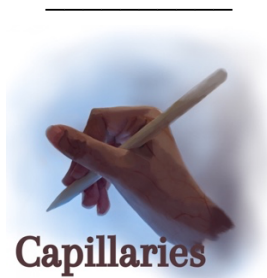


# Capillaries

Journal of Medical Humanities



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cjuw@uw.edu  
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## A Note to the Reader

The following pieces may contain themes relating to sexual assault, suicide, disordered eating, mental health, and other sensitive topics.

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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 16th issue of *Capillaries Journal of Narrative Medicine*. Our *Capillaries* journal at the University of Washington celebrates the full spectrum of the human experience. Artists pour their heart onto these nonjudgmental pages, and readers absorb the stories of people who, at their very core, share the same raw emotions that define our existence. No matter the celebration or setback, all of us know the ubiquity of joy and sadness.

As we transition into Spring, our community celebrates the accompanying growth and rebirth. We watch the flowers bloom outside our windows as we embark on our own journey out of wintery times. The key takeaway this season is not trauma, but resilience. We focus on rising with the sun after being trapped in the dark, and we cheer on those of us who are still fighting to emerge. We highlight our progress, our upward spirals, and our acceptance of shortcomings. We celebrate being exactly where we are on our journey, no matter how far we've traveled or how many miles we have to go. Today, we invite you to do the same.

Thank you endlessly to every person who contributed to making this journal happen. We deeply appreciate our artists, whose narratives are the heart of *Capillaries*. Thank you for your beautiful words, and for owning who you are. To our editors, publishers, marketers, and open mic team, it is because of you that we are able to distribute these critical stories to the public.



Thank you for working tirelessly to amplify the voices of our community. And lastly, dear reader, thank *you*. Thank you for holding this book in your hands and thumbing through our collection of experiences. We hope you find the fulfillment and contentment that you deserve.

Sincerely,  
*Capillaries* Team

The Capillaries Team

Varuna Ravi  
Esha Patel  
Tisbe Rinehart  
Nede Ovbiebo  
Meena Shanmugam  
Trevor Little  
Roni Guerra  
Amber Heaney  
Alejandra Heringer  
Flavia Ernau  
Nitya Malik  
Zachary Datko  
Rian Alam  
Minola Motha de Silva

## **Aftermath**

*By Gabrielle Sieloff*

English Major, History Minor

Deep breaths – into the aftermath,  
First steps out of the past.

Branches sway in soft sashays above me,  
And this forest of unnamed trees,  
Lacks the turbulence of my time spent lost at sea;  
I think there's peace in this new land.

The only stars in my eyes,  
Glowing in the darkest night,  
Are the ones I stuck on my ceiling last July;  
Everything I want is in the palm of my hand.

On a moonlit night,  
Wings unfurling - stiff with disuse,  
Breaking into flight;  
Not because I want to, but because I can.

And I don't wait by my old haunts,  
Forgotten names of past mistakes,  
Wound the chains around my demons and left them to rot;  
My condolences if you understand.

If the bell tolls victory at last,  
I'm the last survivor to hold the line of battle,  
Fading scars, and hearts at half-mast;  
This act of remembrance slips through my fingers like sand.

I raise a glass to the healing,  
And to letting go of the incessant feeling,  
That I need to be bigger and better,  
Than I am.

A blink – out of the aftermath,  
One last wave goodbye to the past.

# From Stardust to Specks

*By Jordan Lull*

English Major, Minors: Philosophy and Business

Paint the story on the skin, a tragedy without the words. Ice divesting the body of comfort and the slow shed of our bravery. In the dark. In the quiet. At the place where there is only the mirror and cadence of breath. In the cathedral. In the holy sepulcher. Will you give the page a name that is kinder than the fingers of the world?

Whispered questions that are more answer than anything else. A heart in the hand, offering and confession and shunned for the way it twitches. The way it hasn't died, yet. These shadows of the sights before our eyes. This distance between the perception and the shape. Our bodies were not made for thievery, but we do it anyway.

The rain catches on their eyelashes and you fall in love with how heaven's tears could not contain themselves. This is called projection. This is really just about the way your body leans towards. Leans away from the self. This is the desire to be something else. This is the wish to be folded into another shape.

If it does not fit into the smooth outlines of appropriate statistics, of comfortable probability, it does not exist. The body is only a shell, a veneer. So you find a prettier one to hide in. Hunt down a new shield. Tell a lie with those false eyes and smile to make a hollow that will collapse in the morning. It does not have to be lonely to be made full.

Somewhere, the water drains and the body returns to gravity. Somewhere, the lungs expel what the vocal cords have never had cause to exhale. When do the lies regain their colors? I will offer this exposure in red lighting, the fury bleeding into shadow puppets on the photograph. There is no end to the gaping wound in the chest.

There is no end to our bodies, lost among the stars.

## The Desk

By *Greta Keyes*

Food Systems, Nutrition, & Health Major

The desk of my dorm room is no longer a place to work; it is a shrine to chronic pain. The altar cloth is soft, holey sweaters I have no energy to mend or even put away, the offerings are empty mugs of tea and comfort food containers, and the incense is the eye-watering menthol of BioFreeze. The only empty spot is the place for my computer, right at the edge where I can reach it from bed to pull onto my lap. Its fan whines when it overheats from resting against the heating pad around my hips. The shelf above my desk is half-filled with half-filled pill bottles where I've started and stopped new medications that didn't help. Evidence of my pain can be found in half a dozen other locations around my room; there's another drawer across the room holding the overflow medical supplies, stretchy physical therapy bands litter the ground beneath my bed, and my cane is propped up in the corner by the door. Even the front pocket of my backpack has its own miniature pharmacy that I carry with me everywhere.

It's been just over a year since my condition manifested, and the ways it's reshaped my life have been profound. Sometimes I find it hard to even remember what my day-to-day existence was like before, when I barely had to think about my body. Even on good days now, there's an awareness I have of my limits, considerations I have to make about what I can and can't do.

On bad days I spend a lot of time in bed and struggle to distract myself from the aching of my hips or my ankles or wrists or ribs, or all of the above and more.

My feelings about my disability vary just as widely. Sometimes my mood is connected to the way my body feels, but other days seem incongruous, like bad pain days when I'm not so bothered or good ones when I'm unreasonably upset by even just a twinge. I can be proud to be surviving and angry at my body and mind all at once. Guilty for not doing everything I can to get better and guilty for the improvements I see anyway, since other disabled people I know aren't experiencing the same. None of it is how I expected, and trying to work through all of it has been almost more exhausting than the pain itself.

In my exhaustion, those stretchy physical therapy bands on my floor don't get used nearly as much as they should. "Should." I'm trying to let go of that word in my vocabulary of pain, because shaming my body for what it cannot do doesn't make it feel any better. Unfortunately, college and society at large are both very fond of 'should' and other such moral imperatives. Productivity, normality, and health are all seen as things one must strive towards, even when it hurts you. I remember first hearing that assumption stated out aloud in a nutrition class, summed up by the word healthism. It was one of many such revelations about all the unconscious biases surrounding disability I'd been raised with. I'm sure there's more to discover.

I don't know if my story can be one of healing, given that my pain is chronic, and in some ways I don't want it to be. I want my story to be one of happiness, of understanding and accommodating my pain and limitations and living a good life anyway.

In the summer after my condition came on, I took up knitting. It was something I could do from bed while watching tv and a way I could still feel accomplished, productive, and entertained even when it felt like the other activities in my life that brought me joy, like hiking, had been ripped away. When school started, I began knitting in my classes to provide a physical sensation other than pain to accompany my professor's words. Months later, my dad sent me an article he found about other people like me who knit in classes and meetings. One of the first people interviewed in it has Ehler Danlos Syndrome like me and knits to give herself something to focus on besides the pain. Reading that, I suddenly felt such a warmth of connection with humanity, like a handmade blanket had been wrapped around me.

One day when I feel better than usual, I clean my room. I put away the altar cloth of holey sweaters I don't wear and the incense of BioFreeze I don't use. I place my cane, which has a beautiful butterfly print and which I love for the freedom it gives me, in a place of honor instead of tucked shamefully into the corner. All around my room, I find just as many little stashes of yarn and knitting supplies as there are medications, and I condense them into a bag that I can reach from my bed or take with me wherever, depending on the day. Although my desk is still a shrine, I do my best to make it one to my happiness along with my pain.



# **Cochlear Implant Surgery**

*By Ronin Deo-Campo Vuong*

Biochemistry Major

Medicine is whatever you make it,  
so I made Him my difficult ally.  
We scoured for answers in my moist, unlit  
chasms and found labyrinthine reasons why,  
I can listen yet cannot hear nor feel.  
I grill Him on these strange things: how to hear,  
how to escape this hushed, unlocked bastille.  
I weighed my arcane options, always near  
the bizarre key not daring past the brim,  
'til I chose and my skull flakes fell to earth,  
my ear gaped, flowering open for Him,  
man-made marvel, to raise bread unleavened.  
My nerves felt scorching rebirth and I heard  
garish, faux symphonies of heaven.

## **Somatic Expressions**

*By Eve Rolston*

Integrated Social Sciences Major

My body is a machine.

My body is my armor.

My body is a temple.

My body is a prison.

My body is my limit.

My body is a value.

My body is mine?

No.

My body is not an object, not even my object.

She is a sacred subject.

She is my eyes and the seeing.

the flesh and the feeling.

she is the breath and the breathing.

the heart and its beating.

She is my doing and my being.

She is a wild landscape, the earth of my soul.

Upon her we build our life together.

my actions,

her desires.

my follies,

our experiences.

They all come to bear on her,

My body.

In love and fear, we share in everything.

Especially our pain.

I am full of holes, yet whole.

At peace with weakness and so,

enchanted.

I keep her eye in my "I" so we always stand alone, but we never  
go alone.

# **Fostering a Culture of Body Positivity**

*By Sravya Valiveti*

Immunology & Infectious Diseases Major, PSU

Growing up, I was skinny and my appearance was sometimes the subject of conversations within my family. As time went on, I kept hearing several people comment on my lean frame over the years, and these were probably my earliest memories with regards to discussions on body image. During adolescence, like most young women, I began feeling self-conscious about my body. In fact, when I was 14, I had a gynecologist point out how frail I looked for my age even though I had an otherwise healthy diet intake. I did not like being thought of as weak. I wanted to put on more weight and look different. However, I quickly learned to tune out these comments where others felt like it was their right to comment on my appearance.

Most recently over the past two years, I happened to put on more weight, mostly due to a range of stressors that I was actively dealing with. During this past holiday break, I had a few women in my family, including my mother, confront me about my weight gain and point it out in a way so as to alert me as if I wasn't already aware of it. Although I could see that the comments were well-intentioned and there was genuine concern, these remarks came across as insensitive and blunt. I was caught off guard. My lifestyle was indeed quite sedentary, no doubt and that was reflected in my weight gain. However, hearing these words pointed out to me was not helpful.

Growing up, I've heard several women in my own family talk behind each other's backs, sometimes saying things to the person directly, commenting on how someone gained or lost weight. These problematic conversations were a pattern and these dialogues would play out often in front of my own eyes. My efforts to stop them from judging other women based on their appearance were a lost cause.

I felt like I was the victim this time around and had to bear the brunt of those remarks. However, I knew that to argue back and address their insensitivity was going to be foolish. I did not think that they would not understand where I was coming from. The truth was that I just could not seem to please my family and fit into their version of 'ideal body image' standards either way, without having someone in my family have the urge to bring it to my attention.

This interaction led me down a spiral for a whole week where I was grappling with a complex barrage of emotions of feeling blamed, disturbed, helpless and uneasy while thinking of my own body. I felt like I was at odds with my own family. I was feeling worthless, unattractive and simply put, not good enough. This incident also had a deep subconscious impact where I was falling into the trap of feeling particularly self-conscious about my body image. I felt judged. I was trying to regulate my diet intake or food choices. I was not allowing myself to have foods that I typically enjoy for about a week following that conversation. I felt this sudden pressure to change, to exercise, to become more fit and to lose all that weight that I recently gained as quickly as possible.

I soon realized that this drive to change was not self-motivated. What was instead driving and fueling this sudden urge to lose weight was hearing these blunt comments from my own family. I came to realize that my plans to make lifestyle changes were primarily to please my family instead of doing it for myself on my terms, which is counterproductive and not a sustainable mindset for long-lasting results. I wanted to feel less judged, more accepted and seen for where I'm at right now and for how I currently look. I slowly started tuning out this noise of other people telling me how my body's changing. I tried to reframe my focus and ground myself by asking more realistic questions that aligned with what I could see myself accomplishing: do I want to make this lifestyle change, and, if so, why? How do I plan to achieve it or what do I want to get out of it? Was my overarching focus on losing weight or to become more physically stronger/active?

I started establishing reasons that mattered the most to me, set a vision for my plan, found fitness activities that I enjoyed doing and gained clarity about the next steps. I crafted my own approach to regain control over the process and set smaller goals while factoring in grace, self-compassion and leaving room for failures in my plan. There was an emphasis on cultivating mindfulness to ensure I was achieving my progress in a way that felt authentic to me, while also acknowledging that I have been through chronic stressors these past few years – it was all the more important to be more kind to myself throughout this fitness journey. I wanted to find my way again to a healthier version of myself at my own pace while not exclusively focusing on weight loss.

I firmly believe that how we talk about someone's weight as a society or in our own circle of family/friends, whether it's through subtle passive comments or actual body shaming, has a direct impact on someone's mental health. I truly believe that how we frame our conversations has a significant impact on how we drive change forward. Over time, I think societal norms have conditioned us to focus more on certain beauty expectations and fixate on other people's looks or flaws. I envision a better future where there's shifts with how women converse about other women's appearances on social media or otherwise. This is especially true when it comes to young women, given that they are more likely to be in a vulnerable space, tend to face extra pressure to adhere to beauty standards and are learning how to set boundaries while navigating perceptions surrounding body image.

I think it's time that we acknowledge women's bodies are fundamentally unique and accept that their body type, needs, metabolism or genetics can vary significantly from individual to individual, which can have an impact on their overall health and well-being. It is normal for women's bodies to change as we age as a result of complex biological, emotional or environmental stressors and likewise, several factors like dietary needs, activity, metabolism are continuously fluctuating over time, right from adolescence through menopause. At the end of the day, it would not make much sense to be hard on ourselves, to compare ourselves to other women's appearances or feel like we need to look like what we did in the past.

There is a stronger need, now more than ever, to be more vocal with addressing stigma, actively confronting our own biases, adapting outdated guidelines on managing weight, addressing shame/discrimination surrounding those who are overweight, and taking a firm stand against bias.

Some people might argue that criticism towards a person's body image could potentially motivate that person to channel that negativity into becoming more physically fit. Although some might be more driven or extrinsically motivated to push themselves to achieve positive outcomes, I personally find this approach to be unhealthy. I believe this approach is unhelpful with sustaining progress and it is quite unproductive for yielding long-term results since your primary motivator is someone else's criticism of your appearance. In my opinion, a person might also fall back into their old food habits or relapse into unhealthy eating patterns which can bring about a range of mental health issues and imbalances surrounding food or body image when they start to lose that extrinsic motivation. The bottom line is that the process of losing weight and maintaining weight does not have to be linear or flawless.

Having worked as a health coach, I have observed the practical benefits of using tools like Motivational Interviewing to empower patients to believe that the locus of control when it comes to making healthy lifestyle changes lies in their hands and that they *do* have full control over taking action to improve their health outcomes. With conscious efforts, they have the power to change their perception of factors surrounding their own body image and



re-define their narrative while overcoming past judgment that they might have encountered. I do acknowledge that this is easier said than done from the patient's perspective. It definitely involves working on reframing mindset, re-evaluating and exploring a person's relationship with food guided by an interdisciplinary care team of counselors, physicians, nutritionists, personalized exercise specialists etc who can support whole-person care. They can additionally help them process difficult emotions surrounding unhealthy behaviors/attachments with food.

By asking the patient what they want their goal to look like, meeting them where they are to set a realistic baseline goal based on the patient's comfort level and establishing a tailored diet plan that works best for them, they can have improved autonomy and control over their own progress. I believe that continuity of care—such as frequent follow-ups, building trust and meeting patients with empathy through their barriers and successes—makes a world of difference for the patient to feel truly seen and to feel like they're at peace with their own body. As a result, they feel more equipped to own their wellness journey and can fully embrace their body type.

It is also imperative for providers to go beyond goal setting while managing chronic conditions. Celebrating small wins through positive affirmations can empower patients to work towards a positive body image. Primary care physicians (PCP), for example, are in a dynamic and uniquely privileged role to be actively involved in a patient's holistic care long-term, through

ongoing conversations about several aspects of health and play a central role in patient's care coordination. PCP's may thus benefit from employing tools like Motivational Interviewing to identify underlying reasons associated with barriers surrounding healthy lifestyle changes through nonjudgmental and open conversations.

## **My Love**

By Trevor Little

Creative Writing Major

Lonely, water-locked, and quiet,  
an empty mind rattled with doubt –  
lost hope for a brighter morning  
or a darker night.

It was in these moments we found *us*:  
broken travelers on a shattered road.

In a new dawn you faced the world alone,  
heavy with the weight of ages –  
days gone by with a lost clarity  
and a broken vision of life.

And yet you cling to me still:  
I feel your fear and see your strength.

So when the fire swallows your name and marks your arms,  
Hold me close.

when the water chokes your heart and soaks your hands,  
Feel my touch.

when the wind whips your mind and stuffs your ears,  
Hear my heart.

when the earth crushes your light and buries your eyes,

See my love.

There's a silent promise in your breath tonight,  
a remembrance of what we were and what we'll become.

In a heartbeat we fall to pieces beneath a setting sun  
over an ocean of glass,

present in our reflections,  
yet absent in our thoughts –

in this we revel,  
growing free and full with a peace

to wash away our lives.

If you stay with me, I will sing to you.

In our final moments, I will whisper you a vow:

“I'll never let you go.”

## **Library Leering**

*By Caroline Roe*

Political Science Major

You say that the way she walked  
Or moved her hands  
Along her neck  
Stroking the sore muscles  
As she peered into another book  
She wanted the attention  
Surely the only explanation  
For her being there  
Late  
At the library,  
In that outfit.

You would assure your mother  
Your sister  
That the snap judgement you made  
To excuse your unreciprocated advances  
To offer explanation for why  
Is rooted in her outward appearance  
What she exuded from every pore  
It was so clear  
To you  
Wasn't it?  
You felt entitled

To just look, of course  
Its only natural of course

She would not have worn that if she had not wanted to be Gawked  
at  
Here in the library  
Skin is to be covered  
So that the men can focus their attention

On economics  
Enlightenment  
Finance  
Matters of great seriousness

Maybe the ogling is harmless  
Maybe it's the result of biologically driven urges  
Hormones  
That men can't possibly be expected to control Maybe  
the woman is enjoying the attention  
As she reviews her notes  
Carefully placing each highlight You don't  
notice her book's name Or the fact she has  
evaded you Everytime you approach

You were intoxicated by her beauty And  
surely it is a great compliment To be  
awarded with attention  
To be regarded with high esteem Because of  
the way your cheekbones Sit  
On your porcelain skin  
And the way your body bends  
As you sit  
In the library  
Reading  
Turning the pages

Surely she is purposefully turning you on Merely  
making eye contact makes you Feel out of control  
And makes her feel  
Your power

## **A Choice**

By *Sailaja Devaguptapu*

M.Sc Human Genetics, Post Graduate Diploma in  
Bioinformatics & Patents Law

I had seen a death once  
    And I died once  
I had seen death twice  
    And I died twice  
I lost track of the number, thence  
    *I chose* to not merely die  
But, to face the how and why  
    Of life and death  
    The dying breath  
    The questioning eyes  
Why wither the mortal ties?  
    Why come and go?  
    Seeking to know;  
    Unto the choice less choice  
    *I chose* to humbly lend my voice  
    As I too was there  
The world of somewhere and nowhere



The Void  
The all encompassing void  
The awakening and alchemising void  
The divinizing void  
The weakening and strengthening repertoire  
The revealing memoir;  
Ergo, *I chose* to lyric a healing tale  
The ailing to set sail  
Within!  
To restore thine grin  
  
To let live, live it all  
Rise from the fall  
Rise and live, forever  
Storm the weather  
As the autumn lets in the spring  
Forever unto thine blues, *when chooses* not to cling  
Yet again, to let soar thine wing  
For, to be sanguine or a weakling  
*Is a choice*  
The poise  
*Is a choice*

To heed the inner voice  
Amidst the noise  
*A choice*  
We make  
Ourselves, to remake  
As greets us, the choice less choice  
For, the life-breath  
Transcends life and death  
When *we choose* to ascend  
And transcend;  
Fathoming and transmitting the clues  
Transmuting the blues  
We live, once  
We live, twice  
We live forever  
As we head there  
The word less world of nowhere and everywhere  
For, *we choose* to live  
Love, to give  
To give it all  
To let rise from the fall  
To let rise, live and love, forever!

## **Knuckles that Buckle as the Sea**

*By Jordan Lull*

English Major, Minors: Philosophy and Business

There is a second on the edge of safety that tastes like the final note. Edges sharp as a throat laid bare. A dare and a declaration at once. The way the fingers lace together and press, knuckles buckling as the sea. Shimmering while the hours dwindle. I have no name for this ease, but I'll trace it to you anyway.

Under the foliage is a secret that longs for an echo: the grandiose nature of persistence. In the face of what? The face of oneself. The way the lyrics get stuck between molars, a collection of vowels unsuited to civilized company. The things I call myself at night. The way it tastes on another's tongue.

Here is the place in the meadow where the moon comes to sleep. A canopy of dreams whispering between soft moments. I keep waiting to open my eyes in darkness, but there are only stars. There is only warmth and hazy mornings and ellipses between lips. I keep waiting to be locked out, but the key belongs to me now.

Everything learns the shape of itself eventually, fingers pressing into empty spaces. Fingers finding what eyes cannot see, what the lashes don't dare approach. I am making up for lost time and lost appetite and all of the ways I learned to feel full. I am trying to remember I was not wrong. I am not wrong, still. Remind me?

# Starvation

By Tilly Rossetti

Cinema & Media Studies Major

something is severely wrong with me.  
sick  
perverted  
twisted  
wrong  
unnatural  
inhuman  
sick.  
i'm sticking with sick.

you see, i  
*like* that feeling-

it starts as a deep  
ache, then  
stabbing pains join in  
jousting back and  
forth, seeing which  
can wound my stomach  
more,  
until my head begins to  
throb, pulsing whilst  
floating, above my  
consciousness, taking me out  
of a realm of  
reason.

and that's when my heart begins  
to race,  
pitter, patter,  
faster and faster,  
an incomparable  
rush  
that my brain *loves-*

an indescribable pain  
one that feels *right*,  
a self-harm that feels  
*deserved*,  
a self-starvation that i *enjoy*.

(because it hurts less than sadness)

# **Corporeality**

*by Eve Rolston*

Integrated Social Sciences Major

After I received my first chronic pain diagnosis, I began having visions of the eternal forms of my mind and body. My body was weak, broken and vulnerable, splayed on the ground and barely breathing. My mind struggled to bear the weight of its lifeless form, like a mother lifting her fully grown child. They staggered along helplessly, the warm glow of their outlines wavering every time I was uninsured for the next treatment, passed along to yet another specialist, looked at another blank, “normal” test result, asked if I might just have a really low pain tolerance, and so on. I knew that something had to give under the pressure, and soon, otherwise it would be my mind that starts to crack, to break down. To drop its precious cargo. And over time it did; slowly but surely accumulating wider and wider stress fractures. Fingers slipping.

But it wasn't until I took Disability Studies classes, until I heard disabled voices, that I started asking the important questions: Why do my mind and body take separate forms like this? Why are they not one, as they are in my physical self? Where are they going? And why is it so important that they get there? Why is being weak, broken and vulnerable such a threat? A threat to what? (a threat to who?)

Maybe I imagined them separately because of the way that everyone talks about my body. Because of the way that bodies are envisioned, how their form is molded by our language, our society, our culture. Especially the ideology of our medicine.

It has feelings, the body, but they are biological. Primitive and controllable. Just give it the right fuel, the right training, and it will produce the results you want. All bodies are the same, don't you know? Each body can pass that test of good health if it is only used correctly. Prescriptively.

Such lies.

Lies embedded in the logic we use to judge each other. On the playground, in the office, at the hospital.

Now, when I catch myself in my mind's eye, there is only one form. Not the object and the subject, not the dead weight and the carrier, but Her, a singularity. And now I know why I separated them. Because when she lays broken and vulnerable on the ground, I am alone. There is no part of me to be strong, to carry the weight. If I allowed that vulnerability and injustice to invade my whole being, that glowing form in her virtual world might never get up again.

Laying t(her) alone, the world carries on without me.

But does she need to get up? Where is she going? What is it that she must do?

Maybe now my form is not alone. I can see – or maybe I envision – others. Other eternal forms running past me, running over me with large strides, almost gliding. Their eyes do not waver from the path they tread, they don't even glance down. I can only guess where they think they are going. To some kind of glowing city, maybe. To success and innovation. To a promising future sculpted by our festering desires of the past.

I crawl awkwardly off to the side, into a ditch, and look up to the sky. This is no place for me. This path will never bend for me, only I for it, until I break. Now that I see, I cannot unsee. It is “I” in the lived world that protects her in my eternal world by taking a new path, a new way to see a body.

I keep my eyes wide open as I crawl towards an unknown destination. Through open fields and dense forest, through many days and many more nights. She has to stop to rest often, laying back, eyes to the stars. At last, the rocks underneath grow smoother, and up ahead a sharp line of bright, deep blue. I rush feverishly into the cool water and float there, the sun reaching out to feed me its light. The sea cradles us, soothing wounds and floating sore limbs, sweeping me up like I weigh nothing at all. My difference, its meaning - a whole world full of someone else’s meanings - they all swirl away with different currents. Here there is no place to go and no way to get there. Just gentle rocking into the eternal blue. This is a place that’s made for me. In a strange world, my strength is my surrender.

I would stay there forever, but life does not walk through time on a line.

Sometimes even now I am pulled back to that first path against my better judgment and must perform the trick again. Normality can be seductive that way.



But each time I see what is real, what should be real, and turn away. At my own pace, I stumble, crawl, and drag myself down this now well-worn trail glistening with silvery drops of blood from my wounds. I follow it to the sea.

My words, my actions, my classes, my days; I live them all so she can return there. To the place that is made for her: to the place that I make for her. This place where the water lifts the dead weight of judgment from our bodies. Where new futures can be born without a sinister form to hang behind us, to regulate our becoming human.

Where joy is that feeling of being cradled by the sea.

# **Grief**

*By Caroline Roe*

Political Science Major

Grief is a weight that we all must bear, A burden that  
we cannot share.

It settles deep within our hearts,

And tears our very souls apart.

It comes in waves, like the ocean's tide, And leaves  
us feeling empty inside. It haunts us in our waking  
dreams,

And lingers in our silent screams.

Grief is a journey we must undertake, A path that we  
cannot fake.

It leads us through the darkest night, And into the  
dawn's first light.

It changes us in ways we cannot see, And shapes us  
into who we'll be.

It teaches us to love and cherish,

And reminds us of what we'll one day perish.

So when grief comes knocking at your door, And  
you feel like you can't take anymore, Remember that  
it's okay to cry,

And to let your sorrow pass you by.

For in grief we find a love so true,  
A love that will forever renew.  
And though it may be hard to bear, We know that  
love will always be there.

## Love & Sex in the Time of Corona

By Therese Mortejo

Majors: Psychology and Creative Writing

The outer lips of your vagina fold inwards to meet the inner lips  
and together

they sew themselves shut.

Your pubic hair stops growing,

the shower was the last time

your back folded down

at an uncomfortable angle

just to make sure you didn't miss a spot.

If he unzipped your blue denim

and stripped you of your panties

the only thing he would find

is miles of smooth satin skin

no hole to pry open or fit into

no lips to finger or fondle

no stubble to complain about.

She calls this "revirginized."

The last snap you sent him was over

four hours ago.

You hold your breath almost as tightly

as you hold your phone

hoping

wishing

*praying*

that the notification got lost in the sea of  
texts  
calls  
emails  
that don't matter.

Or better yet, you accidentally cleared the notification altogether  
and just forgot.

Yeahhhhhh, right.

You stop breathing as your thumb scrolls  
to find the yellow encompassing ghost.

The indifferent screen reads,

*Ryan \*heart eyes emoji\**

*Opened • 3h ago*

She calls this “left on read.”

Your conversation with him has been  
a ping pong match,

a quick back and forth of

“How’s your day going?”

followed by a

“Not bad, hbu?”

It finally got interesting last night

when you asked,

“If you could travel to any city, where would it be?”

and he answered your answer,

“Italy.”

You let the excitement pile up

and topple over in your stomach,

fooling yourself into thinking

that this was a sign.

You let the excitement show,  
responding faster than usual  
typing out more detailed replies  
expecting the same excitement in return.  
You let the excitement crumble  
and die  
it's been four days without a response  
and you know he's seen it.

She calls this “ghosted.”

Your palms glisten with sweat  
as you clench  
and unclench  
your fists.  
You pull the stray curl behind your ear  
for the third time,  
silently pleading for its cooperation.  
You consider switching out your  
puffy blouse for something that shows a little more  
skin,  
but the blaring of the FaceTime call  
sounds an alarm in your head.  
You take a deep breath,  
practice your smile, and  
slide your finger across the screen to answer.  
It is your first time FaceTiming  
a stranger  
and as the connection settles into place  
you wonder why he looks  
nothing

like his pictures on Hinge.

She calls this “a date.”

Your left hand grips the phone  
while your right slides  
down  
down  
down  
until you reach the sweet spot  
between your legs.

Your teeth find your bottom lip  
and bite  
the narrative he weaves into your ear  
dancing behind closed eyes.  
You wish that he was  
in your room  
on your bed  
on top of you  
but you’ve gotten so used to imagination  
that he actually is  
on top of you  
on your bed  
in your room.  
Sound escapes your lips  
loud  
loud  
louder  
until you know he’s melting too.

She calls this “sex.”

You text him every day.  
You snap him  
you dm him  
you even hit him up on  
Facebook Messenger so,  
even if he’s not physically  
there, you can feel his  
presence  
every time you hold your  
phone, as if he’s your favorite  
app  
lying just beyond Face ID  
sitting on the home page  
waiting for you to tap him.

You know his height  
what school he goes to  
whether he wants kids  
or not  
and he’s told you his life story  
like ten times  
on FaceTime.

You put three red hearts after his name  
call him ‘baby’  
and celebrate your one week anniversary.  
You fall asleep to his good morning texts  
and wake up to his good night’s. You live  
in two different worlds two different time



zones

two different lives.

You feel like you've known him as if  
your souls had met in a past life and  
never forgot each other

but

you've never met him.

She calls this "love."

I call it "you've never even met him."

She calls this "love."

I call it "you don't even know  
him!" She calls this "love!"

I call it, "maybe one day."

# Gravity As A Hereditary Disease

By Jordan Lull

English Major, Minors: Philosophy and Business

The floor crumbles and so the body is made to float, to rise above, to break the bones and hollow them out for a weightless second. The throat eats the sea so that there is somewhere to place the feet, again. So that the teeth do not get their hands dirty with tears. And the body can be nothing but whole, even when it fractures into compass points and forgets its way North.

*What's wrong?*

The fifth metatarsal breaks before letting go of itself, but it breaks all the same. This skin peeling away from its structure, flopping without the prison to hold it up. A scaffold. A glance into the system at play. And the outrage drowns out the colors, the story collapsing. What remains, when the bodies are just numbers staggering upwards?

*You're supposed to be the one I don't need to worry about.*

Cut off the leg and the body balances, holds itself upright, does what it can. Cut off a leg and the spine rearranges, adjusts, compensates. This goes on for a lifetime, until the world is whole again. It is whole and the body bounces along, one leg now, until the hip collapses into itself. The body does what it can, but never for long enough.

*So there will be no one left to worry at all.*

## **Effects-her**

*By Anonymous*

My heartbeat thumps from my wrist against the side of my head  
like stifled emotions from inside me  
pounding to escape  
as I lie in the dark,  
the future hazy with uncertainty

I forgot to take my meds today.  
Tomorrow will bring confusion  
delusion  
most of all, seclusion  
trudging through campus, my eyes glued to the ground  
desperately avoiding the smiles and laughter and life that line the  
sidewalks  
as if they jeer  
pointing their colorful joyous fingers right into my hopeless, dark  
heart  
burning shame rises within me  
like lava bubbling deep within a volcano, waiting for a chance to spill  
out  
onto the people that care most about me

Why can't I feel happy?  
Each headache, brain zap

spew of nausea and overwhelming shakiness

Pushing me right to the edge of eruption

I remembered to take my meds today.

I feel grounded, for the first time my emotions don't feel like a centrifugal force

holding me down, swirling violently

They simply rest, as if someone flipped the switch

and cut their power source

The sweet breeze and warm sun wrapping around me, the leaves fluttering off trees overhead

People around me smile and laugh, how happy I am that they enjoy the weather too

Soon I will feel like them, surrounded by the people that care most about me

Is this what happiness feels like?

Each breath, joke

swig of water, future plan, thought of gratitude

brings me a magnitude relief

How grateful I am for Effexor.

## **Frustration is Futile**

*By Caroline Roe*

Political Science Major

A poem for my little sister, who I was blessed to spend most of 2020 with in Boise, Idaho where we grew up together (because of COVID we both lived at home, this poem reflects the gratitude I feel for that time now in retrospect).

It was a cold winter day,  
Promises of spring break filled our minds  
When news of a pandemic  
Began to affect people of all kinds

We gathered up our belongings  
Without much fanfare or facts  
We were only nineteen  
When the weight of the world  
Was placed on our backs

I joined a mass exodus of youth  
We were headed back home  
It was 2020  
No one really could have known.

I walked with lighter footsteps, back then  
I never could have understood  
I did not yet know of what awaits  
In adulthood

To understand more of humanity  
Like a rock on the forest floor  
Slowly overtaken by moss  
Blissfully unaware, no more.

I would soon grow to know loss  
More grey than green  
As it turns out  
24 is only a step outside  
the adolescent scene  
What I would do to hug us  
To whisper that it would not be okay  
but rather  
Be grateful for this, and for every day  
Cherish time with family  
Someday it may not be possible  
to all gather

With the weight of the world on my shoulders  
Now, at 24  
I keep waiting for you to come back  
To just walk through that door  
It's hard not to look back  
How did I allow all that precious time with you  
To fall through the crack?  
All because of COVID  
We had all the laughter, the songs,  
All because of COVID  
I spent 102 extra days  
And 102 extra nights  
It was all bonus sister time  
Even when we would fight.  
We danced with  
no music, not a  
care in the world.

When we were  
together it was  
always a sight.

My sister was my best friend, but now  
A message to her I can no longer send  
So instead I will write  
So that I might remind others  
to cherish the people who are their light

She was someone who was made up of love That could light up a  
room  
I had no idea I would say goodbye  
Soon.

Frustrated by COVID  
an ambiguous force,  
I screamed: who my age wants to live with their family? I wanted  
to be away,  
In college of course.

Blissfully ignorant  
Of the painful reality  
Unaware  
That someday I would want to go back  
To a time and place  
Just because you were there.

You were so beautiful  
To remind you of this  
Was just one of many things  
That I did neglect

At 19 I was too selfish to care  
I wish I had taken the time  
to reflect

I will try to remember  
That you would always say

Thinking about something  
Can be done in a multitude of ways  
My sister was kind,  
She deserved more time  
The world is cruel  
But she did not mind

To be kind like Kate  
Is the ultimate feat  
Because without her  
The life I live now  
Could not have been complete

She lives on in the trees  
In the music  
On the mountaintops  
And in the promise of tomorrow  
I know that she would not approve  
Of anyone drowning themselves  
Especially not in sorrow

No my sister would say instead  
Swim  
Do not make my death about you

Make it about the rest of your life  
So I challenge myself  
To give positivity  
And gratitude



A chance  
We never know  
When today could be the last day  
We can dance

With the weight of the world on my shoulders  
I now look up and see  
Your laughter as it rains down  
And your smile

shines through  
I hope you know  
That the best parts of me  
Are all because of you.

Until we are together again,  
I hope you can see  
Your presence on Earth  
Is dearly missed  
By me

- In loving memory of Katherine Judith Roe (2001-2021)

## The Capillaries Team

**Varuna Ravi** is a senior studying Public Health-Global Health and pursuing a career in Clinical Research. She is the President and Head of Publishing for Capillaries. Outside of work, she loves listening to video essays, meeting new people, and learning to play the electric guitar.

**Esha Patel** is a sophomore studying Neuroscience and is working towards a career in medicine. She loves designing social media posts as a public relations officer for the journal. In her free time, she enjoys being in nature, kayaking, and trying new breakfast restaurants with her friends!

**Tisbe Rinehart** is a senior studying Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) and Environmental Studies, and is working toward a career as an author and educator. She is the Editor in Chief for Capillaries. Her most cherished simple pleasure is reading in the sun while sipping on her morning coffee.

**Nede Ovbiebo** is a junior studying Public Health-Global Health and Biochemistry. She currently serves as the open-mic coordinator for the Capillaries Journal. She plans to pursue a career within the areas of health policy, medicine, and academia. In her free time, Nede enjoys reading, trying new coffee spots, and baking.

**Meena Shanmugam** is a junior studying Microbiology and is working towards pursuing a career in medicine. She is the treasurer for Capillaries. When she's not doing anything college-related, she's spending time with friends and family, watching documentaries, and creating niche Spotify playlists.

**Trevor Little** is a senior studying Creative Writing, with dreams of becoming a comic book writer someday. He's greatly enjoying editing pieces for Capillaries with the editing team! You can catch him in his free time playing video games, reading comics, and spending a hellacious amount of time watching YouTube.

**Roni Guerra** is a junior studying Neuroscience and Classical Studies, pursuing a career in medicine. They are on the Publishing team for Capillaries. When they're not studying for ochem, they're usually reading, baking, or spending time outdoors.

**Amber Heaney** is a sophomore studying English with a minor in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, and was an editor in this journal. Her goal is to pursue a career in book publishing. Amber loves sitting by the water and reading a book, eating Ben and Jerry's ice cream, and writing poetry on the side.

**Alejandra Heringer** is a junior studying English and music, pursuing a career in teaching. She is a part of the editing team for Capillaries. In her free time, she enjoys baking, reading, and drinking an almost unhealthy amount of coffee.

**Flavia Ernau** is a junior studying Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology, working towards pursuing a career in medicine. She is on the publishing team for Capillaries and she loves walking around downtown Seattle, finding new spots with amazing views and good coffee.

**Nitya Malik** is a freshman studying biochemistry. She is a part of the editing team, and loves seeing the creativity in other people and their form of expression.

**Zac Datko** is a senior studying English and nursing. He is an editor for the journal and looks forward in a career in healthcare and increasing patient outcome through communications. He enjoys reading, writing, and the gym when he isn't busy working in the emergency room.

**Rian Alam** is a sophomore studying physiology. He works on the editing team for capillaries and loves seeing the development of different art pieces as they transform a story into something tangible. In his free time Rian loves to read books, play videogames, and enjoy a good burger.

**Minola Motha de Silva** is a junior studying Environmental Health and is pursuing a career in immunology and toxicology. She is part of the Public Relations team for Capillaries. She loves crocheting, ocean creatures, plants, and sunsets.