

ARGENTUM

The Art &
Literary
Magazine of
Great Basin
College
2024



REVEAL

2023-2024 Staff

Hilary Kinney and Dori Andrepont, *Co-Editors*

Dr. Josh Webster, *Adviser*

Reveal was such an intriguing theme for this, and we were excited to see what the artists and writers created to submit. We weren't disappointed! As always, *Argentum* is much more than two editors, and we thank Dr. Josh Webster, Chelsey Pennell, and Angie de Braga for their assistance. We also thank the Great Basin College campuses who help to get out the word and take extra steps to make known that the submissions are open to all community members. We do appreciate it!

We hope you enjoy this year's publication, and consider submitting to the 2025 issue.

Our website is www.gbcnv.edu/argentum and staff can be emailed at argentum@gbcnv.edu.

FRONT COVER *Pieces Reset, Petals Revealed*

Medium: Collage from Magazine Paper Scraps

Carly Nielsen

FIRST PLACE IN STUDENT ART

Table of Contents

Outside Front Cover	Argentum Selection Committee	2
Pieces Reset, Petals Revealed <i>by Carly Nielsen</i>	Chalcosoma Atlas Revealed <i>by Katrina Brumit</i>	3
Inside Back Cover	My Mother's Recipe <i>by Savannah Isbel</i>	4
Olive <i>by Isabel Miller</i>	Daybreak <i>by Wyatt Baumeister</i>	5
Outside Back Cover	Playful Kitty Goat Milk Soap <i>by Brittany Streeter</i>	10
Behind Cannery Row <i>by Jennifer Stieger</i>	Sybil's Prayer <i>by Lynne Morris</i>	11
	The Fruit of the Labor <i>by Rafik Vartanpour</i>	13
	Shadows in the Light <i>by Liz Nash</i>	14
	Flats <i>by Ali Lawrence</i>	15
	Multiple Facets – Peony <i>by Skylar Ceccoli Eiffert</i>	19
	Man's Obsession <i>by Anna Davis</i>	20
	A Place for Everyone <i>by Rebecca Murphree</i>	21
	Female Vandal <i>by Lorraine Meza</i>	23
	Home <i>by Elisa Carlsen</i>	24
	Around the Next Corner <i>by Moira Smith</i>	25
	Golden <i>by Maria Castaneda</i>	26
	The Stone's Inn <i>by Dylan Wirth</i>	27
	Bursting Out <i>by Greg Reeder</i>	31
	Peace Revealed <i>by Angie de Braga</i>	32

Argentum Selection Committee

We thank our 2024 Selection Committee as they took time from their busy schedules to review and choose this year's submissions to be included in this publication.

Their willingness and effort is deeply appreciated.



Chelsey Pennell

Writer

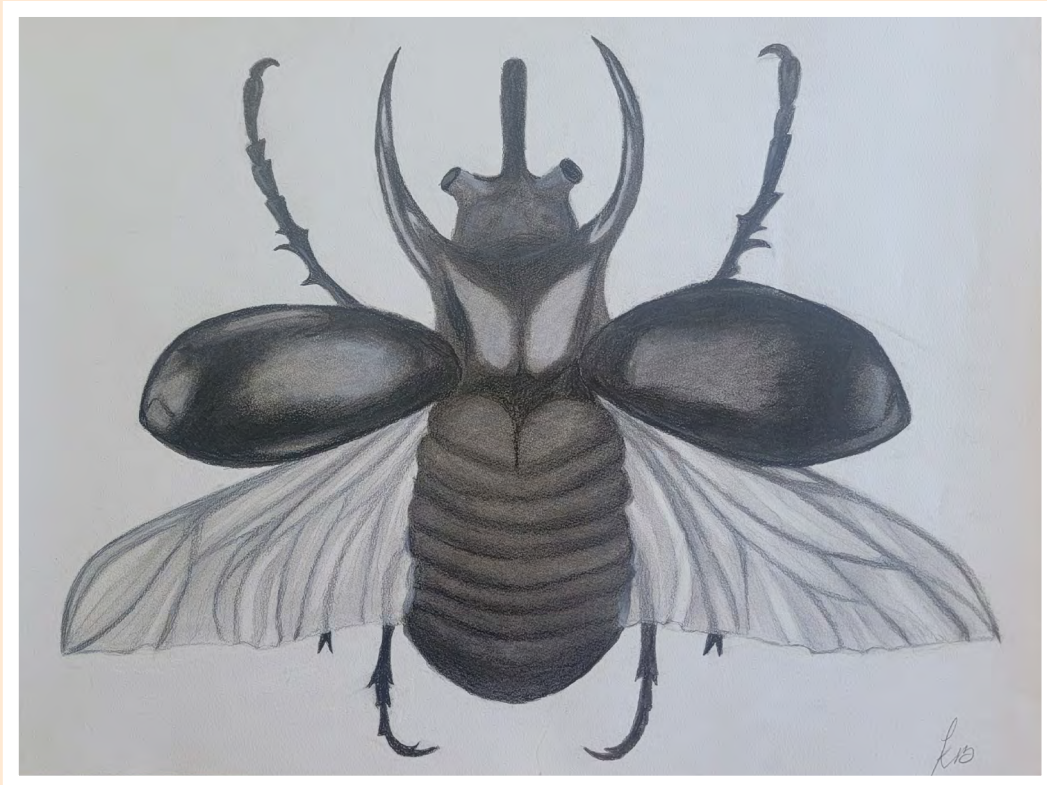
Chelsey Pennell has written short stories and poems for *Argentum* magazine and worked as student editor. She enjoys reading and writing, and raising her family in Northern Nevada.



Janet Winterer

Artist

Janet is an artist, sculptor, potter, wood worker, leather worker, jewelry artist, and glass lamp worker. She has done metal casting, various types of weaving, spinning, sewing, fiber arts, lapidary and mosaics. She has produced thousands of works of art both large and small, been represented by an esteemed art gallery and won numerous art competitions. She served as assistant sculpture teacher at Antelope Valley College in California and is currently an active artisan member of the Society for Creative Anachronism. She plans to never have a day in her life without art.



Chalcosoma Atlas Revealed

Medium: Charcoal

Katrina Brumit

My Mother's Recipe

by Savannah Isbel

It is a Sunday afternoon and my mother has prepared supper.
We gather around the table, laughing, talking,
And reminiscing on the past.
This is our tradition.

On the counter I see Bruce's Yams,
"Cut sweet potatoes in syrup"
Printed on the ever familiar
Brown and orange can,
Empty,
Its contents turned into the masterpiece sitting before me.

Sweet potato casserole,
Soaking in butter and brown sugar.
A staple of my childhood,
Topped with marshmallows,
A favorite of mine to this day;
A decadent treat,
Sitting on our table as always.

I ask my mother for her recipe.
"Canned yams,"
She reveals to me, sparkle in her eye,
"In light syrup, never dark,"
Like a secret she has carefully guarded her whole life,
Waiting for this moment to come.

She relays to me her recipe,
As I'm sure her grandmother did to her,
With no specific measurements,
Instead relying
On handfuls and dashes
Of this, that, and the other.

I listen to her like I'm a child again
And she is telling me a story,
Of a far away place,
And far away time
That I hope to pass on to my own daughter,
In a not-so-far away place,
And a far away time.



DAYBREAK

by Wyatt Baumeister

FIRST PLACE IN STUDENT WRITING

BODIES OCCUPIED the village square, spreading out like a cobweb — clustered in the middle, thin at the edges. Their voices carried farther, beyond the limits and toward the forest out in the distance. Taking part in neither the noise nor the nucleus of people, Tai stood at the edge, jumping on his soles and listening to his feet shift the dirt.

Ahead of him, a small group of elders were talking to one of the soldiers who had made his way to the isolated village. Covered in shining metal armor, he stood out not just in his height but in his posture, showing off the impressively clean armor that reflected brilliantly under the afternoon sun.

Being at the edge of both groups, Tai strained to hear anything said. Try as he might, however, the voices of his village mates towered still, bearing down in their excitement and anticipation on his shoulders. He squirmed — his clothing felt uncomfortable now, scratching at his arms and legs.

He shouldn't be here. His elder brother Yui was somewhere in the crowd, the picture of promise and hope. And he, knees shaking from his constant movement, voice quelled by a weight in his throat.

A greater pressure held against his shoulder. Tai jumped, dancing away and throwing the weight off. He stared down a long-haired boy a few inches taller than him, with shoulder-length spiky black hair and deep green eyes.

The newcomer laughed, hands held in surrender. "Easy there, Whelp."

Tai groaned as he rubbed his shoulder. "Not funny, Yui," he grumbled, frowning as the laughter continued.

Waving a hand, Yui receded, softening his face with a smile. "Cheer up. This is a big chance for us."

"If we can even pass the test."

Yui rested a hand on Tai's shoulder again. "I'm sure we'll be fine."

A shock pressed against his bones at the contact.

Batting the hand away, Tai stepped back. Everyone was smiling or focused. Not that he could blame them; their lives were at stake from a bandit uprising across the kingdom, but the twisting of his stomach prevented him from sharing in their fervor. "Says you," he mustered through his teeth. "I'm not sure I'll make it."

"What makes you say that?"

Tai shrugged, feeling in his shoulders the pain from when Tai had grabbed him. "I've never been as strong as a lot of others here."

"Not a lot of us ever needed to be." Yui shrugged.

"It was the elders who wanted us to help the kingdom. Surely the soldiers sent by the kingdom will understand."

A knot in Tai's throat prevented him from speaking, as he looked at Yui's posture and frame not too different from the soldier nearby.

He heard Yui speak, but it was quickly drowned out by silence. The soldier stepped away from the elders finally. Spear in hand, he stepped up to the group at large. His blue eyes radiated an attention-grabbing gaze.

Tai followed how the soldier raised his spear from the ground, stretching his arm diagonally until it crossed over the sun and created a shade that obscured its lethal blade.

He began to speak, with a baritone that carried itself far. Even the wind went silent to listen to his words. "A spear is not a sword; its swings are not comparable. It is not a rapier, lightweight and controllable. It is not an ax, strong and heavy.

"What it is, however, is an extension. It is held in such a way the shaft can be parallel with your body; its motions are made in a similar way to how you would move your arm.

"To wield a spear is to wield yourself, to extend your body and mind further than before. Therefore, it must be given consideration. Every weapon I have listed and more is not a toy. It is a tool, and like every

tool, it must be used with caution and with expertise, and given proper respect to its power. It can save people or end them. But it can only do so by your own will. However you choose to wield this weapon is through your conscious actions, and your consequences.”

Straightening his back and holding the spear high, the soldier pressed the shaft into the ground once again. Near parallel with his height, Tai almost convinced himself there were two soldiers there, each with a pair of fiery blue eyes and a dominating echoing voice.

“You have chosen to stand here today as trainees of the spear, extensions of the body, to wield it in defense of the righteous, guardsmen of the innocent. You seek to protect yourselves, your comrades, and those around you. You fight not in the name of selfish glory, but as a friend of your allies and loved ones. Should you master the spear, you master yourself.”

His speech tapered off, and like earlier when the crowd quieted for him, it became raucous once again, the young voices combining in a flurry of cheers and pride. Tai’s heart roared against his chest, shaking his bones. He raised his arms in support, but with his voice still caught in his throat and his shoulder still wincing as he moved it, it was all he could accomplish.

Several other soldiers marched forward and discussed the preliminary training. Over the next week, they would undergo various exercises. At the end of the week, each participant would pair off in a practice match. Those who passed the assessment would return to the capital to continue their training.

Before that time, Tai never felt such intense stress on his body. As the youngest of his family, he was unconditioned to more typical labor that many of his seniors were already accustomed to; his elder brother Yui was already prepared to take over the farm, while his sister Hua worked around the clock caring for many of the elders. He had nothing to prove — with most responsibilities covered, he was left with little but what he desired to accomplish.

By the end of the week, Tai wondered if his body would cooperate during the practice match. His arms screamed and his legs cried as he walked to the village square. With back throbbing and neck squirming, nothing felt right, yet he still marched with conviction and hope.

When everyone had gathered, the same soldier as yesterday stood forward from the formation. His smile radiated as he looked upon everyone at attention.

“It is good to see everyone here that I saw last week. We are in trying times, so we must all remember to do

our part.” He raised his spear high, much like the first day, and the other soldiers followed. “Let it be known that your kingdom is proud of you already.”

The other soldiers stepped forward, carrying carved wooden sticks. “Today is the practice match. You will pair and be given an opportunity to show your prowess. Please do not think of this as a win-lose situation. No matter what happens today, you will have demonstrated a skill that can be honed further, no matter where you are.” He stepped back, and the armored and unarmored crowds mingled.

Tai held the practice weapon with both hands, feeling the smooth surface. He eyed it carefully, looking at the detail and the care it took to create this. No doubt a master craftsman — someone with the necessary eye to precisely mold a balanced tool to test one’s skills.

The sounds of fighting began to escalate. Spears clashed; voices called out in strained grunts, gasps, and the occasional bout of laughter. Gripping his spear tightly, Tai closed his eyes and breathed, the tension in his body beginning to fade.

“Hey, Whelp.”

Tai spun, throwing the spear around him at head height. It clacked against Yui’s.

Yui smiled, eyes narrowing. “Trying to get a jump on me, huh?”

With a sigh, Tai lowered his spear. His upper arms tensed at the effort. “No, you just sc —”

He noticed the spear too late, striking between his eyes. As he fell to the ground, eyes blurry, Yui stood over him, stick aimed at his throat.

“Do you yield?” Yui asked, a grin dug deep into his cheek.

Tai’s body thrummed. The stress of the past week, the fear of doing poorly, and Yui’s confidence channeled into his arms. He swung his spear toward Yui’s stomach. It found purchase, and Yui skipped back, holding his ribs with one hand while the other held his spear out.

Grin still on his face, Yui said, “There’s the Whelp. Let’s go then.”

Tai had enough time to stand up when Yui jabbed at him. Pain coursed through his abdomen. He offered a weak parry that was answered, cold wood pressed against his throat.

“Yield,” Yui repeated.

“No.”

Tai spun and lunged, knocking them both down and their weapons away. Yui shoved him; they both dove for their weapons. Tai sprung first, rolling to his feet and swinging at the abdomen again.

Yui parried, threw in another jab toward the shoulder. Tai ducked, held his weapon in both hands, aimed it at the ground, then snapped it up. It crashed into Yui's jaw, sending him sprawling.

Tai lunged, spear thrust down. Yui rolled, and Tai kept pace. Dirt thrust up from each jab. Yui grabbed his discarded weapon, rolled, pressing the spear into the ground to pull himself up.

Each lunge between them aimed for their face and chest. Tai struggled to breathe, his heart bursting into his chest and his muscles burning from the exertion.

Yui's spear reached closer as his dodges slowed. Pressurized wind grazed his body. The tension from the past week of effort resurfaced, and he stumbled. A blow landed on his shoulder; next on his right knee. A final jab struck his chest, sending him crashing against the ground.

Yui hovered over him once again. The grin had vanished from his lips, replaced by a deep carved line. "Yield."

Staring into the sun, Tai wanted to cry. Every nerve where Yui had struck wheezed for him, wincing and squirming as his efforts fell with him. He eyed his opponent through hazy eyes, the corners of his vision threatening to close as the exertion caught up with him, dragging his body down even as he tried to raise it.

Shadows appeared, blocking the glare of the sun. Glancing down, he saw Yui reach a hand out, grin reforming light dancing in his eyes.

Lifting his arm took great effort, each movement fighting against a weight unrelated to his current stress. Yui yanked him up with ease, the momentum sending him into an embrace.

Pushing himself away, he looked to the crowd, unwilling to face the glittering gaze of his brother. Many fights continued; only a relatively small number had finished. He looked at each face, all smiles on their mouths or in their eyes. Determination sparkled in each of them, like stars in the night sky.

Yui gripped his shoulder. "You did good."

His heart thudded against his ribs, and he looked down at his scratched knuckles as they went white from holding the spear.

That night, Tai looked at the night sky. He was right: the stars seemed much dimmer than everyone's eyes, and with a frown etched deep, he wondered what his own eyes looked like. The following morning, Yui passed, and Tai knew the answer to his question he waved his brother goodbye.

Five years later, and Tai saw that same somberness in the sky each night, like Yui's eyes were the backdrop itself.

Little changed, both to his surprise and his relief. Given the isolation of their village, he wasn't surprised that little word about the bandits' efforts reached them, much less the bandits themselves. Even the soldier that had stayed with them — the same that had greeted them all — had yet to receive a letter from the king.

A few of the villagers left, guided by that soldier's directions. Anticipation and anxiety spurred a call to action in the hopes they could protect their home.

Tai remained. With Yui gone, many of the responsibilities left behind were picked up by him. He took to them much quicker than he expected, and during the late nights wondered how much of it was because he finally had something to do, or something to prove.

"Thank you for your help, Tai," Hua said as she put her rake away, rubbing the sweat from her forehead and stretching her back.

"It's no problem Hua," he returned, rubbing the flexing muscles in his shoulder.

Hua smiled. "Still, I know you've been busy with Dad since he's been slowing down."

He shrugged. "He's getting old — I understand."

Hua snorted. "Yeah — you're ready to drop." She smacked his shoulder for emphasis.

Feigning pain, Tai fell to his knees, a whine escaping. "How could you do this to me — your own brother?"

They shared a laugh. Tai felt a swift, easy exhale with each breath, and the smile on his face came easy.

After their voices died, Hua looked to the sunset. "I'll go help Mom with dinner. Don't stay out too late, alright?"

"Yeah, yeah. Shoo."

Hua disappeared, leaving laughter behind. With a small smile, Tai looked to the evening sky, drinking in the cascading colors. The soft mixtures of reds and pinks filled him with a sense of ease.

As he stared, that ease swept away. Yui had departed on an evening similar to this one. Tension pinched his shoulders at the memory of the practice fight. Bouncing on his leg, he controlled a sudden hiccup in his chest. How had Yui adopted a cold confidence during the fight, and easily morphed it to a caring smile afterward?

The question gnawed at his head, but he pushed it away as he caught something: shadows. Not the natural tendrils that came with the setting sun. These were malleable, forming at the edge of the tree line. They

spread wide instead of thin—a moving blob that rolled forward.

Voices rose. Looking around, other villagers that had been finishing their own work collected in the village square, led by the soldier, a rigid frown in place of his normal smile.

“What’s going on?” Tai asked as he approached.

“I don’t know,” the soldier responded, voice heavy.

The shadows sharpened further, faces of gruff men. Their silver-plated armor lacked the luster the soldiers had years prior. Their eyes, distant as they may be, glinted under the growing darkness. Weapons followed, spears reaching higher than them, bladed ends shining bright.

Their footsteps echoed. Heavy clomps shoved into the dirt. They marched with purpose and weight, affording no pause. Their destination was to be met soon, maybe sooner than Tai wanted.

The newcomers said nothing as they approached. Their leader, perhaps, held a hand. They stopped in unison, footsteps quieting into the evening sun.

Stepping forward, he spoke with a sharp air of familiarity. “Where is Tai?”

Cold dread ran between Tai’s shoulders, stabbing down his back and arms. Whispers sprang; members of his crowd looked to him, but he had yet to move. He had to make sure.

A helmet obscured most of the speaker’s features, but his eyes and mouth remained visible. Sharp green, even under the setting sun, was easy to distinguish, and the thin line of the man’s mouth matched one he recognized.

“Yui.”

Their leader looked up. “Tai.”

“You’re back.”

Yui glanced around, at the soldiers behind him then at Tai again, ignoring the rest of the crowd. “I am.” His voice evaporated into the air, thin and quiet.

Pressure in Tai’s body built. Beginning at his shoulder, it snapped down to his chest and knee. “How’s the war effort?”

“Done.”

Murmurs escalated, first one voice then many, blooming into a gust of wind.

“You won?”

Yui looked away, still not directly looking at anyone else from the village, eyes cascading in shadows. His soldiers danced on their feet, but Yui raised a hand again to quell them. Looking up again, his once vibrant green eyes hardened, more like emeralds than summer green leaves.

“Not without consequences.” The final word slithered off his tongue, like blood from a wound. “The kingdom..”

“You don’t have to continue,” Tai said, but his own words were laced with dread.

“I do, actually.” Yui locked directly and solely with Tai; the hand holding his spear twitched. “The kingdom has expressed concern of another uprising, and has sent its soldiers out to ensure none will happen.”

A chorus of metal and leather. The soldiers readied their weapons.

Voices rose, high in pitch and fear. Villagers old and young mixed their panic in a grating pressure that slammed into Tai’s heart.

Fear blossomed in his throat—but he spoke anyway, choking down his panic. “Tell your men to stand down, Yui. We’re an isolated village with no formal training.” Yui pointed the spear to the soldier next to him. “He was left here by the kingdom to facilitate any villagers who wanted to travel to the capital afterward, if you remember.”

“And now he is being deemed a liability.”

Tai’s feet moved first. He shadowed the soldier who looked on with quivering fear. “On who’s authority?”

“The king.”

“His own Majesty?”

A nod was Yui’s response.

“Does the king take kindly to casting out his own?”

Another clatter of steel, grunting noises with an undertone of threats. Yui’s shoulders squared. “You have no idea what we’ve been through.”

At the mention of ‘we,’ Tai’s heart collapsed into his stomach. The memory of the smile Yui gave him vanished, and in its place a slick, dark green gaze and deep-rooted frown.

“No,” he said, barely above a whisper, “I suppose not.” Raising his voice past the knot in his throat, he asked, “I suppose you don’t plan on telling us either?”

“I believe I’ve told you more than enough.”

“Then what do you plan to do?”

Yui’s gaze pierced him—his skin, blood, and bones—and out to the village that shadowed the setting sun.

“The king has demanded we conquer to eradicate uncertainty.” Voices rose to a pitch, shooting into the sky and rustling the trees. Yui raised his hand, but the voices continued, escalated—a frenzy scuttling across the grass and toward the village.

Tai raised his hand too—and silence reigned.

Yui nodded, not at him. Through him still.

“Face me, Tai.”

The words slammed into his brain repeatedly, but nothing connected properly. “What?”

“Face me. If you win, then we shall not conquer your village.”

Words flung from his throat, slathered in fire. “Five years you’re gone, five years of silence from the kingdom, and you return, demand we surrender or die, and now this?”

“I never said you would die.”

“You haven’t said shit.”

Yui’s gaze returned, softening to an old affection that had been absent for a long time. “You have no choice, now do you? If you do not face me, I will give my men the order.” Extending his spear out the blade, even under the encroaching night, still shined brighter than anything else.

Tai quelled the rising vomit, jamming it down his throat as he eyed the sharp steel. His mouth opened thrice, and each time released nothing but a quiet gasp. As he turned around, a spear was thrust in his arms.

With calming eyes, the soldier gave him a smile—the same one that he initially greeted the village with five years ago. “Do it. It’s not like we have a choice anyway.” As he prepared to back away, he said, “Your kingdom is proud of you, remember that.”

Tai nodded, each motion with his neck heavy. Facing Yui again, space had already been made, the soldiers retreating into a semi-circle.

The brothers stepped forward, readying their spears. Yui smiled.

Tai lunged. Wind sharpened at his ears as he aimed for the neck. He missed by a mile—Yui swept at his feet, shaft first. He crashed to the ground. Ears ringing, he rolled, feeling instead of listening. Dirt ruptured as he was followed.

He found purchase. On his knees, his spear went gut first. Clashing wood signaled a deflection. Momentum carried him into Yui’s fist. The stars turned hazy as he landed on the ground again.

Cold steel poked at his neck. Nausea swam through the contact point.

“Yield.”

Reverberations of the past—Yui’s cold, determined stare.

Tai’s mouth opened, a mimicry. “No.”

His leg kicked out. Yui strangled a gasp, and Tai rolled back to his feet. Knees wobbling, he jammed his spear as he shook away the fog.

His eyes crossed as the light reflected off the blade. Air pressure coalesced at his throat. He ducked left,

throwing his spear forward. Finding air and Yui at his right, he retracted, spun the shaft, and swept it toward Yui’s feet.

The clang of Yui’s armor rang in his ears, then a thud. Tai rushed, then paused with a ghastly gasp. His body felt warm—warmer than an early night should. Then cold again as the wind whistled against it.

His hand went to his stomach. A small hole, just bigger than his thumb, gushed out blood as he released another strangled breath. The grass reached toward him. He fell to his knees, adrenaline escaping through the fresh wound.

Something flashed in his fading eyes. Looking up, Yui hovered over him, arm straight, spear close enough to his nose he could smell the steel and oil.

“Yield.” Just like five years ago.

Pain flared in Tai’s stomach. It spread to his shoulder, the first blow that stunned him; his knee, the second blow that crippled him; and his chest, the final blow that finished him.

“No—”

Yui reared back, cocking his shoulder. He lunged.

The air vanished. A vacuum held everything in place, neither advancing or retreating. Yet the spear inched forward, crossing stars and the brilliant gaze of the rising moon.

Tai gripped his spear. The hand on his wound went to his left knee. His right leg pushed out—and the spear followed.

A sickening sound pierced air and body, a gurgle next, and finally the clatter of steel and leather.

Yui collapsed on his knees, propped by Tai’s weapon. He sighed, broken and light. Then he fell further, into Tai’s arms as they raised to hold him.

“Why?” Tai asked, tears unbidden in symphony with his blood.

“The kingdom—” a strangled sound as Yui fought to speak “—is not right. I can do nothing to stop it.” A shaky hand rested against Tai’s shoulder, making them both quiver. “But you can.”

“Bullshit.”

Yui laughed, guttural. “The only bullshit thing is your—” a cough, spilling blood “—your will. Take my men, Whelp. They’ll follow you.”

Tai felt heavy. Not from his heart, crushed into his ribs, but Yui’s body as gravity took hold and pushed it into him. And he cried, screaming into the sky in a vain effort for the stars to comfort him.

When his voice quelled, Tai looked down at the corpse in his arms. He rolled Yui over, pulled the spear gently from his body, and fought to his legs.

With a hand on his wound, the other clutching the spear to keep him steady, he held his back straight, staring down both the calm soldiers and the frightened villagers.

His arm moved, holding the spear high. The soldiers followed. To the villagers, he spoke through a wind-torn throat. "Against the kingdom we stand, for the

kingdom that believes in us is not the one to send brother against brother." His eyes welled again, and the blurry stars formed a familiar smile. "We shall raise ourselves to be what they sought to destroy, and from it we shall birth a new age."

Voices echoed into the night, a channeling symphony of fear and promise. ■



Playful Kitty Goat Milk Soap

Medium: Cold Process Soap

The design of soap is only revealed once it has solidified and has been cut.

Brittany Streeter



SYBIL'S PRAYER

by Lynne Morris

SYBIL OPENED THE CRACKED, creaky, wooden door to the shed-like toilet enclosure, glancing back behind her to make sure no one else was parked in the gravel lot. She was hoping for something a bit more modern, but running water was running water. Holding the door open, she turned and motioned to her nine-year-old daughter, Monti, to come in. Monti looked dubious, like only a fifteen-year-old living in a nine-year-old's body can, but she sauntered into the shed and looked around.

Monti squinted in the dusty rays from the high, narrow, filthy window and peered into the cobwebby corners. "There's no lights," Monti observed, turning toward Sybil and adding slowly, "And it's cold. And dirty."

Sybil chuckled. "Well, beggars can't be choosers and there's nobody around here beggin' more than we are right now. It has runnin' water, even if it is cold, and that's what we need after three days without a wash. C'mon, lean against that door while I get undressed and cleaned up."

"Why do you get to clean up first? Why not me?" Monti pouted as she shoved the door closed with her skinny back.

"Well, I would be happy to trade with you, muffin, but I clean up first so that by the time we get to you, the water in the basin has warmed up a bit. So, wanna trade?"

"Nah." Monti leaned on the door which Sybil had fastened with the rusty latch. Sybil noticed that when the door was latched, there was still a one inch gap along the long edge, letting in the cold air. Monti leaning on it helped secure Sybil's privacy from peering eyes.

Sybil took off her jeans and top, hanging them over the top of the partial wall between the toilet and the rusty sink. They were far from clean, but she hadn't

worn them for a whole week yet, so she would be putting them back on after she bathed. Her underpants, however, were another story. Sybil forced herself and Monti to wear their underpants four days in a row. On the fifth day, they found a place like this, washed themselves and their four-day-old underpants, and went without undies for a day while the washed pair dried in the trunk of the car. They called that fifth day "Commando Day". Sybil had dispensed with her bra weeks ago, wearing tops that disguised her chest. Finishing up, she rinsed and wrung out the washcloth, dried herself off, and stepped back into her clothes. She hung her rinsed and dripping undies over the wall.

"OK, you next," she said to Monti who was examining a dying gray spotted moth crawling across the floor.

"How come we have to use a brown washcloth and towel? How come we don't get to have those snowy white ones like you see on TV?"

"Because brown covers up the dirt, that's why. White ones wouldn't stay white very long, would they?" Sybil calmly replied.

"Will we ever get to have clean hot water and white towels?"

"Yes, baby, some day we will have a whole closet full of white towels — and sheets too. And hot water in a marble and gold-plated bathroom with heated floors. Get undressed."

"I need to go pee," Monti said, stripping off her clothes and sitting on the toilet seat. "Ooh, look, Momma, there's a ten-dollar bill down there on the floor! She pointed at the corner by the door. Sybil glanced down then bent over to pick up the money. "It's not real, Monti. It's 'funny money'; it has a picture of Popeye on the front and a bible verse on

the back. It was probably left here by some traveling preacher, hoping whoever picked it up would be instantly saved.”

“Lemme see!” Monti demanded, reaching out her open palm. “Saved from what, Momma?” She examined both sides of the bill, reading the words of supposed salvation in the printed bible verses.

“From themselves, maybe, doll.”

Monti looked up at Sybil as she dropped the bill back onto the dirty floor. “Shoot, I wish it was real. We could use it to buy candy!”

“I wish that too, baby. Now finish up and get over here so I can give you a wash.” She cleaned Monti up, then washed the tiny pink underpants and hung them next to hers on the half wall.

As Sybil was helping Monti get dressed, the door latch rattled loudly. “Anybody in there? I got to use the toilet!” a man’s voice called out. Sybil looked up to see a man’s dark eyes peering into the long door crack behind the latch.

“Just a minute, almost done,” Sybil replied, gathering up the washcloth, towel, and two pairs of washed undies. Monti hid behind her as she opened the door to a tall man in a dirty ball cap waiting outside.

“Sorry, ma’am. Didn’t mean to rush you, but you know, when you gotta go...”

“No problem, we were done.” Sybil and Monti retraced their steps to their car, putting the wet things in the trunk, then climbing into the car. Monti didn’t

like to ride in back, but Sybil insisted, not only because Monti was too small to ride in the front seat but because Sybil needed some personal space sometimes and Monti tended to talk, talk, talk if she was sitting right next to a person. Sybil had used this alone time over the last couple of weeks wandering the back roads of the Midwest to sort out what to do, after she and Monti had run in the middle of the night with not much more than the clothes on their backs. She got into the driver’s seat and glanced quickly at the man lingering outside the bathroom door. Strange, she thought, since he acted like it was urgent.

“When are we gonna get to where we’re goin’, Momma?”

“Soon, kiddo, soon. Have a snack now and read your book.”

Sybil hoped that by tomorrow they would reach her brother’s house, and he would welcome them into his tiny abode, at least until Sybil could find work and get back on her feet. Monti needed to be back in school, and it would help both of them to be around family.

She looked in her rear view mirror as she pulled out, noticing that the fellow who so urgently had needed to use the toilet had never gone in, but instead was climbing into his car and pulling out, heading in the same direction as she was.

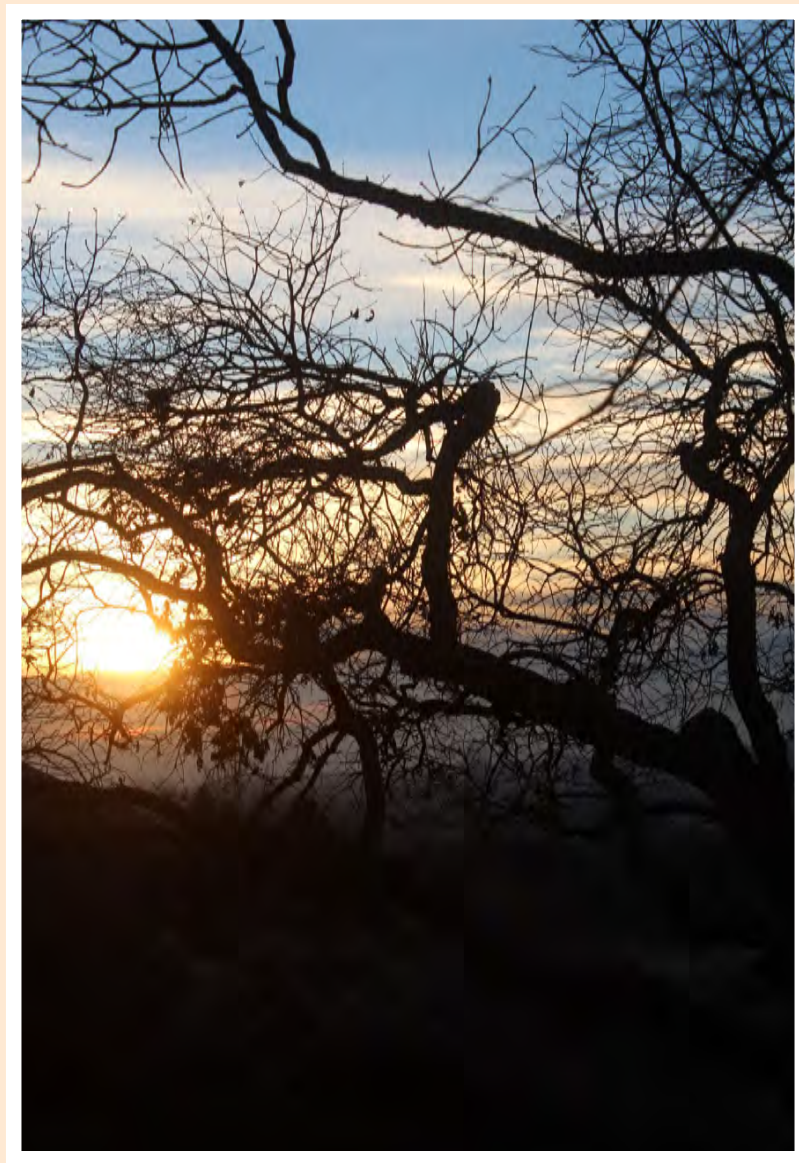
“Just one more day, Lord. Just give me one more day,” she mumbled as the old car picked up speed on the rural highway. ■



The Fruit of the Labor

Medium: Painting

Rafik Vartanpour



Shadows in the Light

Medium: Photography

Liz Nash

SECOND PLACE IN STUDENT ART



FLATS

by Ali Lawrence

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT being right there on that edge, the edge of it all, almost safe but not, near that point, but stopping to consider it. A meditation moment. Wanting to tip into security, but also wanting to soak in this bland whisper of danger for a little longer.

That was one reason my turn signal was on, why the horizon was right there and I wasn't scurrying to it just yet. The other was my bladder was way too full, the massive drink I bought 100 miles behind me having migrated south. I was going west. We weren't on the same page.

No more than a dozen miles ahead was Nevada, a wall of neon and security lights from casinos and hotels and venues hosting acts popular four decades prior. Above those winking and chasing and flickering lights was nature's offering of a show. Orange and magenta and plum like those little juice barrels that are just sugar and water and food colouring. They formed a strip of sky above the casinos and above the mountains behind them, lurking below the clouds already darkened by night, and the moon and stars up above them. It was dark and twinkling here in Utah, here where I was almost but not quite safe. The radio was on, but I was outrunning the station out of Salt Lake. The Bees were playing some team in Texas. There had been a delay. Early innings.

The road leaves a lot of time for solitude, for getting lost. That goes double when you don't trust anymore, an idea laughable from this side. And when you drive an anonymous sedan, you don't really get the camaraderie of driving a real truck, joining in with the boys at stops and on the CB. I had to stay in my head and across the radio dial.

And lately that has meant getting lost in my dreams. The unconscious ones, not the career-day ones. The

ones where I visited the same city, over and over, a small fragment in a small part each night, which is really like the world we live in already, small, almost random fragments that are a sliver of what we do over here.

The dusk light shone across the salt flats, some water shimmering in the distance toward outcroppings like stony yachts on a dead sea. I tried to notice them as I looked around at the other cars at the rest area. I was almost safe. I was not safe.

Three trucks. None of the ones on this route drove trucks. They did in Nevada, but not Utah. Five SUVs. None of them were the Fords that the locals used. All good. These were families and guys with goatees with t-shirts with guns and symbolism that suggested what they stored in their basements. These were recreational radicals at best. They still went to soccer practice like anyone else.

The cars looked okay. Sedans. Some hatchbacks. Plates from out of state. People drifting through. Still okay. It should be okay.

Except for the one. The one had tinted windows. The plates were something special. It's been long enough and close enough on occasion to have a sixth sense about these things. I know it will happen eventually. But not now. Not this trip.

I made to park, turning the lights off as I angled in to a stop. No one wanted to be blinded as they picked out some Fritos or wandered onto the flats for some social media post or stared up at the colours of the sky. They were such good colours this time. They felt more vivid. The West always feels vivid. It never rains for us. All of that magic is held up higher.

The bit about dreams is how much safer they are. Even the falling dreams, the ones where you hit your own mattress, the Sealy safety valve. There aren't

consequences, only possibilities. I'm the only one who actually gets hurt.

I parked as far away from that one car as I could get. Getting out of the car was a reminder that my bladder really needed to be rid of that Big Gulp, thank you, and I hurried in, past the drink and snack machines buried behind prison-level metal grating and the trash can long since overfilled and the scattered chew and butts and nicotine pouches that tell me, yes, I am indeed still in the West.

The inside reminded me of a post-apocalyptic Burger King — I decided this on an earlier trip, one a few years ago when I wasn't as careful and wasn't doing as much, moving as much. The probation years, if you like. The stalls and walls were this institutional orange, tagged to oblivion and targets for fists and feet, frustrations that only manifest in the transient loneliness of the Interstate. We can't stop. We can pause, but we certainly can't stop.

I picked a stall and sat. I counted the seconds, probably because that's what I do with numbers. I remembered once hearing on the radio, static as the distance became too much, that a scientist had researched how long the average mammal pees and it was something like 20 seconds. I got to 15 and then 20 and 25 and 30 and the relief was palpable. Big numbers. Pushed it this time.

Too much to hope for toilet paper. I used the tissue in my pocket. Good enough.

The thing that I would say if I had one of those big trucks where they can talk to each other is that, over the past few weeks, I've decided that I need God to exist. I guess I don't care which one. I just need one of the ones who's really omniscient, like can read my neurons like they're doomscrolling humanity. I need a God because I need someone to see my dreams. These little fragments that tell me who I am. These tiny stories that maybe say something worth sharing. I need them to see these glimpses. And maybe someday we can talk about them together.

Hands washed, looked in the mirror, saw bleary eyes through the etchings. Just a few more hours to where the Interstate and the US highway met, hoping the contact was there and nothing went sour and that I would get to my hotel room tonight. Then I could gently drift off to some flavour of Law and Order or something.

I stepped out. There were people milling about. There was laughter. There were vacations.

There was that car. It had moved down the parking lot, and it had stopped behind mine.

Fuck.

I should have known not to stare. I should know when I'm being watched. But I was also far enough away that I probably looked like I was looking at the sky, the colours deepening as overhead turned more from blue to navy to black. They would have seen a romantic. A pity it was a burner phone or I would have taken some pictures.

I got my legs to move after some stern words to myself; I turned toward the desert, toward the salt. The dead part, the part where there were the lights of cars out exploring and lights from phones and a bit of desolation turned tourist. I walked and I heard the crunch under foot. I stopped. I counted. I counted more than I did in the stall. I put my hands in my pocket as I shivered. It was not cold.

I was less than two hours away. But the clock wasn't running. Not counting down from 120 yet. They had to move. Or I had to run.

The other pocket had a few bucks in it. Have to carry cash. Cards can be tracked. Cash is safer, but I never quite carried enough of it. Most of what was left went to gas. But there was enough. I turned to back to the pavilion and the vending machines.

It was all concrete, brutalist tourism. There was a viewing tower, backlit by both the fading sky and by Nevada. It was really right there.

"Hey, you like sour cream and onion?"

A scratchy voice. A voice that had smoked. But an androgynous voice. As androgynous as the human it came from.

She... they?... were next to the snack machine. Slight and relatively short, greasy blonde hair. They could have been 14 or they could have been 40. Slightly tan. Rumpled pants and worn boots and a t-shirt from what looked like a sandwich shop; under the logo it said Hilton Head, S.C.

"Mine are stuck. If you buy one we'll get 'em both."

I had two dollars left. There was a green bag hanging by a corner, the red and blue logo of some company I had never heard of pressed to the glass. Most of the rest of the snacks were equally anonymous. Someone was also selling local country music CDs toward the bottom.

"Sorry to ask."

I told them — I went with them because the last thing I needed right then was to piss someone off — that it was no bother at all. I really did like them. I put my money in.

There were some beeps. It spat out three quarters in change, and then the coils unwound some more. The stuck bag didn't budge, the one I ostensibly paid for riding up and on top of it. The machine said thank you in its cheery toothpaste-blue font.

"Fuck," they said, giving the metal grate a mighty kick. The machine was out of reach. So were the chips.

I muttered sorry. They laughed, a quiet, humourless bark. I turned around and the car was still there.

"What say we take a walk," they said. Their eyes flicked over as well. "The sky'll look good from the tower. You look like you need a break."

They told me things as we walked up the ramp, the switchback of concrete gentle and long and still warm from the day's sun. They told me their name was Early. They told me that this was their favourite part of the day and year. That they usually lost track of the day and month until they went to one of the gas stations on the Nevada side and it had the date on the lottery machine or the you-must-be-this-old signs for liquor or smokes. That this was the seventh year. Of what I didn't know. We reached the top.

"This is my favourite spot out of all of it, Ace," they said. They held their bony arms out expansively, out toward the desert and the headlights, the traffic of the Interstate behind us. The last patches of light were starting to fade.

"This is where I'm free. Where I can go out and run and scream until I fit in my body again."

We stood in silence, leaning on the railing. There were lights on the cliffs just over the border. There were a few gaps in the tire noises from the trucks pushing on through the night, trying to chase down the light that was fading. The last charcoal-magenta bits were being shouted down by promises of loose slots and keno and some game I had never heard of.

"All of this is a dream anyhow. We're all running, right? It's like that running in a dream where we don't quite get anywhere. There's promise in one direction and darkness creeping over another and studious practice at dropping bombs behind us and... and there's this in front of us. There's forever. And those are the best dreams.

"I mean, you're running."

I really tried. I gripped the railing a bit harder. I thought I killed the reaction. But Early's knowing smile, one with a molar missing – which surprised me for some reason, thinking maybe there would be less for them to work with, a different number – it told me they knew.

They shouldn't have known. I looked like every other parent out here driving an anonymous bubble. I

did this because I didn't stand out. I didn't acknowledge Early because I knew better. That didn't mean they were wrong.

The car was still there. The passenger door was open. Early turned back to the darkened desert.

"We do what we have to do."

There were other footsteps coming up the ramp.

"Back that way there's just that tree thing that probably talks to aliens," they said, pointing to the east and the highway sculpture lost in the night. "And behind us is where they practice to kill people. Out there is where we run as fast as we can but never seem to get away."

They fixed me with a stare.

"And that way," they said, looking toward the border. "That way is our opportunity. It's where the goodie-goodies from the Valley go to feel like they're being naughty and to gamble away their benefit cheques. It's where the truckers stop off for a cheap meal and a rub-and-tug. It's where the hustlers who ain't shit show up because they were fucking useless down in Vegas. It's where everyone pretends virtue and vice are worth anything."

They lit a cigarette. The steps were still coming.

"We know better, right? We know that all of it is desert. It's just that some of it has more lights and more shade and more air conditioning than other bits. All of it. The cities or the empty, all the way to the ocean. It's the same shit. We make it how we can."

"Excuse me," a deep voice said from behind us. I tried to unclench all sorts of things.

"Yeah?" Early piped up, half challenge.

The figure points to my car. "That belong to either of you?"

"Naw," Early says before I can react. "We got the camper down on the end. Somethin' wrong with it?"

The figure pauses. He thought he was right. I didn't want him to know he's right. Not right here on the edge, but I can't step to safety just yet. I looked up and out.

"I bumped into it when I dropped my phone," he said.

"You need us to call the cops for ya?"

"No, thank you. I can't even see a scratch on it. But I wanted the owner to know."

Early shrugged. "Probably out there somewhere," they said, thumbing back out over the desert.

I had picked out one good cloud at this point, trying to decide when the colour left it entirely. The two of them were talking and then they stopped talking and the footsteps went away.

“Thank you,” I said at last, quietly.

“We get by,” they said, looking back out over the now-darkened desert. “We run.”

It got cold in short order. The tire noise became less frequent. It was very much night.

“We should head to the camper,” Early said, and I could hear their smirk. “Then you’re giving me a ride into town.”

We walked down in silence. Early grabbed a canvas pack from under the ramp, and we circled around a trailer at the end of the row of cars, out where the parking spaces became long. The other car had pulled away.

“Had they known, they wouldn’t have played the game,” they said, standing on the edge of the curb. “Give it 10 or 20 and we can go.”

We did. Then we went. Early, me, my nondescript car, and a few million in cargo.

The lights grew brighter in a hurry; we passed the port of entry station for Utah and then it was Nevada and everything was like an electric-blue daylight. Virtue to vice. It wasn’t a big difference.

“This exit,” Early said. They aimed me at a gas station across from the row of casinos. “Good enough.”

We shook hands, which seemed weird, but hugging would have been weird, too, and there seemed to be something owed for a conspiracy of affection.

“We all run in one way or another,” they said. “Your job is to get where you’re going, do the thing, and then run this car out into the desert and run away. Don’t let them lock you down.” They smiled, hoisted their pack, and waved.

I got back on the highway and spent the next two hours waiting for the lights to come on behind me. Empty valley after empty valley. I was sure there would be choppers and SWAT teams just around the next bend. Just a little bit more, if I could keep running, and I would open the trunk and they would take it out and I would be handed a fat envelope that meant I was good for a bit longer. Then I would check in and I would sink into the bed and I would listen to the detectives catch the bad guys. Or maybe it would be a good time for us to go through some glimpses together.

One of these times, probably. There’s a lot to say. But that happened later.

I turned the radio on. The game was still going. I didn’t know the score. ■



Multiple Facet – Peony

Medium: Paint, Pencil, Pen, Color Pencils, Poster Board

Skylar Ceccoli Eiffert

THIRD PLACE IN STUDENT ART



Man's Obsession

SECOND PLACE IN STUDENT WRITING

by Anna Miklovic

Behold! Earth's last deity

Borne from righteous conquest of oblivious nature.

Man's fortuitous overreach into matters beyond themselves.

Lay the descent of men in marble coliseums and their children steadfast beneath them.

Recant of Prometheus and his stolen fire.

Oh, the marvels that do intend to harm us
inexplicably.

—credit score

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

by Rebecca Murpree

SHAWN HAD WORKED for SmileCorp Enterprises for years, ever since they first took responsibility over all government services. That was back when the world wars ended and the food shortages began. What choice did he have but to be a good employee? He couldn't let his family be killed with no protection from SmileCorp. He couldn't let them starve on no rations. So he had been a dedicated accountant and did everything asked by his superiors.

And where had that gotten him?

In this little, tan-walled room, surrounded by empty chairs and the receptionist typing away behind the desk. Shawn stared at the sign on the wall decorated with cartoony yellow smiling faces. *SmileCorp Enterprises Unemployment Office: Where the unproductive are put to use.*

His eyes focused on *unproductive*, the current bane of his existence.

How had it come to this?

For years, he had been the perfect employee, at least according to the mandatory training films. He knew exactly what to say, when to say it. He maintained the required tempo and volume based on the length of the sentence. He had submitted all his forms on time and with the proper authentication. He'd been good!

Maybe it had been because of his new coworker. Maybe he had just been more productive than Shawn, and they decided they didn't need him anymore because of that? If that was the case, then Cameron had better watch his back —

"Shawn? Shawn Hawthorne?" called the receptionist, interrupting his thoughts. "Your appointment is ready, honey. Just go right through there, and we'll find you a new place here with us. Don't fret, dearie, I'm sure this time you'll be able to stay with us forever! After all," she added, smiling brightly, "Everyone has a place at SmileCorp!"

THIRD PLACE IN STUDENT WRITING

Sighing, he got up and trudged through the door, entering a small room, equally as bland as the previous one, containing only a desk, two chairs, and a short, mustached man in a pressed suit.

"Ahh, let's see here," the man said. "Hmm. You are Mr. Hawthorne?"

Shawn nodded curtly.

"You have the standard female consort and two offspring?"

"That's correct. Their names are Sara, Sam, and —"

"Until recently, you worked as an accountant at SmileCorp Enterprises?"

"Yes, sir," Shawn said through clenched teeth.

"You were terminated for unproductivity?"

"No — well, yes, but I wasn't — It was Cam —"

"Well, I'm sorry you were removed and all, but don't worry. Everyone has a place at SmileCorp! I'm sure we'll find a way to use you right away!" said the man cheerfully, stacking some papers on his desk. "Let's get your forms all filled out and get you sent on your way!"

Shawn sighed with relief. Maybe this would be easy and he could get a new job soon. The man presented him with a thick pile of papers and a pen. Shawn flipped through them, signing without stopping to read.

"Looks good!" the man said once Shawn was finished with the paperwork. "Now if you'll just come through here, we can run a few tests and get you all ready to go!"

He led Shawn through a nondescript door at the back of his office, then retreated back inside. Shawn heard a click as the door locked.

Ominous. But probably just for his privacy. These people were professionals.

As the door closed, he realized how dark the new room was. He held up his hand and had to squint to see it in front of him. Small lights blinked occasionally, and

he could hear the whir of machinery, probably scanning his body and vitals to see what jobs he could excel at.

An automated voice came through speakers. "Please remove your clothing for processing."

He hesitated. This hadn't happened the first time he'd been assigned to a job. Why would they need—?

"Please remove your clothing for processing."

Praying no one was watching him through the darkness, he removed his company-issued jumpsuit. A light flashed on the opposite side of the room and he flinched, blinking at the sudden brightness.

"Sizing scan complete. Please step forward."

Shawn did so. He felt cool metal under his feet, and something snapped tightly down around his ankles suddenly, rendering him unable to move his legs. He gasped with surprise and almost lost balance as a belt began sliding forward, taking him with it.

The conveyor brought him to a second room, this one bright and shiny. It faintly smelled of antiseptic and rot and something he couldn't place. Once his eyes adjusted to the light, he saw the floor and walls were bright red. Workers dressed in plastic smocks and tall rubber boots rushed around, weaving between silver racks draped with bundles of stuff the size of a grown man that looked a lot like the meat rations his family got every week.

Was he going into food services? That would be... a change...

He tried to step forward, then realized that his feet were still encased in a small metal box on the conveyor, allowing him room only to wiggle his toes.

A worker came in behind him. He picked up one of the smocks and retrieved a pair of the tall boots from a rack near the door.

"Should I put those on?" Shawn asked.

The man just laughed and donned the protective wear himself, flipping through a stack of papers he held with one hand.

"Mr. Hawthorne?" he asked, and Shawn nodded, painfully aware of his abandoned jumpsuit on the floor of the other room.

"Ah, another unproductive one, I see," the man said. "Poor thing. Don't worry, everyone has a place at SmileCorp!"

He poured a drink from a spout on the wall and handed it to Shawn. "Drink up," he said. "This will help us finish finding your place."

Shawn tipped the cup to his mouth and sipped the cool, clear liquid. He spat a little out as it hit his tongue, surprised at the slightly sour taste of the drink. Behind him, something made a scraping noise.

"What was that?" he asked, starting to glance back.

"Oh, nothing," the man grunted. "Just drink your juice... and hold still..."

Something sharp slid through the skin on the side of his throat and he cried out in shock and pain, ankles hitting painfully against the restraints as he collapsed to the ground, feeling his skull give to the steel.

"No..." he gasped. Tears ran down his cheeks and he imagined fragments of bone cutting through the skin at his ankles and the back of his head, but he couldn't move.

As he stared up, the man appeared through the lights floating before Shawn's eyes.

He reached down and pressed the plunger on the syringe, flooding Shawn's veins with chemicals that burned through his body with every beat of his heart.

A blinding light.

A searing pain.

A distant scream — his own?

A sense of betrayal and loss.

Then calm, suffocating, infinite darkness.

Everyone has a place at SmileCorp. ■



FEMALE VANDAL

by Lorraine Meza

THE WOMAN WAS a lonely young artist. She wandered around most of the time avoiding the cold empty house that was once filled with love, laughter, and midnight dances in the kitchen. She often found herself scribbling his name on the back of a stop sign or quickly on a window of a business, she did not care if she got caught. She felt a little thrill surge through her body and brought a little warmth to her shattered heart.

One night, while at home, his face was burning deep in her soul. She sketched his face over and over in her sketchbook, but it was not enough. Her fingers and body ached with pain to do something bigger, to make his face feel real. She threw her paints in a bag and drove to their favorite spot, the drive-in. It had closed a few months ago so it was perfect. She climbed up the patio and on to the roof of the snack bar, so she could access the projector booth.

Her paints hit the roof with a loud echoing drop as she dumped them out of her bag. First, she started with the outline of his face, perfectly rounding out every curve of his left ear, then down and around his jaw and up his face, to the top of his head and swooped down the edges of his hairline. She began to add his features, his lips, nose, and eyebrows. As she began to sketch out his eyes, she dropped to her knees and sobbed. She could smell the paint on her hands as they covered her face. She looked at her painted palms then looked

past her stained fingers at the empty lot. Memories of their dates at the drive-in flashed through her mind, the giggling at the couples making out in the cars next to them, the talks about having a family one day as they watched other families enjoying their time. She remembered being upset with him when he would fall asleep during the movie. She missed him.

She took a deep breath and stood so she could continue her art. Shading in the colors and adding depth and detail to his face then finishing his eyes. Those dreamy deep eyes of his that she could get lost in. She felt at peace. She collected her paints and headed down. As she climbed down the structure there he was! He held her with such a longing firm embrace. She could feel his strong arms squeezing her tight, and his fingers gripping into her back to pull her closer into him. She could smell his mesmerizing scent. He told her it would all be ok now, she didn't have to hurt anymore. She hesitantly wrapped her arms around him as she questioned how and why he was there! He had passed so suddenly a month before, but there he was in her arms. She could feel his warmth, her body released into him.

Police responded to a call. A young female vandal had fallen from the abandoned structure and was unresponsive. ■

Home

by Elisa Carlsen

Like my ancestors, I go swimming
in the shallow ends
of Permian Seas

that once bloomed brackish with
unknowable life under violent
chemical skies

since dried to fool's gold
gleaming from a ripple in this
shelterless land

And like my ancestors, I surface
breathless in the back rooms
of Doom Town trailers,

where I leave my body to the vultures,
so I may live alone in
the high desert fields of God

and rest my bright soul
in the burnt neon orange
of their atomic glow

And everyone I know tells me
my land is a wasted land, but

Home Means Nevada To Me



Around the Next Corner

Medium: Digital Photography

Buckskin Gulch, Utah. New vistas are revealed around every corner, compelling you onward.

Maria Castaneda



Golden

Medium: Photography

Maria Castaneda

THE STONE'S INN

by Dylan Wirth

VACATION DAY 1

Ok I'm logging every day of this trip in a new cute little journal I bought just for this. I wanna be able to look back at this one day, and remember everything. The inn I'm staying at is really nice, the rooms clean, the bed is all made up with this green bedding that reminds me of the trees back home. I skipped the dinner tonight because I ate on the way here, but it did smell delicious. I can't wait for breakfast in the morning, and I might just have to try the inn's cooking along with the restaurants I researched. The man working at the front desk was very nice, he was pretty old though so I wonder if maybe he is the owner or something. I think I'm going to take the next couple days to relax before I start exploring the countryside. It wasn't that long of a train ride, but the sun is going to go down soon, and I feel sleepy already. Must be the clean air or something, my body is used to it. That, or the coziness of the room making me sleepy, the desk I'm sitting at even has one of those old candles with a cap to put it out. It really does feel like it's part of a fantasy book. Though the one part of the fantasy I don't like is the outlets not working. I can't charge my phone, and it's almost dead. I'm going to ask the front desk about it tomorrow. Anyways I think that's good for the first night, nothing too eventful really.

Goodnight Journal, Samantha

*Was this the real day 1? I had a phone in this one.
I got off the train in this one. I think it is the real one.
Who was that old man? I haven't met a young man
here at the front desk.
The man working it has to be at least sixty.
How long have I been here?*

VACATION DAY 2

I got such a good night of sleep last night. The bed was incredibly soft, and comfortable. I can't wait to sleep on it some more tonight. My phone died while I was asleep so I'll have to ask them about that. The shower was hard to figure out because every shower that isn't your own is, but once I did figure it out it was amazing to have a hot shower after all that traveling. Today I have a few things planned, the inn has some historical significance of some kind, and they offer a tour of the building to learn about it. I don't know what it's about, but when they mentioned it last night I thought it'd be fun so I'm going on it this evening. After I finish writing I'll have breakfast in the dining area by the lobby. In the evenings it turns into a full fledged restaurant that I can't wait to try. I don't really have much more to say. I think maybe from now on I'll do these journal entries before bed so I can talk about my day, not just my plans for the day. So I guess I'll talk, or I guess write tomorrow night.

Goodnight Journal, Samantha

VACATION DAY 3

Hey journal, the tour yesterday was really interesting so let's start with that. Apparently the Stone's Inn, the place I'm staying at I don't think I've mentioned yet, was turned into an impromptu hospital back in World War Two. How neat is that? I went on a whole tour of the building checking out every floor, and even some of the back employee areas. The little break room behind the front desk was a sort of nurses station where they would sit if exhaustion overtook them is what the tour guide said. There were so many wounded soldiers that the nurses rarely had time to rest. A lot of them did end up dying in the building of course, which the tour guide said is why the building is haunted! It was really exciting, but also pretty sad to learn about everything that was going on. People barely younger than me died

here. It's pretty scary to think about, I can't imagine if I'd died when I was eighteen. Today though was much happier. I took a walk in the countryside, and found a beautiful hill with a tree to read a book under. It was like a painting when the sun set. The sky was all kinds of purples, oranges, and pinks. It was absolutely beautiful. When I got back to the inn it was dark, but I didn't see the old man who'd been here when I checked in at the desk. Maybe it's his days off or something. He did look old enough that he should probably be retired, the young guy that was working was really nice too though. I told him about the outlets not working, and he said that there had been a problem in a few rooms, and apologized. Apparently some of the old wiring had gone out, or something. Nothing that would be a fire hazard, but he said I could charge my phone in the employee break room if I wanted. I don't think I will tonight. I've enjoyed just being in the moment without it. I'll definitely have to my last day here though for the train ride back. That was my yesterday, and day today though, I think I'll definitely continue writing before bed instead of in the morning.

Goodnight Journal, Samantha

Did I leave my phone there? What is going on?

VACATION DAY 4

Today was another great day seeing the sights of the countryside. There are these horse drawn carriages you can go on that pull you through a park planted with huge oak trees, and meadow flowers. The springtime just made it all the better with all of the flowers being in bloom. There were so many colors of tulips I just loved it. Whoever planned the park, and its plantings did a really good job. The oaks were beautiful too, their leaves were a deep green, and they towered over the path that the carriage was on. It was so fantastical to ride through the shadows, and the sunlight. It felt just like one of my books. I don't remember the title, but it was about elves who lived in huge trees. Mum got it for my 22nd birthday last year. It felt like I was in the book living in the trees. The inn had a small party in the afternoon. There's a jazz band staying here and they played a concert. I danced, and had a few drinks while meeting a few of the other guests. There's a lot of older people staying here this week. Dinner was delicious. I ordered a beef stew, and the meat was so tender it just melted in my mouth. I've been eating at the inn's restaurant all week even though when I planned the

trip I wanted to try a few places I'd seen online. The food is just so good that I can't help it. That just about ends my day though. It was fantastic.

Goodnight Journal, Samantha

VACATION DAY 5

I can't believe my last day here is over already. I wanted to do something big today since it's my last day. So I went to a winery for a tour, and a tasting of all kinds of fancy wines. It was really nice. I've never really been into alcohol, or the flavors of wine, and all the other stuff about it so a lot of the information went kind of over my head but it was fun! We walked through a part of the vineyard. It was so big we wouldn't have been able to go through the whole thing. The rows of grape vines just went on, and on. It made me think of hedge mazes with all the plants surrounding me. We went through the whole refinery area which I didn't really understand, and still don't. The cellar was really dry, which I didn't expect. I thought it'd be damp, and humid but I guess they don't want the barrels to mold, or something. Then we went into this beautiful room on the second floor that had a huge glass chandelier, a carved wooden table, and windows that overlooked the vineyard. That's where we tasted the wines. I think I'm more of a white wine kind of person, but almost all of them were fantastic. There was one that had a weird olivey taste. That one I definitely didn't like. The tour, and tasting took all day so by the time I got back it was too late to go out for dinner. I ate downstairs, and came up to write my entry before I forgot anything. Now I'm going to go ask the boy at the desk to charge my phone in the employee break room overnight, and I'll pick it up in the morning. Check outs at eleven so I'll just grab it then. Then it's a train ride home, and work the next day. It was a great time though I'm sad it's over. Everything has to end I guess.

Goodnight Journal, Samantha

I left my phone with the front desk? This can't be real.

I didn't write this. It's my handwriting though.

Did I write this?

How long have I been here?

VACATION DAY 1

It's day one finally! I've been looking forward to this vacation for months! I bought this journal downstairs in the inn's gift shop so I can write down everything about my trip. I usually would do it on my phone, but I think I lost it on the train, or something. It's ok though I've got all my data backed up, and I'm signed up for the whole tracking service in case I lose my phone so I can just handle all that when I get home no big deal. So I'm staying at The Stone's Inn, and it is this beautiful rustic little building out in the country. I just got to my room, and it is so cozy. The bedding is this beautiful green that totally matches all the grassy hills, and the carpets are this deep blue that just feels calming to look at. This is going to be a great trip.

Samantha

I didn't lose my phone.

VACATION DAY 3

I spent the day doing nothing today, and it felt amazing. I went down to the Inn's dining room for breakfast in the morning, then again at lunch time, and again at dinner. All day I just sat in my room reading a book I bought in the gift shop. I missed reading fantasy, and Rose's Bloom is not so bad. It's not the best book, but I did buy it in a gift shop after all. Lounging all day just felt amazing. I know I sort of wasted a day of my trip, but is it really wasted if I enjoyed it?

Samantha

How long have I been here?

VACATION DAY 1

Today is the day! I've arrived at The Stone's Inn for my trip into the country! I'm so excited to see the sights, and have some leisure time. Work has been killing me lately, and it will be great to just relax for the next five days. The room I'm staying in is so small, and cozy. I love it. The floors are this dark oak wood, and I noticed the vents have these vine patterns on the covers to make them look more decorative. The hot air they're blowing in really does take the bite away from winter. It feels nice to be bundled up inside. Everything just feels right here, and I can't wait to stay. This first entry is gonna be short because I am just ready for bed, but I'll be sure to do more in the next few days!

I can't even count the weeks anymore. How old was I when I wrote this? How old am I now? How long have I been here?

VACATION DAY 5

What a trip this has been! I loved every second of it! Though I spent a lot of time in my room it was worth it. I feel so relaxed, and just ready to take on the world. The sun is setting outside right now, and the sky is a gorgeous orange, with streaks of pink running through it. I can't believe how beautiful it is. Hopefully writing it down helps me remember. I am getting really tired though, and check out is at eleven so I better head to bed. This has just been fantastic, and I'll have to do it again some day!

God. Please. If you're out there. If you're real. Help.

VACATION DAY 4

This has been such a great trip! I'm so sad that it all has to end tomorrow. I wish I could stay longer, but life calls. Today was fantastic, I just sat in my room enjoying the ambience all day. In fact I had a few days this week just staying in my room, it's just so cozy, so warm, so inviting. I love it. Even though it is so hot outside, the country gets hot in the summer. I think I'm going to call this one a short entry, and go to bed. It's been a lazy day, and now a lazy night.

Why do I keep calling it cozy? I didn't leave the room for days this week? This is one of the last journals I have left to read.

I don't know how I've managed to read them all, but I have, and I'm scared.

I don't know what to do. I don't know how long I've been in The Stone's Inn.

I don't know how to get out.

VACATION DAY 1

Today marks the first day of my vacation to the country! I can't wait to see all the sights, to taste all the food, and to breathe in that fresh air! I'm staying at The Stone's Inn, and it is just perfect. It's like a tavern out of one of my favorite fantasy novels. The room is so cozy with my desk candle lit. The green bedding coupled with the wooden walls, and floors makes me feel like I'm staying in a tree! I might have to spend one of my days in the room just to soak it in! Maybe I'll get a book, or something. For now I'm writing in this journal to record my whole trip. I don't want to miss a thing! The train ride was exhausting though so I think I'm going to call it a night. I can't wait for breakfast in the morning!

Sam

Cozy.

VACATION DAY 2

My first full day out here in the countryside! It was gorgeous! I watched the birds fly by my window for what felt like hours. They're migrating for the winter, and there were just so many. There were so many different colors of them too! I saw these big blue ones, and these bright red ones, alot were this dark dark black. Some were brown with little white spots, and those were my favorite. After the birds I sat out on the patio of the inn. No one was out there so I had the place to myself. I read a new book I bought at the gift shop called Wilting Lily. It was interesting. There were alot of references to death, and thematically it seemed like it was trying to say something about it. I don't think I got it though. Maybe I'll have to reread it. That's how I spent my day though!

Sam

How long have I been here how long how long

VACATION DAY 1

I bought this journal in the gift shop for my trip. I don't feel like writing much in it though. I feel tired. Maybe if I sleep I'll feel better.

I think this is the last journal I wrote besides my new one. This is the only entry.

VACATION DAY 1

It's a new day! The first day of my trip out into the country is here. I bought a journal to record my time here down in the gift shop, and they were selling these purple pens! I think tonight I'm going to take it easy, and rest while I have the chance. There's plenty to do out here, and plenty I want to see. The trip took its toll on me though, that train ride was brutal. I think it's time for bed.

Samantha

I don't know if anyone will find this. I hope I do so that I remember what is happening. It's my fourth day on my trip. I don't know how many fourth days there have been. Gary fell asleep at the front desk, and I wasn't sure if he needed help, or not so I went into the back room. I couldn't find anyone so I went through another door, and it led to an office. I found a journal on the shelves next to a box. I thought it might be a list of phone numbers, or emergency contacts, or something so I looked inside. It was my journal. In my handwriting. Talking about this trip I'm on now.

I don't know when I wrote it. There were more in the box. There were hundreds in the box. I swiveled the box out on a dolly I took from the employee room, and Gary was still sleeping. I think he was sleeping. I've counted the journals, and there's about four hundred, and thirty two. That's almost eight years of journals. All of them are written by me. It's my handwriting. It's my way of writing. It's my trip that I'm on. I think I was twenty three when I got here. I don't know how old I am now, but I look at least sixty. I could be older. I'm going to try leaving tonight. I'll say I'm going for a night walk, or something if anyone asks. I'm also going to hide these journals, and especially this one in the room. Just in case.

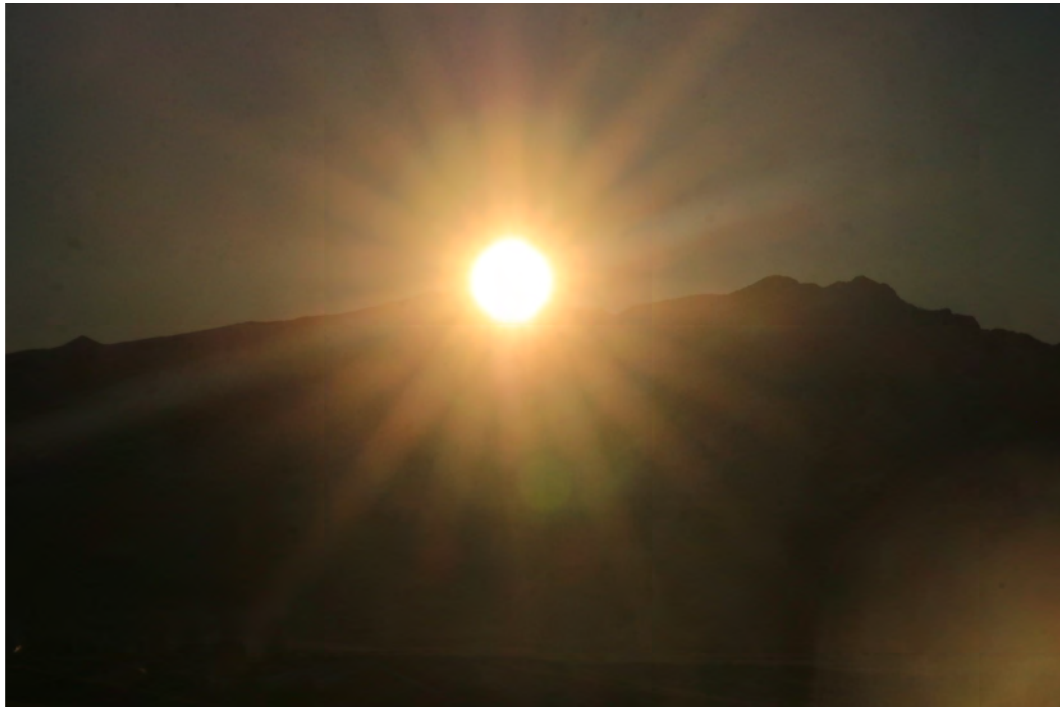
Samantha

VACATION DAY 1

My old bones are creaking! That was one long train ride, but I am excited to see the countryside. I'm writing down everything I do so I don't forget. I got a journal down in the giftshop, and now I'm ready to write. The front desk boy downstairs was very nice when checking me in, and was also running the gift shop. Suppose they're a bit short staffed. The room looks very cozy with its green bedding complimenting the dark oak floors. It really breathes life into the room. I'm quite tired from the journey, and I think I'm ready for bed. I hope this trip is everything that I dreamed it would be!

Goodnight Journal, Samantha

THE FRONT DOORS to The Stone's Inn opened outward as the building breathed in new life. Samantha had finally died. The inn breathed in again with contentment as the new soul was trapped, and devoured by its innerworkings. Samantha had been a tricky one to keep. She'd been writing too much for the inn's liking. It had slowly driven her away from the hobby, but had never truly been able to break her of it. She'd even found her old journals it had hidden away from her. It didn't matter now as Samantha's corpse sat still in the chair at her desk. The floorboards of her room split open. The ones under her chair shifted forward, knocking it over, and sending her corpse into the abyss of the inn. The inn always got the soul it was looking for in the end. This one had only taken fifty three years. ■



Bursting Out

Medium: Photography

Greg Reeder

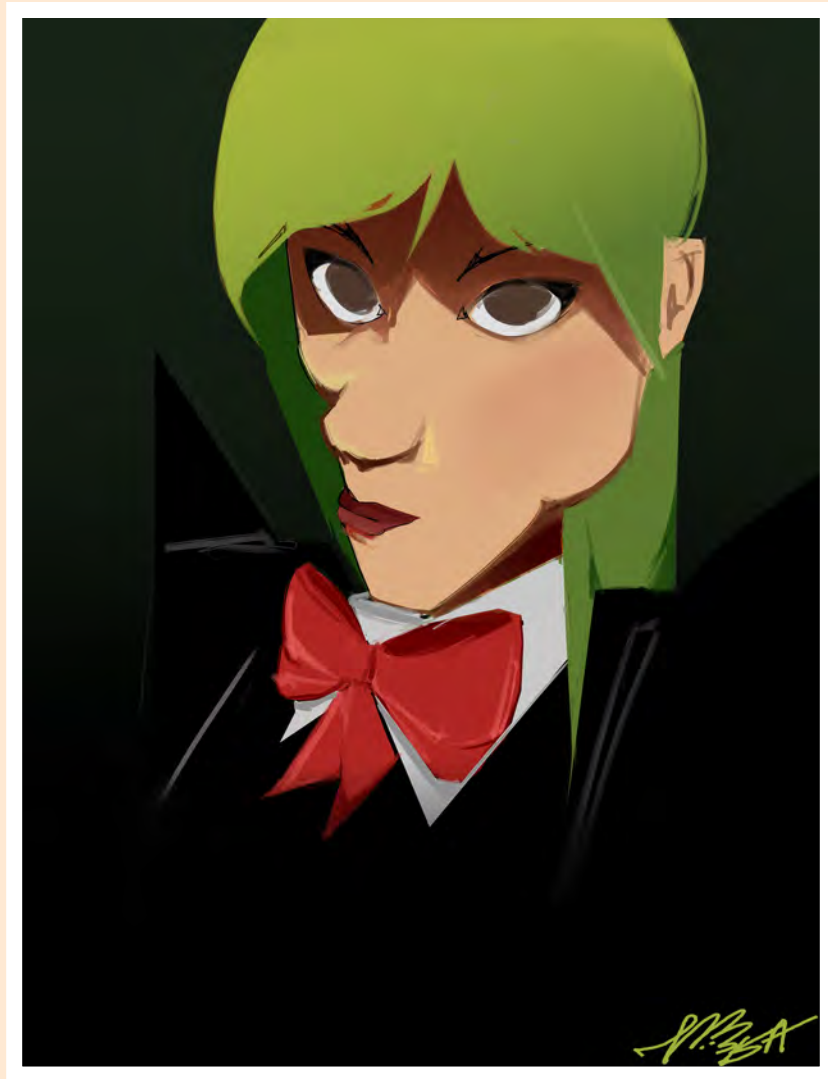


Peace Revealed

Medium: Digital Photography

The sun setting over our field and barn in Lamoille, Nevada.

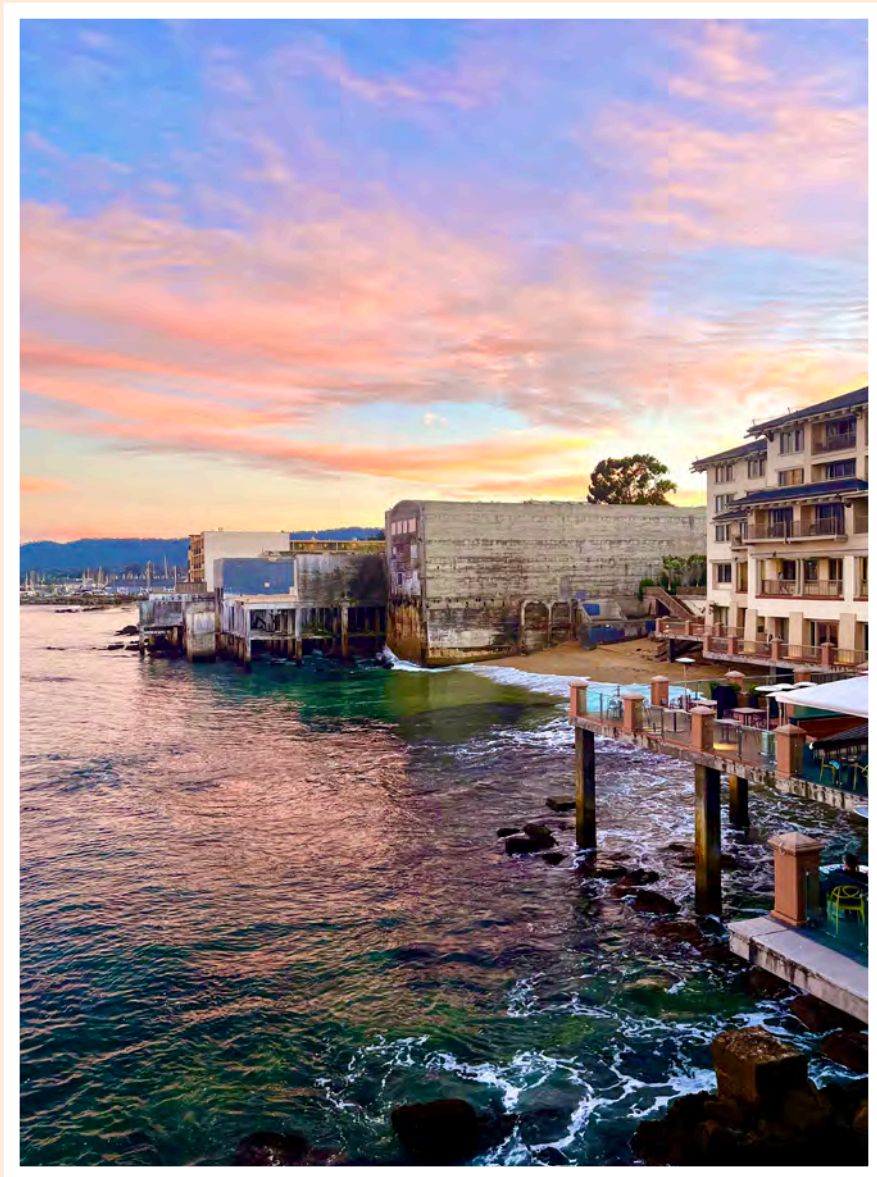
Angie de Braga



Olive

Medium: Digital Art

Isabel Miller



Behind Cannery Row

Medium: Photography

Jennifer Stieger

www.gbcnv.edu/argentum
argentum@gbcnv.edu