



P'AN KU

LITERARY & ART MAGAZINE

Volume 56 Issue 1

BROWARD COLLEGE

VOL. 56 ISSUE 1

PAN KU LITERARY & ARTS MAGAZINE

BROWARD COLLEGE

“I watch the dis-
tances
I’ve drifted from,
warmer
to just warm, and in
turquoise
surfs and merengue
bands
and rice and beans
and genes
I come back to these
sandbar”

Atalaya
Miriam Sabrina Taveras



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FALL 2019 • ISSUE NO. 1

P'AN KU

LITERARY & ARTS MAGAZINE

BROWARD COLLEGE

Founded in 1964, P'an Ku Magazine is a student-run, bi-annual literary and arts publication funded by Broward College. Our namesake is the Chinese God of Creation. Chinese mythology holds that P'an Ku created the sun, the moon, the heavens, and the earth. From P'an Ku flew the wind and the thunder, and his fleas became the ancestors of humans. Anyone endowed with creativity is said to be possessed by the spirit of P'an ku.

Editor's Note

I can only hope that we'll all have something to call Home after this: a place to reflect on relationships and family dynamics, a shelter from the madness and the heat, and a safe space to harbor the deeds of imagination.

There's no place like South Florida, and there's nobody quite like a South Florida Artist.

I wanted this issue to invite all the varying identities of our community to come together, and to celebrate how different we are. From the tropical color palette of "Chicken Dinner" to the frightening reality in "America's Emotional Wall": we populate our environment with our personalities, and this edition of the magazine is a reflection of the people who made it.

Room 511 at BC Downtown became a Home for myself as well as my incredible team this semester, and it's a massive understatement to say this wouldn't be possible without them.

It wouldn't even be imaginable.

They say it takes a village to raise a child; you're holding ours.

I'd like to thank our contributors for trusting us with their work.

I'd like to thank my family for always supporting me when I drift from our Home to others'.

I'd like to thank Broward College for allowing us to build a Home together.

Best,
Michael Lozano
Editor-in-Chief



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P'AN KU

COVER ART - TAKE A STEP INSIDE MY MIND

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The Unprepared Scholar Alexa Delgado



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Solace

Ivar Fandel, Photography



My Home

Jacqueline Bird

Come in, the doors are open
Take a peek at my life, have a seat
That orange vase in the corner
That was my sunset in Africa
Blue walls, the Caribbean Sea
My worn sofa, a place of comfort
With memories to smile or blush
The faint crack in my chandelier
A reminder of the glass ceiling
Circular ball on the coffee table
Full moon in Cairo
Light from the skylight
My oculus from the Pantheon
The painting on the wall
Days in Italy, tapas and Sangria
My hanging beads
Mardi Gras in New Orleans

The umbrella in the corner
First kiss in the rain
Worn rug on the floor
My kids and I played on fours
See through my eyes
Its warmth and comfort
Share my family secrets
Taste some muse bouche of my life
I share the love



7 Faces
Caitlin Pazmino, Oil Paint



Their Most Precious Gifts

Paula Rosario

We are four girls, but I know I'm the favorite.

I'll always treasure when Margarita used to make café con leche for me in the morning, while we watched her favorite novelas.

At night she used to drink tea or milk and I would be next to her until she drank her last sip.

I would always want to listen to her stories about flying, and all her advice for me.

After she passed away, I got a little silver watch that belonged to her.

I lost it and I still don't know how it happened.

All I want to think now is that

Her biggest gift for me was time, she gave me time and she wanted me to use it wisely.

Her daughter, my grandma, gave me her rings too, that I won't lose.

But their love will always be with me.

They gave me affection and they still do, her gifts I'll always carry with me like the most precious treasures family can give.

She used to tell me I was her angel but now she's definitely mine.

Margarita looking for me all the way from the sky.

Passing By

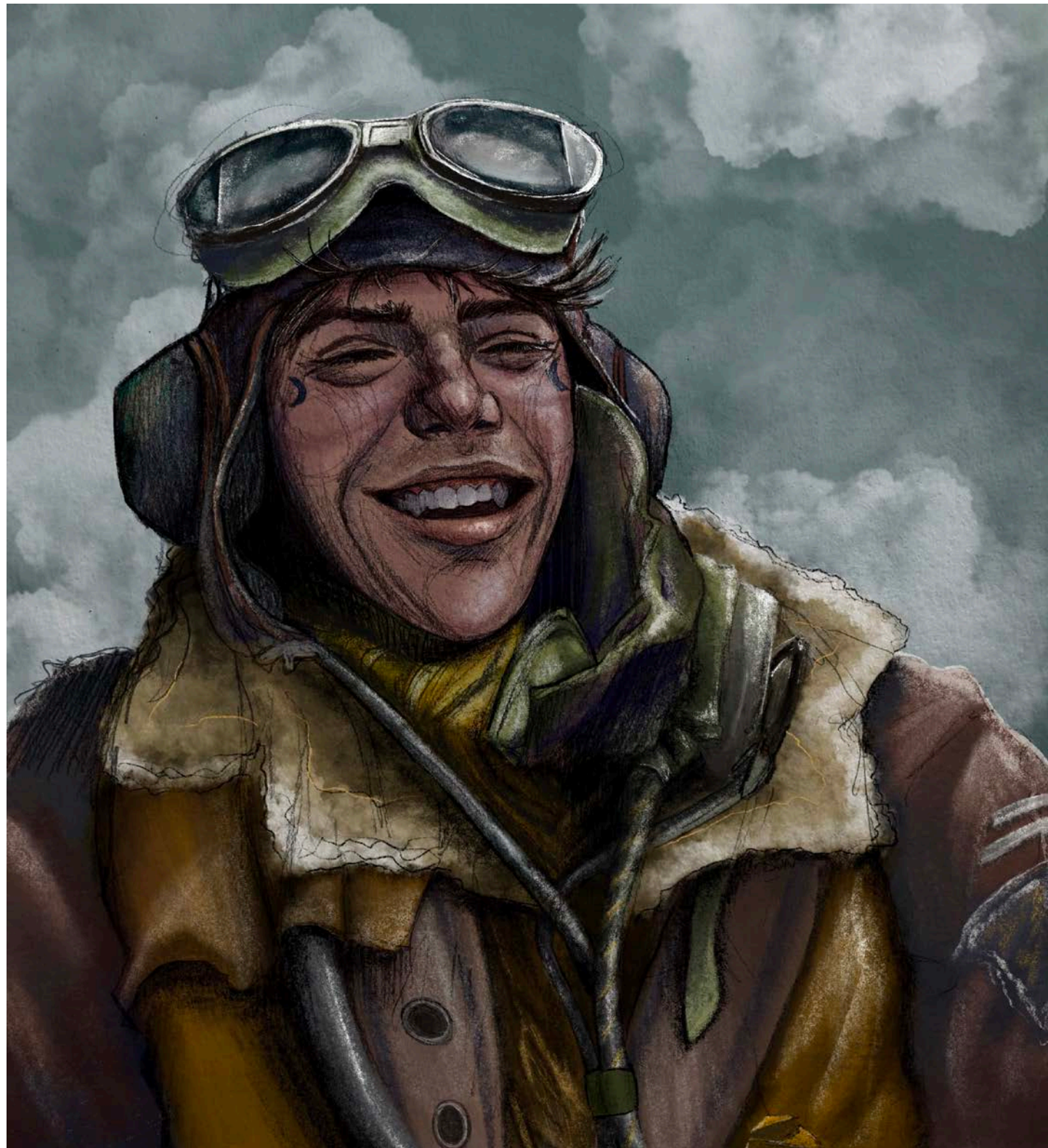
Nina Retto, Mixed Media





Happiest Days

Ellana Sunshine, Digital Drawing



Malboro Man

Taylor Martin, Photography



Knotted Hair

Madelyn Gibson

My sister stands behind me. I sit on a black folding chair. My head bobbles as she pulls my “friends” out of my hair. Even with her skills, it is still a daunting task and not for the faint of heart. She lathers in some special cream that only Empire students can buy. She rakes the comb down my scalp.

My sister shakes her head. “I don’t know why you didn’t ask me for help,” she says under her breath. Everyone has asked if I need help: my sister, my mom, even co-workers nag me about my hair and why I don’t take care of it. I remain quiet because I am ashamed. I am ashamed of lying in bed for days at a time, afraid of what the world thinks of me, with the only friends wrapped in my hair. Clingy, selfish friends.

My sister splits my hair and yanks out another clump made from split ends and conditioner flakes. “I had no choice. I had to do it.” She doesn’t realize her hair pulling makes my head ten times lighter.

She makes a comment that frightens me. “You should’ve told me sooner. You are not supposed to put products in knotted hair. It can create mold.”

Mold.

I felt angry at myself. How did I let my damaged thoughts rule me? Rob me of my motivation, steal my sleep, latch onto my scalp and these annoying little friends.

When my sister pulls out the last friend who made an effort to stay, she demanded I go back into the shower a where she teaches me how to wash my hair. Not slap soap on my head but massage it in. Let the conditioner soften the strains of my hair. Use my fingernails, get into crevices on your head.

I follow her instructions. There is no class I need to hurry for; there was no one to impress. No deadlines or due dates in the near future. Putting myself first, that is all I care about in the moment.

My sister comes back and says, “Does your hair feel silky smooth?” I let my fingers caress my black waterfall. I wind them into the cascading silk ringlets. It has been awhile since I felt this texture.

Maybe this is healing.

Artistic Coping Mechanism

Michelle Holguin, Ink on Paper





The Pathway of Self Revived
Nickson Morin, Digital Art

Paint With All The Colors of the Memories

Marija Beate Kaufmane

A mother's tired hands slide down her child's fragile cheek before the bright orange sunrise and the blood red and purple sunsets.

Her child feeling so lonely even though her mother loved her, an inferior contribution her father didn't mind not contributing.

So, her world an empty dwelling of concrete apartment walls like limitations, and empty days ending in blue and red sunsets.

Wherefore, her home is non-existent, but floats in thin air right between her ribcage, where it exists with the people that truly love her.

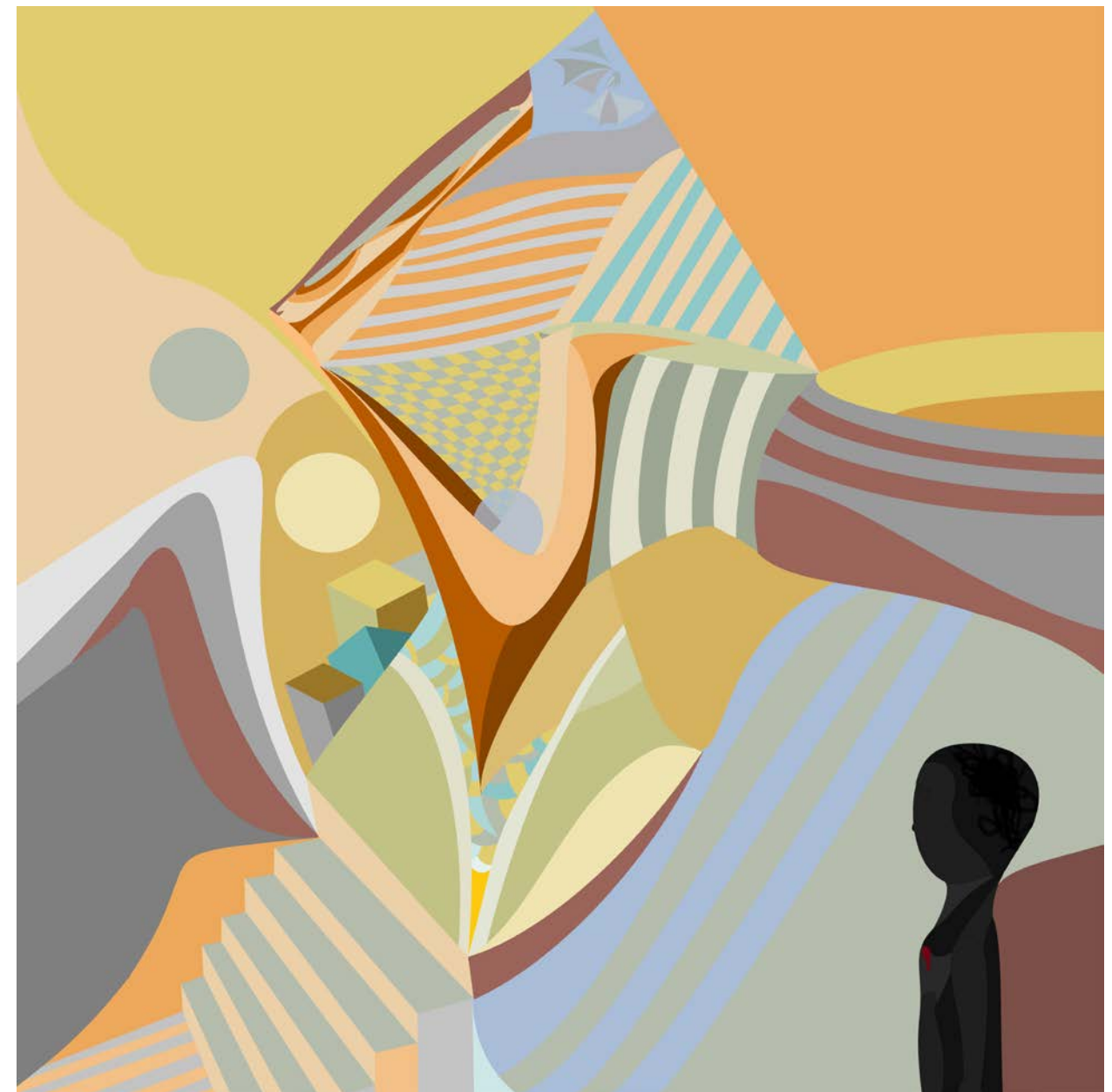
Like the gray birds that fly north when seasons might change; she has no home, because home does not consist of three or four, nor infinity.

Considering this, her dwelling means family that's been stitched over and over again, like linen scraps.

A home divided by oceans and clashing waves she's always scared to cross, because of fears of sea salt in her lungs.

Waves that roar and crash together like her gray and clouded memoirs.

Memories that she sometimes wishes could consist of yellows and pinks more than blues and purples that float with her throughout her days passed by.





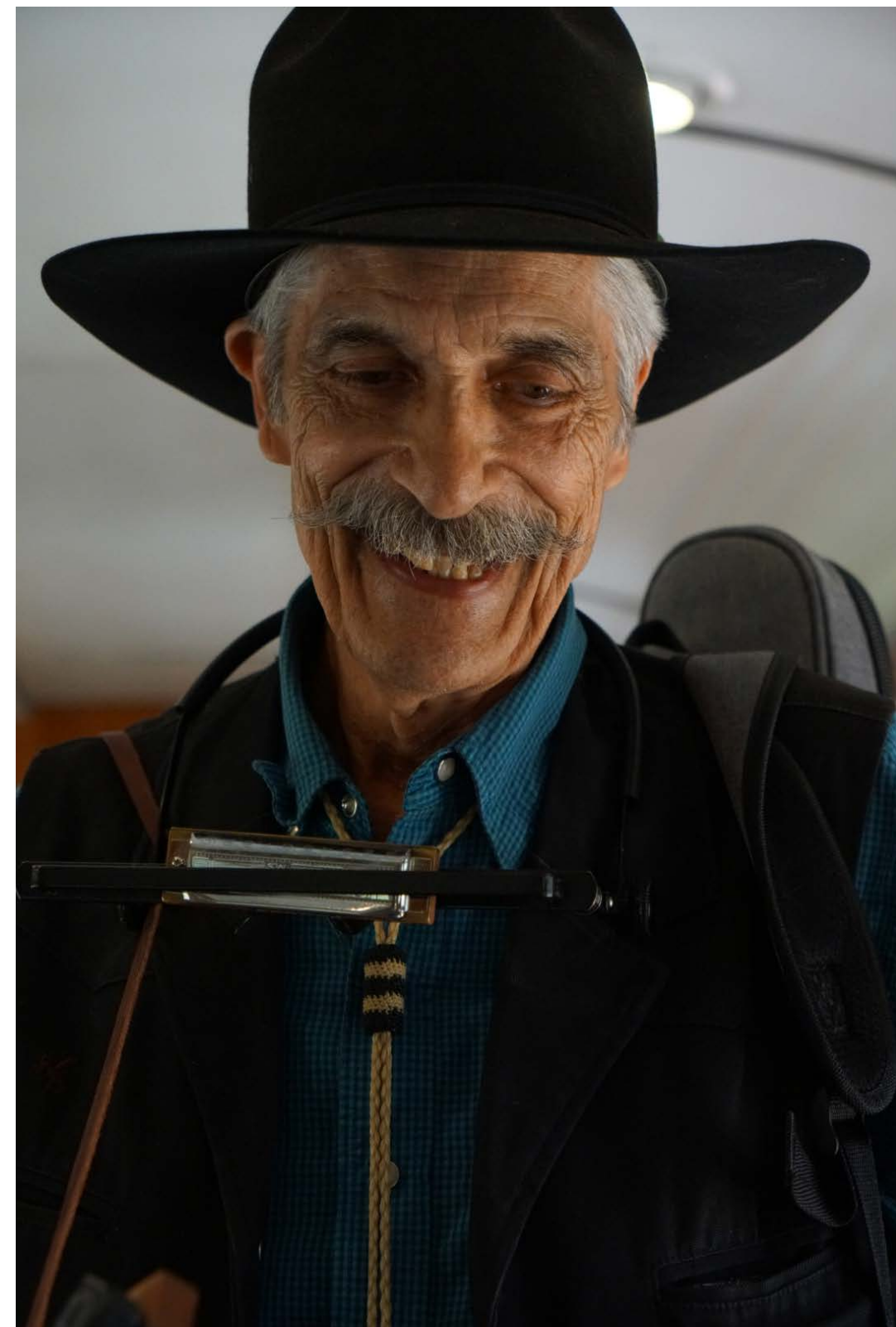
Turning Man
Alexander Miller

For me recently becoming a man
feels like growing rods through my body
ones that protrude past the skin of who I am
enthused to show me a drape of who I could be.

Becoming a man for me feels like becoming
a beast of who I was then learning
how to use table manners

—keeping elbows off the table,
chewing, mouth closed—

Becoming a man means finding a stone unturned
a stone most people won't show you.



In Here...

Rebecca Delva, Watercolor



When the Cherry Blossoms Bloomed - A Short Story – After Yukio Mishima

Alexandra Woltin

Reiko, a poor commoner, grew up in less than desirable conditions. Her parents' small one room, four tatami mat home was dilapidated and old, appearing as though its foundation would collapse at any moment. Even though Reiko lived in poverty, she felt grateful for her existence and acted diligently and performed obediently toward her parents. Growing up with the ideology of Confucianism and Emperor Meiji's Imperial Rescript on Education, Reiko was educated on the importance of filial piety and was taught that peace can be maintained by moral efforts. So, at a tender young age, Reiko had already started feeling the weight of her filial duties as a daughter, and her mother made sure to prepare and teach her how to be a devoted wife and mother, further burdening her for when the time came to leave the shelter of her family's home.

At the age of ten, on a chill, snowy night in the heart of winter with the moon in full bloom, the moment came that officially granted Reiko passage to womanhood. She hastily looked down at her throbbing stomach, fighting the urge to scream out in agony. Feeling a sharp, sudden, searing pain she had never once felt before, she glimpsed blood.

Reiko saw, between her frail thighs, a dark red liquid seeping in a steady progression, painting her beautiful, translucent porcelain skin ruby red. She touched the wetness with her small, pale fingertips causing the redness of the blood to brighten, thereby confirming her new reality; she was now a woman. Reiko felt a flutter of nerves, scared of her new, binding reality, for she had no idea what was to come next.

When the word of her menstruation and new-found womanhood reached her father, his response assured her that fate and fortune were on her side. Indeed: her father, an overworked and ill-tempered man, who was famous for his sudden violent outbursts, had chosen against selling her off to a brothel to be defiled by men for financial gain. As gratefulness swelled inside her, feelings of resentment for the father who showed her little attention diminished. He had wanted so desperately a cherished son birthed from her mother's womb, but reality was harsh to her mother, cursing her with miscarriage after miscarriage until nothing close to a living, breathing soul could come from her belly ever again. Her father's dream of having a son was forever ruined.

Being a woman, for this reason alone, she worked ten times harder to win her father's love and approval by total filial obedience. Day after day, Reiko tended to the household duties making sure she would never become a hindrance to her family. Her hard work paid off, for as she grew older, her parents treated her gently and displayed subtle acts of kindness such as providing her with a larger portion of rice during meals.

Reiko presumed it was because of all her hard work and devotion as a daughter and that her parents had finally lost all hope in receiving the gift of a beloved son.

As time passed, each day different than the one before it, Reiko grew more and more beautiful. She possessed warm, alluring, dark eyes that seemed to gaze into the vastness of the soul, entirely bewitching a man's heart with one simple, lingering glance. Many men wished to be in her presence—with gripping intentions to make her their own—but none seized her interest, and as quick as a shake of the wrist and a finger pointed in the direction of the door, they were sent out on their way.

One fateful morning, when the cherry blossoms were in full bloom painting the landscape a delicate satin pink, Reiko, who was diligently cleaning the small space she called home, peered out her newly spotless window and glimpsed a dazzlingly handsome, stoic man in a lieutenant's military uniform riding in the back of a rickshaw with another man dressed in similar fashion. Reiko and the handsome lieutenant locked eyes with one another, and she immediately fell in love with him. Even though she lacked a name to call the handsome stranger, she intuitively knew that they were fated to marry.

After that day, he began visiting her dreams each night, filling them with both passion and pleasure, and before long she knew she must find him, for she believed he was the whole reason she existed. Walking down the dirt road in her best kimono, she searched for him, eyes darting from right to left in continuous motion. She did not want to miss one moment in which she might once again lock eyes with her beloved. Reaching the main road, slowing her pace to take in the scenery, Reiko's traditional geta sandal caught on a rock, causing her to stumble abruptly forward. As she quickly thrust her arms out in front of her in an attempt to catch her fall, someone took hold of her arm, steadying her back onto her feet. She looked up, and as if an apparition, the handsome lieutenant stood before her warmly embracing her, and as he gazed intimately into her eyes, he smiled.

Oh Dear, Oh Death

Rebecca Delva, Mixed Media





Chicken Dinner
Daniel Otero, Mixed Media

the words roll off the tip of my tongue,
like dewdrops down a crisp leaf.
what prompts people to ask is what they've already seen:
a night sky, in my eyes.
the stars that have lost their gleen.
the words I utter, exhaust a dreary echo,
as it leaves my lips and parts ways with their ears.
releasing an incoherent explanation of my thoughts, feelings, emotions,
and of course,
my fears.
yet they still demand answers.
so, I inhale slowly;
another attempt at a dissociative rapport.
the ones I rely on so heavily
the ones they rely on solely.





Morning Commute

Pablo Matute, Brush Pen

Mother's Ocean

Oscar Jean

Latitude 65.2482 degrees north, longitude 60.4621 degrees west.

Somewhere in the Arctic Ocean there is a glacier slowly drifting into nothing.

On sixth street near my home, there is a woman slowly drifting into nothing

Surrounded by an ocean of doubt she drifts lonely and afraid

I call the glacier my mother

I call the ocean sixth street

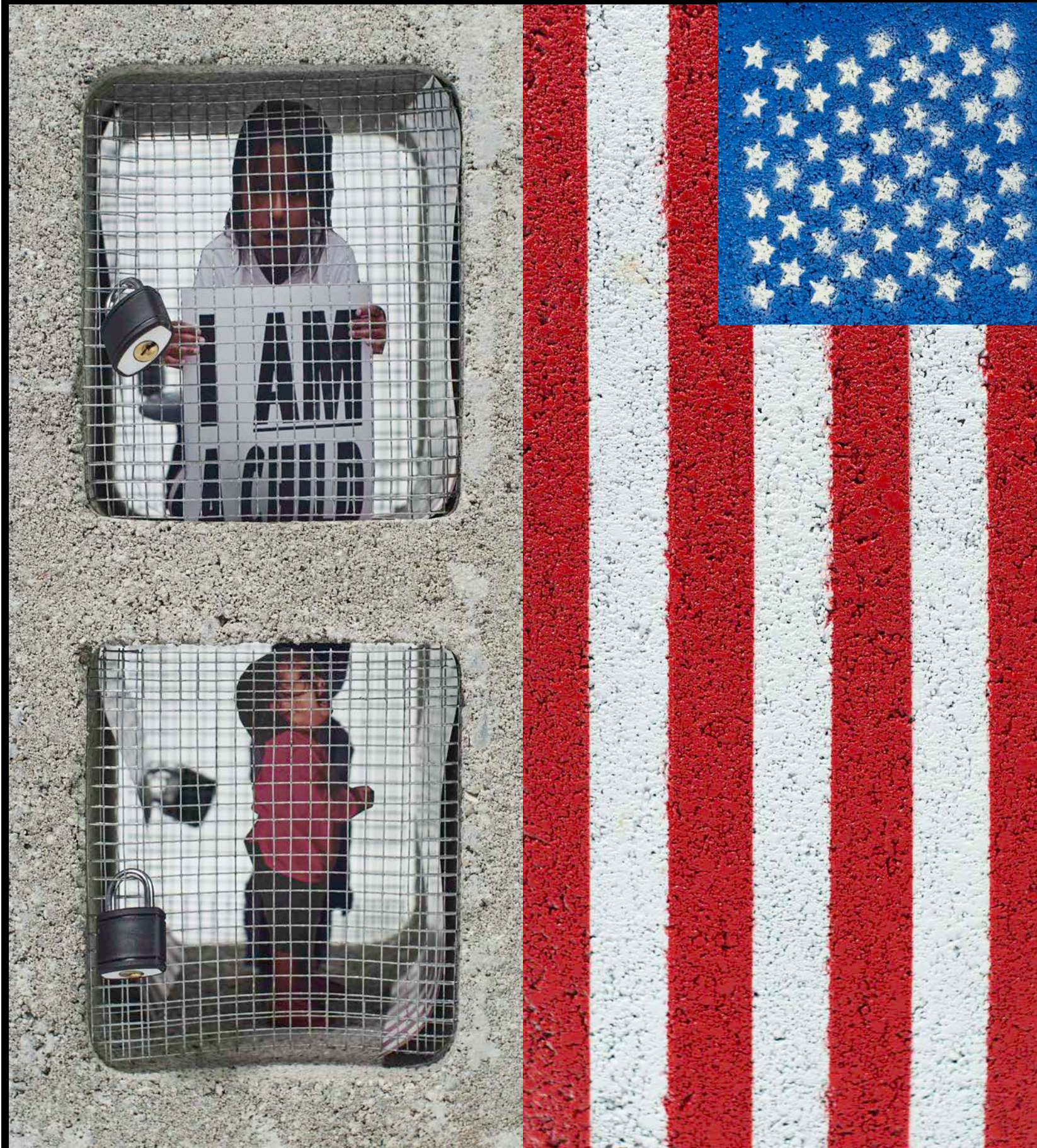
I am afraid that she is alone

That she is drifting too far from home

That I too would soon find her laying in the ocean... melting.

America's Emotional Wall

Jorge Manzanares
Cinderblock, Photograph, Paint, Locks



6th Sense

Sebastian Francois, Photography



I Don't Know How But They Found Me
Alejandro Gonzalez, Mixed Media



OCD Handwashing Habits
Michelle Holguin, Ink on Paper



Couldn't Save The Oranges

Sarah Henry

Nostalgia visits me often.

It settles in weird places. Sometimes, I feel it heavy in my hands when I can't write what I want to. Other times, I feel it floating in my stomach right before it reaches my heart. Mostly, it creeps over me, luring me with a thought here and a thought there. Every so often, it knocks me to the ground and replays memories until I either get up or give in. The getting up is never easy, but the giving in is never pretty.

I read once that the hippocampus stores memories. What would nostalgia do without the hippocampus? Where would it go? Would it evaporate like a puddle on a summer sidewalk? Or would it just plain disappear like Mama did that night of the hurricane?

I was young, big enough to ride the Blue Thunder at the county fair, but small enough that it scared me so bad I wouldn't. That afternoon before the storm, under gathering clouds, I climbed the tree in the backyard, picking all the oranges. Ripe or not, I was the hero saving them from the hurricane. Inside the house, Grandma was fixing canned foods and whispering prayers. Outside, Mama was playing Patsy Cline on the stereo. She was piping like a songbird and pounding nails into the wooden boards over our windows, so she didn't hear me scream when I fell from my branch in the tree. I landed on my back and got that real weird feeling where oxygen isn't a thing you can breathe anymore, and all you can do is lie there and gasp until your lungs start working again.

But Mama saw me fall and came running. I took a deep breath there in her lap surrounded by

bruised oranges, just like I took my first breath in her arms surrounded by frantic nurses on the day I was born. She loved telling me that story, how I came in and changed her life in the best way possible. I believed her 'cause of the way she would sing my name in the morning to wake me up for school (Ayyyla, Aylaaa) and the way she could make nightmares disappear just by lying next to me. But it's easy to believe people when you're eight years old.

Everyone in Moniac was watching the Weather Channel that evening. I fell asleep on Grandma's arm listening to newscasters trying to predict the future.

When I woke up in my own bed to the sound of raised voices, nighttime peeked through my curtains. Mama's voice and a voice I didn't know were fighting to be heard outside. I rose to the window and saw her: stormy winds blew her hair angrily, brown curls reaching in every direction. Then I saw him. A man with dusty hair and the most desperate face I'd ever seen. He was holding out his arms to her like he was pleading. Mama was tense in the scattered moonlight, doing all she could not to blow away or fall into his embrace. Just then he looked from her to me, to my window, and I didn't think he saw me but he looked so long and so hard I knew he must've. I wasn't scared of him, but something in his eyes was so familiar that I flew back onto my pillow, terrified. I fell asleep so fast that when I woke up in the morning I was sure I'd dreamt it.

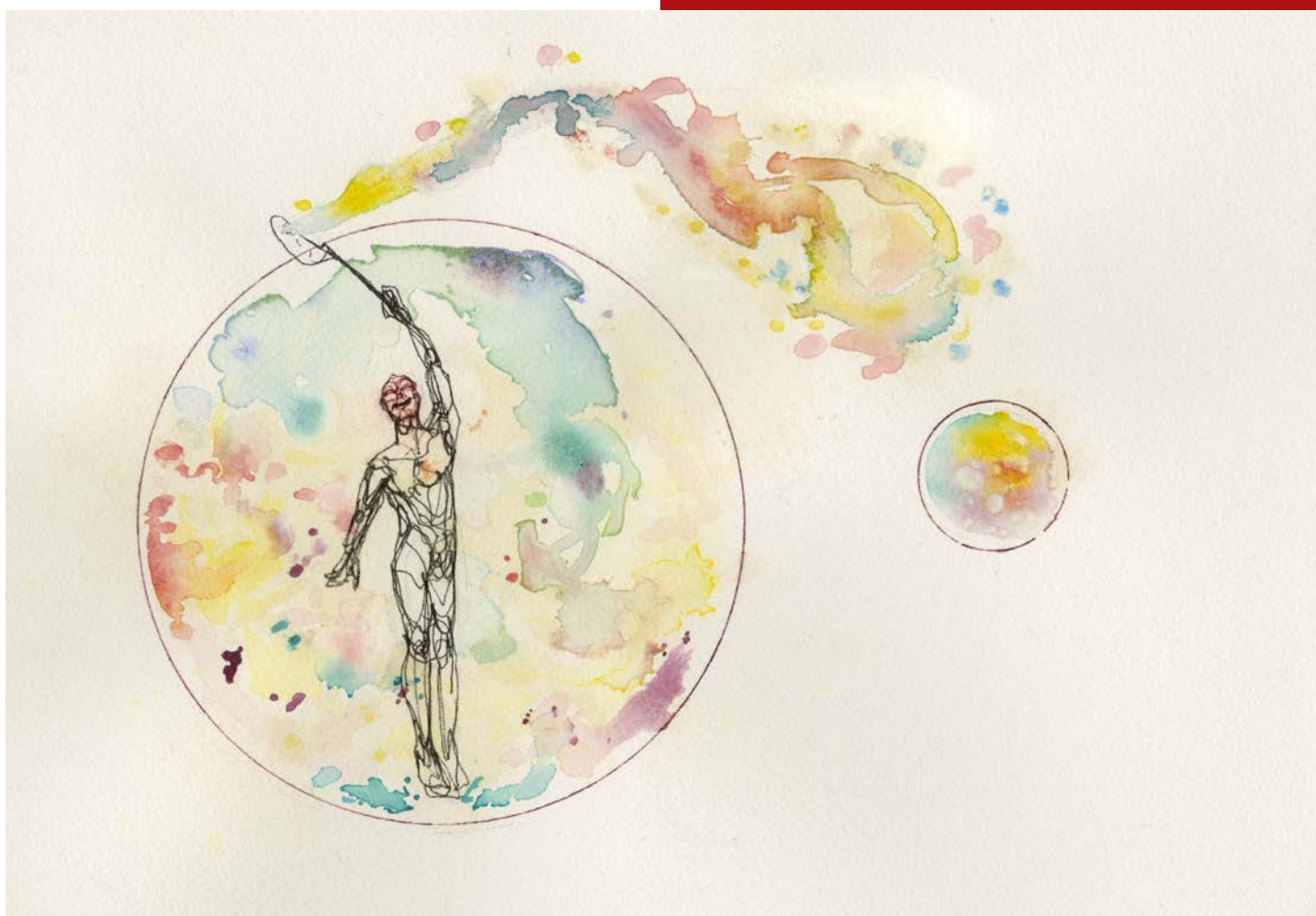
Once the hurricane passed, I looked for her in the wreckage, but Grandma told me I wouldn't find her there. Mama's room was a mess, not because of the storm but because she threw everything around while packing to leave. Socks and shirts and shoes littered the floor. The picture of me on my second birthday, the one that always sat on her nightstand, that was gone.

Back then I liked to think that maybe she left for some really important reason, like she was a spy who had an urgent mission. But when I was ten Grandma told me that the man I had seen on that stormy night, that man who might've been a dream, was actually my father. And that he and my mom had carried on in that breakup-make-up-run-away-together fashion since they had met in high school. But she didn't come home this time and Grandma couldn't tell me why. Maybe that meant they'd found happiness somewhere without me or maybe that meant Mama was too broken to come home and raise me.

When the nostalgia gets so heavy I can't even open my eyes 'cause the tears will never stop pouring, I take refuge in Mama's old room. I sink into the bed and I can almost smell her, that weird scent from the new-age shop on 46th street, like if cedar and stars were being smoked out of a cigarette. In the mirror, I drape her leftover clothes around me.

I've watched as her room has become part shrine, part storage unit over the years. Twice I tried cleaning it, sorting through Grandma's hoarding and Mama's history: a half-empty prescription of Lithium, a worn GED study book, a collection of love notes signed E.G. Each time I found some relic belonging not to my mama, but to all the other people the world knew her as.

I can't help wondering about where she is now, about what it would be like if she never left. Most of all, though, I wonder if she's out there thinking about me, too. But all that wondering and thinking just makes you dizzy after a while, and you gotta stop or you'll spend your whole life spinning.



Imagination

Ciomarah Stokes, Watercolor

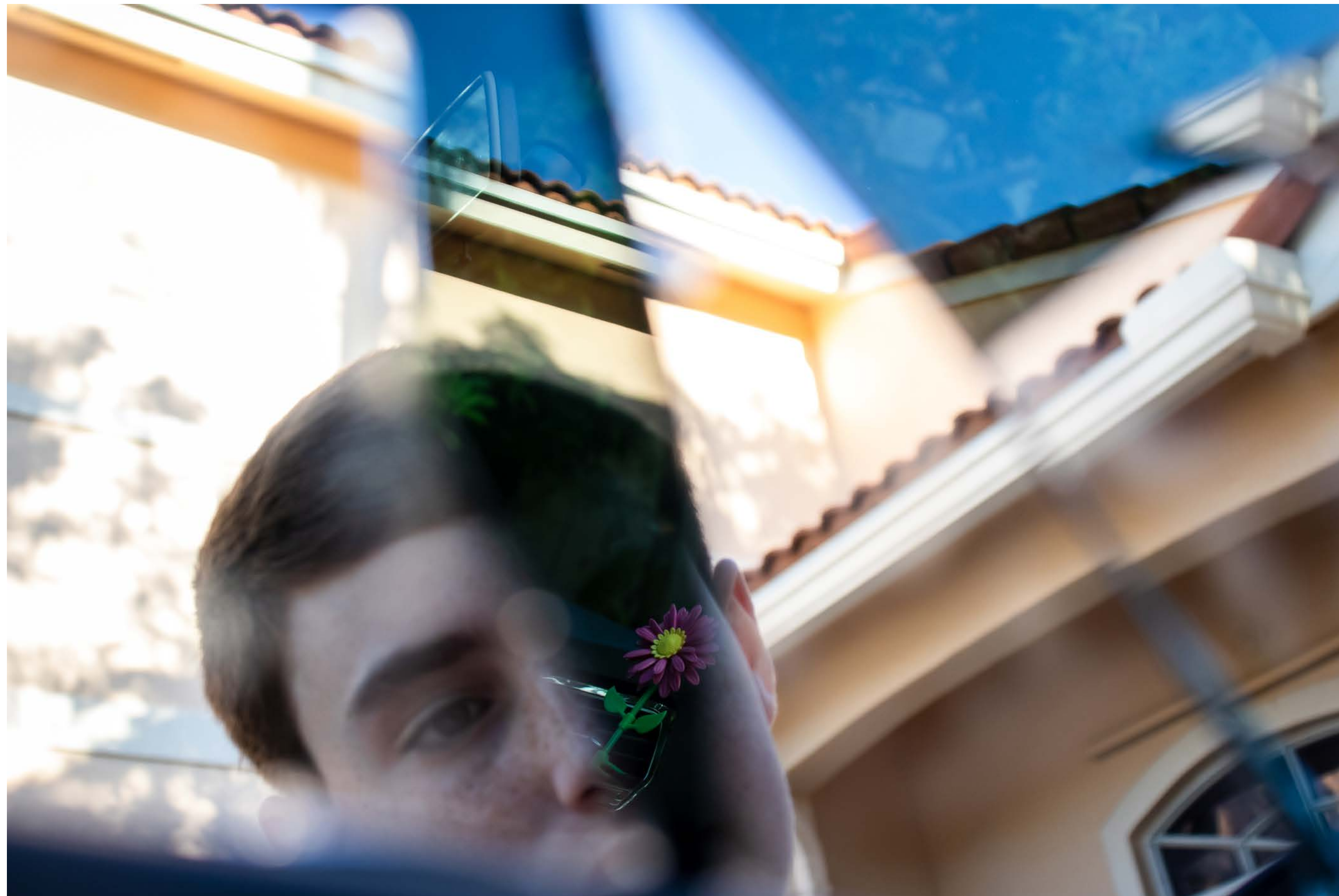


Neighborhood Kids

Justin Culley, Photography



**A Sharp Collision Between
Dream and Reality**
Justin Culley, Photography



Atalaya

Miriam Sabrina Taveras

I am from the shoreline,
grand belt of brilliant blue;
where golden angels play
tricks on bare, deep tanned feet
holding steadfast onto
both crag and fishing line.

I am from roaring streets
and voices just as loud,
hearty people who fear not
tempest, envy, or drought.

I am from high ceilings,
from lovely tableware,
from rotting wood and rope
sagging, groaning, peeling
over my grandmother's
youthful jungle of koi.

I am from sweet lilac,
from deep sleep and honeybees
from coconut and love
spilling from her breast, which
bore the weight of our world
though for none other to see.

I am from happy accidents,
from salty milk to me;
I'm from hard work rewarded
and struggles persevered.

I watch the distances
I've drifted from, warmer
to just warm, and in turquoise
surfs and merengue bands
and rice and beans and genes
I come back to these sandbars,
to the palm fronds thirsting
over my head full of dreams.

The fading clamor of the winds against the metal bird's wings gives way for my anxious thoughts to settle in. I lightly drum my restless fingers against my knee, taking solace in the comforting heat from the patch of warm light streaming from my tiny window and onto my lap. As the plane cruises along to its gate, my chest bubbles with anticipation at the thought of coming back to my roots: driving by my old high school right next to my house, strolling through the plazas and shopping malls my friends would always want to hang out in, gazing out at the waves of a most mesmerizing cerulean blue that crashed against the cliff rocks lining the seafront boulevard. And of course, my grandmother's hotel—my home. Passed down from my late grandfather, the hotel was frequented by sports teams from all throughout the island; as such, my first experiences seeing giant people were pretty unconventional to say the least but quite humorous for the basketball players that got the chance to talk to a little girl that stared intently at them as if they were mythical

creatures. I remember the lampposts that fancily stood outside the main entrance but almost never worked, the vibrant bushes of native flowers that I would make necklaces and crowns out of as a child, and that inflatable Santa Claus sleigh that we would always hang up over the reception desk's roof during the holidays. I wonder if she has kept it, or if it even still works. I want to see it all again, to see what has changed and what tvstayed the same all this time I've been gone.

The tinkling of undone seatbelt buckles reverberates through the cabin now, accompanied by the excited whispers and impatient shuffles of tourists and islanders alike as they rise from their seats too early, awaiting release from the confines of this loud and cramped prison. While they line up in the aisle in vain hopes of quickening their escapade only to learn the gates to the aircraft have yet to be opened for a few more minutes, I turn my attention toward my window, and the sneak peek of home is provided. Beads of sweat trickle down the marshallers' deeply tanned temples and onto their stained neon vests, warning me not to be fooled by the mid-December sunrays I had grown so accustomed to in my college town. Unlike the northern sun, watery and cold under its sharp sunlight, my scorching tropical sun was indeed a force to be reckoned with, one that cast down smothering heat that coiled around your limbs like a hot-blooded snake. Even as a local since childhood, I still feel a little overdressed today.

As the queue begins to spill out of the aircraft gates in what feels like organized chaos, I hop into the crowd and gradually make my way towards the exit, all the while pondering the topics I could address with my grandmother and aunt without receiving awkward glances as their response. I didn't want to ruin our first meeting in two years with a comment that could be too rough around the edges for such a gentle-natured people as my mother's side of the family. After spending so much time surrounded by my father's siblings and relatives while moving abroad for college, I adopted a hardened exterior to my personality after exposure to their harsh humor and tough love. I crafted a confident mask to hide my flaws below; I made myself look like I knew exactly what I was doing. While it was helpful in developing my skills in defending myself in a mercifully adulterated world, it had restricted my soft-hearted interior from ever revealing itself to anyone, limiting my means of expression as I grew afraid to allow myself a single moment of weakness.

Now, as memories of my childhood under my grandmother's caring wing crashed into me like the roaring Caribbean waves of this warm and welcoming sea, I realize that coming back to my little island marked a stage in my life where I could let my walls down for once, allowing myself to expose a softcore I had hidden away ever since I left for college and had almost forgotten I possessed until now. My fingertips tingle with unease and turn numb at the idea; I could count the people that had seen me at my most vulnerable state with one hand, and coincidentally they are

all a part of the life I had here in this sweltering paradise I call home. I ask myself if I would be able to bear myself out like that to anyone after so long, but as expected, I do not receive an answer. Even though my mother herself stood as my beacon of emotional support—embracing my instances of anxious breakdown and sitting through my stressed-out rants listening all the way—it was in my grandmother’s power alone to pick you apart and hold you in her arms as the human turmoil you were and built you back up even just a little sturdier with little need for words. But it was never to make you impenetrable from the outside, no, but from the inside. She made my mom into who she is today, bold and unbending, without the need to fake it. I come to see her now, not as the budding teenage girl she sent overseas to chase a distant wish, but as a blossoming woman with a bushel of dreams thickened by wisdom and growing ambition.

Once past the threshold and through the sky bridge, I step into the lively terminal whose busy aisles and myriad of voices inform me on time without a need for a clock: it was an hour or two past noon, the most hectic time for traffic throughout the airport. I join the unseen currents of people coming and going, following the colorful variations of accents and languages that melted together all around me into a wide river of dialects. As I bounce down the aisle on my way to the customs and immigration desk, I spot my reflection in the window I walk past, and a glint of light from under my ear briefly catches my attention. Slowing down, I push my hair behind my ear and blink at the sight of a pair of small pearl earrings framing both sides of my face. I had forgotten I had them on, as I don’t often wear earrings at all—I can’t fathom how I even still have ear piercing holes. My thoughts drift to memories of my grandmother, of me sitting in her room, dainty arms clasped together in protest as

she slips a pair of tiny diamonds into my ear piercings. “A woman’s look is never complete without a pair of earrings, *mi amor!*” She would always say, making sassy hand gestures whenever she uttered the word ‘look’ in her best attempt at speaking English.

She would tug and play around with my dirty blonde locks, curling them around her finger to enhance their already-curly texture. One could say I adopted the habit of doing that myself eventually and haven’t been able to stop since. No matter how much I pouted and complained, nothing would deter her from dolling me up whenever we were to go out to birthday parties or church sermons. But despite her seemingly superficial standards of beauty, right before I was to head out, she would always plant a kiss on my forehead and remind me, “If you feel beautiful, you’ll look beautiful!” Thinking back on her words now, as I absentmindedly massage my right earring with distant eyes lost in thought and a smile etched upon my lips, it became obvious to me that her first attempts at forging a stronger version of me had started much earlier than I had originally thought.

Reaching the never-ending line to the customs and immigration desk, I close my eyes for a moment and listen to the different regional dialects rolling off the tongues of people around me. From the fast-paced yet lazy slang, the people from the capital expressed themselves into the curious pronunciations of the people from the northern islanders that made them sound as if they spoke with their mouths full; all shared the familiar accent and rhythm of Dominican Spanish that I so desperately missed in my ears. My eyes flutter open as I crash back into reality, staring ahead at the rest of the line I had yet to make. I slip my phone out of my pocket out of instinct before quickly recalling the absence of a phone carrier as a consequence of being overseas. How strange it is, to feel so at home in a place where your phone has no signal. Seeking distraction, I tap into my camera roll and scroll through my recent photos. I pause at a picture my aunt had sent me before

I had hopped into the plane that brought me here. It was a picture of my grandmother and my cousin of eight years old; while my cousin looked like he aged five more years instead of two from the last time I saw him, my grandma had not aged a day from how I remembered her. Her hair a rich chocolate brown going pale at its roots, seeing it cascade down onto her shoulders in the long bob she sported brought the scent of honey to my reminiscing nose. I watch her open-mouth smile and remember her voice: nasal, loud, and beautiful, with hearty laughter like a witch’s yet as contagious as the joy she radiated in every wide and true smile. Her name, Huguette, elegant and soft on the tongue, is of French origin; I think I only learned how to spell it properly during my late middle school years. It might seem strange that I never once called her grandma, *Abuelita*, none of those things, ever. She has always been like a second mother to me, so I referred to her as such. As her first grandchild, I was born on the day of her birthday; she would always tell me, every birthday we spent together, that I was the best birthday gift she would ever receive.

After making it past the desk, eyes welled up with salty tears from my sudden reminiscences that warmed my heart all too fast. I walk past the sliding doors that separate the arrivals exit from the waiting area. I’m met with bright sunlight flowing down from the glass roof and the vibrant smell of warm coffee stronger than anything the gringos back in my college town had in store.

And in the sea of faces spreading out around me, I see them: my aunt’s short blonde locks frame her rosy round face, holding my baby cousin as her tiny hands tangle her mother’s hair at the back of her head. My two cousins dash around the crowd dodging people’s steps, spelling danger for either one that would get too excited and run straight into someone’s leg; My boyfriend’s wide shoulders and plump lips that parted into a warm smile brim-

ming with anticipation at the sight of me from afar. And of course, my grandmother: standing next to my boyfriend, I catch a glimmer in her eyes as she follows his gaze finally landing on me. Before I knew it, my slender legs break into a sprint towards her, until I land on her soft embrace as she tenderly strokes the back of my head. I gently run my thumb against her smooth skin as my face buries into her shoulder, filling my nose with the homely and warm scent of coconut and lilac softly radiating from her. And in her arms, I am home.

“Te extrañé, Mami Huguette.”



Into The Light
Justin Culley, Photography

Kids In Black

Jamie Lopez

No one told us that we were supposed to wear purple to the funeral
So I showed up in eyeliner and black pumps
And he wore a leather jacket and a tie
People stared as we held hands
And tried to keep back tears
The church was warmer than it usually was
With three times as many people than as on Sunday morning
All sitting in the front rows in everything from lavender to violet
While we stood in the back
The kids in black
And tried not to cry

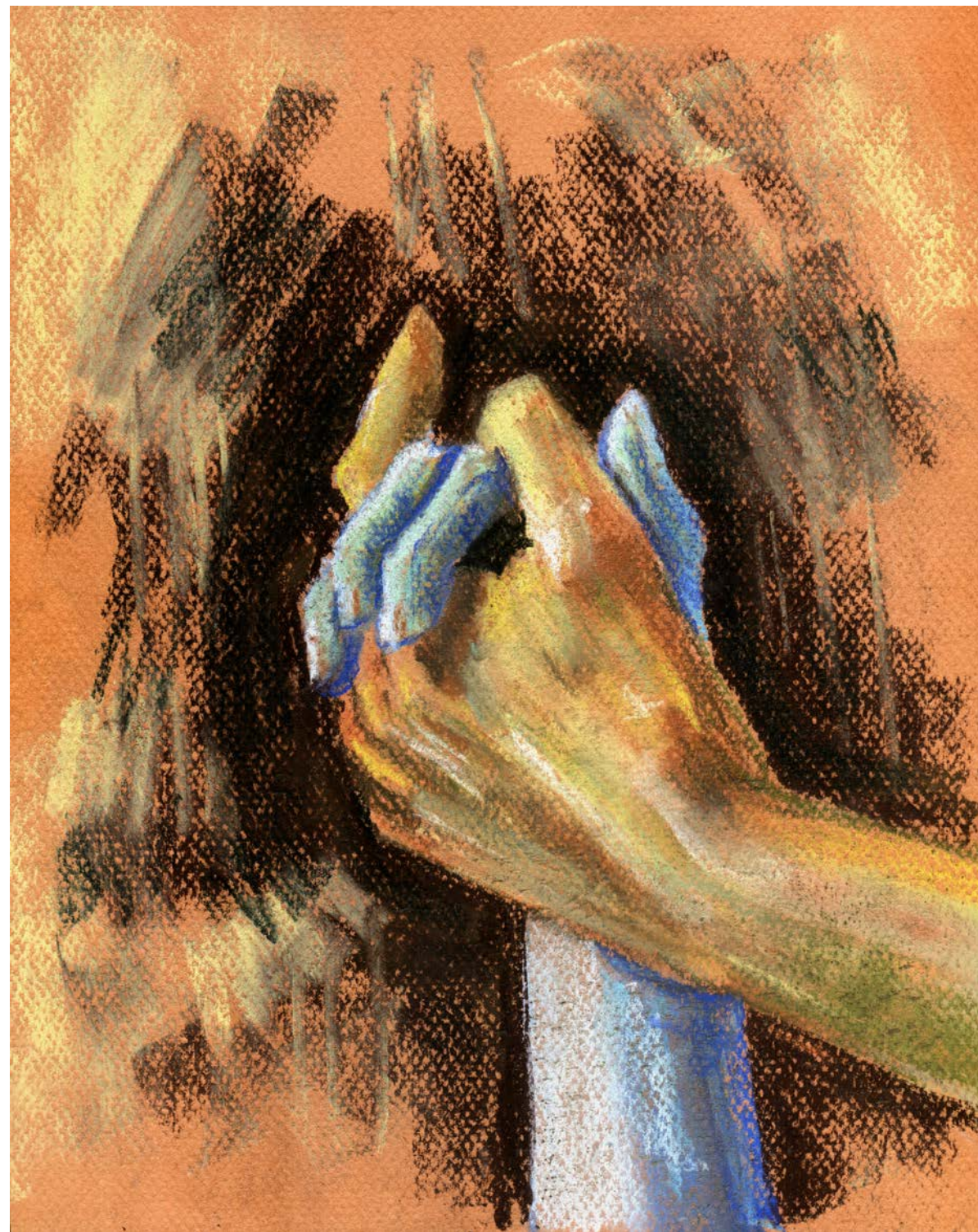
Take A Step Inside My Mind

Justin Culley, Photography



Warmth

Natalia Vargas, Pastel



The Uncatchable Fish

Taylor Martin

December 10, 2015 10:51am

They say to catch the “uncatchable fish” you must have patience. But what they never mention, is the fact that most of the time after you catch it, you lose it instantly. In the blink of an eye all of your hard work vanishes. Almost as if never to have happened in the first place. But you. You were different. This fish I never expected to catch, the, one I never saw swimming upstream. Against the strongest current known to man, addiction. Addicted to not one, but every synthetic happiness anything to be snored, shot, and sipped. But I loved you anyway. All of your scraped and tethered scales made you more beautiful. Your gimpy fin made you human and your eyes made it impossible-not to love you. Every crack and crevice of your soul was reflected onto me with that fishing pole. Never once suspecting that once I caught you, you’d reel me in too. With words like “I love you”, the hook sank deeper. Into my skin as I saw you for who you were, precious and in need of assistance.

You see, the thing about fishing is that without the proper bait the catch means nothing. But, you know, that not everything that’s been caught is an award for something. You can’t put a price on the perfect catch, it has to be earned with words like, “gratitude” “acceptance” and a multitude of others. With every level of love comes a price we never want to pay. The, things we dare not say, in fear of cutting the line. That line between ourselves and that perfect fish that’s never caught because no one has the patience-for admiration. But I saw you in that river staring up at me with eyes as mesmerizing as the sun although I dare not stare for it could be troublesome. Seeing into you made it hard to breathe like being held under water with no warning. Against my will, I fell- into you,

like being pulled into the current of that addiction I was speaking of. But mine was not a drug, it was- your touch that kept me up, higher than that sun in your eyes that rescued me, from my own darkness. Unaware of how caliginous that part of me was I gave to you the parts that had never seen the light of day. Surrounded by a school you were set apart instantly. Like a ray of light that strayed-apart and chose to shine on a sliver of the world no one had noticed. Or appreciated. Me.

You took the bait and saved the part of myself I wasn’t sure that I had. With, long nights and early mornings I cherish your existence like the breath of fresh air you are. Without you here it seems I’ve forgotten how to breathe. Pulling you up to the surface as you gasped in a panic- but you trusted me. I could see it in your soul, you, found a way to make me whole. Without even knowing it.

The incredible part is that the bait I speak of had no tasty chum, no, piece of flesh that kept you coming back for more. It was me. A simple naked hook with no shiny disposition nothing special to reel the other fish in. Just me. Just my words, my eyes and the way they looked into yours like we’d known each other for eons by the first time our skin touched. Your soul fit mine like a glove to the white winter I never got to see.

That, Christmas Eve in jersey we said we’d spend in a year’s time. To meet your family and to feel snow-flakes melt on my warm skin in passing.

“My very own Christmas morning” Is what I told you that you are. The very best moment you open your eyes to, the, one that you wait for all year long for, that makes all of the past sour memories disappear- You.



I'd give precisely 365 days off of my life if I knew it meant to touch your skin again. To, hear you say, "that's my girl" and the way your voice cracked as you called me "your everything"

But sometimes even when the catch is flawless things go awry. Either, you throw the fish back to sea or you cling to it for dear life, until it takes its last breath. And you, I wasn't going to let you slip through my selfish fingertips, not for a second. A second? Yes, that's what it was, that's how long it took. Before, I could look into your eyes and feel my soul change. Into the purest part of myself I had always wanted to be. To tap into the clarity of things I could finally see. I'm changed- by you. You see, everything happens for a reason and our paths were meant to connect the way that, the, end of the rainbow always saw the gold.

Gold, yes. Like that tiny nugget of gold, you told me I was, the, one that you carried around everywhere in your pocket. Simply to have with you at all times. Something that you cherished and that was worth so much, but only to you. Something you didn't want to share, but keep close to you "forever".

So, you see, I grasped onto you as if my skin could save you from the damage that the current had done. But eventually you took your last breath, and the only thing I could do was stand around to listen. The last words to depart your sweet lips were, "baby" as you called for me through that phone in your car at 3:49 in the morning. I tried, I did. I caught you, my uncatchable fish, and you lasted as long as you possibly could on the surface. I wish, there was something more I could do, I wish, I had known where you were to send help to you. I wish, you hadn't of let those doses of synthetic happiness take you over. I wish, you'd let me be the drug you needed to get you through that night. But, that's okay- Because someday "we will come back to the place where it all started, whatever that means." Because "you are everything that is, and everything that will be"

For Alex.





Miriam Sabrina Taveras: is a writer that lives within a world of her own creation, seeking for greater ways to put it into words with every day that passes.

Claudette Goico: is a Dominican who always looks on the bright side.

Sebastian Francois lives freely and brings passion into his art form is a driving force on why he loves photography.

Jorge Manzanares loves painting and drawing but photography is what pulls him most.

Nina Retto “Home is the place we always go back to and we all have different ways of going home.”

Sarah Henry has taken up writing, after years of procrastination, as a means of better understanding her inner and outer worlds.

Ciomarah Stokes is an optimist with a love for visual art, storytelling, and tea.

Marija (Maria) Kaufmane is an emerging poet who has taken her own thoughts and feelings to write poems with deep meaning and emotion.

Daniel Otero enjoys creating all kinds of art and experimenting, but illustration is his forte.

Justin Culley every day, he observes the world quietly; thinking of ways to communicate his reality.

Michelle Holguin is a mixed media artist. Being told “girls can’t draw!” by a little boy then; spite gave way into a positive passion as she matures.

Pablo Matute is a cartoonist who has been drawing for fourteen years.

Caitlin Pazmino finds the most rewarding feeling comes from her struggle in creating her work.

Paula Rosario This is going to be the first time publishing her thoughts to the public, but she is willing to take the risk.

Natalia Vargas A lazy artist that gets inspired by others, loves holding hands and petting every cat she sees.

Rebecca Delva is a graphic design major.

Jacqueline Bird An exotic mix breed that she is, so is her palate of literary curiosity.

Alejandro Gonzalez likes to stare at the abyss for too long

Nickson Morin keeps looking for art in everything he touches.

Taylor Martin can be found smothering her dog with affection.

Ellana Sunshine loves to dive into all different medians of art.

Claire Joseph is inspired to write based on what she is feeling or thinking as a way to get out the emotions and thoughts

Ivar Fandel has exhibited paintings and photographs at Art Serve in Ft. Lauderdale, the 1310 Gallery and has been published in the Archives of Pediatrics and P’an ku Magazine.

Alexa Delagado is a filmmaker who feels liberated through the storytelling of filmmaking.

Jamie Lopez is small-town writer with big opinions, who want to make the world a better place for the people they love.

OUR ARTISTS

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2019 Florida College System Activities Association Award Winners

TOP AWARD

Melissa Torres, Debra Vazquez Memorial Award for Excellence in Poetry

INNER CIRCLE AWARD

Natalie Laurent

FIRST PLACE AWARDS

Melissa Torres, Best Poem, Spring 2019

Michael Lozano, Best Photograph, Fall 2018

SECOND PLACE AWARDS

Natalie Laurent, Two-Page Spread, Spring 2019

Natalie Laurent, Staff Page Design, Spring 2019

Oscar Jean, On-the-Spot Poetry Contest, 2019

THIRD PLACE AWARDS

Nicole Forero, Poetry, Fall 2018

Sabrina Taveras, Nonfiction, Spring 2019

Noann Maia, Art, Fall 2018

Natalie Laurent and Simone Kelly, Two-Page Spread, Fall 2018

Natalie Laurent, Design, Fall 2018

Natalie Laurent, Design, Spring 2019

P'an Ku Team, Editing, Spring 2019



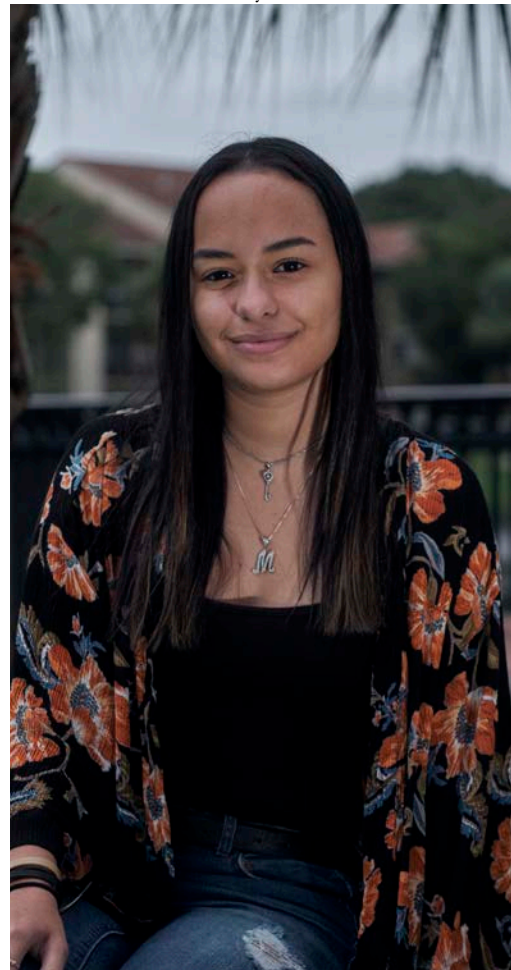
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