

*THE*  
**SCRIBBLER**  
*2026*



It is the stars,  
The stars above us, govern our conditions

-William Shakespeare

*King Lear*

IV.iii.36-37

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# THREADS OF FATE

by Brooklyn Whitmer

Beneath the stars where silence sings,  
Beyond the pull of earthly things,  
There weaves a thread no eye can see—  
The quiet hand of destiny.

It whispers through the morning mist,  
In lovers' smiles, in moments missed.  
A winding road, a path unknown, Yet  
every step we call our own.

Was it by chance or something more  
That brought you knocking at my  
door? A thousand choices left behind—  
And still, your name was in my mind.

Fate doesn't shout, nor does it plead,  
It plants a thought, it drops a seed.  
And while we dream of what could be,  
It writes in ink we cannot see.

The sailor prays to wind and tide,  
But fate decides if he'll survive.  
The gambler rolls, the poet rhymes—  
Each tangled in her web of time.

Some call it cruel, some call it kind,  
Some chase it till they lose their mind.  
But fate is not a friend or foe—  
It simply points the way to go.

We wrestle with its silent rule,  
Declare ourselves both king and fool.  
Yet in the mirror of our past,  
Its fingerprints are clear and vast.

The letters never sent are read,  
The words we spoke still echo, dead.  
The moments lost, the ones we seized—  
All woven in its vast decrees.

A stranger's glance, a child's cry,  
The way a bird cuts through the sky—  
All signs, perhaps, or just the breeze—  
Yet fate walks softly through all these.

Do we decide, or are we led?  
Do we build paths, or walk what's spread?  
Perhaps it's both—a dance, a game, Of  
shifting stars and fleeting flame.

But whether we believe or not,  
We all must drink from fate's old pot.  
It shapes the world, both wide and small,  
And one day, comes to claim us all.

So walk your path with steady breath,  
With eyes on life, not only death.  
For though the thread is not your own,  
The steps you take are yours alone.



# Life

by: Grayson Garrett

I rode in a car one day  
Heading to a college, where my brother stays  
When we passed by a small church  
And behind the church were tombstones  
Countless stories, countless memories  
All finished beneath the trees  
It made me realize how fickle possession is  
For the poor enter death the same as the rich  
Neither has an advantage underground  
When their bodies lay still without a sound  
What then did their money earn  
A comfortable time before the urn  
You take nothing with you in the end  
Other than your bones and your sin  
But if you were to ask me  
I would tell you what I see  
A world full of people chasing the wrong things  
Money and quick fixes seem to be important  
Until the end when it wasn't worth it  
So why bother living if this is true?  
Because there is point to this life  
There is a point to you  
We're here for two reasons my brother  
To love God and to love others  
Because in the end when you enter the grave  
It's better to have love than a rich estate

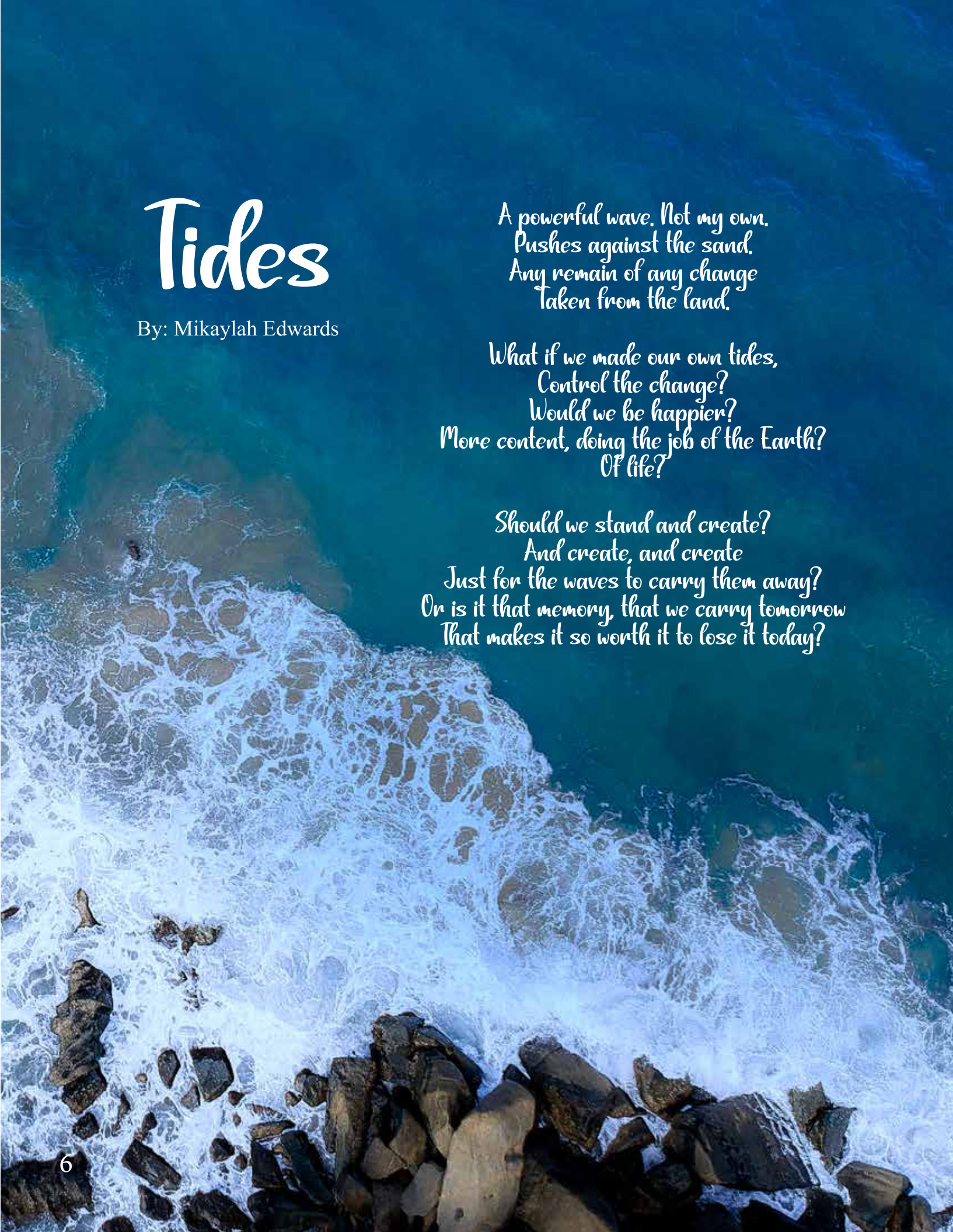
# Tides

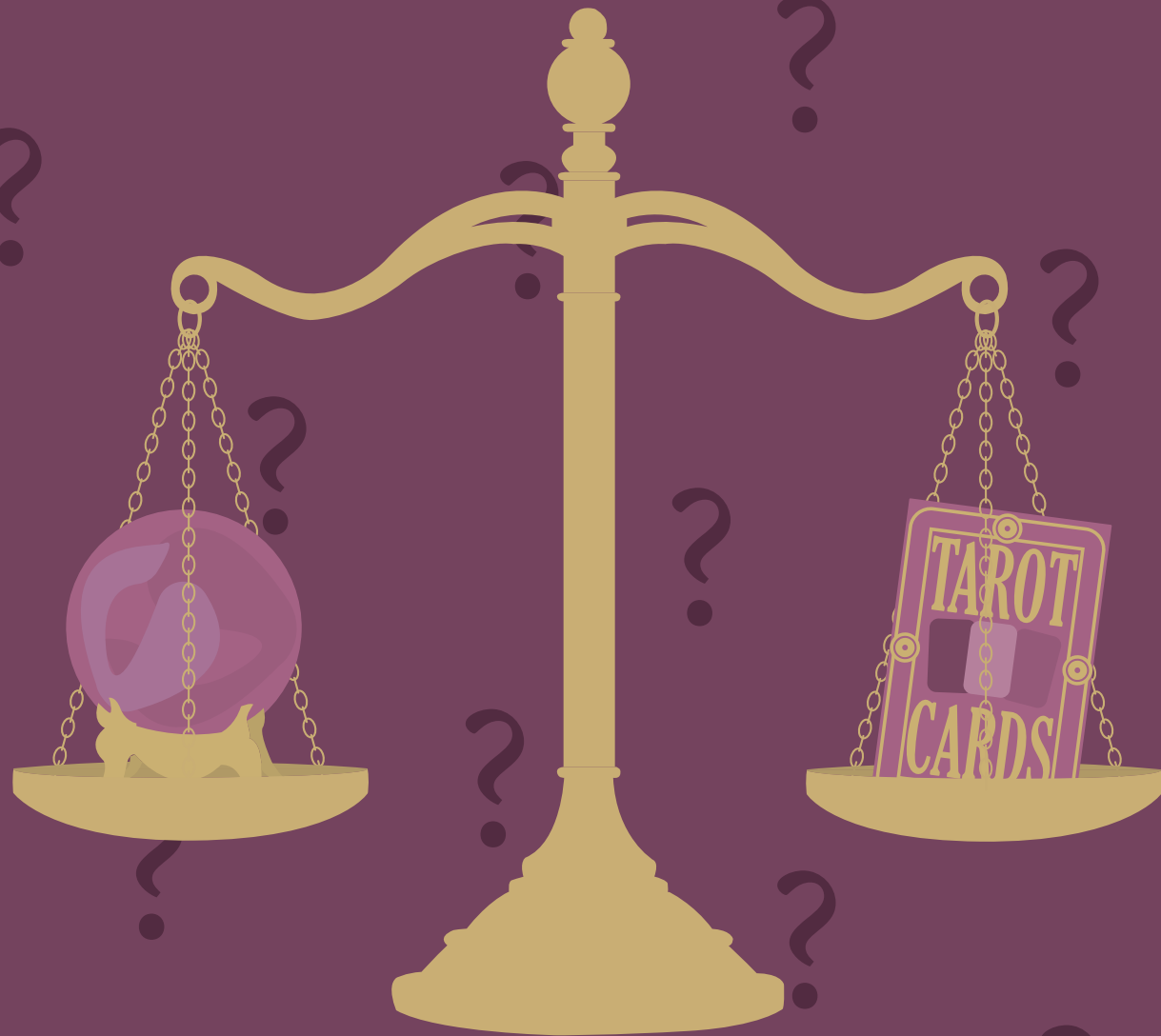
By: Mikaylah Edwards

*A powerful wave. Not my own.  
Pushes against the sand,  
Any remain of any change  
Taken from the land.*

*What if we made our own tides,  
Control the change?  
Would we be happier?  
More content, doing the job of the Earth?  
Of life?*

*Should we stand and create?  
And create, and create  
Just for the waves to carry them away?  
Or is it that memory, that we carry tomorrow  
That makes it so worth it to lose it today?*





## Weighing Fate

by Kelley Seal

A heavy-handed thing, fate—  
The thread of life, the fall of cards,  
These fail to intimate  
A determined path this hard.

Set, destined, to the point  
The phrase “written in the stars”  
Becomes the hinge and joint  
Of a fallacy to stay on par.

Does humanity have free will?  
Not according to zodiacs!  
Set conditions determine life, good or ill.  
Should we heed such hacks?

No, the cast dice determines naught,  
The inevitable set aside, forgot.

## Tides of Fortuity

By: Laura Reece

Here. Walk this way. The sand  
under our feet may as well be an escalator,  
taking our minds to other places--  
places where the moments are ours,  
like blue is the ocean's and yellow is the sun's.

I don't mind if you don't.

There was a time when I despised  
the grainy feel--back then--

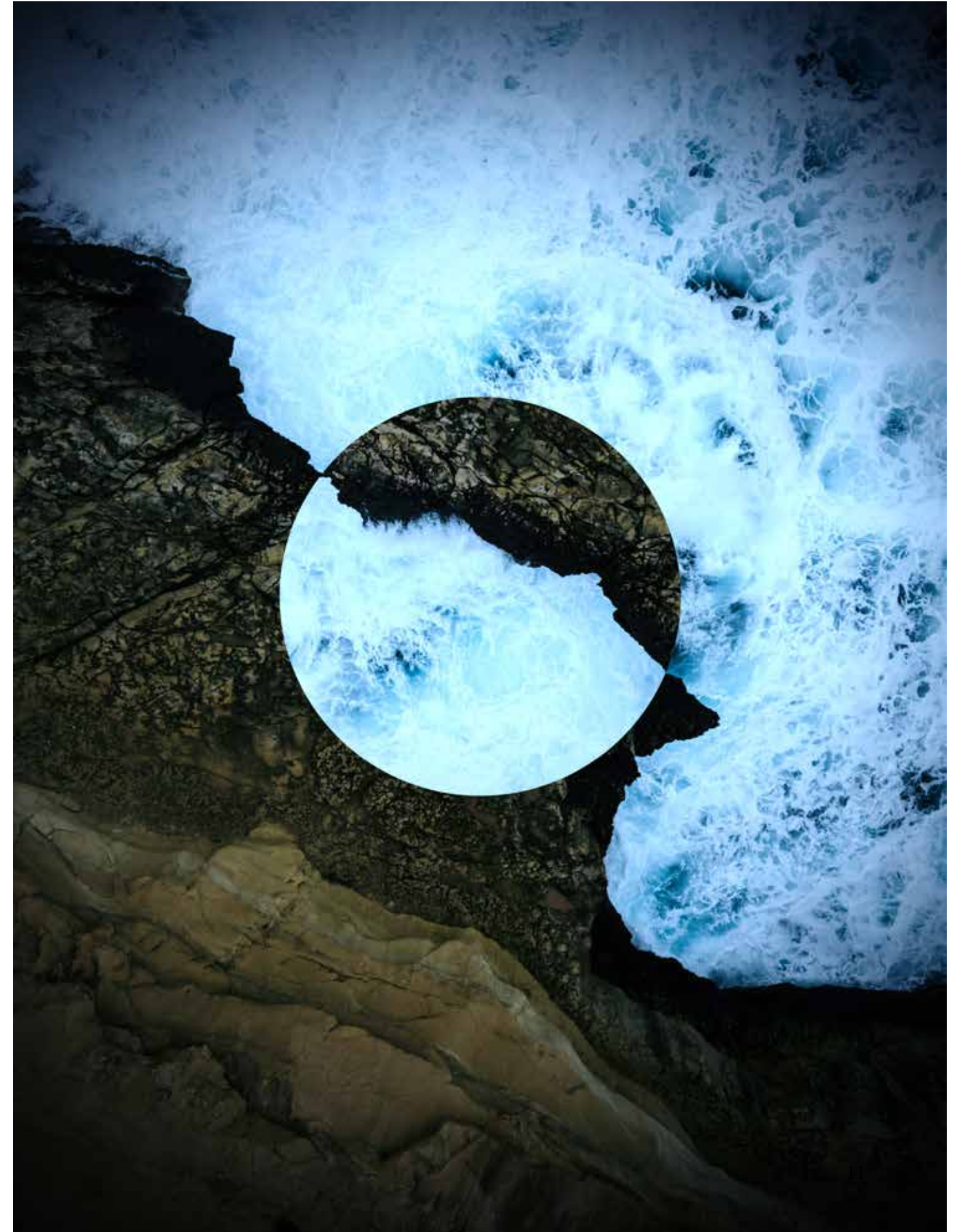
but now it is balm. Over here. I  
relish the cool water lapping over  
our feet and encircling our ankles

like a hug from a sweet child,  
wanting attention, approval; she still  
comes back for more though never  
getting any care in return--just coming  
and going, coming and going. Back to us.

I have been in this moment before,  
once. Time was slower then, stretched  
out into thin slivers, marking bits  
on a line to be remembered yet  
mostly forgotten. But for now--

now--they are ours.

I don't mind if you don't.





## The House He Built- (Dedicated To My Brother)

by: Al'Lexus Ott

The smell of sawdust was the first thing that ever felt like home. Little Caleb would sit on his grandfather's workbench, legs too short to touch the floor, watching the old man's hands move with the grace of prayer. Every stroke of the sandpaper, every steady nail driven into wood, told a story. "Wood remembers love," his grandfather would say, voice soft as the hum of a saw. "If you build with your heart, it'll stand forever." Those words rooted deep in Caleb's six-year-old soul—just before the world cracked.

When his grandfather passed, it felt like the light went out of their small house. The tools gathered dust, and the workbench sat empty. But sometimes, in the quiet, Caleb swore he could still hear the tap of a hammer in his dreams. Years slipped by like planks through calloused hands. Caleb grew tall, strong, and restless. He followed that dream his grandfather planted in him, working job after job until the world finally took notice. A TV show discovered his talent—the way he could breathe life into old wood, turning broken places beautiful again. Viewers loved him. America loved him. He smiled for the cameras, but his heart never forgot where it all began—in that tiny workshop with the smell of cedar and his grandfather's laughter echoing through the air.

Success, though, has a way of testing men. Fame brought fast friends, long nights, and wrong turns. A mistake, a fight, a bad decision—and suddenly Caleb's world collapsed. The cell door slammed, and silence became his new workshop. It was there, behind concrete and regret, that he prayed for the first time in years. He thought of his children's faces, his mother's tears, and the grandfather who had taught him that real

men build—not destroy. "Lord," he whispered one night, "give me one more chance to build something that lasts."

When he stepped out of those gates years later, his hands shook—but not from fear. From hunger. The hunger to make things right. His children are older now. His mother's hair had gone silver. His grandmother's hands trembled when she hugged him, whispering, "Your granddaddy would be proud." That was all he needed. He worked from sunrise to moonlight, hammer in hand, sweat on his brow, rebuilding the life he once broke. With every nail, every plank, he carved redemption into the world around him.

Then, one summer afternoon, Caleb stood back and looked at the land his grandfather once owned—a wide field now filled with life again. Four houses stood in perfect harmony: one for his mother, one for his grandmother, one for his sister, and one for himself. It wasn't just a compound. It was a promise kept. He even built his sister a huge resort style pool — family could access and gather around the pool like his grandfather always hoped. Each home had the same wooden beam over the doorway, hand carved with a single phrase: "Wood remembers love." Caleb smiled through tears, feeling the wind move through the trees like a familiar spirit. He could almost hear his grandfather's voice again—steady, proud, sure. "Good job, boy." And in that moment, he knew: fate hadn't forgotten him. It had been building him all along.

# Cold

by: Dr. Angela Carraway

I am FREEZING! WHY is it SO COLD?! I haven't had a drink of water since I woke up! Yesterday was NOT like this!

What happened?!

I did NOT sign up for this...not.at.all! In fact, I shouldn't even be here! One day, there I was... minding my own business (as always!), happily eating and sunbathing with my roommates when this...this...this creature kidnapped me and took me away!

It was AWFUL!

After a long time, he let me out at this dump. At least some of my old roomies are with me. Of course, they are my least favorite of my old group. They gossip and cackle and talk about me all the time! Just my fate!

One of them is a big bully, too! He picks on the old man who was here when we arrived. It's really awful the way Bully treats Mr. Gray, physically assaulting him all the time and not letting Mr. Gray join the group. I thought Bully had killed Mr. Gray last week, but he's still here. Mr. Gray is a tough old bird. This cold hasn't helped any, though, and the dehydration just makes things worse.

In fact, it's about time to go to bed...what happens if I don't get water before then??? If I don't have water soon,

I'll just die! DIE, I tell you!

Oh, look! There's that horrible kidnapper! What's he doing? I think he's giving out water. I want some of that! Get out of my way! Here I come! Move, Mr. Gray! You've already had enough. OWW! You stepped on my toe! Get out of my way, NOW!!! Stop picking on me!

Why am I always so mistreated? I.do.not.deserve. this! Why me??? I am so COLD!!!



# Justice

by Scotty Stokes

The whip cracked again  
We heard the cries of man  
He's in line won't ever run again  
But was that justice now, are we happy now?

They all did what they felt they must  
Many were beaten, hosed and cussed  
Some were dragged to the back of the bus  
But was that justice now, are we happy now?

He cried out, "I can't breathe"  
The world looked on and saw his need  
A death that made every heart bleed  
But was that justice now, are we happy now?

Shots rang loud  
A Blue Life hit the ground  
Cheers were heard a "pig" just went down  
Hope he dies chanted all around  
But was that justice now, are we happy now?

Buildings burned in anger and rage  
We just can't seem to turn the page  
But was that justice now, are we happy now?  
When we can all walk hand in hand  
Boy, girl, woman and man  
There'll be justice now, we'll be happy now.



Are we the masters of our fates, or is something bigger setting the course of our stars? These questions are central to several of the Bard's plays. The quote at the beginning of this issue comes from *King Lear*, a play in which the stars seem to direct the outcome. It seems Shakespeare tapped into something universal since many after him have asked these same questions.

In this issue, the authors propose their takes on fate and free will. Some are lighter in tone than others, but each one addresses the battle between fate and one's agency. The entries range from poems about the influence of the Zodiac to stories about kidnapped chickens. For some, fate is in control. For others, people possess the power to change their destinies. Some even argue that fate and free will must strike a balance. Following these entries, readers will find a new feature. Starting with this issue, *The Scribbler* will highlight one work from the previous contest. This year's Hall of Fame entry is the poem "Justice" by Scotty Stokes.

I hope readers will leave this issue with a deeper appreciation for fate and its role in our lives, however active or inactive it might be.

Sincerely,  
Amy LaFleur

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