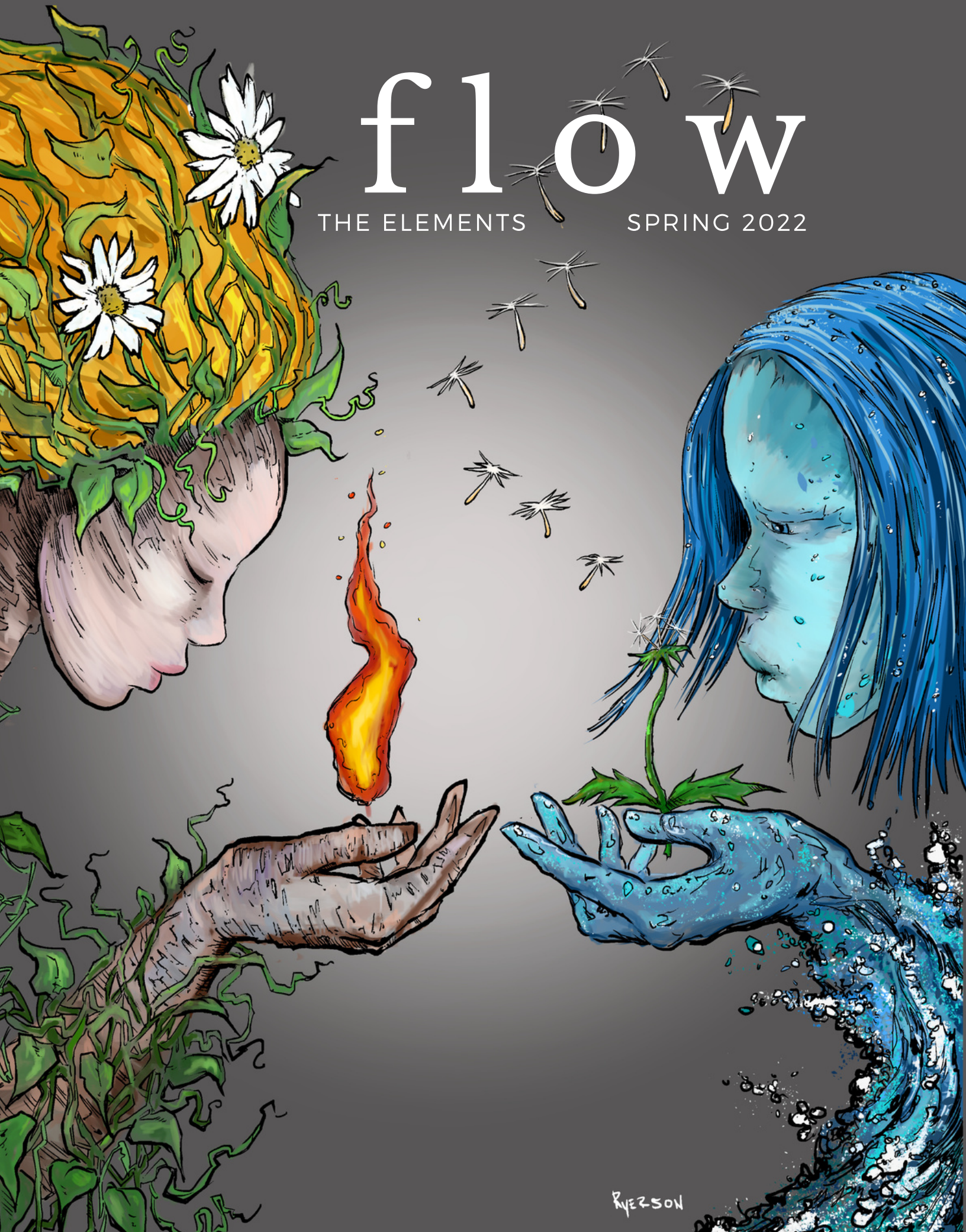


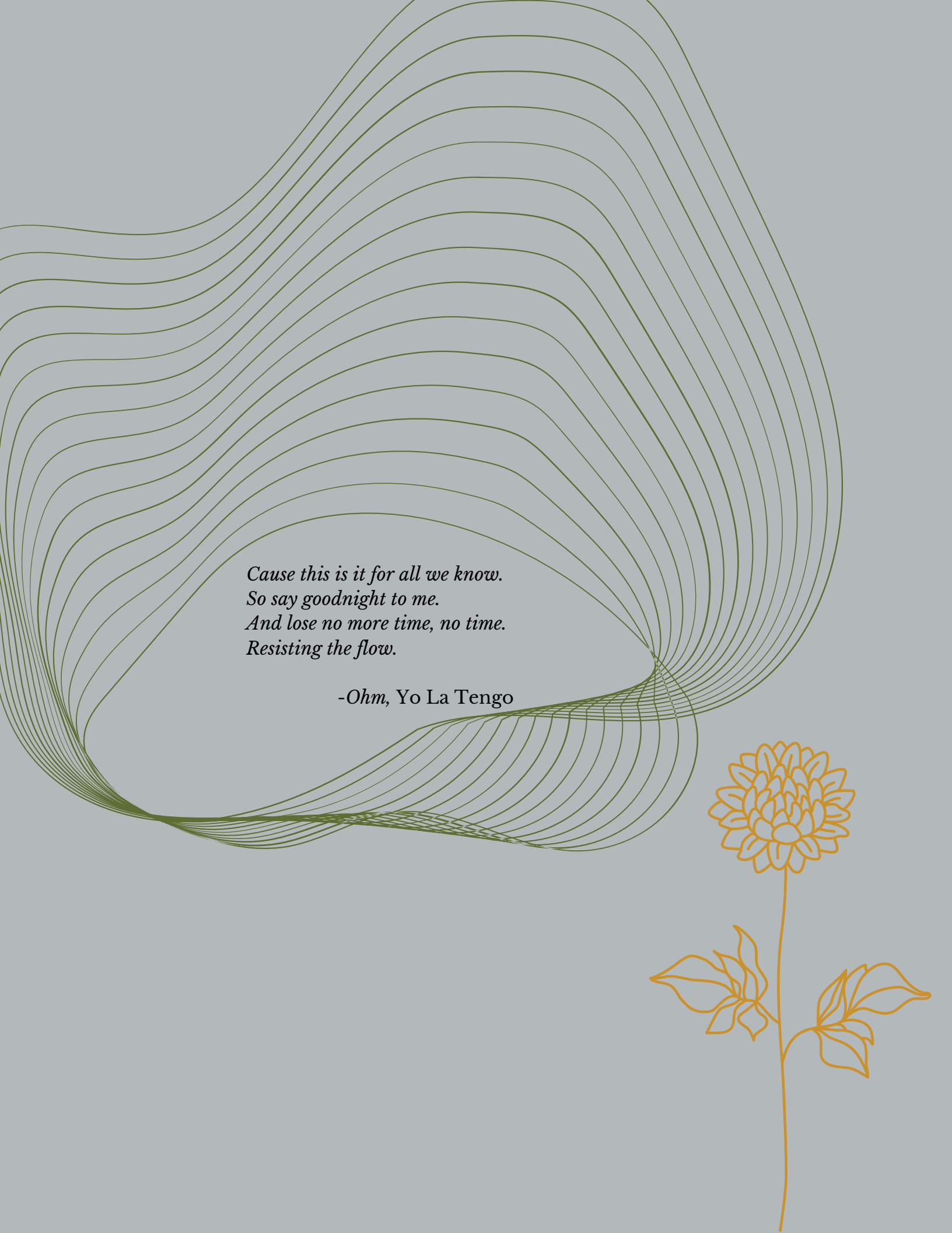
flow

THE ELEMENTS

SPRING 2022



RYEZON



*Cause this is it for all we know.
So say goodnight to me.
And lose no more time, no time.
Resisting the flow.*

-Ohm, Yo La Tengo



flow

SPRING 2022
THE ELEMENTS

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Contributors



Gabe Ryerson is an artist who lives in Champaign, IL with a beautiful faerie queen and two young hobbits. When he's not working on illustrations, he enjoys hiking in the woods, thinking about chakras, and talking to rabbits. He's a big fan of children's book illustrators like Mercer Mayer, Arthur Rackham, and Maurice Sendak. He's not a fan of heights, old chewing gum, or sitcoms.

Instagram: @gabrielryerson



Dr. Neha Gupta recently completed her PhD from the University of Arizona. She researches characterizing the cumulative watershed influence of green infrastructure on stormwater quality and quantity. She holds an MS in Hydrogeology and a BS in Geology from Ohio University. She likes to hike and read science fiction in her free time.



Jacq Guyton (or as they were known in Athens, Kara Guyton) tried their first corndog at the age of twenty-three. Everything's been uphill since. They live in Knoxville, Tennessee, and their favorite food right now is Laotian Nam Khao.



Ginny Stack is a human currently residing in Athens, Ohio, where she enjoys the natural landscape and endless pursuit of way too many hobbies. Gardening and writing are two of those interests, which tend to intersect in unique ways - she is prone to wax poetic about beans.

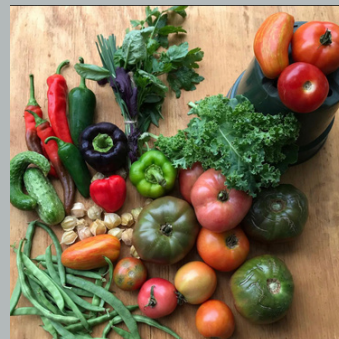


Jackie Donaldson (she/her) is a graduate student of English at Eastern Illinois University. She writes essays, creative non-fiction, and poetry. Her work has been published in *Loud Coffee Press* and *The Vehicle*. Connect with Jackie on Instagram and Twitter @Jacquiverse.



Chris Monday is a farmer at V, comic artist, songwriter, performance artist and practitioner of any whim he may fancy.

Find him on Instagram at @the_monday_channel and @veggie_vision_farms





Letter from the Editor



Erin Pfahler



As a yoga practitioner for the past fifteen years, I think about and reflect often on the elements as a means of finding inner balance, as a way to make sense of and find peace in all the layers of being human. Looking through the lens of energetics, earth, water, fire, air and space each have their own qualities. In the practices of Yoga and Ayurveda, these elements are believed to make up all living beings and each of us is made up of a unique composition of all five that affects how we think, act and feel.

I have been told countless times what a grounded person I am (or seem to be, hehe). This quality from what I understand is a response to earth energy, that pull of gravity. I've always felt like I have some tilt towards more earth in my being, but of course that isn't always balanced perfectly.

To tell the truth, I haven't been practicing this philosophy of yoga in my every day quite as much as I'd like to be; the philosophy of mindfulness, of paying attention, of being grounded and connected. Or at least, lately, it just hasn't come easily.

I haven't been thinking about the way my feet meet the ground when I walk or how the sun helps my plants grow or dries them out with too much. I haven't been thinking as much about the sips of water I take or how much water I use to bathe with. I haven't been thinking about the air that blows through my hair or my next breath in and out of my lungs that may or may not come. I haven't been thinking about the space between my shoulder blades or the space between you and me and everything in between.

I haven't been thinking much about all of this until I sat down to write to you and realized this was true. I have been disconnected from life right in front of my eyes and the life inside me too.

My time lately has been spent thinking about what's next. After finishing a task, I'll move right along on my list or my mental cloud of future thinking spirals me into the next day somehow without me even realizing it. In conversation with friends, clients and strangers over the past few weeks, there has been a similar vibe. I'm not alone in feeling this.

Responses to a simple "how are you?" have been something along the lines of,
"It's like I'm walking on thin ice."
"I'm really worn out."
or
"I'm just plain ole' tired."
or I've also heard responses of, "Things just won't slow down."
or most recent words from my neighbor,
"Time has been dissolving."

Sometimes after my initial "how are you?" and their response, I get a look of genuine empathy as they nod and listen to me saying something similar in return.

That response held true, until I read all the contributions contained in here. As the contributors sent me their pieces and I read through each one, I was reminded how just paying attention or giving some awareness to these different components of being alive, the elements, can ignite a certain sense of wonder or connection where it was once missing or maybe never existed. These pieces written by farmers, artists, scientists and students created space to remember how to fit in moments of pause so I can keep soaking in all the elements of living.

What I love about the pieces that follow is that they've reminded me that it doesn't take long – mindfulness, wonder, connection, awe, whatever you want to call it – can happen amidst the hustle of a day. It doesn't take long to give thanks to the dirt that's under us all or to the water that flows from the tap as it runs over our hands, to acknowledge the flame that cooks our food and the sun that brings us back to life after a cold dark winter. Or to savor the air flowing into our lungs and back out into the ether.

May you find this issue as nourishing as I've found it to be.
May you find small moments of peace.

Gratefully,

Erin



Flow is a project made as a result of the curiosity and predicament of living in a human body; the stories that they hold and how they unfold.

It's a digital publication made to share these stories, plus art and interaction surrounding the ebbs and flows of the human experience.

www.patreon.com/azinecalledflow



a zine called Flow is made possible by your support, which is greatly appreciated.

Ways you can support:

~read, enjoy or share this zine with someone

~give one time through Venmo

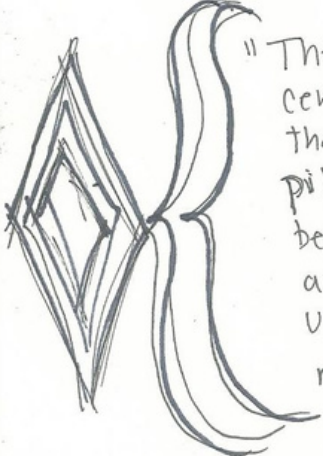
~subscribe on Patreon

10% of all proceeds this season will be donated to Marsh Zhinok, a Ukranian feminist organization collecting funds to support women during the war in Ukraine.

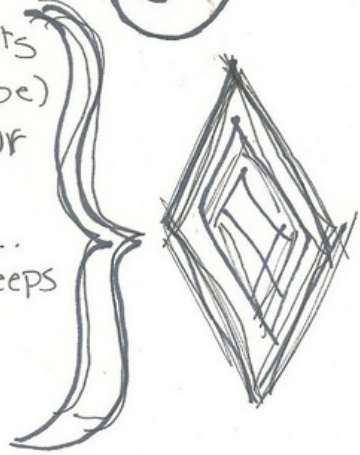
Thanks for reading!

ARCHETYPES & ATOMS

• Neha Gupta.




"There are four common elements, each at its center another deeper element (the archetype) that makes it what it is. These are the **four pillars of the world**. They were in the beginning evolved and molded out of chaos... and it is their contrary action which keeps up the harmony & equilibrium of the mundane machinery of the universe"




~Dennis Hauck

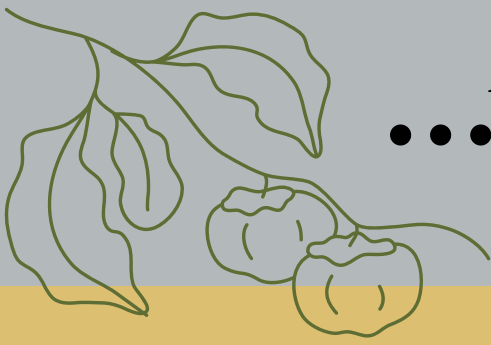
The invocation of the archetypal elements is to bring the "contrary action" that keep the **universe in balance**. This push & pull, to me, bring to mind a dance. Following the expression of myths, folklore, and legend, we will nest our expressions of the stories of our world within the archetypes of fire, air, water, and earth.

In the novel Cooked, author Michael Pollan delves into humans' relationship with food, using these archetypes & highlights the need for the alchemist's approach to avoid the Scorn modern science brings to our innately human sense of wonder.



"... for thousands of years, and in many different cultures, these elements have been regarded as the four irreducible, indestructible ingredients that make up the natural world. Certainly they still loom large in our imagination. The fact that modern science has dismissed the classical elements, reducing them to still more elemental substances & forces - water to molecules of hydrogen and oxygen; fire to a process of rapid oxidation, etc. - hasn't really changed our lived experience of nature or the way we imagine it. Science may have replaced the big 4 with a periodic table of 118 elements, and then reduced those to ever-tinier particles, but our senses and dreams have yet to get the news."





A Taste of Curiosity



Jacq Guyton

Prayers: Earth, Water, Fire

Growing up, before every breakfast, lunch, and dinner, my family would say prayer. There were a few different versions of liturgy we would recite, depending on mood and time of day. They sing in my head even now, a decade away from home.

They ranged from your quick and dirty "God is Great, God is Good" quatrain, usually said together in the early morning sleepies. Of course, prayer wasn't said until my dad had yelled my oldest brother's name up the stairs for the fourth time, each time threatening that we were 'going to eat without him'. (My brother slept on top of his mattress in a sleeping bag until he was in his post-teens. When he would finally shuffle downstairs for breakfast, he would bring the whole sleeping bag with him, wrapped into it like a grumpy caterpillar in its cocoon, or a Pharoah woken from the dead too early.)

When holidays came around, my uncle, one of the last practicing Quakers in my family, always blessed the cooking hands.

But it was at dinner every night that we would sing my favorite prayer: a funny little ditty where we would hold hands at the table and swing them back and forth, singing...

Oh, the Lord is good to me
And so I thank the Lord
For giving me
The things I need
Like the sun and the rain and the apple trees
The lord is good to me
Johnny Appleseed!
Amen

Right around the 'Like the sun and the rain', we'd start singing faster and faster, so that the line dissolved into a slurry like the LMNOP mouthful of the alphabet song. We'd swing our arms so fast the water glasses would sense danger and when we got to the 'Johnny Appleseed' line, you'd think he was God himself the way we yelled it. Johnny with the appleseeds and the rain, Johnny who's giving me the things I need! Johnny Appleseed was the best prayer, easily. It really got all the juices flowing. At the "AMEN", my siblings and I would slap our hands together and dig in.

Later in life, after any of the god-worshipping affiliations of Christianity had washed off me like thin soup, after I realized the importance of being present at the table when somebody is cooking you breakfast and the food is hot, even after I found out that Johnny Appleseed planting apple trees was not, as the more puritanical fans of the eccentric plantsman would like to think, for the Love of God, but for the liquor-making money the trees fruited every year, after all that... I find I still love to sing that song.

It's no mystery why those songs and prayers have stuck in my head all these years; I must have said them a hundred thousand times. Did the meaning wear off in the same way any words lose meaning in the gain of muscle memory? Yes. That's if I ever grasped the meaning of prayer at all as a kid. God, to me as a child, just meant free cookies and lemonade and lots of singing at church, then grandma's house for lunch. So, I'm sure I was sincere in my thanking him, if only for that.

I never felt I had to shuck off the body and blood of imposed religion after I left home and let ritual of Sunday church fall away. It was, after all, just that: a ritual, a meditation, something I yearn for in my older life. God can just be a name and a name meaning any old thing. Warm memories of naps taken sitting upright in pews and Bill the Organ Player playing organ remain sacred; they mean everything, in some ways, to me now.

It may not come to pass that I have children of my own, but if it does, I would like to have songs for us to sing together. Johnny definitely has a place there, but it's not God I want to sing to. It's the sun and the rain, and the appleseeds. The birds and the bees and the first spring peas. The fork, the knife, the giver of life.

Here's an offering from me to you all, a prayer:

To Earth

May our soil crumble dark and rich
And the leaves I eat accept my kiss
Apples and onions and figs exist
So I thank the earth for giving this

The spot we stand, the tomatoes we can
The earth gives us goodness
again and again
Let us treat a friend as a friend
And tend to this earth
As gentle as lambs



To Water

Water boils,
Water steams
Water keeps our insides clean

Water rolls,
Water washes
Water helps us do our dishes

Water flushes
Water flows
We're made of water,
heads to toes

Yes, water makes rice
Yes, water makes tea
Yes, water makes life
Yes, water makes me!



To Fire

Flint made a fire as quick as a fox
That's why we can stew in this big metal pot!
Fire makes things hot, and who would've thought?
Some folks long ago who didn't like rot!

Now in goes the bones and carrots for stock
Why make just a little? Might as well make alot!
If you think cooking now is hard, I'll tell you it's not
To think that we used to cook using just Fire and rocks

So share a soup with your friends,
Round a fire is best
Slurp slurp away,
Its OK, make a mess!

And when day comes to end
But night is not yet
We'll warm our hands on the fire
And ready hearts for sleep's rest

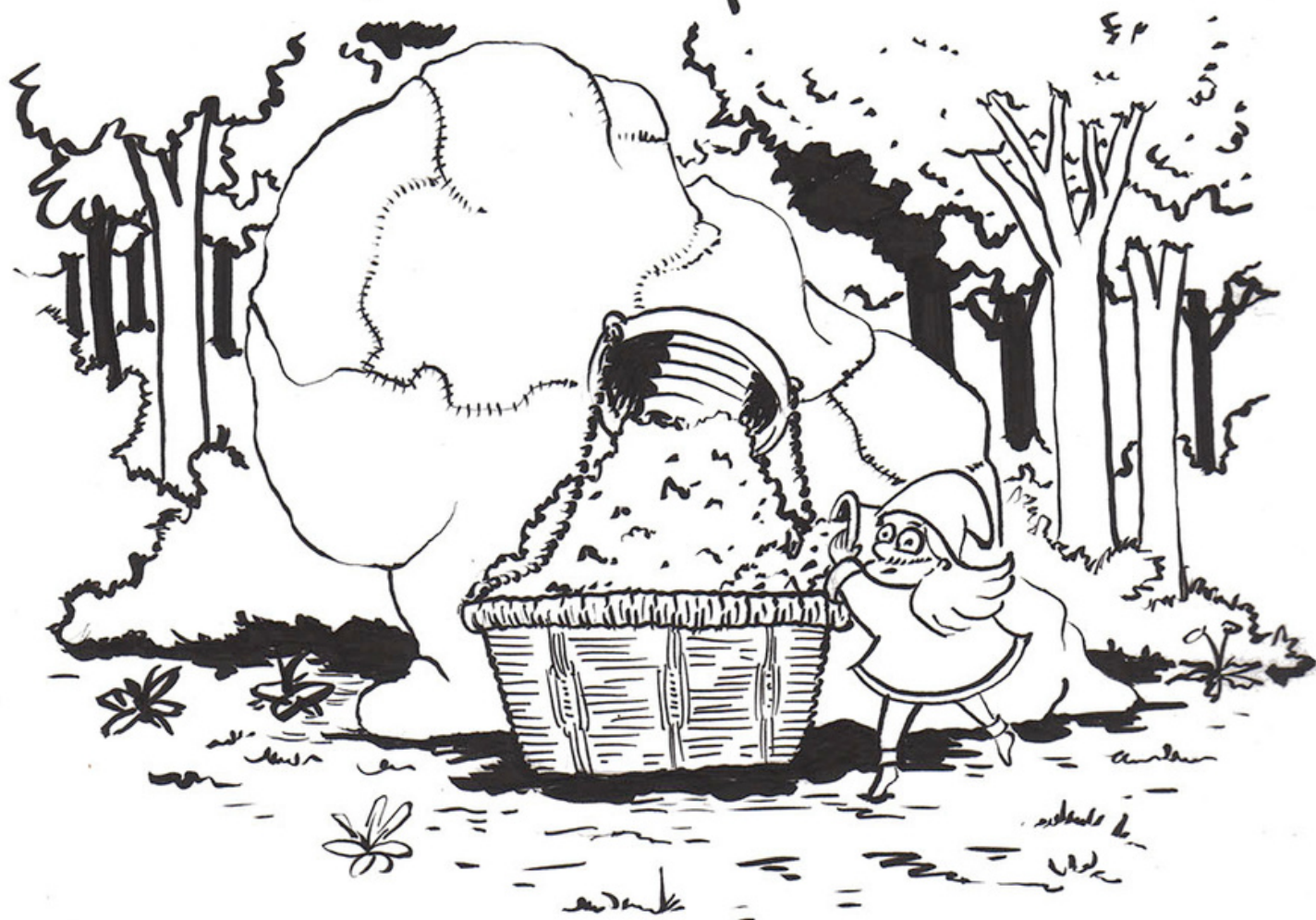
Comics



by Chris Monday



I've come to accept some of my memories
are more likely recollections of fantasies
I'd thought up while wandering alone...





The little person showed me a hot air balloon which they were planning to power with the thermal heat of composting, organic matter!



Then we talked for a while, but I don't remember what about. I remember mostly just feeling comfortable, delighted and safe. The feelings are strong and real even if the memory is my own fabrication.



My uncle died and I'm going back there for the first time in years. To visit my aunt. So I've been thinking of the woods a lot more often lately.

I didn't come to mourn. My aunt has no deep need for comforting. I came to celebrate my uncle's life and to reflect.



The thought of being eaten up by animals after dying didn't sit well with me, but I did hear what he was saying.



No, instead I will be eaten by the bugs, birds, mammals to give them strength. I will be a part of them...



Even after my consciousness is gone, the energy remaining that I have to offer will be dispersed through these woods, where I will in essence, remain forever.



He loved life so much, but sometimes when he got going, he almost seemed excited for his day to pass on and join nature.

Well I don't think he was
excited to die >chuckle<
He would never admit it,
but I think he was a
little nervous.



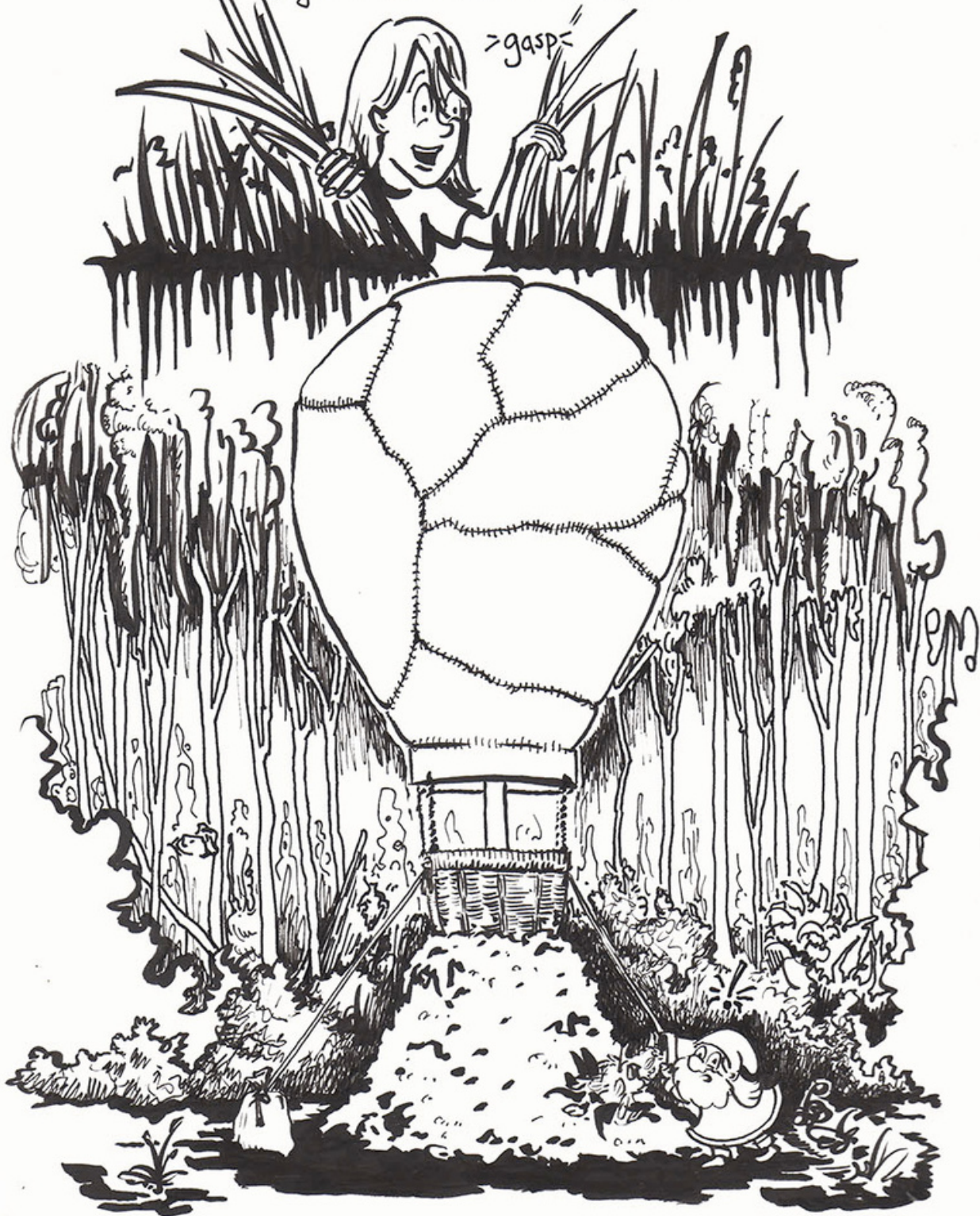
He was just fascinated with what makes us us,
and that we'll break down into and become
a part of something bigger than ourselves.

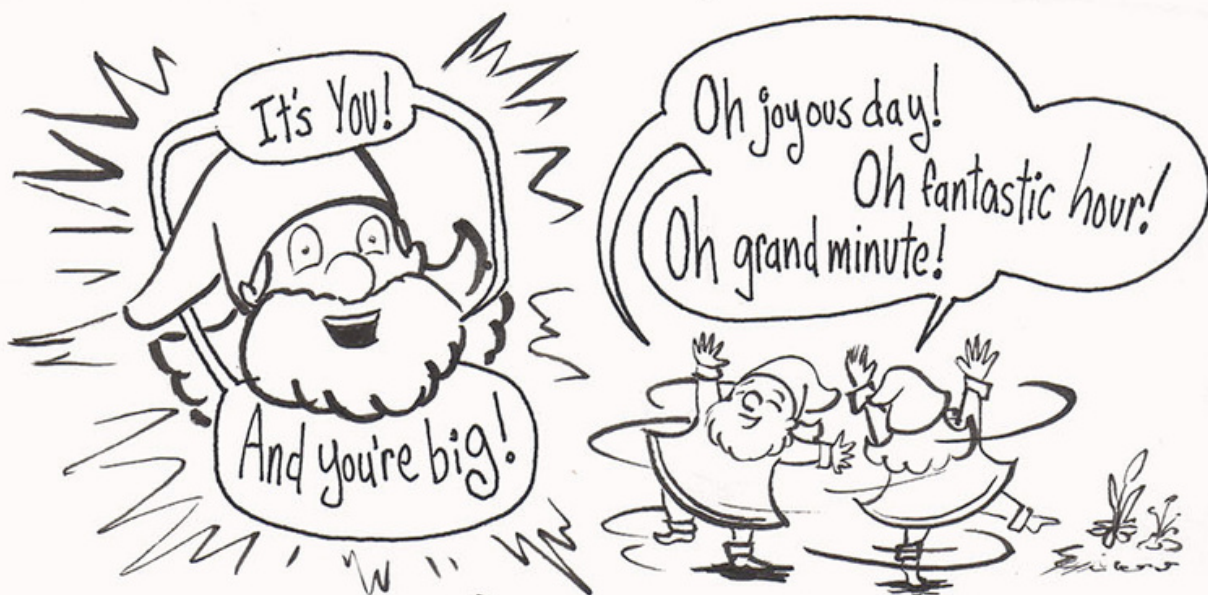
Eventually came the time for me to walk
these woods I haven't seen in over ten years.

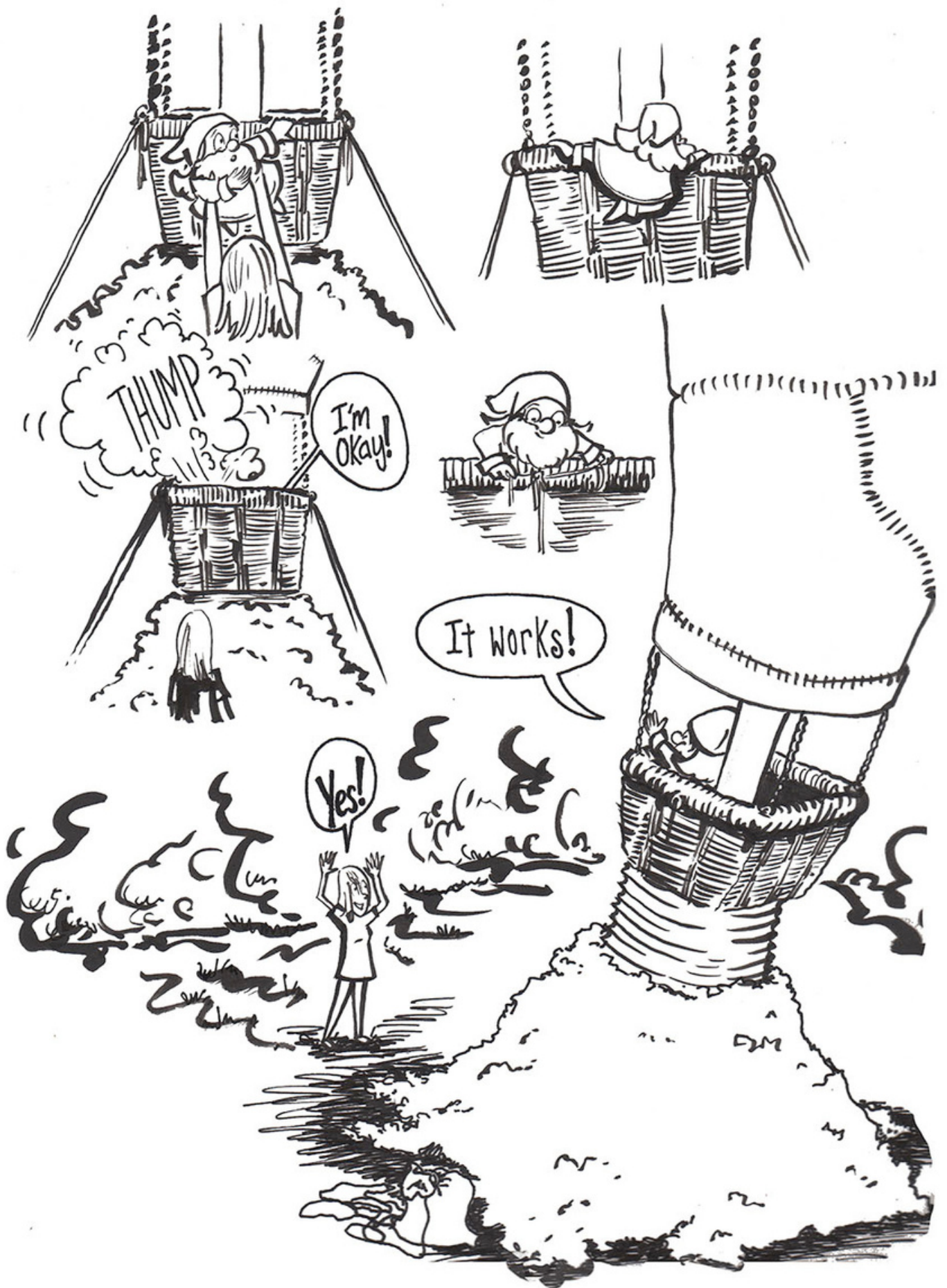


This wasn't ceremony. My uncle's body
had already been placed in the woods.
By his request, he was to be visited by no one.

This walk was for me. To check in on
my memories. To see if I still have the
magic and vision I did in the past.









Never forget, my friend...
You are not only what you eat, but
also what you remember, what you
believe, and what you share!

You are of the elements
both tangible and theoretical!
A heap of facts and mystery,
for we shall all be the
fuel of the forest one day.

I don't know what to believe. My time in
this forest was some of the best I've experienced
in my life. When I came back here today I
wanted to be lost for days, but inspired by
my little friend I now aim to set my sights
what is above and beyond these trees...
...until the day I become a part of them.

Poetics & Prose



expressions of gratitude for the elements as they play a role in gardens and life.

Ginny Stack

air

the air that brings the pollen and bees
that rustles the leaves of plants, and trees;
a cooling touch upon my cheek
the darkness through which the stars i seek.
a breeze to hold up those with wing,
and to carry the words of those who sing.
whisper, winnow, wash through stalk and stem
drift throughout the world, and back, again.



fire

ancient fire, burning bright,
chases away chill from winter and night;
gently, it coaxes roots and seeds
to open, to rise, as spring proceeds.
then summer sun's unrelenting heat
warms the earth beneath my feet;
it reaches its peak, only to descend
on its journey south, again.
first, it lingers to set autumn afire
a glorious, golden season before winter's ire
even then, a cold and distant light
will peek through clouds, keeping souls alight.
remember, now, the fire always burns,
and so too, the sun always returns.



earth

earth - a paradox of life and death
a home in which to live, a final place of rest.
as I bend down to the land,
rich soil of memory stains my hands.
from what seems nothing, verdant plant life grows,
but abundant life teems below;
roots wiggle and dig, inching down,
sharing space with those in the ground.
when i lay me down for final sleep,
my body and secrets the earth shall keep.



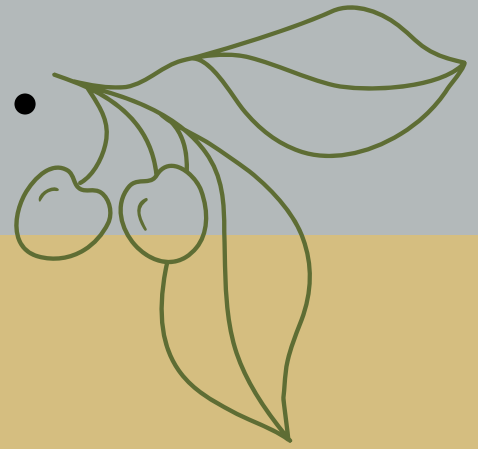
water

water, the life force that flows through us all,
permeating bodies, big and small
rain against leaves, a lovely sound,
pitter-patter, then drip - to the ground.
sparkling dew chills the feet,
glitters bright, and graces leaf.
slaking thirst, giving relief,
providing soundscape for moments of peace.
as storm pours and rivers rush,
water keeps our lives and gardens lush.

*Ginny intends to write or stitch these onto flags to hang in her garden,
and let the sentiments circulate on the wind.*



Jackie Donaldson



The Seed

Last June, I lost someone I thought I couldn't live without.

It was a violent and bitter end for us, not an amicable parting. Years of friendship were dismantled in a single moment of unrestrained anger. This person, who I loved and admired, discarded me without a second thought. Grieving someone who still walks in the land of the living is especially excruciating because you have to go on knowing that they have simply chosen not to walk with you. I was so sad that I thought I would die.

On the first day without him, I woke from a fitful sleep and the realization that he was really gone came to me like a stunning revelation. Grief swallowed me whole on this day; it infiltrated my muscles and bones and churned the bile in my guts. I kept replaying our last conversation over and over again in my head, wishing I could take back what I said – wishing I could say all the things that I had withheld.

For many more days, life was unbearable. My regular routine was shattered. I stayed in bed. I constantly checked my phone, wanting a call from him that never came. I spent all my days in a stoned blur, rather than face the fact that he wasn't coming back.

Eventually, I peeled my rotting, despondent body from bed and peeked through the blinds. It was summer at last, after an unbearably long winter and a stormy spring, and I just knew that if I wasted those sunny days in my dark depression room, I would simply never recover – and I wanted to recover.

When I could not make myself eat, I drank water. When I could eat, I ate the soft green flesh of an avocado. I rinsed off its slippery brown pit, then left it out to dry. I washed my hair. I brushed my teeth. I began to remember that I was once a whole person who existed in the world independently of anyone else, and that meant that I was a whole person still.

I began spending time outside. I read self-help books, and books about love, and books about grief, and I scribbled sad poems in my notebook out on the deck. I waited for the bright, white, sun to permeate my skin, to infiltrate every corner of my body and clear out the dark shadows of mourning from my soul.

I filled a ceramic pot with planting soil. I pushed the avocado seed deep into the dirt with my fingers. The idea that I could grow an avocado tree in a small ceramic pot seemed unlikely, but there was something therapeutic about handling the cool, moist, black, Earth, ripe with nutrients, ready to feed a little life.

After a few weeks, I stopped waiting for a message from him. I pumped up my bicycle's flat tires. I put my headphones on and rode my bike all over town. Low hanging branches brushed the top of my head as I zoomed up and down the sidewalks. The sky was a luminescent blue.

People were existing all around me – people who, too, had felt the sharp sting of heartbreak at one time or another, and had survived to love another day. I watered the seed.

I started to realize that the sun didn't revolve around him – it revolved around me. I had chosen him; I had decided to invest my time, love, attention and energy into him and that is what made him special – because I was special.

From the seed, a tiny green sprout sprung. I gave my teeny houseplant all my love that no longer had any place to go. I stopped turning over our last conversation in my head. I stopped holding onto the idea that things could have happened any other way.

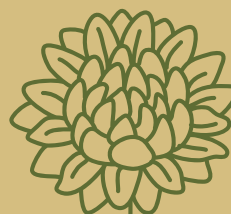
Where your focus goes, energy flows. By the time the hot summer days transitioned to cool autumn evenings, my avocado sprout had twisted up out of the Earth, growing into a thick red vine, with two pointy leaves that were always looking for the sun.

My entire life had changed. I had a new routine and new healthy habits. I no longer looked to another person for love and validation. I was stronger and more secure. I was whole, and had always been whole. I never regretted the love I had for him – I think that maybe he needed my love.

When your heart is breaking, you will feel like you won't ever find anything better than what you lost, but the universe is always working to serve your highest good. Crisis is the greatest catalyst for radical change, and the people who are meant for you will always meet you on the other side.

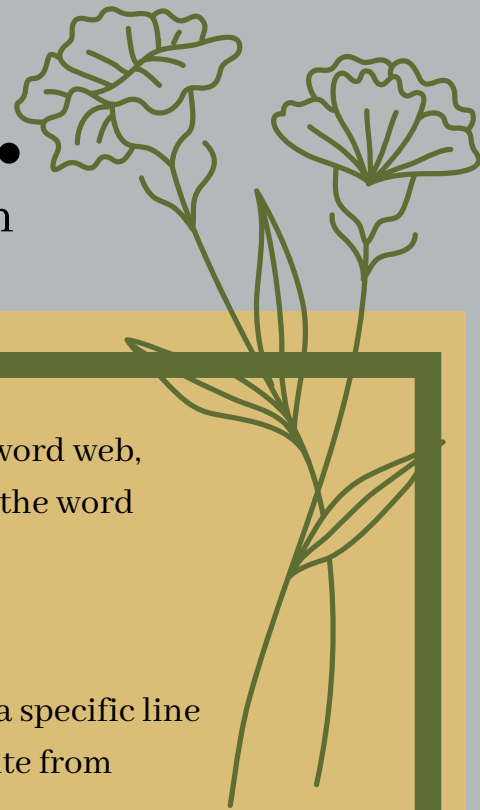
In order to grow, we must plant the seeds of change. The root of all suffering is attachment. We grasp onto things with both hands, despite the knowing that all things are temporary. The greatest source of suffering is the resistance to change.

Admire beautiful flowers; let them be unpicked.



Turning the Lens

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writing prompts for reflection



~ write the word 'elements' at the center of a page and create a word web, writing all the words, phrases and ideas that you associate with the word 'elements'

~ what piece stuck out to you the most in the zine? Write down a specific line that you sticks out to you the most from that piece and then write from there for a few minutes

~ do you resonate with a specific element? if so, identify it and write about why.

~ write a letter to Mother earth and then perhaps write another letter as if Mother earth were writing to you. what messages arise?

~ it is said that water likes to move in spirals, rather than be forced into straight lines through pipes. Create a piece of writing about water that is written in the shape of a spiral by turning your book round and round as you write

~ what creates fuel for your fire? at your core, what matters most to you?

~ imagine that your pen is being gently pushed along by an invisible breeze that dances around and with your hand, coaxing out your words and encouraging them to find whatever order they find

flow

is made possible by your support, which is greatly appreciated. Thanks for reading.



Erin, editor and designer of a zine called FLOW,
is a writer and yoga instructor living in Athens, Ohio.
You can learn more about what she's all about on her website.
erinpfahler.com