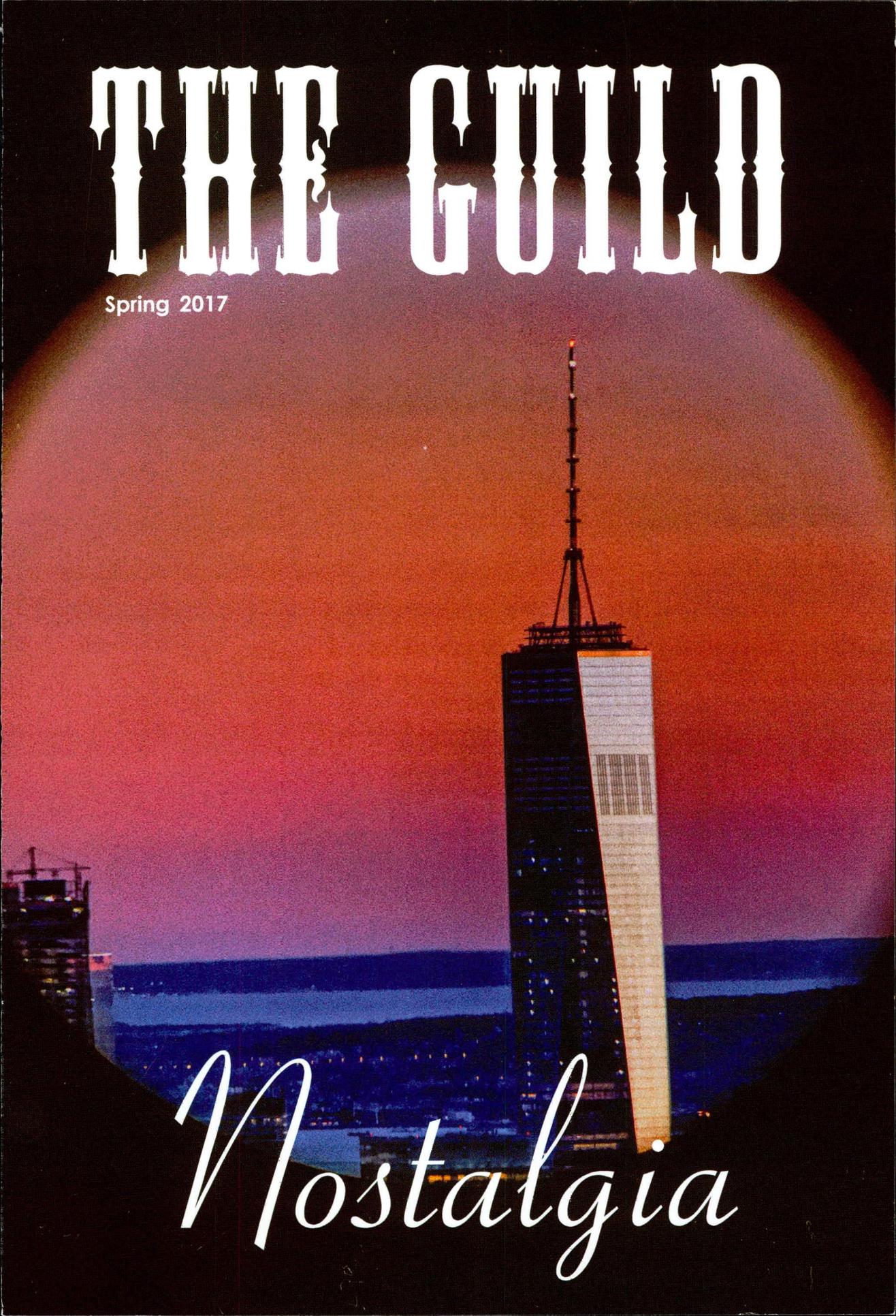


THE GUILD

Spring 2017



Nostalgia

Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

This is *The Guild*, BMCC's Literary Magazine. Every semester members of the Writers Guild come together to curate the magazine and work around a specific, *suggested* theme. This semester we went with *Nostalgia*. Nostalgia is a broad yet somewhat specific theme to work with creatively. However, it can be done and executed beautifully as you'll find in this magazine. Everyone has a past and everyone has a story, nostalgia can bring those stories to life. Not every poem, short story, or picture within this magazine has a direct link to nostalgia, however, we felt these pieces compelling, creative, and definitely worth showcasing.. We hope by the end of this issue that you come out fulfilled and inspired. It's not easy to put your thoughts, emotions, passions, hopes, and dreams on paper but these artists have done so in this issue and in their lives. I applaud these artists for being daring enough to express themselves and display it for others to see. Thank you for digging deep into your brains and hearts and seeing the world in front of you and past it as well. A special thanks to all of the submissions editors: Kendrick Zapata, Kedari Matthews, and Brandon Rodriguez. I especially want to thank Dylan Vivolo for being the backbone of this operation. You've held it down and brought a different dimension to this magazine. I want to thank our graphic designer Rabia Hussain for teaching and helping us for truly make this magazine come to fruition with a lot on your plate. Thank you to our Club Advisor Prof. Stapleton and our Magazine Advisor Prof. Goodison. Lastly, we would like to thank OSA, SGA, and BMCC for supporting the artists at this school.

Jada Gordon, VP & Editor-In-Chief

Being happy is a subjective concept for me most times. Writing is an outlet that I am still in the process of embracing. Cutting yourself open and shining a light on the darkest corners of your mind is one of the hardest things one can do. Thank you for spilling your guts. Thank you for reading this magazine. This gives me hope. This gives me peace. Writing and reading, and compiling all of these artist's hard work, teaches me to love. Thank you for loving me, and my guts, though tangled in the light.

A special thank you to Rabia Hussain, and Jada Gordon. For without them, this magazine, nor I, would have been written.

My love always,
Dylan Vivolo *Co Editor-in-Chief*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>FULLY EMPTY</u>	(P.6)
<u>FIAT CAFE</u>	(P.7)
<u>THE PHANTOM STAR SEED LION</u>	(P.8)
<u>THREE WAYS</u>	(P.8)
<u>TWO FACED</u>	(P.9)
<u>ABANDONED CITY</u>	(P.10)
<u>UNTITLED (FLOWERS)</u>	(P.10)
<u>A SOMEWHAT FOND MEMORY</u>	(P.11)
<u>KING JOHN</u>	(P.12)
<u>OUCH</u>	(P.13)
<u>RIGHT?</u>	(P.15)
<u>SUMMERTIME FINE</u>	(P.15)
<u>INSOMINAC</u>	(P.16)
<u>ART GHAZAL</u>	(P.16)
<u>AFFLICTIONS OF A MUSE</u>	(P.17)
<u>UNTITLED (SUNSET)</u>	(P.21)
<u>TAKE YOUR MEDICINE</u>	(P.22)
<u>BEST INTEREST AT HEART</u>	(P.22)
<u>SUENOS ATORMENTADOS</u>	(P.23)
<u>LET IT GO, LET IT PLAY</u>	(P.29)
<u>CHOOSEY</u>	(P.30)
<u>SLEEVES</u>	(P.31)
<u>UNTITLED (LEAVES)</u>	(P.32)
<u>NOSTALGIA</u>	(P.32)
<u>JUST</u>	(P.34)
<u>PICTURE 1</u>	(P.35)
<u>WE ARE ALL AL(ONE)</u>	(P.35)
<u>THE LONELY WALK</u>	(P.42)
<u>JULY</u>	(P.43)
<u>JUST LET IT OUT</u>	(P.44)
<u>ADAM</u>	(P.45)
<u>YOUR DEATH LEFT A CRATER IN ME</u>	(P.46)

<u>LEAP</u>	(P.47)
<u>I WANNA BUILD A ROBOT</u>	(P.48)
<u>CLUB BENCH</u>	(P.49)
<u>A BRYANT PARK SUMMER</u>	(P.53)
<u>NOSTALGIA PIECE</u>	(P.54)
<u>SMILE PRETTY</u>	(P.55)
<u>A MESSAGE TO OUR SPONSORS</u>	(P.56)
<u>PROCEDURE</u>	(P.56)
<u>OUT IN THE DISTANCE</u>	(P.57)
<u>COLORS</u>	(P.58)
<u>MADE ME WANT</u>	(P.58)
<u>WINDOW</u>	(P.59)
<u>THE NUTHOUSE</u>	(P.60)
<u>JUST SMILE AND WAVE</u>	(P.61)
<u>BROOKLYN BRIDGE</u>	(P.62)
<u>UPSTATE</u>	(P.63)
<u>MY NOTICE</u>	(P.63)
<u>MAN IN THE ROOM</u>	(P.64)
<u>THE NIGHT RIDERS</u>	(P.65)
<u>DEPRESSION</u>	(P.66)
<u>WANDERING SOUL</u>	(P.67)
<u>UNTITLED (FERRIS WHEEL)</u>	(P.67)
<u>THE FEELING ISN'T MUTUAL</u>	(P.68)
<u>BUBBLES</u>	(P.70)
<u>MAGNOLIA AND THE MOON</u>	(P.71)
<u>LEAST TRAVELED PATH</u>	(P.71)
<u>GIRL</u>	(P.72)
<u>BRAND NEW</u>	(P.72)
<u>PICTURE 3</u>	(P.73)
<u>TICK TOCK</u>	(P.73)
<u>PART OF ME, PART OF HIM</u>	(P.74)
<u>POST-IT THANKS</u>	(P.75)

Fully Empty

You make me feel empty.
You didn't always make me this this way.
In fact, at some point, you made me feel full.
Full like... like I had just cleared two plates at Thanksgiving, and my grandmother just announced that desert was ready.
Full like a city bus when it's rush hour.
So very full that my belly filled.
My thighs grew thick.w
My cheeks swelled.
My ass grew wide.
And my breasts, heavy.
Your love made me feel, full.
It fed me. Kept me warm. And most importantly.
Full.
With 3 words: I love you.
You filled me.
But then,
You decided that I looked too, full .
You looked at my protruding belly in disgust
You looked at my swollen cheeks in anger.
At my sagging bosom in disdain.
At my thickened legs with vexation.
At my obese backside with irritation.
And you took it.
You took your love.
That which made me feel, warm
Made me feel fed.
Made me full.
You took it, and all it did for me.
Now my skin shivers in the cold.
Now my legs are twigs.
My chest a board.
My cheeks hollow.
Now I feel like an old car in the junk yard, without tires and my engine flaking with rust.
Now I feel starved as if I haven't eaten in weeks.
You make me feel empty.

-Jaixa Lopez



The Phantom Star Seed Lion

a dandelion...
flowing through the snow dancing
in the dim moonlight
i dream of blue skies
and cracked hourglass as time runs
across the seashorEs
suddenly clouds cleaR
a single gem at midnight
flashing through the night
but it understands
loneliness it's determinAnt
to dance together
for king and country
i fly by lanterns to See
the land in new light
i descended on
to a puddle to see her
reflectin up closE
and together we
danced on till our heart's content
raindrop repulleD us.

- Joel Paredes

Three Ways

We're on the phone and shawty
calls me
You ask me not to black, so I listen.

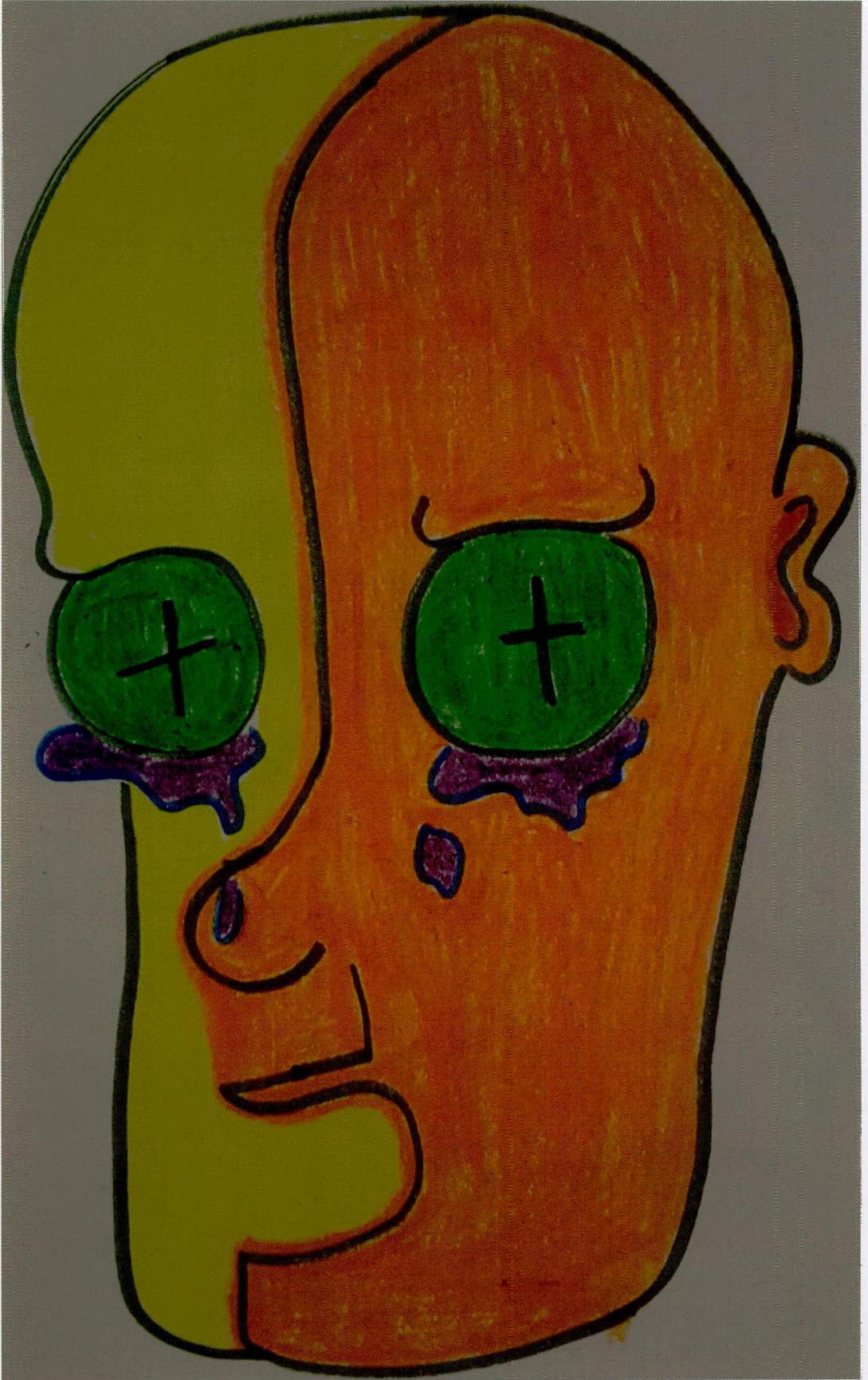
She tells me my energy is draining and
that you don't need me,
But does she know that the back of your eye-
lids have my complexion?
Or how you call me every evening to ask for my
blessings?

She continues down the road her insecurities,
Listing all the things that you love about me.

I've got you on the next line reciting poetry,
I listen but I didn't sign up for uncertainty.
I wanted a lover who only needed parts of me
I don't care that my lips feel like a sugar fix or how
Your Moon rises when my Sun sets.

I click over as she continues,
She tells me that I ruin your days and take light away.
She doesn't know that you like it that way.
She thinks that it's you she adores,
When really it's all of me that she loves about you.

- Amber Williams



Airiana Rendon: Two Faced

Abandoned City

Sights...
I love you still
I keep thinking of you
All day long and along
With the moonlight
And despairs
In the abandoned city
Of silence and storm
And the wild bunny
Departed the city
And flew
Gasping for light
Of the moon
In the far space
And I'm here still
Watching
As the wild bunny
Returning and gestures
Of despairs
Returning to the
Abandoned city
In aches and echos
Louder than the storm
The storm of the
Abandoned city

-Safwat Abdelmasih

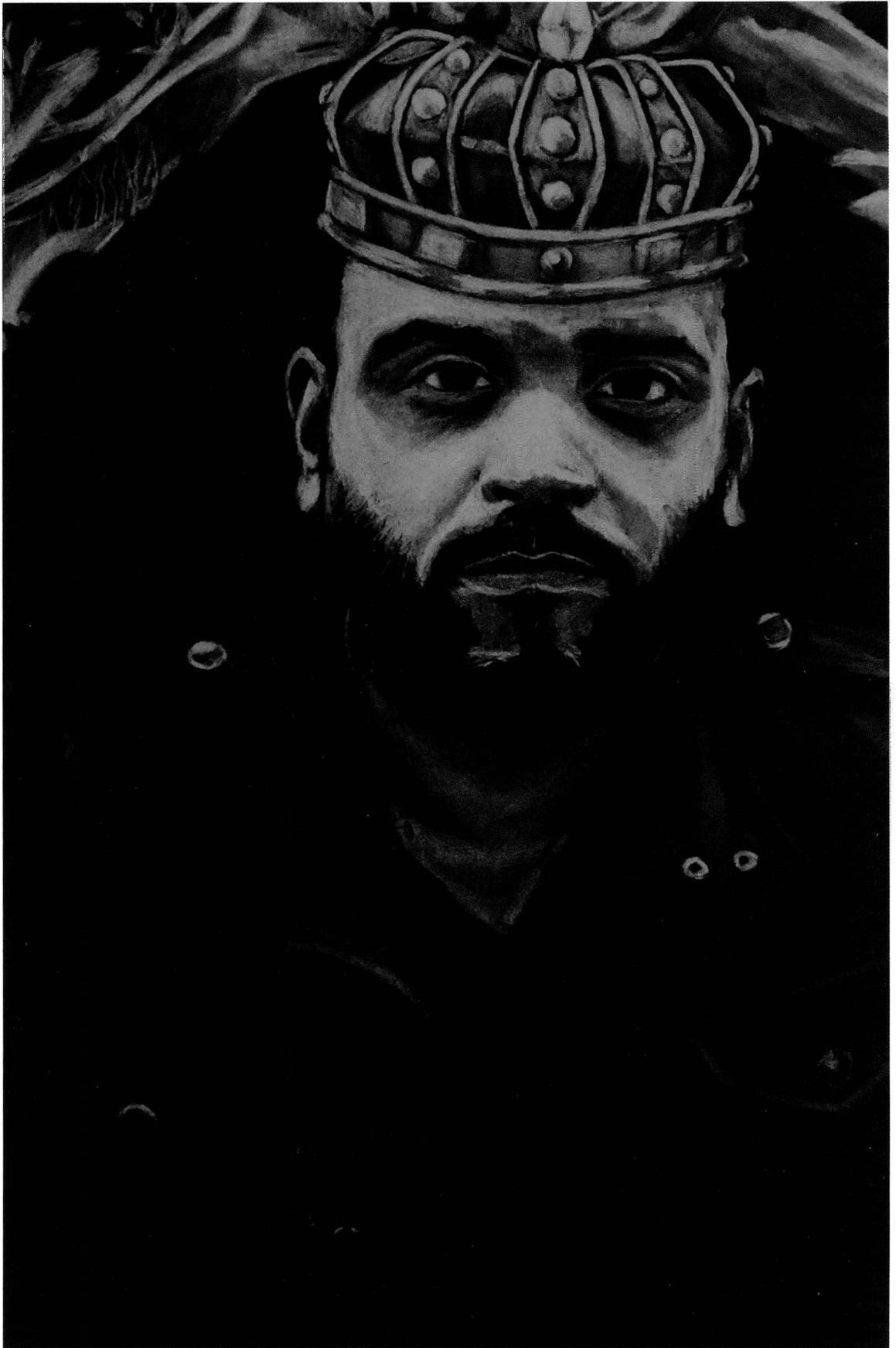


Lyvette Soto

A Somewhat Fond Memory

Thinking back, I seem to recall
A time, when I wasn't so tall
And my baby sister just started to crawl
Saturday morning was when I had the best feeling
Internal clock would wake me up
When everyone else would be sleeping
Me and my little brother running straight to the kitchen
To get a bowl of cereal, that was a mission
Opened up the cabinet, just to find
Nothing but a few dead roaches, and hoped we were going blind
Someone beat us to the punch!, had an idea who it was
My older sisters, the wonder twins
Of course, that's what an older sibling does
If we were lucky, they left early for work
Then we would rummage through their room
To find cereal, snacks, and goodies they hid from us
And accept the forthcoming doom
For now, we were content with our bowl of Cocoa Puffs
When our sisters get home, they just might kill us
And they wouldn't look as pretty in handcuffs
Fox kids, ABC kids, and Kids WB
Were the channels we alternated on commercial breaks faithfully
Kids WB was the best though, I'm sure we can all agree
These mornings were iconic, I have to say
Even with a routine that was repetitive
I wouldn't have spent that time any other way

-Daniel Videau



Ouch.

Gina Lymberopoulos

“Our love was made for movie screens,” as our favorite Kodakone song says. Our friends always said they wish they had a love like ours, as strong and admirable as those cheesy characters that fall in love in a Nicholas Sparks or John Green novel. We had romance for the ages; a chemistry stronger than a chemical bond in a high school lab. They do say that two chemicals that aren’t supposed to mix can end up being pretty deadly, though. I guess you could say the same for me and him. He picked me up at eight. I told my mom I was going out with the usual, but I could reassure you this was not the case.

Let’s rewind back about a year.

I was home alone, bored out of my wits. My family had gone away to our cabin for the weekend and all I had for company was my dog. Twitter was boring, Snapchat was overplayed, who even uses Facebook anymore; and that’s when I decided to download Tinder. I had no intention of taking this seriously; it was all fun and games until a few dozen swipes in, I stumbled across his profile. “20, love sports, comic books & music! Hit me up!” He was tall, about six foot one with dark brown hair and piercing blue eyes that could melt your soul just but looking into them.

I swiped right. It was a match.

About an hour passed when I was suddenly awoken by a loud notification. Alas, it was from the boy on Tinder.

“Hey gorgeous, if you’re free to facetime, let me know!”

We facetimed. And we did again, and again. I didn’t think it was possible to fall in love over the phone but I did. We talked about everything; from music to writing, sports, even the most intimate details of my life were now part of his. We finally met at a Blink-182 concert, and that’s when we made our relationship official. He kissed me to one of my favorite songs; “I Miss You.”

It was a dream. My friends all adored him. He would buy my gifts, shower with me with compliments and make me feel as if I was the only girl in the world. We became the “it” couple of our friend group.

About two months in, things began to change. He got angry with me really fast. One time, he cursed me out and left me in the middle of a parking lot in the town over at 11’o clock at night. Why? I was answering my mother’s text messages and he thought I was ignoring him. I forgave him, though. I figured he was having a bad day and I apologized for making him so angry. A week later, he told me I was too fat and if I didn’t lose weight he’d dump me.

I started skipping meals. He was right, anyway. At least he cared enough to protect my image.

A month later, we were alone arguing in his room. I told him I wanted to see other people.

After that argument, he told me to use cover up on my bruises and wear a sweater; he didn't want our friends asking any questions.

I did.

I wore a sweater that day, and I remember the countless amounts of compliments I had received on it. I remember him taking credit for it, and my friends praising him on what an amazing boyfriend he was.

"You're a lucky girl."

I smiled. The best acting I'd ever done was in that very moment.

Let's fast forward to the present.

Our last fight was last night. I told him that I was tired of living that way, and that I was done. I wanted nothing to do with him anymore. I stood up for myself. I was proud of myself for the first time in a long time.

He grabbed me by the wrists and threw me on the floor before I could even finish my sentence completely. He kicked me a few times, and I remember his voice growing deeper and more sinister with every word he spoke and every kick to my body. "You'll never be done with me. No one will ever love you like I do." I begged for him to stop, but this only made it worse. The last thing I remember seeing was the metal bat coming down at me. The last thing I remember hearing was my favorite song. "I miss you, miss you."

My funeral was today. My friends were all there, huddled in a pew of the church we grew up attending together holding each other trying to fathom the loss of "someone who was more than a friend but more like a sister." My parents held my little brother in their arms as they stood over my body lying still in my purple lined casket saying goodbye to me for the last time. Mom leaned down and kissed the scar above my temple that caused me to be where I am now.

Nobody knows where he went after he did what he did.

I just wish I could apologize for making him so upset.

Right?

Do I believe in love at first sight?
No.

Even though I do believe in the way you don't always *fall* in love,
you collide into it like you would a wall on your way to the bathroom in the
middle of the night when you don't have your glasses on-
I don't believe in love at first sight.

Do I believe that I could randomly look up at any given time and
have my eyes magnetically snap to where you are,
even though maybe I didn't know you just yet,
and have every other sound and person and thought fade out around me?
Do I believe that I could find you in a sea of people
and after a while get so good at pinpointing you in a crowd that I go on living life
as if it's just me and you?

Yes.

If you're asking me if I believe in you then yes.
And If you're asking me if I believe it was you from the moment I laid eyes on
you,
then yes.

Maybe I don't believe in love at first sight,
But I believe in you,
And that's the same thing, right?

- Dylan Vivolo





Caffeine
&
Dreams

Art Ghazal

I'll be your babe who's all about art.
I'll feed your mind, there's no doubt, art.

Mark my words, I'll paint woman who like to pout, art.
Smart woman, insane woman, hundreds by the count, art.

Empowerment, sexuality, nothing mundane, hang it up, mount, art.
Don't force it, embrace it, explore it, you're in route, art.

I'll be your muse, in front of the camera, slouch, art.
Take my picture, everything you do, I inspire, no drought, art.

I'm your recruiter, I scout, art.
Where would you be without me, I'm calling you out, art.

- Isabella Pride

Afflictions of a Muse

Brian Altamirano

What can be more painful than a broken heart? It systematically dismantled my very essence. Tortuous apparatus of destruction were inflicted upon my flesh, digging themselves ever so deep into my soul, causing havoc along the way. Annihilating the character of a once strong and proud individual, until nothing was left to be recognized. A caricature of myself was all I was left with, broken into so many miniscule grains that I became foreign to my own self. Every morning I woke up to the reflection of a strange figure staring back at me with eyes so weak and gloomy that I was left with no choice but to rebuke him. Every morning I told him “to hell with you. You feeble fiend of a creature.” And every morning it stood on the other side of the mirror, staring back. I was disgusted by his presence, just the thought of him made me sick. No pity was found in my heart for this critter of a person that I became, only repulsion, only distaste, and disgust. In what moral position was I to say to my brethren to love each other, if I couldn’t find it within me to do the same toward my own self? I couldn’t animate the same force that oozes out of me when I see an orphan or a beggar towards my own being. I had rejected myself completely, and in doing so I had lost myself among the perpetual freezing flames of despair. Engulfed in the darkest of clouds situated in the midst of an abyss, I became blind to the possibility of ever escaping such labyrinth of despair. My will had been crippled and sucked away, to the point that I was unable to gather the energy to stand up to my own oppression. My growing hebetude had become so immense that I was no longer compelled to exert any energy outwardly, depression had swallowed me whole.

Before I met her, I was an impenetrable iron bull, strong both mentally and physically; but then the wound inflicted on me by that petite creature became the demise that took me into the horrific place in which I found myself. Must I blame my foolish heart for having led me into her arms? Or must I blame my ego for becoming so attached to her presence? What about her, can I bestow these accusations upon her, so as to leave me blame free? Of course not. My own weakness was the cause of my despair. My senses had distracted my consciousness, so as to become dazed. My sight had been taken in by such beauty, my touch desired the softness of her lips, my sense of smell had been captivated by the aroma that she left behind, my hearing indulged in her symphonious voice, and my taste glands attracted to her every kiss. I was enchanted, taken in completely in the same way that a raven easily becomes fixated unto a bright object.

It was at this time that I was struck down from the summit of the greatest of mountains where she resided. Inflicted with despair by her repulsion I tripped over myself, falling

from a precipice of immense altitude. So high was her pedestal that the cosmos could barely contain it. As I was purged out from her presence and plunged back to earth with intense speed, I was exposed to the elements. Freezing in the cold, dark, emptiness of space; burning my flesh as I scratched the sun; sucked in, mutilated, and spit back out by a black hole. Until I landed back on earth; but the velocity that had been generated was so immense that the crest was unable to contain me. I landed under huge layers of rocks, dirt, crystals, and magma. Deep was the pit of despair in which I was left. Alone in the shadows of the underworld, I encountered many demons. The entity which remained closely attached to my every move was my new found friend Misery. She would attach her many tentacles to my atlas and would demand to be dragged around. Never far off in my conscious; exhausting me in every aspect. I had become so accustomed to this agony that the thought of a life away from this preposterous cave was inconceivable. A senseless drone I had become, in a tenebrous world where misery was omnipresent.

Maybe it was my proximity to the core of hell, maybe it was my own delusion, whatever it might have been, being in such a place would make a day drag for years. Sleep was seldom acquired and when it came, it would become afflicted with calamities so as to keep me up for what it felt to be another kalpa. Epochs came and went and with my old companion Misery I remained, dragging her along as I roamed the nebulous corridors of the labyrinth in which I settled.

In a completely spontaneous moment I had separated myself from my companion, her tentacles had come loose for an instant. Although this event took no longer than a second, it was more than enough time. It sufficed, and a fire had rekindled in the depths of my subconscious. Aware of such sensation I knew that I had to act upon it before the monstrous shadows came to pay me a visit. So I became keen with this new found sensation. Desire started to formulate in my mind, causing my body to become warmer and warmer. I was infused with flames of passion once again, my shackles burning off. So luminous I was, that the whole labyrinth was lit, and completely eradicating the diabolical shadows that dwelled in such place.

My mind was free once again. Her bondage over my heart had been broken and my lungs could expand once again. For the first time in a long time I was able to take the deepest of breaths. I felt exalted, vigorous, engulfed in such a magnificent and vibrant light. After such breath, I came to realize that what had seemed to be a short sporadic moment that gave me freedom once again was actually an event that had been going on since I fell in such a state. I came to understand that the reason for my fall was not due to her ending our relationship; but rather, my neglect of myself.

I began to dislike my own being, quickly that took flight and it became despair at trying

to get rid of myself. I had become soft, a spineless insect in the eyes of those around me, and as the world is my mirror, that horrific reflection that the world showed me came from within me. I rebuked such personality to the point that I took a plunge off of the precipice and into the dark abyss in order for me to disappear from my own self.

I had believed that I tripped off of the summit from her slight exertion of force when she denied me. I had believed that I was in hell because of the ferocity of that fall. I had believed that Misery had attached herself to the tip of my spine. All these assumptions were wrong. The fall came from my own indignation at myself. My old friend Misery had not attached herself unto me; but it was I who had the tightest grasp on her. I was so deep in this state that I had become delusional, I was blaming exertive forces for my lack of character, even though a character is as much of a delusional concept as that which I tried to get rid of. What I had done was to try to get rid of the self with the self, which is utterly impossible. It would be as trying to see my own eyes with my own eyes, or trying to touch the tip of my finger with the tip of the same finger. I was at a lost from the beginning, and my trying to do something to improve only sent me deeper into despair.

The opposite would not work either. That is, not doing anything about it. So neither doing something about it nor not doing anything about it would have helped me escape. What was I left with in such a perplexing event? I was left with a new found opportunity that would get me out of the pits of hell. All I had to do was to take a leap of faith and understand as well as feel that the ego which I tried so hard to get rid of never existed. All the judgement and condemnation were bestowed upon a character that was a complete phantasmagoria; which held no real entity in reality, not a single atom could form from this concept. So by the mere act of this realization the freezing fires of despair were melted away. Soon after I found myself in a state of tranquility, as if I was surrounded by the beauty of nature. I kept this state of mind long after its genesis. This concept was not only applicable to my ego or lack thereof, it was also relevant when speaking of my muse.

It felt as if an eternity had passed since I had last seen her, and yet I could still remember those little imperfections that had made her perfect in my eyes. Even with my new found detachment, she was still at the rudimentary actions of my heart. I knew that an encounter with her would be inevitable, and that the first glance would determine the outcome of the chains of events that would unfold afterwards. I also knew all characteristics that I had gathered in the past were a fugazi, a blowing of smoke, so that the warrior who I thought I was didn't really exist; and neither the spineless buffoon who fell into despair. This brought forth a certain level of comfort, since there was nothing left for me to become a critic of. I could accept the person I was during those times and at the same time reduce the influence which they play in the present events. I could

suspend judgement from both myself and the rest of the world on how one is meant to react when inflicted with love.

The time finally came for both of us to see each other again; it had been weeks since we had last held a conversation. Circumstances had kept us away, but fate has a funny way of dealing with events that one tries to stay clear of. We were in close proximity. Our eyes locked. She looked as beautiful as ever, with those big dark eyes penetrating my soul, that huge smile that wrinkled her nose and pierced my skin.

I could not become fixated on her beauty as I had done in the past, I admonished myself; being enchanted by her motions and acts would be a regressive state. I had to become colder in my approach this time around, being in love without the attachment that is usually associated with it. Thus we held our first conversation, it was kept for some time. Until I came to realize that those eyes that had looked at me sublimely, had the same spark towards another man. I knew it would be a futile act for me to try to win her love like I had done in the past.

I was detached from a wounded ego, I knew she had become unreachable. I could finally rest, I could start to use my energy for more practical matters. I became fascinated by endeavors that would consume a vast amount of my energy and time; once again I wanted to suck the marrow out of life. Experience it completely with the same passion that I once had towards her. Thoughts of becoming a writer, a poet, an entrepreneur, a boxer, a pilot, a physicist all came to mind; all were within the grasp of my imagination. Yet even at this point she still held a high rank within the infrastructure of my subconscious; but she had become more of a *hintergedanken*- a simple thought in the back of my head. I began to contemplate whether complete detachment from her would become my best option; but in doing so I would be doing the same thing I had done in the past, I would be exerting a huge amount of energy into a futile goal. Abandonment of this concept quickly became apparent. Once again, there was nothing I could do and at the same time, nothing I could not do to change my circumstances. All I had was awareness of myself and my circumstances as they were, and acceptance of them without passing judgement. A simple concept when written down; but sometimes the most elementary things can become the most difficult.

How strenuous and complex is the process of life, and yet so simple, so simple as to continue to go on without the need of any conscious attention. The growth of a baby inside the womb is extremely complex, yet the baby does it with immense ease. It feels that I must adapt a similar concept within the realm of my everyday life. It would take me away from the labyrinth of my own thoughts and into a more vibrant way of life. It would allow me to be fully engaged in the moment, sort of the same sensation I get as

when I am around her. That is to feel young, to feel strong, to feel vibrant, to feel alive, to feel that my heart is filled with joy, to feel that life is happening to me as much as the other way around. This is a simplistic attitude of love.

The task at hand now becomes to be able to gather this sensation from other sources and not just from a muse. I ought to become engaged in the moment, in doing so she will slowly be diluted among the fluidity of the events that are being performed. Becoming analogous to a rose is the conclusion of her, upon which I have derived. To enjoy her presence without trying to pluck her. It is so that I will depart from her presence, so as to let her find her way and I mine. Nonetheless she remains my muse, influencing my actions and thoughts. For a humble poet I've become, whose songs are song upon her thoughts, and even if her name has gone, the rose's smell will carry on.



Pablo Heras

Take Your Medicine

The landscape is flat
As far as the eye can see.

We are so accustomed to it
now, the edgeless empty

medicated tranquility.
People are
fading fast. Crawl

on your knees, sand
between your
fingers, all dramatic

and stuff. It really

has been
the end of
the world.

- Edwin Bode



Best Interests at Heart

Unless you or me do something about this, he's not going to feel any better
Someone has to, at least try, to make him see the good parts of life
Like how he still has his ideas to pursue, or some shit like that
You know what he wants to do, so go on ahead and cheer him up
Cares and circumstances, especially his, matter at a time like this
A straight-forward talking to is probably our best option
Whole lives depend on us, if you think about it, because what if he goes on a
rampage?

Awful things will definitely happen, whether it's to himself or others
Lot upon lot will be filled with regrets and the results of our carelessness
Nothing's as bad as not doing something about this
Going to his place and talking to him is the best thing to do
To do nothing is disserving our friend and possibly others
Get your shoes on, we're out
Better to do this than let some other person get in his head

- Brandon Rodriguez

Sueños Atormentados

Angel De La Peña

The elephant was awoken by the torment of dreams. Her mattress laid on the floor in the center of the room right before a window, allowing the moonlight to meet her stare when she would be awoken in a bed drenched with oil. It flowed out of her like a stream of water during her time in dreams, time spent gathering the scattered memories of her lover. Despite herself she woke up from her bed and walked on over towards the window. There a cockroach waited.

The cockroach with his body facing the window continued to gaze at a night which did beauty well. There were no sounds which could disturb the wandering soul. A soft breeze carrying along the calm felt only in the familiar moved through the trees at the other side of the lake, eventually meeting the aching shell of the cockroach. Once the cockroach came under the disfigured shade which the elephant created, he continued to stare at a moon who at this time admired herself on the lake. And both the elephant and the cockroach bathed in the moment. To the latter the moment brought along the realization that such a thing was possible; the cockroach, having spent his entire life within these four walls had never understood reflection, while the former, standing short beside the cockroach, became overwhelmed with envy at how the moon admired herself and enraged at how it dared to do such a thing before her. It wasn't long until the elephant caught sight of the cockroach and once the disgusting and vile insect (the elephant thought), crossed her sight, she used the force of her emotions, lifted her trunk and smashed the cockroach.

"Come on now, you know there are no closed doors here," the head nurse said.

Despite this reality and despite the consequences which would usually follow, it was known that the elephant was the head nurses' favorite and as such enjoyed comforts which no other patient was granted.

"How are you May?" The elephant responded. The head nurse takes notice of the elephant's bed.

"It happened again?" The elephant nods.

"Did she say anything this time?"

"I actually have no desire to speak."

"It's better to talk about it, you know that." May continued. "I only want to help." "Get some poison."

"That's not funny."

"Neither are all the cockroaches wandering around in this room."

"I'll see what I can do."

The elephant still looks at the moon.

“Come down to breakfast today.” May continues, “I spoke to Lisa and I convinced her to fix up your favorite: los tres golpes. I even have el queso blanco which you love so much. Just— just come down.”

“What’s the point in talking when we both already know the answer?” “There’s nothing stopping you. You know that right?”

“Stop talking to me like a patient.”

“Come down.”

The elephant looks over at May. “It’s a beautiful night,” she says.

Once May stepped out of the room and the elephant left alone with the moonlight, piece by piece the remains of the cockroach were carried by that wind which now made its way back towards the palos. The elephant after several minutes made her way towards the closet and placed clothing upon a body, which despite now being dirty, was once a well maintained temple and headed past the door.

When the elephant stepped into the common room she was looked upon by the herd which gathered there to eat, despite the shouts created by Abel who was being pushed against the wall by guards.

“I’m so tired,” he screamed, “please, I’m so tired.”

The elephant remained by the door as Abel, being carried by guards, made his way towards her. He repeated the words over and over again until the elephant was forced to contemplate its truth. May who had now stepped out of the kitchen looked over at the elephant and made her way towards her with a plate in her hands. The elephant looked at the food and sat on the table by her side. Without saying a word to May she took a bite out of the queso blanco and the juice which flowed out of it with every bite reminded the elephant of that night en el Jardín.

It was a night unlike any other in Santa Piedra. The sun still warmed the elephant’s skin despite the fact that midnight had already passed, and the birds who would at this time find rest among the palos, flew in circles over all of Santa Piedra. This, the elephant knew was taking place as a result of the oil which flowed throughout all of Santa Piedra after Pablo Iguante opened the gates to el Jardín.

Unlike most who called Santa Piedra home, the elephant was one of the few whose feet remained without cover when the oil entered her home. Despite her attempt to find the nearest chair or mueble to stand upon, the oil touched her feet and for the first time in the elephant’s life she danced. Finding herself lost in a place distant to that of control, the elephant danced her way towards the main road, and from there made her way towards the gates which soar towards the heavens before el Jardín. As the elephant made her way she noticed how the roaches, los macos, the rats and every other doubtful crea

ture which came in contact with the oil danced alongside her. And as she continued step by step surrounded by the others, the elephant never thought she would find the day when such creatures, which to her remained some form of testament to her truth whenever she would attempt to abandon it, would be welcomed by her with open arms. And yet they continued to dance until their skin made of cuero came under the protection of the dancing palos en el Jardín. Once there, the elephant like all those around her found themselves in awe not only by their surroundings, but at how comfortable they felt in the midst of it all. To the elephant it seemed that this gathering despite knowing that it was without parallel in history, was somehow familiar, and as the elephant's calm found itself in the company of others, the elephant felt that they had all returned to something from which they had came.

Pablo Iguante leaning short against the pulpit allowed the dancing to continue without music, enabling all those en el Jardín to listen to the whispers which el Mar del Principe uttered with every wave which reached the shores of Santa Piedra, after a journey which stretched twelve-thousand miles.

It was during this silence that the elephant was brushed by a horse who made her way through the others towards the edge of Santa Piedra. Her skin, as dark as the skies above, dark skies which during that night would with their truth allow the stars to shine theirs, welcomed with humility the sun's continued grace. The horse went on until she reached the edge of Santa Piedra with el Mar del Principe before her, as the elephant from far behind admired the nappy mane which the horse wore well. Throughout the gathering the elephant was unable to look elsewhere but at the horse, and she could feel as every passing second brought along a greater understanding of her beauty.

"El tiempo llegara," Pablo Iguante said as he stood on the edge of Santa Piedra with el Mar del Principe behind him and a flock of sheep before him, "cuando caminaremos sobre calles de crystal." As the elephant alongside the others listened to Pablo Iguante, they came to the realization that these words were never meant to be understood.

"Will you join our class today?" May asked.

"And do what—talk with everyone else here about what we're thinking?"

"Only what you're feeling."

"I was doing that before you interrupted," May said.

"And do you expect us to allow you to leave so long as you continue to only speak with yourself." May attempts to grab the elephant's hand, "you need to speak to others. You need to cooperate with us."

"If the time ever comes when I have something to say, I will write it," the elephant said.

"Besides—no one is waiting for me."

As the other patients made their way to the various sessions which were being held all

throughout el Hospital Maniatico, with the aim of preparing them for a world outside these walls, the elephant made her way back towards her room. Before she could arrive however, the elephant first had to pass by room 102 where Abel and all those whose emotion ran free would be taken. As she passed the room Abel stepped out with two nurses behind him. Abel walked passed the elephant silently allowing her to notice how the sadness which Abel carried on his face minutes before had been replaced by a smile, which she could feel had never known suffering. Once inside her room the elephant could see how poison had been placed at every possible corner in the room just as she had instructed, and was relieved by the thought that today she would have a peaceful rest.

That night in Santa Piedra after the gathering had concluded, the elephant laid on her bed with her sight on her roof made of zinc, and without any attempt to dissuade herself from the feelings which tormented her mind, the elephant began to feel herself with her left hand in a way which she had never done before. Times would come when she would look towards the curtain which served as the door, and whenever she would hear a sound behind it she would control the emotions which inspired the motion of her hand. The struggle came to a swift end when her hands lost all sense of control, causing a mighty stream of milk to water her bed, and within seconds start to flood her room and the rest of the house.

“Que diablo es esto?” The elephant’s mother screamed from her room. Panicked the elephant covered herself before her mother entered the room. “Mi hija,” the elephant’s mother with a smile continued, “mi pobre hija—te enamoraste de un elefante.” The elephant’s mother sat beside her daughter and started to caress her hair. The rest of the night the elephant’s mother decided to share her torments with her daughter, whom she was sure by now would be prepared to know the details of her first love. It was during this conversation that the elephant noticed how the milk which watered their feet had started to age wise, and how this wisdom which caused the milk to age yellow, was due to the confessions of truth which the elephant’s mother spoke that night. The elephant accepted this as true when she witnessed the rhythm which her mother and the oil shared; the elephant’s mother’s hands belonged to her passion, as they flew all over the room, the oil would follow their direction, and as the soul made its struggle clear through the words which the elephant’s mother spoke, the oil danced along in understanding.

“Yo y tu abuela nada mas teníamos como cuatro días en Santa Piedra cuando yo decide coger para el Mar del Principe a bañarme. Me recuerdo pensando que yo nunca había visto una agua tan cristalina, y lo único que quería era entrar y poder caminar y ver mis pies entre la arena. No importando cuan hondo me metía siempre pude ver mis pies. Bueno tan enfocada en esa belleza estaba que una ola vino y me voltio. Cuando me levante el elefante mas negro que había visto en mi vida estaba encima de mi. Yo todavía

tonta de toda el agua que había bebido me quede ahí mientras el busco su caballo. El me monto y me llevo adonde mami. Al próximo día pase por la playa para ver si lo encontraba y ahí estaba el abajo de un palo. Quisiera poder decirte que el me tuvo que conquistar pero la verdad es que tu padre hacia belleza desde su juventud. Y si soy honesta con mi misma diría que ya en ese momento lo amaba. Y si no lo amaba veía en el alguien con quien siempre estuviera a salva, siempre estuviera segura. Bueno mi hija te digo que nos pasamos el día entero encima de su caballo entre las montañas, y ya al fin del día cuando vi por la primera vez el resplandor de la luna, el me agarro en su brazos y ahí hicimos el amor.”

It was all true and the elephant had no reason to doubt it. The elephant’s mother’s story of love could be summarized in few words; instead what had taken all night for the elephant’s mother to explain, and what caused the oil to tremble with a fury fueled by passion, were the emotions which the elephant’s mother felt all at once when she was penetrated by her lovers trunk.

“Pero la pasión no fue suficiente mi amor. Tu padre tuvo honor y fue ese honor que lo llevo a luchar eso malditos caballos cuando nos invadieron. Yo trate de decirle que luchar por el amor era mas importante pero nunca me escucho.”

Those words inspired a sensation within the elephant to confess to her mother that the one whom she had grown to love within a matter of hours was in fact a horse.

“El amor es una marea de sufrimiento mi hija. Pero estoy feliz en saber que ese dolor no nos condena a la soledad; no mi amor, el sufrimiento siempre nos unirá.”

And how could the elephant confess to her mother now the truth of her love. The elephant’s mother after having to endure ninety-six years at the mercy of the few memories which she held of her one love, the elephant was convinced that it was now her burden to feel the isolating nature of love and allow her mother to find some rest in her daughter’s suffering.

During the next gathering as the elephant entered el Jardín the horse whose black skin and nappy mane she had thought about since the moment she laid eyes on them, was now transformed into an elephant whose hands were holding those of Pablo Iguante. That night the horse gave her account of the miracle which had occurred; after having written her name in the book the Prince had gifted her with beauty by transforming her into an elephant. This miracle Pablo Iguante would later testify was the sign he had been waiting for from the Prince, stating that the Prince had promised him a beautiful elephant to stand by his side as he continued his relationship with the Prince. The elephant as she witnessed what was taking place before her could only think of the beauty which the horse used to do so well.

More than twenty years later the elephant awoke from what she presumed would be a peaceful rest to the sight of cockroaches roaming around her room. The night before there was only one, but now as the elephant examined the walls and corners of the room, the elephant counted more than thirty-five cockroaches. Terrified by the realization the elephant headed towards the lake behind el Hospital Maniatico determined to swim out as far as she could. She would swim so long as she had strength in her body, and if her bodily strength would wither away, she would use the strength of her emotions.

It was at this point that the elephant noticed how the time had come for the moon to admire herself once more, with the lake serving as her mirror. Before she could enter the elephant was stopped by a large creature whose wings danced with the rhythm of the wind; it continued to carry itself across the lake effortlessly, so sure of itself the cockroach flew with its sight on the crystal clear lake below. It eventually settled underneath the palo to the elephant's right. Still uncertain as to the identity of the creature, a creature which to the elephant had done beauty already, she decided to approach the palo and was in awe at the cockroach she found.

"Belleza," the elephant said to the cockroach who listened. The elephant thought of this as a gift sent to end her suffering, and accepting it as so the elephant went on to tell the cockroach the truth about the only story of love which she had known. Once the quick story came to an end the elephant kneeled before the cockroach and said, "now go and find love." It was then in those pitch black eyes which stared back at the elephant that she was able to see how deformed and ugly the life which she had dedicated to beauty had made her. And so determined to end it, the elephant stood up and started to walk into the lake, causing the cockroach to jump and bite her neck; the elephant left bathing in her blood underneath el resplandor de la luna.

Let it Go, Let it Play

Jada Gordon

Side A

I put the needle on the record
Let it go, Let it play
Let the sounds and voices spray magic into your system
It's the best poison, the most enticing venom
No stream or download could ever replace
The melodic sound system and the booming bass
Read the liner notes and let the sound contort your face
Let it go, Let it play

Side B

Each track spins it's own web
And sings its own song
The spirit's in me so I sing along
Let it go, Let it play
The stories take me back to the lives of yesterday
They take me back to my own sordid life stories
But I don't want you to feel sad or sorry for me
Ice cream in my hands, little stars in my innocent
young eyes
Mom's yelling, sun beats down on my bare back
And I am mesmerized
Let it go, Let it play

Side C

The gems of Lauryn
The power of Janis Joplin
The wails and moans of Nina Simone
The merry-go-round rhymes of Nas and Kendrick
Love me
Guide me
And confide in me
Let it go, Let it play
I want this feeling of symphonic ecstasy to last forever
I'm as free as a bird and light as a feather
Better to feel this high now than never
Let it go, Let it play



Side D

This is a melodic, brilliant ride
The lyrics hit, the music sticks
Take me away because I cannot hide
Forgive me the chorus has me floating across the room
I have to prepare myself for impending doom
Soon the music will end my friend and flow down the drain
Then our valley will dry
Have to be honest I won't tell you a lie
So I Let it go, Let it play
Let the last trace of good music pour out of your system
So I could give it a proper goodbye
Let it go, Let it play, Let it die.

Sleeves

Gina Lymberopoulos

The summer breeze
blows through my window gently
Shivering
down my spine.

To my friends,
This means
Keggers
Playing flip cup and
Beer pong, Bonfires and
Road trips but
to me
It does not. For the girls it is
wearing tank tops
and high waisted shorts
Packing bikinis for
the weekend
At the lake upstate,
hoping
that they'll be able to impress that life
guard
from the year before.
But for me,

It is not.

For me,
It means
telling my friends that
I'm too ill
for the beach day Saturday,
to go on without me
And the question that constantly burns
Bound to make its annual return.

"Why does she wear sleeves
In the summer?"

It is because of the sleeves
of linear patterned scars
That litter my flesh
Hidden away.

But to everyone else,

I am just cold
All the time.



Lyvette Soto

Nostalgia

Ximena De Dos Cruces

Damage

Voiceless conscious

How close we hold what hurts us the most

Cause letting go is knowing that somethings are better felt alone

I've become a ghost

Of my own

A mind-trap, trapped in a prison: It's an empty room, unselfconscious

Messes I can't manage

Who can say they've loved,

honestly

I can't tell if this is real

When the dark has many sides

and the light only one shade

When you reminded me of what I didn't want to remember
And the fear of being lost in some absence
is merely thought: hollow sounds, glimmers and fragments
Wouldn't we all like to be in touch with time, not forgotten?

Who can say they've lived love,

grasping

Glassy eyes, an ocean and shallow waves, some good-bye.

These memories let me know you're no longer here
Leering shadows in the corners of my mind
And only you i find
Tear

Who can say they've never been afraid to feel
Nothing more than something invisible

Running in circles so long it feels like I'm sitting in one place, lost in a maze

I remain

I chose to pretend and you did too
Just so we can say we tried it again

Close to the pain

I thought this was more than a phase
Eternal yesterdays

Who can say why they love, anyway

We live through our flaws
How imperfect: It all seemed so perfect
Emotions on pause
we hold what hurts us the most, however
Letting go is learning to see through moments, forever, not ever
Feeling our cause

When true love is realer than any moment.

Just

Ed Bode

Just because
it's too cold
to go to Chinatown
and kick the gong

around, just
because it hurts
to work, just
because the sky

is gray dust
on the red brick,
just because it
gets dark early now.



Pablo Heras

We Are all AI(one)

Krys Howard Denard

“... At some point throughout the day, some of us realize we are watching time spill away; becoming innocent bystanders to the serial killings of seconds that are as valuable as the air we breathe. We put on our masks in the morning and, with our tattered facades, fade through the afternoon until our Oscar worthy performances of bravado and invincibility become convincing enough to fool our own minds. We often continue these portrayals into the night, when sadly we’re confronted with the lament of our own realities. Darkness, in this particular way, reveals the light. Yet there are always instances in our public displays of strength and self-awareness where the masks fall off and you actually become aware. Sometimes it’s the wayward sting of emotional turmoil, reminding you that you’re not as tenacious as you thought. At other times you’re confronted with nature, the supreme goddess of unpredictability, and with her divine uncertainty: a random rainstorm happens seconds after you’ve stepped outside. In most cases however, life has its own mechanisms in place to introduce us to the humble truths that we avoid.”

As the youngest of four brothers, Tyler Richards has always been the quintessential attention seeker. He spent his high school years straddling the social ladder in a futile attempt at popularity. He eventually mastered the role of court jester in his desperate plight for approval, while always using his humor to disarm young women and avoid physical conflicts with men. Although Tyler never could find a way to sit at the top of the high school social ladder, he had done well enough to win himself a seat at the table. His antics had also gained him the reputation of an amateur womanizer and a seducer of all mankind. A natural rake, if you will. Yet, for all the social allure he possessed, there seemed to be a hint of despair tied to him. From the way he wore his hoodies always a quarter of the way zipped - with his uniform shirt always unkempt below, you can sense a sort of coordinated madness looming right underneath his prescribed Burberry shades. Oh yes, his momma raised a very flamboyant boy. "Dress to impress, or don't dress at all", he always said. One of the most recurring scenes that haunted him from those days was during a biweekly meeting he had with his counselor Mrs. Rothstein. "Why don't you impress us with better grades" she once asked. "Who really cares about my academic performance" he stammered back, "this whole life is a performance, I'd rather focus on dressing the part!" "Young man, she calmly replied, "you are dressing the part for a canceled show." He always remembers his response that day, filled with naive enthusiasm and the petty urge to have the last word: "Life is a Broadway play."

High school ended way too quickly. Without warning, the real world had slowly crept up on Tyler and unfortunately landed him squarely unprepared for the present. He met this realization the way most self-assured high school graduates do, with an explosion of self-doubt, lack of foresight, and less than sufficient means to truly provide for himself. He gave into the grief of not being enough and found himself totally consumed by his overt lack of control over his own life.

Of course, he managed to get into character efficiently enough that no one close could ever see or understand the depths of his despair. The few moments he had between his performances of an ambitious adolescent he spent turning his liver into a refinery, detoxifying the effects of whiskey and gin. He originally started off by smoking marijuana, but the contentment and happiness he felt when he smoked only made him feel worse when he sobered. Why should he be happy? In his mind he was an utter failure in the face of anyone born or allowed to participate in the American experience. Not attending college was bad enough, but not having a real job and living with his parent made everything feel a whole lot worse. He often recalled all the women he had seduced with his charisma during his teens, all of them having long forgotten about the "waste man" and moved on to their bright futures. He would sit in his room and laugh sometimes at his inability to even capture their attention now, simply because he couldn't provide measly dinner dates or material bestowals to show his interest. All

of his male friends continued the chase of thrills, but his empty wallet could never pay the price of the gallivanting lifestyle. He was subject to only witnessing their fun from behind his computer screen while he faded from the world, living vicariously through online timelines, moments captured by cameras, and the occasional emotional rant post. He started to see the world only through the broken lenses of YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, neglecting to live out his own story. Stagnancy had conquered and trapped him in the confines of the narrow world known as anguish. How pitiable.

To cope, most of his sober moments were spent looking out his window searching for mental muses. You'd usually find him in that old walk-in closet his siblings had converted into a bedroom. Laying on the twin size bed and looking at the stark contents of his undersized room, you wouldn't find much: just a few books he never finished, a wardrobe that was only opened on special occasions, and a locked wooden cabinet case whose doors were held up by a loosening screw, divine will and magical defiance of gravity. Inside this cabinet he held his most valuable possessions. He often looked at his chest of treasures, musing at the decorative nature of the lock; whenever he did need to gain access to its precious contents, he would simply lift a door off and with one hand rummage for gold. He often got lost in his daydreams; looking out the window, his sole gate to temporary peace. The view wasn't exceptional, but it allowed him to watch over the younger children playing handstand, tag, and "treasure", amongst other games. Treasure was his favorite game growing up; to have something he could protect and hold dear for those few moments made everything that much more exciting. Other kids would attempt to find out what his treasure was for hours, but to no avail. Unlike his peers who repeatedly chose their favorite toys and parent's china forks, his treasure would usually be a piece of paper with his name on it, his eldest brother's lucky socks, or other things of that nature. He couldn't quite understand why he found value in any of those things, but they meant so much more to him at that age. Presently too depressed to care, he avoided the urge to figure out the reasons for his past peculiarities. Instead, he gazed at the kids below: their laughter, yells, their amazement at each other's hidden treasures made him smile. Summertime in the city was the best. "It's 10 am in the morning you baboons" he heard himself screaming, "can you guys shut the fuck up!" He enjoyed interrupting their adventures, and since the start of their vacation, had made it top priority to do so daily. "It's 10 am on a monday", the pediatric choir sung back in unison, "Can you get a job!" He shut the windows, "enough with theses dweebs", he murmured, "time for serious business."

On this particular morning, one like all the others, Tyler decided to take care of some of the grocery shopping. Okay, maybe "decided" is too much of an inaccurate word. You see, his momma had recently purchased 8 boxes of cereal, and only a half gallon of milk. Momma never understood that whole milk, although traditionally essential to consuming cereal, could also be enjoyed as a stand alone beverage. Add that to the fact that all three of his older brothers were athletes who associated the drinking of dairy as the basis of all fitness, and you begin to understand the tragic outcome that would take

place unless a thoughtful and heroic knight - Tyler in this case - didn't rise to the plate. A refrigerator without enough milk for cereal, without enough milk for four growing boys, is a first world tragedy. The very thought that Momma didn't grow up here sent chills down his spine most times. She was born on a poor island in the caribbeans; where 24 hour running water and electricity was practically nonexistent and the limited amount offered was reserved mostly for the rich. He was six years old when he first inquired, "what do you like most about being here then Momma?" "The movies", she would always responded, holding her glass of Barbancourt, "the actors are so funny." Lately, she was hardly ever home. Work life for a single parent had to be exhausting. He thought about her, and how ashamed she must be of him. What had he made of her sacrifices? He was worse than his father who left them so many years ago... So off he went, our tragic hero, embarking on this transient quest, equipped with the usual get up of black nylon sweatpants and an oversized grey hoodie that covered nothing but his bare chest; his eldest brother's flip-flops the footwear of choice. Walking out, he thought briefly about his father, and how just like him he would one day leave Momma. He would have to exit this stage, the scene was coming to an end. "Life is a Broadway play", he whispered to the empty hallway.

By the time he reached the bodega down the street, his mind, body and soul had begun the theatrics of convincing the outside world he was socially sound, his self-potential on route towards Canaan. The promise land was all but a smile away. As he entered the shop he was greeted by Ahmed and Elmer. Ahmed was the skinny, dark chocolate cashier who's rich, dark brown curls fell over his face - a picture of him would make for a great Jesus Christ stock photo. Elmer was the chef, a short but chubby hispanic fellow who laughed at his own jokes way too much. "Hey brother", Ahmed inquired, "you'd like it on a roll or hero?". He was referring to Tyler's regular; a Bacon-Egg and Cheese breakfast sandwich. How else would a growing boy have the energy to lay on his bed and surf the web all day? "Not today boss", he responded, "grabbing some Lactaid instead." Everything was a sacrifice. His weekly allowance was already dwindling, having already blown half this pass weekend on a gift for himself. "The world must be ending Papi, eh?" Elmer inquired. No way could he waste such perfect opportunity. Tyler heard the roaring laughter mixed with the perfect blend of coughing intermissions as he made his way to the far back. Underneath the dim lights, pass the beers and wine cooler section, surrounded by the faint reggaeton playing directly above him, he saw her.

She wasn't exceptionally beautiful, in fact, she didn't even strike him as pretty at all. Her face was flat and extremely skinny. All in all, to truly describe her was an unstimulating task. He focused his mind trying to pinpoint what had exactly triggered this instant attraction within him. She was short, had a slight double chin, and had her light brown hair in a bun, which oddly reflected his own hairstyle. He continued to look at her under the dim lights of the aisle hoping he could decipher her appeal; her body had some bodacious highlights, but the fact that she was no taller than 5'2 made it difficult to adore. As his eyes made their way back up her frame, he finally realized the startling

magnetism in the girl's gaze. So many times before he'd heard the saying, "the eyes are the window to the soul", but he had always thought of it as poetic fallacy, dressed up words to ensnare the untrained ear. Now he was experiencing the quote first hand; that one glance into her light brown eyes allowed him to see something he'd never seen before: a reflection of his misery. Inside his still carcass, his soul trembled. His unreliable sense of calm melted as he looked into her eyes. Nevertheless, the portrayal of bravado continued. Having lived on this stage of his own creation for so long, he was well versed in instilling his resolve until his desired effect was achieved. He approached her with the grace of a gentleman, greeting her with a cool smile. "Hello beautiful", the words flew out without any hesitation, "how's your morning so far?" Surprisingly, she didn't seem flattered or annoyed, as if expecting him, or any man with eyes and enough courage, to obviously approach her. She responded, somewhat too quickly, "Boy, **Bye.**"

How many times had he heard those words before? That seemed to be the default response of all the women he made a pass at these days. The first time he heard the phrase was from Ariel. She was ten times more beautiful than the girl in front of him. In fact, Ariel was a God on earth. It was two weeks away from graduation and, overwhelmed by the academic pressures - caused by his own procrastination - and anxious about the not so distant future; he released all of his demons inside her for the last time. Every scuffle that night, every grip, every kiss and moan felt like it would go on for an eternity. Yet, nothing lasts forever. Later that same night, he told her he loved her more than anyone else on the planet and got on his knees begging for her hand in marriage. "Boy, **Bye.**" Maybe she had a sixth sense about how things would end up. Maybe, she knew he wouldn't get accepted to any of the universities he applied to. Maybe, like most women around here, she hated all the men. All the infidelity, all the lies, all the overt disrespect had left her hollow. He and all men like him were to blame. She put on her clothes and left, forever, just as beautiful as the day she first came into his life. The curtains closed on Ariel's back and opened again to the petite brown haired girl inspecting the dairy produce. She wasn't as beautiful, but she was just as intense. He purposely reached for two whole milk jugs directly in front of her, posturing as cool as possible. Ice cold. "What's your name love" he solicited, "your hair's gorgeous." This time the silence lagged, then with all the strength she cared to muster, her response shrieked. "I said bye, nigga."

To be frank, Tyler would have been a lot more offended, had he not been paying so close attention to her visage that he noticed "it". In that single instance before she responded, time had froze. He saw her pupils glow when he called her hair stunning. He saw the corner of her lips slightly rise, foreshadowing what would have been such a marvelous smile. Then he saw her do it: correct her eyes, and force an unimpressed expression on her face. All these actions occurred in only half a second, but he saw! She was, without a shred of doubt, performing, posing, and acting out a reaction she convinced herself was the most appropriate for that moment. She was just like him,

unconsciously but intentionally acting out a role through the day as to not let her true self be shown. Her true self which would only return to her tonight, when all of the lights were turned off, as she laid on her bed. There, she would possibly hate herself for not being accepting enough towards him. There, she would ponder about the other alternatives that she could have chosen to act out. In that lonely bed, she would definitely wonder whether or not he would come back to the store to give his infatuation towards her another attempt.

He burst out into a slightly hysterical laugh. As expected, she simply walked away into the back room (whose door read: Employees Only), never looking back to see what would befall him. His mind focused back on his original goal: milk. Reaching the register felt like a walk of shame. Ahmed wore an uneasy smile, barely blinking - like a portrait of Christ, concerned at the actions of the sinners, urging them to return to salvation. Elmer was no longer laughing, his face was unperturbed. His eyes however, revealed a rage that wouldn't be subdued for much longer. "Thank God I didn't order food", Tyler thought. He quickly purchased the gallon and made his way out. Man, was he glad to exit out of that hell hole! He long since tired of asking when they would put a running A.C in that place. Lack of milk and absence of air conditioners, those were the real tragedies. Whilst waiting for the streetlight to change in the pedestrians' favor, a thought occurred to him. Was **everybody** like this? Was everyone everywhere always wearing a mask? He even thought about his family; was there ever a time where Momma and his brothers weren't posturing or pretending to be something that deep in their core they could never be? "Estupido!", he heard from behind, "my name is Fabiana." There she was, in the upstairs window atop of the shop, crumbling up a piece of paper to throw. "Text me", she mouthed at him, followed by a peculiar wink. He was smirking, now blowing an over the top kiss to her. She smiled. In just a few seconds the windows were closed, with her most likely making her way back down to the employee's breakroom. In about half that time, he had already saved her contact information on his phone. Life suddenly felt a little better. He stared at the crumbled piece of paper, it seemed to have been the last page of some old textbook.

With her number stored, this old relic was no longer of use to anyone. Still, he flipped it over, possessed to see both sides of the ancient sheet. He read it's content to himself, ignoring the honkings of the insistent cab drivers parked across to his left; sonic harassments were their daily routine, all for the sake of the almighty dollar. The page read:

Humans are bizarre creatures. We create false identities for ourselves every waking moment, never once stopping to rest our souls. We spend more time creating and occupying these characters than we do trying to be our own selves. Ironically, this is the only way we know how to connect with others. We go through life holding our cards to our chest, poker facing every move we perceive come too close to who we really are.

Our core can never be shown to another, we intentionally submit our true identity to a prison of darkness that can't be witnessed by any other soul. We all do it, all the time. We are twisted liars trying to convince each other of anti-truths such as fulfilled personal happiness and that we are all in a "better" state then our realities exhibit. We are all victims to the act as well. How utterly self-destructive is this ritual, yet how completely essential it ---

*We are all **alone**.*

"Must of been some type of philosophy course", Tyler thought. With his vacant left hand, he crumbled up the piece and shot it at the empty city garbage can to his right. Kobe Bryant would be proud. He hurried across the street before the light changed, running up the block with uncommon urgency. His neighbor, who was sitting on the front porch of the house directly next door had even asked him how was his day was going, only to be precipitously dismissed. "The day is going Wayne", Tyler yelled without looking back, "got some celebrating to do!" He made his way upstairs, bolting pass the first floor neighbors who were in the lobby hallway exercising their morning ritual, whilst flooding the entire complex with its signature stench. They never said hi, those guys, no matter how much of a good time they were having. Posing casually on the window facing the mailboxes, they stared as the youngster flew by. "Yes, yes, yes" he screamed while locking the apartment door, "I fucking did it!" He began to breakdance and moonwalk in circles all over the living room - hands moving in accordance with his feet, as if his limbs were possessed by the king of pop himself. "This life is a Broadway play", he howled, "This life is a Broadway play." He was back in the darkness now, finally able to take off the suffocating mask and breathe in the reality of what just happened. For these next few hours he was able to rejoice by himself. For the next few minutes he could be excited about what was next, free to escape this existence in the wonder that new love could bring. Deciding that placing the milk inside the fridge could wait, he went to open the wooden cabinet, his beloved treasure trove. He lifted its door and gripped the bottle of rum inside. Today was going pretty well. There wasn't a first world problem he couldn't fix.





Espírito Domingo

July

Stephen Tenezaca

Inside the grey Impala were two naked male bodies holding each other,
Without penetration taking place, only passion between a man who is 28
And a boy who is 18.

18 has dark brown eyes and is short
28 has light blue eyes and is tall
Both have black hair and the same name.

They are talking about what they want to be in life
18 wants to be an actor on Broadway and engaged
28 wants to retire from the legal firm by the age of 50 and married.

18 kisses 28 and performs fellatio on 28 with pleasure
28 moans with satisfaction
It's 18's turn and he moans with satisfaction, too.
They take a break.

Both men look into each other's eyes and discover they might be
In Love
Two hours ago, they were two strangers that met on Henning Drive.
Now are facing the possibility that they might be

In Love.

18 tells 28 that he is scared
28 asks why
18 tells him he has never felt intimate in his life
28 kisses him
18 is helpless
With him.
Night was becoming Day with the stars disappearing in the early morning sky
28 had to leave for work
18 is sad
Clothes are on and the nudity is gone

The Impala leaves the isolated parking lot

28 drops off 18 at Henning Drive

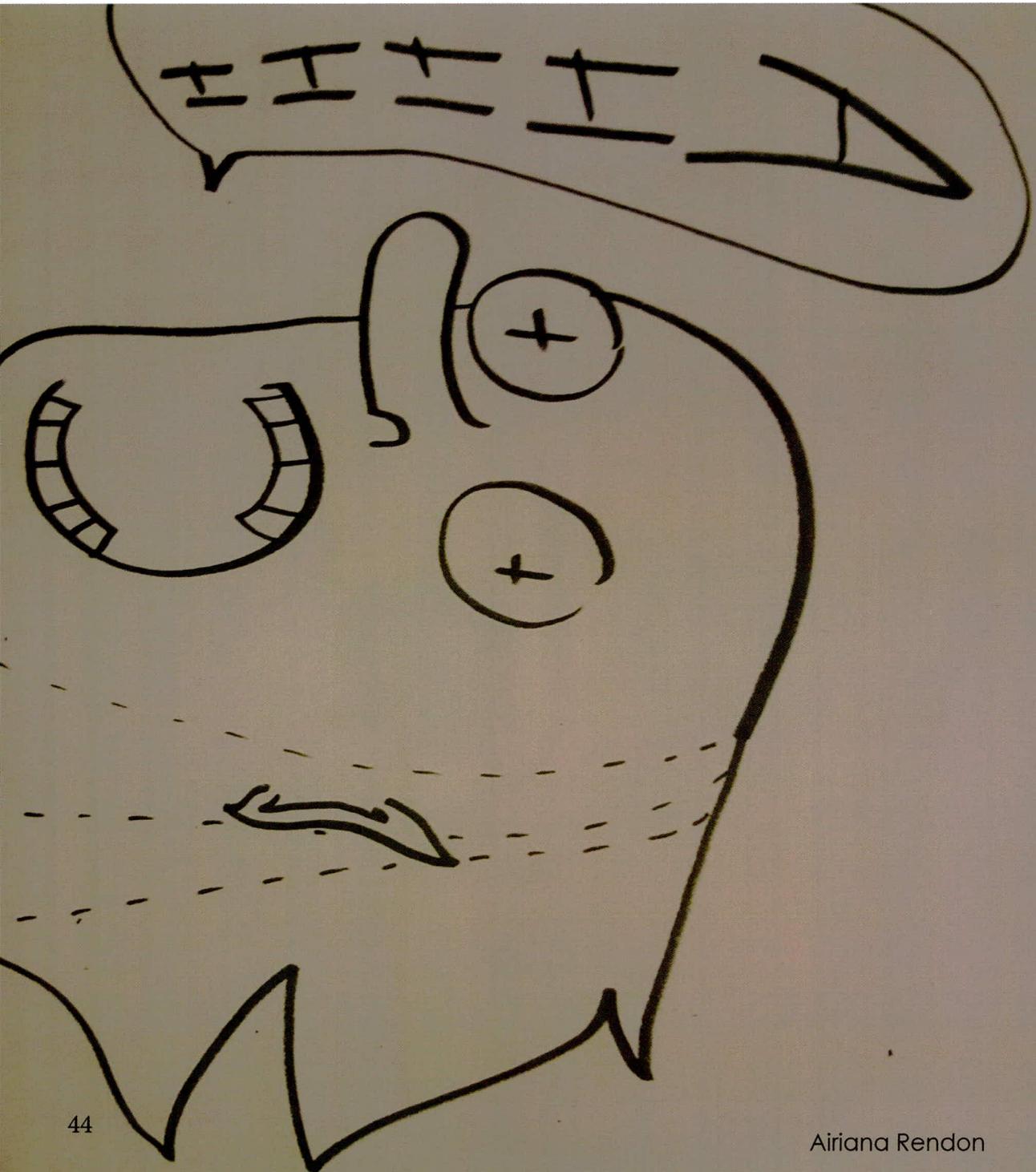
Goodbye Kiss takes place and 28 drives off into the tangerine sunrise.

18 is alone and waits for 28 to come back.

18 is now 20

Still waiting

28 is still 28.



ADAM

Joel Paredes

Blueskies and green is the color of trees a mirror reflects history, different puzzle pieces molded to create a new image, he made me though his image. I never had a childhood on my birthday I was given a gift of pitchforks and fire, they name me monster he calls me Junior. I can't speak but I can express emotions. for all my life I receive nothing but hatred. I knew love once but it was gone when my bride was murdered by my loving father now I feel hatred. I spent a good amount of time looking for him but karma got to him first. my mind feels like a maze water levels slowly rising my heart runs cold pondering the thoughts, does this one have a soul Blue tries and green is the color of skin a shatter mirror reflects my future.

Your Death Left a Crater In Me

Dylan Vivolo

when you died,
people looked at me like i had.
it's weird, cause like, here i am. living, breathing, blood still coursing. and yet, i feel like
i'm the one decaying on the basement floor.

when you died,
people looked at me like i had.
it's weird, cause like, here i am. living, breathing, blood still coursing. and yet, i feel like
i'm the one decaying on the basement floor.

you died. i lived.
and yet, people still managed to take pity on me.

you died,
and people looked at me like i was terminally ill, like i had maybe one more week to go.
afraid it was contagious, they'd stopped buy, brought food, then quickly scurried home.
to their own family.
that was still alive.

i guess the saying is right.
when those you love leave you, they take a piece of you with them.
i guess they were all right.
their hugs would've shattered me.
i was a wilting flower.
i was terminally ill.

i guess they were all right.
you died, and i did too.



Iryna Yafimchyk

I Wanna Build A Robot

I wanna build a robot With limitless ability
To do anything
And everything
To grant me stability
I wanna build a robot
To become a god
To heal disease
To conquer depression And bleeding veins
To stop bankruptcy
To teach us many things About advanced technology About love and
friends And most importantly! The secret of life
Yes, into that too
I deeply dive
About the secret of life? About the mysteries And science
I wanna build a robot
To replace my body Organs and skin
With metal and plastic To stop my heart's bleed To heal my illness
insanity Oh, that would be fantastic! I wanna build a robot
To I become a god
I wanna build a robot
Because I need a god

- Safwat Abdelmasih

Club Bench

Isabella Pride

My mother use to tell me “Alex, everything that glitters isn’t gold”. I never understood what she meant by it. It was always one of those things your parents would tell you over and over again that doesn’t register until it’s too late. Well, I remember when it did register. It was during the summer when I was ten years old.

I spent most of my free time alone. I enjoyed my own company. Don’t get me wrong going outside alone and trying to find something exciting to do was a challenge. In the beginning of the summer I spent most of my time on a bench. I know what you’re probably thinking, “a bench, really?”. I lived in a small project development in Brooklyn so there wasn’t much to do. Yes, this bench was pretty ordinary but the bench beside mines, that’s where the real fun was. That bench became so popular during the summer the kids who lived in Independent Towers nicknamed it Club Bench.

Club Bench was the spot all the cool kids in my neighborhood hung out at. I would watch them laugh, dance, argue and play Double Dutch; it was all happening at Club Bench. Now for a girl who had trouble entertaining herself this bench and the kids became appealing to me. After a couple of weeks of watching them I became more intrigued. I wanted to be a part of it. For the first time in my life I wanted to hang out with other people besides myself. I wanted to have girlfriends and I wanted to jump rope. I wanted to go to the corner store with two dollars in my pocket. I wanted to spend those two dollars on five cent Laffy Taffys and Sour Patches with my girlfriends.

At Club Bench there was two girls who stood out the most. They reminded me of the Twin Towers because they were the same height but not really and I could see that one shadowed the other. Their names were Tammy and Catrina. Tammy was tall and lanky. She had bronze brown skin with almond eyes and a round wide, nose. She mostly kept her curly dark brown hair in a low bun. Tammy loved hair gel, the more the better it seemed. She proud herself on her gelled down baby hairs. They looked like tiny waves going down the side of her forehead. Her style was the same as any ten-year-old in Independent Towers. She wore jeans with plain colored tees that matched her Jordans.

Catrina on the other hand was Tammy’s opposite even though she was close to Tammy in height. Unlike Tammy’s lanky body Catrina was slim. Her skin was the color of sand. She had big eyes with lots of teeth. Her lips were also big and she had a pointed nose. Most of the time she wore her hair wild and curly. Sometimes she wore it in a tight ballet bun. She had style for a ten-year-old. She never matched her tees with her sneakers like the other kids and her socks were always mismatched. I liked that about Catrina. They were both so pretty and loud. They received so much attention from everyone; I envied that. They were the dynamic duo. You didn’t see one without the other.

I thought I would spend my whole summer watching them. Being that quite, weird girl on the other bench who stares. Until Tammy and Catrina approached me one

day. They asked me if I knew how to turn Double Dutch. I could actually, I use to play with my cousins from my father's side in Virginia but that soon ended after my father stop picking me up during summer break.

I remember while Tammy asked, Catrina stood by her staring at me. When I agree to be one of their turners Catrina only said two words to me. Those words were "pretty eyes". My eyes are hazel with specks of green. I have very light brown hair. It's so light in fact that in the sun the edges of my hair look blonde. I have tan skin like burnt toast and I'm very short. I looked up at them both from my lonely bench with excitement and acceptance.

Once I was a part of Club Bench I was a part of the crew. It was better than I imagined. We played rope, we laughed and we danced. For the first time in a long time I didn't want to be alone. I wanted to be around friends. I wanted to be a part of a group and I got my wish.

The more time I hung out with Tammy and Catrina the better I got to know them. After a few weeks we stop going to Club Bench. Tammy didn't want to go anymore because Chicklet had a new girlfriend. Chicklet was an older boy Tammy dated. I never found out what his real name was. I did know why they called him Chicklet. He was missing two front teeth so the other kids would make jokes about him needing Chicklet gum to fill in the empty spaces in his mouth.

I use to watch Tammy and Chicklet from my bench. To a ten-year-old girl they seemed like they were in love. He was always hugging her and picking her up. She always looked so happy. Until the day she caught him hugging and picking up Ashely. Once her and Ashely had a fist fight in the court yard it was over for us hanging out at Club Bench. Not only was Tammy a fighter, she was also insecure. She would constantly talk down about herself. She would randomly call herself ugly. She would just blurt it out for no reason at all. Catrina would immediately correct her. She would tell Tammy how pretty she was and if she thought differently she was crazy. Then Tammy would look into a mirror and call herself beautiful for five minutes. It was like she needed Catrina to stroke her ego. Among other things Tammy was bossy. She had to be the leader, she had to be the most interesting person in the room and she always had a story.

When it came to Tammy's stories there was always unbelievable drama. The things she would tell us were insane for any ten-year-old. Every time I hung out with her and Catrina I knew I would hear about some crazy adventure Tammy had; Catrina seemed use to it.

During the summer I got to know Catrina better as well. She wasn't as loud as Tammy like I first thought. She was quiet; she absorbed what was going on around her more than anything. She just listened to Tammy's stories while looking interested, but I felt she knew something was up with Tammy's stories.

What Tammy didn't know is after the three of us hung out, Catrina and I would talk on the phone. Catrina was an only child. Her mother was a cop. This left her alone a lot.

Unlike me, Catrina didn't like being by herself. That's why she hung out with Tammy so much. Catrina needed to be around other people.

Catrina liked to read and write. Over the phone one night she told me she secretly wrote down every story Tammy ever told her. She said that one day she would write a book about Tammy's adventures. I'm not sure if Catrina actually believed everything Tammy told her but I don't think she cared as much as I did; not until Tammy told us the story of her little brother getting badly injured.

Towards the end of the summer Catrina and I were thick as thieves. We even hung out without Tammy. Tammy was spending a lot of time in Harlem with family so we weren't seeing her as much. I didn't mind honestly, I liked it better when it was just Catrina and I. When we were together we actually did more things. We would walk to the North Side of Williamsburg and hang out by the water on Kent avenue. We brought notebooks with us. We wrote about anything we wanted then we shared them with one another. It was nice and peaceful. I was completely myself and so was Catrina. Catrina didn't have to tell me how pretty I was every day. She didn't have to listen to me talk constantly and she didn't have to get bossed around by me. Our relationship was simple and creative. When Tammy came back from Harlem she wasn't interested in what Catrina and I were up to. She didn't want to hang by the water and she definitely didn't want to write in a notebook. Tammy didn't waste a minute telling us about her time in Harlem. It was back to the same old thing and I got over it. I think after a while Tammy could sense that she was losing Catrina as a friend. I believe because of that Tammy became desperate enough to tell us a story that would top all of her stories.

It started the day Catrina and I called Tammy to go to the store. It was like any other summer day, but this day Tammy said she couldn't go. Now this was odd to us because Tammy always came outside, even if she was grounded she would sneak out. When we asked her why she began to tell us how her baby brother got hurt. To this day I don't remember his name. Tammy's brother was hurt in a car accident while she was in Harlem.

The accident left him on life support. She continued to tell us that not only was her brother fighting for his life, but he was fighting for his life while he in an incubator inside of her bed room. She told us she had to keep a close eye on him and that's why she couldn't come outside. Catrina and I were speechless. At that moment everything came to the light for Catrina. She finally figured out that Tammy was nothing but a pathological liar.

When we hung up the phone with Tammy, Catrina called me right after. "Let's go to her house!" "Are you sure," I replied.

Catrina was sure, she had enough of Tammy and she was finally calling her out. Tammy, Catrina, and I lived blocks away from each other. As soon as I hung up with Catrina I threw on a pair of sweats and house slippers.

I yelled to my mom that I was going to the lobby for a second and that I would be right back. I lived on the sixteenth floor and I knew it would take more time for me to get down stairs if I waited for the elevator. I didn't want to chance it by not meeting Catrina in time so I ran down the stairs. My heart skipped a beat with every step I missed. When I got to the lobby Catrina was waiting for me. She looked pissed in her pink and green butterfly pajamas. She didn't say a word, when she looked at me she turned around and made her way out of my building. I followed right behind her, still trying to catch my breath.

It took us all but ten minutes to get to the ninth floor of Tammy's building. When we got to her door Catrina took a deep breath, cover the peephole with her right hand and knocked with her left; her house keys still in hand. I thought my heart stopped when I heard footsteps inside of the apartment. I knew they were Tammy's because her mother wasn't home. Tammy told us earlier that her mother was in Harlem which made her story of a ten-year-old taking care of a baby on life support that much less likely to be true. There was a pause when Tammy got to the door, Catrina banged again and Tammy opened it. The look on Tammy's face was unexpected. She was smiling. I couldn't believe it, Tammy open the door, took one look at us and smiled.

"Where's your brother?" Catrina asked.

Not breaking eye contact with Catrina to acknowledge me, Tammy paused for a minute then moved to the side. When she turned back to look towards her bedroom Catrina moved so quickly towards it I hesitated. When I finally got the nerve to make my way through the apartment I found Catrina. She was standing in the middle of Tammy's bedroom. It took her two minutes to turned around. She looked in my direction. I stood in Tammy's doorway. I knew that Catrina wasn't looking at me, she was looking passed me.

"Why did you lie?"

She was calm.

"I was just joking with you," Tammy said.

"Who jokes about stuff like that?"

"Do you even have a brother?" Catrina asked.

Tammy didn't say anything, she just stood there smiling with her head down. I couldn't take any more of it. I always knew that Tammy was a liar but I never wanted Catrina to find out like that. I watched the pain on her face which made me want to take control of the situation. I looked at Catrina's confused and frustrated face and told her we should go. We both walked out of Tammy's apartment faster than we entered. Tammy closed the door behind us without a word. I pushed the button for the elevator unable to say anything else.

Catrina was a lot more upset than I was. I think it was because I knew deep down inside the truth about Tammy. I believe Catrina knew too but couldn't bring herself to the truth. If she did, then that would mean her relationship with her best friend was a lie. As I stood there waiting for the elevator I understood what my mother meant by "everything

that glitter isn't gold". From my lonely bench looking over to Club Bench at Tammy and Catrina I thought they were having the perfect summer. I thought they had the greatest friendship. In my mind I created this fantasy that was Tammy and Catrina which was nothing like the reality. At that moment I was grateful for the lesson from my mother and I made a pledge with myself that I would never forget that summer.

Gabrielle Rawls: *Bryant Park Summer*



Nostalgia Piece

We didn't give a fuck back then. I ain't a kid no more we'll never be those kids again

Uniforms

Books we didn't have to pay for
Money to spend when we thought we were rich
Dreams of what we wanted to be by twenty

All disappeared when we left those walls
Those walls ripe and yellow with hope
Our ceilings littered with blue and white skies
We didn't know how cold the outside world was
We were still in those walls after four o'clock

Water exploding out of fire hydrants
Bikes to the park
Orange popsicles and lemonade
Summers of love

Can't capture those moments again
Snapshots of the past make me laugh
Because we're stuck in walls again
Stuck in walls of refrain
In walls of white
Blank space
And bleak endings

Dreams of life
Expectations of us
Living up to the world they've built for us
The shit might fall to mush
Because our ship was built to wreck

- Jada Gordon



A MESSAGE TO OUR SPONSORS

Dear Time,

You do not exist. You are nothing but a mere concept, artificially constructed by man, a tool used to measure the lifespan of living organisms. It's so weird how you can be peaceful and serene, yet cause constant chaos and turmoil. You've even managed to manipulate the human mind, and heart, controlling their emotions as well as their actions. You make them need more of you, and when they don't get enough, it takes a great toll on their mental state. They almost start to have withdrawal symptoms, sort of like an addict, with you being the drug. I hope you're satisfied with the results of your work. I guess those predicaments only happen to the ones that misuse and take you for granted. They say you heal all wounds, but how can that be? It can't, you may have everyone else fooled, but I see straight through your facade. The appearance of those wounds may fade, or disappear, but the pain that caused them will forever remain. Keep in mind that I don't treasure you, as everyone else does, nor do I see you as minuscule, or inferior. I don't worship you as a god, or fear you as a devil, but value as an extension of creativity, more than a figment of my imagination.

Sincerely,
The Lone Wolf in Black Sheep Clothing

-Daniel Videau

Procedure

As if I knew
(snow
falling harder
now)
at 5am. My mind
could be anywhere.

the suture dissolves
without a trace
into the warm sea
of the variegated
body

desperate to
hold our
blood inside

a moment to
reflect before
anesthesia.

-Ed Bode



Colors.

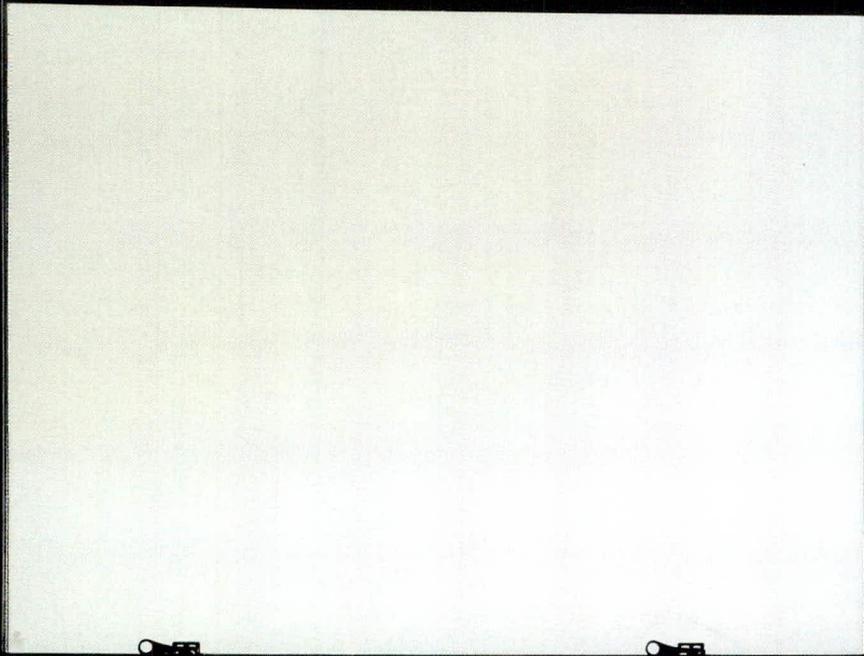
I looked at myself. I looked at myself long, and hard. I didn't blink; but when I did I watched how slow my eyelids moved. They say eyes are the windows to the soul, which explains why I like it better when they are closed. Tear ducts flooding, I watched as the droplets fell softly on the blue of my sweater. Blue, blue is considered a feeling; yes. But is there a color to describe the feeling of numbness as you stare yourself in the face and say: "I'm ready to die." I don't think there is one specifically, but it does vary. It is as green or yellow as the vomit that follows the anxiety attack that made you cry so much you gagged.. It is crimson, from the blood that drips from my wrists at 3:00 in the morning; and it is as cream colored as the old sink it stains. It is as pink as the shampoo bottle; the last one you saw before the black that followed as your eyes closed, slowly whilst laying on the bathroom floor. I kept looking at myself. I nodded slowly. I opened the cabinet, and picked up the orange bottle of pills, poured them into my hand, and swallowed. I closed the cabinet, and I stared at myself again, I sat down on the floor of my grey colored bedroom and smiled to myself softly. Finally, everything was white.

-Gina Lymberopoulos

Made Me Want

I wonder and raise a curious touch on your door
how does sweetheart receive first blush
no return a repeated touch still no echo
I rest my head in a warm moist savory
cinnamon brewing from your door
aroused the aroma I've been summoned
a repeated motion on your door
stillness stillness sounds not inside
a silent cry then tear produced
a teardrop falls in eyelet lubricates
the peep responds aroused a wink
Good morning my love I've waited all night
brought for breakfast in my excitement
I spilled the milk just outside your door

-Jerome Brown



Amber Williams: *Window*

The Nuthouse

By Airiana Rendon

I am currently in a psychiatric hospital, that's what they call it, the staff. I prefer to call it a psych ward, sounds cooler, more demanding and overall just badass. On my first night I said nothing, ate and went to bed.

The next day could have easily been a repeat of the previous night but it wasn't. The difference, being I talked to people. I am a pretty friendly person and can talk to people semi easily but after the meet and greet it all goes to shit. The after work, the maintenance, is the difficult part and I've never quite got a good handle on that. The subtle nuances of friendship, when to text, how much to say to them, what level of friendship you are at. It just never made sense to me. The romanticizing of a non-romantic love interest. When it comes to actual romantic love interest I'm even worse but I won't dive further into that.

Now this action of talking lead to a bonding of a group of people with me included and sometimes at the helm. While I am not the best at maintaining I have noticed throughout the years I always seem to somehow get to be a part of the "It" group somehow, which is a skill I am somewhat proud of. This group of people are made up of individuals who have been here longer than me by weeks or days. But the key difference to this group was the name, what they named this place. The name is not unique or interesting and rather crude. The name could apply to many things, mostly perverted in nature, but a different name than mine, the staff, and probably many. But the name, I don't want to say. It feels like a secret. A secret that ties me to this place. A secret that I would like to keep a secret.

With this being said, this group of people was the only thing besides the one television in the dayroom we all shared keeping me sane, in a place their paid to make you sane. There's some irony there that I just can't put my finger on but it's quite entertaining. We laughed, talked, gossiped and eye banded the staff and each other. One person who so happened to be a monk, was a white man who was nearly 30 years old, who had an episode and though the C.I.A. was watching him. He was from Texas and had a slight accent, and has traveled all around the world but mostly Asia.

His father came to visit one day. His father was a huge man, just the typical Texan. Brawly, tall, and quiet his dad was but had a strong demeanor. Now this visit was different than all the others. They talked about this place. Naming places he would like to go once he leaves. An upcoming legal case he had due to the fact he was fired from his job for his episode. I suggested he bring this to a legal team. He thanked me heavily throughout the remaining of his time there and even mentioned it when he said bye to me. The mentioning of the illegality of it all though, was common sense to me so I don't understand how he did not know this. During this talk, they used the word. Not only did they use the word they used it multiple times. Using the group's special word to an outsider, even your dad is an offense of severity. This word has come to become a special word for us all. It means so much, just throwing around this word in casual conversation is starting to cross a line. Say psychi-

atric hospital, or psych ward. Just anything but that word. With him saying that I felt the whole group fall out my hands. Slipping away into their rooms and never coming back out. The Texan ruined it. He ruined it for all of us. The group was ruined by his actions. We talked less. Sat next to each other less. Supported each other less.

The days became longer and longer. More mundane and quiet. Just staring at the one television in the dayroom. Just staring at Kelly awkwardly flirt with her co-host, knowing that even though it says Live with Kelly it'll never just be Kelly. The once giant happy group split up. The once giant happy group will never be a giant happy group with each other. Never again. All . All thanks to this word. This special word that someone tainted. I left with Instagram handles and numbers from my small group. I sat in the car taking me home. Looking back on the days when we were that giant happy group.



Just Smile and Wave

Gina Lymberopoulos

Wake up. Slowly. Open your eyes to your dimly lit room after dozing off in the wee hours of the cold and rainy morning. Your alarm buzzes, a constant repetition of a zombie apocalypse-like blaring in your ear would make anyone want to slam their phone against the wall. Makeup is still smudged under your eyes, which are stained and swollen half shut from the tears that streamed down your cheeks all night that only began to dry up after getting some kind of shut-eye. 8:47am. Shit. You're running late now, and you start to panic; yet you don't care in the slightest, because honestly, who even cares anymore. Walk to the kitchen, take a pill, happy pills the doctor gave you last week. New prescription, and the side effects will make you bloat, as if you aren't already fat enough. Go to the bathroom, wipe the leftover sadness from your face and reapply the happy for the new day. Bright pink lips, rosy cheeks and long lashes. Put on a clean shirt; maybe not that white one because it makes you look bigger; not too bright either, don't want the attention on yourself. Black it is. Brush your hair a few times with your fingers, it's too late to straighten it, and then leave the house. Wave and flash a small smile to the mailman, and bat your eyes and wiggle your fingers flirtatiously at the cute boy leaving for his uni class who is just across the street. Laugh with your co workers about last night's episode of It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, and then question how the annoying girl who talks too much sitting across from you doesn't find it comical. Nod to passersby on the train, and mosey on home. Walk past the mirror in the hallway, swiftly. Don't look at yourself. You always do this. Walk the dog, come back inside and go to the bathroom. Lock the door. Look at yourself. The pills have worn off, and now, so has your happy face. Repeat.



Pablo Heras

Upstate

she told me once that
i had a cloud of
sadness following me.

i wish i was upstate
floating in a lake

the water brimming up to my ears
silencing everything around
me
staring straight up at my stratus
i wish i could silence everything about
me.

or
on the floor of the woods

decomposing back into this earth
becoming the roots that hold us all
together
i wish i could hold myself
together.

-Dylan Vivolo

My Notice

The attention paid you
is commensurate with

the delicacy with which
you deliver yourself

to me, my seeding in the
afterlife, my seat in the New

Jerusalem. Your lovers
tend to die too soon: both

husbands, the boy with the
pick-up, the wife-beater,

the troubled genius. They stand
over you, waving their arms

at me, invisibly, as real as
wonder, as order, as water.

-Ed Bode

The Man in the Room

By: Vastavia Mercedes

I feel dark and alone. You ever had deja vu. Did it ever feel so real you had to touch it? A reality check was soon to come by. As I walked into the strays of hell. I summoned my initiation of my soul being sacrificed. My stomach growled with a silent kick. The kick felt like an unknown womb being born. What was I thinking? No what I was doing?

A little quick cash wouldn't hurt. In and out but third times a charm. That bitch shining like a star. My eye so red ; it's devoured by rubies. As my life reenacts of what path I should choose. The miraculous diffusion of human beings.

Exchanged for goods always exported for itchy hands. You pour out your hands in the lust for money. My dreams of hell have began. A soul so innocent that despairs heart-ache.

Flashbacks of what could have been? I'm so grateful to be alive. It's hard to explain.

The wounds burns my skin. I have deep intentions of relapsing. Maybe I already have?

A question I wish to not answer. But I choose with such pain declining the offer.

Dark shadows of devious moments. Just happy to see another day. Only my heart can adjust what my body has experienced. I wouldn't sit here writing this is if I were a fool. Hustler born native deformed in a tragic of greed. Moments measured in spite of despair. Cuts to the hands of fearlessness.

One cut lead me to my freedom in such short notice. The last gasp of air I held to pace myself. They dropped me to the floor. As they continued drastically pulling my soul out.

A shade of dark emptiness collapsed my temple.

As I lay there helpless, I almost felt my body become lifeless. It had felt like it was the whole night in that moment of emptiness.

I heard someone speaking to me. I knew it was God himself. He dressed as a different figure. Not what I can remember so vivid. He summoned my energy back to life. Revival of my spirit. As the trip of hell ended. I was threatened for more danger. It felt so unreal. It hurts to speak or do anything. My conscious altered to get away fast as I could. When I fixed myself to existence; the adrenaline tumbled through my spirit. that moment I thought I was going to die. You ever felt so scared you froze in disbelief? As this nightmare is going on, I am contemplating on what I should do. The memories, flashbacks aren't temporary. Its like the reaper was following me.

I walked away so comfortably not being alert and productive. My subconscious said you wasted time. You know you smarter than this. The only question that was asked. Repetitively saying "Am I going to die tonight?" As i thought in a sudden pause. "I am going to survive. I am a strong woman. I am not going to die."

While being submissively choked. Gasping for air. My instincts told me to break free. My feet couldn't reach the floor. As I pulled out my weapon of security. I was attacking him while still gasping for air. Suddenly I was free as I cut his face of a non human. I felt it were the ending of my life. All I could call on was God. He saved me and it broaden my horizon about life. Life is too short to take it for granted. You never know what tomorrow brings. The light will always shine at the end of every tunnel.



Gabrielle Rawls: *The Night Riders*

Depression

The sadness of depression is worse than what you thought;
it keeps your feelings in— devouring your soul.
It grows from day to day as you act like nothing is wrong;
yet your eyes have always told the truth they're not shining anymore.
So what are you intended to do when the world don't give a fuck;
if you're happy or sad,
why would anyone help you for?
Doesn't matter if you're lonely you will never get that call.
All your love ones have forgotten you
since you left home long ago.
So you're stuck with all that anger, all those feelings, all those thoughts.
No more weekends with your lover with the girl you love the most.
In your life you're always working,
quite frankly that is dull.
Tends to happen when you never trust your feelings, trust your gut.

So the sadness of depression is worse than what you thought;
it keeps your feelings in— devouring your soul.
As you think the past is over,
it returns with huge blow;
because that anger that you have will be dump right on your thoughts.
You been depressing on your feelings since the time you were a boy.
It's been building up for centuries,
now it's all about blow.
You remember how your dad used to hit you and your mom.
He is label as a tyrant,
as the worst that's in this world.
You became an alcoholic, smoked some weed, and did some dope.
Ended up with two small children guess it's time to get a home.
Since you promise to your mother you will not be like that punk;
yet you have so many shadows in your closet, in your home.
You might even be a tyrant like your father was before.

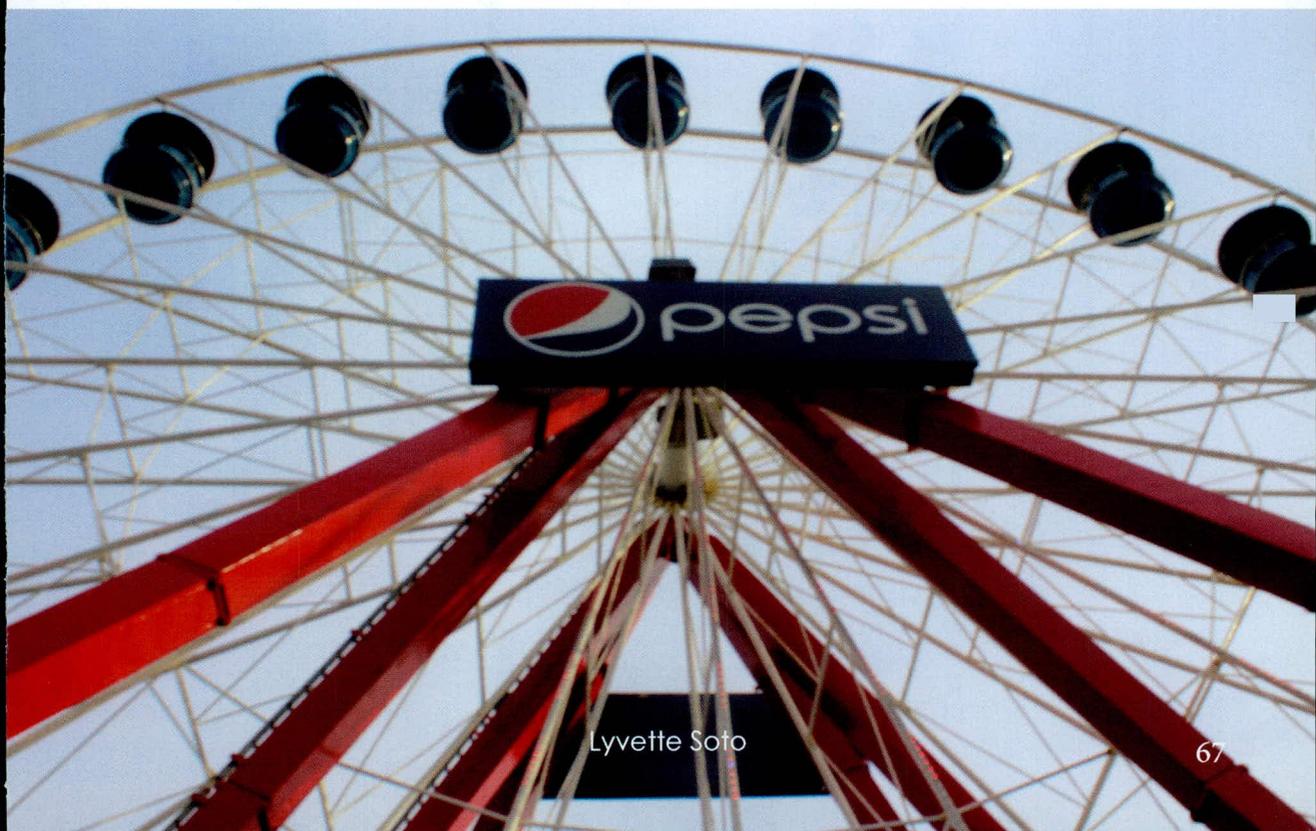
For the sadness of depression is worse than what you thought;
it keeps your feelings in— devouring your soul.
This words aren't meant to frighten you;
I just want to let you know,
that depression can be broken
just show your feelings to the world.
Be a witness to your actions without getting to involve.
You will find out what Buddha meant when he talked about the void.
So be happy and delighted that today there is a storm.
By the time the winter is over you will once again find joy.

-Brian Altamirano

Wandering Soul

Can you please touch me?
Can you tell if you are real?
Let me hear the river
And watch the moon again
Can you touch me?
Make me believe the soul can expand
"show" me that it dawn in them
Can it dawning in them?
Will the river still running again?
The ink flooded into stories
The ink lost on every page
Take my soul and write me story
Meet me at the river again
Will the moon watch me, I am?
Your halo burned my existence
My belief shatters dawn in you
Hug me today!
How much can birds fly on the tree?
How long will they be on the tree?
Please touch me "today"
Tell me you are real
The body's sad
hug it with your eyes
Tell the soul to expand

-Safwat Abdelmasih



The Feeling Isn't Mutual

Some memories are hard to recall, others easy to remember
Like when I was a kid, starting school in September
Playing with other kids felt really cool
Including this one girl I walked with after school
Knew her for a while, she lived right down the street
I liked her alot, she was nice and sweet
I was only ten, and couldn't explain this feeling
Wondering if what I felt, had a true meaning

Both of us had a passion for drawing
Which is probably what drew me to her
Looking at her art, then showing mine
Hoping she would take the time
To appreciate it, and not think I was a loser

Either way, I was incredibly shy
After graduating, we shared a hug, then goodbye
I'm sure she didn't feel the same
On the plus side, I could be inside
Playing my favorite video game

When this feeling came around again, I just turned fourteen
Women that caught my eye, were always on the big screen
Until I met this girl at the library, she was fun to be around
Felt like I could express myself freely, which kept my mind more serene
As far as intimacy went, there was quite some time that we spent
On making our lips touch, my heart would beat so much

When realizing I wasn't ready
For a relationship slow or steady
We drifted away from each other,
without a paddle, or a rudder
Thought our closeness had no ends
Because our little brothers were still friends
She took it easier than expected, thought it would be harder
But in no time, she had a new guy
One that definitely wasn't smarter
As that chapter closed, surely the next would open
My life story, is what I started to lose hope in
Treated like a boy toy that couldn't get broken

Like this one girl who's identity will remain anonymous
Felt like the pit of her soul was essentially bottomless
I was seventeen at the moment, though certain things were unclear
I began drinking liquor with my friends

Didn't really like the taste of beer
But back to the girl I started to mention
Every second she spent, was on drawing unneeded attention
Had to school her about that attitude, but didn't put her on suspension
Lucky for her, she was attractive
So I let her off easy with detention

There was one good time, all the others were whack
I gave her that one possession, made sure to have protection
I knew I could never get that special thing I gave her, back
After removing her thong, climaxing didn't take very long
Wondered if she knew the ropes, and thought this newcomer was strong
Guess I wasn't a bore, because she wanted more
Or that I was just that bad, which is really sad
Immediately stopped talking after that day
There's plenty of fish in the sea
I just hope the bait will draw them my way

Further down the line, I found a connection that was strong
With this young woman in the air force, while I was in the navy
Thought nothing could go wrong
Met a couple months after turning nineteen
Our conversations were deeper than the ocean
Funny, smart, and pretty, I was gonna make her my queen

Was too late when I realized that it was all a game
Played with my heart like a pro
After that, I was never the same
Couldn't believe I didn't see it coming, for a while, I went insane
Convos with her friend on social media is how I found out about other men
Since what we had didn't succeed, guess I had to try, try again

Wanted to give up on dating, and just be done
Then I met a girl that seemed special, right before I turned twenty one
At first, had really good times together
And thought she would be the one
To stick it out with in the long run
So I proposed the idea of a marriage, over the phone
She said yes, decided to do it in a courthouse, we felt so grown

We'd been with one another for a little more than a few months
Which wasn't very long, but hey, "you only live once"
Didn't know the emotional baggage we each had was too heavy to carry
Should've taken things slow, before deciding to marry
The heated arguments we had over problems, including financial stability
Kept our apartment warm, when we couldn't pay for gas or electricity

There were ups, but just as many downs
Even though the roller coaster was crazy

Neither of us felt like getting off
Didn't want to start anew, guess we were that lazy
Over three and a half years, trying to make it work
Dealing with her on top of everything else was making me berserk
Those relationships have sailed, never to return
Thought mutual feelings could brave the storm
When will I ever learn?

-Daniel Videau

Iryna Yafimchyk



Magnolia and the Moon

I watch the petals of your fingertips touch the softest parts of your mistresses.
I wish it were me deflowered in your company.

I remember it now, fertile and bare.
Stuck with the memories of how hallow I'd become with new life in my hands.
How I would offer you pieces of forbidden fruit, and you'd suckle.
My sweet honeybee.
...You were feeding me.

My Magnolia.
It would be a luxury to watch you bloom in my Sun.
If I pull you out now and bury you here, you'll be gone in a day.
That's just my way.
I'd much rather watch you from a distance, sending waves loaded with my kisses.
My glows, helping you grow.
Illuminating the land where you sleep hoping to feel your petals at my feet.

- Amber Williams





Iryna Yafimchyk

Brand New

I wear you like a denim jacket that rubs me
so raw it sheds my skin I watch it fall to the
floor judging it all the way I wear you like
you love me though I know it's my new
found skin I wear you like i'm worthy
though the doubt is sinking in I wear you
like I am brand new because I *am*
brand new I am *brand* new I am brand *new*
- Dylan Vivolo



Pablo Heras

Tick Tock

Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
That is the sound inside your head
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
It isn't a clock it isn't a pump
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
That is the fear inside your heart
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic,
They skip the truth again and again
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock,
wrong one

It was a drum it wasn't a gun
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
A sentence awaits while you pray
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
Falsely accused a cell awaits
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
Your mind is free you travel abroad
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
Decades have passed your body is free
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
The world has changed what do you do
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
Nothing has changed its still the same
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
Your fear is that they'll do it again
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
They did it again but not to you
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock
Tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock, tic tock

-Jerome Brown

Part of Me, Part of Him

There's a part of me that wants to love him
I see he's so damaged
He's a rare animal caught in one of man's contraptions
I feel that he once walked the walk I walked
He convinced me that I'm not crazy
That I'm not alone

However

There's a part of him that's occupied by another
That I can't stop
I don't want a crazy mess on my hands
I don't want his worries
Her heartbreak
And my guilt on my hands
Like the blood on the scene of a crime

But there's a part of me that want his time

Because time never ends when I'm with him
There's a part of him that's stuck with her
Their history thick with bonds, inside jokes
and bridges I could never burn
Blocks that I'll never build
And sparks that could never be reignited

She is lucky to have him
Like a snack in a cracker jack box
She probably cherishes him
But not the way I would
And not as strongly as I could
There's a part of me that wants to turn
The potential energy of us
Into the kinetic energy of lust
And love that'll shatter my soul like glass
But this time my feelings too shall pass

There's a part of me that prays he won't stay with her
Or that she'll leave him
And that he'll want me
I'm being selfish but the part of me that wants him is taking over

I want to believe there's a part of him that wants a part of me
But I know I'll never see
So I'll take the pain of unrequited love and just be
Because I'm tired of dreaming
And maybe the next beloved will see

- Jada Gordon

~~Wrote it for you~~
It's cool to see Dylan
Dance sometimes

The Writer's Guild is the Perfect
Habitat to express myself and be ~~as~~
a creative outlet to an awesome group of
individuals.

I like feeling
surrounded by people
& maybe having
friends.

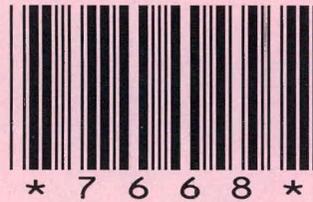
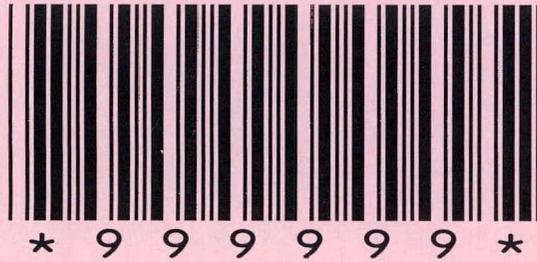
Your poems were always
musical, just like your
personality

~~Wrote it for you~~
I liked it
I loved it
I got attached
I got scared
I can't play away
I love it

You made me feel loved.

The writers guild
I like the
Cambridge

Like I could be a better Creative
I'm not alone.



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