

The Blue Issue

Spring 2022

The University of South Carolina Beaufort

Journal of Creative Writing and Art

Faculty Advisor

Dr. Ellen Malphrus

Editor-in-Chief

Selena Menjivar

Editorial Board

Mackenzie Ware

Robert-Nickell Bilgen

Patti Teter

Samantha Derenthal

Sophia McKeehan

Department of English, Theater, and the Arts

University of South Carolina Beaufort

One University Boulevard

Bluffton, SC 29910

Table of Contents

Manifesto	6
Editor's Letter	7
Advisor's Letter	8
Featured Artist's Statement	9
View From the Parthenon	10
Stranger Than Fiction	11
Greek Ideas, Roman Mind	12
Solivagus	13
Atropos	14
94	15
Tsushima	16
The King's Remedy	17
Clouds Gather	21
Implications	22
Boundless	23
959	24
Cherry Point	25
Dunes	26
Lifeboat	27
Elm	28
96	29
Pervading Waters	30
Sinking Feeling	31
Ballot for Tomorrow	33
Thoroughly Naturalistic	34
Untitled	35
Good job boss	36
Lovers-rock down	37
Breukelen	38

Table of Contents Cont.

Alternative	39
Untitled	40
Cold Feet	41
White Bend	43
The Plainfield Blues	45
Motive	46
Pound of Flesh	47
Untitled	48
The Unsaid Letters	49
Mind Reader	50
Teetering	51
The Pop Shop	52
Dancing with the in the Blood Moon	55
Untitled	58
Same for me	59
Coffee Gone Cold	61
Skinny Love	63
Far Cry	64
Tarragon	65
Untitled	66
Drawings from my ex-friends	67
Puff	68
Perhaps	69
Gemini Noctis	70
Metaphysics & Logic	71
Untitled	74
The Tin-Pan Chemise	73
Mercy Mild, River Wild	74
Captured	75

Table of Contents Cont.

The Last Good Thing	76
The Little Girl in the White Dress	77
Stunning Deer	80
Run	81
Broken Speech	82
Confessions	83
Passion	84
Index of Contributors	85
About The Pen	87
About Society of Creative Writers	87
Submission Guidelines	88

In honor of the Blue Issue that our contributors created within these pages and the conviction that we hope this issue incites in our readers, our staff has composed an Exquisite Corpse to serve as this issue's Manifesto:

Blue

My diamond sheds tears for her

A wide range of colors

An icy sharp edge

On the wings of a brilliant morpho queen

Ocean of wonder, hold the crestfallen sky

Soulful melody strung

Color me human, bound & boundless – bring it on.

Editor's Letter

Hello Dear Readers!

Blue has many representations. Relaxation, loyalty, open spaces, sadness, imagination, and inspiration. Just like this issue of *The Pen* it is filled with many interpretations. When reading some of these pieces we hope that you can feel safe and inspired to write or whatever you are most passionate about. *The Pen* strives to bring people together to just read and to write on.

I believe that the Pen Staff did a marvelous job to bring this issue to life. It's never easy, but they showed great initiative to make this issue as wonderful as it is. Without them I would be lost, I am proud of our work and love this issue deeply as much as they do.

We want to thank Dr. Malphrus for always ushering us to our true potential. She inspires us every day with her kind words of encouragement. She helps guide us on this bumpy road, but she always thinks of our well-being. We can't thank her enough for all the support she gives us every day on this thing we call life.

Thank you for picking up *The Pen* today!

Advisor's Letter

Dear Reader,

Welcome to *The Pen's* Blue Issue. Inside these covers you will find an exploration—in words and images—of the human condition in its myriad shades of blue. At one end of the spectrum there are the hammering heartstrings of down and dirty blues, and at the other end there are “nothing but blue skies from now on” (to quote Irving Berlin). As you open yourself to the creative work here, I think you will be reminded that behind every joy there was probably heartache, and just up the road from every patch of the blues is a hallelujah in the making.

What you hold in your hands is a manifestation of love's labor, not only on the part of the writers and visual artists who contributed to this issue, but also on the part of the dedicated staff of *The Pen* who made this journal a reality. Selena Menjivar, *The Pen's* very capable editor-in-chief, has been steadfast in her commitment to make this issue extraordinary. Alongside her, for *The Pen* staff is all about teamwork, are Samantha Derenthal, Nickell Bligen, Sophia McKeehan, Mackenzie Ware, and Pattie Teter. Each of them has given of their time and talents with unwavering grace and generosity, and the beauty of this issue belies the incredible amount of hard work that brought it to fruition. I couldn't be more proud of their efforts. Yes, perhaps I am biased, but I'm here to tell you that the staff of USCB's four-time award winning literary journal is awesome.

Come, and you will witness for yourself the blue gift they have in store for you.

Onward!

Ellen Malphrus

Faculty Advisor for *The Pen* & The Society of Creative Writers

Featured Artist's Statement

College course taker by day, struggling artist and musician by night. I am Jenna McCarty. New to the Lowcountry, I'm originally from the Midwest; home to generations of young and restless creators. Since moving, I've become a gardener, lover of butterflies, and botanist of sorts. In the little free time I have as a 20-year-old, I find myself sketching and painting the local flora, fauna, and fungi. My overall intention with my art is to pay homage to my pursuit of happiness.

Cover Art: This piece was originally done on 8.5x11 cardstock with acrylics. Like much of my work it involves a form of color study. It's been called by a few names since its creation: *Eyes on The Prize*, *Blue*, and lovingly *Kind of Blue*. It was a creative twist to the portraiture I was making at the time that has inspired many of my post works.

View From the Parthenon

By Hudson DeLoach



Stranger Than Fiction

By Kenzie Dorth

God has writer's block
and while we are lost in
fear and despair
we aren't aware

that God is numbering bathroom tiles and counting toothbrush strokes
as He leans over a countertop filled with pre smoked cigarettes and too many antipsychotic
meds His head fills with thoughts of leaping off a building
for in order to kill others one must imagine that they are dead

In hopelessness and tragedy
we actually forget that in reality
our demise is definite
and like anything worth writing
it comes inexplicably without method

God was ten seconds early and I was three minutes late and before my fate
I contemplate
those ten revealing seconds
where I thanked God for His occasional work of fiction

Greek Ideas, Roman Mind

By Sophia McKeehan

Our conviction is a continuous development

We forget that the mind has its roots

But establishing a new way among the mazes

Moves forward to the consummation of continuity

An individual is the offspring

And so concretely she is

She does not replicate the traditions

Which may converge from the past

Solivagus

By Hudson DeLoach

To go through lands so far you do commit,
And so not stone nor tree nor man you miss,
On each fracture and fraction, you reminisce,
All things you see, your eyes to memory submit.

No thing you know is deemed unfit,
And you, oh you, great joy, take in this,
Each phrase and rhyme in your mind does criss,
The merge of which increases your solid wit.

And yet alone your journey you do bid,
None to come with you, form minds associate.
You know of all the greatest myth.

Did alone they travel, no! Others amid!
I know this journey is your opiate,
And I pray you find another to share it with.

Atropos

By Hudson DeLoach

There among the high, scattered ground,
Of broken paths, none yet have found,
I sought the things to which were bound,
My mirth, my misery, upon that mound.

And that I found follows me now,
And pardons me, "How do go thou,"
From day to day to lean to bow,
To seek that ground in which you plough?"

I have no answer to its queries,
Yet it expounds and puts forth theories,
So many so it forms a series,
But chief among them, it dubs me Ceres.

94
By Edra Stephens



Tsushima

By Jake McClave

Yukio, my friend, these words I shall scribe. That day, withheld from the vain and forgotten.

They came with fire and steel. Arrows of foreign siege illuminated the molested coastline. Father and son, answering the volleys of hellfire, the battle bloodied cry of one final goodbye. Tsushima wept tears of scarlet.

You and I are nothing alike. I am a coward, the shell of a man. The display of death before us, I could not lift my blade. I had accepted my fate, you accepted yours. I think back to when we spoke of our nindo. "One is not judged by how one lives, but by how one dies," your words, not I.

It was in death when you truly were alive, to die without fear, to fight for what you love.

You are buried at the ancient shrine. The gods sorrow filled the sky.

That was the day the blue snow fell.

The King's Remedy

By Kai Bangs

Meet me under the stars by the fountain where I first proclaimed my love for you, my dearest. At dawn, we will set sail on my ship. The three of us will never look back. T'is my love for you and our darling babe that will carry us on. I may not have much to my name, but one thing remains true and undying and that is my love for you and the family we will have.

I dream to see you soon and wake up with you in my arms.

*Yours Always,
Anthony*

The King watched as his soon to be wife read the love letter with a blissful look upon her face. A look so long lost, he'd thought it had been gone forever. But all this time, all it took for the King to see that beautiful smile on his beloved's face, was a letter - from another man.

A servant boy no less.

It was trifling and discomfiting. How can this foul, black-skinned houseboy make a Princess smile like he'd plucked the stars from the heavens and brought them down just for her?

How dare this boy lay with a Princess as beautiful as she and put a babe in her virgin body? And to think the two of them were conspiring against the King as if he were beneath them?

They should be the ones kissing at his feet! He has given everything to the both of them, and they betray his trust by conspiring behind his back!

Blasphemy! The King declared as he marched away from the castle and into the servant's quarters. All who saw him turned their heads and refused to make eye contact. The King sneered at them as a thought crossed his mind.

If anyone hears about the Princess' babe, they will turn on the King in a violent stupor. And God forbid they find the truth - that the babe is not even his?

No. This will not stand.

The King hovers over the servant boy's sleeping form. A blissful smile on his face as he dreams of the King's fiancée. Anger clouds the King's vision as he brings the dagger over his head. He remembers his bride's smile and in a fit of rage, he draws his dagger down with enough force to break steel. Warm blood splatters across his face. He smiles wickedly as the servant boy squirms in his bed, the look of pure fear in his eyes, knowing that these are his final moments.

"Let this be a lesson, boy." The King spits, "You are nothing. And I am King. You should have thought about that as you undressed my wife and took her like the animal you are. And when you behave like an animal." The King twists the dagger and the servant boy cries out in pain, "You die like one."

The King watches the life drain out of the servant boy's eyes, the smile never leaving his face. He rips his dagger out of the filthy boy's chest and wipes away the excess blood.

"What have you done?"

The voice of his bride drew the King from his raged stupor. He looked at the dagger in his hand and at the servant lying lifeless in his bed.

The servant's boy's eyes were still open, but there was nothing there. The King watched as the Princess rushed over to the servant, taking his lifeless body into her arms.

Tears flowed down her face as she cried out to the heavens begging God to bring the love of her life back.

“Take me instead! God, please give him back!”

But he didn't. The servant boy stayed lying lifeless, not a single breath of intake to be heard. The Princess' cries were sure to draw attention to them. Quickly, the King gathered the Princess into his arms. She thrashed against him, struggling to keep her love in her arms. But her efforts were futile. The King was stronger than her. Both in strength and will. He refused to let anyone know of his bride's infidelity and bastardous child.

Eight months had passed. The King and the newly appointed Queen were now married. The Kingdom congratulated the King and Queen on her pregnancy, not knowing the truth of the bastard child. When the time for the babe to arrive, the King declared no one shall be allowed to see the bastard child, knowing they would question the babe's dark complexion. HE could not get rid of it before without hurting his wife, but now that the child was being born, he had no intention of letting it live past tonight.

He waited patiently outside of the midwife's chambers, waiting for the cry of the babe, but it never came.

The confused King marched into the room, seeing only his wife, blood all around her sheets.

The King rushed over to her and looked around. Other than the dazed look on her face, the Queen seemed to be fine.

But the child and the midwife were both gone.

He looked to his wife who just smiled at him.

“You'll never find my child.” The King was furious. He grabbed the Queen by the throat and began to squeeze her neck.

“You will never see the light of day again. You are my wife and you will learn to respect me. Do I make myself clear?”

The Queen narrowed her baby blue eyes at him then nodded her head. The King let her go and she erupted into a fit of coughs.

The Queen put a shaky hand to her stomach, afraid to look in the mirror and confirm her suspicions. Please God. You took the love of my life. Please have mercy on me and have me not with her child. Not with that monster. The Queen prayed every chance she had, not willing to lose her faith. But each morning, day after day, the Queen found herself hovering over the toilet, emptying all of the contents in her stomach.

“My Queen?” One of the servant girls asked from the opening to the bathroom.

She was small and frail. Her dark hair and skin reminded the Queen so much of her lost love.

The Queen began to burst into tears. The servant girl - her name was Devina - broke her professional attitude and embraced the Queen in a much-needed hug.

“Devina, I do not wish to have his child. To have it and raise it would be a betrayal to Anthony. How can I do that to him?” The Queen cried harder at the sound of her true love’s name. It was the first time she’s said his name since - that day.

“My brother loved you more than anything in the world. He would have understood why you gave your child away. You needed to protect her. But now you have to make the choice to be this babe’s mother.” Devina took the Queen’s face into her hands and wiped away the tears, “Whatever choice you make, my brother and I stand behind you.”

Devina’s eyes seemed to stare into the Queen’s soul. She knew what the Queen was thinking about before she had the chance to say anything. The Queen’s thoughts seemed wicked, but there was no way she could live with this child. Not with everything she’s witnessed.

Anthony died two years ago. One year ago, her baby was willingly taken from her arms to be raised by another family. And now, she was pregnant with a monster’s child. What if the child turned out to be just like its father? Cold. Ruthless. Murderous.

“I cannot have this baby.” The Queen’s voice was full of authority. All the questions she held before were gone. She knew what she had to do.

That night, the Queen snuck out of her chambers and climbed as high as she could go, still wearing her undergarments and nightclothes. The night was as cold as her husband’s heart. The wind blew under her dress and the Queen imagined herself flying away. Letting the wind take her beyond the prison she’s forced to stay in for the rest of her life. The Queen looked out into the night sky. Barely any stars could be seen through the clouds blurring the view.

With one hand on her stomach, she lifted a leg, balancing on a single foot, the gravel digging into her soles.

Everything seemed to be in slow motion as the Queen stepped off the ledge, the wind catching her for a moment before a hand is pulling her back onto the ground of the roof.

The Queen rushed to get away from whoever grabbed her, desperately trying to escape this Hell she’s constantly in.

“You will not kill my child, whore.” The King’s voice sent a chill down the Queen’s spine. She froze in place. How did he find out about the babe?

It did not matter. He knew and the Queen knew the only way she would be able to escape is to give him what he wants. Someone to love him just as much as he loves himself.

Reluctantly, the Queen followed her husband back inside with the promise that once the babe is born, she would come back to finish the job.

The Queen’s funeral turnout had been exceptional. Everyone in the kingdom came to show their respects and say their goodbyes.

At the head of the altar was the King and his precious three-year-old daughter.

Clouds Gather

By Hudson DeLoach

Amelie's eyes drifted over the water bordering the defiant stretch of concrete that was the wharf. A bustling hub of comers and goers centered around a single, monolithic entity, the MRSS Aquitania. It was a beautiful ship, or so Amelie had been told. Yet, she hardly noticed the ship's designer lines or ornate portholes or the four great funnels or even the illustrious name bolted onto the landward side of the ship. What occupied her attention, every ounce of it since her eyes had drifted from the concrete edifice and slipped off the purpose-built figure of the Aquitania, was the vast expanse of deep blue water. A thought flickered across her mind, someone like her, from the inland, ought to be in absolute awe of the expanse. How could there ever possibly be so much water? Her thoughts turned grim, how could there be so much water? A cool breeze passed over the wharf as she clutched the flaps of her jacket, pulling them in tighter to offer some protection. Not just against the cold but the water itself which now seemed to be rising, filling her whole field of view as her heart skipped one of its increasingly oncoming beats. Her throat tightened as she let out shallow breaths. Her head felt almost weightless as...

A hand rested on her shoulder, "Amelie?" A man's voice with a single question began to clear the growing clouds which had overwhelmed her mind.

Implications

By Sophia McKeehan

The law is a generalization

An implication to feign a reality

Ultimately, logic must come first

An underlying conception itself

Always open to uncertainty

Already shown to limit freedom

Boundless

By Samantha Mae

I would scour every inch of the world to pick you the very last flower.

Protecting its drying and fading petals until I deliver it to you.

If the world is bare, with no flowers left

I will create one for you with my soft hands, working until they wrinkle.

A flower made out of grass or hay.

If the world is full of flowers, blooming exuberantly,

I will pick them all, exposing my warm love for you,

Every day until I will have to create a flower for you,

Made out of grass or hay.

959
By Edra Stephens



Cherry Point

By Gracie Laseter

Down the curves of a winding dirt road
Nestled amongst the oak trees,
Protected by the gangling branches of the Loblolly trees
Carefully decorated with Spanish Moss
Lies the place in which I call home
Infused with the smell of the salt marshes,
Framed by the patient waters of the Okatie River
Is a place encapsulated by memories,
Of mine, my family, and the people who have come to be family
The gentle souls of Cherry Point watched me as I grew
Like the sunflowers that lived in my father's garden.
Protected, nurtured and played alongside my siblings and I
As we navigated growing up.
The people who lived along this road
Were like none other
Interesting, kind and truly one of a kind

Dunes

By Sam Messinides

Sand has to learn to hold onto anything else
before it learns to hold itself,

clinging to driftwood and broken shells,
or anything that'll quench its thirst
for stillness,

twisting around the ankles of lonely lovers
who stood in place for too long,

blonde hair wavering into sea oats,
blue eyes washing out into sky,
praying that one day they will be enough

and that someone will unravel
their love from the dunes.

The sand begs for stillness,
but I am disappeared and become morning,
dawning at the end of the island,

bleeding my stillness into the waves,
holding myself tightly as I drift
out to sea.

Lifeboat

By Samantha Mae

Am I beginning to drown?

Or getting comfortable with the depth?

Dark eerie water shivers up my legs

Past my hips, spine, and shoulders.

My neck is warm, tense from anxieties...

My feet kicking around to keep me afloat,

Trying to find a rock or something to stand on.

Waves crashing around my face

And Ears are ringing, full of water.

Another night, being lit up by the lighthouse

But no keeper inside.

Elm

By Samantha Mae

What I once thought was a calming nice spot
Became a frightening nightmare of distress
I sat once again beneath this dark shade
Wondering who sat before me right here
By chance did they vanish leaving this spot
It's possible, this tree has done much worse
Why did I think to sit here earlier ?
Because of the cool shade? And hanging moss?
I wish I let myself leave the seat open.

96
By Edra Stephens



Pervading Waters

By Robert-Nickell Bligen

Your crimson waves move round and round our ships,
As madness bears its fangs beneath our skin
Your “water” sings, inviting us to dip
Our bodies in and waste us truly thin.
I see the beauty in your eldritch glow
As well as horrors gliding underneath
I comprehend the way you choose to flow
A beast that waits a while to bare its teeth
My people seem to fear the way you are,
And try to flee our fast-approaching fate
Yet none of us will really get that far,
As you’re inflicted with a need to sate.
Now come as there are people to be saved,
Wash and drown us in the one Great Wave.

Sinking Feeling

By Hudson DeLoach

The gunshot echoed off the warehouse's brick walls as Malcolm's body hit the wharf with a dull thump.

"F-f-fuck!" A lean man pressed himself back against the warehouse wall.

"Shut the fuck up!" A large man with a gaunt-framed revolver bellowed.

"Moore—" Doyle managed to moan out with a tinge of terror.

"SHUT THE FUCK UP!" Moore bellowed a second time, as he flicked the safety on his pistol and shoved it down the front of his pants.

"What the fuck..." Doyle stepped away from the wall, looking over the corpse in front of them.

"Take his boots off."

"What?"

"Take his damn boots off," Moore said as he turned to walk away, Doyle's head turned to watch him approach their car.

His eyes, however, drifted back to the body.

"W-why are we.." He took a step back from the body as Moore returned. He glanced back as Moore's hand slapped down onto his shoulder, directing Doyle as he pleased.

"He was a snitch, feeding the Garda." He released Doyle as he shoved him towards the body. "Take off his boots, they'll slip off and rise him up before we're good and gone."

"Rise him up?" Doyle asked as he knelt down and struggled to get the boots off, his hands shaking.

"He's going in the Liffey you melter, now hurry the fuck up." As the boots came off, Moore moved to the head. Doyle felt no choice but to comply as he helped to lift the body. After a yard, Doyle stopped.

"What about the boots?"

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Forget the fucking boots." Moore pushed forward with the body, forcing Doyle to keep moving. His temperament cooled as Doyle became more compliant.

"Head towards the car."

The two men hauled the body towards the car, coming to a halt as Moore dropped the head into the trunk.

"Leave the legs out," Moore said as Doyle let go of the legs. Then, Moore knelt down as he began to tie the body's limbs together.

Moore talked as he worked, "We're in this together now Doyle, thick as blood."

Doyle could only weakly reply, “Yeah.”

“And you aren’t going to stab me in the back now, not going to be a fucker.” Moore turned to face Doyle, stopping what he was doing.

“No.” Doyle meekly responded.

“Good.”

There was a long silence as Moore finished his work. Once done, he lifted up a set of weights and took the head again. Doyle, with only some coaxing, took the feet as they made their way to the edge of the wharf, setting the body down as Moore tied the weight to its feet.

As they stopped, Doyle noticed the weights out of the corner of his eyes, “Were you... Did you plan this?”

“No,” Moore responded without even looking back to Doyle.

“Those weights... They’re new aren’t they?”

Moore sighed in frustration as he looked back to Doyle, letting go of the rope. “You searching for intent or some shit Doyle?”

“No—”

“Good, then shut the fuck up.” His voice raised into anger as he spoke. Doyle was silent as he watched Moore finish and roll the body off the edge.

The body struck the water.

Ballot for Tomorrow

By Jake McClave

don't give up.
for it will Haunt you.
it will,
Destroy you.

be the few.
the dying hopes of Legends.
the graceful Poetics in all things.

Remember.

don't give into the Rest.
not even when it's Dark.
alone with the Monsters.

Life is our Conquest.

sail with the Storm.
for your days will see an End.

Love.

for it is a Fight.
A Brutal Fight Indeed.

Thoroughly Naturalistic

By Sophia McKeehan

Doubt and destruction permeate

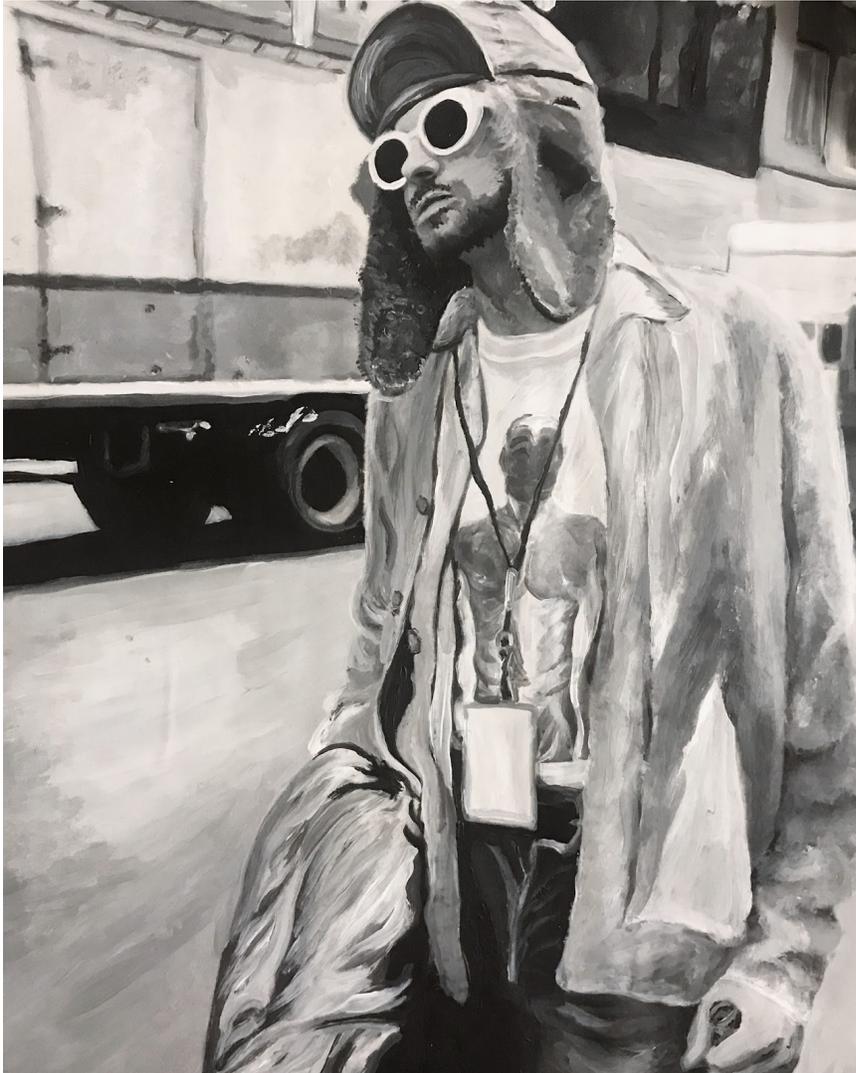
It seems essential, developmental

In the face of our (almost) discoveries

We smudge out the hope

Untitled

By Jenna McCarty



Good job boss

By Amir Jenkins

You're using energy but it's just being wasted.

Working for something that doesn't bring you joy and it's just takes from you.

I'll get back the hours that I wasted at this place.

Wouldn't even care which means I should care.

Eyes watching tentatively but guidance is never around.

Radiating the same pride ancestry betrayal that caused my people to become capitalistic puppets.

A snake in the grass barking orders but forgetting there still wolves hiding in the flock.

They say that the shepherd should leave their flock to safety not to slaughter.

But who's to say about the flock from the abandoned shepherd?

Rules that are in place for our downfall.

Good job boss

Lovers Rock-down

By Edra Stephens

These trains are running way too slow today, and I've got to get to 59th street before curtain calls. This is her first show. I promised I would be there. Shit. What's happened now. Damn can these people please shut up. I can't hear. I pray everyone just stays where they are. Thank God I decided to sit in the corner. Dear Lord do not let anyone touch me, keep me safe, calm, and protected... That hum. Whose humming – Janet Kay's *Silly Games*?

That summer 1979. Whew it was hot. The sun burned a different way in the city for this country girl. The sunlight was not the only thing burning that summer. I fell into him, he was tall, locks flowing down his back, and a swag that made your thighs burn. I will never forget tripping over the Bacchus doorway. Hearing "hey batty gyal, is ya a goodas or di rude gyal?" My head popped really quick. Who the hell? All I saw was a smile that lit up the sky. I knew I would be whatever he wanted.

Who's that humming "*Silly Games*" by Janet Kay? His voice cutting through the screams, and cries is calming, familiar. Our first house party, we dance to that song. I walked into a different world. The food, the music, the bodies moving, slow methodically spellbinding. I had never seen a room with all the furniture moved, nothing except speakers taller I could not see over. Booming thunder rolling throughout the block. All eyes turned when we entered. I didn't know what was being said, but I knew it was about me. His voice "Jah know, mi baby, look good." Everything disappeared with his voice, I melted into him. The way he smiled radiated through me, lighting a fire that still burns. Leaving a voice echoing through the walls, where duppy's dance to whispers.

Thank Jah. The lights. I will walk the rest of the way... Damn got to look where I'm going. Wait what? "Yuh empress, yuh good?" That voice. No. Not my sunshine.

Breukelen

By Samantha Mae

One small shop,
A shop,
That filled our noses & was our see you soon.
A see you soon,
That became a distanced chance.
A distanced chance,
That gave a new outlook & wealth.
Wealth,
An abundance of joy & life,
Which we received from one small shop.
Brooklyn's finest.

Alternative

By Sophia McKeehan

We're born with a choice

Yet personifying shamelessly

We think of her from this exalted position

Inevitable, aggressive, dominating

Personifying the world with success

Campaigning a habit

Coloring all that we can

Signifying a sinful deterioration

Of all that we were

And all we could be

Untitled

By Jenna McCarty



Cold Feet

By Kenzie Dorth

My cold freezing feet

Stood in front of the motel

On Christmas Day

As the flakes fell

I remembered

Her and I playing in the snow

We played in heaps of snow

Stomping our little feet

Running 'cause we remembered

That there were sleds at the motel

And as the snow fell

We were happily together that day

We were sixteen on New Year's Day And we didn't care about the snow Instead of childish games we fell

In love at the old motel

Full of good times we remembered

She never remembered

That on that day

We were supposed to meet at the cheap motel Her, pure and clean as snow

Our naked legs and feet

Intertwined, but instead my hopes fell

Even though my hope fell

And she had not remembered

And I thought she had cold feet

We moved on past the day
And kissed in the snow
Behind our favorite motel

They found her overdosed at the broken- down motel Where her marriage fell
Apart like snow
Fell from the sky she remembered
The day
He never came and had cold feet

My cold feet
Jumped off the bridge that day
Down the road from the old motel
And I fell
like snow
I remembered
Everything

White Bend

By Kenzie Dorth

They used to call my town
White Bend
For you could count the number
Of colored people on one hand
In a population of thousands

White Bend
Where the one black kid
Was expected to win the track meet
Where the Asian
Had to be the smartest in the class But otherwise
They were good for nothing

Sunday was no longer a day
But a lying lazy boy
Domingo! Domingo!
Sunday! Sunday!
They taunt

But White Bend is a home

To the honest, distinguished
Middle class
They do not have the eyes of murderers
But he might!
(A finger points)
He's from the city!
(Another finger pokes)

And all of a sudden

It does not matter

Who has murder

In their eyes

If there is a gun

For their hand

They still call my town

White Bend

For you could count

On one hand

The number of colored people

In a population of thousands

The Plainfield Blues

By Jake McClave

Wild asparagus lines the vacant dirt road of my arrival. The soil breathes the same air as I. Mounds of dirt turn to Earth. Green blades rise before the moon. A Plainfield that lay beneath the clouds, flattened by its might. Enormously quiet, it was the only noise I could describe.

At night the wind chills. Dew coats the green skin before me. Fog floats like phantoms, haunting the early light. Yellow wings, waiting for my rise. Work before the sun arrives, you might be able to rest before it retires. No, my summer was not one for those who get tired.

Plumes of pesticides infect my lungs, yet I still breathe healthy and young. Not many return more than twice. A long day's work is always carried by the calluses, tattooed into my flesh. The life of a field boy is one I don't recommend.

Delivered by jet, catered to insects, we rise and fall. Work fast and efficient, and you might just be the one for the job. Perfection is the standard anything less equals disaster, might not be so wise to move any faster. Don't count the days. Time will only take its time.

On this farm there were no livestock, only machines that work in the sky. Herding jets and watching them fly. The buzzing engine rings in my mind as I attempt to close my eyes.

At the end of it all the Plainfield Blues, still got me high.

Motive

By Sophia McKeehan

The sun acts with a motive

A generous giver, a gift

He warrants an irrespective cause

The origin is thereby not determined

A wonderer, a wanderer

Walks under the sky

And does not ask why

She merely sings *thank you*

Pound of Flesh

By Sam Messinides

Boys live off the irony.
Of giving themselves away
to grow.

A strip off your back,
dripping with silent.
Red tears.
And the skin from your ribs,
better to see the
puckering fire in your lungs.
Begging for air.

Your hands.
And your heart too.
Feeling is unnecessary
and love.
Is undeserved.

And soon you'll be a 'man.'

Of hateful bone,
tongueless mouth agape.
A scream of anguish.
Begging to feel
anything but.
Burning

Untitled

By Jenna McCarty



The Unsaid Letters

By Kit Crosby

There are letters I wish to write

To those that wronged me and the ones I deeply care about

For my words to sting like the back of their hand

For my sentences to scream until your ears bleed

For the venom dripping from my mouth to pierce their skin as they hold the page.

But I hold back my hand,

I do not write,

I keep my mouth shut

And I turn the other cheek

I will not become what they were

And still are

Mind Reader

By Kit Crosby

Sometimes people wish to be able to read the thoughts and minds of others

But do you really?

Do you want to hear the cries

The screams

Or nothing?

Some people's minds are full

Some are void

Some want escape

Others want to be found

So, I will ask you again

Do you want to read minds,

Or do you just want to control their mind?

Teetering
By Samantha Mae

Living,
A blessing,
A new cold breath in.

Existing,
A curse,
A shaky warm breath out.

Living,
Smiling,
Jumping into the deep end.

Existing,
Sulking,
Drowning in the shallows.

The Pop Shop

By Kyleigh Blackwell

Everyone told Crissy she was crazy when she said that she wanted her grandpa's old poster in her bookstore, The Pop Shop. She loved comics and books growing up, just like him, so he had left it to her in his will when he died. That was something that he was adamant about. Her grandma didn't understand why, and he never mentioned the reason to anyone else either. It was a pain in the ass to haul this poster down several flights of stairs and to find a good place for it on the wall, seeing as it's fucking massive. But it was completely worth seeing the comic bubble line "Naturally, I refused!" on the wall. She even had to spend a day touching up the paint so that it wouldn't look so dingy and rusted. She didn't care if she needed the money. The sign and her shop may never bring her much financial success like a big box store, but it kept her happy knowing that her Pops is proud of what she created. That alone was enough to keep her going every day.

So, just like every other day, Crissy dragged herself out of bed, made a cup of coffee and schlumped into the shower, mug and all. She dressed herself and made her usual route to the shop, not too far from home. She unlocked the gate and started her usual opening procedures. She counted the cash and put it where it went before she turned on all the lights and music. It wasn't long after she flipped the 'OPEN' that she already had someone walking in.

"Good morning! Welcome to The Pop Shop! Let me know if you need help finding anything."

The man ignored her and continued to finger through the shelves of books and dislodged the displays she had just fixed from last night. The gentleman spent around 30 minutes in the store before he made to leave. Crissy turned her back and waited for the door to ring open and closed, but it never came. She turned around and found him standing near the register, staring intently at her grandpa's poster.

Trying to interest him in some comic products, she asked, "It's a funny little piece, isn't it?"

The male patron turned to her suddenly, seeming hysteric.

"Are you the owner?!"

"Yes?"

"That poster, are you aware of what it is?"

"It was my grandpa's favorite decor piece. Why?"

"Lady, that is a rare famous piece of art from a collection by Simon Squall."

"Oh really? That's cool." Crissy went to return to the register, not interested in selling anymore, but he stopped her.

"How much?"

"I'm sorry?"

"How much?! I need that piece! I'll pay anything!"

"It's not for sale."

"I beg your pardon?!"

She tried to tell him again that it wasn't for sale, but he insisted that she must sell it to him. He even went as far as to tell her that her shitty little bookstore looked like it could use the money. She refused him for the last time and asked him to leave if he wasn't going to purchase any actual products. After the encounter, she took a deep breath and resumed going about her day.

Time passed, and the male buyer, whose name he never gave, continued to come into the shop every other day to pressure Crissy into selling her most precious possession. Every other day he stands in front of her counter and demands that she give him the art like he is a spoiled toddler demanding his fourth toy car to destroy. She can almost picture him as a tiny baby bitching and whining while throwing the worst temper tantrum. This went on for 3 weeks until she confided in her friend Emma, who only suggested that Crissy closed for a break so that Emma could take her to Sweet Greens.

Emma had been just talking for 15 minutes about how Crissy needed to just throw the poster away before Crissy had finally had enough.

"Why can't you just get rid of it? He's gonna keep coming back until you either give it to him or get rid of it. It's just a giant hunk of metal that you bitched about having to carry around"

"Because it's priceless, Emma!" Crissy paused and took a deep breath, trying to calm herself. "Because it makes me feel like grandpa is standing behind me every day and watching over me while I live happily, just like he wanted."

Emma stared at her with sad eyes compared to her previous annoyed ones. Emma had never known her grandparents, so she couldn't understand what was so special about this poster. Crissy looked back down at her over-priced salad that now looked more like a bowl of the cash that the buyer waved in her face one time when she said it was irreplaceable to her. Just buy something else.

Emma dropped the topic after that, knowing that she had no merit to argue about the value of a sheet of metal. She told Crissy about how she would support her in whatever she needed. She even promised to come in and help around the store next week while she was off from modeling. Emma gave her a hug and kiss when they left. If Crissy knew about the bombardment she would get after lunch about value, she would have asked her friend to walk her back to the store instead of parting ways.

As soon as Crissy rounded the corner next to her store, she was immediately stopped by 2 men and a woman. One of the men was the buyer that had been harassing her.

"Yes ma'am! This is her! This is the priss who won't sell the work!" The man sneered at her.

The woman turned to her, but she looked kinder than her associate.

"I see. Pardon the intrusion, but my name is Peggy Anne. I work with the local NY Art Museum. My assistant here tells me that you have a rare piece from Squall and are refusing to sell it to him because he wouldn't buy from your store."

Crissy couldn't do anything but stare at her and her assistant's audacity.

"...you must be joking."

She jumped a little as if she'd flicked her.

"No miss, I am not joking." She looked to her assistant and then back to Crissy.

"Is that not what happened?"

Crissy then began to unload everything onto the woman in the middle of the sidewalk about how her assistant had been harassing her for almost a month about her grandpa's poster and how she refused to sell it because of how much it meant to her.

"I mean, why would I put so much work into hanging that heavy thing and touching up the paint if I just wanted to sell it the first chance I got?!"

"YOU ALTERED THE PAINTING?!"

The assistant was red in the face from embarrassment. His boss turned to him and told him to hush. She would deal with him later. Miss Anne turned back to Crissy and profusely apologized for her assistant's behavior.

"You have a lovely business, and I am sorry that he made it a living hell for so long. I'd like to reimburse you for your troubles and I would also love to invite you to coffee to talk about possibly using your store as an art display? We would obviously pay you for the space we use. Are you free next week?"

"What about the painting?! She's made it worthless!"

"Then there is nothing to be done about it. Now, about next week?"

Crissy felt like the smile she had on her face might become permanent. The only thing on her mind as she walked into her store with Peggy to check her calendar was the story her grandpa told about how someone had wanted to buy his poster off him in the 90s.

Well, naturally, I refused.

Dancing with the Devil in the Blood Moon

By Edra Stephens

There are no stars, the moon is black, and my heart is beating like a drum going down this road. The air is dry and cool, each curve I get more nauseous. Not knowing what is beyond this glass. I can't see anything, it seems nothingness'. I only pray we do not run off the road. It appears there may be water on the two sides. The darkness has disguised the landscape, if there is grass there are no buildings, or homes to be seen. No lights from a town. Yet, these random white trucks parked every couple of miles with lights blasting is very unsettling. I fear where we are going, with no place to run.

I know this was a bad decision; we should have said no to them. They could have found the location on their own. I only agreed because they begged for help. Getting into the van was a slight slip of consciousness on my part. But, I'm here now so what? I must figure out the next move. Some music would certainly help. I could never take the quiet for long periods. This has been too long of a period for me. My mind is swirling, I need it to stop. I don't know what that little pink pill was, they said it would help me it's not helping. These fingers crawling up spine. I want to scream; no sounds are coming out.

Please make it stop, the pounding is killing me, I can't take it anymore... we break. What's happening? Doors open. I feel hands touching me, darkness is everywhere. Suddenly... the sound cuts through air, hitting me deep within. The heavens light up, my body starts, I let loose with wild abandonment. My voice lost stuck inward. Did anyone find my red boots?

The morning glow is heavenly. Nothing but pure white snow. It's lovely, I want to fly upon it, and gently land like a snowflake. It's just too cold, and I don't have a warm coat. My boots have a hole in them, and I think they are too small now. I used to play outside in the snow when I was little. We made snow-angels. They were simply amazing. It was like they flew down with wings barely touching the ground, and wrapped them around each other. I became one with them.

"Come on dear it's time for your med's," someone said.

What. Are they talking about me, why do they keep talking at me, asking "where is she?" I'm right here, why can't you hear me. I'm at the point, I just want to know. I'm talking to them, my mouth is moving, I can feel it move. Please, hear me, I want out. Let me be free. I can't find my new shoes.

The snow is unusually beautiful today, it's falling again, the archangels are flying with such grace, and beauty.

"This is sad, no one knows what happen to her. She's constantly moving her mouth, and nothing comes out. Poor girl," they said.

Who are they talking about? Have you seen my boots?

The women all dressed in white just shook their heads, going poor girl continually. I don't see or know what girl they are talking about. I do feel sorry for her, just because they keep going poor girl.

Long ago I asked my mother... do you like... I loved that song, just the flashing lights were coming down, and I was only helping my friends. The pink pills were so pretty they. I should

have stayed home that night. They said they needed me, and I kind of knew where they were going, and I love a good party. I like dancing free.

The hitchhikers they picked up were not nice. Not nice at all. There was so much blood, just raw, sickeningly sweet, and sticky blood, everywhere. All I wanted to do was scrub my face, my body until it was raw, and pure again.

“She’s going into convulsions,” they said.

“Poor sweet girl, what the hell happened to her,” they continued.

Help, help, help...

“Did you hear something,” the pretty lady asked.

“No, wait, maybe. No, I didn’t.” she said.

She lowered near my ear, ever so softly she said, “my dearest girl, you will never tell what happened that night. I know you can hear me. That is why I’m here to make sure you will always stay quiet.”

Help, help, help...

My boots, where are my boots? Brain, and mouth together, work now. The red boots. I had boots when I was little, they were not red. I know I had some red boots. I just can’t put it all together.

“Well, well now... aren’t we trying really hard, how’s that puzzle going?” the pretty lady asked. “I can see it in your eyes, and these stupid nurses feel sorry for you. If you really wanted to talk you would.”

“See, you may have forgotten, but I remember. I saw the faces of your victims. You jumped out that van and let loose. The images show you dancing hypnotized, pulling off those red boots, stripping your clothes, ripping them to shreds. Blood covering your body from top to bottom. Now your voice is caked with each of their dried, gooey, clots. That’s what has your tongue. The blood-spattered all over it.

“Aaaah...aaaaah... AAAAAAAAAAH!”

“What? How.”

The nurses are coming, I did it. Words I just need my words now, I pray I live to say the truths. She’s not going anywhere.

“Dear, can you try to speak? Take your time, it will come,” she said.

I’m trying, I want to. It seems like yesterday, I planned to go partying with friends. We heard about this wild scene happening about thirty miles from school. I just wanted to party, nothing serious. So, I decided to go with them. There was four of us, my roommate Anna. She was young, inexperienced, the driver, Dan, and his friend Carlos. I met the guys in lab class. They seem kind of cool, and Carlos was really cute. They cooked up these pills in lab one day while the professor was in his office sleeping.

I gave it a try; I mean there were colors. Dancing everywhere, and I wanted to dance with them. The guys picked Anna, and I up that Friday evening, heading to the weekend party.

We took two of those pink pills when we got in the van. There was this pink rat that started talking to me. Talking, I'm serious. On the way we stopped by this gas station, and the old man said, "I hope you kids are not going to that place in the woods." We of course said no.

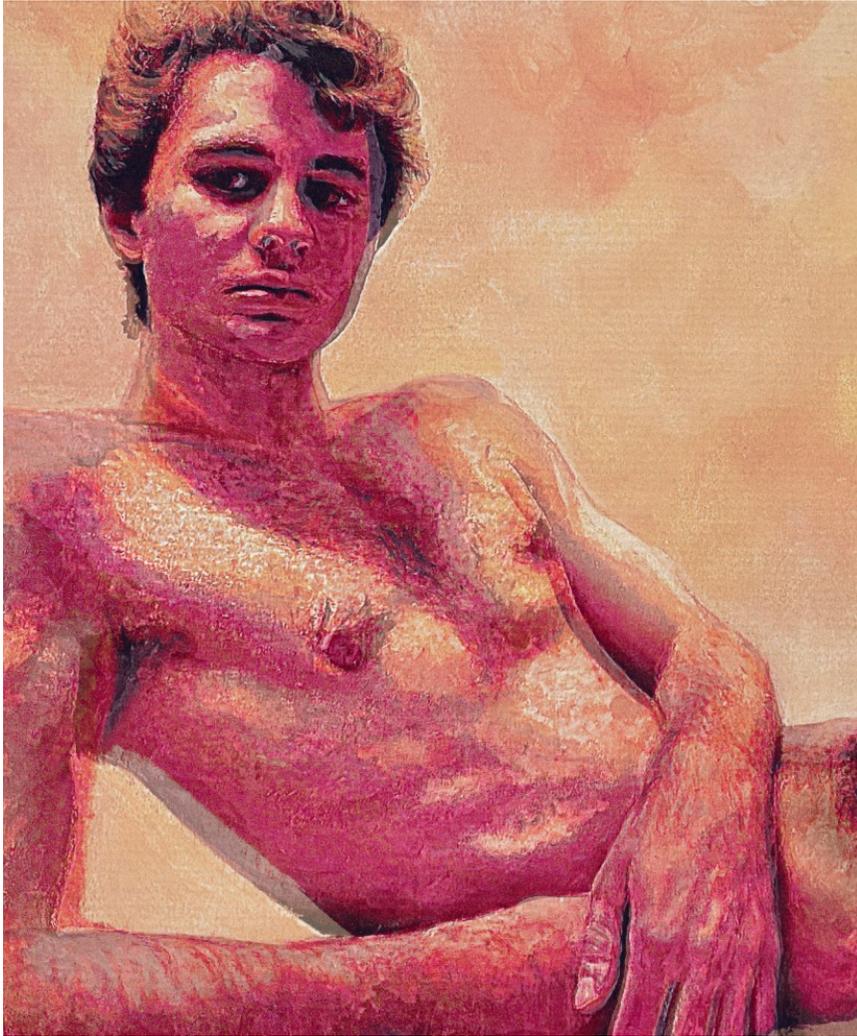
We lied, that's exactly where we were heading. These guys at the gas station started talking to my roommate, and they wanted to go to the woods. We were like the more the merry. I knew something was not right the moment they stepped in the van. We started smoking some hashish, I felt really weird. They started touching Anna, I was yelling at them. They pulled a gun out, and demanded we turn down this road. We stopped. Everyone was screaming, and the colors were just spinning. They took the guys out the van, I couldn't let them hurt her. I just couldn't... I hear...outside.

They opened the door, and made me do horrible things to Anna while filming. I don't want to remember; I don't want to speak. EVER.

When I got to the woods, I just wanted to dance the blood off. I wanted to be clean, feel clean. I can't scrub it off. It's still on me. My white boots-soaked red. The white rat comes every now, and again to talk, she's real pretty.

Untitled

By Jenna McCarty



Same For Me

By Jesse Elliot

I'll remember you for folly beach

Hand-in-hand we lay in peace

The white sand on our cheeks

As water laps upon our feet

I'll remember you my teenage dream

For the reckless kids we used to be

And the life we shared as we grew out of our teens

And learned what heartache means

I'll remember you for your head strong smile

And the way we lived and loved denial

Cause it meant that we believed

We would always be

I'll remember you for the way you'd laugh

When the joy we shared was all we'd have

Two reckless wannabes

That's who you'll stay to me

I'll remember you for the endless nights

With my hands in your hair and yours on my thigh

And the moonlight on my sheets

May we never leave

I'll remember you for the way you'd breathe

As I laid awake to watch you dream

And I'll run to you in my mind when I can't sleep

I'm promising

I'll remember you for your new tattoo

And the way it burned as I followed you

When you took my hand and we leapt right off that peak

Into the sea

I'll remember you for your long blonde hair

And the way it fell as you stood and stared at the precipice

Just before we'd leap

If you do the same for me



Coffee Gone Cold

By Kenzie Dorth

Just like that he was gone

A whisper

In the wind, coffee

Gone cold to think

Time

Could stand still

And here we are still

Left behind his husband gone

Mad this time

Around hearing a whisper

In his ear to think

He died over a cup of coffee

Hot, piping hot coffee

Sits still

And we begin to think

About how quickly one can be gone

With Death's whisper

There is no more time

Back in a different time

Back when he didn't drink coffee

And he wouldn't whisper

But scream and giggle still

Young before he was gone

Before he had time to think

About decisions to think

About guys and guys time and time

Again before virginity is gone

With actions hot and steamy like a cup of coffee

And still

Death will soon whisper

How peculiar that three letters is Death's whisper To think

That DIE, HIV, and AIDS still

End time

And like a cup of coffee

Just like that it's gone

Gone is coffee time

Skinny Love

By Gracie Laseter

His mahogany eyes locked with mine,

I was left speechless.

Any words circulating in my mouth had been flushed out

As this beautiful creature stared back at me.

A sweet, soft, atmosphere surrounded the two of us,

Both too afraid to say the words

That lingered on our tongues.

While our eyes ran wild with love ballads,

Ones that would never be heard

As long as we remained in this stalemate of

Skinny Love.

Far Cry

By Samantha Mae

For the length of a winds howl

I am sending you kisses

For the width of the oceans

I am saving you my warmth

For the brightness of the sun rising

I am embracing our growth a

For the distance we suffer

I pray for less.

Tarragon

By Hudson DeLoach

I am consumed by your colossal eyes,
And which my ignorance is with chastised,
And knowledge behind, fate for me denies,
And yet afar from you, my eyes despised.

You were to me like the she stone maker,
To all unfortunates met your gaze.
But in proximity you forsake her,
And become that gold-clad one she betrays.

But I know you are not real, not here,
You are of our collective fantasies.

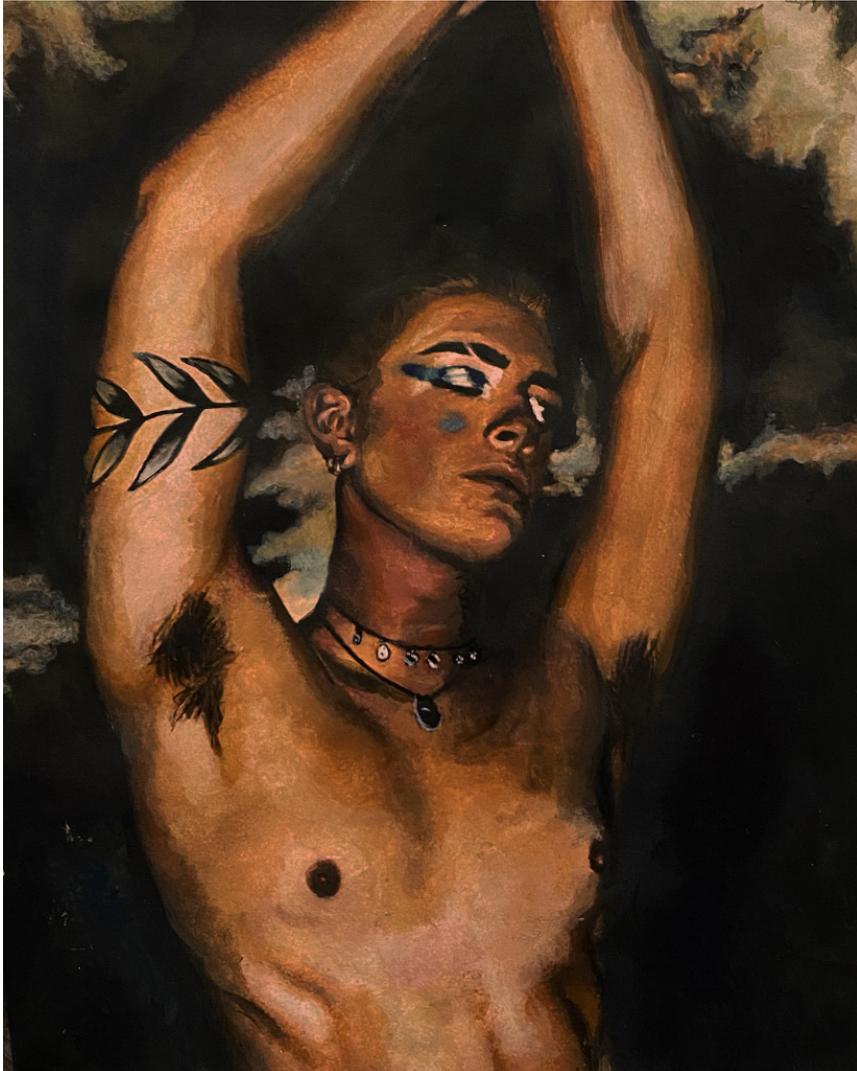
In our dreams you appeared to take flight,
But when we awake as I awoke, fall,
Your name lands on pages and not on ground.

I pray to but once wake and you appear,
And in person receive our flatteries.

But in absence my pen to paper write,
And my contribution however small,
I hope will undo the wrong that left you uncrowned.

Untitled

By Jenna McCarty



Drawings from my ex-friends

By Mary Rickenbaker

it's a multicolored eye,
with shadows and highlights
and flexing hues,

it's a weakness of mine,
to have someone i know I'm bound to lose,

if I had a nickel, I'd have two,
if it's between me and you,
I don't like to choose,

i don't want to be hurt,
i don't like being used,
i don't tolerate toxicity,

I'm tired of my own complicity.
why does your art betray you?
why do my friends betray me?

when I leave you, I hope that you'll see.
I won't be friends with someone who treats others like they're less than free.

Puff

By Mary Rickenbaker

We buried you yesterday,
I sent you away with my pearls,
I doubt you'll need them at all but you just looked so small.
You died young and bored,
The only freedom you got was from a plastic ball
You were just so small.
Like a dandelion you blew away,
A puffball spread into a million little pieces,
Now I write poetry next to your grave.
It's strange how things seem like they'll last forever,
But forever never came.
I feel ashamed,
What if there was something I could've done to save you from pain?
One thing I know,
My oak tree will never be the same.

Perhaps

By Kenzie Dorth

Perhaps the world is bland my dear, perhaps the world is bland

The lonely never receive love only the strong of mind control fate does the bitter taste of ugly thoughts seal our fates atlas?

Do the lovers ever feel alone though company they give?

The strength has left bland after taste and that is where we live

Perhaps the world is bland my dear, perhaps the world is bland

Gemini Noctis

By Sam Messinides

Starlight seems a dimension of its own,
removed from the shadowed space between
their cinderous forms, glowing like
moonless soliloquies whispered in
a time before time.

But stars can only echo for so long
before they are gone,

unplanting themselves from the night
like lost childhoods.

I want to catch them as they fall
and hold them, burning against the hollows
of my chest because I want to bleed
the way candles do.

Metaphysics & Logic

By Sophia McKeehan

Between nature and art

The second has superiority

The perseverance of nature is inscrutable

And it is not for us to explain

We are the beekeepers

The tenders of the mother

The ones with responsibility

Untitled

By Jenna McCarty



The Tin-Pan Chemise

By Edra Stephens

“Run, girl!” he shouted.

“I’m running as fast as I can, it’s moving too quickly!” Sirens blaring, I stumble.

He grabs me, wraps the rope, around us. Thankfully it’s tight.

“Hold on,” he said.

He... we jump, rolling. Falling... into the trench, I can’t move he’s too heavy, and the wind is too fast. His legs locked between mine. We’re stuck. Everything was blowing over us. The ground rumbled beneath. His hands are pulling the cords tighter, drawing us as one. The black clouds moving closer, spinning, spreading, limbs. His eyes are locked on mine, pushing.

It passes over, his... his mouth finds mine. I grab tighter, holding for dear life, I can feel the push, as were being pulled. He’s pressing hard, holding the line. Quiet finally. I look at his face stone, void of what just happened. We slowly rise. I look at the flowers on my dress, roses ripped, dirty, forever soiled. Everything gone, completely in shambles, including us.

Mercy Mild, River Wild

By Mary Rickenbaker

there's a chapel down the street,
where mama and daddy got married,
true was the love they carried,
their parents didn't care,
their only worry in the world
was the hatred that they shared

I never liked pews,
I prefer places with the views
I skim my palm over the water
I sift the rocks through my fingers,
The scent of the river lingers,
The droplets fall the water remembers,
I sit as my memory dismembers,

my conscious knocks,
the cold water shocks,
As I jump off the Mary Wall into the Amite,
The river ripples I caused its calamity,
A bridge once crossed now broken,
A girl once small now outspoken.

Captured

By Gracie Laseter

Your eyes have captured me,

I feel as if I've turned into a deer,

Stuck in the headlights beaming from your eyes.

Your Iris keeps me in a trance.

The dark honey color surrounds me

As I slowly suffocate in denial.

Gasping for love,

Every time my head makes it above the tidal waves.

The Last Good Thing

By Jake McClave

I was getting coffee with my mother. I can't remember what exactly we were talking about, but we were smiling, laughing. We had finished our cups, ready to return. No rush, these moments expire with our age. Taken for granted.

I am holding the door for her to exit, and I see her look back and start to cry. She's on her knees pounding my chest, her tears shedding on my blank canvas. All I could do was look down.

The Little Girl in the White Dress

By Kit Crosby

The little girl in the white dress,
You always saw her walking down that quiet dirt path,
Her feet bare so she could feel the earth beneath her,
Her fingers brushing up against the flowers,
But never picking them.
She wanted them to continue to grow,
She knew if she picked them, they wouldn't last much longer.

The young girl continued on,
Always down the same path,
Her feet always bare,
People watched her,
“Such a curious little girl” they thought.

She grew,
And she still went out,
That same dress,
The little girl in the white dress,
No.
The girl in the little white dress,
But the watchful eyes of others dirtied the dress,
It was not her doing,
The dress still fit,
She was happy,
She was beautiful,
And always found joy in watching the flowers grow,
Never daring to pick them.

The others continued to watch her,
As she went down that path,
Blind innocence as her lead,
Her hair bouncing with her dress as she danced instead of walked,
“Such a pretty young woman” they thought.

She had grown from a little seed all wrapped up in a soft fabric,
To a blossoming flower,
Her petals just beginning to reach for the sun,
A soft pink like the tint on her cheeks,
Little spots like the freckles on her nose,
Outstretched to the sun,
Embracing the warmth it offered,
Never afraid to smile,
To walk with open arms,
She became a beautiful flower.

She was no longer the only one on the path,
Others began to walk it,
She did not object,
She was beyond elated to share the flowers with others,
As long as they promised not to pick any of those flowers.
They did not pick those flowers,
Rather, they picked her.

She just wanted to keep growing,
She never asked to be torn from her roots,
The person never asked her “would you mind being pulled from the earth”,
She never said “Yes!”,
She only yelled “No!” as her petals fell,

Her stem torn from the harsh grip they held and the violent pull from the earth,
But when she wilted in their palm,
They tossed her ragged body aside into the flowers she so loved.

The little white dress was becoming fertilizer;
And so was she.

She watered the new flowers with her tears as her aching body gave way to the earth,
She did not make a final wish,
But a promise,
“As I become one with these new flowers, I shall sew thorns. For they will not be picked and
tossed as I, but they will grow and thrive.”

Stunning Deer

By Lindsay Pettinicchi



Run

By Gracie Laseter

I don't remember anything but running

Nothing else matter but the beating of my feet against the forest floor

And the wind fighting through my unruly hair

The dense trees enclosed around me, trapping me in a cage

Of flora and fears

I stopped a mere moment

To take in the silence of the trees

Until

I remembered why I was running

Broken Speech

By Kit Crosby

I'm trying,

I promise.

It's just that I'm choking

You see.

These words of mine,

They're broken,

The shards scratching my throat,

So all I taste is the metallic liquid,

Not the silk laced words

Confessions

By Sophia McKeehan

They look at him in **this** circle

Obscure and baffling

He proved he had beliefs they did not understand

The **boy is** an instrument to **the reader**

Passion

By Robert-Nickell Bligen

The flames are burning through the temple gate

Intense and fierce they set the place alight,

My heart is like a constant drumbeat pounding

As feeling's feelers wrap around me tightly.

My latest craft lays on the table there

Pristine and shining, soon for all to see

This drive within me grows more every day,

Succeed and proceed through that solar flame.

Index of Contributors

Amir Jenkins, 36

Amir is a USCB student and a contributor to *The Pen*.

Edra Stephens, 15, 24, 29, 37, 55, 73

Edra is a USCB student and a contributor to *The Pen*.

Gracie Laseter, 25, 63, 75, 81

Gracie is a junior majoring in Secondary English Education. Writing has always been one of her greatest passions and is excited to be able to share it with the world.

Hudson DeLoach, 10, 13, 14, 21, 31, 65

Hudson is a Lowcountry native, aspiring fantasy writer, and hopeful English teacher.

Jake McClave, 16, 33, 45, 76

Jake is a Senior now and was lucky enough to stumble upon Dr. Malphrus's creative writing class this semester. He learned a lot and really enjoyed reading what his fellow peers wrote.

Jenna McCarty, Featured Artist, 35, 40, 48, 58, 66, 72

Jenna is a USCB student and a contributor to *The Pen*.

Jesse Elliott, 59

Jesse is a Junior Honors Nursing major here at USCB with a minor in Interdisciplinary Medical and Health Humanities. Jesse is a resident assistant for the Bluffton campus building Port Royal and the president of the Student Nurse Association (SNA). Jesse is also a Nurse Intern at Beaufort Memorial Hospital and avidly plays guitar and writes songs in his free time. His poem "Same for Me" is an adaptation of one of his newest ballads and you can hear him perform it when he plays in the cafeteria for "Music Mondays" in which he collaborates with Sand Shark Activities Bard and other student talents to provide a musical experience for USCB students.

Kai Bangs, 17

Dreams seem to be coming true for him. His work has been accepted twice to be published and is achieving his lifelong dream of visiting France. Writing *The King's Remedy* was a challenge for him. He had to think like a tyrant. He had to set aside all that he believed in to write it. He was proud of his work, then he hated it, and now, he's proud again.

Kenzie Dorth, 11, 41, 43, 61, 69

Kenzie is a USCB student and a contributor to *The Pen*.

Kit Crosby, 49, 50, 77, 82

Kit is currently a dual enrollment student here at USCB. They are an aspiring photographer but also loves to write especially poetry. They have loved the arts for years and hopes to continue to grow in their skill and share what they can with others.

KyLeigh Blackwell, 52

KyLeigh is a senior Interdisciplinary Studies major and Literature minor. She enjoys writing as a hobby and for classes. This piece was something that she wrote for a class and just wanted to get it out somewhere else because she loved it so much.

Lindsay Pettinicchi, 80

Lindsay is an award winning, exhibited and published photographer. HHI is certainly a photographer's paradise and vacationing for years on the island inspired her to study photography. While nature and wildlife photography are her passion and moving targets a specialty with her Nikon camera and Tamron 600mm lens, she has branched out to and has found similar success with commercial photography. Presently, she is a real estate photographer and is a beach photographer.

<https://www.alignable.com/hilton-head-island-sc/lindsay-pettinicchi>

Mary Rickenbaker, 67, 68, 74

Mary is a freshman at USCB and is majoring in Communications with a minor in English. Mary has always loved poetry and says it's her ultimate form of expression.

Robert-Nickell Bligen, 30, 84

Robert-Nickell is a senior English Major at USCB. He enjoys stories of any kind, whether they be from a book, show, or a game. He hopes to be able to create stories that will live in people's hearts for years to come.

Sam Messinides, 26, 47, 70

Sam is a USCB student and a contributor to *The Pen*.

Samantha Mae, 23, 27, 28, 38, 51, 64

Samantha is a senior at USCB, majoring in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. She is an internationally published writer and newspaper journalist. She is an active member of The Pen's editorial board who spends her down time writing and playing with her two dogs.

Sophia McKeehan, 12, 22, 34, 39, 46, 71, 83

Sophia is a full-time student at USCB in Bluffton and is majoring in Informational Science and Technology with a minor in Creative Writing. This semester, she was inspired to write a lot of blackout poetry, and submitted much of her blackout poetry to *The Pen*.

About *The Pen*

The Pen is a four-time national award-winning literary journal sponsored by the Society of Creative Writers. It is produced under the Department of English, Theatre, and the Arts at the University of South Carolina Beaufort and is advised by Dr. Ellen Malphrus. This publication features creative works from students across all three of UCSB's campuses. Accepted submissions in this creative journal include fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama, as well as other, non-written forms of art such as music and visual arts of all types. The Pen (ENGL 211) proudly showcases the creative works of its student contributors and also serves as a credit-earning course for any major to gain transferable skills and experience in the publishing and editing world.

About The Society of Creative Writers

The Society of Creative Writers is a student organization at the University of South Carolina Beaufort that sponsors the publication of *The Pen*. The student-led club serves as a writing community for USCB's students of all majors. SCW's mission is to provide creative writers with a safe and nurturing place to workshop, share, and discuss their creative work, as well as engage students in writing activities to improve their writing skills and inspire them as writers.

For more information on meetings and events please follow *The Pen* on Instagram (@uscethepen), and Twitter (@uscethepen). Or like our Facebook page (**Society of Creative Writers**). For additional comments, questions, or concerns please email our editorial staff at thepenuscb@gmail.com

Submissions Guidelines

In order to be considered for publication in *The Pen*, writers must be current USCB students or alumni with no more than two years since their last active semester. Students from all majors are encouraged to submit their creative work. All work submitted must be original, unpublished, and preferably produced while at USCB. Simultaneous submissions are allowed; however, if submitted work is accepted for publication elsewhere, please inform editors of *The Pen* immediately. **Submissions are open year-round.** Creative writing, art, and other forms of expression will be considered. Fanfiction will not be accepted.

All submissions should be sent via email to ThePenUSCB@gmail.com in one document (preferably Microsoft Word) with page breaks between each individual titled piece. The author's name should be included in the file name. Writers are expected to send only polished, college-level work. Any work submitted **must include a short author bio blurb** in the third person, (no more than 100 words) in the submission email.

For poetry, no more than seven pieces may be submitted. No more than two pieces of drama may be submitted, and they should not exceed 2,500 words per piece. **For prose**, no more than five pieces may be submitted, and they should not exceed 2,000 words per piece. Ensure work is formatted as it is intended to appear on the page. **Photography and art** must be sent as a JPG or PNG file no smaller than 5" x 7" at 600 dpi, and no more than ten pieces may be submitted. Artists and photographers must include their name, title, medium (i.e., oil on canvas, charcoal on paper), and dimensions for each entry. Music submissions should include an audio file, along with any lyrics or notes.

Submitted pieces go through a blind voting process— no one on the staff knows the identities attached to the pieces to make certain no voting bias takes place.