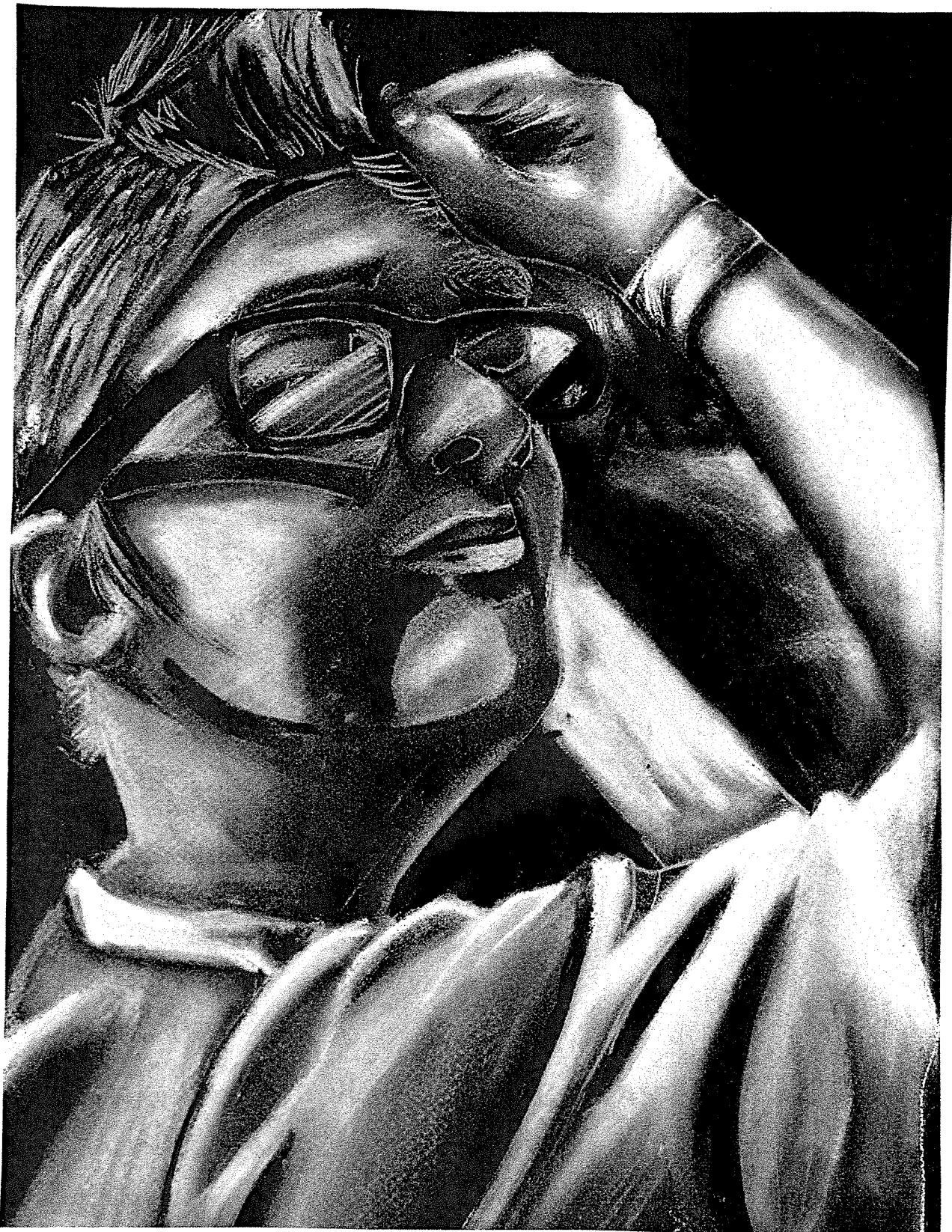


***IMAGE / IS***

***2015***



***MERCY HIGH SCHOOL***



**IMAGE / IS**



## ***Wedding China***

Although she once was  
the pride and joy of the family,  
she now is only the depressing relic  
of how a marriage went bad.

She knows that no one wants to be reminded  
of the sad truth  
so she remains under wraps,  
keeps to herself.

She used to know her worth  
but now she is not so sure.  
She scoffs at everyone around her  
who believes they are her equals.  
She always thought she knew her place  
but this is not it.  
Yet she's unsure of herself; there are  
cracks in the logic  
that always served her so well.  
She spends her final days alone,  
away from the action.  
No one is interested  
in her glittering conversation,  
her reflections on the good old days.  
They know better.

Something, somewhere has gotten broken  
and she is trying to pick up the pieces.  
She cries out for help  
but no one is listening.

***MEAGHAN FORTNEY***



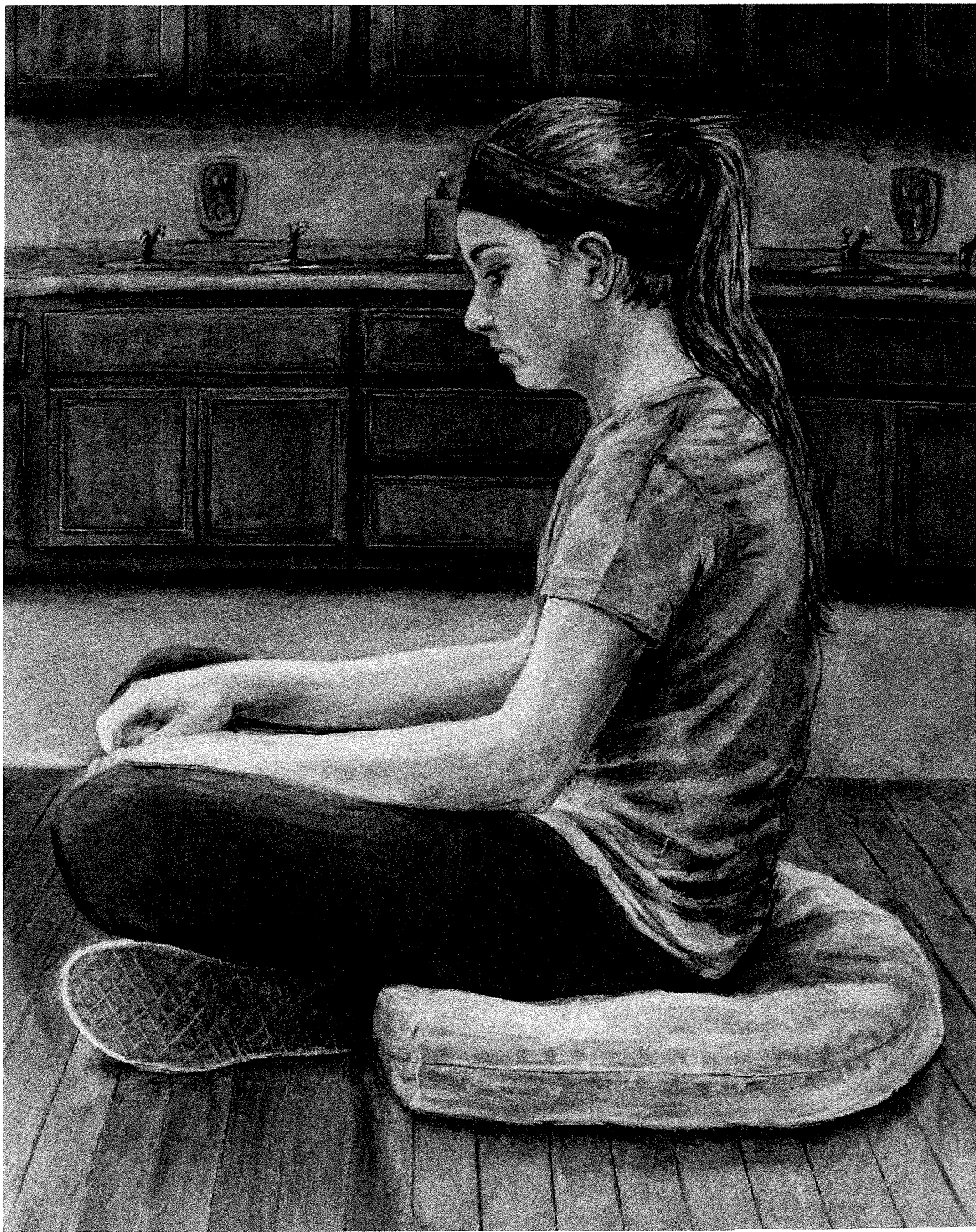
## ***Leaf***

To fly without flying  
is the story of my life.  
Someone else can be the owl  
or the brown feathers on an eagle.  
I am content to be the leaf.

The leaf, after all, is a child,  
the only one in its family;  
all expectations rest on it.  
Yet many lines mar its body.  
It must have secrets; it must be brave.  
Even though a dog tramples on it full weight,  
even though a child traces along its edges,  
the leaf endures, proud, persistent.  
A breeze lifts it off its branch,  
and for a moment --  
before it lands in the clutches of a blue jay,  
is used to carpet its nest --  
it takes flight.

I have seen hills created  
when leaves are grouped together  
so perhaps it is not so alone after all.  
Perhaps there is a sun shining  
from somewhere behind a cloud,  
just enough sunlight to decipher  
the scars, the markings  
that bear witness to that one moment of flight.

***IHECHI EZURUONYE***



MIRANDA STANO

### ***Table Cloth***

Like an old wrinkled woman  
she patiently waits,  
hoping for someone to notice her.  
Left to her own devices,  
no longer needed by her family,  
she can't help but to become a bit undone.  
After all, she was once considered a rare beauty,  
a work of art. Now, just a faded old thing,  
she longs for those days when she was coddled, revered.

Once she smelled of lavender and roses  
but now, only a rustic mothball odor  
seems to seep from her pores  
and, although hanging on by a thread,  
she no longer seems to have the strength  
to cover all those dinnertime activities.  
So it is that she is cast aside,  
left bedraggled and bewildered  
by time itself.

***ALEXIS VERDERBAR***

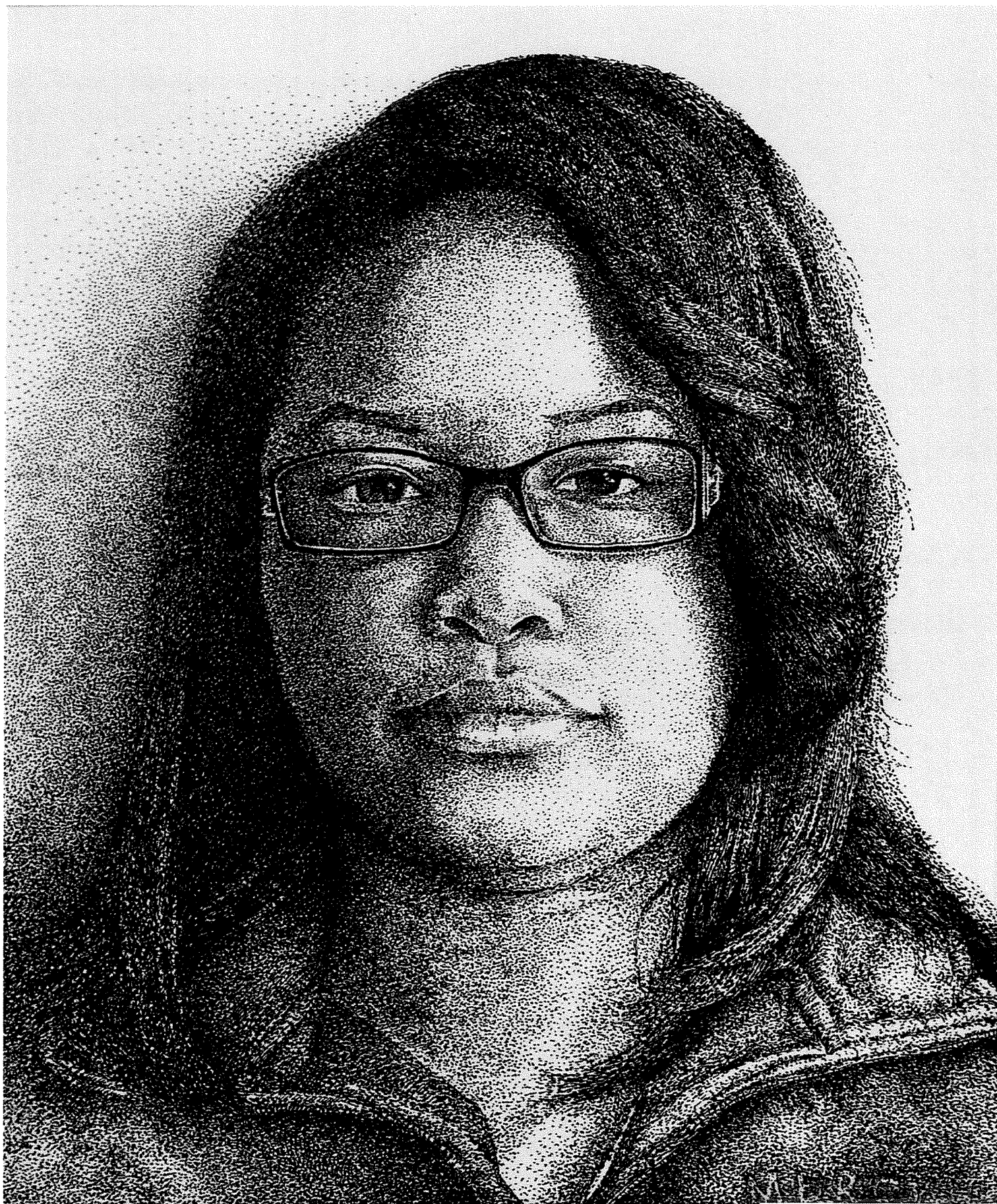
## ***Predictability***

The first thing you notice is the house.  
It is rotted, decrepit,  
so you walk up the steps with trepidation  
not seeing the lights upstairs.

Once you enter you try to take note  
of something that might assist you, offer a clue.  
The walls are scraped and jagged,  
reminiscent of the marks lost souls leave  
as they are dragged to perdition,  
their distant cries of terror still heard amid the cracks.  
Then, there is the chandelier;  
it moves yet there is no breeze.  
The floors creak; the doors slam open or shut.  
The verminous sound of nails, tender feet,  
are heard, then not heard.

Last is the bedroom, the tidiness of it  
inconsistent with what you have come to expect.  
Just as you become sure it is empty,  
you notice something, a dark figure at the corner.  
It turns, and then a scream is heard.  
The silence is suddenly deafening.

***ASHLEI BROOKS***



JINGHAN HU

### *Deciduous*

If I could, I'd be a leaf.  
Let others aspire toward oak trees,  
formal dining room tables;  
a leaf is enough for me  
with its intricate frameworks  
that open and close,  
its potential paint job  
that resides--somewhere--for now  
in its leathery folds that are  
small enough to be overlooked  
yet complicated enough to be appreciated.

**JENNY O'BRIEN**

### *Bee*

Being new to town,  
this nomad travels through the village,  
in search of its treasures  
which, he knows, are golden.

Granted, he collects his ransom,  
but, in truth,  
takes only what he needs  
and does not depart  
without leaving something in return.

**CHRISSIE CLAYTON**



### ***The Old Red Barn at Noon***

To step inside is to enter a cathedral  
whose light flashes rainbows on the walls  
and whose thousand stars  
glimmer on the vaulted ceiling.

Built, long ago, by skilled hands,  
it has stood strong throughout the years.  
Its vast walls seem to stretch  
across the land.  
and its high ceiling  
towards the heavens.

Even the bales of straw,  
piled like altars,  
glisten, as if adorned  
with a thousand candles.

Even the floor  
is patterned and illuminated,  
as if carefully designed.

Pillars, lining the aisle,  
towering above,  
reach up in unison,  
forming the arches that seem to support  
the very ramparts of heaven.

And in the prayerful quiet  
of this testament to faith  
flies one white dove  
stirring, with its holy wings,  
the very breath of life.

***MARIE CAMP***

### ***Pursuit***

Up above,  
the moon chases the sun,  
in a spirited game of tag.

He jumps atop their big blue bed,  
over the fluffy white pillows piled there.  
But she is determined to win  
so she jumps into a closet below the stairs.

Listen and you can hear,  
one calling her name,  
the other quietly panting.

***MADDIE GEORGE***

### ***Interrogative***

We begin and end with one simple dot;  
our lives created and completed  
with a punctuation mark.

Yet what about all the questions in between—  
Who did we become?  
What did we achieve?  
How did we affect the earth?

And even after we die  
the questions are all we have left,  
the same ones asked  
even before we were born.

***HANNAH HEMBREE***



## *Eyes and Ears*

A cheerful hum  
drowns out  
gunshot ricochets,  
late night weeping,  
echoing screams.

We are not deaf;  
we hear.  
Why don't we listen?  
Scotoma's one dimension,  
masks  
blood shot eyes,  
replicated smiles,  
and scarring welts.

We are not blind;  
we look.  
Why don't we see?

Perhaps.  
an investment is needed  
before our senses,  
can register correctly  
or perhaps there is  
a program, an app,  
that needs be attached.

You talk.  
I say, "I see."  
I listen.  
I hear you leave.

***TAYLOR BABCOCK***

## *Calculator*

Look inside,  
behind the shiny plastic case,  
the buttons labeled so brightly.  
Beyond that is a town of numbers and symbols  
with roads that directions cannot explain,  
a city that has its own language and culture.

Press a button and send a violent twister  
storming across its plains.  
Press another and a tsunami crashes upon its shores.  
If only we could see its rolling mills and pipelines,  
its traffic grids with their subways and bridges.  
Instead, we type in equations and let it flaunt its abilities  
in the form of radicals and exponents,  
unseen calculations of the most complicated kind.

Press Clear  
and watch a whole city come to a standstill,  
roll up its sidewalks,  
and cower in darkness.

***TASIA GABRIEL***

***Stars: The Children of the Sun***

They dance across the night sky.  
They sing, they talk, they laugh.  
They are children, after all;  
so they're not as self-conscious.

They don't care that everyone sees  
how the boys wink  
and how the girls  
giggle, blush,  
and hide their smiles in their hands.

Only at the first sign of dawn,  
do they end their play and scurry home,  
before their mother  
rises from their big dark house  
to call them in for bed.

***KATHRYN DUNLEAVY***

***Impatiens***

Their fragile fairy wings spread,  
then flutter gracefully;

bowing, and dipping,  
they join hands to dance in the wind

***KATELYN SULLIVAN***

## ***Glass Vase***

In the old days, she was admired  
for her crystalline beauty;  
indeed, she was always a cut above the rest.

She graced every table  
and held her own at social gatherings.

But now that the years have  
chipped away at her,  
she is only a pale reflection of herself.

Having served her purpose  
as a treasured golden gal,  
the table now is graced with a sharp, new face.

So it is that she's been left on the shelf,  
shoved away in a place set for the old and outdated  
to be forgotten and relegated  
to a dim and dusty future.

***KATIE JOHNSTONE***

## ***3 A.M.***

It's the devil's hour,  
when evil forces mock the Trinity.

It is the time of anxious silence;  
a time easily disturbed by any and all  
unexpected and unwanted sounds.

It is the black hour of unconsciousness  
when nothing is truly known or unknown,

the hour of watchful presence  
when we are unsure of everything,  
even ourselves.

A child awakens from a nightmare,  
a mother works to cast the dastardly demons away,

yet 3 a.m. sticks like shadowy tar,  
until scrubbed away  
by the swollen hands of 4 a.m.

**AMY VLACHOS**

### ***The Designer-Knock-Off Suitcase***

This savvy, retired businessman  
yearns for the open road.  
But, ever since he got fired for fraud,  
he's been relegated to a room no bigger than a closet.

He used to be the boss's right hand man;  
he traveled all over the world.  
He couldn't help but to unload his story  
to the men in charge;  
eventually the truth came to light.  
He was let go.

Abandoned now with only his tarnished name  
he has his regrets; empty and broken  
he's the one left holding the bag.

**KATE MOREY**



JINGHAN HU

### ***Tonight***

The wind embraces  
this ragged pine,  
rocks it back and forth  
like a mother would her daughter  
in a heartfelt farewell.

***JENNA AJLOUNY***

### ***Love***

It whitens our days,  
like a priest does after a good confession,  
washing from us  
all worries and anxieties  
so that we might  
hoist them up,  
like sails;

after penance is done,  
our billowing belief in love  
is the breeze  
that fills those sails,  
moving us toward the brightest horizon.

***KRISTEN ABBO***

## ***Oak Tree***

You may not know it, but I feel the pain as the pocket knife  
marks my chest with meaningless letters.

Yet I know that in throes of romance  
those letters mean the world to you,  
that they form an equation that defines you,  
so I let it happen; I stand witness.

I watch as you walk away all starry-eyed,  
him returning your gaze with the same love in his eyes.  
But, I've seen it a million times before.  
So soon, those stars that seem to blaze, will fade into morning  
even while yours still burn bright.  
A little later, he'll even forget your trips to the forest,  
forget your shared dreams,  
and what you each expected of each other.

Rest assured, you will also forget.  
But before you do, you will visit me, and not just once, either.  
Believe me. I've seen it all before.  
Your tears will soak my roots.  
You will trace, with your fingers, those futile characters  
that once said so much.  
I will watch, and I will comfort you.  
But as time wears on, the letters will too;  
you will need me less and less.  
The last time you come to me,  
perhaps in the spring, you will sit in my shade  
and I will whisper in your ear:  
*This too shall pass.*  
You will gaze up into the heavens once again,  
and, hopefully, a brand-new star will catch your eye.

***MEGAN HAASE***



## ***The Wind Speaks***

I pass you by every day when you walk to work,  
trying to sway you to follow the routes I think are best for you.  
But you value your independence, don't you?  
You resist my advice. Perhaps you don't realize that,  
once it is gone, it will rarely return the same way.  
Let me tell you, you can't always do things on your own;  
it's okay for you to ask for help, to seek assistance.  
No, nothing is handed to you, but others can guide you  
and you can learn from others' mistakes.  
Maybe you don't want to believe it,  
but you will not be successful if you continue to ignore my advice.  
Understand that I want what's best for you  
and that I'm only making suggestions here.  
Let me give you a push onto a path  
that will help to amiably curve your future.  
Life can be a breeze. It's a funny expression  
but true if only you'll stop ignoring me.

***KRISTEN HISER***

### ***Thorned Rose***

Once again, she must meet her mortal enemy,  
engage in a border war  
with the crabgrass for land rights.

It is this proud warrior who jabs  
at the green recruits, with her swords,  
desperate to survive.

Though already stained crimson,  
she is sure to win.

***AMY KRAVUTSKI***

### ***The Blind Veteran***

Although I'm just a man with a snowy mustache,  
I do wonder if there is a future  
for any of us now that we've passed  
the pinnacle of our lives.

I myself served in the confederate army in South Carolina.  
It's true, I was the highest ranking officer  
during our America Civil War.

I was the one who ordered the first blast of the cannon  
that would be known as the greatest step  
toward freedom, that is, the day  
that day at the Battle of Fort Sumter,  
or at least that's what  
that there silver badge keeps telling me.

So I thought I was a hero.  
All these years later, though,  
none of my countrymen acknowledge me as such.  
Oh, there's the occasional curious questions  
but, for the most part,  
no one's interested.

I guess ol' Sylvester should listen to his own words  
when he says that moving on can be healthy.  
After all, borders change,  
people switch sides.  
What is a noble cause in one decade  
becomes a pitiable misunderstanding in another.

So we do the best we can  
and remember that starting over  
at a new age  
can help to heal an open wound.

***JENSEN PECORA***



**COURTNEY PETERSON**

***Only Once***

*after Jaroslav Seifert*

did I watch  
a sly fox jump a hen—  
a mother to her chicks  
and so strong in so many ways,  
just no longer.

Stealthily, he slipped through  
the curiously fox-shaped hole  
in the weathered, wooden fence  
to slither into the coop.  
Then, jowls full of feathers,  
he backed out, slipping  
into the dark, terrific forest.

It was just another example  
of nature always fulfilling  
its Darwinian promise—  
the strong survive;  
the weak perish.

Yet witnessing proof of it  
I grew a bit uneasy.  
There is no escaping  
this precarious labyrinth alive.  
Whatever that foe might think,  
there is no free lunch.

***MADDY LONIEWSKI***

## *Shell Shock*

I went to the market today,  
partly because I needed milk,  
and partly because my eyes kept catching  
your photograph in the hallway.

It was odd that such a normal store  
could make me feel so foreign.  
Louisa kept pestering me,  
asking if I was alright  
and told me that if I needed anything  
to just telephone her.

I must certainly have been a sight  
having not left the house in a week.  
Or perhaps it's been two?

Your sister, Eleanor, came over every day to visit  
the week after I received the letter  
from the Marines wishing me their  
*most sincere apologies*.

But then, one day, I threw an awful fit,  
even knocked a vase on the floor--  
that lovely crystal one you bought me  
for our tenth anniversary.  
I guess that scared her off;  
she hasn't come by since then.

I keep waiting for something to happen  
that would force me to leave the sofa,  
but no one comes.  
I suppose there are far too many  
war-torn widows for me to be  
of any significance, any urgency . . .

but I can't stay here  
forever, can I?

So, I must find the strength  
to walk to the window  
and open the curtains,  
because, the truth is,  
my soldier  
isn't coming home.

But where to find that  
in a vacant house  
filled with memories of him?

***JULIA KIRBY***

## ***Calendar***

She lives her life behind a desk  
keeping track of the successful lives  
that surround her.

Thus, it's no surprise that she counts the days  
until a holiday, or a long weekend,  
when she may get a bit of a break.

In truth, she spends each moment  
juggling an interminable list  
of appointments, dates, meetings  
that never involve her.

Each day they check up on her  
waiting to hear the long agenda  
that they can't remember themselves.  
She never gets a *thank you*, though.  
No, despite all her hard work and effort,  
they simply leave her hanging.

She wonders how long she can go on like this  
for, in truth, her days seem numbered.  
Just one date missed, one slip up,  
one meeting skipped and they'll be ready  
to remove her from her position at the desk  
and replace her with someone new,  
a contemporary gal,  
with a fresh, new face  
that comes up blank.

***ALLIA MCDOWELL***



### ***Cracked Crystal Vase***

You hide, keep toward the back of the crowd,  
because you know that no one wants you.  
But after all of the flawless children  
have been chosen,  
your individual defects are only more apparent;  
the wear of your years, the marks of abuse,  
though making you unique,  
though revealing your true, particular story,  
only label you as fragile and insufficient.

So your confidence is low, your insecurities high  
because so few want to get involved with someone broken.  
They cannot seem to  
open their eyes to your beautiful wounds,  
your perfect imperfections.

***AMANDA TROJNIAK***

### ***Napping***

Like a sloth hanging heavily  
in the willow tree

the drowsy cloud  
rests  
in the dreamy sky.

***JULIANA RUGIRELLO***

## ***The Back Lot***

Especially when the moon shines bright  
fatal curiosity always leads me  
to this same unused portion of earth.  
There the musty fog rises from the ground  
like the breath of spirits  
who once inhabited this mysterious land.

There, wilted flowers lean against the pitted grey rocks  
that are illegible from years of erosion.  
Their desiccated petals,  
now scattered like the shards of bone,  
blanch in the dark, moonlit night.

There is a rusty, barbed wired fence  
and on it, signs declaring the threats  
of a hundred abusive men.  
Their words send gusts of wind  
that chill my spine.

So I try to keep my distance;  
forewarned, after all, is forearmed.  
But I am drawn time and time again  
as if by instinct  
or natural inclination  
like that horde of black crows  
that come to terrorize the sky,  
their loud caws rupturing the night.

***MARIA PULLICE***

### ***Two-Faced***

I am surrounded by coins.  
Each day I am shown the face they want me to see.  
Yet, with only a small gust of wind  
or a slight bump off the table,  
they can flip.

Personalities change; words begin to mean nothing.  
On Monday we see heads,  
on Tuesday, tails.

Nevertheless, we continue to search for a special coin,  
the one that is golden,  
that will bend, slightly, between the teeth,  
the one that cannot disappoint,  
the one on which we can place our bets  
and win every time.

***HALEY SCHULTZ***

### ***Buttercup***

She's worn her yellow hat  
along with her green dance outfit.

Now she's ready to join  
the other girls of the chorus  
as they swing and sway  
to the hot new tunes of Spring.

***TIV PHULL***

### ***One a.m.***

One a.m. is the hour of poets, those who do not sleep.  
because their minds are kept awake  
with the lively sounds of the city,  
those who cry when no one is there to hear.

One a.m. is the hour of the lonely,  
of those who want to be loved,  
fail to find love, or find it in the wrong places.  
One a.m. is the hour of the alienated,  
those who live outside,  
who nevertheless find the misery reality provides.

One a.m. is the hour drunken fools  
who carelessly endanger the innocent.  
It is the hour of the lonely,  
the hour of the guilty.

Come two a.m. and welcome  
with its drowsiness and decision,  
for one a.m. is no hour to speak of,  
only to accept or endure.

***T'YARA MCMILLAN***

### ***China Cabinet***

Not everyone has a servant as faithful as he,  
this tall, reserved fellow  
who stands at attention,  
ready, in any way, to serve.

Granted, his overall expression remains a bit flat  
as he reflects upon the sea of polished chairs,  
the glistening table,  
but he is a man of discretion;  
you'll never find him repeating a bit of dinner gossip  
or commenting on wardrobes.

Somewhat fragile, under-appreciated,  
he, nevertheless, holds all within;  
secrets of the past, insights into the future.

***KAITLIN BAYER***

### ***Speed Limit Sign***

She stands tall and proud,  
showing up on the right  
to remind you of your limits.  
And you need her  
for though she is a woman of few words,  
she is caring and knowledgeable  
and works to keep you out of trouble.

Yes, she worries about your safety.  
So those days when you think you've got it all under control,  
you may even start to forget about her,  
assuming that you remember the rules she's set for you.

She understands your need to break the rules,  
to be in the driver's seat.  
After all, she's been around for a long time;  
she's pretty much seen it all.

But she stands fast; her position is permanent.  
She is thoroughly dedicated,  
knowing that everyone, once in a while,  
must look to her for help.

***TAYLOR GIBNEY***

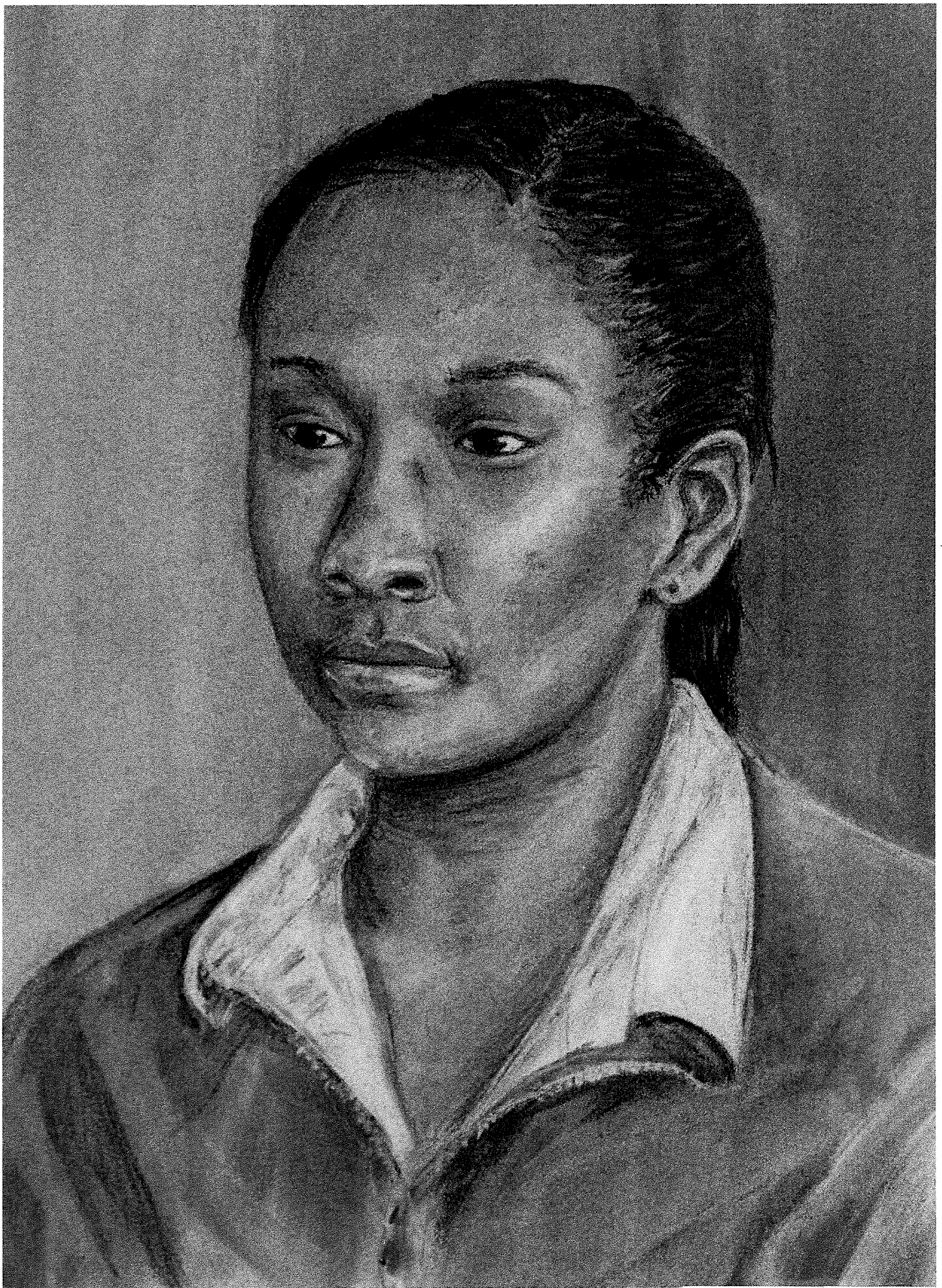
***The Invitation from Death***

He enters swiftly  
and secretly, brushing up  
like a whisper.

As it is with the spilling of ink,  
darkness comes. Soon the walls,  
the furniture, the floors,  
everything is dripping  
in sin.

From a pocket of his black cloak  
he draws a poisonous pen,  
writes his own invitation,  
stamped and sealed  
with tongues of flame.

***SIERRA WANGLER***



MIRANDA STANO

### ***Old Acrylic Paints***

With nothing left to give to the world,  
their time has finally come.  
They've spent countless years together,  
trapped inside this crowded little box  
they've called a home;  
each has offered his special gift to the world,  
a bright, new view of life  
but the elders of this clan have reached their limits  
and now await that very last inspection.

After years of creating major works  
at the worn-out hand of the great artist,  
they can only sit about,  
stooped and cramped,  
until it is time to go.  
In the meantime,  
they only have their colorful memories.

**MORANDA YALDO**

### ***Foxgloves***

Like a small tower of warning bells  
they stand at the edge  
of the schoolyard;

the flies dread hearing  
their echoing ring  
that ends their playtime.

**ABBY ROSLER**



## *Candy Shop*

Sometimes, in the morning,  
I drive past a vacant candy shop,  
the virtual museum of sugar sculptures.  
The early sun illuminates all within--  
the chocolates and the butterscotch,  
the gingerbread and licorice--  
so that they become the slow burning  
embers of a dying fire  
in an enemy camp.

The door bears a CLOSED sign  
that hangs like a weight  
shackled to a prisoner  
who aches to be free.

Children wait anxiously  
outside the the dusky windows,  
one behind the other,  
tightly gripping their wadded cash  
like rifles at the ready.

Marzipan and licorice wait in rows--  
sitting ducks in the middle of hunting season.  
The marble block where the fudge is sliced--  
a simple sacrifice before the hunt.

**LOGAN WILCZEWSKI**

## ***Sewing Machine***

Years ago, she used to run around all day in circles--  
making and mending,  
a whirlwind of activity.  
But then again it was a different time;  
there was the sewing circle,  
the kids played all day, right outside  
the window where she sat.

But nowadays things have slowed down,  
come to a veritable stand-still.  
Her feet have stopped peddling,  
her arms have stopped guiding the fabric along,  
she's finally abandoned the needle.  
that, so many times,  
managed to draw blood.

One day someone will need her,  
will come to her with outstretched hands.  
Sad to say, by then, she might be broken,  
her body beyond repair,  
her talent and true worth only stitches in time.

***SAMANTHA DICKIE***

## ***The Silence Speaks***

I am nestled in the spaces between your words,  
making my home within pauses, punctuations and ponderings,  
expanding myself to swallow the air around you.

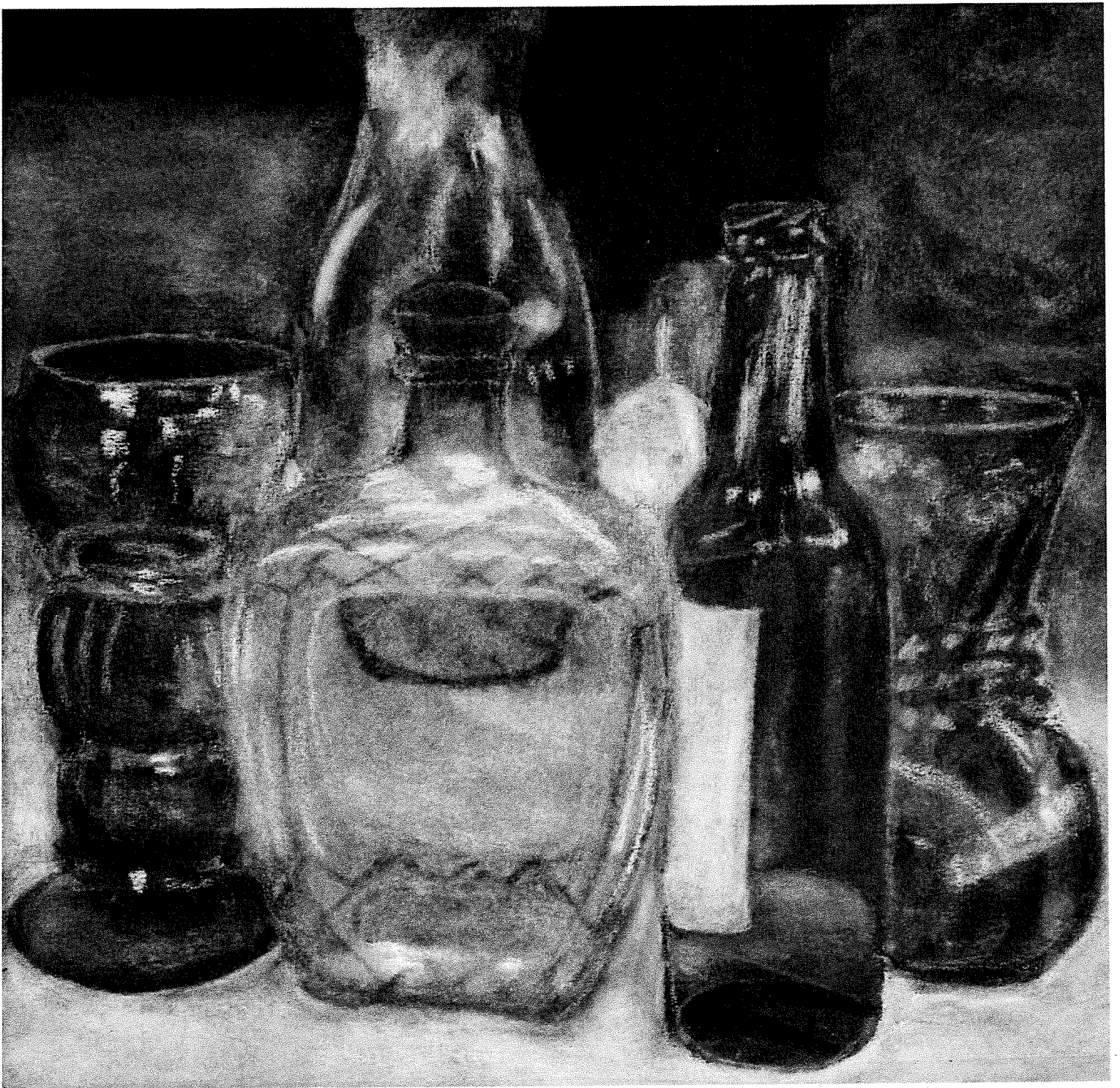
You find me daunting at times,  
consider me the unwelcomed guest  
when in the company of others,  
and try your best to talk over me,  
not realizing the value my words can have.

But when the needless hum of noise actually ends  
and it is my turn to speak,  
I can boom louder than cries, crashes, and the words of prophets.  
Why, if I so choose,  
my resounding tone can even  
deafen a nation.

Most days, however,  
I prefer simply to stretch out,  
looming over you like a neglected truth  
until the day's end.

When you shut everything off and out,  
that's when you'll hear me  
echo your very own thoughts  
as if they were my own.

***CLEOPATRA WEEKS***



JENNA CHAMI

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