

THE CATALYST

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Hi! How are you? I hope you are well. I am very glad and very thankful that you are holding and have decided to read the 18th issue of The Catalyst.

I started my senior year a few months ago, which is pretty crazy. In preparing for my final year at this beautiful institution, I started to reflect on my back-to-school ritual from the past 15 years. When I was younger, each new school year meant something new. Perhaps I was just caught up in all the back-to-school advertisements telling me I needed to get a new backpack, new notebooks, and new shoes for the new year, but the month of August was always characterized by the word “new” for me. I started to internalize this idea of “new.”

As I prepared myself for the first day of school every year, I would have my heart set on reinventing myself. I wanted to have a new personality to match my new outfit and new pencils. I was ready to forget the past years and start fresh as a new version of myself. Maybe someone that was funny, or someone that was smart, or even someone that was outgoing.

Now, as the ~grown-up mature adult~ I am, I realize how silly that was. First of all, why did I think that I could only have one defining personality trait? More importantly, why did I want to erase the progress made and the growth created in the last year in order to bring forth a “new” self? I decided this year that I won’t be starting fresh or starting new. I will be starting exactly where I am, and evolve from there.

A catalyst is something that ignites change. It does not construct things from building blocks, it takes existing substances and allows them to react when brought together and change. That is how I’ve started looking at the new school year, and the beginning of anything new. We are never completely starting fresh, and we will never be “new.” Instead, we are evolving over time from who we already are.

I hope that you will bring this idea into the new year with you, and I also hope that you will enjoy this issue of The Catalyst and what we have become.

With love,



Christine Ho
Magazine Managing Editor

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PART I

CREATIVE PROSE

PACHAKUTI

PURELY
ANECDOTAL

INSOMANIA

TO THE EARTH

TAKE IT ALL
AWAY AND I'LL
STILL HAVE YOU

THROUGH/OUT

WHEN WE WAKE

SLEEPOVER

GROWN

A SHADOW OF
DOUBT

AURAL TRYPTIC

SEASIDE
RENDEZVOUS

pachakuti

by
rachel
andrews

She sees us fighting for the land She shared with us as a gift,
squandering Her work, and for what?
Profit. Power. Privilege.
I didn't create those, God thinks,

and just like us Women on Earth,
God has to roll up Her sleeves
and solve the problem Herself.

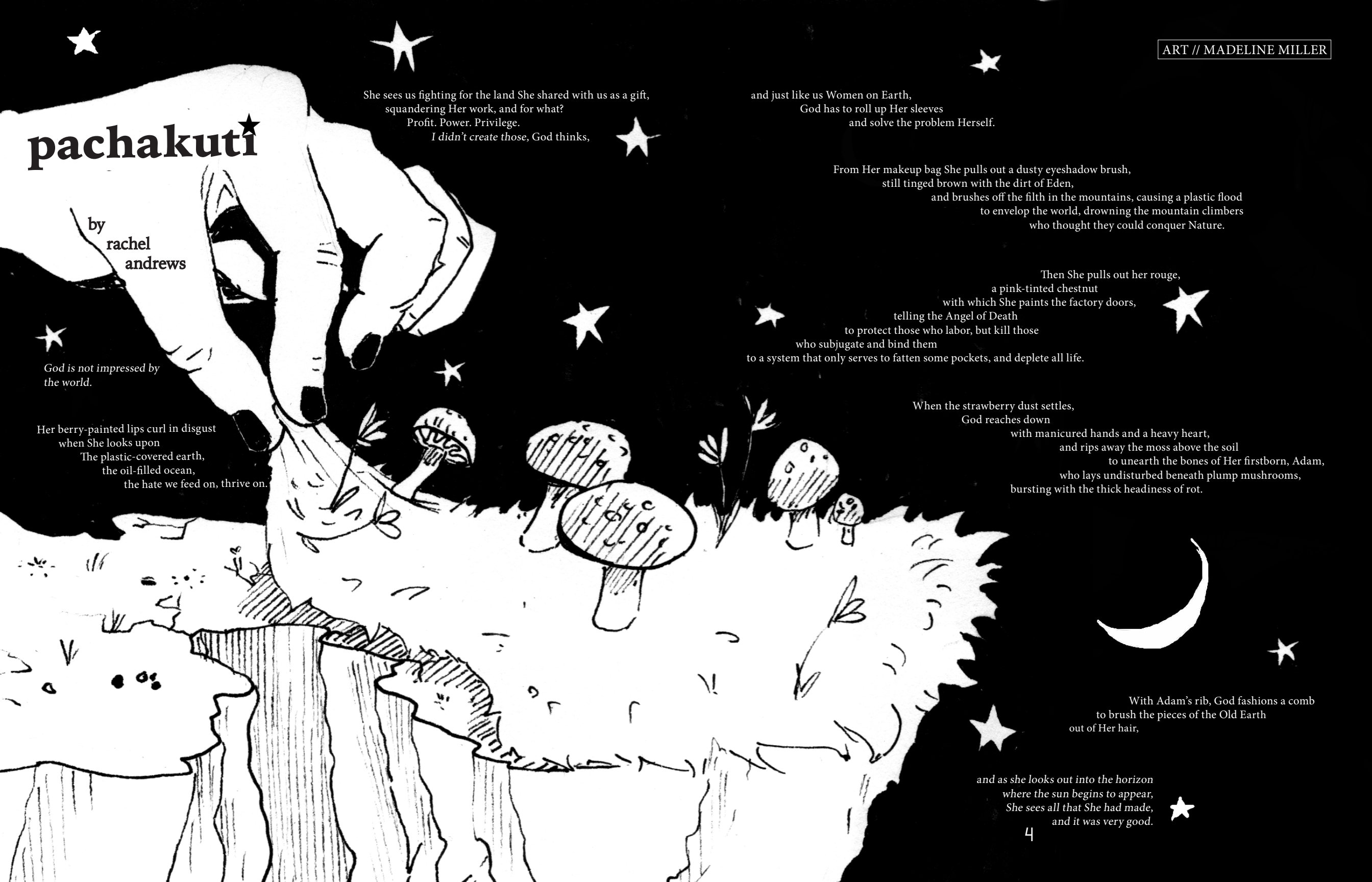
From Her makeup bag She pulls out a dusty eyeshadow brush,
still tinged brown with the dirt of Eden,
and brushes off the filth in the mountains, causing a plastic flood
to envelop the world, drowning the mountain climbers
who thought they could conquer Nature.

Then She pulls out her rouge,
a pink-tinted chestnut
with which She paints the factory doors,
telling the Angel of Death
to protect those who labor, but kill those
who subjugate and bind them
to a system that only serves to fatten some pockets, and deplete all life.

When the strawberry dust settles,
God reaches down
with manicured hands and a heavy heart,
and rips away the moss above the soil
to unearth the bones of Her firstborn, Adam,
who lays undisturbed beneath plump mushrooms,
bursting with the thick headiness of rot.

With Adam's rib, God fashions a comb
to brush the pieces of the Old Earth
out of Her hair,

and as she looks out into the horizon
where the sun begins to appear,
She sees all that She had made,
and it was very good.



God is not impressed by
the world.

Her berry-painted lips curl in disgust
when She looks upon
The plastic-covered earth,
the oil-filled ocean,
the hate we feed on, thrive on.

PURELY
ANECDOTALBY
HARRISON PYROS

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I watched a woman's car stall on the tracks while a train was coming. I remember seeing her jump from the driver's seat, waving her arms in some desperate attempt to stop the train, and then run, fleeing the impending crash. And just like the other spectators, I watched, waiting for the inevitable orchestra of sparks, wreckage, and screeching metal. But in a twist that felt like a cop-out, the train missed its mark by maybe a foot: the car was on the track adjacent. Then the railroad lights quit flashing, the safety bars lifted up, and I drove away at the green light, barely glancing at the woman still gasping for breath on the sidewalk as I sped by.

This anecdote wasn't meant to reveal anything, it's simply a story I pull out of my back pocket sometimes. I find anecdotes entertaining: they're a break in the plot, a side-bar, a tangent with an immediate wrap-up and payoff. The Greeks described them as "things unpublished." For the Romans, during the Justinian era, they were the "revelation of secrets." Because after all, anecdotes are just details, but the Devil is in the details. Hammering home meaning like an Aesop's fables gives me a headache—infer your meaning through nuance, not everything has a point. Most of my anecdotes are just examples of the absurdism around me—what else do you want from them?

When I lived in Portland for two years for college, I met

a guy studying psychology who needed to find meaning in every interaction. This was during my freshman year when my friend-group would drink six nights a week, drop acid, and tally the shots we took (from whatever ten-dollar handle) on our arms in black Sharpie. The guy's name was Milo and he listened to *Songs About Jane* and thought I was edgy because I said, "Who cares?" a lot.

During a fourteen-person acid trip in a trap-house in Washington, I decided I was in love with him while he was smoking pot through an apple-bong. He liked to trace my jaw and lips with his finger whenever we were drunk on whatever Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday; and I wouldn't figure out if this was a boy questioning his sexuality or just comfortable with his masculinity until a semester later. In an upstairs room of some house at a party he grabbed me and kissed me, tasting like Green Apple Four Loko in the closest thing I'd get to a *Love, Simon* moment. The next weekend, he was kicked out of school for drugs and running from the police.

I don't bother asking the "why" to things in my life anymore—it doesn't interest me. The characters that asked, "Why me?" in novels were always my least favorite. "Why not?" I always respond. My stories sound as if a wheel was spun with random names and verbs, and I must roll with the Mad-Libs. My time in Portland was like a two-year-

long indie film shot with the lens of a fever dream and seasonal depression. It turned out my friends and I developed a reputation for being indestructible on that small campus. I was on mock trial and making the Dean's List with my closest friends. Our big group-chat was called "Puke & Rally" where we would do drugs and celebrate Wine Wednesday with a religious fervor. I liked my personality to be a compilation of multi-tasking tropes. I think Portland is weird, I don't think they've ever seen someone that can party and not be a burn-out. They've obviously never been to California.

My conception of the social prerogative collapsed in on itself like a poorly-built house. Rules and expectations of how we were supposed to exist and interact felt as if they were thrown into a blender to make a discarded societal smoothie. Sensationalism and absurdism became the preferred mode of organization and I decided to just go with it. During my freshman year, there was a four-month-long period where no medical services were available on campus—a call to the med center resulted in advice on herbal remedies and a "sorry 'bout it." There was an outbreak of strep throat and I fell victim to forty-minute hot showers and bouts of delirium. When I showed signs of improving, my friends celebrated with absinthe and sub-par dining hall fries.

There was a boy named Aaron that I met in Portland whose antics were so strange that my friends and I still debate whether he was real or not. He was a rich kid from Marin who loved Xanax and not going to class—I don't think I ever saw him not drunk or hungover. He desensitized me to absurdism. He once went on a Xanax bender from Thursday until Tuesday and couldn't remember a thing in between. During this stint, my friend called me and told me that people thought Aaron might be OD'ing on a bed, and the only thing I bothered to ask was, "Is it your bed?" It wasn't, but we decided that since he was still breathing, he was fine. We were indestructible, remember?

During our freshman year, Aaron was stabbed in the face by some Marin drug-dealer after he tried to steal a bag of molly. He won a million-dollar civil lawsuit and never once put sheets on his bed. He was kicked out of school with Milo. A couple of years later, I found out he was shot in his car somewhere in the Bay. Rest in peace, I guess.

Before Portland, I used to grasp for meaning like the claw of some arcade game. I walked circles in my backyard and threw over-ripe oranges at a brick wall from a tree older than my parents. This was the same time two nurses and a doctor all told me I had high blood pressure only to conclude a few weeks later that maybe I "was just a neurotic person" and hung up before I could ask another question. It doesn't surprise me—my neatly-organized *Edward Scissorhands* suburb tricked me into believing there was an order to things. My anecdotes have taught me to stop expecting organization. I welcome the absurdism like I abandon a definition.

One of my best friends from Portland who now works for

Google tells me stories about two soccer players she lived with her freshman year. They were pretty and blonde and had the intelligence of a turtle. They would make two or three Irish Coffees in the morning as a way to start their day and then complain about headaches in the afternoon. They were shocked to find out Bailey's Liqueur was alcoholic. One of them went through a 90210-depression, waking up to watch eleven-hour marathons of the show from her lofted bed and then fall back asleep around midnight in a blanket of snack wrappers. Another woke up in the wrong bed with her entire torso stuffed inside a trashbin. Because they thought she was smart, both girls asked my Google friend if it was possible to give themselves anorexia because they "were looking to drop a few pounds." One of the girls transferred to be in a sorority at another school and the other married rich and lives in Seattle. It all works out, unless a bullet gets in the way.

When I get bored, I instigate my own absurdism. I wrote a three-hundred-page novel about my senior year in high school: a *Gossip Girl* exposé of personal proportions. My school was in Los Angeles and my senior year was packed with house parties, casual sex, and cheating couples. We were bad kids, but bad kids make the best content. Monogamy fell out of fashion that year for whatever reason, and people slept with one another as revenge tactics and as a way to pass the time. I slept with college boys at campuses nearby because I thought I was cool, and met pornstars while clubbing in West Hollywood. We were children of LA, kept informed by the steady-stream of evolving gossip. I sent a copy of the manuscript to every person it mentions. I'm currently seeking publication.

It seems my anecdotes are not meaningless because they've warped my worldview. I don't believe events happen for a reason, but I know the effects have changed the way I behave. I think trauma makes you funnier, I find tears self-indulgent, when I see Heineken on sale, I send a thank you to a god I don't bother believing in. My humor is like chucking oranges at a brick-wall and seeing what sticks. I roll with the punches, it hasn't failed me yet.

I have given up on trying to sound smart, I let the wave of colloquialisms and half-formed thoughts wash over me with pleasure. I hate when people my age try to be philosophical—it usually means they smoke too much weed or not enough. I've come to ask, "What does that even mean?" only to find hardly anyone knows what they're saying. Words are released in an attempt to drain the alphabet soup in our heads. I toss my words into the air and hope they land. I throw my oranges and hope they stick.

I look for meaning in the actions and reactions and determine its value later. I wonder if anything is truly absurd when the world just runs that way. I'm letting the world shape me like a child's erratic ceramics project. I don't bother expecting organization anymore—it's all just anecdotal, find your meaning elsewhere. ▲

INSOMANIA

BY SOFIA LYON



THE LONELINESS OF CHILDHOOD WAS NEVER MORE APPARENT ON NIGHTS I COULD NOT SLEEP.

I frequently experience insomnia, and have done so as long as I've been conscious enough to recognize darkness.

* Retrospectively, I attribute this to my young mind's tendency to worry. There was a fear, of course, of darkness itself, of what might linger within it and when it might come to snatch me. I also maintained an irrational aversion to my own dreams, the possibility of falling into an imaginary circumstance with variables beyond my control. However, what was perhaps most troubling to me stems from my conditioned belief in the functionality of the night time—that I was meant to be asleep, that most other humans on the planet were asleep, and that I might face some elusive consequence for remaining awake. There was a terrifying impossibility about believing I was the only human awake in the world.

* On particularly restless nights, when my parents were fed up with my periodic visits to their bedroom, my mother let me lie on the living room sofa with the television on at a low volume. Within an hour of moving from isolation to familial familiarity, I fell asleep swiftly, all anxieties abandoned and absorbed by the diluted, static sounds of the 90's: canned laughter and outdated jokes. Like a salve to my frightened and upset heart. Late night television has a remarkable quality of the ordinary, of human beings living a wonderful, uncontroversial day; something which my late-night thought spirals and dreams lacked.

They are almost designed for the purpose of lulling one to sleep.

* I remember the feeling of distant movement: my brother shuffling about in late-night shenanigans, the creak of contracting beams holding up my home. I recall the weight of shadow, a blanket for daylight. My heartbeat, slow and steady, the only affirmation of the physical as darkness enveloped it. A sound which accompanied me deep into my eventual, long-awaited slumber.

The one exception to my insomnia occurred on nights I went to sleep early. My room held the soft glow of the hallway light, the faint sounds of someone else enjoying a late-night television

show in the next room. The whispered conversation, the human noise—a beacon of togetherness amidst the dimly lit darkness of my childhood bedroom. My heart settling in the knowledge of presence; my overwhelming love for the ones who brought me comfort. Worrisome thoughts scarcely troubled me on nights like that.

* Nighttime manifests peculiar abstractions of what we see in the waking world: obscured, mysterious, quiet, isolated. The time spent living one's subconscious life in dreams

* is necessarily independent. But to resist sleep feels like committing a social ill, awarding extra time one should not have. In my nights awake, I confronted the inescapable reality of myself: my position in a vast world, my smallness on a small planet, the truth of being with oneself forever. My dark and arid room, the suffocation of twisted cotton sheets. Alone in a liminal space, awake in a sleeping world. The sensation of listening to my mother watching a show I would not understand and the hushed voices of my brother and father in conversation can now only be written as sublime. That

feeling of security remains untenable to me, something so visceral and human it operates beyond my comprehension.

* In the sinister night, amidst persistent thoughts of striking singularity in an infinite universe, in the moments before finally submitting to sleep, listening to my slowlyw beating heart amidst the stillness of a lonely room, all I think of are the words of Ms. Plath: "I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart. I am I am I am." Total isolation is a physical impossibility, even in the solitude of night.

Silence continues to render me sleepless. ▲

I am senselessly intoxicated by your lonesome voice and withholding laugh and youthful allure.
 I am senselessly intoxicated by your s ou l .
 I am intoxicated by your wi ld laugh and youthful allure.
 I sense your lonesome voice and i hold you .
 I am less lonesome with you .
 I am w hol e .
 with you .
 I m e l t i n t o you .
 I n e e d you .
 I am in lo v e with you .
 me and you .
 you .
 me .
 me .
 me* .

*you're a part of me now.
 **you're apart from me now. ▲

Take It All Away
 and
 I'll Still Have
 You

By Nidhi Khanolkar

ART // JUNE HASTY

Darkness in an unfamiliar neighborhood, but the porchlights shine like beacons. My brother's scars from our immersion blender are hidden in his fist, clenched tight around his neon-green jack-o-lantern. I am an angel, silver-haloed, a vision in a white ballet dress, matching tights, fairy wings. We cross the street to the stranger's doorstep in a pack, a band of young knights in search of our treasure. Three steps up to the castle, then the bell. We wait. I float up to the steps. A man, not a dragon, deposits handfuls of oversized candy in our buckets, one-by-one.

I don't float down the stairs.

When I fall—when I step too far—when the ground cries out from under me—it scrapes my palms and my skirt and—*scratch*—slices the skin from my knee.

My mom takes us home. My knee sticks out of the hole in my tights, raw and stinging. My skin is peeling off, staining my white dress; my wings are heavy at my back. The halo hurts my head. At home we put a Band-Aid on it, but it hurts when I bend it, the rawness of the flesh and the tightness of the adhesive straining against my flexed knee. I pick at it and rub on it and peel it off in the shower, pry at the dark scabs till they fall away in pieces. I squint sideways at the new skin, stitched to my old skin, and lament the lack of uniformity. My friend wonders why it hasn't healed yet. I wonder, two months later, the same thing. ▲

TO THE EARTH (REVELATION 12:9)

by phoebe pineda

PHOTO // ALEX IVORY

THROUGH/OUT

BY CHRISTINE HO

Then you begin to count.

Three,

Two,

On one you begin pushing.

The hard surface presses against your index finger, but you ignore the pressure building at your fingertips. You stare harder at the mirror, unsure where to place your gaze: into your dilated pupils, or at the violence happening to the left of your blushed cheek, or perhaps at the specks of dust that you regret not wiping off?

You start to feel it.

The sting begins skin deep—it always does. It seeps through.

The epicenter of this catastrophe is burning.

Your left ear is now turning red, the burn radiates through it, they say sometimes the only way out is through, but right now through does not seem like the right answer. It continues to burn and you feel the temperature of your blood, hot, rushing towards the .01-inch surface on your ear. Your brows furrow as you wince at the pain, your breath quickens, your jaw tightens.

You remind yourself to slow down.

Breathe.

In

and

Out.

Out.

The face in the mirror glares back at you.

The dust that sits on the shiny surface suddenly becomes that much more irksome.

You let out all the air left in your lungs.

Out.

You've done this before,

You tell yourself.

It'll just be like before.

You nervously shift your weight,

left

and

right.

The ache is migrating now.

Like honey,

it travels down your neck,

and gathers at your left shoulder.

It lingers there for a second,

another second,

another second.

You're closing your eyes now, your teeth are grinding against one other harder than before, and you pray that **the throbbing passes soon.**

Just one more second,

one more second,

one more second.

Your index finger is pressing against your earlobe, an imprint growing at your fingertip. You ignore it again.

You hear the pop.

Pop.

You push the earring through your ear.

You gently place the backing through the stem.

You brush your hands through your hair and tuck it behind your ear.

You cool down.

Your jaw relaxes.

Your breath s l o w s

You look at the glimmering dot on your earlobe.

You walk away.

The stem of your earring is stained red. ▲

when we wake

olivia benun

a cafe sits quiet and unassuming, tucked away in a corner of a bustling city center, somewhere where a river of people never stops flowing, and horns wail as cars race down a road. if you sit on the bench under the tree on the sidewalk across the street, it's really quite a lovely view. the pale blue exterior gently eases your eye away from the inky walls of the surrounding apartment buildings, and the warm glow from the tea lights behind the glass windows begs you to look inside. when you're standing in front of the shop, you'll run your fingers over the intricate metalwork of the wrought iron tables and chairs that are set up outside and imagine the feeling of the pattern impressed into the backs of your thighs as if your skin was as soft as clay melting into the seat in the hot sun. a bell will ring softly when you push open the door and the sticky sweet smells of freshly baked bread and cinnamon and coffee will ask permission to asphyxiate you and you'll gladly let it. inside, the china is as white as the powdered sugar that coats everything in the pastry case, and the shriek from the steaming espresso machines reminds you of a young child's cry of delight. the other customers are all wire-frame glasses, wool coats, and raw denim, and although few of them are speaking the atmosphere is familiar and sincere. at the counter is a young barista, he's not facing you but his posture is open and relaxed and his laugh sounds like christmas morning. the record player in the corner is singing faintly, and soon you'll be singing along too, surprised and confused by the stream of lyrics that seem to keep flowing out of your chest, even though you swear you've never heard the song before. and then—then you're six years old again in your grandparents' living room and you hear those same tinkling piano keys, but now you're staring at the empty leather chair where your grandfather sat just hours before, a cigarette still smoking silently in the ashtray on the end table, the glimmering sunlight swimming through the crystal and leaving rainbows on your bare feet. ▲

ART // ROSALIE RUBIO



I'd hate to bore you
with the minuscule
details of it all.

But I just have to say:

In the moments before it happened, I'd hardly declare myself "dead on arrival."

But rather, I felt like a sentient being detached from my own unconscious body, watching from above as the EMTs strapped on the AED to my naked chest—Ugh.

"My naked chest?"

God, I'm sorry you had to hear that.

I don't have the body positivity to say shit like that.

Perhaps,
you would better understand
if I told you how seeing her in
my bed made me feel like a
defibrillator delivered 1000
volts to my heart.

Anyway,
the point I'm getting at is this:
Seeing her strewn across my
sheets,
clinging to the bed frame,
was, for lack of a better word,
my revival.

Seeing her, with eyes closed
and lips slightly swollen,
was enough for my ventricles
to contract again, sending
blood gushing through my
body. She'd never looked so
enamoring as she did right
then.

And I know what you're
thinking—
"Is this fucking gay?"

But you should know
that it was a Thursday
night,
and I only like girls on
Fridays after I've downed a
few drinks.
Plus, we assured one another
that the exchange was
completely platonic.
After all, this is
what girls do at
sleepovers, isn't it?

sleepover

by
Julia Goldstein

GROWN

PHOTO//SOL RAPSON

The strong wind outside threatens my hair's stick straight posture. Though it is a sunny afternoon, the sun's warmth isn't able to put up much of a fight against the wind. As I follow my mom from the narrow parking lot into our local, needlessly spacious Walgreens, I quietly release a sigh of relief. For the time being, my dense hair is not endangered, safely crowning my head in all of its spiky glory.

Inside, my mom makes a beeline for the aisle of cotton balls, cotton rounds, cotton pads, all things cotton. For what reason these are such necessities, I have no idea. The round ceiling lights above make the white walls and floors of the store look aged and yellow, the racks of orange laundry detergent dull, the turquoise Clorox containers unpleasant and sickly green. As my mom and I move farther down into the aisle, I almost walk straight into a girl with long black hair who looks about my age; she is also waiting for her mom to restock whatever cotton product she is so deeply in search for. Startled, I turn to face her, wanting to apologize, but as her face becomes clearer to me through the strands of hair covering her cheeks, my words lose shape and are only silently spoken in my head.

It's Audrey.

"I have to say something," I think to myself.

The last time we had seen each other was during winter break of our sophomore year, and after that I had quietly exited out of her life, overwhelmed by the busyness of school, my best excuse. Now over a year later, silence doesn't seem like the most appropriate way to greet her. That's how it all had ended in the first place—with silence, my silence.

Nonchalantly, I toss out any word. "Hey."

In this one second encounter, a feeling of guilt rises, one that I thought I had already successfully suppressed and left behind. The end of our friendship was my fault.

I could at least give her that much.

The two of us have known each other since kindergarten, though we weren't officially close friends until the eighth grade. In our tiny Asian school, we had simply grown accustomed to each other's existence. In elementary school, I was like an extra in the background of Audrey's life, but our twenty person class was so small that eventually our circles began to overlap. In middle school, we were forced to interact more because our teachers constantly assigned for us to sit together; to this day, what potential they saw in this partnership is still a mystery to me. For the seventh grade medieval fair, I had been lord of the castle, and she my lady, despite her being at least a head taller at the time. Everyday leading up to it our teacher had emphasized the values of chivalry that we had been learning in history class, but because of my size I only felt mocked whenever I tried to help Audrey carry her pile of textbooks from class to class or politely pulled out a chair for her. Up until high school I had always been one of the shortest people in our class, if not the shortest. Now at fifteen-and-a-half, I finally tower over her, and my gigantic feet have evened out in proportion to my six feet height.

So this is what it feels like to look down on people.

In the back of my mind, I had always thought of Audrey as the girl who has everything that I don't. Her family has a five bedroom, remodeled vacation home in Lake Tahoe that they rent out every year. A house! Not just a small log cabin.

BY L VERENA O N G

But even though I imagine that she lives a life of luxury, that she is one of the haves and I a have-not, her actual home behind our old school is smaller, and might I mention much messier, than I had originally pictured. In any case, compared to my East Oakland home where I hear the sounds of gunshots flying through the darkness almost every night, and where my windows are blocked by rusty iron gates to prevent bullets from lodging into them, deep down I always longed to move to an area where I could be blessed with safety, where I may take that security for granted. I have no doubt that any worries of this sort have never even lingered for a second in the back of Audrey's mind. Blessed is what she is, blessed—blessed by her parents, blessed by our teachers, simply and wholly blessed, favored even by God that she may live the way she does.

She was also always above me academically. In our fifth grade school-wide spelling bee that we competed in, we had both been finalists. And of course she won the first prize, beating even the eighth graders who participated and made it to the last round. If we were in a competition, she would, without fail, come out on top almost every time.

I still remember the moment the spelling bee had ended, when our teacher walked us back to our classroom, whistling songs of congratulations to her while the middle schoolers trudged away in the other direction. Laughing, he had asked Audrey jokingly, "Do you think you're really smart? Or are the eighth graders just dumb?" She had simply smiled quietly in response, but I noticed that glow of pride which radiated from her. A new aura had entered into her that day. When she switched out to her new private white high school last year, I received her scholarships. Since she was gone, I could finally become number one.

Because we had gotten closer, over the years I came to have a deeper look into her life, beyond the filter of comfort and affluence that I privately associated with her. Beginning in high school, I made a greater effort to keep in touch and began a group chat with two of our other friends as well. I initiated everything. I asked to hang out. I invited myself over. After my parents and I moved to her city at my insistence to be safer and closer to school, I biked to her house with my Wii games and donut holes an hour before the time the four of us had agreed to, and I left the last, almost an hour later. This became our tradition during school breaks, and during that period I came to realize that the smile she kept on her face was used to hide the pain of change and isolation—though she was in a new school, surrounded by new people and opportunities that I thought were more well-suited to her lifestyle, she counted us as her only true friends. She had no desire to leave us behind as only a part of her history. She didn't want the places she had set for us to dwindle into becoming only a passing "yeah, we used to hang out" type of acknowledgement in sudden moments of recall.

But still the happiness I projected onto her eventually caused me to grow more insecure in what I lacked in comparison, even though that never mattered to her at all. And slowly that came over our friendship like a dark cloud. She was unaware of the uneasiness I had towards our

relationship, but for me this insecurity became the voice inside my head that I couldn't shake off, the stranger outside knocking and banging on my door whom I kept ignoring, but would break his way in regardless to get whatever it is that he wanted. Looking back, I tended to joke offhandedly about being poor. I wonder if that subconsciously made me want to distance myself from her, especially once she transitioned to a much more prestigious school, the kind that is praised in parents' magazines, one that people like us from our small Chinese corner of the Bay Area rarely attended.

Back in aisle two, I observe her cautiously. She is fidgety—her feet start back, her hands turn into fists on the inside of her pockets, and her eyes, accentuated by the outline of her dark circles, look in all directions. Her hair has been tossed by the wind, but she makes no real effort to brush it. She looks down, and for the first time, she looks small in my eyes, anxious even.

"Hey," she faintly replies, her mouth tight and slightly curving upwards.

I know that face. The confusion that it reflects is an overtone that tells me deep down she is still wrestling with our past, not knowing what had happened between us. Restrained in this second of awkwardness, I know that she probably has questions, ones that I have the answer to but which I choose to leave open-ended and unresolved. Quickly, she turns around and follows her mom to the cashier. Her mom, still preoccupied, has not noticed me. Within another second, I lose sight of them. I return to my own mother, who has had her back towards us during this entire encounter.

My mom and I move towards the front of the store just as Audrey walks out the door. She is smiling at her mom, and the looming shadow that had come upon her when she saw me is now replaced by a new brightness, a side that she used to hide at school but which would occasionally be revealed when she overcame all odds and beat me in Mario Kart. She has no idea, but sometimes I had tried to be a better friend and secretly let her win.

I guess now she'll really never know.

Her back is facing me and her feet quickly take her away, farther and farther and farther. She gives me no second glance, no acknowledgement. Our lives clearly aren't a part of some Hallmark movie where a one second encounter would be the long-awaited reunion for a lost friendship and a happy ending. Today has proven that any hope for reconciliation between us has diminished.

Once the best of friends, we are now strangers, not even remote acquaintances. At the same time, though, I wonder if I truly care as much as I should. Isn't this, after all, what I had wanted? To be distanced from her so that I could make a better name for myself? Was I wrong to think that investing in this relationship would relegate me to second place over and over again?

But these questions do nothing to quell any remote feelings of regret or shame—my old guilt has already returned and cries out for my confession: this is all my fault.



A Shadow of Doubt

By Ethan Dildine

Your memories and past are like a shadow. Everpresent and inescapable, yet going unnoticed. As you grow your identity, filling your childhood brain with happy memories, so too does your shadow grow in tandem.

Your brain doesn't discriminate in regards to what to keep for the rest of your life, and it has a nasty habit of hanging on to the bad ones. And most of us are controlled by these memories.

Even when they can't be recalled at will, existing only as echoes and ghosts, they influence each and every walking moment.

Small fragments of trauma and disappointment, like the time you were picked last in P.E., or the time you had to sit alone at lunch, or the time you were invisible at a party.

Unfortunately, there is no way to physically remove memories from your brain, much like how you will never be without a shadow. Except in darkness, where all is shadow. I spent my life running from my shadow, concealing and suppressing it whenever I could. But I realize that's just not possible. For better or for worse, my shadow will follow me until the end of my days.

It won't vanish no matter how much you try to ignore it, so it's best to get comfortable with it instead. Perhaps you can learn something from it by treating it like a friend instead of an enemy. ▲



"ARE YOU GONNA TAKE IT?"

"I don't know."
She did. So did he.

They sit on the bench overlooking the beach, attention trained on the line between the cobalt sea and a fiery orange sky. Milo gazes at the rings emanating from the sun, dying slow, like an ember. Or a cigarette butt...That reminds him.

He sparks and sucks in, smoke cyclone swirling into his lungs. Exhales. Fights the urge to cough, lips spreading into a giddy smile. He holds it out to Sol. She doesn't turn. "Sol." Nothing. He clicks his tongue. She starts, perhaps having forgotten about Milo, her mind as far as the sun.

"Hmm?"

"Mmm?"

"Mmm-mm."

Mmm-mm? Did Sol Prieto just "mmm-mm" a Marlboro? The girl who once cracked a Juul pod open into jungle juice? The same girl that sucked the nicotine out of a boy's fingers at a party when she smoked him dry? The guy wasn't quite complaining then, but the point stands.

Milo squints at her, flabbergasted. "There's not even a filter!"

"Mmm-mm." She smiles, and turns back to the horizon. Gone again. Her eyes reach out over the sea, taking everything in at once, the waves, the ocean spray. The sun. "That's the end of the world."

Milo squints again towards the end of the sea, watching Sol's namesake rapidly approach the water. It looks like a meteor soaring towards Earth, igniting the sky before eventually extinguishing everything underneath it. Maybe this was the end.

"It'd be nice to get this over with, yeah?" he half-heartedly chuckles.

She just squints at him. "Huh? I mean," she points out at the water once more, "that's the end of the world. The boundary." Milo flashes his eyes: "Go on..." She does.

"We can walk up, down the coast, back into town, get a burger at Sal's—we should do that—take a stroll on a freeway, even sneak onto a military base, if we wanted to, but that?" She shakes her head, unable to believe her own words. "Inaccessible. The end of the world."

Milo chuckles, not quite on board. "I can swim."

"To Thailand?"

He concedes. Sol rests her chin in her hands, sun on her cheeks. "And we lived right on it..."

"We reached the end of the level. What's our prize?"

She doesn't respond, instead staring at the ground, a collection of cigarette butts, candy wrappers, fast food bags,

and empty lighters. Sol toys with an old napkin under her foot.

Milo slumps lower, eyes settling on the border between sand and sea. Waves sweep further up and up the beach, leaving mounds of sea foam on land. Bubbles silently explode and disappear, spraying salt shrapnel cross the sand, onto seaweed, the cliff face, and hermit crab shells. None of this distracts Sol. She blinks at the sun. Then does it again... Hmm...

She reaches her hand out to Milo. He giggles, but obliges. She takes a long, long drag, cherry burning bright, throat scorched as if by solar flare. Smoke passes her tongue and teeth in an exhale doubling as a sigh of relief -- "thank God." Milo throws his hand forward again, expecting a rally back. She doesn't tear her gaze from the sea.

"Mmm-mm."

Milo hides a grin, then immediately lights another for himself. Both lean comfortably against the bench, and hold their hands in their laps staring over the vista.

A certain balcony catches Milo's eye, the last on the street, hanging over the patch of beach to their left.

"Wasn't that where Ryan—"

"—Ryan Doyle—"

"Ryan Doyle's party was?"

"I think."

Milo can't believe his ears. "Think." He makes a noise with his tongue to indicate he very much so disagreed with the use of that word. "Think!"

"You are kidding me. More than one item caught fire at that party. You and Tifa left me in Econ early so you could shave your legs 'just in case' for that party. It was the biggest of the year."

"Of three years ago." Sol closes her eyes, maybe trying to prevent the memory from entering through them.

"What even happened at that party?"

"I don't remember."

She did. So did he.

Three years ago, Milo, Sol, Tifa, and Luke stumbled into Ryan Doyle's driveway, the pre-game having ventured too far into "game" territory. The clan gazed blankly into the house, as neon lights kited and bounced across ceiling and skin, scattering

color across the room like rocks skipped awry. Nameless music that everyone still knew blared out the door, rumbled through the house and the ground under their feet.

Beneath them waves crashed against the cliff under the house, beating into the rock face, out of sync with the music, but adding to the chaos. Several people lined the balcony overlooking the water, intoxication adding duplicates to waves that were already there. A boy tried to impress a girl with his knowledge of the barnacles that grow along these cliffs (it was actually sort of working), three guys fought to see who could chuck a can of Coors the farthest, and one woman threw her cigarette butt into the sea, interest lost in the gathering. Tifa and Milo stared at her before sharing a glance: "Ew."

They crept up closer to the door, pushing the girls to the front. This trick didn't work on the two 18 year old gentlemen bouncing the door, one short, one tall. "No guys allowed."

One held a pink bottle of pineapple tequila, the hit drink of Milo and Sol's freshman year—future winners would include cotton candy vodka, Redrum (red wine + rum), and just, like, actual moonshine. This specific bottle had had a rough night: a thin crack ran up the side, starting from a chip at the top, and it was only about half full. That didn't stop the taller boy from wielding it in his fist like a sword.

Milo sighed a fake sigh, already turning to leave. "Told y'all. Time for sushi. Or tacos." His jaw dropped -- this would be what he'd consider the best idea in his life, "Wasabi tacos."

"Shut up." He wasn't sure who said that.

"It'd totally change up the spice profile..."

"No—" The voice stepped forward, eye to eye with the boys running the door. It was Luke. "I put on my whore shorts, walked from FT to DP, and tripped off of a curb. But I'm here."

The shorter boy squinted down at Luke. He was enjoying this. "No guys allowed, man."

"I'm not even a threat, I just want to dance. I'm here to scoop up and trap all the 'straight' boys here. I'm not the competition, I'm here to get rid of it."

"What?"

"I'm here to get rid of boys. It's like they're mosquitoes and I'm swatting them all down."

"What?" Neither doorman was getting the message

"I'm here to fuck your mos-qui-toes. I'm like a fly swatter. No. I'm a frog."

The short doorman turned to Tifa. "Huh?"

She didn't understand the question. "He's a frog, man..."

Milo stepped forward to clear everything up. Sol smiled. He always had a knack for mediation and smoothing things over. He cleared his throat, summoning everyone's attention.

"He's here to fuck the mosquitoes."

Short doorman scoffed, to Milo's utter surprise. "We don't know any gay guys."

Luke laughed right in short doorman's face. He pushed him aside—he'd heard enough. "There's always gay boys." Luke stumbled, rounding the edge of the balcony.

"I'm a frog." He disappeared into the party.

Tifa nodded. "He's a frog, man." The remaining friends stood, involuntarily swaying to music inside. They began to enter, but taller doorman put an arm up in front of Milo.

"He may have been a frog, but you look like a horny straight boy." He extended the cracked bottle to Milo. "Drink this."

Milo slowly wrapped his fingers around the bottle, half of a fifth (for those keeping count—a tenth) of pineapple tequila sloshing around in his hands. The liquor was cold, but, upon touching a throat, would burn indiscriminately, filling his stomach, legs, arms, head. Milo stared at the bottle, thinking about the power it had, the games played, wars won and lost (there must be an equal amount of wars 'won' and 'lost', thought Milo. Because of...math. There's one winner and loser—man, I'm smart), girls courted, tears shed, exes called, hands left unwashed, hamburgers bought (and subsequently consumed—he should go to Sal's after this), bones broken, beaches spontaneously visited, smartphones cracked, meals returned to the outside world, nails chipped, skateboards bailed off of, cars crashed, and homework forgotten about because of one stupid beverage, one stupid chemical compound (not one he actually knew, but chemicals nonetheless). He thought about—

"Are you gonna drink that shit or not?"

Oh yeah. He glanced into the bottle to find a solid yellow ichor waiting. Watching behind the doormen, Sol shook from anxiety and Tifa from excitement (Milo is totally gonna yak after this). He brought the vessel to his lips, liquid stirring in his hand, as if ready to jump down his throat and take hold. He turned the handle up, up, and...

"I can't." He dropped the bottle to his side, and the taller doorman snatched it back, adequately entertained.

"Jesus..."

Milo turned (dizzily) to the source of the voice: Sol. She

SEASIDE RENDEZVOUS

BY KYLE DENT

snatched the bottle, gilded handle glistening as it rose into the light—towards her lips. Golden hair and liquor alike tumbled downward, as every molecule of liquid turned and crashed and fought the others to reach the bottom first. A whirlpool formed as a bubbling sound came from her mouth, throat working overtime to make sure not a drop landed on her tongue.

She drank...and continued to drink. After a few moments of standing with mouths agape, Milo questioned the doorman. "Why are you letting her do this for me?" The taller doorman blinked, then shrugged.

"Sex?"

Milo turned to Tifa. "At least he's honest?"

"I'm pretty sure that's admissible in court anyway."

Sol sipped some more, and dropped the bottle to her side, throwing her head back. The booze was clearly working its magic, and a drop of blood dribbled from her lip, torn from the thin crank. She glared at tall doorman, thrusting the bottle an inch from his face, the speed and fury surprising everyone.

"Fuck you." She chucked the bottle off the side of the balcony, and stormed in. Milo and Tifa cheered, stomping in after her.

Milo smiles upon recounting the memory. Sol flicks her butt off the cliff.

"I wonder what happened to that bottle."

Sol smiles softly. "Me too." They would never know—but luckily, I do. The bottle landed in the sand, and shattered two days later when a storm wave crushed it against the cliffs. It was swept out to sea. One shard ended up in Singapore. Another in Panama. Several lie at the bottom of the sea. The bloodstained handle washed up under the wharf downtown from you about a week ago. Go figure.

Sol stares dead into the sun, so low on the horizon that it didn't quite hurt to look at. It seemed so close, like an illuminated weather balloon just out of reach, just hovering in the sky.

"Right?"

Sol shakes, snaps back into the conversation. "Yeah..."

"It's too bad."

Sol did her best to offer a question that didn't blow her position of 'barely paying attention.' "What do you mean?" she decided on.

"Nothing." There's a silence. And then another.

"What are you going to do?" Sol

swallows, trying to catch the words as they leave her mouth, perhaps not realizing she was speaking.

Milo sits for a moment, eyes glazing over the water.

"Probably just keep working at the shop."

"Mm." Another silence. Why did he always have to do this? Or was it her?

"We're saving up, though." Sol's ears perked up, Milo having never uttered the word "saved" before.

"For what?" The words left her mouth before she thought them.

"To go to T.J."

She stood corrected. Maybe it was a start. Or maybe it wasn't.

"And Luke's, like, my boss now..." He motioned with his hand like a plane taking off.

"What?" She finally looked at Milo. The sun had passed under the water anyway. "I thought he was gonna go up to write in Portland."

Milo shrugged. "This is better money. Anybody can write anywhere." Sol shrugged too.

"He's an 'associate' now."

"What are you, then?"

"Assistant associate."

"Ahh." That says it all. Milo shuffles his feet, pulling his carton out again. He flips one between his knuckles, wrapping paper solid, tobacco firmly stuffed. Taps it against his fingernail, and wiggles it out to Sol.

"I'm okay, Milo."

He slips it right back into the box, perhaps trying to hide it from the eye. The ocean continues to crash in front of them, a soup of pebbles and cigarette butts and bird feathers and glass shards and plankton and fish and plastic, sloshing around every which way. Sea salt and rocks break the components of the sea, smashing and pulverizing everything into atoms, the water becoming one part everything, a matrix of life and happening.

The roar of the ocean was overwhelming. So loud. Ever present. Just like—

"I remember what happened at the end of the

party."

Sol was stunned, almost intrigued to reclaim the deleted scene from her memory. "What happened?"

He smiles, giddy like Christmas morning. "We got drunk."

Sol nods, well aware. "Drunk..."

"Drunk. And then..." Waves slammed against their cliff, maybe trying to hear as well. "We went to Sal's. We got double deckers. And came to the beach. Right here. Then—"

Sol stops him—she remembers. "And we ate right here..." She looked down over the cliff. "And I hurled over the edge..." Milo cackles, but Sol doesn't join in.

"That's all?"

"That is hilarious." He nudges Sol. A bit too hard.

The sun falls further and further under the horizon, aura gone, rendering the waves black and invisible. Sol looks at the dirt and wrappers under her feet. Reads a logo.

"Sal's."

Milo tries to offer a branch. Tries. "Tifa is having a late grad party tomorrow. You should come."

Sol opened her mouth to speak, unable to form the apology they both knew was coming. Milo speaks before she can. "Or are you gonna be gone already?"

Sol's mouth hangs, Milo's words burning in her like a manta ray shock. "I'll see what I can do."

He knew she wouldn't. So did she. ▲

SHE SNATCHED THE BOTTLE, GILDED HANDLE GLISTENING AS IT ROSE INTO THE LIGHT—TOWARDS HER LIPS. GOLDEN HAIR AND LIQUOR ALIKE TUMBLED DOWNWARD, AS EVERY MOLECULE OF LIQUID TURNED AND CRASHED AND FOUGHT THE OTHERS TO REACH THE BOTTOM FIRST. A WHIRLPOOL FORMED AS A BUBBLING SOUND CAME FROM HER MOUTH, THROAT WORKING OVERTIME TO MAKE SURE NOT A DROP LANDED ON HER TONGUE.



PHOTO // GRAEME JACKSON

PART II

POETRY

EUCALYPTUS

THE BLUE
MAIDEN

TEA ROSE
DICHOTOMY

EAVESDROPPING

SILVER LINING

FORCES OF
NATURE

WHITEWASHED

PLEAS OF
HUMANITY

VOICELESS

TETHERED AND
FEATHERLESS

HONEY LEMON
COUGH DROPS

CALIFORNIA
INCANTATION

TODAY IT IS
GLOOMY AND
I THOUGHT OF
YOU

BALLET IN
BLACK

WHISPERS

OLD SHIRT FULL
OF HOLES

MIRRORS AND
WINDOWS

MATTER

HANDS

INSPIRED BY
DICTEE

TUMMY
TROUBLES

WEEDING

FRECKLED
STARS

PISCES

NIGHT SKY

PURPLE

FAITH

LIQUORED LIPS

SPLINTERED
RAINBOW

LOVE ME 'TIL I'M
DEAD

ILLUSION

PLAZA RUBIO

Eucalyptus

By Emma Wilkins

She sometimes remembers
days spent on forest green carpet,
eating natal plums from the backyard.
Days spent in craft drawers
and eating ginger ice cream in Mendocino.

Nothing was complicated then—
her grandmother's quilts had yet to fade.
The salmon colored chair
offered its comfort,
she could smell eucalyptus
if she wasn't too far from home.

Now, she suppresses nostalgia
from saturating her days.
She permits one prayer per week,
imagining stained glass windows,
tracing her eucalyptus tattoo.

The sun caresses you, red-orange rays,
its final embrace before it marches on upwards;
And all a sudden

It is blue,
Blue,

Blue so bright, it fills your lungs and pours into your soul.

Blue jewels of air nesting in fronds of grass.

Blue heart, blue lungs, blue eyes

And she,

She is blue as well.

Late at night she lies very still

So as not to disturb the world around her,

And slowly, slowly,

Her soul spills out to coalesce with the world around her.

She disintegrates, she is no more.

Tired, tired of the blue,

One swift motion

—That's all it takes—

She stabs her heart with a thorn

And lets the red flowers bloom out of her.

The sun will rise and you will see her,
Roses so vivid and pure,
And you will smile
at her mask of calm.

And from her chest,
You will pluck
the fragrant roses
with care.

THE
BLUE
MAIDEN

Tea Rose Dichotomy

He would've asked,
maybe,
if he could

grab coffee with you
at French Press,

where someone yesterday,

wearing your smokey,

balsamic floral bouquet by Tea Rose,

reminded him of you.

But today he's split

By Andrew
Nguyen

between how he thinks

you think of him

and how he hoped

he could change

how he thinks you think

about him.

If he could,
maybe
he would've asked.

Tell me what you want to hear and

See me for who I want to be

Yeah

yeah

yeah

Yeah

Mouths move in rhythm
as souls wander upward,

Eaves Dropping

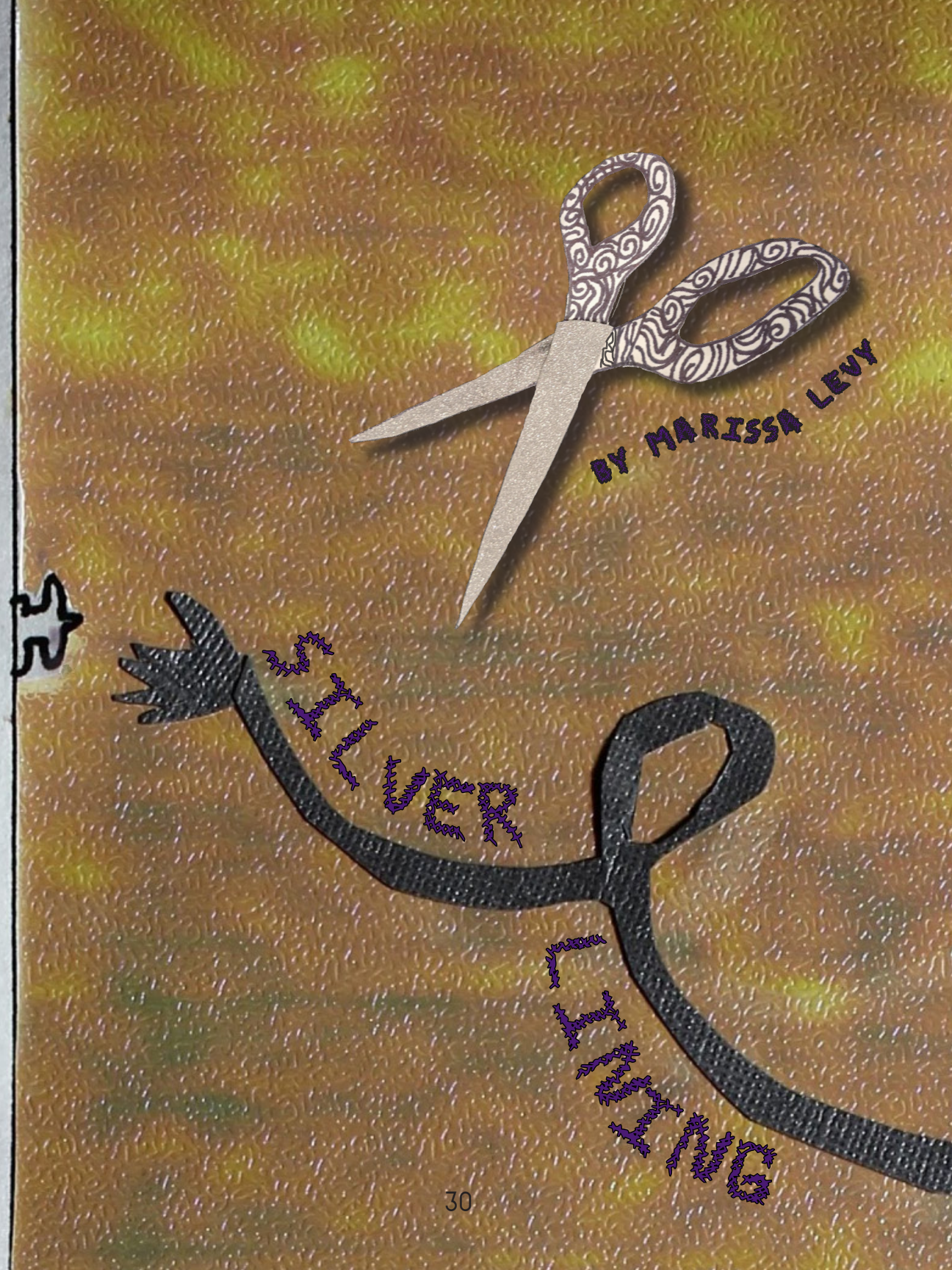
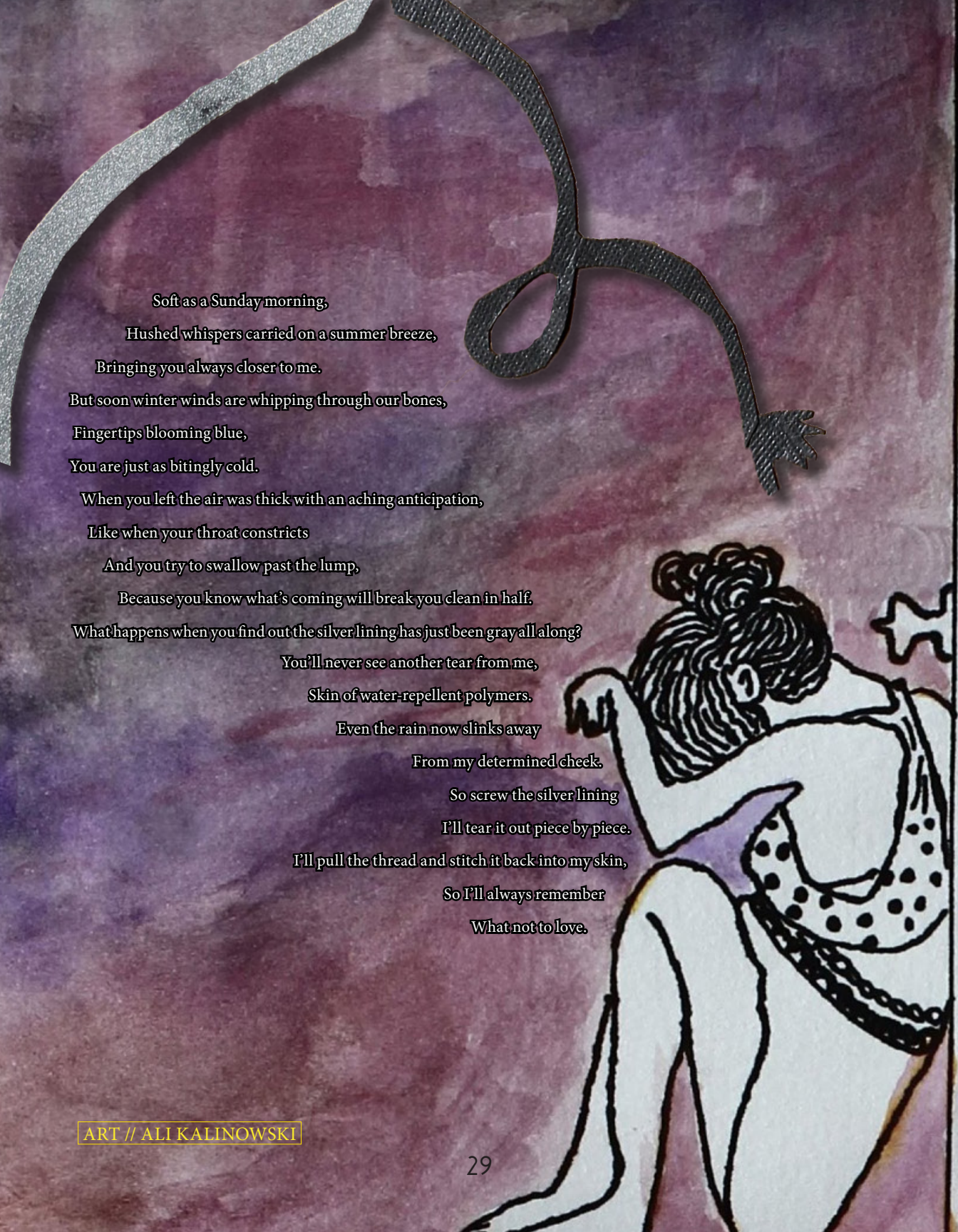
By
Renee Whalen
&
Alexandra Deane

on the conversations of life,
the clouds are lulled to sleep.

Is it a lie if we only tell ourselves?

Soft as a Sunday morning,
Hushed whispers carried on a summer breeze,
Bringing you always closer to me.
But soon winter winds are whipping through our bones,
Fingertips blooming blue,
You are just as bitingly cold.
When you left the air was thick with an aching anticipation,
Like when your throat constricts
And you try to swallow past the lump,
Because you know what's coming will break you clean in half.
What happens when you find out the silver lining has just been gray all along?
You'll never see another tear from me,
Skin of water-repellent polymers.
Even the rain now slinks away
From my determined cheek.
So screw the silver lining
I'll tear it out piece by piece.
I'll pull the thread and stitch it back into my skin,
So I'll always remember
What not to love.

ART // ALI KALINOWSKI



BY MARISSA LEVY

forces of nature

by Nidhi Khanolkar

when we are worlds apart

and you
whisper my name

the wind brings to me
the echoes of your voice.
you are the moon

and I
the gentle cresting waves,

you turn the wine dark sea
in my veins to a tempest.

31

ART // LAUREN WICKS

WHITE WASHED

BY ANDREW NGUYEN

What formula should I use
to calculate my drifting,
swinging pendulum,
an aimless boat that
carries the cargo
of my self?

I wonder
about my dad.
What did he use
when he sailed
from the Mekong in '77
across the South China Sea?

Did he even think to calculate
his drift, or did something
so subjective, I mean
relative, not cross
his mind during
his escape?

Did he sway,
as I sway when
the tide's inquisitive
crest crashes over my ship?

*You definitely want some chopsticks,
right?* To eat my pasta? I'm okay
for right now, because for now,
my sails still stand sturdily
against tenacious tides
and subtly cryptic crests,
until another, distinct
but similar swell
finds me again,
thrusting my boat back
when you tell me that maybe

*We shouldn't go to the Têt festival,
you mean, I shouldn't go to the festival
because it just might be too Asian for you.*

CRASH.

What equation do I use to figure
where I am in a desolate sea?

And is there partial credit
for sailing with no anchor?

If you're looking for me,
maybe find me by your shoreline,
Vietnamese, but tumbling in the
white wash.

32

ART // LAUREN WICKS

PLEA FOR HUMANITY

by Jaimee Hocker

To the restless souls in desolate places maps don't bother to trace.
To the children who cry for their mother at night, whether in a warm crib or facing famine's embrace.
To the brothers who weep for their fallen kin, and the fathers grieving needless and bloody victories.
To the people who run from the streets as bombs land on their feet.

While my country celebrates freedom with spectacular bombing raids in the darkness,
I ask, what cost is there for the fate of humanity,
With our big guns and ships and fading grip on reality?

Reclaiming faith in humanity starts with the determination of one.
Because we are all just the same in the end when it's over and done.
What we want is natural - equality, freedom, and the right to dream
and to believe that what we desire and strive towards may come.
Hear the souls of the voiceless people, the widowed, the motherless children,
end the suffering of those who die in the name of a nation's freedom.

Humanity is worth more when we learn how to listen.

VOICELESS

by Nayeili Meija



∫.
Boca. Cresta y Lengua.
Bone bridging teeth and palate.
The mouth.
A palette to create.
Tongue crosses the bridge
Creating friction.
Fricative. Friction. Fricción.
Voiced or Voiceless.
Ciera la boca
Be voiceless.
Better.
You can't create problems that way.
Sshhh.

Tethered and Featherless

In my loving you,
You plucked my feathers,
Intricately sewed threads

Into my
heart and
gut

That were,
in turn,

Not sewn to your heart
as well,
But your fingers which you used
to make me dance

In rhythms
that
made you

glow.

By Joike
Meijer

ART // NIDHI KHANOLKAR

PHOTO // CANNON HASTINGS



HONEY

lemon COUGH DROPS

By Tomas Palpatotoc

I crash sharp teeth down
blistering rocks,
splintering cold lemon,
liquor filling
the spaces of my mouth
once unoccupied.
I taste you
in every breath.
Take in the scent
hold it next to mine
to cool my beating heart.



35

Relieve me
like
my body aches for
tendons recoiling in rejection,
begging for a sip to cleanse this
throat swelling to the seams of itself.
seemingly straining the seams of my
leather bound back,
breaking my sewn together body,
watching my pages spill onto the floor
like falling leaves
as summer turns to autumn
and the lemons don't seem so sweet
anymore.

Honey licked lips
wrap me in embrace
fold that feeling
into the ridges of this stone.
coat this mountain in gold
to play tricks with the sun,
reflect rainbows to project pictures
on this monument
to hide the metal exterior that lays beneath it,
let summer surround this house
so at least it can look warm on the inside.

But this cough doesn't fade,
isn't soothed by candied promises,
shining memories in the back of my eye
from a time when I could still see the light
at the end of the tunnel I have been walking down

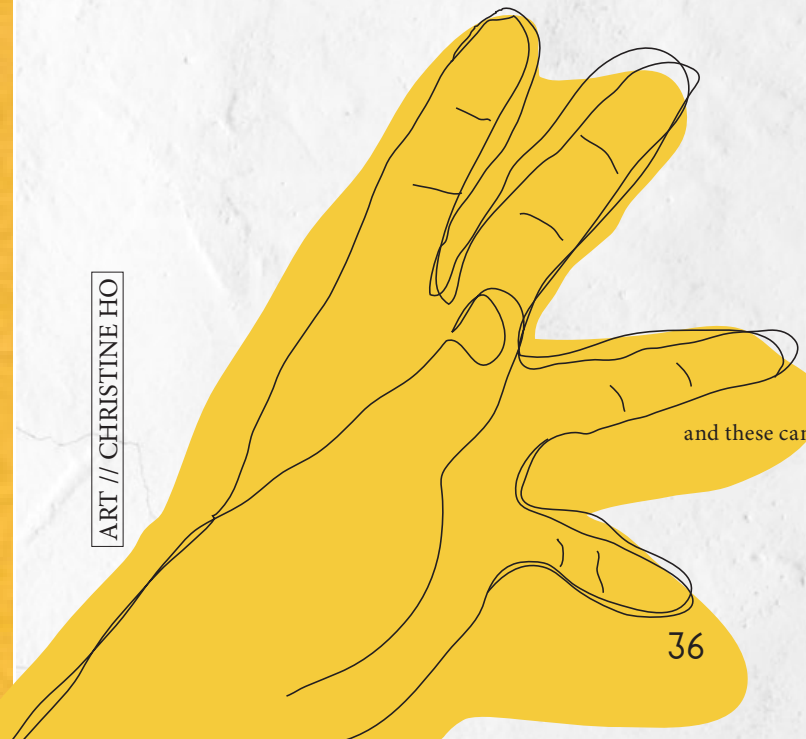


for far too long.
This cough
doesn't release its grip from my throat,
it embeds fingerprints on my body—
thumbtack reminders of its wounds to my heart—
so even if I pull them out
I do not forget
the pain;
still lingering,
gripping the strings of me,
dangling off myself,
threatening to unravel my mind.

I want to breathe
let me go,
so I ask you to hold on to me,
but your hands are long gone
and there's nothing left to hide my bruises,
and these candies just don't seem to soothe me in the same way.

I desperately grasp onto
honey lemon cough drops,
puckered between my lips,
because they're worth
the moment of sweetness
as they pass my tongue,
because for a moment I forget
we can never last.

ART // CHRISTINE HO



36

California Incantation

By Teike Meiger

Sun punctures
On honey golden skin
Evoking the time
Last year
When the rays
Glaze our arms
Coated in warmth
Light dancing

Between my limbs
As it does right now.

Under this white glow
I remember the heat

You told me how you
Love the feel
Of sun melting
Into the pores of your skin
California incantation

Brooklyn doesn't know this
Heavenly sweetness
Shivers reach your marrow
I'm glad she keeps you warm
And reminds you of the California warmth

And the sun
punctures.

TODAY IT IS GLOOMY AND I THOUGHT OF YOU

BY TAYLOR DESTEFANO

Seasonal depression
always found you in the summer.
As the sovereign sun beat down on you
over and over and over again,
the pressure immense
and suffocating.
Its passing bore comfort,
like coming home.

And I used to agree
that some are like the sun
while others are the

moon.

but
today I
woke with
the dawn.
And as I held on
to that first
magnificent taste
of coffee, I looked
outside
and I watched the clouds—
how they float along
so distant and serene,
so unbothered by us—
and I saw you in the
gray.



Old Shirt Full of Holes

By Tomas Pallapatoc


It still smells like you.
swims in the aroma that haunts your closet
mom refuses to clean out,
afraid of losing
the last part of you still in this home.

your body still lingers in It,
tracing the shape of your frame,
weaving them into Its memory
in a way we can only wish to remember you.

when i wear It like a costume,
they still tell me i look exactly like you,
but i see every difference.

Its folds do not fit me like they did you,
the shape of my nose, the length of my hair,
the glasses i have changed,
the ink i have dug into my skin
in memory of you, but also in rebellion.

i see the difference
in the way people look at me
as they once did you,
in the sadness of their eyes,
when they realize
they only see me
because you are gone.



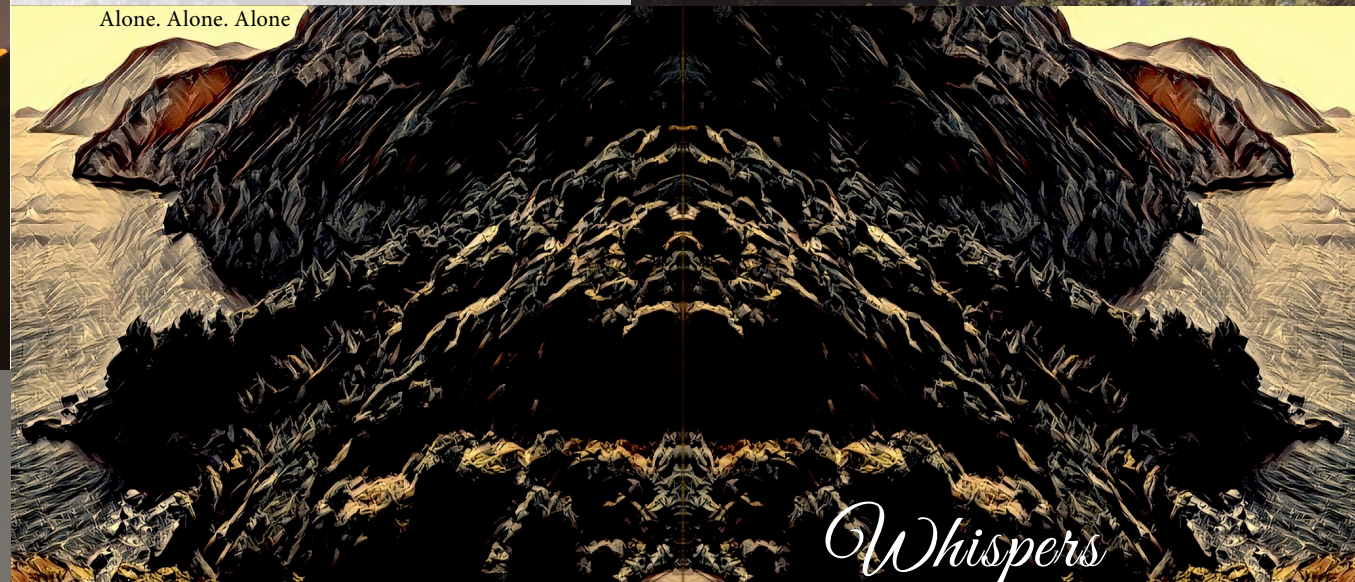
Ballet in Black

A soul sits at the bottom of a well,
Blind to the world, light a million miles away,
Planets apart, aimless and drifting.

Through the starless sky a dancer pirouettes,
Spiraling as gracefully as they can,
Round and round, and up and down, praying, begging
To collide with something, someone, anything, anyone.
But they don't.

There is no one there.
In an empty stage, unlit, unseen,
They keep on ever dancing in
The vast and empty cosmos,
Alone. Alone. Alone

By Franky Hall



Whispers

By Natalie Dellamonica

Leaves whisper in the haze of a setting sun
As shadows envelop each particle of dust;
Then darkness—
A stygian void than sucks you in wholly,
Where the silent hush seems loud
And the flashing stars seem quiet.
A single soul: surrounded.
Trees spanning all sides,
And the loneliness sinks its claws in.
You sense the creatures that lurk nearby, waiting.
Hesitant to come too close; afraid to shy too far.
You pretend you can't see them in the dark.
The leaves continue to whisper—
Too loud and too quiet,
Whispering about you
And you let them.

Mirrors & Windows

By
Wren
Palmer

Portals to another dimension
to use at my discretion.
A glimpse of my image
reminds me of all I wish to see.
Someone who looks in the slightest
just a little bit like me,
but when I gaze out of the frame
there is a she I cannot see.

Beyond that window
I recognize no one,
but in this mirror—
in this mirror—
I am both
at home and abroad.
Grounded by
the California soil,
transported by
my grandfather's nose
and aunt's smile.

All at once,
I am my family's
past and present,
carrying their
features and
a sense of loneliness
because I am
neither here nor there.

Beyond that window
I recognize no one,
but behind
the looking glass,
I've never felt more
free.
Because I've never
felt more
Me.

On the other side
is someone I recognize:
Someone I know,
yearning to shatter our barrier.

We are manifestations of
our family's past and present,
our frustrations permeate through
the looking glass.

I know she hears the waves crashing
and feels the salt coursing through
her body
with every drop of sweat and
tear,
inviting her to embrace
my side, this side,
her other
side.

I extend a hand,
if our selves could merge
she couldn't ignore that
I am
more than a vessel for
her to see
all she is and can be.

When she comes
to see me,

beaming,
we look
at one
another.

Then,
I am seen,
and she is
too.



MATTER

BY EMILY JIMENEZ

IN SCHOOL WE ARE TAUGHT

“Matter is defined as
Anything that has mass and
Takes up s p a c e .”
Those eyes, that page,
Every tree, building block, no matter age.
Remember this
“Everything is made up of matter.”

WE GROW UP: reality hits.
We must ingrain this in our brains:

“Mind over matter.”

If it is everything, and everything
Is nothing to us because
We are taught to wait until
Spring,
When the clouds part and the
Flowers bloom, to “just stay
positive,”
To ignore the aching pain
The pounding, screaming in our
brains.

Then all the world is m e a n i n g l e s s
And we are left with .

They didn't teach you that
In the spring the flowers
Bring bee stings and all
That follows is the
Blistering heat;
Bringing
You down
Even
Lower than you thought you could go.

So forget about the meaning,
What does it MATTER when



N o t h i n g does?

ART // JENNY JIMENEZ



Inspired by DICTEE

by Emily Jimenez

Primero a la izquierda
y después a la derecha.

Staring blankly
Remember to smile
And laugh on cue.

Te quiero mucho,
Pero yo no hab—

Glancing around, nervous picking
Stopped with mouth gaping open.
My hopes and dreams
Your words of wisdom,

Translated
Altered:

Una diferencia demasiado grande
Pero demasiado pequeña.

You expect me to know
A mother tongue
My mama barely spoke when I
Was growing up.

I am nine, and my failure to speak:
A constant reminder that daddy left.

I get drenched in the flash flood of
Foreign rain because you.
My family took my umbrella and waved it
In front of my confused face
Telling me:
“Deberías entender lo que estoy diciendo.”

Dear Tia, Tio, Abuelita, Hermana, y mis sobrinos,
Because you never could would—

One day I will bridge the gap
And we will walk across the
Borders of North and Central
America hand in hand and
We will use our Spanglish words
As stepping stones into each other's lives
Which we have seen, felt, touched, hugged,
But have not listened to, heard, contemplated,

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Understood.

ART // ANNLI TICO

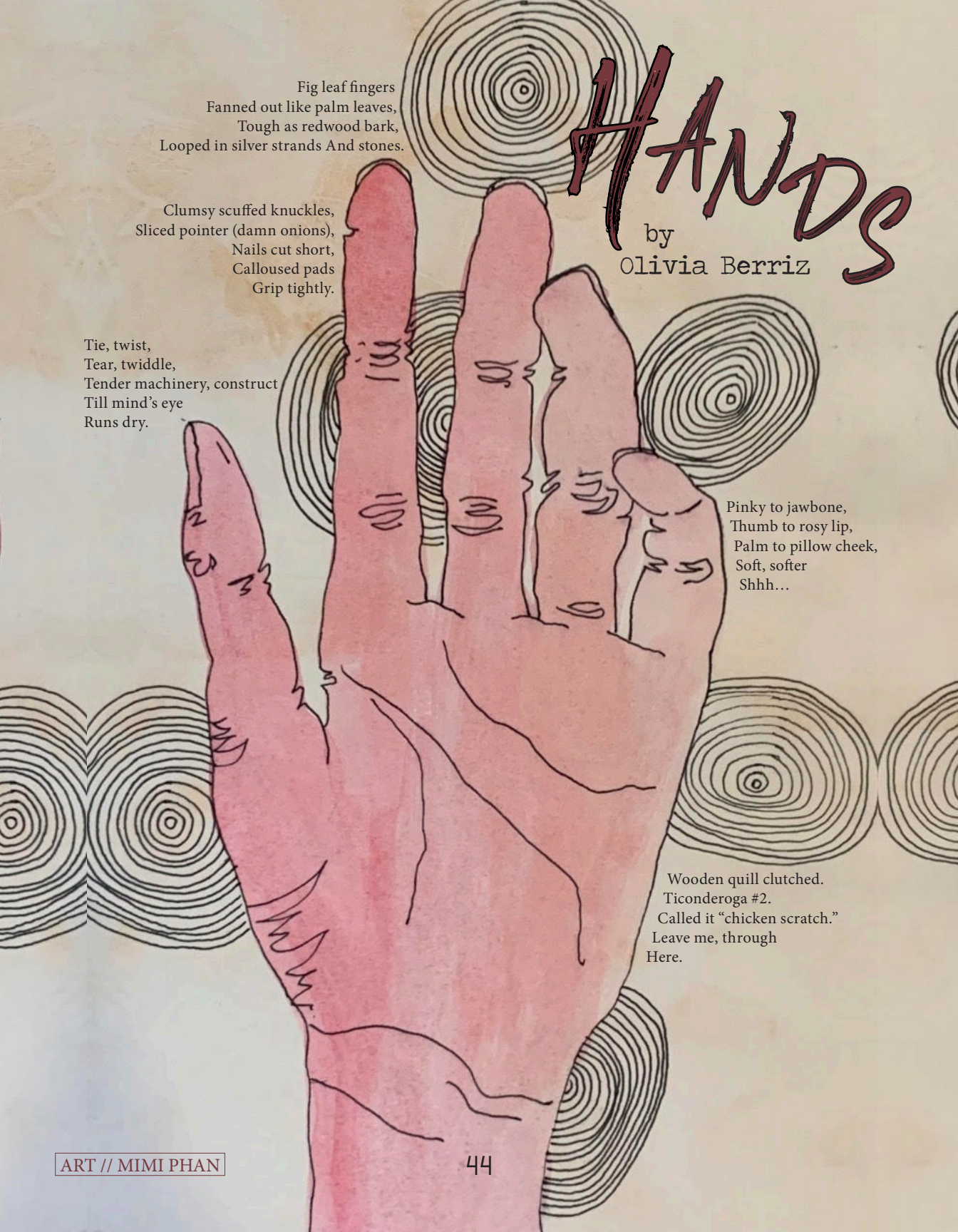


Fig leaf fingers
Fanned out like palm leaves,
Tough as redwood bark,
Looped in silver strands And stones.

Clumsy scuffed knuckles,
Sliced pointer (damn onions),
Nails cut short,
Calloused pads
Grip tightly.

Tie, twist,
Tear, twiddle,
Tender machinery, construct
Till mind's eye
Runs dry.

Pinky to jawbone,
Thumb to rosy lip,
Palm to pillow cheek,
Soft, softer
Shhh...

Wooden quill clutched.
Ticonderoga #2.
Called it “chicken scratch.”
Leave me, through
Here.

HANDS

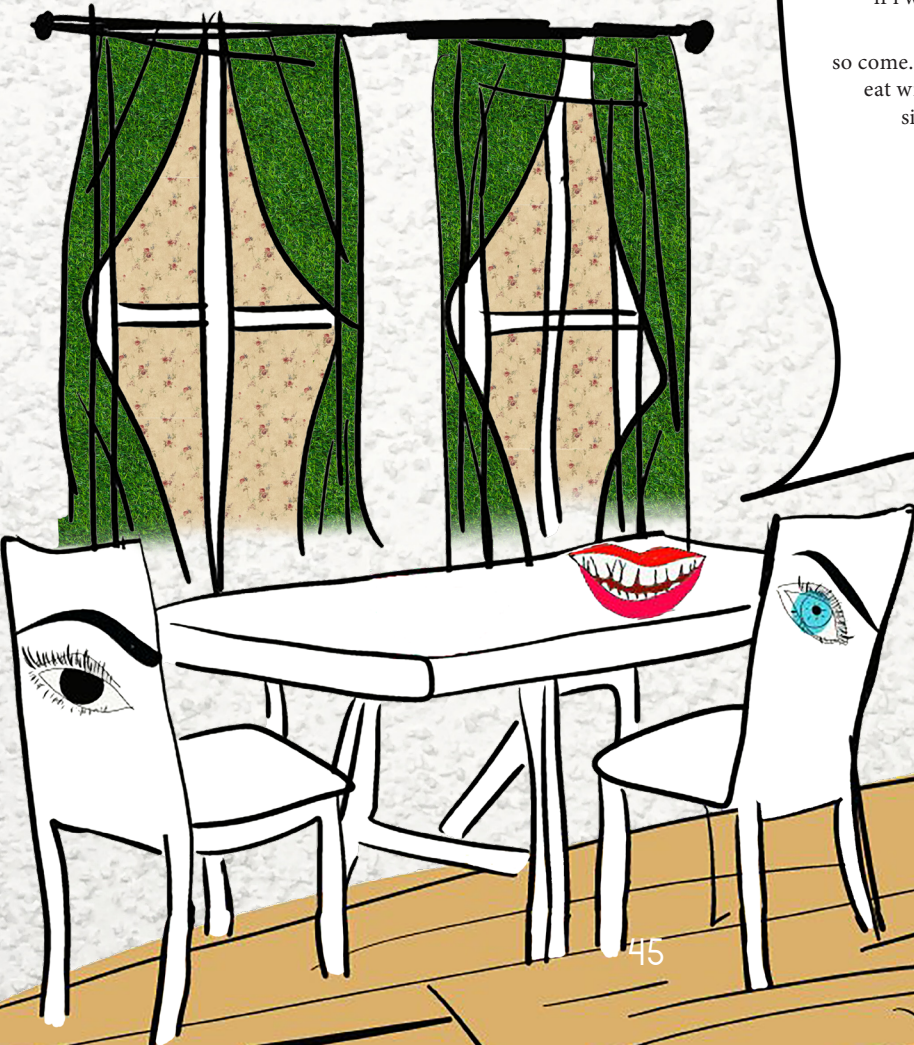
by
Olivia Berriz

ART // MIMI PHAN

44

t u m tr o u b l e

BY Ashley
Beeson



i hate eating in silence.
the munching,
crunching

sound of saliva
the gurgling,
swallowing.
almost brings up the food i
just ate.

masticating my meal to mush,
mixing and mingling with my spit.
i would stop altogether
if i was forced to do so alone.

so come.
eat with me.
sit down at this table for two.
we'll be together.

and i'll remember to
forget my fear.

ART // KERRY HUANG

Weeding

By Julia Goldstein



The love of my life is growing in my garden
And cultivating her requires close attention.

I've been watering,
weeding,
and feeding her,
But not hoeing.
She does that all on her own.

I thought if I tended to her she might bloom for me,
But I can assure you that she blooms for anyone,
Even a gardener wearing crocs.

ART // ALYSSA LONG



PISCES

BY ADRIAN HINOJOSA

On the icy windowsill
The snow moon poured into me.
The frosty curtains remained still
As the blade of light left its sheath.

It caressed my shivering shoulders,
Honored me with its foldings.
Proclaimed with cold confidence and certainty
This life I shall lead.

We all share the chance of life,
Those under the frozen declarations.
Yes, the patterns certainly dance
To the rhythm of our cool palpitations.

*Yet I have just become
Before I have chosen to become.
Covered in the deafening drapes:
The referral of the stars.*



FAITH

When I was six, women with rosary beads told me I lived on a cliff
and at the very bottom of the dark,
unrelenting abyss,
there was a net, woven from golden string
and waiting unseen.

They told me if I found myself at the edge,
if I peered down too far
or if some cruel, fiery monster came snapping its jaws at me,
all I had to do was fall,
and it would catch me, and bring me home safe—
so long as I believed.

When I was ten, a man with a red beard came to my classroom,
armed with two books and the name “Dawkins” spilling from his lips
and he told me there was no net,
that all the belief in the world could not stop me from falling,
for no matter what they told me—
“You cannot cheat gravity.”

I know of dead mothers whose portraits
cry tears of oil;
I know of fathers whose children
bleed senselessly;
I know this, and nothing
of the net at the bottom;

I can only fall—
and hope faith can catch me.

BY PHOEBE PINEDA

PHOTO // VALDEMARAS D.

PHOTO // HOPE CURRAN

Purple

by Tea Sez

Purple is the in between,
The color
in the middle.

Not one thing,
it is many,
Joy, anger, sorrow,
Confusion,
depression,
elation.

It can be warm and fuzzy, or
Suffocating and restrictive.

It is the color of hurt...

Swollen bruises.
Broken hearts.

Shaded with black
and orange

No reason
For the motley colors
Of the night.

Later,
When all is silent,
The orange

And all
That remains
Is utter
darkness

Night Sky

by Tea Sez

Liquored Lips

By Ellie Boucher

You haven't always made me cry.
There were times when we lived
In the sweetest moments of the night,
Drinking smoke from the other's lips,

sending love

like electric shocks

through each other,

tingling waves converging in our toes and fingertips.

But,
the nights got too sweet
and your lips evermore bibulous
and the shocks that you sent me

turned sharp
like jagged crystals in my veins.
You shattered the reality we built together,
sent sinister ghouls careening through the fractures.

Oh, you, who ripped my wings
And brought me to my knees.
The tender love I gave you wrapped around your fist,
A leash tied to my heartstrings.

Did you get what you wanted?
Did my ruin bring your heart more light?

I hope you are a bad lover. I will never know, But I hope you are. I need you to be.

Because if you are a painting
You were dreamt up by God.
And if I am an island (and it feels I am)
You are the vast blue around me.

All around me.

I wish I could go anywhere
Without being reminded of you.
I wish I could go to sleep
Without meeting a false version of you
In some unreal place.

You are everywhere and I could never go back,
I could never remember
The way the world looked
Before you stained it with your madness.

Now I am without you,
And you might have been an illusion
But I know you were not
Because I am still insane.

LOVE ME 'TIL I'M DEAD

by Taylor Destefano

I spend my days looking at the sky,
Waiting for it to fall.
And it's only at the end of the day
When I let my head down,
That I see it's already shattered into pieces
Surrounding my feet.
Threatening to keep me in the corner
Where I spend my time
Bottling up the essence
Of who I used to be.
And it's in those shards on the ground
That I see the reflection
Of a new sky filled with
Cotton candy clouds.
And I'm trying to capture the sweetness
But the clouds are melting,
Sticking,
Sugar on the soles of my shoes.
I used to think
I had my head in the clouds
With my feet on the ground,
But now I'm upside down
With my feet above me
And I just want to go back
To worrying about the sky falling,

by Anushna Patel

ILLUSION

Because at least then, I knew that it was above me.

ART // TANVA KERR

ART // ANNIL TICO

Blood stained hands and swollen foot,
Cigar smoke and silvan nook,
Coffee mugs and sunny showers,
Pretty girls all dressed in flowers,
Old water ways and fallen trees,
Little kids are stung by bees,
Paper cuts and pan-fried fish,
Mom just made my favorite dish,
A good hot book and well-written meal,
A bright open rose in a deep red field,
Finger pricked upon a thorn,
Holy Mission, Christ is born!

Plaza Rubio

by Frankie Hall



SPLINTERED RAINBOW

by Kohlo Smith

we all know
Scooby Doo, the goofy great dane
and meddling kids
who put hundreds of
monster-themed crooks
behind bars.

Velma, her red skirt and orange sweater,
stringing together clues,
faster than a loose-cannon bad-cop
desperate for conviction.

Shaggy, green-shirted and pube-goateed,
chowing down on chocolate sauce
and sardine sandwiches—
poison deadly to any mere mortal.
like, zoinks.

Fred, in blue pants and signature ascot,
the white-bread member of the crew.
no catchphrase.

Daphne, a vision in purple;
pretty first, rich second,
black-belt third.
the classic damsel in this dress.

no rainbows without sunshine;
aside from Fred's bottle blonde hair,
the color yellow is conspicuously missing.

a sixth member
(counting Scooby)
of this crime-solving crack-team.

easy enough to say:
that Yellow was taken out
by a particularly stubborn case;
permanently jeepered by the creeper,
scrappy doo snapped in miami
and went on a stabbing spree.

i say their fate
was no failed-bait-entangled
horror show,
but something more insidious.
and slow.

Yellow and the gang
fell out
like Daphne Blake
falls through trapdoors.
Fred forgot their name
when he suggested splitting up.
they wandered solo
through the haunted mansion.

Yellow felt them slip.
lauded them for every case
and studied up on solving crimes,
asked each time to come along;
never was straight-up denied.
but felt alone and lonely
even when they did go.
unheard over the chatter of the gang
and the droning of the stereo.
uncomfortably crammed into the trunk
and relegated to the back
of every photo.

so Yellow let them go.

the rest of the world moved on
like rainbows were always a bit thinner.
no clues pursued to their existence,
no live-action reboot
of their life.

they realized
the ones they thought
completed them
had never felt the same.
their sunshine Yellow smile dimmed
to pale cloud,
covering the memory
of what used to be a rainbow.



CAT-ALUM

MATT KLINE

The Catalyst is delighted to feature one of the founders of the magazine and one of its most staunch supporters, former Editor-in-Chief and graduate of the class of '96, Matt Kline. Matt, majoring in Law and Society and minoring in Philosophy, also found the time along the way to establish the modern Catalyst as a feature of the UCSB arts landscape. The first issue in 1996 (next page) featured an interview with Chancellor Henry T. Yang, who praised the work of the Catalyst crew, "Creating new organizations to help tap into the talent and gifts of our most resourceful students is important. It is especially important to help reach our students as individuals, to give them an opportunity to uniquely express themselves in a meaningful and provocative way...Catalyst is something new."

We are so pleased that Matt agreed to feature as our fall '19 Cat-Alum, and grateful to Ashley, Wyatt and Marlowe for being part of the Catalyst family!



Drawing by Marlowe Kline

Matt Kline helped re-found The Catalyst in 1996. He and his family have supported the magazine over the years. Matt wears a few hats these days: partner at the law firm O'Melveny; board chair of the KCRW Foundation; and lecturer at Stanford University, among others. His wife Ashley is a designer, and their children Wyatt and Marlowe love the arts—spending time making music, writing stories, and designing. Matt credits his years on The Catalyst as a remarkable chance to learn to help build teams, to work towards consensus, to fundraise for a beloved cause, and, most importantly, to help create a conversation on campus, based on creativity and community. It's wonderful to see it thriving 23 years later.

-Matt Kline

CATALYST



tube
 tube...
 to be...
 planar paranoia
 planar exact-ment
 blue monitor
 cycle
 stroboscopic
 allotment
 expunge this water glass
 half foil
 midas make its way
 some say
 lock joint
 lock jaw
 sea saw
 pulse
 transpose foreground
 to background
 and back to this
 fire synapse
 fire sin-ops
 on fire again
 polychrome
 poly-enigmatic
 polystyrene state
 of staying up late
 pulse
 pulse
 code
 pulse pulse pulse pulse
 paratextual state
 taking
 taking this beating
 well
 i might add

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