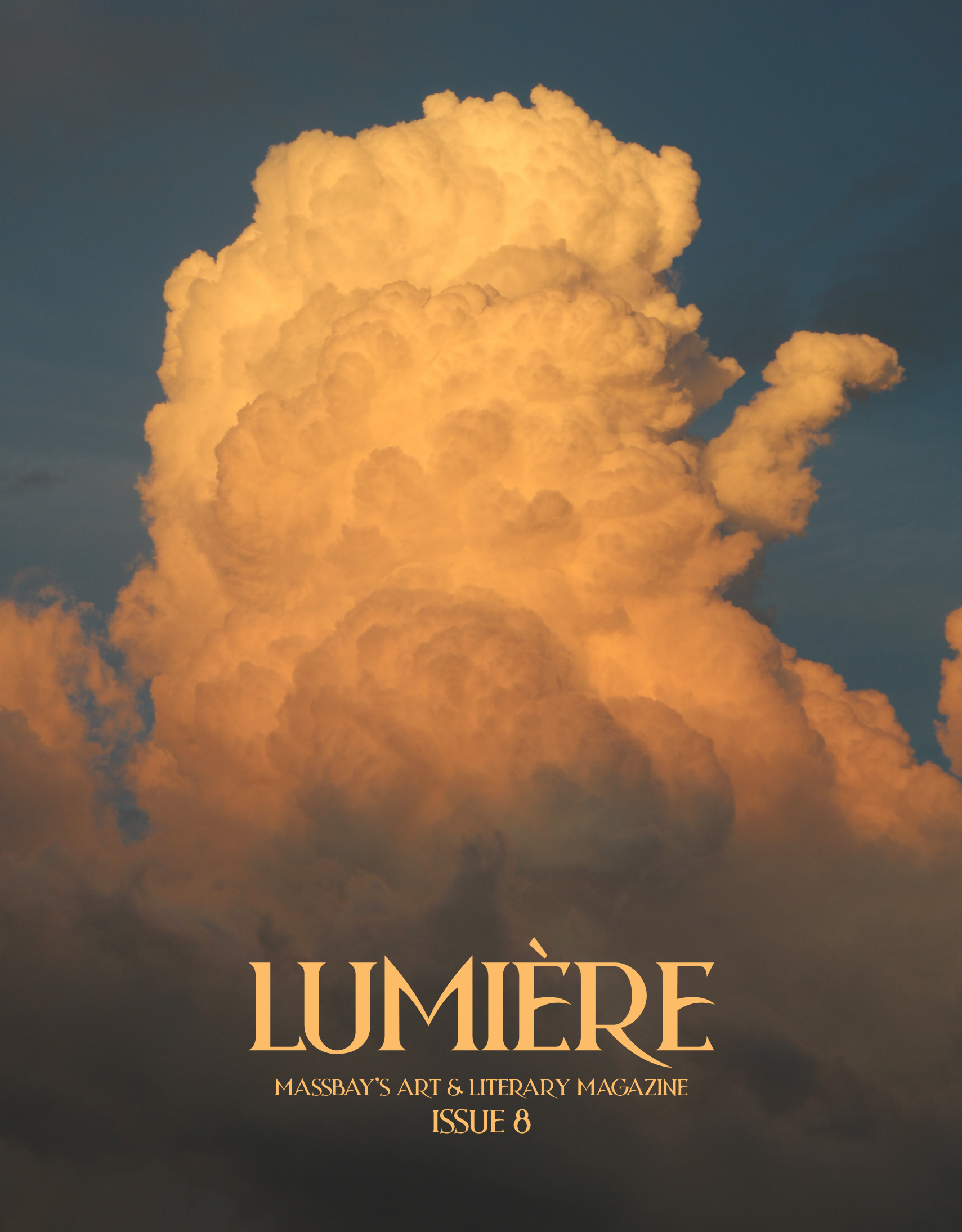




LUMIÈRE

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ISSUE 8

lumière

ISSUE #8

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Mission Statement

The lumière team strives to produce an inclusive and diverse platform that “illuminates” the creative work of MassBay’s students, faculty, staff, and members of the larger community. Our goal is to showcase the wonder of unique expression, talent, and passion. We hope this issue will provide inspiration to future writers and artists who have a desire to feature their work.

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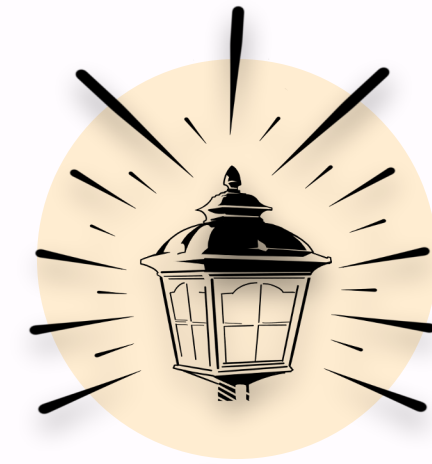


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Losing (Lost)

Jameson Gillihan

Lost the ticket (only ticket) on the way out, hand in pocket, fumbling, (crumpling,) flexing one corner to the other (never creasing). Always something in that pocket: lint, a pen, a lighter (through the wash, broken), a cough drop (melted, stuck), a ticket, lettering faded (sweat and friction). The key to never losing things is never moving them – so everything lived in that dirty jean pocket, getting sticky with sugar and menthol and aspartame chewing gum. The ticket (crumpled) (faded) lived there too, fingers on it, taking attendance.

When was it lost? (When did I lose it?) Turned out pockets too late, mostly empty (always dirt and a wrapper and that little broken lighter). Fingers had no answers: must have wandered off – must have rubbed into dust in all that time we spent fidgeting. Stolen? Maybe, you know how the city gets, all thieves and pickpockets (dirty) (desperate) (broke), mid-crowd shuffling reaching hands – they touched me – saw the ticket (mine) for a wallet (mine) and took it. Sure, maybe, or maybe I took it (careful), held it (careful), inspected it, insistent, needing to know: Where am I going? Nowhere now. Home, now, empty pockets, dirty jeans, heart beating, lighter leaking fluid where it fell.

Floral Canvas

Michelle Bediako-Sampong

Matinee Rites

Jack Curtis

The two boys rowed through the crowd gathering in front of the movie theater. On the marquee overhead, the noontime light streamed down the neatly arranged red plastic letters. Children climbed jerkily out of the double-parked cars and spilled onto the outer foyer, their mothers giving last-minute counsel. Clutching fifty-cent pieces, the two moved beyond the ticket booth and headed toward the corner newsstand where their friends huddled.

That the two were brothers was obvious. Same brown hair, same brown eyes; matching clothes and matching strides. Too much sock showing, plaid shirt too short to be tucked into his beltless pants, Greg, at twelve, looked as if he grew out of his clothes every two months. His face was still round, with only his jaw hinting at an older angularity.

Robbie, a half-head shorter than his older brother, was continually growing into the clothes inherited from his brother. He wore his brother's clothes as a badge. Greg's favorite shirts became Robbie's favorites. Robbie, like his brother, slung his baseball jacket over his shoulder. Only younger boys tied their jackets around their waists. Once clear of the crowd, Greg led the way toward their friends.

Through last winter and spring, during Greg's last semester in elementary school, the two brothers walked every Saturday to the large neighborhood moviehouse for the kiddie matinee. That's what their mother, to whom "Greg and Robbie" was one word, called it, which irritated Greg like a scraped elbow. Now summer, a wide-open field, awaited.

Their walk began at Sam's Five-and-Ten-Cent store, where they habitually loaded up on candy. They followed a labyrinthine course to the movie theater. Robbie knew practically all the streets, alley ways, and short cuts and usually led the way. He often boasted to his mother that they never took the same way twice.

Everything that was serious and solemn beyond reason attracted Robbie. That spring he had read a story by Jack London that told of

comradery in a wintry forest, which had enthralled Robbie. On one of their walks to the theater, he proposed to Greg that they, like the characters in the story, take an oath of allegiance, to always come to the aid of the other. It would be their pact, permanent, a bulwark against the rush of events, big and small.

"You swear?" said Robbie, needing assurance like Lenny Small asking George about the rabbits.

"Oh yeah, sure, even when I'm in junior high," Greg answered, but without much thought. Robbie held onto the pledge like a treasured object, fisted away from view, deep in a pocket, his own fortifying secret.

As the two brothers approached, the circle of boys opened up a bit to allow them in. All were the same age and height, thereabouts, all eager for the rights bestowed upon teenagers. Robbie glanced over at the newsstand. A mild wind played with the corners of the stacked newspapers weighted down by some metal objects. He guessed they were old engine parts, only cleaned up.

Robbie took his place in the circle, alongside his brother, but not quite, a half-step behind. When he saw his brother slide his movie money into his pocket, then Robbie thought maybe he should do the same thing.

Robbie said, "Hi," but received no response.

"Hey, he can't come," said one of them, pointing at Robbie.

"Why not?" said Greg from his place in the circle.

"C'mon . . . you know why . . . he's too little to sneak into the show with us."

"Yeah," said another boy.

Robbie was surprised. Greg hadn't told him anything about sneaking into the movie. He didn't understand why his brother and he would have to sneak in. Their mother gave them the money.

"Look, I forgot to tell . . . Okay you guys, as we planned, Dave will go in and open the front exit door and Robbie will come in with us. No big deal. He won't get in the way," said Greg.

"Look, no go. It is a big deal. I don't want

him in on this. He's a tag-along. He's like your shadow or something . . ."

"Yeah, but what can I do?" said Greg.

"Yeah, he's like a shadow. Plus, he's still in grammar school. How come he gets to hang around us?"

"Because, well . . ."

"He'll be too chicken and probably blow it for us."

"Ditto that."

"I could do it, I swear," said Robbie.

"You'll probably start crying or something."

"I don't cry. I won't cry."

"Look, just let him come this once," said Greg. "This time."

"That's just it, especially not this time, our first time crashing. He's too little. He'll get in our way."

"Let him go into the theater on his own and meet us inside."

Outnumbered, Greg turned to his brother.

"Look, Robbie, you go ahead. I'll meet you inside. Look for me inside. You look for me, okay? I'll find you, honest. I gotta go."

Like a tribesman excluded from the season's first hunt, Robbie backed away from the circle. The boys continued to map out their strategy. Still surprised, Robbie turned slowly and joined the other children in line. He was aware of only a windswept feeling along his shoulder and neck. His jacket, folded over his arm.

As he neared the ticket booth someone from behind him shouted, "Hey, Robbie, where's your brother?" Robbie didn't answer. He couldn't answer.

Ticket in hand, Robbie moved slowly toward the theater entrance, jostled from all sides. A box of Red Hots fell from his front pocket. He looked down quickly to see the red beads fan out down the shiny walkway. He stood wooden, looking at the cellophane window of the empty candy box till the crowd flattened it. He watched as several feet kicked it aside.

Robbie gave his ticket to the doorman, who tore it into two halves with one hand. In the same motion, he stuck the stub upward with his thumb. This hand trick was a cool matinee event of Robbie's, but this time it went unnoticed as he took the ticket. Robbie walked past the lighted

candy counter, and by custom walked through the golden doors on the left side.

The theater was already dark. It seemed darker than usual. On screen, Flash Gordon toy rockets careened through papier-mâché craters and peaks. Robbie walked down the aisle stiffly. He sensed he couldn't sit down in the front center section where he usually sat with his brother and his friends. Down the rows, attentive faces shined like half-moons. Without glancing up at the screen to get his bearing, he sat down on the left side by the aisle, halfway down, three seats in.

Robbie drew his knees up to his face, pressing his feet hard against the velvet seat. He locked his arms around his knees, enclosing unfamiliar emotions coursing through his body. The cold feeling had subsided and Robbie now felt aglow. His feelings raced over each other, turning, reversing, colliding. He didn't try to sort things out. He didn't seek answers or an outlet. He looked forward through half-exposed eyes without registering anything.

A scene far from the theater's animated air arose in his mind. He remembered a family dinner, a formal meal, a holiday meal with all the family present. There was a glow surrounding the scene. All the guests were in place, the meal had begun, his mother was circling the table with a large serving tray, when someone knocked down one of this mother's prized cobalt-blue plates to the dining room floor. It shattered.

The crashing sound reverberated through the suddenly quiet room. His mother stood above the vivid, triangular fragments. The design, its golden edge, was obliterated. His mother didn't hear the shocked expressions, the apologies. She didn't move to clean it up. The dinner had to go on.

The guests looked at each other for hints on what do. His mother stood there. It seemed to Robbie that the plate, the plate's importance, was moving into her memory. She stepped over the shards. Robbie was bewildered. She let the broken plate lay where it was. Like she wanted it to sit there for a while, as a reminder. The treasured thing, one of a kind, in a particular place, at a particular time, was now gone. No one was to blame. Precious objects, dear and hard, break. That was how time was marked.

The moment, sharp, still, quiet, recurred in

his mind, quickly enlarging. Each time with fewer images rising, with table, faces, and walls blurring, always the golden glow. His mother in sharp closeup. He was fixated by his sightings.

Only the look of his mother emerged, which he studied. Standing solitary, displaying only momentary sadness. Instead—the composed, defiant look of a rebel. It ended there. Then repeated with intensity. He grabbed tighter. Robbie rocked from side to side in his seat. The theater dropped off by his side, a hollow, deep blackness surrounded him.

Just as laughs greeted “Francis the Talking Mule,” the curtain at the exit, right of the screen, was thrown open. Someone ran into the passageway leading to the exit space. Almost at the same instance, the exit door was pulled open, quickly, violently. As the curtain swung back into place, a wedge of light—outdoor light—lashed across the audience, its reach extending toward Robbie. He knew instantly what the flash signaled. Dark, silhouetted bodies, six, seven, burst from behind the curtain. They looked like soldiers dispersing under fire. They jumped into seats, some moving in from the aisle. Two or three of the figures ran up the right-hand aisle, taking seats on both sides. Robbie thought he saw his brother but wasn’t sure.

The curtain fell back into place. The silver-hued darkness returned. Some children started screaming during the chaos. To them, it seemed like fun. Some cheered on the trespassers. Waving and pointing and whistling, they became accomplices. Ushers ran down the aisles with their flashlights beaming across the carpets and rows of heads and seats like searchlights in the night.

Robbie dropped his feet to the floor and sat upright, reduced to being an observer. He tightened his arms, pressed his fists hard against his thighs. He watched detached as if watching a newsreel he knew little about but was still held captive by its images and sounds. Would the ushers find the intruders? He didn’t know what triumph looked like, what failure would mean.

The ushers converged on the exit and cast their flashlights into the exit space for any remaining intruders. They started up the aisles again, shining their lights into the faces of the restless audience. The violators had quickly

claimed their seats and sat upright, pretending to be absorbed. The battle zone settled and the ushers resumed their posts. The movie’s calming spell again took hold.

Robbie felt his jaw tighten. He knew he wouldn’t see Greg. He knew his brother wouldn’t look for him. Their bond had been shattered. The seat couldn’t contain Robbie’s dismay.

He lunged up, grabbed his jacket and turning too quickly up the aisle, hit his thigh against the armrest. To shake off the pain, Robbie ran up the aisle faster than anticipated. From the center section, Greg saw Robbie running, but fearful of calling attention to himself, he pulled back and let Robbie go.

With both hands Robbie swung open the theater lobby doors and stepped into the pale glow of the empty lobby and ran across the carpet, so quickly that the girls at the candy counter looked behind him to see what the trouble was. He pushed hard against the metal bar of the glass exit door with a bang that startled the doorman. He slammed onto the marble entryway, past the abandoned ticket booth, but slowed down, blinking as his eyes adjusted to the sunlight bouncing off the cars and buildings. The street noises and movement met his anger.

After running four blocks, Robbie stopped abruptly and turned up a quiet side street. He walked up the center and then picked up his speed. The street’s solitude welcomed him. Nothing moved in his sight. He felt like a front runner eyeing the final stretch that was his alone. Concentrating on the end of the street, he swung his coat from side to side. And then onto the second block, again quiet and abandoned. No cars forced him to diverge from his route up the stripped line. He owned the street.

He reached the boulevard, where the sounds and sights moved quickly. He gulped at the air, crashing forward. The broken pledge still twisted in his side. Goading him, a half-step faster. Slowing him, to the point when he had to pick up his speed. Push, release, push again, harder. He ran the next three blocks. Occasionally he caught himself in storefront windows, a shiny moving picture. The speeding image became his partner, edging Robbie onwards, not to lessen, not to look back, not to think. The doorways and the doors

between the windows came quicker. Breathing heavily, in cadence with his quick pace, he repeated to himself under his breath, “Yer left, yer left. Sadie was there when ya left. You’re right.”

Robbie slowed and walked past a market parking lot. He stopped to wait at the signal to cross the street, thick with rushing cars. Robbie’s chest raised and lowered steadily. He held his head up, open hands lodged on his hips, his jacket hanging over his wrist. He looked across the intersection, and there was the faded sign of Sam’s Five-and-Dime, its golden letters and numbers like old-fashioned lettering on baseball jerseys. When the light went green, Robbie crossed the street, just as shadows were taking shape, and entered the small, cluttered store.

When he saw Robbie, Sam, round and bald, walked down the left-hand aisle to greet him and took his station at the cash register, surrounded by racks of shiny packages of batteries and cigarettes, with a multi-tiered candy display on the counter. Robbie stared ahead. His heart still raced but he

suppressed his breathing.

“You’re back early,” said Sam. “Did they show my favorite—Buster Keaton? And, hey, where’s your brother?” Not really expecting an answer, he waited to serve the boy.

The phone rang in Sam’s back office and he retraced his steps. Robbie released a big breath and inhaled deeply, gathering himself. The store couldn’t contain him very long. He switched his jacket from one hand to the other. He reached out and grabbed a candy bar, in a brown wrapper—he knew the color, he knew the lettering, he knew what he had. Sam looked up from the phone to see Robbie pivot at the counter, with something in his hand. Before he could react, Robbie was out the door.

Robbie ran down the busy street, passing pedestrians, flailing his arms. The candy bar crushed in his fist. It didn’t matter. He ran with piracy in his eyes. Shielding himself from the sun, Sam stood in the doorway, waving Robbie back.



Forefooted

Angel Marie Russell

Do not put faith in the
Narratives of the past
Being the fortune tellers
To your fate.
Do not believe the whispers
Of what ails you
And pulls you further away
From yourself.

Do not resign to the
Pitfalls and valleys
Of the past,
Marking the road
That is yet to be plowed.

You are not destined to follow
What lies in the rear view.
You are not fated upon what
Has been strewn before.

These are merely markings
On the path traversed.
They are temporary;
Way-showers without maps.

They are stones on a hill
Valleys behind the ridge
Forks in roads and
Oghams carved in trees.

You dear heart are led by
Well-worn shoes
And feet that step
With ferocity,
And hopeful planted lands
From leaps.

Your past does not define you
Not the darkest of hours,
Nor the loneliest of sorrows.

Our landscape merely shows us
Points along the way,
Towards lessons,
Of birth, and decay,
Of burn and ash,
Of spark and flame,
Of wind and blaze, and you
Are all of these things.

Free to dream
Upon the grace of tomorrow,
The soothing balm
Upon the meadow's breeze,
And the dawn on the horizon
Bringing hope of better things.
To live, to learn, to grow,
And to be.



Flames

Yana Z.

Shifts Passing in the Night

Vicki Prince

As I amble solitary down the dimly red-illuminated p-ways, making my way to the ship's smoke deck, I softly whistle a melancholic tune. I can't recall the melody's origins except to muse that it's reminiscent of something that could've easily been performed by Yoko Kanno and the Seatbelts. Ancient mariners' superstition holds that to whistle aboard a sailing vessel is to challenge the winds and invite their wrath. Such antique reasoning seems far removed from contemporary logic, though I must confess that some part of me is engaged in deliberate, subversive antagonism.

It's just past 0000 and having completed our routine combat systems status checks and reboots — it's time to feed the addiction I've cultivated since the later days of my lengthy technical training, prior to arrival in the fleet.

Almost every time the command gets underway, I make certain to secure myself a position on this watch. It's colloquially known more crudely (as with many things) as the "balls watch" for self-apparent reasons. Midnight came and went, and my shipmate and I completed the requisite systems procedures to maintain the complex neural network of the ship's eyes and ears — and now it's time for the ritual catharsis of nicotine and stargazing.

As I roam the halls and feel the subtle rumbles of the hull cutting through the bottomless depths below — I can't help but contemplate its analogous relationship to that of a starship. I've often in jest submitted that I chose enlistment in the navy because there's no such thing (yet) as Starfleet. Terrestrial seafaring compares in my mind to the way sci-fi vessels traverse times and places beyond the stars. I now find myself buoyed and protected in an environment otherwise entirely hostile to my very existence. The cold, naked void of space and the ocean share many similarities.

Getting underway removes us from the oft unappreciated luxuries of terra firma — but there's nothing in the world quite like being out to sea. It's like being everywhere and nowhere all at

once. Where the jagged creases of the untouchable horizon rise and fall to embrace the boundless sky in their leviathan, terrifying chaos, and mindless hunger.

I round the final claustrophobic, industrial corner of the p-way to the top of the ladderwell descending to the hangar bay, grasp its rails, and slide down them to the hatch below. This is colloquially known in the navy as "skylarking" and is officially frowned upon as a safety hazard — but everyone learns to do it and does. It's a hallmark of command familiarization. It gets particularly fun aboard smaller ships, or in livelier seas.

My black leather combat boots kiss the familiar nonskid deck at the base of the ladderwell with a dull thud. I jerk the lever on the hatch to the hangar bay open with its old, familiar, machined metal clang. These watertight doors show their age, and the grooves of the dogs on them are all worn smooth and shiny. But through diligent, routine maintenance they still do their job.

I saunter out into the soft-green glow of the upper hangar bay and make my way aft to the smoke pit on RAS Station #5. Sailors are only permitted to smoke when and where "the smoking lamp is lighted." And aboard our command, that place is most often RAS-5 or on the fantail. Both offer remarkable views of the ocean. Not what one might call a "vista" in this environment.

For the first time since my watch began, from the open aircraft doorways to one side of the hangar I can hear the muted thundering of the waves. And in the soft, midnight ocean air my skin feels cooled and dewy.

Out onto the smoke deck I lean against the shaky, haze-grey rails cradling me from plunging into the murky depths below, as I pull a cigarette from the breast pocket of my uniform. This stowage space for such things, as with so much official policy, is frowned upon by "big navy" but broadly disregarded in practice. Knowing and learning what is and isn't keen, and what you can and cannot get away with, is a delicate balancing

act of familiarization in the actual navy. It often stands in contrast with official policy, and in practice constitutes a kind of nuanced, unspoken display of tenure.

I glance around the smoke pit — an alcove on the side of the ship used primarily for receiving food stores, supplies, and fuel during underway replenishments — and think to myself how quaint it is that there is no actual illuminated lamp here. I recently learned that the ship-wide information call of the smoking lamp's status and location derives from a time before it was commonplace for people to have their own timepieces and lighters or matches. The smoking lamp was a literal lamp that the sailors would use to ignite their assorted vices.

It's a communal place. A working class place. Somewhere we all gather throughout the days and nights so far away from friends and family. It gets us outside the skin of the ship to shoot the breeze and drink in and appreciate our rarified surroundings. You wouldn't want a lamp out here in the dead of night at sea. It might give away our position. Nevertheless, god bless the imaginary smoking lamp.

I'm reflecting on how much I love this shift

for how few people there are awake and about to bother you when a shadowy figure emerges across the way, accompanied by the mechanical whine of the doorway to this hallowed ground.

"Hey, got a smoke?" the tired specter grumbles. It's a friend of mine, one of the MCs named Caleb. When you're on a first name basis, that's friendship.

"Ah, shit — I just burned my last one. I was gonna ask you!" is my reply, having just exhausted my final good cigarette from the portside NEX and now wanting to linger and smoke another. From here on out, it's all Newport Menthols and Marlboro Lights from the ship's store, all the way home.

"No worries. I'll be back," he politely groans. And as suddenly as he slunk in, he's gone.

I turn back around, and gaze out over the contrasting expanse before me. The undulating, shadowy foundation, and shimmering celestial ceiling of my life in this moment. There are a thousand purposes calling me back to shore. As my cigarette cherry creeps closer to the filter, I think that despite all that beckoning noise and potential — someday I'll miss this.





Light
Nathaly Posada

I Am

Henry Brill

I am gay, aroflux, and allosexual
 And I am proud
 I am Jewish and a victim of anti-semitism
 We have the right to practice any religion
 I am gender nonconforming
 Gender identity is a human right
 I have down syndrome and I'm a victim of ableism
 I only see my abilities
 I am a victim of political hatred
 Proud to be an independent
 I am a victim of nationalism and ancestry discrimination
 I have Volhynian ancestry
 I am a direct descendant of the Volhynian tribal union
 The Israelites from ancient Israel
 The Canaanites from ancient Canaan
 I am a grand nephew of immigrants
 Who survived the pogroms in Eastern Europe
 And born in Israel
 No immigrants are illegal
 I am a great grandson of Polish-Israeli immigrants
 Who survived the 1939 invasion of Poland
 Who also did the aliyah
 Took the risk
 My grandma changed my family beliefs
 My last name changed from Barill to Brill
 This is me
 I am



Ginkgo Leaf

Angel Marie Russell

Secret Ingredient

David Earl

The first one crawled out of Grandma's old pasta pot. As I pulled it out of the cupboard, I saw a harbinger of suburban Armageddon emerge from the depths and rear its thorax at me. I let go of the handles as if they burned, and the pot hit the floor, clanging like a tolling bell, and out of its gaping mouth advanced the first roach of the day. I shouted, and like a legionnaire unsheathing his sword, I unbelted my sandal. But as I wound up, the roach scuttled under the dun cupboards of the kitchen island.

Later, I learned they were German roaches: flaky, brown, about the size and shape of almonds, not the things that looked like glossy black stones, armored tanks, the things they flash on pest control posters or the body horrors of B films. But they scuttled real good, just like I thought a roach would, like toothpicks raining onto the ground.

As I'd unbelted my sandal, there was another clatter of metal, high pitched and sharp, accompaniment to the deep gong of the pot. My mother had dropped the knife she'd been cutting onions with and clutched her arm as if it'd sliced her on the way down. Her thinning height and hair wavered like a stalk of wheat and the lines of her face rent her skin. She drew her feet together, away from the island and the ground level cupboards. I didn't have to tell her it was the roaches; the aunts had warned us of "all the problems" in the old house, though only after we'd arrived.

Dad had gone with the aunts, his sisters, to round everyone up for the reunion; we were alone in that house save for Grandpa. Standing at the stove, I could just about see him; he was reclining in the living room down the hall on his easy chair he'd always sit in, watching TV. There weren't any contours that he and the cushions didn't share, his skin seemed ready to slough off of his withered limbs, which dangled like prey in a spider's web. He hadn't turned toward the clangor of the dropped pot and knife, hard of hearing from blasting coal in West Virginia and loading guns in Normandy. He hadn't looked at us once since we'd come down.

Our offering for the reunion's potluck was baked mac n' cheese, and we had less than an hour.

So we washed the pot, inside and outside, scoured it with soap and pad. And we filled it up with water and lugged it over to the gas stove, dusty, anemic, and dinged up, certainly older than me. I cranked open the valve, the snaps of the pilot light cutting the viscous air. Flames bloomed like votive candles at an altar and licked the bottom of the swollen steel belly. I thought I saw a smile flicker on Mom's lips, and I could just about hear Grandma shuffling behind me in her rabbit-eared slippers.

Before Grandma died, Mom would always be at her side. It's not that Grandpa and my aunts and uncles weren't cordial, but I could see it in their clipped talk and half-moon eyes: she wasn't family in the same way Dad was and they didn't care to change that. Only Grandma was different. She told Mom stories about Dad when he was young, talking to her with a gentle deliberate voice and nonchalantly tilted head as she would with any of her children. And Mom loved the old house, especially the kitchen, the walls crenelated with cupboards and an island surfaced with monolithic hardwood, bigger than the dining table, where she'd follow Grandma about, helping cook food while Dad knocked beers back at the dinner table. Dad, with his chintzy sunglasses and a photoshoot smile as he was swallowed back into the family, listening to his siblings, their bickering, and the occasional request for money which he would accept without question or consultation. Rarely did his eyes come back to us. I introduced myself to my strangefaced cousins then sat in a corner to read; that was all you could do when you only met once every two or three years.

I think Mom looked forward to cooking in this kitchen today; she probably knew it as well as any of the aunts. Now, as we realized that we needed the Dutch oven next, she drew her arms to her chest as if the walls were lined with eyes, and I realized I was doing the same. But Mom steeled up first, and the moment she'd gone and pulled the oven out of the cupboard she let out a half-scream and curse, her hair flying away from her face. It was the Germans, two this time, crawling up the

outside like isopods on a diving bell. Somehow, she didn't drop it. Her hands turned into mottled red and white claws as they clamped on the handles, as if to will the creatures off with an angry aposematic display. We stayed there like statues, until I realized I could hear my mother's breathing pick up, undercut with a hiss, and I iced my gut and batted the crawling things off with a spatula. One, I hit it square with my sandal. It crunched; I didn't look. The second broke for the hallway, I swung and missed, and it skittered into one of the side rooms, where it'd hide in the lattice of shadows cast by the endless clutter that covered the floor.

The rooms of the house had become vestigial, save for storing clutter that accumulated here. When we arrived, the kitchen island was glassed with magazines and transparent plastic gift tubs of cashews and chocolate coated shortbread ordered from a mail order catalog that had hooked itself behind Grandpa's eyes and got him clicking. The fats had gone rancid and were weeping like brown pustules and the chocolate bloomed like dried salt from a sidewalk puddle in the winter.

If it were any other day, we would've opened up the cupboards for any razor-thin shadow of them and Raided the bastards before we'd so much as put on the water. But today, there was no time to chase as the Germans took cover under the kitchen island; we could do nothing but put the Dutch oven in the sink, soap, scrub, and set it aside, our hands frantic. I'd put my right sandal back on, still unbelted, and it flopped under my foot like a flap of peeling skin, Mom's face stolid, save for her jaws minutely pulsing. We had a job to do: mac n' cheese.

The pasta water was going, and we got to making the white sauce. I got the milk, butter and cheese we'd stored in the fridge, the only fresh things to be found in there among the CoffeeMate, half-scraped tubs of margarine and wilting sliced bread. I kept my focus on the stove, the two burners, watching the perimeter around the butter, the chopped onions, the milk, the old pasta pot and the Dutch oven. It was hot; an AC whined but didn't make a dent in the thermostat, and the swelter of the pots melted into it.

Looking for a colander, I found a German squatting on the mixing bowl beside it. Picking up a towel, a roach ran for the shadow of another. And

opening the drawer just under the sink, I could see for just long enough that every space between the unused brush, soap, and sponge wriggled. Mom no longer twitched when they were unearthed; we couldn't tell who was under siege. At first, I thought they might've been drawn by activity in a dormant kitchen, but they were probably there the whole time, lurking out of sight under more benign dysfunctions.

While looking for a lid to the pot, I finally found a dented can of Raid on a shelf. I opened the cupboard under the sink, where I knew they'd be. Even in the pitch dark I could see them because the darkness shifted and waved its antennae. I depressed the plunger, let loose a saturated hellspray and banged the door shut. I thought it'd be like flamethrowing a bunker, except that wasn't at all how Raid worked. You had to kill them quick, nip it in the bud, or else they catch wind of what you're doing and scatter. So they did the only thing they could do, swell out of the cupboard door whose latch I hadn't realized was long broken.

The exodus came in ones and twos, then threes and fours, mounting the kitchen island, soldiers scaling cliffs. The sauce was simmering, I lowered the heat just so, and in almost the same move I whipped off my sandal again and started whapping. They fell, limp, picked off the side and falling stiff like the husks of some flaky-limbed nut, yet they kept coming. I kept flailing like some peg-legged puppet, thwacking roaches as they streamed out while twisting the mushy dial of the stove and stirring, trying to keep the ivory white sauce from burning. Dad wasn't back yet. Grandpa was still staring at the TV. Mom, hard-faced and huffing, her voice torqued, kept saying to ignore them, to focus on cooking as she mixed up the breadcrumbs, preheated the oven and prepped the casserole. I realized I probably had the same expression on my own face as we swallowed that no one else would come to help, as we fascistically did our duty.

Just before the sauce was done, a big motherfucker scuttled out, a different species, darker, shinier and fatter than the Germans, like a proper roach. Seeing steam waft out of the pasta pot, I stonily told Mom to throw some salt in, while I lined up my swing. The windup was long and tense as the roach moved in fits and starts like a puttering go-kart, and when it paused for a fraction

longer, pondering the surroundings with its antennae, I whipped my arm forth like a discus thrower, my sandal a whip cracking against the roach-stained hardwood. The big one fell like the rest, and in the murky light I lost sight of its body until I saw it lying an inch from my uncovered pinky toe, still alive with its carapace splintered, a wing torn, a leg bent back over itself. I heard the timer for the sauce ding, and I kicked the body down the hall with my still-sandaled foot.

As I turned back to the stove, I saw Grandpa looking at me, for just a second. His jaw seemed to hang from nothing but his graying lips, and his eyes were as tiny and empty as pinholes. The deluge of roaches eventually slowed to a trickle, but I knew I hadn't done anything to fix the problem; they'd just regroup and multiply again, and honestly, I almost didn't give a shit.

Just after we put the casserole in the oven, I heard the screen door open and hiss on its pneumatic brake. Dad walked in with his photoshoot smile on. He walked past the clutter like it wasn't there, as if the shadows cast by their molten, heat-warped towers were tricks of the light, and Mom glared at him. You'd think he was looking right at her at that moment, but I saw that minute turn of his head. I knew he was breaking eye contact, confirmed when Mom stepped over to me and asked if I could handle the rest in a tightly calm voice. And however much I wanted to say yes, knowing how much she wanted to get out, I only looked at her slant, long enough to maybe know I meant "yes," before she turned back to Dad to tell him she was never coming back down here, then left through that same screen door.

Dad didn't watch her as she left, didn't say a word acknowledging it, and after a long silence, he turned to me, as I stared at the oven, watching it glow. He asked how the mac n' cheese looked as if it were not a sweltering ninety degrees in the kitchen, that I did not have one sandal off and greasy with roach innards, or that there weren't still-twitching bodies by the kitchen island.

I didn't look at him, in what I later realized was the same look, slanted way he doesn't look at Mom. I said it's going fine, in what I later realized was the same voice, skating over the unreal surface of this

humid air. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Grandpa, looking at us slant with his pinhole eyes, not seeing the house or the roaches around him.

When it came out of the oven, the mac n' cheese smelled more delicious and disgusting than anything I'd ever cooked, the milky-white fats enameling the butter-yellow pasta and tender fibers of deep red bacon. I gave it a few minutes to cool and loaded it in the car. My mother sat outside on a small boulder, an island in the weed-choked yard under the sun. It was less harsh than the inside, with the space rapidly shrinking, sucked up by the fractalizing roaches. She didn't look at me, only into the glassy dark windows of the house.

We knew when Grandpa died the house would probably go, too. Grandma's kitchen would be lost under that rubble. As I turned to go inside, I imagined for a split second that when we left, the roaches would emerge, coating the kitchen, the entire house, interlocking their brittle hooked legs into some ultimate, shifting crust of mold that would consume what was left of the desiccated corpse of a house, leaving only those things not even roaches would eat.

I drove Dad, Grandpa, and Mom to the reunion. Dad still had that photoshoot smile. Grandpa's eyes resembled dried up wells. I didn't look at Mom.

The reunion was miles away in a strip mall, a scar plastered in concrete, strip malls and supermarkets rising like beige scabs, fractured by rusted road barriers and dry trenches that the culverts drained into, lined with sun-bleached litter laying among the straw like weeds. The family was reuniting on the anniversary of Grandma's death, but it just felt like any other day, outside of that house. It seemed that over the next rise we might just turn down another street and reach that house again, the real one, Grandma's house, with the family milling about the dining table and Grandma puttering around the kitchen with Mom on her heels.

The mac n' cheese was a hit at the potluck. My cousins, uncles, aunts, familiar as strangers, told my mother and I how good it tasted, asking what the secret was. My mother was silent; I told them it was all the roaches baked inside.

Love

Marina Schiering

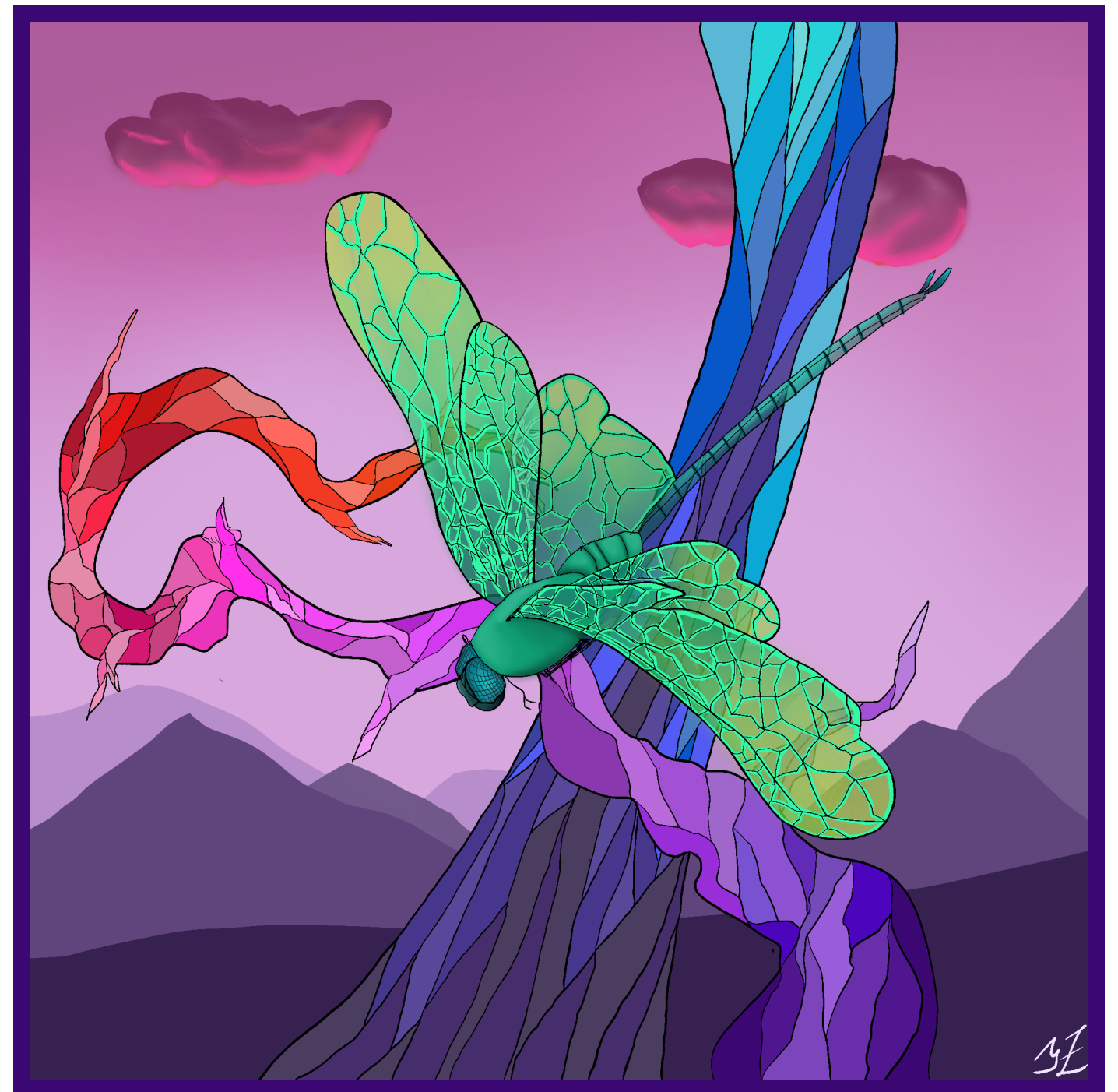
They call love addictive
They call plenty by the wrong name
They call me vindictive
In search of the word: disdain

They call love addictive
As if one in the same
They're grasping for explanation
Of a notion widely proclaimed

Truth being, Love is strong, but often finds blame
Truth being, Love is encrypted
The translation: insane

Love calls them addictive
Love say it them who is untamed
Love can't help but be predictive
Weaponizing heartbreak

Love calls, but I've rejected
Love won't find me claimed
Love's power seems unrestricted
Thus, I abstain.



Glass & Colors

Yana Z.

In the Sand

Krystal Flint



Revolution Princess

Isabela

Part One: The Princess

[Verse 1]
If you bleed enough
Then maybe they'll notice
And maybe they will put you on a throne where you belong

If you scream enough
Then maybe they'll hear you
Or maybe they will laugh and tell you that you're wrong

[Verse 2]
If you kill enough
Then maybe they'll catch you
And maybe they will lock you up in jail to rot

If you lie enough
Then maybe they'll love you
And stop trying to turn you into something you are not

[Chorus]
She's the last enlightened mind
She's the last snowflake left
In the sunshine
She will bring about the end
And we'll never be happy again

[Verse 3]
And if you put yourself up on a pedestal
Then maybe they'll send you down to hell and let you burn
If you put yourself up on a pedestal
Then maybe they'll worship you like you deserve

You can understand the message
No matter how torn my dress is
Change is coming like an arrow
Break your bones and drink the marrow
Wanna set a precedent and sing about the government and
Let everybody know

[Chorus]
She's the last enlightened mind
She's the last snowflake left
In the sunshine
She will bring about the end
And we'll never be happy again

Part Two: The Revolution

[Verse 1]
A toast to the kids of the post-war dream
Everybody bow down to your new queen

[Chorus 1]
Watch the city fall
Put your hands against the wall
Burn the banks and palaces
Crush their jewels and chalices

Let the fire rain
Take a bullet to the brain
A requiem for the monarchy
A funeral of ecstasy

[Solo]

[Chorus 2]
Watch the city fall
Put your hands against the wall
Burn the banks and palaces
Crush their jewels and chalices

Let the princess reign
Take a bullet to the brain
A requiem for the monarchy
A funeral of ecstasy

Part Three: The Coronation

[Chorus]
(Revolution's calling) It's the age of hysteria
(Revolution's calling) It's the age of anarchy
(Revolution's calling) Everybody wants to be a hero
At the start of the new regime

[Verse 1]
Where do we go from here?
As the smoke starts to clear and the people cheer?
Where do we go from here?
As we hold on to what we hold most dear?

[Chorus]
(Revolution's calling) It's the age of hysteria
(Revolution's calling) It's the age of anarchy
(Revolution's calling) Everybody wants to be a hero
At the start of the new regime

[Verse 2]
What are they all saying?
What is wrong with me?
I could be a goddess
Drowning in hypocrisy

[Chorus]
(Revolution's calling) It's the age of hysteria
(Revolution's calling) It's the age of anarchy
(Revolution's calling) Everybody wants to be a hero
At the start of the new regime

[Bridge]
[Verse 3]
Is this what you really wanted?
What will you do now that you're free?
All that your past can do is haunt you
With dreams of who you used to be

Part Four: The Queen

[Verse]
As triumphant coronets sound
To announce the presence of the queen
Bloodstains on her dress
Ready to be blessed
She looks sadly at the wreckage of a dream

[Chorus]
She's the last enlightened mind
She's the last snowflake left
In the sunshine
She has brought about the end
And she'll never be happy again

[Chorus 2]
Watch the city fall
Put your hands against the wall
Burn the banks and palaces
Crush their jewels and chalices

Let the princess reign
Take a bullet to the brain
A requiem for the princess
A rebel under duress
Another damsel in distress
Look at her, her life's a mess

White Room

Jeferson Pineda

White room, white room
Please keep me safe.
Humble and protect me.
Room so magical
Crisp walls and shiny floors are all I need.
White room, white room
I will not dare disobey you.
I will keep to myself and be oh so polite.
Room so dainty, soothe and guide me
Fix and correct me, a poison to calm me.
Room so hidden
Silence and protect me.
That is all someone like me could ask for.
White room, white room
Please do not ever mention it.
All the bending and breaking
Caved in walls and crumbled floors
Were all I asked for.
Room so devoid

What have you done to me?



Horn Pond
RiobePhoto



Tranquil Night
Andrew Wills

Tears for Fears

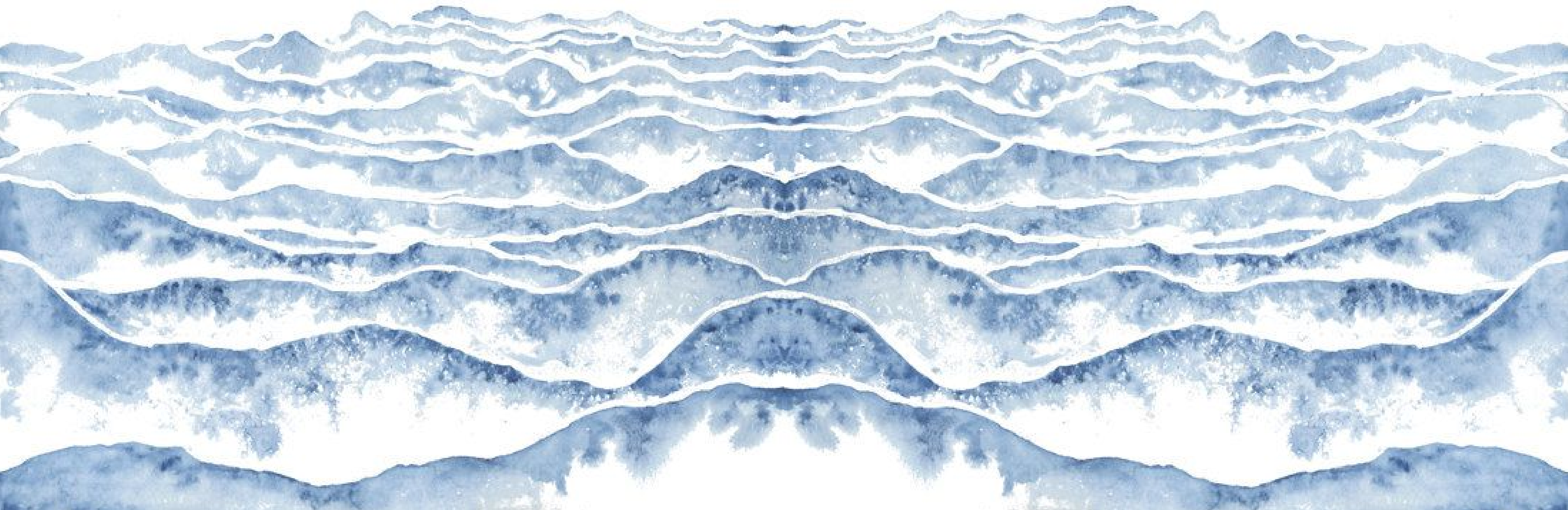
Ann Whelan

On the phone tonight I heard your voice
from then, the way I heard it when
it sustained me, salve
for abandonment fear, vibrations
under my ear, my head in your lap.
I remember Daddy and you together
holding me and the powder-blue ice pack
to my forehead, consoling
for that repeating nightmare I couldn't explain
except I was losing a game
something of consequence
and slipping on large rocks— a jetty
overtaken with breaking waves—
trying to get to you
but you were on the other side of the ocean.

A Ship's Ode

Lee M.

I was a mighty ship,
Weathered from a salty sea.
You were my captain,
Beautiful, wild, and free.
Yet as time ticked on,
Your passion began to fade.
Your fire for me dimmed;
I tried my best not to feel betrayed.
We came upon a lighthouse,
Dressed in rich, bright color.
Would you escape the tempest seas,
And take shelter in another?
He was anchored to the shore;
He was shiny and new.
I was adrift in the ocean;
I was rusted and blue.
I told myself you were mine;
The truth, I tried to refuse.
I was old and worn;
He was the one you'd choose.



The Bridge

Ness Epshteyn

I am not the biggest fan of truth or dare. Blanche (who always picks truth) has a tendency to lie; and our last dare involved Shimon pouring a cup of iced tea on my head.

Yet here we are again—me, Blanche, Shimon, and Harry—skulking about in the art room after hours, readying for one last game. *One more memory before we split for college*, Blanche had insisted. (She always was the sentimental type.)

Usually, I pick truth. And I do tell the truth, because as far as my friends are concerned, I have nothing to hide anymore. No dates, no scandals. Everybody already knows I'm queer. There is nothing juicy left; no more tea to spill. Unless you count the tea Shimon spilled. Which is why *I'm not a fan of truth or dare*.

Today, we've got a fifth person. Bond joined late in the year—very late. So late, in fact, that when the teacher introduced him to our class three months ago, my first thought was: *Is joining that late legally allowed?*

My second thought was: *Shit. Fuck. That's Bond, isn't it?*

The day he joined, Bond sat with me during lunch. I was equally as surprised by that as I wasn't.

On the one hand, he knew me. On the other hand—*No*. I remember hunching over my \$1.50 cafeteria "gourmet" mashed potatoes, stabbing them with a fork and dodging eye contact because I'd been wrong, and I didn't like that.

But if Bond wanted an apology, he didn't say. Instead, he leaned over and stole a French fry. I made a snide comment about his hair ribbon, but he said nothing.

Despite my misgivings, I ended up dragging him into my friend group. That's how we got here: 'cause I *forced* him. I don't know what possessed me to do that. Maybe I dragged Bond into my group because I still felt sorry for him. Or maybe—and this is the worst "maybe" of all—maybe I'm sitting here right now, on a stool in the art room at a table made for people much smaller than the five of us, playing a game I don't particularly like because I feel sorry for *myself*.

"Truth or dare, Emmy?" Blanche asks me. I

snap back to reality.

"Truth," I say. Everybody groans.

"Again?" gripes Shimon.

"I said what I said," I reply. My lips quirk into a half-smile.

Blanche sighs. "Shit! Here we go again."

"Well?" I prompt her.

"Shut up, I'm still thinking," she grumbles. She looks to her boyfriend, Harry, for help—but he just shrugs. My smile gets smugger.

And then, Harry says, "I've got one," and leans in to whisper it in Blanche's ear.

"Not bad," she tells Harry. Then she turns to look me in the eye and asks, "So, Em: How did you and Bond meet?" and my smile dissipates as I realize that, for the first time since we started this farce of a tradition, I might have to lie.

└ - - - -

It wasn't so long ago. Two years, maybe? Yeah. Mid-January. It was cold as balls. I'd nodded off on the (nice, heated) bus, and missed the stop where I should've switched lines. It wasn't a long trek—just two stops off—so instead of waiting in the cold, I figured I'd walk.

It was on my walk that I first encountered him, rolling two suitcases behind himself, one thin, bony hand wrapped around each handle. The backpack he wore was overfull to the point where my back hurt just looking at him.

"Excuse me," I said. His baggage was blocking the sidewalk.

He stopped rolling, and turned to look at me. His breathing, audibly ragged, was the only sign of exertion I could pick up on, as the oversized puffer jacket he was drowning in made the rest of his body language unreadable. His eyes were gray and reserved.

"Nice weather today," I commented, tugging my scarf down to talk.

"Indeed," he said, and pulled his suitcases to the side so I could go. "Are you going to the bus stop?"

I paused. "How'd you know?"

"Your bus pass is in your hand," he pointed out.

I looked down. "Oh. So it is."

"I'm going there too," he said, and started rolling his suitcases again. *Drat*.

I ended up walking in the street, in that gray

area by the sidewalk where adults like to park their cars. Every few minutes, I'd step into the middle of the road to circumvent one.

It wasn't too bad: the bus stop was closer than I thought.

I sat. He stood. We waited.

Typically, I wouldn't needle a stranger. But according to Maps, the bus wasn't due for another half hour, and I was bored. (God knows my curiosity'll be the death of me.)

I asked him where he was going with all that stuff, 'cause I didn't think it'd fit on the bus.

"Nowhere in particular," he replied. "And, it'll fit. It always does."

Always? I made a sound expressing my doubt.

In response, he laughed dryly. It was the kind of laugh that didn't sound like it should be a laugh: like the sound my middle school ex-friend made when I told her I wasn't comfortable with her unloading her *mommy issues* on me every time we hung out.

An uncomfortable silence followed.

Against my better judgment, I pried.

"Everybody's going somewhere."

"'Nowhere' can be somewhere," he said. His eyes were steely now. Cold, like mid-January.

"True," I said, if only to placate him. Still, those words set off a funny feeling in my chest: something dark and sick. *Can nowhere' be somewhere?* "I guess it can."

Then, I asked his name. He gave it to me after about two seconds, hesitantly drawing the syllable out so it sounded like a question—*"Bo-onnnd?"*—like he wasn't sure if it was his name or not.

"Cool name," I said. Then: "I've never met a girl named Bond."

"I'm not a girl, though—?" Bond's voice pitched up at the end of the sentence, like he was asking a question—or seeking confirmation of a well-established fact.

"You sound like one," I unhelpfully pointed out.

Bond didn't say anything in response to that: he just looked down, and scuffed his boot against the sidewalk.

After several minutes of dead silence, the bus arrived. Somehow, Bond managed to maneuver everything in. Driver looked pissed, though. ("Move along, little lady.")

I sat down next to Bond, because the bus was full enough. As the bus pulled out, I waved my arm, trying to get his attention. "Aren't you gonna ask my name?"

"I guess," said Bond, not sounding particularly enthused. He picked his head up from his phone, looking irritated. "You can tell me if you want. I guess."

"Emmett," I replied. Then, "So, Bond. Where are you *really* going—"

Bond jerked his head up again. "Can you not?" he snapped at me. I drew back, alarmed.

Two stops went by. Then, three. I rethought all my life choices, and decided almost all of them had been correct. I justified my nosiness—telling myself Bond stuck out enough to warrant it. *For sure*.

Finally, Bond tucked his phone away in that stupid, oversized jacket. "I'm going to the bridge," he told me, as if he hadn't told me to shut up three-plus stops ago.

"The bridge?" I asked him.

He tapped the window. I looked outside. "Ohh," I said. *That* bridge. "The one with the broken railing. The one we were on right now."

"Yeah," he said, and pressed the red *Stop* button. Then, he grabbed his baggage.

The icky feeling came back. I grabbed Bond's wrist—*Where are you going?* I meant to ask—but he shook me off.

"Don't be creepy," he hissed, in his weird, girly voice. *"I don't even know you."*

I followed him off the bus. Every now and then, Bond paused, looking over his shoulder at me. His eyes read, *You're an idiot*. But I didn't care.

The twisted, sick feeling followed me all the way—intensifying as Bond approached the gap in the railing. I jogged, catching up to him. He was staring through the gap, looking down, down, down at the churning, polluted soup we called a "river."

Fucking knew it. I grabbed the hood of his puffer jacket, and yanked him away from the edge. Bond made a funny squeaking sound, before twisting out of my grip and whirling to face me. His eyes were *furiously*.

"Were you seriously gonna jump?" I asked. My tone came out more accusatory than I intended.

"Excuse me?" Bond crossed his arms. He

looked pissed.

"You said you were going to the bridge."

"And I told you not to be creepy, yet here you are, assuming things about me," he spat. "Fuck. Off."

"I will not," I huffed. "Can you really blame me for thinking you were gonna jump? I mean"—I gestured at the gap in the railing—"look!"

Bond said nothing. Instead, he took off his backpack—and shoved it through the gap with his foot. A second later, I heard a cracking sound, followed by a splash.

The fuck?

Bond collected his suitcases, glaring at me all the while as I stood there, too dumbfounded to ask him what the hell he just tossed.

And then, he left. Not through the gap, but down the sidewalk framing the bridge.

Two days later, I glanced out the window during a red light and saw somebody who looked like Bond shoving a suitcase through the gap. He stood there for a few moments, head cocked to the side, as if listening for the splash. Then, satisfied, he grabbed the remaining suitcase and left.

Well, then.

└----

The second time I saw Bond, it was summer. My folks stopped at a convenience store so my brother and I could pick up snacks on our way back from the beach. I hid behind the chocolate bars while my brother tried to convince the cashier he was old enough to buy cigarettes (stupid).

I was contemplating getting a Milky Way bar when somebody tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around, and saw a girl standing there in men's clothing. Her pants were tight in some places, and loose in others. The button-down was not made for somebody with a bust.

"Hey," she (he?) said, and I recognized Bond's voice.

"Oh," I said, suddenly feeling a little stupid. "Uh... Hey."

"Remember me?"

"You tossed it off a bridge." "It" being the backpack and the suitcase. If the pattern held, the other suitcase was gone now, too.

"So, you do remember me," said Bond. His eyes weren't steely anymore, but they weren't exactly kind, either. He crossed his arms over his chest.

So, he's one of those boys.

My brother walked over, empty-handed. He looked Bond up and down. "Who's this?"

"Bond," I said.

"Crossdresser on a budget?" he asked. There was a lilt in his voice, like it was supposed to be a joke. I looked at Bond, trying to gauge his—*his?*—reaction, but all I saw was fatigue.

It wasn't till my brother and I left the store that it occurred to me: *I could've stood up for him.* But then I remembered the kid on the bridge—and decided I was right in letting it be.

As my brother and I trudged back to the car, I could've sworn I felt eyes on the back of my neck, judging me.

But I was right, I told myself. And it didn't matter, 'cause Bond wasn't the type of person I wanted to wrap my head around. Surely, I won't meet another person 'like that' anytime soon.

└----

I was wrong, as I would learn in bits and pieces: fractured, like a gap in a railing on a bridge that should've been fixed years ago. I was *wrong*, because I did meet somebody else like that. Or, I guess I didn't meet this person, because I'd known him all my life (or her. Hard to say: □□y was elusive). "Social contagion," as they call it, wasn't it. Who in their right mind would want to live like this?

'*Crossdresser on a budget.*' I put the hairclips away, and shut the drawer. It was January again.

└----

Fast-forward to the present. I'm sitting at a table spattered with years' worth of dried paint with four other people—three of whom have their eyes on me, round and curious, like baby owls. The fourth perches on a dusty stool, eyes gray and narrow. I open my mouth, and find that I can't say a word.

Blanche cocks her head to the side, brows furrowed. Shimon's lips curl up at the corners. Harry's fingers are steepled. Bond looks tense.

"I forgot," I tell them—and let out an awkward *teehee*. "Sowwy."

"*Sowwy?*" Shimon looks aghast.

Bond rolls his eyes, and I wonder what I did wrong this time. *Am I wrong, to not want to talk about you? about the bus stop?*

Blanche looks up at Bond. "Mind filling in the

gaps? Since Emmy has"—she glances at me, eyebrows raised—"apparently 'forgotten' how you met."

Shimon *tsk, tsks* at me. I go red.

"Sure," Bond says. He hops off the stool and stretches. He looks good like this. Confident, now. Self-assured. "Emmy and I met on the bridge." The bridge. Not the bus stop.

"The bridge?" asks Blanche.

"The bridge. The one with the broken railing."

"Ohh," says Shimon. He nods sagely, like he knows what Bond's talking about (though I'm pretty sure he's faking, 'cause it's not anywhere near his commute). "*That* bridge."

The three of them—Blanche, Shimon, and Harry—look up at Bond, their eyes round and curious, like baby owls. (Owls with a very short attention span.) I can already hear their unspoken question: *What were you doing up there?*

"I threw a suitcase in the river," Bond says.

"Right through the gap. Emmy watched."

"Backpack," I correct him.

Bond blinks, and gives me a quizzical look. Then, his eyes light up and he says, "*Right*. Yeah; it was the backpack."

"You never told me what was in it," I add. "Or the suitcase, for that matter."

Bond falls silent. For a moment, I wonder if I pushed too far. I wonder if I was, once again, *wrong*.

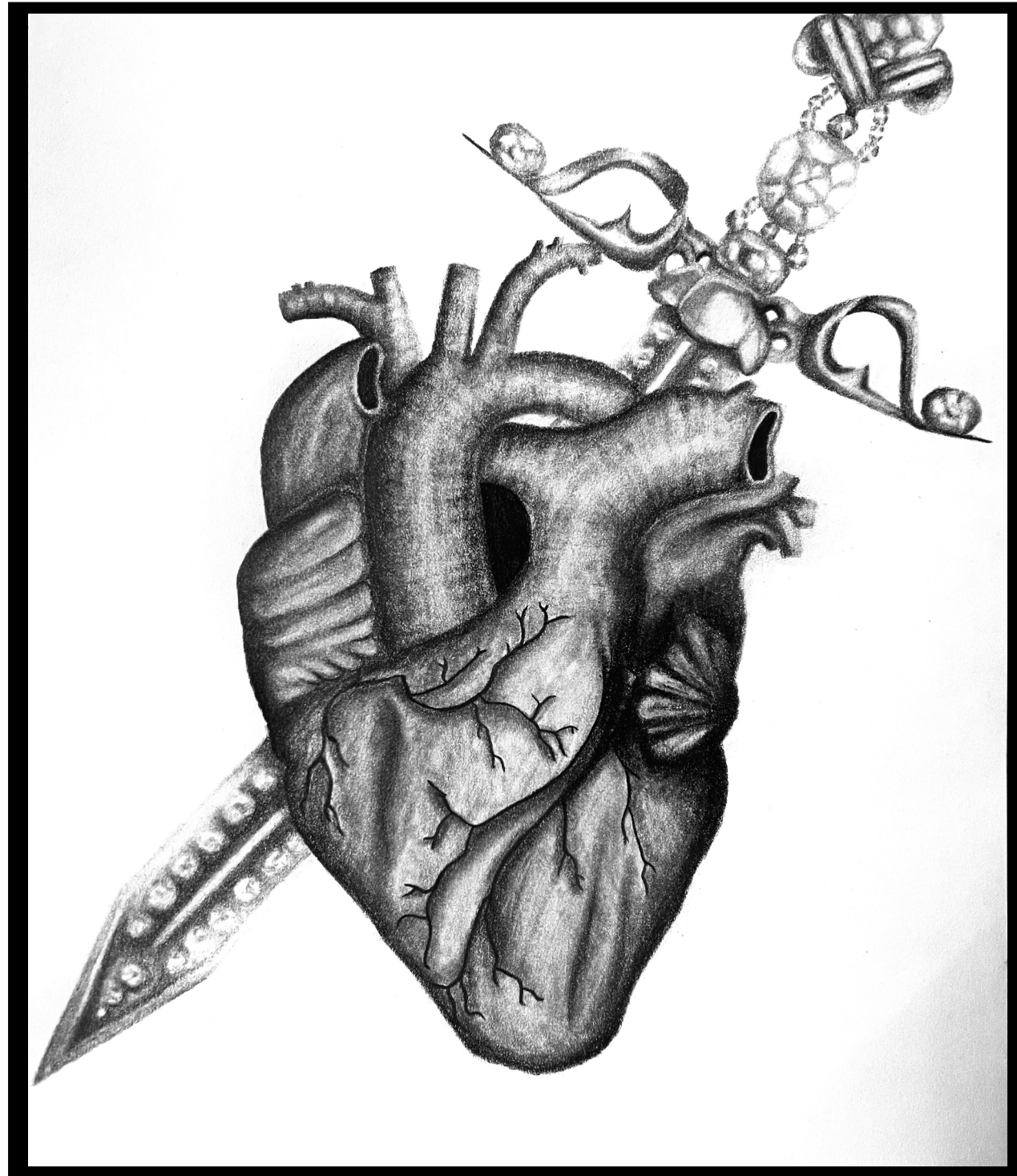
But then, Bond grins. He looks me dead in the eye, in a way that almost feels *smug*, and says: "Women's clothing. Every article I owned."

"I see," I blurt out. Maybe it was only when Bond shoved his backpack off the bridge that I saw him as he wanted to be seen—that I truly *met* him. "You were following the age-old masc tradition of being a goddamn idiot."

Bond snickers—and I realize that, discounting the bus stop, this is the first time I've heard him laugh.



Bridge Yang Cheng



Wound
Zara G.A.

Questions from the Body

Elsa Gnann

When have you last said
you loved me?

Discarded memories of childhood.
Still young.
Still naïve.
With perfect hair and horrid teeth.

What have you said since then?
Worthless.
Failure.
Useless.
Ugly.
Idiot.

But, never once an uttered “I love you.”

A Nobody.

How was it you last said
you loved me?

Things have changed in recent years.
Now older.
Now bitter.
With horrid hair and perfect teeth.

What can you say to me now?
Hormonal.
Trying.
Changing.
Growing.
Abusing.

I didn’t know your passion could hurt.

More Beast than Person.

Can you one day learn to say
you love me?

Smile in the mirror with me smiling back.
Soon wiser.
Soon kinder.
With our perfect hair and our perfect teeth.

Can we practice for the future?
“I love you.”
“I love you.”
“I love you.”
“I love you.”
“I love us.”

Article 1:

Zombies Be Damned, Survivors in Worcester Are Making New Lives for Themselves

by Aris Valere

WORCESTER, MA. — When terror struck our country last month, there was no coming back. Our precious Earth had become engulfed in a dismal abyss, circling the drain and doomed to await the final blow to civilization. Fear, anger, and sadness plagued the land worse than the zombies roaming it. That sudden change, known as Invasion Z, caused massive devastation and left the country in shambles. Panic overcame nearly every city, and hope became a waste of time. It has been a month, and we're interested to see if anything has changed. In search of firsthand experience with the new world order, we traveled around the city of Worcester, MA, stopping and chatting with anybody who didn't have blood dripping from their teeth.

Frank, age 35, is a local of Worcester we met on our trip down Park Ave. When asked about his experience with the zombie apocalypse he replied, "I'm doing great!" As Frank began to elaborate, a blood-dripping corpse animated from behind the corner. Frank sprang into action and slashed it with his sword. Without missing a beat, he took a sip from his canteen and continued, "It's like this. Shit is easy now. It's all so clear. I ain't got no job to sweat. No bills, no big answers I need to find, no nothing. All I need is this." He held his blade in the air as he cleaned the fresh blood off with his cloth. "And the only place I gotta be is right here, and I just gotta survive." Frank offered us a perspective that forced us to think a little differently. The chaos of his old life had been replaced with mayhem, but as Frank noted, it came with increased clarity and direction. It appears in today's world, we can no longer afford to ignore the present moment. A price we must pay, but in turn we get to keep our heads.

While people settle into the new way of things, many like Frank are taking it in stride. As we continued traveling through the city, we ran into Stephanie, a delightful middle-aged woman who was setting fire to a heap of undead when we asked

her to sit down with us. "Well, I've never been a person who's good at routines," she started as she gazed at the elemental power of the fire. "Every day in the old world was different, and I couldn't find a way to keep it all together. Now I know each day what I have to do." She informed us how she has managed to establish a helpful morning routine. Once the morning terror dissipates, Stephanie makes her bed and conducts a stretch routine. Next, she checks the perimeter of her little shop. She built an elegant fence system from chicken wire and 2 x 4s, and even put together a few makeshift booby traps. Stephanie remarked how she has always wanted to try her hand at construction but never had the time or confidence. "It kind of forced me into it, but I'll say, I've loved the opportunity!" she remarked as she drew her ski mask over her face to cover the smell of burning flesh. "They all come here to drop the bodies off. They count on me to get it done. They know I'll do it, so I check for deliveries first in the morning, and then a few times throughout the day. It's good to feel needed, and good to know I can be depended on. Wouldn't want those things coming back now, right?" Stephanie laughed as she thanked us for stopping by. We learned from Stephanie that even in the darkest circumstances, there exist opportunities. We could all give up, or we could take a page out of Stephanie's book and get on with whatever the task at hand is.

We continued down the road and found that it opened up to a scenic park. Later we learned that the former "Elm Park" was now referred to by the locals as "Salvation Park." There we met quite the interesting character. A man of no fear, so to speak. He carried no sword and no gun but told us he was armed with the power of self. Salvation Park swarmed with zombies, and we were fearful to continue. Nearby, Jon intuitively felt this and came up to us. "These beings seek fear. Why is it they don't attack each other? Fear. Without fear, we are safe." Amazed by this discovery, we let Jon know why we were there and asked him to give us the full

scoop. "In my previous life, I was an accountant. Crunching numbers all day and scared of everything and everyone. I couldn't even look people in the eye. Now I know, if I am able to place my fear aside, I will be at peace with myself and the world around me." A little too heavy for the zombie apocalypse we thought, but Jon continued regardless. "It's not that I am without fear, it's that I've managed to control it. It no longer dictates my actions. I am able to see it for what it is, but not let it rule over me." He told us how he's shared his newfound knowledge with the people he's come across. "Some take to it, and some refuse to see the fear. It is not easy, but it frees oneself from any bonds within or without." While Jon continued, more zombies began making their way into the park. The sense of urgency struck this reporter to his core, but Jon simply took a deep breath and

calmly began packing up for the day. He kindly let us know he started teaching a tai chi class at sunrise and welcomed us to join. "We have a few spots open as Joey and a couple others..." Jon paused for a moment. "Well, you know, succumbed to fear and become someone's dinner." Our photographer George and I both immediately turned to the incoming horde. We then thanked Jon for his time and bolted out of the park.

Even with zombies still roaming the streets of Worcester, resilience and empowerment are taking the city to new heights. Amid panic, chaos, and excessive adversity the people here have managed to rally. Hope is beginning to shed its light again as the people of Worcester, MA face their problems head on.



Rise Up Brandi Perry

Infested

Jameson Gillihan

The whole place is infested.

He sees it in the walls, in the ruts of the windows, on the ceiling: squirming black-brown clumps of cockroach dripping from the seams. He sees it every day, unlocking the door, kneeling his way past the courtyard cat always following him. He closes the door behind him and flips the lightswitch. Huddled inside the lights, insect silhouettes dapple the dirty carpet like sunlight through leaves. Lex locks the door. He thinks nothing of it. He settles in for the evening, has dinner early, imagines smashing one of the insects crawling up the bathroom sink as he brushes his teeth that night. Two come to join it. Lex sets his palms on the edge of the sink, looking at them.

Lex lives alone, so he's always the first one up. He gets to turn on the lights, again, and watch the shadows scurry away (again). He gets to open the silverware drawers and see the bugs run across the spoons and the forks and the knives. He gets to reach inside the cabinets, pick out cereal boxes covered in droppings and grime, pour out a bowl and rinse off a spoon and eat breakfast underneath the roach lights. He's stopped trying to kill them. Why bother? He pulls on a jacket and goes to work. Who cares.

Lex doesn't get to care. *It's an apartment*, he thinks. He's going to be out of here in a year, right? One year. So it doesn't matter if he doesn't bother. Who cares. And anyway, he thinks, *he* can't solve a complex-wide roach infestation. Right? He's got neighbors, the roaches have neighbors. He'll put poison out, some'll die, some will retreat up a floor and down a floor and in vents from one side of the building to the other, and they'll fuck until they're overflowing again, spilling out of the lights and the cabinets and the silverware drawer. And then, in a year, Lex will move. Who cares?

So he doesn't do anything. Gets home, turns the lights on, hangs his coat up, watches the roaches shuffle inside the ceiling lights. He has dinner early and brushes his teeth and goes to bed.

Over the City

Lexi Ramos Miranda





Bookbot Yang Cheng

The Box

Angel Marie Russell

Hope was torn
From a child
With a too big heart
And wide eyes of wonder.
She took the pain fed her
Kept in a Box inside.
So deep, like poison,
It clawed her mind.

Made a storm of beauty,
A racing tide,
Lungs filled,
Crashing down waves
Of fury,
She held a storm
In her bones.
Its might reckless
And wild.

She held the tide back,
Despite the sorrow
Treading ever near,
Whispering always to her ear.
She gasped and clawed
Like the poison that ate her.
She raged and contained
A shadowed silent scream.

She grew bigger,
Like the box she contained.
'Til the keeper left
And she abducted the key.
With courage opened,
The rusted shell popped,
Cracking and aching,
Released all she was not.

A flutter, a whisp,
A ray through cloud,
At the bottom
An ember, a too faint glow,
She cradled the mystery
Of her long lost hope.
And wept.

LUMIERE

Boring Legal Stuff

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Frequently Asked Questions

Who can submit work to lumière?

Anyone, and that includes you! It's our practice to ensure that at least 70% of the work in the magazine has been created by students, but we also find it important to publish work from faculty, staff, members of the community, and anyone else who hears our call.

How are submissions reviewed?

First, our submissions manager removes all identifying information from the submission. The editorial team looks for work that is original in subject and style, showing the world something new, or letting us see something familiar in a new light. We highly value attention to craft, no matter what the medium.

How can I submit my work?

Go to lumierelitmag.com and click "Submit Your Work!" at the top of the page, or email us at litmag@massbay.edu.

When is the deadline for submissions?

We accept submissions all year round and publish annually at the end of the spring semester. The deadline for each

issue will be announced every spring. Submissions received after the deadline will be reserved for the following issue.

Can I publish my work anonymously?

Yes! When filling out the website submission form you can choose to have your piece published anonymously or with a pseudonym.

Is AI work accepted?

Per our submission guidelines, all submissions must be the creation of the applicant; as such, this does not include AI-created works.

What types of work are accepted?

You can submit your poetry, short fiction, prose, short plays, lyrics, artwork, photographs, and other creative work.

Is fan art accepted?

Our goal is to accept works that are unique and unfamiliar to the audience. While fan art is considered a type of art, it is not exclusive to the artist and is therefore not accepted. Also, without the appropriate licenses and permissions, fan art may be considered an infringement of the copyholder's right to publish that work.

Does the magazine staff edit submissions?

We reserve the right to crop and enhance art submissions, to copyedit, and to make minor changes to maintain consistency across the magazine, but we highly value the integrity of the work we receive and will not make substantive changes. We promise not to change your ending.

Who creates the magazine?

The magazine is primarily developed by the hard-working students of EN202: Advanced Writing; however, any student at MassBay is welcome and encouraged to join the lumière staff. If interested, please contact English Professor Matt Walsh at mwalsh@massbay.edu.

How can I view the magazine?

Printed copies are available on the Wellesley Hills and Framingham campuses in the library and Academic Achievement Center. You can also find this issue and all previous editions online at lumierelitmag.com.



Lunar Eclipse 2022

RiobePhoto



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website: lumierelitimag.com