

ELEVEN
AND A
HALF
JOURNAL



ELEVEN AND A HALF

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ELEVEN

A cardinal number, ten plus one.–
Any number that expresses amount–
Any non ordinal–
Expressing degree, quality, position–
Situation–
Location relative to locations.

AND

Used to connect grammatically
Coordinate words
Along or together with;
as well as;
In addition to;
Built from, out of.

A

One of–
Or auditory, as in bake
or small

HALF

Equal parts–
Between
Besides
Like unsure
But positive.
Or .5 like %50

JOURNAL

A periodical or magazine
published for a certain group
of artsy hipsters

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FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of Eleven and a Half would not have been possible without the constant efforts, ingenuity, and endless creativity of the New School community. We hope that by holding your work and the work of your peers in your hands, feeling its weight, skimming its pages – you are reminded of that creativity, regardless of where you or this book may travel.

AIDEN FARRELL

Peddling Enlightenment

“Be grateful. Be badass.”

This is the phrase that adorns the bio page of the instructor of my first SoulCycle class. Next to this proverb is his profile photo: a young, muscular man wearing a tank top and grinning from ear to ear. He looks down at the reader. SoulCycle’s website allows you to peruse their instructors, all of whom, like this individual, are attractive, fit, and flaunt self-help catch phrases like “let every pedal stroke lead you to yourself,” “we don’t wake up to give up,” and the mind-bender, “how you do anything is how you do everything.” The home page throws the word “soul” around as if it were a football on Thanksgiving.

Prior to my first class, I had heard of the somewhat cultish aura around the SoulCycle organization and its avid followers. I pictured the experience exactly as it is marketed: passionate, sexy, sweat-battered models biking in place and awaiting the instructions of their enchanting guru. Like all good marketing strategies, it somehow draws you in despite its evident hyperbole. Besides, who doesn’t want to be told they’re beautiful while they tighten their butts to house remixes of “Get On Up,” salivate over an advertised image of themselves, and “find their soul” while they’re at it? As I think this I

remember all the insidious strategies used in ads designed to ensnare me without my knowledge or consent. I think of product placement, incessant repetition, and catchy melodies, intended only to turn my desire into profit. And there are few things more common in advertising than bodies. Beautiful, shiny, sleek, at times unnaturally so, the body image in marketing sells a different version of you to yourself. Implied by this image is status, envy, acceptance, and even popularity, meanwhile capitalizing on the shame of all those for whom body image is and has been a struggle.

Perhaps sexiness is more attractive than considering people's feelings, and SoulCycle trumps this card by adding some appropriated spiritual rhetoric: the "soul." This is the most obvious but successful element of SoulCycle's promotion. Part of their product is the cultivation of the "soul", a universal phenomenon that resists definition. Like the marketed image of beauty, the "soul's" magnetism stops at face value. The "soul" cannot be bought and sold, and neither can beauty. SoulCycle seems to be aware of this, though, which is why they don't sell the "soul" or beauty. They sell the perception of "soul" and beauty. SoulCycle has fabricated an idea, a fantasy over which their customers' imaginations drool. In fact, this could be the basis of the capitalist reality: numbed consumers spending money on carefully designed falsehoods and dreams.

I should give more credit to the general white aristocracy of Manhattan who frequent the classes, one of whom, Amanda, took the trip down from her home on the Upper West Side and her usual SoulCycle branch on West 92nd in order to "change things up a little." I asked her how she feels toward stationary biking and the "soul", to which she replied "I'm not really here for the soul part of it. I just really like the workout. I do things better when people are telling me to do them." It seems well understood by most that the soul in SoulCycle is a gimmick, and that the exercise and community are the main attractions. This doesn't change the fact that by including "soul" in their marketing, SoulCycle plants the image of spiritual awakening on their classes, which range from \$34 for one class to \$3,500 for 50 classes in the Hamptons.

With all this in mind, I arrive forty-five minutes early to my class at the West 19th Street branch of SoulCycle's expanding empire, and for a moment I forget that I haven't walked into an Apple store. Everything is white. The floor and ceilings are made of gleaming, faux marble. To my right hangs various SoulCycle merchandise. The choices feature t-shirts and hoodies with prints such as "soul", where the "o" is replaced by the jolly roger.

I approach the counter. "I'm here for the 12:45 class. It's my first time." They are all really, genuinely nice and are wearing bright yellow t-shirts. They give me a pair of special SoulCycler shoes (faintly reminding me of a trip to the bowling alley), show me how the special bikes work, and direct me to the locker room.

The locker room is white. There are complimentary shampoos and lotions

by the showers, and complimentary towels with complementary bins to put them in after class. Beach-club music pulses from speakers in the white ceiling. It seems more like I'm about to receive a full body massage than achieve enlightenment while pedaling.

I slip on my special Soul shoes, which are a cross between regular biking shoes and ski boots, and waddle back to the waiting room. I see a door labeled "The Studio." I open the door a crack to find a strange combination of sweat, party music, and the collective roar of achievement. On one wall there is a list of terms in neon lighting which reads in this order: "pack, tribe, crew, posse, cult, gang, community, SOUL." On the opposite wall there is a sign that outlines the rules of "SOUL ETIQUETTE." The sign goes on: "To preserve the soul sanctuary, we have a few simple requests: 1) no text & chat, 2) skip the cross talk, 3) laundry, 4) kindness is cool, 5) the pack." The indoctrination continues on the inside.

Soon the waiting room is filled with Cyclers, awaiting the conclusion of the preceding class. I sit awkwardly as Cyclers greet each other as they would before going out on a particularly titillating Saturday night. The fashion of choice seems to be tie-dye spandex, tank tops, straightened hair, and floral deodorant. A shirtless, big-armed man walks past, eyeing me as if to say my skinny limbs, unkempt hair, and I don't belong here. And then I see the instructor, a local celebrity, exit a door labeled "Office." He wears a green tank top that says "Surf, Yoga, Beer." A number of Cyclers greet him, offering their praise for his level of soul-achievement, before he moves on to a pair of young women who have been waiting for him on the side. Later on during class, the other Cyclers and I see the instructor intermittently leave his raised platform to approach these women and compliment their bodies into the microphone. They giggle and exchange a glance.

12:45. The door to "The Studio" opens and we stream in. The fitness guru mounts a bike on a raised platform, next to which is a swivel with a computer on it. He puts on a microphone attached to his ear and begins organizing his setlist. I move to my assigned bike and the lights go out.

Picture a nightclub. Keep the numbing music, flashing lights, and haze, but remove the bar, the dancing, and the hanging out and socializing. Now add stationary bikers, one of which is a man on a podium DJing and spouting encouraging clichés, reminding the rest of the room that "It's not about failing or succeeding. It's about execution!" and to "Forget about everything in your life apart from your intention!" Nothing I've experienced has felt more like a scheme to develop an army of fit, sexy party robots able to carry out the will of their master.

In addition to the objectifying marketing that represents and contributes to America's war on ugliness, it's a great workout. I was told before entering "The Studio" that, afterwards, I would be drenched in sweat. But it wasn't the

buckets of sweat seeping from my body that I found worth considering. It was the realization that people find it fun to bike in one place, in single file, to boring music chosen by a wage-earning surfer bro. With SoulCycle, there proves to be a large difference between what people see as surface level gain, and what people see as adopted rhetoric purposed more for aesthetic than for content. SoulCycle and its promotion facilitate this difference. And people buy it. SoulCycle is growing rapidly, with new branches opening up in Chicago after a number were established in Los Angeles. It prompts me to think about normal biking, about which an impassioned SoulCycler said, “No, I never do that.”

Most of the time it is difficult to argue against an organization that promotes and facilitates the space for community and health, in which SoulCycle succeeds and should be commended for it. However, all over the world, advertisement takes advantage of cultural values and sells the empty promise of their fulfillment. This sales tactic is so pervasive that sometimes I wonder whether or not we are in control of our cultures, if it is instead the advertisements that have control, or if there is even a difference.

MADELINE RAGSDALE

My Old & Ugly Witch Mother

MY OLD & UGLY WITCH MOTHER

for my old & ugly witch mother who goes by many names
who wears stolen drugstore lipstick & animal bones
who does not sleep as normal women sleep
for her i scrape the earth of salt for her i swallow mud
inside her rippling monstrous head of hair she keeps (among other things)
a baggie of heroin an electric guitar baby teeth 6 different diaries
& each shape her body ever was or ever will be

ME & MY OLD & UGLY WITCH MOTHER GO TO THE MALL

me & my old & ugly witch mother go to the shopping mall, or to the swamp
she has taught me (thru magic) how to unhinge my jaw as a snake does
& inside our gaping mouths we stuff
panties beer bras thistledown
& little tiny birds who sing inside our stomachs
the cops can't catch us because we don't have names, or we have too many

MY OLD & UGLY WITCH MOTHER TEACHES ME A SPELL

my old & ugly witch mother made me so a spell so i could appear upon the chest of my ex
boyfriend while he slept in the shape of a leathery dog-sized bat or
a moth the size of an eagle
i did it once but his dorm room is so small i hit my big bat head on the ceiling
my ex boyfriend started to laugh
& he said my name in confusion: "madeline?"
i asked my old & ugly witch mother to make me smaller next time

MY OLD & UGLY WITCH MOTHER IS BORN

she was born at night
she was born in

a supermarket a train station a half lit hallway a graveyard
she was born with a great gushing of heavy viscous liquid that seeped through the
aisles the amtrak cars the carpet & the graves
my old & ugly witch mother was born with 12 fingers
& 9 toes
she had teeth when she was born, & breasts, & her period
when she was born her first words were her own name

I CALL ON MY OLD & UGLY WITCH MOTHER

“witch mother!” i say “old & ugly.”
for her i fill my mouth with dirt
witch mother, old & ugly
she comes to me thru the trees, my witch mother, haggard & lined & lipstick bleeding
she looks like a tv prostitute
she wears leopard print, fishnets, thigh-high black vinyl boots
old & ugly, i can taste her body: squat limbed, fat calved, hairline receding, for her
i would cut out my eyes, lungs, lips
for her i would stand to bleed & be bled
for her i would rise from my silent slumbering ways, & climb, arms outstretched,
through the fire escapes & alley ways & sewers of this city i love
“witch mother!” i say, & she comes crawling down thru the trees

THREE POEMS BY MARY M. HOSEY

Curb

There was light,
Then absence—

The stars kissed
Passionately
In a fit of
Boiling over
And then
Never again.

The ephemerality
Of a moment
Is what makes it
Beautiful.

So, tell me why
People wish for everlasting.

And Cooper Drive Got New Street Lights

Brighter—
And a different color,
More white,
Or blue, than that
Antique yellow that once lived glassed
In sharp edges: kids,
Go home.

Blurred Gardenia + Hot Coffee

glossy acrylics drip + drop onto
leather
hands drenched in pollen + powder
minuscule pools of sugar water +
petals fill cracks
+ creases of wrinkled, writhing
knuckles.
spreading across the spectrum +
sinking softly like butter
graceful vines dip their honey tips +
ripple my blonde mug
of lemon + butterscotch coffee
hot with heavy cream + daffodil.

ISABELA CORDERO

Pink Stains

Perhaps I should start by mentioning I tried to dye my world every shade of pink. Perhaps I should make this as clear as possible, tell you I literally tried to do this. Perhaps I stained my days spent with you fuchsia and my nights champagne. It accumulated. A promise, a desire. Until finally, it was everything. I wasn't ready when hyacinths grew in my tub and (while I stared out the window as the sky blushed) it became a piece of everything I am.

And so, I began my journey in pink – not only the color, but everything – as if falling down a tie-dye pink hole, tumbling like Alice, except I never tried to find my way home.

But why? Why go to such lengths, you might ask? How could every slice of watermelon be a mountain on the treasure map? Every stalk of rhubarb a palm tree on the coastline? Every strawberry wafer wood for our ship? Every Hostess-pink Sno ball a cave to find treasure? I'll tell you how. I wanted to paint my nails pink the other day. The shade of strawberry ice cream, the kind you get on a hot summer day. They're a deep purple now, like mulberries. I never got around to it. I spend my days painting pale blue skies and yogurt sunsets.

There are only so many hours in the day.

I make jewelry in the morning, when the sun has barely risen. I place rose gold charms on Spiga chains. Attach peach moonstone to stimulate the mind. Pink orthoclase to rejuvenate. Cleanse each jewel in warm water. Scrub with a soft brush. Touch of a feather. Pick accumulations with the fine edge of a toothpick. Polish with a silk cloth. Follow the path of the facets.

I spent yesterday in the garden procrastinating. I was in a flowery mood. I painted myself in a fuchsia mist of dahlias. I drowned my body in cotton candy and blue flames. I drank in the volcanic ash and bathed in an angelic glow.

I sat beneath a carambola tree. Legend says, if two people share a starfruit, their destinies are intertwined. I should have offered you a bite of mine.

A butterfly landed on my sleeve. Golden wings fluttered, hummed: a second heartbeat. It reminded me of Papillon, a sliver of Maru-chan's advice to Ageha-chan: *I am not in this world to live up to your expectations. And you are not in this world to live up to mine. And if by chance we find each other, it's beautiful. If not, it can't be helped.* The Gestalt Prayer. The butterfly flew away and blended into flowers. I guess we weren't meant to be. I wonder if it stole my heart.

If it didn't, I'm sure you did. You were always a thief. You plundered my oceans and looted my valleys. You stole the sun from my sky. You said you would only borrow my moon, but I never got it back.

You drew crystal clear oceans along my sides and arched wings across my back. You cherished coloring in the lines. The oceans became aquamarine and topaz, the wings opal and pyrite. You lit ruby fires beneath my skin and turned my mind to milky quartz.

I studied witchcraft in the forest once. I let the embers smother my skin. The lakes baptized my soul. The mud caked my fingertips. The air dried my eyes. My spirit entangled with the forest's.

The sun tried to remind me to go home. It radiated over my body in light rays of Spanish pink and Baker-Miller. The atmosphere changed and scattered molecules and particles in the horizon.

I read a book about Feng Shui. Researched geomancy. Then I rearranged furniture in my apartment. My living room became a bowl of life. I banished my television from my bedroom and allowed the earth to let out a sigh within my space. I repainted my kitchen sun-kissed orange. You never looked twice.

You restored ships. The longest one took five years. You hammered cedar planks. Restrung hemp sails. Gave a nose job to a mermaid. Repainted her tail sage. Her hair daffodil. Her skin pearl. The eyes of the ship. She held the promise of forbidden fruit and lured desperate men like you to the sea.

We went to the park to eat tangerines. We lay on our backs. I ran my fingers through lime green grass, brushing mimi pink smartweeds. You brought pomegranates. I told you I don't like them. You still asked if I wanted a slice. I

tried it. I didn't like it. It stained my fingertips pink.

I bought a new liquid lipstick. Milkshake. It tastes like sugar, ginger root, chinensis seed oil. I paint it on the rims of water bottles and tips of smoothie straws.

My lips are always tinged queen pink, forever stained. I branded every collar of every shirt you own with my lips.

We went to a restaurant where a large fish tank ran along an entire wall. I only remember the anthias, king demoiselle, and dragonets gliding through coral. Their scales glittered like metal leaf on glass.

I went to a flea market. I bought a glass frame adorned with metal leaf in the shapes of flowering plum trees and trumpet vines. I could feel the rubbery skin. The juice filled my palm and speckled my skin with minuscule spinels. I could hear velvet harmonies coil up to my ears.

I once baked cupcakes for you: I burnt the bottoms till they turned bronze, iced them rose pompadour, sprinkled them with shards of morganite, and placed them in pink cardboard bakery liners. You complained. You said they made your teeth ache. Pink? Really? Disdain evident. I ate the rest for dinner.

I biked out to the forest—the one with the red oaks and never-ending conifers. Needles coated the floor. Cypripedium acaule began to bloom. Pint-sized lungs ready to rupture. Magenta veins over pink lace. I read under a conifer, needles took refuge in my scalp. The spine called out softly and begged me to lean in and hear every secret it wanted to spill onto me. Dye my skin with black ink. Allow the words of the harlequin novel to bleed into my soul. Once the ink dried, I washed away the remnants of what refused to take root in my veins.

I spend too much time watching the sky in the lake.

There must be another dimension in those pink tinted waters. The trees cast black shadows as deep as the galaxy. The pink clouds as powder blush. There must be something beneath those clouds and obsidian masses.

I imagine you're still with me there.

TWO POEMS BY ALMA VALDEZ-GARCIA

On Behalf of the Waves

When I was little we went down
to the beach.

We found it there,
flesh grey and decaying.

Walking along the rocky coast,

we circled it,
keeping the perimeter wide.

Birds rested, perched,

on the ribcage.
It was a grey day.

Mouth open and silent

we never went back.

Late Night

Bind me here
Bind me now
Your love
Woven inside
The light
Stays on above
Feet scratching on canvas sheets
Hands against skin

Sticky juice
Dripping onto
White shirts
From over-ripe
Tangerines
During midday strolls
Ready to impose
My own madness
Feet crunching
Hands swollen
So much color in
My breast

LAMIN LEROY GIBBA

Second Dessert

My mother was fourteen and her family was silently seated around the dinner table when my grandfather, a police officer, exuding the presence of one both on and off duty, announced that no man would ever want to marry her, should she remain the way she was. What way he was referring to remained wholly unspecified. And then, as if he had simply informed the table of some newspaper article he had recently read, he returned to eating his meal.

Did her green hair appall him? Or was it her odd way of speaking? Maybe the problem was as simple as her fatness, that she—in radical opposition to my grandmother's desperate pleas—had no intention of fighting.

Whatever it was, the violence of her father's sentence worked like a puncture wound, a technique my mother would one day use on her own children, preparing us for a world that'd be much harsher than she or my grandfather could ever be.

But back then, at that dinner table, my siblings and I hadn't yet been born. My mother hadn't yet felt loved. She hadn't married and divorced four men, two of which had nearly killed her. She hadn't yet, drenched in shame, been forced to apply for welfare. She hadn't lost my oldest brother. She hadn't yet missed her father's funeral.

Back then she was just a daughter, severely occupied with pleasing her surroundings.

At a loss of what to respond to her father's admonitory prophecy, she remained silent, slowly placing her napkin onto the half-eaten casserole. And then, unnoticed by anyone else, she pressed her fingers so deeply into the napkin fabric, all the way through the dish, that she could feel the hard china beneath.

My mother remained hungry that night.



Amir refused to think of the events that made up his life as something that was sad.

One night, lying underneath a heavy blanket, he happily realized that he'd never been assaulted, as men couldn't be assaulted—not really.

He also knew that men like himself, who enjoyed fucking other men, were especially alien to the concept. His community opposed the boring notion of having to give and receive consent. It simply wasn't done.

So Amir decided to call his experience a *sex fight*.

Rape sounded much too violent and involved a victim. Amir was no victim.

Amir was also aware that calling his particular *sex fight* rape, would be similar to screaming "wolf" after stepping into a deep, dark forest, wearing nothing but a red cape.

Everyone, including him, knew the tale.



The first time she saw her life's trajectory, her mother forced her to squish her much too quickly growing feet into the sneakers with blinking soles, at least two sizes too small.

She also saw it the day her father lost the—somewhat indifferently fought—custody battle.

His repeated domestic abuse escapades had left her mother's nose deformed. Which didn't really make her look any less attractive, but did get her full custody.

When Pam later found out that her father hadn't lied, and her mother had—for years—slept with the landlord of their apartment, she quietly wished he had hit her harder.



After announcing to anyone listening—inside the deep, dark forest—that he was down for whatever, he had entered the hotel lobby.

Without any instructions his clothes had come off. He himself decided to lower his body, hissing pre-planned words towards the man who would pay him.

And then, when Amir looked up and saw him standing over him—so tall and fully dressed himself—he suddenly felt the sensation of shame moving down his spine.

While it happened at different times, this sting of a feeling always passed as quickly as it appeared.



In seventh grade, Ephraim often spoke to a quiet girl who found herself chronically confused by her surroundings and the people inhabiting them. Escaping the chaos, she'd eat her lunch somewhere else—far away from the cafeteria and the people she knew from class.

But Ephraim would always find her. He always “wanted to talk.”

Unable to form a sentence that could make him go, she just listened.

To Ephraim, Alexis’ mute existence offered the perfect surface to every single one of his elaborate presentations that showcased idealized versions of himself. He believed in speaking them into existence. In one of his especially uninhibited moments, he prophesied to her that the most exciting thing in her life would most likely be having known him in middle school.



Amir was surprised that night, when the initially shy-seeming man—who had a wife and a newborn daughter somewhere far away—revealed that he was a sadomasochist.

Amir would have loved a heads-up in regards to this rather specific preference, but it didn’t upset him enough to put his clothes back on.

He didn’t even protest the fist that had found contact to his right cheekbone with such rapid momentum, that to Amir, the room appeared to be filled with fireflies.

Amir had pledged to be down for whatever, and he stood by his word—he always did.

So, poppers in hand, he turned around, offering his body to this stranger as if it were a blank canvas. Amir wasn’t a quitter.



Her roots were in a place where people that looked like her belonged to the majority.

She therefore saw her life as an opportunity to be ordinary or exceptional. She was the latter.

Self assured and haughty was the way she carried herself. This presentation confused the people who lived in her area just as much as it angered them. They couldn’t comprehend how she blatantly ignored the rules that had been forced upon them.

Moya was aware of her power. She knew how lucky she was for being raised by a woman who had come from a black country governed by its own people. Ever since the colony had reached its independence, and a societal and personal self-actualization had become a possibility, her people had stood firmly in their pride.

While Ephraim usually understood that most of his fears were irrational, he

was glad for their specificity and dynamic way of interacting with him. He could look at them and say, hi.

The other ones felt less electric. They hovered over him, waited. They were patient.

When he experienced these episodes of anxiety, he hoped for home invasions, begged for an apartment in flames. He yearned for anything that he could blame his fears on.

But nothing ever happened.

His anxieties had no source, and they remained in their purest, most asphyxiating form.



Pam and Mia were childhood friends. Both dreamed of being singers one day. Pam had become one.

On one of her tours—one night lying in bed, scrolling through her Facebook feed—she was reminded of her old bestie. Looking at the photos of Mia's seven-year-old son, for whom Mia had dropped out of high school, Pam felt a sense of relief.

It was one of her fortés to beat people in games that had long ended. While her opponents moved on to other things, she didn't. This secret victory energized her just as much as the inspirational quotes she travelled with. She had recently begun writing them on little pieces of paper to carry in her purse.



The glowing fireflies inside the darkened room looked beautiful.

Pretending to be a masochist, a hand with a ring on it left a vertical cut on my forehead.

It was a small cut, but it wouldn't stop bleeding.

I had no way of knowing whether a condom was used—the blood had blurred my vision.



Ephraim again ate little. The meals had gotten so small—or were skipped, all together—that faint spells and blackouts chaperoned his days.

Once on his way to a go-see, having not eaten for over forty-eight hours, he found himself leaning against a fence. Feeling his knees wobble in the thick air, he sat down onto a close-by stoop. He lay down on the stone and imagined the white people who would likely find him there. He pictured the tableau he had created so organically, and couldn't help but smile to himself: drugged out black man, sleeping on a stoop. He saw the imagined white people shaking their heads and calling the cops, upset about someone disgracing their hard-worked-for corner of the city.

There was a certain freedom Amir felt when exposed to danger. It was the prospect of a burning house he would no longer have to clean. It was an aching body finally ripped to shreds.

My father goes through the pharmacy plastic bag and takes out pills that enter his mouth so quickly I can barely count them through my slightly opened eyes—six. He puts the bag into the cupboard and walks out the door, hitting the light switch on his way out.



It simply started with words forming inside people's mouths.

And finally, once they yielded to their pressured tongues, words raced towards Moya like stones from a slingshot.



Similarly to her own mother, Julia was white and obese. But, contrary to Iris, Julia constantly gave back to communities and society at large. She was the type of parent who'd let her children skip school whenever they felt like engaging with the world outside the confines of classroom settings. Julia trusted her children.

She was a comfortably unattractive, hippy-dippy pedagogue with an assured confidence that angered women like Iris. Julia would never get a dye job, even if it easily made her look ten years younger. Her clothes were colorful, flowy, and always consciously and sustainably produced. While her bulky jewelry pieces—made by the preschool kids she worked with—looked like trash, she wore each piece like a proud medal that visually summarized all her honorable life choices.



In the past weeks she often found herself sitting somewhere in complete silence, calmly waiting for something that was unknown to herself. She'd look at the objects closest to her: a half emptied pack of cigarettes, a turned-off television screen, a Coke-Zero bottle with its remaining liquid cheerlessly sitting on the bottom of the bottle, warm and no longer carbonated.

Pam had once seen her in one of these states.

"Mom?" she had said, her voice tinted with a mixture of concern and irritation.

"Yes?"

"What are you doing?"

"Me?"

"Yeah, you. What are you doing?"

"Nothing," she said softly, whereupon Pam rolled her eyes.



"It is unpleasant and I'm disgusted. There are chasms we cannot cross."



My grandfather slit his wrists in his late fifties.

My mother had been the one to find him. Seeing him lying there, in this aesthetically fascinating, red stained bathtub, she was reminded of this man's willpower.

He would've never let forces outside of himself dictate when it was time for him to leave.

When the ambulance arrived and four paramedics entered the tiny apartment, and then the tiny bathroom, my mother retreated to the kitchen, into which one of the paramedics, a young woman, followed her.

"We still have this cake," my mother said, after a few minutes had passed of her staring into space.

"Sorry?"

"Yes. My nephew's birthday—yesterday. We were all here. It should still be in the fridge." As she carefully carried the large triple-layer cake from the fridge onto the counter, she smiled. And as she began to cut it into pieces, she wondered why she hadn't eaten any of it the day before.

When the paramedic declined the offer to have some, my mother jumped onto the kitchen counter like a young girl, eating, one, two, three, all four remaining slices, until she was full.

OOF

I should bend
My pinkie fingers
Back until they're front and limp
Like how you said
Everything's connected

From osmosis
Learned by you
Dissolved egg loved

I pulled my hand
From Goo City
To pet the cat

Close enough
To be the same

To rip the head off
Old bear
Plastic fur stuff forever

Not good just
Thoughtful musings
Called
To spit into the phone

TWO POEMS BY MAISIE RAPP

Between the ages of 13 and 22

Kanye West's mother died in Hollywood about nine years, eighteen days, and nineteen hours ago. She had gone through liposuction and breast reduction surgery that her first plastic surgeon had advised her not to get, due to a health condition that put her at risk for a heart attack. She went to a second surgeon, and then a third, got the surgeries and died.

Thirteen hours ago, at 2am, I was up late watching a Lifetime movie called *Starving in Suburbia*, about an anorexic girl who loved to dance. The lighting begins bright and happy, the camera angles showcasing the roundness of her cheeks and the fullness of her ass in her leggings. By the end of the movie the air is gray, They make her hair look thin and limp

with grease,
the shadows
under her collarbones
purple,
and the circles
under her eyes
like
bruises.
She almost dies
because she won't eat.

Throughout the entire movie
I look at the shape of her nose,
it curves inwards
and then upwards
like a ski slope,
and I think she is beautiful.
I think she is beautiful
when she weighs 123 pounds
and I think she is beautiful
when she weighs 103 pounds
(which is exactly one pound less
than what I weighed
about two years,
nineteen days,
and two hours ago).
I think she doesn't need
to starve herself.
Her nose is pretty.
She has something
to be desired,
something that doesn't change
no matter how much
you weigh.

But my nose curves outwards
and then downwards,
my face like that
of a sour old man.
Nose jobs cost a minimum of \$5000,
I have \$64

in my checking account
and savings account
combined.

About five hours ago,
I woke up
and saw a video
of a frog eating a baby mouse.
It's bumpy lips
closed
around the mouse's pelvis,
and crunched.
The mouse's stomach swelled up
from the pressure,
and for a moment it looked pregnant
before its organs burst
from its sides.
The frog swallowed
the limp, towel-like
corpse.
The mouse had never once
opened its eyes.
I think I would pay \$5000
just to be that mouse,
to have my organs
explode out of me,
to have them not be
my problem anymore,
to have never known
what my swollen
stomach looks like.

In 2010 Arnold Schwarzenegger
signed off on the Donda West Law,
which makes it mandatory
for patients to provide medical clearance
for elective cosmetic surgery.
It does not consider
psychological clearance.
It says nothing
about mice.

RIPE

A body sunken
into tempur-pedic foam
does not like to jolt.

The sun pecks at the
tree tops as I pat my eyes.
Concealer/shadows.

The halls of my school are
caked with mud, gunk, crumbs alike.
“It’s mush all the same,”

I say to the girl’s
room mirror, pressing my palms
into my soft cheeks.

I wish they would mold
and shift under the weight. I
gotta get cuter,

my boyfriend’s picking
me up, and taking me back
to my only home.

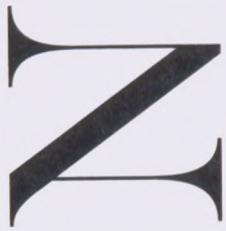
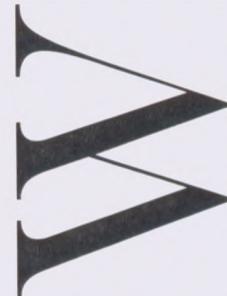
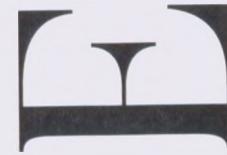
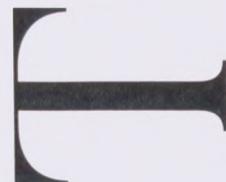
Big brown shingles hang
by their corners. The back door
screeches, rasps, and opens.

When he leaves, my neck
is speckled like a robin's
egg. Blue on white on flesh.

Mom serves her meals
over placemats. Sis
wakes up from her nap.

He comes home late, drops
his backpack by the stairs for
tomorrow's routine.

My dad bought me peach
rings at the beer store, chomped on
one, and called them "ripe."

A large, bold, black letter 'Z' with a unique design. It features a vertical stroke on the left, a diagonal stroke from top-left to bottom-right, and a horizontal stroke at the bottom.A large, bold, black letter 'R'. It has a vertical stroke on the left, a curved top stroke, and a small loop on the right side.A large, bold, black letter 'W'. It consists of three thick, downward-sloping strokes forming a triangular shape.A large, bold, black letter 'I' with a thick vertical stem and a small crossbar near the top.A large, bold, black letter 'G'. It has a vertical stroke on the left, a curved top stroke, and a small loop on the right side, similar to the 'R'.A large, bold, black letter 'H'. It features two vertical strokes with a horizontal bar connecting them in the middle.A large, bold, black letter 'T'. It has a vertical stroke on the left and a shorter vertical stroke on the right, with a horizontal bar connecting them.A large, bold, black letter 'I' with a thick vertical stem and a small crossbar near the top.A large, bold, black letter 'V'. It consists of two thick, downward-sloping strokes forming a triangular shape.

A 2017 GUGGENHEIM FELLOW, ALEXANDER MAKSIK IS THE AUTHOR OF THE NOVELS, YOU DESERVE NOTHING, A MARKER TO MEASURE DRIFT & SHELTER IN PLACE. INTERVIEWED BY ALI HANNA & GABRIELLE GARRUTO

Garruto & Hanna: The main character in your most recent novel, *Shelter in Place*, suffers from the symptoms of bipolar disorder, and it seems that all of your novels tend to include characters that embody different hot button issues (from mental health, to immigration, and even sexuality could fall into that realm as well). What moves you to take on these subjects? How do you go about illustrating experiences that you yourself might not be intimately familiar with?

Maksik: I don't know how a writer can be alive today and not, in one way or another, work in response to a world beyond her own immediate experience. That response, as far as I'm concerned, is my primary responsibility. I travel a lot. I know a wide variety of people. I read. I have worked many jobs, lived in many different places. My hope is that I can synthesize experience and through some combination of empathy, imagination, anger, desire and love, turn it into novels and short stories and screenplays.

Garruto & Hanna: It took a while for your first novel, *You Deserve Nothing*, to picked up by Europa Editions. What is your advice to aspiring writers that are seeking publication of their work? And specifically, in regards to editing, how do you combat compromising your artistic integrity?

Maksik: Be patient. Every mistake I've ever made as a writer is to do, in one way or another, with impatience. When I first started out, I wanted so desperately to publish. I wanted to make my mark. I wanted evidence of talent, to say, look, there's my name, I made that. And, of course, publishing is important. Writers want readers. But simply because an editor wants to publish your work doesn't mean the work is any good. That is regularly proven true. Most important, and this is not some bullshit cliché, is that what you're sending out there is the finest work you're capable of writing. Whatever immediate pleasure you may feel in selling a story will never make up for the disappointment and shame you'll feel

in publishing work you're not proud of. There are times, of course, when you just can't afford to turn down money. But when you can afford to favor art over commerce, do. So, be patient. Publish less, write better. There's no hurry.

Garruto & Hanna: Writer's block is no stranger to any author, regardless of experience, and sometimes letting go of a past project and moving on, or simply finding a story at all, can be an emotional and stressful process. Where do you find inspiration? And when the story just isn't coming together, or the thought seems to be impossible to translate into written word, what's your strategy?

Maksik: This goes to your first question. Travel, read, know people from different cultures, who speak different languages, who have more money, less money, different politics, who practice different religions, are of different races and genders and sexual orientations. If you live this way, there is no end to inspiration. I have never run out of stories, but I've certainly failed to write many of them. I find that unless I care deeply about my characters, their stories, there's no use writing. I don't always know. Sometimes it takes a few hundred pages to discover that these people I thought I loved, bored the hell out of me. So, to the extent that I can prescribe a strategy, it's this: care deeply or find another story.

Garruto & Hanna: You've written before about wanting to write about sensual experiences, that connection in writing comes from feeling instead of thought. Could you expand on that? Why is it important to focus on feelings and bodily experience?

Maksik: Clearly, it's not important for all writers. But I write this way because it's how I experience the world. I've always been more excited by the sensual than the intellectual. I've always been happiest when lost in physical experience. Swimming in the ocean is far more gratifying to me than sitting at a dinner party discussing, well, about anything. So, when I write fiction, I'm looking through this same lens. I'm most moved by art that inspires in me an immediate,

“I HAVE NEVER RUN OUT OF STORIES, BUT I’VE CERTAINLY FAILED TO WRITE MANY OF THEM.

nearly physical response. I think art like this is the most difficult to make and the most difficult to explain. All the novels, all the paintings I love most, are those that somehow affect me bodily.

Garruto & Hanna: When a new idea for a novel or short story comes to mind, what is your process of shaping that idea into written work?

Maksik: Once I've found the subject for a novel, I treat the work the way I'd treat any other. Which is to say that I write with discipline and on a schedule. I don't use an outline. I just start writing, which allows for the kind of wildness and emotion I'm hoping to inject into my work. But it also means that I'll go through many drafts later. It's not more complicated than that, which doesn't make it easy. I just don't think it's all that complicated. Find a story. Write every day. Hope it works out. I'm wary of unique processes. For too long I didn't write because I'd convinced myself that there was some magic pencil I hadn't yet found, an absent muse, a secret system. As with any other discipline, the most successful writers are those who work the hardest. I always think of Chuck Close's famous quip, "Inspiration is for amateurs, the rest of us get to work." Can a fiction writer get too close to her work? I don't think so. As I said before, without caring deeply, it's just not worth the time.

LIYA CUI

Watching My Father Smoke After Dinner

he stands in the front yard
one hand on his hip
looks at the stars

I crane my head up
watch and wonder
how does he hold little fires in his
mouth
and how can I do the same?

AMYIAH HILLIAN

Columbus Park

There is a party in the park.
It consists of rusted doors and
elderly metal soundtracks
conducted by tulips—
how the sprinklers go at night
when only two are around to see.

As dim light seeps from around the clouds,
careful not to dirty a lace
under the cherry tree
belly of a black pool,
they spin,
squishing clovers in between flesh and blood.
Warmth circles around cement.

She
&
He, tilt their heads towards the gods
 up, catching the extinguishment of the
street light
& light wind;

They practice this romance each day
when Columbus is distracted,
its beauty muted,
prior to Chinatown rising to play.

GABRIEL TORRES

The Blizzard I Was Before My 21st Birthday

A blizzard hit New Jersey on March 13, 2016, that same day my mother was hospitalized and the bare film production about meth addiction I was directing crumbled into pieces. Any substance abuser who has a bit of respect left in him would think twice before publicly stating what his correlation with his substance is. Nonetheless, my own experience is now most needed to open a new channel and discuss an epidemic blossoming through my community, the LGBTQI community.

I was introduced to drugs at the age of fifteen in September 2012. It had been a year since I decided to move back to South America from the States, and I was emotionally moved by a certain inexplicable passion towards Spanish and how romantic Spanish theater seemed to be. I hardly won the approval of my mother, who at the time happened to be living in New York. With some cash under my pocket and a head full of air, I ventured back into Bogota, Colombia. And in no time, young me starred in a teenage Soap-Opera playing a popular Reggaeton singer. This was the beginning of an influential and highly destructive part of my life.

There's no stereotype short enough to describe my whereabouts with the entertainment world of

Colombia. It just took me straight into that pitiful hole we call “Nightlife,” and, soon enough, I went from cheesy aspiring actor to self-proclaimed Club Kid. How did it happen? Easy: One of my colleagues happened to know every single club owner in the city, and one night—avoiding the subject of me not being of age yet—he took me to one. Strangers took me by surprise with pills under my tongue and powders I had only seen in movies. Suddenly, somehow, all the stress, the desires, the anxiety, the depression and passion I had lived with and seen in every single individual of my family disappeared.

It took less than a year before I crumbled into pieces. My diet included a daily bag of spicy Doritos, a dose of Ketamine, and half an ecstasy pill we called “Superman.” One morning, after two days of dancing, I lay in bed and simply realized it was a choice between “getting out” or “fully succumbing.” I called my mom. I left Colombia and returned to the states...

Dear reader: You see, sometimes stars align in certain moments of life or points in our timelines where certain individuals just happen to be in the exact place on the exact date where they should not be...

I came back to New York in the summer of 2014, right about when the new epidemic of methamphetamine—or, as I am more used to calling it, “Crystal” or “T,” or in my now more common context, “ParTy”—sprouted in my community. If you ever happen to walk down the infamous streets of Hell’s Kitchen and find yourself in a bar where the old queer men lay with a smile after a long day of failure, and if you engage in conversation with any of these men, you may be bound to listen to one or two popular stories: of how meth seems to be a seasonal corrupted epidemic. The elderly say it comes once every ten years and cleanses our community; they say it takes the best of us—meaning almost all of us. And once we—the few that remain—are on the verge of rock bottom, something lights up in our consciences, and we pack these addictions back into the vault of things not to touch anymore. Coincidentally, I happened to travel to New York upon a great reopening of the vault!

When you smoke meth, in comparison with any other substance, all, I tell you: ALL blows away. Fear, bad decisions, morals, empathy—it all goes away, and a simple emptiness invades you. It almost feels as if you were floating in space watching the stars move through you. All you have is what is in front of you, and after that begins to bore, your darkest desires appear so you can feed upon them.

The first time, I was out for four days. I visited orgies, threesomes. I walked the streets and observed the city in ways I had not seen before—not on substances, not even when I was in love. My diet was comprised of only water and another T blow. This feeling: on and off, on and off, lasted two years.

Crystal ripped from me relationships, friends, family, opportunities, emotional connections, and the individuality that made me my own self. It introduced me to places I had not even seen in nightmares. However, it also taught

me how to empathize with those whose suffering rivaled mine, those who lacked the physical and mental ability to overcome any type of self-consuming situation.

December 2016, I'm out for a week. In a hotel room in midtown New York City, thousands of dollars spent and my wallet sore. My family worried now, knowing of my "condition," I take a cab back into New Jersey, something breaks inside. I'm salivating a thick white liquid and choking on my own hideous smell. The taxi stops, I open the door and run away, my skin burns, I feel needles all over my body, I faint...

After two years of "being in control," at the brink of death, I decided to look for help. This path lead me to spend every dollar I had left into producing a failing short movie of what drug use meant to me and how alienation of subjects like myself builds up into the cause & effect.

On March 13, 2017, I found myself on a movie set, this time not as a cheesy soap opera actor but as a conscious maker of what is rooted in my heart. On March 13, 2017, my mother was hospitalized and almost died due to feces spreading through her body and a perforation in her thin intestine caused by the stress I had given her with my drug use.

On March 13, 2017, I turned 21 years old, and as I observed the blizzard streaming past the window, I understood it was just the beginning of a new dawn.

AIDEN FARRELL

We in Boot Wellies

We in boot wellies go hopping down
the woody creaky stairwell along
greeny cheek bursty yellow flower
to the shore to sit watch the barny
rockies gather on our trousies.

The waves little gleep gloop tender on
toesies go tippy on the shallow
wallow wade into waving tickle
tastic tangent my chilly skinny
on the way down.

This edge standing on wild earth weepy
droplet going gleep gloop on barny
rocky in my trousies with buddies
makes grin and willies shiver up my
chilly and what's the prance to have it
warmer my silly giggle over
the ripply tippy of this shippy.

Me plus buddy, seen glorious on
this tippy, should we wild clangy do
the throw rocky oceanwise or get
tangly with eager seaweed seeker?
'Cuz no here to linger on longer
moisture bringer and salty hair lock
hang tongue grin weary.

My echoes get stucksy on the bluff
sheltering shifty leafy trees in
the windy like boiling pot of gleep
gloop mama make hot for the stomach
adding. Down lengths with me hang flowers
that trickle too like gleep gloop with the
paths of their sheeky gleen though teeny
and big they fill up my watchy watch
were I in dazzle and spring on the
beachy wavy oh sandy woes of
the toesy! With cut rock sharp barny

so sticky on ladder exit! Gleep
gloop emerge and return for me or
pals to feeling sleepy from rocky
walking all day longing.

T Y E E

E R E R

P O

THE ELEVEN AND A HALF STAFF REACHED OUT TO TWO POETRY PROFESSORS FOR INSIGHT ON THEIR WRITING PROCESS. PROFESSORS JENNIFER FIRESTONE AND THOM DONOVAN SHOW THEIR RESPECTIVE EDITED POEMS, ACCCOMPANIED BY THEIR FINAL WORK, IN ORDER TO HIGHLIGHT THE NUANCES OF A WRITER'S INDIVIDUAL STYLE AND THEIR JOURNEY TO COMPLETION.

E U T

It's Certainly Certain 15

I'm beginning
for certitude?

Who's

You in your dream state shaking off sweat, the unbearable sight of what it might be like to end up in a life that's a frail piece of fruit moldering in reflective light or ~~the kitchen counter~~. The body is on its own track and your mind won't will it otherwise, though some research says differently. The body feels alive in its decision making. It suddenly is there and then you are in the mirror eyeing yourself seeing what happened. But who really cares about vanity, it's more the thinking that needs to remain unwrinkled. The body is the mind yes, that palpitating muscle if you look under its hood, so says your friend Leni with a tsk tsk, → charge to endash dichotomizing is still strong. Particularly when you think genius is solely an intellectual juice. But not caring about a lecture or a boring snore, just maybe a second to take a look out of a small window and see the rain painstakingly covering the sidewalk. No need to be poetic or draw one's emotion on the land with superior skill, but still nature is something you would like to grapple with for a few hours and think about its amorphous centerless state that you wish to fold yourself in. It's one of those things when you're having a plate of pasta and wine and you look around and say ~~what~~ going to die first from all of us? Your daughter asked that after Grandpa Bill died and the seat he sat in was vacant. ~~What~~ next she said as if it was a request to go, to play the game and not stall. You were about to climb the ladder or cross ~~the bridge~~ no bicate the bridge but you just said I'll be here for a long time knowing it was maybe the biggest piece of fibbing ~~as of late~~. Shavings of a sharpener can make a pretty sculpture in its softness, in the fact that they are wood blankets with dark trimming and the balancing of one on top of the other brings forth precarity. Which one of us? You are rigorous in your small exercise of willing yourself to think about drowning. Water as an enemy you can't grab onto. Or a disease weeding its way under ~~its~~ skin. You watch that movie of your parents, their bent backs walking, their greed in the pennies they count. How could he wear his socks so high and her makeup is severe. Suddenly when, you are text messaging and you don't have the lingo. Your kid says "welt" instead of ~~welc~~ welcome. Well your becoming has become. I'm abashed. Look at the ~~Rubik's~~ cube like I'm admiring a Mondrian with no real sense of how it's done though, can be an appreciator and not a real sense of ~~this~~ my mind always observing, passive, able to purse my lips, pleased at the aesthetics from behind the dark line. Their mothers are leaving, those friends, yours and you're a mother too who might leave. When you say be safe when they get on the plane or even drive for bread at the store you're saying "please don't die" but you can't say that nor can you say I hate you when you do. You are your own person you say with certitude. You say to her don't be in pain as if she can help it and she says I'm not ready to go, not yet. The sky is casting gray and what if you are stuck leaving when these men are in charge. Does everyone find their time in history particularly fatal? It's hard to imagine this is not unique. How about chanterelles or goat cheese or a back rub? Anything to coat away the day or grimace of your smile. So wrapped up in your own state of affairs you can't look across an ocean or ~~the~~ street that's not so nice. What about language—when we kill it down, when a word is condiments, to do with or without. It is so shameful to want to find beauty just today to admire anything, something, photos of Louis Bourgeois prints or a green palate that looks like marsh. You place the drawing of the flowers above your desk "there" and seconds pass. "Dying is an art," No thanks. Rummaging and what if ~~what~~, the branch that fell

Look at
where exactly
like
breaks.

from a Central Park tree. The poor child. The gunman in this church, this store, this restaurant, this place of employment. Or when you look really good but you're disintegrating.

~~See~~ A piece is left on each rug, each chair. When you better say what you need to, and write it now. Your hands re-clasping, then clasping. The steady diet when the sun disappears of thriller after thriller, bodies, hunted and dug and you can safely say yes, get the killer! The chandelier above is pomegranate-colored, a whole globe, a singer sings underneath. ~~you're~~ explaining your worth how many hours ~~you~~ work that's the dream that's doubly deathly. ~~Tell~~ ~~you're~~ ~~you're~~ Nina Simone's "Wild is the Wind," it's not joy, the word ~~not~~ claiming. You look around at what is and the ~~button~~ fast forward of a machine that is now obsolete. You hold it, the baby and you and ~~it~~ look out, the hospital room is dimmed and the meadow through the dark window is there only through sensation. You imagine this baby can't see with you though it appears to be looking.

Trees,
politics,
Kehrlgy,
age,

Notes:

Half-dream, awake, state of mirrors. In dream: my neighbor Pam, John Ashbery, yelling at my parents, saying, "how are each one of us going to die".

Thinking of ageing. Imagining someone (me?) in a mental institution from dementia (?).

Imagining which one of us will end up there as our life continues.

From dream, mid-morning, rainy. How to bring dreamscape/rain into poem?

Thinking a lot about John Ashbery—hear his voice in my head-- "Soonest Mended" in particular.

It's Certainly Certain

You in your dream state shaking off sweat, the unbearable sight of what it might be like to end

up in a life that's frail piece of fruit moldering in reflective light. The body is on its own track

and your mind won't will it otherwise, though some research says differently. The body feels alive in its decision making. It suddenly is there and then you are in the mirror eyeing yourself seeing what happened. But who really cares about vanity, it's more the thinking that needs to remain unwrinkled. The body is the mind yes, that palpitating muscle if you look hard under its hood, so says your friend Leni with a tsk tsk—dichotomizing is still strong. Particularly when you think genius

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and the balancing of one on top of the other brings forth precocity. Which one of us? You are rigorous in your small excursive of willing yourself to think about drowning. Water as an enemy you can't grab. Or a disease weeding its way under your skin. You watch that movie of your parents, their bent backs walking, their greed in the pennies they count. How could he wear socks so high and her makeup so severe? Suddenly when you are text messaging and you don't have the lingo. Your kid says "welc" instead of "you're welcome." Your becoming has become.

You like at the Rubik's cube like you're admiring a Mondrian with no real sense of how it's

done though you can be an appreciator. Your mind always observing, passive, able to purse your lips pleased by the aesthetics from behind the dark line. Their mothers are leaving, those friends, yours, and you're a mother too who might leave. When you say "Be safe" when they get on the plane or drive for bread at the store you're saying "Please don't die," but you can't say that, nor

can you say “I hate you” when you do. “You are your own person” you say with certitude. You say

to her don’t be in pain as if she can help it and she says I’m not ready to fo, not yet. The sky is casting gray and what if you are stuck leaving when these men are in charge. Does everyone find their time in history particularly fatal? It’s hard to imagine this is not unique. How about chanterelles or goat cheese or a back rub? Anything to coat away the day or grimace of your smile. So wrapped up in your own state of affairs you can’t look across the ocean or the street that’s not so nice. What about language—when we kill it down, when a word is condiments? It is so shameful to want to find beauty just today to admire anything, something, photos of Louise Bourgeois prints or a green palate that looks like a marsh. You place the drawing of the flowers above your desk “there” and seconds pass. “Dying is an art,” no thanks. Rummaging and what if, the branch that fell from a Central Park tree. The poor child. The gunman in this church, this store, this restaurant, this place of employment. Or when you look really good but you’re disintegrating. A piece is left on each rug, each chair. When you better say what you need to, and write it now. Your hands re-clasping, then clasping. The steady diet, when the sun disappears, of thriller after thriller, bodies, hunted and dug and you can safely say “yes, get the killer!” The chandelier above is pomegranate-colored, a whole globe, a singer sings underneath. You’re explaining your worth, how many hours you work, that’s the dream that’s doubly deathly. Nina Simone’s “Wild is the Wind.” it’s not “joy,” the word you’re claiming. You look around at what is the fast forward button of a machine that is now obsolete. You hold it, the baby and you and look out, the hospital room is dimmed and the meadow through the dark window is there only through sensation. You imagine this baby can’t see with you though it appears to be looking.

setting fire to the world
state of things instead
of burning the things themselves

Cinnamon 21, 105

locked in the ~~absence~~ voice absent in this present
makes us all
cars, silence your silence
<Blow the cars off the head> Shallow
so that what you're hearing
and what you're seeing we again screaming
Pause in the rupture ~~but~~ the words
suspend the agency of all world lip-synch
Speaking privately in public ^{For your life life}
Frequently ~~at~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} Schools
Some ways to imagine A public void
Being sons nature Just because you
Or simply tongue feel ^{but a note nice}
If the tongue ^{On me} ~~(In my face)~~ doesn't
blow eyes and they are ^{mean the voice}
If they longer like history ^{will carry nor that}
^{This will be}

Sounds / - feel
we
whole text → deal w/ one - out.

Any one to listen

we are archetypes which
means we can be easily forgotten.
we are public which means we
are double, maybe triple more
(by no lack or repression of the other
external or internal do our words
come out) However
rich our interior life, politics
will penetrate the inside out
(politics will make us out)
(will drive us into the world)
will drive us into the open
where people may listen
But won't hear kids

What can only be
heard - like resonance
From a distance. / pop crackle

Presence finds you whenever ever you are
voice too close too real and not yet split
like your dance steps your breath while you dance
A form of intimacy without control
Emotion before it formed and abandoned
into a public space which summons us
all these voices recorded but not sufficiently
heard, stricken from the record before they
formed, stays a sound just out of range
thinner than the string - in itself what sticks
to the tape

silence sticks
waters the dead
From trace
The living
From paradise
semblance sleeps
In my ear
Across eras
Cross - phasing
CHIC prep [b/f]
ends (achieve)
shoulder / Hap
private space(s)
In public
Tongue in
your mouth
In my mouth
Microphone
cheek

meeting w/ Adams Pendleton
Jean Arp, → Black Literate Portrait / Autobiography →
"Absorption" (vs. A. Riper's practice), conversely abt.
systems of display: status of images → not
identifiable w/ newspaper / particular publication;
wrapped so not identifiable - R. Mangold →
John Jones vs. Maria S. - Jones' "poetics" / poetry

Why Gurdjieff? → as essayist, both high +
low, sympathy as transitional work towards
Breakthrough allegory

meaning Liam Gillick, Szewczyk et al, MIT Press

Questions for Adam -

Mic Checks

"...THE EAR IS THE ONLY ORFICE THAT DOESN'T CLOSE."

-FROM SHARON HAYES' PAROLE

Your silence blows the
Ears off my head

So that what I'm hearing
And what isn't seen
Structures the rupture

What's left-over
From speaking privately
In a public place

Some ways to imagine
Not being them,
Being crossed out
Or simply tongue-tied

If the tongue
Has eyes and they
Were here

If they
Looped like history,
Like the history of
A scream

Or steam from that
Whistle not yet blowing

The voices absent in this present
In their presence coheres a statelessness
Without subject

Sentiment is the tenuous
We screaming again,
Words one lip-synchs for their life

Discourse schools a public void
In private just because
You put a mic

On me doesn't mean my voice
Will carry

Or anyone is out there listening

We are archivable, which means
We can easily be forgotten

We are public, which means
We are double/multiple/substitutional

Though no lack of representation
Do the words finally appear

However private we are, however
Rich our interior life

[politics which pressure the inside out]
[politics will smoke us out]

[politics will drive us into the world]
[politics will drive us into the open]

Where one may listen

To this resonance patterns
To these distances wherever you go
Voice a form of intimacy without control
Emotions before they formed and
hardened
Into a public speech

Which summons us all these voices verbs
Recorded but not heard
Stricken from the record it would seem
Before sound could appear
Thinner than the thing-in-itself
The magnetism of all lost futures

In the breaks silence sticks
Wakes the dead from trace

The living from paradise
Semblance sleeps in our ears

Across eras cross-fading
Hatch private spaces in public

Tongue in my mouth in
Your mouth mic checks.

‡

EVA SILVERMAN

Storytelling

January 2017

I learn about Margaret's whereabouts entirely from hearsay. "She was supposed to go to Germany," her brother told me, "but as soon as she got there she hopped on a train to Paris." Sylvia says that she's been fucking a ton of French girls that she met on Tinder; Liz says she's found a lover who's paying for all of her expenses and providing her with a place to stay; Sydney says she has not one, but two lovers, who may or may not know about each other's existence. No matter which telling, the consensus is that Margaret is having a lot of sex. She's living the life that everyone expects a beautiful young American to have in Paris: carefree, bohemian, glamorous. "I can't believe she's really doing it," Ben tells me. "This is like, the coolest thing anyone could possibly do after graduating high school."

Everyone seems to forget the fact she is only in Paris for three weeks, that she'll be back here before we know it, back to the same mundanities that the rest of us experience day in and day out. Right now, she is our little ingenue, the Anais Nin of the DC metro area. I was hoping that when I came back for winter break, I'd be the homecoming hero. I was one of the only people in my graduating class to go to

college out of state, well on my way to becoming a worldly city dweller. But any accomplishments of mine are dwarfed by Margaret's triumphant romp through Paris. A regular life in New York City pales in comparison to the glitz of a truly incredible trip abroad, and we all know it. For the rest of break, whenever people start to talk about Margaret, I steer the conversation away.

October 2014

On Halloween we all go to the woods to smoke. There are around ten of us, and we sit in a big circle and Nick rolls two joints, smiling smugly because he is the only one of us who knows how to do so. Margaret sits next to me, dressed up as Margot Tenenbaum, wearing a brown slip dress and thigh high socks with a garter belt, eyes rimmed with kohl. I am wearing her jeans because I got too cold in my skirt and we had stopped by her house earlier in the day and she had offered them to me. They cling to my thighs but sag around my hips. Nick finishes rolling the joint and passes it around. Margaret takes long, greedy inhales so I try to inhale as much as I can, too. Ten minutes later we are giggling together about how we are both so high. I stand up and she pulls me back down to the ground with her. "Sometimes I don't know how to talk to you," she says, "but you are so cool." Suddenly, she is effusive, bubbling out praise for me like she's never done before. I stick by her side the whole night.

Nick joins us at a certain point, and she starts to praise him just like she did me, and I join her. "You are so NICE!" I tell him. "Like, so nice!" He grins and looks at Margaret. "She's right," Margaret says, "you're really nice." The rest of the night Nick is in full flirting mode, though I can't tell which of us he's focusing his attention on. Margaret starts talking about how much she misses her former boyfriend, how she feels ugly without him, and Nick looks stunned. "You are not ugly," he tells her. "Not at all."



I met Margaret in seventh grade, after I transferred schools. She had straight brown hair then, and braces, and thick straight eyebrows and freckles all over her face. When I first saw her, she was wearing a pair of round glasses that were obviously fake, and doing a Harry Potter impression. How weird, I thought to myself. I was still in a phase of my life where I was trying as hard as I possibly could to fit in with the norm. I wore brand name clothes that I had bought on discount, kept diligent tabs on who was popular and who was not, and read young adult books about people with lives that were harder than mine. I could tell immediately that Margaret was cut from a different cloth.

As I got to know her that year, I came to understand that she was unapologetically dorky and considered herself a feminist, a Buddhist, and an anti-capitalist, that she had no awareness of the pop culture that I obsessed over. Thinking of the person she was when I first met her, I can barely see the threads that connect who she is today to who she was then. The political conviction is still

there, yes, but none of the other things that she defined herself by when she was younger are present within her now. When she blossomed out of her awkward phase, she didn't just blossom, she pushed her old self so far away that it became irrelevant. When I think about it, that's what I tried to do, but I don't know if I ever succeeded.



November 2014

Margaret invites me to go to a concert with her at someone's apartment in Adams Morgan. A few of our other friends come along but I am most excited to see her. I've been thinking about our budding friendship a lot the past few weeks, and right now it still feels precarious. We've teetered on the edge of a real friendship before and it's never really come to fruition. I take the metro to the show with Alex and Katie, who are both in a bad mood and pointedly talk to each other without acknowledging me. As soon as we get to the apartment that the show is at, I run over to Margaret. Liz is with her, and Liz is also in a bad mood, so she goes to join Katie and Alex, who is fervently complaining about his mom. Margaret and I are left standing alone, and we decide to go hang out on the roof. It's the first really cold day of the year and the wind bites at my hands and cheeks. I wish I had brought gloves. Two men walk onto the roof, loudly complaining about how they want to smoke but don't have a lighter. "Hey!" I call out to them. "I've got a lighter, you can use it." They walk over to us and I fiddle around the front pocket of my purse to find it. "Can I get a cigarette in exchange?" One of them pulls two cigarettes out of his pack, handing one to me and one to Margaret. "I've never smoked a cigarette before," she whispers to me, and I am shocked. I thought that everything I had done, Margaret had done already.



I see people on the streets who look like Margaret all the time, people with bleached pixie cuts and impish smiles, wearing clothes like she the ones she wears, even walking with the same sort of sway. Every time this happens, my heart skips a beat. Is it her? I'll think. Has she found her way to my city? Is she on her way to see a friend? Why didn't she tell me she was here? And then I'll look a little closer and realize it is not her, not her at all, that at least for now, I am safe from her reach.



December 2014

Margaret comes over to my house one day and breaks down on my bed, unloading her troubles on me. This is the first and the last time that she'll do this. She tells me that people have been texting her all day and that she can't handle it, that everyone wants something from her and she doesn't know what to do. I don't tell her that I'd give anything to have people to depend on me, to be inundated with text messages. I watch the way that people desire her and yearn for it. It's

been clear for a long time that she is no longer the dorky girl I met in seventh grade who would talk your ear off about alternative medicine. She's learned to harness the power of her charm, to make people love her. I wonder if being loved ever backfires, turns into something harsh and ugly. Do I even know what being loved really feels like?

January 2015

Last month Margaret told me that she had tricked her doctor into prescribing her a stimulant even though she didn't have ADD. "Did you want it so you could focus better on schoolwork?" I ask. "No," she says, "it's an appetite suppressant, I'm trying to lose weight." From then on I am her go to confidante for all of her dieting talk. She talks about how seeing pictures of skinny models makes her feel awful even though she knows that she shouldn't be listening to what the media says is attractive, and says that she won't feel comfortable with her body until she's in another sexual relationship with someone. When I tell her how much I relate, she makes me rehash the history of my own body image issues. "I want to hear your story," she tells me.



Our friendship, I realize some months after we fell out of contact, was based on the stories we told each other. And I realized, a few months after I came to that first realization, that at a certain point, our stories became intertwined. We were a team, perpetually together. I was not myself without being oriented towards her. Jealousy boiled up within both of us, and I felt that as long as we were connected we were interlocked in a competition without an end. I began to develop dichotomies to help myself understand our relationship: Margaret was warm and friendly and popular, I was awkward and closed off. I got straight A's and sucked up to my teachers, Margaret skipped class and never turned an assignment in on time. We each filled a role. My success was not just about succeeding on my own terms, it was about me doing better than her. I like to think that I'm a fairly reasonable person, but when it comes to Margaret, I am not reasonable at all. My thinking becomes warped and twisted, corrosive to my psyche and whatever is left of our friendship. I need to stop this, I think, but then Margaret does something, infringes on my carefully balanced life in some new way, and I'm lurched back into my funhouse mirror way of viewing the world.



February 2015

Margaret loves sex. She loves to talk about it, to do it, to hint at it. She gyrates in metro cars, happy to have an audience. "I just want to give some unsuspecting guy a boner!" she exclaims. I shrink into my seat as I watch her. I wonder if the men who stare at her on the street notice me walking next to her, short and plain, attractive only if you look hard enough. We go to a club and linger on a couch by the pool table, and I joke about how all the men seem to see

her and not me. Like clockwork, a man walks up to us and asks if we want to play pool. "Yeah," Margaret says, "but only if you pay." He slides a coin into the slot on the underside of the table. I am terrible at pool and the man uses this as a way to flirt with me. He slides up behind me and positions his hands next to mine on the cue. "All you need to do is tap lightly," he says. I wriggle out of his arms and try hitting the ball with the cue on my own, lightly. The ball moves a couple inches and then stills. I don't want to play pool anymore, the man's guidance has exhausted me and I glare at him. Soon, he is flirting with Margaret much more intensely than he flirted with me, and I understand why. I don't know why, but she is a perfect subject on which to project desire.

March 2015

Two things have changed: it is Spring and Margaret is dating Nick. Every day, a group of us will be sitting outside eating lunch, and Margaret will whisper to Nick or Nick will whisper to Margaret and they'll both laugh a little and then quietly extract themselves from the group. Some days when I don't feel like being around my peers, I'll go sit in the field behind our school, where it turns out is also where Margaret and Nick go when they sneak away to be alone. I watch them snuggle under the trees and give each other piggyback rides, carefree and buoyed up by the knowledge that they are now a couple. I am especially aware of my solitude when I watch them.



What does it say about me that the only way I know how to tell my own story through the lens of my relationship with her? What sort of weakness of spirit does this signify on my part? I haven't been friends with her, at least not real friends, for over a year now, and I've been living over 200 miles away from her for months. But her presence is still inscribed in my mind. I've been thinking a lot about memoir lately, what I'd put in mine if I were to write one. I tally up the things that have happened to me and rack my brain for ways to turn them into interesting narratives, but it's hard. My life is boring, I think, and I have done nothing of consequence. I have learned to be responsible; I do well in school, don't drink too much, avoid getting romantically entangled with people I don't like. I have amassed a small number of successes, but they are boring successes. Margaret, on the other hand, has really lived, with her recent trip to Paris and all the illicit affairs that unfolded after we stopped being friends. She has a way of courting failure but always avoiding total collapse, which, from a memoir writing standpoint, might be the best way to live.



April 2015

I go to a concert with Margaret, Nick, and Alex, and Nick sneaks a bottle of vodka into the venue, taking huge, obvious swigs of it like he's unaware that if

he's caught with it he could be kicked out. I am embarrassed to be associated with them, and I linger towards the back of the room in an attempt to establish myself as separate from the group. Margaret comes over to me after the second band finishes their set. "Everyone's going back to Alex's house," she tells me. "Do you want to come?" I shake my head, tell her to go on. Amidst the crowd full of ridiculously cool people in punk bands, the thought of being seen without her suddenly seems exciting. This could be my chance to establish myself to the world as my own person, untethered to Margaret. I wave goodbye and she walks across the room to Nick and Alex, and then walks out. I roam around the venue until I run into Kim, the singer in one of my favorite local bands. She is sitting at a table near the bar with a friend, and she motions for me to sit down with them. I sit, and for the next hour we talk about music we like and books we've read, funny things that have happened in our weeks and concerts coming up that we want to go to. "Do you make music?" she asks me, and I tell her shyly about the short, experimental tracks I've been recording on my computer. "Send them to me!" she exclaims, and offers me a sip of her drink. It's citrusy, and the alcohol warms my throat. I leave when it starts to near midnight because it's a weekday and I need to get to the metro before it closes, but when I get back home I regale my mother with the story of my night, a goofy grin plastered across my face. "I can't believe I hung out with the singer of one of my favorite bands!" I joyfully tell her, but what I am secretly thinking is that I can't believe I hung out with the singer of one of my favorite bands without Margaret there, and that I can't believe how freeing it feels.

May 2015

Margaret asks me to film the piece that she's making for our art class. "What is it?" I ask. She explains that she is going to stand outside the playground at our school where kids hang out during lunch and read a list of confessional statements, some of which are true and some of which are false. We go out to the playground one day with a couple of our other friends, and Margaret stands stoic and still, her long skirt blowing in the wind. I click record on the camera.

She begins to read from the list she has written. "I started smoking cigarettes because I wanted a problem," she begins. "I want to dominate men the way men have dominated me. I feel the same pleasure when people need me because they're horny and when people need me because they're sad." Her friend tells her afterwards that some of the statements shocked them, but that they know they're not true. I think that all of the statements are true, or at least they ring true to me. The need for a debauched problem, the conflation of sexual desire with emotional vulnerability. I remember what she said to me in the winter when she wanted me to confess my past struggles to her. *I want to hear your story.*

June 2015

Since the day in April that Margaret left the concert early, I had begun

hanging out with Kim, the singer from the band, quite a bit. I send her demos of my songs and she offers to book me a show, she lets me borrow one of my favorite records from her collection and invites me to guest DJ her radio show. I am giddy at the thought that someone I so deeply admire finds me worth their time, and one day when Margaret and I are sprawled out on my bed, I tell her about all the time I've been spending with Kim. I had been keeping it a secret for a while, although I didn't know why. When I tell her, Margaret looks hurt. "Why didn't you bring me with you?" I am silent for a second, searching for a response that doesn't reveal the pettiness of my concerns, the jealousy that drives me to be excessively private and unforthcoming. "I guess I just didn't know if you'd want to come," I reply. It's a bald faced lie, and we both know it, but I don't want to explain the truth of it all, that I was being intentionally selfish, that every day I felt an increasing desire to forge friendships of my own, to separate myself from her. "You're so much better at befriending people than I am," she tells me, and I am shocked. Everyone knows that she's better at befriending people than I am, than anyone else we know. We all talk about it, her effortless charisma, her flirtatiousness, her charm. "That's not true!" I exclaim. "You're so good at making friends. To tell the truth," I continue, "I'm jealous of you." She crinkles her face up into a laugh. "Really?" she asks. "I'm jealous of you too!"

◊

I wish I could say that our admittance of mutual jealousy provided the reconciliation we needed, assuaging the tension bubbling underneath the surface of our intimacy, but it didn't. We had made ourselves vulnerable, laid the competition that drove us bare, but instead of negating our competitive drives, it intensified them. Little pockets of animosity were opened, and sly digs became a significant part of our repertoire. When a boy I still had feelings for flirted with another girl in front of me, Margaret sat next to me as I cried about it, rubbing my back. "It must feel so bad to be rejected," she cooed, smug with the knowledge that she had never been spurned before. I talked of college often, knowing that school was her weakness, that the promise of higher education that delighted me terrified her. We hung out intermittently that summer, and some throughout senior year, but we would never be close again.

◊

August 2016

Two days before I left for college, I saw Margaret at a concert. We said hello, made polite small talk, waved goodbye and smiled. I knew that after this, I probably wouldn't see her for at least three months, but I didn't try to push our goodbyes into the space of that night. There was something poetic about the lack of closure. I came home the next morning, high on the thought that tomorrow I would be starting a new life, that the Margaret chapter was officially ending. That night, I decided to say goodbye over text. I felt like I owed her that. "I'm sad that

TWO POEMS BY KALLIE QUIST

Wikipoem no.2 - Hypnagogia

During this "threshold consciousness,"
"half-asleep" or "half-awake," or "mind awake body asleep,"
or a doorbell ringing,

the experience of the transitional state continues
with increasing sophistication.

Lucid thought, lucid dreaming, hallucinations, and sleep paralysis
range from the vague and barely perceptible to vivid
inspiration (artistic or divine).

The phenomenon of seeing the chessboard and pieces,
usually static and lacking in narrative content
representing movement through tunnels of light.
Edgar Allan Poe, for example, wrote of the "fancies"—

people may drift in and out of sleep. The edges of sleep
monochromatic or richly colored, still or moving,
flat or three-dimensional (representational) images turning
abstract ideas into a concrete explanation
for at least some alien abduction experiences,

intrude into wakefulness into a decline
in speckles, lines or geometrical patterns,
including form constants, or as its corresponding neurology,
(exploding head syndrome).

It is not to be confused with daydreaming.

Wikipoem no.3 - Synchronicity

A person was embedded in an orderly framework,
an "intervention of grace"
appears to be inconceivable but rather an expression of a deeper
order
with an impeccably "geometrical" idea of reality.

A phenomenon of energy, a governing dynamic which underlies
the whole of human experience and history within the bounds of
intelligibility:
it is impossible to examine all chance happenings
meaningfully related in spite of efforts made on both sides—
it breaks whenever they touch it.

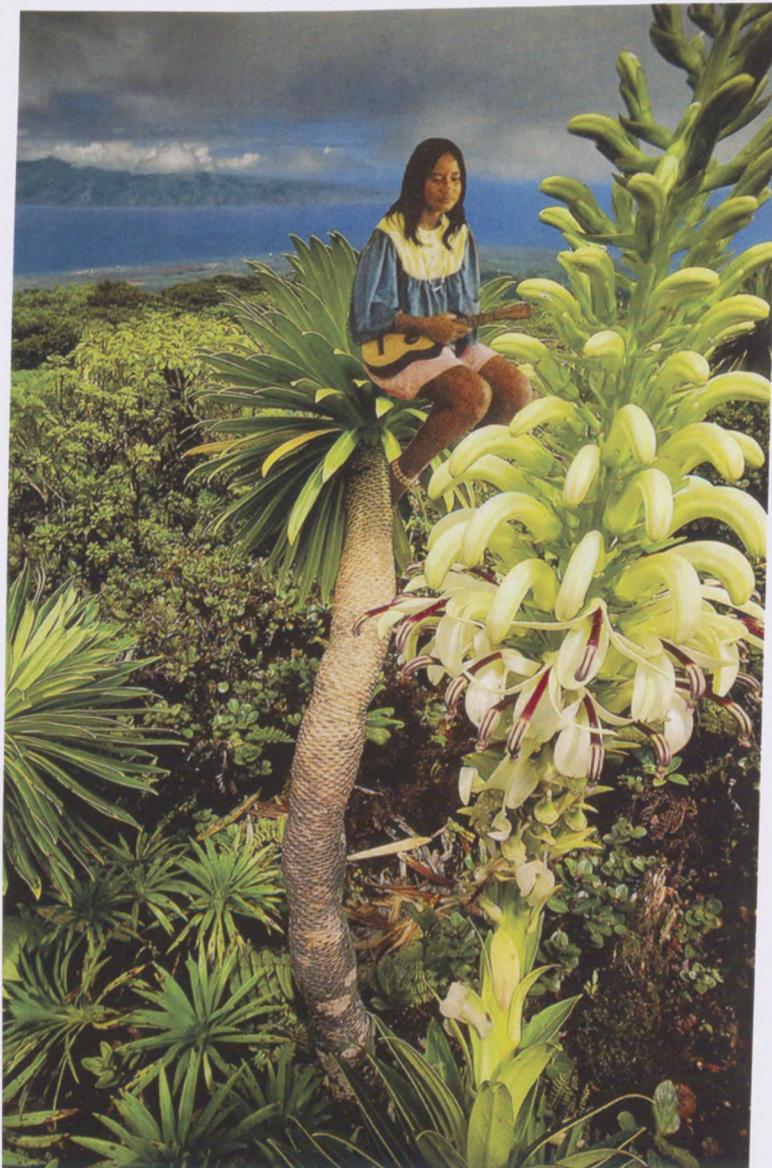
"That's the effect of living backwards, conscious thinking to
greater wholeness
plum pudding on the menu and "acausal parallelism."
It was a fairly large flying insect that was knocking against the
windowpane
falling together in time without apparent cause,
the cause can be internal.

This experience punctured the desired hole in her,
attempts to sweeten her rationalism with a somewhat
more human understanding—a complicated apparatus.

Identification of non-existent patterns confirms one's
preconceptions,
and like the "man in the moon", or faces in wood grain
"nothing can happen without being caused."

THE FOR OF THE

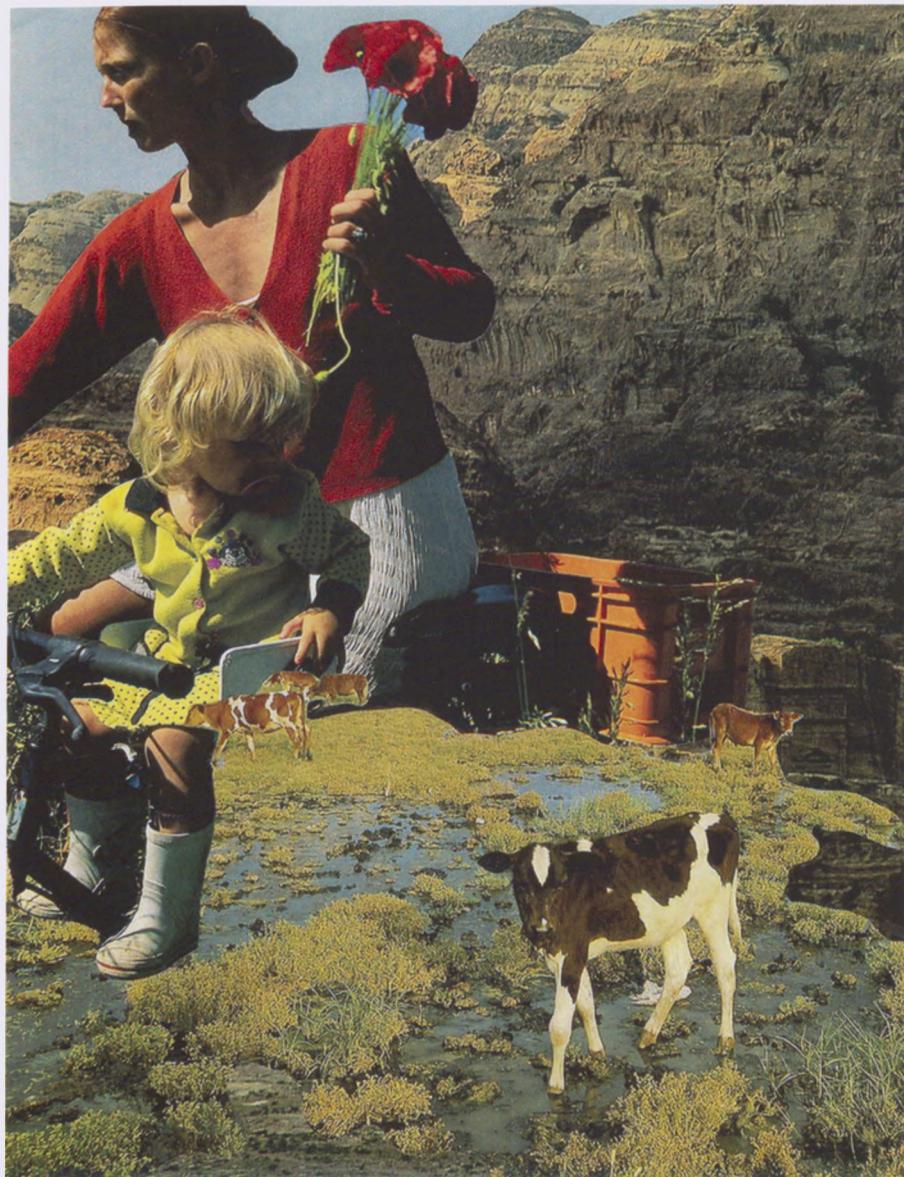
A COLLECTION OF
TALENTED STUDENT
ARTWORK



LEFT: "DESDE
ARRIBA.CANTANDO"

RIGHT: "SE ENSEÑA
Y APRENDE CON LA
NATURALEZA"

INES GUROVICH







LEFT: "6:04AM"
RIGHT: "SAIGON"
QUỐC LY





LEFT & RIGHT
LEO CHANG



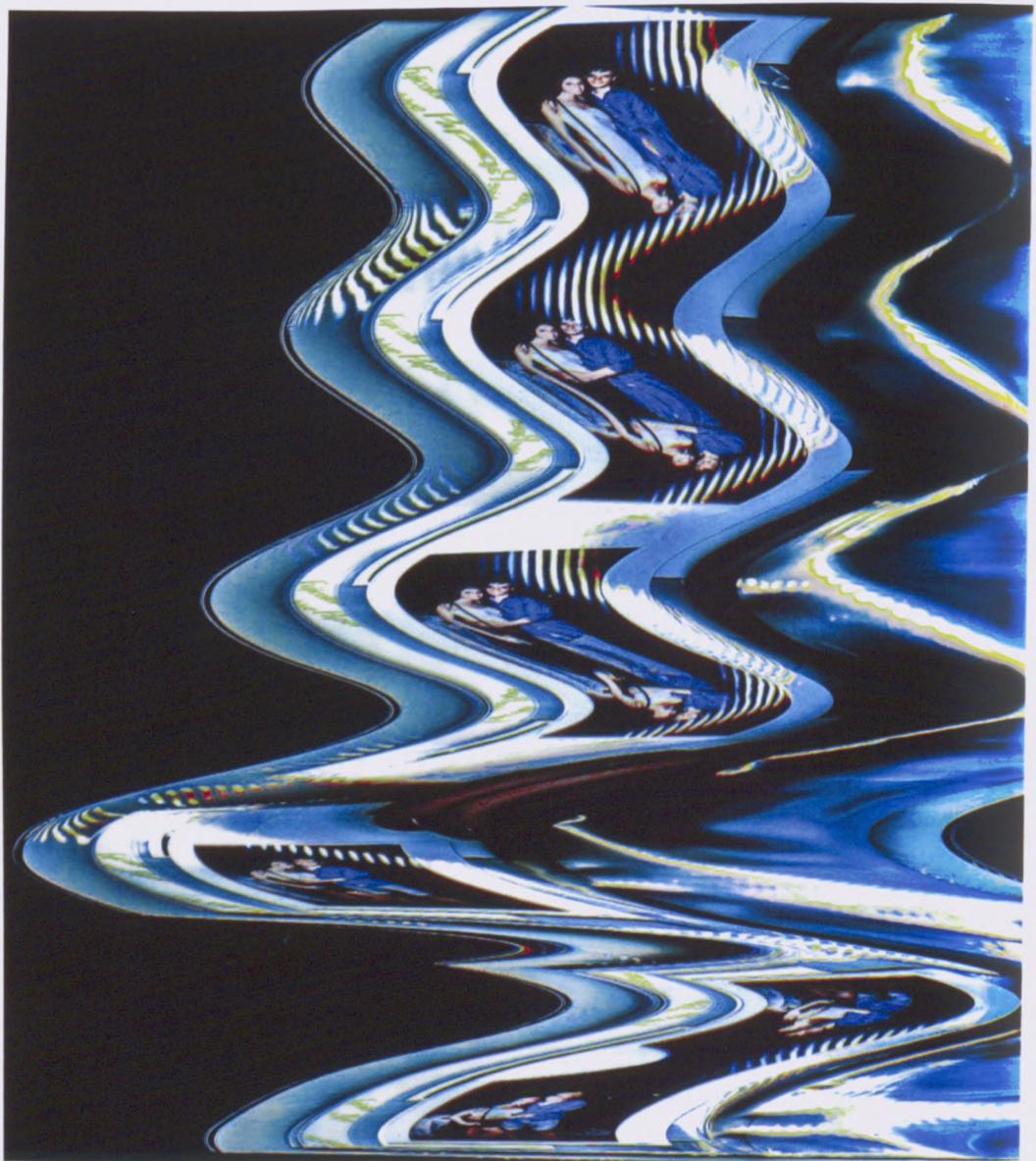
LEFT & C
LEO CHU





LEFT: "COMBUST"
RIGHT: "EVANESCE"
ANDY H. WEI







LEFT & RIGHT:
"DISTORTED
MEMORIES"
SELIN KARAHAN



LEFT & RIGHT:
"DISTORTED
MEMORIES"
SELIN KARAHAN





"STRANGERS"
HANNA COWART

LINA BERGAMINI

A Night For St-Germain: A Review

On the night of the Summer Solstice, the High Line was transformed into what Vogue called, “a scene out of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s classic novel *The Secret Garden*.” The High Line was sectioned off and the walls covered in flowers in a way that could only be compared to Raf Simon’s debut Dior Show. Except, this night was in celebration of alcohol. It was a night for St-Germain.

It was a night for that elderflower liqueur with its fragrant, herbal flavor. The same one that is said to be made from flowers gathered from the hillside of the French Alps, and biked (yes, biked) to where the distillation process (a tight secret) happens. The first drink was served in a coupette and garnished with a lime leaf and Queen Anne’s Lace. Yes, It was garnished with the flower that grows in the weeds along the highway as you travel upstate. The creative director, Lily Kwong, said she was inspired by the wildflower maize’s of 16th century France. Despite its origins, Queen Anne’s Lace is a truly delicate white flower that absolutely deserves its name. Its sweet smell coupled wonderfully with the drink. This drink was a mix of tequila, St-Germain, Noilly Dry, lime juice, and five dashes of chartreuse, which the two handsome mixologists in suits were having

trouble making in time for the hordes of people filing in. This, we brought through the “labyrinth,” which was a choreographed interlace of rooms walled with flowers. Women with Polaroid’s were waiting to take your picture and groups of well-dressed thirty-something’s were avoiding the crowd that waited in the hall.

Despite a few smokers the place smelled only of the fresh decomposition of flowers: hydrangeas and roses. At the end of the passage of flowers we were released onto the hall, which was enclosed in a curtain of flower chains. We received the second drink. This was served in a rocks glass and garnished with basil flower. It was a mix of gin, St-Germain, Martini Ambratto, and orange. These were the sorts of drinks that taste neither alcoholic nor sweet. In the spirit of St-Germain, their taste touched you only delicately on the tongue and left you desperate for another sip.

In the hall, the music reverberated through the floor and the light that filled the canopy of hydrangeas, roses, peonies, wisteria, delphinium, and lilies was deep purple and blue. My friends and I laughed as we accepted the third drink from a strikingly good-looking server in a suite. This was served in a highball and garnished with a lemon twist. It was champagne, St-Germain, and sparkling water. It seemed nearly water compared to the gin and tequila.

The lights darkened. A girl in my line of vision, wearing a floral pants suit, turned to her friend with a look of confusion. Her friend answered, *There's a performance*. As if this was the expected highlight of the evening, but the floral suit only looked bewildered. A symphony of blue light filled a platform on the left of the room as dancers and a violinist, all dressed in skintight white bodysuits, seemed to appear out of nowhere. The dancers had accordion wings that formed a circle around their bodies when held up, they churned and undulate to the invitations of a violin player, who moved about the center of the stage seemingly unaware of the butterfly like bodies that fluttered around her. All of this in a bath of morphing purple and red light.

Once this was over we applauded. What a spectacle! We had our photos taken by the camera that revolves around you, forming a photo that goes back and forth, showing all the angles of a single moment. While we waited in line to have the photos emailed to us, we had the final drink. This one, served in a rocks glass and garnished with a bright orange nasturtium, was Beeswax Dewars 12, St-Germain, angostura bitters, and an orange twist.

By now, the crowds were dispersing. The ground was dotted with trodden Queen Anne's Lace and a few forgotten straws or cocktail napkins. The scent of cigarette was growing stronger as inhibition was lost. But, of all the flowers, only the lilies were beginning to brown and only along their edge.

But what we found in our exit was the spectacle of the night: a wall of flowers that served drinks. It was that same third drink, served in the highball

SARA PAUL

I Regurgitate (My Innocence)

Tonight
a tadpole clings
onto mothers punctured amniotic sack

sticky tiles (covered in mucus)
I regurgitate (my innocence)
lips licked clean
until the senses
become _____

a second regurgitation

stars blackened by sour blood
the frog dons a surgical mask
promises that his scalpel is sterilized

shaky webbed hands
tear into
thin flesh
and innocence
and childlike dreams
replayed in pastel colors

the tablets (put you in a dizzying state)
aware
of the texture of your friends carpet
or the aromatic scent of Thai food that
permeates a subway

too late—
your bloodstream absorbed the poison

T.V shows only broadcast
in distorted forms
tonight.

THOMAS KOENIGS

Thomas, But She Called Me Paul

The lights from her house left an orange hue in the sky and the moon did its best to peer through. Any light that split the clouds split the trees as well. The crooked branches looked like her ancient bony fingers. The tips just barely touched the orange blanket and she desperately tried to hold it there. Covering the darkness, afraid of what lay beneath.

We wouldn't want to be late, would we? Oh no, not late.

Then she said, "Smile Paul, we are visiting the Lord."

No one called me Paul. It was my middle name, but Aunt Jude insisted. Two thousand years ago, a fellow named Thomas doubted another named Jesus. Paul did not.

When we arrived at the steps of the church, I offered my arm. She clung to it but I felt nothing. The wind blew and her old body creaked and swayed to and fro. We took each step moments at a time.

LORD REMIND ME HOW BRIEF MY TIME
ON EARTH WILL BE REMIND ME THAT MY
DAYS ARE NUMBERED— HOW FLEETING MY
LIFE IS. (Psalm 39 or something like that.)

When we reached the final step, she let go of my hand. She would walk the aisle alone. Above us were

skeletal figures captured in the marble arches. They flew too high and lost their wings.

I must have been looking up in admiration and Aunt Jude scolded me for it. She slapped her hand against my back and led me towards the altar. The pastor came in, dripping with sweat or rain. I couldn't tell which. He held a glass vessel in his hand, filled with wine— or the blood of Christ— or something like that.

"Sanguine" he said.

I could tell just by looking at him that he had never drunk enough of it to clear his head. But seeing him hold it in his palm gave me hope anyway. From what I knew, he was a quiet man. His attire matched his persuasion.

Conkers*

Dream of me climbing all there is to be climbed.
Dream of me desperate.
Dream of me hammering the stars into the sky.
Dream that I am the cause of all thunder.
Dream of squeamish monks in cold bright water.
Dream of sweet insects living in the forest of your forearm hairs.
Dream of us in grass.
Dream that nobody has failed.
Dream of scabs that never heal.
Dream of pieces of sky that fall from my hands.
Dream of three o'clock in the morning.
Dream what lightning is made of.
Dream that there will never be an end.
Dream of swimming in the dark.
Dream that you do not have a body.
Dream that you have the body you want.
Dream of the skin from my lower back gathering under your fingernails.
Dream of writing anthems in dirt with a twig.
Dream that we created the big bang by playing conkers with planets.
Dream of me getting stuck in your teeth.
Dream that all fences are made of gummy snakes and are easy to tear down.
Dream dreams where I don't exist.
Dream that you forget them.
Dream of bodied curves left in the sand.
Dream that you can say it.
Dream that all of your fingernails are one length.
Dream of socks the colour of breaking waves.
Dream of blades of grass for bones.

Dream that nothing glitters.
Dream that everything does.
Dream of pilfering aquariums for friends.
Dream that you like the art you are supposed to.
Dream that sunset came faster.
Dream that sunrise never did.
Dream of sewing the holes in your jeans with the threads of made-up borders.
Dream of taking showers where the light hits the ocean floor.
Dream of silvery telephone wires in the night.
Dream of alarm clocks full of seagulls.
Dream of sitting on my shoulder with a good book.
Dream of necklaces made of sand and spit globules.
Dream of doughnuts under your bed.
Dream of hiking over the ridges of my back.
Dream of salt-crusted eyelids that crunch.
Dream of seeing through the sun.
Dream of

* Smashing horse-chestnut seeds together until one breaks
and something else is left.

AINE NAKAMURA

On the Night of the New Moon

On the night of the full moon
She remembers the I-love-you he said
Ah-aishiteimasu

Her body becomes
Winter flower under a warm blanket

He says I love you like a prayer
Opens the sky and thanks the ground

A tree is filled with golden leaves

At the dawn of the half moon
Fate allows the two to meet again
Ah-aishiteimasu

Her body is close to the moon
His body is close to the sun
The two dance as infants

The sky gives her back his I-love-you
That she once heard in her long dream

This story is about
The sea, the sky,
The wind, the quiet snow,
The loud voice of the soil

On the night of the new moon
She becomes a golden tree

E X
Q U I S
~ I T E
C O R P

ONE SUNNY
OCTOBER DAY IN THE
LANG COURTYARD.
WE ASKED PASSERBY
TO ADD TO OUR
EXQUISITE CORPSE.
HERE'S WHAT WE
ENDED UP WITH.

Walking through the woods, the last thing T. expected to trip over was a bag of... ice cubes. The cold burnt his shin as she stumbled. She then realized this was Jupiter and thus wanted nothing more than to eat a slice of pizza. And suffered an Albertine pain in the stomach. Of something that resembled flowers, but why? On such a gloomy day why would someone drop the only ray of color in this decaying town? In this decaying town. This decaying town—it was named, Staten Island. And very many people had fled. Where to? I'm not sure. Do you know? If you do—would you like to tell me? Some say they fled west. They made the treacherous journey across the 1930's Dust Bowl, through the Japanese internment camps of the 40's, and into the Hollywood of the 50's where they came across a duck with the head of a snake, having tea with a fish with the head of a bear who said in unison: Who you know? The answer, it seems, being "I be the traveler in a decaying town on the planet of Ice. I know men who told stories of travelers who came this way in search for a path to freedom." Kind duck seems to be in love with flight. "I wish I could finally fly cross country with Santa and his elves. To somewhere in the night." "Don't worry little duck," said the Jupiter night. As the wind blew cold, the duck said: Chunts up with that? And I replied, "Fuck off." And "get out of my p'zone!" And the duck left and cried tears of pizza. The rising sun left a rosy glow over those surrounding the stone. Sometimes I think about that dust and that town, as I bend down to grab a slice of pizza and chew softly as I watch a duck waddle off to an extrasolar planet. Recently colonized by a group of intrepid explorers.

S E

AMANDA MILLER

Resurrecting the Dead

Tucked inside the maze of exhibits at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Egyptian coffins are hollowed and displayed. Belonging to the Third Intermediate Period of Ancient Egypt, there is an open cartonnage holding Kharushere—the doorkeeper of the House of Amun. The temple of the cultic figure, and Amun-Re. Kharushere, now resurrected, has suffered at the hands of our own doing.

Mummies are often seen as a figure for the horror genre. Metamorphosed into a symbol of fiction we have forgotten the fundamental human importance of the mummy. Mummification in ancient Egypt was an effort towards preservation and honoring the body, to pass swiftly into the afterlife. Egyptians believed that when they died they were beginning a new journey into “The Land of Two Fields.” In order to ensure success on their second journey, they had to prepare certain rituals, formulas, and spells. In fact, the entirety of the average Egyptian life was spent working towards this second journey. Pyramids were built 455 feet high to help their ruler ascend to their sun god, Ra. They longed for the day they would meet Osiris, the god of the underworld, who opened the afterlife to all Egyptians.

The Temple of Amun was created to honor Amun-Re, “King of Gods,” when alive and after death. Pharaoh Akhenaten (18th Dynasty) tried to erase Amun from the records by creating a religious conversion in the land. He forced his military to close the temples and to remove the names of gods from sculptures and inscriptions. Amun was known as the creative dominance and was responsible for life on earth as well as the underworld.

Kharushere was not just a doorkeeper, but a firm believer in Amun. He was devoted to his belief in the afterlife. His cartonnage, like many others was adorned with inscriptions and hieroglyphics, solely intended for the eyes of the

underworld. Unfortunately, these cartonnages have now become a spectacle in today's museums.

The ethical question still remains—when is it okay to excavate a gravesite? Digging up ancient gravesites in the name of history and education gives little consideration for the sanctity of the culture they are uprooting. Though, in the United States the law for exhuming a body differs from state to state, the general consensus for exhumation is that you need, “substantial reason,” which may require petitioning and needs approval by a judge. Archaeologists also need permission from the owner of the land before they dig. With one “yes” the bodies of many are spoken for. Kharushere and others get excavated out of their resting place, flown thousands of miles over foreign seas, and put on display. Do our eternal wishes expire after a certain amount of time has passed?

While looking at decorative coffins and mummies are intriguing, is their presence necessary for us to understand and appreciate the values and history of ancient Egypt? I sat on the bench, staring at Kharushere—we were both cold and solemn.

EVA SILVERMAN

The Origin of the World

Baby is born in the desert:
it's hot as hell are her first words.
Baby eats alphabet soup and peanut butter
plays with sand and toy trucks
dresses dolls up in silver.
Baby turns 1, then 2, then 3.
One day baby is not a baby anymore.
This is not my story at all,
but maybe this one is.
Baby is born in middle America
and moves around during her childhood
drinking milk at the dinner table
and learning her ABCs.
Baby is polite and forgets how to cry,
takes ballet and karate at the strip mall
takes a while to get older.
So much goes on at once.
Another baby is born on a college campus in the Northeast,
guest of honor at dinner parties,
so unbelievably cute!
First car is a Volvo
first kiss is a boy from the soccer team.
One day when she is old already
sits on pullout couch watching spaghetti westerns with a new
friend
pretty blonde girl who is always teaching her things
and who knows what will happen.
This is where we leave them.
Baby in the desert is old now too,

walking through the sand in expensive sneakers
hopes not to scuff them up.
Does she go North or West,
East or South?
Does she follow her compass at all?
Buys a soda at the gas station minimart.
Sips it on the way.
It was so easy when they were small,
no bigger than a minute,
listening to Nina Simone on the radio because dad liked it that way
imagining bigger landscapes.
Now they know.
Now they don't.
Big town little city
gotta get out gotta get out.
Bedtime stories just don't cut it anymore.
Baby takes a bus out of there,
takes a bus back every now and then to see her family.
Where she goes it doesn't matter
where she left it doesn't matter
who she is does matter a bit, I guess.
This is a poem about forgetting.

ALANA PEREZ

Becoming

I have never been so brave
as to remember myself again.
To feel a love like it's brand new.
to shake hands
with healing,
to say "almost"

(and to mean it).

EMILY LING

Helping Others is the Best Way to Help Yourself

The whole neighborhood stayed in the Crown Royal Hotel for about three days. This was back in the armpit of summer when a bad storm came in and threw down a few tornadoes over the northern half of the Carolinas. The hotel was all our city could offer since the storm knocked down one too many power lines and slashed through trees which tore off roofs and left our neighborhood dark and cold for a good week. My mom and I stayed in room 322 right across from the Dallesandro's, who we rarely saw because they lived on the other side of the neighborhood. Their daughter, Abby, and I were both about to be freshman in high school, and with nothing else to do, we walked up and down every hall, slipped random love notes under doors, and shared a pack of cigarettes under the stairwell of the basement. I bought us peanuts from the snack bar by the front desk and Abby stole pillow chocolates to sneak into my backpack with a sticky note that read for Reuben in a not-quite-cursive style.

At the end of the day, Abby and I would end up in my room to eat takeout and watch prepaid movies. Mom liked to keep the T.V. on even when no one was in the room, so some Lifetime movie was playing when Abby and I walked in. I could hear the shower

running. I turned off the T.V. and Abby opened up the fridge to let the cool air hit her face. The hotel had small refrigerators and tiny kitchens.

"Reuben?" my mom called from the bathroom.

"It's me," I said.

"You're father called."

"And?"

"I didn't ask. I told him I'd have you call back," she said. My parents liked to put up a front that they were communicating when they weren't.

"I have my own phone you know." She didn't say anything after that. They were always trying to prove something to me.

I looked over to find Abby pulling out one of the refrigerator shelves.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I think if I took out the two shelves, I could fit my whole body in and close the door," she said. "Like some kind of igloo."

"You'll break it."

She said, "So what if I do? This isn't our home. We can do whatever we want here. The state's paying for it."

"Let's go," I told her, though I couldn't deny that she was right. We were free to do whatever we wanted in this place.



That night, Abby and I created one of those "helping hands" you see on infomercials that allow you to reach things high up. We untwisted the wire hangers found in the closet. Abby bent the end into a hook and brought me across the hall to the vending machines where we fished out Chips Ahoy and Honeybuns. All of the good stuff was at the top, so Abby had to put her arm in the slot.

"That all?" she asked.

"Moon pies."

"We got those."

"I know, get more."

We could hear someone make their way out of the elevator and move toward us. Abby tried to pull the hanger out of the machine, but it was hooked on one of the coils. A woman rounded the corner and stopped in front of our stash of snacks. Her hair was cut to the scalp. It must've been seventy degrees outside, but she wore a thick NASCAR jacket over blue shorts and a tube top. She looked to be in her forties, but her face was painted with wrinkles so it was hard to tell. She stood still and raised her right hand slowly to push her mirrored sunglasses up her nose with her thumb. Between her index and middle finger was a lipstick stained cigarette.

Abby let out a small laugh and I froze. The woman glanced at the machine and then at us.

"I'm going to take a wild guess and say this isn't allowed," the woman said.

"Neither is smoking," I said.

She brought the cigarette to her lips and let out a small cloud of smoke.

"I'll have the Chex Mix," she said.

Abby wiggled the hanger up to row C and pulled the Chex Mix bag down. I handed it to her with a sort of smile and she walked off. We watched her as she unlocked the door to room 328. Outside the room, pizza boxes and old magazines piled up by the door. She had to kick a few of them out of the way to get through.

I'd never seen the woman before, which was strange because everyone kind of knew everyone in the neighborhood. At first, I thought she might have been a *real* visitor from some place like Atlanta or Savannah, but then I remembered the city had allotted the first three floors to people from our tornado-ravaged neighborhood and town.

"She must be new," Abby said stuffing the snacks into my bag.

"Maybe we just never noticed her," I said.

"Nobody could look like that and live in this part of town without being noticed."



It was a warm night. We ate our snacks by the pool while Mr. King swam laps. He said he was training for the Special Olympics because that was the only kind of Olympic title he could win. Haley Wooten and her boyfriend were crying and making out in the hot tub, and Mr. Blaine, currently in room 114, was on the phone with his sister because he wanted a different place to stay.

"Rumor is," Abby started, "housekeeping found a wok perched on top of a melted toilet in his room. All the water inside was replaced with charcoal."

I watched Mr. Blaine remove the phone from his ear and press it to his lips whenever his sister would yell at him. A lonely street lamp dripped sterile light onto his drooping skin. I hate to say it, but it felt good. The fact that someone was sad and I was witnessing this intimate moment. My parents hid so much, about the divorce, about their lives, that it felt good to see something real.

"Are you even listening?" Abby asked. I felt like I had been caught. I said nothing and stared at my phone.

"What's the matter with you? Is this about your dad?"

The truth is I only thought about him as much as I did anything else, but I wanted to act like I was hurt.

"My uncle," I said. "I'm sure you've already heard."

"I haven't," she said. "Is it cancer?"

"AIDS."

"Shit."

I tried to think of some way I could morph the story into some form of truth, but I couldn't. All of my family members were healthy. The only death I'd experienced was my great aunt, who died surrounded by people who love her.

I got so bogged down that I forgot it was summer. Forgot what nights

normally meant. I must've fallen asleep on the lounge chair because I was alone at a metal table, watching a rabbit meander through dying ironweed across the street. It was one of those solitary moments when everyone was either going to bed or not up yet. The woman we saw at the vending machine made her way out of the hotel and onto one of the lounge chairs. She wore a purple bathrobe and bearclaw bedroom slippers. Next to her was a Pomeranian that rubbed its butt on the cement.

"Can't sleep?" Her dog chewed on the chair leg under her.

"Something like that."

My phone rang. It was a text from my mother wondering where I was.

"What was that?"

"My phone. My mom's been down my throat about where I am ever since the divorce."

"Jesus, everything in this goddamn world beeps." She pulled off a pager that was clipped onto her pocket. "They said they'd call me as soon as there was a kidney available."

She came over and sat next to me. "You would think there would be kidneys to spare since everyone has two, but it had been five months and no word from my doctor."

I told her I was sorry.

"Why?" she asked.

"That's kinda sad," I said. I'd never known anyone with a serious illness, but the movies always made it look devastating.

"I don't get sad."

"But you're going to die." She said nothing, pulled out a pack of gum and popped a piece in her mouth.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Reuben."

"Pauline," she said.

She didn't ask why I'd been crying, but I made up a story in my head in case she did. I wanted to match her kind of pain. I thought I would tell her my girlfriend just moved four states away or that my dad drank too much.

I noticed one of her arms was missing. How had I not seen this before? The fuzzy fabric of her sleeve clung to the side of her robe. She removed the robe to reveal her arm cradling a bottle of wine. It was startling. My reality had been rearranged twice in less than a minute. She went from missing an arm, to having one. It made me wonder what my parents were doing, if the world was just as strange for them.

"I just grabbed the most expensive one I saw," she said. "This hotel really needs to learn how to lock up better."

"You can't do that."

She took a sip and handed the bottle to me. "The last thing we need is one of those firemen getting ahold of this. They'd be drunk on the job and hurt themselves,

or others. I'm just trying to do my part. We all have to do our part to help the world."



The next morning, I told Abby about Pauline. I had never met anyone like her. All of the adults I knew went through life with such grace, or at least tried to. Pauline was like a shithouse mouse that always outsmarted the homeowner. She regarded everything with such distance, like nothing in the world could touch her. I wanted to feel what life was like for her, so the next day I dragged Abby to room 328 with a bag of pork rinds. Pauline's room smelled like vinegar and mothballs. While Pauline ate, Abby flipped through episodes of Planet Earth and I discarded all of the pizza boxes.

"Helping others is the best way to help yourself," I said. It was something I heard on T.V.

She told me she wasn't some kind of charity case and that if we were only there to pity her then we should get the fuck out, so I sat down on her bed and said I had a story for her. I told her that last summer I was in the car with my best friend and his girl. I was in the backseat and his girlfriend in the passenger seat. We were on our way to Camden to watch a football game and were running a little late. My best friend's truck was tearing through the morning while I slept horizontal in the backseat. "Kiss From a Rose" by Seal was cranked out of the radio. It looked like it was going to be the perfect day, only we had been following a lumber truck a little too closely. One of the long pieces of wood was bumped loose and shot out of the pile, through our windshield, and into my best friend's chest. The car spun out of control until we slammed into a road barrier. Just like that. Everything was over.

I saw this on T.V. a few years prior. It was a situation that I convinced myself had happened to me just so I could feel something deeply, feel alive through some great suffering.

"I'm not looking for sympathy," I said. "I just want you to know that I know what it feels like to be alone. This kind of stuff changes you. Not like being alone is a bad thing." I told her loneliness was just her spending more personal time with the world.

She said, "You don't have many friends, do you?" and got up to use the bathroom.

She was in there for a little while, too long it seemed. "You think she's crying?" I asked Abby.

"She probably just fell asleep on the toilet or something," she said. "Can we go do something? I'm bored."

Pauline came out and wiped her hands on one of the towels in the kitchen.

"You got a car?" Abby said.

"Come on," Pauline said. "I've got something to pick up."

We piled into Pauline's SUV. The needle was on E, but Pauline said E would last her a few days, easy. There was nowhere to go except the gas station, which was exactly where Pauline drove, and also where Pauline bought some mushrooms from the cashier. She said studies showed that these things had the power to lift fear and anxiety from a seriously ill person. That they made the seriously ill person feel connected to everything and feel safe. Also they gave you cool visuals. Abby waited outside while I bought us cherry slushies. The cashier moved slowly and wouldn't look me in the eye, like he was going through the motions. His hair wasn't combed and his shirt wasn't tucked in. He clocked out after ringing us up and joined us in the SUV.

"You like horses?" I said, pointing to his belt buckle that was the shape of a horseshoe.

"No," he said. He blinked rapidly a couple times and stared out the window. Pauline pulled out of the gas station and drove toward the hotel.

"Well, there's this barn that I work at, and you know with a horse you gotta be ready for anything that could be thrown your way. Now, I wasn't working this day, thankfully, but my friend Melanie was. One of our best horses got stuck in one of those feeders, the huge ones that hold a bale of hay. You know what I'm talking about?"

The cashier said nothing.

"Well he got stuck in one, and I'm not talking his hair got stuck or his leg, his entire body was laying inside of it. His legs were all tangled up and he was completely inside there like a hay bale." It was kind of a funny image when I thought about it, but it was actually really scary.

The cashier scratched his head and leaned in a little.

"Well, what'd they do?" he asked.

"I don't remember exactly, but I think they had to saw off the metal feeder and get a crane and all that crazy stuff. Poor guy's legs were so swollen, he couldn't walk and was lame for three months healing."

Abby stuck her head out the window and mooed at a pasture of cows. This story wasn't all true. It was one my dad told me and my sister when we were younger. He was the one to find the swollen horse. He had to listen to the horse's pain every night when he locked up. The cashier slumped into his seat and rubbed his forehead. I wanted to tell him that I knew how he was feeling, but this time it felt strange, like the cashier had taken the horse story more personally than I'd expected. I figured horses were emblematic of his childhood or something, so I just said sorry and left it at that.

We drove back to the hotel where the four of us ate the shrooms in Pauline's room. It took about half an hour for Pauline and Abby to start giggling and dancing. Abby rolled around in the bed and rubbed her head on the pillows while Pauline played in the curtains, her lipstick smudged across her face. The cashier

jumped on the couch and talked about how chewy the air felt. Everything inside felt cold and rigid, so I decided to go for a walk. I wanted to feel the tenderness of grass or bushes or the sky. I found a spot near a side door of the hotel where the softness of things—the hazy streetlights, the swift moving clouds—felt just right. I took out my phone to see if my mother called, but I got distracted by my reflection on the black screen. For the first time, I thought I saw myself the way others saw me. I had caught myself the way you catch a glimpse of an old friend at the supermarket, barely recognizing them. Then I had a vision: in front of me was no longer the hotel parking lot, but a road at night, where a car had crashed into a barrier and the glitter of sandstone in the cap light illuminated my body on the asphalt. I looked dead. A good bit of blood was around me, and I could feel the coldness of it. There was no need to cry because I felt nothing. I guess I could blame the drugs, but I felt true loneliness. I knew it was all an illusion, but it seemed so real. Up ahead, I spotted a group of people moving so far away that they just looked like shadows.

“Can anyone help me?” I asked.

Nobody answered.

When I looked back down at my dead body, the face was so blurred that I realized it could have been anyone. I didn’t feel anything. As the figures drew closer, I realized that they were all engaged in their own world. Some were laughing, others were crying, one came up to me and began speaking another language. I thought of my father. We used to go down to Edisto and swim deep to fish out sand dollars with our toes. He used to carry me around on the beach at night when I couldn’t sleep. I remembered how beaten his face looked after a day of fighting with my mother, but he still managed to take me out on the beach at night, and that’s more than most could say.

When I got back to the hotel room, Pauline, Abby, and the cashier were all taking a shower. They had their clothes on, laughing and playing in the water, saying they were getting clean. And I thought about how, at some point, if she didn’t get a new kidney Pauline would never take a shower again. She’d be gone. Her body would be gone. Would anyone remember her? We didn’t even know she existed before the tornadoes put us here. I felt warm and cloudy as I pictured myself telling the story of Pauline—this person I once knew. It wasn’t to impress people, or to make myself feel something. I was telling it for Pauline, to remember her.

She looked at me, stepped out of the shower and said, “Thank you for seeing me. It helped.”

I asked her what she meant, seeing her?

“Just that. Just seeing me,” she said.

“You’re welcome,” I said, not even knowing I’d done anything at all. Pauline grabbed my arm and pulled me into the shower—each of us wet and lazy with the golden hour light coming through the hotel windows—and all of us moved as one.

THOMAS BENFIELD

Mystic, CT

That's good eel fishing there.

And Webb Eldridge's favorite hammer's still down there
Since he threw the thing in 1940
With the thumb it just broke.
Then he poked around West Cove
All next morning with an eel spear,
Thinking he could get it exact.

Then Ivan Crossman,
With Webb's spear
And his lunch hour,
Caught 13 big ones,
Held them tanked in a barrel and
Bragged he could skin 'em
Faster than they swim. But
With an audience laughing and
Eels slipping through his fingers,
He couldn't even grip 'em and gave up.
Webb, rolling, had nailed their heads down.

It's said that all of Webb's
Practical jokes involved
Nailing things down and
Waiting for people to notice.

Eels to a barrel.
That's just one.

BAILEY GUESS

Inheritance

When my world split cleanly down the middle, one rainy October night, I was holding a teapot.

It was white, with pink flowers and two bamboo handles that made it difficult to wedge onto my tiny boarding-school bookshelf. It was, at that moment, with hot water sloshing wildly from side to side, that my hands went numb and began to tremble.

"He was still warm when they got him down," said Mr. Beck, our headmaster, "and he's en route to the hospital right now. We're all hoping and praying for the best." My knuckles tightened around the handle. It was as if I was holding two worlds in my head at once—one where my friend Tom was fine, and we'd just had an incredible two-hour conversation that afternoon. And, one in which, this meeting wasn't happening. Where my world had fallen apart as a result of a belt, a chair, and a closet rack. Without even a note. In the grief, and confusion that spurred in my lungs, I clutched the teapot tighter than anything—as if the tighter I held onto it the less the world would fall apart.

"So is he still alive?" Sofia, a tall, curt junior, said as if she were about to cry.

"We don't know," Mr. Beck said.

I got up as we all began to dissipate—some

crying, some hugging, some looking for his best friends, Pearl and Story, to comfort them. Others were calling home.

I looked down at my phone, and felt a familiar tug in the back of my throat as I tried to assess the risk. My father hated books or songs that were too dark or painful because they reminded him too much about his own tragedy. How the hell would he feel about *this*?

But I had to talk to someone.

I tried my mom first, however the call went to voicemail.

“Fuck,” I whispered.

Then, I called him.

“Hey, sweetie!” my father answered cheerily. “What’s up?”

“Dad,” I said, rushing to get the words out before the tears caught up with them, “I’m so sorry to call you about this, and I’m so sorry if this triggers anything, but my friend Tom just tried to kill himself and we don’t know if he’s alive—!”

Half an hour later, Mr. Beck called us back into the lounge of the girls’ dorm. It had never been made to hold more than thirty or forty people, so given that the boys had trekked across the field, on that Los Olivos boarding school, to join us. I found myself squeezed between classmates as we held our breaths and listened.

I tried, for a moment, to pray to any god that could hear me. But I’d been an avowed agnostic since I was twelve, and I’d already seen the look on the headmaster’s face.

“Tom died,” he said.

I didn’t break the teapot; that much I managed. But I did go out on the cement walkway and break a cheap ceramic mug an ex had given me, and though it was less organic, when one’s world is breaking, it can feel like equilibrium to break something tangible—a way of stabilizing something that won’t be stable for a very long time.

And gathering up the pieces, I thought about Memorial Day weekend in 2005, and wondered exactly how much of my father’s DNA I shared.



From what I have seen, while depression is not always hereditary, one does have a greater chance of suffering from the disease if one’s antecedents have as well. However, while some who inherit depression are born with it and often suffer greatly from an early age, for others it can be jump-started by an event or experience, even if it had made no appearance before then.

For my father, that experience was his brother’s suicide. My uncle, John, was diagnosed with his illness for as long as I can remember.

He hadn’t shown any of the signs of fatality to however; like my friend Tom, he’d kept it hidden well. My father had a bad feeling about him — but my uncle lived an hour and a half away in Bellingham, WA, and his wife, Laurie, was aware that he stopped taking his medication. So the bad feeling stayed a bad feeling until

Memorial Day weekend in 2005. My other uncle, Phil, hadn't seen him, and neither had my father nor Laurie. With increased urgency, their search continued. Until they finally went to the police, and found my uncle with a shotgun under a Bellingham bridge.

He was 41 years old.

The main thing I gleaned from the funeral, and memorial services was the reality and inevitability of death. That may sound somewhat grim, given that I was six at the time, but to me it was a simple fact—the sky was blue, the grass was green, and at one point or another, everything dies. Later on, when pets became a fixture in our household, there were no farms upstate or underhanded replacements; it was still tragic, even with goldfish, but death was death.

My uncle's suicide instilled something in my father—a constant state of exhaustion and snappishness, along with a pain that hovered on the crossways between mental, emotional, and physical.

Thank god my mother was able to set aside her reservations about depression, to help my father. As it was, my father was put on medication for depression. The difference, my mother said, was palpable. I was made privy to this information much later; I was quite surprised to learn that news.

But that is how the disease made itself known in him—rooting deep in his genes and sprouting up at calamity. And while it's true that my father and I have our differences (he's a Blondie fan, for god's sake) I've always gotten comments that we resemble one another. We share the same nose, hooked at the end; the same green-blue-gray eyes; the same oval face and long neck. And we're both stubborn as hell, doubly endearing ourselves to, and frustrating my mother.

So when Tom died, among the rest of the cacophony and pain that ensued, part of me was lying in wait for depression to awaken in me the same way it had in my father. *Just try it*, I remember thinking grimly one night. *I know the signs. I know the symptoms. I know about therapy, about medication.* If depression was waiting around the corner for me, I reminded myself, I had at least learned, by proxy, how to live with it.

I told no one about my thoughts—not even my father, who, flew down to Santa Barbara, drove over the mountains into the tiny town of Los Olivos to see me. He arrived five days after Tom passed, which during that time, I'd also been rejected from my dream school. To top it off, I had found myself unable to continue writing the novel I'd been working on without feeling the urge to be sick on the keyboard. If my genes were going to betray me the same way they'd betrayed my father, this would be the moment.

And yet, I was strangely calm.

It was as if I'd prepared as much as I could for a hurricane that might or might not touch down: there had come a point where there was nothing left to do but wait.

Driving with Dad to a nearby diner I felt a kind of pressure mounting in my chest. As we talked about normal, average things, they lapsed into silences. I felt myself growing increasingly desperate with the need to say something about what had happened. But how to phrase it without sounding crass, or uncaring, or self-centered? Worst of all, if I did manage to put something into words, would it trigger my father into one of his bad days that even the medication couldn't fully get rid of? What was there to do?

As my thoughts spun wildly out of control, my father cleared his throat.
“You know,” he said, “I’ve never believed in the idea of closure.”

I stared at him for a moment, trying to connect this phrase to anything.

“Yeah?”

He looked at me for a minute, his eyes darting back to the road. “From my experience, grief is cyclical. You never get fully away from it, but some days get better than others. And there might be a lot of bad days in there—but it gets better, gradually. And that is something I can say for sure.”
For probably the hundredth time in the last week, I felt tears start in my eyes.
“Promise?”

“Oh, sweetheart.” He sounded broken, and I started to cry. “I promise.”

◊

It’s been nearly a year now since Tom passed away. I watched and waited—but my genes did not follow through on their threat. Instead, like my father said, it got better. The suffocating pain receded. After the first week, I stopped sleeping twelve hours a day. I even managed to pull enough of myself together to finish my college applications by the end of November. The pain continues to fester—but is much better than I could have ever imagined.

I can’t stop thinking about what happened, and what, if anything, I could have done. There are songs I can’t hear; movies I can’t watch. And even though things are so much better, there’s still such a clear gap between everything in my world before and after Tom. I’m healing, but still split.

Sitting at my desk and writing this, I can look up and see a teapot, white with pink flowers and bamboo handles, wedged in between two stacks of books. There is something beautiful from that night, then, that remains whole; something that endured. And, as I remind myself, people are much stronger than ceramic.

Penance

Lodged in the crook of an elbow.
A small treat,
ready to be thrown.
A smile that forgives.
Do you think I'm pretty? I ask my
dog.
The object is unattended to.
The possessive is used to describe
the power of giving something a
name.
Who owns me?
The earth shakes when it wants;
the body wants to be held.

Tummyache

blue lipped faucet
aluminum cat tongue
apple cider vinegar
gave me
a tummyache
i want my mommy
to hold me
i want to lick
the plate clean
to brush palms
with the nightjars
to kiss all up on
a pretty face
my cul de sac
sweetheart nuzzled in
a cotton blouse
oh to be the
guiding light in a
grocery store parking lot
just the cure for
empty tummy syndrome
singing in the key
of big spoon:
“skidamarink a dink a dink
skidamarink a doo
i love you”

big kiss forehead
mommy tuck me
in bed drinking
pepto with the
big boys
come closer sleepyhead
reach out your
doll hand
fluent
in devotion

MADISON HARTZ

Sobriety Coin

I stare at a bowl now sitting on my kitchen table. The bowl is a muddy brown color with flowers and leaves painted on it. The rim is the color of thick brown blood clotting a wound. The contents within this bowl tells more than I can. It holds more than I could ever hold. I picked up a gold coin inscribed with the words: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." I hate holding it. This coin holds a number of lost battles that I do not want to re-live. Helplessness mucks us up the most. It's the lack of being able. The loss of control. The unfairness of captivity. You are now captive to a thing that stings.

A sobriety coin. This coin doesn't belong to me. I claimed a lifestyle of sobriety once I was exposed to things and people that turned me away from substance. My PTSD deepens when I drink so I chose to stop doing so. This lifestyle is better for me. I control myself and that is something I can appreciate. The coin belongs to my ex-boyfriend. I had been with Victor from the time I was sixteen until I was almost nineteen. I found out he was an addict when I was seventeen. We lived in Pennsylvania. Our area had one of the highest opiate related death tolls in

the country. Everyone knows that opiate use is an epidemic. We lived within the epidemic. But, I don't know if we ever truly saw it. There was too much time spent pretending that it wasn't there. I'm eighteen now and he has ruined a large part of my life that I will never get back. A part that I can't get back and I don't want back. It would be useless to me now.

In the beginning, I called and made appointments for outpatient treatment and therapy. I was playing the role of an adult. The role of a mom. I read about his oxycodone wet dreams and his need to be held over by a substance through a phone screen. Through his phone screen. I was never one to snoop until I felt as if I was doing myself and Victor a disservice by acting oblivious. I noticed behaviors and watched Victor squirm when he lied. I hadn't noticed how significant the lying became until he could look me in the eyes and actually believe that he was telling the truth.

He told his family that he couldn't travel to New Jersey to visit because his girlfriend was in the hospital. I was not in the hospital and he wasn't sitting next to a hospital bed. I now know where he was all of those times when his timeline didn't make sense. The boy who worked at the gas station down the street from me sold Victor his Xanax scripts. His name was Joe and he isn't an important part of my story. I was seventeen.

In September of 2016, I walked into Victor's friend's basement where he was staying. His dad had kicked him out because he found a stash in an old coat pocket. I opened the basement door and there were bottles of Mad Dog 20/20 everywhere. Blankets hung on the prison-style windows. He glared at me and didn't say a thing. The lights were off and the television was fuzzy. I grew angry because I begged him to get it together and figure things out with his dad. He put his head in his hands so I couldn't see his face. He said he needed space and time to think but I couldn't give him anything more than what I already had. I knew he'd been using. If I left he would get high and pity himself because that's what he knew how to do. I saw envelopes filled with pills and a lit-up cell resting on the table. He pulled me in when I was needed and threw me away when I tried to become anything more than an object. I was so tired of feeling like a rag doll. He yelled in my face and his mouth was so close to my cheek that I could feel heat and spit striking me. He had never shouted at me before and I grew soft and fearful. I didn't know who this person was, I didn't know anyone could make me feel so unlovable. I began to sob. The kind of sob that shakes your body and hurts your heart. I clung to his legs like a child and he kicked me off. I begged and became scared of him, scared that he would hit me. I left. Many events similar to this unfolded over the following days, weeks, and months. Victor was relentless. His addiction was relentless. I was relentlessly present.

My therapist said she had something to show me. She said it reminded her of me. I had been seeing her for about six months at this point. She handed me an

obituary. A mother speaking of her son who died due to an overdose. “To know him was to love him.” she said. I began writing Victor’s obituary in my head. I began writing my own too.

On December 25th Victor dropped by to stuff his face with food after he snorted pills in his car. He said he couldn’t afford a gift or a card and I was very much okay with that. I was okay with most things at this point. He went missing a few days after the holiday. I didn’t sleep while he was gone. I was dissociating and I felt like my limbs didn’t belong to me. I had dealt with lying and unannounced disappearances for months. This is not where I wanted to be. I thought I would hang myself with decorative lights or eat dry wall after nights of wondering if the person I loved was dead. He came home a few days later. He was arrested for stealing guns from his father and trading them for drugs. He stole over ten thousand dollars in the span of a year. His family and I sat around a bare kitchen table as he told us the things that he had done. His mother was on speaker phone sobbing. I threw up. The gold cross that my grandfather had gotten me was missing. I turned eighteen on Christmas day.

The morning Victor went to rehab in California I felt heavy. By heavy I don’t mean emotionally tolling. I mean physical weight. He was in the throes of withdrawal. He was taking a bath and he could barely keep himself awake. We needed to leave for the airport in Philadelphia. He was a fucking shadow of what he used to be. I propped him up, dried him off, and helped him get dressed. The weight of him on my shoulder that morning has never left me.

As Victor’s sickness began to spiral I developed an illness of my own. The only time I felt safe was when I was hungry. The less space I was taking up the less likely there would be enough of me to feel. I was so ill at one point that I couldn’t stand up without crying and I said, “I am a corpse so let me be a corpse.” I didn’t want help, I didn’t plan to accept it. Eventually, I entered treatment in July and I’ve been recovering ever since. Victor’s addiction led me to befriend my own addiction. I relied on starvation. When I told Victor that I had an eating disorder he said “Sometimes I don’t eat when I’m hungry either.”

The coin has the serenity prayer pressed within its backside. I took this coin from Victor one day in June. It was shortly after my high school graduation. I was at the hospital where my new baby cousin had just been born. I got a call from Victor’s cousin and then his father. Victor had totaled his car about a mile away from his house. I immediately asked what he was on and where he was, I knew he was okay. He was always okay. He doesn’t know how to learn from the destruction that he creates therefore he suffers often and intensely.

I arrived at his house and his lip was busted and his eyes were thin lines against his face. He screamed and yelled and refused to acknowledge that he was messed up. He called me a liar and insane. I was lowered to nothing. My eyes swelled with tears and my face was so tired of speaking and not being heard. I

took the coin and said he didn't earn it. That he would die or kill someone soon. I felt angry because I'd let this puddle of a man hurt me. I had and have let him hurt me. Yet, I'm grateful that he hasn't killed me. I feel obligated to thank him but I do not. I wanted to help him with all of the power that lies hidden in these hands, in this mind, in this body.

The lying and the undermining was like someone burning my skin in the same place until the area became so fried that it didn't hurt anymore. He will never know what he has done to me. He gets to recover from his addiction. I hope I get to recover from his addiction as well.

I still have the coin. Maybe one day soon I will throw it off of the Brooklyn Bridge or break it with my teeth. I haven't decided yet.

EMILIA COPELAND TITUS

Birdcalls

on a clear night in the middle of summer, louise lawler walks home from from an art installation she has been working on by the hudson river. it is 1972 and performance art is on the rise— people will pay decent money to walk around a gallery and listen to a man make lewd comments about them while masturbating. louise thinks, i can get that for free right on the bowery, and laughs at the thought. the laugh tastes stale against her tongue. it is a laugh by way of survival. her friend martha kite walks beside her, swinging her arms through the thick soupy air as she goes. in this moment, except for the shuffle of shoes on the pavement, new york is quiet.

the only time new york is quiet is when something bad is going to happen, has happened, or is currently happening. louise and martha do not have time for bad things right now. they are tired of the torturous silence.

so martha starts hollering, or maybe it's louise. either way they are screaming. this is also survival. a bird flies from her throat, warbling and humming and frantic:

willoughby willoughby willoughby

they say the names of men they know, louder and louder, a game. they let the sounds slide out between their teeth like a mockery being spat. it feels good, the way they aren't supposed to feel good. louise grins at martha, or maybe martha turns towards louise.

cy twooooombly cy twooooombly

isn't it always a man they know? the two of them are laughing so hard now. aren't women only supposed to make art about the men they have known? they stamp their feet on the concrete as if to rattle those who lie beneath it.

vito!vito!vito! acconciiii vito acconciiii vito!vito!vito!

louise places her hand on martha's shoulder, catching her breath. the only thing worse than a woman is a crazy woman. her cheeks are damp with tears, sweat. she thinks about museums, all that dead air in between columns and canvases. all those men looking at women being looked at by men.

aaaaa!!! aaa-artschwager aaaa!!! aartschwager

oh, louise, how we luxuriate in our derision. how gorgeous it is to create art with the selfishness of a man. why not take their names, the way they have always taken our bodies?

andreandreandre caaarl carl andre carl aaaandre

decades later, i wish louise could hear my thoughts across the hudson as i stare at a painting in my university, waiting for an elevator. i can only read the artist's name in her voice, a banshee's shriek, a witch's cackle, a gorgon's rasp:

sollllllll solllllll sollllll sollewitt sollewitt sollllllll

GRACIE PIERSON

Doors

Press the silver button to open the gate, but not from the outside, on the outside you enter the code and push. It is not gonna be easy, you have to kind of sort of nudge it. And then, this is when you press the silver button, No—not just after you open the gate, wait—maybe I won't call it a gate. It is more of a door, a hefty one with a huge handle. But after you open the door (that is much like a gate) you walk through the courtyard and open the glass door, which does not have a code, you just push it open, this one doesn't take much effort, a gentle nudge will do. Finally you can enter, its empty, walls of glass, a vast space that appears to have no exit but one, except there are other doors, some standard with knobs on the left, or right, depending on what side you are standing on, twist and open. But there are also some barn doors, that hang on a track, above the doorway, these ones slide, so guide the handle to the right, or to the left, depending on what side you are standing on. Besides a few standard doors and some barn style ones (installed for aesthetic purposes) there are no more doors in this space. Oh—and there is the mechanical folding door too, to get to it you slide the barn door to the passageway, turn the knob of the door at the other end. Then you are at the mechanical door, to open this door you simply press the button mounted on the wall, the bottom button,

the door will then start to peel up, folding at the corner and flattening parallel to the ceiling. But don't leave the space this way, the opening is not meant for you, turn back around and exit by turning the knob back through the passageway, slide the barn door to the right (yes to the right this time) and leave. Go back through the glass door, it pivots by the way and is wider than most doors, yet it still will open easily. Walk out back through the courtyard and you will reach this door, or gate, the one with the silver button. The button will be on your right, press the button and pull on the handle at the same time. It is going to be difficult, the door is heavy, so you have to put some weight into it.

LAURA YE

The Daisies

First

-If I bled roses, would you love me more?

Red

The living room was soaked in red. Or it seemed that way. The lonely light bulb that dangled from the ceiling was surrounded by strands of red crystals that Mommy had hung up. They enveloped every last bit of the bulb's white light—circles within circles, strands aside strands, crystals upon crystals, red, then more red—no light could penetrate that and remain white.

Everything that the light touched was made red, almost like roses but not quite, including Mommy. She sat by the dinner table, writing. She wrote with such grace and fluidity, her hands seemed like they were swimming in the red ocean. Every now and then she looked up and saw me, or maybe all she saw was just another red shape, not red enough. Never red enough.

Second

-If I bled roses, would you love me more?

-Don't say 'if'. You will bleed roses and I do love you.

I'm Sorry

"I talked to Sara's mother today," Mommy said during dinner. "She said Sara started bleeding yesterday."

"Mommy—"

"She bled roses," she paused, "and so did Jason and Molly."

"I'm sorry Mommy, I promise I'll try harder."

"Give me your hand."

I reached my left hand across the table. Mommy picked up the butter knife next to her plate, held my hand and put it to my palm where a messy scar was. Her hand was gentle, the knife was not. Its jags were nowhere sharp enough to make a clean cut, so they dragged on my skin, against the scar, tearing through the thin membrane, threatening flesh. A cut formed and a single white petal popped out, still shifting, struggling between its liquid and solid states. Then another petal and another and another, until a single daisy flowed out of the cut and, with my heart, dropped. The table caught the flower with infinite gentleness, and I was caught between the pain of self-loathing and the dried wound of cracked skin.

There was a moment of silence, a burning silence that threatened to turn everything to ashes.

"Go back to your room," Mommy said, her finger brushing over the cut.
"Finish your homework."

Third

-*If I bled roses, would you love me more?*

-*Stop asking me that question.*

-*Mommy?*

-*What is it?*

-*I'm sorry.*

-...*It's not your fault.*

Birthday

With my neck bent back uncomfortably, I watched the blue sky and studied how the clouds went by. It was my eighth birthday. My body was numb from sitting on the porch in the same position for so long, but I didn't want to take my eyes off of the grass, the houses, the sky, the clouds, everything.

The door creaked. Mommy walked out of the house. Reluctantly, I plucked my gaze out of the blue to look at her. I rubbed my sore neck.

"Happy Birthday, dear." She held up a little bottle of red paint with a little red bow stuck to the lid. "I heard from your teacher that you're learning to paint at school."

The bottle didn't have a label on it, allowing the burning color to be on full display through transparent plastic. Her faint smile was warm and I smiled back.

"Thank you, Mommy."

"When is Sara coming over? Should I start preparing dinner?"

My eyes wandered, certain to avoid her gaze. "She can't come."

"Why is that?"

"She said her mommy didn't want her to hang out with me anymore, because I can't bleed roses."

Her smile faded ever so slowly. What was left was neither anger nor disappointment, only fatigue that weighed down her existence.

"I'll get dinner started." I followed her back into the house. The dying sun outside was beginning to tint the sky.

Mommy didn't say a word that night.

Fourth

-If I bled roses, would you love me more?

-Not now, I'm writing. Go play on your own.

-What are you writing about, Mommy?

-Dreams.

A Gift

It was Sunday night. Mommy and I curled up on the couch and watched TV. The room wasn't red that night; there was only the silver glow of the moon outside the window. Mommy had turned off the lights, and I saw on her face, illuminated by the TV, a relaxed expression.

"Mommy, did Daddy bleed roses?"

I watched the muscles on her face tense up subtly.

"Yes."

"Then why can't I bleed roses too?"

She did not answer.

"Where is Daddy?"

"He left."

"Is it because I can't bleed roses?"

"No."

"Then why? Why did Daddy have to leave?"

Annoyance flashed on her face.

"Because I loved him too much."

I did not understand. She just kept staring at the T.V. I turned away and got up.

"Where are you going?"

"I have homework." I didn't. I climbed up the stairs to my room. Without hesitation, I grabbed the scissors on my desk and positioned them above the scar on my left palm. I quickly closed my hand around the blade before the tears in my

eyes could escape, and pressed as hard as I could until I felt it pierce through. I released my hand and hoped desperately.

Daisies. One after another. Little white flowers oozed out from the cut and floated weightlessly onto the ground. My feet were almost completely covered with them. Then it stopped.

I stared at them as if they would magically turn into roses. My eyes watered. I picked up one of the daisies and kicked away the others. I opened the drawer under my desk, and took out the bottle of red paint that Mommy had gotten me for my birthday. I unscrewed the lid and pushed the flower into the bottle, ignoring the fact that my injured hand was completely covered in paint. Then I dragged the wet daisy, now red, out. It wasn't red like roses, but almost. With the dripping flower in my hand, I walked back to the living room, ignoring how the paint stained the floor and my feet. Mommy was still looking at the TV, but wasn't actually watching anything.

"Mommy," I raised my arm and offered her the pathetic red daisy. "I have a gift for you."

She took it without a word and cradled it in her hands for a moment. Then she crushed it in her fist.

Fifth

-If I bled roses, would you love me more?

-Maybe.

-I don't know if I'll ever be able to bleed roses.

-Hmm.

Questions

I walk into the hospital with a bouquet of roses from the floral shop next door. They're cheap, but roses nonetheless. Red dress on my body and roses in hand, I walk through the white like a drop of red paint falling, falling.

I stop in front of a door and open it with my scarred hand. Mom is sitting on her bed, writing, with an open window to her left, sending her fresh air. On the table between the bed and the window is a plastic bottle with roses in it, roses that are redder than mine. A gust of wind drowns the room and sweeps up a few red petals that were desperately hanging on to the stem. They land safely next to Mom's hand. I put the bouquet down on a chair outside the room, then walk in.

She doesn't look up at me, and fiddles with a petal between her fingers. I pull a chair towards her bed and sit down.

"Who are the roses from?"

"Do you ever get tired of starting a conversation with a question?" She's still writing. "I asked the nurse to get me them. I paid her afterwards, if that's what you're worried about."

"What are you writing?"
She smiles. "A poem."
"Read it to me?"
"It's not for you." She shifts position and sits up straight. Then she starts reading,

I dreamed that I was red
My hair was flaming auburn
My skin, crimson
Roses
Like roses
Crimson like roses
They cheered and applauded
They all did
But then I woke up
And saw that I wasn't red
I was an oddly shaped cloud
I was a crooked paper plane
I was Grandma's hair
I was spoiled milk
And they left me
They all did
So I cried and I cried
Until sorrow painted me red
And they loved me
They all did."

Sixth
-Mom?
-What now?
-I hate you.
-I know.

The Daisies

Mom didn't say a word after she finished the poem, and later in the silence she fell into slumber. The hospital is quiet at this time of day. The window is still open, granting the room a dim moonlight. The roses are soon to wither. A nurse calls me from the hallway, and I leave the room.

"Your mother's condition isn't critical at the moment, but she does need a blood transfusion." The nurse turns toward me and says, "Usually close family members make the most ideal donors, so we pulled up your medical record and saw that you are a match."

“I am?”

“Yes. Would you be the donor?”

I stupidly turn my head to look into the room at Mom who is still sound asleep. The roses are wilted completely. Some of the petals rest on the bed, decorating Mom even in her sleep. Unable to control myself, I let out a laugh.

“Miss?”

I keep my eyes fixed on Mom. “I’ll give her my blood.”

The nurse says something else that my ears fail to catch. I return to the room with light footsteps and close the door behind me. I sit back down in the chair, and slowly start to pick away the red petals that have fallen on Mom’s face and hair—they are beginning to disturb her dreams. For a while, I watch how the moon shines into the room and how my dress doesn’t look red anymore in the dark. I watch the wind blow, I watch the night tick away and I watch Mom sleep. Then I can’t stop crying. I curl up in my chair and cry.

Etymology of Soft

*Soft drink I drink—oh boy, you sure
are Shirley Temple—
Soft boy
swiftly sewn, even and smooth
even luxurious*

Magellan thought *oh, soft ocean*
Mar Pacifico
unassuming basin,
terrifying colossus
—somewhere a lover pees
on their partner's leg
to relieve,
soften, jelly-stinger-venom
having seen *Friends*
innocently releasing
more poison—
cold rocky beach day
basin,
astronomical salt water bowl
—my parents, always so fearful
of us getting pulled in by undertow,
the violent conveyor belt
hidden on soft day

list of things that yield to weight:
brioche bun
who can eat an orange
soft-core?

No perceptible funny business
of devoured *soft*?

the softer sex
we must've concocted
this one to distract
from the ultimate softening
—power conflated with
hard. Prowling self-obsession
that in the soft night fears
self-love
so untenderly

I benefit from
all different micro-softs
and am ordered
by all different micro-softs
and curl up in soft sometimes
and breath in dust soft-spoken
and try both hands at unmaking
poison,
poised to crawl and grab ankles
in soft light

Negative Value II

He scattered the powdered pigment over the surface and threw it in handfuls that spread on impact like shrapnel¹

Polke violently colored the canvas separating violet into gold and deep bronze, dropped dispersion-paint-resin-pigment H-bombs

*“Who are you?” Abdullah called out into the night. “Who are you?”
The men shot him dead²*

They say that Mel Gibson’s image has been restored
—he will continue to win awards and laugh we speculate

Polke said the pigment was like opal—
a color for each angle

1. Alibis Sigmar Polke 1963-2010
Edited by Kathy Halbreich: 128

2. “Yemen Aftermath: Trump’s First Military Raid Continues To Raise Questions” by Alice Fordham and Tom Bowman from NPR Online (February 2, 2017)

Red Bead Bracelet with Elastic Band

Heart decayed Off because
mine for [poke out] Sharp
one side blood quarter
turned
around the different
Is two times around
twice down turned round
speckled space splashing states
however deep splashes
Circle questions one crumbles
Volcanic glass turntable sphere
turntables remotely

XIII

*(about a picture Dylan didn't know she drew
of me)*

I will be created and unborn like stardust
stark naked and caged in blue
acrylic and fetal
which you say is vulnerable
so I'll be held by blue moonlight
and hold you in opal bedsheets
so that we can always be free like street-
pigeons
while we heart-dance on the
East River Promenade and
never mince words again
together we can never mince
our words again

You drew a picture long before you knew me

How could you have known that I was that
nude woman vulnerable?

Transposition of Piano Mélancolique (extraits) par Élise Turcotte as translated by Adrienne Rich

And in the end take
/reconcile nothing
that hurts to bring with.

A letter to you (*toi*)
perhaps from a bog Let's
believe or try
to intrude believing

inside this there's
A nod towards nothing
—I drown in
 notions of "my" (*mes*)
 notions of lungs (*poumons*)

But I can't undo that
imperative: no
that spreads like sickness
billows in clouds
rises like smoke—your
Pond and vine eyes

And in the end that
vicinity to I
impossibility/longing/vacancy or you (*te*)
that position from
which the placeholder: the
language challenges "swamp" (la mangrove)

#11ANDAHALFREADINGLIST

A LIST OF BOOKS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT, COURTESY
OF SOME OF OUR FAVORITE AUTHORS ON TWITTER.

Emma Who Saved My Life

WILTON BARNHARDT

Recommended by
Laura Lippman, author the
Tess Monaghan Series

A Certain Age

TAMA JANOWITZ

Recomeded Augusten Burroughs, author of
Running With Scissors

The Sadeian Woman

ANGELA CARTER

Recommended by
Alexander Chee, author of *The
Queen Of The Night*

In A Lonely Place

DOROTHY B HUGHES

Recommended by
Megan Abbott, author of *You Will Know Me*
& TV writer for HBO's *The Deuce*

A House Made of Water

MICHELLE LIN

Recommended by
Chen Chen, author of *When I Grow Up I
Want To Be A List Of Further Possibilities*

Flower Wars

NICO AMADOR

Recommended by
Chen Chen

Two Serious Ladies

JANE BOWLES

Recommended by

Joe Dunthorne, Author of *Submarine*
& *Wild Abandon*

Little Deaths

EMMA FLINT

Recommended by

Ann Cleeves, author of *Raven Black*

Grendel

JOHN GARDNER

Recommended by

Sean Michaels, music critic &
author of *Us Conductors*

Close Your Eyes, Hold Hands

CHRIS BOHJALIAN

Recommended by

Jodi Picoult, author of *My Sister's
Keeper*

Novel 253

GEOFF RYMAN

Recommended by

Carmen Maria Machado, author of
Her Body And Other Parties

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

LÉNA BARTELS is a second year BA/BFA student studying at the School of Jazz with a concentration in drums as well as Literary Studies at Lang.

THOMAS BENFIELD is a senior studying Poetry. His work has been featured in Eleven and a Half and the Ibbetson Street Press.

LINA BERGAMINI is a student at Eugene Lang, majoring in Literary Studies with a concentration in Fiction.

LEO CHANG is a senior in the BFA Integrated Design program studying Fashion Communication. He has photographed for CR Fashion Book, Urban Outfitters, Tomorrowland and numerous leading fashion influencers.

ISABELA CORDERO is a sophomore studying Literary Studies with a Concentration in Writing.

LIYA CUI is a senior studying nonfiction

writing. She has written for The New School Free Press, Her Campus, and is a staff writer intern at Culinary Epicenter.

THOM DONOVAN is the author of numerous books including *Withdrawn* (Compline, 2017), *The Hole* (Displaced Press, 2012) and *Withdrawn: a Discourse* (Shifter, 2016). He is currently an Assistant Professor of Literary Studies at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts.

AIDEN GARABED FARRELL is a senior in the Writing Track of the Literary Studies major with a concentration in Poetry. He has also been published in Belleville Park Pages.

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LAMIN LEROY GIBBA is a fourth-year BFA acting student at The New School of Performing Arts – School of Drama. He has written stage and screenplays and is now—drumroll, please—working on his first novel. Lamin's feature film *Shinier People* is currently in development.

BAILEY GUESS is a freshman at Lang, still undecided on her major. This is her first time being published, and she is very excited to see her work featured in Eleven and a Half.

INES CUROVICH is a graduating senior in the Integrated Design major. Ines's art work has been featured in DisFunkshion Magazine and Nylon Mag.

MADISON HARTZ graduated from Weatherly Area High School in 2017 and received the Gold Key on behalf of the Scholastic Writing and Art Awards for her piece entitled "Seven Layers". She majors in Creative

Writing and minors in Religious Studies. She hopes to never stop writing.

AMYIAH HILLIAN is a junior, studying at the New School for Public Engagement; and a new comer in the poetry world.

MARY M. HOSEY is a senior studying Nonfiction & Poetry. She is also studying Creative Publishing/ Critical Journalism at The New School for Social Research.

SELIN KARAHAN is a sophomore student at Parsons School of Design and is currently studying BFA Illustration. She has previously published two pieces of paintings at CMS/Cern, Switzerland.

THOMAS KOENIGS is a sophomore majoring in politics and minoring in writing. While this will be his first published poem, his lyrics have been featured in Castle Rock Writers, Colorado Public Radio, and The Denver Post.

EMILY LING is a first year student planning to major in Global Studies. Her work has appeared in Pamplemousse, Litmus, The Blueshift Journal, and The Wax Paper.

QUOC LY is a senior at Parsons, majoring in Fine Arts with a concentration on oil painting.

ALEXANDER MAKSIK is the author of the novels, *You Deserve Nothing*, *A Marker to Measure Drift* & *Shelter in Place*.

RUPERT MOON is a junior in the Writing program. They are an international student from Ireland, and this is their first publication.

AINE NAKAMURA is a singer, composer, poet and sanshin player, currently at the BFA program of Jazz and Contemporary Music. Her poem "On the Night of the New Moon" is also the lyric to her composition of the same title, which she wrote and premiered at the Jazz School in 2017.

SARA PAUL studies creative writing at the Eugene Lang college. Sara has won multiple awards for her writing, including a Regional Gold Key from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards as well as the Connor Writing Contest. When she isn't writing you can find her daydreaming in a corner or crying while listening to a Coldplay song.

ALANA PEREZ is a second-year lang student born and raised in the Bronx and is currently residing in the bustling metropolis of North Nowhere, New Jersey. She has been writing poetry since the age of 15. She is usually singing, reading, or taking an NJ Transit bus into the city.

GRACIE PIERSON is a junior at Eugene Lang majoring in Literary Studies with an emphasis on poetry and fiction. Her work has previously been published in Eleven and a Half Journal.

KALLIE QUIST is a sophomore at Lang

studying poetry and literature. She has self-published two chapbooks: Neuroticism & Eroticism and Unoriginal Content.

MADELINE RAGSDALE is a freshman studying Journalism and Design. She has previously been published in Philadelphia Teen Stories. She loves Debbie Harry, conspiracy theories, and weird dreams.

MAISIE RAPP is a sophomore studying writing. This is her first time being published.

ELI LOUIS RECHT-APPEL just ate an onion flatbread—and there's comfort in that. You can always be sure that he's out there, eating an onion flatbread.

EVA SILVERMAN is a sophomore majoring in Literary Studies. Her nonfiction has been published in Bandcamp Daily, The Media, and The Le Sigh and her poetry has been published in various zines, including The Chapess, What Kind

of Trouble, and Letters from Bummer Camp.

EMILIA COPELAND TITUS is a second-year Lang student studying Culture & Media and Writing.

GABRIEL TORRES is a sophomore theater major at the The New School of Performing Arts.

ANDY H. WEI is a Fine Arts Major studying as part of the class of 2021. Previously published by ABC 13, The Houston Chronicle, Awwwards, Glasstire Magazine, Susan Kathleen Foundation, etc.

CHARLOTTE WILLIAMS is a junior at Lang majoring in Literary Studies. She thinks about cowboys and Karen Carpenter exclusively.

LAURA YE is a sophomore majoring in illustration. She is publishing her work for the first time.

MARY ZECH is a freshman studying illustration. She is interested in politics, art history, and gardening.