



ABSINTHE

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Special Issue 2023: Dreams

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The Places I Have Called Home

Teagan Arnott

Patchwork quilts and bunk beds turned submarine
Broken bowls still unseen
Glistening snow melting into sweltering summer
As hope glimmered and fate was in slumber

Crowds never kept there
An isolating atmosphere
The sweet air soured by cries
Sugar crusted confections served with lies

Numbers dwindled; four, three, two
All throughout the avenue
Multicoloured moods veer and vary
Vincible visitors; be wary

Sun-baked summers with a blistering breeze
No minds at ease
A garden homespun
A man on the run

Scratches at the closet door
No one to call for
Hollow rooms illuminated
Vacant hearts become weighted

Whispers in the midnight sun
Nothing left to stun
News delivered hours late
No time to contemplate

A bleak palace loomed
Somber songs resumed
Walls and words bleached
Poison spilt and preached

Forgotten kith and kin
Washed away with a sip of gin
Pomegranate promises made
There is comfort in a blade

The Places I Have Called Home - Teagan Arnott

Fate may turn its head
And clip that central thread
The frost may one day thaw
If destiny detaches its jaw

Sunlight filtered through eyelashes
Snowflakes littered like ashes
Once barren walls now kaleidoscopic
Once idle hearts now hypnotic

Luminous days may soon outweigh
Darkness no longer haunts the doorway
The bickering and brawls now silent
The noise is no longer violent

Moonlit ventures and predictable fiction
Crafted without contradiction
Stars ablaze in the sky
These creatures are no longer shy

Galeophobia

Holly Mooney

I thought I was
hidden well

under the moss
by the rocks

that swamp
the other side

of the lake
no summer

homes here
I float at night

to a bigger
body of water

when you're cold
and wet like that

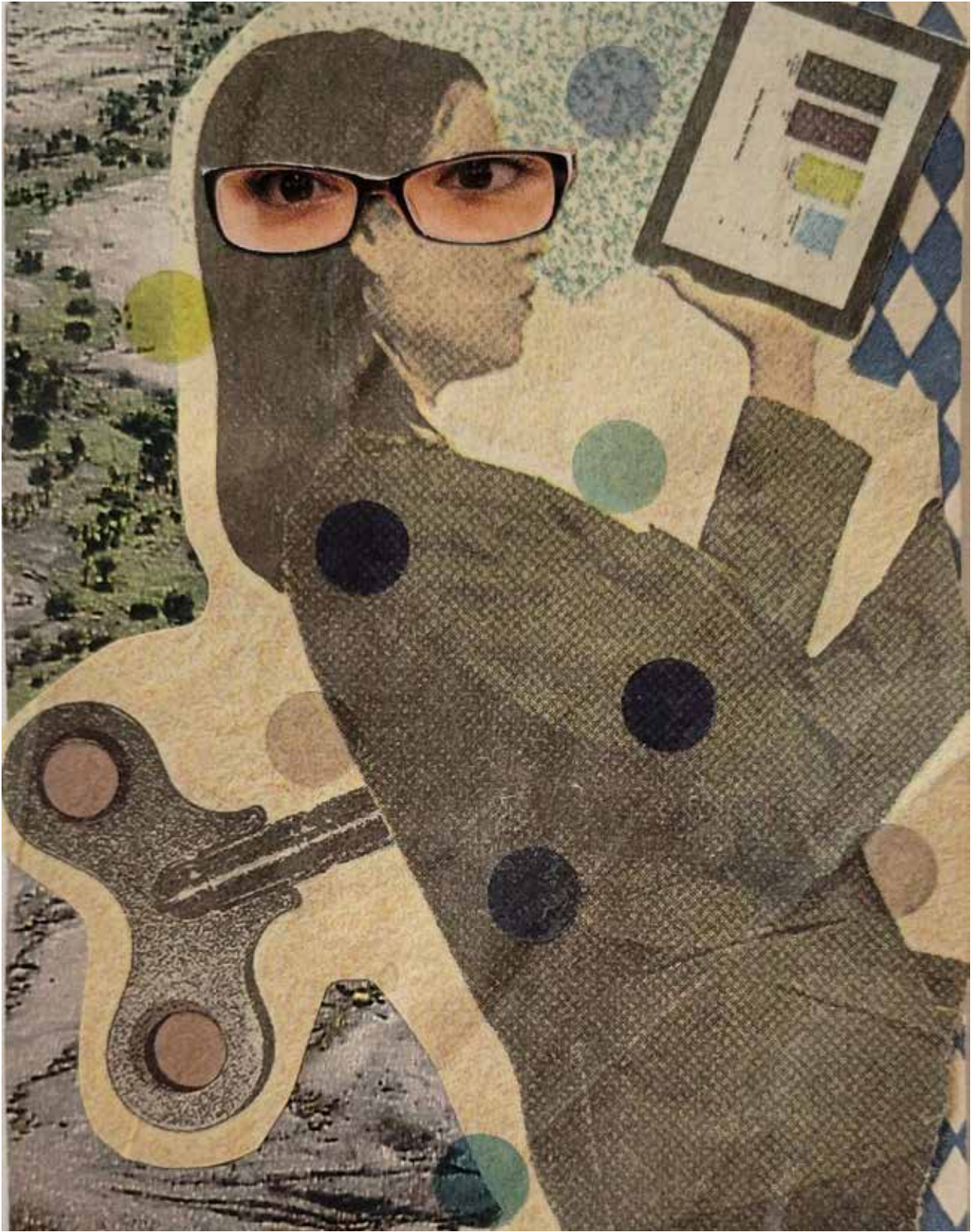
the clothes stick
to the skin

I see it on the
pier telling people

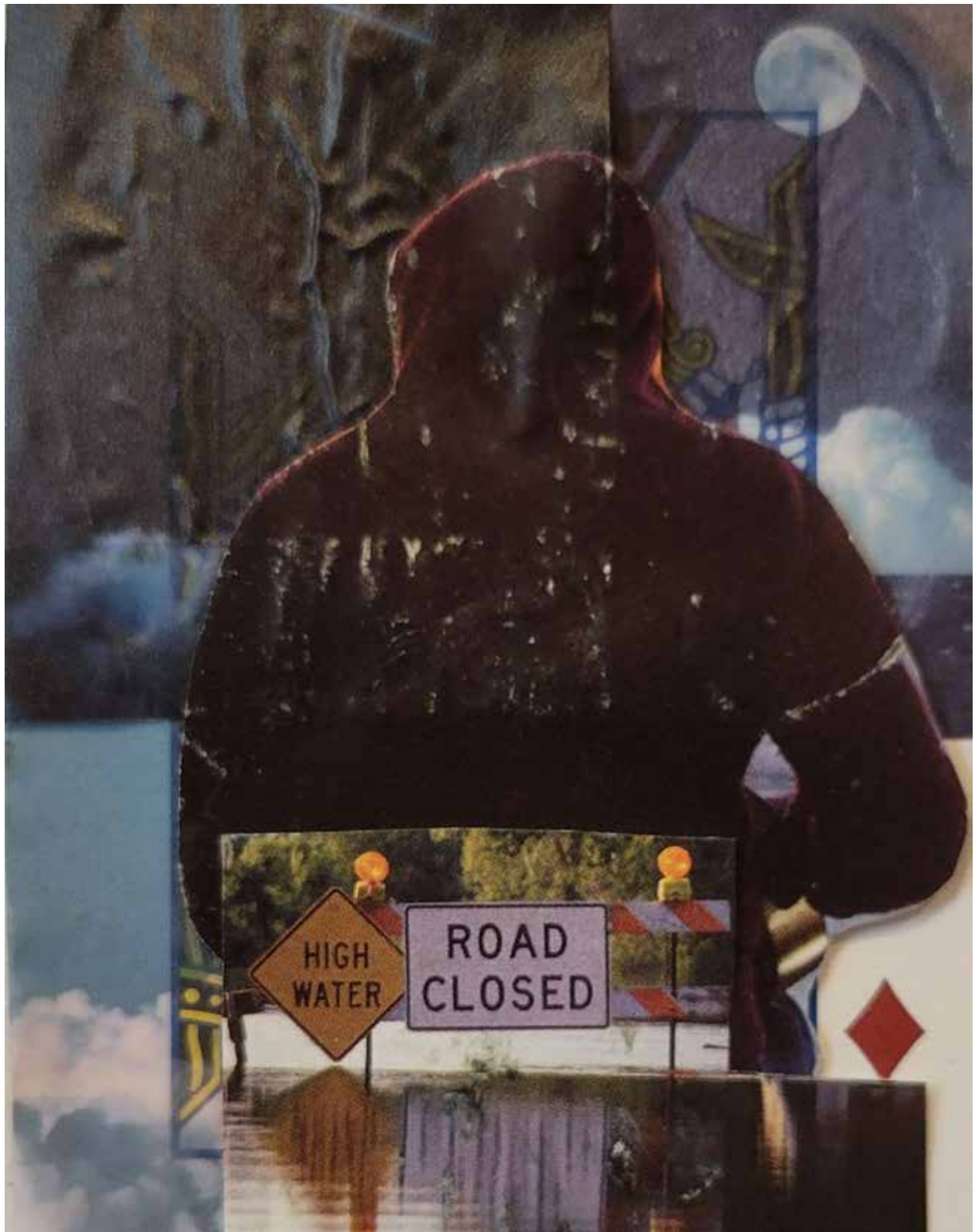
I jumped
and pulled it in

the people who
are afraid of

sharks believe you



New Lens - Samantha Martin
(Collage piece made on playing cards.)



Distant Worn Dreams - Samantha Martin
(Collage piece made on playing cards.)

Dreamwalker

Madison Marvin

They don't know they're dreaming. This was made very clear to me when I entered my first Dreamworld. It was strange at first, being Awake while those around me were Asleep, but I've gotten used to it. By now, I don't bother trying to tell the Dreamers that the reality they are in is false—it never ends well.

The Dream I am currently in belongs to Allison Peters, a fifty-six year old white woman living in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. She's divorced with two college-aged kids, and worked as a filing clerk before she retired a year ago. She had dreams (literally) of being an actress, which she gave up when she got married. Yet she had put her acting skills to good use for twenty-oddsome years, pretending her husband's infidelity wasn't happening, until finally her kids left the house and she could divorce him. Allison's Dreamworld consisted of being a famous actress, having never married Gary, the aforementioned cheating husband. But she still had her two kids, somehow. It was nice that they continued to be a part of her Dream. In Allison's Dreamworld, she lived not in a great big mansion, but in her two-story brownstone apartment she had spent her twenties in. Which was fitting, as in her Dreamworld, Allison hadn't aged past twenty-five. Her kids were still children, fresh faced and full of unwavering devotion to their mother, as opposed to not calling on her birthday and only texting to ask for money. For Allison, her Dreamworld was full of love; from her fans, from her children, and from her fiancé, Chris Pine. I didn't want to leave her Dreamworld, but I could feel Allison beginning to stir at the edge of consciousness, so I knew it was time to go.

The next Dreamworld I entered belonged to Allison's son, Ben. This often happened when I was Dreamwalking—I would go from Dream to Dream based on the Dreamer's connection to another. It was like following a train of thought; a run-on sentence made acceptable through the use of a semicolon. Ben lived in Toronto, with only an hour's time difference from his hometown, and yet he was just falling asleep as his mom was waking up. Ben's dreamworld was more abstract, than Allison's. I've found that the younger the Dreamer is, the less concrete their Dreams are. Perhaps this has less to do with age and more to do with a lack of lived experience—the older one gets, the more likely they are to regret the life they've lived. The more they dream of changing the past, as opposed to dreaming of a new future. Ben's Dreamworld didn't hold characters with as much free will as Chris Pine proposing to Allison. Instead, the vague face and body of a guy from his gym would float through his mind, followed by the intangible feeling of *want* and *lust*, before the Dream would shift to failing an exam he hadn't written, and then to being six years old and scraping his knee. Ben's Dreamworld wasn't all too strange—over the millenia, I've experienced much weirder than Dreams of love and anxiety and pain. Ah, Ben was waking up now, as he had an early-morning lecture.

I followed the thread of Dreams to Yasmin Lee, the girl who lived next door to the Peters' and who had happened to watch Ben fall off his bike, and scrape his knee. Yasmin had been nothing but a blurry blob in Ben's Dreamworld, but in her own, I could make out her features much sharper; could see the curve of her chin and the glint in her eye. How a Dreamer sees themselves in their Dreamworld depends—sometimes I can view an entire Dream without even seeing the Dreamer's face. Other times, I embody the Dreamer so entirely I forget what my own limbs feel like attached to me, their body is my body is our body. Yasmin's Dreamworld I've been here before, I think. Or no. It was through the Dream of her Grandmother, who Dreamed of her Granddaughter half a world away. Yes, that's it. Yasmin was smaller, in her Grandmother's Dreamworld. She was as her Grandmother remembered her, a tiny wisp of a girl who would sit on her Grandmother's lap and laugh as she told Yasmin stories about their family. It was startling, somewhat, seeing the juxtaposition between the bright, cheerful child in Yasmin's Grandmother's Dreamworld, opposed to the darkness inside Yasmin's own Dreamworld.

Yasmin's Dreamworld was full of anxiety, fear, and sadness. Great waves of blackness would come and swallow Yasmin's figure. Would come and gobble her whole. And then it would spit her back out, as if Yasmin was too disgusting to digest. I could feel it—Yasmin's despair—as concrete and real as if she were awake. But I knew, I knew this wasn't Yasmin. I felt as though I knew her, better than her Dreamworld did. Yasmin was a light in the darkness, she was all that was good in this world. I think I could love that version of her. I watched, I felt, I was Yasmin's body as it was consumed, by the dark shadows of her subconscious. I wanted to shout at her, to tell her how she was so much more than this. That she was so loved. This was the first time I've ever wanted a Dreamer to wake up.

Suddenly, I am thrown from Yasmin's Dreamworld, slipping just as easily from her mind as I had slipped into it. And the loss I felt was so tangible, so real, I wanted to weep. It's been many nights since I Walked into Yasmin's Dream, and I haven't Dreamwalked since. Sometimes I still think about Yasmin, and she is pure starlight in my mind. She is something I can never know, can never understand. In the way you look up at the galaxy swirling beneath your feet, and not care for the loveliness of it all. You know you can never swim in the milky way without drowning on air. Because she was everything I wanted and nothing I could have. And I think if I saw her in a mirror I wouldn't recognize her eyes. I want to know her by her soul alone. But hers is not mine to have. I feel like a howling child, throwing a monstrous tantrum because I can't have something I want, something I didn't even know I wanted until I couldn't have it. Until it was taken from me. I wouldn't call what this is, love. Love is too fleeting, too finite, too fickle. I know I am facetious in my infatuation. But when I look up and see the first star in the night sky, I can't help but make a wish and dream.



Night in New Brunswick - Teagan Arnott

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