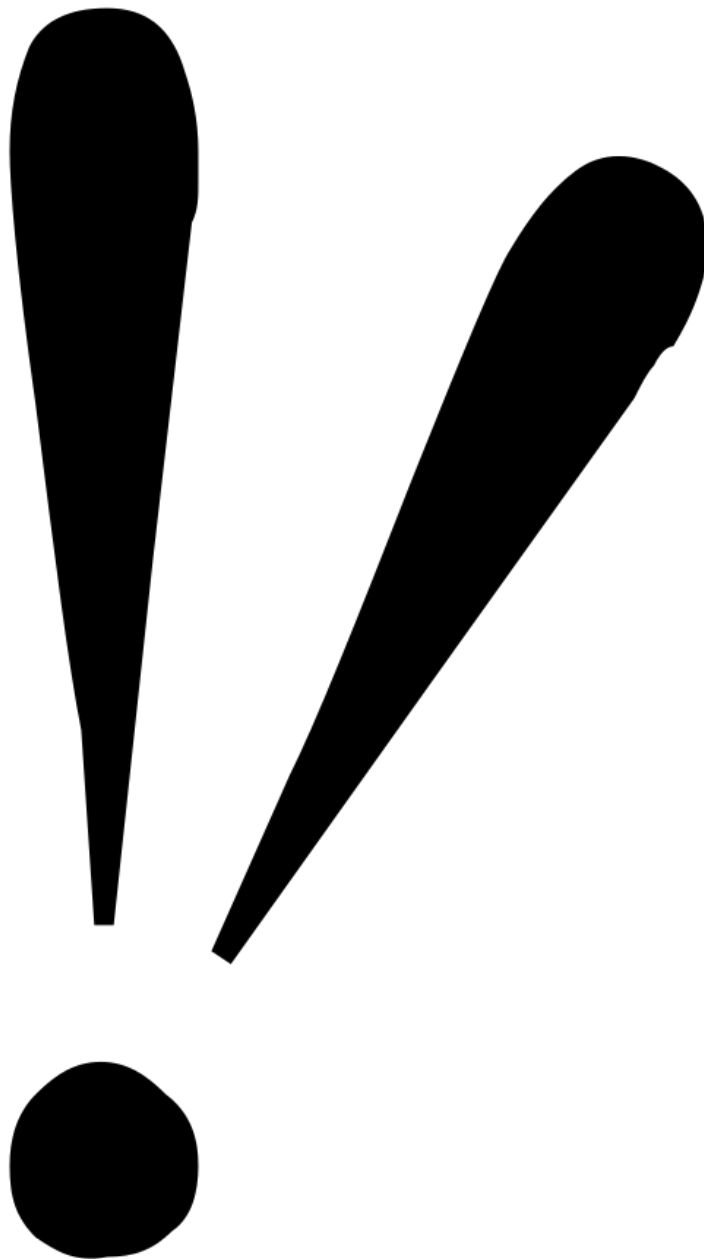


ACCLAMATION POINT

A MONTHLY JOURNAL of ART and LITERATURE

Vol 1, Issue 1
August 2019



Greetings!	2
The Font	3
As Advertised	4
Panic Button Pill	5
September Prompt	6
The Calm & The Storm	7
Beheading Holofernes	8
What Are We Reading?	15

Greetings!

Welcome to our pilot issue of *Acclamation Point*. We are glad you are here! Let us introduce ourselves. The acclamation point is a special punctuation mark used to signify a message of warmth and welcome. It is the enthusiastic, kind host that welcomes you after a long journey. Here at *Acclamation Point Journal*, we strive to honor the spirit of our namesake by welcoming new and emerging writers who have singular visions and compelling stories to tell. Our journal is unique because even though we are a small, fledgling independent press, we want our writers to dream big by refusing to be constrained by rigid standards. We are dedicated to encouraging exploration by assuring new writers that we would like them to be adventurous in their creative pursuits, and that we will welcome them home to tell us the tale. Our mission is defined by our three core values: Unique Vision, Community Mindset, and Social Consciousness.

In this issue you will find some short stories and poetry from the founders of the *Acclamation Point Journal* as well as some beautiful photography from friends of the journal. If you are looking for a recommendation for a longer read, you can find what we are currently enjoying in our "What Are We Reading?" section. Enjoy your perusal and we hope to see you submit something in the future! Be sure to check out our prompt for the September Issue.

The Font

By KB Thomas

The reserves have run dry --
The masses drank from the font but gave
no offering.
Now the gods are too tired, too old, too
exhausted,
Spent from a life of inequivalent giving.
The last of it went to the Lonesome
Traveler,
Who also knew exhaustion, who they
thought was worthy.
The gods reached up to his thirsty lips as
hard as they dared
And bid him "drink!"
He extinguished the last of it, leaving only
sand.
He, the final and best of all the
worshippers, even he
Neglected offering to revive the font.
So it remained from thenceforth dry
Aching for the one who would never
come.

As Advertised

By KB Thomas

I am as advertised.

"1993 Chevy truck, terrible condition,
fenders rusted,
bumper falling off,
a knock in the engine,
and sometimes it won't even start."

If you choose to call me yours, you may
suffer.

My luster left me long ago

My only commendation, "she's got
character"

But character doesn't cut it when your
craving

Veneration on the verge of a void

And people are pulsing and passing you
by.

Because I am flawed -- as advertised.

"1993 Chevy truck, terrible condition,
Eats oil and bad gas mileage,
Headlights foggy,
A dent in the door,
And sometimes it won't even start."

Panic Button Pill

By KB Thomas

I paint on a face that suggests to the
world a smile I no longer own.
I brush on fake light that mimics
moonbeams to make up for what left my
eyes.

I go out. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Feel the poison in my lungs, so long as I
can feel at all.

And coming home is the worst part,
Because I come home alone.

And I scrub off the painted, pained,
panting smile.

The one that asks, "Did I do it? Did I stick
the landing tonight?"

And all that's left is my same face.

And I take off the clothes, the itching skin
begging to molt, and all that's
underneath is smooth, pink flesh.

The flesh you thought was beautiful.

The hair you twirled around your fingers.

The little lines you traced and named and
loved.

And I pull on the t-shirt that was yours
and play that song we used to hate
together.

And I scramble for the panic button,
Pop one to make me sleep.

Because I haven't slept in years without
either you or that pill.

And when it takes me, I hope for not the
first time that it takes me for eons and
millennia,

Stretching forever into the stars,
So that the loss of you won't sting
anymore.

September Prompt

This month's prompt is a word jumble.

Red. Plume. Boots.

Let this inspire your work, and we can't wait to see your submissions. For the September issue please submit no later than **Monday, August 19th**. Please see the [submissions page](#) on our website for formatting and genres. We have put together an inspiration board on [Pinterest](#) for anyone who would like visual inspiration.

October's writing prompt will be posted shortly after this deadline and you won't want to miss this spooky prompt!

FIND US:

Website

acclamationpoint.home.blog

Facebook

[AcclamationPointJournal](#)

Twitter

[@AcclamationPoi](#)

Pinterest

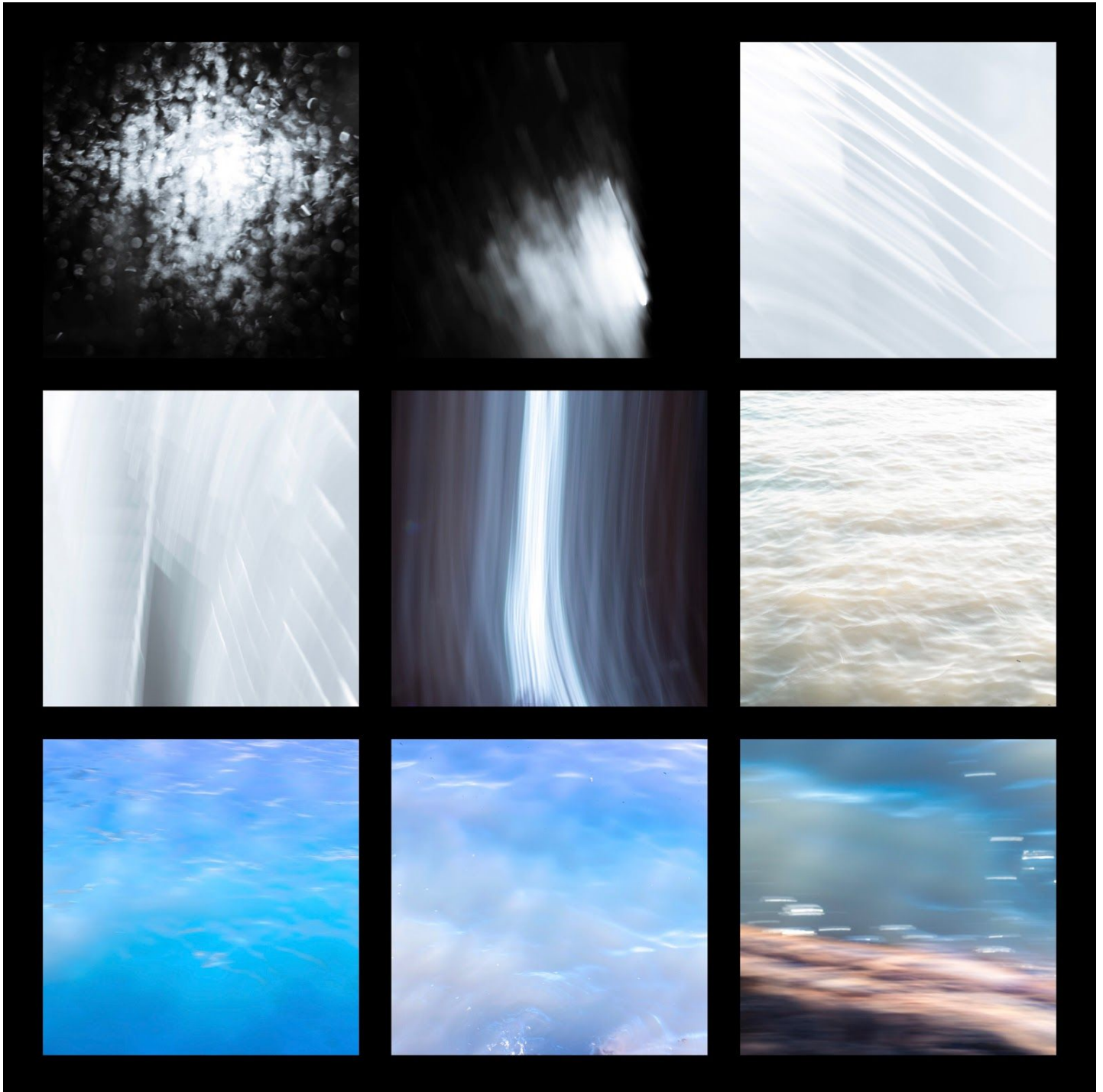
[acclamationpointjournal](#)

Email

acclamationpointjournal@gmail.com

The Calm & The Storm

A photo essay by Savannah Saxton



Beheading Holofernes

By Ashley Davis

I mix my pigments together to get the perfect deep reds and golds. It is to be exquisite. It will feel as though the viewer is bearing witness to the justice. The smell of the freshly mixed oil paints builds in my nostrils. It is a sharp stench that brings back so many memories. This painting will show everyone that I am not to be underestimated.

My father taught me to paint. Without my mother, father really had no choice but to have me around at every moment. He never seemed to be annoyed at the fact I was in his studio. I remember sitting on his knee and him taking my tiny young hands in his paint splattered palms. He would show me how to move the paintbrush to get certain textures. Teaching my young hands the movements needed to create masterpieces. His warm smile that scrunched up his eyes in contentment was my favorite. I've never been able to replicate it.

Many fathers may have seen a talent or a brightness in their daughters, but few would have done anything to encourage the pursuit of it. Father had known one of the greatest artists alive for a short while and had taught me his techniques. I hoped to meet Caravaggio one day, but he is not the sort of man father would approve of me knowing. When father had taught me all he could he sought out another who could teach me techniques I had not yet mastered. Perspective had always given me trouble and father commented on the poses of my models not being just right. The tutor he found was talented

and a professional painter like father. An old family friend, Tassi. A little younger than my father. He was trusted in our family and helpful in my learning. I was 16 when he began tutoring me.

Commonly, artists take scenes from the Holy Word of God to inspire their work. The women in these paintings are always so beautiful. Fully formed women at the peak of their beauty. Their faces delicate with feminine features that refuse to contort themselves into unbecoming expressions of emotions. Bodies of these women seem idealized in some way to me eye. They are curved and robust, but only in the way that would appeal to certain viewers. There were few rolls or pudgy bits that exist on the human form when bent into certain poses as in the paintings. Almost as if they go unseen.

Susanna and the Elders...The Book of Daniel, Chapter Thirteen. It tells the story a pious young married woman whose almost divine beauty causes lustful thoughts in the minds of two elders. These elders both make a deal...plotted, with each other that they will find a moment where they could have her alone to themselves during her daily walks in the garden. As Susanna prepares for her bath she sends her own servants to bring her back things. The two men wait for her servants to leave before sneaking out of their hiding in the garden and attempt to seduce her. Not seduce her. Threaten her. They insist that if Susanna deny the opportunity of laying with them both then they

would go to her husband and bear witness that she had a young man in the bath with her after servants left her alone...It seems painters focus on this portion of the story with Susanna's calm listening attentive gaze as she is propositioned. Yet, no one focuses on her unyielding faith in the face of a threat of physical harm and loss of reputation.

This was my first real painting I completed in 1610. Even before my tutoring had begun I painted a remarkable piece. Susanna and the Elders. I remember showing my father the sketch of what I intended to paint before starting mixing my pigments. He was surprised by two things in my rendition of this story. The first was the similarity of our styles. He said it could have been sketched by him. To my ears, this was the highest compliment a painting master could give me. The second thing that surprised my father was Susanna. Her screaming face contorted, open mouthed, head pulled back by the fistful of hair gripped tightly in the fist of one of the elders.

"This is a real woman. The curves here are exquisitely done. Perhaps the most realistic female nude to be painted." He stood eyes fixed on the sketch and was silent for a moment. "But no one will have this in their homes or in a cathedral, little bird. Consider loosening the grip here... see how this would naturally allow her face to turn slightly to her right like this... See? Move her right arm down so it is not high in the air and this hand seems unnaturally claw like. What's to be in her left hand here? A knife? There is no knife in the story, so no one will think this is the beloved Susanna. She can still challenge your viewer here. You do not have to compromise fully who you are, Artemisa."

He was right. No one wanted to see depictions of true violence inflicted upon women. Even if it is true. We speak about it to our daughters. But to put a face to it, put an expression to it...it is too much. The face could be their mother's, sister's, wife's, childhood friend's, any woman they know really. The expression on that face is unmistakable as pain, fear, torment. Mouth agape letting their voice ring out seeking out someone to answer with kindness and protection. Eyebrows furrowed together in pain and torment. Hands reaching out to put a stop to it...it makes the situation too clear and leaves no room for unclear circumstances in human interaction. The men who requests paintings to be made for their collection and pleasure do not want to think about situations such as this when they look at their art.

Thus the fist clenching her hair tight before loosened now, letting her hair fall back over her shoulder. The fist turned into a gesture meant to silence her instead. Her face turns more forward and down away from the admirers...attackers. The expression is not as harsh as her original open-mouthed scream. No, no Susanna has her eyes lowered and mouth slightly open as if you might hear a sweet, soothing voice come from her. Her right arm relaxed but wandered in front of her across her body hand shielding her from the looks of the gazers and shielding her own body. The left hand now unarmed takes a similar pose as her right but almost touches one of the old men as if to push him away.

When Tassi had begun tutoring me he focused on perspective. He teased me about Susanna and would point to small sections asking, "What models did you use, Artemisia? How

close were they together...did you even look at them when you painted?" He would chuckle as I barely blushed. The men were models my father had used for one of his works. I seated myself behind him while he worked on his painting as to not get in his way, but I began sketching their faces even in different poses so I could challenge myself. It was the only way to have models for my own work. Tassi was only teasing of course with his questions. Flirtatiously even perhaps. Under his critical questioning the words dripped with jealousy. There was no denying my work was good.

He was the most charming man I had ever met. His smile could dazzle you for hours, but his mind was the real gem. While practicing different perspectives in landscapes and portraits, assignments he would give me, we would talk of everything new in Rome. He would talk of philosophy and new scientific discoveries being talked about in the city's square. Things I wasn't privy to with being kept in the house. Sometimes he would paint side by side with me each on our canvas painting what we saw in our ways. Generally, he would wander about the room while I worked. He would talk until I no longer responded as I concentrated deeply on the work and lost myself to it completely. Tassi would then come stand behind me and watched as I worked. If I struggled, he was there taking my hand in his and moving my hand with the brush to correct the work. I don't remember when his hand lingered a little longer on my hand or when it moved to rest upon my shoulder.

Tassi began to talk to me of marriage. In my naïve thoughts I couldn't imagine what a well accomplished man like Tassi would want with me. Yet, I was flattered and

giddy with delight to have attention as a woman. My father would regularly ask me about my thoughts on Tassi. It has only recently occurred to me that this was perhaps father's plan all along. If this is true, then I must also ask myself how much father knew about Tassi then?

Regularly, father would have to leave for business. Travels with business colleagues or to new patrons wishing to commission a work from him. He left me at our family home in the care of Tassi. When we were alone he was far more romantic. Kissing my hand at breakfast or playing with my hair while I worked on more assignments became a habit. He had been my tutor only a few months at the time.

"Artemisia, I don't think I have ever seen a more beautiful woman. You're delicate. Kind. I do believe this is the first time I've felt this way about any woman," Tassi would whisper in my ear, "You truly are exquisite. Like a painting yourself. Be mine always."

My head would rush and I'd feel dizzy. Is this what love feels like? My whole face felt flushed and blotchy. My stomach launched itself upwards but felt as if it were flying in the cavity of my abdomen. My hands shook as he took it in his to press it to his lips once again. I looked away as I felt stinging in my eyes. I would excuse myself and find my way to my room. As my door closed I would feel breathless. He takes my breath away.

On one of these times when father was gone his behavior changed. Tassi escalated his manner toward me and became far too familiar. The day my father was to return he turned into a man I didn't recognize at all. Like Susanna's story, he waited until servants were gone and tried to kiss me. When I turned away from him he

would lightly chuckle and I could feel his hot breath against my skin.

"You will be my wife...I have to have you. Don't you like me as well?" Leaning into me he pressed his forehead to mine and inhaled deeply. His hands wandered to my waist and held me a little too tightly. He waited for me to answer his question.

I could only nod. I did like him. I was fond of him and entranced by him. My heart slammed itself against my ribcage. I thought the bones may break with the force of beating. There was a rushing sound in my ears. There were footsteps approaching in the hall when I felt his grip on me loosen and step away from me. He excused himself from the studio when the servant arrived. Tassi sounded differently. The tone of his voice was...tense perhaps? Strained at the very least and his words cut short. I thought his footsteps sounded heavier on the wood floor as he walked down the hallway outside.

Before it happened, I hadn't realized I was alone again. I suppose now I had gotten lost in a painting again. I can't even remember what I had been painting now. Tassi had stormed in and slammed the door behind him. For a moment he did nothing but stand and stare at me.

"Enough painting," he growled it at me from behind bared teeth.

I could only respond with a furrowed brow and frozen body. I felt as if I were becoming one of my paintings. Completely stuck in one moment forever. This feeling did not last long as Tassi flung himself towards me. My body unfroze itself, unsticking itself from the captured pose, but my limbs felt as if they were covered in layers of paint still. I had knocked over the stool I had been sitting on while I worked. The wood on wood crash

startled my ears. Tassi was not done though.

He grabbed my painting and threw it to the floor. The fresh paint smeared itself on the floor. Tassi turned to the table containing my tools. All of my brushes, my palette, knife, everything was knocked to the floor in his surprising rage. The clattering of every single brush bouncing off the floor was so much louder than I would have thought possible. I bent down to start collecting the brushes for preservation from any further violent outbursts but forgot about myself.

When Tassi grabbed my arm to pull me up from the floor I had never experienced such sudden pain. My hands twitched without thought as the muscles in my arm were being squeezed together. He dragged me out the studio and down the hall past my painting hanging by the bedroom. It was my first attempt at capturing the character of Judith. When he pushed me into the bedroom I did all I could think of...I kicked and screamed. I thought of Susanna and the Elders. My arms tried to push against the oncoming assault as Susanna had reached out. I had even grabbed a knife and cut a small chunk of his flesh...it didn't stop. I thought of Judith in the hall standing watch in her frame.

Until recently, Judith had been an overtly sexual character who demanded power from men when she pretended to seduce Holofernes only to have her grab her weapon and cut through his flesh until his head came free of his body. She was a hero to her people. She saved them from an invasion. Yet all that they wanted to remember of her was that she used her body to her advantage.

"You're mine now." He whispered in my ear. His hot breath made my skin crawl.

The part about it that hit me hardest was that he knew...he knew what he was doing. I was ruined in the eyes of the society of Rome. My family was ruined. I could not fetch a worthy dowry. What would I do now? What would I tell my father? What would he do?

By the time my father arrived home that evening I had bathed and dressed myself as best I could. I refused help from the servants in dressing. I couldn't bear it. My skin felt as if it were on fire. Like I was burning at the stake already. I kept telling myself that he would marry me, he would have to marry me. He would talk to my father and no one would know. As I walked down the hall and descended the stairs to greet my father in time for dinner I heard absolutely nothing. No voices, no rustling...it was quiet. It was as if I was walking through the tomb of Christ himself.

I thought of Judith again at that moment. How silent it must have been after the deed was done and Holofernes breathed no more. Would it be this quiet? Surely Judith could hear her own breath in that moment as I could hear mine now. Finally, I heard plates clattering and wine being poured into glasses. Turning the corner off the staircase I saw my father.

"Little bird! How good it is to see you. You've grown again." He embraced me warmly, but my body urged me to push away. Every touch lit a new fire on my skin. I could not push him away. I could not tell him what had happened in that moment.

For nine months Tassi talked and talked of marriage. "Yes, Artemisia I will marry you," or "Of course, you are

my love," or "I'll speak to your father tomorrow about it." What else was I to do? I was not a free woman. Now 17, with no money and the only solace I had was in painting, but I was careful to not show anyone what I really worked on in the middle of the night. I had begun my sketch of Judith taking her vengeance. Once my sketch was done I had had enough of Tassi's manipulation. I fancied myself Judith and I would have my vengeance as well.

Resolving yourself to tell someone you love the truth can be a difficult task. Every time I tried to leave my room to speak to my father my chest caved in on itself and my legs denied my request for help. It felt as though Tassi had a hold on me once again and I could do nothing to break the hold. I called upon my muse to come to me. Asking Judith to fill me with her own resolve and brutal strength to get me through this night. I thought of my sketch with Judith knife in hand doing what she must. Her prayer rang in my mind.

"Lord God, to whom all strength belongs, prosper what my hands are now to do for the greater glory of Jerusalem; for now is the time to recover your heritage and to further my plans to crush the enemies arrayed against us." I whispered it to the cool draft and the dark shadows in my room. Picked myself up off the floor and opened the door to make my way to my father's studio.

When I entered he turned from his working table and patted the stool next to him. As I sat silently next to him he turned to me. "Little bird...are you alright?" When my voice became stuck in my throat he grabbed my shoulders sending flames running up my neck and to my face. "Artemisia. Are you alright?"

All I heard was a loud roaring in my ear and my bones chattering as I shook uncontrollably. I must have told him all that had to be said. His eyes scrunched up, but he was not smiling. Tears flowed from his eyes and dripped onto his wet canvas. "He will pay for this. Either he will marry you or he will pay for what he has done."

Tassi refused a proposal of marriage of course. My father has decided to take him to court. He cannot sue for rape...instead I am listed on the lawsuit as damaged property. In the eyes of the law that is what I am as I am unable to fetch a wholesome dowry now. Tassi has done all he can to make sure I look like the liar and manipulator. He has called upon his friends to bear false witness. Paying them to tell the court that I have been with them before Tassi had ever touched me.

One man said, "the girl you see sitting before you is nothing more than a whore and her home is a brothel. You can ask anyone about her and her servants," before spitting on me. Another man I had never seen in my life screamed that I was the one to blame since I had rejected his own advances. Yet another paraded into the room swearing that he had seen Tassi on the day in question and had been with him the whole day.

Before the next could even enter the room the judge stopped the procession. He whispered to the other officials sitting with him on the bench. Then he turned his glare on Tassi. I thought for one fleeting moment that perhaps this was the end of it. Perhaps they could see through Tassi and his game. When he said to Tassi, "Agostino, you must stop this," I thought they believed me.

"Stop what exactly, sir?" Tassi retorted with his sickening chortle.

"You can see her for what she is now. These men know her and her true nature. She is a best of ungodly seduction."

"Agostino..." the judge leaned closer to Tassi, "you were heard discussing the event by others."

"Who? Who heard? What did they hear?" I saw one bead of sweat form at Tassi's temple.

"It does not matter who. It matters that there are those who can testify to this young girl's claim. You were heard in the tavern."

"The tavern?" Tassi chuckled and my skin crawled, "You can't trust anything you hear there can you judge? If you were to believe even half of the things men say in a tavern every single man in Rome including you and perhaps even The Pope himself would be imprisoned," He wiped the hair by his temples and emitted a laugh from deep within his belly, "It is tavern tales. That is all."

"Tassi. Enough." The judge's face had gone red. From embarrassment? Shame? Or anger? "Tavern tales or no, it has begun discussion about your wife's absence and your potential involvement."

His wife. He was married. He was already married. My thoughts were interrupted by the judge's commanding voice.

"Artemisia, we've heard your account of the events. Are you now ready to answer the examination questions?"

I nodded and returned his gaze with my attempt at solemn bravery. Bracing myself I answered all ridiculous questioning that was hurled at me.

"Artemisia Gentileschi, what were you wearing on the day in question? Were you properly dressed?"

“Artemisia Gentileschi, how many lovers have you taken before Agostino Tassi?”

“Artemisia Gentileschi, had you assumed a familiar attitude toward Agostino Tassi? Did you lead him into this?”

“Artemisia Gentileschi, did you know Agostino Tassi was already married when you started the affair with him? Is this why you have brought this false witness to the court?”

“Artemisia Gentileschi, recant your false tale.”

When I had answered their questions and denied to recant I was given only one option. The only option for a woman’s testimony of her own rape to be considered true was to again give her testimony, but under duress. The device chosen for me were thumbscrews...They gave me the choice to recant or risk my painter’s hands as collateral for justice. As they tightened the ropes they again asked me their questions and I relived every moment yet again. I could feel the bones cracking and bending. They had one last question for me though.

“Artemisia Gentileschi, is everything you have said true?” The judge glared at me waiting for me to break under their torture.

“Yes.” I had to gulp for air as they tightened the ropes yet again. There was a snap that echoed in my ears. “Yes, everything is true.”

They released the device and let me look at my hands. My thumbs were already turning a shade of purple I did not think was possible. I snatched the device from my torturer, feeling a bout of bravery in my resolve. Standing directly in front of Tassi I threw the ring of ropes at him that were still attached to their screws.

“This is the only ring of our marriage.” I spun on my heel and was escorted home by a servant. I expected to be welcomed home, but instead found my father sobbing and a cousin sitting at the table. I was told I was no longer welcome in my home. I was allowed to take my paintings, sketches, and a few art supplies my father could spare. I was told I was to marry my cousin and he was to take me to Florence.

“Rome could no longer be her home. She is dishonored here and can never recover. Take her.”
Now as I look at the painting taking form of Judith and Holofernes almost completed and my hands almost healed I can’t help but think that vengeance is not something people are used to. I’ve been told I’m angry and violent and my paintings are far too grotesque for a woman. The women in my portraits stare down the viewer. There is a sense of defiance in their eyes. This painting of Judith is to be my masterpiece. Holofernes will not be feared any longer.

What Are We Reading?

***Fledgling* by Octavia E. Butler**

This is my first foray into Butler's work after hearing so much about her. It is a shame that we are not reading this in schools. *Fledgling* is a narrative tale about a young girl fighting to remember who she is and what she is...Butler's twist on a vampire tale shines through the mass amount of lacklustre vampire tales. Her focus on folkloric traditions and her own creative vision is intriguing. The mastery of her craft keeps the reader turning pages and stepping into the role of this young girl to unravel the mystery with her. 10/10 recommend. I'm planning on checking out the rest of Butler's catalogue after this winner.

-Ashley

***Girl in a Band* by Kim Gordon**

Sonic Youth is a band that can't really be defined by a genre (though often post-punk rock) and that explores unknown artistic territories. Kim Gordon, the bassist for the band, is notably one of the coolest females in an often male dominated music world. Her history also includes the oh-too-common case of dating someone in your band. Her now ex-husband Thurston Moore has always been and is still the guitarist for Sonic Youth. Their divorce rocked the rock world so to speak. As a musician myself who refuses to be defined by genre and gender as well as also having experienced romance within a band, I could not wait to get my hands on this autobiography. Kim Gordon tells her story with such authenticity,

passion and imagery that makes me feel like I am there experiencing it all with her. Taking place mostly in California and New York, Gordon describes her many meetings and friendships with well known musicians, poets, visual artists, film makers that have (like Sonic Youth) influenced generations to come. It's not an easy one, the art world in Cali and NYC, but Gordon thrived and this book is proof. I recommend this book to anyone who loves art and big cities, but mostly to girls who could use a role model like Kim Gordon.

-Savannah

***Women Who Run With the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés, PhD.**

I'd had my eye on this book for quite a while, then I was gifted it by my fellow founder, Ashley. This book is part psychoanalysis, part ethnology, and part folklore. It delves into the ways both the Wild Woman and the wolf have been depicted and constrained, and the way a wildish nature can be reclaimed. I am generally a fairly quick reader, but every now and then I come across a book that takes more time per page to fully dig into. This is definitely one of those books for me, but I already consider it well worth the effort. The weight of Estés's words takes time to steep. She is, somewhat foremost, an amazing storyteller, who also brings a substantial intellectual background to the telling of her stories.

-KB