

*to those in isolation — may sonder be your path to connection*

## ***Letter from the Editors***

*sonder: the realization and awareness that those around you live rich and nuanced lives that are just as complex as your own*

When the *Caesura* team sat down to select a theme for our 2025-2026 edition, we were immediately drawn to “Sonder.” Though we knew we would spend a significant amount of time defining and explaining the word to those of you who are unfamiliar, we believed it was worth it. Sonder caught our attention, again and again, because it verbalizes a feeling many of us have felt, but could never quite place. In fact, sonder captures the feeling many of us experience when we read poetry or experience artwork — windows into the complexities of others’ lives.

Sonder is both isolating and connecting. Sonder can be confusing, or frustrating, or exciting. It is a strange experience to look around yourself and realize: none of this is about you. In a world where individualism and self-centered outlooks dominate our culture, we want to encourage you to set that aside. Consider those around you. And then consider their Maker.

Ultimately, sonder points us to God. What better way to experience the beauty of His creation than to acknowledge the multitude of ways He is working in the lives of each of His children? What better way to celebrate the talents He has given us than to create writing and art that help us understand one another?

As for the reader — we hope this edition of *Caesura* helps you experience sonder in a new light. We hope these works lead you to empathize, understand, and connect with your neighbors. And through that, we hope these works lead you closer to the One who connects us all.

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## **To Know**

*Adalynn Wollan*

I wanna live one day in your bones,  
Behind your eyes, in your home.  
I wanna put on your steel-toed boots,  
Go to work, spend time alone.  
I wanna see your thoughts from your eyes,  
I want to know.  
I feel it there,  
With my hand on your chest.  
I feel the darkness you promise I lighten,  
But I'd like to be certain,  
I'd like to know.  
Let us switch vessels,  
I'll prove that I need you,  
And I'll feel how I love you.  
I'll know if it's too much or not enough.  
And you'll know you're not too much,  
Not ever too much,  
I need you to know.

I'll laugh at my pink hair,  
And finally like my brown eyes.  
You'll feel my aching bones,  
And I'll feel your aching stomach,  
And we'll look at each other  
Through the other's eyes  
And we'll finally know what it's like  
To know.

## **Piano Bird**

*Mitchell Eltzeroth*

Peeking between timber  
door and frame,  
I watch  
the old bird  
perched  
on a black bench.  
Safe from her squawking  
I wonder  
what kind  
of bird  
is she.

Her craned neck  
stretches  
over the ivory,  
hawk nose  
buried  
in the sheets.

Crow's feet crinkle  
as she reads.  
Her pigeon toes press  
pedals, preparing  
for her flight.  
Bony talons  
preen the piano,  
plucking keys.  
Then she plays.

Notes flutter  
through the air.  
Her voice joins  
the soaring song.  
Swooping harmonies  
send her gliding  
from note to note.  
She sings  
simple  
sweet  
somber.  
A songbird.

## **Fish Poem**

*Noah Hayden*

Please forgive me; I know nothing about fish  
My hands do not remember the slick granite scales  
As she, half alive, slides back into the pond  
Every line I pick up tangles, due to clumsiness  
Or perhaps subconscious intent  
For I hate to stifle living things  
—  
Maybe I'm worried  
That it is true what they say  
"It gets easier with time"  
—  
This is the paradox of being:  
Today I wanted a fish poem  
But yesterday I preferred to watch  
Those dim shapes shifting against the bank  
And keep my distance

## **The Hiding Poem**

*Emmylou Kunze*

Five poems  
I laugh in their face  
As they shake their fists  
Lock me out  
In disgrace  
I wander the empty roads  
Looking for a  
Wayward poem  
To tuck under my arm and  
Haul back home  
  
Past forests dribbling dew  
And stone fences ill-hewn  
Through fields, like a net  
This bluegrass carpet  
Too thick for my  
Ankles  
Struggling to wade

along, but  
wait  
In the silent  
Heavy calm  
Rises a voice  
Like a whisper of fog  
- and it sings -  
  
Here i am, poem-catcher  
Here i am not  
As you have been wading  
I have been hiding  
Don't you see  
You are lost  
  
Where is here  
I echo back  
Where do you curl your  
Tiny bare feet  
Through this bog i cannot  
Hope to find

any stray footprint you  
maybe dropped  
  
In the dimness, in the light  
Melting off the treetops  
I hear a chuckle and  
Wonder  
As the cold mud sucks at my  
Angry knees and  
The bugs pluck fitfully at my  
tangled braids  
The voice like a  
New old friend  
comes from  
Somewhere inside of  
Me

## God, bless the small things

*Noah Hayden*

Often when I walk I imagine  
The thunderous earthquakes my  
Footsteps produce  
To the worms, who have not  
Hands to cup their ears  
And stifle the thuds  
Maybe they lack ears entirely?  
In which case they feel the  
Reverberations all over  
And sense  
(Behind them the devil cartoonishly cackling with glee)  
The false signs of rainfall  
Which is probably worse

## A sweet pup in Assisi

*Annie Lingren*





when the sky becomes  
a constellation of unfastened fish jaws, you might  
find  
these phantoms  
clipped to cloth  
leaking from beneath the closet.  
this orange shirt might rock in the air  
with a cavity in its arms. this shawl/  
scarf/vest might  
unknit itself. this dress,  
you might find in a corridor, or  
you might not.  
what I mean to say is:  
I am counting days  
by the amount of time it takes  
to press a dried squash into my palms  
until it breaks  
butternut, honeynut,  
red kuri,  
kabocha,  
chayote

## Riflessioni su Venezia

*Katie Todd*



## All My Life

*Anna Blower*

I can only hope that I'm like the moon.  
To reflect another's light.  
To be content alone or crowded by clouds.  
To continuously realize myself.  
My crevasse cherished.  
My shadows explored.  
To inspire.  
To show colors from within.  
Touched by man but belonging to the universe.  
To be framed by nature through the eyes of humanity.  
So close,  
Someone's night light.  
So far,  
Someone's reach.  
Strung between gravity yet holding strong.  
I wish to be like her.  
Or to at least admire her,  
All my life.

## Clean Break

*Lleyton Kane*

I write breakup texts for a living.  
  
Not like a side hustle. This is my actual job. I have a website. I have a rate card. I have a Calendly. Mondays and Thursdays I do consultations. Tuesdays and Fridays I deliver. Wednesdays are for the people who chicken out on Tuesday and need a pep talk before I press send on their behalf.  
  
The business is called Clean Break. My mom thinks it's a cleaning service. I have not corrected her.  
  
Here's how it works: you fill out an intake form. Length of relationship. Communication style of the recipient (I give you a dropdown: texter, caller, voice-noter, emoji-heavy, dry). Reason for breakup (also a dropdown, but with an open field because people are creative). Whether you want to leave the door open, close it gently, or weld it shut. I draft. You approve. I send from your phone, which you've handed to me across a coffee shop table while you go to the bathroom so you can have deniability with your own fingers.

I have a 94% client satisfaction rate. The 6% are people who got back together and blamed me for the text being too effective.

My best work was a four-sentence breakup of a three-year relationship. The client cried when she read it—not because it was sad, but because it was so precisely her voice that she couldn't tell where she ended and I began. She said it was like watching someone do your signature and getting it right. I charged her double.

My worst work was Kevin.

Kevin came in on a Tuesday in November wearing a Patagonia vest over a Patagonia fleece, which is a look that communicates a very specific relationship to emotional vulnerability: amenable but only in REI lighting. He wanted to break up with his girlfriend, Margaux—yes, with the x—who he'd been seeing for eleven months. He described her as “a lot.” When I asked him to be more specific, he said she had strong opinions about sourdough.

I wrote the text. He approved it. I sent it. Margaux responded in fourteen seconds with a voice note that was six minutes long and included, by my count, three references to attachment theory, one to Esther Perel, and a forty-five-second stretch of what I can only

describe as structured weeping.

Kevin looked at me across the table at the coffee shop. He was holding a cortado in both hands like a baby bird.

“What do I do?”

“That's not included in the service.”

“Can I upgrade?”

I should have said no. I should have handed him his phone and wished him well and gone home to my apartment where my cat, Ender, was waiting to be fed exactly seven minutes late, which is the amount of lateness he tolerates before knocking the BRITA off the counter.

Instead, I said, “Okay.” I drafted a response to the voice note. Then a response to her response. Then a response to her friend Chelsey's response, which arrived from a different number and opened with “I just think it's interesting that—”

By midnight I was sitting cross-legged on Kevin's couch, operating his entire phone like mission control, fielding texts from Margaux, Chelsey, Margaux's therapist's after-hours service (I did not

respond to this one), and a group chat called “Kev’s Boys” where his friends were sending fire emojis and a GIF of someone throwing a chair off a balcony.

Kevin was asleep. He’d fallen asleep around 10:30, mouth open, one sock on, the Patagonia vest still zipped to his chin. I was managing the dissolution of his eleven-month relationship from his living room while he snored into a throw pillow that said LAKE LIFE.

And here is the thing I won’t put on my website: I was good at it. Not good like competent. Good like lit up. Every text was a tiny negotiation, a calibrated detonation, and I was placing the charges with the care of someone who understands exactly where the load-bearing walls are in another person’s love. I knew when to concede and when to hold. When to use her name and when to use “you.” When a period was a weapon and when it was a door.

At 1 a.m. Margaux sent: *I just want to know if any of it was real.*

I held Kevin’s phone. The cursor blinked. Ender was home, definitely furious, probably mid-BRITA. Kevin shifted in his sleep. The throw pillow had pressed a crease into his cheek that looked like it might be permanent.

I typed: *The parts that were real were real. The parts that weren’t, I’m sorry.*

She wrote back: *Okay.*

And that was it. Eleven months, collapsed to a single okay. I set the phone on the coffee table. Kevin’s mouth was still open. A small thread of drool connected his lip to LAKE LIFE.

I let myself out. I walked six blocks to my apartment. Ender had knocked the BRITA off the counter and was sitting in the puddle, looking at me with the specific contempt of someone who has been abandoned by the one person who was supposed to show up.

“I know,” I said.

He didn’t move.

I sat on the kitchen floor in the water and opened my own phone. Fourteen unread texts from my mother, which is not unusual. She texts in fragments, one thought per message, like a telegram operator who discovered emojis. The last one said: *are you eating enough protein*

I hadn’t responded in four days.

I thought about drafting something. I'm a professional, after all. I could write the perfect daughter text. Warm but not needy. Engaged but not overwhelming. The exact right amount of exclamation points to communicate health and happiness without triggering a follow-up call.

Instead I typed: Hi mom. I'm sitting on my kitchen floor in a puddle. *My cat hates me. I had a weird night. Can you call me tomorrow?*

She called immediately.

I answered.

## **For Mom**

*Abbey Toner*

I used to pick you dandelions instead of daffodils  
I believed they were your favorite  
Roots hung loose, spikes jutting out  
Each stem sat at a different length  
I always pulled too hard  
Always accidentally plucking the heads straight off  
Perhaps in hopes you would throw yours back too  
In a hollering laugh to the sky  
You grabbed my hand in yours, and in a series of twirls  
We reached the cabinet of glass  
And as you pushed your glasses back  
We set out to select the nicest vase  
To hold water for your favorite weed  
Displayed as a centerpiece for all to see  
I believed they were your favorite  
Ever since I began to bring dandelions instead of daffodils

## Poached Poetry

*Emmylou Kunze*

I write poetry  
Like my sister fries eggs  
Haphazard, somewhat out of hand  
Never twice the same way  
Trying new styles, new  
Twists of the wrist  
A few crumpled pages  
Are what i end up with

She reads my new poetry  
I taste-test the eggs  
Scrambled one day,  
Poached and then coddled;  
I'm whitman one day,  
Maybe byron  
or no one at all

Sometimes we laugh or cry

Sometimes we merely grimace  
I spit the eggs back in the sink  
And she says  
Not your best, sis  
And as i choke on her endeavors and she  
Trips through half-writ poems  
I think to myself  
isn't this infinitely  
better than being  
perfect alone

## On the waterbus

Annie Lingren



## To the Elderly Man at Meijer

Ella Wortley

The elderly man sitting at the store watches me come and go.  
He sees me ponder indecisively over the color of flower to choose—  
He wonders what they're for.  
I used to avoid going through his door,  
I neglected eye contact as I quickly returned to my car.  
But years have passed, and I have learned to decipher—  
Between the heinous intent of a glance,  
And those simply curious about the world around them.  
The world is an incredible place, and I'm curious.  
So is he.  
I feel his eyes upon me as I choose the flowers,  
And I let my actions remain mysterious—  
Which is the best way to do things, I suppose.  
I offer him a smile and wish him a good day as I leave the store.  
I wonder about his life.  
He wonders about my flowers.  
Mystery makes the world go round.

## **As a Child, I Enjoyed the Suffering of Others**

*Zoe Cook*

“Just let her sit there, Mom, she’ll eat it eventually.”

My face is hot, and my throat is tight. I look down at my pink princess plate defiled by bitter, dry broccoli. I kick my legs against the chair and huff. I prepare myself to sit here for the rest of eternity to avoid ingesting this disgrace of a vegetable.

As Dad walks out of the kitchen, Grandma gives me a sly smile. She picks up my fork, spears a piece of broccoli to the top, and begins marching the fork around my plate. “Oh, how I just love my new hat! The fork says in a falsetto voice. “Just look at how amazing my... OH NO!”

I’ve grabbed the piece of broccoli and shoved it into my mouth.

“Not to worry, I’ll just go into this hat store and put on a new...  
MERCY SAKES ALIVE!!!”

I stuff a new broccoli hat into my mouth without having finished chewing the first. Ms. Fork’s hilarious distress increases as her cruel overlord crams her mouth as full of broccoli as she can without

choking. Between chewing and laughing, I can’t catch my breath until the plate is clear. Grandma picks up my plate, congratulates me on finishing my dinner, and dismisses me from the table. I linger, staring at the swirly dark green tablecloth hoping more broccoli will magically appear so we can keep playing the game.

I am an adult now, and I’ve left Ms. Fork, my hatred for broccoli, and Grandma in the distant past. I wish I could reexperience the glee of ripping Ms. Fork’s hat off her head and forcing her to watch in horror as I devoured it. I wish my problems could be solved by pretending to be a hat-eating monster. Most of all, I wish I could hug my grandma and thank her for taking the time to turn the broccoli of doom and despair into the highlight of my day.

**RAWR!**

*Katie Todd*



## **Pigtails & Pineapple Skirts**

*Adalynn Wollan*

What is it that fuels that smile?

The pink and purple hairties

Artfully mismatched in crooked pigtails?

The gap in the top row of teeth

That only seems to make the smile wider?

The yellow and pink pineapple skirt,

Or the glittery, light-up princess sneakers?

Is it something not visible in these photographs?

Why is she wearing a bright yellow shirt with the pineapple skirt?

What was the thought process there?

Likely, it was a simple love of colors.

A child who wasn't worried about

Appearing distracting or obnoxious,

Who said she loved the rainbow best

Without worrying about what it meant.

A little girl unbothered by the fact

That her two front teeth had yet to grow back,

Who was simply proud to have lost teeth,

Who knew the tooth fairy was pretend,  
But still loved to make-believe.  
Who didn't mind the lisp the gap created,  
Who was content with what was temporary.  
A child who loved the swish of her pigtails around her ears  
As she pushed higher and higher into the air on the swingset,  
Who did not view the pigtails and pineapple skirt  
As symbols of innocence waiting to be exploited.  
Whose hair had not been pulled,  
Whose tooth gap had not been mocked,  
Whose light-up shoes had not been labeled contraband.  
I remember telling my mother I hated  
My pigtails and my pineapple skirt.  
I don't remember loving them,  
But the girl in the photos did.  
What is it that fueled that smile?  
Innocence? Ignorance?  
Pure, unadulterated bliss?  
I wish I could remember.  
She looks so happy.

## **Chaos Within**

*Isabella Gusmano*

I don't cry loudly, as not to cause a scene.  
You see, I learned to cry softly, and to breathe...  
Making noise never did a thing for me.  
To bring my chaos to the foot of another was selfish  
Rude "Shh, they'll hear you" is what she'd say.  
But keeping the chaos in never eases the pain  
It only dissipates...  
I need only to be seen, heard, to be allowed to breathe again...  
Other people make too much noise in my head—  
I've got my own chaos within.

## The Hole I Didn't Dig

*Brittany Brown*

Most of the time  
they only get to the no  
nothing more,  
nothing less.

A door half-open,  
a sentence cut short,  
my voice  
folded back into my chest.

Is it worth it?  
Maybe that doesn't matter.  
Because I know  
Who stays.  
Who never leaves.  
Who loves me without condition  
or interruption.

Still  
there is that human ache,  
that quiet yearning  
to be heard  
by skin and bone,  
not only by spirit.

Even trying to bind myself  
only to You, Jesus,  
I feel it  
that small tremble of wanting.  
I'm not perfect.  
No one is.  
But I know where I belong.

So I grow quiet.  
I keep to myself.  
Because when I speak,  
I am denied.  
When I rise,  
I am talked over

like wind against closed windows.

Yet my Father listens.

He bends low.

He does more

than anyone else ever could.

What is this feeling?

It comes again.

Not new

just deeper.

The wounds don't leave.

They carve further inward,

harder to climb out of.

How do you escape

a hole you didn't dig?

Someone carved it into the earth,

left it uncovered,

and I fell in.

They don't come back.

They don't hear me.

They don't see me.

They don't try.

But something new is coming

I feel it in the dark soil.

And whatever it is,

I am ready.

I may not have their voices.

I may not have their choosing.

But I have my Lord

and Savior.

Thank You, Jesus.

## Party Games

*Elise Adams*

The guests played games

    Making toilet paper into diapers

    Molding babies out of clay

The family made food

    Carving fruit into cradles

    Cutting cookies into onesies

The mother opened gifts

    Shouting over the new stroller

    Sniffing at Susan's knitted hat

And the lady in the corner smiled

    Her hand resting on her flat stomach

    Her fingers tracing an absent weight

## Fragile Growth

*Katie Todd*



## Etymology of a Crush

*Matthew Lacy*

I had never really considered  
why we call it a crush.

It seems a bit odd.

Doesn't it?

Strange how an awful, heavy word  
describes a light and airy thing,  
a feeling for the vernal months  
when flowers blossom and  
happy woodland creatures rear their young.

Sometimes I feel it in that way.

The butterflies in my stomach  
reach such preposterous proportions  
that they suddenly force me afloat  
from the flurry of their wings  
at the reminder that a certain woman exists.

At other times, I find myself fearless.  
The very thing that should freeze me  
becomes an overwhelming good  
so that I can push beyond my mind  
and do whatever needs to be done  
to demonstrate my devotion.

I understand now  
why we call it a crush.

I assign such importance to the requital  
of my fervent feelings that it becomes a burden,  
a vast emotional trap of my own design  
forcing me like Atlas to bear the weight of the world,  
for I make my love my whole world,  
and the same thing that gives me strength  
pushes me downward with every passing minute.

A friend told me  
that I should savor this sentiment,  
but it's hard for me to  
just go with the flow

when most of the time  
I don't know  
what the flow is  
or where it happens to be going,  
and I'm trying to figure that out  
without getting caught up and swept away  
by the river I'm dipping my toes in.

The truth is,  
I mostly deal in extremes.  
The empty forge of love sits  
barren from my pain  
until it roars to life  
with no warning or consideration,  
leaving no time to guard myself  
against the flames that call out to me,  
begging me to make something  
out of the scraps of hope  
I left lying around last time and  
some sparse bits of attention  
from the one I admire.

Perhaps I'll listen to the flames again,  
and melt my hopes, memories, and aspirations,  
crafting something greater and sharper than ever before  
with the forceful collisions of my dreams.

Perhaps, if I am quite careful,  
I will not burn myself in the flames.

## The Nature of Things

Abbie Beliles

I wish I had the words to tell you.

The little white cursor blinks on the blank Word document for what feels like hours. My head aches as I fold up my glasses and set them on the table.

I wish I had the words to tell you back then. *I'm not sure if it would've changed much, but at least you'd know that I cared.*

I don't know if you would've stayed, but at least I would've put up a fight. I wouldn't have just sat there as you walked out the door. I wouldn't have to stare at your scuffed-up wedding band on my coffee table for the next three days as I started the draft of my next romance novel.

Back then, you said that I didn't care about you, that I didn't notice how far apart we were becoming, that our relationship was like an electric guitar and a showtune piano. I knew that these things were true, but I couldn't bear to hear it come from your mouth.

The fickle thing about words is that you have them after the

moment has already passed.

I'm an author, a master of words. Still, I couldn't change our ending. No matter how unsatisfying it was. I couldn't change it, and that's what kills me.

So, I begin typing.

*Love is like a moth to the flame. I am devoured by a power beyond my comprehension.*

No.

*Marriage is a life sentence.*

No. No. No.

*Love is a blob of paint that stains an off-white T-shirt.*

No, that's disgusting. Is that really what love is? Is that all it is?

*Love is a poem that rhymes.*

I sit here writing lies—fluffy romance stories so corny it would make a Hallmark writer gag.

Who am I kidding? I don't know the first thing about relationships. I just use these fictional characters to keep the electricity on.

Maybe that's why I like keeping it on the page instead. On the page, I always know how the story will end. Then again, I wonder what it would be like if real-life relationships were like this, rational, predictable, easy to describe.

Maybe we were too easy to describe.

If that were the case, then maybe a romance story wouldn't be worth telling.

## **Stomping Ground**

*Elise Adams*

A stomping ground doesn't move—  
You do.

A stomping ground stays still.  
It allows people and time to pass along its surface,  
Existing in a constant state of welcome,  
Embracing the hand it has been given.

You, on the other hand, could never stay still.  
You decided that you didn't need that stomping ground after all.  
You left it behind, discarding it like an inconvenience,  
Moving on to the next new and shiny thing.

But now you have the audacity to try and claim it,  
Getting mad when you see the new occupants moving in.  
You're like a toddler stealing from a baby,  
Demanding possession of a toy you haven't played with in years.

Well, news flash: you don't own the stomping ground.

It doesn't want you.

It's not indebted to you.

In fact, it owes you nothing.

Its value doesn't depend on whether or not you call it a stomping  
ground.

It existed before you, it existed during you, and it's still existing  
after you.

You just can't stand the fact that it can exist without you,

That it doesn't and has never needed you.

You only claim it when it's useful,

When you can pass it by and say, "There's my old stomping  
grounds."

You don't get to use it as a way to center yourself in the now,

To force the world to acknowledge your presence.

But most importantly, the stomping ground isn't just another piece  
of your past.

It isn't a memory for you to shove into a dusty photo album or

Another trophy for you to show off to your future grandkids,

Saying, "This was a girl I knew once upon a time."

I guess you haven't moved on then, not really.

Maybe you should.

## **Rosemary for Remembrance**

*Natalie Shiels*

of course you mourn her. Why not? that's the part  
you wanted. Your beloved by your side.  
but, when she reached for your hand, you dismissed  
the words she spoke, the love she had for you.  
Now, our tragic hero, you can find  
the way to justice, laying daisies, rue,  
and violet at her graveside. Did you love  
her more than childhood friends? She needed you,  
a shoulder to cry on. Instead, you left.  
your letters tossed with little care. By earth,  
the creek, the peace of willows, she sings as  
the flowers smile and bend to face her grief.  
You left her there. So let this guilt find you  
within your coffin. Jilted lover, mourn.

## **You needed someone softer**

*Abbey Toner*

I met her once,  
You know, the girl.  
I saw her crying,  
Sitting silently across the great divide.  
I couldn't understand.  
She was seemingly sensitive and sweet,  
With her smooth highlights and soft jeans.  
I was like her once.  
You know nothing of that,  
I would have been too much.  
Too honest, too loud, too abrupt,  
Too much to be with someone unseemingly cold and contrary,  
With coarse curls and confident conscience.  
I was afraid then,  
That she would end up like me,  
Sitting alone across the table.  
I almost reached out,  
As I pretended not to watch her weeping so openly.

But I understood then,  
Why we shouldn't, couldn't have been.  
I know now that you needed someone softer.  
Someone like her,  
I saw her once,  
And I understood.

## **Molasses**

*Adalynn Wollan*

Molasses  
Or tar  
Sweet  
Completely opaque  
Eyelids like doors  
Lashes like weights  
Sleep escapes  
Pain stays  
Lead-laden limbs  
Vanilla and lavender syrup  
Lavendar  
Like a late summer sunset  
Lavendar  
Like oil, heavy on my sleeve  
Lavendar  
Nothing to do with you at all  
Lavendar  
Everything you meant

I think  
I was already sick  
Somehow sicker  
Than what I'd out-lived  
The air is  
Ever heavier  
Like tar  
Or molasses

## **A Narrative Between Myself, God, and Others**

*Gibson Wing*

Ever since this started I've felt so hollow  
A deep hole within myself  
Some days I wake up angry  
Some I wake up sad  
And most I feel nothing at all  
I want to feel again

What did I say  
Why did I say it  
How can I fix it  
What is wrong with me  
Why do I ruin everything  
How can I fail so much

I eat less  
I drink less  
I laugh less  
I smile less

- caesura -

I enjoy less  
I am less

Is this guilt?  
Is this judgment?  
Is this anger?  
Is this sin?  
Is this depression?  
Is this delusion?

I'm so sorry  
I don't know what to do  
The brakes are cut  
And the wheel is loose  
The windshield is shattered  
And we're crashing through

I regret everything  
I live in that regret  
I hate who I am  
I live in that hate

- sonder -

I sin every day  
I live in that sin

God, help me  
God, save me  
God, renew me  
God, punish me  
God, awaken me  
God, why am I not listening?

I find myself at life's four way stop  
One way leads to Heaven  
But the path is blocked by trees  
One way leads to hell  
And the other two ways lead to purgatory  
Which is a hell of its own

I am sliding down a hill  
On a sled of uncontrollable speed  
No walls to protect me  
No one to help me

- caesura -

I jumped down this hill alone  
And I will suffer alone

Each crime I commit  
Each sin I commit  
Every time I fail to commit  
Leads me to the same place  
Leads me further away  
Leads me opposite from grace

I have wronged you  
I have wronged God  
I have wronged myself  
I have wronged everyone  
I am wrong  
And it is wrong to think that

I hide from you  
So I can hide from me  
So I can hide from God  
So I can never be free

- sonder -

So I can burn for what I've done  
Because I believe I need it

What a complex I have  
How complex I am  
Nothing going on  
And nothing going in  
A bundle of sin  
And a mask with a grin

Everything I do feels fake  
Every joke I make is a lie  
I'm sick to my stomach  
Everyone I love sees it  
They don't like my jokes  
I'm sick to my stomach

Mom, help me  
Dad, help me  
Friends, help me  
God, help me

Please help me  
Help me find what to do

Fight, flight, or freeze?  
I saw a spider once  
The size of a silver dollar  
I stood still for thirty minutes  
I couldn't think for hours  
I freeze

My tires are bald  
From spinning in place  
Not moving forward or back  
Not moving time nor space  
I am burning rubber  
And I'm wasting gas

Will you ever want to talk again  
Will you ever think of me highly again  
Will I ever be worthy again  
I don't feel worthy ever

I don't believe what I pray you believe  
I live the lie that I tell

Why must I play tennis  
As the ball  
Hit between Heaven  
Hit between Hell  
God owns me  
Why must I suffer so

I know God loves me  
So why don't I love Him  
I know He created me  
So why don't I love Him  
I know God speaks to me  
So why don't I listen?

## **The Kite**

*Noah Hayden*

He took down the kite from the sky

A noble flash of fire

And let it drag on the asphalt.

Cliche: How far the mighty have fallen!

Truth: The phoenix is powerful only when

She is stretched prostrate across the abundant sky.

He coaxed the kite along

As it made vague attempts at flight

Why do we yearn for a fathomless freedom?

For there is nothing the kite despises more

Than a tangle in the string.

Inversely,

There is nothing the kite loves more

Than a young child's cry - "Be free!"

And a pair of scissors.

Icarus realized his folly all too soon

Or else, he always knew it was futile

As the kite rises blissfully

Separated finally from its ball and chain

We all want to kiss the Sun,

To cradle the world in our arms.

The phoenix resurrects,

the kite catches a new air current,

And the world becomes ever more distant

From the aspirations it contains.

## **The Rhythm of Change**

*Mitchell Eltzeroth*

I stand  
on the sea's shore.  
Worries wash away  
with the rhythm of the tides.  
In and out.  
In and out.  
The beat of my breath  
joins them.

But the sea's  
calm countenance conceals  
the war beneath the waves.  
Grains of sand separate  
with each swell.  
Torn apart  
by the turbulent tides,  
never to meet again.  
Former friends and family  
fated to become fond memories.

Waters recede  
the sand lands  
among strangers.  
Perplexing pebbles and  
shells surround him.  
Hoping for a home,  
he settles.  
Then air.  
A moment to breathe.  
Suddenly the swell snatches  
him away again.  
Confined in the cycle  
while others are doomed  
to the depths.  
  
I sit in silence.  
Listening  
to the truth in the tides.  
The rhythm of change.

## Icarus

*Ella McDivitt*

The rubbery soles of my tennis shoes cling to the sandy red rock underneath me, as if begging me to not go a step further. But I do. I walk myself right up to the edge of the cliff and stare down at the pebbled shore beneath, foamy gray-blue waves smashing against the rocks. I am one step and a light gust of wind away from tumbling over the edge, my body smashing onto the shore like a flesh-and-bone wave.

My father's voice beckons me away from the edge. "That's far enough." But is it? I feel myself drawn to the two hundred feet that lie between me and the water, as if I could fly down like the shrieking gull that spirals overhead. He speaks to me in harsh, fearful tones. He plays out a scenario of falling, waiting, unsure if my broken body is still alive. I am too close to the sun.

I can picture this scene, though my father thinks I can't. I can imagine handfuls of hikers staring in horror as I somersault through the air, my hot wax wings dripping into nothingness, landing on the beach with a sickening crunch. But this is not the scene I crave. My father thinks I have a death wish; I do not.

What would I see, as I wait for helicopters to arrive? Lying on the beach, the frigid waves of the Gulf of Maine washing over me—I do not imagine I could be in pain down there. The beach is pebbled with millions upon millions of rocks that press into my damp skin. The sharp, unforgiving points of shells, slick driftwood, cold, salty wind surrounding my brokenness. The chilly air stinging my nose, my eyes, streaming with salty tears mingling with the seafoam. The pale and gentle warmth of the Northeastern sun resting on my body, not oppressive, only a ghost of a touch.

There, where no one can reach me. Hours and hours alone. The steady rhythm of the waves my only clock, to rest among the rocks my only task, scuttling hermit crabs my only companions.

I do not imagine I can feel pain.

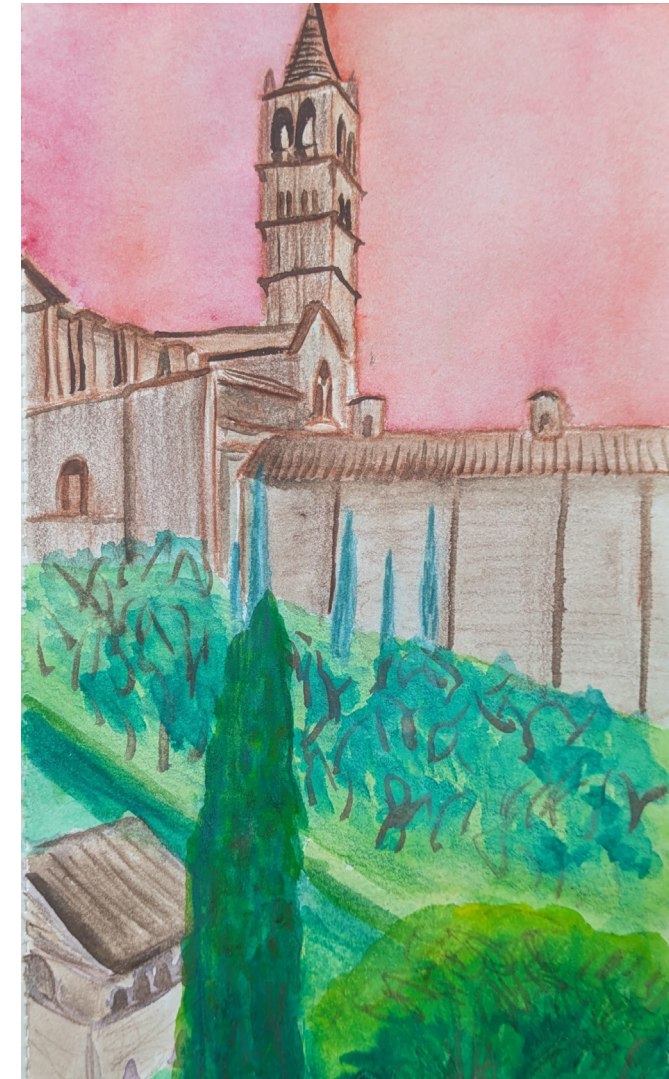
## Again

*Anna Blower*

Nature comes to its end.  
Sounds of the grass embracing my feet.  
The trees' begin a brittle sleep as the leaves reveal their character.  
Calming kisses from the breeze.  
Singing crickets praise the soft air.  
Spiders rebuild their webs from the day.  
Noir creeps into clouds, and the mood highlights their framing.  
She stares back, breathing relief into our lungs.  
Restoring peace to the shredded heart.  
Nature comes to its end,  
To experience,  
The beginning,  
Again.

## View from the hotel window in Assisi

*Annie Lingren*



## **I still pick at my scabs**

*Maya Hawkins*

I still pick at my scabs  
Because yes it's ugly when it dries up  
But when it heals  
There's a pink hue of infancy  
A part of your skin has been refashioned  
To make you new  
And exposed  
Why must the air touch the webs that adorn the outside of me  
Why have i been stretched so far  
Where if i pull on the thread I'm a loose pile on the floor of my flesh  
Where if I flinch at the touch of your calloused hand  
I pull  
Away  
I yank myself out of your embrace  
You said it doesn't burn when you touch the stove anymore  
Because your fingers have been so worn from the world  
Paper for hands  
Folded and written in red

Dragging long lines of weakness and  
worry  
Either way i love you in the mess of my heart  
  
I still think about my salvation  
Your son still reminds me of how close  
I've come to forgetting  
the final squeeze of your hand  
Where your fingertips spread apart each strand of my hair  
On a loom of your story that you still write  
when you're gone  
I've sat here  
Unfinished  
  
Picking at my crusted blood  
Letting it become red craters  
On the surface of the planet that still encircles you  
Calming, lazy circles that threaten to lead me astray  
because I've done the same thing over and over and over and  
over again

It's hard to watch the sun rise  
it's so pink when i close my eyes  
and feel it wash over my face  
with every sun rise  
I know that it's not the end  
And every day will still begin

## **fear**

*Natalie Shiels*

You have this little voice in your head, the one that replays every awkward moment or tragic end as you close your eyes at night. It governs your life. You think of everything in terms of being perceived — how do you avoid being the center of attention, the butt of the joke? You triple check your hair in your phone camera on the train; you wear simple, plain clothes; you avoid construction sites at midday.

And none of this is bad. You just want to put your best foot forward, make sure that people see you as you are. Or as you want to be: careful, respectful, understanding.

And it's not just about the way you look. You let Brett talk over you in work meetings and smile politely on silent Zoom meetings because — what if you don't have anything substantial to say? What if they hate it? You can't lose your job. You always wait a little too long before turning right on red because you don't want to inconvenience other drivers. You don't leave the house after dark, triple locking the door and turning every light on.

But at some point, after years of carefully placed bobby pins and sharp winged eyeliner, something else seeps in.

You step out of the house without looking in the mirror. You wear loud patterns and aren't worried about if your outfit matches perfectly. You take the shortest route, past the construction site at midday, and put up a middle finger without a second glance.

You hesitate to call it courage.

This new thing, unnamed and unknown, is a little exciting. And maybe it is brave — stepping out to try new things and be someone you've never gotten to be before.

But then you realize why everything has been so quiet.

You have always been careful, respectful, understanding. That voice has taught you how to be safe. Protected.

But now that the constant warnings have been silenced... there's a ringing in your ear. You take a step, then another, then another, and before you know it, you're halfway around the world, London, Lagos, Lisbon. You've found yourself in a new place, surrounded by strangers.

You start doing whatever you want. You stop thinking about the consequences or the people you've left behind. You leave the house after dark to get a late snack and don't even consider what the shadows might be hiding. You wear a full face of makeup and curl your hair just to go to the grocery store; then show up to work in sweats and a messy bun. You roll your eyes when it's warranted and snap back when it's justified.

You try not to be ashamed of the places you've been and the things you've done in the name of this newfound confidence. Because this is better than the caution, right? This is easier.

If you have always lived by that voice, how are you supposed to survive when it's gone?

It doesn't even register to you that you've stepped into the street until the car passes less than a foot behind your back, the wind whipping your fraying braid over your shoulder.

The danger has started to become fun.

How close can you get to the flame before you pull back?

How far can you lean over the edge before you fear the fall?

There is no limit, you decide. On the roof of your apartment building, you wonder what it would be like to touch the stars.

## **Rebuild**

*Ella Wortley*

I lay in the middle of the rubble,  
Watching the ash pour down—  
Adorning my hair, clothes, face,  
*Remains of what I thought was home.*  
You can't fight an earthquake built of tragedy.  
You're lost and afraid, and nothing is safe anymore—  
Torn from the weak hands of a child.  
*Now, you must be your own home.*  
Discover the bricks that you held close to your heart,  
And uncover the mortar of things that are constant,  
Lay them slowly, carefully, patiently.  
Your back will ache with sadness—  
Grief over the life you wished to have,  
Fight it.  
*You are building a home.*  
Place the boards of things you love down in a majestic pattern,  
Cover the walls with items that bring you joy, peace, and comfort.  
*Your home will be beautiful.*

- caesura -

Sleep on the things that bring a smile to your face,  
Dress yourself with happy memories and blessings.  
Warm yourself with the sun beaming from proud smiles,  
And eat and drink with the ones,  
who help you fall in love with being yourself.  
It will take time.  
It is worth it.  
*Rebuild. Rebuild. Rebuild.*

## ***Contributors***

### **Elise Adams**

**Abigail (Abbie) Beliles** is an undergraduate in English and was born and raised in rural Indiana. Her work has previously been accepted in *Caesura* and *Lit Mags*. She loves writing stories of all kinds, whether it be novels or short stories.

### **Anna Blower**

### **Brittany Brown**

### **Zoe Cook**

**Mitchell Eltzeroth** is a lifelong Hoosier, writer and artist. Starting with skits for drama club, he enjoys writing of all kinds including short stories, screenplays, and poetry. He hopes to incorporate his love of storytelling into his art as an Illustration major.

### **Isabella Gusmano**

### **Maya Hawkins**

**Noah Hayden** is a sophomore majoring in English, Writing, and Honors Humanities. He hails from Vincennes, IN, and attends classes here at Indiana Wesleyan University. In his free time, he enjoys reading and writing, and he is excited and grateful to share his pieces in the 2026 edition of *Caesura*!

**Emmylou (Emma) Kunze** is a sophomore at Indiana Wesleyan University and is majoring in Nursing and Honors Humanities. She has been writing poetry since middle school and finds her inspiration in relationships, life experiences, and Creation. This is her first poetic publication.

**Matthew Lacy** is a four-year contributor to and editor of *Caesura Magazine*. In the process, he has made friends to last him a lifetime after he graduates and enters the world of public education, where he hopes to inspire a new generation of writers and poets.

**Annie Lingren** is a junior Studio Arts and Creative Writing double major. This is her third year on *Caesura*'s editorial team. Crafter of prose, poetry, and artwork, Annie enjoys indulging her whimsy

in all possible ways and hopes that her work may be source of refreshment for others.

**Ella McDivitt** is the Head Editor of *Caesura Magazine*, and this is her third year working on the editorial team. She is a junior English and Writing double major with a minor in history. She enjoys reading juvenile fiction, romcoms, and adventure novels. She primarily writes children's fiction but also writes creative nonfiction and dabbles in poetry. Her future plans include writing and publishing children's novels and attending law school.

**Natalie Shiels**

**Katie Todd**

**Abbey Toner**

**Gibson Wing** is an attempted writer and musician from Dayton, Ohio. His works include two (home) studio albums, as well as many essays and poems of varying quality. His primary goal in life is to be remembered but not perceived.

**Adalynn Wollan** is a 22-year-old Creative Writing Major. Poetry has always been Adalynn's most effective outlet, and she has come to believe that this form of art is meant to be shared. The poems themselves ought to speak for themselves, and the writer hopes they touch the hearts of *Caesura* readers. Adalynn would like to thank Dr. Allison and Dr. Fayard, as well as her peers, for helping her reopen these creative channels during her time at IWU.

**Ella Wortley**

