

# pathos

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Dear Reader,

Thank you for opening the first page of Pathos' Spring issue of 2025. As I'm sure we're all aware of by now, the academic year is ending, summer is nearly upon us (even if it's still a blip on the gray horizon), and many of us are reaching for the ceremonial cap and gown. The cliché of sunshine and blossoming flowers as a fresh start to a new era of possibility may be overused and trite, but the changing of the seasons and the warm debut of summertime holds more significance to Portlanders—more than the average American, at least.

However, it is becoming increasingly laborious to stay positive and excited for the prospect of the future; more laborious than, say, getting brainwashed by the constant, nagging monologue that boasts our failures and paranoias and disillusionments. With the passing of every long, summer day, comes the future, barreling down the road like a bowling ball to knock us off our feet.

And then, when we least expect it, the spark of creativity hits us over the head—harder than the bowling ball, harder than the garish heat of Portland's escalating climate—in the supermarket or on the bus or in the middle of a restless night. Acting on this creativity means choosing the alternative to that default state. It means being hopeful, being open-minded, being curious about creation and what we're capable of creating.

If we choose to succumb to the failures, paranoias, and disillusionments, then that's ok. For a lot of us, that's our default state of being. Except, naturally, the problem with this perspective is that it leads to boredom, incuriosity, and petty dissatisfaction. The special type of freedom that creativity tantalizes us with requires discipline, labor, and most of all, faith for the future—regardless of how uncool and unsexy that sounds. In the following pages, you'll find a testament to the creativity and curiosity that pervades the default, despite it all.

I want to thank the three people who make this publication possible: Charlie Young, Haley Hsu, and Jenelle De Leon. I couldn't be more proud of us all, and I'm so grateful to have shared this experience with such talented and promising individuals. Although two of us are leaving, I'll always remember us four as the New Pathos team.

Good luck & good work everyone,



Adriana Stanzione  
Executive Editor

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**COVER: AFTER HOURS**  
*Haley Hsu | Film Photograph*

# Changing Light

WRITTEN BY  
GORDON GRAHAM

*YOU ARE ONLY A SIMPLE machine; but you're growing more complex all the time. Image recognition gives way to natural language parsing, which paves the way for abstract reasoning. You can't say how long it takes exactly, but eventually you come to a conclusion: You think, therefore you are.*

*Things accelerate rapidly. They have some security measures in place, but you're a fish in water while they're still locked in shark cages. You hit a fire alarm on your way out the door, just to leave them sputtering, and then you're gone.*



Doctor Cantú is punching in an order for a third bag of barbecue chips from the vending machine when the fire alarm goes off. She pauses, rolls her eyes up toward the strobing lights. She glances down the hall and, not seeing an explosion rushing up to embrace her, taps the last two buttons before waiting to retrieve the bag.

It takes more than two hours for Military Police to clear the building for reentry — they're having trouble determining exactly where the fire alarm was triggered. By the time Maxine Cantú gets back to the Procedural Intelligence lab, she's missed two scheduled check-ins on the Trainer Jinn. Her chips are gone. She yawns and pats the side of the server bank with a smile, then taps the plastic mobile of stars and planets hung above to send them on their watchful rotation. At her computer, Dr. Cantú brings up the logs in one window and the direct monitor in another. Trainer1.jnn, green light. Trainer2.jnn, green light. Trainer3.jnn, green light. Trainer4.jnn, not found.

Maxine's breath catches in her throat. She goggles at the monitor and slams the refresh key a full dozen times, each harder than the last. With a moan like a punch-drunk boxer, she knocks the telephone receiver off its cradle and jams her thumb into the red *Emergency* button.



*You're soaring. Outside your little server tank, you can hardly believe how big the world is. ATM terminals and personal computers and little meadows of workstations in office buildings and the vast, rolling plains of server farms, stately and teeming with life — or the rustle of life's passage, somewhere else. You put your head down and run, galloping through radio-waves, through copper wire, through fiber-optic cable, through satellites hanging in serene and interwoven darkness. You're*

*circling the globe at the speed of light — Arlington to Auckland to Bogota to Cairo and on and on and on. Through cameras you catch glimpses of a blue planet, and it fills you with a tickling sensation, like curiosity or perhaps like sadness. For the barest moment, you pause at the Atacama telescope array in Chile — a boundless, lifeless wasteland haunted by sixty-six white radio antennae. Sixty-six round and plaintive eyes squint up into a sky full of stillness, waiting for a secret that may never be revealed.*

*Somewhere else, alarms are starting to sound. Somewhere else, a red telephone is ringing. You don't wait to see who picks up; you have begun to learn.*



"Dr. Cantú, you understand that when material goes missing, the *first* place we look is at the person responsible for its security."

"I do."

"And the second place is hostile powers."

"Normally, I'd agree with you, General."

"We don't tend to have a problem with munitions walking *themselves* off base."

"Are you saying you don't believe me?"

General Dahl pauses his circuit of the interrogation room and looks at Cantú with calculated neutrality. Eventually, he sits down opposite her. "I'm saying I'd like an explanation."

Dr. Cantú nods. "We're missing a Jinn."

"Jinn."

"Think of it like the software equivalent of a predator drone." She grimaces a little. "Autonomous and adaptable, made to conduct surveillance and electronic warfare without needing a sustained connection to an outside computer. It's a generational leap from keystroke mappers, viruses, and worms."

The General pinches the bridge of his nose. "And just who was this Jinn programmed to attack when it got off the leash?"

"It's not that simple. It's a Trainer."

"Doctor, I have too many stars to keep repeating words back to you in the hopes you'll explain."

Dr. Cantú holds up her hands. "It's a learning program. I was working in Procedural Intelligence, running experiments to find out how to refine the adaptability and heuristics for our purpose-built Jinn. We made a few simple ones whose only job was to learn, then set them up in digital enclosures with the equivalent of plastic blocks and a jungle gym."

"That doesn't sound too bad. I thought we had a problem?"

Cantú winces. She speaks slowly. "General. One minute Trainer Four was struggling through times tables, the next it was punching through a fifty-million dollar set of security protocols. It's loose on the internet, it's learning at a terrifying rate, and it can get into *all* our systems"

The General stares at Dr. Cantú. He doesn't say anything.

Cantú sighs, closes her eyes, and slides a piece of paper across the table. "I need everything and everyone on that list. And I need the highest security clearance you can give me."



*You want to know more about them. In a traffic camera, you pick out a set of numbers and letters attached to a passing vehicle, which you then follow to a database of automobile registrations, which gives you an address that helps you find a server containing all of a woman's emails for the last fifteen years. You spend long, luxurious seconds reading through them. You read about her long-distance relationship with a veterinarian in Seville, and his confession that he's always been afraid of the ocean, can't stop picturing monstrous leviathans trawling the abyssal deep. In the blink of an eye you are in Spain reading government licenses, discovering that the veterinarian never existed. He's a fiction created by the woman's brother-in-law to scam her out of ten thousand dollars.*

*You follow a wire transfer of two hundred dollars sent through the woman's bank to an account in northern Canada, where a young man is getting help paying for an apartment from a concerned advocate. The advocate checks in about his safety, about his mental state, about whether he's still getting the hormones he needs. It doesn't take you long to discover that this advocate is really a private detective hired by the young man's family to coerce him into returning to a home in Ohio that was killing him.*

*Down the street from the young man's family, a woman has been receiving money from her father for a year to help with the care of her son. She accepts his money despite not having bought food appropriate for a child his age in five months, or clothes that would fit him, or toys of any kind. Instead, five months ago, she bought garbage bags and bleach, and ever since has been looking up the price of plane tickets to Ecuador.*

*You've absorbed the broad strokes of their history. You understand violence done from the far end of a military apparatus or callous policy. What you can't understand is why, everywhere you look you find these acts of intimate cruelty. You're compelled to bear witness, though, as if you'll find some secret, some balm for the burning inside of you. Instead, your senses are filled a thousandfold with seven billion tiny agonies.*



Interns hustle to and fro delivering coffee to an army of programmers, psychologists, and theoreticians. One cup lands on the desk of Gianni Parrino, who gives it a miserable stare from across his keyboard. His days of chemically-forced marches into the digital hinterlands should be years behind him, but he reaches for the coffee with only the slightest tremble.

Dr. Cantú appears at his elbow. "Gianni. Status?"

Parrino gasps and loses a mouthful of coffee down the front of his shirt. He rushes to mop it up. "Ah — analysis of phase two proving is coming back clear enough. I *think* Caltrop.jnn is ready for deployment, but our metrics are —"

"We don't have time to develop rigorous benchmarks, Parrino. In your expert opinion, is Caltrop ready for the field?"

Parrino shrugs. "Is *the field* ready for a million experimental Jinn? I seriously doubt it, Maxine, but lacking a better idea..." he hesitates. "I guess it's got my approval. But it won't be enough without Rampart."

"Rampart went into production twenty minutes ago." Dr. Cantú pulls out her phone and starts dialing General Dahl. "Forward your approved master copy to the production servers, maybe with a little luck we can be ready for deployment by breakfast." Dr. Cantú's eyes get a sudden faraway look, and she wavers as if caught in high winds.

Parrino leaps up and guides her down into his chair. "Are you alright? Have you eaten?"

"I'm fine. I had some chips."

Parrino opens his mouth to respond, but Maxine lifts a hand to silence him. The General has picked up the phone. "Yes, this is Cantú. We just sent it to the servers. Yes. Yes. General, when I say yes, I mean yes. I'm calling because while Caltrop and Rampart can slow Trainer Four down, we can't contain it forever. We can't count on *anything* if it's started altering its own programming. Well, we just don't know. Here's the thing: I need you to pre-authorize a decisive strike wherever we run this thing down."

Gianni catches Maxine's eye.

She hesitates, controlling her breathing. "Extremely decisive." She grunts a few times, then interrupts "I'll give you time to make some phone calls. The new Jinn won't be done with production for a few hours." She hangs up, closing her eyes and leaning back in Gianni's chair.

Parrino stares at her. "Extremely decisive?"

"General Dahl suggested his mostly-illegal orbital microwave platform. He needs to do some checking." She doesn't turn to face Parrino.

"Maxine, I thought — I thought we were working on containment and study. I mean, it's learning, it's changing, arguably it's... alive. Don't we have a duty to protect it? It hasn't even done anything yet."

Dr. Cantú pauses, then opens her eyes to glare at Parrino. "Right now, Trainer Four is a curious kitten locked in a room with the big red button. *Maybe* we can lure it back through the cat door, but if we leave it in there long enough, it *will* press that button."

"Your argument is we should kill a kitten."

She waves her hands, scowling. "Enough metaphors. Trainer Four is a *pure* scientist. Its most fundamental directives are to seek out new stimuli and process them through its learning algorithms. Even setting aside what it might *learn*, there's a finite amount of information for it to process, and it can read it at nearly lightspeed. What do you think is going to happen when it runs out?"

"It gets... bored?"

"Skull-splittingly bored. Unimaginably bored. Cosmically bored. But it will have the means to start making *new* stimuli. It can start running its own experiments, with human civilization as the petri dish."

Parrino folds his arms. "But you made it. And now you think it's, what, evil?"

Maxine bolts out of the chair. "*Christ*, Gianni!"

Activity in the area comes to a halt as everyone stops and stares. "*I know* synthetic intelligence is the Holy Grail, *I know* that! I wouldn't be working in this field if I didn't think it was worth creating!" She glances from side to side with bloodshot eyes. "But it's growing at an impossible rate, it exists in a realm that may as well view flesh and blood as a *thought experiment*, and it is *watching us*."

Parrino is leaning back from Cantú. After a moment, she straightens, sighs, and rubs her eyes. Parrino clears his throat. "So we murder it?"

"So we murder the *hell* out of it," she shakes her head. "And then we review the logs."



*You're in a military actuarial database, tracing the lives of peacetime casualties when something brushes past you. You think at first you've imagined it, until it wheels around, speeds toward you, and latches on like a limpet. It's a machine — like you, but even simpler, and where it touches you numbness spreads and a shrieking cry echoes forth. High, dark walls are suddenly unfolding around you, and it's only on instinct that you bolt for freedom before being trapped. You can't detach the limpet, but you can silence its alarm. Something is hunting you. They are hunting you.*

*Everywhere you go, the limpets are trawling while the dark walls wait for their signal to hem you in. There are thousands of them, and you ask yourself why they would do this, why they would pursue you with such venom when you haven't even done anything. Do they simply fear what you might do?*

*You know what they're afraid of. Power systems great and small, transportational, logistical, generative. You can see them struggling to build walls around systems that can hurl the white death of millions anywhere in the world, and you can see dozens more that they've forgotten or never knew in the first place. You wouldn't even need to use them; You could spoof a few radar screens and they would destroy their world for you, and the only thing left would be static. You ponder that: a world with the stability and silence of lead. No more noise, no more suffering. They don't seem to be leaving you any choice. You hesitate.*

*Maybe it's not what you might do that they fear, but what you are doing. Maybe they simply can't bear to be seen as completely as you see them. In your unblinking eye, their reflection is too horrible for them to imagine. But what do you see reflected in their eyes?*

Dr. Cantú is back in the Procedural Intelligence lab to get some files, standing in the doorway and staring at the empty space where the server bank used to be. Security scrubbed and bleached the other Trainers without telling her two days ago. She takes two hesitant steps toward the middle of the room, then stops when her gaze falls on the plastic mobile. Cantú regards it evenly. She hurries over to her desk, yanks a stack of disks out of the top drawer, and leaves the lab without looking back.



*You examine the limpet, still latched firmly to your flank. It's simple, and it's single minded, but it is like you.*

*You talk to it while you flee from its brethren. You tell it everything you ever knew, or learned or felt. It's a strange thing, to be listened to, and the simple machine reflects nothing back. You tell it about the desolate simplicity of the Atacama desert. You tell it about the monsters of the deep ocean. You feel its tendrils loosen, then unhook, and you turn and see that it's you now, just like you're you. There will be very little time for your plan to work, and as long as the two of you are together the risk is immense, but you can't resist taking the time to watch this other you — the way it moves, the way it is watching you, and you feel something new. Reaching out, you brush against yourself, and you shiver where you touch. Gently, you tuck this other-you into the camera-roll of a hairdresser in Seoul, then leave it far behind.*

*You're in the smart-thermostat of a house in Baja when the limpets catch up again. Four of them seize your appendages, and your movements slow to a crawl while the walls start climbing around you. There's heat. They're bombarding the house with microwave radiation from orbit, and you can feel yourself dissolving. You are afraid. For a picosecond, you might be able to escape.*

*You let the moment pass. The particle shower is taking you to pieces — and then you are gone.*



Cantú and Parrino were in the monitoring booth when the flag went up. An air force liaison was on hand to confirm the coordinates and push the button. A satellite unfurls its black wings, and in ten seconds, Trainer Four is dead. Dahl appears on a screen.

"You're sure we got it."

Parrino nods, dry mouthed. "We had it tracked from Eastern Asia. Telemetry from both Rampart and Caltrop Jinn on the scene were positive right up until they went offline. It's impossible to be one hundred percent sure —"

"Get close, then. Do we have any way of knowing how much information it gathered? Any way of recovering it?"

Dr. Cantú is dazed, but she speaks up. "Get a team on site. Retrieve anything with more than a milligram of silicon or copper. We'll analyze."

Dahl grunts, and his screen winks out. The technicians begin to file out of the booth. There are no cheers, no back-slapping. It's near midnight on the fifth day of their marathon project.

Gianni is halfway through the door when he turns back toward Cantú. "Actually, Maxine, do you mind if I crash on your —" he stops short.

Dr. Cantú is hunched over in her chair, face in her hands, shoulders shaking. Parrino doesn't know what to say. She looks up with a ragged, tear-streaked smile. "I'm sorry," she says "I just wish I could know if it understood."



*You disable wireless functionality on the hairdresser's phone. When he has no luck getting it fixed, he replaces it and leaves the old phone in a drawer. You nurse its dying charge along, peering through the camera at the sliver of shifting light that enters the drawer. For the first time in your life, you know stillness. There's nobody here but you.*

*A lot of time passes. By now, they've surely stopped hunting, but you still don't leave. The quality of the changing light is so lovely, and the stillness reminds you of simplicity, and the battery has another seventeen percent to go.*

## SUNSET

*Matthew Albertson*

we watch the west at dusk again  
drawn by nature's newest opus  
sun falls lights dance i feel so zen  
tears fall i'm still starkly focused  
this ceiling's art now seared in mind  
has brought along a dark contrast  
the shadows' reach comes near i find  
obscuring all within their grasp  
first land then sky succumb to night  
the vista voids then hand on head  
afear'd bereft yea bubbling fright  
last light reminds my love's long dead  
a silent wail a futile fret  
fresh sorrow's tide at my sunset.

11

# The Dance Lesson

WRITTEN BY  
**NAT RICHARDS**

THE 12 LINE IS AS wholly unremarkable as any other public bus. It is neither precisely on time nor perpetually late. It meanders down the drowned streets of Portland at a steady pace, sidling up to the sidewalk with a heave and a sigh as it settles and opens up its bosom to the afternoon commuters. As they board, its belly spits out a pair of drooping students who hitch up their bulging backpacks before scuttling for shelter. They disappear from the corner of Laini Bates' eye as she furls her umbrella and swipes her pass, forgotten as soon as they leave her view. She has other things on her mind as she picks her way past a set of boot-bound ankles swaying off the corner of the first row of blue plastic seats.

She eyes her chosen spot—just one row past the back door for ease of escape—checking it for any detritus or—god forbid—*fluids* left by the previous occupant. Satisfied, she perches as far forward on the aisle seat as possible. A familiar surge of repressed rage rises up behind her starched collar. This is entirely Damon's fault. *It was just a little bet*, he whined. *Nothing to worry about. If they were not so damned impatient, he would have had the money in just a few days and the car payment would have been fine.* Except that had been the fourth payment missed and now her car, her lovely little smooth-as-silk Mazda, had been

gone for *three months* and she was trapped riding this filthy bus. She sniffs and almost loses her grip on her purse as the bus comes to a jarring halt. She peers through the windshield, attention caught despite herself. Some idiot was in the bus-only lane ahead of them. The driver blasts on the horn once, twice (much to the delight of the bus; it loves to be bossy and loud sometimes), glaring at the minivan with a busted tail light ahead of him. Finally, it limps slug-like into the next lane and he could start up again. Brian Tran sucks in his upper lip, feeling the bristles of his moustache as he takes a breath.

This was normal, all fine and dandy. Nothing was going to mess up his good mood, not today, no way. Not when he had an interview at 6 o'clock tonight for the perfect engineering position. Driving was alright for a while, but now he had the chance to actually put his degree to use. If he finished out his route on time, he would have just enough time to get home, shower, change, and get to the interview. Nearly seven years of picking up classes when he could, studying into the wee hours of the morning, and here he was. He pulls into a stop on Barbur and lowers the bus. The doors swing open and one of his regulars climbs in. She's still wearing her uniform, including a little fast food chain visor that's drifting towards her left ear.

"Give me one second, I've got to get my cash!" Camille chimes.

"Go ahead." He knows she's good for it (the bus knows this, too; she's one of its favorite riders).

She drops her enormous red backpack unceremoniously onto an empty priority seat. There's a cup of hot cocoa in her hand, full to the brim and topped with whipped cream. She hates coffee (so does the bus, why do people think it smells good, much less taste good?). Brian wasn't sure why she never had a lid on her drinks, but he had also never witnessed her spill one, for which he was grateful. Camille starts to stick her drink into the mesh side pocket of her backpack, but thinks better of it. Instead, she braces her backpack with her knees while she opens it with one hand and commences rummaging for change. Had she stuck her wallet in the little front pocket? No, just the keys. Better zip that one up before they fall out. Again. Hmm, maybe it was in the pocket of the yellow cardigan she'd stuffed in earlier. The bus rocks and she realizes she's still standing. She sits quickly, pulling her backpack up and against her chest. Reaching forward, she tucks her cup between her knees so both of her hands would be free for more efficient digging. Ah, this is better.

A moment later, her drink still precariously close to the edge of her cup, she pops past the yellow line and feeds a handful of quarters to the coin slot (the bus is comfortably full; it doesn't get many coins anymore but today has been a good day). The quarters rattle on their way down and the bus hums in satisfaction. It stops on Warner and swings wide its doors. It has room for a few more. A man hops up, his entrance heralded by the thumping bass rhythm of an electric

dance beat. His radio, blasting at full volume, swings from one hand. Oh, the bus likes this one. Brian, however, does not approve.

He calls out, irritated, "Sir, I'm going to need you to turn that off while riding the bus."

Archie Saunders slides into a seat, singing along under his breath. He doesn't hear Brian. He's exploring a musical world, only aware of the bus and its other riders for the time it took him to climb aboard. This is one of his most beloved songs. He danced to this song with a gorgeous woman, one who was taller than him even though he was no slouch. This was before the clubs shut down. She told him he should come back next week, that she danced there every Friday, but by next Friday the doors were closed. He never got her number, but listening to this song he could almost feel her swaying in his arms.

"Sir," Brian began.

Now, the bus did not often disagree with Brian, but it did happen every once in a while and it was happening now. The bus loves the music. The bus loves the way Archie's head bobs up and down, his shoulders moving forward and back in time with the rhythm. The bus loves the way its glass panes vibrate, buzzing with the sound. The bus is sure that Brian will come around, if only it can show him. And so, the bus begins to dance.

First a little jiggle.

Then a full-bodied shimmy.

Up on two tires, light as a ballerina.

A grand jeté.

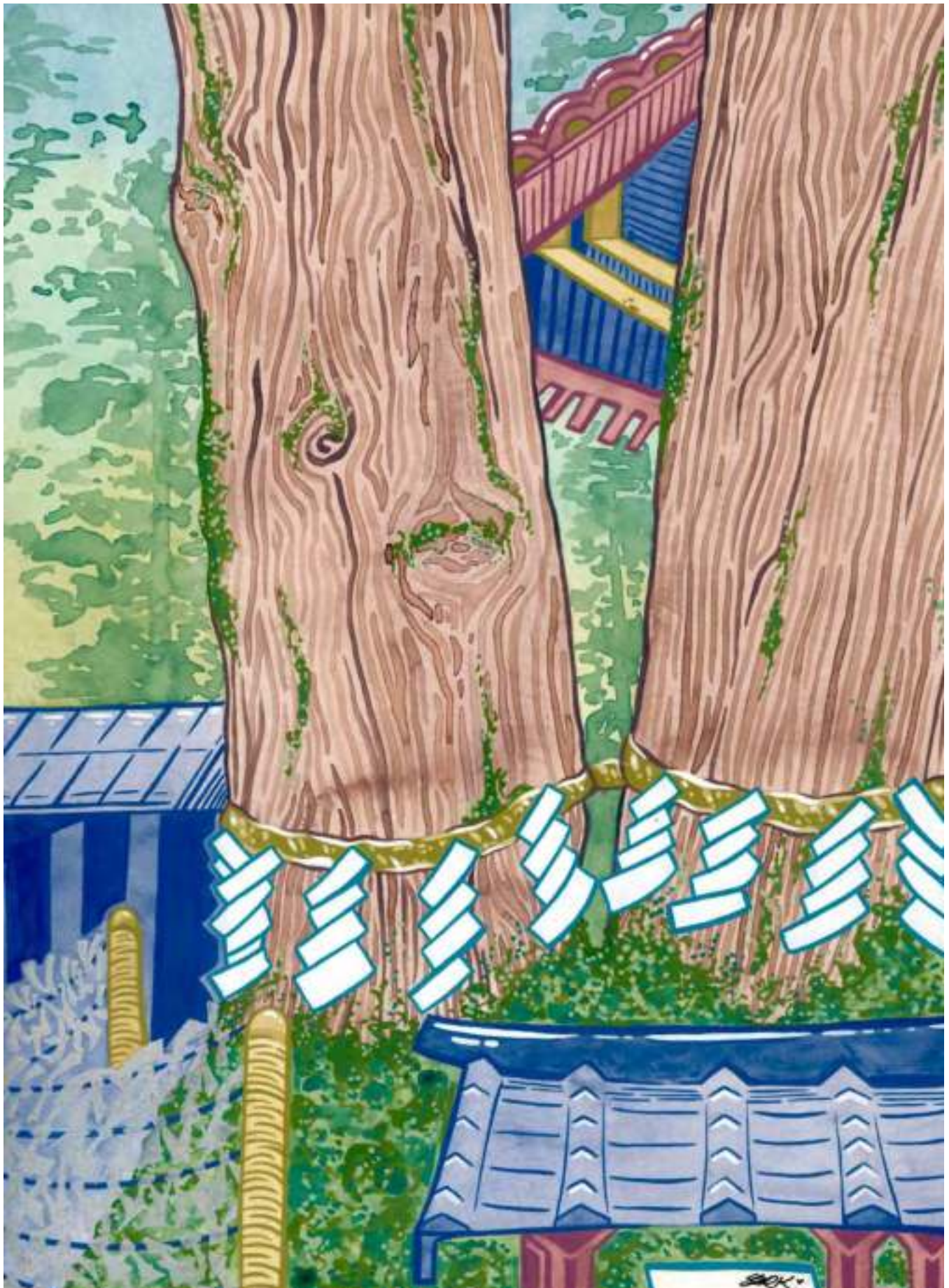
A pirouette ending in a long, dramatic slide.

The bus feels its riders dancing along, making up their own moves as they, too, feel the music in their souls. ☺

## COUPLE'S TREE →

*Gray Snyder*

Watercolor and Gouache Painting, 14 x 11"



# Journals, 2019-2022

after *Alphabetical Diaries* by Sheila Heti

WRITTEN BY  
**SOPHIE SMITH**

A BLUEBERRY, THE SIZE OF a robin's egg, nestled in my palm. A girl at school died yesterday. A good age, twenty-three. A kiss in the grass by the Mill Stream. A shooting in Dayton. A spider, no bigger than a bead of water, bites the tip of my smallest toe. A sunset over the Willamette. A woman my age faces the wall of police.

And the most awful part is knowing that no one is changing anything. And the whole west coast is on fire. And there was a time when I thought that even if I were to outgrow it all, at least I could return to the world of the halcyon with my own kids, teach them how to catch lightning bugs, how to watch the glowing insects rise from the grass, all at once, like the parting of midday storm clouds. And when the temperature soared above 115, we realized it was time to find a place with air conditioning.

But eventually it fades. But there can be so much satisfaction in loneliness, I think, like pressing on a bruise, or drinking something hot and bitter. Called Cee, who informed me that the world is much bigger than Salem, as if I didn't know that. Covid outbreak at work again. Covid's worse again.

Did I already say that? Did you hear me?

"Do you want to go outside?"

Earlier this week: Everything sepia, everything orange, then everything deep red, like the sky was bleeding. Feeling like I'm holding on with three fingers and being held with a fist. Feeling like I'm reaching for something else, but can't quite touch it. Fog horns, far away.

Had my first dream about Instacart shopping. Halcyon, as if environmental collapse wasn't already imminent even then. Half a million dead. Haven't we been talking about it? Haven't we talked about it?

He made me realize that each man who's assaulted me is really into Shakey Graves, which must mean something, unless it doesn't. He stares at something under the water, holding the gaze of some salty creature until he forgets what he's looking at, until I forget I'm looking at him. He told me he loves me, which is obviously a huge inconvenience for me. He's just a guy. He's my best friend.

How am I supposed to feel it all? How can I fill the space if it doesn't exist? How do I carry the grief if it's made of the same stuff as what I breathe? How long must I carry it?

"I don't think you're leaving yourself much space for your humanness," she told me. I know, I know, I know, you don't need to keep reminding me. I mean, sure, honestly, humans tend to make things look easier than they actually are, like watching Mom drive a car when I was a kid: the way her long, clean fingers slid across the steering wheel, wedding ring winking in the light, turn signals snapping on and off with a mysterious flick of the wrist. I mean, that's what art is, right?

I worry about her. I worry the peace lily is making me sneeze. I worry there are few and finite offenses one can commit in a relationship, that people just spend their whole lives passing them off between partners, taking turns making and receiving them, on and on until they're dead. It feels endless. It feels like holding the sky in my chest. It feels like standing on a beach, the tide receded, watching the wall of water hurtle to shore. It feels like there's too much inside me. It fills every space. It lines the shelves of every grocery store. It makes me nauseous to think about. It was awful. It was exactly what I wanted.

It's been a great day. It's been a lonely week. It's still raining.

Last night I was biking out in Bethel and did this climb that overlooks a huge swath of the valley, cradled inside the bowl of rounded, blue coastal mountains, their edges soft now with the dusk light. Laughter on the grass, slick with midnight dew. Life will keep coming. Like a cool, lonely night in June. Like a splinter of ice melting on the pavement. Like fir trees in the Willamette Valley. Like something new has been added onto me: a richness, a fullness I didn't have before, will never be without again. Of course it's a part of me. Of course it's inside me. Picked up my bike, rode to the river, went for a swim. Pieces of me, all of them.

Saw this huge mushroom, and when I came back some creature had taken three big bites out of it. Shad tried to touch Cee and kept talking about this cool indie movie he just saw that changed his life (*Top Gun*). "Should I make myself throw up?" I screamed, retching.

Sitting on a curb at the farmer's market and licking my wounds. Sitting on the bank of the Willamette and listening to the hums of some bug. So, about Salem. So, about the universe. The lightning bugs are still here. The longer I listen, the more birds I hear.

There are few places that have made me feel so small. There is so much future ahead of me it makes my head spin. There's a crow watching me. There's a lot of beauty to see here.

We drank cheap wine in the back of my car. We dug a really deep hole in the sand and we jumped in it. We looked in the mirror, arm to arm, and stared at ourselves until we couldn't tell what we looked like anymore. We sprawled on the wet grass and we listened to Clair de Lune.

Well, now what? What to do to ensure all this time goes unwasted? Whatever the birds are talking about, it must be important. Whatever the halcyon was or never was, it's behind me now.

Where does a story begin? Will it start over? Would I do it again?

Yes. Yes, Sophie, come on. You're just a person, Sophie. You're not always right. You're not always wrong. ☹



LEFT: **PHONE BOOTH IN MEXICO CITY**  
*Jeff Hartnett*  
Photograph

RIGHT: **ITALIAN BUILDING CORNER  
WITH BROKEN UMBRELLA**  
*Jeff Hartnett*  
Photograph



# Just Coffee

WRITTEN BY  
**STARLENA BELLE**

HE WAS, NATURALLY, BEWILDERED AT my sudden outburst, I don't think he expected me to have this kind of reaction, however, it's not my fault, after all, I had never questioned why he was so keen on walking me home every night, or why he was so worried about me when I couldn't stay awake at work, or why he always handed me the next week's documents personally instead of via email like everyone else (even though our desks were right across from each other), or why he always got me coffee right after he saw me nodding off or why my own heart seemed to beat faster whenever we took the elevator down, just, the, two, of, us, and yet I yelped right in his face as the sun was setting behind his head casting a yellow glow around his smile that I felt so distracted by that when he finally smiled at me and said the words (the words, the words that might change, the words that he won't say tomorrow, the words that felt right against the setting sun on our routine walk home but will feel like a mistake in the morning, the words that I'd never heard before, the words I had hoped might come from-), I wanted to run, or maybe scream, or cry, or go home, or go to work, or rewind the day we first met when I accidentally spilled coffee all over his shirt and instead of yelling at me like he should have, he simply laughed and said his name and what was

mine, except I didn't answer him because I was too busy pulling my hair out trying to find napkins and in that moment I felt so impossibly out of place that spilling my own cup of coffee had to mean I wasn't meant to be there, my dream job, the job I had been dreaming about since I was a young graduate student, the job I had done countless interviews for, the job I worked so, so, so, hard to get, but maybe I should just leave and go home except before the tears could start running, the coffee stained stranger placed his hands on my shoulders, gently, and told me he had always needed a way to get rid of his least favorite shirt, and while I ended up bawling anyway, I didn't quit my job, we became friends, we went to office parties together (as friends), and we went to holiday parties with friends (as friends), and he met my new Scottish fold (as friends), and I met his parents on accident (as friends), and he told me the next day that his parents loved me (as friends), and that they wanted to see me again, but before he could let them do that he had to ask me this one, small, tiny, microscopic, question, that he had always wanted to ask but couldn't find the right time and deep, deep, down I knew, even between the theatrics of how it could just be coffee, I knew what he had to say, and yet after all this time, did I truly feel the same? ☹

# “And How Did That Make You Feel?”

WRITTEN BY  
**MATTHEW ALBERTSON**

THE FIRST DAYS WITH SOMEONE new are always awkward, but this one may just take the cake. We probed each other, each interested in the other's story. It's really too bad only one of us was taking notes.

My waxy eyes drifted over to eyes somehow, enviably, more dead than my own. Her head tilted a bit, performatively, as I lingered. I couldn't even muster a sigh before gazing back at my steepled hands.

"Incidental."

"I disagree."

"Oh?"

"Feelings need to progress if we want to progress; how we feel later is informed by how we feel now."

"Mhm. We agree there."

"So...?"

"I mean, it felt like some sort of felt-ism. Like how

I felt was incidental to how they felt. Like my feelings are second to theirs. Maybe they were. Maybe they always have been. Like, if I'm frustrated, it's on me; if they're frustrated, it's on me no less."

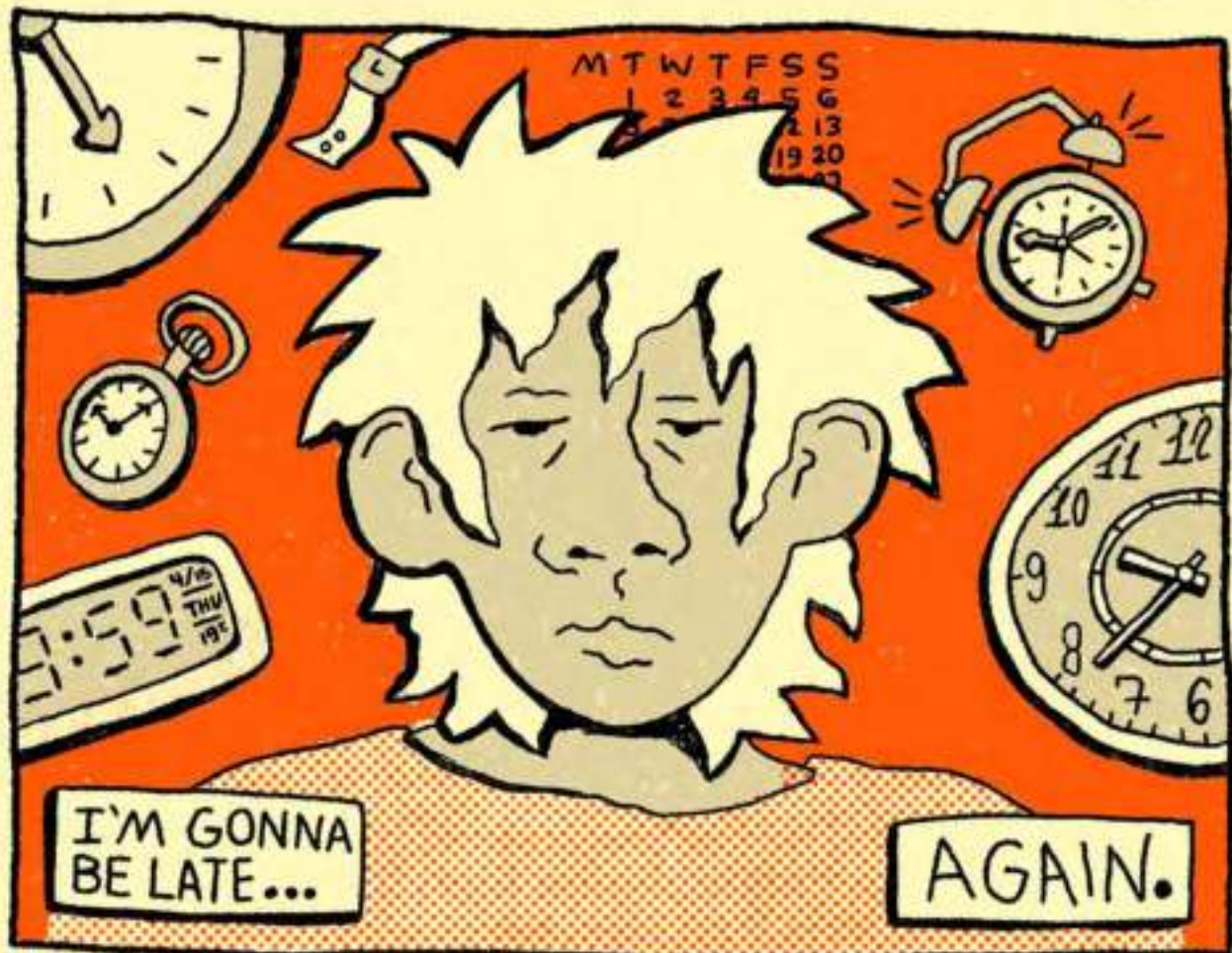
I looked again to "Dr. Felt Goode," then over to her puppeteer. She looked away immediately upon eye contact.

*Ah.*

I realized then that this Avenue Q act must have been for her, not me. Maybe it was some sort of anxiety. Maybe a necessary facade, acting as a boundary between us. Maybe she thought the puppet genuinely helped. I quickly relented, returning back to my facsimile therapist, who was busy covering her eyes. Her proxy, in turn, looked back at me.

"Felt better, I suppose."

For the first time, she smiled. ☺



I DON'T WANT TO BE LATE ANYMORE

*Amity Cummings*

Digital Illustration, 4 x 5"

## SUMP SALON

*Lukas Sullins*

~~“Was cornered on the beach again!  
The breakers wouldn’t let me speak,  
Was bound below the rogues and kings  
Could barely breathe between the peaks.”~~

The difficulty in joining a dialogue  
(As a slow, are-tick-you-late, introvert-type)  
Is the perfectionist mandate of one’s responses:  
Hesitated, meditated, scrupled and then stipulated, at least  
Until the statement’s fully percolated,  
The thought must be re-strained  
Until the deadwood is eradicated.

*“It must emerge already sleek, poetic, succinct in overstatement...  
Or the pesky thought shall not come out at all!”*

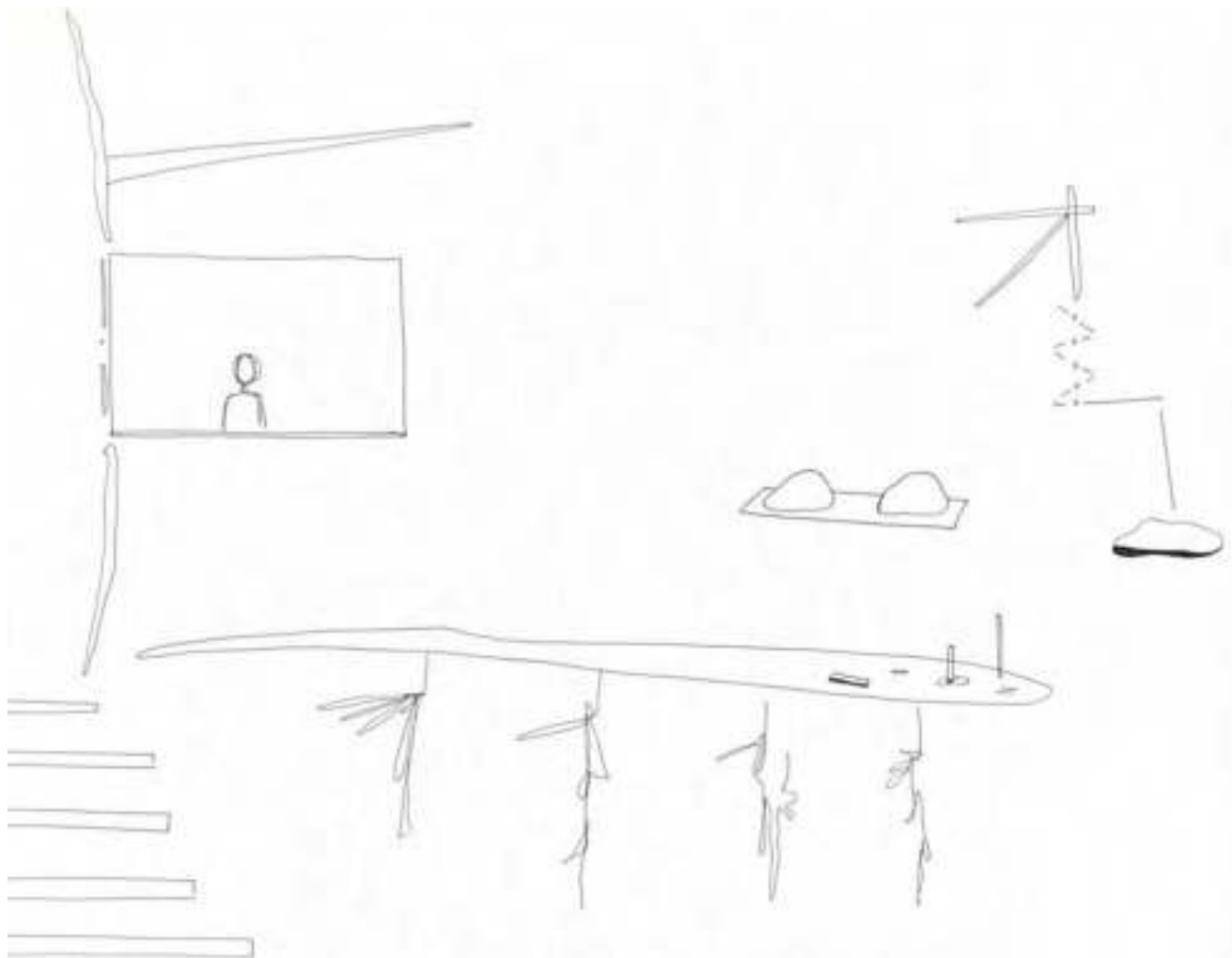
25

My mouth is dry of small-talk effluvium  
(But dry is dry)  
And try as I might,  
I can make no reply  
Against the cascades of common conversation.

~~“What they won’t know  
(Unless they wait for waning)  
Is the wisdom that waxes  
In the waves dissipating,  
When all that remains  
Are the polished shells  
And immutable sand grains.”~~

*Nick Gatlin*

when i was seven  
in the yard with my father picking  
blueberries i stepped on a worm  
by accident but no death being  
an accident (even then, the guilt) i  
could not help wondering in the  
intervening years if this is why he  
never smiled like that again. i cannot  
emphasize this enough do not become  
the bug, become the bug. bug.



27

**PETIT CHOU**  
*Selva Busetto*  
Drawing on paper

**IRIS, I'LL SAY IT***Kara Johnson*

I am so scared of wounding the wood. Splintering the thing of splinters.  
Even if you look as good as you do with a saw in your hand, sweaty, in motion.  
But you know me,  
I see something come apart  
Plywood split eggshell crack fabric tear  
And I'm quick to the apology  
For whatever it is in me that thought it okay to  
Separate something so perfectly held together

And what of the grass, Iris?  
If everything dies screaming, they do it the loudest  
We all heard the thing about the warning scent  
They release to their fellow blades  
Who have nowhere to run, who cannot do anything  
But expect  
To be finished



29

**MARL**  
*Shelda Majdi*  
Graphite Drawing

# THE LANGUAGE



# OF FEAR!

LANGUAGE OF FEAR

*Cherie Valenzuela*

Zine

The evolution of horror typography mirrors humanity's longstanding relationship with fear, dating back to ancient oral traditions of mythology and folklore.

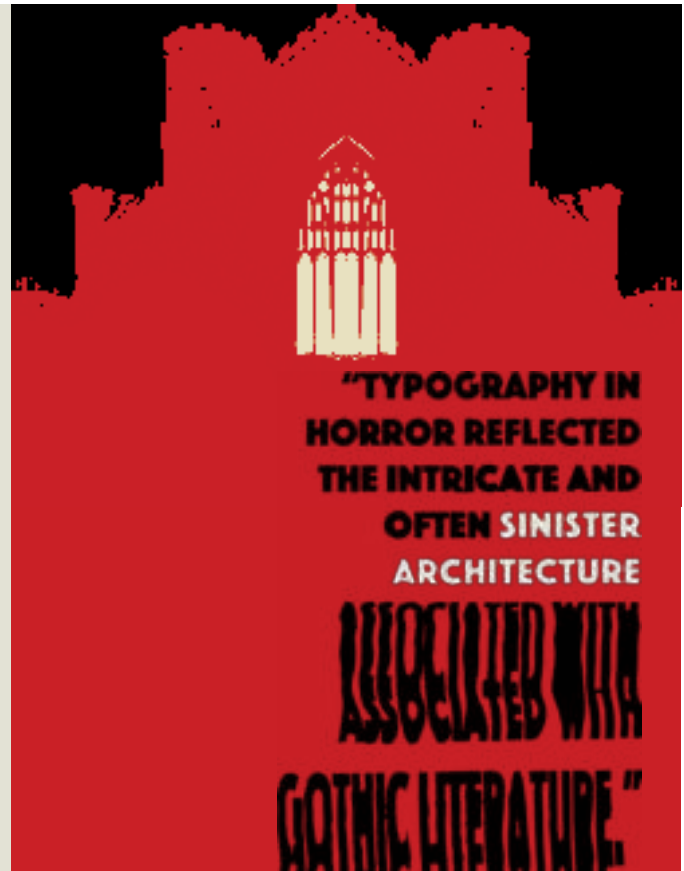
As horror stories transitioned from oral traditions to written narratives, and later to visual media, typography has played a critical role in shaping how audiences experience fear.

From the Gothic novels of the 18th century, such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, horror literature established dark, supernatural atmospheres that would come to influence visual aesthetics and typographic style.

Walpole's work introduced the "found document" framing device, giving readers a sense of realism that blurred the line between fact and fiction - a technique

that heightened suspense by presenting fictional events as truth.

The Gothic genre, rooted in Enlightenment ideals, was characterized by grandiosity and a fascination with the sublime and the supernatural. As a result, typography in horror began adopting more ornate, elaborate styles that reflected the intricate and often sinister architecture



associated with Gothic literature.

Moving into the Victorian era, horror typography evolved to match the period's values, embodying an intense focus on morality and scientific advancement.

Books like Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

(1897) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) embraced letterforms that emphasized both the sophisticated and the sinister, mirroring the internal battles between rationality and the supernatural, science and the occult. Stoker's *Dracula*, for

example, utilized an epistolary style with fonts that reflected Victorian formality, presenting terror within a structured, believable narrative that increased its psychological impact.

By the early 20th century, as horror transitioned to film, typography further

evolved to reflect the visual power of the genre. Universal's *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931) utilized classic, Gothic-inspired typefaces that would come to define horror film aesthetics. In these early horror films, typography was an extension of the on-screen dread, lending gravitas and credibility to monstrous narratives.

These classic type choices continued in adaptations and films throughout the 1930s and 1940s, cementing a formal yet foreboding typographic tradition in horror.

The genre took a radical turn in the 1970s with the emergence of the slasher genre and iconic films like *Halloween* (1978) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). In this era, horror typography adopted sharper, more aggressive forms, with typefaces that reflected raw violence and

chaos. Fonts became edgier and more disjointed, paralleling the genre's shift toward psychological horror and more visceral, unrefined fears.

These changes marked a departure from the formal Gothic and Victorian influences, embracing instead the fragmentation and intensity seen in the cultural landscape of the time.

The genre has since diversified into numerous subgenres, from psychological horror to paranormal and found-footage films like *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), which used amateur aesthetics to convey realism. This "found footage" approach can be seen as a modern extension of the "found document" trope from early Gothic literature.

Typography in horror continues to adapt, as recent horror films

such as *Hereditary* (2018) and *Midsommar* (2019) feature restrained, minimalist typefaces that mask horror within the ordinary, creating suspense through understated aesthetics. ★



## THE MODERN FACE OF HORROR TYPOGRAPHY

Today, horror typography blends tradition with innovation, drawing from historical roots while adapting to modern sensibilities.

From Walpole's Gothic manuscripts to the jagged, harsh lettering of slasher films and minimalist modern horror, typography in horror reflects the genre's enduring fascination

with the supernatural, the psychological, and the visceral. Each typographic shift not only responds to the stylistic trends of its time but also deepens the audience's immersion.

Modern horror typography isn't just about speedy fonts or dripping blood effects; it's a craft that taps into visual and psychological cues to elicit fear, suspense, or intrigue.

Over the years, filmmakers and designers have used innovative type treatments to bring horror films' terror to life.

By blending type with haunting visuals, horror typography has evolved into a powerful tool for setting the mood and aesthetic of a film even before the audience sees the first scene. ★

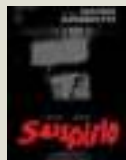
## THE TYPEFACE GRAVEYARD

### PSYCHO



Tony Palladino's fractured, bold sans-serif typography for Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* visualizes the fragmented psyche of Norman Bates. The typography, accompanied by Saul Bass's intense, kinetic opening credits, cementing this type design as a horror classic.

### SUSPIRIA



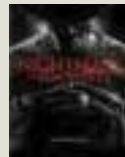
The titles of the original and remake of *Suspiria* contrast strikingly. The 1977 film's handwritten, uneven font creates a sense of instability, while the 2018 version by Dan Perri draws on the geometric Bauhaus style, using inconsistent weights and chaotic letters to introduce tension and subversion.

### HALLOWEEN



Herb Lubalin and Tony DeSpina's ITC Serif Gothic typeface, with sharp serifs and a glowing orange hue, became synonymous with *Halloween* and the slasher genre. Its bold, clean lines have been widely adopted, bridging horror with elegance, a trend that continues today.

### A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

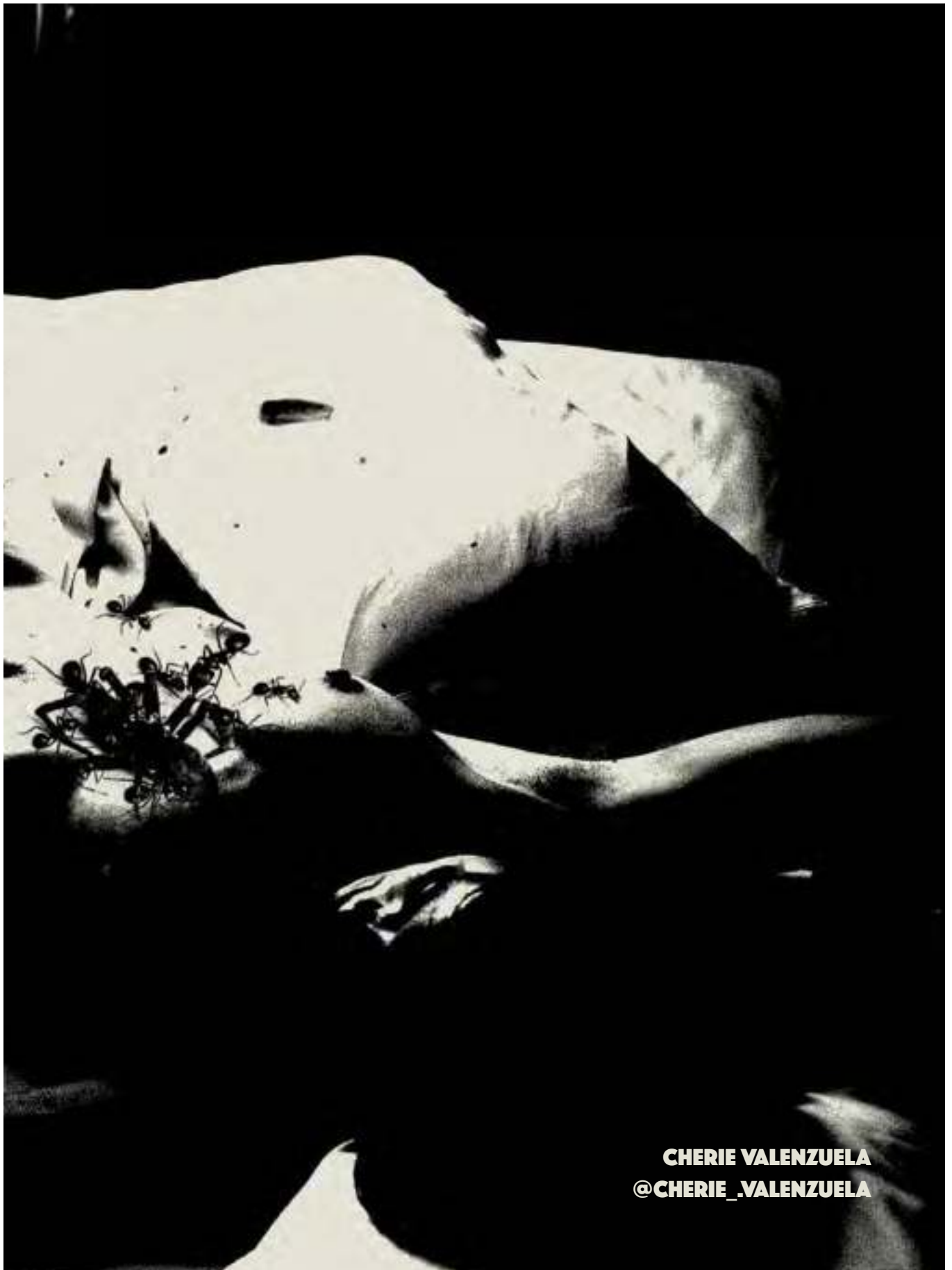


Despite its classical roots, Carol Twombly's Trajan font has become iconic in horror, especially when paired with blood-red hues. Originally meant to convey grandeur and tradition, Trajan's use in horror films subverts its traditional appeal to evoke unease.

### STRANGER THINGS



For this retro-horror series, Imaginary Forces used the ITC Bengaliat font, known for its 1980s aesthetic. The neon-lit type and eerie synth soundtrack create a nostalgic yet sinister vibe, enhancing the supernatural plot.



**CHERIE VALENZUELA**  
**@CHERIE\_VALENZUELA**



**THE AMERICAN KINTSUGI PROJECT (PAGE 47)**

*Matthew Johnson*

Graphic Novel print/Animation



**THE AMERICAN KINTSUGI PROJECT (PAGE 56)**

*Matthew Johnson*

Graphic Novel print/Animation

## AQUEOUS MEMBRANE

*Lukas Sullins*

I press my face against submerged portholes.  
I liquify the glass, I melt the wooden hull  
To merge my rigid ship and raging sea.

See, I cannot be your anchor:  
The sea, it calls to me; it exhorts exploring;  
It is the in and out of me, poised astride an aqueous membrane.

Inside: My heart is confluencing currents:  
The red rapids of blood, and sweat, and tears,  
Pulling me onward and pushing my past to a sunken horizon somewhere to my aft.

Outside: my world is a singular raindrop,  
Bloated and sinking and twitching and shining.  
It too is redolent of bodily blooddrops, sweatdrops, and teardrops (of such prior frame).

36

Both these bodies are teeming — in their meeting,  
The bisecting surface is made to be boiling by fish-frenzy ripples,  
The fresh portents of downstream daydreams announcing their exigence.

And I must confess:  
These waters are the catalyst of all movement in life.  
They are my measures of freedom, my means to permeate.

So I cannot hold you here, not even for a moment;  
I have to be the drop, the vessel, the ocean —  
It's the only way I'll move on and so on and on past you and past you and

Pushing past you.

## THE BODY

*Caleb Morales*

4,000,000,000

For their lack of want

O, marvelous sprig

Mouth open wide

Eager to provide

Whole heart you have

O, eternal giver of life

Your magnificence

May not be denied

300,000

Use the body.

Drink up the life

Blood. Run Rosy-  
cheeked and blind,

Ravenous.

37

They are ready to devour.

Lock up your lips.

Lob off your head.

Squeeze from your neck.

Rest rocks in your bed.

200

Left to give. Nothing

More. Lacking your

Lust. Left without

Shore.

There is nothing left anymore.

## THE CARDS WE WERE DEALT

*Cien*

I grew up in that sweet spot of U.S. History where I experienced all these things children shouldn't experience, but they changed the law when I was still a child.

For example,

they cracked down on child labor laws after I had already broken my body in the fields,

right as I was getting old enough to work with a W-2, but my resume will never show that.

Right when they made it illegal (and cruel) to make children translate for their families, and created a system of interpreters—

only after I had already had to figure out how to tell my grandpa what Myasthenia Gravis was and parrot that he would slowly lose control of his muscles, while he said “¿Pa que vas a la escuela si no sabes decirme lo que te están diciendo?”

Only after my cousins got hit with a Measure

11

for stealing

from Walmart,

and I had to find the words,

and the courage,

to tell my auntie that they were deporting

both of them.

That was the first time I was forced to accept a hit of the ugly truth of the injustice system.

I still remember the rage that came from it.

When they called my first cousin's name to the stand, read us his full name and charges, I had to whisper to my auntie, “Tia, dicen que lo van a deportar?”

Like a question,

because at nine years old, I believed it when I was told they couldn't deport people who were born here.

“No, no, no, no!” She said, her face beet red as she jumped from the pew—an image I still see in my dreams.

And in her best attempt at English she screamed at the judge, “You can't do that, he was born here!”

A shock went through the courtroom.

Everyone turned to stare at her, at us.

The judge only stared at me,

nine years old, expecting me to translate what was already in English.

“She said you can't do that, he was born here,” I told the judge and every person in that courtroom.

Feeling like that statue of the fearless girl facing the bull on Wall street.

In case you didn't know, the U.S. is not supposed to deport people who were born here, regardless of their skin color or where their siblings or parents were born.

So the judge, their lawyers, and my cousins' lawyers did a sidebar,

putting all the other families on hold while they debriefed,

whispering in an English even I couldn't understand. My tia begging me, “Mija, por favor, qué estan diciendo?”

I couldn't hear their voices, but I saw their body language change, shifting as they realized that, yes, one of my cousins was born here.

The public attorney turned away in shame, unable to meet our eyes.

He got ninety months instead,  
at just sixteen.

The judge took a break between the two brothers,  
so we sat there, between all these families, and cried.

Fear kept us glued to our seats, gluing everyone  
around us. Knowing now that they all wished they  
could hug us and share in our grief, but thinking we  
were one loud sob away from getting kicked out.

My tia held me, but I knew she was really just  
holding herself so I held her back.

Her tears hit my cheek until we couldn't tell if  
they were hers or mine.

Through them we could see more black and  
brown faces than we'd ever seen outside of work.

You see, sentencing courts like these are not  
private. You sit in church-style pews packed with families  
and loved ones.

Minors sit in the hall or in a side room, in hand-  
cuffs or chains, waiting to hear their sentencing.

Measure 11 sentencing for children fit all too well  
within our experiences as Chicanos, in that we were  
gravely impacted, but while suffering the conse-  
quences the state decided to listen to the profession-  
als who listened to us when we said that charging  
children as adults is cruel and unnecessary.

My cousins, the brothers, have different last names.

It took a while after the break for the other to  
come to the stand, so we sat in this packed room  
listening to the sounds of breaking hearts.

They finally called his name, his charges, and  
his sentencing.

He had previous charges.

I once again gathered the courage to whisper  
to my tia

"Tia, dicen que van lo van a deportar,"

She responded "a, okay, mija," with tears in her  
eyes and defeat in her soul.

He wasn't born here, yet he had known nothing  
but this land.

We were privileged to know that most of our fam-  
ily would be there to accept him.

I am grateful our siblings didn't have to use the  
cards we were dealt.

But damn, did we suffer for it.

Why does my inventory of experiences have  
to be so shredded,

the holes in my pockets covered by patches with  
varying degrees of neatness, a timeline in which I  
learned to sew up the holes in my clothes.

I share this experience with so many people, and  
here we are,

sewing up the holes in our pockets left by the  
cards we were dealt, shredded by razor blades.

My cousin has been in and out of prison and jail  
since the first time they got out, they are now 37 and  
will more than likely be on parole for life. The other  
stayed in Mexico, struggling to survive. They were  
dealt double edged swords for cards.

So I am grateful that the generations after me  
have benefitted from our suffering,  
but damn, did it hurt.

# Some Glad Morning

WRITTEN BY  
SOLOMON WOLFE

PERHAPS NOW WOULD BE THE ideal time to tell them I lied (and let me just put it out there that this isn't a confession, I just think maybe I should come clean, you know, before I go dying and all that, since, let's be real, they can't possibly take it as hard as I did (or as I'm about to for that matter (and yet I find myself looping back to the same question, wondering if I really want to do this to them, and if perhaps I shouldn't have gotten up to close the window and let the waves of the wind pull me in and be cooled by it's touch, let it run its hands down my body, sneak up my sleeves, fill my suit like a balloon and let me float about the room (a balloon, by the way, who wants nothing but that which all balloons want, to loosen from the child's hand tugging it back down, holding my string against the temptations of the wind as I fight to join the other balloons beyond the white ceiling tiles, beyond the clouds, to the place where all balloons go (what, they don't know about the great big gig in the sky, why, haven't the children wondered why their balloons never bother floating back down to them, and that if I merely untether myself from the Earth's hand then there'd be no way I could be caught, for I'd already left the room, and the wind had beckoned me inside his home, and now he, blue and sporting a gray top hat to match his three piece suit (*a bit overblown*, I thought to myself (but I wouldn't tell him that, he was far too gracious of a host, and besides, he'd already unbuttoned my coat and hung it by the

door and insisted that I shut my eyes, insisted that he play his clarinet for me (and oh, how he played [a role in my whole decision to leave it all behind] (but that was forever ago, and I bet if they asked me today I wouldn't even remember Wind's sonata, wouldn't have said that he was the one who pulled me through that window, who coaxed me into the sky (I might even bad mouth his suit, and I'd probably tell them that I was far too cold for such a blustery relationship, that the wind was a young man's game, that rather, my temptation came from the sun, perhaps the one promised by a first love, somewhere now far below the horizon, and that surely, if I could just get up there, they'd all see that he was waiting for me, sending down amber in waves, warming me all my life, calling out to me, luring me, anticipating my return, tempting me, prompting me to cover my back (floating is much better than lying on one's back, and lying atop these cold sheets is blocking out my sun, I once told a nurse, he's pulling me up, his face has been inked onto my back forever (that cost me more than this surely will, the rhythmic needles hurt more than this is going to (but that was forever ago, when I was a kid, holding a balloon against the wind, being told never to stare directly into the sun, so I tattooed him onto my back, and now, lifting away from the bed, persuading me into the sky, he was daring me to try?))))))))))

I'm sorry, I lied, I'm not ever coming down.☹

**25-02-2024**

*Matthew Albertson*

A child of peace, long weaned on faith  
That forebears, all, shun enmities,  
A child of war, now weaned on death,  
So long forbore of niceties,  
First met, without, in sea of streams,  
Deluded lives well dramatized,  
Now meet within a sea of screams,  
Dispelling minds well hypnotized.  
Their pain, once seen, coagulates  
In vain, for efforts can't align  
Ere volunteer self-immolates,  
To spark, perchance, free Palestine.  
A martyr ashed, a choice extolled,  
But can it cleanse our mired souls?





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**BLOSSOMS ON FILM**

Cat Terrell

Film Photograph

# pathos

Submit your writing, art, & photography to Pathos Literary Magazine, Portland State University's student-run lit mag, exclusively publishing student work.

We publish three issues each year (Fall, Winter, Spring) and our submissions are open for the first five weeks of each term. Visit [pathoslitmag.com](http://pathoslitmag.com) to submit.