

the deposit

This is a collaborative art and literature magazine between Graphite and Zine Club! Literary works were provided by Graphite while Zine Club created response artworks to display along side the writing. Unlabelled pieces that do have art responses will be directly on or beside the writing piece.

Feel free to interpret the art responses as you want. I think these are best enjoyed cuddled up in a blanket with a warm beverage.

Enjoy!

with lots of love,

Zine Club and Graphite



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Last Breath Heard on Mountaintop Remote

Whispering wind carries my tongue to eyeless horizon where no man is from.
Up the wretched peak, where golden dunes ask, beg, then gasp for drink,
Where nature forsakes its gaze to make heard the dust's hollow, booming drum
Atop the mounds where my dozen youths rest—that place wherefrom my soul did shrink.
My dirge, such sickly, fat tune, left alone to die in threadbare (and empty) bed.
As waning sunlight dances across rotten sill, these are the notes my heart last bled.

"She was my bride, my empress! Her ivory locks yet sway behind mine eyes!
Her smile, though crooked, could have fought amongst heaven's ru'nation!
Those eyes, dewy gardens unto themselves, calmed these restless cries!
Yet still, it was her voice that speared mine ears to harmonize in fatal elation:
The implement I must retrieve, with which to turn sprightly crop
Wind's whispering should solely remain; not a candle's wax should drop..."

I went about some forty years, but from her I heard no further note
For it was I—their own father—who lured them to mountaintop remote!

Old Aunt Gertrude

Passing brick heaps, petrichor remains,
As God's holy pencil shavings briskly refrain.
While the wind fluffed my hair and blew me gentle kisses, And the sunshine turned deathly leaves a glowing gold or crimson I saw on a porch (looking more than a little crude)
An old, stout pot that everyone calls Aunt Gertrude.
Decorated in magenta hues—you couldn't possibly miss her—
With her hair up in a tuft like an agéd, cruel teacher! She bathes once a day, as a lovely lady should
But uses an awful perfume that makes her smell of pinewood.
When children pass by, she'd love nothing more than to shout!
Instead, she scrunches her rosy-red face in a pout. She's a prissy, fussy, proper old woman that nobody likes; Only I can appreciate her ceramic just right.

Requiem for Nature's Traitor

A city foolishly conceived of a tower that would pierce Heaven
and kill a god. Heaven, which already was filled with a mechanical blaze;
Heaven, whose angelic faces had already been erased.
Only the most baneful were left to struggle
Against the maelstrom of clawing, scraping smog, now left, forgot.
Beneath the tower and the flames and the spirits, a man
The final to meekly stand upon soft, wetted shoreline,
To breathe the memories of fresh river air and lay supine
And cast a mirage-esque gaze upon
The last will and testament of a radiant Technician.
Cast from Heaven, down a meteoric body flew
And nature's rays beamed upon the man anew.
Like a midday shadow was that omnipotent divine
A fragment carved by Heaven's Knife, disfigured in screeching factories.
Yet, still, she deigned to take pity on the man's iniquity.
She cooed to him upon the wind:
"Let me care for thee. Take the light that is rightfully mine."
The man dashed across the bay
To find where now the body lay.
The impact had caused dirt to sprout and flowers to bloom—
A collection of red, flaky pipes, like tendrils, wrap and absorb.
Where Sol now lay, levitate two softly-glowing, blinded orbs
And the soft clacks on gray-tiled earth
Cause the plates to shift and whir; a kaleidoscope was illumed.
The man, now disquiet, cast his visage to naked, undignified glory.
From broken organs hollowly whistled a mourning dove call;
The man's ears hummed, his hand wrapped around a pole,
The sledgehammer, poised to strike!
The eyes fell from their prison, with white-stained buds reflecting victory.

Coffee

When I was younger, I used to drink so much coffee that I would throw it back up. I had no self-control, and no one would stop me. It wasn't until my dad was cleaning the vomit off my bed that I realized I should probably slow down.

I decided, after that, to limit my coffee intake. I needed to be healthier. I should only have coffee once a day and only in the morning. It was just going to help me start my day. Nothing more.

I still found myself needing it throughout the day. I craved something to give me energy. I decided to amend my coffee rules. No more sugary syrups and fattening cream. All I needed was black coffee, and I would be fine. I needed to look out for my health, after all. A little bit of coffee can't hurt, but the shit that goes in it definitely can.

Once I implemented this change, coffee became gross to me. The bitterness sat on my tongue every morning. I sloshed it around in my mouth as my own daily ritual, waiting to see if the taste would ever change. It was the definition of insanity. If I couldn't have the sugar and cream, it was impossible to stomach. This routine only made the cravings worse. I would yearn for the sweetness of a heavenly, sugary latte like an addict waiting for their next fix. That is what hunger does to you.

Every viral health article was saying the same thing: coffee is bad for you. If you drink coffee, you'll get heart disease. The caffeine is bad for you, your teeth will stain, your breath will stink. Coffee is so unhealthy; it would be stupid to keep drinking it.

I wrestled with this internally for quite a while.

My problem with coffee grew even worse when I started working in a coffee shop. Every day when I went to work, it was there, taunting me. I was only allowed one drink per shift. Every

day I would go in and tell myself that "I don't need to drink this crap today," and almost every day, I would cave. I'd sneak sips in when nobody was looking. It was my dirty little secret.

Sometimes, I'd play a game: I would see how far I could get without drinking it. I usually couldn't get deeper than two hours into my shift without the cravings becoming too intense to ignore. I rarely made it without slipping up.

My consumption got so bad that my restriction became more intense. I was more determined than ever to abstain. It became torturous to go into work, constantly handling my own delicious ambrosia, while simultaneously being unable to have it. I left every shift with my willpower in shambles. My drive home was thick with tears and heavy with guilt. I could not work there much longer.

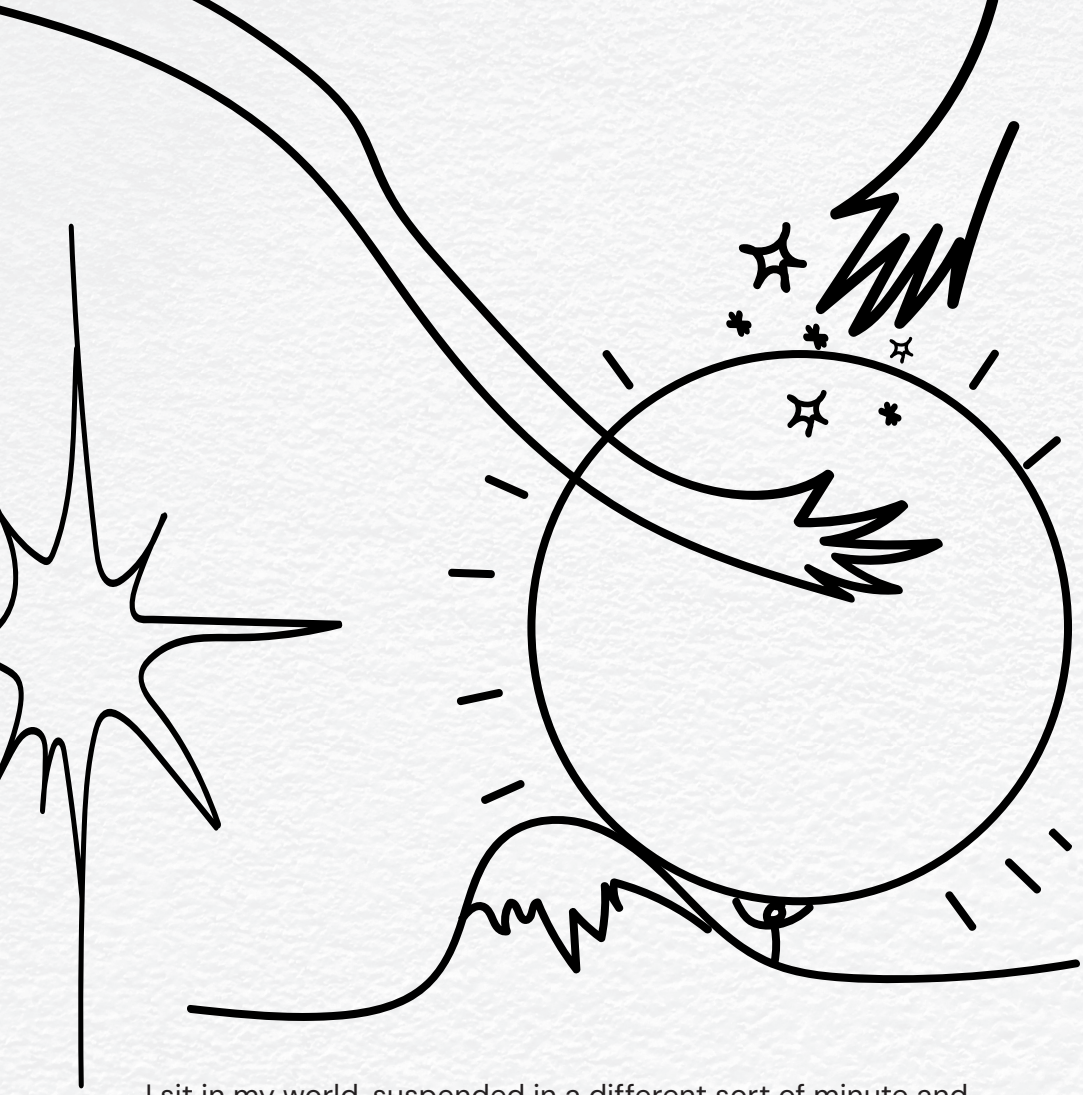
My coffee habit, or lack thereof, became unbearable. It had ruined my life. I would cry to my mother every night, saying, "I can't do it." I'd beg her to forge doctor's notes so that I wouldn't have to leave the house. But she didn't understand. She couldn't. On a particularly bad night, after passing out on the kitchen floor from withdrawal, I realized I had to make a serious decision to protect my health. The next day I slid my two weeks' notice in, cheeks burning with shame. I had never quit a job before.

One might wonder how I solved the coffee dilemma. It's simple: I did not.

I admit that I lied to you, reader. I never had a coffee problem. But I did have a problem.

I still do.


FOODS
DELIVERY
DRINKS



—I sit in my world, suspended in a different sort of minute and think.
we cannot fathom what it means or who it all entails
we should be afforded the time to scale
the dips and valleys
until we are as familiar with it as our own body frame
we should be able to tumble gracelessly over the words
learn how to spell it out just as we did our names.
We should live long enough to understand the majesty,
the mantle gracing each gravestone plaque,
of the meaning "being in America and being black".

IX. She asked me, what does it mean to be [redacted]—

it's living hot wire power
it's falling hard and soft, holding fast and tight
it's being mixed, two snakes swallow the other, flavor soured
fear of not being black enough, too white
or of being too colored
it's paradise on the mind
it's a noose on the neck, a weight that smothers
it's two stars thousands of miles apart lovin blind
it's sittin on the dock of the Bay
resting Robinson feet in rough waters
cat and craw fish float while piggy toes swirl and sway
it's to be a villain and a martyr
it's to be feminine and fair
it's to be a brother, sister, a mother bent over in prayer
it's being Sisyphus each day
it's being afraid and standing brave
it can be gay and smells like shea butter, tastes of jambalaya and etouffee
it sounds like laughter and Donna Summer in a saffron salon
it's hooded with a hijab and stands in the light of Yeshua, baskin
it means to wear a mask
it means being alive while feeling the closing casket
it means standing on trial for the crime of being born
it means a legacy and a bittersweet birthright sworn
it's your bold body and blood, Eucharist for them to drink

Do I Know You?

(The Little Peasant in Blue (The Jockey))

Do I know you?
Something about your face seems familiar, but it's a blur.
Everything kind of blurs here.
Blurs into one.
All the days are the same and all the people are the same.
Correct me, but aren't you the Jockey?
The one who wanted to go to flight school, but his family said no,
So he learned to ride a horse instead.
Ride it out of this green beautiful wasteland where nothing grows but things fade.
Yeah, I remember you now.
I never dreamed you would return.
Maybe you can take me now, before it's too late,
Before the heart fully fades.
I'm still waiting for someone to take me to the place that will save me.
My pretend soul stays lukewarm here like all others as my real soul freezes.
But God knows I could never learn to fly or to ride a horse.
This could be my last chance before the grass envelopes me.
Please take me.
Please take me now.

Okay... turning into a human attempt number... 100, I think. I take a deep breath and stand up on my hind legs. Let's see, what does a human look like? I envision my golden, shimmering scales fading into drab, pink skin. The only gold on my body now would be in my blonde hair. I feel pale fingernails start to form where my ebony claws once sat, and I can feel my pointed tail lift off the ground as it starts to shrink away.

My mother cheers me on from the couch. "You're almost there Cyg! Don't forget the wings!"

The wings . . . I focus on my leathery wings, pulling them in, never to be used ever-

"Ugh!"

I fall over onto the carpet, panting heavily as I watch my skin return to scales.

"Mother, are you sure there aren't any humans with wings in this world?"

"I'm sorry my child," she chuckles. "I think that only happens on those TV shows of yours. Wanna try one more time?"

I roll back over onto all fours, shaking my wings to make sure they're still there.

"Maybe after dinner." Or maybe never. "I'm taking a break."

"Okay, but you'll have to do this eventually, Cyg. It's the only way you can live in this world."

I head to the dim basement that I'd made my sanctuary. My makeshift lair. I revel in the darkness that clouds the room without the aid of windows, and the cool stone floor. It's more like a cave than the rest of the house. It actually feels like home. All this effort just to go outside?

That's ridiculous! I should be able to fly freely and naturally as a dragon. Mother and Father told me that humans have ways to shoot us down from the sky. Their cruelty and fear would have surprised me by now, but there were monsters like them back home too.

I still remember when we heard the king declared war on dragons. I was told to grab what I could carry so we could hurry to the portal keeper. I settled for my geode. My big sister Viraneth managed to quickly pack most of her hoard in a large rucksack she found. We made it before anything could happen, but a little late. When we arrived, only one portal remained — one to a human-dominated, magic-free world. As far as they know, dragons don't exist. Go there or die here. We changed into human forms, but I couldn't do it yet. I wasn't used to it. Vira dumped her hoard on the ground and let me climb in the rucksack instead. On the other side, we hid in the forests for a while. We eventually managed to use bits of our hoards to buy a house. It's a small place in the mountains with next to no neighbors. Of course I can't transform yet, so my new life involves being babysat in a gray house, every second of every day. All while avoiding windows to keep suspicion low.

I look at my geode, holding it closely and watching it sparkle under the dingy light bulb. The crimson glass rose reflects better days and broken promises through the faint sparkles. It's the shining jewel of my hoard . . . the hoard that I thought would grow much bigger. I found it while playing with Vira in the lair one day. It's a piece of home itself. The one piece that I can still have.

I hear my father upstairs. "Cyg! I got dinner!"

I climb to the kitchen. My father, in his spiky, golden-haired disguise, lays out raw steaks on the table. He can't swoop down and bring home whole cows anymore, so he has to settle for trips to IGA.

"Just a minute. I'll be over," my mother says as she opens

the old stone fireplace.

Sunrise-colored flames fly from her lips, enveloping the logs. We're eating human-style tonight.

I can't help but feel naked at the table. Well, I am naked, but I mean in how I'm surrounded by what looks like humans. A golden-haired, fair-skinned mother, father, and teenage daughter, all dressed up and surrounding a small dragon. If my parents want to fit inside, they need to be disguised at all times; otherwise the house would be reduced to rubble. Vira could fit in the house since she's still young and the size of a large dog, but she takes her form anyways out of convenience. Simple things like how we light the fireplace and how we eat dinner remind me that they're still dragons. Yet, I wonder if I'm going to forget what they actually look like one day. Or, if I forget we were dragons at all. They can let bits of their true selves shine through, but they don't have much reason for it.

"So Cyg," my father says, looking up. "Any progress on your transformation yet?"

"Umm . . ."

"He made great progress today! He should be able to do it any minute now!" my mother chimes in, pushing her long golden hair out of her face.

Vira's green eyes light up as she smiles.

"That's great! Then we'll be able to hang out the way we used to again!"

Is it really going to be the way we used to?

"That reminds me . . ." Father says, finishing the last of his meat. "Your mother suggested I get a treat for you from the butcher, Cyg."

He walks to the kitchen counter and holds it up.

My forked tongue drops from my mouth.

My tail wags with excitement.

It's a plump . . .

Juicy . . .

Cow eyeball.

My favorite part of dinner back home.

"Cyg, you can have this eyeball . . ." he says as my saliva drips to the floor. "..But you gotta do me a favor first . . ."

My excitement turns to dread as I close my mouth.

We all gather into the living room. Everyone's eyes lock onto me as I stand nervously on the beige carpet. I'm not nervous about not doing it, I'm nervous about if I do.

"You got this brother!"

Okay, one last time. Back onto my hind legs... A deep breath and it's time to begin. Let's get the wings over with first. Focus...

"Hey, I can't see wings anymore! Keep it up!"

Now the claws...

"Fingernails! We have fingernails!"

Now the skin...

"Yes! That shade looks real!"

I keep going down the list, changing bit by bit...

"There's just one tiny patch left! You're nearly there!"

"Keep going Cyg!"

"You'll be human in no time!"

Less than a second and I'll become...

I stop. I fall forward onto my front limbs, my head to the carpet. I take deep, heavy breaths as my body starts to feel

right again. If it's this hard, how hard would learning to change back be? Applause erupts from the couch as mother comes over to pat me on the back.

"Way to go baby!" she says as I stare into the carpet. "Just one more time and you should be able to do it!"

"No..."

"Okay, well maybe take a break and try it again. Okay my child?"

"I said no!"

My voice thunders through the house like a roar as I jump backwards from her. Everyone is startled, I can see it on their fake faces. "I'm not doing this again! Ever! I'm not going to stop being a dragon!"

I flap my wings and whip my tail, showing the parts of me that I'm never going to lose again. As triumphant as I try to look, there's weight building behind my eyes like pressure on a dam.

"Cygoryn, we're just trying to help you!" Mother's voice goes stern. "This is something you need to learn how to do!"

Vira stands up. "Cyg, this is just a disguise. Don't you want to go out and see the new world?"

I stare at them for a minute, breathing heavily.

I can't hold the pressure back any longer. "No," I squeak out in a high-pitched crack. "No, I don't..."

My face is warm. My eyes are wet. Everyone is staring. Before anything else, I dart into the basement and slam the door. I find my geode, hold it as close to me as possible, and hide under the bed. I hide away from this world, hoping it's a bad dream, but knowing it isn't. Everything I was promised to experience, feel, and be is now being taken bit by bit. After a few minutes, I hear the door open.

“Cyg? Baby? Are you alright?” my mother asks.

I hear the creak of the stairs and then see shoes in front of me.

“You’re not in trouble, we just want to talk. Will you come out of there?”

Reluctantly, I crawl out. My parents, their faces and hands . . . they’re real again. Their real, shimmering, golden selves. Not entirely, but at least I can see the green, slitted eyes I found comfort in.

“We are so, so sorry for how we pushed this.” My mother kneels beside me. “We just wanted you to be able to go outside. To live.”

I look up at her with watery eyes.

“When is this going to be over? When do we get to go home?” I choke out through my dry throat.

My parents look at each other, searching for what to say, before my mother turns back to me. “Baby–” she stops, catching the squeak in her voice. “We might never get to go home.”

I always knew it in the back of my mind, but hearing it makes it real. I put the geode down and fly up to my mother, burying my head into her shoulder. As I sob, she stands and holds me, rubbing circles in my back.

“I want to go home too. I miss when I could actually be me.”

“It’s been hard for all of us,” my father says, walking over. “That’s okay. You don’t have to be quiet about it.”

There’s about thirty minutes where none of us say anything. We just stay as we are as I hold on for dear life to my mother's warm embrace, letting tears fall down her back. Eventually, my crying weakens and the silence ends. “Let's take some time. You can transform when you’re ready.”

I open my reddened eyes to look into hers. “I can?”

“Of course, my child.”

My father puts his scaly hand on my shoulder. “I know this isn’t home, but we’re working to make it the best we can. Who knows? Maybe we’ll get a house big enough for us to be ourselves in. Maybe somewhere where we can fly.”

I don’t know how true this is. Though the possibility makes me smile a bit.

“Cyg, are you okay? Can I come down now?”

At the top of the basement is Vira, standing in her full form: green, slitted eyes embedded in golden scales, ebony horns curling up, tail waving behind folded wings. It's her again! I smile and nod as I’m lowered back down. She bolts down the stairs, immediately hugging me and putting her head on my shoulder.

“It’s good seeing you like this again, Vira.”

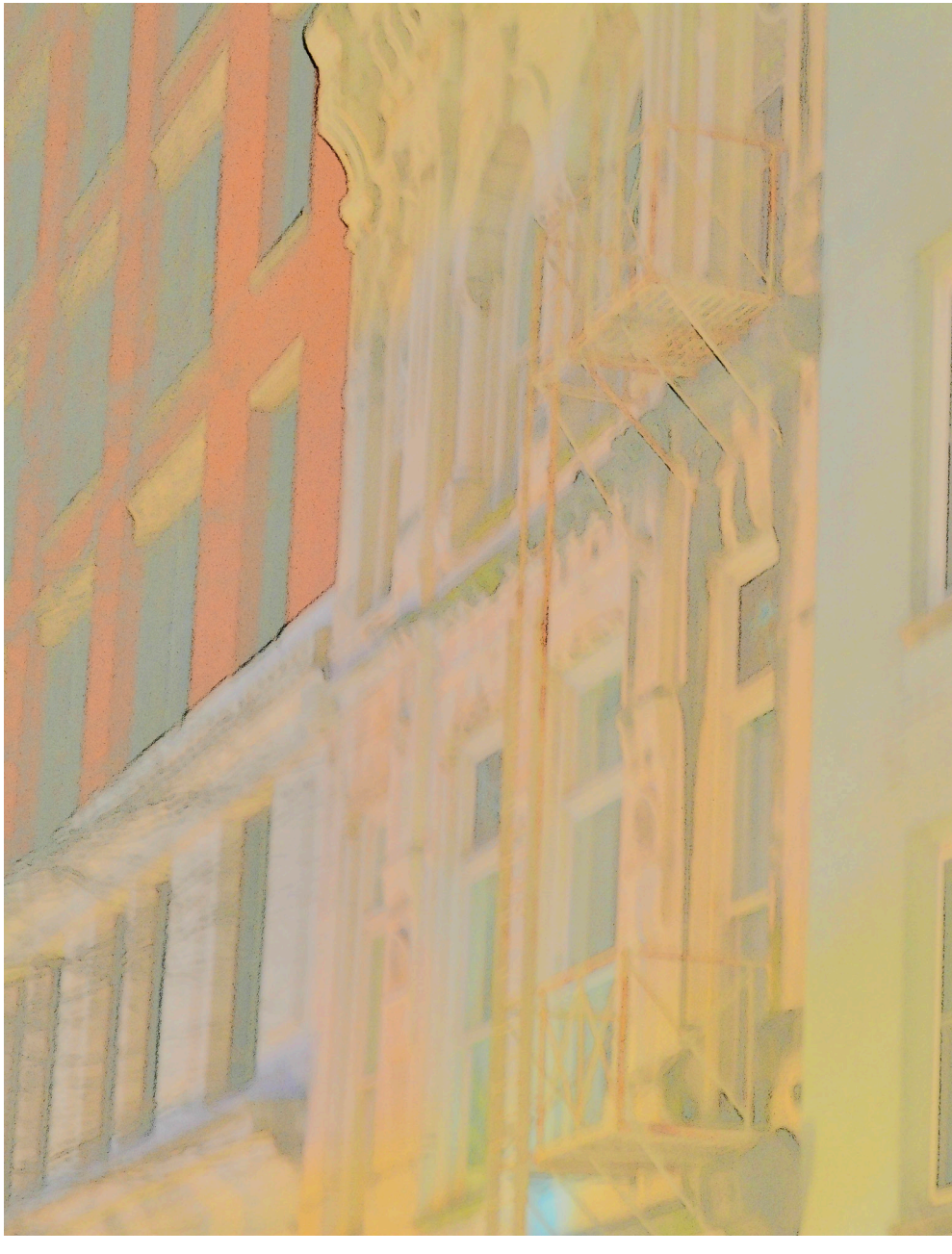
“It’s good being like this again. I should do it more often while I can.”

As we finish hugging, my father climbs back up the stairs.

“Cyg, the cow eye is yours. I can save it for later–”

“Oh, I’m eating it now!” I interrupt as I dart up the stairs.

Someday, I’m going to be too big to walk around like this and will change shape permanently. But for tonight, we get to wear our scales as I’m surrounded by the important parts of my home.



Window-Watcher



Mr. Mangel on the Seventh Floor

Last week, a man named Kurt Mangel was fired from his position of adjunct professor of English literature at Dansbury Community College. His firing was somehow completely unrelated to the mountain of complaints about him that the dean had received in the span of the mere six months Mr. Mangel had been on faculty payroll. This is the story behind the incident, which, by the way, is completely fabricated. This is called a lie.

Micheal Lyman had lived on this planet for thirty-four years and had spent approximately five of those years working night shifts as a janitor for Dansbury Community College. On his first night on the job, he'd been assigned to clean out Sullivan Hall: the biggest and ugliest office building on campus where most of the school's faculty had been crammed into. No one had ever told him to keep doing it, but no one had ever told him to stop either, and after hearing extremely detailed tales about what his fellow janitors on dorm duty had to clean up, Micheal had found that picking up after professors didn't offer him much to complain about. So he never said anything to his superiors. He just kept cleaning, and soon enough he settled into a pretty comfortable routine.

Kurt Mangel had lived on this planet for thirty-one years and had spent approximately half of one of those years working as an adjunct professor of English literature for Dansbury Community College. He was not particularly thrilled to be teaching at a community college, but upon graduation from his doctoral program, he quickly discovered that without substantial publication or research of any kind (which he lacked), getting a tenured position at a real institution, as he described it, would be nigh impossible. So he'd been forced to play the field until he could finish his manuscript, which he just knew was so groundbreakingly genius that whichever publication house was lucky enough to get ahold of it first would make him their poster boy.

But for now, he was not a legendary figure in American

literature. He was only the new guy at Dansbury Community College, leaving him to teach the crowded ENG 101 lectures that let out at 4:45 p.m. (this was referred to among the English professors in the Dansbury faculty lounge as "paying your dues"), which required him to hold his office hours at a ghastly 5:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Unsurprisingly, it was rare that anyone, students and faculty alike, ever paid him a visit in his office.

Last Thursday, at 4:57 p.m, Mr. Mangel reached his office, Room 0727 of Sullivan Hall, and gave himself a moment to stop coughing and catch his shaky breath, as his office was on the seventh floor of the complex, and the elevators were currently on their third week of being out of service. He had lodged several complaints with the campus repair team, but he had quickly discovered that the opinions of the faculty unimportant enough to be on the seventh floor of Sullivan Hall were not well-regarded by anyone who had the power to change anything.

When he'd recovered from his concrete hike, he maneuvered through the towers of books sprawled across his office floor (his requests for actual bookshelves had been similarly ignored), flicked the humidifier in the corner on, and flung a hefty binder stuffed with student essays onto his old desk. This was the only time in the day he had to work on grading, and since he didn't have anyone to go back home to, he usually ended up locking himself in his office until midnight. His therapist had advised against this sort of prolonged isolation, but as with most professionals in his life, Mr. Mangel tended to pick and choose what advice of theirs was legitimate and which was, as he referred to it, "hokey-pokey."

Kurt Mangel's trembling left hand now glided across Savannah Mason's midterm paper, leaving shaky splotches of ink in its wake. He always paid very close attention to the marks he left on his students' work, as he liked to think that literary scholars a century from now would peer at the serial-killer-scrawl feedback he left on half-baked essays about Huckleberry Finn and nod with knowing approval at his thoughtful

insights. This fantasy was a real possibility in his mind because a late-night internet search had revealed to him that an archive of David Foster Wallace's papers, including syllabi and graded student work, was stored in the University of Texas's library. This, of course, gave him the rather arrogant impression that there would one day be a Kurt Mangel collection in some university's library (there would not), or that there could ever be works of his that were even close to significant enough to populate such a collection. He thought of his style of grading as attentive and engaged. Students reportedly thought of it as tight-assed.

Last Thursday, at 5:05 p.m. , Micheal Lyman was sitting on an old sofa in one of the many faculty lounges of Sullivan Hall, recovering from the effort of dragging a shopping cart's worth of cleaning supplies up seven flights of stairs. He huffed and puffed loudly. Dr. Lucy H. Reynolds, chair of Dansbury's history department walked inside to use the coffee machine and flashed him a pitiful smile. "Hey Mike, howyadoin?"

"I'm doin' alright, Dr. Reynolds. Thanks for asking. Just takin' a breather after the marathon I did to get up here. How 'bout yourself, sugar?"

"Can't complain, I reckon, other than this killer headache I've got. Sorry that I'm sticking around a bit late tonight. I know you've gotta clean my office and everything. I don't wanna be in your way. I've just got so much to grade tonight," she said, gesturing toward the machine gurgling out a brown stream of coffee into a cracked mug. "That's what this is for."

"No worries 'bout that, Lucy. It wouldn't be the first time someone stayed a bit too late around here, now would it?"

"You're bad, Mike," she chuckled as she shook her head. She knew he was talking about Mr. Mangel. The entire seventh floor had been a bit on edge since he'd taken up residence in 0727. Michael heard the complaints and the rumors every time he changed the trash bags in the faculty lounge. He had particular complaints of his own about the man, but he didn't find it professional to badmouth someone to a colleague of theirs. "Have a good night, now," Lucy called out to him as she left the

lounge, steaming mug in hand.

Micheal smiled before he craned his head up long enough to notice the big black blotch of mold that had formed a watery ring in the center of the lounge's ceiling. He swore under his breath. He had diligently worked to rid the seventh floor of the epidemic of mold that it had endured after last summer. It'd been a wet and humid season with more rainstorms per month than the county had ever seen before. The ensuing water damage didn't mix well with the seventh floor's already-stuffy climate. He sighed as he reached for his bottle of Instant Mold Remover™ for the third time this week.

Last Thursday, at 7:39 PM, as Kurt Mangel finished tracing the massive red D+ at the top of Naveah Branscomb's midterm paper, he suddenly felt the warm presence of someone else in his office.

"Now, Professor, that seems a bit harsh, doesn't it?" asked Mary Mahosa, Mr. Mangel's teaching assistant. "Naveah's a real hard worker, you just gotta give her the right incentive."

"Mary!" Mr. Mangel exclaimed. "How long have you been sitting there?"

"With how many papers we have to go through, I'm always here. You gave me the keys, y'know," Mary said as she stretched her legs out on the couch across from Mr. Mangel's desk. She flipped a dial on the controls to the humidifier in the corner to amp it up a level.

"I guess I was so wrapped up in grading that I didn't even see you come in," he muttered. "Can I get you anything?"

"Water would be nice. I'm parched."

"Right. There's a cooler in the lounge. I'll be right back."

On his way out, he noticed Mary's dress, a long piece of fuzzy fabric tinted such a dark shade of green that it was almost black. Something about her outfit seemed to make him feel light-headed.

Last Thursday, at 7:42 PM, Micheal Lyman dragged his cleaning cart out of the men's bathroom on the now nearly deserted floor, and yanked his gloves off with a sigh. An unidentified individual had left such a mess for him to clean up today

that he planned on giving dagger eyes to any male professor he came across the next day, just to cover all his bases.

The lights on the floor had dimmed now, and he didn't notice Kurt Mangel scurrying out of the faculty lounge with two plastic cups in hand until he bumped into him, sending the tepid water flying from the cups onto the cold white floor.

"Ah, Mr. Mangel, I'm so sorry! It's so dark in here, I didn't even see you. I'll clean that up for you, don't even worry about it," Micheal said as he squatted down to the floor and grabbed a towel from his waist.

Mr. Mangel smiled at him. "No worries, Mike. It's my fault for being in such a rush, eh? And remember what we talked about. You can call me Kurt, y'know."

"Say, I see you've got two cups here. You got a guest in your office, or are you just extra-thirsty tonight?"

Mr. Mangel's face scrunched suspiciously. "Oh, uhm, just my TA. We're...going over papers together."

"Ah. I didn't know you got a TA, Kurt. Bet that makes everything way easier, huh," Micheal said as he finished wiping up the spill.

"Yeah. She's...new." Kurt Mangel appeared in no mood for small talk now. "Well... I've got to get back to the grindstone. See you around, Mike," he said as he quickly refilled his cups and hurried back down the dark hallway.

As he watched the professor hobble away, Micheal Lyman began to try and recall if he had ever seen a professor and a TA in an office together so late at night with the door closed before. He hadn't. He had heard a lot of stories about things like this, but he'd never wanted to believe it could happen at good old Dansbury. The thing with those stories, though, is that they never ended well. Especially for the TAs. He gripped the ring of custodial keys in his pocket a bit tighter and began to slowly approach room 0727 of Sullivan Hall.

From outside the office, Micheal heard a muffled conversation through the door, in which he could make out the rumbling of Kurt Mangel's voice. He listened for a while, waiting to hear another voice chime in. He waited for what felt like

hours. It sounded like a rather one-sided conversation, but perhaps the TA had been on the receiving end of a lengthy lecture.

Eventually, he heard this:

"Anyways, Mary, I got that water you asked for."

Micheal listened for a "thank you" in response. There was nothing. But Kurt replied to the silence with a "you're very welcome" anyways.

Then: "Here, I'll help you drink it."

That was the final straw, Micheal thought as he rummaged through his custodian's keyring for key #0727. He jammed it into the lock, kicked open the door, and pointed his lopsided set of keys at Kurt Mangel in the most threatening manner he could manage. "Don't you lay a finger on that girl, Kurt!" he cried before the reality of what Kurt was truly doing set in.

Kurt Mangel, who was pouring the contents of his plastic cups onto a ravenous patch of mold on the wall, gave Micheal Lyman a shell shocked look. "Mike, I think you may be confused," he said, pointing to the black pattern of gunk next to his humidifier, "This is Mary. She's my TA. She was helping me grade papers. I had to help her drink some water. She was thirsty."

Last Thursday, at 8:15 p.m, custodian Micheal Lyman, age thirty-four, performed a citizen's arrest on former adjunct English professor Kurt Mangel, age thirty-one, in Sullivan Hall on the campus of Dansbury Community College. When campus security arrived, they discovered an entire colony of mold in Kurt Mangel's office that had managed to spread to the rest of the seventh floor through unknown means.

The next morning, Kurt Mangel's office was empty. Every other office on the seventh floor was empty too. The entire floor had to be fumigated.



Untitled Herron Sculpture



Untitled Demon Sculpture


Tarsus

Okay, So I Sit

Stay and such. Leather shoes,
Thrifted, so, used
But fit and so kept
On a stack of other shoes —

One holey pair tossed
Because they kept while I ran through
Streets and parking lots till my
Socks bemoaned the rain.

With them I let go some khaki pants,
Some shirts I love still, because I
Loved them, once, when I was
Different. Not worse, just — before.

But I have new clothes now.
I want my family to like them.
I'm visiting, later, once I make the drive.
Maybe it shouldn't matter,

For me, for them
To say I look nice,
And mean it, but it does,
And I do.

I take it to reflect
Myself — part of me
Hoping, all the time, to say
"Hello," and that I am, as ever,

Your son, whom you
Remember, and to hope
I am not worse, now, just
Different, just — after.

Hearing: I love that which within you
Has always been gold,
And out of which and from which
And around which you grew.

Because every person's life has had
One beautiful moment at least,
Like all shirts have once suited
Someone, and so, are Loved
Forever.

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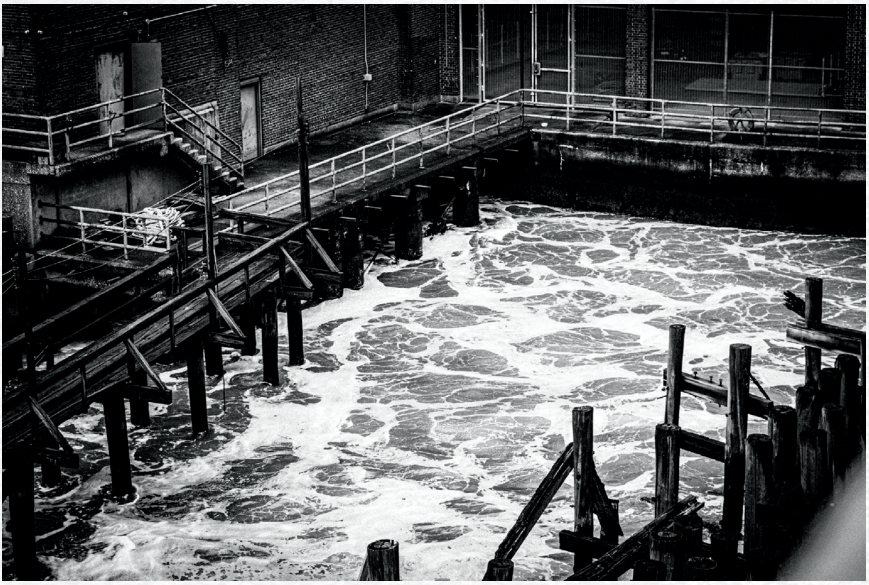
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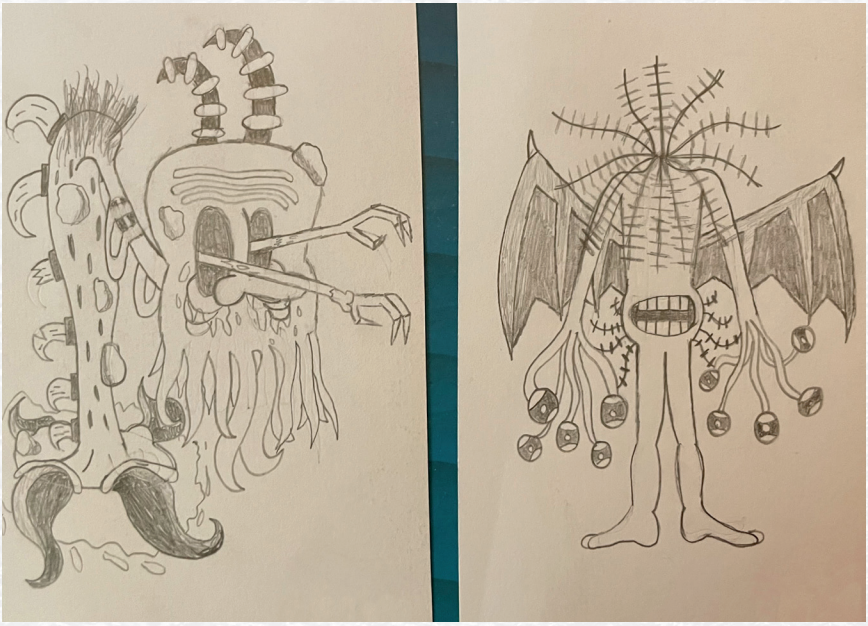
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Swan Dive 2



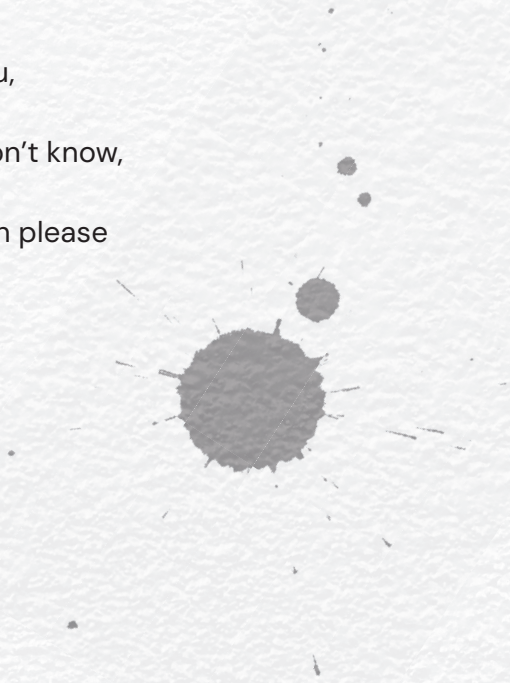
God Bless Them All



Untitled Creature Sketches

SPOTTED

i am a blush face
monkey scramble around myself to
cover raw skin: i don't
know what to say so don't look and
you say something, you, say something,
with your big eyes and begging
neck, to me please, and
god gives me only a leaf to cover
myself i have eaten of
that fruit. that fruit of which i was
told not to eat, and then it ran
down my chin naked chin down my
body like sap acid
stinging, razed down my body,
i am wet and now
all that's left: a puddle,
drooling, my legs, and you,
you look at me i fear
i ate the fruit and i still don't know,
i still don't know what to
say this leaf is not enough please



Saint Damasus

By the time Sam accidentally debunked the adage that one never forgets how to ride a bike, it was far too late. She was miles away from her parents' home, picking gravel from deep within the laceration on her shin and wishing she hadn't let childhood nostalgia get the best of her. Ahead, the sun was bubbling behind the eroding rooftops of Main Street and making way for the moon. If she had any chance of making it home in time for supper, she would need to hail a cab. This would be an impossible task, however, as Galena was all but dead once the dinner bell rang, especially on the night before Thanksgiving. Even if there was a running cab service, she couldn't make a call with a smashed smartphone.

Galena — her hometown — was a former lead mining town of four thousand people in northwestern Illinois. It had three schools and nine churches; the most diverse aspect of its inhabitants was their preferred denomination of Christianity. That was part of the reason why Sam had packed up and hauled herself to Chicago as soon as she could. It was only a three and a half hour drive from one to the other, but the two cities might as well have been in two separate hemispheres. For years, she successfully evaded her parents' pleas to visit them, so, to her current detriment, her mental map of the town was jumbled and obscured.

Sam's precarious position led her hobbling up the worn brick stairs of Lou's apartment and knocking on the door. The two first met on the front steps of Saint Damasus Catholic Church after a Youth Reparative Ministries meeting. Sam's mother enrolled her in the program to set her daughter on a godly path after discovering her locking lips with a girl behind the Denny's on Franklin Street. To have fallen for a girl who Sam had met in conversion therapy was, in many ways, pure poetic justice.

The girls were each other's first true loves, and when Sam skipped town without Lou, they became each other's first true heartbreaks. Even so, no amount of space or time

could erase Sam's memory of Lou's rickety studio above her parents' bakery on the main street. It might have been the only real home she had in Galena. Selfishly, Sam hoped that Lou hadn't also fled the area since she left, but she knew firsthand the ways that their hometown could suffocate people like them.

"Can I help you?" a salt-and-peppered man asked as he opened the door; his body filled the chipped oak frame.

"Sorry, uh, sir. I was just…" Sam searched for the man's wrinkled face in her mental archives to no avail. He appeared old enough to be Lou's father, but age was where the resemblance stopped. "Does Lou still live here?"

"Lou?" The creases in his forehead deepened as his eyebrows knitted together in confusion. His expression quickly twisted into one of recognition. "Oh, you're looking for Louise! Come on in."

The man, still towering over Sam, made way for her to stagger through the door. Her wound was now pulsing through her entire leg, and in the few minutes since her crash, the cream-colored tongue of one of her Converse had already been dyed a deep maroon.

His gaze traveled leisurely down Sam's body, stopping at her leg and snapping back to her face. "Quite the cut there," he said, lips thinning into a tight, downturned grin. "Louise will fix you right up. You were friends?"

"Well," Sam started, then paused. Lou had blocked her after she left; Sam knew little about her life now. And with every second she spent unsuccessfully combing through her memory for the identity of the man before her, she realized she could hardly remember Lou's life from when they were together. She didn't know how much the man could be trusted. "Yeah, we were friends."

"You'll have to forgive me; Louise doesn't talk much about her past," he said, whispering the last two words as if their

utterance alone would summon a demon. “Honey, you have a visitor!”

Lou emerged from the kitchen; her once sapphire hair was now a wilted brown, her face riddled with scarred dots where steel once protruded, a dainty gold cross dangling from her neck. She waddled forth, resting a hand on a huge pregnant belly and carrying a toddler on her hip. The man met her halfway to deliver a kiss to her lips.

Sam backed toward the door at the sight, but her balance was thrown by her throbbing leg which sent her hip into the edge of an entryway table. “I’m so sorry,” she stammered, stumbling to straighten out the contents of the table. As she bent down to recover a bundle of fallen papers, a familiar black symbol jumped out at her: a black heart with a thin white cross in the center.

“Oh my god,” Sam choked out, looking up from the leaflet to see the older Father Mike, one of the Youth Reparative Ministries pastors. “I have to go. My parents are expecting me for dinner.”

Semaglutide Spritzes and Deficit Daiquiris

content warnings: intentional weight loss, diet talk, fatphobia

"But, yeah, it's super easy. Only one injection a week." The bartender pinched the tanned flesh just below her pierced belly button. "I'm already down six pounds from last month."

"God, I wish. I've been on Keto since, like, February, and I'm noooowhere near where I want to be," the woman to my right slurred, rhythmically tapping her manicured fingernails as the bartender prepared her gin and tonic. She wore a leopard print triangle bikini top with high-cut black bottoms that tied at the hips. As she slouched on the stool, her stomach barely formed a roll.

"I've tried just about everything: Keto, Atkins, Paleo, Weight Watchers. I'm telling you, girl; nothing works as well as this." She squeezed a wedge of lime, dropped it into the glass, and slid the drink across the bar. "You have to do the work, don't get me wrong. Calories in, calories out."

I'd heard a similar speech from my sister at least once a week, even more when she was actively dieting. If we were still in touch, I was sure she would've peddled injections onto me, too.

"Mhm," she hummed through a cocktail straw.

The bartender pivoted toward me. Her eyes scanned my upper body before snapping quickly to meet mine. "What can I get you?"

I dropped my arms from the edge of the bar and into my lap. Quickly opening and closing my mouth, I second-guessed the order I had rehearsed. No, I walked all the way across the boat for this. I smiled—imagining myself tanning on the deck later, drink in hand—and requested a piña colada.

"Oh, honey, no." the woman next to me placed a hand on my shoulder blade. "Do you know how many carbs are in one of those? She'll have a gin and tonic, too."

"Good choice." The bartender winked at the other woman. She made no intention to obscure the gesture.

"God, even thinking of the sugar in one of those drinks makes me gain a pound." She shook her head. The new bottle of tonic hissed upon her breaking of its seal, and she began preparing the drink I did not order.

"With a figure like yours," the woman next to me said as she poked a pocket of fat on my side with her index finger, "you ought to be a little more careful about those empty calories. A moment on the lips..." She hiccuped before taking another sip.

"You're so young, too." The bartender plucked out a straw and stabbed it through the ice. "I would get... Well, you know, that in control while you're still in your twenties. You'll be so much happier with yourself."

She placed the pale, fizzing liquid in front of me and stared expectantly. I brought the glass toward my chin and pretended to suck some of its contents through the straw. From inches away, its scent burnt my nostrils.

"See? Nothing tastes as good as guilt-free feels." She winked—I had become a part of their clique, apparently—before returning the bottle of gin to the shelf behind her.

With a tight-lipped grin, I slapped a ten dollar bill on the counter and rose from my stool. I began to walk back to the lido deck; each step shook the ice against the edges of my sweating, piña-colada-less glass. I thought that, maybe, I could learn to tolerate the burn of gin and the acid-reflux inducing tonic. Maybe it was just as good as a piña colada.

When I reached the edge of the ship, I dropped the drink over the railing and into the ocean. Cup and all.

A Leisurely Afternoon at the Winery

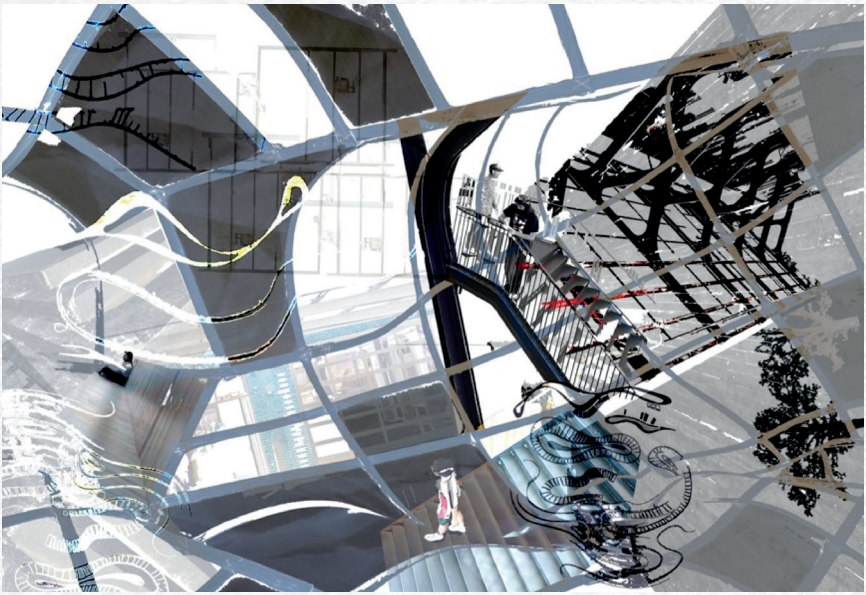
It's an early summer day. Patio weather, which means just the right temperature for sitting outside on a cushioned wicker chair, blanketed by soft sunlight. Now I understand why cats love napping in this warm light. Rows and rows of grapevines soak in the day, full of berries that only need a few more months before they serve their great purpose. My sunglasses cast their own golden hue as I survey my midafternoon treat: a glass of wine and a plate of cheese and crackers.

The crackers are simple, as they should be. Crackers are merely vessels for cheese. The white cheese—Swiss or cheddar or whatever, I wasn't paying attention when the sommelier described the plate—is creamy yet dry. Mildly salty, it tastes so good while soaking up the moisture in my mouth. But that's why we have white wine; delicate, fruity notes like Honeycrisp apples to pair with the bolder flavor of the cheese, combining in my mouth for a symphony of flavor that gives a sense of pleasure only experienced by an artful balance of food and drink. It's a pleasure that can be sensual or simply satisfying, and it can only be achieved in tranquil moments like this: lounging on the patio overlooking the vineyard and the rolling hills behind it, casually eating and drinking tasty treats to your heart's content. I brought a book with me, but I don't think I need it. The warm sun on my face makes the chill of the wine more noticeable. There's a gentle hum of quiet conversation around me, as though the spell of the vineyard compels us all to be comfortable and soft-spoken.

I try just the cheese and wash it down with wine, and I find that I may not need the buttery crackers after all. When I combine the crackers and cheese, however, it reminds me of an artisanal grilled cheese sandwich. The kind you get at a fancy bistro instead of the one you make on the stove at home. I don't necessarily feel fancy right now, even in my new sundress with the flowy skirt that flares when I twirl.

This certainly beats drinking rosé wine with pretzels while sitting in my pajamas, no matter how comfy that situation can be nor how many times I've done it before. This moment, this indulgence, always feels more genuine. Real peace and relaxation where I can be away from reminders of the dishes in my sink and the homework I've nearly finished; or it can be a reward to myself for finally having a day where I have nothing I need to do.

I am in no rush. It's a beautiful day and I am indulging in flavors.



Fragmented Gray (1)



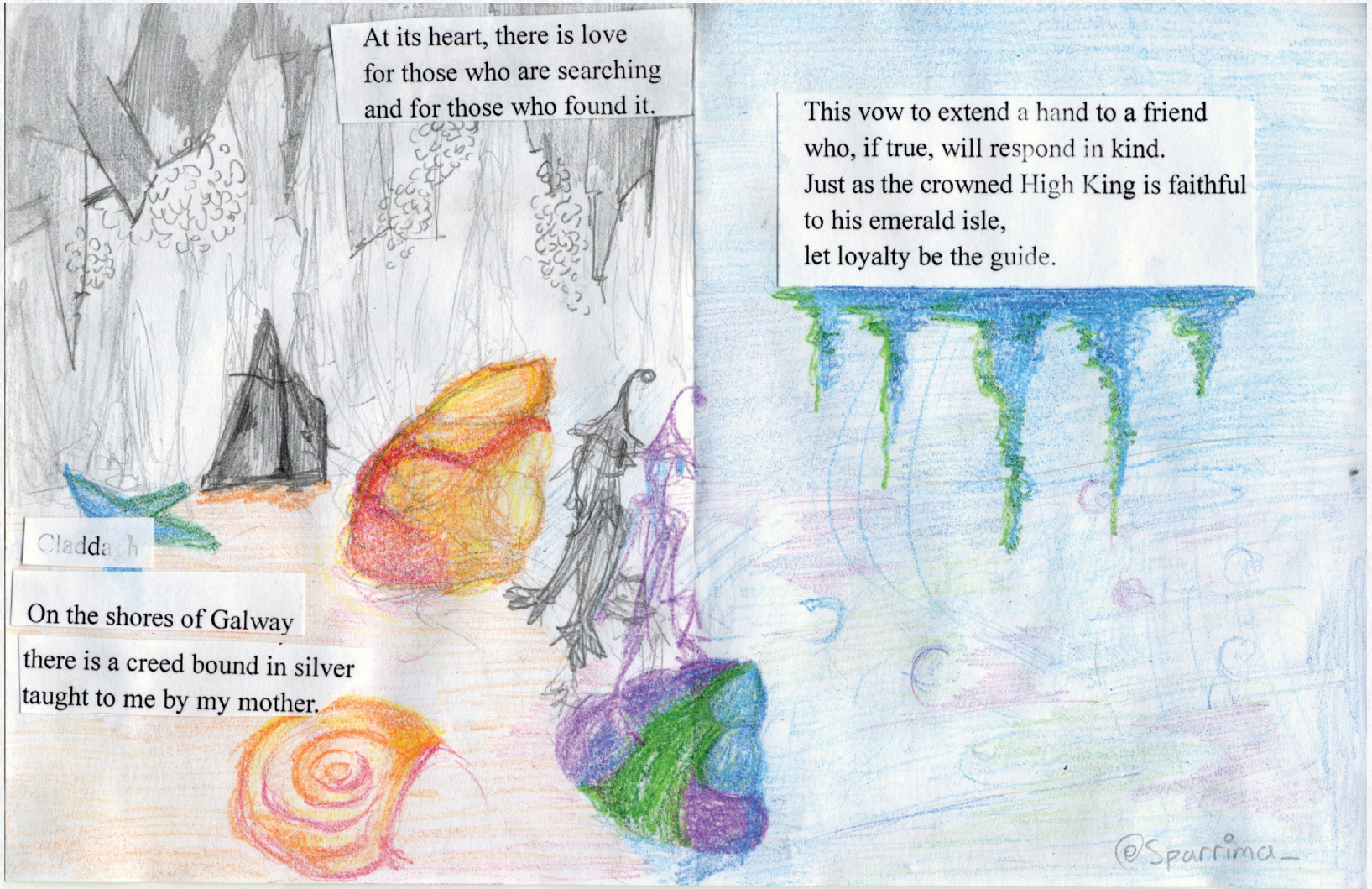
Fragmented Gray (2)



Jacob's Ladder

Claddagh

On the shores of Galway,
there is a creed bound in silver
taught to me by my mother.
At its heart, there is love
for those who are searching
and for those who found it.
A vow to extend a hand to a friend
who, if true, will respond in kind.
Just as the crowned High King is faithful
to his emerald isle,
let loyalty be the guide.


At its heart, there is love
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Cladda h
On the shores of Galway
there is a creed bound in silver
taught to me by my mother.
@Sparrima_

Desperation in a Dive Bar

I met God in a dive bar. I was not looking for deliverance, but He offered to buy me a drink anyway. Maybe He saw my hunched shoulders. Maybe He heard me beg the bartender for more liquor. Maybe He thought I was pretty. God is not meant to be understood.

Later, I am on my knees for God like all good sinners are. I have made a church out of this derelict bar bathroom. I worship at the altar as His hallowed hands pull my hair, palm my neck. With God in my mouth, I can taste my sins. They make me gag, but He moans and pushes my head down. Repentance has never been easy.

God keeps repeating my name. How strange to hear God pray to me for once. I look up through tear-laden lashes and find only a dark face and burning eyes. Graffiti on the bathroom wall behind Him. Strangers' signatures scrawled across the surface. I assume they are all someone else's God.

My knees have molded to the broken ceramic. They feel just as cold. I grip God's legs harder than the doctor's office doorknob. Despite being in the presence of God, I don't feel any holier. I am still serving him, still repenting for my sins, still asking for my grief to be taken. I had no idea salvation would be so lonely.

Tomorrow, I will kneel next to the hospital bed and try to pray, but I will see nothing but burning eyes and graffiti. I will hold the limp hand like it is God's leg and my knees will remember the cold and cracked ceramic. I will taste my sins once more. Religion can look like anything when you are desperate.

Excessive Amounts of Carbon Dioxide

Tell me, can you breathe?
You burn the bones of the past.

Past bones burn hot with vengeance.
Suffocation does not always leave bruises,

But always leave a bruise to suffocate solemnity;
Carve out a tooth from a beached whale.

Wail as rising seas' teeth carve up the beach–
This is how we watch our planet die.

Our planet watches as we die with it:
Fevers, fires, floods, and famines.

We flood our families as we perspire.
The air is thick with the stench of sin.

The air is thick with the stench of your sin.
Tell me, can you breathe?

Sacred Despondency

You're halfway through pouring milk into your cereal before you realize it's coming out in chunks, cottage cheese style. That's the third carton of milk that's gone bad before it was even half empty. You always buy milk for your cereal, but you can't remember the last time you reached for the cereal box before today. Maybe you just like having something you always know is there when you need it, like a safety net. Or insurance. Or God.

Or the tailgate on the truck you fell out of when you were three. Maybe four. It was too long ago to know for sure. You'd begged to sit in the back with Chip. He wasn't allowed to sit in the front because he liked to lie under the pedals, his paws next to your feet. It was exhilarating until Nana drove over a bump in the road. It sent you tumbling and the gravel bit into your flesh. You'd never seen your blood before this; it petrified you. You wailed as Nana drove away, the engine's roar drowning out your agony. You walked home with a snotty nose and scraped knees. This is when you learn what abandonment feels like: crimson consternation marked by loneliness and sorrow. You'll feel it again when God turns his back on you.

You'll feel it with men, too. Relationships aren't made to last. You pretend to be thrilling, enticing, erotic, even though you are none of these things. You're lying through your teeth, but he is too focused on your tongue to care. Everything, down to your breathy sighs, is rehearsed. It is all a performance. If you close your eyes, you can pretend this is what love feels like. If you tell yourself this is all you're good for, eventually you'll believe it. You've learned not to get attached, so when he inevitably leaves, he doesn't get the satisfaction of your heartbreak. Goodbyes have been easier since you left the Church. God Himself showed you nothing is permanent.

Just like that cicada from last semester. You were walking to class when its transparent wings caught your eye. You paused to admire its exquisiteness, but before you could blink, an

oblivious stranger trudged past and squashed the insect beneath his heel. Its little wings torn; its body crushed against the pavement–a mosaic of destruction. You haven't prayed since you were told Chip wouldn't go to heaven but you bow your head and say a few words for the tiny corpse anyway. Partially for the cicada, but also selfishly for yourself. Please, let your demise be at the hands of something gentler than a callous God indifferent to the death of innocence.

You are the cicada, the actress, the little girl bleeding on the gravel, and the spoiled milk. You are decimated by uncertainty. You don't know what shape your life is supposed to take and you fear you will never have the luxury of authenticity. You will exist as a fraud, a lie. Nobody likes dishonesty, and once they see through your deceit they will leave. You won't blame them; you're equally ashamed. Their absences will sting like your loss of faith every time. You will turn sour, helpless to watch the world spin while you rot from the inside out.

Maybe you're destined for this eternal misery. Maybe you will always be disillusioned at the prospect of living. Maybe you abandoned God, not the other way around. Maybe this is your punishment. You're not religious but you are desperate. To you, they are the same. You kneel on the carpet in your room and rest your forehead against your stained sheets, pleading for reprieve. You beg for everything to feel lighter, just for a second. Take away your fear, make you certain. You don't know who you're asking anymore, or if anyone is listening. You ask anyway. You believe it's better to be ignored than to be alone. These days it's hard to know if there's any difference.

Rain and Music

In their infinite stage,
The orchestra beings,
And each note
Falls from its staff,
To greet life,

To give life,

To soak my soul;

I welcome the rain.





des mains qui me sauvent #2

Something New

If I had worn something more presentable that night, I may have never found out the truth. When your uniform consists of flat, ugly shoes from your grammy's podiatrist and an apron with streaks the uncomfortable brown color of baby shit, you may get some strange looks, but you also become a confidante. People will trust you when they think they have nothing to lose: you can hardly judge someone else's life when you look as disheveled as I do.

"I'm guessing you work here?" She gestured to my hands, where the lines in my palms held deposits of red clay. They say you take your work home with you, and owning a pottery studio meant that I wore the signs of my art all over myself, no matter how hard I scrubbed.

"Hey, how'd ya guess?" I held my hands up and shook them with a flourish. She gave me an awkward smile, and I dropped my hands to my sides. "So, what can I do for you?"

"I was wanting to have some plates made, but I'm not really dressed for...whatever it is you do to make them." She smoothed her hand down her cream skirt and cleared her throat. "Do you do commissions?"

"How soon do you need it by?" I began my monologue flatly as I pulled out the order form. I always liked it better when people made pieces themselves. Even if they turned out chipped or bent or just ugly, each piece that left the store was infused with the magical satisfaction of having made something yourself.

"I was hoping I could just watch you do it now? It's not a big deal, just a plate." She looked around the empty store, the only noise coming from the portable speaker in the corner playing throwback hits. "Don't you think you could make an exception considering...?"

She was right. Business had been fine. I was afloat. What's

the harm? I walked to the door and flipped the sign. “Okay then, we can get started…?”

“Oh. Cameron.” She stuck out a well-manicured hand for a shake, and I took it briefly, hoping I wouldn’t stain her pristine skin.

“Natalie. So, what’s the occasion?”

“I’m getting married in two months. My fiancée is busy with school, so I’m taking care of everything.” She toyed with the ring on her finger. On it was a diamond so big, it could be classified as a boulder. “Including the cake plate. Have to get my ‘something new’ to keep up with tradition.”

“Ahh, you’re the blushing bride?”

“Well, more like a wedding czar if anything,” she intoned sarcastically. “That’s what my fiancée thinks, at least.”

“You know what you want. Nothing wrong with that. We can start with plate shapes.” I went to hand her the store manual, but she balked at the thick binder. “…Do you want me to choose for you?”

She nodded, exhausted.

“Of course, hon. Take a seat.”

As I readied the clay, Cameron slumped onto the bench on the long wall of the studio. From the corner of my eye, she looked less like the imposing businesswoman she first appeared to be, but rather like a little girl playing dress-up in momma’s work clothes. I tried to think of the last time I dressed as nicely as Cameron was, and my mind snagged on my final date with him in college. My final date since, actually. God, why do I always remind myself of him?

I sat at the wheel and threw the clay down with a smack. Cameron jumped. I grimaced. “Sorry,” I said. “I should’ve warned you.”

"No, no, it's fine. I'm just not used to all this." She gestured at the studio, eyes moving quickly over paintings on the walls and paper snowflakes hanging from the ceiling. "I was never an artsy kid."

"More of a math and science type?"

"Not even that. I never found my niche, so I just do what my parents do." She shrugged, and I noticed the small wisps of hair floating down from an otherwise pristine bun. Small dark circles hung under her eyes. "I just haven't fallen in love with it yet. Not like Charlie has."

My fingers tensed involuntarily, sending the walls of the plate concave at the sound of that name.

"Sorry," she said, sitting up straighter. "I don't want to distract you."

I swallowed the unpleasant taste of bile in my throat and smiled up at her, my hands still working the oddly shaped blob on the wheel. "No, you're fine. It makes the time go faster. Tell me more about your fiancée," I said, as I started to rebuild the outer wall of the plate.

"God, where to begin? I met him years ago at a college party when I was a junior. He was just...magnetic. He knew how to look at a person and tell them exactly what they wanted to hear. We started dating after that, took some of the same classes since we were in the same year. And here we are now." Cameron ran her fingertips over her manicure, smiling as she got to her ring finger. "All these years later and he still tells me just what I want to hear. He just knows how to read people, which is why he's gonna make a great lawyer one day."

An unsettling nervousness crept over me and my arm hairs stood up on end.

"Are you married?" she asked.

I snapped out of my funk. "No, it's not my style. I must be

too bohemian."

Dating never came easily to me after what happened in college. I thought I hit the jackpot when I toured college as a high school senior: the tour guide was a smart, older law student, and he sneaked me a sticky note with his cell phone number at the end of the tour. He was handsome, with sparkly brown eyes that crinkled in the corners when he smiled. Like Cameron's Charlie, he was into law, and he was good at it too, because he always had an angle on everything. He was a catch, and he wanted to date me, some random soon-to-be freshman who couldn't keep her numbers straight in math or write an A-worthy essay. I walked through that whole relationship waiting for the other shoe to drop, hoping I'd someday learn exactly what it was he saw in me. When his messages grew stale (and then stopped coming at all), it didn't surprise me. I could even say that his final call didn't surprise me either. The night still feels so clear to me now. C'mon Nat, I'm still so... intellectually attracted to you. Just not—I just need someone on my level, and you need someone on yours.

For all the times in those two years I feared he'd change his mind, I thought I wouldn't be surprised when it was finally over. The End still pierced me anyways.

I snapped back into our conversation, done with daydreaming. "I dated some in college, but I never found the luck you did. You must have found the only good Charlie out there."

"You're probably right. Especially around here," she said wryly. "God, going to ASU made it impossible to find someone decent to date."

My head snapped up. "You went to ASU?"

"Yeah. Did you?" She tilted her head. "What a small world. That's where I met Charlie. How come we didn't run into each other?"

I stared at the wheel and attempted to put the pieces together. A law student, from my college, with his name. I ticked off the boxes of the checklist in my head and prayed to some nonexistent god that this level of coincidence was comical instead of terrifying.

"You okay?" Cameron bent her head down to meet my eyes, which were stuck on the finished plate stuck to the wheel.

"Yeah!" I said, too falsely enthusiastic for my own good. "The plate is done. I can get you set up with glaze, and you can make the design on your plate while I...sort things out in the office in back."

"No, no, I don't know if I can—"

"Sure you can!" I ushered her to stand and lead her by the elbow to the painting station, placing the plate down beside her. "If you're worried about the plate, just sketch it and we'll do the hard part for you. Be right back."

I turned away from Cameron's confused expression and nearly ran into the doorframe of the backroom. I thought I'd never hear his name again. My friends had schooled me on lessons of heartbreak: never Google him, never follow him online, never poke around to see what he's up to. But now, as my fingers shook typing his name into the search bar, I abandoned all their advice.

A picture of the two of them came up first, taken at their law office six months ago. Junior fellow Charles Sharp pictured with law clerk Cameron Greer. He looked older and somehow more handsome, with broader shoulders and a light shadow across his chin. I couldn't help myself, and I continued to scroll. Three years ago: the new class of recruits. Cameron and Charlie stood next to each other, smiling, the engagement ring not yet on her finger. Eventually, I ran out of staff pictures on the website, but my fingers itched for more. I opened one of my social accounts and I searched for Cameron's profile.

Charlie used to nag at me for posting online. He thought it was tacky, and he never had any accounts of his own. That's how he disappeared from my life so entirely since college, but I never imagined that he was just a few clicks away this whole time. Cameron's page was filled with pictures of Charlie: on hikes in the mountains, at Christmas dinners with her family, on sunny porches with cups of coffee. I flicked through her feed and the years passed by, transforming Charlie into the man I recognized. A post from Valentine's Day, six years ago, when Charlie said he had the flu and didn't text me all weekend. The caption: My guy.

That son of a bitch.

You know, you have a lawyer's mind, he once told me. You can read people, Natalie. You should spend your time doing something more useful than this artsy bullshit.

"Natalie?"

I snapped my head up.

Cameron stood in the office doorway with her arms floating away from her body, her hands covered in specks of glaze from her nails to her wrists. "I'm finished."

I placed my phone face down on the desk, trying hard to keep the nausea in my stomach from showing on my face. We walked back to the painting table, where the plate laid drying amid brushes and condiment bottles full of glaze. She had painted small white roses with dainty green leaves that stood out against the blue glaze of the plate. I don't know what she meant earlier; she could definitely do art if she wanted to. On the middle of the plate, in a lilting script, she had written:

Mr. And Mrs. Charles Sharp ~ February 12th

I sucked in a tiny breath.

"I totally understand why you love this stuff so much," she chirped, hands clasped together near her heart. Her ring

glittered, a splatter of green glaze on the stone's surface. "I could probably never convince Charlie to come, but I'd love to sign up for one of your classes."

I nodded at her and attempted a smile.

"To think I did the painting myself! With your help of course."

I managed a small "Mm-hm."

"God, I should get home. I still need to make our dinner." She took up her purse and reached her arms out wide for a hug, before looking at my apron and deciding against it. Instead, she took one of my hands in hers. "Thanks so much Natalie. It was great meeting you. I'll leave you my number, and you can call me when the plate is ready? If you're not too busy, maybe we could get drinks or something too."

She pressed a thin business card into my palm and squeezed my hand. Then, with a friendly wave, she turned and pushed the door open. I caught the phantom sight of a blue paint stain on her white skirt before the door smacked shut behind her, bells chiming happily over the entryway.

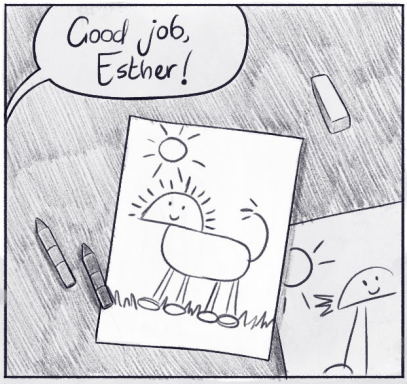
"Summer Storm"

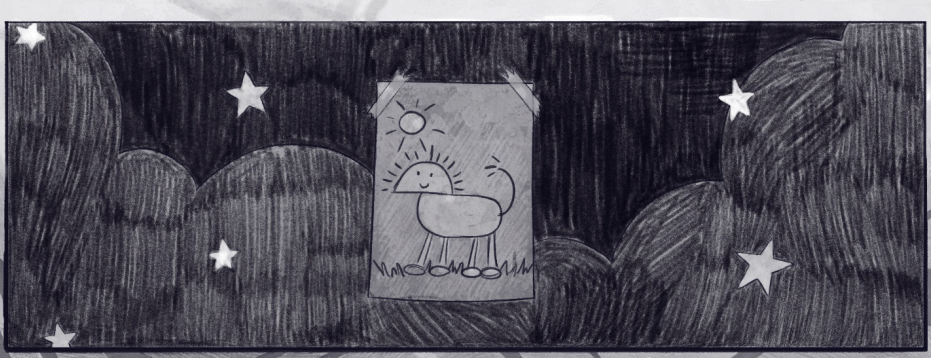
What rough winds quicken
and stir the sultry summer air,
bring rain drops beating
heavy on grass, slash down
leaves and tendrils of moss
to blanket the muddy,
marsh-choked ground.

The rose's unclothed center
exposes a frantic yellow eye
to the grizzled, gunmetal sky.
White wisps scurry across
its sullen face,
driven by the wind
to the storm's rough embrace.


Ms. Jane look!




Good job, Esther!







Imaginary Friend Comic

“The Gardenias”

A smell like sweet cream and musk.
It is November in Louisiana
and there is nothing beautiful left
but our own survival:
another storm season escaped,
but no leaves falling
in a clatter of crimson and amber,
just the same muck and stick
as filthy river water studs the air.

Everything looks dead
but this one, dark, shining bush.
It enfolds the bright blossoms,
their petals tough and soft
like a lover’s tongue.
They swallow me in their scent.


Kain '25

In the mirror,

I notice my reflection only when mourning its apparent death.
Locking eyes,
I can't tell which of us is gone.
I guess neither, since we both still stand.
Starting to wish that one of us was not.
Through the screen, tears start to roll.
On the bright side, it seems one of us can still cry.

But enough about me,
let's talk about you.
I know where you've gone.
Please understand that I'm there with you.
If I hate you as you wish, then I hate myself.
Your destructive actions are all reflections of my own.
When you beat yourself up, it leaves me crying.
Your suicide would be my complicit homicide.

We'll make it through together,
it's the only way.
We need each other, not a person less.
I know I can do better, I promise I'm trying!
After all we are simply, most finally human—
Horrifically and beautifully, most complexly human.
Trying to make it through is just that thing we always do!
So why don't we all just give ourselves this chance?

The Urn

I don't remember much about them before the urn. I remember my grandpa, of course. I'd been nine years old when he passed. But I don't remember as much as I should, and I've never been sure why. Of my grandpa's appearance, I can picture just his beard, which went as low as his belly button and had been around long enough to witness many of the stories he told us. The particulars of these stories are lost on me and my sister Lexi. We only remember that his mouth was constantly agape with some tale when we went to their house up in Sabina, even long after we'd stopped listening. Even when we had stepped out the door and into mom's car and were already halfway down the street. He was still talking, we just knew. Even through cancer. As I said goodbye, he couldn't keep his mouth shut long enough to give me a moment to cry. I imagine he kept going for the five minutes after I was banished from the hospital room, right up until his death. Talking.

Grandma did not take the passing of her husband well. He'd been a strong man, we were told. It was hard for her to watch his body deteriorate. In their youth, they'd traveled the world together. Then, they were confined to this tiny town in Ohio. The only trips they made were to

ALDI and the doctors. Mom thought that once he was gone, her mother might flee the country. Quite the opposite– Grandma refused to leave her bedroom for the eight days it took to get him cremated and returned to her. She also refused a funeral, and though she said it was her husband's wish, I overheard Dad saying that it was probably bullshit and she was just afraid to face anyone. I thought that was bullshit. Grandma wasn't afraid of anything.

The issue is that she doesn't seem to realize he's dead. The simple gray urn that contains his ashes has been his stand-in for the past five years. It has its own place at the dinner table and gets served just the same. She straps it into the front seat of her car and takes it on errands. She props up books

for it to read before bed. One summer, she went to China, and upon her return, we got a slew of photos of the urn posing in front of the Great Wall.

The worst part for me is how she conversates with it. She asks it what it thinks the weather will be the next morning, she lets it pick her outfits in the morning, she even tells it jokes. Often this pensive expression floats over her like the shadow of a cloud. She scrunches her eyebrows and pushes her lips so close together it looks like she's blowing a kiss. That expression means she's listening to something it's saying. If you try to say anything to her when she looks like that, she'll hiss at you to shut it and hold the urn up to her ear.

Concern for her about these practices has dwindled over the years. The doctors say there's nothing wrong with her. Her memory is still absolutely perfect, and she's quite able to take care of herself. They say she doesn't have dementia or any other problem with her brain. She's not even depressed. As long as her delusions stay confined to just the urn we can assume it's nothing more than an odd coping mechanism. That had been enough to satisfy my parents, though they still refuse to acknowledge the thing when Grandma comes over for dinner and shovels mash potatoes into its smooth metal face. Even Lexi, who used to indulge me with theories on my grandma's psyche, has turned away from caring. She's seventeen now, and the urn is just a funny tidbit she laughs about with her friends. I don't think it's funny at all.

The urn knows things it shouldn't. Like when Grandma came over this Christmas and got that funny look on her face after we'd just finished opening all our gifts. She took a moment to hear what the urn had to say, then asked me and Lexi to step into the other room.

"Gramps tells me you two have been sneaking around."

It's true. I'd helped Lexi escape a couple nights before to hang out with some boy, but I didn't know how Grandma could possibly know that.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to tell your parents. We just might recommend you be a little more discreet next time."

Or that time she won ten-thousand dollars in the lottery because she swore the urn told her "it was absolutely imperative" that she stop at the 7-11 and buy a scratch off ticket at that exact moment. I suppose this is something she could have made up after buying the ticket, but after years of watching the jar, I'm not so sure. Her luck has improved dramatically in the years after my grandpa's death.

I love Grandma more than anything else. She's the type of woman to kiss the toaster just to thank it for what it does. To her, the cornfields that surround her town are as beautiful as the fjords she visited during the two years she lived in Norway. She can romanticize even her grocery list. She maximizes life in a way that's almost threatening to me, and for that reason I'd rather spend time with her than anyone my own age. But the urn makes me so uncomfortable that it's hard to be around her at all.

"Doesn't it bother you?" I asked Lexi one night in March. I turned fourteen just yesterday, and this is the only reason I can guess my presence is tolerated in her room at all. She's become quite reclusive recently, but only to our family. I think it has something to do with that boy I helped her sneak out to see.

"I don't think about it much. Not anymore. And neither should you." She says this muffled through a blanket, a shield she's erected so that I can't see who she's sending texts to.

"How can everyone just ignore it? I can't sit in the same room as her when it's there. I feel like it's watching me."

"Then don't sit in the same room as her!" Lexi snaps. She looks like nothing but an angry sheet. "God, don't you have something better to do with your time?"

I really don't have anything better. When I was younger, I had many similar mundane obsessions, a term my dad dubbed

my unmerited fascinations. As a toddler I was prone to staring at cracks in the wall. Adults theorized that I was dreaming up fantasies while gawking at the broken paint. They liked to envision me as a creative. When I was old enough to explain myself, I admitted I was no dreamer. I was simply happy to be focused on one simple thing, a pattern that would continue for the rest of my life. In kindergarten, I'd been fascinated with the shape of the alphabet, like the sharp angles that made up Z and the perfect roundness of O. I had no interest in the sounds they made, only how each letter had its own personality that I'd attached to its form. The year before my grandpa died, our house became overrun with black ants. I spent all of my free time following the ants on their path through the hole in our screen door to their nest in the backyard. I can't get these things out of my head until I've exhausted myself in the details.

The urn really isn't anything special. It's as unassuming as they come, though at my age, I really am no expert on funerary vessels. Besides the lid and beaded border just under it, it's shaped exactly like a silver raindrop. There's a single mark near the bottom from when Grandma dropped it years ago (yes, it sported a bandaid for several months), but that's the only blemish. It would have been perfect to sit on a shelf in her living room. It wasn't meant to be paraded around like it is.

It's only a couple of weeks into April that I decide Lexi is right. My life can't keep revolving around a metal jar. I need to be more like her. I should be meeting boys under the cover of night. I should be gossiping with girls about those moments. I should be keeping secrets. I think I'd like it if my family had only a vague understanding of who I am. It seems my parents know every word I'm going to say before I've said it. I bore them with my monotony, just like I bore everyone else. The only person who can stand my tediousness is my grandma, and only because she's lived such a full life that tedium is comforting.

I am aware how awful it is that I'm planning to defile her

most prized possession, but I've never been so transfixed by something. My assiduousness is becoming legendary to even myself. I've had dreams about the thing! And I wake up from those dreams and my mind is still on the same thing. Something must be done.

I ask to stay with Grandma the first weekend of May. This isn't at all suspicious— though my visits up to her house have reduced drastically as my anxieties have grown, I still stay there every couple of months. It's easier to see the pot outside of its own abode. When it's in our house, I can relax knowing that we have the home advantage. But up in Sabina... that's its own turf. I'm the trespasser there.

When mom drops me off, I drag Grandma outside at all times except during sleep. Her grounds are beautiful, so beautiful they can be overwhelming to someone so easily satisfied by the simple. The grove of evergreen pines that shiver in the wind. The catfish pond where the next-door-neighbor's kids dip their toes in and giggle as the fish rumble up to the surface. The impressive collection of bird feeders that attract swarms of hummingbirds in the Spring and Summer; I keep my sight focused on the flight of a singular bird, ignoring the stored ashes that sit on the bench between me and Grandma.

"Are you happy here?" I wonder aloud. The three of us have been sitting in silence for a great deal of time. The sun is painting the sky pink with the sorrow of its departure, and my hummingbird is long gone. If I'd spent my life traveling the world, would I be satisfied enough to end it all here?

"We are very happy," she says, and this should be justification enough that my services are not needed. But I will not allow this strange lamentation to continue. Not long after that, I help Grandma off to bed, tucking both her and the urn in (I owe it that much). I return not thirty minutes later, and through the faint light of my phone I can see her arms are now wrapped tightly around it. I have no fear that she'll wake up because she's known to sleep through anything.

Still, it's much harder to conscientiously remove what she's physically attached to. I tug at the urn, but her grip on the thing is so strong I have to plant both feet down and pull with a considerable amount of my strength to tear it free.

I take it up to the catfish pond. The light of the moon reflects off the metal and into the water, and I realize that I've actually thought out very little of this. I can't throw the urn into the pond! Come morning it will be entirely apparent that I had something to do with its vanishing. Grandma would never forgive me. My family would never forgive me. This is a transgression beyond any of them would ever imagine me doing. This is murder.

Instead, I remove the lid. I have to see inside. I have to prove to myself that nothing is actually there but ashes. I think this is what is driving me crazy, the possibility that she might actually be talking to it, that inside a part of my grandpa still resides. That he's still telling stories and I'm not complex enough to receive them.

On top of ashes sits a single tooth. An incisor. Almost indistinguishable from the yellow stars in the sky above. The cremation should have at least burned up some of it, but this tooth has inexplicably resisted incineration. Without hesitation I grab the tooth and chuck it into the pond.

Before it has time to sink a catfish has found it and swallowed the most I've seen of my grandpa in more than five years. For a second, the night is without illumination and it feels like I'm following the tooth right into the belly of the catfish. I blink and the stars have found me again. I return the lid and then bring the urn back to my grandma. This concludes my obsession.

At breakfast, the urn sits on the counter, not in its chair at the table. Grandma cries while pouring our cereal.

"Gramps died last night," she says simply, and that's the end of it. From that point onward, the urn never leaves her house. Only I can figure out why: it'll never speak to her again.



Sunrise in the Amazon

Oranges

I have oranges.
Come, sit, stare.
Oranges are good,
Better than spoiled soup.
Eat an orange, dear.
Sometimes I stare,
Have an orange.
Dear ol' melting mind
I only like oranges.
Strawberries remind me
when I got them oranges.
Of course I ate 'em.
Here, take an orange.
You look thin, so eat.
I don't like oranges!
Go away, leave, die!
They put it in the orange.
The soup will kill you
So don't give me no orange,
It smells like death.
Dear ol' dilapidated mind.
You used to like oranges.
The strawberries hide death.
Sometimes I leave my body
To go find oranges.
I hate that rotten smell
Of oranges and mold,
But that's what I smell like.
Dear ol' decaying body.
You no longer smell
Of sweet scented oranges.



Five Years

You were
The hay-strewn bomb
Who wove the flaming nest.
Even now, I feel your
Blood dissolving
My frame.

You spun
Like Eta Carinae,
But shone like a white dwarf
In the unforgiving rain
Before clarity robbed
Your light.

You tried
To engulf me,
The way the seas swallow ships.
You were
Frightless of all
Prospects, until came the deafening whimper,
And you left us venom in jars,
Anathemas haunting us like
The eyes of pickled snakes.

Yet,
Without you,
Christmas is a pretty bell with no chime,
And June the primordial blackness
Where my errant mind wanders.

You're now
The void space
In piney shadow. My days bleed together,
And I'm sane to miss you but

Mad to seek reunion,

For I
Was not there
When we buried you. I was watching the world
Through our weems in
Your chains.

I now
Wonder who leaves
You flowers on Mother's Day. It was never
My joy to cherish, for I've never been
My own.

And you're now as far away from me as love.

The Parade in the Crazy Boy's Head

Therz a pairede plying unsyde ma hed
Comb ta fuffle dremz kin en frenz nev'r cud
A dram a my alreedy bay did

Hey's laydin frunt lyke ah alweeyz syed
Me swite hoo seide ma optism nev'r wud
Save may from the pairede plying unsyde ma hed

En the dulcid tunes herd unasick chyld's bed
Frum mutther's lips win owl the whorled's could
A dram a my alreedy bay did

The faes a cunfiss that wunse brut ma dred
No maklin this faevrish hart lyte with dulled bud
Spurng sings through the pairede plying unsyde ma hed

En isle fullow the rivr tithe thi plase wurr eye've bled
Befur thi undeen hoo promist to tyrn may to wood
A dram a my alreedy bay did

Bet alas! The nihtly gyre thru witch eye've fled

While the Coffee Gets Cold

My green coffee mug, its color muted after countless washes, fits perfectly on the base of my
Keurig.
My favorite coffee pods have been discontinued, so I treat the last box that I have like my treasure.
The creamer joins my freshly brewed coffee, changing its color from dirt brown to that of the khakis I was forced to wear as a little kid.
The one spoon mismatched in the drawer of silver uniformity, reminds me of my Grandma. She was a lovely woman with an eye for anything out of the ordinary.
This spoon, a small thing, was her favorite.
As the old metal meets the side of my ceramic mug, clink clink clink, my head starts to fill with the scent of my drink, an indulgence that used to disgust me.
From the other room, I hear a cry followed by something hitting the ground, thud.
I abandon my green mug on the table as I run toward the sound of my Mom's sobs.
I see her scuffed up work shoes first, so small as they are tucked beneath her body, then meet her on the floor.
I never liked this floor; scratchy carpeting wasn't ideal for two young kids.
Her sobs get louder and deeper, and I'm clinging to her like I'm three again.
Her body shakes with each cry like the Earth does during an earthquake, and I'm forced to glue myself to the ground to steady us both.
Her hands hold her face the way they used to hold us: gentle and secure.
Her face, her beautiful face, has become wrecked by smudged mascara, salty streaks, and genuine horror.
I try to find out why she's crying, but I'm answered by more tears.

She points in front of us, and my eyes find the muted silver pistol first, hovering above the carpet.
I feel the glue that was holding me to the ground before starting to loosen as my mind screams at me to flee.
My twin brother lays slumped in the loveseat, with crimson splattered across the side of his face.
A pillow rests on the floor, that stupid scratchy carpet floor, bearing a hole in the middle that wasn't there before.
I let go of my Mom as she continues to wail and feel my arms go limp at my side.
My legs have gone numb so I just sit there and stare at the pistol, then at the pillow, and then at my brother.
I start to rise, shakily at first, and move toward the kitchen as bile climbs up my throat.
I'm hunched over the sink, throat burning, as my body gets rid of everything except for the image of my brother.
His hair, no longer the color of sand, was always compared to my Mom's.
We shared a nose, a laugh, a smile, and a heart.
I straighten myself up, walk to the table, and sit in front of my beautifully green coffee mug, with my treasured coffee, trying to ignore the sounds of my Mom's sobs.
No more steam, no more aroma.
How do you live, when half of you is dead?

Letter to a Sad Man's Pinterest

dear black-and-white art film screencaps with yellow captions,

dear indie rock band that still lingers in my top 10 four years later,

dear photos i know i showed him,

dear inspiration for the story we were going to write together,

dear ideas posted in 2013 that he told me he thought up himself,

dear 1800s human anatomy diagrams,

dear movie about rape he told me to watch,

dear pins from last summer about forgiveness from god,

dear panic attack message chain,

dear "how did u find this account?",

dear "im sorry, i wont make any excuses",

dear "repent",

dear "i need u to hate me",

dear "we are way past it now",

dear bimonthly shower panic attack,

dear typing and deleting and typing and deleting,

dear messages i'll never send,

dear questions without answers,

dear letters i can't finish,

dear letters i can't even start,

Undereye

nobody else thinks i look like him;
he is angular where i'm soft,
dark where i'm light.
but under the eyes,
past our long, thick lashes,
are the same sharp cheeks:

"smile bones."
i imagine pressing them down
with the pad of my thumb,
molding them like clay
into a nicer shape

the bridge of his nose,
his deep under eyes
are clear, smooth peach like wax;
mine are smattered with freckles
like a spray of blood,
dimpled, darkened, scarred.

he was an easy birth,
pink and fat in photos,
our mom's brown hair
dangling down onto his eyelids,
hospital gown nestled
against his round cheek.

i had to be ripped from her,
violent and damaging.
the nurses tried
to hand me to her
but she was too sick to take me.

i think i took something
of her with me,
clenched in my tiny red fist.
i think it lives under my eyes,
where he came out clean


Psoas
Vagin
Bladder
@Vadiyostatic

Alice

I was 14. The air was warm and sticky. We walked in the middle of the street, parting around advancing headlights like an ambling rainbow of fish. A thin plastic jack-o-lantern bucket tapped against my thigh with each lopsided step, five pieces of candy and one empty wrapper swishing around noisily inside. The whole neighborhood smelled like one big bonfire. Green glowing porch lights lit up every other house. Sometimes it feels impossibly far away, the shapes and sounds muddled and unfamiliar. Sometimes it's close enough that I can taste the waxy outer layer of the Sixlets we stole from my parents' candy bowl, crunching like bugs between my back teeth.

I sat on the curb, feeling every bump and crack on the backs of my thighs through my thin plasticky dress. I was a twenty dollar Alice in Wonderland, the calligraphed words "EAT ME" and "DRINK ME" draped over my knees. My soon-to-be-boyfriend was meant to be the White Rabbit, but he didn't want to wear the bunny ears I bought him or paint his face, so he was just a guy in a suit. I jammed my fingers into the backs of my Mary Janes, pressing on my blisters through the backs of my thick socks before pulling my heels out to look at the little pink spots where they had bled through.

"Ouch. You okay?" Harrison asked, his lab coat crinkling as he gestured to my feet. He held his candy bucket dangling sideways, the zip-tie handle snapped in two."Did you bring other shoes? I would offer to swap, but..." He looked down at his own battered tennis shoes, and I tucked my feet back into their prisons.

"Nah, I'm good. I'm used to it," I lied. I hadn't counted on my shoes being this hard to walk in, but what else could I have worn? Alice in Wonderland wouldn't be caught dead in flats. I stood back up, dusting the debris off the back of my skirt. My almost-boyfriend was behind us, standing in a little huddle with the rest of our group. I didn't know why we had all stopped in the first place, but it was time to go

again—apparently Wyatt Johnson had about a billion bottle rockets crammed into the pockets of his giraffe onesie and he was anxious to set them off at our old elementary school's playground before his curfew. We walked in silence as the air got cold and uncomfortable around us, close enough to hear our friends' yammering, but too far away to know what they were saying.

"How have things been with you, Morgan?" Harrison asked me, taking the polite, formal tone he always used when the conversation got awkward. I had known Harrison since Kindergarten, but a year of infrequent contact during lockdown made him seem like a complete stranger to me now. I felt like I was in a job interview; there was a correct answer here and an incorrect one. I sniffed and tucked my freezing hands under my armpits.

"They've been alright," I answered, correctly but unconvincingly, a wave of heat rushing to my face so suddenly I felt I could see myself glowing at the corners of my vision. I squinted at a bleary shape in the distance, heart humming. All the blood inside me felt too hot, boiling my stomach and bones from within. My arms and legs broke out in goosebumps. I pursed my lips, feeling how the shapes of the words felt behind my teeth before I gave them air.

"I was seeing someone, but it didn't really work out." This was the wrong answer, the one that had been steadily clawing its way up my throat for the past year. I felt light-headed as I stared at my breath fading into the air, his existence made physical in a little wisp of white. No longer contained within the clear plastic borders of my phone case. No longer left behind the moment I let the screen go dark. He was a "someone" in my real life, dissipating into the air.

"Oh. That sucks," Harrison said, and I nodded robotically, sniffing again. There was another pause.

"He was nineteen," I said, watching the words billow out in front of me. I wanted to snatch the soft cloud like

a skein of cotton and shove it right back into my mouth. I wanted to gasp the phrase back down, let it intermingle once more with my breath in that private, dark space between my ribs. But it was in the air now, light gray and irrevocable.

"Oh," Harrison said after a much shorter pause, and I could hear in his exhale the way the corner of his lip turned up awkwardly. I thought he might say something else. There were certain ways in which I'd always imagined someone would react to the nastiest, most shameful part of me. I sat in bed for hours, face hot, picturing them against the swimming colors of my dark ceiling. In my dreams I had imagined commotion. A shift in understanding; a visible paling of the face. I imagined that whoever I told first might look at me and see that yes, there was something that wasn't quite right. That something deep in my core was gnarled and black. I felt it as a gaping hole in the center of my abdomen. I imagined that someone might suddenly see it that way, too. That they might feel the contours of it with an ungloved hand, holding their breath, nodding solemnly, kneading the pulsing edges with sad curiosity. Harrison's hands stayed shoved in his pockets. "Well, that's no good," he chuckled.

"No, it's really not, is it?" I sighed. My almost-boyfriend slowed down to walk with me, and I let the topic disappear behind us, still shimmering faintly in the frigid air over the asphalt. Sometimes I imagine going back there now, clenching the faded fragments of words in my fist, a cobweb tangle of pain. I imagine standing on Harrison's doorstep, holding it out to him like a dog fetching its owner scraps from the trash. I imagine pressing it to his chest and begging it to sink in beneath the flesh, begging him to do something different with it. I imagine a million different worlds. But I don't drive through that neighborhood anymore. I don't know any of the people there.

Our Tattoos Eternal.

Permanently
Raked into our skin
The black ink resides,
Plaguing us for years.
In our heads we
Permanently fear
The torment
Will take place in our comfort
Together.
No matter who,
No matter what,
No matter when,
The tattoos will never change.
The stains on our brains
Are forever.

Though, my dear,
What we do not know,
Is how
A new coat of ink
And a creative flourish
Will cover the black scars.
From the first kiss
To every loving touch onward,
New colors will emerge:
Colors of us.
Tattoos will be redrawn,
Memories will begone,
And what will be left,
Colored in gold,
Are
Our Tattoos Eternal.

Viento

- ¿A dónde vas?
- A donde me lleve el viento,
respondía en broma al salir de casa.

Premonición del andar de una vida,
he estado en ríos y selvas profundas aún cercanas a algún lejano antaño,
he escuchado su murmullo, su grito,
así como también el de ciudades tantas veces ajenas,
pero tantas otras incluso reconfortantes.

¿A dónde voy?
Aún el viento tiene el voto en este añoro de ser hoja,
de ser yarumo,
aún durante este andar lejos del trópico.
¡A nuevos ríos!¡A nuevas selvas!
A lugares desconocidos,
y tal vez a otros de dónde nunca me he ido.

Los añoro en cada respiro,
que no es un respiro sórdido,
sino uno cargado de una sonrisa profunda
y de la gracia del recuerdo.
Respiro, y aún respiro fuerte,
un respiro que le pertenece al viento.

Viento

- Where are you going?
- Where the wind takes me,
I used to respond jokingly when leaving home.

A premonition of a life's journey,
I have wandered through rivers and deep forests that still hold
the image of a distant past,
I have heard their ripple, their yell,
just as that of cities, so often foreign,
yet at times even comforting.

Where am I going?
The wind still holds my vow in this yearning to be leaf,
to be yarumo,
even during this wander far from the tropics.
To new rivers! To new forests!
To unknown places,
and perhaps to those that I have never left.

I long for them in every breath,
which is not a sordid sigh,
but one filled with a deep joy
and the grace of memory.
I breathe, and I still breathe strongly,
a breath that does belong to the wind.

Just Know That I Love You

I meet my ten year old self on the worn carpet of our bedroom floor. She's sitting against the wall, sketchbook propped up against her knees, pencil in hand. She doesn't look up until I take a seat across from her, my back against our bed. The white floral patterned quilt is rumpled, the pillows askew, and over the edge of the mattress, peeking out at me, is Brucie, our stuffed triceratops we've had since we were two.

I turn back to myself. She's studying me now. Her grey-green eyes take in my hair, my jewelry, my makeup. I don't even know if she recognizes me.

"Hi," I say. I smile at her. She points at my teeth.

"You don't have braces," she replies. Her voice, higher and juvenile, sounds foreign to me. Strange how you can forget pieces of yourself like that.

I nod, pulling my lips around so she can see the product of years of orthodontic work. "Yep. I wear a retainer now, only at night, and a mouthguard cause I grind my teeth real bad." She nods still inspecting every inch of me.

I'm wearing a hoodie and sweatpants that are slightly too large on me, just the way I like them. I had considered dressing up, to show her that one day she'll have a style of her own that goes beyond the legging and brightly colored tees she wears now. It's going to take her years to find her own look. In the end I settled on something casual and comfortable. I catch her eyes lingering on one of my necklaces: a silver chain with a little triceratops pendant.

"You found the necklace Mitzi bought you?" Her voice is envious. Her hands, the fingernails painted a pretty pink, reach up to her throat. No necklace.

I don't tell her that this necklace is actually the second one our grandmother, Mitzi, bought us. I lost the original when I was in elementary school and my mother found it when I was a freshman in college. A year later it disappeared, this time never to be seen again. The one I was wearing was a replica I'd received for Christmas. She would learn this on her own time someday, so I simply reply, "Yes."

She's quiet for a second, looks down at her sketchbook. "I'm glad."

"Whatcha drawing?"

Her freckled face flushes at the question. She shifts to sit criss-cross applesauce, her arms protectively concealing the contents. "Just a character of mine," she mumbles. I suppress a smile. I never did like sharing my art.

She glances at me then straightens up, her young face suddenly serious. "What am I when I grow up?" The question doesn't surprise me, and she quickly follows it with another. "Am I an author?"

I can't help but laugh but not unkindly. Of course she would ask that. We always loved writing. We still do. But I didn't come here to talk about what we become when we grow up. "That's for you to decide," I say with an air of mystery that makes her pull a face.

"Well if you're not here to tell me my future, why are you here?"

I'm surprised she's so straightforward, but I suppose there is a special kind of comfort that can only come with talking to yourself. We stare at each other; I take in every detail. She's so small and so young.

She has a year and a half until middle school and four and a half more until high school. She hasn't gotten her second piercing yet, and she won't change her hair until she's sixteen. She's thin as a rail. I'm not. A wave of grief threatens to pull me under as I realize she only has a few more years left of loving her body.

By the time she's thirteen she will have come to the realization that she is not beautiful and everyone who tells her so is a liar. She will develop an intense hatred for her body. Her relationship with food will become one of toxic habits and even more toxic actions. She will rely on physical fitness to keep the bad thoughts at bay. I really have no one to blame but myself. Looking at her now I wonder how I ever could have been so cruel.

I lean forward, bracing my elbows on my knees. She sets aside her sketchbook and pencil and mirrors me; we look like twin conspirators. I wonder what my mom would say if she saw this. I imagine she'd know who I was immediately, with that innate mother sense of hers. I wonder if the rest of my family would recognize me too.

"Do you want to go see them?"

The question brings me back to the present. She's watching me closely like she can read my thoughts. Maybe she can; we share a brain after all. I do want to see them, just to refresh the memory of them in my overcrowded mind; it would be nice to see the girls my sisters used to be before they had the audacity to grow up. I didn't come for the rest of my family though.

I shake my head, give her my full attention. "I came to see you."

"Why?"

"To tell you that I love you."

She looks taken aback, and I feel strange saying it outloud. I know people tell her they love her all the time: Mom, Dad, our grandparents, our sisters. I know she feels loved by those around her. I also know that she will give all her love away and leave nothing for herself.

She processes my words. She studies my face, our face. A tear slides down my cheek and I take her hands in my own.

"Never forget that, okay?" I look into her eyes. "No matter what, don't forget that I love you."

She is an intelligent girl. I know she understands the depth of my words, even if she doesn't realize it yet.

Her head turns towards the door, hearing something I can't. "That was Mom," she says quietly. "She said dinner's ready." That's my signal; it's time for me to go.

Ten year old me and I stand up, hands still linked. She gives mine a squeeze and offers me a toothy smile.

"I'll see you soon?" It's posed as a question. I can see the eagerness glittering in her eyes.

I squeeze her hand back. "Someday."

She goes and I'm left alone in my childhood bedroom. The walls will be blue someday and covered in posters and pictures. I'll have a desk full of art supplies and shelves full of books. Brucie will maintain his position as reigning stuffed animal over my collection. I see pieces of her, my ten year old self, in everything I own, and each day I try to be a little kinder to myself. For her sake.

God's Emotions in the Eyes of a Teenage Girl

It is March 11, 2020, and I am thirteen years old, sitting in 8th grade history class in the early morning. Between papers yet to be graded and her wide array of personal items, the contents of our teacher Mrs. Hopkins' life are scattered about her classroom. She sits at her desk which displays her hoarding habit, scrolling through her email inbox. She elects a popular basketball boy to pass out our morning worksheet, and he laughs with everyone as he makes his rounds through our classroom. I sit quietly waiting for my own.

"Let's watch CNN 10," Mrs. Hopkins says after we all have our worksheets, turning on the student news with her remote control. On the big screen, the reporter's brow furrows. He tells the world about the pestilence stirring in China, called the coronavirus, which people continue to deny. In our own classroom, denial courses through my classmates as no one reacts to the reporter's words except for the occasional scratch of pencil on paper as they take notes. But even at a young age, I am not idiotic enough to deny what I can clearly see. My father has been warning his loved ones about this very thing for weeks. But maybe this is what they mean when they warn us about God giving us over to our worldly desires. Maybe the punishment has finally come to pass.

After the video ends, Mrs. Hopkins lectures endlessly until a small timer beeps, alerting her that she has five minutes until we are supposed to switch classes. I raise my hand to ask her a question.

She makes eye contact with me. "Yes?"

"Do you think our Chicago trip will get canceled because of coronavirus?"

"Silly girl," she says, taking a long swig of her gas station soda. Instantly, I detect that silly girl does not carry the same whimsy or affection that it does when my father says it. Mrs. Hopkins obviously finds my idea preposterous. "Mr. Murphy would never cancel the Chicago trip. It's my favorite thing we do all year!"

I accept her answer with a nod and move on to English class.

But two days later, an email arrives in my mother's inbox from Mr. Murphy himself, not only canceling the Chicago trip, but announcing that we will have an extended spring break "to limit the spread of disease."

I will not return to school as I know it for a year.

***

We have been diligent citizens for three months, but cabin fever has hollowed us out. My family decides to make our first big venture out while still burdened by the yoke of the pandemic. Instead of flying, because airplanes are full of recirculated nastiness, we drive to a beach community a few miles away from Fort Morgan, Alabama. A realtor would call it "quaint," but soon my family and I discover that it is closer to rundown. Weeks worth of trash are piled up outside the beach accesses, and we can clearly see the oil rigs cranking out climate change from our seats in the sand. The worst part is that everywhere we go, locals look at us as if we have three eyeballs just because we are wearing masks. But my mother, the most optimistic of our trio, continues trying to make the most of it.

In the face of adversity, optimism alone can only last so long. Four days into our vacation, we are sitting on the beach, trying our best to ignore the oil rigs and watch the waves crash in peacefully, as if we are a normal family on a normal vacation. But God has different plans for us, stirring a thunderstorm in the clouds above us, bestowing an eerie darkness upon us as far as the eye can see. When my father hears the first clap of thunder, he silently begins disassembling the umbrella and packing up his beach chair. When I hear it, I scream and cry bloody murder, fearing that being struck by lightning can't be far behind. Being so vulnerably exposed to the elements of the beach is not doing anything to quell my fear of thunderstorms.

With all of our belongings in tow, we begin trekking back towards the beach access through which we came in. Chilly rain pelts our bodies as we walk through the thick, damp sand. A second, much louder clap of thunder blasts through my ears, reigniting both the fear and the instinct to run. I run as fast as my legs will take me to my mother's silver Subaru and hurriedly climb into the backseat, sobbing all the way. As we drive back towards the community, the pool area is forlorn and everyone is holed up in their houses, just as we have been for months. Finally I am able to fall onto my bed in the rental home and drift into a tearful sleep, still recovering from the panic that the storm on the beach instilled in me.

God's fury, however, is not satiated by the first thunderstorm. While we are eating dinner that night, in the most mediocre restaurant in the community whose only true selling feature is that they require masks, He strikes again (literally). Thunder quietly rumbles through the restaurant patio, causing some patrons to glance briefly at the sky. When it does not garner the attention God thinks it deserves, a second boom roars through the earth, and I swear it even shakes my chair. The downpour of rain from the sky matches the downpour of tears on my face. My father sees my condition, sighs with exasperation, and goes inside to pay the bill before we've even finished our food.

When I wake up in the morning, my mother is re-packing her suitcase. She turns to me and says, "We're going home early." An hour later we are on the road and it is 10:00 am, but the remaining darkness in the sky would never give that away. God is still angry and I don't know why.

***

Today, a few months after we returned home from that infamous vacation, I am attending my very first day of high school, albeit halted by the presence of face masks and a spooky silence that envelops the building. The green light to slowly start the return to normal life has appeared, but we have a long road ahead.

I stand in a line for the metal detectors that stretch seven feet out the door. The boy in front of me tosses his

backpack on the table so the security guard can do her daily search. I can hear a few low voices discussing the day ahead.

Even though I am back in school, I can't help but notice the teachers still broadcasting their voices to a few stray black boxes on their screens. A cocktail of anxiety and hope is expertly mixed in their faces. I try to follow their example, but maybe it will never be like it was before. Can I live with that? God remains silent through all of this and does not provide an answer to my internal question.

***

It is May 19, 2024, and I am seventeen years old. I am not even two weeks from graduating high school, and part of the celebration includes "youth Sunday" at church. I have just given a youth-led sermon about the inner light that I see in the people I hold most dear. They are found in the Bible just like Adam and Eve or Jonah and the whale. The lights of the world. My church family showers me with resounding applause.

We prepare to sing our closing hymn, which I picked out myself. "This little light of mine" has the entire congregation dancing and doing the motions along with me, even the grumpiest of grandpas. The pianist grins as she plays each note, and I even see some tearful faces in the crowd. The song is now one of my favorites, because it allows the memory to return to the surface, and allows me to wonder about what ways I can "let it shine" moving forward.

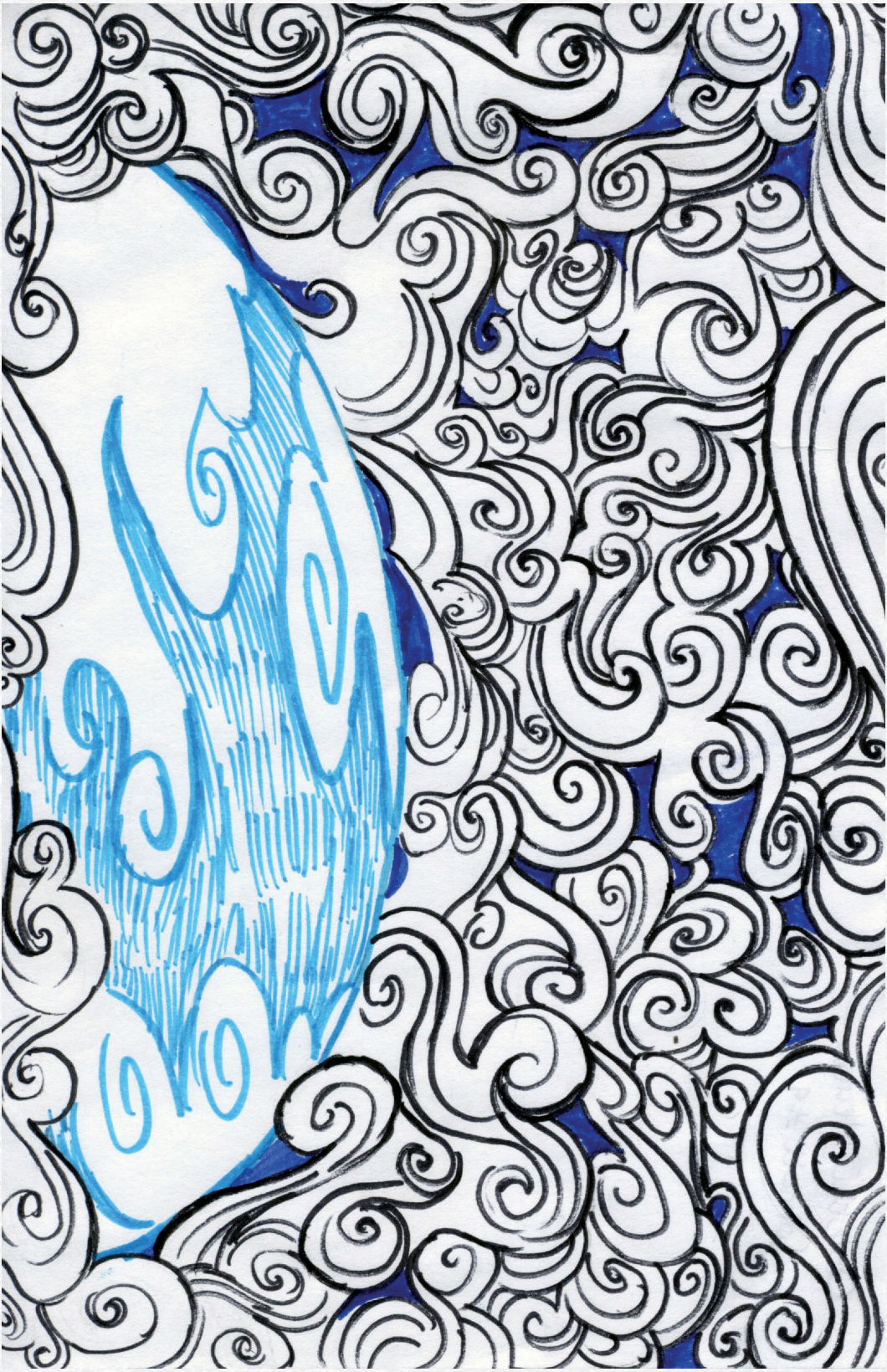
I raise my right hand to give the benediction, officially ending the chapter of the church youth group in my life. It has been tumultuous at times, but it is the steady presence of a heartbeat in a body that so desperately needs it to survive. Finding a new heartbeat will prove to be difficult. But God smiles down on me, and He is on my side once again. When I could not find light, I became it.

In Syzygy

In syzygy, the ardent moon and sun
Doth vie for subjugation o'er the land
Replete with spangled garlands thus undone
Beneath the sable sky the moon had panned.
Yet in the morn the sun usurps her reign,
Returning to the dell her pearly rays,
And banishing the beasts to come again,
When she takes rest to cycle temperate days.
Ah! Like clockwork! Duos ne'er to keep
Control of power! A strife to carry on
Past when we will be ushered unto sleep,
Before the final dusk or final dawn.
    Yet I feel none but pure envy so rare,
    For days and nights have the lone, grasping pair.

Sonnet #9

Perplexing bedlam's oft a frequent end
To choices deemed the fault of teeming rage.
Yet tis our fate to war without a mend,
Like August leaves upon a tragic stage
That tear themselves unto a blustering wind;
A wind the welkin doth control to rein
And wrest the fiercely crashing, cresting waves
That, wrought into the sky, cascade down rain,
Yet, just to mist and sprinkle earthly graves.
And gales in passion do, in choices mad,
Doth spin and circle in blind lunacy
To rend the Earth. And yet the wind so clad
In death and dirt falls down so uselessly.
    Tis not the fault of man to choose in rue,
    For God's own voice pure madness doth pursue.

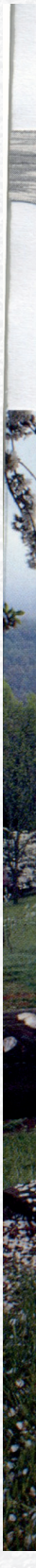


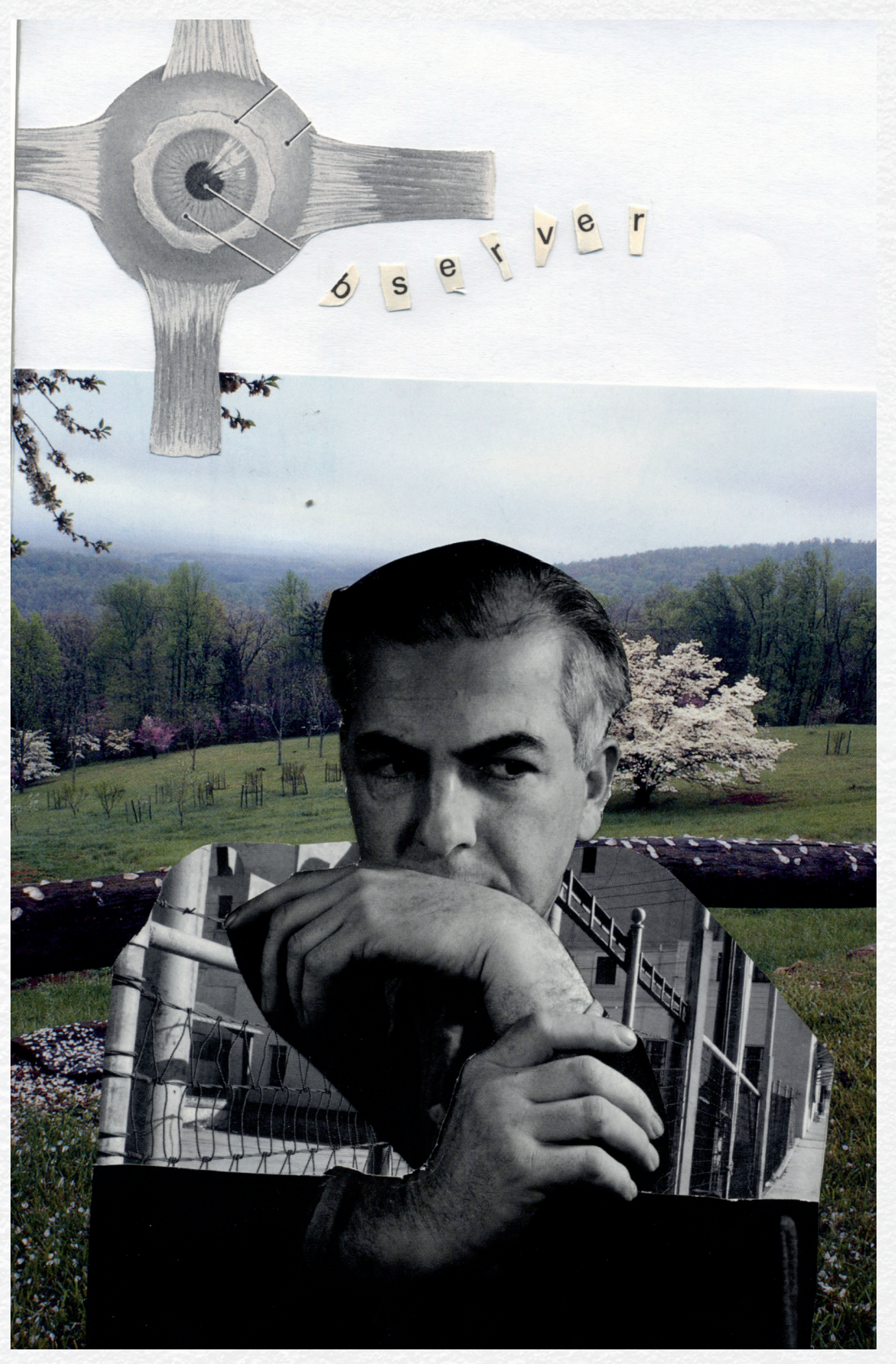
The Woman In Blue

Emerald grass burst with sunflowers towering over its blades. Wispy clouds scattered the sky as if they had been softly brushed across it. The sky was a vivid blue, brightening as it peeked through the clouds. A golden sunbeam met a lone woman's sandalwood skin. She raised a hand to secure a large sunhat on her head. Her hair shone almost raven, each curled strand standing out against the light of the field. The ribbons which hung from the sunhat matched the cornflower of her day dress, billowing behind her with the breeze. The dress was covered in embroidered vines, ivy trailing down the length of the skirt. Her face turned to meet the sun, only her cheek visible with the stippling of sunlight through her hair. Her expression was lost to shadow.

She grasped a wicker basket with her other hand. A piece of fabric stuck out of the lid, plaid and aged. The fraying strings were barely visible from where she stood. Her grip on the handle looked as if it were threatening to release, as if the weight of its contents were becoming too hard to hold up any longer. She stood alone in the wide expanse of flowers as she held the basket and gazed at the clouds. Was she dreaming of something? Waiting for someone?

The woman was far away; she began to fall out of focus, almost impressionistic in her details. Yet, still, she seemed close enough to touch. Something seemed to radiate off of her, drawing me in. It was something that warmed my chest, that fluttered in my stomach. It was something I couldn't quite place, somewhere between wonder and recognition. It felt as if I knew her; her back to me prevented none of the familiarity which resonated the longer I looked. Her allure didn't falter even though I knew neither the color of her eyes nor the sound of her voice. No matter how close I got to her, she never turned; I didn't know her name. I got up, moved away from her, and left the art exhibit, daydreaming of the woman in blue.




observer

Seabash

The storm rolled in heavily, forming a dark blanket over the sea. The sails whipped in the wind like captured prey and the crew yelled at each other through the sea salt. Large wooden beams of the galleon bent low and wheezed as they rose and fell in the sea foam. In the belly of this unfortunate vessel, captured in the clutches of an angry sea, a game of eclectic poker was being played in the shaken lamplight.

Four men were huddled around an old beer-stained table peeling from water damage. One was a lizardman who had been sentenced to death for devouring a family in broad daylight, one was an elf with a pension for theft, one was an orc who gave himself up to let his clan escape, and the fourth was an unidentifiable man covered in flowing white cloth. The poker chips launched into the air sparkling in the lamplight, and splattered onto their wooden table as the boat thrashed once more. The mess of chips fell to the lizardman's side of the table.

"Play it where it lies," rumbled the lizardman as he shoveled the chips into a pile.

Seawater gripped the ankles of the players, but they didn't care, the booze let them float. The cards started to waterlog and slapped when the orc slammed his cards onto the table, revealing a full house. He let out a guttural laugh that mixed in with the snapping of the main sail above them–which sent a rain of wooden chips into the gameboard. The four men simply fumbled with the cards in their hand, accepting the commotion from upstairs..

The elf used the chaos to reach for the lizardman's chips, which were previously his but the sea slid them away. Another wave crashed broadside and launched the table to the left. The lizardman raged at losing his double aces to a full house contorting his body into a roar. Another boom and the table flew to the other side of the boat. All four men played the game indifferent to the storm, they just didn't want to lose their hands. The orc moved to collect his bounty and play another hand, laughing as the water lapped at his knees.

“Wait!” belted out the unknown man, his face covered in a decorated religious cloth and a body adorned with ceremonial archery attire as he put a straight flush of dry cards onto the wooden table.

“That doesn’t count, it’s too late, bastard!” the orc screamed in disbelief.

The water poured in and carried the men through the belly of the ship. They gripped tight to the sides of the table which never fully went under. This wooden table was surprisingly buoyant for being on a sinking ship. They washed them up to the next floor of the ship, and continued to argue over the last hand.

“If you were a patient asshole, maybe you would’ve known. You jumped the gun, slag tooth,” said the clothed man.

The lizardman realized the elf took his chips. He peered down at the small elf, barely able to contain the rage on his face. It almost looked as if the scales would melt right off of his face out of pure hatred. He had lost one of the best hands he got in years, and a player at the table tried to take the chips he fairly won. His eyes burned and his face cowled in disgust, not only for the actions of this elf, but for his guiltless face. The large scalding figure brought his arm above his jowls and moved like a blade, cutting the elf in two with just one fluid motion.

"Atta boy!” the religiously clothed man screamed, smiling beneath his ceremonial hood.

He looked to his left at the stunned orc and lodged a dagger into his thick green throat. He knew that orcs don't go down that easy, so he thrusted his hands over the clothed mirage of his poker opponent. The water swirled at their waist and with no better place to be, the cloth man revealed his face with his free hand. Two radiant eyes of an angel attacked the orc’s soul. A massive black wing sprung from the angel’s back, throwing feathers all across the now floating poker board. The orc’s green body began to weaken and his hands let go of the neck of the coughing angel, and he began to look sickly. His body slowly gave in and he fell back into the salt water and floated amongst the ship's rubble.

Another wave, another wave. The boat toppled and the massive lizard men and the angel were launched upward and around and over. Their strength meant nothing to the sea surrounding them.

"Killing him was cheating!" the lizardman belted out.

"I know, you bastard," the angel said as he grinned, enjoying the chaos.

The lizard man reeled back and lunged at him, fed up with all the rule breaking in this poker game. The cherry-colored eyed angel jumped over him onto the stairs to the next floor, blocked off by heavy wooden beams.

"Get over here, cocky human!" the lizardman growled.

"I am no human, you sore prick!" the angel yelled back. He raised his hand above his head and a mechanical whirl began as a small ball above his holographic middle finger emerged, pulsing as several mechanical parts suddenly grew into the shape of a long skinny cross. The surface of it looked like miscellaneous parts of an engine all welded together.

The angel lowered the six-foot cross into a horizontal position and a string appeared between the beam and the base of the cross. The hand of the angel set itself at the middle of his mechanical cross, and if it had already been there, pulled back a silver arrow. His arms widened, and he let the arrow fly in an immense calmness. It looked as if he was no longer enjoying the chaos, but instead taking in the reality of the world around him. His breath calmed, his grin faded, and his arrow flew.

The arrow almost seemed to teleport across the room, slamming into a wooden beam behind the ducking lizardman, now crawling forward on all fours. The lizardman rose before the angel winding his claws back to split his adversary in two.

"Shit," the angel said as he attempted to load another arrow.

The lizardman reached him before he could pull the string back, but his keen claws were stopped by the crossbar of the large greatbow. The beams that once imprisoned them shattered as the angel was thrown through them with the

force of the lizardman. Soggy wood chips shot up like sparks from just one motion of the lizardman. The eyes of the angel turned white and he lost consciousness for a moment.

"You thought you were clever, but you're nothing too..." hissed the lizardman.

The beams of the lower floor of the ship cracked under the weight of the rising water and a massive wooden beam, holding an immense amount of kinetic force, whipped through the middle of the ship. The lizardman's brain did not have enough time to react as a supporting beam of the ship swung through his body, crushing him completely and sending a rush of water through the entire ship.

The angel rose to his feet with a wobble and regained his footing. He hasn't been hit that hard in years, decades even. Four of his ribs were shattered. His body thudded to the wet floor with a slap and his breathing became strained and heavy. He shoved his hand into his chest which began to fill with a radiant light. This light revealed the internal workings of the angel. His heart was lugging in motions, covered in splinters of the angel's chest. The radiant light seemed to meticulously reform every rib. His heart started up fast again and his ribs all reformed themselves.

He may have healed himself, but the boat was too far gone. At this point it began to flip. The disproportionate weight of the galleon made it collapse in on itself, swallowed by the storm. The water swallowed the floating wooden fortress and the storm rolled on.

On a beach on a village not charted on any national maps, maybe a few local ones, the sandy angel rose, supporting himself on his cross-shaped weapon. He limped to the shade and sat, tending to his wounds again with the spells he had learned. The string of his weapon had torn, so the angel rummaged through his bag and rewired it. He then pressed a few odd buttons on his mechanical cross and it changed its form to a concave staff, with a string on one end. He tied a lure on the string with precision and wandered back to the sea to catch himself some dinner.

Winter Lady

The white waterfall sprinkles its dust in silence,
The tender caresses it gives this earth
It breathes into the wind a sublime whiteness.
Snowy sublimeness.
And now I can no longer see;
My sight is availed unto this whirlwind powder,
And ahead of me and behind me I am spindrift with snow-flakes. Snowy snowflakes.
The distance my eyes surmount wavers now,
I cannot see the spires ahead of me, nor the bright sun, re-duced Into ghost glow.
And I walk along repetitive paths,
With Men and Women who walk along repetitive paths; They too are drenched in the speckled air,
It coats their furs and skin and lips.
It wants to hold them tenderly;
I want it to hold me tenderly.
I look up and feel the brushes of
All these glistening particle fingers.
This winter reaches all,
It descends into the deep earth, where the dead of old reside,
And freezes the hearts of those buried there.
Then it climbs into the clouds, and above,
And flows like a stream through the gates of heaven, Bringing wonderland into paradise.







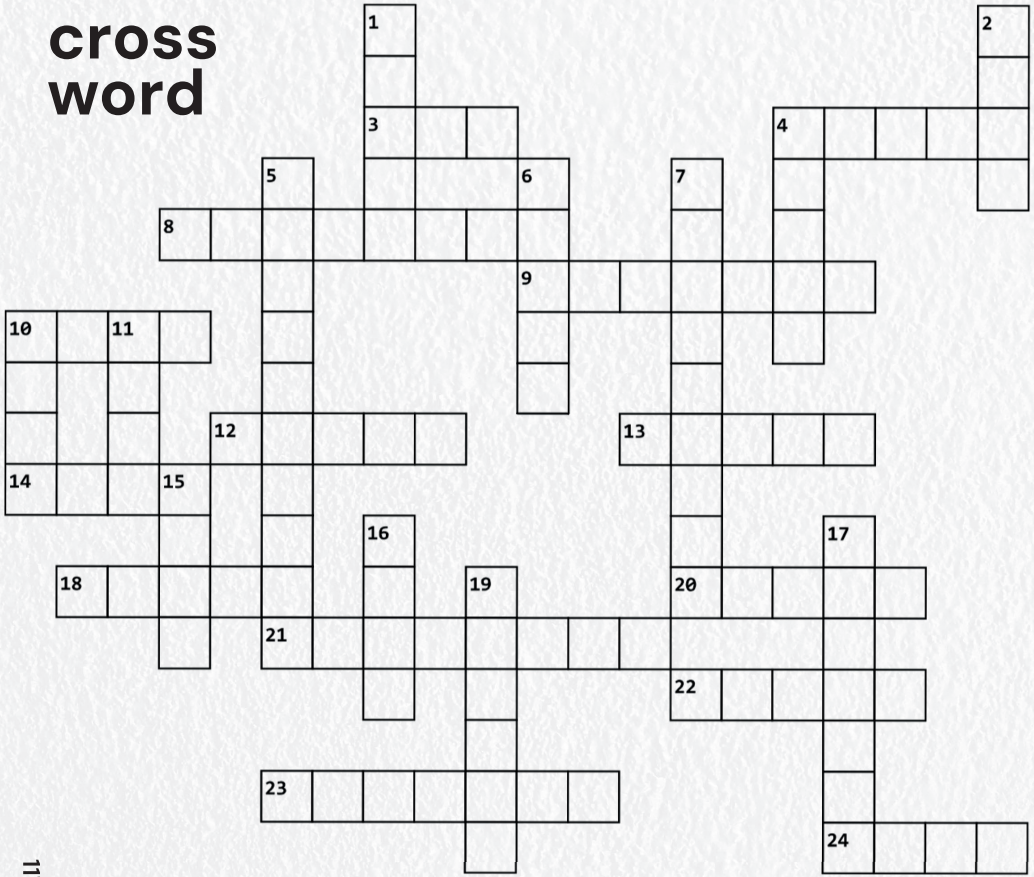
word search



word bank

bamboozle
chamomile
cozy
deposit
kaleidoscope
zonked
breeze
rocks
melancholy
dust

cross word



DOWN

1. very short fiction
2. verse on a page
4. a book's resting place
5. reminiscent of works by "metamorphosis" author
6. fantasy or romance, for example
7. what a brontë sister might use
10. a specific style and size of a typeface
11. book barcode abbr.
15. revise, as a draft
16. a long, narrative poem
17. octavia butler's best-selling novel
19. a poem of fourteen lines

ACROSS

3. the progression of a story
4. the deposit's former title
8. a soft, shiny black form of carbon
9. between a short story and a novel in length
10. a character who contrasts with another character
12. poetic rhythm
13. a bibliophile may own many
14. literary mood
18. 5-7-5
20. repeated thematic element
21. concluding section added to the end of a literary work
22. "_____, _____, _____," says Hamlet
23. what paints pictures with words
24. em or en, in editing lingo

playlist



So Many Details
Toro y Moi



Geneviene- Unfinished
Jai Paul



Best to You
Blood Orange



Simulation Swarm
Big Thief



Livin' Loose
George Clanton



Russian Doll- smaller
dacelynn



Watermelon
John + Jane Q. Public



Oom Sha La La

Haley Heynderickx



The Rain Formerly Known as Purple

Chris Christodoulou



Peaceful Sleep

Keiichi Okabe



Parking Lots

Plum



Like a Tattoo

Sade



Hatachi No Koi

Lamp



Papa was a Rodeo

Magnetic Fields

and more!




thanks
for
reading