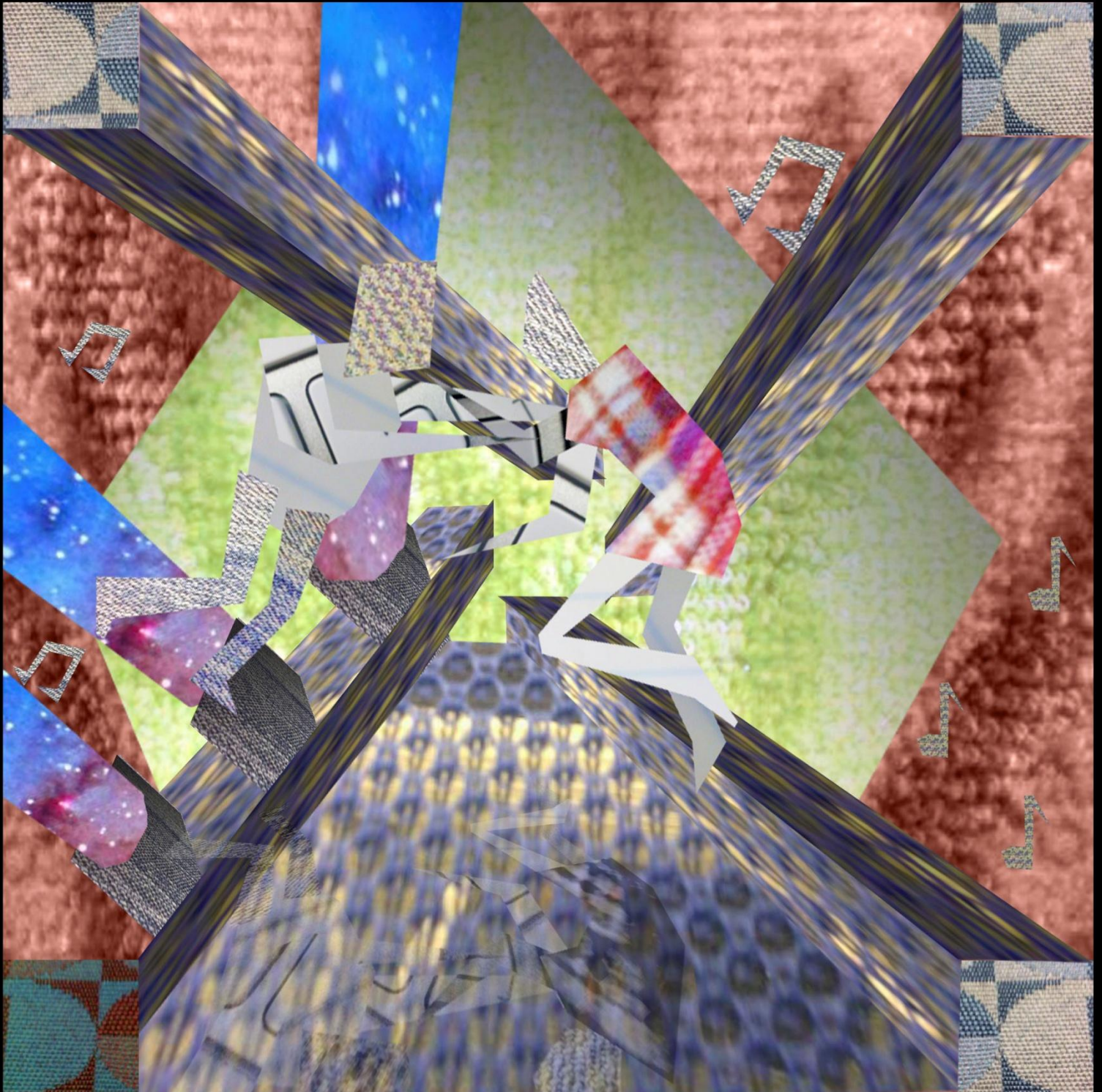


CROSSROADS

THE STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE OF
HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Crossroads

The Online Student Literary Magazine of Hudson County Community College

Sponsored by The Writing Center at HCCC

Volume 1, Issue 1

December 2012

Student Editorial Board

Sophia Anthony

Casey Collado

Daniel Pavlick

Faculty Advisor

Professor Barry Tomkins

Support Staff

Dr. Pamela Bandyopadhyay, Associate Dean

Professor Joseph Caniglia, Coordinator, Writing Center

Anthony Choo-Yick, Head Tutor, English & Humanities

Joseph Pascale, Head Tutor, ESL

Cover Art

"In the Spotlight" by Angelina Roman

Special Thanks

Marcia Hightower Simmons

Beatrice Taylor

Gabriele Rosado

Victor Lopez Jr.

Johanna Bolanos

Genesis Avellaneda

We would also like to thank everyone who submitted work for this issue!

Editorial Policy

The student editorial board considers submissions from all currently registered HCCC students and alumni. Submissions must conform to college guidelines regarding behavior and speech, and the editorial board will not accept material that aims to denigrate based on race, sexuality, or other aspects of identity. The editorial board is open to considering all submissions, but not all submissions will be published. Decisions of the editorial board are final. All submissions will be automatically entered into the Writing Center Contest. *Crossroads* asks for first North American publishing rights. Authors and artists retain their copyrights, own their work, and have the rights to future use of this work. *Crossroads* accepts submissions on a rolling basis, with deadlines on the 15th of each month. Submit to crossroads@hccc.edu.

Table of Contents

Letter from the Editors.....	4
------------------------------	---

-Prose and Poetry-

Conscious Dream – Qualema Wideman.....	5
I Am – Qualema Wideman.....	6
The Hole – C. Estrella.....	7
A Midnight’s Cry – Marcus Calero.....	12
I Did Not See Thee Death – Hector M. Rivera.....	13
Panic – C. Estrella.....	14
Apologies Profound – Hector M. Rivera.....	15
Hours of Dawn – Zaida Mohammed.....	16
Predestination – Hector M. Rivera.....	18
A Safe Place – Daniella Porres.....	20
Peach Tree – Timothy Casey.....	21
Look Up to the Sky – Jessica D. Vega.....	23
It’s Kind of a Funny Story – Andre Mallay.....	25
A Day to Remember – Jenny Escalante.....	26
Wayne Street – Melissa “Mel” Ortiz.....	29
With a Pen in My Hand – Andre Mallay.....	30

-Visual Art-

Anastacia – Angelina Roman.....	4
Portrait – Angelica Santiago.....	11
Purity – Angelina Roman.....	16
Fire Goddess – Angelina Roman.....	18
Flower Maiden the Second – Angelina Roman.....	21
Endless Night – Angelina Roman.....	23
Self Portrait – Alonza Blackwell.....	25
One Rainy Day – Angelina Roman.....	28
Monochromatic Still Life – Angelica Santiago.....	29

Welcome to Crossroads,

The Crossroads Editorial Board is thrilled to share with you this, our first collection of poetry and short stories from the Hudson County Community College community! A collaborative effort nearly six months in the making, producing this inaugural issue of the magazine has been both a journey and a learning experience for us all.

In addition to the work and ideas of the editorial team, this publication owes its existence to the gracious contributions of our staff advisors and supporters. To Professors Tomkins and Caniglia, to Dean Pamela Bandyopadhyay, and to Mr. Joseph Pascale and Mr. Anthony Choo-Yick for their roles in igniting the discussion, in communicating with the college administration, in receiving and forwarding submissions, and in striking that delicate balance between guidance and encouraging independence - we extend our thanks. Appreciation, too, is due the artists whose work we are honored to display throughout this magazine; you have managed, even without reading these stories and poems, to lend colors and light to their words.

Until our roads cross again,

Dan Pavlick

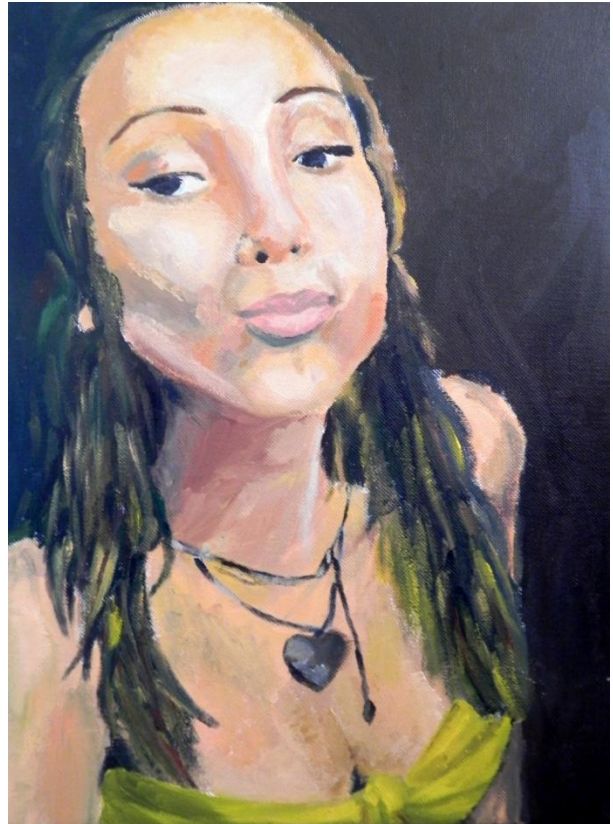
Casey Collado

Sophia Anthony

The Crossroads Student Editorial Board

Conscious Dream
by Qualema Wideman

Shed thy light upon me,
as the light triumphs and darkness weeps.
Hold me tight,
as I lay my head upon my pillow to sleep.
Nurture me, endure me.
Is a dream my reality as I open my eyes?
Lay me down, rest my soul
My aura sparkles, it glitters so bold.
Awake me from my deepest peril at last.
I shall hold no regrets as I age old.
For I am in the presence of time.
I dream so consciously,
My realities are sublime.



"Anastacia" by Angelina Roman

I Am

by Qualema Wideman

I am beautiful, though my mother never told me.

I am strong, though my father made me feel weak.

I am happy, even though my mother made me feel sad.

I am relentless, even though my father made me feel worthless.

I am me because of my mother and father.

I was a mistake.

I was the child born from three abortions.

I was the child that stole my mother's aspirations.

I was the child that trampled over my father's dreams.

I was the child that took away daddy's football and baseball scholarships.

I was the child that stole my mommy's youth.

I was the child that gave my grandparents such joy.

I was the child that was abused, because of my mother's carelessness.

I was abused because my father didn't know.

I am twenty years old.

I am no longer a teenage girl with insecurities and doubts about life.

I am not an adult worried about my future.

I am in transition.

So who am I? I am an adult.

Age does not define who you are.

Your mind, your spirit, your thoughts, and your actions define who you are.

I am a child... a child that has always been an adult at heart.

The Hole
by C. Estrella

"Don't cry, Evelyn," she said softly as she saw them walking in the park, hands intertwined, bodies slinking towards each other. She tried to run away from the scene, but curiosity kept her there. She felt pathetic following Milo and his new girlfriend around. It only hurt more to know. They sat down under a tree, their tree. This new girl wasn't allowed under their tree. How dare he? Then she wondered, was it really their tree? How many girls had he kissed under the tree before her?

Maybe she should have had sex with him; maybe then he would have stayed. She loved him; she was just scared. But she was always scared; maybe it was too much for him to handle.

She closed her eyes in an attempt to fight back the tears and saw herself under the tree with him, talking about the sky and the ground and the universe. She remembered lying against him, her body moving up and down gently as he breathed in and out. It was peaceful and it was perfect and she wasn't scared. But now she was overcome with fear.

She opened her eyes, tears trickling down slowly. She didn't bother fighting them. Fighting them just made a bigger mess; it was best to just let it run. Her fake eyelashes were wet and as she cried they fluttered down to the ground in silent defeat. Her body was shaking gently. She really didn't know what to do or where to go. She could just leave, take a train to one of those cities in the no-name expanse of middle America. Wyoming was big enough to be small and anonymous, wasn't it? Maybe one of the Dakotas, a small town in Iowa or Wisconsin. That would do, wouldn't it? "Wisconsin, Wisconsin," she muttered to herself like a prayer. But even if she escaped this city, she couldn't escape the fear. She couldn't escape Milo's voice in her ear: "I don't want to be with you anymore."

Evelyn walked down the avenue, the brine of dried tears stinging the sensitive skin on her cheeks. She didn't know where she was going; she thought she'd walk until there was no land under her feet. She'd stuff bricks in her pockets and jump into the river. But her feet were sore by the time she got to the hole: the war memorial surrounded by a smattering of chairs and tables, where in the summer people came to enjoy the cool mist of the fountain. But now in the fall it was all but abandoned. She didn't really know why they called this place the hole. Evelyn had told her classmates in grammar school that during a time of plague the hole was a

giant mass grave where bodies were indiscriminately dumped. They believed her; she was a good liar.

"Evie?" a slightly familiar voice asked from the right.

She turned and gazed at him with a puzzled look on her face.

Kenny had never actually met Evelyn; he'd just seen her on campus a couple of times and masturbated to her pictures on Facebook. They'd been at the same parties, but she was always surrounded by her circle of friends. They always bought for her so he never actually spoke to her, yet he'd marvel at her as she danced, figuring that, since the drugs were his, she was his for that moment in time. He felt stupid for saying her name. He should have just stared.

"Kenny, right?" She smiled and stretched her hand out to his.

He could tell by her puffy eyes and smeared makeup that she had been crying. Her hand felt soft in his. He lost himself for a moment in fantasies about the softness of the rest of her body – the nape of her neck, the small of her back – and the gentle warmth of her tender body against his mouth.

"Yeah, you're Owen's friend right?" He didn't need to ask. He had e-stalked them enough to know they'd been best friends for the past three years.

"Yeah," she said. "What are you doing here?"

He ran his fingers through his black wavy hair. "I was visiting someone around here and it's a really nice day; I thought I'd just come and walk around, maybe sit down, have a cigarette."

"You know," – she walked towards the tables, inviting him to follow with her voice – "city council is trying to ban smoking in the hole."

"---- `em," Kenny said, taking his pack out of his back pocket. They sat down across from each other. He offered her a cigarette and she took it in her hands. She put it to her lips while he lit it with his zippo.

"Haven't had a cigarette in a while," she said, putting her elbows on the table. "But I guess I need one."

He leaned back in his chair and took a pull. "You don't need anything?"

She held up her head with her left hand and took a pull. "I don't know, got anything that'll kill someone?"

"Anything can kill you," he said.

She smiled and shook her head.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"Yeah," she mumbled, "maybe."

"So why'd you come to the hole?" he asked, moving closer to the table.

"Oh." She took a pull from the cigarette. "I was just bored, wanted to walk around. It's a nice day for a walk. Crazy weather, right? Seventy degrees in November. I don't know whether to be scared or happy."

"Just enjoy it as it comes." He shrugged.

"I'm over this," she said, staring at the cigarette. She tossed it to the ground and stomped it out with her foot. "Are you a business major?"

"No, pre-med. Why did you think I was a business major?"

"I don't know." She shrugged her shoulders and let out an empty giggle. "You just look like the type. No offense."

"What do you mean I seem like the type?" he smiled.

"Well," she said, reaching her foot out to tap his leg, "you seem miserable all the time." She rubbed her foot slowly against his out stretched leg. "I just always noticed in you this face."

"You notice me?" he interrupted, surprised at his own candor.

"I notice everyone," she said in a breathless whisper that compelled him to inch closer to her. "Everyone who notices me."

"I'm sorry," he said, embarrassed that she understood his stare, but liberated that she was not disgusted by it.

"Don't be," she said, "you aren't the first." She moved her foot back to her own private space and slouched back in the metal seat. She threw her head back and looked up to leafless, naked trees. "Doesn't it annoy you, the way the trees just stay here and do the same thing every year?"

"No," he said, confused by the wall between them now. "They're just trees."

"Do you think some higher power ever looks down at us and says we're just people?"

"They wouldn't understand you and I like we don't understand the trees," he reasoned, struggling to maintain the conversation.

"We don't understand anything, you know? Not the trees, not the weather, not love, not life. It just all seems so meaningless. We could die tomorrow; we should all just give up fighting to understand it all."

"I get you, but," he moved his chair in even closer, "there's a great chance you won't die tomorrow, or the next day, or the day after that."

"That's a tragedy," she sighed. "I won't be around long." She smiled suddenly and changed the subject. "Have you eaten?"

"Uh, no," he responded, but his mind was still stuck on her words: *I won't be around long.*

"You ever been to Ray's Cafe?" she asked.

He shook his head. "Nope, don't think so."

"Come with me," she said. She was never really this welcoming of strangers, but she needed someone to take her mind off of Milo and the new girl. "It's right around here."

Kenny was flustered. Was this a date? Was he dreaming? Was Evelyn on something? And then he remembered: she was on the rebound. "Are you and Milo...?"

She tensed up at the sound of his name. Her eyes widened.

"Are you guys still together?" he asked.

"No," she shook her head and laughed. "We broke up a while ago."

He wondered: how long is a while in Evelyn Atwood time?



"Portrait" by Angelica Santiago

A Midnight's Cry
by Marcus Calero

When the hour draws near,
voices will fade in the night.
As you're swallowed by your fears.
Watch the your eyes lose the light.
A midnight's cry is fatal.
The situation is going critical.
I've seen my world crash and burn.
Waiting for your turn.
I'm looking for the next kill.
I'm ready for the thrill.
Watch as the blood seeps down.
Watch as I fade into the background.
Listen as the noises dim now.
Regretting all those things I said.
The moments replay in my head.
Insults.
Results.
I'm done complaining.
Through with explaining.
Now everyday, I have to fight to stay alive.
When part of me is dead inside.
I'll follow you into the lies.
Until you find the truth hidden in the midnight's cry.

I Did Not See Thee Death

by Hector M. Rivera

I did not see thee, Death, as you stalked through distant lands;
You swooped so subtly low that blood ran cold as lead.
Men of courage, forged of tougher stuff,
Meandered down to darkened pits of rough-and-tumble bluffs.
If you had claimed me, I'd be spared of War's true awesome bite;
I see thee ever leering to loose me in your grasp,
But now I wonder sleeplessly of others who have passed.

What is the patriotism others speak from couches?
They seek blood, so safely spared from bullet's cold, cold kiss,
And when they play computer games, they thirst for more blood bliss.
I hate thee, Death, and elected foes who command from distant lands
And sleep so sound on whorish beds and know the running joke.
It runs so swiftly through the hills it scarcely can be caught;
It screams for you to paint the hue of human refuse bought.
They do not bury corpses made; they do not know the brave.
They only leer from limousines cemetery black.
They only demand tribute the painted color black.
They only remain, so far gone: Death's head reels the wicked back.
"You instead, you instead," bemoans the twisted wretch.
"Take this infernal mess and burn it black as they,
So sick am I of limousines and pigs who ride away."

Panic

by C. Estrella

I felt a million ropes

Little hands

Tighten vices and grips

Around my heart and lungs

Cemetery dirt suffocated me

I could not breathe

I could not see

Just the tombstone for comfort.

Here I stand

Here I drown

All spirits pale and brown

Here I suffocate on menthol smoke

And the green vapor of gangrenous love.

Here I fall on broken heels

Here I am

Half alive,

Wishing I was a black hole.

Apologies Profound
by Hector M. Rivera

Would that I could spare thee son from dragons of my youth,
who squatted down upon my choice and rended it straight through.
If I could strangle demons with gauntlet hands for days,
the tragedy of your pain would disappear decades.

One Dragon in particular her teeth still stained with blood,
manifested too late for me to plant my sword in good.
Her name was seed and I did reap the discord you now feel,
pray tell me son, but do not weep your fate will not be sealed.

How could a boy so innocent feel father's sin so strong,
that shadows run after him and long to tear him down,
to darkened holes and furnace pits and places filled with rot,
who smile with glee when then they see the evil in the plot?

Would that I could challenge all those shadows who aim to feast,
upon your youthful joy and epic aims to ingest peace.
I would scream a barbarous yell and scatter darkness far,
I would plant my axe brain deep atop the carcass yard.

Bloody tears sown thick with hate would fuel my deathly rage,
to cleave and maim the shadows deep who seek to have you slain.
I would die of burning, I would die of blade,
before I ever let those things touch hair or hide I made.

Forgive me son, forgive me for it is I who doomed you so,
I could not listen and would not listen to warnings I was shown.
Please steer clear of dragons who seek to utter lies,
and lead you down the path with speed to familial demise.



"Purity" by Angelina Roman

The Hours of Dawn
by Zaida Mohammed

I would wake up in the early hours of dawn,
While everyone slept;
Sit myself in front of the luminous morning, with the heated sun
At the rear of the house
Slowly peeking up from the horizon,
The grass still wet from the dew.
Hearing myself plead for mercy from the almighty,
As tears of helplessness stream down my cheeks;
Replaying my trials and tribulations in my memory,
As if they had just occurred - sometimes they had.

I realized my individual worth,
None of which was recognized nor appreciated
By the one who mattered most.
I senselessly positioned myself
Into his carefully fabricated trap

Without the slightest idea of his aim.
After enduring for so long,
I eagerly and dearly hunted for an escape.
It was just a cover, a fake cover -
this is now clear to me -
that I was drawn to.
A cover whose inside was as fierce as fire,
Portraying itself to be as tough as stone
Yet delicate as a rose.

I sought deliverance from this hideous dungeon
In which I had been captured.
Captured by the bitterness of an
Egoistical, self-indulgent creature
While surrounded by constant lies and deception
And our nonstop retaliation and altercation
With each other.



"Fire Goddess" by Angelina Roman

Pre-destination

Hector M. Rivera

How did I end up here? My body is burned and I'm lying in a dumpster. I'm too weak to scream out for help. Who would help me anyway? Even God's own advice was repugnant to me. No self-respecting three piece suit could even stand to smell me, let alone help me.

Most recently I was enjoyed by a teenage sadist who painted his canvas with gasoline and matches. I guess his Xbox and date rapes grew tiresome. He approached me as I sat in a cold puddle in the alley shivering and hoping for death. I should have never looked up to see his dashing grin. His teeth were violations. He explained to me that he worked for the local shelter and was out trying to rescue people during this latest of blizzards. I never questioned the validity of this. Not even after his help crunched the back of my skull with a pipe.

How did I end up here? She was a good woman. She had dreams and aspirations. Her name was Twyla and she believed in true love. My name was Douglas and I brought sorrow

wherever my shadow fell. The love of a good woman was not enough for me. The purity of an angelic son could not rein me in. Wanderlust was my mistress; drugs and alcohol was a fiddle whose music I could not ignore. How many days did I ignore her? How many days did I make excuses to avoid my beautiful boy? The fiddle would begin to play and I would dance my life away. I would dance for hours and before too long, my loving home transformed into a seedy bar. The fiddle would play on and I would then materialize into backstage bedlam. Strange women's moans lulled me to sleep and sandpaper knuckles greeted me good morning. It must have been here that led me to the dumpster. No, it was before Twyla. Who am I kidding?

How did I end up here? I was 16. My father dropped in and paid my mom and I a visit. I hadn't seen the old coot for eons. I wondered even then, if he was really sitting before me or some hallucination. Acid was a delicacy then. He told me a tale of mistakes made. Pop shared his failures with me. Epic failures of not realizing the mental condition my mother had. It appears that my mother, God rest her soul, was not "In her right mind," as he put it.

Sure, I remember days when Mom's threats of suicide disturbed me. One might say it was a giant warning sign that those suicide threats would come after one of my occasional four-year-old temper tantrums of being forced to live in a soiled diaper. You will also hear no argument from me that it is not in the best interest of the child to burn cigarette butts on him, regardless of if the voices told her it was the best way to be rid of the devil's temptations in my head. I sat there realizing that the old coot had wanted to save me all along. He wanted to save me from this monstrous woman and her monstrous ways. Sad to say though, that Pop wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed. He never expected that when my mother politely excused herself from the dinner table to powder her nose, she was really returning with a double barrel shotgun. She blew him in half right in front of me. I didn't even get a chance to tell him that I had really loved him. I'm sure that was the situation that led me to the dumpster and the rest of my minutes as a crispy critter.

You know, now that I think of it, I can't even blame Mom or my half-a-dad. Gosh, that was ghoulish of me to say. I was the reason I ended up in that dumpster deep fried and served up like fast food into eternity. It was my choices and every footstep I plotted, that led me down that road. Here in the funeral parlor of the great green dumpster, the rat gnawing on my burnt finger is the only one left to pay his respects. It makes you wonder. How did I end up here? What could I have done diffe---

A Safe Place
by Daniela Porras

I've always dreamt of low hills, a single tree with fruits, short grass, a river, and a blue sky. There's more to this scene than nature; there's life. The light colors blend together to make an unforgettable landscape.

The low hills allow me to see ahead; they don't block my vision for the future. High hills would mean exercise, which I highly dislike. I can picture myself jumping from hill to hill, without worrying about negative comments or being seen. The single tree gives me a feeling of ownership and safety. The fruits would be my way to survive day after day. I prefer the low pasture because high pastures would have hidden things. If the pasture is high, I would imagine that a snake or dangerous animal would slide through there. With a river close by, I would bathe as well as wash my clothes. I wouldn't mind having the same clothes as long as they're clean. The blue sky is a sign of peace and happiness. Rainy days make me sad, in addition to giving me bad vibes.

L'ete brings back the exact feeling I once had as a child. When I used to watch Dora the Explorer, I would fantasize about the day in which I could walk that safe world of hers. Dora would walk alone with her monkey, finish a task, and then travel back until next time. This was the life I wanted to live, and the girl I still want to be.

In this safe place, I wouldn't mind being alone. The road would be for those neighbors passing by, yet living miles away from me. Diving into this picture has made me realize how familiar it is to my life. Metaphorically, I have lived this scene every day of my life. Each aspect of this painting speaks a little bit about my likes, dislikes, and who I am. I aspire to live a peaceful life with no enemies. I dream of the day when I can be myself without thinking twice about my identity. I want to be free from today's selfish society and make a change. This safe place has not only impacted my life, but has always rested inside my heart.

Peach Tree
By Timothy Casey

He wasn't there today - though John never really paid him any mind when he was. Still, John couldn't shake the uneasy feelings. Every day for the past few years, the man from apartment three would always stand in that exact spot. There was no significance to the place he stood or why he stood there. In fact, on several occasions John had asked the old man why, but he simply replied, "No reason," or "Just to pass the time." So when John left his apartment on his way to work, the absence of the man from apartment three was the first thing he noticed. He shrugged off the uncommon situation as the old man simply being tired, and continued his journey.

I hope he's ok, John thought, pulling the heavy glass door to his office building open. In the elevator, his thoughts traveled to the day ahead of him, and the frail old man from apartment three was the last thing on his mind. John hustled and bustled as his day wore on, sweating in his small cubicle, and trying to crunch numbers for the large corporation that employed him. With a furrowed brow and hunched shoulders, he slumped onto his desk as he finally put in the completed data. Stretching his back, he turned off his computer and headed home. Having worked through lunch, he stopped at a hot dog stand and ordered two hot dogs. Finishing the last bites of his meager dinner, he walked down the block to his apartment building; still the old man wasn't there.



"Flower Maiden the Second" by Angelina Roman

The next morning he knocked on the door to apartment three on his way out. With no answer, he figured the man was in his usual spot, but when he went outside and saw that the shade under the small peach tree in front of the building was still bare, he had given up. He was tired of trying figuring out where this weird old man from apartment three could possibly be. And so for the rest of the week, he paid no mind to the out-of-place peach tree in the middle of the block of a busy city, and his missing neighbor.

The morning of two weeks after the man stopped spending his days in front with the peach tree, John's curiosity got the better of him. He called out from work and set out to discover the whereabouts of the man from apartment three.

"All I know about him is that he's been here a long time, even before I took over the building thirty years ago," said the landlord. "If you want, we can head up to his apartment and make sure he's ok."

"I guess that could help ease my mind." Keys in hand, the landlord followed John up the three flights of stairs to apartment three. A knock on a door with no reply was all they needed to open the door. A fumble of keys later and the door was open. The apartment was bare from wall to wall save for a small note on the counter. John walked over to the envelope read the card and understood. The next morning John stood under the peach tree and just waited.

Life doesn't always give you the answers you'd expect.

Look Up to the Sky
by Jessica D. Vega

This telescope I have
is big as can be
look up to the sky
tell me what you see

I see the sun
and I see the moon
it comes out at night
and sometimes at noon

Mercury, Venus,
Earth, and Mars
look up to the sky
see the shooting stars

The two biggest planets
are Jupiter and Saturn
look up to the sky
do you see an amazing
pattern?

Next comes Uranus,
then Neptune and even Pluto
look up to the sky
you can't say that it's pseudo

There's asteroids and comets
in this big galaxy
look up to the sky
do you like what you see?



"Endless Night" by Angelina Roman

It's Kind of a Funny Story
by Andre Mallay

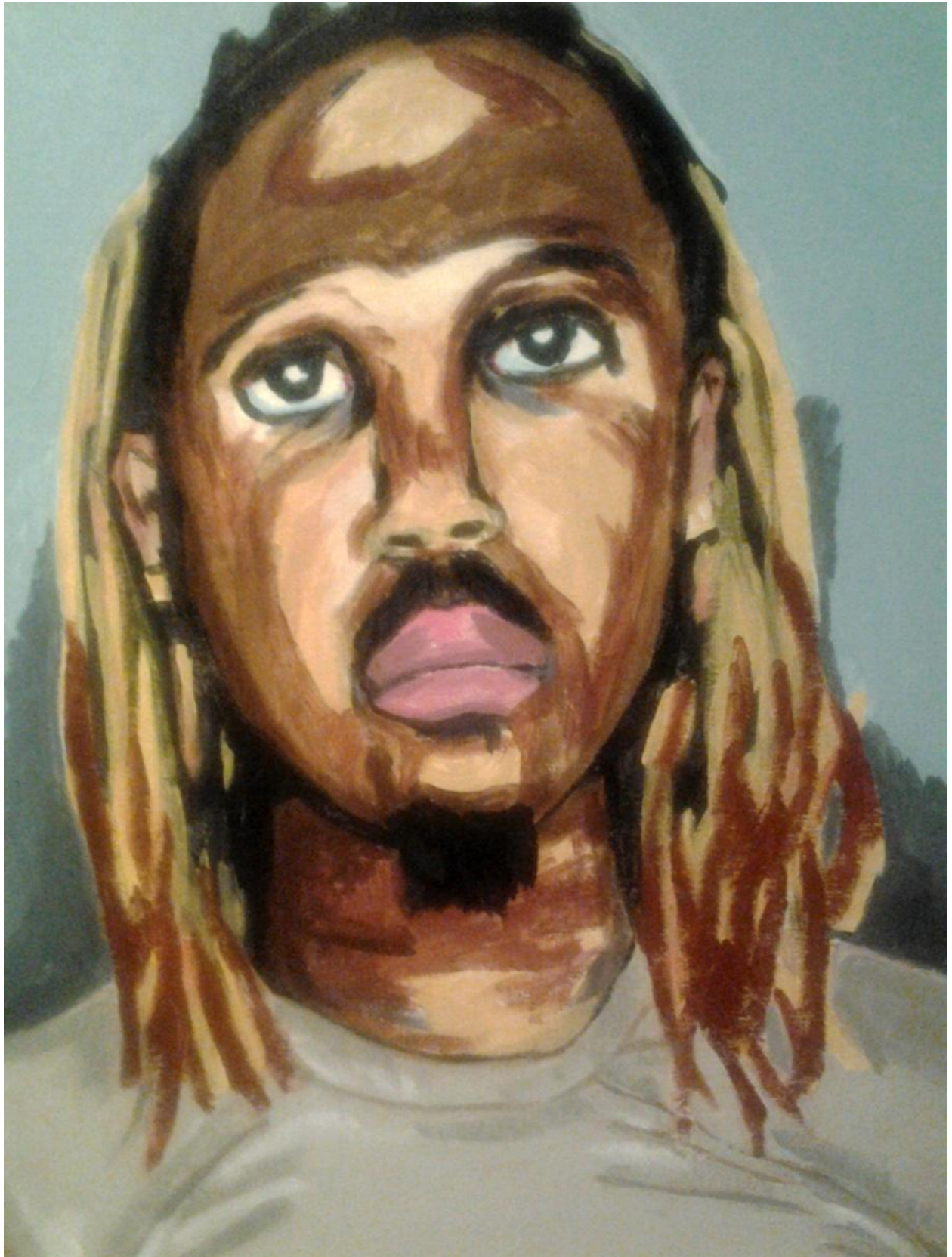
There are a lot of strange things out there. Trust me - I've been to the movies, read books, and met people, but today's events would top my weird charts. I was walking to the park on a quiet spring day. The air was cool and the clouds were darker than coal, but I knew the approaching rain would be cooler than ice. When I arrived at the park, there were few people there. I noticed the local bully harassing some younger kids. As I approached the group, the younger kids ran away crying and talking to each other. "*No bruises, cuts, or blood. Thank God I made it on time,*" I thought. Everyone knew I was quiet, but they also knew I had an anger management problem. My temper only acted up in fight or flight situations. This situation fell into the "fight" category, and I was ready to play. My body started to warm up as adrenaline rushed through my veins. The bully turned to face me, holding what appeared to be a wooden bat. He stood a few inches higher than me and was well built. The ugly grin on his face was just asking to be punched.

"Well look at what we've got here," he sneered, gripping the bat with both hands.

"Listen," I began to speak, "I will give you ten seconds to beat it or I will hurt you."

"How about I give you three?" roared the bully. Three seconds later the bat was swung at my head. Funny thing about that – the bat turned into ash within five inches of my head. As the bully and I stared at the ashes on the ground, my body took over and I unconsciously let out an invisible force field of torrent energy. My assailant flew back the length of a football field. As I stood there trying to make sense of all that had happened, I realized that it was all quite logical: the temper problem, the burning sensation throughout my body, the rush of energy. This did not feel weird or strange to me. In fact, it felt normal, natural even.

"What's going to happen next?" I thought as I gazed up at the sky.



"Self Portrait" by Alonza Blackwell

A Day to Remember
by Jenny Escalante

I woke up to the sun shining and the birds chirping. It was a nice day out in Harrison, NJ and everything was going well. My mom woke me up with a bowl of oatmeal to eat. Then she laid out my clothes on my bed for school; while getting dressed I would hear her say, "Jenny hurry up!" While I was eating, she braided my hair to look like a Native American. Luckily, for me my school was around the corner from where I lived.

So my mom dropped me off at school and then she went to work. I was in my third grade classroom in Mrs. Bishop's class. All the students had to be in their classrooms and ready to learn at 8:30. At that time we didn't have to wear uniforms, so most of the 8-year-old kids had different colors on. If the students were gathered together they would look like a rainbow.

My class had a beautiful view of the New York skyline. There were about 20 students in class and everyone had their own desks. The classroom was decorated with everyone's work that was done in class. All the classwork had at least one sticker for doing a good job. My teacher was at the chalkboard writing fill-in sentences for our language arts section. Every student had their own desk and chair with a bin on the inside of the desk to put in our books. Some of the students' desks were decorated with either Barbie stickers or racecar stickers, depending if it was a girl or boy.

I always sat next to my best friend, Robert, and we would always end up talking in class and getting in trouble. "Jenny penny did you watch WWF last night?"

I replied, "Yea I did!" My teacher noticed that we started talking and fooling around in class by distracting other students, so she moved me to the desk next the window by the sharpener.

Everybody was doing their work and I got up for a minute because I had to sharpen my pencil. I always looked outside to see New York because I loved going over there. Every time my parents had an opportunity to go out they would take me to Times Square or to Central Park. While I was looking toward New York I saw a plane going toward the World Trade Center and it was ridiculously low. The plane crashed. I saw the explosion and the smoke that started coming out of the first tower. I saw the clock and it was 8:45am. Then I saw a second plane going fast and next thing I knew, it landed inside of the building in tower 2 at 9:03am.

I froze and didn't move one muscle because I was in shock. Mrs. Bishop kept calling my name, but I wouldn't turn around. So she came up next to me and kept telling me to take a seat until she saw what caught my eye. "Oh no, oh my god!" said Mrs. Bishop. She was also in shock and while she remained there she saw the second plane go into the second tower. She held me close to her so that I wouldn't look any further and I felt a tear of hers drop on my shoulder. Mrs. Bishop closed all the shades, so that the rest of the students wouldn't panic. Mrs. Bishop said, petrified, "Um, okay class, open your math books to page five and do problems one through fifteen." She left the class and left us doing work so that we wouldn't see or think of what was going on. She went to Mrs. Jackie's room and turned on the TV since there weren't any students present. The news was on and she saw everything that was going on. "What did you see?" said Bobby. "There was a plane flying, but it looked low and it crashed into a tower," said Jenny. A few students in my classroom started crying because some of their relatives were there. Most of the students in the building heard what was happening in New York and they started worrying.

A few minutes later I heard my teacher cry and the only thing she would say is, "my son," over and over again. I kept peeking at the window and I found it strange because before there were two towers and now there was only one standing. At that time my mom was working, and she was a teacher's aid in the school. In a matter of minutes, parents started arriving and students started leaving. People feared that something might happen in New Jersey since we are so close. My teacher came back in the class with pink eyes and a pale-looking face. She put the shades up and we saw what was left of the towers, which was nothing. It was an empty space full of dust.

My parents took me home and my brothers came back from work early in fear of what might happen next. My mom dressed professionally since she was a teacher's aid for kids with special needs. She had light brown skin, her long beautiful hair up in a bun, and her soft-looking face held me close to her. They sat me down on the couch with my two older brothers for a family meeting. They explained to me in the gentlest way they could that the planes which went towards the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were hijacked. They spoke to me about how there are bad people who do bad things to hurt people. They also tried explaining to me what the government was going through and everything that was happening in the world. The next day I went back to school and I saw one of my friends still crying because of what had happened yesterday. I asked him what was wrong and he responded while sobbing, "My

dad didn't come back from work in New York yesterday." With just that response we knew the worst. He passed away when the first tower came down. It was a very sad and unfortunate week that no one will ever forget.

After seeing what has occurred in the United States, I have realized what some people are capable of. It's like a student bullying another student but ten times worse. I have learned to appreciate what I have and to be careful with who I communicate with because in this life not everyone can be trusted.

Now in the present we have a piece of the World Trade Center at our park in Harrison, NJ and there is a memorial at ground zero. Many people go there to see what happened and to pay respect to those who lost their lives. We will never forget a tragic day like September 11.



"One Rainy Day" by Angelina Roman

Wayne Street
by Melissa "Mel" Ortiz

Pictures in my mind's eye
play more like movies.

Memories awakened by the
remembered sensation
of the hot concrete
as felt through a cheap pair of Skippies.

Awaiting my turn to ride
that one blue and white,
banana-boat seat, second-hand bike
shared by the whole neighborhood.

Crossing over Railroad Street
now called Christopher
headed for the piragua man.
Make mine "*de tamarindo*"

Yelling to open windows
for someone to toss down house-keys
a quarter, or some money for ice cream.
Reply: "*We got the same ---- upstairs!*"

Fashion shows held in front of Barrow Street Mansion; side ponytails and Aquanet.



"Monochromatic Still Life" by Angelica Santiago

With a Pen in My Hand
by Andre Mallay

With a pen in my hand.
I begin to write.
Nothing to stop me.
This is my fight.

To where the destination is unknown.
Do I have the will to carry myself back home?
I stop myself because the path is unclear.
Surely my journey can't be near.
I have to keep writing... it's my only way.
But the mental blocks always stay.
I hop over them one at a time.
The sense of doubt is my only time.
Why did I leave my writing behind?
Why did I take the fun away?
I'm starting anew... yet new ideas don't stay.
This idea won't stay in my mind.
It seems to be lost in time.
For now I must put my pen away.
And continue writing another day.