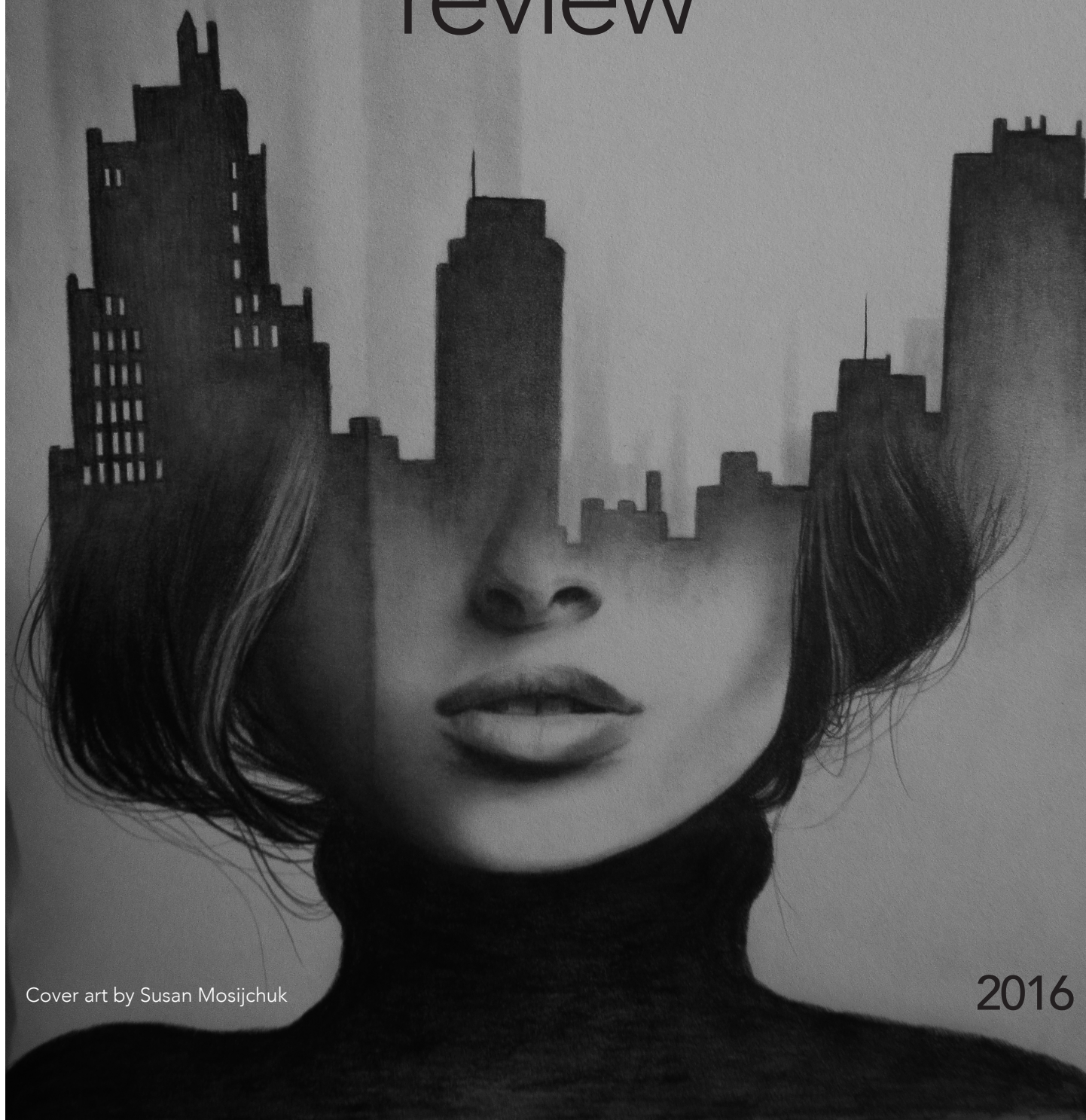


A creative publication of Springfield Technical Community College

Brick House

review



Cover art by Susan Mosijchuk

2016

*The 2016 edition of the Brick House Review is dedicated to Professor Gwendolyn White,
whose patience, professionalism, and unwavering support will be dearly missed.
We love you.*

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Photograph by Michael Guilmette

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Graduate Certificate

Brian Krawiec

Some news to share that is meant to be,
A future event that will happen to me.
Before this happens, must still educate,
As I prepare for the day to soon graduate.

Having completed the necessary credits I need,
For I now proclaim with truth indeed.
An opportunity to widely open the door,
A chance to continue to learn some more.

Many semesters along with the years,
Receiving accolades, and many cheers.
Guests, and friends seeing things fit,
While watching me gain a certificate.

I will return afterward gaining a degree,
Being told of being a part of STCC.
Until now other than having practiced to deceive,
A grad certificate is within to achieve.
As said at the outset, is plain to see,
This news I share will happen to me.



Photograph by:
Michael Guilmette

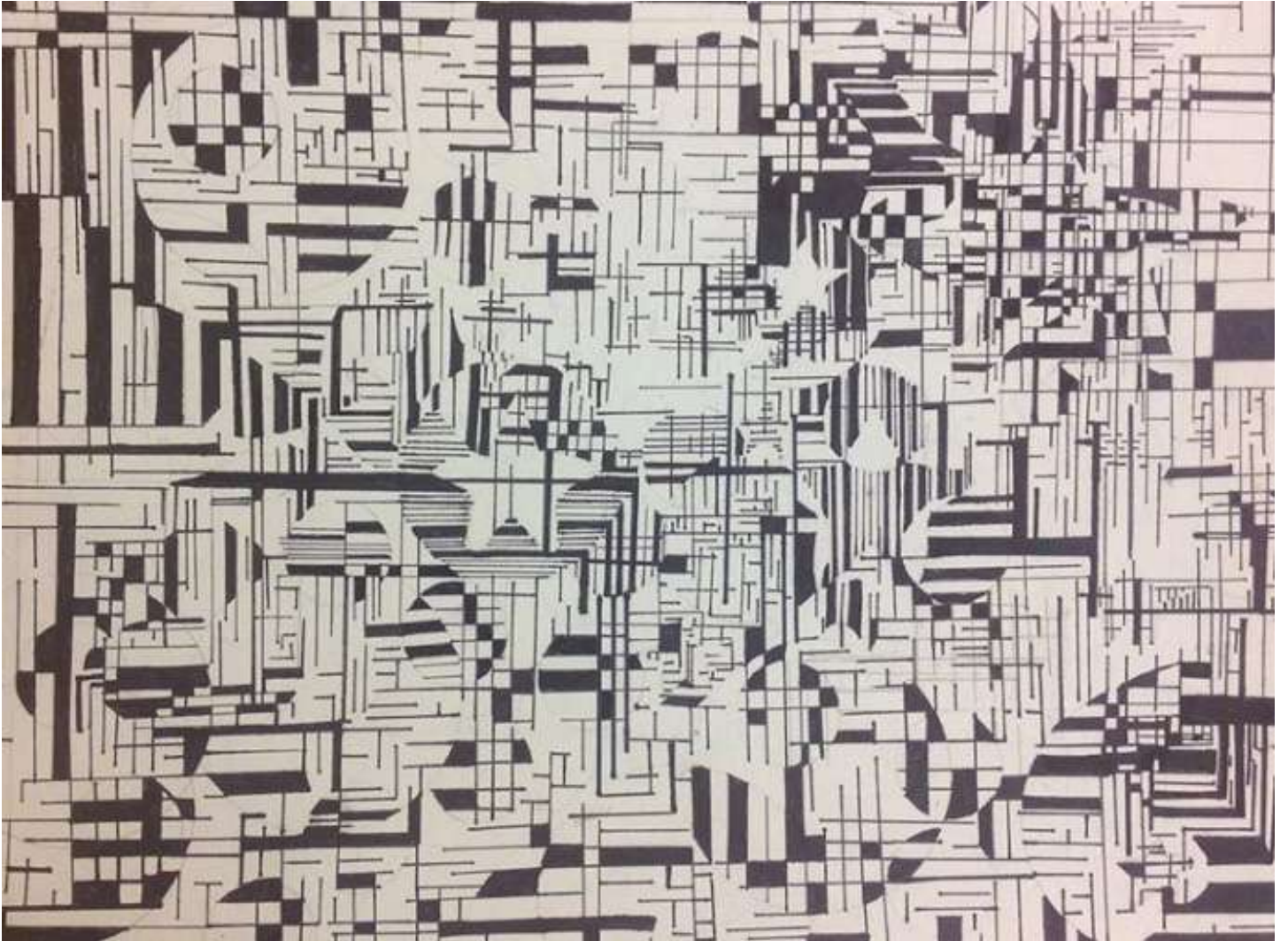
My Country Tis

Rick Noble

My country tis of thee, sweet land of poverty.
For thee, I weep. Land where my fathers were killed.
Land of the white pride. From every foreclosure sign.
Let revolution ring.



Palace in Belgium, in permanent marker
Edgar Vaskanyan



Star
Melissa Amaro

A House Like Mine

Breyonna Jones

He woke still able to feel the words on his lips but he could not recall what was said. He had been sleep talking again. Tracing the roof of his mouth with a dry tongue he tried to find the tail end of whatever thought that had just been lost by the violent jolt that pulled him out of his slumber. He had been dreaming again. The same dream, he knew. Sitting at a glass table outside under a swelling blue-violet sky he waited for Nilda. Beautiful Nilda. She was late as usual so he passed time rearranging the Tulip assortment in the middle of the table. The sun shone brightly, so brilliantly, almost blindingly that he could not see anything but the rainbow beams that were casted against the table top as the light cut through the crystal vase that held the flowers. He had to squint in order to see Nilda approach her seat. His breaths were shortened to half of what they normally were. Words lodged themselves against the sides of his throat. Across the table sat Nilda in her sleeveless dress of cotton that lay softly against her skin. The sunlight trickled down from between separated clouds, lightly tracing the outline of her body, lacing itself around strands of hair.

"Jordan," she breathed, both in a greeting and in a willingness to say his name aloud.

It had been a cordial meeting but Jordan could not stop staring. His muscles fought against every signal his brain sent. He was frozen in his seat. Even a simple "yes" as a reply was impossible. His mouth refused to open. Nilda did not seem to notice, reaching into her purse to produce a crumbled ball of paper. With her long fingers adorned with silver rings and painted nails she soothed the wrinkles away to reveal an address scrawled across the paper in red lipstick.

194 East Munro Place

He knew the neighborhood by reputation alone and silently wished she was moving any place else. The dream always went this way. Nilda with a sly smile wrapped around her teeth lit a cigarette and pointed to the paper with the end of her lighter.

Being so proud of herself she said, "This is my new place."

A new kind of joy was bubbling just under the surface and she could hardly sit still in her seat. A stiff wind blew Nilda's hair free from her ponytail, letting the faint scent of her lavender shampoo envelope his senses and suddenly he had to fight the urge to pull her to his chest. She spit the burned out cigarette butt to the ground. She spoke softly, her words barely staying adrift on the breeze. So suddenly she was uncertain.

"It could be your place too, Jordan."

The way in which she choked on his name made it clear that she knew he would decline, yet again. Once after college they had tried to live together and it had been the most beautiful and toxic arrangement they had ever made. No, Nilda would have to move in alone or at least without Jordan. The scene around them seemed to be

morphing into something else, which only meant the dream was molding itself into a nightmare and would soon be over. Jordan still could not speak but he had so much to say to Nilda before she disappeared again. But his throat closed tighter and his tongue weighed thousands of pounds resting at the bottom of his mouth. The sky over head turned more black than blue but Nilda still smiled. It looked a bit twisted and somehow did not fit her face anymore.

Nilda's arms shot across the table, encasing Jordan's clammy hands in her too warm ones.

"Or you could just stay over some of the time. You know that once I've got you there you won't want to leave."

As Nilda's hair blew wild all around Jordan could not tell what he wanted to do more. Pull her close, tucking her head under his chin or run, run far away. It had started to rain in the dream making all the colors bleed and pool together wherever the fat droplets touched Nilda's body. She was melting in front of his eyes. Her grip on him never wavered as her nails sunk further into the flesh on the backs of his hands. She pulled him closer, her loose red mouth whispered her final words close, so close to his face.

"Trust me Jordan; you have never seen a house like mine."

And she was gone.

Whatever happened to Nilda?

It was a favorite question for people to ask as Jordan tried to move along with his life. Along, not on. There would be no moving on from Nilda. Not entirely anyway and he knew that because there had been a part of him deep down that had been cold ever since that night.

In the early morning light when the world was still quiet Jordan shook off the last remnants of his dream encounter. He sat at the edge of his bed, letting the bottoms of his feet connect with the icy wood floor to convince himself that he still was grounded. Earth-bound. No one had to ask about Nilda, they chose to. They chose to bring her up every chance they got to see if his reaction would change. It never did. He supposed they all wanted to know if he felt some kind of remorse for hurting her, or wanted to know if his was being eaten from the inside out by the acidic burn of his own guilt. And of course he hated the feeling of knowing he could no longer see Nilda, but he would never let anyone else know that. Only when he was alone would Jordan allow himself the solace to ask, to wonder, and to cry about what could have been different.

He did not like to think about it but Jordan felt so responsible. There had been no point to their fight but there was so much spite laced into their words that they both knew it was over. After their relationship had turned collapsed in on itself it was Nilda who moved out of their apartment. She did so in a huff while bitterly throwing plates and slamming doors and Jordan was just happy to see her go. He could not help but smile to himself as he watched her scurry back and forth collecting her things, swearing at him the whole time. Soon he would have silence. Silence took up much more space than Jordan could have ever anticipated and when beautiful Nilda left she not only took her noise but her light. A source of life Jordan had become accustomed to, it had

been with him for so long, and silently filling him to the brim with a sweetness he could not produce on his own.

After the door closed behind Nilda the days ticked by at an aching slow pace. Slowly, Jordan noticed how dust began to settle on the things she forgot to grab on her way out of the apartment. Things he knew she would not be back for but things he could not bring himself to touch. Even sun's light seemed to bring less and less warmth as the days morphed their way into years.

It would not be until four years and many sleepless nights later that Jordan and Nilda would meet again at a bar. The room was dimly lit and it was still legal to smoke in buildings so Jordan at twenty-four had tried to find a table closest to an open window. With whiskey in hand he let his eyes move across the faces of the bars patrons. Most were older men with overgrown mustaches and the occasional teenager trying to pass for an adult. In his own world Jordan did not notice the woman approach him until she placed two glasses on the table. His gaze moved up and in a mere moment it felt as though all his ribs had vanished and his heart was in danger of beating out of his chest. It was the same rose mouthed Nilda, who had not seemed to age a bit. She did not wait for him to invite her to sit down, she pulled out a chair and for a moment the noises and people of the bar were nothing but blank space. They sat, face to face both afraid to move for fear of losing the others attention.

"Nilda," Jordan whispered.

Her name formed so smoothly around his voice that he never wanted to stop saying it.

"Nil-," her finger pressed softly against his lips stopped him. She smiled and they sat for a while, talking around the ever present feeling of sorrow that presented itself to them as a reminder of all they had said and done wrong to each other. When the bar was moments from closing Nilda reached into her purse and presented Jordan with a crumpled piece of paper. She smoothed the creases out to reveal an address in red ink.

"This is my new place," she said softly.

The ache in his chest had been soothed just by seeing her. The years had been so good to Nilda and Jordan could have stayed at their tiny table forever. Nilda looked unsure and Jordan could tell he was not alone. She still loved him and everything turned bright. He had to keep from shaking as she took his hands into her own.

"It could be your place too, Jordan."

The corner of her mouth turned up into a hopeful smile but it withered as she saw lines of worry streak Jordan's forehead. Even now, it was nothing but a hopeless dream. They were at their best when they were apart and nothing they could ever build together would be solid enough to sustain them both. Nilda gave all of her warmth to the final squeeze she gave his fingers as they realized nothing good could come from them.

Rubbing away the tears before they could form she laughed so he laughed too.

"Well," Nilda murmured while slinging her bag on one shoulder, "the least you could do is come by once in a while."

Jordan rose from the table as soon as he was sure his legs would not betray him. He opened his arms to her and she wrapped her arms around his waist tightly trying to commit the feeling to memory. He kissed the top of her head and promised to visit. He offered to walk her home but she refused with a small smile. The lights in the bar were going out and her shape started to fade the closer she got the door.

"Trust me Jordan," she said before stepping out, "You've never seen a house like mine."

The pride in her voice made it clear to Jordan that she was going to be more than okay. She had found a place to call her own where anything was possible. Before he could respond she drifted out into the night with the door shutting behind her. Something about the scene felt different from the last time he had watched her walk away.

As the bar cleared out Jordan stepped into the winter air feeling warmer than should have been possible. He was light on his feet, smile at people on the street all because Nilda loved him. And he loved her. No, they would never be together again but he would no longer have to face to coming days without the possibility of her. As he watched a couple cross the street holding hands he knew that he had to tell Nilda. The mere thought of having her back in his life was enough to make his heart beat differently. Like it was not just pumping to keep him alive but so he could be alive another day to see her. He felt a mass in his pocket and pulled out the paper Nilda had taken out at the table.

194 East Munro Place

He knew the neighborhood it was just a few blocks away from the bar. The thought made his pulse sing and his feet move more quickly and suddenly he was two streets away then one then he saw the crowd of people. A small crowd, some appeared to be on their phones and there is a specific kind of panic that sets in right before you realize something horrible has happened. With Jordan his mind had not fully grasped the idea that it was Nilda in the center of those people. No, because Nilda had left the bar only moments before he had, he was practically right behind her. However his chest tightened, his stomach threatened to turn over, and his knees began to buckle even before he pushed his way through the people and saw Nilda. Her body turned on its side and for a moment he convinced himself she was still breathing, until it became an impossibility from the way her open eyes stared at nothing. A man, possibly Nilda's neighbor told him the police were on their way but Jordan barely heard him. He fell to his knees next to Nilda's head of black curls. All around more people came out of their houses to see what was happening. The December winds blew strong and Jordan wanted to give Nilda his jacket because she wasn't wearing one and her purse was missing. Frantically, Jordan brushed stray hair away from her face, and then brought her head to rest on his knees. The man neighbor told him to stay calm and something about not moving the body. The body? Nilda was not a body. As far as staying calm, how do you stay calm as chunks of snow coat together on the already frozen face of someone you love? Sounds of sirens coming up the street were wasted on Jordan, so were the neighbor's attempts to move him away

from Nilda who could no longer feel anything. How do you love someone so much and keep yourself from going crazy once they are gone? How do you keep from trying to shake them awake again? How is it possible to not hold them to your chest, feel for a heartbeat, and whisper, "You can breathe air that I don't need."

After rubbing away any remaining traces of his dream Jordan made the walk from his apartment to the bus stop in front of 194 East Munro Place. The morning was flushed with the gleam of early spring. As he settled into his spot on the bench Jordan relished in the fact that no one else caught the bus at this exact time when he did because that thought made it easier to listen to the wind blow and remember. He timed it perfectly every morning, waiting until he saw see the top of the bus coming over the hill to let himself bring forth the Nilda of his memories, the Nilda with life in her cheeks and warmth in her embrace. She sat so close that their thighs touched. She glanced at Jordan, waiting for him to ask to finally come back to her place. He only looked upon her face, smiling with his lips dipped in melancholy. The Nilda of memory caught his face between the palms of her hands, keeping them facing eye to eye.

"Jordan, you still haven't seen the inside of my house," she hummed softly

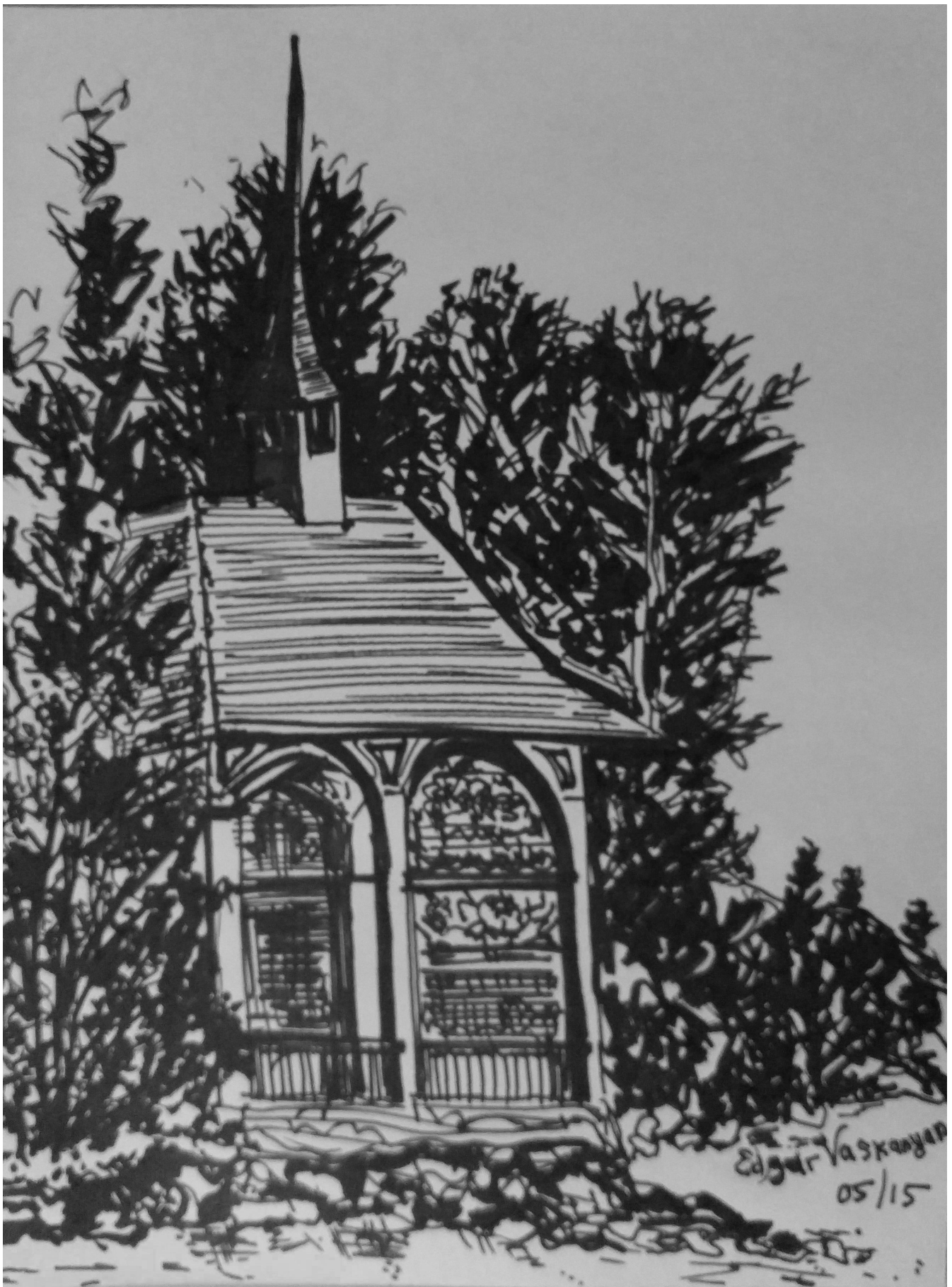
The bus wheels screamed to a stop in front of Jordan and the Nilda only he could see. She kissed his cheeks before shooing him away. With temporary warmth living behind his ribs Jordan boarded the bus, looking over his shoulder to the bench. Like in his dream she was beginning to wash away even though it was not raining.

"I told," she exclaimed with her loose red mouth twisting into a smile too big for her face.

"I told you, you've never seen a house like mine."

As the bus pulled away from the curb Jordan turned to look out the window at a barely there Nilda, using the back of his hand to clear his tear rimmed eyes, Jordan smiled.

"I certainly haven't Beautiful Nilda."



Chapel, in permanant marker
Edgar Vaskanyan

Residents of the Shadows of Misery

Dionys F. Cabriotti

We write about it,
we speak about it
We blog about it,
we brag about it.

We learn about it,
we blench about it.
We hide about it,
we live about it.

Meanwhile,
it lurks and grows
unwanted, unsolicited,
around Them.



Photograph by:
Melissa Oyola

The Art of Monster Making

Breyonna Jones

We make monsters
As hard as that may be to believe
We make the dilemmas and strife that fills our everyday lives
It's plain to see even to the untrained eye
No, we are not born this way
Entering this life, we do so with pristine outlooks
Between the backhand compliments
And forcible namesakes
We make them into mirror images of our worst selves
Placing pills and nonsense under our tongues
Hiding from the shadows and undesirables
Blocking ears from the whispers
When the world is shouting so loud that the edges become frayed
Trying so hard to escape the grips of reality
Only to find broken dreams at the bottom of a bottle
With numbing and hazy rims
From the skeletons in our closets that eventually become our friends
When the boogeyman is our confidant and his claws the only relief
Every nervosa is justified
We make monsters
It is not hard to believe
Reflections change when people claim to know what's best for you



Flower
Melissa Amaro

Light and Dark

Jason Roy

She is the bright rays when she shows the day.

Her illumination makes the world wake up eagerly.

She leaves powerful leaders speechless, not knowing what to say.

Her light shining on me makes me hold on passionately.

Someone so bright, how could she possibly have a darkest night?

Shade everywhere she walks, leaving her mist where she goes.

I must ride through this troubling plight.

Her shadowy appearance I'm aghast with my woes.

Balance the two sides of her beauty.

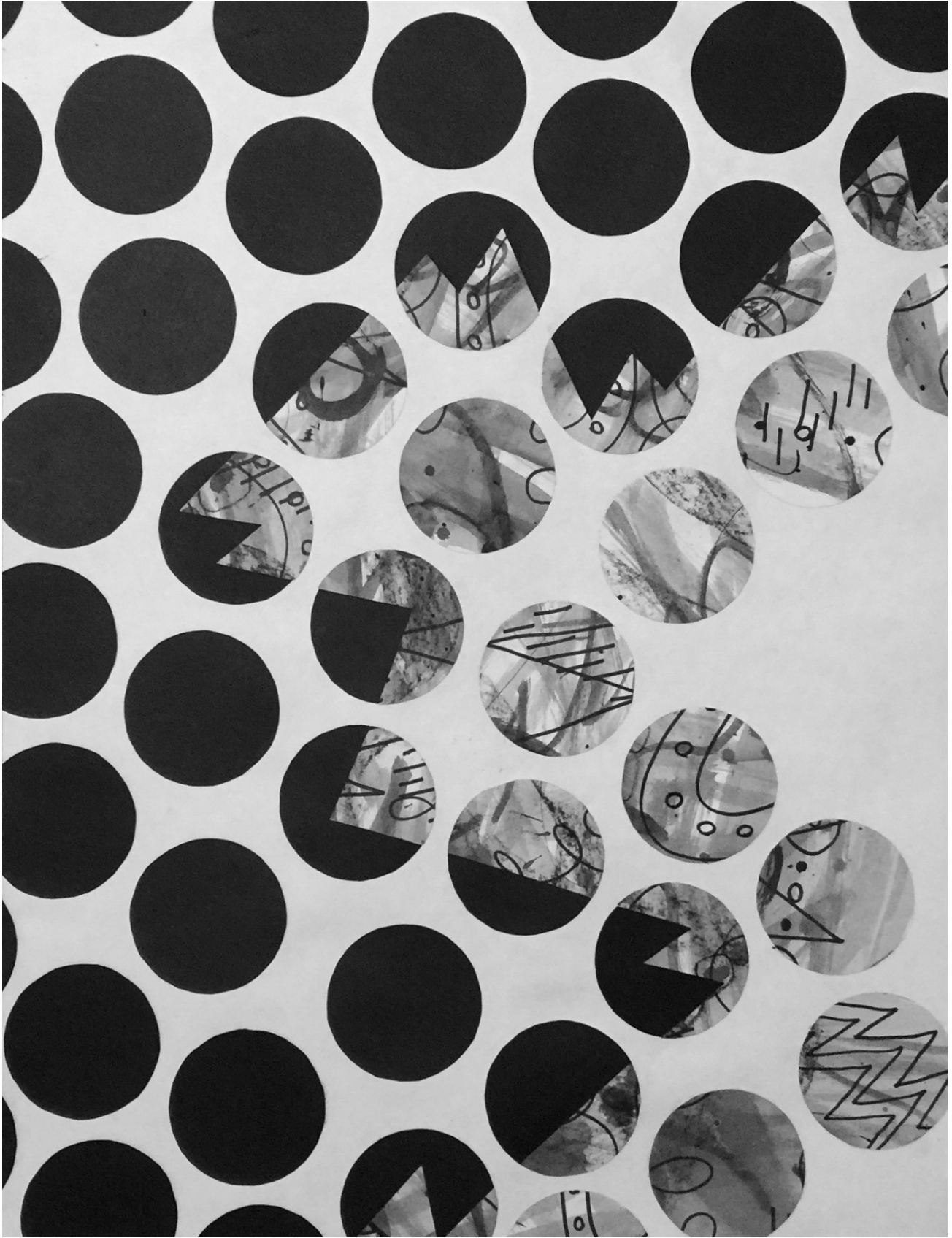
The abundance of her starlight

The darkness is my duty.

I'm choosing now to be her valiant knight.

With the sun comes shade

I love her light and darkness, may they never fade.



Collage by:
Michael Spear

Quite a Metaphor for Life and Death

Gerald Moise

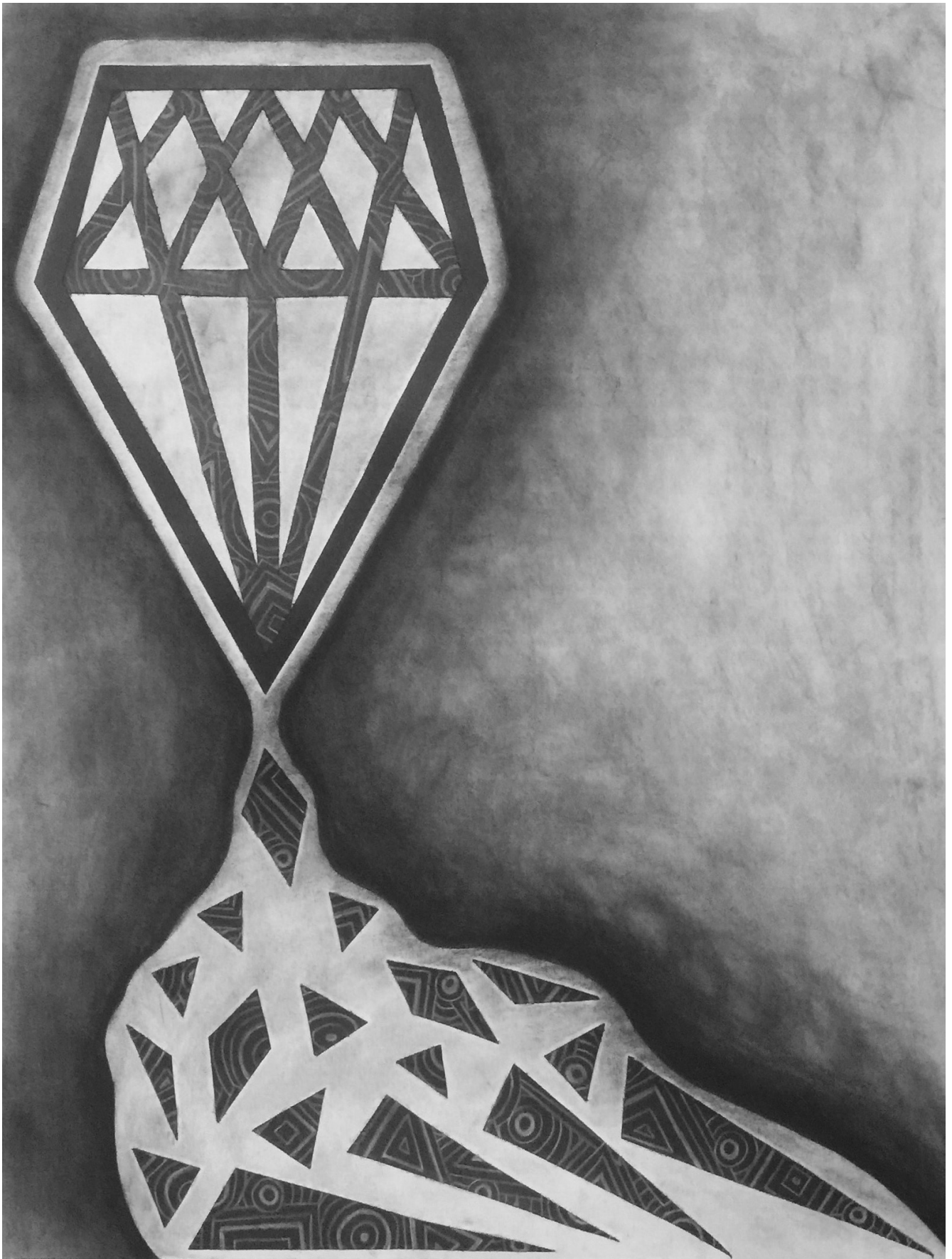
Every time autumn's frigidness wears away the leaves grips and cause them to fall.
Summer's once green life withers away to return to mother earth.

Like every mother she knows when the time has come,
Whether it's a bird pushed from the nest,
or an infant child's first breath,
maternal instinct mixed with offspring love, together knows best.

The real test is when winter's bitter cold desires the sun,
lands are frozen, inhabitants run,
birds soar towards the south,
the worst's yet to come.

Continual Cycle of seasons of change
Constantly challenges the strong, the willing, and brave.

I know when MY spring blossomed a life that I can call mine,
summer followed and seemed endless forever alive.
Deep inside your mind a day can last forever,
fall slowly creeps by, while we all spend winter together.



Collage by:
Michael Spear

The Final Hymns of the Angel Above

Samuel Fortilus

"My, my" Is all I can say
As I'm above the crimes I see done.
I've no care for what any thinks
Now that a "One-Winged Angel" is what I've become.

I left from the graces I've known
but not down to your level.
I simply stand above
and watch the sins in which you revel.

I've heard your cries in pain
and flew lower with support,
But this was only at Night,
since the Day lacks remorse.

Many cry for help
Asking for guidance and loving our trust,
Only to turn their backs and continue
As if there was no problem they've complained to us.

My blade of compassion and love
Once shining brightly is now filth with rust
I once ran forward, first to battle
The Demons of Pain and Lust

The Beasts of Jealousy,
I've battled with swift assurance
To keep fresh in your mind
That my loving help was always constant.

Other Angels grinned and mocked
Lecturing me to be wise,
But foolish in my own heart,
I noted their advice "Ill-Advised".

I was foolish indeed,
Absorbing the pain you've supported
Hoping that in some weird, kind way

That I'd be rewarded.

But I now see your ways,
Leaving me dumbstruck, depressed.
Nothing you can do now
Can leave me impressed.

Used like an object,
You've tossed and abused my heart.
I should've left you to suffer
Right from the start.

But it's me who hurts now,
Slicing my own left wing.
None of it for you,
but for the lesson in its sting.

I'm quite finished being a help,
the one none will respect.
Now, dare to call upon me
when you're feeling a wreck.

I know you as Forsaken,
Betraying my joy.
Using my open mind and heart
like a child using a toy.

No more will I do there
to help you rise from your depths,
Now I've grown as dark and cold
As the Angel of Death.

You'll cry your eyes out,
looking for a place for your pain to be stowed.
Standing on my doorstep, sniffing
As I laugh loudly and whisper
"No."

Our ears have grown sore
Of the problems you've to tell.
So, here's our last note,
Wishing you luck in Hell.

But maybe in our absence,
You may really prevail.
Standing victoriously over your problems
That would then be old tales.

But it seems like by that time,
Our love will be gone, stale.
I hope you can conquer,
But we know that you'll fail.

We, the comforters,
are tired of this jest
So please, stop talking
and give us a rest.

You can choose to live differently,
Stop giving into desires.
Or ignore our good truths
And continue to hurt in the fires.

Either way, as of this moment,
It's no longer our concern,
But it's high-time you learned
what it's like to burn.



Painting by:
Michelle Valentin

(21) Dandelions

Madison Fischetto

Five. She is fascinated with everything. She makes crazy poses and her silhouette imitates her on the burning pavement.

Seven. The boy downstairs calls her ugly. Her knuckles bruise from where they connect with his nose. Her mother puts band aids on the wounds

Ten. They don't like her hair, her eyes, the way she laughs. They pick her apart until she stands bare boned. They cut her roots and she pulls at her skin as if it's not her own.

Thirteen. She walks. Left foot right foot, hands stuffed into jean pockets that touch lint and gum wrappers. She buries herself in size too big sweaters and avoid compliments.

Fifteen. She tugs at the sleeves of hoodies during the summer. Once malicious smiles turn upside down in concern. She spends the days in the dark and wears too many bracelets.

Sixteen. Her mother plants seeds in her palms. They sprout roots in her veins and grow to her core.

Seventeen. She yells until her voice grows hoarse; until flowers bloom in the empty cracks between her ribs.

Eighteen. It has rained for eight years. She brings an umbrella when she goes outside.

Twenty-One. She picks flowers and presses them in her favorite books. She blows the seeds off of dandelions and laughs.



The Elephant and the Fox
Brielle Savoie



Photograph by:
Michael Guilmette

I Finally Realized

Sarah Abdul Baki

Today I looked at the mirror and didn't like me.
I looked at myself and thought man I am ugly.
I looked at the magazine next to me full of girls I'll never look like.
The image society had printed in our minds
Embrace your curves they say
Having a stomach is horrible
How to lose 20 pounds in 10 days
Wear short skirts
Show more skin
Sorry to say
I don't want to
I want to be me
I want to be modest
I want to be free and recognize me not the image society wants me to be
I looked back at the mirror and felt like it spoke to me
They don't know who I am and what I want to be
I finally realized that I liked me
All I want is to be able to love myself for who I am
The person I worked so hard on creating
A person that went through the ups and downs.
There is no one in the world who will love me as much as myself
I don't care what people think
I want to look pretty for myself
I wear makeup for me
I Crumbled up the magazine and threw it away
And whispered these girls will never be me.

Different

Christian Colon

I don't feel any different. I wake up every day, go downstairs, eat breakfast with my parents, then shower. Just like anybody else. Isn't that what most people do? I mean sure, most kids have moved out already, but some people my age still live with their parents. Even, my best bud, still does and no one says anything about him.

Sure, my mom gives me a little help putting my clothes on, big fucking whoop. I do most of the work myself. That doesn't mean I'm any less than you are. Sure, I don't cook for myself. But that's not entirely by choice. My hands shake a little bit and the heat makes me nervous. Shame on me for asking for help.

I think just like you. I talk just as good. Maybe I slur a little, but I still get my point across.

I have a little trouble learning, too. Stuff comes to me a little slower. I ask for a little extra help. So do other people. I just take a little longer. So sue me. But I catch up eventually. Even if I had to take two extra years of school, I still graduated. You have no idea how proud I was. My friends all clapped for me and my parents were taking pictures.

So why didn't they ever tell me? Were they even really my friends? Or was I just taking their pity without even realizing it?

"Don't worry, Mikey. I understand it's harder for you. "

I could see the shock in her face when she said it.

"What do you mean 'it's harder for me'?"

I didn't get it at first. I could tell she didn't want to answer. She felt so bad and I thought she deserved to when she finished her sentence reluctantly.

"Y-, you know, because..." There's no way she could've known I didn't know. "because of your disability."

It was like a ton of bricks coupled with the world itself hit me. "My di-, my what?"

"Your disability. You know."

Suddenly the reason she was hired to tutor me made sense. I thought my parents were just preparing me for college classes that I wanted to take so bad.

"What do you mean, 'my disability'?"

She had no idea what to say. We sat there for what seemed like ages. Eventually I just stood up and went downstairs. My parents were on the couch.

"Am I retarded?" I couldn't think of anything else to say. I was still in shock.

"Mikey," My dad spoke. "What are you talking about?" He sit up quickly. My mom's jaw just dropped.

"A-, a-," I stuttered when I got nervous. I had always thought it just to be a nervous habit. I could think clear enough, but speaking was a different mission in itself. "a-, am I re- retarded? Answ- swer me."

"Mikey, sweetie, no." My mom stood up and tried to hug me but I pushed her away. "You're just like all the other kids."

"I- I-" I tapped my head to try and get the words out quicker. "I, I'm twenty five, Mom. I'm not a ki- kid."

"Sweetie," She touched my arm and I slapped her hand away.

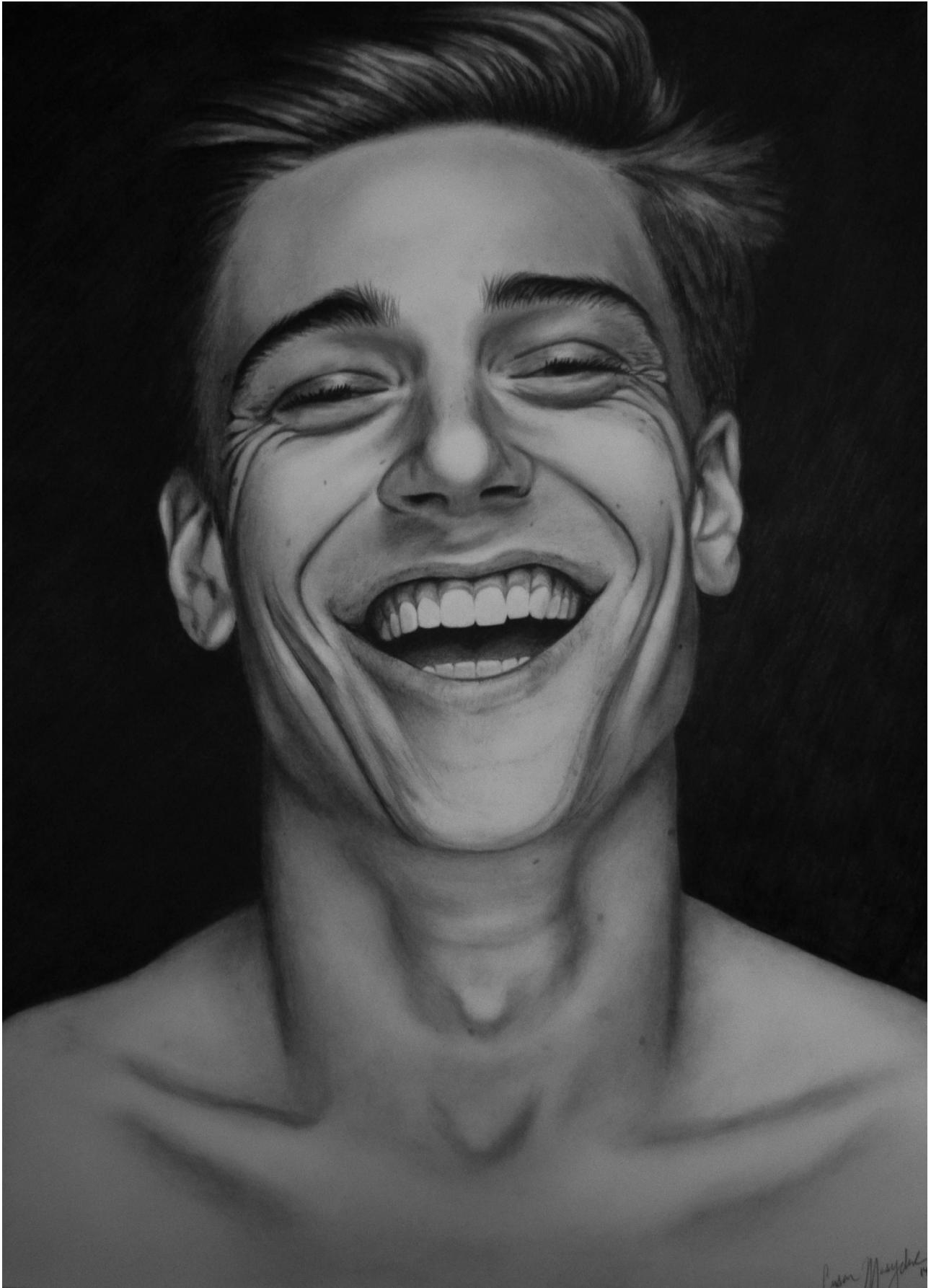
"Bud, you're not retarded." My dad spoke. "You're just a little," He paused to find the polite word. "Slower...than the rest."

I couldn't even speak. I was speechless.

I just went back upstairs. They didn't know what to say either, so they just let me go. I sat in my room for a few hours. Sarah had passed me in the hallway and tried to apologize but I didn't really hear her. I wonder if she said anything to my parents.

I never even realized I was so slow. How could I not have? I don't want to be different. I don't feel any different. I don't think any different. Or maybe I do think different.

I don't want to be different.



Tim Bormann, in graphite
Susan Mosijchuk

Loss of Love

Dionys F. Cabriotti

Pinging archaic sounds
from the likes of Polish and German miracles.
Like descending arpeggios
Into a pit of eternal forgetfulness.
Along with them goes,
unnoticed,
The heartbeat of God.



Photograph by:
Melissa Oyola

Abandoned Transcendence and the Hat Box

Breyonna Jones

Today, for the first time I saw a bird hit a window. Leaving behind a thin streak of blood that caught the light just so. It was a black bird and I am fairly certain its neck was broken. I killed for this day. In doing so I perjured my very being for what the "good" life offered me. Murderer.

It was not easy to lure her out of her hiding place. It had to be done with promises of true love and dignity. For a long time she believed that she belonged to herself and herself alone. Speaking out of turn and voicing an opinion when no one asked. Yes, it is true she was a spirited one with a fire that burned so bright from within that I had hoped she would self-destruct. And maybe I would not have to get my hands dirty. Daddy said she needed to be silenced, that her tongue was to be retracted. "What good is she to us like this?" he would ask with his pipe stem between his teeth. However, she was heard louder than anyone could have imagined. She had forsaken marriage and the idea of being forced to carry a child against her will. The pants she wore had patchwork stitching across the knees and the words she wrote were vile and spoke of choices that do not exist.

Mother assured me I was doing the world a great justice, a necessary evil if you will. She was a saboteur, my own personal terrorist who destroyed all of my opportunities for happiness. With her typewriter words and ink bombs, no man would marry her. And that is what she wanted. She had ridiculous dreams of a future that was self-made. Where she could speak freely and give love to whomever she saw fit. These quixotic notions would lead to nothing but shame. No children, no husband, she would be left to her thoughts and unpublished manuscripts.

They tried to train her to be proper and applicable. Dresses were bought and sewing needles were put to use. Suitors were lined up to see and behold her newfound elegance. None were interested in her speculations or countless journals filled with raw thought and emotion. She rejected them all, and instead decided she would rather die alone.

So I killed her. And so went her stories, and poetries and unheard of thoughts. I had to make sure she did not escape so she was dismembered. I started with her ludicrous dreams and happenings for the future. Countless pages were ripped from walls and notebooks. Every pair of trousers was burned. I could feel the acute sense of anguish that radiated from her whole self. She did not want to leave and she cried. She cried into a crumpled ball of nothingness. I wanted to keep her close so I put her in a hat box.

She was really very pretty if you ever took the time to look. We could have been the same person, but not anymore. My mirror tells a different story. As I put on the veil I see the loss. My eyes are no longer iridescent and the fire has long since been put out. My mother's dress fits like a glove and I know they are all waiting for my appearance.

The hat box calls to me with pleas of desperation and the reflection before me begs to be made whole again. But I am tired. I know the outcome and I am ready. The crows will be released when we kiss and I will no longer be my own. Resting the bouquet of dried Peonies and Baby's Breathe into the palm of my hand I walk towards my own end, leaving the words of a stronger woman behind me.



Drawing by:
Melissa Amaro

Helios

Melissa Oyola

His golden eyes glared at the sun
His heart was coal and weighed a ton
His skin so pale and white as snow
Death is calling and his regrets do show

Winter came and winter went
And no angel was heaven sent
Love was dying and heartache began
All was gone when life ran

He became cold as ice when his love faded into the night
So he glared at the sun's beautiful light
Being the only warmth he'll ever feel
Because Helios' heart became cold as steel



Mermaid Greeting Card
Edgar Vaskanyan

Empty Space

Breyonna Jones

There is a space in the heart
A space unknown in origin
Whose depth rivals the mysterious deep blue
A space, an abyss
To only hurt, to only reject in its true nature
The sweet nectar only Cupid's bow can bring
A space that can only be satisfied temporarily by the touch of many others
Even in a fool's paradise this illusion doesn't last long
Why? This one space, small and easy to forget holds so much force
It makes a person
There is a space in the heart so small in size yet capable of so much
The space only to filled half way
Its vacancy only to be filled with the upmost casualties
Forced to live with no permanence
No single touch to commit to memory
No whisper in sweet breath
To be sober in the worst way
Never to know the drunken haze of desire
Or the heart-wrenching hangover of gentle kisses
There is a space in the heart fueled solely by doubt
Engine by worry
Engulfed in fear
The fear of the unknown, unsure of how to show affection
How do you love with the fear of none in return?
That I must know

Unsolicited

Dionys F. Cabriotti

The Unsolicited
like a malignant growth
that corrupts deep within our souls,
emerging from that horrid Sound that blows!



Photograph by:
Melissa Oyola



Two, in graphite
Susan Mosijchuk

Write About Me

Jason Roy

Write about me like I write about you.

In these pages my ink bleeds true.

I'm not upset that it's over, because it never really began.

Writing about you with my memory's hand.

The best thing is to expect you'll do the same.

Fill your writings up, mention my name.

Write about me like I write about you.

In these pages my ink bleeds true.

If you write, I'll know I'm still there.

It would put my mind in flair.

The fortune I would have to be your inspiration.

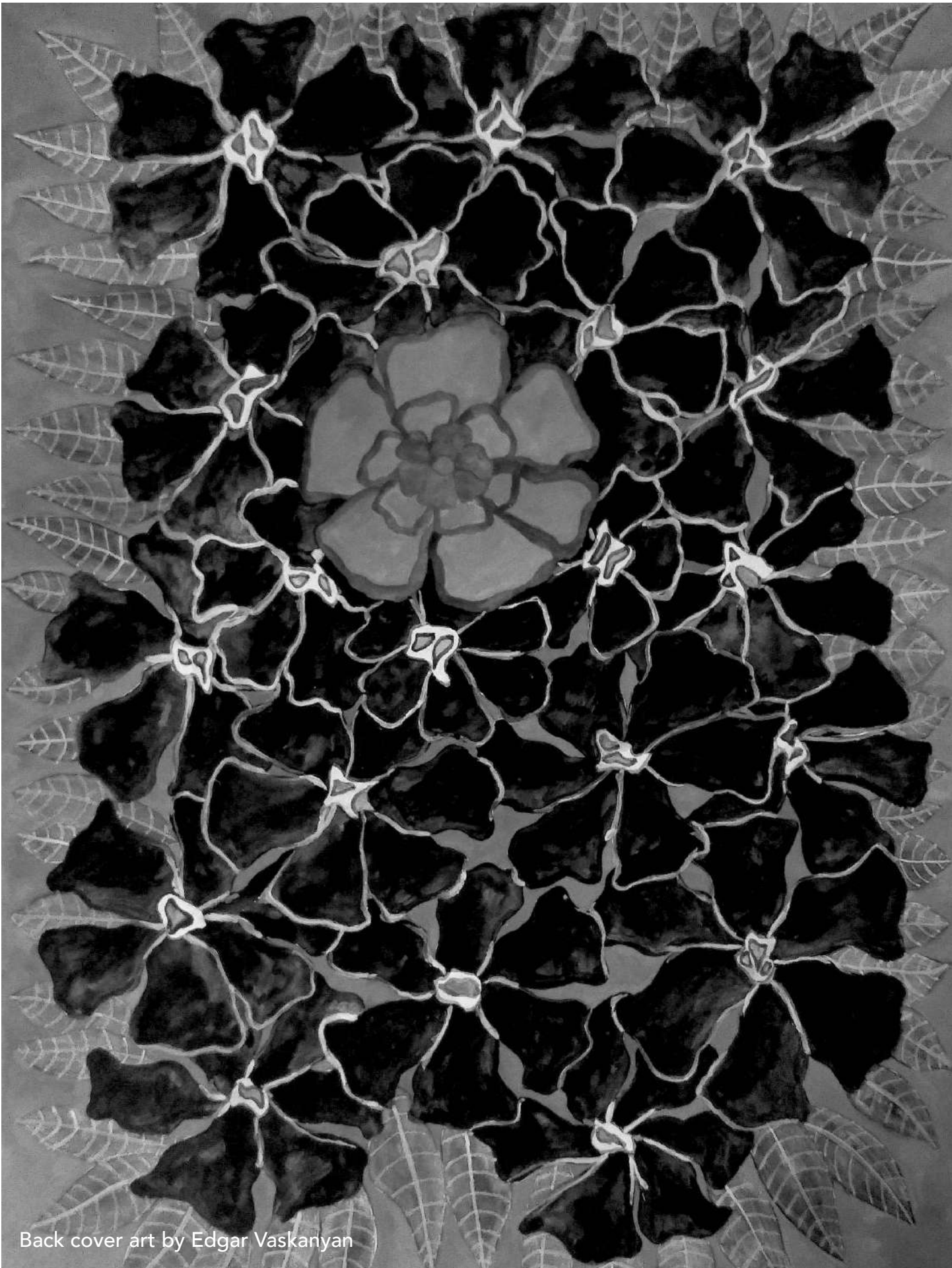
To just be the basis of your creation.

Write about me like I write about you.

In these pages my ink bleeds true.



Photograph by:
Morgan Belanger



Back cover art by Edgar Vaskanyan