

**B R E A K**

**The Indicator**  
Volume L Issue 2 | Spring 2022

Cover Art by Calvin Van Leeuwen



# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Another semester, another issue! The writers, editors, and artists of The Indicator have worked so hard to create the issue you have now, and we are so proud of all the work they have done over the last few months. Having been members of The Indicator all four years of college, we are amazed with the growth of the magazine. From all of our daring and passionate new faces to the commitment of our returning members – it has been an absolute pleasure to witness our little creative community expand, both in numbers and in their own personal work. We have been so honored to serve as the Editors-in-Chief of The Indicator over the last year and we know that those who come after us will continue to develop the magazine and club far beyond what we could have. Everyone involved in the issue, with a special shout-out to Gabby Avena, our brilliant Indesign master, and Susan Lee, our most supportive and amazing Vice EIC, have played indispensable roles in the creation of this year's issue. We are so grateful to you all for giving us the opportunity to work with you and we look forward to seeing all the future work you do!

And now, our introductions to the semester's theme: Break.

Hannah:

"Break" indicates an interruption of sequential experience. It is a moment of shift, of a thrust from one state of being into another. Often, break is the loss of something, whether physically, emotionally, or aesthetically, and the gain of some, in many cases, unexpected other thing, which rises from that negative space. Sometimes, breaks occur intentionally, invited and anticipated to fracture a continuous state; other times, they are entirely accidental, arriving suddenly to indent and alter patterns of familiar design. In almost all cases, they are unmistakable, even if the point fissure can only be determined in retrospect. Break is atomization. Break is the outline. Break is transformation.

The pieces in this issue attempt to articulate the nuances encapsulated within and looming around the word "break" – the moments leading up to, the point of disassembly, the aftermath of, and the understanding of from a perspective far removed.

Kalidas:

Breaks. There are many kinds. In some ways this makes it difficult to articulate this issue. Some breaks were within the internal world of the speaker. In other pieces, there was a break in a personal relationship. In all these pieces, I would say two things are consistent. Even amongst pieces in which larger cultural dynamics loomed large, the break within the piece was always deeply personal and private. Most of the pieces reflect this, I think, insofar as they have only one or two active characters. That is to say they are largely interested in the intimacies of self-relation—when one breaks how do they move themselves through that breakage, how do they recover themselves, what of themselves do they lose. That, and the failures and possibilities of one-on-one relationships:

The other consistent thing, which is maybe constitutive of every break, is the breaking point. That is, there is an event, a moment at which the break happens. And each piece sits somewhere in proximity to this moment. Some pieces are at the moment of the break. Some are considering the way in which tension builds, how collective moments lead to a rupture. Some sit in the anxiety of foreseeing a break, until that anxiety, and what inspired it, is itself a break. Some are years beyond the breaking point and looking for ways to heal from it or to recover what was lost. Others celebrate what that break made possible. And some look at the moment when we break, or we break the world around us, in order to live. Others still imagine realities other than alternatives in which the break never happens.

Thank you all again and enjoy!

Sincerely,

Kalidas Shanti & Hannah Zhang Class of 2022  
Editors-in-Chief



# The Report Card

Subject	Grade	Comment
Biddy stepping down as President	F	Our only demand is that she rides off on horseback
Trustees vote to keep ACPD armed	F	If investment bankers and hedgefund managers know anything, it's that cops should carry guns in Val
Res Life's latest failure: 200+ students on housing waitlist	C-	It's like being waitlisted from Amherst all over again...
Amherst Prom	B-	Turns out Amherst Prom just as awkward as your highschool prom
Kim and Pete	WTF	The world is burning
Moose hired as most recent ACPD copaganda tactic	D, for Dog	Well done to the PR firm that suggested this hire, his cuteness almost eclipses his handler's rifle
Elon Musk buys Twitter	F	If this doesn't get us off social media I don't know what will
Young MA performs for Spring Concert	OOUUU	Pride Alliance experienced record meeting turnout post concert
AmherstBussin' existence	F	It's like watching a trainwreck every hour of the day

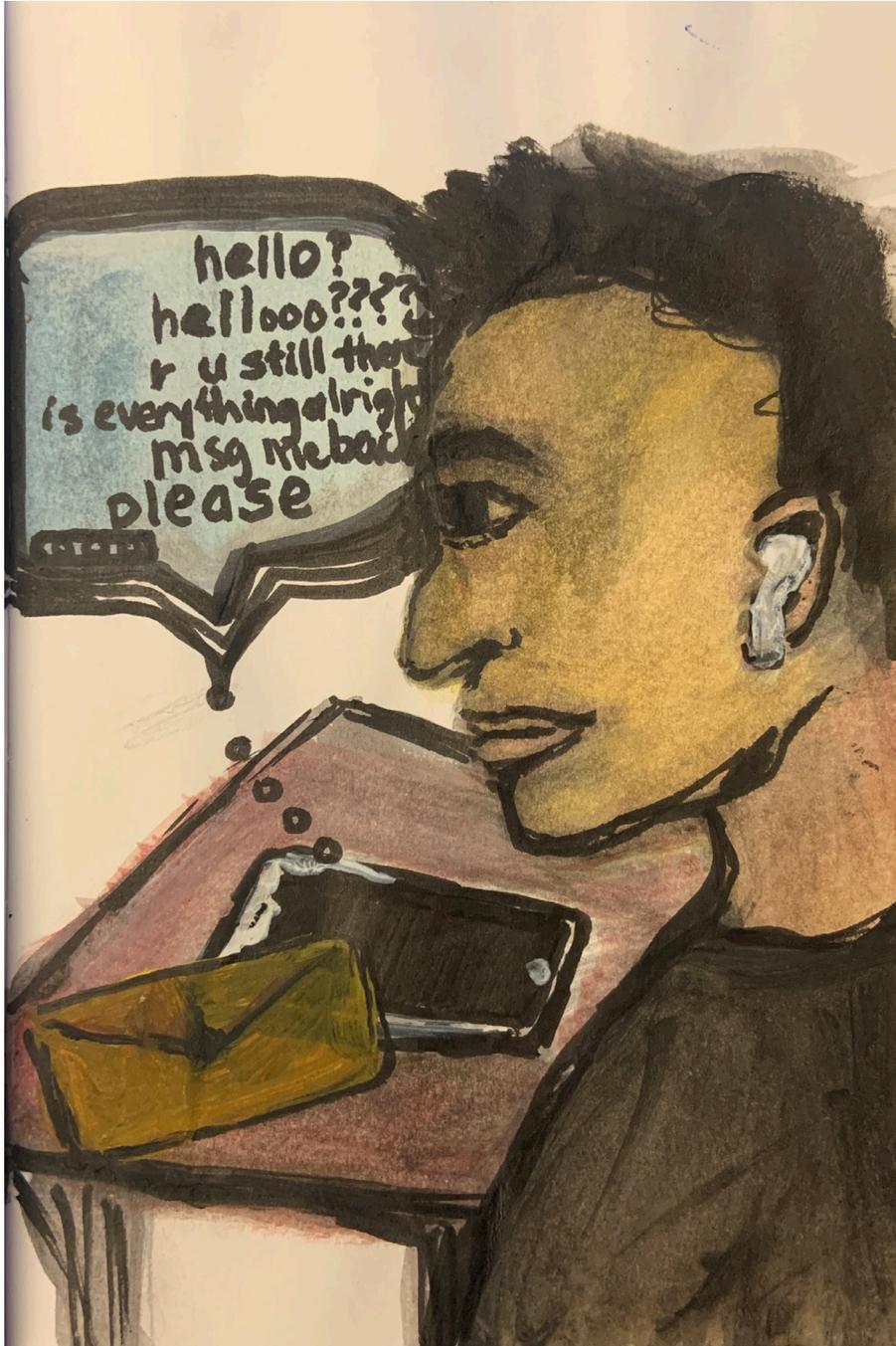
-LZ

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE Kalidas Shanti & Hannah Zhang	i	TOP TEN REASONS WHY BLACK BOYS PLAY BASKETBALL Kalidas Shanti	27
THE REPORT CARD LZ	iii	I BROKE MY ENGLISH Priscilla Lee	30
MY BROTHER GETS HIS COLLEGE ADMISSIONS LETTER Sarah Wu	1	DOE, A DEER Gabrielle Avena	31
FLASHBULB MEMORY AND THE THINGS I HAVE TO REMIND MYSELF TO FORGET Sofia Hincapie-Rodrigo	3	THERE IS NO STOPPING HER A'Cora Hickson	35
"TILL SOME BLIND HAND SHALL BRUSH MY WING" Joe Sweeney	7	RUMINATIONS Zoe Alarcon	38
ON ROBERT C. SOLOMON (1942-2007) Ross Kilpatrick	10	LAMPLIGHT Leland Culver	41
UNTITLED Rachel Hendrickson	11	UNTITLED Mariana Rivera-Donsky	43
OF CHOOSING A FAVORITE Dustin Copeland	13	SEA OF SORROW Tiia McKinney	46
6:43 PM Jackeline Fernandes	17	BROKEN BLACK HEART Mikayah Parsons	49
PAUSE AND BREAK Carolyn Thomas	18	SMUDGED Ari Dengler	53
THE BREAKFAST DATE (BREAK, FAST!) Sam Spratford	21	HAMADRYAD Pauline Bissell	56
ON CONCRETE AND BASKETBALL Caelen McQuilkin	24	THE PERSIMMON TREE Kei Lim	58
		NOT LET GO OF HOPE & BROKEN HINGES Gracie Rowland	60



Tiia McKinney is a Staff Artist for the Indicator

# MY BROTHER GETS HIS COLLEGE ADMISSIONS LETTER

Sarah Wu | sdwu25@amherst.edu

ONE:

On the day my brother gets his college admissions, he picks his envelope up ever so gently, drags a finger across the edge of the flap, and peels back the white like he would peel back the skin of a banana. The envelope bulges with expectations, ripe with the fleshy substance of letters, words, sentences, paragraphs; if he could slip the paper into his mouth, the faintly salty tang of sweat from his upper lip would mix with the dryness of the paper, letters blurring together into inkblots indistinguishable from each other.

In second grade, I tried to teach my brother how to eat napkins; I thought that if my naive brother who was still in kindergarten learned how to eat napkins, then I could have his lunch too. That day, we spent the afternoon shoving dry pieces of paper into our mouths, napkins soaking moisture from our tongues, its soft texture turning into slimy globs, but in the end, we couldn't force ourselves to swallow; my brother followed my example as I spat the wet clump into the plastic abyss of the garbage can.

He never learned how to eat napkins. I never had my two lunches.

TWO:

On the day my brother gets his college admissions, he is sitting on his covers, shirt lost somewhere in the void that is his bed, sucking clothes, blankets, humans, alike down its hungry gullet; he would walk

around without pants either if it weren't for my mother, her eyebrow raised and her mouth set thinly as he lumbers down the stairs in boxers for the first time. Now, he stays in his room, soaking the warm, musty aroma of teenage boy and dirty socks, waiting and watching for the email, reaching for a glass filled with the kind of lemonade that our mom only buys once every ten Costco trips.

We once wrestled for the glass of lemonade when we were younger, grubby hands grabbing until the glass toppled over and sprayed sweet lemonade and sharp glass. My brother cried, back when he would cry a lot more, and I sighed and grabbed his sweet, sticky stained little hands, pulled him over to the kitchen sink to pull out the glass shard embedded in his hand, and held his hand underwater in an awful attempt at ten-year-old first aid: 1) tape his hand with Scotch tape and napkins, 2) pour him another glass of cold, sweet lemonade. And when our mom came back into the kitchen, it was like nothing had happened, except for the red stain on the kitchen table

THREE:

On the day my brother gets his college admissions, he is still in school, in AP BC C-A-L-C, calc. His head is tilted low to his worksheets; even though the teacher is talking, he has his AirPods in one ear, and he is jamming to the music, head slightly

swaying to the invisible beat. The teacher notices the single AirPods in his ear and calls on him; the class notices her frown and turns around to stare at him; my brother doesn't even look up and calmly says "Square root of three x plus twenty-nine, remainder one over six-oh-oh-five," and continues to bob his head to the music.

FOUR:

On the day my brother gets his college admissions, he is not at home. He is not even at school. He is riding his bike with his friends alongside the coast of the beach, ocean breeze stinging his face, wild grin turned to the sky, sun beaming down at him as he shouts to the heavens, road swiftly burning beneath him dizzily, hands off the handlebars. Underneath him, his bike bucks like a horse and throws him off, and red streaks and gashes form on his legs and arms, but he just laughs and laughs and climbs on his bike again—*just one more, I swear*—and he laughs because he is free; he laughs because he is alive and he is happy to be alive.

REALITY:

On the day my brother gets his college admissions, I do not know what happens.

In reality, he is more than a couple of hundred miles away and has only sent me a hundred text messages in total from the moment I left home two years ago. I have texted him to ask him how his college admissions have gone, and the little three dots appear ... and ... disappear ... at ...

the ...  
bottom ...  
of ...  
the ...  
screen ...

...

flickers for a few hundred seconds before it finally is dragged away and is never to be seen again; I try texting him again, but the three dots do not come up, and it's only when I text him every day for seven days straight, text him so the chat history looks more like this—

hello?  
hellooo?????  
r u still there?  
is everything alright  
msg me back  
please

—always him on the left, and me on the right, the chat filled to different amounts like two glasses of lemonade, the kind of lemonade that our mom only bought once every ten Costco trips.

A week after my brother gets his college admissions, I get a phone call from him. I pick up and he is there on the other side and I call his name—once, twice, three times—but the only sound I hear is his ragged breaths, and as my voice dies down, I silently listen to him suck in one wet breath after another.

# FLASHBULB MEMORY AND THE THINGS I HAVE TO REMIND MYSELF TO FORGET

Sofia Hincapie-Rodrigo | shincapierodrigo24@amherst.edu

I hope you never forget who you were that summer.

1. It's a hot one, even for the South—the kind of summer where we are sticky with sunscreen and smelling like a flurry of coconuts and careless adolescence. I tell you I'm not jumping off the cliff unless you're at the bottom waiting for me. You don't hesitate—you never do. Escaping the heat, I watch you dive into the lake, shattering the stillness it held. You did the same to me this summer. The first time I hit the water it brought me relief. In, out, and back in again. Off the cliff and into the lake, a routine we grew comfortable with. It was always like that. I'd plunge into the deep end for you. But I drew my last breath, August came and wrapped its fingers around July's throat, and I don't think I've exhaled since.

I learned about flashbulb memory in my senior year psychology class and I think that's the only way I can remember us now. Brief flashes of red-hot memory that bring me back to who we were then. Maybe that's all we were supposed to be—brief but impossible to forget.

2. I'm crying again, and you tell me we're just kids and it isn't that serious. "You take yourself too seriously," you say, "we're too young for any of it to matter." Sometimes I think about this, and I'm angry. Other times I wonder if you were right. Maybe if my mouth wasn't full of blood from biting my own tongue; if I had tried to explain why I took myself so seriously, we could have made it work. What if your hands had been strong enough to pull me out of myself? I run it through my head constantly, adding up the "maybes" and "what-ifs" hoping they result in a new answer. I can't seem to figure it out, but I was never very good at math anyway.

I hate nostalgia. It's a liar for telling me about how good things were back then. Conveniently leaving out every tear-stained argument and every moment we let each other down. Nostalgia ignores every red flag we used to curl beneath, claiming that at least they kept us warm for a moment. They were real too. Forcing it down, the lump in my throat feels like a metaphor for every feeling I've ever swallowed.

3. I'm hurling every glass object in my room against the hardwood floor, polluting your heart with the implications of my own rage. Too much noise, too much silence, too much of it being too much. Melodramatic and unreliable, exaggerations of minor inconveniences. I can't seem to stop searching for any

reason to push you farther away from me, trying to find the words for being ungrateful enough to turn something good down.

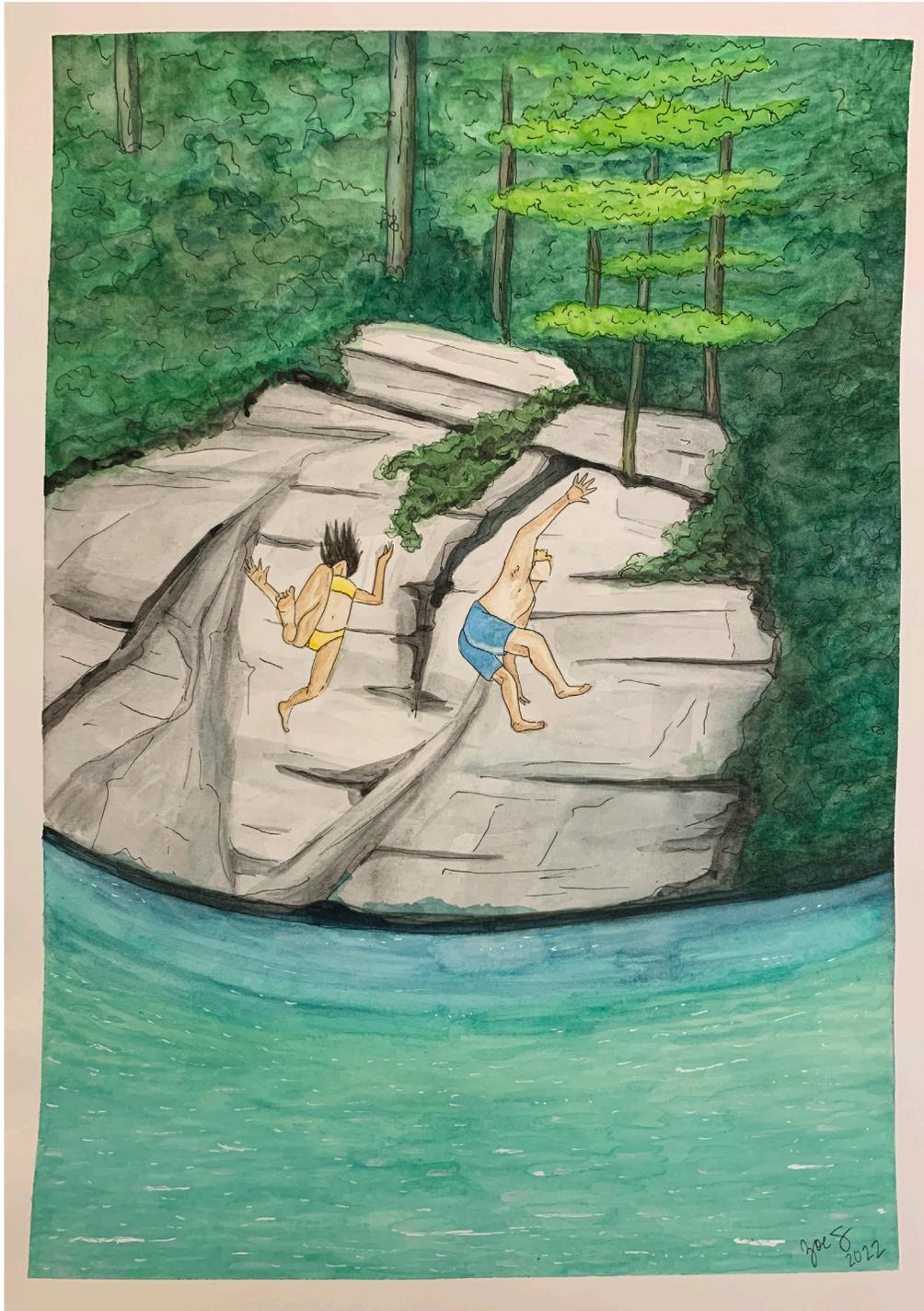
We're never in the same place for very long, always loving each other at the wrong times like a bruise we can't seem to stop pressing.

4. The alarm clock won't stop ringing. Immediately after rolling out of bed, you hit shuffle on a playlist to prod me to get up. "I love this song," you say. I've heard it a million times and by this point I can predict what's coming next. You cough it up immediately, unprompted—a thorough analysis and comprehensive explanation of every possible detail of the song. Carefully curated music for every moment, I've never known you to sit in silence. You talk for hours and I hold onto every word. I'm not sure what it means that I can't recall the song now, but I think what matters is that I remember how it made me feel as I walked away from it, down the stairs, and into the kitchen where I sat as you made breakfast.

I hope you never forget who you were that summer.

September came and loosened August's grip, and while we may have outgrown each other, I hope you know that despite every attempt to remind myself to forget, I can't. Despite every fistful of cruel curses we threw at each other, I still find myself clinging to a feeling that you won't be just another one that got away. Maybe you'll be the one who finally teaches me how to stay. Or, maybe not. Maybe we won't find each other in every life, but I hope you know that the life I got to love you in was the one that meant the most.

5. In the lifetime where the alarm clock never went off, I left the front porch lights on. Come home soon.



Zoe Strothkamp is a Staff Artist for the Indicator



Isaac Silva is a Staff Artist for the *Indicator*

# “TILL SOME BLIND HAND SHALL BRUSH MY WING”

Joe Sweeney | jsweeney25@amherst.edu

I wasn't thirsty anymore, so when I heard him calling from over the belts it was ok. Part of it, too, was his voice, which sounded like it had finally decided being exhausted wasn't worthwhile. TSA workers (agents?) don't seem to have time for anything. But really that's only true about the ones behind the belts—at the gates they're always waving me through. Go on ahead. For some people it's easier to imagine behind their mask than it is to see, their smile.

As I came closer my bottle began to rotate gently in his hand (“See the fluid? Yes, yes I do).

“Where can I dump it out?”

Points, “There's a trash can.”

Rarely am I able to find things, especially if they're in front of me, to the right or left of me, or behind me. Before I had even turned to look I saw myself coming back, eyes wider: *Where?* And he keeps telling me, and still nothing has happened.

But I turned and there it was. The liquid ran down the draping plastic folds. Or I'm pretty sure it did; I had turned away. Everything about it felt wrong. The bag was a bright green. It used the dull can rim for its shade.

I wasn't that tired. I'd slept on the bus ride over, and it was very relaxing actually. The seats were inclined so you could lay your head back without craning, and I fell asleep while the world was very gray beside me. And that's not the impression I get when I'm just walking—the world beside

me. The best I can come up with then is a turgid evergreen or a wind-shaken bough. And the gray too, pressed jolting against the window. I wasn't that tired.

“You see the strings hanging from your pants?”

My hands were to my head, my feet filled the yellow footprints. Notwithstanding their color those footprints were very fashionable, at least it seemed to me. They had a tight curvature and detached heels—very businesslike. I could see myself going anywhere in shoes like those. Maybe that was the point.

“Put them in the sides of your pants before we run the scanner.”

I couldn't get them in, they kept falling out. I almost asked if they would just give me a break. I figured it out, though. The detectors don't really whirl, but they do move, and quickly. From one side to another. The one in front of me always seems to go left-right. I don't know if they can scan both ways, or if they have to return to their original position. In any case, they don't have to wait long to find out.

Now I'm just waiting on the belts. But it's not their fault. The belts falter only because the beams are not enough; they can't pick apart the insides alone. Helping them along is yet another man behind. Nothing has ever been there—how does he know what to look for?

Maybe it's no one's fault.

And all the while my bag hangs heavy on the belts; in its gray dull bin.

There's an image that comes back to me. Two brothers grow up under a roof cold as the light of stars—it's not anyone's fault. There is something inside dad and mom that love is too lonely to name. Under the same silence many things come to pass, one too-many too many. Against this brothers come to know the name of the other.

But I do not know them.

When the growing's all done one brother becomes sick. The other flies in from where he's been, three thousand miles away. He comes to his bedside. He knows it is a miracle he is anywhere at all. He hates himself for ever being pained by a solitary voice. He looks into his eyes. He looks away when understanding comes to kill everything. He looks down at his hands. I loved you before I even ever knew what love was like. He holds them.

Flying, it is no longer right to feel anything. But after it racked his body for so many hours (His teeth had shivered!) it lives inside him after all. He sees the faces of his cold lights through the voice on the phone—his parents, who did not come for his brother. They are not faces that will ever be made right.

What he can he lets drip from fingers, from legs chests and eyes—but because the world has no place for it he must decide which part he will hold beneath his heart. This image and my eyes upon it.

Their eyes upon me—but barreling through transparent air I am too quick for them yet. Still, there cannot be much time before I return.

Which part? Which part?

Only now that I am made to pick them all up does it seem absurd how many things I have. My phone, my wallet, my keys—where does it end? And it ends right there, except for the crumpled receipt I got from the convenience store. I almost just leave it for the bin. Almost. In the end I can't.

My bag rolls along the linoleum, faster than the belts could take it. Already the gate is there. I have plenty of time. I bought some peanut M&Ms at the Hudson newsstand and already, they are nearly done for. I think about going back for more. I think about walking up, pocketing the limp yellow bag, walking down and away. I think about the type of person who could care about a thing like that. The person I see is not any person I have ever known. I do not go back; their image unnerves me.

And yet still there is something wrong. Twenty-five minutes to departure and the voice fails to come over the speakers. I eye the boarding screen, which says "To Cleveland", to me alone. This is not where I'm going.

I run, with my shoulders tense and my knees bending and my heart beating quick as the wheels are turning. I pass everything by. The terminal sprawls beneath my feet, and I am not amazed by how quickly I forget such cramped endless gray space.

And when I arrive at my right place they haven't even boarded the first group. I could return to my original position and no one—no one—would suspect a thing.

I take a seat, far from anyone else. The windows are wider than anything, floor to ceiling amid their steel lattices. I don't look out, though. That's for later.

I am more tired than I supposed I was.

The bag is no longer heavy on the belts. But it is heavy still.

It's moments like these I feel I don't particularly care for anyone.

How, then, does it happen? The bag falls over—behind it there is a little girl. I snatch the handle. I do. She is untouched.

“I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.”

And I keep looking at her.

She walks away. All this time hand in hand with her mom. The beams that shock through the wide windows are the shadows of the sun.

I sit there for a while, but not much longer because my flight is very soon. Before takeoff I hear this guy a couple aisles down going on and on about how God made him attend his exorbitantly priced christian university. I don't know why this speech has begun. The girl he addresses meets these revelations with kind affirmations, too kind really. It is incredible how kind people are.

I don't know how this will end for me.

Does he ever wonder why God chose him, and not someone else? I don't think so. I doubt he knows anybody so well to wonder. And yet if I were in his position, knowing I should—would I myself wonder? Again, I don't think so. I guess that's why God made me live my life, and made this guy live his. Then again, maybe things would've turned out better if it were the other way around.

When we roll off the runway I look out my window, but not for long. There isn't much to see after all.

# ON ROBERT C. SOLOMON (1942-2007)

Ross Kilpatrick | rkilpatrick23@amherst.edu

Sometimes I think about  
Nietzsche scholar Rob Solomon  
Who died of a hole in his heart  
Just past security  
In the Zürich Flughafen  
Did he bless himself  
And wish that he'd live over again  
*Da capo*, philosopher eternal –  
Or did he accept that little hungry hole,  
Friend since birth,  
A final ending –  
Or did he wish, perhaps,  
For different funeral rites:  
Wife and friends  
Not linoleum and worried  
Flight attendants  
And the bright lights of eternity  
Soaring through the sky  
“Don't take off without me.”

# UNTITLED

Rachel Hendrickson | rhendrickson25@amherst.edu

Amongst the curved cutlery, puzzles missing pieces, and books with yellowed pages, a vase held a collection of costume jewelry. When the sun hit it just right, the glint seemed to capture the attention of every customer who entered the front lawn of the Church. Lou was no different.

Unable to ever resist a good sale, Lou turned off Route 11 as soon as he saw the posterboard scrawled in sharpie on the side of the road. The habit really seemed to annoy his wife, especially in moments like this. Whatever stew she was cooking up, large enough to feed an army, would be leaving the stove in twenty-five minutes, “Whether or not you’re there.” Lou did have a bit of a propensity for being late, it’s true. But at this point, the drive only had twenty minutes...

Lou was no different than all the other passersby, unwittingly buying the knickknacks heavy with stories from church ladies whose sweetened drawl masks the fact that any conversation lasting longer than five minutes would reveal a whole slew of sickeningly condescending remarks. So he too stopped at the vase.

It was objectively ugly. He wasn’t really one for taste, but this much he knew for sure. The shards of cheap ceramic, darkened and dusted with age, were pasted together somewhat haphazardly with what looked like paper maché. A summer camp arts and crafts project. And it only took half a glance to realize that as shiny as it was, the vase’s contents weren’t worth shit.

But still, he lingered. Some strange feeling of déjà vu washed over him. Lou tensed his hands, untensed them, checked his watch...

“Um, excuse, excuse me, how much for the vase?”

“Mm, what is it that you want, hon?” Probably only a good five years and bottle of hair dye older than he was, Lou still viewed the woman behind the pricing table as a dinosaur, and her speed at this moment certainly wasn’t helping matters.

Five decibels louder, “The vase! Just on, uh, that back table over there, by the.... It’s filled with jewelry, something like it? That one.”

Her look was littered with doubt. So he paced back to the table, picked it up with a surprised grunt, and brought it back to her.

“This vase.”

“The jewelry’s two apiece, I’m gonna need to count it for ya first.”

“No, no, I- how much for the vase?”

“Oh, no, hon, you don’t... it’s not for sale.” Lou paused here, and looked into the eyes of this woman, clouded over, just stiff enough to send shivers down his spine.

---

There was noise, it was loud. Lou knew in an instance not only what had gone wrong, but the fact that he would be to blame. He and his brother Joey were left in the care of the neighbor’s girl, Judy, while his parents were out at some luncheon or other. Judy was only thirteen, and he was honestly quite offended that they thought

he and Joey, already *nine*, needed to be taken care of by *her*. He'd protest – he would! – if that didn't mean they might drag him with them.

Judy and Joey were in the living room, and he was showing off his baseball card collection as if that is what would make her fall in love with him. He sat on the coffee table, swinging his legs back and forth with reckless abandon.

Lou watched the whole scene play out in slow motion from across the room, with a comic book laying limply in his lap. Judy's eyes were just wide enough to reveal that any interest was feigned, until Joey, practically ready to leap across the table to grab his Casey Stengel, threw his shoulder into the giant bouquet of tulips their mother had just picked up yesterday. The angle was just right that the whole lot, flowers, water, vase and all, went flying before crashing down right at Lou's feet.

Judy's eyebrows flew to her hairline at twice the speed. "Oh, they are just going to kill me!"

Joey sprang up onto the table, seemingly in a state of shock.

Lou, despite now being the one doused in water, was the only one with any wits about him. "Get down from there, unless you want to break that too!" Joey did listen to that. "Now c'mon, I'm gonna change, you grab up all these pieces, Judy you go throw out the flowers."

He and Joey spent the next two hours using a collection of glue sticks (too weak), marshmallow fluff (too messy), and ultimately the goop Lou had seen their Dad use to patch up the wall to stick the shards back together. They decided not to add more water, just in case, but after Judy had finished drying the carpet (throwing down towels, pushing down until they felt wet) she added the flowers back in.

Then after ten minutes, he heard the car pull into the driveway, and with a smug smile, Lou actually believed he might get away with it. That is, until...

"It was Louie!"

---

Lou, meeting her gaze, hoping to win some battle of wills, and instead caught something in the furrow of her brow that made everything click into place. "Do I, are you Annie? Annie May? We went to middle school together." His breath caught for half a second. Even if it were – why on earth would he say that? He was in too deep. "I think... your sister, she used to babysit me and my brother? We lived next door, #26?"

"LOUIE!" And the face that had previously seemed so plastic broke out into a roar of laughter.

They didn't have much to say to each other. She was older, old enough to have gone out with their parents while he, Joe, and Judy stayed home, and he had moved away by the time they'd have been old enough to have anything in common. But the recognition was nice.

They chatted and gave each other the highlights of their past fifty years before she taped the vase up in newspaper. "Y'know, this was Judy's favorite. I think she got it from the tag sale and took it with her to every apartment. She loved you both, she really did."

Lou wanted to ask, but he couldn't quite bring himself to do it.

He went back to the car and after a call to his wife, punched in a number committed to memory but one he rarely remembered to use.

"Hey, Joe? Yeah, it's been a while, hasn't it? How are you? I'm, yeah, I'm glad. Anyways, uh, I know it's pretty late notice, but how would you like to come over for dinner? I've got something to show you."

# OF CHOOSING A FAVORITE

Dustin Copeland | dcopeland25@amherst.edu

The process of choosing a favorite of anything is fraught with contradiction. A “favorite” thing one moment is secondary the next, and even enduring preferences are (however momentarily) superseded by new obsessions every once in a while. “Favorite” may not even mean what it appears to —I think it is not uncommon for people to call their favorite object something which has some kind of personal meaning or symbolic importance to them, even when that object is not actually their preference in daily life. Someone may call an old cast-iron skillet their favorite pan, for instance, and each morning still reach for their practically-preferred non-stick.

Favoritism smacks of untruth also because of its appeal to the absolute—“favorite” is a superlative, assigning an objective “best.” But favoritism is complicated by its individual nature, as a “favorite” is *your* absolute best, that which you hold above all else. How are you supposed to decide what you value most? Favorites are relative not only to their set (favorite movie, favorite drink, favorite space) but to their people (My favorite movie and yours, different yet mutually undeniable). And still, deciding a favorite feels to me like assigning an absolute. This is the dual nature of favoritism, the reason it is so slippery, so untruthful, even as it seeks out something true in the most personal sense.

It may be possible to determine a

“representative favorite” by examining patterns in one’s choices of favorite things. This representative choice would reflect themes that may be revealed in either varying favorites over time or in one’s “shortlist” of favorite items (from which they are unable to choose just one). In terms of spaces, I would call this someone’s “taste,” or the boundaries of their aesthetic and narrative preferences. Narrative, because spaces tell stories by their arrangement as well as their architectural intention. The patterns of human interaction are visible in every detail of a space, from pencil-marks on the dining-room wall where a child must do homework to the collection of personal ephemera cluttering the surface of a nightstand. Those narratives that make us happy, our preferred genres of space, help narrow down what may be our favorite space.

There is also impulse—oftentimes we are encouraged, when asked our favorite of a thing, to answer simply by blurting out the first thing that comes to mind. Upon further consideration, that thing may very well hold up as representative of one’s preferred themes, or it may not. In my experience, the first thing that comes to mind is often something that I have spent time thinking about most recently, like the movie I’ve enjoyed a lot and which I’ve seen just a few days before. This isn’t optimal when looking for a relatively permanent or representative-over-time favorite, but if

favoritism has no continuity, then impulse might be the only way to ever get a glimpse of the instantaneous (and therefore truest) favorite.

Finally, it is possible that, even under the considerations of either impulse or thematic representation (or an amalgam of both), one's choice of favorite fails to be (or feel) true. I do not know if I can ever be satisfied with the label of favorite on a thing—sometimes the label lessens the thing in my mind by giving it a sense of importance or sanctification which I feel it should not have. I think that is true of what I impulsively believe to be my favorite space. But since no alternative seems satisfactory, this space will have to do.

A little over a thousand miles southwest of here, there is a room I'm thinking of which serves as the functional nucleus of a house. I can't easily estimate its dimensions (I haven't been there since January's break, so all my description should probably be taken with a grain or two of salt), but it's made up of two roughly equivalently-sized and semi-distinct areas which each comfortably fit not too many people and are divided by a countertop extending about two thirds the width of the room, with enough space for two people to pass between the wall and the end of the countertop at once. The length of the room is more (but not too much more) than twice that width. The longer dimension is aligned roughly north-south, and about half of the wall opens into the house's front entry-room on the north facing end. The walls have a color, though their position as contextualizing backdrop to the room means that I can't name it. Certainly not

white, but certainly not red, like the front room is. Light colored, an opening shade rather than an enclosing one.

Three large and clearly very old windows take up most of the south-facing wall—though they're really all one window with two mullions that keep the moving sashes a reasonable width. This window is the primary light source during the day. Its light feeds, besides the people inhabiting the room, several large plants that dominate the south side. The plants tower over a squarish table which seats at least six, which is less than the table's true capacity because some of the seat-space is taken up by the same plants. An ancient chair sits against the western wall just south of the countertop, facing towards the east. One of the house's two dogs spends a great deal of time on that chair. That dog is called Louie, and is a Vizsla—the first Vizsla I've ever met, or heard of. The other dog, Rosie, is ancient and, when not in too much pain, likes to be pet gently. She stands pressed against your leg like only old dogs do, and growls nervously when overstimulated, threatening any who might make her yet more overwhelmed. She's a very comforting presence. When I was there, the house's cat didn't spend too much time in that room, but he is worth mentioning for his haunt on the stairwell is visible from the base of the staircase, which opens out to the northeast corner of the room.

The floor is an ancient (like the windows, like the house) hardwood which feels weathered, like my aunt's colonial farmhouse does. It smells welcoming like that house, too, though here the dogs

aren't overwhelming and the cleaning regimen is more existent. The eastern wall, besides an electric fireplace set where an old wood fireplace probably was, is largely a bookcase set into the wall that houses a stupendous number of books. Also on the bookcase and its immediate surroundings: a massive coffee grinder, various family photos, a collection of (probably) handmade ceramic cups, aged trim around the fireplace, a dog bed at its base.

The counter turns ninety degrees towards the north once it meets the western wall, running to meet the room's end. This longitudinal portion is broken only by appliances (toaster, microwave perhaps) on top of it and the sink itself. A dishwasher is present under this portion of the counter, and an oven might be. Cabinets line the wall above the sink (maybe that's where the microwave is), and a coffee maker stands in a privileged position south of the sink—it is the most vital of this family's appliances.

The stovetop lays on the jutting-out countertop, opposite the magnet-festooned fridge against the front wall. The oven's other potential location is underneath the stovetop (as they may be one unit with a gas stovetop, like mine at home, but also might not be. I feel that the stovetop is electric and separate). The countertop reflects (not literally, since it's not at all reflective) the incredibly textured ceiling from the last time the house was renovated, a few decades ago—though luckily much of the original trim and flooring from the circa 1890 building remains. It's a very strange house, geometrically nonstandard and eclectic

in almost every sense. But it is also warm, and unified in that every bit of eclecticism comes from the same people, and all together the space contains those people in it.

I think the reason this fits as a favorite space, and why it may have been my first impulse and yet still be representative of some larger theme, is that the patterns of the space remind me very much of their equivalent in my own family. The dimensions are certainly different, and my kitchen's floors are cork, and my house is probably a good half-century younger at least, but they feel essentially similar. That similarity, though, borders on the indescribable. Much of it probably physical, despite the structural differences: our countertops are at a similar height, and both are piled with food, chargers, and magazines—though the proportions of each are different. I sat at a stool facing towards the kitchen half of the space, laptop or magazine or coffee sat on the countertop in front of me, to form the most important social memories of my life at home. Those memories define what I think of as a “good” social space, full of the kind of interactions and smells (of sizzling food, of baking dessert, of arrayed takeout) that make me comfortable, that make me feel like I'm performing “home,” that are healthy for me. So sitting at a stool facing towards the kitchen—half of that older kitchen, laptop or magazine or coffee sat on the countertop in front of me, felt very nice.

But just reminding one of a formative space does not justify calling something

a favorite, since that formative space assumes a superior position as referent, the more real version of the sign. And it is not that the older kitchen is somehow better than my own. In fact, upon consideration, choosing the referent that is my childhood kitchen-slash-dining table to be my favorite sounds like the obvious choice. A reason for the impulsive choice may then be the recency of it: the older kitchen I visited for the first time not too long ago. Or, it is a bias against my own home that I have always had. My parents both left their homes after high school and never went back except to visit, never will go back. I've always thought that was beautiful, loved the diasporic spread of my extended family across the country. So while I love the spaces that make up my childhood home, they are impermanent. Not only are they impermanent, but I don't want them to be permanent. I *want* to participate in or make spaces that are like that, not as recreations, but as familiar patterns and rituals that are themselves healthy. That's what separates my impulsive choice of the newer-to-me older kitchen from the older, newer one: I feel like I could live in the former for the rest of my life.

# 6:43 PM

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6:38 p.m. She finds herself on the platform dialing the number at about the same time she began to think about pulling out her phone from the front pocket of her jeans. In fact, he has already declined her call. She's probably thinking he won't show, he thinks, as she rolls her eyes and angrily shoves her phone back into her pocket, thinking he won't show. He runs out of work and is driving through rush hour traffic now, regretting leaving so late as he honks at the old geezer in front of him driving at a snail's pace. 6:40 p.m., she reads in glowing font, looking up at the display screen with the train schedule times above her. 6:43 p.m., he mutters under his breath, stepping on the accelerator as the Jeep touch screen radio flashes the digits 6:41 in a menacing neon green. Will he get there on time? Doesn't matter. What really matters: whether he has time to stop at the local liquor store to grab a beer. She steps over the gap between the train and the platform and finds a seat by the window, her eyes settling on the local liquor store across the street, and wonders whether he stopped to grab a cold beer. He doesn't grab a beer, and instead finds himself running up the platform stairs, briefly stealing a glance at the watch on his wrist, 6:42 p.m. Sprinting now, he peers into every train car window for a familiar face to find the darkened faceless presence of his replicated biological cells rushing past behind the glass as the train lurches forward, the time now reading 6:43

p.m. *Remember this*—she thinks to herself as she presses her face up against the window, bearing witness to the blurry two-dimensional cardboard cutout that was her father on the platform, looking particularly cartoonish in his navy blue windbreaker and oversized jeans and big floppy New balance sneakers—because she might not even see him in his fleeting atomic presence next time. *Next time*, he thinks to himself. *Next time?* she asks herself. The promise of the intimacy of parallel gazes, of solemnly looking at the train together as she waited on the platform with him, was no more and would be no more, for they were to now direct their gazes towards different things. Propelled forward into time, she faces the front of the train car. Remembering his time with her when she was younger, he turns away, feeling detached as though he were watching former events unravel in the third-person instead of the first-person. He finds himself walking across the street towards the local liquor store at about the same time he encloses his hands around a nice cold beer to forget.

# PAUSE AND BREAK

Carolyn Thomas | cthomas23@amherst.edu

## PART 1: Pause

The winds howl outside, and the rain smacks the ground with a heavenly force. Although it is nighttime, the lightning strikes illuminate the sky—the clapping sound of thunder echoes outside. The weather creates an unstable atmosphere inside Riverbend – a suburb of Silicon Valley. It does not often rain here, and rarely does it pour like this. The Riverbend drivers are not accustomed to such “extreme weather”. Cars pile up on the high way. Grocery store goers cover their hair in paper bags as they sprint from the store to their cars. The whole city behaves like they are hydro-phobic. As if a droplet of water touched their skin, they would turn into the wicked witch of the west and melt on the spot. On this particularly dreary Tuesday night, the winds pound especially hard on a luxury Riverbend apartment complex. Inside, a couple argues. Here, the lightning strikes, pounding rain, and howling winds are no match to the storm happening inside this room.

“I do not want to pack up and move to Chicago. My life is here, and I don’t just want to drop everything. Why can’t we just love each other from a distance for a little while”. Jasmine said as she put her hand on top of Tyler’s.

“You’re so fucking selfish,” Tyler scolds as he pushes Jasmine’s hand away. “You’re making me choose between my mom and you. But I should not have to because this is

supposed to be the one time that you chose me. But you’re still deciding between me and your job. You can code from anywhere. You can find a job anywhere.”

Jasmine pauses and recollects her thoughts. She is angry, but she does not want to hurt him. She places her hand on Tyler’s shoulder.

“Now you’re asking me to choose between you and my life. Somehow I am still the selfish one?”

Tyler pushes Jasmine’s hand off.

“I know, but are you okay if I’m not in your life anymore? Is that worth it for you?”

“We can stay in each other’s lives. We can love from a distance.” Tyler takes two steps back towards the kitchen. He buries his head in his hands and takes two breaths. As his face resurfaces, tears mark his face.

“My mom does not have much longer. They say that in a year or two the Alzheimer’s will take all her memories. At that point, it’ll already be over. She needs me now. I need you now.”

“We’ll talk every night, every morning, every afternoon. When you need me I will be there for you like I always have been. Tyler takes another two steps back, and is almost at the front kitchen door.

“Why are you so cold towards the people that love you? It’s like you do not understand family. Maybe it is because you did not grow up with one.”

“So now you are bringing up my broken childhood. That’s it. This conversation is

over. You want to leave. Leave. There are so many you's out there, and I will find another one. He'll be even better. He'll never say things like that to me."

"You never loved me. You just wanted to be loved, and I was just there. Because I loved you, I see it now. You never had any intention of loving me back." Tyler opens the door, slams it, and runs out. The rain is still pouring. The wind is still howling. The lightning still illuminates the sky. As Tyler runs to his car, he uses the rim of his hoodie to shield his eyes from the rain. Jasmine, still inside, wonders, "Is that my soulmate I just let walk away?"

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## **Part 2: Break**

Chicago is known for frigid winters. The people are used to it. They enjoy bundling up and wearing snowshoes everywhere. The cold has become part of the Chicago

culture. What Chicagoans are not used to is 75 degree weather in the middle of February, which is supposed to be Chicago's coldest month. Even stranger, the warm weather has lasted over a week and a half. Each day it seems to get warmer. Park-goers lay down on picnic blankets and sunbathe all around Millennium Park. The college kids won't quit throwing their stupid frisbees around and bumping into finance workers fast walking, so they don't miss their 9 am business meeting. The businessmen wear heavy winter coats gladiator-style around their waist. They haven't gotten the memo yet that it's warm outside and has been for over a week. Flowers are blooming. Trees that lost their leaves are starting to turn green again. Some of the bees are coming back, and with them returns the damn wasps. A few squirrels decided it was time to break their hibernation early. It's Sunday. It's sunny. Jasmine and Tyler could not have chosen a more beautiful day to get brunch. Five years have passed since they last spoke and broke each other's hearts. They arrive around the same time and sit at a two-person table near the front window. They both order a cup of coffee even though they both kicked their caffeine addiction three years ago. Crazy how old habits return so easily.

"Why did you lose the fro?" Jasmine asks as she adds a second packet of sugar to her coffee. She didn't remember coffee being this bitter.

"When mom kept thinking I looked like her dead husband. God, I hate Alzheimer's. She's gone now, though. Maybe I will grow it out again. What, you miss it?" Tyler says playfully.

"I don't miss the fro. I miss you."

“I know it’s been a long time. We should do this more. Let me know when you’re back up here for your next business trip.”

“I don’t want to get on the plane tomorrow.”

“Would your boss allow that?”

They pause for a second and an extensive silence fills the air.

“I’m still not over you.” Jasmine says looking Tyler dead straight in the eyes.

“I’m engaged to Valerie.”

“I know.”

“I never stopped loving you.”

“Neither have I, but you’re a little too late. I have a family now.”

Tyler changes the subject to his three-year-old daughter Kayla. He shows Jasmine pictures of Kayla in a lab coat playing doctor with stuffed animals. Tyler can’t shut up about how he thinks Kayla is going to be a doctor and the new face of medicine or something. Jasmine can’t stop thinking about how there is no fixing this relationship. Somehow their conversation circles back to the weather because they ran out of topics. They leave the coffee shop. Jasmine gets on her flight the next morning. The next day it snowed six inches.

# THE BREAKFAST DATE (BREAK, FAST!)

Sam Spratford | sspratford24@amherst.edu

before i earned my driver's license  
before i learned to swerve down narrow city streets —  
i fell  
i fell in love with the existentialists' sooty prose  
peering into an opium abyss and seeing my reflection in obsidian and

when i returned home,  
it smelled like cinnamon and soap

before i earned my too-small hips  
before i learned to sever kisses from promises—  
i fell  
i fell in love with my friend's soft touch  
swaddling the valley of my waist and pressing lips in primordial warmth and

when she and i slept,  
nightlights looked like newborn stars

dancing through *L'Étranger* to the rhythm of prickly smirks  
i wash down heartburn with chamomile tea  
with college-issued-carpeting under my feet  
i don't know much except  
"camus was a *dick!*"  
and at some point i took a one-way ticket to someplace  
my dad would have called "the real world"  
quietly weeping into his steak dinner

up, across the table  
there is the love of my life  
framed by noontime and neon  
waffles and latte

there is nothing left to yearn for

when i go back to chicago  
where lakeshore drive is bleary and damp  
i will hide between skyscrapers like velveteen shadows  
waiting for my friend's parents to leave the room  
but for now our chests rise and fall as  
we match the pulse of  
railroads and teslas  
marking time—  
the oscillation between half-life and almost-death

what was it like to hold my breath for so long that  
i felt dizzy  
for that boundless, choking moment when  
i believed i would live forever



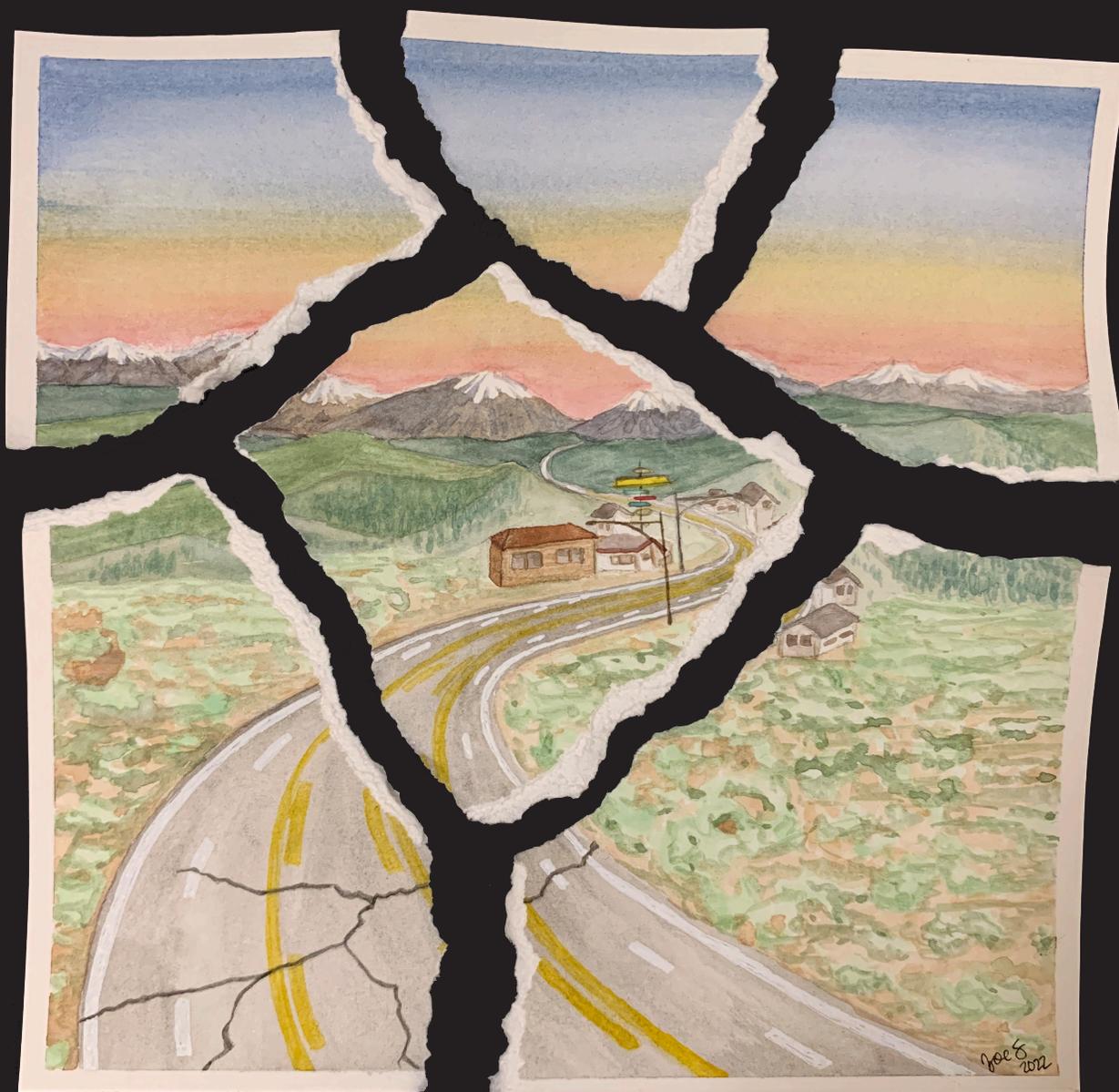
A/P

Calvin Van Leeuwen

Calvin Van Leeuwen is a Staff Artist for the Indicator

# ON CONCRETE AND BASKETBALL

Caelen McQuilkin | [cmcquilkin23@amherst.edu](mailto:cmcquilkin23@amherst.edu)



Zoe Strothkamp is a staff artist at the *Indicator*

In order to break, something once had to be whole / in a  
mosaic

Sharp cracked edges bring one another to light, make  
themselves cohesive not in spite of but because of the splits  
and gaps and shattered spaces between, an art form  
beautiful because it is broken and put back together

The air always felt still when I grabbed the basketball from the  
rim of the hoop, brought it down, dribbled twice, and threw  
it down to the court to my teammate, who years ago had  
so much to say that we'd drive around the block as many  
extra times as it took for our conversation to end, always  
longer than the ten minute drive from home to school

She'd grab the ball running—a fast break—sprinted down the  
court to the other side, and took two graceful steps to gently  
toss the ball up into the net. I can still feel the way the  
cheers poured out of our crowd, yelling, stomping on the  
bleachers, the PTSO volunteers selling popcorn and hotdogs  
leaning out of their booth to look at the updated score board

In those days when we held our fists in a circle before any game  
and yelled break on three, 3,2,1, Tigers on 3,

Break / was what held us together. Molded together, we were  
pieces made haphazardly cohesive

Molded together: by things like the concrete that artists paste  
between mosaic pieces, or what it means when you walk  
back into the locker room after losing by one free throw in  
overtime, side by side

Last August, I thought that the worn asphalt streets of my town  
should buckle under the pressure they hold: the tension  
between staying and leaving. What would it mean for  
concrete, or a game lost by a single free throw, to span the  
2,853 miles between Lee Vining, California and Amherst,  
Massachusetts?

In Western Massachusetts, red pines and rolling hills pull in the same horizon that stretches seamlessly for miles in every direction in Eastern California, dusty yellow expanse in the west, faded brown embrace in the east.

So what about disparate horizons? Are those /  
Untenable?

I think if basketball can be concrete, maybe distance too can be  
poured and molded

Weaving, piecing together, making break cohesive

I believe that people carry places with them, and that even  
broken, the line of the horizon is still traceable

Meaning, I believe in mosaics.

The pavement of Highway 395 can carry you from Hesperia,  
California to Laurier, Washington. The last time I drove its  
familiar winds back to Lee Vining, I thought

That maybe break / is what holds me to this place now.

## TOP TEN REASONS WHY BLACK BOYS PLAY BASKETBALL

Kalidas Shanti | kshanti22@amherst.edu

*After Natalie Diaz's "Top Ten Reasons Why Indians Are Good at Basketball"*

1. Another boy can throw his ass within the pocket of your hips in public.
2. It is a way to show off one's new kicks, and say, "I got more after wearing these down," even if that is far from the truth.
3. We battle with the ball, so the court is where we learn what it is to win, what it is to lose. We no longer have to jump a boy, mouth loaded with threats and a knife or hammer at our hips.
4. We pass threats along with the ball. And it is the role of every player to ensure that we survive whatever is at the end of our sentences. Regardless of teams, we know each other in this neighborhood. And what would we be if we lost a regular. Nobody needs to die here.
5. Playing defense allows us to protect something, and the ball finds its way out of the net even when we fail. We know what it is for a body to vanish under the frisking of fingers when protection inevitably fails.
6. Setting a screen is a gesture of the body, demanding another to stop for both our sakes. An eroticism we love to taste.
7. The court is another home: we can arrive at any time of day, and the hoop welcomes us with the wideness of its mouth. Even on a rare day of rain, when shoes have no traction, the court continues to be a place where we can find safety.
8. The safety of the court is not an escape. Anyone and everyone is free to walk onto the concrete or watch from the sideline where the radio plays out of a parked car.

9. The court is a home for the hammer of our legs as we untether ourselves from the ground and launch our will into the confines of a textured orange ball arching toward the painted red metal of the hoop. Someone catches the ball before it gives its energy to the earth, and they move.

10. The court is one of the few places where myths of our failure do not exist. It is where we first stretch our being into something other than ourselves. We care about everyone else's location—if they have the stamina to speed away from one side of the court to the other. We all want to see the hoop taste the dirt, sweat, and citrus of the basketball.



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# I BROKE MY ENGLISH

Priscilla Lee | prlee25@amherst.edu

Λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο, scan my pinking flesh,  
dented divots from my inky pen, no  
墨 to drink. Excuse me, I play with babbles,  
singing your scribbles.

Draw it out. Pray, jazz with me. Pluck the hairy  
strokes and Trace calligraphy. Laisse  
en moi, l'amour, les lignes de la langue. Raise  
your palette, open your mouth, receive the  
Bread of my Breath, be

lieve in me. 我日夜都不住呼求,  
日 Truncate the hEavens, divide with •••  
Se connaître on a bridge of feathers—I swallow  
nervously, Lover.

Curse my Tongue, I garble your Name. Sometimes I  
slip, like Oi! 我愛 your erotic hollows  
好, 我要 don't laugh at me, boy 你笑  
We're fitting together.

# DOE, A DEER

Gabby Avena | gavena25@amherst.edu

*Trigger Warning: Mention of sexual assault*

When I am thinking of what to write, I pick at the skin on my lips. I hold the cracked bits between my nails, pinch, and pull transparent flecks of thoughts as a snake peels off its skin, exposing soft flesh underneath. This, too, is an act of translation. I wonder—if I picked, and picked, and picked, maybe I would have a story for you. Maybe I could trade my mouth for the fullness of the world.

Maybe this is what the world would say:

It is the warmest day of winter when I decide to walk. On the way down, I hear voices between my steps resounding on the stairs—

Why are you outside

—step—

I'm not, it's the staircase of my dorm

—step—

If someone attacked you right now, no one would hear you scream

—step—

Mom, please

—step—

Why aren't you in your room

—step—

My friends are in there and I don't want to bother them

—step—

Do your doors lock behind you

—step—

No (and I did not say that I never lock my door)

—step—

When I was in college, our doors locked behind us

—step—

and one time I was with someone I thought was a friend

—step—

and he tried to take advantage of me

—step—

and I realized that if I screamed no one could come in and save me  
—step—  
Okay, I'm sorry  
—step—  
Don't be angry  
—step—  
I'm not  
—step—  
You don't understand  
—step—  
You're just like a deer who can't see the car in front of her  
—step—  
Silence as my feet give one final bite to the stairs.

It is the warmest day of winter and I want outside. I want the path to swallow me whole. I want the doe to taste the fender. I want.

Just off the path, the fields are as pale as my dried-up-dusted-off-old-bits-of-skin. The mud skulking below sups at my boots with every squelching step. Clouds crowd the air, as they are wont to do after a storm. The earth today is especially ugly, and I breathe it in. The word is not content, but free.

There are birds in the trees; I know this, but I cannot see them. There are only their endless calls, at once close and far, echoes echoing echoes, repeated in such rapid succession that the sound becomes a communal, unyielding scream. I, too, wish to hold open my jaw and empty myself to the muffled sky.

Beyond the birds are two overpasses standing like two shoulders hunched together—one across a river, the other across a road. I surprise myself by favoring the latter. I like how the cars sound like rushing water as they rip past, whistling with the wind, making the structure shake with every element that passes through its concave gut. I close my eyes and feel nothing but motion.

When the shaking stops, there is a figure approaching from where I came. As he advances I can make out a stocky frame, gray whiskers, something—it could be anything—gripped in his right hand. In him, I see the tall old man from the neighborhood I left for college, the tall old man who would pull his German Shepherd by the leash in the mornings. Once, while I was walking the half-mile to the bus stop, the man and his dog paused on the other side of the road, turned, and began to follow me. When I stopped at the bus stop he stopped too, bringing his dog to poke around an unfinished home next door. When the bus was in sight he

and his dog left the house, passing behind me just as the bus pulled its brakes, my brightly-colored kid scissors damp in my grip. I remember how once, when my mom drove me to the bus stop, I saw the old man standing past our winding driveway, into our side yard, outside my shuttered window. I remember how my mom bought me a rape alarm, this little grenade-like machine that would pour out noise if pulled. I remember how I accidentally set it off once in school and never wore it again. I remember that it wouldn't matter; no one would hear it scream above the water and the cars and the wind.

I stand on the overpass as the man draws closer. If the soft animal of my body trembles, it is because of the stream of cars passing beneath my feet. I wonder—how does a deer decide when to run and when to stare, doe-eyed, at the light?

The man walks by me in silence—the cars are gone. The shoulder of the overpass is steady. I stand still until he walks out of sight. The earth is especially ugly today. I breathe it in. The word isn't content, but alive, but free.



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# THERE IS NO STOPPING HER

A'Cora Hickson | ahickson25@amherst.edu

red button  
bloodshot  
blood's hot  
stinging of the eye  
burning sensation  
a very familiar sensation

not what she want to feel but she  
is the best at it

(Why stop now?)

wet momentum

crawling  
down

her face

Doesn't that feel sensational?

(Why stop now?)

flushing waters: her favorite pastime  
locked doors: her signature piece  
yet no one sees:  
a closed exhibit

(So why stop now?)

tracing past, tracing a dotted line  
wasting time  
wasted time

between space

missed opportunity  
missed glances  
i miss her.

tracing the past sporadically

isolating

glue nor tape will fix it

(She should stop.)

the pieces are already shredded  
                    already erased  
                    already lost  
but she can't accept that

(So she won't stop.)

civil war – a battle on her homeland  
opposition reigns on both sides:

the vibrations warm her  
like the soldier's boy beating of the drum  
irregulars beats travel through her arteries, supplying some  
thing worth living

the resilience chills her  
like cool rain after a captain's defeat  
weathering storms she can not feel, wounded  
gettysburg on her cortex

what side are you on?

pictures are timestamps  
breaks in time

an endless loop is her  
constantly spinning spiraling

constantly clicking that red button  
bloodshot

constantly, momentum slithers down her face  
sensational.

the same piece  
yet not the same artist

(Who wants to see her anyway?)

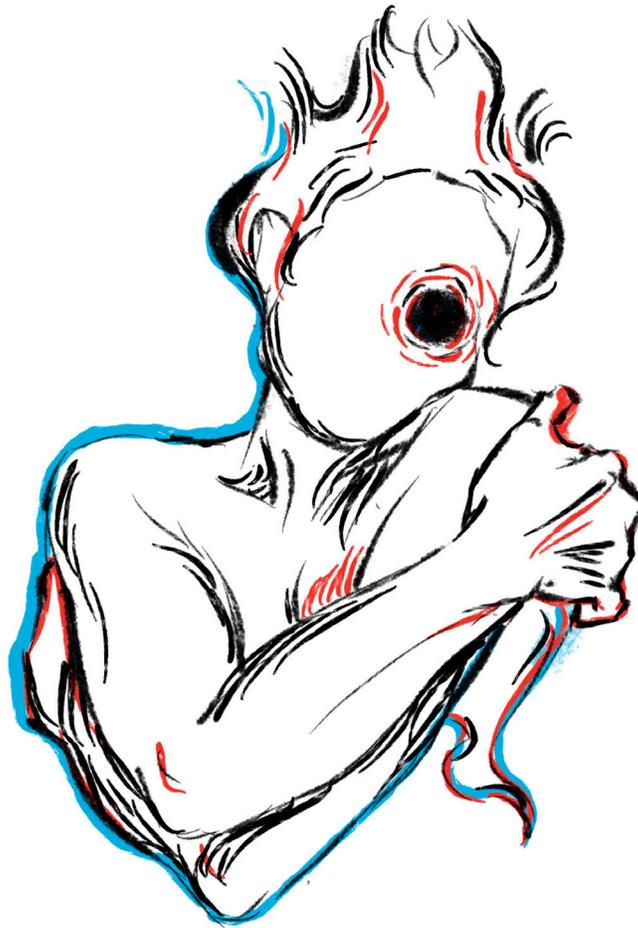
she's a broken record instead  
                    broken                    indeed

civil war – a fight she wants to end

(want it to stop?)

no break.  
all hell breaks loose.  
all (of) her breaks loose  
shatters

(it won't.)  
it can't.



Cece Amory is a Staff Artist for the *Indicator*

# RUMINATIONS

Zoe Alarcon | zalarcon25@amherst.edu

When you were young  
You would approach your mother's bed  
Afraid of an intruder  
Now you approach it  
Afraid of yourself  
Hoping she can save you from eternal tinnitus  
Drown it forever with a peaceful sonata

You're like an immortal grain of sand  
soaring around the globe  
Unaffected by the harsh wind,  
The sour desert,  
forest fires, hurricanes  
Lulled by the melody down glissando glaciers

Before the familiar screeching returns  
Your head rushes  
like a nauseous meteor  
Memories of life as a sand grain dissolve  
Their remains settle on the sun  
And sometimes fall as mist  
vanishing when you touch

Your eyes are misty  
And your heart is about to flood  
Your attention is too light

Like ripples in a lake made by a stone,  
Which from that point forward will betray you

Maybe If you just flick your wrist  
a millisecond before it leaps  
from your fingers...

You won't start a fire fueled by water  
needy and relentless

Like a howling child determined to prove her true innocence  
As she grips a crisp blade

Let it Flow through you

R

E

Enticed by reckless tides

But some are so strong they sweep you right out to sea



Bela Achaibar is a Staff Artist for the *Indicator*

# LAMPLIGHT

Leland Culver | gculver24@amherst.edu

Your face I thought your face I wished your face would long  
have left me, gone away, above.

Unharmd, although below I go, except for silent wishing,  
occasionally fishing for unhurried hypothetical love.

But glinting in the dark, your eyes espy my every dreaming  
thought like burning violet embers I remember once were blue.

With you, it was that feature of your face who struck me first—  
those coldly burning fires alien to sense—despite my own  
competing whence of piercing ice but then the old advice of  
course is never, never look yourself in the eye.

Atop your face that place of staring flame it sat, a field of  
waving craving lavender as natural as grown but burning like  
with light to warm the frost within my eye.

Melted, though I tried to freeze it up again the marshal called  
and I attend, and once extended near enough to catch there  
was no cold within the world or out of it that could, without a  
doubt, extinguish that feeling now engendered.

This is going to destroy me.

Because, of course, you didn't stay I should have known it's not  
your fault you went and cleaved my heart in two of which you  
dared to take a piece along and bent my mind into a spiral, and  
my spine into a sea. I am falling. I am drowning. I am bending  
so excruciating far that I am sure my skull has pulled my other  
bones into a grisly knot.

But still I see your lip encoiled like a whip, a quirking smirk  
preserved forever in this ocean over-iced, for that is how I  
stop the burning, stop the melting, stop the conflagration from  
consuming it all.

Locked away, safely this time, until again I can peruse, or take  
you for a muse, I swim towards the surface and my head breaks  
through.

And breaks again, and yet again and but again and always  
there is water all around me, freezing cold resounding with my  
screams as breath runs out and fingers squeeze into my throat  
and freeze into my flesh.

The water rushes around me. The ice roof cracks below. And at  
last I break the real surface.

Your face, it haunts me through this place; He will not leave  
The shifting, shuttling pace although I race ahead and move  
The walls behind to lock my mind against your relentless,  
Unmasked, unwanted assault.

That whiplike lip upturned infuriating close as if  
With not a whiff of difficulty I could reach my hand out,  
Card it through your violet-burning hair and grasp the bow  
Beneath your cheek; and pull an arrow sleekly back  
Before release, to shoot the watchful lamp within your eye.  
Shattering. Snuffing out.



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# UNTITLED

Mariana Rivera-Donsky | mriveradonsky25@amherst.edu

She got in the car at half-past two in the morning.

It didn't really matter to her where exactly she was going as long as it was away. There was only a certain amount of time that she could ignore the steadily growing pressure in her chest - right underneath her collarbone. Right above her lungs. She had lain in bed for hours doing absolutely nothing productive.

It wasn't exactly a feeling of sadness. Or pain. Rather one of unease, which no amount of deep breathing and tossing and turning could get rid of. Everything was just too too too much for her to handle at this god-forsaken hour. Her body was beyond tired, but her mind refused to let her stop moving. A finger twitched. Her eyelids fluttered. And suddenly she was wide awake again. Every single thought she had seemed to come from her stomach and crawl its way out of her throat.

She knew she was prolonging the inevitable. She needed to leave. Eventually, reluctantly -like she was still trying to prove to herself that she could stay, that she could close off her mind - she got out of bed.

Most people find driving in the dark to be either terrifying or liberating. Something about driving down a dark deserted highway with no one for around for miles

was satisfying to her. Like letting a scream build in your throat for hours before finally letting it out. She never considered the possibility of dying. Of crashing. It didn't really phase her one way or another. Maybe she was too stupid to consider it, something about her youth and ignorance.

In the past few weeks this had become her almost-nightly ritual. She never knew quite where she was going to go, preferring instead to just drive. Tonight it looked like she was going to end up on the beach. Her mother had grown up on a beach, so as a child she always felt like a mini version of her mother anytime they took a family trip to the beach. The family trips eventually stopped, but the feeling of her mother's influence never really did. She should call her mother tomorrow. Well, later today.

The beach, of course, was empty. She almost expected it not to be. But no one was there. She let the dog out of the car, watching as he ran towards the water, sand flying up as his paws connected with the ground. The moon was waning, she thought, and there was not much light, just barely enough to see the water. She walked towards the water, kicking at the cold sand. It had rained earlier in the night, so the sand was hard-packed and cold to the touch. She took off her shoes. Dug her toes into the sand and waited for the tide to come towards her.

The wind was bitter, even for summer. New England waters were cold at night. She could feel it in her hair, the salt air thick and abrasive. There was a light from a boat in the distance, nothing more than a pin-prick of light on the very edge of the horizon. A big boat. It must have been huge to be seen from that far away. How many people would be on it? How many people do you need to operate a boat that big? Do they get lonely?

She watched the waves in the distance, barely visible in the dark blue night, just little white crests above a dark dark dark ocean.

She watched the waves break on the shore. The water rushed up to her feet and it soaked her toes, stinging the cuts on her ankles before retreating backwards.

She watched the dog as he ran behind her. He was chasing something, but it was far too dark for her to see it. She supposed it didn't matter.

She stayed there, toes digging into the sand, feet cold as hell, arms wrapped around her ribcage for a while. She didn't know how long. A while though. And then she walked back to the car, opened the trunk and watched as the dog hopped in.

She stopped off at a gas station on her way back. Walked into the harsh white light and grabbed a few things at random. Yogurt and Oreos, she realized. She grabbed a pack of jerky on her way to the counter, feeling rather than seeing the eyes of the store clerk on her.

She waved goodbye to the clerk and then she once again let herself into her car and pulled back onto the highway. She grabbed a blanket from her bed. She fed the dog some of the beef jerky – he was nearly too tired to eat it – and made her way downstairs to the front porch. Covering herself in the blanket and pulling out her newly-acquired yogurt, she made herself comfortable enough to watch the sunrise over the lake at exactly 5:12 am. The wind was bitter, even for summer. New England waters were cold at night. She could feel it in her hair, the salt air thick and abrasive. There was a light from a boat in the distance, nothing more than a pin-prick of light on the very edge of the horizon. A big boat. It must have been huge to be seen from that far away. How many people would be on it? How many people do you need to operate a boat that big? Do they get lonely?

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# SEA OF SORROW

Tiia McKinney | tmckinney@amherst.edu

Sparkling dark blue waters violently crashed over my head,  
They pinned me under their strong currents, forcefully grabbing me in a chokehold  
I desperately inhaled, trying to taste the salty air on my tongue,  
Instead salty water crashed past  
my lips, over my tongue, to the back of my throat, past my tonsils,

I frantically inhaled hoping that in one of my gasps I would taste the air again,  
that I would break the surface of the water,  
But I kept going deeper, and deeper,  
farther out to the horizon  
The tides dragged me across the abrasive sand until I was too far out to feel the ground  
Then my body just floated loosely in the cold waters,  
moving only by the violent currents around me

Yet I saw the blue again, the dark blue overtook my vision and I stopped trying to inhale,  
I stopped trying desperately to clutch the sand beneath my toes to help me stand still  
I allowed my body to float loosely  
And each second, each second grew and  
the fire in my lungs grew, like a match set to a forest,  
And even though I was still young in the world,  
I imagined that for a second the dark waves would be my last image of it

My little heart pounded into my chest, and I felt a thumping in my throat  
With the churning salty waters  
my head pounded, matching the panic rising in my chest and  
While my heart wished to break the surface,  
my body began accepting an inevitable fate of darkness,  
And I began to sink further into sorrow  
I wondered if my family had remembered me,  
and if anyone would notice when the waters turned violent,  
I hoped that someone would come to rescue me,  
That I would not be reduced to tangles of lifeless debris  
that floated beneath my feet

Then I felt a hand grab my own and pull me away from the water's grasp,  
I gasped my first breath of air in what felt like an eternity

my nose burned and I sputtered and gasped,  
but I was home, free from the strong tides that I thought would keep me.  
At last I broke the surface, my cousin kept my hand in hers, leading me to shore  
My body felt limp and I could still feel the waters swaying me side to side,  
But I was finally safe.



Aoife McGuire is a staff artist for the *Indicator*

# BROKEN BLACK HEART

Mikayah Parsons | mparsons24@amherst.edu

Broken Black heart.  
Tattered Black heart.  
Broken Black fish.  
Battered Black fish.  
Black fish out of water.

I offered my Black heart on a silver platter,  
And they took it for the slaughter.

My Black heart was not used to beating outside of its Black chest.  
I closed my eyes and requested a rest.  
White bottoms of white dresses flitted around me.  
Hands the color of pale moonlight found me.

Tattered Black heart.

“Would you like to come inside?”  
They were so welcoming at the start.  
“We are your neighbors.”  
They invited me to dinner.

I watched the butler in his Brown skin and Black tie  
Recite the laminated menu lines.  
When I pointed to the main dish,  
He promised sinisterly to obey my wish.

“To eat such hearty meat,  
Will you pay in organs or your seat?”  
My seat, previously affixed to the ground,  
Now hovered above a void of darkness.

My heart stilled as though preparing itself.

“What organs?  
What do you mean?”

“For meat that sweet,  
The animal needs to feast.”  
He put his finger on my chest.  
It dropped from my shoulder to my breast.

His finger grazed my nipple.  
“The animal needs something supple.  
It looks like you have a couple.”  
I glanced at my own body anew.

Sensing my discomfort, he grimaced.  
“Fine. There’s one more option still.  
To supplant the fatty tissue, the beast must kill.”

To choose between an animal and a beast.  
I wondered if there was an option to leave.  
I had been so allured by the home’s exterior,  
I had forgotten to inquire about the home’s superior.

Brown skin, Brown man.  
Put down your hands.  
The puppeteer in white  
Steers with unclear sight.  
Brown man, Brown hands.  
What about your wife?  
Did you know she’s in the kitchen,  
Trying to survive?  
Did you know her hands are clutched around a butcher’s knife?  
The brown-skinned man sees the brown skin of my thigh,  
Realizes it matches the skin below his eye,  
And decides that I’m not fit to die.

“You have three seconds to leave”  
He pulls my organ from my chest.  
“Take this lesson not in jest.  
If I should hear my family cry,  
I’ll crush your heart until you die.”  
Black, Brown, and White.  
I sprint past,  
Worried that each breath

Will be my last.

I turn the corner,  
Consumed with fear,  
And my headlights  
Stumble upon a deer.

Her complexion matches mine,  
The parts of her that I can find.  
Blood stains most of her skin  
Alongside bruises on her shins.  
Her eyes are crazed as, at last, she looks.  
Her gaze directing me to a wall of books.

“Depart from here.  
You must leave this place.”  
Her hands cupped the sides of my face.  
“They’ll try to tell you it’s different here,  
But the only color they don’t see is clear.”

She splays her palm along my side.  
I use her other hand to hide.  
We take great pains to find a path  
That leads us, hidden, out the back.

This woman’s knuckles graze the latch,  
When suddenly her foot yanks back.  
White-gloved hands drag her down the hall,  
Into darkness, I watch her fall.

The pulsating cavity of my chest  
Alerts me to its unwelcome guest.  
The emptiness that my sternum objects  
To the organ I let my ally eject.

Just as my fingers brush the door,  
I hear a terrifying roar.  
Likened to my seat from before,  
A darkened void becomes the floor.

“I told you if you couldn’t ditch,

I'd hunt you down, you loathsome witch.  
My family's life is all that matters,  
This time, only your heart will shatter."

He made the mistake of thinking  
That saving his wife's life required my leaving.  
He squeezed my heart until it bled.  
I remember the sensation of no tears shed.  
I remember the void turning a startling red.  
I remember the longing for a bed.  
I remember wondering what might have been different,  
If instead of my heart, I had used my head.

# SMUDGED

Ari Dengler | adengler24@amherst.edu

*Trigger Warning: Mention of sexual assault*

It's 4:32 am.

Liza is awake, lying in bed, listening to the intent scratching of pencil across paper. Lukas hasn't slept for more than three hours a single night this week. Instead, he's spent all day and night hunched over his desk, lamp basking him in light as he scribbles down his new book.

"Lukas?" She sits up in bed, gripping the bed sheets to her chest. Lukas remains silent. He claims his hearing is bad, but Liza sometimes wonders if he says this merely to justify his silence, to ignore her without repercussions. His hearing seems to work when he wants it to. She tries his name a second time, but his head remains down, his hand sliding across the paper, a desperation and dramatism present in every stroke of pencil.

"Lukas." The third time she speaks, he turns to her. "Yes?" He brushes his fingers against his chin. They leave a mark of pencil lead. It reminds Liza of when she was a little kid and would finger paint, always managing to smear the cheap paint across her cheeks and chin despite her mother's attempts to keep everything on the canvas. She suddenly feels a little nostalgic, saddened by the memory.

"Yes?" Lukas repeats, standing up from his desk and making his way towards her. When he gets close, she notices he smells like pencil lead too, a sharp, metallic perfume, and gray pencil smudges dot their

way across his white t-shirt. He probably hasn't changed his clothes or showered in almost a week, and the way he's standing there, mouth slightly agape, body pointed downwards at her, makes her a bit uncomfortable.

"You haven't slept," she mutters as she pats the bed beside her. "You should sleep. It's almost daytime."

"I'm not tired. And the book—"

"Lukas." She hates the way she says his name, the annoyance that seeps through her voice. It's the same way her parents spoke to each other in the years leading up to the divorce. When she was little, she'd stay up at night listening to the passive aggressive conversation of her parents, the way their words remained calm and apparently friendly but actually held daggers. She had sworn she would never be in a relationship like theirs. Now she understands that it's more complicated than that. You could both love and hate someone, feel drawn to them and be repulsed by the sight of them.

"I'm not tired," Lukas repeats. His eyes are glowing, sharp against the darkness of the room. He links his fingers through Liza's, softly trapping her hand inside his. When she was watching him from a distance (sitting, writing frantically in the dim desk light) she could romanticize him, imagining he was some kind of starved, overworked, beautiful artist. Now, up close, she can't do anything but think that he looks sad, his hair in bedhead upheaval

and his eyes burdened by huge, drooping sacks beneath them. He looks tired, and she wishes he would sleep and take a shower.

“You haven’t slept,” she repeats. Their conversations lately have been them repeating the same words time and time again, each time hoping they’ll gain new meaning to the other. So far, their attempts have failed.

“I don’t want to sleep,” Lukas mutters. He tugs on her hand, brings it to his lips and dots his mouth against it. “You can’t write forever,” she responds, moving her hand away from his. He takes it back, circles his fingers slowly across her palm. “Fine. I’ll take a break.” He locks eyes with her again and leans in to kiss her. She turns her head away, lets his lips graze her forehead instead.

“I’m not feeling this right now. I’m tired.” She pulls her arm away, but Lukas tugs it back, his nails digging into the flesh of her lower arm. She feels afraid for a second. In their relationship, Lukas has always touched her right. He’s never made Liza feel the dread of being with a man who takes ‘no’ as a suggestion, begging and pleading with his body language and (sometimes) his words until she decides it’s easier to give in.

But Lukas has never been like that. So she lets her fear sink away.

Liza tugs her arm away again, and Lukas lets go. She feels a cool wave of relief rush through her, and she slides her arm under the mound of covers, further nestling her body away. Liza likes being buried away under blankets, like a child being told a bedtime story. There’s something comforting about it, one of the rare, lingering feelings of childhood found in

adulthood.

Lukas begins to undress, to abandon his shirt and pants on the floor, his eyes fluttering over the room in dazed tiredness. He joins Liza in bed, lying next to her, his breath soft and warm on her neck. They lie there in silence for a few moments, and Lukas’s warm breath morphs to gentle kisses that he leaves on her neck. They feel playful, youthful, like young love. Liza is about to drift off to sleep when Lukas’s kisses become more urgent, rushed, young love morphed to lust.

“I’m not in the mood,” she mutters. She knows she shouldn’t, but she feels bad every time she says no. The tendency to please is so deeply instilled within her that her voice drips with apology anytime she rejects Lukas’s advancements.

“Can you not get in the mood?” Lukas asks. He presses his body against hers, runs his fingers through her hair. Liza feels her body tense at the question, her calves tightening, her shoulders bracing inwards. She pushes her body away from Lukas, lets space and silence sit between them in the bed. “What sort of question is that?” “Do I not get you in the mood?” Lukas responds. His tone is soft, sullen, almost hurt.

Liza can’t figure out how she’s supposed to respond to this. The silence returns, its weight collapsing onto her. The pile of blankets feels suffocating rather than comforting. “Of course you do,” she finally responds. She worries that she’s hurt Lukas’s feelings, and she scoots her body towards him, the space between them whittling away. “Of course,” she whispers again, suddenly feeling very sorry. She can’t be mad at him for his lack of receptiveness; how could he be receptive when he’s barely slept, when his thoughts are cluttered and

blurred, when the underarches of his eyes are this darkened? All he was trying to do was love Liza, to feel loved by her, and she failed him.

“I love you,” Liza whispers, and Lukas cocoons his body around hers. “I love you too,” he whispers. She lets him rub his groin against her thigh, lets him show her how much he loves her.



Bela Achaibar is a Staff Artist for the *Indicator*

# HAMADRYAD

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So, the will still bends  
Beyond the sentimental  
And you, still  
Wielding the fissured, the fragmented,  
The crumbling under and cracking apart.

Never were you glued together entirely, veined instead  
Like great great grandmother's vase, willed down  
On promises to not be broken  
But webbed in hairline fractures still. I cannot assemble  
The pieces of you together,  
Before another meandering chasm sprouts from  
The creases in your palms.

All the revelations were late to arrive.  
Even when you have been the understory,  
And sworn away rigidity,  
And turned to the same wind  
That teaches saplings to contort and carry their own weight,  
The only surviving softness lies  
In your oil spill irises,  
Still tracing skeleton trees, wide as millenia, immortalized in embrace,  
Immortalized until they are not.



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# The Persimmon Tree

Kei Lim | nlim25@amherst.edu

A lifetime's worth of spinning,  
and all virtue stumbles,  
enmity circling pupils like rings of ebony  
ink the bark of the persimmon tree.  
Branches beckon like the arms of  
my mother, calloused by the abandonment  
of men who knew her fragility  
and whispered honeysuckle promises still—  
They spooned hope into her mouth  
and scratched filth into her soul  
before leaving her to cradle Guilt  
against a pitted chest.

Sweetness fills the air, wafting  
from the single persimmon she bears.  
But hidden among foliage grown  
thick and disheveled,  
it is small and nearly rotten.  
Enchanted by the tangled fortress  
and baited by the promise of fruit,  
foolish little boys climb high into her leaves.  
Dancing drunkenly, she savors  
the taste of dulcet deceit.  
Bitterness has hardened soil to asphalt,  
and her teeth bare no mercy.

It hardly takes a second—

A second split into fragments,  
and fragments as many as there are  
bones scratching the ground.



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# NOT LET GO OF HOPE

Gracie Rowland | growland25@amherst.edu

I dance under the imagined warmth of the moonlight,  
Twirl from one end of the rose garden to the other  
Until my head is spinning, spinning, with the  
Stars like a laughing tapestry above my head.

I forget about funerals and fallacies,  
Genocide and god under the moonlight.  
I forget about yellow hospital walls and  
Plates thrown against kitchen floors.

I am laughing and dancing and  
Screaming out the lyrics to Blue by Joni Mitchell.  
I am a child again, pink and earnest,  
Swallowing down doses of happiness in eager gulps,  
Holding onto this amber-soaked moment in time.  
I have not let go of hope, not yet.

I remember my old ballet classes as I  
Twirl in the roses' hearth of curious crimson,  
My childhood dreams and the old swing over by the lake.

Pure ecstasy, I trip over happiness accidentally that night  
In my grandmother's rose garden,  
As I lift my hands above my head  
And twirl to the dulcet tones of velvet.  
Oh glorious, silvery moon, oh shimmering horizon of blue,  
How I love you.

# BROKEN HINGES

Gracie Rowland | growland25@amherst.edu

I slammed the door in Hope's face and told Her  
I was better off alone, my pride too brazen to realize that good intentions  
Matter more than harsh words spoken over late night calls.  
I was too ashamed to apologize back then, too ashamed of the broken hinges I left.

All my bad decisions become immortalized in short lines of poetry;  
I sometimes wonder if they resent their small relevance.

Armed with a fistful of secrets and youthful indiscretion,  
My days are plagued by quiet remembrance, every morning a gasp for air.  
Decaying love and childhood dreams, I wish to forget  
All the things that once shimmered with golden naivety.

My sister says she and I are almost too much for a single person,  
Too full of memory and magnitude, darkness and desire.  
Swallow me in small doses and you can stomach me,  
But gulp me down and I'll splatter on the kitchen floor.

I was meant to be a ghost, not a soul, you see,  
I was meant to haunt, not to love,  
To hide in the tawny ground like old  
Socks and love letters buried beneath my bed.  
Broken hinges, broken hinges,  
Why did no one tell me growing old is just  
Leaving a trail of buried memories behind?







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Volume L Issue 2