

; see also

Berkeley Literary Journal
Vol. 2, No. 2
Spring 2020

A New Hope
by Ben Burdick

Strawberry Canyon
by Ian Good

Spring Migration
by Mark Cohen

Empty Room
by Amanda Almeda

The Imposter Snowstorm
by Yongbin Chang

The Law Zone
by Kiki Tapiero & Ari Chivukula

What I Know
by Karnik Hajjar

My Father Will Forget Me
by Tyler Takemoto

; *see also*

Dear reader,

We forecast in our call for submissions that “2020 will likely be a whirlwind of challenges and beautiful resistance.” We did not know then that those challenges would drive us out of campus, into our homes, and away from each other. Weeks have passed since we last sat in a classroom together or waved hello in the halls. And as epidemiologists continue to adjust the timeline of this nightmare, it is hard to escape the feeling that it might never end.

Our conditions today make hope all the more important to hold and nourish: hope that things will change, hope that we can play a role in changing them. The theme of the spring 2020 issue of ; *see also* is hope. What futures do we long to see realized? What momentum carries us forward when other forces threaten to push us back? At other times these questions are already difficult to answer, and now they seem naive even to ask. But we have to ask them, because a future we cannot imagine is a future we cannot build. We are so thankful to our authors for pushing our imaginations in the direction of hope.

In poetry, we have six contributions:

- In Ben Burdick’s “A New Hope,” the speaker lines up a reflection on their father’s hope of surviving cancer with a reflection on Han Solo’s hope of navigating an asteroid field. Like Han Solo, the speaker’s father—and the speaker themselves—resists the grim predictions of numbers and science: “This time is unique, incomparable.” This time, Han Solo will get through the field; this time, the speaker’s father will live. The poem is an exercise in shielding the futures we hope for from the things we know.
- During a walk, the speaker of Ian Good’s “Strawberry Canyon” notices a sight that reminds them of someone they have lost. Even though that someone has “been dead for years,” the light and dirt of the trail revive a memory. The return of that memory induces in the speaker both a sense of shame (“made me sick. / I had forgotten you”) and a sense of hope (“and you were still a part of me”).
- Mark Cohen’s “Spring Migration” playfully links the cycles of season and migration to the renewable promises of love and hope. In the same spring that “seabirds drop their slop on boardwalks” and “Ducks chase my dreams in my sleep,” “I lock your hand / Like the / Sea lion on the rocks that just / Swam to sea / To meet its mate.”
- Amanda Almeda’s “Empty Room” is a poem of timeless sentiment that is also grounded in this historical moment: “We made our own Olympics (they were going to be canceled).” The poem traces a series of premature departures in the speaker’s life, from “your emptied room” and from various childhood homes. The speaker takes the reader through each departure as if they were flipping through an album with snapshots of their face: “I’m nine / I’m ten / I’m eleven / I’m thirteen / I’m fifteen / I’m fifteen / I’m fifteen.” And yet something hopeful survives these disruptions. The speaker has made their “own playlist,” has learned to manage the moods of their alterable life.
- Yongbin Chang’s “The Imposter Snowstorm” sets the speaker’s doubts against the backdrop of winter. The speaker, though “stuck in a storm,” persists because “[t]here’s always a reason to hold on to hope / Because after Winter comes the Spring... / And in place of the *maybes* come the *absolutelys*.” “Like snowflakes on a warm glove,” the

; see also

speaker's doubts dissolve over the course of the poem into the gentle hope that "[y]ou are always good enough."

- The speaker of Karnik Hajjar's "What I Know" identifies hope as an internal resource that survives even the worst heartbreak: "There was one part of me still unscarred / Pure and smooth and polished." Despite falling apart during a toxic relationship, the speaker uses this hope to glue themselves "together, rougher, sharper"—and to emerge from the experience stronger than before.

In nonfiction, we have two contributions:

- Kiki Tapiero and Ari Chivukula's "The Law Zone" is a hilarious critique of law school and its social dynamics. The skit presents an alternate reality in which Hillary Clinton has been elected president and queer and nonbinary people of color have become the majority. This piece offers hope in showing that even alternate realities we believe we would prefer still have their own work to do—and that we have to fight for this one. "The Law Zone" thus broadens imagination about what is possible and encourages reflection on some of the absurdity of law school.
- Tyler Takemoto's "My Father Will Forget Me" is by turns brutal and tender. It repels the nostalgia that might glaze the writer's memories of his father, examining different moments in which they hurt each other. But the essay also refuses complete estrangement: As his father forgets, the writer "will tell him about the days we would spend at the beach with shovels to build huge mounds of sand near the water, hoping they would be sturdy enough to outlast the oncoming tide." This essay reminds us that it is possible for a story to conclude on a note of hope, despite everything that preceded it.

Keeping you and your loved ones in our thoughts. Stay hopeful, and happy reading!

Sincerely,

Angela Moon
Ari Chivukula

Bill Nguyen
Elena Kwon

Iman Shah
Luna Martinez Gomez

; see also

A New Hope

by Ben Burdick

“Never tell me the odds,” Han Solo said,
before successfully navigating
an asteroid field. Some people think
George Lucas never studied space.
No one ever wonders whether he
studied probability theory.
Is Han a frequentist or a Bayesian?
What does it *mean* to him to hear
the odds are three thousand seven
hundred twenty to
 (one)
against? Does he know to ask
“What group of similarly situated
pilots, what comparable asteroid field,
in what ships and with what experience,
produced these figures?”
Perhaps three thousand seven
hundred and nineteen (*other pilots*)
were unprepared. Perhaps some of their ships
lacked routine maintenance,
flew through denser storms,
maybe a pilot was drunk or distracted.
A million microscopic distinguishing factors,
a million ways to say: those numbers mean nothing,
 Tell me if you want, it's all just noise.

Han made it out the other side. Not because of luck:
Han did not defy the odds,
there is only
 (one)
 Han Solo,
there is only
 (one)
 Millennium Falcon,
 There are no odds.

Numbers only stand for averages.
This time is unique, incomparable.
Han ought to have said:
 Those numbers don't apply to me:
Your odds are
 (*other pilots'*)
odds: my odds are what I believe them to be.
It shouldn't matter what the robots say,
so what does it matter to say it?
Tell me the odds if you like.

“Never tell me the odds,” my father said,
before they put the needle in the crook
of his arm to begin the drip. My mother thinks
Dr. B_____ never studied medicine.
I know the odds are useless, because I
studied probability theory.
I am a Bayesian.
I know what it *means* when I hear
the odds are — something —
some number of years to
 —
excuse me? I know to ask
“What group of similarly situated
patients, what comparable cancers,
in what hospitals and with what drugs,
produced these figures?”
Perhaps all of those thousands
and thousands of (*other people*)
were unprepared. Perhaps some of their bodies
lacked the benefit of modern research,
were damaged by smoke and dust,
maybe the doctor was drunk or distracted.
A million microscopic distinguishing factors,
a million ways to say: those numbers mean nothing,
 No time to waste our energy on noise.

Will we make it out the other side? We pray for luck:
Even if there are no odds we must defy them,
I have only
 (one)
 father,
he has only
 (one)
 kidney left,
 Never tell me the odds.

Numbers only stand for other people.
This time is unique, incomparable.
I know I ought to say,
 Those numbers don't apply to me —
Your odds are
 (*other people's*)
odds: *his* odds are what I believe them to be.
It doesn't matter what the journals say,
and I don't want to hear it.
Never tell me the odds.

; see also

Strawberry Canyon

by Ian Good

I went for a walk today
on the forest road;
the light shone through the branches,
and it was beautiful.

But I was surprised,
because I found you
on the trail, among the dirt,
and you've been dead for years.

So I sat against a tree,
because it made me sick.
I had forgotten you,
and you were still a part of me.

As I sat there
against a tree and wept,
the light shone through the branches,
and it was beautiful.

; see also

Spring Migration

by Mark Cohen

In Spring seabirds drop their slop on boardwalks

And their mussel shells

To bleach.

Ducks chase my dreams in my sleep

Turkeys squawk at a dumpstered raccoon

With whom they never dine.

This blue heron wading at low tide

Did he just eye me by I-80?

Are we friends?

Bird tourists:

They fly by South San Francisco.

While seagulls

Kite solo on ocean winds,

Taunting my breathless

Bike ride.

I lock your hand

Like the

Sea lion on the rocks that just

Swam to sea

To meet its mate.

; see also

Empty Room
by Amanda Almeda

It was a task
The practical thing to do
We carted out your things in boxes and bins
But when I saw your emptied room
Why did I feel like I had drunk the last drop of my glass
Before I was ready to savor it
Why did I want to tip it back, shake it out
Tap the bottom
Only to find air

I'm seven again
There's a distance stretching as we pull away in my parents' car
I'm too little to see through more than half the car window
But I know we're on the freeway
When I see the streaks of perpetual Washington rain
Race across the window faster and faster
My dad plays December, 1963 on the stereo
And while all my favorite songs had been about dancing
This is my first memory of understanding a song about longing

I'm nine
I'm ten
I'm eleven
I'm thirteen
I'm fifteen
I'm fifteen
I'm fifteen
Another line stretches as I rise into the air
This time we're leaving too far for me to come back
I've made my own playlist

I learn that summer means boredom
Occupying ourselves with settling in
Strangers in an unfamiliar town
I know what to do when we have to stay inside
We made a newspaper (of pretend things that happened today)
We made our own Olympics (they were going to be canceled)
We made our own Beverly Hills (so we could have something to celebrate)

I walked campus today
It felt like the backside of a postcard
Home stretches like cobwebs, used stamps
Less and less sticks as dust collects.

; *see also*

The Imposter Snowstorm

by Yongbin Chang

I'm stuck in a storm, and I'm very cold
It's getting dark and I'm all alone
Sun's gone down and I don't know what time it is
But it's not snow that falls on me
It's soft *maybes*.
Pelting me and burying me
Making me colder and colder
Until I don't feel like myself
I forget what it feels like to be warm

Slowly, the *maybes* fall
 Maybe you're not enough
 Maybe you don't belong here
 Maybe you don't get it
Maybe you deserve to fail
 Maybe you'll never make it

But the snow never lasts, there comes an end to it
There's always a reason to hold on to hope
Because after Winter comes the Spring
Because the night is always darkest before the dawn
Because after you fall you get back up
Because we only appreciate warmth when we know the cold
And so, maybe this storm will also subside.

And in place of the *maybes* come the *absolutelys*
 You're *absolutely* enough
 You *absolutely* belong here
 You *absolutely* get it
You *absolutely* deserve the best
 You *absolutely* will make it

And one by one, the *maybes* melt away
Like snowflakes on a warm glove
And as the imposter ~~syndrome~~ snowstorm clears up
The warm sun shines again and reminds me:
 You are always good enough

; see also

The Law Zone
by Kiki Tapiero & Ari Chivukula

INTRODUCTION

Scene: Voiceover 1 (V1, Kiki) and 2 (V2, Ari) on a dark stage.

V1: The year is 2017. Hillary Clinton was only elected a year ago, yet deep changes in the fabric of America have been wrought.

V2: The flight of white Americans back to Britain has already shifted racial demographics to majority-minority.

V1: Cis-men can no longer go topless in public because it's 'distracting.'

V2: President Clinton appointed Supreme Court justices Merrick Garland and Jeffrey Epstein.

V1: The majority of lawyers are now hired by massive state bureaucracies within the new Department of Peace and Radical Affairs.

V2: War criminal John Yoo has been fired and war criminal Eric Holder has been hired.

V1: The Berkeley Law admissions process prioritizes Astrology sign over LSAT score.

V2: You unlock this door with the key of student loans.

V1: Beyond it is another dimension—a dimension of law, a dimension of logic, a dimension filled with 300 people you pretend to like.

V2: You're moving into a land of both mediation and meditation, of magical realism and magical thinking.

V1 and V2: You've just crossed over into the Law Zone!

; see also

DIVERSITY PHOTO

Scene: Berkeley photographer (BP, Gus) corners Student 1 (S1, Kiki) and 2 (S2, Ari).

BP: Welcome to Berkeley 1Ls! As you know, we can't secure federal funding without showcasing our class complexion. Would you be willing to appear on our instagov account?

S1: Sure!

S2: What do we need to do?

BP: Great; just stand there and look racially ambiguous!

BP snaps a few photos and examines them on the camera.

BP: These look great! You know what though? I think you could help fill our gender quota as well. Would you consent to that too? It's nothing much! We just really want to see your gender.

S1 and S2 look at each other, hesitating.

BP: You're wearing too much for me to really see your gender, you know?

S1 and S2 slowly undress, leaving undergarments.

BP: Yeah, but you could be cross-gendering! We really need to see that you're committed.

S1 and S2 fully undress and stand there, slightly cold.

BP: Perfect!

BP takes photos from several angles, some invasive.

BP: These are perfect!

S1 and S2 pickup their clothes and start to walk off stage as BP chases after them.

BP: Would you be willing to attend class that way? It'd be so brave.

; see also

BIG LAW/PUBLIC INTEREST DIVIDE

Scene: Biglaw (BL, Ari) is working on a laptop. Public interest (PI, Kiki) approaches.

PI: Hey! Mind if I join you?

BL shrugs without looking up. PI sits and stares at their screen.

PI: What are you working on?

BL: You know, just applying to jobs.

PI: Woah, so early?

BL: Actually, I'm on a different timeline since I'm applying to big law jobs.

PI: Oh yeah, I forgot about that. Public interest folks always figure things out later, but I try to remember—not everyone is PI!

BL still hasn't looked up from their computer.

PI: Well, I'm just another basic public interest queer trying to save the world. We really need people like you to push back on the nonprofit industrial complex!

BL stopped typing and closed their eyes as if anticipating a headache.

PI: I can help you if you want! I think I know someone at the DOJ.

BL: That's not even my area of law, I'm trying to be an M&A attorney!

PI: Oh. Well, I think I know some diversity scholarships?

BL: That would be great, you know, all I have is the Dean Edly Biglaw Grant.

PI: At least you don't need to worry about grades, I hear biglaw firms will take whatever they can get these days!

BL stares at PI and says nothing.

PI: All right, well I can see you're busy, so I'll leave you alone now!

; *see also*

EVERY CONVERSATION AT BERKELEY LAW

Scene: Student 1 (S1, Ari) and 2 (S2, Kiki) bump into each other in the hallway.

S1: Hey person's whose name I know! Small talk, insincere question about how you are?

S2: I'm just going to say hey because I don't care about you enough to remember your name! Answer that conveys I'm kind of stressed, just to test the waters for how you respond.

S1: I am surprised at your honesty, but I don't want to go any deeper with you, I'm scared of my own emotions. We got this!

S2: Gratitude. How are classes going? I want to leave and hope you don't just list them all.

S1: List of classes and professors. Change of topic to the only thing I know about you—how is that club going?

S2: List of events we had recently. Name drop of guest speaker at a recent big event we had.

S1: I'm feeling insecure so I'll insert something about my position.

S2: I am getting uncomfortable. I dread doing this again in a few weeks!

S1: Until then!

Both walk away and sigh a breath of relief.

; *see also*

WHITE CIS STRAIGHT MEN COLLECTIVE

Scene: White cis man (WC, Ari) is welcoming members when bad ally (BA, Kiki) enters.

BA: Hey! I am an ally of white cis men, can I come to the meeting?

WC: This is actually a social group only for people who identify as white cis men. Queers of color have space in the rest of the school, so this is a space just for us.

BA: Right, right . . . but I took a 23andMe test and I am 7% white! That must count for something?

WC: If you have to try and prove your whiteness, you probably shouldn't be in this group. Also, maybe we should have a talk about your brown passing privilege. But you are welcome to help out with our journal, or come to our event later this week.

BA: Oh what's the event about?

WC: We're raising awareness about how the first year classes impact our community.

BA: Oh, I don't know about that. I'm just here to learn the doctrine.

WC: Okay... how about you come to our protest next week? Dean Spade is being invited to speak at our school and he's been known to say really problematic things. He said only trans people should be allowed to serve in the military.

BA: I'm sure that's just taken out of context.

WC: Well, if you really want to be an ally those are some things you could do.

BA: I'll think about it . . . but why do you folks even need a space for people who are white and men? Why don't you all just join the men's group? You're being divisive!

WC: We all share a certain experience of being at this unique intersection. For example, the law school ran out of he/him pronoun pins. We're tired of being they'd! Tired of being ungendered! We want to be seen fully and even embraced for what we are: white, cis, straight men.

BA: To be honest, I'm really into white guys and think it's cute you organized.

WC: Get out!

; *see also*

DONALD TRUMP SPEECH

Scene: FedSoc (FS, Kiki) is trying to enter, but aggressive minority (AM, Ari) is blocking them.

FS: Let us through! We want to see the man who should have been president!

AM: Why do you FedSoc-ers like Trump so much? He's not even an originalist, don't you care?

FS: He's in line with our deeper values: trying to bully women into sleeping with us!

AM: You deserve each other, but Trump doesn't have a place on our campus!

AM and FS's phones chirp, they both look to check the notification.

AM: Dean Chemerinsky emailed the entire school.

FS: He's reminding us that all speech matters!

AM: How can he say that the only cure for good speech is platforming bad speech?

FS: Out of our way facist! Trump/Kavanaugh 2020!

FS pushes AM and runs past them.

; see also

CDO DRESS STANDARDS

Scene: Presenter 1 (P1, Ari) and 2 (P2, Kiki) discuss dress codes for CDO.

P1: Remember, you are all going to be working in one of the most strict and conservative professions out there. It is important to have a very polished and professional look.

P2: Here's the first look: Bowtie and skirt. Remember, you always want to have a masculine and feminine combination. Don't just fit into a box, make it colorful, make it playful, make it ambiguous.

P1: Here's the second look: suit jacket and heels. You always want to make sure with this look that your makeup is fierce, nails done is a plus.

P2: Great! Now let's check for your visual understanding. What's wrong with this picture?

There is a picture of a straight woman with matching skirt and blouse

P1: The color is unprofessional?

P2: Right! There's a lot of things wrong with this picture. The color is too dull, there's no pattern, the skirt is too long. This look is way outdated, and I don't want to prevent any of you from expressing yourself, but this is just not the attire to be wearing if you want a job.

P1: Next check! What's wrong with this picture?

Straight man with a suit jacket

P2: It looks very...distracting.

P1: Exactly. I want to remind you all that this is a conservative profession. We can't be dressing like straight people. Even if that's how you feel, you all should dress on the safe side, and then maybe start challenging social norms once you start working there. I even would recommend being aware of your hair length and body language.

P2: I feel ready to get a job!

; see also

What I Know
by Karnik Hajjar

You held me close despite my rough edges
Or maybe it was because of them
Your fingers rested on the coarse surface
Small raised bumps from small scars
Barely healed, always visible
From when I destroyed myself
Learning who I am

In your arms I thought I knew

There was one part of me still unscarred
Pure and smooth and polished
Locked away under rough skin
Your calloused hands were the key
That fragile part would vibrate
To the hummingbird beat of your heart

Against your chest I thought I knew

You shattered my purest part
Venom in your voice and
A knife in my spine
Brought to my knees
I was surrounded by shards
Pieces glistening from my tears

Holding myself I realized I didn't know

So I picked up the pieces of the mess you left
Glued it together, rougher, sharper
The perfect rose now has thorns
And when I saw what you hated in me
I saw what I hated in myself
I refuse to give you satisfaction

Standing before you, I know

; *see also*

My Father Will Forget Me

by Tyler Takemoto

My father will forget me.

Two days ago, it was his birthday. So I called him, then texted my mother when he didn't pick up. She dialed my number on his phone and put the line on speaker so that we could exchange a few pained words and lapse into silence.

Maybe the forgetting isn't a bad thing. He will forget all of our conversations: the ones where I cut ruthlessly, relentlessly, sarcastically into his humanity and capability. He will forget the times he slammed his fists onto the table after too many cans of beer and screamed about how sophomoric my ideas are; how spiteful, naïve, and arrogant I am.

He will forget the time, years ago, when we went bicycling together and he sped away after an argument with me—too fast for me to keep pace on my training wheels. He will forget the first time he left, driving without looking back even though I was running behind the car as fast as my childhood legs let me. I remember how it felt each time when he disappeared from view. Maybe that's why I'm not running after him this time, even knowing that with each passing day, his mind and memories grow dimmer. It hurts too much to be left behind again.

He will forget how cold I was when we reunited. And how stubborn I was to let the coldness remain with me, year after year despite his efforts; watching it transform into something ugly. He will forget how my mother and I then left him alone in his dusty apartment with no companions but fish in a tank and three televisions blaring cable news. And he will forget that even though he told me how lonely he was, I never found it in my heart to keep him in my life and tell him the truth about me.

He will forget the day his supervisor called me while I was at work to tell me "there is something very wrong with your father." He will forget about the four hundred miles I drove to take him to the hospital after his mental breakdown. He will forget how his words had stopped making sense and that he couldn't answer a simple question about who I was.

My father will forget me. But there are so many things I will remember about him. As he forgets the bad, maybe I can bring myself to do the same. And I will remind him about camping together in the backyard. I will reminisce about our walks in the park. I will tell him about the days we would spend at the beach with shovels to build huge mounds of sand near the water, hoping they would be sturdy enough to outlast the oncoming tide. The next day, they would always be gone, but we would try again: spending hours shoveling sand into huge dunes on the beach. My father never knew why I was so determined to build something that would survive into the next day, but no matter how futile, he would keep shoveling alongside me until the sunset.