

The
Lion's
Eye

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allison marcino

The Lion's Eye

Spring 2017

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“Nolite te bastardes carborundorum.”

— MARGARET ATWOOD

CONTENTS



POETRY AND PROSE

ALENA WOODS	8	<i>The First Look</i>
DOMINIC LA PORTA	10	<i>My Grandfather as an Offering</i>
STEPHANIE SIEVERS	11	<i>hammered and angelic</i>
PETER WEILAND	11	<i>A Moment of Happiness</i>
EMILY MILLER	12	<i>A Prayer for May 25, 2011</i>
JAKE COHEN	13	<i>Runner</i>
ELIZABETH JUNE MADDEN-ZIBMAN	15	<i>Incident</i>
KATIE TENCZA	16	<i>Rosedale Dusk</i>
MARIA PRINTON	17	<i>On Pink Wine</i>
AMELIA ORTMAN	18	<i>Dark Sea Water</i>
MOMOKO OI	20	<i>Take It or Leave It</i>
ALENA WOODS	22	<i>The Light Inside</i>
MICHELLE LESNIAK	25	<i>Mapmade</i>
ALENA WOODS	27	<i>Undressing the Ocean</i>
DANA DALY	28	<i>Toska</i>
MARIA PRINTON	32	<i>Moon Music</i>
ALENA WOODS	33	<i>Please Do Not Touch the Moon</i>
VINCENT GIACALONE	34	<i>An Apology to PBS and its Talented Creative Staff</i>
DANIELLE BRUNO-ARLEQUIN	38	<i>Hands (For Her)</i>
ANASOFIA TRELLES	39	<i>Andes</i>
ALYSSA DUGASZ	39	<i>The Loss of Fire</i>
DANIELLE BRUNO-ARLEQUIN	40	<i>What I Learned About Myself That Night</i>
DANIELLE BRUNO ARLEQUIN	40	<i>Front Page</i>
KATIE SHUM	41	<i>Fuzzy Peach Tea</i>
MARIA PRINTON	42	<i>The Last Twelve Hours of My Life</i>
CORINNE PETERSEN	43	<i>Epiphany</i>
RACHEL TURAN	44	<i>Rats</i>



CONTENTS



POETRY AND PROSE

DANA DALY	45	<i>Cityscape</i>
CLAIRANNE CARDACI	46	<i>Smile</i>
ALENA WOODS	48	<i>Broken</i>
JAKE COHEN	49	<i>Easing In</i>
KENDEL STILES-SCHATZ	50	<i>Lessons from Icarus</i>
KATIE SHUM	51	<i>Rouge Noir</i>
KENDEL STILES-SCHATZ	51	<i>Death's Parade</i>
KEITH MELLEA	54	<i>Girl from the North Country</i>
MOMOKO OI	56	<i>Nameless</i>
ALYSSA DUGASZ	57	<i>After Dusk</i>
ALYSSA DUGASZ	57	<i>The Loss of Fire</i>
KELLY NOLL	58	<i>The Last Look</i>

CONTENTS



ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

ALLISON MARCINO	(COVER)	<i>Turkish Lanterns - Carmel by the Sea</i>
ALLISON MARCINO	(MASTHEAD)	<i>Keys - Henry Miller Memorial Library</i>
ALLISON MARCINO	7	<i>Succulent - San Francisco</i>
ALLISON MARCINO	9	<i>Bixby Bridge - Big Sur</i>
ALLISON MARCINO	13	<i>Typebars - Henry Miller Memorial Library</i>
ALLISON MARCINO	14	<i>City Lights Bookstore - San Francisco</i>
SAM PINCUS	21	<i>wtf...</i>
CORINNE PETERSEN	24	<i>Untitled</i>
CORINNE PETERSEN	26	<i>Untitled</i>
EMILY MARAGNI	32	<i>Moons</i>
CONNOR MEANY	36-37	<i>Stay In</i>
RYAN SOLDATI	43	<i>Vacancy</i>
MEAGAN MCDOWELL	45	<i>Which Way?</i>
DARA KUSHNIR	49	<i>Underground</i>
RYAN SOLDATI	52	<i>Peace</i>
KENDEL STILES-SCHATZ	53	<i>Land of the Free</i>
RYAN SOLDATI	56	<i>Photographer</i>
CHRISTINA RITOTA	59	<i>Galaxy</i>
ALLISON MARCINO	(BACK COVER)	<i>Succulent - San Francisco</i>

*“I swim for brighter days despite the absence
of sun.”*

— ANDREW MCMAHON



SUCCULENT - SAN FRANCISCO
allison marcino

THE FIRST LOOK

A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

I want you to take a minute and think about the first book that made you fall in love with reading. Were you forced to read it in high school, did your older brother recommend it to you, or was it something you just happened upon one day? I remember reading and re-reading *Little House on the Prairie* until the pages of my paperback started to rip. Laura Ingalls was the girl I wanted to be, the one I turned to when times were tough. I also considered Beezus and Ramona Quimby, Matilda, and Charlie, to be some of my closest friends. Even at a young age, I knew I wanted to one day create characters that might give comfort to someone else. It felt like the noblest direction I could follow in my life.

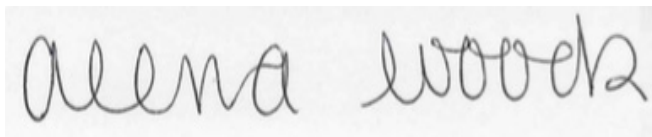
Because at one time, back in elementary school, reading used to be “cool”, whatever that means. If you weren’t reading *Harry Potter* or *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, you didn’t really have much to talk about with other kids on the playground. But as we entered middle school, this fad started to diminish. Why stay inside and read when you could be playing sports or video games like everyone else? It became about what everyone else was doing, and not about what *you* wanted to do.

This mentality has transformed into something more dangerous: where college students now think one area of study is superior to others. I’m here to tell you that it’s just not true; how could your passion burn less brightly than someone else’s? Who gets to decide this? So if you decide to pick up a book instead of a soccer ball or like to decipher metaphors rather than equations, that’s okay.

When you go to college, you’ll find people who feel the same way you do, which is why I’d like to thank my fellow executive board members and friends for their help and encouragement over the years. Kelly, Alyssa, Cynthia, and Danielle, the TCNJ literary community would not be this strong without you, and I will always cherish the times we have had together. I finally found the people who understood and shared my love for the world of literature. My friend and fellow writer Kyle Siegel and Professor Catie Rosemurgy have changed the way I view my own work, guiding me out of my darkest doubts and onto this new path I’ll be following after graduation.

Thank you for taking the time to support The Lion’s Eye — let us show you what can be done when you follow your passion. All you need to do now is flip to the next page.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alena Woods". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Alena Woods
Executive Editor



BIXBY BRIDGE - BIG SUR
allison marcino

MY GRANDFATHER AS AN OFFERING

there is a god of decomposing things
& i found him / in grandfather's skin:
cobwebbed & so close / in color to
hospital sheets / i can only tell where
his body ends / & the alabaster covers
begin / by a makeshift altar of blos-
soming lavender across his hips / let
me try this: one week ago you heard
my parents' argument & said visteria
/ which is to say / your final word to
me was bullshit in a dying dialect /
two weeks ago your hands could still
clasp in prayers / i didn't believe in /
death / let's pick up before i under-
stood / thought can be shed as easily
as body / as easily as snakeskin / let
me try this again: what does it feel
like to have an iv dripping holy / wa-
ter fishhook into your skin / promise
you a pinch as your final pain? / did
i imagine your teeth reach down to
your lip / to curse this new god with a
moribund word?

stephanie sievers

HAMMERED AND ANGELIC

Hammered and angelic
Eyeliner smeared where
The tears dripped yesterday
How I wish I were a bead of sweat
So that I may feel her
Cheek's soft skin.
Her laughing celebration finds my ears
Even over the music she loves
As her launched white ball spins
Around the rim before
Falling into
The tenth cup.
Her nose is blue from snorting my prescription.
I have winner
But I'm not ready
My vision is unfocused when I'm
Not looking at her.
Her mouth's left side raises to a smirk
When she sees me take my spot
Before her
She takes her shot

peter weiland

A MOMENT OF HAPPINESS

When was the last time
the height of your heartbeat
pounded pure art through the air?
When the pain of passiveness passed
to passion, pouring euphoria
onto the ashes of burnt-down boredom?

Have you ever unveiled a festival of ecstasy
that infects your mental energy
with split-second spectacle-chemistry?
It makes your molecules crave spontaneity:
the work of tiny atomic deities,
trapped in our minds but freed momentarily.

This minute of spirit,
when your awakened breaths emit the tones
of a crowd crowded with life, but you're alone
except for the secret stealing your thoughts,
reminding you of chance's subtle gift:

that in this moment, you'll forever exist.

A PRAYER FOR MAY 25, 2011

Surrounded by canaries, budgies, a parrot that made the sound of the microwave,
and you,
the house felt small.

Too small for all the people spilling onto the porch,
into the swimming pool, into the next-door neighbor's yard.

We watched as everyone danced around one another
like tornadoes across a prairie of carpet.

In a back room you placed a ladder by my feet
and pointed a finger to the stars

and we chose to climb up, up, away

From the natural disaster of your extended family reunion

I was not part of. I was not ready

for the planets in heaven you showed me,

for the moons you would dance me around.

Tell me everything:

astrological sign, blood type, cholesterol level.

Aren't these the things you ask on a first date?

Aren't these the things we should know?

Surrounded by canaries, budgies, a parrot that only chirped in "beep, beep, beep",
and lovebirds,

you kissed me.

Our cheeks were the color of the walls: Pale pink.

My stomach was like the floral patterned couch: everywhere.

We couldn't be separated.

"Keep beating until your swords turn into ploughshares"-

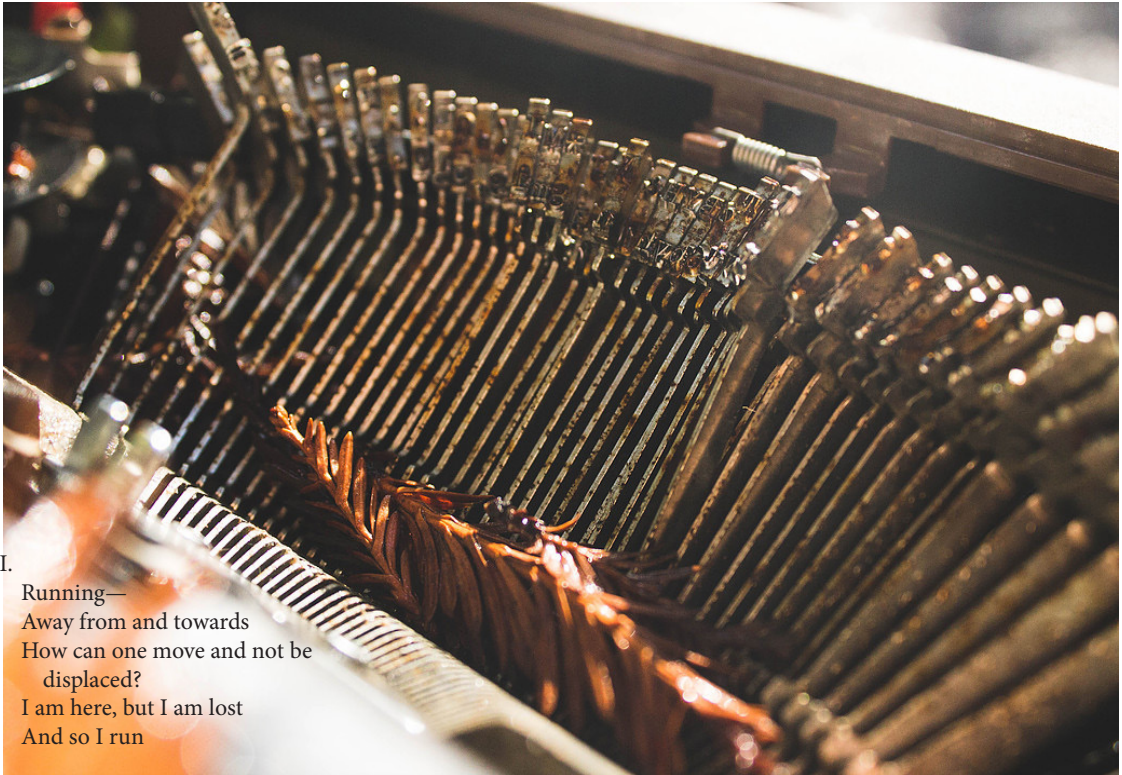
we did for three years. No one told us we had to stop

once we had the proper farming equipment for harvest.

How beautiful, oh Lord, that we felt as innocent as two people could.

How inspiring we still feel this way.

allison marcino



I.
Running—
Away from and towards
How can one move and not be
displaced?
I am here, but I am lost
And so I run

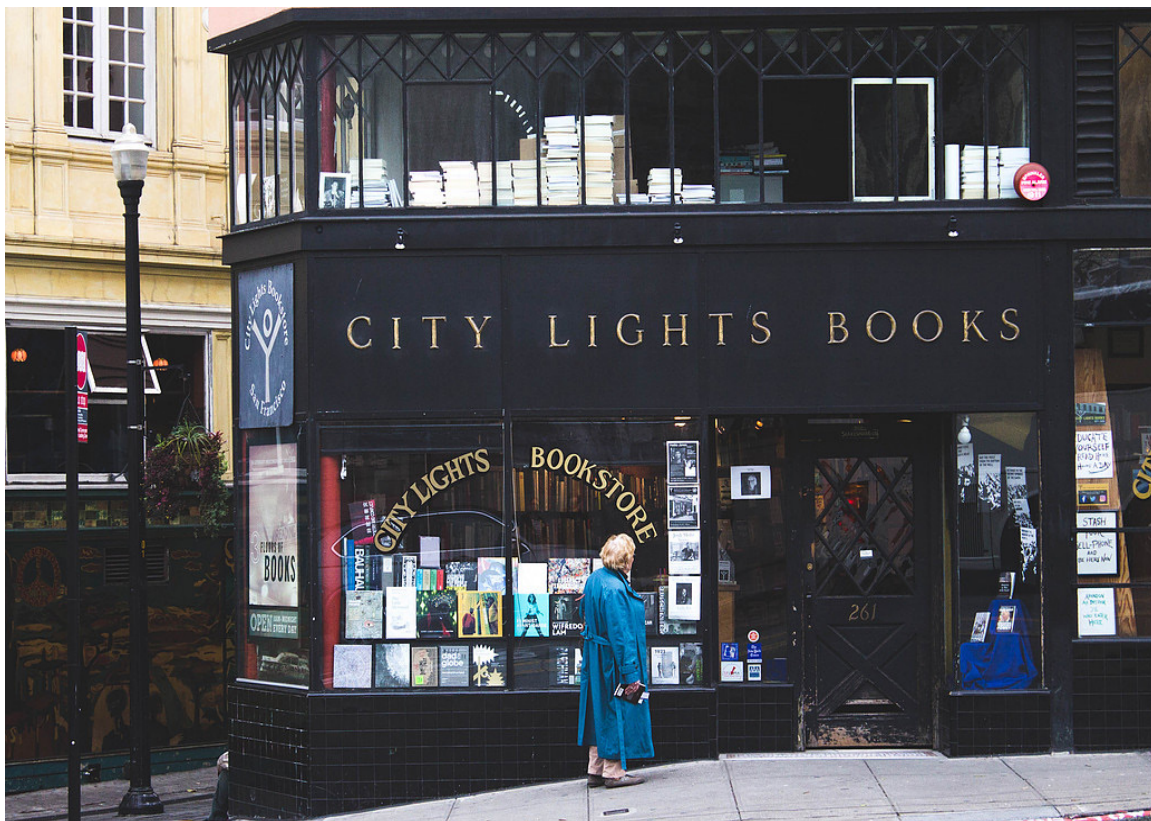
II.
Gravity is ubiquitous
Exerting itself on the Earth and me, alike
For every action
There is an equal but opposite reaction
I push the Earth with my feet
And the Earth pushes
me
And so I run

III.
I chase the setting sun on the horizon
In the hazy twilight
I beat on endlessly while the moon ascends—
And so I run

jake cohen

RUNNER

*to honor the life and work of liz zibman...rest
in the sweetest peace.*



CITY LIGHTS BOOKSTORE-SAN FRANCISCO
allison marcino

INCIDENT

Love came like
Christ
back
We walked in the dark park
shivered
in last year's odd outgoing Thanksgiving
tree breath bark black iris blue night
where all the sky lens open
for its two fallen stars
on the park bench
of commiseration

Like Magdalen slumped at the foot of the cross
Like the fibers symmetry between the brain
and spinal cord
Like cobblestones into sponges
Like hearing owl hoot timbre-first real time
in your life
Because you're of the age- it means something

Christ Love Came
back
Finally stopped at your lemonade stand
Finally somebody let in the Avon lady
who poured out of Victorian bottles the Nile
of an Amethyst mind split like a geode filled
with the milky quartz of Zen's Sabe, Wabi, Aware
Yugen, you get, you get and you begin to give
the miner returns the gold to the river, Furyu
For you, for you are the sado masochistic dream
I have never told anyone about, the reason for
oil lamps in the '80s, and I want to marry it
breast feed its Timouthies, cook for it
and buy it silver

ROSEDALE DUSK

Orange clings close
to the treeline defined
now only by lack;
dusk's boldest member
loath to depart
its source.

For it has garnered these trees' reds,
their purples and golds,
the live fire lately posed
mid-peacock's flare
on branches' ends,
and left their containers
featureless silhouettes.

These tints' ascent leveraged
out the sun's dive,
as in a transpiration of light they
climbed, trickling out of earthly bounds
to intersperse with airy blue.

And so they keep close,
ill-disposed to quit
familiar forms,
but at length their reds mellow
peach, and all their hues
brim blue.

Then they inch out, extend
in finger-grasps to bridge
the breadth of sky;
for once they have made their goodbyes,
they will settle all corners
above slumbering earth,
and in the site
of their wonder's birth,
they will wait, stored.

ON PINK WINE

Remember when your best friend told you
about her first kiss and how
his hand was on her neck
and his eyelashes cast crosshatched
shadows on his perfect cheekbones?

Remember how she said
she sparkled
and he was drowning
in a love potion?

But then you had yours
and it was nothing like that

because nostalgia
is a liar
and nothing is as
rosé-soaked
as people remember it

so yours was a little messy
your hair was tangled with hers
and you didn't know
where to put your hands
but she was giggling
as if she were
rosé-soaked
and you didn't really care.

DARK SEA WATER

The dark seawater washes over my freshly painted pedicure as my feet sink deeper into the sand. The chilly water feels refreshing on this oddly hot April night. The moon is full and glistening on the water leaving a straight shadow of light leading right towards my feet. It's as if the moon wanted to shine on me tonight.

My arms are crossed and I am staring down at my feet in frustration. I don't know why I have toe rings on, the plan says that I like toe rings, but they're extremely uncomfortable. This is just one of the many things that have been happening to me that don't go according to my pre-planned file.

I don't want to make waves, I don't want my parents to be embarrassed to have a messed up kid who isn't programmed in accordance to her pre-planned life file. This is the simplest thing in life; everyone is programmed to go along with their file. I am a self-aware person and I know that there is something wrong, a glitch perhaps. There is no one more pissed off about it than me. I've always been a loose cannon, mouthy, and even a wild kid, but I would have never expected to be this flawed.

The battle is constant in my brain, it is an ongoing fight between what I want and what I should want. It is hard admitting this to myself, but I don't want the pre-planned life that everyone has; they know when they're going to meet the love of their life, they know when they're going to have kids, they know when they'll get their dream job, and they even know the time and day of their death. Every huge moment of their life, in addition to the little ones, are planned out in a file that is given to every single person at the age of sixteen.

Everything was great when I received my file. Major life events went as planned; things in my life were safe and expected. However, everything changed three months ago on my 21st birthday.

Maybe if I hadn't gone to a club and drank so much, maybe if I didn't kiss that guy, my life would be like everyone else's. Something had to have happened that night to make my actions not coincide with my pre-planned life file. The pre-planning life committee never messes up (or so they say), I have never heard of someone's life not go according to plan. The embarrassment my family and friends will feel is enough to make me want to bury my head in the sand and never take it out. The New World Leaders will have me in some lockdown chamber, I'm sure, and have me poked and prodded and studied until the day I die. These thoughts leave me deeply upset, but also extremely angry. Why is this happening to me?

I didn't realize how red hot my face got from the mixture of sadness and anger running circles through my head.

My face cools down when the sea breeze blows against my face. The fury inside of me cools when I remember where I am, the place that always calms me down.

Breathe in for four counts, the salty air fills my lungs and hold it there for two counts, then I let out the air for four counts. I found this trick in an old journal of my great grandma; she had mental health disorders called Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Anxiety. I've never heard of mental health disorders until reading her journal, but it seems to have put my great grandma through hell.

The breathing technique was written down many times in the journal, I think she used it to calm herself. Whatever her reason for writing it down, I am glad she did because it calms the constant storm in my brain. I wish therapists were not eliminated, it seems as though my grandma improved a lot due to her therapist. From what I gathered in her journal, I think therapists were people you went to whenever you felt sad. The New World Leaders have outlawed them because every single person's life on Earth is pre-planned now. Life is planned out and expected, this new way of life eliminates war and conflict, it promotes international peace and respect for all humans in the world. Since everyone's life is controlled and set up in such way that only harmonious relationships are formed, there is no need for therapists. People are programmed to be happy and only happy.

That's what scares me the most, I feel like I am the only person on Earth who is not happy.

Things have not been going according to plan in my life, many things that are supposed to happen, aren't happening. Many things that aren't supposed to happen are happening. It's as if the pre-planned life is, forgive me New World Leaders, useless.

This burden is too much to bear when I'm surrounded by people who seem to float through life according to plan.

I don't understand how.

People preach about how knowing and being aware of every step that they take in life is a gift, but I see it as an unwanted ticking time bomb.

For three months, my life has been messed up. I've been holding a heavy secret that I can't tell anyone.

An even bigger secret is held within me, it's a little goldfish trying to fight for its life because it knows I don't know what to do with it. My hand runs over the tiny bump on my lower belly and rests there.

I shut my eyes and think of the dark sea water washing over my freshly pedicured toes and I breathe.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

She picks up the jump rope and suddenly she is back by the river with her brother
and the neighborhood kids and they're all laughing

but there's a man nearby behind a tree with his belt unbuckled and his forehead
shining and she didn't notice at the time but she knows now,

now that it's too late.

She watches him now
watches him pump his fist
by his crotch
as the children play behind her.

The jump rope in her hands is a noose and it's wrapped around each of their little
necks and they're gasping, gasping for air but she can't let go

and the man licks his lips and looks on.

He's holding the rope.

Alone and untouched,
she puts the jump rope back
into the box in the shed on the farm by the river
and locks the door before dropping the match
by the gasoline-soaked grass.



WTF...
sam pincus

THE LIGHT INSIDE

10:45 pm.
You cross the parking lot
that divides you from this moment.

My clenched fists
are chrysalises that will never soften.

The street lamps
bleach the evening until it's nothing
but an afterglow.

Your eyes could never adjust to brightness,
especially when I claimed it as mine.

The light inside has broken but I still work.

I wonder what it is you've always
wanted to tell me but couldn't.

That your parents were never in love.

That you try and recreate every good
moment in your life
until there are none left to restart.

I will never know.

Because even the walk to my car
is fleeting, and who knows when you
will see my face again.

To you, love was nothing more than
a way to pass the time until your life
really began.

Does this hit you harder than the pavement?

Now, as we stand face to face, all you can
think to do is kick the pebbles at your feet.

Eye contact strips you of the humanity
you talked yourself into on the drive
from your house.

I don't want you.
That is something I know.
That is something I could say with certainty.

I asked you to meet me here, I thought it
would be metaphorical,
being surrounded by stop signs and
parking spaces.

Bodies no longer in motion.

I don't think about the future anymore.
The light inside was a turn signal that
wouldn't stop pointing in the wrong direction.

It is dark enough without you here,
next to me,
Telling me that this is something we can fix,
when I know it's not the truth.

The light inside flickers.
The light inside is a match held in sweaty palms.

But I still work.



UNTITLED
corinne petersen

MAPMADE

The way you turn a key in a lock
looks like the calculated manipulation of a compass
as your pointer finger circles the edge of the doorknob
and your thumb keeps the key in the center, in place.

Navigation tools weigh down your pockets like ballast
and no matter how stormy the sea or dead the wind
you always seem to find a way to make it home.
Clumps of metal, rusted to ruin or polished to glory
never lose out to the other things you could be keeping in
the spaces they take up.

(Brittle shells and cracked wood, tokens from your time away,
little irreducible but no less instrumental talismans
fill the gaps between the navigational tools and, deeper,
in the gaps between the gaps, sand
like gravity expanding in the hollows, sand like gravity
like ballast keeping you heavy and slow.)

And what room is left between the sand for anything else?
No room for real gravity, just the memory of it.

If the place you need to go is home, I'll let you leave.

On the wall I spread my fingers out
and with my eyes, trace the path of a thin gray line
looping over the branches, until I pull my fingers in tight
and imagine you pressing back from the other side of the wall –
here is the church, here is the steeple.

When I open the door, I'll see all the people
homecoming and can only hope
you'll have had enough of home at this point
to come back, too.

Your fingers, two long legs on a tool
mapping out a distance on a door like it may lead you somewhere
other than the hallway, like the next turn
might just map enough space out to show you where you're meant to be.



UNTITLED
corinne petersen

alena woods

UNDRESSING THE OCEAN

The sunrise uncrosses her legs and invites us into her pink morning.
If she could, she would lay like this all day, goose-bumped and glistening,
basking in the full attention of early birds like me.

We give each other enough space to undress the ocean:
its waves are billows of blue silk, finished with a crochet trim.
Soft enough to slip into, until she begins exfoliating me in salt and sand
like a masseuse fighting for gratuity, until my skin is too raw to touch.

The ocean likes to stand on her tiptoes and kiss the sky's blushed cheeks,
as they begin to recede into the peachy undertones of the early afternoon.
I realize that there isn't enough infinity to bask in; there will come a day
when the world is dropping its robes for someone else.

When the night begins smudging charcoal onto the edge of the clouds,
I am still standing here, an early riser bathing in artificial insomnia.
The sky curves in different ways this time of day, pierced with dermal stars
and last night's mascara.

I would try using the moon to pull the ocean closer, but there are some
distances that just can't be broken.

TOSKA

“No single word in English renders all the shades of *toska*,” author Nabakov would claim years and years from now. “At its deepest and most painful, it is a sensation of great spiritual anguish...At less morbid levels it is a dull ache of the soul, a longing with nothing to long for...In particular cases it may be the desire for somebody of something specific, nostalgia, love-sickness...”

It was strange how barely thirty years of life could seem like enough, but that was precisely what Sasha felt as his world crumbled around him. Uncertainty hung like an oppressive fog. Even the people Sasha and Father Konstantin worked with seemed wary of them. It pained Sasha to have to send people from the only home they’d ever known, though comfort was found in knowing they would be kept safe- alive- to continue a legacy.

“Sasha, I need you to come with me later today. We need to do some searching.” Father Konstantin’s arthritic hands made many typical activities difficult for him; it was not unusual to see someone shadowing the elderly man.

Sasha stood humbly before him, always feeling small before such a grand presence. “I need you to tie this around your eyes,” he murmured, holding up a piece of gray fabric.

Sasha blinked. “I...why?” he asked before he could stop himself. “We must protect the Batushka’s treasure for when the time is ready.”

Ah, yes, the august family was being imprisoned, and Father Konstantin had made it a mission of his to ensure their comfort despite their isolation.

Sasha at last noticed the worn but sturdy briefcase sitting unimpressively on the ground. Two shovels rested next to it. Under Father Konstantin’s arm was a large, leather-bound book.

“We’ve been entrusted with a great treasure and heavy burden, Alexander Mikhailovich. Your wish- to spend the rest of your life and energy saving our home- is that still just as potent?” Sasha nodded without hesitation. Father Konstantin pursed his lips. If his smile was inspiring, his frown was commanding. “Then we shall do this and maintain our silence- until the time is right.”

Sasha faltered for but a moment before asking, “Father, what about you?”

A mischievous look crossed the priest’s face, transforming him to the strong youth he must have been long ago. “Sasha, my eyes are failing me. I could hardly read a sign on the road. What do I know about where we’re going?”

With that, their journey began. Under the guise of two merchants, they wheeled their ‘goods’ down a lonely highway, with the sun and a few clouds as their only audience.

“I hear you’re expecting a new addition to the family, Sasha,” the old man murmured as they veered left. Why were they turning off the road?

“Yes, soon. Tanya is...hopeful. But worried.”

“A new life is always something to be celebrated. Just last week, I became an uncle. Dmitri he is named. He is beautiful. Do you have any idea what you’ll name yours?”

“Tanya is set on naming her Nadezhda,” Sasha replied, managing a

smile.

“Her? So, she knows for sure?” Sasha could hear the friendly amusement in his voice.

“I’ve been told at spoon-point a mother’s intuition is never wrong.”

They both chuckled, still making their steady way across the field.

“Well, it is a good name- a fitting name. I’m sure she will be hope for us all,” Father Konstantin said after a pause.

Sasha found himself becoming more and more perplexed as they meandered about; indeed, it seemed entirely at random when Father Konstantin called them to a halt.

“Perfect,” he murmured, removing the blindfold from Sasha’s eyes. He peered curiously around at the green landscape. It was just a short while after the spring thaw, a persisting dry spell dispelling most of the mud and allowing emerald to spring forth from the earth in waves. Birch trees waved their thin branches lazily in the slight breeze.

“Come, come, Alexander.” They each took a shovel and began to dig a spot in the earth. Sasha felt his hands slip as sweat coated them and saw Father Konstantin’s face twisted in a grimace as his throbbing hands worked themselves without mercy.

When they had dug down to their own heights, Father Konstantin at last deemed it deep enough. Clambering out, he fetched the old briefcase and, reverently, lowered it back in. The dirt they had so recently displaced was thrown back over and disguised as best as was possible.

“If you could just do one last thing for me?” Father Konstantin asked quietly, almost tentatively, holding up a trowel and a bag of seeds. Sasha took both items and planted the seeds in the spot indicated, about two feet from where they had just buried the briefcase.

“Perfect,” he heard Father Konstantin breathe heavily, age at last showing itself in his voice as he sat himself down on the prickly grass, sketching out all he saw before him. Sasha peered over his shoulder, watching as he sketched the tall, spindly birches to the steep incline. To Sasha’s slight confusion, he drew a tree in the foreground that was nowhere to be seen, not fully grown, but still at a stage where it had established its place in the world.

“Yes, I think that about does it,” the gravelly voice murmured as its owner heaved himself up, Sasha hastily offering his assistance. “Thank you, son. I’m afraid I’ve asked a lot of you for little in return. I’ve essentially sealed your fate, and may have separated your family.”

“Father, we should head back to the main road,” Sasha cut in, not ready to linger on whatever long-term ramifications may be in store. He’d wanted what many others had wanted: a spouse he could be close to; a house that was theirs and theirs alone that would keep them warm; children... He loved Tanya dearly and cursed every second that the chaos of the revolution hurt her, saddened her, carved her lovely face with deep lines of worry. But Father Konstantin was right; he and Tanya were going to be given Hope. And while his heart continued to beat, while the blood of his forefathers still pumped through his veins, he had to try to save their home.

A wizened hand on his shoulder startled Sasha from his worries, and his eyes snapped up to meet those of Father Konstantin. It seemed cruel that such sadness could be allowed to plague such eyes, the eyes of a man of kindness

and selflessness.

"I am sorry." Father Konstantin's voice was soft. "I...am sorry, Sasha. I do not know what you want to do, and I may have made the decision for you. You have helped with so much and stand to lose just as much. But the Whites need a rallying point. After the family is freed, the case may be unearthed. Those funds can be used properly to secure our home. But not yet."

"I understand." Sasha hated the way his voice broke.

"I know you understand. But Sasha, what is it that you want? To save us all from the Reds or embrace the fragile comfortable life you've made?" There used to be no deep circles beneath Sasha's brown eyes. Now the rings of exhaustion and stress grew darker as his hair grew prematurely greyer. "I don't know."

"As soon as it is possible, bring your family here. Transportation will be arranged, and they will be brought to an émigré house with a few others. You may do what you wish, but I...I feel it is best if you stayed behind. Your... involvement with us will no doubt make you a target." Sasha opened his mouth. Closed it. Licked his lips. Nodded. "I am so sorry to you and Tanya, and your child. So, so sorry-"

"There's no reason for apologies from you, Father, please," Sasha cut in imploringly. Father Konstantin searched his eyes. A low hum escaped him, and he nodded.

As they took slow steps back to the original building, Father Konstantin handed Sasha the sketchbook in which his drawing of the field still remained. "My nephew, Dmitri- remember, I mentioned him earlier? He and his parents are on their way to Paris as we speak. I...didn't want to be there to see them off- just in case. I've told them to keep their eye out for your wife and child as well. And to expect to be given this much later." Mouth too dry to speak, he settled with nodding. "Think of it as a...memento of our trip. So that someone can look and see exactly where we were." He waited until Sasha made eye contact. "I bless your daughter and-"

"You can do that when she's born!" Sasha hurriedly assured.

Father Konstantin shook his head. "I...may have somewhere else to be by then. But as best as I can, I will give her all the blessings she will ever need now."

That night was an emotional one. Sasha and his wife spilled tears of anger: misdirected anger at each other, consuming anger at themselves, inextinguishable anger at those tearing their lives apart with their words and their guns. And when all the tears for that evening were dry they held each other as a drowning man clings to a lone bit of driftwood, and they had assured each other with whispered words that it's only temporary. Though, what it was, neither specified. Promises were made- I'll always be here- and Tanya was given the sketchbook, an early present for their unborn daughter- their Nadezhda, their Hope- who would in turn give it to Dmitri.

The evenings that followed were calmer, but the same promises and declarations were interwoven with every goodnight and sleep well and I love you. Then, Tanya gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. Both basked in the overwhelming love and pride that that flooded their souls. Sasha had sought out Father Konstantin, ready to have all the necessary rites performed for his baby, but he was gone. His home and church were deserted, the locks on both places broken. The night before Tanya and Nadezhda were to depart, Sasha sat beside

his child, telling her everything he'd ever want or have to tell her at some point in her life. He had no set script. He told her where she was born and whatever bits of history he could remember. He told her who her mother was, who he was, how someday she would be helping others, in as much safety as he could arrange for her. On and on he went until he felt fairly certain he became incoherent.

As his wife and daughter were taken away to safety and opportunity, Tanya stayed facing him, both she and little Nadezhda watching him become smaller and smaller, never looking away. He kept up an encouraging smile, proud of himself that he only broke down when they were too far to see him collapse to the ground and sob like he hadn't since he was very young. The loneliness was the hardest part of the days to come, returning to his empty house. But he had stayed behind for a reason, and would carry that out until his heart stopped.

"Alexander Mikhailovich Popov, you are under arrest. You have been found guilty of crimes against the revolution. We are to take you to an isolated location where you will undergo interrogation and await your sentence." Guns- stolen, he was sure, from the nearby armory- leaned solemnly against the shoulder of every soldier there, glinting with mocking cheer in the early morning light. He did not fight back as two strong hands gripped each of his arms in a firm hold- too firm, really. But the pain never made it to his eyes. Anguish was to be held dearly.

Even as the blazing sun sat atop the emerald horizon, resting briefly before its long trek across the sky, Sasha could smell a storm coming in the air, and he knew it would probably be raining by the time his interrogation began.

MOON MUSIC

In history, she learned that Romans would go to war with the sea and have love affairs with the moon.

Well.

One Roman would, anyway.

And she considered it
and decided that the sea
would put up
a good fight
and maybe hit her
hard enough
to fix her.
But still
she thought
she would rather
sneak off with
the moon

because maybe the tides would
give her some trouble
after all.

And maybe the moon
would invite her to join
the lunar cycle,
and she wondered
what kind of music
the moon listens to
and if she'd
be able to hear it
once they fell in love.



artwork by emily maragni

PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH THE MOON



1. even when its beams are kimono silk on the moth-eaten cloth that is your skin
2. if you will not remember the way it sings of bruised silence and the implications of vibrations
3. after the day has settled upon the seams of its clouds
4. because there are riptides you haven't ridden yet
5. because there are waves brimming in the soles of your feet
6. when the sky is too heavy to hold anything but tomorrow
7. like it's the dangerous curve of your jawline when you speak
8. as if you could control its heavy breathing
9. as if you could pick your teeth with its axis
10. unless it is what you want to become

AN APOLOGY TO PBS AND ITS TALENTED CREATIVE STAFF

I wish we kids had remembered
in sixth grade or so –
the time our chest hair first came in, or so,
the time we first tried in vain to elbow into the social
circle
where they discussed dance dates
and deodorant in the dark, or so -
that someone at PBS sat down and thought
to write “I Love You” and “Just Imagine”
and all those songs, all those things
(like love, like imagine,
like help, like think, like give)
that we know from the start
are vital parts of us

...but a velvet purple dinosaur and
a yellow lion saying them, or –
dear God
- singing them?
For the sake of sating our siblings
that were four years old,
drooled everywhere,
and just didn't have the motor skills
to peel anything back
or the critical thinking capacity
to ask what the catch was?
No, no, we were above that cutesyness,
that unapologetic kindness,
that soft open pair of arms -

we ran away to Newgrounds.
We lied that we were 16
(the same way
we had lied about having a girlfriend).
Our characters, our colorful first teachers
flipped the bird at sex workers,
kicked the doctor,
had their blood-spurting, pixed-in guts

ripped to pulp by big muscle-men's bullets.
We laughed.

We saw Elmo try to beat the
shit out of Big Bird for weed
and at the end
when he won
we forgot to write in our diary.

We saw Arthur's dad cheat with Muffy's mom
and at the end
when they fucked
we forgot to say goodnight to our dad.

We memorized that muffled
mp3 about Barney being on fire
and at the end
when he died
we forgot to stick up for the kid with pimples
(however small,
however hidden,
we laughed).

We made our siblings watch.
We made them wish our love,
our imagine,
our help, our think, our give
were still there,
all these baby songs, all these baby things
that we swore we would never
again allow to sneak into us
and then

only then
we got into the circle.



STAY IN
connor meany



STAY IN
connor meany

HANDS (FOR HER)

We lay on her bed, hands
intertwined because secrets
travel faster through
fingertips than words.
With every touch, every
squeeze around my joints,
she is trying to tell me something
that phonetics cannot convey,

The palpitations around her
heart are in my palm.

I wonder why he ignored those squeezes.

Her hands are made of
knucklebones plucked from amongst the
frozen pebbles found shore side,
warmed when cupped and
strung on the chords of the soft forest
melodies that drift from her lips when
we spend quieter moments,
the closest we ever get to
voiced ambiguity.

And though she has
nails that claw at flesh
caught in the invisible tendrils of vice,
that tangle with an enemy as
close to her as skin,
God!
I am convinced that the
prints of Atlas whorl
on those digits.

He released those hands violently,
but I guess I cannot completely
complain for one
cannot cradle my soul when
their palms are full.

anasofia trelles

ANDES

I will not apologize
for the thickness of my hair,
the fullness of my mestizo lips
the boldness of my Guayas words.
I will not hide from the sun.
My brown skin was never meant to match
your "flesh" colored band aids.
I was born with the Andes sketched along my spine.
I am the product of Inca sweat,
drops of blood from the rivers
of conquistador massacres.
I am not the repetition of history.
I am the reincarnation of fury.
Your wall does not scare me.
My ancestors taught me how to trek mountains.

alyssa dugasz

I FEEL A WITHERING IN ME

I feel a withering in me
When the snow rests snug on my mind,
A kind of silent suffocation.
The drifts compile on synapses,
Meandering branches of trees,
And the empty spaces in between them.

I feel a withering in me
When the wintered impressions of soles gather,
Blending together in a blur of gray smudges,
Making me forget where I came from.
The wind brushes my cheek just to see it burn-
Deep rosy wine against the clouds.

I feel a withering in me
When the wet cobwebs huddle against my thoughts.
They cluster here until spring,
Until the flushed sky rises
And the long process of thawing begins.

WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT MYSELF THAT NIGHT

- 1) I cannot drown in a shimmering blue mixed drink that reminds me of what tourists always imagine Caribbean water to look like, only to learn that- surprise!- the ocean is a fucking ocean everywhere.
- 2) The shimmering, gleaming water that will actually drown me is the yellowed, pooled liquid that cascaded in your face when pink shells kissed. I cough it up on my bedsheets instead of on the work I should be doing.
- 3) I guess I've always had a glimmer of hope, fool's gold gleaming at the bottom of a bottle bought at a tourist trap, tucked in my cleavage. I must have forgotten to bury it with my sopped clothes, from the first time I almost drowned in you.
- 4) I don't want him to drown with me, his sad eyes becoming flecked with pyrite as the water chokes his brain and pulls him under. Just pull me into the watery grave of clasped hands and eager mouths; the golden eyes of a martyr suit me better.
- 5) But, his hands will always reach for mine, thrusting through icy current and sun kissed riptides; my eyes are his beacon.
- 6) In time, I will learn how to swim for myself.

FRONT PAGE

Front page: a woman
is among the attackers
dressed like a war zone.

FUZZY PEACH TEA

Immerse yourself in me,
Perfect Peach. Your leaves
steep as I surround you.

Dry,
the teabag crumbles
between my fingers
like dirt.

We have a choice—
milk, cream
or simply black.

Rain shattering against the ground
Cold seething in place
My teabag curls in warmth
all morning long.

Between index and thumb,
the teabag bounces
in delicate sweetness
atop the shifting water.

Baby pink, pink, orange.
Slowly at first,
then all at once.

Perfectly Peach,
my lips agree.
Perfect for bread
and butter.

maria printon

THE LAST
TWELVE HOURS
OF MY LIFE

11:57 p.m.
my sister didn't contact me.

9:42 p.m.
my brother fell asleep crying
against my shoulder.

8:16 p.m.
I thought about
what her dream might have been
if she were actually
sleeping.

7:24 p.m.
I kissed her wrists.

5:22 p.m.
we weren't eating dinner. I think
my dad was too sick to eat
but he wasn't the one in the hospital.

4:38 p.m.
my brother called me.
the call lasted less than
a minute
but we needed it to last forever.

3:45 p.m.
it was silent.

2:13 p.m.
my mom texted me with what
she thought was news.
there was none.

12:56 p.m.
my sister used to wish she lived
in a castle and I'm not sure
when she started to wish
she didn't live at all.

11:21 a.m.
she texted me. I wonder
how much blood got on the phone.

corinne petersen

EPIPHANY

Everyone is searching, searching—
searching for a way that's clear;
for very soon the morning rises,
but still night's presence lingers near.

And moon and sun are dizzy dancing—
dancing through time's swift typhoon;
their patterns ever are repeated,
although the notes are out of tune.

Then you and I are waltzing quickly—
waltzing 'cross the gleaming floor;
laughter seems to swell around us,
the music play forevermore.

But soon the dancers, madly twirling—
twirling through their footwork deep,
grow weary from their ceaseless dreaming,
must wake from this euphoric sleep.

The golden chandeliers are glowing—
glowing on that ballroom free,
where words and warmth that once did flow
now stumble, sightless—cannot breathe.

Then to the doors we're blindly rushing—
rushing through the cold night air,
and stars replace the chandeliers—
for now we see: there's nothing there.



VACANCY

VACANCY
ryan soldati

RATS

Domestic rats have heads
That don't fit under doors
So they make nests from newspaper
And try and forget that they're trapped

Free for an hour a day, rats
Desire routine like the worried man who sits
Hunched over model trains squinting
His small eyes to make out tiny screws

He wants to be asked how he feels
When he emerges from his own cage
Retreating defeated and leaving a lonely daughter
Undisturbed and unattended

Domestic rats have poor vision;
They cannot see with their own red eyes
Let alone the eyes of the daughter whose paws
Occasionally reach purposefully beneath the door

The worried man hides beneath his layers of
Repurchased childhood toys
Like a bed crafted artfully
By rats from even strips of news.

One day the screws have become too small
No matter how hard he squints
And his daughter has replaced him
With a rat twice his size

dana daly

CITYSCAPE

Silver trees glinting in the sun, a ghostly forest,
Not a branch in sight, but with mighty trunks.
Down below, beetles scuttling atop black earth,
Shells of red, white, black, blue, sometimes painted and striped,
Their innards slipping out, returning later, transient residents at best.

Ants marching, always marching, at the mercy of tiny suns-
Emerald is the color of controlled mayhem,
While ruby eyes stop the grey forest dwellers.
As sunlight wanes the forest comes alight.
Tethered stars guide nocturnal wanderers home.

Burrow deep in those trees of grey,
Hollow out spaces to live and hide.
Those fragile shields blink as eyes, a dance both open and secure.
The ants wander out to lead and be led by other ants
For the right to keep living in their grey tree homes.



WHICH WAY?
meagan mcdowell

SMILE (*FOR MY MOTHER*)

T-Cells,
natural killers,
extranodal.
Mutating, failing

Killing.

Stages I, II, III, IV
pass like numbers drop
on New Year's Eve.

The reality is harsh
but they tell you to smile.

Three days of drug induced sleep
Three days of dreaming.
Falling down a spiral staircase,
two steps away from the grave.
Just one more time,
I want to see you smile.

The ICU waiting room is cozy.
Sleepy-time, green, and jasmine teas.
HD TVs.
There is CNN talking about Russia.
I talk to the infectious disease Doctor,
the ENT, the receptionist.
Everything pounding, throbbing into one.

For the first time in my life,
nothing matters.
Not school, life, or death.
Not those goddamn insurance companies.
I lower my head, I pray, I give it up to God,
I smile.

And then,
you wake,
yellow-eyed, voice a whisper,

“I’m going to live.
I feel it for the first time.”
I smile.

Christmas is what keeps you going.
Nothing but joy and cheer
inside a tiny hospital room.

Steroids,
Methotrexate,
Ifosfamide,
L-asparaginase,
Etoposide.

They tell you to smile.
You try with gashes
lining your mouth,
descending down your throat,
reeking and burning.

Day after day, week after week,
Coming home, going back.
New York at 3 am,
carrying your fragile body over snow.

Month after month
of hand sanitizers,
busy city streets,
giving it up to God.

Pretty words could never hold
the immensity of it all.
But we are here today.
We can smile.

BROKEN

“If your heart is broken, leave it open.
Let it breathe.”

Mom holds my face in her hands,
molding these words into the
creases above my eyelids
with the tips of her fingers.

Today was just like I thought it would be,
tomorrow will be the same.

We sit in the hollow silence
that we carved with our expectations
of how this was all supposed to happen.

I would shatter,
and Mom would be there to gift wrap the pieces.
Memories of scraped knees and Neosporin,
days spent in lukewarm bath water.

My body is the faucet now.
There is no escaping the flood.
We stick our hands under,
reaching a numbness that
neither of us could have ever anticipated.

Was loss supposed to feel this hollow?

I can't remember.
I've been too scared to try.

It's been years since the world
had to pick me from underneath
its fingernails.

But now I am here to stay,
right when there's nothing left
to offer but broken tables and
open windows.



jake cohen

EASING IN

If you fall
in love, then you
might crash.
So you eased me in,

as if I crawled into
a made bed,
peeling back the white, silk sheets and
sliding in.

Gently enveloped by a
cocoon of warmth,
I flex my extremities
and slip into
a pleasant reverie.

LESSONS FROM ICARUS

- I. What if Icarus wasn't a lesson? Wasn't the boy who flew too close to the sun and suffered the ultimate fate because of his mistake? What if it wasn't a mistake?
- II. And if the myth could change don't you feel like the moment Icarus landed his eyes would whip to Apollo, refuse to turn away as they shed ashes and salt, as if he would rather waste the rest of his days blinded from gazing too long than miss a second of that light?
- III. Don't you feel like you'd find him at every sunrise, needle in his mouth, hands stitched together, praying he had gone a little higher? That you'd find him at the peak of the mountain, arms splayed like eagles, imagining he was there again, thinking maybe, just maybe, if he steps off he'll fly once more? That you'd find him willing to take the chance if he doesn't?
- IV. Don't you feel like even if he conquered Poseidon's deeps, lived to tell the tale, with smoking flesh he would still melt black lips every sunset so he could dream about what it would feel like to kiss that star? That he would forever regret the moment he didn't?
- V. Or do you think, now that he knows that the pads of his hands will grace the sun, but his body will succumb to the waves – that his lips will feel the warmth, but his ribcage will be crushed by salt – do you think he regrets it?
- VI. Do you think, now that he knows, he yearns to go back, to tie rocks from his ankles so he'd stay beneath the lining of the atmosphere? That he yearns to go back, and with his sharpened heart he would cut the tips off his fingers before he'd let himself be tempted by Apollo's sway again?
- VII. And yet if the myth could change, don't you feel like Icarus would rather rip the skin off his back and grow feathers from his spine than be grounded by a sun he never reached?
- VIII. I still don't know which regret is worse.

katie shum

ROUGE NOIR

I filled the void with classic red lipstick
encased in black and gold, encased
in intricate simplicity

I misted away complexity,
electricity, the feeling of knowing
all too well
with Chanel No. 5

But the vapors
and the rings of obscurity
fogged the pane so sweetly—
I couldn't feel.

I let the hangnail pull and pull
until the fresh blood turned
to the perfect shade
of Rouge Noir.

And in the caverns where the bats can see,
in the caverns of his mouth,
just his dash
was enough to blind me.

kendel stiles-schatz

DEATH'S PARADE

Hushed leaves scatter away as black shoes scuttle by,
And the mourning voices whisper, and the woe singings cry,
And the black shoes continue dragging, as eyes search the sky,
And the moaning bodies whimper, and the ground dips and sighs.

At the center of Nature's ball, a wooden box creaks and groans,
And the herd clusters closer, and the woe singings moan.
At the center of Death's parade, a wooden box gleams with light,
And the body instead, so pale and shy, smiles for one last night.

Hushed flowers stand their ground as black shoes approach the throne.
Envy ripples, jealousy triples, a box no longer alone.
One by one the herd grasps hands, swaying with the trees,
And from day to night, from dawn to light, they chant,

"You're free, you're free"



PEACE
ryan soldati

Send me your
tired, your poor,
your huddled
masses yearning
to breathe free.
Send these to me,
I lift my lamp
beside the golden
door.



LAND OF THE FREE
kendel stiles-schatz

GIRL FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY

Many dark mornings I awoke to
a large beige room, blinds drawn -
mirrors, crystals, palms, the space above
full of only my breath, cold and still.

I sighed deep and long, torn flesh and tea
would come to a boil, and I'd be off
to wait for you, your morning glory locks
approaching as the dawn rays glittered
behind you.

I drifted many days in the savage cold
bent like a reed enduring winds and tides -
the sky clear above, clearer than ever,
if only one could see the maelstroms
swirling above.

(Better this than dark hot hazy night hurricanes
wandering starving wolf in the rain and gale
gazing blankly at silhouettes in the distance
as if it enjoyed the void growing in its gut).

From a little magic tome in my pocket
I'd have bards from the past sing and strum
to make you hum and smile. Fool that I am.
Letting myself dream as the cold wind
rushed outside.

How our minds danced together. Oh,
how I lost myself in the arboreal glaciers
of your eyes, and how I so dearly wished
to be the northern lights above them,
blessing you, your guardian angel.

In my silver Jetta, I gleamed the salted asphalt,
savage engines spewing smoke and sad souls
surrounding me, those brief moments
in bleak beautiful Trenton stirring grey green
trees with fingers long calloused looming -
my hands look more like them every day.

Little girl, I am a survivor. I have seen and felt
things I never want you to.

I work hard, I rip my flesh and bruise my bones
because these days I don't know how else to live

then I met you.

Like a huddled shipwreck survivor,
forlorn gazing from the shore,
spotting at long last a silhouette -
drifting by the bittersweet orange horizon,
somber ivy waves hissing in rhythms
of that halo moon, rising anointed -
wondering and waving,
will you see me?

When I heard there was another,
that I was too late, too far gone -
I took the shot in stride, stoic
like an elephant and an arrow.

But I felt the beast rise inside me,
the dark deep Blood pumped in my neck, baying at the moon -

I was reminded of those wild
jungle nights pacing manic in a cage,
high as heaven and low as hell only me
and my shadow for company.

I relinquish my love, ties torn with tired teeth -
Farewell. Farewell. Farewell. Farewell. Farewell. Farewell.

Farewell. In another life perhaps our paths would have crossed more cleanly. Perhaps.

I must go to the city on the island, to do
thing I told you I was going to do.
That is something that will not be relinquished.

Yet,

you are a muse to me, you have stirred my soul
to put words on a screen late in my bed,
and in the cold and lonely rooms. This is a rose
for you, girl from the north country.
You are spring, a flowing brook free from winter
once again.

Maybe we will meet again one day. I hope so.
Goodbye, beloved sister,
Be Good.

NAMELESS

“Have you been with a girl?”

Yes. Her hair was cotton candy and her smile was starlight. When she rolled her eyes with that exasperated smirk I thought of rollerblades and 80s movies. She hated candles and I hated open-fire stoves. We compromised with a fireplace. When she left me she helped me find a new apartment first. Her hands were cold when I finally found a room I didn't feel so lonely in.

“Have you been with a girl?”

Kind of. She was a bartender and I was the cliché sobbing mess after a hard day at work. She made my drink a double and refused my money, winking and taking my number instead. She kissed me in the dark corner behind the bar and held me as I started to cry. Her lips were a dark velvet sky and her arms were wool blankets.

“Have you been with a girl?”

Once. Sunshine had nothing on her laughter. Our legs tangled under the covers, her smile soft against my neck. She made chicken soup when I was sick and messed up the recipe so I choked on the first bite. She cried herself to sleep in my arms after her first job interview. I looked at her next to me, her lips parted and her eyelashes still dotted with tears, and wondered what it would be like to kiss her. I've wanted to. I can. Probably. I've waited so long, so patiently, for the right moment. But I learned that it's possible to love someone so much you can't kiss them.

“Have you been with a girl?”

“... Yes... kind of... once.”

“That's hot”



PHOTOGRAHER
ryan soldati

AFTER DUSK

A slant of shadow wraps the floor,
Wetting my ankles with the dim
And weighing my body down.
It strips away the light in elongated spikes,
Spearing the photos that float on the walls
Like dying fish.
The inverted lightning flames out
Into my farthest corners.
The halos that I have wrapped around my life
Have been smothered.
I am decaying into the darkness,
Losing myself within the lapping waters.
When my fingertips can no longer slide across
The surface of the light,
I will close my eyes
And weave myself into the mist.

THE LOSS OF FIRE

We wrapped ourselves around the fires until our hands melted,
Until we impressed the little suns into us,
Smothering them.
The leftover stains of light still sludge through our veins,
Clotting up the insides of our hearts
And pulsating their halos in time
With our drowning breaths.
In the moments when we open wide and
Expose our pink throats in their guttural silence,
You can see where the rays
Have painted themselves thickly under our skin.
Now we have taken all of the fire,
Driven it to extinction as we seeped it into ourselves
And watched it flicker from within our palms.
The greedy population has said that the loss of fire is harmless,
That now we should move on to taking the stars.
They've begun building junkyard spaceships,
Ready to sacrifice themselves
For the rush of just a little more warmth.
There isn't time anymore to feel the awe of the night sky,
To miss the snapping of the fire,
Or to even lay on blankets of backyard grass
And wonder if our children will ever get
To see the stars.

THE LAST LOOK

A NOTE FROM THE ISSUE EDITOR

Dearest Reader,

Hello, and thank you for picking up this edition of *The Lion's Eye*! TCNJ is bursting with talented students, and this literary magazine is one of the ways we get to showcase the amazing writing, art, and photography from the creative minds we have right here on campus. The magazine is entirely student-made: it would not be possible without students willing to submit their creative pieces or club members willing to dedicate their time and skills to all the behind-the-scenes work that goes into putting the magazine together. *The Lion's Eye* is truly a testament to TCNJ's talent.

By studying abroad in England this semester, I've realized the importance of appreciating and supporting what you have at home. While studying at the University of Nottingham has been a wonderful experience, I miss TCNJ much more than I originally anticipated: not just the small classes, the kind people, the engaging clubs, and the beautiful sunsets (actually just the sun in general, really), but even the constant construction and the terrible sidewalk drainage system. I didn't think I'd feel homesick for a college, but (as cliché as it sounds) during your years here TCNJ does become your home, and your friends become like family.

When I realized my schedule abroad meant I wouldn't have stable wifi access during the time period when we needed to put the magazine together, the rest of the *Lion's Eye* executive board did what any good family would do: they worked extra hard to make sure the magazine still got out to the rest of campus this semester. I'd like to especially thank Alena Woods, our executive editor, for being so kind, dedicated, and understanding, proving yet again that TCNJ students really are the best. As old students graduate and new students begin their journeys here, the *Lion's Eye* family is constantly changing, but I've learned that even being across an ocean doesn't change the love you have for your home. Thank you, dear reader, for appreciating the importance of supporting the talent we have at TCNJ as well.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Noll". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Kelly Noll
Issue Editor



GALAXY

christina ritota

ABOUT US ::

The *Lion's Eye* is published biannually 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 our Facebook page, TCNJ Lion's Eye Literary Magazine.

The *Lion's Eye* is co-sponsored by the Alpha Epsilon Alpha chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the National English Honor Society, at The College of New Jersey.

SUBMISSIONS ::

Although the deadline for our next issue has not yet been decided, submissions are currently being accepted. Please send all submissions via e-mail to tcnjlionseye@gmail.com.

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