

*To know a man properly, you must know the shape of his
hurt —the specific wound around which his person has
been formed like a scab.*

~ **Kei Miller, *Augustown***

Cover Art: Diane Chin //: Life with My Mother

Faculty Advisor // Wanda Campbell

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Editor's Note // Angel Percentie

Every person carries an ache that shapes some essential part of their being, but the biggest misconception is a person is alone in feeling this way.

In this edition of *estuary*, Acadia's creative arts magazine, many of the pieces reflect feelings of loss, hurt, longing, and love. These themes run throughout the collection, and often, one poem starts the conversation, a photograph chimes in, and a short story peels back the final layer. I was struck by how art was used to confess what has been lost, what hurts, and the longing that persists even as time passes. Art memorializes both the troubles and joys of life, and to take raw feelings and weave them into a poetic form or capture them with a lens, is a way of healing.

Thank you to all who submitted. Your voices, intimate, soulful, and inspiring, have created a collective healing through words. A special thanks to Dr. Wanda Campbell for her guidance and support in another successful publication of *estuary*.



is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq nation

For the Acadia Pool // Scotia Broome

Where are the days when the hole was filled?
When the water chased away the sadness.
The darkness that threatened to pull you under,
swept away by each stroke through the water.

Where are the days when light streamed through the windows?
Rays dazzling the water in blues, yellows and greens,
reflecting the laughter filling the pool deck,
streaming from the locker rooms.

Where are the days when mesh bags lined the lanes?
Kickboards, snorkels, paddles, fins, strewn about,
white and navy caps dipping beneath and above waves,
red faces and tired, blissful smiles.

Where are the days when the speaker burst to life?
Of soft chatter while stretching—retellings of the day,
shouts of *last one, fast one!*
And fist bumps with good jobs between lane mates.

Where are the days when you could breathe?
When anxiety coursed through your veins,
until you floated weightless,
and the water eased the tension free.

Where are the days of Wednesday nails before a meet?
Team breakfasts or pulled pork and chili dinners,
home cooked meals by parents, 50 people fitting in one house,
of *sweet caroliine bum bum buuuuum* on the bus back home?

Where are the days of *AXEWOMEN ON THREE?*
Three chops for ACADIAAA,
the sound echoing the building.
Now sitting silent.

Where are the days when the hole was filled?
When spirit and soul filled the cracks
that bled red
and blue.

What's Going On // Victoria Smyth

I tuck into the bin,
Mattress topper draped over me like a shroud,
Sinking into the shadows of the basement,
I transform into clutter in the dimly lit storage room.
Small voices hover,
Little feet patter in and out,
Searching, but never quite finding.
I stay still, silent,
For hours,
So they must seek me,
So they can escape what's happening above.
What's going on upstairs?
I only know fragments,
Only what I'm told,
Only what I'm allowed to believe.
They move up there, speaking in strange tongues.
Down here, I play the part of ignorance,
So those small feet can feel it for real,
An innocence I can only pretend to know.

Life with My Mother // Diane Chin

1. Why do you run away from him?
 - a) I don't want to live in the jungle.
 - b) I am lonely.
 - c) He breaks my heart.
 - d) I need to protect you, my darling.
2. Why do you come back to a country you hate?
 - a) I want to be one step ahead of your father.
 - b) You are safer here.
 - c) I want to fight for us.
 - d) I need to protect you, my little girl.
3. Why do you want me to call you by your first name?
 - a) I want us to be best friends.
 - b) We can be sisters now that you are fourteen.
 - c) You find a job and I will stay home and knit.
 - d) We need to protect each other, my dearest.
4. Why do you take all those pills?
 - a) A donkey cart man ran me down, and laughed.
 - b) I feel alone and afraid.
 - c) I do not want to work with cruel people.
 - d) I cannot protect you, my daughter.
5. Why do you pour kerosene oil around your bedroom?
 - a) I want to burn all my secret words.
 - b) I want to burn the evidence of my life.
 - c) I want to burn in white light.
 - d) You cannot protect me, my beautiful one.
6. Why do you want to die?
 - a) I can see no other way.
 - b) I want to control my future.
 - c) I know that you will survive.
 - d) I want to fight for me.
 - e) None of the above.

Moe // Cameron MacDonald

The unrelenting frequency at which you lose the rock-skipping game. The reflection halfway through the thornbush. The pyrotechnical trampoline incident of '98. The book and binoculars shared afterwards to watch birds come home from long days of tweedlelee and caw. Waking in a blue haze at 5 am; Sally went with Brian instead. The game of darts as a coping mechanism. Moe telling you: you have not been wronged, there is nothing to be forgiven. Later, the augmenting of a beachflame with rum and a dead seal. The regret after. The slow evolution of prose throughout the editions of *Art and Craft Desk Assembly Manual*. The clinking of beers on the roof to celebrate. Moe finding a star among the light pollution. The loss of his pinkie at the factory. The loss of his ring finger at the factory. His layoff. Mopping champagne from the country club floor at midnight. Cereal in complete dark. The first coughing fit. The first one to come up red. Your layoff. Got anything else? Fate isn't as exciting as I thought. Moe, comrade in that long siege against biology. Fitting, then. The end of the dirt road, truck on fire.

Lost and Found // Angel Percentie

Some days I tote the weight of what I have forgotten.
I do not know its name or when I had it last, only that it sits
in a cardboard box among shrunken sweaters and Tamagotchi pets

I miss it how I miss being the smallest kid on the playground
Like growing wings on daddy's shoulders
Like being cramped in the middle seat on a long drive

I miss it like the taste of box cake on Sunday evenings
Like Monday morning drills: Streamlines, Pull Buoys, Keyhole Pulls
Like Thursday's clarinet practice, spitty reeds and snare drums

I miss it like sun dried towels, fresh off the line
Like stained Tupperware and packed lunch
Like dusty vinyl on a hoarder's shelf

I miss it like the German boy I met only once
Like the people I see every day for years, then fall out of touch
Like my first teacher, my first book, my first word

Winter's End // Halle Audas

That cold winter night, a dark winding road
took you from us. Our family—destroyed.
It seemed the more we cried, the more it snowed.
You are gone forever. Left in the void.

Trunk smashed in; shattered glass spread all around.
The car couldn't protect you from the crash.
Your lifeless body laid upon the ground.
Nothing left of you but fifty in cash

found by the mother of your unborn son.
He will never meet you, but he'll be fine.
We'll take good care of him. He is our sun.
He is smart and funny, and he sure shines.

Reminders of you and when you were young.
Now winter is over, and spring has sprung.

Whispers of the Winter // Abigail Dancey



Canteen // Katherine Stanislow

Chef wolf-whistles as I walk by with a load of plates for the fly-infested dish pit. I ignore him. “She’s too good for us!” he shouts, a dangerous edge in his voice. I turn to walk back, and a shiny metal spatula catches the light in his hand. I walk past, feigning ease, readying myself for contact. Readiness doesn’t matter though, I always flinch. Laughter erupts. I roll my eyes and laugh along, trying to seem a good sport, trying to act like I enjoy the attention, trying not to let my rigid body give away my discomfort. The last thing I see before I exit to the dining room is Mateo’s serious face in the corner.

A week later, I refuse another night out with the restaurant crew, hating myself as I do. I know the kind of stuff they get up to. I know my handful of drunken experiences don’t match up to their kind of post-shift Wednesday night. I already struggle to keep my composure in the kitchen as it is, I don’t need any further naivety revealing itself. Naivety is an irresistible target for Chef. I can’t strike the balance: In not doing enough, I do too much.

The next morning, I’m tired from a double shift and nodding off against the sticky server’s station when Chef slides close, breath sour from the previous night. “C’mon *princess*, Mateo needs you in the canteen.” I agree as nonchalantly as I can, hating the closeness of his body. My day quickly changes from pouring coffees for the regulars in the air-conditioned dining room to serving French fries to misbehaved children in the hot canteen window.

I sit stewing in the oily air of the deep fryers when Mateo breaks me out of my daydream. “You got stuck with the shit shift,” he observes. I nod, grateful for the acknowledgement. He’s never spoken to me before, and

his usual tough attitude hasn't incentivized me to initiate. It's just he and I in the kitchen, Chef doubtlessly sleeping off his hangover in the pantry. There's a lull at the canteen window. Mateo and I start talking and we don't stop. He shares dark, scary secrets and I listen. I share stories of my painfully innocent life, and he listens. My shift flies by. I'm on my way out when Mateo mumbles, "I'm sorry about Chef's behaviour." I wave it off like it's nothing, but in that moment, it's everything.



Where Vice and God Collide // Ajanta Deibel

God appeared to me last fall
As vice in human form.
He mirrors unto me
My own twisted evil.
Brown leather shoes
Carry a man with so much to prove.
I run to meet his pace
And fall.

Vice appeared as God and soon
Brought me to my knees.
Young brown eyes pierce me as
He hums an ancient tune
Like sand slipping
Through fingers, snow in dark winters,
And temptation disguised
As love.

Chaos came in stable form
To show what I could be:
Wife who follows His lead
So strong, solid, and sure.
This phantasy
I play on a stage not built for me,
And I lose myself to
The role.

My ego faked her own death
To fall in love with You.
What she labeled “divine”
Was identity theft.

“Imagine me
As someone else! Bring me to my knees!
Allow me to forget
My path.”

I’d throw away my life for
This god dressed as a Man.
A vice to end all vice!
Why should I crave for more?
Unsatisfied
Is all I’d be as your loving bride.
My wish can’t change what we
Both know:

Only briefly can we stay
Where vice and god collide.
I tell lies to myself
As you lie in my bed.
I couldn’t possibly
Tell you the truth.
No three small words are needed to prove
What I feel is too big
For you.

Flames // Olivia Hooper

In
this
suffocating
dark, I strike
a match, and
watch it bloom
a golden arc.
Tonight,

I
burn the silence down,
as violins swell and
cymbals sound. The
past is ash, I let it go,
bathed in embers' fevery
glow. Gone are the
shadows, the weight, the
cold. Hope tolls like
bells in towers of gold.
A dove ascends into the
sky, no longer caged, no
need to cry. But winds
conspire to steal away
my fragile, flickering
flames. As the light
converts to crumbling
char, I cradle the
warmth inside my heart.

Invisible // Quinton Gagnon

“You’re not disabled,” you say.
Yet the binder you were given after my surgery says
otherwise,
The doctors who order for yearly visits say otherwise,
The pill dosette that lies—
not lonely, mind you—
on my nightstand shows otherwise.
Even my aching heart,
whose rhythm has never *ba-bumped* quite right,
goes out of its way to pump oxygen
into my wheezing lungs
and through tunnels of veins, with walls
equally familiar with the taste of flowing iron
and straight, stainless steel
to make me able to pick up a pen
and tell you otherwise.

So, who are you to say otherwise?

Goldfinch in Tantramar Marsh // Nick Lundrigan

*The self-slaughter of birds that summer
filled the flower beds with limp necks,
wings oddly bent, bones collecting
from attempted flights through glass.*
~Marilyn Lerch, "Love in Flight,"
Moon Loves Its Light

A beacon of yellow—
daffodil and buttered toast
and sunshine on an August Tuesday.
Juxtaposed by a matte black forehead
and winged doorman's epaulettes,
his feathered coat welcomes a newcomer.
Goldfinch moults for the second time that year,
black feathers pushing to light. Echoed
in dark eyes of golden-throated hummer,
the self-slaughter of birds that summer.

Chirping and chortling
in the wetlands' strong breeze,
goldfinch's inky eye latches
to a twinkling shimmer across water.
Song left to fend for itself in the marsh,
abandoned as he pecks
at something better in the distance.
Thistles and milkweed aplenty below
but some freshwater siren's hex
filled the flower beds with limp necks.

Glimmer of a future or hope of an end
beckons goldfinch from surety,
soaring full-tilt into suspected salvation.
With a smack or maybe a thud,
collision! Shocked, stunned, scared.
A body smaller than small bisecting
the park Visitor Centre's woodchip moat.
Minimum wage student to the rescue, goldfinch
shoved into a shoebox for future dissecting,
wings oddly bent, bones collecting.

Gone in a moment, grounded by force,
now never to return to nest
atop silver birches opposite the water.
Agency and Fate conspire in the treetops:
see the world in a little yellow songbird
and assess the hue of every blade of grass.
The other side of the marsh is greener
to the goldfinch who thinks themselves invincible,
destruction of a songbird comes to pass
from attempted flights through glass.

The Sun in My Arms // Aspen Webster

“Stay away,” I saw him flying, moving closer to my light. The scorching and withering light that ravaged and killed mercilessly. It sparked fires and ruined crops and fried the ground around it. My light brought only death. The wind cackled viciously, whispering of its intentions to ruin all I held dear.

“Turn around, please,” I begged him, his manner only encouraged by the wicked wind behind him. His feathers rippled, then recoiled ever so slightly as they found my heat.

“I’m going to hurt you,” I reached out my arms, their rays not embracing, but repelling. I used my harshness and burning light, to push away his eager self. It did not work. I watch, dread filling my mind as he grows closer and closer, pushed ahead, motivated by the swirling wind, twisting my words, my meanings into those of longing, of love.

I did love him, but I did so from afar, I made his days bright, burning the clouds to help his way, to aid his escape. I urged him to keep his distance, to take the advice of his clever uncle. I wanted him to escape, to survive so I could shower him with my blessings from afar.

“Please not again,” I cried silently as the winged man drew closer, the breeze shaking the sagging feathers with the same twisted tempo of my pleading head. The winds had taken so much from me, I begged them to leave me this one love.

All at once he was in my arms. I looked at him closely, savouring what I knew would soon be just out of my reach again. His sharp jaw and tussled dark locks, his soot smudged nose and pock-marked olive skin. He was

beautiful and yet would soon be little more than a memory.

He fell. From my embrace to the cold, dark ocean below was more time than even the divine could count, and yet it was mere seconds. I felt cold. His embrace had stolen the life from my light, and I would never have it back.

He smiled. To a life as short as his, holding the sun for just a moment must have felt an eternity. I smiled back. I knew I had given him more than most mortals ever dare to dream of. I had to be okay with that, if not for me, for him.



Life Is... // Madilyn McClellan

Life is my bound contentment
Free as the bird on the apple tree
It is what I make of my present
Dancing around the leaves in glee

Life is my sweetest sorrow
Bitter in its happy disarray
Yearning for each and every morrow
But hating each and every day

Life is my purpose and my gratitude
It's my jovial and my fortune
I'll always meet it with a positive attitude
And never face an image of distortion

Life is my sickness and it is my curse
Each pain in my chest and each cough
Reminds me not to act in perverse
For my actions will always pay off

Life is my faith and it is my hope
I look forward to each and every triumph
I'm proud of how I've succeeded this slope
Let tomorrow face me and my righteous

Love Defined // Megan Rogers

My mother in a country kitchen
cooking a homemade meal;
she knows that I am on the way,
cannot wait to make her reveal.

My father, wide-awake,
cleaning Jack Frost's dust
off my car at 6:00AM,
while the house inside is hushed.

My worker-bee aunt busy,
reading each text as I press send,
despite the long bank line
that seems to never end.

And my caring cousin's loyalty
standing strong, unlike Rome.
Find us together in 50 years
at the nearby old folk's home.

The Yellow Door // Matthew Duncan

Drive me through the valley
Around fields, shades of green
Autumn heat is stronger than summer
Sticky like glue,
Sweet like a melon
Let me stay here forever
In this utopia
Trunks older than hills along the horizon
Roots deeply imbedded
Flowers grow and leaves that flow
I've found the yellow door

Untitled // Bethany Estabrooks



A Letter to the Colour Pink // Sophie Ashton

Hey. It's been a while.

I'll be honest, I haven't thought of you all that much until recently. I spent a long time trying to avoid you, but maybe I'm just realizing that you're not that bad after all.

I hope you know that I never hated you. It really didn't have anything to do with you. I was actually pretty obsessed with you for a while, as you might remember. But I guess I just came to hate how you made me feel.

Soft.

Ditzy.

Childish.

I was growing up and I felt like I needed to be more sophisticated than that. I know it doesn't make any sense. I don't understand it either.

In all honesty, I think I was just afraid to admit that I liked you. But, I'm not afraid anymore.

So, if you're ready, I'm willing to try again.

Morning Java // Summer VanBuskirk

Stained inside, chipped and dented,
yet drinks are still warm until the very last drop.
Coffee clings to the mouthpiece
like glue.
Worn and battered,
lost then found,
it always returns home, ready for the next brew.
Every morning it sits
ready and waiting
for the good morning! push to get through the day.
The first sip
eliciting a grin or a lighthearted laugh.
No matter the time or place, the cup can be filled with
motivation to forge ahead through the day.
Everyday without fail, the cup perches beneath the Keurig
spreading warmth and happiness
before starting a new day.

Rain // Grace Naugler

You're like a grey midday reset,
my favourite mug filled with peppermint tea.
An essence of warmth and comfort is felt
when you lay next to me.

You wash away my worries,
letting out a big sigh.
You soothe with your rhythm,
like a lullaby.

You provide a stage for dancing,
a backdrop for books to be read.
You smell of mid-summer at dusk,
or a cozy night in a blanket-filled bed.

Rain, we will meet again someday soon
please come find me on a Sunday under the moon.

Tidal Run // Abigail Dancey



Brooke // Avery McWilliam

I see you twinkle in the twilight like a lost quarter,
cascading through cracks in the rock
your skin is silk that slices through stone:
diaphanous, but direct, moving swiftly and surly.

I gaze through your translucence, it reflects
me as I shield your serene from the gawk
of dawn with my shadow. You see me in a trick
of the light; the sun isn't used to being up this early.

I wave through your ripples with shaky hands,
ginger is my touch that matches your curled locks.
I can touch you, but never twice the same. My eager
muddles your excellence, brewing brown and murky.

I want all of you, but you slip through my fingers,
evade every jar and slip out of every box.
Your current uncaptured, for stillness is stagnant
that dulls your shine and stresses your dirty.

Wind Watching // Aine O'Morchoe

Twin gazes pass over my shoulders,
Alert and watchful;
Two sets of ears stand at attention,
Listening with intent.
Muscles are tensed, poised and ready,
To take off at the first sign of movement.

Wind brushes past my head,
And I feel a tug on my hand, beckoning me
To look out at the vast field that has appeared
For rabbits rustling in the waving grass.

The dogs have passed me already,
Taking flight into the distance.
Dirt flies behind them,
And the rabbits run far and fast.

When I turn back
They stand still,
Smooth and bronze,
A celebration of centuries of love and dedication.



*~Inspired by the sculpture
Wind Watching II by Fan Yu*

Project Little Brother // Laura Taggart

Our spacecraft found its footing on the new terrain, never before touched by a vessel from the Intergalactic Alliance. The door hissed open, and the commander and I took our first look at planet 1478932.

Commander peered forward into the dust.

“Well Lieutenant, it seems that mission Little Brother was a success,” I nodded, gleaming with anticipation. The Alliance had been watching 1478932 for a millennia all with the intention of launching Operation Little Brother.

3.7 billion years ago our scientists detected simple life in this isolated corner of the universe. The discovery caused riotous upset in the courts. According to the intergalactic peace charter, all life has the right to representation and self-determination under The Alliance. Unfortunately, 1478932 was young and too underdeveloped to partake peacefully. So instead, we watched as the great reptiles rose and fell, the ice formed and brought the woolly mammals, the circuits of nature went around tweaking, and refining life. We saw little promise in terms of allies until the dextrous mammals began fashioning spears, and their grunts turned to syllables. As our information was lightyears out of date by the time it reached us the mission started immediately. Wormholes were identified and a voyage was launched that spanned the development of a civilization.

I took a trepidant breath. “I can't believe I was fortunate enough that my lifetime coincided with this project.”

“Our cause has been anticipating this moment for millennia lieutenant,” the commander grinned. “Now let's go find our new allies.”

Our boots stirred the loose soil as we walked. Steel and glass structures stood like scorched trees against the red sky, groaning in the arid wind.

Patches of paved road began to appear, significant amounts of vegetation struggled through the fissures in the asphalt. An hour passed since we entered the settlement, without signs of life.

“Stop.”

The commander threw out her arm.

I halted, scattering pebbles into the crater before me. Grey pavement lay fragmented, pressed deep into the incongruous depression.

“An asteroid?”

“No,” she uttered, observing the blackened storefronts. “I’m afraid not.”

We cautiously stepped inside a nearby storefront.

It sat hopelessly silent. Clinging to the wall was an image of a hovercraft projecting a luminous beam, with text that the translation device read as **I BELIEVE**. The moss-eaten floor was littered with papers.

Deciphering a surviving booklet I read:

[We’ve reached the 60th anniversary of the Voyager golden records, two time capsules containing representations of intelligent life on Earth sent away with the Voyager spacecrafts in 1977. Hopefully, these metaphorical bottles we have thrown into the cosmic ocean might reach intelligent life.]

My hands shook, crinkling the fragile parchment. I understood what the commander had feared at the crater. Planet 1478932, our Little Brother, had been left with no guidance. They perished thinking they were all alone. A spec in the vastness of a cold, unloving universe. Left to fight over scraps.

“They waited for us,” my trembling hand closed, compressing the booklet, “but we never came.”

Midnight Pearl // Angel Percentie



Do You Know What It Means? // Caitlyn Cross

Do you know what it means
to miss that house in the trees,
that blow in the wind
which tickles the water's skin?

Do you know what it means
to miss the laughter,
the sound of the tv,
and the coffee maker
brewing in the morning?

Do you know what it means
To miss the warm hugs
The caring hands
That reach out when you are lost
Or need a hand?

Do you know what it means
to miss the warm bed,
with a little body
breathing against your leg?

Do you know what it means
to miss your home,
the place you have always been safe
but now no longer belong?

A New Species // Ewan MacLean

*This World is not Conclusion.
A Species stands beyond—
Invisible, as Music—
But positive, as Sound—
~ Emily Dickinson*

Often, around the break room gangbox
others offer their religious pitch
to why one is a ‘fucking idiot’
if they don’t invest in Tesla.
They claim it profitable,
yet stocks and slots suck dry their funds,
small dots on their phone dictate the time
they drive home and worship their projected future.
Faith placed in inflation as if a talisman,
This world is not conclusion.

Humans have been at the wheel
far too long,
hitting every pothole, skipping, clipping
each shoulder, killing a few species
with each swerve, destroying the earth
as we park drunk on the lawn.
I hope in hindsight this skid mark was short and bitter.
A better species can come remove our bodies,
sober they will be when we take our last yawn.
A species stands beyond.

This species will be humble, resourceful,
much more content.
We've pushed too hard and lost the safety
of mother nature's net.
She deserves better. I don't think
I'm being pessimistic
for dreaming of a creature
living in peace, no fear of the fiscal,
not bound by plastic,
Invisible, as music.

Will I mourn my Lego, lovers, and cars?
Of course, won't we all?
But I'm content with the past,
I think I'll keep looking in the rear view
though, I expect to crash, going off
what I see when I look around.
Being replaced is not negative
nor something absurd
or profound,
but positive, as sound.

estuary

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