

# Windows Spring 2021



 Abigail Shoults

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## Invisible Dragons



By: Susannah Meszynski

Meet my invisible dragons. In size, they grow and shrink. Sometimes there is only one, but sometimes many more. I have known them since I was a little girl -- but no one else can see them. They are constantly with me, like a scar you can't remember getting. With tails thrashing against the floor and angry snarls, they dictate my every move.

Some might say they are protecting me, but how can that be when they won't even let me live? I am like a princess in a guarded castle, but no one slays my dragons. I try to battle them myself, but they always win.

My dragons don't like it when I go anywhere, even necessary places like the grocery store. On a day when I have to go grocery shopping, I have to wake before the thrushes and doves. Beneath my bed, the dragons stir. Their breathing is like a mother cat's purr but threatens me like a weapon.

My sock-clad feet touch the wooden floorboards as if stepping on glass. I tiptoe across the room, sword in hand. The dragons grunt, but they do not wake. Not yet.

Quickly, I dress, brush my teeth, and slip out the door. The morning air is like a cup full of hope. Maybe this morning, of all mornings, I can escape them.

I start the car slowly as if this will make it quieter. I know they will wake when they hear the engine roar.

A dragon's desperate warning cry of alarm rips apart the tranquil morning silence. *She is trying to escape!*

I stomp on the gas and fling my vehicle from the driveway. Orange flashes in the rearview mirrors as the dragons fly after me.

They soar above me all the way to the grocery store, then spiral down into the parking lot. I glare at them.

"Can't you wait by the car?"

They don't.

No one can see my dragons, but any eye contact makes me feel like people can. As if somehow they can sense the invisible, ferocious beasts flanking my heels.

With my head low, I start shopping. As I go, my dragons' warning flames heat up my neck until sweat runs down.

I get stuck behind someone in the dairy aisle. I try to say "excuse me," but a dragon nips at my hand before I can.

*Don't talk to her, they say.*

*"Why?"*

*Because "excuse me" might not be the right thing to say.*

So I go around the woman without saying a word. I brush against her and turn back to apologize, but my hand is nipped again.

*Don't apologize. That will make it worse. Pretend it didn't happen.*

The dragons' logic is flawed. I know that in hindsight, but in the moment, all I can do is obey their every word. If I don't, they might eat me.

At checkout, the dragons grow bigger. As we move up in line, they hiss instructions at my elbow.

*Wait for the person in front of you to finish. Don't unload your groceries too soon.*

*Do you have your wallet ready? Don't do cash! You will have to count that out, AND the cashier will hate you for making them get change.*

*But if you use your card, for goodness' sake, make sure you slide it the right way! There is nothing more stupid than using a credit card the wrong way!*

I tremble. Checking out should be simple. But when you have invisible dragons dictating your every move, it becomes hellish. With trembling hands, I slide my card. My words somersault over each other as they tumble from my mouth.

Once my groceries are bagged, I rush out. My dragons chase after me.

*You were so embarrassing. What is wrong with you?* asks one dragon.

I stop. I cannot do this anymore. I can't, I can't, I can't.

I drop my groceries, unsheathe my sword, and turn on them.

"Go away!" I shout.

They laugh -- a deep and snarling laugh.

*We can't because you'll never change. You are the shackles binding us to you. We will always be with you wherever you go.*

I want to cover my ears like a frightened child. Instead, I lunge at the dragons. Their long tails swing around and knock me down.

I cry out in pain as my hands and knees hit the pavement. My sword clatters down beside me. I stay there on the ground, hands searing and tears prickling in my eyes. They are right. I will never slay them.

"Dragons got you down?"

The voice makes me sit up and look around. It must be the tears in my eyes or the blinding morning sunlight, but for a second, I could swear

the woman standing in front of me is wearing armor.

She holds out her hand to me. I take it, and she helps me to my feet. I look around. My dragons have shrunk back. The scales along their spines stick up like the hairs on a frightened cat.

I look at the woman in wonderment.

“You can see them?”

She shakes her head.

“I can’t see them, but I know they are there. Everyone has invisible dragons.”

“Do you?”

“I did.”

“How did you slay them?”

She shakes her head. “I didn’t slay them. I made peace with them. Then one day they flew away.”

“You make it sound so easy.”

“It wasn’t, but it was worth it, which makes it seem easy now.”

She picks up my sword.

“You won’t be needing this anymore.”

“Why not?”

“It is time to tame your dragons.”





Isaiah Day

### **Shattered**



By: Abdisalam Yousuf

I have shattered your hopes  
I have shattered your dreams.  
I have shattered your will,  
but you could not shatter me.

You have used me as an excuse  
and blamed me, time after time.  
I have destroyed relationships,  
with the people we have left behind.

I have brought you despair  
along with endless nights of joy.  
With no chance of repair  
of what we destroyed.

See once I am shattered  
you cannot put me back together.  
For if you do,  
I will cut you forever.



## A Morning At The Coffee Shop



By: Lauren Wiegers

Fifteen minutes left before I had to buy something else. The smiling barista at the coffee shop who called me “honey” – Deb, her name tag said – always assured me I could stay as long as I wanted, but it still felt rude to sit at the counter by the window for five hours and only buy one coffee.

I needed to find a better way to spend my Saturdays than sitting in this shop for hours with my computer in front of me, pretending I was finally writing that novel that would be the next big success. I spent four years in college for an English degree but it turns out degrees don’t write books. All that effort and I was working in a department store, waiting for some giant epiphany that would give me the words I needed for my book. They never seemed to come. I couldn’t think of a story, something worth saying.

“Workin’ on something?” the man sitting next to me asked. He had a thick Scottish accent, and he smiled from behind his bushy red beard. He looked thirty-something, with twinkling eyes and a jovial air about him.

“Ohh, trying, anyway,” I said. “A novel.”

His eyebrows went up. “A novel, yeah? What’s it about?”

“Nothing, yet,” I said.

He chuckled. “Havin’ a bit of writer’s block?”

“A lot of it,” I replied. “I end up scrapping everything I write, every week.”

“Ah, I see. It’ll come to you,” he said.

I doubted it, but he was kind to say so. “And you?” I asked, pointing to his laptop.

“Oh, just some work project. When the kids are shut up with my wife in our little apartment, it’s hard to think straight, let alone get anything done. So I came here to get some work accomplished.”

“How many kids do you have?” I asked.

“Three boys, and a little girl born two months ago. They keep us busy,” he laughed. “The little one has a lot of health complications, so we’re back and forth from the hospital most every week. Always something going on in our little family.” He looked as if he liked to talk about his kids.

“I’m sorry to hear about your daughter,” I said. “That must be so hard.”

“It is sometimes,” he said. “But we keep praying, and the Lord’s



taking care of us. I was able to pick up some extra hours at work and that allows my wife to stay home with the kids. We're pretty tired, but we're getting along fine."

I marveled at his resolution. Here I was at twenty-two, feeling washed-up because I couldn't write a good paragraph. He had a growing family and a sick daughter to take care of and he was taking it in stride.

"That must take a lot of faith," I said.

"The Lord is good," he replied with a smile. "He gives us faith for each new day and always provides."

We went back to our work. Eventually, I got up to go order another coffee. As I was waiting in line, the man packed up his computer. He stopped next to me on his way out the door. "Well, good luck with your book! You'll hit upon something sooner or later. It's just a matter of finding the right story to tell. Look for it in new places. Ask questions. Listen. There's something very valuable in someone who knows how to listen when the rest of the world can't be bothered," he said.

I nodded, then quickly turned and gave my order to the impatient older lady with the bright purple hair standing behind the counter. I turned back to the man. "Thank you," I said. "I'll remember that."

He nodded at me. "Of course." He handed the lady behind the counter a folded bill. "For her coffee," he said to her.

"Please, you don't have to do that," I protested.

"But I want to," he said. "Please."

"Well, thank you," I consented.

"You're welcome," he said. "It was nice meeting you."

"You as well!" I replied. "I hope everything works out for your family."

He smiled warmly. "Thank you." Then he tugged on the brim of his hat and said, "Good day," before walking out of the shop.

I watched him go thoughtfully. The lady who had taken my order cleared her throat loudly and held out my iced coffee. I thanked her and took it from her, swirling the ice inside the cup. "I'm thinking of coloring my hair," I said to her. "Where did you get yours done?"

Her frown suddenly cleared. "At the place just down the street," she said. "My granddaughter wanted me to do it. She's eight. I watch her on Tuesdays for her mother, and we both went to get our hair done. I would never have let her mother do something like that at her age, but she's my baby and I like to spoil her sometimes," she chattered, her earrings swaying and her face glowing.

An hour later, I left the coffee shop, my mind buzzing with

thoughts and caffeine. I had spent the last forty minutes listening, watching, talking to the baristas and hearing their stories about the regular customers, their families, and what their plans for the rest of the weekend were. And I bought a coffee for a girl who came in looking like she'd just been crying, just to pay it forward.

I still hadn't written a single paragraph. But I knew about a man who had four kids, a sick daughter, and strong faith in God. I knew about a woman with purple hair who doted on her granddaughter. I knew about a man who bought a bagel every morning just to feed it to the birds outside, and a girl who was hoping to get engaged in the next week. And a hundred different fragments from a hundred different stories whispered to each.



### #IStillLoveYou



By: Leah Salcito

A gaze that penetrates,  
retrieving a sad soul,  
repairing the glass shards,  
back from slivers to whole.  
A fleeting breath of warmth,  
that sets pale cheeks aflame,  
a subtle difference,  
and strangely still the same.  
An expression of mirth,  
that could banish the dark.  
In its absence, surround-  
-grew unbearably stark.  
A natural fragrance-  
-gave an odd, serene calm.  
Beautiful illusion,  
cheek to cheek and joined palms.  
Onslaught of emotion-  
-for a much-traveled path.  
A route that thrice spurned-  
-left woeful aftermath.  
Weeping willow ran dry,  
a tiger lily blooms.

Dandelion grew cold,  
where towering oak looms.  
A swelling adore quick-  
-tick hands will hinder not.  
Rekindling of passion,  
forsaking that once fought.  
A ringing alto sounds,  
a sweet song anew,  
though seeming halfhearted,  
calls out steadfast and true.  
Alone lost will wander,  
Until beaten and sore,  
as a proof of profound,  
that remains evermore.



 Abigail Shoults

## Chaos



By: Linnea Meshkoff

Most don't worry about what's going on in the world around them  
Where ice is melting faster than kids are being shot down  
Where pollution is everywhere in town  
The world needs more honesty  
Where people aren't dying in poverty  
As long as big business men are getting paid by selling their work  
Society is blinded by greed and by choice

All these problems and no one is willing to help  
All our hands are stained red with blood of those innocents that we chose  
to ignore  
But this society doesn't have to die to be changed  
Just need to have our eyes opened and rearranged



Tyler Weinstein

## Taking Flight



By: Lauren Wiegers

The young bird stood teetering on the edge of the cliff, its craggy, gray walls shooting down, down, down into nothingness, the ground so far below that it could not be seen. Indecision racked his body, exhilaration and fear plummeting from his heart to his stomach, where they rolled in a scuffle, trying to best each other. This was the moment he had been anticipating for so long – his first attempt at flight. And yet he couldn't convince his body to move. The drop was far, and doom in the event of failure was certain.

He looked out across the chasm. In the distance, a new and beautiful world lay stretched out before him. Across the hard and unforgiving rock and cold air was a lush green forest. The branches of the trees reached out to him, beckoning him closer. The rich expanse of vegetation and the exotic scent of the strange fruit growing on the trees tantalized him, drawing him forward until he was leaning out over the precipice, his whole body quivering. So long he had lived on the barren cliffsides, longing to travel to the fertile lands he gazed at from afar. This was his chance to leave behind the world he knew and venture into territory that was as of yet unexplored by him.

Sunlight rippled in arcs across the glossy plumage of the birds that already soared and plunged in the air over the chasm. Resolve grew within him. This was his time to join them. When his feet left the rock and his wings stroked the air, he would no longer be just a chick. He would be a real bird. Spreading his wings, he took flight.

Mrs. Robinson watched fondly from the window as her son Matthew leapt from the bottom step of the porch to the driveway.





Liliana Rodriguez

### **A Ride To Roger's**



By: Alexander White

Phone. Rings. Curious. Voice. Speaks. Unintelligible. Voice.  
Recognize. Mrs. Maddock. Phone. Talk. Reassurance. Phone. Hang Up.  
Uncertainty.

Shoes. Tied tight. Readiness. Doorknob. Twist it. Readiness. Keys.  
Unlock door. Readiness. Keys. Start car. Anxious. Engine. Sputters. Dread.  
Engine. Revs. Excitement.

Road. Drive. Alert. Red light. Stop. Bored. Green light. Go. Alert.  
Driveway. Park. Concentration. Thoughts. Scatter. Concentration.  
Door. Open. Inattentive. Roger's mom. Crying. Confusion. Stairs. Climb.  
Confusion. Mrs. Maddock. Hug her. Sadness. Roger's mom. Question her.  
Incoherence.

Door. Open it. Worry. Shoes. Take off. Respectful. Roger. Call for.  
Worry. Roger. Silence. Exhaustion.

Door. Knock. Impatience. Door. Open. Locked. Door. Open. Frustration. Door. Open. Aggressive. Smell. Catch it. Repulsive. Self. Realization. Loss.

Door. Break. Anger. Room. Search. Messy. Roger. Call for. Worry. Smell. Catch it. Putrid.

Closet. Look. Denial. Closet. Approach. Denial. Smell. Catch it. Toxic. Door. Open. Nervous.

Roger. Scream. Dead. Roger. Don't look. Dead. Roger. Deny. Dead. Roger. Confirm. Dead. Roger. Bile. Repulsive. Roger. Plead. Unresponsive. Roger. Hug. Grieve. Self. Grieve. Understanding. Room. Walk away. Resentment.

Mrs. Maddock. Crying. Sympathy. Mrs. Maddock. Hug her. Pain. God. Question. Why.

Object. Action. Emotion or Description. That's what Dr. Hayman said to write, and in as few words as possible. He said it might help me make sense of that day, seeing what I saw, Roger's dead body. He overdosed the night before I made that ride to his house. His mom couldn't find him, or get into his room, and called me. This wasn't his first time, and I'd have given anything to make sure it wasn't his last. It's too late for that, though. It's too late for his mom to have her only son again. She already lost him once, and to lose him twice is unthinkable. She needs therapy more than I do, and yet, here I am writing this per Dr. Hayman's request. I don't feel much better, and I still wonder why I question God as to why Mrs. Maddock had to lose her only son. God won't have a direct answer, but Dr. Hayman might.



## **The Ways Beneath Us**



By: Kaylie Morehouse

Lost but always found  
The ocean drowns my sad thoughts  
Lost without courage  
But the fear set in  
The surface beneath the waves  
When you have the way  
To finally navigate  
Back to the surface again



## Hidden Wonder



By: Meredith Scott

Breeze whistling, the sounds of the Grand Cayman beach welcomed my parents, brother and I as we approached the mossy stone steps by the entrance. My father lugged the bags between his sunburnt arms while my mother stayed behind looking at directions. Trees crowded the ground and birds dived from above to skip across the sand. I saw a wooden dock perched on the edge of the beach, the blue light from the water reflecting off of its wet surface. I tried to convince myself that everything was calm, but still, the thought of what could be out there swarmed my brain. The ocean back home in New England felt cold and dark in comparison to the Caribbean ocean that sat right in front of me. As I crept into the water, my imagination overtook my fear as I speculated what hidden wonder could be out there in the unknown sea.

Sharp rocks buried in the sand poked at my heels while the seaweed that sat in between them brushed against my ankles. Even though the water felt warm, my skin couldn't help but feel sensitive. I stood stiffly in place, the current slightly pushing against my body and snorkeling gear clenched in my hand.

When my feet moved off of the rocks and to the sand, the water felt warmer. The current began to rise to my waist, yet the fear in my mind didn't crowd my thoughts. For once, I found the water surrounding me more welcoming than the air that sat on my head.

My hands untangled the bands of the snorkeling gear carefully while I walked deeper into the water, hesitation being overtaken by the curiosity of what could be below me. As I tucked my head underneath the surface, my breath trembled with the paranoia that the tube would soon be overflowing with water.

Breaking my train of thought, a fish with streaks of yellow and black across its scales drifted by my hand. Its glossy, black eye focused on me intensely, and the fear in my breath vanished. The fish's body curled away from my fingertips and into the depths of the water. With a deep breath, I followed only to find a sea of vibrant fish scattered throughout the area. My bare feet kicked against the water in hopes of getting closer.

As I swam around the cluster of fish, I noticed many other creatures beneath me. Fish hid between cavities of the pale limestone, poking their heads out to only retreat back in. Tiny yet colorful fish traveled to the bottom of the surface and scraped against the stone, causing debris to drift upwards to the surface. I swung my arms backward to sit above the activ-



ity like a cloud in the sky, trying my best not to interfere. My arms went limp with my concentration on this wondrous world beneath me.

Suddenly, the weight in my body shifted, and I drifted away from the band of fish and coral. I dug my arms and legs into the current, but the waves continued to push me farther and farther into the water like a ragdoll. Further away from the surface. Farther away from what was familiar. With a shaky breath, I pulled my eyes down to the bottom of the water to find that I drifted far above the ground. Breath trembling, fingertips shaking, my mind swelled with fear and panic. My throat held onto my breath tightly, my body continuing to be pushed deeper into the ocean.

Then CRASH! A wave hit the top of my head with the force of a tree being knocked to the ground, sinking my head completely underwater. Water engulfed my snorkeling tube and ran down into my lungs, hindering my breath. My breathing only got more and more congested as my snorkeling gear fell down my hair and into the water next to me. The salt staining my eyes led the world around me to darken. With all of my leftover strength, I tore myself upwards.

Coughing, I jumped upwards with desperate force, the sharp breeze of the surface piercing my skin. The salt bit my eyes like thorns as I struggled to open them. I had drifted far beyond the wooden dock and from the beach. The water around me, still and quiet, left me helpless in the open. The beach, now far out in the distance, became blurry with the sea water clogging my eyes.

I wanted to go back to the beach, to the familiar warmth of the sand, and away from the scent of salt. I dug my hands into the water weakly, propelling myself towards the beach. The snorkeling gear limped in my hand as I reluctantly pulled it along. The salt sticking to the goggles stained my fingertips.

The water beneath me turned dark, causing me to stop without a second thought. My mind ran with fear as I wondered what the shadow could possibly be. Hands shaking, I placed the goggles over my eyes and dipped underneath the water.

A sea turtle, small yet vibrant, sat on the sand quietly. My once shaky breath slowed down as I took in all the details. The scattered, dark spots across its fins and head and the course shell covering its body left me speechless. It poked its head against the mossy coral delicately, and drifted away towards the dock with tranquility.

Without even realizing, my body trailed behind the turtle through the water with ease. I continued to watch it, and soon the environment seemed brighter. The vibrancy of the fish from the fish brought itself back

to the ocean, and the warmth from the shallow water by the beach made its way to us. Before I knew it, I felt myself smiling at the new refreshing feeling of the water. The light around me centered on the turtle and revealed it to be the hidden wonder I was searching for all along.



## Trauma



By: Loretta Murray

When the world goes wrong  
and you think you can't cope,  
you need to be strong.  
Be hopeful.

You must be aware that  
behind every cloud  
the sunshine is there.  
Be mindful.

Open your heart  
and believe in the people  
they will do their part.  
Be trustful.

Encouragement and hope  
is what you will find.  
It will help you to cope.  
Be thankful.





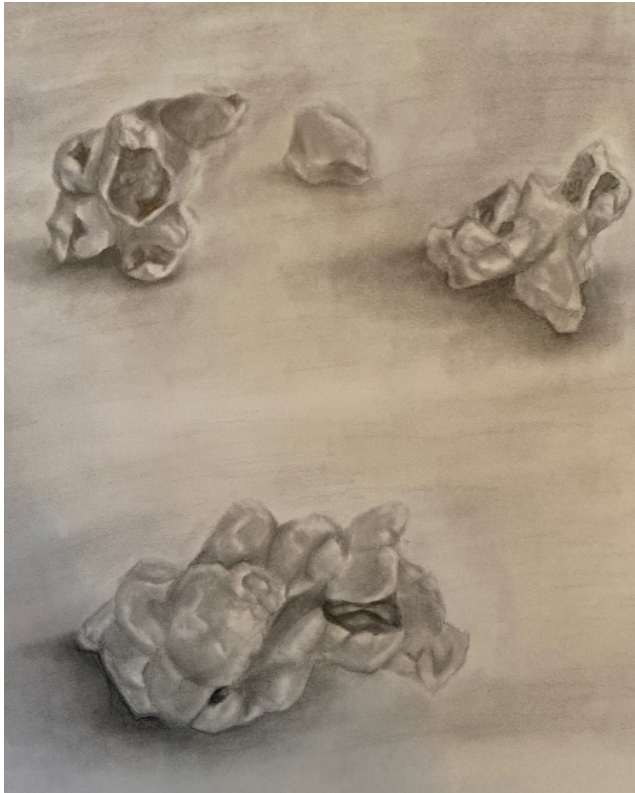
 Marin Rogers

## Sacred Bonds



By: Hunter Gilbertson

Sacred bonds are made for two.  
You were meant for me and I was made for you.  
You hold the scepter. I hold the key.  
You are the one who completes me.  
Sacred bonds are made for two.  
I'm your heaven. You're my earth.  
You're the one who gives me my worth.  
We go out to the park at night.  
The stars look so beautifully bright.  
Asteroids shooting from the left to the right.



Andrea Visco



 Matthew Stevens

## The Fire-Box House

 By: Mary Blakney

Jade Massilon shook her head to try to get control of her imagination. But when she looked again, he was still there, standing on the orange leaves under the oak tree that grew almost too close to the house.

It would have been odd enough for a stranger to walk into her backyard from the forest at all, but this stranger looked like he should have been walking into a sci-fi convention. His entire head was covered in a hairless, ridged, and scaly mask. He wore a futuristic-looking, slate-gray jumpsuit, with an intricate design of shiny gold-colored circles embossed on the front. Heavy gray boots came up to his knees.

“My vehicle is disabled,” he said. “I require help.” He had a deep voice.

“Where is your vehicle?” Jade asked, stalling for time.

“Almost half a mile north-northeast of here.”

Half a mile north-northeast. There were no roads in that direction, only a rough jeep track. So either he was confused or he was lying. “I’d be happy to call someone for you,” she told him. She would lock him out and call 911, and they’d probably take him to the hospital.

But before she could finish closing the door, he grabbed it and followed her inside. He was tall — at least six-foot-six.

With an effort, she looked up at the scaly mask. It fit him so well that it must have been glued on and touched up with makeup. “Can you wait outside, please?”

“No,” he said, and closed the door.

“Really,” she insisted, her pulse throbbing in her ears, “you need to wait outside.” She tried to force the door back open, but he held it shut easily with one hand. She tried to dart past him, but he blocked her way.

“You will stay where you are,” he said.

Jade took a deep breath and let it out. She should get him to talk, she decided, to get a better idea of what she was dealing with. Was he a fugitive in disguise, or just delusional? “What’s your name?” she asked.

“Zuke.”

“Zuke,” she repeated. “I’m Jade. Why the alien costume?”

Zuke hesitated a moment. “Are you asking why I wear this clothing?”

“Yeah, why the alien suit? You going to a con?”

“No, this is the uniform of a Chuzekk zeed.”

“Oh, I see. Where you from?”

“Chuze.”

“Choose what?”

“Chuze is the name of my planet. Your people have not discovered it yet.”

Jade nodded to humor him. “So why do you have to be in here? Why can’t you wait outside?”

“Because this house has a fire box.”

“A fire box? You mean the woodstove?”

“I don’t know the word for it,” he replied, glancing over his shoulder at the antique wood cookstove that kept the little house cozy, “but its heat is recharging my thermal garment. We’re cold-blooded; we cannot create our own heat as you do, so we wear special garments. After my vehicle was disabled, I did not have time to finish repairs before charging.”

“So you came to my house to recharge your garment?” Jade asked, beginning to relax a little. The stranger was certainly delusional, but at least he seemed to be harmless.

“Yes,” he answered. “It will only take a few more minutes, then you will come with me to my vehicle.”

“That’s okay, you go ahead. I’ll be fine here.”

He shook his head. “No. I will not allow you to contact your government.”

“Why not? They can help you.”

“Jade,” he said, “I may be unfamiliar with your planet, but I’m not naïve. Your government would consider me a threat, capture me, probably kill me. They would attempt to reverse engineer my personal device, my thermal garment, and my vehicle. When my people choose to make contact with yours, we will do so with a show of force sufficient to prove such actions unwise.”

“I see,” Jade said again, and bit her lip.

“You should put on a coat. My garment is almost charged.”

They had been tramping through the woods at a brisk walk for about five minutes when Jade was struck with a new thought. Didn’t delusional people sometimes become violent when their delusions were threatened? What would this guy do when they got to his “landing site” and there was no spaceship? “Does your vehicle have a self-destruct function?” she asked.

He looked down at her, his lips curling into just a hint of a lopsided smile. “Do you really think I’m going to answer that?”

“Okay,” she said, “that’s fair. But if it does have a self-destruct function, and if it’s in need of repair, then the self-destruct could theoreti-

cally go off by accident, right?”

He said nothing, but his smirk was a little bigger now.

“And if that happened,” Jade continued, “then we could get to the spot where you left your spaceship — I mean your vehicle — and find nothing.”

But when they got to the landing site, it was Jade who was surprised. Standing among the wispy birches and thick hemlocks was something that looked like a rocket, white and cone-shaped, with three or four round black parts at the bottom that looked like exhaust ports.

“How did this get here?” Jade thought out loud.

Zuke laughed. “You see, I’m not crazy the way you thought, only perhaps crazy to come here. You will stay with me while I finish repairs.”

Jade’s toes were numb from the cold by the time Zuke was done. He spoke a command, and the engine, or whatever it was, started with a babbling hum.

He turned to her. “I will leave now; you are free to go. I believe that since you have seen me, my people will expedite the Earth project. You can expect our ships to arrive soon.” Then he stepped into the vehicle, and its hatch closed behind him. It continued its babbling hum for a few seconds, then went silent and disappeared.



Isaiah Day



## The Recurring Dream



By: Hunter Gilbertson

The gears are clanking, grinding.  
Forever counter and clockwise.  
The sprockets are breaking.  
The pressured pins and springs pass by your eyes.  
Steam is all you hear.  
As springs pass by your ear.

Smell of brass wafts by your nose.  
The universe has collapsed.  
All secrets have been exposed.

The gears held as a barrier.  
To keep the universe afloat.  
The human is the soul carrier.  
Just like the ocean holds your universe, you hoped.

Don't sit in your demise.  
The ocean waves come and go.  
As do our lives.  
Flow back into your revolution, go.



## Ice Cream



By: Samuel Bean

A horrid wail pierced the air. A scream like a banshee weighed with grief.  
A nearby dog jolted to life. It sprinted towards a red-faced child.  
A pink smear trailed down the boy's shirt. What remained from a frozen  
treat.  
A man came running over. Bad dog, don't eat that!  
A mother bent down to console the boy. Rivers flowed out of his eyes and  
nose.  
A napkin appeared on his face. It wiped away the sticky carnage.  
A father was out of breath. He put his wallet in his pocket.  
A hand produced an ice cream cone. The wailing ceased.





 Marselle Desbordes

### **My Last Breath**



By: Alexander Johnson

Is this it? Is it actually happening? Am I proud of where my life is? What will happen to my kids? Did I tell them I love them? Do they love me? Do they hate me? Who will show up to see me go? Do I want them to? Am I ready for it to be over? Did I turn off the stove? Did I feed Charlie? Who will take him? Will anyone? What if I'm not ready? Can I stop it? Should I stop fighting? Should I give up? Why?

Goodbye...



## A New Season



By: Abigail Shoults

I push open the heavy door of the once familiar coffee shop. The smell of fresh coffee still fills the air but the atmosphere is abruptly interrupted, the old wood floors divided by bright yellow lines. I shuffle along the arrows and wait for my turn. Standing there, at a distance of course, I can see how hard they are trying to make things feel the same. The baristas still try to make friendly conversation while politely ushering people towards the exit. The customers laugh with them, jiggling their masks and fogging their glasses.

The line moves along and it is my turn to face the plastic barrier. The barista's crinkled eyes indicate that she is smiling under the mask, a now familiar sentiment. After placing my order I am able to stand and wait for my drink, a brief moment to take in my new surroundings. The seating area is dark and lonely, barricaded by tables. The shelves are filled with goods but I'm careful not to touch a single thing. Looking around is usually the hardest part. Without fail there comes a quiet mourning of a life that seems so far away. There was a time when the rooms were bright, full of color, life, and activity. But even those memories are being bogged down with time, becoming dark as well.

When my drink is done I promptly leave, the new custom. Outside the air is crisp and cool. The first leaves are getting a burst of bright orange against the green of summer. People are returning to their sweaters and scarves, now adorned with a mask to match. They say that these are unprecedented times, different from any other, but there is a deep comfort that comes from the consistency of seasons.



## Baby Grand



By: Nathaniel Simard

It was the crack of the splitting rope that alerted the rest of them to the danger. The swaying floor below buckling their knees as they hauled, pulled, sweated, the scream of the man struck so unceremoniously down in the prime of his life, lain out underfoot by the viperous twine. The others struggled to compensate for the sudden lack of strength in their lines, hauling, pulling, sweating, cursing that fallen man to their last breath as ropes slipped from between calloused fingers, as wood groaned and swayed and broke loose.

The choir played to the tune of a sinking ship while the audience bellowed their dismay in a cacophony of conflicting cords, pages flying loose from the hands of the grand maestro, the wiry man of a thousand talents and a thousand more recitals, of concert halls and the great theaters of old, the company of kings and the companionship of queens, the skill of a thousand lifetimes. The thundering boom of the 1812 Overture, cannons to the men who had let this travesty be loosed, Tchaikovsky himself with a candle to the fuse.

A baby grand piano, rolling down a stairwell.



Liam Shelly



Caroline Ward

## Home Run



By: Alexander Johnson

I walk up to the plate. Bases are full. Game is tied. I can feel the pressure surrounding me as I get into position. The pitcher's eyes are piercing as he picks his pitch. He starts to wind up. My heart drops out of my chest. I see the ball flying at me as I close my eyes and swing. I feel the bat hit my shoulder as I hear the umpire yell, "Strike!" We set up the dance again. I meet the pitcher's eyes as he swirls the ball in his hand. He winds up as I hold on for dear life. This is it. As the ball barrels at me, I swing. I hear the snap as the ball and bat connect and the breath leaves me. I look up as I move forward, praying. Will this be it? My first one? As the ball breaks over the barrier, I drop to my knees crying. I finally did it.



## Molasses



By: Leo Amrani

Carol knew as a private investigator that there was a very rare chance that she would have an opportunity to solve a string of murders. However, now that she is working on one, Carol almost wishes she was never hired for these cases. She is solving a slew of murders that dates back to the 1980s. Same killer, same motif, same crime scene. This was a serial killer that had been around for forty years and he had yet to be caught. This killer seemed to go after young, attractive people. Men and women alike. The victims would disappear one night and never return. The killer would later send what was left of the victims to their residence: an index finger, and their heart with a piece carved out and drizzled in molasses. It's like the killer wanted people to know that their loved one was dead, but he wouldn't return the bodies, just gave them closure. What was he doing with the bodies? Eating them? Preserving them? Experimenting on them? It doesn't make sense to Carol, and it doesn't make sense to the rest of the world either. Nonetheless, the killer is referred to as the Molasses Killer.

*Brrrring*

Carol snaps out of her thoughts with a jolt at the sound of her phone calling for her attention.

"Hello?" Carol sighs.

"Carol? What's wrong?" Her father, Frank, sounds concerned.

"I'm just...frustrated with the Molasses murders," Carol grumbles.

"What's bothering you about the case?"

"Everything about it. It's very confusing and messed up."

"Why don't I help you with it tonight at dinner?" Frank has experience in the field.

"Dinner? What dinner?" Carol frets.

"Tonight, you were going to come over for dinner."

"That's tonight?"

"Yes."

Carol internally curses. She doesn't have time for dinner.

"If you can't make it tonight..." Her father trails off. He is hiding his concern well, he has always been good at that. Not letting Carol really know what he was thinking, what he was doing. He was always so secretive and overprotective. When Carol was a child, Frank would lock her in her room at night. He told her it was a safety precaution - "Dangerous

people are closer than you think, dear. I have to protect you from them.” Carol understood where her father’s overprotective nature came from, since her mother disappeared when she was a baby. Carol felt sympathetic but his behavior never seemed to shape into a sense of normalcy.

As Carol drives the fifteen minutes to her father’s house, she keeps going through the details of the Molasses murders over and over again. She thinks more and more about the missing pieces of the puzzle that is the Molasses Killer. She is missing details that feel so obvious to her. Something about the killer feels oddly familiar and personal, and this leaves Carol unnerved.

Her father is waiting for her in the driveway. Carol greets her father with a simple hug and kiss on the cheek. After dinner, Carol and Frank pore over case notes. They spend two hours going back and forth over the Molasses murders, obsessing over every little detail.

“Thanks for your help, Dad. I appreciate it.” Frank beams as he stirs a tablespoon of molasses into his coffee. His eyes narrow at the jar of molasses that sits in front of him. He mumbles something under his breath that Carol can barely make out

“Carol, can I show you something?” Frank’s tone is grim. That odd feeling creeps into her stomach again and refuses to leave. It settles and grips her lungs, forcing her breath to still and shorten.

“Sure...” is all she can say. Carol feels her father’s request is more of an order than anything else.

She was never allowed to go down into the basement when she lived here. Throughout Carol’s upbringing, Frank had consistently promised to show her one day what was down there, saying, “Beautiful things exist down there, Carol.”

He guides Carol down the rickety wooden stairs that lead into the basement. Each creaky step she takes resonates with her shaky breaths. Her pulse thuds in her ears. Carol wishes she could see her father’s face, but he cleverly shields that from her. At the bottom of the stairs, a mahogany door. A single flickering light bulb hangs above it, illuminating her father’s sullen eyes. Eyes that are usually kind and honest are now transformed into something Carol doesn’t recognize.

“Carol...” Her father starts, “I want you to know that everything I’ve done was for the greater good.”

“What are you talking about?” Carol gulps, feeling her chest constrict. She feels the urge to run as fast as she can away from him, from this house. Her feet refuse to move, frozen to the spot. She wants to see what is

behind that door, but at the same time she prefers total ignorance.

Frank unlocks the door and reveals to her a blanket of darkness that covers the room. Frank gestures for Carol to go in first and foolishly, she does. All Carol can make out is the sweet smell of molasses, the hum of a machine. As soon as Frank switches on the light, Carol's stomach drops and she immediately feels nauseous.

There are rows upon rows of glass cases, each one filled with a perfectly preserved body. In the very center of the room, there is one that stands out amongst the rest. A beautiful young woman, her eyes closed as if she is just sleeping. Holding a rose to her chest. It is her mother, looking just as young as when she disappeared thirty years ago. Carol whips around to face her father. She expects him to be hiding his face or refusing to look at Carol. Instead, he looks straight at her, without a hint of remorse. Wordlessly, Frank locks the door behind her and gestures to an embalming table in the far right corner of the room.

“Please lie down Carol, this will only take a second.”



Andrea Visco





Tyler Weinstein



Caroline Ward

## The Ultimate Smiler



By: Aminatah Jaiteh

All the excitement of living in a new place was completely gone and now complete fear was all that was left in my mind. I had been living in Cotonou for about five years to that point and the entire time I spent there was pretty much my entire childhood. My parents had planned for me to return back to the states at a certain point for better education. However, at that moment it felt very unreal. My father finally stepped out of the gate and interrupted everyone trying to bid me farewell and giving me advice about my new life. Right when we were told the bags were in the car, we got in and drove off to the airport. It was such a quick end to my life in Benin as I barely got to even say goodbye to everyone. The car drove off and I tried to control the very unfamiliar emotion I was feeling in my gut. It was uncomfortable, and my heart raced faster the closer we got to the airport. The ride to the airport was the quickest trip that my 10-year-old self had taken, it felt like everything was moving so quick.

My father carried my suitcases to the airport entrance and my mother stopped with my hand holding hers tightly. This was where she stopped and let me go in with my father. My baby sister was on her hip and she had me by her hand. She had to let go of one of us and looking at her, I knew she did not want to do it at all.

My mother is a mother of six children and unfortunately for her, she only had two daughters. She had wanted to only have daughters, so when I was born, she was overcome with joy. Now she had my baby sister and it seemed unfair that she had to give one daughter up and only keep one other. My mother is stern and not very indecisive. She always looks confident in doing whatever she is doing, or making any decision. She looked very indecisive at that moment and we were both becoming reluctant to let go of each other's hand. I let go of her hand and I tried to say goodbye but all that left my mouth were pathetic sobs. I started rambling about how I did not want to leave anymore and how it would be better if I left when I was older. Her sclera were bright red and her eye bags more visible. She kept telling me that it was going to be okay, that I was going to be okay. My father had to eventually separate us because I was becoming very serious about not wanting to go.

I had a great relationship with both my parents. However, when it came to my father and me, we were inseparable; he was like my very first best friend. Everywhere that we went it was quite easy to tell I was his daughter, from our identical smile to our strong bond. He looked at me and

he grabbed both my hands with his warm hands. The memory of me complaining about how no matter what the temperature, I always feel cold, and him telling me he would always warm up my hands made me sob. In that very moment the gut feeling I had in the car was becoming clear; I really did not want to leave at all, and it felt like I was being forced to go. He was looking at me sobbing, and he smiled. His stupid smile, his completely stupid smile triggered me. I became very upset. How could this man be smiling at all when I was basically being thrown into a plane and shipped to a completely different country?

He wiped my tears and he laughed through a bit of a shaky voice. “I thought you said you were strong like your Ba?”

I had never wanted to hurt my father before, but that day was the very first time.

“I don’t want to go,” I said very clearly and sternly.

“You have to. It is what is best for you.” He idiotically smiled again.

“But I don’t want to go, I want to stay with you and Ma and everyone. I promise I will do well in school,” I said, desperate.

“You have to go. Do not worry, I am coming to see you soon anyways. You’ll be fine.”

He was so calm, and he continued smiling through my panic attack. We spent a good five minutes trying to calm me down and he was smiling through it all. He did not cry; he did not even show a sign of annoyance with me. His calmness and the familiar feeling of comfort started calming me down. It was getting hard to breathe, and trying to think and breathe properly was taking a lot of energy out of me. The more I calmed down, the more his smile became the only thing that was close to comfort. I loved his smile so much and I knew I was going to miss it so much.

I held on to him tightly until it was time to be separated. It was going to be the final goodbye and it felt so permanent at the time. There was a line that only passengers could cross and right when I crossed it without my father by my side, I felt the empty space next to me and the cold air pass by my body. This really was it. I looked back at my father one more time, he nodded, and I just walked.



## **The Agony in Almost**

 By: Leah Salcito

I punch the switch and the light flickers thrice, illuminating an Everest of unloaded plastic and cardboard. A twelve-step recovery, taken one step at a time, starting with what lies at my feet. I muster the might to pull apart and release the trapped animal, aware of the imminent mauling, its contents serrated jaws rending the flesh that stirs within. Staring up at me is the identical match to one in a frame, on paper, and accompanied by words I have never been able to accept. In Loving Memory of Derek Rogers 1982-2008. A glistening trickle welcomes a smoke screen of hazy images past, in rapid-fire succession, as I remove the contents that are the remnants of you.

Placing aside the epitaph, I am cut of ice, hands moving of their own accord, finding purchase on a small box of forgotten contents. Removing the lid chips into the thaw. Running my fingertips across a small object, a flood gate robs me of air. A vintage keychain viewer with a rusted clasp and faded Six Flags emblem. I peer inside, seeing an image of a naive version of myself staring up at you as you stare straight ahead. I smile softly at the apparel upon your person, remembering the lashing you took from a park manager regarding its content. Apparently, a Spencer Gifts original making vague mention of your manhood does not a “family friendly” establishment appreciate. I giggled and you apologized before stalking off to turn the offending garment in on itself. The next couple fragments - a stub, a receipt, and a key card. I recall that trip to the cinema but just barely. A film on par with popular teen trend of the time. The receipt from Hana Sushi, a mom & pop from your hometown that earned your five stars. It was my first run in with raw and has been my preferred since. You laughed to nearly falling over my ineptitude with chopsticks. You would be proud to know that I have since mastered the art. The key card reads Hilton Hotels, the only place you ever truly held me...

Two pieces remain, an ill attempt at pressing the Tiger Lily you plucked and a warped mass of foam and wires. I am thirteen again, your brother a single year my senior, you two years from legal. Corey, in his callow, splintered the Sonys I had spent several weeks in servitude to earn. I sat stunned as you made him bow his head to me in deference. I was a fledgling and fatuous and like the fish we hunted for at the encampment where we first met, you had me hook, line and sinker; it mattered not how often I gasped for breath, I would irrevocably bite the lure. Lakeside picnics, paddle boats, and a game of spinning a pop bottle resulting in the

previously untouched met in damp prayer. A tryst that outlasted several summers, never serious, but always “almost.”

A little deeper and hands fall upon the cloth belt your mother bid me take on the day of sadness. As I look upon it now, all I can see is the white karate gi, bound with the black of your third-degree rank. Your naked feet, and chiseled torso moving with all the elegance of a coiled cougar on the prowl.

It took 3 hours, and infinite miles of highway, to see you in Connecticut, but once I got that first taste of freedom, I never failed. It had never been a trip in waste until the day of desertion...

Folded and neatly stacked is my dance of desperation. Dignified and modest, often said to illustrate traditional clothing. Yards of embroidered navy and silver with scarlet tsubaki, miles of ivory cranes that served to tie it up and split toe stocking feet adorned with wooden platforms, lacquered, and engraved with abalone. Hair twisted up and skewered with a kanzashi comb of pearlescent orbs and golden filigree. Skin painted with snow, raven lined eyes and lips brushed with rubies. A porcelain geisha doll and it was all in service to you. I have held silence on the how and the where, and the commandeered Amex belonging to the one who reared and the international Ebay seller never inspired rumor either.

I had expected fatigues and a tearful departure and clung to vain hope you would offer praise for my elaborate display, but you never showed and were gone 72 hours before barren ducts bled dry.

The hooked fish unreeled. A lone Koi left to solitude. The waters ran stagnant until leave permitted your return and you presented me with a gift in the same hand newly adorned with a sliver of spun gold. In that moment there was naught but capitulation to “almost” as the one I would find on your arm was everything I could never be.

Derek, you were the kind to peer only at the rippling surface but never reach a hand inside, never wanting to know what moved the surface from underneath.

Years passed and in an incident made for television drama, you came home to find that flawless femme fatale engaged in actions unbecoming for one committed, and with one you called friend. Two rotators and a revving versus pelting precipitation, your Kawasaki splayed by asphalt, and the curtain was drawn: Fin.

Nestled between the folds of fabric, I find a melon Ramune and a box of matcha Pocky, snacks bought at the mart down the road from your dojo. Well past expiration, bought years ago in offering. Standing up on legs that now quake, it is a few shaky steps to your frame. I place the

tokens on either side and pedal back, pledging the securing of sandalwood scented fumes so it may closer resemble a Butsudan as once intended. Aishiteru... I have only loved this deeply once... Pressing my hands into one, head bowed, I pay my respects, still striving to embrace a culture we both hold in reverence.



Madison King



 Abigail Shoults

## Lethophobia



By: Alexander White

It's a Greek word, fear of forgetting something.  
I feel it all the time, but have everything,  
At the least, it's more than most.  
Still I need, to check for those  
Things.  
Keys, wallet, phone;  
Check.  
Mask, Purell, gloves;  
Check.  
Strength, smile, hope;  
Half-check.

I walk up to my workplace,  
Two masks rest on my face.  
One is blue, the other gray,  
Handmade by my grandma.  
She made another ten,  
All the patterns different,  
I need to call and thank her.

It feels weird with it on,  
Like I'm doing something wrong.  
Though I know it's really right,  
It's as if it's way too tight,  
Or like I slept bad last night.  
And reality, still hasn't shaken me,  
Awakened me, made me see the light of day  
Today will be another day, maybe it might be  
Okay.

But it won't, I'm grounded in precautions  
But feel like a human amongst Martians.  
This whole thing has me exhausted,  
Makes me feel like it's not real.

But it is. A year later into this two week pandemic.  
And I still don't feel like I've adjusted.



I still don't feel like it's actually happening.  
Where's the pinch, where's the gasp,  
Where's the waking up realizing you sweated through  
Half of your bedsheets, so you drink more water and  
Hope this time the bad dreams don't come.

Nowadays, it's a bad dream to wake up  
To a reality where you can't give your own  
Damn grandmother a hug. And still some  
Will criticize you for that, make you feel  
Like you're wasting your life staying inside  
Trying to protect the few family and friends  
You have next to your side during these troubling times.  
And why? Who knows?  
Lethophobia.

If you feel like this,  
And you do the most  
To protect yourself  
And those that are close,  
You probably know,  
But you're not alone.  
We all lost a year,  
And not just the ones  
Who say that they did  
To get the local government  
To reopen bars and restaurants.  
We all did. Grieve for it.  
It's okay to feel horrible.  
Let it be, then let it go,  
Breathe in deep, then let it go.  
You're not alone, and this I say: It'll be okay. Even if it feels like it won't.





Liam Shelly

## Redemption



By: Lauren Wiegars

Redemption.  
I speak aloud the word that is on my heart.  
I look around me  
At what we  
Have become  
And my soul pleads  
For revival.  
How great is our need  
For something greater  
That will rival  
All the hatred, all the loss, and all the pain  
That has laid claim  
To our nation  
In this year.  
I fear  
That our pride will stop us  
From seeking liberation  
From the sin, the sorrow, and the devastation

That has been so near  
To each one of our hearts.  
We need a new beginning  
A saving grace  
To stir to life, to awaken a humble faith.  
And I cry out to You, Lord –  
Please forgive us of our wrong  
And the ways we've stumbled in so long  
And redeem a broken people.  
Bring reconciliation –  
Take hold  
Of what is old and worn out  
And make us a new creation.  
My voice may be the only one  
Crying out in the night  
For Your Son,  
Jesus Christ,  
To come and make us whole  
But I cry out with all my strength  
And ask that You start first  
In my heart  
And give me a thirst for righteousness  
For justice  
And for mercy.  
And may your mighty power, God  
Take what is dead  
And make it to live again  
So that our humbled hearts cry in unison  
For You,  
And are made new  
As we turn from darkness  
Unto light  
And together, in Jesus Christ  
Embrace Abundant Life.



## Design Team



With COVID-19 still limiting campus access, the Windows Club produced only one issue for 2021. We were happy to meet in person to design and produce it. We hope the stories, poems, photos, and artwork contained in these pages provide a reminder that creativity blooms even in the shadows.



*CONGRATULATIONS,*

*CLASS OF 2021!*

Abigail Shoults  
Lauren Wiegars