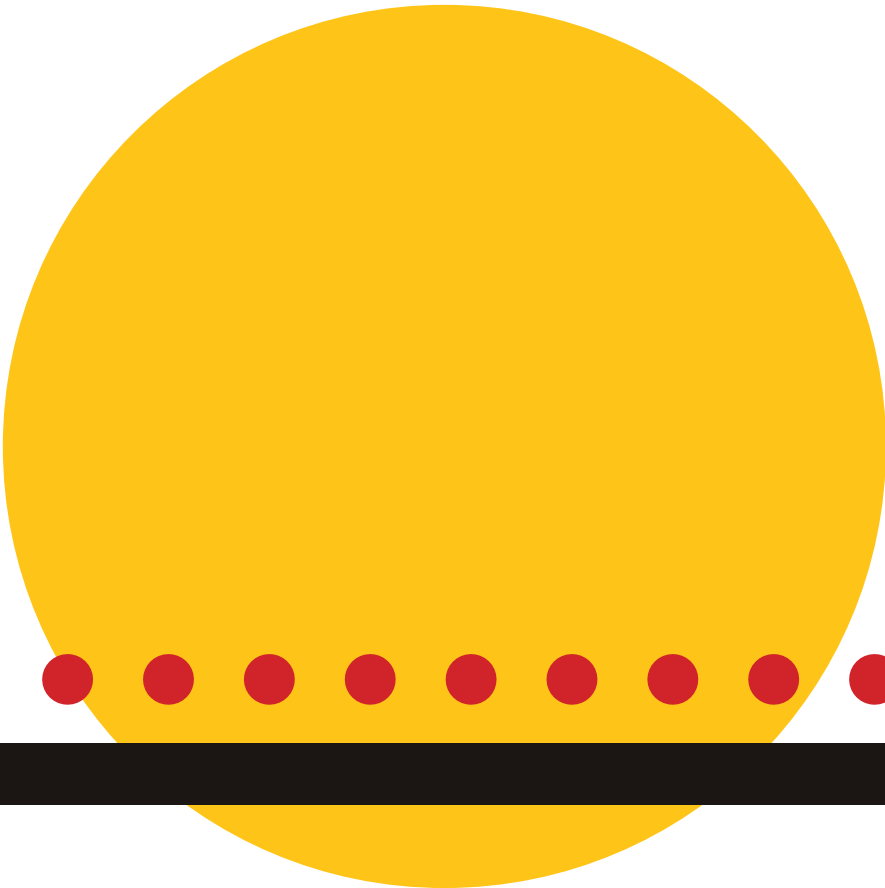


The **GRACKLE**

2014 - 2015



The
GRACKLE

Chestnut Hill College's Art and Literary Magazine



2014 - 2015

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DEAR STUDENTS,

Congratulations to everyone involved in the publication of this extraordinary 2015 edition of *The Grackle*. Kudos to graduating Editor-in-Chief, Nikki Spano, and layout wizard, Andrea Wentzell. High praise to all on the staff who reviewed submissions and to every student who submitted a visual or verbal act of creation. (If, due to page limits, your submission does not appear in this *Grackle*, please keep writing, keep imagining and noticing what lies before your eyes and do submit again.) Writers often describe the courage it takes to overcome the terror of the blank page; think how much more courage it takes to put your work out in front of others! The poet W.B. Yeats clearly understood how subjecting our private dreams to the public is an act of both love and vulnerability; listen to what he tells his listener/beloved in “He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven”:

I have spread my dreams [my poems]
under your feet;

Tread softly because you tread on my
dreams.

Congratulations to the faculty advisors who have helped you to bear fruit and to every instructor whether at Chestnut Hill College or in your past who has encouraged your creativity, who has dared you to dream—or, in the mantra of one CHC writing prof, to “Be, Do, Have”—Be the artist, poet you are (or “half poet” as one student names herself here); Do the work that can bear fruit; then realize you have accomplished what you have to do.

A word of added thanks to the CHC Administration, who have made the financial commitment to resurrect and to continue the tradition of *The Grackle*, not only because they believe in the arts, but because they believe in your gifts and talents.

Of what follows: I can only say that, having had my “sneak (privileged) preview” of this year’s *Grackle*, I am very deeply moved by the talent and vision I witness here—verbal and visual—and what that means not only for us at CHC but for the entire planet. One poet here intuits that her dream-memories feel “cosmically insignificant, but yet so essential.” Just as the “taste of blackberries” or feel of “sandals in the snow” remind us that we are of earth, so too the photographs of a young elephant in Africa or a child named “Emmanuel,” made wondrously visible, may inspire us to take action to protect them. In these pages we hear of city faces, we see African giraffes and snapshots of winter like those seen from dorm rooms, we view bridges to cross and painted fantasies; we read stories that blend comedy and danger. I find in one poem a 21st Century version of Emily Dickinson’s backyard Sabbath relocated to a coffee café—but with the same feeling of the sacred in the ordinary, not to mention evidence that art reinvents itself on the shoulders of those who have preceded us. And that only skims the surface of what I have read here.

A few years ago, a Spanish Literature professor visiting CHC showed slides of

prehistoric drawings from the caves of Altamira, Spain, that date back to times we can hardly calculate. The questions that stuck me then, recur to me now: what impulse was it that led our earliest human ancestors to record the wonders and dangers that stood before their

eyes? What sacred impulse leads the human heart to create? If these are questions I cannot answer, they are also ones that the student work in the 2015 *Grackle* invites us to celebrate.

Congratulations!!

Dr. Barbara Lonnquist
Professor of English

DEAR READERS,

I believe that our little campus here at Chestnut Hill College wonderfully embraces the changing of seasons. Summer pulses with the energy of move-in day, happy reunions, and friendly games on the Summerhouse Lawn. Autumn brings with it a burst of vibrant color and the excitement of the annual quidditch tournament. Winter, a picturesque white landscape as snow blots out red roofs, assures a good snow day when everyone can gather the lids to their plastic storage containers and sled down the hill by the parking lot. And finally, spring promises the birth of fox cubs and goslings, petals on the breeze, and the launch of *The Grackle*.

As I look through the pieces in this issue, I appreciate that these artists and writers often turn to nature for inspiration. They have snapped photographs to immortalize the images of our campus under a blanket of snow or of the sun setting over a beach. They have written about birth, childhood, love, old age, and death. Many of the pieces in this issue offer new perspectives on the seasons of a year and the stages of a lifetime. *The Grackle* contains the poetry, fiction, art, and photography of some of the best creative minds at Chestnut Hill College.

This is not to say that each piece that was submitted but not selected to appear in the issue does not have its own merit. In fact, I encourage each writer, artist, and photographer

who submitted this year to continue to work on their craft and to hold on to the confidence and courage that urged them to submit their pieces in the first place.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the review board which met for hours at a time to discuss and debate over each and every submission down to their smallest details. And of course, this issue would not be what it is without the hard work and passion of the editors, the faculty advisers, and our publisher, David Kahn. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Barbara Lonquist for her contribution to this year's issue. Without these individuals, artists and writers would not be able to experience the satisfaction of opening a book to see their work printed there for all to see. Their dedication to the continued success of *The Grackle* makes the past, present, and future issues of this magazine a special part of Chestnut Hill College's creative community.

Within this magazine, you will find pieces created by students of various ages and phases in their college careers and lives. Experience this issue as you would a walk in the breezy heat of a summer morning, in the chill of an autumn afternoon with leaves crunching underfoot, in the crisp wind of an icy winter evening, and in the fragrant warmth of a spring night. I hope you all enjoy the 2014-2015 edition of *The Grackle*.

Nikki Spano
Editor-in-Chief

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UNTITLED
Elizabeth Bachmayer
2016



BRIDGE TO NOWHERE
Ellie Convie
2015

A Painted Piano Next to Bloodied Rubble

Nick Kowalski

2016

Shielded police stand between us and them.
The riot force infringes upon our air, as stones
Attack their shiny skulls, but they condemn
Our words of Western ideas, unknown
To people dressed in black. The wall of grey
Plastic warns of a tyrant, who with pen
On yellow paper, aborts protests to fray
Our freedom's fabric showed on CNN.
Among the struggle, man creates an art,
Keys, bridges, sound. Before these men of war,
Our music softly he plays; all our hearts
Be still! His song moves lips to say, "No more!"
Burned from words, Governments will fall to ash,
But music will survive the mad bloodbath.

Pillow Talk

Sally Simons

2015

White sheets marred by ink black hair;
My dreams bleed into my pillow--
The forgotten and the memorably truthful--
And as we lay here
Now thoughts of you are added to the vault.

How we talked
Of the taste of blackberries,
Wearing sandals in the snow,
Broken transmissions,
Drowning spiders in the sink –

All of it cosmically insignificant
And yet so essential
Because without it
I would only know
You smoke Camel cigarettes,
You drive your Chevy too fast,
And you have an extensive collection of rock band T-shirts.
You wouldn't know
Why I like Keats,
Hate sunny days,
And am unable tell you a damn thing about baseball.

And added to my secret keeper,
My crisp, white pillow,
Is the memory of how we
Listened to the rainy tune
Nature drummed on the roof this Saturday night.

UNTITLED • *Liana Flores, 2015*



SUCCULENTS • *Amanda Monroe, 2016*



TOPSY TURVY
Amanda Monroe
2016

A Love Affair

Elizabeth Herrera

2015

I'm having a love affair with my pillow.

No matter how many times it doubles in size—
soaked with the weight of my problems—
or I smear all my makeup from another long day,
or I scrunch and I squish it this way and that,
it loves me back.

Every night, it cradles my face,
and for hours while I dream—
helpless and defenseless—
I'm gently caressed through the dark and the night,
it loves me despite who I am.

Maybe it's having a love affair with me.

Ignorance is Bliss

Briana Charlton

2016

Head bent against Winter,
I walk among the city Faces
Staring coldly in my direction,
Whispering silent judgments
While their skin reddens from the frost
And their breath gusts before them like a
mockery of fire.

What do you think offends them so?

Increasing my pace,
The Wind whips my ears raw
Until I remember I've forgotten my hat,
And putting it on,
I find I care a little less about the chilly Air
And rather pity them,
For they are not as warm as I.



UNTITLED
Liana Florez
2015



QUIET MAN • *Jill Walsh, 2015*



SIGNS OF LIFE • *Andrea Wentzell, 2015*

The Beast

Gabe Henninger

2015

The walkie crackled and words funneled through full of static and glee.

“This is Wildfyre to Anti-Christ. I repeat, Wildfyre to Anti-Christ. Do ya read me? Over.”

“I hate it when you call me that. Can’t we come up with a better codename?”

Silence came through the walkie.

“Lucy? Are you there?”

The walkie roared to life.

“Ya didn’t say ‘Over.’ You have to say ‘over’ when you’re done. How else could I possibly tell when you’re finished? Over.”

“Lucy, I hate it when you do this. This isn’t the army. Why do I have to say ‘over’?”

“Why do you have to say what? Over.” She sniggered.

“Over.”

“Ya gotta give me a message, Damien. Ya can’t just say ‘over’. Over.”

Damien could hear the gap-toothed grin over the walkie. He sighed before he begged.

“Please, can you just tell me what you were going to say?”

Silence fell again. Damien

gave in.

“Over.”

“Haha! You’re so easy. Anyway, get your butt down here. I found the Beast and we are gonna kill it. Bring that knife I gave you, Anti-Christ. Wildfyre over and out.”

Damien stared across the room at his bureau. He tiptoed over, opened the top drawer and reached back behind his socks until he felt something hard. He pulled out the dark, shiny blade and held it at arms length. He glared at it. He hated this thing. Lucy had given it to him for his birthday. This was during her knife-throwing phase. She had stolen it from her father and slipped it past Damien’s mother. They spent the entirety of his birthday throwing their knives at trees. Lucy squealed every time she flung the knife, regardless of what she hit. Damien threw his knife with one hand while covering his eyes with the other, secretly hoping the whole time his mother would notice and come to take it from him. She didn’t.

Damien snuck down the stairs and opened the drawer under the sink. The bottles were gone, which meant his mother was here. He swallowed hard.

Damien sidled up to the wall adjoining the living room. Silence hung in the air like a body, heavy and horrifying. It broke with a rumble. A snore resounded from a lump on the couch that wore his mother’s clothes. Damien trembled at the thought of her waking. A minute passed. Another snore. Damien sprinted down the street.

Lucy sat on her porch and screamed as he came into view.

“Finally! God, you took long enough. I’ve been out here for years!”

She stood there in a too-big T-shirt tucked into dirt-stained overalls grinning ear to ear. Damien hefted the weight of his knife in his hand and glanced at Lucy’s bare palms.

“Where is your knife?”

Lucy’s eyes flashed and Damien immediately regretted his question. She picked up a large stick that was on the ground and slashed at him. He ducked as the makeshift spear cut through where his head just was. Damien screamed as Lucy howled. Damien sat on the ground, panting and shaking, as Lucy tried to get control of her laughter.

“I almost cut your head off.”

Damien pouted. He hated the way she said almost. It was too happy, too eager. He wished she would stop.

“Come on, Gaymien. Let’s go kill the Beast.”

They made their way to the backyard, which was a dirt patch fenced in by a house on one end and a forest on the other. They called it Demon’s Grove. Or at least that’s what Lucy called it. Damien always thought that was a bit much. It certainly was a big forest, but there weren’t any demons in it. Lucy always talked about that kind of stuff, like there was some sort of monster right behind her waiting to pounce and tear her apart. She talked like she could handle anything. Damien hoped that was true.

They entered the woods, Lucy in front and Damien trailing in back trying to think of any excuse that would get him out of this awful hunting expedition. As he followed Lucy, she cut through the brush and spoke in between each slash.

“I saw him a little bit ago. He was huge and I’m pretty sure I saw blood in his fur.” Slash. “This isn’t even a big deal. I go hunting with my dad all the time. He lets me fire his gun and skin the animals. I’m pretty much an expert knife-user.” Slash. “So, like, killing the Beast is gonna be super easy. Don’t worry Anti-Christ. Wildfyre’ll keep you safe.” Slash, slash, slash.

Lucy cut a path open to a clearing, a flat grassy space ringed by bushes and trees. They stood in silence. Damien felt a breeze roll through. He thought this was the only place in the forest he could feel the breeze. He thought this was a special place, a place of peace, a place of perfect silence. Lucy slashed through that too.

“Hey, Anti-Christ, you fall asleep? This is where I found him. I think he likes to hang out here, makes his nest on the edge of the clearing or something.”

Damien felt anger take hold of him. “Seriously, I want a new code name.”

Lucy didn’t look at Damien as she moved ahead and poked around the outlying bushes with her spear.

“Jeeze, fine, whatever. What do you want to be called?”

Damien watched her as she went cutting absentmindedly at the brush. He thought about it hard and mumbled, “I don’t know, something cool.”

Lucy turned her head towards him as she cut.

“How about Dragon Face?”

The spear whipped through leaves. Damien shook his head.

“Blade Master?”

The spear slashed brush. Damien frowned.

“Blood Reaper?”

The spear made a thud. The Beast whipped around, out of the trees, and glared in the direction of Lucy. She screamed, dropped the spear and ran away. A few steps into her retreat she tripped, fell to the ground, and rolled. The Beast charged her, mouth foaming, and scampered over her body.

Without realizing, Damien had drifted toward the scene and swiftly kicked the rabid groundhog off of her thrashing body. He stood above the groundhog, his shoe on its throat and knife in his hand. He bent down as the rabid animal squirmed and ran the tip of his knife across the neck of the animal. Its neck gushed blood, its mouth foamed pink, and it squirmed less and less each second.

Damien ran the knife deeper into its throat again and again. The animal stopped moving. Damien kept going. He waited until there was silence. Perfect silence. The red blood on the green grass soothed Damien. He smiled as a feeling of calmness washed over him. It was glorious.

Lucy stood up, intact and humiliated. She walked over to Damien, and for the first time that he could remember she was silent and fearful. He held the wet blade close to his face and said quietly, “Blood Reaper. That works.”

Lucy stared.

Damien smirked. “Over.”

The Painful Shadow of Absence

Nick Kowalski
2016

The TV was on while he watched the door.
On the brown couch, the boy picked his nails
Until the pale tips turned red, but stopped before
They bled onto his dog's white fur tail.
The boy's mom requested that his dad walk
In first, but the dog snarled louder than
She did for strangers. His dad couldn't talk.
His mom's face was soaked in salt water when
She walked in; the boy's stomach felt as if
It were being choked by a snake with black
Beady eyes. He knew. Their eyes left him stiff;
In his bald chest lay an eternal crack.
The TV went black, and the screen became
One more void to take the breath of his flame.



EIDEL • *Miriam Leffler, 2016*

Being a Poet

Elizabeth Herrera

2015

I am half a poet.

My brain creates creative couplets,
But I don't know where to go from there.

I struggle to structure the lines with good rhymes,
Then find the meter and rhythm won't work.

I've read the great works of my peers and the published,
And I wonder why I can't do the same.

If we are all working with the same English language,
Why is it my thoughts warp on their way to the page?

It becomes a frustrating fight to perfect any verse,
And I can't help but yearn for the lilt in the lines.

I am indeed half a poet on my very best day--
Everything always feels so incomplete.

UNTITLED • Elizabeth Bachmayer, 2016



PERCEPTION • Stephanie Knecht, 2015



THE LASTING EFFECT
Cassandra Griffiths
2018

The Calling

Joe Hamersly

2015

There is a calling
from the canyon
to my ears,
and I have nothing
left to fear,
because I am whole

I have lost
my sense of self
for far too long,
but now myself
is who I want to be

So, I'll go
two thousand miles
just to feel
the wind roaring from the canyons,
and I know everything
will be okay, somehow

There is a calling
from the canyon
to my ears,
and I have nothing
left to fear
because I am whole



ZASHI
Miriam Leffler
2016



GREEN LANDSCAPE • *Ashley Hernandez, 2015*



A POSTCARD WINTER • *Briana Charlton, 2016*

UNTITLED • Elizabeth Bachmayer, 2016



EMMANUEL • Elizabeth Bachmayer, 2016

"Desire for—"

Nick Kowalski

2016

The café is my chapel; the
Blonde barista, my priest.
Jazz music, my hymns; my chalice
Bursting with earl grey tea.

One Sunday, when charcoaled pillows
Bulging with rain consumed the heavens,
In my velvet chair sat a gray
Man who looked ready to die.

As I ordered my tea, I saw
His pallor was like the dust in my
Pop-pop's plastic urn, forgotten
On top of his empty writing desk.

Too afraid to write, I grabbed
The Times and asked
For a scone; the blonde
Barista shook her head.

The man dropped his pen as
I waited for my tea, and he looked
Down into his coffee like a child
Into the wishing well at the mall.

His skeleton hand reached into
An orange bottle and grabbed blue
Pills. He sealed his glassy eyes and
Drank the pills with his French brew.

Teeth the color of urine stretched
Across his wrinkled face, and I
Asked my pale priest about his smile,
And her red lips told me why:

Hued medicine is peace
To the dying artist fading
Into the haze of the
Darkest corner in a café.

In My Mind

Sally Simons

2015

In my mind, I am running. My flowing elegance is stunning as I breeze by a patch of marigolds and Queen Anne's lace. My breathing is even and not a drop of perspiration mars my skin. Galloping horses cannot outrun me nor is any Olympic athlete my equal. I am free from all but gravity, though my feet try desperately to avoid contact with the earth.

And then I trip on a rock.

And it all comes back to me that I am not a gazelle. Sweat is everywhere. I am panting unattractively – my dog looks much cuter when he does it. My thighs are wailing their opinion about this ridiculous idea known as “running for fun.” And I am asking myself the questions womankind has been begging to know the answers to since that long ago day we decided losing weight was a priority: why does food have calories, why do I enjoy chocolate so much, why did I even think this was a good idea, and for heaven's sake, why do I even care what I look like?



LOS PICOS DE EUROPA

Erin McMEnamin

2015



UNTITLED
Courteney Glennan
2017

"Nursery Rhymes to Funeral Dirges"

Nick Kowalski

2016

To be is to die,
From morning to night,
Pink skin to skin white.
Lips sealed – no reply.

"Why did we try?"
Lips sealed – no reply.
Legs intertwined tight,
Pink skin to skin white.

Dance, so we can lie
In warm beds – no light –
Legs intertwined tight,
"Why did we try?"

In warm beds – no light –
From morning to night,
Dance, so we can lie –
To be is to die.

Of Coffee and Fathers

Elizabeth Herrera

2015

The coffee was in my sights long before the scent smashed into me like a train.
The caboose carried memories of my father.
Tall and handsome, loving and generous, a bit of a child when appropriate,
But most of all, mine.

I let the love surge through me and smiled at my memories,
Barefoot summer evenings, dances in the kitchen, stories before bedtime,
A childhood of happiness, comfort, and support.

My cognition returned to the coffee drinker, and I considered him as a father,
Saw him laughing with his daughters, throwing snowballs with his sons,
Picturing children he may one day have and adore,
I knew that their love would mirror my own.

The Impatient Seed (a sonnet)

Navonna Garrett

2017

Here lies the impatient seed,
who only wanted to grow into a tall tree.
There, in the ground, it would tremble with need,
if only time would show what it would be.
So the seed dug deep into the soil
and rushed to take all the water into its roots,
around those of others they would coil
like long legs outstretched in vegetative boots.
Young, it stretched its neck to the sun
and grew to be the most beautiful and envied tree around,
but it forgot that clear-cutting season had begun;
finally, it saw the beauty of nature as it fell to the ground.

So here lies the fallen tree,
Who forgot that patience is key.

For Whom?

Nick Kowalski

2016

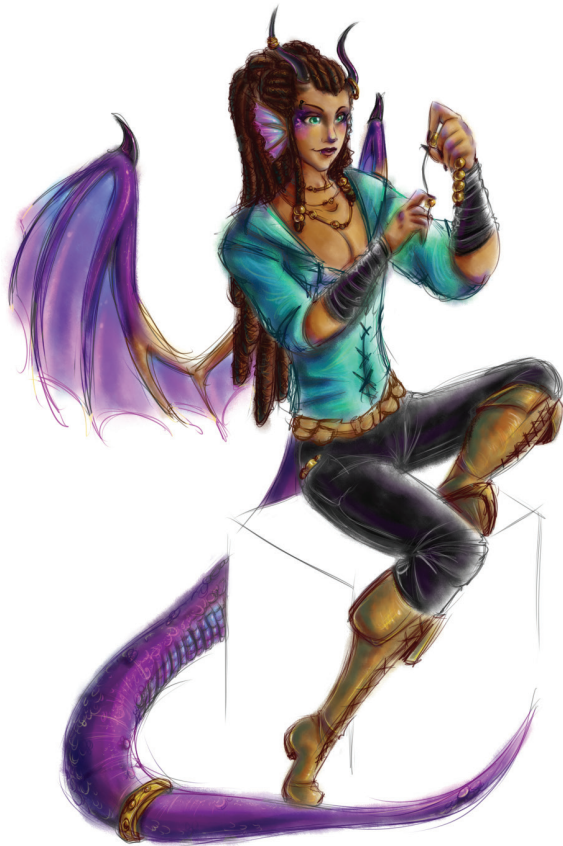
Early Sunday morning, when the
Yellow sun is a sliced grapefruit,
Sprinkling its red juices onto
Pale blue China, I unlock the
Stain glass doors, which are thicker than
The lectionary with wrinkled
Pages, yellowed by sweaty hands,
On the pale marble pulpit with
The crackling microphone, through which
Father Blanche's voice squawks to a
Faceless crowd his sermon on a
Holiness through hate, like the pale
Infant screeching in the last pew
At her mother for her toy train.

But late Sunday evening when the
Hazel globe of orange fruit, held
By the charcoaled canvas of the
Universal silver light bulbs,
Shines on the shadowy streets, I
Lock the empty house of gaudy
Circumstance, in which my prayers for
Something, anything, went unheard
By the earless chalice, blessed in
Memory of – and once the
Last bolt sings its vibrant hymn, I
Look to the hazel globe and pray
For anything, something, and her
Cold breath warms me with a reply.



CATHEDRAL
Jill Walsh
2015

MAETHOR • *Miriam Leffler, 2016*



BHASKAR • *Miriam Leffler, 2016*

Alive

Karina Melendez

2017

They say blood is thicker than water...

But from the eyes of a 5 year old, blood seems to flow a lot faster when they're screaming at the top of their lungs about who's the real bastard....of this family

Arguing about who's at fault for the anger caused by alcohol induced insanity.

And...maybe...just maybe, this time it won't be me

So I run...

and I hide in the corner under my older sisters bed while she's sound asleep...

and I figure he won't bother me,

Because when she's around there's pure serenity,

The silenced cries of the damage done to her innocent preteen body...

But she allows it...in hopes that it will protect the ones she loves,

In hopes that this time when she calls for salvation, someone... anyone will see past the deceitfulness of a perfect con artist intricately designing a web of lies to mask the cries of a desperate family who's just looking for a way to shout...

loud enough...

But then, there are days where things are so silent you can hear a pin drop...

And those...those are the days when the beauty of a mothers face is altered into someone whose screams have turned into whispers of a weakened voice saying please stop.

But in the eyes of liquor and jealousy, stop translates to go as in go until she's not breathing so well anymore.

I can only assume, that's the only way a coward could feel that much power over someone who every hour regrets the day she laid eyes on the devil dressed up as him...

who wrapped her up in smooth words and made her multiply his sin..

Which means that inside of us are pieces of him...

Little things that make us hate ourselves for a life we didn't choose to begin...

Growing up as witnesses to the horrid things we wouldn't even wish upon our worst enemy...

So we force ourselves to forget...

Because amnesia sounds a lot better than just plain denial

Yeah, we can live like this for a while...

Drawing smiles on our tired faces as we try to cover up the traces of black eyes in an attempt to hide our foundation of hurt.

They say blood is thicker than water but water is what quenches the thirst of a sore throat trying to explain why there's burn marks all over her arm...

I mean the whole kids will be kids thing only lasts so long...

until someone realizes that there actually is something wrong,

And they swoop in and carry us out like a personal savior, and we get to witness the steel bars that get placed in front of the anger that we paid for...

...25 to life.

And we get the chance to live and not just be happy to be alive...

Because alive is breathing, living is exploring,

Alive is barely making it, living is surpassing it,

Alive is worrying about what people say, living is doing what makes me happy every day,

Alive was hiding behind the damage left by this man, but Now...living is what I am...

To the Mortuary Beautician Who May Dress My Corpse When I Leave This Life

Joe Hamersly
2015

My naked body
shall lay before you,
silent
and unflinching.

The scar that runs
from my left shoulder
to my right hip
is to be covered
with some cheap makeup,
because beneath clothes,
I want to be beautiful
for once.

While you're at it,
please mask the scar
to the left of my navel.

Thank you.

In regards to apparel,
please keep it simple and clean:

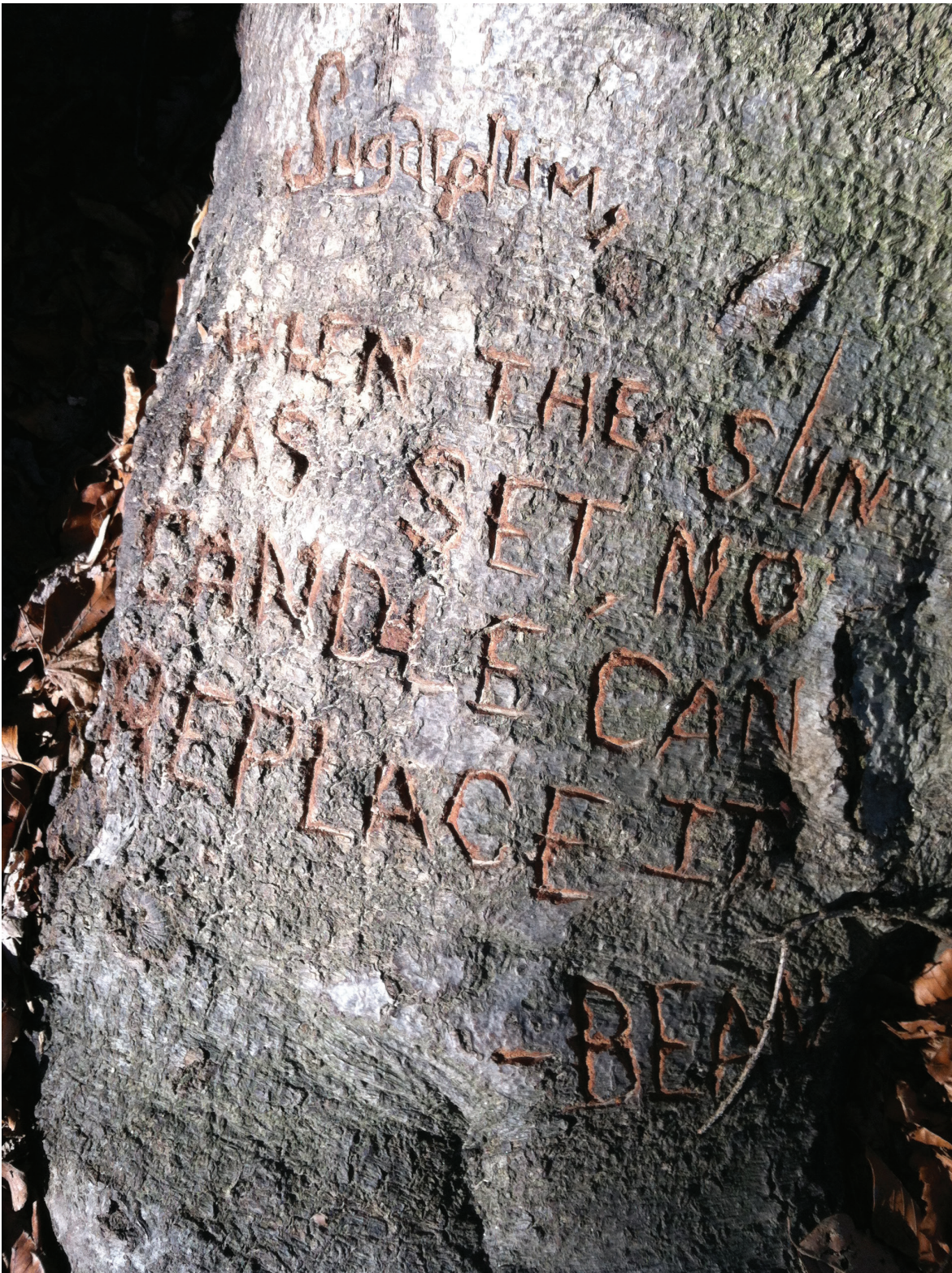
A white collar, black tie,
and a black suit with black pants
will do just fine.

I hope my wife shall lay
one
last
kiss
upon my lifeless body
and frozen lips.
I hope my children hold my hand,
kiss my forehead gently,
and tell me that they love me.

When the viewing
and service are over,
I shall be escorted to a crematorium
where I shall be turned to ash.

However, you may feel about that,
know your work was not wasted,

For, you made me beautiful
when I was left in my old age, and I hope you know
that when I am scattered to the Atlantic,
I shall be forever drowned in beauty.



WOODEN WORDS

Amanda Monroe

2016



UNTITLED
Liana Florez
2015

THANK

You

FOR

READING





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