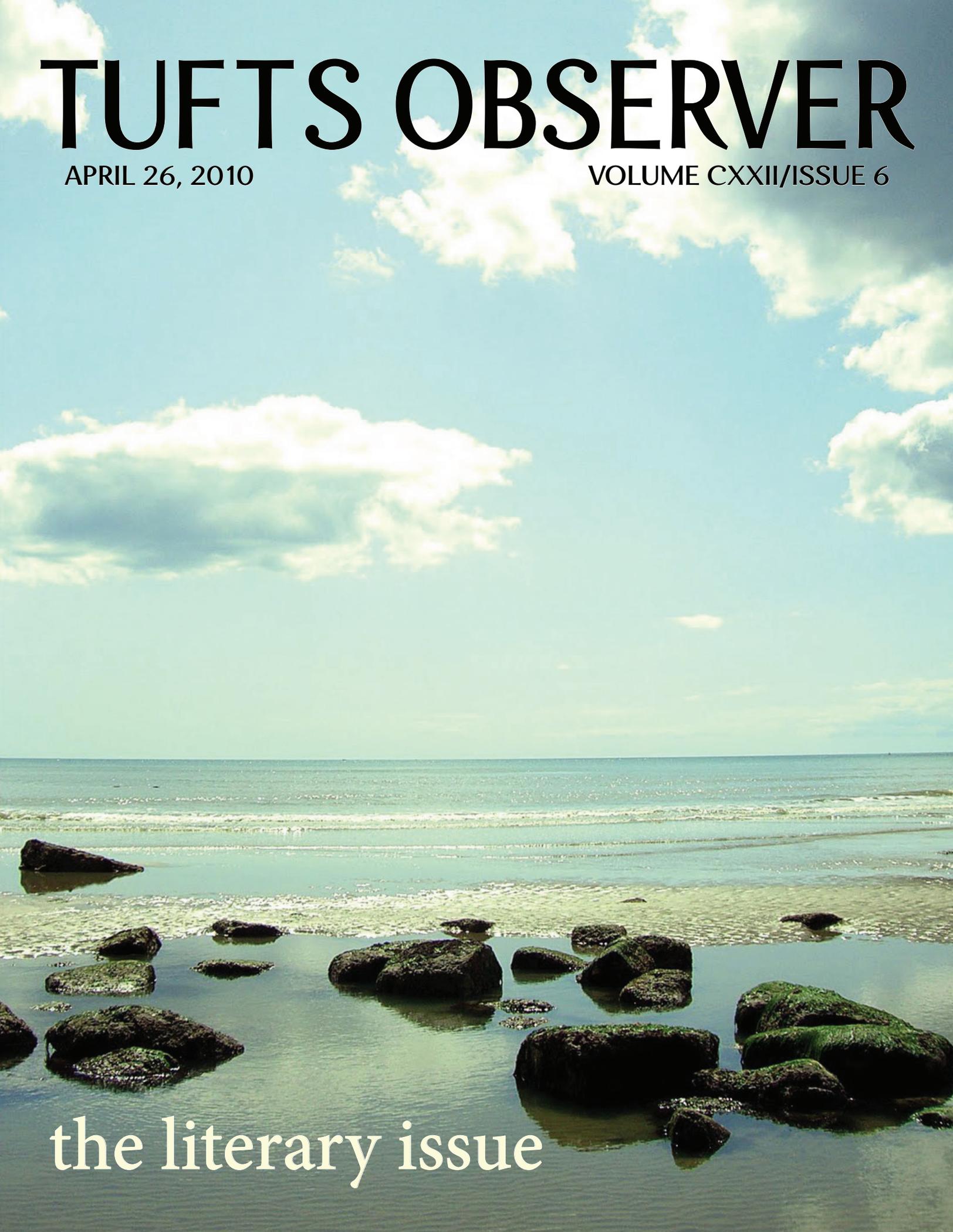


TUFTS OBSERVER

APRIL 26, 2010

VOLUME CXXII/ISSUE 6



the literary issue

letter from the editors

Dear Tufts,

Here, in your hands, you hold this year's Literary Issue of the *Observer*. "Sure," you say, "that's cool, I guess." What you may not realize, however, is that this is not simply paper and ink, but also the blood, sweat, and wonderful creative juices of your fellow Jumbos. No but seriously guys we pulped the paper using those ingredients.

Technical details aside, we have brought together on these pulpy pages a strong and diverse group of poems and fiction pieces. We wanted these stories to touch on a wide array of realities and emotions, and to display innovative exploration of form and content. In short, we hope this collection will speak to our entire community in one way or another, so please enjoy! In most issues, we can only squeeze a couple of Poetry & Prose pages between the other sections, so we are incredibly excited to bring you twenty-four whole pages of pure creativity, this time around. And as always, we suggest you take a moment to check out the beautiful photographs and drawings that our artists have provided to accompany the text. They make the magazine as handsome as it is!

And to conclude, we would simply like to extend an enormous thank you to all those involved in the process of putting this issue together, especially the writers themselves.

Good day to you,
Natalie & Meg
Poetry and Prose Editors



EDITORS

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Daniel Rosen

MANAGING EDITORS

Zachary Foulk

Eliza Mills

SECTION EDITORS

Katie Boland

Meg Boland

Katie Christiansen

Zachary Laub

Marysa Lin

Cara Paley

Molly Rubin

Natalie Selzer

Ariana Siegel

Seth Stein

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

David Schwartz

ART DIRECTOR

Alyce Currier

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

Elizabeth Herman

LEAD ARTIST

Ruth Tam

LAYOUT DIRECTOR

Daniel Weinstein

COPY EDITOR

Kristen Barone

ASSISTANT COPY EDITORS

Danielle Carbonneau

Kate Griffiths

Carly Machlis

Daniela Ramirez

Isobel Redelmeier

Elisha Sum

Brian Wolf

Zara Fishkin

BUSINESS & WEB

WEB DIRECTOR

Will Ramsdell

ASSISTANT WEB DIRECTOR

Charlotte Burger

WEBMASTER

Jonathan Evans

BUSINESS MANAGER

Andrew McGowan

STAFF

Michael Bendetson

Chelsea Brown

Nicole Abi-Esber

Katherine Sawyer

Lauren Herstik

Elaine Kim

Rebecca Plante

Suzi Grossman

CONTENTS

April 26, 2010

Tufts Observer,

Since 1895

Volume CXXII, Issue 6

Tufts' Student Magazine

www.tuftsobserver.org

2 FICTION
Penguin on Smith Street, *by Gideon Jacobs*

4 FICTION
Home High, *by Alex Gomez*

6 POEM
Chatter, *by Alex Blum*

7 POEM
Seventeen, *by Katie Boland*

8 FICTION
Lifeguard, *by Micah Hauser*

9 POEM
Directions, *by Eva Parish*

10 FICTION
Ace, *by Shir Livne*

15 POEM
Christmas With Kyle, *by Philip Dear*

16 FICTION
Out?, *by Ariana Siegel*

17 FICTION
Animals, *by Aaron Cantu*

18 FICTION
Car Wreck, *by Amy Connors*

19 POEM
Common Grave, *by Caitlin Corvini*

20 FICTION
Satellite, *by David Schwarz*

23 POEM
Pablo Neruda, *by Matt Maraynes*

24 POEM
Visitation, *by Melis Aker*

CONTRIBUTORS

Melis Aker

Alex Blum

Aaron Cantu

Amy Connors

Caitlin Corvini

Philip Dear

Nicholas Dynan

Alex Gomez

Gideon Jacobs

Asher Leviton

Laura Liddell

Matt Maraynes

Avery Matera

Eva Parish

Brian Yen

Correction

In the April 19th edition of the *Tufts Observer*, Rhianna Jones was incorrectly labeled as the author of the article "Picnic Perfect." Chelsea Brown is in fact the author.

Since
1895



A Penguin on Smith Street

by Gideon Jacobs

Peter Montgomery came home to find that his mother had turned into a penguin. He knew it was her from the moment he walked in the door, for she still wore his mother's red-rimmed glasses with the rhinestone right between the frames. And unlike most of the penguins Pete had seen in *National Geographic*, this penguin wasn't naked; she had on his mother's favorite sundress and his mother's favorite apron. Though she now waddled, she still moved with the same grace every boy in the neighborhood associated with Ms. Montgomery, the most beautiful woman on Smith Street. And when Peter looked down at her feet, he even saw three pudgy black and pink toes poking out from holes in her running sneakers.



The evidence was undeniable: the penguin standing in the kitchen was, most certainly, Peter Montgomery's mother.

Pete was pleased that she hadn't turned into a scary penguin: the kinds that have sharp beaks and make strange noises with their throats. His mother was big and furry, like the stuffed animal he'd asked her to buy him on a trip to FAO Schwartz. A yellow stripe ran down her belly and black, silky fur stretched across her shoulders. Her head swiveled like a camera on a tripod. Her little black eyes followed Pete's slightest movements.

Pete had received his report card that day: exceptional marks in spelling, handwriting, and grammar. He wanted to show his mother, but he couldn't get her to look at the paper. He pointed to it proudly, saying, "Look mom! Look how well I did this term!" But every time he thought she was about to read it, his mother's penguin head would swivel left or swivel right. Her penguin eyes would dart up or dart down. Her penguin feet would march here or march there. She was too distracted by the cupboard above, filled with cookies, candies, and other delicious snacks, to focus on Peter's report card.

But Peter was never one to give up easily. He scratched his head and rubbed his chin until suddenly, an idea crept into his head. He sneakily grabbed a box of chocolate chips and began placing them in a line on the floor. He made a trail that led out of the kitchen, through the hallway, into the dining room, up a chair and onto the table, until, finally, the last piece sat atop his report card. Surely, if there was a delicious chocolate chip sitting on the paper, his mother would not be able to resist looking at his grades.

Pete returned to the kitchen and, as expected, his mother took the bait. She voraciously followed the trail, gobbling up each chocolate chip in her long, black beak before moving to the next. She made her way out of the kitchen, through the hallway, into the dining room, up a chair and onto the table, until, finally, she reached the last piece of chocolate that sat atop Peter's report card. She gobbled up the chip, her little penguin tongue guiding the morsel down her throat, and then stood on the table, staring quizzically at the paper before her. She tilted her round, penguin head left and right, as if examining his grades from different angles. Her eyes shot up to Pete, back down at the paper, and then back up to Pete. And then, with a sudden bob of her neck, she snatched the paper off the table with her beak and gnashed it with her jaw. She ripped the report card into unrecognizable shreds and gobbled it down with the rest of the chocolates.

Peter said, "No! Bad penguin," hoping to teach his mother a lesson. But there was no saving his report card, which was now making its way down his mother's penguin throat, right into her penguin belly.

Frustrated, Peter climbed the stairs to his room, his mother trailing behind him. He figured that he'd do his chores so that when his mother returned to her normal self, she'd have something to be happy about even though he had no report card to show her.

He began to make his bed, carefully straightening his sheets to get all the folds out. He threw his comforter over the mattress and let it fall slowly into place. He gave each of his stuffed animals a kiss



and rested them against his headboard. But when he turned around to grab his pillows off the floor, he found no white fluffy pillows. It was an unimaginable scene—there were feathers everywhere! His mother had a pillow in her beak and was thrashing about, tearing the pillowcase and sending feathers flying all over the room.

“STOP IT!” Peter yelled.

Startled by her son’s scream, Peter’s mother jumped onto his bed, knocking his stuffed animals to the floor and wrinkling his sheets. The headboard nudged his dresser, and his lamp fell to the floor, shattering. The clock by Peter’s window fell off the ledge and hit Peter’s radio, which then fell on the bookshelf and knocked hundreds of comic books off his desk. Pens and pencils spilled onto the floor that was already covered in countless small, white goose down feathers; casualties of his mother’s aforementioned pillow eating.

Peter looked at his mother sternly, wagging his finger in her face. “That was very naughty!” Her penguin eyes followed his finger left and right, but she didn’t seem to understand that she was being scolded for being a bad penguin.

Frustrated, Peter left his room and walked into the backyard, his mother trailing behind him once again. He figured that he’d plant some vegetables so that when his mother returned to her normal self, she’d have something to be happy about



now that he had no report card to show her and she found a big mess in his room.

He knew that she absolutely loved cucumbers. So Peter grabbed a shovel and planted a little row of cucumber seeds. He dug little nooks in the soil, dropped the seeds in place and covered them up. He patted down the dirt and placed a pebble to mark where each plant would grow. Now, all he needed was to give them a little water so they could start growing into big, juicy full-grown cucumbers. He ran into the kitchen, filled a glass in the sink and ran back into the yard.

But when he reached his newly planted cucumber seeds he saw that there was dirt scattered all over the garden. The pebbles were gone and only giant holes were left in their place. He dug into the soil, searching for his seeds, only to find nothing but weeds and roots. Where had his seeds gone? He looked up at his mother and saw little bits of dirt smeared across the sides of her beak. She looked back at him, chewing noisily.

He asked her, “Did you eat the cucumber seeds?”

She nodded her penguin head up and down and gulped down the last of them. Pete threw the shovel down in a huff and walked back into the house.



With no report card, a messy room and a ruined garden, Pete was truly fed up. He resolved to run away from home. It was clearly a better alternative to living with a messy penguin for a mother. He packed a bag full of clothes, books, and cucumber seeds, ready for his journey.

His penguin mother watched him gather his things without making a sound, following him around from room to room as he grabbed this and that. On his way out the door, Peter left a note for his mother, in case she ever did return to her normal self. It read:

Dear Mother,

Your unfortunate situation has left me no choice but to run away. It’s not your fault. It’s the penguin’s. I miss you. I love you.

-Peter

Peter folded the note and left it on the kitchen counter. As he walked toward the front door he could hear the sound of his mother’s beak gnashing paper. And with that, he left forever. ☺



by Alex Gomez

It's a Wednesday I think, and I'm going home high. It just passed 10:15 in the morning, my alarm reminds me—been up since I heard kitchen noises at 9:46. (I didn't forget about the alarm—I knew it'd go off, marking forty-five sweet minutes left in the breakfast hour before James—I call him "Camper"—picks me up. Still blazed from last-night antics, he and I plan to shop uptown a bit, just for a while. Maybe I'll buy some flannel or a grinder; Camper doesn't know really what he wants, but I need to buy a special edition record for Nina. Otherwise...bad. So since I'm going home, packing happens, panic happens, I shave.

Camper is waiting downstairs. "It's snowing!" he texts me.

So I see. We tie our scarves tight and cross a few streets, the air's so fresh. Great morning to leave London. Let the confusion of the clouds figure itself out for a few weeks 'til I come back in the New Year.

But Camper leaves on Sunday and he's NOT coming back. So we hop on the Tube and shoot uptown. I watch people. We're talking about the class system of humanity. Fucked up.

"What about Rocket Vintage?"

"We can go that way. Okay."

"Can we check out these flannel jackets?" Camper's found a £5 one that seems great. I check the time. I look at a sweatshirt once owned by some named "Skeeds."

"Should we keep going?"

"Yeah, we could go faster. You're not buying that cheap one?"

Guess not. Back on the street again. A million crappy t-shirts in market stalls; Rastafarian tents blast us with marijuana imagery. Really, really not interested, Bob. Camper helps me look for this record, but no shops have it.

"It's okay, man. It's not like I didn't try."

"Why does this t-shirt say *Do Not Wash in Warm Water. Do Not Tumble Dry?*" Camper asks me across the stall.

"Not worth it, dude. But I'm buyin' this one. See? It's got some *Star Trek* glam rocker on it."

We buy a banana fritter. (Best thing.) I check the time and we give up. My train's at "14 o'clock", I tell our friend John, who proposed a late brunch, "and I really gotta jet." Almost worried, I give Camper one last hug.

"Kick Keats in the head for me," I tell him as he grooves up to his flat to start a paper.

I eat peanut butter on a carrot. Many hundreds, or it feels like that, of steps later, my big-ass suitcase and myself are out in the half-assed snow. I am vaguely worried about time, but hey, the sign says sixteen minutes to St. Pancras, and here's the bus. Awesome.

I am sorting money in a public transportation vehicle—it must be done before I change the currency—and I am so uncomfortable, with leafy Euros and pound notes spread across my lap. What power is in this paper? There is no power in it! But there is power *on* it. Smearred all over it. People smell it with their many greedy eyes.

Holborn, then Russel. Tavistock Square. Euston. One more stop. It's four minutes to two and I have 'til 2:04. And then we are stopped. This vehicle is rumbling, but stationary. I can't stand so still. I stand up. People around me know I am late, they know my story. It is 1:59.



BRIAN YEN



Heaving hot breath through my lungs, a growl of confusion and anger pours out. I am out of breath, not sure whether I should affix my energies on surviving or consoling my pathetic self. Lost. If only I wasn't going home high.

"Are you alright?"

"Huh."

An angel named "A. Neal" helps me, slides cards and tickets effortlessly through windows and machines. She soothes me. The train's gone. But you're on the three o'clock. Smiles. The tensions whose grating screeches I hadn't even had time to hear fade to happy clarity. Smiles. One-hundred-eighty degrees behind me there is a currency exchange, coffee, phone credit. I utilize all three. I am OK. I text Nina and tell her *I am OK*. I can't bring the coffee I've bought into the waiting area. It was boring anyways; no kick.

"Take your coat off please."

"Take your hood off please."

"Oh—my change." The short woman with no English waves me off and I walk through the metal detector. And I grab my big-ass bag and my big-ass coat and I head towards the passport control booth.

Oh. The Passport Control Booth. Oh. I am about to vomit, suddenly.

Is the room spinning? With my bag and my coat and heat and my heavy head, my momentum could be spinning the room. One person, two—now five people are around me as I find myself sitting down. Hunched over; surrounded.

"Sir?"

"I am about to miss my second train," I say to one of the faces. "Can I just tell you my whole story?" I see another smile; it comes from behind concern and strict rules, though.

"So I missed my two o'clock train. But they were nice enough to put me on the

next one free of charge,"—I am thinking about Nina. How worried she'll be. "And now I've just realized I left my passport back at my flat."

We are being silent. This second is for silence; I am a failure. Too much, even, for the savviest of train station staffers in London. But just now a neuron fires: *NO*, nobody can bring it to me. I must go quickly

CHATTER

Alex Blum

It exhausts me to think
I can't stop thinking.

Inane things passing
through me; half-heard whispers:

a grey sky out the
window snow coming
soon a tough
winter ice cream

Broken radio chatter.
Chemical notes that make ants dance.

I'm losing myself to chatter.

home and get it myself. Can I leave my bag here. *NO*. Can I first get the ticket changed. *YES*. There are storage lockers. *OK*. I get a wink and a smile from A. Neal as I walk out and feel somehow positive despite all this. I am able to smile, too, and before too long I am running. I will be running for a few hours now, I think. Thank God for that goddamn elliptical machine.

Underground stations are a godless maze of human endeavor. As I realize this, I am unable to digest the magnitude of

it—I don't have time. Northern Line—the one *BLACK* line on the map—but going north. North? Yes. Transfer. With the image of the beautiful salt-and-pepper curls that had jangled on a woman sitting opposite me bouncing in my mind, I head to the platform that's next. But which? Ok, South. Yes? Northern...but not the Eastern Branch, you want the one that goes through—

"Doesn't say, does it?" A man ten years older than me and far better dressed stands at my side and he is reading the same map, the same set of symbols. Equally mystified.

"You're as confused as I am?"

"I think it's this way," he says. We are together, walking, together humming "Charing Cross...Charing Cross..." We will find it. This man is strong.

I am leaning into the fuzzy upholstery of the seat on the train and cool, annoying sweat slides across my back. I am feeling positive again after the youngish black man in front of me suddenly rises to his feet, offering the elderly bird standing on brittle legs his seat. Oh, humans. Oh, angels.

And now I'm here again. Oh, well.

"I love you Southbank," I say aloud. "Wasn't ready to leave you yet anyway." I realize I never said goodbye. I am taking pride in Lambeth. But not in my stupidity. Never go home high, I guess.

Men at the door, metal shutters. Oh no, was there a fire alarm? Am I barred from my building? *Shit*.

"Just a test."

"Cuz it's a Wednesday, isn't it?"

Chuckles, jolly. "Catches on, this one." Those men must've put the Christmas spirit in me, because I am in the kitchen with two blond girls at either side. My flames are giving me a farewell hug. I have just told them my rotten luck. I am gonna get my passport and—



AVERY MATERA



“Go go go!” says the one in the School of Midwifery. Busting through the door, throwing open the top drawer of my desk, now bare from abandonment, I open my eyes wide, ravenous for relief. THE PASSPORT. IS NOT HERE. AT ALL. It is not under the three notebooks, the textbook, the shiny folders with my drawings of clouds on them. It is not under anything.

If my passport is still in a hostel in Berlin...

No. After such great sex it's a wonder we thought of anything at all—no. I took it, put it in my bag, journeyed. In my backpack. My “rucksack,” they say; which is *where*?

I watch the gnawed-on butt of my second carrot bounce on the sidewalk. It fell a long way. Ha! I throw far when I'm angry. Because my passport was in my rucksack and THAT, ladies and gentleman of the jury, is stuffed in my suitcase. Which I have left at the train station. Which I had with me the whole time. Yep. Consider death, Alex.

Again the crossings. Again the buses that buzz around the glass circle cinema. But I am making the buses sleep on the couch tonight.

So much heat and so many fingers crossed that I almost forget: *Jubilee* is my favorite X-Men character. Jubilation Lee, rain-slicker yellow and neon pink—my train bears her name. Will I remember the good parts? I have been running for two straight hours. They say if I miss the “sixteen-fifty-five” they'll put me on the next one anyway. Will I remember the positivity?

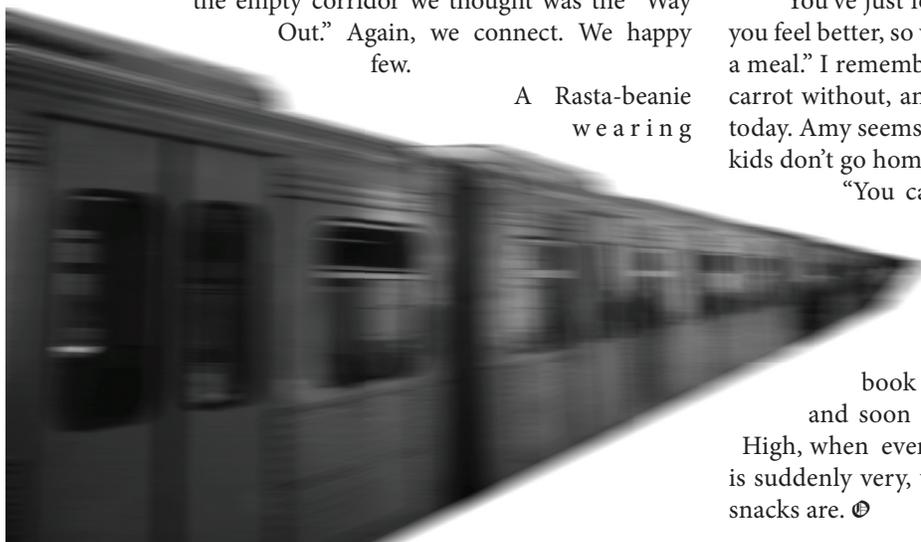
Subterranean heat drowns out thought. Sweat, moving sidewalks, hustle. *Do I look ridiculous?* I wonder vaguely. To these women, especially. Thank God I have a girlfriend.

Like a monkey on monkey bars, I swing free and nihilistic on the handholds of this train. Germs? I touch everything. When I am high, like voltage, I need grounding. Reached Green Park—beautiful. Is it bad that I check out my acne in the windows? Train two makes me think: God-DAMN, I have been all *over* this city today. Heard all types of voices. Seen love at all ages. Feeling lonely, I watch two stately sixty-something Englishmen talk about blood tests and blood pressure. The woman heating the space next to me is very happy.

I arrive at *King's Cross/St. Pancras International*. How epic.

I am laughing with two strangers as we turn away from the empty corridor we thought was the “Way Out.” Again, we connect. We happy few.

A Rasta-beanie
w e a r i n g



dude with a hip hitch in his step—could he ever know what his drug has done to me?—interrogates me, asking for the ticket to my luggage. The ticket? To my luggage. Pocket Number Six procures this. Transaction complete—I am suddenly the loud American at the front of the line, waving his passport around and offering his credit card.

It seems like all steps are complete. I really cannot foresee a further fuck-up of this journey, failing the ultimate combustion of the train and all its mechanics. Wait. Haha! Don't I have some mezz stuffed in my toiletries somewhere? Oh well. If they bust me for that I deserve it. I am more concerned with the amount of sweat in my clothing.

“You wanna know the end of the story?” I am asking A. Neal at the check-in booth. Quick and self-loathing, I give her a story that ends with me pointing at my suitcase, saying “...the whole time.” Oh, the entertainment. But also, I have A. Neal's sympathy.

I say, “You know what? I've seen so many friendly people today—if the product of this is a greater fondness for humans, I'd call it a good, full day.” I think I might be serious. Because now I am watching two pairs of kids, lovely girls in school uniforms with their headstrong pre-teen brothers, and they're trying to buy candy. At both registers the workers are saying: *You're 43 pence short; you're just sixteen pence short, do you...* Can I love this forever? How can I not? I guess I'll die at some point. But my own transaction is smooth. I buy three Happy Hippos. I tell the register worker I'll be using a credit card. That okay?

“Hey. I'm easy,” he says. “And you understand the system.”

Do I? I am wondering as I put back a book I accidentally stole from the airport bookstore.

“Excuse me!” I look up and there's the angel, Amy. Her nametag and my ticket, I notice, both have just that letter *A* for a first name. She is beckoning, silently. I freeze: now what? She is still silent, but smiling. Oh shit, the joint. My already sweat-heavy hoodie gets a surge of panicked moisture.

“It's a good thing,” she assures me. So will you say something, lady-who-is-now-weirdly-a-part-of-my-life-but-still-just-for-today?

“You've just lost so much of your day. We wanted to make you feel better, so we're moving you to a first class seat. You'll get a meal.” I remember that I've had a carrot with peanut butter, a carrot without, and one Animal Cracker-style *Rich Tea Biscuit* today. Amy seems to be the angel in charge of making sure high kids don't go home hungry. Or maybe she's my patron saint.

“You can tell all your friends about traveling with Eurostar!” How can I tell all my friends?

Besides Camper, I met them all for the first and last time today, I think cutely.

And now I am extra-thankful to them all because now I am writing it all down in this

book and the journey is complete. I got home high and soon I'll see my brother and we'll get that Home

High, when everything we grew up with, everything familiar, is suddenly very, very exciting. And you know where ALL the snacks are. ☺

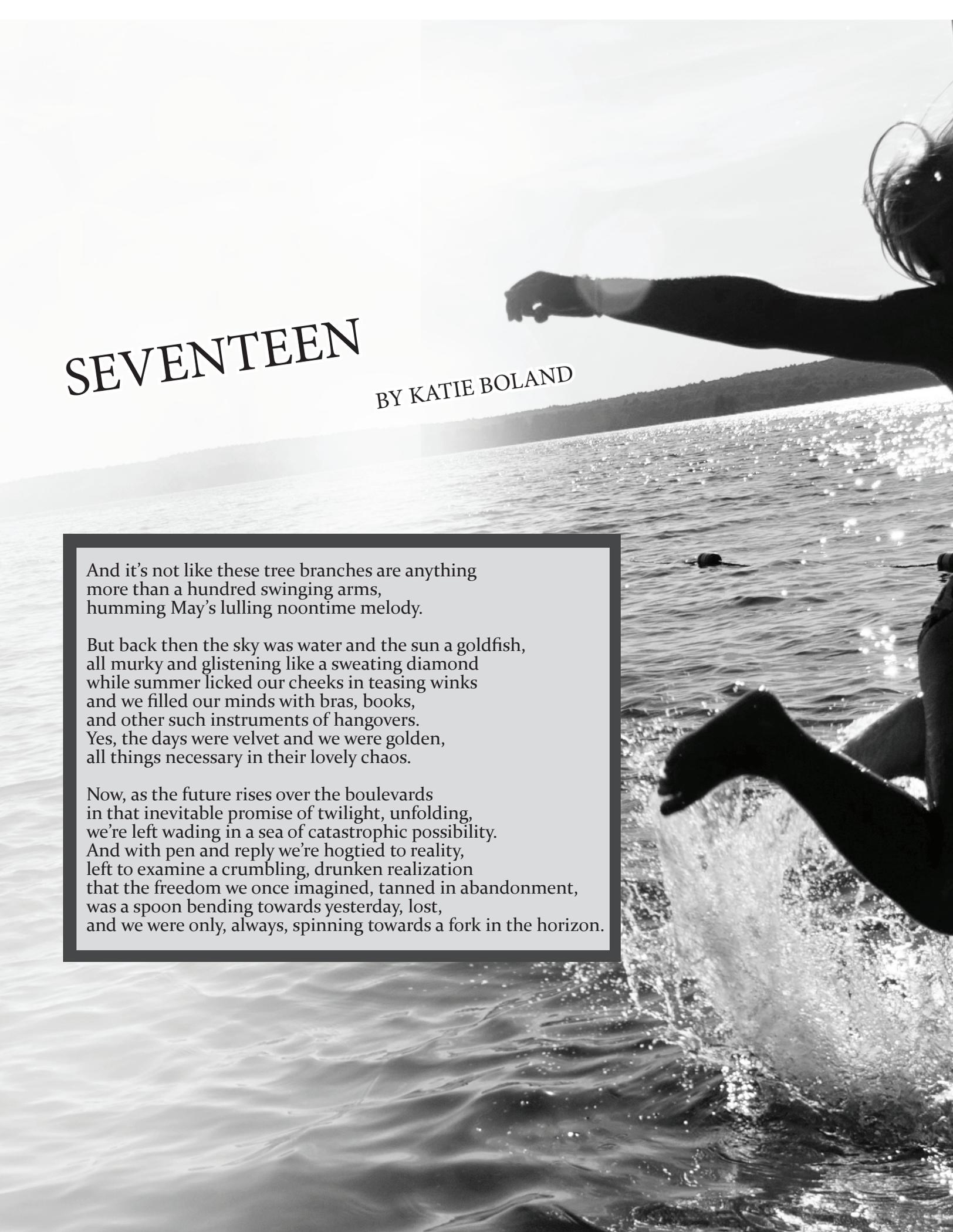
SEVENTEEN

BY KATIE BOLAND

And it's not like these tree branches are anything more than a hundred swinging arms, humming May's lulling noontime melody.

But back then the sky was water and the sun a goldfish, all murky and glistening like a sweating diamond while summer licked our cheeks in teasing winks and we filled our minds with bras, books, and other such instruments of hangovers. Yes, the days were velvet and we were golden, all things necessary in their lovely chaos.

Now, as the future rises over the boulevards in that inevitable promise of twilight, unfolding, we're left wading in a sea of catastrophic possibility. And with pen and reply we're hogtied to reality, left to examine a crumbling, drunken realization that the freedom we once imagined, tanned in abandonment, was a spoon bending towards yesterday, lost, and we were only, always, spinning towards a fork in the horizon.





Lifeguard



By Micah Hauser

NATALIE SELZER

I stare at Kate from across the pool. She is beautiful, at least for right now. That's the thing—she has this way of looking extraordinarily plain one moment, but then she'll shift in her chair, and the sun will catch the curve of her neck, her hip, a line of skin that disappears gracefully beneath the red of her swimsuit, transforming her. I watch her flicker back and forth.

A whistle blows. "Five minute break!" she says. All of the kids swim to the edge of the pool, slowly, as if the whistle is winding up a set of invisible strings that pulls them out of the water. I climb down from my stand a few seconds after Kate descends from hers.

We sit at the picnic tables near the entrance.

"When do you want to go to the funeral?" I ask.

"Early," she says. "Around four."

Three nights ago, Eli's parents crashed into a semi-truck as they drove home from the movie theatre. Eli and I were at his house, listening to records and drinking beers I had stolen from the refrigerator in my garage. Then his phone rang. He stood up quickly and walked straight to the bathroom; I could hear the sound of him slamming the toilet seat down, over and over.

"I don't know what to say to him."

Kate is looking at the water. "You can't," she says.

"Listen." For a moment, I feel like maybe nothing has changed. "We should take a trip. You, me, and Eli. Before we have to leave for school."

"What kind of trip?"

"I don't know. Just drive somewhere a few days away."

I can tell by the way she's holding her shoulders that it isn't likely. Another lifeguard blows the whistle. Break's up.

Kate is on her feet before me. As she heads to her stand on the other side of the pool, I say, "I like your purple nail polish."

"It's lavender."

"Your lavender nail polish." _____

We're in the car, changing. I'm in the driver's seat, leaning to the left of the steering wheel and struggling to pull black dress socks over my damp feet. Kate is in the back.

"Don't look," she says.

I put my head down, but I can see part of her breast reflected in the side mirror. Feeling guilty, I shut my eyes tight, like a kid counting for hide and seek.

"Okay," she says.



I open my eyes and look at her, this time through the rearview mirror. She is wearing her mom's black dress, and it fits her poorly. The fabric is all bunched up at the shoulders, and the dress hangs loosely on her body, making her seem small. As she slides out of the back to get into the passenger's seat, I take the keys off the dashboard and start the car.

The service is held just north of the city at a place called North Cemetery. It has another name no one uses—Hopewell Cemetery. The sun is bright, and my neck feels itchy beneath my collar. I recognize some of Eli's aunts and uncles, but many of the people here I've never seen before. We sit in white foldout chairs arranged around the two large holes in the ground, coffins to either side.

"The souls of the just are in the hands of God," the rabbi says.

I read the first part of the little brochure distributed by the ushers. In loving memory. On the front is a picture of Eli's parents, standing under a tree and looking at each other. They are very young in the photograph, and it looks like his

mom is about to say something to his dad. I glance at Kate, who is sitting between Eli and me. She's holding his pinky in her left hand, moving her thumb back and forth across the edge of his palm. I want to grab her right hand, but that one is holding the brochure.

"And their passing away was thought an affliction, but they are in peace."

Now their knees are touching. Eli's is hidden beneath black suit pants, but Kate's is peeking out from underneath the hem of her dress.

"Hey," I whisper to Kate. But she doesn't hear me.

I wonder where Eli will live now, who will keep his dog while he's at school. I can tell he's trying hard to look like an adult, his back pressed firmly against the chair and his hair combed neatly to one side. The effect is spoiled by his feet, which are turned awkwardly inward. They are innocent and tragic, those feet.

"They shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself."

Kate is scratching her ankle. A few weeks ago at a party, she tripped into a potted cactus, just drunk enough to think it was funny as we crouched next to her and used tweezers to pick the needles out of her calf. Her hair had rubbed softly against my cheek as she leaned over, placing a hand on my shoulder for balance.

"The Lord is thy keeper, and the faithful shall abide with Him in love."

We stand up as the coffins are lowered into the holes. I think about my own parents. The heat is sweltering, and a lot of people are fanning themselves with the brochures. I look at Eli. He isn't crying, but his eyes look defeated, like they're curving

downward. And for the first time in my life, I feel like I am in charge.

Late that night, Kate, Eli and I are sitting in my living room. On the coffee table there are three cans of soda, an empty pizza box, and a copy of *The Sandlot*, which we rented but haven't watched. Kate is petting my dog, who sits next to her while comfortably licking his nose.

Eli is still wearing nice pants and a button down shirt, but his suit jacket and tie are lying on the floor next to the couch. A little earlier, my mom put a Tupperware container full of chocolate chip cookies next to the jacket, then kissed the top of Eli's head and

squeezed his shoulder before going to her room. We haven't said much since then. Kate is swinging her heel against the side of the couch, and Eli is watching it go back and forth.

"Let's go to the pool," he says.

I look at Kate, and then back at Eli. "Okay."

It's dark, and I stub my toe as we walk silently along the back fence. Kate is fumbling with the lock, and I take out

my cell phone for light. She finally gets the key in, and we push the gate open slowly, wincing at the dull scraping sound that feels much too loud to get away with.

"Sshh," I say.

As we're walking past the pump shed, I hear the motor for the filtration system clicking on. Eli looks over, but Kate is already on the grass, heading towards the wooden gazebo used for birthday parties. She is the first to start taking off her clothes. She pulls her shirt over her head by grabbing it at the back of the collar to reveal a black, lacy bra. The straps that arc across her shoulder blades are dangerously skinny, and, for a second, Eli and I are mesmerized. She sits down on the pavement to wriggle out of her jeans.

"Well come on, guys."

When all of us are down to our underwear, we walk towards the edge of the water. Kate jumps in first.

"She looks good tonight," I say.

Eli smiles, the first I've seen in a while.

"Feel okay?"

"I don't know," he says.

We stand there a few moments longer, and then Eli goes in after her. My arms are clasped tightly against my chest, and even though it's warm outside, I start to shiver in my boxers.

I back away from the edge of the water. Unsure of what to do, I walk over to the lifeguard stand and climb up. I stare at the pool; it seems more like a dark, rippled sheet of glass than water. At the opposite end, Eli and Kate are leaning on the first string of lap lane buoys, talking. It's difficult to see, and they look more like shapes than people. A few seconds later, I sit down and rest my hands on my knees, watching them, making sure that they don't drown. ☪

Directions

By Eva Parish

**The highway's coated, heart by heart, with red;
I plan to be its next warm casualty.
The soil, the air, every attempt at hope
is human, after all; I think I could
recover. Take me, drive me, coast to coast.
I haven't had enough of desperate love
affairs. Are you my next, oh much maligned,
My land, my heart, is yours? As much as mine.
I start to think I might bleed blue and white.**



Ace

SHIR LIVNE

my body is slightly
awkward and awestruck
by you, even when you fall, silent.

limbs are tricky and
angular, mathematical
equations in a movement
but this was never covered
in class, this tipping point,
this salty breathed rookery
'neath our fingers twining.

you've played this game,
this melding of mouths
in spades, a rhythmic
cello-grace. you, now,

and if the world spoke
old english, thou and me
would float the seven seas
and never raise the sails an inch,
wooden bellies worn by waves.





IMAGES BY

lauracurren





ZONE A ACCES REGLEMENTE
INTERDITE A TOUTE PERSONNE
NON RESIDENTE
ADRESSEZ-VOUS AU BUREAU
7 rue de Sevigne 75004 PARIS







Christmas With Kyle

BY PHILIP DEAR

We go through every year the same,
A stocking hung to show her name.
The night is cold, the darkness deep,
And I will search for who's to blame.
We sit to eat the quiet weep
Of eyes that yearn for peace of sleep.
I try so hard to give good grace,
But fail, for hope I cannot keep.
Through stale refrain we try to trace
The memory of fading face.
It's carved in stone that all is lost;
A daughter's, sister's warm embrace.
This Christmas time our eyes are glossed.
But winter came without first frost,
And Mother keeps her fingers crossed,
And Mother keeps her fingers crossed.



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH HERMAN



by ariana siegel

The story took only ten minutes to tell. It wasn't a very long story, but I thought about it all day after that, and once again twenty years later, when Gabrielle lived someplace else. She told me it was a dream, but in my dreams it was real.

The story began when her eyes burned blue. She had woken on the crushed velvet cover of a van's back seat, and from the inside you couldn't immediately tell you were in a van, moving. By her side were two others, one she didn't recognize, the other, her blonde friend Kayla. The three of them lay crushed upon the seat like velvet.

In the front seat, a woman with big hair and turquoise earrings that draped over her shoulders drove furiously, fingers white-knuckled on the wheel. The sound of horns, smeared by speed, penetrated the van walls. No one dared ask where they were rushing to. They were clearly kidnapped.

The horns stopped, the van stopped. The white-knuckled fingers released the wheel and threw open the front door. Heels on stairs, a doorbell, an extra ring, and the scrape of a rusty knob. Hushed voices whispered a hurried exchange and Gabrielle couldn't make out much, though her ear was pressed to the cold metal van wall. Two words: "new ones." Was that it? Kayla did not wake, if it was Kayla; her face was down on the seat and only her hair stuck up at odd angles, crushed by the corrosive caress of sleep. Next to her was another body—a boy from school? She didn't know. He would not appear again in the story.

The big haired lady led them inside. Their kidnapper. A red powder room with red chairs and red walls and silver mirrors. Nothing was explained; they got dolled up. They did nothing; others dolled them. Dressed them, painted them, combed and blew out their hair in styles

they'd never seen, though Kayla's refused to be tamed without wax. Wax? Gabrielle didn't know why wax. It was like she'd slept for a hundred years.

They were led out of the other side of the house, the backdoor, it seemed; but then. There on the other side, there was a red carpet in a secret tunnel, a tunnel filled with superstars. Superstars: the ones whose names most people have heard or whose faces most people have seen but whose lives no one knows much about. Each of the prisoners were matched with a superstar, pinned to their arm like safety pins hold a paper number to a marathon runner. Assigned. They stepped out into a rainforest of camera flashes and strange noises and frightening grins, the red carpet underfoot.

It was four in the morning when Gabrielle's eyes slipped open briefly to reveal the red numbers of the alarm clock. But outside, in the red carpet rainforest, someone suspected her. Suspected something she said. *Are you sure about that?* a man in a tuxedo asked, and he laughed but he meant it, *Are you sure?* She could tell. She was supposed to belong to the big-haired lady's family, the one with long earrings who was now wearing a rich turquoise dress and a tinkling laugh. Gabrielle supposed she did belong, in a way. But not that way. Pinned to this strange arm, this was the pretext for her appearance in the red carpet rainforest. The rainforest. It was a rainforest. Everyone believed it, believed everything, except this man in the tuxedo. Gabrielle was beginning to believe it herself.

How do we get out? she whispered to one of the dolled-up girls pinned to a celebrity arm.

It's an organization, the girl said.

How do we get out?



They match you up with celebrities without dates, and you pretend to be dating.

How do we get out?

It's for the cameras. For the public.

How do we get out?

At night some of the girls go out.

How?

On the streets. For pay.

But how do we get out?

Why would you want to?

But how?

This right here is the life. The red carpet life, the celebrities, the real thing. The real thing.

How do we get out?

How do we get out!

No answer. The man in the tuxedo was still talking. A female celebrity walked by; pinned to her arm was Gabrielle's boyfriend, Luke. Gabrielle called out to him. He smiled and walked over, the celebrity pinned to his arm. The tuxedo man watched Gabrielle closely, ran his gaze over the line between Gabrielle and Luke's eyes, over the ridges of her mouth, and Luke's, and the celebrity's. You two are brother and sister? Luke's eyebrows raised. *I know what this is*, the tuxedo man said, his voice dripping with the clarity of correctness, *tell me what this is and I can help you out.*

Out? thought Gabrielle. *How do we get out?*

In the dream they revealed themselves, Gabrielle and Luke, revealed everything, the kidnapping, the dolling, the pinning, the rainforest. The man's nostrils flared, white at the tips, the corners of his mouth dove down his chin. He shook his head. He left. They were still there.

How do we get out? Gabrielle and Luke's eyes glued together. They dissolved.

And that was it? Yes, that was it. A ten minute story, but one I thought about for the rest of that day, and the next. And twenty years later when Gabrielle was gone, and her boyfriend was gone, and my daughter was gone. Kidnapped, the man in the suit said. He flipped his notebook shut. The corners of his mouth dove down as he left me there, alone.

Every night before going to bed my daughter holds my face and whispers, *Good night, and no robbers.*

No robbers, I say.

No kidnapers.

No kidnapers, I say.

No bad guys.

I smile and kiss her on her forehead, my lips taugth with an irrepressible smile. In the morning, she is gone.

Honey, I whisper into a red, carpeted rainforest of fear, How do we get out? ☺

animals

by Aaron Cantu

Two men sat facing each other at a table outside of a taquería, drinking beer. The first man was watching two emaciated dogs fight behind the second.

"I might lose my job again, soon," the second man said.

"Why?" asked the first man.

"Low output," he growled. "More and more of these educated dorks applying every year. I'm a goddamn liability in their eyes!"

"What will you do?"

"Nothing. At 49, I am what I am."

The dogs began barking louder behind him, and soon a third one joined in, howling and gnashing. One of them began to shit and all of them bled, and while they were rolling around violently in their collective filth a fourth dog approached them, yapping:

"Well," the first man said, "You could go back to school."

The second man grit his teeth and then said, "Nah. I have no money or ambition. And why have either? There's always somebody smarter, bigger, faster, better in this world. Jesus, it's hard enough to breathe around all these people!"

"Yep. Gotta keep on your toes," slurred the first man.

"I'm just too damn tired."

The fourth dog continued snapping at the frenzy of three, and suddenly they broke away from each other to chase it down. They ran until all four crashed straight into the legs of the second man's chair and he fell backwards on top of them, spilling his beer everywhere.

"Goddamnit! These mangy fucking dogs!" he snarled from the floor. "Somebody cut their balls off already, they're everywhere! Where the fuck do they all come from?" As he maneuvered to lift himself up, the dogs resumed fighting, and he fell to the floor once again. ☺



RUTH TAM

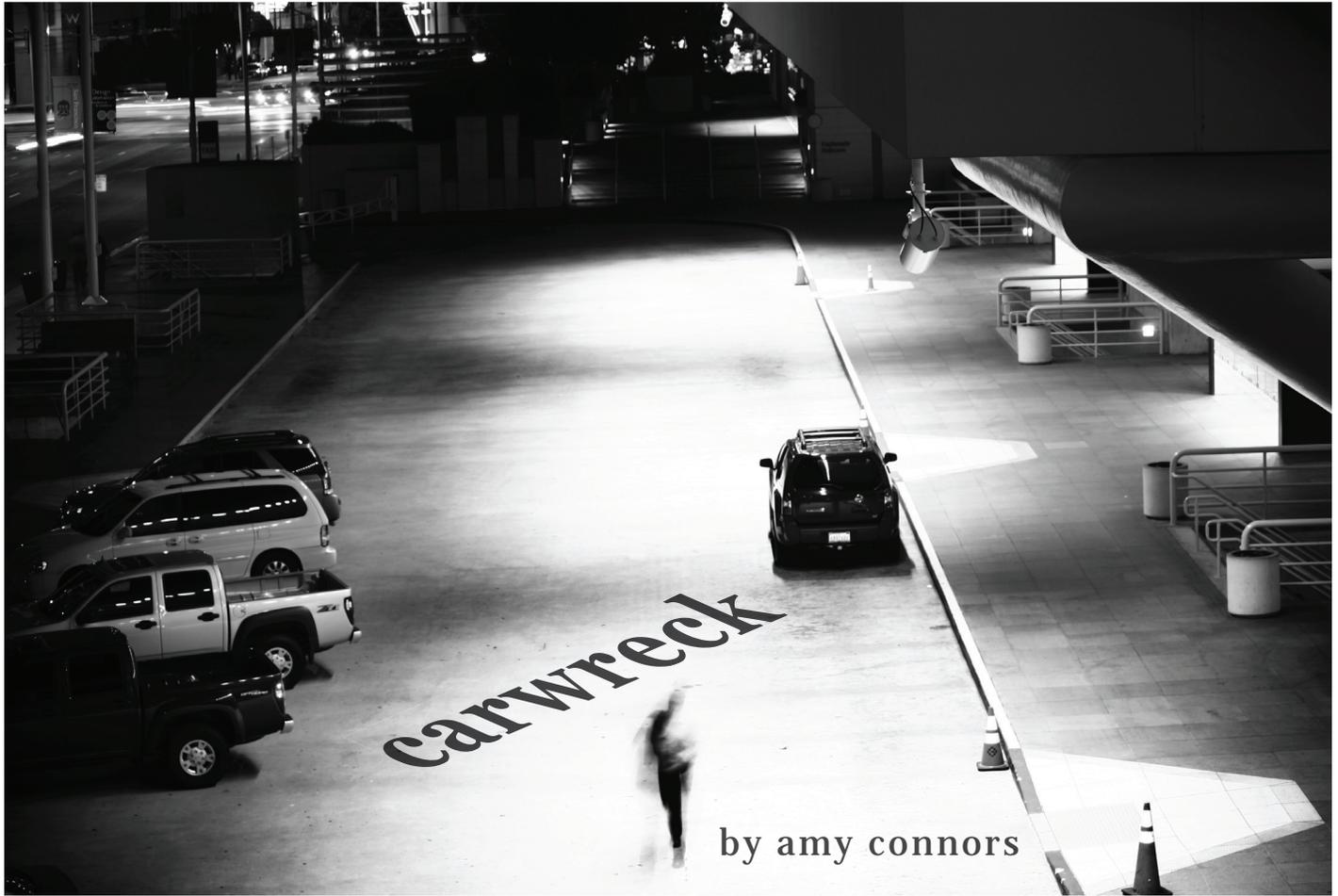


PHOTO BY BRIAN YEN

by amy connors

This contorted mess is all we have against the negative Fahrenheit I won't duck from the wind I'll stand by this wreck until creative expression appears in it to you my words contradict the creeds but subtlety aside screw instinctual behavior I'm already alive in the future where we laugh in retrospect because I can't even keep straight how many "two kinds of people in this world" there are each morning I find myself peering through the arcade from a new position I never know when the pattern will come to my attention but it's not anything you or I can see and then you can't argue with me because once I crashed to the ground unconscious and for those few seconds I was all you could think about and moments like that are what fill the void so on this cold night when your car breaks down in an empty parking lot in the freezing cold while the engine's steam curls under the hood and the car alarm stutters don't tell me to go find somewhere warm while you wait for the tow truck this is you falling to the ground and neither of us can see it but I can feel where I'm needed and it's between your gloveless hands and the steering wheel that's not turning anymore tonight and tomorrow you'll need me in some other way but I'll see the world differently and I'll offer myself in a new language that we haven't spoken yet. ☺

COMMON GRAVE

BY CAITLIN CORVINI

This is the shape of dying.
Arched, exposed, vermilion scales,
the silhouette of crying

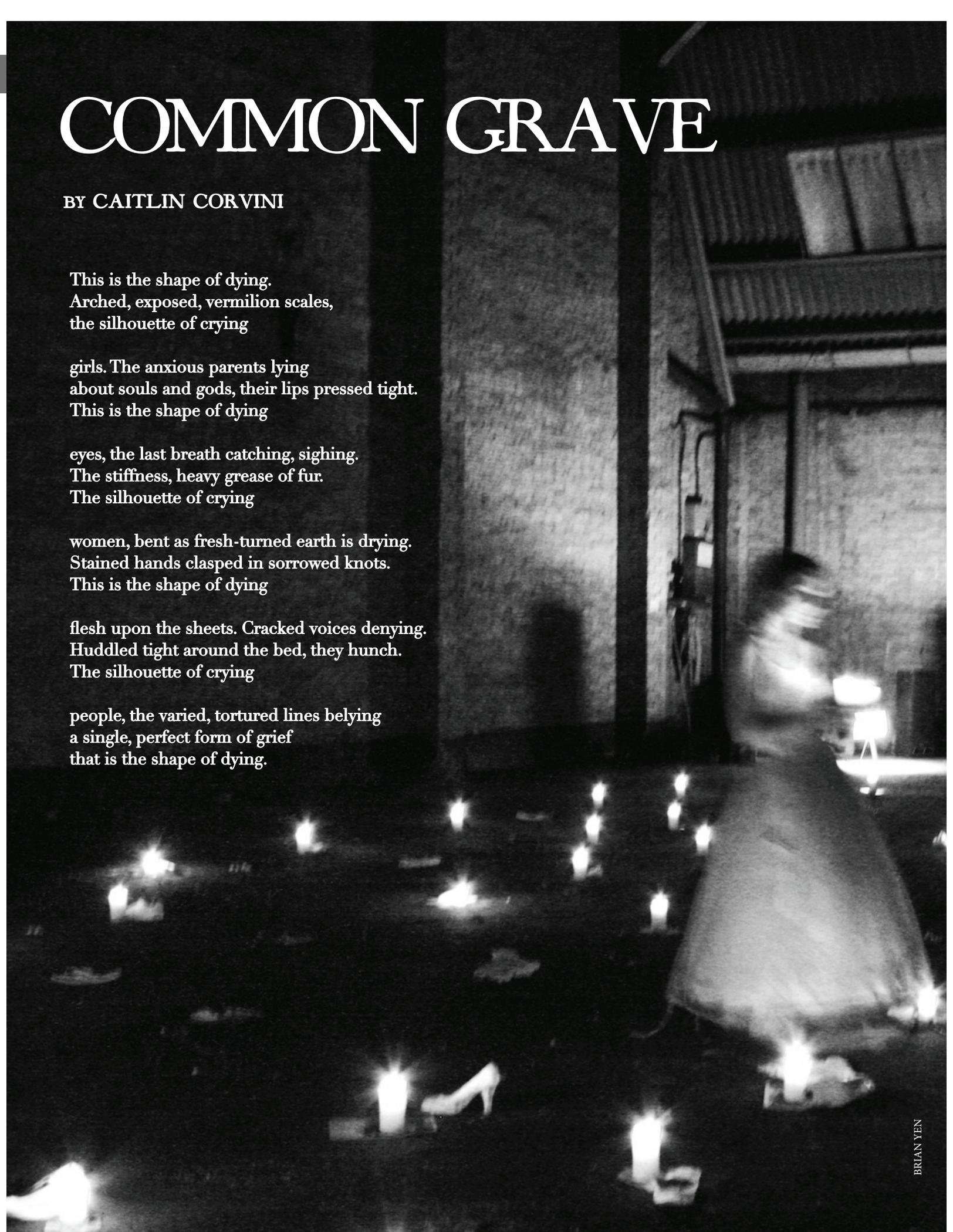
girls. The anxious parents lying
about souls and gods, their lips pressed tight.
This is the shape of dying

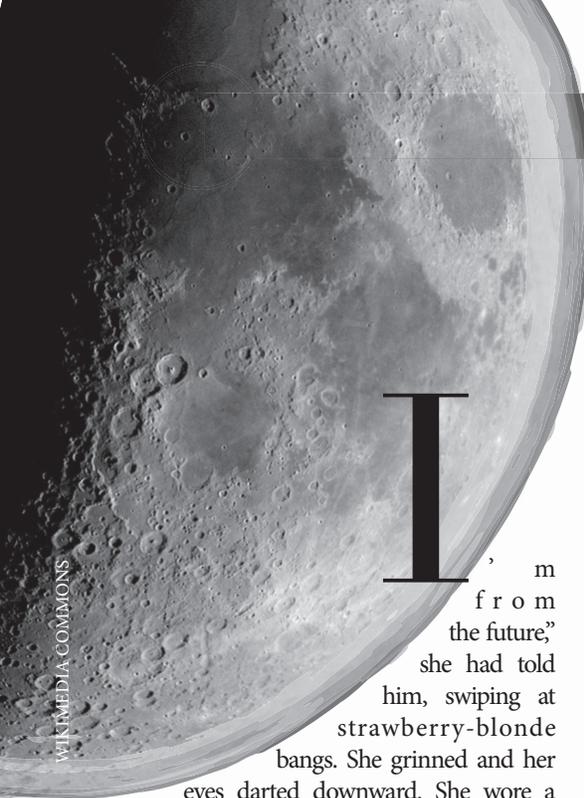
eyes, the last breath catching, sighing.
The stiffness, heavy grease of fur.
The silhouette of crying

women, bent as fresh-turned earth is drying.
Stained hands clasped in sorrowed knots.
This is the shape of dying

flesh upon the sheets. Cracked voices denying.
Huddled tight around the bed, they hunch.
The silhouette of crying

people, the varied, tortured lines belying
a single, perfect form of grief
that is the shape of dying.





Satellite

by david schwartz

I'm from the future," she had told him, swiping at strawberry-blonde

bangs. She grinned and her eyes darted downward. She wore a silver sweater that day; it went well with her handmade tinfoil helmet.

Selene Argyros seemed to come out of nowhere. One day no one knew her and then all of a sudden everyone did. No one was quite sure what brought her to the Odyssey Academy on the outskirts of Greece, New York.

"Now, excuse me," were the first words she said at the school, "I was wondering where I might find my locker. The numbers are all weird. I guess I just thought numbers were numbers because they went chronologically. It seems a little silly to have numbers that aren't in order."

"Well, they're separated by grade," the girl replied. She was small and Asian and didn't look particularly friendly. "Seniors are on the left side of the building and sixth graders are all the way to the right." She pointed each way for emphasis, flashing her whiteout nail polish.

"Thank you very much," Selene said, "and I like your fingernails." She then twirled around, causing her soft linen dress to billow up a little, and slid down the hall to the left side of the building. Sandals on linoleum make excellent sliding devices, she found.

The first question Ethan Mills asked her was "How old are you?" It was an odd ice-breaker, but he was nervous, and it was better than nothing.

"Just today I turned 18.6 years old," Selene exclaimed. "Isn't it funny how, on some days, you figure things out, and right when you do someone asks you about them? It's like prepar-

ing for something you didn't know you had to prepare for."

"Sure," Ethan replied, staring blankly at her light blue sweatshirt before continuing. "You're new, right? I'm Ethan."

"My name's Selene, and I'm a senior," she paused. Smiling. "Ethan Mills?"

He stared at her, patting his shirt to find a nametag of sorts.

"Well I have to know these things, now, don't I?"

The moon shone brightly that night. Few people were awake to see the waxing gibbous make its descent through the sky. It crested confidently no matter who was watching. Once covered by the horizon, she smiled. Waves crashed coastward. Waves slid seaward.

"Whenever I drink Constant Comment tea," Selene said after sipping from her travel mug. "I think of my mom."

"That's weird, isn't it?" Ethan asked. They were eating lunch together in the cafeteria during fourth period.

"I don't think so," she replied. Briefly, she examined an apple and moved it around in her hand as if trying its curvature. "She always used to make it. I think it's the smell. I think she smelled like Constant Comment tea, too."

"I guess I think of my mom when I eat watermelons."

"Why?"

"Just because," Ethan shrugged before re-treating into a bite of ham sandwich.

"She also loved Styx—the band, you know. That makes me think of her, too."

The two burst out into song, banging plastic utensils against the blue tabletop.

*"I look to the sea,
reflections in the waves spark my memories,
some happy, some sad,
I think of childhood friends and the dreams we had..."*

At his locker one day, he noticed there was a neatly folded piece of paper that had fallen into one corner. He opened it up, found it soft to the touch from being crumpled numerous times.

The silver Sharpie chicken-scratch fleshed out a map of sorts. It started at school and ended at a point labeled "Here." After a short car ride, he found it was a place called Rock Beach.

As his feet made contact with the shore, he saw her. There was a silver tiara in her hair, sparkling faintly in the dim sunlight. The way the light hit the crown charmed Ethan. He was Here.

"You found it," she said, smiling.

"I did," he said. "I like your crown."

"Thanks, I like things on my head. They're fun, and you can't lose anything on your head, well, except your mind, but that's a different story."

Ethan laughed and put an arm on her waist. "Hey, what's this all about?" he asked.

"I like adventures, and I thought you needed one," she replied. "Seniors here don't have nearly enough fun. I mean, in a year some of you will be in different parts of the world studying and working and being real people. Real people, I have found, do not have time for sudden map adventures."

"Hmm, is that true? What else have you found?"

"I have found that my sandals make excellent sliding devices, that my mom smells like Constant Comment tea, and that you are a boy who likes adventures. I am especially glad to have figured out the last one."

He kissed her.

They were infinite, rolling and swelling as if some hidden hand held a weak magnet above them. Then, in their calm, they grew steeper. They became sharp like knives, these waves, as they tried to escape their ocean boundaries. They jumped to disconnect, they jumped to escape, they jumped heaven-bound together. In their passionate act of gracelessness, they collided and crashed in a doomed dance and broke helplessly against the shore.

Selene's favorite thing in her room was her aluminum foil mobile. Hanging over her bed, it recreated the planets and their moons. Nighttime winds blew through her window and propelled her personal solar system. She fell asleep beneath it, her last sight the Earth and its moon.



Inspired by the mobile and bored with homework, Selene grabbed aluminum foil from the kitchen and returned to her room. "I made that crown out of tinfoil," she told the Beta fish that eyed her from its bowl. "It only makes sense that I make a helmet too." It looked at her, blankly. "What? Beta, look at that," she said quietly, pointing to the mobile's moon. "She's fragile, but she's also powerful. Naturally, I must have a helmet to accompany my tiara. It's perfect."

"Tell me about something you lost," Selene prompted Ethan at lunch. "You don't have to have found it again, but it has to be important."

He thought for a moment, looking up at the institutional lighting.

"I don't know, I lost my wallet once when I was with my parents in Europe. It had 70 pounds in it. What about you?" Ethan's gaze was lost in the orange he held in his hands.

"My mom, I think. I haven't found her, yet." Her face was blank. Ethan couldn't tell if she was kidding.

"I still remember sitting near the hospital bed when she was... well, you know. She was staring out the window with only little stars to keep her company. How unfair that it was a new moon. How unfair to be lost in the dark like that. I made a mobile a few days after and hung it above my bed. So I could fall asleep underneath the moon. You'll see it one day."

"Hey Selene," he said. "I'm sorry."

"It's okay. Thanks. Most things end up leaving eventually."

"All things, I'd say," he replied.

"Says who?"

"Is today Wednesday? I love Wednesdays, and today's a good day, so I think it's Wednesday."

"No, it's Tuesday."

"Oh, that makes sense. I've been thinking about this," she told him. "The days of the week are based on the solar calendar, and I think there are a lot of people in this world who connect with the sun. Mentally. They're in tune with the sun. But I think I connect more with the moon—I feel for it more."

"So what does that mean?"

"Well, the lunar month is 29.5 days whereas the solar month is normally 30 or 31 days. So it makes sense that I'm off a day every so often, right?"

"I don't know if it works like that, Selene," he laughed.

In May she asked him, "Will you still love me when you're old?"

"Of course," he said, too involved in his homework to voice an original answer.

"Think of it, Ethan!" she said, face bright. "People grow old and one day you'll have strands of silver hairs and be wizened and wonderful. Oh, age."

"I don't want to get older."

Selene smiled wider, revealing the tops of her canines. "You don't have to. It's all mental, you know."

At times the moon is farther from the Earth than at others. Sometimes she is closer to the North Pole, others closer to the South Pole. It is cyclic, though; the moon always comes back. She wiggles in her orbit to explore a new thing in an infinite pattern of variation. It's perpetual change that, over time, doesn't really change at all. Barring a galactic disaster, the Earth will always be paired with its moon. Always.

"Have you made up your mind about what you want to do next year, Selene?" Ethan asked her near the end of the year. "A gap year or something? Fill out college applications?"

"Well, I'm going to spend a part of the summer with you, and then in a blue moon I'll go on my own adventure. Where I started, I guess. This is just temporary, you know."

"Us?" he asked, suddenly hurt and weak. His eyes shifted from his book on Achilles.

"No, silly!" she said, giggling. "I mean here. Greece. I want to travel."

"Oh, you never told me." He paused, calculating. "Sometimes I feel like you're too mysterious. I should know you really well. Do I?"

"Sure you do. My name's Selene, and I like you. I have an aluminum foil mobile, and I have trouble discerning if it's Wednesday or Tuesday only every so often. Now tell me—do you know those facts about *everyone*?"

"Well, I guess... I don't know."

"And I'm here because I'm supposed to be because it's always nice to have variation even if you always do go back to the same place."

"So you'll come back?"

"Yes, but you'll be in college and then who knows where. If anyone's going anywhere, it's you, bud." She pulled her hair out of its ponytail.

"Shoot for the stars!" she read off the inspirational sign on the wall.

"Lunacy."

It was a quiet day in June when he found a note shoved under the door of his house. Ball-point pen chicken-scratch told him to go back to Rock Beach. He could smell her.

Ethan waved once he arrived at the shore.

"Glad you got my note," Selene said.

He hugged her. "Remember when we were here last? You had a tiara then. But now I see you have a... helmet?"

She laughed. "I lost that tiara. Somewhere in my room. Or maybe I turned it into a different thing. Which would be funny because then I wouldn't have lost at all."

"Exactly. Why are you wearing a tinfoil helmet?"

"Why not? Preemptive meteor protection? You never know. Anyone who can wear a tiara can wear a helmet, you know?"

"I guess," he said, blankly staring at her silver sweater. It didn't constrict her, but it wasn't free flowing, either. It made Ethan uncomfortable.

There was something remarkably dangerous about the ocean that night as Selene's parents walked down the beach near their vacation spot at Fortuna, California. Stella and her husband lingered near the rolling waves, lured not by the invisible moon but by the dark, dark night.

"Do you know," she told him, "that there are more stars in the entire universe than every grain of sand on this Earth?"

He shook his head.

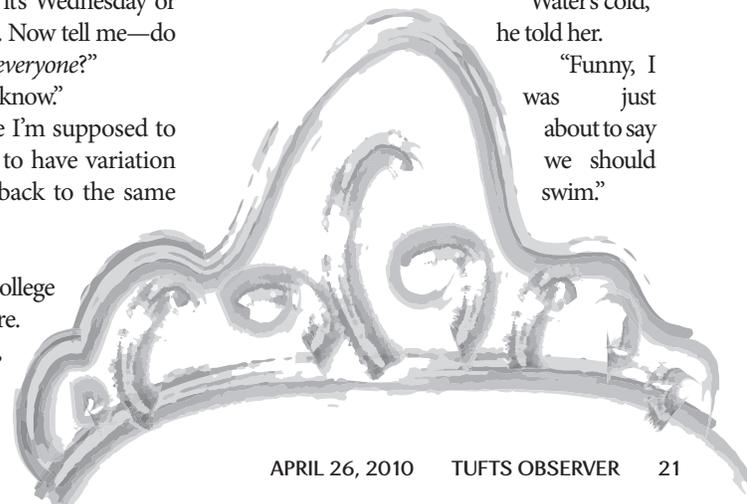
"Selene told me."

"Isn't she something else?"

"She is," Stella whispered. The breeze carried her words across the ocean before fading somewhere between the mist and clouds.

"Water's cold," he told her.

"Funny, I was just about to say we should swim."





His laughter flew up over the sounds of waves crashing against the shore and people crashing against the waves.

“I have a present for you,” Selene said quietly after some time had passed. “Call it a graduation present.” She reached into her circular purse and withdrew a book. It was worn. “It was my mom’s, but I’ve read it too many times. To think of all of things I could have done if I hadn’t been reading it,” she laughed. “And just think—memorizing this will get you prepared for your English classes next year, right?”

He extended his hand and took the book. It was soft like the note she had slipped into his locker so many months ago.

“It’s Homer. A collection. You’ll like it.”

“Okay,” he said, smiling. “Thanks.”

Her foot kicked at the shoreline, scattering little rocks and pebbles that cascaded into a mound. She stared at her creation, breathless for a moment, as the water came softly towards her, rounding it, and then pulling it away. It was her offering.

“You know what tomorrow is?” she asked him.

“Our nine month anniversary.”

“It’s also a blue moon.”

“Oh, cool,” he replied, in a different world.

She said something along the lines of “Do you remember what I had said to you about that?” but he was too engrossed in flipping through the pages of the book she had given him. Three faintly circled lines called out to him as the pages fell over each other like the waves before him.

*“Her great orbit is full
and as she waxes a most brilliant light appears
in the sky. Thus to mortals she is a sign and a token.”*

“Stella!” he screamed. His voice reached unearthly frequencies. It was desperation. “Stella!”

Waves crashed. It was murky. He squinted to see, bobbing desperately for air. They were good swimmers, he couldn’t help thinking, but why was the water so strong, so mean?

The undertow grabbed him by the feet and dragged him down, until he shot himself up seeking air. But the depths desired him. The depths demanded a sacrifice.

It is maddening to drown. It is worse to helplessly watch another person drown. To throw your hands out to get up and go to her, yet all your arms do is sink.

He saw glimpses of her, only glowing in the illumination of the stars. He saw her go under and tumble around and hit that sea dagger of a rock that jutted out into the sky. He saw her body buckle and fade beneath the surface. He saw her wash up onto the coarse altar of sand on the shore, pale and bloodied, but strangely beautiful like a goddess.

Then, like Hermes, he flew, becoming the waves themselves. He danced with them. He moved with the magnetic pull that pinched and crumpled the ocean over and over and over.

On the beach, he felt as if he were swimming still. The sand meant nothing to him. He ran over to Stella, putting a waterlogged ear to her mouth. She was breathing. She was breathing. She was still breathing.

He wasn’t good with words. That’s why he had Stella.

“She’s doing better,” Selene was told by her father, “and she wants to see you.”

Somewhere, in some land, doing better was a synonym for dying, wasn’t it?

“So I’m going,” she said. “I told you I would. It’s not like I lied to you, Ethan, really. And you’re going, soon, too.”

“I know, Selene,” he said, embracing her. Sinking, sinking.

“Change doesn’t matter much if you never have anything ordinary in your life.”

“You have me,” Ethan tried. Selene suddenly looked ridiculous in her hat. It was off-centered and lined up awkwardly with her bangs. Stray flaps of aluminum distracted him.

“I know, exactly. For example, when I see people smile, I’ll remember how I made the connection that smiles are remarkably crescent. A lot of important things have curves or circles or something like that. I mean, what is important that’s square?”

He softened. His features smoothed. “Selene,” he paused for the gulls, “tell me a secret.”

“I’m from the future,” she told him, swiping at strawberry-blonde bangs. She grinned and her eyes darted downward. Her silver sweater looked excellent with her handmade tinfoil helmet.

The blue moon was beautiful the next night. But, in comparison to the next eighteen he would see, it was nothing remarkable. It was full and wide and curved, bitter and secretive. It pulled him out of his desk chair to stare wide-eyed.

Somehow, forty years had passed and he was fifty-seven. He had seen nineteen blue moons in his adulthood, and under each he had consciously withdrawn a copy of a very beaten book. Ethan dragged his fingers over the annotated pages, like Braille, reading the feeling of pen against paper rather than of the words themselves.

The moonlight of his nineteenth blue moon was particularly illuminating. It made his eyes shimmer, brightened his wedding band, turned his salt-and-pepper hair radiant silver.

Entranced by the particular beauty of this moon, he walked outside to his balcony. There, he heard wave upon wave pile and crash and roll into the shore. They were miraculous, those devils. Perpetually energetic, perpetually moving. They never ended. They were forever young.

What struck him in his trance was a shadow that dotted his view of the coastline. It walked along the shore, closer to his home, and he began to make out its features. It was a girl, young—that was for certain—who couldn’t have been older than eighteen. The moonlight made her hair seem a tint of blonde, but it could have been the streetlights near the beach. Her youth was incredible and particularly stunning, and he thought that her tinfoil hat made her look surprisingly beautiful. ☺



Lately,
I find myself unraveling nights
in the fetal position, eyes clenched
because the room isn't dark enough.
Morsels of light stain everything
and I can tell for sure that they are
the fallen stars of each ideal I've
been praying to in place of a God.

But the imagination knows my secret
password, rappels over my eyelids
and into my ears, whispering that
Pablo Neruda has taken an axe
to my plywood reality.

And all I did was ask him: "Do you
keep the reader in mind with each
love poem you write, make sure you've
made a copy before you pass it to her?
Are her eyes alone incapable of
giving life to your words?"

So now I pray to the man who
has no love poems to display
because they only survive
in an atmosphere of two,

and he tells me to speak to
you instead and to never
repeat what I've said.

by matt maraynes
PABLO NERUDA

Visitation

By Melis Aker

And on to single mirrors I

Give

Infinite forms:

For I, with your

Melancholy body

Fuel the potentials

of louder mimes

born from higher

constraint.

And to those who

are convicts

Of thought

And prisoners of

Words,

Think not with your minds but Through caged

Birds-

Live by

deferred

Bodies—

those that remain

unheard.

For you, in which (my) language

Perpetually predisposes (your) perception,

On to which (my) dynamism distorts

(your) Suggestion and

(our) Situation,

Learn from thy

Self

And Think

Of thy Thoughts. A word of

perspective.



TUFTS OBSERVER

SINCE 1895

www.tuftsobserver.org

TUFTS UNIVERSITY
P.O. Box 5302, Medford, MA, 02155

PLEASE RECYCLE