The Midway Muse

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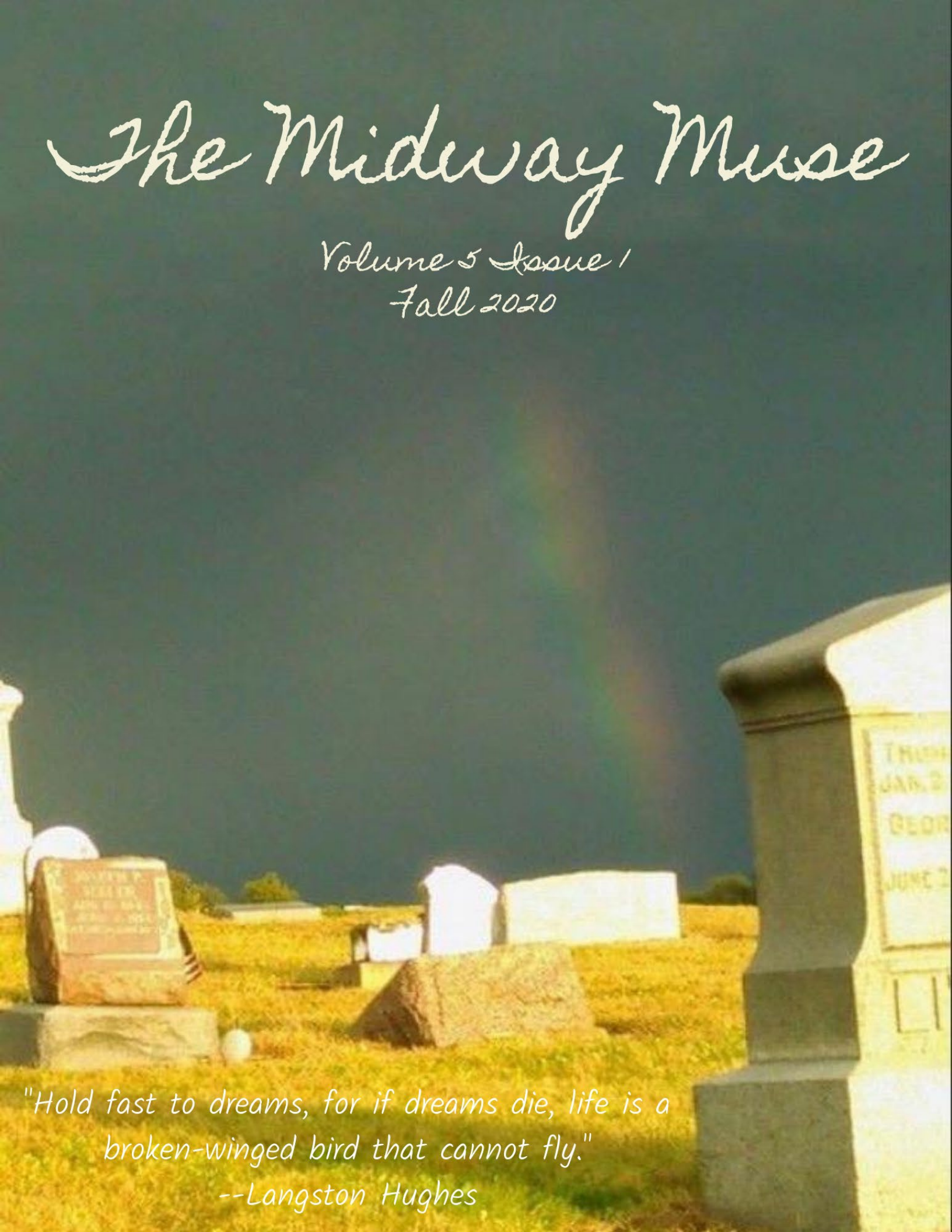
Fall 2020



"Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly."
--Langston Hughes

The Midway Muse

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Brian Axon



Hannah Waroway



Brian Axon

The Masque of the Red Birth

All mice know that to don a coyote pelt
is to be neither mouse nor coyote
but something other, entirely.
The magic, they know, is under the skin.
Lionheart or Lunchmeat they call he
who brings a mouse to a dog fight,
but what else is one to do
when one's own skin won't fit?
The recipe calls for equal parts
how is the mouse perceived?
and how does the mouse perceive himself?
When at last he peers into the bloodpuddle
from a face that is and is not his face,
for the first time since it was but a thought
his heart recognizes itself,
and it goes wild just as it grows serene.
When they speak of mice and men,
remember that, under the right pelt,
anyone could be anyone, anything.
What sort of creature are you, under the skin?
You cannot don what you did not win.

Cait A. Smith



Brian Axon

Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight

from

It's Not All Greek: Or How I Came to Not Fear the Muslims and Love the Turks

Most people are either cat lovers or dog lovers, but not both, though a few love indiscriminately and for that they are probably blessed by St. Francis more than the rest of us. I have always loved animals, but primarily I'm a cat person in every sense of the species: domestic cats, feral cats with their TNR-clipped ears, Kentucky wildcats, cheetahs guarding their precious kittens in the Serengeti, cougars in the crevices. Dogs, I can take or leave. To be honest, I actually used to hate dogs—slobbering, yelling, pooping idiots—too stupid to realize that if one has to go to that much trouble to get attention, one would do better to go without it. Have a little self-respect, I say, which is one thing I like about cats: they have it up to here in self-respect.

As I small child, I thought all dogs were male, all cats were female, and I still can't quite shake that conviction, even though I realize how impossible the procreation of the species would be with such restrictions. Dogs just seem so much like boys (*icky, you've got cooties, boys*), while cats are just so much more lady-like, even when cocking their leg up over their head to clean their nether parts. At least they clean them; dogs never seem to notice what's hanging out their back-ends, just how other dogs' back-ends smell. The fact that cats cover up their business and dogs just let it lie wherever it lands just proves my point.

I once wrote a poem to this effect—not about back-ends and stuff, of course; some things aren't poetry—but about dogs and cats and males and females and how messy all that can be. It went something like this:

As a child in the world
of my own logic,
All cats were female,
all dogs were male.
Even then I knew that
dogs could be bitches,
cats, Toms,
But there it was:

Dogs were always leaping up,

drooling for attention.

Cats withdrew,

winked a knowing eye,

cleaned a certain nail,

and curled up

in their mystery.

Years later, I revert to childhood wisdom:

We cats are women

and men still are dogs.

That little ditty earned me a reputation as a frigid feminist more than I deserved, but there it was. Who knows how many slobbering idiots I was protected from because of it.

Over the years I have worked to soften my intolerant attitude, widening it to accept all God's creatures: dogs, men, Jennifer's pet iguanas, Elaine's grandchildren's lizard with the piece of gravel stuck in its butt I had to remove with the tweezers to change its chameleon colors from a dying brown to a living green….and so forth. I have come to find a soft spot for puppies, if I don't have to clean up their mess, and to place a soft hand on an older canine head, giving it the pat it so pitifully craves. Dogs can't help being what they are, I guess. They didn't ask to be born dogs, and maybe even the Daisy Hill Puppy Farm can't teach an old dog new tricks or change its spots or however those metaphors are supposed to be mixed to make any sense. Still. "*Cats rule, dogs drool."* Everyone knows that. And everyone who knows *me*, knows I am, even in my enlightened years, in my heart of hearts, a cat person.

Even I have my favorites. I can wax positively silly over any kitten anytime, anywhere and have been known to feed all the stray cats in Athens or Turkey or wherever I find myself when given half a chance, but in my life of cats, there has really been only one. Gatsby. And like his namesake, he was "worth the whole damn bunch of them," whoever *they* are.

The minute I saw him, I knew we were meant for each other. Having had sleek Siamese males who always looked emaciated and one half-crazed Siamese female who screamed incessantly in heat until she lost her voice and went around with a silent scream emitting from her Muench-like mandibles was only funny once. Still, I loved the coloring of the Siamese Seal-point and their

bright blue eyes, even if they were a little crossed and slanted. What I really wanted was a fluffy Siamese that didn't caterwaul in heat—and when I got a glimpse of a cat just like that in the pet store in St. Matthews, I knew immediately he was The One.

"Birman, Male, 8 Weeks" the label read above the cage where a tiny, wispy-haired darling with innocent blue eyes peered hopefully through the bars. *Birman?* The pet store clerk handed me a brochure detailing this perfect breed of cat of which I had never heard: *long hair that doesn't mat or shed, little vocalizing, friendly--even with children*. There really was a feline that looked like a fluffy Siamese who didn't scream at the top of its lungs! His clear, round, blue eyes, his Seal-Pointed long hair, and his tiny purr were enough to make me whip out my credit card like the Sundance Kid drawing his six-shooter. Five hundred dollars later, I had made the best bargain of my life.

He told me his name was Gatsby, though I knew it without his saying so. Everything about him was luxurious. If Scott Fitzgerald had been there in that pet store with me, he would have quoted himself, "*There was something gorgeous about him…a romantic readiness such as I have never seen."* Holding him against my chest, if two hearts ever beat as one, ours did. Friends and lovers soon came to realize that the number one spot with me was taken, and they could come in second or not at all. Once, observing my pampering of my pet, a now "ex" bemoaned, "When I die, I want to come back as a cat. And not just any cat. *This* cat." He should be so lucky.

Nothing was too good for Gatsby, nothing too excessive. Friends were amazed when I went to the expense to have his portrait painted by a Venetian artist, but even they had to admire the beautiful job she'd done dressing Gatsby in blue velvet to match his eyes. If anyone exclaimed at my indulgence, rolling their eyes at my "misplaced affections," I needed only to remind them that most parents keep their children all their lives; few cats live beyond their teens—a thought I couldn't bear to entertain. Secretly they may all have agreed I was "away with the fairies," but they made allowances all the same, and for that, we are all still friends.

When my mother raised her eyebrows at my choice of offspring, I only had to remind her once: "Mom," I said, firmly. "Gatsby is the only grandchild you're ever going to see from me. Your *grandcat.* I expect you to treat him as you would any of your other grandchildren. It's only fair." Whatever else my mother may be, she has always tried to be fair. If she spends a few dollars more on one kid for Christmas, she will not rest until she has evened up the amount spent on the rest of us. I am proud to say she rose to the task, wearing her "Ask Me About my Grandcat" sweatshirt we gave her for Mother's Day and making sure Gatsby got birthday cards and valentines and a Christmas stocking full of all kinds of treats, just like the other grandchildren in the family.

Gatsby became well-known, traveling all around the world with me, from Kwajalein to Germany to Cyprus to Hawaii—and back again. If he didn't go, I didn't go. Bribes and fees and sob stories and hissy fits, and poems, prayers, and promises—whatever it took to get his personalized padded carrier with me on the plane I was not above. More than one immovable official at more than one airport was informed, "He is my baby. You wouldn't make a mother put her baby in the cold, dark cargo compartment under the plane where he might get crushed by all those heavy suitcases, would you?" If that logic failed to move them, ragged sobs (and genuine tears) generally did the trick. Adding "I am widow and my cat is all I have in the world" was even worth the low degree to which I'd stoop, Kyle forgive me. Whatever it takes. "Have cat, will travel," is my mantra, and I'm sticking to it, quarantine or no quarantine.

So of course he was with me when I moved to Catalkoy, North Cyprus to teach English that year at the Girne American University. Tired of Germany and its cold, overcast climate where we'd been the last six years, we were looking forward to our time in the sun. A quick perusal of the *Eye Witness Guide to Cyprus* in the aisle of Barnes and Noble, and we were ready for our "working holiday" on an island in the Mediterranean, much to the envy of friends and colleagues stuck in less desirable spots around the world. Eagerly I signed the contract to teach English at GAU, packed up my worldly goods and, with Gatsby in tow, took off for the sunny south.

To put it mildly, there was much about Cyprus that was not as I had expected. Having only read about the Greek side of the Republic of Cyprus, it really was all Greek to me, but that was where I was mistaken. I wasn't even aware there were two sides to the island and its story, as the Greeks refused to admit they had lost the northern half in a nasty tug-a-war with Turkey. The civil war that had ripped the island apart a few years ago had left the island cut into two Cypruses, so to speak, though the North was considered "illegal" by every country outside of Turkey. Naturally, the Girne American University was on the Turkish side, in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, and never the twain shall meet.

Sure, the bright blue Mediterranean Sea is just as blue and alluring on either side, the olives and the cheese just as tasty. The people I came to know, whether Greek or Turkish or Cypriot, were just as friendly and memorable. But it wasn't all sunshine and bougainvillea. The Greeks despised the Turks who returned the favor, the bullet holes in the abandoned cottages visible witness to their exchange of feeling in not so distant civil war. While the Greek half of the island was modernly well developed, if only because of its British tourists, the Turkish side was sadly underdeveloped and nearly desolate, vestiges of former battles still raw and unredeemed. Not only was it missing all the conveniences of fast food restaurants and over-priced shopping malls, even the basics like road repair, plumbing, and garbage collection left much to be desired.

Discovering the Girne American University was American in name only (I was one of only two American professors there) and its academic standards no higher than a sports-driven institution of higher learning was the last nail in the coffin. I was sure that by teaching at GAU whose idea of an English literature library was a handful of dog-earred paperback romances, I was teetering on the edge of professional ruin. As soon as I could find a real American university elsewhere—anywhere--, Gatsby and I would be on the next plane out of Dodge.

Until then, though, we determined to make the most of it. We could see the sea, sparkling from our sprawling rented villa where the private pool was ours alone. (Not that Gatsby indulged in swimming, but he supported whatever his mother enjoyed.) Behind us rose the Five-Fingered Mountains with its ruins from the days of the Crusades beckoning to be explored. Most importantly, we were together. Surely a semester sojourn in sunny Cyprus, even North Cyprus, couldn't be so bad.

Except for the dogs.

Next door to our rented villa lived an indifferent British woman and her Kurdish husband—and, it shouldn't have come as a surprise, their three dogs. This was more of a nightmare than living next to a kennel. One, a rather large brown Labrador-mix, with a goofy "*why don't you love me"* cowering posture to him (cats would never stoop to such levels), and a deep-throated "*argargarg,*" wouldn't be so bad by himself; it was that yippy bitch (literally) he ran around with, a little, skinny yellow female idiot of a mutt who couldn't keep her fool mouth shut that really ruined any hope he might have of gaining any sympathy from me. Added to that a mix-breed ridiculous poodle-something who came from out of nowhere to board with the other two and whose "*wowwow*" was stuck in overdrive—and the decibel levels in the neighborhood—along with my nerves—were off the scale. These fool dogs barked as if they are programmed on automatic; their "*wowwowowowowowowowowow*" going on nonstop—how do they breathe?—for 40 minutes at a time.

"*Yipyipyip," "wowowowow," "argargargargargar*, at least one of this trio would keep up the litany throughout the night, usually joined by at least one of the other two, howling at the moon, howling because there was no moon; howling at the first star of Venus, howling at the Dog-star (whatever that is), probably howling even in their sleep.



Sleep? That's the operative word. Maybe they couldn't sleep and they didn't want anyone else to sleep, either. Misery loves company, and I was certainly in that company, thanks to them. The entire time I lived on the island, I do not believe I slept throughout the night, unless it was the half a week I had a cold and drugged myself with Night Nurse and slept like the dead and nearly missed my 11:00 class. I don't know how their owners could ignore it. When they went to bed at night, did they just *die*? Maybe they made so much noise themselves (I'm not suggesting how), they didn't notice what their dogs were doing? When I mentioned to my neighbor that their dogs' barking in the night was a problem, she dismissed my complaint as if I were whining about the weather. "They're owiginally stweet dogs—nuffin' you can do," she lisped in that lower class English dialect that always sounds as if one has a speech impediment, shrugging her broad shoulders, the look on her smug, round face daring me to *twy*.

Nuffin'? *Nothing* you can do? What did she think I was? *Bwitish?* I am an American! I know my rights! I will not sit still for injustice! But what *to do*, was the question. "Get a gun," a Cypriot friend advised. At my horrified expression, he clarified: "Get a pellet gun and just ping those manky mongrels whenever they cause you grief." Hmmmm. An idea. But where would I get any kind of gun in North Cyprus? This wasn't the good ol' USA, where guns were a dime a dozen. Besides, I was pretty sure she'd have me arrested, her Kurdish husband most likely kin to some corrupt crony in the police department.

"Get a bug zapper," Kieran, the teenage son of the only other American colleague suggested. "I'm sure you can get those little gadgets at Mr. Pound!" He found all kinds of fun stuff in that British alternative to the U.S. Dollar Store: cigarette lighters that shocked you if you tried to fire them up, fake dog poop, stuff like that—all for only 4 YTL a piece. Such bargains! Such violent solutions! But desperate times call for such measures, and weeks without proper sleep were making me desperate.

One night in many, shocked out of a fitful cat nap by the sudden sharp reprise of Dog #2's Variation on the *Where, Oh, Where is the Moon Tonight* Recitative # 27,648, I leapt out of bed, scuffed on my Crocs, and shot outside, at least as fast as I could get the heavy wooden front door to scrape open without falling on my butt when it finally came loose. In my Cat's Pajamas nightshirt, I glared at the offending canines lined up at the wall separating our two front yards, whose caterwauling (would that be *dog*erwauling?) made my former Siamese sound like Beverly Sills in a Puccini love aria. "What is your problem, YOU SONS OF BITCHES?!" I screamed at the top of my lungs, awake enough to appreciate the irony of my name-calling as I added my own screeching to the cacophony of theirs. Wake up the neighbors? I hoped I did!

My joining in just increased their intensity.

Lest they jump to the wrong assumption that I was about to turn their trio into a quartet—an "*if you can't lick 'em join 'em"* defeat--, I looked madly around to find something to demonstrate my rage. Stooping and feeling around on the dark ground in my front driveway, I picked up the first hard thing my hands touched—a piece of gravel, a small piece of bark from the olive tree, something—and threw it as hard as I could….where it landed on this side of the wall. They stopped mid-way in their cowardly retreat to the deeper safety of their own yard and gave me a look of "*Is that the best you can do?"* This incredulity only set them off into additional runs of "*wowowowowowowowow"*—with derisive laughter thrown in between the *wow's.* I am even pretty sure I heard one of them bark*, "She throws like a girl*"—with a London-Turkish accent, of course.

Wait a minute. What was that smell? You know that sunken feeling you start to get in your stomach when you are pretty sure you have just stepped in something that shouldn't have been there in the first place? Hesitantly, I raised my hand to my reluctant nose. There it was. In the dark, I had managed to put my hand on a piece of their own dog poop deposited illegally in my front yard, and even though it was now dried hard as a rock by the relentless Cyprus sun, the faint remaining tell-tale odor gave its identity away even in the black of night. The fact that the rock I had picked up was not a rock at all only exacerbated my fury. "Aaiaiaiaiaiaiaiaiaiaiaai!" If there is one thing I hate in this world—besides dogs, of course—it's *poop!* "I can't stand it, I just can't stand it," I moaned in my best Charlie Brown imitation.

And if there's one thing that makes me madder than losing sleep, it's finding somebody else's dog's poop in my yard! Nothing makes me more furious than for other people to let their dogs run loose to use my yard (even my *rented* yard) as their outhouse! It's bad enough living in North Cyprus where one isn't allowed to flush the toilet paper down the inadequately narrow drains and has to "pop it in the bin"—*remember to say in the lower-class English dialect*—and take it out on the infrequent rubbish days. But to have to look at the neighbor's dogs' poop, smell it, and even inadvertently pick it up IN MY OWN FRONT YARD is beyond any international concession even Turkey might offer to the Greeks to become part of the EU.

I ran around the side of the house to the swimming pool and plunged my hands in the cooling water, rubbing them as frantically as Lady Macbeth to remove the damned spot. I balanced my left foot on the top step leading down into the pool just right to lean over and wash my hands without getting the rest of me soaking wet. That would just be the last straw.

The dogs followed me to the side of the fence that faced the pool, keeping up their soundtrack to my comedy of errors. They were just as curious as to what I might do next as I was. If only I could grab one of them by the collar, I would drag him over that wall and hold his yapping head under until he could offend no more! That would teach him! Then I'd grab the next one, if he didn't shut up, and the next! *Down they'd go, 'enry 'iggins!*…until the world was released from all such oppressive din! They had long passed my line of gradual good-natured tolerance to the Rubicon of former hatred and beyond.

Crazed by the lack of sleep, frustrated by the never-ending noise, and horrified beyond reason at what I'd just held in my hand, I believe I just might have followed through on my murderous thought—if I could have followed my feet out of the pool. Never Ms. Grace to begin with, and handicapped by recent accidents at the beach (another story), my weak left ankle turned, which in turn led to my weak left foot's slipping off the first step into the water, and down I went, not necessarily with a bang, but with a splash and a watery whimper.

Now, I love swimming at night. I especially enjoy it in the heat of high summer, in a pool in the secluded garden at my favorite French Quarter hotel, say, or in the bathwater-warm lagoon of Kwajalein with a new boyfriend. This Cypriot baptism of sorts, however, was not one of those romantic occasions. This "taking the plunge," as it were, was insult to injury, salt in the wounds, to put it in a misplaced metaphor.

To give credit where it's due—and, like my mother, I'm nothing if not fair--, the dogs finally had something real to bark—and laugh—about.

I spluttered to the surface, my coughing blending surprisingly with the constant clamor, and waded soddenly to the edge of the pool. I didn't give those sons of you-know-what's the satisfaction of a second glance, just squished my way back into my house, scraped the door shut, and stood foolishly dripping on the tiles of the living room floor. Any thought of sleeping tonight was completely out of the question—at least for me. My obtuse neighbors snored on while their beasts kept up a constant commentary on the night's events. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* would have to help me fill the hours reading until time to crawl back out again in the daylight.

Gatsby, however, had the good grace not to sleep through the entire incident and to know when I needed comforting. He appeared sleepily from the bedroom at the end of the hall, observed me with a concerned eye, then padded noiselessly—that's one thing I love about cats: everything is *noiselessly*—into the room to rub his soft, warm fur up against my shivering wet legs, an attempt to dry them off, I'm sure. I reached down and picked him up as he liked for me to do and cuddled him against my damp cheek. "Dogs!" I growled through gritted teeth. He didn't even

bat a whisker though I know how much he hates getting wet—just scraped his rough tongue across my chin a couple of times to let me know he understood.

Whoever said a dog is man's best friend never knew those dogs next door in Catalkoy. They certainly never had a cat. At least not *this* cat.

Rebecca L. Briley



Eric Bradley



Carrie Hawkins

El Dorado

In the rasping throat of the hourglass,
clenched between the maws of oblivion and sublimity,
desiccated dunes dry-heave diamonds so clear
you'd die just to hold one,
so scorching you'd combust if you tried;
corrosive sand chews the faces off of
skulls and treasure maps alike,
devouring any X marks the spots,
obliterating every breadcrumb wee, wee, wee
all the way home…
And all the while the savage, scathing sun sears down,
"You're good as dead, you know,"
while the sifting sand-dunes shift and yawn
and, full of rib-bones, start to salivate
at the promise of swallowing you whole.

Cait A. Smith



Cait A. Smith

Due or Die

Too stressed to sleep,

Too tired to care.

Is my life even going anywhere?

I can't focus,

I can't even breathe.

When did I get water on my sleeve?

I have to keep going,

I have to stay awake.

Wait when did my hands start to shake?

I can't worry about the clock.

Ticking away,

Tik-tok, tik-tok.

The time is getting closer,

I can feel it in my chest.

Maybe now at least I will be able to rest.

I do it to myself you see,

Always putting the pressure on me.

Be perfect, stand tall.

No one will know at all,

That the mess you hold inside your head,

Continuously fills you up with dread.

The monsters come out at night.

When the time is right.

Daybreak used to scare them away,

But now it seems they are here to stay.

Its due and die, not due or die.

Why is it always due and die?

Hannah Welte



Louisville Lights

Annie Oakley



Carrie Hawkins

Grandiose

Your eyes tell of a terrifying tale
that you dare not share with anyone.
Each line, dip and curve of your face,
almost molded into the most perfect of creations.
Still, just pieces of you that tell only
part of the magical enchantment within.

I want to swim in your beauty;
bathe in the elegance of your being.
Intently studying the divine movement
of each collagenous fiber and vinculum.
Enthralled by the magnificently
detailed movement shared with me.

Your silent stare begins to strengthen
as you overtake the mask's derm.
None before ever privy to such exquisiteness;
living, breathing, grandiose sovereignty.

Brady Delgado



Brady Delgado



Rebecca Briley

Eyes of Ireland

To live among the ancient, to be among the Celtic nation.

Standing at the Cliffs of Moher will never leave my concise. I watched the waves crash, white topped, into the cragged rocks below. Bellowing sounds to the masses which gather from around the globe.

This land which I found, invaded with my heart, and devoured with my eyes was full of lore and folk tales of great and terrible times.

Strolling through Kilkenny also known as The Medieval City you can understand why. Life is found in these places; their people are alive. Their roads are made of large heavy grey stone, not an ounce of blacktop was in sight.

Walking past the great castle we stumbled upon a small shop.

The shop keeper was genuinely in love with his people, his town. He kept us there, rapt in conversation. To him it did not matter that we were Americans, he would have talked for hours had we the time to let him.

He explained a game played in Ireland called Hurling and showed us the deep old scars he carried. I was slightly horrified at the large white slash covering the back of his head, he smiled as he said with pride, this one he received at only nine.

The sport is brutal, but this man's eyes were bright.

He brought to mind all sorts of phrases and descriptions you have heard a hundred times. "Eyes are the window to the soul." "His eyes were alight/alive."

I never really understood these phrases, not until this man, this moment. In this green country, this one moment, apart from my hurried and shelter sort of life.

This man, the reason his eyes were bright was the fact his soul was burning with passion, dancing with hunger, exuding pride, and every ounce of energy was reflected in his genuine gaze and shinning bright eyes.

The great Isle which made my heart race, my breathe catch, now had another strong grasp of me. The people, the land will draw you in, but the people will make you wish you could change your fate.

The magic told in folk lore, from times long past I believe has slowly seeped from the ground. The trees exchanged this magic with oxygen then it invaded the population. This is why the Irish people are amongst the most ethereal and charming.

Laura Minton



Laura Minton

Where the Heart is (When the Veil Falls)

When the trees all don their gold-silk robes and lean back on their trunks like merry old ma'ams and men to wag their tongues and puff their pipes;

When the sun melts like butter across the thickets and the frost-tipped fields, where the jackalopes each raise their bramble-crowned heads and become kings;

When a single blackberry on the tongue bursts in not one, but a thousand bubbles of honey that each taste of Summer going to sleep in the corn;

When the barn-owl, from its coin-tricked eyes, shines down a spotlight that blazes and burns and beams with Truth from the rafters, and in its quiet hoots are murmurs that sound like Answers;

When the Little Dipper, brimming with the sweetest cream, tips its little spout, and the Rabbit in the Moon thumps its feet like dinner bells and death knells;

When the bone-dogs baying in the night begin to sound more like a beckon than a boding and Will-o'-the-wisp dances in their throats;

When an angel, I think, winks down at me, and the lightest feather in perfect chaos tips the scales to lay an omen at my feet; (if I listen,)

Then, and just then, will I know I am home.

Cait A. Smith



Brian Axon

Masks

What's a song without words?
What's a heart without the love?
The meaning is different with no music.
A soul is haunted if not freed.
How can you live if you cannot breathe?
There's no fear without reason,
Our instincts are the warning,
But we have ears that do not listen.
We have chills in the summer,
And there is blood but no body,
For there is harm within arms,
And we get scars from the lies.
The trouble is, we are all in disguise .

Overthinker
Go to sleep not knowing...it'll be the same as you are awake. ~~Unless you can~~

A thought in process
A beautiful thought becomes ugly if all you do is stare. Beauty cannot be just what you see. Beauty is the hard work and kind actions of improvement of self, and others.

Becoming.
I hope my heart doesn't become as cold as yours. But you must be willing to both sacrifice and save yourself. You have a ray of hope - yet you choose to stay in the shadows.

Clear Denial: First Person
One day I will realize all my mistakes were a result of you.

Homeless dreams: not enough abundance in my room, not enough notebooks to fill, not enough time to condense my thoughts, my dreams have no home. They are gone with the wind, free as a bird, and unwritten in the rain.

Souls Attached
Take my heart with you and return it when we meet again.

My Friend
Anyone who acts friendly while knowing you suffer is not human, but truly a monster.

Mentally diminishing
When the fun becomes absent, the demanding requirements become ever so present.

Wow
"How much is the world worth?"
"It depends on what you value."

One step ahead to sweet victory
Pain is necessary but temporary. The attempt is sweeter than any loss. Let the thought leave me bitter.

Inspired
My intentions are good, but my motives are not.

Puppet
Here I am dancing when we all now I have two left feet.
There you go sweet talking when you'd rather just be blunt.
He loved someone I could never be, and I loved someone he never was.

I survived
I told my grandmother everything. She left. You came. I saw her through your eyes. You left too. The difference is she died, but you're still alive.

Annie Oakley



Brian Axon

Inez

Just a small town, unknown, overlooked by the cities surrounding it. Only twenty-five miles outside of Paintsville, KY. Its name is Inez, it is thirty miles from the nearest Wal-Mart. Remote and lonely, with barely a dollar to its name. Built only to support the rising Himler Coal Company in the early 1900s, but later evolved into a community. Where big restaurant chains did not exist. Small diners and home cooked meals feed the souls that stay here. The only mode of transportation is a personal vehicle and if one is lucky enough to not own one then it is one's own two feet that carry himself/herself. The only mark of civilization is the courthouse constructed from the very rock the mountains hold. The courthouse was the work of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal program in 1938. And now to this day there are three courthouses within one block.

This place is where a lost boy goes to find himself. Sitting in the Dairy Bar, the local hotspot to eat, he may order the cheese fries and a vanilla cone on the side to wash it down. A meal so delicious and filling that he can barely believe it only costs seven dollars. So sweet to the very last bite. He closes his eyes and sees the clouds part and the stairs leading to heaven. But then eyes open up to the realization that he is nowhere but in the same town he has spent the entirety of his life gulping down all it has to offer. In the day he is content, living the life all his elders once lived. Just a small-town boy with no experience of the outside world. Held captive by the mountains around him. Like a wild animal in a cage, tamed by the silence and his only friends are the shadows that are casted about as the sun starts to set.

But it is a simple life, living only to his own means. It is a mix of different cultures. Some grow crops to feed one's family. Others raise cattle and livestock. Then there are the hunters, who chase down anything they can see through one's scope. But everyone has a gun. If not for one's

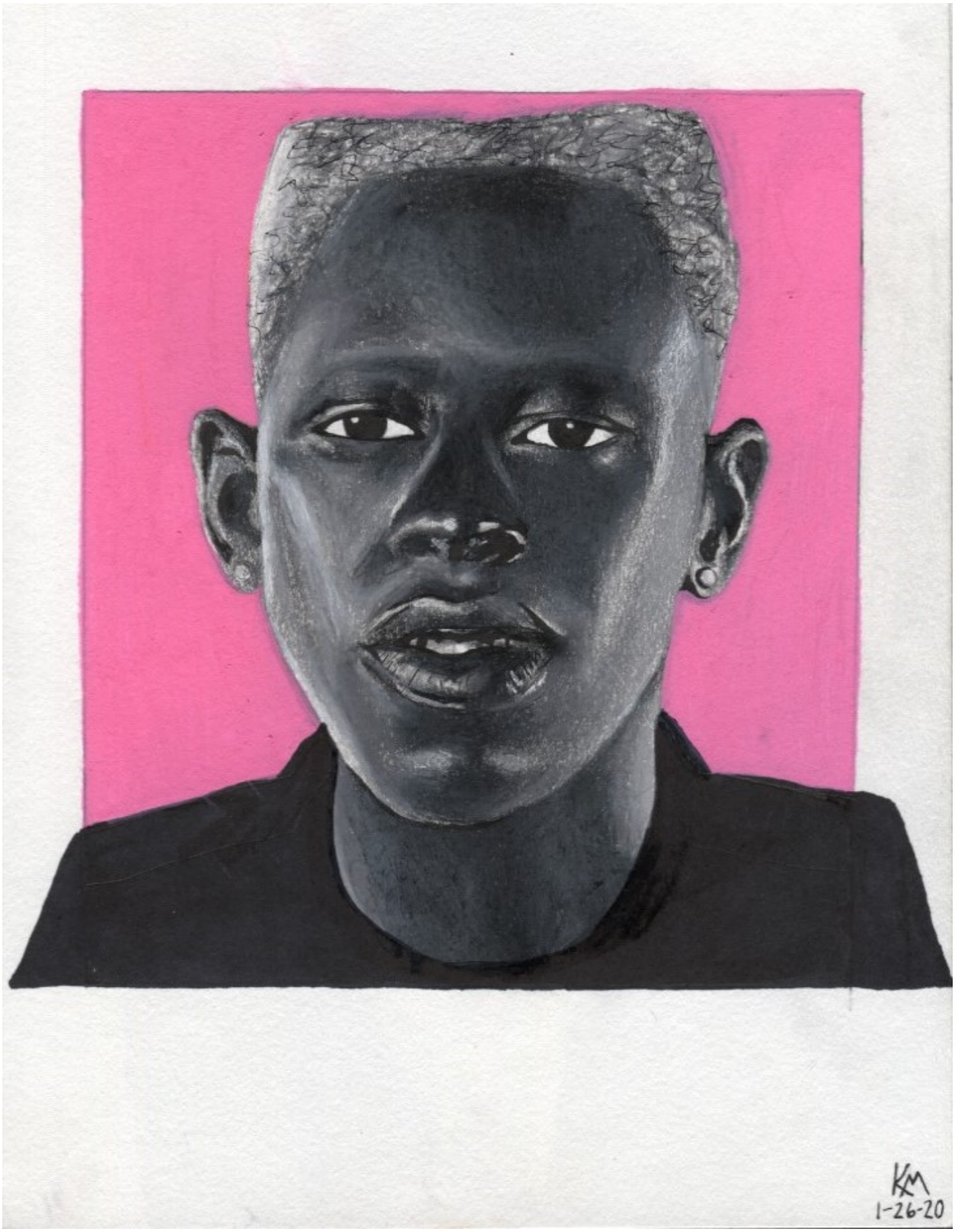
choice of lifestyle, then for protection from the ravaging troubled souls that travel in the night. Bringing in odors of musk and unfaithfulness. Traveling in gaggles like a pack of wolves searching for his/her next prey. But in one's case, his/her next fix. Drugs are a terrible problem in Inez. From meth to pills to anything to get a quick high. All of it exists in Inez. Steer clear of it and he may have a chance to escape. But get caught up and he is trapped for life. Only a few make it out alive but most end up running right back. If someone leaves, they realize the rest of the world just is not as simple and yearn for that sense of security and simplicity once again. The ones who fight this feeling and continue his/her life outside of Inez go on to do great things. But the ones who wander back tend to live a slow paced, minimal lifestyle.

There is far more good in Inez than evil. Inez alone has approximately 40 or more churches. All of which follow Christ. Not all may agree with this form or religion but as does all religions it teaches some sort of moral conduct. The community is full of supportive people. Especially if one plays sports at the high school. The only high school in Inez goes by the name of Sheldon Clark High School. But recently has been changed to Martin County High School, after the county in which Inez falls into. The most valued sport to Inez is football. All of the local businesses hand out donations left and right to make sure the players are fitted to play in the best gear possible. But even with the donations fundraising is still necessary. This is because the high school just does not have the funds to provide to every sports team. But if one played football, they tend to cherish every second of it because of the work they have had to put in to get to that point. One could say it is the closest thing to heaven. On Inez's only football field, "The Rock", named after the giant rock found in the middle of the field when renovating it into a turf field. The only way to the field is a small two-lane road that runs right in front of the field. But when it is game time it is just 2 teams warming up for the big game. Warm crisp breeze carrying

different colored leaves across the field. The wonderful smell of the pumpkin spice latte from the McDonalds across the road. And for an instant one could only wish to pause in time. This is when a small town is at its fullest. But when the game starts it is a different environment. It is dog-eat-dog. AC-DC sounds like thunder over the loudspeaker. The fans are almost as rough as the players. Screaming over calls, rigging cow bells and sometimes even breaking out in an all out brawl. But after the game the winning name on the scoreboard takes home the trophy and all is calm once again.

Inez is a very odd place that houses some of the roughest, however nicest people to walk the earth. But as does everywhere else it houses its demons as well. But no place is all darkness. Inez has its beauties hidden where one would least expect. Outsiders would not understand because they look for big aspects when in reality it is all about the small things. From the diners, to small homes in the woods, to the Friday night football games, these are what makes Inez a special place. Rich in culture and richer in good souls, Inez is a hidden gem hidden within the rolling Appalachians.

John Stafford



Keeley McClellan

Remembered By

I don't really know where I'm going with this
I was just told to write
So here I am
Moving my fingers rhythmically
Touching every other key with light finesse
I'm not really rhyming here
Because there's no rhythm I fear
But there it goes
Such an easy flow
Of how in times like these
I'm guaranteed
An outlet for things I can't control
That have taken their toll
On my delicate mind
There are words I just cannot seem to find
Words I so desperately want to be heard
Affirmations I want confirmed
The want for acceptance
The need for remembrance
But it always seems like I am destined to be remembered
By the stupid things I do, the stupid things I say
Those things everyone patronizes me for in an unnecessary way.

Bella Robinson



Brian Axon

It Goes Both Ways

I can't seem to shake the devil off my shoulder
And I've yet to see the angel as I've grown older
Some days I lose hope
And some days I feel as if I'm sliding down a slope
A never-ending hill
Of perpetual piles of pills
Stacked so high that I can't seem to find my way back
But I finally cross the other side
Embracing those with arms open wide
But all of it is such a scheme
A trick to make things not as they seem
My heart now severely impaled
But those that did it hide behind a meticulous veil
And act as if I'm the one to blame
And maybe I should be caught in the flame
I admit my faults and I accept my consequences
And all that seems to do is destroy my defenses
So I'll sit here today
And type in a way
That helps me understand the ways in which you won't accept
That maybe you're to blame too, with your accusations unnecessarily kept

Bella Robinson



Annie Oakley



Carrie Hawkins

Acrostic Poems

Counting days
Or
Living
Lies is
Extremely
Crucial
To our
Individual
Opinions towards
Nothing

Believing in
Oneself is
To
Test your
Limits
Everyday

Spending pointless
Hours trying
On overly
Priced clothing

Slowly losing
Wishful
Ideals for
Princes in
Everyday life
Foreshadowing a
Ruthless
Image
Going from
Hopeful
To
Evil in
Noticeable time

Pushing off
All assignments
Simply because
Studying sucks

Something
Always

Left on
Tables

Beauty
Revolving around
Individuals who
Desire an
Eternal love

Resisting
Everything
That stays
Under the
Rage I
Neglected

Bella Robinson



Hannah Waroway

Seams

I blame myself for cloudy days,
And for the suns sorrow.
I blame myself every day,
That follows tomorrow.

I blame myself for even existing,
For breathing all the air.
I blame myself for wanting and missing,
Why do I bother to care?

I blame myself for others,
For what I could never forsee.
I blame myself for all the problems,
That are very much not me.

I blame myself for the cloudy days,
For the stars not shining as bright.
I blame myself for all the ways,
That you couldn't fight.

Before the light was a constant,
Before the light was bright,
Now it's just a bit dimmer
As if its lost delight.

I promised I would not faulter,
Because you depend on me so.
I try to hide the fact that I,
Am falling apart like snow.

I need stitches to put me back together,
To add a little more life,
But still I see all of my seams,
Ripping left and right.

Soon I'll be nothing but threads,
And maybe then you'll see.
I do not care what happens to me,
As long as I have given everything to thee.

Hannah Welte



Dahlia Svoboda

His Hands

Ever wonder what's in store?

Are you just empty and wanting more?

Do you feel lost and not knowing which way to turn?

Have no worries, for the Lord knows what you yearn.

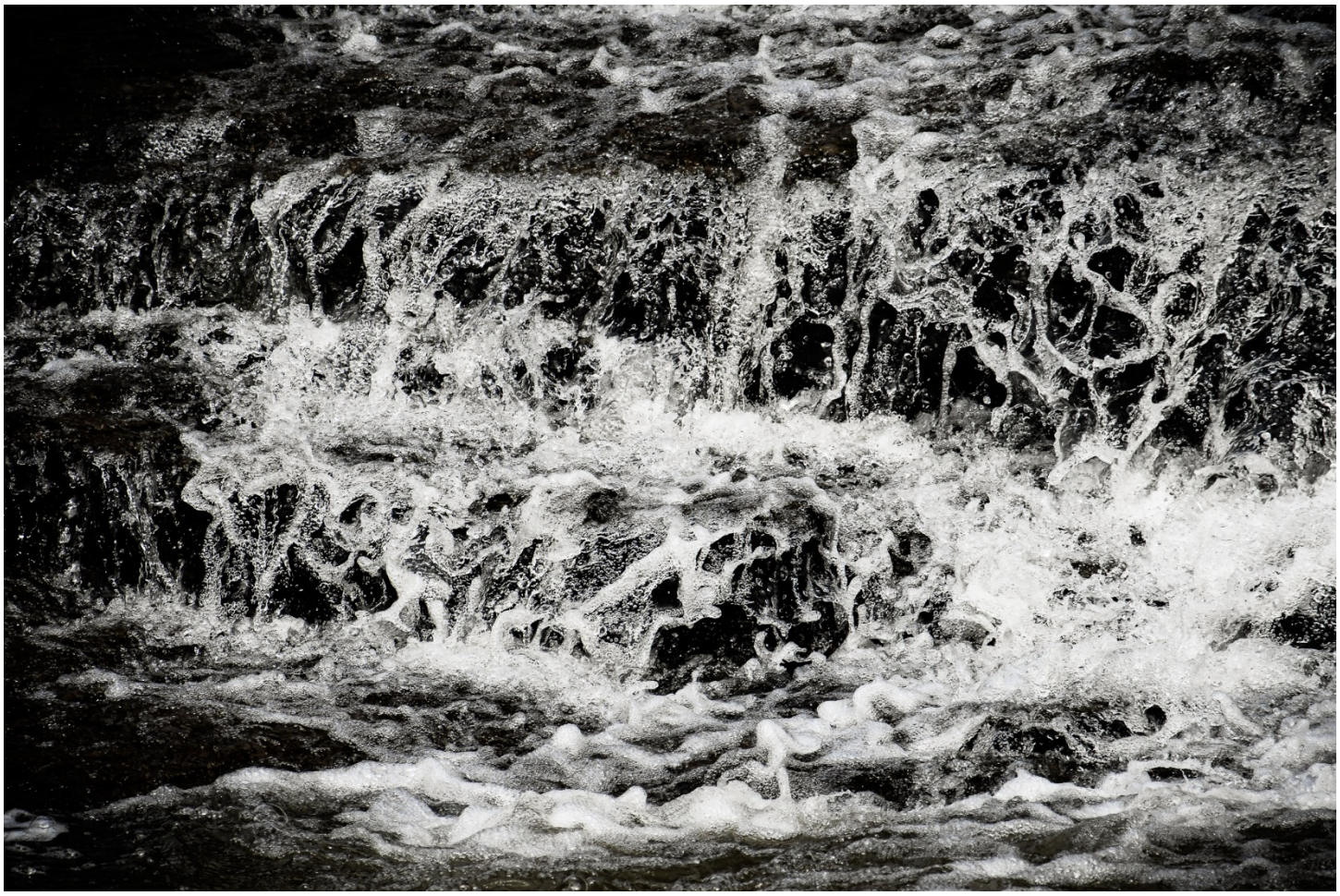
The Father has a plan.

So, don't wonder or worry.

Have faith where you stand.

It is all in His hands.

Ryleigh Bonk



Hannah Waroway



Keeley McClellan

Carries On

Pain can be relieved, and bruises heal.

Objects can be replaced, and light can overcome darkness.

Hearts can be broken, and words can’t be unspoken.

Memories may fade and bonds can be broken.

No matter what the circumstance, life still carries on.

It’s all about how you respond.

Ryleigh Bonk



Brian Axon

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