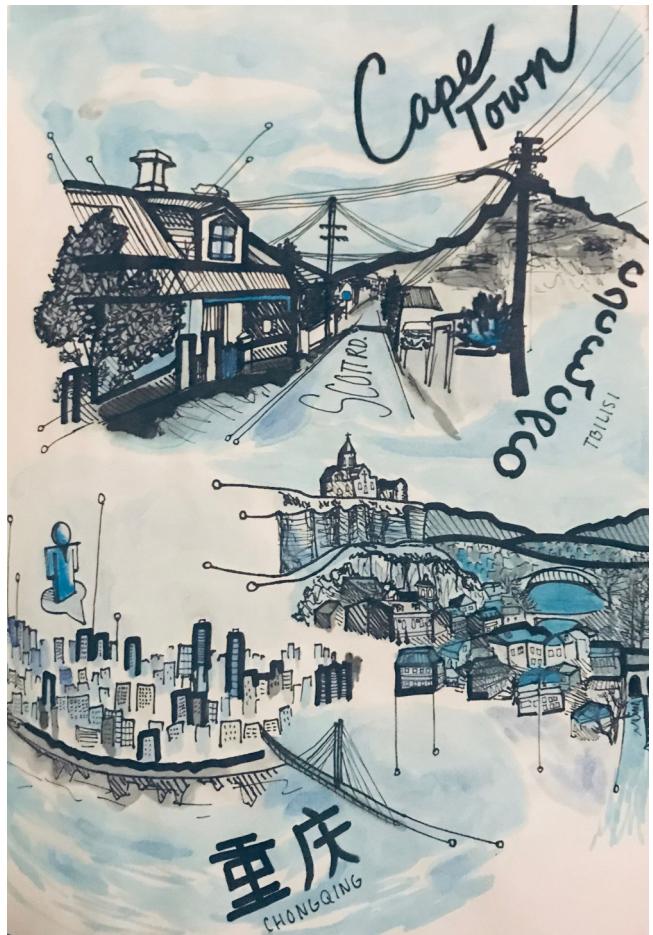


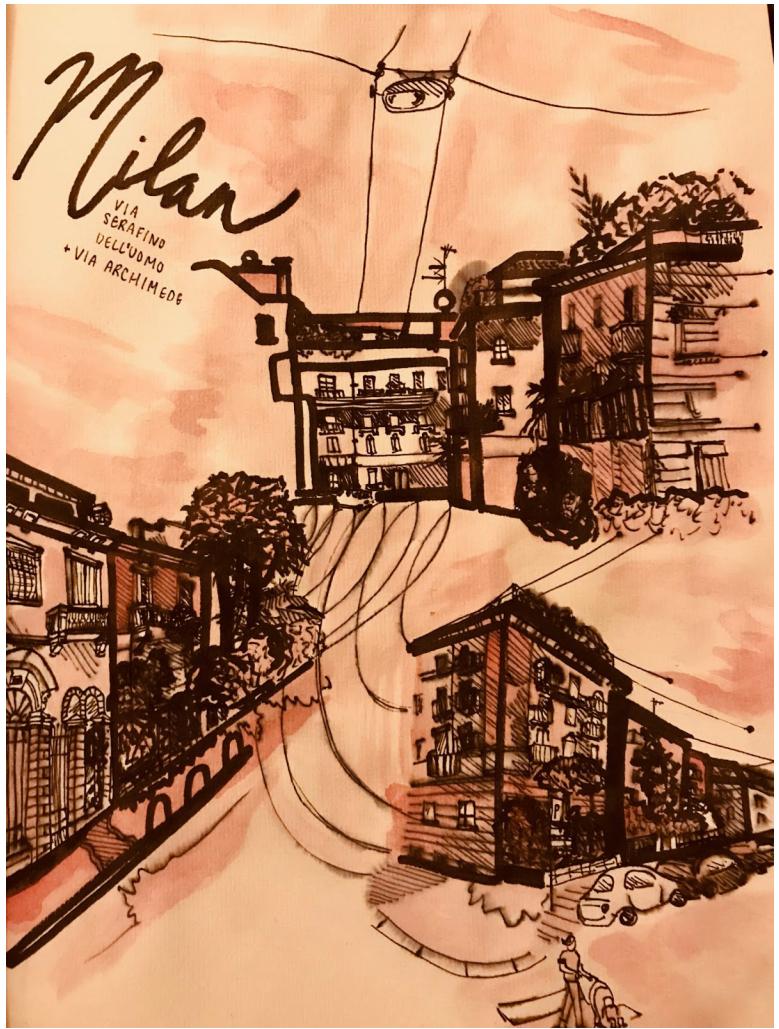
UTOR

issue zero
the, "we might
have something
here," edition





2



PUBLIC DOMAIN.

3

Oh, Angel!

And she sits smoking.
You will fail to notice
The way last night still lingers
In her hummingbird tongue,
Whipping away steam to clear the mirror.

You dart and jump like watercolor paint.
Oh, gas mask man,
Look closer, you drain the world like a bath-tub.

I yell:
Everyone through the looking glass!
(we are looking to ride the tresses
Of a one Lewis Carroll).

But jailbird baby, I stay behind to call,
Do not pass go,
Do not stop at the kiosk for chips and beer,
Don't slam the door on your way out.



Untitled 4:

Revealed to her hither and thither
Obliged to show her features,
Nipped by cigarette smoke.

Some holding her knees pinched
Stuck in the mind and proficient in something
(the general desire).

Dinner left behind her,
Moments of her,
Rushing back,
Perpetually,
Terribly,
To something else.



Before Lorca

FGL looks at me, says,
no tastes...

Federico, baby, come to the Limelight with me
i, between anapests,
—inhale and sob.

groaning sounds of pederasty
swarm my ears (in mist
he
deserves it, you fuck a kid, lose the war.)

FGL looks back and me and says,
description has no time,
i could be beautiful and have no time.

the quiet drunk of love,
staggered to us, smells of sweets,

and lives.
and grabs his breasts and weeps.
they will outlive the stones, these breasts.

a marble maverick,
greek statues never in their drapes,
sing beneath ~~ver~~loving breath:

beautiful, only in time—
he lives.

Nede Trommel

Ad Ad Ad In In Ad Ad In
I know how late it is by the people i'm talking to
My All I An
You all go to bed
Sn Wi I'm
You all go to bed

Advertent to work
Adherent to hurt
Adhesive introvert
Innovert and inherit, my excuses
Nonsense negative self talk my abuse is
Cruising, defusing, snoozing, still waking up with bruising

I'm soyluctant to give my opinion
Short sighted dominion ain't winning no bel prizes words
dancers who'd punch the stage crew if they saw them
And I get it, they're just trying to own it.

We all need truces

Truth's too intrusive and
Damn if I become a recluse, let loose, and accept the only
problems are the ones you're thinking about

I couldn't believe it! When you saw me, we were hanging
down out. With the pussy church!

Late Night Liz

I am sitting on the edge of the bathtub, knees facing the door, one elbow, one knee, one hand steadyng my book (Alexander Chee's How to Write an Autobiographical Novel). I sit up, grip water in my hand and press my full fist against the lowest dip in my spine. The water dribbles down coalescing for a moment before my thong soaks it all up. I imagine a kind and gentle figure behind me, in my mind it's Mother Liz from two nights ago. I wandered into church like an ass, late, rained on, confused and quiet. The service had just ended but she introduced herself and let me stand awkwardly at her side while the few patrons who had made it on time left.

So she grasps a big yellow sponge. She fills it with water and then squeezes it right above my lower back (just as much as she can with the one hand, never so much as to ask all the water from it). She never touches me but let's the water make its ill fated little escape from tub to sponge to me to tub again. I want to cry but I don't. Eventually I stand, take off my bra and dip my toes in. It's still too hot but I sink in thinking, if Mother Liz had run this bath for me, it would've been perfect. As I begin to sweat into the bath I begin to cry and use a washcloth and sponge to water over my shoulders and face. But, eventually, all in one moment, I calm and slip into quiet rhythm— left side in the water first, then right, each time listening beneath the waterline as the bath escapes me.



5/24/15

Chream
my throught reaks of CAcream
My trout reeks of cream
my palate whaphs of cream.

cringing lemon-bAcked Walls
The kind of Keylime pie.
old and A hand, from
wooden a chAir ʃ of the
Barred same color
Downtrotted, and bAckward
But poinTing up.

I Try to take a pulse, but
I'm shaking(?)

The Crem is made from
Fat. a Jelly

It's stock them, on my the
Back of My tounge

Eclipse

I abandon, vanish, go missing
out
I leave behind

probability
failing grand scales
why's a worse question

si wise's nonsensical
twilight
in the road, I'm

fraught by thought of not and
oh,
When I told Gaia to suck a dick
I was probably projecting

Caspian Lovett Vail

We, the taste of weeping eyes, we lap
At nose, at ear, this blinding, deaf, terrain—
Oh, have we traveled here too many times?
Pin cushion feet against the samel map

Stay lit, ere stillness follows life in doubt.
These candle eyes who flame at every turn,
Must know, too well, the breaths of all who live,
Make great a wind to blow these votives out.

It has been long since we spared words of love,
I wonder now, Oh must this fire keep?
Bespoke, we bodies, that long missed the other's
tongue.
Dear Caspian Lovett Vail, my little lying dove.



Untitled 8

Lift me by my standing hairs
(a study in grief)
I am migrated

Freshly dead and ready for my shroud!
Oh sick clothburn.
Clothburn!
Buried I shall till at last;
Forest of wimpled movement.

Gauss Crimson

gonna find one down to us stound
despite never going near (not one) near
The all other one they go uh near
The asolear lab is us (my esame isn't Michelangelo)
There's ch-cha-champagne in the chandelier What?
There's chassis groves in belvederes What?
The all other one they go near
The auctioneer loved this song
yeah, what a cool um cell phone
yeah. wish I would ignore Guinevere honey dear
yeah, I'll stock her young bast full
As nerve medley on your whim!



negativity bias

I've read that our brains have a predisposition to pessimism.

It's probably some botched survival instinct, but it's awfully inconvenient to be so afraid of worst case scenarios, to sink down into that sticky mud of self doubt when in reality, in that island of rationality somewhere inside the tempest-tossed seas of my brain, I know the worrying is stupid–

But it's hard to make myself let go of, hard to convince my brain that no, I don't need to be making myself feel this way, that I have the answers somewhere inside me (or that I don't even need to know any answers).

The fears seem cyclical, recurring about once a week, on any given day, and they get better with time, they lose their grip on me the longer I go on looking my demons in the eyes and telling them to fuck off, like I'm not afraid at all.

They get better with time, but sometimes they still get bad, they still remind me of whatever my greatest fear must be;

Humans have always been morbid creatures, but we like to pretend otherwise. Always hiding our nihilism behind pretty Sears catalogues and laugh tracks, except for my generation, which likes to set nihilism to laugh tracks, to make suicide punchlines, to help each other cope by joking about our inability to cope.

On the one hand, I get it, and I like that the jokes understand me.

But on the other hand, I absolutely can't stand them.

I don't know how much they help.

I know it's impossible to be happy all the time, but it's equally impossible to be sad all the time, and wanting to die maybe isn't something we should make so many memes about.

I know that our brains hold on to the sadness for longer, that if two events were to happen at the exact same time, one good and one bad, the bad is all we would see.

I also know that it's bullshit, and that while we can't rewire our brains to work in a different way, we can try.

My hair's soft and well-behaved today, and I like the taste of my vanilla chapstick, and maybe those flares of positivity, however small they seem, are things I can try to project at volumes equal to the bitter weight of any conceivable tragedy.

Filler shouldn't have been shocked by the rolling blue When you raised your arms without moving them having conquered the obstacle gardens. Pedals and ankles, you're moving too fast. I shouldn't have been swayed. When you reached below tangles then unfolded a blush from the sky in your hand, I shouldn't have flinched as it's fed it to me. Talking up possible teas, and of course you'd never take one alive. I did my best to fold again the shape that dropped and embalm it within a recreation of the area we scout. A recreation for my window. Folded for a backpack or suitcase. For a bus ride that was never really a trip.

Top Ten

Ultimate Full Truths Told
Imprisoned by impossible phrases. Each story a bunch of
All of my wonder ful phases?
When words intercept
How can I really connect
mazes.

Genesis P. Orridge Would Fucking Gag

feel somehow, still, far. still. will call my mother and ask her what she thinks. she seems never to have the answer to things like this but her voice will soothe.

forever yours,

e.g. kaplan

email attachment: pdf

i, h.h. holmes,

take your clothes

fold them neatly and force you down on your knees

roll your head back and tell you: call me sir

please

i think to hog tie you but cannot find the rope

i

swear i just had it

it does not matter

i'll use your belt to wrap one hand

handcuff the other to the bar in the tub

you whimper

quiet enough that

kathleen and the baby still sleep

i grasp one arm and pull

you come apart like caramel

gooey and bleeding

this seems wise. i can only hope this blows over quickly and quietly for you although i suspect it will not. i must talk to my wife.

ardently,

will

email attachment: pdf

i, frankenstein,
am on this cliff with you
am eating (sugar cubes
wind-bitten and crying)
wearing your skin like bedclothes
still your creator,
sir

Leprosy > Hickeys

These little weeping orgasms all over your body,
Oh, we are so unlucky!
For ours will be a little death
Again and again.

MISERY KID :: a series by Trina Mercado

1. No Notice

The flat stretch of desert known as The Emptiness lies on the top edge of the mindfield, and is vast and lonesome enough to have properly earned its namesake and then some. It's known for being habitable, but only just barely: neither safe nor dangerous, nothing to write home about, nothing to complain about, and always some infernally frustrating temperature right in between too hot and too cold.

Really, the most remarkable thing about The Emptiness is its unremarkability. That and its endless void of a sky—no sun, no moon, no clouds, rain, or snow. No stars. The sky here is simply heavy, an overbearing weight on one's shoulders.

People used to come from other places to study it, or take pictures of it, but upon further inspection, they all seemed to mutually agree that the phenomenon was no longer worth their time. They probably found other, more interesting things to ponder, Miz figures. She hasn't seen an outsider in years. Hasn't talked to a neighbor in months, either, but with the way her neighbors are, she's sure that's excusable.

Sometimes, Miz climbs up on her rooftop, and tries imagining what the sky must look like everywhere else. She fills in the thick blank slate above with images of celestial bodies, or constantly changing weather (moisture, searing heat, roars of lightning and flashes of thunder or whatever it is), but she's sure it can't compare to seeing the real thing. She peers off far into the distance, to where the Calavera Cliffs separate The Emptiness from actual civilization in that great big everywhere else, and her head spins the slightest bit as she tries to grasp the scope of it all.

She can't remember where she lived before this, if anywhere at all. For all she knows, it's always been this way; time passing without her knowledge, a constant waiting for some grand change that would wake her up, set her into motion. But the endless waiting only made time start to grow sour, so suffice to say that she's given up after a however many years, settled well into her little slice of nothing, only as content as she knows how to be,

which isn't very much at all.

Miz can hardly stand to watch tv anymore, but she presses down the top button on the remote with no hesitation that night, like she does every night. It used to be better, she thinks, before the mindfield got so deeply shadowed. Now it seems like the tv shows nothing but reruns, news broadcasts varying from alarming to monotonous, reruns, or jarring static, but sometimes, Miz will strike gold and find something that makes her laugh, so she really can't bring herself to get rid of the thing.

It entertains Carmicheal too, and that alone is as good a reason as any to keep it until it breaks. Her pet rat just seems to enjoy watching the movement, or perhaps he enjoys seeing an array of colors that extends beyond the dusty browns and dismal grays of their surroundings. He's been her pet for a few months now and taking care of him is another one of the only other activities Miz gets something out of. It staves off her loneliness in a noticeable way, having another life to take care of, reminding her to take care of her own as well (because in the eternal slog of The Emptiness, sometimes one needs reminding).

She spends most of her days typing in the numbers she's provided, recording data in endless spreadsheets for Mystery Inc. She has no idea what the data is for, but knowing isn't her job. She really doesn't enjoy her work, but its complete and total steadiness pays her meager rent, so Miz could never imagine giving it up, either.

It doesn't even take her that long on the daily, which is both a blessing and a curse, as when she's done, Miz often has no idea what else to occupy her time with. She eats and sleeps, entertains Carmichael. She rereads her collection of books that's seen no new additions in years. She lazes around, she tries writing words of her own, but feels like the words in her head are stuck in stasis somehow, and it requires more effort than it's worth, trying to get them out and in the open.

She feels like her whole life is stuck in a stasis.

She's not an adventurous eater, but she does get tired of

*her usual meals every once in a while, switching to something else, then switching back. There's a big wide grocery emporium within walking distance, as The Emptiness prides itself on convenience and low effort **everything**, but Miz is a terrible cook, and would rather order in spaghetti and meatballs and a side of garlic knots right about now, at 8 pm on a Thursday night, a late dinner that her stomach is growling for.*

She's already fed Carmichael his nightly meal of spiders and a neatly sliced-up scorpion, which she knows regular rats don't eat, but Carmicheal isn't a regular rat— he's a little shadow-infused.

*Just like Miz is, and **knows** she is, by the way her tears come out inky black when she cries, smearing dark across her face where she wipes them.*

A masked delivery boy who she assumes is about her age comes to hand off her meal at the door, and she thanks him, half wishing he'd attempt a conversation, and half immensely relieved when he says nothing, letting her close the door in silence.

Miz slumps down on the sofa and devours her meal in less than fifteen minutes, stopping just short of getting a too-full bellyache. She turns on the tv, lifts her feet up off the floor to curl her legs underneath her, and hugs a pillow into her chest as she turns on the tv. A shopping channel catches her eye, hawking unflattering clothing probably targeted at the retirees who live out here.

There's something about the earnest cheeriness of the models and salespeople that make Miz chuckle somewhere deep in her throat, so she keeps it on, snuggling herself in more, wishing Carmicheal were there to cuddle, but not wanting to get up to fetch him from his cage. For a creature so dark and badly perceived, he really is quite affectionate.

She shivers, from chill of loneliness that tends to wash over her every night at around this time, then nearly jumps out of her skin when she hears (and feels) a sudden, heavy thump atop her roof. Then— a flash of light outside her window? Streaking by before she has time to process it?

Miz leaps up off the couch, knowing her front door is locked, but still squinting at the latch as best she can without moving, trying her best to make sure. This is so highly irregular that it takes too long for Miz to remember the baseball bat stashed behind her bed in case of emergencies, a makeshift weapon she's never once had any reason to consider using, but one she quickly goes to pick up and keep in her hands, just in case.

She doesn't know if she should go hide in her room, turn the lights and tv off and pretend nobody's home, barricading her door and sneaking out the window... or if she should leave the lights on and turn the tv on higher, make it seem like she's not alone... or if she should do absolutely nothing, because there's a chance the thump was just an owl or raccoon up there, having a hard time keeping its footing, and the bright light outside was the first sign Miz is finally losing her mind once and for all.

She didn't want to call the police on what could so easily be a false alarm— not that the police are very reliable out in the boonies to begin with. She could go outside to investigate too, bat in hand and back against the wall, ready to run into a neighbor's place for help. Miz feels like she would be better off running to a neighbor than calling the police. At least then the help would be more immediate, and she has a hunch some of the other hermits must have some decent survival skills.

Miz waits for a good while, silent, hair standing on end all across her body, opting to turn down the tv, to listen more closely. She doesn't hear anything, but her tv is acting up now, static seeping into the once perfectly-stable infomercial channel, ruining the colors and blurring the lines together with ugly waves and patches of light underneath them.

Miz grimaces at the sight, fingers wrapping tighter around the bat in her hands. Carmicheal squeaks shrilly, and Miz can hear him running in circles, apparently reading the distress in the room. "It's nothing. Maybe," Miz says to him and to herself, though her nerves still twist inside her even as she attempts to brush it off.

When there's another flash of light before her eyes, this one bigger and near-blinding, Miz is pretty sure this won't be

something she can brush off at all.

The light dims and fades completely, but now there's an entire other person in Miz's living room: a woman wearing velvet pants and a suit jacket, with long legs and a sort of tear-drop-shaped body that starts with a small head and narrow shoulders, but broadens out a great deal around her waist. She brushes herself off, looking almost as confused as Miz imagines she must look.

*"Oh," she says, eyeing Miz up and down. "**You're** not what I expected at all."*



UTOR-ZINE.COM

Lollygaggers

Danny went running up the stairs. Briefcase in hand and smelling, indubitably, of the rows of dingy streets she had wandered through before landing on this one. She stopped at the first landing and slumped against the wall. Trying to catch her breath as quietly as possible she held the briefcase close to her chest. And immediately dropped it. The thing still smelled of blood. The deep brown leather yielded no difference in color but the smell was distinct. Suddenly overwhelmed by the urge to cry she gasped, clapped her hand to her mouth, and began to sob. Crying so violently her mouth would not close, her spit dripped between her fingers, caught in the fabric of her gloves. Almost as quickly as it began, the crying stopped, and she stooped down to reach for the briefcase. Almost hidden in the sharp sunlight coming through the window one story up she could see the small engraving on the metal plaque, "G.D. III". She pushed her fingers across it as best she could without losing her balance or having to touch the quietly blood-soaked leather. Realizing she could not feel the letters through the fabric of her gloves she pulled, frantic, at each finger, at the palms, at the seams, anything to get them off. But her small, clad hands, remained just that and as she slammed them, palm open, knuckles down, into the floor, her body fell back against the cold cement wall.

In time, she gathered up her legs, the case, and her hat that had fallen off in the episode, and stood back up. She breathed deeply, her ribs wrestling with the layers of too-small clothes and made her stumbling, quiet, way, up the remaining flights.

The door was barely open when the smell of velvet curtains drawn for days, of dust, of perfume, ricocheted her between moments and memories, settling, if only for a second longer than the rest, on the soft expanse of her skin

that felt like a velvet sea that rippled back and forth under each finger. Her palm pressed to the girl's stomach to feel the hairs there push back against her hand as the goosebumps spread across her body, feel them catch on the paper cuts and healing blisters. She was so soft to touch, Mrs. Danton thought, that she falls through the fingers like sweet water, and drains away even now.

But as her lungs filled and she could draw in no more breath, she looked to see the passing years that sat there, cowering in the corner, standing with an arm on the mantle, stoking the wood in the fireplace, barring her entrance at the door, bodies that piled up and spilled back out, pushing her out and sure enough she turned around and ran. She grabbed the brass knob, still warm from how long her hands had lingered there before she had worked up the courage to walk in, and slammed the door. The BANG sent her flying down the stairs, toes tapping the steps, heels never touching. But two flights into her escape her foot caught on her skirt and she went sailing down to the landing, crumpled and breathing hard. She didn't hear the steps over the sound of the blood rushing in her ears but the voice was unmistakable, "Danny?" She inhaled quickly, tremblingly, and spit out a quick but wavering, "no." She stood up and pulled her skirt down, adjusted her ill-fitting coat and pulled her hat down further over her mussed hair. She felt could barely look up but for a moment Mrs. Danton did and looked into the eyes of the woman above her and thought, if these capture any more of the sun someday the world will all go dark. And for a moment it seemed it had. Relit, broken, only by another, "Danny?"

"No. Like I said, you must have me confused with someone else."

The girl stopped at her door and quietly opened it. Sent a quick glance to the curtains, to the bathroom, to the

couch and fireplace and kitchen, all untouched, still stopped dead in her tracks by the smell of the woman who had been there only minutes before her. It was not until she had been standing there so long that her feet began to hurt again from her shoes that she noticed the letter, lying half obscured under her toes, half bright and white against the deep red carpet. She took a ginger step back and crouched down to reach for it. The envelope was blank and unsealed. She slipped her hand in and pulled out the thick, layered, sheets of paper. With hands that could barely stand to move she unfolded it and began to read,

Our shadows lie where all the cars dash by like 8 pm spilled all over a white picket fence.

All those people—drunk in love and spared.

Watch like this peat-block city will burn fast and bright.

You must look around the room,

Smile back,

Feel your eyes roll to and fro,

Like marbles,

In your wooden head.

But at dawn, turn away in your bed and sleep.

I run my hand through my hair but abandon it quickly, I get stuck on the tangles. I quickly close the laptop and say, *I'm fucked, I have nowhere left to go with this piece. But it's not due until twelve tonight, wanna head out soon?* Oslo pokes their head into the living room where I'm sitting, yeah Kingin. Leaving in 10? And, without waiting for an answer, pads to the closet in the adjacent hallway. We both wince as they slide open the screeching doors. Thirty minutes later the door slams and we forgo locking it lest we draw attention from our creepy neighbor who wants to come out and chat every time he hears our keys jingle. *The door locks anyway, you can't get in without a key, it's just not bolted* Oslo whispers to me and I nod, better safe from Michael and

robbed than suffering through the intellectual and physical intimacy of enduring a conversation with him and keeping safe the few valuables we had in the apartment.

This is my first time going here. Like, since I moved. Weird, huh? He laughs, so what's the project again? Adopt-a-statue? I nod. We have to pick out a statue, analyze its clothes, shit like that. We're walking to the Met from the Lexington stop. I'm not quite sure what I am looking for. Neither of us wants to open Google maps again and check, but the building is immediately recognizable when it comes into view. We both breathe in at the same time (and at our own paces each mutter some awed profanity.) We begin our ascent up the stone steps and I stare at my shoes as we climb and eventually plateau out, fearful of tripping. I murmur, *so ancient Egypt first? Then Greek statues?* I hear nothing so I assume I've received a nod in response.

When we are finally inside and at the kiosk to buy tickets I check the price and wince. Didn't my teacher say this was free? *Twelve for you, King Oslo chuckles. Shut up.* He knew I was saving my money for a burger tonight, fries too if I was lucky. When I get to the register I quietly groan, *so... twelve?* The man behind the desk tells me that it's a *suggested donation* but that because we only have about an hour until the museum closes, I *could* donate less. I ask how much less, and he says some people only give one dollar. *Can I do that? Thanks.* His small pinched face, framed by a large mop of black curls, looks suddenly disdainful, Sure. He hands me my entrance sticker, which I promptly place in the center of my chest, and a receipt (also a sticker which I am tempted to wear running up the leg of my pants). We wander in. *Ancient Egypt is this way,* Oslo nudges me. I meander around an actual transported tomb while he finds the bathroom, then we tour the sarcophagi together, and eventually make our way to the big open room where there

are larger pieces—ruins from a temple. A small moat takes up most of the space and the thousands of tiny windows that comprise one whole wall watch their reflections in the water. We stand there taking pictures for a minute, left with only about twenty or thirty minutes for Greek statues.

Os doesn't take nearly as much interest in these so we go our separate ways. Him to the stone heads, me to the stone bodies they probably once belonged to. I take my time reading plaques, admiring angles. No one feels right. All the naked women feel like they've just dropped their clothes and are reaching, shocked and demure, to grasp their breasts and crotches. I shake my head and wander further back into the strange, still, hall of bodies. I spend a minute cringing at a statue of a very tall man resting his arm on a very little woman, but I feel someone tap my shoulder and I turn, expecting Oslo to have returned from his foray into the sea of blank stares and terrifyingly realistic curls. No one seems to be there. I look around for any plausible suspects. In my search my eyes light on a woman about thirty feet from me. I can only assume she is a statue of Aphrodite- she is unaccompanied, completely undressed, and not trying to hide either fact, who else?

I make my way over, weaving around tour groups and docents. Finally, I reach her. I tuck my hair behind my ear and stare. My eyes wander up the pedestal, the long, chipped toes, the legs, one knee missing, and up to where her head should be. She is armless and worn in many places, the plaque says she was most likely accompanied by the baby Cupid in her original form.

And slowly as I work my eyes back down over her broken breasts, pale stone stomach, the parts of her that have been broken off seem slowly to be replaced by a shimmering semblance of stone that wavers with the movement of air, with each breath from everyone in the hall that seemed to touch her, to press gently against her. I reach up gingerly and

almost immediately my hand is trapped in hers.

She rises from her crouched position and steps down next to me. She remolds my quaking hands and begins to shape hers in them. I am puzzled and don't respond. She brushes the hair out of my eyes (too thick for my ears to hold it for long). She taps her virtually uncarved ears, covered almost fully in exquisitely cut hair, and closed mouth. Of course. *You can't hear or speak. They didn't make you like that, huh?* The only sense besides touch that she seemed to have carved into her was sight, eyes that cut, quick, soft, deep into yours. She nods and resumes her process. It is agonizingly slow, I only know the alphabet in sign language and even that is choppy, c-o-m-e, w-i-t-h, m-e, pause, l-o-v-e-r. She begins to walk towards the back of the exhibit, me in tow, I stumble behind her and look around, no one else seems to have noticed her, or me. She pulls me through ancient Greece, Rome, and then back again through Egypt. Eventually we reach a small hallway- taped off and dark, smelling of sawdust. Here she turns back to me and spells, *renovations*. I nod, still silent, and she backs in, both of my hands now in her cool, grip, held with a firmness that borders on pain. She is larger than I in every proportion and even my hands seem to be enveloped in the steady mist that is hers. Finally, we are tucked into the dim tangle of sawdust and markings on the walls of where the new exhibit will be, *F2, BLUE 769*, and a scribble I doubt even the workers will be able to read when they begin construction. She starts by lifting my shirt, nudges my arms until I raise them, and pulls it over my head. The familiar clink of my belt buckle, rustling of jeans, and soon we are both naked. She wraps her fingers around me and pulls me close; she is cold.

After what felt like hours we both lie on the uncomfortably crisp carpet. She picks up my hand, still a little bit shaky, and presses it to her chest. She turns her face to me and smiles. The broad expanse of her body is cold and

I feel no pulse but I understand. I squirm and pull my hand from hers to return the gesture. Her eyes light like she would laugh if she could and her silvery look drops to my nose, my lips, my collar bones, all the way down to my toes and back up again.

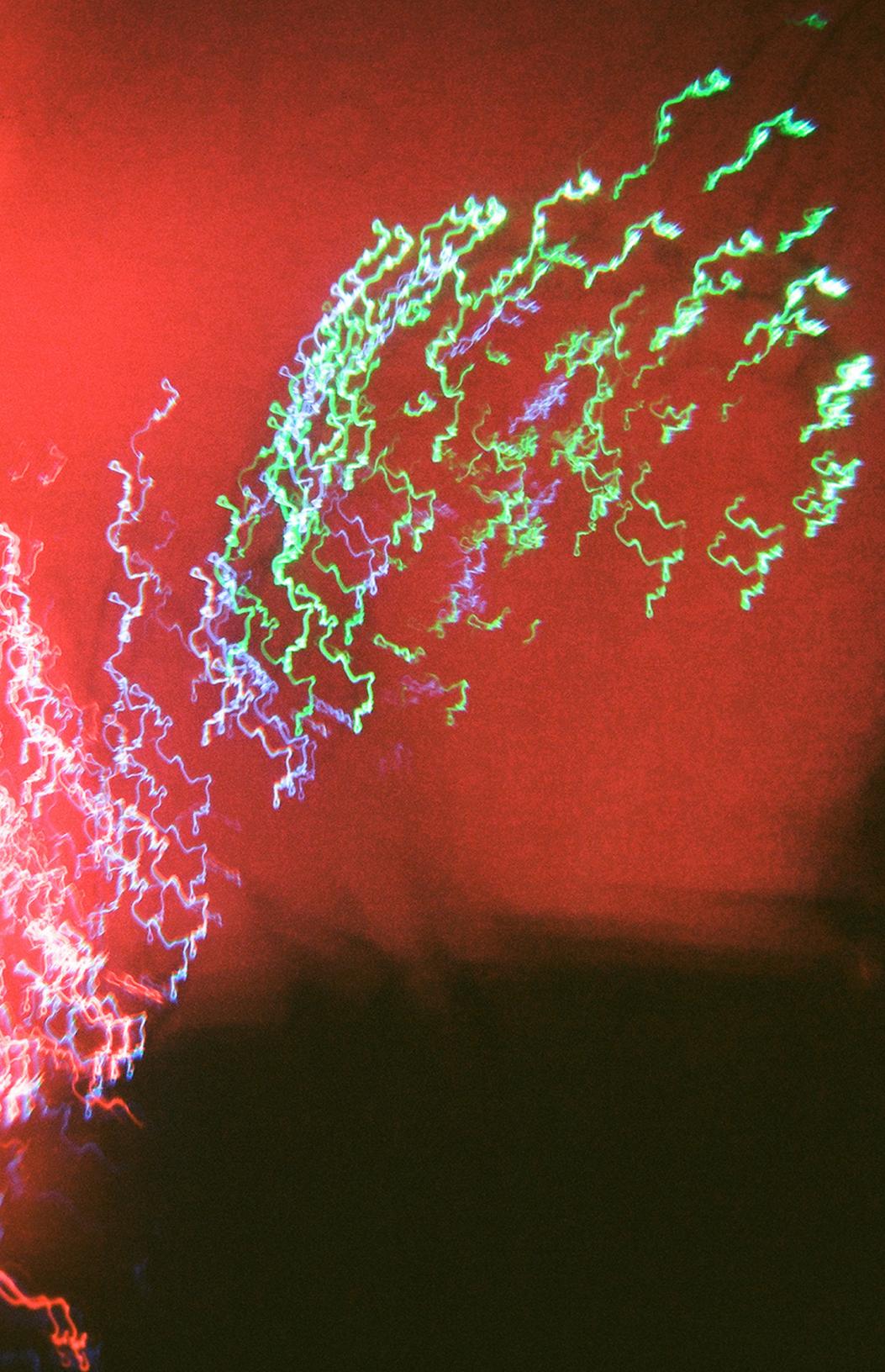
Soon she sits up, bends her knees, and lets her hands rest where they peak. I roll over and curl my body around the trunk of hers, gripping her waist as tightly as my tired arms will let me. After a few more moments she unwinds me and stands, reaching for my clothes. I lie back down, unwilling to let this end but after a few minutes I sit up too and mimic her previous position. I watch her lean to grab the jeans, the black shirt, and watch her legs press against each other, void only of cellulite or I would have mistaken her body for mine. I stand and turn to stretch and as I hear the belt click against itself again, I extend my arm without looking back, *Thanks*. But when they are not passed on to me, I spin back around and look at her. She is fully dressed now, somehow shrunk to fit into the familiar jeans, halter-top, even the combat boots, the off-white of her body stark against the powder blue and black. She crouches next to me again and spells out *what do you*, but instead of finishing the sentence she taps my head. *What do I think? Well you look beautiful*. She smiles, and reaches for my hands again, *come*. I shake my head; *I'm stark fucking naked*. She smirks and waves her hands in front of her eyes and then mine, *they can't see us*.

I stand, wary and still cold but she pulls my arm as she did before, and we begin our walk back through the museum. This time I walk beside and not behind her, but often I get lost and she gently tugs me down the correct corridor. Finally, we find the statues. When we reach her small pedestal, she taps it. I cock my head and she taps it again. I climb up and sit on the remnants of the stone steps I found her on, giggling. She looks at me for a long time and reaches both hands up to pull my head further down,

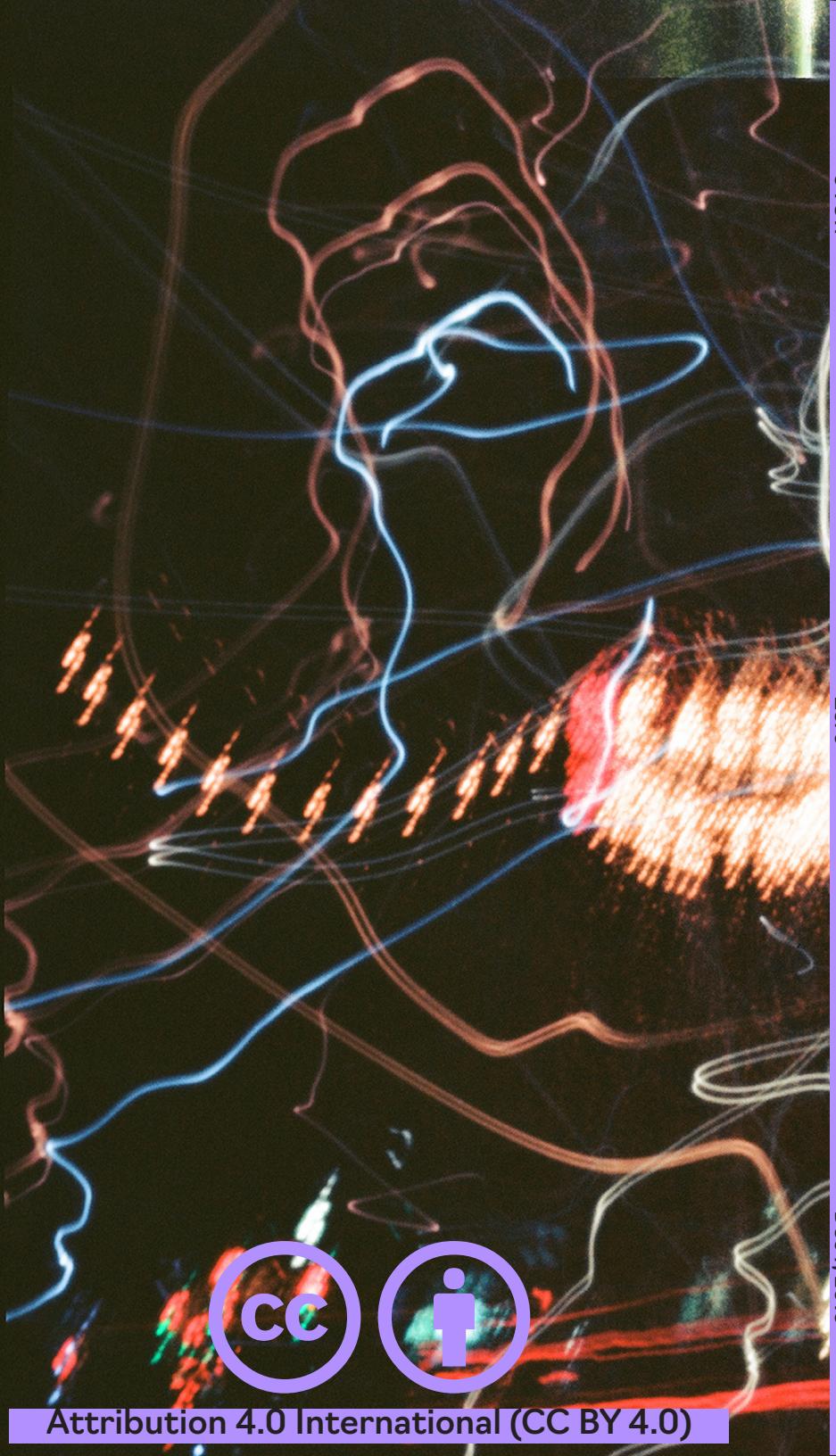
kisses my forehead, and begins to step away. I laugh and reach out my arm to keep her hand in mine, to keep her soft chest pressed against my knees. She leans back and for an instant I hold all her weight in my fingers, *lover*, I smirk but the further away she gets the harder it becomes to move, to grab at her to force her to stay. I look down at my arms that are now becoming a shimmering semblance of stone. As quickly as I can I call, *come back soon...* She nods and takes one more step back, her hands fall to her sides, mine frozen in midair.

Suddenly I hear a shrill voice and she jumps further away from me, *ma'am you should know better. You are not permitted to touch the statues!* She nods and smiles but her eyes dart between me and the security guard and suddenly Oslo comes into view, *Hey King, museum's closing we have to go. What happened to you? I came looking for you right here like three minutes ago and I didn't see you.* The two of them walk towards the exit and consequently out of my view. *Lover*, I rasp one more time, but even my voice drains away. The sounds of the museum dull and fade and soon I cannot hear or speak, made, as it were, in her likeness. New and passive body formed quickly and quietly, like snuffing out a candle.









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