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2025-04

# Whorl: 2025

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Whorl: 2025

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Creative Arts Society  
Boston University  
Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine



# whorl

2025

Boston University

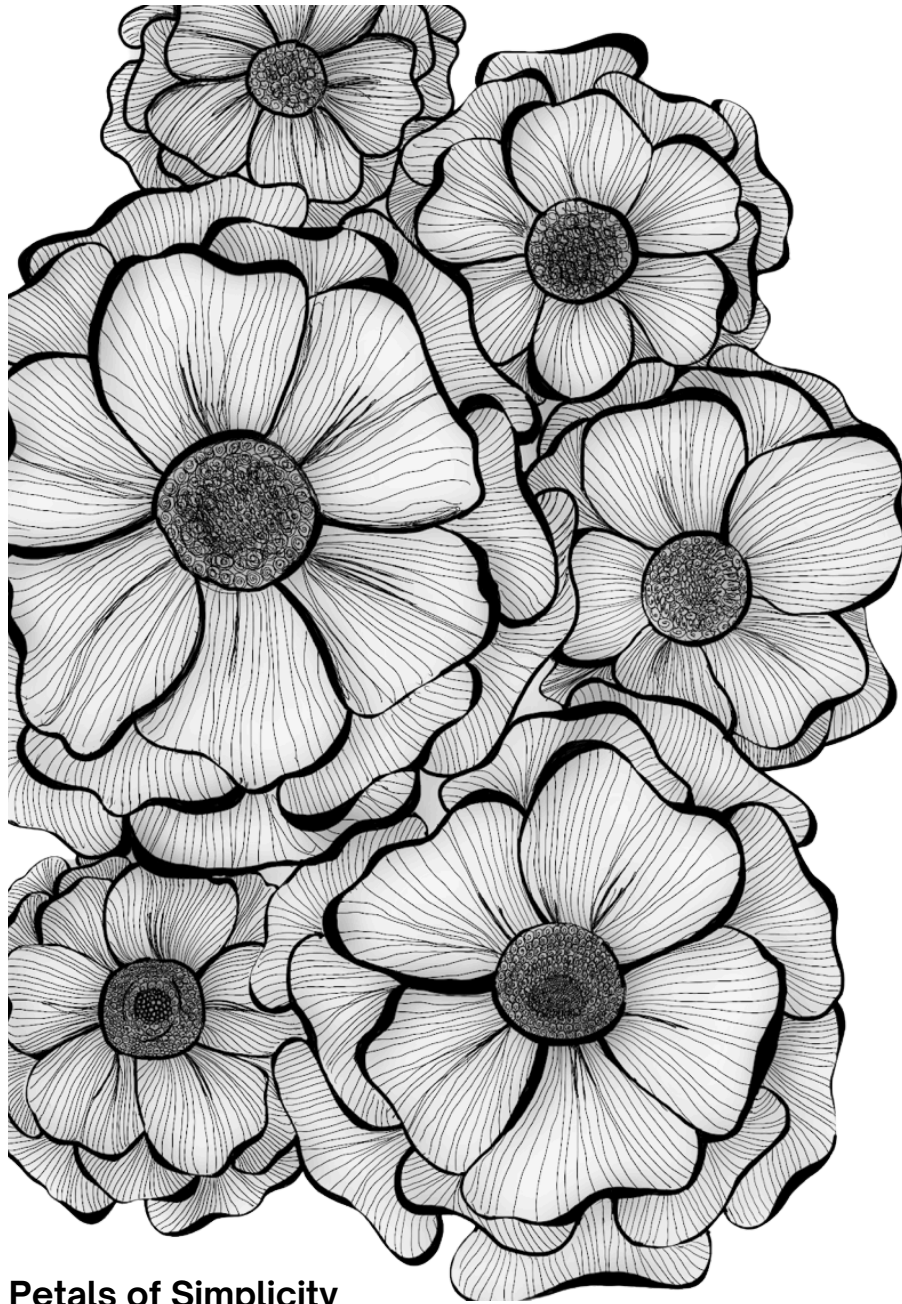
Vol. 27



# from the editors

*Whorl* reveals concentric circles, ever-growing, infinite, displaying our wholeness and oneness.

In the spirit of expansion, the 27th edition adds to the oeuvre of works created within our community: an evolving collection from the School of Medicine, Public Health, Dental Medicine, and Boston Medical Center. Here, we capture and celebrate the artists among us—medical, public health, and dental students, residents, fellows, attendings, and scientists—who prove that vocation does not define creativity, nor does it limit the artist within.



**Petals of Simplicity**  
Anushka Aghi

While there is no selected theme, a thematic ode naturally emerges—an ode to what we have seen, heard, felt, and what we have made of it. We move forward, spiraling across eighteen mediums; song and dance, fiber and metal, paints and collages, inks and digital strokes, and even *fruit*.

This issue is timely, not only because of the world's ever-shifting state but because art is, and has always been, a response to change. The included works add marks to the fabric of time, reminding us of smoldering intensity and effervescent joy. Idyllic stillness and halcyon nostalgia. Unflinching realities, raw, and unresolved.

To all who shared their work, we extend our heartfelt gratitude. The review and selection process was conducted anonymously to fulfill our commitment to impartiality and fairness. While not all works could fit within these pages, every submission remains a part of our ever-growing circle and is available in the online edition.

As the world twists and turns, we continue to capture our thoughts and moments, immortalizing them in fabric, paint, prose, song, and dance. Each work, adroit in its execution, contributes to this living, breathing collection. Through these captured breaths, creation flourishes, encapsulating the ephemeral and making it eternal.

## From one spiral to the next,

### WHORL TEAM 2025

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF	EDITORS
DANIEL TOUREVSKI	DAMAN DHUNNA
EMILIYA AKHUNDOVA	EMMA KRAUS
JOSHUA CHOI	GRACE JOHNSON
MARCIA-RUTH NDEGE	TIFFANY LENG

# founders' foreword

## 2025

These are demanding times.

We demand much of ourselves, whether it is speaking out against injustice or simply paying our bills and taxes to keep a roof over our heads. There may be cracks in that roof, cracks in the system, breakdowns in our bodies, our lived ones' lives and livelihood, our defenses against fear and alienation. So we write, photograph, paint, sculpt, doodle and design because we must. We create to make sense of life and ourselves, letters organizing the disorganized even if just a little.

In *Whorl*, the words and visual art that now include fabric and fashion are in themselves a living tapestry, each work contributing an unexpected panel in an ever-expanding quilt, the whorl that is the sum of its beautiful parts connected. At 30 years of age, *Whorl* continues to provide a forum for the unspoken and the unseen. We could not imagine or live in the world any other way. Thank you to the editors and artists who have made *Whorl* 2025 everything it is, for joining us in our worlds and letting us continue to be part of yours.

Tri D Do, MD, MPH  
Margaret S Lee, MD, PhD (MS Lee)

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## Tree of Veins

It is a lifeline for a baby in the mother's womb,  
A trunk divided into many branches and twigs.  
Their shapes resemble tubes, long and cylindrical,  
A one-way highway, stretching from head to toe.  
Filled with air, water, and tiny living cells,  
Vital threads of life pulsing through the body's core.  
Some cells blush in red, others glow translucent,  
A tapestry woven with thick and thin walls.  
Some carry the essence toward the heart,  
Others, the whispers of life as they flow away.  
They meet and mingle, refueling on spongy bridges,

The rhythmic heartbeat echoes in the traveling air.  
But harm lurks in shadows—aneurysms and strain,  
Hypertension's grip, the silent thief of breath.  
Cancer cells, like weeds, prey on their relentless growth,  
Twisting the roots of life with merciless intent.  
Yet still they strive, these vessels of life,  
Through trials and storms, they persist and endure.  
For every bruise and tear, a chance to rebuild,  
The tree of veins, steadfast, a lifeline of resilience.

---

## Nader Rahimi

Tree of veins is attributed to the artist and anatomist Leonardo da Vinci, who in the 1490s poetically described the circulatory system as "a tree of veins." Mediaeval era physician Aelius Galenus known as Galen, described the aorta as "a trunk divided into many branches and twigs" that nourished the body.

## Turning, Leaves

Outside,  
The leaves are turning.

The change was gradual  
Nearly imperceptible—  
At first.

On second look,  
It became clear—  
Green was growing old  
Fading  
Growing gray.

The sun stayed brilliant  
Shone just as bright  
The trunks stood just as thick and straight  
Their branches extending stiff fingers  
Pointing out to you  
And me.

But—  
After a few days  
A few rubs  
Of our collective eyes  
There was consensus  
The trouble was not inside  
With our senses.

Outside,  
The leaves are turning—  
Black.

With science  
It made such sense—  
But the trees were trying  
To flag us  
Pronounce a message  
As their trunks doubled over  
Onto themselves  
Heavy with all the light they could eat  
Semblances of loose-jawed mouths  
Whose bark proved weaker  
Than their bite.

And as their bright black frills shined,  
Their wooden fingers—  
Now sallow and bloated with time and light  
Turned, too  
Slowly and surely  
To point at themselves  
Scream in silence  
Wave while still  
Show us that which we  
Rubbed our eyes free.

To be right  
And to be effective  
Are not the same—  
As you can see,  
Turned.

Rodolfo Villarreal-Calderon

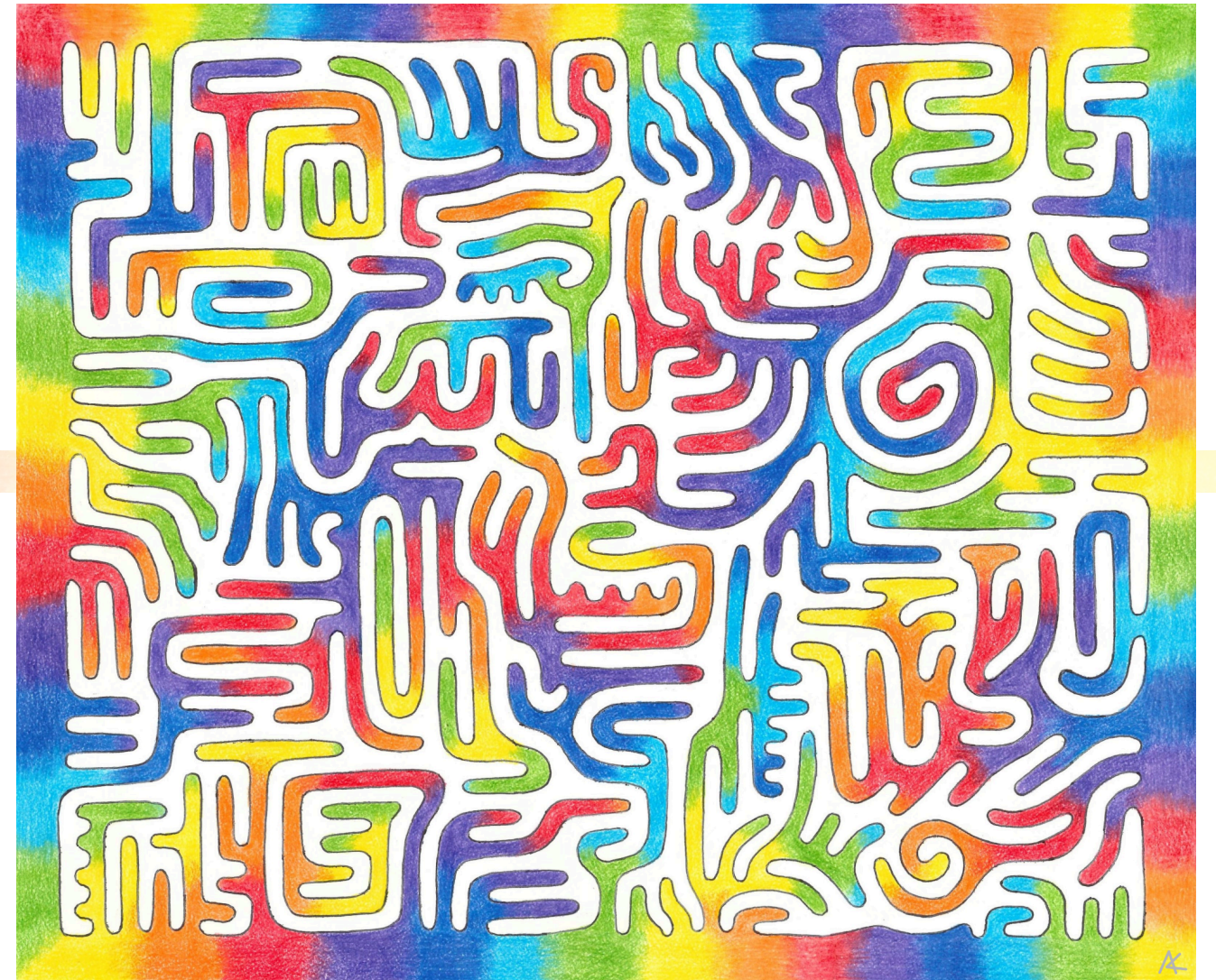


One Day  
Daman Dhunna

## ■ Feeling Amorphous

Colored pencil, ballpoint pen

10



Aren Kalash

# Mercury



## Isabel Dominguez

This is the top part of a "Falla", large monuments made of wood, cardboard, and paper, in the town of Valencia, Spain during "Las Fallas", a festival in the UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

### *In the Variance of Gait*

In the city, in-bound and out-bound they move—  
crossing streets, turning corners,  
dancing between cracks on the sidewalk.

In a city, I find no place to sit and cry.  
I wander between blocks,  
searching for an empty corner.  
I sit next to the homeless and mourn our lost land.  
beside professors on benches,  
gazing at the absurdity around.

I navigate like a bird,  
circling lamp posts too tall  
to see not as trees.  
Their feet stumble on cobblestone,  
where mine fly— but I pretend to fall anyway.  
We make eye contact and laugh,  
our bellies rising, touching the sky.

He is the lanky extension—long, consistent, loose.  
A suit hesitating, tie unraveling.  
eyes fixed on the screen,  
but knees locking under that silky cloth.

She is a staggered step, asymmetric.  
A puffy coat holds back her torso,  
a foot dragging just enough  
to etch runes in the sole's rubber.

A cane, and friend, gripped by chalky knuckles.  
Some thighs burn and cede, like bellows.  
pausing every twenty steps;  
the city moves on without waiting.

Once, we were children,  
taking double steps, trotting quickly,  
their wrist pulled by a guardian  
searching for the street's name.  
Balancing on one leg,  
they squint skyward with doubt,  
while the child, lost to the symbols,  
lands wide-footed, ready for the next pull.

In those mechanics—  
swings, limps, stumbles,  
shakes, skips, jumps—  
we are intimate with change.

In  
Motion



Emiliya  
Akhundova



Daniel Tourevski

## BENDING

In this flesh cocoon,  
laboring to become myself,  
spinning, bending time

---

M. S. Lee, MD

## Maybe Blue

What would you like to be  
when you grow up? the angel said.  
“I don’t understand,” I replied.  
“I’m 79 and half retired.”  
Well, isn’t purple your favorite color?  
Wouldn’t you like to be purple?  
Of course there aren’t many purple stars up there.  
You might have to settle for blue.

---

Keith Tornheim

# Brown Enough

Don't get me wrong— You're **allowed** to be Brown. In fact, we *love* the fact that **you're Brown**.

Be **Brown** for the pictures,  
For the **diversity campaign**,  
For the brochure that says,  
“*We care*”

But **don't** be **too Brown**.  
Don't bring **your voice**,  
Your rage, Your grief.

Don't shatter their  
carefully built belief.

Your **lived experience** cuts  
too deep—  
—it's a story they'd rather  
you keep.

We can talk about **disparities**,  
But only in **theory**—  
Not in the **real pain** we carry.

We'll study war, trauma, and  
displacement too—  
—Just *not* the kind **tied to you**.

Yours is just **too... complicated**,  
Too raw, too real,  
Too closely related.

Remember, we want you to be  
the kind of **Brown**  
that **doesn't**  
**disrupt their peace**.

After all, as a Brown person  
In this esteemed position,  
You **no longer represent**  
**just yourself**.  
You **must represent us all**.

And the mere **thought**  
**of your Brown**  
-possibly **staining** the *rest of us*  
-is enough to make them worry,  
—Enough to *cause a fuss*.

Listen, I'm not saying  
**don't be Brown**.

I'm just saying—  
Try not to be **too Brown**.

But my Brown doesn't **vanish**  
Beneath the weight of their unease.

It stretches wide,  
It stands **tall**—

--**Filling spaces**  
they didn't **anticipate at all**.

I thought **shrinking** was making space,  
But all it did was **erase** in this case.

Then something **changed**—  
—I stopped asking to belong,

No longer feeling **estranged**,  
I started standing strong.

A wise friend once advised:  
“**Stop letting doubt bring you down**.

Don't give them **the chance** to say,  
“*Why try? You'll fail anyway.*”

**Claim your space and go your way**.  
**Believe you can, and rise today.**”

And I felt the **change**—  
When I let my Brown fill the space  
It was **always meant to take**.

When a Brown student whispered,  
“**Thank you for representing us.**”

When another student said,  
“**Thank you for being here**  
**& doing what you do.**”

And especially when a peer told me,  
“**Because of you, I believe I can, too.**”

And right before me,  
The change was clear.  
More of us gathered at the table here,

Distinct, yet aligned—  
With **stories intertwined**.

You see, we **don't** have to **look the same**  
To know the **ache** of being ‘*other*.’

That's when I knew—  
We weren't meant to fade or bend,  
But to **stand**, to **rise**, and to **transcend**

Wearing our symbols,  
Our truths, Our pride—

No longer hidden,  
No longer denied.

**Together, we rise**,  
Lifting each other high

I've learned to soar by  
**Simply showing up**—

Proud, whole, and more  
—*Never giving up*

The best way to rise  
Is to simply *be*.

Show up, stand proud,  
*Unapologetically.*

My Brown  
is not too much.

It is power.  
It is tough.

In fact,  
It is exactly enough.

Because my **Brown**  
is **not too much**.

It's **bold**. It's vast --it fills  
the spaces they never  
asked.

## Please Just Wait

You used to guide my hands,  
Yellow Ticonderoga pencil spelling my name,  
Two names - one in each language,  
Completely different and yet the same,  
Like you said, I am the bridge.

You used to bring me fishing,  
Just an old yellow rod and a smattering of sunlight,  
And suddenly it's a waiting game - will they take the bait?  
Except I hated this game, but,  
Like you said, “just cast and wait.”

Yet, I was impatient, sprinting forward,  
Falling head-over-heels for a taste of tomorrow.  
Never mind the growing pains, past warning signs,  
Signing my name, just the one,  
To create my own signature, a new forever,  
To force a cast, forget the past, or for that dazzling forecast.

But the runner's high wears off,  
And the Ticonderoga is dull,  
The fishing rod shelved away, far enough.  
You're listening to the voices in your head,  
To avoid the white coats, swallow the pain.

I thought it was a marathon,  
but now it's a sprint towards the finish line,  
whether you'll flatline before I can give you a lifeline.  
It's ironic, the “bridge” that I've become,  
Just your future white coat - only if you wait that long.  
Suddenly I'm the one telling you, “please just wait.”

Kylie Tang

Asel Mustafa

## Kennebec River

By Guhan Venkatesan

“Not all those who wander are lost”-- Tolkein

The Kennebec River is not a particularly notable body of water. It rises in the foothills of the Appalachians, a blue-green ribbon that cuts through the rugged Maine wilderness as it traces its path to the sea. In the past, its banks were lined with Abenaki settlements, French missions, and Yankee villages. Benedict Arnold once marched a Patriot army up the river in an ill-fated attempt to march on Quebec during the Revolution, although the campaign ended in failure with half the men dead and the seeds of the general's disillusionment in the American cause planted. During the 19th century, shipbuilders, ice harvesters, and loggers all used the river to support their industries, and towns began to spring up along the river's southern course. The town of Augusta was even chosen as the state capital. The upper reaches remained relatively untouched, however – a pristine piece of the great Maine wilderness that, despite man's industry, still remains wild to this day.

The wilderness was what had brought Joel Campbell to the banks of the Kennebec. He'd driven six hours from Providence, and he kept on driving until he saw the gravel road leading off State Route 201. He followed it, away from the highway and into the forest. It was approaching dusk, and Joel needed to find a place to camp before dark. He drove past the signs for the Forks Inn, down the unmarked road. He didn't know where it went, but he followed it until, just as he was wondering how the hell he'd get himself out of here, the forest opened up and he found himself in a clearing, right next to the riverbank.

Stiff-legged, he eased himself out of the car and sized up his campsite. The clearing was small, not much bigger than a baseball diamond and littered with pinecones and leaves. Behind him, the evergreens formed a wall of wood and needles, obscuring everything except the narrow path he'd driven on. On his left, a stand of beeches jutted out of the ground, their shadows reaching out over the water. On the right, there was nothing but the Kennebec, dotted with waves that danced across the surface and lapped at the rocky shore. It wasn't much, but it would have to do. He opened the trunk and began setting up his home for the weekend.

Joel made his camp near the water's edge, using two of the trees to put up a rain fly over the battered canvas of his pup tent. Next came a firepit made from the stones along the river's edge, weathered and polished for years until they were smooth. He gathered twigs and sticks from the forest floor, assembling them into the teepee pattern he'd learned in the Boy Scouts all those years ago. Soon, he'd gathered enough material to set it alight, and before long, the fire was crackling merrily, spitting sparks and pale smoke into the sky. He unwrapped the loaf of bread he'd brought with him in his provisions pack, and sawed off two big slices. On these, he layered a piece of hard cheese and two slices of cold ham. He placed a large flat stone he'd found on the river's edge over the fire and toasted the sandwich over it. When it was done, he finished it with a handful of Jamaican escovitch pickle and ate it slowly, his eyes fixated on the dancing flames the whole time. When he was done Joel washed his hands in the river and retreated inside the tent for the night.

It was still dark when Joel woke up. He looked at his watch. It was 2:43 AM. Outside, he could hear the wind whistling through the conifers. Still half-asleep, Joel poked his head out of the entry flap he kept slightly unzipped. The clearing was empty, a blank pitch-black. Behind the tent, he could hear the river, the dull slap of waves breaking against the stones on the riverbank. In front of him, he could just barely make out the shadowy figures of the pines and birches, quietly keeping watch over the landscape. Above him, he could see the waning crescent of the moon. The sky was clear, and he could still find the constellations his grandmother taught him as a boy in Jamaica, littered around the autumn sky like broken bits of glass scattered across a highway.

It'd been months since he last remembered seeing a clear sky like this one. Joel had been working overtime for months –no, years, he had to remind himself-- ever since the first pandemic cases had reached Providence. Since then, he had been working jobs across the Northeast. He'd spent time in Boston, New Haven -- even New York, during the first two months when it was really bad and no one knew what the hell was happening. But most of his time had been in Providence.

It was a charming, vibrant city before the pandemic, and the people only made it more interesting. College students who called messed up from booze, pot or worse –Joel had noticed a couple of the Brown kids had a nasty coke habit going. Intellectuals and esoterics, drawn to the erudite nature of the city, and always willing to discuss their area of expertise, even when acutely nauseous or doubled over in pain in the back of a rig. Deathly ill folks going to Roger Williams Medical Center or Rhode Island Hospital to access treatment only available at three or four places across the country. And, of course, the regular number of traumatized motorists, gunshot victims, intoxicated people, and bullshitters you'd see working in any American city. The hours were long, the pay was mediocre, and the scenes could be pretty grim, but it was the people Joel met that made EMS worth all of that. He got to see every side of humanity he could think of, and thanks to them, he never thought he'd leave. He thought to himself, “the pandemic changed all that.” The pandemic had trapped him in the ambulance, the people replaced by the masks and the churn of faces on the rig. He'd kept going until his body gave out, only to come back to a different EMS system than the one he'd left, colder, detached, one where all the faces were replaced by the same masks.

As if summoned by a charm, the pains in his knees and back began to emerge, the dull ache of joints that had been pulling stretchers and boosting patients for almost twenty years. The bright stars in the sky faded into a fog, and in the fog, the faces emerged, gasping and thrashing about as they suffocated all over again in front of his eyes. The odor of bleach wipes and hand sanitizer invaded his nostrils. He could hear the sirens, but instead of fading in and out like they were supposed to, the wailing getting louder and louder. Joel could hear his heart pounding, his breath squeezing away, his palms becoming slippery with sweat as his fingers curled in and his nails dug into his palms. He mustered enough energy to pull himself back into the tent and zip the tent flap shut. He needed to get some sleep, but he knew he wouldn't be getting much.

The light streaming into the tent was what woke Joel up for the second time. Rubbing his eyes, he peered through the mesh window of his pup tent. The sun was already up. He crawled out of his tent, his joints still stiff and sore from the long week at work and (he presumed) the night he'd spent on the barren ground of the clearing. As he emerged from his tent, he felt his knee click, then snap as the ligaments shifted and rolled. He still wasn't used to that feeling, even after a decade of having bad knees – there was just something inherently uncomfortable about your knee moving and sounding like that. If he'd known that his shoddy lifting form would lead to this, he would've been more careful when he was starting out in EMS, pushing patients on stretchers during dialysis runs and hauling drunks off the ground. He cleaned up his form as he got older and the aches and pains began to pile up but over twenty years of EMS service took its toll on everyone. Already, Dr. Singh had told Joel he'd likely need knee replacement surgery in the next ten years with the way things were going. At least he could still move somewhat well now, even if his knee felt like a water balloon about to pop. Gingerly, he stretched it out on the ground until he felt the pressure that had built up dissipate, before rising to his feet.

The firepit he'd built was cold ashes now. He built the teepee lay like he had last night and lit it up. Once it had burned down enough to form a pile of hot coals, he smoothed the embers over until it was a flat bed. He rummaged through his knapsack in his tent until he found the battered coffee pot and loaded it up with a fresh batch of grounds he'd picked up from Bolt's before leaving Providence. He filled the pot with some water he'd drawn from the emergency jug he kept in his car and set it in the firepit, pushing it down until the blackened bottom of the pot was surrounded by the dull red coals.

As the coffee came up to the boil, Joel rummaged through his knapsack again, emerging with a battered aluminum frying pan which he laid over the coals next to the coffeepot. He sliced off another piece of ham and fried it along with one of the small onions he carried in his provision pack. Once the contents of the pan were hot and fragrant with the intermingled smells of meat and onions, he emptied it on a slice of bread and ate the whole affair. By the time he had finished, the coffeepot was emitting a healthy head of fragrant steam, and he poured a bit into his Providence EMS coffee mug. Hesitantly, Joel sipped the brew, but he found himself quickly satisfied with the dark, chocolate-tinged brew and emptied the remainder of the pot's contents into the mug. His morning ritual complete, he poured the fire bucket of cold river water he'd filled last night over the coals, producing an anguished hiss and a cloud of steam and ash that quickly dissipated in the breeze coming off the river's surface. He ran his hand an inch above the wet soot, make sure the firepit was cold out, before heading back to the tent.

Once inside, he double-checked his hiking pack. He'd broken down his fishing rod before leaving Providence, and he took a moment to carefully inspect the rod and reel pieces, making sure neither of them were damaged from the long ride up. He checked for his knife, compass and flashlight in the front pocket, and replaced the batteries in the flashlight when it wouldn't turn on. He made sure he had his extra set of fingerless gloves and woolen socks in the main pouch, along with the battered steel first aid kit he'd carried with him when he first came to America. Finally, he put a couple of granola bars from the provision pack into the side zipper before slinging the backpack onto his shoulder.

Joel started trekking north along the riverbank. He followed it for about half a mile until the firm grass gave way to marshy ground, then changed tack to head away from the Kennebec. The state route he'd driven in on had long parted ways with the river, and there were no trails this far into the backwoods. It was true wilderness, similar to what he'd seen whenever he visited his grandparents in the Blue Mountains. There, his grandfather had taught him how to fish using a line as the Maroons of Jamaica's rugged interior had done for centuries, tying a hook to a piece of line and baiting it with some cheese or a piece of bread before dropping it into the water. You'd seldom catch anything big, but it was easy to catch mountain mullets or river gobies from the swarms of little fish that lived in the shallow streams and rivers, and there were still times Joel preferred the simplicity of walking to the nearest body of water with nothing but a baited hook and some line. Once he'd moved stateside, he'd learned to fish with a rod and reel from some coworkers in Providence, and graduated to catching trout, pike, perch and walleye. He'd quickly come to enjoy the thrill of wrestling a fish out of the water, steadily reeling it in until the river's surface broke, and the thrashing body burst out of the water, flopping about on the line in a futile effort to break free. Eventually, he'd bought his own rod and reel and started fishing on his own. He went out once or twice a month for four years until he'd hurt his back in 2021 and had to stop for a few months. By the time his back had healed up, he'd stopped going to the woods entirely.

Of course, he didn't want to stop enjoying the outdoors. Joel had grown up in the backwoods and loved it more than anywhere else. But he couldn't spend any time there. After his injury, he'd been forced to pick up extra shifts. The rent wouldn't pay itself, and Andriy needed him to pick up the slack. They'd cycled through three new EMTs in the seven months Joel had been out of commission. Andriy said one of them didn't even make it through his second shift – apparently, the kid nearly crashed a stretcher with a patient on it into a parked car as he was trying to load it onto the ambulance. Joel remembered wincing when he heard that one. Kids like that were always tricky – you had to coach them through their first few shifts while they learned the ropes of EMS in the real world. As the seniormost EMT, the responsibility of supervising and training new hires had been his for some time, and he'd trained dozens of EMTs over the years. Some of them had turned out good, going from raw, awkward teenagers to confident, composed professionals under Joel's guidance. Gina and Kimberly had risen through the ranks to become paramedics in Boston and Atlanta. Emile had put in three years as Joel's Wednesday and Friday partner before going back to school to become an ICU nurse. Two of Joel's trainees – Raj and Lisa – had even gotten into medical school a couple years back. Those success stories were outnumbered by the burnouts, sociopaths, Ricky Rescues and imbeciles who he'd failed to reform. Then there were the weird ones. There was the kid who said the full Lord's prayer before each call (admittedly, Joel didn't lose a patient with him, so maybe the kid was onto something). There was the girl who'd been a perfect partner on the rig – while riding three other EMTs on the side, each one more than twice her age. And of course, there was Sally, who'd celebrated Joel's 48th birthday by bringing him a massive cookie with the words, "Happy Birthday Black Joel" written in blue frosting. Andriy still chuckled whenever he got to retelling that part of the story, even though he'd told it about five or six thousand times.

Joel sighed. He'd been there for over twenty years, watching partners and coworkers come and go. Through it all, he'd put in his time, helping the Ukrainian through thick and thin. But Andriy was gone now. After the war had started, he'd packed up his things, sold his house and left his supervisor's job to join the fight against the Russians. The new supervisor they brought in to replace him was an empty uniform, a bureaucrat whose sole purpose seemed to be to make sure there were warm bodies in the ambulance, no matter how skilled or experienced they may be. When Joel tried to tell him that he needed to spend more time ensuring the new recruits were trained, the man had smiled and agreed. The next week, Joel's hours were cut, then again the following week, then again and again and again until Joel had just one four-hour shift on Thursday. He worked that shift, went home, and began packing. He kept most of his fishing and camping gear in his backpack, and he needed less than an hour to track down the rest of his gear and put it in the faded olive hiking pack. He'd stuffed ham, cheese, onions, bread and a couple jars of homemade Jamaican escovitch pickle into a haversack, along with the bag of Bolt coffee grounds he picked up on the drive home from the station. Then, he got into his car and started driving – out of Providence, up I-95 past Boston, through New Hampshire, up to Augusta, then up 201, following the Kennebec until he pulled off the highway onto that dusty gravel road. He'd driven to get away, and yet here he was, still thinking about all those years and how it all ended so suddenly.

A fall stopped Joel's train of thought. He hit the forest floor with a muffled grunt as the air rushed out of his lungs. As he picked himself up, wincing from the impact and the clicking in his knee, he realized he didn't know where he was. He looked around, searching for a landmark or hint as to where he was. Behind him, there were trees, in front there were trees. To the left there were trees and to the right there were only more trees. He dusted himself off. He didn't know which way to go, so he decided to go forward. He began walking through the forest, stopping every twenty minutes or so to sip from his canteen and rest his knee, which was beginning to click again. He walked for an hour, then two, then three, as the sun rose higher and higher into the cold blue Maine sky.

It was nearly midday when Joel finally spied something through the outstretched field of brown limbs before him. In the distance, he could see blue – a wavy blue, placid and docile between the trees and the sky. He felt his head pick up, his back straighten, and his legs take over, beating out a steady, brisk pace. He marched down the ridge he'd walked up, gathering pace like a mountain stream swollen after a storm, building momentum as it courses towards the river and the sea at the end. He felt his knee click and wince with each step but his brain didn't feel the pain. He kept going through the trees.

Joel burst into the clearing at the base of the ridge. Before him, the Kennebec flowed downriver, towards his campsite and the Atlantic beyond. He felt himself gasping for air, the suppressed pain from his knee rushing into his head, his heart thumping away in his chest as it frantically tried to pump blood to his body. He managed to collapse on a boulder near the water's edge. As he lay on the rock, he felt the cold air fill his lungs. The sky seemed brighter here, painted impossibly blue without a cloud in the sky. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and thought to himself,

"I'm alive."  
"I'm alive."  
"I'm alive"

Joel took another deep breath, and lifted himself up off the rock. He unslung his backpack, and pulled out the granola bars and the fishing gear. He inhaled one of the bars while he assembled the rod, and munched on the other as he fitted it to the reel and loaded the whole thing with hook, line, sinkers and a worm he found wriggling in the black mud underneath the rocks at the water's edge. When he was done, he picked up the rod and his backpack and found a nice spot by the water's edge where a shoal of rocks created eddies and pools in the current. The salmon liked to rest and spawn in those areas where the water was calmer. He fixed his eyes on the one furthest out in the current, imagining his hook sailing into the center of it. He checked his line and made sure there was nothing behind him to catch the hook. Finally, he took a deep breath and cast out, finishing with a smooth flick of the wrist as he'd been taught the very first time he went line fishing with the guys from the squad. He watched as the hook followed the path he'd drawn in his mind, arcing through the bright blue sky before hitting the water with an inaudible splash. Joel exhaled. Now, all there was to do was wait.



Unidentified  
Joshua Choi

A trio of mushrooms possibly from the galerina or conocybe family seen on a decaying log

# Rachel Amgott

Landscape/Nature Photography



**Tree With A Story To Tell!**

**A Look Into Infinity!**



## Aging

Deeba N. Kashtwari

I noticed the silver strands in my hair 🙄  
wrinkles on the skin that was once so clear 😞

There was a time when I was slim 'n' trim...  
I didn't need to burn extra calories in the gym 😊

I was the fastest runner among all at my school,  
I thought, I could keep that pace forever, I was then a fool!

Time comes when we lose the so called "glow"  
the knees grow weak, the feet move slow 😞

We no longer remain strong and can't sit on the floor 😞  
If the bell rings, it's hard to rush and open the door...!

I saw people aging and some of them dying ..  
but somewhere, I was in a denial in my mind 😞

Finally when the reality of old age dawned on me...  
everything was blur, my eyes could barely see 😞

I prayed to Almighty come what may...  
please keep me mobile and healthy till I stay

Make me age with inner peace and grace.. ☺  
Keep the spiritual glow on my face 🙏

keep me surrounded by those close to my heart ❤️  
and let yours be the last name I recite, before my soul departs!



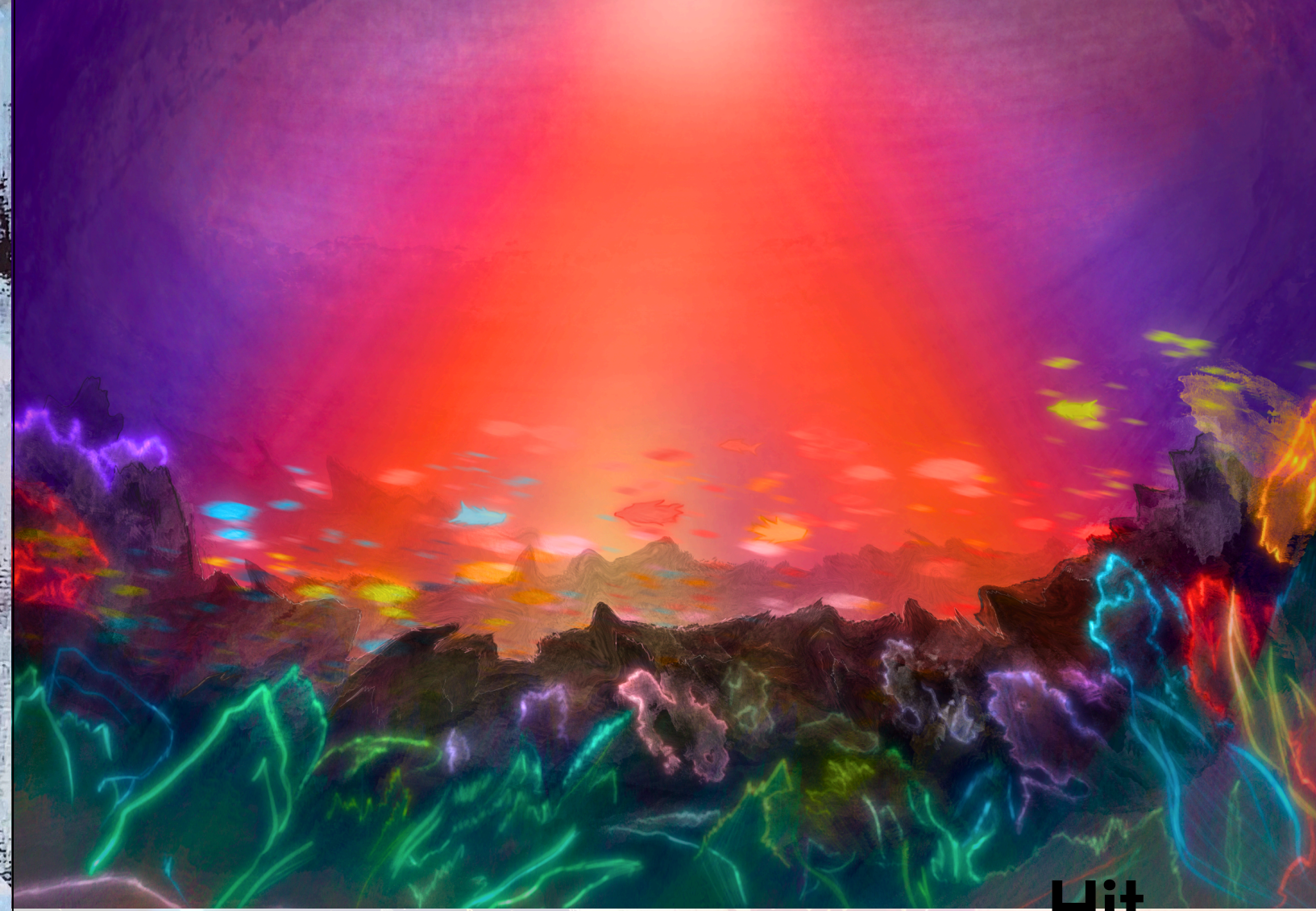
When I moved to my new flat I was very happy but when I worked out that the whispering voices that I can hear when I put my head under the water in the bath belong to dead people I wasn't happy any longer, particularly because I realised that every time I put my head under the water when I had a bath the voices were slightly louder than the time before.

I tried not putting my head under the water when I had a bath but every fucking time curiosity got the better of me and I had to try it just for a second just to check and of course, even half a second of that sort of thing would bother anyone.

I keep asking the landlord to put a shower in but he prevaricates and says things like what do you want a shower for that's a lovely old bath that's an antique that is look at it it's Victorian you'd pay top dollar for one of those at the reclamation yard.

It's all right for him. He hasn't got fucking dead people talking to him every time he washes his hair.

**Head and Shoulders**  
Daniel Tourevski



**Hit  
Bottom//  
Escape**

**Diego Lopez /**

Inspired by a line from Radiohead's "Weird Fishes", this piece explores the idea that even as we sink to the bottom of the sea in moments of strife, we can still find novelty, radiance, and a renewed sense of purpose. Made during the first few weeks of medical school, the piece reminds us that, though difficult, moments of transition are often the ones we remember most fondly.

**En Pointe**

-  
Ashley Davidoff





Reminiscent Dreams of Time  
Spent at that Old Prairie House

Evan Carey

### Ana Is only 3 weeks old.

Ana is only 3 weeks old.  
She weighs 2.2 kilos.  
She eats 100mL every 3 hours through a tube in her nose.  
She tries to pull the tube out.

Ana is only 3 weeks old.  
She's now in state custody.  
Her mother is somewhere praying to get sober.  
Her nurse hopes Ana will find a home by Christmas.

**Hanna Raskin**

Ana is only 3 weeks old.  
The world has been more cruel than kind to her.  
She lays alone in her crib all day.  
Other than volunteers like me, there's no one coming to visit her.

Ana has a wrinkle on her forehead from tensing her face in pain.  
She cries, and her face turns red.  
Her muscles are all completely tense.  
I try to rub her back with the fingers that curl around her tiny body, and I say the Shema.  
How exhausted she must be.

She starts wailing, so her nurse comes in.  
The nurse injects pain meds into Ana's feeding tube, prepares milky white liquid for her, and hands me a pacifier.  
"Ana would prefer the real thing."

I tell Ana that her new family will be kind.  
Maybe she'll have a dog or a cat.  
She'll have grandparents who will spoil her with toys and cuddles.

Maybe the rest of her life will be so lovely that the horrors of her first 3 weeks will be diluted.

At 10 pm, my shift is over.  
The nurse takes Ana and puts her back to bed, wishing me a safe walk home.  
As I enter the elevator, I slip on my coat and check the messages waiting for me.  
Stepping out of the hospital, I flip up my hood to insulate myself from the cold.

Ana is only 3 weeks old.

## Split Heart

Kylie Tang

Antidepressants	and addy,
Anything to frame the pain.	As long as black coffee is bitter,
Brighter is the peak and	darker is the pit, wax and wane.
There's no book nor author,	and yet there's an anti-hero,
The side character in the autobiography.	Temporary graffiti has no tomorrow,
So as long as blue light fills blue eyes,	and artificial sweetener rots the sweet tooth,
Does it matter if smoke burns the	throat, if a shot in 1 mil earns 10 mil?
Plagiarism is copy-plus-paste,	minus a Works Cited page,
Divided by two parties,	multiplied by little pills,
Raised to the	power of silent truths.
Well-known equation	for the fake, but no proof,
And proving reality	isn't worth the guilty fantasy.
So two times	two isn't four,
And euphoria	times ecstasy
Is	n't
Em p	ty



Flowers  
Evan Carey



Maine Dock at Sunset  
Kitt Shaffer

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**Hanna Raskin**  
**Me and Me: The Inconvenience of Creativity in Med School**  
*Reflecting on the splitting of self.*

I get into bed at night, and the Me that I stuff down-way-down all day wakes up.

The Me whose voice breaks when she lets herself be seen, who smiles at the morning light, who cries when she sees a dead pigeon on her walk to school.

The Me that gets lost in books and poetry.

All day, I make her be quiet. I push her down, and I beg her to let me Focus.

Then I get in bed. I don't technically NEED her to Focus anymore, and I'm too tired to ask her to be quiet.

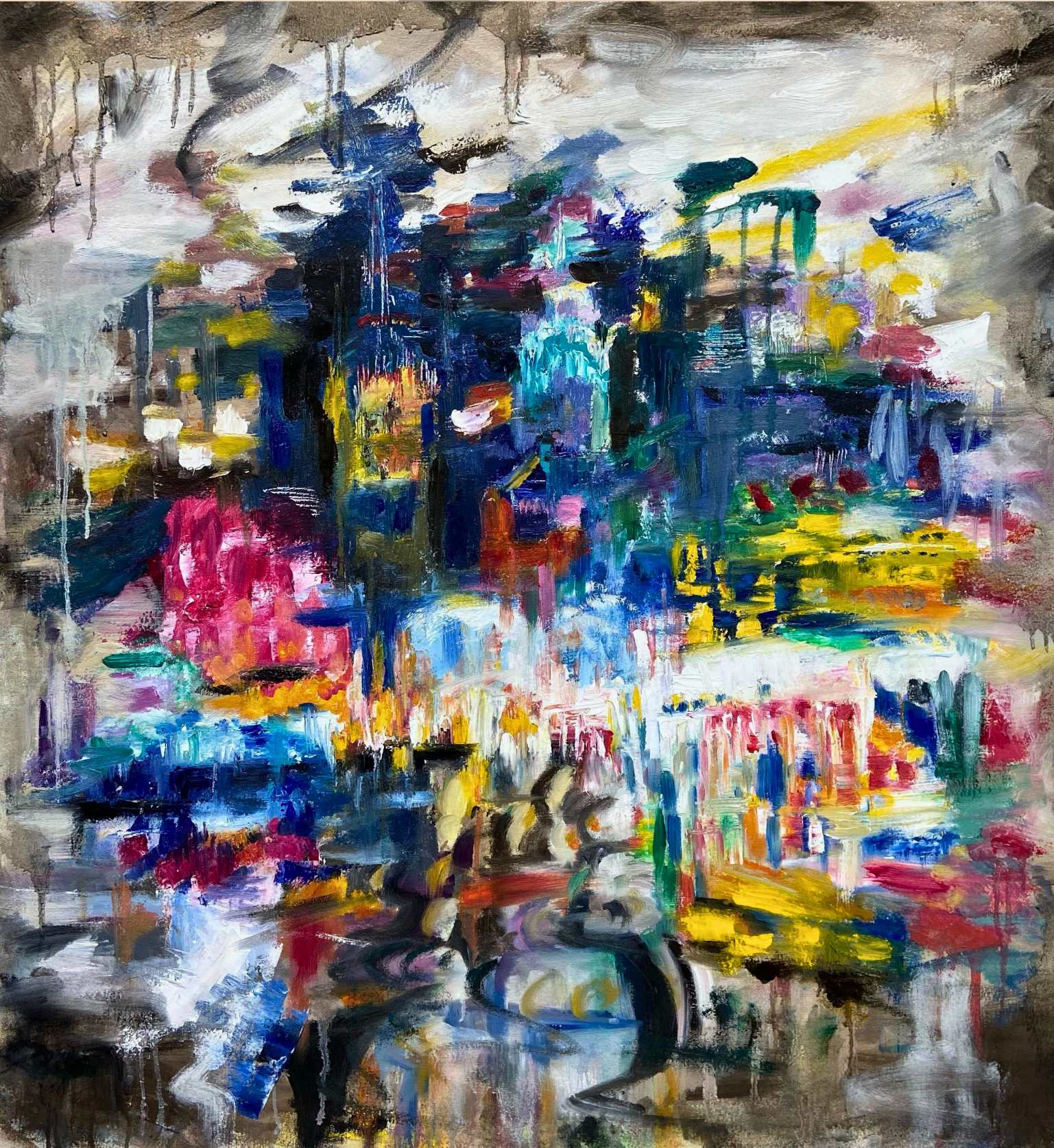
So she isn't. She looks for poems and pictures and art. She reads novels for too long. She gets curious and collects articles that she saves to read later.

She reads about gardening and cognition and makes lists of her favorite contemporary artists.

And sure, we were supposed to go to bed an hour ago, but how can I ask her to stop when she gets so little of our time?

So here I am, letting her write another little piece before I kindly ask her to tuck herself away again so we can go to sleep.

City Nightscape  
Tiffany Leng



## Bearded Whale

Kitt Shaffer



But these

Ain't no phases  
These my faces  
The way I inhabit my spaces

Here and there  
Different places  
No matter how I turn  
Right lessons left to learn  
Left lessons right where I can find them  
Save myself chases

Wherever I let myself go  
That's where I be  
Not to where I'm headed but where my head is—  
It's in the pursuit  
Where I'm happy.

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Lunacy

Rodolfo Villarreal-Calderon

All my life  
My identity has been “too political”  
So many watchful eyes,  
way too critical

I get asked where I’m from  
I can feel my heart flutter  
& ...I try not to stutter  
I slowly scan the room  
Trying not to assume  
...the worst possible outcome

I can’t help but pause  
Yes, I know “there are laws”  
But let’s be real,  
they weren’t made for me,  
So if I say Palestine  
This could actually end with a hate crime  
—It’s either that, or an “I’m sorry”  
& them becoming as silent as a mime

You see, as a Palestinian  
A part of me almost expects it  
As I’ve realized that embracing my identity  
causes people to judge me AFTER having already met me

This is exhausting.

As a Palestinian muslim living in America,  
I have BEEN afraid

My whole life,  
I’ve been brushed off with the words  
“It’s complicated”

Even when I said that I don’t feel safe  
—I was basically told that I should be okay with being hated

My IDENTITY, the person that I AM  
—is “too political”

Me saying that my family deserves rights  
—is “too controversial”

If it wasn’t so sad, it would be laughable.

**All My Life**  
Asel Mustafa

Emiliya Akhundova

**Untitled**  
Oil on canvas



## The Living Blueprint



This digital artwork was created on an iPad using Procreate, "The Living Blueprint" invites viewers to explore the intricate and interconnected pathways that define the essence of life itself. The piece elegantly showcases the structural beauty found in nature, drawing parallels between the organic patterns of foliage, the delicate intricacies of cellular designs, and the network of veins in living organisms. Through a vibrant interplay of colors and forms, the artwork transcends traditional boundaries, encouraging a deeper reflection on the relationships and connections that bind all living things. "The Living Blueprint" serves not only as a visual feast but also as a reminder of the elegance inherent in the complexity of life, inviting us to appreciate the beauty that lies in our shared existence.

**Anushka Aghi**

## Life at 45

Mixed Media



I See You comes from my Mother Tree Holds the Stories series of paintings. The rings in this are created using bas-relief, and the painting is made of acrylic ink. Each ring of the painting holds stories of a year of life. I find that the paintings become potent symbols for the viewer to connect with memory, grief, reverence, admiration, and connection to nature and the passage of time.

**I See You  
Mixed Media**

**Alana Garrigues**



Ashley Davidoff



Chest of Fruit



“The Mind and Soul” explores the tension between our rational thoughts and the heartfelt desires that drive us. This piece highlights the internal conflicts we all experience, showcasing how our intellect and emotions often clash. Through its blend of lines and shapes, the artist invites us to reflect on the challenges we face in understanding ourselves and making decisions. It’s a relatable representation of the struggles we encounter in balancing what we think with what we truly feel.

Daman Dhunna  
The Mind & Soul

## Dusk on the Dock Garrett Wingrove



This is meant to illustrate how dependent our bodies are on the food we eat. From left to right, the skin, kidneys, and heart are shown, constructed out of a variety of fruits and vegetables.



**We Are What We Eat**  
Talya Cohen-Neamie

Winter sunset, Western Norway



Robin Ingalls

Winter lake scene, Western Norway



Robin Ingalls

**Viewer Discretion**

The following work may contain material sensitive to some readers. Viewer discretion is advised.

**REPENTENCE**

The funeral was a simple but elegant affair. Bouquets of white lilies rested at the end of each pew. Despite the flowers' own lack of vibrance, under the colored light filtering through the stained glass above, they took on subtle hues of incandescent pinks, blues, and greens. A gathering of twenty or so family and friends filled the chapel. Seated in the very furthest pew, Chanwoo knew no one but his wife seated beside him, his daughter's wife in the very front, and his daughter in the casket.

Chanwoo had almost not recognized his daughter when he first saw her lying with her hands resting across her chest. She had grown thin, gaunt even, during the last seven years since he had last seen her. The blush they had used on her was too bright, making the pale waxen skin that surrounded her cheeks seem even more lifeless than they were. The wrinkles around her brows from her constant furrowing were gone. Chanwoo wondered if the mortician had injected something. How else could they have possibly removed something that had been a part of his daughter since she could walk?

Chanwoo's eyes constantly flickered between his wife, a stout woman with soft features, silently crying beside him, the back of the head of the woman his daughter had married, and the white, balding pastor at the front. A bit hypocritical isn't it? All those years he had spent bringing their family to church, teaching her piano and investing in vocal lessons so she could join the worship team, only for her to leave the church, her faith, and their family behind for some girl she had met in college. Now she wants a pastor at her funeral? The irony of it sickened Chanwoo, yet he also prayed that this meant there could be salvation for his daughter despite her choices.

"Thank you for coming. I wasn't sure if you would, but Becca made me promise her that I would send you an invitation. I'm sure if she knew that you came, this would have meant a lot to her."

The service had ended and the pallbearers had carried Becca to the hearse, but Chanwoo was not one of them. While the other funeral guests began to make their way to their cars and drive to the burial site, Chanwoo debated whether to leave with his wife instead when Penny had called out to them. As she expressed her gratitude, Chanwoo looked down on her and could not see in this girl what his daughter possibly could have. She was short, had frazzled hair, and wore glasses too large for her face. Chanwoo had noticed when his daughter had first invited Penny to stay at their home for fall break that this girl picked at her nails till the point that they would bleed. What could this white girl possibly offer that his daughter could not find in a nice Korean boy at their church back home?

"Thank you for inviting us. I know it must not have been easy caring for her while she was sick. Thank you for looking after our daughter," said his wife as she clasped Penny's hands. The sight of this made Chanwoo ill. How could his wife forget that this girl was why their daughter hadn't spoken to them in seven years? How could she pretend as though this girl was the reason why they had no and will now never have grandchildren? That she was source of why there was any doubt about where their daughter's soul would rest?

Hanjung released her hands, and Penny stuck one out towards Chanwoo expectantly. The audacity to ask for a handshake, for some kind of reconciliation after everything she had caused infuriated Chanwoo. He glared at the hand and dug his own deep into his pants pockets, but Penny refused to pull her own hand back.

"Please, just shake her hand," Hanjung whimpered, pulling on her husband's arm.

Chanwoo lifted his eyes for a second, meeting Penny's gaze. Her lips were drawn thin and eyes bloodshot. The rich auburn hair from when she had first visited their home years ago now had prominent gray streaks running through them. Amidst the sadness in her expression, there was something more that Chanwoo couldn't quite place. Was it pity? Could this girl possibly pity their family for all the pain that she herself had caused?

Chanwoo's face flushed red and his ears grew hot the way they always did before he had an outburst. Ripping a hand out of his pocket, he slapped Penny's arm away. "How dare you," he roared. "How could you even possibly think that this was okay?"

Penny began to glower. "You think I'm doing this because I want to? Do you know how much you hurt Becca? If it were my choice, if Becca didn't make me promise, I wouldn't have invited you even if you came to us begging" she hissed.

"Don't you dare talk as if you're doing us, doing our daughter, a favor. You're the reason she left us. The reason she got sick. The reason all this is happening in the first place," Chanwoo spat back.

The snap as Penny slapped Chanwoo resonated across the small grass lawn.

The few remaining guests who had yet to make their way to their cars were all staring at them now. Hanjung had begun to cry again and was doing a poor job of hiding her tears as she clasped her face with her hands.

Penny uttered a single word before turning.

"Leave."

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The rhythmic clicking of her mother's sewing machine filled the room. The portly woman was craned over a piece of fabric and her father sat in an armchair beside her mother doing what he did every night. He skimmed through the Korean newsletter and commented how the government was turning their country to shit, regardless of changing administrations or the fact that he had now lived in the United States for almost double the length of time he had grown up in Korea.

Becca's phone thrummed against her thigh as she sat on the couch picking at a tangerine. Fishing it out from her legging's pocket, she read the text from Penny, her girlfriend.

"How's it going? Did you drop the news?"

"Not yet. Everything feels so normal right now. Idk if now is the best time," texted back Becca.

"Wdym? Wouldn't a time like now be better than them finding out on their own?"

"Idk. It's just scary I guess."

"Bec, it's been three years, you know better than I do that this convo's gotta happen eventually."

Becca sighed as she read the text. Penny was right and she knew it. She had been putting off this conversation since the beginning and by the time they entered their second year together, she could tell that withholding their relationship status from her parents was beginning to wear on Penny.

"Who's that?" asked Hanjung from across the room, peering over the edge of the five dollar Costco reading lenses that perched dangerously on the tip of her flattish nose.

"It's just Penny," said Becca.

"Oh, how is she?" asked her mother. "Did she start her new job?"

"She starts next week, she just finished moving in."

"Is she living by herself or did she finally get herself a boyfriend?" her father chuckled as he flipped to the next page.

"By herself, for now, or uh well, I've actually, I've been meaning to tell you. I've been thinking about moving in with her," stammered Becca.

"In New York? Why would you move all the way there?" asked her Dad. Folding the paper closed, he turned to look at her.

"I've always wanted to try living in New York. Plus, me and Penny go way back."

"That's true, if you're going to live in a city, you should do it when you're young," agreed her mother before continuing on, "Your father and I did that too, you know. You can't do that when you're married and have kids. You don't want to raise kids in the city"

A lump formed in Becca's throat as she struggled to force out her next words.

"Actually about that. Umma, Appa, I've been meaning to tell you. Penny and I are dating."

The silence in the room that followed was nauseating. Penny cursed herself for having eaten dinner as it threatened to make its way back up.

"What do you mean?" her father asked, finally breaking the silence.

"Penny and I are dating. We've actually been together for a while, I just didn't know how to tell you," Becca said in a single breath. "I know that you weren't always the biggest fan of Penny and that you think she's always super insecure or nervous, but she's actually one of the nicest and kindest people I've ever met. If you got the chance to really get to know her, I know you would like her too." The words spewed out of her despite her best efforts to rein them in.

"Are you telling your mother and I that you and Penny are gay?" Chanwoo said in a low voice, cutting through his daughter's rambling.

"Yes," answered Becca. "I know how you feel about gay people, but I want you to know that I --"

“Have you talked to Pastor Mike about this?” asked Hanjung.

“No, I already know what he would say, plus I haven’t been to church since college, he doesn’t even remem--”

“No. No. You don’t know what you’re saying. We will call Pastor Mike and meet with him first thing tomorrow,” interrupted Chanwoo, almost yelling.

“No, you’re not listening to me,” replied Becca.

“No, you’re not listening to us” thundered her father, throwing the newspaper onto the coffee table as he stood. “Do you even hear yourself, what you’re saying right now?”

How could she not? She had mentally rehearsed this conversation over and over since she knew her sophomore year of high school. She hadn’t believed in God since her junior year, but each time she imagined this conversation, she prayed that her parents would tell her that it’s okay, that her being their daughter superseded their faith and that they would stand by her no matter who she loved. But, deep down, she had always known that this conversation would happen the way that it was. Her parents entrenched in their beliefs would shut down the minute that anything threatened them.

Tears began to well as she muttered, “You’re not going to even give me a chance?”

“First thing in the morning, we go to church. No daughter of mine will be gay” huffed Chanwoo as he stormed out of the living room and into his bedroom, slamming the door closed behind him.

Becca looked to her mother but Hanjung refused to meet her eyes.

Behind the sewing machine sat their family bible. Yellow, oranges, greens, and blues from years of highlighting had bled through the pages, the stained edges of the book mocking her for ever hoping this could have gone differently.

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Sitting in the furthest row, Hanjung clenched the tissue in her hand. She cursed her past lives for the egregious sin they must have committed for her to be subjected to the cruel joke that this was. Over the past three years she had finally begun to make amends with her daughter. Moving from phone calls once or twice a year to finally meeting four months ago, gradually, she hoped to repair the rift between them.

The meeting itself had been rather auspicious. Given that her daughter was in town for business, Hanjung invited Becca to meet at the Golden Dragon, a somewhat luxurious Cantonese diner that once been their family’s go-to spot for celebratory meals. Perhaps this would be the opportunity she needed to jumpstart rebuilding their relationship. Consequently, she was disappointed when Becca turned down the offer and instead suggested coffee at a nearby Starbucks.

Entering the cafe, Hanjung took in everything. Becca was seated at a small table in a corner of the room. She was dressed in a maroon top with a gray pinstripe blazer and matching gray pants. Her hair had been cut into a short bob and dyed blonde. Compared to the long black haired girl perpetually in sweats Hanjung had remembered her as, Becca had become almost unrecognizable. Hanjung looked down at her own orange puffer jacket and blue shirt and felt underdressed, embarrassed even.

“Have you been eating well?” Hanjung asked as she sat herself in front of her daughter.

“Yeah, I guess so,” answered Becca.

“What about work? It’s not too difficult? Too stressful?” Hanjung continued.

“Work is work. It’s fine I guess.”

Hanjung’s gaze could have lit a flame on Becca’s face, but her daughter did not notice. Instead, Becca seemed more interested in the shrubs growing outside the window than her mother in front of her. For the past six and a half years, Hanjung had hoped for the moment that she would be able to see her daughter again but words were failing her now. Part of her wanted to embrace her, to apologize and beg for forgiveness. At the same time, Hanjung wanted to grab her daughter’s face and twist it towards her. She wanted to scream, look at me, look at how you’ve hurt me. How could you leave? Please come back. Please just come back. She could not tell which she wanted to do more.

“I stopped going to church.”

Becca finally turned her gaze towards her mother. “Really? When?”

“Around the time I called you and you finally picked up.”

“What about Appa? Does he still go?”

“Yes. We fought about it in the beginning. Now we just don’t talk about it anymore,” said Hanjung. Just like you, Hanjung thought to herself.

“Why’d you stop?” Becca asked.

“It just didn’t seem right.” I lost you because of it. “How is Penny?”

“She’s good.” Becca’s voice faltered for a moment and then she continued. “She’s really too good for me.”

“That’s good. I’m happy for you then,” Hanjung replied. And to her own surprise, she genuinely was.

When they received the invitation and letter in the mail four months later, Hanjung collapsed. Four months ago, did her daughter seem tired? Had she lost weight? Was there something that she had missed, something that she could have said that would have let her be by her daughter’s side as she battled cancer?

Each night, unable to rest. Hanjung paces down the hall between their bedroom and living room. She pores over her memories combing for the moment she could have stopped this. During the short hours she does manage to sleep, Hanjung sees Becca. Rarely, she comes to Hanjung as a child, no older than five or seven, with the same furrowed brows that had frustrated her mother every school picture day. She holds her mother’s hand and speaks to her about school or friends. Sometimes, they sit side by side in silence. However, most often, Becca appears in the distance as an adult, so far away that she is nothing more than a small dot in the horizon. These nights, Hanjung chases after her. She tumbles forward and trips over her own feet until she can no more, her daughter still a distant figure far out of reach.

ssssshh don't speak

Louis Gerstenfeld



Jazz Club Set Break  
Louis Gerstenfeld



■ Sargam Choudhurry

**Piya Ghar Avenge: Waters Bearing Promise**

Amidst this Bengali Hindu wedding ritual, the bride's mother and aunts gather around a nearby lake that symbolically embodies the holy Ganges River, with a ceremonial offering arranged in gleaming bowls, seeking blessings for the bride's upcoming nuptials.

**Cosmos In Her Palms** Intricate mehndi unfolds like galaxies across open hands, each delicate curve echoing the profound power of art and creation cradled in human touch, a parallel of the cosmos.

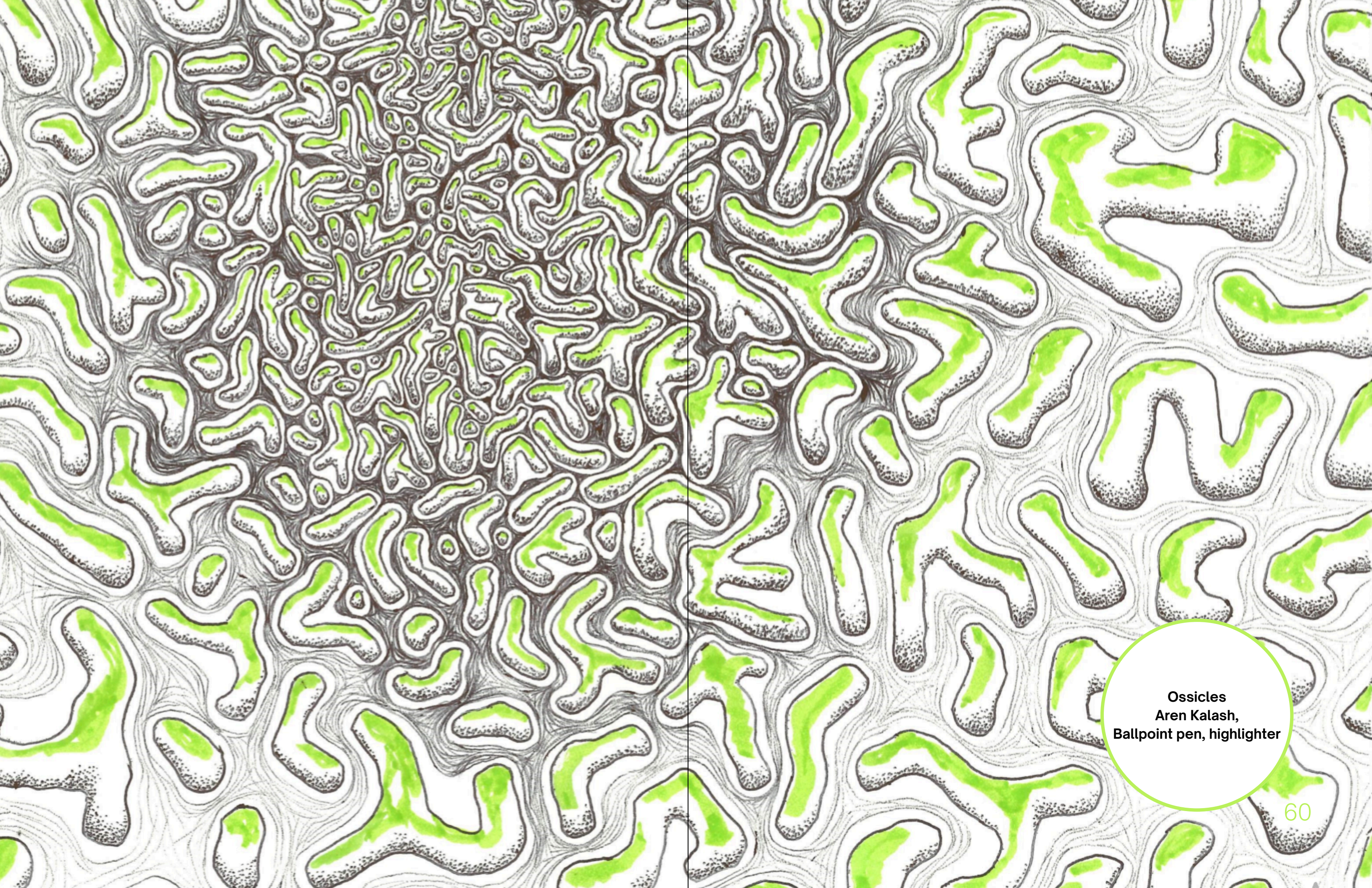


A nostalgic wooden train winds through Alishan's scenic forest, capturing the beauty of nature under a vibrant blue sky.

**Christmas Travel:  
Alishan, Taiwan train tracks**

A serene view of the Alishan train tracks cutting through lush greenery and leading toward a rustic station under a bright blue sky.





Ossicles  
Aren Kalash,  
Ballpoint pen, highlighter

Sheep Sweater  
**Isabelle Joy**



*Sky & Grass: Cotton Yarn  
Sheep: Synthetic Yarn*

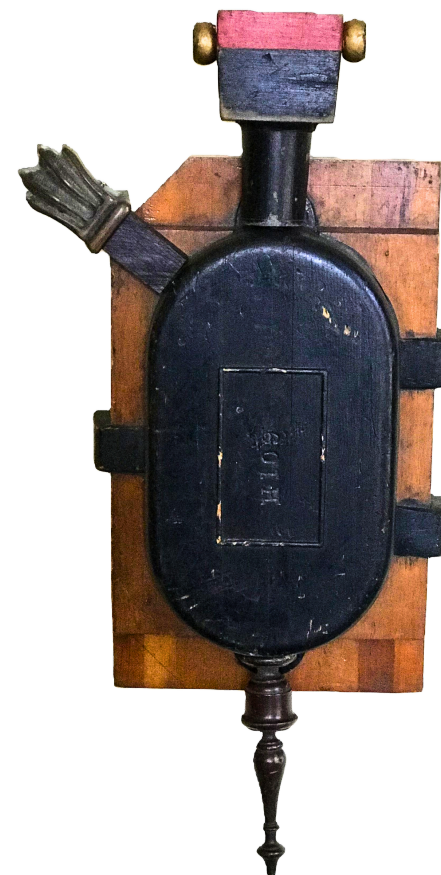


**Happy**

Mixed media old wood casting pattern and antique brass hardware. Doesn't it make you feel—Happy?

**Climbing the Walls**

Mixed media turtle from the pandemic. Embellished wood casting patterns with an old finial tail and a brass furniture claw.



## • Waking Up To A Song



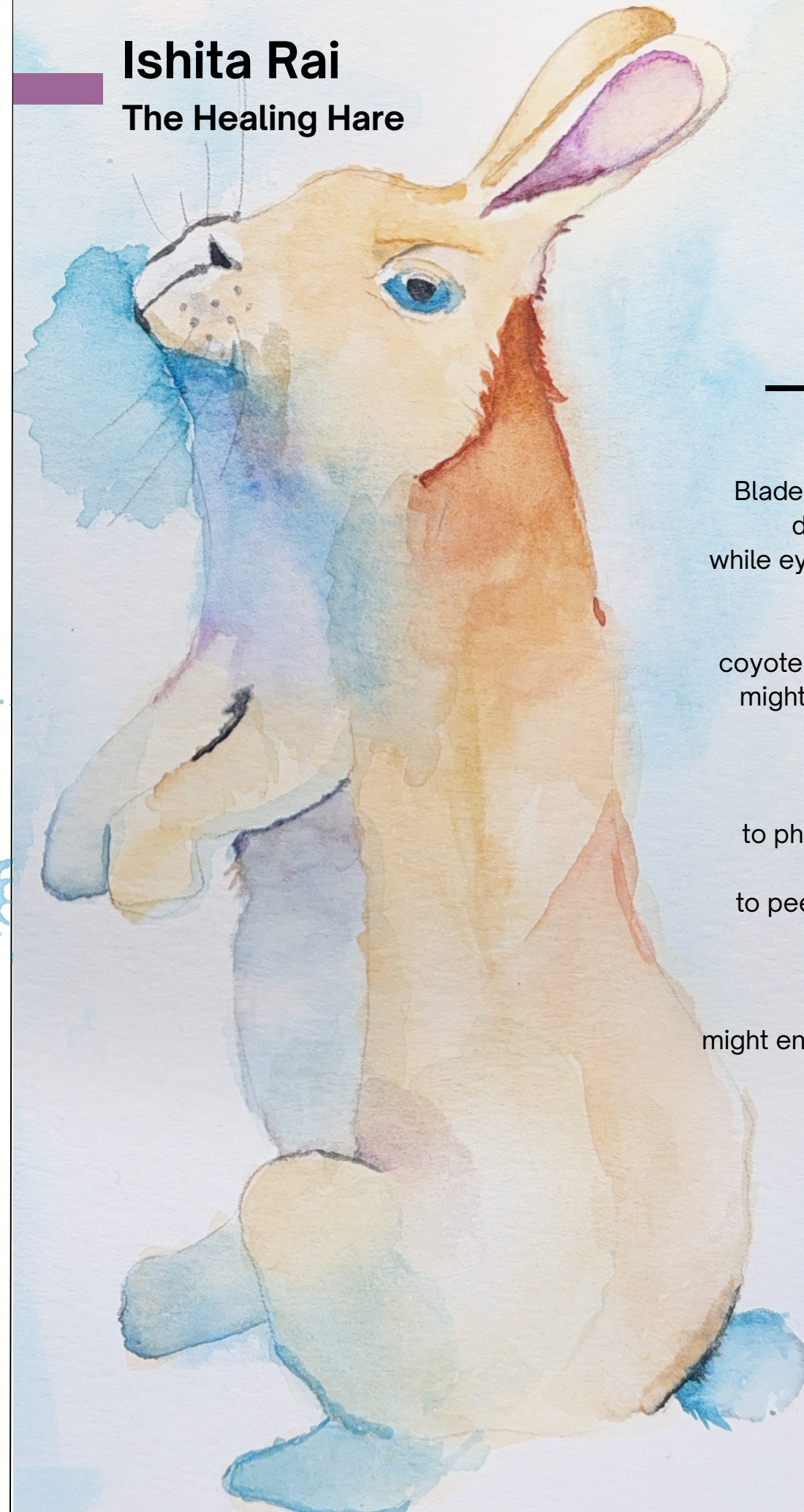
Isabel Dominguez

Blue Jays are one of many birds that have adapted to survive in, what to them is a chaotic environment, cities.



Ishita Rai  
**Take My Hands**

Ishita Rai  
**The Healing Hare**



## Lofty Thoughts

Finishing my lunch, I spied a bunny having his on the lawn. Blade after blade of long green grass disappeared jerkily into his maw, while eyes and ears and twitching nose kept vigilant guard to warn of many dangers—coyote, hawk, or household dog or cat might come in search of fur-wrapped snack.

A bunny, I thought, has no time to philosophize about deeper things, for if he paused to peer within in search of answers—Why am I here? Where will I go?—talons swooping from above might end his final—now lofty—thought: Hare today, gone tomorrow.

Keith Tornheim

# performance arts

scan the QR codes

**Starry night. J tree silhouette**  
Garrett Wingrove



**PROJECTED - UCLA Battle Royale**  
Edmund Zhi



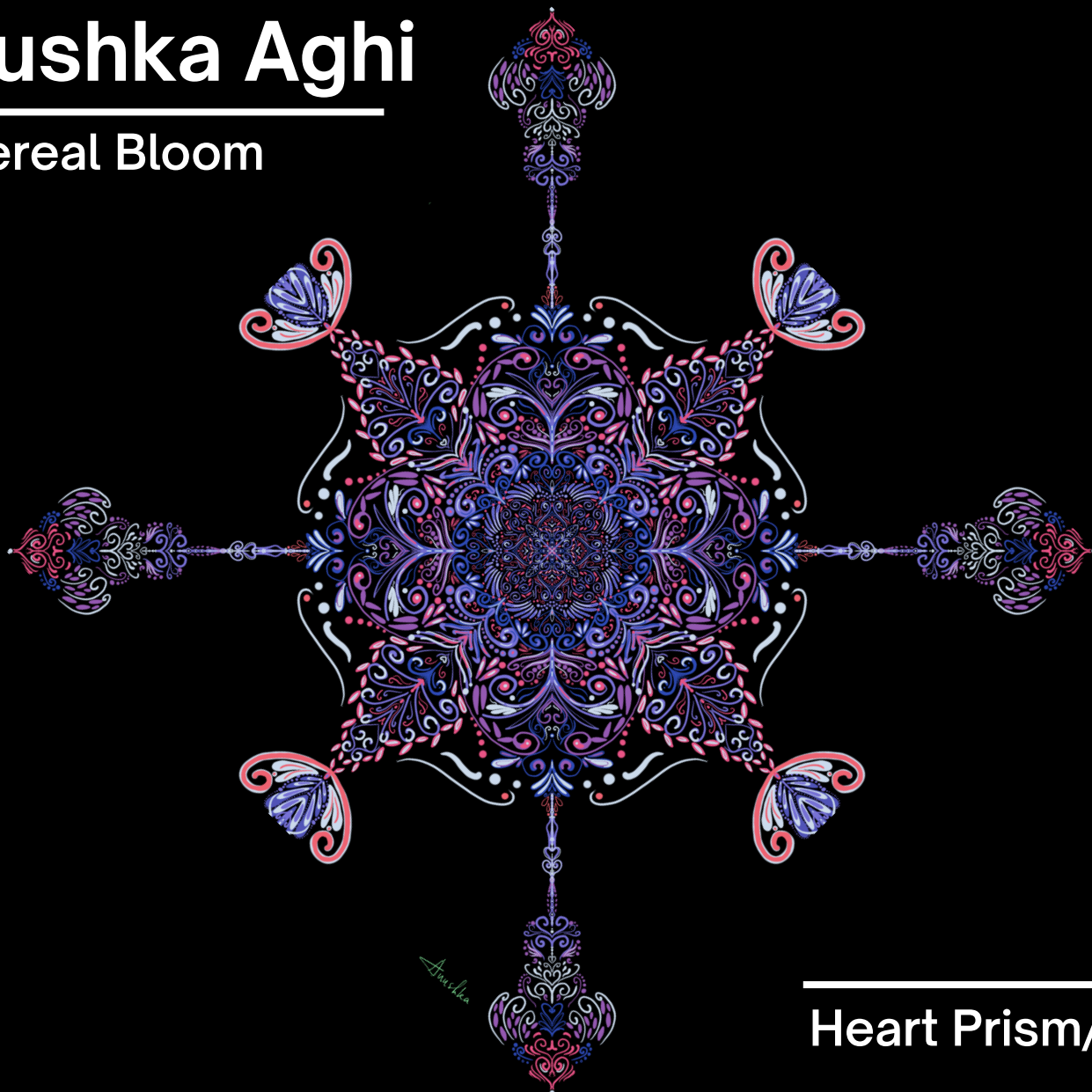
**Common Conecap**  
Joshua Choi

**Queen of All Crows**  
Simon Nichols

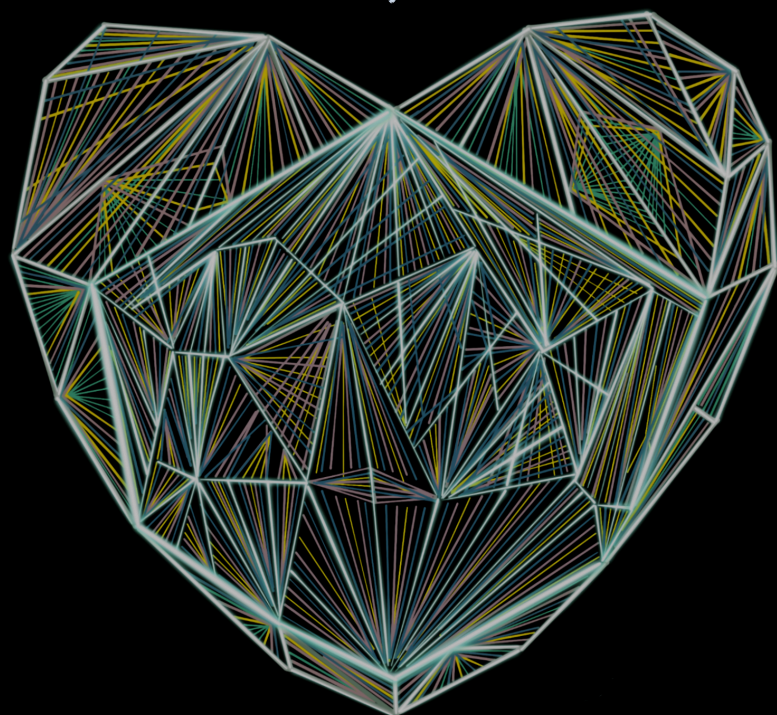


# Anushka Aghi

## Ethereal Bloom



## Heart Prism/Prison



### They Got Me, Pal

by Mark James McDonough

On John Feely's nineteenth birthday, his mother dropped him off for his freshman year of college with all the emotion that would accompany giving someone a lift to work. No tears. No big goodbye.

"No big goodbye?"

"Oh, I'll see you in a month for Columbus Day. Then I'll see you the month after that for Thanksgiving, then...."

Feely supposed she had a point. They were only a two-hour drive apart. But still. He watched this woman cry at MasterCard commercials, listening to the Beauty and the Beast soundtrack, and once during an episode of Smallville. Now her only child, her baby-boy, was leaving the nest and she didn't seem bothered. Maybe she was just excited to not do his laundry for a few months. Maybe she was sick of eating Jr. Bacon Cheeseburgers from Wendy's for dinner. Maybe she had some old pervert coming over to make out. Whatever the reason, she was gone and Feely was left in an empty dorm room. Empty for only a moment though, only long enough for a deep breath.

Feely couldn't remember what answers he put on the roommate questionnaire, but they were clearly the wrong ones. Any algorithm that spit this guy out needed to be deleted. He met him for the first time at orientation and their original encounter left a lot of room for improvement. Will Cavendish was his name. He had a tumbleweed for hair and it moved whenever his eyebrows did and his eyebrows moved up and down every time he talked. Feely never once saw him without his hands on his hips, and so there he would stand in the middle of their room, the wiry bastard, throwing the whole vibe off, cooing like a pigeon. This was the first thing he ever said to Feely:

"So, did your grandfather fight in the war?" It was like that all the time. All of his greetings were questions reserved for deep friendships or maybe never.

"Yeah actually he did. Did yours?"

"Yep! Got killed over there!"

A month prior, at overnight orientation as they lay in their beds Feely heard Cavendish's whole backstory. The thing he was most proud of, the thing he never shut up about, was that he had been a ball boy for some basketball team in the Pacific Northwest. Feely couldn't remember which one. Feely hated basketball, but this didn't deter his co-tenant any. Cavendish went on and on about all the players he met and the autographs he had in some diary at home, like the ones you keep when you meet Goofy at Disney World.

"Let's see... I've met 'Lemon Lime' Larry Collins, 'Señor Soap' Max Diaz, 'Recycling Bin' Barry Andrews..."

Okay, these weren't the real names of the players. But they might as well have been. Feely didn't know the difference. When Cavendish entered the room for their official first day, before he even put his bags down, he asked Feely if he'd ever seen the movie *Disturbia*. *Disturbia* was a 2007 remake of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* aimed at teens and starring Shia LaBeouf. It was the only thing in the world Will Cavendish liked outside of being a ball boy.

Over that next week, he'd watch it in its entirety six times. Feely fantasized about scratching the DVD so he couldn't play it any more. Or maybe he'd just jam Cavendish's head through the TV. What Feely couldn't have predicted was that he'd soon long for the only problem being an infinitely repeating LaBeouf. The second weekend they were there Cavendish was bobbing in the middle of the room like usual but couldn't seem to get his words out. Feely felt physically ill. If this lunatic was at a loss for words, something very bad was about to happen.

“Well, John, I’ve got a question to ask you. I happen to have a girl coming over this evening and I was wondering if you might mind stepping out for a few hours.”

John told him he wouldn’t. He was a bit jealous of his freak roommate for succeeding with the fairer sex, but mostly he was just dying to see what the girl looked like. As Feely exited, he passed Cavendish and his date in the hall. The woman he was holding hands with was somewhere between fifty and eighty-four years old. Feely felt terrified at the thought of this woman stealing all of his belongings. True, there wasn’t much to steal, it wasn’t like he had expensive silverware in there, but..oh! What if she used his toothbrush?

Feely came back later that night and the woman was gone. He couldn’t sleep thinking about where she might have been in the room. Did she sit on his pillow? It was more than likely. Where the heck did Cavendish even meet her? He’d have to find a way to confront him about his behavior, but what had he even done really? All he did was watch some horrid movie and politely ask to have the room for a few hours. Feely tossed and turned, unaware that the Cavendish issue was about to resolve itself.

That Monday when Feely was walking back from one of his gen-ed courses (My Body, My Health- an easy A if there ever was one) he noticed a commotion outside of his dormitory. Campus police were escorting someone out, and even from a distance Feely could see the tuft of hair bobbing up and down.

When he saw Feely, Cavendish shouted “they got me, pal!”

That was the last time Feely would ever see him. The police confronted Feely when he tried to get back in his room. They asked if he had anything to do with it and he could honestly tell them he didn’t even know what “it” was. Cavendish had started to sell weed out of his closet and got caught the first day he did it. The campus cops informed Feely that if he was in the room when it happened, he would’ve been expelled too. When they told him this they waited for a reaction that would never come. What would Feely care if they kicked him out? The place was a nightmare. They’d be doing him a kindness. The cops were enraged, like they had been turned down by a woman at a bar. Red-faced and evil, they stormed out and left Feely to his room, now empty once again.

Cavendish would slip further and further from Feely’s memory. His replacement roommate, Hank, was the polar opposite of the bizarre character that came before him. The two of them would become great friends and experience the highs and lows of college and of life side by side. Feely didn’t get news on what became of William Cavendish until late that next summer. He felt that a nutcase like that could only end up one of two ways: Either shot dead by police or the future president of the United States. An hour after he had this thought, he walked in while his mother was watching the news. There was a story about a kid who didn’t buckle his seat belt correctly on a rollercoaster, Chief Thunder’s Red Hawk Drop, a 400 foot mega monster. The ride flung the teen onto the adjacent interstate, killing him instantly. Cavendish was dead at the age of nineteen.

Feely did something strange when he first heard the news – he laughed. But as time went on, when he thought of that pigeon boy, he got a little sadder each time. Cavendish was just a young kid like everyone else, looking for a new start that he never got.

It wasn’t until years later when Feely was lying next to his wife on the couch that he fully broke down weeping.

“John,” she asked “Are you seriously crying over a Shia LaBeouf movie?”

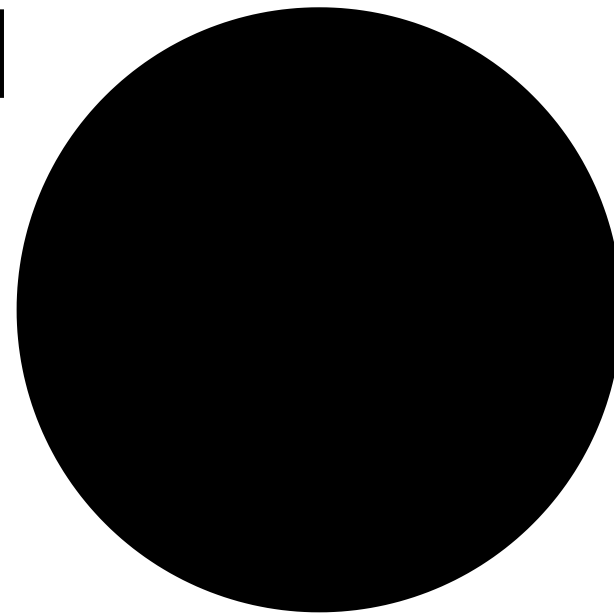
The End.

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