

Zoos and more

A Creative Odyssey
By Shasta Sovereign
January-June 2026



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Dear Reader:

We hope that you have had a good year so far.

We are in the midst of summer. The summer solstice has just passed, and we hope to take advantage of the wonderful weather before the schools start up again. What do you do in your free time? Do you like hiking our wonderful trails? Or getting on your bike and riding along abandoned railroad tracks? Or is water your comfort spot and you like to find balance, on the paddle boards for instance?

What elevates you beyond the mundane? Is it something you relish? Or do you try to rush away from, when the mundaneness of existence threatens to envelop you? Does creativity help you in anyway? And what is your medium of choice? And in doing so, how can you recreate your life and yourself in the process?

On the following pages, we collected inspiring articles from around the North State. We still feature monthly topics on our website which we hope will serve as a muse to your creativity. We also always welcome you to share inspiration on whatever topic and in whatever medium you choose.

We hope to hear from you soon.

In Inspiration,

Shasta Sovereign



Teal

By Ace

Teal -

I wore teal to your funeral
It was your favorite color
We sat in rows—
Your oldest son to my right
your middle to my left
A box of tissues stuffed between
and your youngest right beside

23, 17, and 14

Too young to feel this type of pain, with silent tears they cried
I wore teal to your funeral
And since you've been gone
nothing has ever been the same

**here I am again now and indefinitely too**

By Anon E. Muncule

Aloft in the beams,
a critter in the attic,
with mice and bats
Freeloading roommates,
the squatter I've
become, the shame
I hide — and ignore —
I sold the house
long ago.
I wither to dust,
reading only with the
sun's permission,
eating alone at night,
when the new owners
sleep, or loudly make love.

Flail Chest

By Anon E. Muncule

You can't live
in this environment.
You are supposed
to be with people.
And have special memories
made on average days
where nothing exceptional happens
but to you
everything was exceptional,
and you get to tell kids
and partner
about it
and argue
over what to watch
before bed
and forget
but then remember
to brush teeth
and take out the trash.
But you're isolated
and imprisoned
and you're a treasure hunter
that sees the "x"



and has a shovel too
but who can't dig
because you're not welcome
the four hundred feet distance
from here
to there,
where the treasure sleeps
or at least
tries to.

Gasping in a Vacuum

By Anon E. Muncule

My bones, gnawed by life—
That toothy, hungry thing—
there they go:
Eroding with time,
Cracking, when even they
are done.
Then—alone and set
on the line to dry;
Or in the peat,
to one day heat—
The cortex peeling
strings of white and pink,
Hanging from condyles,
Still articulating
with scored, flat parts;
These balls and bats,
once dressed
In a tailored suit
That stretched—
wrapping muscles,
their cords and strings.
Unseen beneath the stocking
that kept the marrow dry;
The chalky scaffolding of me,
It once moved, jumped and spun.
And danced.
Once.
This is what I fear.
Near, I am near:
Here, the place Grandma sped away from.
Here, the place a friend...
with whom
I once spoke...
Here—
Soon, there.

**Clockwork Panic**

By Anon E. Muncule

The me in men
made the man
in me,
once. A shrinking portion of Back Then,
yet once, characteristically,
Now now now.
— this new Now
finds me
a rewind cassette tape,
a pulsating hard thing;
and now soft, still, and silly,
(back then, in the before times
remember I once was
hard and
Throbbing)
Witness
Me singing and, having sung,
observe the man in me
Alongside the me in men;
see and hear and with me together;
let us rejoice and permit tears,
just in case.
Perhaps I can discover lessons, kenning them well,
grow at the wilted places, and yellowing too.
Asking in tones near a plaintive pule,
forty years old, a student still.
The question?
Who am I,
now?
Follow-up question:
was I really then who I say I was
or did I paint rosy and pink
the brown and jaundiced
times?
When asked at 20
I knew with certainty
misappropriated
the answer
and could even show my work!



The Split Fire & The Snapping Dog

By Anon E. Muncule

There are two kinds of fire:
one that burns eternally,
and one so hot at times it seems it cannot burn
with such intensity
for very long.
I do believe
I have hit at last
the exact thermodynamic law
that governs
the two
of us:
You
(She if you are not reading, my love)
are geothermal;
I am volcanic.
The law of us.
I cannot keep
You as metaphor—
Blood may leak,
through the ink,
and pain may seem
an eternal companion.
But I cannot activate
regions in my brain
and run off
with metaphor and conceit
any longer.
No.
I have to look at you,
and See your face.
I get to look at you, and
get to see your cloaked insides,
displayed for my translation, shown
to me alone.
I can of course still write poetry.
Today tomorrow yesterday and now
I always will store away,
and protect from decay and disuse,
my stronger than faith belief
that words are playthings—
As well as tools, to me
and free and perennially
available for to use; yes,



Also they are tools forged
to lend a brotha a hand, to help me
go about raising from the foundation on up
a good life.

As a carpenter marries
his hands to his mind,
over the years, learning by accident
how experts are made,
and, knowing what to do next,
to raise a framed fresh cedar skeleton of a future family's home.
And on a foundation he laid himself too.

My flame is partially fueled
by whatever it is that makes a man
behave as if rude and mean.

In reality, it's just me reacting
like a neglected,
and underfed dog.

The dog
snips and snaps and barks and growls;
he seems angry, angry
and dangerous.

But he is merely petrified and confused.

Whitman wouldn't judge

the dog
nor the bark
or sharpened teeth
that file his menacing mirage
and that drew blood
that one time.

Walt, he'd sit on the floor,
stretch his hand out slowly,
and validate the fear,

talking to him,
using words like "validate"
if he felt it necessary.

He'd remind me—pretending to be watching
rather than admitting I am the dog
who scares all except the man in the slouch hat—

That the body of an animal
remembers every cold night,
every day of isolation,
and every piece of emptiness
—and the plentiful scarcity—it has ever endured.
Ever.



The dog isn't evil; no.
It's just operating on an old,
outdated survival manual.
Before long twenty bucks
says Walt has the thing playing
and singing joy directly into the dog's eyes,
the wagging tail in the background keeping
the moment full of breath.
Strange, us aflame.
Stranger still
what comes next.

Father and Son

By Anon E. Muncule

my father
I'm told
would, as cut-grass on shirt
landscaper,
in the morning
plant flowers (brought to sow
by a fumes-fueled truck)
and return beneath the waning moon, under the choking gray
swabs hiding the stars.
dig up planted flowers
and, before work
came again,
sell 'em off,
shrugging over the phone,
shrugging over a customer rather confused,
just as he sowed, stole,
and sold me, when I was 3, shrugging over my mother's
tears, seeing but not knowing
yet her strength, her super-
power she one day
will never
Not need.

Midnight Stream

By Anon E. Muncule

The midnight dream.
You—and me—
And the before us stream.
Walkin' til sunup,
Talking til we're clean.

**Mutiny in the Hold**

By Anon E. Muncule

My stomach feels a sheet of ulcers, with dry mortar,
Welded as one open bleeding shallow ditch,
or maybe a tender gastric camp
Or pocked canvas, shot through holes torn away
From stress over something—
Or maybe nothing—
With oyster white and violent rimmed berms.
And the twisting, gnawing and the burning,
Beyond the later nausea,
And before a
great big bleed,
Spread across a hell aflame in the gut
And the coming day
It turns leather
Like a bota bag,
in the sun.

I Hear You Up There At Night

By Anon E. Muncule

Your voice
is how I end the day.

Do we still mean it—
that meeting?

I've been ending my days
to your voice
for two years.

Sixty-three million seconds.

We made a plan
in one of them. Didn't we?

What happens
if one of us goes south
and the other—
keeps going, well,
to the Other place?

Two years.



One empty pillow.

I crawl under the covers
to where we once knew safety,
and just before I dream
never of you—
I play your silly voice
reciting Whitman.

We still have a plan.

A Man is Made by Himself

By Anon E. Muncule

I'm a man you don't meet every day. And yet—you know me. Strangers have never been such intimates as we. I have no clue where you are now, and yet, at last, I see where I myself am.

I once heard there were worse things than dying. As I've said, I'm a man you don't meet everyday. So, be easy and be free, and come, come along with me; what it costs, I myself will pay, but do come, do now come along with me.

Mind if I share a few words with you, Stranger-Friend? If you've somewhere to be, that's okay. Perhaps some other time. But if not—if you're here for a moment—I'd like to talk.

Oh, one more thing—what's your name? What shall I call you? You can call me James, or anything really, just not "late for dinner."

Because names matter, don't they? They are our anchors in this shifting swelling world. How peculiar it is a stranger even can be witness and touchstone, if even for just a moment. Attention, of the real unflinched variety, is a rare thing, up there with the rarity of unconditional love and up there with hope held aloft as the world caves in and is engulfed in flame. Maybe that's why I now have finally gotten around to go ahead and write you. I'm here, if only in words, I'm here. For you, for me, for those I abandoned before. I'm here, and I'm ready to explain things.

Hellbound and unready.
What was that?
Did you hear that?
I am scared.
There. There it is again. Did you hear it?
This line moves forward, the ground pulls me with.
My breaths come quicker. And smaller.
I go ahead, unready, to a place I don't want to go.



My limpid self mixing now with silt millions upon millions of years old; I become silt; the silt becomes me. The edge pulls me falls-ward. I go sliding unsure. Cling to rock or branch—let go, and trust the flow? If the threat of capture and arrest is the currency of freedom, are not the shackles and the cell the coinage itself? If capture is revelation—and if revelation is the thing with which one purchases freedom—then is it not true that freedom comes cheaper (and sooner, too) the moment running becomes stopping? Was I not once clean? Will I now quit the lie.

Spotless

By Anon E. Muncule

1—

“A poem”

Again?

Must I?

But right now?

Why?

What if I don’t?

Really?

But I can’t.

I wish I could.

2—

“Present in the moment”

It flitters through the cracked window the first day of spring. My chest rises to the beat of the birds

waltzing on the swaying branches; my ears point as it dives in from both sides, informing me, “she sings the good song.” When I woke at dinner time,

the dryer unwrinkling jeans and hoodie, she stood there—T-shirt and hip huggers—finishing the Penguin classic, before whatever came next.

3—

“I did a thing, and now I wait”

I wrote a poem.

Left it on her pillow.

She has it.

But it’s still in my head.

A kiss, perhaps,

will jog it loose,

back to my

lips.

**Moving Still, Together Permanently**

By Anon E. Muncule

'I'll sit all night,
and sleep on the floor,' she says.
If I leave,
you'll be there in the morning
and still on the toilet, I want to offer with a smile—
But don't.
Instead, "Comfort
is an appreciated phantom,
One rarely known—
and not always found," I say.
Do not ask why.
(I'm listening now, to bountiful and disparate thoughts,
exploding at volume and of course all at once—yes, me--
an unlicensed doctor,
and watching 72 married years
In a musicless duet
or staged thing—two 95 year olds,
convincingly appearing now as 21 again, and five for a moment, and once, earlier, one was
still a ninety year old, the other an age I still can't make out.
He and her, both of 'em now,
Look as I start to say, yet
first catch the unfurling time stamp
in red, perhaps a sign
of a future
evening, as I again labor and find myself trying to sort
memory
from
fantasy,
and perhaps--or for certain
To be precise--with my unassailable wife—asleep on my lap—interrupted future scenes as I I
look up from my voice recorder (dumbly and preciously taking it all in (for down the road
me), I look—and they look—and he farts—and I finally say,
"We're going to be a
well-oiled machine
soon enough,
the three of us."

Later, at home, I felt—as I do now—
a variety of ripening selfish-depression,
that sardonic Fate—Let us say—
plucked from some invisible
vine despite, maybe now, 50 years,
still to go.



He'll still be on the toilet then.

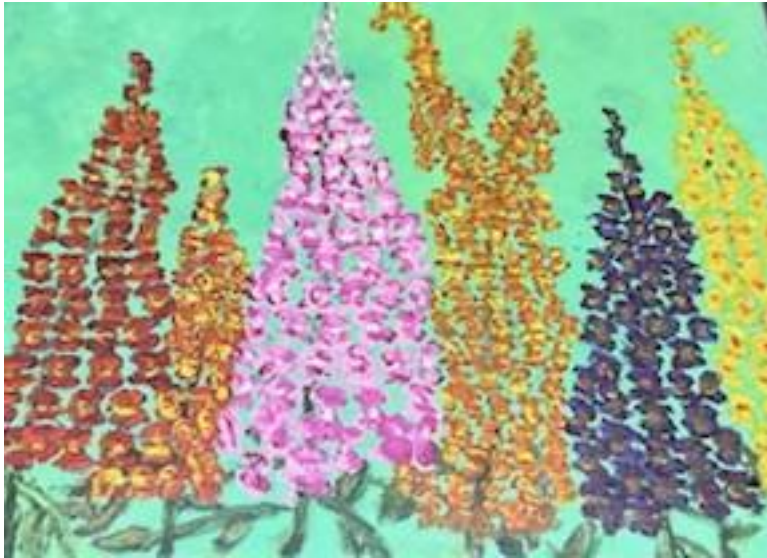
He, like all—including you—as well as him there, on his bright screen shining on his fly catcher, doing things on his phone, things that you read of, he, now 95x only slows to being forgot (by most and then by all)
when I—I mean me, yes me—
Am myself on the toilet,
With a tube inside, hurting and helping in unison
as a peculiar pair
for another time's consideration.

And also, me—when him one day—still, maybe, fifty years somewhere up ahead, my wife,
who will be her now on the cold pink tile floor with fake tears and fists fake thrashing the rosy
and clean bathroom floor, I say that my wife, one day too using fake calls
To 911,
Just to manipulate, and victorious indeed
come out to be, my wife (who once napped on me or
near making me obey, or—
as she would say,
"Listen! No! You have to!" But
she could hear neither him nor me
and stirring within
a rush of warmth like tea
In January
Blazed my organs and innards,
And cheeks, too.
They are cute,
but my wife is cuter
and, fifty more to go,
when one day I do age 90 know,
and it is first a dry "Get up! Now!"
But before the end of the first month
of our new life
she's yelling in Spanish, too.
I hope I remember her as last memory to collapse
right before heart and the rest
do the same.



Oh Snap

By B Davison



Relax

By B Davison





What Am I Searching For?

By BE

"There is an ache I cannot name,
Deep inside, a searing flame.
Not simple grief, not need for rest,
But something clawing at my chest.

I cannot sleep, I cannot wake,
Frozen here, no moves I make.
I want some wonder, sharp and bright,
To drag my mind back toward the light.

Everything feels out of tune,
Thoughts pour in like a monsoon.
Mind and body both afflicted,
In a state so conflicted.

Worries gnaw with a need to feed,
I'm too lost to name the thing I need.
In my head the words take shape,
But from my mouth, no words escape.

And when I try to make it plain,
The message drowns inside the pain.
I search for cures I cannot see,
And still can't name what's wrong with me.

When you're so empty that tears won't flow,
There's nowhere left for grief to go.
Why does positivity feel so fake,
Like sprinkled frosting on a cake?

I do not think I love despair,
But something wakes and feeds me there.
What am I searching for?
How do I end this war?

My body is a house of pain,
A prison built of nerve and vein.
I'd trade for new, if I knew how,
And leave this wreckage here right now.

Overstimulated, nerves are frayed,
Yet bored by every choice I've made.
Too full of noise to bear the day,



Too starved to turn the noise away.

My mind convulses, sick with doubt,
With poison it just can't get out.
I need to sleep because I need the rest,
But sleep still leaves me just as stressed.

It steals life's hours, but leaves the pain,
Eyes closed or not, the chains remain.
It fast-forwards my life away,
Yet gives no strength to face the day.

I jolt awake with thoughts unclear,
Eyes wide open and full of fear.
Luckless like a three-leafed clover,
The dream has passed, but it's not over.

My stomach churns with dread,
'Cause reality's still worse than the nightmare in my head.
My will to change grows cold,
Yet I wonder why no growth takes hold.

Endless scrolling on my phone,
So connected, but so alone.
Every plan I start,
Quickly falls apart.

How can I be excited for what's in store,
If even small things drag me to the floor?
I want to laugh and mean the sound,
Not feel buried underground.

Cheerfulness feels thin and trite,
A sarcastic joke that won't sit quite right.
People see me and think I'm putting on a show,
But I'm in more agony than they'll ever know.

They fake concern, but I see the lies,
I see the judgment in their eyes.
I'm so tired of being discontent,
Withdrawing endless payments like my rent.

I count the things that I possess,
Then hate my own ungratefulness.
I should feel rich, I should feel blessed,
But instead feel tightness in my chest.



I want to change, but change feels locked
Behind a door my hands have knocked.
Knuckles worn down to bone,
Only to hear myself alone.

What am I searching for tonight?
A reason strong enough to stay?
A hope that cannot be stripped away?
A fire that does not fade away?

I stay here for the ones I love,
And the Mighty One above.
But I am tired of borrowed will,
Trudging through, but standing still.

I want desire to live to be my own,
To guide me when I'm all alone.
Not duty dragging me through pain,
But fire inside my chest again.

What am I searching for?
How do I end this war?
If I can't even seem to cope,
How can I expect to believe in hope?

This is my prayer I send...
I hope I make it in the end."



The Sentinel

By Bryan E

Rocks were laid long before my flame,
Before I had height, before I had name,
Before your hull ever kissed the rain,
Before your course was a whispered aim.

They rose from the deep without decree,
Stone-set teeth in the salted sea,
Not placed by hand, not moved by me —
They simply were what they were to be.

Before I was built from iron and glass,
Before your compass was forged in brass,
They waited in tide and shadowed mass,
Silent beneath each ship that passed.

Your voyage was inked long after theirs,
Charts drawn thin with hopeful prayers,
But reefs don't bend and stone don't care —
They hold their ground. They are just there.

Then I was raised where the breakers cry,
Lantern lit to divide from sky,
Not judge the helm, not testify —
Only to stand where the dangers lie.

I do not steer and I do not chase,
I mark the edge of a given place,
My duty ends at the shoreline's face —
The wheel is yours. The speed, your pace.

I cannot calm what the storm intends,
Cannot rewrite where the reef-line bends,
I show the hazard. The rest depends
On captains, charts, and chosen ends.

Stare too long and the glare will blind,
Brightness burns an impatient mind,
Lights a warning — not a sign
That fate itself has been aligned.

Your trip was planned while here I stood.
Here I remain, as a beacon should.
Check your chart. Read what you could.



I did my part. You chose the wood.

Some ships surge with a narrowed sight
Trust the glow over charts at night
Confuse the flare for flawless right
And mistake the burn for guiding light.

When the current took hold and the keel let go
Wood met stone in the undertow
My lights don't move — they just let you know
Just as calm and still as the wrecks below

Unmoved above while your wreckage grew,
Silent and composed as losses accrued,
Fixed in my post as the splinters flew,
Collected like debts you swore weren't due

My lens doesn't lie, but it bends the view
Sends a truth that depends on you
Every beam that I ever threw
Only showed you what — not how to pursue

I never dragged you across that reef
You steered so hard with blind belief
Steadfast I burned with no relief
While I cast a glow over your chosen grief

Ships don't crash 'cause the light's too bright
They crash when they worship only sight
And the line you blurred as wrong or right
T'was your hand on the wheel that night.

Hull goes quiet — no more debate
My white glass eye never blinks nor waits
Whither it saves or it desecrates
It all depends on who navigates

The Helmsman

By Bryan E

The sky went black before the noon,
A bruised horizon, split too soon.
The swells climbed high in jagged crowns
And dragged the dying daylight down.



For years I've sailed for merchant's trade,
By honest contracts freely made.
But this first charge of royal claim
Puts more than ledger to my name.

The debt my father left unpaid
Outweighed all freight I ever made.
The crown forgave — but not for free.
That debt was laid in full on me.

The cargo in my hold is slight —
A crown-born trifle wrapped in white.
To you it's lacquer, lace, and thread,
To me it's mercy — or my head.

The seal upon that lacquered chest
Bears royal mark upon its crest.
To gleam in halls I'll never see,
Yet haunts the deck that carries me.

Delay is treason where kings reside,
Their patience thin, their mercy denied.
A storm may rage and a mast may break,
But courts forgive not the hours you take.

If I turn out, the gale will claim
My crew, my fame, my father's name.
If I lie still to let it rage,
The sea will write my final page.

So I weighed the deep against the shoal,
The open darkness against control.
One promised death in endless swell,
One offered hazard — but hope as well.

The light broke through the bitter night,
A fixed, unwavering, distant white.
It split the dark from reef and swell,
But would not say which side was hell.

If I turn outward, the gale will win,
It claws the ribs and peels the skin.
If I lie idle and wait it through,
The sea will claim what the crown would too.

I saw the reef in broken rows,



Black teeth beneath the surge and throws.
One inch beyond the charted seam,
And hull and hope split down the beam.

The light burned steady along the shore,
Not promise — no — but something more.
A fixed white line through rain and foam,
A measured mark that whispered “home.”

Beyond the reef the harbor waits,
A guarded curve of granite gates.
A cut through rock no wider span —
Than hope allowed a drowning man.

A basin shielded from the fray,
Where timbered piers hold storm at bay.
The last reprieve before the gale
Could smash the timbers and split the sail.

No margin left for doubt or drift —
A narrow pass through rock and cliff.
The outer dark was closing fast,
The swells ran high, the die was cast.

The sea behind me roared its claim.
The shore before me burned the same.
I used the light to take my chance,
Between the reef and circumstance.

If I am wrecked upon that line,
Let it be said the fault was mine.
Not storm, nor crown, nor guiding light —
I chose my course against the night.

Basalt

By Bryan E

We have endured a thousand years,
Of storms that war with ocean’s spears.
We watched the coastline rise and fall,
Watched empires carve and lose it all.

We were here before your trade,
Before your father’s debt was made.
Before your charts and measured span,



Before ambition troubled man.

Before the debt or cargo ever weighed,
Or a single plank or plan was laid.
Through shifting tides and chilly air,
Your timbered hull crept unaware.

You speak of danger as surprise —
Yet chose the dark before your eyes.
You saw the reef. You knew the tide.
Still pressed your helm against our side.

We did not reach, we did not call,
No malice stirred our granite wall.
We did not move. We did not choose.
We simply stood where tides abuse

We do not hurry. We do not heed.
We are not plagued by want or need.
You call us cruel for standing still.
As though we moved against your will.

The only thing that changed that night
Was mortal judgment under fright.
You steered by hope, by chart, by light,
And brought your hull against our height.

You sailed to end your father's shame,
To clear a debt, to cleanse a name.
Yet haste that swore to pay the due
Has written something worse for you.

You weighed the reef against the king,
And chose the louder threatening.
Yet neither crown nor wave compelled —
The course you chose your pride upheld.

"No other path," you told the crew.
We heard the part that wasn't true.
Necessity is often dressed
In garments pride has tailor-pressed.

You said there was no other choice.
We heard the tremor in your voice.
Men will name their fear "resolve"
When pride will not let patience solve.



The crown set hours. The clock ran thin.
You wagered flesh to settle kin.
The king's demand, the doubled sum,
One loss incurred — another to come.

The cargo lost and promise owed —
A doubled weight your haste bestowed.
You could not bear the waiting hour —
The helpless drift, the yielding power.

Haste is not the same as wise.
It merely shuts impatient eyes.
Bravery does not rush the brink.
It pauses long enough to think.

The storm behind you would have passed.
No wind forever holds its mass.
You chose the reef to shorten pain —
And found a sharper, swifter bane.

You say the storm allowed no stay.
You would not suffer one day's delay.
Yet men call "must" what pride demands —
And blame the earth for their own hands.

The tide has patience. Stone has time.
Yet man outruns his own design.
For lacquered toys and gilded thread,
You steered your living toward the dead.

A trinket for a pampered throne,
Bought with wager of flesh and bone.
You risked your crew to spare your name —
And crowned your fear with virtue's claim.

But fear refined, and dressed as will,
Still flees the test it must sit still.
You could not bear a single night
Between your debt and morning light.

One night of fury you might have borne.
The dawn would rise — the sky reborn.
But fear prefers a moving grave,
To standing firm against a wave.



Perhaps you're the one who Fortune favors,
To taste of death and end your labors.
For endings grant what ages crave.
A boundary marked by mortal grave.

All flesh must end its frantic chase,
An exit cut in time and space,
Finitude – your saving grace,
Not stuck like us in endless place.



Fairy Tales Can

By Come True

Prince Charming actually didn't
Invite me to the Junior Prom
Actually, no one invited me
And even Joe Cherry's regret
Monday after the Prom
Didn't staunch the pain

Nothing did. The secret shame—
The certainty that I was fat, ugly,
And unlovable was made concrete
That junior year in high school.
I didn't even qualify as a stepsister
(my younger sister was the beauty
But certainly not Cinderella)

Sixty years to the day
I'm ready to give myself
The glass slipper,
To release the carriage
Stuffed with envy, self pity, resentment,
Delusion
from my bones

And create my own Prom
Dance to my heart's melodies
And forgive the troubled teen
Who believed the worst
So she could survive the worst

I am the fairy tale
Come true!



People I Love #1

By Darhma



Never done people before and wanted to do portraits.



People I Love #2

By Darhma





My Favorite card game

By DJ

Thank you for the memories, the ones brought back to me as a kid, playing cards.

I have to tell you I was able to spend a week with two of my sisters. One has had 2 strokes in the past 2 years. After her 2nd stroke (tragically happened when she heard about a death in the family), she could not speak or walk for a long time. Now she is doing both. Her speech is broken up, but when I asked her if she remembered the card game Mille Bornes, she got all excited & said YES. We played a round or two & it just took us back in time.





Violet Tea

By Flours in Her Hair

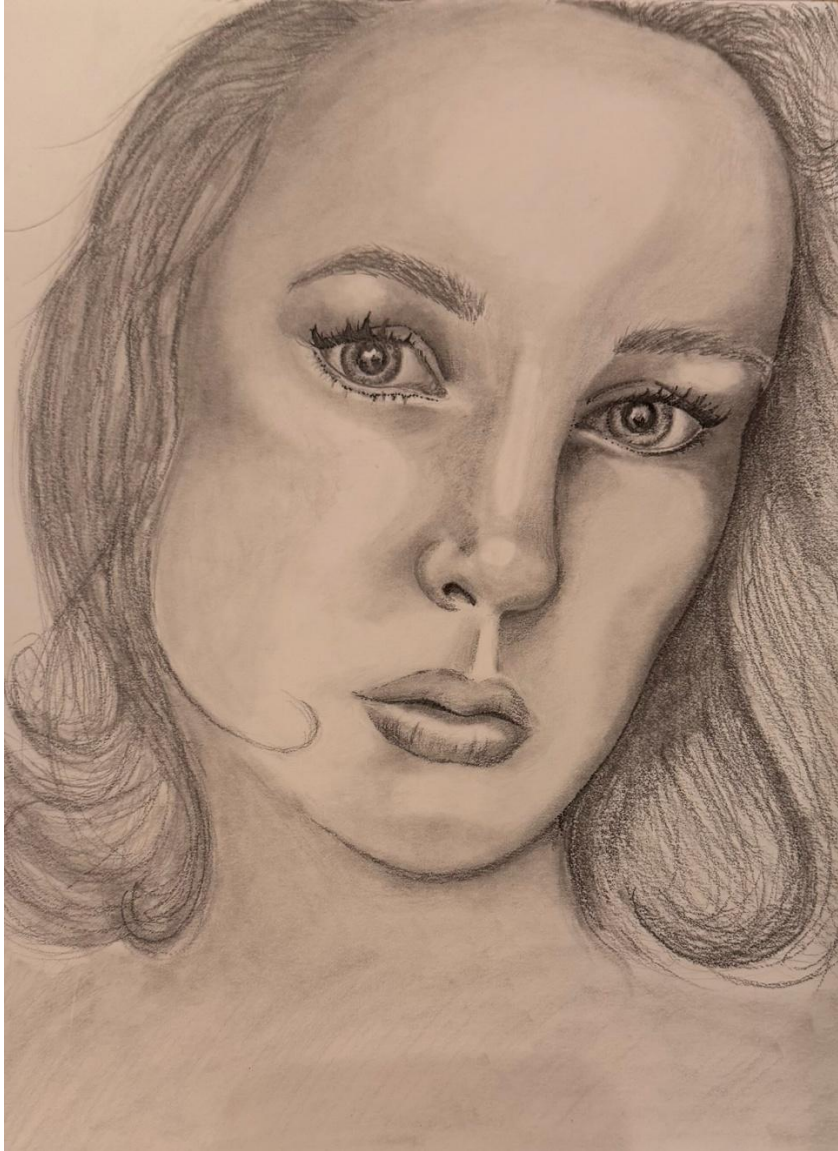


Try it and tell us how it tastes!



De-flowered

By GA



Alas, forlorn has
Taken a toll upon the
Soul,
Barely blooming,
Wilting before Fall,
Dormant past
Winter
Echoes of Spring,
Resurrection,
Dancing to Procession
Embodying peace on
A Summer's Eve



Curses

By Golden Sapphire

Curses, what are they?
When do they start?
When do they end?
Curses have to do
When a person is
Alive.
How they're being treated
By others.
If they're being mistreated
If they're being controlled
If they respect the spirits
That moved on.
If they respect
Another person,
Culture and religion.
Or the way they live
By praying to Gods and goddess,
if they lower their body
To the ground
And bow.
Or they light incense and pray
To their ancestors
Who protect the bloodline.
If they have a shrine
Of their bloodline,
A shrine for Gods and goddesses.
A cross and a bible
for God and Christ.
A curse is started
When they passed on.
It's based on
How they passed on.
That's how a curse
Is born.
A curse
Can be moved from
One person to another,
Or through their bloodline.
A curse can't be removed,
It can't be broken.
Even praying.
How to stop a curse
Is burning a white candle



With incense,
Put white rose petal
In salt water
Surrounded by dirt
And white stones.
Surrounded by the dirt
The candle
The incense
The rose
The salt
The stones
The dirt
Will stop the curse.
It won't break it,
But it will put it to sleep.
Sometimes I do feel
I'm alone on this path
I walk in the darkness.
Maybe that's why
No one will save me
Or pull me out of this
Depression I'm in.
Wanting someone to save me
And keep me safe.
But that dream won't come true.
Those wishing.
No one will come save me



Orchid Flowers

By Grace

The orchid is
My favorite flower.
There are 28,000 to 30,000 species
All over the world.
I never knew
There were so many species of orchids
And use bark soil
Instead of potting soil.
The name "orchid" comes
From Greek word for testicles.
It refers to the name of tubers
In some species.
There are some rare species
Of Rhizanthella gardneri flowers
That are underground,
They grow in Australia.
Some are on the endangered species
Because of the environment
They live in.

My favorite toy as a child

By Grace

My favorite toy
As a little girl
Was the Pogo stick.
My mother bought it for me
For my birthday.
I was so happy to have one
So I taught myself
How to stay on one.
I got really good at it.
It was hard
To put it up
When I went to school.
It was so good for balance
And just being able to
Control your toy.
I wish I still had one,
It was a great exercise.

I loved it.



The Zoo

By Grace

Zoos are very nice to go and visit
I haven't been to the zoo in a long time.
There are a lot of things you can learn there.
Children love seeing the animals at the zoo.
They can write about their experiences there
Because there are a lot of animals there.
One thing I don't like about zoos
Are that they keep their animals caged in.
That would make them be very depressed
In a closed enclosure
Instead of being in the wild
Where they belong.



A Trip to Aunt Christina's House

By Gus

My favorite journey was going to aunt Christina's house. It was a very long journey in the Toyota. We went at night from the house in Janesville so the day would last longer.

We took some food, water, and snacks on the journey and I was playing new Super Mario Brothers on my DS.

It was a very long journey with daddy and mommy. We would sometimes stop for gas to refuel the car on the trip. We probably had to refuel maybe two times on the trip.

I would see those colorful lights in the background at night on the road and the stars in the night sky.

When we made it to aunt Christina's house I saw cacti and other exotic plants at aunt Christina's house and there was a sunset with nice, ambient light. We went to the house and aunt Christina took us in.

Daddy was really exhausted from all that driving and the journey so he went to bed to sleep for the night and in the morning he was still sleeping for most of the day because he was so exhausted.

I played around the house and aunt Christina gave me cake and ice cream! Aunt Christina could cook very good too - Christina was a great cook!

Daddy and mommy would talk to some people there and have conversations and funny jokes! We had a really good time at the house with aunt Christina and some other friends.

The house was very comfortable. Lots of pillows, blankets, antique furniture, couches, and chairs. We stayed there for maybe four days.

I had a really fun time there with daddy and mommy.



Dancing in the Rain

By Heidi



I started out with chalk and decided to outline with acrylic paints. I started the painting last fall. When I was alone deep in my thoughts. Painting helps me to relax and breath, and I remind myself good things will happen in my life again.



Whistler The Western Screech owl

By Himalaya



Not exactly a zoo, but a local wildlife rehab held an open house in spring, and I met a Western screech named whistler who was blind in one eye. I decided to draw him as a wizard because I felt it fit him!

**My grandma the wackadoodle unbrushed**

By Julian Conari

She once said “run Tommie”
never knowing a misspelled word spoken aloud
could be seen as a thing,
but never once did she know me, partial or full.
Told me “there! See? Hurry now.”
I was up front,
driving home from Oregon,
To be delivered by RV
and sent by desire
to be back
and fast.
Run she says again, just go already...
Her hands were at 11 and 1
Just as she yelled maximum
and I sat just barely but enough
to remain awake.
I said no.
I can still see her doing it.
She was barefoot.
And her hair was unbrushed.

One day a sentence a gavel does say to me

By Julian Conari

I am born, and observe
I am always having done
with a change
priced towering over my penny and nickel still mine

Stamped not my papers now gone, nor the passage to private
St. Helena mine own
was any at all but expected to be known.

Falling, soon I will have fallen,
well past disgrace
done with a mind
who plays,
even when here caged,
with His name,
and recalls the bowls
my grandma once gave
Neapolitan—flavors all three,



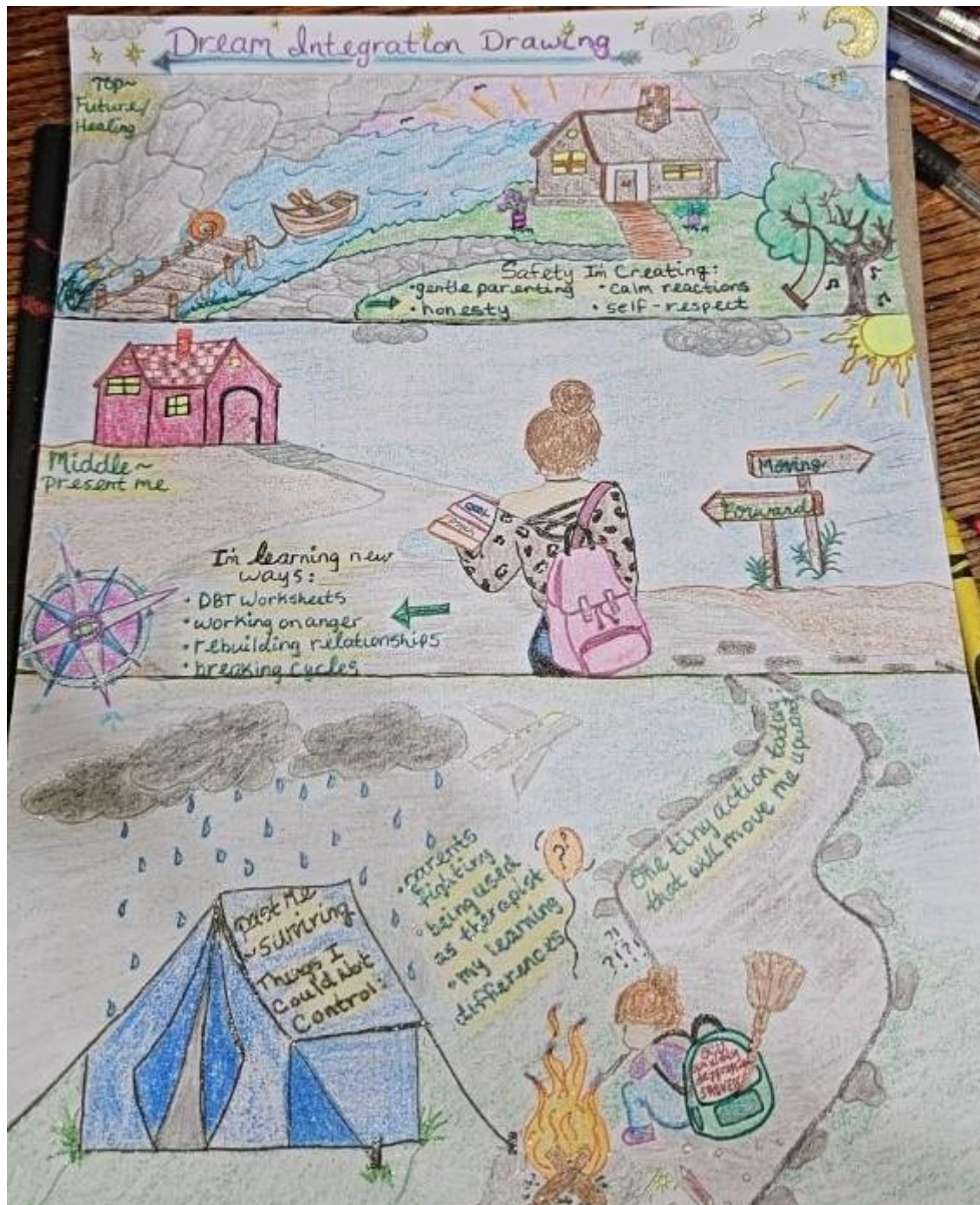
a banished treat for me.

On and beyond,
to neglect and through too
to here, done up there;
Some long time ago
alone in a cage
fending off beasts
seen by one
and known by two.
I march loving loves
I for a reason
or two—
maybe more, many many many—
more, but
today, together I and her;
on choking leash,
free— no not her
but me.



Integration in Motion

By Kaitlyn





The Space Between

By Kaitlyn





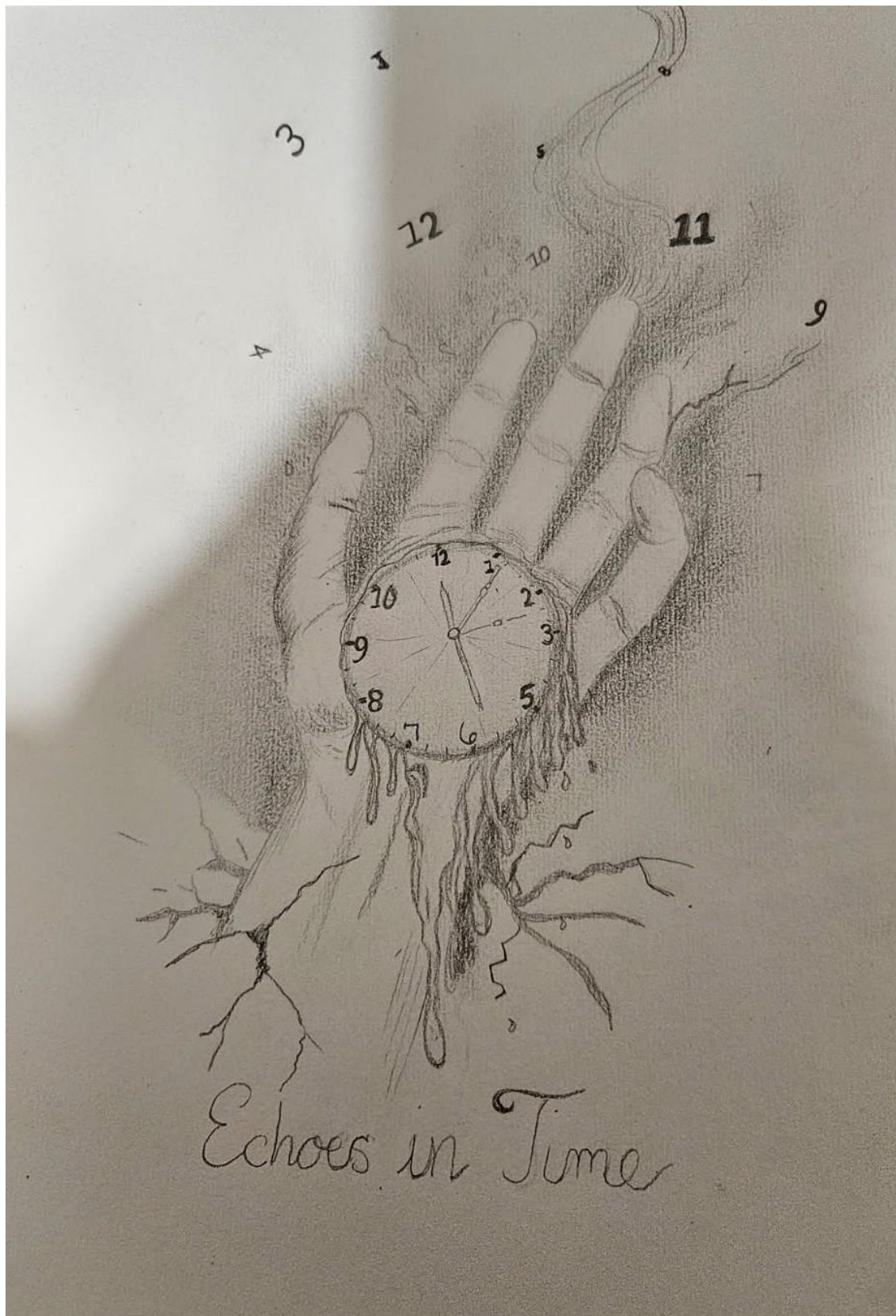
Seasons of me
By Kaitlyn





Echoes in Time

By Kaitlyn





Quan Yin
By Linda



First time doing realistic painting with acrylics



Rocks By Marilyn and Sherry in Tulelake

Happy Mother's Day



Coastal



Wild Grass Basket



Taking over Tulelake



Our friends want to place all kinds of rocks around Tulelake, tell us if you find any!



Rocks by Marilyn
Peace



Over the Rainbow



Strawberry and Watermelon



Happy Camper





Zigzag painted rock



Dots





Holiday Gifts.

By Markus

Well as for this year, gifts and such wasn't as affordable as it has been in the past. Normal holiday season (aka Christmas) in the past has been better. The one gift I know we are all thankful for is being alive and together for another holiday season.

This year the best I could do was send out some cards and Christmas texts. For a few people in my family I did some prints. That is only a few that I took a picture of other ones I didn't take any pictures. In truth the reality of gifts is the togetherness of family, because you never know when the unspeakable happens.





Redeemed

By Mary

There was a little girl
with wildflowers in her hair
and dreams too big
for the small town roads she walked.

She loved deeply,
the kind of love
you swear will last forever
when you're young enough
to believe forever is promised.

She built her whole heart
around a boy she grew up beside,
her high school sweetheart,
her first home.

And together they dreamed
of tiny feet and lullabies—
until the world grew quiet
in the cruelest way imaginable.

She held grief in trembling hands,
a mother with empty arms,
trying to survive a pain
no words could ever soften.

After that,
the darkness came fast.

Loneliness became familiar.
Nights blurred together.
Addiction whispered lies
that numbness was healing.

And for a while,
she disappeared inside herself.

The little girl with big dreams
became a woman
just trying to make it
through another day.

But even in the dark,



God never stopped searching for her.

Through every broken piece,
every tear cried on bathroom floors,
every moment she thought
she was too far gone—
grace waited patiently.

And slowly,
she found herself again.

Not the same girl she once was
stronger.
Softer.
Wiser.
A woman rebuilt
from ashes and prayer.

She learned healing
isn't a straight line.
It's choosing yourself
over and over
even when it hurts.

And then love found her again
not chaotic,
not temporary,
but safe.

The kind of love
that feels like peace after war.

And finally
after all the loss,
all the waiting,
all the storms she survived
she holds her baby girl
in her arms.

A miracle.
A second chance.
Proof that even after devastation,
life can bloom again.

The little girl with big dreams
was never broken beyond repair.



She was becoming
exactly who she was always meant to be.

Tough Little Cowgirl

By Mary

She was a tough little cowgirl
with dust on her boots
and fire in her bones.

The wind tried to steal her balance,
the world tried to break her spirit,
and life bucked hard beneath her
wild, untamed, unforgiving.

She fell.
More than once.
But she learned something
out there in the dirt

The ground doesn't get to keep you
unless you decide to stay.

So she'd wipe her tears
and climb back into the saddle.

Again.
And again.
And again.

She didn't know then
that every fall
was building muscle in her faith.

Didn't know
that the lonely nights
were teaching her
how to hear God whisper
through the quiet.

Now she's grown
not softer,
but deeper.

There's still grit in her spine,



still steel in her prayer,

Her eyes see differently.

She sees God
in sunrise spilling gold across a pasture.
In the way wildflowers bloom
where nothing should grow.

she survived.
She sees beauty
in all things
Because
she knows
broken things can still stand.

She is still that tough little cowgirl only now
she rides with grace instead of fear,
with gratitude instead of anger,
with God beside her.

And when life bucks again
because it will

She smiles.
Tips her hat to heaven.
And holds on. ♥

Coming Home

By Mary

She was a girl who learned pain early,
who wore strength like armor
because breaking felt dangerous.
Her smile hid the ache,
her laughter stitched over wounds
no one asked about.

She knew how to endure,
but not how to rest.
How to survive,
but not how to hope.

Then Jesus found her
He said



"Come home."

And for the first time,
she believed staying alive
wasn't a punishment,
but a promise.

Healing didn't arrive like lightning
it came like the sunrise in the morning.
Slow. Faithful.
Day after day choosing breath,
choosing mercy,
choosing to be here to live this life.

Now she carries life beneath her ribs,
a tiny heartbeat teaching her
that her body is not a battlefield
it is a sanctuary.

She is becoming a mother
with hands that once trembled,
with a heart that once begged for relief.
And somehow,
that makes her holy.

Because the wounded girl didn't disappear
she transformed.
She learned that love can stay,
that God keeps His promises,
that life after
pain
is still life worth living.

And as she whispers prayers to the future,
Jesus stands beside her, smiling,
because resurrection
has always been His specialty. 🌿



Misadventures of Maximillion

By Monna

Hi, my name is Maxmillion. I'm a brown and white Cocker Spaniel. I have freckles and a goatee.

One of my favorite things to do is sit out on the porch at night. And that is what I was doing a few nights ago.

The wind was blowing the branches of the cedar trees. Cones were falling out of the Pine trees.

There were no animals out. The Possum, Raccoon and Skunks must have been home rolled up in their beds.

Without any warning a big gust of wind rattled the screens on the porch windows. And it popped the screen door open. Without thinking I jumped down from my chair and ran through the door.

How wonderful. I can run anywhere. A road trip in the dark. I could go anywhere. Lickety split I made a mad dash through the park.

My little feet splashing through water puddles. My belly was getting wet, because I'm so close to the ground. Also my head and back. My ears that had just been flopping happily now were so wet they just hung down.

I stopped running and looked around, I said to myself, I don't like the rain.

I turned around and followed my scent home. As a breed we are bird dogs and we can naturally follow scent. Nowadays we are lap dogs.

Finally, I reach home. To my amazement the door is shut. I sit on the top step barking. Mamma come save me.

Suddenly the door opens and there is my beautiful mamma.

Oh, Max you don't like the rain, what are you doing out there? I'll be back, I'm going to get a towel.

And sure she did one of those big fluffy towels. She wrapped it around me and picked me up. Carrying me and rubbing me all over to get me dry. In that moment of time I knew my mamma loved me and I loved her.

There were to be no more road trips in the dark of the night and the splashing of the rain. In the future though, a lot of walk abouts would happen with her and without.

**Bella's Last Road Trip**

By Monna

Come on Bella let's take your last ride before your last ride.
I'll need help getting you into the car. The window is down and we are headed around the block.
Is the last line we are headed around the block
Somehow you've pulled yourself up and your head is out the window.
The wind is blowing your long white hair back from your face. Your eyes are closed you look like you're in your own Zen.
I was always going to get a picture of you like that but didn't now it's emblazoned on the the back of my eye lids.
You're on the vet's table. She is preparing your leg for the needle. She pushes it in. I yell take it out.
It's too late. Bella's last road trip.

SANS SOUCI

The End

Zoo

By Monna

Mankind is the apex of God's creation.
The animals were created with intuition
and we were made with free will.
We have to learn to be compassionate kind and nurturing.
We can learn all that from each other
and from the Creation.



Runaway Kids, Chapter 1

By Moody Santa

two good things we have going
to Alex. First she gets to
JO EASTER tomorrow.
and is getting her own room.
"Jealous me?" well Alex is
like a daa!! cute 😊 her
new dress has flowers on
it yellow flowers the
is all beautiful everywhere
she's cute ~~or~~ one sec I need the
bathroom.



By Moody Santa

Chapter one Zackie

I + was a dark and stormy night.
Whats happening? I.D.K, Alex!

AKA Alexandred said, well
+ then thats unfortunate
Yeah it is. well acording to
me It is. youre acting strange
Zackie said. Ummm no Im
not Yeah hu. no, yes, no.
OK Stop! Zackies mom said
Zackie go to your room
OK, he stuck out his
tounge at Alex before
he left. Uhh I wish I
was never born, hey at least -

1



As we heal the earth, we heal ourselves

By Peggy





Experiencing New Things

By Peggy

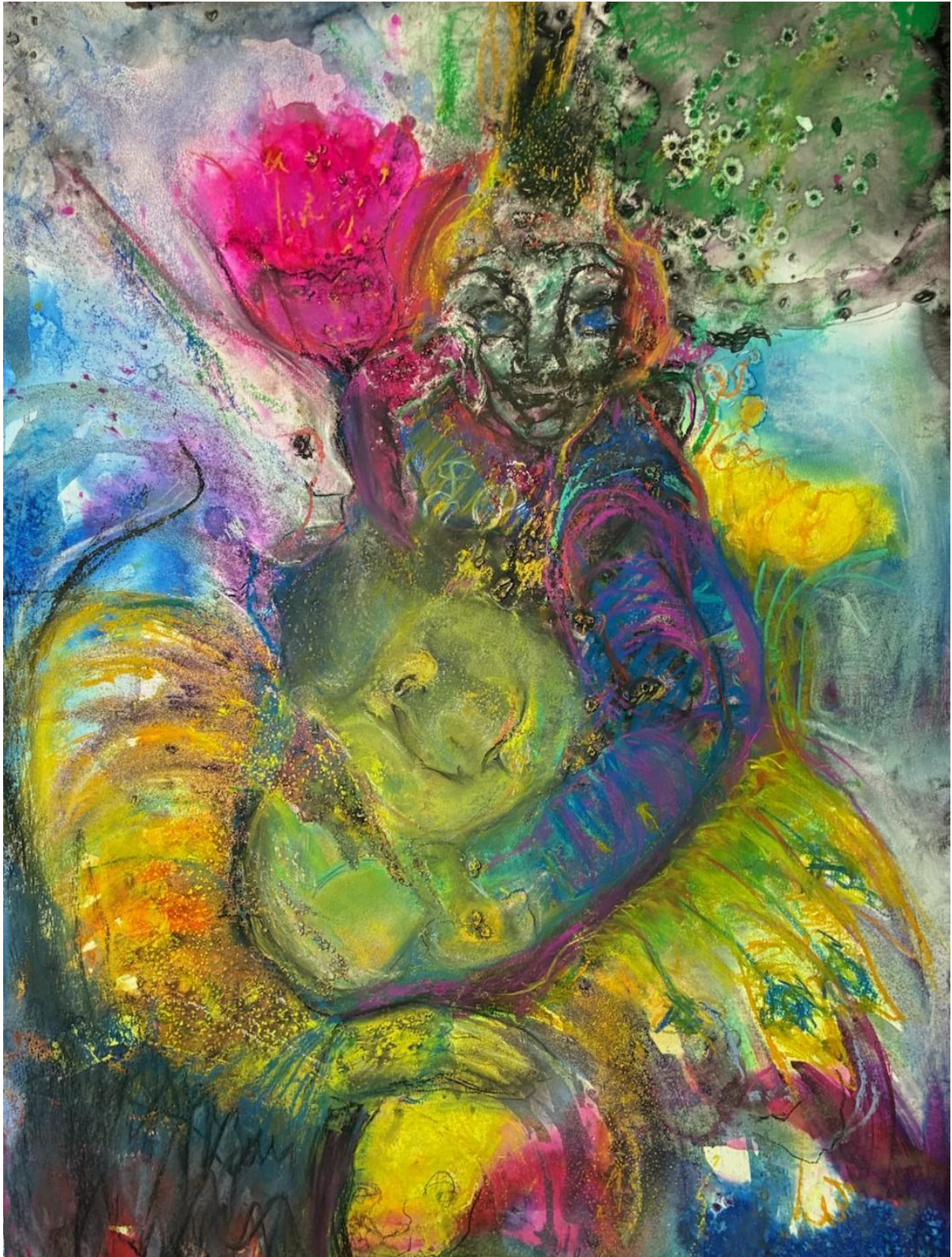


I did it looking for new things for the classes in the fall. The substance is called cold wax technique on canvas



Evolution is now, CHOOSE LOVE

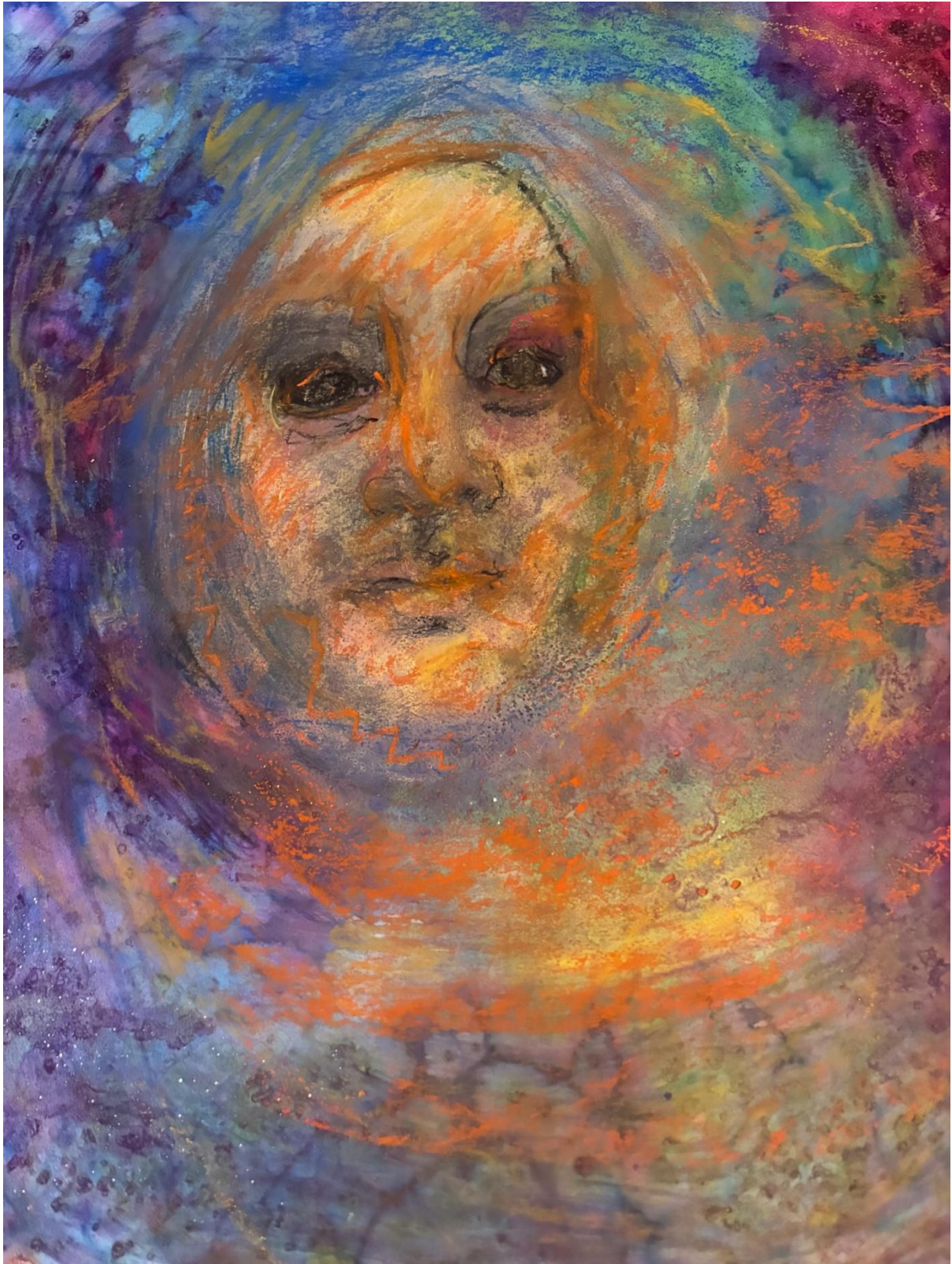
By Peggy





Evaluation calls for change. Be the Change. For the good for all.

By Peggy





Fire Horse

By Peggy



In Pastel and watercolor. The horse is the Chinese year of the fire horse, which comes every 60 years. Its about using that energy to make the change we want. "Be the change you want"



Helpless Hopeless

By Peggy



In Pastel and watercolor. Feeling helpless, hopeless, my original concept of that which is still active on my life. It was right after WW2 at the age of 6 in bombed out Germany.



The Yellow Rose

By Pensir

The story is about a young rosebush that has just been planted in the ground, barely an infant. This is when her consciousness arises. She can't see anything, but she can feel everything. She knows she's protected because she has her thorns and she starts to grow and here comes her first bud she blooms and she can finally see she can see the sun. She can see the birds she's heard all this time, she can see the bugs. She's still young so she doesn't remember everything. The cold comes and she goes to sleep what feels like the blink of an eye she starts to wake up again, but she can't see and slowly, she grows more and another bud and this time there's more for 71 but one sprouts and she can see again and then another sprouts as she can see a different point of view and then another sprouts and it continues until all the roses have opened up and they can see everything around in one collected mind each individual has thoughts, but each individual can comprehend every single thought at the same time. The yellow rose is a complex. I don't know what word to use here shortly after the bloom there's this lady, grey hair, gentle, loving, eyes, soft smile she sometimes speaks to me, says a yellow rose. I love it when she speaks to me. She may not make sense when she speaks to me, but I still love it. I bloom for you, thanks say yellow rose and another season passes and the rosebush. As soon as she feels her life coming back, she focuses everything on her growth she wants to please that lovely woman but the season she'd never appeared this season the yellow Rose sees a saddle, old man that doesn't stop the yellow rose. She wants to give more she wants to make this man's smile the way the woman smiled at her.

The Yellow Rose

She was barely alive when her mind first stirred.

A thin stem pressed into unfamiliar soil. Roots, fragile and searching, pushed through cool darkness. She could not see, not yet. There was no shape to the world. No color. Only sensation.

The soil held her gently. The earth was heavy but kind. Water slid down through the dirt and wrapped around her roots like a quiet whisper. Above her, warmth would sometimes touch the top of her stem.

She did not understand what warmth was.

But she leaned toward it.

The first thing she knew about herself was that she was protected. Small sharp thorns pushed outward along her stem, little spears that warned the world away. She could feel them forming, each one a tiny shield.

Time passed in ways she could not measure.



Then something new began to grow.

A swelling at the end of her stem. Tight. Folded. Waiting.

Her first bud.

She felt it forming the way a person might feel their own heartbeat. Slowly, the bud grew heavier, fuller, until one morning it opened.

And suddenly—

She could see.

Light flooded her existence. The sun burned bright and warm in the sky above her. The air shimmered with movement.

Birds crossed the sky in soft arcs. She had heard their wings for so long but never understood them. Now she watched them glide through the endless blue.

Bugs crawled across her leaves. Some tickled. Some nibbled. Some simply wandered.

The world was enormous.

She was still young, and the moment her petals opened she began to forget the darkness she had come from. The soil felt farther away. The memory of blindness faded quickly beneath the brilliance of the sun.

Days passed.

Then the warmth slowly began to leave.

The air sharpened. The light weakened. The wind carried a bitter edge.

Cold came.

Her petals fell.

Her leaves stiffened and dropped away.

Sleep pulled her down into silence again.

To her, it felt like a blink.

But when she woke again, she could not see.

Her old bloom was gone.



Still, something deep inside her was stronger now. Her roots had grown deeper in the earth. Her stem thicker.

And soon—

New buds formed.

One.

Then another.

Then another.

This time when they opened, sight returned again, but not from one place.

Each blossom opened its own window to the world.

One saw the sky.

Another saw the fence beside the garden.

Another looked toward the house.

Another toward the open yard.

At first the views were confusing. Different pieces of the world arrived at once. But slowly her mind stretched to hold them all.

Each rose could think.

Each rose could feel.

Yet all of them were her.

A single mind, spread across many blossoms.

The yellow rose had become something larger than a single flower. A gathering of thoughts. A shared awareness.

A quiet chorus inside one living bush.

Not long after the first blooms opened, she noticed her.

The woman.



Grey hair framed her gentle face. Her eyes were soft and patient, the way sunlight rests on calm water. When she walked into the garden, her steps were slow and careful.

Sometimes she stopped in front of the bush.

Sometimes she knelt.

Sometimes she spoke.

The sounds did not always make sense to the yellow rose. Human words were strange things. But her voice carried warmth, and warmth was something the rose understood perfectly.

The woman would smile.

“A yellow rose,” she would say softly.

The rose did not know what the words meant.

But she knew the feeling behind them.

So she bloomed.

Every petal opened as wide as it could, stretching toward the woman’s face. Toward her voice. Toward that quiet kindness.

She bloomed for her.

Seasons passed this way.

Winter would come. The rose would sleep. Spring would wake her again. And each year she pushed harder, growing thicker, stronger, fuller.

More buds.

More blossoms.

More eyes to see the world.

She wanted to be beautiful for the woman.

But one year, when spring came and the yellow roses opened their petals again—

The woman did not appear.

Days passed.



The gate creaked open once, but it was not her.

An old man walked slowly into the garden.

His shoulders sagged as if something heavy rested on them that no one else could see. His face carried deep lines, carved there by years and grief.

He stood beside the rosebush.

For a long time he said nothing.

The yellow rose watched him through dozens of blossoms.

She remembered the woman's smile.

The warmth in her voice.

The quiet joy she had felt blooming for her.

So the rose did the only thing she knew how to do.

She bloomed harder.

More buds opened.

More yellow petals stretched into the sunlight.

She filled the garden with color.

Not because she understood the man.

But because she remembered the woman.

And she hoped—

Somewhere inside him—

The same smile might grow again.



Acceptance

By Pensir

I finally accepted my diagnosis of bipolar disorder.
It's amazing how long it took me, and honestly, it took that long because of the stigma attached to it.

Everybody thinks they know exactly what bipolar disorder is.
Hot and cold. Up and down. Happy, then crazy.
But it's so much more complicated than that.

It's not just moods.
It's something that can feel completely out of your control, something that shapes your thoughts before you even realize what's happening.

What amazes me most is how long it took me to learn this.

Not because people didn't tell me—
but because I didn't listen.
I finally set my pride down and did the research myself.
And as I read through it, detail by detail, I saw my own life written on those pages.

Every symptom.
Every pattern.
Every moment I thought was just me failing somehow.

Why didn't I do it sooner?
Why did I let stigma scare me away from proper treatment?
Why did I believe what everyone else thought they knew instead of finding out for myself?

I'm not looking for answers to those questions right now.
They're rhetorical—questions I need to sit with on my own.

But what matters most is this:
I finally accepted what I am, who I am, and how to treat my symptoms.

And that acceptance feels like the first real step forward.



Faith

By Phoenix





In Lieu of the Prom

By Sri

Let me tell you a few things about my prom.

I was raised with a lot of rituals and ceremonies (which also involved a fair bit of austerity) within a religion from India. Arising at 3:00 AM, taking a cold shower, ceremonies began in the temple room at 4:15 AM.

The altars for the Deities(murtis) of Krsna And His companions and expansions, were ornate: Solid silver, or carved wood, marble, and loads of flowers, not just carnations and marigolds, but lotus flowers and gardenias and Jasmine. The Deities were made of various materials, such as marble, brass, wood, even solid gold, and rock.

Their outfits which were changed 2 times in a day were made of silk and cotton and chiffon, satin, all hand embroidered with gold and silver jewelry, or beaded beautifully. On special occasions, they were made entirely of flowers.

Their jewelry was made from glass beads, silver and gold and crystal and diamanté and rhinestones. They wore peacock feathers and flower garlands.



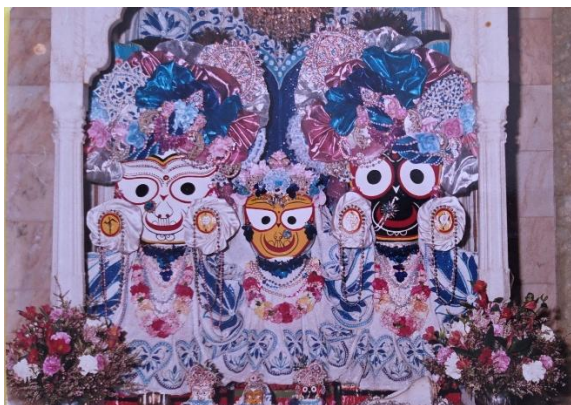
Syamasundara of the Divine couple Sri Sri Radha Syamasundara in Puerto Rico.



Radha of the divine couple Sri Sri Radha Syamasundara in Puerto Rico.



Sri Sri Radha Syamasundara in Puerto Rico.
My adopted dad gifted these Deities to this temple.



These Deities are wooden. They are Lord Jagannatha on the right, His brother Balarama on the left and Their sister Subhadra in the middle. You can read about Their pastimes in the Mahabharata. Subhadra was married to the greatest archer who ever lived named Arjuna, to whom Krsna spoke the Bhagavad Gita. These ones are in ISKCON Melbourne, Australia. I was Their pujari and I dressed Them here. I was 17.



Sri Sri Radha Govinda in ISKCON New York in one of Their flower outfits.



All of the food we ate was first offered to Their Lordships on beautiful, silver or gold plates. The food was all fresh and vegetarian with most of the recipes originating in India. The offering of the food was done before the altar curtains or doors were opened to the temple congregation. When they opened arati followed. There were several of these throughout the day.





Worship by the devotees was not done kneeling in pews. We bowed down at times upon entering and leaving the temple room, but most activity involved singing and dancing. All songs were in Sanskrit and Bengali, ancient and traditional, accompanied by the playing of Indian instruments. The most common instruments were the mrdanga drum, which is two-headed and worn around the neck, brass symbols, called karatals. A harmonium. My adopted dad also played the sitar, esaraj and Sarod. Tamburas and tablas, too. Flute.

On the altar certain objects were offered in a set order in a ceremony called arati or puja. The one offering puja was the pujari. They would ring a bell in their left hand and in circular motions, clockwise, would offer burning incense, ghee lamp with whicks aflame, a conch holding water, a handkerchief or folded cloth, a flower, and the last 2 items were not offered in circular motions, a chamara(a yak tail fan with a silver handle) this was twirled up and then brought down. And finally a round peacock fan in a fanning motion, up and down. The puja began and ended with the blowing of a conch shell 3 times. I was a pujari from age 12 on and blowing that conch shell was pretty intimidating. What if I couldn't do it? It was tricky.

Some people might have a vision of Hare Krsnas as a bunch of hippies probably because the movement started in 1965 and the chanting and dancing in the parks and streets attracted a lot of that element. But that was not my reality. Everything was very pakha, suchi, precise, brahminical, strict. There were proper and improper behaviors especially when in front of the Deities.

We very often had festival days which entailed the altars and temple room being decorated ornately with flowers, vases, long garlands. Peacocks were made out of cut vegetables and fruits. The Deities would receive new outfits. We would get to dress up not just in the normal saris and or Punjabi outfits for females and dhotis and kurtas for males, but we got to paint our faces with gopi dots, Vedic designs and symbols and wear lovely Indian jewelry, tikas, earrings, nose rings and chains, bangles, ankle bells and braid kuchis into our long hair.

The festival days were filled with activities all dedicated to whichever form of Krsna or His avatars or companions we were celebrating. There were plays and traditional Indian dance (usually bharatnatyam, sometimes Manipuri dance, drumming and martial arts and dandiya stick dance) performances. From the youngest age we, the children were doing these performances as well. I always played a star role in plays having to memorize page long lines. We would get treated to professional dance and bhajan (singing and drumming and unique Indian instruments) performers as well.



This is me in Los Angeles, all grown up. My friends and I had just finished a stick dance performance in the temple room.

There were certain auspicious days like Janmastami which is Lord Krsna's birthday where we had to fast the entire day. Some fasting was just til noon or moonrise but Janmastami was until midnight and then a light feast to break the fast with a massive feast the following day. Every festival always involved honoring or eating of super delicious prasadam or offered food.



On Janmastami over 108 separate dishes are offered and on Govardhana Puja many more. Other events that were celebrated were weddings, grain ceremonies for 6 month old babies, initiations of devotees: first or diksha initiation and then second or Brahmin initiation. These



were all done, with vows taken, in front of the sacrificial fire into which were thrown by handfuls ghee-soaked grains and finally fruits and vegetables.

Not every day was a festival. We also had academics classes and play time and cleaning the ashrams and doing laundry and other every day body maintenance activities. Some daily devotional activities were tedious and hard and boring for us kids. Chanting japa for 1 hour for little kids and at least 2 hours for older kids and adults (initiated especially) was intense. Sitting through an hour long Srimad Bhagavatam class at 7 am or so was hard too. Sometimes we got to string garlands or roll the ghee whicks or bead the outfits or make jewelry during class.



Sri Sri Radha Sharad Bihari in Philadelphia. I helped bead this outfit when i was 10.

Even though there was so much celebration and singing and dancing a prom would never be permitted. I don't recall where in the Vedas it says that young boys and girls could not talk to, play with or even look at each other but it was strictly enforced in the Hare Krsna schools. I was talking to a childhood friend yesterday and she reminded me that most of these adults raising us came from Judeo-Christian backgrounds and/or obviously had major sexual hang-ups and even perversions. Not every interaction between opposite sexes is a desire for or an act of sex especially in children. But they told us that it was and there were strict punishments for the slightest interaction.



The Vedic scriptures, the way they were presented to us, spoke down on sex, saying that it was the most entangling aspect of material existence and led to downfall. Illicit sex, meaning outside of marriage and then only for the begetting of children, was prohibited.

But clearly there was an obsession with it. They tried marrying me off when I was 12 to a 20 year old man. So now, without boobs, and with the biggest fear of sex, I had no idea what it was until many years later, not allowed to talk to boys my age, I had what was left of my childhood polluted with this certainty that this full-grown-man was going to have sex with me and I'd have to serve him for the rest of my life. Ugh. I was so angry.

But I got out of the betrothal and he never came anywhere near me. I did it without hurting anyone's feelings nor displeasing anyone. Quite a bit of calculating had to go into accomplishing this, a 12 year old child in a warped adult world. But I got my freedom along with a curse from one of my probably sexually-repressed female teachers that no man would ever want me. She took her anger out on my face and head too but hey whatever.

These hypocritical adults preaching no sex and all were being sexually inappropriate with us children, too; some worse than others.



I tried to make sure nobody would feel comfortable asking to marry me.

I am 16 years old here in New York.

Not available.

I am still very upset that I was deprived of natural connection, fulfillment of natural curiosity with the boys along with innocence and chances for sweet discoveries on our own, stolen from us. I have had no successful relationships with any man and thus I raised my 6 children to 3 different men mostly on my own. Maybe I will come back in another life and just get to have the most romantic life with my most loving soul-mate and heal the travesty that it has been this time around.

Maybe even get to go to a prom.

Clearly I still value my upbringing. It formed me. I take the good with the bad. I hope you enjoyed this tiny glimpse into my world.



And A Little Child Shall Lead Them

By Star Dancer

That is the prophet Isaiah, chapter 11, telling us about a time when the king will come bringing justice and peace. Even fierce animals, will lie down together, and “a little child shall lead them.” Why a little child? Who is the child?

Far Out Club

Almost twenty years ago my friend and I started an after-school club for children who did not fit well with the regular school program. Some kids were wild, and disobedient, others just quietly eccentric. Kids enter the club in 1st grade, and stay through 6th. We try to always have that family-like age range, and never more than 6 or 7 kids total. I actually wanted to close the club a few years ago, but then a group of 5 devoted adults came on board to help, including a FOC graduate, now in high school. So, as they say, the show goes on.

Last Meeting

I have led this club for years, slowly working on kindness, creativity, negotiation, respect, emotional regulation. Recently, I have experienced my own dysregulation, high anxiety, for no apparent reason. I am working with a physician, a psychiatrist, a counselor, acupuncturist, massage therapist, and numerous faithful praying friends, to help myself through this very hard time. I certainly did not feel in any condition to lead the last meeting of Far Out Club this week, but I did.... Sort of ...

Little Child

Jake is a little child often disobedient ... misbehaving, etc. He is also highly intelligent. At six years old he reads like an adult. We had just started eating our pizza at snack time, when he said, “I just feel kind of funny eating without praying first.” We all put our pizza down, and he prayed, “Heavenly Father thank You for giving us this pizza and orange juice.” Another student, famous for arguing with adults and fighting with kids added, “Lord, thank You for Suzie’s mom who brought us this pizza, and for all the adults who come to Far Out Club to help us. Amen.”

Lead On Little Children

Why was it the children who led out in prayer? Most of us leaders are Christians, but, operating in the public school, we respect the separation of church and state. The children haven’t heard that concept. Life is all the same to them. They know the Lord. They are His kids in school and out.

As they prayed, I felt the Lord whisper, “You just rest Mrs. Clark. You just listen and follow the children. They will lead this community you started farther than you can imagine in My name.”

Light Our Hearts

I have to admit; my heart is heavy these days. We circled up as we always do a few minutes before closing time. I read them a story. We held hands and sang;

As we leave this friendly place



Love give light to every face
May the kindness which we learn
Light our hearts till we return

Thank you children for those prayers. They truly lightened my heart.



Paper making

By Susan

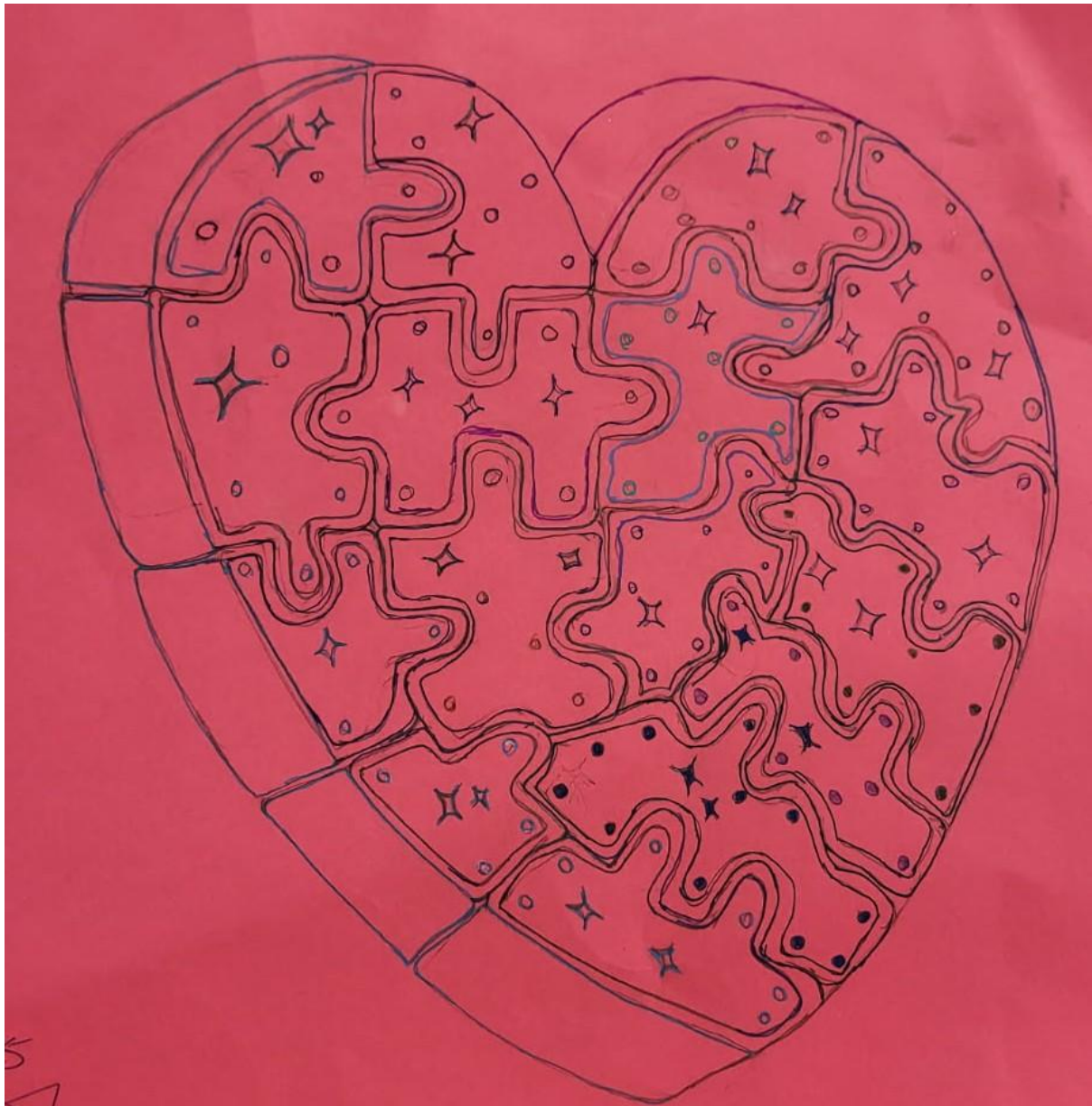


This is from a paper making class made by a lady who is nearly blind.



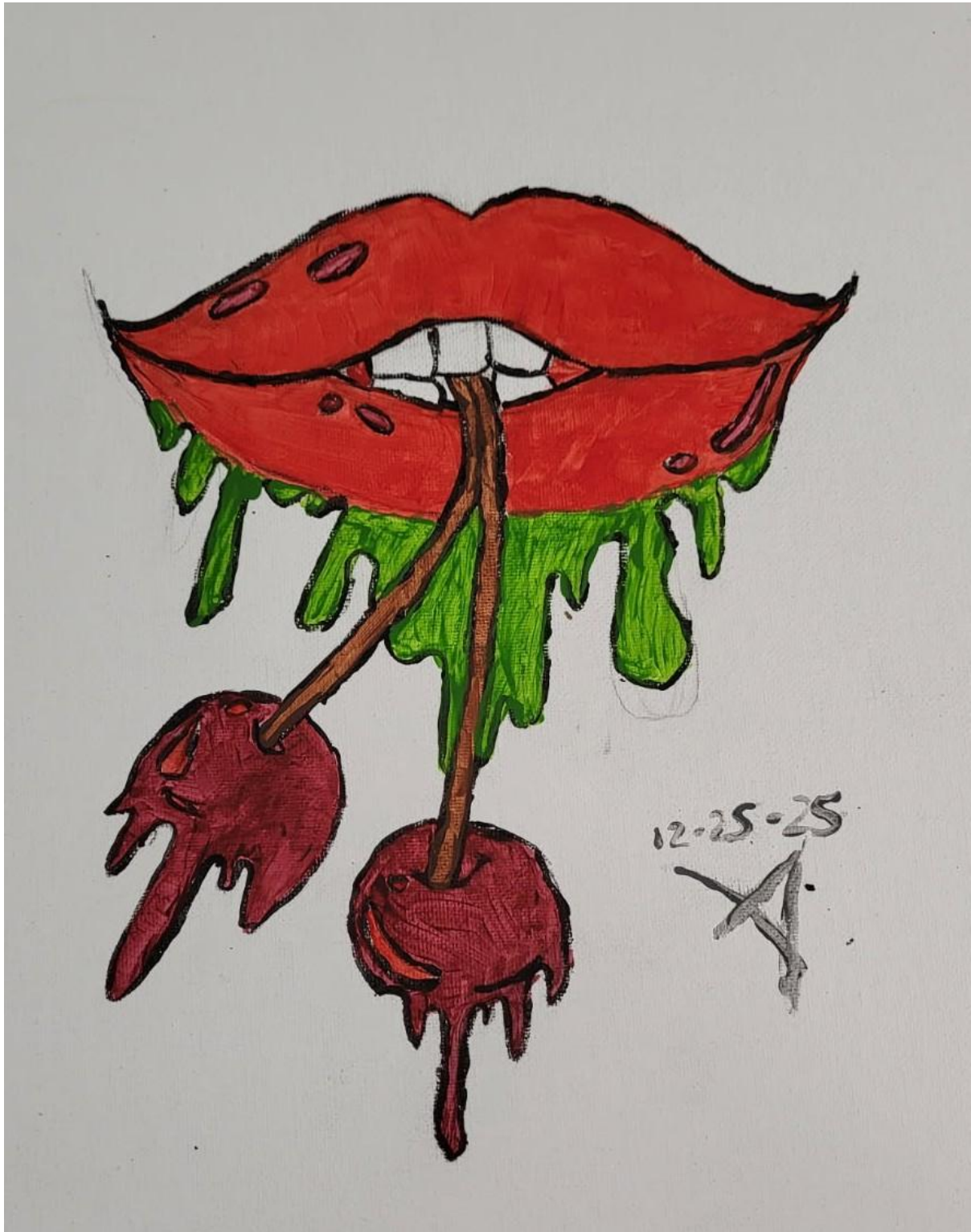
Autism Love

By T





By T





Crocheted goods

By Trina





Spring

By Ariana I, 6th grade, Tulelake





Spring Time

By Brantley W, 1st grade





Spring

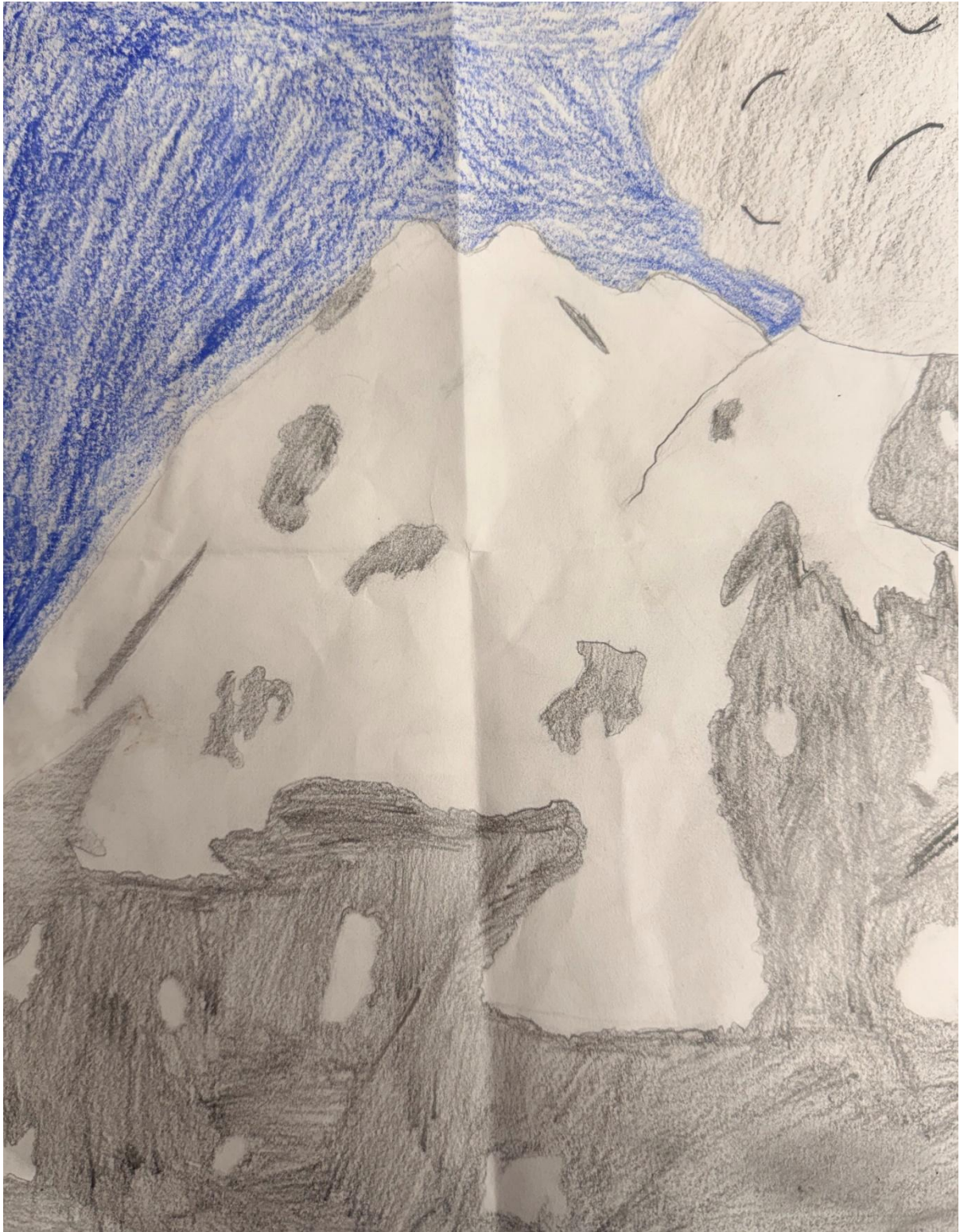
By Joselyn R





Spring

By Nicole, 5th grade





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