

THE GRAIL

VOL. XVIII November 7, 2023 ISSUE I



INSIDE

SONGBIRDS

GOLONDRINAS

Indigo P. recounts how art has formed the ground both for connection with and resurrection of his father's memory.

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TAKING FLIGHT

50°00'56"N 02°41'51"E

Cassie M. wonders what it would be like to be a Great War soldier caught in the explosion that created the Lochnager Crater.

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REACHING OUT

YOU ARE IN A HOLE

sasha sasse tells us that we're stuck, then tells us what to do about it, and supposes what will happen should we ever emerge.

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FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

Shaking off the dust, a hand reaching out from the grave, The Grail returns after 1.5 years away, with the apt theme of resurrection! In this special comeback edition, we celebrate the wrapping of October and the onslaught of cold weather with an issue centered around death, rebirth, and more. We are happy to report that while there might have been a short recess, The Grail is reinstated and ready to publish the scarily wonderful work of the student body once more. We've pulled off the cobwebs and ripped free from the ivy, now it's time to get back into the action.

See some real resurrection in Finn G.'s poetry (3), while Henry M. pulls you in with portrait photography (3). Yours Truly discusses scientists and historians (and how they're glad they're not either one) in a delightful

poem (6), while photographs of some haunting, somber crows are brought in by Henry K. (8, and also the front cover!), along with many, many more astonishing pieces.

This is our first issue of Volume XVIII, and we won't be the last! For our next issue, The Grail will have the theme of invention. So inventions old and new, scientific and speculative, concrete and intangible, come one come all to the great Grail! Watch out for us on SB Info or on our website at reedthegrail.org for a link to add your submissions for our next issue! Until then, we hope you have a safe time, stay warm out there, and watch your step in any graveyards, especially at night.

Warmly,

Care, Adrian, Max, Robert, and Inez

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Front cover photo: Crows 2 by Henry Kallerud

Grave in the Forest

By FINN GIRVAN

Utter the words out loud
and so come the vines
born from the pollen carried by the butterflies in the stomach
trancing up through the throat
branching out across the face
thorns erupting from those smooth green stalks
digging into the eyes
tears of blood rain down
blinded by the want, blind to the need

The vines tangle around the body now
never strong enough to make a move
you will see no flowers here
leaves rustle in the wind
hedging their bets on a fall that never comes
by then the blood will be dried
the feeling a grave in the forest

And I tell myself it is all just chemistry
emotions, the growth of the vines, and the death of everything
no one has ever been so wrong.



Portrait of Odin Simms by Henry McDonald

Golondrinas

By INDIGO PINDER

Papá, you wrote this poem:
the beating of the hearts
broken the calm of the ocean that
feeds them and the howling o' the
night banishes the cowardly eyes
in the melancholy they sink when
life rejects them at tender
sunset

we are thorned souls
far from reality
and hailed the cypresses
and the Golondrinas

Papá, you and I are golondrinas, swallows. I came to you, to perch on your balcony and lie in your nest. I flew away at tender sunset. You were a thorned soul, a sacred heart, and you knew I would return.

You held my mom's hand. Rain came down and filled the streets. A downed powerline slipped into a puddle, and when you and mom splashed through it, you were shocked from hand to hand.

You went back to your sisters and declared, "I am in love!"

They rolled their eyes, "Pshhh, ¡Arturo el romántico!"

I was born two years later.

In an old video, I sat on your lap and tried to eat dirt. Mom held the camera. "Arturo, watch out!" she said.

"Ah, don't worry, Megan. My mom let us play in dirt. It's good for you."

Meanwhile, I stuck my face in the mud.

I wonder if you already had symptoms when that video was taken. I wonder when mom knew. Maybe you talked about the delusions and hallucinations—once the video camera was switched off and I was put down to nap.

I know you tried to go to the U.S. to get treatment, but they caught you crossing the border as a kid and wouldn't let you in.

Right before my first birthday, mom made the decision to leave and take me with her. I think you understood. You “weren’t very stable,” she said. Not stable enough to raise a child. I try to understand. I wonder when you knew we were leaving. I know you always thought we might come back—your golondrinas. You were not a coward. You never gave up. And new birds flew to your sill. Not many, though. It was a lonely life, but your mother was there, and you had a few friends at Rock and Ron’s pub and bar.

You sent me paintbrushes in the mail. You were an artist. You wrote to me, “Every day when i wake up i say a little prayer on your sake and when i paint every sroke i intention it with love for you.” When I was little, mom fielded the calls and emails. She tried to protect me, I think. In high school, she let me talk to you on my own.

At fourteen, I was too young to understand your love. My attention span wasn’t long enough for your love. I only responded to about half of your emails. This made you sad. I hope the happiness you felt when you received an email outweighed the sadness from my silence. “Have I angered you, indi??” you wrote. You hadn’t. I was just too self-absorbed to write back. I did like writing to you, but I thought you’d be around forever.

And at fifteen, when you died, I was too young to understand what I had lost. Your mother, your sisters, your brother, your cousins, they cried for you, and we painted your tomb.

I had flown back to you, but it was too late. Your face was a puffy mask. It didn’t look like a face. But that was the first time I’d been beside your body since I left, so I looked even though I knew it was all wrong. You were not there to see my return. So, I turned to your tomb with the rest of them.

“Art is for champions!” you wrote to me, “And you are a real good artist like me.” I painted your tomb and stuck colored stones into the cement.

Your mother, my abuela, hugged me. “Mi Indi cariñoso, te amo.” You were not coming back, so she held me. Her golondrina had flown away and was never coming back. I am my father’s son, a golondrina to sit at my abuela’s side and hold her beating heart. And now that I am old enough to cry for you, she holds me too. And we have your paintings on our walls and your brushes in our drawers.

I have folders full of your paintings.

“I hope you enjoy this little present,” you wrote, when you sent me a new creation.

But these are all echoes of our golondrina. I want you to come back to me. Please. Come back to your son. I know what you felt now. I know the hopeless pain you felt to see the sun set. The birds could blanket the skies and never comfort your thorned heart. I take out your brushes and my paints, and I sit down. I call to you. Please, come back to me, my sweet golondrina, my Papá. And your face takes shape on my paper, and your loving hands hold mine. And you tell me, “just let your self flow on the canvas and touch at the last stroke as if it was the begining of the piece!!!!” And I paint your face, and for a moment you come back to me, and I am a thorned soul, far from reality, and I hail the cypresses and the golondrinas.

A Letter to the Visitor

By YOURS TRULY

I'm tired of playing a scientist.

The letters of all the questions, the guesses, experiments and conclusions stamp themselves into my brain.

It's easy, the way my finger flips on the lights, letting the hum into my head as I tend to my beakers, muttering about potential solutions to the problems I can touch.

It's all I can do to not look down at the ink and graphite smudged against my hand while breathing in the air gone stale with fear and regret.

And I'm tired of masquerading as a mathematician.

The variables in all the equations, the theories, calculations and answers work their way into the inside of my eyelids.

It's automatic, counting the way I've learned to by jumping backwards from the hundreds, my fingers loose and limber from the sting of checking and rechecking what should be correct

It's all I can muster to get it all right, because to be wrong by a literal fraction would surely mean weeks of embarrassment.

And I hate being a historian.

The books and photographs and movie reels find their way into my heart in the night, arteries clogged with what should be ash, if not dust

It's tragic, how important the information is in the anecdotes written by various hands, some of them my own.

It's all I can hope to ensure that the yellowed pages and faded time shape how I see the science, those abundant and precious scenarios, and come up with the formulas for the success that flits between my fingers.

I will never stop.

With love to the scientists, mathematicians, and historians of the world,



Portrait of Alec Sloth by Henry McDonald

50°00'56"N 02°41'51"E

By CASSIE MINICUCCI

when i died, i tried to take the sky with me
i remember the way it felt, sharp and bright

on the scraped skin of my cheek
but when i tried to grab it, i couldn't reach

tired arms ricocheting
off the copper, stiff in the air

i put my wrists to my ribs, told myself
if i imagined hard enough

i could turn bones into silt
ask the sky to feed them

until petals broke through,
blood-red sprigs molting

to rageful mauve
let them devour, i thought

i would rather be nothing
if i cannot keep the sky—

i do not want the world
to keep my bones



Crows 3 by **Henry Kallerud**

You Are in a Hole

By SASHA SASSE

You are in a hole. There is no way out.
You could try clawing up, if you want.
Perhaps you might tear some dirt loose;
perhaps your nails bleed on cold stone.
You might as well yell your voice ragged,
but you cannot tell if your cries can reach the surface,
shrouded in shadow as it is,
and few ropes could reach this far down anyways.
You would prefer to be in a box,
with no yawning reminder of an elsewhere.
You might content yourself with memories of the sun.
Idiot. What do you know of sunlight?
You are in a hole. You could try to spin stories:
what you will do once freed, what your friends must be up to.
You fail, of course. The words of freedom and friendship
have no point of reference, here in the hole.
The longer you stay here
(What is 'long?' You lack minutes or months.)
the less you can recall of words altogether.
Tools of communication are vestigial,
here in the hole. They wither.

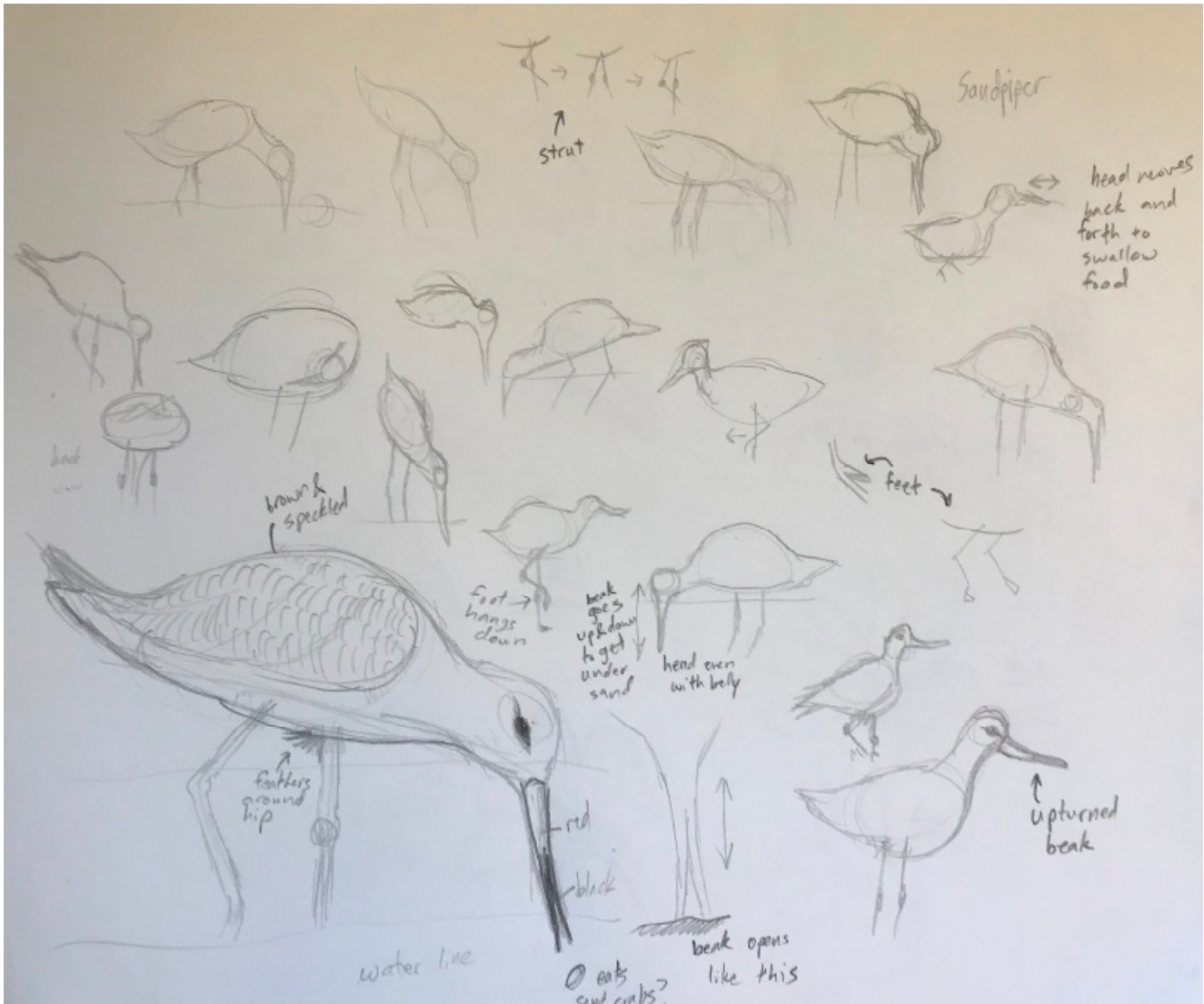
Suppose that, through some miracle —
gravity reverses for your sake —
you get out. Congratulations!
You were missed, met with a chorus of
“Where have you been?”
You answer, but it all seems rather silly now.
You are surrounded by loved ones,
not alone, in a hole. The hearth crackles
with welcoming warmth; the clammy hole

now seems very far away indeed.

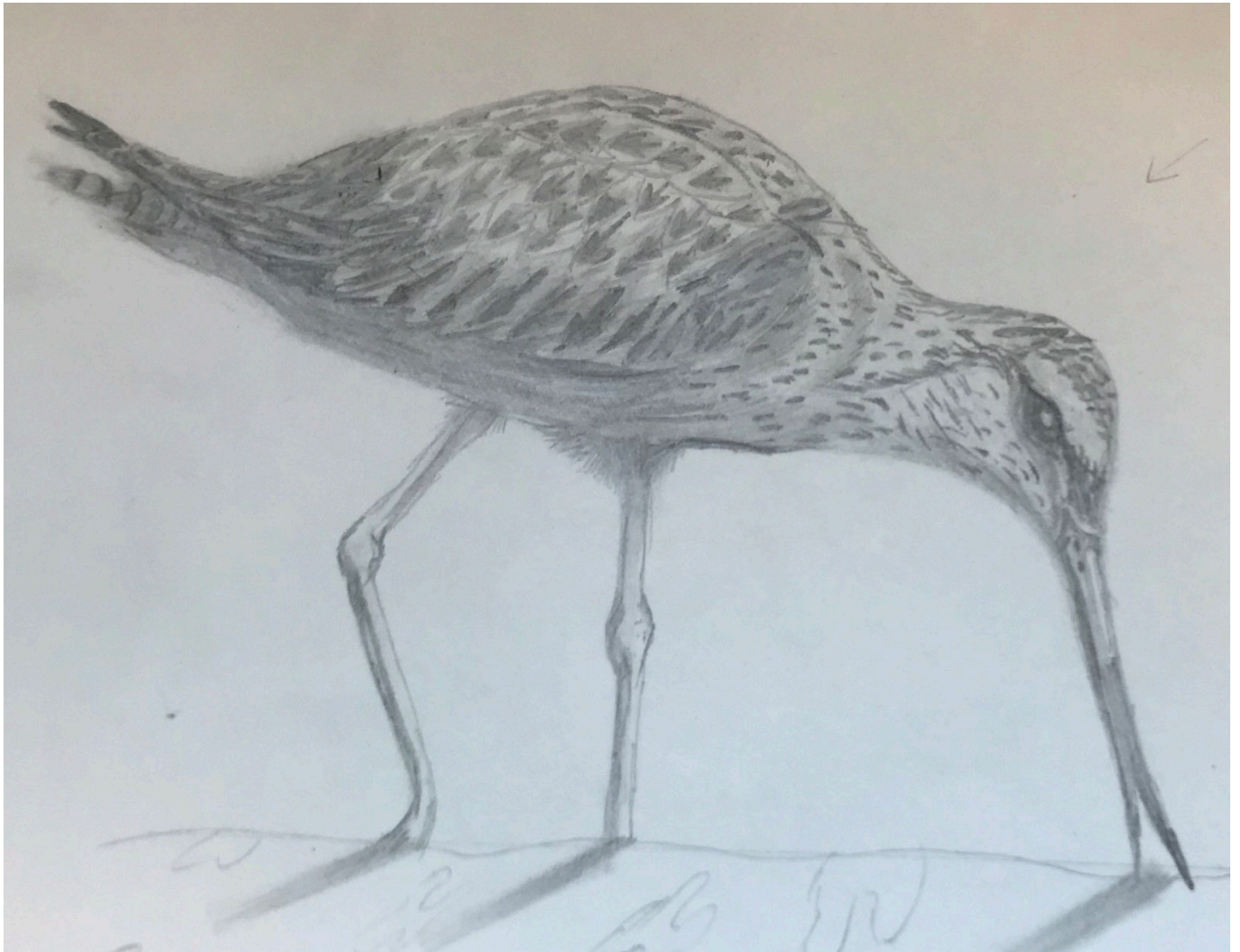
After a moment of adjustment to the light
you forget that darkness weighs on ineffectual eyes.
You find it difficult to speak about silence.

Let's say, when you keel over, you go to Heaven. Well done!
Dining on ambrosia, God at your side,
you peer down through the stratosphere at your family.
What the hell are they doing down there?
Your nectar-marinated tongue recoils,
imagining their dirt-born food. Their sublimest tones
grate against your ear, attuned to angelic chorus.
The hole, up here, has slipped your mind altogether.

After a bit God likely bores of you, casts you back to Samsara.
As a baby, or a bunny, or a beetle, or a bird,
you are far more concerned with your body
than with the Kingdom of The Lord Your God.
So its echo fades. But on the off chance that you become
a worm, you might writhe your way back to the hole.
Maybe this time it will be a home.
The hole itself would not improve;
you would just have worse taste.



Marbled Godwit Study I by Ella Crotty



Marbled Godwit Study II by Ella Crotty

Its been a while

By ANTHONY VALDESPINO

Can I hear you again? I'm missing
your voice... your words are food
for an empty stomach,
a vacuum,
a person — like me.

It's very likely that I dream too
much, for I never desire
to awaken; the sun may shine
but you gave me light, enough to
warm a fire that can melt a
glaciated heart...

But nowadays I'm burning, and
the clouds can't help but cry —
when these thoughts pollute
their purity and blue fades into gray.
And when it pours, a flood of words
will lift a page from thirst,
and when I read I hear an echo
coming from the depths of my throat.
Once again I hear you, — how odd
it sounds to my ears...for yes, I
must admit that I forgot
the sound of my voice.



Portrait of Sophie Basden by Henry McDonald

Between Time

By ANTHONY VALDESPINO

September 19, 2021

Between the stars is time, and within time
you came to love me.
Us youthful few, who amble along aimless
time, shan't oppose
the prose which writes our rights, while wrongs
be wrought as
songs for the self.
Memories made for a mortal's dreams;
how fortunate my eyes came to be
-- to see an angel who,
without wings, caused my heart to
carelessly spring.
Though two hands cannot press as one,
my heart has been touched by you.
No longer could meaning itself remain sober;
for between time came tragedy, and within tragedy
your soul sprung away from me.
A'lass she was, and was no more...
What else have I felt? -- if not the desire, to sing as
the choir, of my silent disdain.
I am here, yet still I wait for her to arrive.

Only in a mortal's dreams...