



THE FIORETTI

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The Fioretti is Marian University's undergraduate literary journal, established in 1943. The word "Fioretti" comes from a collection of short stories and popular legends about the life of St. Francis of Assisi (patron of Marian University and the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg) titled *Fioretti di San Francesco d'Assisi*. The word itself means "Little Flowers."



Are you passionate about literature and the arts? Have you ever dreamed of publishing your work? Consider submitting to *The Fioretti*. We accept submissions from students of all majors. We consider submissions inclusively and welcome works from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

If you would like to showcase your work in future issues of *The Fioretti*, please visit our website:

<https://www.marian.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/co-curricular-programs/the-fioretti>

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

“Fioretti,” an Italian word meaning “little flowers” and drawn from the life of St. Francis, flawlessly describes the individual works that have come together to create Marian University’s student-published literary journal. In keeping with the tradition that began in 1943, the cultivation of student work in this edition of *The Fioretti* provides not only a place for creativity to burgeon, but to be admired by all who may enjoy these little flowers of art. We student editors hope they challenge, comfort, and inspire you as much as they have us.



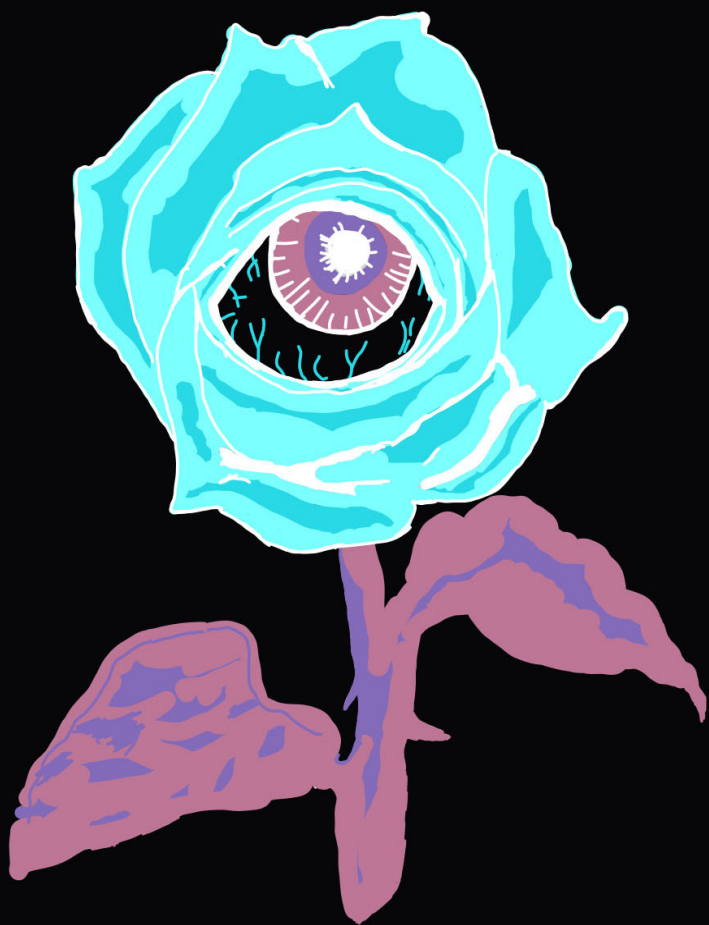


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ELEANOR

EMILY PARSONS



They stood on the porch—he had walked her home
Said “was there a fella she liked?”
And out on that porch—as lamplight there shone
She thought she would tell him he’s right

The guy with five letters—she said honestly
Five letters to spell his last name
He had five letters—K, R, A, F, T
And he said that he felt the same.

They’d known each other—for quite a long time
For they were Mount Adams neighbors
They’d known each other—she’d pay half a dime
For he would deliver newspapers

Her love left for Texas—when war rolled around
From high school she would graduate
He was in Texas—never left US ground
A phone call instead of a date

Worked for a while—lived on Carney Street
Got married in year forty-four
They worked for a while—they made all ends meet
Had one child and then had five more

A house full of warmth—of music and laughter
And cousins who lived right upstairs
A home full of warmth—though others came after
With piano playing and prayers

I only knew her—until I was nine
But watching her through the TV
I better know her—her stories are mine
It feels like she's talking with me

Christmastime comes—and we still remember
While singing of five golden rings
Christmastime comes—in the cold December
We think of the memories it brings



FANTASTIC FASCINATING

JOHN HARLEY

VEHICULAR MANSLAUGHTER

EVAN EWY

Treeline illuminated sparsely by passing headlights.
A deer makes his presence known to the wind blowing by.
The headlights are in ignorance.
Crossing the busy street is one of deerfolk's great plights.
A deer is wary of the beacon cutting through the night sky.
The cars are indifferent.

Dismay brought upon deer who face the periodically lit road,
they've seen their friends cross,
die.
But yet, they stare across, their gaze interrupted as they're showed
car after car, their thoughts
"try."

Cool asphalt under the hooves of the whitetail.
She is seemingly clear to cross the great river Styx.
A light over the horizon,
She is transfixed, any attempt to move is to no avail.
The car gets closer, it doesn't seem to slow, speed fixed.
A suicide mission, two for the price of one.

The car is ruined, the deer is ruined,
brain matter, intestines, eyeballs
scattered about the vehicular artery.
The deer was pushed to the side, its fluid
drains to the ditch, to not get on someone's white walls.
Will it ever be remembered? Or just some mockery?

SPACE RAT

OLIVIA SWALLEY

When we were in our 20's, we used to swim with the moon. We held hands under the night sky and traded philosophies. Wolf always talked about living in space. It was the only time I saw a spark in his eye.

"Our planet is dying, there's a limited number of things we can do." He'd smile and look up. "Living up there and watching this old rock dry out is the only plausible solution to me."

He would over-explain the possibilities and what life might look like living on a space station, or even better—Mars. I shivered at the thought of the loneliness that could reside in the soil of a such a strange planet. A rusty loneliness—something much warmer than the chilling loneliness found here on Earth.



It's cold until God comes around. Then it's hot and loud. God rides on waves of wind that push and pull all of our bodies down here. Balls of fire light up the dark places that are otherwise cold and dangerous. When God comes around, crime and ugliness stop for those few precious moments. Just as God always comes, God also always goes. We're left in the places unnoticed. Our world is built from concrete and trash. There are colonies just like ours in every direction, all hidden. All of us wait for God.



The time we spent together felt like another life. I have difficulty understanding time and the way it passes. Why does it feel like a different world? We got so close that our vines started to grow intertwined. It became difficult to know where I began and he started. Slowly, his vines started to warp around my wrists. My roots stopped planting themselves and instead dug around him and his mind. I stopped looking for sunshine. Then, before I knew it, his vines were strangling me. Every time I grew, his skin was pierced by my thorns.



My family lives in an infrastructure constructed from pieces left behind to be forgotten. I take care of my family, and they take care of me. Wait—I think I smell bread. I have to follow this scent. The gusts of wind that follow God collect and distribute trash, food scraps, and anything else that is intended for us. When bread falls in, it does not stay on the grime for long. I don't get a good look at the bread before it is surrounded by other starving souls. I ignore the crumbs left behind. I move along. Ahead of me I can see Eluka talking to his cousin. When his eyes meet mine, he lazily waves goodbye to her. He crosses through the fast-moving herd towards me. I let out a soft sigh before he is within earshot.



I imagined what zero gravity might feel like. Swimming through the air seems like one of those things that you can't describe until you experience it. I wonder if flowers ever daydream of pulling out their roots and falling into the sky? I want to point my arms above my head and push the earth out from under my feet. In my later 20's, I stopped growing with him. I started withering. My roots pointed towards darkness, protesting this world.



Eluka talks a lot. He does not need me to be having this conversation. I am not even listening to him anymore. His words fall into the continuous background noise. I try to concentrate on a silence that does not exist in the external world. My existence as a member of the community feels so empty on the inside. Most of my actions are automatic. Every day I have the same tasks, I go down the same tunnels, I pass the same souls. Eluka is on the usual schedule and nods before hopping off in the direction that he always does after our one-sided conversation.



On my 29th birthday, I woke up alone. The sheets were stained with a cold sticky loneliness. It was engulfing me and making it difficult to get up. I followed the sun into the bathroom. The cold floor slapped my sockless feet.

The cold water refreshed the forgotten regions of my being. The temperature climbed until my skin was red with burns and the air was clouded with fog. I cried until the burns turned numb. I screamed until the hot water fell down to a warm blanket. I stopped crying when the water ran to cold. I turned off the water and slugged my way to the bedroom. That's when I saw his text, "Happy Birthday!"



Everyone on the grime talks about the Beyond. There are so many rumors and stories, it is difficult to know what is real. There is nothing wrong with our world now, what if when we go to the Beyond, God is here? I wonder why so many around me are so discontent that they worry themselves with what may lie in the Beyond. I wonder if others feel stuck in the boring routines given to all of us. I think this is why there is such an obsession with the Beyond. It's an escape from our current environment. It is tradition for Elders to wander off into the beyond, never coming back at the end of their lives. Sometimes young souls become curious and attempt to explore the Beyond. This is where most of the crazy stories and rumors are born. Some young souls never make it back.



The first time I found out, my organs fell. My stomach twisted itself and never came undone. My pain manifested itself into a rock that brought my weight down to the Earth. I struggled to stand up again. It felt as if I were in an anti-gravity machine that was suddenly unplugged. My roots were torn out from under me without my permission, twirling me to space. My brain created flashing images of them together, and my masochistic tendencies flashed themselves to leave burns. I can't help but think that maybe if I would have listened to him, he would have been satisfied with me. I always hated the judgmental way he would look at me while I was trying to enjoy my food. I can't help but look up pictures of her body. It's on one of her burner accounts that I find out where he really was on my 29th. The wool slowly unraveled to reveal the true darkness that resides in the blue of his predator eyes.



“Okay guys, come back here, when darkness hits. We’re going to see the Beyond.” Eluka stands up tall on the balls of his feet. He gives off the impression that he has been out there before. In all reality, he just understands how to fake confidence. He uses it to his advantage. I know deep down Eluka is severely insecure. I think he is afraid of silence, which is why his mouth is constantly moving. He is convincing, though. There is not anybody else who could have manipulated me into going into the beyond. Eluka didn’t even have to try to convince me. I do not want to go. There are so many better things I could be doing. What if some great finds blow in? I could miss a dessert square or half of a fried tender. My paranoia causes me to keep checking behind and around us.



So often on Earth things fall in on themselves. So often is death, despair, and anger. So often can this limited rock feel suffocating and confining. In contrast the sky feels so open and free. I wonder what’s out there. I know that there are planets, some stars, and eventually Gods. But there is more out there we don’t know about than that which we do. It’s hard for me to imagine Nothing being out there. I can’t think of Nothing without trying to give Nothing some sort of body or outline. Nothing floats through the sea of silence. Nothing is beautiful. I wonder how vast, dark, and beautiful the thing called Nothing is. In my 30’s, I fell in on myself. It was in that dark space that I started to look for sunshine again.



I reluctantly show back up to the spot after darkness has hit. I had to sneak out of the back tunnel so my family wouldn’t badger me with questions. Eluka is in his spot as if he had never left. His smile was menacing. I glance around at the other bodies that awkwardly take up space. I knew everyone there. We all have known each other since we were tiny pinkies. In my childhood, I would not have imaged that we would all find ourselves in that moment. I wondered if they all felt as lonely and dead on the inside as I did.



In my 40’s, I decided to give my love to the stars. To me, the night sky started to look like a hug that could never hurt me. I whispered my secrets to the

man in the moon. Since I was alone, I could afford to use an anti-gravity machine whenever I wanted. Every time I would close my eyes and imagine swimming through the sky, hunting for nothing. It was at one of these facilities where I was approached about being sponsored for space travel and living. I didn't think twice. It took one handshake before training began. I had already been practicing for this my entire life, the way I isolated myself from the Earth-bound bodies around me. It as if I always knew I were destined for the stars.



“Okay, so there is a simple tunnel system that takes us through 4 crossings. At the first 3 crossings we take the tunnel to the right. On the final crossing we take a left. Then we skip for over 20 feet before we are at a tunnel that goes up. This leads to the Beyond.”



In my 50's, I boarded a spaceship. The kind of spaceship young boys and girls dream about before they are forced into some work that doesn't satisfy them. I know I did not feel the same way these people would feel in my spot. My bones were frozen with anxiety and fear, afraid of movement. Things went in slow-motion during the countdown, then unexplainably fast. The pressure and turbulence caused my soul to shake deep within me. I thought I was, without a doubt, going to die. It kept climbing and climbing. Then, at some point, pop.

We were floating above all known existence. It felt like what I imagine it would feel like to pause time. The loneliness of Earth is such a richer blue from an outside perspective. As I went over the loneliest place, the place where Wolf's heart is, I flipped off the world. I felt vulnerable and dizzy, nothing but an encasing of nerves floating through space.



“Here!” Eluka yelled before scurrying up the tunnel and disappearing. One by one we all followed, unsure of what we might see. Unsure of which unfortunate young soul might not make it back. Passing the border between everything known into the completely unknown and naked. At the end of the tunnel was a sea of darkness. It was so open. Before I reached the top, a million

unfamiliar scents hit my nose. After crawling into the sea of blackness, I was on an asphalt ground, surrounded by openness. The vastness of the air was unbelievable. It was the first time in my mundane life that I didn't have concrete above my head. We all squealed with excitement and joy. We started playing and pushing each other.



In my 60's, I celebrated 10 years on Mars. I have lost more weight than I ever thought humanly possible for myself. I am nothing but a frame comprised of bones. When I walk around, I miss the body that used to pull me towards the ground. I have to wear a heavy suit when I step out of my living quarters. I feel like I'm back in college, only this time I'm scorched with a rustic loneliness I can't escape. I moved planets to escape a feeling, only to find a red version of that feeling. It is a nice view though, one I know Wolf would kill to see. I know I'm not meant to stay on this burnt soil forever. I have plans with the stars. I have allegiance to my dreams, and for my final performance I will be swimming in the sky. I will swim until I meet God, then I will shake her hand.



A flash of light illuminated me and all of my terrified peers. We all immediately jumped in different directions dispersing into the darkness. No one told us God could see us, and we were all so embarrassed of our behavior. We scattered in different directions, all disappearing into the wilderness. I ran and jumped until the darkness was absolved. It was replaced with a new light, a new light that stayed around much longer than God. I ran and jumped in an attempt to hide from this light. I ran until darkness hit 3 times. Then I realized that I had no idea where I was. I had no idea what direction home was. I realized I was one of those unlucky souls who is forever banished due to curiosity. I must survive in the open, alone. I miss my family and look for love by interacting with the things hustling around me. There are monsters out here, ones with sharp claws and teeth.



On my 69th birthday, I fermented fruit to create my own birthday juice. I drank it and danced on soil not meant for human feet. I flipped off the world that continued without me, protesting this life. For the first time in forever, I laughed. I laughed until my lungs hurt. I laughed until my chest rang with pain. I didn't stop laughing until the sun ran away. Later that night, before I drifted off to sleep, I thought about how this had been the best birthday I had ever had. The laughing fit returned. I began planning.

On my 70th birthday, I took a Rover on an adventure. I gathered all the resources I needed and started on my way. It took me 3 days to get to the base of the largest mountain in our entire solar system (that we know of), Olympus Mons. It did not live up to my imaginations of it. I was very disappointed. It was flat and expansive. The red loneliness was unforgiving and less aesthetic than the mountains that hold up the horizon around Colorado, or the ones that hang around Utah. I miss the mountains that hide in the special pockets of deep Arkansas.



I follow the smell of the bread and tomato sauce around the corner. I climb up this huge orange machine or retired ship for a much larger creature. I see another rat ravenously eating, facing the corner. He doesn't stop, but I search the plastic wrappings for any other scraps.

"Oh my God, it's you."

I whip around back toward the rat, and it's Eluka. His eye has morphed into a red and pink mess. His skin is sunken in, revealing that his eyeball itself was completely removed.

"Wha- What happened?"

He looked down before looking back up at me. I had never seen him this quiet and slow.

"Cat." He exhaled.



Today is my 79th Birthday. As a gift for myself, I'm writing this. One last goodbye to the world. First, goodbye to Mars. If this somehow makes it to Earth, don't forget where you are. Don't be afraid to let your feet come off that blue soil. If you work for the people who provided me with this ride of a lifetime—thank you. Also, I'm sorry for what I'm about to do with the rocket.



DECAY

LAUREN KENNY

SILVER STAR

CLARE HAENNI

I have not known you for very
long, yet I have already imagined
you dead.

The image came to me in a period
of awful waiting for I was not with you when
It happened. I had to rely instead on
my imagination to supply scenes of what was
happening. Like phantom pain from a body
part already lost, I saw our friends rush in to
find you, too late, already broken.

I felt like I lost you. Like I couldn't wait for the
text but I didn't want to read it.

I have never been happier to be wrong.

I am so glad that you are real and that I get to hug
you today, awkwardly in the back stock fridge
next to crates of milk piled high.

I can see in your eyes that this is a
source of shame for you. That you don't
want to talk about it in detail
with me. I wish I could wipe that worry from
the window pane of your mind. We
carry your safety with us because we love you
It is no unworthy burden.

While I was visiting my cousin for
her 1st birthday party this weekend

I found a little silver star on a windowsill
from another party or event I think.
Sometimes I feel like that silver star.
Hidden, discarded and
a l o n e.
Still beautiful, being told I am beautiful
But not truly being loved not truly loving
Flashy like I might turn your head or catch your
eye for a minute or two
but who would take home such a little thing?
I prefer it that way (I tell myself)
when they go away my world is undisturbed
I don't have a lot of practice with love
I don't know anything about
anything
But after all this, in the morning
my eyes will be open

RED

SAM OSHO





THE LAST TIME

THE STORY OF A CAT AND HIS DAMN FLEAS COLLEEN SCHENA

This is the last time.

Peppermint anti-tick acid melts my lungs

I scrub the floor with both hands,

Wet hair cold, drips slide down my borrowed shirt

This is the last time.

The vacuum, dismantled,

Lurks out back in moonlight

Burnt hair and lint smoke rolling

This is the last time.

The pathetic cries of a kitten guilt my ears

My knees weaken at his sickly mewling and fuzzy tears

Soap and medicine waft through the air

This is the last time.

I spray the ancient carpet

A second, third, fourth time

And wash my clothes on hot.

This is the last time.

I crack my car windows

And the neighbor's lights kick on

Filling I AM with blinding yellow

This is the last time.

I toss the sealed bags outside

They thump in the yard hard enough I hope

It killed all of its flea-infested contents

This is the last time.
I remind myself as I blends to 3
Wet treats and dead pests leave more to clean
But the catty crying has calmed.

This is the last time.
The California orange kitten
Falls asleep in his swaddle
Surrounded by our doting eyes

This is the last time.
He leaps up to my shoulders
Watches my mouse with more intent
Than I've ever watched Minecraft

This is the last time.
I try to call him another name
So when his new mother comes
She won't have to call him "Buttguts"

This is the last time.
I fall asleep to his purring heat
His little claws kneading into my skin
Little white scratches adorn my arms

This is the last time.
He greets me Sunday morning
His new family minutes away
This little tiny Cheeto unaware

That this is the last time.





THE HOME THAT BUILT ME



MOLLY DURCHHOLZ

I do not know about everyone else, but to me, home has a very special place in my heart. Some people talk about how they can never live where they grew up, but for me, home is a place I want to share with my future husband and family. I grew up in Evansville, Indiana. This is a moderately sized city. It's not too small, but it's also not too huge. It definitely is a blooming area. There are buildings now where crop fields used to be. In my mind, Evansville is a great city to raise a family and that is one thing that is very important to me.

Evansville became home to my family even before my parents were born. My grandpa Durchholz moved to Evansville from Ferdinand, Indiana after he graduated eighth grade. Then he stopped schooling so he could help his dad farm and make more money. Years later he met my grandma at a bar, and if you ask her, it was love at first sight. They then got married and began to build their family. On my mom's side, my grandpa Brougham grew up in Evansville and even attended the same high school as me, my brothers, and many of my cousins. When he grew older he became a pilot and at the same time my grandma was a flight attendant, but they never met on the same plane. They met in a bar, went on three dates, and then decided to get married. They then both agreed that Evansville is where they wanted to build their family.

Both of the houses where my family began are still strong and standing. My aunt and uncle Durchholz moved into my grandparents' house after they both passed away. Then my grandma and grandpa Brougham are in the same house they have been in for many years. It's not the house they started their family in, but it's the one where most of the memories were made. Then the house right next door is mine. This is the literal home that built my family. My house will always hold such a special place in my heart. It holds all the childhood memories that I never wish to forget. Growing up next to my grandparents was one of the most influential aspects of my life. They helped raise me. Not because my parents were never present, but because I loved spending time with them. Since it was so easy, when I got bored I would just walk across the yard to my

grandparents and end up watching a movie with my grandma. Some people like to say, “The home is where the heart is”, and my home is Evansville.

Evansville has a population of 118,588 people. It is currently the third largest city in Indiana, and it feels small at times. There are days when I feel like there is nothing to do because the town is so small, but then I look at the smaller cities surrounding Evansville and realize that it is huge for them. They have to drive into Evansville just to do some grocery shopping or need to buy new clothes. Evansville is like a miniature version of Indianapolis with way nicer people and less to do. When at home, I feel safe wherever I go, but when in Indianapolis, I always feel like I am on my toes. I have to always be alert in case something happens.

One of the most comforting things about Evansville is that most of the people there are fairly nice and I know a lot of people in town. There are not too many places where I feel uncomfortable or unsafe. I also do know where and where not to go. Most of the people I was surrounded by were family, friends, and my parish at home. I attended Catholic school my entire life, so I was always surrounded by a good community. I always had people there for me in all aspects of my life. The type of people that make up most of my community is my family. My family means so much to me and I love spending time with them. This doesn't just include my immediate family, but my aunts, uncles, and cousins even distant cousins.

My community is filled with people who are always open to lending a helping hand. People who pray before eating and call dinner supper. People who are very known for the midwestern goodbye, saying that they are on their way out but spend another fifteen minutes saying goodbye to everyone they spoke to. People who speak with a minor southern twang and throw the word “ya’ll” into the conversation any chance they get. It's filled with people who will always be there for you, no matter how long it has been since you last spoke.

My community is my people. I will cherish every single one of them till the day I die. My community has helped me grow into who I am today. They have seen me grow, watch me fail, and supported me through some of the roughest times of my life. My community has always been by my side, and I promise to always be by theirs.

POCKETS OF LIGHT

AUBREY MAJOR



I WAKE UP ALL THE TIME TO SEE ANOTHER BLACK FACE

LYDIA SHOCK

And they're Dead in the streets all because of their race
I don't know who started all of this
but it's time that it stops getting dismissed
Taking a life all because they are black?
and the people who do it are getting too much slack

I'm tired of all this injustice
it's time racism faces destruction
you will no longer get away with it
this will no longer be omitted
we will stand up now and forever
until all races can stand together

HUGS



ANONYMOUS

The road ahead of me began to blur, the yellow lines quickly becoming zig zags as I raced from my house. My cheeks were hot, my eyes unable to hold the dam much longer. All I wanted was comfort, safety, and warmth.

I had a strange dream a few days ago. It was a kind of morphing dream, one with several different plot lines. It began with me in my parent's house. There was a girl from one of my classes in my bed, and that's apparently what set my dad off.

During the summer of 2020, my mind raced in doubt. It seemed to want to prove God as unreal and untrue in everything. As a Christian, I was distressed.

I told my adopted grandpa about it. He told me to use Scripture.

"Whenever those thoughts go through your head, just think, 'In the beginning, God.' Just meditate on that truth."

The stress of the argument had been too much for me. I suppose it hadn't been for the others involved.

My dad had said (loudly) in the midst of it: "This is good! Yelling lets the anger out!"

I screamed: "NO IT'S NOT!"

The girl disappeared and I was left to deal with my dad alone. I decided I couldn't take it anymore, that I wanted to move out. I began looking for my personal things when I caught my dad trying to read one of my private journals. I feared his reaction to me calling them "my adopted grandparents," so I ripped the journal from his hands and scolded him.

As I pieced a puzzle together to distract myself, my mind continued to race. Then, the strangest idea came to me: what if Jesus was an alien and we were being deceived by some ancient alien race this whole time?

I wanted to bang my head on the table. I prayed so hard for forgiveness and clarity.

The argument started dissipating, and my mind already had an idea of whom it wanted to run to. I told my parents that I wanted to sleep somewhere else, that being in

the house made me stressed. They did everything they could to try and convince me to stay. My dad even offered to leave and sleep in a hotel. I finally agreed to go to my uncle's.

His face grew wilder, his eyes bulging, with his cheeks red as radishes. My dream transported me out of the house, and I was suddenly back in my college dorm. I don't remember if my roommate was there, but *he* was there: my coworker, Daniel.

One night, as I tried to drift off to sleep, an alarming thought rang through my head:

"I don't believe in God!"

I sprung up, freaking out and wondering if I was crazy. I wanted to cry. If God wasn't real, I had nothing to live for. His love and light were more precious to me than my own family.

"No," I told myself.

"Deep down, in my heart, I believe. Jesus didn't turn John the Baptist away when he doubted. He's not going to leave me either. I got to hang on."

As I headed towards the door, we said our "I love you's," but of course my dad had to add:

"It's too bad you don't love us enough to sleep under our roof."

When the drama and tension between my parents was still fresh, I had spewed the story to Daniel with a tear in my eye. Always eager to offer advice, he would give me comforting words and anecdotes from his own life throughout the day.

"Pray about it. Hang in there."

I watched a video by a pastor on YouTube. In it, he explained two types of doubts: intellectual and psychological.

"Intellectual doubt would be like, if someone found evidence against the Resurrection of Christ. Psychological doubt is mostly based on feelings and situations. But the doubter can push through that by going, 'I'm still going to trust in You, Jesus, even in this doubt.'"

In my car, I broke down and called the only one I could think of: my adopted grandma. I prayed, hoping she would answer. When she picked up the phone, I struggled to tell her what happened through my sobs. "Can I please come back over?" I asked.

"Of course you can, sweetheart."

Once before, Daniel told me a story, but this time he prefaced it with:

"This is personal, but I'm telling you because I consider you a friend."

One day, I texted a "Happy Anniversary!" to my friend's mom. She responded with:

"Thank you, how are you today?"

"Not well," was all I answered.

She called me immediately.

I stumbled through the back door right into my adopted grandma's arms. I let my tears go that had been held back during the drive. I held her tight and couldn't say anything.

"Oh, sweetie..." she soothed. I could see my adopted grandpa right behind her, concern written all across his face. It was a strange scene for me, me bawling like a baby with them in their pajamas.

Still, there was a comfort being there in her arms that I knew I wouldn't have found in my uncle's.

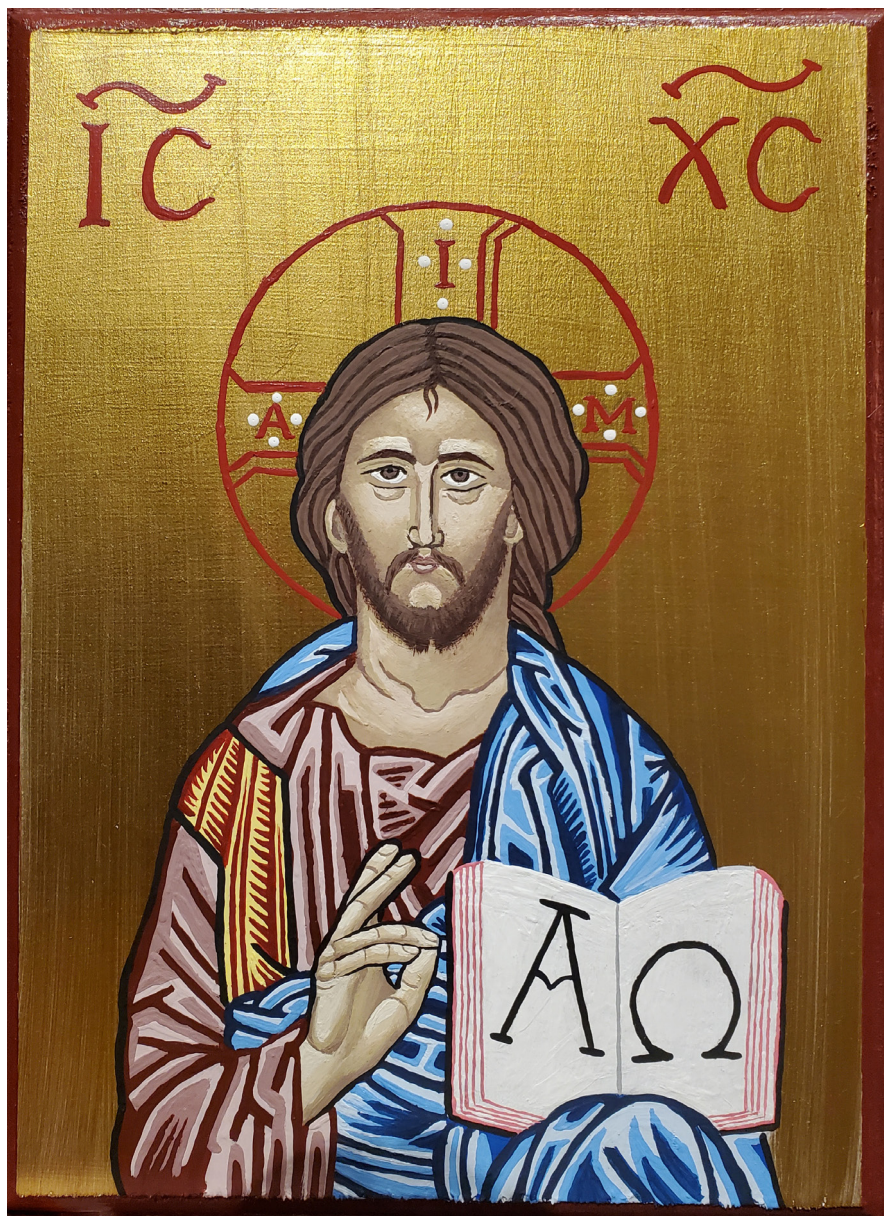
In the dream, Daniel was laughing and talking with someone in my dorm, like we were at a party. I felt so down, so overcome, that I wrapped my arms around him and hugged him from behind. He was surprised, shifting his weight as if trying to get me to let go, but I saw his face soften after a couple of seconds. Without saying a word, he closed his eyes and held onto one of my hands, and we sat there in quietude for a moment before my dream kicked me to the next plot.

I started crying as I explained my doubts and fears that were going through my head. My friend's mom listened kindly and was ready with huge encouragements. She ended the call with a prayer:

"Lord, I just pray for her as she's going through this anguish and fear and doubt. Lord, I pray that You would please help her to feel Your Presence physically..."

Suddenly, there was a wave a relief that washed through my chest. It was like a breath of fresh air, and I felt immediately soothed and relaxed, set free from the tension I had. There was no way that that feeling had come from simply hearing my friend's mom's voice.

I was in my Heavenly Father's arms.



CHRIST PANTOKRATOR

TORI WILSON

BLEEDING

LIZZY HOSTY

The thought of sitting down to

Bleed

Makes the veins in my forehead quicken.

Maybe if I keep thinking about it,

One day it will burst,

And I'll

Bleed.

But for now, I stop myself every time.

I keep coming back with paper towels to wipe up the pus

And wipe away what might've been

Visionary

Or

Insightful

Or

Beautifully put

Simply put

Perhaps I am afraid to bleed

I mean, not actually

I bleed all the time,

My fingers raw to the bone;

Picking,

Picking,



Picking.
And once I'm done?
More picking picking picking.
But genuinely?
The kind of blood that people want to see?
The bleeding that proves my worth?
Sorry, I smeared the page.
What was I saying?
Ah, there I see it now.
The blood from my fingers is
Now the blood on the page.
But now the blood is flowing,
Endlessly,
And I can't get it to stop.
But was I ever meant to get it to stop?
Isn't the blood meant to be the real work?
I guess the cost of a good poem
Wasn't hard to find,
After all.
After all,
What's one more dead poet in
The Dead Poet's Society?

UNTITLED ARTWORK

ALLIE BUNTIN



PILL POPPERS

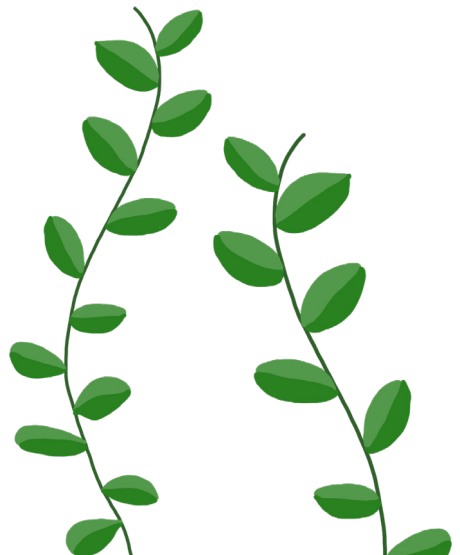
JULIAN SANTOS

Peter Piper Picked a Pair of Pills to Pop
 Just to see what they'd do to him
 He Popped a Cocktail Stocked with
 Adderall, Buspar, Benzos and Zoloft-
 But they didn't send him soaring like his friends said they should
 Like he thought they would.
 But Peter's pals don't Pop the Pills like Peter does-
 Peter Piper failed to Properly Profess
 That the Pair of Pills he Picked to Pop
 Were Prescribed by the Doc that Promised Peter
 He would feel better, be better...
 Be better...
 Better grades
 grateful teachers.

The practice of pill popping isn't all that bad
 Over time I've acclimated to how they fuck up my head-
 But explain to me why - humanity solves - everything with - a bandaid
 Binding battle wounds with paper and praying it stops the bleeding
 Creativity ceded for the appeal of apathy.
 But now that I'm grown and have learned how to cope
 The world ain't so helpful to me anymore
 My pills don't cost like they used to no more
 My teachers don't help keep my grades up no more
 Now that I am no longer a subtracted detraction
 Distraction, disruption, disobedient delinquent.
 Instead of talking and tapping and running and laughing
 The chaos is caged in my cranium stadium
 And I'm the only one here to hear the show.

When I was a kid I felt like everyone looked after me
Even though in reality they were just keeping track of me
Demanding submission
Requesting restrictions
Suggesting prescriptions
Creating a pill popper and expecting normality
I mean, I guess apathy's much better than hyperactivity
But part of me wants to be back the way I used to be
when I used to breathe
Without my serotonin saviors-
My dopamine dealers
That only give me what I need
When I get on my knees
And take them down my throat.
I'm a registered drug addict
disguised in the lie that these drugs aren't those drugs
Because my prescription subscription certifies my addiction
But those drugs help too.
My brain is so fucked up
that the shit that makes you fly
Just pulls my head above the water
so I can stop drowning for a couple of hours.

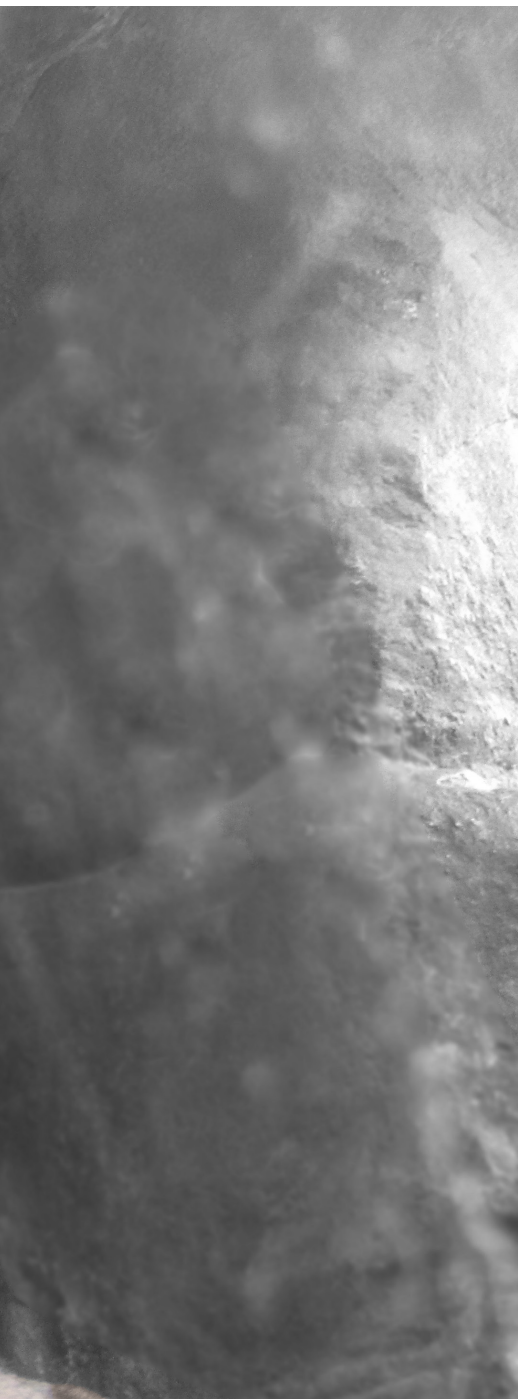
And It's scary when you realize that
you need...need...need these drugs
Normal was interrupted, disrupted and adjusted
To fit the checkbox checking if you take your medicine every morning...
Every morning...
Every morning I sign my soul
to the deceiving demon of dependence
That came to simply satisfy my symptoms and suffering
But now enslaves me and enchants me
with the normalcy it brings me.
I'm still stuck in some sick simulation
And the only way to wake up
from this matrix of madness
Is to take this pill...
This drink...
This joint.
Because only then I'm free-
Only then I am finally
okay.





SOFT

ELIZABETH COOLEY



IN OUR MEALS

ANONYMOUS

Author's Note:

Consequences and sacrifices live with undocumented immigrants and their families. In my case, I find them in our meals. It's important to share these stories to build awareness and empathy for a group of people who live hidden in fear, sadness, and pain.



At the dinner table memories of my parents' upbringings are scooped up and placed on thrifted bowls and plates. With each bite, I swallow pieces of Mexico. Mom will give everyone second servings before we have the chance to finish the first. I sit impressed that she managed to hold onto recipes as she crossed the feisty rivers, guided by the reflection of the moonlight which graced the same stream that clawed her ankles. I watch my dad rub his belly as he reaches for more servings. I stand up to do the dishes, delighted that his tastebuds weren't left to dry in the desert- the same abrasive heat that led them to their new lives.

On days when my siblings and I are living life as American children, out with our boyfriend or girlfriend, we forget who showed us how to love in the first place. We'll go out to American food chains, spending money on burgers because we don't fancy the pig intestines mom cooked. As I arrive back home, fragments of our parents' lives will float out from the speakers. Mom will yell at dad to turn down the music and convinces me to eat again. A YouTube video plays on her laptop as she shares that she's going to cook a meal from a recipe she found. As she reviews the videos, her commentary will remind me that I'll never know each corner of her and my dad's minds.

"Mira el chamaco como come. Y la señora ni tiene sartén bueno para cocinar y esta vestida como si nada."

She'll tell me how the YouTuber's son eats funny, how they don't have nice pans, that they dress as if they weren't posting themselves on the internet. She'll add,

"Así era antes en México."

That's how it was back in Mexico. Where hands replaced utensils, only one pot or pan was used to cook several cheap meals, and one's best clothes were hand-me- downs worn out by the previous owner. I hold tightly to the moments when my parents recall how it was then and how it is now. Moments where reflections on a life that they've created for our family seep- a life that grows from their never- ending journey. For recipes kept in her heart she'll share,

"Así lo hacia tu abuelita."

I imagine my grandma, separated by a border and never-ending miles, able to guide mom's hand as she drops in spices to the pot. Both artisans of flavorful meals. No measurements are needed when love is the main ingredient.

Even simple meals are my favorite. If you ever plan on staying home and have time to spend on the toilet, I'd suggest dipping a tortilla in eggs, frying them, then throwing black beans and queso fresco on top and enjoy a taste-rewarding stomachache. Or, if you want something without the stomachache, heat up a tortilla and throw salt or a slice of ham on it.

"Así lo hacía tu abuelita todo el tiempo cuando no teníamos nada para comer. Hubo tiempos en que ni teníamos dinero para sal," mom shares.

These were the meals my mom grew up with- the only things her family could afford to eat: tortillas, sometimes with salt. As a splurge, ham. When they lived in Mexico, my parents were underweight, yet capable of carrying more burden on their shoulders than I ever could.

Coming to the States introduced them to the world of fast food. Quantity over quality looks its best dressed in grease. With an ever-growing beer and stress belly, at buffets dad demands,

"Come más porque no pagué para que comas un poco!"

He hates seeing us eat small quantities when there's so much food available and a lighter wallet. They never want to see my siblings and I unsatisfied or hungry. With pressure from my parents to finish my plate and not let food go to waste, I find myself constantly binge eating. I grew up not knowing how to stop eating even when I felt full- I worried more about how much my parents spent and not enough about my health.

With each pant size I went up, I came to be my nicknamed gordita or 'fatty' in English. My dad would call me this the most, as a form of endearment. He meant no harm with it. Influenced by media that preyed on the self-esteem of young girls and drowned them in beauty standards, gordita caused me to feel anger, shame, frustration. I couldn't wrap my head around how something seemingly negative could be out of love. I was conflicted on finishing my meals as they asked and being called gordita. The name never stopped me from eating though. I cared too much about the affair between food and money.

Hard. Earned. Money. How could I waste their money? Money that was earned through labor in environments where words were poorly strung beads, thin and fraying threads creating meaning. My parents would often ask my siblings or I to translate for them- orders at McDonald's, praise from teachers, hospital papers, overdue bill notices. Mainly the oldest, my sister, did the talking. The very few times I attempted to translate letters from their jobs or the doctor's, I often felt frustrated that they'd expect me to know terms that I still don't understand today. English or Spanish words often slip out of my

mind at the worst moments. I'll find words that I know in one language missing from my mind in the other language. Thankfully, the only language in food is love.

At the dining table, love was there when we handed each other the saltshaker or a sliced lime. Dinnertime- when my parents would come home and share stories of the day. Hearing my dad being harassed by coworkers turned my meals bitter. The taste remained when my mom would share the bitchiness of her coworkers and how much they'd judge one another.

No matter what we ate, none of us would question if there'd be leftovers. Every guest to visit left with extra pounds and plates.

On holidays my parents especially make sure to send guests with extra food. With Univision playing in the background, love bounces from plates to the walls and ceiling. These days are when their memories and longing for their birthland spill. Even with empty cups, lips aren't dry when there's a flood of tears soaking them. The same lips that longed to kiss the cheeks of my grandparents one last time.

Each holiday worthy of a turkey, pork, or ham serves to remind me how difficult living in foreign land surrounded by words, culture, and actions you don't understand is. New Year's Day is when the burdens and joys of the year and years past boil over. This is also when my parents tally the years that they've spent away from my grandparents, my aunts and uncles, their nieces and nephews, one-bedroom houses with mattresses on the floor, daily bus rides, balding of soles in their huaraches, confident communication, hand-me-downs, r-serving meals, Ranchera music, authentic Mexican food, clay pots and pans, broadcasts without translators, beauty of Veracruz, home. Twenty years away from home.

On these holidays, my parents will want to video call my grandparents. They'll swallow their grievances to wear a smile.

When they video chat, my grandparents express how they don't even recognize mom or dad. They'll say to my parents,

"Como han cambiado."

How much you've changed, even in the span of a year. It's not only on holidays that this is acknowledged though. On birthdays my parents will also cry before eating a *très* leches cake and admire how much we've all grown. We'll embrace one another with firm hugs, bodies plump from love.

And I'll cry, too. Out of love and fear. Fear that one day they'll be gone. That I stopped kissing their cheeks too early. I'm scared that I won't be able to measure seasonings by intuition. That I let too many leftovers spoil and go to waste.

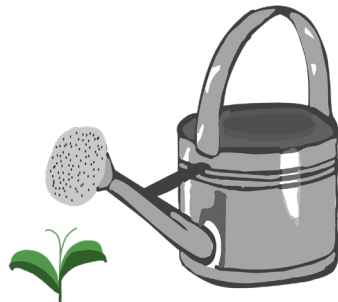
Despite the salt from tears dripping into plates and cups, our meals remain delectable- the flavors mixed with memories of their home and bits of what they've known.

STARS SHINING DOWN

MOIRA METZ

It's amazing that there are suns millions of miles away
and they shine like little dots for us
little dots of light sparkling in the dark dark sky
and we just see them as tiny little glimmers of light
that we barely take notice of
but billions of miles away there are gigantic suns burning for us to see
and God made those suns for us
And I'm afraid of the dark
I am afraid of what could be in the dark
I'm afraid of what's in the distance
there's the barking dogs and distant shouts from who knows who
but the stars, that's where God is shining
and on earth with me
and gazing at the stars is like keeping my eyes fixed on God
I could look down at the earth around me
see the horrible and terrifying things in the shadows
or I could look up
be dazzled by the beauty of the lights upon the dark
and be happy

2:32 AM 3 FEB 2019



LINE MELODY

MOLLY DURCHHOLZ



PROVERBS TO THE UNCOMFORTABLE

ELIZABETH KASSAB

To the tea cup that feels like it doesn't belong in either hand—
From you I still drink.

To the thoughts that overthink to overheating—
Slow down.
You have a moment before you go extinct.

To the pen that waits and waits to assert existence's purpose—
I'm coming... I think.

To the tears that refuse to leave the eyes—
You wash my face clean.
You.
The rain of my blink.

To the heart that hesitates in front of its audience—
You're taken too seriously.
Imagined to an end.
Forced into a plot you will to bend.
Improvise.
Your remaining stage will aid and anticipate your becoming.
Not for my sake alone, but as your liberating link.



TREE OF A LOST SOUL

STEPHEN SULKA

Sam was going for a walk one Sunday afternoon. He was tired of studying and he needed a break. He stepped out of his garage, hit the button to shut it and began walking out of the cul-de-sac. It was a nice day. Well, about as nice as it can get during fall in the Midwest. It was quite windy and cold but the sun would come out now and again. Leaves were stirring along the sidewalk and the wind was beginning to give Sam goosebumps. He turned left at the end of the block and headed for a walking path in his neighborhood. Something else drew him out of the house today, but he couldn't quite tell what. It certainly wasn't the weather. Sam never liked the cold. In fact, whenever the temperature did drop his hands would turn purple and become so cold they felt like they had just been chipped from a block of ice. No, something else was calling him. Sam kept walking out of his neighborhood. Just ahead was a small forest. Maybe the birds and the squirrels would help distract him, he thought. About one-hundred feet into the forest he noticed an oak tree on the edge of the path. It didn't look like any of the other trees. It was still green. Sam couldn't believe what he was seeing. It must have been no more than 45 degrees outside for the past month and here was this oak tree with leaves more vibrantly green than anything he'd ever seen. He had to stand and stare at it for a moment. Bewildered, Sam thought he must be losing his mind. As he approached this tree he noticed that it had more animals on it than any other tree in the forest. There were at least a dozen birds' nests and half a dozen squirrels trying to store food. As he moved closer to this tree he noticed that the weather felt warmer too. The sun was shining more brightly, and his hands didn't hurt as much from the cold. It seemed like this tree was in another world. Sam walked even closer and placed his hands on the trunk. The tree felt warm and gave him a sense of euphoria unlike anything he ever felt before. He closed his eyes to help him forget the cold and the studying he had waiting for him back at home. Then, Sam felt like he was falling, headfirst, diving in a spiral. He opened his eyes

but found that everything was still black. His euphoria was gone, heart pounding he closed his eyes again and braced himself for the impact, not knowing when it would come. Seconds later he wasn't falling anymore. He didn't even feel himself land, but when he opened his eyes the light was so bright he had to squint for a few moments to let his eyes adjust. He felt that warmth and euphoria again, but it seemed to be coming from every direction now. Sam opened his eyes. He was lying down in a bed, in a room he had never seen before. The bed was so comfortable he didn't want to get up. Just as he rolled over and closed his eyes, he heard a voice from outside of the room.

"Alex, breakfast is ready!"

Who was Alex, he thought? He didn't know anyone named Alex. Sam sat up in bed as he heard footsteps coming up to one of the doors. When it opened he saw a woman standing in the doorway. She looked gorgeous. Beautiful, fair skin, and long brown hair that extended to the small of her back in gentle waves. She gave a comforting smile and her blue eyes, alight with joy, fell upon him. She stared at Sam like he was someone she had known for her entire life. Sam, however, could not have been more confused. He forced his face into a smile, wondering what he should say. Sam had no idea where he was, and this woman, whom he'd never met, was treating him like a lover. He decided to go along with it and see what happens.

"Sorry... eh, honey. I'm sorry I overslept. I'll be down in a minute, just let me splash some water on my face," said Sam.

She left him with a smile and he heard her footsteps trail back down the stairs. Sam threw the covers and quickly walked into the bathroom. Immediately something felt amiss. His body didn't feel like his own. He felt quicker and more agile. In the bathroom, he flicked on the light and his reflection in the mirror was certainly not his own. Shocked, Sam had to stop himself from screaming. He looked like a completely different person. Sam was an athletic twenty-one year old college kid with brown hair, blue eyes, pale skin and glasses. He didn't look like this anymore though. His body had been changed to a completely different person. Alex was a little shorter, but much more muscular and tanned. Black hair

and a beard now covered his face. His eyes weren't even the same. His were green now.

"This can't be happening," he thought.

Sam quickly recalled the events that brought him to this point and hoped that he was having a nightmare. Taking the form of a completely different person and assuming their life. He couldn't understand. All he did was touch that tree, and it brought him here. Horrified, he wanted to find a way back. Back at his home. Surely his parents would be looking for him soon. He had only left for a short walk. Sam entered the closet to find clothes. He needed to play along with this until he could find a way back. He needed to find that tree again. If it brought him here, surely, it could take him back...

Whoever this Alex was, he certainly made a large sum of money. The walk-in closet was nearly the size of the bedroom itself. After finding some clothes he went downstairs into the kitchen. The first floor looked even more expensive than the second. The kitchen looked large enough to suit a restaurant. People who must've been servants were there, standing over the stove, washing dishes, and preparing various meals. Once Sam had smelled it all, he was nearly distracted from finding a way out of this place. Sitting at the breakfast table was the woman he had seen in the bedroom earlier and two young children. A boy and a girl.

"Hi daddy!" said the young girl brightly with a mouthful of oatmeal that was dribbling from the side of her mouth.

The woman Sam assumed to be his wife looked at him over her cup of coffee. She looked concerned, then leaned forward as Sam approached the table, expecting a good morning kiss from her husband.

"Hi... uh, sweetie... Good morning," Sam stuttered. He could not believe what he was seeing. Sam was shocked, but he needed to play along so that he could find his way home. He walked first to his, or Alex's, wife, not sure what to think, and kissed her quickly on the lips, feeling extremely awkward. He tousled the hair of his son as he made his way over to his seat. It was a rather large breakfast table draped in a clean, white tablecloth upon which were place settings of fine china covered

in a blue floral pattern, ornate silverware, and crystal glasses filled with orange juice.

Sam continued, "Good morning, everyone. I'm sorry overslept. I had a bit of a nightmare last night."

"Oh, I'm sorry sweetheart. Do you remember what it was about?" said the gorgeous woman in a consoling tone.

Sam thought quickly. He knew that he was still in the nightmare. "I... I dreamt that I lost my mind and forgot who everyone was," replied Sam.

His wife looked at him sweetly and said, "How awful, honey. It's all over now, though."

"Yeah, thank goodness," Sam said unconvincingly.

The gorgeous woman broke the silence once more. "Listen, Alex. While I take Andy and Sally to school, will you run some errands for us? I would ask Mark, but he is out sick today."

Sam was immediately relieved. Finally, there was a way out, and he would be able to find a way back home. "Sure, I'd be glad to do that. Do you have a list of things we need?"

"I left it in the kitchen. Thank you, dear. Andy, Sally, go get dressed so we won't be late."

The two young children scooted off their chairs and made their way to Sam with their arms outstretched. Knowing that he needed to continue his act as father; he reached down hugging and kissing them both at the same time. Sam was still very unsettled, but he couldn't help but notice the sincere love and affection this family had for each other. He felt touched and reminded of the way his parents treat him and his brother. Once the kids had left the kitchen Sam turned his attention back to his wife. She stared at him across the table with a subtle smile and eyes that revealed fervent love and affection. *I really need to leave, I've been gone nearly two hours. Mom and Dad will be worried sick*, Sam thought. His wife stood up and walked sultrily towards him without ceasing her gaze. She sat on Sam's lap and placed both her hands on his face, pulling him into a passionate kiss. Sam was in complete disarray, but he needed to keep pretending to be Alex so that he could find his way home. He placed

his hands around her waist and opened his mouth. *You know, maybe I could stay here for a little longer*, he thought. Sam continued to kiss her, locking his lips with hers he had forgotten all about leaving. Soon they heard small footsteps making their way down the stairs and she hurriedly removed her lips and fixed her eyes to the dining room door. A second later the two young children stepped excitedly into the room dressed and ready for school; their backpacks on staring at their parents.

“Ready to go?” said the wife with a flushed expression. The children nodded and proceeded back out the door they just came, waving to their father while the gorgeous woman, turning to face Sam again, stole one more kiss and followed her children out of the dining room. Sam paused for a moment before standing. He recapped the events that led him to this point; they thundered through his mind like a galloping horse. He could feel the blood pumping inside his skull and he could feel the beginning of a headache. As he made his way toward the door, hoping he wouldn’t have to speak with anymore people, a man dressed in a neatly pressed and fitted tuxedo held out two things in his white gloved hands; a shopping list and what Sam guessed was his breakfast placed in an insulated bag.

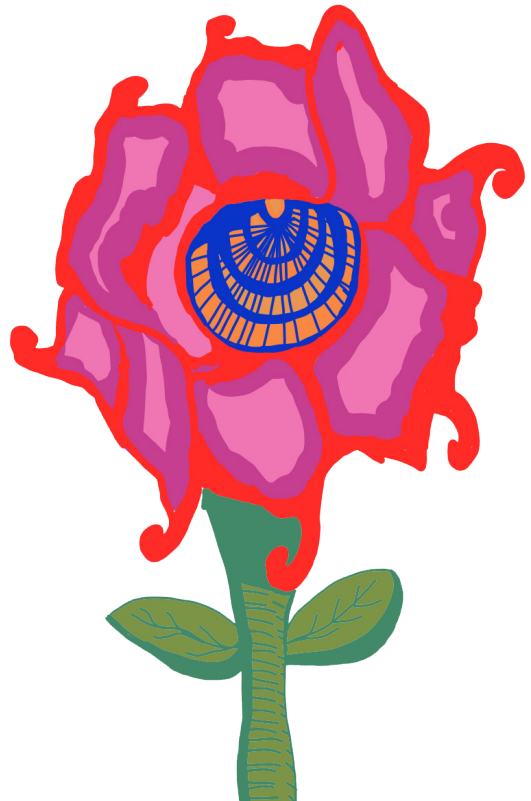
Wanting to leave as soon as possible, he grabbed both items and left, saying “thank you.” The room just beyond the dining room appeared to be a foyer. Sam had not noticed how large and beautiful it was when he passed through earlier. It looked large enough to be a ballroom. Just off the front door was a short set of polished, white, marble stairs that wrapped around the entrance in an elegant curve. The floor beyond was slightly darker and shined so that Sam could see the reflection of the chandelier. It hung from a long chain attached to a high vaulted ceiling. The fixture itself was made from a gold, metal structure bent upward then out. Almost as if it were a fountain trying to rain light upon the room below.

Sam nearly sprinted to the front door which he threw open in his haste to find the tree to take him back home. The outside looked nothing like where Sam lived. He couldn’t tell if he was in another state, or perhaps, another point in time. It must’ve been a summer month. The wind was blowing great white clouds across a blue sky. Birds were

chirping and the grass was green. This change from the wintery weather in Indiana made Sam feel worried. *The tree that brought me here is going to blend in with all the other trees*, he thought. It seemed that every house and every street corner was accompanied by trees. Panicking, Sam ran around his, Alex's, house looking for the tree. He would recognize it when he saw it, but it wasn't there. After searching for what must've been an hour Sam was starting to lose hope. *Am I going to be stuck here forever?* he thought. Making his way to the front of the house again he saw a large black SUV that had not been there moments ago. A hooded man stepped from the back seat carrying a pistol. Sam couldn't see anything of the assailant's face except for a malevolent grin.

"Wait!" Sam uttered. "Stop! You c..." This was all that he could do before seeing the sky shift downward. The final thing he saw before falling into deep, dark tunnel was his assassin's satisfied face.

In a menacing tone the murderer remarked, "It's a shame that people never seem to believe Rick when he says, 'pay or die.'"



DISINTEGRATION OF A FLY

ETHAN BRUBAKER





THE PERPETUAL METAMORPHOSIS

CAROL OBERGFELL



The thing is...

Every earthly thing about me will change.

My style will change.

I'll shop strictly secondhand,
then I'll buy designer brands.

My weight will fluctuate.

My pants won't button, then I'll have to
go down a size.

I'll become more or less extroverted or introverted.

I'll be the one that hosts great parties,
then I'll be the one that stays home
alone.

My strength will devolve into weakness in the
span of a single moment.

My friends will come and go.

I'll have a few good ones with similar
interests that live close by, then I'll
have a cat and my mom.

My political beliefs will break and bend.

I'll vote blue, then red, then not at all.

I'll gain lots of knowledge.

I'll go to grad school abroad, writing
and teaching successfully,

Then I'll forget simple lessons I learned,
like the importance of balance.

I'll be so jubilantly happy.

And then unbearably sad.

I'll be a student, then a teacher,

then a stripper,

then a writer,

then a student again,

then unemployed.

I'll be single,

or taken,

or married,

or divorced.

I'll live in the same zip code as my parents.

Then I'll live across an ocean.

I'll be sure of myself.

Then all the way lost.

I'll pray every day, then not for months.

Have a pocket full of rosaries, then a
necklace full of crystals.

Babies will be born.

Babies that make me an aunt, or a
cousin, or a mother.

People will die.

People that make me a widow, a
vilomah, or an orphan.

Reality will be transformed—though it's never
been static.

But always, I will be me.

No matter what I see in the mirror nor how I
feel about the woman staring back.

Always, I will be challenged to love me.

No matter who I am or what I'm doing.

No matter what happens to me.

The changing never stops.

Do we learn to live through the change?

Or is the change itself life?

Do we learn to love through the change?

Or must we love the change itself?

VALUE STUDY IN FALL

JUSTIN HORNER



DON'T TELL MY DENTIST

OLIVIA SWALLEY

My last
Wore a disguise
a false nose
Had a jar collection
Was obsessed
with colorful wings

My last love
Felt like
What it feels like
To force cigarettes
Out with your tongue

My last
Had an anger
That mangled
My belongings.

My dentist told me
To stop
With the candy
And to
Never
Crunch on ice

He doesn't understand
What sweetness
Does to my
Traumatized tongue

He doesn't care
How sharp the crunch is
When aided
By the cold

So many people
Told me to
Leave my last

Spit him out
They said
Dangerous
They said

My lost love
Traveled on the wind
To places I couldn't see
my lost love touched air
I could never reach

Roses have blossomed
In the broken places
With only a little sunlight

My new love
Dances with the bones
That used to be
Painted with bruises

My new
Bottled the air
From The ground
That god touches
And brought it
Back for me.

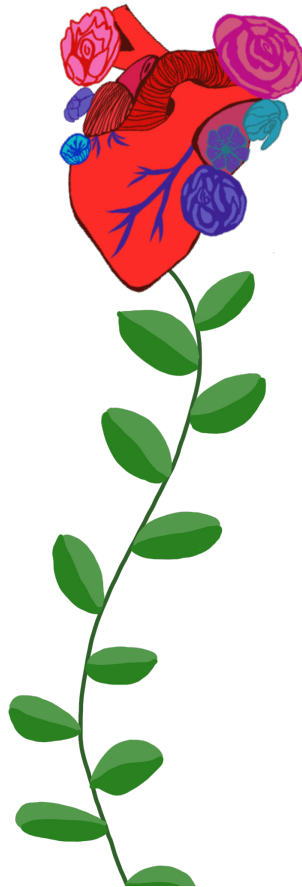
My new
Feels like
Extending your arm
In a moving car

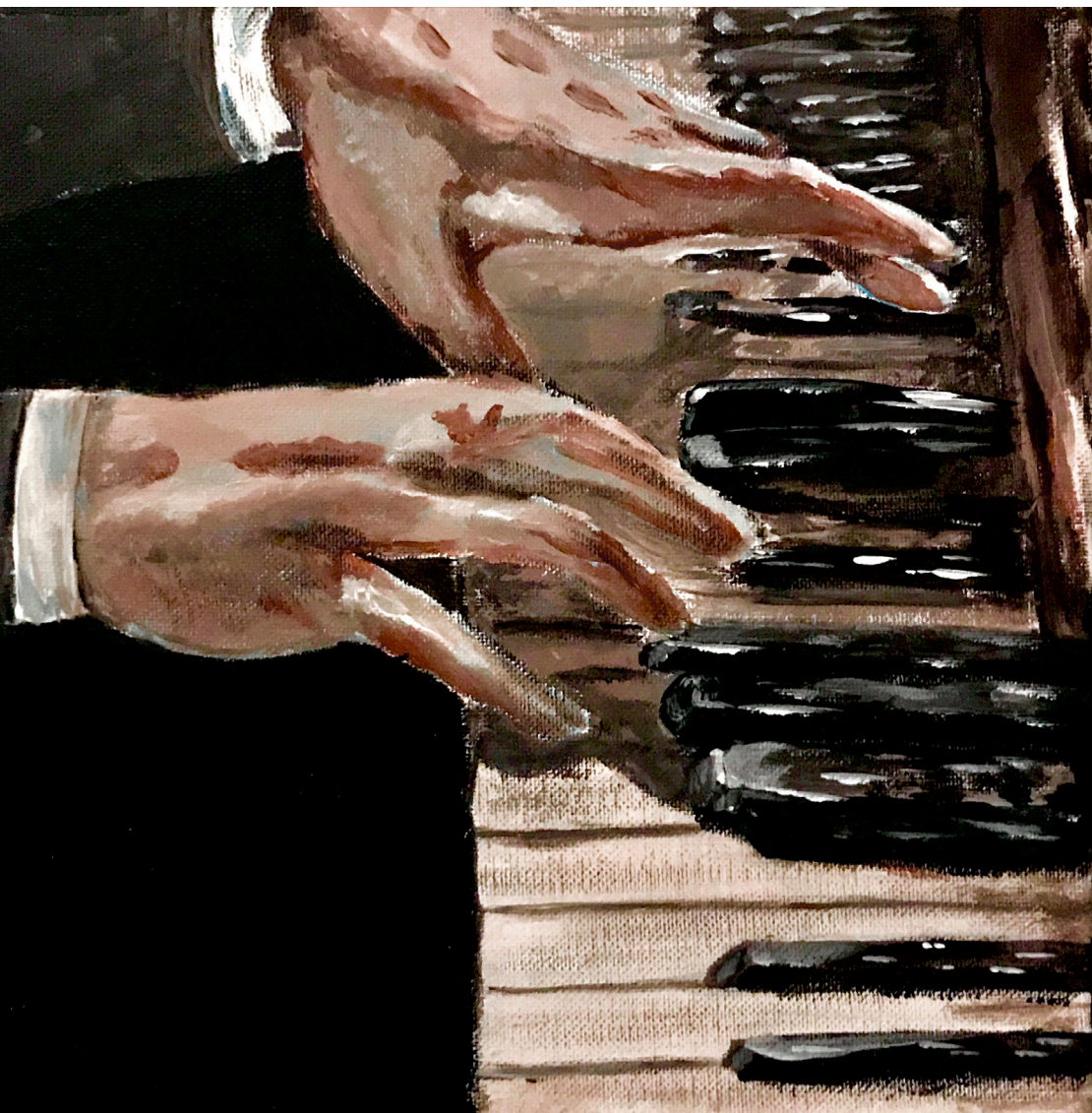
My new
Lives inside
The thing that beats
Deep below my ribcage.

My new
Was never lost
My new
Was never not

My new love
Is a true blue
One that loves
With everything
And loves fully within

My new is so sweet
I can't let
my dentist see.





NOCTURNE

EMILY PARSONS

NANCY DREW, ESCAPIST HAVEN

COLLEEN SCHENA



Wandering the streets of Paris, feet scraping over ancient cobblestones lining the gray Seine, I was on the lookout for adventure. The gothic *chef d'œuvre* Notre Dame, gloriously glowing in the midday summer light, had been my home for my morning – but now? Now, my Parisian tour was on hold, and it was near impossible to get back in anywhere without waiting an hour in a line of sweaty American tourists in floral shirts, khaki shorts, and thick fanny packs. (Not to single out my dad, but the sheer volume of Americans I met simply by following those people was astonishing. That, and bumping into one – and hearing a good old-fashioned Midwestern “ope” in response.) So I did what any sensible undercover American traveler did—I thanked Notre Dame

for the morning, thanked God for Notre Dame, and moved on to find intrigue in the hot Parisian streets.

I crossed under a stone bridge that was older than I was and watched the water glisten against its amber skin; it was rough and aged in the same way that the time-worn Coliseum and the tomb of St. Francis had been. It smelled ancient in the same way the city of Salamanca and Alcazar’s mortar castle walls did after decades of heat and days free of humidity, the special days where clouds vanished and the red buildings looked like paper against the blue sky.

I glanced out at the water, my usual love, but when I realized I could see it, excitement overtook me; not because I could potentially reach it through the round stone pillars with a corroded pathway, but because they were smartly guarded with safety bars. And wherever bars would be, so too would an old, rusted, romantically timeless lock.

Jackpot! A quick glance around told me I was, in fact, alone (save for my parents a few hundred feet back), so I did what any sane adventurer would: I jiggled it. A few times

from a few angles I tried it, just to see if it would give – when it didn't, I took its picture and moved on, having been satisfied with that end to my treasure hunt.

That trend of finding locks continued through my entire time in Europe, then through my time in New Mexico, Kentucky, Canada, and countless other places I was so blessed to visit. But why locks? Why not something more exciting, like a rose or a cleverly-designed shot glass?

Two words: "It's locked."

"It's locked" were staple words from my childhood. They are part of designs I sell on Redbubble, a source of me courageously shoving all kinds of objects into locks to move them, and the first phrase I utter when my bathroom door sticks shut. It wasn't something I got from locking myself out of my dorm; it wasn't a product of my parents (though my mother had to break a downstairs window to get my brother and I, cold babies in a harsh winter, inside), and it wasn't from my ever-investigative and elite private school; I didn't learn it from any of my plethora of fairweather friends, who were aficionados of locking me out in their own right.

No, I learned this in tandem with the best opening line of any computer game ever: "Hi! I'm Nancy Drew."

Nancy Drew, the everlasting girl detective, played protagonist to 32 PC point-and-click games, and I did my best to solve every one with her. And every time I clicked on a locked door, she would exclaim, often in factual monotony, "it's locked." She was my best friend, and, even though she was simply a computer voice and a blurry photo here and there (her creators like to keep her hidden, but that doesn't mean they don't tease us with photos and art), she became my inspiration and my acceptance. It was because of her that I learned quickly and studied broadly, that I was a master at reading people before I graduated fifth grade, and why I became a well-spoken and oft-considered precocious child. Because I spent my free time saying her dialogue with other characters out loud (and theirs, especially if they had accents), I grew into a confident actor, musician, and writer. I saw details no one else seemed to notice, heard the instruments most ignored, and could fill in gaps without being shown a full pattern. It led to me loving these small details, making friends easily, and being so excited to learn that I racked up awards in speech, French, history, and forensic criminology like they were easter egg awards in one of my games.

But when you naturally choose to excel, to be observant, and to be friendly, it often leads to less-than-friendly interactions. It leads to having friends, then suddenly wandering alone every lunch because there's nowhere for you to sit. It leads to you trying out for a play with your best friend, then her leaving you alone at practice because you

didn't help her enough on an assignment. It leads to you wishing you couldn't read people so well, because you know exactly who's bullying you and what they're saying – because of *course* when they made up a language to make fun of you, *not* learning it wasn't an option. It leads to an extra sense of isolation and paranoia, because you just *know* everyone is ignoring you and *precisely* who is hating on you the most. It leads to that work you love so deeply becoming your only solace, you fearing group projects like they would kill you, and your closest friend being a computer game who gives you an escape. It leads to you ignoring the world outside whenever you clicked on a Nancy Drew game; it leads to “hi, I'm Nancy Drew” being the reason you release the breath you were holding all through the school day. With Nancy, I could be anywhere else, whether it was exploring a tomb in Egypt or riskily snooping in a New Orleans curio shop. She could go wherever she wanted and sometimes took her friends – and I, a twelve-year-old in desperate need of a hero, latched onto each and every one of her adventures. She never told me I couldn't come or ignored me when I did.

Unlike Nancy, I don't travel alone—not yet. I find it's more fun to take a small gaggle of people, two to three to wander with. One day I'd like to imitate her global adventures of solitarian exploration, but my memories tend to be richer when they have voices besides mine. Either way, the time alone to adventure is important—I love taking Nancy's methods of exploring, methods I have adopted in my job as a journalist and my abilities as a friend, and applying them to much larger scales than a room or an office.

My first rule is very different from Nancy's, however: I don't snoop into anything I can't immediately see. Nancy has second chance screens where everything goes back to normal with the click of a button; I do not have a way to erase my getting caught looking through cabinets or puzzle boxes. She and I both make errors, except she gets a nifty screen after hers. I just get awkward looks. It's an unfortunate side effect of not actually being Nancy Drew, and life not being a computer game.



I wander off a little ways when my group starts to disband, each pursuing their own interests. Then I work with the big picture: the buildings, the cafés, the quirky bookstores and the wandering fiddler, or the open-air chapel and the Swiss Guard fighting the Italian Grandma. (Fact: you will see this in Vatican City at any given point. Italian Grandmas are tough – but Swiss Guards are tougher.) My steps are light, my eyes wide, and I take it all in; the colors, the shapes, the smells of hand-rolled cigars and freshly-baked bread; the taste of a neon limoncello paired with the deep blue of an unpolluted Assisi night. I wander around in clothes you would never catch me wearing around Indy: dresses without pockets, sandals I can't run in, a phone that is there for photos and photos only. It's almost like I have some kind of immunity; nothing can hurt me when I'm exploring, and I'm not suspicious enough in my floral thigh-length dress and little white heels for anyone to follow me.

And I'm ready on the off-chance adventure of a whole different kind strikes. Will I be stumbling upon a mystery? Probably not. But I will remember the details of the rich Spanish tapas under the midnight sky in the golden-lit square; I will remember bailing my dad out of multiple French conversations, only to watch him speak flawless Italian and remembering he had his adventures too. I will remember the way that the Arizona landscape lights up after a rain, names of clouds and how to pick locks. I will always hold 30's slang in a special place in my heart and exploring trails in thick winter snow. Curious bluegrass tunes and deeply complicated jazz ignite my imagination at any given moment.

Every time I put a new pin on my travel map, I have, in part, Nancy Drew to thank: she showed me what was out there. I simply had to take her insights and go forth, enjoy the world through the eyes of adventure, and, most importantly, find every lock I can possibly imagine.

And say “it’s locked” at every. Single. One.



ABC's

ADRIANNA DIXON



Name: River

Date: 2/08/2021

Description: How can we take childlike concepts such as letters, numbers, shapes, etc. and turn them into something we can use today?

Instructions: Write out the ABC's and what each letter reminds you of or means to you. Make sure to have a peer review your work and leave constructive feedback beneath your writing **BEFORE** it's turned in so that there's time to fix things. The revised version needs to be on a **DIFFERENT** piece of paper.

A bloody nose stains my face from a fight I didn't start. Bruises taint my body in places they shouldn't be like paint splatches on the wood of a canvas. Caressing fingers of a hand too gentle and warm for its kind, glide across my neck. Dazzling eyes too pretty for me to handle asks me a forbidden question. Each word spills out of his mouth like honey, drizzling onto my tongue as I taste his sweet pleas. Fear I've never felt before takes over my small, fragile, petite body. Gripping hands pull me in so close that I have to gag myself. He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he...he loves.... Inside it hurts, inside my heart is pounding, trying to get out of its cage, inside my stomach melts into a hot sticky mess. Jabs of pain erupt all over my body with each step I take. Kisses are planted on my bones from head to toe. Lips unimaginably soft touch mine and I catch on fire with tears steaming down my face. My hands won't stop shaking so I clench them together as I speak. No more I say, but no is the wrong answer. Open up, a little wider, say ahhhhh, good boy he coos. Preying on me with his sharp canines, he lures me in with that voice of his. Quietly I mewl into his pillow that smells like bloody caramel covered roses. Reels of dark memories play in my mind going round and round. Screaming back and forth scares me, scars me. Thrashing and kicking turns into wiggling and moving then it slowly turns into moaning as he carefully grabs my hips. Used items are either thrown away or recycled so which one will I be? Vanity clouds my mind because he chose me. Whispers flow through my ears begging me to play. X marks the spot all over my body in a game I've played many times before. Yearning for something I have to ask for is my new way of life. Zero is neither negative nor positive, odd nor even, it's neutral just not when it comes to me.

Reviewer: Lake

Feedback: Honestly, I think you did an amazing job. I'm proud of you. I love how you used less common words than most would've picked. You used the word A instead of something like apple or ant or even someone's name. On the other end of the spectrum there aren't too many X or Z words so I'm impressed you were creative enough to think outside of xylophone and Zebra. It takes a lot of effort and thinking to come up with a word for each letter that makes sense and connects with each sentence. However, the content seems a little sensitive so a trigger warning would've been nice. I mean what if I've been through something like this and have PTSD? You don't know so it's better to be safe than sorry right? Besides all that, there are a couple of personal things I'd like to touch on so let's get started. I didn't know you thought my eyes were, what did you say? Dazzling? Why didn't you mention that before? If I would've known that I would've looked at your strangely feminine figure more often. Especially during class. I love making you squirm in your seat just waiting for, what did we call it? Oh yeah! Lunch time because as you mentioned I have sharp teeth so you saw me as some sort of vampire preying on you for food right? That's cute. Don't get me wrong though, your mouth had plenty of uses too. Stop acting like you're so innocent, like you weren't moaning like a little bitch for me. What was that stupid argument anyways? You were yelling so fucking loud at me it was funny as shit! You just kept screaming, "I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU!" You did all that just to come back to me the next damn day! So don't sit here and play victim. Oh sorry! Am I getting too personal for you? Well too bad, you shouldn't have put our business out there like that. Good thing I'm the one giving feedback because what if I hadn't read this before you turned it in huh? Even though you didn't actually put my name, with enough investigating and plenty of tears from your fake ass, they would find out it's me. I would've gotten in trouble and we don't want that now do we? Hmm? I'm actually looking at you across the room while I'm writing this and it's funny that you have no idea how deep a grave you've dug for yourself just by thinking you could write this without my knowledge and get away with it. You're one clever motherfucker I'll give you that, but that can only get you so far you know? Well, unfortunately, that's all I have to say for my feedback! I hope this helped! See you at lunch time.



ALLISON MANSION

ELIZABETH BATH

THE CHERRY TREE

JACK ADAMS

An unpopular populist propellant of violence once said,
“They’ve made their decision; now let them enforce it.”
But forcing a façade of cherry trees and picket fences
punctures the unspoken, unbroken raucous reality that lies bespoken.

It is plain and simple for me to see that some semblance of unity
is lost in the yearning of youthful have-nots, who are commonly
taught to be the enemy. Yet I dare to hope, relentlessly.
I dare to dream, to do, to defy.
I dare to shout into the eye of the suppressive storm that
streamlines that old cherry tree monolith.
And one day, I will dare to die.

I only pray that when I do, I will be remembered for who
I chose to be, and not what I ought to have been.
Because before I believed in the future, I fortuitously
found a fortune of stories secured in a past pretending to be honorable.

And that treasure trove of hidden history was tantamount to treason,
which is why I so foolishly held them inside
to divide and devour my increasingly conflicted conscience.
What am I to think when all I’ve been taught to approve
turns to dust, to tumultuous lies?

Don’t speak. Don’t sing. Don’t read and write.
Don’t profess the secrets that might measure up
to the light of truth when taken in totality.
The inexorable truth is that I need an exorcist
to expel this duplicitous, deplorable façade from my soul,
lest I be burned at the stake for my mistake
of believing in cherry trees and picket fences.

EXERCISE IS IMPORTANT

CLARE HAENNI

Life is like running. Life is
like running because some days
you don't feel like going for a run,
but you get up and do it anyway.
And on that run you discover that
roma tomatoes, when in the palm of
your hand, are the shape and the weight
of what you imagine a heart would be. And you
notice that yellow bell peppers are so pale
that you can see the veins under their skin.
It is hard to keep a lot of details in a brain like
where the pretzels are today if they are not
in aisle 8. My memory feels like a rusty
filing cabinet where the secretary tries to
keep the important information on top for
quick access but it always ends up
two or three layers deep, buried beneath
the "current affairs" folders. To
"fall in love" sounds gentle. I think lately that
I've been yanked in and out of
that mushy stuff. My brain boils love down to some
levelheaded decisions but my heart
picks up a jump rope whenever I'm around you.
I guess what I am trying to say is
exercise is important.



SEEKING HUMAN KINDNESS

DARIUS SHELTON



CRYPTIDS

A SERIES OF SEVEN SENTENCE STORIES

ELIZABETH COOLEY



I love the sight of snow at night, white powder falling in fat flakes against an empty sky. I relish the chill traveling down my spine and the crunch revealing the specific pattern of my bootprints. Not everyone thinks so highly of the snow—I think that is why the snow thanks me. Lazy flakes start to flurry over an upcoming clearing, whispers of wind grow into a howl. Squinting against darkness, I can see it: a white form, kneeling in the middle of the storm. Just as quickly as it arrives, it departs, flurries following closely behind. It might just be a dream; it leaves behind nothing but a single pair of patterned bootprints and a faint, wind-whispered “thank you.”



A hidden waterfall roars in the depths of Tennessee. Determined tourists must hike a steep trail of deep streams and jagged rocks if they wish to find it—and they most certainly do. For atop the waterfall sits an elegant stone statue: a red-tailed hawk, regally perched with gold-tipped wings spread across the sky and razored talons embedded into the soft soil of the cascade’s edge. According to the legend, it cannot move under the human gaze. However, when the hawk finds a moment of solitude, it flies off, taking with it as many wet pebbles as it can carry to feed its jagged nest of red-granite chicks. Hikers often leave small, upright stacks of stones as a tribute to the hawk’s beauty. When the bird and the stones disappear for a day or two, the hikers rejoice in their accepted offering, and the mischievous park ranger snickers next to his quite precious—and quite inanimate—statued hawk of the Tennessee falls.



Stumbling down a dirt path, a tornado siren sounds. Trees by an undisturbed farmhouse stand still as statues. Sunbeams, uninhibited by bird or cloud, scorch cracked ground and craggy face. Why does the siren sound? Out of the corner of my eye, something rustles in the barn—someone shrouded in shadow, sighing and groaning, writhing against the siren's screams. I reach out my hand to help the farmer.

The shadow takes it.



She is most content when the leaves change—her scales change with them. Verdant reptilian hues bloom into reds and yellows and oranges and purples and browns and golds, transforming one cohesive mass into a series of resplendent abstractions shifting against the breeze. Imperceptible to the untrained eye, looming tall as the treetops, gentle as the grazing fawn. The humans only know her as the swift rustling of autumn leaves, the faint flapping of mighty wings, and the smell of smoke. Unless, of course, she is asleep, deep in slumber, a mountain of foliage on the forest floor.

As tempting and rare as it may seem, I would advise you not to jump into the eight-foot-high pile of colorful forest leaves. Hasty humans tend to find that she resents being so-disturbed.



SPLASH

LAUREN KENNEY



of the waist down

VALERIE FERNANDEZ

spinning in a chair, wearing a skirt,
a man stared; my mother grimaced.
to teach me self-defense she said:
keep the inner parts of your legs glued,
nothing can peek out.
if not the thighs,
at least cross the ankles.

at the age of 9,
I realized there were hidden
intentions crouching
in a man's gaze and pants,
eager to pounce.

I wear shorts underneath a skirt,
in the hopes that imagination won't
penetrate another's thoughts
causing them to swell,
stealing a rush of blood.

and to smooth the lumps that form
from calories disguised as
treacherous flavors beating on tongues,
eager for someone to point out

the land of my belly:
where mounds sit and sink at touch,
tight clothing compresses fat,
a happy trail domineers-
the home of displeasure.

before I was a preteen,
the gentle oozing of red
and a brief sting from
nicks and cuts
no longer bothered me.
the clumps dropping from the blade
and dancing with the water,
pointed at the razor-bump veiled skin,
and told me,
it's working.

I craved for the blade to remove
the gaze fueled by testosterone
and slice off the surplus of fat.

ashamed to ask for help,
frustrated it grew
faster on me than others.
longer and thicker,
a list of attitudes to regurgitate.



UNTITLED

DANIELA OCHOA



ALL WHO LABOR

AUBREY MAJOR

OBEDIENCE TO THE OBEDIENT

CAROL OBERGFELL

He is threatened by that which challenges.

(Is he threatened by me?)

I believe he is a smart, creative, intuitive, loving person.

However, this is all shadowed by years and years of practicing obedience. Obedience to a party, to a religion, to an image, to an expectation.

When you are taught that obeying is the way to heaven and questioning is the way to hell, the curious mind will learn to turn off.

To stop asking questions.

THE PEACE OF SITTING WITH JESUS

AUBREY MAJOR

Nothing compares to this moment
Me & the Holder of hearts
As I lay it all down
I embrace what I've found
A Peace that is higher than stars.

The gold shimmers brighter than light
After all, a King needs a crown
This servant needs filled
& her King says "Be still."
As from glory & praise, He steps down.

Who am I that the King calls me friend?
With my rambles & endless requests
Yet He lends me His ear
& He whispers "Come near."
Every small thing pours into His hands.

This Peace that is higher than stars
Is the King who bends low just to see us
Cause the Savior who knows you
Saves time just to hold you,
Just sit with this Peace, His name's Jesus.

BOLD AND BRIGHT

EMILY GUSHROWSKI



WALKING WITH GOD IN THE MARION COUNTY JAIL

GABRIELLE MOBLEY

Today I sit in a cell, one that is cold and dark. I do not deserve to be here. Damn this world for being so cruel and racially bound. Why is it me who is punished for standing up to such injustices? I am one of God's children, as we all are. We are all the same on the inside, and our only difference is the pigment of our skins. I am disgusted with how this cruel world treats our brothers and sisters differently because one's skin is shades darker from those who are pale faced. I am an ally, standing up for my brothers and sisters. I stand with them on the front lines, and act as a friend, sister, and child of God. I am no different from those around me.

I am cold and weak, yet I am strong at heart, full of **goodness**. I know I can trust the Lord. The truth will always be portrayed in the faithfulness of the Lord that I give. I know that my faith will pay off soon. I find comfort that everything I see has been created by God himself. I know that I am one of these things he has created. I see the truth all around me through God. God walks with me everywhere.

I have only been here a couple days, but I fear I will be forgotten in time. I have not done anything wrong. I may have gotten too physical in my altercation with the officer who made my arrest. But I am not guilty. I have been charged with assault and/or battery. What can I say? I was watching an injustice be done to someone who was only taking a video of an officer. I could not let a woman be taken down and pinned to the ground for simply hitting a button on her phone. I did not want to hurt anyone, that was never my intention. I have a good heart and straight morals. Anytime I see a woman, no matter her skin color, being assaulted, I find it is my mission through God to correct such injustices.

I cannot help but feel she was assaulted due to her skin coloring. She was a black woman, wearing a shirt that read BLM across the front of it. I am sure that she was on her way to the Black Lives Matters protest just two blocks away. I was heading there myself. This was the first time I had witnessed such abuse to a woman of color in person. I am shocked and appalled at the way it was handled

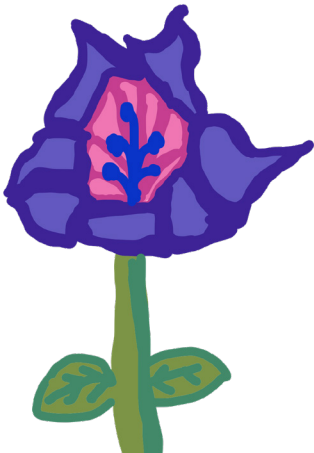
by the white man who wears a badge that is meant to “protect” the people. At this point I must ask the question, “Who is protecting her?” The answer was simple in my mind... I must protect her.

In case it is not obvious, I have not been one in trouble with the law before. I have never even had a parking ticket! I am a respectful young woman, who wants to do the world right. But how can I do this when the world is so full of hate? “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love...” (2 Timothy 1:7). The world needs some love. How do we get this love? Through our Lord. We need to see **beauty** in our society, and that starts with the world opening up, through this their hearts will be filled with love, and not of hatred and anguish.

I was beaten, for standing up for what is right. I was forced into a car for saying “I will stand against injustice”. More people need to be educated on the common good of our Lord. I am in a cell, for following my heart, and for spreading the common **goodness** of our Lord. I wish for the world to open its heart, and see how I do. We all bleed the same colors, and yet we are treated unequally. I am in this cell because I have the correct morals. I am here because I am on the right side of history. This world is full of hate. But I will not stop loving my brothers and sisters.

I know our heavenly father is watching me now, in my worst times. I know he will give me what I can handle, and I will come out stronger for this. We all will. I must trust and have faith that I am on my right path. I know God will not let me down now, for my intentions are pure. I can relax here, and know that God will hear my prayers. I want to inform whomever is reading my letter that I am a woman who walks with the Lord. I know I can trust God to be in his universe, as I am in mine. I am grateful, I have no need to worry about how

God will handle these horrid times. I am blessed with the belief that God will forever be right. God will guide me and everyone else into the light, and get rid of these hard times. Perhaps that is why I am here. God works in mysterious ways. I will continue working in my ways, to protect those who need a voice. To be an ally to my black brothers and sisters. I will help the world to heal and learn that we are all one race.... **The human race.**





NUNS

ELIZABETH BATH





UNTITLED

MIRANDA ANDERSON

ANHEDONIA

ETHAN BRUBAKER

It's violent, violent, violence.		Earworm forever screams, loud, loud,
loud. Who's this? Are you? I am		shoeless. My nails are rough, thick, and
jagged. My toes are bones dragging		torn flesh with it. Why are my eyes on
the floor? I can't reach my smile; it's		stuck on the ceiling behind a fan
swinging razorblades. Earworm.		Earworm. Earworm screaming, I'm
leaving again. A cloud strings a rope		around my neck and pulls, stretching,
my neck curls like a ribbon. I lose an		ear and leg
as it	knocks	my head
Fishing.	The	clouds are
Fishing.	It's not	amused
worm and	throws	me back. I
pick up my	smile. I	imagine I
used it just	now.	Check
when I	land to find I lost my ambition to the	
you don't	need a smile to laugh, light has escaped	
is night.	Poison. Toxin. Venom. To be spat up	
The	earworm still screams. I scream too,	
no longer	hear. Nothing. Nothing but the	
whispers.		

time.
yourself in
You'll eat
mouth.
roof of your
brings to the
jacket
copper
powder and
black
explosion of
taste a small
enjoy the
learn to
time you'll
mine. In
you're all
have and
you'll ever
fill. I'm all
Have my
will eat you.
Fear me. I
nowhere.
You're
You're lost.

will be.
Light. Never
There's no
happiness.
never any
there was
the truth.
show you
memories. I
your
dreams,
take your
for you. I
happiness
there is no
world.
In all the
be hostile.
I'll always
through, it
way
finds its
light ever
or love. If
happiness
never know
You'll

MARGOT'S EARBUDS

JACK ADAMS

The first time Margot used earbuds, she was fourteen. It had been her birthday, a dreary day in April. Wind hissing through the trees, rain smacking on the roof and echoing through her family's tiny, one-story house. The earbuds weren't particularly impressive. A cheap pair with blue rubber tips, probably made in China (like everything else her family ever bought) and picked up at the Dollar Tree, or the clearance section of insert-supermarket-here. But they were a gift from her favorite aunt, Elaine, and so she adored them.

Margot didn't *love* music, but she liked the Rolling Stones enough to use those earbuds consistently. When she was walking somewhere by herself, doing homework, cleaning her room, driving downtown, or eating breakfast, there were those blue, rubber-tipped earbuds. They lasted her about midway through high school before her dog chewed them up.

Her second pair were all black, \$15 on Amazon. By then, she was more of an AC/DC kind of girl, but the Stones always popped up on her list of recommended songs from time to time, right alongside Metallica, Guns N' Roses, and Blue Öyster Cult. This pair lasted her another three years, which surprised even Margot, considering how often she misplaced things. Thank God for a spare set of car keys.

Her black earbuds took her through one too many fire drills; her driver's license test (twice); the senior prom; her first love and heartbreak (thanks a lot, Justin); moving to a new house, but never making it *home*; her dad dislocating his shoulder when he fell down the stairs holding her baby brother; her mother's wailing that followed for weeks after; the drive to a weed-ridden cemetery, where she met some second-cousin-or-other named Gillian who was just *so sorry* for her; the silent torrent churning through the house-not-home the last two months

before she moved into her college dorm; the phone call she got from her parents when they split not long after. That's when she threw those earbuds away.

That first semester sucked quite a bit, but on the upside, Margot became well-acquainted with Dr. Ingrid in the Counseling Office. During her first spring semester, Margot's roommate, Anna, convinced her to listen to the newest single by AJR, a band she had never heard of. No, I'm more of an 80's–90's kind of girl, she said. Just listen, Anna responded, offering one half of her own earbuds. Fine.

The next day, Margot marched to the campus bookstore and purchased a new pair of earbuds. Pure white. Apple. Lightning connector that plugged straight into her phone like a charger, instead of the ones that came with a headphone jack. \$35 in the bookstore. Those took her through the next three semesters, right around the time people became more and more scarce on campus.

She remembered walking through the spacious student lounge, hardly a soul in sight. And those who were there were strangers hiding behind masks of every variety, some plain blue, others sewn with a pineapple print. AJR hummed through her body, her feet keeping the beat with each step. Margot glanced out the window, saw the trees. They weren't swaying. No rain. No hissing wind. Everything was still, like God had pressed the world's pause button. She turned her music louder, and walked away.





CARLY AND JOHN

ELIZABETH COOLEY



UNTITLED

MOIRA METZ

ONE MORE THING

GRACE BLAKELY

If I could say one more thing to you, what would I say?

I could ask you how I got my nickname,

I could share my favorite memory of us,

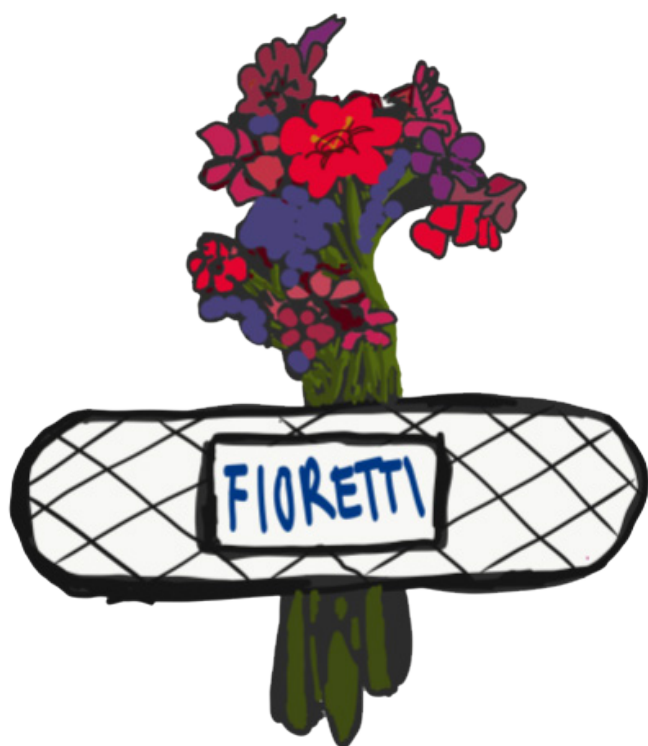
I could tell you I love you...

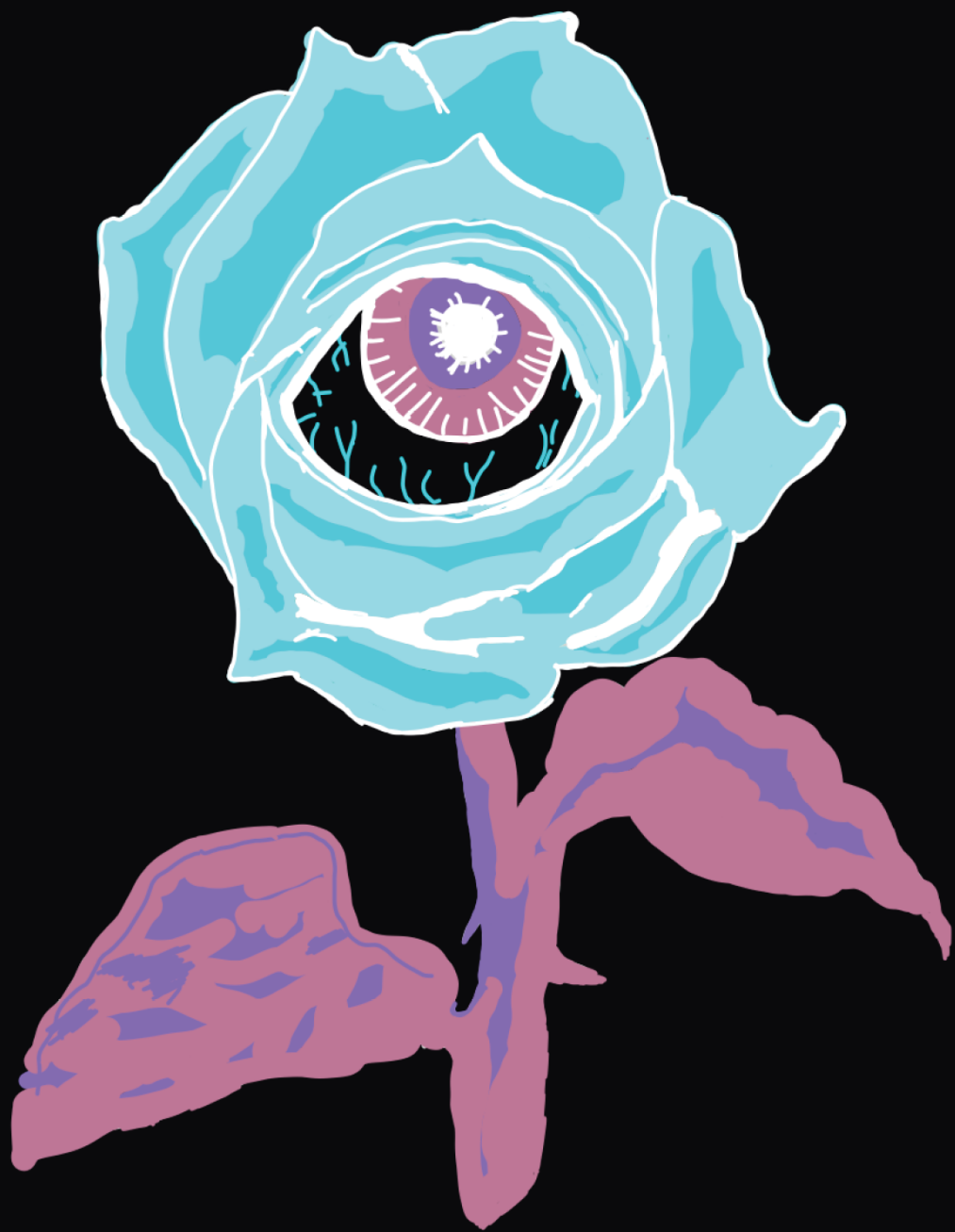
There are so many things I could say,

but nothing would ever satisfy me.

I would always want to say one more thing.







Cover Design and Illustrations

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