



arise, undertow!

PRISM

PRISM ART & LITERARY JOURNAL

VOLUME CXXXII



***arise,
undertow!***



i want to write for You a poem
to heal wounds, shed light, and be
bitter. to raise Earth up with both
hands & make its weight cumulus.
however this will not be that poem,
since some say Earthy poems
are too easy
on the eyes; it should then
come as no surprise that
through the rough growth
and death, yes, more flowers
will force up to the sun, and
yes, they will take the
light, giving nothing back
to You but your self, tending
them, intense in your expression,
at once signifying something — a
line for spring, for love, for
uncertain weather: a
particular turn, among all
turns a particularly
reflexive motion — however this
is still not for spring but
for You, who may yet
live past every unborn thing
on a promise
or an expectation

that the flowers You tend will be
more than vapid metaphors

that the Earth in your hands
will match the one in your dreams

that your shadow will
rise up from that Earth
and learn to demand of You
the light

Ethan Heusser,
Editor-in-Chief

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **Ethan Heusser**
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GRAPHIC DESIGNER **Ty Sokalski**

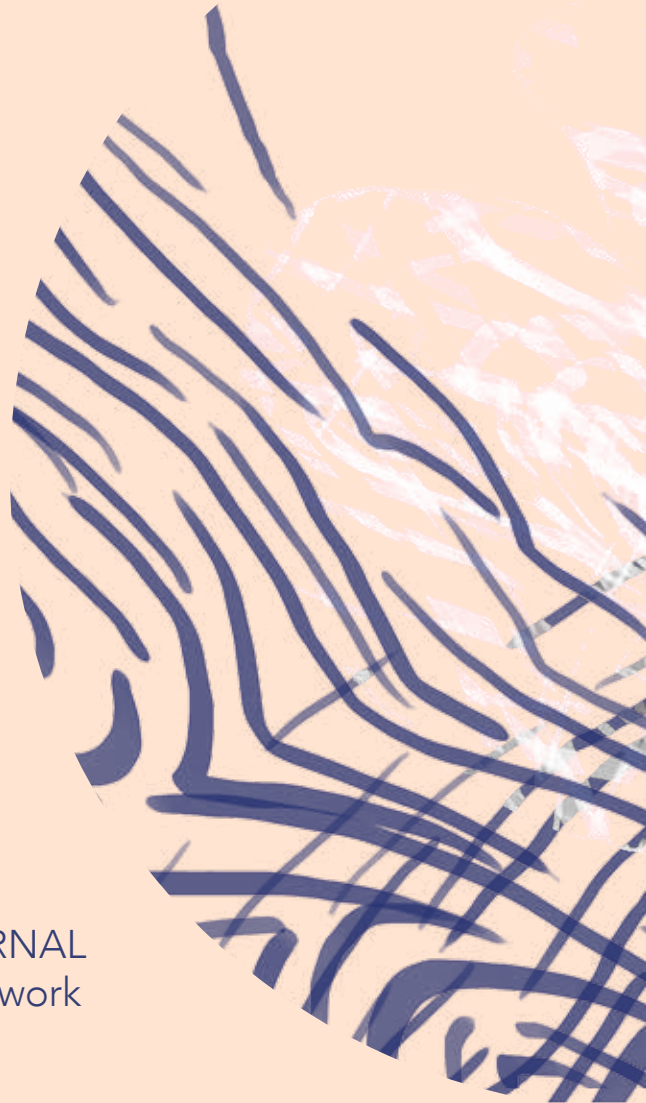
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To volunteer, contact us at
prism@oregonstate.edu

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No Passage

GREGORY BAL | PHOTOGRAPHY

The background of the page is a light blue color. Overlaid on this is a complex, abstract pattern of thin, dark red lines. These lines are curved and somewhat chaotic, resembling a stylized, high-contrast representation of a natural texture like wood grain or perhaps a close-up of a leaf's veins. The lines vary in thickness and direction, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Echo

VICTORIA SAAGER

but when they say
that ignorance is
bliss they forget that
Narcissus was
happy too because
he never watched
the news.



Hips

LAUREN MORGAN

like the cross that cedar tree
is a door welcoming you into the life of the living
but i think my hips are too wide to fit

i am perceived through these large hips
as someone who knows to soften the butter not melt it
who likes cosmos over rum

me and them can't be separated
for god's sakes who is a woman without
a desire for child bearing

defined by differences of slim and slammin'
i prefer mine neatly stretched in hard wash jeans
but sometimes packed away

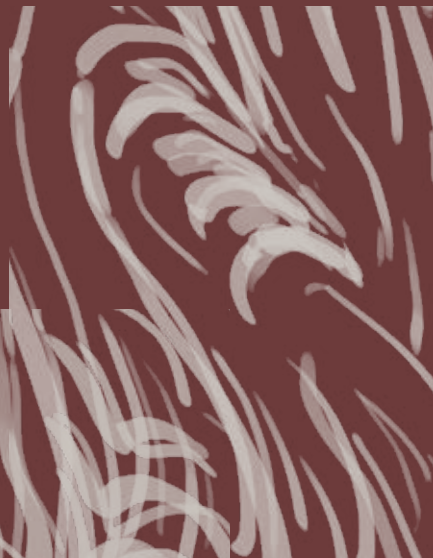
but if we stood hip to hip
all the world could see the power and strength
in the projection of this pelvis

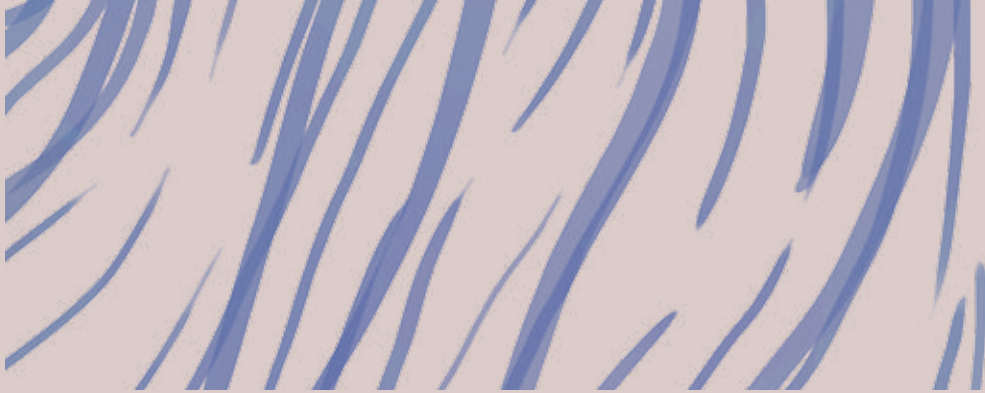
the oval corset protruding my body
the one that screams femininity
maybe is the billboard for my capability



Her Jacket

HANNAH GALLAGER | MOSS, ROSE
PETALS, WAX, AND CLOTH





Individual

JACQUIE GAMELGAARD | PHOTOGRAPHY





Jacarandas

MATTHEW SCHRAMM

As I rest on the easy chair in my room
through the speakers runs Moonlight
in French, and through my window sneaks
a little moonlight in godspeak of a clear night
clear ahead, clear rising and lifting me out of this
redandyellow-swatched chair surrounded by my
posters and guitars and desk and grounded thoughts.
I'm there, again, flying miles miles miles over my country
and over the border and south some more until
touchdown in the sprawling center city of México
then a black SUV ride to our hostel en el centro.
Four days and nights spent wandering and wondering
through the concrete crowds and steamy street vendors.
So real (yet surreal) was this vibrant host, she
pulled my arm and shouted in my ears with her foreign tongue
and offered me mezcal and pulque and spirits
to lift mine farther, which I declined most of the time
my spirits are high enough already, gracias.
Easter Sunday I shaved and dressed nice and walked to
the largest cathedral I'd ever seen (the only one actually)
and sat amidst my Mexican family as they praised
the resurrection of our Lord, Jesús Cristo.
Then a Primera Plus to Querétaro, una manzana to snack on
and an orange sugar drink to sip on.
Welcomed by dear Veronica, our new mother we
bought taxis to our new homes of white and brown
white for the paint on the walls and the paint of my skin
and brown for the rice and the smiling faces of mis abuelas
mexicanas who showed me to my room where I unpacked
and tried not to lose my wits, calm yourself niño.
I had a window through which I could see a broken
car that hadn't run in years and the high black gate and
the cobblestone street and my new favorite trees
Jacarandas blooming in the springtime of purple so
vibrant like royalty or Prince or the snubbed crayon
from the yellow box I used to keep in elementary
the box pushes me back down to my square room
where I rest with fingers hovering over keys.



“And who wrote all that?”

CAMILLE TOLLBOM

And obviously I want to hate the old,
dead white guys,
but then I remember

my grandfather leaning over his coffee, shriveled,
tugging at a sugar spoon
he can't lift to his thin mouth, my grandfather

whose feather body melts into his favorite armchair,
croaking hymns, whose own
grandfather was a Swedish immigrant, and

whose father never said I love you, my grandfather standing
awkwardly in a revolving door,
who never knew two words in Swedish because

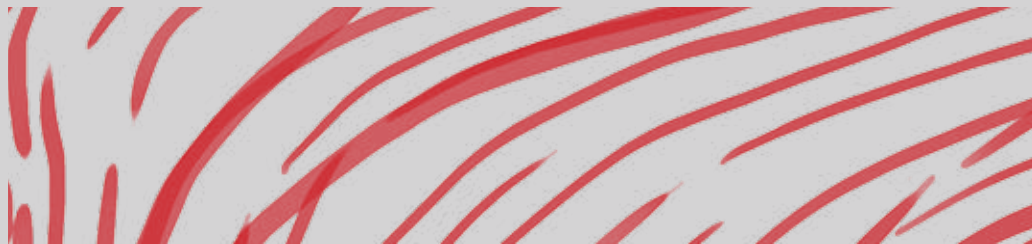
Education has always been a plaster bath here.

—no one gets out clean, and now all grandfather has for culture are
Fox News and Precious Moments figurines
(but the figurines are grandma's, not his)

so can you please explain to me why I have to be reminded of Parkinson's disease in every
English class while I clench my fists and wait for Ragnarok?



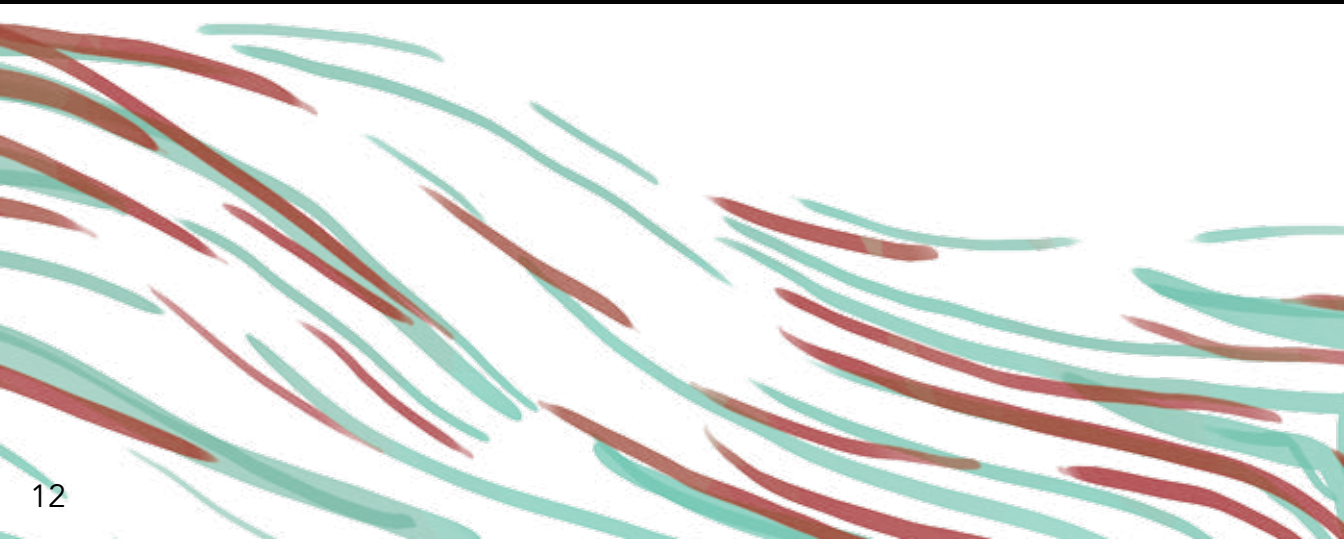
Lecheries
MIKE CHASCO | OIL PAINT





wise riddance

ARWYN WILKINSON | PHOTOGRAPHY





Police Car

KAYLEE WEYRAUCH | PHOTOGRAPHY

Excerpt From "March of the Frogs"

GABRIELLA GODIER

Mom thought it'd be good to spend the summer with her sister-in-law. Give me culture, she said. And experience. But staring into the eyes of our new roommate, Peaty the frog, I question the difference between true wisdom and simple family loyalty. The thing is huge. Brown and mustard colored, its eyes propped on top of its head. Slime reflects light off its skin, adding a few hues of red, if you squint at it right.

Gretchen sits at the desk across the room, ignoring her dinner of Kraft Mac & Cheese, instead shuffling papers atop the mound of her belly and the rim of the desk. "Did you see the forecast tonight? Clouds might be coming!"

I shuffle the canned green beans, steaming fresh from the microwave, into my Tupperware bowl. They're soft enough for a baby to gum, and it reminds me of childhood. Preserved juices and the faint hint of metal subdues my hunger for the night. I take a bite and glance back up at the frog. Mistake. One sight of slime causes me to cough up my dinner. Can't eat with him staring.

"Come on, now, child. Don't be that way." She's facing me now, too. Two lines of vision staring me down.

"It's raining in Connecticut," I switch over a tab on the computer in front of me.

"We're not in Connecticut, sweetie."

"Mom's in Connecticut."

Gretchen swivels back to her food, spooning two slippery noodles into her mouth. The fatty cheese mix drips over her lips, and she licks it up in one swipe. Her fingers flip a page over in her report. More flat

lines on graphs. She annotates the side of her analysis with a glossy red pen, and the ink clots in balled-up residues after each stroke.

"Why can't the frogs just migrate, Gretchen."

"They do. But it's not time for it now. They'd just have hotter places to go. They migrate the same routes every year. This is their wet climates now. Or should be."

"They should figure that out." I still feel Peaty's look weighing on me. "Stupid things don't know where to go."

"They just can't help it, child."

A buzzer hums from downstairs. Gretchen hops up from her seat, and her report scatters across the carpet, hovering above the fibrous hairs. She mumbles to me before announcing, as she descends the stairwell, something about the time of day. Leaving me stranded. I peak over again towards Peaty. Still staring.

I grab a towel to cover the Peaty's new glass container bedroom, a plexiglass rectangle that could be substituted for a fish tank, but my foot catches on a wire plucked from the carpet. My body crashes forward into the container, and we all collapse together, pulling the monitor and keyboard down, too. Earthquakes shatter through my brain, and I clutch my head tightly only to look up and see Peaty in front of me. He croaks once before hopping on top of me.

I convulse, my head snaps and to the side, and I see the world enlarging around me. The fissures between the keyboard buttons now fit a whole crooked limb.

My bulky chin now rests on the ledge of the “F” key and my legs slide between “R” and “G”. Escape. Escape. Escape. I wriggle around the keys as my new body settled, warts and all. My tongue elongates and settles into the pit of my lower lip. A fly buzzes by, high pitched, its wings battering the hairs of its back. It progresses around the side of the room, and it rests on the monitor behind me, clinging by the tendrils of its many legs. I can’t turn my eyes. Crooked limb in the keyboard bothers me. I lift myself up into a lion’s stance.

Squishy-eyed look, slimy residue drooling on its skin onto my head. Peaty’s arms cling to my hunchback, and he relaxes into the indents of my shoulder blades. I quiver with a failed attempt to leap across the keyboard, dragging myself chin-into-key. Dreaded mess. One slip again, and my muscles reorient and strengthen for the first successful leap. Peaty croaks, his vocals vibrating along my back as a violin, and his fingers tighten on the lumps of my shoulders. My legs spring forth, and they fling me out the window with Peaty glued to my skin.

Shrubs, leafy greens, and thorny branches. We frogs collide with the moss and stone of Gretchen’s walkway, but we sit back up, expressionless and silent. The stone walkway, ignorable before as a human, now towers as an arid and mountainous terrain. I hop forward on the inclines of the rocks, my limbs flexing and sticking to the dry surface. The membranes of my feet stretch with every dry step, leaving behind a glossy residue glinting in the sunlight.

A shriek swells in the air as Gretchen opens the front door behind us, stepping outside with a sigh and a snuffle. She pockets her car keys, the fabric of her jeans frayed and torn from use over the years. She doesn’t bother to lock the door of the cabin.

Peaty urges me forward once Gretchen’s steps and shadow fades from our range of sight. Somehow, the nasty thing won’t budge off me, but he instead grips tight if I pause. So we hop through the marshland, the leaves smacking against my skin. Each motion like a

train wheel riding up and down a hill of momentum. Stop. And go. And stop. My neck shuffles up and down like those cartoon pigeons I see strutting to a bread crumb tossed out by a distracted businessman on his way to work.

The shrubs surround us as a dying rainforest, yellowing from malnourishment. The marshlands of my mother’s hometown used to be damp to the touch. I remember sinking into goop, toying with Uncle Tom. He’d take the blow to the face with a tough attitude, portraying himself as an ogre guarding a secret spring that fed the waters from a mysterious cavern. I was six then, and he and Gretchen were only dating. She kept her distance from me, preferring my mother’s company, discussing precious topics like shower curtains and teacup collectables. My mother would speak for hours. Gretchen would respond favorably with a polite wallop of laughter when it was her turn to speak and a word or two of soft affirming words. It was a good match for the family.

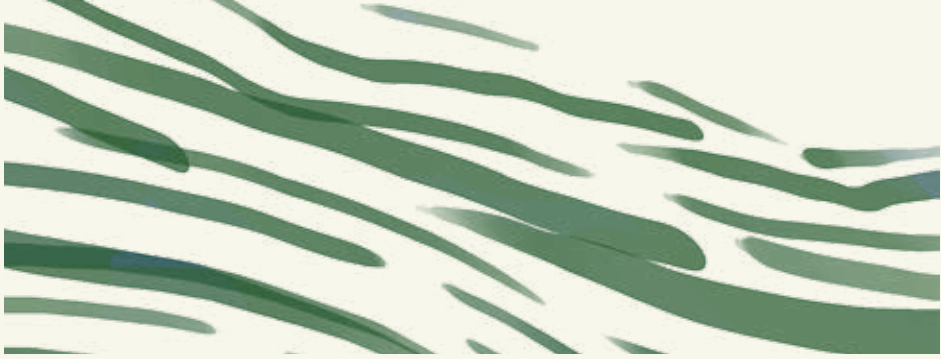
She and Uncle Tom opened a research lab together with his inheritance before they married, a cabin in the middle of the marshlands, preparing it wisely with a reception room to welcome any potential donors. Old Southern money wasn’t guaranteed for climate change enthusiasts, but the donors adored a simple tea display next to an exotic plant. Photographs well for future campaigns. And the wives appreciate a cause that takes time to tidy up on the side. Gretchen’s focus is amphibians, particularly in their sensitivities to change. She spends hours noting the population changes of various species in sloppy writing, describing changes in habitats of the marshlands where the frogs die out. “They indicate livelihood. An Indicator species. They don’t take change very well. If they die, other things are dying, too.” She defended this to me over breakfast one day. Uncle Tom’s photo still hangs in the cracked windowsill, the only thing recently clean in the kitchen. I would carve my spoon into mashed oatmeal in response, creating a cavern that exposed the bottom of the Tupperware bowl.



Tofu

ALYSSA LILJEQUIST

The streetlights are glowing just enough
That I can see the drops of rain falling
I shove my phone in the right pocket of my rain jacket
And pull the hood over my head
My vision shrinks to what is directly in front of me
I stare down at the sidewalk and see streams of water flowing
My boots make ripples in the puddles
It's only a mile through town to the police station.
I continue my trek, one minute, two minutes
I feel as if something is crawling up my spine
And turn to look, to my right, to my left
Nothing. My steps pick up speed when I see
Someone in a colorful ruffled outfit peeking from behind a tree
My stomach clenches and my eye twitches
I start to back up when I notice a flash of wild fake red hair
It goes back behind the side of a house
I reach for my phone, in my rush, I fumble
It falls into the storm drain beneath me
A buzzing sound fills my ears and I don't hear my phone splash
My breath comes out in short, choppy bursts
The large being from behind the tree, as if sensing my helplessness
Begins to walk slowly toward me, with a white painted radioactive face
And bulbous crimson nose and cerise smiling lips
I spin around and pump my legs and arms as fast as I can
The other falsely grinning creature joins the pursuit
My rain boots hit the ground hard as I try not to slip on the slick concrete
Then the ground begins to change — it turns into soft, white blocks
It crumbles underneath me and I fall and fall
I land in what feels like a gymnastics foam pit
But it is entirely made of tofu
The creepy make-up laden oversized bodies
Fall into the tofu pit and begin wading toward me
I grab one of the smaller blocks and chuck it in their direction
It sends one of their red wigs tumbling into the dark
The other reaches me and grabs me by the arm
It shoves me underneath a tofu block and presses it into my face
My arms and legs flail but I cannot push it off
A rushing sound floods my ears
My last memory is a pungent smell as the world fades away



Death to the Mosquito King

DAN ANECITO | PHOTOGRAPHY





Unfinished

ANGELICA INGEMAN | ENCAUSTICS



Hanford

CAMILLE TOLLBOM

In seventh grade you watched as another girl shouted at me with her eyes, her thick lips pounding at me, “You’re not a good singer, you’ll never get married, you’re a failure, ugly.” And like you,

the dressing room was silent, cold as the gray metal of my locker handle, which I gripped but couldn’t see, my eyes studying the grimy tile floor, marred with clouds and smudges in mold that looked like broccoli, a rising plume, like my father’s high school

mascot, “The Richland Bombers” — it was on his waterbottle, his sweatshirt, his baggy green band pants, his faded letterman’s jacket, a proclamation: an immigrant’s fragile fortune buried in nuclear gold, the gold that paid for the house I grew up in,

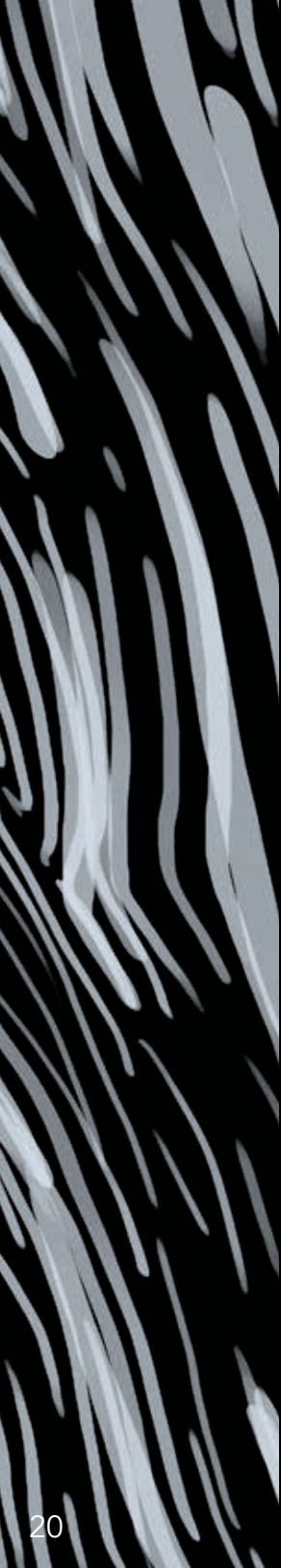
and my nice public school, where I met you and that other girl and everyone else who stared, who weren’t tall and fat like me, whose mothers sent them to ballet and hip hop, who hadn’t embarrassed themselves in peewee soccer, who had nice hair and blue eyes

and looked glassy and bright, the princesses I wanted to be. And you were one of them, and that’s why your kindness was painful, when you sat next to me in Spanish class and told me you saw, you were sorry.

We moved on
like goldfish sharing a dull tank, swimming around each other, not out of spite but out of mind, a distance of attention.

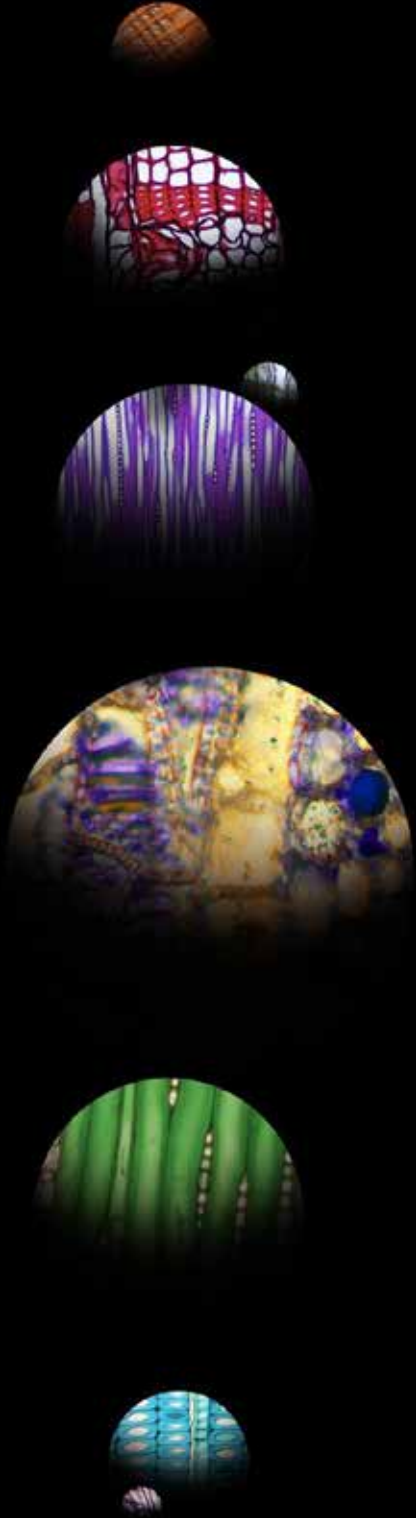
Last year I saw you wobbling down a dark sidewalk, glowing dimly under the lab orange street lamp, a guffaw in your throat as your black pencil skirt shifted further up your bowed legs, your new friends supporting you as you tripped,

and I wondered if I had done this to you, standing by as the smoke billowed ash into the flickering dusk.



Galaxy of a Wood Nerd

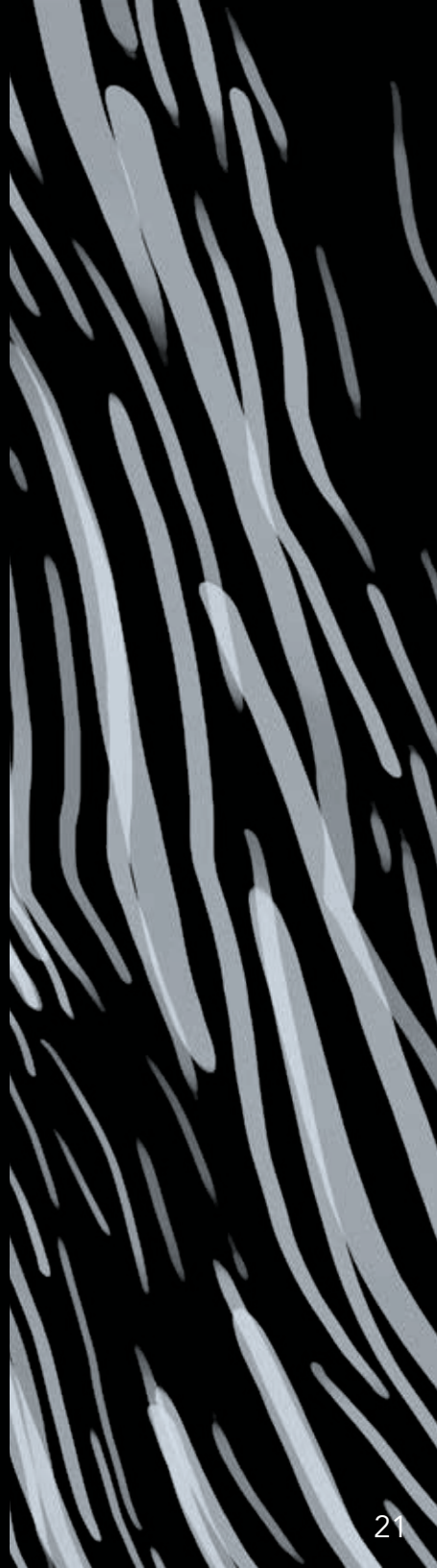
AUNA GODINEZ | MICROSCOPIC PHOTOGRAPHY AND WOOD

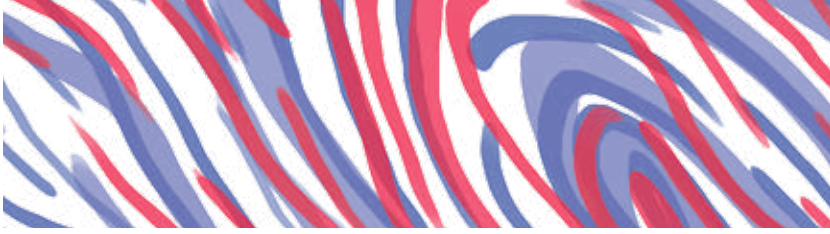


Here numbers are different

BUDDY TERRY

85 was called from behind the counter, but I was 9 — it would be a while before that red number applied to me. school got out 15 minutes ago but I had already tied and retied my shoes 2 times, paced all 3 isles, peaked into the drivers' test booth and got caught by Mom, but the man got a 16 on his test whatever that means, and I sat for a few seconds. 86... 86! 87, *oh wow two numbers at once, we must be close, peering over at the ticket on Mom's seat eagerly, 3... 3. in what world does 3 come after 87, Mom, will we be here forever? yes, yes?! no my child, patience is a virtue, her hand brushing through my shot soft hair like moms do, but there's nothing to do — 88 — and they're never gonna call us. why? because 3 doesn't come after 87, it comes after 2. but here it can because I comes after 99, what, yeah here numbers are different, why, well it makes it easier, how, can people not count past 99? — I can, no... they can't?! no no they can but — 89 — I flinched, it's just how the system works, what's a system? well its how something works, but if a system is how something works how does the system work? Well uh... 90... my shoe started tapping the tile. Mom I'm bored, I know, kicking my foot out and time is made from numbers, sighing it is, so if numbers are different here then so is time, wait, and if time is different then we don't know how to know what time it really is because I comes after 12 not 99 when you tell time, and if we can't tell time then we might be here forever. mom, forever is a long time.*

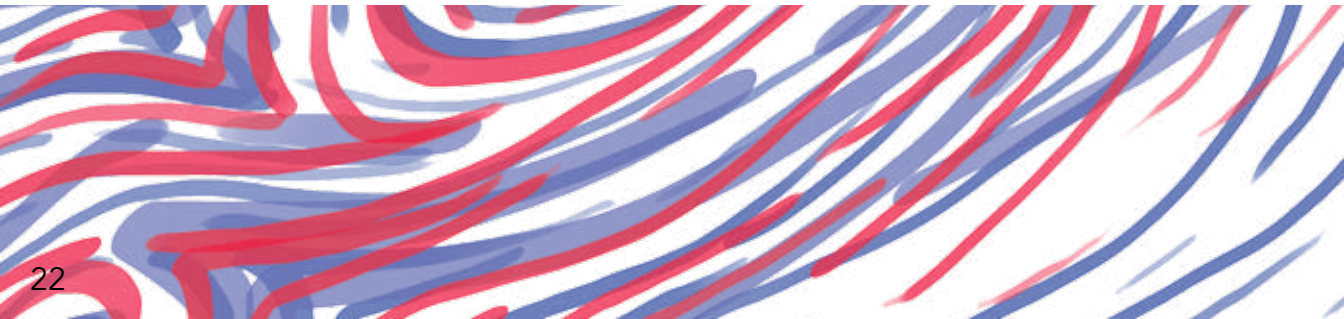


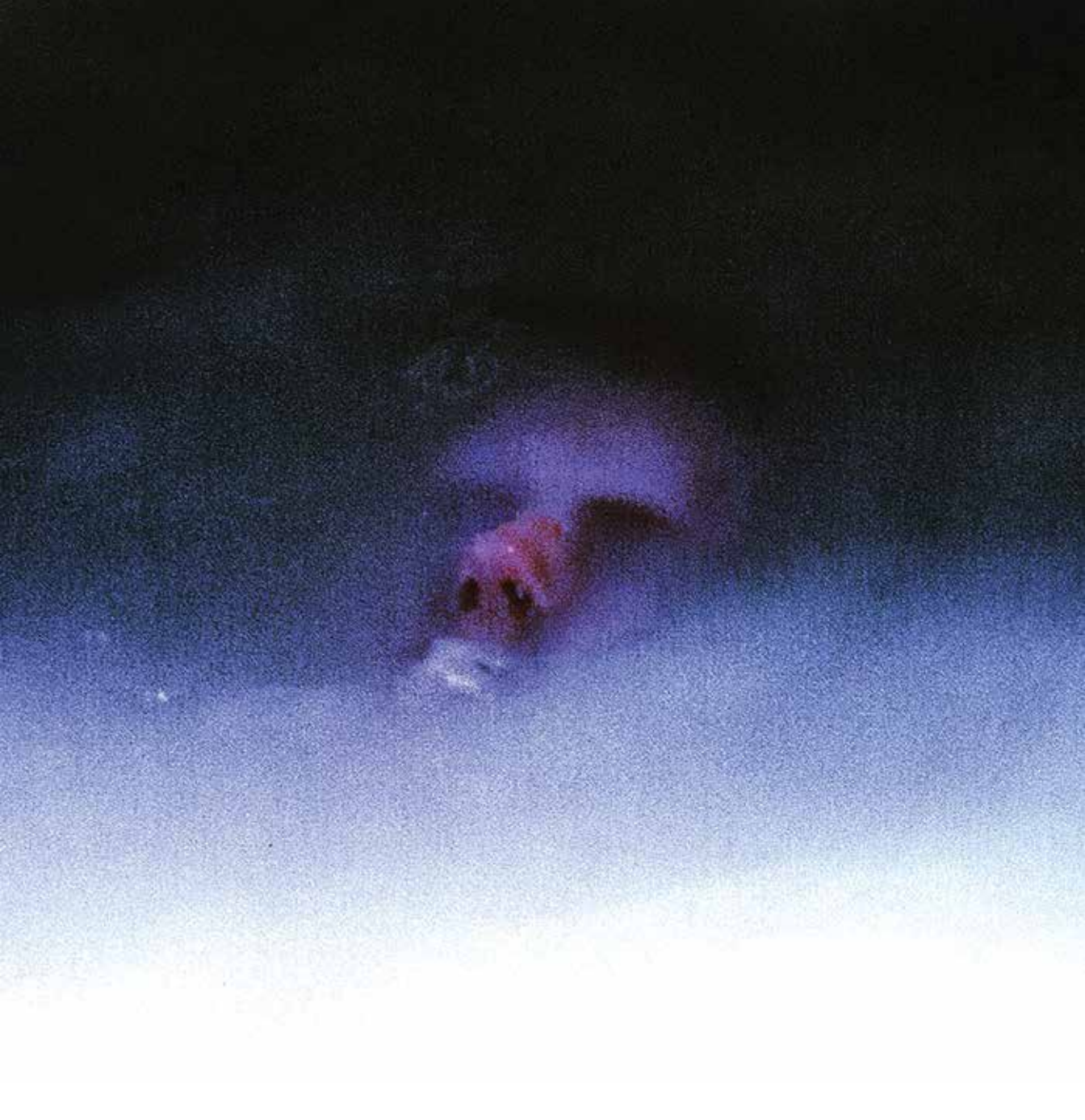


Construct

GABRIELLA GODIER

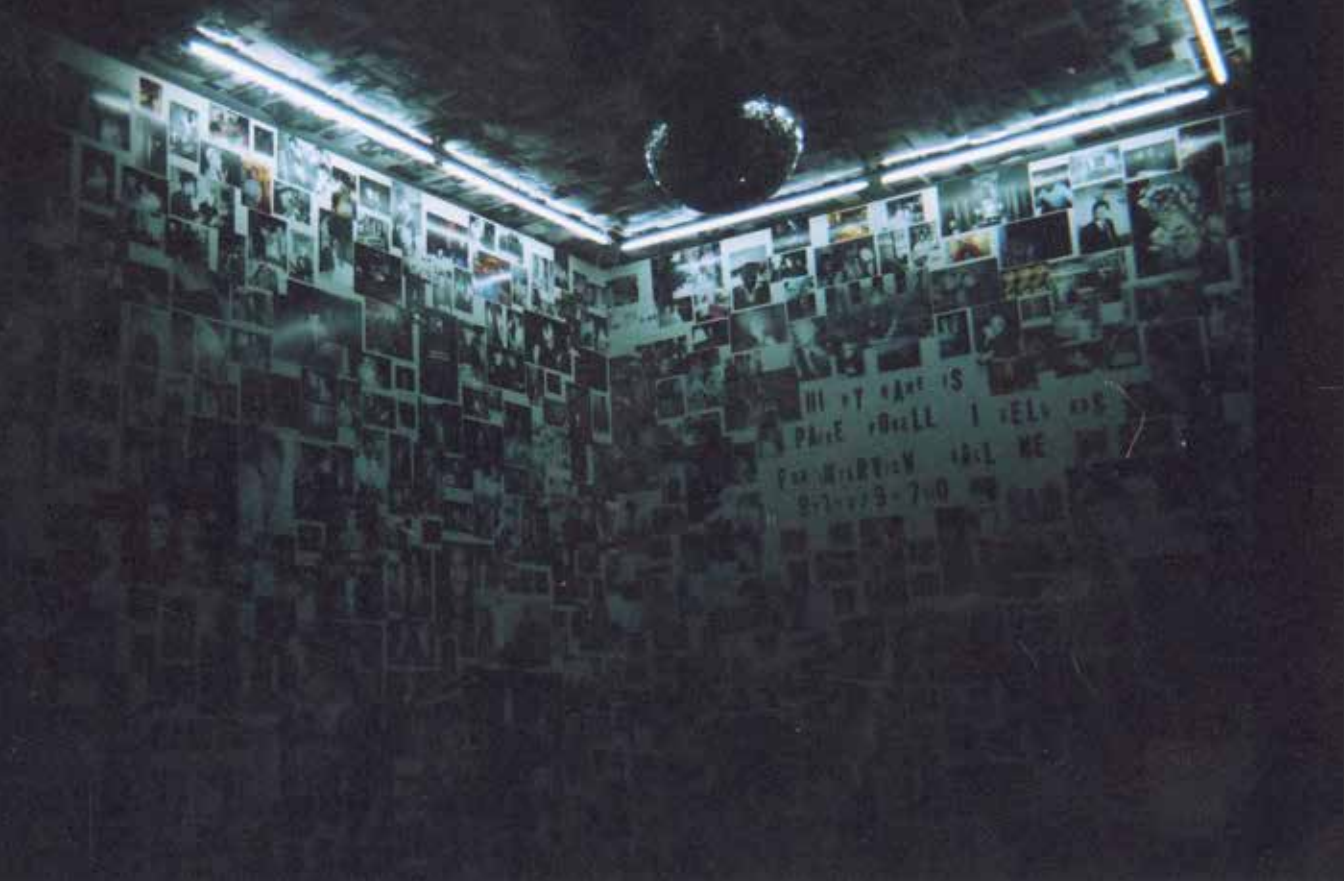
No one told me
that I'd grow up with a world that calls me
one shade
when my grandma calls me two





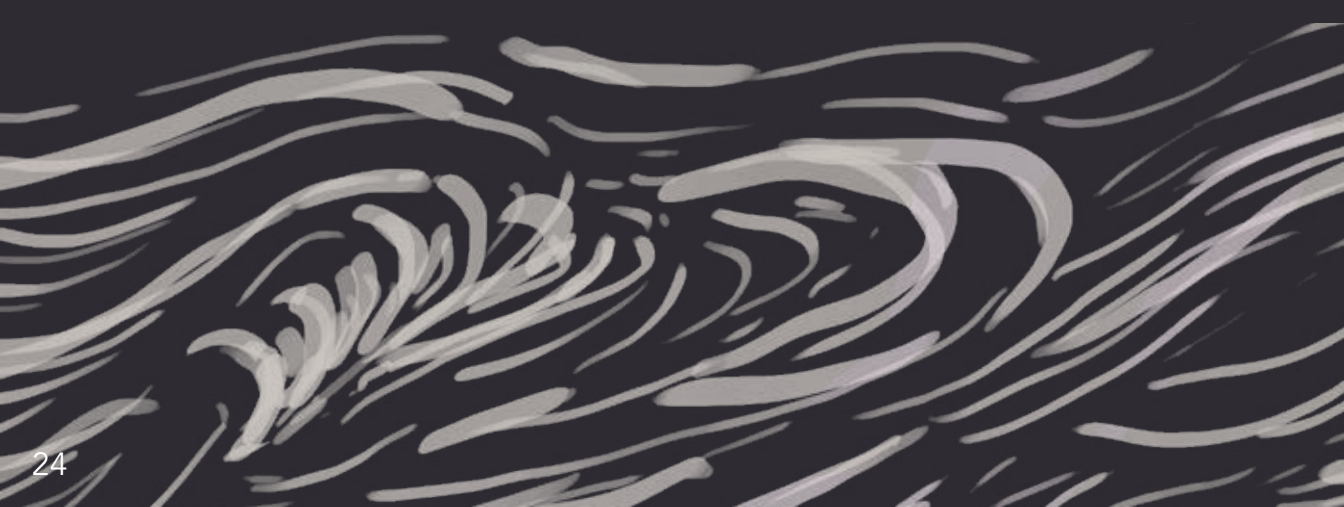
A Sip of Milk

DAN ANECITO | PHOTOGRAPHY



Película de 35 mm

CHLOE RAMIREZ | FILM PHOTOGRAPHY





Nirvana, Fuzziness, and Other Diagnosable Conditions

PHOTOGRAPHY BY EMILY MARKHAM | TEXT BY MICHELLE MILLER

It frustrates me that there is no word in the English language for the exact moment between night and dawn. The inky four-thirty-in-the-morning when you question whether you should bother trying to sleep at all. Your arms make vibration trails and the sky turns your skin grey-purple. Thoughts are fuzzy like your legs under the deep fluffy blanket, ebbing between slumber and consciousness.

Madrugada: Espacio de tiempo entre la medianoche y el amanecer.

It happens when you look in the mirror. Blank eyes stare at that body for the first time and both reflections are of each other, the person in between a visage.

Depersonalization Disorder: a state in which one's thoughts and feelings seem unreal or not to belong to oneself, or in which one loses all sense of identity.

It's hard to talk about — feeling like your body doesn't exist. You can't seem to remember who you are some days. You curl up in your skull and the movie starts, filmed by an unfamiliar set of eyes.

I've been asked if it is similar to *nirvana* — how Buddhists strive to achieve this state of non-self and emptiness. I didn't understand why it was similar. Why someone would want this.

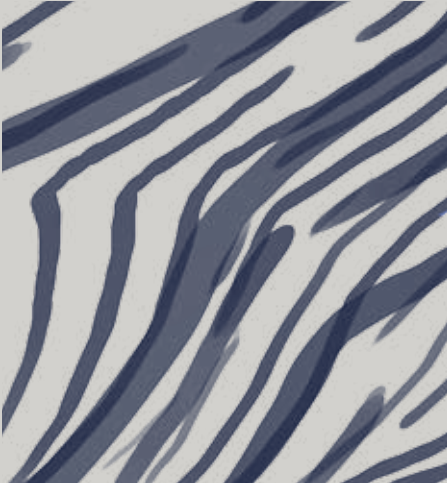
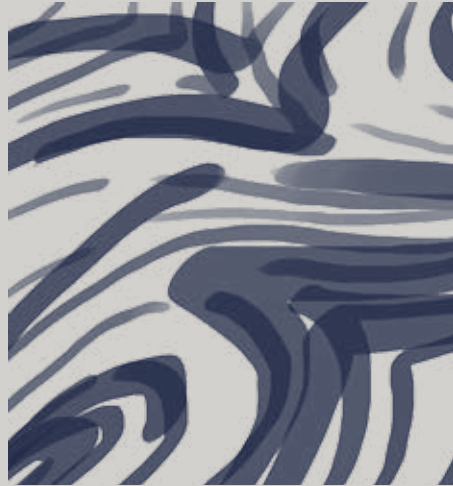
Most days I am me. But others I am the silk-torn moon, lying embedded in the sky long after sunrise.

Panama es dulce

CASEY CRUSE

Luna, fruta del cielo,
es una naranja brillante
falta la rebanada tomé entre
mis labios.

El agua isla está tranquilo,
un espejo con árboles
para beber en calor. Los insectos
cantan y las aves se han ido
a dormir, Panama es dulce.



Moon, fruit of the sky,
is a bright orange
missing the slice I took
between my lips.

The island water is calm,
a mirror with trees
to drink in the heat. The insects
sing and the birds have gone
to sleep, Panama is sweet.



A Death Untold

ALEXANDRA MAY | WIRE SCULPTURE



strain

ANTHONY J. HEATHERLY | POETRY & PHOTOGRAPHY

bones of a body
are not meant to stand strong like
long spanning bridges



*Thank you for
False hope*

LUCAS PARIS | PHOTOGRAPHY

If Given the Choice Between Home Depot and Ice Cream, Always Choose Ice Cream.

CARLIE POWELL

I was six years old, my legs sweating like popsicles in the sticky summer heat, when my mother and my father's mother decided to drag me along for one of their 'brief' outings.

I was not certain of many things at the tender age of six. I was, however, certain, as they dragged me through aisle after meaningless aisle, that I was destined to die of boredom in Home Depot.

What I didn't know then, that I do now, is that my mother went in there searching specifically for an item that they didn't carry: solace.

We spent two hours in that store because she was relieved to see that the closets there were empty, with no dusty skeletons waiting to be revealed.

And the cupboards had only dust bunnies. There were no booze or painkillers or empty promises hidden inside. Just plywood and paint and possibilities.

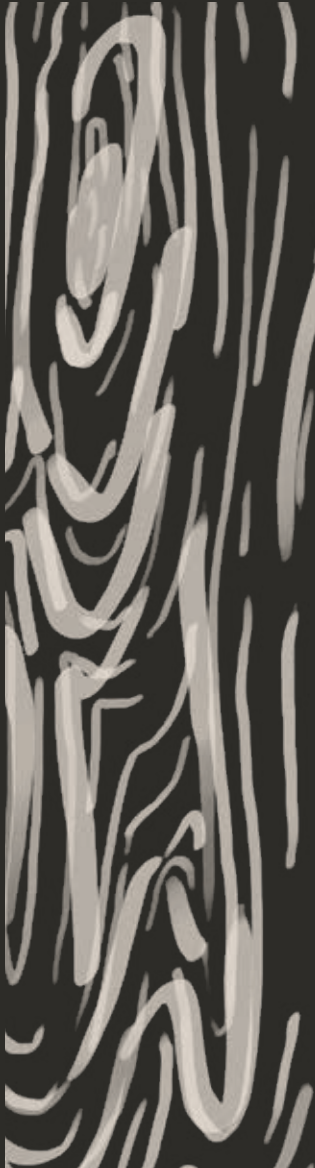
What I didn't know then, that I do now, is that every time my grandmother commented on a fancy light fixture, saying, "Wouldn't that light up your house just wonderfully?"

She was really trying to say, "I'm sorry that my son cannot love you, he got that trait from his father I'm afraid."

If I had known about those things then, or if I had been older, I would've told them to put their bank cards and their cash away.

I would have told them that no amount of appliances from this store could ever turn our house into a home.

I would have suggested that perhaps we should go out for some ice cream instead.





Surreal

MARA WEEKS | PHOTOGRAPHY





The Drowning Clown

DAN ANECITO | EMBROIDERY



Pyro-Inclined

LYRIC SPIVEY

Ben wakes up on hard gravel to the sound of sirens and screaming.

He groans, disoriented, and tries to lift his hands to his head in an effort to stop the ringing in his ears. Sharp stabbing pain jolts through his body in response, and he gasps for air. There is something wet sticking his shirt to his body, and he can't feel his legs.

Brow furrowed, Ben slowly opens his eyes and sees grey. He blinks once, twice, three times, and the view doesn't change. Panic takes hold: have I gone blind?

But then the shape of a person appears, hovering over him, a splash of too-bright reds and yellows contrasting the ashy sky, and Ben realizes that all that grey is smoke, and this person is a paramedic, and her mouth is moving, saying something, but he can't focus through the ringing and the sirens and the screaming.

She purses her lips, straightens to wave at something, then drops again and presses something against his side. It's scratchy and he winces, blinking harshly. The woman leans in close and now Ben can hear her a little clearer.

"You've been in an accident, but I've got you. You're going to be okay."

He looks at her weirdly. Of course he's okay, he's just tired and a little scuffed up. Probably fell off his bike showing off to Nate and his little brother. Where are they, anyway?

Someone joins his medic friend, and suddenly he's off the gravel and on...something else. Something white. A sheet? They lift him up and the world spins for a moment, and his head lolls to the side. He sees people running and crying

and watching, and more sickly reds and yellows, and flashing lights bathing everything in color, and it makes Ben think of that Picasso painting, the one about war and chaos.

And then they turn right, and he sees the building.

It's brilliant; four stories of early 20th century wood ablaze in glowing heat and energy. Men in big bulky jumpsuits hold hoses longer than any he's ever seen, shouting and pointing and moving. He feels like he's in a movie.

The paramedics stop in front of an ambulance, and he tries to follow their conversations and actions, but his side is hurting again and he's really dizzy and the world starts to spin again and the flashing is really starting to bug him and I'll just close my eyes for a minute.

Ben wakes up on soft bedding to the sound of monitors and sobbing. His eyes drift over across the white sheets and white walls and fall on a dark-clothed form hunched in a chair too small for her body. Gale.

He tries to ask what's wrong, why his girlfriend looks so miserable, but all that comes out is a squeak and a cough. She bolts upright out of the chair and latches onto Ben's hand.

"It's okay Benji, breathe, you're safe. I'm here."

Ben looks at her, confused, until he feels the stiff wrapping around his waist and sees the IV in his wrist. He swallows, tries to speak again. It works this time.

"What happened?"

"You were visiting Nathaniel at his apartment. Something caught fire and the whole building

went down. You got hit with debris, but it's okay, the surgeons removed it all. They said you're expected to be here for another week but don't worry! It's only to make sure you're rehydrated, you lost a lot of blood."

"Oh, okay." Is he supposed to feel relieved? Right now he's just tired. And confused. "Where's Nate?"

"They patched him up, don't worry. Brady too. They'll be alright. You're going to be alright."

Gale sweeps Ben's dark bangs to the side and keeps saying that. That he's going to be alright. She's trembling. He blinks. "What's wrong?"

She inhales, "I was just really worried is all. You looked awful. I didn't know if you'd make it." Her fingers curl around his ear. "The fire's been on the news nonstop. The firefighters stopped it but there was a lot of damage. And," she takes a breath, "seven people died. Including Nathaniel's parents. They couldn't get out in time."

Ben jerks, startled, and the monitor beeps louder. She shakes her head.

"Benji, all those people, they were on the top floor. You could have been up there too, could've...oh God." Tears are threatening to fall again, and Gale looks away.

And Ben remembers. Remembers Nate having a spat with his dad in front of his best friend. Remembers them scheming for a way to get back at him. Remembers recruiting Nate's kid brother Brady in the prank — to get access to his firecrackers — and why he and Nate and Brady weren't on the top floor, because they didn't want to be near the blowup his parents were sure to have.

And what a blowup it turned out to be.

Gale is crying again, laying against the hospital

bed, and Ben slowly puts his arms around her.

"It's okay," he whispers, "it's going to be okay."

Ben sees Nate for the first time four days later in a patient day room, where he is sitting at a table facing the window, idly fiddling with a Rubik's Cube. Crutches lay propped next to him, and his left leg is in bandages. Ben rolls past a large man loitering outside the door and over to the table on his wheelchair and locks the wheels so they're side by side. Nate glances over once and goes back to his puzzle.

"Hey."

"Hey."

"How're you doing?"

"Okay. Got hit in the side with debris, but they got it stitched up. I'll be out in another week, they think. You?"

"Leg got burned pretty bad when I went back for Brady. Can't walk on it yet, but I've only got a few days left. He's okay, by the way."

"That's good."

No more words are exchanged for a good five minutes, and they avoid each other's eyes. Nate flicks the same rows back and forth. Ben stares at his lap, hands folded. Finally, he can't take it anymore and grips his wheelchair.

"Don't you feel awful?"

Nate shrugs.

Ben's voice drops, "I mean, you've seen the news, right? How many people got hurt? How many...died. Your parents, Nate."

Nate's hands still for a brief moment and then start again with even more fervor.

"God Nate, do you even realize how bad it is? People have been calling my dad non-stop asking how I'm doing, reporters are camped out on our lawn 24-7 hoping for a story on the

‘tragic survivor’, we’ve been getting tons of letters from friends and family, it’s insane!” Nate puts the Cube on the table and stares hard out the window, but Ben doesn’t notice. “And here I am, knowing the truth, guilt’s been eating me alive man. I don’t even want to think about school, that’ll be a nightmare. And I—”

“How do you know all that?” Nate finally looks his way. Ben is so startled his train of thought derails completely.

“I – what?”

“You haven’t been home yet, how do you know what’s going on?” Ben gapes at him in disbelief.

“Is that all you care about? How I know what’s going on?” He gets another shrug in response.

“Jesus, Nate....Okay, alright. Whatever. Gale tells me when she visits. Happy?”

“Oh.”

“Oh”? Ben’s practically having a nervous breakdown, and yet his friend’s acting like he just got a bad grade on an exam. He shakes, livid, and turns so he can chew out this dense idiot out properly. And he stops short, because now he sees Nate, really notices him — how he’s completely rigid and unmoving, how his face is flushed and sweaty, how his hands grip the ends of the table so hard his knuckles are white, like it’s a lifeline. There is the slightest hint of a tremble too, like he might fall apart any second, and it makes Ben think of a tree growing against a cliff.

Nate shudders once, and his mouth parts in a whisper.

“The cops came to my room yesterday. They said they traced the source of the fire to my apartment. Then they asked if I knew anything. I—” his voice breaks, “I told them everything.”

“You did? Everything?”

“Yeah.”

“But dude, Nate, that’s—”

“They thanked me for my cooperation. Said they’d look into it. Came back about four hours ago. I, they,” he wavers, catches himself, continues, “They informed me that I’m under police custody now. When I’m out I’ll be arrested for real. Got a guard at my door, he follows me everywhere. He’s right out there now.” He jerks his head behind them, and when Ben looks he can see a large shadow in the doorway, that loiterer who remained unmoving the entire time. He swallows and Nate continues.

“I don’t know if there’s gonna be a trial, they’re still figuring it out. Brady’s been handed to the state, he’s gonna go somewhere when he gets out of here too. I don’t know where.”

“But, but Nate, nobody’s asked me anything, aren’t they going to arrest me too? You said you told them everything.”

“That’s right. Everything I did.”

“What?”

“You heard me. I did it. It’s my fault. You just happened to be there.”

“I...no Nate, that’s not true, we both know—”

“It is true, Ben. And it’s gonna stay that way.” Nate’s jaw sets, and through the nervous terror in his eyes there’s a determined glint — it makes Ben think of a stubborn ship in an impossible storm.

They are silent for ten minutes more, silent and still and sorrowful, until a nurse beckons for Nate from the door. He gives Ben an unreadable look, gathers his crutches, stands, stretches, winces, and hobbles his way out. The nurse and bodyguard follow him.

Ben watches him leave through the reflection in the window. He doesn’t turn around.

Next

RIONNA MUNIANDY | ACRYLIC





isosceles tides

ANTHONY J. HEATHERLY

and the echo you called out
had the whole town irked;
an honest tongue only after you won.

(we lied to ourselves the first six weeks;
(spending time in an alley's shadow)
(your sophomoric soul and my reflective streets.)

When the last bee pollinates a flower

CASEY CRUSE

Maybe it will be when all the mountain rivers dry up
and the moon is farther from the earth than ever before; her white bone,
a nickel through the haze of Ra swollen yellow,
ready to burst a final curtain of photons
about the sky.

Maybe it will come in a flash in the stars
and earth will depart as a maple lets go a leaf to the autumn,
put out in a thousand colors.

Maybe in a dream pre-colonization, it'd deviate.
Before fruit trees, sprouted, bloom too soon. In taut heat, when peaches, plums
succumbed in soft
halves, spoiled — the fault in us.

Maybe the bees will outlive the flowers; go on
to make mineral honey
to trace through the sediment veins. Straight golden lakes for a future race.

Maybe when dust settles in valleys
about the rocks, the last bee will
sip a kiss of nectar and let the morning frost keep her beating wings.
As if she were sleeping.

In tomorrow, she won't remember the way the wind touched down on trees
and a summer grizzly bear played a game of chase,
honey down and back,
his front paws, two plates.



To Mommy

RIONNA MUNIANDY | ACRYLIC
AND MIXED MEDIA

Millions of Peaches
JOHNNY BEAVER / ACRYLIC AND INK



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