



The Preface

A Magazine of Art and Literature

Spring 2022

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Dear Readers,

We are excited to have a print issue of The Preface after nearly three turbulent years of the Coronavirus. The previous editor, Anya Schwartz, was disappointed our magazine couldn't share the incredible voices of Goucher creatives during the spring of 2020. To keep The Preface alive without being on campus we created an online blog. The Preface's "Quarantine Blog" served as a new platform to share student work not only with the Goucher community but with the public as well. Our quarantine issue was live for the 2020-2021 Academic Year. We want to thank all the students that submitted knowing their work would only exist in an online space. At the start of this academic year, we wanted to share their voices in a physical book The Preface's 4word Zine. This is why the first section of this year's issue is composed of a reprint of the Quarantine Blog.

Entering the fall of 2021, the future of The Preface publication was on the forefront of our minds. We looked to The Preface's past for inspiration and discovered the 4word. The 4word, A DIY Literary Zine, contained less formal student works like doodles, sketches, and short form writing. Our vision of the fall's 4word differed from previous editions, we wanted to combine the zine aesthetic with more formal content to create an immediate printing. This printing, we hoped, would remind students that the magazine exists outside of a virtual space. Much like what past editors have said, when we tell our peers that we are the editors of The Preface they ask us, "What is that?" Distributing the zine during the Involvement Fair was our way to bring the magazine to the forefront of Goucher's collective mind.

This year was not without its own challenges. As graduating seniors who weren't able to observe the inner workings of The Preface, we essentially started from scratch. We could not have gone through this year without the help of our faculty advisor Edgar Kunz. He provided the foundations for us to develop our vision for the year, while grounding our array of ideas and encouraging us to look at the attainable. We would also like to thank the professors who promoted the magazine to their students which provided us with plenty of submis-

sions. The Preface would not exist in our hands without the assistance of Ayumi Yasuda in The Office of Communications. Her patience in guiding us through the administrative preparations to create a printed issue and her support in the printing process is much appreciated.

To the students that submitted, even those who weren't published, we know how hard it is to send your work to others for judgment and approval. We thank and applaud you for the courage and confidence it took for you to hit send. Without your submissions, The Preface would be stuck between a concept and realization.

As graduating seniors, we are sad to leave Goucher but we are reassured that The Preface will continue to be a Goucher tradition because of the creative community's involvement throughout the past three years.

Love,

The Editors,

Grace Fischbach & Matthew Savin

The Quarantine Blog

In the Spring Semester of 2020, Goucher students were sent home for what was expected to be a two week break. Instead, we found ourselves limiting contact and staying home for an indefinite period of time. SARs Co-V-2, the Coronavirus, had disrupted our way of life and we continued the semester from home. Social distancing isolated the Goucher community from our routine lives on campus.

In the Fall Semester of 2020, faced with another semester of virtual learning The Preface launched our Quarantine Blog in hopes of connecting our community once again. We accepted any form of creative expression made during the early and continuing stages of the outbreak and published it on our Goucher website.

The following works were featured on the Quarantine Blog in lieu of a traditional print issue, here they are collected in print for the first time and in order of publication. We hope that these works stand as a testament to the Goucher community and our faith in the arts during a pandemic that tested our ability to stand together.

Guide

Sonia Sukumar

Hindus believe that the future is predetermined and we are guided by the stars

i've done three tarot card readings and the advice is always unaffordable / i figured if flowers love my mom as much as she loves them then they might be able to heal me / so i tell myself that one day i'll drive three hours to Duluth and stop at a sunflower field halfway there / as a challenge i won't take pictures.

i know fate exists, because my mom was telling me about her best friend from before i was born and how she wishes they kept in touch / i realized that she is the same woman who talked to me every day at our Kathak classes last summer and who added me to a dance group chat / as of last week, they're friends again so i know the stars are on our side / since the universe is in charge, we don't take credit for our good deeds and we don't take the blame for our bad / there is comfort in this.

now when i drive, i notice patches of purple, white, and yellow weeds on the sides of roads / if my heartrate starts increasing, i focus on the colors / weeds are pretty too and each time, i tell myself i'll stop and take pictures of them / or i'll lay all the way back so they surround my face in a selfie / if i use HUJI, I can remember how powerful the sun is, as i watch the app pick up streaks of light and scatter them across the flowers.

Stolen Star

Sarah Dreyfus

Stolen Star- Hijaltalin
amidst temporary rifts
for e.h.

when I needed a hand you extended
it and it felt like finally I could imagine
living for some(one)

time/these floaties, i thought, kept me buoyant, “I was just making
do,” looking down
shamefully at the sand on my toes, you had pulled me
out of the navy blue lake.

it was friendship it was/finally female
friendship, we gave each other tampons when we forgot them in pub-
lic
restrooms/phone calls late at night about spiraling/pain

from our stomach cramps, swirling/the nonsense
our heads seamlessly turns into common
sense you were there at 3am/we went back to Crystal Lake and swam
together, shaking

the water off our heads at the Bechdel Test
because, “How can women survive without bashing men once in a
while?” floating
on our backs looking at some stars, we wished
we could see more of them, we kick

the base of some fences on Tappan St. and stick some dandelions between
the chain links, “If we love/d a guy once/realize
we actually love someone else, whatever it is, just don’t love him anymore, if he doesn’t love

us back, we deserve that support,
if anyone doesn’t love someone anymore,
I’d hope they could talk to their friends about it” you’re holo(-)

graphic through my phone/but you(r) voice on my desk, spreading
next to my photos taken in Glasgow, the empty wine
bottle with dried chrysanthemums poking out the top, encouraging us
both

to sleep tight and thank you so much, many thank you’s, especially
for “the Icelandic indie-rock group suggestion, what’re they called
again?” I asked. so many
times/my friend (finally)/gratifying the gravity of our intergalactic
bond one/that still ties

into itself like the candy-stripe friendship/
bracelets across oceans when I studied abroad one
that can when you broke your phone, find/our way to pizza

stops, stoop sits at 12am, joking we sent Hedwig with a letter, somehow
we met
on time at the tex-mex stop for dinner, 630pm sharp. “We’re better
than technology”
you stated, put your foot on the curbside

of Route 9 by the Mobil and your elbow on your knee like Plato

smirking, we realize
how “no one rings the doorbell anymore!”/it’s been
two days since you blocked me and I remember one time last

summer thinking if it was meant
to be that way, could there be a time in our lives where we wouldn’t
be friends? when I thought that by the kitchen sink,

my chest pounded itself, snap-like/glass shat-
tering/(ringing) the hardwood floor
sends heat through

my body, my hands
clammy so I put the sponge down and I knew that would
never happen so I took a walk to your house and we walked somewhere

together/and I was shown again what friends are for,
I didn’t think about this(.) blank space they don’t teach about in chil-
dren’s hollywood movies.

Prioritizing mental health is part of being a (person)/(friend)-

I remember our sneakered feet tapping the pavement
down Harvard St/because it was just a few days ago, and I pointed
out how our legs walk in time/we started seeing ourselves like two

of your brightest blue and green Techno Glow-in-the-dark acrylic
smears

on your emptiest canvas, both our face masks multicolored, “nice
outfit!”,

we say at the same time, we wore all black that day/we search for cof-
fee together,

end up at Starbucks and we shrug/challenging ourselves to stop
rolling cigarettes, your applause when it had been four days for me/my

head on your shoulder later

in the backyard you're playing your nintendo switch and apologizing
about it how now it might seem
like you're not listening "we're just hanging out," i begin to snore,
"no need to be sorry."



Changing Times

Oscar Hernandez-Genovez

Calle da la Argentina

Frances Harvey

Calle de la Argentina, España
whether it was
cheaper or had a cherished
fifth bedroom the family
preferred the opposite side
of the street fifteen meters
facing diverging concrete
four stains of traffic
separating them from
petroleum dust they packed
their nails and shoes in zip
lock bags made their escape
in less than five hours less
than the time it took for me
to explore the shelled veins
of this city the first thing I
thought was how am I
supposed to say goodbye
I can't even say goodbye
in my native language
what if instead I just asked
how they got the movers so
riled up so frantic to be
able to move ancient wood
and spit up plastic across
the asphalt maybe in this
epoch they can light their
eyes with some kind of
molecular blaze maybe

this is what gets them
going maybe this is what
keeps them from fleeing

Noah's Ark, and Other Forms of Protection

Matthew Savin

AT THE AGE OF 20, ALEX WAS STILL A NAIVE YOUNG LAD. Having been the only out gay man at his high school, he was new to the dating scene when he arrived at college. His experiences in romance and relationships had been a roller coaster due to the lack of guidance and experience. Now, he was reduced to waiting for a call or text from last night's hookup while lying in his dorm in the hellhole known as a liberal arts college campus.

He loved the small class sizes and the beautiful wooded scenery of up-state New York, but goddamn the isolated location and small student body meant that the dating pool was very limited. Even more so if you were a guy who craved other guys. The harsh winters meant that it was almost a necessity to have another warm body in bed. Except there was more to romance than necessity, the rare treat of another man's touch felt like a divine intervention from the perils of hellish loneliness, and Alex didn't want it to be rare anymore.

All of Alex's friends were either in relationships, or were at least getting the pleasure of waking up in the arms of another on a sunny Sunday morning. Alex woke up to tinder notifications from men who were much less attractive than his starved for male attention mind thought so the night before. After being able to finally meet the (relatively) hottest senior on campus he relished in his good luck on finding a man who was moderately attractive, had an ok personality, and best of all, was conveniently located. In summary, Daniel Fischer was the (relative) perfect package.

His night with Daniel was hotter than hell. The arrival of the first kiss was nothing short of immaculate, and for the first time in awhile, Alex excommunicated every self hating thought from his mind and focused on the moment. Daniel's body was warm and inviting,

and his dorm was perfumed with scents like cinnamon and jasmine, whose earthy aromas lulled Alex into comfort. His caress seemed to create light that spread through every nerve ending. The weight of another body flowed over him like holy water, and Alex surrendered into the temptation that enveloped him. He gave into everything immediately, and let his body accept that of another. For the time that it lasted, Alex felt whole and didn't give a damn about any consequences.

However, after three days of non-stop texts, calls, and an intense night of passion; Alex was now facing the dreaded day after. By 3:00 PM Daniel still hadn't responded, which now resulted in Alex lying in bed waiting for his phone to buzz once more. Though his physical form remained still, Alex felt his soul begin to enter a downward spiral. He wanted this one to be the love that lasted, but from his current perspective, it looked like it was not meant to be. No matter how tired of the tinder cycle he was, Alex was just going to have to realize that he was going to be lonely for a little while. For now, he waited in silence under the seductive and watchful eye of French pop sensation Dalida, who stared down at him from a poster next to his bed. He looked to the wall opposite of him, where he hoped a poster of Jean Seberg pouting sassily in the film "Breathless" would be able to inspire him to gain some confidence. All of his blinds were closed, and the sunlight that was able to make its way in was dim and muted by clouds up above. He looked at his poster of Lupe Vélez. In the movies she always got the guy, she was desirable and was famous for her love life. He wanted what she had. However, instead of actually doing anything about it, he returned to wallowing. The desire for anyone, just any damned person to appear was so overwhelming that he felt a tugging sensation in his chest that wanted to drag him to the closest possible man.

His non-prayers were somewhat answered just a few minutes later when thunder and lightning pulsed and roared outside and a man somehow materialized in his room.

"Do not be afraid!" He commanded. He was older, but certainly not unattractive. He was the type of man who Alex would see in some

clickbait listicle titled something like “16 Silver Foxes You Need to Follow on Instagram.” Alex would immediately click on that article and let his idle hands become the devil’s plaything.

“Alexander, arise and listen to me!” The man said in a deep booming voice which again, could not be considered unattractive.

“What the fuck? Who are you? Alex said.

“That is not important now my son, There is something I must tell you.”

“I’m calling the police,” Alex said, picking up his phone.

“Stop!” Said the man in a higher pitched voice that made Alex pause. “Can you listen to me for like, one damn minute?”

Though this new voice was definitely not attractive, the abrupt change was effective enough to make Alex listen to him. He sat back down on his bed. “Ok fine, I’m listening.”

“Alexander-”

“Yeah it’s Alex, let’s ex out that Xander part.”

“Ok, Alex, I know this is all going to sound quite fantastical, but I am Saint Fiacre, I am here for you in your time of need. I am a holy man, a healer, a man in tune with herbs, plants, and the workers of the world.”

Alex stared at Jean Seberg, motionless behind the weirdo, and tried to formulate an attack plan. He glanced towards the scissors on his desk. The man was old, he could probably be taken down easily. However the scissors slid off of the desk on their own. He looked towards his book collection to see if he had any potential projectiles. He had large, thick collections of both Anne Sexton and Virginia Woolf, and an Edie Sedgwick biography. All were too far away, he was fucked.

“I’m dreaming, this is all a dream.” Alex said.

“Let’s test that out.” Said Fiacre. He reached out and pinched Alex’s arm. Alex felt the pressure and stinging sensations radiate throughout his body. “Hm, no. Not dreaming. Let’s try something different.” He grabbed Alex by the arm again. Alex’s body went limp and his vision blacked out only to be replaced with a fiery red. All he could see was a deep scarlet as a droning noise began to rise out of the

background. Then he felt heat, nothing but heat. White hot fire that pierced every pore on his body and wrapped itself around his organs and burnt them. The noise became much more distinct as he began to make out that it was just a choir of people suffering. The screams were unrelenting as unidentified voices wailed, cried, and begged for mercy. However, the worst was the loneliness, the sense of isolation that he felt roam around his body. If he reached out he wouldn't even feel the movement of air as all molecules had left him. The smell of sulfur started to invade his nostrils. Just as he was unable to take it, the vision stopped.

"Believe me now?"

Alex was in shock, but relieved the experience was over "You present compelling evidence." he said.

"May I take a seat Alex,?" Fiacre said motioning towards the chair at the desk across from Alex's bed.

"Yeah, sure."

Fiacre sat down, and Alex could now see the warmth in his eyes. Outside, a gentle rain that sounded like the delicate footsteps of a toddler began. The man, who Alex was starting to come around to believing he was a saint, twiddled his thumbs like he was waiting for Alex to make the first move.

"Do I need to re-explain what my deal is, or..." Fiacre said.

"No I remember you're all about things like plants and stuff. Wait, ok so if this is about those succulents and the orchid that I accidentally killed in here, I swear I did my best to take care of them and that I'm so much better with plants at home."

"Don't worry, for it is not about that." Said Fiacre, smiling.

"Right you're all about herbs too. Ok then I'm really sorry about the time I sold oregano to those middle-"

"-Ah Ah Ah! I didn't know about that one, but..." He trailed off and took a small notebook out of his pocket and scribbled in it furiously. "That's noted."

"Goddamn it"

"What did you say?"

“Nothing.”

Fiacre rose out of his seat and paced the room for a moment before returning to it. “Alex,” he said. “My patronage covers many other subjects as well. Like cab drivers, gardeners, and tilemakers.” He stopped to think for a moment. “Well I’m not sure how to break this, but I’m also in charge of certain diseases.”

“Like what?” Alex said.

“So when two people love each other, they get together.”

“Nice,” Alex said.

“Yeah I hear it’s nice, don’t have much experience with it y’know,” said Fiacre. “The whole ‘devotion to God’ thing. Anyway when they love each other they get together, but one of them,” he paused again.

“Well, they could be ill, and that illness could be passed on.”

“And...?” Alex said.

Fiacre put his head in his hands and let out a sigh of frustration.

“Dude! I’m the patron saint of STI’s and you have one! Didn’t you read the email from the student health center?”

“Well it came when I was super busy so I just skimmed it.”

“Your school has a massive chlamydia outbreak. You have chlamydia. Alex.”

“No! No I refuse to believe that,” said Alex.

Fiacre got up and walked over to Alex’s bed and sat down next to him.

“Alex, you weren’t careful last night and this is a consequence of that.”

“I know,” Alex said. “But I was just so excited that someone wanted me I kinda, well, I kinda forgot.”

“Alex, you have to be more careful. I know a man is an exciting and rare opportunity for you, but that is no reason to not practice safe sex,” said Fiacre.

“Ok Fiacre, I’m gonna ignore that you said a man is a rare opportunity for me and focus on that fact that I have a fucking disease.” said Alex.

“Hey listen chlamydia is curable. It’s really all going to be fine, you just need to know how to take care of yourself. Watch this.” The man stood up again and raised his hands. At first nothing happened, but Alex’s dorm soon became a private concert venue.

A light from an unidentified source shone down on Fiacre and a droning noise began. The drone achieved more clarity though, and it was beautiful. Voices rising in perfect harmony that was angelic. Except they changed themselves into a familiar tune. Fiacre went towards Alex's dresser and produced a pamphlet from the top drawer, the concert ended abruptly.

"Were they singing-"

"-J'attendrai by Dalida? Yeah, we decided that it might be more comforting if the angels sang something you were familiar with." He gave the pamphlet to Alex who stared at it intently and then began to read aloud.

"So You've Been Diagnosed with Chlamydia." The black letters were inside a garish purple circle and were arranged in a way that suited a children's cartoon more than a sexual health pamphlet. In the corner was clip art of a frowning clown holding a solitary light green balloon.

"So that should contain all the info you need, all the steps you need to take and such. Be well Alex" said Fiacre. Alex could hear the familiar rumblings of godly trumpets and grabbed the saint's arm. "Wait, please don't go."

"Alex," Fiacre said. "You don't need me. I was only here to deliver the message."

"Please Fiacre," Alex said. "I'm scared. I don't know what to do."

Fiacre turned around. "It's all gonna be fine, you just have to be safer in the future, and maybe not have sex for a little bit while you get treatment."

"Oh," Alex said. "That part isn't difficult."

"Then it looks like my work here is done."

"Can't you just, like, fix it?" Alex said.

Fiacre stopped in front of Jean Seberg. His face took on the look of the friend who had a huge truck and knew they were gonna be asked to help someone move in. "I mean I could, but then if word got out then I'd have to cure everyone, and then the big man upstairs wouldn't be too happy and things just get complicated."

“Pretty please,” Alex said. “I’ll go to mass every Sunday.”

“Listen kid, no one’s believing that one, if I had a dollar for every time I heard it I wouldn’t have been venerated. Will you be more careful from now on?”

“Yes! Yes! Yes, I promise, just fix me please,” Alex was desperate. “I’m already lonely, and if people know I have chlamydia they won’t want to get with me. I just want to be clean.”

“This isn’t about getting ‘clean’,” said Fiacre. “This is about your health and the health of others, capisce?”

“Yes completely, now cure me.” Alex said.

Fiacre sighed, “Ok, now lie on your back.”

Alex did as he was told and Fiacre laid his hands just above his groin. He expected to feel some change, or at least some sensation but nothing came. Fiacre took on the look of intense concentration and Alex stared at his ceiling. A few minutes passed before Fiacre lifted his arms back up, and the procedure was over.

“Remember, just between us.” Fiacre said. “My work here is now really done. Peace be with you and all that jazz.” Fiacre went towards the door just a little too excitedly though, and Alex had one more question left in him.

“Before you go, can you tell me if Daniel is gonna call to-night.” Alex asked.

Upon hearing the question, Fiacre’s face went through an elaborate emotional journey before he settled on a smile tinged with frustration. “Pray to St. Upid for that one, Alex.” he said, strolling out the door.

All was silent in the little dorm room and Alex felt as empty as he had before the arrival of Fiacre. He checked his phone to see if Daniel had attempted to contact while Alex was having his vision, but there was no such luck. In his mind, Alex was facing two choices. One was to face the loneliness head on and become part of it, or face Daniel and deliver some well deserved divine retribution. He stood still as a statue, paralyzed by indecision and the realization that his only companion was the rain that continued outside.



Who Are You?

Em Knight

Woeful Washing: A Quick Step Laundry Guide for People with Depression

Jamie Damm

Average Completion Time: Between 2.15 hours and 23 days

1. Identify that you need to do laundry. It may take a while for you to have enough dirty clothes because you've been rotating between two pairs of sweatpants, an old marching band long sleeve, and a pullover sweater your ex gave you during your freshman year of college. It doesn't smell like them anymore, but you always wear it when you get into a mood like this. Stalk their mom's Instagram page, even though it's been two years, but don't text them. It's too late to give back the sweater anyway. Seriously, don't send the text. Once you have accumulated enough clothes to need to do your laundry, wait approximately five days. Remember you need to do laundry, but it's 1:37 A.M. and you've been watching TikToks for the past 51 minutes. Forget again. Wake up ten hours later with no memory of laundry. Repeat twice.
2. Once you remember you need to do laundry during the day, it's a Tuesday. Your busiest day of the week. There isn't enough time to do it in between your morning and afternoon Zoom classes, and you usually take a nap and walk the dog before your Tuesday night class. Your mom tells you "it's good to get out of the house and get some fresh air". You don't even want to get out of bed. You don't do the laundry.
3. It's the weekend now and it feels like you have all the time in the world. You resolve to start on your homework before Sunday night. It doesn't happen; you've never been good at change. Go to Target without a list and spend way too much money buying pint-

sized Ben & Jerry's, but damnit you deserve this. Sit in the parking lot and eat Half-Baked right out of the container. Afterwards, you feel disgusting. At dinner that night, you push around your food and your parents ask you to stop mumbling, please. You can't help your voice is monotone. Sometimes, even talking feels like an effort.

4. When your room smells vaguely musty and your mom threatens to take your car away unless you start the laundry immediately, you know it's time to start. You don't know why she adds the car part in, it's not like you can go anywhere in a pandemic. Read the tags/labels on your clothes. This is only necessary when you have new clothes. The t-shirts and shorts you've had since high school wash the same. You don't really care either way.
5. Sort your clothes, dividing by color and material. Whites, pastels, and light grays into one pile and deeper colors (black, red, navy, brown) into another. Or don't. In five minutes, they're all going to be wet regardless. Take your clothes and put them into your hamper. Grab your phone and headphones before heading downstairs. Shuffle your music library between old Eminem, Hozier, and half of Taylor Swift's album folklore.
6. As you load the clothes into the washer, turn the shirts if they're inside out. Same with the socks. Find the shorts you thought went missing; they were just buried in the bottom of a pile of clothes in the back corner of your room. Find the sweatpants with the plum juice stain you got two weeks ago and remember how recently, every time you pick up a utility knife at work you imagine it gliding across your skin. Reassure yourself you wouldn't actually do anything. Still, tell your best friend it scares you. It does. Then, tell your parents and how you really need to go back to therapy. Your mom makes a list of therapists and gives it to you after dinner. Call the first name the next morning. Pretend like this is different from the time in 6th grade when your English teacher saw your wrists and called your parents or the summer after 9th grade when you smashed a glass bottle against concrete and pressed the pieces

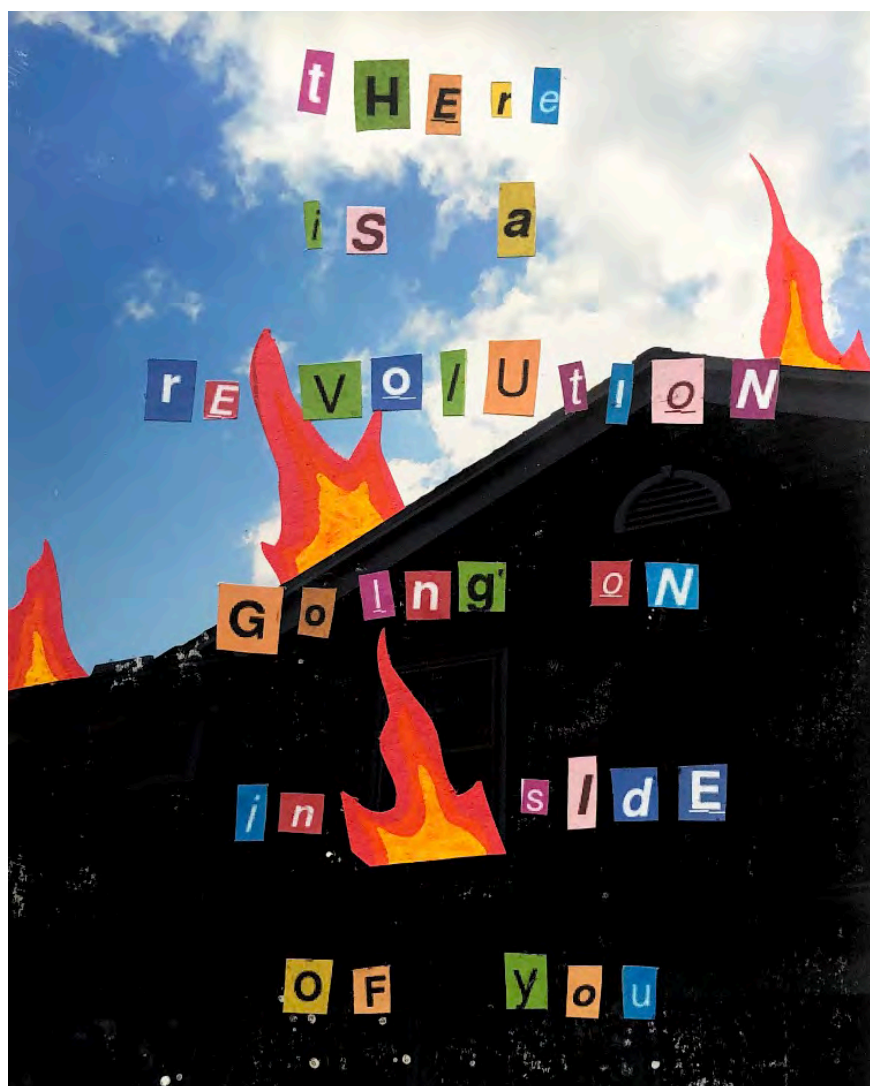
into your palms.

a. A note on stains: if your clothes have a stain on it, use the Tide Spot Stick before putting it in the wash. This will usually work. If the stain is blood (sometimes when you're anxious, you pick at the skin on your shoulders), soak in ice water before washing it. Try to ignore it when the blood doesn't come out of your shirts.

7. Press all the right buttons (extra large load, cold/cold wash) for the water to start flowing into the washer. Grab the bottle of detergent and pour one $\frac{2}{3}$ cupful onto your clothes, moving in a counterclockwise direction. The measurement does not have to be exact. Rinse the Arm and Hammer-blue stain from the cup under the cold water. Close the lid of the washer.
8. Do not set a timer; it will be done in about an hour. Remember how the washers at school would only take 30 minutes for washers and 30 minutes in the dryer. Try not to think about what you would be doing at school, if you were there. Fail.
9. If it's the morning, lay on your bed aimlessly, definitely procrastinating your homework. If it's the afternoon, do the same, but take a nap. Sleep for 15 minutes or 2 hours. It's your choice. You end up staying up too late anyway, you could use the sleep. If you do fall asleep, you will wake up by your mother pounding on your door. It's an afternoon alarm you know well. Tell her how depression makes you tired, she will not understand how you are half-joking and half-serious.
10. Slump downstairs, bleary-eyed. Pull your damp clothes from the washer, stuck together by mildew, and throw them into the dryer. Do not use a dryer sheet, even though your parents do, you do not see the point to them. Set the dryer for 50 minutes. They will be warm when they come out. When you pull on a newly dried shirt, the warmth of it makes you smile for the first time in days.
11. Either fold your clothes right away, rolling your shirts and placing them in pyramid stacks on your bed, or forget about them for about one or three hours. If this happens, the clothes probably

won't get folded and put away, but they'll stay in the hamper on the floor of your room, clean. Really put in effort to take your clothes out of the dryer right after it finishes. Fold all of your clothes, remind yourself to try to match up your socks. You've been meaning to get better at that. Put the clean clothes away into your dresser drawers. The dirty clothes on the floor still need to be washed; you'll need to do another load of laundry. This time start on it right away.

12. Congratulate yourself on doing laundry. Repeat as necessary.



WRWWR
Em Knight

10:17 AM

Avi Moss-Slavin

I've made a big mistake
I don't know what it is yet
I don't know if karma's even taken note
of the error in my ways
ten bejeweled hands entering my
data on a heavy keyboard
it takes the heel of a hand
to sink the 'Enter' key
but I'm getting caught up in the details
I need to wipe off the
sheen of sweat that has
collected in my right earlobe
it's hard to feel clean
in the heat of fear
as I ghost over the puzzle
pieces of the night before
I've always been told that
to bemoan what cannot be
changed is an ultimately fruitless
endeavor but that doesn't stop my
heavy breath or my contorting stomach
when do you stop fearing yourself?



A Series
Tsivi Laurence

To Medusa

Kate Libit

I wonder if you ever thought,
As you lay violated on Athena's doorstep,
That you would become an unwitting icon
Of unabashed female strength and power.

If you ever imagined a world
Where beings bearing a feminine identity
Could fight for her rights to beat back
Against the supposed hero defining her.

If you ever gloried in your ability
To turn lustful flesh into rock, defying him
Who sees you as a challenge to overpower
And nothing else, not heeding your hate.

I wonder if you ever mourned
Your snakeskin sisters who used goddess
Given gifts to take away Choice, that
Elusive thing, away from the less fortunate.

But I know one thing-
The patriarchal world is ever-present
But it is not so powerful that we cannot
Retake and reshape it into one where the
Law is set, not in their stone, but in ours.



Series II
Tsivi Laurence



Hypocrite

Sarah Dreyfus

our friends slap their bare feet in the dirt and pebble puddles down the
little alley off E.27 next to the garage with the vines like curtains

unveiling a pink cat's face spray painted this water falling keeps
us huddled like parkas in winter I told myself we wouldn't be

here again we're too close to this brick star shaped structure we made
for the fire our shoelaces practically poking the embers so i nod

toward the house we should head back now before going
back to the keg i told myself i'd just be tipsy this time and

now Lauryn Hill's coddling us you cradle my knuckles your thumb
plucks my spine for a second now that hand's in my back side right
pocket i move

some hair from my nose and you pull at my fingertips your thumb
circles lowly in my palm nudging your head to my ear you don't really
move

your body any which way do you i do my best to not sway back
and forth in complete and utter warmth my god i wish again and
again

i looked up from the fire into both your eyes; said something real sim-
ple like i'm so glad to just stand here with you

for a.t.



Kaleidoscope Tower

Tsivi Laurence



This Too Shall Pass

Tsivi Laurence

Wander

Jessica McKinney

To move without a fixed aim; follow
A winding course; meander; to roam
Without knowing who I am; to go astray;
Wondering who I am; knowing I am lost;
Unable to find the way; I am ruined;
Subject to failure; my own failure;
Will I succeed in telling the tale of my own losses?
My mind wanders to the sound of fear;
The sound of my tears hitting my mirror;
from Wendh- to wind or to weave; to turn my direction toward
Where I want to be; wanderlust; longing; impulsive;
I will find a way to return to where I belong.

A Photography Series

Jibril Howard







Sonnet 20

Sarah Dreyfus

When it's not chilly outside but the ringing in our heads continue like chatter

I look forward to walking with him. Our bodies temporarily train tracks; parallel.

I've seen us this way. But his pace quickens and I now feel the water moving in my bladder, and we are now further from each other. The man playing his accordion at the Ceiledh at orientation mentioned, it all flows "right, left, in out, only time will tell."

Then for lunch I heat mushrooms and carrots with onions, garlic, and salt.

Highland smells of smoke and dew and the sound of truck engines. Bike bells. are now drowned in oil and in my shaking hands and I think my ability to love is malt.

Amidst my bouncing and twirling by the stove top, I remind myself that no one can write my dreams- not even Ezra Pound.

Then he'll appear. Seeking more tobacco disguised in chit-chat. He'll pull 3 pounds from his pocket.

"I'm skinned" he coughs, "all out." He faces me and specifies this phrase with a sigh.

He proves his smile to me with a cider bottle. Together we giggle at

the foam on the carpet, the fact that we said fuck it. When he asked me my intentions I felt like we had, for the first time, just said “hi.”

But we are young and we are free and lively- like there is no end is what we are told.

When we depart for even two days I think of these greater implications and I begin, again, to feel the cold.

Ishtar Ishtar

Natalie Rudin

I arrive with my entourage of worms at the copy of Ishtar's Gate
existing on the astral plane -
it shimmers and winks at us discreetly, and the clouds are on their toes
around it,
asking us to please be as quiet as possible. And who is there,
trapped in the Gate? the heretic's livestock wades amongst the lazuli
depths,
bathed in oils and anointed for a light spring sacrifice.

my worms are weary, and they crawl into my hair, my hair is lathered
in static from the despair of the inhabitants who wander within this
Gate.

Ishtar, Ishtar, you're already in my legs, leading them
to golden mines, immersing them in salt-filled baths to draw out toxic
cells and contemplations.

it's nightfall at the Gate; the worms itch to tuck themselves into the
folds
of the deep earth and the dark earth
but I force them to wait with me to hear instructions -
Ishtar, Ishtar, giver of the milk that now curdles at my feet,
my worms and I need to be put to rest -
Command This...!

Ishtar's Gate is shrinking and my worms are one big ball of mush.
the rooster crows to tell me to retreat and that I need to try
to wrench out my maternal instinct on another day.
and still it is impossible to muffle Ishtar's (Ishtar, Ishtar) whispers

and her rippling murmurs mocking my museum texts
that sophisticate the brute Augustus, wearing her pelts on flimsy
acrylic skin.

Accomplice

Tavish Young

We had agreed, we had it so clear in our heads, to see each other only in the way you see cousins and old neighbors. How childish, how ignorant to think we could sit next to each other, brushing arms, and speak of nothing but movies, and cars.

When we get pizza with my friends, you are quiet in the way you are always quiet, because you want to be.

Petrarch

Natalie Rudin

do you remember sitting in the pews, heavy energies blanketing your hands, not letting you pick up your pride and your dignity up from the floor before the herd of believers trample them?

you're going to cause the death of a deer. it will impale itself on your front gate and mock you with its apathetic eyes.

salt is piled on your pillowcase again - why aren't you licking it? why don't you taste it? everyone has to, why are you some exception?

a bird eats a man and a man reaches out from under your bed
and a man wants you to help him grieve,
to contort your face and share his sorrows alongside him.

now in poverty, philosophy is naked,
and you watch it sink into the eager grasses of your well fed lawn;
it doesn't look you in the eye. it is ashamed, and you should be as well.

A Love Song

Flinn Leigh Eng

I don't believe in true love.

The concept of “soul mates” is a comforting fiction for some, but not me. The quickened pulse of the heart, a faint feeling of anxiety, worry over making the right decision—Iris does not evoke that in me. I didn't feel that particular unease when I met her. Much stronger in my memory is the way the world slows down when I am with her.

Everything calms when I see her. I feel the tumult in my mind quiet down. As bold as she is in life, I know her asleep, when she cannot be anything but honest. In her sleep, she is a soft, melodic rhythm of tenderness and comfort. I know the way she curls into my chest in her sleep, her arm draped across my body, the sound of her contented sigh carrying me toward comfort. I know it, and I miss it.

It took me too long to tell her how I felt about her. Looking back, I know I felt it weeks, maybe months before I told her. It just didn't feel the way I'd expected it to. I'd expected something stereotypical, something theatrical and grand. I'd expected to be able to pinpoint the exact moment I fell head over heels. Instead, what I felt for her was a quiet comfort, a joy I could find in no one else.

I cross the street, careful to avoid a puddle that has gathered near the curb. It's well after sundown by now. If I were going to see anyone else, I wouldn't come calling this late. The warm spring breeze blows right through me, doing nothing to warm my unrelenting chills. Even at a distance, I can see little changes that mark my absence, decisions she has made without me. The plants that used to live on the windowsill in our bedroom have been removed. The garden looks untended, overgrown with weeds. There's a different welcome mat at the door. Handfuls of small, inconsequential things, all of which add up to something that feels big. I think to look over my reflection in the windows by the front door, but the only thing I notice is that she's taken down the wind chime. The silence outside the house

borders on oppressive.

I go through the front door. The lights are on, and the house is silent. From here, I can see into the dining room, where a pile of what looks like unopened mail sits on my side of the table, a single place mat at hers. A half-empty cup of tea sits ignored on the place mat, the open jar of sugar beside it. Iris sits curled up the table, silently reading in her pajamas with her legs tucked up underneath her.

“What are you reading?”

I see her eyes freeze as I speak. Her whole body goes rigid. I’ve resolved to let her take her time, but it feels like hours before she finally turns her head to me. Her eyes meet mine, a welcome glimpse of familiarity after a long time alone. I smile at her, watching her expression open immediately.

“Arden?” My name in her mouth sounds beautiful and delicate, more precious and valuable than anything else in the world. Her voice is raspy from disuse, I think, or maybe she’s sick.

I can’t think of how to progress from here. This is not a situation in which I can afford to get things wrong, and at the same time, saying nothing is not an option. I think I came here to talk to her, so I ask her again what she’s reading, but I don’t think she hears me.

“It can’t be,” she says. Her hands shake as her body unfolds from the chair. The book drops with a bang to the table as she gets to her feet.

“I’m sorry it’s been so long.” I watch her closely, trying to get a sense of her reaction. Her lip is trembling, but so is the rest of her. She’s not quite smiling, but nor is she angry. If I’m being fair, I don’t really know what my reaction would have been, were we to switch places.

“You look...” Iris approaches me with tentative, barefoot steps on the kitchen tile. I stand still and let her look me up and down.

“You look good.”

“Considering,” I tack on dryly. “I’m still cold, though. Are you ok?”

“I was fine,” she says. “Totally fine. I can’t believe...”

She breaks off into silence, blinking hard. Her voice is fractured with feeling, a crack of emotion threading through the sound.

The changes in Iris since the last time I saw her are obvious. She's still wearing her engagement ring, which both lifts my heart and breaks it. But she's grown alarmingly slight, her pajamas hanging loosely off her thin shoulders. Maybe she hasn't been eating properly. She has always been a tiny woman, but she's made up for this in the past by owning every square inch of the space around her solely through posture and carriage. Her hair falls down her back in unruly curls, and she has the darkest, most captivating eyes I've ever seen—which are, at the moment, probably accentuated by the fact that she has started to cry. She has always had a strong presence, but right now it feels dimmed. I've caught her off-guard, but I don't know how I could have done this better.

"I'm sorry it's so late," I say belatedly.

"No," she says at once, swiping her sleeve across her face.

"Don't be."

The first time I met Iris was in the music shop in the next town over where I worked on the weekends. I don't even remember what I was doing at the time—probably re-alphabetizing a section of records or something. I heard the bell over the door and looked up in time to see a woman in a gauzy white sundress enter the shop. She took off her sunglasses and surveyed the place, and for a second I thought I saw her eyes settle on me. Suddenly, her face lit up.

"Hello, darling!" she'd said.

I'd watched her come toward me as if in slow motion, trying to recall where I'd seen her before that she'd calling me darling right off the bat. But she walked right past me without so much as a glance. She was there to meet someone else, a date that somehow went south in the first ten minutes despite her every effort. I remember watching her thumbing dismally through some sheet music by herself, as if to kill time more than to search for anything in particular. I picked up the tablature for Nancy Sinatra's Bang Bang and slid it across the counter to her. She took one look, laughed, and said she didn't play

guitar. Did I have a piano arrangement?

I asked for her name, and the shine of her voice embedded itself into every nerve of my body. It took a few months of her “accidentally” returning to the shop when I was there for me realize that it wasn’t an accident. It was easy from there to forget past flames, to regret all the songs I wasted melodies on before her. Now, I wish I had saved every sound I have ever made, so that she could know that every note that ever left my voice was meant for her.

“How are you?” I ask her. She takes a deep, shaking breath, hugging herself in lieu of hugging me.

“I’ve been better,” she admits, her voice cracking. She clears her throat. “I’m sorry I’m such a mess—”

“It’s fine.”

She searches for words but falls silent again, leaving me scrambling for something else to say. Now that I’m inside, I realize how little of our house has actually changed, but the pervasive feeling of emptiness is suffocating. There’s something here—or perhaps, not here—that makes our shared home feel foreign and unwelcome to me. Maybe it’s the lateness of the hour, or just the simple fact that I haven’t been here in so long.

There are more obvious notes of Iris’s presence and my absence inside than there were out in the garden. A single empty hanger is on the hooks in the entryway, for Iris’s winter coat and my lack of one. Her shoes are placed neatly on the mat by the door. There’s only one set of keys in the dish on the landing. There’s a pile of dishes in the sink, sure, but only one of the place mats is on the table. My chair is pushed in and dusty.

I glance over my shoulder at Iris’s baby grand piano, the centerpiece of the living room. It dominates the space and draws the eye, even as it sits silent. It looks dusty, which is bizarre. Iris has always taken good care of the piano. But from the look of things, she hasn’t touched it in a long time.

I didn’t have any instruments in the house when Iris and I got engaged. I only ever used a record player to decorate my time at home.

But once she moved in with me, there was constant humming in the air. We danced through our days to the tap of her toes, washing dishes or putting away groceries. Whenever she needed to think or focus, she hummed a familiar series of notes, her “thinking song.”

She had dozens, maybe hundreds of little songs, for thinking and cooking and driving and reading, snippets of tunes and moods that colored nearly all of our time together. Even in the quiet moments, her body always swayed, bouncing to a beat only she could hear. I loved that part of her. I still do.

I remember skipping part of a day at work, a slow summer Friday, to be home to receive the piano so I could surprise her. I still don’t know if she could sense something different in me when I picked her up from work that day. I was eager on her behalf for a gift she knew nothing of. What I remember the most is the way her joy rippled across her whole body when she saw it, how she was completely and totally lost for words.

She walked around it, tracing the curve of the lid with her hands and peeking in at the strings, treating it with an almost spiritual reverence. I lifted the fall board to reveal the keys, and saw her elation written in the pull of her lips and the corners of her eyes.

Iris sat down that day, noiselessly touching the keys. She began slowly, a few notes at a time, probably checking to see if the piano was properly tuned. (It was. I knew better than to let her down.) But as she went on, it built into an unrestrained celebration that spanned the whole of the keyboard, her fingers dancing over the chords and gliding into vibrant explorations of tone. I stood back to watch her, savoring the experience of a song she would never share with anyone else. As I got to know her, the way she experienced the world and felt it with every nerve in her body, it seemed sacrilegious to expect her to give back anything but the syncopation and emotion of her ephemeral, spontaneous compositions.

But now the piano sits untouched, almost forgotten, as if she’s been avoiding it. The house is quiet, and so is she.

“How can you be here?” Iris asks suddenly, bringing me out

of my memory. I look back at her. It takes me a moment to put my thoughts back in order.

"I don't know," I confess. "I wandered for a while until I found my way back home."

"Why come here?"

"To see you." It's the truth, but it doesn't feel true, so I add, "To hear you."

"But I don't..." Iris wrings her hands as she steps out into the living room. She searches my face as if I am a puzzle she has to put together. "Why? Why now?"

Something in her tone gives me pause. We haven't spoken in a long time. Months, maybe. I can't remember. All I know is that I've missed her more than I miss anything else. I don't think of Iris in words, but in actions, shapeless feelings and desires for a future that I cannot distill into a single sound. What I want is impossible. I don't know if she will understand.

"Because I was thinking of you," I tell her. "I miss you."

I don't know why this is the wrong answer, but it definitely is. Iris's brow furrows, her lips turn downward. Her breath quickens, still shaky.

"You miss me now?" she asks.

"What?" I backtrack. What did I say? Wrong tone? Bad choice of words? "I do, I miss you. I miss you and I want to talk to you."

"Now?" Iris asks. "Now you come to talk? Only now?"

"I don't know how long it's been," I say, racking my brain to try to figure it out. It was snowing when I saw her last, and there's no snow on the ground now...

"What, did you just get around to noticing you missed me?" she demands.

"It's not like that!" I protest.

"Then what is it like?"

"I don't..." I break off, thinking. "I don't know. It's been strange and confusing. I got lost for a while. I know things are probably difficult for you right now—"

"Difficult?!" she hollers, with such ferocity that I actually jump. "Do you have any idea what kind of hell this has been for me?!"

"I'm sorry—"

"You think you can just waltz in here like nothing happened?" The fracture in her voice finally breaks, and her eyes overflow. Tears stream down her cheeks. "Just ask me what I'm up to, like I'll be happy to see you?"

"Are you not?" I ask.

"I—!" Her hands are shaking again, but this time I can't tell if it's from shock or frustration. "How? How are you here?! Why now?"

"Why not?"

"Why not?" she echoes, incredulous. "Why not? Arden!"

"Iris—!" I can't find the right words. Everything I say just makes her more upset. She lets loose an unintelligible shout, a vocalization of how overwhelmed she is. I knew this wouldn't be easy, but it's her. It's worth it. "Do you not want to see me?"

"No!" she snaps. "Yes! I don't know!"

Whatever conflicted feelings she might have had before, I think they've solidly given way to anger now. Her face is red from crying and from rage, her whole body shaking with the effort of containing all her emotions.

In Iris, moods and feelings play across her whole body, spilling out from her chest and rippling across the rest of her. Her anger is palpable in the air around her as it reverberates against her skin and strangles the song in her voice. While she has been cross with me before, I have never been on the receiving end of the unbridled depths of her rage. But even now, I don't think that's what I'm seeing. I've lost count of the arguments we've had over the years, but none of them were ever like this.

"After everything you put me through—"

"I'm sorry!" I keep my distance, even take a step back to give her space. "But it was an accident, wasn't it?"

"I know!" The bitterness in her voice is almost tangible. I hold onto the hope that it isn't really me she's angry with. I've seen her

in grief before. I know better than to take it personally. She rubs the heels of her palms on her eyes, turning away from me. "I was there!" I remember her presence more than any pain there might have been. The water on the street had frozen into ice. I thought I was doing everything right, taking corners slowly and checking my mirrors constantly, almost compulsively. She teased me that we were going to be late. I just remember smiling in the split-second I had to come up with a reply. The skidding car that hit the driver's side door took the breath out of my lungs and ended that song forever in a shatter of glass and thunderous crushing of metal.

I don't think I could have avoided it. It was an accident.

"I'm sorry," I tell her again. "I didn't mean—"

"I know!" She keeps her back to me, her shoulders shaking. "I know it was an accident! I know, I just...!"

I want her to express all these hurt emotions. I do. I'd be lying if I said the guilt hasn't hurt me, too. I wish I knew what would soothe her, some magic combination of words that would set her mind at ease. I don't think these words exist. I don't know if she will ever be all right.

"I'm sorry I haven't been here to help," I say. It's true, but the words don't feel correct. What role could I have possibly played in helping her grieve me? "I didn't mean to upset you."

Iris's shoulders droop. Her breath hitches in a stifled sob. She turns slowly, looking over her shoulder, as if to check that I'm still here.

"What did you think was going to happen?" she asks. Her lip trembles again as she folds her arms in a hug around herself. The silence weighs me down.

"I don't know." No matter where I look, I can't find a place to rest my gaze. Nothing feels right to me. I don't like to see her cry, but it would be awful of me to pretend she's not in pain. "I just knew I had to come to you again."

"Are you going to haunt me now?" she asks.

"I don't think so. I mean, I know we have unfinished business,

but..."

"Not really haunting material, I guess." Iris twists the ring on her finger, a sad longing in her eyes. She gives a soft chuckle, a quiet, despairing melody. It finally clicks in my mind.

"It's so quiet without you."

Her eyes meet mine. She draws in a trembling breath, but whatever words she might have said are lost. Tears flood down her cheeks as she sinks down on the piano bench, her back to the keyboard, her shoulders shaking. She is almost completely doubled over, her forehead pressed against her knees as she sobs. Her entire body shakes with grief. I can't stand to see her in so much pain. The only thing worse is knowing that it's because of me.

"I'm sorry." It's all I can say and it is not enough. My voice shakes, weighed down with tears of my own. I kneel down on the floor in front of her, looking up into her face. "Iris, I'm so sorry."

"I know," she sobs. "I'm sorry, too."

I don't know the name for what I feel right now, watching Iris cry at the piano. It can't be grief, because I am not the one who lost her. It can't be longing, because she's right in front of me. My chest is caving in and I can scarcely breathe. She's hurting. We both are. I don't know what the right question is, nor do I know how to ask it. All I know is that I can't stand the silence anymore.

"Will you play me something?" I ask. Iris looks up, equal parts confused and surprised by the request. "Just one song."

"Arden..." Iris shakes her head. "I haven't played for months."

"I know." I nod to the piano, in all its dusty glory. "Or, I thought as much."

Iris hiccups. She looks uncertainly over her shoulder at the piano, seeming unwilling even to touch it. This is probably the first time she's even sat on the piano bench since the accident.

"It's all right if you'd rather not," I say quickly. Maybe this is too much to ask right now. Maybe it's too much to ask ever again. "I understand."

Slowly, Iris straightens up. She wipes her hands on her pajamas,

swings her legs around the piano bench so her feet rest on the pedals. She lifts up the fall board and ghosts her fingers over the keys, silently passing over them in what I think I recognize as scales. I never learned to play an instrument. Records were enough for me before I met her. I get up from beside the piano bench, the better to see her face as she plays.

She begins slowly, a few notes at a time. It takes longer than it has in the past for her to find the shape of the song she wants to play, I think. I don't know what goes on in her mind or her fingers while she plays. I can't imagine this is the easiest thing in the world for her to do, either. But she always builds to something special. It starts out deceptively simple, a repeated pattern that she slowly varies. She decorates the pattern and extends the phrases, sending her fingers over more and more of the keyboard as she reacquaints herself with the muscle memory of playing. The sound washes over me and sets my soul at ease.

In her song, I see her. It's a quiet, peaceful sort of tune—not quite mournful, but not quite happy. It sounds like the homesickness in my heart. It misses me, as much as I have missed hearing it. Iris only looks up once during her song, at the high point of a glissando, and pauses to offer me a muted smile before ending it. She remains at the keys for another silent moment, eyes closed. Somehow, in this, I feel like I know. She's going to be fine. I bow my head to her.

“Thank you, Iris.”

Iris replaces the fall board and stands up. Now that the song is over, she seems to want to move more quickly than her body is capable of.

“Can I go with you?” she asks.

It takes me a moment to hear this question for what it is. The words don't hit my brain right. It's as if I have to parse each word individually before I can piece them together as a request. I search her face as I process what she's said.

“No.” I don't want that for her. She's said it so quickly, as if

she's just asked to come to the grocery store with me. "Stay. Don't follow me."

She gives a sort of defeated sigh, as if she expected this answer. She pushes the piano bench back in and sweeps her hand over the fall board. It comes up, covered in dust.

"Promise me," I say, now worried. I didn't even think that seeing me again might conjure in her a desire to die. "Iris—"

"Ok." She nods, tears trickling down her cheeks again. "I just miss you so much."

"I miss you, too."

"And I'm sorry," she murmurs.

"There's nothing for you to be sorry for."

I wish the light in here were brighter. I want to see her in these last moments before I go. I want to hold onto this feeling, because I refuse to believe that I can't. If there is a single power in this universe greater than death, I think it must be love.

"Can you stay?" she asks.

"No." Even if I could, I don't think I should. I reach out to her, to brush back her hair, but my hand goes through her curls. She closes her eyes, tears gathering again beneath her eyelashes. I don't want her to cry anymore, but who am I to tell her she can't?

"What happens next?" she asks. "To you?"

I have been dreading this question, because I don't know the answer. There are no answers that I can give her. And where I am going, there are no more questions.

The walk away from the house is one of the hardest things I think I have ever had to do. Iris stands in the doorway, watching me go, and in the hours before sunrise, all I can think of is how thoroughly I will miss her. I know the way the pain will come, the heavy weight of guilt and heartache. But as I think about it, it will either be the worst pain I have ever felt, or absolutely nothing at all. Either way, this is the time I lose her forever.

I don't believe Iris was my soul mate. I don't think such a thing exists. All I know for certain is that the slim, fragile thread that

brought me to her could have easily been broken or overlooked, and I would never have known. I don't think she is the only woman I could have been happy with, but I think I am unimaginably lucky to have been with her. Time and grief may have changed her, but she is still the woman I fell in love with—bright and emotional, who experiences the world with her heart, while she was with me and now that she's without me. My love for her echoes in every corner of my mind, monumental and immense and at the same time, not enough to contain the multitudes of her in my heart.

Her melody warms my voice as I hum it. I don't know if whatever comes next will hurt, but I know I can face it. I carry her song with me into the great and final silence of the grave.

Return to Goucher

Upon return to Goucher we wanted to celebrate the occasion by reviving an old tradition, the fall 4word Zine. The 4word Zine historically has been a relaxed literary magazine that encapsulates less formal creative works. Our edition of the zine this past fall, served a different purpose. We wanted to provide a tangible experience of Goucher's creative community as an opportunity to celebrate our artists. Since there was a limited run of the fall zine, excerpts from the issue accompany submissions received in the spring.

sunday

Carolena Brazfield

take off
your cross, I'll
take off my
pearls. coil
the gold snakes
neatly by your
bed and come
back to me.
soft, butterfly-
light lips,
every nerve
standing at
attention. do I
make you nervous?
do you hold me
in you? will
you miss me
when I
burn?

if not, don't
touch me
like grandma's
antique china,
chipped, you:
the super glue
along the curve
of my spine,
where you'd place
your teaspoon if
you were to fix
and drink me. and
if so, please don't
touch me
different
when I show
you where the
real cracks lie,
when I tell
you why I
will never
meet your
God.

my father requests his FBI file

Grace Fischbach

he is refused. what was the first reason
they flagged him? was it because TSA
stopped him with a carry-on brimming with soap & candy
upon leaving lebanon? was it his ebay purchase
history of bloody Army helmets, a nation of
islam flag stolen by the California National Guard,
and the 100 names of allah rug? was it the FBI
wanted flyer of osama bin laden he stole
from the Post Office and framed for his wall? was it
the protest where he held my hand as me and
my sister walked on the sidewalk to avoid being
arrested for marching without a permit? was it after
9/11 when he whispered bomb al-qaeda plane into my
baby monitor? was that when I entered his file?

A lie

Virtuous Ayuk

goose bumps against skin, huddled under neath fluorescent green swing N slides, bubble gum pink peeking out of cracks, streetlamps in the distance winking on, something like falling asteroids, fields sprawling out, a backdrop to this polaroid scene, you're pressing your soft skin to the cold hard soil, soaked with memory, listening for murmurs of all the secrets that have been whispered in this tragic place where the creek meets the playgrounds edge, and now you're nodding like this is real, and now I'm reaching for your cheek because we both want it to be, it's smooth cept for the remnants of grooves as dewed pebbles sank into the curve of your jaw and now I'm looking away, moonlight glinting off the wet granite, and now I'm looking back into the october brown of your eyes, coily strands bleached moon white, we're giggling like little girls, so unashamed in our joy, face alight, head raised to the heavens and then that whole summer, we loved without caution



Memories

Prachi Ruina

Murmurations

Rachel Leeds

6:00 AM:

Wake up. Put on blouse and skirt. Brush teeth. Drink coffee, eat bagel. Brush teeth again. Gather belongings. Put on shoes. Leave the apartment. Lock the door. Walk down street to subway. Ride to station near lab. Walk east two blocks. Reach the fountain square. And see him.

I stop, and see him standing there, face focused, peering out through tiny holes in the mesh basket. Every other inch of skin is covered- secured in white utility polyester and wrinkling in puddles around his feet. I cannot see his shoes. He stands here, every day. One reinforced arm raised to open the door of an invisible box. There is no hive box. There are no bees. There is just the Beekeeper. He stands here, every day. On my route to work.

There are lots of living statues: painted ladies sprawled beside park benches, bronze men- their pectorals glistening in the sun, human skeletons- each bone labeled neatly in pen. They live the day in one position, change box by their side. Then at night, they count their earnings. They walk home. They scrape their selves off with pumice stones until they're ordinary. Then they sleep. Wake up. And do it all again.

But the Beekeeper is different. He has no change box. If you stare past the mesh holes, you can see intention in his grey-green eyes. He is not a living statue standing still to earn a living. He's a Beekeeper paused in time.

7:20 AM:

Leave the fountain square. Walk two blocks east to workplace. Enter building. Clock in. Don protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Enter lab. Lay out beakers. Lay out capillary tubes. Prepare samples.

Scrub all surfaces clean. Exit lab. Remove protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Go to cafeteria. Buy bagel. Eat bagel. Begin report. Don protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Enter lab. Sanitize beakers. Dispose of capillary tubes. Scrub all surfaces clean. Finish the report.

6:00 PM:

Exit lab. Remove protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Clock out. Exit building. Walk six blocks north to grocery store. Purchase prepackaged chicken salad, bottle of Dasani water, one banana, and one bagel (for tomorrow.) Take subway by grocery store back to apartment. Sit at table. Eat chicken salad, drink Dasani water, and then eat banana. Shower. Go to sleep.

??? PM/AM:

I cannot sleep. My breath is too hot, my white sheet too heavy. A bird coos by my window. Does the Beekeeper see his invisible box as he stares at it all day? Does he feel the whirl of the bees inside? The emptying of stomach sacs? The soundless flapping of wings? Peach-fuzz bodies with tiny legs that stick out in all directions? What is the Beekeeper expecting? What does he need protection from? Is he even wearing shoes?

6:00 AM:

Wake up. Put on blouse and skirt. Brush teeth. Drink coffee, eat bagel. Brush teeth again. Gather belongings. Put on shoes. Leave the apartment. Lock the door. Walk down street to subway. Ride to station near lab. Walk east two blocks. Reach the fountain square. And see him.

I wonder if he sees me, through the corner of his eye, as he stares so intently at his box. Maybe, if I squint, I'll see the outlines of that box. A whisper. Its shadow on the ground. Sight is such a glare today, but if I close my eyes- I feel them there. Each dot, each freckle is a bee. I wonder if he sees me (through the corner of his eye.) I don't need him to see me. I need to see him and see with him- see what he

sees. The plasticky grip of his glove pressed tightly against my palm as we tend the bees together...

7:20 AM:

Leave the fountain square. Walk two blocks east to workplace. Enter building. Clock in. Don protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Enter lab. Lay out beakers. Lay out capillary tubes. Prepare samples. Scrub all surfaces clean. Exit lab. Remove protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Go to cafeteria. Buy bagel. Eat bagel. Begin report. Don protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Enter lab. Sanitize beakers. Dispose of capillary tubes. Scrub all surfaces clean. Finish the report.

6:00 PM:

Exit lab. Remove goggles. Clock out. Exit building. Walk six blocks north to grocery store. Purchase prepackaged chicken salad, bottle of Dasani water, one banana, and one bagel (for tomorrow.) Walk six blocks south and two blocks west to fountain square.

Oh good! He's still here! I knew that he would be. I stand next to the spot where he stands. I stare where he stares at the invisible box and picture the hive inside it. Throb in all its animation. Frantic dash of workers. Semen-sack drones. And focal point: the Queen. I stare where he stares, eat my chicken salad, drink my bottle of Dasani, and eat my banana. The box is there. I know the box is there. I squint harder and harder until the black closes in. I am hot. I am shaking. Something's gathering inside me. The box is right there- the hive nestled inside it. It's there! How can I still not see it?...

I breathe in and out. In and out. Then I look again at His face. Take in every measure- the arc of eyebrow. width of nose, parting of pale lips. I memorize the pantone hue of his eyes. And for now, this is enough.

7:15 PM:

Walk two blocks east. Take subway back to apartment. Shower. Go to sleep.

??? PM/AM:

I cannot sleep again. There's a fever. A stirring. A bird pecks at my window like that storm cloud made of starlings. Swooping north, south. east. west, up and down- swirling into itself forever. I must not visit the Beekeeper anymore. I must keep myself away. Encase my face in mesh until it leaves ticklish imprints in my skin. Shroud the remainder of my body in white polyester. Out there, in the field at dusk, sunburnt, itchy and powerful- I soared up, plunged down veered this way and that- alongside the cloud of starlings. My bones began to buckle. My breath stilled to a hiss. It was too much. I had to move. Go somewhere less... I had to go or else, I'd start to cry.

6:00 AM:

Wake up. I'm okay. Put on blouse and skirt like normal. Brush teeth twice. Drink coffee, eat bagel. Brush teeth twice again. Gather belongings. Put on shoes. Leave the apartment. Don't go see the Beekeeper. Lock the door. Don't go see the Beekeeper. Walk down street to subway. Don't go see the Beekeeper. Ride to station near grocery store. Good! Walk six blocks south. Enter building. I am safe. Clock in. I am safe. Don protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Enter lab. Lay out beakers. Lay out capillary tubes. Prepare samples. Scrub all surfaces clean. Exit lab. Remove protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Go to cafeteria. Buy bagel. Eat bagel. Begin report. Don protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Enter lab. Sanitize beakers. Dispose of capillary tubes. Scrub all surfaces clean. Finish the report.

6:00 PM:

Exit lab. Remove protective coat, goggles, and gloves. Clock out. Exit building. Don't go see the Beekeeper. Walk six blocks north to grocery store. Purchase prepackaged chicken salad, bottle of Dasani water, one banana, and one bagel (for tomorrow.) Don't go see the Beekeeper. Take subway by grocery store back to apartment. Good! Sit at table. Eat chicken salad, drink Dasani water, and then eat banana. Shower. Go to sleep. I am safe.

??? PM/AM:

I cannot sleep. I cannot breathe. A bird flies into my window, crushing his body against the glass over and over. His coos mock me through the air. He won't let there be quiet. In the darkness, I still see grey-green eyes through mesh. The Beekeeper. He wants me. But I can't... Why can't I?... I want to break the bird's small wings. Snap them in my fingers. Choke his throat. Then drop him. Let him clatter to the streets below like trash. No! I'm sorry! That's terrible... I don't want to hurt him, poor little bird. I just want to fall asleep. Please please leave my window. I want to be still and blank and quiet and alone. Somewhere safe, hidden, coated in wax, where no one will ever touch me... except the Beekeeper. The Beekeeper can touch me.

I wake up. I put on my nicest blouse and skirt. I brush my teeth, pour coffee down my throat, and chew through a bagel. I brush my teeth again. I buckle my shoes and leave the apartment. I bring nothing. I do not lock the door. I walk down my street to the subway. The subway is closed, so I walk until I reach the station near the lab. I walk east two blocks, I reach the fountain square, and I see him.

He's looking at his invisible box, and I can finally see it- a beautiful inlaid hive. All the bees come out. They flock around my ankles. They kiss my fingerprints. I look at him. He smiles. It's time to move on. The bees swoop and scatter and startle like the starlings from the field. The city dissolves into meadow; almond blossom, lilac, and wisteria fold around the dawn. The air is satin, palpitating, pink as a newborn kitten. All this loveliness... I will not go to work today. Oh! What a coronation! I look at him. He looks back with his grey-green eyes. He smiles. I smile. He takes my hand. We're wreathed in flicker, in silence, in a cloud of bees- as we walk, together, towards our new home.

Library of Congress

Jonathan Yannes

The Library of Congress now holds
confessions to murders,
truths never spoken,
lies made reality through
sheer forces of will.

And yet, it can do nothing
But watch itself expand
And implode endlessly.

I wonder how it feels for each tweet to
enter the petrified
burning sun encased in its
marble pillars, and be
simultaneously remembered
forever and therefore never
coming back.

Tonight

Jupiter Berrysmith

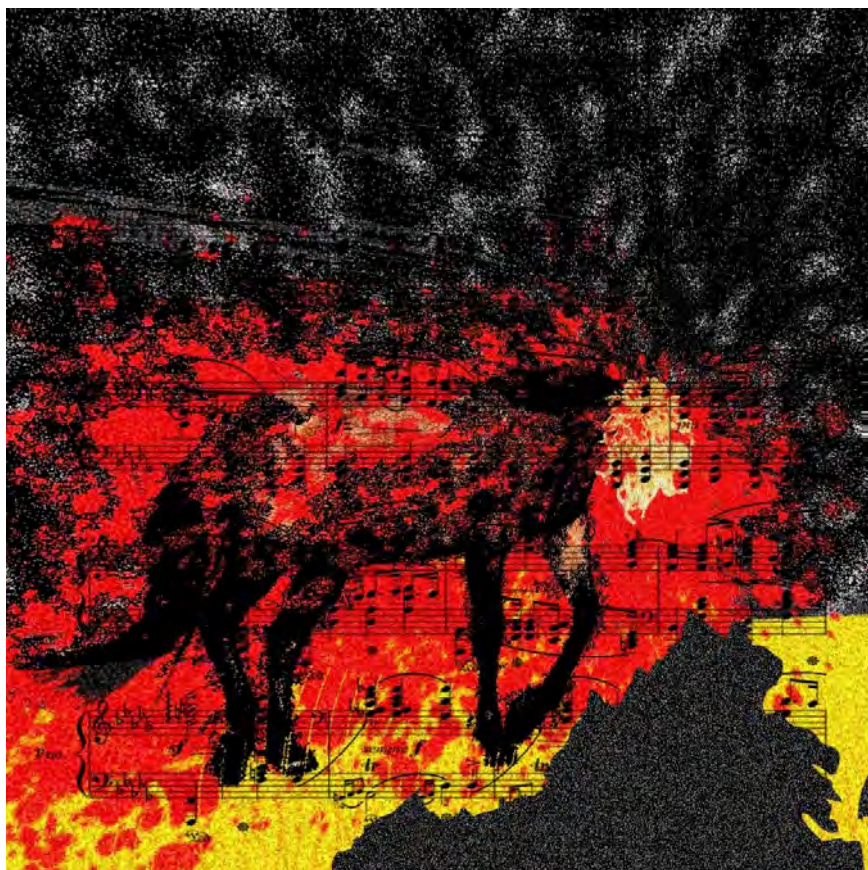
- after Richard Siken

Tonight,
I'm thinking about the bay back home, measuring the distance between us by
lining up all my skinned-knee scabs, and the swell rushes through my head as the
sky goes dark. I assumed this was what freedom felt like, but I can still hear the freeway
scream and our doors close and open and close and open and closer this time, closer than any man
has been before. Night walks in on my beating, eating heart that has a penchant for legs alongside my own, and red fruit, like raspberries, strawberries, ruby peaches peeled in the sink ready for a pie;
my lover must learn the way my humors flow with the waxing and waning of the tides. I am a collector of yearning, slow pain from the slice of a buckknife, wails like the sea lions at dusk and I like how he carves into my cavernous walls; the sound has a likeness
to capturing the spirit of a middle schooler in love and then letting it loose, and of course I couldn't care less about his intentions. I trust him. He's my lover's lover. How old were you when you realized the moon didn't have a face
but craters, like violence, sunken into its skin. I learned the hard way that to have expectations is to admit defeat before the

beginning begins.
roadside motel.

Now, I'm checking myself into this

Now, I'm singing to myself and staring at the scars on the wall.



Mortuus Rapax

Elie Siegal

Diseased Vehicles

Matthew Savin

THE ONLY CAR ON THE ROAD FOR MILES, the worn out sedan made its way through the ink black sky of the night, leaving a trail of noise in its wake. Undeterred by the sound, nature continued on in the 3:00 AM haze. The two men up front were silent, their vocabulary consisting of shared glances that conveyed exactly what they needed to. In the back was a third; someone considerably younger who looked like he was barely out of high school. Fitfully sleeping, he tossed and turned in the confines of the polyester seat belt that laced around him. The trio were miles from Pittsburgh now, the area where the highway turns into rural streets. They passed through many small towns, places where the main drag would close before sunset, with the ghosts of empty storefronts and abandoned cars as the only company. In about four hours they would be across West Virginia and move on to the thin strip that separates them from North Carolina.

They were in a radio dead zone, and that is how the driver preferred it. He didn't need any distractions from the road. Out here, the lack of stimulation and summer heat were a dangerous combination, and the events of the last five hours had already made him weary.

"Pull over Joe," the man in the passenger seat said. "I gotta piss."

"Can't you just hold it?"

"C'mon man I gotta piss real bad."

"Fine"

The delicate brakes didn't want to cooperate, and it wasn't until Joe raised his leg and slammed it down where it made a full stop. The other two lurched forward, and the man in the passenger seat's head whipped back and forth. The one in the back moaned as the jerking woke him up.

"Well Len," Joe said, motioning his head to the fields on the

side of the road. "Go piss."

He turned to the one in the back seat. "And you, I think you should get up and stretch your legs." It wasn't a suggestion, but more of a command. The younger one complied.

The night air was thick with the smell of manure and stagnant with no breeze. The lack of civilization proved itself with the permanent sense of decay around. The pavement was cracked, and the lone road sign was unreadable with all the dirt that covered it. Even the moon felt like it was coated in a layer of grime due to the dulled light emanating from it.

The younger one hopped out of the back and looked up at the moon. Peering over, he made sure the other two weren't looking and stretched. He didn't want to prove them right by showing that he actually needed to do so.

"Well," he said when he was done. "Where the hell have you taken me now?"

The two men looked back at him for a second. In the headlights their shadows became exaggerated caricatures that stretched to the horizon. They returned to their conversation without an answer, which was typical. Then the lights clicked off, and he was back to needing his eyes to adjust to the dark.

At his feet, where the grass border met the pavement, someone had shoved a small cross into the ground. Now it was askew, leaning slightly towards the left and half of what had been a pearly white paint had chipped away. He took a step towards the object. Attached to it was a tattered blue ribbon that was hanging on by a thread. Up close he could see that slivers of wood were sticking out from it. He leaned down closer towards the small icon. Though there was nothing remarkable about it, he was still entranced by the small piece.

"Well look what Andy's got," Len said. "He found himself a toy." He plucked the small cross from the ground.

"Who could be stupid enough to die out here," Joe said.

"You gotta be real dumb," Len said.

"Probably why this 'memorial' is such a piece of shit."

“Don’t be an asshole, put it back.” said Andy.

“Aw c’mon, I think it’s cute. Could be a nice good luck charm for the next part of our journey.”

“Next part?” Andy scoffed. “You don’t even have a plan for the next hour.”

“I will with my new lucky charm,” Len said, rubbing his thumb across the small thing. Suddenly he hissed and grimaced, retracting the digit from the cross.

“Fuckin’ thing gave me a splinter.”

“Yeah some luck for you,” Andy said.

“It’s a piece of trash Len,” Joe said. “Just drop it.”

“Alright,” Len said. He wound up his arm and tossed the cross into the field where it landed in silence; too small and insignificant to make an even a light thud.

“Nice throw,” Joe said.

“You think I could make it to the MLB?”

“Nah, they don’t take trash like you.”

Andy stared in the direction of the thrown cross. He looked down to where it once was in the grass, but now he couldn’t even see the indentation in the ground where someone had stuck it before. Truth be told it was probably just a gesture of goodwill at the moment, and hasn’t been visited since, but Andy was still pissed off.

“God’ll get you for that Joe.”

“Look at this idiot copying what he hears on the TV,” Len said. “Bea Arthur is more of a man than you will ever be.” Len said.

“Just remember that it’s your fault I’m here,” said Andy. “Besides, don’t you have to piss, that’s the reason why we stopped.”

Andy turned around and heard the sound of a zipper being undone and the sound of liquid hitting pavement and Len sighing with euphoria. He turned his attention back to the field where he noticed small movement on the horizon line. He squinted, trying to focus on whatever it was but from his perspective it was miniscule. He just stared at the silent amoeba-like blob, waving two small appendages in the distance.

“There’s someone out there,” he said.

“I don’t see anything,” Joe said.

“Me either,” Len chimed in.

He watched again as the figure began to wave. He couldn’t tell if it was the distance or just a trick of the night, but the waving seemed to become more frantic. His chest felt heavy with the weight of realizing that he was the only one who saw something. Andy took in his surroundings; the land was flat and stretched into eternity. At once every act that his body performed unconsciously came to the forefront and he could feel everything. He felt the sensation of every single blood cell rushing against the delicate walls of his veins. His breath stopped midway through his diaphragm and formed a large mass. The machinations of his stomach stopped and the burn of acid and bile spread their unnatural warmth throughout his abdomen. Finally his mind flashed him back to the events of the previous night and he’s back on that sidewalk on Allegheny Avenue keeping watch while Joe grabs his shoelace and jimmies it between some random car door to unlock it. They had a good thing going at that point, Andy would be the little teen beggar on the street asking for money and when some good samaritan would reach out with a dollar Joe and Len would rob them for everything else they had. It was a good plan, until tonight when it wasn’t.

He could smell everything; the aging grease from the dive bar around the corner, the trash that had piled up on the street, and the stench that came from his pores as he tried to sweat out every ounce of fear and guilt over what he had just seen.

“Get in!” Joe says. “And quick.”

Though he wishes he wouldn’t, in his vision, Andy complies and jumps into the backseat of the piece of junk. Whoever owned it would probably be glad to get rid of it and could use the (presumably meager) insurance payout towards a new car. Len jumps in as well and the trio speed off towards the highway

And then he’s back on the side of the road staring at the figure in the field, as both of his “companions” are yelling something that

he can't make out.

"We have to go out there," Andy says. "Make sure that they're alright."

"To make sure who's alright?" Len said "There's no one out there, now get your ass back in the car."

"He's right," Joe said. "Now why don't you do what he said and then we can go."

"No."

"What did you say?" Len said, stepping closer.

"I said no," Andy said, realizing now that his mouth was filled with the salt of tears. "She's following us, it's her, I know it's her."

"Now listen kid," Joe said, appearing behind Andy. "You've had a long night and you're just acting crazy. Get. In. The. Car."

"I'd listen to him, now quit your crying and get in."

"This is our punishment," Andy said. "We're being punished for what you did. We have to go back and explain everything, they'll understand if we admit everything. Then everything can be alright"

"Listen up you little shit," Len said, pushing Andy against the side of the car and grabbing his shirt, pulling Andy closer. His breath was a mixture of tobacco and an unknown meaty smell. Once again Andy turned towards the field and stared at the figure, still waving silently.

"I don't know what you think you're trying to say here, but you get it out of your head this instant. What happened, happened, and you can't change it now. Just like you didn't try to change it then."

The words stung, and as Len let go, Andy slumped against the car.

"I have to help her, I have to make it right," he whispered.

"You know what, go out there," Joe said. "Go out and see if there's someone."

Andy took a step into the grass when he heard the sound of a car door opening. He looked back to see that both men were getting in, and the engine rumbled back to life. The headlights came back on and illuminated the road. He ran back to the car and started to pound

on the windows.

“Hey! Hey! Where the hell are you two going?”

Len rolled down the window. “Oh you thought we were gonna stay while you were on your little adventure? You keep talking about what happened, you know that we have to keep moving.”

“You know what?” Joe said, shifting the car back into park. “Let’s give him a chance,” he faced Andy. “You got five minutes to make your choice.”

Andy stared back at the field. He began to question himself. Was the figure still there? It looked like it was, but were they still waving their arms? Everything just looked skewed and Andy wasn’t sure he could trust himself anymore.

He gulped and took a few shaky steps into the grass when Len called out to him.

“Are you sure you’re making the right choice?”

“Why do you say that?”

“Well,” Len said, sticking a cigarette in his mouth and cupping his hand around his lighter. “Can you be sure that someone is going to see you? Let alone something you’ve made up.” He smiled as tendrils of smoke curled from his shaggy lips.

“He’s right,” Joe said. “You’d just have to wait for someone to come by and notice you. Hey can I bum a cig?”

They were both tragically correct. Andy instinctively knew that this was the perfect place to go missing. If he went out there he would have a perfect view of the road and all the occupants that had happened to wander down it, but they’d have to want to notice him in order to help.

It was then that Andy had finally gained an awareness of where he was. He hadn’t seen a sign of life for miles. He wasn’t sure where he was or what direction he would go in to search for help. To his left he had finally noticed that there was a mutilated deer carcass on the road. Another car or different man made predator must have hit recently. The creature’s neck had been snapped and slit open all the way from the carotid artery to paunch. Exposed viscera had spilled out

and fresh blood was still leaking, and Andy looked back towards the field. His vision blurred in panic and he wasn't able to discern what was part of the crops and where the figure in the field was. A gentle breeze wafted the smell of copper towards him, which combined with the smell of the cigarette, made him feel faint and unsteady.

"I mean," Len said. "You could always stay with us."

"Yeah, you could. I mean you'd have to try and get with the program."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm just saying, you know what we've done, and what we need to do now. We don't need anyone holding us down."

Andy ran into the field.

"Hello?" He called. "Hello, is someone out there? I'm just trying to help."

He turned in multiple directions but all around him as just grass, and he couldn't distinguish where the road was anymore. Every direction provided the same view of grass twinkling in the light of the pre-dawn moon. Something ahead of him moved and he was finally face to face with the figure that he was looking for. As he approached the figure reached out their arm, an act of salvation and connection; a moment of retribution to finally answer for a crime that he didn't want to happen.

"Oh thank God. Are you al-"

He didn't get to finish his sentence before loud pop stopped him in his tracks. The smell of smoke and copper appeared once again, and he collapsed into the grass.

Len appeared from the field and tossed a small object back out into it. It landed with a metallic thud. He eased himself back down into the passenger seat.

"So was there anyone out there?" Joe asked.

"I was a little busy with something else." He produced something out of his pocket. A small wallet, with three initials sewn into the front. He rifled through the worn out thing and produced a series

of bills in various notation. He looked again for anything special but gave up and returned it to his pocket.

“When we get to another state, I’ll throw this thing away.”

“Len,” Joe began, “I don’t want to sound like a pussy, but did we do the right thing?”

“Right? No.” Len said. “Best? Well I think that one is more fitting.”

“You do?”

“Yeah. Besides, he wasn’t the first.”

“Hm,” Joe said, shifting the car into drive and speeding off.

The car bounced as it went over the dead deer, which unlodged something from the car that scraped along the road. Neither of them cared.

“I guess you’re right.”

“He would’ve spent the rest of his life waiting for someone like himself to come along and save him. And lord knows he’d be waiting.”

And off they went towards their inevitable destination.

me and my therapist discuss brood x (summer 2021)

Adele Ehrman

last time the cicadas came I was 3
and a half watched my cousin eat one
alive crunching between his molars
saying the female ones tasted better
on his tongue wonder if that's why he
preferred me rather my brother my
cousins got 17 years on me

*8 feet underground
for 17 years
unearthing themselves for their next
cycle brood x feed off
of young trees
leaves brown
rotting*

It's been 17 years and this
june the cicadas arrive just in time
to witness the end of my girlhood
a man once passed me in the street while
tying my shoe he said
he preferred it when I was bent over
my friend once found his way up my thigh

*male cicadas do the calling
the constant screeching
the aching sound of wanting to mate*

*if one was to cradle itself in your
ear canal and sing your
ear drum would rupture*

put the child locks on and made me
strip for him before he would drive me
home memorized the color of my thong
whispered the things he could do to me
in my ear
that me refusing makes his dick
hard saying no turns him
on I say take me home
he laughs
when does womanhood begin?

*the funny thing is
they emerge in such large numbers
their predators can't kill them all
they are never going to be threatened as a species
there are too many of them*



Maine Pt.I

Matthew Savin



Maine Pt.2

Matthew Savin

Van Meter, 9:18 AM

Jamie Damm

I saw two squirrels.
They were in love, I think, I
Hope they share acorns.

Rain makes the pavement
soggy. February 5th:
I missed your birthday.

21, no more
Sneaked wine, will you still use his
Bottle opener?

I notice your braids,
Your hair has gotten longer.
In a year, things change.

Blue Raspberry Gum

Aniya Carrington

“Shut up”, he said, and my mouth slammed closed. I began thinking of things, far reaching things, like steel metal lobster traps and Blackstone prisons. How could two things that are so entirely different have the same purpose?

Black tar, kindergarten glue, blue raspberry gum. My own gums, suctioned.

When you go to the dentist’s and they have you lean back and they shine that light in your eyes. When you’re lying there, throat bared, arms out, mouth open, does anyone think of the guillotine? Shut up, they say, in not so many words, putting the tube in your and taking all the moisture, stealing all the lacquer, leaving you bone dry.

It’s exhausting, being alive.

if my father left

Grace Fischbach

my mother it would be for another
tongue he writes grocery list love
letters to, a tongue who speaks
in guttural stops and noises not made
after infancy, a tongue he devotes
his academic breath to, a tongue the cia
trains operatives to listen to, a tongue
whose children have not seen peace outside
of a song, a tongue that makes my half-sister
a random tsa security check, a tongue who knows
collapsing hills of sand and dry heat the rich pay
sauna memberships for and blue skies that don't
threaten rain, the tongue of the doctor who told
my mother the child she prayed for would die, the
tongue of the village friend who told him it will
survive, the tongue of my father as he prayed for
the only child he will be the first to touch when
my eyes stare at him like the evil eyes above
the doorways in the land that cradled jesus.



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