

Open up your eyelids
Stop living in silence
We organize in the streets
But they label us tyrants

—Steven Payán

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A Literary Arts Magazine



Issue 26

Fall 2025

Woodland Community College

Ink

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If you are a current student of Woodland Community College, Colusa County Campus, or Lake County Campus and would like to contribute to future issues, please see wcc.yccd.edu/ink for submission guidelines and deadlines.

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Sunny

Kyira Smith

The rays of heaven shined jubilantly
They lit up the trees
And paraded through the town
I lay under a tree
Where the crepuscular ray peaked
And I dared not make a sound
Instead, my eyes fluttered closed
And the beam on my face matched the beam through the oaks.
The ongoing haze parted as the twilight waned away
Now in its place standing valiantly
Were the heart of the sun and the sultriness of the beam.
Therefore stood in front of me the culprit
Scorching as she trode through the horizon.
I stared at her and yelled the words
“Nuclear Fusion!”

Rebuild and Rebound

Ximena Tuxpan Chavez

On a cliff off the coast weathered down by cascades
In the thick of a hedge overrun with grass blades
A domain lies unclaimed to redeem and invest
In a home to await for lost love once suppressed

Underneath carpet torn hide remains of betray
Mend the frays and entwine strings of gold in array
And unveil to restore your morale swept ashore
Windows down, breath of wind dries the dew of outpours

Incomplete stands the fence beaten down by the storm
Paint is chipped, boards are loose, guard is down to transform
Rays of sun glitter bright shining light on the path
To observe just beyond fields of green aftermath.

Dear Q

Odalis Leon Altamirano

“You laugh when you breathe,” you once told me, and I’ve never forgotten it

Random bits and pieces of conversations with you are always at the back of my mind, persistent and restless like a strong wind in the middle of the night

We became best friends randomly and suddenly, neither of us expecting it

Our friends never saw one of us without the other

And you soon knew me better than I knew myself

That first summer felt like a lifetime,

Full of warmth and full of light, it felt like the sun on the beach, every day

Long nights that ran into the early mornings, from dusk until dawn, an endless day,

an eternal summer

I had never believed in soulmates until I found a platonic one in you

My soul felt like it recognized yours from a different lifetime

You were there for me more than anyone else, we were all we had when our families felt worlds away

I hadn’t known what it was like to have a friend like you, and I know they say it’s better to have known and lost than to have never known at all, but your loss is one I still haven’t gotten over

I still remember the wind whirling my hair up into the sunroof of your car like a tornado as we drove, winding down a back road

I remember the smoke, filling up your car and the crown on the dash that glittered in the moonlight

Our friendship started well after our childhoods, but it made me feel lightweight and free, like I was a child again and we were having as much fun as we could until our parents called us back inside

It felt like the childhood I never had, and our friendship felt like a story in a book that I couldn’t put down

You used to make breathing feel easier,
But your last phone call felt like you took away every breath you helped
me take
The silence you left when you hung up the phone was deafening,
And I still felt like I was grasping for air
Two weeks later

Our story ended without a conclusion and like the beginning of our
friendship, unexpectedly
Your story and mine divulged into two different sequels, and yours is the
one that I'll never get a copy of

Poisonous Wish

Javier Villarruel

I look at the gun laid gently on my drawer.
It is a makeshift old thing,
its barrel not but a worn pipe
That points to where it will not sting.
As I gaze down its bore I do not see
an elegant spiral that brings a clean end,
but sets of broken, jagged, deadly teeth
which bite at what they might not intend.
Yet among all the belongings I possess,
there is nothing I value more than that gun.
It tells the flawed yet whole tale
of the man that had it for his son.
He put it together himself,
made it in the dark street corner he was often around.
A shady pair that would learn to come to my aid.
It was a new purpose the two had found.
It is not truly mine to claim
since I am a fraction of who it served,
but I'll guard it like he guarded me
so that his purest wish can be preserved.

My Letter of You

Eric Loeth

Dear beloved, this is crazy to think
Hearing your voice makes me blink
If I was to smell your presence it would be Lilies
I always try to be silly

Your laughter, like wind chimes, fills my ears
The days the sun would shine as you slept glow golden on your face
Being with you makes me feel as if my heart skipped for a moment,
mesmerized by your beauty

The pink lemonade you love is sweet and sour,
tingling on my tongue, jumping flavors around my mouth
The aroma of grandma's cookies that are your favorite
feel welcoming with every bite

Watching you for hours feels endless
As time passes, we talk
Walking in your shoes helps me understand
Our journey my love, oh, how I love you, love us and our ups and downs,
Rollercoasters are the same, we are the same

Love brings us together, regardless of the distance
We connect like bluetooth
We connect like interlocked hands held
We connect in ways that others cannot

Seeing your face plump as marshmallows as you smile softly
Touching the screen on our calls as I poke your nose like a bubble in front of
me

Darling, you are my everlasting love of what cannot die in this life
Your heart is as kind as a gentle breeze that carries the leaves across the
world

Look at the moon, as we have only one
Know that I am still here with you, even when I am not
Loving you is who I love
Unique in your way above all.

Company Always Welcomed

Eric Loueth

Waking up to a call from my friends
Asking to hangout and explore the outside
Took my camera along that had a lens
Feeling happy, somehow, though I had just cried

The big city was what we had always known
Driving around in our cars on the road
Taking advantage of the countless days
Reaching our route became a heavy load

Pictures taken amongst my friends' smiles
Our presences together grew stronger
We never knew it would be a while
Almost coming to an end, but wishing it longer

If it was me, I would want it to last
If it were them, they would too miss the past.

Toolbox

Jack Olton

A boy, inexperienced, restless, with a will to create,
Holds a hammer, aiming it steady.
A wooden box lies open before him — the start of a toolbox.
Objects lay down beside him, gathering dust before his eyes.
He doesn't swing the hammer; he just waits and waits.
Time passes long enough to see leaves crumble outside.
One has purpose, a goal, and a vision.
The others are tools lacking any sort of mission—
Going nowhere, waiting for his assistance.
He wants to build something that takes time,
But lacks any reason why... or so he thinks.
A toolbox is the blueprint, but where do you begin?
He thrusts the hammer down, working off nothing but instinct.
As each swing leaves mistake after mistake,
He remembers the sound of his father fixing things,
The steady rhythm of nails, the quiet weight of care.
Eventually he gets it right.
A piece of him projected in his hands.
He sets it down to come back to,
Sleeping off a day's hard work.
Something to be proud of.
Something with weight.
Something that says more than words could.
He just realized—
It's the perfect gift for his father's birthday.

Hole

Nate Ward

Out in nature, when the moon gave off light
And all the beasts of the woods took a nap
A hole would appear in calmness of night
And the asleep would fall into the trap
They saw the hole expand towards the woods
It ate all it could within its dark sight
It ate all of nature's kindly goods
It made all the beasts run without a fight
As nature fell within the hole, the sound
They would have made became naught but eaten
It spread even more as it ate the ground
It ate from the large to the small cretin
But soon, the morning light came out to play
Causing the hole to go and hide away

Choice

Nate Ward

The road now splits into endless paths
Each and every one stamped with feet
Leaving each foot mark left more unique
In Endless dirt, each was like the last
The first lay bare, soot used to paint earth
Machines worked endless at the road's side
Those whose marched here had their dreams died
And had to abandon all their worth
Another path shown, barren of life
A path covered with blood and stilled eyes
Ones who avoid this path are all wise
Lest they find their own blood on a knife
Another path lay, riches laid out
It was one of the easy paths laid
But many footsteps look crooked this way
So better to stay than go in doubt
Each path well-worn, Each not treaded less
All paths had pain etched into their soil
Unable to find one without toil
So, what road will your feet come to rest?

My Angel
Eric Loeuth

We sat there watching
Hearts feeling heavy
As gold in our palms
Thinking was more than that
Beep, Beep, Beep
How much longer until you come back?

Time goes by feeling this inflicted wound inside me
That cannot heal
I miss you, I say I miss you so much
I can still smell the acid of the hand sanitizer that was used
Before holding your hand that felt like thin paper

I look at you, grandma, and wish cancer never took you
Away from me I say
The guilt of never being able to say goodbye by loved ones
We never expected to see you fly so soon, as I never got to say goodbye
Soar as far as you can like a bird in the wind
Watch us from above

Your love warmed our hearts like a smore melting in a mouth
Even your scent still lingers like the buzzing sound of a fly
We hope to see you again as the smile you gave was bright like the light
bulb turned on.
Thank you for being my loved one
To be loved by the short lady with no hair who had a temper when
annoyed

I will move on to be as strong as you were
Keep my head high as a kite in the sky
I will never forget you
You will stay in my memories and heart forever

Wartime soldier

Jack Olton

He climbed aboard as the ground lit with flame,
Not for glory, but to outrun the shame.
He told himself, just fly—don't look below,
But war finds you, no matter where you go.
An Air Force pilot flies home from battle,
His passion now turned shackle.
His name is irrelevant, for he is a soldier—
An object of war like the weapon on his shoulder.
He's praised by some as a hero among men.
He flies his plane through the night,
It floats upon clouds once light,
Now heavy with the burden he carries—
He sinks into a foggy territory.
He did what he thought was right,
Until the night the wrong target was in sight.
A village mistaken, a call too late,
He watched the flames and sealed their fate.
Since then, silence sounds like screams.
He wakes from war buried in dreams.
Now home, he walks past waving flags and cheers,
But all he hears are the cries in his ears.
No medals dull the flash of light—
He did his job but lost the fight.
He did what he thought was right,
But now all he does is cry at night.

Bank Heist

Jack Olton

Time flies faster than a bullet.
Again! Again! Again! Repeats through our heads
As we load up our wallets in front of the feds.
If only we had one more shot.
We regret yet move forward—
Forward towards exits swarmed by blue,
Forward towards people unlike me and you.
Exits made of walls of cops.
Our final stand? Or maybe,
by chance—
An opening, an opening, an opening in the wall,
Our ticket to freedom from the law.
Now out with the money—
All of us made it.
We shook the blue.
Slipped through alleys, tore through night.
Ditch the masks. Ditch the ride.
City lights now far behind.
Everything's fine.
The heist was a success.
Now what's mine is mine.

Music Battle

Jack Olton

A harmony of shattered glass.
The band of three needs to get back on track.
Each one fights to lead the sound,
Competing for the crowd's favor and claps.
A mix of lyrics, pulled in three directions —
Still soul behind the track.
The crowd's withering like dead flowers
As the band starts more fires —
Not on the stage, but in each other.
The guitarist angry as a Monday morning,
Says the others drowned his song in noise.
Lyrics sung so loud the wind stops to listen,
But none agree on what the words should mean,
While the drummer plays a tune
Lacking all forgiveness.
Like lightning striking with no thunder's time,
The rhythm stumbles, out of beat, out of line.
The band's going under.
If only they had got along with each other.



Untitled by Eric Dassis

The Alarm

Odalis Leon Altamirano

The alarm was blaring in the background
An incessant noise that wouldn't stop
A warning, that something was coming

Years of training couldn't have taught us
For how we'd react when it actually happened
An alarm red, a possible attack, and now we had to act, quickly

I only had to meet eyes with my comrade
A few fleeting words, a quick and brief discussion
We turned on our heels, adrenaline carrying us
As we ran, our hearts pumping louder than our legs

Our voices yelling, carrying through the rooms
As loud as we could muster, alarm still blaring in the background
Heads turning, looking at us, listening to the alarm

This is not a drill, this is not a drill
Over and over and over
Comprehension finally floods their eyes

We lead, they follow
Through the building, out the door, into a bunker
We're all crouched, barely fitting under the concrete ceiling

I look around, sweat dripping down my face
My friend at my side, and we meet eyes again
We all look at each other, chests heaving from running
The alarm is still blaring

Minutes pass like hours
The heat and sand are all we can feel
I send my husband a message hoping it goes through
I love you

I sit so still I can hear everyone breathing
A prayer flashes through my mind
And the thought that this is where I might die

A Trip to Mexico

Jack Olton

Day One. I turn the engine on.
Move till I'm gone.
Day Two. Three more days.
Almost there.
Wait — wait — wait.
Day Three. Where am I going?
I fly through the morning.
At the end of each day,
Continuous mourning.
Day Four. I'm driving through the country,
Crossing the border.
Day Five. No more days.
I'm here to stay.
Gunshots — bang. bang. bang.
I fall where I stand.
My head spins out of hand.
I know where I am. This is Mexico, ma'am.
My father's funeral.
A man of mans.

Game Day

Jack Olton

Off the bus, I stand before open doors.
Gear in hand, I pause and dream of great scores.
I walk and walk — beneath, the glossy floors
Reflect the eyes of past team legends' roars.
The match begins, the crowd erupts with cheer.
They hold the ball, we're backing off in fear.
They move with grace, their passes sharp and clear,
But we won't quit — defeat is not yet near.
The score is 10 to 2 — we're feeling pain.
Swoosh, swoosh — they score with ease again, again.
But now they slip — their pace begins to wane.
They gasp for breath and stumble down the lane.
They pushed too hard, too fast, their legs give in.
We seize the lead — last minute, we do win.

Becoming

Jamie Seibel

I am standing
on the Guy West Bridge,
looming over the edge
to ripples of river
and a yellow sky.
I imagine my shoulders
sprouting black and white-
speckled wings, flying over
the greenish-blue mass
to join the flocks of geese
and woodpeckers in their
discovery of shelter and food.
Bikers race past me, ignoring
the fluttering of a
fledgling. I wish to be
part of the wind,
but when I reach out
to grasp it, the pencil falls
from my hand, splashing
against the surface of water.



Untitled by Andrea Nava

The Circus of Consensus

Michael Murray

Step right up, the tent is glowing
Where facts are bent to keep Truths flowing
Who decides? What's right? What's wrong?
Why, the man in the office oblong!
The juggler juggles talking points
While clowns debate whom to anoint
The lion roars with self-righteous flair,
No tamer in sight of his gilded chair.
The tightrope walker spins a tale,
Risk, reward, pass or fail
The crowd applauds, then boos, then cheers,
Depending on their nightly fears.
Step right up, admission is free
But only if you pay dearly
The ringmaster grins, adjusts his tie
"Democracy," he says, "will never die."

One Life Too Many

te snow

too many innocent victims.
too many wasteful deaths.
too many times; the inhumanity of man.
one more case.
one more tragedy.
one too many.
one that is always with me.
one that impacts my life direction.
one that influences my choices.
one that shapes my answers.
one that causes continual chronic pain.
pain that is not physical.
pain that is all mental.
pain that came from unspeakable tragedy.
pain that cannot be explained to the uninitiated.
pain that is now my life

In The Shower

Odalis Leon Altamirano

Sometimes when I'm in the shower
I remember

I remember trying to scrub away your touch
With torching hot water and so much soap that my mother would yell at
me for wasting it

Sometimes when I'm in the shower,
I break down in tears
The tears turn into sobs
The ugly, silent sobs
The kind where you try not to make a sound and your breath becomes
ragged

This happens a lot less than it used to,
But it happens the most around the anniversary of when you took a part
of me
And I don't know how to describe exactly what you took

Maybe it was my sense of peace
Maybe it was my ability to talk to strangers, without my mind going to
the worst-case scenario
Maybe it was the fun part of me, the part everyone loved because I
laughed when I breathed and I joined the others at parties

Maybe it was dreams that didn't terrorize me
Maybe it was the thing that made me feel like I wasn't damaged, or dirty
Maybe it was my friends, the ones who didn't believe me or the ones
who don't try to talk to me because I'm not "fun" anymore

I can't explain that I'm not me anymore
And I never will be,
Because of you

Accents

Odalis Leon Altamirano

When I was younger, people would always remark on how I didn't have
an accent
And they seemed amazed

Amazed at how eloquently I spoke English
Amazed that my first language could hide behind my English, like it was
better off being tucked away unless absolutely necessary

When I got older, I realized how lucky I was
Lucky that I knew these two languages, these two keys to two different
worlds
Lucky that I could speak for not only myself but my parents as well
because my mother had yet to welcome a second language to her tongue

Lucky that my first language was a seed, with roots that went back to my
parents' country
A seed that blossomed and bloomed like a marigold in October
Whose smell lingers, and leads the path back to my own roots

These roots that are strong, and persistent
Like my parents,
Despite all the hardships they've had to endure

Maybe not luck, but my dad's perseverance
That brought him from Mexico

The seeds that he brought, and planted in each of my siblings
Seeds we watered, that blossomed and grew
Despite the storms that may pass

They've tried to take the seeds that so many of our people have planted,
But these seeds have grown roots
And it is not luck that has weathered the storm, but our strength

I left home when I was 17
Still a child, barely an adult
But I had the weight of the world

My first night in my dorm room, I could smell how long it had been
empty
The air felt stale, and lifeless and nothing felt like home
I sat on the empty twin sized bed, bags still packed
and cried

I longed for a place that felt like home
I longed for the early morning chill, and the roosters crowing
And my dad's pickup truck right next to my window

The rising sunlight filtered through sheer purple curtains, creating a
lavender haze that showered my entire room
Cool, smooth tiles shocked my feet in the morning, waking me up a little
faster in the winter

If I lay on my back
With my eyes closed
I could imagine I was home, laying on my bed
The purple quilt beneath me, a dream catcher with horses the first thing I
see when I open my eyes
And the sound of my mom making coffee in the kitchen next to my room

I longed for the smell of wet dirt, and hay in my hair because I was
running late to school, but I still had to feed the horses, or my dad would
be upset
The smell of the fresh air, in the country, miles away from the nearest
neighbor

Home was where the stars twinkled and winked at me every night,
because you could always see them so much better out there
The creaky door on the side of the gate when my older sister snuck in,
and the dogs barking until they recognized the late-night intruder

At home the sun shone brighter, and the air was crisper

At home I'd get lost in a book in the purple haze
Or lay in the back of the pickup in the middle of the night when I
couldn't sleep and talk to the stars and the moon because it felt like they
were the only ones who listened

I wish I had known
That I would always mourn
This version of home,
When I was 17

Homebound

Jack Olton

Calgary
A place full of empty promises.
I was born there,
but know it about as well as a goldfish knows the outside of its bowl.
Sidewalks I never walked.
Alleys like stories no one bothered to tell me.
It smells like gravel after rain—
Familiar, but hard to place.
Alberta
The province that holds Calgary
like a photo in a cracked frame.
Frost bites first,
then the silence finishes what the cold started.
I passed through towns like wind through wheat—
Always moving, never staying.
Canada
A country stitched together with highways and snowfall.
Mountains that pierce the sky
like questions no one answers.
It's big.
Too big to know.
Too quiet to ask.
Yet it's my home.
I seek out, I dive, I climb—
Like a dog chasing a ball, you don't need a purpose.
Like reading a book you forgot you started.
I like my home.
I just don't know it yet.

Jesters

Jessie Solomon

Jesters are more than Jokers and Clowns
They aren't Fools that perform for people in crowns
Jesters dance and twirl for more than a mile
They go city to town to make people smile
In the past they wore mostly black and white
Now, unlike Mimes, they're a more colorful sight
Jesters can be heard from a block away
For when they dance, their bells do play
They jingle and jangle more than a Christmas tune
And they should never be confused for a Bouncing Buffoon
Jesters come in multiple sizes and shapes
From small to tall, thin to wide, same with their capes
Jesters always love to see people grin
And that is why Jesters will always be within my kin

The Petals of Summer

Tyler Hughes-Garcia

Have you ever had flowers brush against your naked skin?
Every petal falling down makes you think
What could have been
I'm a little stuck in my past cause I haven't quite figured out my present
If your heart gets broken easy
Then you really get it
They say that Summer's most nostalgic
Cause the solstice is the thought that never ends
The moon's been watching us for all of our lives, telling us to look the
other way
But it shines so bright that the ocean it reflects forces the tide to stay



Deep in Memory by Addyson Shively



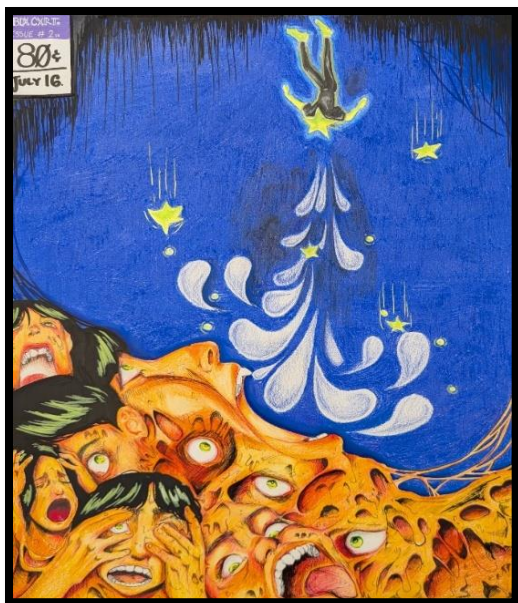
Red Thoughts by Erica Bella Luna



Untitled by Noah McKim



Picture Taken (Self Portrait) by Erica Bella Luna



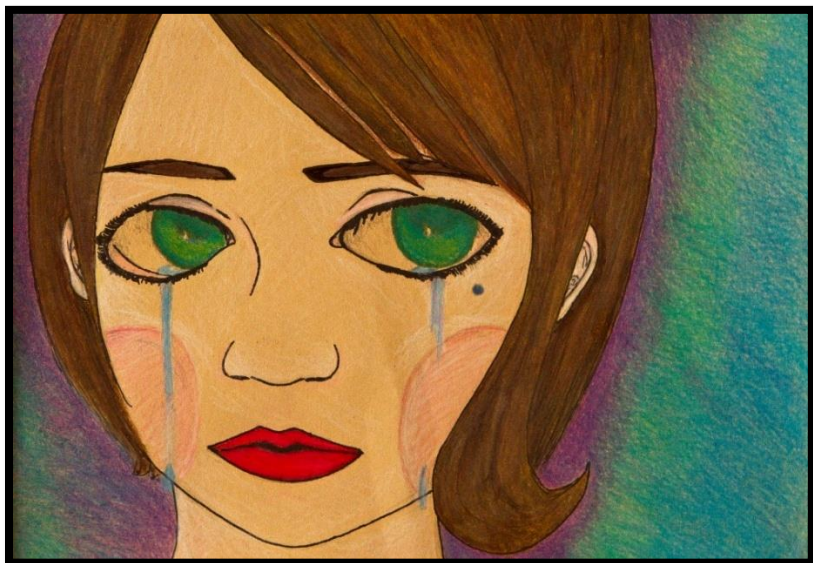
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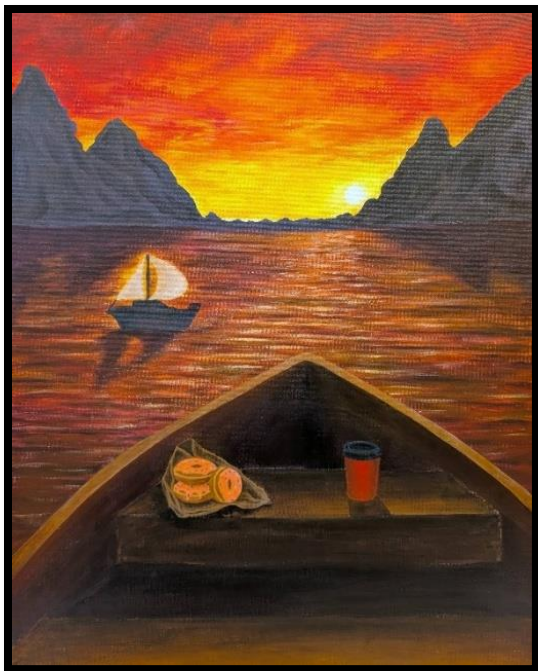
Eye Candy by Zei Sanabria



Untitled by Adriana Orozco



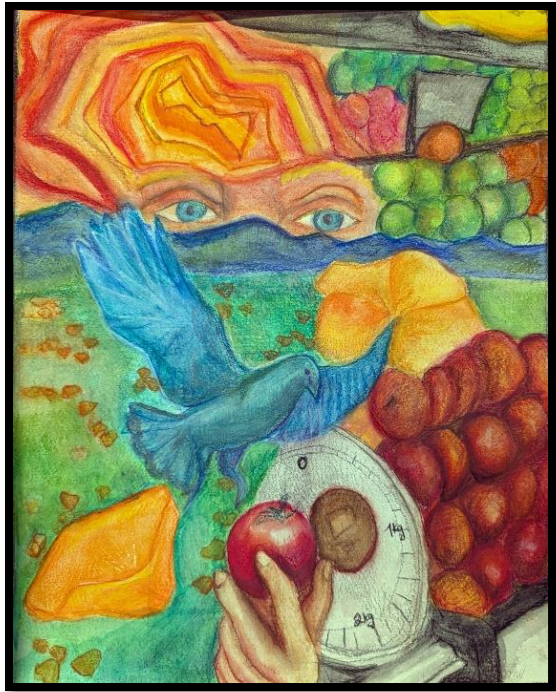
Me Watching the News in 2025 by Jamie Seibel



Untitled by Angelina Parsons



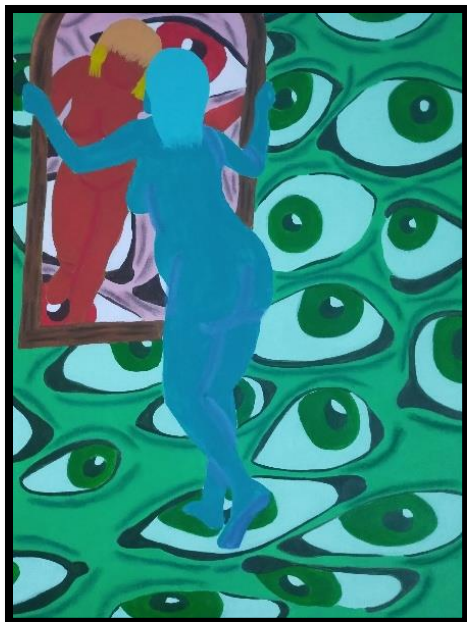
Aquatic Borealis by Addyson Shively



Untitled by Anonymous



Knight's Honor by Addyson Shively



Eyes Of Men by Zei Sanabria



Untitled by Michael Tafoya



Untitled by Sterling McMullen-Gross



Untitled by Emily Yue

Lightbulbs

Kyira Smith

Lightbulbs always have a special glow
Iridescent, illuminating, electro.
In the backyard was where it burned
Though that time soon came to churn!
Grainy images swirl my mind,
Of hazy summer nights under that light.
Mosquitos dancing along my skin.
Sucking juicy red from I and kin.
Walnuts lay behind me.
Quiet pit pats along the grass soon follow idly.
But then the lightbulb's glow diminishes to a flicker.
That's when I know laughter can't be any more sicker.
No blue jays sing
And the old tree wallows
Gone are the days of one-sock
And in come the nights of sorrow.
There's no jackets,
No grass,
No sparkles.
And once every full moon I see the haze of that lightbulb.
A distant memory filled with smoke.
Only to remember the last time it glowed.
Down came the lightbulb, a sad sight to see.
But then again, nobody remembers but me.

Look For Me No Longer

Ximena Tuxpan Chavez

By the beacon of moonlight that beckons me come
I scour and light upon a tear in the mesh
Gaping open to betray the path I succumb to
as I start for the last time afresh.

I don't look back as I writhe against the jagged edges
Nor do I whisper farewell when I emerge on the other side
Released from constraints that were endless
Where I could never be satisfied
no matter how hard I tried.

You'll wake up tomorrow and wonder what's become
Of the one you loved so dearly
Who was always tethered to your side.
And you'll ramble through the streets
Calling out my name
But you see, you'll never find me
For I have gone away.

It's in my blood to chase
And charm
And cheat
And bolt
When I get restless and bored.

So don't look for me any longer
for you'll labor only in vain,
and if you ever see me in the moonlight yonder
I'll turn my face away and feign
that you ever knew me at all.

Weigh Your Wealth

Ximena Tuxpan Chavez

Speak not of earthly riches stored in vain
for seconds slip beneath the cracks of day
to lie untouched beyond your reach, now slain
to sink beneath the crashing waves of gray.

What once was worth more than your love now fades
to clouds of mist; mere dreams of true renown.
What once shone bright with splendid glow degrades
amidst the waste of scraps ablaze, burned down.

Too far, too late to claim what you have lost.
The one you claimed to love has gone astray
in search of new appeals to fill the cost
and soothe the pain of false love in decay.

So when in time you breathe your last goodbye,
remind the ones you love to heed your cry.

Poisonous Breaking

Javier Villarruel

When something breaks,
does it become flawed?
Can it still be complete?
Or is it now fractured?
Can that something, now flawed and fractured,
still prove to be useful?
Or is it now useless?
Would that be a disgrace?
Can that someone,
now a flawed, fractured,
useless disgrace...
Mend?
Does that someone mend
using its old pieces?
Or can it use new ones?
Would it still be broken?
Can I,
who was broken and mended,
be more than what I was
before I broke?

My Arrival in LA

André Boddy Oré

Bright blue skies, dirty air,
Unhinging me
Deep-set eyes and permed hair

...

Everybody is the same—
But they all look so different
Chins high, no shame, and they're all full of ambition.

Why's it feel like that nobody cares,
They're so distant,
From their own families,
They're all on a mission
They walk around so important,
But all I see is tradition,
And left eyes, that left ties
Who're fed lies from a system

I'd rather have people stare,
Then walk around with no vision.
Don't you go check nobody's screen time
It's always 'cause of conditions,
Plus, everybody out here feel like
Words are just ammunition.

...

It takes a big head-
to knock yourself over.
All you gotta do is beg,
And hope you win people over-
They say "the city of angels"
But nobody out here's sober
And I'm here seeing every angle
Wishin' it all could be over.

But I came here on my own,
I made that choice,
And when I go home,
I'll be proud, and I will raise my voice,
To tell the people that it's better here,

Away from the noise,
And even though it may seem slow
We need to learn that the joys-
Of this life,
don't come from the "what's there to do"
But rather who is there to do it with,
And you get to choose,
Do you want life around the debris-
and the dross of the earth,
Where people suffer every day-
for stuff that's not even worth.

Those are society's finish lines,
the ends of the road,
The demons want you there,
So you can be within their control
Those are great people getting tied out there,
I know that is true,
But it gets hard-
to push away the life they're force-feeding you.



Forensic Bears by Addyson Shively

The Plane

André Boddy Oré

I lay in a plane of acceptance,
with shackles and thorns on my feet,

I struggle but know there's no fighting,
and I have to accept my defeat.

I love but my love goes unanswered,
by kindred and friends too alike,

I try, but my effort's neglected,
so I choose to stay out of their sight.

I rise to escape this vast desert land,
In hopes that I'll find here, a beach,

Or better, a lively oasis,
A place far away from the heat.

I stumble and limp through this lonely place,
Stability, out of my reach.

Enshrouded behind the dark clouds of anxiety,
Is truly who I mean to be.

The clouds have just cleared with this new night,
My path, I can finally see,

I leave this plane knowing my journey,
It starts with understanding me

I grow, and I change with the seasons,
I liken myself to a tree.

A sapling, fragile to the weather,
In fear that I'm losing a leaf.

Each leaf falling down was a hope,
You picked every leaf off my branch,

You shook me until I was empty,
And left each leaf to rot where it lands,

So I wander in other directions,
Regardless of if I can stand,

And each step all your thorns will grow deeper,
As I sink deeper into the sand.



Walking Fossil by Addyson Shively

Used Books

Kyira Smith

Bobble head bobbing back and forth,
Stacks and Stacks of books.
The cases that hold them more like warm beds,
Where each book could nuzzle in and rest.
A wild maze, each row is
A labyrinth filled with entertainment
Stories of vampires, heroes, and legends
Each book a door to our imagination.
Take a book off the shelf
And you immediately find something close to yourself
Each word you read is like a song
A lullaby to all that have been harmed.
Each flick of a page, a flick of the mind
Brain materializing castles, hospitals, and all places alike
You blink too fast, and your life soon flashes
Though is it your life or one of your past ones?
The scent of old pages
Of another time
And the conversations
From another life.
Cloutier's isn't just a bookstore
But a revisit in time.
Of stories made from ghosts in our life
Each book more like an ode to those who have died.
So read your books and let them wrap you tight,
Their words a balm in the craziest of times.
Don't let the words slip from your grasp
And remember books will always last.

Alias: Chaotic ITILII of Mentos Diferentes

Song: "Young, Gifted & Brown" (2008)

Album: Mentos Diferentes, "El Campo"

Verse 2

Steven Payán

Crusading for Justice like the late Corky Gonzalez/
Catch us Marching in the streets like Cesar Chavez//
This is for the homies locked up or up in college/
Looks like it's on us to stop the violence//
Open up your eyelids/
Stop living in silence//
We organize in the streets/
But they label us tyrants//
From the LA Blowouts where we fought for Education/
To the takeover of DQU,
That's Occupation//
40 (1969) Years later
M.E.Ch.A's still in the house/
Still fighting for our rights- now, what you talkin about?//
Whether you organize in the streets or your fights in the field/
There's one thing for real/ this our time to build//
The Eagle & Condor is our symbols of Unity/
Red & Brown mix/
We all in the community//
We are... Young, Gifted and Brown/
Wit the skill to change the world around//
Hit the town/
Came to shut the system down//The Eagle & Condor is our symbols of
Unity/
Red & Brown mix/
We all in the community//
We are... Young, Gifted and Brown/
Wit the skill to change the world around//
Hit the town/
Came to shut the system down//

The Red Wrench

Eric Loeuth

I never knew how heavy this guilt would feel as I kept waking up from my slumber. I awoke alone in my bed, confused, not remembering what had happened the night before. My anger was always hard to control, and I often thought something was wrong with me, especially whenever I saw red in situations I couldn't handle.

My wife, Jessica, and I had lived together for four years. I loved her with all my heart; she was beautiful and smelled like flowers whenever she hugged me on our good days. Jessica loved drinking coffee; she always made a cup every morning. We had our arguments here and there, but now, getting flashbacks of last night, I remember I had finally had enough of all the nonsense she threw at me, telling me I didn't put in enough effort, treating me like I was nothing, not even a person. It hurt like a deep wound that I couldn't fix. Every time she yelled at me, I felt this burning urge to just make her stop.

That night, we argued again when I came home late from work. She didn't understand, assuming I'd been somewhere else. This wasn't the first time. When she yelled, I yelled back, anger and frustration taking over, until I stormed into the garage and grabbed my red wrench, the one I usually used to fix my car.

There was blood everywhere, on my hands, on the floor. A puddle spread across the wooden boards. I panicked, rushing to grab a large bag to stuff her in, then cleaned up the blood as best I could. My mind was spinning; I couldn't think of anywhere to hide the bag, so I shoved it into the closet. That night, I tried to sleep, wondering if the neighbors had heard anything.

Before the sun came up, I grabbed the cold coffee from yesterday to keep myself awake. I couldn't sleep anyway. Then, I decided to take the bag from the closet, tie it up tight, drag it down the driveway, and throw it into the trunk of my car.

I drove to the lake. The water was deep and blue, surrounded by tall grass and trees. The early morning breeze brushed against my face as the sun began to rise. When I arrived, I noticed a few people already there—some I even knew from my visits to the lake when I came to think alone.

As I got out to open the trunk, I suddenly heard a voice behind me. It was Carlos. I'd known him for two years, and he'd met my wife before. He'd been fishing at this lake for years.

"Hey there, Benny. How's it going?" he said.

“Oh, hey. Uh, great. Just here to think and relax, like I always do,” I replied, then asked, “Catching any fish today?”

Carlos looked out at the lake, holding his fishing gear. “I sure do hope so,” he said in a weary tone. As he glanced back at my car, he noticed a white cloth with red stains sticking out of the trunk. It looked unusual and gave him an uneasy feeling.

He pretended not to notice, not wanting to stir up trouble, especially knowing how I got when I didn’t like what I heard. Carlos walked off toward his usual spot on the dock, a little down from the parking lot.

“Well, I’ll get out of your hair. It was nice seeing you again. Hope everything’s okay with you and your wife,” he said, a hint of sarcasm in his tone.

I froze for a moment when he mentioned Jessica.

“Oh, everything’s fine, Carlos,” I said, waving him off.

Once he left, I went to the trunk, lifted the heavy bag onto my shoulder, and walked to the farthest edge of the lake. The path curved around the water in an almost perfect circle. When I set the bag down, I noticed blood dripping from my hands and knelt to wash it off in the cold lake water.

The bag was heavy, heavier than I could have imagined, but I managed to push it into the water, watching as it slowly sank, bubbles rising to the surface. Relief washed over me, though it was tangled with sickening guilt.

“Rest easy now,” I whispered. “This was our favorite lake.”

As I walked back to my car, I couldn’t stop thinking about whether I had done the right thing. A tear slid down my cheek as I pulled out of the parking lot and drove home.

The house was empty now. The smell of coffee still lingered in the kitchen, reminding me of her. It was so quiet, too quiet. I hoped nobody would find out.

When I walked into the garage, I saw the wrench, still stained red. It didn’t feel like mine anymore. Maybe nobody will notice, I thought. I’ll just keep using it with a smile... while washing it clean with water.

Even as I grow older, I still have not forgotten you.

Yet, butterflies pass by reminding me of you.

I look up and feel at peace knowing you are up there.

Starbucks In Fall

Eva Soto

Every fall, my sister and I love to go to Starbucks. It's not anything special, just us walking in and smelling all the coffee and pumpkin stuff. The line is usually kind of long, but we don't care. While we wait, we talk about our week or just joke around. Sometimes we point out other people in line and guess what they're ordering. My sister is usually right and I'm always wrong, but we still laugh about it.

I usually get an iced pumpkin spice latte, and my sister gets an iced pumpkin chai latte. She says it's sweet--a perfect chai mixed with pumpkin. Watching the barista make the drinks is kind of cool. They pour the milk and swirl it around, and it looks perfect in the cup. I never thought about how much work goes into a drink until I watched them measure everything and make it just right. Sometimes the barista calls out orders and people's names, and it makes me think about how many drinks they make in a day and how fast they have to be.

The store smells like coffee and sugar and pumpkin and sometimes a little cinnamon. People sit at tables with laptops or notebooks or just stare at their drinks. Sometimes we sit by the window and watch cars go by and people walking dogs. My sister notices things I don't, like a kid laughing at a cookie or someone's scarf blowing in the wind. I notice the small details too, like the way the sunlight hits the tables or the way the whipped cream melts on top of someone's drink. All of it makes the place feel alive even though it's just a Starbucks.

When we finally get our drinks, we go sit at a table and just chill. The cups are cold and refreshing. We talk, laugh, and sometimes just sit and sip quietly. It feels calm for a little while. I like it because it's simple but feels important. It's not just the coffee; it's hanging out with my sister and having a break from everything else. Sometimes we sit there for a while, just people watching. I notice some people get the same drink every time and some try something new and it makes me think about how everyone has their own little habits and routines.

Even though Starbucks is just a chain, it feels kind of special to us, especially in the fall. We notice little things like the foam on the top or the sound the blender makes. My sister always points out the pumpkin decorations or the music they play. Sometimes we take silly pictures of our drinks or make jokes about how extra they make everything. Those

little moments make it our spot even if it's just for a little while. It's part of our routine and it feels normal but also kind of special.

Sometimes we see friends there too and say hi. Other times it's just the two of us. Either way, it's a nice break. The cold drinks, the pumpkin smells, and the cozy feeling in the store make it a place we look forward to every day. When we leave with our cups, we feel ready to do the rest of the day. It's not a big adventure, but it's ours. Little moments like this show me that small stuff can matter and just being with someone you care about can make something normal feel important.



Untitled by Hailee Lopez

Graveyard Hours

Nate Ward

The shovel hit the old dirt with a loud thud. As Samual tried to force the spade into the ground with his foot, he glanced over to what was overlooking the ground. Like always, the name on the tombstone had faded away with both time and lack of maintenance. But, then again, all of these graves were. This whole place looked and smelled like the definition of a graveyard, that being grey and earthy with a hint of dead people. From the randomly spaced tombstones to the withering and already dead trees to the ash grass that littered the whole place. Even when he tried to open the gate to this place, the door he pushed fell backwards and broke. They hadn't been looked after for a while. When the owners of this place couldn't pay the yearly tributes, the pale priests condemned this place, leaving this place to die and leaving the graves left behind. Looking back at the ground, Sam noticed the shovel still hadn't punctured the ground. He began slamming his foot on it repeatedly, in hopes of actually pushing through.

"You know, for how long you've been doing this, you'd think we would've gotten any better," a voice echoed towards Sam. Raising his head, he turned his head to an old, withered tree a few graves down. Their branches were bare riverbeds, pointing out in whichever way they felt like. On one of the higher branches sat a crow. Her snow eyes stared down at Sam.

"If you're here to try and convince me, you came a bit late," Sam commented as pointed with his thumb to a freshly reburied grave. There wasn't anything in there, at least not anything that could be sold.

The crow jumped down onto the ashen grass and waddled over. As she did so, Sam finally got through the first layer of dirt and started digging much more easily. Jumping onto the tombstone, the crow spoke again.

"You know this is wrong, Sam," the crow spoke.

"And yet the prices of food still rise in this kingdom," Sam spoke as he dug deeper. "Besides, the Pale Church forsook this place. It's a free game for anyone to dig here."

"Well, do you see anyone else here, disturbing the dead?" the crow squawked back. Sam paused for just a second.

"Well, people are afraid that if they go somewhere the church forbids, they'll get cursed." Finally,

Sam hit something solid. As Sam brushed away the small dirt layer with his leather gloves, the crow rubbed her eyes with her feathered fingers.

“You’re afraid of them too, you idiot. They’re the church.” Sam rolled his eyes as he lifted the coffin’s lid. Inside lay the skeleton remains of someone. Judging by their attire, a pale gown with the symbol of the church in their hands, they were a bit wealthy. Looking over, Sam noticed a few rarities on the corpse. A pearl necklace, a few gold arm rings, and the metal circle emblem representing the church.

“I may be afraid of them, but for now, I’ll survive against them.” The crow rolled her eyes. Suddenly, in a flurry of feathers, the crow had changed from a piece of coal with wings on it to an elegantly dressed woman. The crow’s feathers had transformed into a coal dress.

Resting upon her head was a massive hat also made of those feathers.

This was Abigail, the crow witch. She and Samual had been traveling with each other for a while. She was also his only way of making any money. Samual had left her at the inn they were staying at, knowing that she wouldn’t really approve of this.

“At least let me stand guard so you don’t get caught,” Abigail said as she summoned her staff.

“Thank you, Abigail!”

Glass Feathers: A Girl Born of Ashes

Adriana Murillo

Some girls are born with silver spoons in their mouths. I was born holding a shovel — and a secret.

At four in the morning, my small brown hands gripped tomato plants and hope in equal measure. By the time the bell rang at school, I had already fed animals, prayed to a Virgin who looked like my mama, and wondered how I would survive another day of being too Mexican for the classroom, too American for abuela, and too loud for the silence expected of girls like me.

I've worn trauma like second skin. Some call it Borderline. I call it survival with rhythm. I've been institutionalized, wrongfully accused, and still showed up for the world like a light switch no one asked to turn on.

But light doesn't ask permission.

I created a nonprofit cat café in the middle of my own unraveling. I named it *Purr & Sip* — a sanctuary for both stray kittens and the broken-hearted. Some people serve lattes. I serve healing. With every whisker saved, I stitch together pieces of myself.

Then came the explosion.

Esparto — my hometown — burned. Literally. And with it, the illusion that I would ever live a normal life. I lost people. I lost my baby. I lost the lie that staying quiet would keep me safe.

I was held at gunpoint by men sworn to protect me. Not for a crime. For crying for help.

And yet, I rise — with glass feathers stitched to my shoulder blades. Even broken wings can catch the wind if you believe enough.

I channel my grief into protest songs. I tell stories with rhythm and rage. I dance in the dark to chase out the shadows. My art isn't a luxury. It's my rebellion.

I'm here to remind you: not all phoenixes are pretty. Some of us rise from farm fields and psychiatric wards. Some of us never get statues or sashes. But we wake the world up.

This is not just a submission. This is my declaration:

I am not the drama.

I am the evidence.

I am the voice that refuses to be silenced —

for my people, for the cats, for the broken girls who glow anyway.

Print me if you dare.

Love at First Strike

Jack Olton

I sit up from my chair and stare at the door. The clock above the front desk reads 2:32 PM. He said two-thirty. I grip the strap of my purse and take a deep breath.

I stand, push in my chair, and head for the exit. My pulse beats faster with every step. I push the doors, but they do not move. I shove harder, and they swing toward me.

He is standing on the other side.

For a second, neither of us speaks. Evan's dark hair falls slightly over his forehead, and his leather jacket fits like it was made for him. He looks exactly like his picture. Worse, he looks better.

"You're late," I say.

"Traffic," he answers, like that justifies anything.

"Right. Again."

His mouth twitches, just barely. "Guess I owe you a streak of punctuality."

He steps inside, and the door closes behind him. The sound of bowling pins crashing echoes across the room. People glance at him as he walks toward me. It feels like he brings a current with him, one I did not ask to be swept into.

"I thought you'd leave," he says.

"I almost did."

He tilts his head slightly, studying me, then gestures toward the lanes.

"Round two?"

I follow him, not because I have forgiven him for last time, but because I still want to beat him.

The bowling alley hums with Saturday energy. Families fill the tables, league players in matching shirts move with practiced rhythm, and the air smells faintly of wax and fried food. It is familiar. I grew up here, spending weekends with my dad, perfecting my throw. It is one of the few places I still feel sure of myself.

At the counter, he asks my shoe size, tells the employee, and tosses the pair to me. I catch them without looking. His eyebrow lifts.

"You play?"

“I don’t just play,” I say. “I’m good.”

“Guess I’ll find out.”

I tie my laces tighter. “You will.”

We pick our balls and head to the lane. The moment I hold mine, it feels right. I walk to the foul line, settle into position, and release. The ball rolls smoothly, curves just enough, and slams into the pins. Strike.

I turn and meet his eyes. A small, satisfied smile tugs at my lips.

He does not look surprised. “Not bad.”

He grabs a heavier ball, lines up carefully, and throws. It hits slightly off-center but knocks down nine pins. His follow-up picks up the spare cleanly.

“Better than last time,” I tease.

“Trying to make up for being late,” he says, and for a second, his grin softens me.

The game builds slowly. I fall into rhythm with strikes and clean spares. He starts a little rough but sharpens with every frame. By the sixth, he hits a strike, then another in the eighth.

When he turns toward me, there is something different in his eyes. Less casual. More intent.

“Looks like you’ve got competition,” he says.

“You’ve got a long way to go,” I answer, though I feel a flicker in my chest that I try to ignore.

He smiles faintly. “I like a challenge.”

I try to focus, but the air between us feels charged, like every throw is saying something neither of us wants to say out loud. I take my turn and hit another strike. The sound echoes, clean and satisfying.

By the final frame, I am ahead by twenty points. He knows he cannot catch up but still finishes strong with a strike and a spare. When he turns back, his expression is calm and unreadable.

“You’re good,” he says quietly.

“I told you.”

He steps closer. “Another game. Winner picks dinner.”

“And if you’re late again?”

He grins. “Then you get dessert too.”

I hesitate, pretending to weigh my options, though part of me already knows my answer. “Fine.”

The second game starts tighter. He is focused now, each throw more deliberate. I keep up, refusing to give him an inch. The noise of the alley fades until it feels like it is only the two of us, taking turns testing each other.

By the fifth frame, we are tied. Every time I strike, he matches it. Every time I leave a pin, he cleans his up. I start to notice the small things about him: the way he breathes before each throw, how his eyes narrow slightly when he concentrates, how his confidence feels earned rather than performed.

Somewhere between the seventh and eighth frame, I realize I am not angry anymore. I still remember waiting, checking the clock, thinking he would not show. But now, watching him line up his shot, I wonder if I wanted him to.

He lands another strike. I clap without thinking, and he glances back, surprised, a faint smile tugging at his mouth.

“Didn’t think you’d root for me,” he says.

“I’m not,” I reply, “Just impressed.”

“Sure,” he says, laughing under his breath.

By the final frame, we are still tied. My hands feel slick against the ball. I throw first. Strike. The release feels perfect, but my heart is beating too fast to enjoy it.

Evan takes his time. He steps up, breathes once, and throws. The ball rolls straight, hooks slightly, and crashes through the center. Strike.

The sound seems louder than it should. The group in the next lane claps lightly, but he does not look away from me.

He won.

Neither of us speaks for a long moment. My chest feels tight, not from losing but from the way his eyes hold mine, steady and unreadable.

“Dinner?” he asks, voice low.

I pause, then nod. “Tomorrow.”

A smile ghosts across his lips. “I’ll be on time.”

As we walk toward the door, the air outside feels cooler, calmer. He holds it open for me, and for a moment, I wonder what would happen if I stayed. If we kept talking, if we gave this another shot.

I should still be annoyed that he was late, that he won. But all I can think about is how alive I felt while we played, and how, somehow, that feels like the real win.

When he turns to say goodbye, I catch myself hoping tomorrow actually happens.

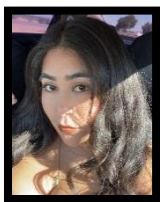


Untitled by Kaori Catalan



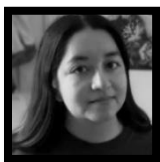
“Cleansed” So Young by Zei Sanabria

Meet Your Editors



Odalis Leon Altamirano (Lead Editor) is currently an English major and plans to transfer next Fall to a CSU or a UC. She hopes to become an English teacher or professor. Odalis is passionate about literature, social change and cinema. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband and two cats. It has been her pleasure to manage the newest edition of Ink

Magazine.



Ximena Tuxpan Chavez (Lead Editor) is finishing up her last semester at WCC as an English major and looks forward to graduating with her AA-T in December of 2025. When she's not writing, Ximena enjoys reading, junk journaling, watching period dramas, and spending time with her two cats. She hopes you enjoy the newest issue of Ink!



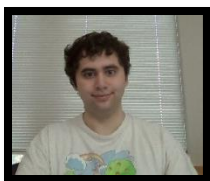
Jack Olton (Lead Editor) is passionate about art, writing, and how language reveals who we are.



Kyira Smith (Copyeditor) is just finishing up her first semester at WCC. She plans on transferring to a CSU or UC in the near future to pursue her major in English. She hopes to work in the comic industry!



André Boddy Oré (Copyeditor) is a professional music major hoping to transfer to a four year to work towards his dream of writing Latin Jazz and playing/singing in a band.



Nate Ward (Graphics Editor) is majoring in English.



Eric Loeuth (Copyeditor) is passionate about photography and art and is hoping to go to a four year university to become a photographer.



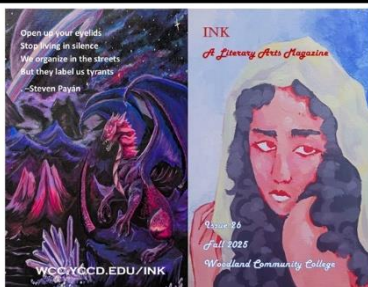
Professor Kevin Ferns (Faculty Advisor)

Creative Writing, English 31 Fall 2025



Jack Olton, Eric Loueth, Nate Ward, Kyira Smith, Odalis Leon Altamirano, Ximena Tuxpan Chavez, Javier Vallarruel, André Boddy Oré

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