

# THE OUTLET

*Bloom Where You Are Planted*



ARTS AND LETTERS  
TWELFTH EDITION, 2021

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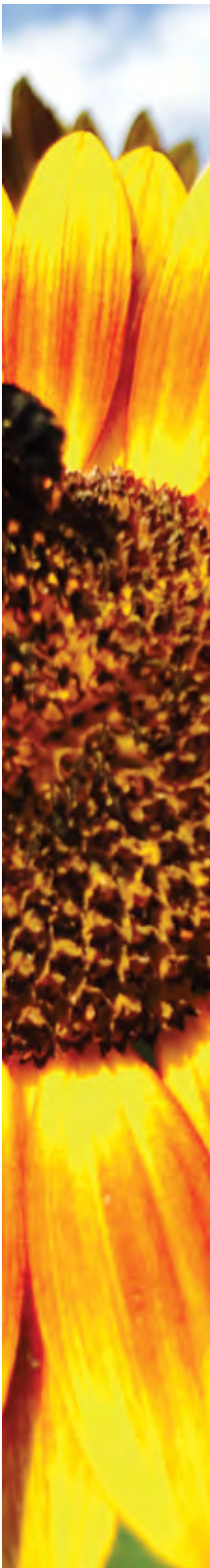
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Cover Illustration: "Sunflower"

Xavier Hersom

Design and Layout

Jessica Leake



## ***PUBLICATION NOTE***

This spring 2021 magazine, “The Outlet: Bloom Where You Are Planted—Arts and Letters, 12th Edition,” contains art, stories, and poems by the Blue Ridge CTC community, created in an ongoing time of crisis: a year of cocooning and inwardness that has resulted from COVID-19. This edition celebrates the experience and resilience of a broad array of college artists who, although not oblivious to these dark times, give readers and viewers empathy and hope, rooted in commonality.

## ***JUDGES’ BIOGRAPHIES***

Selection of Arts and Letters

**Douglas Kinnett** and **Gary Bergel** juried and selected the visual art works published in this 12th edition of *The Outlet: Bloom Where You Are Planted -- Arts and Letters*. **Dr. Kinnett**, a well-known regional painter, is also the former Coordinator of the Art Education Program at Shepherd University. **Gary Bergel**, a multidisciplinary exhibiting artist, is a member of the Blue Ridge CTC adjunct faculty and of the Berkeley Arts Council and Co-op Gallery.

**Sandra Baker**, **Kathy Cox**, **Billie Unger**, and **Jim Ralston** juried and selected the literary pieces published in this edition. **Sandra Baker**, Digital Media Instructor, is an active member of the Cultural Events Committee, a member of the West Virginia Writers, Inc. and has written fiction herself. She has published short stories in the *Artworks Literacy Magazine* and past issues of *The Outlet*. Her passion for expression extends to photography and digital art. **Kathy Cox**, Associate Dean of Humanities and Associate Professor of English, has published six poems in *The Outlet* in the past. She has written an unpublished novel in which every chapter opened with a poem. **Billie Unger**, Tenured Professor and Liberal Arts Program Coordinator, was instrumental in the creation of the original *Outlet Literary Magazine* in 2009 and has been a regular contributor of photos and poems over the years. **Jim Ralston**, Assistant Professor of English, teaches creative writing at Blue Ridge CTC; last year, he published *Lyrics for a Low Noon*, the second of his full books of poetry.

## ***ART WINNERS***

### **First Place**

The Dancer  
by Christopher Green  
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### **Second Place**

Isolation  
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1,000 Windows  
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### **Cut Short**

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### **Falling in Love with Myself**

by Rylee Stevens  
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### ***CUT SHORT***

by Xavier Hersom

a woman is trained to be  
a fragile  
wildflower  
so society  
can

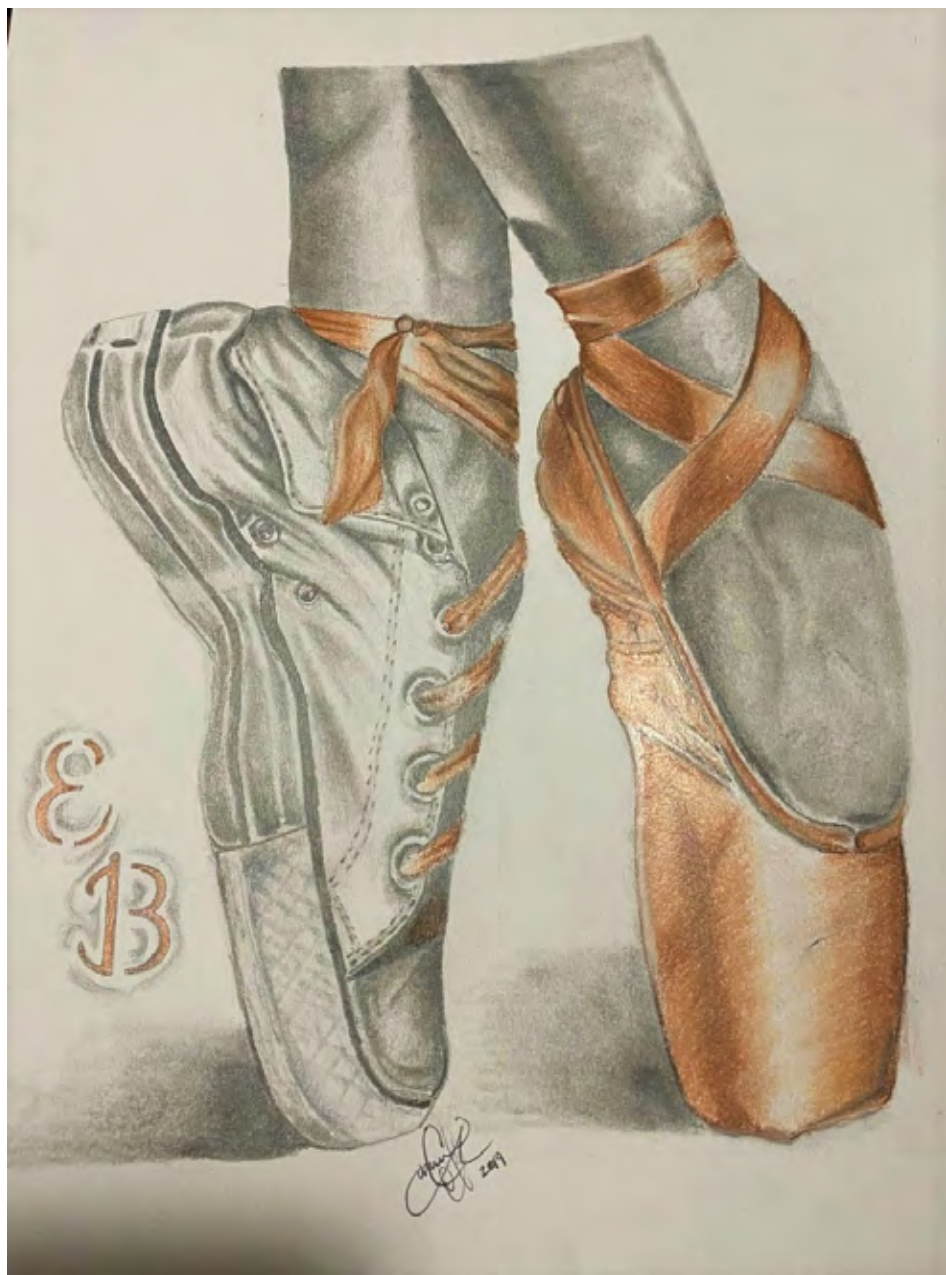
mow over her

thus,  
she will never  
grow  
and reach  
fully in the sun

### ***BUTTERFLY***

by Xavier Hersom

I wonder if  
worms  
tell the caterpillar  
it shall eternally crawl  
upon dirt  
never to soar  
into an infinite sky



***THE DANCER***

by Christopher Green

Prisma-Color Colored Pencil & Prisma-Colored Graphite Pencils



## *MY SHATTERED WORLD*

by Samantha Herbst

“And what do you think you’re doing?”

Turning from my packing, I stared at my brother’s silhouette as he leaned against the doorframe. Unlike me, he seemed genuine in his manner; so calm, so composed. As the only friend I had left, he was one of the only people left in my life who really knew me.

Rushing around the room, I quickly answered his curt question with an equally curt response: “What do you think I’m doing?”

He watched me pack for a while before shaking his head. “This is foolish. You could get yourself killed out there. You know that this isn’t our childhood.”

Our childhood; a memory that seemed so distant. After all, we didn’t grow up in the world we live in. Though death and war were common things those many years, most children didn’t have to grow up before their time, and death was more commonly caused by nature than by hand. The moment my entire world shattered, my innocence was as well. Despite acting and thinking like adults, we still had our childhood underneath the surface.

“I’m not an idiot, Tom.” The moment I finished stuffing my bag, I sighed when I turned to face him. “Where I’m going, I won’t need protection.” At that, I closed the bag with a single snap. Though there was little within, it was items I was going to need for the journey. My brother knew where I was going, but he had yet to vocalize it, nor did he vocalize his concerns. “After what I did, I need to leave.” I continued as I started packing another bag. “I need to get away from everything I know now.”

Staring out the window, he sighed at my answer. For once, he seemed more intent on listening than on trying to convince me to completely change my mind and stay, despite his previous remarks. From what I could tell, he wanted to figure out what would make me stay instead. Yet, if he knew that I understood what he was trying to do, would he try a different tactic, or, in allowing me to understand his motive, was that his motive in the first place?

“It isn’t going to work.”

Shrugging, he was very composed. “What won’t work?”

Turning on him, I sighed. “Tom, I’ve known you since the day Mom and Dad brought me home from the hospital all those years ago. I understand practically all of your motives.” As I finished packing my second and final bag, I sighed. Putting my face in my hands, I shook at the memory of my sin. It was one that was unforgettable; one that was unforgiveable. Just the thought of it made me hate myself.

“Just leave me be. You have learned how to forgive yourself for every minor sin you committed, but the only way I could ever do the same is if I leave. My sin was grievous; it will forever be planted on my eyelids every time I sleep at night. Changing myself will be the only way to do it. I will become a better person, but staying here will force me to commit that vile sin over and over again. Yet I can’t die before my time either. Then I’ll never forgive myself in the afterlife, if there really is one. You must understand me, Tom.”

Looking at me, he sighed. “It was because of your actions that the Battle of Toulon wasn’t a bloodbath.”



“Do you have any idea what it’s like to actually murder someone? To see the life go out in their eyes? I really don’t care if I was challenged or not. You realize my opponent underestimated me because I am 19 and thought I needed a better chance at winning? I took, with my own hands, an innocent life out of anger.”

“So who will you be?”

At that, I sighed. “I don’t know. I’m sure when I get there, Athia will help me figure it out, if I get there in time.”

After three years of absence from my ancestor’s homeland, I awaited that fateful time. “Lieutenant General Thomas Richardson, please kneel.” Shocked by the usage of his full title, he nearly fell to the ground. Unpinning the star from my uniform on my dresser, I held it to the light. “I, General C. Richardson, willingly renounce my title and grant permission to Lieutenant General Richardson to take the position of general.” At that, I pinned the star to his shirt and nodded before I grabbed my coat. Walking to the door, I sighed. With a bag in each hand, I smiled faintly at my older brother for the last time. He knew to keep our conversation secret; no one else would ever know. “If you want me to write to you, Tom, I will; but you can’t write back, and please burn my letters after you read them. Promise me that, please?”

Instead of speaking, he just nodded. In a way, it was a sweet ending. Shedding General Richardson behind me, and embracing a new life in Athia felt much better than it should’ve; even how I knew it should’ve.

Since it was still nightfall, I woke no one as I opened the front door. At the entrance to the woods surrounding my last home, I turned back as my brother waved to me from my former bedroom window. Waving back, I knew, deep within me, he would keep his promise; he alone would know of my true escape.



*APPALACHIAN SPRING*

by Xavier Hersom

Photography



***SECLUSION***

by Heather Huggett  
Photography

***PHOENIX LEVITATION***

Poem Dedicated to Chuck Favel  
by Christine Hersh

Lifting wings up from the depths  
    Out of ashes of the past.  
I'm not swallowed up by death.  
    I'm not drowning in this ash!  
I'm not letting that define me.  
    Tears to laughter-turn.  
The deceiver once deceived me.  
Plunged in flames, I did not burn!  
    Baptized in holy water,  
    Lifted up by hands of grace,  
Called the princess and the daughter,  
    Never easily replaced!  
And as I fly toward victory,  
The wind of passion grows.  
    Miracles and mysteries  
Clouds to sun; rain to bows.  
Love escaped communication,  
    Singly solitary-I remain.  
    My phoenix levitation  
Has freed me from my pain!



***DOUBLE PLEASURE SUN***

by Christine Hersh  
Photography

## *MILES WITH DEATH*

by Billie Unger

I've walked too many miles with Death  
The burden's been the same  
Yet somehow it's the greatest gift  
Despite the path of pain.

Often death is destined  
When sickness steals the soul  
Sometimes a sudden serpent, though,  
That leaves a gaping hole.

Canine, feline, human  
The sequence is the same  
Death does not discriminate  
By fortune, faith, or fame.

Potholes pave the path to peace  
As loved ones move along  
The journey's without joy for those  
Who linger way too long.

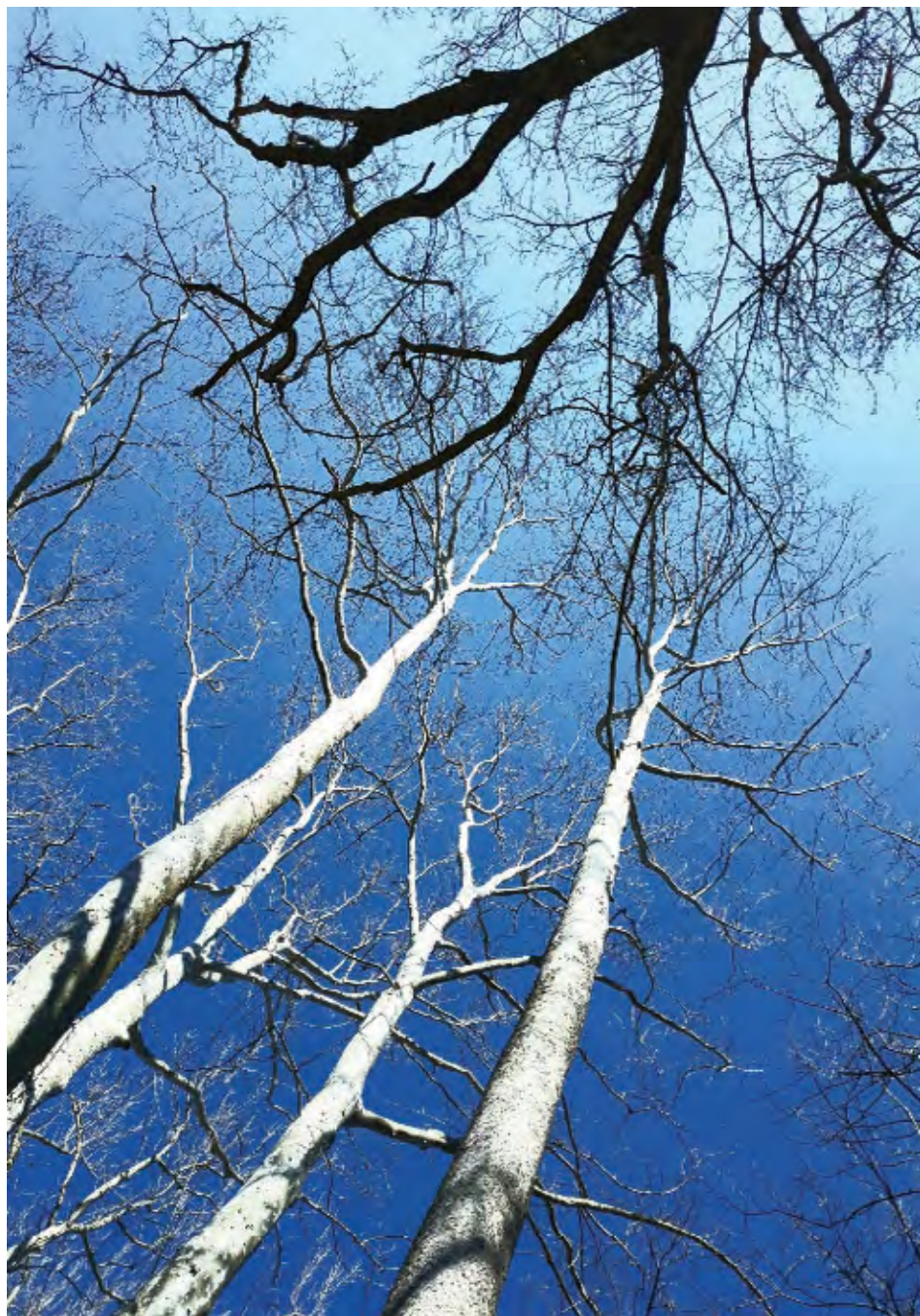
Those for whom death's sudden  
Travel the trail alone  
They fast-track to the Father  
He hastens them back Home.

Parent, partner, friend, or pet  
The trip's hard on the heart  
I've walked so many miles with Death  
It's slashed my soul apart.

No longer blind to blessings now  
With gratitude and grace  
I'll gladly guide my loved ones  
Till they reach their resting place.

I've walked so many miles with Death  
There's really no regret  
For I have faith the Father holds  
Those lives we won't forget.





***WINTER SKY***

by Holley Ralston  
Photography



## *NO GOD IN CONTENTION*

by Steven Wolfe

He took a puff of the cancer-filled tube and exhaled a pollutant. After a few brief moments, he walked down the hill to the back of the house, his dark outline invisible in the blackness. The humble abode had a gambrel roof with flared eaves, a bit dated for his tastes. Too dark to really see the devilish details. He huffed for a moment, plodded his boots, and hurled the bright tobacco into the soaking soil. He watched it fizz out like a soda pop, standing now like a dead man in front of a wooden casing. He spit, jostling his feet a bit. Then, without reluctance, he rifled the gun in his hands to the edge of the frame, banging the twin barrels against the door in a knocking rhythm.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

No answer. Just silence.

He gargled with his own spit and let loose. Then he started once more.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Still nothing.

His scarring lips burned in the cool air, teeth grinding across the tongue like a carnivorous dog forgotten, starving. He took a step back now and stood over the soil, drawing a line across his decorative earth.

This time, he walloped the door.

Nothing.

“Guess nobody’s home,” he spoke out loud, grimacing, hesitating, waiting for an answer.

But he stood for another moment, hand in his eye, scratching back the fibers with agonizingly silent fingernails. Teeth teetering along his lower lip as he stared forward. Double-barreled shotgun still pointed at the doorway.

Nothing.

He was about to go in, but he just stood there, staring into the black abyss.

And just like that, there was something.

A young woman, dark hair, twenty-five-ish, cracked open the door, one eye peering out between the siphoned walls. She didn’t say a word.

“Evenin’ miss.” He was always a smooth talker.

He lowered the gun an inch or two.

“Just here to talk.” His voice was always dark, throaty, melancholic. “Been tough to find food these days...since the world’s all up and ended.”

“Mmmhmm...yeah.” A fine mist started creeping down the sky.

“Figured maybe some ol’ neighborly types round’ here may be...uh...willing to share.”

“Mmmhmmm.”

“So you gon’ let me in?” He sort of whispered.

She stared at the gun and then creaked open the door. "Come on, then."

"So, I was...uh...thinking...maybe some...uh..."

"Ain't got much. Make you some soup?"

"Mmm...alright." If the place was empty, he could have ransacked it.

He sat now, and she made the soup, really just broth; then they ate in silence. When they were done, she took both of their bowls to a rusty sink, back facing him, scrubbing with what little water would drip from the tarnished hole.

"I'm sorry, miss." He was standing now. "Really, I am." Shotgun aimed at the back of her head. "But like we said, the world's done ended..."

-----  
He walked down the center of the abandoned town now, stomping in his boots, stopping for just a minute then to read an old flyer. "SOLAR FLARE...Mercy Hospital...March." It was difficult to make out some of it.

But he already knew the details. And so, after a brief moment, he composed himself and wandered further down the road, wondering how long he would be haunted by the existence of a world that was no longer a reality.

### ***PEACE***

by Katherina Muller

Night is Day and Day is Night  
Sleep eludes me...  
then crashes into me  
as the sun sets  
and the stars come out  
to greet the moon  
with peace.

### ***DECEMBER***

by Katherina Muller

The last leaves  
rattle like old dried bones  
as the wind tosses them about  
before the storm  
buries them beneath  
its wintry blanket



***ISOLATION***

by Heather Huggett  
Photography

## *ANTONIA'S STORY*

by Antonia Capriotti

Mary the red daffodil loves to sing spring songs and laugh.

Evan the black rooster likes to eat nuts, seeds, grains, and insects. He likes to cock a doodle doo and sleep. He is looking for the chickens. He walks on the ground. He went to the farm. He went to the fair.

Peter the cloud is in the sky. He is looking for the moon. He is looking for the sun.

Adam the hat is in the snow. He is looking for his scarf. He is looking for his gloves. He is looking for his coat. He is looking for his boots. He is looking for his earmuffs.

Jonathan the cowboy went to Texas. He is looking for Cody. He is looking for Brandi.

Cody the brown horse went to Texas. He is looking for Jonathan. He has a blonde tail and mane.

Brandi the cowgirl went to Texas. Jonathan kissed Brandi. Brandi has blonde hair.

Ava the brown chicken likes to eat nuts, seeds, grains, and insects. She is looking for Evan. Evan kissed Ava.

Kristina the cloud is in the sky. She is looking for Peter. Peter kissed Kristina.

Eva the hat is in the snow. She is looking for Adam. Adam kissed Eva.

Christopher the tooth is at the doctor. He is looking for Ashley. Christopher nuzzled Ashley.

Ashley the tooth is at the doctor. She is looking for Christopher. Christopher kissed Ashley.



***BRANDI***

by Antonia Capriotti  
Colored Pencils

*REMORDEO*

by Samantha Herbst

I know nothing beyond the brick,  
Wounds of blood ooze onto my bed,  
Tick, tick, tick, tick

Leeches pull my blood quick,  
Birdmen make me shed,  
I know nothing beyond the brick

My sight sees nothing but the wick,  
Whispers above me leave nothing unsaid,  
Tick, tick, tick, tick

I pray He'll hear I'm sick,  
He'll know that all else has fled,  
I know nothing beyond the brick

Bad air makes me thick,  
Perfumes have stained me red,  
Tick, tick, tick, tick

The Danse Macabre is known to stick,  
As my sight makes me dead,  
I know nothing beyond the brick,  
Tick, tick, tick, tick.





***BEAUTY IN THE NIGHT***

by Christine Hersh

Photography

## THE RAMBLINGS OF A CORPSE

by Kaide Curry

It is warm underneath the sun. Its beams reflect off my glassy eyes. I just stare. There isn't much else for me to do. My eyes... they won't close, they *refuse* to close.

And so I stare at the sun and the light envelopes me.

It is warm, the sun. The warmth does not last as the day, slowly, painfully, turns to night.

The night is cold and leaves me dotted with dew. The chill seeps through my skin and into my bones. It feels almost comforting as I lie here, unable to truly rest.

The wind picks up. I hear it howling from my place among the weeds. It reaches my plants, blowing them lightly, lighter than I thought possible by the wind that howls oh so loudly. Dandelions bending, clovers waving, ragwort swaying. My hair wisps across my face.

I am at peace.

When the insects come, I can feel them poke and prod my body. I can feel them dig into me and lay their eggs. It tickles. I feel them hatch, feel them squirm inside of me, their little bodies growing fat on my flesh. I cannot see the sunlight anymore. The beetles make quick work of my eyes.

I can no longer see, yet I can *feel*. I can *feel everything*.

I feel my organs slowly turning to mush inside of me. I feel the maggots in my mouth, chewing casually away at my tongue.

I feel no pain at this. How can I? I am at peace.

Despite having no brain left to use, I think. I wonder if anyone will ever find me here, a work of art, courtesy of a not long enough life.

I try to think back to my past, to before I came to this little patch of grass and thistles and flowers and dirt. Remembering is like looking through a funhouse mirror. My memories before this new life are blurred, warped, twisted. I see the faint outline of my family and friends and acquaintances. I *know* they were there, *are* there, but the wind and sun, the bugs and rot, cloud my line of sight.

My organs are gone. My skin is gone. The beetles and flies have vacated, making way for new creatures to live among my bones. A spider takes up residency in the back of my skull. *She will be my new brain*, I think to myself.

I still feel the sun and the rain, the cold and the warm. It doesn't hurt. Nothing hurts.

I still wonder if I will be found one day. I know, truly I do, that I am hidden from others, that I will not be found.

That doesn't hurt either. I feel at peace.

I am safe here, with my bugs, my plants, my wind and sun. Here, I cannot be hurt. Here, I cannot hurt others. Here, *I am at peace*.



***OUT OF MY ELEMENT***

by Omar Williams

Photography

***FIRE AT RHOADES OPERA HOUSE***

by Samantha Herbst

He'll take me to be free  
All watched the oil spill  
Nearer My God to Thee

Flames licked the curtain for three  
Laying waste without skill  
He'll take me to be free

Down the stairs to take a knee  
Unknowing it wanted to kill  
Nearer My God to Thee

Piling, piling to a degree  
Burning and trampling on that hill  
He'll take me to be free

Windows were overtaken with a guarantee  
Wounded and grounded without a thrill  
Nearer My God to Thee

At the end, all cleared the debris  
Piled six feet high gave all a chill  
He'll take me to be free  
Nearer My God to Thee



## ***WELLS CATHEDRAL***

by Kelly Shurnitski

Photography

### ***SEARCHING***

by Terri White

Cut from the same cloth,  
God created two souls.  
Then he separated them.  
Now each one searches for the other.  
Finally, the search is over.  
She walks into a building  
and hears a voice telling him  
that she's arrived.

She feels the beat of his heart.  
Then they meet, only to discover  
it's not their time yet.

### ***WAITING***

by Terri White

I saw a man, old, wrinkled and lying still on his back.  
It was my husband. I had just died.  
Then I heard my voice saying,  
“It’s okay,” then he joined me.

### ***THE ELEVENTH HOUR***

by Terri White

I kept watching the clock,  
thinking I should know the time her life ended.  
She stopped breathing, and I waited. It seemed like a long time.  
She took a breath, her breathing now very light.  
She opened and closed her mouth twice, how precious.  
She stopped breathing again,  
I checked for a pulse on her wrist,  
Double checking I placed my ear to her chest.  
I lost track of the time. Was it 8:15 p.m.?  
I forgot to check.  
Ginny was now at home.





***MARBLE GROWTH***

by Jonathan Wilfred

Photography



***PRAYER STICKS (TEMPLE SERIES)***

by Doug Kinnett

Acrylic & Wood on Canvas

## *LIAR*

by Katelyn Miller

Unfortunately, we all know one or maybe a few  
Look around they might not be far from you  
Funny enough it's usually the ones you trust the most  
It's usually the ones who choose to boast  
The ones who are meant to be there through it all  
They are the ones who make you put up a wall  
When you think about it, they are the ones who lose  
All they know how to do is use  
When you discover who they truly are, they lose their power  
All they know how to do is cower  
You could say they lose their ability to manipulate  
And let me tell you that feels great



***LETTING GO***

by Xavier Hersom  
Acrylic Painting

## *WHY AM I?*

by Todd Cimino-Johnson

I am male. I am gay. I am Appalachian.  
I am from farmers, politicians, and revolutionaries.  
I will be transformative.

I am liberal. I am moderate. I am conservative.  
I am from peasants, the unfortunate, and protestants.  
I will be a leader.

I am white. I am Sagittarian. I am European.  
I am from bards, Scots, and entrepreneurs.  
I will be a traveler.

I am quiet. I am strong. I am intelligent.  
I am from slave owners, Quakers, and orphans.  
I will be a freer of minds.

I am hopeful. I am humble. I am environmental.  
I am from the North, South, and in between.  
I will speak for those without a voice.

This is why I am.



***COMPLETE SERENITY***

by Tamara Judd

Photography

### *CATCHING A CAT*

by Katherine Cox

You help me catch myself  
when I am whisking around a corner,  
ears back and back down,  
at full speed, you bring me to rest.  
You help me catch myself  
when I am stretched in the sun,  
half asleep, eyes open and closed,  
guarding, half-way, and peaceful.  
You help me catch myself  
suddenly like a glance in the mirror  
facing off and chasing a spot  
that is just a dancing reflection.  
You hold me, even when I am a pile  
of claws, fur, and purring.





## SIMPLE AND CLEAN

by Kaitlyn Penwell

## Digital Art

### *LIGHTING THE WAY TOWARDS NIGHT*

Anonymous

Long shadow cast, yet clear pathway laid  
down at my feet and up to my soul.  
My father taught, loved, and passed,  
and I remain unsure and clear,  
behind and yet ahead in life  
on the dull globe he left, yet the bright  
knowledge growing, every day towards joy,  
without that man who knew his way  
and, therefore, greeted me ahead.  
My loves, my cherished ones today,  
remind me always of that long reaching  
mind and search for truth that made him  
dear to me and always new.  
When death arrived, as death does,  
my new loves came into bold relief,  
yet all the time in light of him,  
his sporadic light left yet in pools  
along my way through remembering.  
So turning to my central souls today,  
I aspire, as I always did,  
to walk that shadowed way towards night,  
fearless as he, loving of work  
with a grip that is hard, even now



*TRANQUILITY*

by Heather Huggett

Photography

***FALLING IN LOVE WITH MYSELF***

by Rylee Stevens

To the person who falls in love with me,  
please know many nights are spent crying  
on the bedside because the tone of your 'i love you'  
was different than the one before.  
Please know sometimes I am silent,  
cannot imagine getting out of bed;  
and the days that I talk  
I may ask you a lot of questions.  
Please know that if you happen to feel  
as if I am too much to handle,  
Also know that I am too much to lose.  
Please remember I am impossible to replace.



***FLOWERS IN BLOOM IN COVID TIME***

by Gary Bergel

Photography



## *DELILAH'S I STILL LOVE*

by James Ralston

“In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.”  
Judges 21:25

Climb up above your fears, he said.  
Go beyond your sloth and doubts  
that you are strong enough.

See who you used to be and what  
battle hymns you might still sing,  
Delilahs you still could love.

And once on top of fear, don't stop.  
Spring forth. Dive in. Part the sea.  
Touch the bottom with your lips,

then push yourself back up for air  
and breathe. Shake out the water  
from the hair between your teeth.

Either that or drop dead, my friend.  
Read yourself to sleep and dream  
of who you'll never be again.

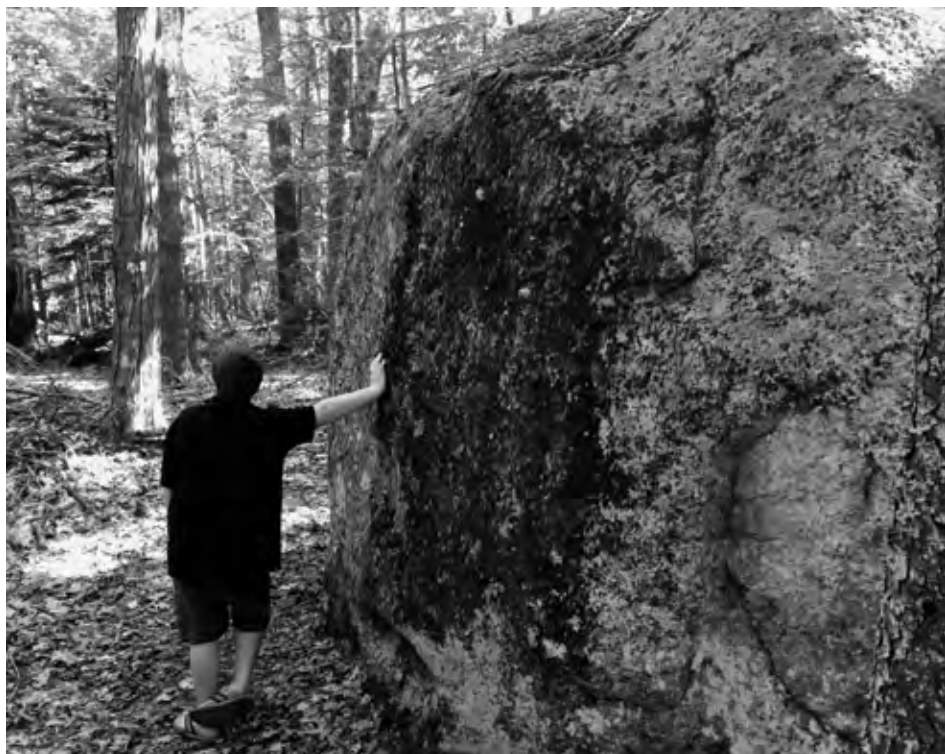


*LIMINAL LIGHT ALONG C&O CANAL*

by Gary Bergel

Photography





***BOY AND A ROCK***

by Xavier Hersom

Photography



***SANDERS COTTAGE***

by Omar Williams

Cardboard Art

## *BEYOND THE CHAIN*

by Lisa Wood

I used to want more.

I used to want to hear dogs barking, hear the laughter of children, get hit with the sprinkler every evening at dusk, and hope that baseballs didn't do any lasting damage. I wanted that but what I got was a patch of grass hardly long enough for a grown man to lay down in heel to head and trees so tall you could only see me in in the dead of winter... and then only if you squinted.

No dogs bark, no children play, not after they chained up the gate and took him away... not after what they found inside.

Gerald.

They never listened to him, not even when he swore he didn't know they were there, playing house in his shed, sitting around the table waiting for him to get home.

I knew they were there, but I couldn't tell.

I wouldn't tell.

They couldn't make me. Nothing could.

I knew they were they there, but they shouldn't have been. They were trespassing. They weren't invited. They didn't belong.

He said he didn't know, but that was a lie. He had to have known. I secretly think he put them there. For me. I fancied that for years, imagining that he had brought them there for me to see, for me to play with. I thought of what his voice might sound like when he told me to do what I wanted with them – that they were mine to do with what I would. He would sound strong and confident, nothing like the whimpering imbecile they dragged away that day, wide-eyed and pointing at me. I fantasized that he lied to them to make them stay, and oh, what a good liar he turned out to be! Maybe he told them that everything he did was for them, and that they had nothing to worry about because he cared for them and always would. Maybe he told them that my soul spoke to him and that I loved them too and that I wanted them there as much as he did. Their stench still sits in the wallpaper they had lined the walls of the shed with, trying to make the place look like a proper home.

He lied to himself about them, about me, about it all. Even as he set fire to the weeping willow that had been my friend, the massive thing that has sheltered cardinals and bluebirds over its 250-year life – even as he tried to use to it to burn away everything he ever knew, he couldn't murder the truth, couldn't clean away the stain. Even as he sits in his cell, far away from me now, still he knows, he remembers, he feels.

The table is still set for dinner, modestly, for three servings instead of five. The pitcher upon the table with its painted rooster on the side and chipped spout, is empty now, but that can be easily remedied. All one need do is ask.

No one comes past the chain or ventures into the woods to peek anymore – that time has long gone. Now they pass by without a second glance at the overgrown driveway, the cracked asphalt barely visible beneath layer upon layer of dead leaves and weedy undergrowth.

Someone left candy once, had thrown it passed the chain and into the gaping maw that yawned behind it. I imagine a child being teased on Halloween when I think of it, their candy bucket snatched and ransacked by older kids. Perhaps they threw the candy inside and dared him to go after it. But it was only one piece of candy, hardly enough to dare with or risk repercussion for. No one ever came to get it. Had they come they might have seen me, might have said hello, might have dug into their eye sockets to pluck out the things that had betrayed them and shown such a sight.

I would have shared the candy with them if they had.

## ***A WORLD OF PLASTIC***

by Kari Raynard

Invisible menace  
Ankle-deep in washed-up debris  
micro-plastic can sicken or even kill  
A line of black  
Plastic fibers  
Shed the chemicals that make them useful  
A concern to public health  
Toxic industrial compounds  
Chemical Trojan horse  
Plastic is everywhere  
There's tons

Reference:

“Beer, Drinking Water, and Fish: Tiny Plastic is Everywhere”

Author: Christopher Joyce



***JULY 4 COOK-OUT***

by Doug Kinnett  
Acrylic on Canvas

## ***FLOWERS***

by Joseph Holliday

No flowers to send  
In smart array  
No flowers to brighten  
A dreary day  
No flower with fragrance sweet  
In birthday times  
Or just for treats  
No flowers just to say  
Farewell my love  
Till another day  
Flowers live  
Such shorten times  
To show us that  
We're all divine  
We are flowers  
One and all  
Sometime soon  
To take our fall





***1,000 WINDOWS***

by Xavier Hersom

Photography



# BlueRidge

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