

# QUARTO

Literary Magazine of the Columbia University Undergraduate Creative Writing Program

VOLUME LXVIII

2017



## **Copyright**

©Quarto by Quarto Literary Magazine

Quarto accepts submissions of literary nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and visual art created by Columbia University undergraduates. Submissions are received and reviewed annually.

Submissions accepted at [quartomagazine.com](http://quartomagazine.com)

For other queries, contact [columbiaquarto@gmail.com](mailto:columbiaquarto@gmail.com)

All rights are reserved and revert to authors and artists upon publication.

Cover art by Jessica Rose Jackson

# STAFF

## EDITORS IN CHIEF

Priyanka Mariwala  
Emma Tueller.

## MANAGING EDITORS

Emily Burns  
Flannery James

## ARTS AND LAYOUT EDITORS

Hannah Cho  
Eileen Gao  
Michelle Huang  
Rachel Page  
Akash Singh

## EVENTS EDITOR

Alison Peebles

## EVENTS DEPUTIES

Irina Teveleva  
Lauren Diaz

## WEBSITE EDITORS

Samantha Caveny  
Emily Clagett

## STAFF EDITORS

Mira Baum  
Kevin Chau  
Kimberly Chia  
Zhaneque Craig  
Sidney Eberly  
Philip Grayson  
Andy Haas  
Angelo Hernandez-Sias  
Cameron Lee  
Armando Léon  
Elizabeth Merrigan  
Priya Pai  
Amber Paulen  
Anny Son

## SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

Anna Lokey

## SOCIAL MEDIA DEPUTY

Nia Judelson

# GUEST JUDGES

NONFICTION

Maggie Nelson

POETRY

Morgan Parker

FICTION

Lauren Groff



# EDITORS' NOTE



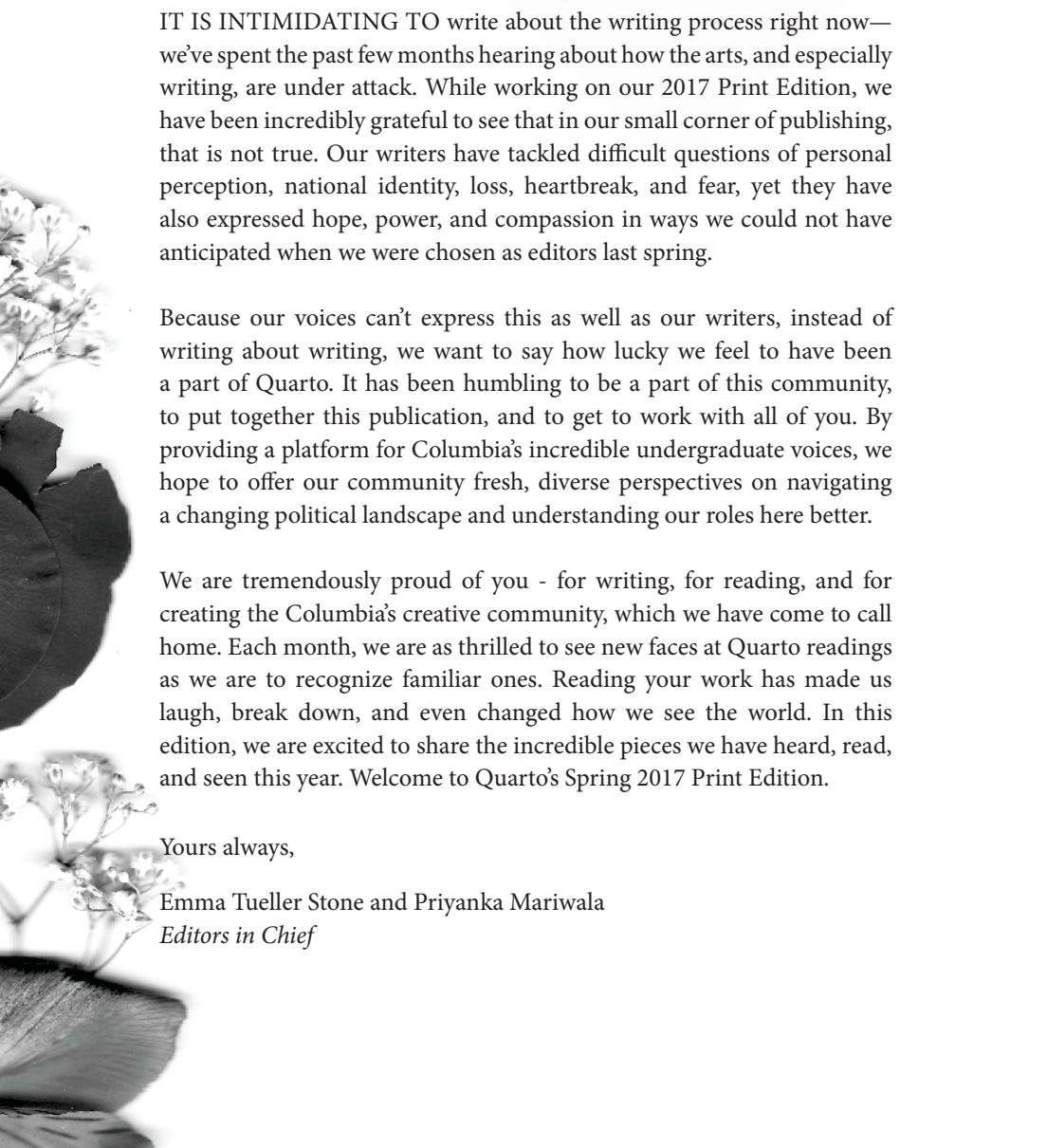
IT IS INTIMIDATING TO write about the writing process right now—we've spent the past few months hearing about how the arts, and especially writing, are under attack. While working on our 2017 Print Edition, we have been incredibly grateful to see that in our small corner of publishing, that is not true. Our writers have tackled difficult questions of personal perception, national identity, loss, heartbreak, and fear, yet they have also expressed hope, power, and compassion in ways we could not have anticipated when we were chosen as editors last spring.

Because our voices can't express this as well as our writers, instead of writing about writing, we want to say how lucky we feel to have been a part of Quarto. It has been humbling to be a part of this community, to put together this publication, and to get to work with all of you. By providing a platform for Columbia's incredible undergraduate voices, we hope to offer our community fresh, diverse perspectives on navigating a changing political landscape and understanding our roles here better.

We are tremendously proud of you - for writing, for reading, and for creating the Columbia's creative community, which we have come to call home. Each month, we are as thrilled to see new faces at Quarto readings as we are to recognize familiar ones. Reading your work has made us laugh, break down, and even changed how we see the world. In this edition, we are excited to share the incredible pieces we have heard, read, and seen this year. Welcome to Quarto's Spring 2017 Print Edition.

Yours always,

Emma Tueller Stone and Priyanka Mariwala  
*Editors in Chief*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 10 DARK LADY LAUGHED  
AND DANCED

Emma Anna Mack  
*Nonfiction*

- 24 WAL-MART SEASONAL  
CANDY AISLE:  
FEBRUARY 6TH 3AM

Sprout Conner  
*Poetry*

- 25 GIN HEAD

Emma Arett  
*Fiction*

- 34 COMING HOME AND  
WANTING TO SMOKE

Isabelle Ivins  
*Poetry*

- 35 GREENHOUSE

Michelle Xu  
*Poetry*

- 36 UNTITLED

Haley So

- 38 A GREAT  
LEAP FORWARD

Karen Yuan  
*Nonfiction*

- 47 HEHELE

Devin Barricklow  
*Poetry*

- 48 THE BEE IN THE WALL

Yoojin Hahn  
*Fiction*

- 52 THE ART  
OF LOSING ICE

Kalila Morsink  
*Nonfiction*

- 62 POEM TO  
END IN CALAMITY

Anurak Saelaow  
*Poetry*

- 63 IT ALL WENT DEAD

Eliza Callahan  
*Fiction*



69 REPARATION AND  
RESUSITATION

Laura Elizabeth Hand

70 NOTICE OF EVICTION

Rosalie Jean Wetzel

*Nonfiction*

74 DÍMEO

Viviana Paula-Núñez

*Poetry*

75 STILL WATER

Nika Sabasteanski

*Poetry*

78 PANDORA'S BED

Lucy Jakub

*Nonfiction*

85 I CAN OFFER YOU  
ONLY MY FOLDED PALMS

Amber Officer-Narvaza

*Poetry*

86 YOU HAVE  
ONE NEW MESSAGE

Glynnis Louise McGavin Eldridge

*Poetry*

87 UNTITLED

Jessica Rose Jackson

88 MERE RANI

Bindu Basinath

*Fiction*

# DARK LADY LAUGHED AND DANCED

EMILY ANNA MACK

*Nonfiction Contest Winner*

## Part One: Ephemeral

AT THE NEW YORK premiere of *Silkwood* in 1983, the room laughed when Cher's name appeared on the screen.

There is a photo from that night: Cher and Meryl Streep stand together, looking distracted and to the right. Streep's young face seems surprised and her soft, blonde hair is upswept. Streep wore a white blazer and a white top with a lace collar, horrendously '80s. Cher wore a dark, heavy overcoat and a gold wristwatch. Her eyemakeup was dark and heavy. In the photo, Streep's face looks like a girl who practices looking surprised in the mirror. Cher's face does not look surprised at all.

Willow-bodied Cher suspends herself above my head while I sleep in soft, red light. My college dorm room walls are warm christmas lights and a *Moonstruck* poster, creased white down the middle. It's not an altar: we cannot light candles in the dorm.

I told the boy who I loved over the summer that he couldn't understand me until he watched *Moonstruck*, not that I have much in common with its heroine, Loretta. But Brooklyn movies feel like Chicago movies when they show the bridge from the East side. I asked the boy if he wanted to come over to watch *Moonstruck* when my parents were gone, but he wanted to wait for it to be special. In August, *Moonstruck* was playing on a big screen downtown in Millennium Park for the full moon. We would go.

Cher is a fabulous woman in the most scientific sense of the word. The



extraordinary largeness of her personal life and musical accomplishments often overshadows a quiet but vibrant career in film. At the New York premiere of *Silkwood* in 1983, Cher was a tabloid catastrophe: the single mother who emerges, dancing, from the wreckage of a broken marriage, a failed TV show, and two bad records. The crowd laughed, but Cher won the golden globe that year. (She won the Oscar later, of course, for *Moonstruck*.) The diva is a comeback kid, always.

The diva wears bedazzled bustiers and red velvet and has tattoos. Cher does not have much in common with *Moonstruck*'s heroine, Loretta. Loretta has grey hair and wears cardigans. Loretta is a watcher, not a performer. In this body, Cher occupies the screen slowly. She walks down small streets with a sensual realism, and her skirt sways. Her eyelids are still Cher's though, heavy. And both women did have a steamy affair with a breadmaker. The *Moonstruck* makeover scene, though, is what bridges the fiction with legend as Loretta emerges in dark lipstick for a night at the opera.

In August, I wait for the boy on the lawn at the park. I spread my jean jacket like a blanket as the moon rises, but I don't see him. The movie starts: Dean Martin croons and yellow words swim across the screen. It is humid summer so there is a bottle of wine in my purse (always) and I open it nervously in a crowd full of old ladies. My heart races, but I don't see him. My lipstick comes off on the neck of the bottle.

I often watch *Moonstruck* this way.

The Cher that I love is a ghost. Loretta covers her "love bites" with makeup. There are wrinkles around her mouth. I tried to paint this for art class but my portraits were garish: a wonky-eyed woman with watercolor hair and thick, acrylic smirks. I could never hope to draw Cher, so I'd pause the DVD to sketch Loretta. Even so, the series was cartoonishly disproportionate. Cher, supposedly, is real and Loretta is the character—though I would argue that Loretta is merely humanization of a relentless machine. Anyways, I could render neither.

Cher's face today is not the one from the movies (it's plastic) and that bothers some people. Personally, I like the miracle. On the screen, Nicolas Cage quivers his wooden hand and throws the coffee table over. He lunges toward Cher and he grabs her waist. Or Ronny grabs Loretta. This is the part where I get confused. This is the part where the breath gets caught in

my throat. The old ladies in the park are gaping. I turn right and I see the boy, and he was sitting right behind me.

103 minutes is not enough time to age disgracefully, so instead we watch Loretta fall in love. (Not at all like Cher.) Loretta wears a ravishing burgandy dress to the opera. It matches the seat. As the music swells, somebody dies on the stage. It can be assumed that Loretta knows Italian, though I suspect she would have cried anyways. Ronny kisses her hand, but she stays watching the woman perish in blue. I turn to look at the boy, who now is sitting next to me, sharing the jean jacket. This is where I would pause the DVD to sketch her tear. I turn, but his eyes are on the screen.

Cher's story is a redemptive one, full of leather and feather headdresses and sexy young actors. Loretta's story is a love story. The lady on my poster is poised over the moon over Brooklyn with her fishnetted knee bent and her thin arms thrown open: I don't know which woman it is now. The eyes closed. I don't know what I'm looking at. So I go to Walgreens and I print the photo, the one from 1983 of Cher next to Meryl Streep. I tape it up under the red lights.

## Part Two: Frozen Lake

Dear Cher,

Yes, I loved a boy over the summer. But I met him in the winter. Remember?

We were snowed in even though Chicago kids don't usually get snow days; we get cold days. School is cancelled when the temperature drops past 15 below and the teachers call it the polar vortex. On those days, you could die outside. (You could die outside most days there, especially back then.) But that day was really a snow day, the first in twenty years, which is always what everyone says when something good happens.

We weren't even twenty back then. Anyways, we got snowed into this rich kid's house. He had a wide staircase and a wide porch that wrapped around the whole front of the house. It was white. The rich kid and I had made out on a Greyhound bus once, but we were still friends, sort of. And the boy was his friend too, remember? Best friends.

They stopped talking though after the boy's dad died and the band kind of fell apart, but this was before any of that, before spring even. We were sliding around on the rich kid's kitchen floor in our wet socks, making spaghetti. I found the stereo system in his pantry above the boxes of noodles and it was a big stereo system. You could hear it through the whole house. Both of them were music snobs who could never agree on what to play anyways, so they suggested I pick the album, mostly as a joke. I looked through the rich kid's family CD rack.

On the cover of *The Very Best of Cher*, your hair is blonde. (The same bottled whiteness as mine now.) There's the color lilac all over you. With your silver eyelids, you look like an ice queen. I remember wishing I looked so pastel that winter. I wore my crop tops all the way into January, but you looked weather-less. Yet Ice Queen.

I remember pressing play and how the kitchen filled. Me and these two. Twisting. The rich kid was looking at me from the side like he was remembering the Greyhound bus. I was dancing with his best friend, the boy. And I remember the boy, how he looked specifically not sad in that moment, and how I thought to myself: Dear Cher, what am I going to do now? I knew in that second how everything would turn when it turned in the spring.

And you had the voice that could melt snow. (Like the glinting shard of a disco ball.) My toe was sticking out of my sock while we danced. I was not anything like glass or frost or sexy back then. Later, I would strip the color from my hair and still not stop. I would add lilac and later pink and gloss my lips for a year.

In 2002, Oprah asked you if you hate the sound of your own voice. You said yes. Then you said you think your voice is getting better. You were 56 at the time, and then admitted that you were only now realizing your hair didn't have to be black. (On Oprah that day, you wore it platinum, curly. "It's a mood," you said.) You said that your mother always told you your voice wasn't the best, but that it was okay, because it makes people feel. You shrugged.

When I go to prom with the boy, my dress is silver. We're still not twenty, even now. And whenever I play your greatest hits, the first song on is always Do you believe in life after love? The one where your voice sounds like a robot.



What should I do?

A fan

### Part Three: Folk Rock

*After Rafael Campos' VII. Fucking*

I was five when I learned about Karen Carpenter. Our kindergarten class was performing *On Top of the World* for the June pageant and during practice, Mrs. Littau, who mothers said was too mean to teach, said to the girls, "You know she threw up to death." And we chorused Ewww from the fuzzy rug, because at five we didn't know much besides how vomiting tasted and that it hurt. Why would somebody do that? And Mrs. Littau said, "She thought she was fat. Come on now! 'I'm on top of the world, looking down on creation...'" She waved her old fingers above our heads and we sang and god, how I loved that song in kindergarten. I used to hulahoop to it on the front lawn until the sun went down. And now that I am somewhat grown, I realized I never stopped thinking about Karen: girls who die young are the crippling mythos that no good teacher would let you forget: how someone once lived bathed in light. How someone once lived big and with consequence. We all love to kill a beautiful girl, and repeat the exquisite libretto of how she sings clear while dancing like a skeleton. The heroine who marries and has a daughter who stays a daughter. Stories only become comedies should the woman age. (Yes, I'm talking about Cher.) A burlesque show. Little straight girls don't dream about husbands who ski into trees. About living to tell the tale.

### Part Four: An Erasure



Cher @cher · Nov 2  
on Being Human in the Age of the Algorithm



Cher @cher · Nov 2  
Follow  
how did you celebrate Madonna's birthday?



Cher @cher · Nov 2  
Follow  
Stood on 55th & 5th & Watched Young Protesters March By [REDACTED]



Cher @cher · Nov 2  
Follow  
GAY UNIVERSE WILL HAVE "Exquisite" lighting [REDACTED]  
universe [REDACTED]

-  Cher  @cher   
[REDACTED] will never be the same. I feel sad for the young [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
-  Cher  @cher   
Didn't Cry [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
-  Cher  @cher   
[REDACTED] In2 Americas Dark Nite
-  Cher  @cher   
Young Protesters [REDACTED] Carried Home Made Signs & Chanted [REDACTED]
-  Cher  @cher   
Didn't Cry [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
-  Cher  @cher   
[REDACTED] WHEN [REDACTED]
-  Cher  @cher   
Heard Madonna  
Fell On Stage [REDACTED]  
This is Something WE ALL DREAD
-  Cher  @cher   
[REDACTED] WE ALL DREAD [REDACTED]
-  Cher  @cher   
ipad freezing up! [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
-  Cher  @cher   
O well life is hard & then u die RT [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



Cher @cher

[REDACTED] &U Will Mend



Cher @cher

Standing on cement [REDACTED]



Cher @cher

Can anyone c me



Cher @cher

[REDACTED] on 55th &5th [REDACTED]



Cher @cher

[REDACTED] Hugged many [REDACTED]



Cher @cher

[REDACTED] NEW  
YORKERS !! THEY WERE [REDACTED]



Cher @cher

[REDACTED] overwhelmed,because [REDACTED] A Fabulous DIVA Was  
touching [em] ! Can't really Blame [em], "SNAP OUT OF IT"

## Part Five: Roofies (or La Finale Aria)

*There was a blonde girl from a big city. Not the biggest city, but it was up there. And she was really smart as a kid. She used to write and perform one-woman plays for the class. She was close with her mom. And as a teenager, she was wild. On the weekends, she wore costumes: neon faux fur and rhinestones and slinky dresses and tutu skirts, clunky boots. Blue lipstick. For a while, her hair was the color of cotton candy. One time she partied for three full days in a row and bathed in the lake downtown. She broke into the hardware store with the boys and staged a paint fight. In platform shoes, she climbed to the top of the Damen Silos, up the ladder with missing rungs during a rainstorm. She hitched rides. She fell in love all of the time and ran from the police barefoot and told stories of her battles loudly, and wherever she could. She was always talking. And everyone was always telling her how brave she was. She was brave because nothing bad ever happened to her.*

According to rumor, Cher was fifteen when she had sex with Warren Beatty. They met when he nearly hit her with his car on Sunset Boulevard in 1961. Nothing really came of it. Cher was sixteen when she met Sonny. She wanted to be an actress. So did Cher's mother, who was married eight times and nearly clinched the lead role in noir drama, *The Asphalt Jungle* but was passed up for Marilyn Monroe at the last minute.

According to rumor, I was fifteen when I had sex with an upperclassman in exchange for a cappuccino. This was, of course, technically false. The two of us went on a date to a coffee shop before barely making it to second base. I also did not get fingered by him during *Django*, as everyone liked to believe—the term at my high school for getting fingered during a movie actually became Getting Django'd. When a sophomore girl (Frankie, a kleptomaniac) called me Starbucks Whore, I didn't really care. I actually kind of liked everyone talking about me. And my mother, thankfully, did not know a thing about the incident.

Cher wanted to be an actress. But she was sixteen and Sonny wanted her to be a singer, and so she was a singer. Years later, after she was both, Cher calls David Letterman an asshole on *Late Night*. She calls him an asshole before he tells her that she looks terrific and after she explains that her perfume is vanilla. She calls him an asshole before he motions toward the floral tattoos on her ankles and asks why she would permanently scar

her body, to which Cher says, “It’s like what Dolly Parton says: when she does this, she feels that she is beautiful.” David says that Cher is the first person to call him an asshole. It is the week she turns 40 and David tells her she looks 20. He asks why she hasn’t come out with an album in five years and Cher says that lately everyone is telling her to be an actress. Cher admits that she misses singing though. And David says, “I think you’ve proven to a lot of people and perhaps to yourself that you can be taken seriously.”

Back in Chicago, I explain to the boy that I would never get a tattoo. I would never want to believe in anything that much. It’s the night before I leave for college. It’s the boy who I love and who was also my best friend that summer. We talk about leaving for a while. Nobody could believe it when I got into college. “It’s just amazing, ‘cause you drink so much,” said the class treasurer. During high school I used to slam big poems on big stages and they were always about sex and drugs and peeing outside. When I say that I am scared to leave, the boy tells me that he is proud of me, and that only a place as big New York could hold me. (I want him to hold me.) I say that I’m only scared because there are no alleys in New York, so I won’t know where to pee.

In New York, I go clubbing all the time. I go alone during the week, because the drinks are free. It feels good not to know anyone. Leaving a club one Tuesday night, I see a skinny guy with long hair. I ask him for directions. (He’s a cater waiter leaving a gig, but really he’s a photographer.) He invites me to a 36-hour funeral-themed rave in a warehouse in Bushwick that Friday. At the rave, someone dances up to me and offers me poppers. His name is Eddie, and he tells me he goes to my school. He lives in my building. On Sunday morning, we take the train back uptown together and we have a lot in common. He loves Cher.

Eddie and I spend the fall playing music in his room. We don’t just play Cher, though. We play Gloria Gaynor and Karen Carpenter and Kate Bush and Nina Simone and Chaka Khan. Eddie always knows just what to play. We listen to Dionne Warwick when we get ready to go out and we listen to Madonna in the morning. We listen to Whitney Houston when we are restless and The Weather Girls if we have company. We listen to Joni Mitchell while we do homework and Vicki Carr when we’re finished. Bjork. Blondie. The Cranberries. Chic. Diana Ross. We listen to Donna Summer. Always the greatest hits.

On Halloween, Eddie and I go to party on a rooftop in Brooklyn. He's dressed as something shirtless and covered in eyeballs. I'm Cher. For the whole weekend, I live in that skin: silver lamé bell bottoms, bedazzled bustier, a fur vest, and a long, black wig. I couldn't decide if I was Disco Cher or Hippie Cher. At the party, no one knows who I am, even though I drew brown lines on the side of my nose to make it look thin. Eddie is somewhere flirting with a man dressed as a goddess. In the corner of the party, there is a short guy with a mop top and a walrus mustache. I ask who he is. He just says, "Someone seventies." I say, "Sonny?"

The next week, Eddie and I go to another party on the same rooftop. The Cubs have just won the world series. I sit with my legs dangling and crane my neck to look for a lake or somewhere where the buildings stop, but a New York skyline surrounds on every side. In Chicago, I imagine there are fireworks and gunshots in the streets. I imagine the parade has already begun. Some people flew home from college when the Cubs won The World Series. I want to celebrate too, so I try explaining to a stranger what this feels like: like midnight on New Year's if the year was 108 years long. They don't understand. I call the boy from home while I stare at the Williamsburg Bridge. We talk about the Cubs for a while and breathe together over the phone. (After we hang up, I resolve to tell him I love him at Thanksgiving.) Everyone at the party is dancing on the rooftop as they celebrate another weekend, so I grab a drink and pretend they are celebrating what it feels like to think that maybe you are not cursed.

The day after Trump wins the election, it rains hard. I go to the big protest downtown. I'm shouting "PUSSY GRABS BACK" in a crowd, clutching a wet cardboard sign. Eddie moves his mouth toward my ear. He says, "Don't turn around now." I turn. And there she is, in front of me. She wears her face like a mask, under the shadow of sunglasses and a large felt hat. I squint. It's definitely her. Her lips are pursed. Her hair is still long and black. I say, "Cher?"

*So the girl meets her hero. It becomes a lovely story for the girl to tell. The drama of it: how the clouds thundered and the anger of marching Manhattanites reverberated in the air. And how she said, "I'm a fan." And Cher held her hands and said thank you and said no photographs and said, "Where do you go to school?" And when the girl said where she went to school, Cher said, "I'm very proud of you. For being here." And the girl snuck a photograph. And later, her dad says, "You are very lucky. Most people*

*never meet their heroes.” But this girl lives a lucky life. She gets free drinks and studies poetry at school. She is a happy girl for such dark times. For such dark times, the girl and her friends think surely this means something good. A triumph. “I can’t believe you met Cher.”*

The Sunday before Thanksgiving, I go to the club with the girl who introduced to me the term “body count” as reference to the litany of men we’ve slept with. We always have fun when we go out together. I remember we danced and were drinking champagne. I remember my second glass of champagne. I remember a white hallway leading to a bedroom. I can’t remember his skin or his body, just the outline of it. And just for a moment. When I come to again, he is leading me by the hand down 110th. He walks me all the way to my dorm and puts something into my palm (closes my fingers tight around it), but I can’t remember his face. He kisses my cheek. In the morning, there are two grams of cocaine in my purse. No money is missing from my wallet. For two days, I don’t speak or cry or move.

Eddie finds me convulsing on the floor of my dorm room. Moaning on the carpet, I look up to a watery view of my *Moonstruck* poster. The paralyzing moment comes when I imagine trying to listen to Cher again. Or trying to write a poem about the delicacy of her frame, the vibrating strength in her contralto. I think, “I will never do this again.” I will never have champagne. Or go dancing. Or have sex with the boy who I love. I barely remember calling Eddie and begging him to come and take the cocaine out of my room. Only lying on the floor, gazing up at the urban ecstasy of Cher splayed across my wall while I wait for breath. (I feel betrayed.) Then I call my mom and I say, “I got raped,” which is a very hard thing to do.

At the hospital, the doctor sticks a clamp up between my legs that makes robotic clicks when it pinches my vaginal walls. The doctor says I was roofied. She give me seven pills and a shot on the ass and another shot to make the first shot hurt less. She gives me a prescription for HIV prevention medication and it costs \$2,700 for the month. In a slow daze, I board the flight home to Chicago for the holiday. My dad is very angry. We cannot be in the same room. At Thanksgiving dinner, he drinks two bottles of wine and starts a fight with my uncle who voted for Hillary Clinton in the primary. My dad screams at my uncle that Bernie Sanders

was the last chance we had and now everything is ruined and he will not lower his voice until we are asked (begged) to leave their house. My mom is very upset.

That night, I am afraid walking alone beneath the underpass. I call a cab halfway to meet the boy at a party. I'm excited to see everyone. But my drunk friends speak too closely when they say, "Well, how is New York?" They place arms around my shoulders. The HIV prevention medication gives me passing nausea and diarrhea. I close my eyes to steady myself before saying that New York is *fabulous*, and did I tell you that I met Cher? I say this ten or fifty or a hundred times. "Where's your glass?" people ask me. "Where's your flask?" ask the ones who know me better. I tell everyone that I'm experimenting with sobriety. They laugh. I throw up in the bathroom. When no one is watching, I quickly finish a bottle of beer in the kitchen which reacts negatively to the HIV prevention medication. The floor tilts. The boy drives me home so no one will see me like this.

We lay adjacent on my parents' L-shaped couch. At its corner, our fingers lace only a little bit. He says he'll stay with me until I fall asleep. He asks if I want to watch *Moonstruck*. I say *The Simpsons* is fine, or whatever is on. We're silent for a long time. The lights in the living room are all off and I study the way the quivering moon lights his cheek pink. I open my mouth and then close it. He asks what's wrong. I say, "I feel sexless."

My dad drives me to the airport on Monday. He apologizes for calling me promiscuous. At the American Airlines gate, he says he is proud of me. Back at school, I find out that Eddie is seeing *La Boheme* at The Met. I think about Cher or, rather, I think about Loretta and how she cried at the end of the opera. One single, affected tear. I think about this even before I learn that Eddie has a ticket to see *La Boheme*. I fantasize being so composed. I tell Eddie that I'll go with him. I buy a black velvet dress that reaches the floor and I don't drink a glass of red wine while I get ready like Loretta did, on account of the HIV prevention medication. I do take my time though (and play music in my room). I do wear dark lipstick.

*In the biggest city, the girl goes to the opera for her first time. She recognizes the inside of The Met from the movies which she has watched and rewatched. Her friend meets her by the fountain in his suit. In the elegant red lobby, women sip from flutes of champagne. The girl buys an expensive ticket for the discounted student rate. From their seats, you can see everything: the shifting fabric of the shimmering skirts and the half-lowered eyelids of actors*

*who sing with their heads thrown back. She is surprised to realize how many of the songs she already knows. Her favorite part of La Boheme is when the dying girl, hunched, asks "Am I still beautiful?" and the poet says, "As beautiful as the dawn."*





# WAL-MART SEASONAL CANDY AISLE: FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup> 3AM

SPROUT CONNER



My mom breaks through gooseflesh packaging  
tears apart school&love&wind  
before telling me that as an egg  
I would've still cracked  
and that girls are like icebergs but I cry  
*I never learned how to swim* so she pours  
the chocolates into her purse carefully  
then all at once before we run  
from the store and to the trees

her hands blistering in the cold  
my skin burning through her jacket

# GIN HEAD

EMMA ARETT

## I'VE BEEN HAVING NIGHTMARES.

I am at a dinner party. I am hosting the dinner party to celebrate my birthday and the air conditioner is broken and all the groceries have gone moldy. Guests in the living room are restless. No wine and nobody brought any. I try to skim rot fat off a container of takeout soup. Doorbell rings and soup falls on floor, rot fat on my fancy sandals. It's Sam and his real girlfriend, Ellery. I'm naked and covered in soup, I'm smoking a cigarette through a stoma, there's soup in my stoma. My guests are angry.

I wake up and his arm is on top of my side and I'm so hot I wish I were dead. I roll over and Google: nightmares from being too hot while sleeping? WebMD says probably not.

I've got a mean case of gin head today. I need to lubricate myself before going to see him. I feel weird going over there if I'm completely sober, but after three or four gins at home the walk over to his place feels refreshing and our routine seems exciting again. Gin head is distinct from a normal hangover: it's a day-long thing. Kind of like you're wearing two or three scarves that cover your eyes and won't stop getting in your mouth.

I peel myself out of bed and go to the bathroom. I find a bottle of headache pills on the shelf and drink out of the sink to swallow them. I pee and take pictures of myself in his bathroom mirror. Send Christine the pictures. look at this bitch up early SCAMMING! Then I look through his garbage to see if there's anything new or interesting—he throws away a

lot of his school papers in the bathroom trash.

Once, I found a card she had written him balled up in the garbage after they got in a fight. (About what?, I had asked. It's not really any of your business, he said. -Was it about me? -No.) Her handwriting is bubbly and fat. When I was a kid I was jealous of my cool older cousins' handwriting, which looked like this. Mine has always been efficient: tiny, precise letters. Even my signature is uninteresting. Looks like a man's. I trained myself to write in all caps. I don't feel comfortable repeating what that card said, but I will tell you that it was signed: love always, Ellie.

This time: nothing particularly ground-moving, just Kleenex and a receipt from the grocery store for a quarter gallon of milk and slice and bake cookies. They must have done that on Saturday. Cute. He paid with cash. I put the garbage back, rinse my hands, flush. Rinse my face and dress. Gather my things: earrings, water bottle, socks. I put beer cans on my fingers and take them to the recycle bin in the kitchen.

I met him at a bar last year and found out after sleeping with him three times he has this girlfriend. I found this out by looking at his Venmo charges; all these dollars from this girl with all these heart emojis.

I asked about the charges and he told me, oh, they're from my girlfriend.

I said, why do you charge your girlfriend for so much stuff on Venmo?

Then I felt bad for asking that question.

I said, I feel really bad, and he said, Well, it's not really a big deal. And I said, okay.

I don't think there's really anything else to it. It's something to do. He's an older guy, he was in the military after high school and came to college afterward. I don't think he's a terribly bad guy. Sometimes we play Jenga or watch television. He'll say things that are annoying to me, like: my girlfriend is so bad at Jenga. And in my head, I'm like, you're bad at Jenga, too. A perfect couple. The games will only last ten or fifteen minutes, we'll talk about our days, we'll have sex and go to sleep.

I've spent a lot of time reading about the girlfriend online: I see what I can on her Facebook, and I Google her quite a bit. The girlfriend is in a sorority. She writes science fiction stories. She paints. A painting she did of him hangs on his wall. I'm not an artist, or an art critic, but I think the

painting is terrible. I'm younger than him but older than her. She's from New Jersey. All her profile pictures are selfies. My friend Maria knows her but not that well, and but tells me she's nice enough.

He has this cat I really hate. It lurks around while I'm gathering my things. I want to kick it really badly. He talks to this cat like he is a stupid person. He calls her mamas, plural. It's weird. It reminds me of my hickish aunts and uncles, country people I visited once a year as a child and never now, who call their children sis and bubbly. The improper assignment of family roles. Who'd want a cat for a mom?

I call to him on my way out the door. "Goodbye, I'll see you around," I say loudly. He grunts a response and the cat yells. I feel cosmopolitan.

From his place I get on the subway to go to barre class. I keep my bright blue gym pants and grippy socks in my sex bag. Sometimes he'll make fun of my bright blue gym pants, and the tight tank top with the slogan I HEART PLANKS–NO, REALLY! on it.

I'll tell him, don't touch my stuff. I don't want this stuff to smell like you.

It's not natural for women to go like that with their legs and arms for so long but that's how fitness works. The Monday morning 7:30 AM teacher of the beginner class, Lindy, has a similar body type to my own, even though I know her pear shape is made of muscle, not fat. In class we put balls between our legs. Not funny. We use resistance bands that look like fruit leather. She says, ladies, looking good, push through, you're almost done!!! Looking good, Jody, get a little lower for me!!! Spread a little wider for me!!! I want her to be proud of me!

It's funny, kind of, that the same noise I make when Lindy gets me in terrible pain is the same sound I make when I orgasm. I'm not very good at orgasming so it's just a cough and groan, and then, in both cases, a warm sensation of pain and pleasure radiates through my whole being. The afterglow is more pronounced with barre because I almost feel like a real ballerina but after sex I feel like, kind of guilty.

My legs are weak on the subway home but I would do almost anything for Lindy. Lifting my arm up to grab the pole hurts. Isometric exercise, dude! I've been going for almost three months, four or five days a week, always in the early morning.



It's amazing what we can train ourselves to do.

A big part of the rest of my day is that I'm waiting on a package. I've been refreshing my e-mail over and over again to see if I've gotten the delivery confirmation. I really do believe that I can quickly become incredibly beautiful with the right system (barre, makeup, adultery, education) but I'm concerned that a piece—or more—of the system is incorrect. Hence the \$150 skincare and makeup system I ordered from the Internet. Anyways. I eat cereal (Peanut Butter Puffins, which go for \$6 for a box at Whole Foods, crazy) with almond milk (cow milk is terrible for your skin and body—remember that) and take a cursory glance at today's math facts packet.

I teach a junior varsity boy's basketball team math after school. "Teach" might be a generous word to use; Coach prints us out math facts packets to do. Mostly I hang out with them while the varsity boys are doing their practice, I grade the packets, I announce the night's Math Facts MVP at All Team Meeting and hand out granola bars. We start systems of equations today. Not so bad. I lean over the table to grab my pen and my core hurts. I make a note about how to flip the signs and then tell myself that's enough work for this morning.

I open my Macbook and log onto YouTube. I watch everything: daily vlogs produced by the patriarchs of massive Christian families (DailyDeens, MannnnnsFam, HAhaBaby), I watch beauty gurus (Elizabeth Stone, MyLifeAsAni). I watch videos of things getting destroyed, too, YouTube recommends me these videos in an entirely separate feed. Today I turn the sound low and I watch a man toss a brick into a washing machine, a hydraulic press destroy pineapple after pineapple, a glowing knife penetrate a stack of crayons. I laugh until I cry at the washing machine versus brick video. Replay. Replay. Replay.

Six times I watch this clip. I send it to three different friends. look at this shit, I write. im honestly screaming. I think about sending it to Sam because I think of him as a destructive person who likes this kind of shit, too, but it's not really my responsibility—as some girl he secretly fucks sometimes—to be the one to recommend him good content. The real girlfriend can be in charge of that, just as she can be in charge of getting him to eat more healthy food. I'm like the cool, fun uncle who visits once in a while and takes you to the mall. Only instead of the mall I wear fun

underwear, never discuss my parents or my finances or my bathroom problems. I don't eat while I'm there or drink his beer, I bring my own water and my own condoms.

I feel like the only differences between me and, um, a fleshlight are pretty minimal. Both objects can be fucked. Maybe that's too vulgar. I'm also not so different than a houseplant: decorative, unnecessary. What separates me is the desire to talk about my bathroom problems. I think that if I was born in the Middle Ages, or in a more rural part of the country, people would call me simple. Small, easy things bring me the greatest joy, and I'm also not very smart. I used to be, but now I can't focus or read well. My eyes ache in long classes. I want to walk around and kick stuff and tell professors don't you KNOW this is stupid?

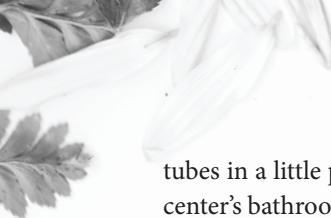
I think it's all the YouTube. Recently, I've learned to be very quiet and ask more questions than I answer. The trouble happens when people realize my questions are just as dumb: I'll ask people, oh, what's your favorite website. What's the most expensive item of clothing you own. Would you rather be 5 feet tall or 50 feet. Then they'll go, jeez, I don't know. It's not trying to be cute or funny, it's literally because I can't have a conversation about great literature or philosophy, much less at a bar.

I undress and look at the sticky note I prepared to remind myself to feed the fish. My betta, Monster, is the best fish in the world. My friends tell me Monster is a dumb name for a fish. The fish, I think, knows and loves me. I brought him back from Petco on the subway. I held him against my chest, in his little plastic takeout soup container. I talk to him whenever, all the time. Are you hungry, baby? I say before I feed him. There you go, baby. My Monster. I don't know why I named him that. Six pellets and a bloodworm, for special. Gin head has subsided to a 3 out of 10. Pretty good but still cloudy. I take my shower. I put on my makeup.

I don't feel like my time at school is very interesting. I go to Hydrology and learn about, uh, toilets. In fact, today was Toilets Part III. Gin head rises to level 5 when Professor Brian is talking about diarrheal diseases. I text with Christine about things like videos and our bathroom problems and things we think are stupid. I work on my homework for Hydrology right after, a 1500 word essay on toilets.

It's more complicated than that, but not really.

I pick up the new skincare system at my campus mailbox. Little white



tubes in a little pink baggie in a little pink box. I take it all to the student center's bathroom and line it up on the sink. I take a picture and send it to Christine. It's between classes so the bathroom is busy and cramped, but I rinse my face and use the new cleanser and moisturizer anyway, patting it on above the makeup from earlier. I feel like people are judging me. I am sweaty but I'm always sweaty.

I go to work. The boys are quick to pick up the lesson and they breeze through our practice problems. We work on their normal school homework and I tell the boys everything I've learned about toilets so far. They're in ninth and tenth grade so they think it's kind of funny.

When we exhaust everything—normal school homework, stories about what bathrooms smelled like at middle school, and a round of “would you rather”—I make the boys read to me, out loud, popcorn style. Usually they read me whatever book they've been assigned in English class, but today I want to hear something that I don't find boring.

Ray pulls out a copy of a book called *Blood is Thicker*, which we are about halfway through. Basically, this boy named Doug meets a girl named (something), who helps him forget about his messy breakup with another girl named (something). In today's installment Doug spends a lot of time pushing people and talking to girls outside the water fountain on the second floor of their school. Doug is also (maybe) involved with a gang. I don't remember what else goes on.

Miss. I am being jostled by a sweaty hand what feels like one second after Doug instigates the fight with Damani, but is actually ten or fifteen minutes later. The body the hand belongs to smells like Hot Cheetos and body spray and it is the body of my student Julian. Miss, you fell asleep. My watch says it is 6:22, eight minutes before basketball starts. All of the boys are looking at me with a surprising level of concern. My hand is hot and sweaty and even a little drooley.

You were shaking, Julian says. I was having an early evening-mare. It was my birthday again, late August. I was in my dorm room at school. An enchanted packet of Yaz! birth control was harrassing me while I was trying to fit into a fancy dress. You dumb slut, it told me. You dumb, stinky slut. When I opened the door to go to my party, against the advice of the mean, enchanted birth control, I was at a high school and Sam was slamming my head into a water fountain.

I'm so sorry, I say. They are gentle with me the rest of the night.

I take the subway home with Clark and Ray and Julian. Clark and Ray and Julian give me trouble about falling asleep in class. They ask if I've got any snacks and they split my blueberry granola bar three ways. They play music for me and sing along. I get off to transfer and wait for the uptown 1. Sometimes I keep a plastic Fiji bottle in my backpack with a little gin and water and imitation lime juice, to calm my nerves.

I sip from it and put it back, do breathing exercises. I'm back. I shift my weight back and forth, maintain the soft bend in my knees. Lindy would be proud I'm not locked up. I'm back!

When the train arrives I hear familiar-sounding voices at its far end. I don't know any of the girls at the far end of the train in real life, but many of them I recognize from Facebook. It takes me a moment to place exactly where I know them from, but once I do my whole body vibrates with excitement. It is Ellery and her friends, her sisters from Alpha Omicron Pi.

They all have long brown hair and jewel-tone coats. It seems that they've just come from M&Ms World. She's carrying a reusable M&Ms World bag in addition to her structured purple Michael Kors handbag. The rest of them have cardboard ones. These girls, they're talking SO loudly, basically screaming, chomping M&Ms in the color of a baby's nursery. Tossing M&Ms and catching them in their glossy mouths. There are M&Ms on the floor of the car that jump and smudge as the train speeds north. One of the girls finds a pink M&M in her hair and eats it.

I'm looking at Ellery hard as I can. I cannot fathom what would possess a girl with so many gifts—great if uninspiring beauty, aptitude for science fiction storytelling, handsome if unfaithful boyfriend—to go to M&Ms World on a Monday evening, and to purchase a bag from M&Ms World. I want to say something. They don't notice I'm staring.

The train grinds to our stop and I get off just behind the girls. We pass through the turnstile. I imagine that I would fit in well with these individuals. I like M&Ms well enough and I am envious of their beautiful jackets and hair. I wouldn't have been able to go with them tonight, on account of work, but I'd offer to Venmo them for a fun souvenir. Something that makes you think of me!, I'd say, I guess. I don't know. Sometimes Christine will steal me bananas from the dining hall, which is similar.

Excuse me, I say as I walk by them near the MetroCard refill machines.

They have formed an ovular shape with their bodies, which are tensed with great urgency. The girl in the olive coat (Alyssa Kerston, sophomore history major) has misplaced her school ID. The girls are supportively digging through their own M&Ms World bags, on the off-chance that it slid in there somehow.

Sorry, she says. And she looks at me for one second longer than she's supposed to. And I want to say something, again. I don't know how that would play out.

What would I say? Hello, Ellery, I am the girl who does it with your boyfriend when you're doing shit like going to M&Ms World. Maybe if you were more like me this wouldn't happen to you. Or: Hello, Ellery, maybe if I were more like you this wouldn't happen to me.

I want to do it like I want to kick the cat. Like I want to eat Tide detergent pods.

You're fine, I say.

I text Christine. I walk home. I can't breathe.

At 11:45 I'm halfway working on my toilet paper, sucking on a lime, looking at articles about makeup on the Internet, and I get a text inviting me over.

We watch some of a new episode of Westworld. I've already seen it but I'm polite. The cat sits on the bed and watches me. I sneeze and feel cat hair inside me. Can cat hair get caught in contact lenses? My eyes have become red and gooey quickly. When he looks at me during the show I perform a sad and surprised facial expression, because of some conflict between some robots. I don't know, I often find television to be very boring.

He puts his hand down my pants and I don't feel like doing anything about it.

I ask if he's got a Sudafed and he removes his hand, gets up, and brings me back a foil packet of Benadryl from the bathroom. This is different than Sudafed, I tell him. I find myself talking a lot, and loudly, about the difference between Benadryl and Sudafed. My voice is gummy with allergy. Sometimes I like to take a Benadryl and then get really drunk, I have the best dreams, I say.

Okay, he says. I do this probably once a week with gin and Benadryl,

most often on a Sunday. Pop a Benadryl right after going out, you wouldn't believe what you can make yourself see. I cannot do that because I have barre early tomorrow. What would Lindy say? He stands in front of me. I hold the Benadryl in my hand.

Can I just have a headache pill instead? Gin head level 6 but that's between the cat and the gin I had after work.

He returns to the bathroom and comes back to me with two little red pills. The candy coated kind, my favorite.

You'll never guess who I saw today, I tell him.

He's in the kitchen refilling my water bottle. I put the Benadryl packet in my pocket. I hear the water going and I've lost sight of the cat. He comes back, hands me my water. I put the pills in my mouth, drink, swallow. I learned how to swallow pills using M&Ms.

Who?

You know, it's amazing what humans can do when they want to and also what they won't do when they don't. Would you rather know when you're going to die or how you're going to die? Would you rather spend a year in the best love of your life and then immediately die of a horrible disease, or get amazing oral sex once a month but never go on a date again? Jeez, I don't know.

So I cough and say, actually, no one, it wasn't interesting.

We turn off TV, the lights, the ringer on my cell phone. I text Christine once so she knows where I am. It's something to do.



# COMING HOME AND WANTING TO SMOKE

ISABELLE IVINS

I've recently begun to clip my keys house mailbox room  
to the belt loop on my jeans.

Bushwick boys do something similar but they're not my point of reference

I know the sign has no origin but I can't help but believe  
in my gay forebears,  
their code  
their clearing of the trees,  
proverbial forest non-placed

An intonation of the evening mood  
Almost graceful under surveillance!

Like the great teeming diversity of the sexes,  
all this writing is writing of exile.  
I'm only building houses inside of me.

Aged eleven.  
Shifting under bifocal surveillance.  
Lies are soft and desire is lumpy

There is no isolated subject, I am told.

• Yet how to confess mother: Bruce Springsteen is a dyke!

There is a hole in my bedroom wall and one day I will blow through.

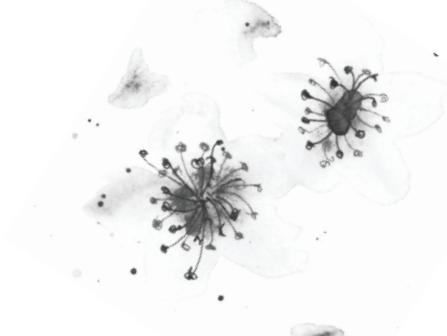
# GREENHOUSE

MICHELLE XU

All afternoon it smelled like a greenhouse.  
Blackness underfoot, the flapping of geese,  
The earthworms white and starving at our ankles.

I climbed in the rocking chair  
Searching for an opening to push into:  
A greeting, a rustle above the rocks.

Once the porch lifted up to the wind  
And you undid my hair  
With fingers that gathered like mice.



UNTITLED  
HALEY SO



月 明  
星 稀  
多 乌 鸦 南 飞

Letters to The  
Queen's B'd  
or Second Term



# A GREAT LEAP FORWARD

KAREN YUAN

MY GRANDFATHER WAS A boy when the dragonflies & sparrows flew low under the ripening sun one afternoon, skimmed past his round face like a koi pond's. Storm coming in to Guangdong. Ripples at the surface. My grandfather & his sisters & brothers ran from the fields into the village as the wind blew hot behind them & the sky bruised dark like something pressing on the wall of this world from the other side. That summer, the Japanese bombed Guangdong.

\*

After the Japanese invasion my grandfather was the quietest thing. His sisters & brothers did not understand. He ate the egg at the mooncake's center & felt so sad for its loss. Every night he listened to the owl sing. He wanted to cut down a tree, he wanted to cut down a forest. He wanted that movement, that wild & red arc killing the heart of something soft. He wanted its white bone splintered in his hair, a grief that could itself be killed.

Under General Yu Hanmou, the Fourth Route Army had fought the Japanese & died. My grandfather & every Guangdong boy cried for these men, their dead heroes. It hurt much more than having living heroes, but idols were never chosen. It wasn't so simple. Instead parts of their hearts roughly dislodged & clung to someone, dead or alive, soldier or bean curd seller, sometimes without them even knowing, unaware of their own devotion, of where, in time & space, those parts of their hearts lie.



\*

Storm coming into Guangdong. It was monsoon season & water flooded the streets into canals. My grandfather was a teenager who swam to school in the morning, shirt stuck to his skin & eyes stinging, quivering as he gasped breaths between each slice of each arm into the heaving water. A sort of contained violence.

\*

My grandfather was nearly grown when he moved north to Harbin, a city on the border between China & the Soviet Union. Churches with onion domes sprouted about the city. Sunsets were sterner, clouds stiffer, the air rawer, chafing his cheeks. It was a good city in which to be lonely. In the university library, he studied stories about young Russian heroes in Cyrillic. The symbols looked like mysterious, coded missives from an agent in wartime intelligence, or from deep within himself, as if he'd dreamt them. They seemed ancient, organic, naked. Read aloud, they seemed like mantra.

\*

Mao Zedong was a man standing on a golden stage in 1949, the birth year of the Communist Party, face full like a peach, like a young poet. In school he had sat in the library for hours reading Darwin, Mill, Rousseau, & Spencer. He admired the western men named Washington & Bonaparte, their long coats & long legacies, who rode through valleys echoing with cries of patriots. He wrote poems about eagles & snow. Yellow barley. The most joyous thing the people could do: March through frost into battle to die for our motherland. His sisters & brothers had done so.

He stood on that stage & looked my grown grandfather in the eye & smiled, jubilant, seeing the future:

My grandfather's face, streaming with blood. The bat swinging down, *crack*, sparrows startled, *crack*, taking flight, *crack, crack, crack*, curving across the sky. My grandfather's mouth was crushed against the dirt, his lips smeared brown. It may have been afternoon in Harbin, after class. He

may have been teaching at the college. He was not the only man in China longing to split something open, but Mao said the professors, artists, writers, & philosophers deserved that pain the most.

Make him kneel on rice. Burn his books. Pack him on a rusting train to a countrysid—it resembled that of his childhood—to feed pigs & till earth for years until soil never leaves his fingernails. Only a poet could have devised such a plan. Look at its symmetry.

\*

In the labor camp my grandfather raked lines into the thin, hungry soil. It was winter. One day, a man stole a sweet potato from the canteen. He & his wife & his son were beaten for half a day. They died as night fell.

\*

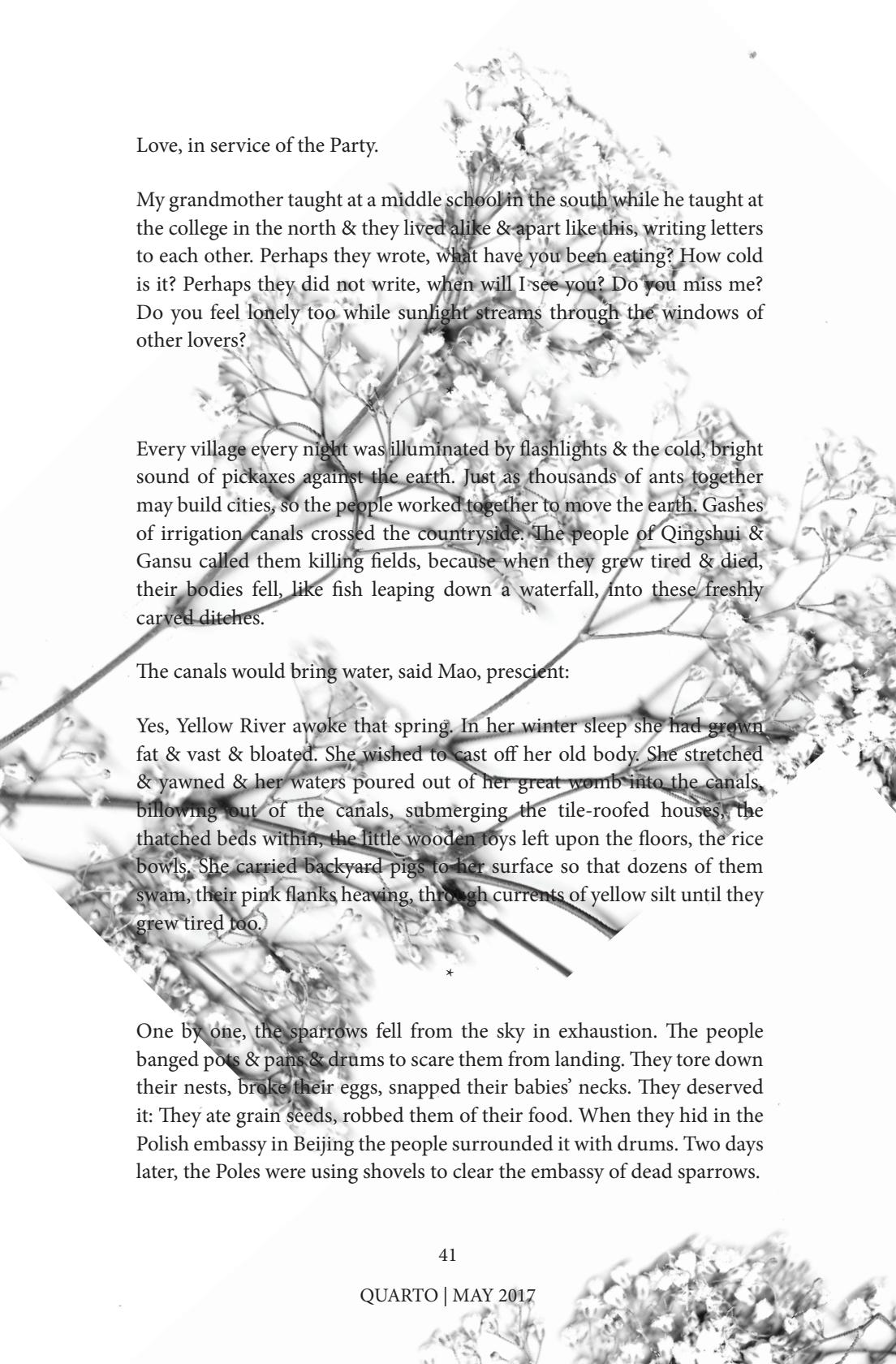
My grandfather tilled the earth & it was the only thing he could wound  
It was the only thing he could scar. He scraped & scraped & scraped  
earth until he was commended as a true patriot. How to identify  
patriot:

1. He can tighten his belt to the innermost hole.
2. He does not need to breathe in to jut out his ribs.
3. See the black on his hands. Is it from dirt? It is indistinguishable.

The laborers were using farming techniques devised by two Soviet scientists named Lysenko & Maltsev, by whom Mao was inspired. How apt that it was winter, the season of Russia.

\*

It was winter again when my grandfather married my grandmother. The nights smelled like fresh snow. They had no wedding; the Party banned such decadence. Jiang Qing had married Mao in the winter too, in late November. They had a wedding where Jiang Qing smiled her actress smile, her pale arm wound around her new husband, twice her age. Her favorite movie was Gone with the Wind. She would almost never see her busy husband but the people called her Madame Mao & it pleased her.



Love, in service of the Party.

My grandmother taught at a middle school in the south while he taught at the college in the north & they lived alike & apart like this, writing letters to each other. Perhaps they wrote, what have you been eating? How cold is it? Perhaps they did not write, when will I see you? Do you miss me? Do you feel lonely too while sunlight streams through the windows of other lovers?

Every village every night was illuminated by flashlights & the cold, bright sound of pickaxes against the earth. Just as thousands of ants together may build cities, so the people worked together to move the earth. Gashes of irrigation canals crossed the countryside. The people of Qingshui & Gansu called them killing fields, because when they grew tired & died, their bodies fell, like fish leaping down a waterfall, into these freshly carved ditches.

The canals would bring water, said Mao, prescient:

Yes, Yellow River awoke that spring. In her winter sleep she had grown fat & vast & bloated. She wished to cast off her old body. She stretched & yawned & her waters poured out of her great womb into the canals, billowing out of the canals, submerging the tile-roofed houses, the thatched beds within, the little wooden toys left upon the floors, the rice bowls. She carried backyard pigs to her surface so that dozens of them swam, their pink flanks heaving, through currents of yellow silt until they grew tired too.

One by one, the sparrows fell from the sky in exhaustion. The people banged pots & pans & drums to scare them from landing. They tore down their nests, broke their eggs, snapped their babies' necks. They deserved it: They ate grain seeds, robbed them of their food. When they hid in the Polish embassy in Beijing the people surrounded it with drums. Two days later, the Poles were using shovels to clear the embassy of dead sparrows.

\*

Mao said to kill flies & rats & mosquitos too, but the people chose to shoot sparrows to near-extinction. Sand-colored belly, white ruff around the neck, pink toes, round, round eyes, timid breath, all quivering. A death that could be watched. Without sparrows, the fields became quiet then louder & louder & louder. That beautiful ochre line on the horizon, what is that? That roar? Oh, what is that roar?

Without sparrows to eat them, locusts swarmed through the countryside turning their grain to dust. Poplar & willow tree to ash. Rice paddies glittered with their bright shells like jewels, or coins, or the tips of scythes instead of rice. They were so tired of metal that they sold all of their pots & pans for food. They were so hungry that they tried to eat the locusts. By the time my grandmother gave birth to my father, thirty million farmers had died of starvation.

\*

My father was a boy in the autumn of 1968 when the foreign minister of Pakistan arrived in Beijing with a case of mangoes. The minister gifted these astonishing fruits to Mao. What was a mango? The people had not heard of it. In the Beijing Textile Factory, the workers received a mango as a gift from Mao. Its lovely yellow skin seemed to glow. They placed it on an altar

& solemnly bowed to it each time they walked by. Later, when it began to rot, they boiled the precious fruit & every worker, as if drinking consecrated wine, drank a spoonful of its water.

A poem in the People's Daily cried:

*Seeing that golden mango  
was as if seeing the great leader Chairman Mao ...  
Again and again touching that golden mango—  
the golden mango was so warm*

Soon all of China knew of the *man guo*. Beheld in their palms, this

miraculous fruit in its round flesh seemed to pulse like a human heart. Plastic & wax mangoes in glass cases were gifted to the people to display in their homes. Mangoes decorated enamel mugs, washbasins, & plates, huge baskets of mangoes sat in parade floats, a plane full only of mangoes flew them to tour far-flung provinces. It was Mao's fruit, a talisman of immortality, a relic. The dentist in a small village who compared a mango to a sweet potato was tried for slander & executed.

\*

Hunger ripens in silence. Like a bubble distends then bursts in opaque water, so emptiness opens into emptiness.

\*

Mao died of a heart attack. The people cried before his flag-draped body & shot guns, rang sirens, blew whistles & horns across China for three minutes during his memorial. A band in Tiananmen Square surrounded by millions played "The Internationale."

*Il n'est pas de sauveurs suprêmes  
Ni Dieu, ni César, ni tribun.  
There are no supreme saviors  
Neither God, nor Caesar, nor tribune.*

\*

Fifteen years later, my mother & father heard shouting outside of their college dorm in Harbin. They ran out into the white morning light & saw buildings covered in red banners, flapping in the wind: A COMMUNIST PARTY WITHOUT CORRUPTION. They followed the sound & color to the center of campus, where a student wearing a clean button-up shirt screamed slogans into a megaphone. A crowd chanted A NEW DEMOCRACY, A NEW FUTURE, A NEW CHINA, again & again, A NEW DEMOCRACY, like a mantra, A NEW FUTURE, like hypnosis, A NEW CHINA.

Then a friend rushed to my mother & father, face white. The military was on its way. Go, go, go. Run now. My mother & father fled the chanting

crowd. Twenty minutes later, tanks rolled in, soldiers in helmets sitting atop with pointed guns. It felt like the last & first day of something. At Tiananmen Square in Beijing, thousands of students were split open by the guns.

\*

As a child I lived in an apartment complex in Beijing called Pearl River that looked like glass cosmetically grafted onto the city's face. Beautifying, unreal. A crystalline world even pigeons avoided, rarely resting on the ledge outside the kitchen window. There were brief squares of grass in front of Building 5 & the gym & the seafood store called Happy Every Day in yellow neon, lurid & strategic bursts of green in a steel land. Flowers bloomed where they were told to.

There, my grandfather painted calligraphy. He was the quietest man. His students said that he was a scholar, a thoughtful man, a gesture of uncalloused hands. He had not been back to Guangdong in decades, but my grandmother was angry that he sent so much money every year

to clean his sisters' & brothers' graves there. He still called Russia *su lian*—the Soviet Union. When he painted calligraphy he painted Mao's poems:

*The whole icy sky is white  
and we are marching in the snow. No green pine.  
Mountains tower over us.  
As we climb the pass  
the wind plays open our red banners.*

*Where are we going?  
To the River Gan in the haze of windy snow.  
We were told what to do.  
One hundred thousand workers and peasants marching on  
Jian, city of luck.*

\*

My grandfather & I would go to watch the flag-raising ceremony in

Tiananmen Square at sunrise. Red flag, red sun, red cheeks of Mao in the huge portrait that hung at the Gate, as red as when he stood in the square in 1949 & declared the Communist Party was born. The square was always quiet as dust when the flag rose. Sometimes smog obscured it & we stood in that woolen air, imagining its ascent. Or rather, I imagined it. I looked up at my grandfather & could not see his face.

\*

That murderer doesn't deserve your respect, my mother said to him at dinner on a hot night in Pearl River over sour cabbage & fish soup. I sat beside her & watched my feet hover above the tiled floor.

He changed China for the better, my grandfather said.

No, he brainwashed you into thinking so.

You don't know what you're talking about.

Think of how you were treated, think of—

There's nothing to think about. Sit down.

I don't understand how you can look at someone so awful and say—

Get out. Get out. Get out—

\*

I don't remember what I said, but I remember the static on my tongue. My right cheek, hot against the slap, my left cheek, cold against the tile floor. My grandfather had flung his finger at my mother, but I then said something children did not say to their grandfathers. I may have told him to sit down, or that it was impolite to point. Certainly it doesn't matter so much what I told him as that I told him. My glasses had flown off & lay on the floor beside my face. I do remember saying *Okay*, like a plea, a word

so gray it shriveled into itself. Looking up at my grandfather who seemed so tall in that moment & so still.

\*

In 2004 the air in Beijing's subway trains was hot like a mother's breath against skin, caressing the blue straw bags of men in sooty shirts to the bare bottoms of toddlers wearing little yellow shoes—so hot the trains became tropical, full of bellowing & screeching, & teens in green school uniforms cupping their hands under armpits while sweat beaded on their wispy mustaches, babies howling, those sooty factory workers baying in laughter, half-mad from the heat, the journey home that was bright & wet & warm like a red beating heart.

\*

erged from the subway station outside of Pearl  
grandfather cutting a plate of pears. When  
e them. I watched him tenderly slice the  
ward movement with the knife. This  
thout static. I ate a slippery wedge  
wirling above the air vents by  
her looked at me, one of a

genealogist  
w a man's  
d tree

# Hehele

DEVIN BARRICKLOW



In the Hawaiian language, there is a word for actions that are not done to other things. My *kumu* explains it as things that simply exist in their own state of being.  
“Doors are just door-ing around.”

Even if a wheel were to roll down a hill & run someone over, it is still a *hehele* word. It was just wheeling around, its intentions true.

It helps me to think of it this way when I ignore your messages; perhaps you were not dark & curly-haired evil, perhaps you were just door-ing around. Perhaps my hurt was simply the result of your careening down the hill, wheeling forward, unable to speak or to warn.





# THE BEE IN THE WALL

YOOJIN HAHN

I TELL YOU THE story while we are both lying in bed. With our eyes half-shut, your fingers soft in my hair. It has begun to snow, and my feet are cold beneath the sheets. Your room smells of ironed clothing, of warmed water and fabric.

When I was younger, I tell you, I could never eat at school. I didn't have anyone to have lunch with. I didn't have any friends.

That's sad, you say, giving me a smile. Tell me something else about your school. About the buildings. The nicer things.

You have the tendency to smile when you find something sad, as if you don't want to admit that it is, that everything has the possibility to become so. And I don't like it when you smile that way, so I do as you say. I tell you how my school used to have roses growing on the walls.

The walls of my school held the smell of old fish cakes, but the roses themselves were sweet, as flowers should be. Their fragrance often attracted bees to the wall, which settled in the gaps between the bricks, building fat beehives that reminded me of tumors.

Because of this, all of us were forbidden from going near the roses. The gardener put tape around the nearby trees, so that we would stay away. And I vowed to never go to the walls, not even when people made me do so. I would rather die than be stung by the bees, to touch the fish-cake bricks.

Thinking back now, I don't know what made me hate the walls so much. I hated them with an abnormally strong fervor, even if they weren't alive. It wasn't because I was scared of the bees, nor was it because I found the beehives ugly. I just hated the walls for my line of vision.

But there came a day when I couldn't stay away from the walls. And it wasn't because my classmates made me do it, as I thought they would one day. As pathetic as it sounds, it was because I was hungry. I was so hungry, that I wanted to cry.

It's strange why I felt so hungry that particular day. My stomach was accustomed to skipping lunch—I had been doing so for the past three years. I think it might have been because I was on my period, or because I had to run many laps in the gym. My teacher made me do that as a punishment, for I had forgotten to bring my PE uniform.

Yet of course, I could not eat in the classroom or cafeteria. Especially not when I was so sweaty, and my pad had leaked. I could see that people were staring at me, and that I smelled terribly bad. I found my PE uniform in the corner of the girl's bathroom, clogging up the dirtiest toilet.

Therefore, I decided to go to the walls. Because no one was allowed to go there, near the roses and the bees. I think my hunger might have made me go mad, for I temporarily forgot my hatred for the walls. Under the sun, the bricks appeared very bright, as if they had stepped out of a fairy tale, I thought. I tore through the gardener's tape and walked past the trees. I settled on the grass, right by the roses.

And there, by the flowers, I ate as if I've been famished for days. I tore through the meat as if I were an animal. I could not stop until I was full, till I could feel the food till the top of my throat. Only then could I bring myself to breathe again. Only then did I hear the hum of the bees.

And what happened after that? you ask, leaning close to me.

Your eyes look rather soft, as if made of warm water. The scent of your hair reminds me of earth after rain, and I do not want to speak anymore. I press my nose against your scalp, which makes you laugh and pull away.

Nothing happened, I whisper into your skin. It was winter. The bees were already dead.

And what I say is not a lie, because it was indeed winter that day. And a lot of insects die in the winter. I am sure bees do as well.

Yet I have some difficulty falling asleep at night. I look up at the ceiling, at the dead bugs collected in the lights. I can't help but imagine the bulbs cracking open like an egg. The bugs raining onto my skin, and nibbling all night long.

It would hurt, but I know I won't be able to make a sound, because you are a light sleeper and can't fall asleep once you are up. Insect bites hurt more than people expect them to be. But you wake up too easily, and I do not want that to happen.

Just then, I feel your hands slipping into mine. I realize that you are awake, and that your eyes are not fixed on the lights. Instead, they are on me, on the white of my face. Your lips are quite pale, and a little chapped.

I heard it, you say.

The sound of the bees.

Somewhere from the hollow of your throat. Ringing like a chime.

At first, I have no idea what you are talking about. I almost think that you are speaking in your sleep. But once I manage to silence my thoughts, I begin to understand what you are saying.

In the quiet, I begin to hear the sounds as well. The sleepy hums of bees. The itch of their legs. As soft as the sound of pencil shavings fluttering to the floor, the feeling of light rain collecting in my eyes.

That is true, I reply. You are very observant.

You do not smile, and bring your lips to the cold of my eyes. I can feel the veins of your mouth pulsing against those in my skin. You tell me the bees cannot hurt me, because I have swallowed them up.

And you won't be hungry anymore, you say, since bees are more filling than you think. Their bodies are filled with honey. Honey is more filling than you think.

And that, as strange as it is, makes both of us laugh, and I smell roses in the air, even if it is the middle of winter. I hold your hands quite tightly, my face warm in your breath. I wish what you say is true. I wish the night would never end.





# THE ART OF LOSING ICE

KALILA MORSINK

## 1. the art of losing isn't hard to master<sup>1</sup>

IN THE DIGITIZED LIBRARY catalogue,<sup>2</sup> there are over 117 books with the title “Losing \_\_\_\_,” where “\_\_\_\_” is a noun. You can read books on losing touch, track, time; credibility, control, ground, face, and faith; heaven, hope, humanity, balance, battles, liberty, and momentum. Oh, the things you can lose! The way, the signal, the vote,<sup>3</sup> the golden hour; the race, the light, the dead, the sacred; my virginity and my religion, your land and your head. There are books on losing our souls and our cool; there are books on losing bets and seasons. There are at least eight different books on losing *it*.

It's a clamor of things you don't want to happen. No one likes losing. Spend too long reading the catalogue and you begin to wonder what's worse: losing time or losing face? Losing the moon or losing a million minds? Losing assisted housing units or losing small wars?

There is a book called *Losing Everything*, and it seems like the worst disaster of all: as though you could lose change and keys and credit card and be quite all right until you lost control and consciousness too. But it's ridiculous to worry about losing everything. It's the wrong perspective. You could stand in a crackling bone-dry wasteland and compose a poem in your head, and you would still have both the wasteland and the poem. The disaster—the thing you really *should* worry about—happens sometime between the credit card and the collapse of the ecosystem. Is it the plants withering, or the rivers running dry? Is it the first person who dies of thirst?<sup>4</sup>

What is the disaster?

<sup>1</sup> From the poem *One Art*, by Elizabeth Bishop.

<sup>2</sup> It's the catalogue of Columbia University Libraries.

<sup>3</sup> It's easy: be convicted of a felony.

<sup>4</sup> People often assume that a warmer climate will result in a wetter world, since ice will melt. This is simplistic. It is slightly less simplistic to say that while wet areas will get wetter, dry areas will get drier.

## 2. disaster<sup>5</sup>

Worldwide computer malfunction on January 1, 2000. Collision with another planet on December 21, 2012. Blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the sun going out, the moon turning into blood.<sup>6</sup>

As a species, we like our apocalypses the way we tend to like our coffee: hot, stimulating, and coming up fast. Colliding head-on with another planet, for example, would be pretty catastrophic pretty quickly: you could reasonably expect to die within the same five minutes as the rest of life on earth. Likewise for the sun going out, although the mass extinction would take a little longer. And so it goes. There are 184 religion-related predictions of the apocalypse listed in the Wikipedia article on “dates predicted for apocalyptic events,” and all of them expect a one-off. They might give a margin of error (like one guy, Nicholas of Cusa, who apparently expected the apocalypse any time between 1700 and 1734) but they expect the actual event to be quick. Wham, bam, burned to death. Nobody on the Wikipedia list said, for example: the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is going to climb over the course of a couple centuries, leading to a number of serious but slow-moving problems that spawn yet *other* problems until eventually most of us agree it’s the end of the world. That simply doesn’t sound like an apocalypse. But it’s the apocalypse we’ve got, and so we’ve got to live with it.<sup>7</sup>

There *are* climate change scenarios in which the apocalypse happens all at once. Ice sheets, for example, tend to melt slowly until they don’t. If the West Antarctic Ice Sheet collapses, we will have to deal with 3-5 meters of sea level rise (on top of the 0.2-0.6 meters that we currently expect by 2100). Superstorms, flooding from Shanghai to Amsterdam to New York, epidemics of malaria and cholera, the Maldives and a chunk of Vietnam completely underwater – apocalyptic enough for you yet?

Or: permafrost in the Arctic land and seafloor stores massive amounts of carbon and methane, both of which are powerful greenhouse gases. If enough permafrost melts and releases enough carbon and methane to warm the climate enough to melt more permafrost, we could end up with what scientists call a “runaway greenhouse effect.” That would be

<sup>5</sup> According to Merriam Webster, a disaster is “a sudden calamitous event bringing great damage, loss, or destruction.” The point of contention here is the *suddenness*.

<sup>6</sup> From the Bible: Joel 2:30-32.

<sup>7</sup> Dying with it may also be involved.

about as bad as it sounds.<sup>8</sup> As a glaciologist tweeted in the summer of 2014, “if even a small fraction of Arctic sea floor carbon is released to the atmosphere, we’re f’d.”<sup>9</sup>

The thing about these scenarios is that everything goes to shit so quickly that you don’t have time to worry about the specific different ways in which specific different things are going to shit. If Earth becomes a runaway greenhouse, we won’t be concerned with any policy except disaster relief.<sup>10</sup> Of course, disaster relief is never actually *easy*. But it’s easy to think about: there’s no minutely adjusted scale of probabilities, no need to hear about ten different possible futures which all shift depending on a hundred different policy choices. That’s the appeal of a quick and dirty apocalypse: all the options fall away, and so do the doubts.

### 3. (the joking voice, a gesture I love)

If you are a climate scientist, you are qualified to state several different versions of “If \_\_\_\_ happens, we’re f’d.” In fact, this is your day job: you just do it in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and only occasionally on Twitter. Your papers have titles like “Thermohaline Circulation, the Achilles Heel of Our Climate System: Will Man-Made CO<sub>2</sub> Upset the Current Balance?”<sup>11</sup> Your colleagues read them, and you likewise read their papers, which begin with statements like, “Theory has suggested that the West Antarctic Ice Sheet may be inherently unstable. Recent observations lend weight to this hypothesis.”<sup>12</sup>

Many of the people who study climate science also feel afraid, angry, and panicked all the time. There is a psychiatrist who diagnoses this as “pre-traumatic stress.”<sup>13</sup> The trauma that climate scientists are anticipating could be the quick apocalypse or the slow apocalypse or anything in between. There are a lot of possible disasters, and they are paid to think about them from 9 to 5 every weekday, whereas most other people try to avoid thinking about them at all.

<sup>8</sup> When it happened on Venus (as scientists suspect it did), it boiled the oceans.

<sup>9</sup> The glaciologist was Dr. Jason Box.

<sup>10</sup> And that’s only if our policy-making systems haven’t collapsed yet.

<sup>11</sup> The answer is yes, probably, and “it would be bad news for a world striving to feed 11 to 16 billion people.”

<sup>12</sup> The title of this paper is “Reassessment of the Potential Sea-Level Rise from a Collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet.”

<sup>13</sup> Her name is Dr. Lise van Susteren.

Anecdotally, a friend called me a couple weeks ago and instructed me to give her Climate Change 101 without pulling any punches. Ten minutes later she was crying, and I didn't know what to say: "Try not to think about it?" "We'll probably be dead by 2100 anyway?" "It makes me cry, too"

#### 4. places, and names, and where it was you meant to travel

There is a book in the library catalogue called *Losing the Global Development War*. Never having read this book, let me tell you: we are definitely going to lose the global development war. "Global development" means industrialization and industrialization means fossil fuels; "war" means to hell with regulation, slam the gas pedal, never sign a legally binding international agreement. We should do our best not to *have* the global development war. After all, the results of developing the globe so far have been, at best, mixed. Soon they'll be worse. There are no winners in the global development war. It's only a question of who loses first.

Seven other books in the library catalogue are about losing places. Mogadishu, Panama, Vietnam.<sup>14</sup> You can play the elevation game: Mogadishu is 9 meters above sea level. Panama has some mountains, but its capital is only 2 meters above sea level. In Vietnam, the Cà Mau Peninsula has an average elevation of 1.8 meters. Only Mogadishu would survive the collapse of the West Antarctic ice sheet, sometime in the future of the global development war.

Play the elevation game enough and you can get used to the idea of losing cities, losing countries. Havana has an elevation of 4 meters; Washington, DC, 2 meters; Bangkok, 1 meter; New Orleans is 2 meters *below* sea level. Half of the Netherlands has an elevation of 1 meter or less. Imagine all of these places flooding, the infrastructure that would be destroyed, the people who would lose their livelihoods, the people who would lose their lives.<sup>15</sup> Of course, we might not lose those places quite like that. Sea level rise is an oversimplification of the effects of climate change. For instance, hurricane intensities will get higher and higher as tropical oceans warm; Havana could be ripped apart by one before the rising water even gets close to overwhelming it.

<sup>14</sup> Unlike *Losing the Global Development War*, *Losing Vietnam* is about an actual war.

<sup>15</sup> Don't imagine this too often, since it's not good for your emotional health.

We would call that a disaster. But would it be *the* disaster? If we lost a city, watched as it was torn open by the ocean, would we say: okay, *now* we can stop being cheerful, *now* we can start saying the words “worst-case scenario.” Now we can stop saying we expect 1-2 degrees Celsius of global warming by 2100, and instead say that if we don’t actually change our global energy policy, we expect it to be more like 4 degrees.<sup>16</sup> Now we can start calling climate change the apocalypse.

Yeah, right.

We’ll get hit by amped-up hurricanes, and we’ll call them *natural* disasters, even though climate change is the most artificial thing there is. We’ll lose places and people, and chances are we won’t cut our carbon emissions by even half of the amount we should have cut them already, twenty years ago. We’ll keep fighting the global development war. We’re good at losing things: so what if we lose one city? So what if we lose one more?

## 5. so many things seem filled with the intent to be lost that their loss is no disaster

You are not obligated to care about polar bears.

There are plenty of good reasons to care about polar bears. Their fur is made of thousands upon thousands of perfectly transparent hollow tubes that appear white because they scatter all the wavelengths of visible light. Their noses are so sensitive that they can smell a seal swimming under the ice from up to 32 kilometers away. They look cuddly. Most of all, it’s an awfully pathetic thing to imagine, polar bears standing on smaller and smaller ice floes as the Arctic ice melts, polar bears drowning when the distance between ice floes is too long for them to swim. Still, you are not obligated to care about polar bears. Species have gone extinct before and will continue to go extinct.

You are also not obligated to care about beluga whales, narwhals, walruses, harp seals, harbor seals, penguins, pandas, puffins, Arctic foxes, snow leopards, orangutans, elephants, koalas, sea turtles, or pikas.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) uses four different modeling scenarios to make predictions. The worst-case scenario, in which we do not develop climate change policy or cut emissions, is associated with a global temperature increase of 3.7 degrees Celsius by 2100.

<sup>17</sup> Pikas are furry little animals with round ears, and they very easily overheat and die

Climate change has long fingers: it melts the ice that seals live on, starves out pandas by killing the bamboo they eat. From a Darwinian perspective, of course, it's risky to rely on one plant species for 99% of your diet. But that's how evolution works: some gambles pay off, and some don't.

Anyway, by the time the world is a couple of degrees Celsius warmer, and the pikas and polar bears are almost all dead, you will likely have your own problems: a hurricane or a heat wave or drought or flooding, increased numbers of refugees to support, increased chances of contracting an infectious disease. You probably won't have a care to spare for the polar bears. By then it will be comforting to say to yourself: species have gone extinct before, it isn't a disaster.

## 6. then practice losing farther, losing faster

Species *have* gone extinct before. Since the middle of the last millennium, we've lost: the Dodo bird, the passenger pigeon, the Tasmanian tiger, Steller's sea cow. The Carolina parakeet, the aurochs, the red gazelle, the Yemen gazelle, the Saudi gazelle. The great auk and the lesser koa finch. The ivory-billed woodpecker, the Japanese sea lion, the Caribbean monk seal, the Guam flying fox. The laughing owl, the spectacled cormorant, the mysterious starling.<sup>18</sup>

Since sixty-six million years ago, we've lost: pterosaurs, long-necked plesiosaurs, four-meter-long marine lizards, semi-aquatic reptiles called choristoderes, Scleractinia coral, the *Theatonius lancensis* frog, eighty-five percent of all Cretaceous species of rays, most species of nautilus, every dinosaur that didn't fly.<sup>19</sup>

## 7. some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent

Two hundred and seventy-two million years ago, the continents were all one continent. South America's nose was smushed into Africa's armpit; Africa's tail bumped against Antarctica's head; Antarctica sat on top of Australia. They were like a pile of puppies, except that a group of puppies

---

<sup>18</sup> All of these extinctions were anthropogenic, which is to say they were our fault: hunting and habitat destruction.

<sup>19</sup> None of these latter extinctions were our fault; we did not exist as a species yet, and thus can safely blame the asteroid.

is called a litter, and a group of continents is called a supercontinent. China was not part of the supercontinent: such are the vicissitudes of plate tectonics.

Then Antarctica gently disengaged from Africa, and Africa stopping butting heads with North America. A little while later, South America finally got out of Africa's armpit. This was one hundred and eighty million years ago. Back then Africa wasn't Africa and South America wasn't South America; the Earth had not heard of names, so it wasn't even "the Earth." A planet hung in space, full of hot liquid metal with an iron heart, and its crust humped itself into mountains which raised their heads out of the sea. They hovered there in communion for a hundred million years, and then they pulled apart, ages and ages before humans walked across them.

So the supercontinent was almost two hundred million years gone when we named it Pangaea. It was like naming a girl in a grave. We had never had her in the first place, and still – masters of the art of losing – we managed to lose her. We could write another book: *Losing a Continent*. (Actually there is already a book in the library called *Losing a Continent*. Unfortunately it is about France's policy in North America in the decade before 1763, and not about Pangaea.)

## **8. I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster**

So what is the disaster? When does it happen? Certainly not one hundred and eight million years ago, when Pangaea disbanded and we were not yet even a whisper against the skin of the Earth; certainly not sixty-six million years ago when the asteroid hit, because when the asteroid hit, the bright-eyed mammals that would become primates survived. Not the Industrial Revolution; not a few decades after that, when a Swedish scientist<sup>20</sup> observed that human emission of carbon would eventually warm the earth. Not in 2012, when it got so hot at Reagan National Airport in Washington, DC that an airplane sank four inches into the runway.

If you ask me right now, I'll say the disaster was yesterday, when the Trump administration ordered the Environmental Protection Agency to stop issuing grants, stop giving new tasks to contracted workers, and

---

<sup>20</sup> Svante Arrhenius, the same guy who came up with the Arrhenius equation and the Arrhenius definition of an acid.

stop publishing news releases, blog updates, or social media posts of any kind. I have spent the hours since I heard feeling as though I can't get enough air. But give me a few days: I'm sure I'll dig up a little more hope, soon.

## 9. even losing you

“We’ll probably be dead by 2100 anyway” is not one of my better lines. When I said it to my crying friend two weeks ago, it didn’t seem to do much for her. She might have cried a little harder.

Most predictions made by climate scientists refer to the year 2100.<sup>21</sup> This is because scientists like big, round numbers, and the turn of a century is pretty round. As discussed above, we’re not waiting on the world to end in 2100 specifically, in a one-off apocalypse complete with rains of fire and rivers of blood; 2100 is arbitrary. It makes a convenient point for researchers to aim their climate models at. And it has the advantage of being firmly in the future, for me and my friend and probably you as well. The average human life span in the U.S. is about 78 years. Even if you add another twenty years for good luck, our lives don’t extend out of this century. So we can run our eyes down the extraordinarily gloomy IPCC Assessment Report on climate change,<sup>22</sup> in which most climate predictions are aggregated, and take refuge in the thought that by the time it’s possible to take the full list of really awful eventualities and compare it to reality, we’ll be dead.

The people born today don’t have that advantage. Add another 78 years to 2017 and you’re all the way to 2095; a twenty-year margin of error gets you all the way to 2115. Probably we’ve all met someone who will live to see 2100. Soon we’ll meet more and more of them: they’ll be our children, our friends’ children, our neighbors and our students and the tiny people we make silly faces at on the subway, and we’ll love them.

We’ll love them *so much*. It’s something people do to other people. In fact, it’s something we’re just as good at as we are at losing.<sup>23</sup> We’ll watch them blink their eyes open and fall back asleep; we’ll watch them make faces and sing songs. They’ll breathe this swirling atmosphere, and they’ll

---

<sup>21</sup> If they’re extra detailed, they might include something for the year 2050.

<sup>22</sup> In case you didn’t catch it earlier, IPCC stands for Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It is *the* authority on climate change science and predictions.

<sup>23</sup> Maybe better.

talk to us, and we'll love them more than Pangaea, more than pi' pandas and harp seals, more than cities and countries, more than track, time, liberty and momentum.

There is a book in the library catalogue called *Losing Everything*, that's not the disaster.

There is also a book called *Losing Someone You Love*.

### One Art

by Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
places, and names, and where it was you meant  
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
the art of losing's not too hard to master  
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.





# POEM TO END IN CALAMITY

ANURAK SAE LAOW

Describe the valley with its lace of tributary waters, a skein of relief lines pulled tight

like a stocking on flesh. Below the legend pulses with icons. This cross-hatched dream

of space in three dimensions. A finger guides an estuary's course as it intersects the coast,

a scale rendition of some crackly thing bristling for exit. Behold the pathway and

behold the squall that follows. The five-minute siren, the carousel of wind. This eye

on it all. Invasion or inversion. The patterns scried and the ruptured earth spilling itself

in ciphers and ciphers. Lean close and you can hear the howling. It flings the shapes

of cars against the shapes of buildings, traces the trajectory of disaster. Why do we right

these angles when everything else is coming askew? The hatch is flung open. The water

surges in. You spread the page and the whole damn thing comes roaring out—

# IT ALL WENT DEAD

ELIZA CALLAHAN

WE GOT A CAB from Overtown back to the hotel. When we got into the cab, the driver asked what two girls like us were doing in a place like Overtown. He said it was the most dangerous area in Miami, even in broad daylight. He said they find bodies there, all over the place, trunks, the side of the road, restaurants. We had come to see the Rubell collection, a warehouse that housed a family's private collection of established and emerging works by female artists. The collection was called *No Man's Land*. The cab driver said he'd never heard of it.

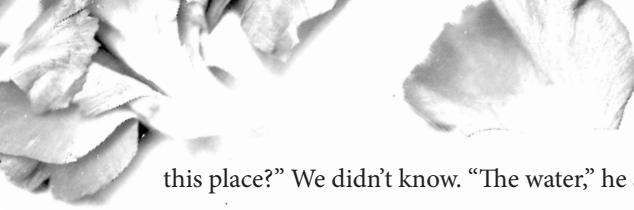
"You ever see that cop show, you know the one, the most violent one?" He turned around and looked at us in the backseat with his eyebrows raised up to a sweaty and dwindling hairline. "You know, where they find the decapitated babies and young girls like you who go missing down on South Beach? That's here in Overtown."

"It doesn't look too bad," I said looking around at small, colorful stucco houses and a street lined with tall palm trees. I didn't even see anyone around.

"I've only picked up one other person here and I knew the second he got in my car that he was a cold blooded killer. Everyone here is a killer—they don't have a choice. Kill or be killed."

The car smelled liked his body odor had been infused into the upholstery of the car seats and had coated the ac vents.

"But I love Miami," he assured us. "You know what's special about



this place?" We didn't know. "The water," he said.

We were driving across a big causeway.

"What's great about Miami is that everyone has access the same water. The billionaires, the homeless, me, you. It's all about access. I love to swim, I love to jetski."

To the left we could see a half a dozen Yachts anchored off the shore.

"That's Mark Cuban's yacht" he said, pointing to the biggest one.  
"That's worth more than 30 million. But it floats in my water."

He told us he had been living in Miami for thirty three years. He told us he was an injured athlete and that he had played Major League Baseball for the Pirates for a year until he blew out both of his knees. He told us he didn't regret being a driver because he was still his own boss.

"I have a lot of knowledge," he said us. "It's called life experience."

We came to a stop and the traffic in front of us went on as far as the eye could see in both directions.

"But my wife hates me she thinks I'm a loser. I have to drive because of her—all her shopping. I take care of her. She lives in a nice house—she just doesn't know it. I live on the intercostal, you know how expensive that is? I paid 400,000 for that house and that was back in the day. She's lucky she's living there."

Everything in the car was beige, the seats, his arms, his dyed hair.

"My wife's very beautiful—she's Colombian. That's my wife right there," he pointed to a plastic rainbow hologram photograph of a voluptuous woman dangling from the rearview mirror. "She's extremely beautiful. I didn't marry my wife cause of her looks, I married her because I thought she was a wonderful person but when I brought her over here, everything changed. Now she's kinda like you know, I love my wife, but she's kind of a dingbat. I think she'd give her social security number to that homeless guy over there. She believes everything."

"She sounds like very nice woman," I said. "She used to be."

Neither of us had anything to add so he kept on talking.

"She was going through this stage where she was getting a loan from Columbia from someone. She lived in Office Depot for about a month, all of a sudden it all went dead. And I said, baby, what happened, what happened. All while she was doing this, I said they're gonna get you for

identity theft, we'll have the police at the door and your not gonna be able to get your green card or anything, and she said, your jealous and I said all right I'm jealous. I was jealous all the time, she said. You can't just give your social security out to people! I said. And the guy she was sending it to has a suite number, you know how that goes—with the post office box. Ah Mar, I trust him, I trust him. Mar this, Mar that. I wasn't buying it. She goes, they wanna see your tax return, I say, they're not getting my tax returns! She went mental on me. She started screaming in Spanish at me—she gets like Ricky Ricardo. I had to have my accountant draw up tax returns and put all fives next to my name and my social just to make her shut up."

We still hadn't moved. He laid into his horn three times in vain before continuing on.

"My wife can't cook. She gets a can of ragù and dumps it all in big bowl and it just tastes horrible. She stirs it up, and puts it on the table. Some bites are warm, some are cold. I eat a little bit and she says how do you like it and I say *ah, sweetie it's delicious*, you know, but it's awful. We had our cousin over for dinner once and she's an attorney—she's only 25 years old, but she's a Colombian attorney—the criteria for Colombian attorneys is nothing like the US. Most of them are just glorified notary publics and they're jokers. But my wife thinks it's impressive. She made me buy new clothes for the visit—mine weren't good enough. I have a house in Costa Rica so I know about these jokers. All those countries down there, they're all the same. I've got a beautiful place in Yura Rica by San Jose. I love it there."

I told him that I had visited the Guanacaste Peninsula on three separate occasions. He said he's never been to that part. He went on.

"There are lot of beautiful women there. I just feel so much better when i'm in San Jose. They just put a new highway in. I thought I was gonna die in a sinkhole there one time. But what I was getting at is no body knows anything down there. She told me her cousin's boyfriend was rich and important so I needed to make myself look good and when they came, he showed up to the house empty handed." He shook his head in disgust.

The variable message sign on the causeway flashed before us advising drivers to take alternate routes. There had been a major accident. He said

we were in luck because he lived in the area around Little Havana and knew the shortcuts and backstreets. We got off the freeway and turned off into a residential neighborhood.

"How old are you girls?" he asked us. We told him we were twenty.

"A tough age," he said. "I see a lot of young rich girls here on heroin. There's a real problem here. I drive them to rehab. I pick them up from these big big white mansions down by Versace's place. You been by there? Beautiful young girls too. Trouble in paradise though, I tell you."

A fleet of cop cars sped past us with their lights flashing but their sirens off. "I hate it when they do that," he said, "makes me feel like I'm deaf."

I agreed that it was disconcerting.

"One time I was going 80 on the interstate and I had a girl jump out of the car on me. Broad daylight. It's no fun driving people around on drugs. When I got home that day I felt sick to my stomach, I couldn't sleep for nights. I just was rolling over in my bed in pain. My chest hurt and I was sweaty. I told my wife all about it but she didn't understand. She doesn't get anything. Her English isn't good enough to get any real idea of what i'm saying. She doesn't care anymore anyways. I could have killed a girl. She doesn't care. I don't know—"

His voice trailed off and he became quiet for a minute. He looked out at the houses as we passed them and slowly shook his head. He took his right hand off the wheel and rubbed his thinning hair back and forth, back and forth. We passed a sign advertising care packages for mother's day and I thought to ask him if he had any family in Miami.

"No, family here. But I make my sister die of laughter everyday. I send her these text messages. Her husband is an idiot. She lives far away, somewhere in Ohio. I don't even know where, I've never visited because I cant stand her husband. We love each other though—me and my sister. I send her messages that crack her up. I send her messages about Bill and his truck. Bill is her husband, he drives a truck for Schneider National. He's an idiot—that's why I never bothered to visit."

"That makes sense," I said.

"We're going to pass my house a little ways up on the left. The pink one."

As we drove on, the police cars that had passed us reappeared in the distance. This time they were driving toward us, their lights no longer flashing.

"They're probably coming from my neighbors. They get a lot of phone calls from them. Their teenage daughter calls the cops all the time and tells them she's being abused by her parents but she does it because her parents refuse give her extra spending money for shopping. It's always money ruining families."

As we got closer we could see more police cars pulling out of the driveway of a small pink house.

"Great," he said. "Last week I came home and two cops were in my living room drinking Orange Soda with my wife—she said they were inspecting a gas leak. I said what gas leak? She said they were looking for one but didn't find it. I said isn't that a plumber's job? I don't like cops. I love this country, I like God, I support our troops but cops, I don't know. I don't trust them."

He asked us if he could make a quick stop to make sure everything was okay inside and that he would turn off the meter and cut the fare down. We didn't say no.

As we pulled up the last police car pulled away. The house was one story with a stucco facade the color of Pepto Bismol. Where one might expect a front lawn was a large expanse of tarmac, which sat entirely empty other than a green jet ski on cinderblocks. The tarmac led right to the front door and the door, which looked like as flimsy as an interior door, donned a lion's head knocker that appeared heavier than the door itself. Only half of the windows had bars and the blinds were drawn. A piece of Tyveck flapped around in the wind on the roof like a luffing flag. "My wife can't park so we decided to make the whole front of the house a parking spot for her. We sold her car though—driving gave her too much anxiety" he told us as he pulled in and parked at a forty five degree angle, less than two feet from the front door.

He limped over to the door and went to open it but it was locked. He shook the knob violently and pressed his shoulder up against the door. He said the door was never locked, not even at night. He banged on it and yelled, *Angie, Angie, open the door*. He told us he was sorry and that this had never happened before that he didn't even have a key to the house,

that no one ever bothered them. He said Angie had to be in there because she doesn't have a car. *Angie, open the door. Angie, Por Fabor. Angie, Mi Amor, open the fucking door.* He told us he was going to go in around back. We waited in the cab with the doors open.

After a minute or so, I got out of the car and peeked into one of the windows but couldn't make out any movement inside, all I could see were piles and piles of papers, notices and documents splayed all across the floor, hundreds of manilla files and envelopes and a chair flipped on its back. As I starred through the window I could see Mar looking through sliding glass doors from the back. His eyes were fixed on the mess on the floor and he was shaking his head. The water sat behind him. I could see his face tighten and his eyes squeeze shut and one hand cover his mouth as he knocked on the glass with the other.

I could see our lonely hero melting down like hot wax. I could see his hand go limp as he tried to pry the sliding door open one last time. I could see him look up to the sky. I could see space steamrolled around him. I could see his injured body admit something to itself. I could see the burned grass rolling to a blue boundary. I could see him turn his back the little pink house and lift his shirt off over his head and walk towards the calm water that sat wide open and flat as an ironed bed sheet. 



REPARATION AND RESCUCITATION

LAURA ELIZABETH HAND

# NOTICE OF EVICTION

FROM: ROSALIE JEAN WETZEL

MY FIRST MEMORY IS of California. My uncle opens the car door to welcome me and I vomit on him. I watch his smile dissipate. My sister splits her knee open on the pavement while running to see my aunt.

I have a lot of very early memories and I have tried, on several occasions, to revisit my timeline and rearrange them, hoping earnestly that somehow something else will surface first. But still, it is this arrival (I remember nothing else of that trip) and my parents' apologies, my uncle's patient reassurance, my sisters screams.

After they had removed the sutures from my sister's knee, they found the wound dotted with small black flecks, where the gravel had lodged itself so deeply into her flesh that the surgeons thought it more harmful to remove them. For some time after our visit to California, I watched her turn translucent next to me in the bathtub and coax the gravel out from her knees. I wanted very badly to collect the tiny fragments, to tuck them neatly under my fingernails and wait for them to hatch into my own precious galaxies but instead I closed my eyes as my father poured water from a cup over my head.

Physicians started using sutures to close wounds four thousand years ago. They say that before they had sutures of the variety we use today, ancient Indian doctors affixed beetles to the edges of wounds, let them sink their pincers in before cutting off their bodies and leaving just their heads to hold the skin closed.

Last night I dreamt I held a gaping hole in my midsection between my

teeth in a sort of urgent maternal panic stimulated by the sense of my cells spilling out million by million in streams of everything I had swallowed — him, her, hurt, violet, rose petals, pills. But the real nightmare is: what happens when the skin accidentally fastens itself around something that does not belong? Gravel, for example, or worse — something that cannot be soaked out in Loreal Just for Kids bubble bath. Like you.

Consider this a kind of plea.

I was fourteen the first time I got my heart broken. The next morning, just before the sun rose, I slipped into bed between my parents and felt the space between my cells throb with a kind of hot and percussive vacancy.

Isn't it funny how there is nothing so dense and opaque as that particular strain of emptiness? Loneliness is when you realize that "vacant" doesn't mean what you once thought it did.

Isn't it equally funny that there is no *sensation* to bleeding? You can taste the blood, watch it seep through your sleeves, but there is no precise feeling to the state of *bleeding*. Your hand goes to the wound, not your consciousness. Only when your child eyes are met directly with reddened fingers do you know that your body is leaking.

Wouldn't it be lovely if the heart were similarly impaired?

I was fourteen for the other first time. He was eighteen. When it was over, right after he reminded me not to tell anyone what we had just done, he tried to discard the condom but it slipped between his fingers and its contents spilled all over his exposed torso, pooling in the divots between his collarbone and his shoulders. Horrified, I looked in the other direction and pretended not to notice.

That year I started weighing myself.

Here is a brief interruption for a fun fact which reads: in the summer of 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed in the Apollo 11 on the surface of the moon. When the two men came home, they alone had left over 100 items on its surface, including a cast golden olive branch, five

American flags, two golf balls, a silicon disk with goodwill messages from 73 world leaders, and 96 bags of urine, feces and vomit.

Yes, there are 96 bags of piss and shit on the moon.

Dad drops me off at the Institute of Living in his work clothes. A few hours later I am caught hiding my hummus beneath my lettuce. Dad would be disappointed. I am handed an Ensure. Cory looks up and tells the dietician: “You sure better let her go to the bathroom after giving her all that.” Dad would be proud I’ve made a friend already, though he would say I need to self-advocate. I stop sipping immediately. “Does Ensure make you shit?” I have just learned that we are not allowed to flush without a staff member checking the toilet first and I cannot imagine anything so undignified — maybe cleaning your own jizz out of your clavicle, but this is a close second. “No,” Cory says, “I just mean you’ll have to piss after drinking all that.” She’s quiet for a second. “But, if it’s anything like SlimFast, yeah it makes you shit.” I mumble, “It’s nothing like SlimFast” as the dietician politely reminds Cory that we don’t use the word “slim” in the dining room.

Cory wants to be a phlebotomist when she gets out of here, which is interesting for a number of reasons.

There are two scars on my right hand, two pale little dots like tadpole eyes or distant moons at the base of my first and third fingers where my knuckles used to scrape my teeth on their way down my throat. But no matter the carrots shooting out my nose or the flecks of blood on the water and saliva on my chin, something festered between my ribs.

Bloodletting goes back at least three thousand years and has only been has only been abrogated as a primary treatment for illness in the last century and a half. I guess it’s natural to replicate the process when your body won’t do it naturally. Do not forget that we still have our autonomous but equally ugly leeching processes.

A leech’s body is made up of 34 segments. It has suckers on both ends of its body and has 32 brains. Because of nervous system similarities, or perhaps the wealth of subject material, they are often used in research on

human brain disorders.

Maybe they consumed our disorders and passed them all down through thousands of generations (the longest life span of a leech is ten years) to spit them back up in the laboratory for our studies. Would this be considered self-preservation?

All evening I lay in bed, listening to the distinct silence of my toes making shadows on the wall. In color, these shapes are somewhere between whale song and hunger and imprecise longing and the figures are angular, nebulous sprawled across the armoire. I think how there might be more inside. Angular, nebulous and the color of the word “damp.” Like memory. I want to ask them what about that moment in California was big enough to decide to begin preserving the things flashing before my baby eyes?

Imagine, if you will, a telescope in this room, poised right in front of my window. The shadows shift over it from time to time as it collects dust and stares out at the moon orbiting around me and my toe shadows, with its 96 bags of piss and shit and vomit.

Since today is trash day, this morning I walked the garbage to the end of the driveway and the steam from my coffee rose and tangled with my breath and right there, suspended in the bitterness, was a delicate miniature milky way, and the familiar way it smoldered for an instant before dissolving made me think that maybe you were somewhere in there, dozing between the molecules. Maybe, I have finally breathed you out. 

# DÍMELO

VIVIANA PRADO-NÚÑEZ

*Poetry Contest Winner*

“A language is enmeshed in a social and geographical matrix just as a rare species is enmeshed in an ecosystem.”

Nettle, D., & Romaine, S. (2000). Chapter 4 – The Ecology of Language. In *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages*, 78-98

Plane landing. I know this unrolling sprawl. Young woman in a plastic chair. Blue box at the edge of the ocean. Coca-Cola bottles and bamboo shoots. Panadería without a name. Gravel parking lots. Cigarette butts. Boys in bikes no shirts. Dogs and ribs. Horses tied to fences. Doorless tin can on the freeway. Quenepas unpeeled, orange withered in the sand. Billboards for boob jobs. Stones weathering into themselves. When dawn blooms the cock crows. My grandmother speaks to me in Spanish and my tongue is a tide unto itself (blackbird swallowing the sun). There is no knowing here. Plane door opens. At the edge of knowledge, one can sense this staticked wall of heat, this island at the end of a tunnel. Please tell me there is no ending here.

# STILL WATER

NIKA SABASTEANSKI

*I. 1994*

My mother was pregnant  
and huddled in a Russian rabbit  
hat, made of rabbits  
her grandfather hunted  
in the woods near Corona Park.

Her grandmother gutted  
and hung them  
from the backyard clothesline  
between dried sparrows  
and pressed Eidelweiss.

The rabbits were fried  
with cream and porcini.  
Or so my mother told the people  
who thought fur hats  
without purpose were sinful.

She stood in the late  
February prevailing Westerlies  
on Jones Beach,  
her Beans boots washed frozen,  
from the still stirring Atlantic.

A snowy owl drafting east  
towards the wintered dunes,  
bowed its head and melded  
with the steel white sky.  
An omen, she would say,  
for an easy labor.

*II. 1997*

And then the horses came.  
A herd of Cremellos  
that marched themselves bareback,  
solemn manes uncombed  
with one in front, glancing side to side.

I stood at sill height  
by the peeling hurricane  
shutters, eyes bleary  
with the Brooklyn dawn,  
alone in the half-moon/half-sun lit room.

I peered at the herd,  
now charging towards the Harbor,  
stealing glances into windows,  
as they marched,  
unmoved by their infant watchers.

*III. 2002*

The last was the winter  
at Barcelona Neck,  
the cove at the forest's coast,  
that ushered out from the tree line  
like a bell's mouth, stained with lichen.

A portent for water,  
the neck existed like a come to life  
high school atlas,  
with technical cliffs,  
always yellow, always dull.

That winter brought the dolphins,  
wandered in from the Peconic River,  
brushed downstream  
by a well intentioned tide  
that got ahead of itself.

So the dolphins swam in circles,  
a frenzy they called it,  
until all the Peconic herring  
were frenzied too and then dead,  
and then the dolphins too.

Belly up in the river,  
with all the town watching,  
eating tuna on rye  
from the Springs General Store,  
and washing it down  
with warm iced tea.

# PANDORA'S BED

LUCY JAKUB



THEY DO NOT FEEL like bites. They feel like a swiftly spreading sensation which arrives all at once and then abates. The worst part is being roused in the wee hours; they only feed in the hours before dawn. They know when I am asleep and when I am awake: they listen to my breathing and my heart rate, and like clockwork during my REM phase they mobilize. The first time, I close my hand over the bite and drag. I leave a bright red smear along my inner arm, sourced from my eyebrow, my cheek, a spot just above my collar bone, the knuckle of my ring finger. The carcass is a dark gooey mash of limbs, but there is little ambiguity as to its genus, and I lie in bed for three hours staring tensely at the ceiling. I can't sleep. I itch. When I wake up again it's to the sound of Suite Mate making her Saturday morning coffee and brie on toast. I say, without opening my eyes, that I've killed a bug. Suite Mate is groggy and irritable and asks me to repeat myself.

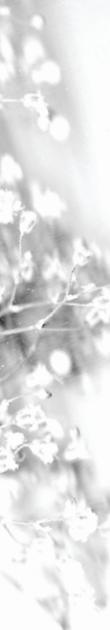
The stages of grief map fairly well onto the stages of infestation. Denial lasts for a glorious ten minutes. As she finishes her toast and I contemplate the ceiling, we pretend that nothing has happened. Before I call Facilities, before I tell the RA, I call my mother, who has logged her time in New York apartments. "Oh. Ah." The audible cringe. "Ahhh." and then "Just stay calm. The most important thing is not to panic. *You will get through this.*"

I empty my drawers. I unstick my map of the Arctic Ocean from the wall, and my print of *Krishna Flirting with the Gopis, to Rahda's Sorrow*. It feels as though more than my room is being dismantled. I take the entirety of my wardrobe to the basement to dry on hot. With some misgivings, I shove the vintage Flokati rug my mother gave me into the dryer and walk away. In shaking out the rug, I find proof: a body, flat and

dried out like a little brown seed. It is translucent, and the black mass in its abdomen is my partly digested hemoglobin. I find many flax seeds which have somehow migrated from Suite Mate's granola stash to my furniture, but they are faceless and false alarms. I seal the only body I find in a paper envelope left over from a gift: it says, in my sister's hand, "Happy B-Day Queen." I tack this proof to the refrigerator for the Bug Technician to find, an attractive man with a black widow embroidered onto his polo, so that he will be able to hire the exterminator.

The culprit, I am sure, is a shallow wooden shelving unit, its glossy black paint flaking at the edges. It is divided into seven parts like a bento box. I came upon it on the curb across the street from my dormitory, and the friend I was walking with helped me to carry it in. It fit perfectly in the space beside my bed, and I arranged it with my books and small trinkets. It pulled the room together. The morning after I kill the first bug, I empty the shelves and shine a flashlight through the gaps in the warping wood. I feel in its corners with a Metro card, as the Internet instructs. I do not find any bugs. I check the lint filter after each load of laundry, pulling apart the dust bunnies for bodies. Clean. The absence is disturbing. Bedbugs, as a rule, live collectively. Likely there is one cranny in my room which is lodging the whole brood. Is it the armchair? Is it, God forbid, my amplifier? If it is, they have crawled in too deep for me to follow.

Suite Mate, stuffing sheets into trash bags, wants someone to blame. It was Boy. He brought them from the frathouse. Who else has spent so much time on our soft furnishings? It would not be the first affliction Boy has carried into my bed. Chlamydia, chronic heartache, lesser illnesses. He thinks that I suffer mainly from Sadness, but it may be more accurate to say that what I suffer is Hope. Sometimes the cure is harder to eradicate than the disease. There is much ambiguity in our relationship, but I know that real love takes root slowly. In any case, codependency commonly precedes it, so we are on the right track. Boy takes offense at my insinuation. His sheets are clean. Sweat-stained and full of muffin crumbs, but he's the only bug in them. He offers them up to me, but I decline. The Internet says that it is important to continue to sleep in the bed. If the bed is left empty, the bugs will travel elsewhere for their blood meal. They may infest other beds in the house. Despite this, in the hour after sunset on the third day, I beg Suite Mate to let me sleep on her futon. She refuses, and seals the crack under her door with a piece of masking



tape. In the mirror the next morning, two vampiric bites glow on my neck. *Cimex lectularius* aims for the face and the thin skin on hands and wrists. Everyone reacts differently to the bites. Some people don't wake up at all; the bugs inject small doses of anesthetic saliva into the wounds. I wake up to a burning itch along my forearms. The bugs feed for five to ten minutes at a time, but I've only ever caught two in the act. My bites blossomed quickly and were barely detectable by morning. I never felt their small feet, even on the crest of my cheekbone. They look like ticks or fleas, but they move like ants.

I have a fear that the bugs will crawl between my legs. This is somewhat irrational, not just because they have a clear preference for the arms and face, but because bed bugs eschew vaginas as a rule. The scientific term for the way bedbugs fuck is "traumatic insemination." Both Suite Mate and Boy ask, "So what's the difference?" Male bed bugs have long since abandoned the vaginal tract of the females, which has atrophied with disuse, in favor of stabbing their hypodermic penises through the armored abdomen. The hole must have been too hard to find. Though the species has adapted to practice this style of mating exclusively, the evolutionary benefits are dubious: while recovering from their open wounds, females are susceptible to bacterial infection, and some succumb to their injuries. If she recovers, a female bed bug will lay three or four eggs a day for the rest of her life. As days pass and the exterminator does not come I do the multiplication.

On day five Suite Mate's face folds in on itself like she is about to cry. "I hate this," she says. I cannot summon sympathy for her. There are no bugs in her futon. Certain pangs of indignation leave me uneasy. The bugs are bringing out Suite Mate's inability to cope with stress, something which has strained our relationship in the past. She feels the ickiness of infestation in the abstract, and considers it profoundly unfair, but because her room is ostensibly bug-free she is untouched by the subtle madness that begins to creep in as the restless nights accumulate. I've been losing two hours of sleep a night. I tote the entirety of my library, in two trips, to a friend's kitchen two blocks away. The books come out of her microwave floppy and steaming gently like a warm tortilla. The only casualties are Tai Pei, whose sparkly cover ignites, and Shakespeare's sonnets, which were sitting on top.

*...Which but today by feeding is allayed,  
Tomorrow sharpened in his former might.*

During this month of Infestation I also, against my better judgement, let in Pestilence. Boy carries the Carman Plague. He knows, if he is sick, that I will care for him, because the real disease I've contracted from him is one of the heart. All else is merely symptomatic of this. I empathize too easily with Boy and am undeterred by signs of contagion, all of which manifest more explosively in his body which is much bigger than mine. Larger lungs, deeper throat. I take his slimy face in my hands and resign myself to catching what he has. The Carman Plague, named for the freshman party dorm, is a seasonal malady: during the first three weeks of school, first years from all over the country and the world descend on a new city for the first time and attend parties in frats and upperclassman dormitories in droves. They drink, have a lot of sex, and vomit on each other. Navigating this grand fluid exchange is an occupational hazard for Boy, who lives in a popular frathouse. The Plague lasts for a week, beginning with a sore throat and fatigue, followed by mucus and a hacking cough, followed by a brief lull after which the nose begins to run. I know exactly how he got it and what her name is. Go through two rolls of toilet paper. Boy never learned how to blow his nose properly. I remember learning from my mother when I was six: don't mash the tissue into your nostrils. Leave yourself room to breathe.

Suite Mate and I avoid the suite, spending long hours in the library. The suite does not only contain *Cimex lectularius* but a variety of fauna: ladybugs march across the ceiling and die in the sills; fat black wasps, from the park across the street, hazard into our open windows on nice days and beat around the venetian blinds; mosquitos whine in our ears at night. Our third suite mate is the roach, who is as long as my thumb. We meet infrequently, but memorably. As I wash dishes there is a plasticky plop onto the counter by my elbow: the cockroach, wriggling, regains its balance as I emit a scream and aim for it with a wet bowl. I miss. It flees alarmingly fast.

The squirrels in the park are no longer cute to me. After searching in vain for vermin smaller than my pinky nail I am horrified by their grotesque size, and it strikes me that the way their bodies race fluidly around tree trunks is not mammalian but serpentine. So, too, with the

pigeons and the rats, whom I used to feel a companionship with, all of us surviving in the hard city. Now, Nature and I are at war. We receive an email alert from Public Safety, reporting a raccoon sighting on our street. After a girl I know is bitten on the leg, I stop going to the park.

The bed's duplicity as a site of both shelter and exposure is brought to the fore. It is still the bed my body loves. The sheets are wearing thin on their third year of use, their black and white patterning obscuring stains from my blood and sweat and dirt. I refuse to stop wrapping myself in my fringed woolen blanket. During the week in which we wait for the exterminator and all our belongings are in bags, I sleep on the blue plastic bug-impermeable material of my school-issue mattress, wrapped like a mummy in my pajamas and blanket. After the first night like this I make sure to leave an arm exposed: an offering, that they might spare my face. The bugs, like vampires, hate the light and they hate fresh air, so I start taking more frequent naps during the day to make up for lost sleep. Suite Mate is concerned that I spend all my time sleeping. I remind her that I am recovering from the Plague.

To break experience down into stages assumes an inevitable development, that things will not remain as they are but will get gradually better or worse over time. The clothes will not remain forever in plastic. A process has been set in motion. Conclusions will be reached. Something will give. The exterminator will come. I call Facilities again.

Boy still comes over to do homework. He steps over the garbage bags and throws his coat and backpack recklessly onto my bare mattress. Boy is an idiot. I tell him that if the frat catches bugs he has only himself to blame. My mother warned me that if I told people about the infestation I would risk becoming a pariah, but Boy is worryingly nonchalant about the dangers of exposure. As nonchalant as I was when the condom broke, as nonchalant as I was when we sat in the same chair to watch the Presidential Debate and he wiped his nose in my hair. Our friendship, unburdened by more complicated labels, is characterized by reckless behavior and the failure to learn from mistakes. During sex, instead of sweet nothings, he whispers: "What are we doing?" and "This is a bad idea." The only climax we are able to achieve is one of catharsis: we bathe each other in tears. There is no intimacy like contagion. There is no solidarity like the solidarity of suffering. There is a Southeast Asian moth that drinks tears from the eyes of its hosts.

I am afflicted by winged sins. Desire is a mosquito. Anger is a hornet. Fear is a roach. The invisible colonization, infiltrating seams and crevices and living under the very skin of our home, is a passive aggression, the source of which eludes me. The source of which does not really matter anymore, just as the contentions over salted and unsalted butter and using the dishes sponge on the stovetop do not matter but accumulate nonetheless into something you resolve to live through for a time.

I don't know why I was expecting a man in a hazmat suit. When the exterminator finally arrives, he is wearing a dirty trench coat and an Obey hat. He is a stubby black man with a mustache and a large backpack, from which he pulls a very low-tech can with a nozzle. I leave and he sprays pesticide on the bed frame and the culprit shelves, which dries for four hours. "That's it?" I ask skeptically as he shoulders his pack. "Yup," he says, and leaves. The Flokati comes out of its plastic, only a little felted around the edges. Pillows go back into pillow cases. I am extremely doubtful. I want to see bodies, but the suite looks as spotless as it has ever been.

Boy sleeps in the bed, in despair. Instead of drinking after his disciplinary hearing, he is drowning his sorrows in my freshly laundered sheets. His sneezes shake the frame. If he is suspended from school, a host of maladies I have learned to live with will be alleviated. Ambiguities will be abruptly resolved. Is this what I want? I listen for his breathing. In the next room, Suite Mate and her friend place bets as to whether or not we are having sex. I am not thinking of sex, I am thinking of breathing in and out through my nose. Being ill has always been a fundamentally lonely experience. I have never shared a sick bed before. Boy lies prostrate like a hot radiator, claiming most of the twin extra-long mattress. When he doesn't snore, I worry that he can't fall asleep. When he starts to snore, I am driven to distraction by the sound of his breath catching deep within his chest, like something is broken. In my delirium I lose my bearings. It seems to me as though the world is muffled by falling snow, though it is a September night and warm. Specifically it feels like the night before Christmas, when I was little and would wake up in the hours before dawn, which stretched endlessly into the near future, on the other side of which waited the patient morning, bright and full of treasure. I keep opening my mouth to describe this feeling, but, hindered by embarrassment or mucus, I close it.

I used to think that Hope, in the Pandora myth, escaped into the

world with the rest of the swarm. But that's not true by all accounts. Some write that Hope remains contained, broken-winged at the bottom of the barrel. Scholars even contend that in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Hope may have been an optimistic mistranslation of *elpis*, a Greek word that more accurately means "anticipation of misfortune." If that's what Hesiod meant, Pandora spared us dread when she shut the lid.

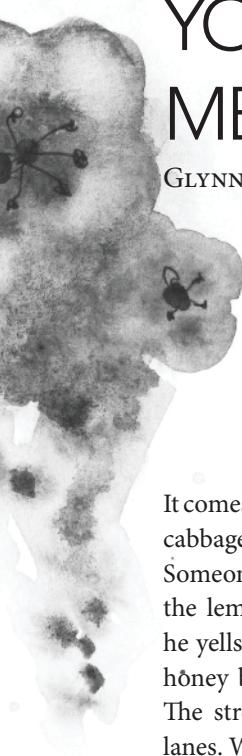
I wake up to a bite. 

# I CAN OFFER YOU ONLY MY FOLDED PALMS

AMBER OFFICER-NARVASA



I am curling over so maybe it's time to leave. To wander through the hallways that hold my crooked spine tight as they wrap me in bones of lemon and floorshine, remind me the right way to undress so that my body calls only the velvet spirits to gather around my navel. I am carrying candles made of honey and rosewood, holding offerings of lavender leaf between my lips, waiting to be groped by the dust motes with the anxious hands. My mother says walk good and good duppy will walk with you, and what if my knees to the floor are calling back the spirits of all the things that laughed as the master lay drowning in a pool of his own blood? Teach me the joy that will sustain us through the parched and drying lifetimes. I cannot always tell what a good spirit is, or how to leave, or when my bound wrists will help me remember a way across the sea. I am afraid I do not know desire, only the compendium of parchment they assembled with a hastily scrawled 'girl.' I do not know how to hold you but I try anyway, laying down a bouquet of jasmine, burning teak and oil to keep you warm through the dawn. I am walking with dried petals between my toes. Lining up shards of conch shells beneath my skin. I am here for the calling. I am yours for the holding. I am only trying to find a way across the sand.



# YOU HAVE ONE NEW MESSAGE

GLYNNIS LOUISE MCGAVIN ELDRIDGE

It comes in different ways. Sometimes it looks like a plate of mayonnaised cabbage or a trip to somewhere or staying in bed for a whole week. Someone comes in and says hey time's up and it hurts like pressing on the lemon in the butcher knife slice while sitting on the floor while he yells at you about it, or a customer so afraid of you they leave your honey booth because you don't look so good choking on their food. The street painters leave the whole neighborhood huffing over bike lanes. We planned a goodbye picture but left before getting to the top of plain water. In this city time moves easily over the body but teeth still shift on their own. But in the beginning it was different, like he walked without feet touching. Now he still has a body but it is not like when he had short term memory or lit and smoked cigars. For a really long time I tried not to think about you every day, it hurts me, I cannot read your writing anymore, and it hurts me. Today I think migraine or brain tumor and why can't I open my head to check? The only way to really know will make it worse. I check the mail. While they talk about surgery club, she says he has a cabbage heart. They ask me what I seek from time travel and it is more or less my email and seeing you.



UNTITLED  
JESSICA ROSE JACKSON



# MERE RANI

BINDU BANSINATH

*Fiction Contest Winner*

RIYA. I AM SO last-minute that it is not until three hours before your homecoming puja that I buy everything the priest is asking for: three mature coconuts, fleshy with white meat; two sixteen-count packages of sandalwood incense; one kilogram of clarified butter in a glass tub. We have a just-opened tub already at home, but I pay four dollars extra at the Patel Cash & Carry because the Brahmin priest refuses to handle used things, but also because this is how a mother loves you, enough to buy anything twice.

Your father is mumbling into his smartphone when I come home from the little Cash & Carry on Route 27. He cranes his neck over the half-wall to me in the kitchen and switches on the television to the local ABC news channel. Springtime, the anchor in a too-tight dress announces, *allergy season*.

“Need help?” Your father asks me as I unwrap grocery bags. Under the duress of mild sciatica, he winces up to standing, wearing the crimson Rutgers sweatpants you bought him when you were a freshman, and he was still disappointed over one-two-three Ivy rejections. How would you get into top medical schools? That was his leaden insistence. I wanted to be disappointed, too, but I have never studied beyond precollege in Chikmagalur, and so it was pride that unfolded inside me. A pride I framed as disapproval, though to you my disapproval is no heavier than a feather. Whenever you returned to school for the semester, I would scold you for not making your home-bed, and you and your father would laugh at my triviality. The laughter was pillow fluff exploding in midair. *Mere rani*, he praised you, failures like the Ivy schools momentarily forgotten, *my princess*.

“Did you hear me, Kareena? Do you need help?”

He watches me trash the plastic bags. The anchor in the too-tight dress fills the background with reports of cow tipping in North Jersey.

“Turn the news off.”

Your father clicks his tongue two times and squats back down into the sofa. He turns the volume up higher, slumps his back into an arch. Your father is tall like you, built from unnecessary inches, from limbs skinnied to cylinders of hairy dough. Sometimes over tea and digestives, Usha from next door interrogates me of his thinness: am I feeding him regularly? I tell her that he is an old-old man, that old-old men are their own to feed, and she goes quiet in those moments, preoccupying herself by brushing stray hairs from her forehead, smudging her vermillion from a circle to a streak.

Usha from next door is one of the modest number of guests we are expecting for tonight’s service. The Gohels from up in Sayreville have all RSVPed, as have Sarah’s parents, Mr. & Mrs. Hartel. The Shettys are away on vacation in Bangalore. In truth, I am fine with everyone but Usha, who used to slip you Mango Mood candies and those times you were a child left in her care. The tiffin boxes of vegetables I steamed she meticulously tossed aside, returning you to me with macaroni cheese amassed in the collar of your frock. Thoughtless woman. All your life I have trained you how not to become fat.

These red granite floors are ice against the parts of my feet not yet covered by callous. I warm one foot with the certain warmth of the other as I walk to the prayer cabinet, open its circular knobs and arrange my new purchases in a crooked row. All the tiny silver deities are temporarily shoved aside. For tonight, the pride-of-place is no longer a feminine Shiva in nataraja, but a portrait of you from the chest-up. It is a selfie that we have blown up at CVS, of you and I before you boarded that spring break flight to Florida. An unflattering photo, your father complains, and yet it is the most recent one I have. The photo technician cropped my face out. Still a chunk of my shoulder remains, nearly hidden by your red-highlighted hair. Like all your other ugly choices, I had told you: those highlights are an ugly choice.

The collar of your sheer teal oxford top is just showing. It is one of

many the authorities found in the dumpster along a Panama City beach, along with your wallet and cellphone. The phone is returned to me waterlogged. Otherwise I had your passcode. I might have unlocked it and seen inside: who were the boys you were talking to? Those who look for you hypothesize all the things you might have been doing, and they are all dirty things. Driven off with local men to do that loose-woman thing you do with a loose-woman's ease. Walked into the ocean naked, flush under the influence of LSD.

After everything I have taught you, this is the disgrace of how you go. At night the thought of your scandal asphyxiates me. It weighs nothing on you, I am certain. Shameless girl. Do you not remember the time in the seventh standard that you made me watch *The Notebook* with you, and I screamed *fast-forward!* all through the sex scenes? You whined. I struck the back of your neck with a rolling pin.

Did you ever understand the things I couldn't tell you?

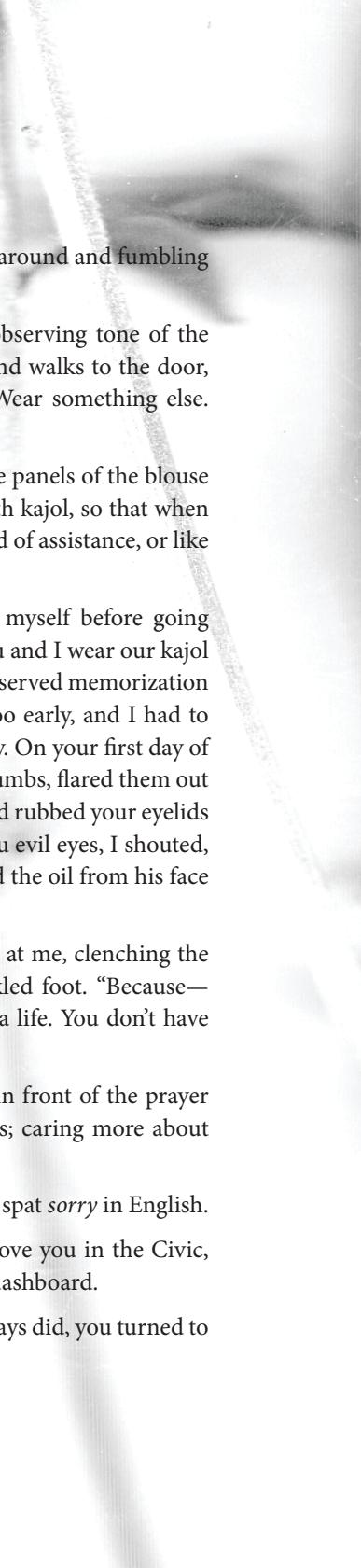
\*\*\*

One hour before the guests arrive, after everything is arranged for the priest's rituals, your father and I head to the master bedroom to get ready. We undress together in front of the headboard mirror. After you disappeared, your father would often wear the Rutgers sweatpants with a shirt and tie and head off to work at Bristol-Myers Squibb. Colleagues pitied him for the mismatch. Sometimes I would not put on pants at all. For me, it was of no consequence. I am not ashamed to say I had nowhere to go. Never mind me. The mirror ensures we do not make mistakes like these tonight.

It takes me seven wraps to secure my saree around my waist. How proud you would be—so many times you forced me into your stinking Zumba class, where they promised that inch by inch, the fat on my abdomen would melt away.

I stuff the front of the saree into place. All of my abdomen is this flatness. Every other day since your disappearance, I have fasted in sacrifice for your return. It is a good thing about a grieving body, how accurately it measures loss. We are, so far, seventeen kilograms divided.

I watch your father tuck a thick paunch of belly into a muslin shirt and khakis. The Rutgers sweatpants crumble onto the floor as I struggle



to clamp the hooks on my blouse.

“Could you fasten this, please?”

Your father adjusts his cuffs before turning me around and fumbling with the hooks.

“You don’t fit this, Kareena,” he says, in the observing tone of the physician. He tosses the sweatpants onto the bed and walks to the door, tapping its panels before closing it behind him “Wear something else. That’s gotten loose.”

With the mirror as a reference, I clothespin the panels of the blouse shut on my own. I lean in closer to rim my eyes with kajol, so that when our guests arrive I will not look like a woman in need of assistance, or like a woman wearing a clothespin.

The doorbell chimes. I take one last look at myself before going downstairs. Although you would never admit it, you and I wear our kajol the same way. In your makeup hand was the well-observed memorization of my makeup hand, though you began makeup too early, and I had to advise you whenever it became too much. Too slutty. On your first day of high school you drew the lines thicker than your thumbs, flared them out like a cat. I held your face against the kitchen wall and rubbed your eyelids bare with a wet handkerchief. Bad boys will give you evil eyes, I shouted, turning to your father for an affirmation. He rubbed the oil from his face with one hand.

“You never let me do *anything!*” You screamed at me, clenching the panels of your tartan skirt, stomping a black-buckled foot. “Because—because you’re *jealous*. You don’t want me to have a life. You don’t have one of your own.”

I pinched both your ears and bent you down in front of the prayer cabinet. Demanded you ask Ganesh for forgiveness; caring more about your karma than my own ego.

You rolled your eyes at his silver elephant belly, spat *sorry* in English.

That tantrum made you late to school, so I drove you in the Civic, listened to your buckled foot kicking dust into the dashboard.

When you grew bored of your anger, as you always did, you turned to

ask me, swelling around your eyes where the slutty had been: “Why don’t you and dad kiss like Sarah’s parents do? Why don’t you sleep in the same room? Or say I love you?”

“Shut up.”

“You wouldn’t be like this if you could do *any* of those things,” you went on, smoothing your starched white Oxford. You were the beginning of someone brassy, and in truth I did not dislike it. “Those normal things.”

Downstairs, your father hastens for me to meet the priest he has let inside, our first arrival of the evening.

“Namaaste,” I touch his feet and rise up again, past the white toga around his legs and the spherical stomach, to the face with a line of mustache, streaks of white talcum lining the forehead like children’s hopscotch.

“Namaaste,” he declares. “You’re the mother. Tike, tike. Okay.”

I bring him into the kitchen, where he pulls a marigold garland out of his fanny pack and drapes it around your portrait. He butters the wicks of twelve swooping diyas with clarified butter and lights a match. After all candles catch fire, he arranges them one-by-one into a glowing oval. Only along its outline does the chill of the granite floor subside.

I hear the doorbell ring over and over, first with Usha in her lime-green saree and your father escorting her in, next the Gohels in modest salwar kameezes, and finally the Hartels in pastel-church wear.

Upon seeing me, Mrs. Hartel squeezes my hand in both of hers, her silver wedding band digging into me, my bangles into her.

“We’re so sorry, Kareena.”

Behind her, Mr. Hartel squeezes his wife’s shoulder, so that we are in a chain of touching.

The service begins in Sanskrit, a language you were never interested in learning. Everyone- even the Hartels, who follow along respectfully-sits cross-legged, their heads dipped into swoops of reverence. Once I am sure all eyes are closed, I open mine. I watch the room of people praying for you. Have you heard that the Gohels’ oldest son is engaged? Or that the younger, little Arvind Gohel—have you heard that he’s gotten

into Harvard law, meek mother's boy that he is? Sarah Hartel is not in attendance, I learn, because she's doing a Fulbright in the Dominican Republic, working in prenatal health. She is to be something big.

Who are you these days? This is what it says in every newspaper squarespace we buy: *Riya Chopra, aged 22, weight 124 lbs, 5'8, HAIR black EYES brwn. Last seen at Panama City Everstay Resort. Was wearing sheer teal oxford, neon bikini, conservative slacks.* The words are accompanied by a black-and-white image of you, which is for the better. While pregnant with you I drank saffron-infused milk to ensure your fairness, but you are nothing like the blonde American girls on the big magazines. We cannot expect to make noise like that.

Mid-service, the priest takes me by the wrist, slips my hand under your father's hand. As parents, he instructs, it is time we must say a prayer together.

"It's essential," the priest nods. "Now. First say her name."

"Mere rani," your father declares. But I say Riya, because that is who you really are, not a rani at all, and that is the first thing he misunderstands about raising daughters. You do not let your daughter backtalk her mother, especially when her mother is wrong. You do not let your daughter leave her bed unmade; she will learn to sleep inside creased sheets. You do not let her take meals off the couch, or sit quiet when she paints a loose woman's face over her the one you gave her. You do not send your daughter to Panama City for college break when she is supposed to be getting her degree. You call your daughter by her name, not princess, because that will lead her to believe herself bigger than she is, and tell me, how will she reconcile this belief when other people look at her and see not a princess, but a blurring inkblot on a newspaper page? You must set her up for disappointments heavy as those.

In truth, I do not want to touch your father's hand, have not touched him in the two years you are gone, but I listen to the priest anyways. When you become a mother you too will understand. After the feeling of failure is a feeling of do-anything.

Together we pour the water of a cracked coconut over the heads of little silver deities. Up close, you can see their faces are vanished from years of Sunday scrubbing.

Beside us, Usha shifts the chiffon of her lime saree and clicks her tongue. She leans over and whispers to Mrs. Hartel, “This is karmic, it must be.”

I look to Mrs. Hartel, who is mouthing a confused oh, whose husband puts one arm around her lavender shoulders and steers them away from Usha. I would never tell you this in person, Riya, but those normal things—the love you wanted love to look like—there are moments I believe you weren’t wrong.

I think of what I did in some past life, as in when I washed your whole small body in the sink, scrubbing circles along your soft-skinned arms, teaching you how to clean, how to hide your privates. We sang a song that was foreign to you, age-old to me. *Shame, shame, puppyshame, all the boys know your name.* I threw your dirty clothes into the bin and clothed you again, and your father slung you upon his shoulders, more square then than they are today.

And in another past life, those Sundays when you used to help me scrub soot from the silver Shiva, and how with your toes tip-toeing on my toes, you would take his body into your own hands, soaping him until he was submerged in bubbles. A laughter sounding like a better version of my own. There has been love that looked like that.

And yet, mere rani. Shameless girl. LSD. Boys pulling you apart like bread: Wherever you are, do you believe in tiny faceless gods?

Because these days, I do not. That is how a mother loves you, enough to disbelieve it all. 



This publication was produced using Adobe® InDesign® page layout software and Photoshop® image-editing software.

The typefaces used are:

Minion Pro, an old-style serif font:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890  
?!@#\$%

Minion Pro Regular

*Minion Pro Italic*

**Minion Pro Bold**

& Avenir LT Std, a modern sans serif font:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
1234567890  
?!@#\$%

Avenir LT Std 35 Light

Avenir LT Std 45 Book

Avenir LT Stf 55 Roman

Production Notes:

Total Printing Solutions

1325 E Douglas

Wichita, KS. 67211

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To our guest judges: **Maggie Nelson**, **Morgan Parker**, and **Lauren Groff**, thank you for your time and discerning taste. To **Joe Fasano** and **Heidi Julavits**, thank you for your invaluable advice, guidance, and mentorship. To **Dorla McIntosh**, thank you for knowing exactly what we needed before we knew it ourselves. To **Columbia's Creative Writing Department**, thank you for providing *Quarto* with the space, resources, and opportunity to showcase the work of Columbia's undergraduates. To **our writers and readers**, thank you for building this magazine. We couldn't have done any of this without you.