

ART AND LITERARY MAGAZINE

ASK WINSTON!
GET ADVICE FROM OUR
FURRY AMBASSADOR

NEW WORLD

FALL 2023 DYSTOPIAN ISSUE

CARROLL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CARA

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the new world! The Arts & Literary Magazine at Carroll community college is proud to present our second publication. We have created a collection that showcases the various talented students of Carroll Community College. This semester's edition includes short fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, photography, and art centering around the theme of "New World."

What exactly do we mean by "New World?". The theme is about embracing the ever changing world and where it leads us, as well as addressing the pitfalls of these new societies. The New World is many things. It's grand, it's imaginative, it's dystopian, it's far off in the future, and it's here today. It's something that we have all lived through in recent years, specifically with the Covid-19 pandemic. And like a phoenix we rose from the ashes. Overall, the New World is what we make it, so let's make it a good one.

A GHOST

BY SARAH HOKE

silent specter, somber,
still,

Why do you walk the
earth?

Is earth your purgatory
'til

You reach your second
birth?

Silent specter, lonely, shy,
Why do you haunt me so?
What about me caught
your eye?

Why don't you say hello?

Silent specter, troubled,
sad,
What's bothering you this
way?

I don't think earth is all
that bad.

Please tell me — will you
stay?

Silent specter, pale and
drawn,

Why fly so close to me?

You whisper that your
time has come,

Tomorrow you will leave.

Silent specter, leave me
not!

Your company so dear
Has kept me from the
worst of thoughts,
From troubles, worry,
fear.

Silent specter, only friend,
I beg you, stay with me!

Do not abandon what we
had —

Dear specter, do not
leave!

A GHOST CONTINUED

Departed specter, sorely
missed,
I blame you not, you
know.

You left me for eternal
bliss —

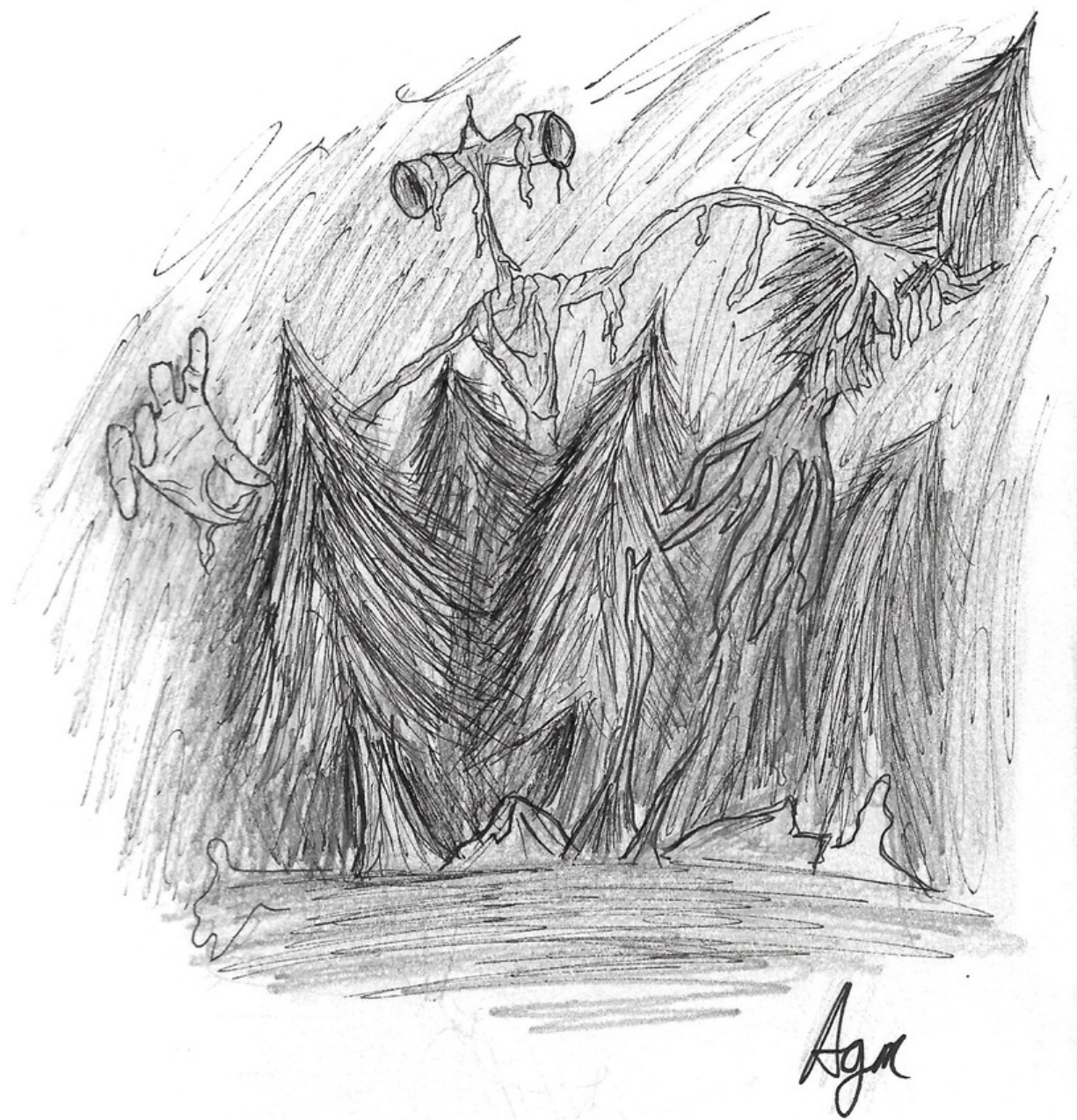
But I'm not angry, no

Silent specter, dearly
loved,
I hope we'll meet again.
I'll see you in the world
above.

Please wait for me, My
friend

YOU LEFT ME
FOR ETERNAL
BLISS —
BUT I'M NOT
ANGRY, NO





SIREN HEAD
BY ANNA MIHM

LIPS OF AN ANGEL

BY MOLLY BROUGH

January 24th, 2022, it was my roommate's seventeenth birthday. We were on our way home from Sheetz in Taneytown Maryland, and we took the longer way home to shout nostalgic music and speed down the back road. This was nothing out of the usual. The speed limit was thirty-five miles per hour. I had hit ninety-five miles per hour at one point. This small decision to speed on the way home could have ended my roommates or my own life that day. For a split second, as my car flew, I thought we were both going to die. This split second taught me how living so carelessly could take somebody's life with only one unwise decision.

Cruising down Old Taney Town Rd, we had already listened to the Pussy-Cat-Dolls, Nickelback, Kid Rock, and now we were on the song "Lips of an Angel" by Hinder.

LIPS OF AN ANGEL

CONTIUNED

This song was a childhood favorite of mine, so my voice got louder, and my foot got heavier as we were going up and down hills, turning sharply at bends, and gliding on the road. At the second chorus of the song, we were approaching the sharp bend in the road where Old Taneytown Road intersected Tyrone Road at about seventy miles per hour. My heart dropped as I saw the circumstances I had just put myself into.

The curve was nearly a 90-degree angle and on both sides of the road the land dropped off to at least a 15-foot drop with towering trees all around. There was a guard rail on the passenger side of the road but the guard rail on my side did not start until a couple of feet after the land drops. I knew I needed to slow down immediately, or we were going to drift off that road.

LIPS OF AN ANGEL CONTINUED

I slammed on my brakes. Doing this caused my front set of tires to stop before my back set of tires. We drifted into the opposite lane on the far-left shoulder. As we continued to drift, hearing the eerie sound of burning rubber, to avoid falling off the road completely and in fear of a head-on collision, I turned my wheel a hard right to return into the right lane.

THE CAR BEGAN TO SPIN A SECOND TIME. MY BRAIN STARTED TO DIM, AND I LET GO OF MY WHEEL. MY EYES WERE OPEN, BUT I COULD ONLY SEE BLACK

While doing this I also let go of my brake slightly, This caused the motion of my car to begin to spin. We spun clockwise. I was still fighting with the wheel trying to control the 2500 vehicle. No thoughts were running through my head other than one, “Destiny never wore her seatbelt.”

LIPS OF AN ANGEL

CONTINUED

The car began to spin a second time. My brain started to dim, and I let go of my wheel.

My eyes were open, but I could only see black. This was panic and adrenaline initiating my flight response. The front passenger side tire climbed the guard rail with a significant impact. My phone had an aux and somewhere in the chaos got thrown around and unplugged the aux. BOOM! Sounded as my car toppled and turned down the rocky hillside. Silence. The silence is the one second we spent flipping in the air. I can distinctly remember this exact moment. like the moment when you reach the top of the roller coaster and everybody on the ride knows we are all about to drop and drop fast. That feeling in your stomach you get, that was my feeling.

LIPS OF AN ANGEL

CONTINUED

I knew what would happen, but anticipating this in as little as one second was excruciating. Another BOOM, and now we are still.

A moment of silence, still seeing only black. My eyes are closed now, and I was not ready to open them until I heard Destiny's voice. Gruesome thoughts of how it ended were running through my head.

“Molly. Molly! Wake the f**k up!” Destiny starts shaking my arm. “Molly, Stop. We have to get out of the car!” I can feel her pulling on my seat belt buckle.

My eyes open and I see her knees on the roof of my car. I am hanging off the ceiling of the car strapped down into my seat.

“Get out!” I panically tell as I try to unbuckle my seatbelt with my fist.

LIPS OF AN ANGEL

CONITUNED

First try, failed. Second try, failed. The third time I scraped my knuckle on the casing of the red button, freed. I fell on my head. Destiny crawled out of the passenger door, me shortly behind her. We both got out and looked at each other. We both asked if we were okay and confirmed to each other we did not feel any pain. We started laughing at this moment.

“How are we alive?” I thought.

When the police and ambulance arrived, they checked us out and told Destiny that since she was not wearing her seat belt, she must go to the hospital to check her spine and brain. As the ambulance drove away, I stood there with the police officer.



LIPS OF AN ANGEL

CONTINUED

“One in a million,” He said quietly while getting on his knees to help me get my phone and wallet out of the car.

“Huh?” I asked him, not hearing what he said.

“It’s one in a million chances that an accident like this happens and everybody walks away with hardly a scratch,” He said as he handed me my belongings.

That comment made me think. I came to two conclusions that day. One was if there is a God, he has a plan for me, and the second one was I live recklessly like I do not care. I realized I want to live a long life. I would love to keep all my limbs attached and my body healthy.

LIPS OF AN ANGEL

CONTINUED

Before this car accident I was not always abiding by the law, I was not always a nice person, and I was not living to my fullest potential. I had already been kicked out of two high schools, transferred to an alternative school, got charged on my juvenile record more than once, and disrespected anybody who I felt offended by.

This car accident, I thought as looked at down the ravine below at what used to be my car, but now was nothing more than scrap metal. Though it was traumatic I want to live my life. Life is far more valuable than when I viewed it before I spun and flipped my car. Life is worth living and should not be taken for granted. The life changing experience gave me a reality check.



FATES
BY ANNA MIHM

GIRLS GO MISSING IN MY TOWN

BY EVELYN LUCADO

Girls go missing in my
town,
Daddy says it's a part of
life
and to keep a knife in the
pockets of my jeans,
not shorts.
Mary went missing in
shorts
so we wear jeans,
but not the tight ones
because that's what Ruth
was wearing.
We don't walk alone
anymore since Esther
walked
home alone.
Then we stopped walking
in pairs when Martha and
the other Mary
walked out into thin air.
So we walked in threes.

We thought it must be the
monster in the woods,
the one the older boys
used to tell us about
to scare us.
The one with gnarly
yellow teeth,
as tall as the trees.
He lurks just beyond the
tree line
watching the girls skip
rope and play house
waiting for one of us to
stray too far from the
others.
I asked Daddy if the
monster took Rachel and
Debbie,
he said don't talk about
it.

GIRLS GO MISSING IN MY TOWN CONTINUED

Mrs. Sarah goes missing,
and I'm all that's left
and I wonder what it's
worth to be
the only one left.

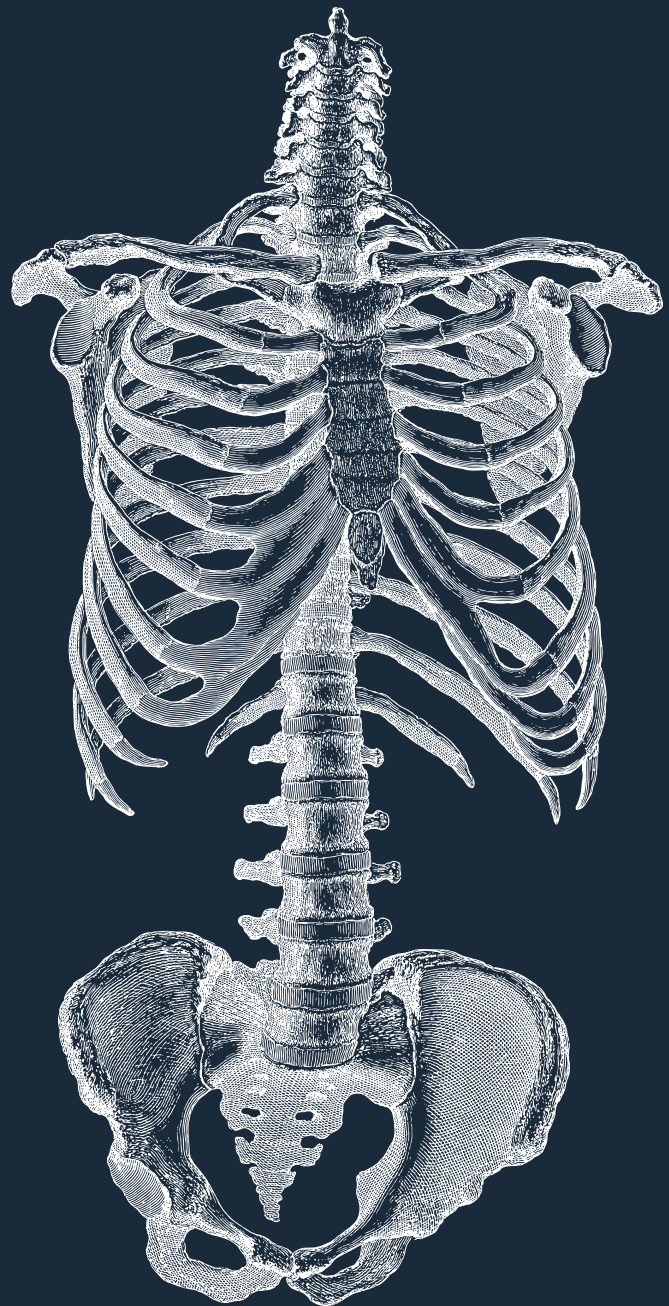
I see the way the boys
look at me.

I see the way the men
watch as I pass
and I know their wives
are somewhere in the
woods.

And I'd rather not be
here,
to be their next victim.

When there was no one
left to walk in threes
I walked home alone,
straying from the
sidewalk
close to the trees.

No monster comes to
meet me,
But I never go home.





MIRRORED

BY ALANA ZUNIKOFF

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

BY JULIE DAY

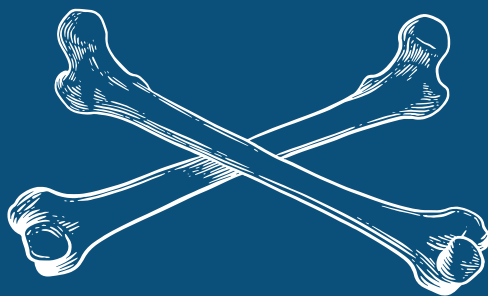
A large tibia shone under the midday sun just as the pattern of a mandala is seen on the creamy white surface. The ivory color of the bone showed that Spenser Rushings had been healthy before he died, until he became infected. The disease that had ravaged North America became known as “the affliction”. anyone with the symptoms was basically given a death notice. Symptoms ranged from throwing up blood, aching, being dehydrated, and not sleeping. The most noticeable characteristic of the disease was the open wounds appearing all over the body.

Rushing's mother had commissioned the carving from the Whitakers, who lived down the street from them. The moment that she found out her son had contracted the disease she started preparing for his death.

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER CONTINUED

This “preparation” is the torching of the body of those infected, but not hot enough to the point of cremation just enough to kill the disease. To make sure the disease is gone from any other source, everything they may have come in contact with is disinfected to the highest level or torched. Because of this, most belongings never reached beyond the disinfection process.

The Whitaker's family business The Bone Craver and Torcher, started not long after the infection started. Ava's mother was grieving the loss of her own mother, Nana Bella, and Nana's worldly possessions.



THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER CONTINUED

Nana died from the affliction. Wanting something to remember the old spitfire, Naomi Whitaker had taken out her mother's bones that had failed to burn in the homemade pyre in their backyard in the backcountry of Maryland.

LOOKING AT HER MOTHER'S BONES SHE FELT
SADNESS AND HER GRIEF TRIED TO TAKE
OVER HER AGAIN.

Looking at her mother's bones she felt sadness and her grief tried to take over her again. She held the breastbone in her hand thinking it was the most important bone her mother had, being a stage 3 breast cancer survivor and a mother of five. It held the most meaning out of all of them.

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

CONTINUED

An idea had come out of nowhere. Taking the bone to her craft room, Ava's mother took up one of her wood-carving tools , what looked like a mini chisel, and her creative drive had taken over her. As she sculpted with the delicate material, an intense focus was apparent on her face. Underneath that concentration was an immortal sadness that even if not seen was always there lurking in the shadows, waiting for a chance of weakness. Immortal and vengeful, waiting for a chance to bring the victim to their knees, taking comfort in their brokenness and grief.

An hour later, Naomi Whitaker had finished an item with material she had never used before. Into the yellowed-white material, Naomi carved a stream of horses. Horses that were wild and free as Nana Belle.

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER CONTINUED

That same carving was now displayed in their entryway. Even though grandmother was gone people could always feel and see the impact that she had on others by just looking at the beautiful carving her only daughter made in her remembrance. Coming back to the present sooner than she would have liked, Ava had finished the Mandola piece for Mrs. Rushing.

IT WAS TIME TO STOP STALLING AND TO
BEGIN THE HARDEST PIECE OF BONE
CRAVING SHE WOULD EVER DO.

It was time to stop stalling and to begin the hardest piece of bone craving she would ever do. She came out of the workshop and walked down the trail to her house. Once she was inside the house, she finally stopped in front of the hall closet.

THE BONE CARVER'S FAUGHTER CONTINUED

She let go of the breath that she hadn't realized she'd been holding and turned the knob. Ava expected to find a monster with claws and teeth, so it could tear her apart. And she would let the gnarly beast tear her apart, piece by piece leaving her like a Humpty Dumpty mess in her foyer. Instead, it was much worse, something she had avoided and denied for weeks. Inside was a closed cardboard box. She felt a wave of unending emotions, pain, sadness, loneliness as she looked at the box. She suppressed everything she was feeling as if it would make it all stop from spilling out, she sewed, and duct taped herself back together. Without the cracks showing maybe she wouldn't fall apart. Finally, she came upon the part that she needed, a piece of vertebrae, L1 of the spinal column.

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER CONTINUED

Ava strapped on the respirator mask and goggles after sketching the image of a dragon with its tail in its mouth. Then she got to work. She suddenly remembered the first time her mother showed her how to carve at 8, why they craved with traditional tools, her telling a very young Ava Norse fairytales, and why her mother started the business of craving bones from people as ways to remember them and the way they lived life. A memory popped up, of her spirited mother yelling at an old man who demanded she stop the “desecration” of remains.

**WHY HER MOTHER STARTED THE
BUSINESS OF CRAVING BONES FROM
PEOPLE AS WAYS TO REMEMBER
THEM AND THE WAY THEY LIVED
LIFE.**

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER CONTINUED

“This is how we have decided to honor people, not by burying them under a pile of dirt or turning them to ashes just to forget them later.” Namoi Whitaker screamed.

“We are doing this , so at least some part of them can live on, either watching the world change or by seeing the people they left know they will forever be missed and loved”

“We are doing this so at least some part of them can live on, either watching the world change or by seeing the people they left know they will forever be missed and loved”

Without even realizing it, the tears that Ava had bottled up for so long were overflowing.

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

CONTINUED

They splashed onto her worktable haplessly and even though she swabbed her eyes with the back of her sleeve, the tears still came.

Sometime later, after the tears had gone dry and she had finished the dragon, she threaded a thick leather cord through the middle and placed it around her neck.

Knock, knock.

Just as she was finished tying the knot, Ava heard the thud of knocking coming from the house in the distance. Getting up quickly, she grabbed the wooden box containing Spencer Rushings's tibia and headed to the house.

She opened the door to find Mrs. Rushings in her jeans and t-shirt. Ava starts apologizing.

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER CONTINUED

“I’m so sorry this is late Mrs. Rushings”

“It’s okay sweetie ”. Mrs. Rushings interrupts Ava’s apologetic babble. “I know how much love and heart you put into your work, and I know Spenser would have appreciated your dedication”.

“I know...” She pauses, seeming to doubt the words she is about to say

“I know your mother would have been proud of you and the work you have done”



SHATTERING INTO TINY PIECES, WITH NO
WAY OF BEING PUT BACK TOGETHER THE
SAME EVER AGAIN.

THE BONE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

CONTINUED

It was as if the dam had broken once again, this time with more force than before. Ava tried to hold back the sobs that broke through, but Mrs. Rushings, her mother's old friend from college, put her arms around her and she broke like an old China doll. Shattering into tiny pieces, with no way of being put back together the same ever again. As Mrs. Rushings held her, trying to console her the best way she could and the tears flowed freely now that she wasn't holding anything back, she felt more at peace than she had in a long time.



DAVID
BY ANNA MIHM

PERSEPHONE

BY SARAH HOKE

I: PERSEPHONE CHOOSES

Persephone chooses
Hades. He asks her
permission
and she obliges.
Uppity Zeus is
infuriated —
how dare his brother
propose
to the object of his
love
before her father?
Hermes snatches
Persephone up
before she can eat all
twelve
pomegranate seeds.

II: PERSEPHONE WONDERS

Persephone stumbles
upon the entrance to
the underworld
and enters of her own
volition.
She doesn't quite
know
what she's getting
herself into,
but curiosity has
always been her
strongest
suit, and the flowers
down here
are hauntingly pretty.

PERSEPHONE CONTINUED

III: PERSEPHONE BATTLES

Persephone is ripped
from her family,
friends, flowers, and
she fights like
nothing else.

The seeds are forced
down her throat in
the end
and her mother is
shocked
by what she sees in
her daughter,
newly-forged.

IV: PERSEPHONE FALLS

Hades entices
Persephone slowly,
coaxingly. She feels
herself
losing her grip on
good sense
as she falls in love.
The earth opens up
to reveal her lover
with a ring bearing
her name
and a promised
elopement.



PERSEPHONE CONTINUED

V: PERSEPHONE LOUD AND VOICELESS

Persephone is ripped
from Hades,
her new love that
feels
centuries old already,
and fights like Ares
himself.
The final eight seeds
are torn from her
hands
and the crown of the
underworld takes her
hair with it
as it's stolen from
atop her head.

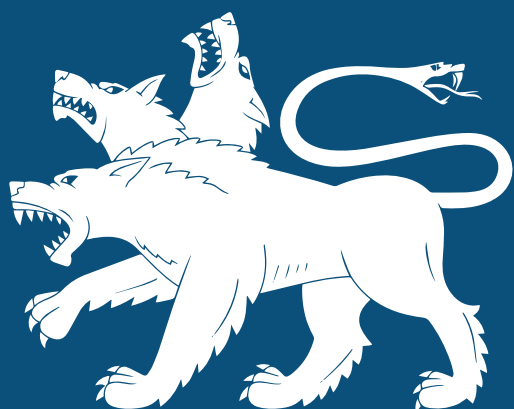
VI: PERSEPHONE ARRANGED

Persephone and
Hades have an
arranged
and eventually happy
marriage, courtesy of
Zeus.
The roof of the
underworld splits
to reveal a frenzied
Demeter,
wild with grief for
her child
torn from her without
consent.
Eight wheat kernels
later,
an arrangement must
be made.

PERSEPHONE CONTINUED

VII: PERSEPHONE VENGEFUL

Hades pursues
Demeter.
Her abundance and
her fruitfulness
compel him. He
doesn't account for
the grief of
Persephone, who will
burn
down the world to
keep her mother
safe and well — and
burn she does



VIII: PERSEPHONE'S PRINCELING

A son is born to
Hades
a prince of the
underworld,
lordling of all the
dead. Young and
naive
little sir emerges
from the depths one
day
to come upon
Demeter's daughter,
plucking flowers
and imagining
whether they will go
to heaven or hell.
Love at first sight.

PERSEPHONE CONTINUED

IX: PERSEPHONE REIGNS

Persephone marries
Hades.
She eats the food of
the dead
with pleasure
and Hades is too
late in wondering
the motives
of his newly-won
wife.
She rises in power
and terror
as queen of the
underworld,
and when Hermes
arrives to bring her
back to Mother,
he cowers.

X: PERSEPHONE FELLED

Persephone dies.
Hades finds her in
the meadow,
surrounded by
weeping nymphs,
and sobs. He brings
her down himself
in his own chariot,
and when he senses
a tiny breath in her
damaged lungs,
he'll stop at nothing
to revive her,
even if not in the
way
Demeter would
prefer.

PERSEPHONE CONTINUED

XI: PERSEPHONE RESOURCEFUL

Persephone is
distraught
at the prospect of
eight months of the
year
away from her love.
But how to get to the
underworld
under the close
watchful eye
of her mother?
May as well try the
method
all the mortals take,
she supposes.

XII: PERSEPHONE REPLACED

Demeter takes
Demophon
as a replacement for
Persephone,
and finds this son a
much better
companion
than her daughter.
She gives him reign
over all
Persephone once had,
and when the girl
comes up to visit,
her mother doesn't
recognize her.

PERSEPHONE CONTINUED

XIII: PERSEPHONE IN CONTROL

Persephone steals
away Hades,
feeding him her
mother's wheat
to tie him to the
surface.

He responds in kind
with
pomegranates from
the dead.

They spend four
months apart,
four months
together above,
and four months
together below.

Finally a
compromise we can
all
live with.





IN THEIR GRASP
BY ANNA MIHM

OH DOROTHY

BY SARAH HOKE

Dorothy was twelve
years old or so

When the weather it
took her away

To a magical land,
there was color at
last

But her Kansas was
still shades of gray

Oh, the shame that
the little girl felt
that day

When they told her
she shouldn't tell lies
But how can they say
black and white's all
there is?

She sees Oz when she
closes her eyes

What happens when
the yellow brick
road Fades to gray
and then crumbles
to dust?

What if the twister
just screws you
around

Like a tin man
abandoned to rust?
Why doesn't anyone
ask about Dorothy
after?

I wish I could say
that our Dorothy
stayed,
That the innocent
always believe,

OH, DOROTHY CONTINUED

That the innocent
always believe,
But in barely a week
the girl started to
doubt
In her personal
sanity.

Oh, the witch of the
west rode around on
her bike
And the farmhands
were always the same
And all of them
helpless when
Dorothy told
Of the madness that
lived in her brain

Oh, the shame that
the little girl felt
that day
When not even Aunt
Em understood
But no matter how
much the girl wants
to forget
She still sees what
she promised she
would



OH DOROTHY CONTINUED

What happens when
the scarecrow won't
talk

Though the crows
come to tear him
apart?

What if the bad witch
still lives down the
road

And the good witch
has no counterpart?

Why doesn't anyone
ask about Dorothy
after?

Well, Toto grew old
and the farmhands they
left

And Miss Gulch moved
away to the east

But when Henry
passed on, Auntie Em
kept the farm
With the help of her
poor shattered niece

Dorothy, too, has
encountered a change
If you saw her, you'd
not recognize

The young lady has
put down the blue
gingham dress
And grown up before
all of our eyes

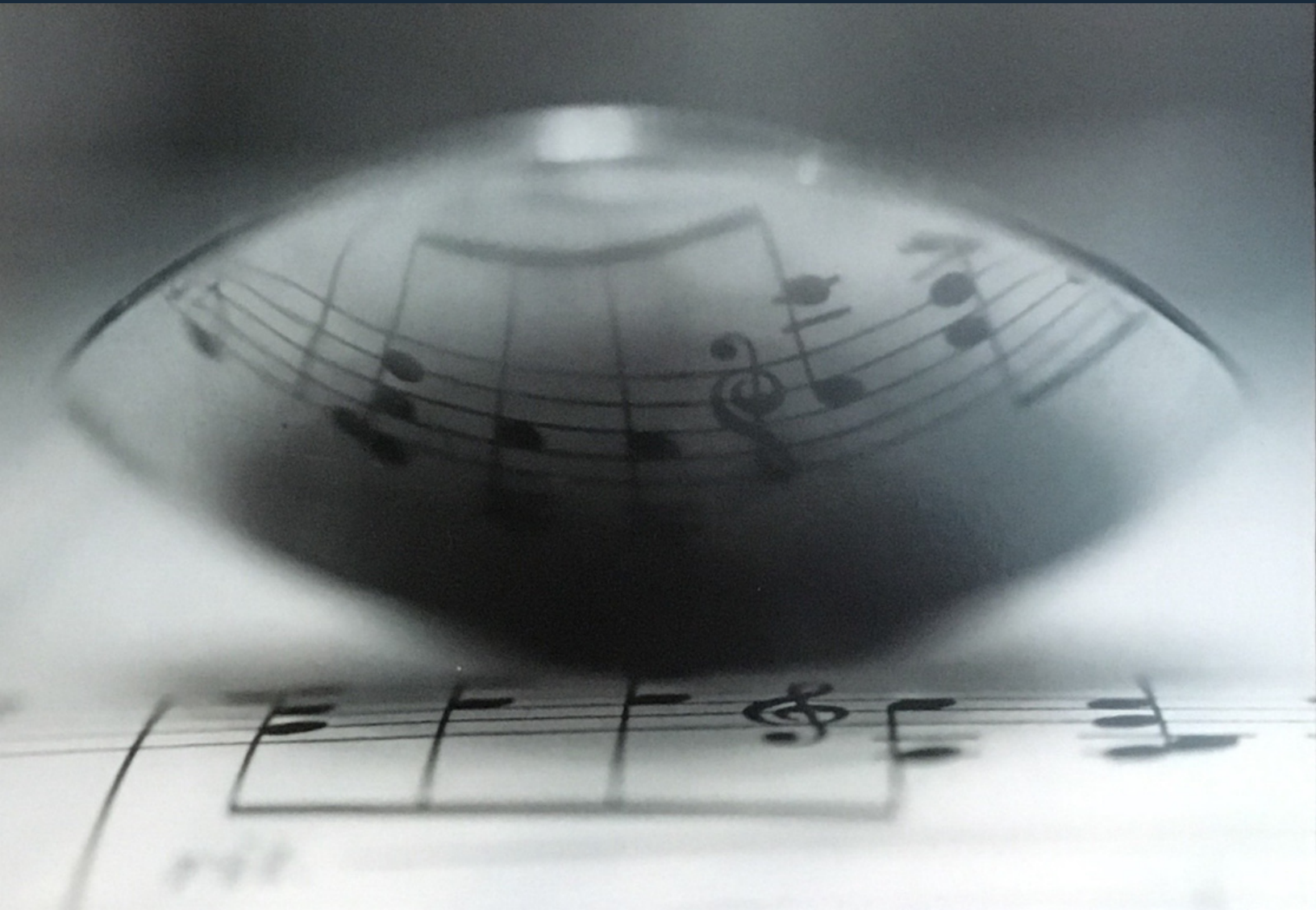


OH, DOROTHY CONTINUED

Oh, she's quieter
now than she was
years ago,
Speaks in whispers
and looks at the
ground
And though Kansas
is lovely and busy
and bright
She still feels as
though Oz is around

What happens when
memories of yellow
brick roads
Fade to gray and
then crumble apart?

What if the wizard
was lying to you
About courage and
brains and a heart?
What happens when
you can't believe
your own mind?
When your senses
have told lies before
What if the slippers
appeared yet again
And they didn't fit
you anymore? Why
doesn't anyone ask
about Dorothy
after?



REFLECTION
BY JESSICA LITTLE

Ask Winston!

Q and A With ALM Club Ambassador

WHAT IS YOUR
FAVORITE
COLOR?



I DON'T REALLY HAVE
A BLACK AND WHITE
ANSWER TO THAT,
BECAUSE I LIKE ALL
THE COLORS

WHAT DO YOU LIKE
TO DO TO RELAX?

I LOVE WATCHING MOVIES
AND EATING SARDINE
FLAVORED POPCORN AND
WATCHING HAPPY FEET

DO YOU LIKE
VIDEO GAMES?
IF SO WHICH
ONES?

I LOVE
VIDEO
GAMES!
MY FAV IS
BASSMASTER

WHO IS
YOUR FAV
AUTHOR
OR
ARTIST?

RICHARD AND
FLORENCE ATWATER,
AUTHORS OF
MR. POPPER'S
PENGUIN

WHO IS
TAKING OVER
AS ALM'S CLUB
AMBASSDOR?

SOB FOR SOME OF YOU
WHO DON'T KNOW ONCE
OUR CHIEF EDITOR JULIE
GRADUATES IN SPRING 2024,
I WILL BE GOING WITH HER.
BEFORE THAT TIME COMES,
WE WILL BE SEARCHING FOR
SOMEONE TO TAKE OVER MY
ROLE AS CLUB AMBASSOR.

TO VOTE FOR
WINNY'S
SUCCESSOR
CHECKOUT OUT
OUR INSTA



@ CCC_ALM

HEARTBEAT

ERIC HUBNER

Today's the day then, she thought, I'll finally be leaving this place. She stared out her bedroom window, looking up at the towering indigo canopy, golden dappled light peeking through the dense roof of leaves. A bittersweet feeling overcame her, this world was hostile, and she and Gabe had spent nine long years trying to escape it, but she'd become quite attached and it was a shame to leave it behind.

“Still,” She said to herself, steeling her mind for the final preparations ahead, “I can't really back out now.”

She glanced once more out the thick glass, drinking in its beauty one more time before starting her morning routine.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

“Breakfast’s ready” She heard Gabe from downstairs as she went to head down the shoddy metal steps.

“Here you are, eat up, we got a lot to do today” He passed her a plate of pond-sloth meat and scrambled squid-bird eggs alongside a glass of steelfruit juice, and promptly sat down at his own plate.

“Any messages from the ship?” she asked, sitting down on the opposing roughhewn chair.

“Nah, plan is still as is. You’ll need to head out and scout the landing area, make sure it’s safe.”

“And you’re packing things all up here?”

“Yep.”

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

With that said, they dug into their breakfast. It all tasted of blood, not for lack of cooking but simply because of the sheer quantities of iron. Even with thorough cooking, the food here was nearly poisonous because of all that iron.

“You know, I’m going to miss this food,” she stated blankly, pointing a fork topped with pond sloth meat in his vague direction.

“Really? How can you stand this stuff?”

“It has a nice tang to it, and the more subtle tastes compliment the taste of iron.”

“Well, whatever, after today I’ll get to eat something that doesn’t taste like I’ve just bitten into a knife.”

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

“Maybe I should bring along some steelfruit,” she wondered aloud.

“Don’t, you know the medical staff would never allow that.”

“Right, right, everything’s got to be thoroughly analyzed and go through a hundred stages of bureaucracy no matter how small or harmless it may be,” she said, rolling her eyes.

“It’s to keep people safe you. Of all people should know that.”

“Hey, I’m a microbiologist not a microbiologist, I know nothing about bacteria and viruses.”

“Right, like how I am engineer, I know nothing about being a mechanic,” he returned, sarcasm oozing from his mouth.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

And so, they bickered, picking at each other just as they picked at their food, until their plates were cleaned.

“Whatever, we need to get to work, don’t want to be late to our rescue” He joked, stowing the metal plate in the bag.

They had agreed to hand over all the things that they had made of the local wildlife for study, and that included their plates which were made of bark of the trees outside. And those trees were true marvels, epitomes of all that was this planet. They were tall, towering structures more animal than plant with mouths, mucus, stomachs, lungs, brains, and even a heart which beat in unison with all other trees around it, creating an omnipresent sound that she had long become accustomed to.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

Even from here at their base you could hear its faint heart, she could still feel it.

**THUMP THUMP... THUMP THUMP ...
THUMP THUMP...**

Back when they had first crash landed on planet I26 – F, she swore that it was her own heartbeat, and whilst it wasn't her heartbeat it has since synchronized with it, beating in unison, such that it might become her own. But that was then, and this is now and so she must leave it behind. She shook herself from her brief train of thought and responded.

“Alright, I'll head for the LZ, my stuff is in the boxes just outside my door”

“Got it, see you in a few hours then”

“See you” she waved, then headed for the airlock.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

After suiting up, the airlock clicked open and she was reminded of the time she first stepped out into this new world staring out at the wildfire of life around her, it was awe inspiring. In all her time as a microbiologist she had never seen such vibrancy and diversity. Not even garden worlds seemed so alive. She giggled to herself a little, remembering just how scared she and Gabe were when first landing here, terrified of this place which to them now seems so calm and quiet.

Not to say there wasn't any danger here, she thought to herself as she passed an acid spitter. She gave the little fiery colored centipede a wide berth, and continued, her train of thought picking back up.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

It's just that they'd become used to it. They knew not to tread through the ferns which threatened to swallow their foot whole. They knew to stay away from low hanging branches which bird catchers liked to coil themselves around and knew to avoid agitating the squid-monkeys so that they wouldn't be bludgeoned to death with metal sticks. Perhaps at one time these things seemed so alien. But now, she thought, staring up at a hanging pond-sloth, red lichen hanging from its back, they were all just mundane. And so, she continued along the well-worn path, collecting bright cyan steelfruit flowers and a nice walking stick from a nearby tree.

As her suit reached a cozy warmth from the hot air and beaming sunlight around her.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

It took a few hours to reach the landing zone, it was out at the seldom traveled to coast of the rainforest they lived in. It was dangerous here, the iron particles could rip unfortified suits to shreds. She shuddered thinking about what it would do to someone without a suit. Beyond that though the only danger here to their rescuers was the rough waters, churning heavily beneath the world's constant storms. The creatures of the rainforest couldn't survive the winds without the tree's shelter so there was no risk of an acid spitter melting a hole in the ship's hull. None of the local aquatic life seemed to be around either. She walked up and down the shore, bits of iron plinking and bouncing off her suit as she checked for any ripper eels or coast worms.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

Once all seemed clear, She walked up and down the shore, bits of iron plinking and bouncing off her suit as she checked for any ripper eels or coast worms. Once all seemed clear , she sat down and stared at the horizon, she could barely see the coast of a nearby island . An imposing volcano belched poisonous fumes into the golden sulfurous skies blotting out the sun over the rusty ocean water. It was a captivating view.

She'd miss this place, she thought to herself as she let the sounds and sights of the beach wash over her.



HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

**THUMP THUMP... THUMP THUMP...
THUMP THUMP...**

A sense of unease began to run through her, as her mind started to run. What would she do after leaving this place? What lies beyond those roiling clouds for her? She stared up at the claustrophobic sky as worry overran her. What's left for me? Where do I go? What's going to happen to this place? Thunder rumbled off in the distance, lighting up the sky like so many cannons, firing without end. She ripped herself upwards, muttering to herself.

“The LZ's safe, I'll have to warn them about the thunderstorm though” her voice droned off as she gripped tightly onto her walking stick, back turned to the ocean.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

The journey back was long, the dark canopy seemed to swallow her as she trudged onwards. But eventually she reached the shoddy airlock. She stared deep into each ridge and bump, each crevice and crack filled with stolen maroon mud and grime. She opened the door to their base and pushed herself stumbling through into the locker room as the toxic air slowly filtered out.

“Only a little longer,” she comforted herself as she slapped herself to focus.

“Only a few hours before we leave.”

She quickly stowed the reinforced suit before heading in and greeting Gabe who was in the final stages of prep.

“You good? You look like you’ve seen a rust kraken.”

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

“I’m fine.... The LZ is safe, there’s a thunderstorm near it, tell them to be careful. How are things here?”

“They’re going well, just a few more boxes to load and we’ll be all set.”

She nodded, falling onto one of the few chairs not yet put away.

“Oh, by the way, higher ups sent a message, once they’ve picked us up and cleared us of any local diseases we’ll be put back in our original intended positions for the colony in system.”

“That’s good” she stared off into the middle distance.

“It’s going to be a garden world they say, it’ll be a nice change of pace from this hell hole even if I have to spend it all taking care of everybody else’s problems.”

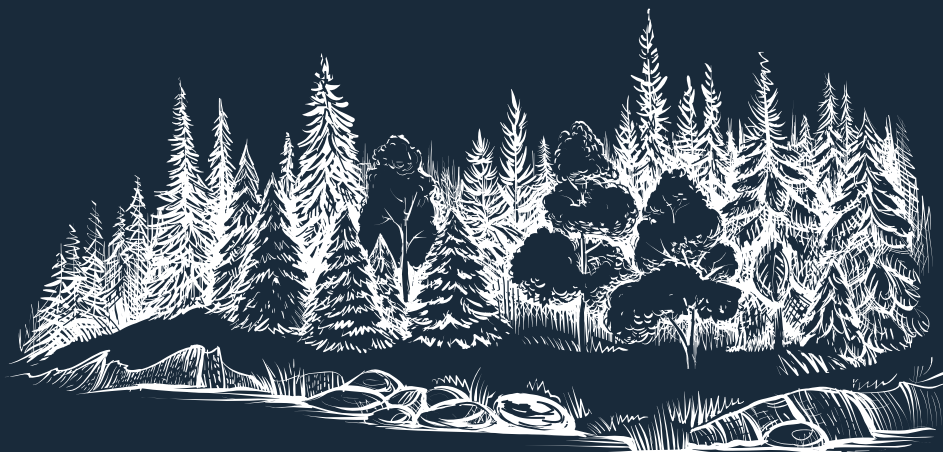
HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

“Yeah”

“Either way I’ll go tell them what you told me
mind helping out here? We’ll eat after.”

“Sure.”

As Gabe headed upstairs, she set about putting away the final pieces of furniture. She wandered about aimlessly looking for anything not nailed down, until she came upon the painting she made. It wasn’t even nearly as good as anything that some garden world painter would make but unlike any of the thousands she’d seen before, this one made her cry.



HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

She stood there staring at the color filled canvas. Eyes flooded with tears; she quietly took in the scene. Luscious muds painted with dyes made of red lichen, stalwart and solemn trees made of ground up iron, endlessly deep violet leaves made of paint derived from the very leaves that were depicted, and behind it all hung the low and churning golden storm through which the dim and setting sunlight poured through recreated with the powdered shells of acid spitters. It was a silent monument to this world; she could hear the world's gentle heartbeat through it.

**THUMP THUMP. . . THUMP THUMP . . .
THUMP THUMP. . .**

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

Then she was suddenly awoken from her hypnotized state by the sound of heavy footsteps thumping down the metal stairs, out of time with her rhythmic heartbeat. She rushed and without thinking hid the painting in a nearby cabinet before going to greet Gabe.

They ate dinner talking between awkward silences.

“Irene, are you sure you’re ok? You’ve gone quiet,” he asked, his concern starting to show.

His question fell dead in the air as she continued picking at the tough meat on her plate.

“If this about leaving this place I’m sure you can come back here in a few years. If they set up a colony here, that is. It’s a bit dangerous but I’m sure they’d have some interest in setting up a chemical or foundry world here with all th”

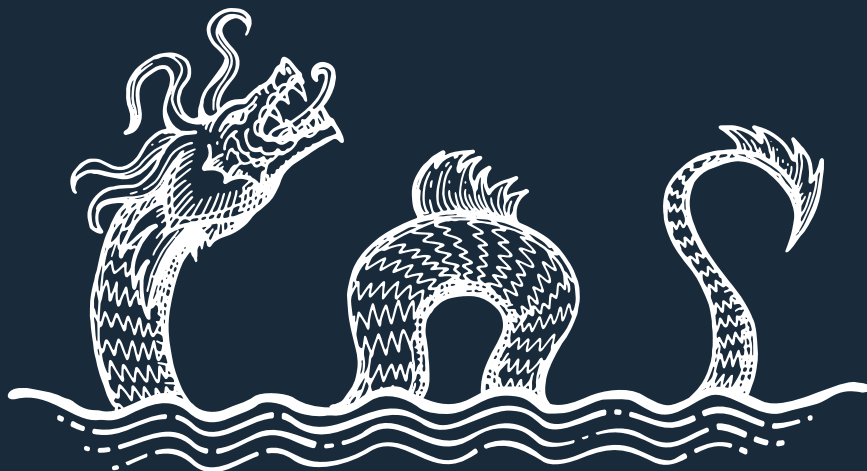
“I’m fine,” she interrupted, swallowing the last of the food and drink.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

“We’ve got to go in an hour or so, right? Finish up quickly we can’t be late,” she said, washing her plate in the sink.

“Right.”

After putting the plates and chairs away, they headed out. The ship would be landing soon, and they had no time to waste. Their convoy dug ruts deep into the shadowed and muddy soil. The trees seemed to loom over the small road they had cleared out before, catching every ounce of sunlight coming from the sulfur poisoned skies.



HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

The small steelfruit flowers glowered at them as they passed, their petals seeming like daggers in the night. The squid-birds screamed out their final trills for the day as the jungle's various insects began to cry into the dark. Even at night this forest held more life than the convoy which preceded through it. With only a few minor incidents they reached the LZ earlier than they expected and sat waiting for their saviors.

“In only a few minutes here we'll be headed home bit nerve-wracking isn't it!”

“Yeah,” she responded, eyes glued to the distant silhouette of the volcano, fumes still pouring from its mouth.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

The silence hung in the air as Gabe joined her in watching the volcano. Loneliness washed over them like waves on the beach. Thunder rumbled and boomed off on the horizon, yet the silence remained, suffocating all thoughts until the sound of thrusters broke it. The sky above them glowed as if the storm had come to greet them, before the clouds parted and revealed a great structure of steel like some flying factory the bulky craft landed in the water. Its angles were sharp, its surfaces machined perfectly flat, lights cold and revealing, lancing out into the dark that hung around them. A large door on the side of its hull facing them lifted and hissed open as a ramp trundled out to meet the ground.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

A large bay flatly greeted them on the other side of the door, and they moved to bring their convoy of belongings inside.

Irene stepped into the cold electric light of the cargo bay, the door hissed and shut closed behind her like some grand set of metal jaws. Harsh red light bathed them as an autonomous voice warned them.

“Cargo bay door closed, cycling airlock now.”

Hidden vents hissed before the bright, pale blue lights switched back on, assaulting their senses as a small team of nurses greeted them.

“Step this way please, leave your belongings here.” she stated plainly gesturing them further into the ship.

HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

As the ship shuddered back up into the air, the nurses promptly decontaminated them and their belongings and brought them in for a health checkup.

“Your BMI is within healthy levels and according to our records you seemed to have gained greater muscle mass since stranding of I26 – F, few are as fortunate as you to come out healthier from being stranded.”

“Now if you’ll step this way, I’ll check heartrate and examine your blood.”

Irene quietly obeyed the nurse, following her to a chair with a small pad that wrapped around her arm and computer that sat attentively, awaiting command. As she sat down and the nurse set up the machine, the monitor flickered awake and began to beep.

HEARTBEAT
CONTINUED

BEEP BEEP...

BEEP BEEP...

BEEP BEEP...

Various graphs and readouts monitored her blood, but she was enamored with the small green line that rose and fell with her heartbeat. Her glazed over eyes focused and shined, her aimless mind gained purpose and an objective. She sprinted out of the room, streaking through the hallways of the ship the bolts of lightning running through the skies above I26 – F’s glass deserts, dodged crates, and crew like an agile squid-bird. She knew this model of ship; she’d traveled the stars on it many times before, and notably knew exactly where the escape pods were.

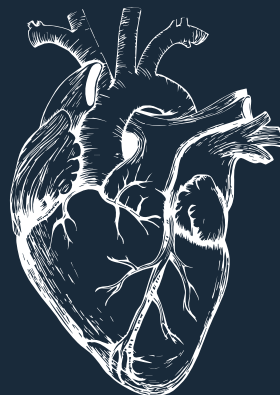
HEARTBEAT CONTINUED

Her body, which had seemed so lifeless mere moments ago bounded down the grease filled guts of the ship with vigor, scouring its bowels for her escape. And whilst security officers shouted down the endless hall, she responded in turn by disappearing into an escape pod and in seconds rocketed out the ship. Officers and crew members alike watched in shock as the small capsule vanished into the roiling toxic clouds, trailing flames behind it. Once more Irene rocketed to her home on I26 – F. She felt alive as she heard her heartbeat once more.

THUMP THUMP...

THUMP THUMP...

THUMP THUMP...





TWO WORLDS
BY JESSICA LITTLE

CHERRY PICKER

BY SARAH HOKE

They took the woman down from the cherry-picker a few days ago. Good. It was long past time.

She'd been there for my entire childhood—eighteen years almost to the day, now that I think of it—and I always looked at her. It made me feel sort of numb to see her up there, alone with no way of getting down. She never seemed bothered, but then they usually made her wear sunglasses. This was before the days of masks.

That was always part of the problem—the control they had over her. This was a woman deprived of not only a listening ear, but the very ability to speak for herself, to fight for whatever rights could be afforded her.

CHERRY PICKER CONTINUED

She had no rights because she could not speak about them. Control had been ripped from her long ago, before she was complete, and she would remain forever helpless.

I was pleased, even in my youth, whenever they let the woman wear a shirt. Bear in mind, I was the child who, when watching the Macy's Day Parade, objected to the female performers' costumes not because of immodesty, but because it was just too cold for them to be out and about without a coat or a pair of jeans. I couldn't see whether the woman in the cherry-picker was wearing pants, but I was glad that at least when the weather got cold around October or November, they let her wear long sleeves.

But in the summer she always wore a bikini. I seem to recall it being star-spangled, but whatever the pattern may have been, it was always too small for comfort.

CHERRY PICKER CONTINUED

I understood even when I was very young the desire to remove layers in the summer, to escape the heat, the confining humidity, but one could get around that by wearing a tank top, a dress. Anyway, why would she be wearing a bathing suit when there was no pool for miles? There certainly wasn't any water up in the cherry-picker. There certainly was never any shade.

She was blonde, this woman. Blonde and slim, an oversized unglorified Barbie doll with one job and one job only—advertise. What she was advertising, I never found out.

She was stationed by a gas station, or somewhere that sold car parts. Her job had something to do with cars—which is funny-ironic, now that I think of it—and with attracting people to the car place. She was silent, but she must have been successful, or else they would have removed her sooner

CHERRY PICKER CONTINUED

I never got the chance to see her up close, this woman, before she was fired or quit. I have to wonder what happened—if you'd seen her, you would have thought, as I did, that her bosses wouldn't let go too easily or too quickly. I have to wonder what happened to loose their grip.

I don't know if they left her out in a storm and she fell—if she seized the opportunity to run when they changed her clothes from summer to fall—if she will be back next week with no explanation—if they're just going to replace her with someone else—

I hope someone stepped in for her. I hope someone did for her what she couldn't, what I never did. I hope she isn't stuffed in a back room somewhere to rot, I hope she isn't in a Dumpster with her head next to her in a trash bag, I hope the sun will be kinder to her the next time she sees it.

CHERRY PICKER CONTINUED

I hope she chooses her next outfit. I hope she hides what she wants to hide and shows what she wants to show, and if she ever wears a bikini again, she can at least have a chance for a pool.

I hope, I hope, I meaninglessly hope.

But the cherry-picker itself is gone, and that seems to me like a good sign.

Update:

She's back now.



Maybe people really can't change after all.

SILENCE
BY JESSICA LITTLE

Silence

In the beginning there was silence
Empty, and alone, no warmth, no emotion.
A void that envelops you in uncomfortable stillness.
Shivering and helpless, it takes hold of the weak.

But then, a small melody awoke in the silence
Like a hand reaching out for hope
A small flame in the darkness
Longing for the indescribable rush of a chorus' swell
One voice desperately wanting to be heard

Slowly, one by one, voices joined the desperate song
Like a wave, a hundred voices morphed together
To create a beautiful symphony of sound
Until it became one voice, made up of a hundred more
A roaring flame against the quiet stillness.

And then, out of nowhere,
Like a clap of thunder, like the crash of a wave,
Like a scream piercing through the air
Darkness reared its raging head.

Silence

Like smoke, it smothered and choked
The breath out of every lung
It crushed every beating heart
It ripped the hope out of every soul.

And, in one swift moment, that light was snuffed out
That still small voice cracked and bleeding on the ground
Its song buried forever in the black now of time, space.

Once again leaving nothing but silence in its place.

Jessica E. F. Little



THE KNIGHT
BY ROBBY COLLINS



CORSPE FLOWER
BY ALANA ZUNIKOFF

THE CONGLOMERATE

BY JAKE ORE

Bits and pieces,
shards and scraps

Remainders of the
times elapsed Like
pits from peaches,
cores detached All
sweetness gutted,
pulp dispatched

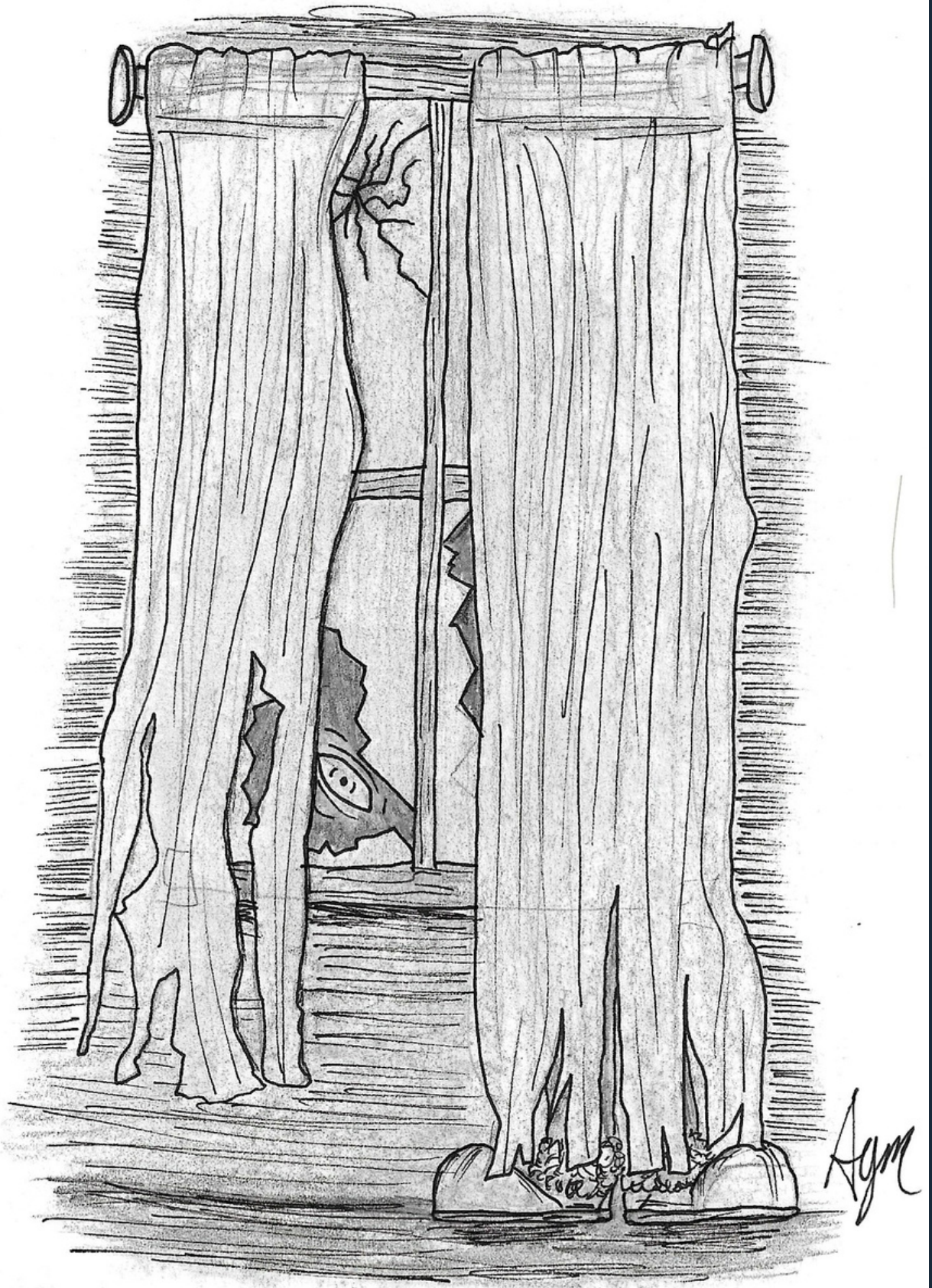
Thousands of
conversations Quick
and quiet
observations All
collected, all
connected Compiled
contemplations

Conjoined pointless
poisons posed By
the darkness that
seeks to overthrow
But within the
darkness a light
source grows And as
the light shines
brighter the
darkness knows
That the light is
coming, now the
darkness glows And
all is revealed To
me





THE PROMISE OF NEW LIFE
BY JESSICA LITTLE



WE SEE YOU
BY ANNA MIHM

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To ALM families and friends, who put up with seeing the same repeatedly, while still giving positive feedback. We love you so much, that we will continue to make life interesting with our limitless creativity.

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To all ALM members, your support, unwavering excitement, and curiosity have made us see what is important and made us strive to be better.

To all writers and artists in this collection of stories and art, it is because of your creativity and imagination that you have made all of this even conceivable.

To all ALM Executive Members and Successors, Chief Editor Julie Day, Co-editor Evelyn Lucado, Treasurer Katarina Witham, Secretary Sarah Hoke, and Successors Nathaniel Bednar and Jake Ore: Through your efforts and undying devotion, you have brought something glorious to life, for which no matter how small has made life better.

Finally, to our readers, who love dark and haunting material as much as we love making it for you, from the bottom of our undying black hearts, we love you!

Here's to a New World,
ALM