



Process of Existence

Hector Collante

Ink on Bristol

Editor's Note

We have received a lot of great work this semester, and as a student publication we know we've accomplished what we have set out to do, and that is to share with our student community the works of our peers. We chose the best work we could, and then we had to choose from those pieces, several times. So much amazing work, expressions of the self, so little space! Indeed, these are all things that every publication must go through, our floors are lined with the corpses of beautiful pieces which didn't make the cut, but it is a reminder for those of us who work behind the scenes of just how talented our student body can be. Often when we go through our classes, scouting work for publication, we will see pieces that never make it to our critiques. Within these pages is a drop in the bucket of the art at Broward College, and we need to change that.

Observe, contemplate, assimilate, create, inform.

Art for us is not just about prestige, but about the embodiment of the human experience and as such, we are P'an Ku, we are life. The thing about each and every one of us is that we are constantly going through these motions due to our unintentional act of living. As life itself, not only are we given the opportunity to take this time experiencing our surroundings, each other, but also we are given the prowess to interpret what we have experienced and turn it into art. What happens within our individual interpretations through our own personal filters is that we are then able to experience one another's creations, able to share those momentary and overflowing moments of emotion and create our own interpretation.

So here is another taste of the human experience, bravado, and humors which pulse within us all. Enjoy your lapses of reason as you dive into this issue, and above all remember that we are all artists in our own right.

Sincerely yours,

Julius Caesar Robledo
P'an Ku
Editor-In-Chief

Behind a Prayer

Trish Kahn
Acrylic on Canvas

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NOT NOT
NOT NOT
NOT NOT

Elizabeth Fernandez

I'm not here to be ok
I'm not your sunshine in a jar
Just because I'm smiling now
Doesn't mean I owe you
Another smile
Tomorrow

Montana
Montana
Montana

Jazmin Hunt

Whistling of air,
The sound of wild mustangs,
The warmth of summer,
The splash of the river,
No harm comes from Montana.

Hide N Seek
Hide N Seek

Madisson Jardine

Sun Light creeps west-ward,
While shadows of spring flowers
Sneak towards the east;
Nature is in secrecy
Hiding from the hands of mankind.



Growth
Christopher Valadares
Digital Photography



Instinctual

It Was Instinctual

Jasmin Lawicki

Birthed from a womb,
fed to the sounds of a heartbeat,
comforted by oversized arms
rocking to and fro like waves of the ocean
lapping beneath the bottoms of boats.
It was all that was known of the world.

Packaged as perfect pop singers
peering from posters on bedroom walls,
for girls who applied lip gloss with each
breath because it tasted like bubble gum,
and who knew it was only obtainable
by picking a color, then a number,
spawning the opening and closing of paper
between sticky fingertips that could
lift a flap and reveal the secrets of the universe
written with hearts over the 'i'.
It was superficial.

At the point when intertwined hands
led to touching, and touching
led to kissing until it exploded,
needing to drink of flesh and desire.
It was passion and passion was sex.
It was animalistic.

Promises by children playing house
who couldn't count the cost
or know the weight of weight
or words that could hold eternity.
Public declarations of affection seemed
to hold meaning because of
the longevity of exclusivity.

It was feigned reality.

Birthed from a womb,
fed beneath the gaze of enraptured eyes,
protected by oversized arms that know
of a world where it is unknown.
Between these arms it is all that exists.
It is instinctual.

Smoke

Maria Ghisays
Digital Photography





Hot Rod

Sara Baig

We rode better when we were younger,
There was a firmer joy in it then, a deeper
Astonishment at the speed—flight, that was our first
Brush with it, our first glimpse at the most coveted
Of human incapacity—and balance, the clear
Huffing push that propelled us forward, the
Screeching reverse that halted us in our tracks.
We could have done anything then, been anything then,
Lifting our asses in the air and hunching
Over the handlebar, cresting, soaring,
Golden-lit in the setting sun.

Though, of course, we learned to drive cars
Eventually, then little could compare
To a hard foot on a gas pedal, a dark sequestered
Freeway, a climbing speedometer. Then too did
We soar, shrieking higher pitched, sometimes
More with anger than with joy, sometimes hoping,
For the stuttering fear of an oncoming vehicle,
Sometimes with tears, sometimes with bellowing laughter,
Sometimes with screeches in time to favorite lyrics.
This too was our rite of passage, through the somehow
Melancholic, in spite of our precious freedom—
I'd always remembered the bicycle as a softer experience,
With a kinder wind and throatier heartbeat.

We rode better when we were younger,
I know it when I climb now, wobbling
With uncertainty in the beginning and impatient
Through the experience, the objectionable leisure
It takes to get from point a to point b. Oh, how only
Years ago I would have been traveling light speed.

Gouache Study

Maria Carolina Keener
Gouache and Ink



Portals

Michael A. Dubreuil

8:30.

Time to act like a human being.

I stared at my screen today pretending to work.

I must've looked like a zombie.

It's funny that it is normal to look like that at work.

Sometimes, if you stare at things long enough,
they start to look like portals.

The only thing that prevented my monitor from becoming a portal
was the goddamn smudges on the screen.

I thought about how I could just fall into the whiteness of it,
and be weightless forever,
but then I saw,
the goddamn smudges.

The Thin Man

Elizabeth Fernandez

Watercolor



The Book of Roots
Nadine Younes
Ceramic

Ancient Skull
Brandon McCutcheon
Ceramic, Roku



Objectified Penguin
Kimberly Escobar
Plaster Sculpture

Sated

Emily Jalloul

She does kegels for him.
Three daily sets of ten,
while she's behind her desk at school or work,
in traffic or brushing her teeth.

They smoke and eat pizza in bed,
kissing with greasy tongues.
They come with her on top,
pulled tight into his chest.
Appetites earned, he asks
"What's for diner?"
She worries about her waist,
but relents when he says burgers and shakes.
At midnight, she'll cook potato
with onion and parsley and garlic.

She never gave in easily.
She never watched sports
or admitted she was wrong.
She tolerates things she never did.
Not the porn or bad driving,
but the faucet left to run,
his tardiness and flirtatiousness.

But with the French toast she fries in butter,
or his grip on her thighs,
she is voracious, sexy in her gluttony.



Seduction

Kewss
Acrylic on Canvas

An Ode to Kitty

Rachel Shapiro

She sits on my chest and stares.
She calls to me as I enter the room.
She nestles against me as I write,
And she throws herself at my feet as I pray.
But it's in the dark of the night that the look
in her eyes bares all.

I feel the depth and breadth of it.
I am overcome by the simplicity of it.
I learn anew each day the generosity of it.
And I am reminded how much I have to
learn about it.
Her love. Love. Devotion to another.

She awaits for me to get settled before softly
approaching.
I learn the value of patience.
She caresses my face with her paw when my
hand stills from stroking her.
I learn the value of asking.
She forgets in an instant that I pushed her
away.
I learn the value of forgiveness.
And in the dark of the night,
As she gazes at me in stillness,
It is then that I know what it is to love.

Revolve

Arielle Magner
Black & White Photography



Death Doesn't Always Need a
Death Doesn't ^{Body}

Death Doesn't Always Need a Body

Death Doesn't Always Need a Body
Doesn't Always Need a Body
Death Need a Body
Death Doesn't Always Need a Body

Emily Jalloul

It's not like the Tooth-fairy
demanding physical compensation.
Some people are stolen—vanish.
never to recover again.

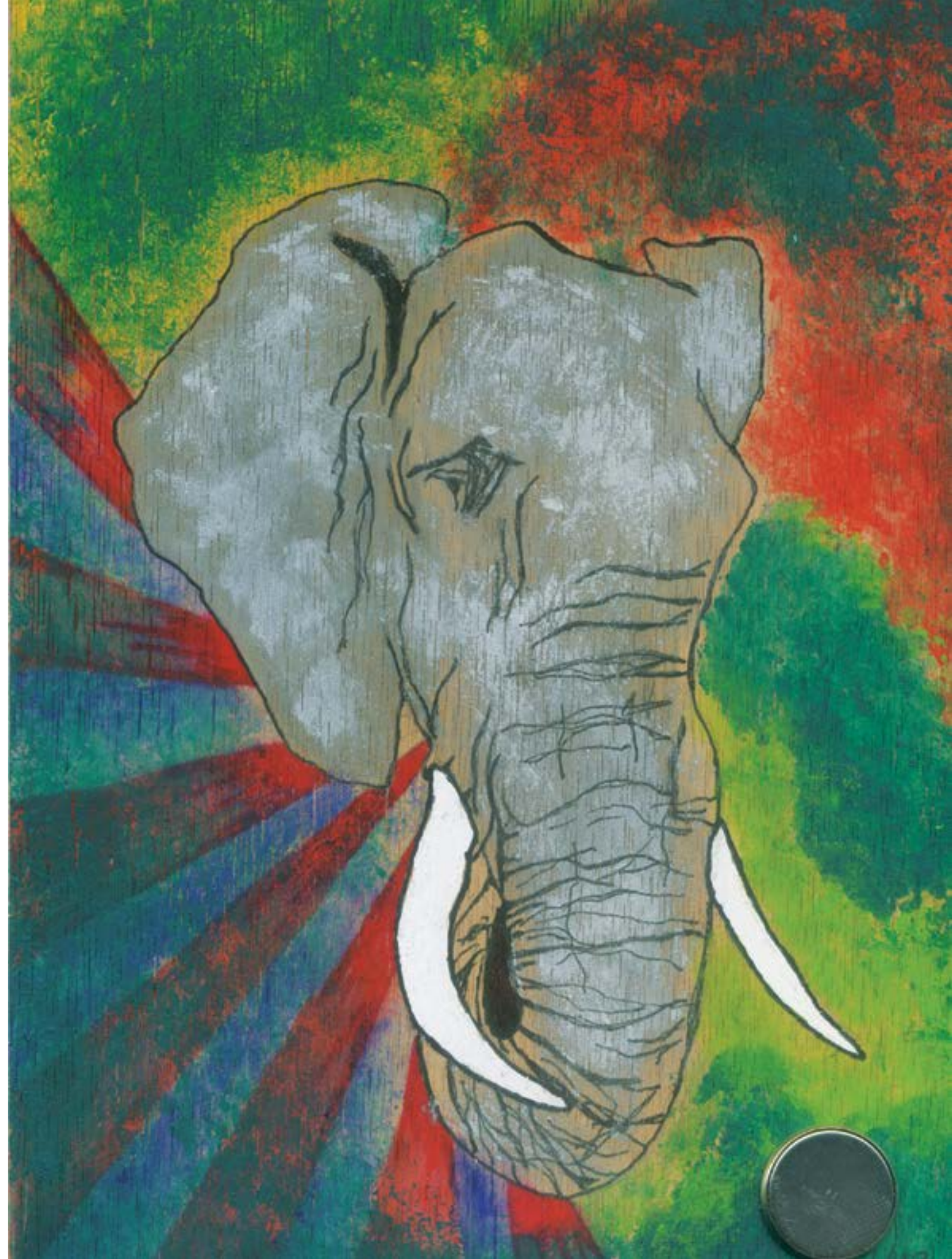
When she was very young,
she'd weep anticipatory tears
at the thought of her mother's death,
so saddened by the thought of being Mother-less.
She's not so young anymore,
and sometimes she fantasizes about it.
*It could like taking off sunglasses,
exposed to luminescence.*

For fifteen years,
she watched her mother
crumble under the weight of herself,
transform into *The Blob* or *Bonnie Grape*.
Brain and bone turned into mush,
trapped by pains,
real or imagined, it doesn't matter.
All with the same solution.
Percocet. Xanax. Soma. Vicodin.
Cocktails or SSRIs.

Once, she came home
to find her unconscious,
passed out with her hand
in a mixed bag of Marshmallows and M&M's.
She held her breath before speaking,
and wondered,
what do I hope for?

Elephant

Katherinn Carvajal
Acrylic on Wood





You Suck Meter You Suck You Suck Parking Meter Parking Meter

Patrick Martin

Quintessential catastrophe comes to light. I was only marching through the sands, I would say perhaps an hour. Of course this doesn't faze you. You, with your brainless pawns dressed in royal blue, wielding headache-producing technology. I counted the change, I counted the time, I counted the drinks! But still, here I sit on the asphalt with your single sadistic eye staring me down.

The obnoxious red blink is driving me insane. Expired! Expired! Really? What point do you serve? I'll pay the fee because of the government's decree, but mark my words I'll get you back! When you're not looking, when you're asleep, I'll be waiting. Then Mr. Parking meter we'll see who has the last laugh!

Waiting

Gouthaman Raveendran
Digital Photography



Mystic Land
Melanie Metz
Digital Photography



Study of Landscape
Samrin Parvin
Gouache Paint





Fear Through the Eyes of Madness

Teo Genao

Black & White Photography

In a Denny's, Smiling

Alexis Lacman

Last year, my picture was on the cover of a Denny's menu, and I was smiling. But my hair was unwashed and unkempt, greasy strands dangling next to my sullen cheeks. And I hadn't slept for three days, just stared at watches and clocks.

But I was in a Denny's, smiling, because a photographer asked me to. My father was in the hospital down the road, a sailor swimming his way up from the depths of an ocean of vodka, resisting the urge to swallow each crest and trough.

But I was in a Denny's, smiling, because visiting hours had ended and cheap coffee and a plastic booth were more reassuring than an empty house.

My mother, a lioness, spent 14 years battling the tumors in her breast and now she resides in a sterling silver urn, her war cry silent to everyone but me.

But I was in a Denny's, smiling, because the waitresses were kind and the comfort of a mother's touch was a peace I would never know again.

My brother, a lost soul, was searching for his solace along the path of track marks on his arm,

only to get swept away by the river of opiates in his veins.

But I was in a Denny's, smiling, because the diner was warm and the air smelled like pancakes. I, a daughter and sister, had nowhere to go, and no more idols to worship, and I needed to tear at the walls and brawl with my circumstances.

But I was in a Denny's, smiling, because screaming didn't seem like an option.



Damaged Goods

Michael A. Dubreuil

Oh, damaged goods
with your reduced price and dented frame
Not only has your integrity been challenged and lessened,
but now there is a numerical value by which
the declination of your worth has cost you

And still no one wants you

Oh, damaged goods
how you sit at the bottom
and collect dust and rust and droppings
Were you not just like the rest not long ago?
Before Charlie, that careless boy
dropped you on your face.

And still you are not wanted

Oh, damaged goods
how you are joined by misshapen companions
that you knew in a younger time
clones of your body, but not of your soul
Their mangled forms a crumple beside you
and now, you are not looking so bad for eyes such as hers
but now

You want no one

Limitation

Joel James
Graphite, Colored Pencil



Magical Hell

Dionisio
Digital Photo Manipulation



All Eyes See

Ashley Cano
Ink

Within Monochrome Dreams

Ascension
Melanie Metz
Digital Photography

Daniel Lopez

This is it; this is where it all begins –
The past, the present, and the future
colliding in a cosmic carousal
engineered by what truly defies reality.
Where the lost could be found
where time itself has no bound.
Is it black? Is it white? Or is it all found
within monochrome dreams—
Shifting through purpose,
swirling through notion,
The vibrations remain unnoticed.
This is the end, where it all started.
As the screeching sound of silence continues
to taunt the madness.



In It Together

Cody Hacker

"My name is Christian, and I am addicted to heroin."

The other members of the group at Transitions Recovery Center clapped as the young, frail appearing man sat back down quietly. Each person in the group was taking their turn introducing themselves, until halfway around the circle a woman stood up.

"My name is Mary and I am an alcoholic."

She stared directly at Christian as she spoke her confession, with shakiness in her voice. Her shakiness didn't appear to be from fear or guilt, but instead from anger and resentment. The members of the group looked at both Christian and Mary with confusion as they wondered why there seemed to be hostility between the two.

The rest of the members finished introducing themselves. As they finished the group director announced there would be a short break before the reconvene. Other members of the group spread out and took the time to get beverages and snacks and meet their peers. Mary began walking up to the table of drinks in the back corner of the room before she was

stopped.

"Hi Mary, how have you been?" Christian asked with hesitation.

"Fine."

"I know you have no reason to want to speak to me, but it would mean a lot to me if we could try to get along here. I want you to know how sorry I am."

Mary quickly turned her head and walked away.

Just one-year prior, Mary and Christian had a very friendly and cordial relationship. Christian was at Mary's house daily. He was always over for dinner or to help around the house. Although this meant another mouth to feed, Mary didn't seem to mind. After all, Mary's son James seemed to be very fond of Christian. The two young men had been dating for a few months and seemed like the perfect

Christian glanced up at him from his huddled position on the floor with the needle still in his arm.

couple. Going into the relationship Christian was honest about his addiction problem but promised to work on it as he didn't want to lose what he and James had. The couple was very social and loved going to different events and parties. However, one night proved to be too tempting for them both.

An old friend of Christian's had invited them to a party at his condo in South Beach. They accepted the invita-

tion but James had his concerns. The man who had invited them not only was an old friend of Christian's but also used to be his drug dealer. After much debate, Christian convinced James they would only stop by for an hour and that he would not partake in any using. Later that evening they arrived at the party, which was located in the penthouse of an eighteen story high rise with two enormous fountains placed next to golden lions out front, a building much nicer than anything they had ever seen, they put the car in park and handed their keys to the valet and walked in. As the night went on they got separated as they were socializing with everyone. James finished up a conversation and began to look around the room for Christian but he was nowhere in sight. He walked down the hallway and called out for Christian. As he called out he heard someone shuffling around in a room to the right of him.

He knocked on the door and there was no response so he walked in. Christian glanced up at him from his huddled position on the floor with the needle still in his left arm. He was sweating and his pupils were dilated making his eyes appear black. James' initial reaction was to get angry, but for some reason he thought, how can he judge someone for something he had never tried himself. He sat next to Christian.

"I want to try."

That night ended worse than either boy could have imagined. James' body couldn't handle the same amount of heroin as Christian's could. He began shaking violently and foaming at the mouth, his eyes slowly rolled back in his head and he passed away almost immediately after injecting the drug into his veins.

Mary, with no one to turn to, had begun seeking comfort for her sorrow in vodka. Her drinking had become so bad

that she lost her job, and ultimately hit rock bottom. She only chose to go to rehab because she didn't want to drink away the memories of her one true love, her son. She had not seen Christian since the accident and was planning on never seeing him as long as she lived. Christian was staring at her from across the room and all she could think was how badly she wanted to hurt him, rip him apart, and make him feel all the pain she was feeling. At the height of her anger, just as she was about to get up and confront him, a somber thought crossed her mind. She took a moment and approached him and with each step she became a little calmer. She stood in front of Christian, he looked up as she leaned in and whispered.

"I can't hate you; it's not what he would have wanted. Let's do this together."



melt
Kewss
Acrylic on Canvas

Memory: A Day, Autumn, 2008

Alexis Lacman

5a.m. We crouch in a corner of the white-walled living room, a plastic bag from Sweetbay rubber-banded around the judgmental, flickering red eye of the smoke detector. Careful to exhale through an open window, each swirling stream of cancerous cloud crafted by mentholated Camel No. 9's and reluctant withered lungs- shoving terry cloth safeguards beneath the door shielding the wispy remnants of our smoky sins from the R.A., giggling because of small rebellions. We speak in thesis statements, verbally penning dissertations on the iconography of Beavis and Butthead; the perpetual catch-22 of being female; the deconstruction of early morning infomercials; the value of a college experience. We light candles, peer at the flames until our vision is sprinkled with tiny, blue dots, and we worship, like Druids in a vast, English meadow, the autumn air, each breeze sensually sifting itself through the grid of the window screen, lightly kissing our faces, whispering hellos and goodbyes and the promise of a new day soon.

6a.m. We slam the squeaky doors of a '97 Volvo, its burnt orange sheen like a rusty, tethered sun beckoning the morning calls of the birds. Our shored, metallic star-ship purposefully races across these beaten and tarred paths, the wind lifting our tresses into choreographed and jerky formations, carrying our excited shouts over the heads of oaken trees, disrupting the final autumnal slumber of each dying leaf. We are singing the tale of Odysseus, screeching excerpts of Kerouac's, belting the fate of Chris McCandless,

channeling our fellow journeymen, our voices hoarse, our verses punctuated by the Violent Femmes crooning from the Volvo's slick, speaker-ered mouth, as we sail onward to destinations unknown.

7a.m. We find ourselves on the rooftop of a parking garage, afforded an expansive view of the city, a clandestine wonder hiding in plain sight, a secret only we and this concrete structure are privy to. We can see Busch Gardens from here, with its steel spirals of amusement twisting into one another like machinated lovers. The sun begins to rise, rise, the heavens lifting that fiery mass upward until it spills out, flooding the streets, shattering windows to awaken this unassuming metropolis. The sky transforms with each hued sequence, painting our bodies with these earthen formal elements – oranges, pinks, greens, yellows – splattering our full cheeks, our widened, smiling mouths, our twirling hips. We run around the lot with abandon, our sneakers making rough sketches of invisible figure-eights, plié-ing on the painted white lines made to envelop dormant vehicles, improvising kick-ball-changes on the thin, filtered stumps of our cashed cigarettes, our bodies fueled by neon energy drinks from the corner store, our blood rushing with carelessness. This is freedom.

This is youth.

**The perpetual catch-22
of being female**

red and sixty-seve
two hundred and
Two hundred and sixty-seven

trite
trite
trite

Emily Jalloul

Two hundred and sixty-seven

of his books remained.
They were useless to her.
She'd never care to know
about *Structural Engineering for Bridges*
and she'd never understand his math books,
even if they weren't in Arabic.
She needed to know
how he removed stains,
cut grapefruit, made shwarma,
how he felt about the war,
his marriage, and his American daughter.
She never had the courage to ask,
how have I disappointed you,
what do you wish you did differently--
marry an Arab, become a doctor?

Months earlier, as he lay in his deathbed,
she stood by him, seeking similarities
between their faces. Eyes, cheeks, smile.
Not enough for the nurse to know she's his.
"You look more like your mom," she's told.
"I have my dad's eyes," she pleads,
pushing away the American.
She wants to reach out and touch him,
hug him, let him love her
like she refused as a child,
always preferring her mom instead.
She wants him to know her regret
for screaming *I hate you* when she was fifteen
and not listening when he explained
how planes flew or how to convert
Fahrenheit into Celsius.
She wants to yell apologies and love-notes
into his brain-dead ears until he wakes up,
wipes the sleep from his eyes,
and tells her *it's okay. We can go home now.*

Aaron Pond

and how far gone is beauty?
the beauty which anyone could find
the beauty which everyone could love
the beauty that was so whole

are we all Frankenstein?
hoarding our own collections
of dead and rotting arts
"collage styled in decoupage
with hints of Thoreau n' Tarantino "
the post-modern piece of shit

How suiting that in our democratic society
where the everyman is
spied on and poisoned
that we create "works"
so meaningless

we are at the point
where art is dead
where art gives head
and art lay dead, in a bed,
of a heroin overdose at 22.

Traces

Michael A. Dubreuil

What happened to the poster on the wall?
There it used to hang so magniloquently.
The one that used to shout out
at the visitors who would walk by.
It is not I who asks the question,
it is the wall that's asking.
It is quite embarrassed to be there,
bare and exposed to all of those that walk past.
How alone, the wall must be.

How alone indeed.

The only trace that still remains
is four small dabs of adhesive,
a memory of the wall's companion.
It is much like the blank expression of a woman
who has fallen out of love
But then we'd have to ask ourselves--

Did the wall ever really have a companion?



Going to Work

Teo Genao

Solarized Black & White Photography

Paternal Sacrifice

Jessica Rae Pulver-Adell

Those swollen-hearted fools,
giving and open-handed fiends of love,
amassed with the pangs of poignant sacrifice,
raw, untutored passions are left to rot.
Glimmering hopes of vicarious gratification
hinder ripe infancy.

It is you who has endured the perennial blunder
of aspirations forever beyond grasping fingers.
You who suffer lacerations of dreams gone awry,
and I, the catalyst of your calamity.

How not, could you know the guilt and shame I swallow,
how blind, how foolish, and ignorant do you take me,
to believe your burden stands unnoticed?
How could you not feel the pangs of sullen footed attempts to please
the maw of expectation boring down upon my flesh?
How may I achieve my own fruition in knowledge that you
have forsaken your own?

Must I charge to ascension in the wake of carrion corpses,
your dreams forever reticent, scattered among the bone?
Or will I become mired in the seas of regret that arrive,
in the maturation of years too late,
will the devouring swathes of parenthood defame my dreams?

Forever fly my mother upon the wings to the sounds of your heart.
Be not still the fingers of ever-composing madmen.
Chase relentlessly the signature of your fettered melodies,
make manifest your dreams, relinquish the bonds of servitude.
Make free my heart and yours, forever to be united in the
quake of your storm.

Forever fly my father of Gaia to the echoing exultation
of your spirit absolved- the burdens of the world.
Spear true of your heart of souls and embrace
those planes thought eternally amiss; for creation of yourself,
and exodus from grief, heralds my everlasting boon.
Unshackle the lances grounding me from flight.

Let I not be the cause of obliteration,
yet the inspiration to chase forevermore
the births of childhood.



Hunger
Minerva Moreno
Solarplate



Relive

Arielle Magner
Black & White
Photography



Here Piggy Piggy, You are the Devil

Maria Ghisays
Black & White Photography



Triplets
Nadine Younes
Sculpture

Shockwave
Patricia Kobelin
Ceramic



Thunder at Dawn
Elizabeth Fernandez
Water Color

My Journey

Xuan Son

The winds were howling through the bamboo woods and I could hear gunshots in the jungle. The rain fell on the ground and the little bamboo wood houses were like drops of blood. The people were being hunted down and killed by these communists, the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge were the heartless soldiers who showed no mercy or emotion toward their own people. The rain smelled like dead people, those innocent and frightened individuals who were their enemies. When I was one, and my older sister was six, my mother left Vietnam. With only the clothes on our backs, we walked to the city and took a bus to where there was an escape boat. The boat took us to Cambodia and another bus took us to Phnom Penh. My mother rented a small apartment. She planted and sold green onions and mushrooms to have some money for our journey. We stayed there for one year and then decided to escape to Thailand. She paid money to a man to take us to Thailand. He tricked us out of our meager funds. A guide offered to help us travel through an extremely dangerous area but also tricked us, taking our money and abandoning us. I was three years old and my sister was eight then. We got arrested for escaping the country and spent one night in jail. The guard let us go. My mother met my

stepfather and we all finally escaped with another group of people who were looking for freedom. I saw a man step on a mine, which blew his legs off. I watched as they sawed his legs off without any anesthesia. His screams reached me as I crouched under a tree where our group had stopped for the night. We had to cross a river that was polluted, killing people who were unfortunate enough to drink the contaminated water. Throughout the entire trip, we dodged bombs and kept on the move, staying in one place for only one night, keeping absolutely silent. Once I ran under a thorn bush to avoid a bomb, and then got stuck in the thorns until someone helped me to get out. We stayed in the forest for eight days and eight nights. The shoes on our feet were hand made from tires.

At night, I felt so sad because I

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could hear the animals in the jungle crying. I thought they cried because we had to shoot their babies for meat. We ate insects, iguana, moneys, and whatever we found in the jungle. We finally arrived in Thailand and stayed in

the refugee camp for three years. That was good fortune for us because that is where the American Ambassador was at work, we were interviewed by the United Nations. We thought we were finally safe, safe from the bombing and safe from starvation, but we were wrong. Bombs attacked the refugee camp every day and night. The people dug a bomb trench in the floor of the house and the nearby school for a shelter that everyone could jump into when the bombs came. We knew when the bombs came because there would be a loud siren sound to alert us to prepare for the worst. Ambulance sirens were a constant background noise. My half-brother Sovan was born in the camp in 1987. My sister and I sold eggs and candy that had been given to us by the American agencies. We would go to the marketplace to trade it for meat and vegetables, but even with this help there was still not enough food. The Red Cross helped us reach an uncle in the United States in St. Petersburg, Florida to sponsor us. He was a Lieutenant in the South Vietnamese army and came here in 1975 with other Americans soldiers. We were first transported to a Malaysia refugee camp, then to a Philippine camp for eight months, where my half-sister (Mai) was born. Finally, we arrived in America in August of 1989. We lived with my uncle in St. Petersburg for one month, until his wife kicked us out.

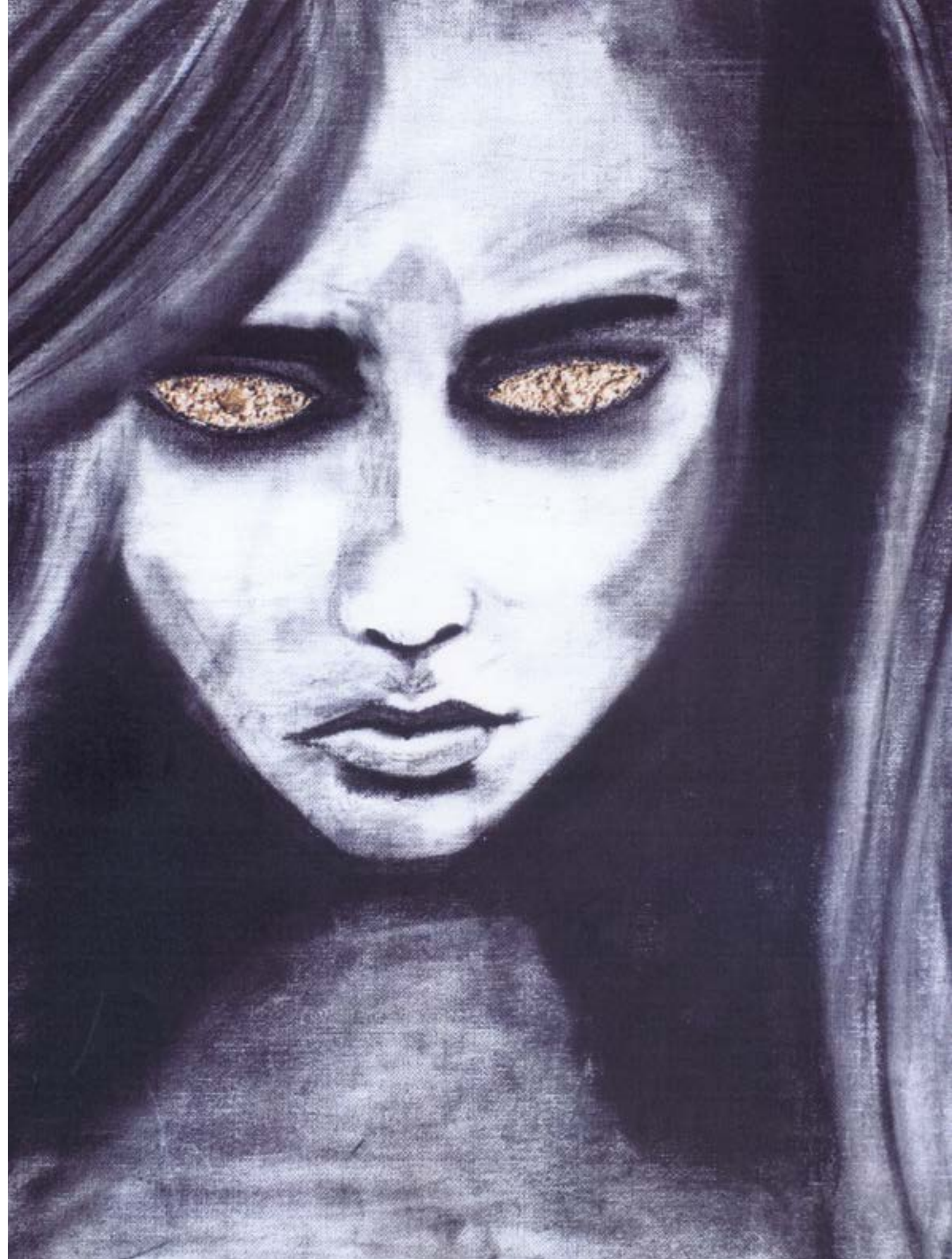
My family is very thankful every day to wake up and know we live in a free country. We thank God for everything, and take nothing for granted. We thank God for protecting us through trials and hardships, and for helping us to remain alive and determined. My mother, who is one brave woman, through her strength and determination never let anything cloud her dream for her family. She had to always work hard just to keep us all alive.

When I first arrived in Gainesville

to go to college, the cicada's z-z-z was sad to me because it reminded me of the sad jungle noises. The noise of the firecrackers on the Fourth of July was not a happy sound for me either, because I would flash back to that difficult time when the sound of gunfire was a constant reminder of the dangers that surrounded us. All of my life, experiences make me who I am.

Eyes on the Prize

Mehr Kashmiri
Charcoal on Canvas



FLESHWORLD

Part I: Kingdom of the Crab People

Michael Perinuzzi

Chapter 1: The Corral

The night stunk like a dead whore's love box, and with good reason, it was the 12am happy hour at the Coochie Corral, and all the perverted scum ridden nematodes from the city were clamoring into and out of the bar to indulge in beer, a lap dance, more beer, and a drunken blow job behind the Texaco station. The gas-run cars of the poor- and hov-cars of the depraved rich- spilt into the lot; grid locking and blocking the arteries of the already disease-ridden, gravel heart of the parking lot. Local frat boys walked in from the nearby campus wishing to drink away the day's lecture. Archaic bums emerged from around the corners of unknown streets, from unknown lifetimes of unknown wastes, of countless eons of lives dimmed but not extinguished. It was a parade of the flies, or maggots, or whatever people would consider degenerates of any age or generation. Each soul inching closer to an alluring glow that lit up the starless night.

The Corral's interior was a violet haze from the hanging lights that roped near and around the haunting, ghost-like signs that detailed the advertisements of major beer and sex-simulation corporations. Violet-skinned figures swirled and shambled around dark metallic poles as the eyes of numerous unknowns followed

the forbidden skin under the glitter; clutching something under the darkness of where they sat grabbing either cash or swollen manhood. Some men hooted and hollered while others gave off a serious aura of attention as if a nipple or ass cheek would turn to gold, if only for a second. Other flesh parasites seemed not to be able to keep their shaky composure and tried to grab what they could never afford. They were met with the heavy punch, kick to the balls, and the occasional eye gauge delivered by the monstrous ebony statue who was widely known as Skimpy before being thrown out into the puke plastered alley way.

He was known as Skimpy for his skimpy way with words, but definitely not in his way of pure, refined ass kicking. He wore a black "staff" shirt, and had a face so stern, his jaw muscles always seemed ready to pop. In the dressing room the girls often talked about how they heard that Skimpy was from one of those African countries that suffered from the primordial wart of genocide. But he was not from the side that rich upper class families would send a nickel a day in order to say to their clones at the country club, "See, we care..." Skimpy was from the side that dealt the pain and kept the watering holes red with hemoglobin and bashed infant skulls. The Corral's management said an independent military group saw Skimpy and liked the way he handled a machete and AK. They were sold. After that, it's a blur; Afghani-

stan, Syria, Mexico, any place where poor lives needed to be recycled for reasons that will keep the present and future scholars guessing. Some say he eventually got fired, others say he resigned, and some say he had a change of heart.

"Change of heart my ass, one glance into that motherfucker's eyes, and you know he would love to rip your head off and call it a trophy," says Mackie Harefoot (a common face around the Corral and common recipient of Skippy's brand of attitude reform). This night, like many others, seemed the same. He would stand in the corner right next to the bar with a glare that would silence a bawling baby. Then, when the shit hit the fan, he'd move in like a great white taking down a baby seal. The baby seal being shot out of the water looking more like a giant turd than an animal, and landing into the sinewy death trap that is the shark's jaws. One swift motion and then it would be over. Nothing to do except take the limp unknown and toss him into the defiled alley way.

Skimpy would never say a word, not even a grunt if the drunks he beat up would fight back and get a lucky shot. A common rumor was that back in Africa when he was "clearing" a village his squad got ambushed and the villagers held him prisoner. His captives were just farmers and normal folk that were brought to the edge, due to the constant influx of genocide and death. As the story goes, the villagers cut out his tongue and left him for dead. Any strippers at the Corral that believed this story would add that the villagers "cut a little more off" than his tongue, because never in the five years of service has Skimpy ever touched or advanced on any of the girls. To them this was either a blessing or a slight disappointment.

Chapter 2: Dance of the Succubus

It was two thirty and most of the patrons who first showed up were either too drunk to sit up, or in the back getting a lap dance. In short, business was booming. For Skimpy though, it was just another night's pay. His silence was almost as on par with the over bearing voice of the DJ, Jimmy Swift, "the only god-like voice that would ever be heard in that den of sweat and flesh," says Rev. Martin (another common face at the Corral).

"Alright all you cowboys I bet you all would love to get your ropes around our next lovely cowgirl, she is new here at the Corral, and you know first impressions are always important. Well here she is, Krazy Karla."

At that moment the lights centered to the main stage, while the beating of electric drums pulsed out of the speakers and electronic music invisibly filled the den. The curtain at center stage opened as a voluptuous ghost strutted into the middle of the stage where a silver spear was impaled firmly in the ground. Clad in red lingerie, she swirled around, her head and her legs blurred making the crowd's eyes

**Every bullet he expelled
would silence the strain**

focus and glance at her bust and buttocks.

Any patron sober enough to notice the perfect trimmed creature dancing in view were locked in a stupid gawk, as if someone drove an unseen ice pick into their brain. Their arms seemed to work though, throwing crumpled green bills on the floor at her feet. Her beauty was almost alien, beyond what mortal men can scarcely comprehend, especially when plastered. As she stopped swirling, she ripped off her top, and at that moment even the most

wasted man in the room suddenly gained a moment of clarity. Away from the pole she danced a dance that seemed to be ancient, as if praising a merciless god that was in the room watching with eyes older than the Sun. As she danced the dance, the white in her eyes seemed to become whiter than her ivory body, yet her pupils became as dark as the darkness that haunts crevices of a child's nightmares. But of course no one was paying attention to her eyes anyway...

The only person not mesmerized by the fine lady's dance was Skimpy, but he was more focused on the movements of the crowd. His eyes floated over the small clusters of nameless faces, like a wizened fisherman scoping the dark waters an elusive fish. Sooner than expected, a figure emerged out of the darkness and tried to crawl up into the light of the stage. As the lights illuminated him multiple band pins and studs sparkled on the darkness of a worn leather jacket. By the movements of the individual it seemed he was very drunk and had a smile that could be perceived as devious, or just plain stupid. Skimpy did not take to notice any of these details, only that the drunken man's face was a great target for Skippy's left fist.

The punch sent the drunken rocker staggering off the stage and careening into

Skimpy was in the back packing up to leave when Starla Scarlet came in with nothing but pink tassels on her nipples.

the filth ridden carpet floor, knocking back a few tables and stools in the process. Karla did not stop dancing and the crowd did not stop watching, but she did exude a smile at

the beaten punk. With blood oozing from his nose the young man smiled back. Stepping down from the stage Skimpy noticed two other men who seemed to be associated with the mesmerized fool- due to their similar leather jackets and attire. He knew what he had to do. After blatantly and nervously yelling their attack plan to each other, the two rockers tried to rush Skimpy from both sides. In the span of a second Skimpy grabbed the attackers before they even realized what had happened. The rocker's were slammed into two empty bar tables then thrown into separate directions, both hitting the adjacent wall. The two punks then cursed their current situation and ran out of the bar. The drunkest of the three wobbled out looking back at the shifting form of Karla; thus so his eyes sparkled and his bloody smile widened.

By the looks of things Skimpy did not even break a sweat in the struggle. He brushed himself off and went to his usual perch to see if a similar struggle would occur again. Nothing else stirred within the crowd and the night moved on as slow as ever. It had seemed that the fast-paced action of the night's recent brawl that had taken

place had slowed time down, in a relative sense. "Yet, even slow things must come to a climax," would say Madame Blu. (A common woman of the night usually located in the vicinity of Coochie Corral.) And so it did, the drunkards, frat boys, and scum ridden nematodes emptied out into the void of 46th street. and Harry the deaf custodian started mopping up all the refuse left on the red carpet floor.

Continued on page 53



Hands of Chain

LaToya Jolly
Acrylic

Skimpy was in the back packing up to leave when Starla Scarlet came in with nothing but pink tassels on her nipples. "Carla wants to say thank you for protecting her tonight."

Skimpy faced her with his stern face, his only face. The young woman shuttered at his response but persisted, "Oh c'mon, she really wants to thank you, hell, uh... I think she's pretty attracted to you, and uh... I'm just sayin'." Skimpy's shrewd features seemed to lighten up at the girl's response, but only in a microscopic sense. He walked past her delicate form and headed for the dressing rooms.

It smelled of cheap perfume and roses. The room was draped in red silk and seemed to become bigger as Skimpy entered through the door. The room did not look like a dressing room at all, more like a large den filled with couch pillows and recliner sofas. The woman named Carla lay reclined on an emerald sofa. She had not changed into anything since her dance. She lay on the sofa which by now seemed more like a bed draped in green gossamer sheets. Skimpy had bedded many on his campaigns in untold lands; many without their consent, but the violence and blood was the major stimulation that motivated him more than any supple breasts or curvy figure. However, now all he felt was the urge to go into her arms. Her aroma bore the scent of roses as her white aura seemed to dress the outer linings of the green bed as they rolled together. She was on top of him as he noticed the room growing larger, and as she moaned the room grew and grew. Skimpy's heart pumped in fear, somewhere the wind shrieked and laughter sounded. Skimpy felt pinned as he tried to move, but her ghostly form held him down. Her large breasts pressed down on his chest. All he could do was look at her face which smiled a smile that destroys the lives of those it greets. But all he could do was stare at her

eyes that became bigger and then larger than the room. Her eyelids receded only to present swelling white pupils with narrow red rivers. The wind grew louder but he did not feel it around his body, only her warm flesh sliding onto him, and him into her. She grew bigger and bigger until her breasts seemed to consume his body and soft darkness enveloped him.

Chapter 3: Into the Land of Softness and Heat

The softness of the green bed of the red dressing room was gone, replaced with a firm soil that gave the impression of cracks that seemed rough yet were nothing of the sort. Skimpy arose from the ground and looked out into the landscape. The deep sky was black with darkness and an orange radiance shown out into the unfathomable space above him, or what seemed like space. No constellations were evident but a lone star provided enough light to illuminate much of Skimpy's surroundings. He was in the middle of a large plain surrounded by orange hills. The ground was riddled with crevices that dispersed into many directions, eventually joining with other cracks and fissures that disappeared into the line of vision. To the south arose what seemed to be foliage and all other routes shown an endless walk in the aridity of the plains. To the north lay an endless pink desert and beyond, into the vast wastland two large mountains pierced into the hazy sky.

Skimpy decided to march south toward the marshes. The walk was long and arduous because of the unnatural array of the land. If there was one thing that stuck out in that unnatural world the most was its climate. To Skimpy the humidity was like staying in a sauna while suffering from west Nile fever. It all seemed to radiate from the thick floor. The fissures that traced the

ground seemed to exude heat the most, so Skimpy avoided crossing those thresholds as well as he could. Yet the effect the land had on him was purely noticeable; his black "staff" shirt showed darker splotches of moisture that grew larger with each mile he walked.

The trees of the marches were not even trees just giant black tendrils that protruded into the orange haze of a sky. The forest of these immense tendrils seemed to go out into infinity. Famished and sweltered, Skimpy sat on the warm ground and breathed in the rose musk of the alien world. It had smelled of roses ever since he awakened there. He sat there for a while letting the heat take him like a fever. The warmth caressed his form in invisible intelligence warming his brain and making his eyes pulse to an organic beat. Suddenly, a faint clicking arose in the hazy distance. Skimpy tried to move but the fever held him in its steamy grasp. From beyond the demon black tendrils lumbered a humanoid form that made Skimpy's stomach churn into oblivion. As it lumbered nearer, clear slime bubbles oozed out of its mandibles with claw like teeth that moved at blinding speeds. Its eyes were blacker than the tendril forest and deeper than the outer sky. Its eight-foot body was encased in a leopard striped exoskeleton, and the second most notable feature besides its excessive output of ugliness, was the giant claw pincers that acted as its arms. Standing on two thin hind legs, towering above Skimpy's prone form, the creature let out a low pitched gurgle that echoed throughout the forest. The call was answered and more abominations emerged from behind the "trees" and also underneath the fuming cracks that decorated the land. Skimpy tried in vain to move but the heat held him

like a newborn whose mother was about to give its baby to the wolves.

Chapter 4: The Kingdom

The fever had festered and brought with it a heavy sense of inertia. The abominations put him in a small orange orb that looked like a giant fish egg. The crablike monsters surrounded outside the egg and were carrying it like ants carrying a crumb. The curved black spires grew thicker as the party shambled onward into the darkness of the forest. Skimpy noticed the heat inside the egg seemed to be less intense than the surroundings for he surely would have succumbed to death if left outside. Fading into and out of consciousness Skimpy examined his captors' pincers that lifted his cell; large claws that were bigger than their own torsos with bulging muscles encased in a shiny solid shell. Their mouths foamed with bubbles as their black eyes stared up at him in naive apathy. The void of their sight never left the egg as they moved through the brush.

The world shifted every time Skimpy closed his eyes. When he would awaken, the bleak orange hued forest would welcome him back, at other times there would be no forest but the plains of his native land- with red rain forming pools of blood on the muddy dirt, and in the distance the cries of the dammed would ring out in unison for his blood to join them in the prison of the Earth. At other times the worlds would merge together to formulate a nightmare of dark thoughts; slime speckled corpses impaled on the tendrils, with dissolved faces gazing at him with living eyes, judging him and damning him to hells beyond comprehension. Yet, in all realms

of perception the crab men were always present below him as his Virgil horde.

The sounds that affixed his ears were both inhuman and too grotesque to bear- the gurgles of his captors and the weeping of an orchestra of women and

As the story goes, the villagers cut off his tongue and left him for dead.

their babes. The demonic gurgles were the constant backdrop as the screaming started to stop abruptly (voice by voice) by a mechanical pop or the sound of metal striking through thick softness. Skimpy could only curl up in his orange orb as the overture attacked his senses and fevered mind. Tears started to run down his cheeks, and his fingernails started to pierce the skin of his shaved head as he tried to drown out the haunting realities of his past and present situation. Blood trickled down the sides of his face as he howled a muted howl of agony in his little egg.

He wanted it all to die and stay dead. That was why he did it. Every bullet he expelled would silence the strain. Afghanistan, Syria, Mexico, and anywhere the hand of death pointed, he would silence the shrieking. The day he helped burn down his home was not in the name of any god or religion like his trainers taught him, to him it was just to see the flames eat up the land and to see the sky cry blood and satiate the world. The next day he removed his own tongue- and that was his rite of passage into the river of blood that sustained him. The skulls and bones of his lineage were lined on the dirt road as the older followers routed out the rest of his village into the square to welcome the arrival of death. It rained that day and the smell of mud and burnt earth

caked onto his senses as he stared out onto the lush fields of dark green as the grey smoke blotted out the orange morning sky.

An unknown force awoke him from his slumber. It came as a small kiss on the back of his eyes. From his squinted vision

he noticed the tendril forest had become less dense and as his eyes gained focus, he saw the sand colored towers.

They stood like fleshy skyscrapers in the alien sky that seemed

to be made of a thick sinewy material. The towers ranged from two stories tall to a hundred. Entrance burrows decorated the mounds asymmetrically as more of the crab creatures stared out of the dark holes. The road the party traversed on was lined with steam cracks. Once inside the city Skimpy's stomach convulsed as a mass of red larvae covered in yellow pus emerged from a particularly deep crack in front of him and his captors.

Eventually, the party stopped in front of the largest mound Skimpy had seen there. It had a more intelligent architecture due to the fact that it was in the shape of a giant castle with evident areas dedicated to fortifications, along with an entrance gateway and guard post. As his carriers shambled past the colossal entrance Skimpy noticed the crab guards that stood at the opening were different; their shell exoskeleton was colored blood red, seen distinctly through the yellow casing of the egg. Skimpy was then carried up a wide stairway into a vast hall. It was there that his orange egg melted and he was spewed onto the soft floor. Covered in yellow placenta he lifted himself up, the scent of roses grew and stung his nostrils. The floor felt alive like soft skin and would thicken with his touch making him more stable with every step. Chills of organic depravity convulsed on his figure and the giant of a

man shivered like a frail old woman. Two crab men stood by his sides and silently beckoned him onward.

The hall seemed to stretch into infinity from Skimpy's perception. Pillars of orange rotten substances held up the melted ceiling of which held wax balls of glowing light that illuminated the hall. Glossy worms camouflaged on the yellow walls slithered out into the dark of the atmosphere through the narrow windows. The trio walked and at times Skimpy floundered and fell, but the soft ground pushed him back up. At some point he noticed her. At first she was just a violet speck, and then with every step she grew into form. The stripper who had seduced him and whom he had protected the night before now sat on a throne of liquefied bodies. She was wearing nothing but a gown of silk lavender and a crown of red ruby. The night gown had made visible her bare, voluptuous body yet Skimpy paid no heed to her sexual beauty. The crab men had stopped at a certain point before the throne and knelt on their narrow hind legs. Skimpy did not kneel; holding himself, he walked awkwardly forward to gaze upon the queen that sat before him. Her eyes were as white as a maggot in a dying man's wound, yet he knew she was watching him. He eyed the throne of carcasses, some melded forms were humanoid, and others were not. He then noticed that some bodies were not dead; plastered arms squirmed, eyes tainted red, blinked and stared at him while mouths and mandibles moaned soundless words of rapture.

"Welcome dear slayer," spoke the queen in a voice as gentle as a morning mist, "I have beckoned you to my world of softness and heat beyond the plains of human existence and reality, for I have chosen you to be my champion." She then smiled and out of the white slits that were her eyes emerged crimson pupils that twin-

kled like flames beyond a blanket of fog. "Time is of the essence and I must be quick to speak, so please come and embrace me so I can rid you of your fever and---"

With a burst of speed, Skimpy stormed up to where the woman sat. Casting aside his fever, he grabbed her by her slender neck and lifted her above the corpse throne. The two kneeling crab men stood up and let out a screech of hellish fury; fear and anger shown in their black eyes as foam seeped down from their jaws. Skimpy stared her in her fiery eyes and began to squeeze. She did not flinch to his assault and as he began to tighten his grip she seemed to smile wider, showing her pearl teeth. Then beyond the wall of reason, something strange happened. Her lean neck muscles stopped to pulse and her form turned to milk. Her body spilt down out of Skimpy's grip and splashed onto the corpse throne. Some of the live faces and lips started to voraciously suck up the milk of their queen as it seeped down the throne. One particularly irate half-face bit at Skimpy's pant leg, tugging at the fiber as it bit. The exiled fever had returned and engulfed Skimpy's form like a lead blanket of weakness. He backed away too hastily and tumbled down the steps that led up to the throne and was flattened out at the spongy bottom.

A mocking laughter surged into the hall. Skimpy shivered from his ailment but the childish laugh froze the synapses in his brain. He looked out into the cyclopean hall; the crab men had stood their ground like statues and beyond them into the yellow infinity of the hall nothing stirred, yet the laughter persisted.

"Slayer, you amuse me with your antics," spoke her gossamer voice, "Witnessing your current act of violence towards me, I might as well tell you who I am and why I require you. In your world of fact and science, I am but a lowly exotic

dancer in a den of drunkards and fools. I am also a bar wench in circa 17th century Britain, a weaver of darkness and spells on the outskirts of Golden Age Athens, and CEO of a mineral conglomerate on colonized Europa. Yet, those are only flesh manifestations of my form in relation to your time strain and many others. But here..."

The queen walked out of the dark recesses of the hall on Skimpy's left. She looked different; not human. She stood stark naked baring scaly skin like that of an albino lizard; dry and cold-blooded. The rubies of her pupils began to blaze, "here is my ultimate domain, Purluxia the realm of flesh, blood and bone. And now I offer you a choice," Her scales dissolved and turned to the soft lithe skin that had captivated multitudes of onlookers back on Earth, yet her eyes remained aflame, "I have peered into your mind's eye and have seen your past. You are a slayer, you are a mutilator of yourself and others, and all the blood spilt in the world you were spawned will never be enough to satiate your bloodlust. There, you would have died an anonymous face among the bodies of countless others just like you. Here, you can be my champion and crush foes never fathomed by the minds of your human existence. Exterminate, eradicate, and purge. That could be your sole duty and you will be remembered for eons because you will live for eons..."

She now towered over Skimpy, her eyes peered into his naked soul and it burned till he felt frozen as if plunged into the arctic wastes of fear.

"Or I can let you succumb to your fever and feed your body to my blood maggots," she held out her hand and through Skimpy's consciousness streamed wisps of hope and health but it seemed to point toward her and only her, then came the wisps of violent tendencies and red hell

that resuscitated him. It also narrowed into her. He then reached out and was suddenly overcome by an energy vortex that shot through his body and sluiced his tired mind.

He stood over her, pulsing with vigor. The crab men seeing his recuperation became tense and let out a shrill bark. The fever was gone and with every breath of rose-scented air gave him more life. The queen gave off a gleeful smile and beckoned him to follow her as she walked beyond the corpse throne. The two walked down a narrow hall and into a balcony and looked out into the land of softness and heat.

"There are three," her voice whispered, "three who can vanquish me and end the control I have over this world, you must kill them all so that their bodies will hang and rot from my castle walls. Do you understand?"

Just then she mentally flashed the pictures of the three beings she wished dead into Skimpy's mind. The first two were inhuman and unrecognizable, but the third was a face he had seen before. The man was young and human, clad in a dirty leather jacket with an undershirt of an unknown band. He exuded a devious smile that could be best defined as a stupid smirk...

END OF PART I

Alley

Yilun Chen
Digital Photography



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