



Fall 2019



The Agathist  
Issue #5  
Fall 2019

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## Advisor's Note

Look at the cover. Notice the beauty, the simple joy of a kid outside, blowing bubbles. And you'll have to pardon me, an English teacher, finding metaphors in things, but here we go: isn't this art? Not just the artwork itself, but the act depicted therein. Blowing bubbles is like art.

We breathe in experience, but we exhale beauty, or tragedy, or both. We draw in breath, even when we think there is no air. We breathe out reflections of our turmoil or loneliness; we exhale songs of beauty, memories of peace; we inhale life, exhale art.

An agathist is "someone who thinks that all things tend toward goodness." Look at this edition as a whole and notice the arc of it all. Innocence to experience to triumph to laughter to light. Breathe light into your life, even in the stormy times.

Breathe.

--Mr. Dickson

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# The Chicken n' Dumplin' Quiner

Hailey Dennis

I have so many memories for our trips to Mawmaw's house for Sunday dinner. When we walked in the door, the television would be blaring the NASCAR race that my Pawpaw had fallen asleep watching. You could smell the aroma of chicken n' dumplin's with a feast of sides: homemade mac and cheese, corn bread, black eyed peas, corn on the comb, and much more. The best part of dinner every week was the deserts. Cakes, pies, warm baked cookies, and a couple tubs of different ice cream.

My mom would usually bring a bit of food of her own, typically potato salad or one of her egg custard pies. Her egg custard pies could melt in your mouth. My stepdad would usually find a spot in the living room and watch the race with Pawpaw while all of my cousins, siblings, and I would play in the yard until dinner was finished.

We'd make a trip to Mawmaw's house every week for about two years. Those two years were filled with laughs, cousin sleepovers, and bunches and bunches of chicken n' dumplin's. We'd set the table and get in line to make our plates. Children always went first, then the older folks, then everyone else of course. Many times, we would stuff our plates so full that we'd have to make another trip once we finished eating. We'd eat so much food that we'd have to wait about an hour until we could eat our desserts.

Everything was great until one Saturday evening when, as usual, Mawmaw had cooked her chicken n' dumplin's. We all sat around her massive wooden table she had in the dining room. Deep in conversation, we began to eat. Suddenly the conversation turns to laughs, and then I hear my stepdad make the remark. He looked at Mawmaw and said, "So, do you know how to cook anything other than chicken n' dumplin's, Mawmaw?" Everyone got quiet. Mawmaw didn't seem to take it to heart, and we all laughed a bit then carried on the conversation.

Since that very day, Mawmaw has never cooked chicken'n'dumplin's for dinner. We've had burgers, casseroles, plain baked chicken, barbequed pork chops, but never chicken'n'dumplin's. Mom blames my stepdad, and we mess with him for it a lot since her chicken'n'dumplin's were a piece of heaven. She would hand roll the dumplings, and she'd kill two or three of the chickens she owned. It was always cooked fresh. We all still pick at my stepdad for it and ensure Mawmaw that her cooking is the best on the planet. No matter how much persuading and begging we do, she still won't make us chicken n' dumplin's.



*Nature Buzzing With Life / Caroline Walton*

# 201 Armstrong Street

Emmory Bridges

Your first tattoo  
was of my big sister's height,  
which wasn't much. My bones  
were still too soft to stand,  
so I sat  
in a pool of mardi gras beads  
instead.

Your second tattoo  
covered the arms  
you protected us in;  
I have nothing to repay you with  
except in fourth grade when  
I sang about Lord's eagle wings  
in languages I could spell but  
did not understand  
and thought about my first  
bedroom door Mamma painted.

Little  
yellow  
house  
when I fell on linoleum floors  
did it hurt you too, or did you  
laugh? Angels laugh like tissue paper  
but I don't think you did; you  
could not be gentle enough.

They make guardian angels from  
oak trees and deadbolts  
where I saw people make silly faces  
in the mucky silver; you stood tall  
while we slept, and turned  
to rest on your belly when  
big sister and I  
played outside in purple weeds  
until streetlamps woke up.

Your hair was dirty.  
Mamma still liked you.  
Would you still hold me while  
she combs everything that is unkind?





Untitled / Millie Murphy

## *A Window's View*

Belle Clem

It is windy today and I feel less than brilliant  
Driving down daisy paved roads,  
Watching a half-lived reality slip through a window's view  
Watching the road as it passes me by  
at the bright spots in the pavement  
where you have a view of the ocean,  
But there is a spot in the road.  
There is always a spot in the road,  
but this does not make the road an allegory  
the road is just a road



*As Far as the Eye Can See* / Caroline Walton

CP

Olivia Harrison

Cerebral Palsy: physical disability that most know of. What most think of as just physical. But to someone who gets to experience it daily, its way more than that. It's watching the way you walk, making sure you don't trip in front of hundreds of people, typing with one hand, hand cramps and so much more. For me, it's forcing myself to get out of bed with a positive mindset about it because I know there is nothing I can do to change it. It's trying to find the words to explain to family and friends the emotional pain it brings. I always tell those around me that it does not bother me but I think that is because for all of my life everyone around me has trained me to be okay with it and just move on. Part of me is thankful they have done that but the other part of me wishes I felt more comfortable talking about it. Sometimes I feel like I exclude myself from social gatherings because I feel like others just stare at me. I often wonder what it was like the day the doctors told my parents the news. They have explained that moment to me several times but for some reason it makes me just want to scream. They explain their pain and anger while telling about that moment and as if I did not ask God "Why"? plenty enough, hearing them talk about it makes me do it even more.

Whenever I meet someone new, I often times try to hide my left side in hopes they will not notice it. But what I do not seem to be able to grasp is that in reality, no one is really looking at that. I have heard so many times that "it's not noticeable" or "I would not have noticed it if you would not have told me" and in the moment, it makes me feel okay but I leave wondering if they are just telling me that so I won't be worried about what they think. Most days wondering what people will think does not bother me, but there is a good amount of days that weigh heavy on me. As I have gotten older, I tend to think more about what life will be like when I am much older. I have never really had anyone be blatantly rude to my face about how I walk. I'm sure someone has had something to say. Sometimes I wish that whatever part of my brain makes me think of this could be cut out so I don't have to have all of these thoughts.

As I'm writing this, I feel myself getting mad. Angry. Hurt. Frustrated. I could not tell you why. Every day I wish I was born different. Everyone always says "you're unique. God made you that way." And I understand that. But as I grow more aware of the body I'm stuck in for the rest of my life, I can't help but get mad and frustrated. Hopefully one day I'll wake up and be fine with what God handed me.

But for now, this is me.



# *As She Loves*

Asma Mohammed

Every day I am given love

As she cooks with fondness,

Every spice thrown in along with a piece of her heart,

Turmeric, chili, coriander.

As she tells me things I should listen to

Advice I never knew I needed.

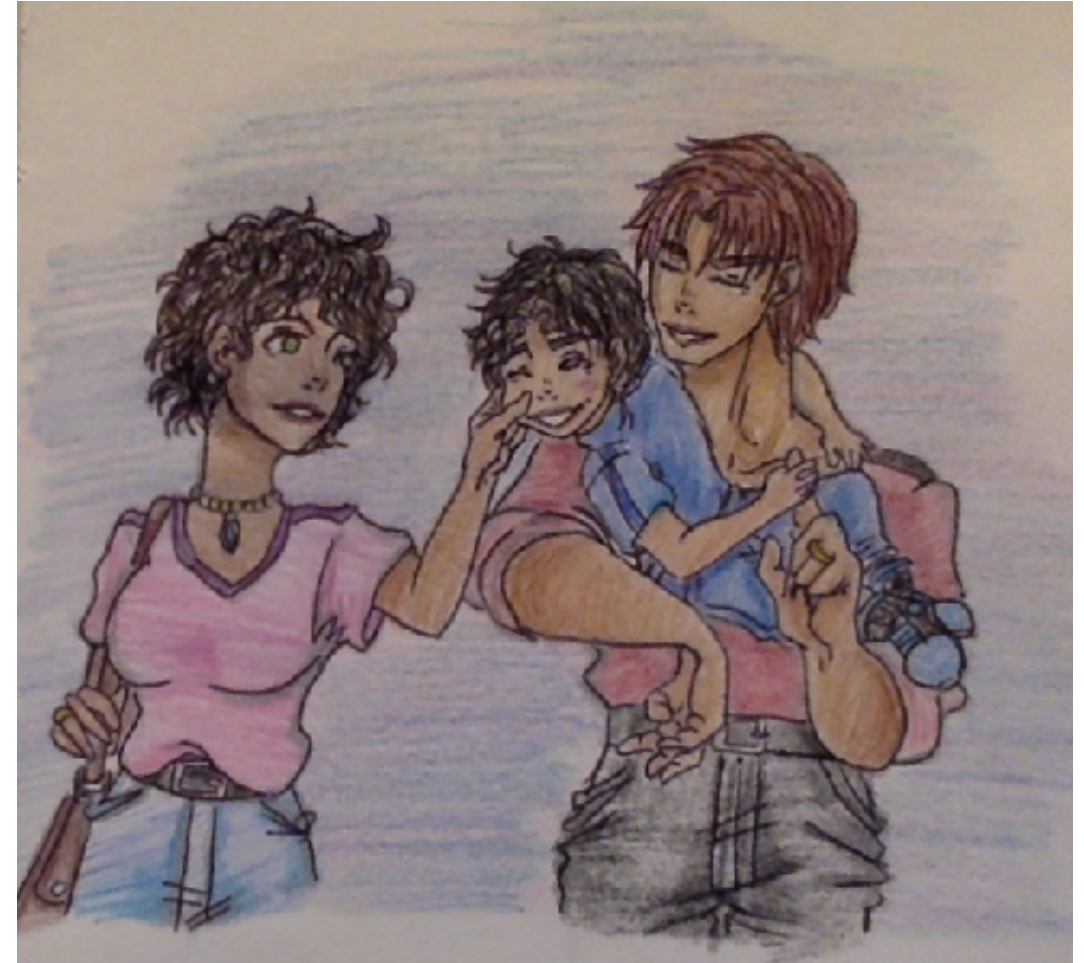
As she scolds me for things I need to learn from

I answer sharply, then

A feeling of regret fills me.

As her calloused hands glide through the tangles in my hair

Kisses me goodnight as my eyes close.



*Family Matters* / Leah Rainey

# Sunflower

Ashley Lin

Up above, the clear blue sky covers over us. The sunlight shines on us, we shine on them. A symbol of happiness we are. Our heads always turned towards the sun, greeting it every morning. Standing tall and proud, casting shadows upon the children.

Tiny heads, little petals, frail stems that could be snapped easily. Unseen by the people I hid, I admire. No one sees me, shielded and hidden away.

Until one day, a child runs through the garden. His innocent smile as he ran down the trail. For the first time he wasn't looking up above at the blooming sunflowers but down at me. A baby, a child just like him. He noticed me out the corner of his eye and poked at me with his benevolent laugh. I was found, I was noticed.

One day he will grow to be taller and maybe so will I and that's when the whole garden will bow before us and I will be able to shield the tiny ones and smile proudly at the sun.

# Her

Hailey Dennis

She's dancing with every inch of her.  
Like a dandelion swaying in the wind,  
Her hips are confidence,  
And her arms are passion.

The world sees red as she distracts  
Sort of like a cobra  
Astonishing but dangerous.

She's unmistakable  
As obvious as a red light.  
Beauty doesn't define her  
She defines beauty.





*Ballerina/* Emmory Bridges

# *Ballerina*

Emma Ellard

On my fifth birthday, my grandma gave me a small wooden box with a ballerina painted on the lid. I turned it in my tiny hands, opened it up and peeked inside; it was filled with little silver cylinders and rods and discs. I furrowed my brow. Dad had to show me: close the lid, turn the handle. Mom still has the photograph of me staring at the music box with wide-eyed wonder when it played a silvery tune. I had fallen in love.

For days, I sat cross-legged in my bed, turning the handle and mimicking the melody; I brought it with me in the car on the way to the park or to church and turned the handle in the back seat; I carried it onto the porch in the evenings and watched the sun set over Mr. Meyer's cotton farm, absentmindedly spinning the crank. I couldn't hear the melody over the sound of crickets and frogs.

Years passed. I turned fifteen. My fingers grew more slender, my skin less soft; the stool I used to stand on to reach the sink collected dust in the garage. My box had aged, too. Its hinges and silver insides were rusty, prone to complaint.

Grandma came over for Thanksgiving and found the contraption on my bookshelf. When she wound it up, a flat, tinny melody lumbered out. *We'll get you a new one*, she insisted. *Why don't you stay at my house this weekend? We'll get you all fixed up*. I was fifteen, I had whined to Mom, feet dangling from the kitchen counter. I was old enough to go to the mall with Laura Beth and Caroline, and I was too old to stay at Grandma's house.

The next Friday, I knocked on Grandma's door as Mom's truck stalled on the street; she answered beaming and covered in sawdust. I asked about her gloves. *Working on that box of yours*, she had explained. She smiled that youthful smile, the one that tugged at her eyes and ears. Her silver hair was pulled into the same frizzy bun. She was so weird. I missed mall pizza and frozen coffee and shopping for clothes I couldn't afford.

She gave me a small nod as if to say come in. Then she made her way through the entry hall, past the kitchen, and to the garage – sat down at her workbench and kept sandpaper-scrubbing a few blocks of wood, as if I weren't there. *Sit down*. From under the workstation, she pulled several small cardboard

boxes. She showed me steel combs and windup keys; I ran my fingers over silver cylinders with raised dots. *This is what makes that box I gave you tick.*

We made one together on Saturday. It wasn't quite done before Sunday ended – unpainted, unpolished, missing a piece of the handle – but I still took it home. *We can finish it some other weekend*, she had told me, *you keep it for now*. I went to the Hobby Lobby in town Monday after school and bought paints. Two sets: one regular, one metallic. I liked the silver color best.

Uncle Robbie called us on Wednesday. They found her sleep-like on the sofa, adorned with sawdust, a dismal halo. After the funeral, I cried into the new music box, salt tears staining its surface. Laura Beth and Caroline asked me to go to the movies the Saturday after. I stayed home and painted a ballerina on the lid. Silver hair, a frizzy bun.



AnnaBelle/ Isabella Thompson

## Deforestation

Lindsey Buie

The flowers will unite

In circumstances only known to greenery.

Destruction follows intensely with Monsters.

However, the cries of nearby flowers and

Tall trees shall never be heard

And soon their pain, visibly seen

Shall harm even the Monsters that created nightmares.

Even with this destruction one can see,

The Garden will bow without choice.

Tears from the sky of sympathy cannot

Save the lifeless beings,

The permanent annihilation by

An evil Monarchy.



Ireland / Jordan Gilbert

# Pictures

Shayla Drzycimski

Broken sunlight beamed through the dusty panes, erased the drowsiness of the night before and brought on the morning. She opened her eyes, lifting one eyelash at a time, to reveal the cracked ceiling that smiled with familiarity. *Stay*, they sang to her in the tune of a comfortable feeling. Flakes of plaster fell around her with each car that raced uncomfortably close to the window. She looked over to the dripping water stains. *Leave*, they spat at her, but she didn't have the heart.

She got up and began to wander. Picture frames broke under her feet, distorting the memories. She picked up a photo and clutched it to her chest. Flashes of a lady, a mother with a warming smile and love painted across her face hugged at the remaining pieces of her heart. *You are wanted here*, the picture softly whispered, slowly depleting any urges to leave that remained within the girl.

The room grew brighter as the girl's feeble fingers wrapped tighter around the memory. Happiness and a feeling of bliss grew inside of her as if any trace of dread magically disappeared. The once dilapidated state appeared as if it were new. The walls were no longer peeling, and the water stains repaired, sealed silent. The picture frames hung neatly in rows along the walls, each beautiful and hummed sweet words of love that filled the air around her.

The girl followed the rows of pictures, each capturing a fond memory she strangely knew so well. She felt as if she were walking on air following all up to the final picture. It was larger than all the others and stood alone. It was the photo the girl had once clutched so tight. Her heart glowed at the sight. She took a step toward it. *You need to let go*, a single loose floor board croaked at her. *No, you are loved here*, the cracks in the ceiling smiled once more but they were no longer singing, and their smile was no longer familiar.

In a moment, everything grew cold. The Lady was no longer a warming memory to the girl. In fact, she no longer knew her at all. Reality shattered across the room as the girl frantically ran to each photo for that feeling of happiness and bliss she longed for. But everything had grown dull and back to where it was when she began. Each picture buried in the remains of a picture frame. The glass crunched under her feet as the girl saw each memory fade into raw truth of what she had always known.





Dark Daze / Ryan Harper

# The ADHD Does Not Define Me

Macy Curan

For you to believe this mental illness defines me is quite preposterous.  
 Yea sure I don't always act the same,  
 And sure, I'm not always in the same mindset as you.  
 But does that really make me a different person?  
 Maybe you're just boring.  
 Nobody likes a normal person such as yourself.  
 Have you ever thought of dragons flying in the sky?  
 I mean how cool would that be to look up and not see an airplane,  
 But a massive dragon?  
 I did it again didn't I?  
 Okay I do get side tracked at times.  
 But it's not that bad.  
 I might not always be listening to you,  
 But don't take it personal.  
 Most of the time it's the disorder,  
 Yet sometimes I just choose not to listen to your stupid topics.  
 Oh, and no doubt I forget things.  
 But who cares that much really?  
 Is it that hard to restate what you sa-  
 What about mermaids huh?  
 What ever happened to them?  
 Do you think they eat like fish or coral?  
 Crap.  
 I did it again didn't I?  
 Wait what were we talking about?  
 I know what's going through your mind right now.  
 "What's wrong with this girl?"  
 "What kind of issues does she have?"  
 Listen here you butt hole.  
 If you can't have the decency to respect what's going through my head,  
 Then you should get out of my face.  
 I'm sorry, that was a tad harsh.  
 If you couldn't tell that's also an effect.  
 Except I can't particularly control it like the others.  
 So, I guess you'll just have to deal with it.

I guess you're just gonna have to deal with all of it if you're interested in communicating.  
Finally let's address this harsh word used to describe me.  
Disorder.  
God am I just some mental patient in some wacko institution?  
No.  
Clearly,  
I'm a person kind of like you.  
Just with a few side effects.  
Oh wow look at that dog right there!  
Wait I'm sorry,  
What did you say?  
At this point it doesn't matter that much to you to continue this conversation.  
Hopefully you consider my point.  
Not the one about the dragons.  
Although how cool would that be?

## *Most Days*

Lauren Dinning

Hurting, from the sides of my mouth,  
From smiling all day,  
Making jokes with my friends while  
Walking to the next class,  
Enjoying the atmosphere.

Finally, I arrive home.  
Alone by myself.  
Hours of time with stale air  
And bland walls.

Nothing moved except  
The weight of my footsteps  
Being carried throughout my body  
As I drift around the house.  
Then, the sound of a car door.

A man walked into the house  
Wearing work clothes.  
He went straight for the kitchen  
And grabbed a glass and a bottle.

Moving up the stairs  
He took his glass and bottle  
And a distant noise appeared.  
The T.V.

Again, nothing moved.  
The night went on  
While I remained downstairs  
And him, up.

By morning time  
He is gone.



Seclusion / Caroline Walton

# There Is No Air At All

Rachel Parr

## SHOUTING

Your preferred method of communication

My ears b

I

e

e

d

The frequencies...

piercing

The volume...

painful

Your message is crystal clear

"I am me..."

and you are you"

separate

we stand, separate but not equal

"You are here to do my bidding"

"Oh..."

My heart sinks.

To you my existence is merely a resource

You say you care.

Do you really?

I can't bear the sight of your eyes on mine

You breathe the same air that I do, and yet

I feel as if there is no air at all



# Dislexya

Anna Meyer

Letters dance across teh page  
Swtiching and moving around  
Constantly seeming somehow out of place  
Headaches forming, eyes phasiing in and out

How is thsi so easy for everoyne else?  
Why do thier brains work so well?  
Why is mine sso mesed up?  
Aoutcorret treis to fix my mistakes

It's even too confusing for teh computer to unsdertand my words  
Why am I epxected to?  
Red lines start mizing with letters  
Red, the collor of fialing

I hate this stupid curse I'm stuke wiht  
Forcied to tyr hadrer than evreyone else  
Faliling inbetween the lines  
Jumlbed words surround me.

# Vulture

Jorden Gilbert

The shore pulls me into its beauty  
Ocean for miles is all I see.  
Feet first  
Then waist  
Neck deep in the salty water  
It pulls me in its embrace  
It holds me  
It holds me so tight that I start to panic  
Pushing and pulling the current goes.  
Trying so hard to gasp for air. I'm drowning  
In my own despair.  
Knowing that this is it  
The end for me  
Everything goes black  
When I feel as If I am done.  
I felt secure.  
I open my eyes, feeling the hot sand  
Embracing me instead of the salty liquid that almost ended me.  
Looking around, I see this warm yellowy figure  
It looks at me with the desire to help me.  
I finally get up, not looking back.  
Until it completely disappears into the distance  
Now left alone with my thoughts  
I try to tell myself that I'm alright  
I am alright

# Hurricane Season

Delaney Sykes

When a hurricane forms in a coastal area it brings a number of possible tragedies. High winds can tip roots from the Earth, and strong floods surge through cities. At first they're calm, but over time the pressure just builds and builds until eventually nothing further can be held. That's why Stella liked to call herself a hurricane. She's filled of uncontrollable chaos and destruction. And so there she sat, in her own category 5: surrounded by a rush of thoughts. Her eye make-up clung to her cheeks where her tears washed them down and her lips quivered slightly. She wasn't sure why it was like this, it's just how it had always been.

Stella had her legs crossed. "Criss cross applesauce" is what her third-grade teacher Mrs. Daniels used to call it. Third grade was a better time. Everyone was irrational. Got sent to time out? Throw a fit. Don't want to eat those veggies? Throw a fit. But now? Fit throwing isn't acceptable. Maybe that was my peak, Stella thought to herself. She chuckled in the midst of her tears, a third-grade peak. Stella climbed off the floor and opened up her curtains. Momma says sunlight helps the mind grow. It was one of the very few things they could agree on. Momma tried sometimes. Others, she barely left her bed. Despite how much Stella tried to deny this, she knew she and her mom behaved similarly. She knew it was genetic. Usually it was just better to pretend they weren't. To her, it was just unfair. She's just trying to grow up. She wants to go to college and she wants to eat dinner as a family. She wants to have constant people in her life. Stella wants to feel like she's in control. But much to her dissatisfaction, bipolar disorder doesn't exactly take requests. Every day for Stella is a silent battle, rarely leaving her victorious.

She walked into her bathroom and turned on the cold water. She washed her face and felt the droplets fall down her neck. It brought her back to the real world. Stella had to prepare herself for school: It became a daily routine. Show up, headphones, busy work, leave. There was nothing to look forward to. Stella knew she didn't belong where she lived. Sometimes she liked to pretend she was one of those cool comic book characters who somehow end up on earth and during their teenage years discover that their powers were the reason for them not being socially accepted. But she knew she wasn't one of them. But she wasn't like her home town kids either. Everyone was built like multiple copies of the same prototype. White, high-class, personality deprived and privileged. But for 8 hours a day, Monday through Friday, she had to be one of them.

Stella put on her book bag and headed out the door. Nobody knew about her 8 a.m. break down. Nobody would bother to ask, nor would they notice her glossy eyes and puffy lips. She would just 'Suck it up' and 'not be dramatic', as her dad would say. But that is how it had to be. Not every issue is a flat tire, or a 'daddy won't buy me a car'. Some are uncontrollable. Some are unsolvable. And that in itself is the largest battle: There's nothing worse than a battle within yourself.

# On This Day

Ikari Johnson



*Everyday Hero / Leah Rainey*

On this day, it seemed as if it was especially bright and sunny; it seemed like even the clouds themselves were laughing and I was there standing in the midst of it. Sunbathing in my youth and wearing the short black dress that reminded me of my mother. I could feel the sun's warm rays wrapping its arms around my skin as if it was a mother holding her child. I would never forget this feeling of the sun on my skin, the look of the clouds or the immeasurable amount pain I felt standing there like a useless corpse.

Unfortunately, unlike the clouds, I would not be laughing today, but instead holding back tears as I stood over my mother's shallow grave at her funeral. Trying not to remember how I was there and could do nothing as my mother used her last breath to call out my name. For me, that day is the only way I could describe it. That day is the day my mom died calling out my name one last time begging for me to help, and I was there standing a million miles away from her while being in the same room.

I remembered everything about her from her beautiful dark curly hair to her golden-brown skin. I remember her loving arms and smile that shone brighter than any star that the universe could ever hope to produce. I even remember her number.

One. It was black against her already dark skin. Everyone was born with one, a number. Everyone's number was different. Each possessing contrasting values, always whole numbers. For the longest time, everyone had always assumed that the numbers were some popularity score or something. For no one truly knew why we were born with these numbers, but it was here, staring directly in the face of death himself that I realized that this cruel and unforgiving world had already had our lives planned out and decided to remind us that we controlled nothing. That here on this pitiful little planet we were about as unimportant as a grain of sand. Maybe this was God's way of putting us in our place, punishing us for our horrible ways, for not listening to him.

This number represented on our wrist was there to indicate the number of people who would attend our funeral. I knew this now, looking around I could tell. My mom's number was one and here I was the only one to say farewell to her decaying corpse. Knowing this made me want to cry as I looked down at my own wrist and remembered that my number was zero. No one would be there to attend my funeral and only one person would care enough to come to say goodbye to mom. I couldn't stop the tears now. On this day, that seemed especially bright and sunny. On this day, that even the clouds themselves were laughing at me and my stupidity.



*Branching out for Lunch / Caroline Walton*

# Walls

Rachel Parr

My fingers flutter across the keyboard, my feelings laid out in 1s and 0s, displayed as a mere arrangement of characters on a screen. The backspace button is my most toxic friend, it is she that allows me to erase all emotion. I click off the app, a couple mindless games and my thoughts race back, once more I type what I want to say and my finger hovers over send, “don’t be clingy, don’t be annoying” the voice inside my head wrestles with my heart and my finger moves to the little backspace button as a result. Click click click, she wins. My emotions are now hidden from the world once again, each backspace a brick in these walls I inadvertently build.

I type once more and hit send with immediate regret, a section of my wall has tumbled down and my conscience is rather quick to replace it. “Don’t acknowledge it, don’t talk about it. Happy or not, it’s better to keep it inside because you’re just burdening them. You’re adding to the soul crushing weight of being human.” Her voice rings high and clear, she is the voice inside my head. The voice telling me that it’s all inside my head. I don’t matter, I’m insignificant.

I begin to pile up other people’s issues with my own. I keep refusing to share my weight. They’re more important. I close myself off more and more. My walls reach so high that the clouds dance around them. Taunting me.

Suddenly, it all stops. My bones shatter under the weight and my walls come crashing down. The tears hit my screen in a slow steady stream as my fingers flutter once more. “I lied, I’m not okay.” Send.

I watch them put me back together, their words and support some sort of molecular level emotional superglue. My bones reform and my body begrudgingly pulls itself into a standing position. All seems well, but the catch is, my walls. They’re gone, and without them I am naked. Exposed to the outside world, unable to hide from them, unable to hide from her, unable to hide from the weight, unable to hide from my issues.

Naked and unstable, subject to the gaze of the world as they study my imperfections and my mental ruins. My walls are broken, and I don’t quite know how to feel. My bones are no longer shattered but some wounds never heal.

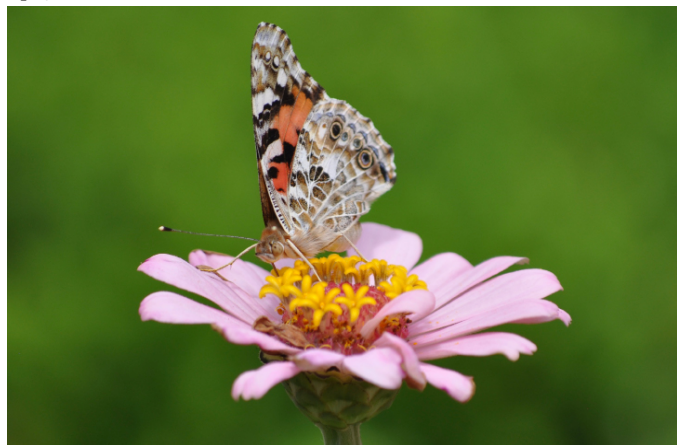
They take some of the weight from me, this is a shared ordeal.

Happier? Yes. Okay? Probably not. Will I live to see another day? Yes, but I’ll always be naked.





*Untitled / Millie Murphy*



*The Painted Lady / Caroline Walton*



*The Giant Swallowtail Butterfly / Caroline Walton*

# Wings

Millie Murphy

My bones are attached by broken rhythms,  
As my eyes fixate on things far ahead.  
From two hearts I heed my purpose.  
Drifting afar with desire to show,  
I will produce all that partially flutters.  
From my mind victory will make its appearance.  
People will see the vision with sunlight diving  
Out of my skull it will sail to their docks.  
To prove my artistry I will paint an act,  
Where kindness bursts hard-hearted souls,  
Allowing freedom to bursts their fear.

# March

Ikari Johnson

March, march on  
March on my child  
For you are almost free  
March, march on  
I will continue to march  
Until the soles of my feet bleed  
I will continue to march until I am free

March, march on  
'Till the pain and suffering leave me  
I continue to march through the rain and water  
Don't fear  
Don't fear me  
For I am leaving to be free  
To the north I head  
Marching on till safety

But once I am safe,  
I will return to you  
And set you free  
That is why I march  
March on

For I will set you free



*Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me / Caroline Walton*



## Joshua Herring

I crawled out from under the wreckage of the jumpship. In another time, ships like these were used to transport cargo in mass across the colony. Now we are the cargo, and the Red-Eyes that watch us are our wardens. I still remember the feeling of their metal fists pounding into my back, and the cold red gaze they gave to anyone they came in contact with. It just made me even happier to be free from my shackles, at least for the time being.

I planned to head east and hopefully run into a Red-Eye patrol. With it, I would find all the supplies needed to carry on, and the further away I could get from C-12, the better. I scavenged some supplies: a half-empty canteen, some rations, a small backpack, a medkit, and the arm of one of the Red-Eyes on board. I laboriously pried it apart from its owner's shoulder with a pipe. It wouldn't need it anyway, it was beyond repair, and there were probably ten more being made to replace it. After a brief struggle, the steel finally gave way. The mounted gun still had some ammo in it, but I made sure to get the whole belt before heading out. Emptied a few rounds into the Red-Eye, too.

— — — — —

It was early afternoon, and in the sky, Sol-Beta had just started peeking around Sol-Alpha. The pair made a shockingly bright glare, turning a large area around the twin suns a pale purple. I made camp under a ridge and started the makeshift grill that I found in another crashed jumpship a few hours back. The solar panels were busted, and there was no timber for miles. It made no difference; I was more than accustomed to the flavor of cold rations. I set my thermos down and turned on the condenser. The air was dryer, so it was filling much slower than usual. I had started eating my rations when I heard it.

A low buzzing came from behind the ridge, getting closer by the second. I scrambled under my only cover, aiming my makeshift weapon skyward. I sat there for what seemed like ages until I saw it. It was a small speck in the sky—a reconnaissance drone. Two small gun barrels pointed out from under its central body, while its camera searched the surrounding area. I almost raised my gun to fire, but then I heard it. A massive thumping sound quickly followed by a resounding clang. It too was coming my way, and I didn't move an inch. A few seconds later, the bottom of a massive foot sailed above me, and I was able to see the form of the demon I know so well.

The Colossus walked in perfect synchronization, its four legs working in

with the grace and swiftness that something should not have. A single red eye glowed in the middle of its face, and its hulking figure cast a dark shadow on where I was hidden. Like the drone, its head was rotating rapidly, searching the surrounding area. It snapped to me.

I immediately bolted for the next ridge, firing the arm at the gigantic machine. I hoped to blind the beast, but my shots only bounced off the dark steel. The Colossus turned its body towards me and loosed an almost absurd number of rounds. I managed to get over and under the ridge but felt a warm trickle down my leg. I pulled up my pant leg to find that a bullet was lodged deep in my thigh, and I was bleeding heavily. Seeing the blood gushing over my fingers, I almost vomited, but I had to push through. I noticed my gun barrel was glowing a yellow-orange from use and jammed it into the wound. The scent of singed flesh engulfed my nostrils as I hissed in agony.

The Colossus was slowly walking towards me, stopping a few yards away from my cover.

"Colonist-2851, please drop your weapon. Surrender or be taken in by force."

The machine sounded eerily human, sending a shiver down my spine. I responded with a rude gesture and some not so kind words.

"Colonist-2851, if you do not comply, appropriate force shall be applied. You have thirty seconds to respond. Thirty... twenty-nine..."

I removed the barrel from the wound, setting the arm aside while I bandaged and administered a painkiller. I felt the medicine flowing through my veins, burning and stimulating my already heightened senses.

"Seventeen... sixteen... fifteen..."

I picked up my gun and checked the belt—didn't want it to jam on me while I fought for my life. I leaned back against the ridge, breathing heavily in anticipation of what was to come.

"Eight... seven... six..."

I made my peace with God.

"Five... four..."

Here we go.

"Three... two... one..."

I got up.



*Perplexion* / Caroline Walton

# Grave Concern

William Lindsey

Where to be buried?  
In the dirt  
In an urn?  
Truly a case of grave concern.

Will I make racket about  
The casket?  
No,  
but the cost will make quite some noise  
As I lay rotting  
Blissful  
Below.

Will my tombstone  
Rock?  
Surely not  
for a statue  
Should be in the statute  
of my will  
a true and utter thrill

A simple cross  
Would leave me quite cross  
And would just not do  
But honestly,  
In my position  
I can't introduce anything new

Unmarked

...Unlike my body  
might be better fitting  
for then when a friend (I don't want to talk to) calls  
they can roam through  
desolate empty halls.

Grouped like sardines  
Most likely my fate  
Or blown to the winds  
Ash  
As of late  
To float free and eventually  
Land in the eye of someone I hardly know

*¿Qué?*

John Murry McCullouch

Jack C. Merlin  
did everything backwards  
and no one knew why  
he insisted his frown  
was always upside down  
and read from finish to start  
when he could easily stop,  
and start to think like  
the rest of us,  
smiling and frowning  
as based on occasion –  
getting enraged about “Life of Pie.”  
Instead he is the wisest man I know,  
for when he walks  
towards light  
he never forgets to see his shadow

# Elevator Pitch

Parker Brewer and Harrison Partridge

[Click to Play!](#)



# End of Love



[Click to Play!](#)

Performed by Legacy

Avery Addison- alto  
Ethan Alexander- bass  
Kendall Austin- tenor  
Gabe Bland- tenor  
Logan Chapin- alto  
Thomas Fetcko- tenor  
Grace Guillory- alto  
Kate Guillory- soprano  
Kaler Hill- bass  
Darion Hunter- tenor  
Sam Owen Jones- bass  
William Lindsay- bass  
Briana Mabry- alto  
Katherine Marsh- soprano  
Teana Neal- soprano  
Sarah Nievera- soprano  
Kate O'Guynn- alto  
Chloe Smith- alto  
Sasha Williams- soprano

# *Waves of Gold*

Lauren Dinning

Rays reign from the sky

And hit the golden blades of grass

As the wind flows through

Her hair and the

Leaves of the willows.

An open field,

Of a golden sea,

With a woman and

A retriever swimming

In the golden grassland.



*You Only Need a Spark to Start a Whole Blaze* / Caroline Walton