



SPARK[★]

A REVIEW OF NSCC STUDENT LITERARY & ARTISTIC EXPRESSION



SPARK 2015 **volume 7**

sparked by inspiration

Through poetry and stories, photographs and drawings, *Spark* showcases the talent and spirit of students at North Shore Community College. This seventh issue of Spark is dedicated to the persistence of vision, forward movement, and the knowledge that creativity is its own reward. **Enjoy.**



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on the cover:
Morpho Flowers | Kat Fedukowski



Curious Yet Skeptical | *Maeve Healy*

Benediction

By Paula Hodgkins

We survived the war

and when we meet
as old friends sometimes do
we talk about our time
in prison
and how it shaped us
both now and then

we move on to other topics...
....that was so long ago

Nodding, we know
as survivors always do
that the war is still with us
waging on every night

at the end of the hour
our eyes meet as we stand to go
and in that silence
there is a prayer
shared between old friends
one for the other
for the end of the war
and the sleep of the dead ■



Faces Of Mount Auburn No. 6 | *Gwendolyn Squires*

Healthy Dose of Computer

by Luccia Arruda

As I said in the Subject line of this email, we haven't spoken in awhile.
See, we're still not speaking
because all that I see - is your face
that I'm imagining across a screen.

See, we're still not speaking
because eyes are ghost-less;
only broken memories to haunt us.

You see, you're not really seeing at
all, when from afar, is just a great
big fall.
A great big fall of empty space:

C u l8ter
Luv u 2

A diminishing race

Waddup bae?
Shut up faggot.

A mindless race.

LMS for truth
Hit me up on fb

A lonely race.

So you see, we're not really
speaking at all - only sending words
through a screen.
We're nothing, nothing at all. ■



Mirror Image Acrobats | Katherine D'Apice



SAUDADE: A JOYLESS WINTER

By James N. Paraskevas II

I should have known better than to rummage through that damned box. I disturbed a slumbering, scaly-skinned monster which had slept for years with human skulls clutched in its whetted talons. It exhaled plumes of smoke between sharp stalagmites which protruded from its cavernous jaws oozing in slimy saliva. What the hell had I been thinking? What precious treasure trove of middle school memorabilia did I expect to discover hidden away in there? Bent baseball cards? Faded pogs? Mummified gigapets? Idiotic thinking, every thought. Reacquainting myself with those ephemeral trinkets was not worth the cumbersome burden that is weighing me down now. I can actually feel it dragging my heart into my stomach like a leaden anchor. It is pulling me down, deep down, into the sorrowful bog of my past. I’m drowning. Dumb, dumb, dumb.

Of course, it’s my own fault. I know that. I ignored the neon sign that ominously buzzed ‘abutters only’ through the encroaching fog. It tried, in vain, to warn me. Unfortunately, I had blinders on and stumbled down Memory Lane with reckless abandon. My defense? My lips were parched, thirsty for nineties nostalgia. Well, I drank my fill, didn’t I? I mistook grains of sand for water in the mirage I’d mistaken for a fertile oasis. Here I am now, morose and aloof, reaping the consequences of such a seemingly innocuous activity. Joy.

I should have known better than to go digging through that damned box! The shoebox is the poor man’s trunk. This particular box, laden with the logo of a long-since discontinued brand of boots, held a particular relic from my adolescence: an old polaroid photograph. I’d scrawled “Xmas 97” into its white margin with a black marker. Surprisingly, the writing was still vibrant.

I must have been using it as a makeshift bookmark because it slipped out of a two inch-thick,

“What the hell had I been thinking?”

poorly written, coming-of-age tale. As it spun mercilessly toward the floor it screamed one thousand words up at me. They described, in sickening detail, a festering, gangrenous wound. I’d hidden it well beneath a worn band-aid comprised of time and neglect. In that moment, which seemed to last for more than a moment, it was torn from my skin and exposed the redden, welted wound. Aghast at the gash, I dropped the shoebox upon my tube socks from which my exposed big toes protruded like two rocks. The contents spilled upon the floor in concert with a cacophony of disregarded sound. I retrieved the polaroid from the debris, egging on my white blood cells to fight off the germy

offensive to introduce sepsis to my demoralized immune system. Either they will finally scab the wound or I will die. Oh! En passant, I never did finish that book. It sucked.

We were both wearing big bubble jackets with faux fur stitched into the rims of the hoodies. My cheeks were rosy-red and gaunt while his were covered in a thin, youthful beard. The glint of refracted Christmas lights pierced through the fog of our breaths. It had been a cold, wintry night.

The old me is the young me and the young me is getting old. Photography has an amazing ability which allows us to confront and gauge how much our perspectives can change during the course of our lives. He had seemed, to me, to be a wizened old sage who brought to me the news of adulthood. Retrospectively, however, he looked almost as childlike as I did. We both had much growing to do- mentally and physically- but only I would have the opportunity to do so. He was seven years older than I was then

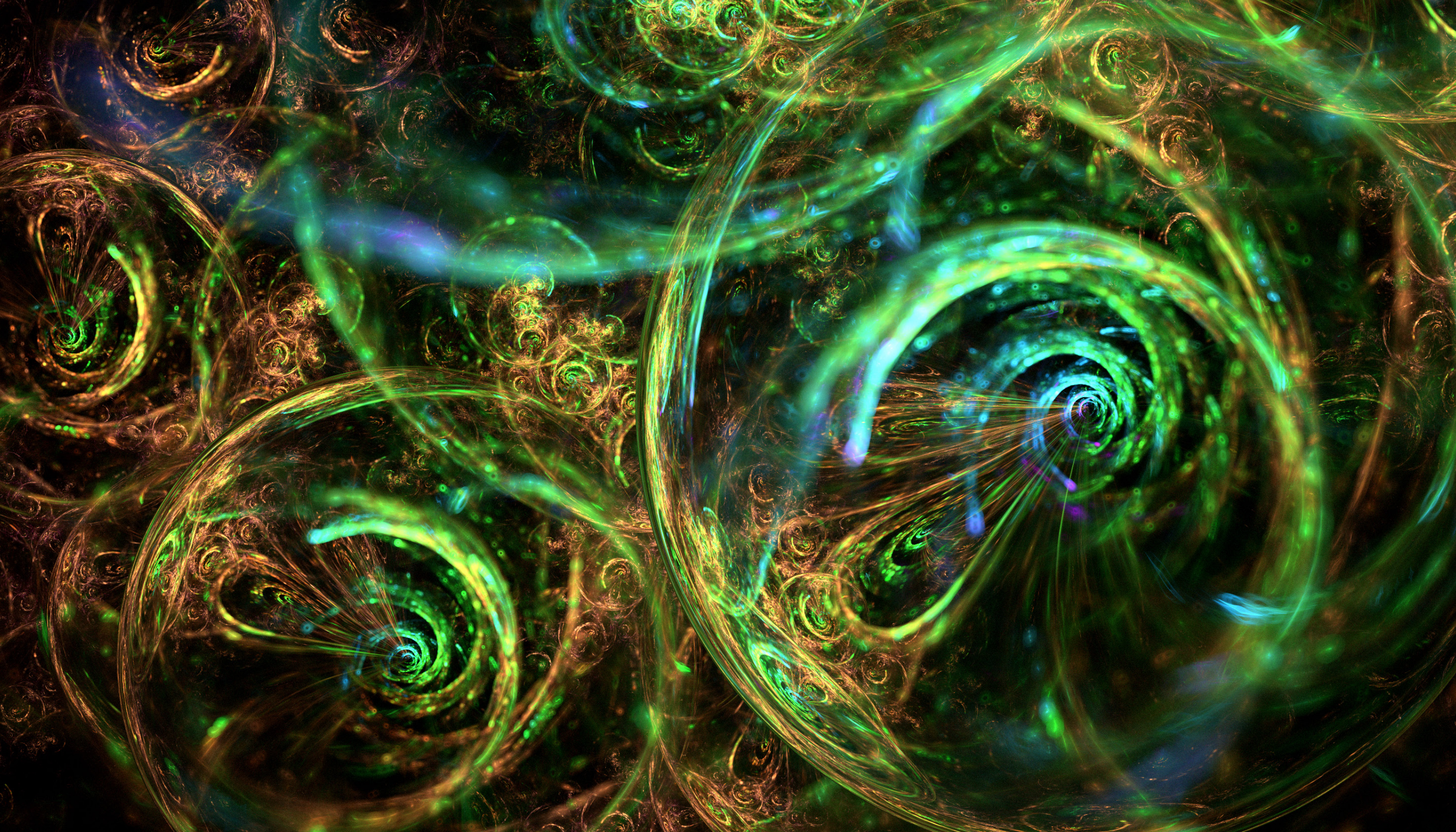
and died ten years younger than I am now. Seventeen years have elapsed in the interim between that tragic Saturday evening and today. Seventeen years! How is it possible that my last memory of him is as old as a typical high school senior? I can condense that span of time to mere minutes in my mind. Has it really been that long since I’ve heard his voice? Do I even remember the sound of his voice? No, I don’t suppose that I do. Some phantom has swooped in and replaced the audio track of my memories with its own strange timbre. That odd little cackle isn’t his; it’s some kind of strange foreplay for a succubus.

We had good times, of course, but not all of those memories were pleasant. He was a teenager when I was still a child and he could, from time to time, be somewhat cruel to me. I remember a specific day when he urged a rottweiler to chase me around my apartment building. I was six years old. It may not be his voice that I recall in my head but I can recount, verbatim, what is was screaming at that hellhound: “Sick em’, boy!

Gettem! Gettem!” I don’t think I’ve ever run so fast in my life, pleading with my feet to navigate those uneven Boston sidewalks. I slammed the downstairs door, breathlessly leaning my back against it with all of my boyish might. The slobbering beast pounced upon the door, fogged the glass, and shook my body with its terrifying barks. He just laughed that demonic laugh of his. At least that’s how I remember it.

Seventeen years. I tried to think of all of the events he missed out on and the limitless history that he, and eventually all of us, will never get to witness. I heard the beast yawn within me, smacking its lips above its pointed teeth. I could smell the sulfur of its breath as the flames within him were extinguished. I was slowly lulling him back to sleep.

I arbitrarily placed the polaroid inside of the book that had kept it safe for all of that time. I gathered my ancient keepsakes into the shoebox and returned the lid. Not today, no, but soon. Goodnight, beast. ■



A Doting Missive

by Jason Grant

Over the desolate horizon of Mars,

Venus flutters across the stars

Through the distance I broadcast in keenness

A darling detected, my only weakness

I have discovered her mantle through my
telescope,

But can only communicate my message out of
hope

Either way, This is my revelation of the year,

To carve this message to her all over this red
sphere: ♥



Untitled | Casey Cormier ▲

Passage | Cole Kraus ►



I am no Sailor

by Jason Grant

I am found, yet lost,

I have no map, and no compass,

I have only the embrace of what beats in my chest,

It is my guide on this deep blue quintessence,

My guide beats ever faster to the east and west,

Why do such cogent notions befuddle on such a pathway,

So many thoughts and so little time

Perhaps I should sleep under the twilight,

And await the lucid sunshine. ■



clockwise (from bottom left):
Untitled | Chandler Kennedy
Commotion | Cole Kraus
Timeless | Cole Kraus





clockwise
(from bottom left):
by Jillian Stanton
 Flowers in a Row
 Wild Daisy
 Grasshopper
 Autumn Colors

Earth, Sky, and Trees

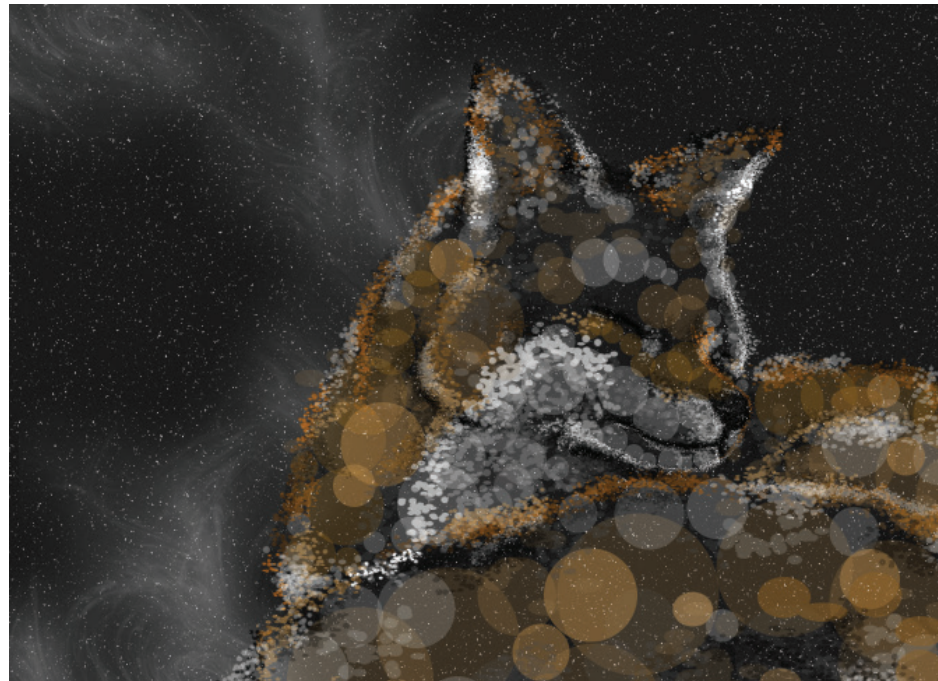
by Heroína Fils

You came around noon,
Your face scarred, vulnerable
With the sun
Running from your shadow.
I took your hands
And felt the cold
Growing in them.

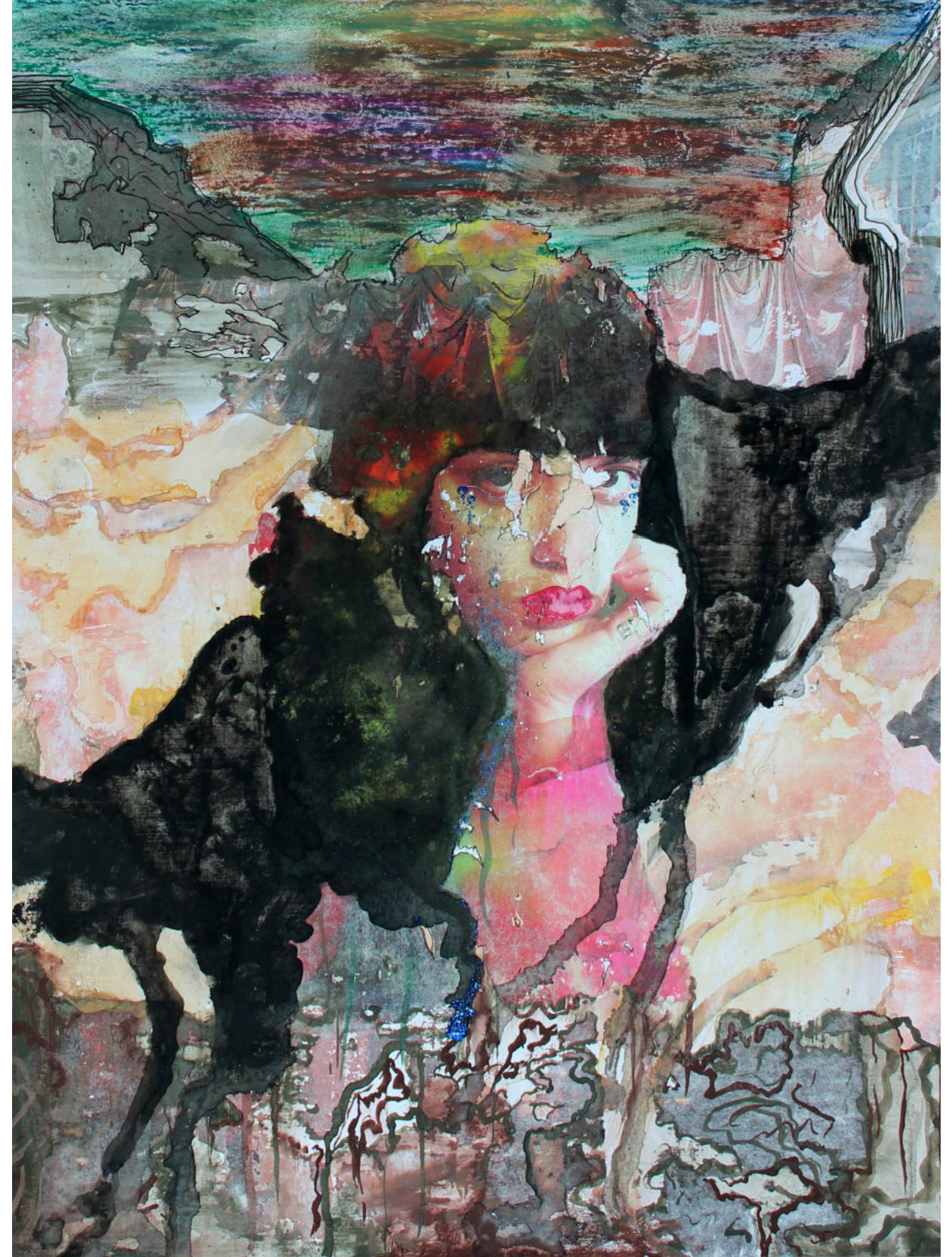
“It is hard to know
Whether trees extend their arms
To pray to the sky
Or keep it from falling,”
You said
With a pained smile.
Only they would know.
Just like no one knows
Whether roots
Are gentle to the earth,
Or whether we are simply
Deaf to her pain.
Still, she, earth,
Keeps the tree rooted
While he swings his head
To the rhythm of the sky.
But who are we to know?
They are beyond our mind to capture,
And our eyes to fathom.
The earth, sky, and trees,
In their intricate affairs,
Do not seem
To care much for us.
Us, haunted and hunters,
With red kissing our hair
And hugging our neck.
Us, trying to find our meaning
In the earth, sky, and trees.

You came around noon,
Fires of a cursed country fair
Burning on your skin,
And a noose hanging
Behind your eyes.
You fastened the rope around my heart
And set it on fire,
Once more.

Once more,
You came back
Like a hurt robin to the nest.
I will keep your hands warm,
And treat your wounded wings.
Until you fly again.
Haunted, and hunters.
Haunted for loving,
Hunters for love. ■



Foxy | Jenniina Vaara



Concentration | Casey Cormier

In the News: Burb Blurbs
Insignificant Tales from
Boston’s North Shore

Editor-in-Chief: James N. Paraskevas II

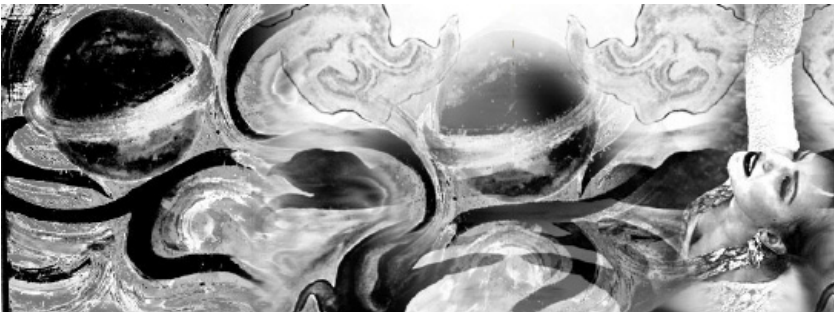
Longtime Bachelor Cooks
Meal At Home, Feels Pride

-LYNN (AP)

Local rapscaillion Claus Henderson, 27, defied the lowered expectations of his perpetually disappointed parents as he tore open a box of Tum-Rub’s Macaroni Sawz and poured its contents into a pot of simmering water. “Just seeing those hardened pellets splash into the water brought tears of joy to my eyes,” an excited Mrs. Henderson exclaimed, “I’ve never been more proud to be a mother!”

With a confident smile spreading across his face, Claus began to stir the pasta bits around the sauce pan with an egg beater. “Ma says you go clockwise, stop, then you go counter-clockwise,” he droned on stupidly, “I think that means you make a circle and then you make an uncircle.” He removed the egg beater from the pot, threatening those dwelling in the kitchen with an unnecessary demonstration.

“Y’know, wit a lil’ bitta practice, I might be able ta work my way up ta frozen pizza!”



Saturn | Kayla Sweet

Plastic Pumpkin Sales
Plummet Unpredictably As
New Year Begins

-SALEM (AP)

The Little Goblin Shop at 66 Which Way is facing financial trouble following the second straight month of dwindling sales. Shattering icicles from the eaves of his storefront windows, shopkeeper and avid Halloween enthusiast Maximilian McDermott, 48, grumbled ominously. “I don’t understand it,” he began, “phony cobwebs, spooky skeletons, and plastic pumpkin sales are all down this quarter.” He paused to remove a pair of vampire fangs from his mouth. “Don’t even get me started on candy corn!”

Maximilian’s wife, Claudia, frowned sullenly from behind the cash register. “Max says that the market is in a free fall,” she lamented as the opening notes of Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in D Minor began to play for the second time in fifteen minutes, “it’s spiraling completely out of control.”

Eerie thunderclaps and ringing bells announced to the McDermotts that the first customers of the day had arrived. A family of tourists from Duluth, Minnesota shuffled into the store, shivering profusely, while displaying disinterested looks at the spine-tingling merchandise. “We’ve got all of your Halloween wants and needs!” Maximilian exclaimed unexpectedly from behind an animatronic warlock. The family gasped in horror as Claudia silently celebrated the first real

scare the store had seen in months. “We’re, uh, actually heading over to the Peabody Essex Museum,” Shannon Handel answered nervously, adding in a whispered aside, “we really only came in here to get out of the cold.”

Once the Handels had departed the store, Maximilian sent his cousin, Thomas, home early for the day. A look of sadness crept over his face. “Well, business picked up in late-September so I took on Thomas,” Maximilian began, unsolicited, “his Easter themed gift shop had gone under in June and I just felt terrible. Now I may have to let him go! Oh! This stuff never happens at the Christmas Tree Shop!” A motion activated Count Dracula came to life suddenly, laughing boisterously, seemingly mocking Maximilian’s grief. He knocked it off the countertop with a quick jab.

“I knew we should have opened up a clothing store!” Claudia shouted suddenly from across the shop, “In fact, I should have listened to my mother and married that Canadian ventriloquist, Ronnie.” She scowled at Maximilian who, a clear veteran of the Ronnie Argument, busied himself with boondoggle. “I should be living in a mansion in Quebec eating hors d’oeuvres and riding horses!” She pounded her fist upon the counter, rattling a dozen or so Frankenstein Monster bobbleheads. Whether out of fear or sincerity, they nodded in agreement with her. “Oh look, hon,” Maximilian chimed in, “it’s snowing again.” Claudia ran over to the window to see. “Do you think we should send the sign-holder home now?” Maximilian thought for a moment before answering, “Not yet, it’s only just starting to get dark. Let’s wait until after the afternoon rush.”

CITIZEN OUTCRY:
Winter Storm Strikes Wintry
Region during Winter, Angry
Mob Reacts

“You know, I just put my shovel away six months ago. It’s enough already with the snow and the ice.”
-Tony Hanscom, North End

“(Expletive deleted) (expletive deleted) (expletive deleted)! Y’know?”
-Owen Potter, Cambridge

“Get out of my face before I beat you with my car scraper!”
-Jack Summers, Revere

“I don’t see what all the fuss is about. I love the winter. It’s the perfect time to vacation in the Florida Keys (maniacal laughter).” -Raphael Hudson III, Marblehead ■

sanna12 | Jenniina Vaara





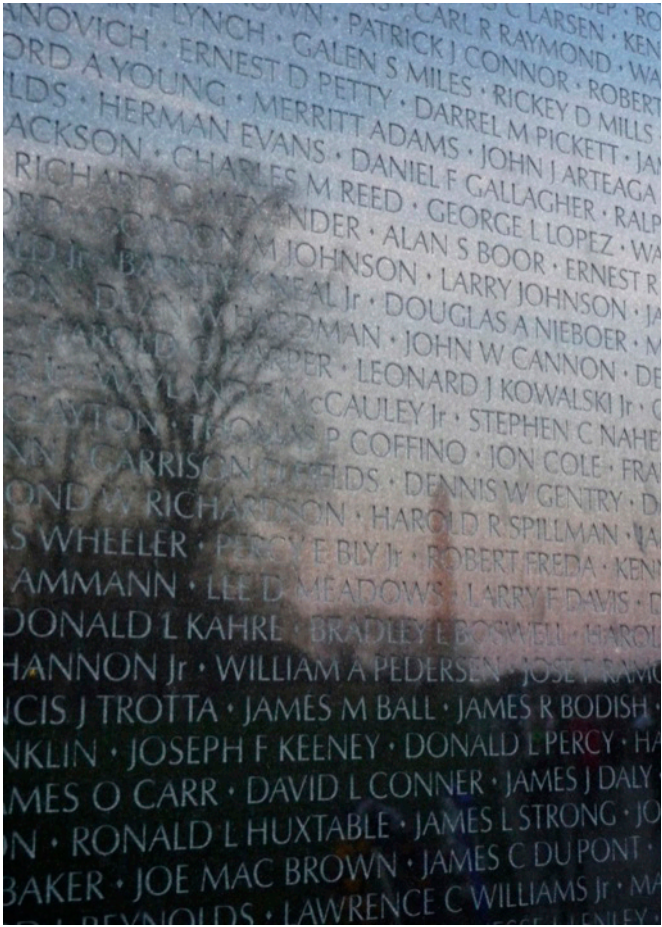
Bob Lobster | *Gina Mercuro*



Jefferson Memorial | *Emma Kraus*



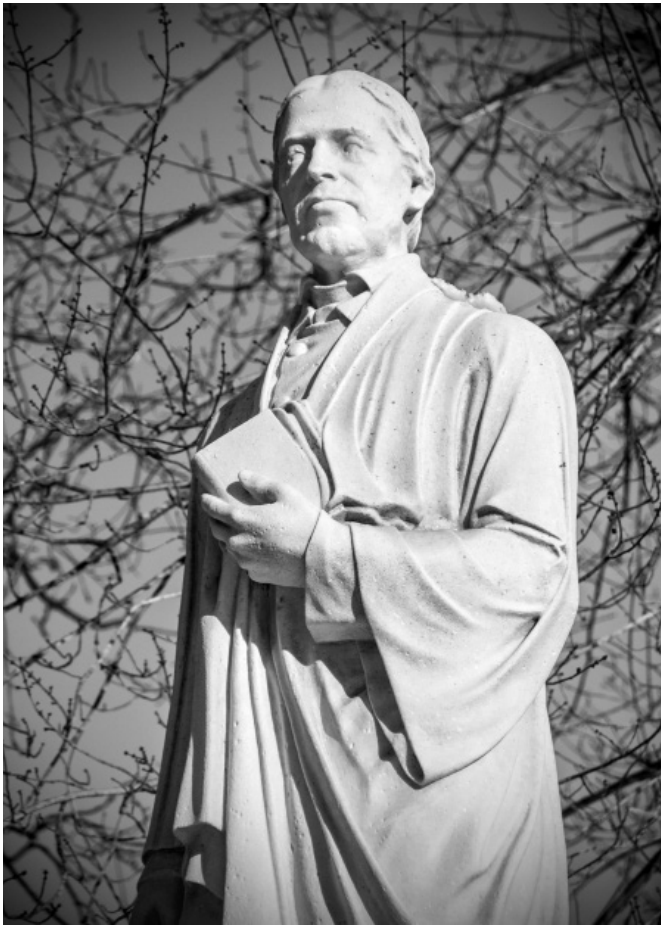
Marsh View | *Gina Mercuro*



Remember | *Emma Kraus*



Where and Why | *Cristy Mejia*



Faces Of Mount Auburn No. 2 | *Gwendolyn Squires*

Clouds

by Heroína Fils

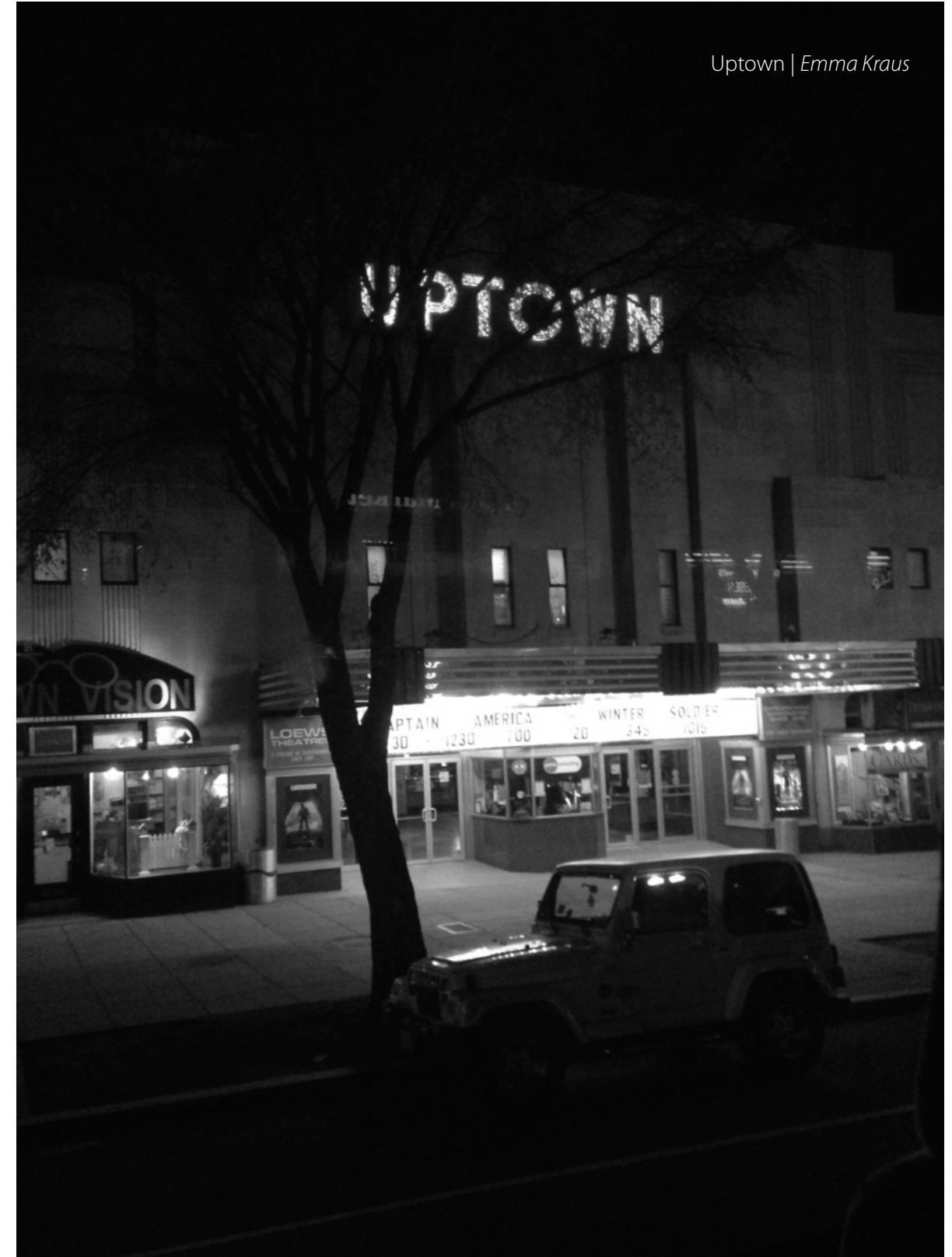
Caught between the earth and sky
It appears you have no home.
Free, you seem,
But your freedom is shackled,
For you go where the wind blows.
Weightless, you travel at her mercy.
Where does your journey end?
On your perpetual voyage,
You hear the songs of angels
While you witness the evil of men.
Where does your heart incline?
Your feelings never go unnoticed
But are they understood?
It has been said
Your complexion reveals them
But have you ever shared them?
Never have your eyes been seen,
But through ours, you have taken many shapes.
You conceal your heart
And hide more than the sun;
You once hid the Son of Man.
But what is shrouded
Shall be seen again.
In you, answers have been sought
And silver linings coveted.
So eminent and yet
It is not spoken of your birth;
You are constantly reborn
And still cry before your downfall.
The broken pieces of your flesh
Appeal each other
But are you ever whole?
You have been given names
Not whispered to you,
Mentioned in poems
You never heard.
Revered in songs
Never sung to you.
Naked to the eye,
Always so untamed
You are embedded in the deepest desire of men,
For who does not wish to fly with the clouds? ■



Untitled | Chandler Kennedy



Proud | Cole Kraus



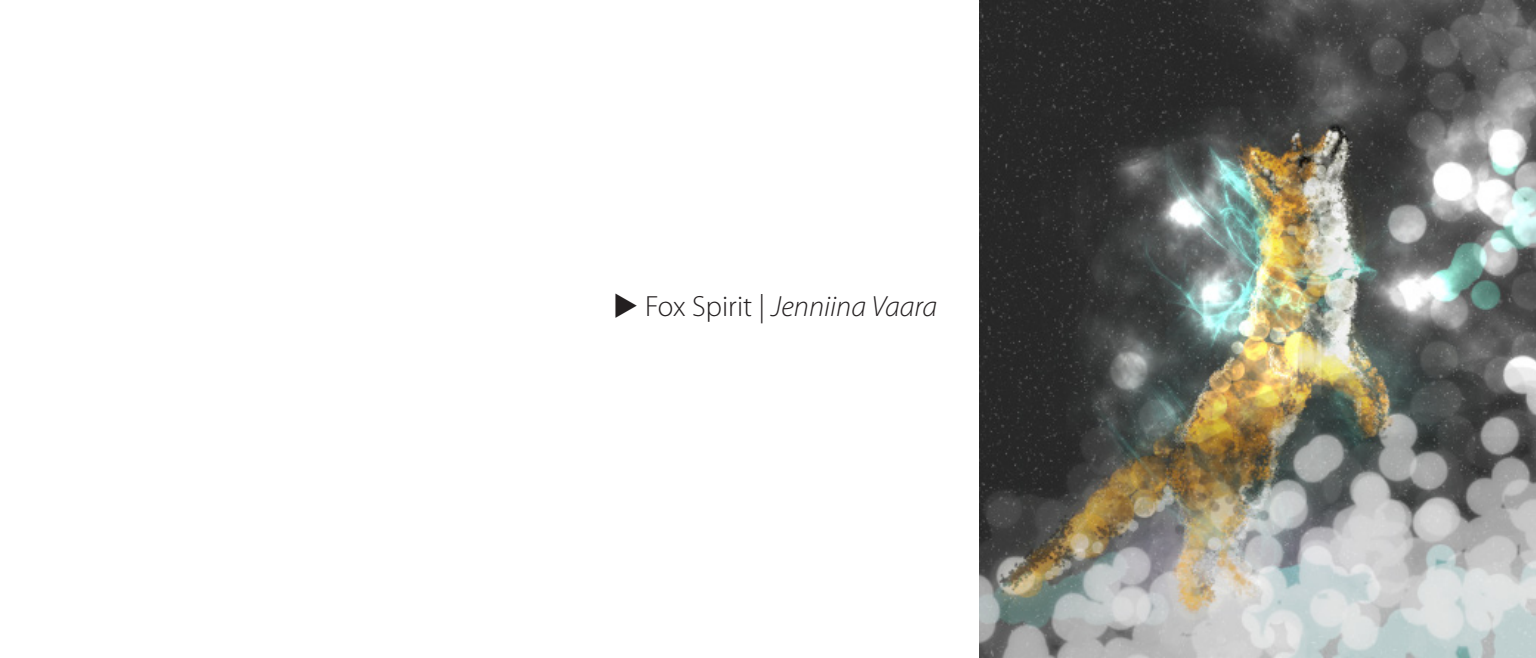
Uptown | Emma Kraus



▲ The Garden of Eden | *Kat Fedukowski*



► Splash | *Maeve Healy*



► Fox Spirit | *Jenniina Vaara*



▼ Tropical Storm | *Kayla Sweet*

INNOCENCE LOST

by Daniel J. Murphy

My shadow, she followed me everywhere. My shadow, my sweet baby sister Darlene, with the golden hair, radiant smile, and deepest blue eyes, which gazed on me as if I were Superman himself. But what eleven year old boy wants to be continuously followed around by his annoying little sister? Every day for me, it was the same question: “Mom, do I have to?” and every day, it was the same answer: “Yes, and you better keep an eye on her.” Once again, I would be forced to take Darlene to the park. My sister was my responsibility. My mother Maggie was a lovely woman with astonishing dark brown eyes to match her long dark brown hair, already trapped in a bad marriage with two children at the tender age of seventeen. My father was a ruggedly built, handsome man with dominating bluish green eyes that could slice right through you. He was also violent and controlling, and five years older than my naïve young mother. He liked to spend his free time drinking in bars. My

dear mother, my precious sister, and I shared two very intense bonds. One, an unconditional love for each other, and two, an unfathomable fear of my abusive and alcoholic father, a man who years earlier had forced his children to watch while he brutally raped their mother. The night of May 12, 1978 would forever change my life. It was a school night, but not any school night because of our favorite television show Happy Days. As the titles rolled, Darlene and I sang along with its classic theme: “Sunday, Monday, Happy Days. Tuesday, Wednesday, Happy Days. Thursday, Friday, Happy Days. These days are all happy and free; these days are yours and mine....” In the dark of the house, we watched our tiny black and white television with the aluminum foil for an antenna as my mother slept soundly on the second floor of our cramped apartment in my hometown of Lynn, Massachusetts. In that night’s episode, the Fonz, the coolest person we knew, was going to jump eighteen

school buses on his signature motorcycle and black leather jacket, both of which I dreamed of owning one day. Drama hijacked the room as he approached the takeoff, and we cheered when the show ended in a triumphant jump. Afterwards, we scurried off to our separate bedrooms, for neither one of us wanted to be caught by my father on the likely chance that he would stumble home drunk once again. My nightmare began a little past midnight. Before my eyes had opened, I sensed intense heat. Flames in their mesmerizing colors were dancing along the walls and ceiling of my bedroom through profuse black smoke, already starting to engulf the room. My survival instincts powered by high octane fear kicked into overdrive. I scrambled out my second story bedroom window onto a wooden porch and raced down the stairs to safe ground. The gathering crowd cheered as my mother lifted me into her loving arms. She was safe but my father and sister were not.

Riding the elevators up to the ninth floor of Mass General Hospital, I began to envision the unthinkable. Would my sister and father really die? I sat in the waiting room frightened and alone, while my mother went to check on their condition. Fear began to suffocate me. The first of many tears began flowing slowly down my cheek. All I could think is what would I do without my annoying little shadow? Would she be gone forever, without giving me the chance to do something I rarely did, express my love for her? Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw that night. The person lying in my sister’s bed was unrecognizable. The fire had taken her beautiful blond hair along with her fingertips, but not her spirit. She had been burned over eighty percent of her body and lay there unconscious while machines helped keep her alive. She was bandaged from head to toe with the exception of the left half of her face. I bent down, kissed her cheek gently, and whispered, “I love you.” Then something amazing happened.

One of her eye’s fluttered peacefully, as if to say everything was going to be all right. At that point in history, no one had ever survived after being burned so badly, but somehow I knew she would make it. I left the room with a horrendous feeling of guilt. This was somehow my fault. I was the one who was supposed to protect her. I had failed. Shortly afterwards, I entered my father’s room and looked down at this man, burned over sixty percent of his body. Guilt set in again, but in a conflicting manner. It was a disturbing guilt. As this monster of a man fought for his life, all I could do was wish he would die. I knew it was wrong, but it felt right. I wanted my own father dead. The days that followed were the toughest days of my young life. I made a promise to God. If God would allow my sister to live, I would no longer be afraid. Thankfully, God did save her and the life of my father as well. Months later, after countless surgeries, both were released from the hospital. This

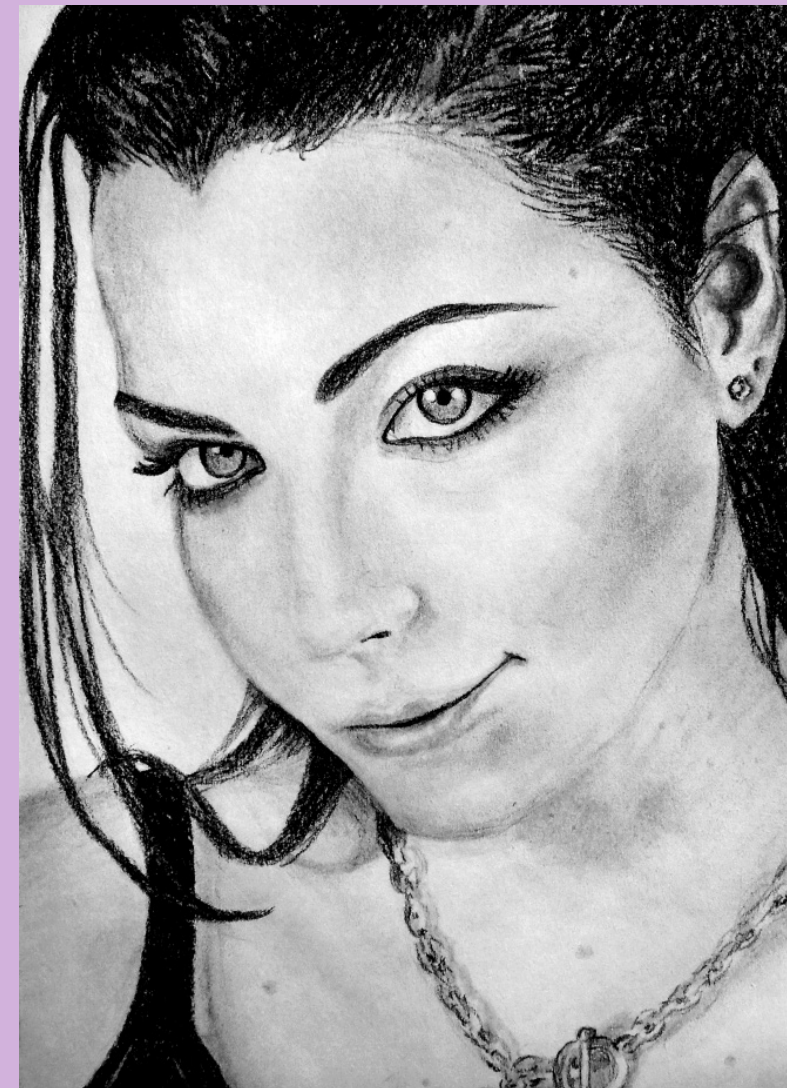
created mixed emotions for me, an entirely new love and appreciation for my little sister and a horrible confusion about my father. Would he go back to the way he was or would he take this second opportunity to change and somehow become the man I had always hoped for? From the moment my sister returned home, it was no longer: “Mom, do I have to take her with me?” It was now: “Mom, I am taking Darlene with me.” For years, we were inseparable. I had become her shadow. As for my father, I wish I could tell you that he changed, but he only became worse. I may have lost my childhood innocence that night, but I did discover my strength. This was the beginning of the man I would become. No longer would I sit back and cower as my father went on his rampages. I was only ten but no longer a scared little boy. I would protect my mother and sister from now on, without fear of the consequences. ■



Kingston | *Emma Kraus*



Untitled | *Chandler Kennedy*



Tribute To Amy Lee | *Gwendolyn Squires*

What of the Weeds?

by Christian Schluter

Yes, the flowers look fine
And the breeze is just right
The dimpled white moon basks
In the star glow of night

Compelled by perfection
We deny the scar
Standard notions of beauty
Define who we are

Yet what of the weeds
The crumbling brick wall
Graffiti on signs
That are threatening to fall

What of the worms
And the grime they call home

The mold that creeps darkly
The creatures that roam

What of the rain
Murderous tempests at sea
The frenzied thrashing
Of life gone early

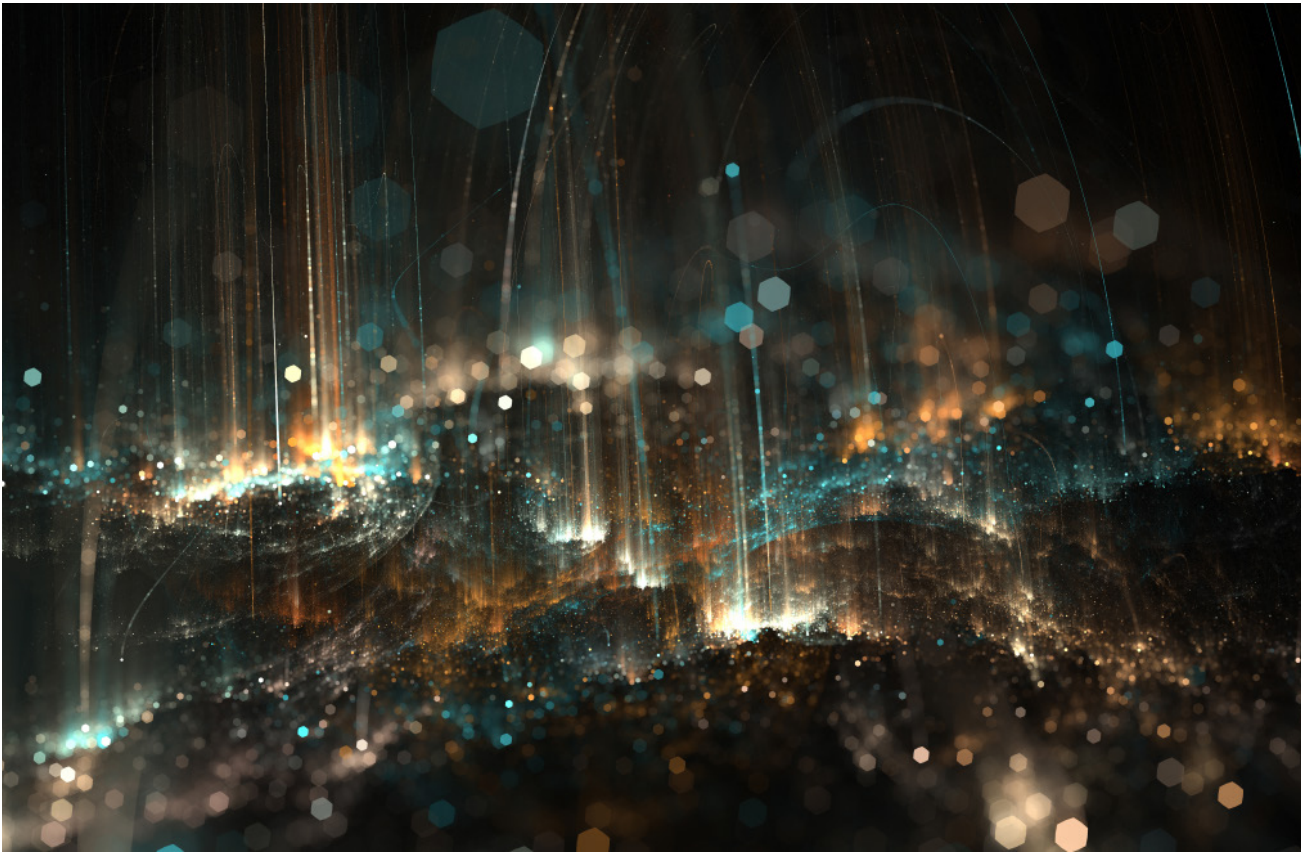
What of the fairgrounds
So silent at night
Covered in detritus
Borne away by first light

What of the pain
Some carry all day
Lost and alone
Each in his own way

What of the soldiers
And the men that they maim
Fear, guilt and rage
Slowly winning the game

For each spot of light, a stain of darkness
With every virtue, a flaw
Determinedly, we craft images of beauty
But it's the scars we should draw. ■

Self Portrait | Maeve Healy



Mineralize | Kat Fedukowski



1948 Custom Mercury
Joseph Macone

A Stirring Has Begun

By Christian Schluter

Surrounded by darkness we walk alone
The paths are abandoned; all birds have flown
Forests tattered, streams torn asunder
Nature exploited; mankind’s sad blunder
No water to drink, nor air to breathe
The mountains ragged, earth’s broken teeth
Yet in this torpid, dank vacuum
A stirring has begun

Its body is frail; its heartbeat is weak
Its future in peril, its chances are bleak
It pushes on slowly, gathering strength
For Hope has begun to stir

Rising up now on wings forged of dreams
Over burnt meadows and scum-blackened streams
Persistent, yet silent, it aims for the sky
Hope has begun to stir

To every city it travels alone
To every village and every home
Spreading its message, defeating the blight
Hope has begun to stir

The landscape illuminates; all beasts arise
Inspired by the sound of sharp, urgent cries
Growing in number, a breathtaking force
Hope has begun to stir

Believers surge on to ear-splitting beats
Willing to undertake mystical feats
With fearless hearts and resolute minds
Hope has begun to stir

Emboldened, determined, the meek join the fray
Demons to challenge and monsters to slay
To salvage the dreams of one silenced man
Hope has begun to stir

They pierce the filmy veil of fear
Souls torn away, and now they can hear
The roar of thunder, beating drums
‘til muscles burn and minds are left numb
The savage strength of a desperate soul
Hope has begun to stir

The battlefield lightens, ghouls meet their fate
The virtuous approach the victory gate
Their future is certain now the battle’s been won
For Hope has begun to stir ■



Sleeping Beauty | Debra Cadorette

faculty, staff, and student volunteers

LISA ALTOMARI
Professor
NSCC English Department
Spark Literary Committee Judge

SHRAE BENTON
Graphic Design and Photography Student
Spark Art Committee Judge
Student Volunteer Judge

JIM CHISHOLM
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NSCC Cultural Arts Department, Art
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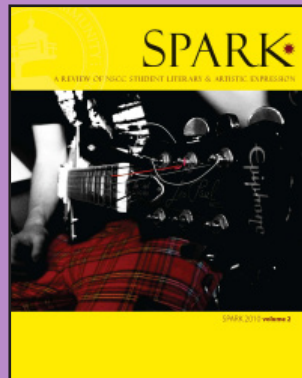
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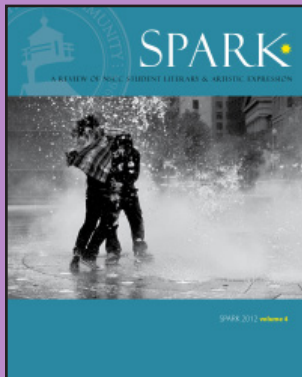
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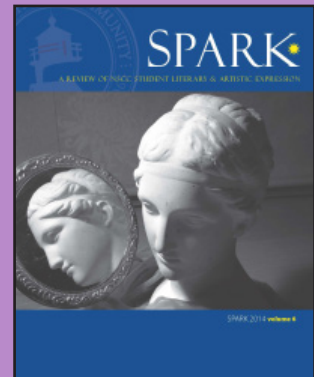
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