

ISSUE 20, 2024-2025

# ATLANTIS ABLAZE

THE OCSA LITERARY MAGAZINE

THE

UNIVERSE  
UNIVERSE

in



# *Our Staff*

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# ***A Note***

***From The Co-Editors***

This issue, *The U in Universe*, celebrates the individuality that shapes our creative worlds. Each piece in this collection is a testament to the voices that make up our shared universe—unique, unfiltered, and unapologetically us.

While we are galaxies apart from Mr. Capley, the brightest star in the creative writing realm, we're grateful that we can rely on the constellation that is the *Atlantis Ablaze Literary Magazine*. We thank our contributors and our readers for embarking on this cosmic journey. We hope *U* can find a spark of yourselves in this universe.

Yours in creativity,

Amy & Caitlyn

Co-Editors, *Atlantis Ablaze*

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i see the world in  
your eyes

Kate Asbra

## Why, Oh U

*Varymar Pantojas Mendoza*

Among the clouds and throughout the days  
When you're not around, life feels empty  
without your face  
When the moon is full and the stars shine proud  
I always search for where you are

Among constellations and patterns of light, your  
star shines loud  
Each aspect in nature reminds me that you're far  
But also reminds me that you're in everything I  
look  
You calmed my world after it had been shook

You're not always here when I want you to be  
And it makes my heart microscopically torn  
but no matter the place or distance far beyond  
where the eye can see,  
I'll always find a way to acknowledge your  
presence in every way and form

From daisies flourishing in spring  
To the chill of the night when the sun falls into a  
short sleep  
The return that the sun brings yet again with a  
glow just peeking over the horizon  
That same dark, honey orange glow seeps into

cont.

cont.

the ventricles of my heart

If it were up to me, I'd find a cluster of bright stars,

Name it after you, and it would take Hydra's title of the biggest constellation

Because the butterflies in my stomach drink the nectar from the carnation that's bloomed

And its only fair that there be a star named after you, at least in our world

When rain pours and stormy grey clouds fill the sky,

I look back on everything that you took from me

My heart, my tears, my passions, my fears,

My strengths, my weaknesses, my joys, my cries

Always there to be my rock

Without fear of judgement, or stares, or mocks

The Disney movies I kicked my feet happily to when I was little

Finally came true when I met you

You may not be prince charming, but you still make me laugh and giggle

What am I to do?

I've fallen deep into your bottomless pit of affection and care

Fallen so hard that no other time that it's happened can compare



I hope I'll never stop falling, that my adoration  
for you never ends  
That for the rest of my days, with you I'll spend  
Because you put the "love" in "lover"  
And emphasize the "I" in "I love you"

You put the "u" in "universe"  
And I hope with each meteor shower,  
Each shooting star,  
My hopes for my next steps with you come true

# Passing Stars

*Analiah Brown*

The stars leave messages of the past.  
Millions of secrets left to confide in space.  
We the watchers, gaze upon those stars.  
Hoping whatever passes by, will be pleasant  
memories  
that will guide us to a radiant light of hope.



# Regardless, Rotation

*Caitlyn Lungstrum*

A fifteen-year-old girl is dead  
Murdered by the monsters in her mind

An innocent man is sent to jail  
Color was the only characteristic they could find

Mother racoon left to gather berries  
Her corpse on the highway, forgotten by  
mankind

The world does not stop  
for anyone outside of the people who knew them  
Outside of the people who cared

# Ego Brighter Than Sunlight

*Jenai Greer*

I never understood the admiration of stars  
What's so grand about a sphere of gas, on a path  
to burning itself out?

Yes, it's enormous and luminous and weighty  
and central to systems

But they aren't me and, therefore, can't be so  
special

What's so grand about a sphere of gas, on a path  
to burning itself out?

I've never had a pretty face, but stars get  
abounding odes to their beauty

But they aren't me and, therefore, can't be so  
special

Can they do this? Defend their right to be  
admired in a poem? Didn't think so

I've never had a pretty face, but stars get  
abounding odes to their beauty

But my face is unique, the only of its kind, and  
yellow dwarfs all share the same complexion

Can they do this? Defend their right to be  
admired in a poem? Didn't think so

Yellow dwarfs share the same inability to  
understand rhetorical questions too, it seems

But my face is unique, the only of its kind, and  
yellow dwarfs all share the same complexion  
They are born and die like everyone else and  
which ever one died for my face should be  
honored

Yellow dwarfs share the same inability to  
understand rhetorical questions too, it seems  
They also share the same types of atoms that I'm  
using way better than they ever could

Maybe I'm narcissistic, thinking of myself as  
too salient

But what other being could be narcissistic?  
There are an uncountable number of stars, but  
how many self-important people?  
I'm a rarity and the cosmos' inhabitants better  
act like I'm someone they can't lose



Analiah Brown

star

f  
a  
l  
l  
s

to end,

we *marvel*.

man meets his  
death,

**We** mourn.

# The Brightest Star

*Maxwell Evans*

The sun burns bright  
Bringing life to our lonely planet  
Warmth and light emanate from its very being  
Rays of radiation boil my blood.

As I look up at the deep blue sky,  
I wonder,  
Did the sun want to shine?  
Did the sun ask for this?

Who are we but parasites?  
We drain from the sun,  
What it gives freely.  
But nothing is ever free.

Why don't we give anything back?  
We can't even say words of praise to it anymore.  
That's outlawed in modern society.  
I wish the sun could hear my thankfulness.

# Leo's Myth

*Rowan McClure*

Stardust trickles through a vein  
Nebulae paint its regal mane  
Through all of life and history  
The beast of the skies remains a mystery

From Mesopotamian days  
To a modern technological haze,  
Through peace and through wars  
He makes his labored tours

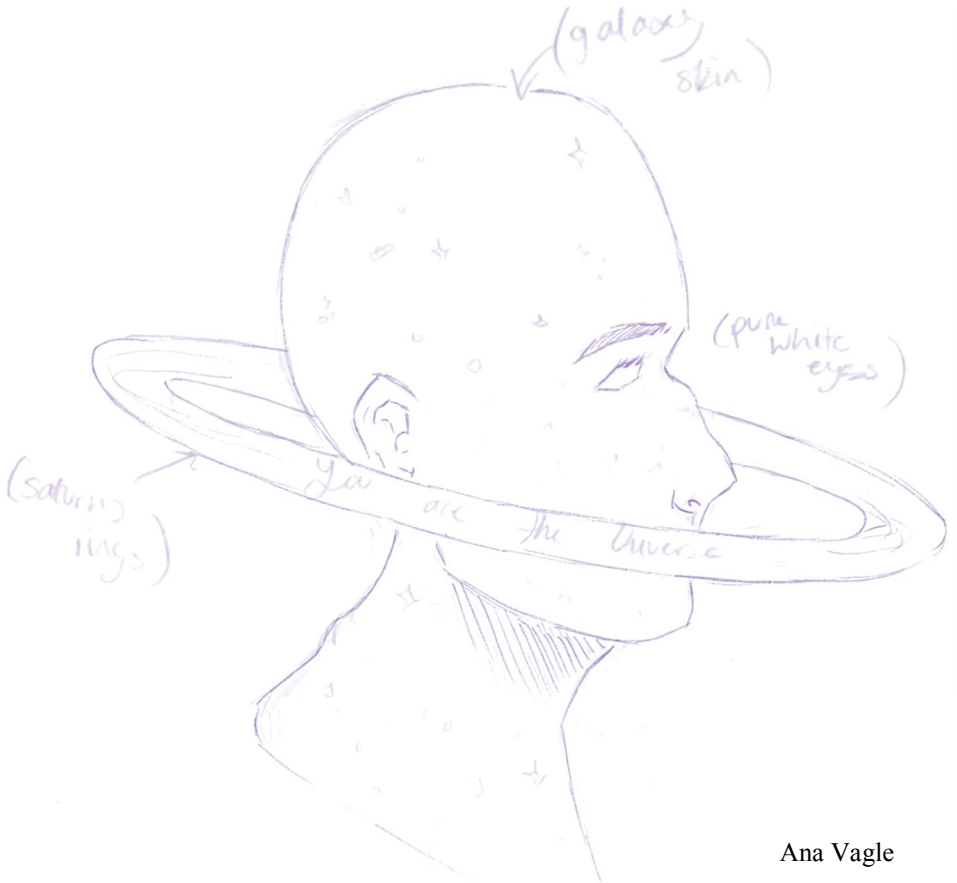
The children of the lion  
Still hunted by Orion  
Frantically play their roles  
The beast's spirit lives in their souls

They joke and entertain  
To keep themselves sane  
Always pouncing and roaring  
Hating and abhorring

His cycle is ever repeating  
Meeting, loving, hating, then retreating  
Regulus lives in my heart  
In every bone and body part



For all who wish to know  
Watch the stars glow  
He'll be up there striding free  
His tale lives on forever  
It lives inside of me



Ana Vagle

# **Nebula Within**

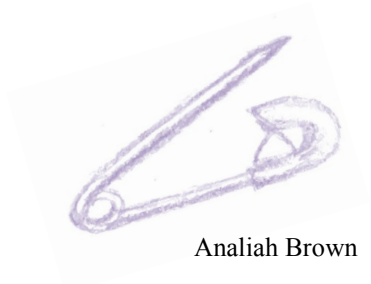
*Amy Flores*

Inside my chest  
a galaxy unfolds—  
cosmos of my lows  
and stars that glow  
all painting me  
coursing through my veins,  
they flow

# Pins

*Samuel Valdes*

It's a saying  
That silence speaks volumes  
Louder than words  
Though truly it's wrong  
Vacuums of emptiness  
Have nothing to utter  
I don't know if it's better  
To let my ears become deaf  
But there's nothing  
Only dots of stars  
Thousands of miles away  
It's impressive  
How in soundlessness  
We build life  
Around noise  
In such grand expanses  
Of emptiness  
Still enough  
To hear pins drop



Analiah Brown

## Peering

*Dina Santiago*

Entry 462 / 12.23.24 / 12:35 PM

The boy was classically handsome, and the girl was dangerously beautiful. The park bench cradled them perfectly, a balanced scale. The boy's legs were slightly turned towards the girl, and he scooted closer whenever she looked away. She noticed every time, a self-aware smirk swept her face. The boy saw me then, and a look of possession overtook him, as if he wished to conceal her from the world.

I took the train. Corner seat, by the window. Corner seats are like headphones or black zip-ups as people learn to graciously grant you invisibility. For that entire hour, I watched. Below, I saw a group of high school students crowding a duck. There were rocks in each of their hands, and soon all I could see was a hive of bodies at the center where the duck once was. In that moment, I felt I discovered God. I felt an immense ache to aid the helpless creature, and yet, I remained seated – looking through the glass to watch what came next.

Entry 463 / 12. 24. 24 / 9:00 AM

Someone asked me my name today. He sat next to me as I watched the same couple from

yesterday – they sat even closer together, wearing matching t-shirts. Laughing, he said, “Do you need some binoculars?” I didn’t understand. He sensed that and asked if I knew the couple. I shook my head, and my ears lit with blood. There were no corner seats in the park, and yet he cornered me. It seemed to make me invisible to everyone else but him. He asked me my name. I paused before answering.

My name is what others call me. I never think of myself as a name. But all I am is what I am to others. How they perceive me, how they watch me. I have never once been vexed with an internal thought without it following someone else’s. I think of my career choices, and it is in my mother’s voice. I think of my happiness, and I see a stranger’s smile. I think of my identity, and I recall the name everyone else calls me.

I told him, “Natalie.” He said his name was Logan, although I did not ask. Relentlessly, he asked where I was from.

Home cannot be found in a wandering mind. I am never still even when unmoving – I am constantly observing who walks away, who stays, who speaks the loudest, who screams in silence. I am aware that this must be a mental condition. I am aware that this constant antagonizing feeling to worship ordinary people has poisoned my ability to live an ordinary life. But I can’t look away.

cont.

cont.

I answered him after a moment,  
“Wyoming.”

His light hair fell to his blue eyes, it looked as if the sky was slipping through blonde streaks of sunlight. He smelled of charcoal, and the paint stains assured me he was an art student. I’ve seen him on campus; I knew he had a lot of friends and never tied his shoes. I gave him my number and he walked away.

Entry 471 / 1.17.2025 / 11:00 PM

Logan came over today. I felt the touch of dried paint on his fingers as he kissed my face. I thought of how many other girls he had kissed and what they were like. I wondered if he thought of them as constantly as I did.

After dinner, I went to the patio. Every evening, a running club gathers at the front of the town center. I can see them all begin to pile up, blood rushing and smiles flashing. I could tell from their dramatic stretches and neon clothing that they all hoped someone was staring, and I didn’t mind being the audience. Logan joined me on the patio shortly after, holding my journal in his hands.

He began to ramble, asking if this was what I did all day while he went to his art internship, and night school, and worked to support us. I didn’t pay much attention to the rest; below they

were arguing over who got to lead the run this time. Their teeth flashed and their chests puffed. They all looked like rabid dogs.

Logan sat down beside me. The chair sunk in with his weight. His legs were turned in my direction, his eyes were beckoning mine. He asked if I wanted to get help.

I smiled at him, turning his attention to the crowd. A fit couple had begun leading the race, miraculously bringing everyone together. “Look at them,” I said, “aren’t they perfect?”

# **Blackhole**

*Kate Asbra*

Take

Absorb all around you

Warp the things that found you

They don't deserve to see

Something as great as thee

Consume

Forever hungry, forever starved

Take from the very world that was carved

Steal, take, eat, consume,

Till nothing is left of me and you

Eat

Eat from the hands that never wanted to feed you

Become nothing and everything of what they

knew

You are the darkness in the night sky

Baffle the minds of everyone likewise

Steal

Till there is nothing left





Analiah Brown

# Her and I

*Isabella Perez*

Eyes like oceans  
Heart of limestone  
The equator burns between us  
My former self and I  
A stark line between  
Who I was and who I could be  
I watch her blood run rivers  
Through forests of memory  
She glows in the night  
My moon and starlight  
Freckling constellations  
Brushing past her skin  
I reach for them, softly tracing  
Feeling the touch of my own flesh  
Against the rush of modernity  
It hits like bricks and hammers  
Machinery to nature  
Oil to water  
I can't change who I've been  
But I know where I'm going  
The universe, with arms widespread  
Smiles and welcomes me in

# Moonlight

*Camden Toner*

Praised for a light that's not yours  
Praised for shining light you never had  
Praised for being a mere reflection

You shone light in the dark  
Guiding weary travelers in the night  
Shining brighter than every other star  
But that light was never you

# Living Breathing Automation

Kate Asbra

Your body is a system, and organization of  
organs  
Eyes distant planets, your skin vibrant hues  
Made up of the birth and death of life  
Born from the skies themselves  
And the planets that make up your mind  
You can't control your functions  
Alike how you can't control a star  
Only to guide it through its time  
To show you how to shine the brightest  
Redirect its light to hit the little worlds just right  
Let them grow and flourish  
Your body an amalgamation of automation  
A living breathing universe

# Plasma

*Samuel Valdes*

Sweltering heatwaves  
Press down on my body  
Shining burning pillars of flame  
Contort around me  
Sweat running down my skin  
It's hard to not move away  
To stop basking  
In the dazzling light in front of me  
Even though my flesh chars  
I stay



Analiah Brown

## Path Eleven

*Alyse Stevens*

Twenty-two paths  
Twenty-two dirt roads  
Made carefully for each individual  
Your own path is carved on your palms  
From the moment you were born  
Your life path was made for your blood

The path numbered zero is the fool  
Hidden deep within bushes and shrubs  
Categorized by a beginning that doesn't exist  
The pebble path forces itself into creation  
Your path doesn't exist is what they say  
But the lack of a mark is what gives you a free  
spirit

The second path is that of the high priestess  
Who braids together understanding and victory  
The path is one of vines  
Wrapping around each of the people who walk it  
Unifying the walker with the path  
The same way she ties together her intuition and  
knowledge

The fifth is the hierophant  
A path of marble steps engraved with stars and  
crosses

Each step is higher than the other  
Learn more and drag yourself up the ranks  
Interact with the divine and learn their words  
inside and out  
Then use it for the mercy of mortals

Path seven is the chariot  
A path made of narrow ledges  
Forced to find perfect balance within yourself  
With equality comes the energy to move forward  
Step on the right terrain and obstacles will cease  
But if not, it will all tip and fall

My path is justice  
The path that's eerily straight  
The birds argue and pester each other  
Scream at me to pick sides  
They want me to point fingers and claim one is  
wrong  
But my palms tell me to stay indifferent

My path is justice  
The path littered with pages of books  
They urge me to pursue the truth  
To be strong and decisive  
Bring punishment when needed  
And be straightforward with what you want

My path is justice

cont.

cont.

The path that only wants peace  
It forces you to skip across stones  
Forces you to yearn for unity  
For peace and beauty  
To help those around you

My path is eleven



Isabella Perez



# Oxygen

*Samuel Valdes*

Belief is finite  
And yet its prosperous  
In such bareness  
We've forced air  
To our lungs  
To breathe  
To thrive in such a place  
Isn't it astonishing?  
That there's the essence  
Of life in our blood  
The constant primal urge  
To cling to our existence  
Sentience so often  
Taken for granted  
We're nothing against  
These stretches of emptiness  
A speck of ambition  
Contained within skies of ink

i' m  
**lost**  
in  
*ink and stars*

Maxwell Evans

# Finding Myself

*Coral Rosario*

In different universes,  
What would I choose to do?  
Who would I become?

Who would I be,  
If not myself?



Kate Asbra

# Star Dust

Analiah Brown

Luminescent tears shone brightly.  
The darken space, illuminated.  
Specs of stardust ignited.

She was the glimmer containing time and space.  
She formed into a living soul.  
She captivated her surroundings.  
She created peace in form of friendships,  
Dreams, hopes, and passion.

She was stardust,  
The inspiration and guidance you looked for.



Analiah Brown

# Another Star

*Kate Asbra*

Drift through the cold ink of the endless black  
sky

A lone, loved star among an astral sea  
Do you wonder if the other stars are just as  
lonely?

So far away from another light  
Another soul, another sound,  
If only gravity pulled us forth  
Brought us together, an unstoppable force  
Maybe then I'll see another light.

We'll keep on drifting  
Pulling and pushing  
Hoping one day we will burn brighter  
Become something more than a lone star  
The burning body you were born in  
The very thing that makes you breathe  
In and out, to let the flames grow  
To hope you become a beacon to be found,  
In that endless astral sea

# Unparalleled

*Samuel Valdez*

Your hands are like stars  
Radiating beneath my touch  
Flames dancing around my fingertips  
Eyes like constellations,  
Sparkling so brightly  
As they fixate onto mine

Each time I stare  
Into luminescent skies  
At the specks of planets  
Millions of miles away  
I see you  
And the sky feels flawed  
Next to my memory  
Of your burning bright touch  
I could see all  
That the universe keeps hidden  
It would pale in comparison  
To you



# Supernova

*Riley Gigstead*

The stars implode around me  
A visual representation of my emotions  
Million years of normalcy, ending in a collapse  
Then a vibrant explosion that lights up the sky

The dust left behind spread thin  
Left to be collected by the flow of space  
A supernova burns brightly  
But once gone it will never be seen again

One after another they die  
Leaving behind one last bang  
Some sort of expression  
Some sort of explosion

# My Universe

*Kate Asbra*

You were the center of my universe,  
Like paper stars hung from my ceiling  
You were always the sun  
Why did your light die out?

My flames have never been as bright as yours  
But now they seem lighter around you  
Like I'm stealing your oxygen,  
Your breath  
Why can't I give it back?

I feel you cry against my shoulder  
Gripping the fabric of my shirt  
Like I was the only thing in the world  
Why do you love me?

Now I seem to understand  
As I saw you go down that path,  
The one I walked myself all those years ago  
Why is it happening again?

I can hold you tight and close  
Feel your warmth and love  
Hoping my dull light can reciprocate  
Am I doing enough for you?



Now I look into your smiling eyes  
And in one second, I seem to know  
You were always my world  
It was always you

beneath  
infinite skies  
the stars  
**intertwine**  
like your hand in mine,  
no *S P A C E*,  
only endless hearts that

*R*  
*A*  
*C*  
*E*



Isabella Perez

# What Could And Should Not Be

*Rowan McClure*

Mortals are unable to touch the stars  
An undeniable fact of life  
Skin would sizzle from eons away  
Bodies melting as they begin to flay.

Mortals spend hours admiring the stars  
As they dance, sing, and paint the sky.  
Yet no matter how one may try  
Humanity can never leave the earth.

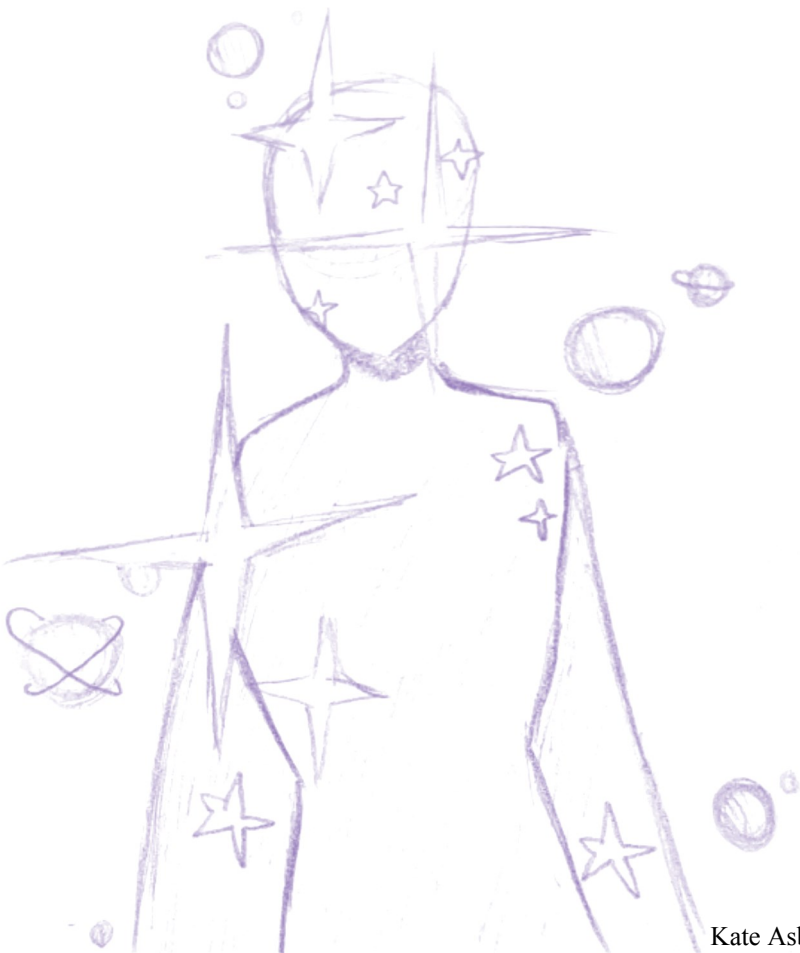
The stars perform with effortless grace  
Their stage the wide expanse of space  
Do they look down upon us with love?  
Or are we scorned for not living above?

Do the stars judge the mortals for their corporeal  
forms?  
For what we all long to shed  
To be reborn?

Mortals wreck their minds worrying of the stars  
Of the thoughts in their minds  
Of the feelings in their hearts.

I wonder if the mortals realize they're fools  
Comparing people to stars

Ignoring their beauties and talents  
In pursuit of an untouchable light.



Kate Asbra

# Stargazing

*Samuel Valdes*

I haven't seen the stars in a long time. Always just emptiness plagued by blinding city lights. I stop sometimes, breaking the flow of foot traffic on the constantly bubbling sidewalks to stare up. And there's nothing but the lights of airplanes flying overhead.

I don't know why I lament so constantly. It was never a tradition, never something I looked forward to. Seeing the sky light up.

I went to the park when I was younger, before the grass underfoot warped to concrete and metal. My mom always liked to point out constellations. She would comment on each of them with nonsensical blabbering of their meanings that flew in through one ear and out the other.

I don't know why I came out here, I needed gas, and I kept driving farther and farther away from where I built myself. Parked more precariously than I would have ever dared on the side of a cliff as I crouched down to sit looking up as I did. And they were there, the stars. Vague hazy memories of everything my mother told me so many years ago about them all.

I didn't really value the time I had spent with her. I wish I did when I had the chance too,

I would change thousands of things about myself if I could now that I see myself now.

I forget her voice sometimes. Pieces of it I thought of as a burden abandoned along the way. I hear it now, when I look at the lit-up horizon. Like the constellations shift to form her being, her mouth leaking the lectures I had long since lost. Like comets crashing through the celestial sea.

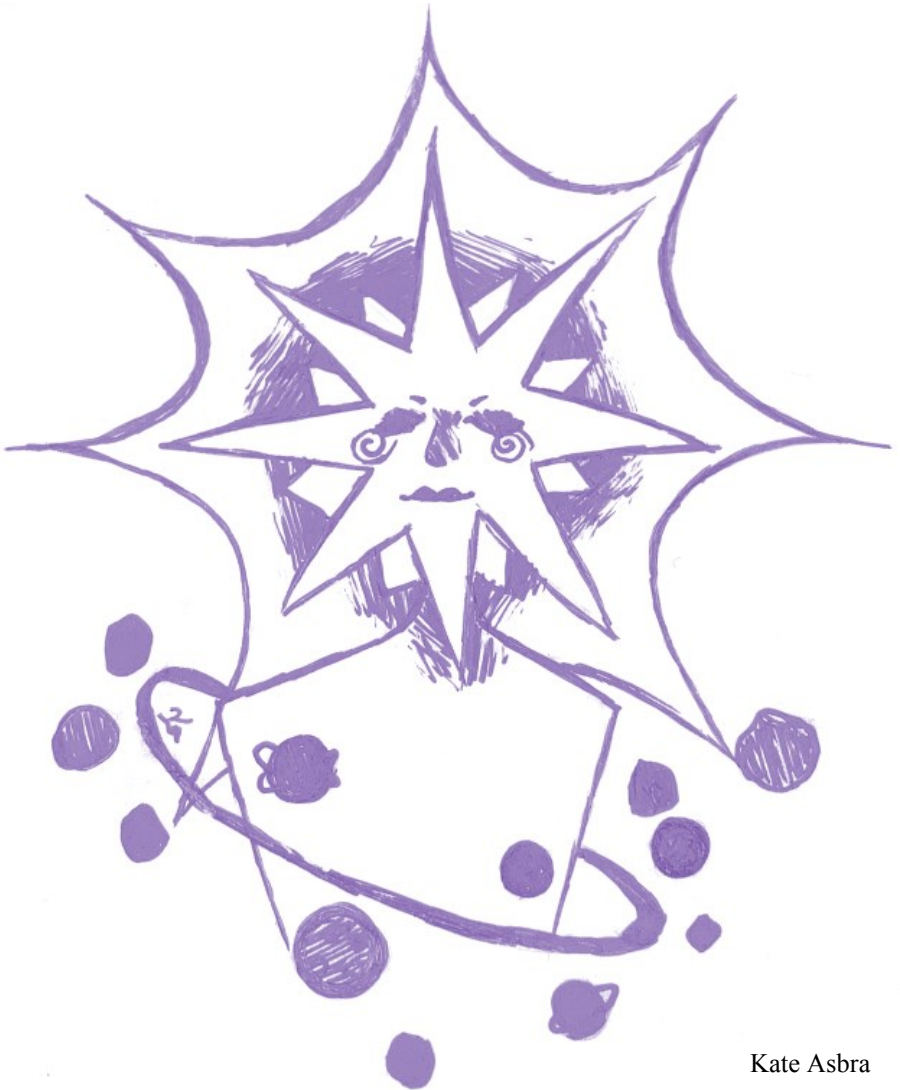
# **You Are Poetry**

*Jaleah Rios*

A hundred billion stars in the galaxy  
Shining brighter than anything the world could  
ever imagine  
Yet no matter how iridescent they glow  
They will never compare to the gleam of your  
smile,  
When you grace the universe with your radiance  
An ocean of crystal blue diamonds  
Intertwine and twirl like the spirals of every  
galaxy  
Mirroring the waves of color in your eyes  
Clouds of ethereal sparkles twinkle into  
masterpieces  
Frozen in time amid the looming darkness  
A statue of beauty that bewitches every mind  
Your voice. A perfect harmony that aligns the  
constellations  
Entrancing and enchanting the world  
With a luminescent energy that dazzles even the  
stars  
You are the glitter of beauty that dances across  
the cosmos  
The comet of light that illuminates the space  
beyond.  
Billions of celestial entities could glimmer  
forever

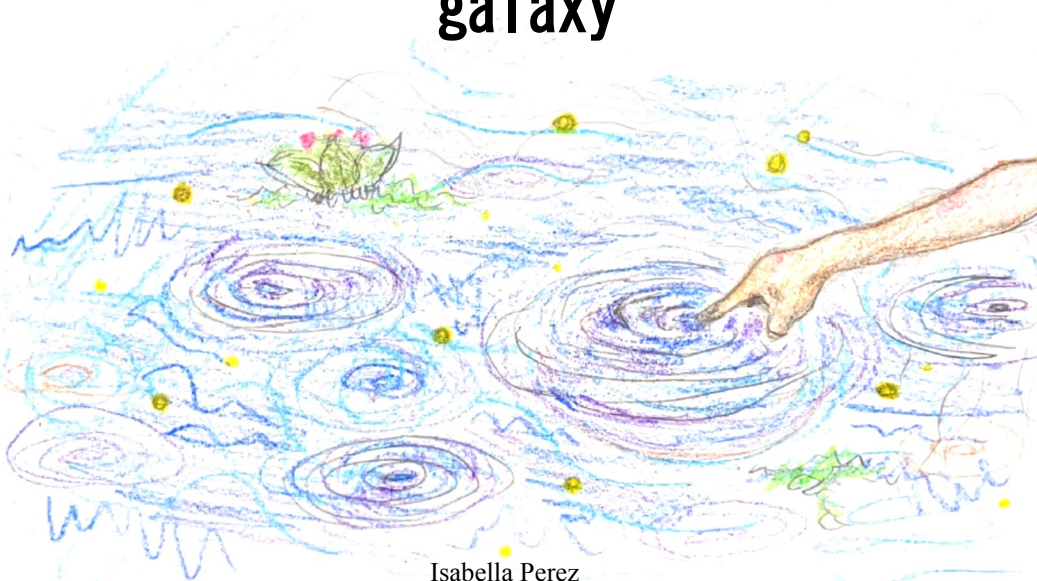


Though only you are a supernova of divinity  
That burns brighter than the universe itself



Kate Asbra

one *touch*,  
one *breath*,  
one *life*,  
sends  
*r i p p l e s*  
through the  
galaxy



# **In Your Orbit**

*Amy Flores*

You are the center of my universe  
The axis around which my heart spins  
prancing amidst love,  
without your force,  
my stars would collapse  
lost in an endless void  
deprived of your presence

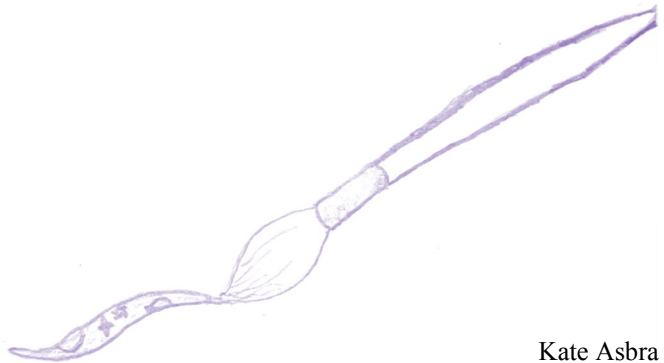
Gravity is but a concept,  
blended with nebulas and galactic dust  
failing to reach me  
for when I think of you,  
I float,  
high on your soul,  
drunk on the warmth of your closeness

# Space Painter

*Isabella Perez*

Palette of planets  
Ideas in the stars  
I imagine Earth as the easel  
I set my dreams upon  
A paintbrush, the cosmic tool  
Saturn's rings outstretched  
Into the bristles  
Venus is my inspiration  
Sat atop Mars, my stool  
Jupiter, the biggest of them all  
Blocking the sun's view  
Mercury is pitiful in comparison  
Said only by a fool  
Pale Uranus brushing past Mercury  
With the deepest of blue hues  
Pluto wavering shyly in the distance  
Hardly more than a constellation  
But I find that its beauty  
Requires the utmost concentration  
And there I am, in the middle of it all  
As Starry Night's visions enthrall  
The Kiss I press to celestial lips  
A Great Wave of radiance  
Where the brush hits the canvas  
A light, a life, colored by the sky  
Nebulas formed by what meets the eye

This is who I am, a glittering entity  
In this endless galaxy of mine



Kate Asbra

# The Universe Speaks in Dreams

*Amy Flores*

Behind my shut eyes is a mirage of visions,  
premonitions warning me of the unseen,  
hidden behind subtle dreams,  
conquering my mind at night—  
reminding me of my hushed, silent fright

Long-lost echoes  
repel off canyons of wisdom  
countless whispers, screams, and wails  
all coexist within me—  
emerging as the sun sets,  
yielding to a moon that shines,  
casting light on my unrest

Nightmares—messages from the world—  
engrave themselves into my uneasy mind,  
forcing me to confront my fears asleep,  
left to wake in cold sweats  
as if being advised to face those trances,  
urged to hear their reaping truths,  
caught wallowing in between slumber and  
reality

It's a one-sided colloquy—  
where my mouth is gaped open, drooling  
with uncertainty and distress,  
too parched to wet my tongue with questioning,  
the haze keeps my mouth dry,  
tightened against the dread from having to  
awaken—  
again



Isabella Perez

# Jupiter

*Alyse Stevens*

My body is a planet  
Draped in beige and white fabrics  
Each strand orbiting around me  
Making my body unique

Each twirl is a day  
Every full dance, a year  
Rotating around one single sun  
The only thing tying me to everyone else

A storm is brewing  
Surrounding my mind in mist  
Forcing my limbs to be feeble  
Enveloping my figure bit by bit

Other worlds can drown in my storms  
The hurricanes that never let me be  
They all say how my red bruise makes me stand  
out  
They all silently watch my torment

And those who idolize me never leave my side  
Each of their stories made by me  
I watch them grow  
I watch them show others my greatness



First was Ganymede  
Who gave up his potential  
He could've been a planet  
But he decided to grasp to my rings

Then was Callisto  
Who stood out for her gradients and pale scars  
Battered and hurt again and again  
Stuck to my hip in hopes of protection

With Callisto came Io  
Made with nothing but rage  
His anger healing any wound obtained  
But Io only follows to watch from afar

Lastly came Europa  
Her white surface wrapped in red veins  
Peaceful and silent  
Coming to my side in hopes of going unnoticed

Each brought another  
The others brought more  
Ninety-five small souls mimic my movements  
Disregarding each sacrifice they've made

The storm won't quell  
My bruise won't heal  
They say I was destined for more  
But what if I never wanted more

cont.

cont.

For I've always desired to be a planet  
Never a star



Alyse Stevens

self reflection  
and *change*  
in every moon  
is what gives  
each  
a  
soul

Alyse Stevens

THERE  
WOULD BE  
NO  
UNIVERSE  
WITHOUT U



@ocsaatlantisablaze  
@ocsacrw

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