A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

On behalf of the editorial and advising team, I am pleased to present the twenty-sixth annual edition of Creative License, an award-winning literary and visual arts publication created to celebrate the artistic achievement of Perimeter College students at Georgia State University. Print copies are available at all Perimeter campus libraries and Student Life offices, and a PDF of each issue dating back to 2013 can be located at the University’s Student Media page: https://studentmedia.gsu.edu/cf/.

Each issue of Creative License reflects not only the creativity and diversity of our talented Perimeter students, but also the dedication and collaborative efforts of the magazine’s student editors and faculty advisors. Student editors are actively engaged in each phase of the magazine’s publication cycle: soliciting literary and visual art submissions from their peers, reviewing and recommending campus submissions, voting on college-wide selections and winners of the Rosemary Cox Awards, and distributing the new issue. We look forward to the process with excitement every year and are proud to present this year’s collection of the best student literary and visual art submissions from all Perimeter campuses.

Since its first issue in 1993, Creative License has served as a medium for showcasing Perimeter students’ excellence in creative work and has inspired unpublished writers and artists to share their talents with a wider audience. I extend a heartfelt thanks to all who contribute to the success of our students and to this publication.

Sincerely,

Tracienne Ravita
Faculty Editor

CREATIVE LICENSE

The magazine accepts any original, previously unpublished art form that can appear in print: poetry, fiction, drama, art, photography, or musical scores. The magazine cannot pay for material selected for publication except with a free copy of the issue in which it appears.

For more information, contact the Editor (English Department of Clarkston Campus, 555 N. Indian Creek Drive, Clarkston, GA 30021) or a Campus Advisor.
Nap Time
by Caitlyn Murphy

I tiptoe to her bedroom door,
hoping that I do not wake her,
for she is such a light sleeper.
Past the door, a staircase descends from above.
A flashing light occasionally illuminating the stairs,
the night light.

Slowly, I ascend the stairs.
Glancing around the corner,
I see her still body,
    as if it has been there for days.
I listen closely,
hoping to hear even the slightest of sounds.
Usually I can hear a faint snore
or the ruffling of sheets.
    One could mistake the two.

A sound catches my attention,
and I sigh in relief:
    She snored.
She does not sleep much
    or too well nowadays.
I softly descend
and go on with my business,
glad that I did not wake her.
comfort.

by Maia Antoinette

sade singing from the record
swaying, naked, to and backward
skin glowing against the red lights
when the moon hides — cloudy nights
paintings watch me move
funky mellow groove — how soothing
smooth
soft, burgundy bed sheets
against
my bare, shaven legs — my feets
polished neats
filling this big bowl
with the alcohol of my big soul
the swollen love tip-toppin over
drunk
it sunk into the mattress

the pillows hugged my hair
the comforter held me tight
because you wouldn’t
The Enchanting Nightmare/ Dark Horizon

by Tatyana Page

In the dead of night when all
Are asleep and the breeze is as gentle as
A mother’s touch to a newborn child,
In this land of enchantment

In a grassy plain the fireflies flicker in the dark of night
Like the stars in the midnight sky.
The times come to play
Here in the garden of shadows

As the full moon shimmers its soft silver color
Over the slow-moving river
And the wind blows softly through the air,
Quiet as death itself whispering in
The ears of its listeners.

The silence becomes nothing more than a sweet lullaby
Into the calm and quiet
Darkness of the shadows,
The nightmares of the night.
High Fidelity Silence  

by Dedra Morris
My mother has always been
a woman who wore beauty
like a goddess.
My father marveled at her radiance,
and I stood in front of mirrors, asking God to craft me like her.
She had caramel eyes that peered at me beneath her spectacled gaze,
hair streaked in maroon henna,
and mouth tinged in 560, Saucy Mauve, her favorite lipstick.
She moved with pedicured feet grazing the ground like fireworks;
the telltale tympanic rhythm of her heels became the soundtrack
of my childhood.

My father’s demise shattered every
sacred ounce of
security my family possessed.
I watched bills pile up on our dining table like armed intruders and
soon,
we sold our majestic ruby house
and the smell of death with it.
We lost many things that year,
things we thought we needed like baby teeth,
things we couldn’t replace like my daddy’s embrace.
But the hardest loss by far was the
disappearance of my mother’s grin,
and the glint in her eye morphed into a dull look of sorrow,
one she still wears today like a curse.

Those around us decided that
my daddy’s ascent Upstairs
meant that my mother
lost the right to be
anything other than a desolate, mourning widow,
cloaked in white and marinating in self-pity.
They stripped her of her makeup,
her accessories,
her livelihood,
and condemned her to a life
of a hijab and solitary ivory.
My mother’s nails were bare now,
and I ached for the cheery
coral and fuchsia hues
coating her half-moons.
She displayed her tears like her
armor,
and I yearned for the kohl lining her eyelids,
silent rebellion.

Today she rises with
sleep in her ginger eyes,
crimson hair to her shoulders,
and applies a steady string of
eyeliner
and rouges her lips,
fierce,
like the warrior I know she is,
that society tried to conceal.
My mother is still
the woman she was
when God took my father away,
and instead of
waning in the role of
the widow who longs for her husband,
she slipped into the role of
mother,
basking in the bliss of parenting.
And I
am still glancing in the mirror,
asking God to compose me
with my Mother’s strength
in my veins.
Sluggard’s Remorse

by Ms Lynn

I see you
Eager, waiting
and always judging.
Your outstretched arms beckon
to me as I walk by.

I know I should get to know you again,
but fear deters me.
I remember our last encounter.
You left me breathless,
heart pounding and drenched in sweat.

I sit and stare at you
for a while. Wishing
I had the motivation to try you again.
You stare back, cold and unfeeling.
I’m overwhelmed. I give up.

I start to make my bed and throw my pajamas
haphazardly across your seat.
My daughter laughs.
“When is the last time you rode this exercise bike?”
She slowly spins your pedals.

Your oversized wheel hums
a tune mocking my indolence. I shoo her away
and cover your sleek frame
with more clothing to hide my shame.
Tomorrow, I promise myself.
I will exercise tomorrow.
We lie here: shattered  
nothing left but jagged pieces –  
jigsaw remnants of a dismal love,  
transparent from the beginning.  
We were shallow in intentions,  
outlandishly eager to inhabit a see-through romance.  
Nice clothes, nice shoes,  
good looks . . . but . . .  
who are you . . . and I . . . together?  
Maybe – a match made in hell’s heaven.  
Tossing logic to the wind,  
we threw stones in our glass home.  
Brought real emotions to a fake relationship  
and catastrophe hit,  
when our fragile foundation could no longer stand.  
So, we lie here: shattered,  
my heart mixed with yours,  
our thoughts intertwined  
as we realize that we were never “we.”  
No, “we” could never truly be.  
It was just . . . “you” and “I” packaged together,  
but it wasn’t as we’d thought.  
Someone forgot to stamp the word  
“fragile” on our box  
so, we didn’t make the trip.  
I just wish I had considered this  
when thinking of who would console me.  
Now, I cut the hands of any other who tries  
to hold me.  
All because I forced companionship  
with a woman who didn’t  
know me at all.  
Now there is nothing left but  
Broken glass on an unkept floor.
She knew he felt her watching him. This was their game. His routine was like clockwork. He left the café around noon every Tuesday and walked two blocks to the library. She kept a safe distance from him, but she always followed. He occupied a private room and researched supernatural romance. She liked how he scratched his brow when he was confused. If he had just spoken to her, she could have answered all of his questions. She thought him to be beautifully mysterious. They kept this game up for months. His routine, her curiosity.

She wanted things to be different. She wanted to be bold like the beautiful girls who went for what they wanted. Today was different from the rest. She would speak to him; she would at least say hi. He finished his research and gathered his books as he did every Tuesday. He walked out of the private room and into her path. She stood and awkwardly blurted out, “Hi!” He stopped in his tracks and turned in her direction. She reached out her hand to shake his, but he looked past her. He shook his head and walked away.

She was heartbroken and filled with rage. Before he walked out, she screamed, “I SAID ‘HI’!” This time, the lights flickered in the library, papers flew in circles, and books were thrown to the floor. No one looked in her direction; they just ran out of the library. She sat on the floor, alone and hurt. She cried for what seemed like hours until she noticed him. He hadn’t left. He walked towards her cautiously. He was different now, even more beautiful than before. She loved him, and finally he had noticed her.

He kneeled in front of her and swallowed hard before asking, “What are you?”

She didn’t understand the question. “WHAT am I?” she responded.

He chose his next words carefully because he did not want to offend her.
“I mean, are you a woman or a man?” he asked.

That question was maybe worse than the first. She looked at him as if he had somehow betrayed her. “How are you confused? What do you see when you look at me?” she asked, terrified of his answer.

“Well, I see a burned face and bald head, grey hair, a hunched back, and sharp teeth,” he answered honestly.

She put her hands on her face and traced the burned flesh with her fingers. “How did this happen to me?” she asked out loud, not expecting an answer. “Find me a mirror!” she demanded. He searched the library for a mirror. He found a mirror and took it to her. She looked at herself for the first time and screamed. He wanted to console her but was still afraid to touch her. “Just leave!” she screamed.

He did not hesitate to leave her. He walked to the door and was thrown back to where he first noticed her. “Why can’t I leave?” he asked.

She smiled and responded, “Because we’re the same.”

He walked to her and snatched the mirror. His face was identical to hers. “What did you do to me?” he cried.

“I fell in love with you.”

He shook his head in disbelief. “What are you?!” he yelled.

“What did you research every day?” He didn’t answer. “Say it out loud. What am I?”

He dropped his head and replied, “A love demon.”

She nodded in agreement. “Now what are you?” she asked.

“Cursed.”
Bondage

by Jennifer "Jam" Sanders

Are you still bonded by the history

Or deprived of the present

Running from the future

And negating the message

Are you still carrying the baggage

That’s been left by your exes

It’s 2018, our goals are manifesting

Are you stressed by the pain

From when your heart had been broken

Do you still force a smile

As if fear is locked and loaded

You’re too strong to be still

Your weakness has been stalled

Your chapter has been written and

You have the leading part.
Eyes Like the Devil

by Jayla Cornelius

I watched through eyes
Like the devil
As spit hit my eye
Then trickled down my face
Onto my collar. My mother
Warned me not to wear that nice shirt
That day, said that I would get dirty
Out in the mud. She didn’t know there
Was another kind of filth I had to
Be afraid of. I choked on my
Momentary cowardice.
Malcolm would have been ashamed.
Peering through the part of my eye
That wasn’t tainted by another man’s hate,
I looked Jim Crow right in his face and said,
“Do it again.”
Glenn Burke  
by Jonathan Sciba

I.
glenn lawrence burke  
six feet at sixteen  
a man as a boy  
of san francisco bay  
he could hit a baseball a mile  
and cover third base from right field  
his sisters had to track him down one day  
to tell him that a scout from the los angeles dodgers was headed his way  
talking to his mom  
as a real giants fan  
he told them to go away

II.
california’s high school baseball player of the year in ‘70  
mom won out and told him to take la’s big money  
he entered the minor leagues  
and hit frozen ropes into the gap  
darts into the corners  
playing outfield like a coiled spring

III.
“hey, where you going, man? you said you were staying in tonight.”  
the baseball player feels his lie running up the back of his neck. (don’t say that word)  
“changed my mind.”  
“can I come with you? I got nothing going tonight.”  
the baseball player pauses. (don’t say that word)  
“you don’t want to go where I’m going,” he says at last

later he is pulling open a door and the men inside smile  
and the music swallows him and for a few hours at the bar  
the baseball player  
does not feel so alone

IV.
last game of the ‘77 season with the dodgers  
The Big Blue Wrecking Crew  
they were raking the rock  
no team had ever had 4 players hit 30 home runs  
and dusty baker was trying for his 30th knock  
glenn was on deck when dusty touched ‘em all  
when dusty hit home he raised his hand  
!!!!!
the high five was born
glenn with his emotion
set modern jocularity into motion

V.
1978
glenn said, “as long as I keep hitting they won’t say nothing.”
the spark plug on the field
every one in the locker room didn’t give a shit (don’t say that word)
they wanted to win
more high fives
his best friend
the coach’s son (don’t say that word)
management wanted him out
away
could he be
a ballplayer
masculine (please don’t)
could he be glenn burke

VI.
traded to oakland for an aging slugger on the free agent market
It didn’t make sense
his teammates were shocked.
he was 27
and would never reach his true potential
a hall of famer
we will never know
management and the old coaches wanted him gone
But his WAR
But his OPS
But his high fives
he was done with baseball
or
baseball was done with him

glenn the ballplayer and glenn the man (don’t say that word)
were two people who people could never meet in public

VII.
they called it grids at first
glenn soaked up adoration and recognition
in his small section of san francisco
living on the streets
but a local legend
still dies of the local disease
still dies of the local disease
Glasses

by Fariha Hossain

Ebony rimmed glasses
always clouded my view.
Perched on the bridge of my nose
and snuggled in the niche
behind my ears,
they are the crutches that assist my weary eyes.
They are the transformers
that morph emerald shapes
into towering trees,
and the accentuation of the
delicate hairs on his chin.
It is the clumsy intruder
interrupting our kisses,
hastily removed and placed on bedside tables,
lonely without my reflecting irises.
It is the steam accumulated on thin lenses after a shower
and the question more familiar than my mother’s laugh lines,
‘Where are my glasses?’
I screech,
hands scavenging through every plausible place,
except on my face.
It is the push of my fingers
on the bridge,
the first object my hands brush
in the apricot mornings,
and my spectacled gaze intertwining with his coffee eyes.
Andre
by Erin Jimison
The Urban and the Rural

by Brian J. Sanchez
Green Eyes  by Nyemah Crippen

The Blinding Lights  by Brian J. Sanchez
Fishes in the Pond

by Susmita Pahari
Father's Fish

by Helen Leal
Fox
by Derek Morgan
Nashotonga, Lake, Wisconsin, located in Senowah County, approx. 25 mi. northwest of Milwaukee.

Wildlife: mink frog, trumpeter swan, red-necked grebe, osprey, silver-haired bat, flying squirrel, common loon.

Following route 18 along the southern edge of the lake will lead you to Kate’s General Store, where many local residents pick up fishing gear, or ice cream, or milk in half-gallon glass containers, or rent videos from a collection arranged in rows along a wall on the right-hand side of the store.

(According to Kate, the most popular video rentals in the fall of 1988 were Beverly Hills Cop II, with Eddie Murphy; The Secret of my Success, with Michael J. Fox; and Roxanne, with Steve Martin and Daryl Hannah.)

On quiet nights when the water is still, those on the eastern end of the Nashatonga often hear eerie laughter traveling from some unknown location out towards the middle of the lake. What makes it particularly strange is that the laughter never varies, in tone or duration, and does not appear to be coming from any identifiable source.

A lonely stretch of road heads south from Senowah County, cutting through vast empty squares of farmland. Traveling this way you might see fields of corn, windmills, silos, or an occasional red wooden barn. It was here, about five miles south of the intersection of Route 18 and Highway H, that several witnesses reported seeing something they could not identify standing or kneeling by the side of the road, in the evening hours of June 10 and 11, 1979. It was shaped like a man said one witness, but it was not a man. It had wings, and glowing red eyes, like saucers. After a brief investigation, local authorities determined these folks, while sincere, had most likely misidentified an oversized owl.
The bridge was built for the sure-footed, not the heavy-hearted. It was a steaming morning before the night journey began, when Mr. Htoo bent down on the cold, wet grass and whispered a prayer. He was a member of the jury in his village back in Burma, with a divine personality, and he was respected by his people.

His wife passed away due to tuberculosis, two years after she gave birth to his son. His son, who was sixteen, the only family member he had left, was taken away from him and forced to carry military weapons for the Burmese government. Ever since then, for the past three months, Mr. Htoo had been running, along with the rest of the refugees, and never got to see his son again. Like the rest of the refugees escaping genocide in Burma, he didn’t carry much, other than a set of tweezers, some Band-Aids, and a traditional flute in his dirty Velcro pouch.

An older couple was trying to put down their tent, which was built using two bamboo poles and a rain fly tarp, when a barefooted young man ran to help them. The sun started to set as everyone gathered...
their belongings, which some tied around their waists, but Mr. Htoo was sitting on a rock near the riverbank, staring. On the other side of the bridge (which crossed into Thailand), he could see telephone poles that stood tall, along with skyscrapers and cars racing on a well-constructed street. His son wasn’t with him. He looked beyond a crowd of people with wounded bodies and could see the mountain region covered in Padauk trees, the national tree of Burma, known for its yellow flowers. While the tears streamed down his wrinkled cheeks, he took out his flute and played “In Another Country” (a traditional Korean song). During this time, a pregnant woman with a crying child on her back sat and listened to him, then came running a child with a plastic bag on his head, who squatted down next to Mr. Htoo. The rest just stood beside their woven bamboo baskets, with their youngest kids inside, and looked across the river.

It was midnight when the leader of the group ushered everyone to cross over the bridge quietly. Mr. Htoo still sat on the rock with his flute on his lap as he watched the others skipping down the bridge. When they got to the other side of the bridge, they could hear sweet traditional flute music playing on the other side of the river, connected to them by a single wooden bridge.
At first, he opened his eyes to a coloring book. The book didn’t have pages and it neither ended nor began — it stretched as far as his vision would go, his ocular horizon in monochromatic hues.

He learned color through linguistics. Red was red because he memorized that particular shade to that particular word, like assigning unruly children to selected seats to monitor their activities. Red was the towel hanging in his bathroom, his mother’s nail polish, Thanksgiving dinner plates. Those were his reference points. When he was unsure of the color of something unfamiliar, he would think about those. Red. The texture of cotton beneath his calloused hands, white tag jutting out the corners. Red. He remembered.

Like his mother, he hid his colorblindness. He wore it like an apology, a cartoon that illustrators forgot to complete. When they cooked together, they let their memories rest. Red was nothing and neither was blue or green or yellow or pink. Turmeric was grey tinged with white, coriander was white tinged with grey, and cumin was a mix of the two. Sometimes they omitted colors completely, read labels, instead, combatting color supremacy with their blindness. Other times, they sighed and cooked with eyes clenched shut, noses in pursuit of garam masala, cinnamon, cardamom. They never had to say a word; they shared the same colorless world, the same grey sky. He asked her once, “When you dream, can you see colors?”

She smiled, teeth crooked from years of dental neglect. “Only in nightmares.”

He adjusted to it, memorizing traffic lights and flowers and t-shirts. His mother shared her tactics, too. She’d point to soil in their garden, milky tea in her ladybug mug, the shared freckle on their collarbones, and say, “Remember your father’s eyes.” So he did, all caterpillar brows and thick lashes.

School was problematic. He learned early that like leaders for the lunch line, colors were predetermined. Despite his efforts, the towering trees in his drawings could not be blue or red or purple. Well, they could, but he could still hear the echo of his classmates’ laughter. “His sun is green…” they’d whisper, giggling at the pickle-hued triangle on the corner of his paper, squiggly lines protruding out. From then on, his sun stayed yellow, orange if he was feeling daring, and he made a mental note to himself: yellow, like the daffodils in the park, orange, like the mandarins his mother peeled for him at home.

Soon colors were engrained in his memory like multiplication tables and state capitals. No more guessing games. Like clockwork, he remembered: red, like Mom’s lipstick; it got on her teeth when she laughed. Orange on his tabby cat, mewling at his door for leftover Tandoori chicken. Yellow when he closed his eyes, pineapple upside-down cake in mind. Green cucumbers sliced in moons, blue veins he could trace on his wrists. He avoided indigo and violet. They were bruises on his shins after soccer, fried eggplant on his plate when he broke the Ramadan fast. Too similar, too often they taunted him, jam and jelly menaces. The years bought normalcy and patience, forming a fragile truce with acrylic paints and Roy G. Biv.

Of course, occasionally there was a blunder, a miscalculation. Like mismatched socks resting on quizzical toes. Like promptly assuring his sister that he liked the “grey” shoe on the left better, even though they
were both “grey.” Like hurried essays penned in forgotten orange, much to the chagrin of his teachers. On those days, he would remain silent, tight-lipped, mentally recounting the mistake. Blue, like the comforter in his parents’ room, infused with both his mother’s perfume and his father’s cologne. Blue, like the pale oven mitts in the drawer by the stove. Blue, like his jeans, boot-cut and a size too small. Blue, like the ink of his favorite pen; he still remembered, long after it had emptied. Blue, blue, blue. The colors teased him, their memories like involuntary mantras. He remembered.

To forget, he would press his fingers on his closed eyelids and desperately try to open them. He relished the feeling, restless fluttering underneath his touch, like butterflies on the cusp of escape. He liked the control, his sight a limb he could suppress at will. He never saw color then. Just raw light, his eyes occluding the rest.

Eventually, his mother would find him. She already knew. Sometimes he needed a half-gallon of ice cream perched on his knees. Sometimes he needed chicken noodle soup, warming his hands. Sometimes he just needed a laugh. His mother would tease him. “Are you seeing red?” “Are you green with envy?” He couldn’t contain himself; he grinned at the triviality. Always, he needed her empathy, her steady embrace. “Burgundy, like the scarf your grandmother likes to wear even though it’s tattered and frayed, okay? Chartreuse, like the Mountain Dew you drink too much of.” He remembered.

With adolescence came the added complication of girls, entities completely foreign to him, ones that terrified him even more than color. The first time he saw a pretty girl, he gawked wordlessly at her for almost an hour, engraving the image in his mind. For years afterwards, her champagne hair was his reference point, remembering how it smelled when she brushed past him. Sex was a new delight; without clothes, the human body was simpler, a canvas smeared in a single nude color. In time, skin tones, too, evoked memories for him. Like desert sand skin, blushing nipples knotted from his touch. Like cinnamon-hued legs spread open for him, revealing ebony pubic hair. Like ivory fingers on his shaft while his fingers rendezvoused in her rosy sex. Thinking about them, their femininity displayed in their breasts and their vaginas, their lips and their tongue, their eyes always made him hard. Even harder when he looked at the red Expo marker in class, remembering her lipstick on his dick.

He met her at his college’s cafeteria one cloudless Thursday. While he swiftly swallowed his lunch, she ate hers in dainty bites, pausing to sketch between mouthfuls of Bengali cuisine. Art had never interested him before; perhaps it was the torment from the colors or his own artistic inability, but hers beckoned for his attention. She had resurrected them, he thought, moon-eyed couples kissing in rustic rickshaws, women in their regal saris, street vendors with oily smiles. He marveled at the culture emerging from her colored pencils, puzzled at this usage of color, one that extended beyond physical embellishment. Her artwork didn’t simply exist. It lived, a lifetime in each stroke. Even though he couldn’t see them, he knew, he just knew that the colors on that page were extraordinary. He couldn’t begin to fathom them. They were their own reference points, vermillion like the bindis on a sullen bride’s forehead, medallion yellow like the chaat

continued on next page
gleeful tourists were eating, emerald trees towering in the background. He walked over to her, cheeks throbbing.

She didn’t like being called an artist. After all, she didn’t create art —she mimicked it. When she saw honey-colored mothers tugging on their daughters’ unruly hair, she drew it. Fathers with ashen beards, cigarettes drooping in their mouths. Children with milky smiles withdrawing from their mothers’ breasts. She remembered. And she drew. She had been watching him too, the man with the coffee skin. She was coy, pleased at this attention from a handsome stranger. She wanted to draw him, the way he looked right now, emitting a vibrancy that would be difficult to replicate. She blushed, eyeing the bulge in his jeans.

They kissed fervently, his underbite and her overbite creating the perfect collision. Magenta, like her lip gloss; it stuck to her mouth when it was windy. He grew fond of the variations of her lips, salty with him after making love, coffee-tinged on Monday mornings, chapped when she ran out of cherry Chapstick. Her art was proudly displayed on his refrigerator, a sight that always made her grin. She admired his fascination, enjoyed his curious gaze while mixing watercolors.

She was particular about her colors. He would watch her intently at the art supply store, her fingers caressing each tube of acrylic paint. She’d point, frustrated at the limitations. She needed red, not like cherry tomatoes, but like the light coming off our heater at night. You know? He knew. Red, like Mom’s lipstick or the lacy thong he had ripped the night before, he thought.

He never told her of his colorblindness. When she asked with eager eyes what he thought of the colors she used, the colors she so meticulously mixed, he would nod vigorously. “Ethereal,” he’d say, and mean it. Nothing he had ever seen before or after compared to the hues in her work. He had tried.

It was his fault. He had become confident over the years, quickly associating purple to the bougainvillea in his mother’s garden, green to the Brillo sponges in his dorm room. Drunkenly, he confessed that he found her blue eyes so sexy, that he’d never seen a shade like that before. Silence. Her eyes were caramel hued with flecks of gold; sunsets danced in them. He saw it. What he meant to say was that he didn’t have a word for that yet, that her eyes were the precedent, the standard he would forever hold other, new things to.

“What color are my eyes?” Over the phone, he could hear her earthquake voice. He tried. Green. She hung up. The next day, his phone vibrated with “What color are my anklets?” He remembered their chiming as she climbed up their stairs. Purple. Silence. A few days later: “Do you even care about me?”

He never saw her again. The artwork turned relic on the fridge remained, the only remnant of the human equivalent of sunlight that he had loved, and she had loved back.

Red, like her knitted scarf, strategically covering love bites. Orange Cheetos dust on her fingers that he licked off. Yellow, like the lemons squeezed on her baked tilapia, his favorite. Olive jacket hanging on her shoulders, draped on the back of her chair. Blue, like the bar of soap in her bathroom, its scent tantalizing him. Indigo and violet panties, arousing him instantaneously. He remembered, reference points for the rest of his life.
Janice took the spare key from its hiding spot and unlocked the front door. She stepped inside the house and took a deep breath. The smell of coffee and burgers lingered. She quietly made her way to the kitchen. Kevin slept like a rock, but she didn’t want to take a chance on waking him. He got up every morning for work at precisely 6:15. He needed his rest.

She fixed herself a glass of wine and sat on the couch for a while. After they were married, she would move in and this would be her nightly routine: A glass of wine to unwind and snuggling with Kevin.

She climbed the stairs to his bedroom. He was sound asleep. She sat in a chair near the bed, like she did almost every night, listening to the little whistling sound his nose made when he breathed. She smiled. This was her favorite time of night. It was so peaceful, just the two of them. God, she loved that man.

She had spent the day picking out a wedding dress. She wanted to show it to him. She hoped he thought it was as beautiful as she did. She chuckled to herself. How could he not?

He stirred in the bed. She looked at her watch: 12:18, right on schedule. Kevin got up to use the restroom around this time every night. She sat up straight in the chair and ran her hands across the dress to smooth out the lace.

Kevin opened his eyes. Janice was sitting in the chair smiling at him. He sat up in the bed and rubbed his eyes. She stood up and twirled around in the dress. “I hope you like it,” she said.

He stared for a moment, speechless, then asked, “Who are you?”
D___ and I meet on an afternoon in late September. It’s the beginning of our freshman year at Shadow Hills High. Around three o’clock, after school gets out, people gather in front of the stone staircase leading up to the main entrance, and it is here that I notice him for the first time: he’s animated, loud, with dramatic gestures, talking to someone I don’t know. He’s tall, thin, wearing a brightly colored Polo shirt tucked into expensive-looking jeans. Something seems to draw me to him; he’s zany, and zany is how I’m feeling…

I walk up and interrupt their conversation with a somewhat explicit quotation from Kurt Vonnegut’s *Breakfast of Champions*. This, anyway, is how we will always remember it.

D___ lives with his mom in a red-brick apartment building on East Rock Springs. There’s a grey cat, hardwood floors, and Persian rugs in the living room. His mom is intense. She works in hair, makeup and lighting; she knows rock musicians. In the bathroom there’s a framed photograph of Keith Haring wearing only black-and-white body paint. In his bedroom D___ has a turntable and a stereo system and we lie on the double bed that takes up most of the space in the room and listen to side one of U2’s *The Joshua Tree*. Out in the living room we listen to Nirvana’s *Nevermind*. D___’s mom sits close enough to me to make me uncomfortable and touches my hair. *I like your hair,* she says, *but it looks like you’re washing it too frequently.*

One night that fall there’s a party at Ben H___’s house and D___ and I go. Jessica and Joan and Christina are there. Tom Petty is on the stereo. People are standing in a circle, drinking soda from plastic cups. D___ is talking and then he’s talking about me, something that makes people laugh. I give him an awkward shove and his cup bounces against his chest, spilling some of the soda onto his shirt. *Jesus fucking Christ Nathan you [ *%^&%^&* ]!* He picks up one of the half-full two-liter bottles of soda and walks over to me and empties it over my head. I move through the room and then I’m in the yard. I’m by myself for a few minutes, listening to the indistinct sound of voices from the party inside. Then D___ comes out.

His mom picks us up. She drops us off at the apartment and then leaves for a few hours. I wash the soda out of my hair and we put on *Spinal Tap*.

Every year, on a night towards end of
January, each grade presents an original skit, with costumes and musical numbers, in front of an audience of hundreds of people in the main auditorium. D___ wins a leading role in our freshman class production, dressing up as Hobbes from Calvin and Hobbes. I end up accompanying C___ when she sings “Sooner or Later” from the film Dick Tracy.

The yearbooks arrive just before the end of the school year. They’re passed out during homeroom and I sit at my desk and look through my copy. Towards the front there’s a large color photograph of D___ holding a French horn — it must be Christina’s French horn — and in it he’s lit up by a halo of afternoon sun. There’s a quote in the corner about Shadow Hills being a place for eccentrics and philosophers.

A few pages later there’s a two-page collection of black-and-white photos with a quote from M___ in one corner: High school is like hell without the elevator music. One of the photographs is of me. It takes a while to sink in. Someone must’ve taken it while I was completely unaware. In the photograph I am picking my nose. Emily signs my yearbook and adds a smiley face. I like that photo, she says. It brings out your true identity. Eventually I find out that a senior named Ethan C___ took the picture. I speak to him once about it and he laughs. You were there, he says, just digging away. I had to do it.

On an afternoon in late July, D___ and I smoke pot in the six-story parking deck next to the University Gym and then we sneak in, climbing over the chain link fence beside the quarter-mile track on the lower right side of the building.

In the bathroom adjoining the faculty locker room on the second floor, D___ grabs me, hard, and forces me up towards the mirror above the sink and points to the skin on my neck.

See? That’s what skin is supposed to look like. I look, and the skin on my neck is pale and unblemished. Then he points to the side of my face. There, he says, look at that. I look at my face, in the harsh, florescent light, only a few inches from the mirror, and it’s bright red, my skin a hideous, rough texture, the acne an inflamed purple mountain range running along the sides of my face.

I struggle from his grasp and we begin to fight. D___ picks up a large plastic trash can and brings it down on top of my head. I end up on the ground in the corner of the room. Adios, D___ says, and walks out. Eventually I pick myself up and begin to wander through the gym, looking for him.
Dynein Disco  

by Dedra Morris
To My January Daydream

by Fariha Hossain

My mother used to whisper my father’s dreams into my palms at night
So I’d always have a piece of him to hold when her hands weren’t enough.
Home was her perfume, the lingering scent of cilantro clinging to her clothes,
Her sleepy embrace after every nightmare, and her regal saris coiled around her like
The rings on a tree trunk.
I grew in her shade, arms outstretched like pillars of the only church I’d ever bow to;
She breathed religion into the unh holiest parts of myself,
looked at scarred wrists through rosary beads,
“Alhamdulillah,” to every “A” on my report card.

When my friends began falling in love with boys with clammy palms and breath stained
with cigarettes,
I was in love with home cooked meals, lentils tinged with lemon, decadent chicken woven
through jasmine rice,
Mom’s caramel hands reaching up to my mouth, finger feeding me like our culture lovingly
taught us.
I would watch her expertly knead bits of rice into the paragon of edible spheres, so each
morsel that climbed into my mouth would be perfectly sized;
I never knew where she learned it until my grandfather’s coarse hands delivered mangos and
strawberries into my mouth like the postcards he would sign with his crooked handwriting.
I couldn’t help it.
I was taken with the way my mother loved,
How her light touch on my back at night lulled me to sleep, how her saccharine voice led a
conversation like a cane tactfully guided a blind man.
I think I was more than a little betrayed when she fell in love.
Her eyes used to twinkle when she saw me; now they twinkle to his voice on the phone and I was left with a starless sky,
Which would’ve been okay if I wasn’t so keen on finding constellations when she blinked.
I would watch her mouth when she spoke to him.
The way she said his name sounded like a fanfare;
She enunciated every syllable, slowly, in measured breaths, like she enjoyed the way it tasted inside of her mouth.
I was green with envy.
I found fault in the stubble on his chin, and scoffed at the laugh lines on his cheeks and called them wrinkles,
But soon, even I had to admit that the way he spoke filled the darkest nights with soft candlelight.

When they married, instead of losing my first love, I gained my second.
I fell in love with his stories, the way his laugh echoed through our house,
And the way he adored my mother,
Never failing to address her as his diamond, or his life.
I fell in love with the respect he had for my father,
The way our house bore the same name as the one our forgotten family shared.
And mostly,
I fell in love with my mother again and again,
How she gave me my life inside of her womb, midst amniotic fluid and unconditional love,
And how she scavenged through the lost and found to give me another family
When she couldn’t give me my Daddy back.
The Cleansing

by Unity Renee

It’s three o’clock in the morning. I am wide awake waiting.


Ready to pray the demons away that stole your baby girl.

As the night falls into morning,

I hear you push open my door.

You’re at it again. And here I am.

Clinging to my sheets as I pretend to be asleep,

Although sleep hasn’t existed for 3 days.

It went away and left behind nightly rituals

With the hopes of erasing who I truly am.

My body shakes as you drench my covers

With water you think is holy,

Praying God cleans my soul as if it were touched by dirty hands.

I found myself and have never felt purer.

But according to you, I’m in need of cleansing.

According to you, I’m not supposed to love her.
Floating Petals

by JeRee Sellers

It’s like stepping into a pool of lava without getting burned.
Steamy bubbles crash, jets trouble the water.
Oh, the sensation of inhaling lavender and mint.
Petals float in circles like a floral whirlwind.

Black soap gets lost, it drowns, then resurfaces repeatedly.
   The loofah dances on the water to the rhythm of the vibration.
   There is movement all around, but I am still.
   I willingly relinquish my ability to move.

I don’t attempt to think or speak;
I welcome the silence
I forget everything that mattered minutes before,
seconds before this bliss.

I manage to slide underneath a little deeper,
   like a snake slithering into a river.
   Piece by piece, stress and pain peel away from my flesh –
   like dried rose petals fall when
   they no longer aide the flower’s healthy bloom.

For a moment,
nothing else exists.
No one else exists,
just this peace.
to carry military weapons for the 
was taken away from him and forced 
the only family member he had left, 
to his son. His son, who was sixteen, 
she gave birth 
two years after 
tuberculosis, 
away due to 
His wife passed 
and he was respected by his people. 
in Burma, with a divine personality, 
member of the jury in his village back 
and whispered a prayer. He was a 
bent down on the cold, wet grass 
night journey began, when Mr. Htoo 
was a steaming morning before the 
footed, not the heavy-hearted. It 
Padauk Tree 
The bridge was built for the sure- 
by Eh Gay Moo 
“ …the bridge was built 
for the sure footed, 
”Realization of the Young Pope,” 
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Orange Rush

by Derek Morgan