

AMPERSAND

Utica University, 2023



Staff

Editors

Isa Hudziak
Jasmine Sonia
Selma Dizdarević

Faculty Advisor

Dr. Gary Leising

Joseph E. Vogel Award Judge

Kristin Czarnecki

Cover photographer

“Grazing” by Leola Beck

For more information about *Ampersand* submission guidelines and the Joseph E. Vogel Award, please go to page 95.

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(Bolded names indicate a winner of the Joseph E. Vogel Award for fiction or poetry)

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Poetry

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Descending

Leola Beck

Jacket, bag, headphones
Jacket, bag, headphones
I hope I'm not forgetting something
Around me people start clambering around
Trying to make sure nothing's left behind

Staring out the window
Watching the clouds as we soar down
I feel the excitement and terror of anything
happening
And I have no control

I've taken many flights before
But not like this one
My heart races with anxiety
As I think about how long it's been

The vivid memory of blurred water
Sitting on my camp's stone stairs
With the phone in my hand
Almost slipping from my face

A fear that I never knew was there
Had suddenly been a spiraling downfall
A constant worry
That anyone would leave
Me and anything we had behind

Central New York to Albuquerque,
New Mexico
It was the only option he had left
The only place where money wouldn't hurt him
so bad
A place where my father could survive

Two years
Filled with a lot of change
A lot of maturing
And a lot of realizations
That everyone struggles in some way

My legs fly through the gate doors
Towards a set of arms and a face
That I can barely see through teary eyes
And a homely embrace that I could never forget

The Mind-Body Split

Jacob Carissimo

In the timeless domain of night, we stole
Away from the dictator ways of lampposts.
We made our way into unowned fields
And, though we heard the noise of many
trees
We could not tell the tallest among them.

I could not see the clothes you wore
Or compare them to my own.
The words were free from reference.
In those fields of senseless liberty, we
Could be anything we wanted,
And if being made us tired
We could, together, be nothing

Yet, in spite of all, when I held your hand
My sighted fingers felt a depression on the
thumbnail.
Your voice betrays distance, and it bounces
off your teeth.
It looks like I can't forget you.
Even your silence is visible.

Why is it that even my blindness is shaped
like you?

Untitled

Jacob Carissimo

I lose pencils more and more these days.
Sometimes, when I am writing
(Some grocery list, some agenda,
On rare occasions a love note)
I find that pencil went away
And took more than lead with it.

Sometimes,
I am not quite

I lose the memories, too.
My fridge will be empty,
The day will be nothing,
That love, no more present
Than an iron bead pressing
On the heart.

Pencils are lost when they're used as well.
When I'm left with the stump,
I want to reach at the page and take it back.
When I brush the eraser dust off the table
I want to grasp at the flying debris.

Sometimes,
I am not quite

The Blind Gardener

Jacob Carissimo

I go on my knees and feel the soil
To check its moisture. I love
The cold clay and how it sticks
On my hands. It needs me
To bring some water, so I go.

I place my hand back on the soil
To know when the water seeps in.
O, the abundant, lapping sound of water
Meeting earth. Who among these children
Can resist such summons?

My God, what a joy is growth!
What a privilege to create!
I alone know where these seeds are.
Hand on the ground, I smile
And try to sense a kick.

Won't this be something!

Bedtime Stories

Isabella Dienhoffer

It had taken over a decade and a half, but she told a tale, one she never used to lull my sisters and I to sleep, and everything had exploded into a clarity and depth I was utterly unaware of. She had grown up in a white farmhouse with a mother who catapulted pots and pans toward her when a speck of dust floated through the aged air, smashing plates from wholes to halves to itty-bitty pieces. My mother melted the cast iron cookware into cannonballs of consonants and vowels, the sharpness of her screams, words branded into my mind evermore, echoed with the power of her enunciations.

Stomps of Sunshine
Isabella Dienhoffer

Flare of
 ardent hope.
 Each step made
 the world tremble
 under the
 weight
 of his
 dreams.
 Eyes aglow,
 as wide as
 the asteroid
 the world
 would use
 to annihilate
 him. Startled
 by the raging ball
 of fire, slowly rising
 to mold the crater to fit his
 ambitions. Whiskey-colored hair fed
 his nightmares until they eradicated his
 dreams. Steps quaked as the demons of the
 world fell upon his back. Crinkling, crumpling,
 crushing. Breaking every fragment of strength the boy
 strived to nurture in spite of the odds. Dimpled-smile fading into
 extinction alongside his youth. Collapsing under the abuse, burning
 then two, then three, and more of his daydreams. Vile nature easily fractured
 him until he splintered into misery. Ending his attempts to nurture his
 imagination; heart blackening as life ceases to
 coarse through his body. Strength transformed
 into a delicacy. Ruined; eyes dimmer
 than dusk. Whiskey barreling; he drowns
 under the pressure. He cannot bear
 the strain nor the misery of each
 asteroid blazing and singeing
 the hope that would create a treasured
 solace, silence, within his amber eyes.

Laundry Guide

Selma Dizdarević

Second place Joseph E. Vogel award for poetry

She wished to draw me deeper into
the pilling and torn fabric of her life.
Cotton was what she was. Overly worn
and little valued. The inside tag of her,
delineating her composition and being,
had faded. Now the care instructions
were unreadable. Indelicately handled,
recklessly tumbled, and hung out to dry
she was. And so pilled and torn.

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Poem

Victoria Elefante

Writing a poem is vulnerable
How to release thoughts trapped for so long?

Writing a poem is embarrassing
I worry all my words will come out wrong
And that I'll too much act my age
And no one will like it

Writing a poem is frustrating
They only want to hear it if it's the lyrics to a
song

Writing a poem is isolating
Who else will understand?

So I wrote this instead
Alone in my bed
But I think along the way
I wrote a poem, anyway

Dead Genre

Breanna Forte

Love prevails between two
incompatible partners, who,
had one thing in common,

love.

That was adolescence. A world of happiness.
Butterflies, rose pigment cheeks,
in hopes for endless laughter.

They give us that ounce of hope.
Maybe someday, that can be
reality not a
genre.

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To Sylvia

Breanna Forte

Life wished to draw me deeper,
into the charcoal midnight of
the eye of the tornado.

I found myself trapped in thoughts,
overwhelmed in the madness. Trying to
escape out
there – a crack.

Chiquitita

Breanna Forte

It was three o'clock in the morning
I sat there, laying down, being practical.
Through the door I heard shuffled footsteps
I creaked open, squinted into the abyss, and
slammed it shut.

The sound lingered, a rhythmic whisper al-
though
I could not make out a song.
I followed the young men, and for the first
time
in my life, I didn't ask questions.

I had been in New York, but
nothing had felt close to this feeling.
This feeling is like human magic upon the air.

The one thing I did not do
was sit there.
Was I a terrible dancer?
Yes, but it made me laugh.

Since that night,
I didn't ask questions anymore

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Psithurism

Breanna Forte

I hear my pitter patter
amongst the crispy crackling crunches that
linger.

Surrounded by a palette of colors.

There are lost hues of blue,
and I hear the whooshing wind.
echoing behind my trail.

It causes a shiver down my spine,
as my hairs begin to stand,
and my knees begin to shake.

I can only move forward,
the leaves will fall.

dreaming of daffodils

Gabby Hudziak

my favorite flowers are those daffodils
that are yellow, happy and bright
I often find myself missing them
as the cold ebbs and grows
I can't stand any more almost spring
or that awful ice sticking to the ground

as I walked by myself, I stared at the ground
and facing the cold, thought of daffodils
and wished and wished it was spring
the sharp desire struck, shining bright
and that feeling from February grows
and I know I can't let go of them

and I keep on feeling them
as I stare, stare and stare at that ground
that want, that desire, that feeling, grows and
grows
and all I know and need are those daffodils
because in winter, sunlight is as harsh as it is
bright,
not soft or warm or calming like it always is
in spring

sometimes winter wanes and teases me with
spring
oh, those warm days! I want to have faith in
them
but my eyes burn from disappointment blaz-
ing bright

so I stare, stare and stare at the ground
knowing, needing and missing those daffodils
while a shadow in me grows

and that familiar numbness grows and grows
and grows
like that cold snap's frost that killed the first
buds of spring
and I fear I may never again see my daffodils
and that salty cement sidewalk widens, keep-
ing me from them
I don't want to keep staring at the ground
but the scorching searing sun is burning much
too bright

that cloudless sky, snow reflecting bright
the shadows stretch behind me and even still
they grow
and they anchor me here alone, though my
ship's aground
and I'm deserted here, with no map or means
to spring
me from this place and I'm stuck alone with
them
the glacial saltwater shadows killing all the
daffodils

but soon bright light changes as the worlds
spins into spring
the severe and scorching sunbeams grow into
warmth and I feel them
freeing me and the bulbs deep in the ground,
sprouting into daffodils

Coffee

Isa Hudziak

At age eleven, my father started buying iced coffee on the ride home from summer school. I'd wake up to the pale brown, watery coffee sitting on the bookshelf next to my bed. The ice floated and disappeared when the midday July sun poured through my window, and I would not get up before noon.

At age fifteen, I curled into the coarse gray carpet of my bedroom floor and cried after seeing my acne-ridden face in the mirror. A flat white, scalding and sugarless, would sit on the red flower tablecloth of the living room table. I would sip at it slowly, repulsed by the sharp bitterness, as I wrote my social studies DBQ with my father defining bourgeoisie for me.

At age four, my grandma and grandpa took me to Barnes and Noble to play with the train set in the back. I'd push the blue trains across the wooden track while my grandpa sipped at his too-bitter americano. We'd sit on the green chairs of the café, and I'd sip milk around the chocolate chip cookie I half-finished, keeping the rest to give to my father.

At age eighteen, my thighs spilled from a venti to a half-filled tall and my ribs jutted

out beneath my skin. Kept inside for months, masked in public and barely able to take three steps without feeling so, so cold. My father drove his silver Fiesta each morning to buy an iced coffee for me, three creams and three sugars, masked and hand sanitizer clutched tight, and I could never thank him enough for that.

At age sixteen, my sister and I were sweaty and heavy-limbed from cheering a basketball game. We slumped in green chairs and shucked our winter coats, waiting for our drinks. A smooth caramel macchiato with fluffy whipped cream and caramel drizzle. Our father sat in the parking lot, reclined and reading off his phone, patiently waiting for us to finish.

At age twenty, I laid my head on my father's chest as rapid tears traced my cheeks. A first love shattered my heart, carving an empty space with a wooden stirrer, and his shirt was stained with saltwater. He handed me a plastic cup, cold on the tips of my fingers, filled with a stark black cold brew wearing a hat of cold foam. I took a sip, and the foam left a mustache. He smiled, and I laughed, and I forgot my pain for a moment.

In memory of Judy
Isa Hudziak

There are very few moments that live in my
brain
like an old film on repeat-
crackling with snow and age,
relentlessly looping
over and over.

The flowers were arranged in threes,
bright pinks and whites around her
with cursive cards tied to them
and several familiar names
making their presence known.

A sweater of creamy white and stitched
brown branches, the cherry red of
a cardinal mounted upon them
is what she would wear the few
times I was able to see her,
but today she wore a neat gown,

When I sat in that creaky white chair,
I could see the line of her lips
and the stillness of her eyelashes
against smoothed pale skin
while her hands clasped together
across her stomach with
her wedding ring displayed
to remind us of how much she loved
him even if her memory faded
over and

over.

During those days when she could not form words

he would sit beside her and hold her hand
and though her eyes were clouded and she
wriggled out of his hold, those thin lips
would form a smile reserved only
for his visits to her bedside.

I saw him stand there
just for a moment
before he touched her cold hands
and pressed a kiss to her forehead

I counted eight seconds
before I could hear the smack of the kiss's
release
and he kneeled by her side.

He bowed his head against the blue arm rest
meant for prayers
and uttered one of his own to her in the soft-
est tones,
"You're going home."
over and
over.

When he stood,
he took another glimpse of her
and when I saw his face,
it was bare of tears
but that was all
I could see
through my
own.

on the outside

Isa Hudziak

the door is locked and I lost the key

I would always keep in my breast pocket,
clutched tight inside the hole of my chest
but at some point, it must've slipped
out unnoticed by me

"You lost that key months ago," my friend
says

over a steaming bowl of mac and cheese
and for some reason, my eyes tear
up and he turns into a blurry
blob against the café
booth, which is the
same color as
the door

to the white picket fence and room of fish
tanks,
photographs in neat and polished frames
of the first time I saw the ocean smile
and lick my toes. the photo is blurred
by shaky, calloused hands and
laughter that echoes like

"Should we go?" my friend asks
the bowl is now empty and the
sun has begun to set, we
have been at dinner for
a while. I nod my head

and think of how

the key I lost somewhere along the way
might have been taken by someone else
and that door which no longer opens
for me will not stay shut too much
longer for the other person

“I’ll wait at the car,” my friend announces
as we stand up to leave the café.
while I scrape off my dish and
place it on the tray to be
cleaned, I wonder if I
will find another

door that will open for me, one that welcomes
me
into an embrace upon the neatly mowed yard,
a dance of grass tickling my feet and the key
safely tucked away upstairs because
I will always be let inside
even if I forget it
at home.

Nancy Drew's bag

Isa Hudziak

Magnifying glass with smudges from hasty fingers fumbling under the unsteady rays of the flashlight held between her teeth.

Journal tattered and dripping of ink, blood and sweat, dented and scribbled pages of checklists and notes to self, the most recent with three scratched underlines, anniversary with Ned dated four days ago.

Pocket knife neatly clasped shut and nestled in the far corner, engraved with the faded name Kate Drew. Upon further inspection, the blade has begun to rust from prolonged saltwater exposure.

Aspirin down to the final pill, the rest scarfed down a parched throat thirty-two hours into a hostage investigation when shots of espresso and heart-thumping terror won't keep the adrenaline pumping.

Prozac prescribed by the local physician for the Drew family one month prior, the startling white cap glued tightly shut by the original seal and a total of 30 pills left.

A newspaper clipping from the Lilac Inn case where she is standing next to Chief

McGinnis with a flashy white smile and static cold eyes, dated four days ago.

Cellphone with a cracked screen, void of greasy fingerprints and stinking of disinfectant wipes as if scrubbed over and over and over again.

Engagement ring shining that sterling silver sheen, a perfect size seven and topped with a cracked ruby heart that shattered from the impact of her fist on a brick wall.

Driver's license with startling sky-blue eyes and violet bruises beneath them, titian waves knotted from clumps of gray soot and sweat, will expire in a few years.

Matches down to the last three in the garish orange box boasting ridged flames and a mascot with sunglasses, the kind you would find on attorney Carson Drew's desk.

Chief McGinnis's cabinet key hidden in the back pocket, given away by a worn leather keychain of a detailed cardinal that peeks above the zipper.

Receipt for the Lilac Inn crumpled with spots of mascara and droplets staining the taut paper, condensed into a ball to hide from the scream that escaped her throat in the solitude of her car.

Late Night Drive

Juliana Pronti

Above, the sky is consumed by darkness

But, the dark is struck by the moonlight
And its emptiness is filled with breath
taking light

Softly illuminating the surrounding sky
Cascading over the dark, creating a tranquil
hue in the sky

Below, the road steadily reveals all of
its beautiful flaws

Every rotation of the tires

Every crack, bump, and pothole

(Even the ones that have been filled)

Revealed by the comforting yellow glow of
the headlights

Inside, the warm air hugs you,

And your smile hugs me.

The gentle hum of the engine melds
with the soft beat of the music.

These melodies tuned out by conversation

Banishing our once dire, but now forgotten,
worries.

Outside, the tires sit stagnant,

Warmth is flooded by cold,

Remnants of security shatter into the
crisp fall breeze

Drifting away, floating towards some
thing greater,

Temporary, yet unforgettable

A Room That Doesn't Exist

Kim Robson

There is a room that doesn't exist.
You may not know that you know it,
but I could not be more sure that you do.
It is where the buttercup yellow walls converge
Into endless perpendicular lines.

Where the late night infomercials about air
fryers and power tools
Never seem to cease.
Where the Seinfeld laugh track becomes a
skipping record of horror.
Surrounded by the invisible audience that
once laughed with you,
Instead of at you.

There are no windows and the doors do not
open
In the way that doors should.
Yet, you know that it is night
Because your internal clock moves forward
Even as the room remains stagnant.

The buzzing from the fluorescent lights
keeps track of time
In a way you have yet to figure out, like an
untalented metronome.
The scent of lime Enzyme Magic, lingering on
the floor, hints it has not been long,
But the way the walls inhale and exhale reaf-

firms that you have been here since the beginning
And will be here long after the end

Scooping You Up

Kim Robson

As the Edy's neapolitan ice cream falls from
our freezer

I remember you

Falling

From the twelfth story of our apartment
building.

Unlike yours

This drop was an accident.

A little too much like yours

I cry beside the wet, dripping remains

Attempting to save what I can

Knowing it won't work.

Uncanny

Kim Robson

She looks like me.
She smells like me.
She smiles like me.
She screams like me.

She has seven fingers on her left hand. An extra pinky and index finger, above their usual spots.
She has two pupils in her left eye. A venn diagram of darkness.
She moves as though her knees were placed on backwards by an angel with a vendetta.
She knows angels do not exist, though.

She sleeps in the woods.
She feeds on any meaty morsels she may lure into her unhinged jaw.
She pricks her fingers on thorny bushes.
She does not bleed.

She does not speak.
She screams.
She does not have a tongue.
She is all teeth.

She lives in my shadow.
She breathes when I breathe.
She moans when I sleep.
She does not dream.

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november 23, 2021.

Kim Robson

an old house in the arts district.
it heaved and wheezed and moaned.

pure white statues of mother mary, blood red
in the toxic sunset.
snow fell through the roof under the four pm
midnight.

a single light illuminated the back room with
an ethereal glow.
the same yellow as my grandmother's smoke
stained lampshades.

the house's outtards became its innards,
made clear by the jaundiced lantern.
as its skin peels from its foundation, i wonder
when mine shall do the same.

Drinking my Smile

Jasmine Sonia

My morning arousal isn't complete without
the thought of it.

Yearning for the bitter taste caressing my
tired lips,

warmth spreading across my face,

Down my throat,

towards my chest

into my stomach

A small pleasure filled smile spreads widely
into a cockeyed toothy grin

A quiet sigh escapes my lips.

I catch myself Pouring the dark liquid in a
daze with hopes of fulfilling myself

Spilling over the curves of the mug in a warm,
tender embrace pooling on the sugar below

Drowning it gently

enveloping it completely

The spoon spins in graceful pirouettes
around the cup's edges

Clattering gently like church bells ringing

I slowly salivate at the starvation that fills my
mind and soul

Steam escaping the carafe prefacing my
morning sigh of relief

Milk streaming in mixing the liquids in a
beautiful spiral not unlike Van Gogh

Pulling the contents to my face preparing for

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the pleasure filled moment
I close my eyes and exhale before the warmth
touches my lips
Enjoying the beautiful pleasure,
Of my morning coffee.

Chatter

Jasmine Sonia

Silence speaks volumes in a room full of
chatter

When the voices blend into the sounds of
cicadas

And you stand tight lipped on the matter
Not wishing for your voice to be loaned
to the noise that fills the stagnant air
the conversation far too much to bear
Silence speaks volumes in a room full of
chatter

When the voices blend into the sounds of
cicadas

A gaze can speak more than words
and your silence grants itself not to compla-
cency but defiance
when humans suddenly turn to mockingbirds
yet it's not their own thoughts that take flight
in a unified alliance
adding to the noise that fills the stagnant
sticky air
Silence speaks volumes in a room full of
chatter

And you stand tight lipped on the matter
Not wishing to contribute to the never-ending
chatter

Twittering of the birds turning to a hum
The buzzing of all the voices gnawing at your
ears

Silence speaks volumes in a room full of
chatter

Not wishing for your voice to be loaned
and your silence grants itself not to compla-
cency but defiance
because it's not their own thoughts that take
flight in a unified alliance
Silence speaks volumes in a room full of
chatter

To the noise that fills the stagnant air
The grating hum of Mockingbirds and cicadas

The conversation far too much to bear
when silence is no longer a matter if but
where
as the buzzing and twittering seems to be all
that matter
Remember-
Silence speaks volumes in a room full of
chatter

The scent of rain
Jasmine Sonia

A ballot of bird's chatter in the morning breeze,
As if nothing were to ever be displaced,
Leaving me questioning if the storm was merely speculation,
A potential hallucination sparked from my imagination,
A beautiful memory with a heavy implication,
Of how fast things seem to come and disappear.

As time moves forward I assumed the memories of its magnificence would fade and disappear,
But I still remember its beauty in the aftermath with the smell of rain lacing into the breeze,
Intricate patterns of lightning shooting across the sky but if I had to come to a conclusion or implication,
It's the world keeps turning even if you've been displaced,
I could've sworn this thought would have been too grand for my imagination,
Leaving me alone in admiration and silent speculation.

I was not the only one experiencing these memories with speculation,
Praying one day they would not disappear,

Knowing love and its wonders were far more
than my imagination,
I began to curse the scent of rain on the
breeze,
Wondering when again a beautiful, perfect,
storm would leave me displaced,
Wondering if the rain held further implication.

But if the rain did, what is the implication?
Would it be to look at word in speculation?
Would it be to be comfortable with being dis-
placed?
Would it be a reminder to cherish the memo-
ries knowing they will never disappear?
Would it be to breathe in a little deeper when
you smelled the rain on the breeze?
Would this crazy storm like love forever be a
creation of my imagination?

I knew this memory was far more than my
imagination,
I knew this storm was the Implication,
That it is okay to let yourself enjoy the smell
of rain on the breeze,
That when it comes to love there was some-
thing much larger than speculation,
That some memories and emotions never
disappear,
That sometimes in life it is utterly indescrib-
able to be displaced,

But to be displaced means to have loved, and
loved fully, so be displaced and continue to
be displaced,
Let the storm surround you and the rain beat
upon your skin and stop living solely in

imagination,
Cherish the smell of rain after its gone and
never let it disappear,
Let the storm become an implication,
Stop hiding behind fear and speculation,
And allow yourself to enjoy the memories
brought from the scent of the rain on the
breeze.

Sometimes in life you need to be displaced
and storms will be filled with implications,
these storms, more than your imagination,
refrain from looking at love through a lens of
speculation,
they come and disappear as quickly as they
arrived leaving nothing but the scent of rain
on the breeze.

Tomatoes
Jasmine Sonia

Vines wrapping lazily suffocating the structures attempting to hold it up,
In the heat of the summer's day scarlet beautiful fruit gleams from the vine,
Some overripened laying on the ground split down the middle.
Hoard of bugs gnawing the bittersweet entrails,
Beating the birds and squirrels to the prize.
Vermillion ooze dripping down the now wrinkled skin
Speckled with little black bugs unable to escape,
Drowning in the mess

I pull one off the vine and plop it in my bowl,
Then another, and another, until the bowl is full,
The reflection off the dimpled silver surface blinds me momentarily as I am
Trying to lift the vine that's strangled the pepper plant below,
With a sigh I realize,
That poor plant had no chance,
Not with the overwhelming weight of the tomato plant.

The poor plant had wilted brown leaves, crumpling at my touch, dissipating into the wind
And what didn't blow away stuck to my sweaty palms, admitting defeat against the

tomato plant
 the aphids had completely consumed the
 leaves that managed to survive the assault
 casting lace like shadows on the earth below,
 Worms wriggled in excitement, deep below
 the earth knowing what the bugs didn't con-
 sume, they would.
 Rejoicing in excitement at the decomposing
 plant and fruit above

Not ...A ...Chance.

I find a beautifully ripe one, so plump any
 pressure at all would pop it,
 I gently grab it from the vine and roll it be-
 tween my fingers,
 Examining its perfection, myself an unknow-
 ing victim
 tossing the bitter-sweet fruit into my mouth.
 Disappointed to find the same bugs that beat
 the birds and squirrels had also beat me,
 I spit the fruit to the ground wiping my
 tongue with my sleeve to remove the rem-
 nants of little legs ,
 that sat between my teeth.
 Spitting on the ground, and the strangled
 plant below
 Adding to the humiliation of the scene below

Not a chance I told myself.

Not ...A ...Chance.

HAND-ME-DOWNS

Jillian Szeliga

First place Joseph E. Vogel award for poetry

On the slumped shoulders of a wire hanger,
a second-hand coat first worn by my sister,
sags under the weight of it all.

Stuffed into the back of the hall closet,
it was intended to keep us warm,
and dry on snowy days playing outside,
but you kept me warm and oblivious,
as we slept arm in arm,
sitting up on strangers' sofas.

I don't blame you for feeling used;
you were unsuited for the job
a security blanket with a zipper,
a sleeping bag turned cloak.

Beyond repair and a shell of itself,
worn out after years of ill-fitted service,
sunbleached and threadbare,
the once electric jazz blue jacket remains,
a reminder of what not to hand down.

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**Art &
Photography**

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Galway Bay
Leola Beck



Pathways
Leola Beck



Midnight Blossom
Hollie David



Paper Panda
Hollie David



My Utica

Selma Dizdarević



Bebby
Isa Hudziak



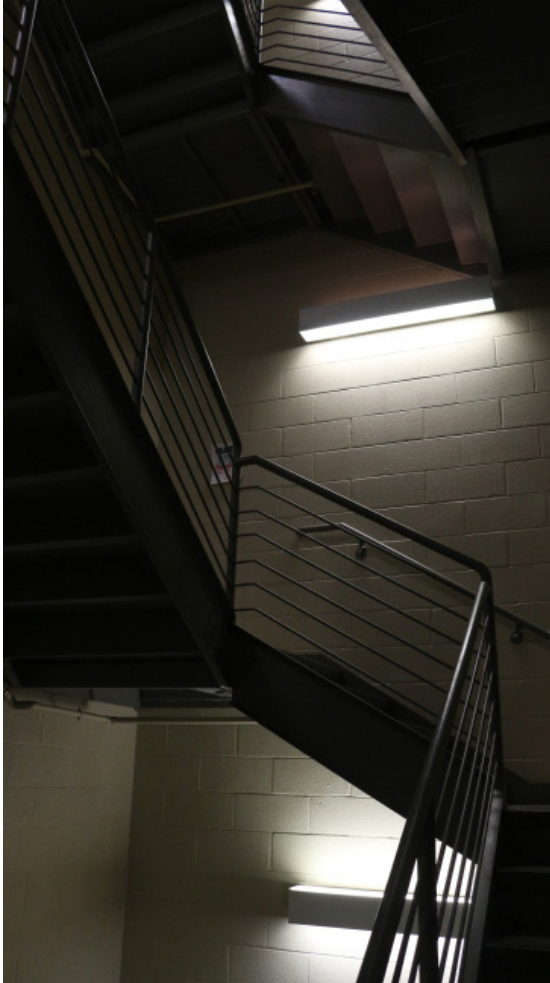
Let's Walk
Isa Hudziak



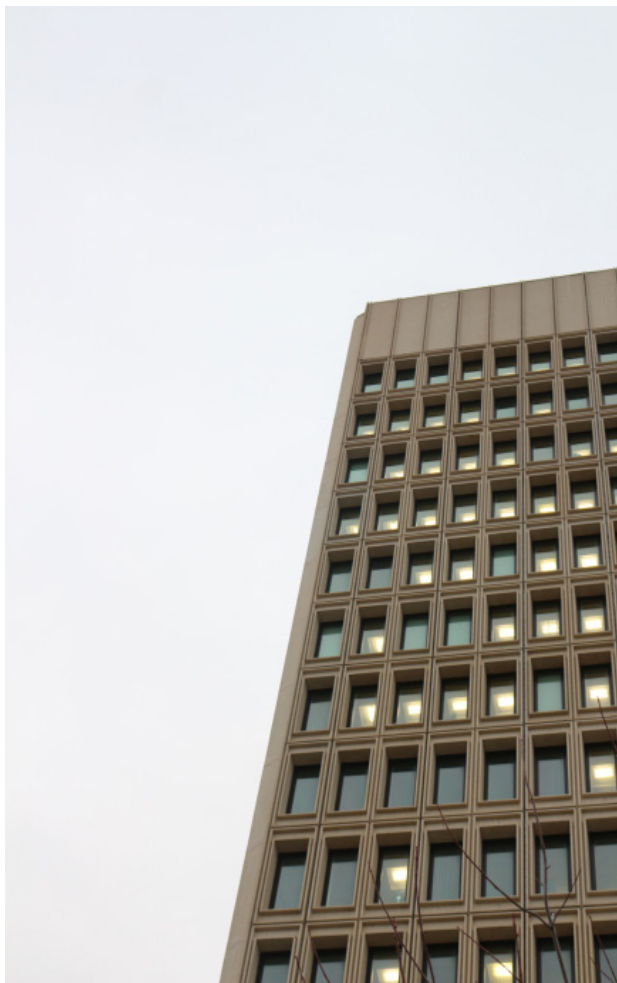
Swirl
Isa Hudziak



Stairs 1, Descend
Michał Kozub



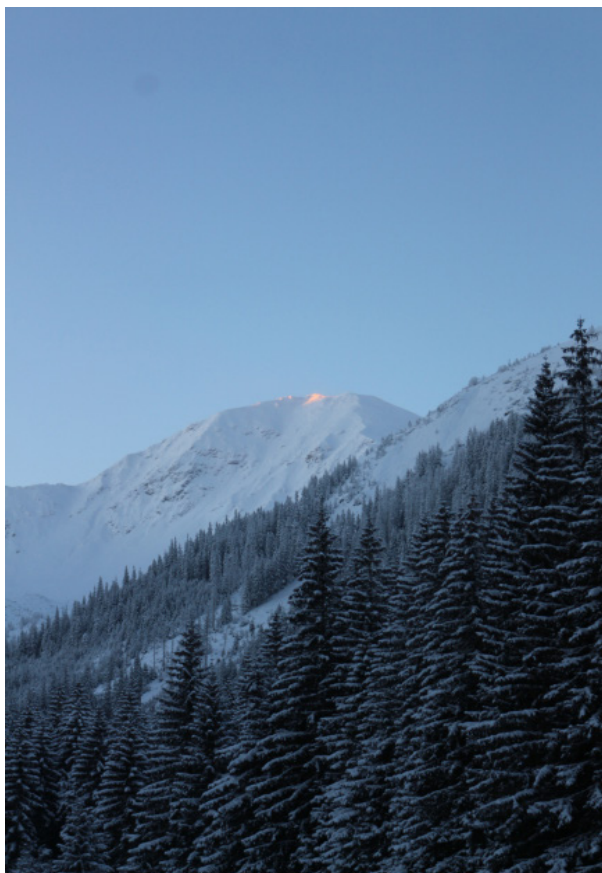
Stairs 2, Ascend
Michał Kozub



Genesee
Michał Kozub



Tatra 1
Michał Kozub



Tatra 2
Michał Kozub



उसतयि (*usatiya*)
Dr. Jeff Miller



For Carol
Dr. Jeff Miller



“an inexhaustible treasure”
(Thich Nhat Hanh, 2018)
Dr. Jeff Miller



*“nothing that dies is dead for
very long” (Wendell Berry)*

Dr. Jeff Miller



Opus 40 (June 2022)
Dr. Jeff Miller



Sunset at Unundadages
Chris Sunderlin



The Narrows
Jillian Szeliga

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**Personal
Essay &
Prose**

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*Old Dogs Learn "Paw" When They're
Young*

*Second place Joseph E. Vogel award for short story
Bryan*

1. Mommy and Daddy's faces are very close. They're screaming. Daddy turns around, walks for a bit, and turns back. Daddy's screaming. Mommy turns her head to the right and I can see her eyes. "Look at what you've done, the kids are crying," Mommy screams. My knees scrape on the floor as I escape back to Julia on the other side of the wall, tucking my chin into my chest and burying my head into her arms. Mommy screams again and Daddy screams again and Mommy screams again and Daddy screams again and Julia screams at them to stop screaming and I'm screaming why are you fighting. At least there's warmth in my sister's arms.

2. With gooey, salty, McDonald's fries in my mouth, Mommy turns her head and looks at Julia and me in the back seat of the car. "When you two get in there, the man's going to ask you a question, okay? When he asks you the question, you need to tell him that you want to live with Mommy, okay?" In a small gray office, I'm sitting on a red stack chair looking at a man in a black suit behind a desk. He looks at Julia and asks her the question. "I want to live with my mom," she says. He then turns his head towards me

and asks me the same question. With tears flowing from my eyes and snot running down my lips, I say, "Daddy's never done nothing wrong, he never hurt anybody. I don't only wanna live with Mommy, I wanna live with Daddy too." Months later Mommy said, "Julia's going to go live with her friend while me and your father work out this living arrangement."

3. Mother's screaming, Father's screaming, I'm screaming, screaming, screaming, screaming, screaming. On the hallway's hardwood floor, I fall into a fetal position, rocking back and forth, whimpering, "My name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan."

"Bryan stop that," Mother says.

"What are you doing?" Father asks.

"My name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan."

"You're scaring me," Mother says.

"Bryan, what's wrong?" Father asks.

"My name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan."

"Please stop this," Mother says.

"What can I do?" Father asks.

"My name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan."

"Bryan we're right here," Mother says.

"It's going to be okay," Father says as he leans over to rub my back.

"Don't fucking touch me!" I screech into

his eyes. "My name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan, my name's not Bryan."

4. Spit forms like condensation on the lines of his forehead as I yell fuck you to his face. Father's hands fasten my wrists to the green upholstered couch, fighting my might to lock me into place. Granny, fulfilling her promise, jams a soap bar into my potty mouth, twisting and shoving it down my throat. "I fucking hate you," I scream. Her second promise fulfilled, two policemen arrive at the door. My eyes peek over the back of the couch as I crouch down. *He won't let them take me.* That silence... the uncertainty of that silence. In that silence he paused and looked at me as if he was unsure he wanted to keep me.

5. Julia jumps up from the Thanksgiving table and runs to her room. "Yeah you run to your room you bitch, like you run from everything in your pathetic fucking life," I say.

"Stop it Bryan. Please. I'm begging you. Please," Mother pleads.

"You pathetic fuck! Once a coward always a fucking coward, eh?" I hear her stop and start walking back. I get up from my seat and stand at the entrance of the hallway.

"What huh, what are you gonna do, eh?"

"I fucking hate you," she says. "I hope you fucking die." I take a step closer. Her head is half a foot from my chest. Spit shoots out on her forehead. "Fucking hit me then," I say. Her sweaty palm hits me on the cheek. I

shove her to the floor and Mother grabs my arms and I break from her grasp and I run to my room and I kick a window. Thousands of pieces of glass shatter to the alley below.

6. I pace around the dark, cold school parking lot in flip flops and a flannel jacket. *You're a fucking piece of shit. You've always been a fucking piece of shit. Fucking live in this. This is what you fucking deserve you sick fuck. No, don't look at the road. No one's coming to check on you. No one's coming to get you. A toothy smile comes across my face. This is what you want eh, you sick fuck. No one's coming. You could walk onto that roof right now and no one's coming. This feels good right? Punish yourself some more, Bryan. Keep fucking doing it. You fucking bitch.*

The Princess's Curse
First place Joseph E. Vogel award for short story
Isa Hudziak

The Sorceress left a message with Rosalie's cat sometime in the middle of the night.

Bleary brown eyes took a moment before registering the tawny feline sitting on the windowsill. A small pink tongue jutted out of a soft white maw as Emmeline groomed herself. Tendrils of sunlight peeked through the arched window to bounce off her hair, resembling a very ripe and possibly radioactive pumpkin.

Rosalie's fist curled to cover her audible yawn, met with a blank stare of disapproval from the cat. Those emerald eyes always seemed to be in a state of judgment, Rosalie noted with fondness. That's when the apprentice noticed a violet ribbon tied to Emmeline's paw, connected to a rolled piece of parchment.

The woman pushed herself out of bed to approach the cat and untie the ribbon. Once her fingertips touched the parchment, it immediately unfurled to reveal cursive scratched with black ink. A woman's voice seemed to whisper in Rosalie's ear, gravelly and lower in register.

"I have something to take care of with the

Queen this morning. Proceed with the plan, I will be back after two nights."

Rosalie's shoulders tensed on instinct, releasing in a tight shiver. Of all the magic the Sorceress could have used, it had to be the one with a very intimate whisper that not only mimics voice, but also the feeling of breath puffing against the shell of your ear.

Emmeline meowed and hopped off the windowsill. Her puffy tail swung back and forth as she padded out of the bedroom without a single look back.

The witch stretched her arms above her head and reveled in the satisfying crack. She brushed a hand through russet curls and, using the violet ribbon, tied it into a low-hanging ponytail.

It seems like today is the day, Rosalie mused with a metaphorical puff of her chest. Time to show the Sorceress how powerful I can be!

After dressing in a daffodil dyed tunic and rough spun brown breeches, Rosalie set to work. She opened two tall doors to reveal the ingredients cupboard and stole away three items: a preserved rose petal, a strand of auburn hair and an enchanted ruby.

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The Sorceress won the ruby in a card match, she had once said over peppermint tea. The old woman ran a painted black nail across the table and tapped her index finger for emphasis.

“The ruby’s red is from the blood of my opponent,” the Sorceress grinned, not dissimilar to Emmeline after catching a mouse under the floorboards. “The enchantment becomes more personal when you add something akin to life, like blood, to it.”

The young witch remembered trying to school her facial expression to hide her disgust. Mind you, this was two days into her apprenticeship—what a way to start! However, it was clear from the Sorceress’s mirthful laugh that Rosalie’s façade was as thin as glass.

“Why do you need personal enchantments? Won’t that make things more complicated for you?” Rosalie asked, braving her fingers on the table to snatch a lavender cookie.

The Sorceress smacked her hand before she could grab it.

“Finish your tea,” the Sorceress demanded with a voice too nonchalant to be accurate. “And then I will answer your question.”

Sips of vigor through pouted lips accompanied Rosalie’s slouch. She slurped her pepper-

mint tea with knitted brows and narrow eyes.

The Sorceress stirred her tea with a silver spoon, dropping a sugar cube in. The cube floated in the baby-blue teacup. The silver spoon gouged it through the center and the cracked pieces sunk from the force.

“Sometimes, people wrong you and getting revenge is the only thing that can amend it,” the Sorceress’s hand stilled from stirring. Cat-like green eyes leveled a withering stare unto brown. “*That* is intimate. That will do much more.”

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The weight of her mentor’s statement did not press upon Rosalie’s understanding until she discovered the Sorceress’s plan weeks later.

“The Queen of the Stonetown and I have a history,” the Sorceress said, “and I plan to make her suffer.”

Nimble fingers paused in their quest to pound basil into a pulp. The pestle hovered dangerously close to the mortar but did not touch it.

“*What kind of history?*” Rosalie asked without truly thinking it over. Chill licked goosebumps across her arms and raised the hair on them.

“The kind that you do not need to know.” With

a wave of a wrinkled hand, a small pocket mirror materialized on the wooden table.

The reflective surface swirled into opaque shades of purple and gray, like smoke billowing from a fire. The smoke took the shape of a girl with round gray eyes and an auburn braid.

The roundness of her eyes was perhaps emphasized by the long eyelashes or the small birthmark on her left cheek. Bow shaped lips delicately curled into a smile. Though the mirror had no sound, Rosalie could imagine that her laugh would rival the sound of bells.

Rosalie placed the pestle on the table so quickly that a loud bang reverberated through the room. The Sorceress didn't seem to notice.

“You will take care of Princess Annette while I deal with her mother. You’ll curse her so that she may suffer along with her mother and in turn, you will gain my favor.”

And thus began Rosalie's attempts to get to know Princess Annette from afar.

Donning a nondescript cloak and carrying a basket of herbs from the creek, the witch would traipse into the cobblestone town to gather intel.

“Lady Annette will be playing the gift fairy again this year!” announced a jovial man standing on the midtown stage. The crowd clapped, and from where Rosalie hid behind a bricked column belonging to the tavern, she could only see smiles.

The walks in town brought Rosalie many places she had not visited since she was a child, such as the town markets— both legitimate and not.

“This brush was used to comb Lady Annette’s hair before her eighteenth birthday!” someone in a brown straw hat and a crooked grin announced, voice high-pitch from the effort.

Rosalie used the crowd to her advantage and slid behind the booth curtain. Fingers rubbed against the brush bristles and plucked a single hair to place in her pocket. If she spent a split-second too long staring at it, no one saw it.

Two days of treks through the town and fighting glimpses of former schoolmates, Rosalie decided she had enough information for her spell.

She learned that Lady Annette was renowned for her kindness and often participated in the Yuletide Festival theatrical performance and practiced often with the opera singer of town.

The princess rode a striking white horse most afternoons with the Captain's Guard, James, according to the town market grocer.

Gossip said that the two hid away underneath the castle's large mossy oak to trade kisses and wrap each other in an embrace.

A plan emerged, along with a bubbling feeling in Rosalie's gut. Bad mushrooms, she reasoned, and shucked her cloak to jot down her plan.

No man will ever fall in love with Princess Annette. She will be forced to live a life unwed and lonely.

"It's the perfect plan!" Rosalie told her confidant, Emmeline. The cat nibbled away at some kibble. "I won't have to *physically* hurt her AND the Sorceress will like me!"

Emmeline stopped chewing her kibble and looked up at Rosalie. The apprentice felt very judged.

"You know I need this; you damn cat. How else will I learn more complex magic? From you?"

The cat, unsurprisingly, did not reply. She just wiggled through the legs of the table and left the room through the small cat-shaped hole in the wall.

Rosalie placed the ingredients from the cupboard on the table. She ground the enchanted ruby into a fine dust, finding it surprisingly more fragile than expected. The piece of hair and preserved rose were next, doused in river water and smashed with the pestle.

When it finally looked like scarlet dusty mush, the apprentice chanted her incantation. The words left her lips in a song accompanied by whistles and vibrato. The mixture glowed a faint red, pulsing like a heart.

She siphoned her curse into a small teardrop shaped glass container attached to a piece of thick string, a necklace for easier travel.

With the necklace safely placed around her neck, tied behind her curled ponytail and buried beneath the neck of her tunic, Rosalie donned her cloak. She pulled the hood over her head and steeled her nerves to sneak into the castle walls.

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Rosalie catapulted herself over the low stone fence surrounding the royal garden. She could hear the clank of metallic armor and hid behind a patch of sunflowers, just tall enough to obscure her. She inhaled the scent of fertilizer and the flowers through her nostrils, exhaling as quietly as possible through thin lips.

Once the coast was clear, the apprentice ducked beneath flowers and squeezed behind hedges to find the princess's window in the same spot as it was depicted in the painting.

A portrait of Annette hung in the local tavern, depicting the auburn-haired beauty leaning out her bedroom window and throwing a rose to an obscured man. The painter depicted the lover only from behind and in the most unremarkable clothing, most likely to appeal to any peasant wanting to insert themselves into the scenario.

Rosalie inhaled deeply through her nose, allowing the air to fill her stomach. She placed her hands against the stones of the castle, feeling remnants of the sun's rays within its heat.

She opened her mouth and sang the incantation for wind. The melody of an airy piece, marked by soft, breathy notes. With each note, Rosalie felt the wind wrap around her like a blanket.

The apprentice floated up the gust of wind, clutching the windowsill tightly once it became within reach. She climbed over the stone, standing behind a garish orange curtain. The wind spell started to eke off the witch and she shivered involuntarily at the loss of its hold.

And then she tripped.

Rosalie's feet had stepped too heavily on the thick orange curtain. Her body tumbled forward, and she grasped for any sort of leverage, only to slip right through the gap in the fabric. Her face planted into a very sturdy floor with a resounding smack!

The witch groaned and rubbed her head, only to hear... bells? A tinkling, light sound that seemed to radiate authority, but the kind that you welcomed.

"Climbing through someone's window mid-day doesn't seem like the sneakiest plan," a teasing voice said across the room.

Rosalie jolted and pushed herself to her feet, ignoring the ache of her nose and the humiliation surely reddening her cheeks.

Sitting on a mountain of fluffy white pillows was Princess Annette with an embroidery hoop on her lap, needle gently held in her left hand. She was dressed in a simple orange gown, the same shade as the curtains, and her hair laid loose across her shoulders.

But curiously, she was smiling and seemed relaxed at the sight of her intruder.

It's just as beautiful as the painting, Rosalie's

thoughts intruded. *She does laugh like a bell!
How can someone be so pretty?*

“You’re not the first intruder I’ve gotten ever since that portrait of me was put in town. This isn’t even my room anymore, I use it for crafting,” Annette explained, resuming her needlework. “The guards are always close by.”

Rosalie straightened her back. She reached up and wrapped her hand around the cursed necklace, pulling it out from beneath her tunic.

“Yes, that may be true, My Lady.” Rosalie chanced a step towards the maiden, heart rapidly beating in her chest. “But how many have come with a gift for you?”

Annette paused her needlework and set her embroidery hoop beside her. She stood up and Rosalie could see now that the princess was not only tall, but also strong. The sleeves of her orange dress did nothing to hide the muscles of her biceps and shoulders.

Brown eyes slid up and down the princess as if possessed, unable to peel away from the sight. Warmth seemed to erupt in Rosalie’s chest, a tingly feeling that expanded the longer this stare-down went on.

So, she did what any respectable witch would do: she pried the necklace off, opened the

cork and juttied her arm out to cover Annette in the scarlet dust.

The princess coughed and hunched over, wiping at her eyes.

“What did you just do?!” Her voice adopted a high-pitch tone between hearty coughs. The sprinkling of dust sparkled against her tan skin, like a glittery rouge delicately brushed with a small brush.

“I’ve cursed you. No *man* will ever love you!”

Rosalie watched as Annette’s face crumpled. Those gray eyes, now squinting and watery either from the shock or dust in them, narrowed. Her brows pinched and a very pronounced frown lay on bow-shaped lips.

In her belly, the apprentice felt something sharp. It was as if Emmeline had buried a singular claw in Rosalie’s skin and dragged upward until it pierced lungs. It felt a little hard to breathe, seeing such a look of despair on Annette’s face.

It’s just excitement, I’ve succeeded in what I set out to do. Rosalie thought, bobbing her head up and down in an attempt to convince herself.

Why, then, do I feel my heart sink?

The princess did something Rosalie did not expect.

The curves and pinches of anguish melted off that fair face like snow in sunlight. Those lips quirked upward in the most satisfied of smiles and that laugh, oh that bell-like chime, tinkled from them. It started gentle, and then grew to the point where occasional snorts slipped through.

Rosalie gaped like a fish stuck on the riverbed.

“Why are you laughing? I just cursed you to be lonely forever!” She screeched. She instinctively clutched the sleeves of her cloak and tilted her head, eyes owlishly wide. “You’ll never have children! No man will love you!”

Annette covered her mouth with her left hand, gray eyes glowing with mirth.

“Witchcraft is a curious thing. Must one be so specific for it to work?”

Rosalie took a step towards the princess, entranced by the display before her.

The princess, too, stepped forward. They were within two feet of each other, almost close enough to touch if one tried. At this distance, Rosalie could see that she stood a few inches shorter than the princess and that Annette’s shoulders were very relaxed.

"I do not want the love of man," Annette explained, voice as quiet as a mouse trying to creep past Emmeline's food dish.

A hand touched Rosalie's cheek and it warmed in response. The princess cupped her cheek, gazing down at her with a look of curiosity and something else the witch could not identify.

The witch felt her heart leap into her throat. She could smell lavender emanating from Annette's hands. Those palms, soft and calloused along her fingers, held Rosalie's cheeks so gently.

"I prefer the love of a *woman*."

Brown met and fell in love with gray, as the tale goes. Rosalie's eyes could not leave the princess's, swallowed by their depths.

I'm trapped, Rosalie thought. She's going to call the guards and I will be sentenced to death.

It should be noted that Rosalie acted next without thinking too deeply. She placed her hands on Annette's shoulders and pulled her forward. Her lips planted onto the princess's.

Rosalie tasted wine on Annette's lips and felt drunk on it. The princess tilted her head and cupped a hand behind the witch's head, index finger twirling a stray curl from the ponytail

held up by a violet ribbon.

Her heart beat quickly in her chest and Rosalie felt breathless. When she pulled away, her eyes were half-lidded and lips parted. It took her at least a second longer to bolt into action.

The apprentice pulled away from the princess and bolted for the window. She pried the orange curtains apart and hummed the incantation for wind as fast as possible, knowing that the spell would only have half the power of the full thing.

The next few minutes can be best described as fast, painful and out-of-breath.

By the time Rosalie made it to the stone walls of the garden and collapsed to the ground, crouched on her knees to catch her breath, did she realize that her curls were drooping onto her face.

She reached a hand up to touch what remained of her ponytail, only to find the violet ribbon gone.

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“Lady Annette! We heard a commotion, are you alright?” James, the Captain’s Guard, asked with his commanding tone.

He had rushed open the door with his shoul-

der and wielded a shortsword.

The auburn-haired princess was sitting on the bed with her embroidery hoop laid across her lap.

“Sir James, I am well. You must have heard the wind play with the curtains.” Annette said, “And you must know that if there is danger, I can handle myself. Was that not the point of our sparring lessons?”

Though the man did not seem to believe her, he relaxed. He scanned the room and put his shortsword back in its sheath.

As James turned to leave, he caught a glimpse of the princess’s hair.

It was tied back loosely with a violet ribbon.

COLORS OF FREEDOM

Personal Essay

Vasyl Yurkuts

1. Blue. Sky. Peaceful sky. This is the first association that comes to mind when I think of the color blue. I do not remember the exact moment when I first thought about the color blue. I believe I was five or six years old. I never thought I would write something about a color even though I have always loved blue clothes. Blue clothes go well with my eyes. Now every citizen of Ukraine perfectly understands the importance of the color blue. The importance of a peaceful sky overhead. February 24, 2022. The day when the blue, calm sky above the heads of Ukrainians turned into a terrible nightmare. Missiles, combat planes, helicopters. No, this is not another film about World War II. This is reality, and it is not only about the sky.

2. Yellow. Wheat. Ukrainian fields, densely sown with wheat. This is the first association that comes to mind when I think of the color yellow. Few people know that Ukraine was one of the largest exporters of wheat in the world. Until 2022. Most of the harvest was sent to European and African countries. But this year, Ukraine has nothing to send. Vast areas of yellow fields, densely sown with grain crops, were burned by the rUSSIAN invaders. They were burned to cause artificial

famine in specific territories of Ukraine and worsen the food situation in African countries. Invaders, robbers, rapists, marauders, murderers – in one word, rUSSIANS.

3. Blue and Yellow. My country's flag hangs right above my bed on the 4th floor in Bell Hall. The blue and yellow ribbon that I have never removed from my left hand since February 24th. I am proud to be Ukrainian. The feeling of pride when I hold the flag of my country makes me forget everything around and be proud of myself every time I have to do it. I remember the day, March 5, 2022, when I was invited to open the final hockey game in Utica. The blood was pulsating wildly through my body, and my heart seemed to jump down to my feet and then come back to my chest. The clapping and noise made by the audience could be heard far beyond the ice arena. Unforgettable. I saw pictures from many cities liberated from rUSSIAN occupation where Ukrainians proudly raised the blue-yellow flag.

4. What is behind that blue-yellow flag raising? Hundreds of thousands of lives taken. Thousands of tortured and starving people. Cities destroyed. People who will never be able to hold their children's hands again. Or hold their children. Dogs that blew up on mines. There is also a story that I will never forget in my life. 9-year-old Ukrainian girl, on whose body 11 different samples of the sperm of rUSSIAN killers were found. This will

not be published in the news or online. Even Instagram blocks such information because it is “too sensitive content.” I am sure that the photos and videos with that “sensitive content” will forever remain in my memory and the memory of Ukrainians.

For someone, it is just a color or two, and for someone else, it is a whole symbol, a history of the struggle for freedom.

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Contributor Biographies

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Leola Beck is a junior here at Utica University majoring in Communication with a concentration in Media with a concentration in creativity studies and a minor in film. Outside of school, Leola is the station manager at UticaTV and enjoys spending her time at the TV studio with her friends. She also loves to read, draw, and spend time with her family and boyfriend.

Bryan is a student at Utica University.

Jacob Carissimo was raised in Rome, New York and attends Utica University as a third-year English/Adolescent Education major. He is involved in the school's musical theater productions. He makes it a habit to sit under bridges when it is raining and contemplate the flow of water in streams and likes to play piano.

Hollie David is a senior Communication and Media major with a minor in Journalism. She is the 2022-23 Managing Editor for *The Tangerine*. In her free time, she loves painting. The painting titled "Midnight Blossom" is featured in the card game Dream Book TCG.

Isabella Dienhoffer is a sophomore Nursing major with a minor in Creative Writing.

Selma Dizdarević is a senior English major, cat lover, and certified Swiftie.

Victoria Elefante is a first year English major who loves reading and language. She plans on being an English teacher, but she loves to write too. She is so glad she got to make a submission for this year's Ampersand!

Breanna Forte is an English Education major with a minor in Literature. Her future plans are to teach middle and/or high school English, where she hopes to extend her love for reading and writing to her students. She enjoys reading, painting, and researching Sylvia Plath.

Gabby Hudziak is a 2022 alum from Utica who majored in Communication and Media with a concentration in Creativity and two minors, Public Relations and Theater. During her time at Utica, she worked with the radio station, WPNR 90.7 FM. In her free time, she enjoys crocheting, playing video games, and cuddling with her cat.

Isa Hudziak is a senior pursuing a BA English/MS Education dual-degree. She is the 2022-23 Editor-in-Chief for the school newspaper, *The Tangerine*, and has edited *Ampersand* for the past two issues. She loves to embroider, complete word searches, and spend time with her sister.

Michał Kozub is an international student from Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Po-

land. In his free time he is running marathons, getting lost in the mountains, playing tabletop RPGs with friends, and trying his best.

Dr. Jeff Miller is Chair and Professor of Communication and Media and director of Films on Thursday, the campus film series. His photography has regularly appeared in the Ampersand since 2015 and six of his photographs were published in last year's edition. This years photographs were taken on campus ["an inexhaustible treasure" (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2018)], at Swale Pond Sanctuary [उसतपि (usatiya); "nothing that dies is dead for very long" (Wendell Berry)], in Yorkville, NY [For Carol], and Saugerties, NY [Opus 40 (June 2022)].

Juliana Pronti is currently a senior at Utica University. She is an English major and is minoring in English Language. She plans to attend graduate school after her time at Utica.

Kim Robson is an English major graduating in May 2023. Her interests include writing, horror films, and painting. She would like to say thank you to her boyfriend, sisters, and two cats for their support.

Jasmine Sonia is a senior at Utica University, as an English major and Literature minor, she has a passion for poetry and the arts. Following graduation she plans to move across the country to pursue her career and future creative endeavors.

Chris Sunderlin joined Utica University in 2022 as Assistant Director of CSTEP. Prior to Utica, he was the Executive Director of the Midtown Utica Community Center and an ESL teacher. He has traveled extensively around the globe and wholeheartedly ranks Unundad-ages sunsets as the best. The photo submitted is the view from his window, around the hill.

Jillian Szeliga is a Liberal Studies major and works in the Office of Human Resources at Utica. Her work as an interdisciplinary artist explores the transitory relationship between parenting and memory.

Vasyl Yurkuts studied at Precarpathian National University in the city of Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine to study English and German. In 2022, he flew to the USA to study as a one-semester exchange student at Utica University. Later, due to the full-scale Russian war against Ukraine, he could not return to his homeland and Utica offered him to transfer his credits and stay to finish his degree with a major in English.

Joseph E. Vogel Judge

Kristin Czarnecki is the Gallery Coordinator at the Rockport Art Association & Museum in Rockport, Massachusetts after many years as an English professor. She is the author of a memoir, a chapbook, and has written many poems and blog posts. She has a lifelong love of art, museums, Rockport, and the sea.

Joseph E. Vogel Award

Established by the late author Joseph E. Vogel, these awards are given to students for outstanding work in poetry and in fiction published in the yearly Ampersand.

Each year, a guest judge outside of Utica University is chosen. Every eligible accepted work is provided to the judge anonymously by the Ampersand Faculty Advisor, and the judge has no contact with any of the submitters or editorial board.

Ampersand submission guidelines:

All submissions must be from students, faculty, or staff of Utica University. Students can be recently graduated and still submit to that year's publication.

Submissions may be poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, photography, or artwork. If fiction or creative nonfiction, the pieces must be fifteen pages maximum.

Submission is not a guarantee of acceptance into the literary magazine. Submitted works must not contain graphic sexual or violent content.

Submitted work cannot contain material promoting discrimination or stereotypes of people of various races, ethnicities, religions, genders, and/or sexual orientations.

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