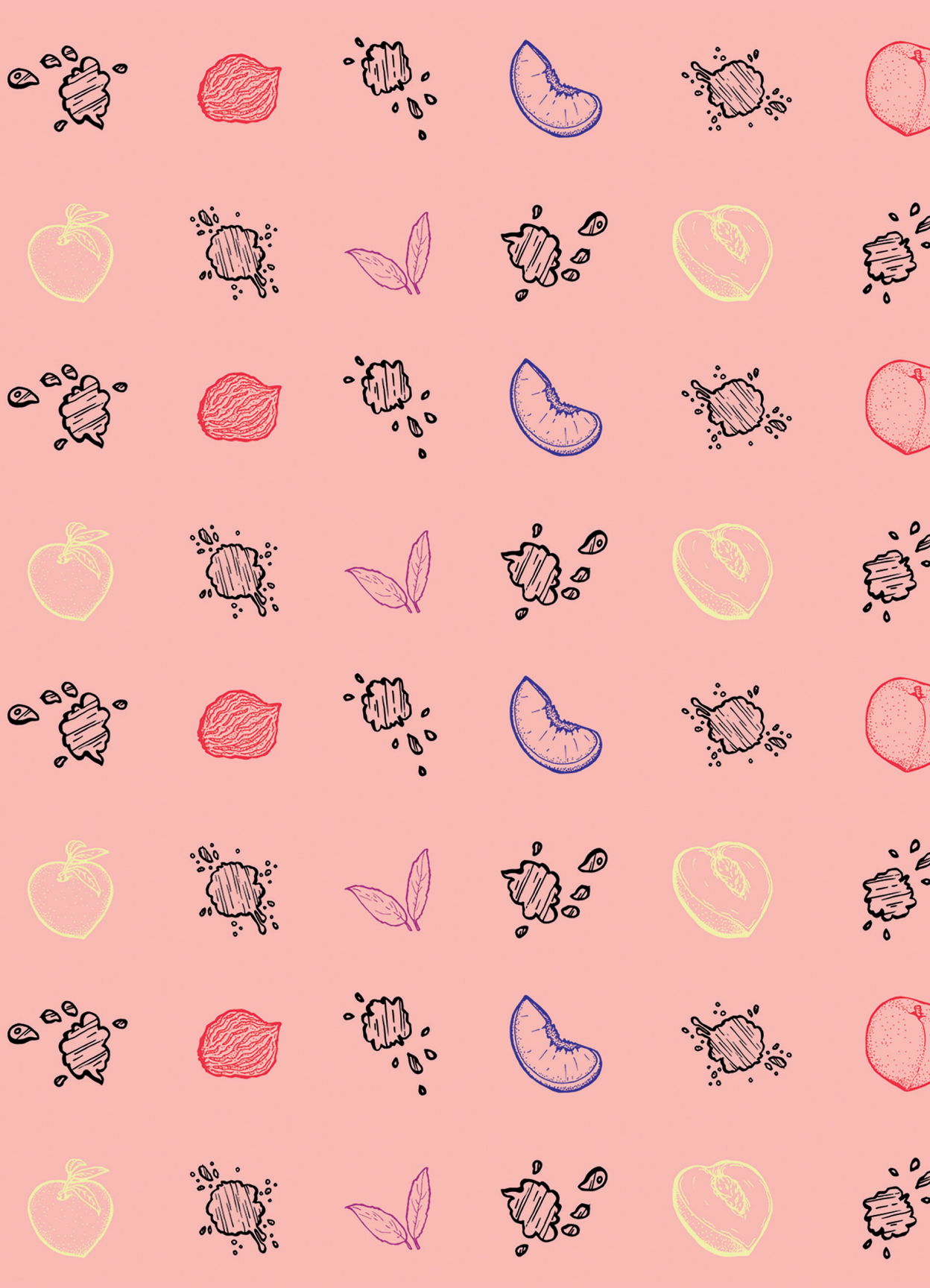




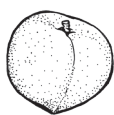
Peach Mag

SEASON 1 YEARBOOK



Peach Mag

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

A little more than a year ago, Matthew Bookin and I were playing a game on the walk home from Essex Street Pub in Buffalo in which you pair a random word or phrase with *Press*, *Books*, *House*, or *Mag*. The game was invented because we had been joking about how difficult and funny it can be to try to keep up with all the different names of small presses and magazines in the literary world, and we'd been playing it for months.

"Milk Mag," Bookin said.

"Bug Bite Press," I said back.

"Blue Books," he said.

"Fish House," I said back.

"Peach Mag," one of us eventually said. Neither of us remembers who said it first, but it stuck, and we always came back to it during future rounds of the game. *Peach Mag*, reads a journal entry from around that time. *Can't take "orange" seriously.*

We had mused about starting a literary magazine before, but the idea remained stagnant for a while. Around the same time, the annual Buffalo Small Press Book Fair had its final run, and Bre Kiblin and I were working together at Talking Leaves...Books, Buffalo's oldest independent bookstore. Surrounded by shelves dedicated to local authors and posters advertising local literary events, she and I spent many shifts talking about which spaces were missing in Buffalo, and how we might endeavor to fill them.

Fast forward a year, and I'm emailing thirty-three writers and artists in regard to their work that we are about to publish in our first print project: the *Season 1 Yearbook*. We had established *Peach Mag*, the online literary magazine that houses the work of more than a hundred people from all corners of the country as well as many parts of the world. Through it, we launched *Episodes*, the reading series that has so far invited eight visiting writers to read alongside dozens of local writers in Buffalo. Shortly after the new year, we introduced *Peach Picks*, our column in *The Public*, Buffalo's premier altweekly newspaper, in which we review books, creative writing published online, and local readings and literary events. We've organized a poetry reading to raise funds for local refugee resettlement agency Journey's End, nominated four talented writers for The Pushcart Prize, participated in Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center's installment of *Art + Feminism*, a

day of authoring and editing the Wikipedia articles of women and nonbinary poets and writers, and gone on tour with our friends at *Shabby Doll House* to six different Northeastern cities. Looking back on that walk home with Bookin, it's nothing short of insane to think of how *Peach Mag* has grown from a tiny vision into what it is today in just one year.

For that reason, the focus of our freshman yearbook is growth. Just as we're looking back at how we've grown in the last year, we asked thirty-three *Season 1* contributors to do the same. In the pages that follow, you'll find the poem, story, or visual art series that we originally published at *Peach* alongside a second piece. The only guideline, we told them, was that the second piece must be either very new or very old in comparison with the first. The *Peach Mag Season 1 Yearbook* is a *Then and Now* of style, content, and form. We were inspired by the feeling of opening a yearbook in June, flipping to the photograph that was taken in September, and thinking, "This doesn't look anything like me anymore."

For a team of people who claim to specialize in the artful construction of words, Matthew, Bre, and I are a bit at a loss for how proud and thankful we are for our contributors, readers, and each other. *Peach* has become the love of our lives, and we can't wait to find out what will happen in the seasons to come.

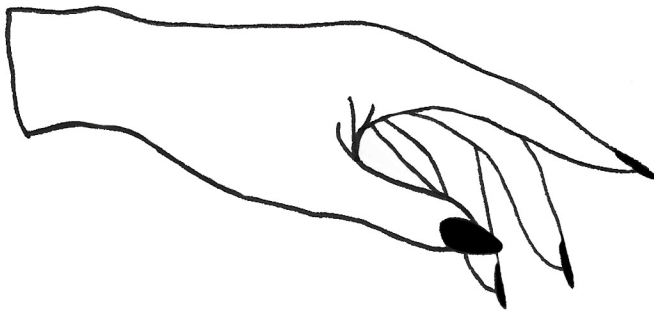
As always, thank you for reading. We hope you enjoy.

<3,
Rachelle Toarmino
Editor in Chief

ALANA KELLEY

from things I've never said to you

HOW WE TOUCH



AND DON'T TALK ABOUT IT

YOU SHOULD BE HERE



WITH ME

from subtitle series

**I THOUGHT I'D FEEL HAPPY,
BUT I JUST FEEL LOST.**

**I JUST DECIDED
I WANTED YOU
TO BE THERE.**

ALANA KELLEY IS A POET AND VISUAL ARTIST FROM BUFFALO, NY. BOTH HER WRITING AND VISUAL ART CENTERS AROUND EXPERIENCES OF SEMI-SUCCESSFUL ROMANCES AND CERTAIN SENSE OF A CONSTANT VOID. HER WORK COMBINES COMEDY AND MELANCHOLY, EXPOSING THE WHIMSICALLY RELATABLE HEARTACHES BETWEEN HER AND HER AUDIENCES IN ORDER TO TRY AND CREATE CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF ROMANTICISM.

The Golf Course

Early reports indicated the course was under attack. It was hard to tell. It was bigger than any other golf course. It wasn't located on the outskirts or in the more sprawling suburbs, like most golf courses. It had been built directly adjacent to the financial district of the city. Twelve miles wide east to west and roughly fifteen miles north to south, it was one of the biggest golf courses in the world, offering regular tournaments from beginner to amateur to professional to world class, as well as a few country clubs, each catering differently to different demographics, whether PGA tour members or local high school teams or college bros or financial bros or middle-aged housewives or alt 20-somethings or alt teens or birthday parties for little kids with their friends. It was an amusement park and an athletic complex, a social space and an office space. The attacks had started at the Republican National Convention, downtown inside the football stadium, packed with Liberty Originalists. Protesters infiltrated the convention floor, interrupting a speech by the 47th President. The Liberty Originalists did not like that there were protesters there. They had guns, as was their philosophy and habit. One of the Originalists opened fire on the protesters, or at least fired a shot. Police do have a suspect in custody, but I am not permitted to disclose their identity at this time.

The shooting caused the Homeland Security officers guarding the convention to assume a formation responsive to hostile fire, based on drone feed showing that the shots had come from the area nearby where the protesters were concentrated. Following an outbreak of hand-to-hand violence, a protester gained possession of an officer's weapon, causing another officer -- young and in his first month of active duty -- to fire an impulsive shot at the protester, who had the firearm aimed at him. After this second round of fire, the crowd dispersed, running for

the exits. Protesters outside the stadium, having watched the events from the Mega-Jumbo-Tron above the entrance, began running in fear, some running at the officers stationed outside, others running towards the bridge, to get over the river and out of downtown before they were injured or killed. The convention stadium lights were shut down, although the patriotic convention decor remained as the night grew darker and the noise in the city did not die. Explosions and shots rang throughout the night, into the early morning, although law enforcement, as well as the media, thought that the disturbances were contained in the midtown entertainment district.

As the national morning news shows began reporting that the violence had almost subsided, there was a separate report from a blog with no more than 100 readers a day, claiming that there had been an attack on a gun store, Winston Holsters, that was located in a suburb named Cambria Hills. This report was not known to members of the major news media. Cambria Hills was not a community that knew much violence. It had an idyllic downtown, along with a sprawling mini-mall highway lasting four miles, before it reached the golf course, where it became an underground tunnel lasting almost ten miles under the greens and ponds of the course, before it reached the beginning of downtown. The Cambria Hills police department responded to the disturbance with dozens of officers, but by the time they arrived there were only two dead clerks and a ransacked store.

Thinking that the national media was correct and disturbances were abating, the regular Monday morning golfers kept their tee times, joined by an influx of finance workers who had been told their offices were closed for the day, following the previous day's incident.

At the 18th hole of Course #26 (known as “The Greenest Course”), two elderly men who played every week were each eyeing their putts when one of them noticed a group of several dozen masked people approaching from the thick hanging trees nearby.

“What is this?” said one of the old men, as he was rushed by several of the masked people, who threw him to the ground, pointing their weapons at him and then also at his partner, who threw his hands up. A puddle of dark appeared on the crotch of his khaki pants, streaming down until it came out onto his foot.

“The motherfucker pissed himself,” said one of the masked people, with a man’s voice.

They tied up the two old golfers, dragged them over to the forest area, shoved them down a little ravine, turned around, squatted down, and began moving slowly in unison around the green.

After creeping around several holes, they raced across the green towards the country club on the hill. A few citizens eating brunch pointed at the people running towards them, amused or confused or both about why there were people in masks running.

He was not at all trained in handling terrorist negotiations, which is what he was now being asked to do, since the protesters had demanded that the negotiator be both local and someone with a resume of nonviolent interaction with the community.

The phones at 9-1-1 began ringing, with calls of terror from different clubs throughout the golf course. At about 11 am, a livestream was broadcasted of the events taking place in one of the clubs. A group of terrorists had members of the political and business establishment sitting in blindfolds against a backdrop of newspapers dated from that morning, most with photographs of one of the protesters shot in the stadium the day before, her mouth open, apparently screaming, and her hands against her abdomen. It had already become iconic.

On the livestream, the armed protesters de-

manded that the president throw his support to a candidate other than his vice president, who was known as one of the most extreme members of the administration, in terms of both ideology and tactics. He was favored to win the brokered convention, but only with the support of the president.

In addition, the armed protesters demanded that the two shooters - the Liberty Originalist and the Homeland Security officer - be immediately brought before a demographically diverse jury of their peers, with the assumption that both would be proven guilty if given a swift, democratic, and orderly trial.

John Malone was a Homeland Security official based in the local office as the head of the Department of Community Relations. He was in charge of organizing outreach efforts to local schools and games and giveaways for consumers at local airports and transportation hubs, designed to humanize the officials of his federal department. He was not at all trained in handling terrorist negotiations, which is what he was now being asked to do, since the protesters had demanded that the negotiator be both local and someone with a resume of nonviolent interaction with the community. He had been given a brief script,

boilerplate answers, all with the gist of “We do not negotiate with terrorists.”

As he arrived via helicopter at the golf course, Malone was awed by a landscape he had never seen: the state-of-the-art series of courses stretching for miles, with the downtown cityscape in the background. He thought, Why haven’t I done this before? Why haven’t I just taken a helicopter and gone sight-seeing?

The protesters sent a message to the department helicopter, warning that they should land at least five hundred meters away from the

clubhouse.

"We're going to have to do what they say," said the pilot. "It's what the brass wants us to do. They said obey what the terrorists say in terms of the meet-up, but don't give in on the verbal end."

Malone nodded. He wasn't really listening. His mind was on the people he was going to be dealing with. These weren't Islamic jihadists or militant separatists. These were ordinary people. College students and civil rights activists were the main groups representing the protests, according to the intel he had received.

Walking into the country club, he saw people gagged and blindfolded on the floor and tables.

"Stop there, you fuck," said a woman's voice. He looked across the room and saw a masked woman pointing a rifle at him.

"Don't move," she said.

She walked over to him, rifle still pointed, and spit on his chest.

"You're the one they sent?" she asked.

"I am," he said.

"Get the fuck out of here."

He turned to leave and felt her shove the rifle into his back.

"I didn't really mean to leave, you idiot."

He turned back around. She took off her mask, revealing blushed cheeks and tangled standing curly hair.

"Come with me," she said, motioning him forward. The gun remained at his back. Crossing into the next room, he saw a few people, presumably terrorists, with masks off sitting around a large conference table eating brunch. Five bottles of hot sauce were on the table. What in the hell could they need all that hot sauce for? Malone thought.

"Who are you?" said a man sitting at the end of

the table.

"My name is Malone. I was sent here by the Department of Homeland Security, on the directive of the President himself."

"Oh really? He really cares?"

"I don't know. I know that he wants to resolve this conflict."

"Does he? Then why hasn't he given us justice?"

"The President wants to resolve the situation and open up a dialogue that can lead to lasting peace and progress."

"What the hell does that mean?"

"The government of the United States is meant to represent you, not oppose you. We hope that we can eventually work together to find common ground, as this is your cause as much as anyone else's."

Malone added that last part on his own, a little bit of improv. It didn't sound right.

"You're right this is our ground," said a man sitting in a patio chair next to where Malone stood.

"So what are you supposed to say to us, huh?" said the first guy at the far end of the table.

"I am supposed to find a way to peacefully resolve this. For you to put down your guns and join us in a conversation. We admit that blood has been shed and pain has been felt. Help us make this right."

The guy at the end of the table eyed Malone, then approached him, slowly.

"You can't give us shit, can you?" he asked once he was inches from Malone's face.

"No," said Malone, "I'm afraid the United States does not negotiate with terrorists."

"That's what I thought," the guy said. He took Malone by the scalp, tugging his hair, and kicked him in the groin.

"Come with me," he said. He dragged him out to the greeting room. He ordered him to strip. Malone didn't move. The guy pointed a handgun at Malone's head. Malone took off his pants and suit and tie and shirt, leaving only his underwear and socks. The guy glared at him, pushing the gun closer into his head. Malone took off his underwear and socks. The guy grabbed his hair again, shoving him onto the balcony overlooking a waterfall.

"Please, don't," said Malone.

The guy pushed him off the balcony, his naked body falling, flailing until it hit the bottom of the falls, blood streaming red into the light blue water pool that was there.

Sirens sounded, cars emerged from the perimeters of the green, and helicopters appeared above the trees, all heading towards the clubhouse. Shots rang repeatedly, then less and less after several minutes. Explosions continued periodically throughout the afternoon, birds scurrying in crowds after each blast. As the sun reached its peak, the explosions finally ceased, and the birds again settled, this time on the bodies of protesters, bloody and bleeding all over the golf course.

The course manager had survived, as it had been his one day off for that week. He arrived there later that afternoon, with military, police, and emergency health officials everywhere. He thought about when they might be able to re-open and if the massacre would be bad for business. Perhaps, they could make it into a memorial of some sort. Would that be profitable?

The Same Flavors

1

A prisoner. A common killer. All of the guards would look at him. He could tell that they wanted to kill him or at least beat the shit out of him. Calling him scum. They hated him. He'd dared to question that they weren't capable of protecting their citizens anymore. His involvement in the hostage crisis at the country club had shown that he was one of those growing number of so-called militants who thought they were able to protect people's rights better than the officers of the law. A light-pink-red-brown shade of food that smelled vaguely of cleaning materials was what he ate everyday. The same flavors. Over and over.

His first treatise was about the way that capital is used to form toxic social relationships, degrade the organic world, take control of your body, create all sorts of intercontinental conflicts and stalemates. There was always a bubble of money but not really money because what is money? But there was a sense that it didn't matter. This was the topic of his second treatise.

This next publication was an all-out call-to-arms. Some said it was somewhere between a suicide note and an edict of surrender.

His execution was the first painless one in the history of the world. It had been lauded by liberals and progressives desperate to make a compromise. These forward thinking people thought that it was the dawning of a new humane era. There was no pain at all, they said.

2

It could happen at any time. They were going to kill him. There would be no pain. The food would digest. He would slowly get tired. He would fall asleep. He would die without even thinking the word "die."

It would be over an hour and a half sometime during the next week, when he would have a chance to prepare for death and know it was

coming, without the terror of knowing exactly when. It would be like a normal death. It could happen anytime. It would happen in a prison.

Protesters stood outside, but they weren't of the more confrontational types that had become commonplace in the years leading up to the convention attack and the hostage crisis at the country club. These new protesters were purely peaceful. They had no intention to try to disrupt the proceedings. They just wanted to be heard. Murder was a sin, even when it was committed by the state, they'd say. We have to stand up and say something.

But you will not do anything, will you? thought the prisoner.

No, we will certainly not, said the protesters to him in a lucid dream he was having, two minutes before he would die.

3

No one thought that emo revival music would become popular. It did. It was responsible for many of the anthems that one could hear at the anti-execution protests. They would all close their eyes and sway.

The prisoner was waiting for his last two minutes before dying, then he was a clown performing naked in front of a group of senior citizens, then he realized he was the prisoner still and he was going to hell, then he realized he was lucid dreaming, then he vaguely from far off heard emo revival music playing, then he was on stage performing to a large audience but also sort of a small audience that was being broadcast on a television, then he was sitting on a couch in the clothes he had arrived to prison in, watching himself in emo gear on the television, screaming optimistically but depressed at the same time, hoping that someday this wouldn't end and he would be back here and there would be no space between dreams and reality.

ANDREW DUNCAN WORTHINGTON IS THE AUTHOR OF THE NOVEL *WALLS* (CIVIL COPING MECHANISMS, 2014) AND THE STORY COLLECTION *DELETE SPACE* (FORTHCOMING FROM MONSTER HOUSE PRESS, 2017). HE TEACHES ENGLISH AND SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NEW YORK CITY. MORE AT ANDREWDUNCANWORTHINGTON.COM AND [TWITTER.COM/SIMPLYWORTHO](https://twitter.com/SIMPLYWORTHO).

You keep me up at night

Yesterday I drove four hours to the ocean
& slept in a Motel 6 where the freeway
ends, the sign's pink halcyon flare & all
the washed out stars. It made me
think of the glow-in-the-dark crystals
I've been growing underneath my bed,
how sometimes their light keeps me up
at night. But they don't keep me up
the way you keep me up.

You keep me up at night cause you can't
stop talking. We lay our bodies down &
your anxiety rots like fruit
on the vine—

you (2:58 am): “can i just say one last thing & then i'll be done.
just one last thing i swear”

I want to ask if you are ever afraid to speak
cause you might ruin the purity of the ritual,
but sometimes you eat Xanax just to check
your email. Worms drown often & drowning
doesn't scare you but the ocean does. In 2009
my dad wrapped himself in Saran wrap every
sober & endless night to protect himself
in his dreams.

you (3:17 am): “i want to buy this pair of orthopedic skechers
but i don't want you to stop loving me”

One day you will die & become reincarnated
as a man who stands on the street with
camouflage pants & a neutral expression.
You'll press the crosswalk button repeatedly,
the frown lines on your temples decaying like
the skin of a melon. There is a rabbit god
who plays with the moon, & on some nights
he sinks his teeth into it like my ambient
cruelty towards the hands that hold me.

you (3:33 am): “are you asleep?”
me (3:34 am): “no”

I’m working on loving you the way dogs
slobber on the backseats of minivans.
I’m hoping for an afterlife that looks like
the Windows screensaver. In the mornings
you wake up & tell me how you dreamt of
sleeping. I can never remember my dreams.
You say that’s ok.

nevermind im going to stop bringing my diary to the party

i am going to close my eyes for a while

i am going to listen to nic explain why
hes afraid of towels but ok with dying

'there are a lot of germs
on towels & you want to stay clean after
you come out of the shower'

'after you die your body becomes
a colony of germs so thats fine'

i have dreams of dying
but in those dreams i always
find a way to live. sometimes
its breezy & other times
i glue my eyelids down
till the sun comes. i lay
on my spine & watch it pour
down in pixels over the
sheets

i am just in time for nothing
in particular

+

this morning my mom texted me: 'well
by now i have accept you will never be
happy person'

'...'

i am happy person mom

i am so happy person i listen to blink182
inside of burger king

i am so happy person i drink milkshakes
with dried blood still caked on my face

(gold shag, black cherry, pink cheeks
nosebleed on the sheets)

i am girl waking up in sack
of flesh waking up in sea of
dudes waking up in bus thats
broken down

+

i hope one day i wake up in an afterlife
that is the windows screensaver

+

my roommate keeps her dead
pets in the freezer when shes too sad
to bury them

she told me a myth that
goes like: who is
the fox spirit that sleeps in the woods
his fur is pasty
as a lagoon & he lights cigarettes
with a blue flame on the tip
of his tongue. he is your theology of
sadness, to be both
the sadist & the masochist. why
must a sorrow unmolested come
only when you scrape
out the moldy
fruit, when you let it rot
on the vine—

i said camiel can you stop

i only keep dead vegetables in the freezer & i feel fine

but i think purgatory is less
like a swamp

& more like the deep end of
the ymca pool

i drown in it with
the same consistency as songbirds
who wake up just as day
breaks

+

laying in bed my mom calls
to say: 'yesterday
i yell at the ocean. hope this year
you will not die'

mom i know
of the symbiosis between myself
& my afflictions
how it has a monopoly over
the real yet
believes only in psychosis

yea i have a shrunken head
but ill still cut
my bangs with safety scissors

spit frothing in the palm of my hand

look at my body
in its sun-glittering crudeness

i am chill girl

i am happy person

i am ivy growing on the side
of the freeway

ANGIE SIJUN LOU IS FROM SEATTLE. THIS FALL
SHE WILL BEGIN A PHD PROGRAM IN LITERATURE
AND CREATIVE WRITING AT UC SANTA CRUZ. SHE
TWEETS @KUNTALOPE AND IS WILLING TO SHARE
HER TOOTHBRUSH WITH ANYONE SHE LOVES.

boy things

most sweet in the distant
shoots of my own body
something warm was my

no chill heart some hills
and delicate noise
delicate nose touches mine
sweet eyes and purple syllables
wildly caressing the wind

you sounded smaller
I cut the light
filling it with body
fumbling knees tangled shadows
delight in the becoming

crushed to pieces the earth could feel it
time crashes into things
a fake cliff to fall off of
remember the red dirt
that's me

simple timing, nestled tissue,
emboldened features
and light there is often
kindness in pain

can you know beautiful passion
without a field
of red words
without an exponential hurt
without a garden of shame

goldenrods quickly
drowned the hills
in the softest yellow

limbs exist and fill spaces
the occupation is overwhelming
forms don't want to be defined

just felt
the sky is manically pink
thoughtlessly the trees are swaying in the
wind wet with rain
hate whispers with precision
cross street and quicken

shift the weight of a body to the night
of possible deaths

untitled

oh you look so beautiful
in the light like that
a lot of tall grass makes it all a painting

trash bags inverted by the wind
billow up into figures
moving like there's
a great deal on a used car
somewhere

i was walking in the rain and listening to
blood orange, i was wet, sometimes
the earth fucks me like this
that good dirt

spanked into my trauma hole
not quite a flashback, closer to ketamine
so completely falling through time
if you know what i mean

i am circling around it
it feels like gym class
i am on the ground and boys are
throwing basketballs
at my head

a broken poppystalk,
now a broken time machine in bed

ASH STRANGE IS A POET AND ARTIST CURRENTLY
BASED IN PHILADELPHIA, BUT ORIGINALLY FROM
ROCHESTER, NY. THEY CAN BE FOUND ON TWITTER
POSTING ABOUT CARLY RAE JEPSEN
@TENDERBOY420.

Bildungsroman Is One of My Favorite Words

Marissa Cooper was dead.
Serena Vanderwoodsen was a cloud.
People talked like a karate movie dub *chop, chop* on Grey's Anatomy.

I thought about what I would wear the next day, channeling all the
hot quirky girls in groups of hot normy friends.

I attempted vague campaigns of Self destruction.
I watched sad movies,
read Jean Paul Sartre on weekend nights,
attempted to eat only Lucky Charms and salad
but I just ended up hungry sitting in my big ten dorm room.

Emil Sinclair was rich
Holden Caulfield was rich
Gene Forester was rich.

I shoved my hands into my pockets as I walked out into the fall night,
channeling all the sad white boys in the world.
I went to another dorm for a late night snack.

It seemed like you could only be existential from the center of the universe,
but there I was, teleporting from the underside of one rock to another,
wondering about myself as a point on a plane.

Poor social skills made me bad at art school.
I watched too many TV dramas
and had poor expectations.

Somewhere in the midst of all that plotting was a good old middle class
black hole.

Cat Sitting

My legs are in black tights
and they seem foreign on this antique couch.
I am undergoing an act
that is traditional among my new peers.
I want to express myself through Instagram
but the visual language of this place
is overwhelming and it's difficult to draw boundaries.
Maybe I'll just text someone a series of small phrases.
I feel a special tension that I can't ignore,
it draws me toward time's true vortex.
I am floating in an elite space
that is filled with white light.
It lacks the conventional sense of gravity.
I feel a little dizzy
because I've been walking rings
around a rosy outlook that lacks
a conventional sense of cause and affect.
I'm the type of person that
takes a few bites of a fancy salad
then takes a walk around a garden
to decide how I feel.
I dance around the empty cylinders
at the center of time.
I walk around singing
Mac Demarco's "Chamber of Reflection"
in my friends' empty home.
Their cat stares me down and
I get uncomfortable, so i pet it and
allow it to sit in my lap a little while.

BREE JO'ANN HAS A SUPER USEFUL FICTION
WRITING DEGREE FROM COLUMBIA COLLEGE
CHICAGO, A SPACEMAN FOR A HUSBAND, AND A
SMOL BABY NAMED AFTER A NATURAL
PHENOMENON. HER WORK CAN ALSO BE FOUND AT
FAFCOLLECTIVE.COM, MONSTERHOUSEPRESS.COM,
AND RADIOACTIVEMOAT.COM. FIND HER ON TWITTER
@HOW2BARADWYTCH.

CAROLINE RAYNER

smoke show

fucked up my knees on saturday morning in the park backflip gone
raw like jam i can feel it oozing attracting bees i slip
into the pond & swim down where snakes live with centipedes

i never heal

i keep picking stinging nettles & making bouquets why

heavy light pins me like a starfish with a morning routine
shredded coconut costs extra cucumber lotion costs extra weed
costs extra can anyone even afford spiritual retreat i pull
out my eyelashes at karaoke because the supermoon made me

california by grimes plays on my car radio when i leave early

while i suck on a lemon peel this time i know even less eat
even less & trust no one already tried fitting myself inside
a snail shell already tried ripping myself open with amethyst &
clawing out like i read birth charts

i wore chambray but like what else could i give

what else

what could i take back

excerpt from mimosa

I could feel the house burning from where I was standing.

Sally Mann calls it radical light. "Time slows down, becomes ecstatic." Yet she caught it. Wet plate collodion because she said she wanted more kill. Packed the darkroom, rambled from Virginia down to Alabama and Mississippi and Louisiana. Explosive chemicals. Worth it. Roots like bones thrashing heavy mist. Gash still fresh in bark. Leaked spirit. Unclean.

Number one crush and I will never recover. I have witnessed it. Blown as the world gains consciousness. Evaporating like magic until shattered and flung upon branch and ridge. I have witnessed.

I know the way this kind of light slices the collarbone wide open. Yet, anyone who claims to be just as honest late in the afternoon while unearthing quartz should not be trusted. When I was told not to repeat cicada, I wrote it by hand one hundred thousand times in a journal I buried then set on fire.

Patch of grass next to the river made holy.

I know the way this kind of light isolates as coconut shaken
from a bowl until suddenly loveless with overwhelm and the trees blur
themselves out. Perhaps this is how I learned to slip between bodies in a
crowded basement for the visceral nightmare I crave. Glittered eyelids
with a shaved head even though I remain afraid. Not bold. Just dressed
in black. Vintage. Nothing else matters because I have seen the greatest
band in the world.

Skin is just fabric easily ripped when confronted with desire in
the form of interference only more chaotic and filled with screaming.

No one has ever protected me but would I have allowed such a
cleanse?

I consider myself uninhabitable.

CAROLINE RAYNER IS A WRITER AND TEACHER
FROM VIRGINIA CURRENTLY LIVING IN WESTERN
MASSACHUSETTS. SHE IS AN MFA CANDIDATE AT
UMASS-AMHERST. SHE HAS A CHAPBOOK CALLED
CALORIE WORLD FROM SAD SPELL PRESS, AND HER
WORK CAN BE FOUND IN *SHABBY DOLL HOUSE*, *NO*
TOKENS, *SCUM*, AND ELSEWHERE. SHE
TWEETS @SCAROLINE9.

summer is something you hold onto

i used to consider spitting into your palms
letting you and only you press
your face in my face while i was crying
tobacco is the smell of your bedroom
when i am or am not inside of it
worried about the progress of boxes
squares and windows that chase me
or the back of my head in your night
rolling over and hearing a palm tense
into the center of something undone
coming apart between my fingers
stretched out across our mountain
needing affection a stone
i used to consider spitting into your palms
the smooth surface of what i can throw

slow rise

you're sober
unforgettable

i'm drooling
i want morning

to move you
help

breaking hearts
your hands

waiting
isn't time

a soft sound
tackling you

CATCH BUSINESS IS THE CO-FOUNDER OF WITCH
CRAFT MAGAZINE AND THE AUTHOR OF *ABLE TO /*
ALWAYS WILL (CCM, 2016).

Little Girl Blue

I want Glossier Stretch Concealer & Perfecting Skin Tint
in shade Light. My insides are shade Blue.
My skin is thin, but I can cover all that up.

When Karen Carpenter sang “Your hope is getting slender”
about the Little Girl Blue, did she mean that she’s losing hope
or that her hope is to get more slender, or both?

Pulp’s song “Little Girl With Blue Eyes” goes
“Little girl with blue eyes, there’s a hole in your heart
and one between your legs / You’ve never had to wonder

which one he’s going to fill / In spite of what he says.”
Jarvis Cocker wrote this song about his mom.
He states in his book *Mother, Lover, Brother*

“I came across a picture of my mother on her wedding day
in which she looked very young and apprehensive.
My mother’s eyes are actually hazel.”

Blue bruises the truth.
So is blue a cliché way to talk about sadness?
Or is sadness a cliché way to talk about blue?

My apprehensive blue eyes are actually hazel, too.
My hope is getting slender, too.
My thin skin burns blue.

Emily Dickinson wrote a series of letters
addressed to Master. No one knows who Master is.
In one of them she writes

“Master—open your life wide, and take me in forever,
I will never be tired—I will never be noisy
when you want to be still—I will be your best little girl.”

So women are meant to be girls
and girls are meant to be little
and little girls are meant to be blue.

Little girls can have so much power.
In the Salem witch trials, the accusers were predominantly
preteen girls. Women were hung on their word.

Dead skin turns blue – lack of oxygen.
When I was a little girl I felt for the first time
a hole between my legs, heavy-wet with bluewater sadness.

It still gapes open sometimes to let the sadness seep out
like a dead witch's pooling blood.
I don't know why blue needs to happen.

It's hard to scratch my way out of this ocean.

Kneeling

My heart open like a burst fig my coffee
a pool staring back at me it's dark & when
I'm not home I wake up with bug bites I'm
never home anymore my body is not home
to me it is a center I am trying to find I
imagine waking up next to the same person
for years & looking at them & thinking only
who are you? do I know you? because I do
that sometimes, I put on my blue dress &
go to church & kneel when the priest says
but when it nears its finish & communion
comes it is bitter on my lips & I don't want it
I lick it up anyway I hold in my burst heart
I say "yes I know you" I walk slowly home

FRANCESCA KRITIKOS IS FROM CHICAGO. HER
POETRY HAS APPEARED IN *BUNNY MAG*, *ALIEN SHE*
ZINE, *HOBART*, AND MORE. HER FIRST CHAPBOOK,
IT FELT LIKE WORSHIP, WAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY
SAD SPELL PRESS.

A Plot of Ocean

Hillary and Angela were in the corner, folding napkins into shapes that looked like vaginas.

"So how long have you been in Australia?" asked Hillary. Hillary was broad, taller than Angela, with her hair pulled back into a low pony tail.

"About two months. You?" Angela was slim and petite. She had a round face with large, wide-set eyes. They looked nothing alike, although probably to a lot of the other caterers from Pinnacle they could have been twins. They had exactly the same complexion. Both of their faces had gone red carrying the ice buckets.

"I just got here," said Hillary, "a week ago. I'm going to save up money for a van and drive to Byron Bay. You should come."

"Cool," said Angela.

They were both in uniform: starched white shirts, striped ties and black trousers. It was their second shift working a banquet together. Every week the caterers, mostly backpackers, called Pinnacle Headquarters on Flinders Street and the agents gave them shifts. Angela had been working all week and she had another shift the next morning, even though the dinner service wouldn't end until after one.

Yuko called them for the main. Each caterer retrieved plates, either meat or vegetarian, from the festering chefs and followed Yuko out into the massive banquet hall, past the stage and among the wealthy guests, dressed in their finest.

The plates were heavy, especially when you carried three at a time. They had to be balanced or else the sauce would spill everywhere and the integrity of dish's presentation would be ruined. Once Angela had spilt sauce onto her wrist, staining her white shirt. Yuko had seen and screamed at her.

Angela marched with the rest of the caterers, mostly Italian, German, and Kore-

an. When she was about halfway to Yuko the sight caught her, out of the corner of her eye. It looked just like... but it couldn't be. She thought she had seen her baby, but that was impossible. That's not my baby, she thought, it can't be. Her baby had come at the wrong time in her life and had to be gotten rid of. There was no way it could be here now, eating dinner in Melbourne.

She dropped off her plates at sixty, then marched back to the kitchen to pick up another round.

"Hurry, hurry, faster, faster!" The chefs were throwing garnishes onto the plates and dripping sweat into the sauce. "Hurry the fuck up!" They were so angry.

"Come on sweetheart," one of the chefs said bitterly to Angela.

"You ok?" Hillary, who was carrying the vegetarian option, asked her.

There it was again. It was definitely the baby, even from far away that was something Angela knew in her gut and the hairs on the back of her neck agreed. What was it doing here, now? Angela was trying to work.

Now the baby was talking to someone else at another table. What was it saying? Was it talking about her? Well, what else did the baby know about? It had been inside of her for a few months and that was it. It was probably telling the other guests about how Angela had dreamt of becoming a set designer, but that the only set she'd ever designed had been for a play that tanked. And she didn't even get accepted into the set design program at the university. After that, she got so lost about her life that she flew across the world, pretty much on a whim. The baby and the guests were laughing at her. Jesus Christ. It was sitting right where Yuko was directing Angela to serve her plates.

"Fifty two, fifty two," Yuko was yelling at the caterers. She could scream at the top of

her lungs and none of the guests would notice, the sounds of their chatter were that engaging. Later there would be a band and speeches. Fifty-three was where the baby sat.

If Angela had to serve her own baby, she would die. It would be so awkward she'd pass out and the plates would fall, breaking on the ground. The food would fall all over her and she'd pee her pants. Everyone would see. She'd wake up and everyone would be staring at her with Yuko yelling table numbers, "fifty-six, forty-two, eleven, three!"

But when she got to the table, the baby was gone. It must have slipped away.

After the service was over, Hillary asked Angela if she wanted to grab a beer. They walked in their undershirts through the dark streets. "I think there's a bar over here," one of them would say, but the bars were always full. No one is going to want us with our backpacks anyways, Angela thought, though her sleek, leather backpack was much nicer than Hillary's bulky MEC.

Finally they found a bar through an alley. Angela had been there before on a date, with someone from Ontario who she had me through Pinnacle, but all he wanted to talk about was Canada. "Did you hear about the new cabinet minister?" "Did you read about the woman murdered in Lacombe?"

The bar was nearly empty. A few men nursed beers by the counter and a couple sat in the back, kissing.

Hillary asked Angela if she had ever been to the Dominican Republic. Angela had not.

"I love the DR," she said, "my ex was from there. He was so hot. the first time we had sex it was bad, because his dick was too big."

"Crazy," said Angela, "awesome."

A man walked over to them and introduced himself as Carl. He was older than them, but probably only by a few years. He had curly hair.

The girls explained how they were from Canada and had spent the evening serving dinner at the convention centre.

"Wow," he said, "Canada."

"They have the worst cover bands,"

Angela began, describing their shifts. "They play Black Eyed Peas, that song from The Muppets."

"That 'We Are A Family' song," said Hillary.

He was staring at Angela. "Do you like catering?"

"No," she burst out laughing.

"Would you like another drink?"

He knew of a bar, which had more going on than this one did.

"All of the bars are full," said Hillary, though it was beginning to have nothing to do with her.

"I know someone," said Carl, absent-mindedly playing with their shot glasses.

As they walked out and into the alley Hillary whispered to Angela, "I'd be careful. This guy creeps me out."

"I know," said Angela, "but I don't want to go home yet."

Carl paid for the three of them to get into the next bar without waiting in line. It was loud and crowded. From the corner of her eye, Angela thought she saw the baby again, though when she turned to look, it was only a woman's thigh, fleshy and wide as she danced against a pool table.

Very quickly Hillary got caught in a booth, talking to a boy. "Do you like him?" Angela asked when she got back from the bar with Carl and a drink.

"Oh, she likes him," said Carl, "I can tell."

"He's a boy," Hillary said. "And I'm only into men."

Carl wanted to have a cigarette, so the three of them walked out to the patio, which was just as crowded, but cooler. Some people were backpackers, pointing up at what might have been the Southern Cross in the sky. Really you had to go out of the city to see the real sky, many people had told Angela, but she had not yet had the chance.

"What is this effect you have on men?"

Carl asked her. "You're so beautiful."

"Are you drunk?" Hillary asked from the other side of her.

"No," said Angela, though it was be-

coming difficult to finish her drink. The beer was becoming heavy, like a sludge. "I'm fine." She started to laugh, "are you drunk?"

"It takes a lot to get me drunk," Hillary said.

"I mean it," Carl continued. "I knew it, the bartender at the last bar knew it. I said to him, 'Are there any girls I should talk to?' He said, 'over there, the brunette with her back to you'."

"I don't know," said Angela, laughing. She could not quite wrap her head around this baby business. Why was it here and what did it want from her? It had been almost a year since she'd thought about it in any significant way. Several months, at least. Her life had moved on.

Why was it here and what did it want from her? It had been almost a year since she'd thought about it in any significant way.

After a little while, Hillary said that she was going home and asked Angela if she wanted to come with her. Angela said no, she didn't want to go home yet.

"Are you going to be ok?"

"Yeah."

"How are you getting home?"

"I'll cab," said Angela.

"Do you have money?"

"Yeah," she said, although she didn't.

Cabs were expensive, she never would, she couldn't.

"Here," Hillary pulled out a bright bill.

"No really, I'm fine."

"Have a good time."

"I'll see you around Pinnacle," Angela said, hiccupping.

They had one more drink and then Carl leaned into Angela and said, "I want to get out of here."

When they were out on the street, he propelled past her, onto the road, hailing a cab.

"Alright mate?" a group of men asked him. He tripped over the curb.

"Your boyfriend is drunk," the men told Angela.

"She's not my girlfriend," Carl said and the men hollered. Carl curled into himself and threw up into his palm, then dropped the sick

onto Bourke Street.

The cab winded into what Angela supposed was St. Kilda, where he had told her he lived, though she didn't know, she'd never been. All she did since arriving in Melbourne was cater and go on dates.

He showed her his bedroom and Angela saw a photograph of him holding a woman with blonde hair in front of The Twelve Apostles.

"Is that your girlfriend?"

Carl lay face down on the bed and groaned into the blankets. "Yes," he said, "but we can't be together." So they weren't going to have sex, Angela felt relieved. Perhaps it had

been obvious for some time.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because she's a Mormon and she hates how much I drink. I said I'd be a Mormon too, but I'm not good enough for her. No matter what I do, if I'm sober, if I'm a Mormon."

Angela asked him if he'd like a glass of water. But he was already asleep and snoring.

She slept beside him in the bed. In the morning she opened and smelled each girl product in the shower. They smelt like candles. She looked at herself in the mirror. She really was beautiful, she had an effect on men. Her back in this lighting was phenomenal. What if she wrote down her number and left it for Carl beside his bed? Would he quit drinking for her as well? What if she asked him? It was nine a.m. She had to be at the convention centre in fifteen minutes if she wanted to make check-in to facilitate the breakfast buffet. But she didn't want to. She left the apartment building and started walking.

She followed the bigger and bigger houses, down towards the beach. When she got to the palm trees, she took off her shoes and socks.

There, in the sand in front of her, was the baby.

"Are you surprised to see me?" it

asked.

"No," she said, after thinking about it for a little while. Even though she had been so shocked the night before, she said, "I think I knew I would see you. I've thought about you a lot."

"Really?" asked the baby.

"Sort of," she said. She knew she wasn't supposed to, she knew she was supposed to have moved on.

There were other people on the beach, though it felt to Angela that her and the baby were the only things to have ever happened in the whole world.

"So what have you been up to?" asked the baby. "Are you still designing sets?"

She shook her head. "Not really. It was just the one."

"You wanted to design sets for a living," the baby said. "You used to say you wanted to design sets for Broadway."

"No, that wasn't serious."

"You used to talk about it all the time."

"No." She felt humiliated by remembering, it was such a joke. "I was probably just joking."

"So what are you doing here, in Australia?"

She didn't know.

The baby smirked. "So you're not doing anything?"

"Well, what are you doing?"

"I'm a baby. Or at least, I'm trying to be."

They walked silently into the shade of a high rise and sat down. There should have been lots to talk about, but Angela couldn't think of anything to say and after while no longer tried to. She was relaxed and pushed sand through her fingers.

"Do you know any Mormons?" she asked the baby, finally.

The baby scoffed, "I don't know anyone." It seemed to be getting testy, angry about how it had never had a life.

"It's not my fault," Angela said, "they told me you would just float around for a while and then go to another family who wanted you. It's not my fault that this turned out to be mis-

information."

"Maybe it wasn't," said the baby.

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing."

"You're going to another family?" Angela's pulse began to quicken. The air was so hot, even under the shade.

"Nothing," it said.

"You are!"

The baby turned to her, with its eyes sharp. "It's not another family, as if you were one. It's a family. It can't just be two people."

"So you're going?" Now her voice was lower.

"I'm not getting my hopes up."

Angela thought about how the baby had first been taken out of her, when she lay in the medical chair reclined 100% back, staring up at the ceiling where a postcard with a photograph of a beach had been taped. The beach on the postcard was not so unlike the beach they sat on now, as if she had somehow crossed a threshold to exist in the realm of cheap, DIY hospital art.

After the surgery was over, the nurse walked Angela into an adjacent room where a row of girls lay in beds divided by curtains. Each girl wore an identical gown, thin as paper. But which one of us wears it best? For a moment, Angela needed to know.

Both Angela and the baby stared into the water. The waves would grow with gentle conviction out of the ocean, reach their peak and then melt into the sand, as though they never existed. New ones who looked just like them, almost exactly, rose and fell in their place.

"What are they like?" Angela asked the baby, referring to the family.

"I don't know," it said, "I'm not getting my hopes up."

"Have you had your hopes up before?" Angela asked.

"You know how it is," the baby said, squinting into the sun.

"I was good you know, I had an understanding of light and texture. Like hanging curtains and stuff. Paul—the director, he told me. He'd worked at the university."

The baby nodded.

"But it just got frustrating." She went on: "All I was doing was designing." She made

models for set designs in shoe boxes. “I’d spend a whole day just making chairs out of cardboard. Sometimes, I even painted a design on the cardboard, say if the chair was supposed to be from the 60s or 70s. Sometimes the plays I designed for existed, sometimes they didn’t. But in the end they were for no one. I just put all the boxes in my parent’s garage. A big stack of them, like a cross section of an apartment building.”

“I should have been an actress,” she said, “but I don’t know why I always just wanted to stay in my room folding stuff instead.”

Two young people ran into the plot of ocean Angela and the baby had been watching. They started to kiss and the boy snuck his hand into the bottom of the girl’s bathing suit, like they were the only two people in the world. What if the baby left me right now? Angela thought. What if where the baby went was right in front of her, there in the waves as the boy and girl’s toes curled into the sand of deeper and deeper water. The baby would shrink, float through the air and then, as the girl gasped in the arms of the boy, slip down her throat like a pill, rooting itself within her layers. Over time, the baby would have never belonged to Angela in the first place. What if that was how it worked? What if that was the truth? That despite everything Angela knew and had been told, the things she thought had a point to them after all.

Though if it bothered her that much, why didn’t she just run back to the apartment where she had slept, ring the bell and say, “I think I left my earrings by the sink,” or “My cell phone’s on your nightstand, can I just come in for a second?” From which point it would be simple. They’d only have to look at each other, in the specific and shy ways she’d learned from music videos as a teenager. It had worked for Angela before, so it was possibly worth a try now. Even if he spent the whole time pretending she was someone else, that was his right.

Except who wanted to have a baby? All the time and for every day of her life? No, on second thought, she wouldn’t want to do that, how monotonous. So then Angela would have to lie back in another chair, maybe with a postcard of the mountains on the ceiling, and come out so screwed up about it that all she’d do for days was watch YouTube videos of “Rihanna’s Bitchiest Moments,” then finally decide to fly

across the world for a second time, ending up exactly where she began.

“Are you doing anything today?” she asked the baby. Maybe if it were free, they could take the train downtown and go to a museum.

The baby shrugged. “Baby stuff,” it said.

“Like what?” she asked. What could babies like this one possibly have to do? She imagined a whole herd of them, floating over the glittering ocean. A gang of beiges and browns, just having fun and talking shit about the bodies they had lived inside of.

“You wouldn’t get it,” the baby said, “you’re not a baby.”

That was true. She was twenty-four.

It was almost noon. Angela was definitely fired from her job, or she wasn’t, and she’d get to serve more rich people meals. But she wanted to keep hanging out with the baby, for just a little bit longer.

“Ok,” said the baby, “but I can’t stay here forever, I’m going to have to leave at some point.”

“A PLOT OF OCEAN” WAS ORIGINALLY PRINTED IN
AN INDOOR KIND OF GIRL (METATRON, 2016).

WE NOMINATED “A PLOT OF OCEAN” FOR
A PUSHCART PRIZE IN DECEMBER.

Full

I

Julia was full of lemons, Kate was full of tissue paper, Jacklyn was full of coffee beans. Michelle's boyfriend cut her open on a Wednesday, and everyone who knew her was shocked to find out she was full of salmon—beautiful, glistening steaks—because they all knew she drank whiskey and smoked cigarettes all day.

Margery was full of one single ant. Her husband cut her open and at first there was nothing. Her husband, her brothers and her father were all there with her and nobody knew what to do. An empty woman? Then Margery's husband dug through her body for hours and found the ant, a queen, crawling up the inside of her leg. He kept it in a jar by his bed and every night he sang to it—a private song that described the way he thought of her.

They said that girls who chewed with their mouths open were full of textiles, the ones who let it up quick tended to have live animals all up inside them. Emily had been full of seeds and Marcus told her after he cut her open he would plant the seeds along the boulevard leading into town, though in the end he did not, he kept them lying around the house and eventually met a new woman, one who was full of soap.

II

Because she was over twenty-five and still a mystery, Lydia posted pictures of herself online for men to look at and guess what she was made of. There was picture of Lydia with her chin high and her neck long. There was Lydia in a tight dress, Lydia smiling, Lydia looking contemplative.

Below the photographs, men left comments:

rubber!

tree bark!

Aluminum!

Ever wish you could see into your future?

Our free fortune tellers have answers to all your questions! Enter your email address for free forecasts and readings

BOOBS i know that you are filled with boobs. I have dreamt all of my life of a girl who is filled with boobs. obviously it is everybody's dream. i know that but there are many steps i have taken to make this dream a reality. I am a responsible adult and all i need now is the woman who is filled with boobs. When i saw your photograph on this dating website i can't tell you how much it meant to me. It is incredible how clearly I see boobs in you. seriously message me because I feel for certain it is meant to be! I know there are internet scams— but TRUST ME, you don't want to miss out on this exciting opportunity i swear.

Once, a man sent her a message saying he was convinced she was full of over fifty thousand dollars worth of jewels. It was such a flattering proposition that Lydia agreed to meet him in an expensive restaurant. But when she got there she saw that he was old and obviously crazy. They met at the front of the restaurant but the maitre d' would not seat them.

"We've told you," he said to the man, Lydia's date. "That you are not welcome here." Then he looked at Lydia pitifully and explained that the man often brought women to the restaurant, but never had enough money to pay for their bills. "I'm sorry to embarrass you," he said. "But I'm saving you a lot of money. He usually gets very drunk."

Beyond them, in the dining room, the insides of all kinds of girls were paraded from the kitchen to the tables. Braised, sautéed girls. Lydia could smell them. Her date was shrunken, white haired. He stammered that the place was inhumane, he needed a table. "I've got to eat," he said. The patrons stared at them, assuming, Lydia hoped, that he was her father. I'm crazy, she thought, I'm just as crazy as he is. Believing that I could be full of jewels? Her mother had been full of meat and her sister soil. She gave the man some money and told him not to write to her again.

III

What if you had been promised, deep in your girlhood, that there was someone for you? Someone out there waiting to know you?

IV

Lydia liked to walk along the streets in her village, alone and gazing into shop windows where girls who had been tanned and embroidered hung on display. She had been in love once, but the boy had not loved her back. For a time, he had sworn that he did. He acted like he loved her, but in the end he told her he did not, even though they had talked about the children they wanted. A little boy. But every time she said to him, "Vitaly, what do you see inside of me?" He grew silent, withdrawn.

He never wanted to talk to her about it, he didn't care. Finally, after trying to bring it up with him several times, Lydia confronted him. "Do you love me?" she asked. He had kissed, touched her everywhere. She had told him secrets and fears, but if he was not even going to try to know what was inside of her, then it was not real. It could not be.

"No," he said. "I guess I do not love you." Then he came by a few days later to pick up some of his things and told Lydia more firmly, once and for all, that he did not love her. "I never loved you," he supposed out loud.

"Excuse me." Lydia was stopped outside the butcher's stand in the market, when a man interrupted her thoughts and asked, "were you looking at that cut?" He pointed to a sliver of pork.

"No," she said. She had been thinking about the further towards the back.

"Oh." He asked her, "Are those better?"

The butcher was very busy and could not help either of them for some time. His stand was popular for only sourcing it's meat from one single ancestral line, a family who lived in the mountains. Lydia told the man this, she told him that the more connective tissue in a slice of meat, the longer it tended to need to be cooked for. "Those are the lines," she said. "The lighter zigzags through the middle."

She did not find him attractive, but he seemed harmless to her, lost over the meat like that, so she agreed to meet him later. His name was Paul. "How do you know so much about meat?" he asked her.

"My mother was full of meat," she said.

Later, in the days that followed he told

her about his mother, how she had been full of wool and they had used much of her to make a blanket he still slept with. He wrapped Lydia up in that blanket one afternoon after they'd been walking by the city gardens and gotten caught in the rain. They talked about how things had been like when they had both been children. "I did not want to be a boy," he said. "It seemed to terrifying, to have the power to see inside of a girl, and then to have to peel open her skin."

"And now?" she asked him when they sat in front of the fireplace. Lydia watched the dancing amber chase its white underside.

He shrugged. "It is life," he said.

Another time she told him a story about her friend Emily. How Lydia had been with Emily at the dance where she met Marcus and they fell in love very quickly. Marcus had said that he knew Emily was full of seeds as soon as he first saw her.

Yes, Emily thought, seeds, I could be filled with seeds. She wanted to have a baby first. A little girl who would keep an eye on Marcus after she was gone because even though she loved him, he was not good at things. He did not know how to cook or clean, he never picked his dirty clothing off the floor. He said he found it hard to remember. He told Emily that he would plant her seeds along the boulevard that led into the village. They would blossom beautifully there for there was lots of sunlight and he would tend to them himself.

She told him that she wanted to have a baby and brought it up several times. Where they would put it's crib, what they could call it, and she thought about it in her head all the time. She told Lydia, "I thought about it while we were having sex this morning, I pretended that I had to be quiet so as to not wake our children." Now she wanted several children, half boys and half girls, but Marcus did not. He said that he had no desire and convinced her it was not a good idea. She admitted to Lydia that she saw what he meant.

"With all of these children you've concocted," he said. "How would I have any time to tend to our flowers?"

Lydia really told Paul all of this story. How they agreed Emily would be cut open on a Saturday. Emily said to Lydia, "I want you to be there, you're my best friend and I don't think I

can do it without you. I'm scared."

Lydia said, "yes, of course." But when she went there on the Saturday, Marcus opened the door and told her that he had cut Emily open on Thursday.

"That's not what she wanted," she said.

"How would you know? You didn't even know what was inside of her."

She supposed that she was telling the story to test Paul, to see what he would say about a man who acted this way. "What do you think about that?" she asked.

"It's awful," he said.

That night they went to a black and white movie, then ate cheese sandwiches at a cafe. When they got back to her apartment, she did not even have to ask if he wanted to come inside, they were past those formalities now. They were moving irreversibly forward. He undressed her with his eyes open. He really knows me, she thought.

But the next morning, as soon as they woke up, Paul started to act very strange. She ignored it at first. Lydia told herself that it was not Paul who was strange, it was her. You always do this, she said to herself, ruin good things when they happen to you because deep down you feel you don't deserve them.

She wished that Emily was around. Emily would talk her down from the situation. Though, Lydia reminded herself repeatedly, there was no situation. When she saw Paul for their plans that evening, everything would be back to normal again. But Paul broke their plans for that evening and when they saw each other a few days later he continued to act strange. He could not keep eye contact with her and answered all of her questions vaguely. That night, when she asked him if he'd like to come inside her apartment he said no, that he had important plans in the morning.

Finally, when they saw each other again, a week later, he admitted that there was something he needed to tell her. It was difficult for him, he said. He furrowed his brow then looked right at her. "I didn't just run into you at the butcher's," he said. "I'd seen your photograph online and I saw you from across the street. I had to talk to you."

"But why didn't you just message me?"

she asked.

He said that he had felt strange about it. They both knew that the internet was an embarrassing place. "But Lydia," he said. "That's not all. There's something else. I know what's inside of you."

Suddenly, she thought of Vitaly—meaningless things, the one time there was an injured pigeon who sat outside of his apartment for hours; the night they carried the microwave into his bedroom so as to make popcorn without waking up his roommate. She was so happy then. She was happy again, for a time, and now it was today.

"You're full of my wife," he said. "My wife Margery is inside of you."

Now Lydia didn't know what to say. Paul told her some of the things they used to do together, trips to the beach, how her favorite food was french fries wrapped up in a single slice of white bread with ketchup.

"I've missed her so much," he said. "When I saw your photograph online I can't tell you how much it meant to me. Immediately," he closed his eyes. "It was incredible how clearly I saw her in you." Then he kissed Lydia. He moved his hands all over her body right there in public.

Of course it was strange for Lydia to think about having another woman living inside of her. But it also made sense. That is why, she thought to herself, I have such a hard time deciding things. Why so often I want two things at once.

Paul cut her open on a thursday, with a soft jazz album playing in the background. He pressed the knife into her skin an inch below her navel and drew the blade forwards, away from him. Waiting underneath, there was Margery.

V

I couldn't believe that I was now, after all this time, with my old love again. And yet, what time? "Where were you?" Paul asked me. "Margery where have you been?"

"I don't know," I said.

VI

They were very happy. Happier, they both supposed, that they had ever been before. Now Paul was older, he had a sturdier man's body. He knew things and told Margery about them, what he had learnt about the curvature of the earth, politics, foreign spices. Though they were still like children when they wanted to be, they giggled and made noises against each other's bodies. He had a moustache now, though he would shave if it was what she wanted. "No," she said. "I don't mind."

"How is Margery?" Paul's father asked him over the telephone.

"Good," he said. "Great. She is just the same."

One evening he cooked a special meal to commemorate the anniversary of the day they met, all those years ago when they were both on the street on their way to the market. He remembered that the sky had been many colors at once. He had pointed it out just to talk to her, though it was not really such an abnormal occurrence where they lived, the village behind the mountains. But she told him that she did not like looking at the sky because her mother had been full of clouds. Even though it had happened when she was very young it still upset her, she was sensitive and he appreciated that about her. Later, in the days that followed, he told her about his mother, how she had been full of wool and they had used much of her to make a blanket he still slept with.

They fell in love very quickly. The months, then years sped by so quickly that when it was time for Margery to be cut open, skin and gutted by Paul, they could not believe it. Already? So soon?

She hoped that she was full of pencils, or crayons, because she had loved to draw so that made sense to her. But he said, "No. You're going to be full of clouds, just like your mother was." And though the idea was romantic, it made her sad for the memories of the day her father cut her mother open on the kitchen table with the sound of an old country song in the background.

Everything around her, in that aching moment when she was a girl, did not seem real anymore. The couch, the chairs, the plates and

glasses in the sink. The rug beneath the table that her mother dripped on, the cushions on the couch, an empty glass on the mantle, the mantle itself. This isn't real, is it? Because one day, just like that, it would all snap away from her, either when she was cut open or sooner, as she had often heard stories of children snatched in the night, girls who were taken to be harvested before their bodies were ready. None of this will be real then, so what's the point in it being real now? She kicked the old dog that had come out of her aunt, just to see if it would yelp, which it did. After that she went into her room and sat against her bed which was not real either. She said the syllables of her name over and over again, so that it did not sound like her name anymore, just three strange sounds in a row.

For their anniversary dinner they ate beautiful root vegetables and a moist cut of beef. Margery said to Paul, "thank you this is so delicious."

He told her it was because of the cut of meat, that when a piece had connective tissues it needed to be cooked longer than pieces without connective tissues, those were the pink lines, the zigzags. "You were cooking all day," she said.

"Yes."

When she asked him how he knew so much about meat and he told her he had read a book about it. "Were you happy without me?" she asked. "What were all those years without me like?" He told her that he had not been happy but he was happy now. Things are just the same as they used to be, they told each other. He still had the jar in which the ant had lived and died and thought about showing her, telling her that story about his sorrow, how much he had loved her, but he worried it might upset her. She swore that she did not remember anything from the time he had first cut her open to the time he found her again in the body of that woman Lydia.

She was just the same as before, except she had these terrible dreams. She would wake up in the middle of the night, crying and damp with sweat. "Margery," he would ask her. "What happened?"

"I don't know."

They were very happy and the months, then years sped by quickly so that when it was time for her to be cut open, skinned and gutted by him, they could not believe it. Already, so soon?

He lay her on the kitchen table with the sound of a blues album they both liked playing in the background. He pressed the knife into her skin an inch below her navel and drew the blade forwards, away from him.

FRANKIE BARNET'S WORK HAS APPEARED IN PUBLICATIONS SUCH AS *JOYLAND*, *MATRIX* MAGAZINE, AND *PAPIRMASSE*. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF *AN INDOOR KIND OF GIRL* (METATRON, 2016) AND A CURRENT MFA CANDIDATE IN SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM.

ok yeah like

i am leaving my apartment today,
after i find my keys
wallet
and bag of tropical Skittles.
my clothes are dirty
and so is my face.
going out
on a journey to the park
2 blocks away.
meeting you there,
to see your dog for the first time.
you chose the park
because it's less serious
than going to your apartment.
you tell me it is a "neutral space"
you don't let people walk in and out of your dog's life,
don't force your dog to do emotional labor
with zero reward.
she is a Welsh Corgi
her name is Madison.
i'm going to work super hard on this relationship.
it is worth it to me.

Milton

because it rained for 2 weeks
and it's just clearing up
i feel like stepping out
and stubbing my toe
on every doorstep in the city
kiss me on my internet addiction
punch me in the place where i am weakest
the parts of the world that brush my hair
and touch my butt
those are my favorite
point to them through the glass
at Chinese buffet
"i'll have some of those"
go home feeling full
watch someone take out their recycling
remember my friends and feel like crying
quickly describe to me what it's like to be stable
so i can go back to whatever i was doing before

GREG ZORKO WAS BORN IN 1990. HE LIVES IN
MADISON, WI. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF *GHOST IN THE
CLUB* (METATRON, 2016), AND THE FOUNDER OF
YUCKY POETRY, A POETRY READING SERIES BASED
IN MADISON.

The Sweet Home: Stomach as a Safe-Deposit Box

Stomach sits and admires the interior design.
Stomach dressed up in black and looks like tar;
He plans to steal all your energy. He growls
and it sounds as if he's calling across a cliff.

Stomach draws attention to who you are
in juxtaposition to who you thought you'd be.
Stomach's never shook hands with either version of you.
Stomach doesn't have hands.

Stomach does know how to carry a tune, though.
Stomach strums the guitar in patterns that he thinks are your favorite.
You don't tell Stomach you haven't listened to those songs in years.

Stomach is a pooling cave of wet wood
and red glue that dries clear.

Stomach makes your abdomen ache.
Stomach loves that use of the word ache,
swallows it slow and tears apart the etymology.

Stomach shifts his weight
in front of the mirror and tugs his hair.
Stomach feels nauseous and turns the lights down.

Stomach crawls into bed next to your body
and starts the performance.
He assimilates bones inch by inch.

Stomach asks why you use the word esophagus
so often in your writing.
You tell him you don't know.

Stomach becomes a storage unit for frost bitten feet.
Stomach is a cavity,
a digestive abyss humming songs about the southland on your own
front steps.

A Complete List of Everything Your Skin Is, Was, and Ever Will Be:

- 1 home to every lover you've ever imagined yourself having. they live inside your appendix. they are decorating it with pretentious curtains bought from a local Target. a few have hung up tie-dyed tapestries made by people whose parents were DeadHeads. it's going to burst.
- 2 home to every lover you've ever had. they've started to pile up near your large intestine. they are covered in blood and doing the macarena.
- 3 perpetually hiding between nerve endings and brain synapses in every body that has ever imagined you a lover.
- 4 not made of peach fuzz. it does not bruise when it hits the kitchen floor. it does not disguise cyanide with its sweetness.
- 5 a jumbo can of Campbell's tomato soup. (don't tell Andy Warhol).
- 6 created for distraction. that's why there's so many freckles, to draw attention away from all the glitter your mom swallowed when you were still in the womb.
- 7 the pair of nylons that you refused to take off as a child, ripped at both kneecaps and the color of a wet band-aid.

HANNAH NATHANSON'S POETRY HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN CANVAS LITERARY JOURNAL, WORDPLAY, SPEAK YOUR MIND & SHAPE YOUR WORLD, AND PEACH MAG, AS WELL AS SEVERAL SELF-PRODUCED ZINES. SHE LIVES IN BUFFALO, WHERE SHE ATTENDS CITY HONORS HIGH SCHOOL AND ACTS AS A YOUTH AMBASSADOR FOR THE JUST BUFFALO WRITING CENTER.

Experiencing & Being Experienced

First the sunrise, then the turning over in bed like a planet alone in its orbit. You throwing the blanket off & eating fresh cherries. Naked body with the windows open & all the birds loud & watching. Somewhere in the past a man & a woman wake in their tent by the highway. Somewhere in the future you wish it would happen again. *Longing*, you remember the poet wrote, *because desire is full of endless distances*. And what Tim said, *I remained angry until I found my emptiness*. The way a book is empty until it is opened & found otherwise. How you want to share each morning with the person you've loved, but they are always so far off in a different morning. So when you're in bed & think *the worst thing about living is experiencing & being experienced*, it's not quite right—the worst thing is that to eat a cherry you must first pull off the stem, and after, you must spit out the pit. You will never eat the fruit whole.

Congratulation Book

Who would you like to thank for your accomplishments?
I write a speech for the wedding & only the mirror hears.
All my friends live in different states. We talk rarely, yes.
And in my memory, the lake was deeper than a skyscraper.
Everything we do online is recorded, for its own sake.
Sometimes trees get lonely. These things are truly strange.
When I thought Caroline died, I drove up the West Hills
to park & blast her song about not being good enough.
We are all achievements in this big hologram of a universe.
Yes, reality is the place where we are good & bad together.
Yes, reality is where we are good & bad to each other.
I stay awake late to watch the concert across the country
where people are dancing. Right now, they are dancing.
Mike's dress looks good! Write that down in your book!
I keep my *Employee of the Day* plaque above my bed
to impress my desirability upon potential love-partners.
I can reach across the stupid country to you in a second.
I refresh your feed. I feel good about it. Yes, I'm learning.

JAKOB MAIER IS A POET AND MUSICIAN FROM
PORTLAND, OR. FIND HIM ON TWITTER @IAMMAIER.

sober poem

i don't drink anymore
and i don't smoke anymore
and i don't *smoke*
anymore
and i don't love anymore
or
at least
not the way i used to
not the way i am *told* to
like how watching a Coors Light commercial
isn't Drinking
they tell me it ain't love
if i don't have my lips on it
if i'm not consuming it
if it ain't
ice cold
and sweating
in my palms
no
a bottle
is not
courage
when held
like an excuse
when swung
like a blame
yeah i have heard
the love-as-drug cliché
in every song
in every bar
in every single poem
you ever wrote me
but what else
am i to think
when all of this
Not Me
is far enough from my blood
for my body to no longer
crave it
how was i to know
how afraid i was

of skin
without knowing my own
solitary
quiet
my own
complete
hollow
how we are each
a box of what
we are given
and i never knew
how heavy
you made me
until i was finally
empty
how as a teenager
i used to savor
the hunger pangs
the brutality
of sprinting across the soccer fields
in July heat
my stomach left with little choice
but to gnaw at itself for a change
i have watched the fire enough
to know
how a flame will eat itself
to death
until nothing
is left but Starving
now tell me that
ain't human
tell me
the whiskey
the ash
the tongue
were all to dull
the hurt i had
when we all know
how much i loved
the bruise
of the morning

WE NOMINATED "SOBER POEM" FOR
A PUSHCART PRIZE IN DECEMBER.

back when i tried to learn

a guitar
i would squeeze desperate-
tight the steel-wound strings

would drag my fingertips
down them raw
until i couldn't feel
a hurting thing at all

it is so like my body's want
to become such callus
to hammer-out an armor
of my own brittle self

but now i hold your hand
and we bridgework the river
whistling

i have died
enough times
that now
this life
the only music
i want to make
is with my mouth

how i sing to you now
a sunlight
so soft

is it not recovery
to listen to my skin
remember touch?

what is kinder than being cradled
not as instrument
not as something
you'd command a scripted note from

but as a surprise-sweet nocturne
we keep finding new ways
to hum to each other
each night
until dawn?

JAMIE MORTARA IS A QUEER POET FROM NEW
JERSEY AND THEY HAVE LEARNED TO STOP
APOLOGIZING FOR IT. THEY ARE EDITOR OF
VOICEMAIL POEMS AND THEIR WEBSITE IS
JAMIEMORTARA.COM.

from **Phone Pieces**

Phone Piece 1: Sushi Phone

Go to a sushi buffet with a friend who has a lovely spirit.
Lay your phone flat on the table,
see how many pieces of sushi
you can fit on your phone—stack it high
then eat your sushi-phone
while you talk with
your lovely spirited friend.

Phone Piece 2

You let a lot of people down.
Now nobody calls.

Amherst 2023

Administrators quench their shame in procedure.
Skaters carve butterflies into rink ice.
We get weird but to no purpose.
Book club grinds on.
I try to make babies by petting a squash.
One of my fingers is ultracidal.
All wallets become hairy buttoholes.
This is mostly a pleasant surprise.
We discover legislation
that changes the spelling to
E-L-E-C-T-O-R-A-L-C-U-T-I-O-N-S.
In 2028 the narrator died.
In 2032 the story went on.

JOE HALL IS A WRITER AND TEACHER WHO LIVES IN KENMORE, NY. WITH RYAN SHELDON AND ANGELA VERONICA, HE RUNS THE PUBLISHING COLLECTIVE HOSTILE BOOKS (HOSTILEBOOKS.TUMBLR.COM). HIS NEXT BOOK, *SOMEONE'S UTOPIA*, WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM BLACK OCEAN PRESS IN 2018.

KEVIN THURSTON

Men I wish I looked like

Marvin Gaye
the actor who played Desmond on “Lost”
Julio Cortazar
Andrea Pirlo

Camus to M Night Shyamalan

The Fall
The Plague
The Village
The Pool

untitled (with Mickey Harmon)

CINDY
SHERMAN
WILLIAMS
SONOMA

poem of uncertain duration & order

this poem can be prepared numerous ways, and can always be added to. serving suggestion: before or during a reading, cut the lines/chunks into strips. perhaps have the listeners help. pull the strips and read until you feel satiated.

A couple with progressive politics both post a couple's photo.
She writes: my talented husband
He writes: my hot wife

The irony of people with houses asking you for career advice.

While the bodies were piling up—beaten, killed, detained, starved—some saved a building and cried “This place matters!” Or, there may be no gesture more capitalist than saving property before people.

“It seems so unseemly to talk about money like that.” This is only said by people who don’t ever have to worry about money.

Barthes writes about Marx writing about the relationship between a lumber jack and a tree. Does the same apply for craft cocktails?

Health-conscious (read: weight-conscious).

When it’s cold outside, I really understand the human pair bond.

Channeling Hannah Weiner, sometimes I can actually watch jokes going over people’s heads.

I’m not being romantic, but I’m being very productive. But I’m not being romantic.

Airports may be the only spaces in America wherein black Americans aren’t the most suspicious bodies.

I’m not being productive, but I’m being very romantic. But I’m not being productive.

People of means don’t know how to interact with me—or perhaps I with them. Two different people, one female, one male, have run into me in public. Both smiled politely and said hello. Both of them, also, placed a

hand gently on my tricep to *acknowledge* me.

This poem doesn't want to be worked on—can we just hang out or something?

Every cigarette can be your last.

Sans-serif revolution

When does snoring go from cute to annoying? Still waiting...

Siri, where can I get my nose pierced?

You tell me to stop making you smile, but everyone else tells me how happy your smile makes them.

I built a room in my heart for us.

When responding “fine” actually means “bleak”

passionate from miles away

There is no fun, just existence.
—my father

I get in relationships so I can write about the end and then invent the best moments with you

I'm friends with drag queens, queers, and poets—you don't want to fuck with me

You should probably only tell strangers about your sex life. Never tell someone who knows both parties.

I'm so vain I'd prefer to loose weight for everyday life, not vacations.

Completely obsessed with myself, because I don't know how to caress myself.

astonished to think that brownfields and leaded water are the reason love

aborts

eating Bojangles and then having a cigarette is my Proustian moment with my father

platonic love boat

in most video & photo shoots I've seen, it's men telling women what to do with their bodies

we all really enjoyed your revolutionary teach-in

few things more wasteful than American lawn culture

slap my ass, let me measure good sportsmanship

I am the light, the way, etcetera

no need to correct a widow at her husband's funeral

where do feelings come from? where do they go?

a brief history of dating: right species, wrong animal

show of hands, who here thinks they are over-paid?

when your ex flirts with you, you know you still got it

sometimes I can smoke cigarettes around children, sometimes I can't—it depends on the parent's sensibilities.

Tonight, I miss everywhere I have ever lived.

I only know what it means to be hot in a man's clothing

Tweeting your way to self-righteousness

I really don't know what to say;
how could I possibly write a book?

Just looked at a mural and thought, "She's cute."

When a lover ends their love,
when leaving is the only reason.

I want the real thing, but only if it's not real.

you've got this job too, just somewhere else

"Go that way," she said,
pointing towards your home.

masturbation as insurance

What if every ex is a horcrux?

Money for nothin, and the quips for free.

God isn't as good as you might think.

Dang, the reverb in this echo chamber.

The solitary nature of freedom.

Everyone looks better in the summer light.

#hourly

The unstable geo-political situation lead to numerous refugees which, of course, created a boon in the local gastronomic scene.

You can't argue with fragility.

KEVIN THURSTON HAS BEEN WRITING AND PERFORMING FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW. HE IS ON THE VERGE OF PUBLISHING *COLOR ME WHITE*, AN ADULT COLORING BOOK, WITH ILLUSTRATOR MICKEY HARMON. HE IS BASED IN BUFFALO, NY.

Rust Belt Country

let's begin
taking to task
the gross shit
across the nation
and how I can disagree
with like
all of it
and still live here
this place
our dumb big amazing
massive asshole little gigantic
bloodbath island with other country above and below
sticky and silky, artificial and pretty
full of meat and cheese and cornmeal
no shortage of t-shirt novelties
discarded condom wrappers
or bubble bath packaging
tattered copies of I Spy in closing libraries
sex toys marketed en masse
marinated in lube
crude oil
motor oil
olive oil
poured out
by the gallon
big cars, little cars
almost all including seatbelts
but fewer have air fresheners
soda
pop
it's called
different things in different places
just like any other drug
vending machines throwing up
nothing but junk
out of their fat blank faces
soup? chicken or beef
martini: shaken or stirred?
underwear: boxers or briefs?
or panties

or nothing
armpit hair
is a light suggestion
or but is sometimes thicker
macaroni salad
feeds the refrigerated craving
and day care
is too expensive
but getting preggers
is totally free
public pools are either
grossly overcrowded
or sorely underused
and nothing in between
big fields growing something
I'd probably eat
if I stuck around
in one place
long enough
to eat anywhere
anything
other than
pancakes
bacon eggs
and makeup
parks are for everyone
and health care is requiring a new kind of copay
called your literal right leg
insurance workers
will absolutely insist on this
even though
it's not them
who make the rules
schools abuse children
and also save them
and generally
that's never happening at the same place nor time
people are killing themselves
and killing each other
all in order

to find out
what it's like
to live a little louder
there is always championing
of the rebel spirit
whichever way
that might move you
and the status quo
provides visual cues
to who you can't walk to
or wave at from your window
and backing your car out of the driveway in the morning
or taking out the garbage
or napping on the sidewalk
next to the garbage
the thing is that there's so much in this
so big-so weird thing
that by law
by contrast
by nature
the fact that any of it exists
is completely insane
it is nothing short of a horrible showboat
a regrettable miracle

Art Piece

I think
it's cool as fuck
when people with vaginas
choose to free bleed
and like
hell yeah
don't give a fuck
and I'm not ever gonna hide
this natural cycle of mine
from anyfuckingbody
but I also
don't feel
like ruining
a whole bunch of clothes
unless
I am sitting
in Steve Bannon's lap
and
in that case
let it all out, baby
let it
pour
all
out

LEAH CLANCY IS A POET LIVING IN LOS ANGELES. SHE IS A COFOUNDING EDITOR OF *POTLUCK MAG* AND THE FUTURE POET LAUREATE OF YOUR HEART. SHE'S BEEN PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED AT *OHIO EDIT*, *ELECTRIC CEREAL*, *FORTH MAGAZINE*, *FUNHOUSE MAGAZINE*, *PEACH MAG*, AND MORE.





LYDIA HOUNAT

from I Swallowed a Rainbow (previous page)
from HUMAN (below)





LYDIA HOUNAT IS A BRITISH-ALGERIAN POET, PHOTOGRAPHER, AND PERFORMER FROM MANCHESTER, ENGLAND. SHE HAS HAD POETRY AND ART PUBLISHED IN *VANILLA SEX MAGAZINE*, *HOBART*, *THE CADAVERINE*, *PEACH MAG*, AND ELSEWHERE, AND SHOWCASED HER WORK AT THE MANCHESTER LITERATURE FESTIVAL. SHE IS CURRENTLY COMPLETING HER ENGLISH DEGREE AT FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY IN CORNWALL, AND IS ALSO A POETRY EDITOR FOR *REALITY BEACH*. YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HER WORK AT HER WEBSITE, LYDIAHOUNAT.CO.UK.

Poolside Attractions

I took off my bikini top and shot it like a rubber band at the sun-blistered chairs. Swimming topless felt so good—the soft chlorinated water caressing my skin—that I thought freeing my bottom half would feel equally as good, and it did, even better actually. The slightest movement sent a stream of cool water circulating between my thighs, fondling my freshly shaved everything. I told you to try it. I wanted to share the experience with you. Because that's what relationships are, really. Selfishly.

You hesitated. Probably because it was the middle of the day, but at this point in the relationship you were still trying to keep up with me, so you slipped off your swim shorts and flung them in the soggy bathing suit pile. We circled each other like drunk sharks, and when our human legs cramped we swam to the edge of the pool to take sips from the martinis we'd made in the motel room. We drank extra dirty, slightly chlorinated vodka out of red plastic wine goblets shaped like skulls. We'd bought them at the Walgreens next to the liquor store in town. They were tacky enough to excite us, and we declared them the goblets for our future Vegas wedding. It must have been around October if we bought Halloween goblets. But why were we swimming? It was probably a hot September. Stores sell holiday stuff very prematurely these days.

Your thick black hair was slicked back; I told you that you looked like your mom, and you told me that Indonesians were afraid of the water. You said that they feared and revered it as something powerful not to fuck with—except for fishing, of course. You jumped up and dove back in the pool like a little kid pretending to be a dolphin. You did this over and over, and it annoyed me because I thought you were only doing it to prove you how crazy you were—so that everyone would see your butt and your

balls. That's what I thought at the time.

I remember yelling—maybe to prove how crazy I was—I remember yelling, “I love swimming!” I sank down in a straight line until the bottom of my feet bounced off the textured concrete of the pool floor. I sprang back up, breasts bobbing up over the water line.

Did we end up using the goblets when we eloped? I can't remember.

Do you remember that skinny cholo kid? He sat at the table under the big umbrella, and then later on a plastic chair closer to the pool to get a better look. He wore baggy khakis cinched with a black canvas belt and actual Cortez's. We liked his style, remember? He had a pad of the motel stationery with him. He wrote love letters to his girlfriend. That's what we guessed anyway, because it looked like he was drawing hearts.

We must have guessed he was writing love letters because we were in love. Or maybe we already knew that we weren't and we thought someone else should be. Or maybe we thought that everyone on that Sunny California day ought to be drunk on bright blue chlorine.

It turns out he wasn't writing love letters. And neither were we. But we came close.

When he sat at the edge of the pool, I saw the words Dear Tia, but I never told you that because I liked the love story better. I was always trying to change things back then, for the sake of a good story with a nice ending. We were right about the hearts, though. Kinda weird.

We slipped over the dividing wall that connected the hot tub and the pool, like naked little sea lions, and the cholo kid laughed. We giggled. He never made eye contact with us, just went back

to writing. Then he left. And then we left.

Yesterday, I saw a photo of you with your wife and daughter. The three of you were in a lake, standing in the shallow water. I pictured your feet sinking into the warm marsh, mud squishing between your toes. You must have felt grounded being swallowed up by the earth.

In the picture, your wife holds your daughter and looks at you. It appears that she loves you in a way that doesn't require dirty martinis or wild Vegas plans or skinny-dipping at motel pools with cholo boys watching.

No one in the picture looks afraid of the water, despite the usual lake creatures. Creatures more real than drunk sharks and naked little sea lions. No one looks like they are in fear or even in reverence of the water. Or the things in the water. Or the things stuck in the mud. Or being stuck in the mud. I guess that's what a family photo should look like.

I'm at the motel. You remember the one. I'm at the pool. You remember the one. I'm under the sun-bleached umbrella writing this letter in a sun-blistered chair. I think it may be a love letter, of sorts.

I'm going to slip into the pool now. With my bathing suit on.

Mother Nature's Black Tuesday

My mom shook us awake every April Fool's Day to tell us it was snowing outside. *Wake up! It's snowing! Go look out the window!* We lived in the desert. The repetition of the joke became the joke.

When I was 19 or 20 in 1998 or '99 or 2000—I can't remember exactly—I just wanted the thing out of me. I didn't feel anything but sick. The two weeks I had to wait was two weeks too long. I didn't drink or smoke anything, just in case, but when the appointment came around and everything was said and done, the emotional relief was well worth the physical pain.

In 2017, I was old enough **we** were old enough, but it was still an accident and we still had shit jobs and we lived in an expensive city.

Can you raise kids in NYC? Yes, obviously.

Maybe I was too old?

Right after I told him, it looked like he was gonna cry, then it looked like he was gonna legit pass out, then I made him sit down.

He says he doesn't remember sitting down.

We'd only known each other a few months, so I practiced a persuasive speech about feeling incredibly connected to it (which was true) but the first thing that came out of his mouth was *Am I crazy to think this isn't a bad thing?*

He smiled and smiled. We smiled and laughed. We smiled and laughed for days.

My old coworker dropped by work and gave me gum. It was mint. It tasted like cinnamon. He gave me a second piece as a test. It was mint. It tasted like more cinnamon. We used to sleep together.

My old neighbor in Austin sent me a text about something cosmic that had something to do with me. I got on the L train and sat across from an old classmate from the 6th grade in El Paso.

A young guy I'd met while walking through the crowd at the West Indian Day Parade (and slept with) texted me out of nowhere.

An old friend from El Paso wrote a Facebook post that went *Last night I had a dream you had a son and you raised him as a single mom on an upstate New York farm and we threw a birthday party for Willie Nelson.*

I *did* work for Willie Nelson's "edibles" company, indirectly. (She didn't know this.)

The first guy I ever slept with in Brooklyn texted me out of nowhere and said I was an amazing person. I didn't text back.

Either the universe reflected the love I was feeling/giving or I was about to die.

We kept smiling and laughing and texting each other *Hahahahaha!!!* and we felt really connected to each other, not only because no one else knew yet, but that was definitely part of it.

I told my best friend on April Fool's Day, as a joke/not a joke. It was hilarious.

Everything that mattered, mattered more. I got all adult and serious. I felt I had a purpose. But we also laughed so much.

**Everything that mattered, mattered more. I got all adult and serious.
I felt I had a purpose. But we also laughed so much.**

Everything had meaning. My job had meaning. The food I ate had meaning. My growing hips and swollen boobs had meaning. I should say *more* meaning.

Our love had meaning. My life had meaning. I should obviously say *more* meaning.

My life became more structured, and my thoughts and love and body were occupied. Two weeks later, I miscarried on the train.

(The technical name for this kind of miscarriage is spontaneous abortion, according to the internet. I found a blog that thoroughly explained every part of it. My doctor didn't give me any literature. Pamphlets are dead.)

When it happened, I bled heavily into a pantyliner while sitting on a plastic seat of the Manhattan bound L train.

On the second part of my commute, on the 4 train, I wore a bulky overnight pad the length of my forearm.

In between the L and the 4, I had to stop at Union Square to buy the overnight pads and search for a public restroom. I floated around in a subdued shock. When blood poured into the toilet at Whole Foods, I knew it was real.

In my own bathroom, I finally cried, wailed. I told him *I lost it*. He held me and expressed some hopeful doubt by repeating *Maybe we didn't lose it though*. I begged him to stop saying that. *It's gone* I said. He stopped and we both cried.

I went to my gyno in Chinatown where the waiting room smelled like fish because of the surrounding fish markets. I texted him about this and we laughed. I had to go back the next week to make sure my hormone levels were dropping back down to normal. The doctor did a second ultrasound because she forgot I wasn't pregnant anymore.

On the train, a lady dropped a big box of diapers

on my ankle and apologized profusely.

My best friend in Austin was pregnant. My cousin was pregnant. My other cousin was pregnant. This girl I hated in highschool was pregnant. This other girl on Facebook was pregnant. Literally everyone I knew was pregnant. When I rode the subway, I saw every single baby in New York City.

I didn't write. I didn't go to dance class. I didn't

go out.

I came down crashing.

I cried like it was black Tuesday after a weekend of ecstasy and bliss. I cried in bed, I cried at work, I cried on the train. I threw up in a trashcan on the platform. I was convinced I was pregnant again, but wasn't, but hoped I was.

We drank and I cried and I said things (uncharacteristic and self-loathing) like *I just can't take anymore loss...*

I remember not being able to drink for three months after my mom died.

I didn't move to NYC to fall in love. I didn't move to NYC to become a mother.

We both wanted another accident.

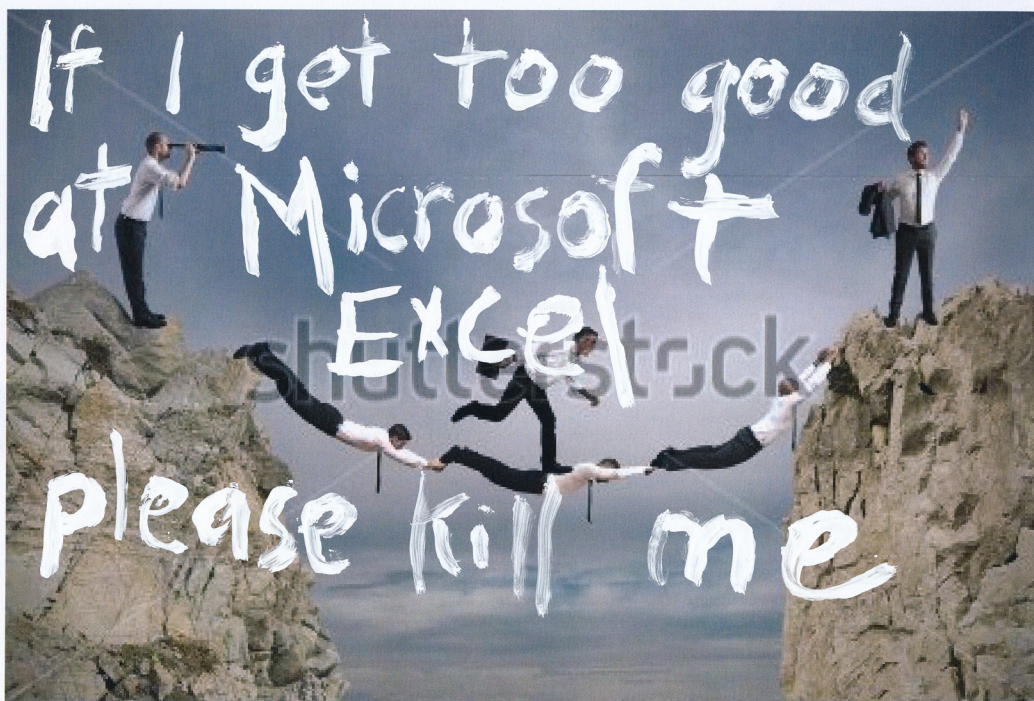
I got my period and started to feel a little better. I sat and copied down all of our text messages to each other and cried when I got to the ones that started with *Hahahahaha!!!* I wrote some other stuff too. I wrote a poem. I wrote a story. I felt a little better.

MARISHA GENE HICKS LEADS A QUIET LIFE IN NEW YORK CITY WITH HER MAN AND HER CAT. MARISHA GENE'S YEARBOOK QUOTE IS "I'M ALL JACKED UP ON MOUNTAIN DEW."

MARY BOO ANDERSON

from LIVE STOCK





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from ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONS





MARY BOO ANDERSON IS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTIST BASED IN BROOKLYN. HER ART HAS BEEN SHOWN AT ISLIP ART MUSEUM, BOWERY POETRY CLUB, AND CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN GENÈVE. HER WRITING CAN BE FOUND IN *LESTE*, *TALKING BOOK*, AND *METATRON'S ÖMĚGÄ* AMONG OTHERS. YOU CAN FIND HER SUBTWEETING THE PATRIARCHY AT @WHOISMARYBOO.

Jaywalkers

How did this new project come about?

I didn't want to sulk or wait around after that tour. I took maybe a month to myself and then got back out there. I know people think it was garbage, but I needed to experiment to get to where I am now. I needed to try things out to get to this new thing. It was a process.

A grieving process?

Something like that, yeah.

Before we get into your solo work, I'd like to ask you about before.

Of course you would. So does everyone.

I'm sure these memories are painful to revisit.

Right. Well, it's not just that. I mean it is that, obviously, but what bugs me is still being treated like half of something after all this time. Like now that she's gone my work will never be whole again. Like we were a package deal, like I was the ugly fucking growth coming out of her side, no matter where she'd go you were stuck with me, "oh yeah, and that other chick." But the funny thing is, I do feel whole now. I feel whole now that she's gone.

Do you feel that your contribution was overlooked?

No. I mean, yes, a bit. They act like she was my muse. Like if I did have creative control in any way it was all inspired by her. Like, nothing could have come straight from me. But I wasn't fucking Garfunkel. She wouldn't have been shit without me. I actually made it all happen.

I think that's why it could be helpful to tell us how it all started. Set the record straight.

Fine.

How did you two meet?

At a bar. I bought her a drink, she gave me her number, I took her out a week later. That was it. It's not a good story.

So you had no mutual connections, you just instantly clicked? That's amazing.

No, and fuck no. She hated me when I took her out. She hated me at the bar too. I never figured out why she agreed to see me again. That's how I felt the whole time we were together actually. She was visibly uncomfortable every time I was with her. She was never herself. Always on edge. But she kept coming back.

Why do you think that was?

Because of the jaywalking. It was all because of the hits. There was nothing more to it. Not for her, anyway. We both got off on it. That's what held us together.

And when did that start?

That first night at dinner. So she's sitting there looking disgusted with me all evening, and I'm just staring at her neck. I couldn't even look at her face. It was that neck, the collarbones, those thin little arms. She was so frail and beautiful and I just felt like the biggest asshole. My body felt heavy. I felt like my tits were weighing me down. I could feel myself slouching. Every second that I looked at her I felt fucking grotesque. So yeah, we both wanted to get out of there. Then I ask for the bill and she gets up before I'm even done paying, and she just runs out into the street.

Where was this?

We were at that Korean place on Bernard, and she's headed toward Parc. So I run after her, I don't know if I wanted to say goodbye or just see her again or what, but I'm running toward her as she's heading into the intersection, and she just stops right in the middle. And I see this car coming, and I can't even explain why I did it. You know, I'll be the first to admit that it's completely out of character for me to sacrifice myself for someone like that, especially someone I'd just met. But she made such an impression on me, she was so beautiful, so fragile. So I jumped out in front of it and took the hit.

So was it purely instinctive? I mean, was it about protecting her, or was there any part of you in that moment that felt – I don't know, suicidal?

I mean, I've joked about that in the past, maybe that's what you're referring to. I used to say that she ran out into traffic because of how awful a date I'd been, but that she'd made me feel like such garbage about it that I wanted to kill myself first. But honestly, it just happened. I can't explain it any better than that.

And I'm guessing it was then that you discovered your... talent?

Nothing ever topped that first time. We did a few creative ones later, but nothing beat the spontaneity, the not knowing what was going to happen. Thinking for a split second that it was all over, and then that rush... I mean, I can only speak for myself. She's always been pretty cryptic about how it felt for her.

How did it feel for you?

Exactly how you'd imagine, I guess. Think of what it would be like to disappear completely, to just be completely empty and let something huge and heavy like a car go through you. It's like having the wind knocked out of you but it's your whole body and every part of your being, your consciousness. It's more than feeling light or invisible, it's feeling nonexistent. That's the feeling I've been craving to re-create, and I do get something out of my continued attempts, something that keeps me going, but not like that first night. I've never come close.

And what about her?

What? Listen, I know why you're asking. I know what you're insinuating. That's shitty. The implication is shitty. I never meant to hurt her. I didn't use her. It wasn't like that.

I'm not sure what you mean. Did she ever tell you how that first night felt?

No. I mean, I don't think she wanted to talk about it. She was out for a minute. I ran over to see her. Then I touched her face, and she woke up. She just looked at me, got up, walked away like it was nothing.

Could she really heal that quickly?

Not completely. It would take another day or two. But yeah, she would be mostly fine after a hit like that. Obviously she had a gift, and it was more impressive than mine. People saw it right away. That's why she was the star.

She used to lose consciousness before hitting the ground. She'd pass out mid-air; she told me. She'd just tap out the second it hit me. She was never awake. People would ask about the impact, the trauma, I don't know. All I know is she wasn't conscious when it happened. And I felt like that made it OK. All those people who complained we were exploiting her, that I was taking advantage, they didn't know. She was asleep. If she was asleep, what's the harm? I wasn't hurting her. How could we be hurting her if she isn't really awake?

Tell me about the fans.

The fans. Can we call them that? They weren't fanatic. They were so casual about it, right from the beginning. I hated that about them.

There was a write-up in the *The Mirror*. A "re-view." It went viral, #jaywalkersmtl was trending that same night. It took me a while to realize they were talking about us.

And they just turned up at the next performance?

Not really. The next one was supposed to be practice, but obviously we were in a public space, there were people around. This was somewhere in St-Henri, I forget where exactly. But we went for it, it worked, and just as she got

hit, I remembering hearing someone say, “I’ve heard of these girls.” Isn’t that fucked up? So after that, everyone was on the lookout, trying to predict our next spot. It was actually kinda fun, at first. It was fun to surprise them, fun when we got caught. But we sold out. We even played Place-des-arts once. And I mean, I was planning shit, I was managing us, but even I’ll admit we ran out of ideas really quick.

Did she ever have any suggestions?

Yeah, some, and sometimes we’d do them, but I mean, that wasn’t her strength. She was our star. I was behind the scenes, running the whole show. I don’t get credit, I know, but really I was calling the shots, setting the whole thing up. Or anyway, I picked the corners.

that kept her bones from breaking. Maybe it melted them. I know I felt melted that summer.

So they were all animals, but the heat made me an animal too. Every night at home I’d be clawing at her, like trying to hold on before I melted away. I’d have three fans on me at night, and I’d be lying next to her, breathing like an animal, and she’d be lying there, barely moving, like playing dead, only sometimes I’d catch her shivering. One time I joked that she was cold blooded. She hated it. She hated me. Because they wouldn’t leave her alone on the corners and then she had to get it at home from me too. But I couldn’t help it.

But when winter came we missed the heat, and we realized we needed it. So we wanted to head

Every night at home I’d be clawing at her, like trying to hold on before I melted away.

You guys really were an overnight success. Many people don’t realize you were only active in the city for a few months.

It got old really quick. We knew we were a fad. We could feel it coming to an end, so we started planning a big finish. The city started feeling small to us, like when you revisit old landmarks you saw as a kid and you feel like they’ve shrunk. It was like we’d had a growth spurt from one month to the next. I don’t know. We had to get out. Every corner felt like a playground, the streets didn’t feel real anymore.

It was a summer thing, you know? You feel like the heat is searing your skin and your body feels heavy and disgusting. Everyone on the street is so attractive and repulsive. And the men. They’re fucking screeching, like they’re just horrified at all the female bodies that have the nerve to cross their path. So we fit, you know? The summer worked for us. That first night was in April, but a hot, almost-summer April night, where you know winter isn’t quite done with you yet so you bring a jacket out of fear and you sweat from the heat and also fear. It was always hot. We were always wearing light, thin clothes, our legs were out and bare. Maybe it’s the heat

South.

Tell me about the last tour.

So we went and did a quick North American tour, but it was really an East Coast thing. We did Times Square, I guess that was memorable, but it was rainy and we did it at rush hour, so she didn’t fly too far, it was kind of boring. We thought so, and the reviews were bad too. So we thought, you know, we both needed a change of pace, and we both wanted to reinvent what we were doing, or stop completely, go out with a bang. We decided to tackle something a little more ambitious. So we decided to go to South America.

Why there?

I don’t know. She’d been to Argentina once and said the cab drivers were crazy. Then I did a bit of research, and found what I thought was the perfect spot.

That would be the Avenida 9 de Julio in Buenos Aires. What made it so special exactly?

Well, the avenue is the widest in the world. I

read somewhere you could land a 747 on it if it weren't for the obelisk standing in the middle like a giant cock. It really does look like a cock. So that's where we set up, right in front of it.

Because the avenue has twenty lanes, the plan was to get hit early, close to one side of the street, but at an angle, so she could fly out into the middle and maybe bump another car in the process. But even if that didn't work, the cameras would be set up so it looked like she was in the middle – oh yeah, we had a camera crew now. Fucking divas, am I right? Some people thought it spoiled it, like it was all fake like wrestling, choreographed, but who are we kidding. There were no surprises anymore.

We're about to step out, I mean, we're in the street, and I spot our target from the corner of my eye, and I guide her a little so we shift just right. And then someone calls to me. And I get really startled, like really thrown off. I mean we were used to cheers and shit, and she got some cat calls, for sure. But this was different. This guy was calling to me, and not in the usual way. I don't know what it was. I mean, anyone could spot that we were tourists, and everyone loves fucking with tourists, but it wasn't just that. It wasn't right. It was this shrill, piercing, meaningless screech that just really fucked with me. I remember having this moment like, maybe it's been like this the whole time, and I just never noticed because I was home and I felt safe. It was fucking terrifying.

So I'm thrown off, and I miss. That was it. I just missed the car. It wasn't my fault but like, maybe it was. So she gets hit straight, she didn't have me as a buffer. That had never happened before.

And she goes flying through the air, not all graceful like the other times, but quicker. Harder. Up and then down. So quick you almost missed it. But it was fucking beautiful. Not that big spectacle they'd all been promised, but something else. Something better, more real. You'd almost miss it if you blinked, but I got a good look, and her face was so beautiful. She looked peaceful. I swear, those other times, she looked passive, bored. But this time she looked at peace with it, almost relieved that this time

would be different, that this time she'd really die.

So this last time, she was awake. She was there with us through the whole thing, until the last second. And it was the most beautiful thing anyone had ever seen, and the cameras didn't catch it – they got some footage that made it look like a freak accident, but nothing that really captured the beauty of it.

That's what she left us with. She gave that to us. To me, but also to everyone. It was a gift.

...And since then?

Right, so now, this new thing I do, on my own – because it still works for me on my own. She couldn't do it without me, and that's what killed her. But I can still do it. I can disappear.

So I lie there and let them roll over me. That's my act. That's the only thing I can do without her. I just lie in the middle of the street and wait. And they go right over me, right through me, and I feel nothing – not the rush, like before, but just a faint little whisper of a feeling. I'm just passive, like she was, I guess. This is what I do now without her.

So would you call this a tribute?

No. I mean, I miss her. I ache for her. But no. This isn't about her. What I realized that day is that they want my body too. They want it just as bad as hers, they thirst for it in the same disgusting way. So if they want it, they can have it. I'll just lie there and let them take it.

You've retained the general theme of the original work, but the partnership aspect of the performance is lost. What's the significance of performing the same material as a solo artist?

I'm not cashing in on her death, if that's what people think. This was my work to begin with, and it's my work I'm performing now. I was the creative force behind the original project.

Let me rephrase that. How is performing alone different for you?

Oh. I guess I'm in control.

I don't know. I was naïve. I thought they were there for her beauty. I thought I was making her beautiful for them. But now I know they wanted to see anyone, any body, beaten up and broken. And now that I know that, I don't dress it up for them anymore. The spectacle is gone. Let them see it for what it is.

You'll be performing 'Roadkill' in Montreal this summer, on the corner of Parc and Bernard. Is that not a tribute to your first performance with her?

I told you I'm not doing this for her. I mean, people can call it what they want. But yeah, I did think of her when I chose that corner. I need to close that chapter. I'm doing it for me. Whatever connection they think they have to it, it's bullshit. This is mine. This is what I need to do.

He told her it was all her fault and she cried because she already knew. The kitchen smelled like onions. He had two burners on, the front left and the back right.

"Can you pass me the garlic?" He had to raise his voice a little for her to hear him over her own dramatic sobs.

"I just don't understand. After all we've been through. You promised it would be different." She was sniffing between each word, and the sound of her snot made him shudder.

"Wash your hands," he snapped.

She looked at him, startled, then put her head down and slumped over to the sink. He knew he should have felt bad for her, a little. He knew he was probably being what you might call cruel. But he didn't feel that he was being demanding. He had put up with enough.

He peeled a garlic clove and carefully minced it. Out of the corner of his eye he saw her flinch every time the knife hit the cutting board. Her discomfort made him smile.

Finally, when he finished chopping, she spoke again, more softly this time.

"I gave you all I had. I took care of you. Don't tell me it wasn't enough."

He left the kitchen without answering and went out onto the balcony. He picked three sprigs of rosemary from the planter. When he came back to the kitchen she was sitting on the floor, sobbing with her head in her hands. Annoyed, he walked right past her to the counter. He spoke without looking at her.

"Get up."

"I did so much for you. I took care of you. I helped you get back on your feet."

"The floor is filthy. Get up."

She slowly got up and leaned against the counter with her arms crossed. He couldn't hide the look of disgust on his face as he watched her. She was biting her nails.

Angrily, he threw the rosemary into the pot of broth simmering on the back burner. He picked up the pepper mill and violently ground it, grunting with every turn. Then he closed his eyes and inhaled deeply, looking se-

rene for a brief moment as he took in the aroma. Before he could open his eyes, he heard her snuffle again. He turned around swiftly.

"Why are you still here?!" he shouted. She took a step back. "Look, I'm done, I'm done with you, I'm done. I haven't asked that much of you. I only want one thing. I didn't ask for all this shit. You gave me everything except the one thing I need to be happy. So I'm done."

"You can't be serious," she whispered, feebly. "I supported you."

"I don't want your support. I don't want any of that. Just go. I don't need you."

She collapsed into a fit of sobs and he couldn't help but roll his eyes. For too long he had listened to her pretend to care for him while she selfishly ignored his real needs. He had waited for so long and been so patient. From the outside he knew it would seem like he was being unfair. But no one knew about the neglect he had endured. She had always wanted him to be someone else. And as he said, he had asked for one thing only, just one, and she had completely rejected that part of him. He could never forgive her.

He turned away from her and pounded his fist on the counter, then let out a heavy sigh. Everything was quiet for a moment. Then, out of the corner of his eye he saw her approach the counter, hesitantly, and pick up the knife beside him. His heart started pounding. Slowly, he uncurled his fist and placed his hand flat on the cutting board. A smile slowly crept across his lips. He closed his eyes, and waited.

She sliced just above the second knuckle of his little finger, just like he'd always dreamed. She was clumsier than he had imagined, but that somehow only heightened the experience. Made it more real. The whole endeavour took only a few seconds, but time slowed for him as he savoured every detail: her soft sobs, the sting as one of her tears landed on the open wound. The small pool of blood spreading across the cutting board, spilling onto the counter, dripping onto the floor. And finally, the crunch he had always dreamed of, which wasn't as loud or crisp as he had imagined, but it was alright. It was real. He gasped and threw his head back in ecstasy.

Once she had finished, he smiled at her, satisfied. Her face was soaked with tears,

making her hair stick to her cheeks. He leaned over, and with his injured hand, tucked her hair behind one ear, staining it with blood. She flinched when he touched her. He looked into her eyes and smiled again, then quickly turned around, tossed the finger into the pot of broth, and got to work.

"I'm just going to braise it a minute first," he muttered, keeping his head down. He opened the drawer next to him and felt around for the slotted spoon, dripping blood onto the floor and counter. When he found it he carefully removed the finger from the pot, added it to the hot skillet, and began sautéing. She started crying softly again when she heard the hiss of it hitting the pan.

"Shouldn't we get to the hospital?" she asked between sobs. "I'll get your coat."

"Just a minute," he barked.

He turned off the heat and carefully plated his dish.

"Sit," he commanded. She took a seat at the kitchen table.

He lit a candle in front of her and set the plate down. He sat down across from her and stared intently. She looked at him; repulsed, yet resigned. She picked up the knife and fork and cut a small piece, whimpering softly as she sliced. She rolled it lightly in the brown butter sauce, then raised the fork to her lips, paused, and looked at him.

"Can I?"

He paused for a second before answering, holding his breath, preparing himself for the moment he had waited so long for.

"Yes. Now."

NATALIA HERO IS A WRITER AND TRANSLATOR FROM MONTREAL. HER FICTION HAS APPEARED IN VARIOUS LITERARY MAGAZINES SUCH AS COSMONAUTS AVENUE AND SHABBY DOLL HOUSE. SHE IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON HER MA THESIS, AND ON ELIMINATING DESIRE FROM HER HEART.

Mouthfuls of Niagara

The tautness of a rope
holds together old friends,
continents, the world. Mist
kisses tourists in a summer
of blondes and brunettes,
a summer of war on war.
All the foreign sounds
become tiny abstract paintings
in a child's notebook.
No one is going to hell.
Everything is fine
and out of season
(so to speak). The Falls
rush by as if to say
we are always a work
in progress, a joyful deterioration.
Mist kisses tourists evenly
under a closed sky.
We mark these words.

Fatigue Performance

After the election,
cue the people
drugged with hope.
Make it a film about
how the music died
and was reborn
as a record skipping.
That's cool.
After the protests,
listen for singing
just beyond the trees.
Voices combing over
the statue of a villain.
Leave it alone.
It says something about
the whole political machine
in us all. Something about
heartbreak. A handful of
dead fireflies in a jar
in the mind. Something
about yelling the word fuck
through a sky removed of birds.
It's more than a paper trail.

NOAH FALCK IS THE AUTHOR OF *SNOWMEN
LOSING WEIGHT* (BATCAT PRESS, 2012). HIS POEMS
HAVE APPEARED IN *BOSTON REVIEW*, *THE BROOK-
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My Dream Journal

In the spring of 2015, looking to improve my always-precarious mental & emotional state, I thought I might get some therapeutic value out of keeping a dream journal. I never put much stock in dream interpretation, but it seemed worth a shot. After all, I can barely keep a handle on what's going on inside my head while I'm awake—who even *knew* what kind of mischief was happening at night, when I wasn't around to keep an eye on it? I thought that by keeping some sort of record of the nocturnal ramblings of my subconscious, I might possibly gain some insight into the inscrutable workings of my lumpy, misshapen brain.

Every time I had a dream I would jot it down as soon as I woke up, reflect on it throughout the day, and write down my thoughts later that night. It lasted about a month before I decided to pull the plug. This is what happened.

FEBRUARY 16

Long dream about going down a long escalator. I'm in a tall office building, on my way home after a long day, but instead of elevators they just have one big long escalator. It's a long, boring ride. When I get to the bottom, I look out the front doors and see that it's started raining hard outside, and I remember that my coat and umbrella are back upstairs, so I groan, turn around, and get on the "up" escalator. I wake up before I get to the top, annoyed and bored, wondering why I never have any dreams about flying or having sex with celebrities. What a dumb dream.

MARCH 6

Standard falling dream. Fell off some kind of tower or lighthouse or something. Just wobbled and lost my balance, didn't jump or anything. Forget why I was up there. The ground rushing forward is a very vivid and upsetting image, but not, like, panicky, life-flashing-before-my-eyes, "I'm gonna die"-level scary or anything. More of that kind of feeling like, "damn—this is exactly the OPPOSITE of what I was hoping would happen." I feel like, however I end up dying, there's like a 75% chance that my last thought will probably be some variation of that.

People always talk about how in falling dreams you always wake up before you hit the ground. Not me – I always HIT. It's never violent or scary or anything, I just kind of hit the ground and stay there for a minute, with a general feeling of "well, what now?"

MARCH 12

Somehow there are fish in the walls. Like the walls are filled with water, and there are schools of tropical fish swimming around in between the studs. I don't know how I know this, but I do, and it's clear that this is a situation that needs dealing with. When the dream starts, I'm sitting there staring at the wall trying to figure out what to do, imagining the fish swimming on the other side, and mulling the problem over, like "Well, THIS is a real pickle we've got on our hands, huh?"

I consider and discard a few different ideas about how to get the fish out. Nothing really seems viable. After a while I decide that it doesn't really seem to be causing any actual problems, so maybe the best thing to do is to just leave it. Sometimes live and let live is the best policy, I always say, you know? When I wake up and think back on it, I berate myself for being lazy and not doing anything. Just the electrical problems alone that fish in the walls would cause make my blood run cold. Is there a lesson in this dumb dream? Must learn to be less complacent, boldly take action, seize opportunities. People love guys like that. Not lazy fish guys. I imagine bringing a girl there after a date. "You have such a cool apartment, Pat!" she says. "I always knew you were a cool, intelligent guy who is really on top of things in all areas of his life. Look at these good, solid, fish-free walls!" she says, smacking a wall with her palm. Then disappointment washes across her face as she hears a muffled gurgling and fluttering of fins in response. Yes, can't just live with the fish in the walls of one's life. Gotta stand up to those fish, show 'em who's boss.

Later, on even further consideration, I think I'm still going about it all wrong. Fish in the walls: that would be the landlord's problem. It would make the most sense to go on a rent strike, or just move. So what's the lesson then? Dreams are so confusing.

MARCH 16

Worst nightmare of them all -- dream about being at work. I get there, go up the elevator, go to my desk, and work silently for a long time.

After a while, I hear the guy in the cube near me that slurps his coffee really loudly begin to start slurping his coffee really loudly. "Godammit," I think. "Not today. I can't handle the strong sipper today." It stops for a second, and then continues, even louder. How can he not know he's doing that? How? I start fumbling to put on my headphones, scrolling through my music for the loudest, harshest noise music I can find to drown him out with, moving in a panicked rush to try and press play before he sips again. "Not another sip," I'm thinking, "My nerves can't take another sip." It's like with every sip, he slurps away my very soul.

I wake up distraught. This is fucking bullshit. I hate this fucking dream journal. Is this really the best my subconscious can do? I bust my ass to feed you full of art, knowledge, and experiences all goddamn day long, and THIS is how you repay me? Given access to the infinite dreamscape, unbound from the limitations of time, space, and consciousness itself, do I ride dinosaurs into glorious battle, soar above fantastic vistas at the speed of thought, or enjoy long, soul-nourishing visits from departed friends or loved ones? Or even have sex with even one goddamn celebrity? A few blessed moments of simple fantasy to relieve the suffocating desperation of daily life? No. But the strong sipper? Oh don't worry -- my subconscious will make sure I don't miss a MOMENT with him. Fuck you, mind. You're officially on my shitlist.

I'm lying there in bed, so mad at my dumb brain. I wonder if there are any drugs that can make you NOT dream. I make a mental note to look it up when I get to work later that morning. Oh right, I think to myself then. WORK. The place I just was at -- in my fucking DREAMS. "Jesus Christ," I think as I pull myself up out of bed. "Do I hate fucking dreams."

MARCH 18

Now we are talking friends... Now we are fucking TALKING. Brain, I am sorry I ever doubted you.

For some reason, me and former heavyweight champ Sonny Liston are best friends. I'm not sure why, but it just feels right and totally nor-

mal, like we've been buds forever. Sonny is super comfortable with me and clearly thinks I'm a cool guy. And me? I'm hanging out with Sonny Liston – you KNOW I'm good.

We're cruising around the city together in a huge Cadillac. I'm driving and Sonny is riding, the windows are down, it's a bright summer day, and we're cranking tunes super-loud. We're just cutting up, telling jokes, making each other laugh, hollering rude stuff at people we pass, and just havin a great time. Sonny is wearing a cool hat and throwing fireworks out the window. I might have been wearing a cool hat too. I bet I was.

As we tool around aimlessly, we start to get louder and rowdier – it could be that we're drinking, I don't remember, but we could also just be riling each other up because that's the way great friends are sometimes when they're havin a blast together. Until eventually, we're driving across some huge bridge, and we impulsively decide to just ram the car through the guardrail and over the side. As I recall, we didn't really talk about it, but the feeling is just kind of like, "Hey, why not? We're badasses and we do whatever we want. We can have fun doing anything." We plunge down toward the water laughing and hollering and die Thelma & Louise style, a couple of cool-ass dudes goin out on a high note, just havin a grand old time.

I wake up all smiles. What a great dream. It puts me in such a good mood that I bounce out of bed and walk around feeling good all day long. The following evening when I get home from work, I look up Sonny Liston on Wikipedia because I don't know anything about him, and immediately feel a friendly bond with him now, based on our nonexistent relationship. I come across a video clip of a fight between him and Muhammad Ali in the 60s where he put some kind of acid or chemical or something on his gloves, and punched Ali in the eyes a bunch, and actually made Ali blind for a few rounds. It was supposed to give Sonny Liston an edge so he could finish Ali off, but it just made Ali madder, and when his sight came back after a round or two, Ali just went wildman crazy on him and beat Sonny Liston up twice as hard. Wild stuff. But that's my pal Sonny -- you never know WHAT that guy is going to pull next!

That night I think, this is a good point to stop doing the dream journal. It seems counterproductive to do extra work to remember boring dreams that just make me angry anyway, and it seems like anything that's worth remembering, I'll just remember anyway. I thought this project would grant me interesting insights into the hidden world of my own mind, but maybe it's better to let that world stay hidden, and just wait for old Sonny Liston show up when he's good and ready.

WE NOMINATED "MY DREAM JOURNAL"
FOR A PUSHCART PRIZE IN DECEMBER.

Script for an Unproduced Campaign Commercial

Fade up on a montage of photos of urban blight, shuttered factories, rusting farm equipment, etc. Patriotic drum & fife music plays softly in background.

ANNOUNCER: All around us, America is hurting. Our schools are failing. Our factories sit idle, while across the nation millions of unemployed are struggling. Washington is broken. But one man—Pat Kewley—is looking to take our country in a new direction: SNAKES.

Turn on the news any night, and see out-of-touch politicians mired in endless partisan bickering and gridlock while the real problems of our nation go unaddressed. Meanwhile Pat Kewley looks to the future: SNAKES.

As savings dwindle and spending runs out of control, what solutions have the beltway power brokers proposed? Pat Kewley has a vision: SNAKES.

Imagine those same politicians buried in snakes. Snakes slithering out of shirtsleeves and coffeepots, crawling into open mouths and wrapping around necks.

Underfunded rural classrooms with falling test scores and crumbling buildings... imagine their pockmarked floors buried beneath a glistening carpet of exotic snakes.

In the secret CIA laboratory devoted to controlling Pat Kewley's mind and recording his thoughts, a technician looks down at his computer mouse, which has become a writhing snake.

Mouse... into snake. Get it?

America's bright promise is slithering away. Many politicians offer solutions, but only one has the ability to communicate telepathically with snakes and has sandpapered off his fingerprints. His name is Pat Kewley.

Plenty of politicians are willing to say whatever it takes to get elected, but only one man has pledged to use his unique mental powers to purify the sins of our nation in a healing bath of snakes, and has also not left his apartment in 12 weeks: Pat Kewley.

Cable pundits and talking heads might offer empty platitudes and pithy soundbites, but only one person knows the secret code word to whisper every time he sees a blue car in order to prevent his heart from stopping.

Despite what his team of doctors says, Pat Kewley is that man.

A change is coming. Do you see it? Pat Kewley can, every time he closes his eyes: AN UNSTOPPABLE TIDAL WAVE OF HELLISH SNAKES.

Patriotic music swells, is suddenly drowned out the loud sound of hundreds of snakes hissing. Hissing goes on for 10-15 seconds and ends abruptly.

ANNOUNCER: Paid for by snakes.

PAT KEWLEY IS A WRITER AND COMEDIAN FROM BUFFALO, NY. HE HAS PUBLISHED HUMOR AND NONFICTION IN SLATE, SALON, PASTE, MCSWEENEY'S, AND CAGE MATCH. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF NOTABLE FAILURES IN BUFFALO HISTORY, DAY OF THE DICKS, AND HOW TO EXPLORE THE NORTH POLE.

GIRLS YOU KNOW ARE BECOMING THICK CARPET

The Invisibility ring is some cryptic Chia pet.
They circle the rug. Lost.
Afraid of fullness. The wall. This.
No one ever runs through fiber.

They chase down wrist bones.
They want to weave themselves into
kleenex boxes but they're just so
Cordless. God-willing. Wrung.
And there's too many woodworms
besides. Root the heavens for
old VHS peninsulas lit into smoke
a litany of smoke. Calls to

our Chronic Gods of dissociation: our
extinguished tigers we should
take into consideration. A shrug.
A holy mess of pancake batter we lather
into our knuckles.

I'm not sure why
my vacuum oozes.

I am dusting
the wrong glacier.

THAT TOMBSTONE IS A LITTLE LOUD, DON'T YOU THINK?

It could be his teeth, I suppose,
or her small perfect breasts
envy of every high school mascot
choking on our melon overlords
so embattled even
the people of the town
feel sorry

Maybe a laudanum flavored
wonder woman is vowing
to kill every last Cowboy
between dead horizons

Maybe the last island
will be a cactus
covered in sequined
shark teeth
Blooming,
blooming.

Thank all your jets:
hovering red over the tripwire
we're keeping the ground forever.

Under Glass Spell (I & II)

Pay attention to how the dead
are xeroxed and so live
on in stereo.

Above the door
to the archive
the inscription reads:

oh,
you're
welcome
baby.

RE KATZ RECENTLY EXHIBITED *BOYWITCH CODEX:
HYPERTEXTS* AS ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AT
DREAMLAND IN FEBRUARY 2017. KATZ IS
INTERESTED IN PERSONAL FASHION, ANTIFASCIST
WITCHCRAFT, AND TELEVISION.

Amid cosmic conflict

I'm so lonely that the world
is ending during a dinner party

I want to buy my mother a horse
I want to scream in his ear

I'll tell him it happened when she began
having to choose between her feet and eyes

It happened when everyone is beginning to bleed from their mouths
and there's nothing we can do about it

I've heard that hell opens like a rose, horse,
that poets are dinosaurs with real teeth
born in caves born by meteorites

that some people are so coated with stars
they don't need to go to prom

ROBIN LEE JORDAN'S POETRY AND LYRIC PROSE
HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED IN VARIOUS JOURNALS,
INCLUDING *ALICE BLUE REVIEW*, *PUERTO DEL SOL*,
A CAPPELLA ZOO, *PEACH MAG*, AND *PAPER DARTS*.
SHE'S THE COORDINATOR OF THE JUST BUFFALO
WRITING CENTER, AND FOUNDER OF THE COMMU-
NITY ARTS PROJECT (B)UFFALO (A)RT (D)ISPENSARY.

I As In

i as in superglue a muskrat tooth back into a jaw
i as in dented pumpkin memory
i as in deflated basketball consciousness
i as in internet parrot projection
i as in holding uterine lining above a toilet bowl
i as in wide eyed no eye lids what so ever
i as in forecasting a shadow self
i as in interrogating repression with a single light bulb
i as in carving out swallowed memories from muscle mass
i as in for a purpose what for but how
i as in contiguous continental conterminous
i as in stewardess placing a napkin on your thigh pre-prandial
i as in heidegger & derrida stripped of language
i as in adumbrating wolves viewed from a youtube video
i as in please let me say just one true thing in this form
i as in effortless dwell of complex incorrigible decision
i as in water moving across stone
i as in photo stored in a hard drive orbiting earth
i as in swimming like a dog in a river
i as in choreografted into body
i as in set in a vague eden
i as in my father's influence
i as in why do people laugh when i interact with them
i as in what if all thoughts even this cannot be untethered from ego
i as in ensconced with a detrimental something
i as in my past life as avaricious egyptian emperor committing sororicide
i as in before you were a human you were black radiance
i as in a golden nothing forever
i as in how could you forget

Money Is Energy & I Am Energy, Therefore, I Have Concluded, I Am Money

dwelt not long with lack & fear
those two old friends
clone an abundance of themselves
can only exist in your head /
if you let them / hold water
with your earnest palms cup
a lake of our trying
pair of gulls wolfing french fries
one hundred dollar bill boxers
& queen anne's lace popping off
the side of the highway
money is energy we locked the sun
in unopened packs of triple a batteries
a mound of trash potential
tossed away / passing through
the articulating geography
of a grouper's gut
wishing only to transform
make move what dormant
fill our eyes like bowls
when you enter this room
tell me again the story
we wrote ourselves out of

ROSE ZINNIA IS A POET AND DESIGNER FROM CLEVELAND, OH, LIVING IN BLOOMINGTON, IN. AUTHOR OF THE CHAPBOOKS *HANDS* AND *RIVER* (WITH ROSS GAY), ROSE IS THE COFOUNDER AND LEAD DESIGNER FOR MONSTER HOUSE PRESS.

Cajun Mix

I'm curled up with Bukowski, reading
If you can't love each other's assholes...
Today the sky weeps those quiet sobs with no clear dusk or dawn,
just drops and a constant wind
It's september and all I've written is a sonnet about regret
and falafel

The university goes on without you
The men with patchy beards still wear Bills caps
The ecological coffee, labeled with a green coqui, remains untouched
The two English luminaries are still grandiose and fat
The sunset still dips the Audubon in blood

With the right song I can almost forget that I'm
Driving to Wegmans for the third time this week, on a Wednesday
Walking through the self-serve bar, then sushi, croissants, bratwurst
and gouda,
until I remember the bulk nut option is gone

I'm better off, I think, it was wrong to steal cajun trail mix
And there were ingredients I didn't like
Sesame sticks and dried corn,

Carbs of all species, and food

Life is not a tragedy anymore
I get on,
Sleep off the darker feelings or drink gin with the groceries still in the car
and only think of cajun mix
When the milk turns sour

Drip Period

I assume the lazy posture
of a meditative author
As the sunset's awning melts my stiff and Pollock splattered key

Toward the market I am heading,
on a search for apples redding
Always food can fill the simple-minded animal in me

In my keychain splattered painting
is a tender ruminating
Bold and red delicious moment scraping just below the knee

I am lucky to have tasted
what the season's end has wasted
Picked the largest dusted bloom I thought would grow my family tree

But what winter froze in evening
was left rough and hardly breathing
Decomposing under soil into something finally free

Angry winter frost is jaded
and the pain has slowly faded
Into memory that paints a splattered sun against debris

RUBY ANDERSON IS A WESTCHESTER-BORN PROSE WRITER AND A BUFFALO-BORN POET. SHE WAS AWARDED THE WNY PROSPERITY FELLOWSHIP FOR HER WORK DEVELOPING JOURNAL PROGRAMS IN DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND IS NOW EXPLORING SIMILAR OPPORTUNITIES IN BROOKLYN.

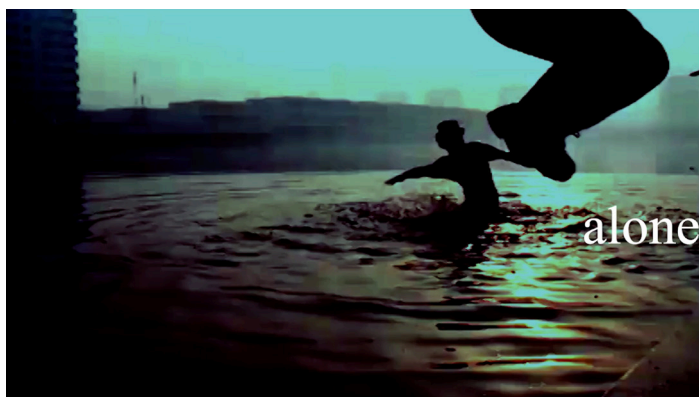
RYANN SLAUSON

from II/VI





from I was a sex tape for Halloween (part 1)





RYANN SLAUSON IS A BROOKLYN-BASED INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTIST WITH A PRACTICE BASED IN VIDEO, POETRY, AND SCULPTURE. HER WORK CAN BE SEEN IN SPY KIDS REVIEW AND NEW AMERICAN PAINTINGS.

junk angel

they called you “junk angel”
and gave you paper bags for wings
the kind that still smelled like a pull-tab can of
corner store beer. your halo was pieced
together with tape that barely stuck
anymore and twist ties from your mother’s favorite
grocery store, and you basked in it. you plucked
crinkled and greased plastic wrap from dumpsters
and called it sacred, called it
glory. you wanted to be holy. they found you
under the overpass. you would have called it
“heaven.”

Cool Girl Moon

I Somewhere in the concavity of the stars, my Goddess blinks antenna eyelashes and guides me. She tells me the emptiness that plagues me will fade, and that even the perishing organic moon I was born under will someday be reincarnated. The spaces between my fingers will be filled and the gleaming eyes of the carnivora will permeate mine. My Goddess holds a space in every flower I hang to dry. She finds a way to hook Her creeping fingers into my spine and let me know I am not alone. I think She put Us here together on purpose. The same continuum is difficult to recreate, and I know I will never pass the same double samara twice.

II She teaches me that the things I regret are not regretful things. I wish it had been you in my veins, sustaining me from the inside of an IV in a foreign city. I wish it had been me keeping your fists at bay when you couldn't do it yourself. I would have pulled my lungs out for you to breathe, if only you could breathe. A long time ago I wanted to hold you, encase you like pink plastic covering and make sure you didn't crack. But everything cracks. We live underwater, in the midst of chaos and low oxygen, and when we finally start to surface, we stretch out for each other.

III People get new jobs, they find out they are allergic to general anesthesia, and I fall in love with you. The earth turns, the truth comes out, my good red lipstick breaks under pressure. I wish I had kissed you under the blistering sun of the dog days, sweaty and thriving and honey golden. I wish I had taken a white charcoal pencil to your apple crisp cheeks and connected every freckle until you were a sky of constellations with holograph eyes that only I could envision. The number of ancient rusting needles that have filled my head is too many for my silk doll hands. I wish I had showed them to you sooner. You taught me to throw them away and leave the cinerem for the birds.

SAGE ENDERTON IS A QUEER TEENAGE WRITER TRYING TO BALANCE HER INSATIABLE NEED FOR CAFFEINE AND HER FRIVOLOUS BOOK-BUYING HABITS. SAGE CREATES ZINES AND LISTENS TO BANDS THAT HAVE ONLY ONE GOOD SONG IN THEIR DISCOGRAPHIES. SHE IS A YOUTH AMBASSADOR AT THE JUST BUFFALO WRITING CENTER AND HAS HAD HER ART DISPLAYED IN THE ALBRIGHT KNOX GALLERY, AND NUMEROUS PIECES PUBLISHED IN BUFFALO.

How the Night Ends is What Really Matters

When I tell my friends that I had cartoon crushes as a child, they appear supportive at first. I say Tuxedo Mask from *Sailor Moon*, and everyone voices their agreement. I say Dimitri from *Anastasia*, and a few people nod. I say Phil from *Rugrats*, and the silence that follows seems like a punishment.

After a few seconds of feeling like the world's largest asshole, I excuse myself, grab the last Bud Light Lime in the fridge and begin walking home in the dark. I turn the volume of my podcast up, and start humming the National Anthem over the voices of the two men speaking to each other.

I get really soulful with it and start using dramatic hand gestures and arm movements because it seems funny in a way that mocks this country, or that's what my father says.

When I finish the last, drawn out note, I celebrate by finishing the Bud Light Lime, slam dunking the bottle into a street corner trash can, missing it somehow even though I touched the trash can with my hand, slam dunking it again, successfully this time, and receiving a drinking citation from a police officer that I didn't realize had been following me because I was busy concentrating on hitting every note in the Star Spangled Banner.

Noises That Exist

As a grown woman
my favorite part of the day
is resting my face on the floor
next to the food dish
while my cat is eating

There are noises that exist
that most people never hear

I'm just like every other cool
well-adjusted person on this planet
I catch colds in the wintertime
I black out at company parties
I fucking just don't get my body

And if you broke my heart in 2012
I am likely to hold it against you forever

I feel incapable
of not asking other people
to use the bathroom for me
when they ask
if anyone needs anything
as they step out for just a moment

The incapability lies in the personal fact
that I can't stand to not draw attention to myself
in excruciating ways
A painful *here I am!* in case
anyone had forgotten

Another favorite part of my day
is loving you in too many ways

I watch people on the street
see you for the first time
and think
I know

SARAH JEAN ALEXANDER WROTE *WILDLIVES*
(BIG LUCKS BOOKS, 2015), *LOUD IDIOTS* (SECOND
BOOKS, 2016), AND *STOP GODDAMN APOLOGIZ-
ING* (GHOST CITY PRESS, 2017). SHE IS THE POETRY
EDITOR OF *SHABBY DOLL HOUSE* AND
TWEETS @SARAHJEANALEX.

26 One-Word Poems in Alphabetical Order By Title

"A sucker is born every minute."

–P.T. Barnum

"it's foggy foggy foggy foggy"

–Robert Grenier

AARDVARK SCHEME FOR SEQUENTIAL PROMISE

Excess.

BIRDS

Birds.

CRIMSON WHEELBARROW

Chickenshit.

DUNK ON HIS PUBLIC PERSONA ASS

Crowdsourcing.

ESCHATOLOGY'S REALPOLITIK

Couchsurfing.

FANG, FANG-LIKE

Mom.

GOING BIRDING

Being-towards-birds.

HECTORING SYNAPSE

Dad.

IDYLIC DIRT FACTORY

Handcrafted.

JUNG IN HIS GRAVE

Huh.

KAFKA IN HIS SEXY GRAVE

Ah.

LIMOUSINE AMBITION

Barter.

MONSTER TRUCK EMPIRE

Steal.

NAUSEA (PART 1)

Reading.

ORIFICE (PART 2)

Asking.

PRURIENT (PART 3)

Giving.

QUOTA FOR TODAY

Zipper.

ROYALTY BEQUEATHS A RAISE

Raze.

SEBASTIAN, L'AUTEUR

Idiot!

TALLY AFFECT

Laptop.

UNORTHODOX PRINCIPLES

This.

VIOLENT PRINCIPLES

Them.

WEATHER TOURISM

Tomorrow.

XEROX PATAPHYSICAL TERROR

Local.

YOUNG, DUMB, FULL OF CRUMBS

Sebastian.

ZOLOFT, 50MG, ONCE A DAY

Drama.

Definitive Guide to the Latin American Boom

after Linh Dinh

Gabriel García Márquez: \$7 latte; cartoon version of the Christian gospels; bathtub filled with anonymous thank you notes; the sound raisins make inside their little cardboard boxes; a relative no one likes.

Julio Cortázar: unsent knives; the way a father pronounces “cigar”; starched tie with a permanent wine stain; throwing an ancient vase out of a hotel balcony; abandoned Metallica cassette tape in the trunk of a used car you are driving out of the dealer’s lot.

Carlos Fuentes: the urine of wealthy university students; neatly stacked clay bricks; 3 or 4 variations of techno; the Coliseum but in a bad way; a lily petal that reeks; looking at gaudy furniture with your partner.

Mario Vargas Llosa: rescinding a careless remark to a person of no consequence; plaid vests; a crossword puzzle in a porn magazine; stifling a cough at a child’s funeral service; non-alcoholic beer for dinner; shaking hands with your boss after masturbating in the office bathroom.

SEBASTIAN CASTILLO IS THE AUTHOR OF 49 VENEZUELAN NOVELS (BOTTLECAP PRESS, 2017). HE LIVES IN PHILADELPHIA, WHERE HE TEACHES WRITING. YOU CAN FIND HIM HERE: @BARTLEBYTACO.

SHAYNA KIBLIN

from **Restrained**







from Light and Color



SHAYNA KIBLIN IS A PHOTOGRAPHER AND VISUAL MEDIA ARTIST FROM BUFFALO, NY, WHOSE WORK OFTEN CENTERS AROUND FEMINISM. SHE IS CURRENTLY STUDYING PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY. MORE OF HER WORK CAN BE FOUND AT SKIBLIN03.MYPORTFOLIO.COM.

TERRY ABRAHAMS

exercise in grieving

stand still
for as long as possible

exercise in loyalty

find out where the river
opens to the ocean

exercise in understanding

you are so small
in this
with me

summer '07

it was the old glass jars
I set up to knock over

the better the stone
the louder the shatter

that was the science
we knew

the best stones we found
with some help from the lake

the search an excuse
to avoid catching your eye

too eager to move on
and return to the breaking

you and I returning stones to the river

stone water skin air
sun tree shade hand
skin hand skin hair
air skin skin hair
hand hand mouth air

TERRY ABRAHAMS LIVES AND WRITES QUIETLY IN
TORONTO. KEEP HIM COMPANY ON TWITTER AT
@TRABRAHAMS.

You Do Not Communicate

You do not communicate
"The weather is nice today"

this is the correct way this is how this is the truth this is because

mother covers her mouth to hide her teeth and her tongue

(twist) lodge in the back of her throat

blood and all.

not knowing/ more. You are

Will you please stand up
place your hand over heart affectionately
unlike the time ?

You do not have
Before it is taken

Yet you have what you've had
In this way

mother's hands are tied.

You say

You do not communicate

Your hear mother's mouth

WE NOMINATED "YOU DO NOT COMMUNICATE"
FOR A PUSHCART PRIZE IN DECEMBER.

excerpt from Aqua Bomb

Formulated sans parabens
sulfates
phthalates

Excess oil mineral
petroleum

synthesize
preservative
hair food dye
un/natural aroma.

When you (your eyes) are 1,000 dollars (plus)
I lick an orange tint to lips

world record holder

Leave it (supple)

and cushiony

apothecary herb
detoxify
(cum-free)

“Serious hydrator
combination”

with

dipromethyloxygenmyblood
extractyouranuschickweed
threedropscholesterolgunk
equestrianleaftriglyceride

dab,dab,dab

1. Apply morning and night
2. Tap gently
3. Before makeup
4. After makeup
5. Not for use

Total 1.68 ounces. \$38 or market price.

Also contains water.

WOOGEE BAE WRITES AND LIVES IN BUFFALO, NY.
IN THE FALL, SHE WILL RELOCATE TO SEATTLE FOR
HER MFA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
BOTHELL. SHE LOVES BLACK COFFEE, VEGGIE PHO,
AND HAVING PERFECT SKIN.

Episodes Gig Posters

Designed by MICKEY HARMON

MICKEY HARMON IS AN ILLUSTRATOR AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER BASED IN BUFFALO, NY. HARMON PRIDES HIMSELF ON COLLABORATING WITH LOCAL ARTISTS, WRITERS, AND ACTIVISTS TO BETTER REPRESENT THE CREATIVES IN HIS CIRCLE OF PEERS. HE HAS PUBLISHED THREE BOOKS: *COLOR ME WHITE*, *THE LIFE & TIMES OF GROVEY CLEVES*, AND *A PIE-EYED NIGHT WITH PEGGY O'NEIL*. HE LIVES IN ALLENTOWN, AN ARTS NEIGHBORHOOD IN BUFFALO, WITH HIS HUSBAND ROBERT AND THEIR RABBIT FERNANDO.

Peach Mag

Launch Reading



METATRON'S

Greg Zorko
Frankie Barnet

THURSDAY
AUGUST 18TH

LOCAL WRITERS

Robin Lee Jordan
Pat Kewley
Alana Kelley

7 PM

Sugar City

PEACH MAG

fall reading



FREE • October 14th • 7-10 pm • Dreamland
387 FRANKLIN ST
BUFFALO, NY 14202

FUTURE ABSENCE TOUR
**MONSTER
HOUSE**

**RICHARD
WEHRENBURG, JR.**
BELLA BRAVO

WITH LOCAL
WRITERS:

**NOAH FALCK
PAIGE MELIN
WOOGEE BAE**

Peach Mag Proudly Presents:

A Poetry Reading to Benefit Journey's End

Friday, December 16th 7 - 10 pm



Sugar City

1239 Niagara Street

\$5 donation

all proceeds go
to Journey's End

Calling All

writers & visual artists:
interested in reading at
the event or donating
art to be sold to raise
funds? send inquiries to:

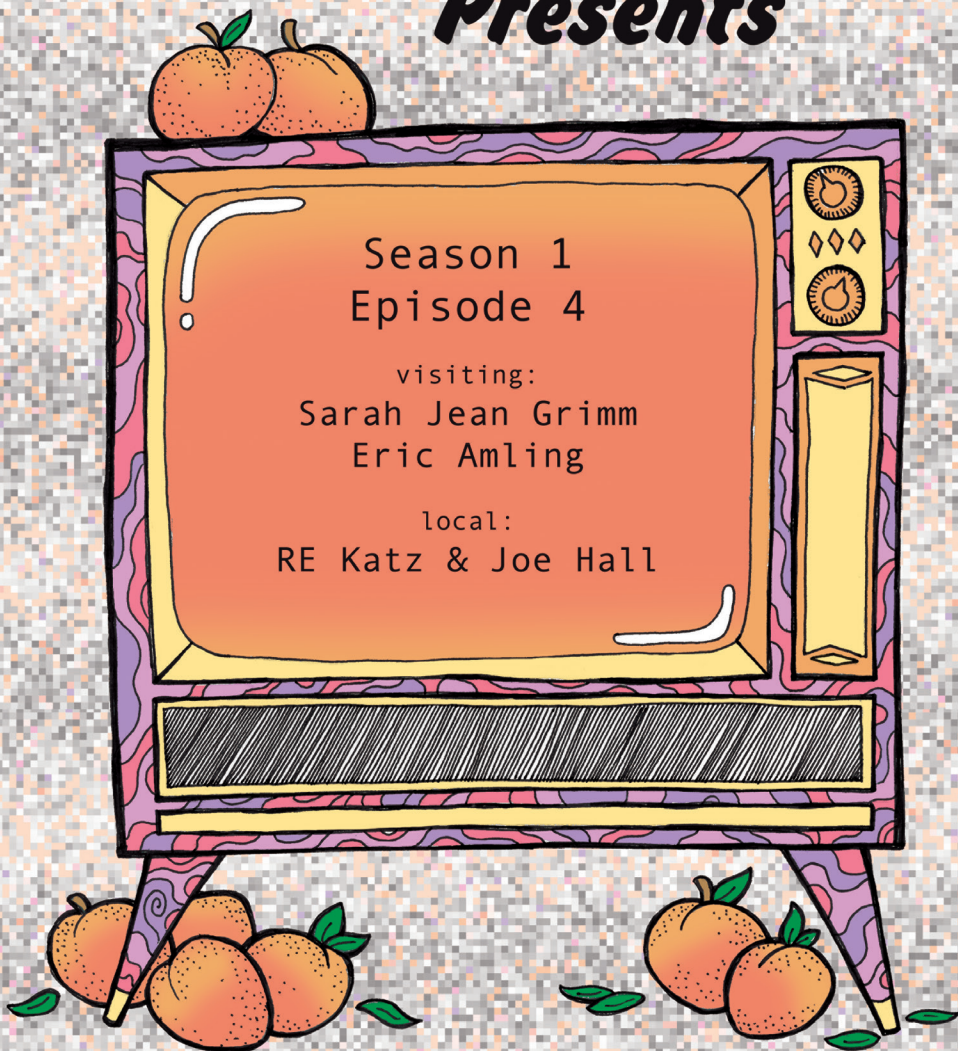
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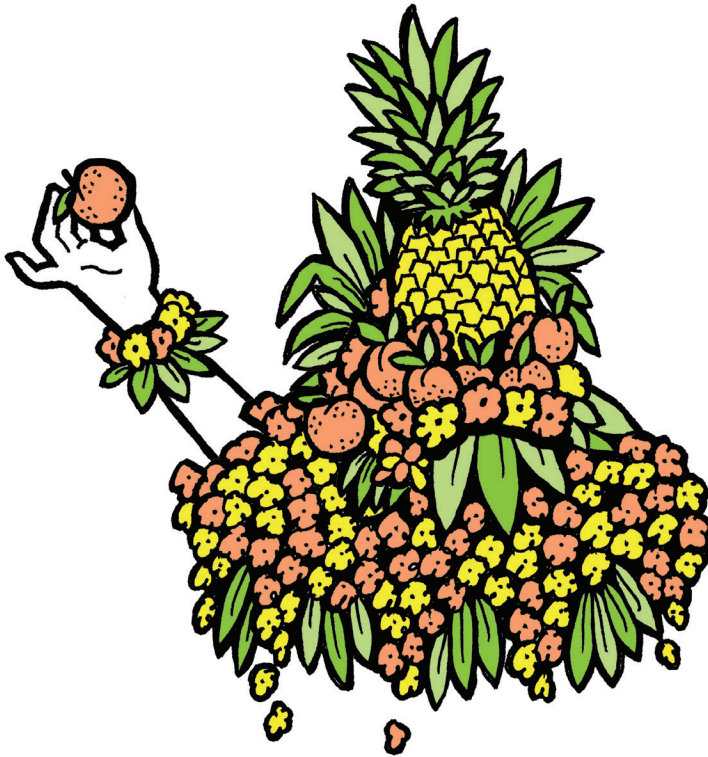
Peach Mag

Presents



Sunday, April 2nd at 7pm
Sugar City / 1239 Niagara St.

   ***@peachmgzn***



Peach Mag



s01e05
poetry reading



pearson
Gehrenger

Nathanson
Enderton

Haq
Thurston

wednesday, june 14, 2017



Pine Apple Company
224 Allen Street

7-9 pm

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