



Inside Out 2026

Palacio de Dueñas in Medina del Campo
Katee Kemether
Photography



Sunset on a Hill
John Winton
Photography (front cover)

Innocent Curiosity
Ajay Garg
Digital Photography (back cover)

Inside Out

Jefferson Literary/Arts Journal 2026

Chief Editors: Blake Weil and Emma Tam
Artistic Directors: Biyanka Hati and Karan Amin
Literary Directors: Bennett Adjaye and Kristi Haag

Editors:

Blake Weil
Emma Tam
Biyanka Hati
Karan Amin
Bennett Adjaye
Kristi Haag
Jessica O'Keeffe
Jennifer Maskery
Anish Basavalingiah
Courtney Dennis

Ajay Garg
Matthew Kraft
Edoardo Manca
Shady Mina
Avni Satish Nair
Benedicta Olonilua
Asad Pasha
Julia Rubenstein
Haleema Siddiqui
Jennifer Velazquez

Content Warning: This magazine includes some written pieces with possibly sensitive subject matter. If anyone is experiencing difficulty with issues that you feel are hard to manage, consider using the following resources:

Student Counseling Center (SCC): 215-955-HELP (4357)
National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800-273-8255 (available 24 hours a day)
Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 for free, 24/7 crisis counseling

Foreword

Welcome to the 2026 issue of *Inside Out*!

Inside Out is the literary and arts journal of the Jefferson student body. As such, it gives voice to our scholars as they migrate through their educational experience at our University. The creativity and vision of our students is featured within the pages of this book. Showcased is student work that was created in the intervals between classes and notebooks, dorm rooms and city streets. Please enjoy this issue of *Inside Out*, as our students offer a unique view of their world using images, colors, words, and light.

Charles A. Pohl, MD
*Senior Vice Provost for Student Affairs,
Thomas Jefferson University,
Vice Dean of Student Affairs and Career Counseling and Professor of Pediatrics,
Sidney Kimmel Medical College*

Letter from the Editors

We are proud to present the 2026 edition of *Inside Out*.

This magazine exists because students here do more than study and work. They observe. They question. They create. In the middle of demanding schedules and clinical responsibilities, they still find the time to write, photograph, draw, and reflect.

The pieces in this issue are varied in style and tone. Some are quiet. Some are direct. Some wrestle with uncertainty. Others document small moments that might otherwise go unnoticed. Together, they show the range of perspectives within our community.

Inside Out is a space to step slightly outside the pace of training and look inward. It is not about perfection or performance. It is about expression.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their work and trusted us to share it. And thank you to our readers for taking the time to engage with it.

We hope you find something here that stays with you.

Blake Weil and Emma Tam
Chief Editors

Bennett Adjaye and Kristi Haag
Literary Directors

Biyanka Hati and Karan Amin
Art Directors

Submission Information

Inside Out is a presentation of artwork, photography, short stories, poems and essays that is published annually. All full-time and part-time Jefferson students are welcome to submit work and to apply to serve on the magazine's editorial board. Submissions may be submitted to jefferson.submittable.com.

Photographic submissions should be saved as a .jpeg file using the highest resolution possible. Artwork should be photographed from a direct angle, without glare or visible background, and saved in the same manner as photographs. Artists who submit non-photographic material will be given the opportunity to have their accepted pieces professionally photographed by a Jefferson photographer to assure the best presentation in the printed magazine. Manuscripts (prose, poetry, translations, short plays, etc.) should be submitted in a Word-compatible document, and saved under the name of the piece (or "untitled," if applicable).

All submissions will be reviewed anonymously; not all submissions will be printed. Please note that entries will be judged as submitted; *Inside Out* will not crop, sharpen, or otherwise adjust an improperly-saved graphic submission.

All submissions must include:

- Author's or artist's name
- Email address and local phone number
- College, department or undergraduate program and year in school
- Genre/medium and title of each submission

View the online version of *Inside Out* at: Jefferson.edu/InsideOut

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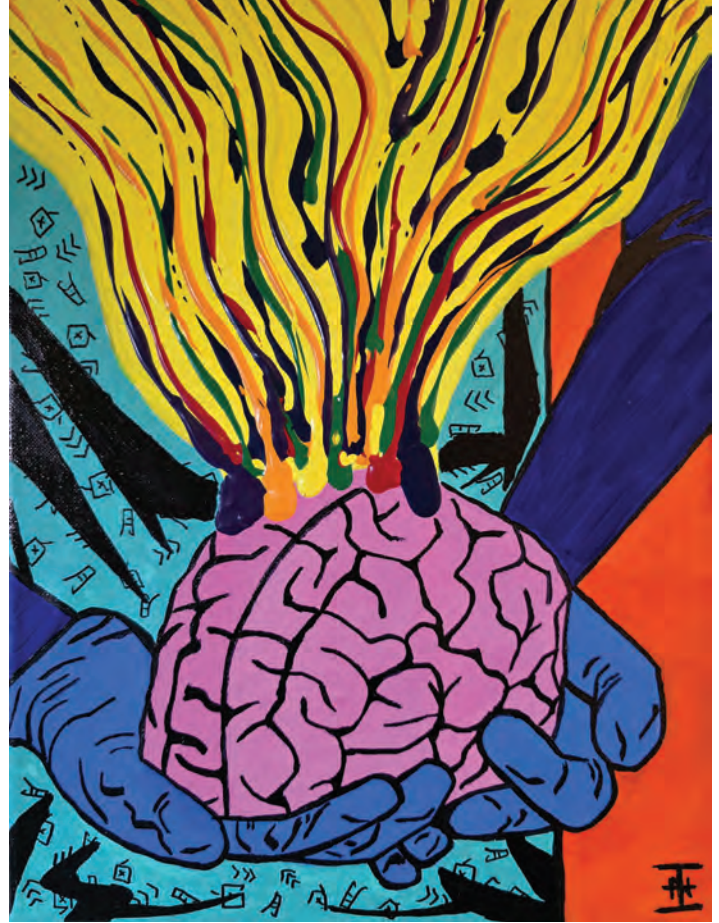
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Our Work



*Bryce Canyon
National Park,
May 2025
Andrew Labeeb
Photography*

Open for Business
Ethan Zheng
Photography





The Imprints of Man

Emily Hashem

The new texture of the world sets in:
an arm strewn over the hills
two plegic legs put hell prints in the earth
a graffiti blanket
Over the peaks of busted windows
and splintered rooftops,
the tips of cell towers needling
between your shoulder blades

But the best thing to do while lying down is love
While strewn out and left for dead
there are the last aimless fasciculations to be spent

Quiet down now
I lay over you
Match my prone body to yours and
try to map out where it went wrong
Palm to palm
If we cannot go back we will thrust forward
Belly to the steel
Nose to the ground glass
we will bear witness to the pain of this layer
As the stone beneath is exposed



under
Victoria Tse
Oil on Canvas



Shoestrings
Grace Schiavone
Photography



Rise
Grace Schiavone
Photography

I Trust You

Sonali Persaud

It was three weeks since I had last seen her
Adorn her daughters little braids with
Green clips

Hand in hand they walk down
To the clinic, where there I wait in
Blue scrubs

She is afraid of needles, but for the first time she
Holds out her arm, lifting up her
Blue sleeves

As she speaks of her busy day
Her tattoos shine in the light, while I draw her
Red blood

I prepare tests, placing drops of blood in
Buffer, watching the control line rise against the
Grey table

I sit with her for twenty minutes, as we await the results
We play with her daughter and throw her favorite toy a
Pink ball

I leave to check the results, coming back
To ask if I can speak with her behind the
White curtain

Negative for HIV, negative for Hepatitis C
And the others we would wait to see in
Five days

I watched her sigh, a subtle smile
As she turned to leave with her daughter in
Green clips

I walked back to the clinic
As I awaited my next patient I even
Sighed and subtly smiled



Phytology: Still Life and Mind
Victoria Tse
Oil on Paper

The Divine Feminine

Keertana Terala

She was only 45.

Her chest swelled with strength, with pride,
for they gave life to her two beautiful children.
And yet, that same source of life
took away hers.

"Breast cancer," they called it.
She never understood how those two words
could come together as one.
This new truth consumed each corner of her world.

The iridescence of her identity faded
with each strand of lost hair.
Slowly chipped away at who she once was,
stealing each memory of the past, its path ablaze.

Once upon a time,

She battled her simmering doubts,
caught with me in the crossfire
of my disillusionment
and my hollow desire
to become the shadow she prayed for in a daughter.

We were mirrors that never matched:
her reflection made of gold and grace,
mine blurred with denim and bare skin.
We tugged and tugged,
in our own little tug of war.

But through it all,
her beauty was never invisible to me—
her bracelets that clinked to the tune of her laughter,
the lipstick she wore like unyielding armor.

She is beautiful.
Each bundle of fallen hair
does not define her beauty,
the way her eyes sparkle
when she giggles along to her favorite chick-flick
does.

She is beautiful.

Each sleepless night and the puffy eye bags that follow
do not define her beauty,
the way she stretches her arms to the sun,
hope hidden in her broken wings,
does.

She is beautiful.

Each grain of indigestible food forthcoming in vomit
does not define her beauty,
the way she holds me as I sob in my sleep
haunted by the universe's sins,
does.

She is beautiful.

Each depressive episode consumed by tears
do not define her beauty,
the way she combats her cancer,
an unwavering stride within
the tide of tomorrow and the chaos of today,
does.

She is beautiful.

When her heart sinks and her head bows,
her eyes shine brighter than ever.
Pride echoes in her smile,
love hidden in the folds of her hands,
a strength that keeps her searching for blessings,
in a world that once forgot her.

That is what makes her
beautiful.

She was only 45,
when cancer came for her.
But she is still *here*.
Still *beautiful*.
Still *her*.
Still *my mother*.

Critical Zones
Alexis Violet
Acrylic on Canvas



Crashing Waves

Keertana Terala

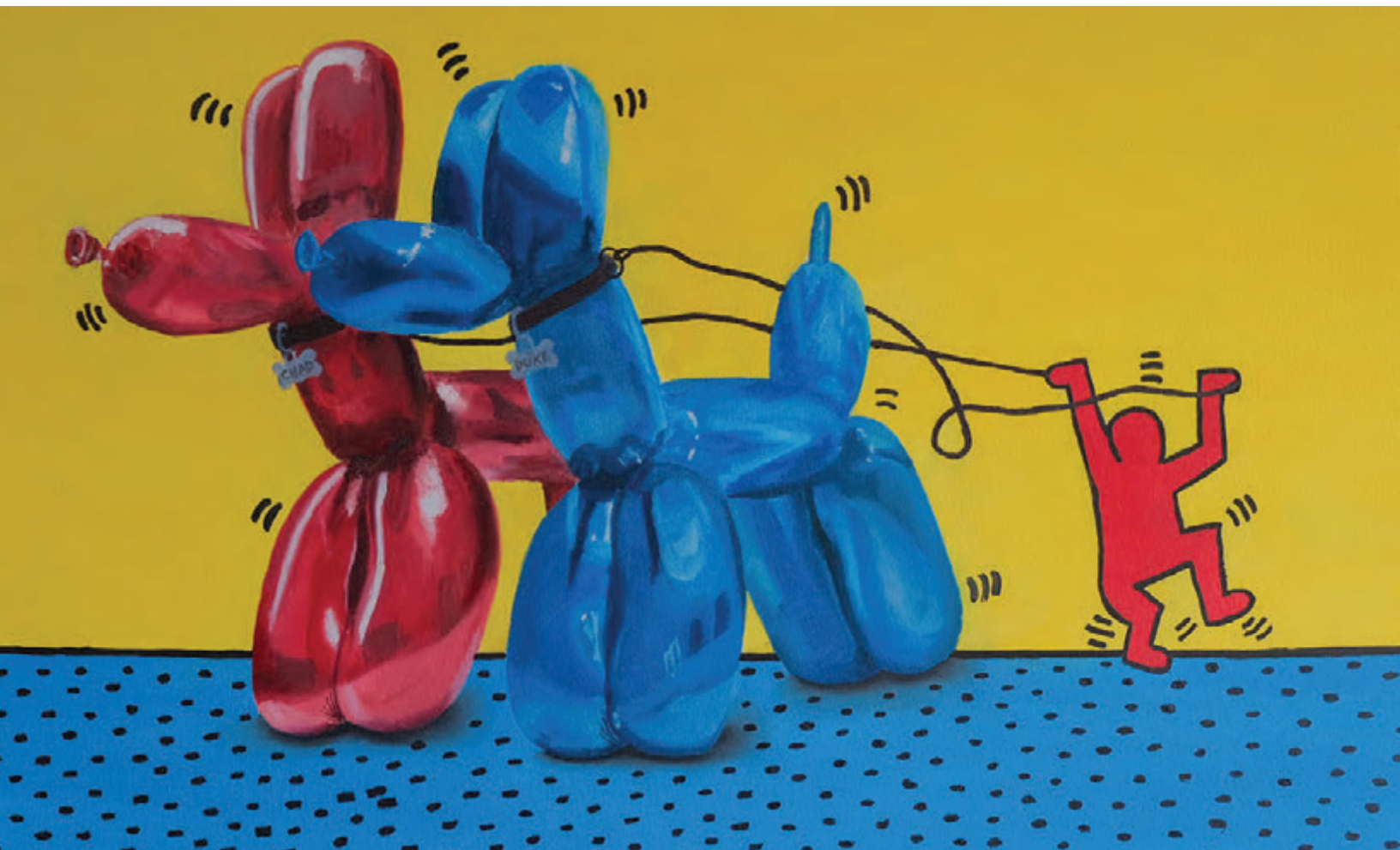
My brother's 16th birthday was followed by
Silence.

Silence like I had never
experienced before.

The words leaving my mother's lips—
alive, luminous, still full of breath—
turned my eyes to stone,
dragging me to the ground,
their weight stamped with a lump in my throat,
grief crystallized like ice,
hard and unmoving,
like swallowing the impossible whole.



Everything changed from that moment
on, as though the life we once had
didn't belong to us anymore.
Like the joy in those infinite moments
will forever be buried in time,
leaving me to bathe in the
cold, still waters
of the silence.



When Koons Met Keith
Emma Tam
Oil Painting

Twin Stars

Saharsh Satheesh

Twin stars,
coiling around each other,
riveted to the hearts,
inseparable creatures,
and they spun,
ever so faster
till their hearts puffed,
brimmed to the lungs with air,
and a magnificent pop,
though we won't feel it till millennia later
leaving all in cosmic dust.

Retraction

Ahlam Houssein

I recall glances
And mouths poised to speak
And minds ignited by the need
To breathe life into the air
Animate its diatomic particles,
Charge its stillness.

And yet—

we withdrew,
Jaws meeting roofs gradually
Air, suspended in lifelessness
Oxygen and nitrogen still bumping into each other
Without exchanging so much as
A word.

Good Luck!
Joria Le
Photography



Commute

Meera Gupta

Launched into the wormhole,
I felt my body begin to
contort
in a thousand small ways
as I hurtled through nothingness
streaked by tails of light
at once turned inside out.
I was not alone;
all around me
were astronauts
who did not look up
while we clattered together
through infinities,
through absence
faster
and
faster
until my self lurched
out of my flesh
and rattled around the capsule.
For three minutes I was a stranger,
before darkness cracked.
giving way to the flood of the familiar.
Bathed in it, I forgot all revelations,
as we pulled into the final stop.



Golden Hour
Samantha Ekanayake
Watercolor

0:00
Victoria Tse
Ink on Paper



Wings of Memory

Arlinda Mitchell-Davis

Like a butterfly, she flew away,
We hope to see her another day.
Like a butterfly, she took her flight,
Now she shines in heaven's light.

She'll always live within our heart,
Though from this world she did depart.
Her spirit lingers, calm and kind,
Forever present in our mind.

She knew it was her time to soar,
To be with God forevermore.
Her gentle smile will never fade,
In every breeze, her love is made.

So we blow into our flutes today,
To honor the butterfly who flew away.





Basilica de la Sagrada Família
Katee Kemether
Photography



I Got It First
Emma Tam
Photography



No, I Got It First
Emma Tam
Photography



fuji, shizuoka
Rachel Matayev
Photography



october moon
Allison Chang
Photography



scientia est potentia
Victoria Tse
Charcoal on Paper

An Exercise in Complacency

Emily Hashem

I hesitate to stretch out my hand,
extending permission not to feel—
comforting the comforted into interlocked inertia,
a complacent embrace.

But I am trying to learn that real love necessitates nothing.

It is full of empty nights
Real love is full of silent nights and virgin sunrises
Not one chicken-scratched page embossing the next.

I make my promises for tonight
To feel one thing at a time— maybe two, or one for each soul we passed on our walk home.
I promise to re-carve our jawlines despite the fact that earth has already hewn them,
To remake your face as the wheel becomes obsolete,
Wearing our silks as if they are not spiderwebs

Thank God! It's going to be okay
I have made certain that I am not too complacent to write when I'm happy
and drink when I'm sad,
that I'll be able to fight when the foe is before me.



The Longest Lesson

Leena Wardeh

Medical school is more intense than textbooks make it look.
But so are the friendships that rise quietly to meet the weight.
Stronger, somehow, than anything we could have studied for.

These years have a way of slowing you down just enough to notice things:
the shadows under everyone's eyes,
the soft resilience in the spaces between lectures and labs,
the steady rhythm of people showing up anyway,
as if the act itself keeps us tethered.

Somewhere along the way,
the finish line for the degree blurs.
The journey becomes less about arriving,
and more about who steadies you when the ground shifts.

There is a kind of companionship that forms,
stitched together from shared silence,
half-erased diagrams,
and the strange comfort of knowing
someone understands why you're tired without needing an explanation.



In the chaos of exams, deadlines, and the constant hum of becoming,
some moments feel almost sacred:
quiet laughter at midnight in the library,
a hand on your shoulder before you walk into an exam,
the soft, unspoken promise that
you don't have to go through any of this alone.

We came to learn the architecture of the human body,
but we are also learning the architecture of each other.
what holds, what bends, what breaks,
and what still finds a way to begin again.

The more we move through these years,
the more we realize that medicine teaches in layers.
Beneath the anatomy and diagrams,
beneath the memorized pathways,
There is a lesson about being human.
how we depend on one another,
how we hold each other up,
and how we keep going.

Maybe that's the longest lesson.
And maybe that's the most important one we'll ever learn.

Green and Red.
Artsakh, Armenia (2018)
Haig Manoukian
Photography



The Wait

Yifan Mo

We were lining up in front of these double doors
Straining our necks
To see beyond the fogged up glass
Waiting for a miracle
Yet none of us knew what it was
Only that white light through the half open window
Seems to yield a sign that beckens
And it fell on people at the front
Their heads bowed down—

And I was waiting for IT
With questions in my heart for too long,
So I left.



I Spy
Emma Tam
Photography

走馬 (sōmatō)
Victoria Tse
Acrylic, Flashe, and Pigment on Canvas



Hand-Carved Stone

Alex Matthews

the bell rings
and the procession begins
arching forward
to the beat of my hollow drum

carrying
a dozen stones
of sorrow

weighed down
with each step
my feet go numb

and my man next to me
drags his feet
cause he's splitting my load
he had no stones
but now he has twenty-three

I've burdened another
so I'm not smothered
I'm a selfish lover
you know

but the fools keep following
the ragged army
continues
to grow

dragging along wagons of my
hand-carved stone

and when they stop to ask for water
I say no
cause our supplies have run
so low

but they plead and plead
and beg of me
so I lower
my robe

their teeth sink in,
hunger reigning
as they feed upon
my soul

but who am I to deny
these people that have saved my life?

alone I couldn't carry all these stones
so I weld an army of strife

men who can't fight back cause they're so in love
they can't stand their fate, but they can't shoot the dove

that leads the pack dragging all my
hand-carved stone

but one day
when I form a baby
my little violinist
to be excreted

my men
may reach their limit
strike me down
throw a revolution

cause it's only so much time till
they realize that I have
destroyed everything they love
their child, themselves, and Heaven above

the stones they drag
they're heavy and round
they'll bring you down
I made sure each one was enough to hurt

to mark my grave
they leave a mountain of stones
and travel freely alone
accompanied by a newfound worth

I'm proud of my lovers
they've always been stubborn
they stand up for what's right

and sometimes that just involves
leaving my stone-cold corpse
rotting alone in the night

but am I ever truly alone?
surrounded by my hand-carved
murder weapons, hand-carved
romance blemishes, hand-carved
false pretenses,
hand-carved stone





Itemlabel Garden Tile
Clara Pham
Ceramic



Blossom
Alexis Violet
Origami Paper and Pipe Cleaners

the Scar

Leah Prischak

A parting line in the middle of his chest;
bubbling with the fleshy pink of hypertrophy.
The imperfection of tissue,
fighting to pull itself together
after being torn apart by the uninterested blade.

His scar dances
with the erythematous border,
as he once did with death.
The scar is loud and proud,
irregular and rare;
flaunting the success of its vindication.

The valiant victory
against all odds.

The blatant reminder of his dance persists,
year after year,
through every battle fought and won,
until he didn't.

As his skin lost its warmth,
his body lost his soul,
that scar remained just so—
holding together
the memory of a man
who could not be broken.



Sea Depths: Fish Contact
Vincent Tse
Acrylic

Softening

Abigail Lamnin

In the serene solitude when the sun sends off the moon,
my fingers flirt with the rustling of the plastic bag
I rip it wide open
I let the crunchy clusters collect, tinkering against the glass bowl
I grab a spoon
I sit down
I pour the milk out
The crunchy
clusters transform
They're now softer with more flavor

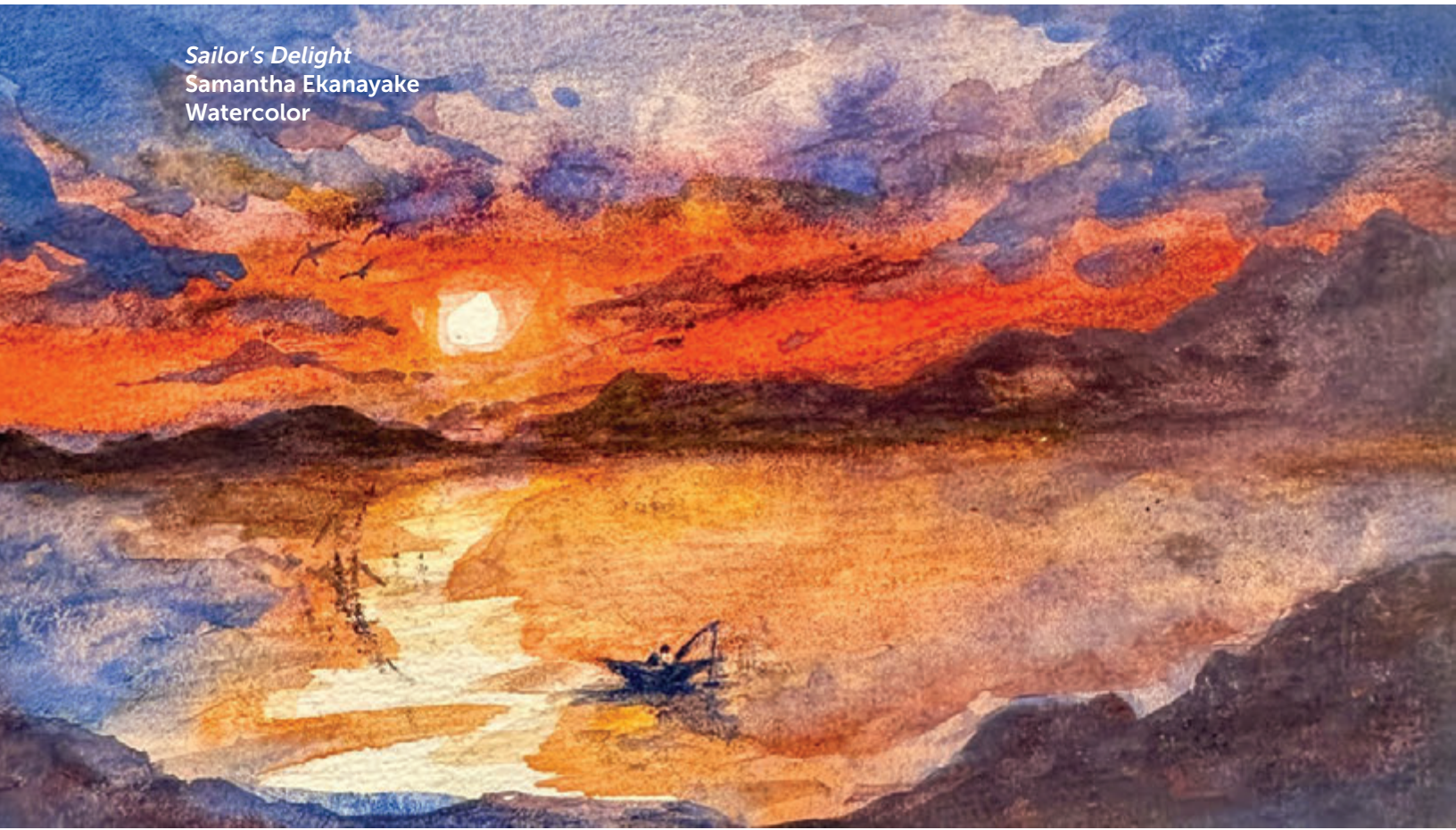


Tea for Two
Emily Luckenbach
Acrylic

At World's End
Samantha Ekanayake
Watercolor



Sailor's Delight
Samantha Ekanayake
Watercolor



Deeper Soil

Kara Peteschmidt

My eyes attracted
To the depth of the soil
Solitude and strength
I dare not wonder

Yet overturning old leaves
Over and over
I yearn for a new tale
Which I'll pleasingly tell her

But the words run out dry
My heart aches for a sound
My tongue paralyzed
And my skin starts to pound

Our tightly bound tie
Unraveled to death
Our life full of words
Broken with nothing left

When someone sees

Vladimir Kirichenko

When they see me, they see veil, not skin but coat,
a word that swallows name and human noise alike.
Gazes seeks answers, not eyes
their words are symptoms before they're stories.

The world becomes a chart I can't unwrite:
pulses ticking in wrists I don't hold,
breaths measured by the tremor of a sigh,
quiet calculations of what can go wrong.

It's hard to trust the beauty of a moment,
when the mechanism looms beneath it.
Even laughter feels like a psychosis
a darting gaze a hidden evaluation.

And when someone looks too long, I wonder
can they see the tremor beneath my calm?
That I, too, am soft and sleepless,
stitched together by unknown grace.

Still, I smile, the way Jeff Med trains us
steady, sterile, and utter glass words.
Everyone says *Medicine*,
yet no one remembers
I'm alive.

Ice Castle
Mauli Maniar
Photography

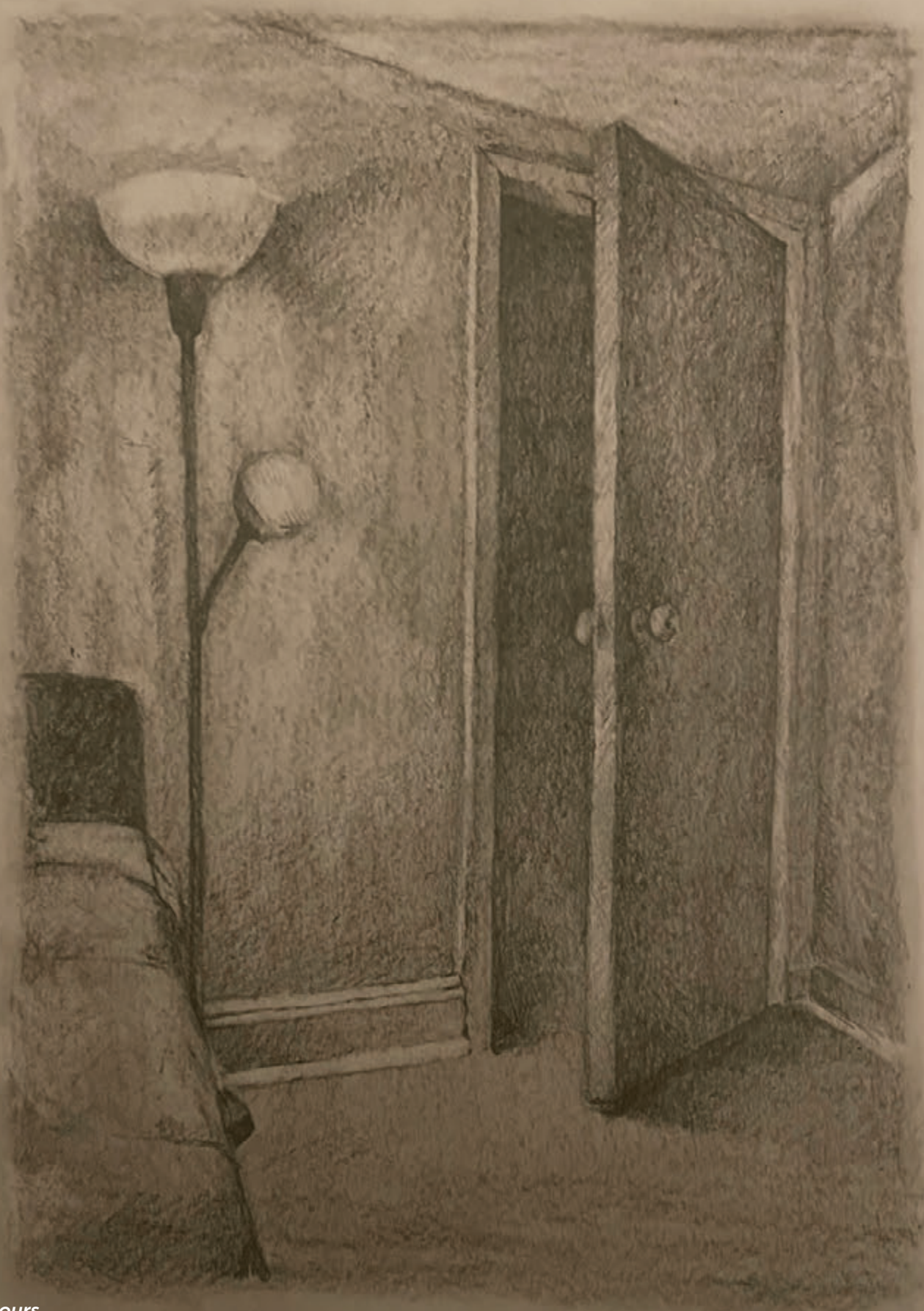




The Brain on Drugs
Ilanit Sedek
Oil on Canvas

Ex Lap
Maia Cole
Acrylic on Canvas





After Hours
Viraj Deshpande
Graphite on Paper

if the ceiling could speak

Ahlam Houssein

it would stare at cascades of filaments rooted in our scalps
as we glare at devices that glare back at us
while our heads hang in surrender to gravity.
its voice would emerge as an ethereal thing
chords unstruck, unheard,
carrying words unspoken
and a laugh so heavy it bellows between our bones.

the speckles of dust on its surface
spell stories of whispered confessions
 of quiet despair
 of jubilant celebration
 of love found and lost
 of dreams that have been
 of dreams yet to be.

as it stands outstretched, in solemn repose,
a witness to our triumphs and trials,
it is a sentinel and a spectator.

if the ceiling could speak,
i imagine it would tell me
the answers i searched for in its plaintive gaze
all of those sleepless nights spent staring ahead.
and if the roof could speak
i imagine it would tell me
of the storms it weathered, the weight it bore
as a silent witness to the passage of time.
and if the sky could speak
i imagine it would tell me
of the tears it weeps for humanity
while we hide indoors in fear of our own reflections.
and if space could speak
i imagine it would tell me of infinity
 of vastness
 of abyss
of how it envelops the ceilings and roofs and skies
of the interconnectedness of all things,
After Hours and of those things still feeling alone.



Bryce Canyon National Park, May 2025
Andrew Labeeb
Photography



The Summit
Ajay Garg
Photography

2am
Viraj Deshpande
Graphite on Paper



For Generations

Keertana Terala

I want to write poems for the silenced.
Those whose tears evaporate off their skin,
stand still in time,
mixed within sweat,
buried under melanin.
tears that tie them to
a vow of silence.

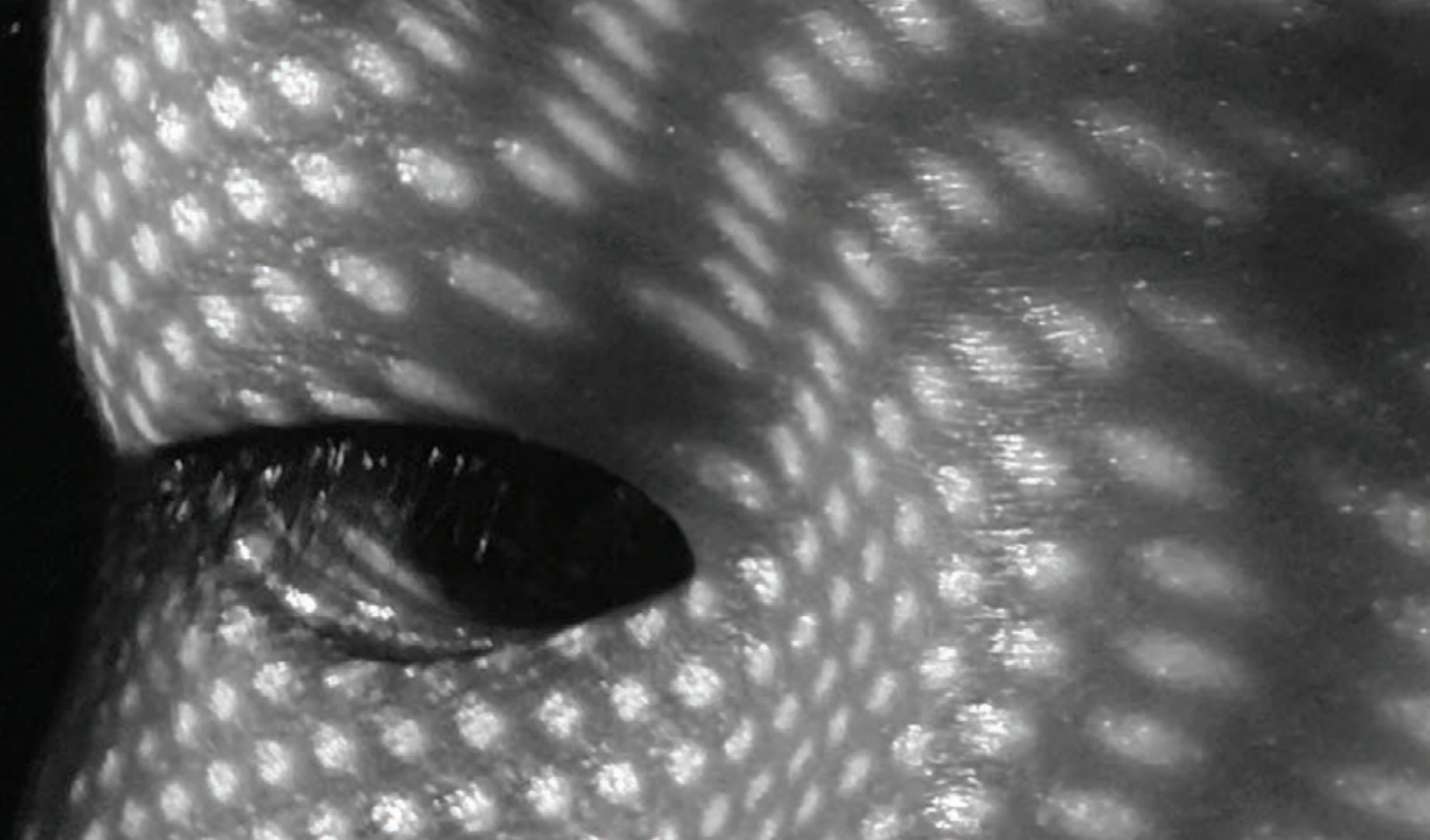
I never want to question my past
why she held no room for a dream—

I dream of a time where my hands will heal.
Where the cracks among my fingertips,
along the folds of each crevice cratered in my palm
will share a space,
a moment in time
with her:
The woman who never echoed the screams of her own heart beat,
the way it flutters,
pitter-patters,
when her face is left marked with
the sins of him.
I dream of a time where my broken hands
may heal.

I want to recite the lines of a time when
the sunlight bleeding through my
window
echoed each morning's call: chanting "you couldn't possibly live more than once".

I want to sing like the siren,
wailing between and across double yellow lines
whispers of a prayer for tomorrow.

I want to stop counting each
breath, holding back each footstep,
I want to unleash daybreak at those who walk over the voiceless,
I want to meet their gaze with the weight of generations.



Eyes of the Beholder
Ha My Luu
Photography

Bystander

Sam Schepps

With enough practice, you get used to being a bystander. To being out of the way, a witness to the most important moments of someone's life. To seeing the devastation of a final breath and the triumph of a first as nothing more than a set piece, an object in the background. You wish, you yearn to play a bigger part, to be the hand on the shoulder, the voice in the room, the eyes that guide from the center of the storm. But you put your wish aside. It's not your role to have a role, not your moment to be part of the moment. And so you watch, waiting your turn.

Just another bystander.

Standing by.



Anger Practice

Abigail Lamnin

I want to be angry.

Anger toward you gives me the illusion of control— a shield against what's softer underneath.

If I can name you mean, I can point.

If I can point, I don't have to touch my own pain.

And then it hits me: it's not polite to point. Politeness I once saved for a stranger in aisle four— my cart apologetically grazing the backs of her heels. When we made contact I felt her indignation thicken the air, a noxious gas.

Her gaze—unforgiving, parental.

In it, I saw the dark places I sometimes pass through but refuse to stay.

Through anger, finally, I see another way.

What Night Brings
Samantha Ekanayake
Watercolor



Bliss

Sonali Persaud

Taking steady steps, she slowly slides along dew-laden grass,
moist earth between toes, crickets singing overhead.

The sun glistens through skies filled with
seas of dark trees and torn leaves.

Branches crick and turn every which way,
reaching their broomstick hands out towards her.

Her throat, scratchy and brittle,
crackles with autumn leaves through soft breaths.

The stream ahead sparkles violently,
touting its clear, icy water.

Tadpoles scurry underneath the surface,
biding time before their tails become legs.

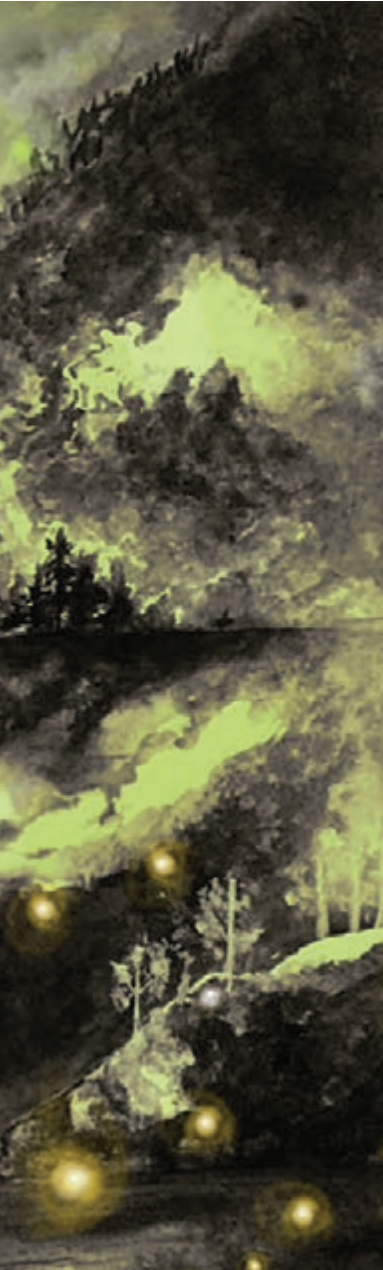
With one more step, she reaches the stream edge,
her toes dangling off the edge, grazing the water.

She lays down, facing the bright sun, arms outstretched,
fingers inches above glacial relief.

No motion to calm her withered throat,
no effort to ease her desiccant lips.

They look at her, confused
as to what causes her pause.

She closes her eyes, and they can see,
she has met bliss.





Brunch on Rittenhouse
John Winton
Photography

hometown homage

Allison Chang

we sit in your volkswagen
with the engine running steam
in frigid january air let
the windows fog up with
our bursts of laughter boisterous
boiling over with warmth

inside the diner we lean
over syrupy pancakes exchange
the latest of when you last
heard from x or saw on
instagram that y has a
new house new kid just
married engaged broke up

we marvel at how
everything nothing
has changed



Puesto de frutas
Matthew Kraft
Photography



Sustenance
Haleema Siddiqui
Photography

Tower
Matthew Kraft
Photography



Streams of Light
John Winton
Photography





Stillness Between Two Skies
Ajay Garg
Photography

Immersion in Autumn

Ahlam Houssein

Tell me to breathe, and I will capture
Each atom's vibration as it swivels through my lungs.
Adrift with autumn's ambrosial scents,
The leaves around me traverse routes
Unknown to humankind in their source or destination
Yet fossilized in the memory of time and nature—
In nature and time.

But could crystals belonging to months ahead
Intrude on this moment, mid-Fall, and fall
Onto a tongue unprepared to be greeted
With a glacial sting from small bundled flakes?
Huddled in fear, together they appear
And momentarily all are gone—
Their appearance anomalous, their invitation unheard,
Their departure apologetic, their stay ephemeral.

But autumn summons these flakes occasionally
To grant them a preview of who shall receive them
As her season dwindles and humankind is placed
In a subnivean cradle beneath the depths
Of winter's solemn gaze.

The *foliage is still here*, I remind myself.
The sun's rays travel with the autumn breeze.
The leaves still sway as the crystals trace their veins,
The flowers beneath trees receiving droplets of water
Once the flakes humbly retreat to the ground.

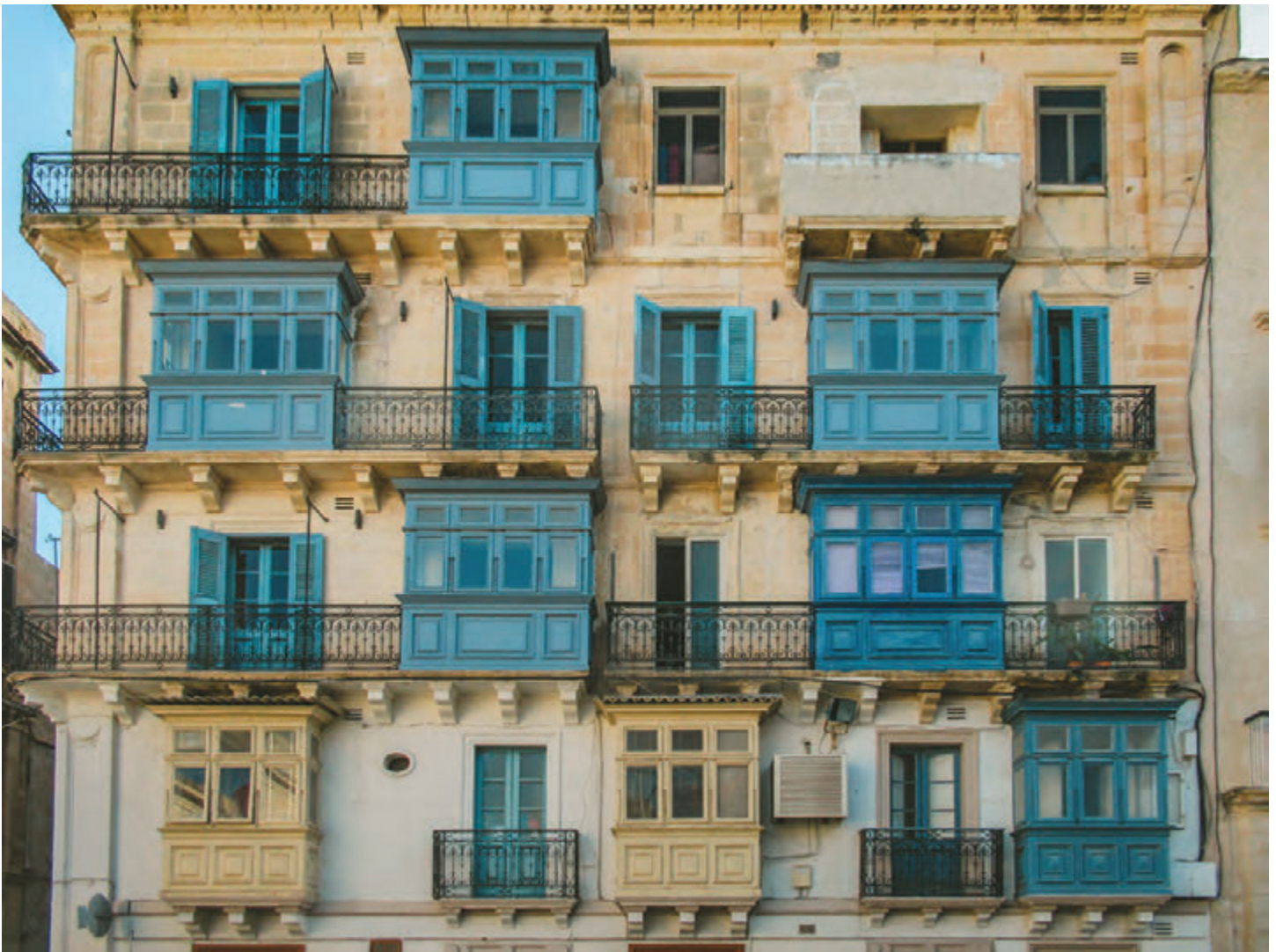


Top Surgery Blues
 Maia Cole
 Ink on Paper

MAIA COLE



Crush
Ajay Garg
Photography



Too Small

Kara Peterschmidt

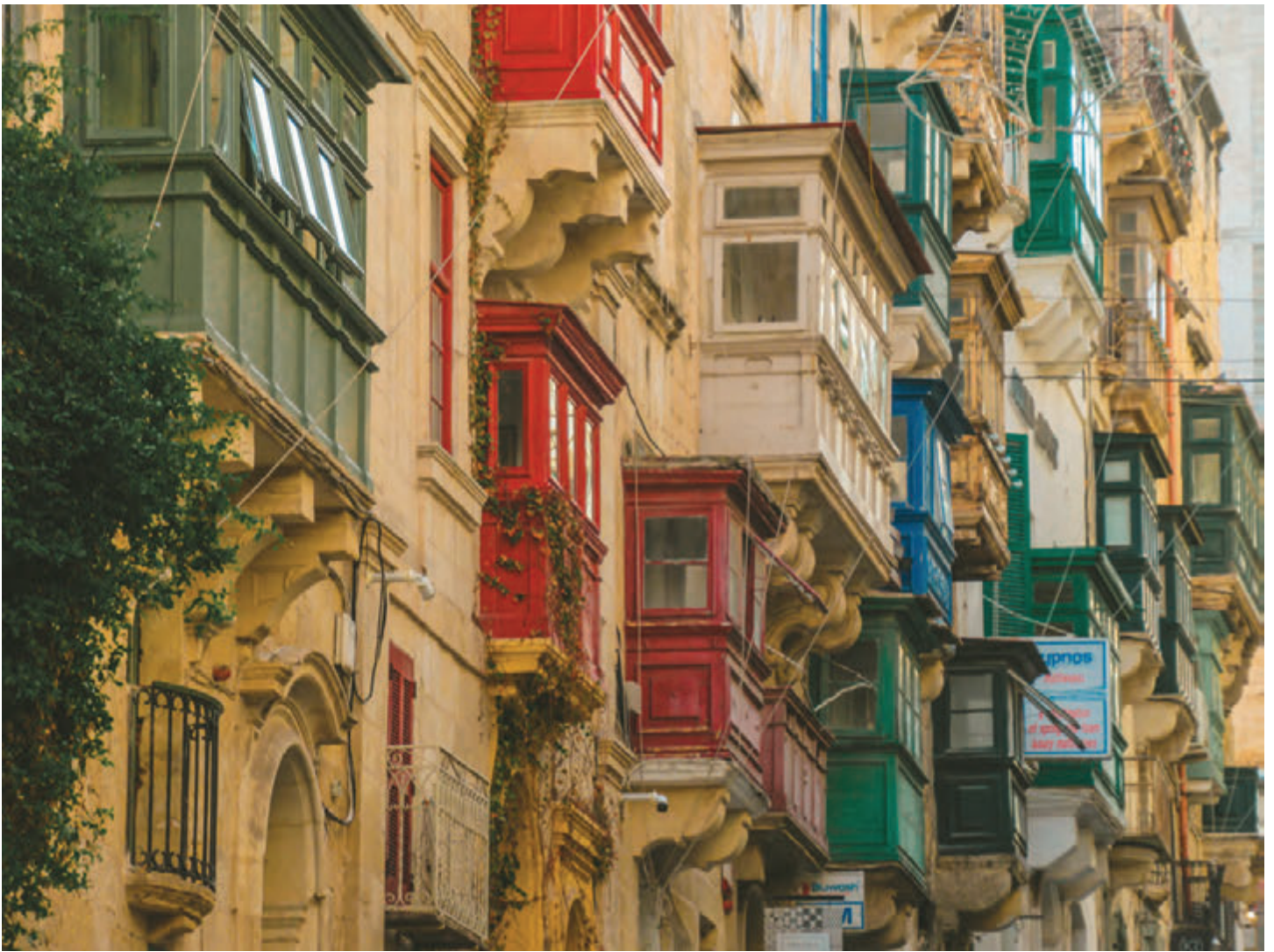
Blue Balconies
John Winton
Photography

The world is too big
And I am too small
Deep in the dunes
I enter, cover, crawl

The ants go up my fingers
As my gaze shifts to the east
I catch a breaking whisper
Of the food I feed the beast

They sit me at my chair
Scolding tone in their teeth
Redness pools below
And covers my small feet

For the world is far too big
And my body far too small
Dripping deep in red
It's closer than I recalled.



Maltese Gallargi
John Winton
Photography

Inevitable Heat Death of the Universe

Meera Gupta

The greatest philosophers in the world
are currently seated in my grandma's living room
bending spacetime so rapidly
my head hurts.

If we had loved her more,
loved her less? Were there spare
fibers of our being we forgot to throw in,
timelines we would have unlocked
with the sheer might of wanting more?

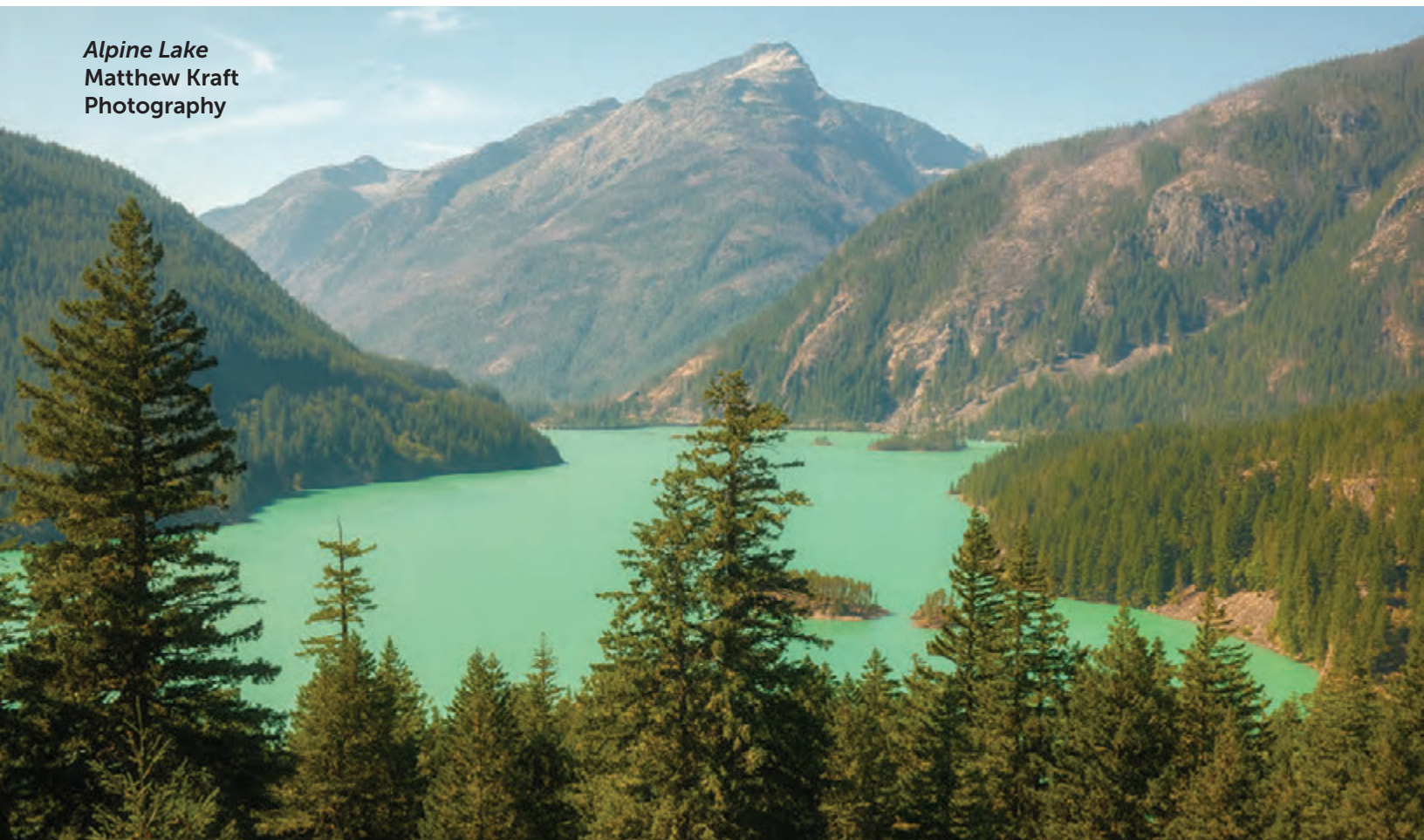
All these questions to leave the one unspoken
did we kill her?

I excuse myself from the dining
room, dizzy with talk of predestination,
and god, of hospitals
and breath.

time denatures in the hot Delhi sun.
if I go into the kitchen she will be
there, or else she is watching TV upstairs,
in her bedroom two years ago.
I close my eyes until I can see her,
then linger there, indefinitely.

when I blink a few times,
we are on my grandfather's bed.
He deals the cards to my aunt and I,
and despite the absence,
we begin to play.

Alpine Lake
Matthew Kraft
Photography



Rock
Matthew Kraft
Photography





Attachment Theory

Jennifer Velazquez

We are born needing each other.

The first thing a mother cat does after giving birth is wrap her body around her babies and coax them to feed.

When she senses they are in danger, she holds them by their scruff and carries them to safety.

My cousin says I am the best person to cuddle with because, in any situation, I find a way to touch

the person next to me. I can't fall asleep holding you, but I won't sleep until my leg is crossed over your ankle.

I've spent the better part of my life trying to convince myself

I don't need anyone. But when my best friend asks to cuddle, what can I do

but push my body up against theirs and let the soft warmth of it carry me to sleep?



The Obscurity of Emotion
Ajay Garg
Photography

Playing Dress-Up in Medical School

Charlotte Slavick

They tried on a coat
Of awkward proportions
Its arms intimidatingly far-reaching.
Its deep-set and steadfast wrinkles a homage to the fruitful longevity of a past well-worn.
Its color supernaturally bright,
unpolluted, and angelic.

That type of thing some people dare not touch for fear of divine contamination.

But within such complexity lies
That captivating piece of artistry dancing along the mid-clavicular line
Minute but profound in detail.
Engraved in perfect embroidery, encapsulating the coat's promise
Anticipated potential.
Maybe it fits.

Another glance gives way to the possibilities of such a preposterous presumption.

Its capability stuck in contemplative limbo.

What brings you in today?
Don't be silly.
On a scale from 1 to 10, how comfortable are you playing dress up?



Blooming Stillness
Ajay Garg
Photography

Pensive
Jacob Schwell
Photography



Sunrise
Jacob Schwell
Photography



The Hand That Let Go

Haleema Siddiqui

A little bird tucks beneath his mother's wing,
Sheltered in shadow, in warmth, in everything.
At first he trembles, clutching at her side,
Unsure of the world, the risks it hides.
Through nurture, through love both steady and true,
The fragile fledgling becomes something new.
Soon he stretches, a graceful dove,
Testing the sky she taught him to love.
He shows off his tricks, loops and quick turns,
His mother watching, her pride softly burns.
They glide through the air, wingtip to wing,
His mother guarding him still from everything.
He flies faster now, stronger, more sure,
While she lags behind, her strength less secure.
Time feathers her wings with wear and age,
And she remembers when the world felt wide and strange.
She knows the moment is drawing near,
To let him go, despite the fear.
With a steady heart, she tells him to roam,
To chase far skies and make them home.
"I'll watch from above," she whispers afar,
"I'll always be here—look for my star."
He clings to her tightly, refusing to part,
Promising his strength, promising his heart.
But the winds grow harsh, her flight grows slow,
And she knows she can't follow where he must go.
She gives him one kiss, soft and brief,
"I love you, my son," she says beneath the grief.
He watches her rise into fading light,
The last warm sun slipping into night.
His heart breaks open as tears take flight,
Grief carried on wings of endless height.
And still, the little bird continues on,
Meeting new skies from dusk to dawn.
Yet with every breath the open air brings,
He remembers who taught him to use his wings—

My mother made me who I am today.



Flirting Red-Winged Blackbird
Jacob Schwell
Photography





Crossroads
Joria Le
Photography

Work of the Heart

MaryElena Sumerau

The heart is a heavy topic in medical school. I've held it gingerly through double-layered nitrile gloves in anatomy lab, tracing the chambers that gave billions of beats before its finale. I've sketched out the interlaced vessels and their complex paths across library boards, poring over those connections for hours with my classmates. I've studied how to bring a heart back from the brink with drugs, electrochemistry, and a strong dose of hope. I've learned to navigate a broken heart's sharp shards, knowing I'll be the person that family will always remember as the one who shattered their world with the news. I learned all of this and more, but no curriculum taught me how to understand the troublesome thing pounding in my own chest.

The first time it truly broke, it felt like the pieces just rolled recklessly between my ribs, piercing organs over and over again. I tried to puzzle those pieces back together, but they fit all wrong as a clunky, crooked mass in my chest. To let those fibers truly heal, I'd need to let them fully break open and reform in their own time. I realized my heart was gently breaking those mottled pieces and then weaving them again, and again, and again.

Again, each time I embraced my soft heart with all its breakableness and big feelings
Again, with every "I believe in you" on grainy video chats or bright sticky notes
Again, with each exhale the speckled dog breathed into my side during sleepless nights
Again, every time loved ones surrounded me with the care of home-cooked meals and handwritten letters for my fridge
Again, as I met new versions of old friends over the seasons, from wedding rings to fresh starts across continents
Again, the first time I watched the sunrise after sprinting across the hospital to save him
Again, the first time a patient gifted me her secrets, wrapped in tears and an embrace
Again, as the newborn landed in my waiting hands after a night of laborious tears
Again, when the older sister read my patient to sleep one last time as we clicked off the ventilator
Again, when I met the boy with kind eyes, steady hands, and a bookshelf to share
Again, as he brushed a kiss across my scarred knuckles and slipped me a key for a door that's always open
Again, on quiet patio mornings with a growing family known for their gentle vinyl records and strong coffee

All this taught me what a healing heart can do. Maybe everyone's heart is meant to break again and again, just to mend again and again to become an ever-evolving mosaic – including my own. The pieces never break or heal alone, for even as those fibers snap, stronger strands are already filling the fresh gaps. Even as the heart heals, those broken pieces still twinge to remind us of what brought us here. I'll spend my life in awe of what the heart can do, watching each one expand into its own pounding tale of resilience and joy, and appreciating the one beating in my own chest.



Cribbage
Lois Schwarz
Painting

The Surgeon's Fruit

Emma Houry

I abandoned the gloves, going
bare
the crack of the hard shell
the initial picking of the white
film
to finally get
to the red pieces

small pieces
numerous
red,
i look down and my hands have
now changed color
red juice colors the wrinkles that
make up my weathered hands

she looks at me
ماذا تفعل what are you doing
dont go to all that trouble

I look at her smiling
ive spent years
working
pushing
all for the color red to paint my
eyes

من يحبك يقشر لك رمانة
for you, I would
peel a pomegranate
anytime

Bison Xing
Emma Tam
Photography





Sunsets with a Siberian Cat

Saharsh Satheesh

Every sunset he would see
a Siberian cat ambling
along the sidewalks
until one day he sat down
at the curb and waited
to see what the feline would do.
Perplexed, it slowly walked,
till it was by his side,
and it rubbed its soft coat
against his fleecy jacket
and sat.

Straight ahead was the sunset,
something he loved watching,
but today he had
a companion.

He considered stroking
the back of the cat,
but she looked relaxed,
with the sparkle of colors
reflecting off her eyes,
so he sighed with content,
and resumed indulging.

Grief

Jennifer Maskery

What is grief? I ask myself as I ponder the loss of my loved one Grief is an interesting creature. For it has no plan, no purpose or warning.

Grief. Why does it show up in the middle of the day or night?

In the middle of a traffic jam? I find myself thinking of all our memories and thoughts flood my mind and my heart races as I reminisce and suddenly I'm crying in rush hour traffic.

But why is this feeling of reminiscing so overwhelming and sad. Oh yes grief.

Grief. It has no feelings it doesn't care about me or anyone. It simply shows up when it pleases to remind me that my own life is very fragile and can be lost or broken at any moment Grief? It shows its ugly head and tears me apart.

But why? And for how long? Will I always have these moments of silence where my mind races and I feel I should be reminiscing on the good times but instead of feeling the warmth and love I felt with my loved one I now feel hopeless alone and tired.

Grief? It's like a broken window and no matter how much it hurts I continue to keep reaching through to the other side to see what's there.

But why? Shouldn't I have learned my lesson by now? I guess my heart just wants to feel the comfort of my loved one once more.

Grief is just that. Grief.



Fall Fog
Brady Stallman
Photography



Catedral Primada de Toledo
Katee Kemether
Photography

Amalfi Daydream
Julia Baran
Photography





Nyhavn
Lois Schwarz
Painting

Where Are You From?

Haleema Siddiqui

Home is a place we return to,
a comfort we carry,
a knowing that never leaves.

"Where are you from?"
A question I answer differently
than my mother and my father.

At just twenty-three,
they chose to walk away
from a system that could not offer
their children room to rise.
They left the streets that raised them,
the language of their childhood,
for a future where their children could-

They carried only what could not be taken:
values, resilience, hope.
Their old homes now live
in photographs on unfamiliar shelves.

Siblings scattered across the world,
each pulled by a different tide,
yet under the same sun
they remember the same laughter,
the same moments of youth
they left behind for a promised tomorrow.

They left in hope of something better,
leaving pieces of their hearts
in a land that shaped them-
a land that no longer feels like theirs
because they had to grow beyond it.

The principles remain.
The identity endures.

But for our chance to dream without limits,
to be met with fairness, not ceilings,
to have the world open its doors-
my parents laid down pieces
that made them Pakistani.

And with every step forward we take,
they remember
they were brave enough to go first.

Contributors

Abigail Lamnin, College of Health Professions (JCHP), 2027
Ahlam Houssein, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Ajay Garg, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Alex Matthews, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Alexis Violet, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Allison Chang, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Andrew Labeeb, College of Health Professions (JCHP), 2028
Arlinda Mitchell-Davis, Kanbar College of Design, Engineering, and Commerce (KANBAR), 2026
Brady Stallman, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Charlotte Slavick, College of Population Health (JCPH), 2026
Clara Pham, College of Humanities and Sciences (JCHS), 2028
Emily Hashem, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Emily Luckenbach, College of Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), 2026
Emma Khoury, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Emma Tam, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Ethan Zheng, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Grace Schiavone, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Ha My Luu, College of Pharmacy (JCP), 2028
Haig Manoukian, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Haleema Siddiqui, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Ilanit Sedek, College of Health Professions (JCHP), 2029
Jacob Schwell, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2026
Julia Baran, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Jennifer Maskery, School of Continuing & Professional Studies (JSCPS), 2027
Jennifer Velazquez, College of Life Sciences (JCLS), 2026
John Winton, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Joria Le, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Kara Peterschmidt, College of Health Professions (JCHP), 2027
Karan Amin, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Katee Kemether, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Keertana Terala, College of Health Professions (JCHP), 2029
Leena Wardeh, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Leah Prischak, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Lois Schwarz, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Maia Cole, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
MaryElena Sumerau, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2026
Matthew Kraft, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Mauli Maniar, College of Pharmacy (JCP), 2027
Meera Gupta, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Nicholas Wang, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Rachel Matayev, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Saharsh Satheesh, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Samantha Ekanayake, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2026
Sam Schepps, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2026
Spencer Haber, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Sonali Persaud, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Viraj Deshpande, College of Health Professions (JCHP), 2029
Victoria Tse, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2029
Vincent Tse, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2027
Vladimir Kirichenko, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028
Yifan Mo, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC), 2028

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