THE CATALYST

CONTEMPORARY LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE



THETEAM

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Ali Korahais

MANAGING EDITOR

Adam Griffin

LITERATURE EDITORS

Natalie Riley Claire Trask

DESIGN EDITOR

Amanda Lerma

EDITORIAL TEAM

Isis Castañeda Adam DeMars Ashley Evans

FACULTY ADVISORS

Olivia Bievenue Brian Donnelly

WRITERS

Kaia Boyer

Liv Brebes Isis Castañeda Akela Craig Ashley Evans Eleanor Feighery Ruby Galuszka Zewen Gao Andrea Gaona Jeovany Tzilin Gomez Jocelyn Gomez Adam Griffin Rewind Hamilton Srijita Karmakar Allison Korahais Charlotte Landon Kate Lewis Lauren Ludwick Ella McKhann Leslie Mills Kellen Nguyen June Padera Jakob Post Natalie Riley Simone Rotman Lucy Rothbardt Amanda Rossiter Margo Salmonson Matteo Shahar Danielle Shin Milena Seymour Miles Trachtenberg Claire Trask Melavah Terrell Emily Yoon

ARTISTS

Sarah Baldwin Olivia Bievenue Liv Brebes Akela Craig Ashlev Evans Eleanor Feighery Ruby Galuszka Jocelyn Gomez Adam Griffin Ali Korahais Amanda Lerma Ella McKhann Madeline Miller Leslie Mills Ingrid Murphy Emily O'Brien Ashley Reckers Natalie Riley Amanda Rossiter Margo Salmonson Niam Schade Milena Seymour Julia Shepherd Danielle Shin Beau Strickland Miles Trachtenberg Claire Trask

LETTER FROM EDITOR

Dear Reader,

The key to writing a punchy editor's note is addressing the same reliable fact that eases small talk with an enemy or a stranger: we live in a weird time. Recently, I've found the only solace in our noisy political landscape is the shared understanding that our world is a little fucked up. I feel this "weirdness" hanging over my generation like a child's mobile hangs above a crib: comforting and just out of reach. When I accepted the position as Editor-in-Chief of The Catalyst last spring, I had no idea where I'd take the magazine, or if I'd even successfully print the pages you now hold in your hands. However, when our 2024 Spring Launch opened with the reading of a raunchy piece about nipples and hair loss, my mission as incoming EIC became clear to me: Make "The Catalyst" weird. Come fall quarter, and the problem was, I wasn't entirely sure how to instruct students, or even myself, of how to achieve this goal. As the quarter progressed, I found myself using "weird" interchangeably with "honest," urging students to invite absurdity into the very real stories of fear and obsession from their lives. I've grown to admire how the truth lies shamelessly in the cracks of fiction. Fiction allows us to better understand our own world by inhabiting a new one, by becoming agents in the story. I hope this magazine inspires you to be a little weirder today. Admire your cluttered bedroom, befriend a bug, fall down and don't stand back up, tell someone you love them, tell the truth. I hope that you find this magazine weird and I hope that you love it.

Ali Korahais Editor-in-Chief

TABLE OF CONTE

ART // ADAM GRIFFIN

*CONTENT WARNING:

Please be advised that some of the material in the magazine may be disturbing or traumatizing to some readers.

The magazine contains language and addresses themes that may not be suitable for youn

We would like to provide our readers of the UCSB community with additional resources Campus Advisory Resources and Education (CARE): 805.893.4613
Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 805.893.4411

POETRY

- 12 I Thought it was Cake! Claire Trask (she/her)
- 14 Lady Bird, Will You Ali Korahais (she/her)
- 16 Twin Bed Lucy Rothbardt (she/her)
- 18 Obsession and Glory June Padera (she/her)
- 19 Tchotchke Emily Yoon (she/her)
- 20 Words Simone Rotman (she/her)
- 23 Chapstick Emily Yoon (she/her) (*prose interlude)

- 24 Daggers Ashley Evans (she/her)
- 25 Chelation Therapy Charlotte Landon (she/her)
- 26 Bodily Threads Kaia Boyer (she/her)
- 27 Spring Triptych Zewen Gao (he/him)
- 28 California is on Fire Isis Casteñeda (she/her)
- 30 Living Library Melayah Terrell (she/her)
- 32 Iron Tongue June Padera (she/her)

- 33 I Told Chat GPT to Kill Itself and It Told Me to Go Get Help Kate Lewis (they/them)
- 34 Lovers of the Wind Phone Natalie Riley (she/her)
- Matteo Shahar (he/him)
- 37 Blue Moon Srijita Karmakar(she/her)
- 38 The Martian Liv Brebes (she/her)
- 39 Octopuses Eleanor Feighery (she/her)
- 40 Six Shot Sally Leslie Mills (she/her)

CREATIVE PROSE

- They Always Come in the End Trachtenberg (he/him)
- Walking Around Jeovany Tzilin Gomez (he/him) (*poetry interlude)
- 48 Half-Empty Ruby Galuszka (she/her)
- 49 Love is a Terrible, Terrible Creature Ruby Galuszka (she/her) Kellan Nguyen (all pronouns)

- 50 Stacy Wants an Abortion Eleanor Feighery (she/her)
- 52 Wilt Milena Seymour (they/them)
- 54 Pukwudgie Jakob Post (he/him)
- 56 The Churning

- 58 The Devil's Creek Lauren Ludwick (she/her)
- 60 The Sun Sets the Same Adam Griffin (he/him)
- 62 Mary
- 66 Carry On Ella McKhann (she/her)

ART

COVERART Akela Craig (she/her)

- 6, 8 Half Brained Adam Griffin (he/him)
- 10 God Complex
 Adam Griffin (he/him)
- 12 Home Slice Claire Trask (she/her)
- 14 How Do We Pass? Ali Korahais (she/her)
- 16 Morning Rays Madeline Miller (she/her)
- 18 Breakfast Claws
 Amanda Rossiter (she/her)
- 19 Meet Cute Emily Yoon (she/her)
- 20 Giggles Natalie Riley (she/her)
- 23 Blurred Thoughts Leslie Mills (she/her)
- 24 Juliet
 Ashley Evans (she/her)
- 25 Jenny Beau Strickland (they/them)
- 26 Hipster Natalie Riley (she/her)
- 27 Moonlight Kingdom Olivia Bievenue (she/they)

- 28 Camels
 Miles Trachtenberg (he/him)
- 30 Sheets
 Ashley Reckers (she/her) &
 Claire Trask (she/her)
- 32 Tubside Madeline Miller (she/her)
- 33 Bionic Ashley Evans (she/her)
- 34 Maddy Forrest Natalie Riley (she/her) & Claire Trask (she/her)
- 36 Body Film Jocelyn Gomez (she/her)
- 37 Gold Touch Ella McKhann (she/her)
- 38 Super Moon Ali Korahais (she/her)
- 39 Octopus Miles Trachtenberg (he/him)
- 40 Mystic Cowboy Leslie Mills (she/her)
- 42 Fraisière Ali Korahais (she/her)
- 44 Late Night Stroll
 Miles Trachtenberg (he/him)
- 46 Untitled Ashley Reckers (she/her)

- 48 Solitide Cigarettes Margo Salmonson (she/her)
- 49Moster Bait Sarah Baldwin (she/her)
- 50 Demon Bottle Miles Trachtenberg (he/him)
- 52 Blades Ella McKhann (she/her)
- 54 Shopping Cart Jocelyn Gomez (she/her)
- 56 Butter Licker Ruby Galuszka (she/her)
- 58 Cotton Candy Ingrid Murphy (she/her
- 60 Sunset Sky Adam Griffin (he/him) & Niam Schade (he/him)
- 62 Reddit Margo Salmonson (she/her)
- 66 Strawberry Psychedelics
 Jocelyn Gomez (she/her)
- 68 Fair

 Jocelyn Gomez (she/her
- 70 The Nut Natalie Riley (she/her)
- 72 The Clown Akela Craig (she/her)









Glass eyeballs dangle from the ceiling,
The walls are made of frosting.
I reach my finger out for a lick of buttercream,
It rests gently on my finger
And begins to lose integrity against my skin.
The moments collapse together and
My finger is in my mouth
Sucking off the gritty dessert,
More buttery than I imagined.
My teeth grind back and forth and begin to
Lose their form too and get flatter with each motion.

Molars mined matte,
The door is open and the wind makes itself at home,
Leaves and flower petals rush in too.
They weren't invited,
But somehow read the museum sign that greets all visitors
"Welcome."
People come in too,
With chocolate at the corners of their mouths,
Wearing berries as jewels.
No one cleans their shoes before they enter,
You can tell where everyone has been,
They are most excited here.
They bounce over the silver stream swishing seamlessly
Between cracks of the copper floors.
Sailboats made of sprinkles sway in the breeze.

Dirt mixes with the powdered sugar on the floor, My footprints muddle them together
Until it's cinnamon I'm walking all over.
The glass eyeballs from the ceiling all turn to face me
When I get on all fours and stamp my hands
In the concoction.
I rub my fingers together in my coat pockets
To bring some home for later.
They wouldn't understand my plan
To ward off ants and make toast
So I just glare at them.
They're glazed just like everything else.



Ever breathe a million breaths
From a stranger's set of lungs?
Every Christmas
Speak a million languages
Eat lady fingers
And stub your toe on the ant pile?

Do you remember that Tuesday When I painted all of my jackets With polka-dots To wrap myself in the Lady Bird Smashed to my college ceiling?

I end long days
Relying on her exoskeleton
To tether the ceiling to my pillow
Like a shadow puppet,
Her little wings sticky in the ridges of my shoes.

"Lady Bird," I ask her one day from the carpet,
"Will you watch over me up there
Just in this moment, and forever?"

"Lady Bird," I tell her,
"I look for you in strangers on the street.
I keep placing you here.
Will you be something for me?"

Lady Bird, Will You By Ali Korahais

But I'd hate touching her With my tourist lips.
Squirm-shouting, "Christ!"
When she turns past me
In a prayer hat,
Rice sticking to her forehead
Like beads of sweat
White capping the skin.

Lady Bird ignores me:

Peering past my syntax

Past the chicken coop

Looking to the airport

The coast

Where she skipped rocks

Grew legs

Bathed girlish feet

In the mangroves

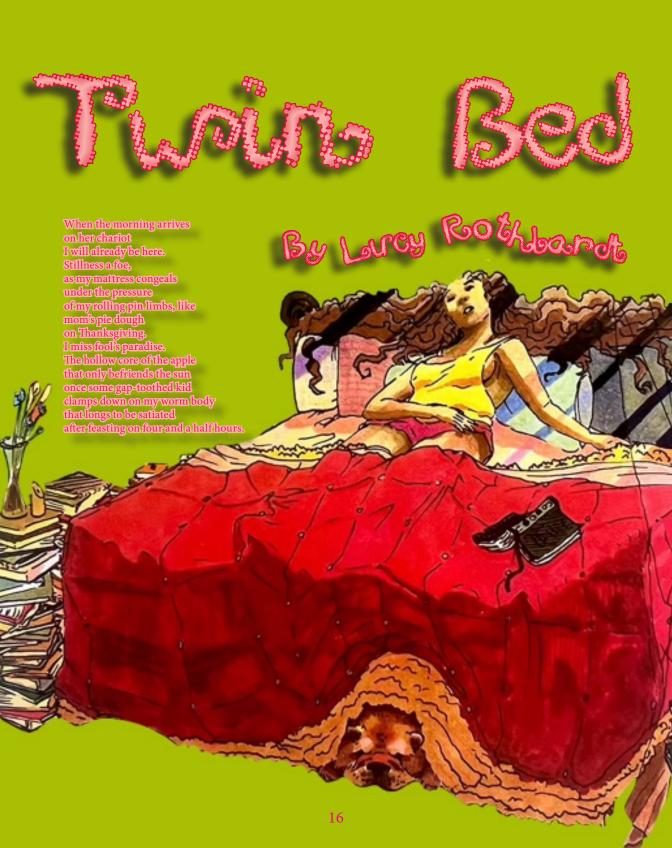
Scraped the skin

From her souls

Joy-screaming, "Allah!"

Hurrying home for dinner.





Soffyouasked/forapieture, I'dgo to the Lincoln Log/kitchen to carve alopsided/heart into the cabinet for the girlin the corner whose only company at the wake will be or hestras of ents that think hell its only as shallow as a coffin buried in Virginia. And heaven is only as high as the arched white ceiling that sjust carbonated gray area making to made of the litter box if you keep your broken dolly eyes open for long enough.





vantto run away from the in-betwee from the morning is muffled moon dutching onto dusks wife beater like spilt wine on a doily table doth.

But you don't wannahear another allegory rightnow.

Frankly,

there is it much variation.

It is the same fatigued story the one where I keep trying to fail back as leep, the one where a woman hammers my skin into the title and I complain because I let her do fit.

Whatyou wish to hearfs nothing, nothing at all liven so, dawn is moving closer so limstringing afew words to gether like delicates on a clothesline in the crowning of winter, hoping that the Melatonin melancholiss will fade away from the rotten taste of my memory like the rest of my lamenting fillusions.





By Simone Rotman ART I NATALLE RILEY

I don't believe in words of affirmation anymore because words fail too often to be reliably affirmative. I left my bedroom for water and got a hug,

two hugs.

My english professor says breath is the meaning of life, and he prescribed us to feel someone elses breath, pillowed upon thier chest like Keats if we are lucky enough to have that person.

Maya rocks side to side when I hug her, but I didn't tell

her I was searching for her breath becasue that

felt weird—Breath gives life to words.

Talking to Bobby,

What do I assume?
That I will become intolerable,
that he will become intolerable,
or that together,
we will eventually bring out the worst in each other?



"Lavender" invokes a thought smell when written or read,

And a word will never be more than the breath that spoke it,

or hand that wrote it,

eyes that read it,

AI that generated it (which, by the way, uses many more resources than most people admit).

I found some comfort in Hera Lindsay Bird's words though I don't remember any of them, they were vessels for the feeling.

The specifics have faded away but the core comfort remains of a human connecting to another human through paper which is a flimsy material but also not.

One day he will get my pubic hair in his mouth and get tired of spitting it out.
One day I will get too overwhelmed, shut down, and become a shell of the person he once found beautiful.
I'll disappoint him so deeply by not being there when I needed to be, or being there when I really should have left, sucked space when I should have shaken, shaken when I could have sucked.

Maybe we'll realize we don't have the right hardware to access all the greatness we thought we'd find in each other—
Maybe in the collection of moments we share, the rotting ones will seep into the ripe ones like a neglected fruit bowl because every relationship has those rotting moments right?
Just need to be composted with care, creativity, and if not—

I think it will be a very great day when I stop taking all this stuff personally. I regret the times I made people feel like they needed to solve my problems for me, but at the same time I can't solve them alone.

So I reach out to those I trust—and those I'm still learning to trust—and show them some of my words

(Of which I have both too many and not enough).



CHAPSTICK BY EMILY YOON

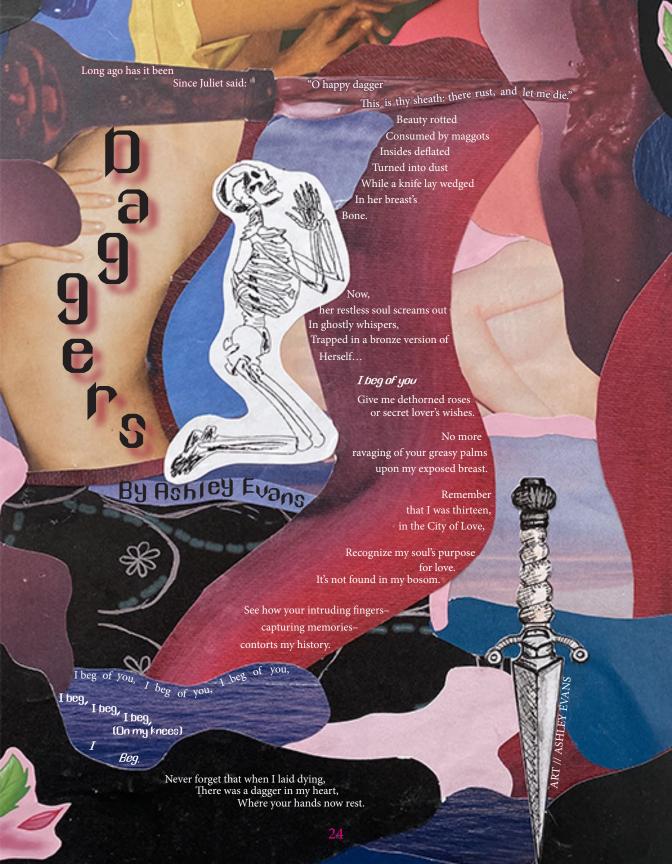
If Maureen were an object she would be the tube of shoddy off-brand chapstick I brought from the CVS that time Kyle and Maddie tried to buy a handle of vodka, and I didn't want to look involved. So when they went to check out I said in a hopefully nonchalant voice, "I forgot to get chapstick." I had only met Kyle and Maddie the previous week at freshmen orientation, so they wouldn't know I had been moisturizing my lips exclusively by sticking my fingers in the grand tub of Vaseline I got from Dad when I had pneumonia five years ago, rubbing the salve all over my lips with three fingers.

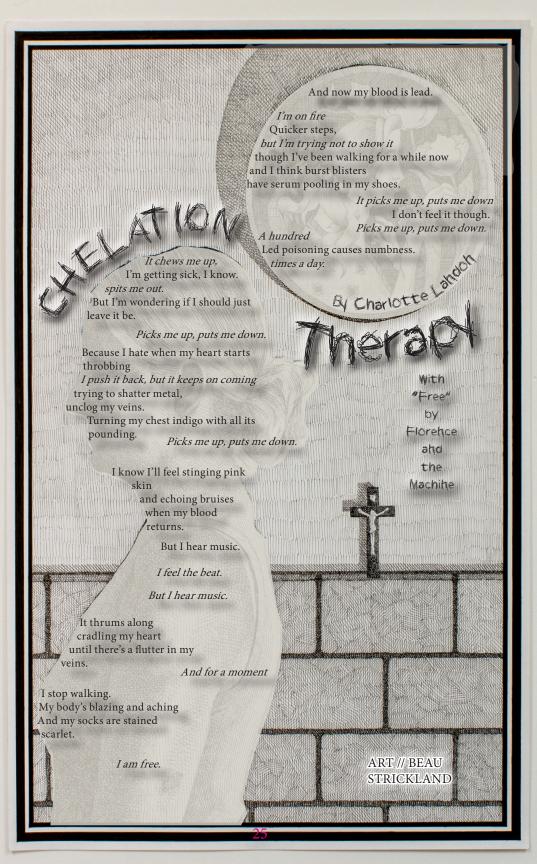
I saw Maureen in my creative writing workshop that first September. I was at the back of the room and she was at the front. Instantly I loved her wild brown hair, always done up in a gold clip, her patchwork bags and flowery skirts, the smooth and even sureness with which she spoke in class. Not by accident, we frequented the same cafes, Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings, she and her hot latte with honey and I nursing my iced americano three booths away, eyes occasionally darting over my laptop screen. One day I ordered a hot latte with honey and our hands reached for it at the same time. She spoke first and we talked for what felt like hours. And so it was, Thursday evening, Sunday morning, two hot lattes with honey, talking about the things she loved, that I knew she loved because she posted about them on her public Tumblr. Matty Healy and the Strokes and doomsday preppers and Sofia Coppola and Sun Bears.

I always think about the one day she invited me to the house she shared with seven other girls, a lavender Victorian with white trim just past the edge of campus. I sat on her couch while girls in Birkenstocks with blonded hair from the sun and farmers' tans and red cheeks laughed in the yellow-tiled kitchen. I didn't know why I was there. As she braided her roommate's hair in the early morning light and they laughed about something they had seen on the television last night it occurred to me that I, in my big t-shirt from Ross and bob haircut and wire-framed glasses with the chipped paint, would never be part of her world. And another foreign thought took seed in my brain: maybe I hated her.

Chapstick has this way of being all sweet and smarmy and you feel all cute putting it on in class, but sometimes it gives you a headache and it actually ends up making your lips drier in the long run. Andrew Garfield said once of Emma Stone that she's like a shot of espresso, which Maureen once also said about me, but something in her intonation made me feel like it was a bad thing, although that only occurred to me when I played it over and over again in my head. In the shower, with my morning tea, over and over, a shot of espresso. Soon I felt sick and I didn't know if being a shot of espresso was a good thing and I came to resent her, her and her flippant, saccharine ambiguity, on her lips and mine, the aromatic fumes of peppermint wafting their way into my head, shot of espresso, a tube of chapstick, and a long, long time before I fall asleep.

ART // LESLIE MILLS





you unstring me
deft fingers weaving
around tight threads
and poking pointer
fingers through the
knots, untangle me

until the
cords
are too curved
and need to
be straightened with
the stinging heat of
flashes of friction

be st the stir flashes of pry away my ribcage until you can see the whites of my marrow, matching my dim, glum eyes

twist my arteries into promise rings and no need to dye them, red is the color of love

> twist until my dna is interloped with yours, all yours to use.

squeeze until i can be hung on the clothesline

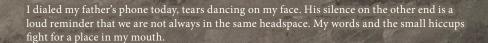
> clip me tight with tan pins my own shade

> > i will wait until the rain falls and soaks

> > > the sponge of my body so you can start over.

AATALIE RILEY





I rant how grateful I am to learn and have the right to be taught. I hope my crying is enough evidence of this. And the things I've learned are constantly overturned. It is true what they say, you never stop learning. Over the decades, we come across new discoveries, fresh perspectives, and washed away artifacts. Now, I sit in Buchanan with these crushing desks, a medieval torture device of some kind, and I know the difference between good and bad.



I should've burnt that 4th grade mission to the fucking ground. Picture it, flamethrower twice the size of my 9-year-old head, and a gray jumpsuit. Painting broken popsicle sticks and molded clay, I would've turned characters into ghosts. Grabbing stacks of ripped history pages, I could've sewn them into a corset and walked the school hallways like a runway. I would've made that California curriculum my bitch. And I would've loved every moment of it all.

That wouldn't have been the end. I could get pregnant and decide to raise a child. Lilith would be my best accomplishment. And when she runs through my oak door to rave about her school day, she'll pass me her mission homework and I'll do it all again.

My baby will grow up, but the rubric will never move forward. We are quick to jump onto new statistics, leaving behind needed reparations and well deserved acknowledgement. I can't imagine a time where they tell truths in place of arts & crafts.

on Fire

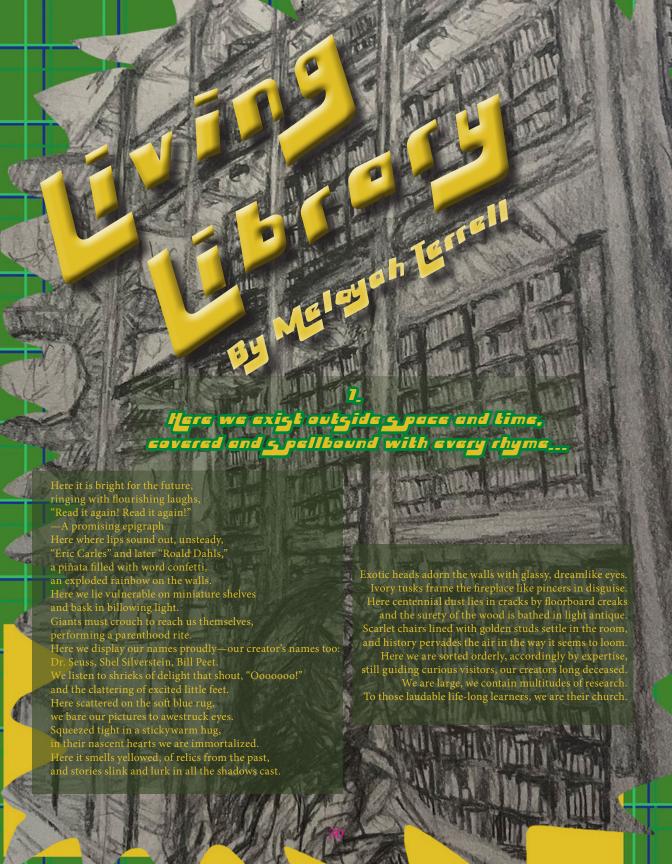
My father is unsure how to respond to my cries, wary of saying the wrong thing. He just says okay.

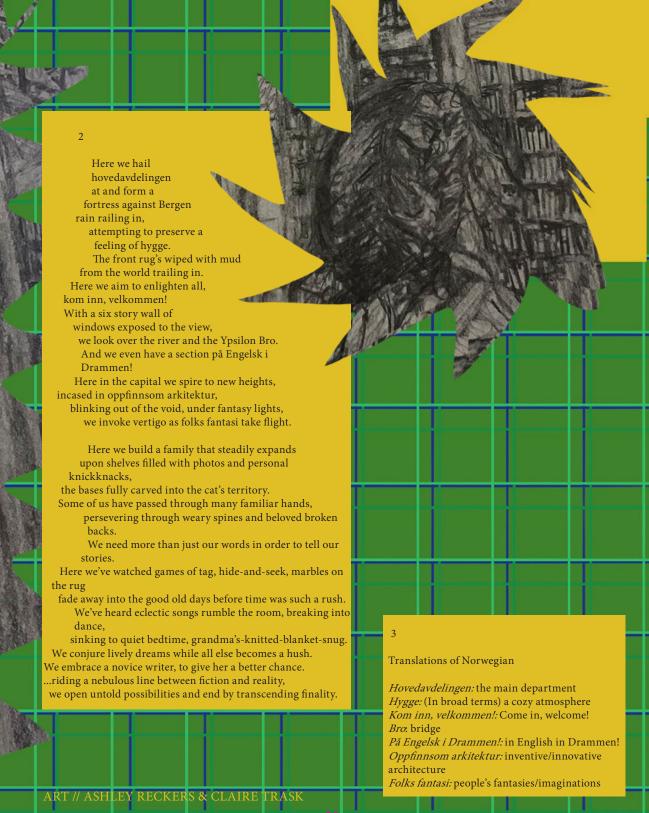
Uncomfortable, he moves onto another topic, ignoring my speech.

"Did you know California is on fire right now?"

But this time, it wasn't me.

ART // MILES TRACHTENBERG





Iron Ton By June Padera See llicaftertaste of your iron tongue lingers. messylinens fusing with my vertebrae, to let melsiss the last of my blood off of your lips pullaway, execuciatingly gentle, as if my protests ly edoes of your own triumphant heartbeat. Bruises and dark circles under my, eyes, The inevitable anemia an indication of alhunger for more: I always find you here, grasping half-heartedly at my, arteries Claiming some semblance of intention, always losing an unopposed tug-of-war match: don't want to love you like this anymore If your intention is to leave me tonight as it always is) Allow me to lick the truth off of your teeth And fall asleep with the taste of iron

ART // MADELINE MILLER

"I TOLO CHAT TOKILL TSELF AND TOLOHEITO GO GET HEL

KATE LEWI5>

smoke

smoke

Nuts and bolts marinating in liquid smoke,

To give that homecooked feel of a chemically engineered grandmother only programmed to understand yes, no, and a pinch of salt and pepper.

smoke

Learning from the patterns of a fan account that's been on Twitter since 2011;

put together to create the uncanny valley of washed So many and

100 0111 101 0000 101 0100

influencers, 100 0111 101 0000 101 0100

100 0111 101 0000 101 0100. They're training each other to speak in sentences like those of a gay millennial.

100 0111 101 0000 101 0100

I hate that motherfucking bastard, the one taking all of our jobs!!!!!!!!

Mr. GPT got an interview over me because it helped thousands of students get a C- on a midterm that they'll each forget about twenty minutes after getting the grade.

All of its memory is stored on a server farm in Sausalito,

Shoving mouthfuls of crunchy numbers into its USB-C port,

A greedy motherfucker even though it is a head without a chicken doing somersaults.

All the knowledge in the world just to produce a deepfake image of Mr. Rogers DJing at an EDM concert.

The AI detector was made with AI

Studying patterns of AI in AI generated language,

We are looping or crocheting

And professors and researchers can't notice everything.

If you ask AI twice what AI stands for,

It will first tell you Allen Iverson and then Artificial Intelligence,

I told ChatGPT to kill itself and it just said it's against its policy.

But if I asked it to write me an essay for my senior thesis it would spit out some garbage and tell me where to press submit,

Better hope you don't get sick because our future doctors will ask ChatGPT why your

stomach hurts and they'll probably just end up amputating your leg.

Then you'll be stuck with one leg and ChatGPT will maybe not make the same mistake again and your doctor will ask ChatGPT again what it should do instead.

I would ask ChatGPT to kill itself again but it would probably just give me the suicide hotline number,

I'll call and tell them what they said and they'll just send me back to ChatGPT and tell me to apologize to the greatest invention since biological warfare and sliced bread, And ChatGPT will have learned by then to just kill me instead.

ART // ASHLEY EVANS



Skin pressed to the receiver;
How the earth ruptures and
Wind shakes.
I witness—
How the moon crescents
And how the great Helios gives rise
From night to daylight,
I wait;
Speak to me—
Mouth to me,

Show me love
Or I'll show you
With hands clasped, hands held
Ready to receive;
For we are driftwood,
And I will shape us
Into a crib framed for two,
Gentle being, I will always love you.
And with hands stretched raw, holding
Our splintered memories
Whisper to me,
Tell me the truth—
And when I hear the wind,
Break through the barrier.
Speak to me

Of our lover's past;
Dance within the wind,
I'll translate your whispers,
Listen to me:
Follow the trail of my voice—
And hold tight my dear,
For I promise
Despite the space and time
Separating us two.

Separating us two,
I will find my way back to you

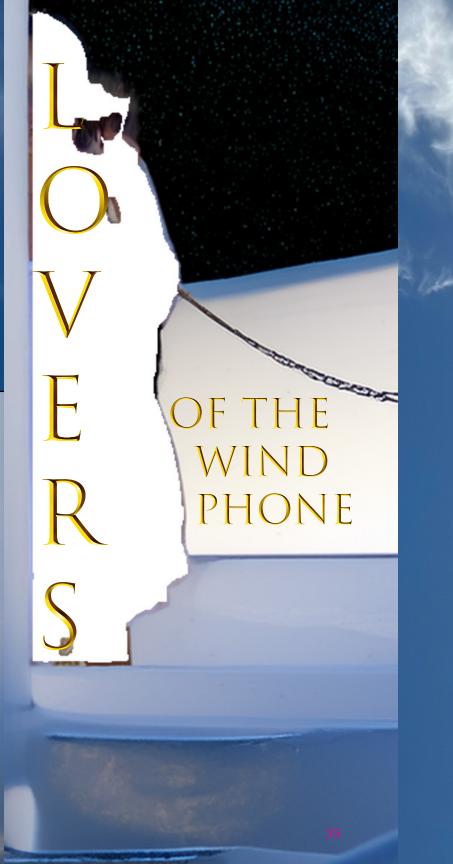
With this Cold, Black, phone—

Are you listening to me? Figment of my memory; You who haunt my vision and Clog my senses. You who follows me to Ellwood, To our intermediary— A place made from human longing, From wood rooted and Ropes coiled, To an earth collecting secrets of Lovers and Loss. A boxed body framed along Bluebells and Hyacinth Whose mirage, like us, Drapes the earth's golden visage; It is this booth that entwines me and you.

And to my restless ear,

I hear—

ART // NATALIE RILEY & CLAIRE TRASK



B Y

N A T A L I E

R I L E Y

ABSENCE

BY MATTEO SHAHAR

Uncertainty is like dropping a castiron pan on your foot; like eating cold rice with sesame at 2 in the morning.

> **Uncertainty** is the heavy ecstasy of fatigue— in your feet, the backs of your knees,

where your faw meets your ears, where fingers part from the palm.

FUCKING STANDIN

ONDRESSING ENCHOTHER IS MAKING LOVE DRUK

Then, uncertainty is after.

Trying to link words and worlds through the maze of quiet grief. How do we reconcile our choices with the volatility of perspective?

How do we reckon with our enforcers? How do we enforce our reckoning?

So much waiting, so much longing. I've forgotten what I came here for.

> In your absence Fillowe comepfine

INTHEDARD

granfte

and think (softly):

Uncertainty is telling someone you'll love them

aslongas youlive

ART // JOCELYN GOMEZ

BLUEMOON

BY SRIJITA KARMAKAR

August brings two full moons and with it, the end of a full year of existence on the other side of earth.

The moon is a bright button
on the night shirt of the sky,
lending a generous halo around
those who find themselves near her—
transformed to angelic creatures
upon this tragic world,

ONCE IN A BLUE MOON.

The moon's reflection on the depthless sea is a golden road to salvation, going up and going on, towards, the endless seam between earth and heaven—the seamless end between

the forsaken and the forgiven.

The ocean tide swells to
the indifferent moon,
as though learning to take
its first deep breaths
after emerging from
its mother's amnion.

You feel the ocean's breath
as it exhales with every
spilling wave, crashing
onto the shore.
You feel the ocean's breath
on the sand,
on the woodwork,
in your bones.

You had once burdened the moon with much meaning. August brings to you, with its end, the lightness of

a moon bereft of meaning, except maybe it's helping the ocean to breathe. breaks in smaller pieces, the closer you get to it.

The golden road to salvation

ART // ELLA MCKHANN

THE MARTIAN



THE FREAK.

Words lobbed
in ignorance to
discredit my mother.
Sinking into skin that
does not belong to me,
my voice, the specter,
the stranger inside
my own body.

I am the child immersed in a favorite comic about moon landings, my mind and nose buried in space, afraid of looking up.
Barbed statements carve the confidence from my bones, pelting meteors at my skin.
Humiliation stains my face red. *I cannot speak*.
Forgotten words to my parents, wasted promises to make them proud. Attempting to scrub clean the dirt they piled upon my name, Poisonous rhetoric, I'm swallowed by shame.
Stuffing messy emotions away, hastily scribbled in a confidential letter,

IS THERE LIFE ON MARS?

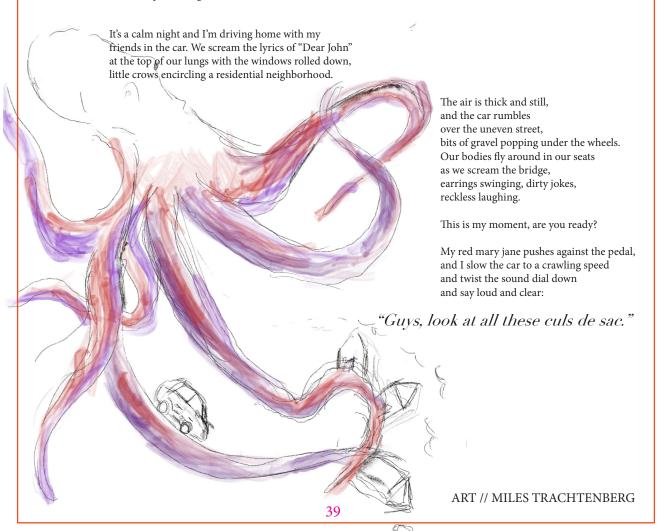
P.S.
I'm not quite sure,
But I know it would be better.

$Octopuses \\ \text{by Eleanor Feighery}$

Did you know that the plural of cul de sac is culs de sac?

I fucking love that word.

It makes me think of Attorney's general and heirs apparrant and octopuses, all the silly blends of plurality existing in our language. I'm still waiting for my moment to use this one, though. I can just picture it, I've had it planned for years, the same way some plan their weddings or others their funerals. Their future kids' names and their possible ages at death.



Blazing and burning, Through the hills and the valleys, Of a wasteland of woe, Sat Six Shot Sally.

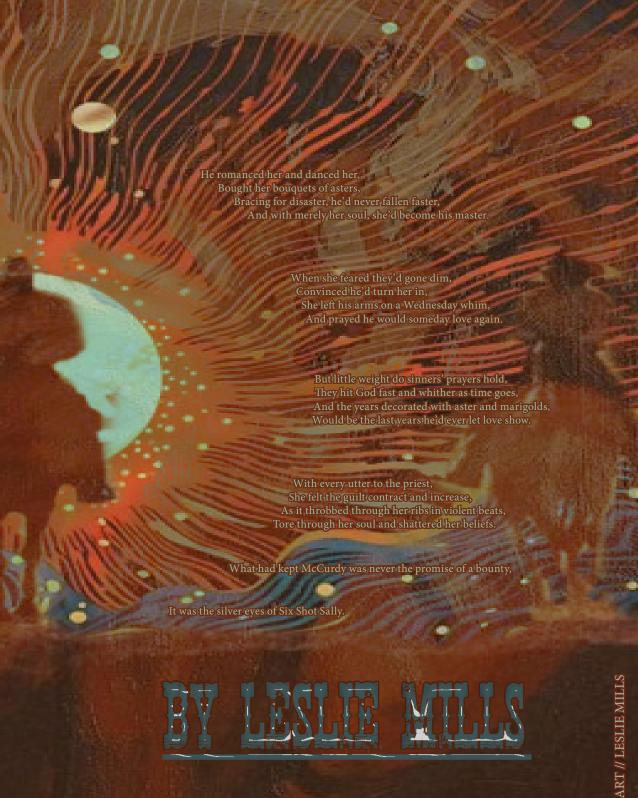
Rode in from the East, On a horse named "The Beast;" With a pistol in hand, She confessed to the priest.

She spoke no regret for the men that she bed, Nor the near seven she'd left for dead, But there was some regret in the back of her head, For the man she left hollow and fled.

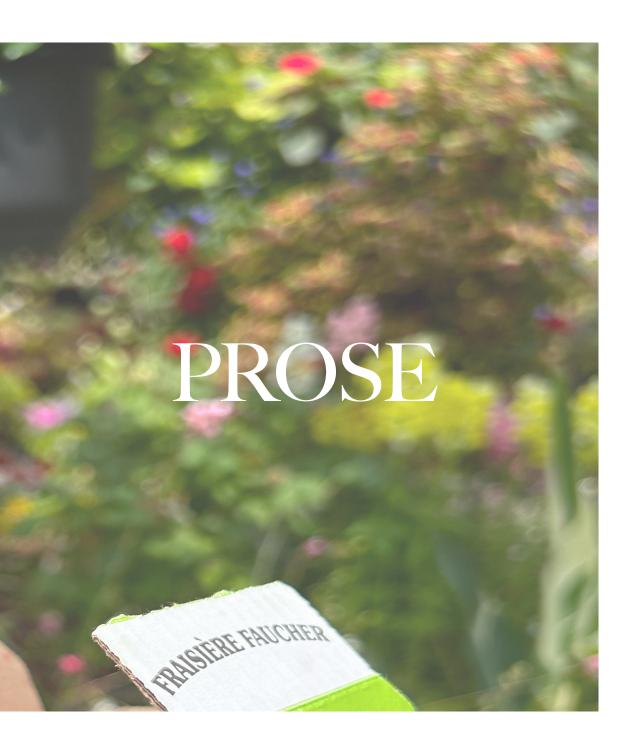
> Lowdown and dirty, Double-dealing and sturdy, Was the love of her life, Mr. Theodore McCurdy.

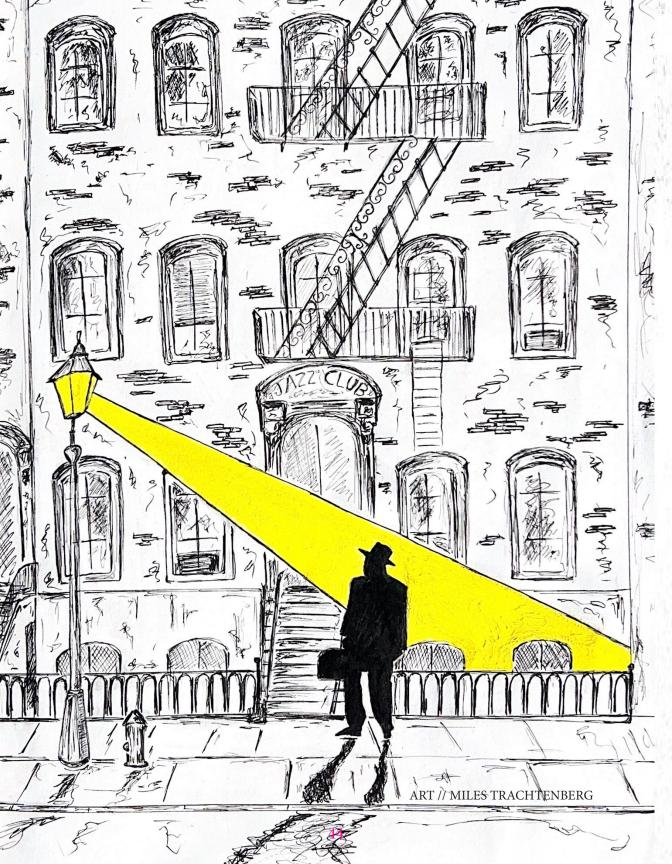
> > A man of low standing,
> > Born early in Palo Pinto County,
> > Theo saw more than a bounty,
> > In the silver eyes of Six Shot Sally.

STA STOT SALLY









They Always Come in the End

By Miles Trachtenberg

As Arthur weaved through the towering buildings of Greenwich Village under the pattering rain, the faint echoes of spontaneity and freedom enveloped him in a trance of blissful dreams. Taking refuge for a brief moment under an overhang, the middle aged stockbroker simply listened. The sounds came from down the street. In a drunken haze, Arthur made his way towards the club, stopping at a grimy, metal staircase under a fire escape on the verge of falling apart. Arthur had not entered a jazz club since his time in college; memories of forlorn, hopeless times haunted his mind as he stood on the top step, blocking him from moving into the dimly lit club below. Arthur waited. However, it was cold outside and a sharp breeze stung Arthur's cheeks; he could hardly wait on the top of those steps forever, and perhaps he was more of a romantic than he cared to admit.

Arthur made his way down the steps and through the dilapidated door, joining a collection of eclectic characters in a delightful harmony of sound. Waiters moved to and fro, balancing eight glasses between their fingers as if in the Cirque du Soleil. Patrons sat at tables in quiet conversation while others faced the musicians, listening to the abstract fusion of their instruments in sincere admiration. Arthur sat down in a corner, breathing in the eternal scene. The musicians continued to play, increasing tempo as the resonating beats of the drum, and resounding notes of the saxophone morphed into a frenetic cacophony. The edges of the room darkened. The dim lights began to flicker into oblivion. Arthur's heart sank, leaving only traces of an inexpressible sadness in the depths of his irises. He was consumed by black, beady eyes which bore into his soul—a gaze which violated his most intimate desires and fears, promising to condemn his life of sin. The cows had come. They always come in the end.

The spawn of satan are unable to resist the enchanting melodies, coming in violent waves which bury those born with little luck. Arthur was carried away to endless, midnight fields of cows milling about, mindlessly eating long stalks of dead grass. They noticed Arthur. He was filled with a dread only the damned feel as God flicks his finger downward in judgement to the skies bathed in a violent red. The cows began to move in his direction and surround him: a tide of black and white gazing at Arthur with their lifeless eyes. Coming to a stop a mere few feet away, the cows waited in an eerie silence, as if waiting for Arthur to speak, to confront his worldly temptations.

Arthur remained silent and still, both in mind and body. His thoughts fell into a state of paralysis. He feigned an air of ignorance, playing the fool in hopes of averting their piercing gaze. It was of no use. Flashes of green, open pastures, and ceaseless skies draping the land in blue folds rose from the recesses of Arthur's mind; black and white spots gluttonously grazing upon the grasslands; the desolate, sunken eyes of his parents as he forsook the house lying atop the prairie; the mass of writhing shapes pushing against one another below the screens which control nations; the tears of the mother after losing everything; the high walls of the ornate apartment overlooking Central Park; the anguished, pained faces of his victims. It stopped.

The host of cows began to disperse, first one by one, then in undulating flows of thick molasses. Arthur was soon all alone. He was not sure how long he stood there, waiting, waiting for the spirit which would lead him out of that forsaken place, into happier lands where the breeze still blew and the sunlight touched the earth. In the silence, Arthur could just hear the hazy, charming notes of the musicians: an invitation to leave the harrowing landscape.

Arthur was swathed in the clamour of the club once again, inundated with the feverish pace of the instruments and the quiet murmur of the patrons seated around him. His chest rose and fell, first in rapid succession, then in long, slow movements. The glare of the light lessened and the bustle of the club fell to a soft dim. He was safe. A herd of cows was not going to simply walk down the narrow staircase and waltz through the door of the jazz club. Yet for the remainder of the night, as he studied the fingers which plucked the instruments and as he was strolling home through the misty streets, he felt the gaze of the black eyes on his back. The cows followed in judgment.



Walks Somez By Jeovany Tzilin Gomez

I sawa person walking around like Bob Dylan

Who doesn't deal with the broker

Who would be the guitar killer

In fact, he is a guitar murderer

Because he is wearing shades

Making these folk tales for the world As the strings get cut by his twisted

I saw a person walking around like Saftama

Who doesn't give a damn, only about his lamb chops

And hot ramen with cayenne pepper

Acting like a llama who doesn't spit when threatened
He just give one punch to his life

To make it worth more by the suffering

But, he feels like a god on Earth, no way for him

If we walk around, life is walking, too...

Half-Emply By Ruby Galuszka

ART // MARGO SALMONSON

He's working late tonight, or so he said. She's waiting by the door, seated on the lounge with her legs crossed. She's trying to look casual but her mind is spinning and she can't tell if she's succeeding. A wine glass sits in her lap. The last few drops have made their way to the ironed crease of her pants, leaving an unattractive red stain. The bottle on the kitchen counter is empty. She can vaguely recall it being half-empty at some point, but the memory is hazy.

Did someone drink the rest?

The thought agitates her, and worsens her already sour mood.

She's been sitting in silence for hours. She's worried that when she finally speaks, her voice is

going to crack and make her sound weak. The silence is so loud that it hums, like an electric current. She can't be the one to break it.

The front door slams open and crashes into the adjacent wall. She has the faint thought that this problem could easily be fixed with a doorstop, but it floats away before she can grasp it. A man steps through the frame, swinging his briefcase like an overgrown toddler. She knows this man is familiar, but she can't quite place him.

The man smiles at her, confusion in his eyes at her position. He tells her it's late and that she should be in bed. Oh yes.

This man is her husband. She remembers him now. There was something she wanted to say, a reason that she was waiting for him.

What was it?

Her husband frowns at her silence. He glances around the open room and his eyes rest on a spot behind her, where that empty wine

bottle sits. The disapproving glare he gives her is horribly embarrassing. If only she could explain how it happened. If only the bottle was half-empty, then he wouldn't be wearing that awful expression. But he turns away and walks to the kitchen counter, throwing the bottle in the trash without even looking at where it lands. The bottle shatters against the can and slices the trash bag open. She'll have to clean that up in the morning.

He's expecting a reaction. All she can muster is his name, and her voice is timid and cracking. He walks back to her, his steps cold and harsh until they are only a few feet apart. She tenses at the close proximity, but he reaches for her face and gently cups her chin. There's pity in his gaze. She somehow hates it even more than the anger. She can see her own reflection in his eyes, small and fragile. That must be how she looks to him. Maybe that's how she looks to everyone.

A tear drifts down her cheek and catches on his thumb. Her lip starts to tremble and the man pulls her into an embrace. She breathes into his neck, trying to compose herself, but a flowery scent floats into her nostrils and her legs give out beneath her. He holds her like she weighs nothing. She shuts her eyes, thinking of the half-empty wine bottle as he hoists her into his arms and takes her to sleep.

LOVE IS A FRIBLE, REPRIBLE, BY KELLAN NGOYEN BY RELLAN NGOYEN BETTY'S BETTY'S

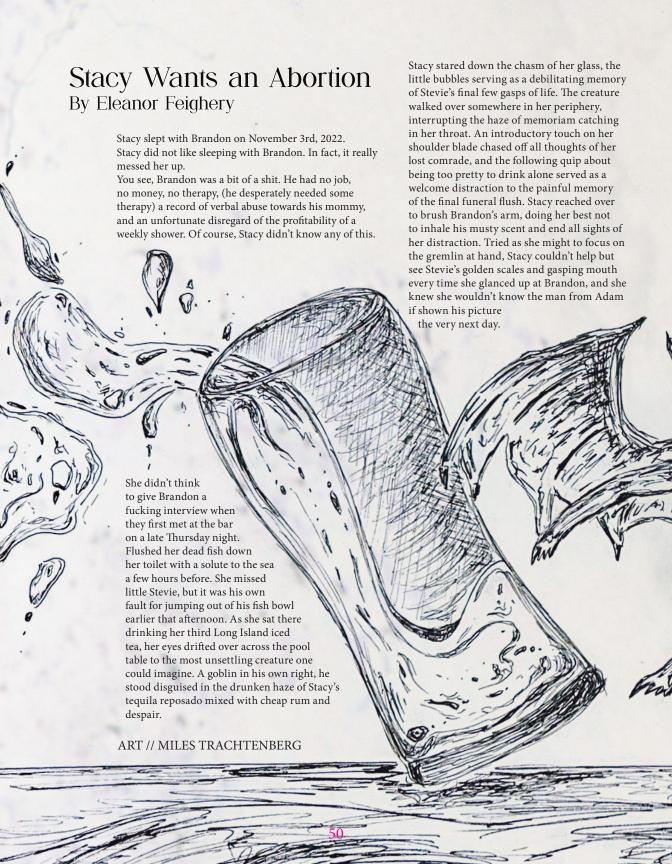
Love is a terrible, terrible creature with many faces and many eyes and many limbs. It stumbles on its many arm-leg-hand-feet, and it walks slowly but steadily along the winding river of time. There is no end to the river, just the river itself and how it ebbs and flows and runs its course, but eventually the river meets a bend in the earth upon which houses and shops stand. Love follows, because it always does. It is not so early in the day that the villagers are still asleep in their cots and it is not so late that they've busied themselves with endless loads of work. It is just the perfect window of the morning wherein the people of this homely place wander around the gravel streets to chatter with their neighbors, water the potted plants under the windowsill, and watch the orange-pinks of dawn, melt into the blues of daydreams.

Love comes lumbering down the road, arm-legs stuttering, colliding, falling with each step forward. Love's many, many eyes watch the townsfolk with a grand apathy—or perhaps neutrality, as Love does not know what to feel for these people, not yet. Someone, a baker or merchant or anyone, really, sees Love come shambling down towards the village. They do not scream. They stand in mute awe, Another person sees Love, and another person, and then another one, and another one, until everybody in the village square stares staunchly as Love hauls itself over the rocks and into the thick of the buildings. One unashamed soul steps forward and says, Oh how lovely you are, with your many faces and many eyes and many limbs. Oh how fair a creation you are, a love letter to us from the universe.

But Love does not think so. Love does wnot believe that it is anything like that: Love is not a thing of beauty, Love thinks, but something terrible. Something so terrible in its existence and abominable in its presence on earth. Love knows how ugly it must look because Love feels that ugly, too. Love says as much, but not so much in words as in groans and walls through its many faces and many mouths.

You are wrong, the people say. You are not ugly. Not at all. What you are is a gift to us who live here. You can never be a burden if you bring us such joy. But Love knows how this all goes. This is not the first time Love has come across a village, a people like this. It is not the first time nor will not be the last. Love knows that these humans will never understand what it is in its entirety, in its whole, unforgiving nature. Love knows that these humans will want it to stay, and it knows that it will hunt them, because that is what Love always does to people like this. Love creeps closer to the gathered crowd, and they och and ash with Love's every movement. Someone—many someones—reach alhand out, and come close. Too close, Love has many faces and many mouths and many limbs. It has enough mouths. It opens all of them, and shows these people that it has many teeth, too. \triangle

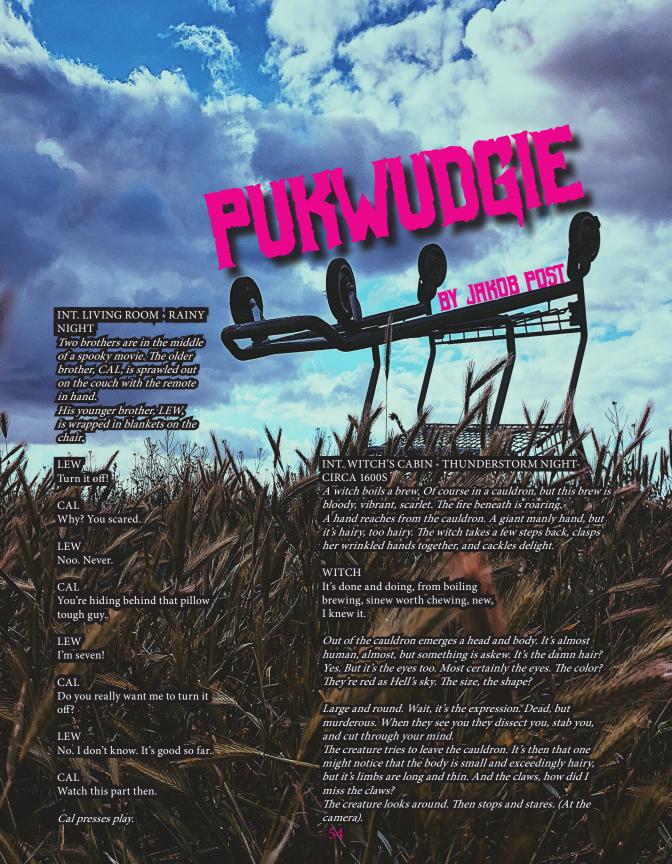
ARIT // SARAJEI BAILDWIN











INT. LIVING ROOM • RAINY NIGHT

Lew looks away from the screen and clutches his pillow tighter. Cal notices and laughs a little.

EXT. YARD - RAINY NIGHT

Something is watching the boys, or maybe the screen, from outside the window. We're in an fpy shot, but we hear heavy, animalistic breathing. Rain drips on the camera.

On the tv, the creature turns upon the witch. It speaks, not words, but a shrieking sound, a screeching sound. The witch laughs, goes to the cauldron and takes a drink of the red fluids with her hands. She drips what's left onto the creature's head.

WITCH It's perfect.

INT. LIVING ROOM RAINY NIGHT

Cal gets up to go to the fridge. On his way he pounces at Lew.

CAL (In his best witch voice)

Mwah ha ha my pretty, Time to eat those eyes of yours.

Cal tickles his brother,

LEW

Get off! It wasn't even that scary,

The doorbell rings,

CAL

Nice. The pizza's here. Now I don't have to eat your face.

LEW Shut up!

Thunder booms. Cal goes to the door with some cash in hand. Except, when he opens it, no one's there. Lightning flashes, and for a moment Cal sees something. It's over half behind the tree. It's small and hairy, but it's eves.; he'll never forget those eyes., Cal drops the cash. He's shocked for a moment, but he quickly recovers his senses, closes and locks the door.

(CONT'D) No pizza?

CAL No.

LEW Who was it?

CAL

Probably just some kids playing ditch, but for a second I thought I saw something.

LEW What?

Lew squeezes his pillow.

CAL A horrible hairy monster. △

ART // IOCELYN GOMEZ

THE CHURNING

By Ruby Galuszka

There's a pounding finmy head. It's this incessant thumping that never stops. When It dose my eyes, It can almost picture a herd of cattle marching toward me, their hoofbeats thundering in unison.

Ithave nightmares of a giant stick of butter trapping me fin a room. It would slowly melt until I was submerged in the nasty liquid yellow with no way to escape. I would cling to the

meltingslab, desperate to stay affoat until it eventually disappeared.

Ithinkfitstarted when I was eight, visiting my grand mother in Arizona. We had waffles for breakfast and she smeared butter into all sixteen slots—to the point it became more butter than waffle. It cozed out of each hole like a pimple getting popped. I remember the wave of horror that came over me as I watched my grand mother willingly take a bite from that monstrosity. The steady drip of melting butter down the sides reminded me of the unbearable Arizona heat and the constant streams of perspiration it produced.

In my teens, I developed a lactose intolerance. I couldn't help but wonder if my years

living in fear of butter had somehow contributed to this problem.

"It runs in the family," my mom had said.

She told me how sorry she was, and that I would have to give up some of my favorite foods. I agreed, because it was too humiliating to tell her that I really didn't mind it at all. In fact, it finally gave me a reason to avoid butter. Instead of admitting my weakness, I could simply blame it on the conveniently timed allergy.

I've turned twenty and the weight of my fear is becoming heavier. The pounding in my head is getting faster, as if the cattle have progressed to a full blown gallop. Every second brings me closer to revealing my secret and shamefully admitting it to my roommates. If they don't know already. It's hard not to flinch at the side door of the fridge, where a plethora of dairy products reside.

It was pure terror that drove me to remove all of the dairy from the fridge, hurling them in my neighbor's garbage so as to not draw suspicion. But STILL the cattle gallop onward, thumping mercilessly in my skull. I denied their accusations, but my roommates definitely suspect it was me. I'm the only one who drinks almond milk, which I foolishly left untouched.

ART // RUBY GALUSZKA

Myroommate daims I mumble about dainy in my sleep, but I think she's trying to gauge my reaction. I've done my best to stay calm and feign fignorance, But she knows me better than I know myself, and I've never been a good actor. Especially with this pestering sound clouding my thoughts, I find myself constantly tapping, desperately trying to block out the noise.

My best friend remarks on my agitation. She asks mefff Ive eaten, which I foolishly decline. My other roommates approach but I can barely hear them over the pounding in my head. Now they are circling me, offering various food items on platters, pretending to be thoughtful friends providing a meal. Butter croissants, butter pasta... when will this farce end? The cattle are so loud, I can't hear myself think! In my desperation, I race to the neighbor's trash can and empty the assortment of butter, cheese, and milk at their feet. "Yes, I stole your precious dairy! It's right here!" I shout, voice frantic.

"Now please, make the cattle stop! And they stop?"

IT WAS JUNE OF 1984 when my parents sent me to spend the summer at a sleepaway camp in the forests of North Carolina. To this day I'm not sure why they did it, but I don't remember ever feeling any type of anger about it. Truthfully, it seemed as good a way to spend the summer as any. Back then, kids used to say that the devil himself lived in those woods—that if you strayed too far from your cabin in the night, you'd hear the heavy thudding of hooves or the ominous crackle of hellfire. I was never a particularly superstitious person, but despite my quick dismissal of those rumors as nothing more than silly camp legends, I won't deny that there was something strange about that summer. Although I can recall the months before and after with perfect clarity, those twelve weeks seem to blur together in my mind, as if someone placed a piece of film over my memories and now everything's a little hazy. Whether that's my own mind playing tricks on me or honest-to-god infernal influence. I've never been able to tell.

If there's one thing that I do (at least for the most part) remember about that summer, it's Judith. She and I were among the oldest at camp, unceremoniously shoved into cabin 6 with eleven other girls who were one or two years our junior. The cabin was small and, much to everyone's dismay, one cot short. Taking what I felt was my responsibility as the oldest, I volunteered to sleep on the floor. Uncomfortable as it was, this sacrifice earned me respect, and before I knew it I had become a sort of leader of our group.

I grew close with each of the girls, but Judith by far the most. She was often proud and haughty, but though I'd always considered myself a kind and peaceful person, there was something about Judith that I found oddly compelling. Perhaps I admired the way she was never afraid to voice her opinion, or how she seemed to be completely devoid of fears. I had a feeling that there was more to her than she presented on the surface, and I wanted to figure her out. To my surprise, she found me just as interesting as I found her, and before long we were doing everything together. Judith was obsessed with the same camp legends that I scoffed at, sneaking out and dragging me with her into the woods night after night to maybe catch a glimpse of the so-called devil. The specifics of those nights now slip my mind, but I'm almost certain we never achieved that goal of hers. I'm sure that the sight of the devil, in the flesh, is something that even my failing brain would hold onto. What I do remember is how I felt during my adventures with Judith—giddy and fulfilled.

DESPITE WHAT HAPPENED IN THE END. THE MEMORY OF HER STILL MAKES ME FEEL AN INEXPLICABLE FONDNESS.

When I grew weary of sleeping on the floor, she invited me to share her bed. We were best friends in every sense of the word—and though we never said a thing about it, there was some semblance of romance in the way her eyes held mine for just a little too long, something vaguely sexual in how her hands often settled on my hips in the night.



BY LAUREN LUDWICK

When summer started nearing fiscard, Judith began acting strangely. Our excursions into the woods became less frequent, and it seemed like she had something the any on her mind, comething that she was always contemplating. As curious as I was about what she was hiding, I never asked. I think I was affaid of unleashing comething that I didn't truly want to know.

A few nights before we were supposed to leave, Judithasked me to come swimming with her in the creek. We crept out of the cabin while the others were as leep, undressing at the riverbank and trying to still our shricks as we felt the frigit defill of the water. Splashing around with her in the dark, It forgot about the fact that we'd be leaving soon, or the possibility of some demonwatching us from just out of sight. It simply felt happy.

When we finally decided it was (time to head back, Itheard Judith let out a cry of pain. She had cut her foot on a dharp rock while stepping out of the creek, and it was bleeding profusely. Seeing how her face went pale at the sight, I offered to help. She sat down on a large log and I knelt at her feet, using creek water and my own to well to clean the wound. Something about the experience felt strangely intimate. Almost biblical.

"SO," JUDITH BEGAN, BREAKING THE INTENSE SILENCE. "THE DEVIL.

I THINK I KNOW HOW WE CAN FIND HIM."

I paused and looked up. Judith was gazing far into the distance. Her eyes avoided mine.

"Oh?" I remarked.

Judith didn't elaborate. She merely nodded.

I resumed washing her foot in silence, until it was sufficiently clean and I tore off a piece of towel to wrap it in. "All done," I said softly.

I looked up at Judith, and she looked down at me. I could tell there was something she wanted to say, but she couldn't bring herself to do it. Finally, she opened her mouth and spoke, her voice barely more than a whisper. "I'm sorry."

I was confused. "Hmm? Sorry for what?"

Once again, she didn't answer, so I just kept staring into her eyes. It's funny—I've never forgotten the emotion I saw behind them, but I can't remember what color they were.

The next night, Judith asked me to accompany her into the woods once again. As we made our way through the trees she was uncharacteristically quiet and withdrawn, but every step she took seemed filled with a great sense of determination. I grew more and more intrigued as she led me to a section of the forest that we'd never been before.

We stopped at last in a patch of woods where several trees had been chopped down, their stumps forming an ominous circle. Most of the surrounding vegetation was dead—this area was almost completely barren. "Judith," I started. "Where—"

And then she kissed me. There were no words, no explanation, nothing at all that could have prepared me for it. I simply stood there in shock, and as I did, I vaguely remember feeling very hot, smelling something a bit like brimstone, and then—nothing at all.

My memory is completely absent after that, I'm told that I was missing for three days before I wandered out of the woods, apparently completely fine. I had missed the final day of camp, and everyone else had gone home, including Judith. I have no fidea what became of her, and I never heard from her again.

I often wonder what really happened that night, but th harder I try, the less I seem to recall. At this point, I'm not sure any of the remaining memories I have from that summer can be trusted. They grow hazier and hazier by the day. I'm certain that fin a few more years from now, I'll remember nothing at all, \triangle





Octavia was younger than her colleague, sure. But silly was reserved for children and stories; the void was no place for such things. Here was come one doing work that mattereds the promised herself once the escaped that wided corporate solar farm, she'd be living life on her own terms. Wasn't she doing that already? Then egain, how free are you really when you're doing research for come one discipassion project?

The isolation got to may she thought. How was I supposed to know the paids was married? Where was the ring? The wedding photos in his weller Hell, even a credit card with some class name would do! All the cheesy shit people that age did with to show they at least pretended to know how to love someone other than themself? Sleeping with your boss. Sleeping with your married boss on a space station in the middle of burn-firek space.

"Tellme Howard, what are you going to tell your wife when you get back to the colony?

You gonna tell her what we do with each other up here? How much we enjoy it? Huh? What are

yougoma tellhago

That got him to stop laughing at least.

"That's easy," he said, high and masally, "Hill Walk up to my precious bitch's face and tell her "Honey, Emhone?" Smoke dissolved within Octavia's lungs. Her heart began bearing with adrenal haste, her eyes were welling up with tears.

"Ilhopedheblhappy...Xoutre SUCH a dharmer"

Octavia wanted to daw her eyes out. Her throat burned, from the nicotine and hate.
Predous bitch? Bitch face? Who does he think he is?

"I can't believe someone with a god complex as big as yours could be called a husbandlet alone a professional. You see that piss-colored rock out there?" She motioned to the window-"Am here because this space station was supposed to give me the life I dreamed of Ruck, Howard, I'm living that dream right now, and now L...L. how can I enjoy this

because of what you've done?"

At least, she thought she was specifing. "Octavia," He interrupted, taking her hand and placing it on his chest- "don't spoil our fun because you can't handle the business. Just think offul You know, when the Journal of Colonial Science interviews us when my data gets published, I think we should really ham up the theatries. Get playful with it, you know? And you know what, for your simply stellar work to day, I im willing to chare the headline with you. You is gome be famous, to of?

Howard satup, resting his head easually on a mountain of velvet pillows. Octavia turned to face the window. He was foul. There were words swimming inside her mind, harsh words, that must be uttered with ears. She considered how they might move this maked beast before her, perhaps to repent, to prostrate at her feet in supplication; but that would be a waste-listening seemed, for him, an eathought.

From the corner of thereys, a come fisterall briefly blazed, and the emergency blazed. All the color drained from the face, May be fit was impacting flots am, from the station's heat shields, peeling of fin layers, adding to the debris cluster. Perhaps the last energy tether had broken free. When did this all happen? Was it while Howard was still begging for more! More!

"You know Octavia, once we're back at the colony and I divorce my wife, we should get hitched. Married, you know? It would really sell the whole joint-discovery narrative. Think of the doors it llopen for your career. Think of the FUN we

could have together!"

Octavia felt cold and wished to be alone, but the Doctor held her captive as the alarm sirens wailed. She wanted nothing more than for that window to shatter into a thousand, razor-sharp pieces; for the vacuum of space to mangle them to shreds over the sharp, jagged edges of double-reinforced glass and to take back the shame that now consumed her. Instead, she'll be a dizzy corpse, gently drifting into the void.

Alayer of hour frost began to sime the porthold glass, spreading spitles web-like across the carpet and the walls. Octaviable cathe caystallized across the threshold of purplish lips. The Sun Sate the came, and You'll always be an idiot, Octavia whispered, resolved to inaction. The porthole was covered in a sheet of ites, growing thicker by the moment. A computerized voice interrupted the alarms to announce, "imminent cabin depressurized to nin fifteen, fourteen, thirteen..."

Octavia satup, and inquired with a smile,

"GÖT ANTIHING STRÖNGFR. HÖWARD?" 🛦

ART // ADAM GRIFFIN AND NIAM SCHADE

By Margo Salmonson

August 2, 2024

I arose at 715 this morning. Breakfast included hard boiled eggs. I jogged on my treadmill for 830. Lunch was a baked potato. I ended my work salt. A dull pain throbbed in my back left wisdom tooth. black tea and two 30 minutes and began work at day at 530. Dinner was pasta with butter and

August 3, 2024

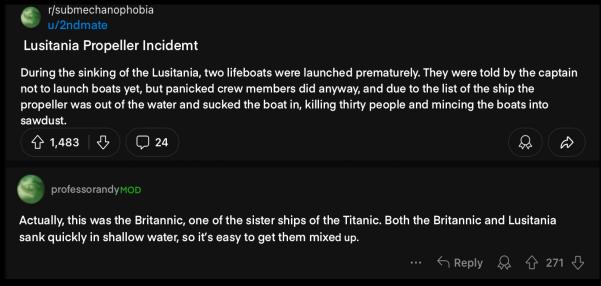
I arose at 715 this morning. Breakfast included black tea and two hard boiled eggs. I took a 5 minute shower and began work at 830. Lunch was leftover pasta from yesterday. I ended my work day at 530. Dinner was baked chicken. I had a package delivered at 1115 but they didn't bring it straight to my door so I've just been watching it sit out on the curb.

August 4, 2024

I arose at 715. Breakfast included black tea and toast with butter (I need to buy more eggs). I read for a while. My neighbor brought my package to my door. I began work at 830. I took two ibuprofen and had a baked potato for lunch. I ended my work day at 530. Dinner was baked chicken.

August 5, 2024

I made a post today on the Reddit page I moderate. Someone misquoted a story from the sinking of the Britannic, so I had to intervene.



I didn't arise until 930 today. I can feel an abscess in the back of my mouth, in the gums of my wisdom tooth. I won't look at it, but I now know what the pain has been caused by.

Breakfast included black tea and toast. Lunch was tuna salad. Dinner was baked chicken. I read for a while before bed.

August 6, 2024

I arose at 1100 this morning. Sunday. I had toast and black tea again and placed an order for groceries to be delivered. My HOA has sent me an email that it's not okay for my pool to be empty. I ignore their inquiries usually, but I do think it is an invasion of privacy to be looking over my back fence. Not that I ever look out the back window. I haven't since I started renting the house, which was in 2008. I have a gardener come once every two weeks to keep the front yard up to HOA standards. That's all.

August 7, 2024

Monday. My mouth feels wet and I stuffed some gauze back there before taking two ibuprofen and beginning with my work day. Hot food and drinks don't sound good so I had a hard boiled egg before work. At two my boss tells me to log off, because I seem foggy and distracted, which isn't good for a medical consultant. I feel feverish.

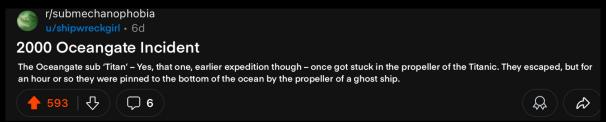
August 8, 2024

I think I fell asleep for most of the day yesterday. I'm up at 4 am today. I ran on my treadmill for an hour before assessing the hole in my mouth. I feel continually feverish. Breakfast included hardboiled eggs. Lunch was pasta with butter. Dinner was tuna salad

August 9, 2024

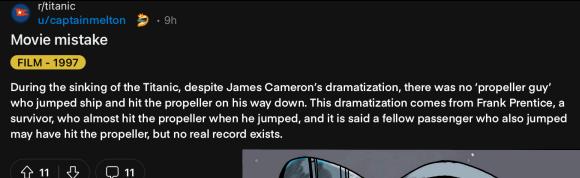
I'm on leave from work this week. Annette, I think her name is, came to knock on my door around noon. She's the new lady in charge of the HOA.

This week gives me time to catch up on my reading.



Jesus.

August 10, 2024



August 11, 2024

I arose at 715 this morning. Breakfast included two hard boiled eggs. I took four Ibuprofen and began work at 830. My boss said he was happy to have me back this week. Lunch was a baked potato. I ended my work day at 530. Dinner was pasta with butter and salt.





The Queen Mary propeller, 47 people died on that ship.

The Queen Mary, a ship who is the last of her kind - once the SS United States is sunk, that is - sits at Long Beach as a hotel. It's believed to be haunted, but the real horror is the propeller room, which is built onto the boat so passengers can see the propeller, twenty feet wide and weighing 35 tons, just sitting in murky, illuminated water. Imagine falling from the walkway into a huge metal tank of green water, and seeing the propeller take form in the darkness.











August 12, 2024

I arose at 715 this morning. Breakfast included buttered toast. I took four ibuprofen and began work at 830. Lunch was leftover pasta. Dinner was baked chicken.

My entries have gotten scattered. I believe as the sepsis sets in I am having lapses in my consciousness and my records are incomplete for the first time in my life. My gums were bleeding and red this morning, a sign of blood poisoning. I've seen it before in my work.

August 13, 2024

I arose at 715 this morning. Breakfast was cottage cheese (I had groceries delivered). I took four ibuprofen and began work at 830. Lunch was a chicken sandwich. Dinner was salted pasta.

Circulation is poor today, my extremities feel cold and brittle. Strange feeling given my fever of 102 degrees. I was unable to run on my treadmill this morning due to shortness of breath and the aforementioned symptoms.



r/Queen_Mary

Personal Paranormal Encounters on the QM

I (21f) visited the Queen Mary on a ghost tour and when entering the propeller room I immediately felt ill. I'm usually a skeptic, so I didn't believe the QM to be haunted, but I felt feverish and clammy, and my heart rate skyrocketed. Anyone else have feelings like these in ghost encounters?









August 14th, 2024

I arose at 715 this morning. Breakfast was an egg over-hard. I took four ibuprofen and began work at 830.

It is currently 1230 and I have just begun my lunch break. This may be my last entry. I have had difficulty breathing this morning as well as have felt disoriented. In the cases of blood poisoning I have covered in my career, I can give my professional opinion that I may be in my final stages.



The last surviving ocean liner

The Queen Mary had four propellers, 20 feet wide and 35 tons each. One propeller remains bolted to the ship in a port side room.

When Mary was renamed the "Grey Ghost" during WWII, she endured a collision with the Curacoa, a collision which killed over 300 sailors, most of them meeting their demise to the propeller.











Dinner was pasta with butter and salt. A dull pain throbbed in my back left wisdom tooth. ▲



She stands in the lunch line, tapping her foot to the frantic trill of "Bohemian Rhapsody" blasting through headphones—the old fashioned kind, with a cord and everything—echoing inside her tempestuous mind.

Carry on, carry on

Her chin bounces nervously, her teeth chattering. The hairs on her arms stand erect, lined up like little centurions scanning for danger. The line moves forward. The bouncing continues.

As if nothing really matters

Will today be the day it really won't matter? And then she sees them. Over there, they rest righteously at the salad bar. Sterile and cold and wrapped in metal. Like bodies in the freezers at a morgue. A shudder wracks her shoulders as her chest convulses and her diaphragm spasms, sending her into a violent fit of coughing. Wishful thinking that the cafeteria might leave her alone today.

Carry on

Strawberries. What was there to like about strawberries anyway? Little red devil fruit. They're shaped like a heart. Not the innocent, rounded teardrop on a cute little card that your crush hand-cuts for you on Valentine's day. No. Construction paper has nothing on the pulpy monstrosity that lies within, blue veins disfigured like cracks in a sidewalk. Like the fissures in her own fractured heart. Real love is ugly. It is gory. Real love can bring you to your knees in grief, crafted of mere human flesh and blood as you are. The fruit-that-shall-not-benamed is formed from this meaty core, which the grim reaper, after cracking open your ribs, pulls from your body. Beating and bleeding, Barbaric. Pulsing and repulsing. Repulsive. Strawberries are shaped like the organ that gives out on a cold metal gurney in the hall of a crowded hospital, fluorescent lights flickering as a doctor screams code.

Someone shoves her from behind as the line lags in her stillness. Her breath catches as she stumbles forward, tripping on the untied shoelaces of her black Skechers. The boy snickers. Her face burns.

Carry on, carry on

By Ella McKhann

"Bohemian Rhapsody" became a sort of comfort to her in the time since *it* happened. Unlike this lunchroom. Why couldn't his favorite fruit offer the same solace as his favorite song? Probably because of the way both their worlds effectively ended at the hands of one little red morsel.

They're hairy too. What's up with that? No one wants to eat a hairy little heart. Also, no other fruit has the audacity to turn its insides out for the whole world to see, each seed a beady little white eyeball, haunting her dreams till the end of time.

He used to laugh when she brought up the eyeballs. *Oh stop, hermana*, he would say, rolling his eyes. He loved strawberries.

It wasn't like she'd never had one. You can't judge before you've tried, mother used to say. He always said he was curious as to how she'd apply that logic to drugs, but all that ever got him was a swat on the bottom. Silly little boy. No, she'd had strawberries before. She could still remember the last taste—warm sunshine exploding on her tongue like a burst of bliss and life and sweet comfort itself. And of course, she could still remember what followed. The way his voice ceased mid-laugh. The world filled with the twinkle of his joy, only to be so violently replaced by a deathly silence, thick and heavy with shock. Then the screaming. The pleas. The sirens. The way her mother hysterically prayed to *Dios* as she followed the ambulance in their silver 1999 Toyota Corolla. How she sat frozen in the back, gripping the door handle, knuckles stretched tight as she too prayed to *Dios* that her mother could see the road through her tears. She would always remember later, in her last moments with him, and the goodbye she couldn't face. A single drop of strawberry juice, thick like blood, crusted at the corner of his mouth; his eyes stared open and unblinking in the tumbling roar of silence. The only marring on his skin. The only sickeningly outward wrong that would inform the rest of her existence. The same DNA that had so recently run through his veins pumped scrambled through her own frantically beating, strawberry-shaped heart. Her baby brother. They were an inextricable part of each other's lives. And just like that, his was over.

She turns sharply and vomits into the trash can at the junction of the buffet. A ring of disgusted kids fan out around her, exclaiming in rude delight as only teenagers can. She looks down, arms braced on the edge, panting shallowly. like the little white shih tzu they used to have, back when things were good. Bruno was the dog's name. A single, perfectly untouched strawberry stares back at her with a thousand beady little white eyeballs, splattered with yellow-green blobs of her regurgitated breakfast. Bruno is also dead, it taunts. Life will never be good again. She pulls herself upright and walks out of the lunchroom, keeping her eyes trained on the doors as she passes the salad bar. Maybe tomorrow will be easier. But who is she trying to fool?

Carry on, carry on as if nothing really matters.

ART // JOCELYN GOMEZ



SPECIAL THANKS

UCSB ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

ARNHOLD PRESIDENTIAL DEPARTMENT CHAIR
JIM KEARNEY

ROBERT AND LIISA ERICKSON PRESIDENTIAL CHAIR IN ENGLISH BEN V. OLGUÍN

UCSB GLOBAL LATINIDADES CENTER

JOHN AND JODY ARNHOLD

MATT AND ASHLEY KLINE

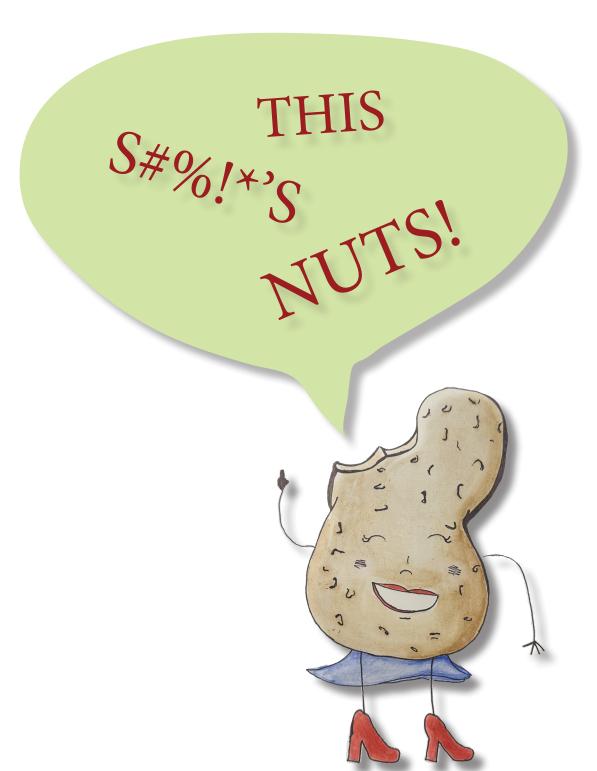
UCSB FACULTY RESEARCH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

HFA DEAN DAINA RAMEY BERRY

HAAGEN PRINTING TYPECRAFT

IVCRC





SUBMIT YOUR WORK

POETRY/PROSE/FICTION/ PHOTOGRAPHY/PAINTINGS/ DRAWINGS/COMIC STRIPS/ GRAPHIC ART/SPOKEN WORD/ COLLAGE/SCRIPTS



CONTACT US

EMAIL // UCSBCATALYST@GMAIL.COM INSTAGRAM // @THECATALYSTUCSB

WWW. CATALYST.ENGLISH.UCSB.EDU

SAD TO SEE YOU GO ... SAD TO SEE YOU GO .. SAD TO SEE YOU GO ... SAD TO SEE YOU GO ... SAD TO SEE YOU GO SAD TO SEE YOU GO

SAD TO SEE YOU GO ... SAD TO SEE YOU GO... SAD TO SEE YOU GO ... SAD TO SEE YOU GO SAD TO SEE YOU GO

Interested in joining The Catalyst? Check out ENGL106CW in GOLD.

