



The Lion's Eye

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ALIZARIN SKY
CHRISTINA RITOTA

The Lion's Eye

Spring 2016

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*“Look at where we are. Look at where we
started.”*

— Lin-Manuel Miranda

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THE (LAST) FIRST LOOK

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Dear readers,

When writing stories, they say that middles are the hardest to write. However, it is my understanding that endings are the hardest to experience both as a writer and a reader. I often wondered how I was going to write my last *The First Look*, but it always seemed so far off and away that I never really considered it too deeply until now, as I am writing it. Now, I've come to the ending and I am finding it so hard to write.

I've always found myself enjoying stories that are quiet and intimate. My story with *The Lion's Eye* was neither grand nor sweeping—not dramatic and fast-paced like I know the publishing world can be—but I made it my own. It was just the way I would have liked to see it played out. I was a general staff member as a freshman, Copy Editor as a sophomore, and spent the last two years as Executive Editor—a path I projected for myself the moment I joined, which was odd in that I never seem to plan anything out very well for myself. Being a part of *The Lion's Eye*, both on the staff and as a contributing writer, was something that went very well in every aspect, and even beyond my expectations.

A lot of this is thanks to our dedicated readers all across campus: without you grabbing copies whenever we put them out, we would have little reason to publish every semester. More thanks are in order to all our contributing writers, artists, and photographers, who make each issue beautiful with their works. I would also like to thank my amazing general staff who dedicated themselves week after week to review works. Thanks, as well, to Professor Hannold, our adviser, for your continued support. And of course, I need to thank the rest of the Executive Board: Anna, Alena, Danielle, Julia, and Lucy. Without your constant dedication and hard work throughout these past years, *The Lion's Eye* would have not been the beautiful literary magazine it was every semester we worked on it. I cannot thank all of you enough.

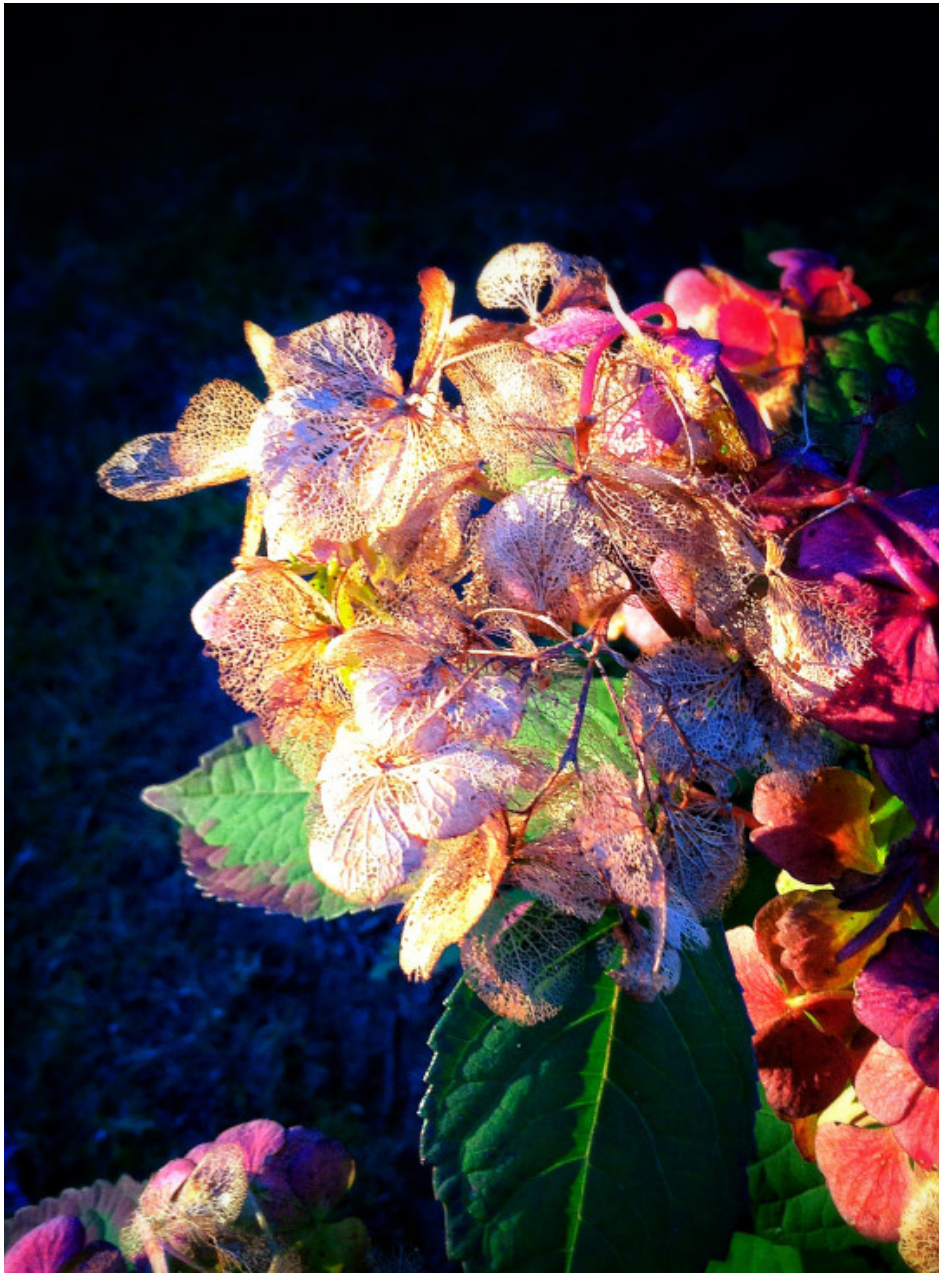
While many of you may only be just beginning with us, it's time for me to finish my last chapter with *The Lion's Eye*. Time for me to hand the reins over to the new generation of the staff. It was difficult to write, but it was so rewarding.

As the beloved Eve Cruz often says on any given Friday, “We made it.”

Sincerely,



Rachel Friedman
Executive Editor



UNTITLED
SAMANTHA PINCUS

THE GAME OF LIFE

The alarm clock buzzes as a bulldozer reverses, so I put my pink-peg self in the driver's seat and shift gears to begin the game of life. My first spin is a 3, so I spend a subsequent 3 minutes glaring at my bathmat. I have to forfeit my next turn, but I don't care. My bathmat is a harsh, toxic green and was bundled with a matching shower curtain for \$14 on Amazon. I also got beaded shower hooks--with free 2-day shipping! I miss my next turn by staring into my kitchen cabinets; I'm looking for answers, but only finding cereal. I'm out of milk and yogurt and most other food. Make a list? No. I lie to myself about my strategy, my game plan: "I'll get to the grocery store soon". Not now, though, never now. The next space I land on instructs me to collect an apple and a jar of peanut butter from my fridge... lunch.

I waste a dumb amount of time feeling sorry for myself. I'm mentally ill, not terminally ill. The mental health advocate side of my brain pipes up, citing her favorite, self-written essay: "Mental Illness Can Absolutely Kill You, You Ignorant Squirrel". I get it; I know. I know because I seem to be forever stuck on a space that says: "Hand all your money to the player with the 'Doctor' card". I pad back to my bed and have a staring contest with my sock monkey. He wins; I lose another turn—but I can't dwell on that. I have to pretend I'm fully functional so I can fulfill both of my "Career" cards. I pull my bright, manager-mandated t-shirt on--a stark contrast from the formal black I wear to my other job at a jewelry store, where I sell shiny things and mourn that I didn't draw a higher salary card. Suck it up--move forward six spaces to Barnes & Noble.

Five hours turns lifetimes later, I move back a few spaces to my apartment: exhausted and ready to forfeit. My purple(ish) IKEA bedsheets have never looked so inviting. I slip out of my t-shirt and smile and into my covers and furrowed brow. My sock monkey is staring again, so I ask him what he's finding so interesting. "I've known you since you were 8 years old. I just didn't peg you for a quitter, that's all." He knows me better than anyone else, so I guess I'll take his word for it.

Kelly Noll

SELF-PORTRAIT

Sometimes I find pieces of myself where
I least expect them to hide—in specific shades
of sunset sky and the smell of heated concrete
in July—the same way sunlight grasps at certain specks
of dust through slivers in the blinds. I found them
in eyelashes like paintbrush bristles and in other
people's freckles, in the texture of tree bark and in
the ghostly grey spiral when my father blew out
his last birthday candles.

I store all the found pieces of me in an old
shoebox underneath my bed and then with veins
of dark blue thread I stitch them back again like severed
limbs, following the wood grain of my skin so that
when I look into the mirror I am a fractal map of rivers
pleading *read me, love me*.

All water leads to the sea.

Kelly Noll

HALEAKALA

My father drove the rental car above the clouds. I stuck my hand out of the window to touch them, but touching a cloud is just feeling through fog and it quickly lost its sense of wonder. At the top of the mountain we got out of the car. He flashed his camera at the sun, a conversation of light, as it sunk beneath the clouds. The sky was enflamed like a cancerous liver, red and swollen. The sun tried to warn him, but he didn't understand.

My younger sister tripped on a rock. There was a thin red cut above her eye like a wisp of cloud. Her face rained in response. My mother took her back to the car to find some tissues. I tried to tell dad what had happened. He insisted on finishing his conversation with the sun before going back to my sister. He couldn't understand its warning, but he captured it for future reference. His camera flashed until the sky was dark and the sun had disappeared.



DUALITY

ANJALI THAKKAR

TO FORGET

After Claudia Rankine

We drive home and neither of us are speaking. Our cousin Caroline died last week while trying to convince her fiancé that she wasn't his mother's ghost. My sister and I try to remind each other to breathe, but there isn't enough air for the both of us. I called Caroline six times that night and my mouth tastes like the sound of her voicemail. The idea that death is pulling us closer together makes my stomach pull itself apart. I fasten my seatbelt as if gravity can't burn through synthetics. I'm realizing that there will be days where I forget how to speak, but will be glad for it.

*Forget: 1. to cease or fail to remember;
be unable to recall;
to fail to think of, or take note of.*

The doctors said that Caroline's neck snapped first, her death was immediate. She couldn't feel a thing after. I tell myself that I am grateful for God's mercy, that I am grateful for the absence of pain. But her fiancé will go on believing that she carried his collection of complexes to her grave and that he had been set free. I would like to tell him that his hands aren't demons, that there isn't a speck of power in his entire body. He wouldn't get to live thinking he had a hold on anyone.

He says he didn't hear the snap of her neck. That there wasn't any limpness or transcendental transfer of energy from her body to his own skin.

Not even one vertebrae out of line. He says that any doctor would prove him right.

Forget: 6. to neglect willfully; disregard or slight

He says that he forgets what happened. He explains that he couldn't possibly remember what it felt like, to feel someone die in his arms. But when he is alone, he cradles one hand in the other like communion, like there's something he can't let go of.

THE DRUNK JOKE
AFTER “THE RAPE JOKE,” BY PARTICIA LOCKWOOD

The drunk joke is that, when you were nine, your dad asked you if your mom drank a lot of wine before she yelled at your grandfather.

The drunk joke is that you didn't know.

The drunk joke is that, after he asked you, your dad told you to just ignore everything and try not to provoke her.

But now you couldn't un-see her drunkenness.

The drunk joke is that you began yelling at her about the drinking.

The drunk joke is that, after you yelled at her, she'd usually call you a piece of shit. Or critical. Or “just like your father.” And these words always made you want to cry, no matter how many times you heard them.

The drunk joke is that she told you to put the wine bottles in the recycling instead of the garbage because the neighbors could see the recycling, and she didn't want them to know how much she was drinking.

You kept putting the bottles in the recycling anyway.

The drunk joke is that you could always tell when she had been drinking because her eyes looked primal and ready for a hunt, and that look always made you want to slap her really hard across the face.

The drunk joke is that, once, after dinner and too much wine with a family friend, she stuck her head out the window of your dad's car and screamed curse words that you weren't supposed to know.

But you knew those words already, cause she used them when she yelled at you.

The drunk joke is that, while she was screaming, your skin crawled in a particular way that made you want to throw up and punch someone at the same time. So you just stared out the window in silence, pretending it wasn't real.

The drunk joke is that she drank and drove. A lot.

Get this: she said the wine made her drive better! Bet the police would believe that one.

Once she drove an hour from your aunt's house to her house after drinking a bottle of wine. You hoped she'd get pulled over and learn her lesson, but she didn't. So she kept drinking.

The drunk joke is that everyone let her drive home that night.

The drunk joke is that you asked her not to drink on your seventeenth birthday. Your family was eating at Olive Garden, and you ordered the pasta with broccoli and olive oil. Then she got drunk and yelled at you until the broccoli tasted like cud because you were holding in your tears so tightly.

Then you sat in the car alone and cried anyway.

The drunk joke is that, later that year, you screamed at her about drinking and she was so angry, you got scared and locked yourself in your room. Then she broke the lock to get inside and tried to hit you, but your dad pulled her off and pinned her to the floor in the hallway.

This wasn't the first time you'd seen your dad have to pin her down. That was when you were too young to see her drunkenness, so you didn't understand why Mommy was writhing and screaming on the kitchen floor in the middle of the night.

The drunk joke is that the next morning, she didn't remember anything about trying to hit you but still tried to blame it on you when you brought it up.

But, hey, no hangover! Close call, Mom.

The drunk joke is that she started going to AA soon after that, but only because she sent a nasty email to a coworker. Like the family she'd been torturing for years didn't matter.

The drunk joke is that she always told you: "When your dad and I separate, you should move in with him."

And so you did, even though when they separated she was attending AA and sober.

The drunk joke is that when you moved out, your fucking door was still broken.

The drunk joke is that, after you moved out, you suspected she was drinking again but tried not to think about it. Then your dad told you that she was, and you felt like you were nine years old again.

But you weren't shocked this time.

The drunk joke is that the day before you left for college, you drove to her house, screamed at her, and then whipped a bottle of chardonnay across the street where it smashed into a million pieces. Then you drove away and almost crashed your car like the chardonnay because you were crying so hard that you couldn't see.

The drunk joke was that you knew chardonnay was her favorite wine and was located in aisle A15 in Bottle King.

The drunk joke is that, when you started drinking in college, you'd look in the mirror and see her eyes on your face because you could never stop with just one shot of vodka.

When you looked like that, you hated yourself more than you did your mother.

The drunk joke is that when you shared this with her, she told you to stop drinking vodka because it was the worst type of alcohol to drink.

The drunk joke is that she's still drinking.

The drunk joke is that she always reminds you how sad she was when you moved in with your father at seventeen. And guilt still rests in the back of your mind, even though you try to ignore it.

Can her drinking really be your fault, is the question.

The drunk joke is that now, she tells you she can drink in moderation.

The drunk joke is that you believe her. Come on, that's a little bit funny.

Admit it.



THINKING MAN
CHRISTINA RITOTA

CLOSURE

closure
you leak out of
 saturated scenes and
 memories shift like
shadows of leaves
 through the cold windowpane
 forming a monochrome kaleidoscope
that temporarily stains
 the bright floor tiles
 with greys and they're
twirling and
 twirling and

twirling around in
 my brain the same way
 i used to imitate
the kitchen fan
 while you sang
 and washed the
dinner dishes with a
 lemon-soaped sponge
 in your hand and

sometimes i still
 sing while i empty
 the dishwasher and

sometimes i still
 dance in the kitchen beneath
 that white ceiling fan and

sometimes i still
 wrap myself in tinfoil armor
 waving cardboard tube swords
straw-sipping pink lemonade
 but your death stabbed me
 with a sharper blade
and i'm still staggering
 swaying from the deep wound
 it made and i'm
twirling and
 twirling and



GHOSTS
MACKENZIE CUTRUZZULA



UNTITLED
SAMANTHA PINCUS

It took me
too long to realize
that poisonous sap was
dripping down the tree trunk
of my spine and pooling in my lungs
like puddles for you to come and splash in
with your rain boots and a smile. It took me too long
to recognize the shape that my intestines were twisting
themselves into, the acid of my stomach seeping through
and screaming at my brain to
get away,
get away,
get away.
I ignored all of the warning signs.

I have seen this
all before: I should have
known, I should have grown
since then, barely a decade old and
mourning the destruction of a forest infected.
We had to burn it to the ground, I had to cut myself
down and start over as a sapling in foreign earth, shedding
leaves in all seasons and struggling for warmth amongst the
towering pines and the oaks—but the soil was safe so I rooted
in deep and
I grew,
I grew,
I grew.
But the poison still came.

ARMILLARIA ROT
KELLY NOLL



STRINGS
CHRISTINE HATFIELD

WORMWOOD

“and in those days people will seek death but will not find it.”
-revelation 9:6

these days,
it’s been a starry apocalypse:

all blood-rushing and
flashes of light.
heaven is airborne
and sings as it falls
and coats our lungs
like smoke.

life has been asking
for fire,
so i show it the parts
of my skin that burn
the fastest.

and lately,
i’ve been counting in
groups of seven.

not in days
or weeks
or on fingers
or the burns
on my skin

but in angels
and stars
and how many times
they remind me of
darkness
and distance

and how quickly we
change our minds

about death and
forgiveness.

how these thoughts
catch fire
like wormwood.
i seek out death
as if it were water
springing out of
the ground.

and search for light
as if it hasn't just
fallen at my feet.

Alena Woods

TWINS

"You see I was a test tube baby, that's why nobody gets me."
-Van McCann

We are falling as the days squirm out of their shallow graves.

The sun burns through nearby shadows and our mother's hands are moons that hold the sky together. You and I are umbilical astronauts who drink amniotic fluids like Tang and pick at our gums with underdeveloped fingers and toes, wondering when we can begin to bite and when we would start drawing blood.

Everything was nighttime until you flipped the switch and kicked on the walls, begging to take your first breath. I was willing to stitch my eyelids shut and rip out my vocal chords if it meant I would be left alone. But life is this wormhole gripping me tighter and tighter and there's no way of knowing what's in there. Except there's light, I can't breathe because it's so white.

I almost wasn't here. My mom said I had been an idea but she forgot how to write me down. Her body shut down some of her organs like carnival rides and no one was allowed in or out. My sister and I were lucky enough to have exact change while our parents flew to different countries, trying to find our faces in other people's children.

We could have remained a hypothesis, our parents' unfinished business.

But we were a baker's dozen.
I was the loaf of bread that didn't burn.
You were the egg that didn't break.

SIX TRANSLATIONS

Six Translations of Bashō's "A Crow on a Withered Branch"

On a withered branch

A crow has alighted:

Nightfall in autumn.

-Matsuo Bashō

On a rusted bench,
The old woman sits; evening.
Black birds flock to her.

A bird pecks the dirt.
A cat stares—its tail twitches.
Which is hungrier?

Lying in the dark.
Body asleep; mind awake.
Footsteps at the door.

The bamboo is dead.
You forgot to water it...
Better throw it out.

Her head in your lap.
The white butterfly resting.
Summer rain falling.

The red of the leaves—
The darting sparrow's feathers—
The pilgrim's sore feet.



UNTITLED
JESSICA KOPEW

THANKING DELILAH

I don't blame Delilah,
I can't say I haven't thought about it.
About cruelty and indifference,
And how there's really no distinction.
How I'd take whatever I wanted
If it meant that I got what I deserved.
There are these rose-colored glasses
Glued to the bridge of my nose and
Before I step outside,
I cut my hair in jagged lines
Because it's the least lady-like
Thing I can think of doing.

Adolescence is this small puddle
Where mosquitoboy come to breed,
And bite until I bleed and am
Apologizing for the mess.
Are they some kind of plague,
Or was it something I said?
Maybe I was asking for this
When I learned what body language was
And how to use it.

I don't blame Delilah for
Cutting off more than just herself.
For believing a man can hold
All of his strength in one place,
And for not listening the first time.
I've seen Achilles heels copy and pasted
Onto upper arms and stomach rolls
And wedged between inferiority complexes
Until all that was left were boys
Fresh off the printer,
Their ink still drying.

After all this,
How could I blame anyone
Whose gut reactions are as
Misguided as mine?



ANANSI
KELLY NOLL

THREE BASEMENTS

I.

It was the end of summer, when the time between day and night became longer and longer, and maybe I was wrong in what I did. But there was a way in which Jaime laughed that made me feel safe, when his face crinkled and crumbled into a smile, like the ruins of a Roman structure; when his eyes lit up with the beauty of a forest fire. So when he asked me to down shot after shot of vodka before the party, I couldn't deny him, even as the alcohol burned up and down my throat, threatening me after each shot. He wanted to know if I could keep up, his black hair falling like a dark halo around his head as he leaned over me on the floor. I gave him a thumbs-up, but he just laughed, as if he knew what I was thinking. People always mistook his laughing for sobbing: the way his back arched, his shoulder-blades reaching out of his shirt like half-formed wings. But by the time he was able to control himself and answer, they had already lost interest. He wanted to know if I could keep up. I ended up in the bathroom that night, him arcing lightning into my back until I fell asleep with my cheek pressed against the cool, alabaster porcelain. And in the morning, I woke up in Jaime's bed, with him beside me, sometimes an arm draped over my back, an arm that we never spoke about, but wasn't necessarily taboo. He always woke up blinking, as if he were reigniting the fire in his eyes, and then he would smile. That's the first thing I think of when people ask me about him: how simply kind he could be when no one was watching. How ruthless it seemed to me in those moments.

II.

But the thing is, I met him in some random basement of some random house that I could never identify again. He came up to me and shoved a shot glass into my hand, and I will never be able to understand why he chose me, some random guy among a throng of them. I can pretend to know, and in the after-moments, I pretended that I knew definitively, but there are some things I will never understand. There was something that grasped him at times, as if the fire behind his eyes temporarily went out, leaving behind amber ashes of a decrepit forest. There was no warning to when he would get into a mood, but when he did, his mouth became a whirlpool wherever we went; his conscious became immune to consequence. I should have asked him what changed those nights, but I didn't. I let him look for drugs at parties while I forced myself to enjoy the taste of sweat and alcohol on people's necks, and when he found it, we would smoke right there, sharing with anyone who asked. In those moments, he would follow the smoke with his eyes, so dark I couldn't distinguish iris from pupil, ignoring anyone that spoke to him, except for me. *Are you tired?* I would ask in broken Tagalog, and he would say, *No, no, I want to stay, I want to have fun.* We stayed until the house was hollow with the echo of aftermath, and this is when he spoke. He taught people what he said were swear words in Tagalog. *Mahal kita. Gusto kitang yakapin. Mahal mo ba ako? Huwang mo akong iwan.* And then we left, tracing our way back home from half-memories. He told me that he loved parties, but he loved the after-moments more: walking back by moonlight, the houses dark and motionless, the air thick, as if the wind were asleep. We got back to his room and stumbled into his bed, face to face and talking into the night, mumbling with unselfconscious smiles made for ourselves. Never did he bring anyone back, and I pretended that meant something.

III.

And that's what we did at the end of summer, nearly every weekend. I got used to the damp basement stone, strangers' sour necks, the awful burn of alcohol, but I could never adjust to the after-moments: the walk back to the room, when every streetlight was broken and the stars reached out to us, pulling us away from the streets. Once, when he took a tablet from some kid, he forced me to sit in the street with him and stare at the stars. In childlike wonder he whispered, *Do you think it'll always be like this?* I couldn't adjust myself to the way we would always stumble into the same bed at the end of the night. *It's fine*, he would say when I asked if I should leave, praying simultaneously for approval and rejection. *You're fine*. Until I stopped asking, and the smell of his room – his sheets, his pillow, him – erupted in my face like saltwater. I remember the way his eyes, half-closed, locked onto mine with such intensity one night, like black holes surrounded by exploding stars. *I love nighttime*. How his mouth never quite closed when he wasn't speaking. *It feels like the entire world is falling away, that you'll never be able to return to what you had*. How his lips seemed to have a gravity of their own that I could never allow myself to fall into. Do you smell that? What a treacherous thing that would have been for me to do. *Autumn's in the air – it's sharper than summer*. I promise, *This'll be over soon*. I do not love you.



LIKE A RIVER RUNS
MACKENZIE CUTRUZULLA



**NOTRE DAME BASILICA
MACKENZIE CUTRUZZULA**

DINER WAITRESS

She wears low-cut shirts
and cigarette smoke.

It's not the fifties,
but she still calls Jim "hon,"
knows how he likes his coffee,
and slides him a pastry
when he winks at her across the counter.

She has a heart
tattooed on her ring finger
and love across her breast;
she thought of getting a skull
somewhere, but doesn't know
if she wants people to see it.

She's friendly with Gloria
and thinks she's an illegal,
and knows she tucks a picture of her son
in the pocket with her pen and pad.

Mary she talks to on break sometimes,
but it's just her part-time job—
she's a working mother
with both her boys in college,
and a husband who kisses her
when he gets home at night.

She knows Joe gives pretty
girls discounts, and quarters
to kids who ask him for gumballs.
They all smile at him, but not too much.
(It's just because he wears a tie.)

Carlos is covered in bacon grease,
and she's seen him sneaking
out back to smoke. People smile
at him, too—but they feel
like they have to.

Sometimes
their eyes will meet above
trays and buckets of silverware;
they say nothing—
the job pays the bills.

In the mornings
silent men pull their noses
out of newspapers
just long enough to mumble
their orders—eggs and bacon, please—
and then recede
into their crosswords and politics.

Children scream, and syrup flies
as they climb across the cushions
with their clammy little hands.
Their mothers think it means something
to wear tight workout clothes; they talk
about living in Boston,
and think they're very cultured.

The phone rings,
fat spews from the sausages,
and receipts cascade down the register
like a woman's carefree curls.

The door
opens and closes and opens and closes
with the shuffle of many feet,
and blurred figures are reflected
in the pristine panes of glass.

Not a word, just a tip—

doctors, and lawyers, and teachers, and clerks;
dirty plates in the same old dishwasher;
sorry, no tables open,
it's a forty-minute wait;
families, and reunions, and awkward first dates

—a few dollars left on the table,
the only faces: George and Abe.

Then home to the same empty house,
driving through the trails
of echoing conversation.

But at the break of the day
she's always back—
just smiling at customers,
and cleaning their booths,
and stirring sugar
into their bitter black coffee.



UPROOTED
MELISSA MARTIN

WRITE THIS DOWN

AFTER TERRANCE HAYES

If you are addicted to the hum of the radio, kiss Orson Welles on the mouth
twice a day on an empty stomach.

If you are addicted to road trips, replace your front car seats with your aunt and uncle
who live out in Portland.

If you find that your friends are starting to grow car doors like metal wings
and charge you by the minute, try becoming anything but a passenger.
They might try and gaslight your family until the suburbs glow like a wildfire,
But you know the places where we would never hide.

Icarus's wings were probably made from condoms and the tips of mechanical pencils
And the way your name sounds in my mouth when I'm calling with good news,
But that's something I never do.

I'm saying that you couldn't run from this even if you wanted to,
Even if you swear that you were sprinting for your life,
Even if you tried to tell me that I was cutting your throat
Wide open with my honesty.
I'm still trying to walk that fine line between
Leaving and escaping,
Holding and clutching.

Prometheus probably asked the birds to take pieces of his heart instead
Because it's the one piece of him that doesn't grow back.
You might ask me if anticipation was an organ because you could feel it beating
Inside of your stomach.

If you realize you want to run, replace your sneakers with lighters
and the smell of gasoline.

But if you are addicted to the sound of my voice, tell me now.
And if you are addicted to the emptiness that surrounds goodbyes,
never stop speaking.

ADJUST

Well that wasn't so bad.

All you really amounted to
Were fever sweats and dry spells.

I sit up at night asking myself
If this is what you would've wanted:

The starry deliriousness from
Closing my eyes and pressing on my eyelids
For too long.
When I open them up, you are gone again and
All that is left are the hangnail questions
That I pick and pick at until
They bleed
And the excuses still living in your taste buds
That are the color of cavities;
Too Sweet to Be True.

You were so good at
Caressing the inanimate,
Caring for what was to come
Because it was so fragile and
Premature
And I could stay warm on my own.

But there are always going to be people
Waiting for you.
I like to imagine you sitting at bus stops,
Asking each girl who stepped off
If maybe she was who you were
Supposed to run into,
If she could be your excuse to
Finally leave.

And even when you were there,
Chills kept me awake most nights.
I was pacing on floor boards,
Counting on their creaks to ease you
Out of sleep.

You slept like a fallen tree:
Stiff and uprooted,
Wanting to be planted somewhere else
Next time.
If I said I didn't need you,
But no one was awake to hear me,
Would it make a difference?

Life is chiropractic;
It breaks me,
Cracks me up and then
I'm bending over backwards for
Someone new.

That is the worst of it.

It has been awhile but
My body is still adjusting.

THE UMBRELLA OF TRUTH

I want to write a lofty metaphor about the Truth being an Umbrella and I suppose that would also entail writing about how Rain is Subjectivity. You would think the Umbrella of Truth would protect one from the Rain by this metaphor but my backpack still got wet and my jeans have been soaked from walking against the wind on a stormy day.

You, the Umbrella, say to me, “Everything you write needn’t be High Art.”

But this is my last hoorah, Umbrella; I need to come up with something. You were supposed to be my muse, to come to me under dark skies and give me some insight into the Ultimate Meaning of the world. Instead, my fingers are starting to prune. The wind whips you up and turns you inside out, and I must lower you to straighten you out.

“Your last hoorah, you say?” You consider as I give you a shake towards the gusting wind.

Isn’t that what I just said? I click my tongue and raise you up over my head again. Subjectivity is pattering on my backpack and I can only hope my notebooks don’t get wet.

“Are you about to die?”

I could make a statement about how one never knows if they are, but that would be too cliché.

“Well, by that merit, you already have made your statement about death. Mortality, like Reality, is Subjective.”

A car could hit me right now and I would die at the young age of twenty-two. All I was doing was walking home from class. I can see the headlines now. My parents on the floor sobbing. It’s all there with a depressing piano accompaniment.

“You’ve been thinking too much about death and Art. Everyone has been thinking too much about death and Art.”

Admittedly, it’s *The X-Files* that makes me think of how quickly and oddly I could go. But that’s too laughable to tell a friend, Umbrella. Rain and Reality have made me paranoid of any strange man. Sci-fi thrillers are not High Art, but maybe that’s why I’m so afraid.

“It may not be, but to reiterate, not everything you—the royal you—write need be High Art.”

I know.

I know all too well.



VIOLET OPPRESSION
NINA MITAROTONDO

WANDERING MYTH

The air was so hot you could hear it
in the screaming of cicadas
cooking, simmering your brain

You walk, meander, search for meaning
in long, lean, dried blades of grass.

Reaching the woods you relent
collapsing in a bed of unkempt green,

Your entire view filled with the tips of trees dipping into the sky,
stirring the clouds into their strange blue cocktail.

You are almost alone,
wind billowing through your hair
like a friend's hand.

Leaves sail down
and turn into dirt,
little helicopter seed pods twirl as they fall,

And acorns drop
for the squirrels to find;
Acorn caps adorn my fingers
as tiny dapper hats.

If you lie perfectly still
like a corpse whose breath barely tickles the air
the rest of the world will reveal itself to you.

Grasshoppers arc from their perches to land on your hand,
gymnasts unimpressed by their usual routine
dancing on chirps and backwards-bent knees.

Ants form a line on a mission from their commander,
that rotund, passive leader at the head of a tiny fascist city-state-hill
like little purposeful raisins marching across the sun-baked earth.

Spiders scurry across their translucent fibrous nests,

like delicate crabs dwelling in a wedding veil,
what is a refuge to her a noose to the others

If you stay even stiller, your breath crouching motionless in your chest
an azure dragonfly alights on your outstretched legs
crawling up its length like a soft, stubbly tree,
ivory dappled with specks of pink.

And then a hint of rain comes to your senses
disturbing the song with a bite and a gasp
like the hint of mint in a bar of chocolate.

BUTTERFLY HOUSE

My father is a big, voluminous flower.

But the gardener tells my mother
he's fragile now. I miss
waking up and seeing him.
I only saw him as the burden I had to water
a couple times a day. But his body
was thriving, even if he didn't want to.

Every morning the gardener tries knocking
on my mother's bedroom window –
reaching, begging her to see for herself.
No one can deny the dirt on his hands
should really be hers.

During the evenings, we bring my father
inside and place him at the head of the table.

I never know what to say to him.
What could I say to a dying soul?
Sometimes when my mother and I
have every reason to give up,
I try to remember my father.

He was the brightest of yellows, warm,
with words of nectar. He was every sun.

I'm telling you, this used to be no ordinary man.
Weekend visits to the butterfly house were his favorite.
There, alive in the flesh, he stood as tall as a statue,
telling the butterflies to give him their best shot.
One by one they would reach and beg for him,
making themselves a home on his shoulders.
I remember once a monarch landed on his nose
and he transformed into a kingdom of trees.
With his arms spread out wide, we both smiled
thinking the world couldn't be that bad.

But now the colors and sweetness from his face,
no longer warm the kindly things of the earth.

Sometimes when my mother isn't home I try to visit him. The gardener is always there, sitting with my father, keeping him company. This was something my mother and I could never do. The gardener understands and sweetly waves me over. I inch towards to what is no longer my father but a big, voluminous flower. I'm telling you, the most beautiful I have ever seen.

Sarah Lewis

ACORN SQUASH

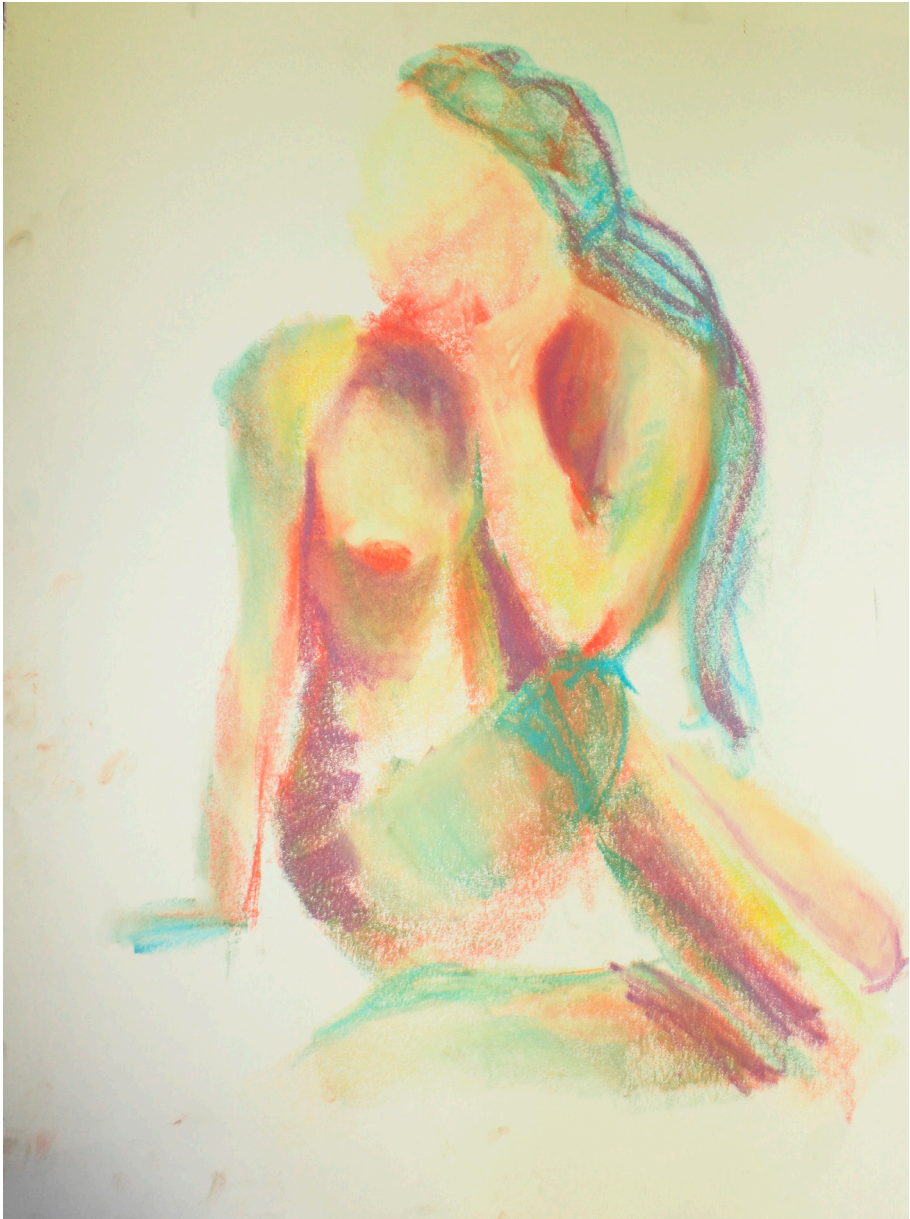
I often think about ways I could kill people. If necessary. I could probably use a baseball bat to bludgeon someone to death; mine is hidden in the right corner of my closet behind my underwear drawer. But an acorn squash? The weirdly indented acorn squash my daughter chose on her class trip to Leonard's Farm, anointed with a half-split stem? If I threw it at your head, it wouldn't kill you. No way in hell.

I bake pies for my husband: cherry on Monday, apple on Thursday. We're having guests Friday and I've already dirtied my two rolling pins, so perhaps I could use the acorn squash to roll the dough. My husband would pull me aside and look into my eyes. I would remain silent.

The acorn squash reminds me of my daughter's head when she sprouted tufts of cashmere-like hair. I usually secured these hairs in pink plastic bow clip. Initially upright, it gradually grew flaccid as the day progressed until it hung limply down the side of her head.

Perhaps this acorn squash can be my Wilson. I will cut my hand and smear a face on it with my blood. We'll whisper secrets in the night, hidden under the covers as though two teenagers. We will plot a death, Wilson and I.

Wilson and I will discover that, in fact, we cannot kill someone. That someone being my husband.



GABRIELLA
NINA MITAROTONDO

I HANDED MY PRIDE TO AN ORANGUTAN...

he wore it like a necktie around his neck,
and squeezed himself into the CEO's Armani.
Fecal throwing and tantrums came naturally

I sold my kidneys to foot the bills
my buyer said that kidney doctors make bank
so I sold my hands to pay for med school
my patients screamed before the surgical anesthetic.

I used reality television as shampoo for my sanity.
that's when I realized I was in bedlam.
I ran frantically about in this gravitational cage
and everyone kept telling me to run, Nikhil run.

And I didn't stop.
Until I was

at the end
of a rope,
I made a final report for death
He slid his spectacles
down the bridge of his nose,
with a saddened smile like
my girlfriend
who always knew something I didn't.
Mr. Sekher.
What did you want?

And I
a Frankenstein patchwork
of transparent thoughts, the spleen
of a lost puppy, and junk from a car trunk,
had lent the orangutan my larynx.

THE LAST LOOK

A NOTE FROM THE ISSUE EDITOR

Dearest Reader,

For three years and six issues of *The Lion's Eye* I have struggled to channel my inner creative writer/poet in order to write a little note to you, Reader. And I must say that, overwhelmingly and perhaps surprisingly, writing this final note to you has been the most challenging. I would have imagined that it would be easiest to write this note; the theme is obvious and all I have to do is say thank you and goodbye. But, somewhat less surprisingly, saying goodbye to something you know and love so much is not that easy.

Not to make my final editor's note cheesy (but honestly, it's going to be), but I have loved my experience as a student here at TCNJ more than I ever imagined I would. It is extremely difficult to imagine my life after this and to say goodbye to all of the things that have made TCNJ my home away from home for the past four years. The classes I have taken, the friends I have made, and the organizations I have been involved with (like my wonderful *Lion's Eye*) have shaped me so much as a person over this short time (yes, I now know that four years is a very short time). I will miss my life in college very very much, but I hope to carry the memories of these things as an imprint on my brain and heart for the rest of my life.

But although it is so hard to say goodbye to such positive, rewarding experiences, it is now time to pass the torch down to the next generation of e-board at *The Lion's Eye*. I hope that the experiences that you have here are as fun, rewarding and stimulating as they have been to me in my time here. As for me, I am off to pursue something new and different, and I hope to find experiences as wonderful to the ones I have had here.

I would also like to say thank you to Rachel, Alena, Danielle, Lucy and Julia (who forgave me when I accidentally called her "Jula" in an editors note a few years back) for the years of support and passionate work from you all. I am teary-eyed saying goodbye to my beloved *Lion's Eye*, but I know that the message of expression that we have brought to you will continue to be passed on for years to come.

Until we meet again,



Anna Mitarotondo
Issue Editor



LION

CHRISTINA RITOTA

ABOUT US ::

The *Lion's Eye* is published by the students of The College of New Jersey with funding from the Student Finance Board. The magazine provides an outlet for creative expression, publishing student short fiction, poetry, prose, photography, illustrations, graphic art, and more.

To learn more about The Lion's Eye visit: lionseye.pbworks.com.

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SUBMISSIONS ::

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