



2018 THE RC REVIEW





## Editor's Note

Congratulations. What you hold in your hands is a one-way ticket into the depths of the Residential College's subconscious, where stories are sucked from succulents, poetry merges with shampoo commercials, and art reaches back in time. We hope you enjoy the journey. There will be no going back.

We live in strange times and they're only getting stranger.

If you find the exit, let me know.

Kathleen Janeschek  
Editor-in-Chief



# Table of Contents: Prose/Poetry

Splash Cerulean - Claire Denson	6
Relationship Advice - Claire Denson	7
pomegranates - Haley Winkle	7
I wanna be as cool as - Elena Ramirez-Gorski	8
so why did i spend three hours coming up with metaphors for love? - Nadia Mota	8
Right of Passage - Natalie Steers	9
Duffle - Alexander Wagner	12
Gift of Time - Wisteria Deng	14
Ode to the Creek - Kathleen Janeschek	15
dancing with infidelity - Jessica Jung	18
pantoum: in the courtyard of the frick - Haley Winkle	22
ode to my mother's love of Prince - Nadia Mota	23
Rickard Spanger - Raven Eaddy	25
Primogeniture - Elizabeth Stanley	26
On a November road trip through an endless cornfield - Sofia Spencer	33
Excerpt from a Longer (Failed) Love Story - Heather Colley	35
States of Dakota - Ellie Katz	36
bare - Kennedi Killips	37
Bedroom Floor Confessional - Kennedi Killips	37
Excerpt from Waking Windows - Kathleen Janeschek	38
Letters to Juliet (Not From Romeo Or Anyone Else That Is Lovesick) - Heather Colley	44
Quelle heure est-il? - Anne Else	46
Chasing a Meringue Sky - Rachel Hurwitz	47
Excerpt from The Edge of the Earth - Olivia Sedlacek	48
The Wife of The Night Shift Worker - Claire Denson	54
A Winter Ice-cream - Wisteria Deng	55
the apology takes the last bus home - Nadia Mota	55
Learning How to Not Want to Kill Yourself - Kathleen Janeschek	56

The Forest Calls Your Name - Kathleen Janeschek	57
Photograph - Rachel Hurwitz	58
Déjà Vu - Davey McLeod	60
*Black Girl Curls - Raven Eaddy	62
The Tiny Country on the Baltic Sea - Anastasia Bergeron	64
The Secret Life of a Succulent - Olivia Sedlacek	70
Malleable Beings - Rachel Hurwitz	76
Yellow Light - Hannah Brauer	77

# Table of Contents: Artwork

Collage - RC Review Staff	2
Wave - Emily Herard	6
Are There More Of Us? - Hannah Brauer	11
Drunken Journal Excerpt - Heather Colley	16
Spaceman - Hannah Brauer	21
Collage - RC Review Staff	24
Primogeniture - Elizabeth Stanley	27
Collage - RC Review Staff	34
Police Officers, Tiger Stadium, Detroit, 1970 - Mike Parsons	39
g - Emily Herard	43
Connor - Elena Ramirez-Gorski	45
untitled - Elena Ramirez-Gorski	46
Grow - Hannah Brauer	47
Collage - RC Review Staff	50
Detroit - Emily Herard	54
Lou Carducci, Tiger Stadium usher, Detroit, 1970 - Mike Parsons	59
Collage - RC Review Staff	62
Reverb - Haley Winkle	68
untitled - Elena Ramirez-Gorski	72

# Splash Cerulean

Claire Denson

Splash Cerulean like one of those Neutrogena commercials from 2012 that smell like pomegranates by the shore. But how many takes did / it take did the water go in her mouth when she smiled when she splashed did she choke there's no way she got all that soap off. Give me a real splash. Give me childhood, the lifeguard yelling and my brother giggling and my mother ignoring us for her magazine. Give me Sapphire Waves and falling under and maybe, okay just maybe I took a shit when I thought I was dying but I was five or twelve give me a water balloon smash to the face and crystal tears and some of that blood-red fun.

Wave / Emily Herard



# Relationship Advice

Claire Denson

Death arrives in the shape of chicken nuggets. I still feel the taste in my mouth: decay, soil, rancid exhale dunked in expired ketchup. I eat them all, washed down with somebody else's strawberry oreo milkshake.

But now I'm hiding. Wartime. Up to the attic, out through the window, flattening on the roof, becoming tile. I know they will come, plier me out, but there's nowhere left to run. Eyes closed.

Open. *Smile*, the soldier says, then kicks in my teeth.

# pomegranates

Haley Winkle

let's find solace in scooping pomegranate seeds like teeth from gums. let's marvel over the deep red, iridescent shining at us when we break apart the rind. let's eat the seeds together with our bare fingers and taste their bursting sweet, find the cerise stains on our fingertips and paint how we feel on white paper towels. let's look at how the garnet paints the rest of the white as it begins to wilt in the open air between us. let's find little beads of its juice on our glasses later on, not nearly big enough to obstruct our sight, but enough to make us remember the tart, ruby as our ready tongues to match.

# i wanna be as cool as

Elena Ramirez-Gorski

I wanna be as cool as

That kid who doesn't care about the rain,

Doesn't run for shelter,

Just smirks and says:

*You take showers, don't you?*

Because it's the same for him.

Because he showers clothed.

Because he's just that cool--

Peel off that denim jacket,

It's just more denim.

Impervious.

*Who cares.*

*Big deal.*

And while you are scurrying hysterical

Like some ancient fool,

He is rooted with crossed arms.

Come back in a week and

Find him rusted,

Birds nesting in his hair,

Truly one with the universe.

God. So fucking cool.

# so why did i spend three hours coming up with metaphors for love?

Nadia Mota

when it looks more like a stray cat with a dead and bloodied mouse hanging from its teeth than a box of chocolates. love doesn't look like goddamn cherry cordials. sometimes i'll see what appears to be a slowly moving shooting star but it's only an airplane full of people angry about their lack of leg room. when i point it out to you, you tell me "oh, no, that's just an airplane" and i argue with you about it even though i know you're right. well fuck me for thinking the cashew cluster was an orange cream.

# Right of Passage

Natalie Steers

"Don't treat it like your grandma- pull the rope!"

The rough, impatient shout of my grandfather echoes across the just frozen ground, as my nine year old shaking hands scramble to pull the yellow twine rope. An entire herd of buffalo is racing by in front of me, and I can feel the thunder of their hooves shake the metal catwalk beneath my feet. The thundering travels up to resonate in my chest- or maybe that's just my heart pounding. A thin wooden corral fence-wall separates me from them, and as I yank the rope- "What are you doing?" my older brother shouts- that pulls the gate to latch them inside, some herd mentality has them coming back my way. The leader, a large alpha bull, crashes into the half closed gate yanking the rope out of my hand. It burns as it leaves.

"What are you doing?!" My grandfather grabs the rope and watches the herd pouring back through the gate. "When they come running up like that you got to close the gate! Like that." He jerks violently on the rope, trapping a single calf and it's mom in the first pen- perfect for our goal of helping ween the calves from their mothers.

He turns to me. "That's how you got to do it. Like that." He jerks the rope sharply again. "And never wrap it around your hand like that," he wraps the yellow twine around his whole hand, the way I had inadvertently been winding the rope in my franticness. "Because they crash back through the gate, like that, like they just did and they'll take your hand with it!"

I look down at my hands and see, the one that the rope had been wrapped around has a large rope burn line across the top of it. A few flecks of blood line its path.

"You okay?" my grandfather asks gruffly, checking the lock on the gate.

"Yes," I say meekly, subdued by the thought of losing my hand.

"Ok. Now don't treat it like your grandma and pull the rope hard and quick like that!" he demonstrates again and then stomps off along the catwalk to look the calves over.

For some families a right of passage involves giving you your first beer or getting to be quarterback at the holiday family football game or carving the turkey. For my family, it's getting to participate in Buffalo

Round Up twice a year, starting at the age of nine. Before that, you're too young; and I had been waiting and waiting for my turn. Basically, ever since my older brother got to do it four years before me.

Now I'm standing in the cold frosty morning air, as large snowflakes begin to flutter down and my hand is bleeding a little but I'm too proud to ask for a Band Aid. I'd already messed up this morning and the whole thing is less exciting and much more cold than I thought it'd be. But I'm determined not to complain and be a whiny little girl, so I crouch down behind the fence again, put my hand back on the rope, and wait for another round of buffalo.

\*\*\*

Buffalo Round Up is an all day event and objectively, the food is my favorite part. A Buffalo Round Up lunch includes sloppy joes and chips. After standing in the cold for hours, the heat coming from those burgers is the best thing I've ever felt and the salt on the Lay's potato chips is addictive, even though it dries out and cracks my frozen lips. Then grandma brings out this huge sheet of brownies and they have a fudge frosting on top that almost makes losing feeling in my toes worth it. As I sit down and start to regain warmth in the tip of my nose (mostly from the steam on the warm apple cider I'm drinking), I'm in danger of slipping into a tired food coma. But the day's not over: we have the second herd to round up.

\*\*\*

I crouch behind the fence pillar and watch through a small slit in the wall as the roar of a tractor heads off most of the herd before they get to the corral of gates and pens. But coming down the line of gates is a clump of five calves, all running so close together they are almost tripping each other up. I wait, muscles tense and posed, not wanting to jump up too soon and yank the rope like I'd been practicing all day, because buffalo will startle at the sight of a human. I wait and as the first calf's nose passes my eye where I'm squatting I jump up and YANK the rope closed behind all five calves.

\*\*\*

As I sit, my toes re-thawing and my hands tired from gripping a rope anxiously all day, my grandfather tells the story of how on my first day of helping with buffalo I perfectly wrangle five calves into a pen to my mother and everyone who already saw it. I try not to look too pleased with myself, but mostly I'm too tired and sleepy to feel

smug. I feel warm, inside and out. My grandfather, who always pays his grandkids when they help on the farm, puts some money in my hand, carefully noting it down on his folder of people and earnings.

"Now there's a little extra in there. You did good work today- five calves in one go. Incredible! So there's a little extra in there but I don't want you expecting it the next time. Don't go counting on it, now. And your aunt will mail you the Certificate, saying you're a certified buffalo handler now. You can put that on your resume." He says looking at me over his glasses, looking especially stern to me as he doesn't wear glasses normally.

I nod vigorously. "Yes. Thank you, grandpa."

"Ok now." He ruffles my hair and pats the side of my head as he walks by. He mumbles, "five calves..."

## Are There More Of Us? / Hannah Brauer



# Duffle

Alexander Wagner

On Friday nights at mom's house,  
pudgy fists shove wads  
of unfolded clothing between the riptide  
of royal blue on which his initials grow,  
gold and brilliant and probably a reference to something.

Three radiant letters  
claim these folds of fabric for him,  
a gift he knows too well, something  
to have which is his, despite the twisted storm  
of cat hair weaving its way into the Velcro,  
ingrained into the black bottom,

and he spends a lot of time with his bag  
because he prides himself on the speed of his packing,  
he knows he is the only contender  
in this race which, for some reason,  
he runs.

He doesn't think about the strangeness of it all.  
He thinks, instead, of the printed email from his father,  
bent into quarters and charred with sharpie lines,  
glowing orange in the lamplight.

A bulletin list of events and essentials  
for the weekend at dad's house  
smile up at him, press up against the white glass,  
beg - by a shaky, haphazard stroke  
of blackness - to be extinguished.  
It wants him to remember to bring water-socks,  
the ugly twisted brambles of neoprene and rubber  
the only barrier between the soft soles of his feet  
and gravel, zebra mussels, the unknown.

It tells him that the seasons are changing,  
as they do, and he ought to keep track of  
their sporadic spin, but he wants to be too young for  
something. Italicized Times New Roman peeks out  
from behind boldfaced prison bars,  
winking dad's desires into his conscious mind,  
where they, perhaps, should always be.

*Bathing suit(s)* is meticulously eclipsed  
as thin, baggy drapes that used to belong  
to the person he wants to be  
are crumbled into something which, to him,  
is easier, snaked along the side,  
fabric scraping against fabric looking  
for somewhere it wants to be,  
before the zipper hums shut.

# Gift of Time

Wisteria Deng

Not an Eden rose or a ribbon laced,  
the last gift you gave—  
an hourglass.

This is how you mark  
time: listen

to the sound of sands sifting  
through a clenched fist, a held breath,  
a squeezed eye.

You flipped a universe on my hand and it ran...

Inside, drizzling rain smothers the dry land.

Still it ran—droplets kept falling.

Falling to light a damn damp candle,  
at dawn, your globe is strangled in time,  
powerless to deliver a morning.

Beneath the falling sea, another ocean  
has torn off the ridge, raging  
at the flowing time.

The rain devours a sea like you  
flooded me. We watched,  
two adjacent worlds forming an empty gaze,  
the last drop of blood hit  
your hungry glass.

# Ode to the Creek

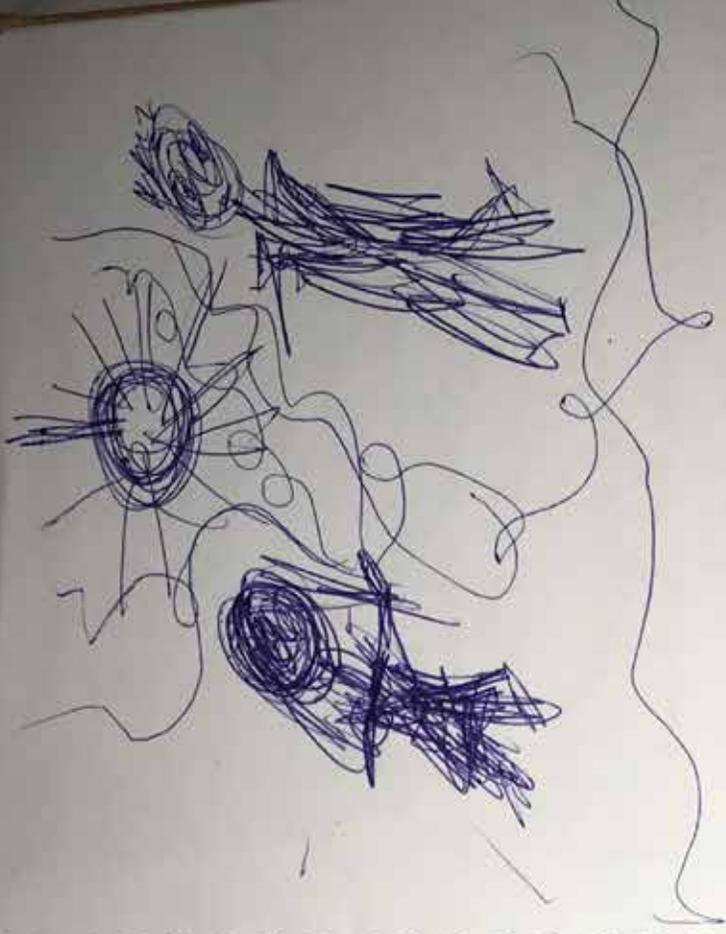
Kathleen Janeschek

Once,  
after my friends'  
homes were sold,  
I pulled,  
from you,  
—blue and alien—  
a crayfish  
struggling in  
the warm air,  
the heat-beat  
of my hands. I could've  
killed him. I could've  
boiled him alive,  
cracked his shell,  
sucked out his  
little lean meat  
like marrow  
from bone. I could've  
slipped it between  
my teeth, slid  
it along my gums,  
gulped it down  
my gullet with  
the tilt of my neck—  
eyes up tracing  
the slope of a hawk's  
head as she turns  
towards me. But—

Instead, I dangled him  
over the mouth of your  
waters, watched the glint  
of his hard body twist  
in the last light  
until my toes turned  
blue, and then,

I let him fall.

Sometimes all I  
want is someone  
to ask me  
how fuckin  
long and you?  
I thought you?  
didn't ask.  
(well, now lol.)



"Can I have,  
a bit of  
your  
"vagueness?"

# dancing with infidelity

Jessica Jung

i.

i thought the highest number  
on a scale from 1-10  
was 10  
until you got new glasses  
and angels started to cry.

23, already having lived  
3 lives—  
each one a little less  
depressing than the last;  
a box that keeps one more cigarette each day.

homeless  
(emotionally)  
but no longer physically  
because you've already conquered that life.

sexual tension  
that reminds you of those weird  
middle school dances  
only made weirder by those  
~pictures~  
you and i exchanged.

but like any love story,  
there's a caveat:  
the girlfriend.  
a minor bump—  
in the road, not her—  
holy shit  
wouldn't that have been a great twist?

ii.

stupidity is assuming  
that maybe you would  
crack a smile in my bed,  
post 17-hour shift  
after what felt like weeks of curiosity.

only 2 to be exact,  
the perfect high—  
14 days,  
a game not quite as long or severe  
as the one that dismantled you  
almost 2 years back.

my navy duvet  
never stood a chance  
the second you stepped foot  
in my lobby  
to make real  
those photos we sent.

the angels—  
they wept  
even after the glasses came off  
and the hair tie fell,  
but especially when  
your body pierced mine.

what happened  
to that minor bump—  
the girlfriend?

iii.

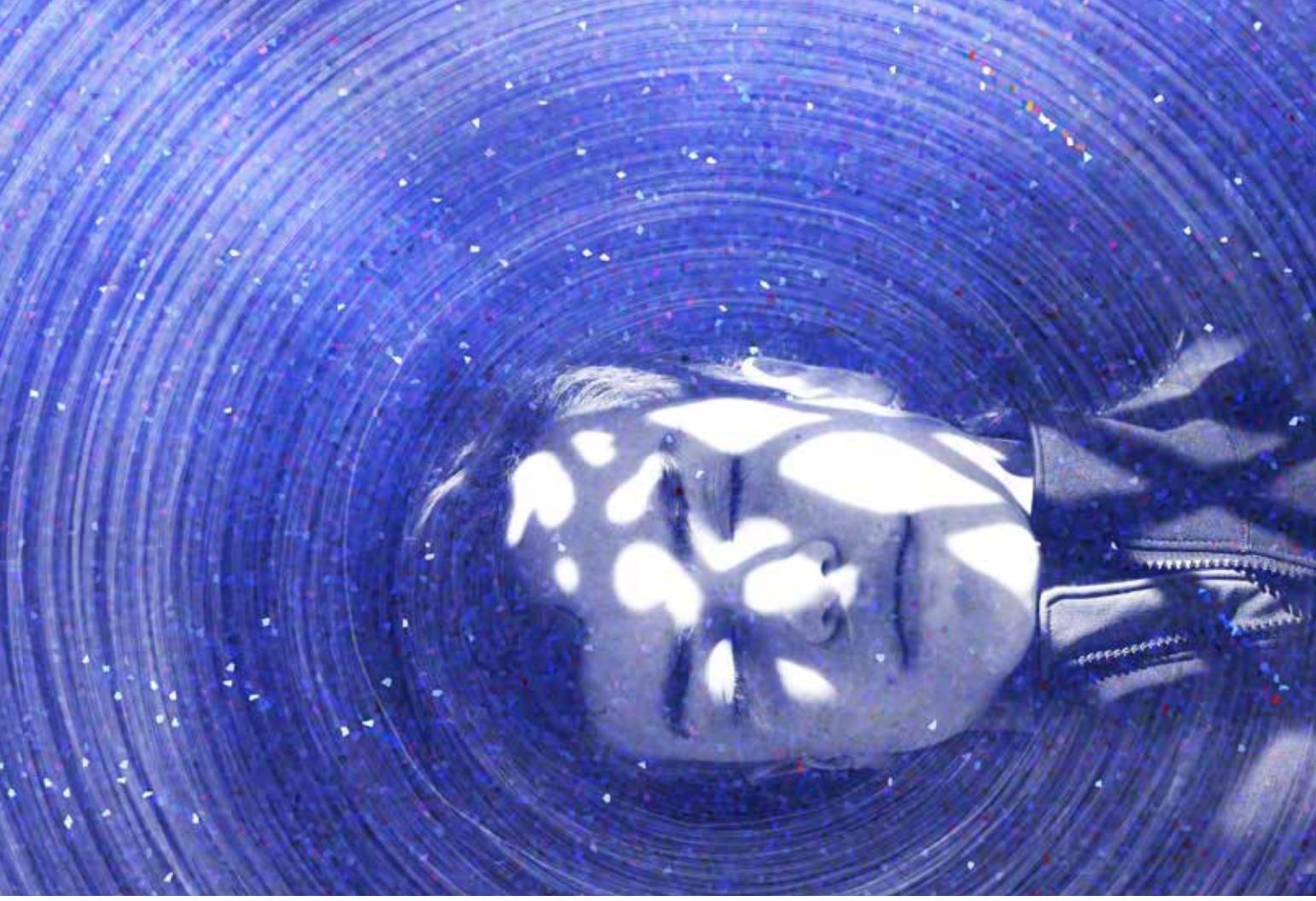
tell me what it's like  
to be independent  
but mentally and physically  
trapped.

23, already having crafted  
3 versions of yourself—  
one for her  
one for me  
and one for the 34,000 others  
who remember your name.

tell me how it feels  
to live multiple lives  
so that i'm made to be  
the antagonist  
every time.

now, let me tell you about  
the weeping cloud  
you've so cleverly hung  
above my head—  
the days and nights  
i was forced to watch myself  
crumble under minor actions  
that prompted my heart's most  
heavily weighted reactions.

tell me why you came back  
to the room with the navy duvet  
but most importantly,  
tell me,  
how is the girlfriend?



Spaceman / Hannah Brauer >

# pantoum: in the courtyard of the frick

Haley Winkle

in the public commons of the mansion,  
visiting voyeurs take their rest upon  
flat marble benches between  
long columns and indoor greenery

visiting voyeurs take their rest upon  
having studied so many frames, and admire  
long columns and indoor greenery  
their looking glass back to reality.

having studied so many frames, they admire  
dust particles floating in the skylight.  
their looking glass back to reality  
before returning to the galleries.

dust particles floating in the skylight  
mirror this elderly building  
before returning to the galleries,  
dust settles on nearby statues

mirror this elderly building  
iron gates and marble floors.  
dust settles on nearby statues  
surface of the oblong pond.

iron gates and marble floors  
in the public commons of the mansion,  
surface of the oblong pond  
flat marble benches between.

# ode to my mother's love of Prince

Nadia Mota

she talks in audio cassette  
plastic and film, that  
winding tape language  
that volume turned down  
low to not wake the  
parents kind of soft-speak  
all silhouette and suede.

once i saw my mother  
gripped by the holy  
spirit on a sunday  
while the choir sang.  
she couldn't stop crying

while the choir sang.  
she said she felt warm  
with some eternal light  
or spectral glow or  
music playing on a  
sunday morning.

she couldn't stop crying  
when she heard he was  
gone. sometimes we mourn  
not the loss of something  
but the ending of it.

her mother said she  
would wear out the  
records from playing  
them so much and  
she did. black vinyl  
all scratched and sedated.

she began to sing with  
her own candle flame voice  
after his flickered out.



# Rickard Spanger

Raven Eaddy  
Hell-o Hell-o  
All thanks for coming out  
2nite  
I firstly just want to say  
It is now safe to put  
youR hoods on  
It is just us here  
ill even put mine on  
See look  
Extra pointy  
You could  
cut a nigger with the tip  
hahahahahahahahahah  
just kidding i'm no racist  
but i do think that white people  
are the superior race  
and that there should be a  
gentle genocide  
a nice and easy ethnic cleansing  
i promise it won't hurt oKKK  
HAIL HITLER  
oh crap i didn't mean to say that  
what i meant to say was  
KALE FRITTERS  
we must keep our bodies  
up so that we may pass on  
our golden genes to our golden  
haired blue eyed babies  
keep your sperm count high  
don't touch things that's hot  
like laptops stoves or JEWS  
or uhhh stews that what i meant to say  
i don't know my tongue keeps  
FUCK THE GAYS  
slipping

# Primogeniture

Art and Story by Elizabeth Stanley

The streets were alive with purple. A rare color, a rich color, usually reserved for the most solemn and holy ceremonies. But today it was strung triumphant and festive through the city, through the country, for today was the coronation. Only on a day like today could the color of the gods be displayed proudly to welcome and bless the new king.

The general hoped he wasn't going to be late. He didn't want to disappoint the soon-to-be ruler. He weaved purposefully through the streets, his progress slowing as the crowd congealed in the roads leading to the heart of the city. Finally, he could see the wall stretching dark and imposing into the sky, seeming to absorb the sound of revelry as he drew near it. The posted sentinels, recognizing him, plucked him from the throng and let him pass through the arched gate.

The castle was dark and silent, a welcome change from the rowdy crowd outside. The general noticed mourning colors for the late king still hung in corners where an idle servant had forgotten to take them down and frowned at the sloppiness. He'd have to ensure they were removed promptly. On this day, the last thing anyone wanted was to be reminded of the assassination. This was supposed to be a celebration. At least the main corridors through which the coronation procession would pass were acceptable, with not a hint of black or gray to be seen. However, as the general progressed deeper into the castle his irritation began to wane. The rest of his preparations seemed to be running smoothly.

The corridors stood empty, for he had ordered the bare minimum of staff to remain at their posts for the celebration and dismissed the rest to the festivities. The fewer people involved, the less chance there would be for things to go wrong. Still, it was strange to see these hallways so bare and silent. The general couldn't even begin to count the number of times he had had to chase down the rebellious little prince to get him to his lessons. Or the times he'd been called down to stop the prince harassing the cooks with his toy sword for sweetmeats. Or the times the prince had 'lost' one of his pets and half the castle was sent off looking for the puppy or the cat... The general sighed. All of that would soon be no more than a memory. The prince had fooled around like that, but after today the prince would be no more. There would be a king instead...

As he rounded the corner the general saw the loyal men he'd



hand-picked for today, one on either side of the door to the throne room. He exchanged a nod of acknowledgement with them as they stood aside to let him pass.

The high-vaulted ceiling echoed his footsteps as he entered and saw the prince sitting in the center of a swarm of attendants. Cast in pale and purple by the soft light, he looked the very image of a king, or even a god. The general could almost imagine hallowed heliotrope coursing through the prince's veins instead of red, if he had been superstitious. But then again, the coronation was intended for the people, who just loved to lap up gossip and mystery. It was a surprisingly smart move on the prince's part. Painting himself as a divine figure would bring the commoners' attention to *him* - he didn't want them talking about the messy circumstances of the his father's death, and who would bring that up when they could be fawning over how he looked like he was blessed and bled purple like the rulers of myth instead?

Of course, anyone with sense would know that blood was blood, and blood was red, but the masses certainly weren't renowned for being wise in their judgement. The general knew they would gasp and gawk and applaud at the show, all without actually seeing the prince. They would notice only the carefully crafted resemblance to his father in the painted planes of his face, and not the youthful softness of his sheltered palatial existence that lay underneath. They would believe in his speeches and promises of victory and conquest without knowing that he would much rather treaty with the enemy instead of crushing them in battle, as his father had been well on the way to doing before his untimely assassination. They didn't know how often the general had to chase after him for not attending his lessons, lessons which would have molded him into a suitable leader... but in the general's opinion, you couldn't really teach that, especially not to a child who didn't want to learn in the first place. But he had certainly tried, because the king had trusted him over everyone else in the kingdom to do it. *Make the country proud*, the king had said, smiling down at his sleeping children and placing a hand on the general's shoulder. *Raise a ruler fit to succeed me.*

Oh, now *he* was reminiscing about the late king. The general pushed the thoughts from his mind, chastising himself for his lapse in professionalism, and continued towards the throne. A yelp of pain followed by a sharp smack echoed through the room and he looked up. A pallet and a brush clattered to the ground, spraying purple powder all over the floor at the prince's feet.

"Watch what you're doing!" the prince snapped, blinking and wiping away the powder the servant had brushed into his eye. The offending servant cowered in front of him, apologizing profusely as he attempted to clean up the mess.

"Shut up! Get him out of here." When no one moved, the prince's voice rose shrilly. "Get out of my *sight!* All of you!"

Two of the other servants scrambled to grab their companion by his elbows and hauled him to his feet, less out of agreement and more out of terror. The prince flicked his hand impatiently as they dragged the other man away, and the other attendants began to snatch up the various makeup boxes and jewelry in a flurry of panic, murmuring obsequies as they backed out of the room. The general stared them down disapprovingly before shutting the door with a snap as the last one fled.

Once he had assured that the servant's mistake had marred neither his face nor his clothing, the prince sighed and turned his gaze on the general. The general hurriedly smoothed the frown that had unconsciously slipped onto his face away and greeted the prince with a smile.

"How go the preparations?" asked the prince.

"Very well, sire. The ceremony waits at your leisure."

A small smile flickered at the corners of the prince's mouth before he subdued it to preserve the makeup. After all, this was the first time the public would see him as their king. And he didn't want to show them anything less than perfection. And now, glancing in the mirror and smoothing the last disobedient strand of his dark-dyed hair behind his ear, the prince saw perfection. He was ready.

There was faint knock from the side of the hall and the prince turned around. "What is it?"

With smooth unhurried steps the general strode over and opened the door a fraction to look out. "Ah. Your sister wishes to speak with you, sire."

The prince sighed and rolled his eyes, but waved a languid hand in approval. He'd grant her a chance to speak to him as an equal before everything changed. Not that they had ever been equal, really. He was the crown prince, the apple of his father's eye.

The general nodded and opened the door to let the princess in. She appeared surprisingly serious and dry-eyed, though her face stood out drawn pale against her hair, which curled jagged and dyed behind her ears, just like the prince's. In the depths of her mourning, she had cropped her glorious locks short, as if imitating her brother would give her the same

strength he had shown in the face of their father's death. He might even have been flattered, somewhere underneath his haughty exasperation at her for making such a scene.

The princess smiled at the general briefly before her face fell into the same anxious expression she always wore when talking to her brother. With a short bow, the general stepped out and shut the door behind him.

"What is it?" the prince asked again, not bothering to hide his impatience at the delay, but regretted it halfway through the sentence and moderated his tone to be softer. The last thing he needed was to upset her, because she'd just shut herself in her room like an invalid again, and he wanted her to appear at the coronation. Everything had to be perfect, or as perfect as he could get it. He hoped she wouldn't be as pitifully weepy as she had been during their father's funeral, but he wasn't counting on it. Between them, her constitution had always been the weaker, rather like their mother's. Perhaps, he thought idly, such a weak will was the burden of all the members of the gentler sex.

"I just wanted to speak to you, before..."

"About?" The prince didn't turn to look at her, attention on arranging and rearranging the array of jewelry on his wrists.

"I don't know. It's just... things will be different soon, won't they?" she replied, with a sigh. "In a few minutes, you'll be..."

"A few minutes has always made the difference."

"That's true."

His sister quieted then and the prince was glad of it. She had time for wishful thinking, about their dear departed parents, of the minutes that had always separated her from her brother - more so than gender or ability ever could - and the what-ifs and aborted possibilities that changed circumstances could have provided. But he had no time for nostalgia, not when the future of the country lay ahead, shining and as malleable as gold, and he would be holding the tools to shape it.

The prince straightened his back with a last glance in the mirror and took a deep breath.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Not yet."

The prince turned and actually looked at his sister for the first time since she had come in. "Why not?" he asked, frustration slipping into his voice again. Still in mourning clothes, hair unadorned and face unpainted? She knew she couldn't appear in the ceremony looking like *that*. "You know we don't have to wait for you-"

"I know," his sister said, quickly stepping up to him, hands twisting behind her back in nervousness. "I just wanted to..."

"It's fine," the prince cut her off, turning his back angrily. "Just go and get yourself ready. *Now*."

"I will. I'm sorry."

"It's fine."

The prince saw an odd metallic flash out of the corner of his eye. The minute shift in his position as he turned to look was enough to send the blade sinking deep into his shoulder instead of his heart. The prince gasped as pain stabbed through him and almost brought him to his knees. From behind him he heard his sister let out a yelp of panic. The door swung open as the general darted into the room, and the prince cried for help.

Metal gleamed at the edge of his vision again, and his confusion was eliminated by raw survival instinct. For lack of a weapon, the prince lashed out with his hand as he stumbled under the shock and the weight of the heavy coronation gown, opening his mouth to cry for help again. The rings on his fingers caught her across the cheek and drew blood. Then his sister's second strike found its mark.

The prince fell with the blade in his heart. His sister wiped her face with the back of her hand, curling her lip as it came away with a smear of red, crude and vulgar against the room's stagnant silence. She didn't spare her brother another look as she pulled the blade from his chest and roughly divested him of the ceremonial jewels and gown before they could be further bloodied. As she arranged them on herself, the general crouched down and took one of the prince's hands as he bled out onto the cold marble, watching the hurt and betrayal on his face slacken into the blankness of death. He hadn't thought he would see the prince's birth and death, let alone have a part in it.

The princess cleared her throat and the general straightened up immediately. "Yes, sire?"

"Get him out of here," she said curtly, though she didn't hide the smile at hearing her hard-won title. "The parade won't wait forever."

The general nodded, bowing. Though her tone was casual as if she was doing nothing more than talking about the weather, the command had her father's ring of authority to it that she had inherited and her brother had not. He bent to pick up the corpse and then stopped, looking closer at the dark stain pooling on the ground. It... wasn't red, but a darker hue, almost invisible against the rich hues of the room.

# On a November road trip through an endless cornfield

Sofia Spencer

the grey sky is the only sky and I feel like the grey sky because I am tired of waiting for the rain to come or the sun to shine and it doesn't even matter which because if there is a downpour or a drizzle or nothing at all I will still be disappearing beneath the weight of the clouds pressing down from above like the burden only Atlas is supposed to bear but he must have taken a trip instead of me or maybe the cornstalks are supposed to support the sky but the farmers cut them down before they could help hold up the heavens with their subsistence and lack of resistance and maybe there are cornstalks growing inside of me too like the scarecrows in all of those horror movies I watched driving through Nebraska which is where the Children of the Corn created a world full of hollowed out husks dripping with gasoline that burst into the red explosions of a monster they called their Leader and maybe it's not such a bad thing if this metaphorical town were to explode or implode with fire or ash because then this sky would be all the colors I never dreamed I could be.

*Kings do bleed purple*, he thought despite himself, eyes widening. The princess's eyes snapped to him as if challenging him to voice it. He met her gaze for a moment, though his eyes flickered down to the red cut on her lip. Then he picked up the prince's body and wrapped a cloak around it, hiding its face and the purple seeping from its chest. It didn't matter now. *King's blood or not, you would have led our country to ruin, little prince.*

"The parade won't wait forever," the princess repeated. The general bowed again and mopped up the mess on the floor, then slipped from the room to dispose of the bloody cloth and the prince's body. Or rather, the princess' body. After the coronation - at which nobody would question her absence, for she had been *so* distressed by her father's death and quite unfit to appear in public - they could discover her body, almost unrecognizable in death from the wounds inflicted by the tell-tale enemy dagger lying nearby... The tragic event would mar the coronation, of course, but it would also cement the country's resolve to eliminate the cowardly insurgents who had assassinated the previous king and the princess at all costs.

It would only be necessary to pretend to be her brother until their treacherous neighbor was crushed. And if she chose to reveal herself then? Nobody would be able to question her leadership after she had achieved the victory her father had been working towards - and if they did, well, their opinion didn't matter, or at least would be as easily silenced as her brother.

The general returned to the room empty-handed, prompt and without any signs of blood on his ceremonial uniform. The princess smiled at him, but did not miss the worried tenseness in his face nor the half-second flicker of his eyes to her chest.

"Worrying about this?" she said, touching the bloodstain over her heart. The general saw her fingers come away purple and nodded, knowing it was useless to lie to her.

"Yes, a bit. I can't help..."

He trailed off when the princess clicked her tongue as if amused by a child's antics. Her hand flitted to the general's face, tracing his jaw with a fond familiarity before she pulled him into a kiss.

"Don't worry," she said, drawing back with a wry smirk. "It's *only* a myth."



# Excerpt from a Longer (Failed) Love Story

Heather Colley

"It's time for me to go, I think," said Jack.

"Three in the morning, that'll do it."

A brief pause as we stood in the dark, gazing at the front lawn. Not uncomfortable.

"I sort of like smoking cigarettes on the porch with you."

"Me too. Usually I'm a solitary smoker."

"Me too. Goodnight."

\*~\*~\*

People say *I Love You* in reverse. They say it when they don't mean it, throw it around when it's easy, because if they really mean it, it carries way too much weight. You tell someone *I Love You* when you really do, and you have knowingly dived into an ocean that will drown you. There is no turning back from that, once you admit it as the truth.

I'm a victim of it too. Sometimes I go home from college, home to New York, and I see my old high school boyfriend. He was the love of my life for about a year and a half. Lost my virginity to him and everything. We see each other because we miss each other, not because we love each other. We broke up because we stopped loving each other after a year and a half.

And every single time we sleep together over Thanksgiving and Christmas, we say *I Love You*. When we're laying there naked in the dark, we say it. Not because we mean it, but because it feels as though we *could* be in love, if everything weren't so tortured all the time. And it's all too easy, just to let it roll off our tongues, and feed it right back, like a reflexive cat hitting at a string on the ground. Hardly a second thought. It feels good to be loved, even when it's entirely bogus.

So people throw it around as a cop-out, when it's passion and sweat masquerading as the real thing, when it's going absolutely nowhere, and the end is around the corner, probably next Monday. You know when people don't say *I Love You?* when they're terrified that it may be true.

Instead, they say things like, *I sort of like smoking cigarettes on the porch with you.*

Which is why, when he turned his back and walked away, his pack long empty of cigarettes, I sat on the porch swing for another five minutes or so minutes, considering solemnly to myself that I was probably in very deep trouble.

# States of Dakota

Ellie Katz

Driving west to where two diverge--  
north and south, you and me.  
Driving west toward the last of  
the buffalo--to Harney Peak.  
From up there on that mountain,  
in that stone tower  
I could see all of it:  
Montana, the Badlands, the ending  
from where we began.  
I could see the painted horses, still wild, and  
the Missouri River. I swam in  
that river before I ever  
swam in you.  
It pulled me the same, though.  
North and south with its currents,  
warm and cold with its depths.  
I can remember now the way that  
brown water wove fibers through my fingers  
and behind my knees.  
That was before your hands ever  
felt those places.  
And it saw my thighs  
before you ever did.  
Remember the first time you saw  
my thighs? Shining like jewels,  
shaped by mountains and touched  
by rivers.  
Remember the first time you pressed  
your palms to them? They gave like sand,  
trusting the flood  
you'd promised.  
I became the buffalo and you  
became the divide.  
I, the peak,  
you, the river;  
but a little farther upstream  
now from where I once  
swam--  
a little cooler  
on my skin  
than I recall.

36

# bare

Kennedi Killips

drunken Shakespeare monologues recited in the early hours of the day  
before the dawn sky flushed pink, eating from takeout boxes on the cold  
tile of my kitchen floor in nothing but our  
underwear and honesty. we coaxed ourselves into believing some things  
weren't meant to work and this was one. as you left, you said, "I hope  
you won't hate me forever." I didn't speak to you  
again for two months until I heard the chiming sound of pebbles hitting  
my window, like the night we first kissed two years before. you stood  
there on my front step; you said, "I'm so  
fucking nervous, you're all I can think about." neither of us believed in  
god, but for the briefest moment, I did; we laid in my front yard passing  
a bottle of pink moscato, listening to the cicadas  
cry. you told me that you missed me, and I swear, for the first time, I  
saw tears in your eyes. two months a stranger, too much, too bare.

# Bedroom Floor Confessional

Kennedi Killips

Rolled up in silky paper torn from  
a Bible my aunt gave me, I empty  
the smoke from my lungs while  
my feet swung idly in the damp  
July night. The obsidian sky was  
dappled with freckle-like stars  
and a moon that grinned like  
my gap-toothed cousin. My chest  
felt ironclad with each breath. A boy,  
only two days past seventeen, sat  
on the windowsill with me. His eyes  
met mine and later that night he  
cried out to God, but it wasn't in  
prayer or anger for once.

37

# Excerpt from *Waking Windows*

Kathleen Janeschek

I can't get her face to stop moving. She's barking at me, lips now full now plush, and her words are stacking against me like a flood I am buffering, now rolling now beating higher and higher, but I am a dam and not a drop of her spittle, her poison leaks through. Then she smiles and her lips are slivers slithering up her cheeks, curling cues for the curve my mouth makes, my face a machine automated by her and I want her to stop I want to tell her I want to stop, but already her face is getting sucked into her mouth, the widening gyre, now cavernous now carnivorous and I follow. The wet slime scrapes my sides, the deep bark the deep red pulsing, vibrating, shutting me along, and her insides become my outsides become my world and as I hand in my resignation to reality, she stops laughing.

Her mouth shrinks to the size of a button, stitched into her chin her cheeks, threads across her face twisted tightly into a knot and I want to reach out and tug it tighter, tighten it 'til she is squeezed 'til she can't breathe 'til she releases me 'til she unties the strings woven into my skin. But my movements belong to her and she does not give one not a single one back to me.

Now it's her eyes.

They begin to bulge out of her head and I want to tell her to pop them back in, but I am lost in their watery glisten, I am lulled with the lullaby of the waves of her oceans, rocked back and forth, the swishing sounds of a lifeless sea drowning out all other noise and I swear there's a salty tang on my tongue. I see myself in her sea. I see my own seas reflected back at me and suddenly I am falling between them, mine and hers, drifting down the dividing line of oceans, waves tossing me, unwanted undesired, to the other side, the other sea, and back again, but I do not mind. I go with the current, I float between rolling, rumbling oceans as down the quiet creek in the shadow of the forest of the house I grew up in. But, wait, in the house I grew up in—was there a creek? The speckles of sunlight on its sandy banks seem so real to me that if I looked down I would seem them there, but I know my mind is playing tricks on me—it must be—and I can't tell if this is one of them. For there's no creek here, in this house and anything that isn't here, that isn't right before me, I can't guarantee. I might have made it up—all of

it, everything outside these walls, which is madness, I know, to think I constructed a whole lifetime of memories, but, yes, I must have, at least a few. I don't know what's real. I don't know what's here. But the oceans, the sea, the storm are here, they are real, I can taste them, and I am tossed roughly now, certainly I never knew a creek for I can swim no longer, I am at the mercy of the water, my enemy, the wet cold matter of this reality, but before I slip under, she blinks.

She bares her teeth in a flash and with her sharp incisors she cuts through my strings, freeing me, her beast and her slave and walks away—just like that, the tie between me and her is severed and I float free. I'm alone. I don't know if I want to be. My body belongs to me



Mike Parsons / Police Officers. Tiger Stadium. Detroit. 1970

belongs to my mind again—or, for the first time? I can't remember. But that's alright—first time or last time, what matters is that I can move my body at my will, my movements are mine mine mine. And when you find yourself back inside your self, the first thing you do is look outside yourself at the world your self stands in.

The room vibrates. Orange ooze bleeds and fills the floor. Frequencies bounce off bodies, radio waves to a station I'm not tuned in to, and their signal turns gibberish in my mind, the sound of a pack of hyenas licking the bones of a wildebeest, just primal noises, guttural husks of words. I imagine I sound the same so I keep my mouth closed and I watch them, from my vantage at the edge, barely outside of them inside of myself. I sit uneasily within my borders, anxious and ready for flight. I know that I shouldn't stand still and without looking down I know my feet are already melting into the carpet, but my body and my mind don't feel glued together enough, and if I move too suddenly, my spirit will jerk itself free of my body and I can't leave my body behind, not here, not among these people, strangers really, whose frequencies are so foreign. Looking at them now, I can see the strings tied between individuals, the connections knotted among members of this party, how each one is positioned and placed relative to the others. Some are anchored, bound by a myriad of ropes, their bodies central components to this being; and others hang on by a thread, squatting on the outskirts of this tribe, unsettled nomads who know how to navigate these bodies too well, too easily, who reek of their displacement, their sweat sticky with a sweetness that coats their voices as they spit syrup on their strings—well, what I thought were strings. I see now that they aren't strings, but veins, vessels of flesh connecting individuals—and, how did I miss this—for they are not individuals after all, but one body, one being, one breath. It's a monster. I've been standing here so close to this mass of blood and muscles, this great beating beast gaping orifices, all these tendons draped across the room, growing, pulsing, pumping, flesh coiling around flesh, tumors sprouting and squeezing and spreading all over its body, popping like pimples and squirting an orange gelatin, slopping its innards on its outsides, and I don't know what is more terrifying—this monster or that I am not a part of it.

I close my eyes to get away from it but it follows me into my mind and I can feel it groping the darkness, prodding the bleak black for me, so I shrink myself, getting smaller and smaller and I wonder how

small I can get before I cease and as soon as I think about no longer existing, I realize that's what I want. I want to shrink until I'm just a black dot on an infinite black plane and then shrink just a little bit more until the curtains drop, the stage fades to black, and I become nothing. It's the only way to escape. But though I keep on getting smaller and smaller I never cease to exist and I realize that no matter how long I wait, I'll never just stop, but the beast is sniffing snorting rooting around my head looking for me and I feel the heat of its skin breath loins and I know there's no way out. Not like this.

When I open my eyes I see new appendages feeling blind like vines, groping the air for fresh bodies, fresh meat and I know if I stay here they'll find me and I'll be absorbed into the mass and maybe that wouldn't be so bad, but the noises this behemoth is making sound like wet clucks choked and throttled in throats and I can't stand to listen to them let alone make them so I unstick my feet from the floor—leaving behind puddles of skin and toenails—and I walk through a doorway and into another room, but the monster is still here, waiting for me, in fact, it's the same room I just left so I turn and walk back and try again but in the same step I leave the room, I enter it again and walking backwards I enter the room to leave it again and no matter how many times I walk forwards or backwards, no matter how many thresholds I cross, it is like I am walking in circles like my steps align with the turn of the Earth and the ground moves to match my step to keep me here. I am trapped within these four walls at the mercy of this breathing, augmenting conglomerate and I am beginning to worry when someone asks me if I'm alright.

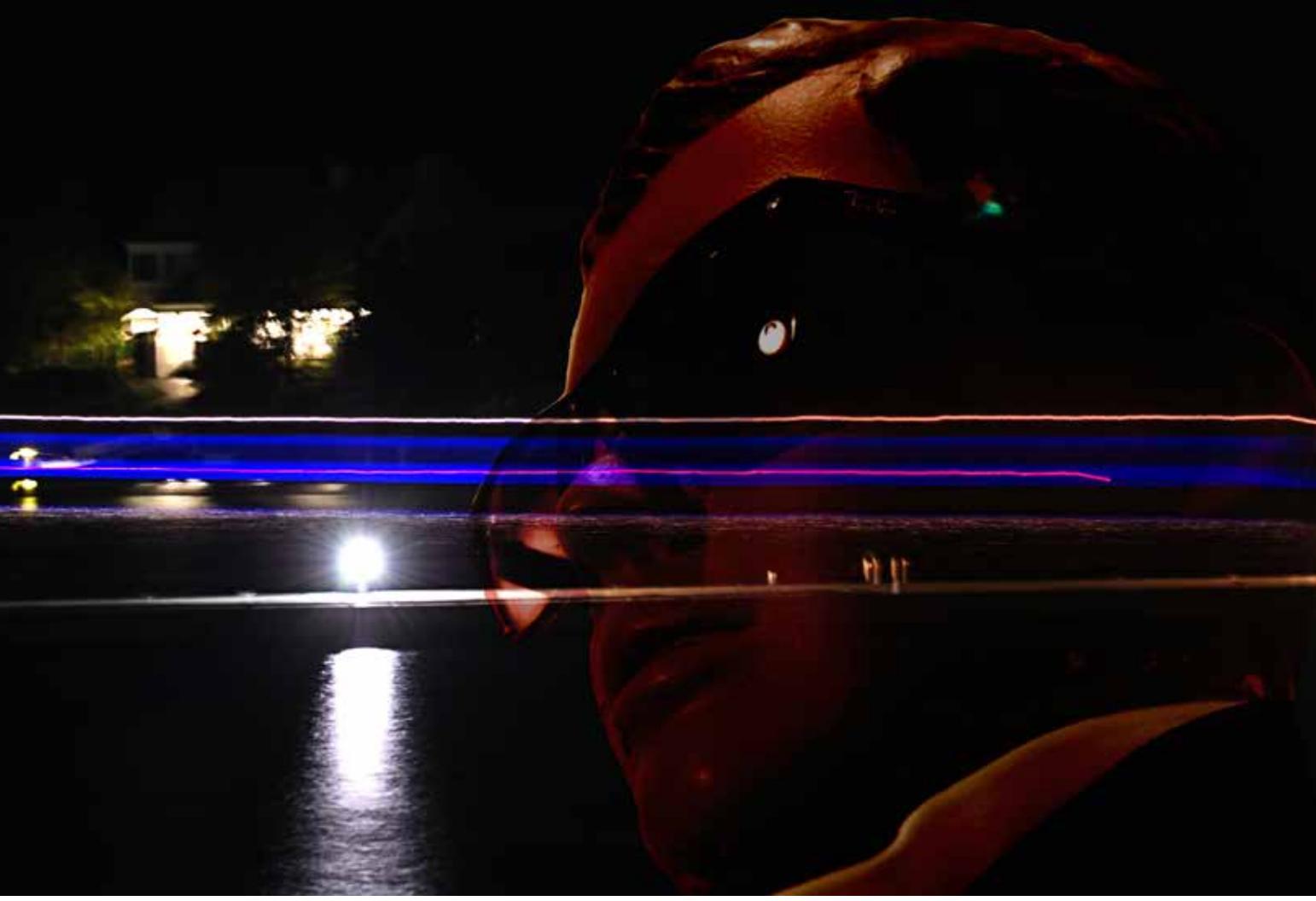
He doesn't have any strings or mutant appendages, and he doesn't glow orange like the others, he's just there. But on closer inspection, he is glowing. Not orange or any other color, but as if a line of bulbs had been strung up beneath his skin. Looking at him, something stirs in me like a smile spreads but deep in my gut, not my face. I don't want to die anymore. Sobriety sets itself besides godliness. Though his voice reaches me like the spotlight of a lighthouse before the ship sinks under, I can understand him somewhat. His words follow but not his sentences so I nod my head and pray, well I try to pray, but I can't remember what I pray to or if I even pray and besides if god is real he'll be here because god is everywhere and this is everything. This guy could be god, he's got the vibes for it. And now I'm worried about

first impressions and wonder if those are more or less important when dealing with all of eternity, but I've already made mine so I let him lead me through shifting rooms and twisting corridors and that monster is dilated across walls, spreading through the floorboards but he is unbothered by it so I imitate him and unfettered we ascend together, rising above the unholy fray, and then I walk into a bathroom and closing the door behind me, he disappears.

Already the party is fading from my head. Out of sight, out of mind, out of memory. I'm not too keen on trusting my senses right now, but I'm even less keen on trusting the things I can't perceive and besides the low beat below my feet, there's no evidence of the party, the people, the beast in here. I'm alone. I have become the world. Or, rather, the world has become me. I find my reflection in the room and I study the world: study the muscles twitching, the skin rippling, the waves of motion rolling, study the pores the sweat the dirt mixing portraits on my skin, study my pupils widening, those two black holes snaring light like blackholes and the little man in my left eye standing with his back to the sinking darkness. He waves. I wave back. I lean in closer to my reflection, watching him carefully, trying to figure out what he's doing, but after a moment I realize that little man must be me, which is strange because I've never thought of myself as a man before. I'd look down to check what goods I'm packing, but I don't want to take my eye off him—off me. With a final wave the little man recedes into the black as if he had been a little light beam all along. Back to headquarters, I suppose. I wonder if he ever wants to leave my body, to strike out on his own, but then couldn't I ask myself that question? Suddenly the weight of my skin suffocates me. The burden of a body snuck up on me; stealthy and silent, it had grown bit by bit, inch by inch, encasing me within its walls, but I, inside of this hubris, had remained the same size, and dragging it around all these years had made me tired. Now I am seized by the desire to shed my skin, my bones, my muscles, to walk out of this corpse and leave it to rot, to be free. I had forgotten how weary I was, but the little man reminded me.

Maybe everyone has a little man inside of them.

g / Emily Herard >



# Letters to Juliet (Not From Romeo Or Anyone Else That Is Lovesick)

Heather Colley

Dear Juliet,

It's funny because you claimed that you fell in love within about 24 hours of meeting Romeo- and Friar Lawrence, who is a religious figure, didn't see a single thing wrong with that. Why is that funny? Because nowadays they call that *settling*. And when it's got to do with a religious figure, they call it *corruption of the Church*. I've got a slight inclination that 2008 New York City is a little different from prehistoric Verona but I don't think myself wise enough to make that conclusion just yet. Will let you know once I've sorted it out.

-Jane

Dear Juliet,

Did it ever bother you that Romeo left some other girl to be with you? A lover that he thought he loved more than anyone he ever could? As in, were you really certain that, had everything not gone entirely mad- he wouldn't have just turned around and pulled the rug out from under your affair too? You know what people nowadays call a new affair that stands on the back of a deceptive old one? A *Bad Decision*. I'm really just wondering if you were comfortable with the possibility of being the love of someone's life for only, say, a year. Or a month.

I suppose it's a moot point now but I'm just curious. Curiosity killed the cat and didn't much help you either.

-Jane

Dear Juliet,

I know the answer to this question but I will ask it anyway because it is a worthwhile one and this is all one great big learning experience, no matter how mad it is. Did you ever hear of *feminism*? No, because the word was coined sometime in the seventeenth century, way after your time in the sun. Anyway, even though it is a moot point because you're dead, if I'd been around Verona at the same time as you, I would've advised you to adopt something quite like it, even if I didn't know the word yet. As in, *Is there any particular reason you are sacrificing your entire being for just one man who might not even be exactly what*

44

Connor / Elena Ramirez-Gorski



*you need?* Did you even know what you needed or were you just an adventurous rebel in pursuit of something that wasn't painfully and miserably boring?

-Jane

Dear Juliet,

People in 2008 New York City do not believe in fate as I imagine that you did. Only some wonky belief in premonition and supernatural guidance and the three witches in the attic pulling on your heartstrings could've driven a girl of reasonable intelligence like you to that insanity. You went wrong where you tried to control your own fate. If you believe in destiny then you have to let it be. That's the whole damn point, but you and Romeo went screaming across balconies and out into the countryside and getting the damn clergy involved, and that is where you erred. You thought you could play God from the window of your metaphorical apartment complex but God played you in the end. He has a funny way of doing that.

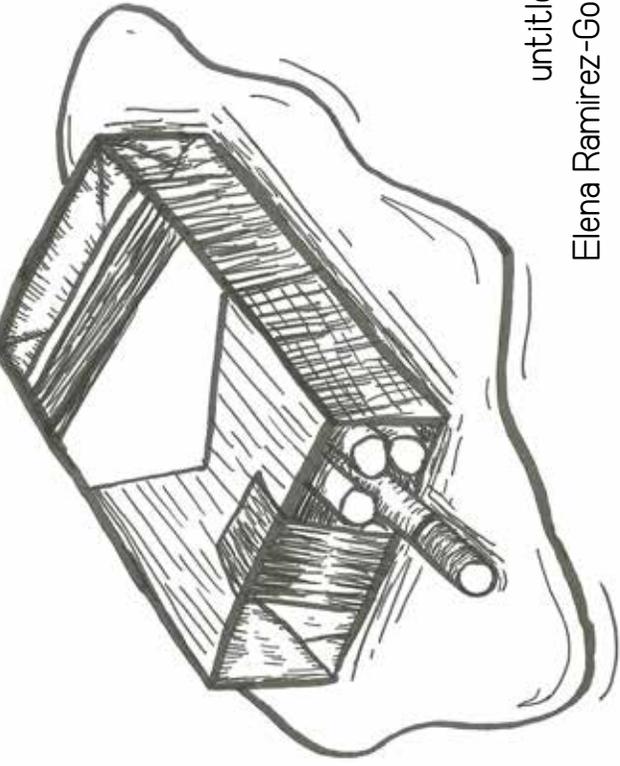
-Jane

Dear Juliet,

Did you think that you were alone in your stoic madness or did you know Romeo was there too? Would it have made you even madder if you'd known that you were floating in the hemisphere going crazy all by yourself, or were you already too far off the deep end that that knowledge would've just been dust on the windshield? Maybe I'm mad too. I'm writing to a dead girl. But maybe it's not madness if no one knows. After all the postman can't deliver these anywhere because you almost certainly have no apartment address.

-Jane

45



untitled /

Elena Ramirez-Gorski

## Quelle heure est-il?

Anne Else

The window cracks  
open and the  
sunset  
floods in.

Washing their faces in the  
golds, pinks, reds of  
the world.

Time is  
unknown. They  
are only  
aware of  
their breath in the  
silky air and  
the way the light  
flickers through the  
cherry blossom tree  
outside.

## Chasing a Meringue Sky

Rachel Hurwitz

The sky is an orange and mango sorbet and if I had a spoon in my back pocket I'd be able to taste the heat of that sun. We chase the sunset down on tires stripped of their treads from too many rides on warm pavement. If we follow it, the darkness can't take us captive. Feeling the warmth on our faces, lifting us towards its light. Keep chasing. But eventually the sky will fade to the color of meringue and old clam shells when our hearts can no longer carry us as far as the ground spinning away beneath us.



Hannah Brauer / Grow

# Excerpt from The Edge of the Earth

Olivia Sedlacek

The legend in our world was that the oldest and most powerful dragon of all spat ice. Its descendants became hot-tempered and weakened themselves into fire-breathing monsters. Of course, their fiery breath destroyed its fair share of humans, but none of their passionate anger could match the cold, calculated fury of the first dragon. The legend said that the great dragon lived on in the frozen heart of ice – one of the poles, modern scientists said now. Hardly anyone believed in the great dragon anymore, and those most skeptical souls were too afraid of falling off the edge of the earth to make the trip to prove the dragon's non-existence.

It seemed obvious to me that a dragon so cold would be infinitely worse than a hot dragon, but all everyone remembered were the great fires the hot dragons in the legends had started and all the destruction those fires had caused. While I was as glad as anyone that fire dragons no longer existed, I was sure there was a dragon far more dangerous in a corner of the planet.

My cousin, who was a scientist, and who was nearly fifteen years older than me, had a model of the earth in his little workspace. It was standard-sized – four feet by two feet by two feet – and showed all the oceans and ice caps and land. In the deep oceans, there were volcanoes that my cousin said some people said will turn into islands someday. I wasn't a baby – I knew that was just fairy tales. The north and south poles were on the long ends of the box. They were massive. It would take an explorer months to search for the dragon. The scientist who had discovered the poles had been trying to find the edge of the earth, but hadn't even come close enough to see it. He'd popped up on the opposite side of the planet six months after departing, with no idea how he'd ended up there and nothing but stories of enormous chunks of ice to show for his bravery. He hadn't believed in the great dragon.

"What happens if you fall off the edge?" I asked my cousin once.

"No one knows," he said. "Some people think there's a wall of ice around the edge, so no one can fall off. Some people think there's land beyond the poles. Some people think there's an invisible wall that keeps you from taking a single step off the earth. Other people think that you'll fall right into space and keep on falling forever until you grow old and die."

"What do you think?"

"I don't know," he said. "I just don't know."

"Nothing good," I said, feeling clever.

"No, nothing good," he chuckled. "Unless of course that's where you find the end of the rainbow."

"Everyone knows rainbows are just rain and sun mixing."

"There's probably some poor soul out there who doesn't know that. Maybe they've fallen off the earth following it."

I giggled a little, even though I knew it wasn't really something to laugh at if it were true.

Then his supervisor came in and told everyone on the entire floor to shut up and get to work. I could see all the other scientists at all the other desks shrivel down and hunch over their stacks of paper. One man turned around and shot an annoyed glance at my cousin.

"Sorry, little cousin," my cousin shrugged.

I shrugged back. "I have to get back home anyway." I didn't really. It was just something I knew people said to make each other feel better.

In fact, I didn't really even want to go back home. My parents were both home, and that was never good. They were the very definition of fire and ice. Supposedly they were now making bombs out of fire and ice, and I believed it. When my parents clashed, the explosion affected everyone for miles around. My father was fire – he was a lawyer and his temper swayed the jury with his passion. My mother was ice – she was a lawyer and her calculated moves manipulated the jury to exactly where she wanted them. My father was frightening when he was angry, but he'd learned to douse himself in a cold bucket of water and only steamed a little. My mother inflicted the fear of death on me. You never knew when she was angry, but she'd strike out in a perfectly calculated way to wound her opponent where it's most damaging. My father would scald you, but my mother would destroy you.

When I reached home (it was only a five-minute walk from my cousin's work), I could see the reverberations of the earthquake that originated inside. Neighbors were hurriedly putting away their grass-cutters and gardening tools and disappearing like animals in the presence of a hunter. The very flowers in our front yard were trembling like they were afraid of the consequences. A lone rabbit, which under difference circumstances might have stopped to sniff the air in our safe yard, barreled right through quick as possible. I could hear my parents' muffled voices

from here.

I braced myself for my entry. I threw open the front door with a bang, to alert them to my presence. All noise stopped for the briefest of seconds, and then continued as loud as before. It was so deafening I could hardly hear what they were saying. I didn't dare go into the room with them, and instead snuck up the stairs (oh why did they have to creak?) to my bedroom.

Fire and ice. Fighting. Deep voice colliding with screeching one. Battling. Until they exploded and sent tremors through my bedroom walls. The build-up was coming. I sat on my bed, clutching the sides of my mattress, staring at my chest of drawers across from me. Its wooden frame was cracked, not from the explosions, but from water that I'd spilled. It was somehow comforting to know that something as refreshing and wonderful as water was more powerful than fire and ice put together. An image of the churning river not three miles from my house appeared in my head, and I swallowed it quickly. Water wasn't always so safe.

Wham! A slammed door shook the whole house. I jumped, my nerves twisted up. The entire house was now hushed. I crept out of my room, silent as a snail. I couldn't tell yet whether I'd find peace, or the remnants of tattered belongings ravaged by storm. I'd heard once of storms of wind and water so catastrophic that entire nations lay destroyed, but that could be another story told to scare children. The mean-spirited kind of story, not the kind meant to make children behave.



The wooden stairs were quiet as I descended, unusual for these stairs.

I turned to see our parlor. The fire was crackling and giving off a rosy glow. The old rocking chair was all intact. The scratches in the floor were the same as the ones that had been there yesterday, from an old cat. My father stood in the doorway to our kitchen. He looked worn down around the edges.

"Where's Mother?"

My father sighed, seeming not entirely happy to see his daughter. "Don't be here when she gets back."

I nodded.

"Did you come from your cousin's?"

"Yes."

My father shook his head. "You got him in trouble again, didn't you?"

I stood still. He didn't really want an answer.

"Then you can't go back now. Go to the river?"

The image of the thrashing river popped into my head again. I grimaced.

"All right, then, don't go to the river."

He paused.

"Where can you go?"

"I'll go."

Without waiting for my father's reply, I bounded out of the house and down the street. Our home hadn't shattered around me, which my cousin had told me many times was just a matter of time, but my mother would be livid when she returned, and she knew how to hurt each of us most. I pitied the poor neighbors who didn't yet know better. My father said it was the only way she knew how to operate. He said she was afraid, afraid that if she didn't control everything and everyone, they would control her. But she never seemed scared to me.

Once I was off of our street, I slowed down to a walk. I had hours until it would be safe to come back.

I thought about bugging my cousin again, even though my father and I agreed that it was too soon. Maybe all his work would be done, and he could take me to get a treat. I knew that wasn't likely. I'd distracted him enough that morning. I didn't feel bad, though. I knew he liked being distracted so he didn't have to do all the hard work of distracting himself.

But even that was better than slogging through the mush they gave him to do.

"I didn't become a scientist to do this," he'd told me not a month after going to work. He'd talked about his endless paperwork and that he only got to even step foot in the laboratory a few times per month, and even then, it was just to repeat experiments that had already been done a hundred times before.

I empathized with him. He'd spent seven years at the university far away to study science – the exciting kind where discoveries were made every day – and now he had the letdown of doing science that was barely even science. I'd told my parents after he came back and had stories upon stories of the wild things that went on at university, that I'd like to go to university someday. My father said that it was very expensive, and very far, and that you had to work hard to pass tests to even be allowed in. I knew that I had no chance of going. Maybe someone could pay for it, and maybe someone could take me there, but no one but me could pass those tests. I've only taken one other test before, and it was the test to be allowed to study with my tutor, and I hardly passed even though my tutor said it was trivial. My mother said not to worry, it wasn't that I didn't work hard enough to get good marks, it was that I simply didn't have the brain power.

My tutor still doesn't think I'm smart, but he knows I'm trying. He's wrong. I'm not trying. I've got five whole years left until I'm old enough to quit learning (my cousin finished his tutoring and went off to university at sixteen) and there are far better things to do than slave over ancient literature like he does. I can tell he tries to be patient with me, because how fair is it to snap at a dull person?

Either way, I decided against going back to my cousin's work. I stopped in the middle of the street, searching for a place to go. I looked around for inspiration, but all there were were houses just like mine – two stories, with glass-paned windows that had shutters just for show – and I could hardly go home now. I started walking again, because if my mother came back this way and ran into me... I shuddered.

I walked until the houses disappeared and trees replaced them. The park. That was a good place to stop. I swung open the little rough wood fence and let myself in. The trees towered over the entire park, leaving the entire place in shade. There were a few people around, including a mother pushing a baby carriage while a toddler ran circles

in the grass near her, but it was hardly crowded. I weaved between the trees, knowing that after just a minute or two, I'd be completely hidden from the road. No one watched me. I sighed. I was safely out of the way.

When the afternoon was starting to slip away, I decided it had been long enough. The aftershock had to be over by now. I made my way to the front of the park, and emerged onto the street, following it until I was standing in front of our yard. Like after every other fight, my mother and father would be sitting in separate chairs on opposite sides of the parlor, each involved in their own project, ready to welcome me home.

I pushed open the front door, this time quietly – it was quiet enough in the house for me to not have to make a racket. My mother stood in the entryway, alone. I peered behind her. No Father. My father wasn't sitting in his chair. My mother wasn't either, but she was here. My throat turned fire-dry.

"I see you're back," my mother said. She looked as cold as iron in winter.

I nodded, my throat too parched to speak. I swallowed, but it didn't help.

"I'll make dinner."

She turned sharply and went into the kitchen. I didn't dare follow her to ask her where my father was. She hadn't said.

As I stood stock-still in the entryway, I felt the pressure in the house become too much. I felt all the windows in the house explode. The shattered window in our parlor shot glass outwards, propelled it yards away from our house onto the lawn. I prayed that there were no neighbors close enough to be showered with glass. The wind whipped through the open window-frame. I waited – didn't even move a muscle – but my mother stayed in the kitchen and no neighbors came to knock on our door, and I guessed no one had heard. Or maybe they didn't care.

I escaped out the front door. I sat on the front lawn, not caring about the shards of glass that must have been among the grass blades. I watched the flowers drift peacefully in the wind and I suddenly was boiling mad at them. How dare they not warn me as I came up the path again. How dare the animals and the neighbors and the clouds and the gravel in the road send me loud signals during any ordinary earthquake and fail to warn me now. Everything had finally shattered and they hadn't warned me.

# The Wife of The Night Shift Worker

Claire Denson

spends her days in thought  
a relationship almost epistolary  
with short notes sent into the void  
of a text opened only in dark  
hours when he's already gone.  
He leaves the hour she sleeps,  
drives in silence through the night.  
They miss each other most  
and only meet in dreams  
but never share the same one.



# A Winter Ice-cream

Wisteria Deng

First time we met, you were eating a cone  
in an icy morning. Last day of Jan,  
the end of a start. We watched egrets fly,  
wings flapping, the sound of Mozart, a clan  
of coherence, union, a divine plan.  
Little joyous accidents, things gone wrong:  
winter ice-cream, melted snowman,  
your laugh lighting up my frozen cheeks, a song  
going so smoothly that we worried  
it would end. Still we rejoiced,  
two melting cones, forcing our way through the throng.  
Knowing well that cold does not last. Fears voiced:  
the constant expectation of a blow,  
wrong season, future that happened long ago.

# the apology takes the last bus home

Nadia Mota

but misses its stop; now stumbles with its shoes dangling from stiff  
fingers, nervous because it doesn't recognize the street signs anymore.  
the apology doesn't recognize itself anymore. the apology has a quarter-  
life crisis and cuts all its hair off in wild, scissor-wielding desperation. the  
apology doesn't acknowledge what happened, just knows something is  
wrong. the apology is a threadbare blanket. the apology is coffee gone  
cold. the apology makes a home in the back of your throat, becomes part  
of you. now all of your sorrows slip out like second nature; so subdued, i  
couldn't hear it when it called for me.

< Detroit / Emily Herard

# Learning How to Not Want to Kill Yourself

Kathleen Janeschek

When I speak, I listen to the words I thought I belonged to as they spill from the slash across my throat, slouch across the tiled floor, and rise, again, in the far corner; that dead air, emptied of human breath. There, for the first time, I see the light of my own eyes flutter, feeble, dense, nearly vacant—I see the words as you have seen them, I see their wicked workings on the wall, I watch the paint chip at itself, the flakes floating down to the floor, the pile you will sweep away someday. The words—they stir. Like the little sparrow loitering on the road to your suburban home, the moment before the wheel comes down on top of her, she lifts—a flutter, a flee—herself from certain destruction and carries herself into the wide and open world.

# The Forest Calls Your Name

Kathleen Janeschek

There's a way the trees come fully into bloom without you noticing. You arrive here one day with the date of departure already fixed in your head and the leaves are green but barely, little half-leaves of what is to come. You know your time here is temporary and therefore valuable, but you won't know what the trees mean or how they will transform until the moment of their transformation is passed and the leaves have long been unfurled. You see them, but not really, not clearly, until one day you leave and when you come back, suddenly, there they are—fresh leafy madness obscuring the forests, the sky, the world, the voyage home, a beauty, a bounty of green, a harvest bound to happen. You wonder how long they've been like that, how long you've failed to notice—when was the last time you looked up from the ground, when was the last time you raised your eyes to the sky?

And now, when you look at them, in the prime of their lives, you cannot help but see the shadows of their deaths. When their leaves were only half-open, the thought of death never crossed your mind, but now you can see it lurking in the lift of their leaves, you can trace their future from their outline. Somehow, it is easier to envision their branches bare, their bark grey, their wood dead, than it was before. Death has entered the picture, the view. Life always carries its shadow.

When you leave, it is only the full bloom of the trees you will remember, and the only shadow you'll think back upon is the shade they cast. Your memory will be bright and perfect; your mind will structure paradise. You will forget everything but the green.

# Photograph

Rachel Hurwitz

My favorite picture of us is one that is blurred, my finger on the shutter twitching from fear of missing or ruining the moment. It is the reflection of us looking into the seven-foot window of a library that we never entered. Lampposts behind us, shining just bright enough to see our reflections, but not light enough to drown them out. He is six inches taller than me. His colorless reflected eyes are staring straight ahead, though I know a moment ago they had glanced down at my beanie-covered head, looking into the library. Wishing it was open so that he and I could find a story book that would become ours and dive into its pages together, not returning until another ethereal, perfect night like this one, which I know will not come.

We look like ghosts. Drifting into and out of existence without the other because we are coming and going at different times. We will continue missing each other in the coming months until I miss him so much that I take another's body into my own and I will miss that moment for the rest of my life. At least I have the photograph. I have the reflection. The shadow hanging there in my room.

Mike Parsons /  
Lou Carducci. Tiger Stadium usher. Detroit. 1970



# Déjà Vu

Davey McLeod

Dreams drain away, like liquid down a funnel

This is the first time I learn how to float

A blinding light at the end of a tunnel

Go to it, like a moth to a bulb

The second time, I'm taught how to float

By my mother's loving arms, swaddled in warmth

"Son, someday you'll outgrow this coat"

Jump among leaves of red and orange

Mom's hand through my hair. She makes such a fuss

Dad flipping pancakes to touch the ceiling

Happy tears in their eyes as I run to the bus

Today at school I learned about feelings

Dad slips a jacket on while mom fixes his tie

Witness them kiss and scrunch up my face

Today at school I got a black eye

This is the first time I feel like running away

Bessy Hofster has a familiar face

She sits in front of me in Biology class

I feel like I know her from some faraway place

"Why do you always eat alone at lunch?" she asks

We sit together in an empty theatre

She admits she has a thing for broken things

Whenever she leaves I feel like I disappear

I kiss her midsentence, while she's crying over a broken wing

She has a room with paintings on the walls

And a dad with two fists and a temper

"Sometimes I wish I could fly away from it all"

This is the first time I tell her I love her

Years later, in a suit that my dad left behind

I find myself toying with a small black box

I kneel by a riverbank and show her the ring inside

She tackles me, and I almost lose it in some rocks

I find myself playing catch with a beautiful boy

You have my father's eyes and name

You tackle me playfully, and I lift you up like a toy

It won't all be easy, if we're at all the same

Your sister is born with Bessy's bright eyes

Like the light at the bottom of a pool

I've fallen into those one-thousand times

Where the water is pleasant and cool

The light at the back of an X-ray

Bessy grabs my arm and acts strong

An ugly shape in my ribcage

I ask the doctor how long

The poison they pump in me is strong

I cough blood at the next county fair

We couldn't keep it secret for long

That night, Bessy shaves off my hair

I shatter a mirror. "How is this fair?"

"Shh," she tells me. "I know, I know"

She wraps up my knuckles and kisses them there

"We've had lots of highs, and one, big low"

"This is him," she whispers, as if I don't know

You stand from a baby grand and bow to a crowd

I clap so hard it hurts me so

I have never been more grateful, nor more proud

You stand up straight beside my hospital bed

I wish it weren't this way

You fake a smile, then cry instead

"I wish that you could stay"

I really wish it weren't this way

Bessy kisses me lightly on the side of my cheek

"I'm sure we'll see each other again someday"

I want to answer, but I'm tired and weak

We hold hands tightly. Nobody speaks

Dreams drain away, like liquid down a funnel

My breath is too heavy. I ask it to leave

A blinding light at the end of a tunnel

# \*Black Girl Curls

Raven Eaddy

I run my fingers through my hair

\*Correction

I shove four fingers into the mass of hair on top of my head I try to move my fingers up through my hair but both me and my hair know that my fingers are going absolutely nowhere. That the only destination is on my scalp tangled in black nappiness. My hair and I play this game every day maybe even every other hour.

My hair is blowing in the wind.

\*Correction

The single hair that has flown away from my neatly packed fro is blowing in the wind. The rest of me is wind resistant and stands strong like that third pig's brick house. My hair is commanded by nobody, not even me.

I wash my hair everyday

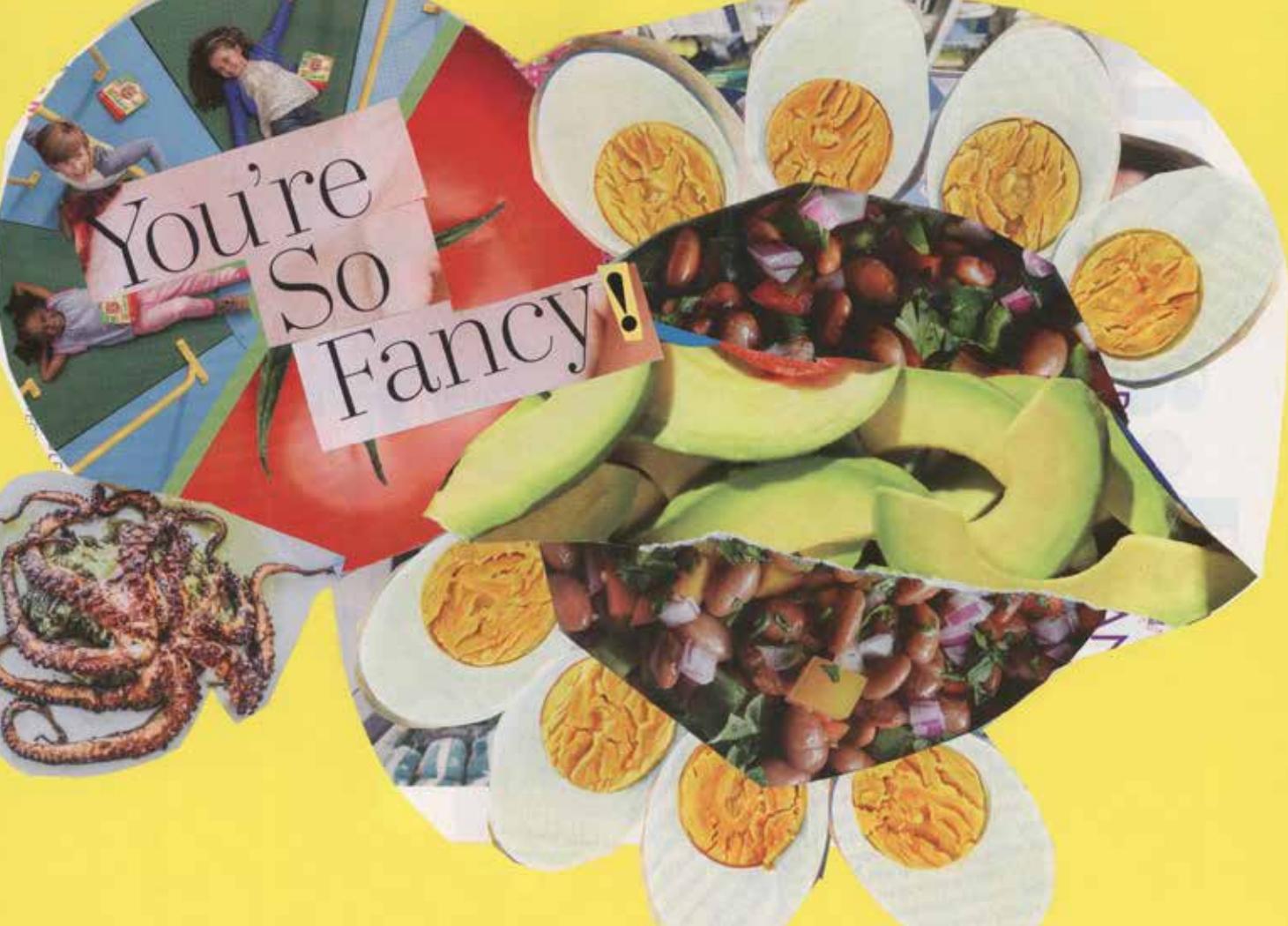
\*Correction

I wash my hair everyday only when you ask me how often I wash my hair. When in reality my hair is a fortress of castor oil cocoa butter and shea that can't just be washed away everyday.

I comb my tresses from scalp down and out.

\* Correction

Combs tremble in my fingers knowing that their fate is already sealed. They know that in my attempt to detangle, their bodies will break in half. They've heard stories, lore amongst combs.



# The Tiny Country on the Baltic Sea

Anastasia Bergeron

My grandparents put name tags on all the rooms in their home. Some were generic, such as 'The Guest Room.' Some were descriptive: 'The Tree Room' overlooked the backyard and its windows were perpetually covered with branches. Others? They were more for my grandpa's personal amusement: all bathrooms received the label 'The European Room.' Whenever I stayed at their house as a child, I was put in the Spotlight Room.

I loved how cozy it was. All that fit was a full-sized bed, a nightstand, and an antique bookshelf that stood tall on the opposite end of the bed. The Spotlight Room got its name by having a window directly facing the street lamp. Every night I'd go to bed with the room aglow, the lamp shining against the glass of the bookshelf. In the morning, the sun poured through the window, perfectly illuminating Volumes I-X of Lithuanian encyclopedias by none other than my great-grandfather, Jonas Baly. I always felt a sense of pride waking up to the shining books published long before I was born. I knew I was a descendant of a writer. But it would be years before I truly appreciated all Jonas did for his country.

\*\*\*

I was on the phone with my dad when I mentioned I planned to research my great-grandfather.

"Just Google his name - there's a room in Chicago dedicated to him."

I was awestruck at his casual tone - but what astounded me more was all I discovered in the first few results.

The *Chicago Tribune* called him "the premier Lithuanian folklore scholar of the United States." The *Washington Post* called him "the head librarian of the Library of Congress's Slavic and Central European division." My dad called him Jonas. I never met him. Or if I did, I was too young to remember.

With a little more browsing I learned that he wasn't just a scholar - he was a savior of Lithuanian culture. But I didn't know exactly how or why. I called my dad back.

"Hello?" His voice echoed over the speaker. I'd caught him during his commute home from work.

"This draft is due tomorrow and I don't want to overwhelm Nana with urgency. I'm just confused about when Lithuania was free and who was trying to control it."

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the Soviet Union and Germany battled for control of "the tiny country on the Baltic Sea" during World War II. According to my dad, Jonas and his family fled to Hamburg, Germany, to avoid persecution.

Suddenly, I'm ten years old and my Nana is reading me her life story. Much of it is going over my head, but her description of hiding in bomb shelters overnight rings in my ears days afterward.

When I googled "Hamburg, Germany WW2" the first match was "Bombings of Hamburg." I instantly imagined the nights of terror my Nana must have faced as a child, and all my great-grandfather went through to find safety for his family. I was still left wondering how and where the folklore came into play.

"If they left Lithuania and were safe," I continued the conversation with my dad, "Why was it Jonas's job to document Lithuanian stories?"

He paused. "When the Soviets gained control, everything was going to revolve around them. Jonas knew that. They didn't care about Lithuanian traditions or culture. They just wanted to standardize Sovietization to wherever they had power. Jonas knew that if he didn't start recording information, Lithuania as he knew it would be gone."

I was silent on the other end, imagining the almighty task taken on generations before me. I felt a sense of familiarity. Jonas knew it was up to him. I couldn't help but relate his passion to my own dreams. The tenacity that carried me from middle school to high school to the best public university in the country. Despite this parallel, my hard work for test grades and successfully-run school events couldn't possibly compare to what he had accomplished.

"... How did he do it?"

My dad described Jonas's work in the United States as well as the free time he spent diving into the pasts of local Lithuanian immigrants.

"Picture this," my dad started, "he'd try to locate any Lithuanian in the Chicago area and beyond and interview them. He'd say, 'Tell me your story' and record it."

The *Washington Post* described Jonas's Library of Congress career, where his "major focus was the collection, recording, classification and publishing of Lithuanian folk songs, folk tales, proverbs, riddles and legends."

Jonas "wrote more than 600 articles and 35 books." I was lucky enough to stumble upon one during my research. It was published on July 11, 2001, and in it, my great-grandfather describes the connection between Lithuanian and Celtic folklore, despite their geographical differences. I've read Shakespeare and many other works by authors who died long ago. But reading the work of my deceased relative was different. I felt uneasy. Poring over my deceased culture-saving ancestor's words, I felt the legacy of writing. Even though I never met my great-grandfather, he began to feel familiar as I perused his work. I pictured myself at age 3, toddling around the house, and Jonas at 92, crafting the perfect description of the origins of Lithuanian and Celtic campfire stories.

\*\*\*

Jonas's son-in-law, my grandpa, whom we called "Paw," battled skin cancer for 15 years before passing during my freshman year of high school. Over Memorial Day weekend of that year, my family took the nine-hour drive to Charlottesville, Virginia, to see him for what would be our last memory together.

Paw had grown up poor. He'd describe his childhood days collecting soda bottle caps and cans to return to the supermarket for money. When his family bought chocolate milk on special occasions, he'd dilute it with whole milk to make it last days longer.

For as long as my siblings and I could remember, Paw wasn't much for presents. He would rather take us to historic monuments, show us new trivia board-games, or play old jazz records. He gave the gift of knowledge.

But on this gorgeous spring day, as light flooded through the family room sun window, Paw was sitting in his usual chair when he called me to come forward. He had a gift bag in his hand - the first and last present I'd ever receive from him. I unwrapped the paper in front of my four siblings and parents to hold up the navy cotton shirt. "University of Vienna" read the white letters across the chest.

"Your great-grandfather was an extraordinary scholar," my grandpa began. "And out of the five of you"-- he motioned to my siblings and me -- "we see you as the most likely to continue this role of success in academia."

My siblings laughed. It was as if I was being summoned by the Greek gods for a mission. I took the gift as a compliment, but I did not understand its full depth. I was only fifteen.

\*\*\*

As I continued research on website #7 of results from the Google search, "Jonas Baly's," a certain line made my heart skip a beat:

"He received a doctorate in cultural anthropology from the University of Vienna in 1933."

Paw's gift finally made sense. I realized the high bar he had set for me - and solely me - before passing. Jonas Baly's saved an entire culture from "Sovietization." And here I am at Michigan pursuing a business degree.

I'm not sure how my path will measure up to my great-grandfather's. Jonas Baly's brought a culture's story to life. One aspiration of mine is to bring Jonas' story to life.

\*\*\*

When I was twelve, my mom informed me that my great-grandfather had died at 102 years old.

"This is a good sign for you," she said, gently brushing my hair off my face. "He died of natural causes. That means you have the chance to live a long, happy life." She dragged out "longggg" in a way that made me smile. We were in the Spotlight Room. Sitting on the edge of the bed, I admired the titles printed on the spines of Jonas's books.

With the summer rays beaming on them, the books seemed to sparkle.



Reverb / Haley Winkle

# The Secret Life of a Succulent

Olivia Sedlacek

I have a little plant that sits on the windowsill in my college dorm room. We are the only living things in the room. I was the only living thing until my plant moved in in October. It's a tiny little thing, just the right size for its clay pot that's less than two inches in diameter. It's the type of plant they call a succulent, with fleshy pink-tinged green leaves stretching towards the sky. Ugh – the word “fleshy” sounds gruesome, but I swear my plant is rather cute.

As soon as I set my plant in its place of honor on the windowsill for the first time, hoping that it would get enough light, I googled how to care for a succulent. I'd heard that you could kill it if you watered it too much, and of course also if you watered it too little. The last thing I wanted was to be responsible for a plant death.

The website that came up first, “World of Succulents,” told me that each type of succulent needed to be cared for differently. It linked to an index of all the types of succulents, an index containing at least two hundred different species.<sup>1</sup> I groaned. My succulent was going to be dead within the hour.

My plant did not die within the hour. I checked it worriedly, but it seemed just as alive as ever.

My plant and I eyed each other. Well, I eyed it – my plant has no eyes to speak of. It couldn't speak of its eyes even if it had them – plants don't have mouths either. Or noses or ears. Although apparently this doesn't mean that they don't have any of the five senses.

An experiment by Heidi Appel, chemical ecologist at the University of Missouri, revealed that plants apparently can hear. Appel played a recording of caterpillars chomping on a leaf in the presence of a plant, which caused the plant to produce defense chemicals, even though its leaves hadn't been touched at all. There was no other way that the plant could have “known” a caterpillar was there other than through sound.<sup>2</sup>

I wondered if my plant was deciding whether it liked me. I wasn't really deciding whether I liked it – what could it do to make me dislike it? I can think of plenty of reasons why my plant might have decided it didn't like me, though. It's indoors, for one – on the inside looking out. Maybe it can tell that the air in here is stale indoor air. Maybe it's choking on the dust that must be accumulating in the room. Maybe it's doing the plant

equivalent of pressing its nose to the window, wishing with all its non-existent heart to be outside in the fresh air where a plant is supposed to be.

Maybe my plant thinks nothing of me at all. Time seems to move so much more quickly for plants – it takes them so much longer to react. To humans, they move agonizingly slowly. Maybe humans are just a blur to plants, not even worth thinking about. Plants thinking – ha! If I were a botanist I would be terrifying my peers right now.

Plant neurobiology, the study of plant signaling and behavior, itself makes most plant scientists very nervous. Terms like “intelligence,” “learning,” and “thinking” should only be used in respect to humans, or at the very least, animals, they argue. Animals are creatures; they act. Plants are living objects; they react.<sup>3</sup>

My plant does not have a brain. That's one thing all the scientists in the world seem to agree on. The term “plant neurobiology” is misleading – no scientist in the world is suggesting that plants actually have neurons. There are just no better terms out there – all the terms used to describe intelligence are anthropocentric, or at least animal-centric. But the fact that my plant is brainless hardly means it can't exhibit intelligent behavior.<sup>4</sup>

It's hard for humans to comprehend how something without a brain can be intelligent. Perhaps it's hard for plants to comprehend how something without leaves can be intelligent. Maybe my plant is baffled that I can exist without roots. Who knows? What helps many scientists wrap their heads around the concept of an intelligent brainless plant is, funnily enough, to compare a plant to a brain. While a brain commands the body, nothing appears to command the brain, much as nothing appears to command a plant. The brain has no central location of control, but the human brain is clearly the source of humans' great intelligence. Likewise, a plant functions in intelligent ways without an organ controlling it.<sup>5</sup>

While saying a plant can think seems to be going too far, a plant certainly makes sophisticated decisions. Is saying a plant “decides” something really much different from saying a plant thinks? Most scientists used to think that plants couldn't make decisions or anticipate events, only chemically react to their present situation. They were wrong – plants anticipate the future in a variety of ways. In an experiment where some roots of a pea plant were put in soil rich with nutrients and other roots in soil with fewer but increasing nutrients, the pea plant allocated more resources towards expanding the roots in the soil with increasing nutrients,



### untitled / Elena Ramirez-Gorski

because it could sense that over time the “investment” would pay off.<sup>6</sup>

There’s even a type of weed that does arithmetic. The Arabidopsis plant produces starch during the day and stores it for night. It divides the amount of starch it has by how long until sunrise to maximize the amount of starch it can consume without running out. Scientists found that the plants are at least 95 percent accurate in their calculations. And these plants do all this without a brain or a central nervous system.<sup>7</sup>

One day, a few weeks after getting my plant, I made my daily observation of the plant and panicked. Its bottom leaves were all shriveled up. They were dying or already dead. I had no idea whether it was serious. Was my plant about to die? Was it something I did? The newer upper leaves seemed to be doing fine. The bottom leaves must not have been getting enough sun. Maybe if I rotated the plant from now on, so the leaves would take turns facing the window, it would solve my problem. Or maybe my plant needed water. Or maybe my plant was sick and there was nothing I could do about it. I didn’t know what I would do if it died and I had its blood on my hands. Metaphorically, of course.

I learned later that cutting off nutrients to parts of the plant that aren’t thriving is another way plants anticipate the future. Plants produce a chemical called auxin in the organs that are succeeding, which in turn triggers the allocation of more resources towards those organs, in the hope of more success.<sup>8</sup>

Plants also have a condition known as “shade avoidance syndrome.” Plants in shade or anticipating shade grow their stalks to avoid being shadowed by another plant. They can distinguish between shade from another plant, which means competition, and shade from an inanimate object, which often means there’s nothing that can be done to avoid it, by the color of the shade. My curtain sometimes shades my plant, but that doesn’t cause the plant to grow quickly in order to beat it to the light, because it knows better.<sup>9</sup>

Now I turn my plant every so often, so all of its lower leaves get a chance to soak up the sun. It takes the plant more time to reorient towards the sun than I thought it would – I seem to remember other plants twisting towards the sun in a matter of hours. It takes my succulent days, which seems odd, because plants can predict the trajectory of the sun and swivel their leaves during the night in anticipation of the sunrise. They can do this even after several days without “seeing” the sun.<sup>10</sup> I wonder if I’m confusing my plant by spinning it around like that. I imagine plants aren’t moved in circles very often in the wild.

I walk by a thousand other plants in the wild every day, and I hardly ever think of them as anything other than things, but my new little plant seems different. I guess it’s the difference between the squirrels that you see run across the street and your pet dog. Not that I would know – I’ve never had a pet. This plant is the closest thing I’ve ever had to one. And it’s hardly a pet. I haven’t named it, I don’t talk to it, and I can’t even tell if it can recognize me. Maybe if I were a plant, it would. Plants can recognize their “kin,” meaning plants of the same species. Plants placed in proximity to their family don’t compete, but share resources. When stressed, plants expel chemicals that neighboring plants can perceive, much as animals emit distress signals.<sup>11</sup> It’s also known that plants constantly produce electrical signals, which may or may not be a form of communication.<sup>12</sup>

Trees seem to be the most cooperative plants of all. In forests, trees form vast networks for sharing warnings and resources. Tall trees nurture saplings until they’re tall enough to reach sunlight. Evergreens with superfluous sugar share with deciduous trees and vice versa. If a disease is affecting trees in one area of the forest, the information is rapidly spread to the rest of the forest. These networks boost overall forest health, benefiting all plants in the network.<sup>13</sup>

But my plant has no network at all. It’s far from its family, which

is native to the desert. It has no neighbors to warn it of herbivores. All it has is me, and we don't know how to communicate with each other. Does my plant feel its lack of friends? Is it lonely?

Plant scientists would emphatically say no. But the world has been emphatically saying no for centuries to all sorts of notions that have proven to be true, many of them involving plants.

An article published in the Kansas City Advocate nearly one hundred years ago on March 19, 1926, begins, "An intoxicated carrot has convinced Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, the British plant psychologist, that plants have intelligence."<sup>14</sup> Despite the article's rather skeptical tone, Sir Jagadish is not wrong. While few recent experiments have been done involving injecting plants with alcohol as Sir Jagadish did, it's been shown to be possible to "knock plants out" using animal anesthesia, putting them into an unresponsive state.<sup>15</sup>

The scientific community used to think that only humans could learn, but recently, a study of the mimosa pudica, a plant that closes up its leaves when disturbed, showed that plants are able to habituate – to learn to ignore irrelevant signals by repetitive exposure to them. When mimosa plants were dropped repeatedly from a safe height, at first their leaves closed up, but after a few drops, they stopped. The plants had figured out that it was safe to ignore the disturbance.<sup>16</sup>

While I've looked at my plant as a type of creature since the day I got it, I now see it as a far more complex being. It's far more complicated than its tiny body would suggest. It calculates, decides, anticipates, hears, learns, shares, competes, and communicates. Much like humans do. And if it can do all that, who's to say it can't think and feel like humans do, too. There is so much left for us to learn about plants. In the meantime, I will continue to water my little plant, but not too much, and hope that if it knows who I am, it likes having me as a roommate.

#### Notes:

1. World of Succulents. Accessed October 8, 2017. <https://worldofsucculents.com>.
2. Michael Pollan, "The Intelligent Plant," *The New Yorker*, December 23, 2013, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/12/23/the-intelligent-plant>.
3. Ibid.
4. Francisco Calvo Garzón, "The Quest for Cognition in Plant Neurobiology," *Plant Signaling and Behavior* 2, no. 4 (2007): 208-211, PubMed Central (PMC2634130).

5. Pollan, "The Intelligent Plant."
  6. Ariel Novoplansky, "Future Perception in Plants." In *Anticipation Across Disciplines*. (n.p.: Springer Link, 2016), 57-70, doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-22599-9\_5.
  7. Antonio Scialdone et al., "Arabidopsis Plants Perform Arithmetic Division to Prevent Starvation," *eLife Sciences* 2 (2013), doi: 10.7554/eLife.00669.
  8. Novoplansky, "Future Perception in Plants."
  9. Ibid.
  10. Garzón, "The Quest for Cognition."
  11. Novoplansky, "Future Perception in Plants."
  12. Eric D. Brenner et al., "Plant Neurobiology: An Integrated View of Plant Signaling," *Trends in Plant Science* 11, no. 8 (2006), doi: 10.1016/j.tplants.2006.06.009.
  13. Pollan, "The Intelligent Plant."
  14. "New Scientific Light on Plant Intelligence," Kansas City Advocate, March 19, 1926, America's Historical Newspapers.
  15. Pollan, "The Intelligent Plant."
  16. Ibid.
- Bibliography:
- Brenner, Eric D., Rainer Stahlberg, Stefano Mancuso, Jorge Vivanco, Franisek Baluska, and Elizabeth Van Volkenburgh. "Plant Neurobiology: An Integrated View of Plant Signaling." *Trends in Plant Science* 11, no. 8 (2006). doi: 10.1016/j.tplants.2006.06.009.
- Garzón, Francisco Calvo. "The Quest for Cognition in Plant Neurobiology." *Plant Signaling and Behavior* 2, no. 4 (2007): 208-211. PubMed Central. no: PMC2634130.
- "New Scientific Light on Plant Intelligence." Kansas City Advocate, March 19, 1926. America's Historical Newspapers.
- Novoplansky, Ariel. "Future Perception in Plants." In *Anticipation Across Disciplines*. n.p.: Springer Link, 2016. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-22599-9\_5.
- Pollan, Michael. "The Intelligent Plant," *The New Yorker*, December 23, 2013. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/12/23/the-intelligent-plant>.
- Scialdone, Antonio, Sam T. Mugford, Doreen Feike, Alastair Skeffington, Philippa Borrill, Alexander Graf, Alison M. Smith, and Martin Howard. "Arabidopsis Plants Perform Arithmetic Division to Prevent Starvation." *eLife Sciences* 2 (2013). doi: 10.7554/eLife.00669.
- World of Succulents. Accessed October 8, 2017. <https://worldofsucculents.com>.

# Malleable Beings

Rachel Hurwitz

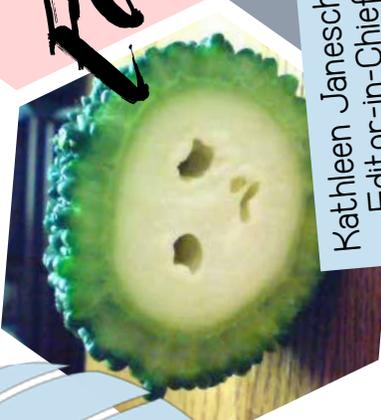
We are a catacomb of pipelines tracing oxygenated blood to the tips of our flesh and deoxygenated rivers back to our four-chambered pump. I heard once, that we are constructed like donuts, one tube running from our mouths to our anuses, so that the deeper you go in our bodies, the closer you get to our outer surface. We are tension lines, pulling desperately on one another to keep us together. We are motored feet following train tracks of filament, one foot in front of the other carrying protein burdens like Atlas did. We are a continuous ray of touch, feel, gentle, love. We are crystalline structures, strong but ever malleable. We are bubbles of fat and air and pockets of nutrients that we will eventually part with. We are maps of nerves, electrical pulses our telegrams, chemicals our instant messenger. We are incredible beings. We are not unique.

# Yellow Light

Hannah Brauer

I have a confession to make as I step out of your moving car but I know I will never have the chance to tell you  
Even if you slow to a stop up the road blockaded into the traffic jam just past the next bridge  
Even if you refuse to move until we make amends  
the yellow street lamps lighting the asphalt  
will me to stay on the shoulder  
Their sheen holds me in the space between stop and go  
  
I will always see your car up ahead with its bright brake lights  
but I know that I will never run to it  
We will never turn red  
will never turn green  
Everything unsaid will remain unsaid and though I have this confession to make  
I'd rather hold it within me  
than step out of my indolent cowardice into the flow of traffic  
  
I'd rather us stay  
in this yellow light.

# the Editor's Garden



Kathleen Janeschek  
Editor-in-Chief



Anne Elise



Natalie Steers  
Poetry Editor



Hannah Brauer  
PR Editor



Mady Martin  
Art Editor



Camilla Lizundia



Olivia Sedlacek



Rachel Hurwitz  
Prose Editor



Elizabeth Stanley  
Layout Editor



Shashank Rao  
Grammar Editor

