



WRITERS

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We hope that you can find a piece of yourself nestled in the depths of these creative minds. With *Writers*, we never start compiling selections with a theme in mind; rather, we wait for the patterns to reveal themselves naturally. Our main goal is to be an illuminating and empathetic voice for all students on campus, in which everyone's experience is truly unique. But when we step back and look at the collection as a whole, a theme somehow always emerges.

Immediately, we noticed a preoccupation with the physical body in this year's pieces. To quote Margaret Atwood, "you are your own voyeur," and this year's edition abounds with pieces that reflect on this idea of self-surveillance. We attempt to reconcile with how we appear, both to ourselves and others, like in this year's Editor's Choice "dysmorphia", or how we relate to each other within and outside of physicality ("the miles between saigon and guangzhou," "Things to Be"). We use our bodies to cope with trauma and tragedy, to create distance ("Incantations for your Digital Ghost") but also to seek connections ("valenta"). We survey ourselves, both past and present ("Female Assimilation," "A letter to my former Self"), and attempt to distance ourselves from physical notions. Mostly, though, we hope that others might feel the same way, that we are not isolated in our bodies.

Just as no two life experiences are the same, our relationship with ourselves is constantly changing. As we navigate through society, we attempt to find a place for ourselves, a place where we fit. Being accepted by others is something we all desire, and when this desire is met with rejection, we find ways to rationalize and cope with who we are and who we want to become. The ubiquitous dysphoria we find in our reflections, between our perceived image and our reality, takes away from the deep, interconnection of our shared, human experience. This year's edition is meant to restore this connection, to celebrate and reveal truths about ourselves, that we have yet to share.

EMILY NELSON & KRISTINE FOO
SENIOR EDITORS

"No one knows any more than me
And I am going to have to stay alive
In the mouth of civilization
I ask god to send a swordsman
And god says *look at your hands.*"

– Melissa Broder, "Problem Areas"



dysmorphia

MORGAN GERLACH • SHE/HER

I don't know what I look like

When I close my eyes
I see grotesque lumps of flesh
sitting under light eyes and hair
my shoulders and hips obscenely large blobs
my chest flat, a disappointment & relief
my stomach protruding far out from me
my legs simultaneously twigs and sausages

When I don't try so hard

I see the little things
the mole shaped like a heart on my shoulder
the large freckle above my hip
the dark circles under my eyes, making them grayer
the scar on my
nose (dinosaur exhibit)
right knee (falling off a mountain)
left knee (falling in general)
left calf (bike accident)
left ankle (surfing accident)
left wrist (baking incident)
right wrist (cat)
right index (a secret)

When I try to picture what I want to see

I am soft and hard
solid muscles and soft curves
too feminine and too masculine
proud of what I see in the mirror



Lady Lotus

NATALIE BRIARE • SHE/HER



On Bike Rides I Can't Tell That You're Medicated

TERESA FOLEY • SHE/HER

At dinner you mentioned your bruise
Again
Liquid filling glasses
Swallowed by voices
So no one would notice
I show you my college tuition
Spent on teeth dyed with tar

Your hair
Exposed on your knees
I guess it was
Your hipbone
That hit the curb
A hole in your left leg
Where seeds grew under your skin
When I was a kid

But you wore wool socks
I remembered
White cotton sliding in broken leather
While the fog wore us like a blanket
And I couldn't feel my toes

In front of you
Leaves that traveled on wet rubber
Pickled in mist and dirt
You noticed bottles that weren't mine
And I got you a glass

On Bike Rides I Can't Tell That You're Medicated

TERESA FOLEY • SHE/HER

You left
On the table
A translucent green bucket
Among unopened mail, stout mugs
With polished cracks
Two insides
Soaking up coffee
We never drank

Washing ring stains white
I think of mottled yellow
Pressed up against flesh
Specks of healing
Or time
And maybe
You won't remember falling
The next time you visit

The Last Row at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church

KELLEY MCCAFFERY • THEY/THEM



a eucharistic prayer

ISABEL CORTENS • SHE/HER

A screaming yellow
cracks through stained glass,
fragmenting again and again
into fine powder gold, all over
the flannel of the sixty some man in
line two ahead from me.

Where'd all this goddamn divinity
come from? I have to squint
to see in all this light.

Ave Maria, upper back, left shoulder.
I can feel her climb every inch of spine and
oak pew. I look down to see dirt
in the nails of the hands I reach with
for wafer and blood of jean jacket-
christ.

Over 5pm coffee
other dirt-in-the-crease of wrinkled hands
reach for humbly crafted peanut butter sandwich halves
and warm styro-formed cup.
My mind traces words from a friend,
declaring his corporate-Cutie clementine
a "tree-blessing". Benedictus,
good word, fruit from the vine;
we humbly implore you, ma'am
would you like a cup of drip.

a eucharistic prayer

ISABEL CORTENS • SHE/HER

You got any cream?
I can't remember if Angels are just
below Humans or the other way around,
Lisa "Frida B. Me" said. I think they're all
mixed up together maybe.

Frida's theology
was what kept our hands warm,
under Rhodes skatepark bridge, near-dusk
mid-december.

Incantation for Your Digital Ghost

EVAN FERGUSON • HE/HIM

My Aunt has been dead for five months now. Exhausted by breast cancer, her system was ultimately corrupted by that ceaseless disease. In the face of all her physical ailments, she was vibrant until the end. However, something very strange has been happening: my Aunt has continued to talk.

Every culture, in every epoch of time, in every corner of the globe, has felt something of the notion that death is merely a transition. Perhaps from this life to another, or to a plane of existence different altogether. Occasionally these days you might hear from those among us who whisper doubts, or loudly proclaim that death is absolutely the utter end to it all. Honestly, I was beginning to accept that as a possibility. But now I can see clearly the dead speaking with the living. It's happening right in front of your eyes, not in some dark and damp candle-lit dungeon invoked by hooded worshipers of the occult. No, it is happening through a medium not even the greatest of psychics could have predicted. The next notification beckoning you to glance at your phone, or power up your laptop, could very well make you too a witness to the digital expressions from these lingering phantoms.

Five months ago distant family members from each coast of the United States gathered to one of the many pine-covered mountain ranges of Southern California to lay to rest my Aunt's soul. Memory of that journey is blurred by the tears that flooded eyes and obscured by the emotions that swelled the heart. The same shared emotions which choked the throats of our small group comprised of the brothers, sons, nieces, nephews, and husband she left behind. A breeze caressed our faces as we marched to a small stony outcrop, overlooking the mountainous forest as it transitioned to vast golden deserts. Despite the size of the tiny wooden urn, it appeared impossibly heavy in the arms of the old man carrying its weight and all that it represented. I don't blame them for wanting to help make it lighter, reaching in and pulling out a handful of the fine grey ash that contained the last remaining pieces of my Aunt's corporeal form. I also don't blame them for miscalculating the direction of the breeze as they threw those ashes like smoke from a cannon towards a boundless sky.

Incantation for Your Digital Ghost

EVAN FERGUSON • HE/HIM

Yet everyone stood stoic, even if mildly uncomfortable, as my Aunt flew back into our hair, under our jackets, and over our glasses. Solemnly unable to translate emotions into spoken words quite yet, everyone's mouths were fortunately closed at the moment of impact. After we brushed ourselves off my Aunt was truly dissipated, her energy returned to meld back with the universe.

It wasn't until after witnessing the ceremony that the realization finally grimly settled in with me; my Aunt was gone, no longer was she going to be a part of our lives. The living then spent a few more days reminiscing and appreciating existence while at a cozy lodge tucked away somewhere among the trees. Soon each group said their goodbyes and were driven or flown back to their homes. But before anyone could try to settle back in, it happened. She posted a poem on Facebook. It was about love, and pain, and hope for the future. Through prose and rhyme it questioned the depths of human sorrow and called for joining of hearts towards brighter days. Family picked up phones and called each other to try and comprehend the phenomenon, in the process shedding more tears they didn't think they had left. After all we went through, I thought it was jarring seeing her younger face in that small profile square, with her name next to it, followed by a paragraph of poetry that was implied to somehow have come from her. I wouldn't have guessed ghosts could type. Though, given all they've been known to possess, cabinet doors and creaky floors were bound to grow tiresome at some point. Perhaps it shouldn't be too surprising that computers were next.

The following day another poem was posted, this one even longer. All the wonderment and magic contained by the first poem was being smothered by the tendrils of a softly creeping unease. I did not know my Aunt to be a gratuitous conversationalist on this plane of existence. Despite the evidence, I wasn't ready to believe dying would change her so quickly. As the days and weeks continued, more and more poems were posted in ever greater length and number. The situation quickly devolved from spine-chilling suspense into a routine banality.

Incantation for Your Digital Ghost

EVAN FERGUSON • HE/HIM

I began to sense that these were not a product from the remnants of my Aunt's consciousness reaching across time and space somehow. Behind the pixels, I glimpsed something that appeared more like the cry from a distraught, tortured soul. Indeed, reevaluating the poetic omens revealed multiple rushed spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, as well as some odd formatting choices. Artifacts which signaled an author still in mourning, still living with all the emotions and hubris that come with being alive.

The poem count is currently sitting at 93 as I write, with another one probably being written as you read. At this pace, I believe we are bound for a few hundred more before the end of the year. As my Aunt's virtual haunting continues, I realize there's only one person who could possibly have this much to say about anything. One person who could give a speech until the audience's ears fell off, all without taking a breath, and who probably had the password to the account all along. The father of my cousins, and the husband of my Aunt: My Uncle.

My Aunt has been dead for five months now, yet she continues to speak. A spell was cast and a digital resurrection was performed. The ghost was eventually captured and the mask removed, and underneath was the man who married her and loved her the most. At first I thought this might have been a window into the afterlife; instead, it revealed the love in a man's heart. She has moved on, and he has not. Perhaps my Uncle will post a thousand poems before the tides of grief recede. I'll be there for him until then, with moral and tech support. But I really should tell him: For as far as society has progressed, wearing someone else's face is still frowned upon, especially if you post it on Facebook.

Reflection in a Vintage Store

BRENDA HERNANDEZ • SHE/HER



Things to Be

SAM STARKEY • SHE/HER

The job description calls for
'detail oriented'

Taco night on a beer pong table
The slight bulge of fat above low-rise jeans and a too tight shirt
Prompt responses to emails

But I think so broad, so
Big picture

Long, never ending train of thought
The vastness of the ocean
People, tastes, sounds that remind of a distant past
Souls with light

Why am I applying for the job... anyways?
I yearn for vacation
Vocation
o to a to o to a to o

So often
Statements of certainty

Shoulder length hair
Red soil
Sunshine on a Sunday
Art made with dots and strokes
Giggling

Made without true knowledge
The ontological commitment

An undeniable charisma
Sunrise fog over the ocean with pink mist
Learning the intimate details of a stranger's life
Harmonizing housemates
Shivering due to brisk air

Things to Be

SAM STARKEY • SHE/HER

What then, do I know?

Derived through experience

My knowledge

When asked

What is there

to be...

Coffee shop chats for hours

Reuniting hugs

Bright white shoes in anticipation of dirt

Impermanence

Warm apple cake with ice cream

The indistinguishable color of leaves at dusk

Fog Sonnet

KAYLIN INGALLS • SHE/HER

fog, , holds possibilities.
Who knows what's missed behind mist, what hides
inside billowing folds, pillowed in soft surroundment
content without movement, to wait t
Who knows what ghost strokes cheek with weak fingers,
embraces you, cold touch felt not understood.
Who knows what creatures breath unwhirls the white shadows,
fills lungs with it, damp inside and out
dampening sounds, sourceless, that could be anything .
Who knows what lives only in the half-light
a half life, seen imagined, mystery moving through clouds.
Who knows? that's how it captures us, wrapped warm in
then pulls us out towards the maybe, the could be,
unknown danger, yes, but also unseen beauty.

Ice Sculpture Moon

LINDSEY KEEFER • SHE/HER

In the white, streetlight-carved columns
Frosted showers stagger, solemn
Heavy stars are peeling, shaving
From a broad sky-iceberg, braving
How the brightness turns its powdered flakes to flies.

Here my hollow limbs can settle
And my throat steams like a kettle,
Boiling broth between the tendons
Of my bones that, bright, could blend in
With that vengeful, grating martian of the skies.

If the winter's born so empty
Was it crafted just to tempt me?
For I ache to fill with flurries
That will melt my vision blurry
Oh, I wish I had the might to fall as high.

Snoqualmie

CLAIRE NELSON • SHE/HER



Seeking Help

KRISTINE FOO • SHE/HER

I don't talk about when my mom was in the hospital
Or when the apartment complex
Evicted us.

I don't talk about the rides home
From a friend,
The only friend
Who I told.

I don't talk about the twenty bucks
From my aunt
That I made to stretch
For the week.

I don't talk about my dinner
Slices from the same pizza
I made to last five days.

I don't talk about the nights
Spent alone in the apartment
Trying to pretend it's quiet
Because she's just sleeping
In the next bed.

I don't talk about how
I left the TV on,
To fill the dead silence
With voices
So I didn't feel alone
That the only breathing I hear
Is my own.

Seeking Help

KRISTINE FOO • SHE/HER

I don't talk about my dog
Who I had to give away
When I moved back into
Grandma's House
When my mom was still struggling.

She's still struggling.

I don't talk about how
The only thing I regret
Was only visiting her once
In the months she was in the ICU

Or how
Once was enough
And how
I didn't want to go
Or how
I didn't want to see her like that
I don't talk about how
I thought she'd resent me
How I still think
She resents me
Or how I cried
Alone
When she told me I was already
Forgiven
But I still haven't
Forgiven myself.

valenta

MADDIE NGUYEN • SHE/HER

1. she greeted me at the door with a smile, a laugh,
curly hair peeking out from under her hijab.
"we're close enough in age," she said,
"don't be scared." she'd been there
almost a year.
so bright. so bold.
when it got to be too much she'd go
quiet –
her voice would shake.
once she just got up and walked out
like i had always dreamed of doing.
i honestly don't know if
it took more courage to go
or to come back.

2. she was an artist; drawing, photography
and we whispered secrets back and forth
one bathroom stall to another.
she was frustrated, she'd tell me,
between "normal" and "better" she didn't know
which to choose.
but where she led, i followed
inseparable.
i missed her terribly when she left.
she follows me on instagram,
posting pictures of
beautifully arranged tables of food.

3. she held conversation cards at the breakfast table
gently asked me, with my eyes closed,
what i thought it might be like to live on mars
and if i could have any super power what would it be?

valenta

MADDIE NGUYEN • SHE/HER

i didn't tell her i would choose
to have her four-octave singing range
or maybe the ability to eat oatmeal without crying
or maybe to be able to turn back time
the day her brother died.
and she still showed up, smiling,
beautiful.
everything i wanted to be
but not in the way i shouldn't have.
in the way that
everything made sense
in the way light is really light
and a lot of other things are just things too.

4. she stayed for two weeks.
i heard her sobbing on the day she came in
though i pretended not to.
she, too, was beautiful
but at the same time she was not.
i was afraid the tiniest thing would break her;
bird-like bones
words that fell from her lips like marbles
everyone else was afraid to pick up
whispers that sharpened their claws in her head
all day, every day.
i heard her screaming from two doors away the day she left
and, god help me, i was glad to see her go
because i
so desperately
wanted to be the same.

valenta

MADDIE NGUYEN • SHE/HER

5. she made me cry
not because she was cruel but
because i never knew a twelve-year old so kind.
i imagine she may have been
a queen, in another life
she carried herself with that sort of grace.
a part of me wanted to cry, every time i saw her, that
"you're too young for this hurt, please,
you shouldn't have to feel like this."

but then
i'd look at my mother
and wonder if she thought the same about me.

Recline in Green

TAYLER BRADLEY • SHE/HER



a letter to my former self

OLIVIA MITCHELL • SHE/HER

you're going to be confused at first. not sure if you misheard, not believing what's on your screen. he's crying, saying that he's sorry, and all you can focus on is your image in the left-hand corner. you don't blink. you don't move. he says he'll call you later, and hangs up without a response. the sound of the call ending brings you back to life. you feel as empty as the room you're in. you cry but can't feel the tears.

it will be okay.

there will be nights that don't end until 5AM, with your best friend gently stroking your hair while the sun comes up and your eyes are swollen.

it will be okay.

you'll want to reply to his texts saying that he misses you and that he's in town tonight and would you want to meet up and talk?

don't.

you'll get back together, and break up, and get back together again, all to feel the same way you did when you were 17 and said "i love you" for the first time. he'll say that he's no good but that you make him want to be. you'll think that you can fix him.

you cannot.

school will start again and you'll head back to portland, with promises that it'll be different this time and that you can make it work. you'll be two weeks into the year when he calls you crying. he will say it hurts too much to be apart. a week later he'll send you a message that his new girlfriend wants him to block you on all social media.

block him first.

it'll be two years later, and you'll be lying in bed, listening to music, when the memories will begin again. only the very good and the very bad will make an appearance—no in-between. it will still sting, but the pain will be muted. numbed. you'll feel dumb, or dramatic, for even acknowledging it. he was in the past, it was a long time ago, you're an adult now. but it still hurts.

you are human.

it's all okay.

Montgomery at Dusk

KELLEY MCCAFFREY • THEY/THEM



Tashunkewitco

TERESA FOLEY • SHE/HER

Today I asked you
Whether the ground made noise when you danced.
Your eyes left the wall where I've written my name
And I was able to see
For the first time you thought I was dumb.

Flipping through the wall of my old house
Saved in a white album sitting in my mother's apartment
There is a woman in a brown picture
In cursive, The First Settler
Like the regret of a childhood
Secret said out loud.

And at Thanksgiving when I was still tripping
I didn't think about the absence of sound
Of soles against carpet
But the pleading silence trapped in my mother's fork
Halfway to her mouth
As her dad praised—
Blue spots spinning around a silver utensil.

In the Year of the Cowboy

EMILY NELSON • SHE/HER

Next to her, the hijacker is sipping whiskey. Karen watches him roll it over his tongue, lips closed, a thin film of stubble on his neck glinting in the dim plane light as he swallows. He hasn't looked at her since he handed her the note – it feels like hours now, but when she goes to check her watch she remembers she left it at the bar on the layover in Denver and can't be sure of the time. She was planning on getting a new watch when they got to Seattle tonight, but that's less likely now. Seattle is miles behind them - they only stopped to refuel and let the other passengers off, bleary Thanksgiving travelers all blissfully unaware of how close they came to being blown to kingdom come. It is 1971, and the papers have started calling them "skyjackers," they appear so frequently on planes nowadays. There are other names for them, too - vigilantes, activists, cowboys. The man who is asking for two hundred thousand dollars and a free flight to Mexico stares straight ahead, his mouth arranged in something like impatience, like he's waiting for a doctor's appointment.

She expects him to make conversation. After all, he's got what Karen's father would call the "dream scenario" – he's guarded only by a young woman, too meek to say anything and too scared to go anywhere. That's what people love about stewardesses, her father had told her when she was eight, after he asked her not to tell her mother about the napkin he slipped to the woman serving them coffee on Pan American. The man holding her hostage could say or do anything and she'd have to laugh, else he might blow her and the rest of the crew out of the sky. The tangle of wires, concealed in a briefcase at his feet, are proof of that. When you think of it, she could imagine Betty saying, it's not really any different than any other passenger. She imagines Betty grimacing when she says that, the way she always does when she's lighting cigarettes for greasy businessmen in first class, but right now Betty is in the cockpit with the pilots, all three scared stiff, straining over the engines to hear anything from the cabin.

In the Year of the Cowboy

EMILY NELSON • SHE/HER

The man produces a cigarette and lights it himself, blows a plume of smoke in the air and looks sideways at Karen behind his dark glasses. He's wearing a clip-on tie, she can tell. She's gotten good at telling which suits are earned and which ones are for show.

"Can you tell where we're at?" He asks. His voice is far too calm, too conversational, the same cool tone he used earlier to inform Karen he needed two hundred thousand dollars (in new bills) or he would kill every passenger onboard.

"Past Reno, I think," she says. Her voice wobbles against her will. He smirks.

"You know the area?" He puffs his cigarette, crossing his legs.

"Not really. I grew up in Idaho."

He nods. "Which part?"

"Camas." The case of money the police had brought to the plane in Seattle is nestled in the seat between them. He hasn't looked at it once, hasn't even checked that it contains the requested amount. The stack of bills hanging from the side of the briefcase gives the whole thing a cartoonish feel.

"Never been to Camas, myself, but my dad was from Nampa," he says, draining his whiskey. He hands the glass to Karen, and out of habit she stands to refill it, but he waves her off. The theater of it all is making her nauseous. She thinks about the man's father, what he must be like, what sort of delusions of grandeur he built up in his son's head that led him here. How many men with sons who wore clip-on ties might live in Nampa. Karen's own father, never one to pass up the opportunity to mention his lack of a son - what might he think of this man?

In the Year of the Cowboy

EMILY NELSON • SHE/HER

He'd gobble up every detail: the dark glasses, the hijacker's calm demeanor and slow, collected voice. He'd tell Karen, "I bet he let y'all live because y'all were so pretty." He loved stories like that, the lone ranger felled by the innocent maiden.

In the empty cabin, the man puts out his cigarette on the sole of his shoe – a folksy anecdote Karen will remember later, something the newspapers will all repeat – and inhales serenely. "I think it's time for you to go to the cockpit, please," he says. His voice is cool, but a smile creeps across his face, a knowing smile that he means to be self-serious and cunning, but she's seen the same look on the face of every man who has slipped her his phone number or paid for her drink before stealing her hotel key; men who know they're getting away with something and can't help being pleased about it. He knows he's won and there's nothing she can do to change it.

"What are you -" she starts to say, but her voice falters. He lights another cigarette instead of answering, letting her hesitance hang in the empty hum of the cabin – unpressurized, per request.

"Don't ask any questions, please. Go up to the cockpit now and tell them to lower the door. Thank you for your hospitality."

Karen stands, staggers up the aisle with kitten heels sinking into the crude orange carpet. She feels slick sweat against her polyester uniform, clammy and unreal. She wants to look back, tries not to, fails - his face is impassive, blank behind his glasses. He could be sleeping, for all she cares. A ghost of that shark smile hovers on his face in the dim plane light. She locks herself in the cockpit, tells the pilot the man's request, and when they land in Mexico he is gone.

David Bowie, Twice

BRENDA HERNANDEZ • SHE/HER



David Bowie, Twice

BRENDA HERNANDEZ • SHE/HER



Syzygy

CAROLINE HOLYOAK • SHE/HER

I.

Let me tell you one
true thing about this world:
a pomegranate is just rubies
stacked and holding,
the sea is just darkness
reflecting in on itself;
you can only hold one
in your hand.

Pick the gems from the velvet,
break them between your teeth,
taste blood where juice should be.

II.

When he came out
from the garden,
I understood why
the poppy
burns envy
in its wet dark center.

When she followed,
she brought her
unbelongings
raw and wrapped
in newspaper.

Syzygy

CAROLINE HOLYOAK • SHE/HER

When I came out
from underground,
my mother wept
cold iron tears—
my slit heart
hung hollow.

III.
In one pear-sweet swipe, she
let the guillotine loose,
brought night's black blade
slicing down on the horizon.

Let me tell you one
true thing:
not everyone can hold this
and still be
whole.

Fountain of Youth

SARON MEKONNEN • SHE/HER



Summer, 1970 (Dog Days)

RILEY EYRING • HE/HIM

In the summer of 1967 my mother left my father, fell in love with a traveling salesman of spices, and moved to the other side of the park into his townhouse. I was only 6 or 7 at the time, so the split made no difference to me – but the days were hot, humid, and seemed to drag on for lifetimes. For a time I drifted between both ends of Central Park, crossing the seemingly endless fields that served as the no-man’s land between my two homes. A few years later my father took off for the other, more golden coast, so I braced myself for a long summer at Jeffrey “The Spiceman’s” place with my mother.

Everything was fine for a spell. Mom stayed at home working on a novel manuscript that never seemed to materialize and Jeffrey—plying his wares at all hours of the night—rode around town in a steel rimmed hearse with a peeling flower-power decal adorning the side. He swore that he bought it off a shaman at Big Sur in 65’, an acid casualty who had no more need for a “steel pollution machine” such as this. It was a steal at this price, he said. Five-Hundred for a set of wheels and a working engine – he’d be losing money, not buying it.

That car cast a spell on me. I was fascinated by it. I always stood on my tiptoes and cupped my hands against the cool glass of the hatchback when no adult eyes were prying. My young mind was scared beyond belief that a body might still lie in the back, but its appeal was magnetic and morbid and I always looked even if I didn’t really want to see. Of course I knew people died, but I’d only really heard of the Manson killings – all over the nightly news Mom watched a year or so back – and my grandfather, who was cremated. No open casket for him. Looking back I see that’s what grabbed my attention—I was obsessed with people leaving. Maybe, I thought, something would eventually materialize in the hatchback if I just kept looking – I’d have the satisfaction of knowing that when people go away it’s not always permanent.

Summer, 1970 (Dog Days)

RILEY EYRING • HE/HIM

Days and days were spent like this: cupping my hands and scanning the shag interior, thinking about anything other than my current family dynamic. Even the prospect of a dead body seemed like cheerier food for thought than that. Though my imagination was captured by the hearse, it became a contentious topic in my new home at Jeffrey's.

"It's a work vehicle, Sharon" He'd say when my mother teased him. He often went from playful to sour in an instant – all spurred on by his volcanic and erratic temper. "Your deadbeat husband couldn't pay the bills, so don't criticize my ride." The bile that rolled off his tongue always stung my mother more than I liked.

"It's just the flowers... they might've fit some hippy dosing ayahuasca at Woodstock, but you're supposed to be a business man. Responsible." She stood hands on hips, elbows cocked forward, standing her ground as Jeffrey worked himself up into a flustered rage.

"The flowers are classy, its not like I'm playin' the stocks – nobody gives a damn what my ride looks like," he sneered as his face steamed red. Then, worked up into a paranoid mania he stomped outside, threw his head back, and screamed "It's called 'artistic license,' baby!"

I tracked the spittle that flew onto the porch from his mouth, then turned my eyes to Mom as Jeffrey tore out of the driveway. I could see her eyes grow brighter, light catching more than usual off of her radiant, saucer-shaped blues as she forced the tears back in to face me. She was a quiet woman except for occasional bursts of mania, when her creativity flourished into all hours of the night. Her face was stony, but I learned how to read it and find the cracks. It was rare to catch her in such a vulnerable moment.

Summer, 1970 (Dog Days)

RILEY EYRING • HE/HIM

That first summer Dad was gone was...confusing. I was too young to "get" that he was actually gone, but sharp enough to realize something was off. When I asked, my mother would dance around the topic, getting halfway to an answer before something changed in her demeanor and she'd decide to withhold. It was in her eyes, like an on/off switch permanently stuck halfway towards either side. I was too young to feel any resentment about it, but I understood this arrangement was not like the picturesque nuclear family. Nights I finished my schoolwork early I camped out on the couch watching sitcoms, feeling like a complete outsider. I saw nothing I could relate to in these families: Gruff, handsome husband with chiseled jaw; Blonde-haired, bubbly housewife, usually donning some sort of towel or apron; A son, tall, broad-shouldered, probably captain of the football team; Daughter, eminently precocious, usually the Valedictorian or an Ivy League dilettante. None of it rang true to me, even then. It was bullshit.

"Your..." she'd begin, the on/off switch momentarily unbalanced. Mom always was very careful to not speak out of turn—a vestige, I think, of the time she was raised. I can still picture her now, gears turning, working through how to explain this to her child. He'd been gone a year at this point, a massive chunk of my life at that young age, and she knew it needed to be addressed. She recognized my intelligence, but wanted to protect me from the pains and sorrows of reality, knowing full well I would become all too familiar later in life.

"Your father had to go away for a while, to figure some stuff out. He's confused." She said.

"He's confused?" I thought. Just like me.

One day Jeffrey overheard one of these talks from the kitchen and filled the doorway, his massive frame blocking out sunlight, the shift in light announcing his presence.

Summer, 1970 (Dog Days)

RILEY EYRING • HE/HIM

"Your father's off in a hole somewhere, nursing his pride. Useless. That's all a man who can't provide can be." I wanted to scream at Jeffrey and tell him he was wrong and that he didn't know him like I did, but I held my tongue. It had been a slog of a winter and a long summer since I had last heard from him and my own memories had faded, taking on the faded quality of an old photograph. It occurred to me that Jeffrey, though a vulgar man in his own right, might have some kernel of truth. My mother said nothing and I watched the tides move in her eyes.

"When you have a women like your mother you best take care of her." He continued, relishing the latter half of the sentence like a horny schoolboy. It was disgusting – I could feel the jet-stream of moist halitosis and nicotine hit my face moments after he opened his mouth. After a long pause Mom grabbed her notepad and left the room. Jeffrey looked down on me, shrugged, and slunk back through the doorway from which he came. I checked to see if he left any slime on the doorframe and was somewhat surprised, then disappointed, when there was none. The sun came back as he left and I stared at the wall for a moment, then went out in the driveway and partook – with cupped hands – in my new ritual.

.

She watched her son – transported, deep in thought – leering into the back of the car. He had grown so much, she thought. Her small boy was now stretching out violently as growth ravaged his little body. Her boy was not so little now, though. Time seemed to be moving very slowly today, but when she looked back on the last twenty or so years, she hardly remembered more than a few stolen memories. Briefly glimpsed impressions, all overlapping, repeating over-and-over at the same time. An image, maybe, or a smell. Apple pie. Her mother's—she always used Granny Smith's. An oak casket with beautiful varnishing. Which funeral was this? Not her father's, he never deserved a ceremony. Deep wells of feeling, now walled off and inaccessible. Things heal in time, they all told her, but in this moment she wished they hadn't. Its not healing its forgetting.

Summer, 1970 (Dog Days)

RILEY EYRING • HE/HIM

Now her boy was picking flowers out of the ground. She remembered when she met his father. She was in the garden when he pulled up in an old beater Ford – was it white or blue? – and offered to lend her some tools. He was just off work at some job site across town when he saw her, and it seemed like she could use some extra tools. He was sweet then. She missed him for a minute, and felt a worrying pang of doubt. All of the fucking arguing? All of the fucking therapy? All of the fucking *fucking*? It'd been for nothing, it turned out. Was it really to late to fix things, or was she just afraid to? No, she had made the right choice, she thought, or at least told herself. She had thought she missed him, but it was just nostalgia. And nostalgia is dangerous. The door swung open.

"Hey sweetheart," she said, returning to her body. She had been twirling her hair into an ever-tightening knot. "Do you want some lunch? There's still chicken from last night."

"I'm ok. thank you though." He walked to the fridge, grabbed a bright purple juicebox, then sauntered up the creaky wooden stairs to his room. The door shut loudly and she flinched.

Juice didn't sound so bad to her either, so she uncorked a bottle and poured out a glass. Wine went in the plastic cups before 5 PM, of course. The glassware was only for special occasions. She waltzed over to her desk and sat at her typewriter, ink ribbons still untouched, and stared at the blank page.

Sunday Morning Breakfast

NATALIE BRIARE • SHE/HER



the miles between saigon and guangzhou

MADDIE NGUYEN • SHE/HER

When you think I am not listening
and my mind must be somewhere else
among the nebulae and everything else you can hear in my head,
(turning, turning)
you tell me that you love me.
You say it in Cantonese
just in case.

I turn my head, bumping clumsily against
your mouth that bruises
so easily and beautifully.
"What? What did you say?"
Your eyes crinkle.
"Nothing. Don't worry about it, gwáilóu."

The shape of your language is so similar to mine
the number of tones in your voice
making me grow envious
of your fluency.
In another time we might have grown up
kingdoms apart.

But I do not think we could have existed
anywhere
or anytime else.
You suit too well this age of fast food and
mobile phones.

the miles between saigon and guangzhou

MADDIE NGUYEN • SHE/HER

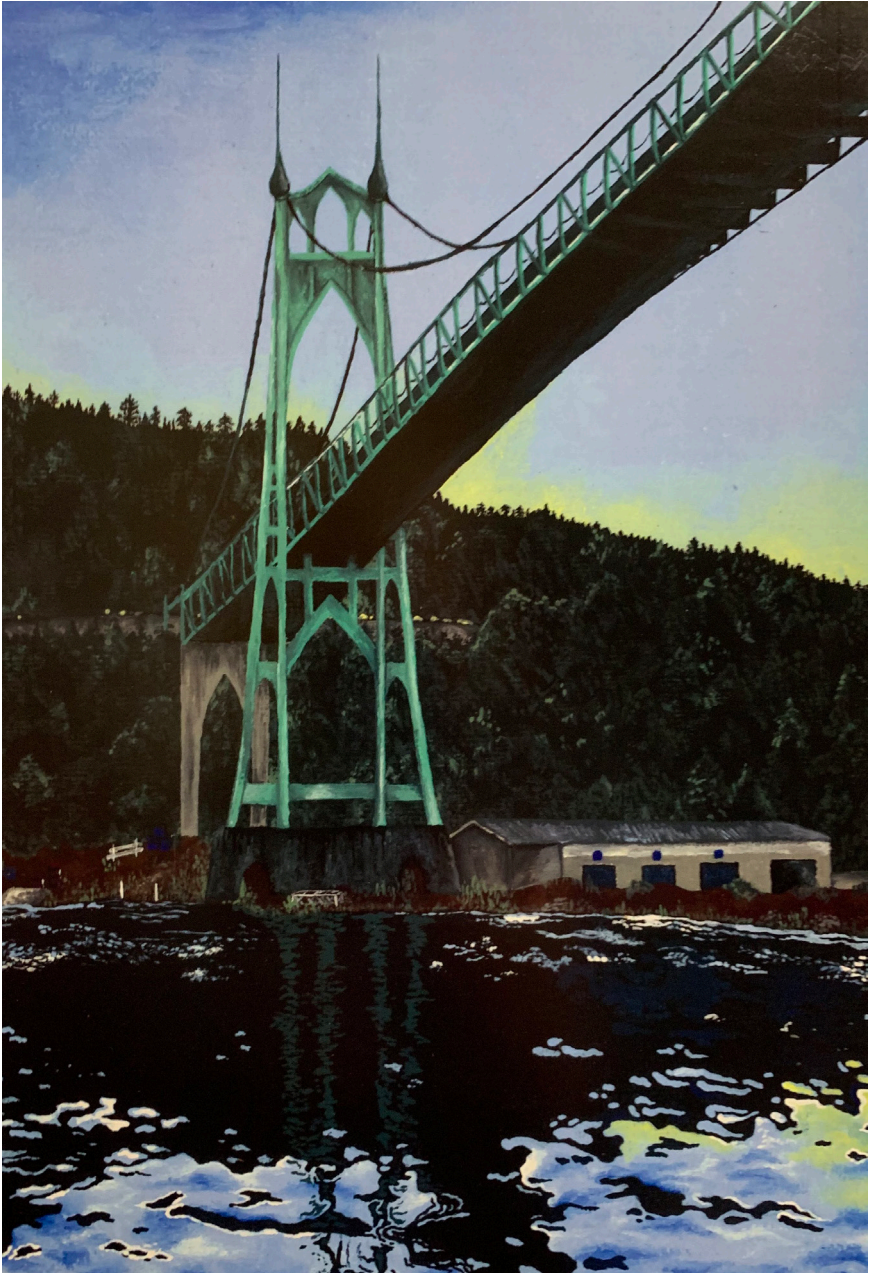
My mind spins and fractures
stories and scenarios
and I try to imagine you as Niulang
or me as a Thúy Kiều
but
we cannot be anywhere but where we are;
you in my bed and myself in my mind.

I tell you I love you.
I say it in English first
just in case.
Then in Vietnamese.
"Em yêu anh."

I know that you are listening
because there is nowhere else you could be
when you bruise my mouth with yours
and we exist outside of history.

St. John's Bridge

KATI COOKE • SHE/HER



Fly Fisher

LINDSEY KEEFER • SHE/HER

It stretched a fisher's harp between the trees;
it, ambidextrous, dexterous played a tin-
sel summer tune. Impervious to breeze,
the spider straddled lunch with mouthless grin.
The wings of the flies it caught upon these spokes
were almost gossamer as humble web.
Eight jointed legs, eight beady telescopes
could rule the net in equal octet spread.

Of course, the pincer-mandibles are two
to pluck, or like a seam- stress, thread the dew.

Transpiring Sense of Autonomy

SAM STARKEY • SHE/HER

Feel the crisp breeze
 The cool air
 Vibrant vibrations

When I was imprisoned
This scene was truly unimaginable
 The fresh air
 The green
 The quiet chaos
 Music and knowledge at ones
 Fingertips

All I could comprehend
Was the daily the present
What was happening in the here and
Now
The struggle
To stay in the moment
I find my thoughts my brain
 Bounce
a reminiscent past to anxiety filled future
I can't seem to stop
to stay in the present

Your job is to heal
 They say
Your job is recovery
 They say

Trauma transpires without consent

Transpiring Sense of Autonomy

SAM STARKEY • SHE/HER

When I jolted awake at 3:44am
Desperate to censor and share
Convinced of impending universal
Disaster, my destiny to

Silently, subtly restore balance
Required the weight
of the
 fate
of the
 world

Neurons firing at a pace to which
Inability to keep up with ideas, thoughts
Internally and externally, assessment of

Mental stability, rather deemed
Unstable in 'the PES'
an inmate
 wearing an id tag, loose-fitting uniform
 escape attempt
 refusal to eat

diagnosed, mandatory homecoming

flash forward one month
returned this time for a
l o n g e r sentence.

Transpiring Sense of Autonomy

SAM STARKEY • SHE/HER

Inside the fishbowl
Every breath you take
Police on repeat

Behaviourally confined
Quick judgement passes

A violation of freedom

So today with the
Crisp air and
Cool breeze
A sensation of
Content with biological wonder

I am sovereign.

Sheepish

MOLLY LOWNEY • SHE/HER



Movements of Protest and Freedom

MICHAEL GALLAGHER • HE/HIM

I. Blurs of movement contrast with the stillness of the country field behind our rambling house. The lush, vibrantly green grass, not more than a hand's length in height, still bears the not-so-distant memory of a chilly morning's dew. The warm, late-spring sun beats down on us as we chase each other around, the dewy grass displaying the haphazard trails of our raucous play. "Aggie! Calm down! I'm getting tired!" I playfully shout at my year-old golden retriever, sitting on the moist, tender ground. She collapses next to me, both of us panting but content.

II. Anger and frustration at blatant betrayal, but emboldened by collective discontent, los ciudadanos venezolanos take to the streets to voice these feelings. Illegitimate regimes and rigged elections tarnish civil participation in Venezuela, leaving an unpleasant, metallic taste on each tongue shouting for truth, integrity, and an honest government. Down with Maduro, they say, changes come with Guaido!

III. Untouchable yet caressing every terrestrial object, the exuberant firmament celebrates its absolute and elemental freedom through everchanging splatterings on its own ethereal canvas. Dollops of indistinctly bordered, white speckles are pushed and pulled around the robin's egg-tinted body, giving Pollock a run for his money. Indecisiveness seems to consume the artist.

IV. My virgin eyes peered outside the van window at the towering, motionless behemoths of rock we drove past. There...And there...And there! It was as if we were being ambushed by the slowest bandits in the PNW. A wave of awe-filled trepidation filled my heart, originating at the bottom of my ribcage, burgeoning into an electric wave that coursed through my body. I wasn't sure when this would be home, but I had better get used to these gracious giants. Perhaps they are stoic protectors, not thieves.

Movements of Protest and Freedom

MICHAEL GALLAGHER • HE/HIM

V. What is your social credit rating? Reassure yourself that you pay your debts regularly even if it means skipping lunch and dinner today. Smile at your fellow citizens on the tram to work. Who knows if someone will give you a bad rating? In 11 months, every citizen of China will be in a Black Mirror episode. Maybe we will grow closer in the face of this guójiā (State) program, but I am not hopeful. It will be another way to strip away our privacy and sow division amongst the masses—both necessary for a totalitarian state.

VI. Right & left, left & right, right & left, left & right. Coordinated, careful placement of her eight legs distinguish this acrobat from others. Her stage is a homemade tightrope, spanning across the striking swath of empty space betwixt two trees. Maybe, she thinks, it would be good to add another connection. Could this help her unique performance differentiate itself? She adds more and more silk, weaving whirlpool-inspired patterns on the anchoring lines she placed earlier. Tired but proud, she sits in the middle, contemplating when she should get her next meal.

ABC D

CLAIRE BREIHOLZ • SHE/HER

What would the
Romantics
Think of us?

Is it possible that we
See the world more
Freely?

Perhaps the world
Does not only look
Beautiful in

A
B
A
B

And,
Perhaps poetry is not
Just *the spontaneous
overflow of powerful feelings*

But,
Perhaps poetry can also
Be an amateur endeavor

ABC D

CLAIRE BREIHOLZ • SHE/HER

(Redefined: the thoughtful
trickle of moderate -- to extreme --
emotions)

With random line lengths
and even random line
breaks?

I am not sure that I understand Milk and Honey
Any more than I understand The Song of Myself.

So, Wordsworth, Whitman ...
Maybe none of us have it right.

Educate Me

CLAIRE BREIHZOLZ • SHE/HER



my resume

SOPHIE DOWNING • SHE/HER

not a catholic
 but go to hall mass
(talked about it in my interview,
 told the truth:
the people are inviting and
 hey!
if the service is short what's the harm?)

can't understand poetry
 but here I am!
(didn't mention it in my interview
 but said I'm excited to try new things)
doesn't seem too hard
definitely not easy
getting better

bad with names
 but sit at the front desk
 handing out packages
 "welcome back!"
(didn't lie in my interview
 instead focused on how I wanted to connect with the community
 meet new people)
still true

don't thrive in dull settings
 but four times a week I count Scantrons
 sitting alone covering her lunch hour shift
 in a dark little office
(wasn't the initial description laid out in the interview...
 still would've taken it
on-campus jobs aren't that easy to come by)

my resume

SOPHIE DOWNING • SHE/HER

have a habit of stress eating
but worked in a gelato shop while my dad was hospitalized
even though we only get comped one regular per shift
(didn't think to bring it up in the interview,
since he was healthy as ever
and I was just planning for senior prom
graduation a blip
months away)

not a fan of selfish industry
but was a bank teller
(never came up in my interview
and I'm not sure that's something you know at seventeen)
I quit seven months in
tired of "one of our bankers can show you our loan options...
follow me!"

pride myself on being truthful
"just being myself"
but still don't get half the jobs I interview for.

Lola and Scarlet

MELISSA ALLEN • SHE/HER



Friends of Silence

JO GEISEN • SHE/HER

There's something special about the world in the hour before sunrise.
The cold is shocking and the sky takes our breath away.
The stars wink to let us know we're doing just fine.
We should be tired,
but the silence keeps us wide awake.

No lights in the houses, no cars on the roads.
Even the crickets are sleeping.
Our breath freezes in our lungs, and our tongues in our mouths.
We should be saying goodbye,
but the silence keeps us from speaking.

No moon hangs in the sky, yet we see clear as day.
We keep the lights off so we don't ruin the magic.
Stardust is shining all around us.
We should be moving on,
but the silence keeps us from stirring.

So we stay in the driveway and look at the sky.
Our minds are calm and our hearts are full.
The hours have slipped away.
We should be cold,
but the silence keeps us from shivering.

We know that soon the sky will lighten and the world will begin to stir.
But for now it's just us,
so we stare at the stars and smile into the dark.
We should be out of things to say,
but the silence keeps us from being empty.

Friends of Silence

JO GEISEN • SHE/HER

There is something eternal about this feeling.
This hour could last forever.
Gemini of the earth, our bond is as strong as the silence.
We could be saying, 'I love you,'
but the silence keeps us from needing to.

There is something special about the world in the hour before sunrise,
something the silence can tell us.

Female Assimilation

CLAIRE BREIHOLZ • SHE/HER

The ritual of
Shaving my armpits
Is as casual
As the assumption
Of the American Christmas.

We can't stop for a
Millisecond to consider
The other possibilities

Are you Jewish?
Atheist?
Is Jesus Christ not your
Lord and your savior?

My armpit hairs –
Grown lovingly
In a soft and a warm home –

Ripped from their womb
Only to
Swirl
Down
The

D
R
A
I
N
.

Of a Certain Course*

KELLEY McCAFFREY • THEY/THEM

fingers flit / on

clocks / on hand /

propelling feet perpetually

forward / trying

to tap a center /

that does not hold

the year i become /

obsessed with time /

is the same year

i'm told / I am

destined to be obsessed /

with time

full circle / is what

They say / right ?

Of a Certain Course*

KELLEY MCCAFFREY • THEY/THEM

concentric & collapsing

/ the linear extends

a hand

the cyclical leans

in / caught in

rhythmic interplay /

are matisse's dancers

Girls or Boys ? /

They entangle /

just the same

*after Yeats

Half Dome

MOLLY LOWNEY • SHE/HER



Aerial Advertising

KAYLIN INGALLS • SHE/HER

The only thing
the Osprey
advertises--
its wings curved planes
fierce feathers flat
in the wind of its flight
brown-white plumage
washed gray into the clouds--
is how grand it is
to be a fish hawk flying,
in the rain.

Heatstroke

CAROLINE HOLYOAK • SHE/HER

you rise biting with sparks between your teeth
clenched like fists yes cinched hot and
clasping claw-tight one bent note sweat soaked and unclean and un
claimed and you
pinned panic into seams and i unstitched
myself and threw the remnants on the ash
unrecognizable without name without place without the way you
cuffed your shirts and somehow there's
a buzz on my breath and thunder on my tongue and you
split and splint-
er and
break out and away and i am so far up and i flail and
fall aflame

Pastels Collide

MARIO SARICH • HE/HIM



Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

"Can I talk to you for a second?" He doesn't wait for an answer, which is an immediate red flag because he's usually a pretty considerate guy. He just walks to his room and unlocks the door. I follow him, dreading every step along the way. He closes the door behind us. Then, with a contemplative sigh, he locks it.

"I'm in trouble, huh?"

He attempts a smile, but there's the caveat of his hand through his hair. His body's tense, hinting that he's upset about something, but he won't confirm it. He won't let me at his eyes. He keeps them locked on his phone as he flips it between his fingers and says: "I want know why you said what you said to me on Friday."

So now, I'm wracking what's left of my mollied-up brain, trying to recollect any part of Friday, let alone the particular mistake he's referring to.

"I honestly can't recall. All I know is that I caught a decent buzz around 4:30, so..." He laughs a hearty laugh—that electric pow wow shit—throwing his head back in a fit. He couldn't fight his amusement.

And that's how I get him!

When he's done laughing and gathering himself again, he lets his eyes fall on mine. And they scream his discomfort. "Hey, what did I say?"

"Undeniably and unfortunately," he remembers for me,
"Oh, yeah," he recalls the whole conversation like a song,
His chorus: "For sure! Who knows you better than me?"
And my hook: "You think we know each other?"

Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

The words roll off his tongue just as I remember them. "What?"

"That's what I want you to tell me. You asked me if I thought we knew each other, and when I said yes, you laughed in my face."

Wow...just wow. I'm a dick. What do you say to that? How do I defend that? I'm sorry is all I can really muster, and even that barely escapes.

"Don't be," he replies.

"But I am; I shouldn't have done that, shouldn't have said that to you."

"Well, why did you, then?"

I know the question isn't rhetorical, but I can't bring myself to answer him. He continues, "I don't mean to attack you or anything, but what the hell, you know!"

"Yeah, I don't know why I said that."

"Did I do something wrong?"

"No, gods, no; you just don't understand."

"Well, help me understand! My closest friend is telling me I don't know him, so what's going on? Talk to me!"

"I can't."

"Why not? I've seen you straighten someone out before; it's not a big deal. I can handle it! Just tell me what I did wrong, please, and I'll fix it."

Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

"You didn't do anything wrong. You just were wrong, in that one moment, and for whatever stupid, immature reason, I felt the need to correct you. And I'm sorry for that!"

"Are you lying?"

"Have I lied to you before?"

"Yeah, actually, you have, but it's whatever. Fuck it..."

"Hey, watch it!"

"No, you fucking watch it. Watch what you say because from now on, I'm calling you on this shit!"

"Oh, please do!"

"Whatever..."

"No, do it! Say what you've got to say!"

"No, damn it. See the difference between you and me? I don't just say reckless shit. I don't make those kinds of mistakes, especially not with you."

There's a knock at the door before I can fire back...thankfully. Believe it or not, I prefer not to argue, least of all with him, but at the same time, I also can't just let things be, especially not with him...

"Go ahead; open it."

"No! I don't want to leave things like they are."

"Me neither, trust me. Just come by later, and we can talk."

Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

"You sure?"

"Yeah, it'll give me some time to think."

His face grows suspicious, but he opens the door and welcomes his guest... while I slip out of the room, hopefully forgotten.

Cut to tonight. Ten o'clock and heavy-eyed. The end of another beautiful era in dreamland. I figure I'm just about done for the night, as in, if I close my eyes one more time, they won't open again until morning, so I grab my towel and head downstairs. But as soon as I open my bedroom door, I'm met by surprised eyes, brazen, brown, and yet somehow surprised eyes. He must not have heard me coming either (understatement of the...ever). As always, he's the first to say something:

"Hey"

"Hey"

"Is this cool? I just let myself in; the back door was unlocked."

"Yeah, for sure."

"It's not too late?"

"Of course not; it's only ten, right?"

He breathes out a quick laugh, and I taste something on his breath. It's cool, calculated almost. I smile back.

"So we can talk now, then?"

Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

A yawn escapes before I can catch myself.

"You were napping, huh?"

"Kind of; I'm coming out of one. I was just about to shower—"

"Oh, no worries. You go ahead. I'll wait."

"You sure?"

"Yeah," he says as he slides past me, "You waited for me earlier."

He makes it to the top of the stairs before I can correct him, so I just tell him I won't be long, which he—probably instinctively—scoffs at. And I can't even be mad.

So I hurry to the bathroom, peel off my clothes, and jump in the shower. I stand right under the shower head, letting the water fall through my hair, down to my scalp. I feel each stream of water as it flows down my neck, my temples, my forehead, and my cheeks. Over my eyes and all they've seen, into my ears and all they've heard, trickling all the way down to my feet and every path they've walked, washing me clean.

I add soap, more for scent and moisture than the cleansing, a little treat for the skin. Like flowers for the home or worship for your gods. It's a ritual, a purification of thoughts. I let it all go in here, allowing bubbling water to turn white, clouds once grey. I collect my faults and prepare my compromises. And when I'm finally sorted, I get out and breathe. Nothing like a few deep breaths and a couple whispered prayers to chill yourself out.

Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

It evens my playing field. When I'm ready, I wrap myself in the towel and head back upstairs. And immediately, I notice the music playing: Get To You Again by Mac Ayres. It's a whole scene with Riley all sprawled out on the bed at the center of it. Fast asleep, he's clutching onto my pillows like a child holding on to her mother's leg. I can't help but smile. He's made himself right at home. He has the blue Christmas lights fading in and out against the ceiling and the candles crackling on the banister. All the while, he's snuggled up in my bed, oblivious to the spell he's cast. Typical.

I decide not to wake him...yet. I want to be under his spell. I just throw my towel over the banister and slide into some shorts. Then, I grab my coat and lie down on the floor.

"No, lay up here...with me." I hear him scooting back toward the wall to make room. I can tell; it's not a request. And as I stand up, he throws the sheets back and rolls onto his side. I climb in beside him.

"Take that off," he grumbles. I reply with a skeptical look, but he's still sleeping. He doesn't repeat himself, and I can't argue. So I pull out of the coat, throw it off the bed, and he pulls the comforter over us. Consensus

"Don't lie to me." I think his eyes are open now, but I can't really tell.

"I won't," I promise. And he pulls me closer, adjusting the sheets so there's nothing between us.

"Tell me why you said what you said." Another order, but the gravel in his voice is just as inviting as it is crucifying.

"No."

His jaw clenches, savagely. I barely stop myself from flinching away, and he notices, immediately, taking his hand away from my side.

Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

"Okay"

"Okay?"

"Tell me what you want me to know, then."

What are you talking about? That's the first thing that comes to mind, but I figure it's the last thing he wants to hear. So the truth, then: "I want more... from you." I was wrong before. Because his eyes flash open, the brown mesmerizing in the Christmas lights.

"More like this, you mean?" he confirms, wrapping his arm around my waist. I smile but his mouth is a grin. His eyes close again. "I want that, too. I've wanted it for a while now."

"I know."

"What's the problem, then? Are you afraid of coming out—"

"I'm not afraid of anything."

"It's okay; everyone's afraid of something. I can help—"

"Well, I'm not! At least, I'm not afraid of that."

"What is it, then? You can talk to me; you can always talk to me. Please?"

"I know, I know"

"You can trust me."

"Riley, I know. I'm just not sure..."

Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

"What is it?" His eyes flash open again, this time somber in the blue light, pleading for me to meet him just halfway.

"I want you to know that I know you want this, I know I can talk to you, and I know I can trust you. I know it, but I just can't rely on it, and that's not your fault. At all..."

He doesn't say anything...I can't tell if he's thinking of something to say or waiting on me to say something else, but I'm nervous all the same.

I decide to just keep going: "I want more from you—"

"You mean you want to be with me?"

It stings to hear him ask me like that. It's too sincere. How could he even question it? I literally came up to him asleep in my bed. I don't just let anyone in my bed, anyone in—at all! He's the closest friend I have. And he doesn't even know it; he can't trust it, either. And that's my point: "Yeah...I want to be with you, but I don't want you to have to be with me."

"Look, if you'll have me, I'll definitely have you."

He still doesn't get it, but I don't have many more words that'll make him understand. Plus, it's so much harder to fight against him when we want the exact same thing. I just want to protect him...

His thumb brushes my cheek, leaving fire in its wake. His eyes soften and sympathize, but the intention is still there, still pure. I could feel it in his touch.

"Don't cry, please."

Friendship

TERRANCE LEWIS • HE/HIM

"Cry?" I follow the trail he'd blazed on my cheek and reflexively try to erase the evidence, but he stops me. And after looking through me for a lifetime, he leans over and presses his lips to my cheek. Then, he whispers: "Just let me show you, Theo?"

I take it back. I take it all back; I am afraid. I am afraid of this man. Because for the very first time, I understand. That thing that they say about names, it just circles around and around in my head: "To name something is to have power over it."

About the Contributors

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Submission Policy

Writers Magazine accepts submissions of original creative work by current students of the University of Portland. These works include but are not limited to short prose, poetry, short plays, photography, visual arts, and cartoons.

All submissions are evaluated by the editorial board. Submissions are kept anonymous throughout the evaluation process.

About the Editors

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