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A Common Place, Volume 2, Spring 2023

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JOHN TRAVIS BRIDGHAM

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SARAH DONAHUE

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ABOUT

Founded in 2021, *A Common Place* is a literary magazine publishing both online and print. Run by undergraduate scholars, it features fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and art. We seek to elevate these emerging writers by offering them the experience of publication and to create a strong literary community at Longwood.

www.acommonplacelitmag.com

A COMMON PLACE #2



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FROM THE EDITOR

After assembling the second issue of *A Common Place*, I am thrilled by the amount of enthusiasm, dedication, and heart that has been put into this journal. This issue is the product of countless people's effort, from the students who were brave enough to submit their work to the editorial staff building everything behind the scenes. Together, we have created a truly wonderful compilation of art and writing.

I want to extend our sincere thanks to everyone involved in this project, including Longwood alumnus Noah Reeves, whose fiction was featured in our first issue and whose generous donation has now supported the second. We are also deeply grateful for the support of the English Department and Professor Brandon Haffner, without whom *A Common Place* would not exist.

Despite the rise of AI-generated art and writing, the pieces in this issue illustrate something that cannot be captured artificially. At its core, art is about connection. About not reaching everyone, but reaching someone. Creating art is disguising ourselves in our work, and hoping not that the disguise will succeed, but that someone on the other side will see through it and feel understood. I believe the pieces in this journal exemplify the humanity within art—which cannot be recreated by any machine.

So as you read this issue of *A Common Place*, it is my hope that you will not just see the words on the page, but find a sense of connection with the artists behind them.

- Emily Steffenhagen

MACKENZIE GORDON

Community

I wake up at 6:46 a.m. on October 19th, my blonde Scottish Terrier jumping and barking at my feet for his breakfast and 7 a.m. walk. I get up with zero complaints and make my dog his breakfast before walking back to my bedroom to get ready. I pull on my standard teal tracksuit with my white Nike sneakers, putting my brown, normal-looking hair into a standard ponytail, washing my face and putting in eye contacts to cover my green eyes. They are now brown.

My dog comes running into the room, leash in his mouth, and sits on the floor. I hook the leash onto his collar and exit the door, leaving it unlocked, at exactly 7:04. I watch my dog run around with his fluffy tail wagging cutely and aggressively. I walk with him down the neighborhood. I see Jim and Riley, an old married couple, sitting on the porch of their painted yellow house, waving to people with a bright smile. I see my neighbor Harry, still in his plaid pajama pants and t-shirt and his similar plaid slippers, getting his mail. Children are running up and down the streets, their mothers walking side by side in similar long skirts and sweaters, holding “World’s Best Mom” coffee cups in hands.

“Good morning, Sarah, and hello to you, Mustache,” one of my community members, Susan, says to my dog and me. Mustache wags his tail aggressively at the attention, and I reach down and pet his neck.

“Good morning, Susan, lovely weather we are having today,” I say in passing, Mustache walking with me, already over his attention high.

“Yes, lovely weather indeed.”

Mustache and I continue our walk through the neighborhood until we end up at the cul-de-sac at the end, then walk back to our home.

My day after that moves on as normal, going to work at the local grocery store, getting off work at 6:24 p.m., getting home at 6:40, and feeding Mustache. I make my dinner of pasta and one Hawaiian roll. The food tastes delicious, as always. After my dinner it is 9 p.m., and I head to my bed. Mustache is asleep on his bed on the floor outside of my bedroom. I brush my teeth, take my hair out of its ponytail, take out my contacts, and go to sleep.

I wake up at 6:40 on October 20th with Mustache barking outside of my bedroom. I groan and get up out of bed with Mustache under my feet. I go to my closet and pull out a purple tracksuit and my white Nike sneakers. I pull on the outfit, leaving my hair down for the day.

Mustache is still under my feet, begging for food. I give him his normal dog food, and when he finishes, he grabs his leash and is ready to go.

We leave the house at 7:13, with Mustache pulling on the leash trying to run away. He makes morning walks so fucking difficult for me. Jim and Riley are on their front porch again, now sitting on their old porch swing and looking at me with this look on their face. They look confused, even if they still have their smiles on their faces and are waving. I wave back, pulling on Mustache's leash to get him to stop running. Harry isn't outside today. I am guessing he has already gotten his mail for the day.

The children aren't running this morning, just walking next to their mothers, carrying empty "World's Best Mom" mugs in their right hands. The mothers just stare at me, their kids not even noticing me walking next to them. They're more focused on Mustache, who is still fucking pulling. I yank the leash and pull Mustache back to me, a sharp whine coming from the blonde scotty. The children back away and the mothers grab their hands and walk faster. I huff at them, confused, and continue walking.

"Sarah?" Susan asks from inside her yard, hose in hand, facing her tulips.

"Good morning, Susan, lovely weather we're having."

"Sarah? Your eyes, they're not brown. And your hair, it's down today," Susan says, her voice losing its cheerfulness. I feel my body freeze at the mention. Mustache is sitting in front of Susan again and wagging his tail at the head pats he is getting.

"Oh, maybe it's just the light. I am not really sure what color they could possibly be, Susan," I tell her, pulling on Mustache's leash again, making it known we were leaving. He gets up without complaint and walks right back next to me.

"And your hair?"

"Just wanted it down today."

Susan stares at Mustache again, this cold look in her eyes before it changes back to her normal morning cheer.

"That's okay Sarah, I'll see you tomorrow," Susan says before slowly turning back to water her tulips. Now looking at them, they almost look fake. I brush the thought off and continue my walk.

Mustache, thank God, is staying by my side and not pull-

ing on the leash at every damn second. We continue our walk, going down to the cul-de-sac and then walking back to the house again. Harry is outside his house on the way back, dressed business casual, most likely on his way to work.

“Harry, missed you this morning. How’ve you been?”

“Sarah, I’ve been well. I do apologize, but I am on my way to work. I am almost 30 seconds late to getting to work at my normal time because of this conversation! Don’t want to delay anymore, do we? We would make Susan very disappointed.”

We both laugh at his comment before he waves again and gets into a blue Toyota hybrid, driving off in the direction I am walking in.

My day is completely off. I get to work over an hour later than I normally do. The grocery store is empty today, which is unusual, and I get home at around 5:30 because of how slow it was. My dinner is early, the same pasta and Hawaiian roll that I eat every day. Today the food tastes bland on my tastebuds. After dinner it’s only 8 p.m. Mustache is still wide awake, running around the house like a maniac.

I move to sit by the window, something I don’t normally do, but my day has already been thrown off, so why not? I open the window and notice that Susan is standing in my yard.

“What the hell?” I whisper, Mustache still zooming around the house without a care in the world. Susan stands just outside of my front lawn, facing my front door.

I freeze, just staring at the door for what feels like hours before she finally walks away. How long had she been there? Why was she there? Did Susan think that I don’t believe in the community? No, no, no, no. I am in the community, *I am*. I believe in our community. I do. I do. *I do*. I can’t go through the conditioning again. *I can’t!*

My alarm rings out, right at 9 p.m. Mustache is asleep on the floor outside of my bedroom door again. I walk stiffly to my bed, change into my pajamas, and lie down. The routine will go back to normal tomorrow. It must.

I wake up at 5 a.m., my dog barking at me for some god-damn reason. Mustache is barking non-stop and it’s pissing me off.

“Shut up! Shut up, you stupid dog!”

I change into a green tracksuit with rage and irritation burning underneath my skin. I can feel my ears and face burning. My tennis shoes are pulled on, even if I’m not leaving yet. A headache is forming from all the fucking noise.

Mustache keeps barking. He refuses to stop. He’s not

even barking at anything important; he just wants to make noise.

“Shut the fuck up! You stupid mutt.” The dog keeps barking and barking and barking and I can’t fucking take it anymore.

I kick the dog into the wall, sharp whines escaping his throat. I hear the cracking of bones as my kicking gets harder and his breaths get shallower. I keep kicking and kicking until he stops making noises. I take heaving breaths in, my anger dying down, and a feeling of calm passes through me. It’s finally quiet. The corpse of Mustache just lays in the corner of the room, my eyes never leaving him. My clothes are splattered in blood and my shoes are covered in fur and dark red. I’ll clean it up before my walk.

I stay awake until the clock hits 7 a.m. I walk out of the house, not changing my clothes like I said I would. Jim and Riley are on their porch again, staring in horror at my blood soaked clothing. I just smile and wave, continuing my routine as normal. Harry runs inside when he sees me, not even getting his mail. I smile at the children. Their mothers shoo the children away with their hands covering their eyes.

“Sarah, is everything alright?”

“Ah, good morning Susan. How are you doing today?”

“Sarah, sweetheart, why are you covered in blood?” Susan is soft in her words, nothing cheerful or concerned in her expression.

“Nothing to worry about Susan. Now have a wonderful day. I am running late on my schedule,” I say with a smile, the calmness all-encompassing.

I continue my normal routine for the day. I go to work at the grocery store, people just staring at me with confusion and fear, noting the flecks of dried blood on my cheeks and forehead. When I make it home, I make my classic dinner of pasta and rolls, the food tasting like ash on my tongue. By the time it is 9 p.m., the living room is starting to smell.

Someone knocks at the door at 9:03 p.m., breaking the strict routine in place. I open the door to see Susan and Harry outside my door with blank looks on their faces.

“Sarah, can we come in? We need to have a chat about your recent behavior,” Susan asks.

“Of course, Susan, is something the matter? Have I done something wrong?”

“Yes, Sarah, it seems that there is a problem.”

Susan grabs my hands, holding them tightly in hers.

“Sarah, honey, you know that your behavior has violated the rules. Remember, we must keep our roles up. We must reform

society into perfect uniformity. We must be perfect, and then they will follow our example.”

“Yes! Of course, Susan! I will continue to be perfect like you said I was, like I was taught and meant to be!” I try to keep my composure. I just can’t go back there, I can’t do it again.

“Sarah, it seems that the community has found that you have been disobeying your role. By order of the community, you must be reconditioned to your role.”

“Susan, please, please, Susan, I can’t do this again. I am in my role; I believe in the community. Please, Susan, I can’t. I can’t, I can’t.” I’m pleading to Susan; I can’t go back to the room. I can’t.

“Sarah, you must. It is your duty as someone who is such a valuable member of this community. You must go back into your role. I am very sorry Sarah, but the conditioning needs to happen in order for you to thrive in this community.”

“SUSAN! HARRY! PLEASE!”

I continue to scream. I scratch at the arms that grab at me, try to claw out the faceless people dragging me away to my little personal hell.

The conditioning is awful. They first start off with five days of complete and utter isolation, with only a monotone voice of a man repeating my role.

I work at the community grocery store.

My name is Sarah, and I have a dog named Mustache.

I live alone in my house with my dog Mustache.

I wake up at 6:40 every day, wear a teal tracksuit, and put my hair into a ponytail.

I have brown eyes; I don’t have green eyes. Only brown.

I walk Mustache down the neighborhood at 7:04 a.m. every day.

Jim and Riley live across the street. I smile and wave at them when I go on walks.

I see Harry leave his house, pajamas on, and get his mail.

I talk to Susan every morning, say good morning, and talk about the weather while Susan pets Mustache, then be on my way.

They repeat this to me over and over for five days, and then come the tests. Every day, for another five days, they test me on my role. They strap me to an electric chair with different levels of voltage. Answer a question wrong, then I get shocked, hesitate, I get shocked, and show defiance, high voltage shocks. It is continuous over the five days; I never leave the chair.

The first days I am resisting. I don’t want to be in the chair, I don’t want to be in the community, or do I? I don’t know

anymore. I don't know what is going on anymore. I pass out only a couple hours into the testing.

The second and third days there is hesitation. I don't pass out, but they are painful, painful days. The tests go on for hours, there is never a time to rest. Sleep isn't granted those two days. The practitioners switch out every few hours. I'm never able to tell who is asking the questions or what time it is. Everything is blurred, and my confusion is growing.

The fourth and fifth days go by in a blur. My mind is like mush, and my body is done. There isn't any hesitation at this point, and I have given up any hope of getting out of the community. There are no more ways out.

I wake up at 6:46 a.m. on November 10th, my golden retriever jumping and barking on my feet for his breakfast and 7 a.m. walk. I get up with zero complaints and make my dog his breakfast before walking back to my bedroom to get ready. I pull on my standard teal tracksuit with my white Nike sneakers, putting my brown, normal-looking hair into a standard ponytail, washing my face and putting in eye contacts to cover my green eyes. They are now brown.

My dog comes running into the room, leash in his mouth, and sits on the floor. I hook the leash onto his collar and exit the door, leaving it unlocked, at exactly 7:04. I watch my dog run around with his fluffy tail wagging cutely and aggressively. I walk with him down the neighborhood. I see Jim and Riley, an old married couple, sitting on the porch of their painted yellow house, waving to people with a bright smile. I see my neighbor Harry, still in his plaid pajama pants and t-shirt and his similar plaid slippers, getting his mail. Children are running up and down the streets, their mothers walking side by side in similar long skirts and sweaters, holding "World's Best Mom" coffee cups in hands.

"Good morning, Sarah, and hello to you, Mustache," Susan says to my dog and me. Mustache wags his tail aggressively at the attention, and I reach down and pet his neck.

"How are you feeling today, Sarah?" Susan asks, her voice calm.

"Good morning, Susan, lovely weather we are having today."



Spiraling, Nicolle Orellana

PEARL SIFF

Stagnant

The cold rain slashes at the windows of my family's old farmhouse. If I remember correctly, the forecast had some heavy storms coming our way today.

I'm honestly not sure how I got up this morning, or how I've gotten out of bed most days lately. But here I am, in my well-worn red sweater, my old jeans, and my brown hair pulled up in a messy bun.

I clunk down the crimson-carpeted stairs and make myself a pot of coffee in our dusty kitchen. When Father left, there were too many things to keep up with, so regular dusting fell to the bottom of my priorities.

"Vera, sweetheart," Mama greets me from the old oak dining room table, her voice weary and hoarse. Her long, stringy hair drapes over her pale and exhausted face.

"Good morning, Mama," I reply, not believing my words. No morning has seemed good for a very long time.

"Vera..." Mama sounds nervous. I glance over to see her subconsciously twisting her phantom wedding ring and biting her lip. Father used to tell her not to do that.

"What's going on?" I down my coffee more out of habit than enjoyment.

"I scheduled a real estate agent to come over and look at the property in a couple days," she replies tentatively.

I lower my mug and look at Mama. I see my own weariness with life reflected in her grey eyes. I understand that we can't keep our farm—there's no way we can keep affording or maintaining it—but understanding doesn't make partings less painful.

I turn to the sink and rinse out the mug and pot with a distracted air. "Okay," is all I can think to say.

"I know that this is hard," Mama continues. "But we'll be able to live without all of this unneeded space, and if everything goes according to plan, we can stay with your Aunt Becky until we can get ourselves off the ground a bit. I'm sure you'll find a job—"

"Mama, please stop." I find myself gripping the counters. Every time we talk about moving I just want to run and hide. And I definitely don't want to keep talking about it. My breathing speeds up.

"Darling, you have to accept—"

“I don’t have to accept anything.” I hear a ringing in my ears and I suddenly feel trapped. I need to get out of the house, where the memories of our once-intact family aren’t staring me in the face. I pull on my rain jacket and boots.

“Vera, dear, don’t go out, the weather is only supposed to get worse,” Mama says, worried.

“I’m just going to the store in town; I’ll be back.” I grab my wallet and the keys to my old musty yellow pickup truck and head out the door. I know Mama won’t follow because my truck is the only vehicle we’ve had since Father and my sister left.

I don’t have enough energy to care when the rain soaks my hair and chills my bones. I clamber into my truck and pull away through the mud. In my rearview mirror I can see the farmhouse, a constant place of refuge for me to return home over the years. But lately it hasn’t felt like home, and it most certainly won’t be once we move. Maybe I’ll call Mia again tonight and tell her about the real estate agent. Or maybe that would upset her; she can’t do anything, considering she and Father moved two hours away, and she already has been recently telling me she misses the farm. I decide against the idea.

I pull into town, feeling much calmer but not better, and take my usual parking spot in front of the rusty brick general store. I hear a dog barking further down the road, begging to be let inside and out of the rain. I miss my dog. Father took him when he left, accompanied by my younger sister, Mia. He’d always wanted Frankie to be a hunting dog, but all he’s ever been is a big puppy with no sense of direction. I certainly relate to that last part. The dog reminds me of when all of this mess really started...

“Frankie!” I open my little arms to the excited hound as I walk through the front door. He bounds around my sister and me in a frenzy, his tail a blur and his floppy ears bouncing.

Mia giggles. “I missed you!”

“Girls, I didn’t bring you back from school just to stand in the doorway,” Father chuckles good-naturedly behind us.

Mia and I laugh as we pound down the hallway, dump our school bags, and plop onto the springy couch in the living room. We chatter carelessly and play tug-of-war with Frankie, who growls playfully. I don’t even notice Mama in the armchair by the fireplace until Father speaks.

“Girls!” he says sharply. There is something in his voice that chills me, and my laughter stops as quickly as if someone had shut off a radio.

I realize Mama has her face in her hands and Father's strong arms are around her. She must have just recently gotten back from her doctor's visit. I feel confused. This scene feels wrong.

"Mama?" I slide off the couch to move closer.

"You two, go to your rooms," Father commands.

"But—" I still don't understand.

"Go!" he snarls at me, and the word hits me like a slap to my face.

I take Mia by the hand and leave in silence.

The hanging bell above the door chimes feebly but cheerfully as I step into the warmth of the store and out of the rain's chill.

"Vera!" Mrs. Hue calls out to me in her welcoming southern drawl from behind the counter. The middle-aged woman and her husband, Rhett, own the place, and their kind natures always create a pleasant environment.

"It's been too long, how nice to see you! Come on inside and get yourself dry. I hear that the storm should be getting heavier, so you be careful when you drive home! Tell me—how's your Mama?"

"She's fine," I answer, wiping my boots on the mat and stepping further into the store. She really hasn't been fine, but I'm too exhausted to say anything different.

"Y'all still planning on leaving Springfield?"

I can see in Mrs. Hue's kind, deeply-lined face that she knows things are hard for us, but her questions don't pry; rather they come from a place of care.

"Yes ma'am," I simply respond, but I say nothing more, and Mrs. Hue takes the hint.

"Well, you just let me know if you need anything, honey—anything at all."

I return her smile, weary but grateful, and turn to the shelves.

As I reach for a jar of mayonnaise, Mark Dawson comes around the corner. I used to be friends with the short electrician in high school. Even though that was only a year ago, it feels like a lifetime...

Despite being seniors in high school, our group's number one place to gather is the playground at the park. I'm sure we scare the younger kids off just by our size—and we can be loud—but we don't do anything at the park except run around like mad-

men, climb trees, swing on the swing set... basically anything to convince ourselves that we're in elementary school again, and not dealing with college applications, final grades, graduation, and all the stresses of senior year.

Kris and Dylan start throwing mulch and shrieking at each other in glee. The others mill about, chattering about things that won't matter in a week. I hear Mark's distinctive hearty laugh for a moment.

Someone sighs to my left and I look over at my boyfriend of two years sitting beside me on the picnic table. His blue eyes pierce my deep brown through his curtain of jet-black hair.

"Only a few months left until graduation," he says. "Then in a few more years you'll be Dr. Vera, the most accomplished neurologist in the country!"

I chuckle. "Sure, and then by that point Dylan will be president."

"Hey, I'm just saying, you're going to do great." Leif grins at me.

Suddenly, a handful of mulch flies out of nowhere.

"Oi!" Leif leaps up, brushing mulch from his green flannel. "You know my aim is better than yours, Dylan!"

I laugh until my sides hurt as we all join in the fray. This would be one of the last days I laugh like this.

"Hi Vera." The present-day Mark standing in front of me seems surprised and a bit curious at my appearance. Considering that I mostly keep to the farm, and that my last glance in a mirror showed me the gauntness of my face, I'm not surprised. I've changed a lot since we used to hang out in senior year.

"Hi Mark." Once again, my mind is too drained for anything beyond the simple greeting to pass my lips.

"Listen, I'm sorry about..." Mark trails off and my brain can't help but try to fill in the blank space. Is he sorry about Father and Mia leaving? About Mama's schizophrenia and her giving up on life the same way that I have? About us losing the farm because her prescriptions are so expensive and we can't manage the property on our own? About me having to give up college to stay and help? About being dumped by my boyfriend, because when my life spiraled out of control, it all became too much?

"I'm sorry about not keeping up with you after high school. Our whole friend group kind of split up, you know? What with everyone going in different directions. It's kind of hard, but... I want to try to get us all back together sometime."

I blink and nod numbly, taken aback by his words, but I know deep down that no matter how much he means them,

they are ultimately empty. Our high school group has all moved on—we aren't going to be getting back together ever again. Well, maybe they will, but I won't. That life is in the past. Too much has changed, and I've changed.

I stumble through an awkward goodbye with Mark, collect the rest of my things, and get back into my truck before I can have any more interactions.

On the drive back to our farm, I think back to the days when I had dreams and aspirations—when I actually believed that I could go to school, become a neurologist, and make a difference in the world. When I had friends, a complete family, a dog, and a boyfriend who cared about me despite my faults. In those days, thinking like this would have caused me to cry, but today I have nothing. My eyes remain bone dry, my lip doesn't tremble, my expression is frozen, and my body merely goes through the motions of surviving.

When I stop for gas, I notice I have a voicemail from Aunt Becky, who was checking in and wanting to know how I've been. It's sweet, but I'm not sure when I'll be getting back to her... if ever. Just the thought adds another weight to my exhaustion.

I'm almost back to our farmhouse and the sky is steadily crying but more heavily now; my windshield wipers are working overtime. Just then, my phone rings—this time I hear it. I fumble to reach for it with one hand on the steering wheel and, when I answer, I hear my sister's voice, clearly distraught.

"Mia?" I ask in disbelief. "What's going on?"

"Vera, I'm on the side of the road! My car broke down," Mia can barely get the words out through her tears.

"What are you talking about? Shouldn't you be calling Father?" I strain to hear her reply through the rain pounding my truck.

"I've been driving back to the farmhouse! I really missed home, and Father's been in a bad place lately, so I just had to get out. I'm not too far, but I didn't want to walk all that way in the rain. Can you come get me?" The distress in her voice tears at my heartstrings. "...Please?"

"Of course, Mia—I'm coming right now. Stay on the phone and try to tell me where you are."

As I follow Mia's directions and try to console her, the rain intensifies, accompanied by threatening thunder and looming dark clouds. I can barely see a few feet ahead of me. My call with Mia eventually drops.

I'm about to the place where I think Mia is when lightning flashes across the sky, thunder booms, and a large oak

cracks, reverberating in my bones. I scream and stomp on the brakes as the dead tree crashes across the road several feet in front of me.

I sit there for a moment. Thankfully I didn't hit it. All that I can comprehend now is that I have to reach Mia; this storm is dangerous and I can't lose her in it. Since it's impossible to drive my truck around the fallen tree, I pull my jacket hood up and step out into the rain.

The forceful wind almost knocks me over and I can barely see where I'm going. I make my way around the oak and focus on following the road beneath my boots. As I stumble along, the heavy raindrops pelt me with sporadic stinging memories. Father shouting, Mama crying, that dog barking in the rain, Leif shutting me out with the closing of his car door... they continuously bombard me with every step. The waves of thoughts crescendo to one conclusion: that I must get to Mia.

Time becomes meaningless, and I have no clue how long I've been pushing through these curtains of pouring water. I still can barely see, and I realize that, out here in the maelstrom, I'm as I've always been... alone.

Something in this moment hits me, and, as the lightning above me flashes, I close my eyes and finally the tears start to come. They flood down my cheeks in accompaniment of the rain, my pain mixing with that of the sky. I've no clue where I am, and I've reached the end of my rope, but at least... at least I finally feel something again.

"Vera!"

My eyes shoot open and there she is in her yellow rain jacket. I plunge into another memory.

"You're hogging all the blankets!" Mia yanks the heavy yellow comforter over to her side of the bed.

"Now you are!" I bicker back.

We sit in my room, watching a show on my laptop, but the wifi keeps dropping out so we talk more than actually follow the storyline. That's when we hear screaming down the hallway.

Mia and I look at each other. She has the same brown eyes that I do. The same eyes that our Father has.

"Everything will be fine," I say instinctively. "Mama's probably just having one of her delusions. It'll pass."

"I don't want you to go to college," Mia says suddenly.

"What?" I'm taken aback.

"You'll leave me with them," she replies. A single tear falls from her eyes onto my comforter.

I recognize Timber Bridge in front of me, which spans the river, now swollen agitatedly below us in the downpour, and I see my teenage sister fighting her way across the bridge towards me.

We meet in the middle and I hold her tightly, not wanting to let go.

“It’s freezing!” she yells through the roaring downpour. She’s just as soaked as I am, and we’re both shivering violently.

“Where’s your truck?”

“Back down the road!” I yell back. “Don’t let go of me!”

The wind buffets us harder as we set off back towards the direction of the fallen tree, Mia clutching onto my arm.

I know Mia is scared out of her wits, but when I see the trust in her eyes, it almost melts me. After a few minutes of miserable walking, the rain, the whistling wind, and the crashing thunder begin to subside to the point where we can talk without straining our throats.

“Why were you on the road?” I ask.

Mia pauses for so long that I think at first she hadn’t heard me. Then she snuffles. “Because I wanted to come home.”

“Why would you want to be home? You were the one who left.” I’m not quite sure where the edge in my voice is coming from, but I feel a bitter twisting in my gut.

“You said it’d be best for me to leave. Both you and Father told me that!” Mia’s tone shifts defensively.

“Listen, you know as well as I do that Mama’s mood is too inconsistent. It wouldn’t have been a good environment for you. And I thought you were all excited about going to some other school because you hated ours,” I finish aggressively.

“Yeah! I hated that school!” Mia’s voice rises to a shout and she stops abruptly in the road to face me. “But now I’ve been at this new school for over a year and no one likes me, I have no friends, my grades suck, and I’m so over it!” She glares at me, and I see the hurt in her eyes. “I can’t believe Father did this to us. And I can’t believe you never visited me.”

“You never visited me either!”

“You didn’t want me to!”

“I call and text, what more do you expect? Mama and I only have one vehicle since you and Father took off. I can’t leave her with nothing.”

“Oh, you mean like what you did today?” Mia’s tone drips with stinging sarcasm.

I pause, taken aback. A moment or two passes. I shake my head.

“Mia, you left me. You left me just like everyone else did. Father left, Leif left, and Mama’s a completely different person now. You even took Frankie away from me!”

“Everything isn’t about you.”

I pause again as her words hit me. I haven’t really considered Mia’s side very much since the split. Mia continues in the wake of my silence.

“I thought going with Father to a new school was what I wanted, after you two had convinced me it’d be a good idea. I could get away from all the bad memories and start over. I could pretend that what had happened... hadn’t happened.”

My heart aches for her. “I understand,” I say softly. Maybe my sister and I are more alike than I thought.

“I’m sorry, Mia.” My words are packed with meaning. I’m sorry for a lot of things.

“I am too, Vera.” Mia’s defensive stance melts and she smiles sadly.

I pull her close and we stand there for a moment, our past misunderstandings resolved.

“Come on, we’ve gotta get back to the truck eventually,” I say with a smile.

As we continue walking, I find myself thinking. Whenever we get back to the truck, I’m not exactly sure what will happen next, but I know that I need to make a change in my life. Somehow, I’ll be a better sister. Maybe I’ll be a better daughter. I’ll try to be a better friend, even if I never hang out with my high school group again. I could even help Mama talk to the real estate agent in a few days. But I can’t be stagnant anymore. I won’t be stagnant.

Just then, I hear the sound of a horn burst through the trees and we squint further down the road. It’s the Hues’ truck coming toward us.

Mia and I grin at each other in relief as they pull up next to us. We climb into the pickup and find that both Mr. and Mrs. Hue are awaiting us. Mr. Hue wastes no time in carefully turning the truck down a road that will take us a roundabout and treeless way to town while Mrs. Hue hands us bright yellow bath towels that we use to dry off.

“You’ve had us worried sick!” Mrs. Hue bursts into fawning over us, but I can’t get over being gratefully surprised at their presence.

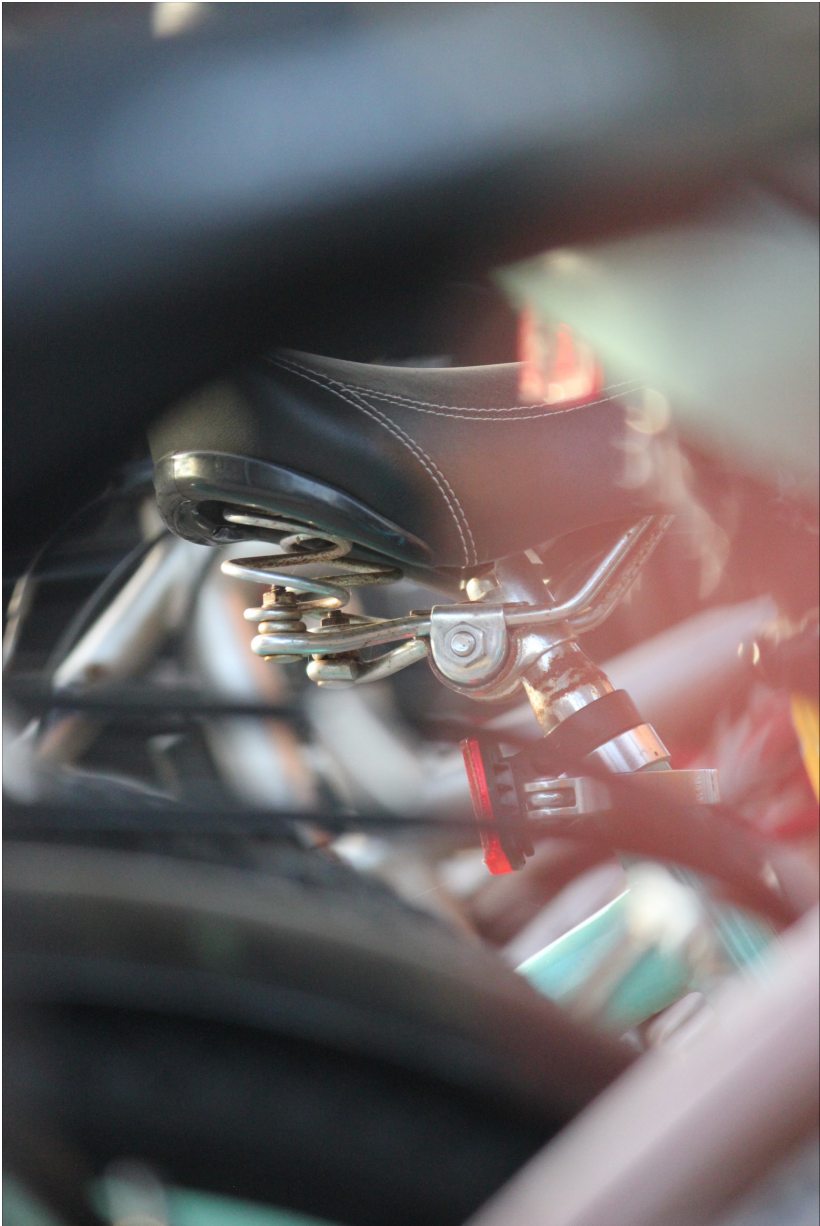
“You came for us?” I ask in disbelief.

“Of course, Vera! You didn’t think we’d just leave you out on the road when you weren’t answering your phone! Y’all’s

mama called Rhett and me at the store, saying you hadn't come back yet. Well, of course we were concerned and, seeing as your Mama didn't have a vehicle, we came out to find you as soon as the rain died down! Now, we didn't know dear Mia would be here too, but we're glad we could find you both." Mrs. Hue smiles at my confused expression. "There are people who care about you, Vera, whether you believe it or not," she says in a gentler voice.

I nod thoughtfully. I can see that now, even though I don't fully understand it. I look over at Mia, who has now stopped shivering, and then I stare out the window as we cruise down the road. The storm is definitely over now, and yellow rays of sunlight are seeping through the clouds above us. As the scenery races by, blurred by the residual rain, I see faintly that the edge of the road is lined with bright yellow wildflowers, battered by the wind but still undeterred. Yes, things are definitely going to be different from now on, perhaps not in my circumstances, but in my choices. I'm not going to abandon my sister and Mama in the way that I've been abandoned. And now, even though there is a lot that I remain unsure about, I do know that there is hope, and for me that changes everything.






Untitled, Judson Atkins

JOHN TRAVIS BRIDGHAM

Violin



The violin is an elegant weapon of both sound and skill, which when used properly, can almost bend the stormy waves of a rock-infested gulf to stand still. Its power comes from its user, and their power comes from the sheer confidence from years of practice and pain. The stance of a violin player is one of such power that even the rumbles of earthquakes couldn't make them fumble to their knees. Almost a gift given by Apollo himself, the violin player is one blessed by God, or a god, whose power is only matched by the forceful pounding present from a Mongolian drummer, built in the deepest hottest canyons of the American west. Not even the sands of time, the venom from the cobra's fang, or sheer force from a tornado's winds could knock these two players from their pedestals.

So, there I saw her, the violinist, the goddess Aphrodite herself, standing amongst the waves of Poseidon, not meant to be bothered, until the day we meet. Only when the moon is at its highest and the rest of the crewmen on the vessel are fast asleep do I see her in the night air, almost like a whisper from a siren's song when I first begin to nod off in my hammock. There she stands on the rocks of a raging sea, clouded by thunder and storms she does not recognize as a threat to her own well-being. She stares across the raging sea to the mountainous cliffs beyond the salt-ridden waves, a place of granite and snow circled by dark clouds of purple and grey, as white and strong as the ruins of Athens thousands of years before. Almost a home to the gods, the mighty boulder holds but a single boy, hidden away within his mountain keep, a temple to protect him from the storm outside and from what lies within himself.

And yet even with the silence from atop the cliff face, she still plays on, for him, waiting for her friend to release himself from his enclosure. This woman of stature and grace, a giant in her own right, she commands the waves the same way a theatre commands an audience. With a flowing robe of red soaked and torn by the harsh sea salt around her, with the winds giving her wings of silk, like the archangel Michael's feathers as soft as clouds. With the most majestic face that's been on the battlefield, she stands proud of her burns, which lay on her left cheek and follow down her shoulder, back, and down to her feet. Almost like an organic tattoo that she chose herself, which shows her

performance in the heat of battle with nature, for not even a dragon could defeat the beauty, for no being of fantasy could knock her down from her goal. And so, I see her there as I feel the gentle rocking of the waves outside during this calm starry night, hoping she reaches the boy hidden away, for maybe he could be a key to the world of the living, or maybe he could be a key to her world and the mulberry trees and flat hills which dance in the wind along with her song.

A song which to the common man would remind him of his childhood. To the sailor, the shanties sung around the lantern on a long night of drinking and laughing. To the blacksmith, the pounding of Hephaestus's hammer against the sharpened spear, fresh out of the sparkling chamber of magma. To the warrior, the battle cry made by the men and women at home waiting for their lovers' return. To the farmer, the humble crow of the rooster on a fresh morning, only moments awoken by the rising ball of orange and red in the sky, still dripping of morning dew.

Yet the little boy blue across the way does not hear her; he doesn't hear anything but the dripping of the cold snow water down the walls of his tomb, across the ancient drawings of his youth that he scribbles and draws around him to free him from his own self-imprisonment, from his own loneliness, enforced by the ultimate warden of this granite tomb, his memories.

I have these memories. I sketch them in my journal as I pass my time upon this ship. The other men drink their cares away. Let them, they don't understand my reasonings, that's fair, I don't either. They do enjoy it when I tell the jokes of my youth, they tell me I should be on stage instead of on a boat, most possibly. And yet I caged myself on this vessel of wood and rock, away from my homeland, away from those closest to me.

Yet every night that little drummer boy falls asleep within his hammock on his stony mountain too. He can see his love across the way waiting for him to travel the rugged waters back home, into her arms once again, and allow his heart to beat once more. Yet every night when I begin to see her, I can hear something from the deep dark foam of the ocean beneath my ship. It's a beat, a faint one, but one nonetheless, and maybe it's time to leave this cave of mine.

It's time to cross the waves back home, and hear her music with my own ears again. I only pray that her elegant music was not merely figments of my lovelorn heart. And that her stance is still unwavering, strong, and whimsical, as it was when we were young—as it was in her own travels, and as it was on the

Violin

battlefield. I'm excited to leave this temple with its high mast,
and stone walls, and hear the song of man once again, and see
her smile and hear her heart sing. Oh, Anna.





Duplicity, Kayla Paolillo

NONFICTION
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SARAH DONAHUE

Miscellaneous Collector

I want to surround myself with beautiful, interesting things and people. I want to give pieces of my eclectic self to those dear to me. I want weird lamps to warmly illuminate the shadows of strong noses meeting, of hair twirling, of mouths cavernous with laughter, of beautiful bodies under hand-knit afghans.

I want mismatched styles of colored antique stemware, who have seen countless moments of joy and celebration, to hold the cheap sugared wine I drink in the evenings when I am feeling like my mother. I want incongruous patterns of whiskey glasses to hold the “good welcome” bourbon I offer to my beautiful guests. I want these beautiful guests to have worn chairs to sit in, embroidered ottomans to kick their feet on; hand built and painted tables to rest their drink on, to lean over, to admire the creativity of. I want dishes of every sort to hold jewelry, trinkets, my soap, to eat off and drink from. I want the amateur art of recently retired or empty nested grandmothers to open windows that overlook a garden much greener than my own, mountains that reach high into the heavens, dotted with spring foliage and daffodils and dogwoods. Or paused brightened memories of flowers picked from the garden, the browning fruit bowl, a child with a Mona Lisa smile, or a lover’s longing as a vessel with which to fill the emotional dramatics a life, such as my own, demands.

Grandmothers with paint in their laps would like to smile. I am like them. Paint smears decorate my generation-worn jeans and furniture that has yet to receive my thoughtful paint stroke; all the same, they are still stamped with my ownership. I want the blocks of wood with phrases like “live well, love much, laugh often” and “a friend is one of the nicest things you can have, and one of the best things you can be” and religious blessings from gods whom I do not worship. I want to fill my space with pieces that spark conversation; pieces that have a story behind them, whether it is known by me or not. I want my space to beat like my heart, for my thoughts to flood the senses. My spaces are a tumultuous grotto, a waterfall to the eyes containing eddies of emotion. Because if thoughts were fatigued furniture and grand antique glass and grandmother’s art and those kitschy sayings and my mind was my spaces, there is balance.

I want to be able to fit my life in a backpack. I want to pick up and leave, my goodbyes taking longer than packing. I want to hold what I've held in my hands in my memory. I want to keep things with me, not physically. I want to transform what I find and experience from physical objects to a true memory that can be clutched forever. I ought to stop holding, clutching, keeping. I ought to experience, embrace, and let go.

I like things. I am a collector of the miscellaneous. I am like my mother who loves depression glass and her mother and her mother's mother. I love things others don't love and don't love what others love. I wish to build a nice place of my own to decorate inside out. I wish to be able to fit my life into a backpack. I am a great gift giver because I select from my own inventory. I collect gifts for great friends that I'm not sure I have yet. I collect gifts for my grandmother that I am too shy to give her. I collect books and trinkets for my romantic interests.

My car is bursting with my CD collection, not including my mother's. I cycle my clothes twice a year when the weather changes because I have enough for two wardrobes. My father's house leeches my taste in oddities and novelties. To him I am like my mother; all the pieces he likes, at least.

My mother's antique bow front china cabinet. A dark tiger oak/mahogany wood with exposed grain and gold adornments, the proud keeper of my mother's favorite glass patterns. It stands broad against the wall given its semi-circle shape. Looking in is how I'd imagine looking into the windowed towers of a castle. Sun rays illuminate the carnival glass and cobalt blue stemware, casting rainbows when the light fractures through the clear crystal. Pink and green depression glass flower vases are stored at the bottom, anticipating their impregnation of peonies every May. Throughout my years, I have always loved opening the lidded compotes to reveal the large, jeweled clip-on earrings; always in disbelief that my mother, as I know her, wore them at one time. The hutch is the dragon's castle.

I am a Miscellaneous Collector. Different from my mother but with the same appetite. Adding to my walking contradiction, collections are meant to match, fall under the same umbrella. Sure, I'm a collector. I have collected books from my favorite series of my youth. My father frequents used bookstores; the first was a gift from him. My bookshelves are full of science fiction novels that have become lost from a series I have not committed to, leaving me always hanging by my fingernails. I separate plates and glasses from their sets in second-hand stores, purely because I like them and do not have the room or need for the whole set. I

like things that don't match, sculptures or paintings that I don't have a planned place for. My spaces match myself in that I do not match.

I've worried about my future as I am young and am beginning to collect. I look at my mother and her mother and her mother's mother and see boxes of beautiful depression glass stowed away for a time to come where there is available space to display it. A time slow coming. I see my friend, with a love for amber glass, intertwined with a compulsive shopper who has a voracious appetite for sleazy fashion, and 20 years of history boxed away, awaiting the judgment of being displayed or addressed. A house could be bought with the money he has spent on storage units. I see my past lover's mother's house, bursting at the door jambs with boxes and old food and crappy art her kids made fifteen years ago. I see my friend's mother, obese, disabled, with a broken ankle sitting three feet away from a pile of dog shit surrounded by boxes of anything imaginable. What is my future? It seems I must stay away from boxes. I don't believe one can be a hoarder before 30. I have a decade of ruthless collecting to enjoy. I will defend my collection.

I may avoid the boxes if only I can replace them with loving arms. My life in a backpack, in a vessel larger than I was born with that may carry my collection of needed things. The camping-ware that I grew up on and did not have the opportunities to use as much as I would have liked. Blankets that I have made to retain comfort, bags my great aunt makes for me every Christmas to carry my needs, passed down clothes so I may look like my mother as I wander across rivers that reach beyond all walls. These are pieces of my collection that are worth carrying on a journey. I will bring paint so I may emulate the grandmothers that don't know what to do with the time on their hands, except I will have the gardens greener than my own in front of me and I will make them mine. I will see those mountains that reach high into the heavens, dotted with spring foliage and daffodils and dogwoods. I will see them weighed heavy with snow and bare of visible life. I will pick flowers and fill every cranny and hand I may with their sweetness and laughter, as flowers are the Earth's harbingers of joy. I will pick the fruit cultivated by friends and the mother, the fruit that never browns because eating happens while you pick. I can carry the fruit in a form different from how it was found, the memory of its sweetness remains and may be revisited with another taste. The same is true of my glass and clothing and others' art. All that needs to be done to taste again is return to the tree I fell from. My mother is my proud keeper.

I am realizing that I am creating the history that I collect. I have jewelry pieces that are staples to me, pieces that I wear often, daily, or with certain clothes. One day I will look down at my wrists, my feet, my neck, my ears and see jewelry that I have held onto for years, over a decade, that I've had since high school, college. I will be able to give them to someone else and say "look here, I have had this for a long time, and it has given me comfort. Please, wear this pretty thing; think of me and my love for you".

When people enter my space, they marvel at the intriguing things I have. They say I remind them of their aunt or grandmother or some other wizened maternal figure in their lives. I am associated with comfort and incense and good smells and college-style chili and luscious pillows and hand-made blankets and big jewelry and wind chimes. I am associated with things. Do I want this to be my identity? I love my things; I am full of things. If I were my space and my things were my thoughts and feelings and the love I have to give, they would balance and equate. I have as many things as I have thoughts and feelings and love to give. Friendship will benefit, my collection will expand in both depth and breadth.

I am not so concerned at this time for where I will go. I will learn to loosen my arms when it is time, of this I am confident. Things happen and come about for my own personal benefit; I believe this. Through it all I will live, in my vessel, in my things I would not let go of when I cannot carry my grand collection in all its profundity. I will always have a collection, no matter its size, no matter the size of my space. Things can be returned to; my mother is my proud keeper. My things will not tie me to a space I don't belong, for I will always find comfort in the dragon's castle. I may journey. I may not be tethered to a space that is not mine. One cannot be tied to their reflection; she smiles back at me, her skin folds more than mine and I can see the top of her head. I do not fear my future, I feel its warmth. Eventually, I will find a castle of my own. It is likely my mother will grow into a tower of mine, gently, like curious vines over time. The garden will be green, the fruits will never grow brown, paint will fill her lap. My mother is my proud keeper of a collection that breathes like her own.





Man-Eaters, Katherine McSweeney

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ARI EDWARDS

As We Are

(ISO Marriage Proposal by Deborah A. Miranda)


The car is still in the shop,
we have about five dollars total
between us, the vent in the back
bedroom is spitting mould, and I'm worried
about my books, the tub is still clogged
after a bottle and a half of Draino
and a plunger and we need to call the landlord.
You're helping your mom prep
for her GI surgery and pretending
like you aren't worried about her,
for her sake. (You try
to fool me too, but you don't.)
The coffee maker is broken
and we're both bitter about it,
finding solidarity in grumpitude.
The mechanic calls you with an update,
and I watch as your face and voice don't match.
"Okay. Thank you." (Fuck.)
At least the rent is paid. It's my turn
to feed the cats; I walk to the kitchen,
three sets of beady eyes follow my every move.
Two bowls of dry food for the babies
and a plate of wet "slop" for the picky one
who's getting thinner no matter what we do. We both
forget to feed ourselves enough to have started
a decent collection of prescription
supplements; the counter's a battlefield
between our CVS and Walmart bottles
(We'll see who wins).
We've got our almost-full-time
jobs and I'm almost done
with school. My Christian family
still thinks we're only roommates,
getting through college.
Last week,
you secretly packed a lunch in my bag
when I had to work a double.

KAYLA PAOLILLO

Nightmares



There's a little place inside my brain
Where monsters go to hide.
There's a tiny space under my bed
Where my heart resides.
I'm up all night convincing them
It's not where they belong,
But they won't budge, they're much too stuck,
They've been there far too long.
So, I said, "I'll make a deal.
I'll let you stay each night,
But only if you're quieter
And a little more polite."
So evening came, I shut the door,
I turned off all the lights.
But I couldn't hear my beating heart,
Or monsters claw and bite.
I tried to close my eyes and sleep,
But the silence was too loud.
The lullabies just wouldn't do,
I craved a different sound.
First I asked the monsters back,
But begged them not to roar.
The most they do is bang and scratch
Behind my closet door.
The heart I needed most of all,
How could I let her leave?
I told her that I'd keep her close,
I'd wear her on my sleeve.



MARIA KRIEWALDT

Our Dance

Our Love immediate,
instantaneous and perpetual.

Our meeting was loud and filled with inexorable joy.
Under bright lights and a sterile bed, I gave you my first breath,
One of the many first I would unintentionally gift you.

As I grew I yearned to talk back to you.
To show how excited I was about our tiny world
That felt so vast and hopeful.
One day, jumbled and slobbery words popped out of my mouth,
I made sure they were yours to hear first.
I soon yearned to walk as you did,
To run as you did.
Another day, I did.
As I walked I knew my feet would inevitably take me back to you.

The world's pain showed no mercy.
It reared its ugly head at me unforgivingly.
But you made my pain yours.
You cradled it as you cradled me.
Letting your sunshine radiate through it,
Turning and morphing it into a
Flicker, a glimpse of what it used to be.
You carefully crafted rose-colored glasses,
and bubble wrapped our world,
painting rainbows and flowers
to make it more desirable and digestible,
For me.

Maria Kriewaldt

Time kept dancing its melancholy dance,
So did we.
Except our dance was chaotic and clumsy.
Not graceful nor delicate but
Not because we didn't want it to be,
chaotic and clumsy was just all we knew.
Dancing to a beat we couldn't hear,
Although we knew it was upholding its part steadily.
Our dance was splashed with reds, yellows, greens, and blues,
Creating new colors only we could see.
It was filled with laughter and tears.
We tripped but picked each other up every time.
It was sometimes loud and frightening.
That was all okay though.
It was what made it profusely ours.

We danced through the years,
Dancing our dance that we assumed would last incessantly.
We danced and danced until

We didn't.



CIERRA CORBIN

Six Dollar Acrylics

An auburn-bearded boy wanders into Walmart,
hangs right, right towards the cosmetics section,
passing old men perusing probiotic brands,
young children on the tips of their toes
reaching for Superman Band-Aids,
the sweet smells of perfume tester strips
and screaming babies overwhelming his senses.

He reaches the nail aisle, sidesteps
a group of girls huddled in front of the polishes,
gives an awkward nod to some millennial women walking out,
turns his body and faces a stocked display of press-on nails.

Head cocked to the side,
he looks at dark red stilettos,
coffin-shapes decorated like cotton candy clouds,
glittery pink medium-lengths
and thin white French lines.

These are his Fridays:
pick up some six dollar acrylics,
glue the largest sizes on wide-set fingernails,
and embrace this side of himself—
the one drawn towards femininity,
the very same he represses, sitting in the shower
on Sunday nights, frustrated tears with hands
drenched in acetone, dreading his male-dominated day job.

But not this Friday.
A hairy arm grabs the longest, brightest set
in the store-bedazzled leopard print with orange jewels.
It's not his style, but it's *loud*. Busy. Bold.

Tonight, he'll triple the amount of glue,
make them impossible to rip off,
pushing both their so-so quality
and corporate comfortability—
This Sunday, they'll stay on. *He'll* stay on.



*Don't Fear the Reaper and Christine's Wrath,
Katherine McSweeney*

CIERRA CORBIN
On The Anniversary of Your Death

(dedicated to my dearest friend John Lester)

I'm surrounded by sun-heated lake water,
Virginia woods,
and memories,
wondering where you would be:
beside me,
or toking it up in some oak tree canopy,
crooning along with crickets,
tapping those calloused toes
to whatever hymn crossed your mind.

When I was suicidal,
you drove to my house
and took me to our friends,
raspy voice and radio blaring
Red Hot Chili Peppers covers (your choice)
and a new spin on Ariana Grande (mine).
There isn't music quite like yours,
no off-key,
tone-deaf rhythms
you sold as melodies,
gray Gibson neck above your knee,
the crooked smile of a madman-turned
poetic muse with a toothpick
and steady whistle breathing through.

Your spirit still sings—
I think of those squinted eyes and eternal bed-head
glancing as gulls shift between the waves,
the sound of your tattered work boots crunching
rustling leaves and broken twigs,
how you might stage a one-off based on the scenery,
evoking genuine joy,
not the fragile laughter and bittersweet tears
our friends reserve for you.

On The Anniversary of Your Death

So I'll focus on the sweet—
there's enough bitter for each passing year;
laugh a little bit extra,
knock back an extra shot of Bermuda Black Rum,
smoke a few more Marlboro Reds than usual.

We'll sing for you,
guide our lives based on the loud one you led—
you've just gotta listen.



CIERRA CORBIN

freed.

your breaking down of who i was,
a careful calculated destruction of an opalesque mourning dove—
you knew what you were doing. you enjoyed it.
you plucked each quill as slow as you could,
squeezed your freckled finger around my neck tighter
and tighter until i begged you to snap it. you laughed
as the pain stung and left me gasping for air.
you glued *my* feathers around *your* head:
a blood-coated crown for the credit of making me strong,
masqueraded as dye to compliment your hair,
a plumed token of pure vanity pasted together from the remex you
ripped off me.

being your golden child wasn't enough.
you threw me into a cage and demanded i perform symphonies.
i lost my voice
and all of the oxygen in my chest. i collapsed from the gilded perch,
gasping for air—

But now I can breathe. I can breathe full breaths and sing when I
want to.

I fly with the wings you lusted for,
the pair you could never grow yourself,
those you marveled at when I was born and envied as I grew.
You fashioned my cage to resemble the mangled metal entrapment
your mind confines you, barring you from ever finding freedom,
no matter how hard you fight—

But my cage was real.

freed.

I longed to be a phoenix,
thinking only flames could break me free,
convinced my only chance was mythical intervention.
The only thing bursting from my chest were screams,
mind-blurring echoes pleading for escape,
ringing back into my own ears because you kept me too far
for anyone to hear. I needed to find a way out.
I waited for the day you took your time closing that cage,
too distracted to see the paper-thin opening the day I bolted,
never looking back at the nest of broken feathers,
fleeing your daily terror—

I didn't need fire to evolve and scorch the proof I was there,
burn all that remained of you.
I just needed my wings.




MALLORY DAVIS

Sonambulismo



I am sleepwalking through life,
and I am the murmur of a whisper gone unsaid.
The wind sways me off my feet and I have learned
that love comes from obedience.
I never know what to say when people are sincere with me.
I have gone through life repressing and smiling and all
my lips can form is a tight "Thank you,"
and poetry is just another way to hide.
Nadie presta atención a las mentiras si suenan bonitas.
I am just another dream-induced prescription life gave you.
The curse of vulnerability makes me gag and
Irony knows how to play the game well.
My father's conscious hides within me
y no tengo palabras para decirle en estos cinco años
que me ha quedado sola.
My mind swirls around me like a seasick dream
crashing upon the shores of realization of how
unbearable it is to look myself in the eye.
Algunas veces siento que siempre va a ser así,
validando el dolor con las partes rotas,
wanting to rip my veins out just to see if I will bleed.





Morning in Yellowstone, Alexander Ward

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