



PRISM

Volume 134 explores the concept of lost communication, feeling disconnected from the outside world, and longing for meaningful interactions — all while mastering the continuous practice of presence of self.

Is our ability to transcend the boundaries of how we communicate through digital platforms creating a culture of apathy and identity loss? Inside, visual and literary artists respond to this experience.

In the process of compiling this edition, much thought went into how this particular moment in time reflects an important transition in the way we interact with each other, and the world around us. I have been lucky enough to be reminded of the importance of being grounded in the now, not being afraid of being vulnerable, and remaining hopeful for a brighter future — even when the road may seem discouragingly long.



ALYSSA CAMPBELL  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



*A DIFFERENT  
KIND OF WAR.*

*A DIFFERENT  
KIND OF GRIEF.*

EXCERPT FROM *THE WAR AT HOME* BY  
THEO ALMAN, P. 8

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# *HALF PLANNED ADVENTURES*





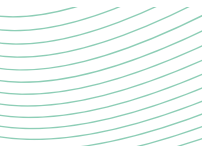
## *LIFE AFTER DEATH?*

My father shot an antelope. He had its skin stuffed  
and now the head hangs on his office wall, chin held high,  
prouder in death than in its shortened, fearful life.  
My father is perversely proud of its ungodly stature,  
but I've always been afraid.

It smells like old wool and mothballs, like getting locked  
in a closet during hide-and-seek.  
If you get close enough, you can see  
its eyes are glossy mirrors: they contain your own eyes, too,  
but distorted and twisted by the secrets that the antelope keeps.  
It watches over us, all-knowing.  
And it will take these family secrets to the grave—  
or to someplace else.

Our cat watches its severed head with suspicion,  
waiting for its next move. She does not know  
she has eight more lives than this animal ever had. Although  
I guess the way it hangs now offers some form of resurrection;  
never allowed to rest, but held  
in purgatory by the taxidermy.

When the cat sheds a whisker and we find it  
loose and homeless in the bed sheets,  
my dad sticks it into the muzzle of the antelope:  
each whisker bringing the beast  
closer and closer  
to the living world  
again.



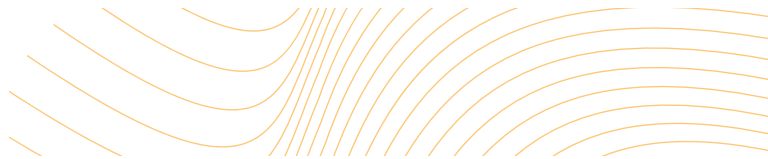


*DISPLACEMENT*





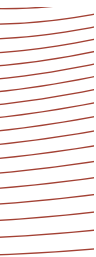
## *VIRIDIAN*





## THE WAR AT HOME

From the porch you can see yellow ribbons wrapping around trees. Yellow is to remember, sons and daughters gone away and not yet returned. Blue is to mourn. The June-bugs blot and drift in the hazy afternoon. Ants creep up the steps and under the door, into the kitchen. The heat is omnipresent. Cicadas shake the trees. Day, night, that call. *We're here, we're here, we're here.* Pain is rising off the walls in crisp spirals. Grass dies in a flourish of off yellow and sallow white. Like a wine-stain.



Inside, she waits for you, wine glass in her hand. There's beer in the fridge, but what she drinks is sharp-smelling. Heady like the magnolia tree in your yard, crisp like peeling paint. Day, night, there's a cicada cry in that glass. A telltale shriek. The liquor cabinet door left ajar, that glass never empty. Teeth wine-stain yellow, sallow white. Unrelenting. *We're here, we're here, we're here.*

It is only in the summertime. Everyone drinks in the summertime. It's too damn hot. Days are long, kids are out of school. Anyone who can winds every hot day down with a drink. A cigarette if their neighbors aren't too Christian. Even Missus Margaret, your Lebanese neighbor whose husband Sam died last year, in the fall drinks something sugary and dark. She gave you a sip once, you peeled your lips back that evening inspecting the you looking out from the bathroom mirror for off-yellow, that wine-stain betrayal. You weed her garden. Through her screen door she sips that dark drink, teeth ivory white. She smiles as you leave, handful of circus peanuts from the glass serving dish on her coffee table. In the driest parts of the summer you take home a pocketful of lizards too. They come creeping out to catch bugs in their red mouths. You clamor over chain-link with wriggling pockets. Missus Margaret lost the key, must have been when Sam died she always says, last year, in the fall. The fence catches, tears your jeans. Grass wilts and you pull up wine-stain weeds and watch Missus



Margaret's white teeth. Cicadas cry. Next door, she drinks in the kitchen, leaning out the window.

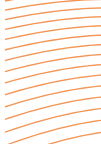
Maybe it's the hurricane that changes everything, maybe it was changing all the time. There's a girl named Katrina in your class, a kid named Jacob yanks her hair during quiet reading time. His grandfather drowned in the floods. Her hair is wine-stain.

They show a clip in the news two days later of a man and a woman standing on their roof, ankle deep in water the color of whiskey. A helicopter films overhead, no hope drops down, the video cuts away.

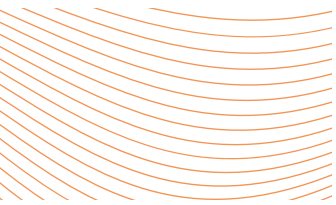
She sits in her lean-back chair, red-wine painting her teeth a new color. It's not her favorite, but cheaper this month. It's ugly, mixed with the yellow. Damn shame, she says. Damn shame, you think, back turned to the TV. They paint the roots of the trees blue in the fall. A different kind of war. A different kind of grief.

You move, years later. You are packing all the world into boxes and She is watching, wine stem tight in her hand. She's had surgery that year. She's thinner now. Like a crack whore, she says to the mirror once while you pretend to brush your teeth beside her. She's laughing. Like a crack whore, you think. Skinny like Sam, who died years ago in the fall. Skinny like missus Nancy who watches your little sister, who is eighty-four and on dialysis and still watches four babies and a toddler and is wilting, like the fallow-white grass grown over the battered plastic playground in her backyard. Skinny like death. Crack whore. Your crack whore mommy, she says it crying. You spit into the sink and wonder if she's going to die. Maybe she always was.

You move to Texas. It's hot, dry. You play a game called rich-kid, poor-kid with your classmates. If you get Christmas presents you're a rich-kid. If you're on reduced lunch you're a poor-kid. You're a poor-kid that winter. She drinks wine at Christmas dinner. It's cold outside and the cicadas don't cry. She grins, wine-stain teeth. Her fingers against the glass, translucent. It isn't summer anymore. You wear blue that spring. *We're here, we're here, we're here.*



*UNMASKED*





# *NIGHT LIGHT*





## *GIRL AS GARDEN*

The first garden was wild—no hedge trimmers, no hedges.  
No razors came close to the tree's leaves or to Eve. Her legs swung  
in limbo like branches, limber in the breeze before the seventh day.  
Now, as per modern arboriculture,  
we prune unsightly pussy willow twigs and purge unruly interests.  
Vines and veins are held to a standard and then shaded from view.

The first garden was wild, but then Martha Stewart spoke the masses and God echoed it:  
plant all the rosebushes in parallel lines; deadhead your lilacs and trim your split ends—  
all to keep the garden in.  
Fenced in, away from the hiccups of mushrooms and molehills,  
away from a comet or eclipse. Last night I saw Venus in the sky,  
soft above the treeline, married with the moon.  
She told me I'd spent too long watering my dead lawn and too long  
peeling the dead skin back from the scabs in my heart.

Tell me, did Eve exist before Venus? Did they make eye contact across the sky—  
one lonely alien woman to another, before the lawnmowers and pruning shears moved in?

As much a girl as a garden, on the seventh day Eve bloomed.  
In a different timeline, she unfurled like a fern—sharp as a sword.  
In our timeline, she covered herself and bowed her head.  
In our timeline, the front lawns sprawl across the suburbs in painstaking preciseness  
and nobody questions it. But still, under the leaves is the deflowered reflection of Eve.

The first garden was wild—before the leaves turned in the fall.  
The whole world turned in the fall.



*OUT OF BODY*  
SYDNEY WISNER | PHOTOGRAPHY



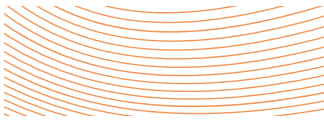




## *THE END OF IT ALL*

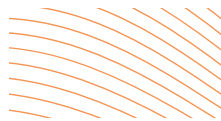
It's still me, but it's not you  
You've cut me out  
Like the ugly flowers in your garden  
You did not want  
It's me, it's you  
We fly through life  
Without caring that it crumbles  
We ignore the shrapnel that falls  
From the moment we shape our world  
I've watched the leaves of your favorite tree turn  
With each passing day  
It becomes clearer  
They were perfect mirrors of your heart  
The longer you shut me out  
The faster the walls that surround me collapse  
Someday the pieces of myself  
Will litter the ground like rubble  
I bet, at that moment  
You will sit high in your tower  
Kept safe  
Not even sparing a glance at my ruin





## *BEFORE I FELL*

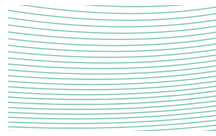
Overly confident, it seemed fortune was on my side, rolling with me through the smooth streets of San Marcos I used to spend most of my time skateboarding the face of this blue dot and you couldn't tell me I wasn't the flesh and bones of cool with my short shorts strong thick legs and booty sticking out at just the right angle part squat part dance move with my afro flowing wild, freely in the wind I'd kick/push those wheels everywhere. After work on a breezy roll filled with jumps bicycle tail rides racing winds and music guiding my heartbeat I felt pumped up enough to take a new route home, one that ends with a long descent down the hill by my house it's a two-parter that only gets bigger it curves it speeds it has all the appeal to get me cruising along the top smiling a sunny side grin until I'm shot out of a dip in the road that sends me speed wobbling into the garage of the house at the curve of the first part of this monstrous Hill.





## SUNGLOW

JAZZMIN SMITH | INK AND COLORED PENCIL





## LUMINOUS

Above, beyond and past our sight,  
they Gather  
as if by magic.

They disappear and reappear,  
then go forth  
to claim their places  
in the Atmosphere.

Forming light and billowy  
Silhouettes, on  
the Easel sky.

Some like pill-bottle cotton,  
and others  
like wooley pastures  
in the Atmosphere.

Then they gallop, and gather up grey,  
to Roar  
and echo with Fury.

Then thunder rolls around the heavens,  
and Explodes!  
Like a hundred trumpet blasts.

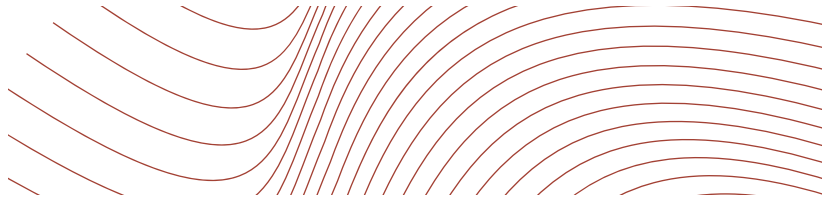
And zig-zag yellow lightning  
Shoots toward the earth  
from Zeus' great bow,  
through the Atmosphere.

And splits the trees below to red fire.  
Then comes rain  
in Fierce and wicked waves.

The whipping wind whirls round about  
the Torn sky,  
high, low, everywhere  
in the Atmosphere.

Then it stops: all so quiet,  
it's over now  
and the Fury gone.

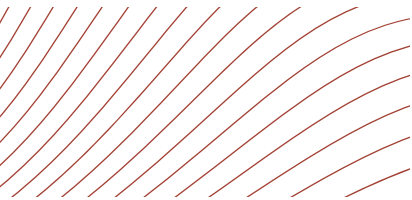
Then Luminous they re-appear,  
all the Mighty clouds  
and Run like white Horses.  
Into the Atmosphere.



## *ANXIETY*

Tonight I'm going to bed early after spending twenty minutes folding and refolding my clothes. All the socks have to have a pair; if one is missing the back of my neck will itch until tomorrow morning. I'll walk through the entire house and check every lock on each of the seven doors, touch the five knobs on the stove, flick off the four switches one by one and watch the reflection of the lights die in the black windows. I'll lock and relock my bedroom door, get into my large empty bed and feel the thoughts swirl through my mind, going faster and faster until they're a smooth blend and I can finally sink into sleep.

Tomorrow night, I'll stay up late after ten minutes of racing down rainy highways, the pairs of headlights flying by me and melting into the night. When I arrive at his blue apartment, I'll leave my stuff piled on the floor like the dishes in the sink. I'll smile and only check the locks once. I'll curl up with the person I love on a twin-size bed, and with barely enough room to breathe, my mind will only be filled with him, and sleep will wrap around me like warm blankets and gentle arms.





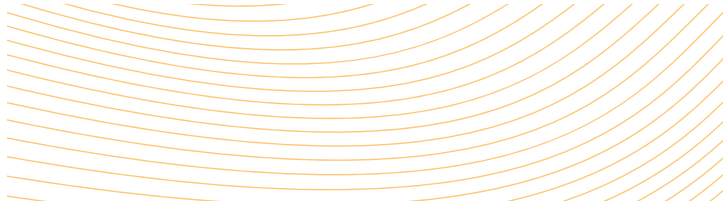
**MITTENS**

CLARA SMITH | SCRATCHBOARD



**THE WAITING GAME**  
CLARA SMITH | ACRYLIC





## *PERPETUAL*

Down the back of the mountains that end in sea there is so much beauty  
crafted for itself to sustain

Down the back of a person  
their only ending is the need to be free

The sunsets pass down below the blue, a relief of what was once a day for them

Trailing past the cliffs and bays are worlds of shared human cycles  
observed from within

The clash of water across an old volcanic rock a boom of doom for the girl on the shore

Looking past the coastal near  
the builds are long and slow  
they repeat in a calm and join through a blend with only the capes alone staying grey  
only the shapes of bone





## *ILLUMINATION*

As lightning fills the dark with radiant shades of purple, a surge so powerful that even the deepest corners are illuminated, so too did your touch. You were electric. But like the lightning, your brilliance was short lived, and I'm left with my ears ringing from the thunderclap that came with your disappearance.





# WE COULD HAVE DONE AND SEEN SO MUCH TOGETHER

MICHAEL BURKE | LINOCUT REDUCTION



## *LADY L.*

She lets you see her patchwork body. You lie next to her, entranced,  
as she points to her thigh and says that when she was 10,

she stabbed herself with a pencil  
just to see how much it hurt.  
(The graphite's still there. You can see it.)



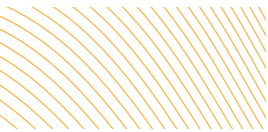
# *THE END OF THE ROAD*

LORENA NAVARRO-SLUZNIS | COLLAGE



*STREAKS*

SHANNA ROAST | FIBER BASED GELATIN PRINT



## *I AM MY LANGUAGES*

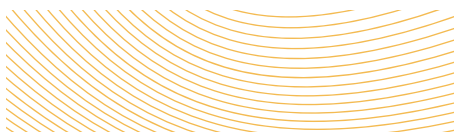
I am my languages  
And my languages  
Move slowly.  
My tongue  
Tied in traffic  
Hitting every  
Light  
Red.

Sometimes  
Words get lost like  
Fingers frostbite  
Lingers thought twice  
Pause like jitters

My thoughts  
On hold/pause  
No cause  
For alarm, just  
Me  
Searching for the appropriate word  
The right "language"  
Or just  
Chasing that thought  
I thought  
I had

I love my languages  
My dreams  
My friends  
My family  
We speak one on one  
And from  
The heart

We have our code  
That only exists  
Mixed  
Serene  
Between us





## *I HEARD...*

I heard our voices were drowning in the deafening silence  
Of white supremacists,  
Bigots, racists,  
Your neighbors, my neighbors.

I heard our vices were magnified by the vast legion of repugnant misinformation  
And slander.  
While I see our culture being exploited by the white noise,  
For all that it's worth.  
Made a mockery of all our advocates  
And those who dare raise their voice against blatant oppression.  
We shouldn't have to be tolerant  
When our lives are at stake,  
When as a minority there is no pride,  
Only targets on our backs.  
I.C.E. has some work to do,  
That's what I heard.  
No more bad hombres,  
And even the good ones too.  
I sensed our humanity was torn to shreds in the blistering ignorance,  
Dehumanized,  
By the attacks,  
The comatose ire of countless red, white, and blues:

A criminal, a rapist,  
An illegal, an alien.  
Words that brand our skin,  
Our reputations,  
Our lives.  
Internalized,  
The words rise up from our skin  
Only to chain us,  
Limiting us as if we cannot rise above.  
I thought our lives were extended between these poles,  
Attempting to choose the better rather than the worse.  
When I heard they were hanging us from the roof,  
With an American flag noose.

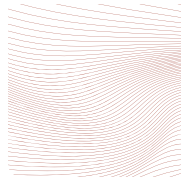






*TRANQUIL*

SARA SARGENT | DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



## *NO EMPATHY*

The eastern pacific hurricane took her  
To an unknown land  
Of brilliant minds  
With no empathy

She is drowning  
Deep down in system  
Or lost  
In a portrayal  
Of historical human movements  
Refusing to allow  
Our issues to die

Nobody knows what America did with her



# *I'VE BEEN UP FOR 40 HOURS, I THINK I'LL WRITE A POEM, BUT I'M NOT SURE ABOUT DOING ADDERALL AGAIN*

I'm human; I think  
My roommate told me Native Americans didn't  
have a word for human  
That the word wasn't a necessary linguistic  
distinction for their lifestyle  
I don't believe him  
But it's neat to think about

I'm a human; I think  
If Indigenous populations didn't need to separate  
their species from that of a tree  
As my roommate says  
I still think it's cool  
I still don't believe him

I'm a human; I have an idea  
I'll just google it  
Turns out native populations didn't have a word  
for google  
I told myself that  
So I believe me

I'm a human; or something  
My teacher told me repetition creates meaning  
I don't know which teacher or when  
But I'm pretty sure it happened  
So I'll speak with authority about it anyway

I'm still a human; I'm pretty sure  
But it turns out pretty sure can mean pretty much  
anything  
Which is why complex multisyllabic descriptors  
exist

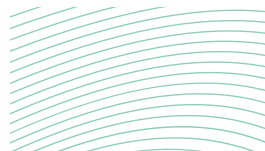
Or at least I'm pretty sure  
And confident in my floccinaucinihilipilification

Yeah, I'm a human; I told you I think  
And I just checked google again  
Floccinaucinihilipilification  
To judge something as worthless, trivial  
Noun, Latin root

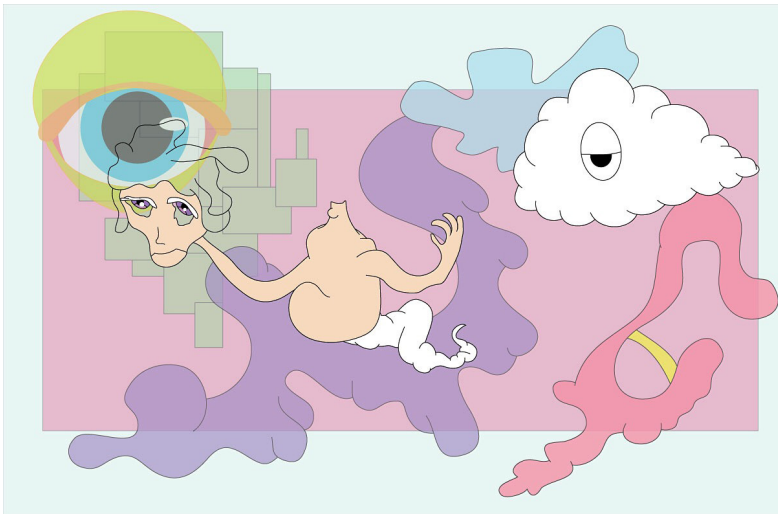
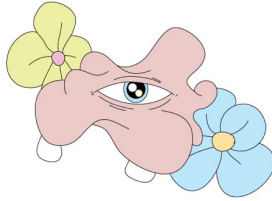
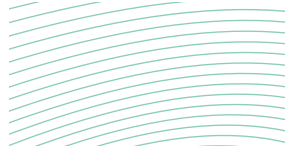
I'm a human; I promise  
Hubristic, humping, hulking  
Maybe not that last one  
Or the other two either  
I let the allure of alliteration come before  
content, sorry

I'm definitely a human  
I know now because I finished googling whether  
indigenous people had a word for human  
Seems to depend on the tribe and the translation  
Translators have a lot of power  
Good for them

Now I'm pretty sure, I think  
This must be getting old for you, but I still trust  
that one teacher  
The one who told me repetition creates meaning,  
or at least I'm pretty sure  
I pay taxes; I attend university; I vote; I go to work  
Yeah, I'm a floccinaucinihilipilification

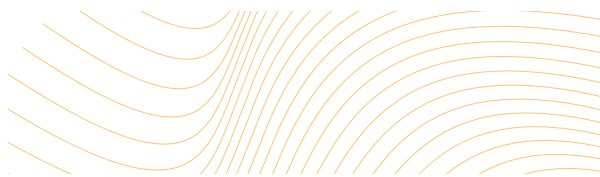


# ZOZ



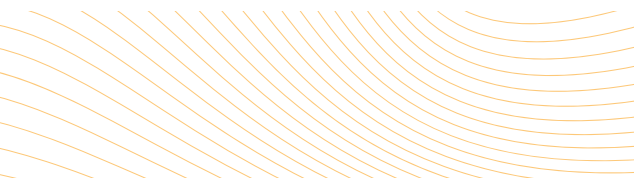


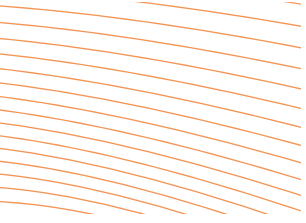
KAILY SWINFORD | CHARCOAL



## *KITE*

As a kite unaware  
Of the string that binds  
Its flight to earth  
So have I been  
A palette of colors seeking wild airs  
Crepe-paper wings chasing the sun  
A man-made bird courting the sea  
Twine all the while  
Eased gently forth  
Or tugged in tight  
By the sturdy fist of a friend.



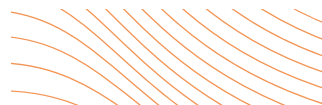


## *BROTHER*

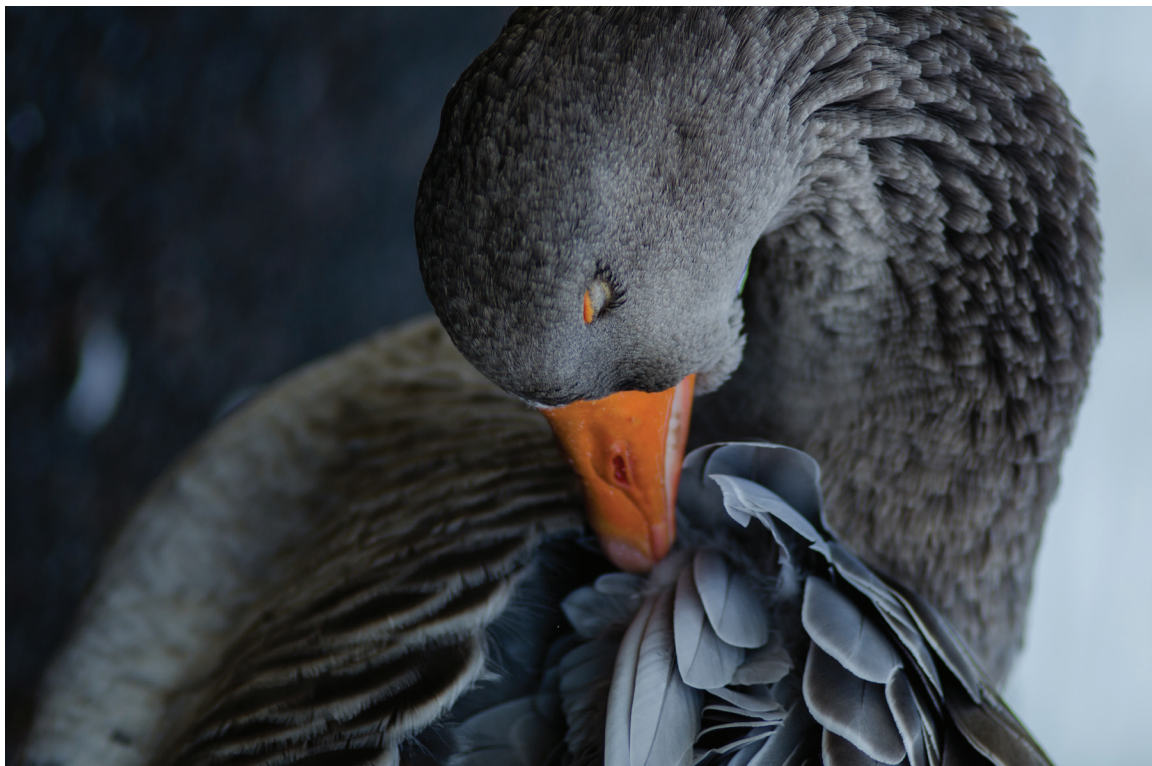
I walk over to find my brother lying in a puddle  
'You'd better move'  
He rolls over,  
And creates another puddle to lie in.

The protector protects;  
Tells them, 'I did it.'  
'But the kid...' the judge says  
'I did it.'

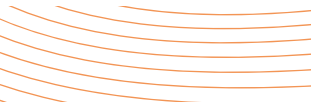
Feels his way through the dark very well  
He doesn't even need moonlight,  
But enjoys a bit of glow-in-the-dark.







*MOMENT OF GRACE*





*OMINOUS / OMNISCIENT*  
DONALD ORR | X-RAY DAMAGED 35MM FILM

SUBMIT SUBMIT SUBMIT

## PRISM ART & LITERARY JOURNAL

DEADLINE: FRIDAY OF WEEK THREE  
OPEN TO ALL MAJORS, ALL MEDIUMS

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TRAILING PAST THE CLIFFS AND BAYS ARE WORLDS OF SHARED HUMAN CYCLES  
OBSERVED FROM WITHIN

MURPHY CALDWELL, PERPETUAL P.23