



## THE PAPERCLIP TEAM

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

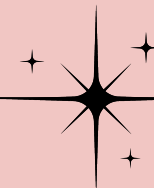
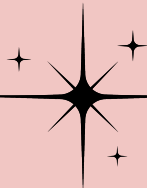
Welcome to the Winter 2024 issue of The Paperclip! The Paperclip is a magazine of original writing and visual art done by students here at ETHS. We strive to create a space for students to connect with each other and express themselves through creativity. For this issue the given themes were "Love" and "Winter." We found that most students who submitted were drawn to the former option...this issue is overflowing with writing and art about affection and heartbreak. From the gut wrenching submissions to the ones that made us swoon, we were moved by the wave of vulnerability and introspection that we've had the honor of compiling this winter. At the end of this issue you will also find a number of miscellaneous submissions from students who took inspiration from outside of our themes this season. We hope you find just as much artistic inspiration and emotional release as we have within the Winter 2024 issue of The Paperclip. If you are interested in submitting to future issues, there will be information on the next page along with information on how to join the editorial team. Thank you to everyone who submitted their brilliant work, and thank *you* for reading it. If you leave this issue with a tear or two in your eye, don't say we didn't warn you. You know what they say, all's fair in love and The Paperclip.

Here are some places you can  
learn more/ask  
questions/submit work/apply  
for the editorial board/internet  
stalk us:

Email:  
[ethspaperclip@gmail.com](mailto:ethspaperclip@gmail.com)

Instagram:  
[@ethspaperclip](https://www.instagram.com/ethspaperclip)

Submission Form:



# APRIL



Your particular headache  
heart beating, foot tapping  
and lavender detergent  
have become distant enough now  
that they seem comfortable

Unfamiliar and sickening  
To pace and spiral  
as the walls closed in  
has become a newfound  
nostalgia

I read through the old messages  
The birthday cards and poems  
I scrolled through the whole of your  
profile  
I watched you from the benches  
and tried to remember  
the specific claustrophobia  
of holding your hand

It seems so soft now  
So sweet  
how trapped I felt

Orange perfume  
Black tapioca  
A familiar bassline  
Black and white disks  
My green dress  
The sweat on your  
brow

I long for an anxiety  
that I can understand

# ANONYMOUS

# I WISH YOU KNEW YOUR PLACE

## A LOVE LETTER TO MY PAST SELF

I wish you knew your place, but I  
don't mean that how you think I do.

I wish you knew the place you've  
made for yourself. The way you've  
begun to thrive and the way your  
confidence has skyrocketed.

When you walk into a room, it lights  
up. Where you would've been afraid,  
you are now excited, and where you  
would've been angry, you are  
strong.

I have watched you grow into a  
beautiful human being, and you  
inspire me every day.

Can you imagine that? You inspire  
me every day.

So yes, I wish you knew your place.  
But I know that one day you will.



# ANONYMOUS

# Untitled

Anonymous

I should have known it was a dream,  
that's the only time I see you now.

I should have been less careful,  
that's your fault.

I remember I thought before falling asleep:

I do not remember the sound of your voice  
so if you spoke, in my dream,

words I don't recall

I must have

made them up.



# To Make You Stay

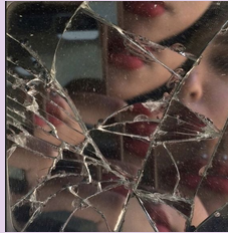


## TO MAKE YOU STAY

ANONYMOUS

It was dark and snowing on the playground. It was only early evening. I can't remember why we didn't go inside. The flakes were falling onto the seesaw and the big hammock swing. It looked like a small kingdom. The streetlight was harsh and made the whole scene look uncanny, two dimensional. I was inside a dreamily sinister snow globe. nothing was real, nothing made sense, and everything was falling into disrepair before my very eyes. But I treasured it. To be disoriented, cold and hurt with you was to be anything with you, which felt like some sort of achievement. You insulted my coat as if you were complimenting me, like you noticing anything about me was an honor. You announced that you were freezing but you didn't leave. We walked in circles within the fluorescent glow of the playground and took in the nostalgia of adolescent moments passing in real time. The snow was like sugar paper. The sky felt low, like a layer of black fabric making its way to the ground. We walked in circles like that for too long. I can't remember what we spoke about. Neither of us knew how to leave but neither of us knew how to stay. so we let evening become night and our fingers turn pink and then purple. Pacing inside the snow globe, waiting for someone to shake it again. To make the whole thing make sense. To make the snow stick. To make you leave. To make you stay.

# SPLITTING



Are these things my fault?  
I think deep down I know they aren't.  
They still hurt like they are.  
Like if I had done something different, things would've worked out.  
They wouldn't have.

I suppose my point is that, sometimes, you're capable of more than you should be;  
and sometimes you should be more than you are. In the end, you'll be anyway, here or not.

I spend so much time in my head, so much time talking to myself.  
Do you think like me? Does your chest ache the way mine does?  
You hum at a frequency my brain likes. It settles there comfortably

I know I know I know, I'm sorry. I don't mean to. I'm really sorry. I can fix it. I can change. I can be better. I would do anything for you. I would give my life to you. I will give my death to you. You can have it, for all it's worth. I would give and give and give and sacrifice my peace and joy and happiness and comfort and peace and sanity and health and peace for you. For you. I would do anything for you. I already said that. I just want to make sure you know. I have no self-respect. I am nothing, that's what I was taught. Is it true? Do you believe it? Because if you believe it then it must be true. Right? You assign me my worth? You give me, my life, my body, my mind, my words, value. Use my body, use my mind, use my comfort, and joy, and words, and life, and wipe up your floors with my dignity.

I hate you with every fiber of my being. Every cell in my body burns with a hatred for you. I never want to see you again. I wish for something so awful to happen to you that I feel guilty for wishing it. You fucking cunt- I don't mean that- yes I do- you hurt me- that's my problem- no, it's not, you shouldn't treat your friends like that- what did you mean by "considered" me your best friend? Do you not anymore- I really like you- what you did was awful- I wish I knew what it was like to kiss you- I don't think we should be friends- I don't actually mean that, what I want is for you to fight for me and prove to me that you actually like me, that's not healthy either way so I won't say anything- I miss you- God you stupid bitch- your eyes are beautiful- Why the fuck would you think it's okay to say that to me- Why are you always rubbing it in my face? This feels like a sick joke- I like when you hug me, it makes me feel safe- You're an awful person- No, you're a human being with many layers and many positive and negative qualities- I hate seeing you with him, it makes my stomach churn- Watching you create music is mesmerizing, I could watch you forever- I hope you don't notice the way I stare at you- I wish I could stare at you- This hurts.

# BLACK HONEY

# Paper Girl



ANONYMOUS

And for the boy to have loved me

You believed it to be true  
and therefore so did I

It was  
the sky as it turned to autumn  
the linen against my neck and cheek  
my own heart as it pounded  
It was  
the air tasting sweet

It was lovely and lucid  
as I held the imaginary flowers  
and let it fall into disrepair

He was looking at me

It was ribbons  
and lilies  
and pearls

It was the rainwater in the sidewalk cracks  
It was my breath that caught as the pages turned

Your words sunk  
into the space between my neck and collarbone  
And the world seemed to melt  
into orbs of liquid light

And he tasted of cinnamon and dust  
blown through the rafters  
and perfectly sung in between breaths

# MY BLOOD

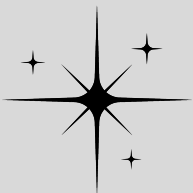
A sweatshirt with a hood  
So that you don't always  
have to wear the same one

I held it by the arm  
while you walked  
and we laughed at  
the quiet comfort  
of each others company

Pushing pennies across  
the wooden table  
Writing little stories  
on crumpled lined paper

There was rarely discussion  
but we understood, didn't we?

My feet up  
in the passenger seat  
I had on too much perfume  
but you didn't mind



ANONYMOUS

Those three words didn't matter  
because of course they were true

You were my blood  
In the cold air  
and in the heat

You wear that sweatshirt now  
with the hood  
and your new shoes

You say nothing  
when it gets to your stop

You get off the bus  
fast enough  
so that I can't follow you



# Untitled



## UNTITLED

ANONYMOUS

It has been far too long for this

Ms. Logic says  
It is not proper  
Stake your whole heart on  
Someone you knew a while ago

Yet I am devoid of reason  
Oh, she has left me for good  
Understand that you have been so much

Even now I mourn what  
Very well could have been  
Every way it might have differed  
Remember my failures  
Yesterday's shortcomings, handsomely hazy

Depth has the place that you've pierced me  
All my soul is stained  
You are nothing but air



## WHAT I HOPE LOVE FEELS LIKE

(A Spotify playlist by  
someone whose never been  
in love)

1. Until I Found You -  
Stephen Sanchez
2. Love Story (Taylor's  
Version) - Taylor Swift
3. Feels Like - Gracie  
Abrams
4. This Love (Taylor's  
Version) - Taylor Swift
5. A Beautiful Game - Ed  
Sheeran
6. Hold Back Time - Derek  
Hough
7. Parallel - Scott Hoying

8. Four - Scott Hoying
9. Salt Water - Ed Sheeran
10. Perfect - Ed Sheeran
11. Right Person, Right Time - Leanna  
Firestone
12. Lover - Taylor Swift
13. Pierre - Ryn Weaver
14. Share Your Address - Ben Platt
15. Paper Rings - Taylor Swift
16. Butterflies - Kacey Musgraves
17. Pointless - Lewis Capaldi
18. That's How You Know - From  
"Enchanted" - Amy Adams
19. Till Forever Falls Apart - Ashe,  
FINNEAS
20. Enchanted (Taylor's Version) -  
Taylor Swift

Maybe one day...

BY TSB



# FLORENCE

You could have touched me  
if you wanted

I was transparent in the summer air  
Stuff of vapor and smoke  
Your fingertips

would have only passed through

I was willing to imagine  
a perfect, romantic sickness

East of Florence

The hem of my skirt  
gathered in your hands

And I was semi solid that night

No more than molding clay

Your arms

would have sunk into my skin

If you had moved swiftly  
with your breath catching  
your hair reflecting the moon

I would have waded to the boat  
and sailed through the darkening sky

Let your shutter click

Let your arms and legs bend

Let your brick and mortar tower  
between blurred frames

And I turned to liquid in your palm

Rainwater pooling at your feet

My heart

would have drowned in the runoff

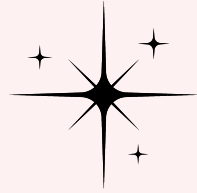
But you could have held it

if you wanted

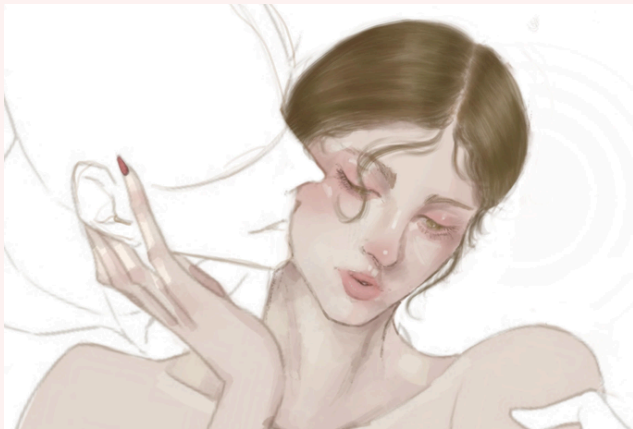
# ANONYMOUS



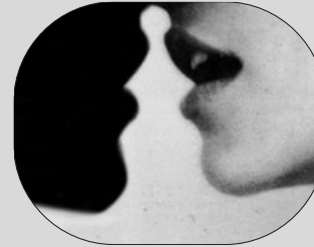
## FIRST LOVE



## HE'S A WORK IN PROGRESS

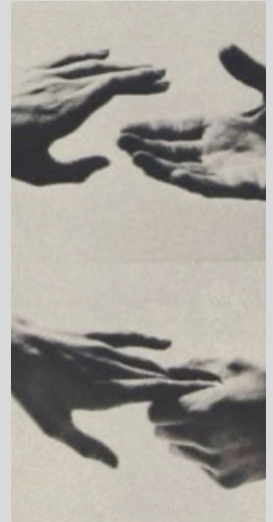


PASHA LURA IRONS-ROSIN



## UNTITLED

wish i could miss it in pieces  
 a downward slope, it is cold and dark outside  
 i long for the thing I am leaving behind and  
 i have dreams  
 gave me a hug  
 a sign  
 a something and it's  
 silly  
 dreamlike, phantom, figment, falsehood  
 i miss you every day.



## ANONYMOUS



## Find yourself people that make you want to write poetry



OLIVIA TANKEVICIUS

Whose face you see when you open your phone  
Because their sight makes you smile  
Who's sent you into laughing fits  
To see you giddy like a child

Whose energy and love and effort  
Is available at your best, and your worst  
Who's pinned on your messages app  
Because their texts deserve to be seen first

Whose time spent together feels like minutes rather than hours  
Because they make the time slow  
Who's school schedule you've mapped  
Since a full day is too long to go

Whose gentle grasp warms yours  
Because the winter nips at your fingers  
Who's willing to hug, even for no reason  
They know the winter solemn lingers

Whose eyes seem to read you like a book  
Because they understand  
Who's carefully pushed a hair into place  
A perfect face covered by a single strand

Whose impact to your life you can't put into words  
Find yourself people that make you want to write poetry

## LOVE LETTERS IN A PINK FOLDER

Everything reminds me of you

sparks die when I listen to that song

you only like the versions where the man controlled the melody  
owned it

you've taken my hobbies as your own

movies I can't watch without feeling invaded

we've divided up the town, yours and mine

ironic because you could never respect boundaries then

you said that day would be a fairy tale

but now all the evenings are nightmares

my body doesn't feel like my own

filled with questions of why me

I can't hurt myself, you told me not to

the memory of you saying that is harsher than drawing blood

did you listen to a word I said

I told you why that color made me sad

made me feel so small

but you still walked me home

and gave me love letters in a pink folder



ANONYMOUS

I've seen  
your sister  
dance

What would  
you have  
expected?

My shoulders  
pale  
narrow  
in the low light?

It was  
a theory  
you enjoyed

With a  
vacant  
expression  
she flits

I am  
much more  
full

It was  
wrong

But I felt  
it  
anyway

## WAIST



ANONYMOUS

## UNTITLED



we met in December  
my eyes met a face  
a face with a glow like the sun on the  
snow  
so bright it hurts but yet so addicting  
in my dreams  
your face is traced by my hands, like  
blooming cherry blossoms in spring  
maybe in the spring  
we'll interlock our lips like how our  
words  
interact and overlap  
on a beach somewhere, dancing under  
the moonlight, your hair becoming the  
night sky  
as if the universe is claiming their  
goddess  
back  
taken from the living  
I don't blame the universe for that  
alone in the world I'll know what to do  
love  
I'd go back to December all the time  
missing you

ANONYMOUS

# The Versatility of Language



## THE VERSATILITY OF LANGUAGE

AN ORCHESTRA RUMINATION - ANNONYMOUS

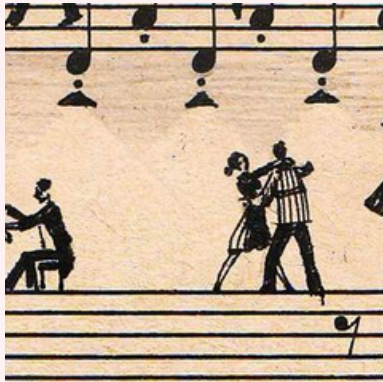
I am reading words I wrote in a state of panic. Words I struggled to see beyond my tears, words I remember exploding out of my chest in sobs. I am reading these words, and I am smiling. Imagine that.

I am writing words like I haven't in years. I am writing words like I haven't ever. I am writing words, and I am smiling. And I read the words I have written, and I smile. And I glance upward, past my corner, watch my friends' bows glide across their strings, let the melody of the orchestra flow over me, and I smile. And I am smiling.



# NOT EVERYONE WANTS A TYPICAL HAPPILY EVER AFTER. EVEN IF THEY WANT TO WANT IT

You think you know me  
at least a bit.  
but you've spent infinite hours on  
my mind  
and I don't want you to know  
but this is borderline obsession.  
3 years of trying to stop my own  
mind.  
Or at least slow it down.  
Feels like you flirt with everyone  
but too much can feel like nothing.  
I watch you  
I used to list your quirks in my mind  
Now I want to burn that list



And then there's the other thing.  
If we were to become anything close  
to what I've imagined, I'd run.  
I hate being someone's main  
character.

I want to be loved  
In love  
Maybe everyone does  
But when it starts to be real  
Suddenly the wanting to want  
disappears  
Fantasies seem to hold more value  
than reality.  
I'm terrified of finding something  
real  
because  
What if it breaks my heart?  
Or worse, I hate it and break  
someone else's heart?

Guys used to ask me out as a  
joke  
in middle school,  
maybe to test my queerness?  
Well jokes on them because  
now  
I can't figure out basic  
attraction.  
I should have said yes to  
someone random  
given it a test drive,  
Too late now when I brand  
myself as the one who makes  
the first move  
But then I get too close to  
something real  
I retreat for fear of hurting  
someone.



My attraction comes as a dragon  
A hyperfixation,  
an obsession.  
Too close to toxic  
for me to feel okay doing anything  
about it.  
Anxiety is a fungus in my mind  
making me obsess  
over what could be.  
I play out imaginary conversations  
countless ways,  
Looking for what I'm actually  
looking for.  
What if I never find it?  
What if I never fall in love,  
I never even trip into one of my  
imagined worlds

## ANONYMOUS

It wouldn't be the worst thing, but it's a  
lonely existence.  
I force my way into new social circles  
Its visceral,  
my need to belong  
I suppose everyone wants to be loved  
that's why I asked my favorite person to  
homecoming freshman year  
alas.  
We were better off friends.  
I'm forever grateful we found our way  
back  
Maybe when you flirt with everyone  
and pretend its fine  
You end up deathly lonely

I'm becoming my own nightmare  
Too nice to know the difference  
between flirting and genuine  
generosity

Isn't there a loneliness epidemic going  
around?

I keep trying to make new friends  
Sometimes it works  
I need my one special person  
But once I choose someone  
I want it to be literally anyone else

I want to live out my days in a restored  
castle  
surrounded by friends  
Where we all do creative things as the  
light fades.

That's the dream I want on my mind,  
not the sappy rom com with wet kisses  
and dramatic coincidences.

# I DIDN'T DESERVE YOU



i didn't deserve you  
 not the secret texts or the longing hugs  
 not the whispered love yous or the hunnybugs  
 i didn't deserve you  
 not because i wasn't good enough  
 but because i was too good  
 i should have had the  
 cute dates and traced outlines  
 the friendship and board gametime  
 but you made your choice taking my choice  
 and now we aren't friends  
 you took that decision beyond my bends  
 of this winding road  
 false signs  
 fake lights  
 to make yourself feel better  
 imitation love  
 artificial friends

ANONYMOUS

## Things You Ruined for Me and Why



### THINGS YOU RUINED FOR ME AND WHY:

ANONYMOUS

1. Drawing. It used to be fun but looking back you would redraw my drawings, I thought it was cute. You probably just wanted to one-up me. I did something I found fun and you had to be better, always.
2. Love. You made me feel guilty for being in love with the guy you claimed out of nowhere. He's a person too, you know? I hope you know he hates you as much as me.
3. Songs. All the songs I found first, that you claimed as yours. I liked the band first, it's not my fault that you can't find any music outside the mainstream without me.
4. Friends. You made me feel like you were the only friend I could have, jealousy isn't pretty. Mad when I invite you, mad when I don't.
5. Clothes. I want the clothes I gave you back. I'm sorry, okay? But those mean something to me and I thought you meant something too. I was wrong and I want them back.

# GHOST

You were here once

On this bench  
in this air

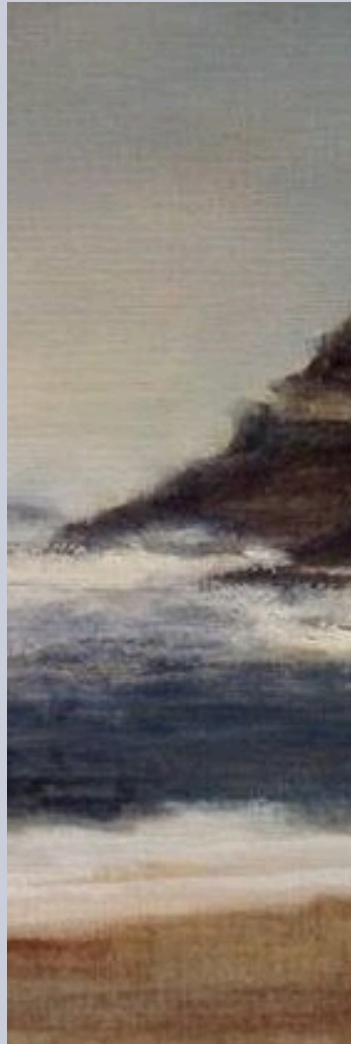
And you were close  
You were familiar

I know that shirt  
and I know those shoes

And we spoke  
and it was normal  
It was routine

Because  
of course we spoke  
of course you were here  
Of course that shirt  
those shoes  
It was familiar  
It was routine

When  
did you become  
so abstract?



# ANONYMOUS

# *A Foolproof Guide to Dancing at Parties*

1. Wear waterproof mascara. Most of it will still come off by the morning, but find a kind that will at least last you until 1 AM.
2. Find a group of people who seem to be comfortable with making fools of themselves. Exchange pleasantries.
3. When you reach the dance floor with your new companions, always pretend you know the words to the song playing, even if you've never heard it in your life.
4. Dance in loose, repetitive movements. Please don't think about it too much, this is supposed to be fun.
5. Stop looking for those particular eyes in the throng of people around you, you will only find that of strangers.
6. Dance with your arms until you forget their eyelashes. Dance with your legs until you forget their irises. Dance with your whole heart until you can't recall their pupils, looking into yours.
7. Give up. Go home.
8. Drink water in the morning. Hot with honey and a squeeze of lemon. Scrub off your remaining mascara.



Anonymous

# HUNGER

I know I can't tell the difference  
but the prettier side comes out  
when I'm tired  
and then I find myself  
perpetually in a state  
of feeling like I'm on the precipice  
of some great wave of wonder

And in my quiet hysteria  
In my euphoric oblivion  
I can see your hands

I know I can't tell the difference  
but right in this moment  
I want you here

So I give in and pretend

You are saying something  
thrilling and profound  
and I can hear every one of your  
heartbeats

You are reaching and sinking  
and water fills my lungs  
My eyes roll into my skull  
and I smile as I drown  
in the warmth of my own disrepair

You are pleased at the sight  
of my tired eyes and wet hair  
You are breathing slowly  
You are speaking fast

But  
you are somewhere else  
with some other person  
in some other room  
holding some other vessel  
full of some other kind of tears  
Drunk and lucid  
I wish for you  
to find me and  
say something that  
you'll regret

And I wouldn't be able  
to tell the difference  
but I'm tired  
and I know  
right now that  
I want you  
here

# ANONYMOUS

## And Leave You Unhurt



### AND LEAVE YOU UNHURT

ATISA D'ABDON

I want to love you so much that I refuse to be with you; to  
leave you unhurt  
It's protective. And it's potent. And it's precise  
It leaves me numb and it leaves me lonely  
But at least it's not you, at least it's me only  
I'm unaware and sacred to repair  
what I've terminated  
I want to love you so much that I refuse to be with you; to  
leave you unhurt  
I need you to know that I love you  
and that's why I can't love you.  
I'm afraid of reality  
that's why you're my dream  
i don't want you in the trail with the others  
so  
I will to love you so much that I refuse to be with you; and  
leave you unhurt

## WHAT ABOUT ME?



## FROZEN BLISS



CHARLENE SOLIS

# Sudden Snowstorm

ANONYMOUS

It arrived, slowly at first, barely making a mark upon the ground  
 But before I could look back the downy flakes were swirling around me  
 and I could not see anything but the blinding light,  
 A tornado of white  
 I tilted back my head, let my heart swirl along with the dance of the snow  
 and allowed it to give into the drunken giddiness of hope once again.  
 The cold feather light flakes gently kissed my lips  
 And the pure magic of the moment, the silent serenity  
 Convinced me that this sudden blizzard was intimacy  
 The early dawn following held countless more wonders,  
 The sparking snow draped along the needle thin branches,  
 Tracing the limbs like my own  
 I was high on the dazzling sight of the all-blanketing white  
 I would have stayed there till my feet froze to the ground  
 and the fresh, cold air became too deadly for my delicate lungs  
 And I wouldn't have cared about the cold winning the battle against my  
 laboring heart  
 For the only thing my heart chose to see was this entrancing vision of frozen  
 perfection  
 But perfection proves to be temporary,  
 Snow drifts along and deforms  
 The long, dragging days rake mud and imprints of passersby on my once  
 flawless scene  
 It was mine, or I believed it was  
 It is so frighteningly easy to fall in love with the intoxicating whirl of frozen  
 crystals  
 Right when they first fall, covering every inch of your warm, mortal body  
 The icy touch of love blinds your foresight  
 The flurries wipe your mind and make you forget  
 That nothing lasts, no matter the beauty,  
 It tarnishes and melts so quickly  
 And now I walk among the ruins of my once-wonderland,  
 Tears slipping as all I see is a field of slush  
 And stains on what used to be pure, perfect white.  
 Snowstorms come and go, whipping in with a promise of adventure,  
 And leaving its heaps of melting snow that only vanish when the land thaws  
 And spring sneaks in once again  
 But they always come, I know this, I should.  
 I can smell another on the wind now,  
 As I finally can bear to leave the remains of the last on the ground behind me  
 And I know not to let it fool me, use me, but how can I have any hope  
 Because every time when the first sparking flakes hit my outstretched hands  
 I forget all over again, I believe the blizzard will be different, as individual as  
 unique snowflakes  
 I try, but snowstorms are snowstorms,  
 they always arrive with a whirlwind and a whisper in my ear,  
 Fleeing after turning every last living thing to ice



# Why Are Guns More Valued Than Human Lives?

BY: JSE

How many more lives have to end before we rewrite the constitution and delete the right to murder? In Illinois pepper spray is more punished than guns. In 2021 there were 202 school shootings and 175 casualties. How many will it take? Why are womens bodies more regulated than guns? You can't save yourself from an ectopic pregnancy but you can own a gun? Someone tell me why the solution is to move out of the country because this right is too deeply rooted.

## THE TEETH



Clair walked into John's bedroom. She saw her husband on the floor, passed out. In hand, she poured water over his head, as that had been the morning routine for the past five years. John woke up and looked at Clair, still half asleep. John mumbled, "They found 3 men dead on the side of the road..." Clair frustratingly sighed. She was wearing a blue suit with black pants. She didn't want to deal with her brother right now. She needed to get to work. She left the room, and John sighed; he got up and looked out the window. They lived in a small apartment building in the swamp of florida near the grocery store and the pharmacy. It was raining; the sky was dark. He went to the kitchen and opened the cabinet. He grabbed what must of been a week-old box of stale lucky charms. He sat down on the couch, turned on the TV, and ate. Eventually, he got back up and put on his uniform, an old trench coat stained with bear spills and mud, his dark pants worn and ragged. john worked as a private detective; he remembered that night, 5 years ago, Halloween. John was driving home with his wife Rachel and son David. He remembers that night like it was yesterday. his wife was dressed up as Frankenstein's monster, and David was wearing an astronaut outfit. David loved space and wanted to be an astronaut, and John was wearing a scientist's lab coat and goggles. As they were driving home, they listened to the wheels on the bus go round and round. It was David's favorite song (he was five). They sang along with him. John Remembers hearing his dead mom call out to him. Startled, he pulled the car over. Rachel asked him what was wrong. He told her it was nothing... he turned to look at her, and in the blink of an eye, he saw something large looking into the car.

He yelled, "What the hell is that!?" it grabbed John and HE couldn't remember what happened next. when he woke up on the side of that road his son was half eaten, guts spilled out. his wife's head lying next to him. he screamed in fear and sorrow. he tried to stand up, but he couldn't. He looked down. One of his legs was missing. He saw a tooth stuck in the wound, a large, long one. It couldn't have come from an animal. then he felt a sharp pain in his head another tooth was stuck in his head he blacked out. he woke up in the hospital 3 days later and he was told his son was dead. He had been given a prosthetic leg. he moved in with his sister, obsessing over what happened. Police had said it was a bear; he refused to believe that the teeth stuck in him could have come from a bear. 5 years later. He's only found more deaths on that road; families every few months would wind up dead. He's the only one that had survived the attacks. These deaths date back to before he was even born. The road has recently had a spike in these deaths. He left his sister's apartment, got in his car, and drove.. Hours later, he made it back to that same road. He got out of his car and opened the trunk, taking a harpoon out, a flashlight, and a knife. he was gonna kill this monster, and if he died trying, at least he would be with his family again. He waited for hours watching, hoping to see something. He started to doze off until he heard a crash. He got out of his car and looked. A car had been flipped over, and there was something big. He pointed the flashlight at it and saw a huge mouth with thousands of sharp, long teeth in it. It had a dark blue body. The creature looked like a fish, it looked scaly. He saw gills and fins, its mouth covered in dried blood. The creature shrieked and ran; it must of been nocturnal and hated the light. He ran after it; the thing was fast, running down the shoreline. He saw jagged rocks, skulls, and bones; it ran into the water and started to submerge. He prepared to shoot it until he heard a voice: "Daddy.." He turned around and saw nothing. Then he heard his wife: "John, what are you doing?" He yelled, "This isn't real. You're not real!" he started to break down. The creature grabbed him and dragged him into the ocean. Clair got up to splash her brother with water. He wasn't there...

flow over me, and I smile. And I am smiling.

**Max Golberg**



## THE SQUIRREL

noteworthy squirrel  
look at you climbing the wall  
so cute as you do  
look at you climbing the tree  
you climb so elegantly

AMY SCHNEIDERMAN

## THE CYCLIST



ATISA D'ABDON

# A Second Wiser



BY ANONYMOUS

[...] I miss people that I am unhappy with. I'm unhappy with the people who have done nothing wrong. I do nothing wrong and then feel guilty about some made up crime. I make up some crime to be unhappy with someone else about. I begin to miss them even though I'm unhappy with them. The cycle continues.

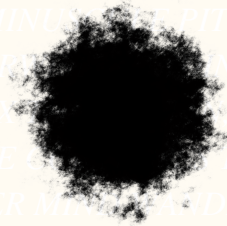
I'm learning how to be sad without trying to dissect the sadness into small enough pieces so that I feel like I can fix it. I've come to realize that the issue is that I'm trying to fix it. I have to just be sad. This is profoundly inconvenient.

People are messy and I am a selective germaphobe. By this I mean that other people can be unclean, and I will accept it enthusiastically. However, if I am unclean it is an issue I must resolve with urgency. I am learning to be unclean. As a result of learning to be dirty and miserable all the time, I am also quite exhausted. It is the time in my life that I am realizing that to be human is to be a disgusting, uncomfortable mess of fatigue, and to also be a little bit beautiful. In other words, I am an adolescent. [...]

I feel the need to be completely enlightened now so that I can get all the uncomfortable discoveries out of the way as soon as possible, but I'm sure I'll reread this in a few years and think about how naive it sounds. Isn't that funny? That you are never truly in your most enlightened state? There will always be a moment, just out of reach, when you are a second wiser.

An old woman sits in a cold, uncomfortably quiet room. She doesn't remember yesterday, nor the day before, and most certainly will not remember today. She wonders when her grandson will send her a letter, having not heard from him in who knows how long. As she struggles to remember her grandson's face, her eyes latch onto a minuscule pitch black spot, or maybe it was a hole, in the otherwise blinding white room. This strange mark seems to relax the woman, as she breathes a sort of sigh of relief. As she continues to gaze upon the mark on the wall, she lets her mind wander. Her thoughts drift about... approaching, yet never catching their prey. Unbeknownst to her, as she rests in the silence of her own mind, the black mark begins to pulsate. It then grows, slowly at first, then rapidly expanding until the once bleached room succumbs to an inky void. The woman stirs just before being swallowed by darkness. Immediately fear washes over her, though was soon replaced by a sickening feeling of familiarity. Suddenly every bit of her once suppressed memory floods her mind like the cacophonous and synchronized beat of a drum. [...]

## MEMORY LANE



[...] she watches what seems like thousands of brutal deaths, ending with even her grandson, and beautiful child of only twelve, having his eyes gouged out, stomach slit, and skin peeled off. [...]

She wakes up, sitting alone in a cold, uncomfortably quiet room. She doesn't remember yesterday, nor the day before, and most certainly will not remember today. As she wonders if she'll ever receive another letter from her grandson, a strange black spot materializes on the wall across the room. It waits, eagerly awaiting its prey.

ELIAS GINSBERG

Clark sat hunched over his round, wooden dining table. He bounced his leg up and down on the hard surface of the checkered kitchen tile. Tears prickled in the corners of his eyes. Trembling, he raised a cold beer to his lips— a wailing police siren blared in the distance. Clark bolted up from his chair, his beer bottle shattered on the kitchen tile. His sweaty palms clenched in anticipation. Then the sound of the siren passed by and drove off into the distance. He let out a long exhale and slumped back into his chair.

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A worm crawls into her hand. It burrows its way through the soft flesh of her palm. Through layers of flesh until crawling along the wired veins coursing through her upper arm. One by one more worms make their way into Eileen. Suddenly each of her fingers begin to twitch.

An infomercial for some second hand product played on the TV screen, illuminating the dark room. Trash from the last two days piled high around his couch. Clark's head bobbed up and down as he held out against exhaustion. Soon his eyes fluttered shut, slumping over in his seat. He was dead asleep, so much so that he didn't notice the tapping on the window. Then followed by the sound of glass shattering He jumped up from the chair and peeled back the curtains.

A figure shrouded by the night stood in the window. A flash of lighting broke through the dark. In that instance his eyes locked onto a familiar pair of glassy, deep eyes and soft lips that curled into a pleasant grin. Her left hand clutched onto a jagged rock. His heart dropped, he fell to his knees as he let out a scream. Eileen crawled in, her skin tore from jagged glass. She resembled a loose bag draped over her form. Each cut spilled with worms from beneath her skin. Below the skin a writhing movement. Burrowed holes and open wounds dotted her skin like freckles. A large toothy grin spread across her face. Clark struggled to undo the brass latch lock attached to his door. He felt a cold grip on his shoulder. He could feel the pressure of worms moving underneath the skin of her hand. A chill rippled down his spine as his heart sank. He turned around flailing and managed to punch her just below the ribs, Her skin warped around his fist. Small prickles of pain dotted around his clenched hand. He pulled his hand away to reveal worms burrowing into his skin. Their tail ends flicked and coiled wildly in the air as they burrowed in deeper. He kicked her back away from him, with a soft thud she hit the ground. He dug his nails into his skin to drag out each worm like squishy splinters.

Eileen loomed over him. She dug her nails into the sides of his face. Under the kitchen light Clark was able to catch a clear look of Eileen's face. Realization hit, she was smiling. She looked happier than he had ever seen her, even though they dated for three months. Slowly her lips parted. A single worm crawled through and fell on his face with a wet slap. Her mouth grew wide, wide enough to tear the corners into an unnaturally large grin. A cascading waterfall of worms spilled through her mouth. Clark screamed. They tore into his skin and burrowed through fat and muscle. The worms plucked clean every inch of meat till only stark white bone shown through. Then they crawled their way back into the winding burrows dotted around Eileen. Curling in and around the hollowed expanse of her body. She feels the kind of happiness that burrows and turns and coils and curls and eats. Today she is anew, today she is alive.

# Alive and Anew

WARNING: Graphic

MKG

Clark arrived home rain soaked and covered in mud. He hastily took shallow breaths and his body ached to rest. But he wasted no time to draw the curtains on each window, turn off every light, and double, no triple check the front door was locked. Soon after hunched over his kitchen table with a cold beer bottle clutched in his trembling right hand. The crunch of the impact, that stench of blood, and the silence that followed clung to his senses. He remembered seeing Eileen bound up the road. Thunder ripping through stormy clouds. When he finally caught up to her he gripped her shoulder, forcing her to turn around. "Get away from me" she shouted, before landing a loud smack on Clark's face. After that Clark's memory was hazy, he knew that there was a fight but the details of it were lost in adrenaline. When the mental fog faded a clear image of Eileen's corpse motionless on the ground and his hands stained a familiar crimson.

Eileen's body laid at the bottom of a shallow ditch. Wet grass clung to her, mud caked her clothes. Rigor mortis tightened her muscles into place. She knew two days had gone by, she wondered how many more she'd have to bear witness to in this state. She spent a lot of time thinking, it was really all she could do but, specifically she thought about her life. How one fatal night with her boyfriend, now ex, took her away from this world. She remembered Clark whacking a final blow to the side of her temple. How she plummeted to the ground before registering what even happened. A white hot flash of pain spread through her head. Motionless, her body laid still on the soaked road. The rhythm of her lungs slowed to a halt. Then there was nothing. Well there should have been nothing. Instead she could hear Clark's heavy breathing, she could feel the pattering of rain against her skin and she could smell the sharp scent of blood in the air. The warmth of a trembling hand pressed against the side of Dawn's neck. "Oh god, what have I-" A choked sob escaped him. Blood pooling on the ground stained the bottom of his boots. His hands tightened around her wrist. The rain soaked mud trailing away beneath her. He's panicking, she can hear it in his breath. He muttered under his breath, "This should have never happened" He let go and her arms unceremoniously fell onto the grass. Footsteps trudging through the mud faded off into the distance. In the forest lies a body but her mind still hums.

## Where Do The Souls Go?



### WHERE DO THE SOULS GO?

LEVI RADEN

Do we rise up into the sky

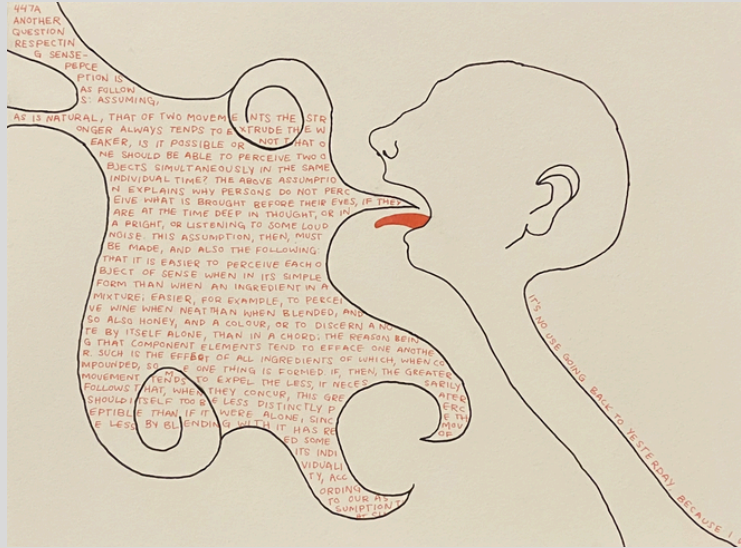
Do we fall down to the underground

Are we hiding around in plain sight

Do we haunt the world throughout the night

Will any of us ever know

Where do the souls go?



PERCEPTION LEELA WITTENBERG TRUBOWITZ

# YOU'RE SO COOL



KALIAL THOMAS

# 2023 PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION

