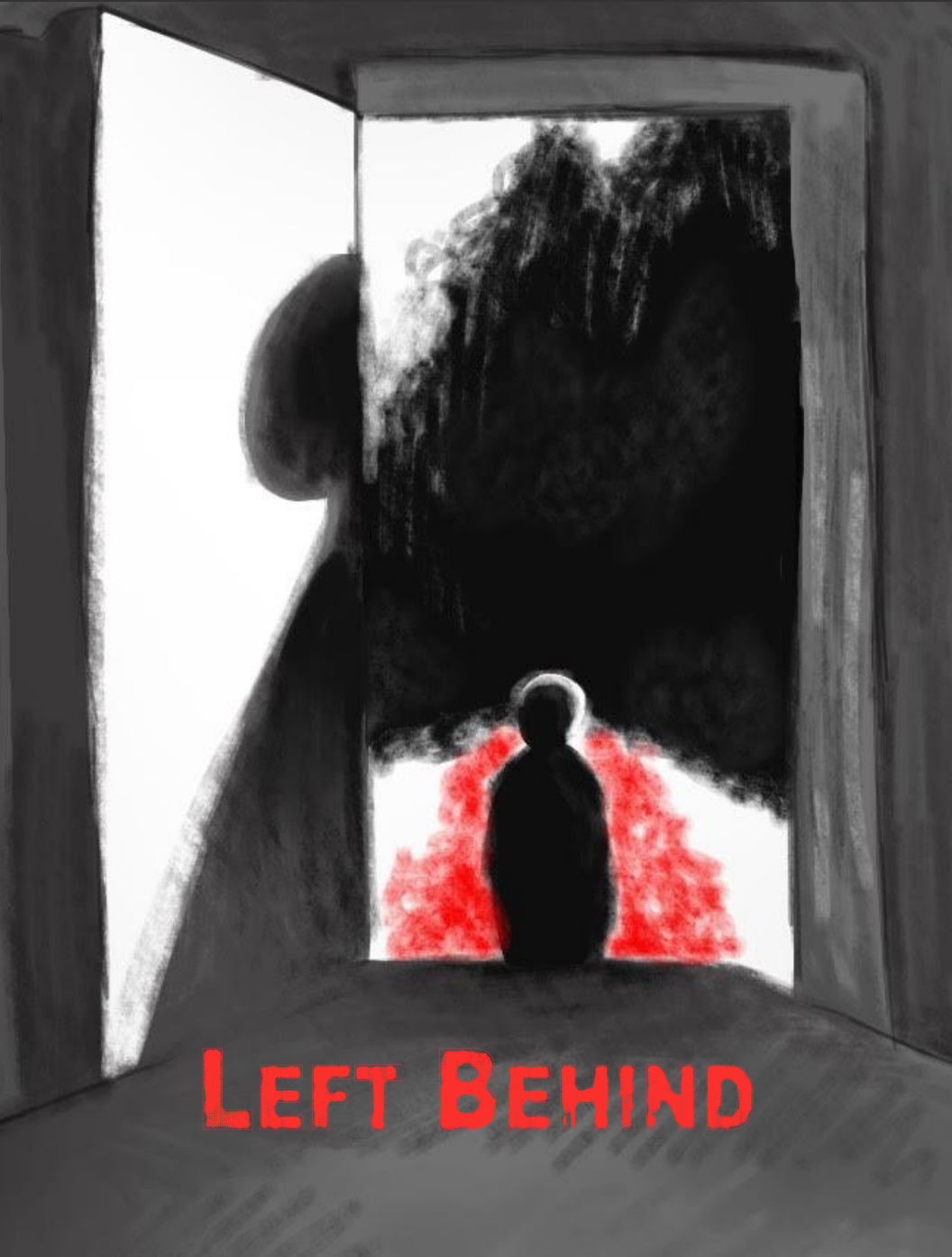


ISSUE #19, 2024-2025

ATLANTIS ABLAZE



LEFT BEHIND

Our Staff

CO-EDITORS

AMY FLORES & CAITLYN LUNGSTRUM

CONTENT

RILEY GIGSTEAD

JENAI GREER

ISABELLA PEREZ

DINA SANTIAGO

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MAXWELL EVANS

AMY FLORES

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ALYSE STEVENS

MARKETING

KATE ASBRA

ASHLEY BAEZ

ANALIAH BROWN

ALYSSA DANISH

AALIYAH MARCO

ROWAN MCCLURE

CAMDEN TONER

SAMUEL VALDEZ

A NOTE

FROM THE CO-EDITORS

Amidst chaos and construction, this issue, *Left Behind*, feels especially meaningful as we prepare to transform our old campus and look towards new horizons, carrying forward creativity and resilience, prepared to embrace what lies ahead of us.

We're so grateful to our staff for being supportive, hardworking artists.

Thank you for being a part of this journey with us, and we hope these pages inspire you as they have inspired us.

Yours in creativity,

Amy & Caitlyn

Co-Editors, Atlantis Ablaze

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Photos

Isabella Perez

I stumbled into the depths
Of my phone's photo storage
A place quite like no other

I found this old picture of me
Twinkling eyes that I rarely see
These lonesome days

A curdled heart gone cold
After the winds of a particularly harsh winter
Sent it rambling to the hands of a clock

Ticking,

Ticking,

Ticking...

Until the day it finally stopped

Ghostly figures fading into the background
A phone can only carry so much before
The happy moments begin to absorb
The bitterness I feel today

But there's this loose, airy feeling
Treading within my bones and my mind
How long must I remain cold

Florida has heat like no other
And the birds' warbling feels like home
And there is nowhere else in the world
That I am meant to be besides here
In the present, not past
A future at last, appearing before me
And the pictures in my phone
All seem like just
Good memories



Isabella Perez

i still
water her garden,
waiting...

Caitlyn Lungstrum

Waiting for Nobody

Samuel Valdes

Constant chatter
Rings throughout my ears
My voice part of a crowd
Insignificant
Howling words
That I can't make out
My throat, aflame
Burning with fatigue
Though I can't speak
I watch as people disperse
While I wait for no one
Maybe if I pretend that
Someone will come
They will
Then I won't be alone anymore
Though I know its false hope
As I fail to reach out anymore
And I'm left alone, once again

Youth

Rowen McClure

I've been too big for my body from the moment I was born.

Ten going on twenty,
begging for independence,
The freedom to exist freely.

My mother would laugh as I spoke of my dreams.

“I'm going to change someone's life!”
I seemed capable at the time.
Yet change is a cruel thing.

Excellence burned away into ash.
Coughing out of my grandmother's mouth
Who placed her hopes in me
When I won my first award at 13 years old.

I've been too small for my body from the moment I matured.
Seventeen going on seven,
not a single medal under my belt,
yet a heart filled to the very brim.

The farther childhood gets the more I want it.
Hugging a teddy bear that seems far too small.
Juvenile ignorance truly was blissful,

even now, as I face tomorrow.

There are no hopes in me anymore.

Nobody's pride and joy.

I am mine and mine alone.

As I kiss my youth goodbye,

I realize now the blessing and loneliness

That is independence.



cont.

“Devotion”

Alyssa Danish

My father talks about me in the past tense
As if I was gone, he knew I was sick
He tried to help me in any way that he could
He didn't understand what I had
He was convinced my spirit was detached,
missing
He just wanted to heal me

He is blind

He just wanted to free me
He was devoted to save me, that scared me
He was told by everyone around us
How to save me
He was so stuck in his ways
Only he knew what was right

He can't speak

He sacrificed all for me
Bowed his head at the altar one last time
He trusted the wrong woman
Even when my mother begged him not to
He trusted the wrong god
Even when he saw me getting worse

His hands broken

It's not his fault, he didn't know any better

If there's an afterlife, are you still willing to be my father?

He lost his mind

For What

Samuel Valdes

Time once crawled to a halt
Now endlessly speeding forward
An unmoving march toward inevitability
Lives spent wanting nothing less than to grow
up
To leave everything behind
And make something of yourself
For what?
Heartbeats slowing
Befalling themselves
With regrets plastered
Against memories
Everything, everyone
Succumbed to turmoil against time
For what?
Left to fend in a world they can't survive in



Isabella Perez

Friendship Bracelets

Camden Toner

We made friendship bracelets
We said we'd be friends forever
But when our paths parted ways,
the bracelets started to tear

Venturing through different paths,
growing as new people,
gaining new experiences
The bracelets continued to tear

You stopped reaching out
I never even attempted to
We gave each other space
The bracelets held by a thread

I look back on when we left
Do you look back too?
I look back on all our memories
The bracelet now lays at my feet

Not By My Side

Jaleah Rios

I should have noticed the signs, it started when
you left my side

You would carry on down the path never looking
back

But if you had turned around for just a moment,
You would see that I had stopped miles ago

I would pretend this is fine, as if it did not hurt
every time

That you would go on without me

As if it did not hurt every time that you would
exclude me from the crowd

So I'd walk behind, wiping the tears out of my
eyes

Hoping my smile hid all the pain I felt inside

I've heard a thousand whispers being shared and
yet I still don't know what they mean

My heart aches to be a part of what you have

Though I'm lost in the background of your story

Shut the door right in my face and expect me just
to follow behind

Talk as if I wasn't there

Like I was a ghost blending in with the shadows

Slowly becoming friends with oblivion

But I am sick of all the lies

Stuck in secrecy every time I ask what you're
doing

It's always no reply
I guess I knew this would be the ending
I should have noticed the signs, because they
started as soon as you left my side



Bloom

Dina Santiago

My mom has very few wrinkles
And large becoming eyes
I observe her now from the other side of the
couch
Grey hair glittering like melting snow trails

It'll take a gong to get her attention
Her eyes narrow strictly focused
On the high-speed graphics
Reflecting on her windless face

I can see the world lifting off her shoulders
Heavy honorable cloak
Evaporating only to
Hover over her head
Like a threatening
Rain cloud

Even in silence
Her joy is contagious
Seamlessly transporting
To a time where the only
Silver on her body
Were her precious baby teeth

I wonder who she was then

When the world was a pebble
Yet to be discovered
Yet needing sacrifice

If time traveling is her ability
Then inheritably
She gave me the power
Of invisibility
Camouflage
Leather and skin
Blending into your environment
To the point where there is no difference
Between me
And the space I'm in

My dad finds sanctuary
Laying on my twin sized bed
Enveloped in large fluffy pillows
He'll poke fun at my
Harry Styles poster
He says he never hung anything
In his room
Save a heavy coat
And the car keys he used
To drive himself to work

Slowly, his eyes close
Falling into deep sleep
Dizzy smile, arms spread

cont.

cont.

Feet half off the bed frame

Slowly, his eyes close
Falling into deep sleep
Dizzy smile, arms spread
Feet half off the bed frame

In the gardens
I'll point out the tree's
He'll notice the flowers
The glow of a delicate petal
He urges me to move
Through nature without
Heavy steps
Or worldly shoulders
His words weighted
With despair and pity
Like he's in on some
Miserable inside joke
Afraid to hear me
Laughing in harmony

I wonder if my parents
See my youthful energy
And for a moment
Let jealousy wave past them
Oak tree beside an orchid
Rooted and promised for glory
Yet still susceptible

To that lingering scent
Of bloom

I have two eyes for a reason
One for life and one for
Reincarnation
Reckless daughter and virtuous woman
My future and their past
Left hand and right

I have two eyes for a reason
One in soil
One in sky
An orchid among oak trees
They loom to check for irregularities
Deep shadow draped over me
Maybe the only way to blossom
Is to be stripped of everything
And reach for the sun

Maybe the oak tree
Is rebirthed
As I consume
Earth
As I enthrall their land
And make it mine

Caught in the Current

Amy Flores

i found peace in stillness,
let go of my grudges,
stopped sabotaging who i was
but just as i began to heal
a wind pushed me back—
too forceful to fight,
too abrupt to escape

i lost my footing,
lost my place,
lost the person
i was becoming

she moved on from me,
while i stayed, watching her
glide through the current
like a breeze



To Grieve the Living

Rowan McClure

Our plans were grand and glorious,
Spanning a thousand years
That we'd spend on the stage
Or on long roads drowning in beers.

We were weary children,
Window shopping for apartments
Before we'd even learned to love
Or even live without one another.

I used to spend nights lying in bed
Reminiscing on the dreams that we'd shared,
Mourning you as if you were dead,
Wishing I had never been spared.

The days still pass, and the night still falls.
The moon still dies and the sun still scalds.
New faces stare and stand by my side.
New dreams emerge and wake in my mind.

Sometimes at night, I still dream of you.
Your magnetism and scarlet hue.
There is no more color left to feel,
I'm returning now to what is real.

Freedom of the Confined

Alyse Stevens

I remember the notification.
The gray text bubble that stopped my heart.
It felt like everything froze.
The world ended.

But I knew that wasn't true.
I heard the tick of the clock,
the songs from birds,
I saw the clouds move.

I was terrified.
So, I ran.
But I was still confined.
Confined, to one day be set free.

That message has never left my mind.
My reply has never left my mind.
I've never understood what I did.
Why I was ruined for being kind.

It took two years for everything to resurface,
and when it did, time didn't stop.
Fear didn't harbor itself inside me,
but amusement did.

I cackled then, and I still do now.

Amused at the fact I moved on,
but you're still leeching onto the past.
Trying to ruin what's put together again.

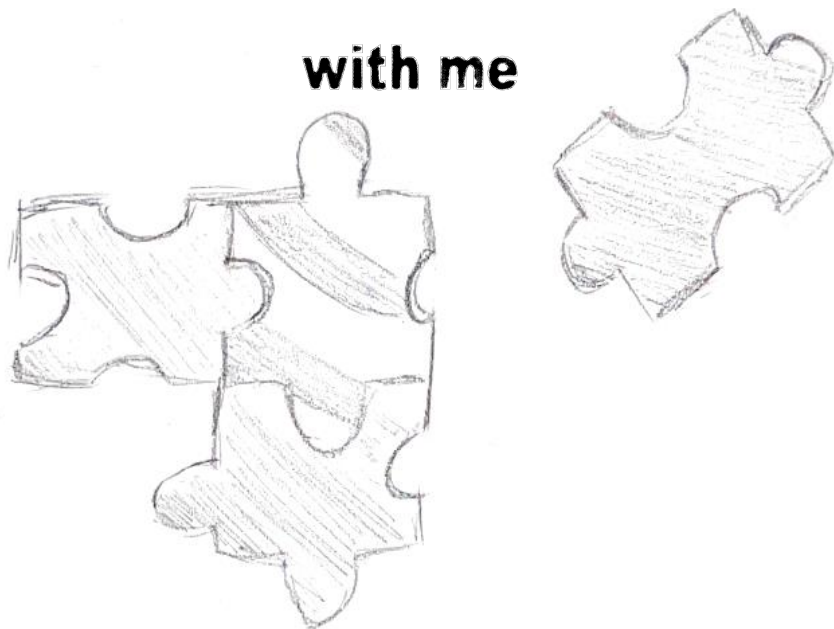
You say I love someone
because I've known them for six years.
You try to repeat the past,
revive what only lived once.

Losing you was never a loss.
Besides,
if you can't stop reliving the past,
you don't deserve to step into the future.

i *wish* someone would

click

with me



like you did...

A Goodbye

Isabella Perez

Grounded by the weight of your guilt,
you attach yourself to me
Chain-linked arms and soft skin,
I've drowned in our carelessness

This is what I leave behind
An endless gasp in the universe
A hole that you bore within me
only to make yourself clean again

I kiss goodbye
to the way your eyelashes fluttered
The only part of yourself
you would ever truly give me

There will never be a day for us
because being kind to yourself
means being away from me

So, this is what I leave behind
A sweet letter on the table
and a slam of the door

Waiting

Ashley Baez

Terri sat on the gray brick porch of her apartment, waiting. She couldn't stop herself from getting excited and kicking her feet, ready to see the silver Toyota pull up in front of where she was seated. Her face felt sticky and raw from sunburns she got from the sun. But she didn't care. She couldn't wait for her older sister Sarah to get home. From what Terri was told by Sarah, she was leaving to visit a friend and would be back soon.

She'll be back! Terri thought. She wouldn't lie. She's just three days late. That's all!

The sound of thunder made Terri shiver in fear. The sun was hidden behind the cloud, as if scared to shine its rays into the humid air. She should be going inside. She should be asking her mom what's for dinner. She doesn't care. She just wants to see Sarah.

Traffic screamed at each other. The sound reminded her of the time Sarah and her were driving to the store, and a crash happened. From what her sister told her, nobody was hurt. But from what she looked up, there was one death. A mother who let herself be left behind while the car was in flames. Terri remembers her sister scolding her for looking it up when she wasn't

supposed to.

You were going to get scared! Sarah told her. I only lied so I could protect you, because that's what a good big sister does.

Rain fell onto the sidewalk like tears. Terri looked down the sidewalk. Her eyes lit up at the sight of one of her sister's friends.

“CARLY! HI!” Terri shouted.

Carly glances over towards her, immediately looking away, walking faster as she passes by. Terri runs after her, her sneakers getting wet in puddles.

Terri catches up to her, grabbing onto the sleeve of her sweater. “Hi, Carly!”

“Oh, hi kid,” she replies, her black hair sweeping over her face.

“Do you know where Sarah is?” Terri asks.

“No.” Carly lies, pulling her arm away from Terri.

Terri skips in front of her, stopping her from moving forward. “I know you're lying. She tells you everything. So spill it.”

Carly tries to move past her, but Terri keeps blocking her path.

“Terri, move.” Carly’s tone sounded serious.

Terri's eyes narrowed onto Carly. “You know something. She hasn’t been back in three days. So just tell me!”

cont.

cont.

Carly's eyes looked past Terri, like if looking at something in the distance. "She's gone."

Terri's head slightly moves to the side.

Huh?

"She's not dead." Terri laughs a bit. "Just tell me the truth."

"Sarah left. She's gone." Carly looks down at Terri again. "I don't know where she is, but she's gone."

Terri's smile twitches before reforming her smile again. "Ok, fine. If you won't tell me what actually happened. I'm just going to harass you everyday until you actually tell me what happened."

Terri moves out of Carly's way, skipping towards the door of the apartment. She stops for a moment, to watch Carly leave. She can see Carly wiping something from her face, before walking on.

Weird? Terri thought. Eh, it doesn't matter. Can't wait for Sarah to come back!

Terri goes into the apartment, closing the door behind her.

Alas,

**there was no more
shadow**

Theseus' Ship

Samuel Valdes

My fingers feel severed
Yet I can move them
A hand, a body that I can feel
That's not mine
The heart that beats
Deep inside my chest
Belongs to another
I cut off so much of myself
To fit the needs, the wants
Of the people I surround myself with

I look in mirrors
In windows and water
Staring at someone I don't know
I've changed myself
So slightly every day
Strung myself along the whims of others
Can I truly look upon myself
In any reflection

**if i'm different
every day,
am i **still** me?**



Isabella Perez

Rebirth

Dina Santiago

We're barefoot on the tile floor
Dirt decays under our fingernails
Lilac afternoons
Bringing in earthworms
From our backyard
Living room blossoms
Into a monsoon garden

Keep me there
Barely hanging, sore
Willing to make a home
Off your cold shoulder
Steady
Keep me barely breathing
As long as you keep me

We walk through the halls
Of abandoned rooms
I remember
Winking moon
And wild stars
I let the silence between us
Burrow in my ear
Whispers of our laughter
Wafting past us
Our childish footsteps

Not even stopping once

There is a resounding hum beneath us
Like a buried dove still breathing
Strung on benevolent innocence
Through dry ground and layered mud
Through rubble and crushed lungs
She sings us to sleep

You don't speak much anymore
Even now, as darkness claims our shadows
Lighthouse beaming against dusk
Moving slower, flickering
Wishing to catch a glimpse of Firefly
Hope ridden in your small light
But you hide your tears
You refuse to shine
Keep grief hoarded
Like you couldn't spare

I whisper your name against my pillow
And I know you won't turn but you'll hear it
I breathe deeply into silk and sink into
That mellow smell of moonlight on skin
The dove is straining to sing
Hums splitting into sudden shrieks
Silence
The earthworms have ended her hymns
They move tactically through her bones

cont.

cont.

Plucking at feathers and blood vessels

We lift our heads

Faces horrified

Tears swarming

Born at the cusp of our waterlines

Then meeting death once again

For a moment

Our eyes are unwavering

For a moment

The synchronicity of our grief

Sounds like severed melodies

Like something withered

Re-sprouting

Life Cycle of a Moth

Alyssa Danish

Today, 7:30 pm, I am leaving my husband
Love, once sparked between us, fizzled out
I can't pretend he wasn't the love of my life
A moth to a flame so beautiful it put Sol to
shame
He left me unable to fly, to breath, to escape
Not for much longer



Yesterday, 7:31 pm, I saw my husband for the
last time
He no longer looked like the man I loved
Flames, once soft and comforting, now rav-
enous
Any longer and the fire would have cremated
me
With my burnt wings, I flew away
Soaring from the ashes, I rise a phoenix

Death of Familiarity

Alyse Stevens

White snow dances on half-dead grass,
falling from the same height,
to the same location.

Together it builds a home.
One that feels familiar.
One of comfort.

The constants of life,
the never changing,
is what makes snow comforting.

Every December,
snow falls into my palm.
Every year, without change.

Then one time, it never came.
The temperature said it was freezing,
but the frozen rain stayed in the clouds.

I knew it wouldn't come.
The repetition of life,
was broken too soon.

When the snow didn't fall,
the comfort was gone.

Familiarity departed.

My home changed.
The climate was different.
I had to relearn how to speak out.

But the things left behind
was worth all the things gained.
Without snow, there was nothing familiar.

But unfamiliarity only means new beginnings.
New beginnings bring you growth
and growth evolves you.

In the end,
we leave plenty behind,
but we still carry it with us.

Life will forever change,
but that's something
I've learned to accept.

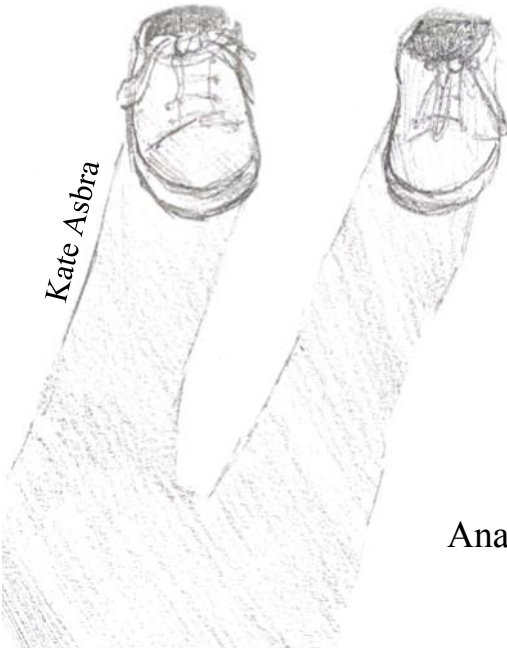
It doesn't matter whether I can make snow
angels.

I don't care if the grass isn't dead.
I've evolved and I've changed.
That's something snow won't replace.

i moved...

**but my shoes
stayed.**

Kate Asbra



Ana Vagle

Take Me With You

Alicia Henriquez

Take me with you, innocence.
Even if it means sailing across the seven seas.
Take me with you, innocence.
Even if it means to climb the tallest tree.
Take me with you,
For even if I run out of oxygen,
It doesn't matter as long as you're with me.
Because you are my breath of fresh air,
The reason that there's blood inside my veins,
The reason why I'm still breathing air.
So don't leave without me.
For I will not survive in here much longer,
For without you I am longing.
Longing for something greater than even I.
Longing for something bigger than my life.
So don't leave me, innocence.
Even though you already left.

Lost

Kate Asbra

I think I'll always miss something,
That feeling of longing for anything and
everything
Wanting just a taste of what I had
A familiar forgotten feeling

I will wait for you forever
Search for what I left behind
Maybe I dropped it under the bed
Where the monster underneath claimed its prize

Maybe it fell out of the car
Laying on the side of the road
No better than roadkill
Like a friend forever forgotten

You sit in my mind like a memory
I can reach, but can't quite touch
Fuzzy as my childhood plushie
Like the hugs that will never be returned

The touch of arms long gone
The laughter I will only hear in fading memory
Dream and nightmares morphing and mixing
With the things I pray are real

I will always miss everything I've left behind
But I will admire those fuzzy thoughts
Till the day they pass

Where Ashes Choose to Stay

Maxwell Evans

The walls once whispered, now they scream,
In flames that rise where shadows dream.
A house of memories turned to ash,
As heat and smoke and embers clash.

Once filled with laughter, joy, and light,
Now swallowed whole by burning night.
A chair stands still, untouched, alone,
But all that lived here now is gone.

The echoes fade, the past is lost,
Each picture frame consumed in frost
Of fire's fierce bite, a cruel wind's sweep—
A house left behind, now charred, asleep.

In silent rooms, where love did dwell,
There's nothing left but ghost and smell,
A place forgotten, burned away,
Where only ashes choose to stay.

Lighthouse

Riley Gigstead

I stand tall here above this shore
My lights have burned out long ago
The shore turned dry from the heat
Boats lay barren against the rocks

The days of my usefulness have long passed
But I still remember the blue waves
Ships larger than whales floated
Guided through the dark by my bright light

Boats don't come by here anymore
I've become useless to this land
My job turned to nothing but memories

Two Ghosts

Dina Santiago

“Do you believe in ghosts?” Aziz asks. The train shuffles us back and forth – as careless as his words. I’m dragging my hands along the curb of my seat; dry gum sticks hard against my fingernails.

“Look around,” I say, “everything is haunted one way or another.” Our eyes both meet the young man before us. His eyes wither as life decays within him. A poster hangs by a thread beside the window, ripped at the corner. The rusty floors have seen better days.

Aziz lets the kinetic motion of the train slam his knee into my own. He counts three beats, then straightens up. He forgets how well I know him; I can feel the goosebumps bubble beneath his skin every time. He lets his hand fall open on his lap, like a flower. I have no desire to hold it, yet I count the lines and wrinkles. I let myself remember what it was like to be imbedded into the roots of his fingers.

I’ve noticed how time ripples through everything and everyone. Whoever chewed this gum is still here, their DNA now residing on me. The young man’s past is a parasite festering beneath his gaze. The poster was once brand new. Aziz looks at me, with eyes of glimmering coal. I feel

nothing for him, and yet I recognize there is someone within me who does. I wonder, as his knee touches mine again, if his ghost fights off demons too.



Sailor

Alyssa Danish

Oh, woe to the sailor's wife - the sailor is lost to
the sea

Run home young lady - you have paid the price
of the sea

Poor, young sailor's son - your wooden sailboat
undone

Don't worry young son - now you're the man of
the house

Pay the price of the tides - the ocean's tax
collector

Spectrums of gold and sand - may the sirens
feast

Oh, dear lover - your love oh, so forbidden

Do not worry - for a dead man tells no tales

Father, don't apologize - you trained him best
you could

The sea is the strongest beast known to man

Mother, please don't weep - your son died a
hero

The ocean pays no respect to the fallen

Rage of the sea - guided by the kindness of the
moon

Sun's rays - a gift the sailor shall never see
again

Death of the moon's son, birth of the mother's
grief
Era of the stages of grief - Era of acceptance



weightless existence

i do not look back

i carry only myself.

Unfinished

Kate Asbra

You sit in the corner of my room
Beside all the other projects
The ones I never bothered to complete

Out of materials, out of inspiration, out of time
I know I will never finish most of them
Forever a work in progress

Maybe one day I will pick you back up
Set you back down on the easel
Make you a masterpiece

But that seems unlikely
There are far too many things to complete

Time Speeding Far Away From Me

Jenai Greer

Mr. Miller reached over the still wrapped power drill kit from last Christmas to rummage through his toolbox, using one hand to catch his breath in his chest. The rainfall of screws, nuts, and bolts making way for his hand filled the dead store, his fingers sinking further down with a huff. The wrinkled man ran his fingertips side to side before gripping onto the desired tool and yanking it out, a storm crashing onto the countertop and dribbling off the counter.

Screwdriver in hand, Mr. Miller ached his way to the candy dispenser with a viscous pace. There was no need to bend over any further than he naturally was as he turned the screws of the side panel, an orange crust covering the screwdriver flathead as the screws moaned. Dust escaped into the air, reviving the man's deeply rooted cough, as the dull yellow lemon suckers and their accompanying moth balls huddled together in tall piles.

A jingle and a creak lightened the room as the blue haired man cautiously peered into the store, seeking through the records and radios while glancing over the one cent candy and advertisement for T.V. repairs.

“Hello? Is this place open?” He called out.

He then heard a thud, a yelp, and a muffled “Here! I’m here!”

The hunched man backed out of the candy machine, revealing his pale complexion dusted with the remnants of neglect like soot on an aged chimney.

“I’m so sorry young man, I was just trying to fix the crank on the sweets machine! Please, come in, come in!” Mr. Miller exclaimed with excitement as he shuffled over to the shop counter.

The customer looked around as he left hearty thuds on the floorboards with his shiny black boots.

“What can I do for you today? In the market for some Doris Day? Leslie Gore? Or are you here for a snack? I have taffies, suckers, and nu-ties if that fancies you!” Mr. Miller sold, pointing around as he talked with enthusiasm.

The customer paused with a hum, thinking of Mr. Miller’s offer.

“Actually, I was wondering if you knew where that new superstore is. My phone died on the way here and I left my charger back at my place,” the customer said with a sheepish smile.

Mr. Miller’s expression fell like a large block of ice from an ice man’s grasp.

Mr. Miller’s expression fell like a large block of ice from an ice man’s grasp. He

cont.

cont.

placed it on the counter and turned it around to face the guest as he picked up a black marker from the basket near the register.

“From this store,” he circled *Miller’s Treasures & Services*, “you head down Hoary Avenue and take a left on Superannuated Street.” *His marker followed his directions.*

“Then you...” he faltered. The map was missing about half the streets needed to get out of this side of town, let alone to the superstore. Mr. Miller let out an exasperated sigh and put the marker down.

These maps were the most recent addition to the store, only 2 years old.

Mr. Miller sat in his rocking chair as nightfall fell. He should have been closing up shop now, but he ended his day after sending the young man away to someone who could actually help him. At least the man had enough sympathy to buy a Stevie Wonder record, but not enough to not exclaim, “This will look so good on my garage wall!”

With all the lights off, he popped a lemon sucker in his mouth and at once spit it out as it turned to brittle, bitter ash in his mouth. He slumped into his chair and watched cars drive down the road, away from there, through the window as his weary eyes became frosted glass.

Mr. Miller shot up with a gasp, his heart

skipping a beat, when the old rotary phone rang. He reached over and put the receiver to his ear, knowing the only person who would call this number would be on the end of the line.

“Getting ready to close up shop, Edward?” Ms. Wilson opened with.

“Already done with that, Linda, not like there’s too many people banging down on my door,” he responded glumly.

“Oh, don’t say that, Edward.” she cooed.

“Save it, Linda, I’m just telling the truth, there’s no need for ole’ Edward and his cobweb store.” Edward retorted as he looked onto the street.

On the other end, Linda bit her lip and looked out her windows, clouds passing by like bustling traffic and the buildings down below tickling her sky-rise like blades of grass.

“Well, how’s your young ones?” she continued on as she scratched her gray tresses.

The old man felt the chill of his store cover his skin like a cast before replying with “As young as ever.”

“Hadley still in Seoul?”

“She tells me about those trains with no wheels, and the city far, far away from here whenever she calls.”

“Oh, did she tell you of that one festival they had over there last week?” Linda perked

cont.

cont.

up with excitement.

“She hasn’t called in months,” Edward responded promptly.

Linda fell silent.

“She keeps in better contact than Andrew... I doubt that boy even knows where this town is or what my number is anymore.”

“Well, he’s got one of those big fancy computer jobs, he’s probably to his neck in wire or- or whatever those computer people do! You know he still loves you Edward, they both do.” Linda tried to encourage.

Linda holds her cell phone close to her ear, silence greeting her.

“I wish you were here Linda. I wish I did not have to wait until January to see you again.”

Edward was the one to be greeted with silence this time.

“I won’t be coming for January anymore Edward, I’m moving again.”

They both let silence creep over them.

“Even further this time, Linda? To a bigger, newer city with even brighter lights until the Heavenly lights take you home?”

Linda winced and bit her lips again, twisting her hips as she contemplated what to say. She could see his deep wrinkled, glazed eyes surrounded in drooping skin. The massive digital advertisement on the building across from hers

began to display a new gaming laptop, blue light traveling the distance and caressing her face through her sliding glass door.

“I couldn’t stay, Edward, as much as I love you, I couldn’t stay there and wait for death to come.”

“Linda, please, just a little bit away they are opening clubs and roads and superstores that have all the anti-aging creams you love so much. You could be here with me and not be old. Linda, please!” Edward choked out, pleading with the woman he grew up with.

The chill intruded into his pores, digging its fingers into the threads of his skin. His tears ran down his face in intricate rivulets, bifurcating on his wrinkles, and running down his cheeks. He covered his mouth as his old lungs hacked up a cough at the tightness in his chest.

“Edward, we both know I don’t belong there.” She looked down at the ridges on the top of her heel-fitted feet, the red hue of her freshly bought heels matching her equally fresh dress.

The stark colorations made her gray hair less noticeable, she told herself.

She had nothing else to say to Edward, for they have been on the opposite ends of this same conversation in New York, Miami, Bangkok, Dubai, Rio de Janeiro, and any other place

cont.

cont.

her end-of-life savings took her.

She just stood and looked outwards as he sat and wept.

After minutes of sobs and coughs, Edward wiped his nose on his mended jacket sleeve and said, “Do you at least have an address?”

“Of course, let me know when you are ready.”

On one of the many overdue utilities bills he had piled up on his desk, he wrote down the address she gave for Hong Kong as his tears blotted the sheet. With farewells, she hung up on her cellphone and he put his telephone back in its place.

His head hung low as he grew colder, a new Maserati driving by with young people hanging out the window. His eyes grew heavier,

and heavier,

and heavier,

until they finally fell.

you can never
leave the
footprints
of the
past behind



**always feeling the need to
catch up,
but i'm *always* falling
behind.**

**i don't want these
emotions to build up,
but i'm running out of
time.**

Plush

Kate Asbra

I see through your beaded black eyes
Scratched and scuffed with time
Fluff and fur matted and dirty
Your fabric torn and scathed

No longer able to be held in a child's arms
No longer to be loved like a friend
Conversations only you could hear

Tea parties with endlessly empty cups
Yet now you sit on the side of the road
It was an accident, I'm sure of it

They'll come back for you, I promise
You are their best friend after all
Who would ever leave you behind?

Falling Behind

Amy Flores

I cross paths with many people each and every
day,
among the thousands that crowd around
and move until their legs give out,
I am constantly surrounded

It's a funny feeling, I feel as though
I'm all on my own
I am only one in eight billion
how is it that I feel so alone?

In the sea of faces, I'm unseen
as they walk past me,
fading away in between,
lost in their own worlds,
I drown in the passive looks
in their eyes,
being left behind,
forgotten

Loose Strings

Analiah Brown

Resting,
Your heart beneath
Our loose entwined fingers
Swiftly, pulling apart, tearful
And alone





**the kiss that you left me
i'll carry wherever i go**

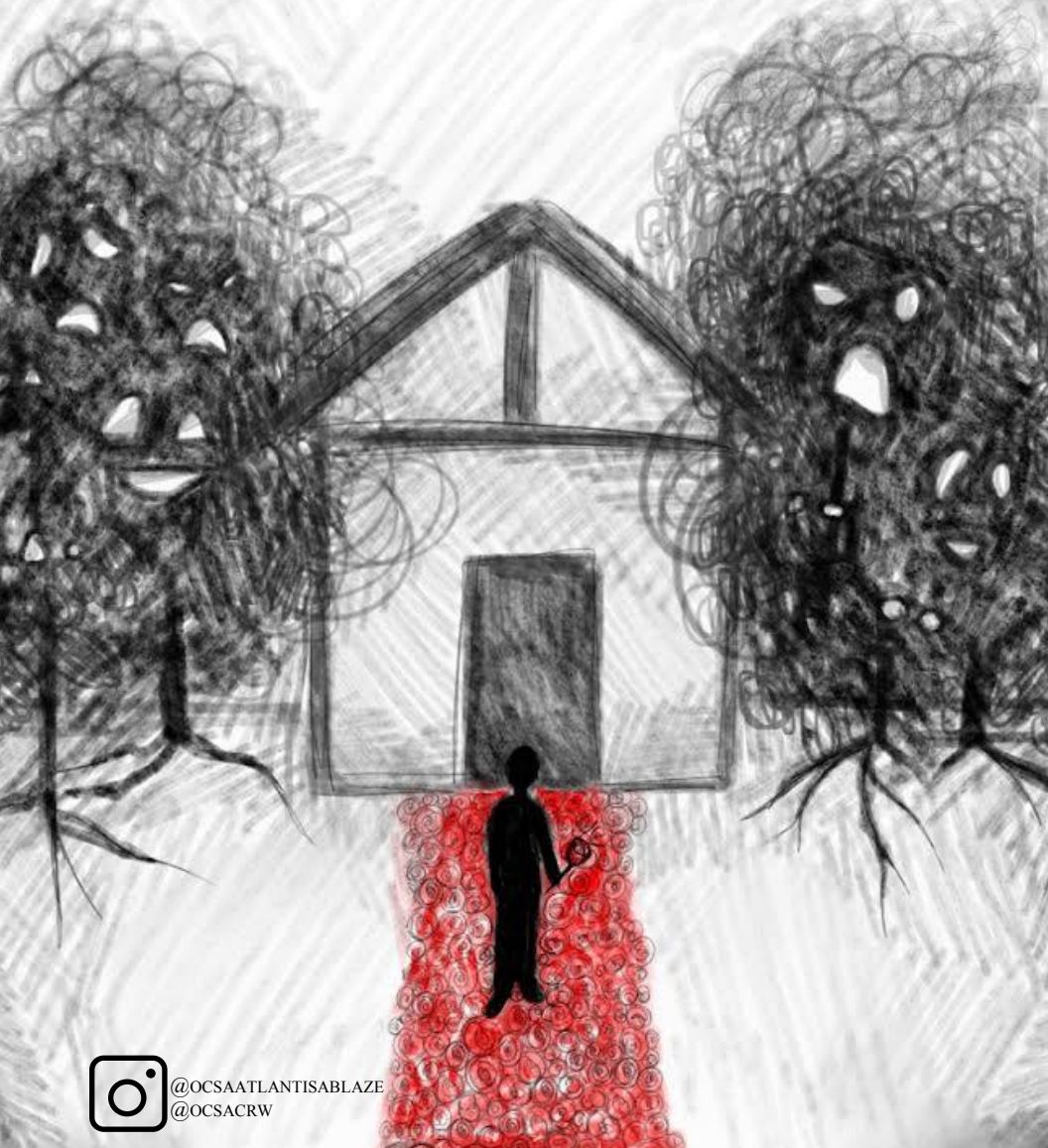
Isabella Perez

Moved On

Ashley Baez

The thought of her is gone
A plague on his mind
Tears that stained his face
Have become tear burns under his eyes
Whispers of her name are vacant
He left her behind
Her scar adamant on his being
Yet he carries on
Prouder than ever
He left her
Now he's free

yet, we're still here.



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