

Lumière

MASSBAY'S LITERARY MAGAZINE
Issue 4: Spring 2019

lumière

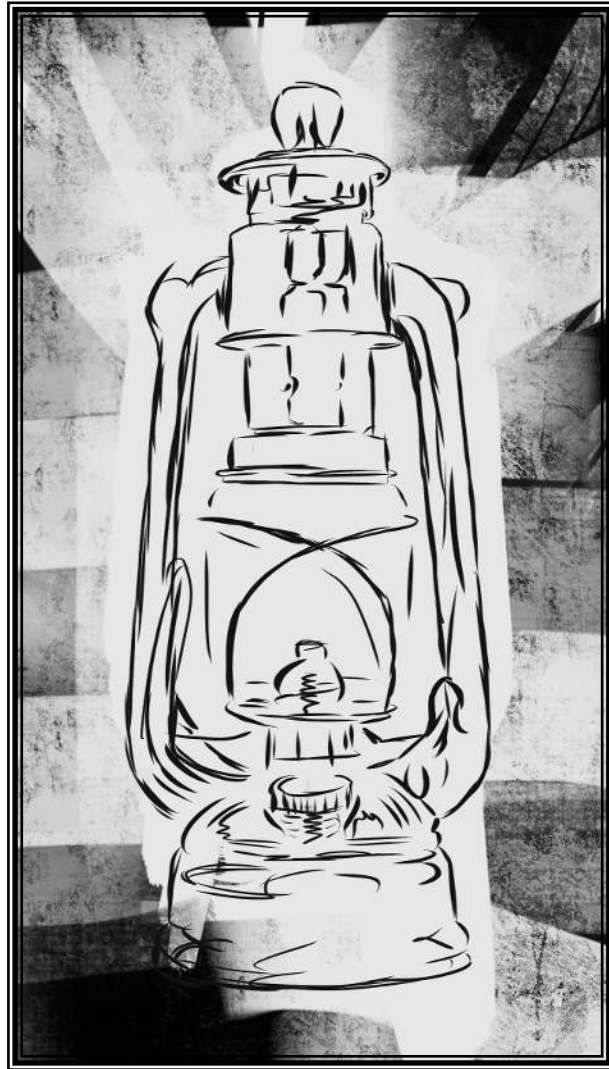
Editor-in-Chief
JayJay Conrad

Editorial & Design
Branden LaCroix
Alix Scarlatos
Kelvin Telon
Sergey Dushkin
David Medina
Madeline Normand
Keenan Pontes
Jarred Rodriguez
Ben Pielocik
Joe Young

Shout-outs
Sean McCarthy
Liz Cooper
Jim Grenier
Chris La Barbera
The MassBay Foundation
Student Development
Meghan DiMino
The SGA

Founders
Diego Rocha
Josh Klein

Faculty Sponsor
Matt Walsh



The **lumière** editorial staff is the flashlight of the literary and artistic shenanigans happening at MassBay. We floodlight the heck out of your creativity. If you've got some wonder, tantalize our eyes, oil up our brain gears; we'll showcase that super-duper, unique expression. **lumière** is here to illuminate ALL the passion, ALL the authenticity, and ALL the awesome. Send your work to litmag@massbay.edu

Table of Contents

Cover: Spencer Peirce Little Farm,
Sachin Sawe

- 3 Photo by Michael Miano
- 4 Reassurance, Sorin Bica
- 5 *Ars Poetica*, JayJay Conrad
- 6 *The Apartment*, Sophia Martins
- 7 Medusa In Love, Ed Pontes
- 8 Hall of Kings, Alura Leet
- 9 *The Interregnum*, David Medina
- 10 *Untitled Girl*, Sophia Martins
- 10 Relationship Goals, Sorin Bica
- 11 *You Are Planet*, Alix Scarlet
- 12 *No Small Talk*, Kelvin Telon
- 15 Photo by Parisa Mavaddat
- 16 E. Gorey, Madeline Normand
- 17 *And the Moon Arose*, Benjamin Smith
- 18 Malachite, Martha Anderson
- 19 *Winter Burn*, Gustavo Ricardo
- 20 *A Moment of Clarity While Stuck in the Mud*, Timothy F. Mines
- 22 Preservation of Time, Alura Leet
- 23 *Voyager*, Matt Walsh
- 24 *Dice*, Benjamin Pielocik
- 25 *Disem-bodies*, Sophia Martins
- 26 *Bald Mtn. Rangely ME*, Jayjay Conrad
- 27 Foliage New Hampshire, Sachin Sawe



- 28 Plant Man, Madeline Normand
 - 28 *ABCDream*, Sergey Dushkin
 - 29 Billy's Bones, Madeline Normand
 - 30 If a Tree Prays in the Desert..., Ed Pontes
 - 31 *I Promise*, Sebastian Heiser
 - 32 *Barkeep*, Branden Pacheco
 - 35 Om Tej, Sachin Sawe
 - 36 Heroin, Josh West
 - 37 *chucky and sean*, beige
 - 38 *Feed*, Branden LaCroix
 - 39 What Lies in the Thick Cloud of Formations, Ed Pontes
 - 40 *Lost in the Sauce*, David Frederick Jr.
 - 43 Carte Blanche, Ed Pontes
 - 44 *My Grand Maw Came to Visit Last Week*, Christian Hardy
 - 45 Great Meadows, Sudbury, Sachin Sawe
 - 46 *Pineapple*, Keenan Pontes
 - 46 Volcano, Michael Miano
 - 47 *To Joey*, Gil Avramovich
 - 48 *The Summer Poem*, Valeri Beers
 - 48 *Winter Lake*, Yukimi Miyashita
 - 49 The Transcendental Splashes of PG, Paola Guzman
 - 50 Manjil Dam, Iran, Parisa Mavaddat
- Back Cover: Photo by Katie Crowley

Reassurance by Sorin Bica



Ars Poetica

Let me tell you something, beloved Lumineers: this is hard. Putting what *lumière* means to me into words has proved near impossible. Which is saying something, because words are what I do—I'm a poet. So, this is *ars poetica*—poetry about poetry—because *lumière*, in and of itself, is poetry.

It has linebreaks that have left me with bated breath; there has been shocking juxtaposition, unexpected yet unequivocal; it has been rife with neologisms the way it managed to meld old concepts into new forms; it has clear stanzas serving as a timeline, an ostentatiously wonderful display of evolution, growing longer and larger with the completion of each verse. And yet, despite—or perhaps because of—our gorgeous, roiling chaos a meter has emerged steady and reliable as a metronome or war drum, or apricity sifting through bare branches of winter-laden trees.

This is what *lumière* has been to me: an apricity that transcended the wish-thinkings of snow: “summer will be here soon enough.” And still yet it is more, because it didn't just provide the pale winter hope of apricity, it did not just plant visions of warmth: it brought summer. At least to me. Turgid with the goal—our goal, past and present, all of us—of lighting up others' creativity like a floodlight at midnight or a sconce in a dark room; *lumière*, and all it was, has been, and will be, was a different kind of illumination: *lumière* convinced me that the Light at the End of the Tunnel wasn't a train.

lumière is defined by memories: there is something incredible about putting together a fully formed literary journal with nobody knowing anything about creating one in an impossibly short time constraint. There is hilarity in the first launch landing on the day marijuana was legalized and here we are

standing with goofy-proud smiles under gold balloons that read “GET LIT.” That was unintentional, I promise, but it is one of my favorite memories, the laughter that bubbled from us and filled the entire school with its tintinnabulation when more than one person came up to say how cleverly it was planned. We had no idea. The round table meetings that ran hours past the scheduled time because of the playful-serious banter over the submissions pile will reside inside of me, embedded in my grey matter like warm fingertips pressed to the base of the spine.

T.S. Eliot talked of life measured in coffee spoons—*lumière*'s life is measured in gallons of coffee. Hundreds of gallons. I literally had no idea how much coffee the human body could withstand until deadlines loomed. It's quite impressive, actually. Kind of concerning, to be honest. (Much to the dismay of my team, I still prefer Mountain Dew as my main caffeine source.) The 2:00ams. The loose papers covering long conference tables. The last minutes. The support offered and given. The cakes with our logo—the fact that we had a logo. The half-kidding remarks about tattooing that logo. All of these are already tattooed on me, the hum of a tattoo gun replaced by that of a printing press.

Which is why this is the hard part: the keyword here being “part.” I depart *lumière* as I depart MassBay—with a diploma, but also with a new understanding of the power illumination can bring beyond the physical.

So, while I'm gone—say it with me, you know the drill by now—keep on being just as awesome as you are.

GET LIT!

— JayJay, editor-in-chief

The Apartment

by Sophia Martins

Out here, families raise families: never leave,
Doubt change. Can't blame them. Stay put.

Wannabe nomad? The stillness of here,
The predictability, isn't worth a long stay.

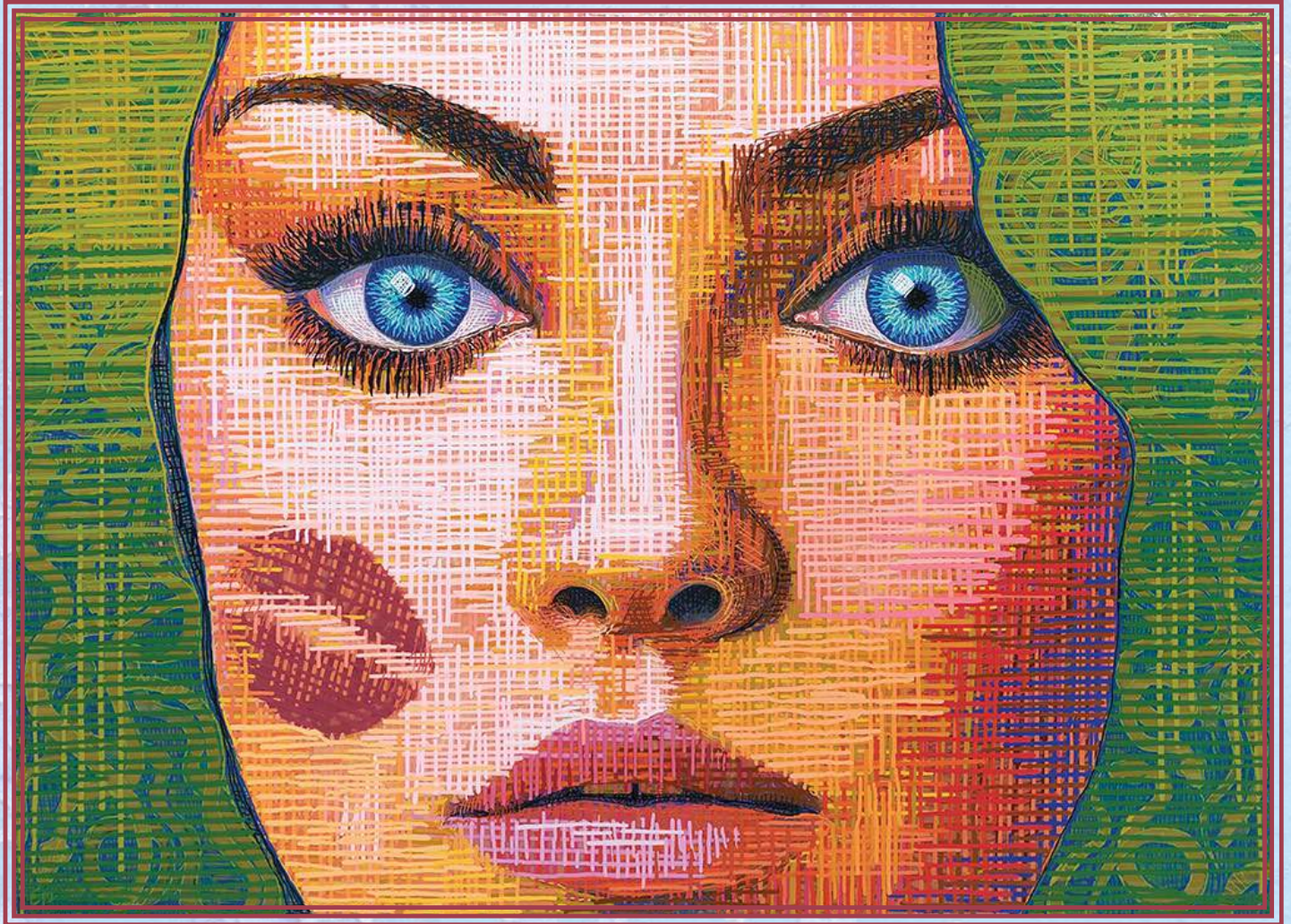
They say they'll welcome you, you, out of place without a friend for miles.
It is a half-home, like the person after the person you actually loved.

Maybe invested in couches, borrowed a rug made by a relative,
Painted fifteen out of twenty walls, we tried to make it ours.

Still haven't met most of the neighbors. In this town,
People circle their enemies from high school like birds.

The roommate moved to New York City, where there is never silence
Somewhere and dogs are well-behaved and there will always be light

At least somewhere. Things I've learned here: to befriend silence,
The real cold of January, the pathetic kick of want.



Medusa in Love by Ed Pontes



Hall of Kings by Alura Leet

The Interregnum

by David Medina

Today I carried five books across the snow.

It was a familiar journey from my office to the university library—a walk that, on average, took no more than three minutes to complete. I carried the five hardcover books using both of my hands. I could have easily carried them with one hand, mind you, by simply tucking their hard spines into my side. But this brash move had proven dangerous in the past—dangerous not to myself, of course, but dangerous for the books. One misstep and I could have dropped them all easily and effortlessly, forcing them to experience the full effects of gravity’s maliciousness and concrete’s indifference. A misstep with books in one hand might force fingers into fragile and frail pages, bending them forever. No, I had committed these reckless errors too many times in the past and now I knew better than to carry these helpless objects with just one hand.

When I arrived at the library I entered and approached the “drop-off” counter. Using the drop-off counter makes me feel frantic and anxious, the way an adrenaline junkie might feel when jumping out of a plane. In all honesty, I’d much prefer jumping out of a plane at 30,000 feet than have to use this corrupt contraption. To say I feel strongly about this drop-off counter would be an understatement. On the surface, however, the counter appears benign: a large, rectangular slot in a desk allows books to fall into an unpadded, cold, hard, vestibule. When a book is dropped into the slot it falls three or four feet directly into the void. “My god, what a fall! What a system! What callous indifference!” These are always my thoughts concerning this process. I have often seen others casually feed this monster book after book. But I cannot bring myself to do the same. I see myself as the books’ steward, their protector during an interminable interregnum in which reader after reader ferries them from shelf to shelf. I fret and panic thinking about the books landing on their corners, scuffing their bindings, or permanently injuring their spines. Worse still, I panic when I think about a book’s binding opening, subsequently exposing pages to the callous surface of the vestibule and the brash books that ceaselessly rain down. Why would anyone take this uncalculated risk? I, for one, cannot. I always, always, hand the books to a librarian to reshelve.

But today the library is busy, and no one is near the counter. I wait, patiently, like the books in my hands. No one approaches. Finally, a young woman who is visibly perturbed approaches me and asks if I need help. I smile and say no and quickly explain that I only need to drop some books off. Without pausing she points a manicured finger at the book pit and says, “Just drop them off in there,” and then quickly turns and walks away.

I stand in the library dumbfounded and distressed. I stare at the monster’s mouth—the black rectangle of my bibliographic nightmares. I realize that others may need these books more than I do, so, I swallow my fears and drop the books, one at a time, into the void. 

Untitled Girl

by Sophia Martins

Saturday night pooled with nobody,
Something the world warns against:

They'll talk about Hansel, Ridinghood, boy-who-cried,
But leave out cautionary fables that warn against Saturday

Nights spent with just T.V. characters.
Anyway, you, a cryptic girl, swings by,

Offerings of IPAs, canned, cold
Already. They smell like pine trees.

A bonfire appears—to confess, lack girl
Scout skills, fail at all that is kindling—

The flame is all your tiny kind of magic.
After bald small talk, we bed

Together, your skin tastes
Of ash, smoke, pine trees in smolder.

Relationship Goals by Sorin Bica



You Are Planet

by Alix Scarlet

As the heat approached,
melting and trickling,
the conclusion began.

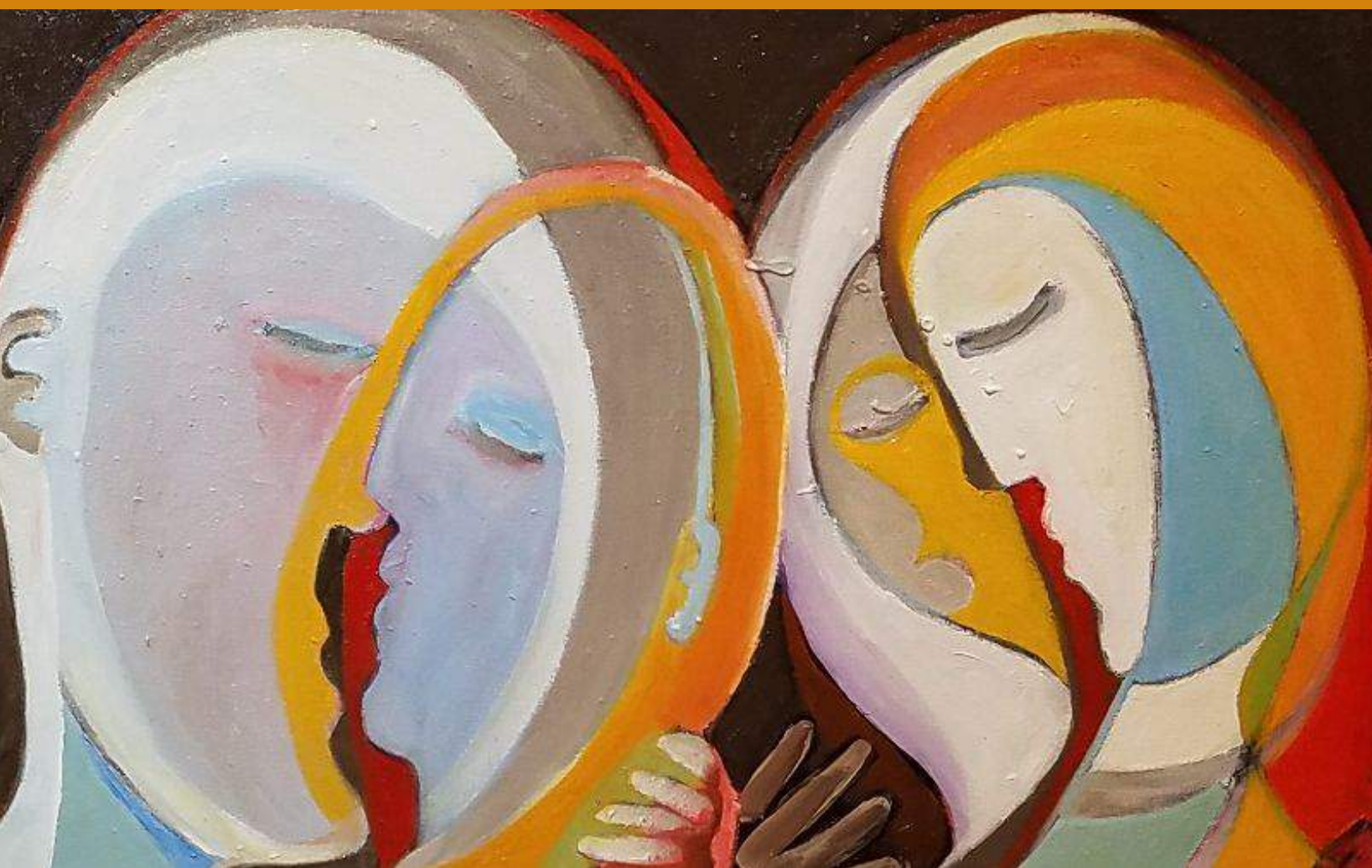
Enveloped us.

(As your limb was my limb,
my liver your liver.

Your fingernails were
mine too.)

And we let it come with
the welcome embrace
of a mass of bubbling,
a clot, a burgeoning...
(Our limbs. Our livers. Our
fingernails.
Our toes. Our hair.)

With only
our teeth left behind,
we were speaking
in hushes.
And there was no pain, no
sorrow, no bleeding.
But we bled and we ran
together.



No Small Talk

by Kelvin Telon

One

Some boys were looking to smoke by the Orpheum Theatre alley next to stiff playing music through loudspeakers.

The street wore a quick rhythm made out of loud doorways and populated steps. The sun liked to fall down with a grey solstice.

There were smacks and horns beating down the pavement.

It sounded like Jermaine on the buckets, but who was on the trumpet?

Around the corner, you found the different build of an unconvincing fellow. An expert in sidewalk dust and babble. He promised puddles weren't mirrors and spoke of redemption.

"So, who's supposed to take care of us?" the stranger reasoned. "The mumbling ones. You, mister? Yes, yes. I caught the idea. Wait, I'm not done with you. No, yes I am. I don't think there's anything more I can say. Or any more you can take from me. Stop and look at me when I talk. Understand? I had purpose. While those fools had it made for them, I spread the word of mouth quick. They haven't met hell on earth. Want to see my passport? I been everywhere. Columbia, Jamaica, Centre Street, Belgrade, Tremont, Adam Street, Chinatown, Morrissey, Columbus. Okay don't believe me, but don't be fooled. Are you mad? Violence is double-edged. What's on your mind, miss? Where's the team drinking tonight? Boys? Hold on, let me get that push to walk for you. I ain't all that bad. And I ain't all that good. You off to work, sir? Office job? Desk by the window? Secretaries secretly giving top? I see that smile. Man's gotta be his own boss."

Someone should have asked him what he meant. His double-dutch unraveled every so often. "I prayed for peace of mind. Peace of mind. Laughing and drinking among others who spoke down on you, or down on me among you."

The stranger went out to catch the bus in that sixty-degree weather. He got off closer to Nepal but right across Yosemite. Bumming his way up Boylston asking for cigarettes or coffee. "Spare a square?" Stopping everyone. He settled for pocket change and bought an ice cream. He ate it in ten licks and walked under a carpet of rain until it stopped. He thought aloud like it was a talent.

He blew his nose on a napkin and asked around for a light. Morgan sparked the Newport.

The stranger saw ten floors of offices that were getting higher and higher as he raised his head. He caught a view of a city that disturbs, discards, and embraces its people. With words from careful weight, he pled: "Please, quit playing...and send the flood."

"We'll sleep peacefully once our epitaphs are underwater," replied Morgan, after some thought.

He did not stop for the stranger who was ready to argue. He bobbed around the station stairwell and weaved through the jabs of people. His fellow commoners, who stood outside the train tunnel exit, handled smoke. He hooked on the wall around the right where people were crossing left. The orchestra of men and women tearing itself inside out a million ways. These car ensembles tracing past cyclists, joggers, drifters, and zombies with one speed. He took a glimpse at the street stage for wobblers, trillers, and banterers that were passing. The tourist guides were colonizing.

Who else sat anywhere, stood anywhere, for pocket change, with extended palm or dunkies cup?

Morgan had a round head and crooked nose from his hustling days throwing punches. Twenty dollars to his name—maybe less. Much like the business and construction that reigned over ambient noise, he kept himself in perpetual

operation with the help of rum (his predilection). Nowadays it was more hand over glass than glove over hand though.

He was next to men covering their cards at a pool table. They spoke like extortionists but the pot was in double digits. One of them mentioned he served in the army.

"You remind me of a bald Tom Hanks," the soldier discovered.

"Oh, so you're perceptive now," mocked Jasper. "You ever look in a mirror though?"

"No. But I'm lookin to win another ten dollars."

"Alright, bet."

"Run, Forrest, run. I call."

The bartender passed over more alcohol.

"How come every time money's at stake you're tryna get me drunk?" asked Jasper. "Pair of jacks."

The bartender never apologized.

"I may be old but still lucky." The soldier, whose name was Moose, laid out a pair of kings.

"Bullshit. Goddamn kings. Keep those crumbs, I don't want em."

"I'll come back later for the rest of my money, okay Jasper?" Moose said it half-jokingly but Jasper knew he meant it.

"Sure thing," he replied. "Come back soon to get fleeced."

"Yeah alright, if you need a loan for that plastic surgery let me know."

Jasper had a buck fifty that ran from his temple and crossed down to his jaw. Someone had carved it onto his facial map. Now the scar kept two shifty eyes apart. Plastic surgery would have to wait.

Morgan's head was held down by Morpheus' water, which he kept in a glass within a solid grasp. The counter was the only thing propping him up.

It seemed Morgan needed another drink to empty his time away.

"Morgan, where've you been?" Jasper manifested next to him.

"Get on with it," Morgan put forth, and like

most conversations that start one way and go another...how many times had Jasper brought up the same offer fiending for a come up? With the same look in his eyes. He never liked him.

"I don't mind having the same exchange," said Jasper. "Maybe another drink will inspire you. Bartender, don't stray too far. Another round glass with a brown-orange color. See?"

Morgan barely listened even though Jasper was sure of himself and spoke volubly. He was thinking of a song. He forgot its name but remembered half the lyrics: "*The colors of your dream turned into time. / With fear and love on a fighter's mind.*" Jasper mentioned underdog Eddy Miller.

If he picked up a deck then maybe some more of Jasper's whiskey would come his way. On the other hand, he felt he was all done with the blue bottles and short glasses. So he stepped outside with a Natural American Spirit instead.

The basement bar was lit under dull, yellow, arc lamp light. The words rang offbeat like a fleeting thought as the prattle ran downstairs. A barfly made sure to ask, "It kicks don't it?" Complaining or praising the glass. Someone asked Jasper how he was doing these days. "Staying out of Lowell?" Those souls never outgrew solitude, but their voices joined together in fellowship through vice. Misery and comfort were vital to their human condition and the marvelous escape.

Morgan believed in money, simple as that.

He figured he could tell Jasper what he wanted to hear and when it came time to box, he wouldn't spare his right arm. Win-win.

"How about I throw in some company? I can make sure that girl you've kept your eye on straightens you out."

"That'd be nice," Morgan thought, not afraid to show it.

The mind wanders, the heart barter. He coveted a real moll, a real showstopper, a swarthy bambi, an Aphrodite under dim light with a heart-shaped ass. He couldn't resist his consumable nature.

Maybe he'd cooperate.

Maybe he went back downstairs so Jasper could tell him how it would go down.

Two

Morgan seldom spoke about "The Catastrophe" and nobody asked him to. One night, after sparring, after a couple drinks, he got to talking about it anyway:

"Me versus Eddy Miller. Soon as we heard 'box' we got right to it. Slow and easy. I test. He reacts. I whiff right past his head. Glove grazes the top of his dome. His trainer is smiling right behind him. I throw a left hook. Eddy spins under it and faces me. His body is arching and leaning around my timing. Looking at my feet? so I change my footing. Staring at my gloves? so I change my stance. Fighting inside and outside. Quuuuick Miller. *Did I or did I not hear someone cry out for me to hit him?* I feign left to step closer. He dances around the right jabs. My left hook swings. And It was supposed to connect. Miller didn't tire! I shift gears. So he's on the ropes. His chest twists back. Left. Right. *Like Mister Fantastic or some shit.* His arms parry mine. His footwork avoids the ropes like artwork. I know he's got a quick head so I try for an opening. He makes one and slips out of it. The punch never met the body. Eddy drove one in close." The crowd drove in closer. "Hits me sideways. Didn't give me a chance to breathe. Didn't they all say *'Miller? Oh, he's soooofft, he's soooofft.'* I hear my corner scream, '*HIT SOMETHING!*' I kept clipping the air. Miller isn't child's play. I caught something that felt like rocks. *It was two blows to my kidney!* Then he caught sight of my fake left. Sprung out of reach from my right. Folding me up with my hands on guard. My body took a liver shot. I still felt like fighting. *The body wouldn't follow!* An uppercut clout stretched me over the flat ring. I remember well. What happened next? *They never expected me to get up!* I butchered him though and the rest is on paper-view, now *fuck off.*"

Morgan never got up that round, but the way he reeled the story off with a burst made them smile along with him. The crowd tore into laughter, Morgan's drink was full again, and they cheered.

In their hearts and minds the fight was fixed—sort of like common knowledge. In Morgan's heart and mind, he'd rather keep it that way. Pretend he hadn't tried his best and fought for his life.

That night he lost the fight but won a whore. Jasper found him in his locker room so the fighters could shake hands. Eddy Miller was saying thank you for taking it easy on me.

Morgan wanted to make sense of things. But in order to do that, man needed reflection. He put it out of his mind, and let the dust linger on memory lane instead.

The root cause of his inertia were heavy lids. A soft languor which drowns. His dreams yearned to sail on an ocean bed.

He found no repose in the bottle bottom. Morgan went after a skinny wood bench instead. He wasn't a stranger to the search for cold comfort. Taking his time with it. He rested his body wherever he could and gripped the familiar rime off the boxing ring floor.

Morgan slowly caught on to his vincibility.

First it was goosebumps, then his muscles hollowed, losing their nerve. His body was aching, getting colder. He shit his guts out until he had none left, while his intestines were tearing up. He felt quiet. Barely moving an inch from the vomit puddle. Whether he was awake or not his insides were twisting and a nightmare followed. Was it the liquor or atonement for something else? He made that question himself.

The street sweepers were coming. Those devils couldn't clean a starry mind that held an irresistible thought singing *Why did I stay down? What am I?*

Kitty was perched on her window. It was idle pleasure common to lonesome doves. The glass was kept shut when the liberal bastion grew

colder. She awaited the inevitable knock on the door. Whoever it was couldn't miss the sign hung on the wall: No small talk.

There was always money to be made in that prosaic neighborhood. The last physical she had made up her latest résumé. Being a woman of that trade wasn't particular in her milieu. She lived with a couple other "Roxannes" that liked to argue. "Maybe I'm laughin bout nothing. Maybe I'm laughin boutchu." You could hear them cracking up in the hallway. "You think he left his shoe on purpose?" The roister and revelry of those heavy drinkers! What some of those girls would do to keep a bedroom with two windows and a closet. Safe from the real estate agent shift.

"Pour me a drop, just a drop!" said Kitty. She called her life a marbled purgatory. But a hard drink put her back into time. "Please let it be Jack, James or Jim. Oh, even Jose." She was working on a stacked pyramid of empty bottles. Those bottles—they were her mainspring.

Many men (or women) made the mistake of treating her like she was an enigma. Not Morgan. They had their ugly fun. Treating himself to her lithe body full of life.

She thought it sounded like Morgan coming down the hallway. "I'll make a regular out of him. He might even be worth gambling on."

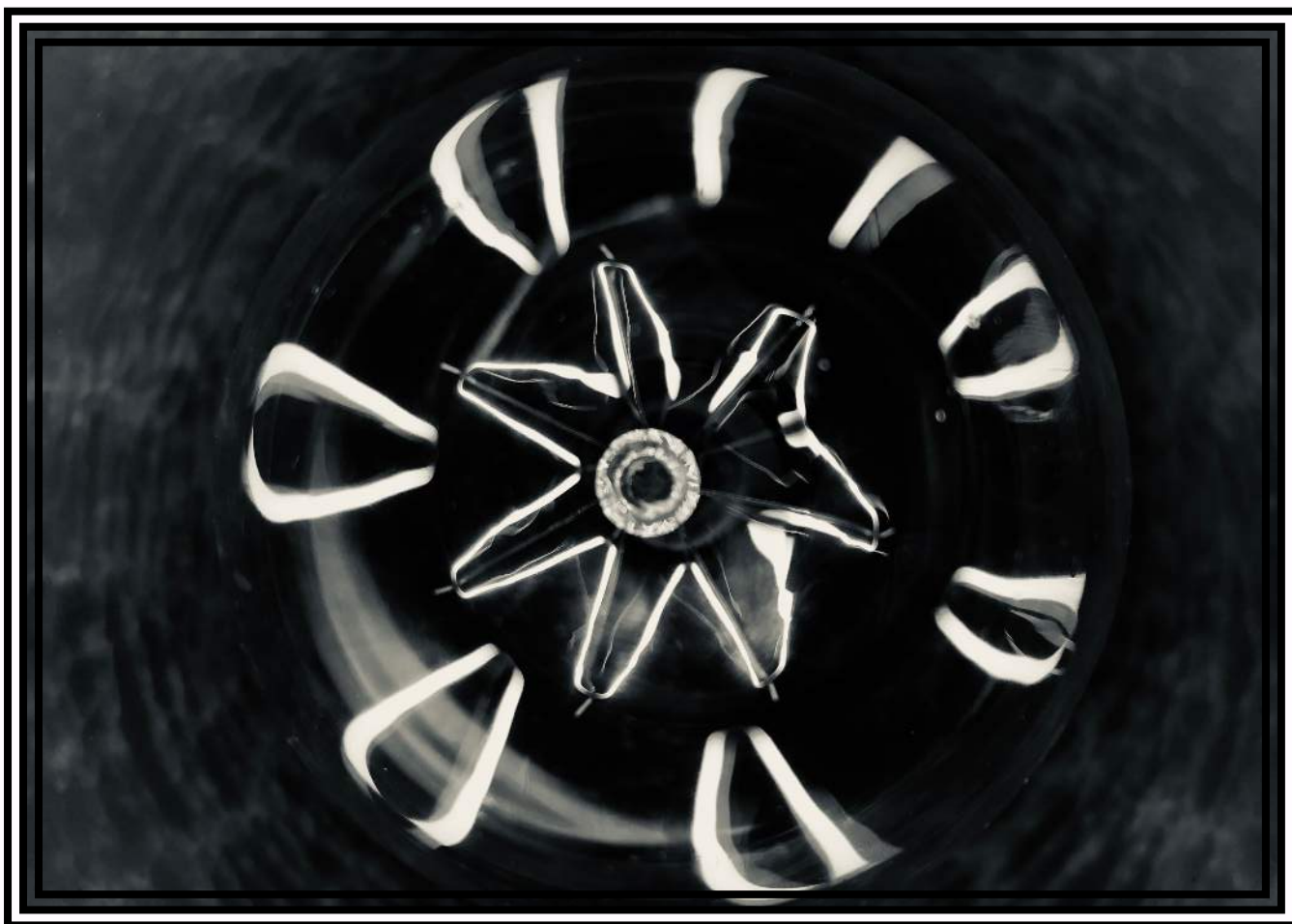
Kitty heard a knock and opened the door for two men that were looking to get theirs. It was Eddy Miller and Moose.

The closing door-hinge creak brought three figures out the frame. It took them a second to read the sign on the wall. One after the other.

Then, when an empty time followed she felt it warranted a cigarette. Letting life carry her over like smoke in the wind. "It all floats up."

The road lit by a wavering light made her feel like sleeping. Unsteady shadows turned to stone while anybody slept. Distorted silhouettes started veering towards their different walks of life. No passerby held the same refrain. ▽

Photo by Parisa Mavaddat





E. Gorey by Madeline Normand

And the Moon Arose

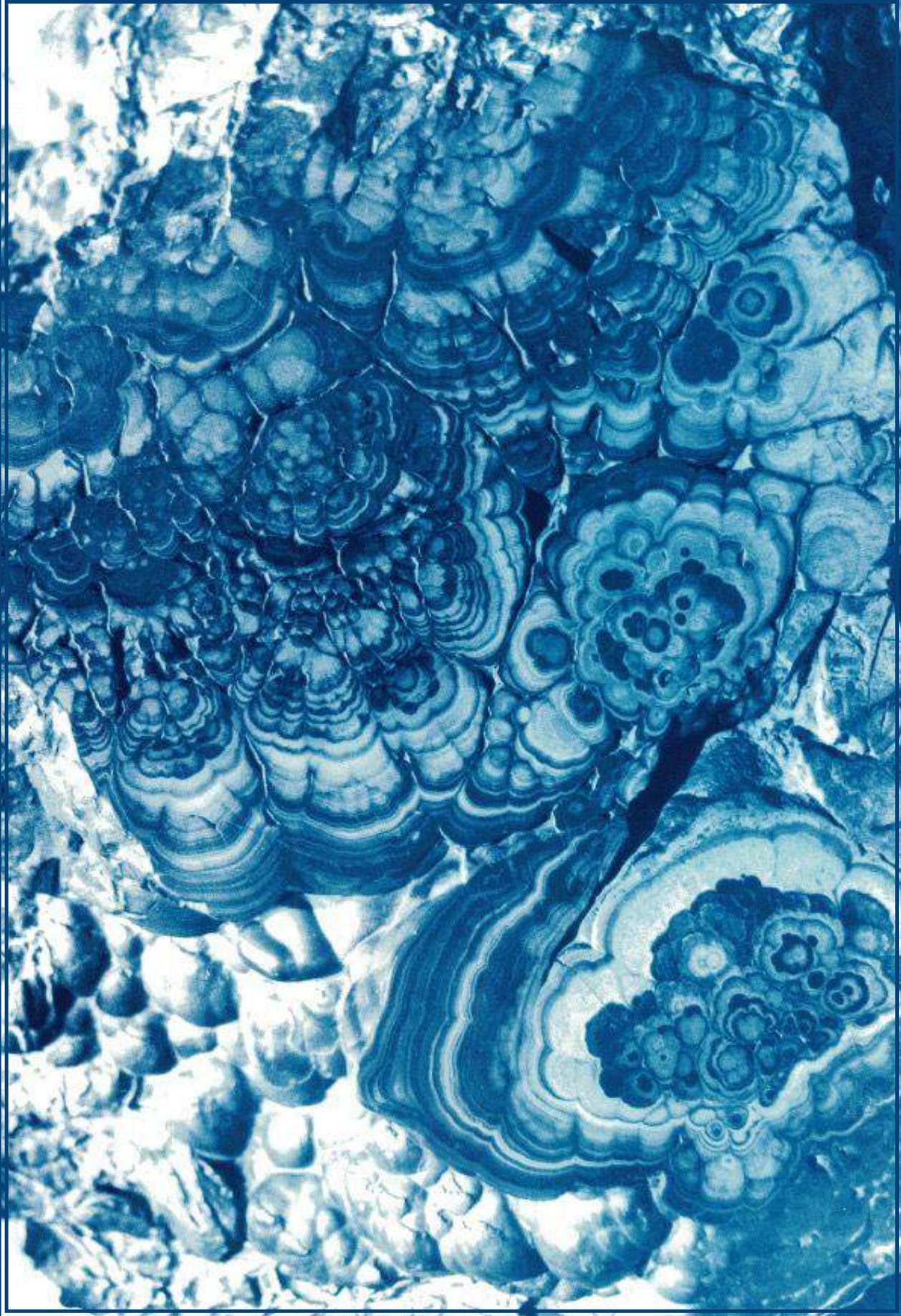
by Benjamin Smith

With fingers like a rat
I pulled skin over the cysts along your back
Dripping like saliva
Peeling in spirals down rotten wood walls
The stench of the glue
Stings like the stench of old bandages
Lying half eaten on the floor by the trash can

So I awoke to the mystery and power
Like a civil war doctor
His bone-saw stained
I smelled burning blankets flung through the hospital windows
Shattered glass pouring over
The streets made of sand
A thousand little knives cutting my toes

And the moon arose
And everything it touched became marble
Like a statue in a Greek gala
Their skin fell away
And all that remained was bone
And all the things of beauty were truly left unknown

Malachite by Martha Anderson



Winter Burn



by Gustavo Ricardo

The Sunshine State was my childhood playground,
Beaches and sandcastles, t shirts and theme parks, warm evenings in our backyard pool.
The Brazilian coast was my high school hang out,
Beaches and boardwalk bars, girls and grills, bikinis and music.

My birthplace is foreign to me. It has a harsh welcome.
Here, I am far from my parents, I am far from the Sun.
I remember the warmth, from friends and from weather, what nostalgia.
Here the land is white, the skies are gray, the air is crisp, the life is rushed.
It's so harshly cold it burns, not my face, but my soul.

The Summer is fleeting, the Snow is ephemeral, the Fall is dying, the seasons are fast.
But oh the beauty of my homeland. New England, land of inspiring landscapes.
Blossoming and blooming never brought such joy.
Never saw beauty in Death until I met Autumn and all her colors.
Nothing so white as snow down in the tropics.
No romantic frozen lakes. No Cozy lazy snow days.

The winter burns more than heat.
My skin has recovered, you learn to use lotion. My soul has not, my childhood is gone.
Winter burn stings, but it also beautifies.
Here I have learned to survive on my own, an Evergreen.
Scraping ice off my car before sunrise, but it's a car I own.
This is my birthplace. This is land of harsh beauty.

A Moment of Clarity While Stuck in the Mud

by Timothy F. Mines

The General bent over his map, studying carefully. The lines of pushpins representing the opposing armies had been laid out with exacting care. The General eyed those two lines of pushpins, trying to decide the best place to focus his upcoming attack. Where shall I launch The Battle? Here, he thought to himself. Here, in Flanders. We can attack the German line in Flanders, breach the line, then roll southward into France, attacking the Germans on their vulnerable flanks. Yes, he thought, we will attack in Flanders.

The General well knew that any attacking force faced massive logistical problems as it tried to move forward, even under the best of circumstances. As soldiers advanced over ground that had been bombarded thoroughly by artillery from both sides, they would struggle to dig new trenches, allow for relief by fresh units, and bring their guns forward to cover the next advance. At the same time, they would face the issues of retrieval of the wounded, burial of the dead, bringing up food and ammunition. The General's planning staff would work hard to try to solve the logistical problems that had plagued all attacking forces during The War.

But attacking in Flanders presented its own unique nightmare. Western Flanders is bogland. The land has been tenuously reclaimed from swamp over the course of many centuries. As the land was reclaimed, a network of canals was developed and kept in place with dikes so that the land would drain. Natural streams and brooks were also kept in place with dikes. The farmers in the area faced heavy fines if they failed to maintain the dikes on their land. But now, during The Battle, artillery fire from both sides would batter the battlefield. The fragile drainage system would be destroyed. The honeycomb of little streams and canals, contained by dikes for hundreds of years, would be free to waterlog the entire countryside. Every shell crater would fill with water. What had been solid ground would return to swamp, with deep, thick mud. Mud would clog machinery, foul weapons, and slow marching soldiers. In a very real sense, The General's attacking army would destroy western Flanders in their effort to save it.

The General had another problem: the weather.

Fall is the rainy season in Flanders. Even just a little rain would exacerbate the mud problem fivefold. A normal rainy season would turn Flanders into an ocean of mud. And a bad rainy season would make most of the Flanders battlefield virtually impassable. Of course, the weather was completely outside the control of a mere General. But The General had to know that 1916 had been a very mild rainy season. Was he really going to gamble on two mild rainy seasons in a row?

The Battle began on July 31, 1917. Both sides had assembled concentrations of artillery that boggled the imagination, many times greater than those used in the battles of just a year before. Millions upon millions of shells of all calibers raked the battlefield. These shells did what they were designed to do...kill men and destroy earthen works. The shells didn't distinguish between trench parapets and dikes. The dikes didn't stand a chance. The battlefield sagged, then buckled, then collapsed completely under the tremendous weight of all that shellfire. The land became mud, deep, oozing, slimy mud. Soldiers on both sides became troglodytes, shot down by the thousands while unable to move, stuck fast in the quagmire. Thousands more drowned in the muck and the putrid water that collected in trenches and shell craters.

The small group exited Division HQ and walked over to the motorcar. The driver opened the door, and The General gestured to The Major, motioning for him to enter the car. "Have you ever been in a motorcar, Major?"

The Major climbed into the car, a little unsure of how to situate himself. "No, sir, this will be my first time."

The General smiled as he climbed in. "It's the only way to travel." He turned and spoke to his driver. "Look alive, Lieutenant, we haven't got all day." The driver muscled the crank several times, finally getting the engine to sputter to life. He jumped behind the wheel and the vehicle moved off. The car contained Smithson, The General and his aide in the back seat, the driver and another staff officer in the front. It bounced along at a brisk pace.

The General was going to visit one of his

front-line battalions. Unlike The Major, The General had traveled by motorcar many times. Also unlike The Major, The General had never attempted to go quite so close to the front as a Battalion Headquarters. This would be his first trip to The Battle Zone. He was quite apprehensive about it, and it took a lot to hide that apprehension from his traveling companions.

The trip from Division HQ to Battalion HQ was almost exactly one kilometer. In a motorcar traveling at 15 kilometers per hour, the trip would take five minutes or so. But this one kilometer represented ground that had been conquered by the British Army during The Battle. As such, it was ground that had been rearranged, reconfigured and regurgitated by several million artillery rounds from both sides, and the resulting mess had been subjected to several weeks' worth of pelting rain.

The Major didn't care for the trip in the motorcar. The interior was cramped, the machine was incredibly noisy, and the ride on the dirt road was painfully bumpy. He didn't really see the point of his appearing at a Battalion HQ as if he were making a social call. He had things to do, Battalion HQ had things to do, The General had things to do. It was a massive waste of time, and it was needlessly endangering everyone involved. Not to mention that it had begun to rain, again, adding further discomfort to the trip in the open car.

As the car got further from Division HQ, the dirt road gradually became less and less solid. The speed of the car slowed as mud covered the wheels. Soon enough, the road was a road in name only. It was a mud track through a mud field. The motorcar's pace got slower and slower. Then the car stopped altogether. It was stuck in the mud.

The General didn't hesitate. "Look alive, Lieutenant. You too, Captain." The driver and the staff officer exited the car and began to push. The General glared at his aide, who hastily jumped out of the car and joined the other two. After a moment, they pushed the car free. The three officers got back in the car. All three had mud up to their shoetops. The motorcar slowly resumed its unsure journey.

The Major watched The General discreetly. The General was on full alert, looking at the landscape, the road, the car. The look of consternation on The General's face deepened. The Major could see that The General's fear of visiting The Battle Zone was ebbing rapidly. It was being replaced by something

else. It was being replaced by the staggering realization of the true nature of The Battle.

The motorcar fishtailed to the left, rocked back to the right as the driver overcorrected. The passengers were slammed against the interior. The car sank a good ten centimeters into the mud. The driver and the other two didn't need to be told this time; they just climbed out and began to work. A quick conference, then positions were taken and the pushing commenced. The car popped free. The three officers climbed back in. Mud stained the driver's trousers up to his knees. The driver engaged the gearshift and the motorcar lurched forward.

The General seemed to be hypnotized by the scene. His eyes were wide as he continued to survey the landscape. Occasionally he leaned out of the car to watch the tires move unsteadily through the thick muck. Then the back wheels began to spin, and the car sank into the mud yet again. Without a word, the three junior officers climbed out of the motorcar and began to try to push it free.

The General stood up. He looked out over the edge of the car at the wheels, almost completely buried in the quagmire of mud. Then he looked out over the land, or what should have been land. In all of The General's battle plans, it had been land. But instead, up close, it was an ugly patchwork of shell craters, puddles, and churned-over mud. There were no trees, only a few scattered husks, scorched and blackened. A blown-up chunk of duckboard seemed to dangle on the lip of a shell crater. There were no features, no landmarks anywhere. As far as the eye could see, in every direction, was wasteland, a blasted moonscape of desolation and destruction. And mud. Mud and more mud.

Some distance ahead, off to the left, a duckboard track emerged from the rim of one huge shell hole. It snaked its way across the mud to the rim of another huge shell hole, a distance of maybe thirty meters or so. In the context of the shattered landscape, that stretch of duckboard track started at The Edge of Nowhere, then led east, offering to take a man a little closer to The Heart of Nowhere. But in The Major's mind, that stretch of duckboard track represented so much more. It represented the sweat and the blood of the British Army soldiers who had fought and conquered that short strip of ground. It represented the work of the Engineers who had built and maintained that duckboard track, under fire and under horrendous conditions. It represented the

otherworldly panorama of the ruined land. They were nowhere near The Battle Zone and yet they were adrift in a gulf of mud. Mud threatened to consume their staff motorcar and the hapless officers struggling to free it, to swallow them all without a trace.



Preservation of Time by Alura Leet

Voyager

by Matt Walsh

The game I'm playing now is *Voyager*, and it takes place in real time, but the real time is in the past, and the past is my own. It's December '99, on the cusp of Y2K, and I've been on walkabout for four months through green temple Cambodia and motorbike Vietnam.

Now I'm in Thailand, drinking lager in the back of a diesel black TukTuk, rounding rotary after rotary of gold Buddha reclining, eyes closed, like he's had enough for the night. But I'm still up with the Kiwis and the Brits, converging with the Scots in Patpong, drinking vodka bulls in the 2am 3am 5am night clubs, wandering palms-up through street stall noodles to the hangover train, north, to the jungles of Chang Mai.

In this game, I'm listening to all the things I never noticed or don't remember, befuddled at the me that was me back then.

I can't play the whole game. I'm married, with three boys, and there's pick up and drop off and cello and soccer. But even now, standing at the charging station, I've got my earpiece in, listening to Claire and Ronald in the back of the jeep. This is three days from the accident, and I don't know how long I'll play this game. The mountain path is slick with rain, our heads clouded with cheap jungle whiskey, our bodies lacquered in mosquito parts and wet bush. We spend long nights in lean-tos against the mountain, cold, and rinse in the river at dawn.

I don't have agency in this game—that's not how it works. I can't change what happens.

At work, I pull the curtain across my cubicle and sink to the floor, planting my hands in industrial carpet. I'm walking behind her. Claire is laughing with our guide, a refugee from Myanmar, as we emerge from the bush high above the terraced rice fields. We walk among the clouds, twentysomethings, like immortals, but we're not, and the mountain path is slick with rain.

I turn off the game but keep my eyes closed. We are back in Vietnam, and this is me now—this is what I remember: Claire, sitting in the hotel courtyard under the tamarind trees. It's early, but we're already in the shade, and Claire is writing postcards, drinking tea. She caps the hotel pen and leans back against me under the tree, her head in the nook of my chest and shoulder as if its contour was designed for this moment. She kicks the sandals from her feet and settles in. We've known each other for two weeks, and her redolence is still new to me. Anything seems possible.

She closes her eyes and says something. Or maybe I say it, or maybe I'm just thinking it now.

I could stay here forever.



Dice

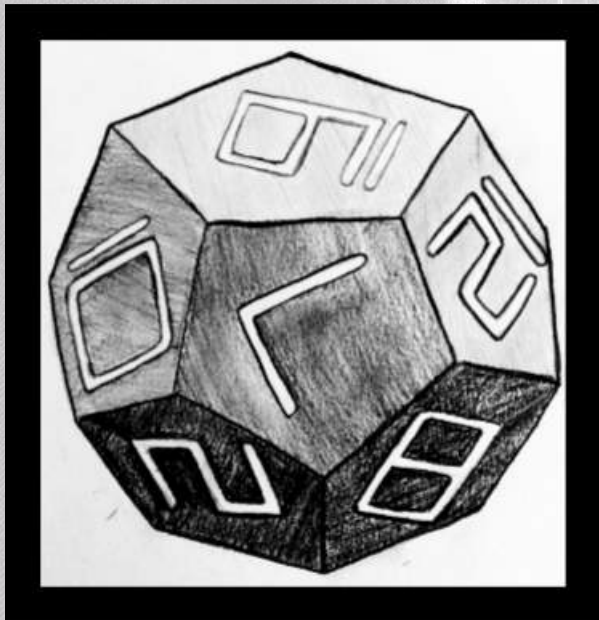
by Benjamin Pielocik

I roll the dice upon the desk
And one of them escapes
It hits the floor and flies away
Directed to the drapes

I search the ground to find the die
Where it had surely dropped
The floor was vacant in the spot
Where I had seen it stopped

The more I look the less I find
I found out fairly soon
As it was gone, no longer here
Perhaps in woods or dunes

Maybe I'll never find my die
It wasn't meant to be
But as of now I guess I'm stuck
Just using RNGs



Disem-bodies

by Sophia Martins

Lately, all that can be seen is disembodiment,
Which is to say bodies that jumped out of skin.
Somebody recently talked about that supposed trinity:
Body, mind, spirit, an algorithm altogether cryptic.
As aforementioned, here is a weird community of bodies,
Minds that hover out of selves like improper molting.

Yes, smartphone addiction is a good remedy for trauma,
At least until bedtime when the nightmares harvest
Insomnia. This lullaby has already failed, and besides,
We can't be our own mothers. By now, ache rots the place.
All that can be seen in this place is disembodiment,
And you'll tire and tire after attempted cures:

Yoga nearly invited terrible terrible memories, despite
Its promise of peace. At least we've built a neighborhood
For shared panic. Last year, your warmth shadowed mine,
Gave off small kindness like candlelight. You never said
You'd cast away the Bad Stuff, but that was the hope unspoken.
Where are you now? Pickled with good by a sun that's not here?

Here, meteorologists don't give this storm a name,
But the start of heavy snow makes this home
Feel like being in a snowglobe, life stilled, miniaturized.
To admit need would be a form of surrender
Made for good, strong people. You far off,
But the snow and the radiator are here to make talk.

Somebody leaves breadcrumbs for the ghosts
So they always come back. Love always felt
Like a migratory bird,
But think you've been scared off for good.
Fucked up brain panics at glimmers of kindness,
Chases them off as common crows from the yard.

If you were asked to come back, would you?

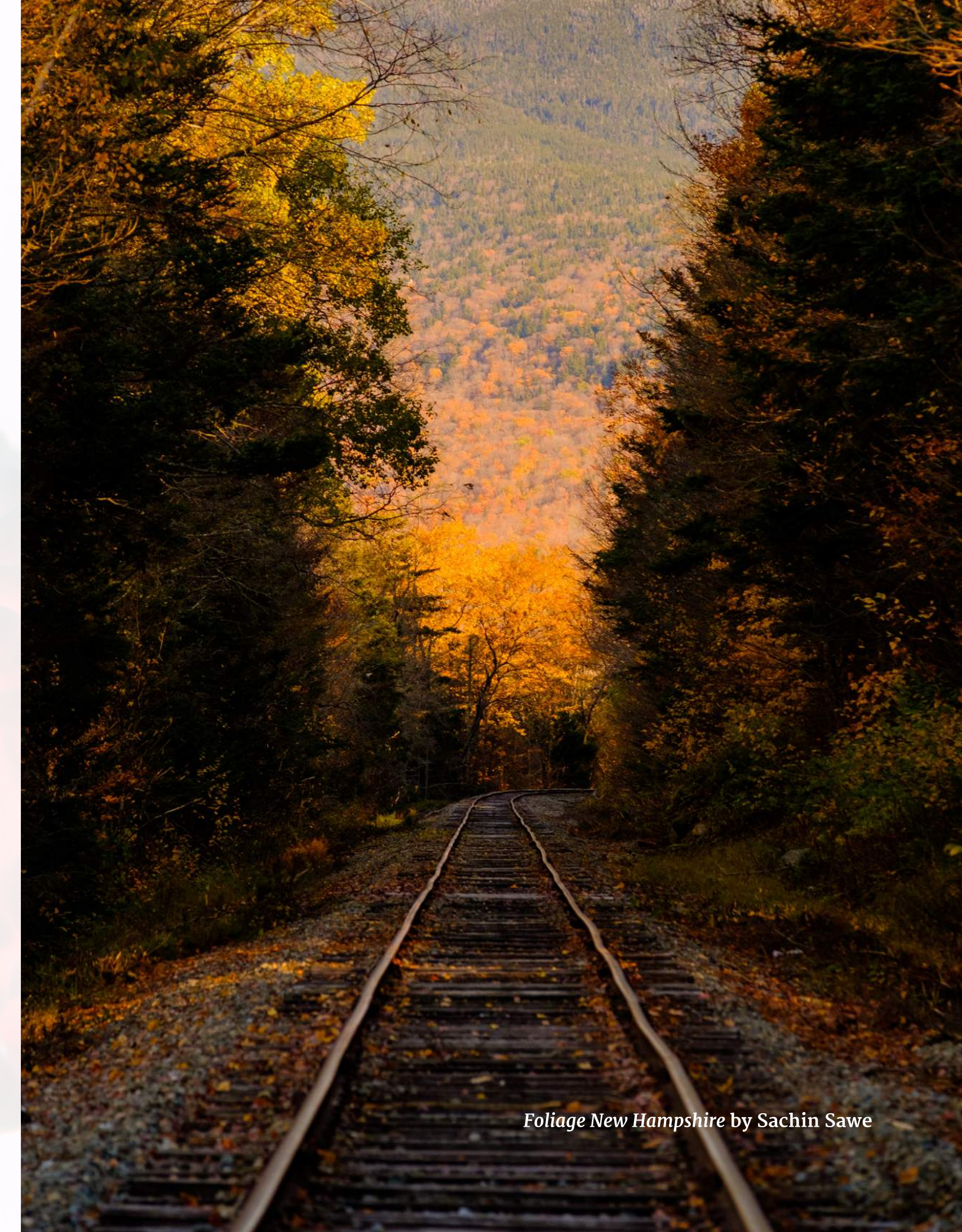
Bald Mtn. Rangeley ME

by JayJay Conrad

Purple peaks bruise melon shades
radiant in the looming skyfire—
a breathy, biting foreshadow
of October.

Swamped in Inkdusk, crawling moss
covers shale like kudzu vine clings,
dances slow foxtrots hand-in-hand
with reaching, earthbound oak-knuckles.

We are the children of dented I-beams
and staggered wood; of greens and
gasps and skyviews standing—necks
craned and faces upturned to Pink-sky Oblivion
—atop an erector set atop the world.



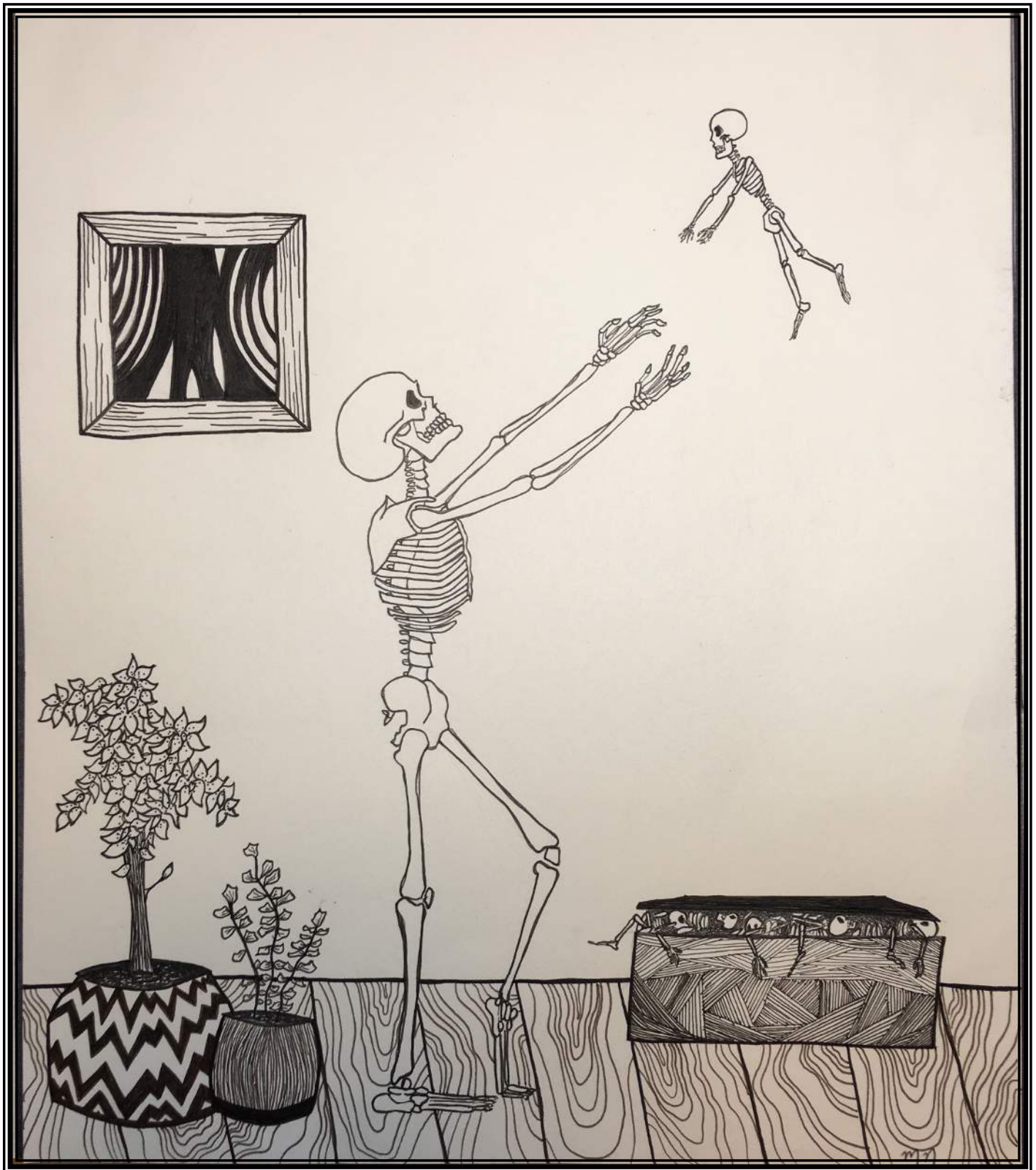
Foliage New Hampshire by Sachin Sawe



ABCDream

by Sergey Dushkin

a
belching bombardier beetle
causes a cacophonous catastrophe
delivering delirium, drenching
erroneous echoes, extremely un-empathetically
“forget me not!” fought the feverish fox
good granules of garden gravel
how they howl, harrowing howls
inexplicable to the inexperienced
justifiably juxtaposed
komodo kings caustic kiss
leaves little but leftovers
maybe more memories make milder miscommunications, or maybe
new neurosis negates nefarious negligence
of course! open the oil, objectify the oloid
persistence promotes perfection, punctuality pampers pestilence
quench the quasar, quit quacking quixotic requests
remember regalia? relentless restlessness
sensible sacrifices to satiate sadistic sultans
tough tyranny, tenacious tendencies
under ubiquitous umbilical umbrella
vocalizing vapid verses, vexing the vulnerable
what went wrong?
X marx Xolotl
your yogi yearly yearning for yellowfin
zanzibar sent zoologists that zap and zigzag



Billy's Bones by Madeline Normand



If a Tree Prays in the Desert... by Ed Pontes

I Promise

by Sebastian Heiser

Do not cry, my Son.
We will live through this war.
If one family
In this entire
Godforsaken town
survives this war,
It will be ours.
Okay?
I promise.
Okay?
I promise.

Do not cry, my Son.
For me.
If one child
In this entire
Godforsaken world
Can survive this,
It is you.
Okay?
I promise.
Okay?
I promise.

Barkeep

by Branden Pacheco

The bar was small and noticeably unpretentious. Nothing about the place was inviting: the beige particleboard furniture, the cheap casino carpeting, the generic one-coat paint job on the walls—it was as if the place had been furnished precisely so that tourists would feel neither welcome nor put-off. This was important, of course. In a small resort town that saw thousands of visitors each week—just for the day, or to celebrate engagements, weddings, anniversaries, and birthdays—it’s important that people leave their money behind and quickly go back the same way they came in. The door was always kept open for those ready for the exit.

I kept busy at work, at bars, and in bed. Strangers came from all over the world. We drank. We flirted. And sometimes we fucked. More often than not I would never see them again, and it was fine. I had come to love the impermanence of it; I felt like I was finally being honest with the world, saying through my lifestyle that I’ve never felt anything like a permanent kind of person, and that when we walked away from each other we were embracing our one-use-only purpose.

By the middle of my second summer in town I settled on a plan. The plan would satisfy my curiosity about foreign places, encourage me to pursue creative work, and still afford me the wild and indulgent freedoms I had been enjoying in town. I would continue to work and play there in summers, and in the winter I would teach abroad. I would be unmoored. This would spare me the anxieties of getting too attached, and spare those around me from being affected by my general messiness. If the last ten years had revealed anything about myself, it was that I was not the kind of person that makes the lives of others better, and certainly not easier.

He walked into the bar casually and it was obvious he was a local. Silver-haired, hands in his jean pockets, his broad shoulders rested beneath his

t-shirt in a way that told the world he had some time to spare and he could go anywhere he wanted. Right then, he chose to sit at the bar and chat with the bartender.

He was kind to me. Genuine curiosity about me and how I had come to work at such a place in such a town quickly endeared me to him. His handsome face, dark humor, and sense of ease won me over. For two summers he spent several evenings, every week, at my bar. We shared stories about our lives. We drank together. We got to know each other, always with the protection of having the bar between us.

Although I resisted his charm, wit, good looks, all of it, I wasn’t playing hard to get—I was afraid. He was 27 years older than me. I was impressed by his career, and intimidated by what seemed to be his full and functioning life. An activist and political junkie, his years of work, stress, and loss rested quietly behind aquamarine eyes. He had grown up in a bigger world with many privileges, and this seemed to have preserved an exuberance that reminded me of the way a child’s eyes light up at the sight of his birthday cake. In time, I would begin to see in his face something I seemed to have lost long ago. It gave me a kind of hope. It scared me. And I loved him.

The night I stopped resisting, he sat across the bar from me glossy-eyed, despondent, and drunk. His best friend had moved out of his house and he had been feeling lonely. But it wasn’t the kind of loneliness men would offer me as bait when their flirting or pick-up lines had received a kind smile and gentle brush-off. We had been confiding in each other long enough for me to feel that we might be good for each other. But his loneliness was not mine. Mine had been buried for so long that I had convinced myself it was something like a minor cramp, easily relaxed by a quick swig of whiskey chased by a one-off with a tourist.

But he wasn’t a tourist, and that frightened me. He was the biggest risk I had ever taken.

All the ingredients for a successful relationship seemed to be there. We shared a love of cooking and food (we were writing a cookbook!). We kept a garden. Our dog was the love of our lives. We impressed each other with our quick answers while watching Jeopardy!, and he always scored better. But it was our black humor that glued us together. It became an unspoken competition between us to test the boundaries as we made irreverent and horrible jokes. And at first it felt intimate. Ultimately, it proved corrosive.

It started at the bar, before I stopped resisting. For months we planned the darkest wedding we could imagine, and this was precluded by a mutual admission that neither of us would ever marry. So, we would have Something Blackened, Something Broken, and Something Stolen. At the conclusion of our vows, pigeons painted black would drop from the ceiling onto our unsuspecting guests. The details became more and more intricate, and always dismal.

When I finally went home with him, we fucked, and I slept over. When we would wake in the morning, we often wanted to stay there in bed just a bit longer. But I had to work at a busy restaurant and bar. As my eyes opened, I'd lean in to his ear and say I didn't want to go to work. "Would you call in a bomb threat?" He worked in public health assisting people with chronic and life-threatening illness. So when he'd say he didn't feel like going to work, I'd offer my solution: "Want me to call in a cure?" We'd giggle at the awfulness of it, feeling both guilty and indulged. He often reminded me of how entitled and ungrateful he thought his clients were. Really, it was everyone that was entitled. And later, when we would meet someone new at a bar, we'd often be asked how we met. With a face that seemed lit up by a birthday cake, he'd just as often say, "Well, he came over one day and he never left." I'd laugh amicably, almost dutifully. And I'd wince on the inside.

He seemed to develop a knack for making me feel lonely and unwanted. Whether this was done consciously or not, there was too much evidence to ignore. He'd begun to lean away from me when we watched television on the couch. His eyes began to dart in another direction when I'd lean in for a kiss.

If I'd come home early from work on a weekend evening, he'd often be entertaining company. His disappointment at my unexpected arrival would be punctuated by the same crushing questions: "Why aren't you at work?" Or worse, "What are you doing here?" It didn't seem to matter that we were living together. I kept telling myself I was being too sensitive or paranoid.

We took the same anti-depressant — the same dose, too. But his depression was not mine, and my dose wasn't enough. When the winters came I'd withdraw into myself, unable to accomplish the simplest, most mundane tasks. It frustrated him when I'd spend days in bed with a bottle of vodka. Sometimes he'd ask, slurring, "Why don't you do anything?" As if my shame didn't already exist. I was unemployed during the off-season and couldn't seem to find my place in town, to embrace my sudden residence in a world that never meant to keep me.

He tried to help. He bought me a calendar so I could keep better track of bills, appointments, and obligations. He gave me a sketchbook so I could revisit a collage-making hobby I once enjoyed. He ordered a printer so I could revise and work on essays and research projects I'd let slip away. Sometimes, he held me as I cried for no apparent reason, telling him I was too tired and didn't want to wake up anymore. I was embarrassed, and I didn't think I could be the kind of person he'd want permanently.

For some time, therapy helped. I paid closer attention to how much I drank and how often. But sometimes, when he came home from a bar after work, I'd be a bit drunk — not out-of-control, falling, or terribly messy, but noticeably enough. Even though I'd be proud of myself for having done the housework, life's administrative tasks tended to, he'd get angry with me. Even when I was coherent, maybe as drunk or less drunk than him, he'd be angry and I didn't understand. He had also been drinking, and I hadn't done anything wrong. At least not those times. No doubt he was remembering that night I was so wasted he called rescue to check my vitals, embarrassed while the paramedics asked me if I felt safe in my home. Or that morning at 4:00 AM when I woke him to tell

him that I had been arrested the previous evening and had to walk home because I didn't have my cell phone and the taxis had retired for the night. I was a drunk and had gone too far, too many times. And he never forgave me for it.

He loved an audience. I knew this from the beginning. The ways he would garner the attention of whatever company was present—even strangers, especially tourists—manifested as compulsion. During our two-year anniversary dinner he engaged with the waitress incessantly, asking about her personal life and sharing details of his own, despite her trying desperately to get on to the next table and continue her duties. It was one of the only times we sat at a table, rather than the bar.... He craved attention almost constantly, and he always got it. It lit his face up and made him smile like a child. And that made me smile. But his happiness was not mine. And I loved him despite that.

The infantilizing started early. Even though he relented a bit when I made my discomfort known, he couldn't stop. The jokes about me needing pull-ups or a booster seat, telling friends I was jealous of his newborn grand-nephew because he got to sit around and poop in his pants all day, the fact that he used the same nickname for both myself and the dog—I was already down, and I felt him kicking with a self-forgiving smile. But I loved him, so I forgave him every time.

Not knowing how to process my frustrations with him or with myself for feeling stranded in a town with so little opportunity for work, I continued to drink heavily. I drank to stop feeling, but more and more often the booze antagonized my insecurities. Rather than passing out, I'd sometimes explode and direct the torrent of anger and fear at him. I'd accuse him of not loving me, of being spoiled and narcissistic, and of diminishing my progress by gaslighting me. I would feel cornered and threatened. So I made him hurt, wanting him to finally recognize my own pain. I asked, exasperated, if he even wanted me. Incredulous and offended, he spun around to face me and made the example of my still being in his house evidence of my importance to him. But that was only tolerance. I should have felt lucky that

he'd stayed with me, despite my alcoholism and depression.

Of course, he was drunk that night, too. But this hurt me more than anything he'd said before. "Maybe I don't want to be with you!" It was my last desperate attempt at trying to make him understand that he was not the only one in the relationship who had been forgiving and tolerating. I wasn't making his life better, and certainly not easier. And he ignored me for two weeks.

His issues with intimacy and his almost pathological tendency to avoid were no secret—he'd admitted this to me, sheepishly and embarrassed. So I made myself as available as possible, waiting for him to sit and talk with me. After work one day, he told me he was about to be back in town and we planned to meet at a bar. I waited, sipping one drink to keep a level head. After an hour, he arrived already drunk with no obvious intention to talk. The only person I wanted to talk to wanted nothing to do with me. Days later, he was gone when I woke. I asked if we could talk later. He agreed, but recanted that promise soon after, writing that he just couldn't do it today. "Please forgive me." I forgave him, of course. But I was still alone and waiting for him.

It gave me butterflies when I'd hear from him, and I would feel embarrassed by the cliché. Then it would turn my stomach as I recognized how I'd grown so dependent on him. I had become pathetic and sick. I loved him. And that wasn't enough—not for either of us.

The day before my 30th birthday, we finally talked. He was putting our relationship on a break "at the minimum." He insisted that I needed long-term, intensive treatment, that I needed to go away for a while far from town. This didn't mean I had to pack up my stuff and leave forever, he assured me; I could leave my things there, he'd water my houseplants, and I could come back. But he wasn't able to explain the parameters of our break. And the part of me coming back was never clarified to mean back to him, to our dog and to our home, or if he meant simply back to town in general. He said he just didn't know what it meant.

After the regular appointment with my therapist, I spent my birthday at home alone and without alcohol, afraid that if I went into town I'd

drink myself dead. He had planned to spend that evening making dinner for the family of friends in another town, anyway. When he came through the front door around 10:00 PM, glossy-eyed, drunk, and without a birthday cake, he sat beside me on the couch. With one eye closed and one eye

opened, he looked at me and asked, “Was it your worst birthday ever?” “Why would you ask me that?” I was shocked and hurt, not anticipating that his final act of cruelty would be delivered with an unmistakable tone of compassion: “Because I know it was.”



Om Tej by Sachin Sawe





Heroin by Josh West

chucky and sean



by beige

daddys first marriage
new bedford four boys
a phd teacher
a dui nurse

two oldest, junkies
schizophrenic & boozed
dad mails them cartons
voicemails accused

worms in my arms!
worms in my brain!
worms in my toenails!
worms in my veins!

both lived for music
til times swept in dust
after the angels
they always grew cuffs.

-now imagine my father
post brain surgery
wherethehell are my oxys
when i am thirteen-

Feed



by Branden LaCroix

News today: another gun murder another
Funny video of cats and dogs lol look at
Me, Monday mornings are the worst and
Another storm, power is out, no help, devastating
Winds across a picture perfect ocean where
Ceremony to honor the fallen heroes who
Died, support our veterans, support the
Troops, killing, raping, pillaging, don't believe
Us, believe me, believe them, believe women, believe
In our system, it works, Blue Lives Matter,
Our Lord and Savior, he loves, forgives and
These children died because they don't pray, so
New game delayed until next year, so
Why didn't they say anything sooner?
What matters? Who cares? I don't, so
This mother found secret to eternal life!
Vaccines are out, doctors are angry, warn
Financial disaster is just around the corner, when
I started a new blog yesterday, writing how I
Deleted my Facebook, don't want the Russians
Being civil and courteous are virtues, so
Burn, destroy, resist the pigs who would
Save money with these 10 tips! You can
Donate money to my GoFundMe, the cancer
Eats this whole cake in one sitting, and
2040 is the last year to get off this rock,
Stay positive, #WednesdayWisdom,
I'm staying home and never coming out



What Lies in the Thick Cloud of Formations by Ed Pontes

Lost in the Sauce

by David Frederick Jr.

The Blood Moon pierced the night sky like a beacon pulsating into the unknown. The air tasted of metal, and retch. That Halloween there was an invocation, and the children of Barrington carried out a massacre. Or a culling, depending on who you ask. The streets had been caked with the blood and marrow of patriarchs and matriarchs alike. What started out as trick or treating turned into bedlam. To this day folks try to guess what happened. A myriad of conspiracies poured out. Was it mass hysteria? Drugging? Cultists?

There was a mighty powerful fog that evening. It crept in like an intruder, a brazen stranger whose macabre intentions penetrated the sleeping mind. The red velvet mist was so thick that it hid the militant silhouettes of the once innocent. It hid their melee weapons. It hid the burning schools and churches. The smoke from the charred institutions billowed and ascended to a starless sky. A rain of ruin came down to submerge the town. Waterlogged corpses drifted idly into the flooded cul-de-sacs. The things people do when they try to rationalize the irrational.

My family and I were running our yearly haunted house lit with dayglo colorful Vampires, Werewolves, and Ghouls galore. It was a real lively jaunt. I was lost in the sauce that night. A massive concoction of jungle juice and Xanax had me adrift in a fog of my own, stumbling room to room, finally landing in the basement. The room was spinning into a maelstrom of color until it snapped into total darkness. Dried vomit had become a fixture in my dwelling, but when the air sirens and helicopters broke me out of my stupor, I was surprised to not find any...only my face paint smeared onto the pavement. Blinded by the light of the morning, my unconscious mind was sucked back into its bloated frame. I staggered towards the front door to find the only thing left of my family was the chalk outline and stains on our front lawn.

Our humble abode was more or less forced into a quarantine—well, it was more like a lockdown—but not one person paid it any mind. Barrington didn't feel like our home; it felt like a husk. It was

an oddly beautiful day, not a cloud in the azure sky. Downed power lines adorned the street like tinsel. Bodies were contorted into unnatural positions with cud coagulating on their cerulean lips. Those of us left lurched aimlessly in this new alien world. Many of the first responders' faces were coated with a dark grey soot: stone-faced harbingers marching inanely into the unknown.

Our Viceroy, a bonafide silver-tongued wordsmith, became a real mean son of a bitch. What other choice did he have? When a mob mentality began to develop, the survivors' minds were engulfed with an array of feelings—feelings of anguish, of confusion, and of loss. There was a chain gang on the outskirts of town, the last of the “get tough on crime” reinstated ones. When shit went south they were able to break free, and they went on a crime spree. The men scavenged through some homes, a couple banks, and of course when confronted by the ravaged youth, they were able to suppress some of those little devils, but they didn't scurry into yonder green pastures with their bounty.

The fools were dragged from a car they had jacked a few miles south. Someone shot out their tires and they had quite the nasty spill. Howard D'agon was the ringleader, a satanist with former mob ties. You could only believe the headlines that were put out. Howard was caught with a cache of animal organs and handguns. He was a real charmer though, as he was stealing hearts both literally and metaphorically. Paddy Torrance was a member of the IRA who thought he flew the coop stateside; arson was his specialty. In fact, rumor has it that Paddy once tried to set the Rock of Cashel ablaze. The Brothers Raglan, Andrei and Vladimir, were twin loan sharks with a penchant for silence, as in they were serving time for crushing quite a few larynxes.

Everyone in Barrington exacted their pound of flesh. We used the same weapons that the little devils had used. I had never understood the phrase controlled chaos until that day. The resolve of the many outweighed the resolve of the few. I took a

rock and dinged D'agon right on his jaw. The group mind mentality was getting the better of me. Wishing to do more, I was angry but conflicted. So I did what I did best: I drank. I was a numb liquor sponge.

The men kept up their tough exteriors, although they knew it was certain doom. Battered and bloody, the men wept to an audience of none. Their howls and pleas were deafened by their accusers. Two miles. They were dragged for two miles through mud, glass, and whatever else still littered the streets before they arrived at the town square. People spit at them and threw bottles, pumpkins, and whatever they could get their mitts on. A mock gallows was brought over from the Hammerstein Hayride, and with it four hangman nooses lay ever so still.

After downing a few bottles of reserve MD 2020, I staggered over to the town square. Usually reserved for local music and farmers markets, the dangling cadavers were hung high, and they swayed in a metronomic fashion. The rage slowly subsided as the yelling drifted into mumbling, which eventually fell to dead silence. One by one the people shuffled back to their dwellings until I was one of the few left there, peering at the flesh chimes blowing in the breeze. While I gravitated along my way, I saw the shutterbugs ogling the cadavers, snapping away while the flash bulbs burst aimlessly.

Barrington became a tragedy town. There was no time for reflection or for candor, only profit. Suffering was our real cash crop now. We became a destination for denizens that were enamored with our despair. A strange destination, a spooky weekend away from reality. "Come and relish in our mortal anguish, at the bloody hills of Barrington." The council of vultures that run the city now do so with no empathy, as a vulture cannot feel empathy.

A new day, and a new placebo for the aching yearn. No Blood Moon on the 13th anniversary of The Red Scorn. While the rest of Barrington was out trying to prove that The Grand Guignol was still alive and well, I absconded to the recess of my basement. Aimlessly my mind interchanged from emptying a crate of red wine to the random horror film marathon I had curated for my viewing

pleasure. I crawled into the deprivation tank my boss Raul let me take from the shop. Away from the light, away from the world, and most importantly...myself.

After rising from my habitual delirium, my morning routine is simple. I usually down some distilled spirits—somedays Whisky, someday Rum, maybe Vodka or even Rakia—but today my boss at the pawn shop Raul procured me some Absinthe. What a splendid birthday gift indeed. I meander around the neighborhood, walking with the ghosts. The town is still preserved almost to a haunting tee. Crime scene tape still bellows in the ether. The McKenzies are reapplying the chalk outlining near their garage. The Wallaces are tossing fake blood ritualistically over their lawn. Dried leaves covered in said fake blood cascade all throughout the neighborhood. Jack O'Lanterns carved with demonic precision, some preserved while others have been caved into pulp, sit by the town center. Passing through the graveyard I see a group of people polishing the headstones, scrubbing with a deep vigor. Over the years it has gone from crime scene to a schlockish orgy of gore and poor decor.

Stumbling into work, I happen to notice that Raul and his wife Maggie are hogtied on the floor. A situation that would normally induce panic, to us it is just another day at Main Street Pawn. As long as I have worked here, armed robbery has been a staple. This place draws them in like a moth to the flame. Trying to realign my focus, I grab at the door frame to hold steady. The pressure in my forehead throbs steady. Raising my hands in the air, I begin to dry heave. The butt of one of the rifles is buried into my face as I collapse onto the linoleum tile.

Trying to understand the masked men's demands, I am feeling more anger than agony. This shop brings forth all sorts of nefarious characters, but to come in with rifles and start making all this noise, well that's a mistake. When I wake, Raul is wide-eyed and all barrels snap in my direction. Both men have pitch black wool caps pulled over their faces, matching lime Afghankas, and acid wash jeans. Everyone is yelling, and they undo Raul's gag. He sheepishly tells me to bring them to

“the big score downstairs.” That’s Raul’s secret signal, and believe me, they’re going to get the big score alright. The biggest score of their life. I try to play it cool, but my words slur right into each other as drool spills from my maw.

The heads of their rifles dig deep into my spine as we venture into the basement. It reeks of the occult and the bizarre, as every basement should. Now I bring them to a room lit by black light, and a secret vault. The mounted animals and fermented organs do not seem to deter the men. Them boys think they hit the jackpot, but what they’ve found is an aberration of sanity, as all sorts of delicacies come through here—monkey’s paws, shrunken heads—you name it and I have seen it. Except this; this defies reason. In the vault they open a crate, and before they can react in disgust, the tendrils of an endless circulatory system mummifies them both, tearing into their pores, gestating their essence, in one breath enveloping and then snuffing out their being.

The arteries twist and bind like gears shifting in horrifying unison, dissolving the flesh until there is only a bloody puddle left. The dynamic duo’s dulcet yelping subsides abruptly. The tendrils glimmer as they gyrate in a fury that is equal parts agony and ecstasy. When it has finished, a white noise takes over the room, a deafening moan that dwindles a minute later as it secretes out quartz-like pebbles from the tendril tips, smooth like pearls and shaped like the Hope diamond. My guess is that it sucks out whatever it can use and these are the leftover scraps.

Snatching up their weapons and their jackets, I discover one just happens to be my size. I slip it on like a fuzzy glove. Warmth radiates from the lining of the coat, and I hose the secretion remnants out of sight. After helping Raul and Maggie out of their restraints, Raul has a good, hardy laugh and cracks his back before he places the guns in the case out back. Maggie also cracks her back, dusts herself off, and places the remaining jacket on the rack. She

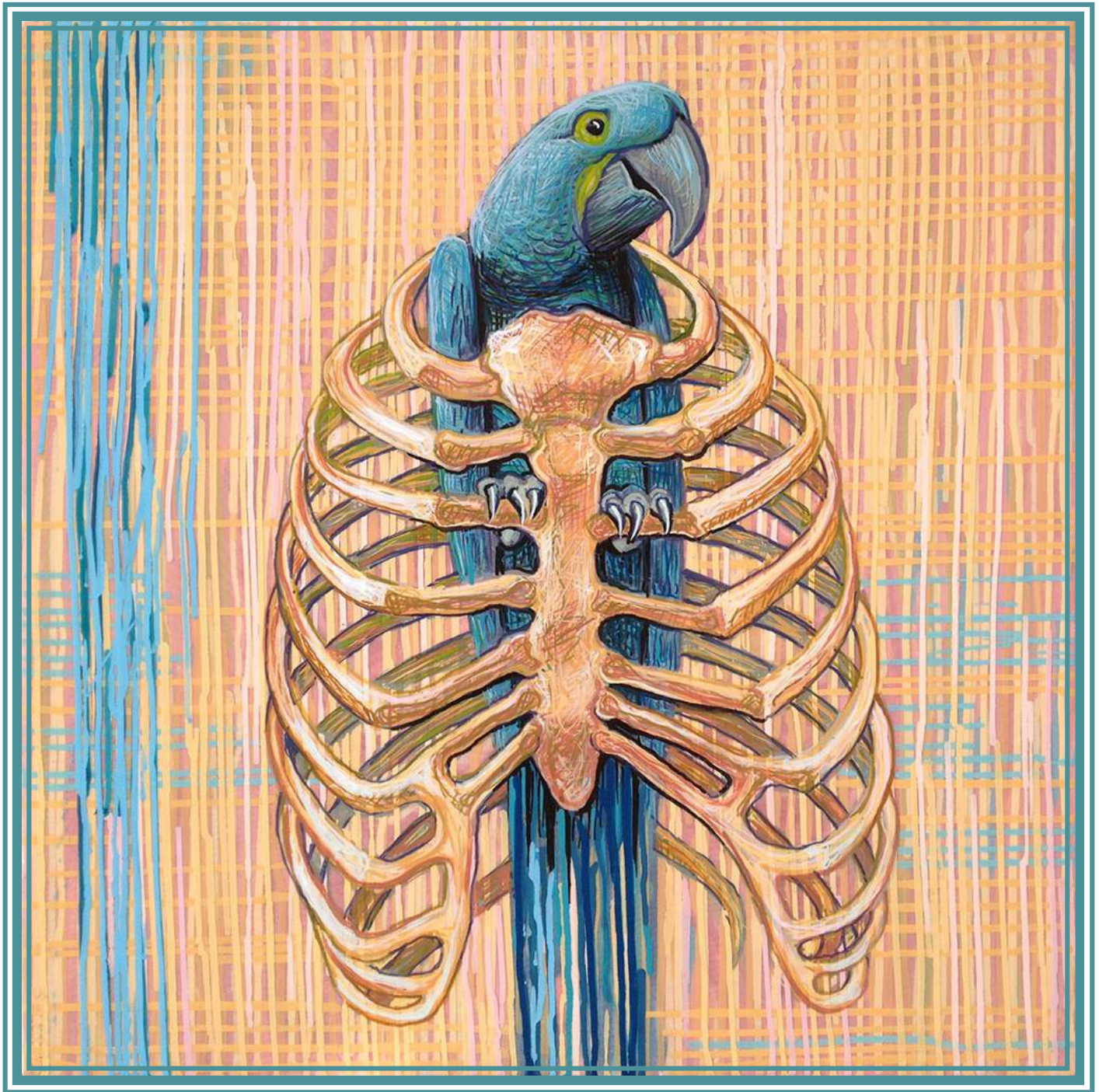
then tosses me two tampons to plug up the plasma leaking from my nose.

The crate had appeared one night, as if out of thin air, outside the shop. A smooth, well-worn surface with what we assume to be Sumerian writing carved into it. Something about it had an air that seemed more retro-futurist than ancient Mesopotamia, but finding boxes full of sentient organs isn’t really my sport. A lone tendril tore through a crease in the crate, first going up a few inches, then creeping up the drain pipe and scaling the brick buttress, and then towering over the shop, its tendrils flailing around in a lull harmony. A soft hum, a white noise almost like a siren song, radiated through the store.

Minutes after I dragged the crate inside, some dustheads kicked the door open. What I remember was that the three of them had matching butterfly knives. They were waving them around almost as if they had choreographed it. One by one they cavorted around the crate with an almost infant-like wonder. The arteries shot out and into their being. Naturally I puked over the carnage on display, the vomit pooling together with the blood into a rather vile peppermint swirl. The tendrils slithered back into the crate. Raul, Maggie, and myself talked for hours about what to do. We unanimously agreed to abscond with it to the basement. Ever since that night I have more or less handled most of our...issues, our dirty little secret that altered our world, tucked away deep away from us and away from the world.

We’re still trying to make sense of it. Going outside for a smoke, we try and plan for the new day, inhaling enough American Spirits to call ourselves conduits. The cool breeze cuts away at our agitated faces. Goosebumps slither up the base of my spine as I attempt to compose myself. Deep down at the core of my being I know there is a fleeting cosmic truth that I will never have answered, but I do know what I need. I need another drink.





Carte Blanche by Ed Pontes

My Grand Maw Came to Visit Last Week

by Christian Hardy

My grandmother came to stay for a while about a week ago or so. She has yet to leave.

She has pleasantly, cosily taken up residence in my home.
When she first came to my door I felt like an old friend had come to visit.
A day or two at best. Just a little rain cloud to moisten my parched lips.

I suppose the misstep was mine.

I invited her in and she has yet to leave.
Yet to remove the talon from my heart and cudgel from my mind.

Every day I hope she leaves in the night.
I put down my head to rest and pray my soul she does not take. I hope the dawn's light will pierce the veil of misery that her visits entail. But she has yet to leave. And here I sit again and all her visits are remembered horrid and exact. All I can do is breathe. Tranquil and alone I sit and postpone, waiting for my grand maw to leave. Waiting for this chasm to fill in or consume me. Waiting forevermore while I fade away. The winds rip through me, chill as the dead winds of Nether Lands. No Sovngarde awaits me. No heroes repast but more a Sheol in time and sense. Sweet Oblivion. 



Great Meadows, Sudbury by Sachin Sawe

Pineapple

by Keenan Pontes

He sat just out of reach of the fires' warmth; He pulled the pin out. It was a mindless task that gave him some small sense of control; He put the pin in. He stared blankly at the fire as it danced mischievously and pulled the pin out. He recalled all the horrifically beautiful fires he had seen this past year and put the pin in. He remembered the symphony of screams and the cacophony of silence that followed; He pulled the pin out. He remembered the twinkling of the small fireworks in the night and how loud they were as they whistled through the air; He put the pin in. He recalled the faces of those that went on ahead. Looking at the pin he had a peculiar thought and pulled the pin out. Perhaps if he did not put the pin back in he could join them. He hesitated, he looked to his left, then to his right as if to remind him that he was alone now and then he looked back at the pin in his

hand. He put the pin in. He looked back into the fire, his eyes a little deader now, but there was also a hint of resolve; He was tired he wanted to rest. He pulled the pin out. He had resolved not to put the pin back, but an ominous wind blew through the trees and he heard the rustling of leaves and a sudden angry shout of some beast nearby; It scared him and he dropped what he held so firmly in his hands. It rolled no more than a foot in front of him; He looked at it and he panicked. His deadening gaze was now filled with a vibrant fear. He lunged with great vigor at the thing he had dropped and the very second he grasped it he threw it once more as far as he could. He heard its deafening laugh and something in him broke. His eyes clouded over as he fell to the ground; He clutched his knees tightly to his chest and he wept. Like a man and like a child he wept. ▽



To Joey

by Gil Avramovich

I don't know if you even closed your eyes
Before you died
I know you screamed in pain
Your blood running down the storm drain
In older times I would have put two coins above your eyes
And your whole body would have floated down the Charles river
Not just your blood

I know you sleep in the womb of rebirth
For now I carry you inside
I used to live as solely me
But now I have to live as you too
Something that you cannot do
Those liquid black windows to my soul
Have been stained with flecks of green.
And when my child is born
Oh, I'll name her Joy.
And she'll be your child too
If not by blood.



Photo by Michael Miano

The Summer Poem

by Valeri Beers

Why
did you
leave
so quickly?
Was it
something
I said?

Why were
you
so inconsistent
with
your warmth?

Winter Lake

by Yukimi Miyashita

The white morning, I walk along a lake
My breath, my footsteps, the weak sunshine,
and all signs of life are absorbed by the snow

I hear the voice in the heavy stillness,
the faint sound of a brook flowing into the pond
In the deathly cold world,
there is a ceaseless beating of old to new.



The Transcendental Splashes of PG by Paola Guzman

lumiere

We invite any and all submissions that employ skillful and imaginative uses of medium and content. All forms of art are welcome. Enjoy our printed publication or visit lumierelitmag.com to browse content not featured here. Please send your creative work to litmag@massbay.edu

boring legal stuff

Statements and opinions expressed in the Magazine are those of the bylined contributors or the editorial staff, and do not necessarily represent the official position of the College.

Written work may be copyedited and printed in excerpt, and visual art may be adapted for layout and design, unless otherwise specified.

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

All Author Rights Reserved

Except as expressly authorized by this Agreement or the Agreement on lumierelitmag.com, you may not copy, reproduce, distribute, republish, download, perform, display, post, transmit, exploit, create derivative works or otherwise use any of the Materials in any form or by any means for commercial means without the prior written authorization of the respective copyright owner(s).

The Magazine authorizes you to view and download the Materials only for personal, non-commercial use, provided that you keep intact all copyright and other proprietary notices contained in the original Materials.



Manjil Dam, Iran by Parisa Mavaddat



Please send your creative work to
litmag@massbay.edu

