

WINDHOVER

EDITION LVI | NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

Mission

Windhover, NC State's literary and arts magazine, strives to serve the creative community of NC State through its annual publication that includes art, film, music, poetry, and prose. Our main goals are to provide a welcoming environment for out-of-the-box thought processes and to encourage all artists to submit.

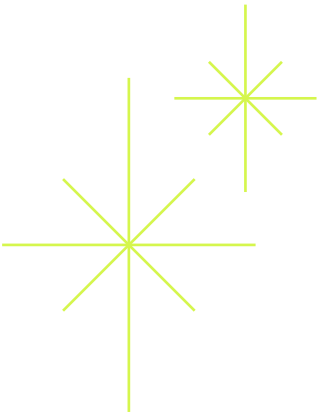
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Note from the Editor

Instead of thinking of Windhover LVI as a book, I encourage you to think of it as a space. Rather than flipping through pages, reading stories, and looking at pictures, you're moving through planes and dimensions. This is a space where artists in our community have gathered to share their stories. I especially want to draw your attention to the negative space. In design, looking at the negative space is one of the first things you're taught. That is, if you want to draw an object, you have to draw the space around it rather than the object itself. As we sketched out the plans for Windhover LVI, we tried to take this approach. It is nearly impossible to show the whole of our community with just a few pages; however, in the space between narratives, you can start to see the whole taking shape.

While the shape of our community is implied with the pieces included, I'd like to draw your attention to the voids as well. Each year, it is impossible to include every submission, no matter how thought-provoking, ground-breaking, or worthwhile they might be. Each year, we are limited by the space on each page. Some stories inevitably go untold, all because of a shortage of space. Each year, the editors agonize over what to include, and the designers work long nights trying to fit them all in. I'd like to thank the staff for this dedicated effort in creating a beautiful, thoughtful, and inclusive space. Thank you to Emma Carter, Sophia Chunn, Cortney Ollis, Maya Mitchell, Ryley Fallon, Javian Evans, and Occhetti; without you, this space could not exist. I also want to thank our adviser, Martha Collins, our fabulous volunteers, and all the people who have shared their work with us. It is a brave act to share your art, and we are honored you shared it with us. I'm glad I get to exist in the same space as all of you.

It is difficult to create a complete picture of our community in the limited pages that follow. This year, however, we are dedicating a space for everyone to share their story. In the following limited pages, one is blank, and it's yours. You might pen a haiku, paint a picture, write lyrics, paste in a photo, a storyboard, a letter, a call to action. You might tear it out, fold it into a paper airplane, and send it flying across the room. This isn't limited to the blank page, either. Wherever you see space in this book, you can fill it; interact with the text, the pictures, the music, the videos. This book is not a sacred space; it's your space. Whatever you do with it, use it, and take up space.

Camilla Keil

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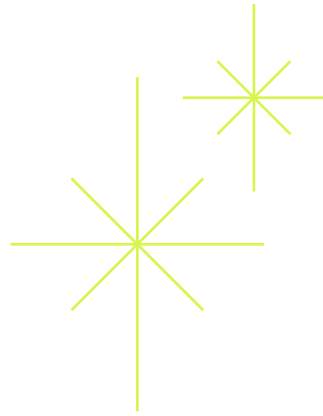
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Bella Woods

Out of Time



The time Kai. Remember the time.

Breath steams from my lips, a dove's silvery plume in the sultry yellow lights of the first class lounge. The sleek glass doors shimmer with the light, the bar polished, mirroring the thin-necked bottles tiered behind it, the green velvet of the furniture, the oiled leather topping the bar stools. A world warm and comfortable, and filled with a man and a woman leaning against that bar. The man's suit jacket is unbuttoned, his tie trailing in two dark tails on either side of his neck. A butter-bright pocket watch swings from his waistcoat, thumbs his waist. The woman leans close to him, whispering in his ear, her back to me. Her hair coils in rusted ringlets down her shoulders. Thick, wavy, like the grass on the moors in Scotland. Like the curling rust of Laura's hair.

I dial Mom's number, hold the burring ringer to my ear. It rings once. Twice.

The pocket watch glints hard gold in the light.

The time Kai. Remember the time.

"Come on Mom!"

Her voicemail marches out, and I hang up. She must be driving. She never picks up her phone when she's driving. I glance over at the glass doors. The bar is vacant. I am alone in the terminal.

I hang up, scan furtive through my contacts. Will's number catches my eye. I punch it, hold the ringer to my ear once more.

"Yellow?"

Classic Will.

"Hey, Will. You still taxi driving?"

"Who is this?" The shrill voice of another person in the room seeps through the speaker. He continues, voice drawn away from his phone,

"Give me a minute honey—Daddy's on the phone."

Married. With kids. Will the knockabout troubadour. Will with his chain-collared mutt and his scarred acoustic guitar. Will with his passion for everything small town and ye-olde dinosaur computers. My Will.

I had teased him about his old-fashioned loves before accepting the posting in Scotland. Why had I wanted so desperately to leave? I could not remember now.

"It's Kai, Will." I bite my lip, slump against the wall, cheek to the concrete. It burrows icy into my skin. "Remember?"

"Finally coming back to the home turf, eh? How was Scotland?"

I glance down at my watch. Eleven thirty. My stomach tightens.

"Hey, I'm at the airport. Mom was supposed to pick me up—I need a lift. Please."

Please, Please...

He laughs a sharp, husky laugh, and the minutes tick by on my watch. "Mmm. Kind of late..."

"I'll pay you double."

"Give me twenty minutes."

The phone clicks silent. I shove it in my pocket. Twenty minutes he said.

It will have to be soon enough.

—

"I should have told you sooner. Hopefully it's soon enough." Laura tried to catch my eyes, her ragged-edged book lying open and flat in her lap. She sat propped against the arm of the couch, legs tangled in a flannel blanket. Pale. Her eyes flashed too dark for that creeping pallor in her cheeks.

I clutched the blanket draped around my shoulders tighter. Shivered.

"How long have you been stuck—in time?" I tried not to scoff the words.

"Years, Kai. Centuries." She smiled at me, her lips drawing taut against her teeth, all the youthful fire in her snuffed, and for a moment I could believe she lived through centuries. Centuries of war, of pain, of disease. Centuries that battered her and gnawed at her and left her harder and colder and older than when she first entered them. Centuries that flattened the life from her, sucking it bit by bit from her soul as deftly as blowing the yolk from the eggshell.

"No wonder you're losing it." My words shriveled in the cold banging at the window, in the heat of her gaze.

She chuckled, a low, burbling murmur. "Losing what? That's the question." She smiled sugar-sweet for an instant, shifting back the way I knew her. But it faded as swiftly as it flitted over her face.

I shook my head, glancing vacantly at the scarred coffee table, the red and black criss-cross of the flannel bunched around Laura's knees.

"I don't know—"

"I'm dying Kai. Losing all my influence. It's been a long time now..."

"How—have you—have you seen anyone?" The words were a form and not the substance of what I wanted to say: a shadow to fill the aching emptiness.

"Of sorts."

She held my gaze for a long moment, all her control melting away.

"It's slow—this dying. And I'm—afraid. Teach me how to die, Kai."

Teach me. Teach me. Teach...

"I've never—"

"But you die every day, a little. Can't you feel it? It's how I die too—just a little, no more than that."

A little—A little—

I stared at her, at the book open in her lap, the words inked black and red against white. Words that sustained. Words that soothed. She appeared healthy, physically.

And there was the time swirling between us. Blips of time that I raced through or lost. Moments jumbled in confusion for me now, since the chapel. And always the echoing.

"Have you seen anyone else—besides a doctor?" I bit my lip, unsure why the question popped out like that: so cold and jagged. I rushed onwards. "There's no shame—"

Will flashed across my mind. Sitting on the back steps of his house, his face shadowed and pale as Laura's now, just staring down at the concrete at his feet so he wouldn't start screaming at the sky. I would sit with him then, in that silence, when he couldn't speak and couldn't go home. The hard days he lived through and in a way died through. I thrived while he struggled, and I could never completely reach him there, on his harder days. But he never skipped his sessions held in the nearby church's basement, never backed down from living. I admired him for it, loved him for it ...

"Oh, that." She closed her eyes, leaned her head back against the arm of the couch. Her book slipped, hit the floor with a thick thud. She did not reach for it. "Perhaps I have, once or twice. It's been so long now..."

"Can I do anything?" Anything, anything to keep her from rambling on like this.

Her eyes snapped open and she blinked. I waited, clutching at the blanket wrapped round my shoulders. I shivered.

"Perhaps." Her voice was soft, far away. Longing.

I exhaled. Smiled. Caught her eyes with mine. "Just tell me what I can do."

—

Will rolls up exactly twenty minutes later, his decrepit, rusted out pick-up traded in for a modest mini-van. He breaks in front of me and hops out of the car.

"Will?"

His dark hair is clipped short, his jaw clean shaven except for his goatee, his jeans and jacket hole-free and matching. He grins broad, twirls slow in the fluorescent light.

"Clean up nice, huh?"

I laugh and bear hug him. He laughs too, and the sound roils warm in the empty air.

I step back, take him in full. "How are you? I know that last time—I'm—"

"I know." He smiles warm, and warmth spreads and invades my body. "I'm better now, Kai. Finally."

I laugh again. Shaky. "I'm so glad."

Shouldering my bag from me, he places it in the backseat.

"Thanks for picking me up on so short notice. I don't know why Mom hasn't gotten back to me."

"It's all right. I don't mind."

He ushers me into the passenger seat. The car gushes warm air and I lean back, sigh with the warmth, with coming home.

He slips in the driver's seat, flips on the ignition, motor sputtering. "What took you so long to get here anyway?"

So long—so long—

"I—I just couldn't get away that's all. My job—"

He holds up a hand. "Say no more."

I glance at the clock. The time strobes twelve thirty. U.S. time, of course.

"You got your currency exchanged right?" He grins a snarky, Cheshire-cat grin, and I punch him in the arm.

"I made good money up in the Highlands—think I'd bail on you?"

Will shifts gears, and stomps on the gas. We hurtle from the terminal, out into the sleek, dark of the road. My phone buzzes on the middle console, screen lighting up with a photo of Laura and I standing behind the counter of my apartment, a Scotch pie steaming on the granite. It was my first true Scottish bake. She must have just posted it.

"Who's that?" Will glances over.

"Will!" I wave at the window.

He flicked his gaze back to the road, chuckling.

"Her name's Laura. I met her in Scotland."

"Oh yeah, I remember seeing her on your account once or twice. I think she sent me a friend request once."

"Sounds like her. Friendly."

"I tried to get hold of you a few times—I must have mixed up your number or something. Or I must have missed the time gap."

"I can't seem to keep track of time—especially on the weekends. Laura's much better at the whole 'controlling time' thing."

Wil snorts, but keeps his eyes locked on the road. "Time ... Where does it go?"

Go—go—



He flips on the radio, blaring those old indie rock ballads that he used to sing on the street corners. I always heard those melodies when I ambled through the Highlands, the moors wild and open, the sky a dome of bronze ...

Twelve thirty Kai—Twelve thirty—

Headlights bloom in the dark and I stiffen, breath catching silver in my throat. But this is America not Scotland. Will places his hand on my arm, smiles gentle without looking over.

The car hurtles towards us, sheens silver in our headlights. And round. Like Mom's—

The car's headlights spear us both full in the eyes. The double yellow lines vanishing under its axles.

"Will—"

"I didn't look away!" He smashes the horn.

The headlights chop through the dark in uneven glimpses, still straight towards us. Will yells, jerks the steering wheel, to the road's shoulder. I slam against the window.

Crunch.

No.

Glass crackles under my skull. Pain ricochets down my spine, flaming down my arms...

In the sea-choppy light, the face of a rowan doe flickers solid, rooted to the road in terror.

We had enough time—enough time—

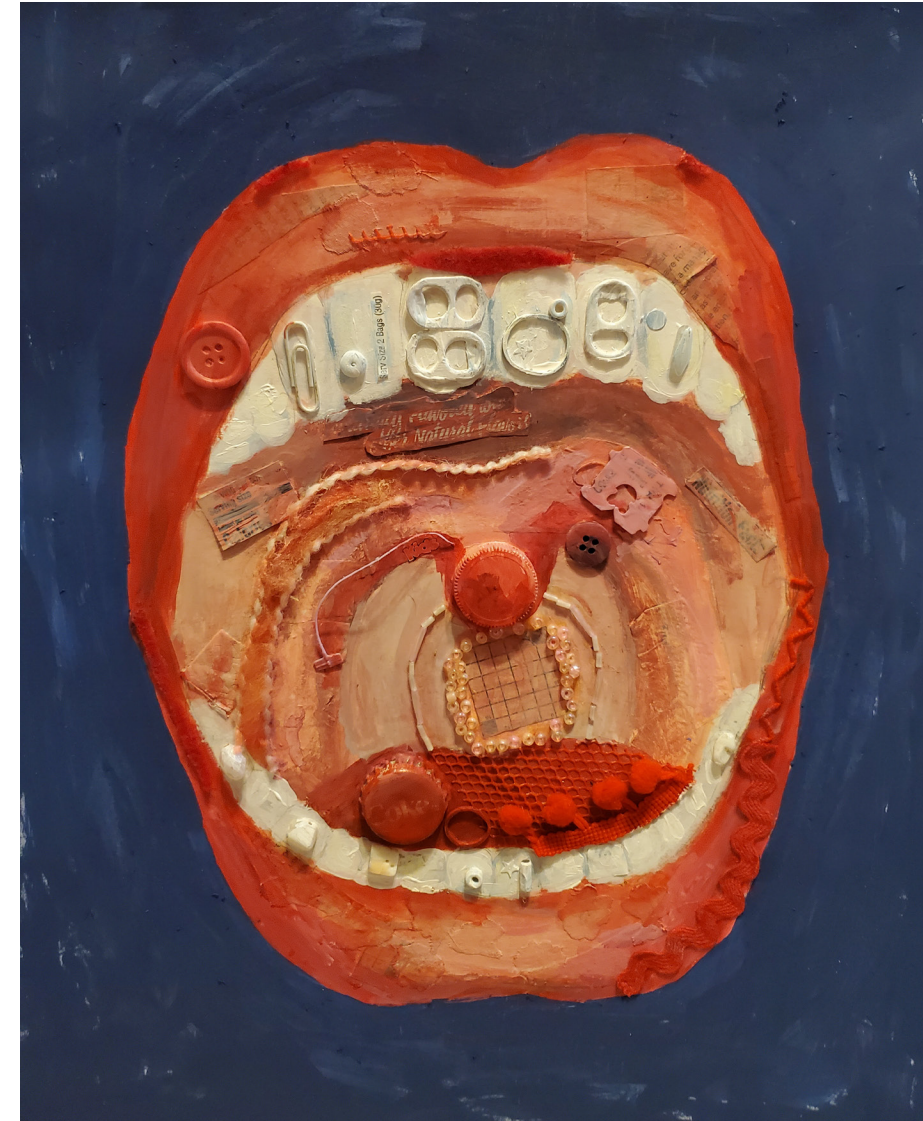
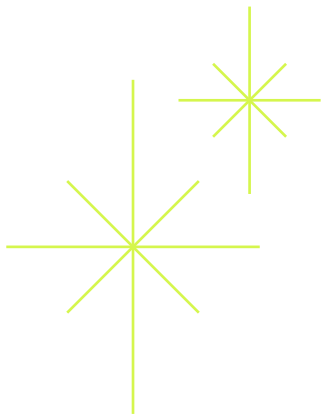
"Will!" I scream his name. Scream without words. Scream without meaning.

Will!

Will curses, swerves again. Onto the road.

Headlights flood the car.

Continue reading this story online at windhover.ncsu.edu



Trash Mouth

Debra Mullis
mixed media

And all loaded up, those
pixelated
eyes of coffee

And
glitching curls
of brown oak:

"Your Sim!"
In their virtual life
and virtual happiness.

("It looks just like you!"
"I guess?")

He walks and talks
just like you
maybe a bit exaggerated.

He has a swagger
And a drawling voice

("I don't sound like that!")

The Sim walks

("Into walls.")

but he lives a happy life
a life of achievement,
a life of love,
with a big house,
of his own,
with a raven-haired wife
And a child
of the same pixels:
of brown oak and coffee eyes.

He walks just like you.
Though you

are not walking

Anymore.

And
by your own hands,

Too.

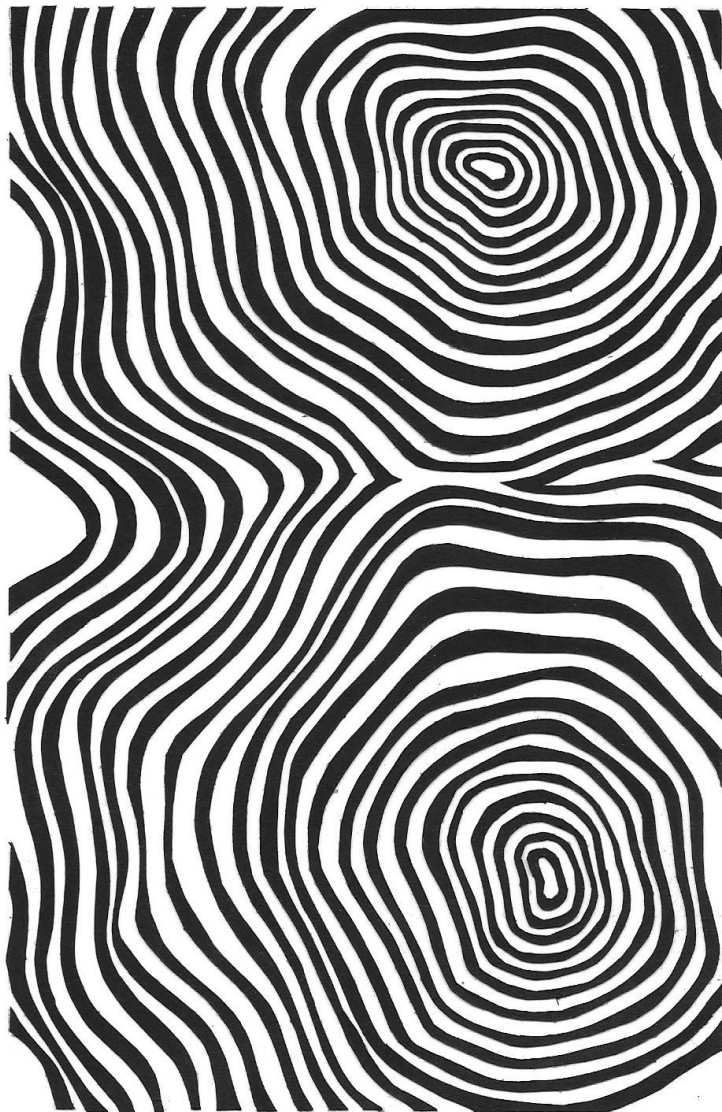
But in our own hands,
the Sim lives,
living the life
that I wanted
to see you have.

"I solemnly swear,
his Sim will no longer be subject to cleaning the toilets."

Tuesday Pil
The Sims 4

Smoking Section

Emma Anderson
cut cardstock



Hotboxing

Ariel Hills

Being with her feels like a 9 PM Monday night high.
9:13 PM, inhaling wisps of white clouds through tight blown glass
leaving bits of green to singe the back of my throat—
one of those feel-good kinda pains.
the pounding bass ringing through my ears
and catching floating melodies in songs I've heard before.
Eyes squinting, finding a simple glance that feels limitless
as the ticking arms on the clock slow.

Half the time I'm present, collected even, but
the other fifty-percent, existing in dreamland,
caught somewhere between the dingy bathroom tiles and Venus.
9:28 PM, a simple reset thinking about the smoke tracing her lips.
I'm jealous of that long draw of smoke, of that THC filling her bloodstream.
I will daydream about her warm breath as she exhales
and find myself lost in the touch of our fingertips passing the keef.

As our sky becomes filtered by smoldering fog,
I'll catch her singing in a tunnel of sound.
My tired eyes will find somewhere in this small empty room
where I can capture her laugh, catch her face in the dim watercolor light
and in seconds she will anchor me back to this dimension once again.
It's 9:32 PM and I'm finding it ridiculously funny how
in the past few weeks I've come to know myself, how I've come to know her,
trapped in something so incomprehensible but alluring by 9:41.

Jane Linville

Oh, Tonight

In the morning, I will wake beneath the shade of a looming pine tree, covered in earth and bruises I cannot remember. I will sigh and brush the remaining bits of wet fur from my skin. Thorns will snag my feet and thighs and the soft parts of my hips as I stumble home. I'll have to check for ticks later. The rabbits and squirrels will part from my path like a scurrying Red Sea. Eventually, I'll see the steeple of a familiar church, or the crest of a house I've driven by a time or two before, and know that I cannot be far.

My wife will be waiting in the kitchen with two mugs of cold tea, watching the full moon fade out of the sky. She'll be beating herself up for getting so busy at the office that she forgot it was my night, how she could have waited up with me and made me drink more water, how she should not have argued when I asked to have carbonara for dinner.

When I walk through the door, my wife will cry. She will pull a blanket from the dryer and drape it over my shoulders. She will hug me, tight and all around. She will clean and bandage my wounds, the way she's done every other time this happened. My wife will fry up an over-easy egg for me, and I will eat it in two big bites.

Eventually, I'll have to get ready for work. My wife will try to stop me, ask if maybe I should call in this time, but it will be no use. I'll put on my tired khakis and black polo, flick on my blue vest and adjust

my name tag. Try as I might, brushing through my hair will not make a difference, so I will pull it into a ragged, angry bun.

Outside, my wife will be waiting in the car for me. When I'm ready, I'll take my seat on the passenger side, and she will drive me up the road to Pet Emporium. I'll get out, kissing my wife's cheek as I go, and firmly close the car door. She'll probably grab a coffee on the way home. My wife loves coffee.

The situation at Pet Emporium will be abysmal. The rodent cages will exude the heavy musk of piss. I won't remember to close the cricket box while I feed the lizards, and the crickets will escape and blanket the entire store in their song. The chinchilla I have been trying to nurse back to health will pass away in the circle of my hand. A customer will complain about me because I told them not to house a beta fish in a one-gallon tank.

Pet Emporium doesn't sell dogs, but dogs move in and out of the store all of the time. They come for grooming appointments and training sessions, and sometimes just to sniff around at treats and toys. Usually I just ignore them, but that morning there will be a husky in the store. I've never seen myself transformed, but I'll wonder if maybe this is what I look like. I will walk up to this husky, who will be accompanied by a little girl with butterfly barrettes in her hair. The butterfly barrette girl will say yes when I ask if I can pet her husky. The dog will sniff my hand when I stretch it out to him, and I will wonder what he smells. Can he smell the woods, the fur? Can he smell blood? But instead of assaulting me with barks and gnashes, the husky will simply lean his face into my palm, begging for an ear scratch.

My wife will pick me up from work around five. She will ask if Chinese sounds good tonight, and I will say yes. Later, as I slurp my lo

mein, I will notice my wife staring too intently at her General Tso's and shifting in her chair. I'll ask if she's okay, and she'll answer,

"Do you like it better, being a wolf?"

I won't know how to say the aroma of loam and leaf to her, the scratch of ragged breath in my throat. The unadulterated joy of a prey animal's perfume on the wind and the sound of flesh torn with teeth, of swallowing whole, will be incomprehensible to my wife. She is so gentle and kind, so soft. So human.

I'll tell her that I don't remember.

That night, I will fall asleep holding my wife, her body tucked into the negative space of mine, my arm amongst her waist. I will wake up next to her, mouth open and spilling drool atop her pillow case. We'll brew coffee together and go to work and come back again.

After a week, the night I was a wolf will blend into the landscape of my mind. I will still go to work, and sleep next to my wife. I will watch TV and read books, I will draw, I will be reminded to water the plants and I will forget anyway. My mother will call, and she will ask about the doctor's appointment. I will tell her that they still don't know anything. I'll explain that they gave me a new medicine to take, and that it makes my pee smell weird, and my mother will laugh.

In a month, I'll feel the itch again. The fur will crop up on my

chest, beneath my chin and behind my ears, and I will know that the medicine isn't working. At my wife's request, I will call the doctor, and she will tell me to come to the hospital so they can run tests. The transformation will take place under fluorescent bulbs on a stiff gourney, my limbs strapped down with leather and silver buckles. I will thrash and claw my way free from the restraints, and the doctor will safely watch me all night from behind the two-way mirror. For the first time, I will see myself; my pelt, peppered with rust and white, not like that husky in the Pet Emporium at all.

But tonight, I am wolf. There is no past or future for me, no worry, no guilt or obligation. Tonight, I dash through the woods, the wind gasping through my fur. I'm in pursuit of a squirrel, or maybe a deer; it doesn't really matter. The scents of rotting wood and rain rattle through my nostrils. Every creak and crunch snaps my mind awake. The moon, as bright and full and beautiful as she has ever been, weaves her light through the trees and into a path for me. I can hear my brothers and sisters calling to her and I join them, our collective cries floating up through the night and over the whole forest. Tonight, oh tonight, I am free.





Wood Sculpture

Grace Boros
wood

Grace Boros was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor-in-chief and managing editor based on a pre-established critique process.

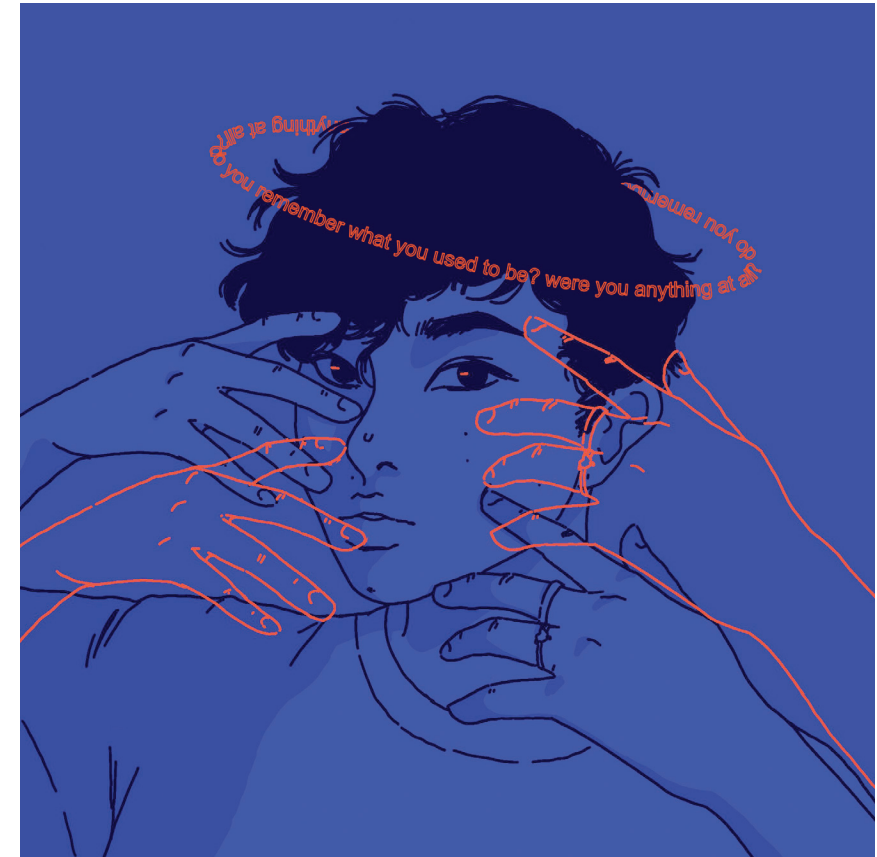
Thomas Jackson

sacred sites on this planet are few and far between

in an old church, to the group it's glorious
not all Christian, no easy explanation
my hands free of a binding religion, walls plated in thick gold leaf
double edged sword, standing with no firm beliefs
thinking of the countless humans killed and brutalized for each particle
eyes full of wonder at the glistening all around, twinkling stars lulling
all i hear are screams, hermetically sealed in the walls
anger swells in my fingertips, wanting to rip it down and summon death
pay him off to give them a second chance, it'll be our little secret

just a day ago we were basking in the glory of the rainforest
the leaf and root carpet they tear up for bars of the same metal
standing below arching pillar tops of ancient conquest & culture purge now
they told me i was reading too deep into it, thinking too dark not enjoying the trip
acting like the majesty was lost on me, merely supplanted by loss's magnitude
my sensitivity to sad ghosts—ever walking—treated as an abnormality
scoffed at, laughing as we leave
if they felt as i did moments ago
they would have startled at the white lace curtains floating in the periphery
pointed their fingers and screamed like the horror movies

i showered the holy grime off my feet
and found a few breaths of salvation in the sunset view
filling out the cold hotel room window, the sunbeam arms of the divine hugging me
the roommate was down the hall drinking spirits they all stole from the roadside
tourist trap
the cycle of poor family bones picked clean by ever-hungry fingertips
kissed by fortune already, taking what they crave from a foreign country
standing in front of the shelves as their corrupt selves gingerly slid liquor bottles
into open black backpacks, wider bodies blocking the view of the crime
i wanted to scream "the affliction and darkness is not mine"
yet i didn't stand up to them, an unprompted self defense isn't standing up for them
i stayed silent and carried on
i didn't stand for anything



Blue World

Vy Hoang
digital



Let Someone In

Joshua Garrett
digitized screenprint

Tiffany Tang

a close shave

a strange gloom flung over the sky
like a ragged coat on a chair decaying
and wool, heavy wool
my eyes didn't see a ray escaping
a moth hole, a channel, a vessel

the fine vein pulsing
shielded thinly by the skin of my wrist
against the press of my thumb
yielded a perfect score

the cold plastic,
the curtain,
the clothes clinging
to a scribble of a soul
tried to persuade it to stay

although i grasped the handle so tightly
the thread that intertwined us all
was not taut that day

Chaniya Williams

I Wash My Compulsions Down the Sink and It Clogs by the Morning

I seek refuge in a sink
that scalds me but never apologizes.
It cleans me of my filth,
kisses my nail beds,
and would bestow me
much more if it
weren't caged by the
reality of what it means
to be inanimate.

It beckons me back in its
many forms.
A leaky tap
in the nostalgia
of a movie I will
spend time missing
or a semi-automatic
that gets my shirt wet.
It is a quadruplet in the
bathroom of a library
and while its siblings gleam
at me,
I already have my mind made up.
For its faucets are
the cleanest and stray hairs
don't encircle the drain.
It loves me and I know this
because it cleans my wounds,
but never enough to bandage them too.

I'm bleeding now,
Skin dry from bathing
in tough love.
My knuckles are cracking
but I hide my wincing
when we meet again
for the fifth time.
My mama sends me
money just because
and I'm in the store as always,
eyeing up the best food
government assistance can buy.
Government assistance don't got
shit to do with the health aisle though.
I hold it in my hands like a newborn
baby I'm afraid to drop,
Reminding me of all the
post-bath greasiness of
moisture slathered on by grandma.
Only a fool makes
a monstrosity of Vaseline
but what if spending 1.99
on a tub of petroleum could be
better spent on the petroleum
it takes for me to get here?
What if when I hand my crumpled
bills to the cashier,
and she tells me that my total
will result in the foreclosure
of a house my mama
busted her ass to get?

I drop the Vaseline anyways
so now the newborn is crying
and all the people in the aisle
are looking my way,
but I don't notice
or maybe I don't care
because I'm too busy
pushing the door open and
pulling up my sleeves.

Eat

James Daniels

Revisions inspired by Justice Ameer's "My Beauty"

I told my sis once
To stop eating this shit.
My nigga's been chewing On
Soul-sex and neo-gender
From thin air
Since Ms. Badu
Slipped into her ears
And gave her
A man fetish
With hoop earrings to match.

Told 'er it didn't matter
If this shit pitter pattered
Like candy coated rain
On her two-toned died 'fro—
Pink and blue—
And slipped down
To her shoulders
Forming muddy puddles
In his—
Fuck, my bad;
I mean HER—
Shoulder dimples,
Transitioning
Into tasty chocolate
Like Cocoa Puffs
In milk.

I wish
I would've waited
Until she explained
Her taste buds.

At least then
Sticky shoulders
Would be the least
Of her problems.
Sticky tongues
And laced legs
Would be the norm.
Sticky eyelids
Wouldn't be
So drastic—
I'd love her eyeshadow
As much
As her soul.

So now
I tell my girl
To eat that shit
Raw

God knows
I gave her Hell
And she gave me
Soul
And soul food
Gives you life—
That's why you lick
The bone clean.

Loved

Joshua Garrett

digital



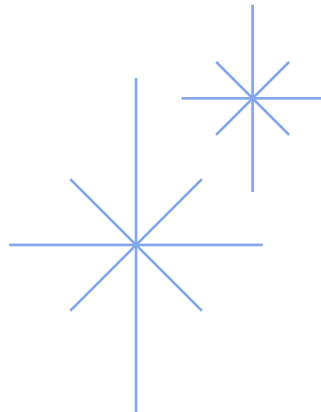
Ellie Hendrickson

Given

you are freezing
you stumble across
the pitted pavement
whispering in between breaths
the words to tonight's favorite poem
you tell yourself it's time
to buy a pair of gloves
though you're trying to learn how to save money
you'll buy a train ticket instead
see your love before winter break ends, you know
you won't get another chance
for three months

and when you get home
the poem puts itself to sleep
you too look,
longingly, at the bed
that morning freshly made
for maybe the first time
since you read that Limón poem
the one about two Woman-Gods
in a field of shipwrecks,
longingly, because first you must sober and scrub
surrender to the clean cotton sheets

but the water melding
with the cold sweat
still undried on your back
is almost as fevered as memory
your love's body wrapped
around your own, and, like your love,
it invites you to give in to it,
asks you to let it smooth
your wind-tangled hair
maybe it's not coincidence
you forgot to tie it back
out of the water's reach



Paige Baxter

Orizuru

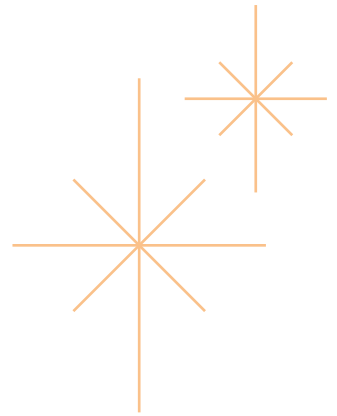
I ripped your skin from
a booklet. A pattern plucked
from printed flowers
sprouts your feathers.
Impressionable child, so
compliant with the ways
of your Parent, your Maker.
I bring dull edges together
despite the budding resistance
of your cardstock spine.

You begin to doubt my guidance,
detesting the wings I have
for you. Oh, my little Icarus,
seeded in opposition to the one
who granted you flight. The same
hands that gently birthed you,
caressing every corner are here
to flatten you out, punish you,
so that you may grow.

I will still love you.

Time will pass, your rebellious bounds
will wear down, but I will always be there
to glue you back together. The sharp angles
that defined your joints tether, arthritis from
the rhythmic motion of my hand rubbing back
and forth
along every fold.

I did not make you to be perfect,
I made you to be mine.





Embroidered Koi Fish

Shayleigh Larsen
embroidery

L. Bush

severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2

crackles like
Velcro
upon auscultation

steel tongue
slides past,
touches,
taps
teeth

hollow hallways,
rhythmic mechanical
wheeze

plastic snakes
into supine
throat

chest rising
and falling
unmarred
by
conscious
effort

Jules Millward

Fête

The quiet pressure satiates,
pull and ebb the tides that blind
Never much for whitened light,
more the shadows that warp and wind

The twisted binary, a lover's rind
search the sloughs and grey to find

The tangled threads, count to unwind
they mangle, march, and lose your mind

Mountain breeze, the sighs that bind
they'll batter brutal, but not unkind

Almost dawn, not silver lined
Dusk done duty, dined and wined



Lemons

Grace Boros

acrylic

Audio

past tense
Julian Doaks

All I Need –
Radiohead
(Cover) ft. Katie
Quinn
Chirag Jagdish Gunjal

Listen online at windhover.bandcamp.com

Leeah Heath

for the missing and murdered, indigenous women

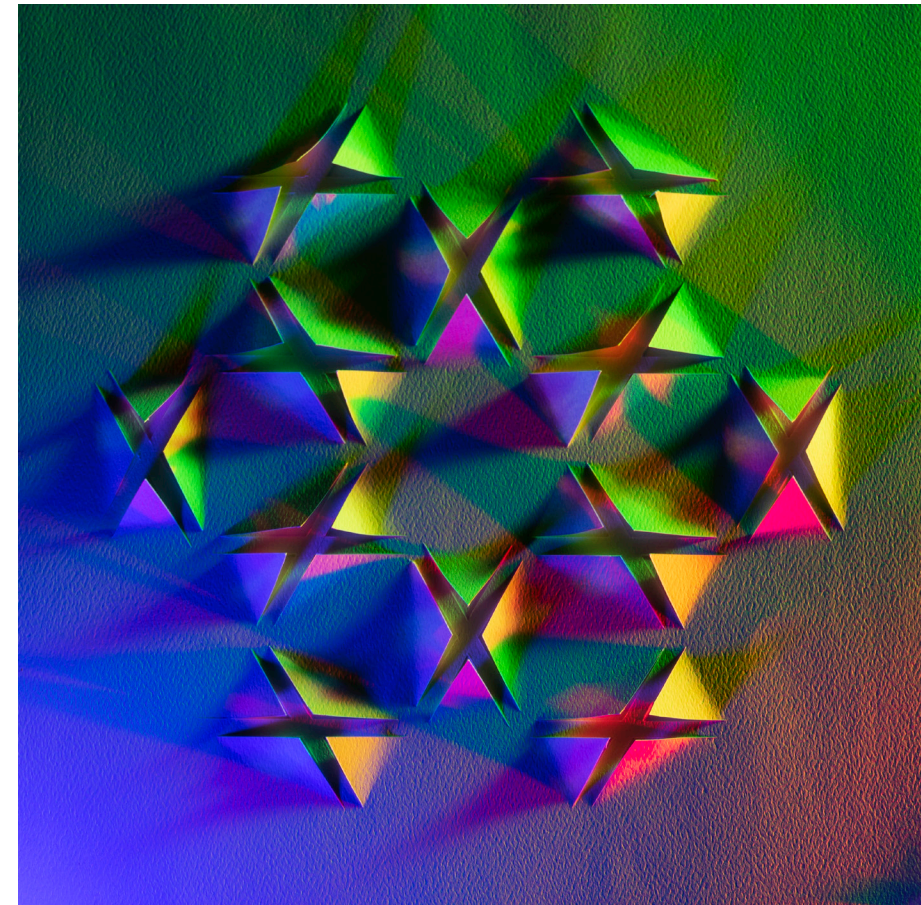
shall we forever live in mourning?
mourning.
i wait for a bright morning.
she waits for her mother,
her sister,
her aunt.
she mourns.
there seem to be no more mornings.
she mourns for her turn.
when she won't see the morning.
as do her sisters,
and their mothers,
and their aunties.

My soul waiteth for the Lord
more than they that watch for the morning:
I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

Relief in Technicolor

Daniel Knorr

mixed media





Go Green!

Sheida Marahemi

photography

Vy Hoang

January (Again)

I ask you to tell me the story
of the lady of spring and the king of riches and
the dead.

In the garden, the carnations
are starting to look
full,
like glasses of wine and blood and
all the leaves are so green,
they gleam bright gold
with dew.

You tell me the story of how
love, like all things, runs in cycles and that
life was just the same.

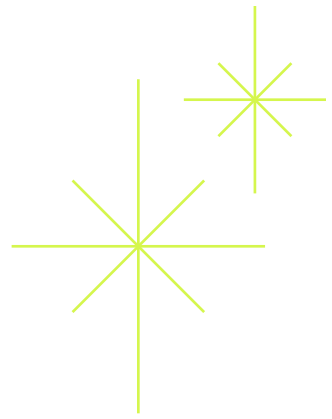
That our time apart is
as precious and sweet
as the moments I am
with you.

Tell me we'll never live forever, tell me
that you'll bury me
beneath a willow tree.
Tell me that the gods
envy our deaths.

Tell me all this and more,
the next time I see you,
your cold hands dragging
me and all my colors back together,
your mouth full and red like wine,
like blood.

GLAM

Grace O'Daniel
collage



Marlas Yvonne Whitley

Sunshine Community

Sun's displacement
In dull yellow chalk
And simple shapes
To make the image
Proper, positive, representative
Of warmth, or happiness
Spontaneously sketched by an eager
hand

Basic bliss
Like a quiet blessing
Watching
New life and old love
Sunday strolling
through the light
The child tried
to capture on concrete

Of joy's placement in
The pattern of her skirt
Surely it cometh
in the morning
And resides until evening
On the grassy playground

Vy Hoang

Big Fires

You have heard this story before. Big fires, floods, and other equally catastrophic metaphors. You were a poet once. Then that poet became me.

I tell her I have heard this story before, I tell her this, with foreign tongue. I know of Iphigenia's murder. I know of Agamemnon's bloodlust and Clytemnestra's grief. I have seen the wrath of Orestes. God, I know that tears are violence and that love is a statement that begs an answer. I know that tragedy moves vertically, falls like a pinball in a machine. We have all heard this story before. You speak to me in one language and I answer in another. We both know that language has flesh and bones and blood. This is a war story. We have to tread carefully on what we say.

It's evening and you're outside gardening. It's July. Maybe August. Maybe it's been such a dry season that the lake has drawn back, revealing and baring its ugly teeth. You're gathering sticks to burn. You're gardening. It's dry. The air smells of smoke and ash. I tell you this. You tell me it smells like home. You always told me that you lived in a forest fire.

It's evening and you're outside gardening. It's always July or August. Maybe no other season exists. The rain comes down in violent torrents. You tell us to go outside and run in the rain. Laughing. I've never seen it rain like this. Oh, this? This is nothing. You tell me that it used to rain so much, the streets would fill and you'd float down them like they were rivers taking you out of there. But you always found a way home. You wait for us inside with a towel and we come in shivering. I could drown in this type of love.

Is it too late to ask your children to be children again? It's too late for me to fold myself into something small and fit in the palm of your

hand. My skin is soaked and I'm shivering and laughing. When you pull the towel from my eyes, He looks just like someone she never knew. He's got his eyes, his nose, his ears. A version of him that comes home at the end of the day for dinner, still wet from the rain. As long as it keeps raining, you can keep him for a while more. I am not your poet. I am the most catastrophic metaphor in flesh.

Poor thing, I am. Poor things, we are. There are things that we will never know. How to shuffle cards or how to play the guitar or how the rainstorm sounded to him. If I stood in front of him, would we be the same height? And if he could know me, would he? At some point, the metaphor becomes more of a joke. But who's laughing?

You say you want to start a fire. You want a fire in the fireplace, a fire on the stove, a fire outside. You know more than anyone that the dark devours. That the cold gnaws. You know more than anyone else that grief moves laterally. That it catches. Love is a shriek that begs for an echo. Only distance can muffle the sound. Only distance can stop the spread. Distance and rain.

We're not going to survive this. No one will. What remains after a forest fire is nothing but the skeletons of the once-were trees.

Skeletons, you say, and ghosts.

How could I forget that every tree has a shadow and every word has a circulatory system? When you cut it, it bleeds. When you listen, it breathes.

They ask how can we live through this, how strong we are to escape it, but the simple answer is that we don't. We live in a burnt house with a flooded basement. Pull me out from the water, drowned, and towel my face dry. Know I am your daughter, your son. Know that you have killed me and I will kill you just as I had killed him and he had killed you. I don't have to tell you. You have heard this story before.

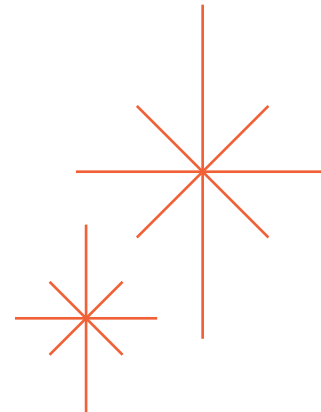
If I were a house, language is the ghost that haunts my halls. I don't have to tell you. I want you to tell me. But if we share a language, it only has one word:

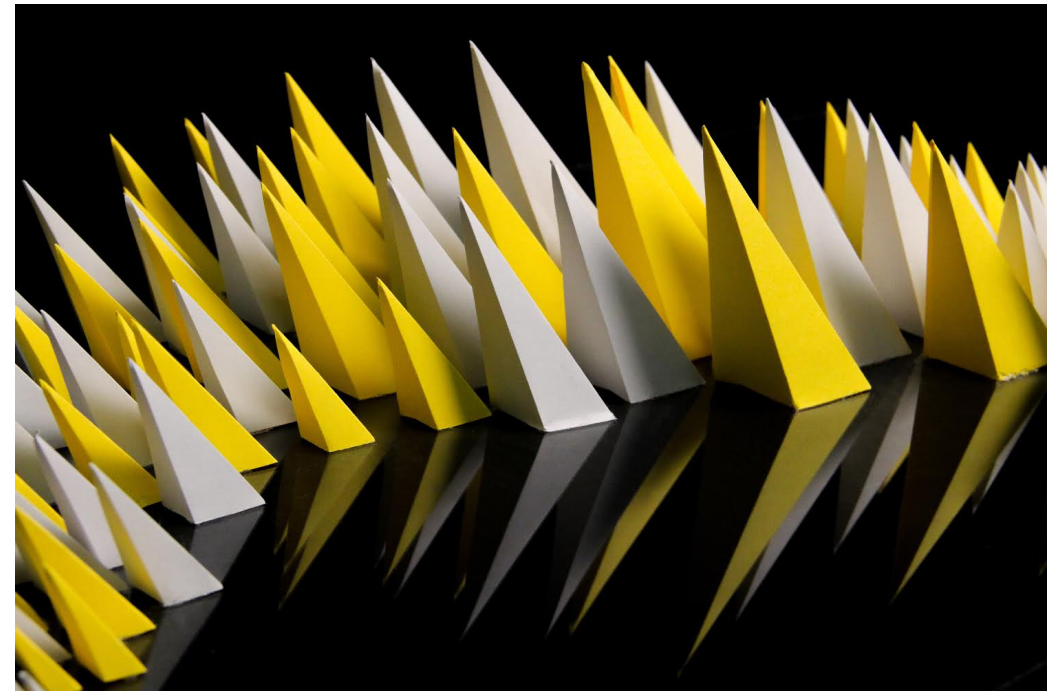
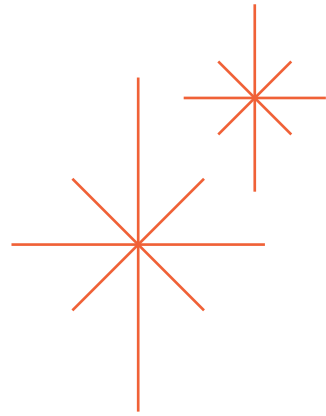
Die, die, die.



Mystical

Christa Zakhary
photography





Pyramids

Nuno Aguiar
paper sculpture



Video

Within Reach

Anna Hart

ARC 9 PIES

Anna Lee, Kent Ortiz, Nathan Royall

Mr. Blob Cleans Up

Lacie Thomas

Watch online at www.vimeo.com/windhover

The Van

Joi Vercellono

I remember the Van.
It was dark green with sand inside.
The Van belonged to my parents,
We had it on Morning Dove Way.
Then the Van was just my mother's.
She had it in Rock Hill.

There was a haze,
the silhouette of my sister's feet
On the inside of the windshield.
She would keep them up there
while waiting in the car rider line.

There was blood on the seat
From when my other sister got jumped
for wanting to love who she loved.

The van, where my mother spoke in
tongues
while we drove to the bank,
Or to Aldi,
Or to the mall,
Only to turn around.

My mother loved that van,
maybe more than me.

The van pulled up to the house,
And she and my sister turned around,
facing the backseat,

"Let's say we move to Vegas, would you
choose us or your dad?"

My sister, my best friend,
I looked at the person who did my hair,
who cooked my food,
who I thought loved me.

Then I looked at my mother.

I looked.

The Van, where in Rock Hill

I rode with my brother,
Who would soon be another sister.
Though she was always my sister.

I should've seen everything,
all of the signs.
Nothing about this was random.
I was eight.
If I could go back,

Would I have changed my answer?
If I knew I was going to be alone?

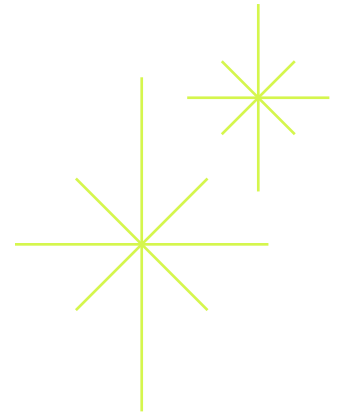
Dad.
I will always choose Dad.

I remember the van,
The sand I spilled from when I made a
model desert.
The sand I spilled made it to the real
desert.

Soon enough,
She wasn't paying the bill. The van was
gone.

Distance strains and growing pains,
Were soon to follow.

My favorite color is now green,
almost like
The Van.



Sentinel

Christopher Oates
digital



Rest

Avery Szakacs
digitized drawing



Breaking Through the Darkness

Natalie Emerson
mixed media



The Purification of Augustine Albemarle

Augustine Albemarle knew she was going to be burned at the stake.

During her weekly ride to her psychiatrist's office, she would relay to her mother everything she wanted to tell her psychiatrist, Sally, in between bites of baby carrots and sips of strawberry milk, a combination Augustine's older sister called an "abomination." Augustine's acceptance of her gruesome and impending death was the third statement that week that made her mother, Genevieve Albemarle, seriously consider sending Augustine to that school her father was always going on about. Genevieve would never do that, though, because she didn't want to quash the open dialogue she somehow still shared with eight-year-old Augustine.

However progressive Genevieve thought she was in her parenting, this week her patience was thinner than the sole of her Dollar Tree flip flops. By the time they reached Sally's office, Genevieve was more than happy to deposit her daughter on someone else's couch for an hour while she went across town to meet a man who was not her husband.

Augustine settled on the magenta couch and crossed her ankles, looking at Sally. "I'm going to be burned at the stake."

Sally nodded, picking up a clipboard and adjusting her wide-brimmed glasses. "What for?"

"For being a witch."

"You think you're a witch?"

"I'm not delusional." Augustine shifted, picking at the frayed pocket to her overalls. "Don't write down that I'm delusional, Sally."

"I won't." Sally leaned back in her office chair, casting a glance at the clock on the wall. "Why do you think you're a witch, Augustine?"

Augustine sighed. "Today in history class, Miss Truly told us that women were burned at the stake for being witches. People thought they had powers, and that the real witches wouldn't burn." Augustine leaned forward and looked at Sally. "At recess, Meredith Hawkins was calling me names, and I wished that she felt as bad as she makes me feel. Then, she tripped and fell in a puddle. That's not a coincidence."

Sally wrote something down on her clipboard, and Augustine exhaled. Sally's office probably appealed to most kids. There was a

bookshelf on the wall housing a host of board games, art supplies, and a few stuffed animals. Augustine was sure that the magenta couch had once been bright and vibrant, clashing spectacularly with the orange rug and inspirational posters all over the walls. A picture of Sally's husband and her two children, a boy and a girl, sat on her desk, alongside a picture of a dog and a cat who were napping with one another, and the trashcan decorated to look like Oscar the Grouch was sitting next to her desk and overflowing.

"It's normal to think those things about people who make us feel bad about ourselves," Sally said finally, offering her a smile as she stood up. She grabbed a piece of paper and a pack of crayons from the shelf. "Let's think through some ways —"

Augustine stared back at her. "I've thought about it enough, and no amount of drawing is going to convince me otherwise. I'm a witch, and my days are numbered."

Sally sighed. "Last week, you were convinced that you had a brain tumor because you came in with a headache, and by the time you left, the headache was gone."

"I could still have a brain tumor."

"The week before that, when it was storming, you thought you were going to get struck by lightning."

"I'm more likely to get struck by lightning than to win the lottery."

"That depends on what lottery you enter."

"I can't enter any lottery. I'm only eight."

Sally put her fingers to her temple and Augustine swung her feet as they sat on the couch, triggering the light-up flowers on them. Although Augustine hated wearing hand-me-downs from her older sister, mostly because she thought all Moira's old clothes were too childish, she couldn't resist the allure of those light-up shoes.

Sally removed the fingers from her temple and placed the pack of crayons and white paper on the table in front of Augustine. "Working through things in creative ways can sometimes help us see things a little more clearly."

Augustine glared at Sally, but eventually softened her gaze. "Fine," she said, grabbing a crayon, "but it won't help. I'm doomed."

"We all are, sweetheart," Sally said, smiling as she sat down across from her. "Now, when was it you first started to get worried about being a witch and burned at the stake? During your history class?"

"Yes." Augustine stopped and looked squarely at Sally again. "Sally," she said, "I know you don't believe I'm a witch, but can you at least pretend?"

"Augustine—"

"I'll prove it." Augustine took a deep breath. "Tonight, you're going

to have a flat tire, and when you call your husband, he isn't going to answer."

Sally felt a chill go down her back. "We're drawing now," she said in a gentle, but firm tone. "Tell me about this afternoon."

Augustine shook her head but complied.

Nobody ever listened to her.

—

Dr. Sally Belhaven hated her job.

It was a shame that she hated it, because when she first started out, she loved it. But after spending the last fifteen years listening to one traumatized child after another conceal their hearts on her faded magenta couch, she'd reached her breaking point. It didn't help that Sally's life was otherwise perfect: an utterly devoted husband whom she'd met in med school, and who always sympathized with her frustration and pain; two children, a boy and a girl, who were both smart (but not too smart) and well-liked by their peers; and a house that set near the waterfront with a wrap-around porch. She existed in two different worlds: the Sally who spent her days trying to break through to children whose stubborn, inward retreats were really cries for help, and the Sally who drank cheap wine in her backyard with her husband as they watched their own, well-adjusted children, splash in the water.

Maybe her recent dissatisfaction was the result of a mid-life crisis, or maybe it was because the children she worked with reminded her of someone else: the Sally she never spoke of. It was the Sally she was at eight, the one who listened to the baby cry and cry and cry. The one who saw her mother draw that final, frustrated breath and shake and shake and shake the baby until she was quiet. The Sally who got up in the morning and watched her mother have the audacity to look surprised when Judith didn't wake up. Nobody knew about that Sally, and no one ever would.

"Shoot," Sally said, dropping her purse and spilling the contents all over the wooden floor in her office as she stood up from her chair. She bent down to pick it all up and, upon retrieval, hit her head on the corner of her desk. "Shit!" she exclaimed this time, immediately chastising herself after the fact and making a mental note to put a quarter in her ever-filling swear jar she kept hidden in her closet.

She scrambled to her feet, deciding to leave the mess to be the next morning's problem, which was what she usually did anyway. Slinging her red purse over her shoulder and flipping the lights, Sally made her way to the parking lot and tried to remember if she had turned the crock pot on that morning. She was just about to get into the car when she heard Augustine's voice say: *Remember what I told you*

about your tires.

"She's gotten to me," Sally said out loud through a sigh, throwing her red purse in the front seat and deciding to take a lap around her car, just in case. "It may have taken three years, but that little girl has finally —"

Sally stopped when she saw her rear tire deflated. For a split second, her heart went into her throat, but she shook her head, reasoning that Augustine could've seen the flat on her way into the office that afternoon. Sally reached into her back pocket and grabbed her phone, dialing her husband.

He didn't answer. Not the first time, nor the second or third or fourth, and by the time Sally was dialing for a fifth time, her heart was beating faster than the time she had watched a seven-car wreck happen before her eyes the day after she got her driver's license.

"You've reached Dr. Owen Belhaven," her husband's voice said cheerfully on the voicemail. "I'm not available to come to the phone right now, but if you leave a message, I'll call you back as soon as I—"

Sally hit the red "end" button and felt a chill go down her spine.

—

Genevieve Albemarle hadn't meant to have an affair with her husband's brother.

In fact, before Genevieve had first met her brother-in-law, Linus Albemarle, she'd been warned by her husband, Hugo Albemarle, that Linus was nothing more than his "whiny and lazy older brother who spent all his free-time gloating about being Mother's favorite instead of making something of himself." When Genevieve did finally meet Linus, she was surprised to see that he was none of those things; he was gentle and humble about his quiet success. Genevieve never stopped loving Hugo, and couldn't deny that he was a good man, but Linus was a great man, and nine years ago, she simply gave in; they both did.

"He'll never find out, will he?" Genevieve asked, looking at Linus from across the room. She took a sip of the coffee he'd just made. "Hugo? He'll never find out."

Linus shook his head, a mug in hand as he crossed the apartment to take a seat next to Genevieve on his faded, magenta couch. "He was never known for being smart."

Genevieve nodded. "The girls are a different story. It would destroy Moira."

"Moira won't find out," Linus assured her.

"What about Augustine?"

"Augustine has no credibility."

"But she still has feelings, even if she rarely shows them."

Genevieve sipped her black coffee. "This afternoon, she told me she thought she was going to be burned at the stake."

"Genny," Linus tenderly put his arm around her, "if that isn't a cry for help—"

"She's seeing the best psychiatrist in town."

"What if that's not enough?"

Genevieve pulled away from Linus's touch. "I'm not sending my daughter away."

Linus was quiet for a moment. "She's my daughter, too."

Genevieve put her fingers to her forehead and exhaled before standing up. She and Linus were both surprised at how easy it had been to keep Augustine's origins a secret. Although distant and slow-witted, Hugo was lovable, so the creation of another child seven years after Moira wasn't all that shocking. Genevieve counted her lucky stars that Augustine looked just like her, and the only resemblance she bore was one her husband and lover shared—a birthmark on the left arm.

Linus sighed and followed Genevieve to where she was standing by the window. "I love you."

She took his hand, wrapping it around her waist. "And I you," she replied, looking up at him. "And I will forever, and I will for always."

"I will for always, and I will forever," Linus echoed.

"But for now," Genevieve Albemarle tenderly planted a kiss on Linus Albemarle's chapped lips, "I have to go. Augustine's appointment is over in ten minutes."

Linus nodded, grabbing her sweater off the back of his faded magenta couch. "Next week, same time?"

"Augustine's monthly family session is next week," Genevieve said, pulling the sweater over her head, "but we can always reschedule." She gathered the rest of her belongings and, just before she reached the door, she looked at Linus. "What we're doing is wrong."

Linus nodded. "And it gets easier every time we do it."

Genevieve shot Linus one last half-smile before the door shut behind her, and she made her way down the brick stairs to her red car. The ride back to the psychiatrist's office was always the worst. Usually, Genevieve played a CD that she found at a garage sale, one that plays Beethoven's music in the style of AC/DC, but today she decided to instead play the soundtrack to *10 Things I Hate About You*, even though that CD was scratched and always skipped the last song. She always blasted the music, right until the moment she pulled into Sally Belhaven's practice, because it was the only way she could forget what she had done and what she was doing.

"How'd it go?" Genevieve said, tucking a strand of hair behind

Augustine's ear as they walked back to their red car. "Still think you're going to be burned at the stake?"

Augustine shrugged. "Without a doubt." Once safely buckled in, Augustine looked at her mother in the rearview mirror. "How was Daddy?"

"I didn't go to see Daddy," Genevieve answered, cranking the key in the ignition. "He's still at work and—"

"No, he's not. He's at his house."

Genevieve stopped, glancing back at her daughter. "Augustine, what are you talking about? Daddy works until five. You know that. You have the family schedule memorized better than any of us."

Augustine shook her head and fished a book out of her purple bookbag. "Not that Daddy. My real Daddy."

Genevieve's mouth went dry, and she swallowed grit. "You only have one Daddy, little darling," she said, turning all the way around to look at her. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Augustine's bright eyes fluttered up from her book and locked with her mother's. "Yes, you do."

"That's enough," Genevieve said sharply, turning back around and starting to pull out of the office. "Augustine, does Sally need to have another talk with you about lying?"

"No."

"Then I don't want to hear anything else about it. Got it?"

"Got it."

Genevieve Albemarle exhaled and changed the radio station to classical music, a suggestion from Sally to help calm Augustine's nerves when transitioning to different activities. They were almost home, almost home free, when Augustine spoke again.

"Mommy?"

"Yes, little darling?"

"Next week, don't stay at Uncle Linus' for so long." Augustine caught her mother's eye in the rearview again. "I don't like coloring."

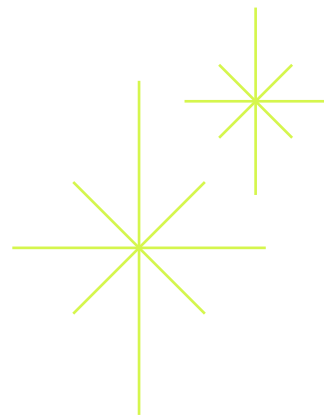
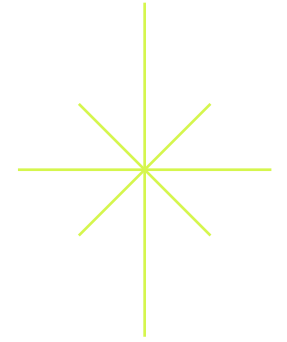
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Marlas Yvonne Whitley

Fulfilment

I read *Annie Allen* in the twilight of my day
And wore Brook's words like a necklace
The thoughts raced by
Demanded I follow
But I read *Annie Allen* in the twilight of my day
And will now go digging for
Those silver stars



Paige Baxter

Waffles on Sunday

Pulling the untouchable sourdough starter from the back of the fridge, grandmother (it's what she insisted we call her) expands it in the largest metal mixing bowl before wheeling it to her station in the adjacent room.

The knit tablecloth falls heavier at her place, the head of the table, peering down at the apron bunched up, small green mountain ranges extending across her lap.

She reaches for her next tool: a butterknife, the one that never fits quite right in the drawer, rigid and stiff to protect her from the heated exhale, the steamy "hiss" that rises once she pries open Teflon jaws, examining for defects, her eyes as big as the empty plate waiting beside her while her blade pokes and scrapes to spotlight weakness, only to find none, as if there ever is. This is her practice.

Uprooting the crisp, golden cavity, immediately applying napkin and pressure to soak up every ounce of remaining fluid that sits, collected in the gridded depressions, disinfecting her workspace to fill every empty plate before her own. Her plaid-printed forearm reaches up, dabbing her silver bangs that stick matted to her forehead.

A single nod in response as she transfers the extraction from patient to customer, only to be drowned in syrup.

Laughter

Joan McCarty
photography

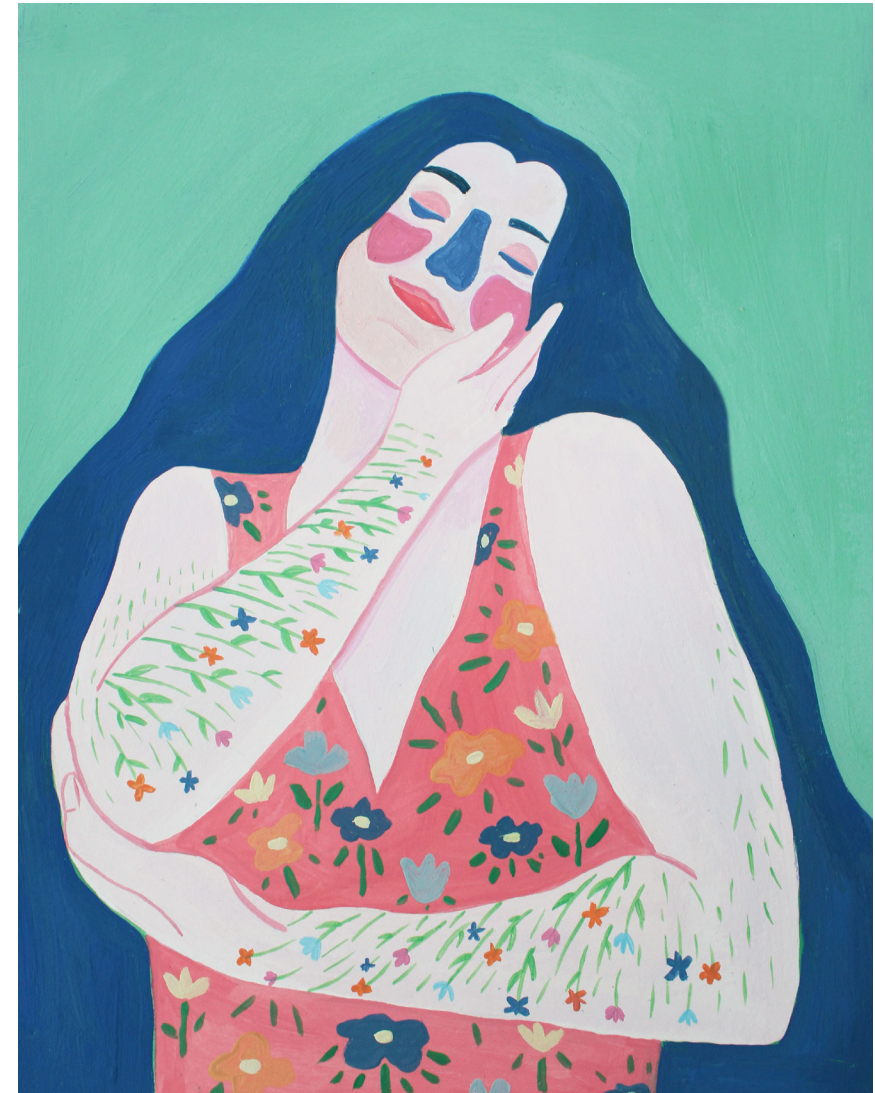


32 Lazaruses

Lazarus walking down the street saying, "About fifteen dollars would really help me out"
Lazarus in the drunk tank vomiting
Lazarus in the drunk tank wearing a short skirt and tights forced to suck off twenty men
Lazarus weighed every morning expected to gain one to two pounds a day
Lazarus taking nothing but water for a week down to seventy-nine pounds
Lazarus in the mind begging for the body to move
Lazarus in school turning face to the wall
Lazarus in bed saying, "We haven't made love in three months"
Lazarus breaking stones thinking, "Two hours until lunch"
Lazarus the machine depressing a mold eight hours a day
Lazarus out to lunch smoking weed on the balcony
Lazarus laying pipe in the street the other workers looking on
Lazarus teaching the Bible asked, "Does the emission referred to in Leviticus mean masturbation?"
Lazarus behind the wheel driving a thousand miles in two days
Lazarus with a bunny tail smiling and saying hello to the men who pass the strip club
Lazarus eating a steak and cheese sub in the car on the way to band practice
Lazarus the dancer with compound fractures in her feet
Lazarus in solitary for protection after he was raped
Lazarus in protective custody now calling himself anything but Lazarus
Lazarus felling trees thinking, "When the forest's gone, I'll have to move on"
Lazarus cutting his arm on sharkskin hauling in the longline catch
Lazarus masturbating on the couch a week after his unemployment ran out
Lazarus three months behind on rent allowed to stay for sake of the baby
Lazarus left at the fire station a note pinned to her basket
Lazarus saying, "I never did it for money except right after the recession hit, and then only for a few weeks"
Lazarus looking at her bedsit saying, "This is only until I win the lottery"
Lazarus asking for donations online to pay for rides across town to work
Lazarus hucking a loogie and spitting on the train covering it with a discarded newspaper
Lazarus one illness away from bankruptcy
Lazarus one mental health day away from losing his job
Lazarus saying, "I'd give you money if I had any, but I'm all out of cash"
Lazarus saying, "Fuck you," thinking, "Let down by the rich man again"

Flower Arms

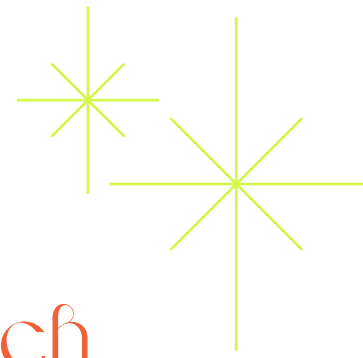
Grace Boros
gouache



Kereshmeh

Sheida Marahemi

mixed media



Send Me a Peach

L.K. Smith

The day I left, I told her to send me the finest Georgia peach she could find.

She agreed to this, of course. With weeping eyes and a wavering smile as she grasped my hand like it would keep me from leaving, she whispered promises to do as I asked.

What I didn't tell her was why.

She had been too distracted by her grief to question my request for a single fruit. Perhaps she figured I was only asking for something to remind me of home while I traveled north where the ground was frozen and the bitter cold prevailed. A simple bite could transport me back to Georgia—to her.

What I didn't tell her is that I asked for a peach to remind me of her.

One single drop of that ambrosia's juice upon my tongue would bring the memory of the taste of her lips upon my own. Her breath smelt like the fruit we stole from the neighbor's orchards as we lounged under a large sweetgum tree after picking up the sweet gum balls for my Mama.

"Go on, girls," Mama would say as she shooed us from the house into the southern heat. "Go and get me some gumballs from the yard."

Mama would use them to make tea when any of us were sick. She claimed they would cure us of any sickness even though the bitter taste was enough to make me shudder at the thought.

Darcie and I would race to see who could collect more; she always beat me.

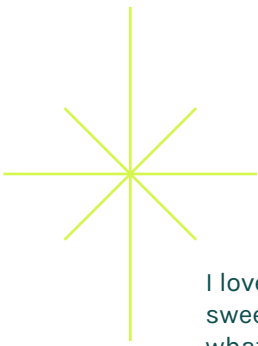
I kissed her for the first time under that sweetgum tree.

We were fifteen.

Mama was busy inside cooking supper, the sound of her music drifted through the open windows in hopes of catching a sweet summer breeze.

Darcie and I sat on the side of the tree that faced the orchards after our skirts had been full of edible treasure. We had been doing this for years and if the Robertsons ever noticed, they said nothing.

I watched in silent wonder as she bit into the peach, my eyes lingering on the pink hue of her lips and the juice dribbling down her chin. We had been best friends since we were in diapers, and I knew



I loved her a long time ago, way before that summer day under the sweetgum tree. However, it was the first time I stopped caring about what the pastor had said every Sunday. What did it matter if we were both girls? I knew I loved her.

"Darcie Mae," I said after a moment to gather the courage.

She caught my eyes with playful annoyance at the use of her full name. I knew she hated it, but her Mama and I were the only ones allowed to call her that.

Darcie wiped her mouth across the sky-colored sleeve of her dress, waiting for me to continue.

"Do you really believe the pastor?"

She smiled, holding her partially eaten peach to eye-level as if to prove her unspoken point. "I am already a sinner, Lottie." Darcie laughed as she took another bite. "It's all bull to me."

Her humor had not eased my nerves. "Could you ever love a girl?"

I watched her chewing slow, my question had caught her by surprise.

She swallowed; her face thoughtful as she turned my words around in her mind. "I don't see a problem with it, no matter what Pastor Bryant or my Mama and Daddy have to say about it."

My nerves started to loosen their grip.

"Why do you ask?" It was her turn to question me now, spitting the peach pit out in front of us. "You love a girl or somethin'?"

I stared at her wide-eyed and could only stutter as my cheeks flushed. "Maybe I do."

"Then I'm sorry to say, but we can't be friends no more," she told me with a shrug of her shoulders.

"What? Why?" My heart sank so far that I thought it was going to fall out right in front of her.

Her face had no certain emotion as she stared back at me.

"Because," she said slowly, choosing her words carefully, "I can't watch you run around with some other girl when there's one that loves you already."

I couldn't answer her with words, so I kissed her instead.

She tossed the peach into the grass, her hands cradling my face. Her fingers were sticky, and her lips were slick from the juice, but I thought I had discovered Heaven at that moment.

I asked her to send me a peach because the smell would remind me of the countless summer nights that we spent racing through the peach orchards, laughing, and singing for only the trees to hear.

We were eighteen.

For those three years in between, we had become even more inseparable—if that was even possible.



We spent our days stealing kisses in the school bathroom and sending knowing smiles across classrooms. No one else could know, especially not our parents. The two of us may not care much for what the Church spews at us, but the rest of our small-town lives by it.

When summer rolled around, we would go swimming in the pond on her family's property and lay in the hot sun among the milkweed that grew wild. I would lay my head in her lap as she wove us crowns made from those wildflowers that littered the fields.

The nights were always my favorite.

We chased each other through the rows of trees, our bare feet pounding against the earth. The orchards were our salvation, away from the prying eyes of our mamas' friends and the prissy ladies whose lives revolve around how many times they go to church. It was the only place where we felt we could be ourselves.

After we grew too tired to continue running, we would collapse amongst the trees, stealing glimpses of the stars through the thick branches of the peach trees. Together, we would point out the constellations we could see and argue about which was which because they all looked the same to Darcie.

"Darcie Mae," I would whisper, my head on her shoulder as she ran her fingers through my hair, "we'll always have each other, right?"

She would give me that sweet smile that had made me fall in love with her in the first place, her eyes crinkling around the edges as she kissed my forehead. "Of course, us against the world Lottie."

Laying in the grass with her felt like a dream now.

We were young and naïve, refusing to accept that the future was coming and there was nothing we could do to stop it.

We were twenty when reality hit us.

I sit miles away from her, far from the comfort of her embrace and the warmth of the Georgia sun and wonder if I made the right decision to leave.

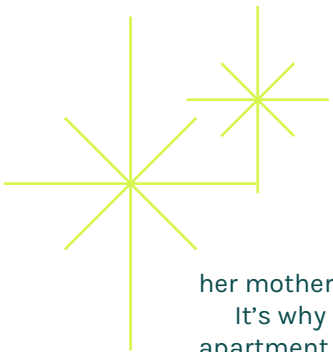
But every time I question my choice, I remember the scathing words of my daddy and the disappointing look on my mama's face the moment they caught us.

"I'd rather my child die than be gay!" Daddy screamed, his face flaming and spit flying from his lips.

Mama hovered like a ghost behind him, silent and grave.

For so long, our relationship had been veiled in secrecy. One little kiss had stolen any chance of remaining happy in our small town. They would all know, and we would be shunned. There was no way I could handle that. So I dropped out of the local college and looked for a place of my own in anywhere but Georgia.

I had begged Darcie to come with me, but she wouldn't, not while



Squaretop Ranger

Christopher Oates
mixed media

her mother was sick.

It's why I sit alone, staring out the window of the cheapest apartment I could find. The Georgia sunlight had been replaced by cloudy skies.

My only consolation was a small package I had just retrieved from my doorstep. I could've cried when I saw her handwriting, the loops of the letters looked like little smiles meant to comfort me.

There was a letter included inside:

My Lottie,

Words cannot express how much I miss you.

You leaving still doesn't feel real, like I could go and knock on your door and you'd answer. Your mama would be in the kitchen cooking dinner and she would smile when I came in like I was her own kid.

Every time I pass the orchard, I expect to hear your voice or the sound of your laughter. I can almost see visions of us running through the trees—not a care in the world. Remember how mad Mrs. Robertson was when we scared her after hiding behind the trees?

Mama is getting worse by the day. Even as mean as she is, I'll still be sorry when she dies. I hope you're not angry I didn't leave with you. She's all I have left here. I couldn't abandon her.

The day will come where I'm ready to leave, and I'll join you. Us against the world, remember? But, for now, I need to stay here.

I miss you so much it hurts.

I love you, Lottie.

All my love,

Your Darcie Mae

I couldn't stop the tears as they fell. I held the letter close to me, hugging it as if it were my love herself.

Through clouded vision, I began to pull the contents from the parcel.

Sweetgum balls and an item wrapped in a soft white cloth, though I already knew what it was.

I removed the covering, tossing it to the side as I held the gift.

A peach—a little bruised from the journey, but it was a beautiful sight, for it was the finest peach I had ever laid eyes on.

And I couldn't help but smile.



Alicia Baldelli

Wings of a Bird, Not a Plane

In the terminal's rafters Esther watched the grey birds whip around above her head, contrasting against the solid immovable structures surrounding her and her fellow travelers. Equipped with rolling suitcases and bags which heavily draped from leaning shoulders, everyone quickly walked to where the departure screens told them they were supposed to be. In all directions, coffees were tightly clenched in the palms of suited men in the same way that she held secrets inside her guarded heart. She watched the rapidity of wings flap upwards and wondered if the birds above her felt confined by the building. Did they ever want to just keep going up? Up up and away, way past the roof and into the wind and elements. They couldn't even see the sky they were meant to soar through! When did they last shake the rain from their feathers or land on a tree branch that hadn't yet been chopped and sanded down to be sold in bulk? Did they know their way back out to the freedom of limitless air? Or had they simply made the best of their lives now that their entrance had become a forgotten exit? Had the crumbs of passing travelers made their lives easier or had it made their lives harder?

Perching together high on a sign for gate C9, the birds brightly sang against the backdrop of human calls for boarding and the echoing names of strangers who were running late to fly away. Esther kept watch on the birds above as she sat in the terminal anxiously grasping her blue passport in both hands while fidgeting her feet. She chose a seat in the sun; there wasn't a cloud in the sky today.

A young girl about five years of age sat across from her. The girl wore a watermelon-printed dress and a red lace headband was the dam which held back the overflow of a river of unkempt curly hair. Esther eavesdropped as the girl spoke to her mother while gently kicking her sandals against a plastic Disney princess-themed suitcase, "Ma, what country is Israel in?" At hearing the little girl's question, Esther's nerves transmitted a volt of emotion into an uncontrollable chuckle.

The girl's mother was holding a cranky newborn while desperately searching through her pockets and purse for where she'd put the pacifier.

It's here somewhere, she was muttering to herself.

I know I put it away.

Her arm movements only further disrupted the newborn who writhed with discomfort and whose whining was building to crescendo with each passing minute she was unable to find the plug which would quell the coming cries. From the turned head, scattered motions and a face which gave no hint of acknowledgment, it was clear to Esther that the mother did not hear her daughter's question over the baby's whimpers. Esther looked up from her passport and caught the girl's eyes; she saw that in them the unanswered question remained, now lingering in the space between them. Quickly looking to the distracted mom, she decided the woman would likely be grateful her daughter had another person to answer her questions as she attempted to appease her younger child, and so she took it upon herself to answer the girl.

"Israel is a country. Just like we live in the United States of America, there are people who live in Israel. A lot of little girls like you live there too."

The little girl's legs halted their gentle kicking of the suitcase. Keeping her eyes on Esther and feeling she was being treated as an equal and not simply as an annoyingly less knowledgeable child, she looked over to her mother and then back to Esther.

Esther may not have known it enough to place words to it or how to dissect its formula, but she intuitively knew how to set a foundation to swiftly connect with children of all ages. With initial comfort and trust formed, Esther continued in that special way of which she was gifted in gaining a child's magnetic interest through the ignition of their imagination, "But...." she said with elongated song and a sly eye, "I just don't know how far away it is from here to there. How many miles could it be from the United States to Israel? How many pizzas do you think could fit between here and Israel?" The girl leaned closer as a curl flopped forward covering her right eye. Esther's face increased in animation; her voice grew as her arms began to aid the visualization of the scope of her words. "What do you think? One hundred pizzas? TWO hundred pizzas? Two THOUSAND pizz—?"

The little girl pierced her lips together to stop her amused smile from overtaking her face. Feeling the adult was wrong in

her estimates but totally asking the correct questions—the kind of questions which needed answering but most grown-ups never bothered to ask, she interjected, "No! One thousand million bajillion pizzas!"

Million bajillion. It was a precise measurement used in kid kingdom which never ended up in the math textbooks to the dismay of many children. "Oh my!" Esther feigned shock, but not with any mockery, it was said with a pure child-like delight. She repeated the fantastical number, "One thousand million bajillion pizzas? Really?! With pepperoni?"

"Yeah, and chocolate pizza too!" the girl said as she knocked her head back and, holding her fisted hands over her mouth, let out a small giggle. Esther had a fleeting feeling of wanting to bottle it up to replay whenever her world dimmed its light again.

"And..." Esther looked around, contorting her face with silliness, building up some time before her punchline, "How aboutttttt... Booger pizza!!!!"

The little girl's whole body erupted in laughter before letting out an ewwwwww with disgust. A foot knocked over her suitcase, bringing the face of a two-dimensional plastic Cinderella to face-plant onto the floor. The sound brought the mother's attention back to her older daughter. She gave up her search for the pacifier, concluding she must have dropped it pre-TSA check and so she stood up, smiling at Esther while she pushed the hair out of the little girl's face. "C'mon, mommy has to go to the bathroom." She reached for her carryon before leaning to pick up the other small pieces of luggage strewn about her. The way she balanced the newborn as she began to hang her luggage on her arm like grocery bags impressed Esther.

"Don't worry, I can keep an eye on your bags if you'd like, take your time." The woman thanked her and the trio left with the little girl skipping behind her mother, whistling at the trapped birds.

Esther's attention shifted to a flutter in her periphery. She followed a tiny bird who landed by the crumbs at her feet which were left by another hungry traveler who must have quickly scoffed down some overpriced bag of orange-colored chips. The bird pecked at a crumb and then abruptly stopped to look up at her. With her crimson lips, Esther leaned forward to softly whisper to the winged-creature, "There is a way out of here you know," she continued on with a more child-like voice than usual as the bird flew away and her gaze followed, "and I think we shall find it."



Slavonice Fields

Mairead Maley

ink wash

Birch Forest

Shayleigh Larsen

acrylic



i enjoyed a night drive, once

Tiffany Tang

the scathing touch of your words,
so carelessly brandished
tore first through the soft leaves of
mr. pothos sitting on his pot
and then through the dry plaster
of the cream colored wall
and finally through my thin, thin skin
so translucent you could have seen a vein
very blue, very fine,
causing my breath
to catch in my throat
and suddenly jewels
poured from my eyes
once you said they were beautiful
but now they scattered aimlessly across the floor and
the heavy door flung wide, spilling light,
my feet ran nowhere until they felt
the bite of the cold air and
the cat's tongue of the pavement
beneath
i worried for mr. pothos and his
intolerance to the frigidity
of january and once you would have
like the moon follows the sun
stood by while the keys unlocked the
door and ran into the ignition and in my
chest an overwhelming weight and
my head a sweeping, sweeping lightness i
touched the pedal and all was
behind me

Protima Mukherjee was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor-in-chief and managing editor based on a pre-established critique process.

Holly Brantley

fridge magnets

all i ever need to know about a person
i can learn
from their refrigerator.

my grandmother's refrigerator, the white one older than me,
is home to:
a million (poorly) drawn homemade cards,
a thousand (awkward) family photos,
a hundred (novelty) magnets,
and ten newspaper clippings of old jokes,
i no longer find funny.

my parents' refrigerator, the new metallic one they got when i went to college,
is home to:
all of the middle school yearbook pictures i wish i could forget,
some pictures of family members i wish were still here,
none of the alphabet magnets i played with as a child,
and a mini calendar from a store,
i've not been to in years.

my apartment refrigerator, the white one that I share with my roommates,
is home to:
a year's worth of inside jokes, written on sticky notes,
a month's worth of pink notepad paper, with a llama in the corner,
a day's worth of coupons, because they expire tomorrow,
and a magnetic bottle opener,
even though none of us drink.

the refrigerators, eternally temporary,
also open to:
my grandmother's leftovers from her home cooked meals,
my parents' off brand tupperware and takeout boxes,
emptiness, besides half a tub of homemade soup,
i can't eat because
it's already spoiled.

Jules Millward

Drowned

Drowned should not describe you
You were always much too pretty for pain
We used to relish the sweet hush of the waves
and nights when that sound kept us sane

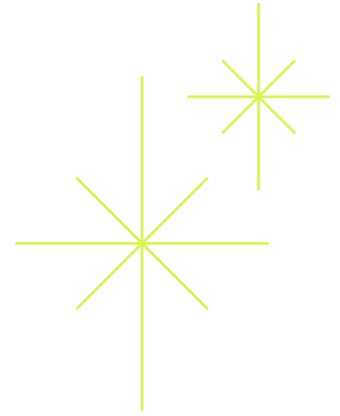
But now I can't stand the seashell static
when I know that same surf stole you from me
Then you're there, your hair flung about
still salty from the sea

The vacancy in your eyes
I almost missed
Your lips now blue
from the oceans you've kissed

With foaming fingers
the tides caress you on the shore
Pulling you into sandy depths
and I can't see you anymore

Daniel Knorr

photography



Before Knowing Environmental Racism

Austyn Williams

Grandma's house was ten minutes and 50 years away from us.
The mouths of vents would switch topics in the redlined air
And soon, we'd arrive at the corner house with its hands on its hips.
Facing a liquor store that matured relatives into addicts,
Grandma's house on Lotus St. was the midpoint
between field and plate,
garden & recreation,
Skin and manmade fate.

As a kid,
—as black,
it was just Grandma's house,
where Grandma was a happening wish from a Dandelion's wand.
Lotus St. never went bare of gasping flowers:
straining their necks from sticking to the pudding of shit,
Cautious to keep the fertilizer separate from their fragrance.



Protima Mukherjee

Bird Watching

My mother and I stand in the small, bound concrete that marks our backyard. I always feel like an imposter when I use that word, like I am still the eight year old girl living in an apartment, embarrassed to invite friends or have a birthday party. Like I am still embarrassed of where I come from. A patch of grass extends just past the concrete, quickly turning into wilder terrain. Colonized grass runs free until it grows into trees, atop a bed of rocks and a stream. My mother loves our perfectly trimmed grass the way she loves America, which is to say she hates it. A manufactured existence she is supposed to enjoy, a luxury she never asked for. She feeds herself lies until she's full of them. A devil's advocate in the making. We're standing outside to let our hair dry, the damp towels hanging off the fence nearby. The July sun reaches down to touch our dark black hair, like the sun used to dry papads and clothes back home. I point out a bluebird, which prompts her to share the same story she shares everytime she sees a bird. I listen intently like it's my first time. I haven't always been a good daughter, but I will die trying. The story involves a mother bird and her children. My mother explains how, when the babies learn to fly, sometimes one of them will fall out of the nest and simply die, and the mother can do nothing but go on with her remaining children. I am reminded of a graph from my science classroom, and how birds have a relatively constant risk of death throughout their lives. An innocent fall turns into a purposeful jump. How at risk are we? My mother solemnly watches the mother bird come back now, a worm squirming in her beak, as chirps break out from the babies in the nest awaiting this food, dependent on their birth giver, hidden from the world; and I watch her. I break for her like a tear that bumps into a nose or a lip on its descent down a face. And I see myself in every dead baby bird on the street.

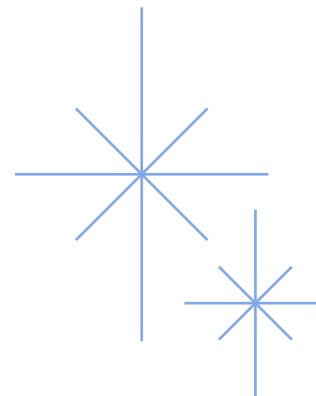
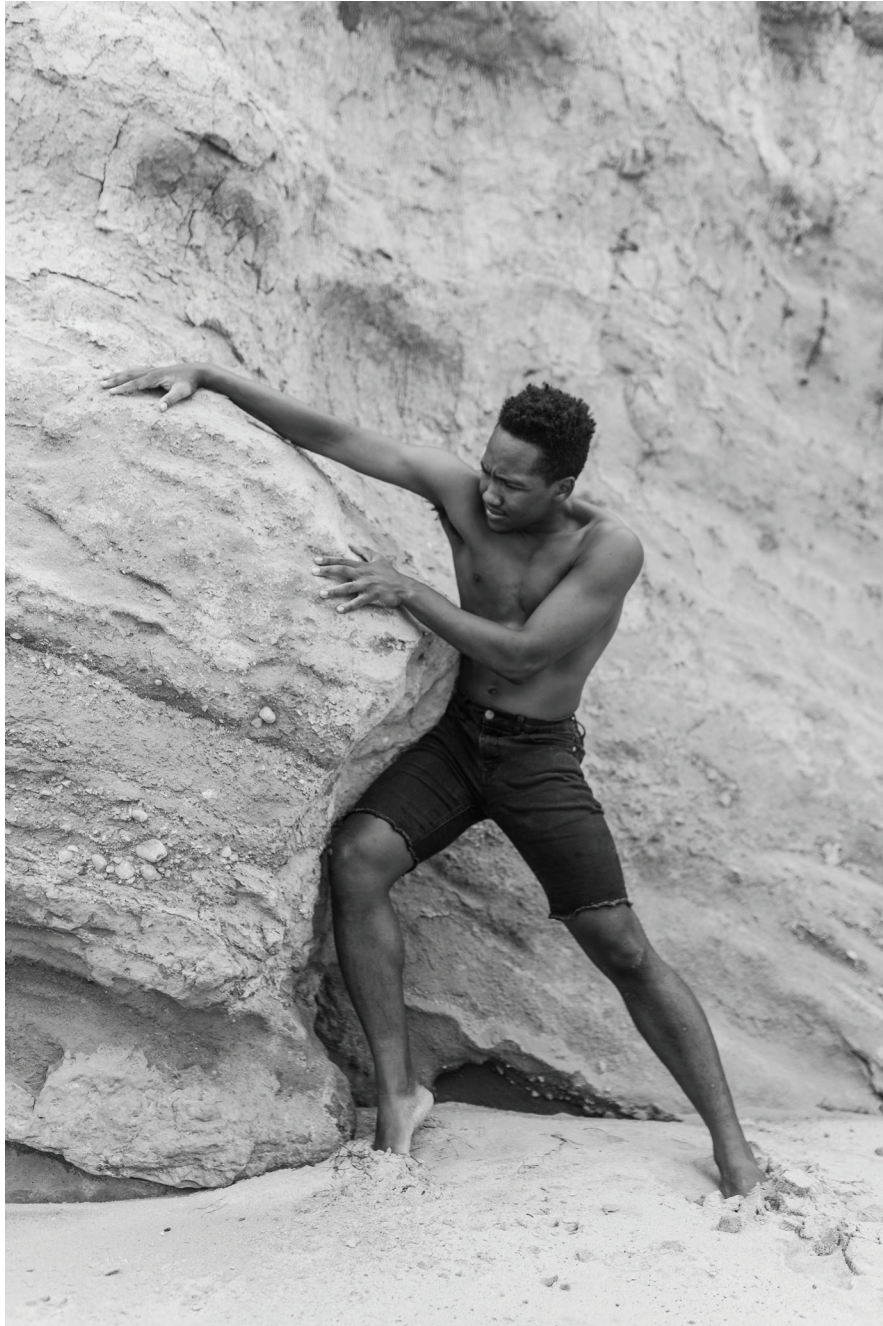


The Same Life

Joan McCarty
photography

Jon

Joshua Garrett
photography



Jona

Joshua Garrett
photography



Honeybee Bloom

Chloe Allen
photography

Thomas Jackson

Portrait

when you offered to paint me
i said

don't
i have no need
for another reflection
static
i read Dorian
scared me too deep
to desire a canvas rendering
i change too often
for a snapshot
of ruin and peace
all in one sitting
starting with a smile
ending with a tired eye crease
ruin or peace
paint peace

i said

paint a moss carpet
under dimly lit trees
paint what will never age
make it eerily still
as if the birds are waiting
for me to speak
let it be a quick trip
let me get lost in it
paint endless beauty
you'd have to buy a darker palette
to render me faithfully

Wisteria

Mairead Maley

I lean into you like wisteria over a highway
When my head touches your shoulder
Purple petals cascading and floating
Concealing my vine-like fingers
Wrapping around your arm tightly

I grow on you like kudzu on an old fence
Soon your wooden bones are covered
From your buried feet to your eyes
Fragrant leaves reaching up to your crown
Not quite reaching your shining hair

I look at you with Japanese beetle eyes
Creeping down and out my face
To grapple at the back of your neck
They chitter with excitement and meander
Biting at whatever sweetness they sense

I feel my chest swell as a starling's does
And the mouth that once sang at your ear
Now feels the weight of the stolen fruit
Oh, have I lived in your forest
Unaware of the damage I'm doing

Through the Grass

Joan McCarty

photography



Tuesday Pil

Sweet Mango

Maricel's fingers curled around the underside of the red stool. She walked backwards, one foot behind the other, like her mother would, careful not to trip on the prickly grass beneath her. Dragging the stool to the base of the twisting tree, Maricel babbled at the stray cats and dogs that wandered over to see what she was doing.

She climbed on it, standing on the very tips of her toes, stretching her small hand to reach the golden, oval fruit that hung just above her head. She was three years old, and her lola had always told her two things:

One: Maricel, wag mong hahawakan ang manga. Maricel, don't touch the mango.

Two: Maricel, wag ka makulit. Maricel, don't make trouble. Maricel remembered neither of these.

Her fingers touched the bottom of the fruit. It swung back and forth, prodding the top of her knuckles. She lunged to grab it as it moved, but her palms met air, and her face met the wet dirt.

The cats and dogs licked at her ears. The chickens roamed the backyard, pecking at the grass seeds in the lawn. Maricel sat up, groggy, staring at the tree above. Green, elongated leaves climbed on top of each other on the branches.

And the mango was so far away.

Maricel began to wail.

In the distance, the screen door of the yellow house slid open. The small figure of her lola hobbled toward her, her thin, drawn eyebrows scrunched, her ankles shooing away the animals. She wasn't wearing her brown wig. There were wisps of gray on her head.

"Ay nako," she huffed.

Her lola picked Maricel up, propping her on her hip.

"I told you not to touch them," she scolded. "Hindi sayo yan." They are not yours.

"Isa lang, po!" Maricel begged. Just one, ma'am!

Her lola grunted. Then, she stretched her hand into the sky, grabbing a ripe mango that dangled at the highest branch. To Maricel, she was so tall. Lola brought her back into the house, setting Maricel atop the kitchen counter. She took a sharp knife, slicing the mango in half. Maricel reached to help.

"Tsst," her lola hissed. "No."

She cut lines, like a checkerboard, throughout the fruit, then folded it backward so the diced shapes stuck out. Maricel sank her teeth into it. It was cold and sweet in her mouth.

Maricel babbled happily as her lola lifted her again, bringing her to a rocking chair. Maricel sat on her lap, her hands becoming sticky with mango juice.

Lola began to stroke Maricel's long black hair. Its front pieces were tucked behind a soft blue headband.

"Oh, kawawa ka naman," Lola said. Oh, you poor thing. "When your parents bring you to the United States, you will forget me."

Maricel blinked at her, too busy eating her mango.

"You will forget your Tagalog." Her lola touched the tip of her brown nose.

Maricel noticed the sudden tearful shine of her dark eyes.

"Wag mong kalimutan," Lola murmured. Don't forget.

Leaning into her, Maricel replied, "Okay, lola. I won't."

Her lola stood, taking the finished mango scrap from her hands. She set Maricel on the floor, next to the cats and dogs. "Alright, go play. Don't make trouble."

Wag ka makulit.

Hours later, after Maricel was done playing with her dolls, she was back on the stool, reaching at the mango tree, forgetting what her grandma had said.

The next mango didn't taste as sweet as she hoped.

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