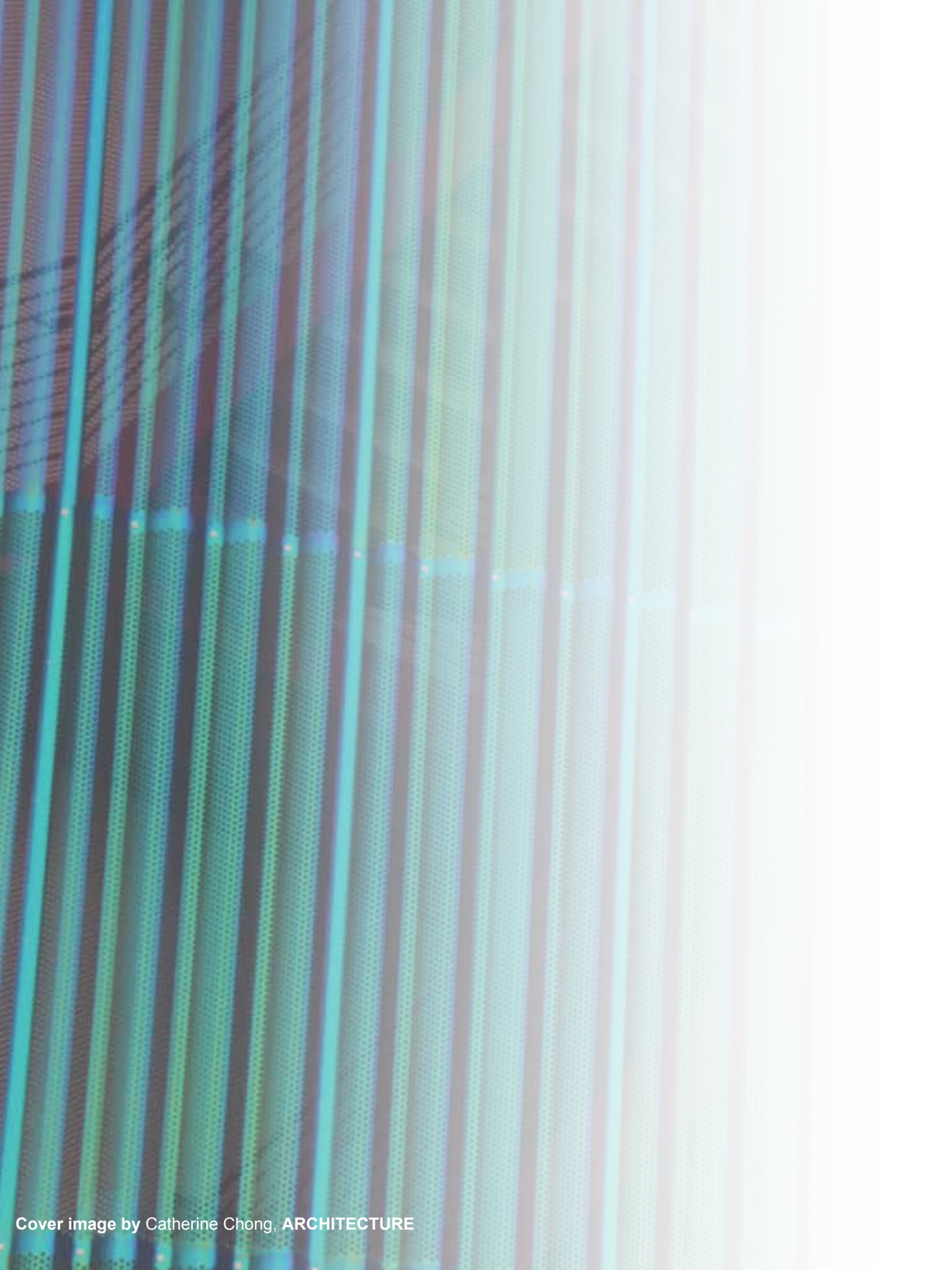


FORCES 2018





Collin College, in its continual move forward with the farsighted vision of serving Collin County with the expansion of buildings and new sites has also expanded capabilities for publication and insured permanence of the legacy of *Forces: Literary Journal of the Arts*. A bold move was made to become digitally permanent with all issues from the first to the present—29 years of *Forces*—to become permanently available to view and download worldwide through the portal of *digitalcommons*. Case in point, a student who visited his family in Vietnam for the first time in his adult life recorded the event in photos; then, he submitted those photos which were selected and now have been downloaded from his family and friends half a world away. What a gift of permanence and a reminder of how we are all connected. The new system also allowed all submissions to be entered digitally and has basically made the menial task of physically snail-mailing – and the editors reading and filing all the entries – a thing of the past. It has not been without its glitches and newness is always – well, new. However, all in all the transition was a smooth one. One last change was to completely give over the selection process to the student editors who have walked the journal completely through the process, from the call for submissions, to selection, to acceptance/rejection notification, to proofing, to print: this is an opportunity rarely afforded any student population at any college.

I would like to thank the Board of Trustees for their continuing support of the journal, the President of Collin College, Dr. Neil Matkin, the unwavering work of Mindy Tomlin-Paulson and Rachel Walker, student editors Mathew Vondersaar, Tiffany Page, John Achomuma, Annie Ellison, Starlit D. S. Taie, Bridget Scott-Schupe, Allison Graham, and Trexia Joy Asiel Hernandez. Also, special thanks to the Writer's Bloc with the selection of their *Best of Journal* recognition and their sponsor, Sean Ferrier-Watson. And finally, the PR staff Marlene Miller, Donna Kinder, and Heather Darrow, for their direction and support. Please support us in our upcoming 30th Anniversary Issue next spring. Submissions will be accepted through Oct. 30th 2018.

FORCES Editor – R. Scott Yarbrough

UNTITLED
David Goldenberg



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TEA TIME
Yipeng Lin



REFLECTIONS

Lydia Pyla

“ODE TO A MOCKINGBIRD” ©2014

Deborah Anderson

Feathers strewn across the lawn,
she went hunting at dusk . . . or dawn.

Long feathers fallen, striped grey, white and black;
this one was brutally attacked.

Tiny sweet feathers clumped into balls,
there was no body left at all.

Was it the orange-striped cat with pouncing white paws,
or the black alley stray, with its razor claws?

I imagine feathers flying in the air,
while cat licked her chops with tiger-like flair.

Perhaps the ubiquitous red squirrel was involved?
This mystery may never be solved.

Striking was this Mockingbird, and ever will be.
Her songs live on in others I see.

Whenever I hear an elegant mockingbird's songs,
please . . . don't say a word.

Just listen . . . as I am smitten,
as she lifts her head to the sun.

Her graceful life has
just begun.

JESSE

Beth Ayers

I like to think the best,
 To listen to those who call him
 Robin Hood of the West
 Those who say he robbed from the rich
 And gave to the poor... and he did... sometimes,
 Those times when he knew who he was
 Knew *where he came from*.
 Could he recall his father preaching
 Bible in hand?
 Hear his mother's gentle voice?
 Before he was sixteen.

Before he became a warrior.
 Before peer pressure and the desire to survive
 Turned the boy into the man and
 Reconstruction turned the man into the outlaw
 Who robbed from the rich.
 But I like to think the best
 Because my great-grandmother was a James
 And some small part of the recipe for *who I am*
 For the blood that flows through *my* veins
 Showing where *I* come from,
 I share with
 Jesse.

AUTUMN IN TEXAS

Anna Boling





FAITH
Alberto Gutierrez



SCAPEGOAT

Andrew Barba

*Winner of the Writers' Bloc
Choice Award*

Clear Californian sky and a field
Full of ripe grapes. I pick as fast
As I can and put some in my
Bucket. Thorns cutting
My fingers as I go.

I am not the only one hunched
Over in the same nauseating
Rhythm. A six-year-
Old girl wearing a yellowed white
V-neck, jeans, and shoes with holes.
She is plucking furiously. Her youthful
Skin barely Torched by the ruthless sun.
She graciously still moves. The hammer
Of time has not crushed her yet.

There is also an old man
In front of me. Straw hat and
A faded plaid shirt and jeans.
His skin scorched by the sun and
Folding over, a raisin.
His eyes transfixed at the
Fruit he is picking. He
Has done this for many
A decades over.

There's nine-year-old
Me. Torn oversized jeans,
A super bowl t-shirt for
A team that didn't win,
And shoes that are taped
Together at the sole.

We work by a highway and
Every Saturday morning I
See cars full of happy families
Headed to the beach to eat the grapes
I picked. I hope to one day
Sit on that sandy Pacific beach
Eating grapes and away from
The Inferno that is this grape vineyard.

I haven't talked to many of them
Except for the Overseer. They seem
Nice. Except for the one on TV
Who said I was a rapist or the
Ones who say I am
"Milking" the system. I don't
Know what any of those things
Mean, so I had to ask Papá. He
Told me what "milking" meant
But said I was not a rapist.

How can I milk the system
when I'm in the field picking
grapes every day? The sun milks
My youth from me so the families
Going to the beach can pay \$.89
A pound for grapes that I picked for \$.25 per 5
Gallon bucket. My parents brought me here
Because they needed work. I'm trying to
Help them.

Back home I went to
School and had friends and a house.
I go to different schools every few months
And can't make friends. I live in a shack
With no furniture and I sleep on the
Floor remembering home and the
Great things there. My Papá and
Mamá say things could be better here.
They aren't yet and I want to go
Home.

IT HAPPENS IN SEASONS

Anna Boling

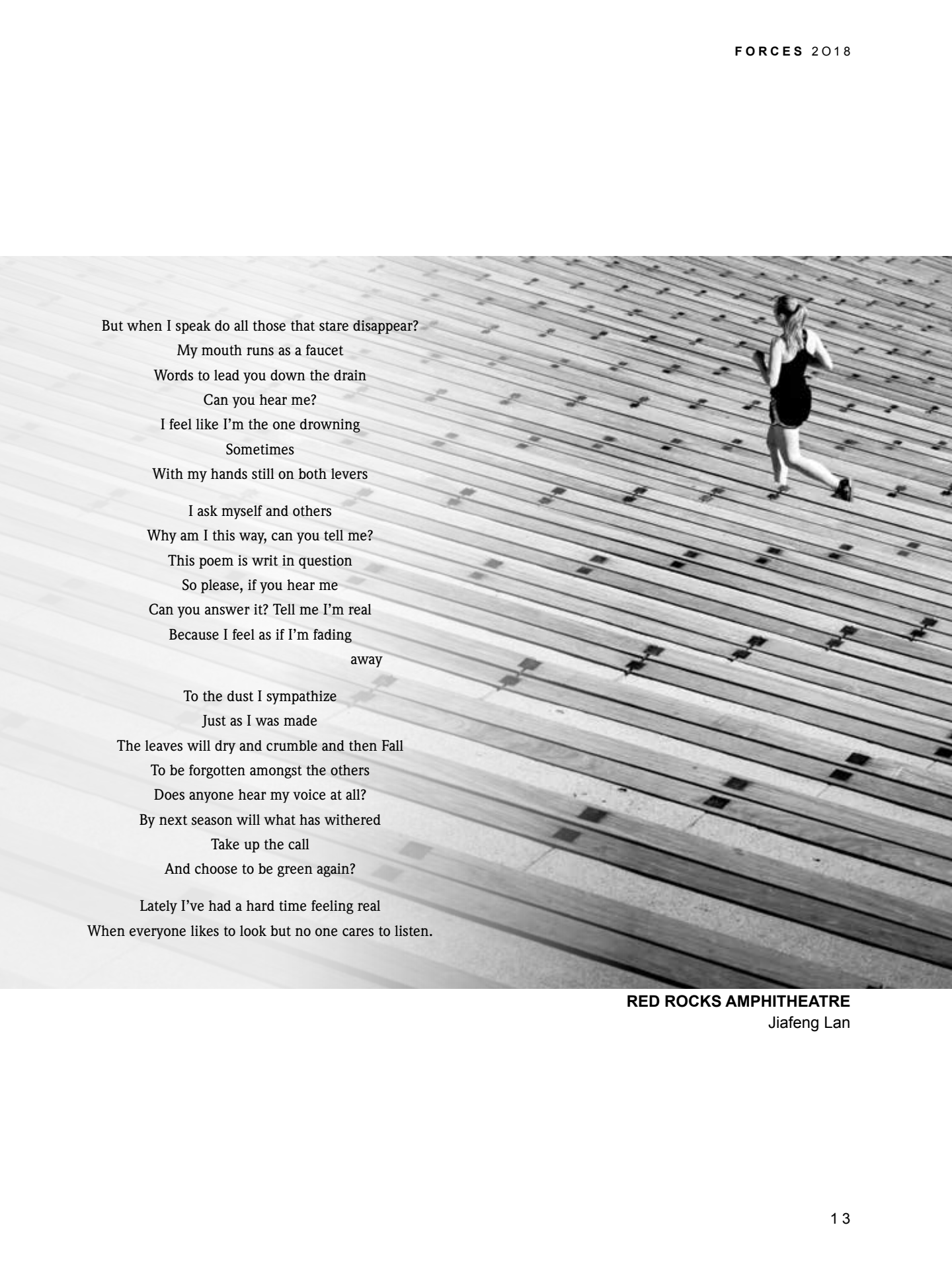
Lately I've had a hard time feeling real
Floating over my mattress at night
Brushing through these complacent eyes in waking time
Amongst strangers
(How cold their stares are
Like pool water in Spring time.
I swim/wait/wade through them)

I speak out
No one seems to hear me
Or at least no one listens
Do these words exist in someone else's space?
Do those I speak to that respond
Have a place only in my mind?

Is it just the way I am
That slips their attention
Like yolk between pinching fingers?
And to those that respond, seem to stick like it's transparent residue?

But despite this I can't help feeling see-through
Am I too small of a person,
Not self-present, not your eye-level?
Even if I was larger would I be stretched thinner
No longer opaque, simply
Evaporate in the heat of your Summer?

Everywhere I walk are stares
Women spiteful and men intrigued
Children in wonder or confusion
At conventional beauty held in a face and transportation I forget
Is on display 'round my mouth and mind
Hardly warm enough for reminder of life in
Cold, hard winter



But when I speak do all those that stare disappear?
My mouth runs as a faucet
Words to lead you down the drain
Can you hear me?
I feel like I'm the one drowning
Sometimes
With my hands still on both levers

I ask myself and others
Why am I this way, can you tell me?
This poem is writ in question
So please, if you hear me
Can you answer it? Tell me I'm real
Because I feel as if I'm fading
away

To the dust I sympathize
Just as I was made
The leaves will dry and crumble and then Fall
To be forgotten amongst the others
Does anyone hear my voice at all?
By next season will what has withered
Take up the call
And choose to be green again?

Lately I've had a hard time feeling real
When everyone likes to look but no one cares to listen.

RED ROCKS AMPHITHEATRE
Jiafeng Lan

WHERE DID THEY GO?

Daniel L. Hawkins

One day I finally realized, just how much they meant.
I never thought it mattered,
All the time that we spent.
In the days after the record scratch, just before the CD skip,
The mastery of the 8-track playing the song you wanted,
Was knowing exactly when to flip.
We rode around for hours, blazing down every dark highway.
None of us had any care or concern,
Of any danger or consequence, or seeing the next day.
The stars appeared much brighter then, more than they ever did before.
But one day our tracks had reached a junction,
And our new paths had begun to forge.
One by one we would fade away, until there was only one.
Now it is time for us to stand on our own,
No more laughter, no more fun.
Looking back at it all now, I never would have guessed,
In the end they were always there for me,
I was the one who left.

CELLY HARD, BOYS

Jessica Meyer



STILL LIFE TRIPTYCH

Maryanne Zamora

SPONTANEOUS GENERATION

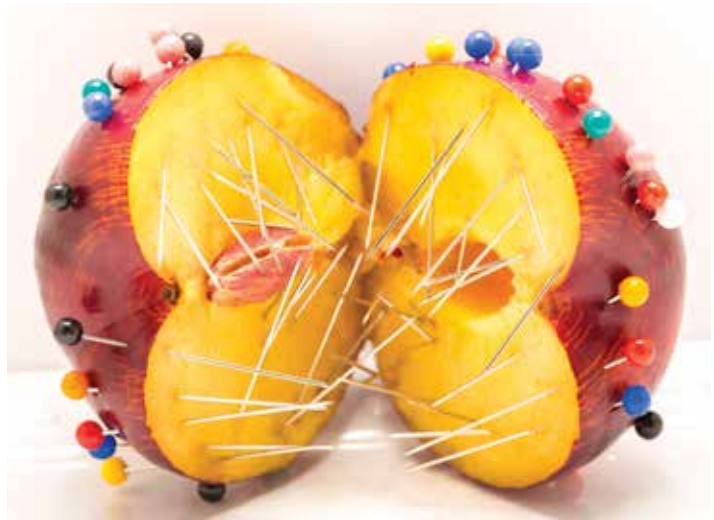
D. Knape

If all life was spontaneous
and out of nothing grew,

we must admit some accidents
without a brain slipped through

We must be clear and honest
the theory is robust,

stupidity is spontaneous
the examples, clearly us.



PUMPKIN SPICE AND TWO THINGS NICE

Jessica K. Flora





ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, SPRING
Jiafeng Lan

NEVER A PALE PLACE

Arianna McDonald

Don't move until you witness
 African sky and sunset-yellow plains with
 Its wild and unique horses with their
 Yin-yang stripes, racing with every gallop until
 They've reached the long-awaited waters.

Rotate.

Don't blink until you feel the beating
 of drums in your chest and watched
 The passing of Rio's multicolored birds
 Dancing down the street, sparkling with
 Every sway and step.

Rotate.

Don't close your eyes and miss
 A historical place where you are
 Swimming with the salts of a
 Sea that you can't drown in, even though
 Death has placed his name on its title.

Rotate.

Don't lose track of the present and forget
 Standing on the edge of a cliff in Wales
 Atop a cold beach, viewing the waters meet
 Their opposite, with the pastel field of
 Flowers in awe with you.

Pause.

The clouds had cutouts specifically
 Designed for the moon's shape as they
 Passed through, allowing as much light
 To shine in the night as possible.
 Live a life worth remembering.

THE JOURNEY TO COLORADO

Nat Chittamai





DIANA Virginia Owen

MY GRANDMOTHER

Jiaan Powers

My grandmother was tall and thin.
I stood in her living room
And said my poem for her.
She corrected me.
I was only five.
What did she know?

MR. DARCY PONDERERS

Dallie Clark





DENOUEMENT Meredith P. Embry

HORROR OF MY LIFE

Trishal Varma

Knock Knock
 Who is there?
 Thy neighbor
 Thy neighbor who?
 Thy neighbor says leave this country
 Bid adieu

I refuse
 I will not be abused
 This is my country
 And I am its people too

Knock Knock
 Who is there?
 Concussion
 Concussion who?
 I don't remember
 Train stopped
 Brakes screeched
 My hands slid
 Across her feet
 Cold blood everywhere
 Not mine,
 Not hers.
 Everyone's

Coming to a stop
 After a hundred mile dart
 Weeks apart
 Who's stop?
 Not mine
 Not yours
 But their stop

• • •

S.S
 Whack! Whack!
 Blood gushed everywhere
 Not mine
 Not yours
 But Ours

Push Shove
 Fall out of love
 Deutschland
 I called it home
 Not mine
 Not yours
 But Our home

Sister
 Mother
 Father
 Brother
 OUR people

Smell in the air
 Zyklon B?
 I guess they lost the Roman Church key
 I bruised my knee
 Holding my dad
 They dragged him to hot hell
 Or an oven of heavy swell
 Fire there was,
 That consumed us all
 Yes people burned
 Never to be returned
 Frail parents they were
 Not mine
 Not yours
 OURS

EN PASSANT
Meredith P. Embry





SALT

Molly Brown

*Winner of the Writers' Bloc
Choice Award*

When I feel overwhelmed by this life,
I bury my ruddy heart
In a mountain of paperwork
while the years roll around me
like Sisyphus' bitter stone.

I ignore until I'm twelve again,
back in the Salt Flats of Oklahoma
with my grandfather's blue co-op hat
in burning fields of white

Scooping wet soil into my young hands,
He and I dug for crystals from parched earth.
Salt-sand gripped my eyelashes
Like desperate snow begging
not to be forgotten.

How could I ever forget you?
The corn worms that made me scream,
the dry stream beds lined with gypsum—
old granaries looming rust-grey in rain
while I rode your red bicycle—
Singing songs in fog that wove
through empty streets
and echoed past still swings,
filling homes with no locked doors.

Sometimes late at night when I need strength,
I return to the letters, the birthday cards,
still tucked with your five dollar bill
and the last line you ever wrote
in fading cursive
"I'm so proud."



HALL OF HEROES

Corey Hinds

BUTTERFLIES

Caroline Dillard

Knees together. Papers on top of them. Back straight. Butterflies. Waiting.

Four more.

Focus. Applaud.

Three.

Check pages. Everything is there. Speaker's earrings distract from words. Oh well. Applaud.

Two more.

Jeez this one is boring. Not nice, don't think that. Is that a spider on his shirt? Nevermind, lint.

Cross legs. Uncross legs. Applaud.

Last one.

Then me.

Butterflies won't be still. Check papers for the eighteenth time. Everything is still there. Breathe.

Quietly clear throat. You got this. Applaud.

"Next speaker!"

You don't got this.

Somehow rise, walk up the three steps, stand at podium. Slide Page 1 to the left, stack on right.

Clasp hands, look up, see them. A sea. A sea of foreheads and collared shirts scattered with yawns. And the eye. The black eye of the video camera. The teacher adjusts its height. Heart pounds. The teacher picks up grading paper and pen. Leg trembles. Breathe. Fake confident smile to crowd. Butterflies are attempting to form a tornado. Glance at first line. Back up.

Memorized. Don't look. The teacher takes last glance at laptop screen, makes sure camera is rolling. His eyes move up and his finger points. The dreaded finger. The cue to begin. Crap.

Miraculously, sounds form intelligible words. Words form sentences. Voice too low. Project.

Scan audience. Eye contact is key. Deliver line to floral dress lady. Speak next to cardigan man.

Slide Page 2 over first. Gesture. Hands emphasize words. Feet stay still. Legs don't move. Don't talk so fast.

Slow down.

Give words time.

Next page. Memorized. Look at people not papers.

Butterflies finally fly in formation. Lend their strength to voice.

Almost forgot next line. Almost stumbled. Glance at teacher. Don't think he noticed.

Slide Page 3 to left.

Halfway down last page. Begin conclusion.

You got this. It's kinda fun.

Wrap up points.

Deliver clincher.

"Thank you." Applause.



OPEN DOORS
Hayley Earnest



FORGOTTEN...

Tara Tompson

Forgotten ... the sound of your voice
not your favorite words

shit and damn

not the severe tone

indifferent and mean

just the sound

Forgotten...the smell of your talent

not the delicious meals

meats and veggies

not the fattening desserts

cakes, pies and puddings

just the smell

Forgotten ... the look of your body

of the old lady flesh

wrinkled and folded

not the old lady hair

graying and sparse from the chemo

just the look

Forgotten ... the feel of your breath

not the nasty smell

cigarettes and breath mints

not the sickening sound

coughing and choking

just the feel

Not forgotten ... the taste of my tears

my deep sadness

regret over words spoken and not

my memories

all that is left of her.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Teighior Stegman





ANYWHERE IS A GOOD PICTURE

Catherine Chong

STATIC STATE

—For Elijah

Amy Weilert

I stand in the bathroom
squinting through the fog
at the toothpaste speckled mirror

watching as my belly recedes
my breasts flatten and spread –

my body returns to her static state.

No longer in that dynamic excitement
waking every morning to caress
each gentle swell and curve.

Even the blood now dwindles to a trickle
as she eliminates all evidence of you –
the tiny heartbeat that used to flicker deep inside,

but she can never erase
the mark
that heart left on mine.



TIME

Alberto Gutierrez



BALANCE

Sydney F. Sokora

COMMUNION

Ann Marie Newman

The shotgun blast of the screen door slapping shut
Announces to the bright, sunny world the arrival of...ME!

Hah-Hah!

My eight-year-old legs leap off the top step in a single bound.

I soar through the air down, down, down.

My landing is muffled in the pillowy, green grass

Surrounding grandma's farmhouse.

Overcome by the delicious ecstasy of warm, crystal clear, sunlit air,

I twirl, leap, and dance upon my bare toes like the

Bolshoi ballerina I imagine myself to be in that very moment.

With one final spinning leap I land, fall, and roll

One, two, three times,

Finally stilling spread-eagle on my back,

Cradled by the grass whose silken blades

Tickle my bare legs; they're welcome, gentle.

Beneath the calming midday sun I rest beside Grandma's flower garden,

Where my eyes are treated to a brilliant, polychromatic rainbow

Of lusty blooms swaying in the breeze.

BUBBLE

Amanullah Kahn



There I bask in the in-betweeness...
 Of soothing, cool earth embracing me from behind,
 And warm, flower-scented air caressing me from above.
 My right hand reaches blindly into the grass.
 Plucking free a few blades, I bring them to my mouth and chew.
 Mmmmm...the grass is a savory blend of sweet and bitter.
 It tastes GREEN, and green tastes like...life!
 In the safety of Grandma's yard,
 I dare to close my eyes against the brightness of the sun,
 So brazenly exposed in the naked blue sky.
 I inhale. I exhale.
 My breath slows and deepens. I feel my heart
 Begin to beat in rhythm with the pulse of the earth.
 My hearing intensifies, magnifying the cacophony
 Of living beings vigorously celebrating the day with me.
 Bees humming, crickets chirping, grasshoppers fiddling,
 Birds singing, trees waving their arms and rustling their leaves.
 Their symphony flows deep into the very center of my being...
 I am in complete harmony with the universe.

Here,

In Northern Minnesota, summers are far too brief.
 Days such as these must be appreciated with purposeful intensity.
 The sensation of the sun's warmth upon my skin,
 The vivid sight, the heavenly scent of flowers, blooming,
 The sacred songs and sounds of life, living.
 The sensual feel and taste of luscious green, green, green grass.
 All must be absorbed into my body and soul's memory,
As I lay in communion with the light of the sun.
 So that I may be sustained through the long, cold winter
 That will surely arrive all too soon.
 Like the shotgun blast of a screen door, slapping shut.

BEHIND EVERY LEAF

Chisom L. Ogoke



FUN IN THE BOTANICAL GARDEN

Gilbert Hu



FULL OF HOPE, OUT OF GAS
Meredith P. Embry

PANIC

Tiffany Page

Suffocating	This prison I'm in
Heavy	If <i>they</i> could just...
My heart is willing	If <i>this</i> could just...
But my hands aren't ready	If <i>that</i> could just...
These thoughts are screaming	Then <i>I</i> could just...
Ablaze with dread	Stop.
As feelings of terror	Start.
Take over my head	Go.
I'm attached to this couch	Live.
Like it's sewn to my skin	
And I can't seem to escape	



POTTY TIME

Laura Braidwood

FORM VS. CONTENT

Susan Maxwell Campbell

Without a heart the poem is green ramblings
but can it go without a skeleton?
the ideas fly like wrens and eagles
where thought ordains order sometimes opaque

chewable poems will satisfy the mind

we wish patterns into stars and rhythms
of whales singing infinite content and form
obeying whatever makes the poem go
flatters what it lightly holds in its arms

—a wild nestling—and welcomes home the poem



NIGHTMARISH DREAM

Allison Graham

A dream is a nightmare
 With all the right pieces
 In all the right places
 Seeing yours gave me a scare.

Mine are of glory and sun shining bright
 Of grass and gleaming drops of dew
 Yours are of dark forests and quiet streams
 Where you find pleasure, I find a fright.

I followed you into a dream
 Once upon a time and far away
 You swam with fish and mermaids
 As the sun made the waves gleam.

What struck me most, though
 Were the sounds and the sights
 As they pulled you under
 And soaked you through.

I thought you must be mad
 As you laughed and shouted
 Could you not see the way their smiles
 Spoke of something terrible, something bad?

Their smiles were wide
 Their eyes were vicious
 You saw no danger
 But I could see it coming in: the tide.

I began to panic; my mind raced
 I could not find a way to help
 You still smiled, without a care
 The tide came closer as I paced.

Then all at once, it was over
 We were awake,
 Staring at blue skies
 And lying on a bed of clover.

We sat there together
 Watching the wind toss the leaves
 And then you smiled and said
 Something I will remember forever

“A nightmare is a dream,
 With all the right pieces
 In all the right places
 The only difference is the seam.”

THE LADDER INTO THE CAVE

Hayley Earnest





SISTERS

April Boyd

*Winner of the Writers' Bloc
Choice Award*

MY SISTER SHOWS UP only when she needs something. Last week it was my flat-iron. This week it's my phone charger.

"I'll bring it back tomorrow," she says before I've even given her permission to leave the house with it. Before I can say anything, she's shutting the front door behind her. I don't see her tomorrow, or the day after that.

The next week, I find her car in the driveway when I get home from class. When I get inside, she returns the phone charger and then points at my mouth. "Your lipstick. Can I borrow that for work?"

"Will you actually bring it back tomorrow?" I ask.

She raises her eyebrows but recovers quickly. "Sure."

Late that night I hear the front door unlock, and then a knock on my bedroom door, accompanied by sounds of sniffing.

"Are you awake?" my sister whispers.

I mumble a "yes" and set down my book as she pushes open the door, wobbling inside on her too-tall platforms. My bedside lamp illuminates thick black rivers on her cheeks, my lipstick smeared and faded on her mouth. She climbs into bed with me and covers her face.

"They don't love me there," she slurs. "They don't love me like you and Mom and Dad do, Alice."

I nod and hug her as she cries and hiccups and says things I can't make out, until she is sober enough to drive home, she thinks. I see her again three days later.

"Someone at work stole the lipstick," she says breezily. "Probably that girl who's jealous cause I get more customers. You can imagine..." She rolls her eyes and smiles like this is something I can relate to.

"I can pay you back, though," she adds when I say nothing. She pulls a crumpled wad of ones out of her pocket and counts them before offering me a handful. I almost take the money until I think about where it came from.

"Maybe you should quit." My words come out in a rush and I'm surprised as soon as I say them.

My sister clenches her fist around the money and drops her hand. "Maybe I have bills to pay. Not all of us live under Mommy and Daddy's roof."

"You could move back. Get out of... there."

For a second she looks at me sadly, almost as if she's considering it, but then the moment is gone.

"Not gonna happen, little sister." She turns around and heads for the front door, but pauses before she opens it.

"I'm sorry about your lipstick," she says. She doesn't look back and I don't go after her.

"I'LL BRING IT
BACK
TOMORROW," SHE
SAYS BEFORE I'VE
EVEN GIVEN HER
PERMISSION
TO LEAVE THE
HOUSE WITH IT.
BEFORE I CAN
SAY ANYTHING,
SHE'S SHUTTING
THE FRONT DOOR
BEHIND HER.
I DON'T SEE HER
TOMORROW,
OR THE DAY
AFTER THAT.



ALL THAT GLITTERS, PROBABLY KILLED HIM

Trexia Joy Asiel Hernandez

“ELIOT? YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE HOW INCREDIBLE PARIS WAS!” Red lips smiled as she called out, soft hands setting down bags carefully as to not disturb the precious contents inside. She had brought him gifts from the fashion capital, and she could hardly contain her excitement. “Where are you? I have surprises!” she called out—already in the process of discarding her red-soled stilettos. She slipped off her coat as well, moving to the hallway closet to reunite the fur with its brethren. She waited for a moment, expecting an answer but none was given.

As she faced the openness of the luxe apartment, a sense of dread began to fill the air. It coated her in worry and anxiousness, weighing on her chest like a bag of bricks. She could feel something was...wrong. He said he would be home by the time she got back.

She sighed and shook her head, dark hair swaying. Victoria, get a grip. He’s probably just out with some friends and he forgot to say.

The beauty leaned down to grab her heels as the dread in her chest receded. Long legs carried her across the living room and deeper into their home. As pristine as it looked, that is what it was: a home, a solace from the cameras and the constant judgement. Sure, her entire career was built on the judgement of her body and its

appearance but it didn’t mean that she had to like it. She strolled past the leather couch whose darkness contrasted against the stark white of the walls and the glass coffee table. She gave a fond smile to the copy of a beloved Alexander McQueen sketch they had hung upon the wall, a small reminder of what fashion had all the potential to be: beautiful, daring, expressive—all without breathing a single word.

Victoria reached her bedroom, desiring well deserved nap, when an ajar door caught her eye. Eliot’s bedroom door was half open, and in the small peak she had into the room, a deep navy blue tie with gold dots signaled to her. “Ellie? Are you in here?”

With her Louboutins still in tow, she cautiously pushed the door open and took in more of the room. She slipped in and found more than just a tie seemingly haphazardly discarded on the ground. There was the tie, Gucci shoes, a tan Armani jacket she recognized from a show two weeks back, and a golden Rolex with a face marred by cracks that reminded her of lightning. All these objects lead her to his closet, as if the designer pieces were bread crumbs and all she was trying to do was find her way home. That wasn’t such a far-off idea. He made their lavish apartment home to her. Not even a McQueen sketch could do that. She

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called out her endearing nickname for him again before opening the closet with a firm tug.

Her stilettos fell ungracefully to the floor as she brought her hands up to cover the scream that was forming on her lips. Tears immediately sprung from doe eyes and her chest heaved as Eliot continued to defy gravity with a leather belt.

In that moment, her world shattered. No, it was obliterated like a vase connecting with the ground. She was a billion pieces, hopelessly irreparable and undisputedly broken.

...

SHE UNDERESTIMATED THE MEDIA coverage his death would get and how much it would affect her. She didn't know she would fall apart every time she saw his face on a tabloid or another headline titled "GENUIS DESIGNER KILLS

IN THAT MOMENT,
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HIMSELF". The easiest way she found to remedy this was to simply not go outside or be online.

Perhaps it seemed morbid, to stay in the apartment of a dead man, but she had no place to go. It was in this unraveled state that she got the call. The steady trilling broke the precarious quiet that had fallen over the home. She brought it to her ear, an annoyed frown on her lips.

"Jesus, it's only been three days, Monica. Tell them I'm being human."

"Darling, I know it hurts but you have to move on. And *Vogue* waits for no one, not even model superstars like yourself." A beat. "Monica—Screw you and *Vogue*."

Her arm swung back and glass rained. She then returned to her previous position, bringing his jacket to her face and balling herself up on his corner of their couch.

**THERE'S A SCREAM INSIDE
WE ALL TRY TO HIDE 4, 7, 8**
Brandy L. Anderson





BULL'S MACHINE SHOP

Josh Jalowiec



BIRD IN THE MOUNTAINS
Hayley Earnest

LOVE IS A REBEL BIRD

John Achomuma

FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

LEE, a 14-year-old boy narrates:

LEE (V.O.)

I've never been outside. I once asked my dad what the town is like. He said it's mundane. He said the outside world is a dark place with bad people, and up the hill is a church that no one ever goes to.

We see an old dusty church, followed by a close up on the rusty church bells.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A house on a slope.

LEE (V.O.)

My dad only leaves the house to throw the trash away.

Looking down the slope, there is a dumpster on the roadside.

INT. HOUSE - PARLOR - NIGHT

Lee's dad (appears to be in his forties, wears pants, a dress shirt and a green scarf) is holding a broom and dustpan. He is yelling at Lee, but his dialogue is inaudible. Behind him is a broken clock that reads 5:55 am.

LEE (V.O.)

(regarding clock)

Ever since my mom died, the clock stopped ticking. Dad says she went to throw the trash away and was killed

by a drunk driver. Dad always says he won't move forward. He says he needs to find peace. He hasn't found peace yet... maybe that's why the clock stopped ticking. But what do I know I can't even read time.

Focused on the clock, Lee's father grabs his son's arm with force.

LEE (V.O.)

Dad likes to wear mom's scarf. Its smell reminds me of her too...lavender.

Shaking Lee's arm:

DAD

Lee, are you listening?!

(tilts son's head to a broken urn on the floor)

LEE (V.O.)

(regarding urn and it's ashes, freaking out)

That's my mom! I'm screwed.

DAD

Lee!

(inhales, exhales)

Go to my room. Get a belt.

LEE

(about to cry)

But dad-

DAD

(points at him with broom)

No punishment, no dinner. And no tears for men!

Lee holds tears in. Heads to dad's room.

EVER SINCE
MY MOM DIED,
THE CLOCK
STOPPED TICKING.
DAD SAYS SHE
WENT TO THROW
THE TRASH AWAY
AND WAS KILLED
BY A DRUNK
DRIVER.

DAD ALWAYS SAYS
HE WON'T MOVE
FORWARD.
HE SAYS HE NEEDS
TO FIND PEACE.



INT. HOUSE -

DAD'S ROOM/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lee scans the room. On a coat hanger, he sees a pair of black pants. Taking them off, he looks at the belt on them in fear. He slowly starts taking the belt off when he hears a squeaking sound. Scanning around, his eyes fix upon dad's bed. Unmade, there is a framed picture of his mother on the pillow opposite dad's side of the bed. Putting the belt on top of the bed, he grabs the picture. Putting it back on the night stand:

LEE (V.O.)

Where's my picture?

(looks around, finds his 4-year-old framed picture under the bed, dusty, sarcastically)

I love you too dad.

As Lee crawls under the bed to get the framed picture of himself, he hears another squeaking sound. Suddenly, a rat runs toward him. Startled, he crawls backwards hitting the back of his head.

LEE

(scratching back of head)

OUCH!!!

(stands up)

Wiping the dust off his 4-year-old picture, eerie music starts playing. Staring intensely at frame, it suddenly cracks. Startled, he drops frame breaking it. Lee starts panicking. As he tries to reassemble it, a soothing MALE VOICE whispers:

MALE VOICE

It's okay Lee! Your dad won't find out.

LEE (V.O.)

(looking around, curious)

I've heard this voice before.

MALE VOICE

Looking for me? Cabinet.

Lee enters dad's cabinet. Getting a clearer look inside, Lee **only** finds his mom's clothes. They are clean and ironed.

LEE (V.O.)

(smells)

Lavender.

A vinyl **SCRATCHES**. The song "Habanera: Love is a Rebellious Bird" from opera play Carmen starts playing faintly. Lee partially recognizes the song.

MALE VOICE

(chuckle)

Ears perked? A closer listen always helps memory. Need a clue? It's from the attic.

LEE

(nervous)

What song is this?!

MALE VOICE

Check the attic!

Walking reluctantly to the attic, Lee sees his dad cutting carrots on the counter top. Through the window, Lee notices rain falling.

LEE

(worried)

Dad?

Lee's dad can't hear him. Walking to the stove, he is also unable to see Lee even though he waves his arms in front of him.

MALE VOICE

Don't worry about him. He was always oblivious to begin with.

LEE (V.O.)

(resumes walk to attic, volume of song increases)

I remember this song. I remember going to pee when I saw someone sneak in.

**ON A COAT
HANGER, HE SEES
A PAIR OF BLACK
PANTS. TAKING
THEM OFF, HE
LOOKS AT THE
BELT ON THEM
IN FEAR.**

**HE SLOWLY
STARTS TAKING
THE BELT OFF
WHEN HE HEARS
A SQUEAKING
SOUND.
SCANNING
AROUND, HIS
EYES FIX UPON
DAD'S BED.**

At this moment, we see a visual of a 4-year-old Lee witness a dark figure with blue eyes dash to his dad's bedroom.

LEE (V.O.)

(walking)

I remember laughter in the bedroom.

I remember this voice.

Thunder **CRACKLES**. Lee is standing below door to the attic. Looking up, the door to the attic opens and ladder unfolds on its own.

Lights flicker. The song pauses...

THUNDER **CRACKLES**.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Thunder **CRACKLES** again. Rain keeps falling. The door bell rings. Lee's dad opens the door to a 30-year-old, male **STRANGER** in a trench coat.

STRANGER

Good evening sir!

Are you Mr. Fukunaga?

DAD

(holding a tomato and a knife, he starts closing the door)

Sorry, but I'm not interested in buying any-

STRANGER

(holds door, pathetically)

One day... I was coming back from a party with friends. I drank a little too much but still took to the wheel.

(MORE)

None of us could drive frankly... not to put the blame on others... it was my fault.

(after a beat)

I'm the man who ran over your wife. I was young and stupid. This was 10 years ago... I was released from prison today.



TRISHA
Gilbert Hu

(takes a deep breath)

I'm here to make amends.

Lee's dad is speechless. Tilting his right arm, light reflects on the knife. The Carmen song crescendos.

CUT TO:
INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

MALE VOICE

Do you remember the toys
I bought you?

Entering the attic, Lee follows a trail of expensive toys. A train set, action figures, robots and at the end of the trail - the dark figure with blue eyes in a suit, bleeding on the floor. Frightened, Lee runs back to the attic door. It slams shut. Looking behind, the figure approaches him. Paralysed, the figure swallows Lee.

GONG! GONG! GONG!
Church bells ring 6:00 am.

**DAD HAS KILLED
DARK FIGURE
WITH KNIFE.**

**THE LADDER
LEADING TO THE
ATTIC IS OPEN.
LEE'S MOM PANICS.**

**STANDING OUTSIDE
THE RESTROOM,
4 YEAR OLD LEE
HAS WITNESSED
MURDER.**

INT. HOUSE - DAD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Church bells wake Lee up from under his dad's bed. After scratching the bump on the back of his head, he looks for the belt he put on the bed. He doesn't find it.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The house phone is disconnected from the dialer. Recent phone call reads 911.

Lee's dad has been hanging himself with his belt. The belt snaps. Hearing Lee walk in, his dad takes the belt off his neck and hastily throws it away. Lee stares at the dead body of stranger with fear filled eyes. A bloody knife is next to corpse. Lee then pans right to his father who is recuperating. Finally, Lee looks at the clock. The hands on the clock are struggling to move but still stay on 5:55 am.

STRANGER (CONT'D)**DAD**

(panting, wearing scarf)

Lee! Please come here.

LEE

(approaching dad, looking at murder scene)

Dad... what... what happened?

Dad lifts stool up and takes a seat. A sad piano tune plays.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Flashback: It is 5:00 am. The dark figure is kissing Lee's mother. Then, they run into Lee's dad's room.

CUT TO:

Lee's dad arrives home. He walks in on Lee's mother in bed with dark figure. "Love is a Rebellious Bird" is playing on a vinyl record player. After smashing the vinyl, he gets in a fight with dark figure. Lee's mom tries to break up the fight.

CUT TO:

Dad has killed dark figure with knife. The ladder leading to the attic is open. Lee's mom panics. Standing outside the restroom,

4-year-old Lee has witnessed murder. Dad forcefully drags Lee back to his room. Dad begins to drag dark figure's body to the attic.

CUT TO:**EXT. HOUSE - DAY**

It is 5:55 am. Lee's mom tries to leave house. Dad holds her. She slaps him. He pushes her off slope. Recovering from fall, she gets hit by drunk driver.

CUT TO:**INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Present: Dad is crying heavily. Lee's mom's makeup is running down Dad's eyes. Lee hugs him. Dad hugs him back. Looking at the clock, Lee still reads 5:55 am.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Sirens blaring. Cops surround the house.

LEE (V.O.)

I asked my dad if he needed help finding peace. He didn't say anything. For the first time since mom died, he laughed.

Sad piano tune fades.

FADE TO BLACK.**EXPOSED****EXPOSED 2****EXPOSED 4**

Michael Nguyen





BUBBLES

Victoria Jones

THE SHIP ON THAT DAY

Starlit D. S. Taie

THE SUN HAD RISEN TO THE MIDDLE OF THE SKY when Quincy walked out onto the porch of the hut, squinting in the afternoon sun. She paused for a moment, glaring out across the sand to the shoreline, where small waves rushed onto the beach, and then looked further out, where clear blue waters faded into a darker blue. The sky was light and free from clouds, and a soft wind blew, making the thatch of the roof flutter, and the palm trees sway gently. Quincy watched all of this, her brow furrowed and a dark look on her face, the calm atmosphere of the island in stark contrast to what she felt inside. In fact, the calmness made her feel uneasy; it was as if the world was playing a trick on her, forgetting what had happened a few days ago. It all felt too nice, too perfect, too *normal* to be real in a way. In her mind all she could think of were burning ships, shattered and broken from hails of cannon fire, hissing as they sank into the ocean. She thought of the distant screams, drowned out as the swells of freezing ocean water submerged the ship, making the men of the crew vanish, one by one, as each wave passed. And then that terrible heavy smoke that hung in the air during the battles, from the muskets and cannons, which made her eyes water and stung

her nose from its sulfur smell. She took a sudden deep breath through her nose then, expecting to smell the smoke, but only breathed in the scent of the palms and their wood.

This shook her from her thoughts, and at that she stepped off the porch into the sand, barefoot having left her boots inside the hut with the rest of her comrades. She could hear them still talking; their topic had moved on to something involving plants, but Quincy had already walked out of earshot before she caught the gist of their conversation. She made her way to the shoreline, her arms crossed, mind wandering again to the battle a few days ago. Her feet waded into the water, it

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MUSE, THE CONURE
Dalton Wright



swirling around her ankles, and it wasn't until she heard the rattle of the hanging beads covering the hut's doorway that she realized she had been staring blankly out into the horizon, those few vivid moments of battle replaying over and over in her head, with no thoughts of her own interrupting it.

She squinted in the sunlight and saw a few members of her group emerge onto the porch, walking with ease. Quincy's injury took that moment to flare up; a sudden, sharp piercing that penetrated deep into her abdomen, making her wince and place her hand on her side. Over on the porch, someone spoke, the voice lost in the distance, and at that the group erupted in hearty laughter. She watched them, the pain subsiding and saw the joy expressed so readily on their faces. As she continued to watch their smiles and happy expressions, she felt a sudden distance grow between her and them. It felt farther than the sandy beach she looked across; farther than the entire island even. Because as she stared, she wondered, how it was they could act that way? People had died; some would never be found as the ocean had stolen them away, and some would never be remembered as time passed. Yet there her comrades were, people who had only heard of those terrors, not seen them, smiling and laughing amongst each other. To them, there was nothing wrong with today- it was beautiful, as the sun shone and the ocean glittered before them. But for her, today could only be seen through the fog of yesterday, and it was cold, and sad.

She looked at them one last time before turning back to the sea, the memories already playing in her mind. The world her companions lived in was so distant from hers, and yet, she could never see herself wanting to be a part of it.

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IT FELT FARTHER
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FARTHER THAN
THE ENTIRE ISLAND
EVEN.

UNTITLED
David Goldenberg



THE JOYS OF NIGHTSCAPES

Maryanne Zamora



LA CATRINA
Alberto Gutierrez





ARMINA

Bridget N. Scott-Shupe

AS MANDATED, ARMINA'S MORNING PASSED without speaking. She was too afraid one of the foremen would sneak up behind her, as they often did, and send her home without pay for some imagined transgression. Some of the women, however, peering around and over their shoulders to ensure their secrecy, would start up short and quiet conversations Armina could sometimes understand. They griped about wanting to talk, sing, and smoke while working and often asked each other for old remedies to help cure their sick children and husbands, who always seemed to be ill from something or another. They talked about the homes they had left behind, looking for something better, and the family that had stayed and were supporting them in spirit from afar, the inhuman conditions of their tenements and jobs, and a lack of food and water that was widespread across all immigrant nationalities. Complaints of mending torn socks and the like after having already spent the day sewing were common, and many joked about dreading having to cook when they went home. Even the children choked out confessions of missing their mothers.

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F THE SEAMSTRESSES FELT particularly close to the woman they were whispering to, they would secretly light a cigarette and exhale through their shirt to hide the smoke, stealing a short break from their employers. During these times, they quietly spoke of fear for the future of their families and children, and about their personal losses and regrets in life. Their eyes, dull while at their machines, would become glassy while color flushed their cheeks. Faces hardened and aged by factory life would crack into pained expressions, soft but tortured, as they ducked their heads to their work, hoping no one would see. Some had lost children in factory accidents when their little clothes had been caught in giant machines, others went home to husbands who had cheated death, but came back missing limbs and unable to work.

The same women who could look so unbearably hollow, however, could also appear to be barely containing their joy. Stories of new grandchildren sparked love in their hearts, and tears of happiness, quickly wiped away into their collars, spilled over their cheeks when they spoke of finally saving up enough to bring their families to America. Rich social lives centered in their churches and communities kept their spirits high, and struggling to preserve their various ways of life gave them purpose and meaning. Despite the differences in language or lifestyle, all these women were facing the same terrors and joys together, and simply being together made everything just a little better; made them realize they weren't as different or alone as they might have thought.

BOWLS, CUPS AND UNIDENTIFIABLE OBJECTS

Chisom L. Ogoke



ARCHITECTURE
Catherine Chong





LOVE: THE VILLAIN OF THE STORY

Mathew R. Vondersaar

“YOU KNOW, I CAN’T SAY I’M MUCH A FAN OF MURDER.” The voice pauses. “I find it a rather ineffective method of control and advancement. Because, and this is important, it doesn’t cause me to gain anything. It.”

He breathes in heavily before releasing it in frustration.

“Speaking purely logistically it causes the other side that I oppose to lose some semblance of power. but can in turn be used against me.”

Where before there was but blackness, now there stands the outline of a man.

“Either from the rage that comes from a lost loved one, or from the inspiration that comes in the form of a martyr.”

The hulking mass of the speaker comes into acuity.

“The follow up solution is to pull people to your side, that however raises the problem of control; for how do you change someone? Someone of value, rather.”

As the light on him intensifies that bulk is revealed instead to be a coat, a coat composed of a multitude of patches.

“But people of that nature are rather difficult to convince, as that person in order to pull to one side or another and

to hold them there has to have a bit of faith that can be tapped into, rather than raw logic.”

His clothes beneath that coat are unremarkable, simple black clothes fitting well to his slender frame. His face remains shadowed under his hood.

“Naturally I would argue my logic is among the most sound; however, those who pursue logic often fail to see when their own has begun to fail them until another comes to point to that failure; and in which case we have two scenarios.”

The void seems to lose some of its core from the light bathing the speaker.

“One: In which they refute this logic and continue to be my enemies, and in which case I either am forced to continue to try to convince them and thereby spend time and resources, or remove them as elements that oppose my personal equation.”

A singular pillar of white slowly forms behind the speaker.

“Two: They conform to my logic, meaning they are creatures that are added to the list of possible allies; however they are therefore below me in levels of competence, and thereby worthy only as things that may serve to increase my own standing, useful, but limited. “

**“THE FOLLOW UP
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SOMEONE OF
VALUE, RATHER;”**

The crack in the void widens until it is nearly the speaker's width.

"Conquering the world is boring. Doing so means that my abilities have surpassed that of the rest of mankind, but do not hold that I had the right to do so."

The pillar turns on its center, spinning slowly around the speaker.

"Conquering a society? Better, but often this can lead to group mentality and thereby have some who choose to rise up; perhaps without even a reason other than rebellion."

The turns gain energy, increasing in speed.

"Love...is that not to take a person and to conquer them? Is it not to sway them to the point of which they choose to give you the greatest of themselves, to do anything for those that hold it?"

"Conquering an individual. Now that...would prove I have both the moral principle above that person, and indeed the mental fortitude to defeat that person. A will and a way if you will."

The blackness begins to bend the white pillar, and they turn over each other.

"I guess I'll simply have to go one by one then, and then it's only a matter of time before I have you all..."

The speaker stands amidst this towering spiral, a dance of black and white.

"Don't you go and die on me yet "Hero." We have a lot of work to do."

The speaker removes his hood, revealing a face without features.

"Love, the main villain of your story, but not the world's."

"CONQUERING A SOCIETY? BETTER, BUT OFTEN THIS CAN LEAD TO GROUP MENTALITY AND THEREBY HAVE SOME WHO CHOOSE TO RISE UP; PERHAPS WITHOUT EVEN A REASON OTHER THAN REBELLION."

LIGHT GHOST

Kateri Whitfield



