

# PERIPHERY

Art and Literary Journal

ed.

61

DRAKE UNIVERSITY 2024



PERIPHERY  
ART AND LITERARY  
JOURNAL

*Edition 61*

# ABOUT

*Periphery Art and Literary Journal* is an annual, student produced publication at Drake University. Funding for *Periphery* is provided by the Board of Student Communications. Contents and opinions in this journal do not reflect those of Drake University.

For more information and contact: [www.peripheryjournal.com](http://www.peripheryjournal.com)

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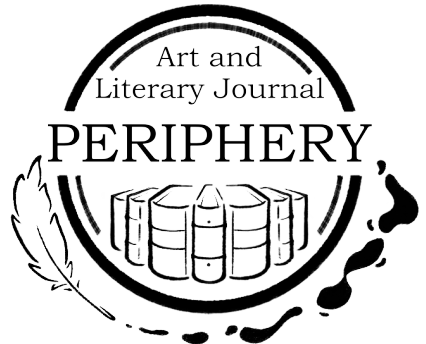
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# SUBMISSION PROCESS

Submission to *Periphery* is free and open to undergraduate students from around the globe. *Periphery* accepts stories, photographs, poems, songs, essays, paintings, videos, interviews, digital art, sculptures, graphic narratives, spoken word, comics, and other creative works, including works from genres that have yet to be recognized. All submissions are sent through a blind review process by the Editors-In-Chief, Art Directors, and Editorial Staff. *Periphery* reserves the right to edit any and all submissions, but does not claim the rights to any published work.

# STAFF

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

In 2022, *Periphery*, alongside many of Drake University's other publications, faced the most serious threat to its operation in years. In late 2022, budget cuts rocked the University—and every community organization that calls Drake home. That's why this year, I'm grateful to the Board of Student Communications, the Student Senate, and the larger overseeing committees for their tireless work, and for re-committing themselves to the importance of student publications.

I'm even more so proud of everyone involved with the creation and maintenance of *Periphery*. I'm proud of the staff for their clarity of purpose, of the amazing writers and artists who submitted this year, and of anyone who has found joy and inspiration in our events or our journal. You are a shining example of why journals like *Periphery* must be maintained.

The work in these pages comes from you. They come from your community, your colleagues, and your friends. They are worth celebrating. As long as Drake University remains, *Periphery* intends to do exactly that.

It was my honor to serve alongside Atlas Desmond as Editors-In-Chief.

To many more years of *Periphery*!

Aanika Pfister  
EIC of *Periphery* (Fall 2023)

# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

When I first started at *Periphery*, we were a team of ten. Each year since then, our numbers have dwindled, until last year we were down to five. Graduation left *Periphery* with a staff of three: myself, Aanika Pfister, and Avery Hjelm.

This year was very much make-it-or-break-it for *Periphery*. Aanika and I were both new to the position of EIC and trying to learn the ropes, while simultaneously, all around us organizations were having their funding cut. There was a very real fear of *Periphery* disappearing altogether.

But now, at the end of the 2023-24 academic year, I can proudly say that *Periphery* has regained its strength and is here to stay. This year, we managed to keep our funding and grow to a team of eight incredible editors and designers. Next year, I can rest easy knowing that *Periphery* is in the competent hands of our new EIC, Avery Hjelm, our art director, Emma Masso, and our more than capable editors.

As this year comes to a close, the question remains: why does *Periphery* matter? It's a small, relatively-unknown journal—why fight for it?

*Periphery* matters because writers, artists, and creatives of all kind matter. Especially at the undergraduate level, when creatives are facing a brand new world of discouragement and rejection, it is absolutely vital for there to be places for creatives to have their work featured and their voices heard. *Periphery* matters because there is nothing quite so powerful as being heard.

Thank you to everyone who submitted; regardless of whether your piece was included in this issue or not, I assure you, your voice was heard.

Thank you, also, to my wonderful team of editors, and to my co-EIC Aanika.

Sincerely,

Atlas Desmond  
EIC of *Periphery* (Fall 2023 - Spring 2024)

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# 🎵 LITERATURE 🎵

"EMPTY WORDS ARE EVIL." -HOMER, THE ODYSSEY



# YOU KNOW THE WAY TO CALIFORNIA

*Maggie Gillaspie*

Buried under the stump  
Of the old orange tree  
Lie the bones of your forethought and freedom  
They will serve as direction to  
The river  
You do not need them  
You know the way  
Past the thorns of the lemon bush  
The tooth rot  
Four cups of sugar for every lemon  
Twelve cavities and a golden crown  
You know the way  
Beside the house up the hill  
That your mother ran every morning  
Determined to lose weight  
On her sabbatical from your father  
Her study being your body as well as hers  
Her seven years of labor long passed  
Her year of leave spent nurturing you  
You know the way  
Through your grandmother's kitchen  
To the stone patio  
Chopin blaring on a crank radio  
Quiet conversations with Virgil  
Without the threat of violence  
NPR talks don't bore you  
Your grandfather likes them  
You latch onto his characteristics  
Bent on making them facets of yourself  
Hope to leech some of his greatness

Steal some power for yourself  
You know the way  
Long dresses and purposeful incompetence  
You crave being taken under the wing  
T-shirts over tankinis  
Tying beads to bracelets  
Bare Feet and crabgrass  
Dry wind and dry faces  
That should be wet  
Your grandmother, the wraith, whispers  
As you embark  
On your walk back home  
If you ever need to escape Phlegethon  
'You know the way to California'

# FAMILY SOUP

*Kolby Friedrichsen*

I spend most nights closed in the furthest room at home,  
to avoid kids the mother grew as her own, but nights  
like these, I like to believe they all forget where I came from.  
I press my toes carefully across the once sand colored carpet

Now holding the fur of our last two family dogs  
and the stains of a jealous cat, competing  
against the “accidents” of a pre-potty-trained  
little boy. Leaving my footprints behind  
like a treasure hunt back to my bedroom door.

I am enveloped in pumpkin candles that mix aromas  
of a meal to warm my cold achy bones. In the last year  
those achy bones cling tight to my skin, framing craters  
that hold home at the base of my neck, supported by a collar  
bone, or a Tumblr.com girl, or a heroin chic  
Courtney Love didn't do it girl, and the need to grieve  
where I came from, pushing these girls down my throat  
So forcefully, the mother soup never passes through my lips  
anymore.

I still watch her though—the mother. In the kitchen  
of warm-toned light. Swirling, potatoes, carrot, garlic stock;  
warmth. I watch her soaking the wooden spoon with new flavors  
Every circle she swirls in the pot. Placing new meaning on home,  
Potato, carrot, garlic stock. Is this love? I watch Her  
sway side-to-side gifting me the motion of unsung lullabies;

Comfort, nurture, warm love. Are you my mom? With caution  
she holds a steam coated potato, pressed by the tips of her  
fingers, offering to my hollow body—Today I am home.

# GRIEF

*Maggie Gillaspie*

Grief is a funny thing for a small being such as me  
I find grief in bookstores and in  
The stems of cucumbers  
I weep for the raccoon on the road  
The mouse in the trap  
My childhood dog in the yard  
He always bathed in sun face upturned  
Laid forever to rest underneath the grass  
Ambiguous grief  
I find it waving at me as the car pulls out  
Find it in my mother's smile lines  
I find grief prematurely  
When I laugh with my sisters  
Look into the eyes of lovers  
I find grief too late  
The dog's old blanket on my bed  
An old letter in my childhood desk  
A sharpened pencil  
A tattoo on the ribs  
I take grief in and hug her  
Clean grass off graves  
Here in wet faces and red eyes  
The sweetest price of love  
Here is my proof that I can do it  
I can love and I can hurt for love  
I wouldn't give it up for anything  
I thank God for ignoring my pleas for the pain to stop  
Grief is my moles that mirror my mothers  
Shaped in triangles  
Scattered about my body  
To mourn is to sing songs  
To mourn is to remember

To be human, to feel, to fight  
Grief is a funny thing  
It is cold at night and warm in the morning  
A laugh in the mirror at  
A puffy face  
God help the dry eyes in the audience



# THE SKELETON

*Grace Flammang*



A skeleton woke up from beneath the ground.  
After shaking and digging he broke through the dirt mound

He pulled himself up and sat on the grass.  
The skeleton looked around and then out loud, he asked,  
“Is anyone out there, or is it just me?”  
“Am I alone, there’s no spirit nor soul I can see.”

Without a brain in his skull, there were no memories he had.  
“Do I have a mother?” he thought, “Maybe a dad?”

The Skeleton stood and took a step back.

He bumped into something,  
his own epitaph.

“RIP” read the tombstone  
“Beloved son and brother.  
Date of death: unknown.”

“My family,” he thought, “Where could they be?  
What do they look like? Do they look like me?”

“I must find them at once! We shouldn’t be apart.

With their son missing,  
They'll be ailed with broken hearts.  
I'll head into to town and look for them there  
We'll be reunited and hence, cured from despair."

The skeleton departed from his home in the ground  
and trekked down the path that led into town.

Upon his arrival to Main Street,  
Stranger after stranger, he tried to greet.

"A dead man, how gross!"  
"He's decomposed! Unclean!"  
"He was eaten by worms and dares to be seen!"

One man stopped, glared and grimaced.  
He looked the skeleton up and down, finally resting on his boney  
visage.

"Do I know you? How could I say?  
You don't look human, but like a Halloween display.  
Now, I don't mean to be crass, I don't mean to debase, but  
You'd be more recognizable with flesh on your face."

The skeleton stood still and took this to heart.  
"I know what to do," he thought, "I know where I'll start!  
With my body just bones and the rest decayed,  
any features I had have melted away!"

So he zipped the man down  
and wore him like a suit.  
He crept in his skin and walked in his boots.

How comfortable it is, another man's skin.  
You'd be surprised, I'd say, how easily you can crawl in!

Through the night he stalked, his anticipation undeterred.  
But a few moments later, something surprising occurred.

A women, quite short, ran up to HIM.  
Held him tightly,  
with a beaming, toothy grin.

“Oh, my son!” She cried, ”You gave me quite the scare!  
Where have you been? I’ve been stuck in despair!”

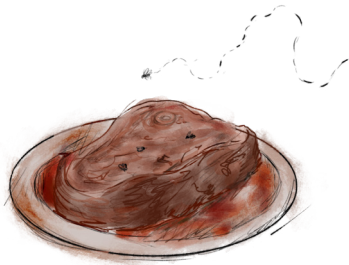
Overflowing with joy he hugged her so fast.  
“Mother, is it truly you? Have we reunited at last?”  
She didn’t respond, instead she just smiled,  
slapped his back, “Don’t mock me, my silly child.”

“You look no more than some skin on bones.  
Your ribs stick out like the teeth on a comb.  
You must come home and eat, I’ll cook up some beef.  
We’ll fill up so you’ll put on some meat.”

He held her arm and followed her with no delay.  
Just now noticing she resembled the man he fileted.

Our skeleton now sits at a table, a filling meal in his ribs.  
Resting content at the bottom, like a babe in a crib.  
Well, so it seems he has a home for today, but now let me ask a  
question:

What will happen once borrowed flesh starts to decay?



TW: suicide

# EMAILS OVER RESEARCH

*Olivia Corey*

The door opened slightly, letting out the bit of daylight that was from the hallway windows. All morning, she sat in her lifeless office with just a few pictures of her family scattered among the many shelves of books. She sighed after answering the fiftieth email she had responded to. Her eyes strained from the countless hours of focusing on what was on her screen.

A knock on the door was quickly followed by footsteps and mumbling. A girl stood in the corner of her eye; she wore a very shaky smile like she was trying to force it.

“Can I help you?”

The girl leaned into her personal bubble, her face inches from hers; she bent over as if she were bowing. She made direct eye contact. From here, body tremors were radiating from her whole body.

“Hi, Dr. Kassel; sorry to bother you, but do you remember me from last semester?”

Dr. Kassel slowly shook her head until the girl continued to blurt out words.

“I remember you.” She closed her eyes and let out a shaky sigh. “But it’s ok, you’re very busy. I wanted to see if you had any updates about research?”

Dr. Kassel shook her head again and slowly closed her laptop. “I have a lab, but there isn’t much to do right now—”

“Great, that’s what I thought, but—”

“Please email me back and come during office hours if you want more information.”

The girl backed away; her smile dissipated into a quivering thin line.

“Ok, thank you, Dr. Kassel.” her face was still focused on Dr. Kassel’s face. “I was coming from a different professor and thought I would stop by. I’m sorry for interrupting you.” And with her last words, she dashed out of the office.

Dr. Kassel sat in her office, confused at what had just happened. No one ever came to her office hours. But Dr. Kassel shrugged it off and kept answering emails.

\*\*\*

About a month passed, and her co-worker stepped into her office briefly.

“So, how’s the lab?”

“It’s fine.”

“How is it fine?”

She concentrated on her emails again, clicking, opening, typing, and repeat. Her fingers flew right off the keyboard, glancing back at the screen, making sure everything she wrote conveyed everything she said.

Her mouth moved. “Just fine.”

“Well, my research is going great.”

“That’s good.”

He paused, his glance reading her reaction. “And I need more people.”

She stopped, finally looking at him. He wore a cocky smile.

“And?”

“I just need more people to care for the rats, Kassel.”

“Sure.”

“I do!”

“Don’t you have 30 people in your lab?”

“It’s not enough.”

“It’s not *enough?*”

“Rats Kassel. The Rats need their young mommies and daddies.”

She rolled her eyes back at the phrase “Mommies and daddies.” A twinge of cringe hit her in the gut. Her fingers started to dance back onto her keyboard, distracting her from it.

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# ANHEDONIA

*Aria Fisher*

You have to make yourself look up at the trees every once in a while. You need to remember when they were larger. Megaflora in your childish eyes. The first time you learned about hippies, you stretched your Icarus limbs and nestled your cheek into the forgiving sappy trunk of that evergreen that you swore you'd make a home out of when things got bad. When you would get sap deep in the whorls of your fingerprints and the lifelines of your palms and somehow the foaming soap in its ugly plastic container couldn't wash it all the way out and you could smell it on your fingertips when you went to sleep that night. biting bark scraps as a primal beastly instinct despite a loose front tooth and skinning your knees while you fall because you vastly underestimated the distance between the safe cradle nook you and your friend found and the pine needle ground.

You must recall what it tasted like, when trees were gods. when your holy communion, the closest you ever got to church, was grinding pine needles between your teeth. the old testament clarity embedded when you almost gouged out your eye with a spare branch and dreamed about the grounded dirt-sap-earth smelltheevergreen breathe deep looking out past the grime while your waxed hardwood floors shook loose and spun under your feet, some odd sense of artificial doom coming from the artful carvings of your kitchen table and the straight-backed lumber chairs that hurt no matter how you tried to contort yourself to make them natural again. the adrenaline violence fear of falling, more honest in the forest than in a living room.

You need to look at the trees and feel the way you used to. shove some dirt in your mouth and connect again and yearn the way you did before it became true that yearning is for fools who hurt. The trees will hurt you and you can love them and pretend you understand the lifetime rings of kingdoms fallen and fires wrought. above and under the ground ancient electric

symbolsyntax humming through you—all flimsy lenses bundle of nerves you small human animal of urges you. Remember when you were moved magnetic and reach for it, ambitions of the sun. Remember when you wanted so badly. and look up and watch the leaves change. and walk over the rotting scraps on the ground. and pretend it is sublime.

# FIKA

*William Shell*

“Coffee, anyone?”  
sitting on barstools  
couches and rugs  
rain tip toeing outside  
“milk and sugar?”  
sipping from thrifted mugs  
on criss crossed legs  
three years ago.

The rain falls as  
the bitter coffee brews  
staring through red eyes  
at neutral beige walls  
dragging back on sore knees  
to board meetings  
while sipping  
from white  
company  
mugs.

# ANOTHER LOST HOLIDAY

*Stella Stocker*

I wait where he can watch me.  
Follow the fly's shaky scribble  
to the fruit bowl, where it spits  
up like a baby. I smell the sun-  
warmed apples, red as Christmas.

Its seeds are sprouted from and  
cosseted by cyanide. I'm a waiter—  
I watch and anticipate. I know he  
wants a mom, not a girlfriend. I  
serve him roast turkey and brussel

sprouts that he won't touch. I  
trash my childhood crafts, make  
room for his, because mothers  
were never children. Instead  
they are reborn as angel tree-

toppers, primed with painted  
smiles and wings that twitch  
but don't fly. All of my clumsily  
crafted snowmen sculptures  
are strangling on friendship-

bracelet scarves. I can hear them  
gasping in the kitchen trash can,  
cheery faces pressed to scrapped

bird bones and the brussel sprouts  
that I cooked and served for him,  
the ones he would not touch.



# AFTER OXYKODONE

*Abbie Langmead*

talking to you like this

is like speaking to a toddler  
who knows nothing, but hates you.  
they say that They Hate You.  
you have no choice  
but to reassure them they don't know  
what hate is.

is like muttering to yourself  
as you try to Remember  
what you need before you leave.  
wallet. keys. cell phone.

is like reading the same word  
over and over again, until  
it means Nothing. it's always  
the simple words. like school.  
or friend. or catalogue.

talking to you like this

is Apologizing, every time,  
because i woke you up.

is listening Through  
your delirious dreams  
of me, Dying Young.

is waiting for You  
to Fall Asleep on the line.

is calling my dad after,  
to sure your cpap machine  
is on tight.

# SWEET SEASIDE

*Emily Hedrick*

“Jason, I’m not mad, just disappointed,” the king said to his nephew, “As heir to the throne, I expect you to automatically understand how things work.”

“That’s impossible, Uncle.” Prince Jason slouched and put one hand in the pocket of his jacket, where he kept his mother’s wedding band.

“We’re royals, we’re born with the innate ability to fully take in situations and make our own decisions about what to do from birth. I simply can’t fathom why you don’t use these noble skills.”

The prince crossed his arms. “You think I’m an imposter? That someone switched the real prince with me after I was born? I knew you didn’t love me.”

The king looked offended. “Jason, I’m hurt!”

“Whatever.” The prince turned on his heel and walked briskly out of the room.

Jason was the only eligible heir to the throne. Almost every royal in this cold, seaside kingdom had died of some type of disease. The situation had become so dire that a separate hospital wing of the castle had been reserved just for royals to protect the staff. Only six people of the royal lineage remained. Jason, prince and heir, about to turn twenty years old. Jason’s uncle Frederick, the younger royal brother, was king, and afflicted with frequent bouts of illness that had caused his health to deteriorate over the past decade, and most people were convinced that he wouldn’t last another decade. He was barely able to get out of bed in the morning these days. Jason’s father, Alexander, the elder brother, was unfit to rule due to brain damage. Jason’s three princess cousins were all under the age of twelve, way too young to rule. That was it. Only them.

Their miserable and dying dynasty had been allegedly cursed generations ago by a vengeful wizard whom they refused to be a patron kingdom to because he was a silver-tongued criminal who failed to fool them with his antics. Nobody wanted to marry into the seaside kingdom’s royal family anymore because they

feared the perpetual bad luck spreading to them.

The wizard's curse went like this:

*“As punishment for the royal family’s scorn and for their spite,  
My strongest spell, like a serpent, will sharply bite.  
Fever will burn like fire, but the flames of life will be snuffed out,  
And as if this were not enough, these plagues will spread  
throughout.*

*Until the stubborn cowardice of these arrogant kin,  
Change their ways which spawn such poison within,  
All who are wed upon the soil to the blood of the Seaside,  
Will find that they are condemned to death’s dark tide.”*

The wizard had never been seen again since he'd cast the spell, but the following generations had suffered greatly without any hope that the curse could be broken. Jason knew from a young age that his days were numbered.

Jason didn't want to rule. He wanted to be an architect. He didn't want to die. He didn't want to marry someone and bring them bad luck. The monarchy could go right to whale shit in his opinion. He just didn't want to lose his remaining relatives, even though they didn't get along with each other.

Jason exited the castle and made his way down the rocky slope to his favorite secret cove where nobody could bother him. He was sulking, but he knew the fresh sea air would calm him down a little. Staring at the sand below him, he headed toward his favorite rock so he could sit and gaze sullenly at the waves on this gray, misty morning. Jason waded into the lapping water. He looked up from his feet, saw the rock, and nearly jumped out of his clothes.

A merman was sprawled out on the rock. His eyes were closed, his forehead was sweating profusely, and he was barely breathing. His emerald-green tail had scales missing and his shredded fins lilted weakly in the wind. His skin was covered in bruises and bleeding cuts that stained the rock he lay on. His long dark hair was a disheveled mess with pieces of seaweed stuck in it. Based on his human half's appearance, Jason guessed he was about his age.

Jason was absolutely baffled.

To Read the Rest Visit: [peripheryjournal.com](http://peripheryjournal.com)

TW: gore

# PEOPLE MEAT

*Kolby Friedrichsen*

I was born with a responsibility to make people love me—to change everything I am, for others around me.

I was promised safety if I could become uncanny, so I threw myself in rapid water, running deeper than the Manson family. Alone in the chaos

8 fish circle over,

kissing with their teeth, taking chunks

of my body, I reach out my hand begging for them to take all of me in.

My body feels so much like a god, you'd think

I was green and covered in scales, with razorblades on my fingertips

instead of bitten nails. Heat-flash in my legs,

Goosebumps rise on my skin, on top of my bones rattling me with hope—

Oh god they love me, I just know!

The more fish rip pieces of me, the more my brain gets fuzzy, and I, the child born to make people love me,

am only bones leftover. With my body consumed there's nothing left for fish to steal, so with one flick of a fin,

I am cast back to shore, to see what the wolves have in store.

# LIKE A ROACH, MY MOTHER

*Penelope Alegria*

shines red in the sun, lays flat on her stomach on bright summer days, though she only comes out in the open like this when she's sure no one else is around, when the neighbors are out of town and the kids across the street are at camp, and though she won't admit it, it's because she heeds the warning of the cucaracha, yes, the silly song she insists on taking seriously, the children's chant, the taunting tune that makes her skin crawl with paranoia, since what could happen to a dirty insect could happen to just about anyone, so no, she won't take her chances, though she's not sure whether American kids know the words, have translated them, perhaps, and grown into adults who hate small scurrying things, though this here is a cold, cold country, which means she hasn't seen any roaches, which means they must have all heard about back home, where the air is hot and heavy and sweet with the scent of trash tanning on the sidewalk, where roaches are only squashed by stupid tiny feet that don't understand that the cucaracha could be their mother, yes, she concluded, that's what must've happened, they all headed south in planes, trains, car trunks, thick with red-brown crawlers who cried and clamored in the dark until they got to their destination and found children who sang about them and women who left the side door wide open like her own mother who knew as all women do that girls grow into roaches and could survive even the apocalypse and still find their way back home.

# YOU CALLED ME AN OLD SOUL

*Gillian Ruppe*

It was late, and my tiny hands gripped my kneecaps through the holes in my grass-stained jeans in desperation. Sleep tugged at my eyes, trying to serenade my young mind into drooling on the passenger side window. I needed to stay awake though. I didn't get to be alone with you often, and even less frequently did I get to sit in the front seat, it was a rare privilege.

The night streaked past the windows at breakneck speed, the mountain and trees and shadows trying to keep us. I was too assured by the haven of the minivan, the protective bubble that I thought was the headlights and blasting heater.

You called me an old soul that night.

I preened with the words, taking it as a compliment to my maturity. I was in such a hurry in that moment, in most of my memories, to get to adulthood. To be called an old soul, especially by you as you carried us from the dark of the cliffs with a practiced hand at the wheel, seemed like such a good thing.

My apartment is cold.

The thermostat is broken, stuck perpetually at 60 degrees. I didn't expect to need fuzzy socks in summer. I spend most of my time here curled up in the refuge of my cave, burrowed deep into my nest of blankets even as the sun bakes the pavement in the world outside.

My plastic bins packed full of first aid supplies and laundry detergent were supposed to cover every eventuality, but I wasn't prepared for this.

Who could've seen this coming?

It reminds me of you. Everything does now, but the cold night calls to mind the time we all spent crowded on the couches.

You loved home improvement shows. You spent hours watching couples with perfect teeth and spray tans buy and sell homes like they were Skittles. You would comment on those you thought had good taste and the ones that you thought were tacky while the wind from outside howled through the gaps in the duct tape I helped mom line our windows with. Cooking shows, too. I never cared much for either, but I would always fall into your side as we watched iron chefs mince and flambee and plate and sautee as we ate our frozen tv dinners out of cardboard dishes. On the few days when I did not have the patience for these distant colorful worlds, you would make concessions, changing the channel until we found NCIS or Criminal Minds, the stuff that you knew would make me stay. Sometimes I still wouldn't stay. I suppose you understood that.

The kitchen can be warm, when I make it that way. Steam from my skillet fills the small space and turns my cheeks pink. This is my third attempt at this stir fry, the first two scraped into the trashcan with the lid shut tight. I hope that when he gets here he won't be able to smell the burning. I've gotten better at this whole cooking thing, believe it or not. A few months ago it would've taken me six attempts to get something even close to edible. It may be warm in here now, but it's also loud, the vent's fan whirring full blast to keep the fire alarm from going off. I think I turned on music earlier, but I can't tell if it is still playing. It is a miracle that I hear the doorbell at all. It's even more of a miracle that when I pull the pan off the heat the vegetables are perfectly caramelized.

To Read the Rest Visit: [peripheryjournal.com](http://peripheryjournal.com)

TW: discussion of sexual assault

# BRACED FOR A BITE

*Stella Stocker*

The way that my mother carries herself with shoulders back, teeth just barely tucked behind lips ready to snarl like a dog kicked one too many times. We tip face-first into flutes

of Riesling. The microwave spins a popcorn bag and squeaks like a baby bird before plunging from its nest into sky. We talk softly over apple-white wine and playing cards as the

radiator buzzes like a cicada. She says the first time she was assaulted was in college. The first time. The way the world swishes through me slowly. My mom didn't believe a girl

could make it until my age without having been raped. A matter of when. Not if. I'm twenty, bitter, and terrified. My mother: a lifetime of snarling hound dogs with softer than

soft fur. The bark, the bite, then the begging. Men who fuck you because they can. The way time collapses into this one moment, solidifying us in amber. Her fear is blood borne.

Our apple-white teeth are bared.  
Braced, we wait for the next bite.



# SCARLET

*Mallory Lo*

Everyone dips it in seduction,  
     But I paint scarlet with panic,  
 Especially when she and I drink cranberry wine  
     That airs out like anxious  
 Anticipation,  
     And claws the only other red  
 Lining her bloodthirsty teeth,  
     Two women, one whose lips never met queer  
 But glow devilish sticky-glossed flames,  
     The dark cherry triad she pouts  
 Scares me to death—

                    Is it a purposeful  
     lip bleed, a streak of  
 raspberry                    infused  
 lipstick,                    or alcohol's  
     reddish                    poison  
     Pouring                    down  
                     her chin?  
                     Fickle thumb  
                     Ready to wipe  
                     But she'll catch my desire  
                     Red-handed  
                     As I forego irises  
                     For a rose-bloomed mouth.

She is pungent blood rain  
     Storming sour in my mind  
 Growing chokeberries in my throat  
     With a lightning friendly touch,  
 Scarlet stains  
     In wait—

To be called her forbidden pomegranate,  
    But if muted words submerge in scarlet,  
And leave a coat of unwanted affection,  
    I'll choke out,  
*Joke just a joke*  
    *Just joke.*

# LOS PAPELES ARRIVE ON A TUESDAY

*Penelope Alegria*

my mama receives her name in an envelope with a US seal, official  
and everything, and she cries. she cries and cries and thanks  
the floor, who trembles in response, who shakes  
my books off the shelves because my mama has been named today.

down south—borders and borders down—they are better  
at reading tremors than i am. that is how my cousins  
and aunts and uncles and scorned grandmas know  
the news before i do. later, i am told that they hold hands  
for the first time in 26 years. they press their ears  
to the floor and that is how they learn to pronounce  
my mama's new name. *legal* is *legal* is the same in  
my language and yours. government-approved and irremovable.

good. my shoulders heave when i finally pick up  
my mama's call. i tell her to hold this news with both hands.  
*see? the paper doesn't tear no matter how our hands shake.*  
*we cry and the ink doesn't smudge.*

# PRINTMAKING POEM

*Jack Burns*

**“They Say All Art is Self Portrait”  
— Unknown**

We are the intertwining of the human and the material.

Our start consists of fleeting thoughts.  
We shoot between your ears until you nail  
Us down and yank us into the light.  
The light, creamy void of the sketching paper.

We are a milky blue copper etch bathed in acid.  
We are a boundless eye of glass which glares through all trees.

A vibrant cemetery of concepts,  
Both premium and pitiful. The lucky lot are  
Etched into the metal. Meticulous.  
Surgical. Pull the spindly needle across  
And scratch us into the world.

We are viscous ink flooding through the trenches.  
We are the morbid heart that pumps to fill a bloody glass,  
The brittle fingers crunching beneath the ruthless gravity of time.

We watch you dip cardboard in the sticky  
Black blood, scraping our shiny skin. Wipe away the  
Goo and find your old friends hiding underneath.  
As if you're back at Lane Tech.  
Room 445, where you first learned to make prints,  
Polishing copper plates at lunchtime.

We are rainbow stains on a sharp paper crown.  
We are the unsolvable human spirit.

Lay us down beneath the clammy sheet.  
Run us through the press. Brace yourself  
While your ideas are squeezed, transferred  
To the mulberry paper, giving us permanence.  
Satisfying and scary.

We are the irreversible editions to your white T-shirt.  
We are bony scissors with teeth, munching on corn.

The images you bring to life now  
Are impulsive and provocative. Where  
Is your statement? Where is your concentration?

We are greasy crayon streaks kissing stone.  
We are a lunch tray full of critters and  
A UFO frying in a pan, sunny side up.

You can't explain to them why  
You see us. You just do.  
Meanings materialize  
When they're ready.

We are liquid tusche tinting and trickling from the brush to block.  
We are a tongue clasping a plump uvula like a fleshy stress ball.  
We are the eyelicker, a carnal amalgamation of ambiguous flesh.  
We are the untitled.

We reveal the arcane thoughts that  
You couldn't put your ink stained finger on  
Until you saw us hanging on display.

# OFF THE BONE

*Ivani Atre*

GOODNESS SAYS TO BECOME AS  
EASY TO SWALLOW  
AS POSSIBLE;  
NEVER ASK, AND  
IF YOU MUST,            SING IT AS A BIRDSONG,

AS THE SILT AT THE BOTTOM OF THAT GREAT,  
BIG,                        BLUE BANK,  
TO TAKE IN THE    SHARPEST BREATH.  
GOODNESS SAYS THAT THIS IS NOT ABOUT  
GIRLHOOD OR  
A CHANT ABOUT CLEANLINESS.

ON PURPOSE,            GOODNESS TELLS,  
PROMISE TO DO THESE THINGS ON PURPOSE.  
THIS IS ABOUT YOUR FEVER, YOUR  
SORE-BONED PERSISTENCE.  
ABOUT THE CREATURE OF ORDER, OF

CONVENIENCE—THE LOSING-WAR  
ALLEGORY FOR  
EARTHLY BELONGING,  
BELONGING-IN-ARMS.  
INCONSOLABLE, WITH OR WITHOUT A WITNESS.

GOODNESS SAYS “BECOME ME,”  
SIGNALS TENDERNESS,  
WEARS TWO DIFFERENT SILKS IN  
COSMIC PERPETUITY.  
THIS IS ABOUT THE THING THAT BITES

AND KISSES THE BLOOMS ON YOUR FINGERTIPS,

ON YOUR EYELIDS.

DO YOU TEACH TENDERNESS?

DO YOU BITE IT      RIGHT      OFF      THE      BONE?

# EXTINGUISH

*Laura Weber*

At the art museum, I bought a candle with Kandinsky's "Squares with Concentric Circles" on it, two by four squares, vertical. In painting class, my professor said my portfolio held a theme of categorization and limits. "I can sense your anxiety throughout this, you consistently use compositions that compartmentalize objects. Oh, there's a clock: is time one of your stressors?" My friend in high school told me she can see my handwriting in my art work—what is it about art that reveals a touch of us we can't recognize ourselves?

I light candles when I do homework. The Kandinsky candle had two wicks, burning at once. Each day a square burned away wax dipped down edges up, fighting, but the flames turned towards each other. Desperate to cradle, desperate to share warmth. What is it about home that makes us assume love is evermore?

One of the wicks burned faster than the other and I knew that I was going to witness two versions of gone. When grandpa was in hospice, mom said that she couldn't bear to watch him dying. She watched him forget things like peoples' names and where he was and how to breathe and when it's a fast death it's shock but when it's a slow death it's agony because you never can know the precise moment when flame goes out. The first wick went black. I was gone making dinner and I came back to see how the wax had sobbed out beneath its metal stand, before it exhaled. I waited for the other wick to get close and even though caffeinated midnight tea sat at my left elbow—a stapled stack of paper with it—I watched it. Greens and blues, yellows and purples melted into a brown pool until all squares were gone. Only the wick.

It knelt down with an understanding that time is not an enemy but clear wax tears gushed out in pulses and I wondered if a candle could worry about dying, worry about forgetting, or worry about being forgotten. Maybe it sobbed gripping to the belief that the after life allows reconnection and I, with solace in my eyes, sat at the bedside and chewed on the inside of my cheeks. It was laying down with whispered breaths and I promised I'd stay with it. I'd give up my time for it. An hour passed and I wondered if I should blow it out. I went back to work, knowing I can only give up so much of myself before having to move on. I flickered my eyes back and forth periodically and it was in those few moments, I missed it extinguish.

# WIVES AND WOLVES

*Kathleen Menjivar*

Tales often began with names, written down in a formal mind or settled notion. It was common knowledge to know the labelings of towns and their folk, and of dogs and their cities. It was the natural inclination of man that drove them to title the simplicities of everyday living in supple words that excited one's tongue. What was a man without his name? Could anything truly be of importance if it did not hold place within words?

Yet for the *groom*, for whom this tale resides, who still wandered amongst a house that smelt of supple wheat and chastising winds. He still, ever wondered about the narrative of such supposed understanding.

The elegance of his title was a facade, for the groom was as he was, a mere creature of strangest proportions. One that coiled the space he passed through with hideous abundance. By sight he was arching, and yet silent as the beasts of woods when they hunted. His body stretched towards the sun like a yearning branch, for the aspects of men could not be destroyed entirely, but the remnants of humble shoulders and limbs were all that remained of a gentle image. The groom bared the head of a wolf, gnarled with a maw gaping with fangs, and dark as the blackest soot. His hands kept claws sharp enough to rip the finest silks, and his eyes sought flesh and bone in the briefest darkness.

The groom *supposed* he had once been a man, though he was surely not one any longer.

He supposed the countryside that sheltered him had a name as well, but he had long since forgotten it. His name had already drifted with the rural winds, a revering title lost to the fogs of careless choices, and had left him with nothing. Nothing per say, beyond wife.

He called her such, if in the brief moments when they neared one another in comforted motion. Wife. Though it was not her name, and the groom did not know it. Nor did he have the



inclination to ask, for he'd attempted plenty before of course, but it never brought more than the curl of tentative lips and glossy eyes. He only recalled awakening, to see the veil of her dress one night, as well as the clutch of her hands. But the memories felt too recent to reminisce. She had dressed him in bigger tunic and sharper cloth, and had not fled at drawing presence wherever he followed her. He had not known why she allowed it, why he desired to follow her guidance into the warmth of a distant cabin with utter comfort.

The groom had only *known*. Peering into glistening eyes, and sweetened face. The groom had only known he loved her, and *my*-was there comfort in knowing.

And so they lived. Groom and bride, wife and wolf. The groom could taste the time of their abode crumble by miniscule minutes in the hidden sanctuary they had inhabited. For Wife did not tell him much, she only showed, and she had shown him a home, one built in ivory wood in the solace of the fields and the chatter of the birds. She treated him gently, and when her hands dared to dance atop his glistening claws, the groom ushered back, fearful to tear the delicate skin she wore. It occurred too often, fervently with how his feet chased the movements of her bare soles across wooden floors. Her presence felt too rightly placed, and the removal of it broke his passivity and wrenched him from whatever armchair he had settled in.

He didn't leave her be, he couldn't. There was wrongness in being separated, in daring to part from the warmth of their shared existence. But annoyance never surfaced in his oddly timed attachments, she was consistent in greeting him with a low chur of a voice that breathed into his soul. Wife never wore a wedding dress, the imagery of the flowing veil seemed to merely pass in his memory, for the paleness of the dress was not akin to what she wore then. Colorful patterns of red and yellow, greens that marked the furtive grass by the porch. It was all just as beautiful, but it did not tempt him enough to grasp at the fragile fingertips she offered.

She laughed at him for this. Softly, as if he were foolish for his worry.

To Read the Rest Visit: [peripheryjournal.com](http://peripheryjournal.com)

# MY THOUGHT PROCESS ON DEATH

*Osnaika Augustin*

1. At a young age my parents told me about death. They told me how my middle name is after my dead Aunt, WildJane.
2. When I was younger I used to be the kid who told other kids that Santa wasn't real. I told them that if you thought about it, Santa would die as soon as he hit the bottom of the chimney, so they were stupid.
3. When I went back to Haiti I would see people lying dead on the side of the road. When I asked my dad about it he would just say "they're dead" and we would walk on. I was never able to tell the difference between a sleeping man or a dead man. I guess it was hard to tell at a young age.
4. The first family member to die was my mom's mother's sister who died in Florida. I never knew her; I just thought it was a free trip to Florida.
5. The second family member to die was my mom's cousin. I always called him my cousin but I never knew him. He died in prison.
6. Being from a poor country is hard. My dad was a pastor in Haiti as well. We would go to funeral services so my dad could bless the family. Haitians have this saying about death, "When you or someone dies you're dead. Death is death. If a dead person comes to you at night that is a demon." It sounds cooler in Creole.
7. When the 2010 earthquake happened in Haiti I had never seen so much suffering in my life. So many people dead.
  - a. (I went back recently. My mom always tells me that Haiti is cursed with death, every Haitian knows it. Although when I got back there, everyone had the biggest smile on their face. Maybe it's not all bad).
  - b. I don't talk about it much because it's a buzzkill.
8. In New York I lived in The Projects. I would hear gunshots all the

time. At the time, I'd only ever seen one person shot. Sometimes I wonder if my little sister remembers seeing it too.

9. When I moved to Iowa I lived in Cedar Rapids. I thought gun violence was just a New York thing but it's an everywhere thing. Especially in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.
  - a. On the second week of school a boy brought a gun and killed himself right in front of our class. No one talks about it.
10. I lived on the poor side of Cedar Rapids and went to the worst school in the district. (Sometimes I'm amazed I got into Drake). School shootings were a regular.
11. If you went downtown the shootings got even worse. I had a friend, Drew. Him, his brother, and his other friends all shot. The news never covers all the kids that died on First ave so I decided to write their names in my notes so one day I'll say their names in my book.
12. I cried when my favorite rapper Pop Smoke died
13. My great Grandma died at 98. She got to five generations. She lived a very happy life.
14. Another school shooting but instead one cop got shot.
15. My goddaughter in Haiti died. She was 5.
  - a. She was named after me. We had a plan for me to adopt her as soon as I finished college.
16. My Aunty kills herself.
17. My Uncle had a heart attack.
18. My Grandma on my dad's side died.
  - a. I don't like my dad side but she was a pleasant lady
19. My Aunty in Florida dies.
20. The privileges of having a big family is there's plenty of family. Even if one day you still have another cousin left. My older sister said that.
21. I forgot to mention. After someone dies you are supposed to have a party up until the funeral. Then you have an even bigger party after the funeral.
  - a. The members of the family also wore white. I have so many white dresses.
22. Most of my friends told me they have never been to a funeral.

Sometimes I wonder how? The funeral after party is the best part.

a. Does that sound harsh?

23. Shootings still happen in Cedar Rapids.

24. Sometimes I wonder what would I be like if I wasn't desensitized to death. I don't know. Maybe I would be shocked when I get news that I need to go to another funeral. Maybe I would feel more compassionate when my friends tell me they lost someone. I just think I wouldn't be as funny.

25. Either way like they say in Haiti, "Lè yo mouri yo mouri".

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF PÓGINÍ GRÉINE

*Mallory Lo*

She didn't see little kisses of the sun in the saddles of her nose and cheekbones, she saw residues of dirt mocha grounds and rust gold flakes nobody wanted. 8-years-old, too much worry on playgrounds, shielding insecurities with mother's lifeless concealer or blank canvas hands to shut up mockery waiting to happen, still waiting. If only she heard the sun rays ambitions of whipping up her lost happiness with a serotonin recipe: Step one peck honeycombs, two smooch rich cocoa beans, three kiss her from chin to forehead, repeat step three so she knows she is loved, Unsuccessful. But a gentle schoolboy ponders cupped hands upon cheeks, seeing her beauty closed off like an unbloomed flower. He peels the fingers, so slowly trying not to cast nervous red blushing over freckles. A pursed smile compliments a whisper, I like your pretty little stars. He saw her little kisses of the sun, and she saw them too.

# FORGOTTEN

*Juheon Rhee*

You have beaten my voice into me, and  
Now you're dead. I learnt your death through  
A parcel.

A photo of a tombstone, your name engraved.  
A short note asking for donations for the family.  
I despised you.

you broke my writing. you never liked how I  
understood. so you hung my head above the  
oak tree grappling my neck

forced me to become

the ants worming up

the branches droplets sinking into the bark.

Until the bullet-rain tore through my body

the sinewing clouds pulsed with eros while  
lightning branched then rippled and faded.

pulled me back and asked me what I could see: your  
eyes. brown and freckled with melanin

that metastasized onto your skin, textured  
with acne scars, your aging, your wrinkles

your expressions. your face your—

I was startled by your humanness

and your life

and I am startled now, by your—

if you suffocated me

with your voice, it fills me whole now like

a skeleton, the cyanide ridden core of an apple

like a father.

TW: violence, drug use

# MY ASS SCREAMS “DISRESPECT ME”

*Anonymous*

Manila to Majorca  
Island hopping in between  
Get a tattoo on my cheekbone  
Bitch you know that I’m the queen  
Popping black tar with the Beatles  
Getting drunk, downtown Taipei  
Someone else’s “once a lifetime”  
Is my every fucking day

Got a pocket full of Bennys  
Got a penthouse full of meth  
The only things i fear in life  
Are honesty and death  
I’m a party in a woman  
And a terror in the sheets  
I killed a man on Tuesday  
At the bank on 7th street

Bitches? I fuck ‘em  
Willies? I suck ‘em  
I drink your daddy’s liquor stash and then i just upchuck ‘em I won’t  
let a boytoy hit unless he’s sterilized—vasectomy But everywhere i  
go, you know, my ass screams “disrespect me”

You like cheese? I’ve got char-coochie  
With a side of juicy peach  
Maybe chocolate? Just fondue me  
And we’ll drink sex on the beach  
I think that man had children  
See the background on his phone?

Hope someone else is in the picture  
Or they'll be left on their own

I like to fuck the prince of Sweden  
For a hot spoonful of crack  
Hope the cameras didn't catch me  
Cuz I'm never going back  
I drink tequila like it's water  
I snort molly like it's not  
As a rule, I'm one and done  
It's just your mom is fucking hot

Bitches? I fuck 'em  
Willies? I suck 'em  
I drink your daddy's liquor stash and then i just upchuck 'em I won't  
let a boytoy hit unless he's sterilized—vasectomy But everywhere i  
go, you know, my ass screams "disrespect me"

Fire's underneath my ass  
That's what i get for doing crime  
But you can call me Jesus  
Cuz my blood is mostly wine  
Blood was splattered on the pavement  
Knife was stuck between his ribs  
Because my parents never loved me  
Some folks shouldn't try for kids

I think my bra was at a Jagger's  
Or my shirt. Or maybe shoes.  
I watched my future change forever  
I see it's all over the news  
I'll burn my license in a bonfire  
Dye my hair at Kum n Go  
Call me Transcontinental Railroad  
Manifest a fucking ho

Bitches? I fuck 'em

Willies? I suck ‘em

I drink your daddy’s liquor stash and then i just upchuck ‘em I won’t let a boytoy hit unless he’s sterilized—vasectomy But everywhere I go, you know, my ass screams “disrespect me”

Bitches? I got ‘em

Banker? I shot ‘em

When the cuties get suspicious, slide ‘em bills until I’ve bought ‘em I won’t let a boytoy hit unless he’s sterilized—vasectomy But everywhere i go, you know, my ass screams “disrespect me”



# LETTING GO OF WORN OUT

*Laura Weber*

in reference to Mr. Perlman's monologue from Call Me By Your Name

when I was seventeen, my boyfriend told me  
he only dates for home  
and family and  
rings.

*we rip out so much of ourselves to be cured of things faster*

we were each other's first anything and  
he wouldn't say he loved until his  
wedding day  
so when he asked  
"in years from now,  
could you see yourself in a gown" I said yes not  
because it was true, but because I needed someone to say  
they wanted me  
on purpose.

*that we go bankrupt by the age of thirty and have less to offer each time  
we start with someone new*

when we broke down, it felt like thirty  
and smudged signatures on  
divorce papers because  
I had already imagined  
how to make myself a wife. my bedsheets  
pulled crammed under  
cramped hands, I chest-down chest-up couldn't breathe,  
heaved. I wasted so many days thinking  
about the moment I would finally

be happy.

*but to make yourself feel nothing so as not to feel anything*

feelings are the fog I live within. So  
when it rains, the sky hiccups  
through sobs the  
thunderous wetness  
pounds down  
relentless,  
I drown in the knowledge that to feel is a blessing  
but not when  
the flood comes.

*what a waste.*

time is not wasted in healing  
but how  
is one to know when they're ready  
to crack  
their ribcage open again after  
how many times and  
say "go ahead, take it."

*our hearts and our bodies are given to us only once and before you know  
it, your heart is worn out*

and when I was seventeen, I thought  
that love in a heart was a finite resource. like when  
blood was drawn, drops  
don't replenish; being worn meant never  
being as full as you were.

*as for your body, there comes a point when no one looks at it, much less  
wants to come near it. right now, there's sorrow, pain. don't kill it and  
with it, the joy you've felt.*

as much as we heave and grieve  
the loves that were not worth our hurting,  
through glassy eyes, we hold our bodies  
and gazes. I tell her I'm scared.  
she says "me too."  
we don't kill the joy we could feel  
by opening ourselves up.  
somehow, ~~we believe in~~ love  
anyway.

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR RUNNING HAPPY

*Jack Burns*

**We run on science. Now you can, too.**

Stiffer sidewalks will take you through the city. Through the horseback trail or a Downtown loop. Endless pounding echoes underground, bouncing up your bones.

Wanna see how much those bones can take before they snap as easy as a toothpick?

**We want to empower you.** Stress, strain, and tension will power their way through. Your body is only as safe as **your run.**

**That's why**  
we need you to **focus on** the hurt. **Your**

**knees** ache when it's

Cold out.

Cold sends a full shiver up your half tights. The blood of the  
running pack keeps you

Warm.

The blood drips from your nose when the  
air is dry. It stains your socks when your blisters burst. It's  
summoned by the friction of your legs swiping one another, over  
and over and over and over until it's over **& hips**

*CRACKLE & CRUNCH & CREAK* while your leg swings each way  
**in addition to** the tired beads of sweat you've worked so hard to  
earn falling at **your feet**.

**To design shoes for the way your body naturally moves** to the  
SQUEAK of your brand new orthotics

SQUEAK on down the steps to the locker room.  
Make them

SQUEAK until they go silent.

SQUEAK until they crack.

CRACK until they POP!

**(It's a holistic approach—a system rather than just a technology.)**

**With the right shoes**— “the coverings formerly worn by warriors to  
protect **your whole body** in battle”

The world **must work smarter, not harder** to break you.

Your bones shift in your skin  
over the course  
of the season and  
over the course  
of the years. Your fans trample  
over the course  
while you race on it, itching to watch you sweat!  
Of course it's gonna hurt!

**This shift in paradigm departs from 40 years  
of thinking  
PAIN=BAD  
and we neatly packaged that  
pain  
into the shoes in this box.**

**Now get out there and run happy.**

# UNTIL NEXT TIME

Taylor Necko

8-18-1985

Dearest Anthony,

I finally found a notebook that perfectly fits into my purse, so I can now easily jot letters to you while I'm at work. Not much is new with me—just missing when we worked here together. Still pouring the coffee, sweeping the floors, and such. Speaking of the diner, check out this news clipping from Westwood Weekly from today:

Not only did we win and get this great review, but last night, the renovations were completed too. We have all new pink menus on the wall and leather bar stools at the counter. These stools don't squeak like the old ones! They're teal with little sparkles, and I think you would like them. Today's customers sure did. The usual flock came in after the 8am church service down the street. They nearly clean out our freezer every weekend, but I don't mind because the tips are great. Mr. Martin especially tips well.

All he ordered for lunch was an egg and coffee for \$2.50, but he tipped \$1.50. Mrs. Define, the hairstylist, tips decently, especially when I show interest in the silly gossip she shares. Mr. Williamson is a bit stingier, but it makes me smile when he folds the napkins into little swans. Today, he mentioned how his daughter flew out west to Arizona for college. That's even farther away than you.

Before I forget, I wanted to remind you to stock up on cleaning wipes and medicine before the weather cools down. An awful flu is already spreading around here. During work, I've tried to count how many cars come and go in the next-door pharmacy's parking lot, but I lose count every time. Anyways, my break is almost done, and I hope to drop this off at the post office before the

**WESTWOOD'S OWN VOTED #1  
DINER**

It is no surprise to us at *Westwood Weekly News* that our own Early Bird Diner got voted as the best diner in the county for the third year in a row. Locals know it is as everyone's favorite brunch stop. You can find house-roasted coffee, farm-fresh eggs, signature burgers, salty French fries, and more. The owner and staff want to thank their valued customers and those who voted for Early Bird Diner in the contest. They encourage everyone in town to stop by for celebratory discounted egg platters, available until 9/1/85.

dinner rush.

P.S. I miss your smile.

Much love,  
Mary Lynn

8-28-85

My love,

It sounds like your classes are off to a good start, and don't feel sorry that you didn't have time to call me last week. It saves both of us money, which we need if we decide to get married within the next few years. Anyways, even if we don't call, I'd love to hear more about your classes. Is it weird just starting college at 25, or have you been able to join study groups and make friends? You always have been a social butterfly, so I bet you've had few problems adjusting. Honestly, I can't believe it's already been almost a month since you left. The house is too quiet without you laughing at Cheers and cooking full meals in the middle of the night. Once all the humidity dies down, I can assure you, I'll be wearing your old jean jacket and scarf.

Something else that I wanted to tell you was that, on Wednesday, Ben Lewis, the owner of the hardware store who always asks for an absurd amount of cream cheese on his bagel, came to the diner alone. You know how he always comes in with his wife before dropping her off at work, but I didn't get the chance to ask where she was that morning. What was weird was that she wasn't with him for the remainder of the week either. On the third day, when I asked where she was, he told me she was sick. Likely the flu. I told you it was spreading, hopefully not at Mizzou. It must be very serious for her to be quarantined all week. I've been chatting with him extra since he doesn't have her to banter with. He asked about you, specifically if you "finally quit this job and went off to school after all these years." I told him about your mathematics major and how I'm excited for you to come visit me for Thanksgiving. He wishes you luck. Anyways, that's all I have to say right now, but I'll write you again soon!

With all my heart,  
Mary Lynn

To Read the Rest Visit: [peripheryjournal.com](http://peripheryjournal.com)

# IDOLATRY

*Mad Vuotto*

I confess that I have searched for an idol to worship  
That I have traced the static veins of marble statues  
That I have looked upon the stainless face of Aphrodite  
And found her wanting

I confess that I have lingered in empty chapels  
That I have caressed the feathered wings of seraphs  
That I have cast my gaze through fragmented glass  
And felt nothing

I confess that I have ached in Latin, yearned in Greek  
That I have cried in a language left to the dust of antiquity  
That I have prayed in every tongue known and lost to man  
And heard no reply

I confess that I have searched for an idol to worship  
That I have sought in hollow churches and museum halls  
That I have longed to hear the call of a worthy god  
And You—oh, You put me on my knees



# TO DRAW FORTH

*Maggie Gillaspie*

I waited outside  
Regurgitating, choking, clawing at my throat  
As it enunciated the death knell  
Reciting vocabulary words  
Stepping on my own foot  
Phalanges  
Toes or fingers the  
Medical term  
The season of your life your  
*Medical term*

Demeter, I'll be there for your daughter  
We hold our souls in cupped hands  
Long since we dropped them in the  
River in the back of  
The old house  
Before mold grew in your blood  
We sent them down the river and  
Grabbed hold of everything demented  
That comes with being a daughter  
Embraced the grief  
Found ourselves once again on the shore of the creek  
Cradled our souls; slammed hands into chests  
She has always been free with me  
She will never be free of me  
Long since days spent in woods and mud and water  
Writhing in dirt and cursing mothers  
Swearing fealty to the spirits in the pine  
Facetious as it was, we owe loyalty  
Only to each other

Our religions are different our souls are one

We will get into whatever afterlife  
On account of the other  
I feel in my bones it will be hers  
She has always been right about  
Those things, matters of the soul  
On account of my pride or her humility  
Her strength my softness  
Her outburst my internalization  
There will never be a path  
A life a world a plane  
That we will not find each other  
Running and crying and screaming

Taking rotting wood to weeds  
Flowers to graves  
Sugar to the woman across the street  
We are matching pieces of the same soul  
We roil and burn with the same hate  
Whisper the same quiet adorations

# LIPSTICK

*Aria Fisher*

I took a sip and saw that-  
sticky and hard to articulate-  
when I pressed my lips to the paper lid, I left a sign behind.  
Not of me, but rather of some collective entity  
woman  
femme  
alien.

Not of me  
not the words that left my throat  
shortly since impressing  
this smattering of shimmered hues,

but a beautifully lit mirror in a dressing room  
with bright bulbs to reflect me  
look, but not at me,  
see the gleam on my chemise, my cabaret tights  
and love me for a time  
in the mirage of night  
and I will love you for it

and I will look back down at my coffee cup and smile  
smug in how I seem to be  
in who I am and how you love me  
knowing that this subtle flaunting  
paint hides teeth, bone bare and wanting.

I sit with you and sinister  
like some child switched in cradle  
a changeling settles sweetly  
nestling under my ribcage  
after I take another sip  
and smudge the old mark  
and watch your eyes linger—first on it, then on my lips.

## SEEDS AND CREEDS ARE DIFFERENT WORDS BY A LINGUISTIC HAIRLINE FRACTURE

*Lucy Fleming*

I am agnostic and I wake every day and stare god in the eye  
as he eats my heart in an apathetic display of hedonism,  
pomegranate viscera dripping from his jaw  
He blocks the door to the bathroom some days  
and I want to brush my teeth  
but the chilling unfocus rends skin from my flesh at the idea of  
touching him  
It is in the likeness of a flash image of a deer caught in headlights  
Tapetum lucidum, I think.  
The way the deer is trapped in the photo in an uncanny, unholy  
glow, knowing and  
unknowing and alive and dead  
Stasis.  
The way the neck cranes uncannily to turn glowing eyes upon the  
observer  
It sees beyond the bounds of the photo, I think.  
and the man in my bathroom door stands there and feels like a still  
image,  
A visage untethered from time.  
Chained to a space in my hallway that just happens to be of  
monumental  
inconvenience.  
Only he is not still.  
He bites.  
with sightless, blaming eyes and a staining jaw and a maw  
ostensibly of a human if  
only I could count the teeth.  
It is my heart but he has been chewing for days and when he  
disappears it does not  
return and when he reappears it is always in his hand,  
no more or less full.  
and the staining to his chest is always fresh and dripping,

his flesh sometimes pockmarked with holes,  
but the bits that fall to the floor are seeds, not gore.  
pink and red and wet  
I stepped on one to prove it was fake  
it split beneath my toe, vindictive and sweet.  
I brushed my teeth.  
My tongue splits like the surface of a berry and I bleed iron, foul  
and mechanic.  
When my feet hit the floor in the night I swear for a moment  
I can see the carpet beneath; pin-prick holes.  
I want to dream of plant life growing but,  
instead I wake and think of things that burrow and wriggle and  
fester and rot.  
I breathe and climb back to bed.  
I shower and he smiles  
and I am agnostic and god holds my heart half-eaten in his hand  
with pomegranate  
falling from his mouth,  
Calcium and glucose and bitterness and—  
vitriol, when it starts to pump blood, weakly.  
Backwards.  
the wrong chamber and ventricles  
valves closing around fruit guts and misplaced viscera and  
misplaced fear.  
The pomegranate seed splits under my teeth and tastes like  
vindication,  
Rebellion.  
pink blood drips recriminations onto the tiles and I dance around  
the man in the  
doorway who has returned to his loop,  
Stasis.  
I wash my face.  
I slip past him.  
I brush my teeth and wash my hair and it drips absolution onto the  
not-blood stains  
Like they were never there at all.

# TELL ME IF YOU WANT MY LOVE

*Emma Ketelsen*

Tell me how to love you  
when it is too early to use the word love.  
Tell me how to show that I care—am curious—  
About you, your happiness, your insecurities, your wonder, your  
misery,  
your all.

We've been two ships passing in the night  
for months—  
each on our own stormy waters it seems—  
and yet  
it is you I want to see wading through the dark towards me:  
a life of your own I am just learning to recognize.

If I hold too tight,  
If I ask too much too quickly  
will you fight to leave?  
That's if you enter my embrace to begin.

I love you like I love  
the wild cats that called my house home before I did.  
We had our own lives and one day we met and then  
our  
paths crossed more and more.

I know nothing about them except  
the sunbathes they take outside my window.  
I long to give them cuddles and a bed,  
but when I step forward they stare and scurry.  
I settle for leaving out food because they have a life  
without me

and I can't leave them be.  
I'll grow whiskers and a tail if it means you'll let me in.

Not me changing myself into something you want  
but working to find common ground.  
An island where we can dock our ships  
together,  
find solace from our churning seas  
together.  
Can we stand and stare and share an island  
together?

Tell me if you want my love  
is what I am saying when I read  
your favorite poems.  
Tell me if you want my love  
is what I am saying when I text  
not caring that you won't answer for weeks.  
Tell me how to love you  
is what I mean when I put  
your poem on my wall and revere your baked goods.

I wish to earn your lilacs and chai and the effort that puts fog in  
your glasses.  
I wish to give you my most sincere words,  
even when they fall from my lips in a string I don't know how to  
untangle.  
I wish to learn you favorite flower  
and you learn mine.  
And we each clutch and cherish them like  
we don't know if they'll wither or grow.

If you add my favorite flower to  
your garden  
I hope that when it comes time to  
cut it and tie it in satin  
that you dry and press it into  
your books  
and you think of me as words wash over you.

Lay any sweetness  
you  
have for me down and I will  
gorge until I am sick on your  
sugarcane slime.  
The taste of your sweetness  
will forever linger in my mouth,  
behind my lips, and  
I will always have what you  
shared with me.  
How do I make you see your presence is gift enough to me?

But I am afraid that now is not the right time,  
or that there never will be a time.  
Because the dirt under my nails has been  
for me.  
My garden is choked with weeds I strain to  
rip out.  
I'm afraid that they will hitch a ride and  
poison the well if I let anyone  
get too close to me.  
That a mob of angry gardeners I thought I was confiding in  
will round the corner to cuss their withered fields.  
They won't care about the aches in my joints  
or the dirt up to my elbows and clinging to my knees.  
Tell me how to live a life with someone else  
because I have kept  
myself  
alone for as long as  
I can remember.

I hope it is not too bold—too frightening—of me to ask to grow  
our  
gardens together  
side by side.  
Full of flowers, peaches, lilacs, weeds, sugarcane, lavender  
and the seeds we collect along the way.



# MONOLOGUE OF DESPAIR

*Penelope Alegria*

Don't you know I was raised to be forgiving?  
The trick is to look at your grief sideways,  
in between the eyebrows, never the pupils  
whose truth could turn you to salt and stone.  
You have to look at your gripe through a window,  
but the glass should be dirty, foggy. Huff hot air  
so it blurs, the outside blobs hard to make out  
and easy enough to dismiss when asked  
whether you remember what happened  
that night. It works sometimes. You think  
I don't know? Nothing really stops the pain  
from crystallizing, not even the steam of anger.  
You think I don't know that the wrong is there,  
still, an eclipse that blinds, a Greek myth  
that doesn't let me look back? It'll kill me. I know.  
I'll keep staring off into the distance until it does.

# STILL WATER

*Clare Pasley*

They used to light up the night as the valley slept—the boys with their hatchet job engines and Timberland work boots. Lining up the cars and bikes they built from scratch, they revved the engines and laughed as if they hadn't done it every Friday night since they were fifteen. Those boys in town called out around the world as they went racing in the street. Their laughter echoed against the tin storm shutters pulled down over the liquor store and within the catacombs beneath the old bridges. They flew towards the Copper City town line, knowing nothing would ever feel as fast as this. Nothing so free.

I can still feel the cold, steel fence in front of the train station. The late June sun set behind a cover of fog, and the crickets hummed from the woods. The train came through once, maybe twice a year. The big hurricane from ten years before brought a flood so strong it wiped out the tracks and dug up coffins, sending them floating down the streets that had turned to rivers. The people downwind of the storm locked their doors and let the water flood their windows and drown them in their living rooms. The lush trees became hemlocks, and town officials marked the rising water levels against the beams of the Fall River Bridge with white paint that never dried.

Before the flood took out the tracks, people used to come to the valley from everywhere to find work. Trains from New Haven, Stamford, and sometimes even New York came through the station every day. The factories had constant, billowing clouds of smoke that grayed the air and gave the valley a bad reputation. But people say that if you got fired on a Friday night, you could find a shift somewhere else by Saturday morning. Now the factories are haunted, and kids throw rocks through the glass windows, knowing that, like those old buildings, we were meant to be born and buried here. But we had everything we needed, and the train had a whistle so loud you could hear it all the way over on Church Street.

We walked down Main Street in silence before the chaos of the race would erupt. Louis lit up a joint and handed it to me, and I took a drag deep into my chest.

“Sometimes I wish you never taught me how to smoke,” I said.

“No, you don’t.”

“I do—it makes my dad furious.”

He pulled the joint from my lips with two fingers. He stopped in the middle of the street, standing on the yellow line.

“Something’s gonna kill you.”

“I almost wish it wasn’t by my own hand.”

“Think about that feeling. The one that feels like a deep fog covering your mind. It’s the silence in the corner of the party, and as you get higher and higher the figures blend. Any song that plays wraps around you. Any thought you have lasts only as long as you let it. This feeling is what people look for their whole lives. The feeling in your chest right now.”

“Burning.”

“Yes,” he said.

“We aren’t at a party,” I argued as I leaned against the fence of Jimmy’s tattoo parlor. He cut the power on the blue LED light and locked his doors at night. He never used to lock it but the month before someone had broken in for his needles, so he had to get tight.

“We could pretend.” He threw the joint towards the river and reached for my hand. Rolling my eyes, I stood up and joined him in the middle of the road.

“What do you do at parties?” I asked.

“What everyone else is doing, I guess. We can be anything we want to be.”

“Can I go to Yale?” I asked, hope flickering in my voice.

“Anywhere you want. I’m headed west.”

“To play the bass?”

“A Fender Strat.”

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# IN MEMORIAM...

*Amanda Loesch*

The night was ever cold on my fingertips  
as they shuttered against the glass  
I held it to my chest,  
grasping at it for warmth  
sipping slowly  
reeling for the tingly feeling inside  
as it slipped down my throat  
traveling slowly  
ever slowly  
and then dissipating.

The same warmth I yearned for  
as I climbed into bed  
wrapping myself in the blanket  
wiggling my toes  
like I did when I was a little girl

securing the blanket to make sure  
any monsters that were lingering had no chance  
to reach out and grab me.

Those seemed like silly thoughts to me now  
as I breathed in the slow breaths of slumber.  
My chest rose and fell,  
and I began to drift.

The air lingered over me.  
Watching and waiting.  
Until the right time to strike,  
pushing down on my chest.  
The blankets were my enemy now.  
I struggled against them,

as a tear slipped down my face.  
It whispered in my ear  
*Sshh*

I drifted off again,  
but not to sleep.  
Body separating from mind.  
It was foreign to me now.  
My body writhed in pain,  
but I could not feel it

My mind had slipped away,  
down the stairs and out the door.  
Leaving my body vulnerable to the attack.

Away from the home and into the woods.  
As the evergreens folded in their branches  
to scoop me up  
and lead me away.

# BEING A MOON Sestina

*Stella Stocker*

I needed to make a mark, so I let my star-print pj pants puddle to the floor and slithered under the sky-dark covers, my face a pockmarked moon hanging off the mattress. He had left a trail of tangerine peels like crumpled marigold petals, leading right into the bedroom. Yesterday in Macys, echoes of me in the mirrors were slipping into a too small citrus colored shirt. A low whisper,

shame, haunted me for the alfredo I ate earlier. In his ear I whisper about knowing yourself, how looking into a sky-saturated puddle is the clearest way to see yourself. But I know the truth: mirrors can only see themselves when looking into each other. So I face his cavernous kisses and eyes like bottomless pools and fall right in. When my mom said I was worth more, she imagined a trail

built from stars, a path twinkling ever upwards. As a moon, I trail over the ocean, wondering what I could hope for besides the whisper of waves at my feet. To be loved means much less than being right. Therapists tell me that I have low self-esteem. I say that a puddle is deeper than the love I have for my crooked smile and round face. Wishing on stars, I hope for contentment beyond that which mirrors

memories of meringue clouds in a blue-buttercream sky. Mirrors double all that they swallow: the white pills are a breadcrumb trail leading to him. Puppeted by pills, I stumble past the sandpaper face of my apartment, wading towards the park where we met. I whisper into the waiting ear of a slide that a moon can't reflect in a puddle. I'm nobody alone. Today he said I need him and I know he was right.

Marigolds wither where he held my wrist too tight. I'm okay, right?

I listen to his voice, warm as microwaved honey, and turn to mirrors for truth. On drowsy nights, I imagine my dad. Under the ink puddle sky, I count constellations like he and I used to do, tracing the trail of lights decorating the snow-globe sky. Only later did he whisper that Andromeda wasn't eaten by a monster—she drowned alone, face

to the stars. I watch talk show hosts with Colgate smiles when I can't face anything else. The pixelated stars shining from the TV know the right way to smile, to talk, to make friends. There's no apparent whisper of sadness and stagnation in their eyes, always cast down. Mirrors are honest. When the foggy bathroom mirror shows the indelible trail of bruises around my throat, an amber necklace, the truth is the puddle

I drown the whispers of my head in. I string up sheets outside, my face a moon framed in a glass-clear puddle. Home is far from here, right past the ocean—no mirrors there. And I'm alone following a starlit trail.

# EL CAMINO'S DOUBLE HOMICIDE

*Mallory Lo*

Parked on Cherry Avenue, the lamppost begins to strobe  
the tall oak shadow we're hidden in, time for him to drive her  
home.

We take the long way, her fingers twined in my crescent hand,  
his stroking my cindered buttons.

Their innocent touch feels like four decades ago  
when I was cherished by a young man hugged in a signature  
leather jacket,

matte obsidian like my body. How he called me his black beauty in  
friendly introductions, a memorable kiss goodnight in the garage,

a drunken farewell rocketing from burnt asphalt  
before a silent tree silenced us.

Now when I hold the blazing hearts of the boy and girl  
jealousy smokes up boiling oil inside my used parts

deficient in sunlight, my outsides washed out by countless mystical  
fog to aqua nights, he even calls me a moon-waxed El Camino.

They dream of drowning in memories of gray leatherette,  
if it means sealing love in blissful paradise, or was that dream  
mine?

Because if the sky's glowing eye shines on abandoned seats  
where lovers meet nevermore, I'll throw up nuts and bolts.



So I plan on the next full moon for a hysterical tumble  
across the crushing heavy road, wind piercing every inch of us.

The town will call it an accident,  
their eyes rippling the flaming murderer.

## SMEARED PERCEPTION

*McKenna Ussery*

Out-of-touch, unearthly,  
grasping at straws of reality,  
observed behind distant eyes.  
An existence supposedly his own,  
but the mind cannot construct images  
blurred by shattered spectacles.

This smeared perception,  
unreachable, unattainable,  
behind pixels on a screen.  
Glass reflects a stranger  
who mimics his every motion.  
The nagging familiarity  
fades into harsh disconnect.

To escape perturbation, he lies  
on plastic surfaces that fail  
to accommodate numb appendages.  
These hands are not his, he suspects,  
wondering why or who now dictates.  
An empty gaze, his focus swayed  
to wondering what was real or fake.

# AUTUMN

*Madeline Cisneros*

I'll change like the leaves change in Autumn  
Going from green to red to brown  
I'll change the way I wake up in the morning  
Change the way I drive back home  
So that someday I may not think of you  
Anymore

I'll change like the air changes in Autumn  
Going from bright warm rays to chills  
I'll make sure to dress in layers  
I'll do my best to prepare  
Knowing that nothing can prevent the cold from  
Creeping in

Autumn comes and goes  
And before you know  
Everything you thought you knew disappears  
And autumn isn't fair  
It's cruel and doesn't care  
So I try not to dwell on past Summers  
Because it only makes it harder  
When the seasons change

I'll change like the days change in Autumn  
I'll let the darkness creep in at only 4pm  
'Cause how can I go about my day  
When I know that you're not okay  
So I'll change like the days change in Autumn

To Listen to the Audio Visit: [peripheryjournal.com](http://peripheryjournal.com)

# DORM ROOM RAINSTORM

*Brynn Kelly*

Curled up in twin sheets, crisp and unfamiliar.

Cement walls echo a distant hum.

Lamp light peeks through window slats.

Water droplets create a symphony of patter.

Students drift into sleep, listening to its lullabies.

The rumbling thunder like the heartbeat of a mother, shaking the floors and rocking lofted cradles.

Nature knows the toll taken on children missing their mother's warm embrace.

Maybe the rainstorm will rekindle mother's bedtime stories and we all can get a good night's rest.





# ART

"I ASK THIS ONE THING:  
LET ME GO MAD IN MY OWN WAY." - SOPHOCLES, ELECTRA





# **NOSTALGIA**

*Linksol Fleming*



# SURGERY

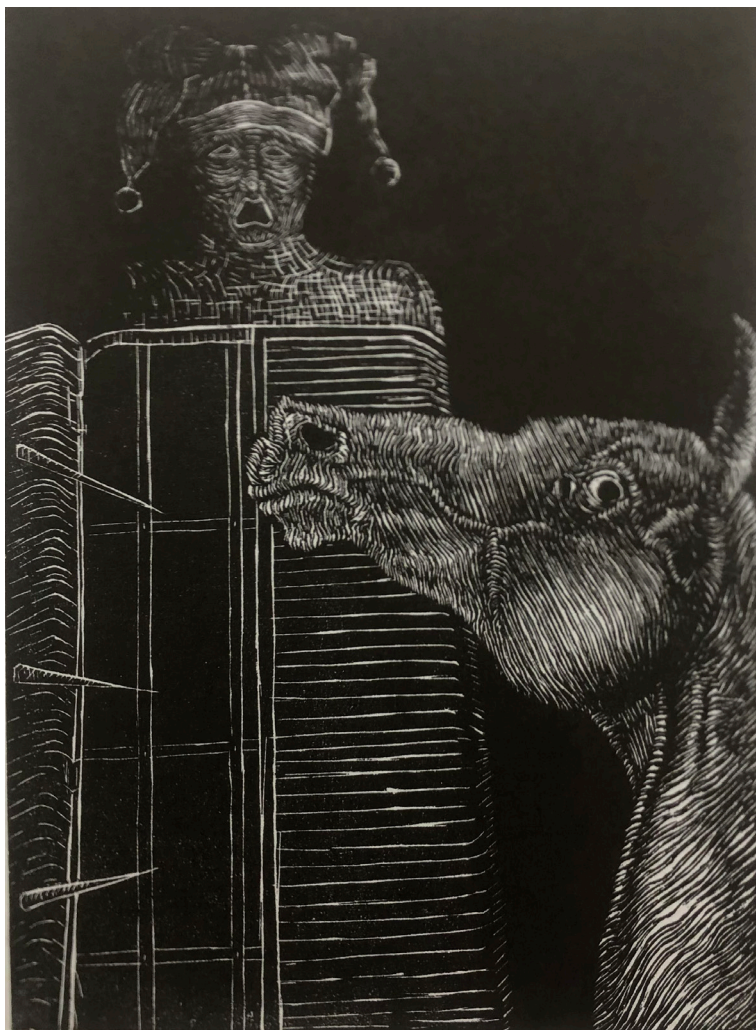
*Linksol Fleming*



# COUNT YOUR SHEEP

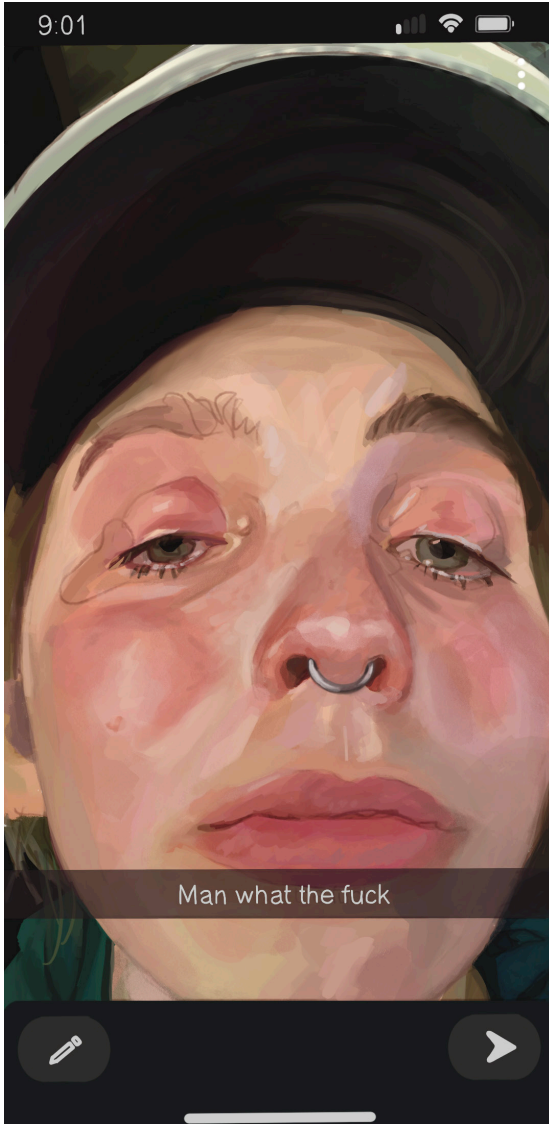
*Kathleen Menjivar*





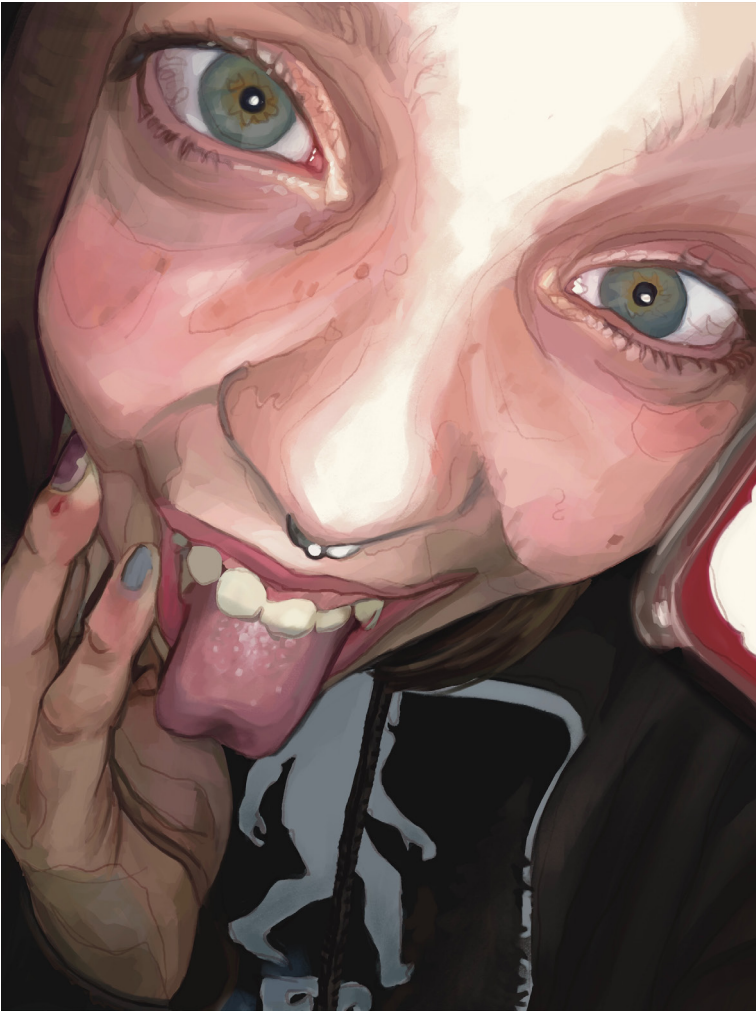
# RESTLESS MAIDEN

*Grace Flammang*



# **ROUGH DAY?**

*Lucy Fleming*



MAYBE THE REAL BIGFOOT  
WAS THE FRIENDS WE MADE  
ALONG THE WAY

*Lucy Fleming*



# **SANTIAGO**

*Donald Patten*



**PAIGE**

*Donald Patten*



**HOW I REMEMBER PUTTING  
FLOWERS IN YOUR HAIR**

*Lucy Fleming*



# REMODELING

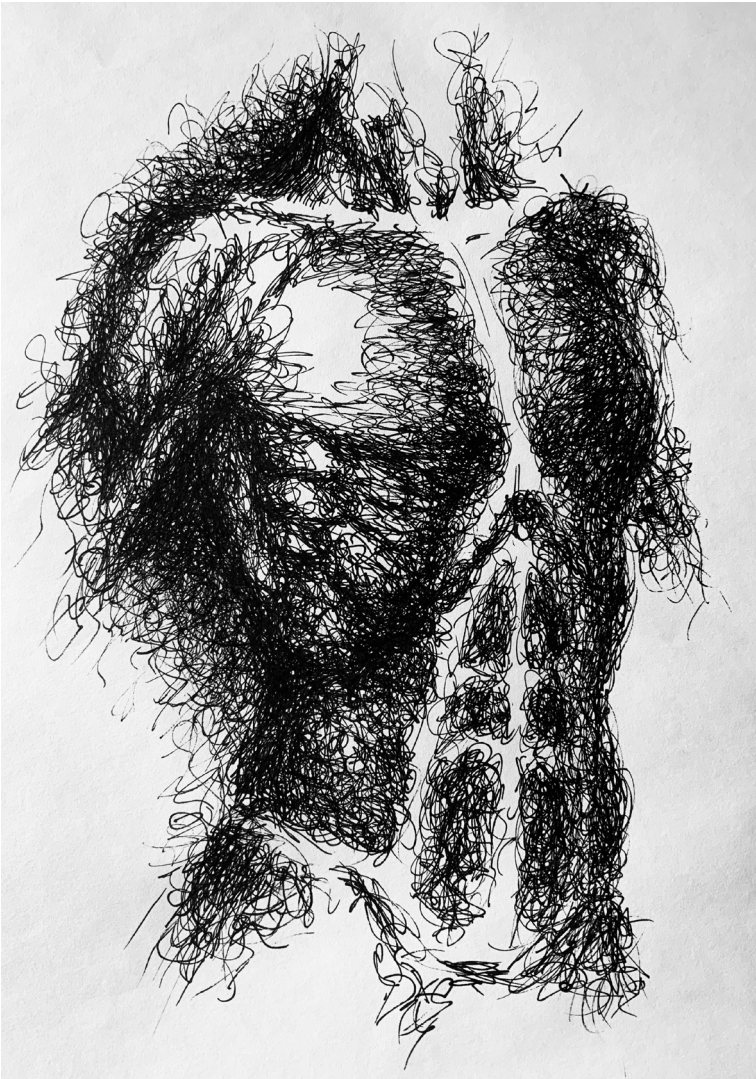
*Lily McIntosh*



# THE HARPY

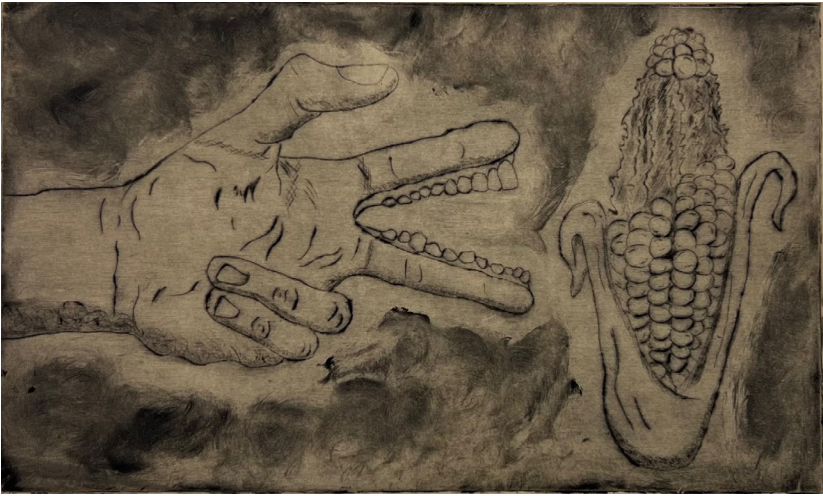
*Linksol Fleming*





**ANTERIOR TORSO  
MUSCULATURE**

*Donald Patten*



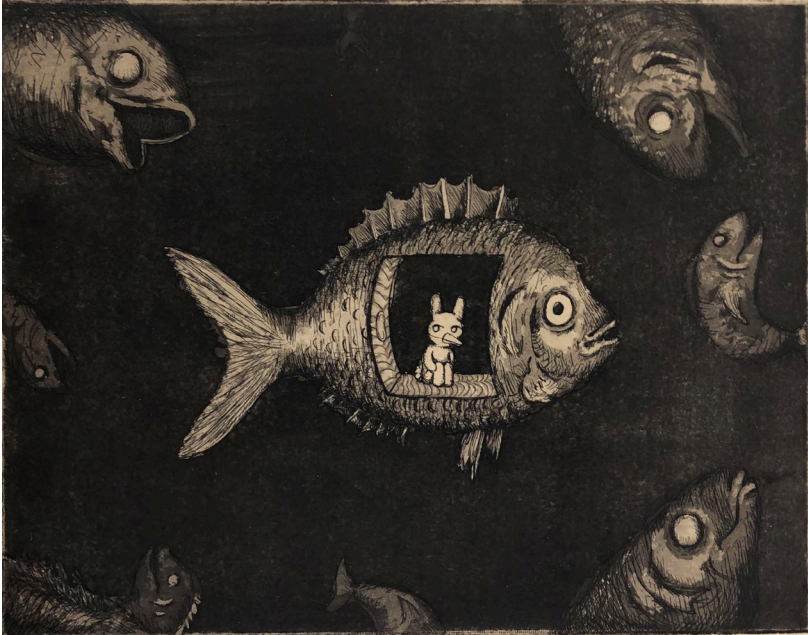
# MUNKHTIME

*Jack Burns*



# BEEF

*Jack Burns*



# FISH

*Grace Flammang*



# STILL, I AM SILENT

*Sydney D'Andrea*



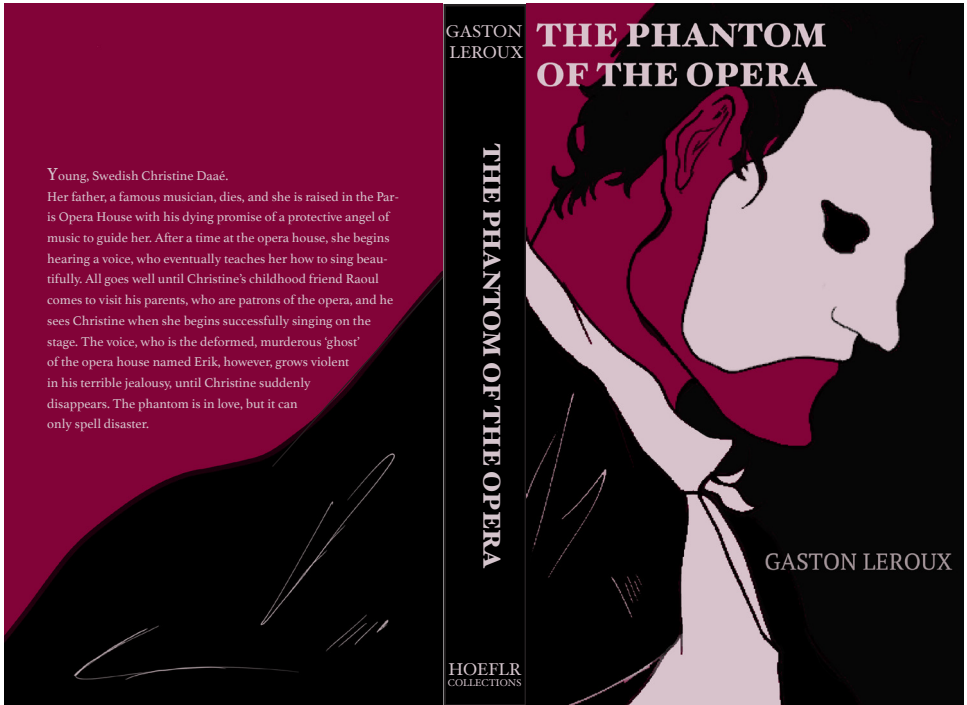
# **← EAT AWAY AT ME ←**

*Lily McIntosh*



# HOW TEMPTING

*Kathleen Menjivar*



# PHANTOM OF THE OPERA COVER SPREAD

*Kathleen Menjivar*





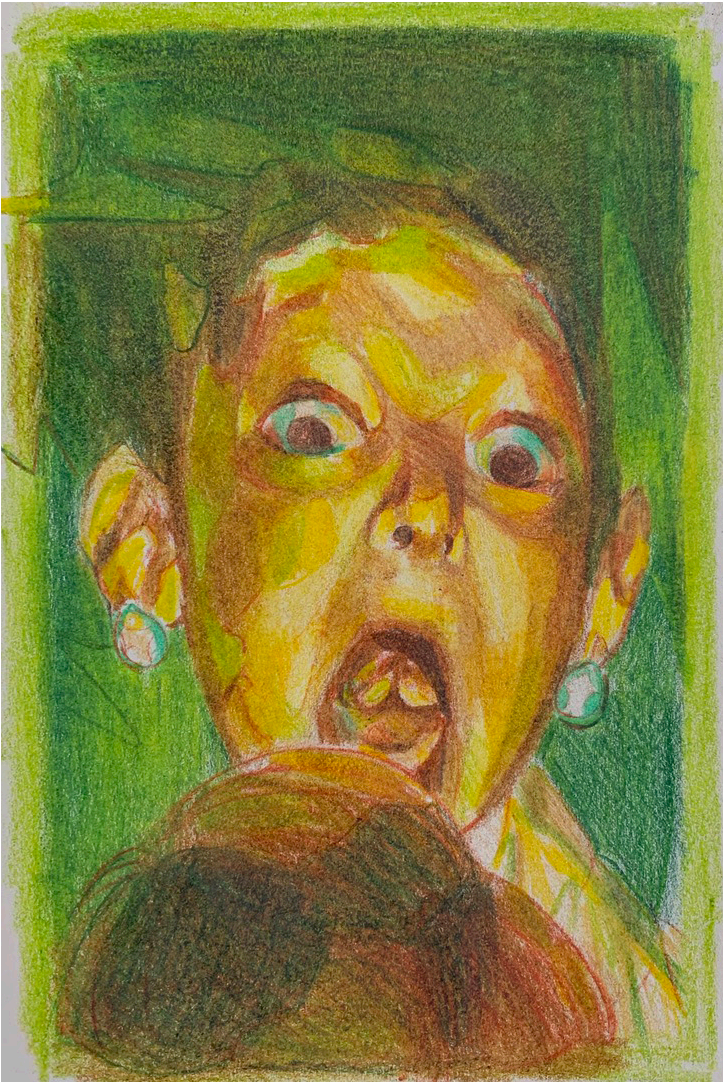
# MODIFY

*Lily McIntosh*



# MEAT MY FAMILY

*Linksol Fleming*



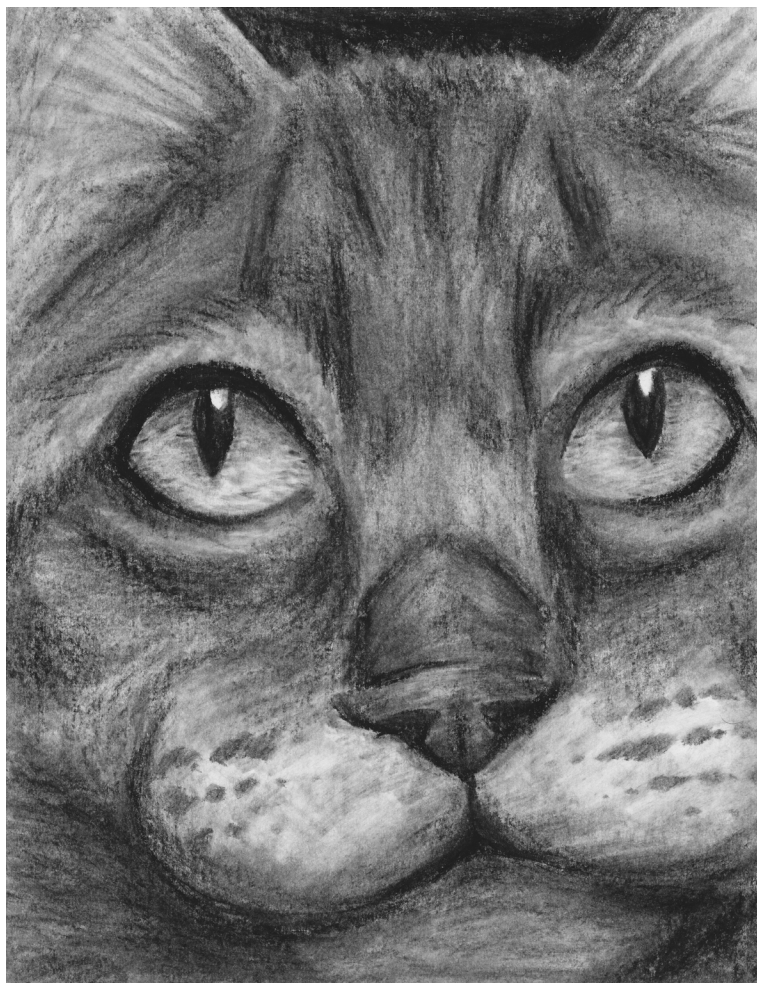
# THE ROLLERCOASTER

*Linksol Fleming*



# SHAME OF LIVING

*Grace Flammang*



# POTRAIT OF A CAT

*Jasmine Kasper*



# FRAGILITY

*Jasmine Kasper*



# DRIFTING

*Sydney D'Andrea*



# **SHEPARD**

*Kathleen Menjivar*





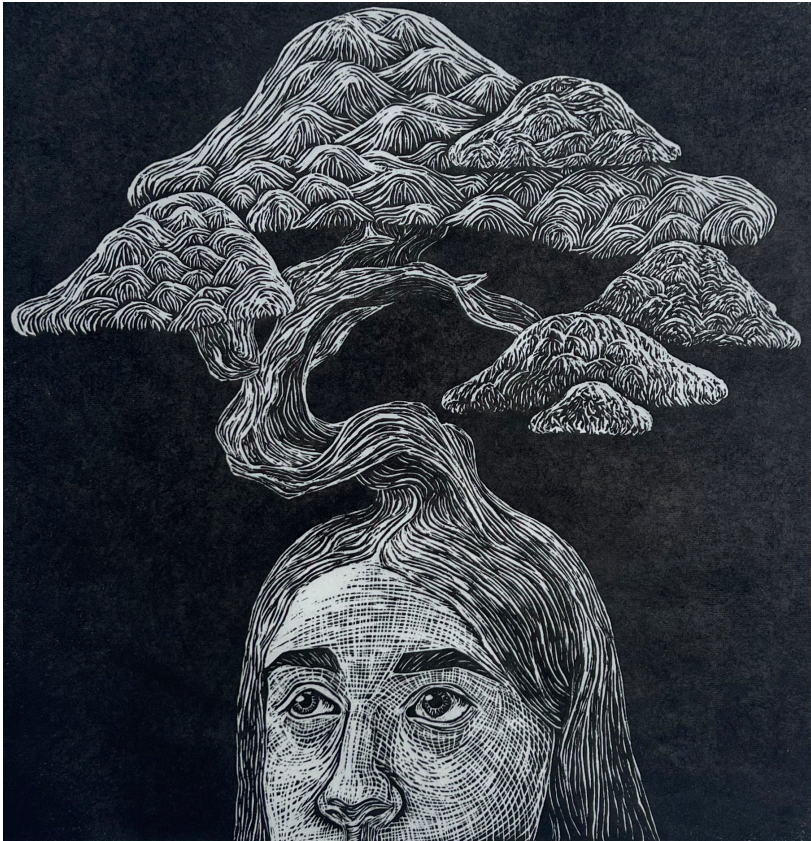
# PERROS CALLEJEROS

*Kathleen Menjivar*



# I'LL JUST KEEP GOING

*Anna Miller*



# UNPRUNED

*Sydney D'Andrea*



# **ALL YOU**

*Carolyn EJ Watson*



# KNIGHT RIDER

*Lily McIntosh*



# TEAR ME APART

*Lily McIntosh*

