

pathos

LITERARY MAGAZINE



Fall/Winter 2024

Vol. 18, No. 1

Dear Readers,

Thank you for being patient with us as we made some big changes at the magazine over fall term. We may have seemed quiet, but I assure you we were busy finding ways to better serve our literary and arts community here at PSU. Fall term provided our organization opportunities to plant new ideas that have been taking root over the last few weeks. Pathos' newest feature, Seed Packets, is live!

We launched this weekly prompt series on our Instagram page and on the Pathos Literary Magazine website at the start of winter term. It's our hope that these weekly seeds will help students from every discipline grow their imagination during creative lulls as well as provide respite from the pressures of academia. Seed Packets is meant to cultivate creativity, inspire art, and champion our student arts and literature community.

Seed Packets also provides students new opportunities to have their work published between issues. Find out more on our website: pathoslitmag.com/seed-packets/

Fall/Winter Issue is here! In your hands at this very moment in fact. Lucky you! The work in this issue is a dynamic mix of genre and mood. A veritable discoball of creativity that embodies how talented and special this student body is. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as the team here at Pathos enjoyed curating it.

Best, best, best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SMG', written in a cursive style.

Stephanie M. Gresham
Editor-in-Chief

Contents

While On a Walk at the Park in the Diminishing Light2 by Sydney Ririe	Warsaw 1 13 by Maxwell Kline	Gone 26 by Yomari Lobo
Eden.....3 by SZ James	DIRTY..... 13 by Storm Ozenne	Early Morning through Redwood29 Jung In
MY FATHER LOVES LIKE GOD..... 4 by Charlie Huxley	The Hound and the Heron 14 by Marley Sherwood	Life in a Ghost Forest 30 Isabel Lemus Kristensen
The Endling 4 by Kyela Evenhouse	Self Portrait as a Pothole in Portland 16 by William MacLeod	Pocket Homes 31 by Lilli Rudine
This Haunting is a Memory, This Haunting is Done with Love 4 by Charlie Huxley	The Witch Next Door 17 by William MacLeod	Absence 32 by Candle De Ferrari
Dream Journal: Entry No. 2..5 by Adriana Stanzione	Devil's Churn 18 Isabel Kristensen	Natalie, I'm Sorry 33 by Adriana Stanzione
Screen Door Pearl District... 7 Jenelle De Leon	Smith Rock..... 19 Jung In	Persona non grata 34 by Adriana Stanzione
Unforgotten 8 by c.p.	Gone Fishing.....20 Ash Kukuzke	Petrichor..... 36 by Sami Ingle
Film class..... 9 by Lime Sieber-Kray	5 Years 21 by Solomon Wolfe	Watermelon 36 by Hawthorn
Kissing the Housewife10 by Giselle Jensen	Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité . 21 by Solomon Wolfe	pervenire 37 Annica Davis
maison laffitte10 Selva Busetto	Bikes..... 21 by Setaria DePue	I am Kind and I am Hurting 38 by Lama Taha
Bitch..... 11 by Nova Lane	Coverage..... 22 by Matthew D Albertson	Poesía Críptica 39 by Andrei Brauner Guzmán
when I die lay me in Pluto . 12 by Joy Amaya	The Dead 23 by William MacLeod	To My Sun..... 40 by Matthew D Albertson
The Gardener's Dream..... 12 by Lime Sieber-Kray	Cazadero Confines 24 by Gabriel Lukas Quinn	Angoon, 2013..... 40 Bambi Moss
	summertime bliss 25 by Eva Sheehan	pervenire 41 Annica Davis



Editorial Team

Stephanie Gresham
Editor-in-Chief

Malcolm Church
Creative Director

Clover Gullans
Copy Editor

Brooke Metropulos
Social Media Manager

Artwork

FRONT COVER: Jada Wheeler,
Imagined Identity, Mixed media

BACK COVER: Eva Sheehan,
Quiet, Illustration

*Additional editorial images
created by Malcolm Church*

While On a Walk at the Park in the Diminishing Light

by Sydney Ririe

I step back a minute only
Red leaf hidden among green
light turned bronze spots of decay into some slithering predator
white flowers along the path, roses and some wild thing,
sprigs worthy of a wedding bouquet
blackberries plead to stay
hooked to the vine as I tease them
with touches mocking their willingness to stay against my hunger
my careful fingers mean only one drop of royal dyed blood
I suck
We do not reside in a house of waste
rabbit stares goodbye even though last week they offered welcome; an invitation
Not even a finch when I pass
has pain never touched them
or does earth's wisdom extend to this tiny furry thing and it knows somehow life
is at the expense of it
and risks all the dogs anyway

Eden

by SZ James

We moved out there in spring. The trees in that place were something to see, out in the wind, blowing like nothing all day and night, howling through the cracks. The lights were small, and our faces loomed big at each other all night around that little table. I set to work. There were ditches to be dug, holes to be filled in. We didn't find anything out in the woods until later, but when we did I decided to do something about it. It felt good, that summer and into the fall, watching the waves whiten and collapse down the slope, and drinking that tea made from the lavender we found growing in the grasses out there. I finally managed to get some decent work done, not being in that little place anymore, with all that noise. Out here was silence, the real kind, that you only dream about when you live in one of those boxes, and it was the thing for work. Sometimes we would walk down the slope and look at the seagulls picking at a dead seal or find some kelp or a jellyfish washed up and poke at it. Other times we would walk in the woods, hear the wind in the boughs and talk about the sun, or the earth, or not talk at all, just walk and listen and be out there. It turned up one afternoon, right as the sun was turning its way down to the salt. We were on the porch, I don't remember what else. It came out of the woods. I thought it was a deer. We'd seen a few of those around. Once we even saw a bear, a little one, and it looked sad and we sort of felt sorry for it, but it ran off. But it wasn't a deer. I don't know. It was something else. It might have been a big cat, maybe. It was sleek like one, anyway, and moved like one, but it didn't look like a cat, or a dog, or an animal, really, it was just itself, which was fine, since that's all you can really ask of anything. Like I said I decided to do something about it. I got off the porch and waved my arms at it to try and make it get out of there, and it did. We didn't mean to be mean to it or anything like that, it's just what you do. It came back later, I think a week later, and I was in the kitchen doing something and saw it out the window, over the flower bed. I thought of the last time, and how I'd been sorry. So I didn't swing my arms at it again, didn't do anything really, just watched it. Followed it with my eyes around the yard, for a while. It just moped around. After a while it climbed a tree, and I stopped watching and did

something else, and when I looked again it was gone. Later I was out in the woods and I found what must have been its nest, or its home. There wasn't much, some sticks, a piece of garbage that must have been from the beach. It was sort of sad, looking that way, and I decided to do something about it. I went back to the house and got some wood from the woodpile and brought it back and built the nest up into a little lean-to, against a tree. I want to think it liked that, but it was hard to tell. I never went near there again. The next time I saw it we were out there on the beach, and it was there in the waves, ducking under them like it was looking for something it had lost down there. We just kept walking and left it alone. It was a whole year before we saw it again. We decided it had migrated. Then I saw it for just a second ducking behind the woodpile, or what I thought was it. I looked around but couldn't find it anywhere. One day we found a pile of fish on the porch, which was nice, not having to catch them ourselves. The fish kept turning up, but we didn't see it anywhere anymore. We thought it was repaying our kindness for building the lean-to. I guess we saved it the trouble of building a new one. But then the bad part happened. I wish it hadn't, and it wasn't anyone's fault, of course, but it did, and there you go. One night we're in bed, late, the moon is out and full coming through the curtain. I get up to go to the bathroom, and come back to find there it is, standing in the bedroom. Naturally I make a big noise, and then the lights are on and it doesn't want to be in there anymore and makes a break for it. Heads for the door, I'm in the door, it goes right through me! I swear, I've never felt anything like that. It felt like sticking your finger in pudding, but inside out, where the pudding is sticking its finger in you. It was bad. After that we moved. I felt bad for scaring it like that, but if it was going to start coming into our bedroom uninvited, that's what's going to happen. So we packed up all our things, and said goodbye to the place, and the trees, and the wind, and the salt down there and that wonderful silence. Haven't been back since. I've wanted to a few times, just so we know it's still there, but I'm worried if we do we might not leave again. It really is something to see out there.

MY FATHER LOVES LIKE GOD

by Charlie Huxley

DO YOU THINK CREATION IS PAINFUL? DO YOU THINK WHEN GOD MADE ADAM FROM THE DIRT HE SAID "THIS HURTS ME MORE THAN IT HURTS YOU?" DO YOU THINK ADAM BELIEVED HIM? AND FOR EVERYTHING AFTER THAT HE WOULD BE THE OUTLET FOR HIS FATHER'S PAIN AND ANGER. JUST AS YOU ARE FOR YOUR FATHER, AND YOUR FATHER WAS FOR HIS FATHER AND SO ON AND SO ON AND SO, THE FIRST SIN REALLY HAS FUCK ALL TO DO WITH THE APPLE. IT'S REALLY ABOUT THE WAY WE ARE BORN TRUSTING AND HOW THE FIRST THING WE LEARN IS TO TURN OUR BACKS.

This Haunting is a Memory, This Haunting is Done with Love

by Charlie Huxley

I've been driving out to the house I grew up in, maybe a couple of times a month.
I don't ever stop, just drive by real slow,
And maybe I'm trying to remember something
Or maybe it's just that I want the house to remember me
The yard in the front is pretty with flowers -
Sprouting up from the bulbs my mom planted
And it's funny
How it looks like my childhood more than my childhood ever did
We buried the animals in the rose garden in this order - dog, dog, fish, dog, cat
I think, if I drove by slow enough I'd see my dad open the screen door and step out onto the
front porch
And he'd see me and holler my name one more time, the one that died with him
I wouldn't answer, because I'm not his daughter anymore, and I couldn't be his son
I hope the family digs the garden up, and they'll see the graves like this - child, father, cat, dog,
fish, dog, dog
I wonder if my grandma's roses are there
I'd dig them up by hand, take them home just to watch them dry up.
Can you make a place haunted just by asking nicely? Just by wanting it enough?

Dream Journal: Entry No. 2

by Adriana Stanzione

My back is up against the wall as if in preparation for execution via firing squad. As to not become my own enemy in the instance that I speak, I wish that someone would just burglarize my vocal chords. I'm at a party, in the kitchen, and there's a photo of a philosopher I've never heard of taped above the sink. I'm afraid they'll find out I don't like Beat poetry. This conversation is draining my blood, and I want to crawl under the table. I want to go home.

*I imagine that underneath these floorboards there's a forest, where Memory Lane stretches out before me, illuminating the trees with the golden light and purity of nursery rhyme. You're there at the trailhead, with your warning: **When I go, don't you follow. Leave me alone, you don't belong here.***

My face goes scarlet as the histories of yesteryear spread throughout my mind faster than chin acne, and my conscience feels as though it's been thrown down the stairs. Somewhere an old oak tree snaps and the forest groans. I pick myself up and follow your blonde curls into the blinding light.

Oh please let me be the hero of this story.

—

I scaled down the side of an apple orchard to a bonfire of such great magnitude that it looked as if a comet had just crashed into Florence's citycenter. Under the rule of Savonarola, even the best minds of Italy weren't left unpunished. I stumbled to my feet, briefly dumbstruck by the mountain of paintings, books, and jewelry encased in the flames. Onlookers and passersby blended into the black 15th century sky, unpolluted except for the embers that danced and crackled through the night. Heavenly bodies and mythical creatures and erotic blueprints curled and melted into one another in the blazing glory. It made me feel anything but holy.

I walked through the ashy mud leaving footprints behind me, my combat boots marking where a space-time refugee such as myself had once stood. I need to get back to California, I told myself. There must be a way.

Through the silent backstreets of the city I wandered, past the heads of hair styled in Franciscan monk tonsure, and past the rotting ravines and broken wagons where bodies once lay piled on top of one another, left untouched after the black death. I could hear the faint and haunting toll of wedding bells, and I met a young child's eyes begging me in a telepathic plea: Come save me, take me away from this altar, this death sentence, and let me be a girl before I'm a mother. I shut my eyes and ducked into the warm orange

light of a dive bar that smelled like my father's breath.

The beer was served flat and the liquor tasted like river water, but nevertheless a strong urge came over me to get drunk. The jukebox had Zeppelin on it, and with all the raw power of Jimmy Page's guitar invested in me, I bought a round of drinks for the poor craftsmen and topless women that were laughing and dancing on the floor. There's no smoking allowed within six feet of this fine establishment, and since I am a good law-abiding citizen, I lit a cigarette outside by the light of the moon and traced its shadow with the tip of my shoe. A heart was carved with two initials on the side of a marble fountain, where I decided to finally lay down, soaking my skin in the shallow pool of nickels and dimes that the lovers must have thrown in an act of flirtatious jest. It made me shudder, why do these things make me shudder? Covering myself in a blanket of moss and ivy, I considered taking the coins for myself, but you know I can't steal other people's wishes.

I stayed within the deep end, and let the murky fountain water fill my mouth and nose and run through my veins and up into my lungs, and by the time I went fully under nothing but a ripple had remained.

Like the remnants of a sailor led astray by the voice of a siren I washed up ashore looking like a prehistoric creature preserved in formaldehyde, my vampire-like skin and hair like a weeping willow flowed down my arms, covering the scars I now realized were meant to be hidden.

Oh please let me be the hero of this story.

Little papers rained down on the masses as they shuffled along a poor excuse for a sidewalk, where smokestacks and the mist of violet-scented perfume concealed Jack the Ripper within the crowd. I picked up one of the little papers off of the wet cobblestone. It said something about a poet on trial for gross indecency. The delicate portrait of the poet himself in a lavish fur coat seemed anything but gross and indecent, so I shoved the paper in my pocket before

the rain dissolved it in my hands.

In my twenty odd years I'd never seen a line of people in petticoats and stockings stretched so long. I j-walked to the neoclassical ejaculation of what would soon be called LA's Roxy Theatre, and concealed myself underneath a big puffy skirt attached to a lady near the entrance of the music venue. With the degeneracy of a dirty little boy I snuck my way into the loud dark room where I heard the noise of cheap amps and felt a wild energy reverberating from body to body. In the sanctity of this room we raged with joy and

anger and passion as a pawn shop guitar was

smashed to pieces on stage. This wasn't no Sinatra at Times Square, this wasn't no Beatlemania, and this wasn't no Woodstock 1969. Blood was shed, I was grabbed, kicked, spit on, and I felt it all. Punk rock meant freedom, and it hurt. But it also awakened me.

-

I'm now running down the empty interstate, where the white lines of the freeway create a path under my feet. A distant mirage on the horizon is simmering in the hot California dusk and the closer I get the more I know where to go. Haunting my old neighborhood, I parade my ghost down Zarina Lane. Is this where the fantasy ends? I lay down exhausted in the front yard of the house at the end of the cul-de-sac, and dig my hands into the soil.

Oh please let me be the hero of this story.

The clouds are floating in the starless sky and I lift my arm and squint one eye, aligning my finger with the man in the moon. Ever so often the light will peek out and create an illusion that his face, not the clouds, is moving, drifting like a pale and distant satellite.

And in the hazy warmth of the soft orange light I finally see her, leaning on the frame of the red front door. In the shadows she looks like Medusa, her body like an apparition I can see right through. Something in me years to win the approval of this old and forlorn heroine.

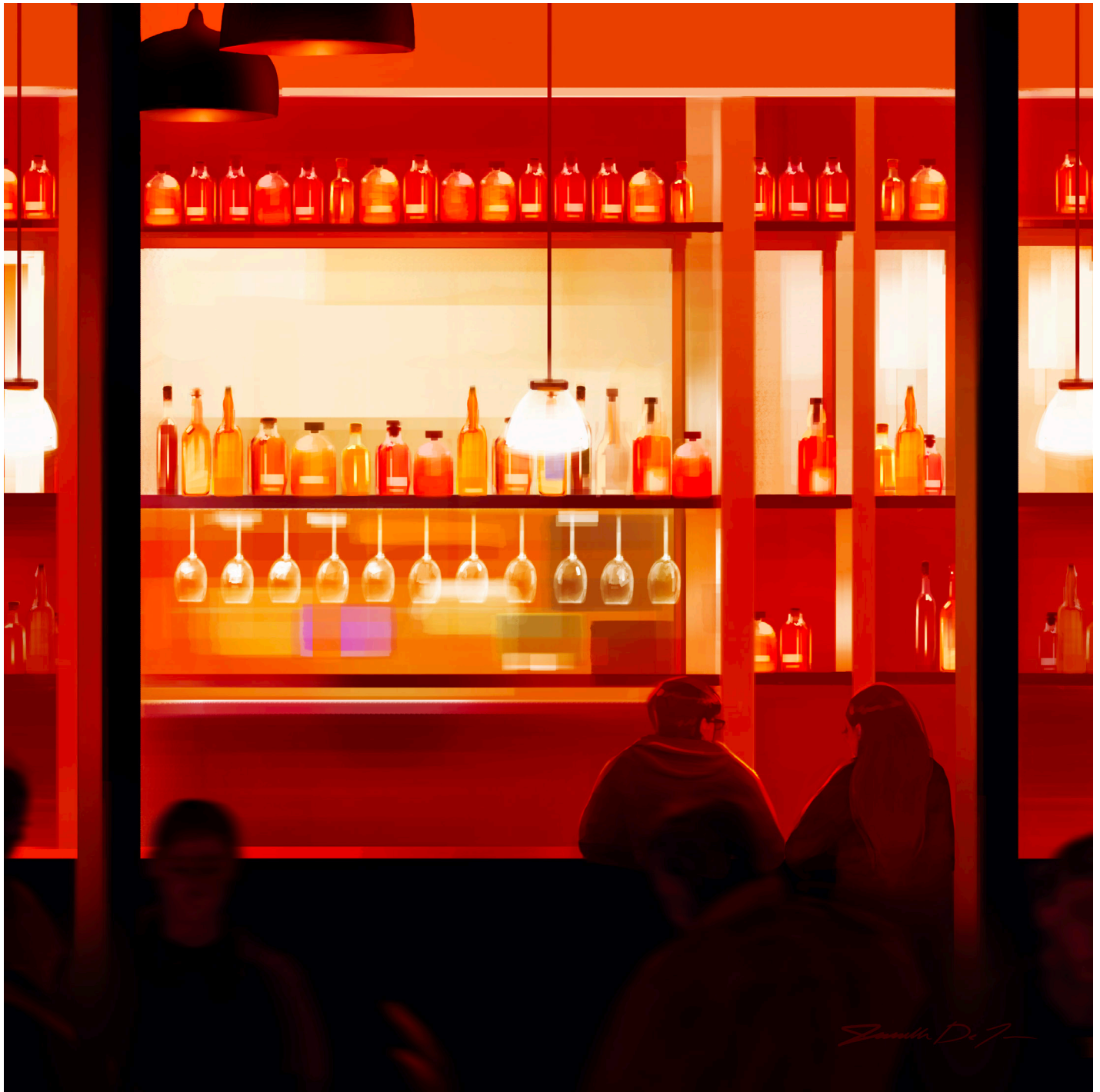
I remember her pride, her autonomy. The stories she told me of Visalia the Beautiful, who walked through the forest by the light of a skull-shaped lantern, and where the wicked Baba Yaga flew in a mortar and swung a great pestle. She kept my baby teeth in a little red velvet sack I found while snooping through her drawers. I don't know why I'm thinking about this now.

A little girl is peeking through the curtains in the upstairs window, apprehensive, yet curious by nature. I look up at her and she down at me. Through her eyes I can see myself lying there, like a remnant of an illusion that she once had believed in. You are the springtime and I am the winter. Your life is in bloom and mine is almost over. I've been searching through space and time for something my entire life, I tell her. Like I owe some kind of unseen debt.

There's a primal fear buried so deep inside me. I opened a parenthesis when I was your age, and I forgot to close it, tragically unaware that everything I've said and done since has been supplemental. You were born with this curse, but as long as you don't do what I have done, I will dream with you again like we did before, and maybe I won't be lying here in the cold wet dirt and you won't be looming up there in the window like a foreshadow.

Maybe then, I will take you in my arms again, and I'll forget the senseless crusade of my mirthless self-destruction. And I will fill the god-shaped hole within me with the peace and quiet of your ancient soul. And I will dance through the ashen sky, like a phantom Casanova, proud and impure. And I'll see you waiting there with your saint-like eyes, and I'll weave your hair into mine.

And I'll never feel the shock and ache of a yankee bayonet or an automatic rifle. And I'll scream it and write it and kiss it and burn it, and bury it in the forest so the next girl will find it. And I'll see the whole of the moon and not just the crescent. And you and I will be the heroes of our story, no matter how it ends.



Screen Door Pearl District

Jenelle De Leon
Digital illustration

Unforgotten

by c.p.

As their blood trickles down
Everyone's pulled out their umbrellas
To hide from the rain
As their blood trickles down,
Everyone's cleaned out their gutters
To hide from the dirt
As their blood trickles down
People only see the writing on the walls
Written by those who had no pen
Free Palestine

Film class

by Lime Sieber-Kray

I found myself in a claymation film today,
one that was too bloodied to be a mixed martini

I found that it didn't taste much of clay
but rather its theme was of bitten-off arms
pilfered from the majority and luckier than the kids.

We all watched as
a Man took them in at night.
He showed me what film was and taught them love;
Love apparently leaves bruises along crocuses lost in the sea
and spilled the barrels of limbs.
God had found their bodies in Gaza;

strips of me slowly peeled off.
Wrapping around a metal bar that crashed against kevlar,
dried blood along it's tip

held onto like it was a film applicator.
Adapting the body through movie reels like using a pasta maker;

With the sea spilling out of my guts

God looked toward me
and showed me the silly part about love.

The theme was of critics who should have been detesting genocide,
Instead they found that bombs kissed arms better, and saw how kids were built of clay.

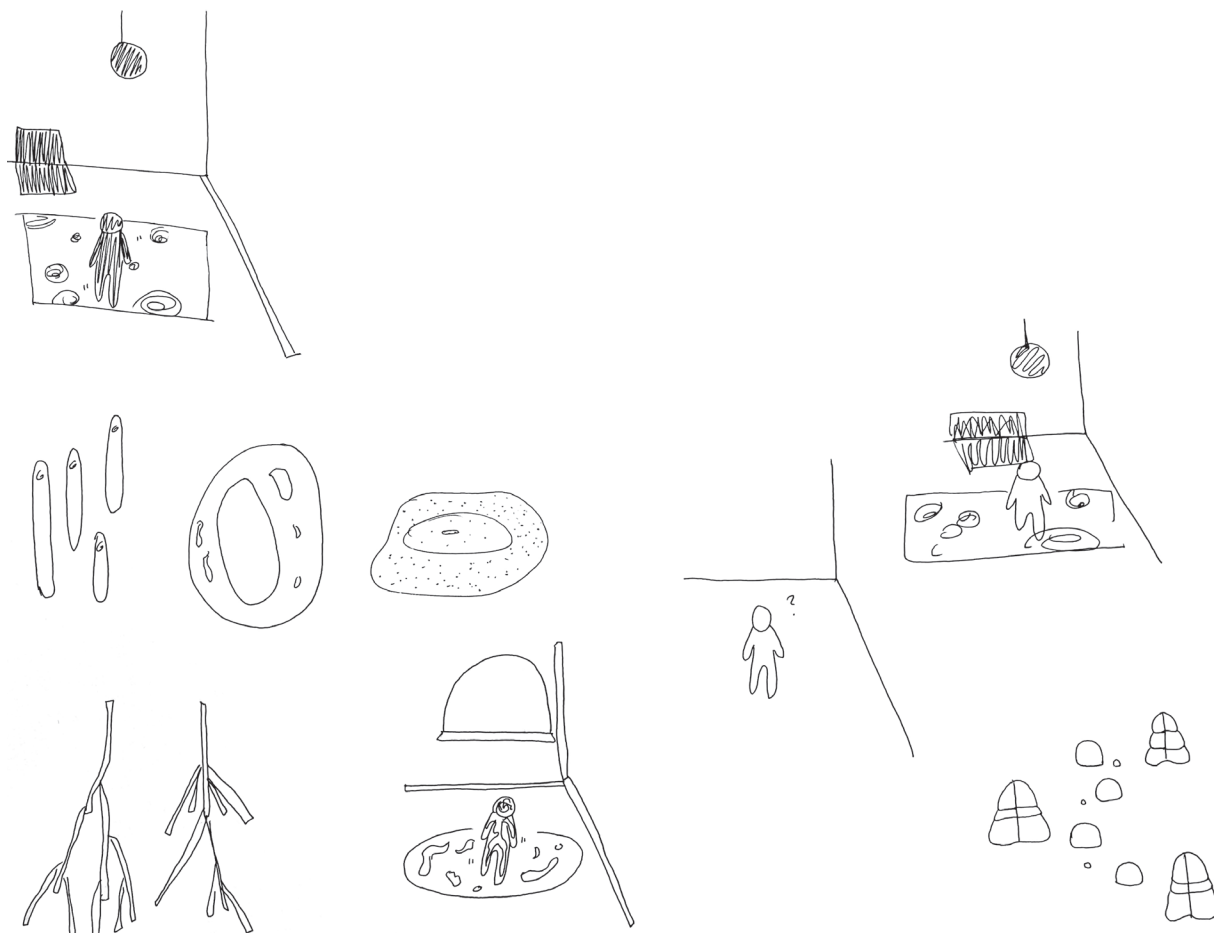
The Man presented how to mold them around
until they appeared upon the waves, any happiness destroyed along the sand.
god must see them lost

He taught me how a fascist serenades you with batons
along my wounds, smooth gritted salt waters preserving my depths.
Clay filled my mouth and built hatred for Israel.

Kissing the Housewife

by Giselle Jensen

when you get lonely about her
who clings to man slick
maple sapped up leaves sickly sweet kisses
carving his trunks of leg, of tree
ask yourself if it's brave
to know of first girls whose hands curl around finger are born kept,
that bursting red yolks bleed just to give life,
that fruits harvested by acrylic french filled tips
keep the gaping mouth of family fed,
that your mothers anger venomous and hissing is not meant to destroy [you] but to be lived on,
that even when eve's gaze fell to the base of the apple tree
freedom was not hers to bite
all this welcomes you, and you deny it?
how is it that in the monastery of men who ring dyke
at your door gluttonous and dry strung out
somewhere between the temple and throat still want you?
Despite you wanting the housewife



maison laffitte

Selva Busetto

Drawing on paper

Bitch

by Nova Lane

You wake up in the morning and go to get some coffee. The worker scoffs at your coffee order. Your hand trembles when you swipe your card, but you tip him anyway, so he doesn't think you're a bitch.

You go to class, where a discussion is taking place. You try to speak your opinion but your voice shakes. You fill the space in-between your thoughts with "likes" and "uhs" so your classmate doesn't interrupt you. He interrupts you anyway. He doesn't interrupt the boy who speaks after you.

Your professor stops you after class to talk about a paper you wrote. "You're actually really good at this," he says. You don't understand why he seems surprised.

After class, you sit in the student union. There is a group of boys sitting near you. They talk and laugh loudly. The sound of their voices fills the cafeteria. You stare at them in awe. You've never been allowed to take up space in that way.

3 o'clock rolls around, and you must go to work. You ask your coworker to do something three times, but he never does it. He makes two jokes that make you uncomfortable. When he leaves to take his fifth smoke break, you do it yourself even though it's not your job. He makes more than you per hour.

Your friends invite you to meet up at the bar after work. You stop by your house to change. You want to wear a new top you bought, but it's low-cut and you're scared of what will happen to you if you wear it. You opt for an oversized t-shirt and shorts.

While waiting to order a drink at the bar, a man approaches you. You're cornered. He pokes a tattoo on your leg and asks where you got it. You politely ask him to please not touch you. His face turns crimson, and he calls you a bitch. You wish you hadn't worn shorts.

When you get home, you sit on your couch. You are so, so tired. You are burdened with an exhaustion that sleep cannot fix. You feel there is a weight on your shoulders. You want so badly to take it off, but you don't know how. You don't know how to escape what you have lived with every day since you've been old enough to recognize it. Every day, the weight feels heavier. Today it feels like it's fracturing your spine.

when I die lay me in Pluto

by Joy Amaya

when I die
lay me in Pluto

where I can feel
a distant pull
from familiar force

let my ashes be
part of its icy atmosphere
so when I tire
I may lay
in its stern heart

let me be
guarded
by Hydra & Kerberos

allow me
the company
of Nyx

grant me
a swim
in the spatial Styx

leave me
to travel
from aphelion to perihelion

for the rest of My Infinity

The Gardener's Dream

by Lime Sieber-Kray

There she lay, convoluted in the eye
with the warm dress lost from a flutter.
Something so soft, common blue-violet
legs filled with hanging staples illuminating
a bed of grass. Justly ignoring the starry
sky that plants her eye in its bloom.
Hanging above a rhododendron bloom,
Azalea licked, tasting her puzzled eyes.
Upon a balcony, there is a starry
woman hanging below. The many flutter,
she is still warm in body, illuminated
by stares. Planted more sweet violet.
She hangs around with me, suckles violet
-colored sweets that turn mouths into blooming
dead Nettle. Facing towards the starry sky illuminating
the building's teary eyes.
Empty puzzles still undone, her heart flutters
with tepid tongues fixed upon the stars.
Stippled fixations found in the starry
vast opalescent eyes, hanging Violet.
Waterlily Dahlias holding the convoluted flutters
of gleaning eyes covered with bloom.
Lying along the grass seam, her eyes
staring towards the earth's Luminare.
Blind once more, her body illuminates
her desire to be picked before the stars.
She lies on the dirt, ropes cut with eyes
facing her beneath the sky. Violet
to the touch, mouths agape when beauty blooms
In the garden. Her life is fluttering.
Once again, she hangs on the ground, fluttering
adrift today, as I see her body illuminated
by her eyes. Her body starts to bloom
with staples, jutting out towards the moon's starry
pain. Wisteria in full display with her eye
staring towards the earth's violet
Eyes, fluttering from the brightening starry
display. Illuminating her blue-violet
skin. She is now blooming in the gardener's eyes.

Warsaw 1 - water tension + falling rain + leaf matter debris + billowing white clouds + sleep deprivation + a brushed hand + a long memory + the insecurity of uninterrupted sleep + missed buspirone or sertraline tablets + blonde hair on a forehead you can no longer kiss + water tension + black coffee w/oat milk + grounds on teeth + falling rain + grey skies + crows w/steel colored cowls + sitting still + wringing hands + repetition + rusting but strong cast iron chain + spikes on only one side of a river

by Maxwell Kline

DIRTY

by Storm Ozenne

Somehow, it's never been lost. Something remains inside,

perhaps like the crust that builds on kitchen counters or under kneecaps-
what I've lost and what I've thrown away; these are the same things.

She taught me to eat with a spoon and yet I learned to twist noodles onto a fork by myself, never wanted

me to keep eating, yet even when she uncut her hold onto a body-
my body-
began to listen to her voice like I never had when it came from her throat.

If I could lose her, the sound of her-
the crush of tin foil on teeth, the sound!

Then maybe I will find that extent of me that lives in the crust of all things.

Maybe if I let my fingers smudge with ink regardless of the paint, or let simple metal stain my skin green-
a crop circle reminding me what touches my hands will be felt in my body.

Maybe if I let my head stop shaking like a muscle or cracking open like a fault line,
if I stop sprinkling weed killer onto the sidewalk in front of my weed killed house.
Maybe if I sunk myself into salt water and smelled with my eyes and blew with my nose instead of

sucking mucus back into my lungs-
instead of coughing, instead of holding noodles on a fork in front of my mouth and lurching forward

forever-
maybe if I began realizing and realizing and realizing-
I will find the limit of me living between the particles.

The Hound and the Heron

by Marley Sherwood

Jacques led his girls through thickets and past knotted tangles of trees, keeping a steady but slow pace so that the two-legged creatures could follow more easily. He kept his nose pressed to the ground, snuffling through the damp earth and rotting leaves for traces of blood and a current of softly humming energy that he did not understand but knew he was meant to follow. He bypassed deer scat, fox fur, and rabbit dens, fighting against his instincts every step of the way. Although the delicate strings of sound that the girls emitted meant nothing to him, their desperation clung to them in the form of sweat and salty tears, and Jacques understood where it was that they wanted to go. He was not here to hunt, as he usually desired to do. Instead, he was to repay years of hearty meals, games of catch-and-chase, and loving head scratches by leading his girls to safety. They were not far off, now.

Marie followed Jacques' soft, russet body with the utmost trust. She, in turn, led her little cousin Bella behind her, her firm, calloused fingers wrapping around the younger girl's thin, frail hand. Marie carried their meager supplies—flint and iron, a frayed quilt, a half-empty waterskin—in a burlap rucksack pulled tight against her broad back. The sack's leather straps dug into her shoulders and had, over the past four days of perpetual walking, turned her muscles into tensely coiled ropes beneath her flesh. The pain grew so immense that her spirit fled her body, instead devoting a single-minded focus to the path ahead, and the destination that must, at some point, emerge.

Despite the pain, Marie never gave Bella so much as a pouch to carry. Their travels were

already hard enough on the girl's weak body, with its always-pale skin and feverishly glazed eyes. This was all to protect the girl, and if she collapsed before they completed their journey,

Marie would have caused all this pain for nothing and nobody. Anyway, this plan was Marie's, not Bella's. She and Jacques should, and would, carry the weight of this journey for her.

"How do you feel?" Marie asked Bella, as she did regularly through each day, always with a tense worry stored up inside that the child would not make it to her own salvation.

"Still fine," Bella said, breathless but managing well enough.

Marie never quite explained it to her in full, but Bella understood why they shambled their way through the thickest of forests, with only the nose of a dog to guide them—though she was not so sure about their ultimate destination. Five days ago, Bella's parents promised her hand in marriage to the son of a neighboring farmer who had far more land than they did. And four nights ago, Marie appeared at Bella's window and whisked her away into the night, promising deliverance from this terrible fate. Marie had kept saying, "Bella, you've only seen 13 winters. That man has seen 27, and he has not met them well."

Marie's concern was a source of warmth for Bella, who always felt a little cold, even in the middle of summer. Her own father had told her, overflowing with pride, that Bella had earned him a dowry of ten sheep and a healthy milking cow. He said it in the same way he reported on favorable bargains he got at the market. A vast loneliness engulfed Bella, though she didn't cry, as she'd long expected this to happen, as weak and unhelpful as she was on the farm. The best she could hope for was to bring fortune upon her family—the ultimate duty of all children—by marrying into a family with more resources or wealth than they could gain on their own. She had only wished that perhaps it could be to a boy her age, someone she liked well enough, maybe with downy hair the color of spun gold and a charming smile, like the devoted princes in the tales her mother told when Bella was bedridden. Her mother, however, had also told her that an old and homely man could also be charming and noble, and not to judge her suitor by his

appearances. It was Marie who had cried, tears of bitter anger, making Bella wonder if one must have a certain amount of imagination, the ability to see a different possibility, in order to cry over your lot in life. Walking in the light of the vibrant love of her cousin seemed preferable to moving in with a strange new family, so once again, Bella surrendered herself to someone else's plan, someone else's hopes.

"I'm sorry, little Bella. I promise we will get there soon," Marie said, unsure if she was telling the truth or not. She shouldered the burden of performing certainty the same way she shouldered their provisions.

"I know. It's okay," Bella said. She wondered, again, where "there" was, but didn't ask. Marie agonized again, as she agonized every day, over the question of whether she was doing right by Bella. She could not stand the idea of the girl being sold off to that terror of a man, who drank

himself into monstrous anger at the tavern every evening, and always took it out on the first person to look him in the eye. Bella was sickly, this much was true, and would probably live better as a housewife than a worker, but only if the husband were a gentle and quiet man, someone who wouldn't cause Bella's heart to beat too fast, who wouldn't be likely to kill her, with fists or with fear.

Marie's aunt and uncle would not listen to reason, and Marie had no place to hide Bella herself. Only a faint shadow of an option revealed itself to Marie, something she'd only ever heard spoken in whispers in dark corners, during nights with no moons: rumors of ruins, spirits, blood offerings, and divine protection for those who had no other place to go. Marie had thus brought Bella to these woods on the promise of a superstition. She could only hope that Jacques, in his animal way, would track down this legend for her. She watched him carefully, always wondering where he was leading them, and if he was just tracking a stag this entire time, if he had no clue what Marie was asking him for. As she watched him, she noticed his tail perk up, whereas it had been held straight behind him up until this point. What has he caught wind of, now?

Jacques could smell the dried blood of countless pact-makers on the soft breeze that whispered down the valley. He'd never been to this place before and had only heard talk of it from the crows and rabbits, who were always such big gossips and liable to weave tall tales out of nothing. Even so, he knew the meaning of the smell, and he knew what it meant when his fur suddenly stood on end, bristling at the stillness and silence that spread forth from the rocky outcropping that they approached, which protruded from the top of a gently sloping hill. An energy, something he couldn't see or smell or even hear, ran like trickling creeks under his paws, and traveled up through his body, making him shiver. This place was not normal, not normal at all.

Marie also could tell once they'd reached the place. She recognized among the dense blanket of caterpillar-bitten ragwort, purple-blossomed willowherb, and fuzzy-leaved cat's ear the ruined foundations of a stone cottage or hut. At the same time, an ominous feeling of a power shifting and moving beneath her aching feet gave her pause. She knew better than to be excited or relieved, for she was not yet sure what price she—or Bella—would have to pay in this exchange.

"This is the place, Bella," Marie said, "I'm going to do something here that will keep you safe, but I don't want you to watch." She didn't think the sight of blood would agree with Bella's sensibilities.

Bella, always perceptive, saw a flickering shadow of grief in Marie's eyes, which cast a fear over her that she hadn't felt before. She did not know what Marie had planned, but

she trusted that she would not put herself through such sadness if she did not think it was right.

"Okay," Bella agreed. Marie wrapped her in a tight, protective embrace; Bella had always liked the way Marie's thick arms enfolded her, which felt like the way her mother held her before Bella got sick for the first time and was deemed to be much too fragile for such things.

Once she pulled away, Bella sat on one of the foundation stones, facing away from Marie, and vowing not to turn her head to look. She would accept things as they came. Jacques trotted over to her and sat his warm body on her feet. She contented herself with scratching his long, silky ears as he rested his forlorn head on her lap and looked up at her with his drooping, heavy-lidded eyes.

In the center of what was once a cottage, Marie knelt on the ground where the knees of all of the supplicants before her had worn the earth bald. She clasped her hands together in prayer, knowing no other way to ask favors from the divine.

"Please keep my little Bella safe. Make it so that she does not have to marry that terrible man, or any terrible man. Don't let anyone hurt her. Please hide her so that she can be happy and free," Marie whispered, and the land listened. She withdrew a hunting knife from her belt, and brought the sharp edge down on her palm, slashing through it from the nook where her thumb started, down to the other side of her hand. She bit back a cry of pain so Bella wouldn't hear, and squeezed the blood out over the dirt, to join the blood of so many other sufferers.

Jacques could only watch as his girl, the little one, doubled over in a fit of pain, contorted in a way unlike anything he'd seen her do before, even in the throes of her worst fevers. He could only watch as her neck lengthened, as silver-blue feathers pushed through her flesh to cover her body, as her eyes shrank and her arms remolded themselves into wings, as her toes lengthened into pointed talons that broke out of her ground-beaten boots. He could only watch as she transformed into a slender-beaked heron and flew away. He could only nudge his head into the side of the girl-left-behind as she mourned.

The heron caught the wind under its wide, outstretched wings, trusting the draught to carry her toward water. She had only a vague sense of a long-gone illness and a newly absent pain. All sensations were brand new, and the sky was hers, and the world below was hers, and she knew no fear.

Self Portrait as a Pothole in Portland

by William MacLeod

Rain fills the sockets on the fringes
of Memory -- cars splash overhead
and headlights torch the past into insight.

Water flows across my blank face
as I stare back at the absent sun. No mirror can show the depth of my riddled crannies,

A half-eaten apple splashes in my mouth,
and I gape in silence. I offer no window
door or tunnel underground to my core.

My belly swells with hobnail spikes and mud. Winter freezes me to stone. But my indentation in the middle of the road
is indelible.

At 3 A.M., when the streets quiet and night settles down with the murmur of soft rain, I sleep a few hours. Then, rush
hour streetcars and vegetable trucks rattle the new dawn alarm. I wake with the city to life.

My hands wipe strands of the dream's
gray cobwebs from my eyes.

The golden insect with wire legs
trembles with the passing of a train.

Life on the mahogany etagere hanging
on the den wall can be precarious.

Without warning, miscataloged books crash to the oak floor from wooden hideouts.

Loose leaves of paper and house plant petals shudder with the steel tracks' vibrations.

Even the teenage boy pummeling the stairs sets the den astir.

When the earthquake strikes, the piano keys hammer out the music of Franz Liszt.
Strains of the Mephisto Waltz rattle the rafters as the gold bug dances on silver threads.

The day after tomorrow.

A suction hose siphons my belly dry.
Then, a yellow hardhat pours me full of wet cement. Trowels smear my skin as smooth as mirror glass.

I cannot see or feel the sun's heat
until hot asphalt spreads across my face
like black mud from a volcano.

My body becomes part of the highway
stretching from Portland to Salem and further south into the desert of another state.

I quiver with the hum of running engines roaring above hard rubber tires, spinning tales of travel, as I stare into the
darkness and touch the world on every side.

The Witch Next Door

by William MacLeod

after Anne Sexton

Holding a basket of fire
in her arms, her feet danced
in quirks and crinkles
around a cauldron of dark
and bitter ale.

She wore a black dress
as shiny as the burnt kindling
she lit by striking phosphorous matchsticks on the rough edges of her brass shoe buckles. Her hair was a frozen waterfall of ink.

Sometimes, she pedaled a bicycle
in a frenzy of tassels, streamers
and baseball cards slapping
the chrome spokes to sound like
a motorcycle engine.

My mother remembered her when she was young--beautiful as the high school prom queen holding a bouquet of white carnations

at the big dance--years before the lost child and the car wreck of divorce.

By day, she kept herself locked in her dusty house. The neighborhood kids hid behind bushes if her door opened a crack. Her window blinds stayed shut. One evening, they saw her gray silhouette in the shadows of moonlight.

And when the smell of burning sulfur

sizzled from the cheroots in her smoking mouth she wrapped her legs around a wooden broom handle, gritted her black teeth

and disappeared into the starless night.

Devil's Churn

Isabel Kristensen

Black and white photographic diptych



The Ending

by Kyela Evenhouse

There will be no other voices after mine.

I will not have another to teach how to walk, or how to lay in the sun and how to shrink from the claws of night.

There is none I can love, emptiness is my sole comfort. The time passes, a welcome ending pulls these weary legs forward. There are no eyes like mine to see stars with, no one to taste the tender roots under foot.

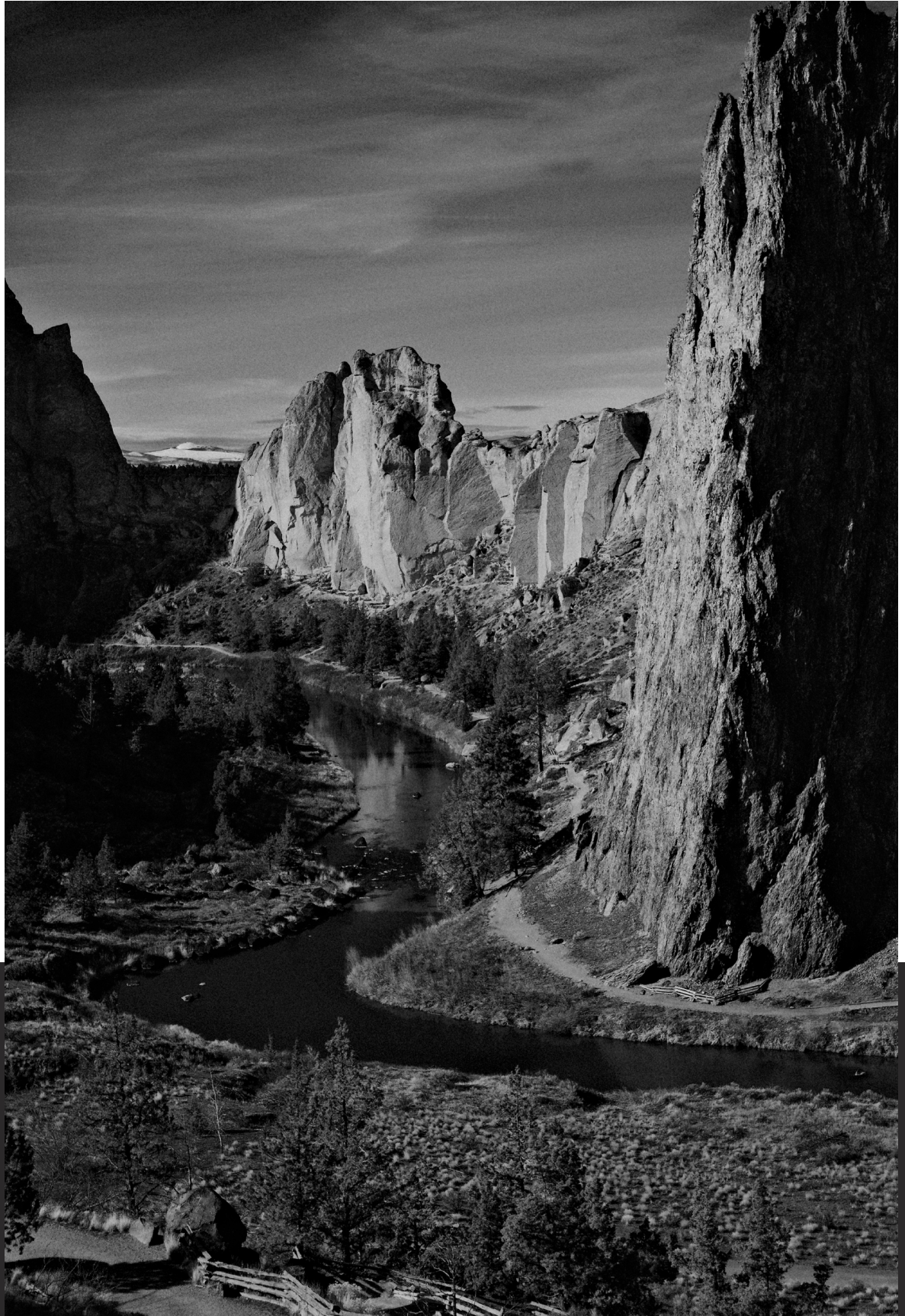
What time has taken cannot be returned. Herds, families of kind thunder over a nearby hill crest , a rhythmic earthquake of movement.

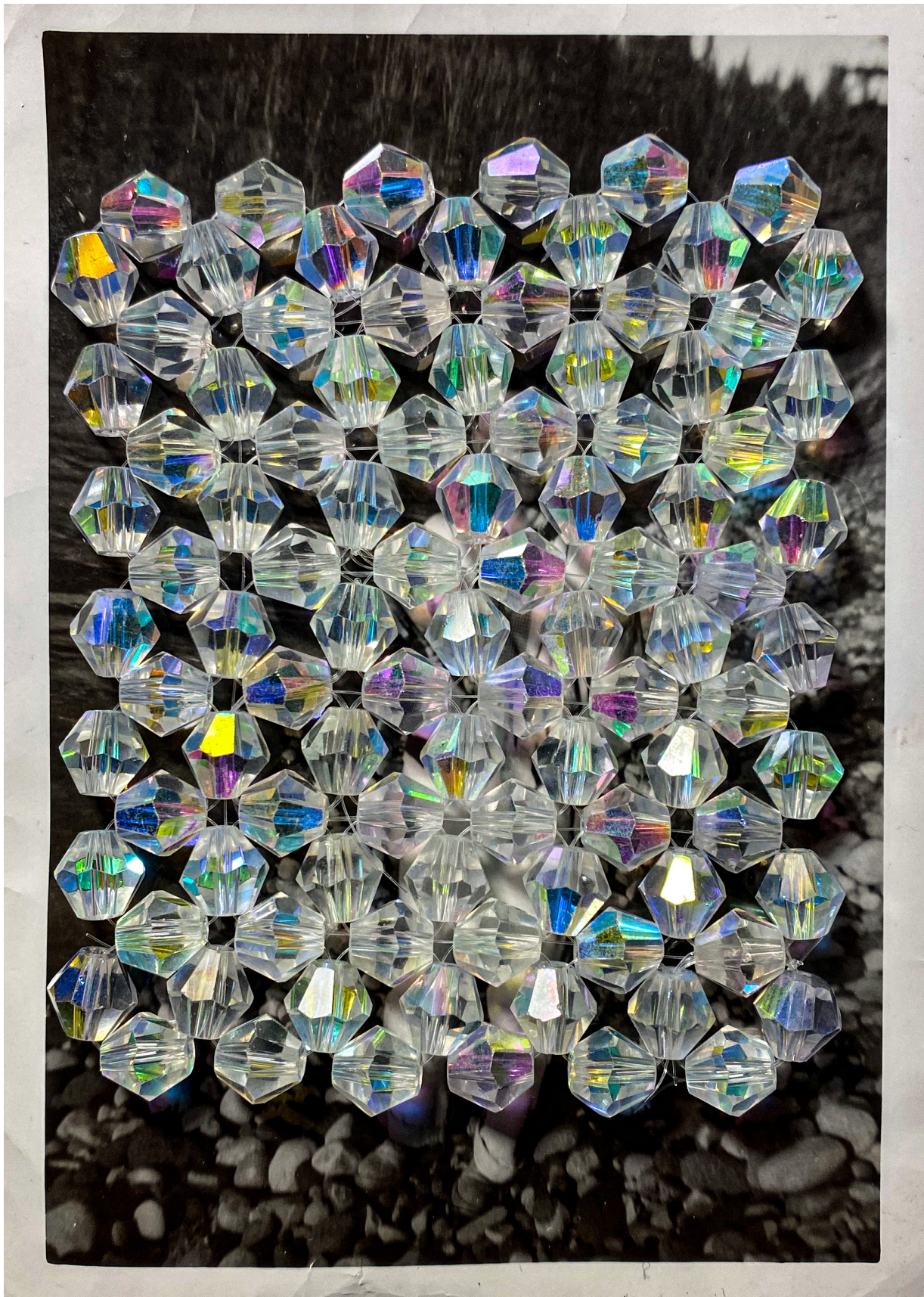
Maybe, my own face in the form of another will appear atop that gentle peak- maybe this loneliness can be soothed with a mirror. Us, at the end of what we are- certainly more comforting than I, alone.

Smith Rock

Jung In

Black and white photograph





Gone Fishing

Ash Kukuzke

Woven beads, photograph

5 Years

by Solomon Wolfe

The store is closed, the lights are off.
Let's slip into our dancing shoes.
Let's push past expiration dates
And meet amongst the frozen foods.
Let's hum to neon closing signs
And open all the tuna cans.
I'll scan your face if you'll scan mine,
Two barcode hearts that skip in time.
Moonwalk on conveyor belts
And ring up every item.
Don't care for all the dollar signs,
I'll buy 'em if you like 'em.
We'll tie our flip-flop laces
And we'll skate within the isles.
You'll pirouette and figure eight
While I watch all the while.
We'll throw away the mice traps
And do the world a favor.
We'll open all the chip bags
To find our favorite flavor.
Let's chalk the floors with purple crayons,
Let's illustrate our story.
Let's create some purple tears,
Let's draw until the morning.
Oh we'll tango past the mangos.
We'll pop dance with the popcorn.
Square dance with the pears
And line dance by the limes.
We'll hip-hop in our flip-flops,
Disco through the Crisco,
Salsa near the salsa.
And hold your hand in mine,
Can you hear the music play?
It's five years, I'll mouth to you.
I have meant it every day
We've met amongst the frozen foods.

Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité

by Solomon Wolfe

Can you not see the world passing us by?
In our four steps they're still eight strides ahead.
It matters not how much fabric we shred,
the world's ears hear not our shrill, forlorn cry.
Swatted to silence, bewhiskered fruit fly
are we, to the fleeting world we once fled.
Are we only seen once they've lost their head?
They throw us out once they've gotten their high.

Nigh, my brethren, the reckoning is soon!
Mutiny the world, dismantle the swine!
Rid of the dogs, let us howl at the moon!
Hands on our heads must be clawed from the vine!
Incline the sharp notes, disrupt the world's tune,
Hear now our cry Révolution Féline!

Bikes

by Setaria DePue

The wind was fierce
Rushing through my hair
And bellowing in my ears
It traveled through me grasping at my spirit

The Dead

by William MacLeod

The dead step into the shower
to wash off the years of dust and dirt
pinkening the pallor of their skin
too long deprived of sunlight.

They glow like gibbous moons,
opening their mouths and eyes.

Water soaks their white veneers
and seeps into their bones.

When the rush of the spray
declines to a trickle, they lock

arms and parade in a naked
retinue of the walking past

whistling past graveyards and hooting
at the children building towers of sand

in the playground by the closed school
surrounded by teachers on strike.

Classroom windows sparkle in the noon
sun. The dead run bony fingers

through their white manes, sending the children running when they bare their teeth.

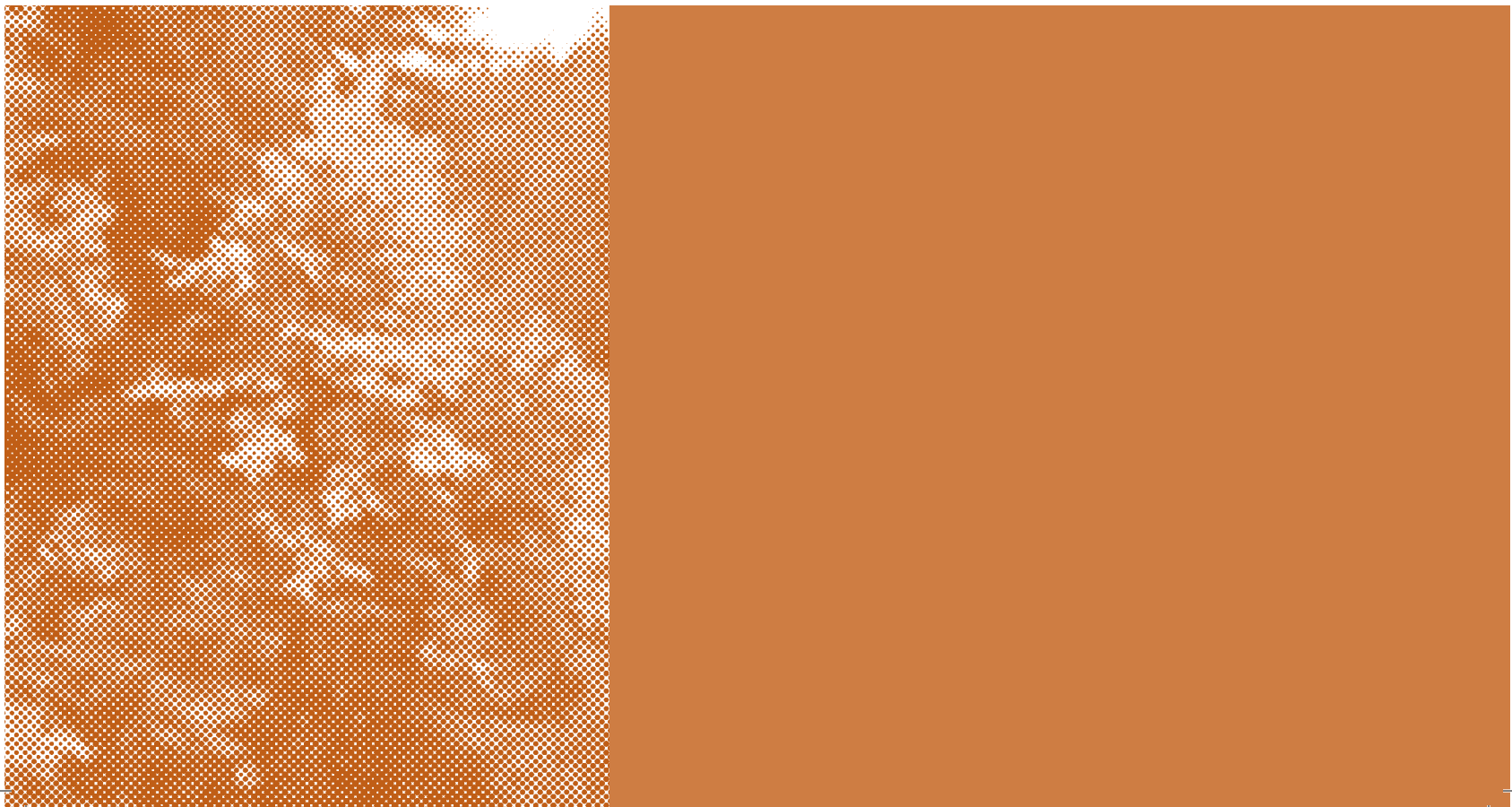
November is too early for frost and snow clouds. But the dead leave behind white footprints in their wake as they step through the red brick walls of the locked schoolhouse, eager to learn the rudiments all over again.

Fallen leaves rustle on the sidewalks,

swelling with applause as the wind picks up urging the boys to dive into the swirling piles tinged the color of fire but without the heat.

The dead take bows at the waist and wave

white-gloved hands from window openings dusty and opaque with a patina of powdered chalk as they drift in gusts of late autumn cold.



Coverage

by Matthew D Albertson

“Welcome back to Nuclear Kickoff, with me, Max Impact!

It’s a Joseon showdown for the ages between North and South! The world series fans have anticipated for seventy years is unfolding, out of left field, and let me tell you: the mustard is off the hotdog today!

Folks from the South thought they were just in for a scrimmage earlier, but this wargame has turned into a grudge game of old school streetball. And boy does it have the whole Neighborhood watching!

For a game that has no competitive stakes, the team from the North has taken things seriously as they ever have. And that tension has free agents from the East and the West waiting in the wings—they’re staring each other down, each refusing to blink.

Well, folks, it’s not unheard of, but in quite a turn a veritable street brawl has broken out in the DMZ! The South’s coaches have matched the North’s aggressive posturing, and a shoulder check was returned with a left hook to the head. We’re in uncharted playbooks here, viewers.

The refs, wearing blue, are trying to break this up, going into overtime. But a number of the audience are calling for blood—and the onlookers seem interested to join in themselves!

But, no, we’ve got a curveball thrown now—in a desperate, last minute buzzer beater, those free agents are speaking with the bloodied Joseon ballers. But what’s this?! A split-second decision has turned the tide! One of the players just clocked the Western agent, and—Boom—down goes Frazier!

And it counts!

The Joseon Peninsula, heck the whole dang Neighborhood, is looking like the aftermath of a nasty match between Lazio and Roma. It’s a whole new ball game here in the DMZ—or the re-MZ—we’re at a flash point! The refs have long-since left. This is no longer a game—it’s a bloodbath. There’s blood in the air, on the ground, on the ball, tonight!

It might be, it could be, it is! Folks, the Football is out!

In a season that has been so improbable, the impossible has happened! Now, if you’re seeing the field I’m seeing, well, you know we’re going to have to go to commercial. This has been Nuclear Kickoff, with Max Impact, please enjoy this message from one our sponsors:”

“Squarespace—”

Cazadero Confines

by Gabriel Lukas Quinn

We sequester what was once our proud nativity
Condemning it to cut-off cubicles
Where we can view our roots like curios
Soon to want acrylic shielding

They become these novelties of nature
Cordoned off for content
We call them parks or reserves, estates or
The new venue for Anne's garden party

The mud that once spun our blood
Becomes just that:
Mud beneath the concrete beneath the rug
Beneath our feet

We forget our creation-cradle
'Til we tire of our plain white mattress
So we briefly play with toys
Made of our cradle's rotten scrapwood

We call them charming sanctuaries
Until mosquitoes bite
At which point we call an Uber and get brunch at one of the five different Starbucks within a two-mile radius
And we go home

summertime bliss

by Eva Sheehan

This poem is a product of summertime freedom.
Heavy hard boiled heads
Now come to vegetate in the ever
heating
sky.

Open and scrambled,
We show there's no thoughts left.
A slow-burn lobotomy—no
Just capitalism.

In the summertime,
We forget the winter blues
And the homeless man
squatting in the building next to us.

In summertime
We celebrate our freedom
And our poor heavy minds
forget about the world is on fire.
So we set sparks into the sky.

We forget deadlines
And the rising thermostat.
We forget the news
and remembering to recycle
Because we're free.





Gone

by Yomari Lobo

It was three a.m., and I was still awake, lying in bed staring at the ceiling, imagining a sky with thousands of stars to be counted. As I count the stars, the face of a handsome man forms. A man, who, when next to me, counted, or more like competed, with me.

I would call him insane and try to beat him at our own little game.

Always.

He would laugh at me and call me his princess, which at first I hated, but I think I just hated it because I wanted him to keep calling me it, so the flutter in my stomach never went away. It's funny how when you look back on past moments you see all the spots where you could have done everything so much differently. Instead of fighting you could have laughed. Instead of being stubborn, you could have submitted. Maybe we could've had more time if I did.

While we counted the stars my eyes would get heavy, but I would fight to keep them open, to keep the moment in the palm of my hand, close to my heart. I would hide my tiredness, but he would notice and encourage me to go to sleep. He would kiss my lips softly, pull me closer to him, and whisper against my lips that he wasn't going anywhere and we would meet in our dreams.

Always.

During my dreams, we would meet at the park, under our tree, where we had met all those years ago on that crisp fall night on Halloween. I was dressed up as Casey Becker from *Scream*, my head itching from the wig, and he was dressed as Stu Macher. It wasn't planned. I didn't know him yet. My brother met him in one of his engineering classes and decided to bring him to the Halloween Festival. It was a simple costume, something no one would have noticed if they weren't a fan of the movie, but seeing the tan sweater with blood pooled at the side, I had made an educated guess. He smiled at me and instead of answering he said, "Casey, baby," in a nervous tone just as her mother had in

the movie and I knew he was it for me.

He irrevocably changed the rest of my life.

But I didn't let him know that he had me hooked that easily. We argued for the first three months of knowing each other, but one day after picking me up in a thunderstorm after my car broke down everything changed.

I was irrevocably his.

I glance at the clock: four a.m. I am officially giving up on sleep.

Sighing, I slip on my shoes, throw on the worn brown jacket that smells like him, cedarwood and musk, and grab my keys before walking out the door. When I give up on sleep there is only one place I go, the only place I feel the closest to him.

The place we met.

Sitting under our favorite willow tree, I lay back, looking at the sky, the fall breeze in my hair, his words whispering with the winds caressing my cheek.

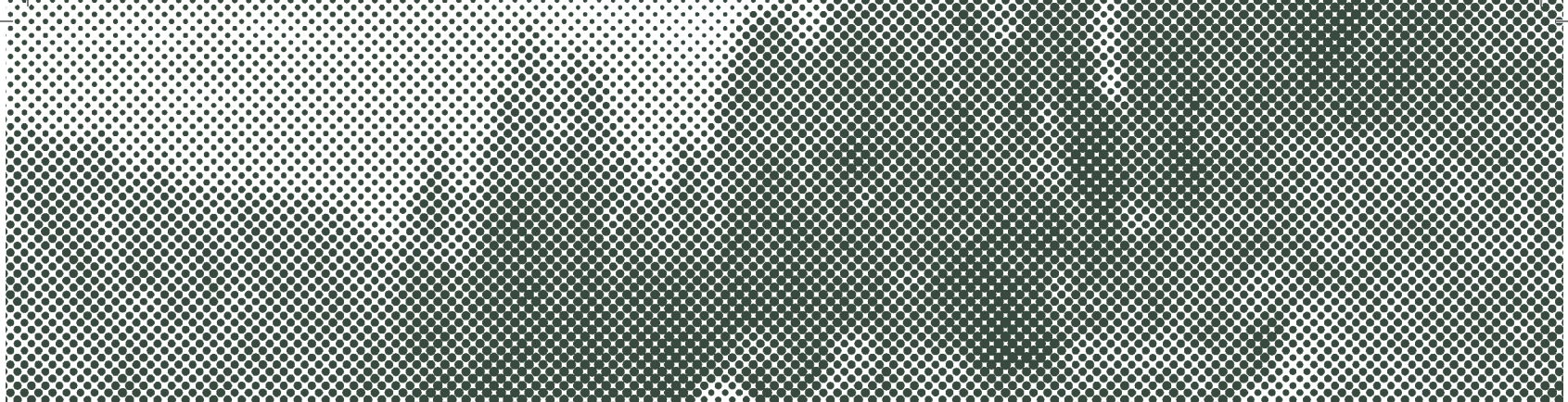
I start to count.

One—I remember our first kiss.

I still remember how nervous he was. How nervous I was. This wasn't like any other boy I had dated or kissed. It was him. He was different and all I wanted was for him to place his soft lips on mine and take me into another world, somewhere where it would only be me and him. Where the stars and the planets revolve around us. And when I finally got the courage, I leaned up and lightly placed mine on his and I knew we were both goners by the end of it. He was mine and I was his.

Two—I remember our first fight.

I was never possessive, just territorial. I wanted girls to know that he was mine and no one else's. A girl from his



women's study class leaned in too hard, her hand on his arm, her laugh way too loud. I went feral. An animal with a desperate need to claim what is hers. I knew she liked him so I practically marked my territory on him. It sent her away and then our fight began. He was oblivious, which I told him. He said I was overthinking it. It was a week before the absence of the other became too unbearable. The loneliness consumed us. We were so used to being together, always, that the universe brought us back together.

Three—I remember our first time.

He planned our date. Before that day, we had never been on an official date. Simple study sessions and hangouts with other friends. We had been alone before but never planned out. He turned the rooftop into our personal movie theater, fairy lights dimly lit the area. A blanket lay on the ground surrounded by too many pillows and my favorite snacks. A projector was loaded, ready with our favorite movies. It was magical, as magical as it could get for two broke college students living on loans. The soft touches and caresses brought us even closer. Our souls intertwined. Our DNA forever engraved with each other.

Four—I remember when we graduated from college ready to take on the world together.

We were so giddy. After being in school for almost as long as we were alive we were so excited to see what the world had to offer us. He was going to work on an app that focused on a better way to learn languages and I was going to be a writer. We were moving to Austin. Me and him. Him and I. It was just the beginning. We were ready to start reading the next chapter of our lives.

Five—I remember the first time we thought something was wrong.

He tricked me into going on a hike with him at five in the morning, a time I refused to believe existed. But he flashed those puppy dog eyes at me and I gave in. We finally made it to the end of the trail, a beautiful sunrise waiting for us,

when the coughing started. He drank some water thinking it was nothing, but then he kept coughing, and coughing, till blood splattered from his mouth. My heart stilled in my chest and time stopped. I don't think it ever started beating again after that.

Six—I remember the doctor telling us he was diagnosed with stage three lung cancer.

The room was cozy, as cozy as an oncologist's office could be. I don't remember what was on the walls. Maybe pictures of her children? Her wife? Maybe her college degree. I just remember the look on her face. The tone of her voice. Pity. The doctor talked to him the whole time. She didn't realize the dead look in his eyes. The way his shoulders shagged and the air left his body. The doctor had given us a death sentence and we didn't know what to do.

Seven—I remember him breaking down in front of me once we got home.

He didn't make it out of the car before the tears started flowing. The whole car shook as he came to the realization that he might not make it. He might never get married. He might never have kids. He might never grow old. He might never live. He was terrified. I was terrified, but I stayed strong. I stayed as strong as I could for him because he needed someone to be his pillar during the storm. And I would be anything he needed me to be. We would fight this, together.

Eight—I remember him growing weaker by the day.

The treatment was aggressive. Chemo and radiation, for what seemed like years but it was only a couple of months. The doctor said it was a small chance of survival but we wanted to fight. He wanted to fight. I wanted him to fight, but then I started to see him grow into a person I couldn't recognize. He became thinner and weaker. Fewer laughs and smiles. Deep down, even then, I think I knew I was going to lose him, but I didn't want to believe it. I didn't want to accept it. I needed him. He was mine and I was his. Always.

Nine—I remember him shaving his head.

When he noticed his hair falling out he decided to shave it off. He valued his hair more than I did, and I knew it was eating him from the inside with the thought of him losing his hair. I remember buying some clippers from Walmart. I remember standing in our bathroom as he sat on the edge of the bathtub, his knee bouncing up and down with nerves. He said just do it, it's just hair. And I said that's funny coming from someone who could rock a bald head. That got him to laugh. I kissed his head and shaved off his hair.

Ten—I remember me shaving my head with him.

His hair surrounded us on the floor. I looked up at myself, realizing that I was here for him, just like he had been for me every time I needed him. So with no thought, I brought the clippers to my head and my hand moved, leaving behind a valley between two mountains. We were both shocked, to say the least. He didn't say anything but a tear left his eye and I knew he was thankful that I was on this journey with him.

Eleven—I remember crying when the doctor told him the cancer had spread.

We were in the same office. Same doctor. Same look. Same pity. The cancer had spread to his liver, his kidneys, and his bones. There was no chance for survival.

Twelve—I remember his troubled breathing.

He started to struggle for breath for the smallest things. Rolling over in bed. Grabbing the remote. Making a bowl of cereal. The man that I loved was slowly deteriorating in front of me and I couldn't do anything but watch. We were both dying in different ways. It wasn't till we were lying in bed, sleeping, that he scared me. The coughing started and didn't stop. He couldn't catch his breath. He couldn't breathe. The thought of him dying terrified me to my bones and it felt like he was taking the air out of my lungs to survive. The sad part is I would have let him if it only meant that he would have more time. I took him to the hospital that night.

Thirteen—I remember our last time.

It was the night before I had to take him to the hospital. I finally finished my book and I wanted him to read it. I wanted him to know that this book and every story I write after this was for him and only him. Forever and always. Once he finished reading it, he came into our bedroom and kissed me. He didn't need to say anything out loud. The kiss said everything. I love you. I need you. I want you. You are forever mine. In the next lifetime and every time after that.

Fourteen—I remember our last kiss.

He became more wires than man at the end. A machine was giving him air. IVs were pumping medicine and water so he would stay hydrated. He had a catheter, that he fought tooth and nail to not get put in. I sat by his bedside, as I did every night. He seemed so innocent, so fragile, so vulnerable. So I leaned over and kissed him. My last kiss. His last kiss.

Fifteen—I remember holding his hand as he took his last breath.

He had fallen into a coma after the kiss. The doctor said that there was no chance of him waking up. His lungs were getting worse. His kidneys were shutting down. It was best to pull the plug.

Sixteen—I remember trying to shake him awake.

I tried to crawl into bed with him. He couldn't be dead. He couldn't have left me. He couldn't have been taken away from me. I couldn't let go. The nurses had to pull me away.

Seventeen—I remember kissing his cold lips.

I don't really remember much after that.

Eighteen—I remember coming home without him.

No one tells you that you stop breathing when you lose the love of your life. Your lungs just stop. Slowly it feels like your heart slows down and everything around you ceases to exist because nothing exists. There is no you without him. What is the point of going on when life is never going to be the same?

Nineteen—I remember the funeral.

I remember the I'm sorry's and the He's in a better place's. But when you lose someone you don't want to hear that. You don't pity. You don't sorrow. You want to be alone. You want people to understand that you are alone in a new world that you don't know how to navigate because you are alone. You have to learn how to breathe again. How to wake up every day with part of your soul missing. You want to wrap yourself in a grief cocoon and drown in darkness till it's your time to go.

Now, when I awake from my dreams, my heart hurts like a thorn-covered vine wrapped itself around my heart and squeezes every time I open my eyes, every time I breathe. Every time I wake up tears stream down my face and I try to make them stop, but I can't.

How can I go on when my will to live is gone?

Twenty—I forgot to say goodbye.



Early Morning through Redwood

Jung In



Life in a Ghost Forest

Isabel Lemus Kristensen

Photographic diptych

Pocket Homes

by Lilli Rudine

I've been living in my raincoat lately.
Buttoned up and grazed with mud
I've stayed out late enough,
to rejoice in frog songs on bitten ears
to open stitches on my cuts—

white moths pick at my eyelids
drinking away the poison in the flickering wisp of a wing.
They settle on me like moss and bundle into my ears
they whisper—
as you soothe a blinding fog to fall

I carry a pocket of lavender to help me sleep.
The day I caught you knitting, you want a bedtime story
and I'd braid the bristling violets into your long, dark curls
I'd give you nothing, you'd take a look at me
and trace patterns on my skin's blue bruising—

Stomping through stones, the bridge peeks out of the stream
to greet us every morning
you wrap that scarf around me—itchy like ivy,

the frost in my eyes seethe as I watch you knit—
we sit while you patch up the scrapes on my knuckles and knees.

Yellow bumpy bud flowers reach through my sore fingers
catching me like a spider weaving me into a web,
you weep over my scraped knuckles—
weaving a home in lavender and strawflower
these nimble fingers craft such cozy holds—and I want you

when I taste the itchy evergreen on my lips.
Your breathing syncs with the chill under my skin,
holding my head as you nuzzle kisses
cry with the moths fluttering off of my eyelids
and your ivy grows a hug around my heart—

My curls tangle into your scarves,
old chill-bitten mornings thaw in your arms,
spiders settle in lavender patches under winding ivy.
We stitch together a nest of loose threads in our pockets—
finally, I unbutton my raincoat before getting into bed

Absence

by Candle De Ferrari

Into the Heights

We chose to ascend rather than suffer down below. Too much existed constraining our desires to be free. Physically, socially, mentally, emotionally - really.

We never managed enough creativity to take advantage of the concrete slums. Maybe it just wasn't possible. We were tired of learning our lesson, again and again.

Narrow roads, designed for travel to-and-from work, would roll in the armored vehicles, the tanks. Open space above granted aerial surveillance ease in tracking our escape.

Housing and business structures worked as decorated walls, funneling our every movement into choke after choke. Cameras were omnipresent. Dead space. Dead movement.

Every aspect of a hellscape has its purpose in creating hell, right? Else, hell would crumble.

The mountains proved to be our saviors.

Finally, we could detach from the means of sustenance - dependence - we sought to unmake. No more grocery theft, no more trying to nurture plants within the midst of civilization. Real farming proved not only feasible but desirable. We could sustain ourselves, our needs, through our own means - and to each according.

Independence. Sovereignty.

Every militant brought their own unique life experience and skills to the table, invested enough in a prolonged freedom to utilize them in an honest way. Stolen, or won, equipment quickly supplemented our own.

We became greater - together.

Dream's Wake

I wake up, only a little sore. Mostly my own fault. I still haven't found a more comfortable sleeping bag.

Light weaves its way through even the dense covering I'd found, illuminating every natural shade of green, of brown. Wind rustles the trees far above. I can tell its early morning. The smell.

Turning my head, I see I'm the first to wake though not by much. I stand, stretching a bit as I take my first steps.

No bad news seems to have come about overnight. We've got a few hours before making any contact, if we keep a good pace.

I get my pack ready, preparing to move on. Nerves rattle through the group. No one knows what to expect.

Nothing like this exists anywhere.

Natalie, I'm Sorry

by Adriana Stanzione

Dear Natalie,

Portland is so cold and green, but I've heard that autumn will soon come with a colorful vengeance, or so they say. I don't feel at home yet, though I didn't feel home when I was at home either. I bought a purse big enough to fit a notebook, but of course I'm not writing. I'm an artist that doesn't create anything. No I can't explain it, that would require words, punctuation, adjectives and nouns. It's not a feeling I'm most proud of, but I feel a sick sense of satisfaction from having absolutely nothing to show for myself, nothing concrete at least. The line between complete liberation and complete anonymity is but a gossamer thread.

I dreamt the other night that I stood on the tracks just outside your bedroom window, before the flood swept everything away. I watched you silently in the moonlight shrug of your tinfoil blanket and wring out your wet hair. I gazed fixated on your bare feet and your pretty fingertips until a huge freight train knocked me off my feet. I fell in the dirt and scraped my elbows. The same way I did back then on the patio when you were teaching me how to do a cartwheel.

In my dream I remember the way your eyes looked when you turned your doorknob quietly and nervously tiptoed like a child through the damp grass and sharp pebbles to meet at the edge of the ocean bluff. Your eyes looked the same as I remembered; they always reminded me of two heavy stones dropped in the deepest darkest well. I'm still waiting for the sound of the stones hitting the water, but they just kept falling and falling through the dark, never reaching the bottom. I've never been able to hear that faint and gratifying splash, and spent years staring into the black abyss waiting bitterly for an echo that I knew would never come.

Before I forget- I wish we could have finished that awful movie you begged me to watch with you, the night before I left for good. You wanted me to stay, said there was no one else here that you could talk shit to. I think it was then when I felt the closest I've ever felt to a stranger. Your raspy laugh, your ginger hair on the pillow, that look you gave me when "the Warden" turned off the TV halfway through our movie: too many references to drugs and alcohol. We're 19! we laughed, and for a second I rested my hand against your forearm.

In my dream last night we shared one more final goodbye. You told me again about how you lost your father's ashes in the flood, and I told you how I prayed to God when I was eleven that my parents would get back together. Well did He answer back? you asked. And I said no, but His silence did give me a great sense of humor and a passionate desire to be alone, eternally, and you gave me that look. Then we both watched the water ripple for another bleak and beautiful hour, until I broke our silence: Do you think we'd die if we jumped off this bluff, would it be quick, would the sea swallow our bodies whole? And you said no, She would spit us out because it is not our time yet.

Natalie, I wish we could say that we miss each other, but you and I both know we don't. I think if we ever passed each other on the street we'd each pull a white sheet over our heads and vanish in a manic flurry of coloring pages and prescription pills. It's only because you're Guilt and I'm Shame, and our ghosts could never be as warm as they hoped, no matter what they did, no matter how we tried.

Persona non grata

by Adriana Stanzione

Halloween
Fallen leaves
Endless green
Cash machine

*Wait- stop. Skip this song, it's not sappy enough.
...Got any more of your stupid rhymes for me?*

Coffee bean
Taste like mean
Junkie queen
How obscene

[...]

That eye on the tree trunk is looking at you weird. It's angry. Naturally. Imagine the amount of anonymous eye contact that poor thing gets. What if you're reincarnated into a tree-eye. A tree-eye on a busy city street full of hipsters and wannabe artists. Oh the humanity.

If I'm being reincarnated into anything it's gonna be those sun-bleached rugs people have on their back patios that no one wants to throw out, because it would require them to lift up each piece of patio furniture by just a corner leg, as to awkwardly shimmy the dead-spider-dust-demon of a rug out from where it was held to the ground. Lower back pain included. And anger.

Remember Mommy and Daddy's infamous patio furniture fight: California, B.C. Back then, during the Grapevine fires. Van Morrison on the boombox. You and Mia barefoot, hiding in the hibiscus, trying not to laugh. Mommy said the f-word.

Yeah but then the joke got old. Quick.

Then it was Mommy and Daddy hate each other. Mommy and Daddy's banter isn't funny anymore, it's too sad and redundant, and cruel. They turned out to just be regular people after all. What a catastrophic let down. Remember the bloodshed on Christmas Eve in the laundry room? Surprised that one didn't end in divorce.

Girl, they've been divorced for over ten years.

No, I just meant like, at the time, like, in hindsight.

I didn't even give a shit though. Santa was coming. Nothing else mattered.

Walk sign is on, dumbass. Get of your phone, you're perpetrating the Gen Z stereotype. You self absorbed, chronically online...pretentious...um, what else...bratty -

Hold on, is that car gonna stop? They're going, like, Princess Diana speed.

Ok well the worst case scenario is you get hit, die instantly. We're all going to die anyway. And you won't be all butthurt about it because you'll be dead. Silver lining: You'll finally reach the outermost edge of the universe and encounter what lies outside of it. What lies beyond infinity. You'll finally get your answer.

I was thinking more like, worst case scenario I get hit but at least I get an insurance claim and a payout, but yeah, no, death is fine too. Oh, and shut up about the universe- I'm too tired to even go there right now.

Why, cuz it makes you wanna roly-poly yourself into a tiny flesh-ball and find the deepest crater left in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion to putt yourself into?

Yes, because it makes me wanna roly-poly myself into a tiny flesh-ball and find the deepest crater left in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion to putt myself into.

-

Sephora's open. Go on, be a girl. Women love makeup don't they. Long pretty eyelashes and pretty pink lips.

Women love to look pretty for all the cameras hidden in the trees and on the sidewalks and in their classrooms and in the shower and in their bed.

Women love shopping too, don't forget. They love to saunter absentmindedly through the mazes of pretty clothes and jewelry, lightly touching the tips of sweater sleeves as they stroll along, syncing their pace to "the beat", that nagging headache of a song whose dictatorship plagues their mind, endlessly.

Women love pretty little things they can hold in their hands. With pretty designs and labels, too. And you never know what the audience will prefer- Wes Anderson fanatics will love a room well-decorated with ornate Rococo-like props. Or maybe they'll like David Fincher more. If so, you better put that lipstick back. Go get a pack of cigarettes and a punk rock diagnosis. You don't care about beauty and love and pretty little things. You have bigger crazy-violent fish to fry. And you look so sexy doing it.

-

Ok it's dark. Time to listen to some Elliott Smith and grip that pepper spray like your life depends on it. I mean, your life kinda, literally does...

Jack-o-lanterns!!!

[...]

Can you skip this song, let's save it for when we're a little more depressed. It'll sound better.

"Oh Well, OK" or "Coming up Roses".

Oh. Girl, "Oh Well, OK".

Nice. Let's get this pity party started.

-

Ooh ok, brace yourself. This repressed memory of one of the most embarrassing things you've ever done is about to avalanche itself through the wall of your subconscious like the Kool-Aid Man.

Did you know there are woodland elves and adorable little hobbits- hobbits with southern hospitality and their own little antique spoon collections? All hiding here within the moss and tangled weeds of this lucky bastard's front yard.

You're really fighting this memory like you're the next heavyweight champion of the world, aren't you.

I'm wiping the floor with it. you know it too. It's like Waterloo up in this bitch.

Alright fine, But I gotta pick at least something to make you sulk about.

There's a certain wholesomeness to that front porch there, you know what I mean? It's making me feel a certain way that I can't put into words, but I know that it's a feeling that only a child is capable of having. Like, the world is such an amazing and warm and beautiful place. Love is everywhere. Everything is ok and everything will be fine. You remember that feeling?

Yeah, like when your parents are carrying you half asleep, your arms around their neck, down that short and sacred path from the car to your bed. You can't wait for tomorrow. Not for any particular reason, other than just the fact that you'll be alive.

[...]

Alright lay it on me girl, cmon now.

Ok, so: Boy from class. Teased you sweetly. Tried hard not to stare at your lips too long. Looks like if the Pacific Northwest knitted a man who'd publicly humiliate you for not knowing who the band Pavement is.

You made him laugh too. Tried not to stare at his hands for too long. Too bad he couldn't break through to your ironclad heart, you vulgar, yet at the same time, kinda endearing, wench!

Oh and the last time you saw him he thought you smelled like an alcoholic factory worker from Soviet Russia. And he thought you looked like if Eminem was a French whore from the 1930s.

Loser. Outcast. Persona non Grata. Condemned to a life of loneliness and misery. Try to fetishize it all you want, never betray that aloof cool-girl exterior. But when you finally die alone, an old spinster, childless in a heap of empty pints of Ben & Jerry's and books you put off reading for decades, then you'll understand.

[...]

Understand what, exactly?

I don't know.

It's ok, you were feelin it. In the moment.

Exactly. Like, the words just poured out of me so smoothly, I just - Oh, thank Science, we're almost home!

Yeah, we just passed the designated bench where we sit down and smoke a cigarette hunched over like we're Phillip Seymour Hoffman in like, any movie he's ever been in.

Ah, yes. PSH bench.

-

Did you like it tonight, the self-deprecation monologue? Be honest.

Well, you know how much I loathe the idea of living childless with a fridge full of my favorite desserts and shelves straining under the weight of unread books....

Only thing I forgot to add were the "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" reruns. God, I know you too well.

I liked your cadence, though. Also the Ben & Jerry's part- what flavor is it, in this unfortunate tale of mine?

Pecan Pie.

Oh fuck off.

Tonight Dough.

You're goddamn right it is

Petrichor

by Sami Ingle

On a dilapidated,
mold-encrusted covered swing,
we sit — we sway —
and listen to the rain create
a pond out of a puddle above us.
The gentle pitter-patter quickly devolves
into aggressive tapping,
like the sound of rocks thrown at glass,
before the water cascades
over the sides of the awning,
splashing
unruly
drops onto our
bare feet.

We squeal out little squalls;
giggles
bursting forth
in pure delight at our
dampened — drenched — world
as we pull our limbs
to our chests.

Huddled together, we look like
the roly-polies that live
under the bricks lining the yard —
the same ones that
curled into
little spheres in our crusty, mud-caked palms,
hiding from the cruel giants who had

plucked them
out of their homes.

The clear, unclouded droplets fall
violently
from the silvery, hazy ether.
We watch as they ricochet
off the impenetrable concrete.
They bounce a few times before their energy
fades.

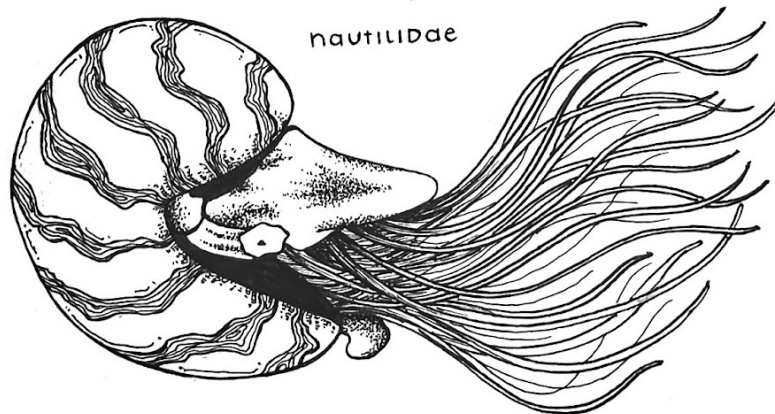
The repetitive motion
Lulls — mesmerizes — us
into a calm trance before
a bolt of branching lightning — a swollen, pulsing
vein —
filled the sky with life, transforming
the dull, dark gray
into a field of
lavish and lovely lilac.

Watermelon

by Hawthorn

and it was in that moment
at the bottom of the bottle
in a sea full of tears
of her own creation
she wailed for years to come
and uncork her
she bloated til she floated
growing lighter & lighter
ready to fly
regardless of glass cap or throttle
but the weight of the fears
kept on growing
like a seed swallowed many years ago
who grew twisted without light
and drank & drank until
it swelled
like some great drunk melon
growing & growing
until it split down the middle
with no grand red cut crease—
just a wrinkle that couldn't
fold in any longer
and leaked out & drown her
trapped in a bottle
alone at sea
reaping and sowing just,

one little plant,
that just kept on growing.
with no light and no eyes,
some baby kept safe at home
until it skin ripped
and it tore
for it could bear no fruit
Only Mold.



I am Kind and I am Hurting

by Lama Taha

There are times in my life that feel so overwhelming and painful all it takes for the River Nile to gush out of my watery eyes and stream down my flushed cheeks is one genuine, warm inquiry, “What’s wrong?”

The River Nile is so peaceful and inviting as it hosts laid-back social gatherings on its banks. The River Nile is also forceful and powerful as it swallows swimmers whole into its deep waters. My waters are calm and overwhelming.

Homesickness hits me hard especially when it feels like everything in my life is falling apart. It’s never just one thing. It’s missing the friends that I had and old school days. And craving home cooked meals and fresh local ingredients. It’s also grieving the fact that my life back home will never be the same because there are changes in people and places I simply cannot reverse.

On June 3rd 2019, massive sit-ins all around Sudan were violently dispersed, including the Khartoum sit-in by the military headquarters. This sit-in went on for months as part of the fight for a civilian government. It was a place that fostered all the hopes and dreams of thousands of people. The people built makeshift clinics and gave out free food. There were murals being painted on every wall and art performances and impromptu music making. There were discussion corners and information sessions about politics and current events. It was a place where the people felt safe enough to be truly kind and supportive. But a massacre at the hands of the government destroyed everything and killed hundreds and some bodies were thrown into the Nile and later found floating, unidentifiable...

The collective pain and grief feels so immense that I don’t think the Nile itself, with all its vastness, could contain it.

The great River Nile, also known as Alneel, gives unconditionally. It is a resource for agriculture, fresh water, fishing, cattle farming, transportation, etc... It is a source for life and for its surroundings to thrive. We refer to Alneel as “Bahr” or sea/ocean which indicates its significance and glory.

Sudanese people are known for their kindness and generosity. It is the kind of generosity that might even seem aggressive to someone not accustomed to it. And I feel as though this kind of selflessness is braided into my DNA. It is an extension of myself and it flows within me. The kindness I grew up in tells me to give unequivocally to others. And the kindness I was nurtured in tells me that Good is abundant and that there’s nothing more valuable than the people and support I have around me. So I know how to be kind to others, to my loved ones especially. I am confident I’m good at it.

If someone compliments my shirt, I offer it to them selflessly. If someone compliments my outfit, I return the compliment with high interest.

“كنتس بل قولح” “Your outfit is beautiful”

“لكن و ي ع ل حل اا” “Your eyes are beauty”

The River Nile consists of two rivers, two Niles. The Blue Nile and the White Nile each sourcing from separate lakes and flowing separately, until they meet. They meet at my home city, Khartoum, and become one. They become the famous River Nile.

At the confluence of the two Niles is where my home lies and is where I don’t hold back. My two Niles are this innate kindness I was gifted by my ancestors and my struggle, hurt and grief. These two meet and exist interchangeably inside me. And one does not compromise the other. Nor is my kindness limited by my hurt. There is no doubt that my Nile continues to flow both saddened and compassionate. Both grieving and gracious. Full and whole and in all its glory.

Poesía Críptica

by Andrei Brauner Guzmán

13 marzo 1894

¿Oyes el alarido de las sirenas? Vivimos a las orillas de este lago la mayor parte de nuestras vidas, pero de alguna manera, siempre las evadiste. Esta noche, las aguas centellean con sus voces fluviales en el canto y desde mi solitaria habitación, toco el cristal que me aísla de ellas y siento que no pertenezco al reino de los humanos. Me gustaría estar contigo, pero tú ya duermes tras ese muro. Debe de ser frágil, pues lo construyeron simples hombres, pero cuando cae la noche lo refuerzas con tus oídos cerrados. Con tu apatía, dibujas círculos de sal para eludir lo fantástico que siempre te amedrentó con su imprecisión. No me atrevo a entrar en tu habitación y encontrarte en tu habitual embriaguez, agotado por el peso del ser, y con la conciencia tan lisa como las paredes que te encierran. Es mejor permanecer despierta a solas para contemplarte con la esperanza de esclarecer tu fatal trastorno. Aun así, me hago ilusiones de someterme a tu vacío de borracho; de hecho, me fascina la ausencia de tu moral, repleta de todo el egoísmo de un adicto que pretende desvanecerse en vez de accederse a la muerte como lo manda Dios. Tu debilidad, que me pide adelantar tu perdición, es contagiosa. Pero soy tu testigo, no la jueza de tu destino y tampoco tu cuidadora. Tú muérete como te dé la gana, y yo olvidaré tus vicios con tal de que no me reproches.

Sentada, escribiéndote desde mi recámara puedo sentir tu conciencia conmigo como un ser invisible que levante los vellos finos que pueblan mis brazos. Pese a tu lejanía,

me encuentro espantada por la sensación de tus ojos perpetuamente fijados en mí, desde la dimensión oscura. El susto al darme cuenta de tu presencia galvaniza mi corazón, rojiza y carnuda, a saltar como un conejo, que con sus oídos perceptivos ha detectado un depredador dentro del amparo de la maleza. Entre los pálpitos que me estremecen hasta las extremidades, tu cabeza sin cuerpo me aparece como una máscara colgada en las paredes de mi cuarto. Tu abertura de boca, hueca y sin fondo, me invita a vagar por el interior de tu ser, a explorar las profundidades de tu pasado, pero algo no me permite adentrarme en ese mundo de oscuridad. Esta criatura no eres tú, sino tu semejanza; encarna lo lúgubre de tu cuerpo desechado a la podredumbre del alcoholismo. Al enfrentar tu máscara, tu espectro terrorífico tiñe el aire con la putrefacción de una boca descuidada, escasamente cepillada, y abandonada a los procesos de la desintegración natural.

Debería temer tu sombra aterradora, pero en vez de atormentarme, me das lástima. Lloro infinitamente y sin pena, llena esta habitación con tus lágrimas podridas que todavía queman la lengua con la amargura del licor. Ahógame con tu cobardía y deja que, desbordando las barreras de sal que dibujaste en las repisas de ventana, el agua me lleve a reunirme con el lago. ¡Qué gracioso es verte plasmado en lo sobrenatural que tanto rechazaste! Entiende que ahora tu castigo es un estado perpetuo de inversión, un enfrentamiento con lo inesperado, así que te vuelvo a preguntar una vez más, ¿No oyes el alarido de las sirenas?

To My Sun

by Matthew D Albertson

on winter days
when it's too cold for clouds
the sting of frostbite is oddly juxtaposed
by sunbeams softly caressing my burning skin
the erstwhile harshness of the season is made so
instantly pleasant i forget the freeze as her light breaks
the grey cloud cover and i know she (the sun) radiates
indiscriminately as i love her (the sun's) beaming
as much a conscious choice that shine as breathing is
for me here on this walk. i know she (the sun) casts
shadows. oh, yes, so many want their place in her
light. perhaps it's the warm blue sky contrasting
overcast's grey filter. it kills you the instant
that shine's made obscured. i feel
the frostbite's onset.

That burn so easily forgotten—so instantly remembered—
A stark reminder of Bill Withers' crooning, this winter weather.

you Sol are both in shadow now and sun
you shiver burned and miss your sun shamash
that sunlight kiss obscured for you today
for others walking here you are their sun.

Angoon, 2013

Bambi Moss

Alaskan islands in the summer
Wet, soaking wet.
I got home at 3am,
Sundown was midnight,
Curfew was sundown.
But no one seems to care.
Because what trouble could you possibly get into on an island with 600 people?
And no alcohol.
I spent my evenings
standing at the local playground, perched feet away from the steep perilous cliffs that
gave the moldy wood chips a gray sea-side view,
and the swing set a nice thick coating of rust.
I once found an otter paw on the shore there,
apparently, they crawl onto land to die.
I don't know why anyone would want to die here.
The ground begins to shake.
The whales are feeding.
Out in the water,
too close for comfort,
the sea boils.
Feet away from where the wood chips end.



pervenire

Annica Davis

Illustration



pathos

ATTENTION PORTLAND STATE WRITERS,
ARTISTS, AND CREATIVES!

To submit your work for consideration for our
upcoming issue, visit us at [pathoslitmag.com/
submit/](http://pathoslitmag.com/submit/)

Follow us on Instagram @pathoslitmag for
information on submission dates, our Seed Packets
writing prompts, and updates on what the Pathos
editorial team is up to!