



THE **GALLATIN REVIEW**
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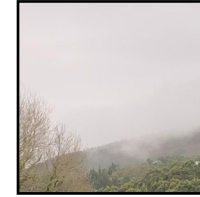
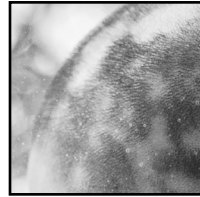
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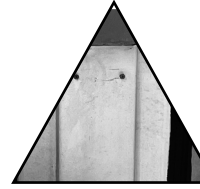
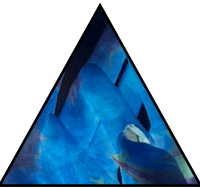


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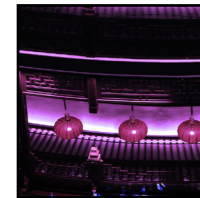
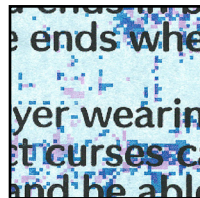


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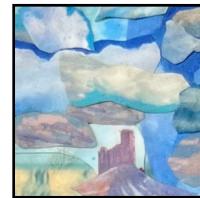
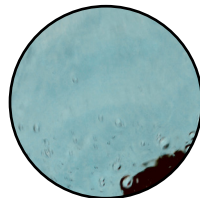
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EL PASO

Graciela Blandon



1.

El Paso is a Jeopardy answer
and El Paso is a yoga studio.

What is a President's biggest nightmare?
What is an artist's favorite canvas?
What is a journalist's wet dream?

2.

Thou shalt not bear thy cross to El Paso,
El Paso bears no witness to your guilt.

3.

El Paso is a scar.
El Paso is a house.
El Paso is soooo sexy.
El Paso is this and that, whatever.

You forgot to phrase your answer in the form of a question.

Or a job application.
Or a syllabus.

4.

There is a sculpture of a big candle outside my local Walmart. Don't ask me why. I take the long way to get groceries now, though, and I keep throwing bullet-sized rocks at the windows of my little brother's high school. Just to check. The day I finally shattered the glass, the stone grazed his knee. He kicked it away without flinching. He's been expecting this his whole life.

5.

El Paso will not teach you something about gratitude,
El Paso will not crumble at the sight of your posters,
El Paso will not laugh at your monologue,
El Paso will not donate 25 dollars to your nonprofit before midnight!

I guess . . . A wall will get you published
A gun will get you votes

El Paso will not get you at all.

UNTITLED

Sophie Mulgrew



On a Monday night it is raining and he stands at the window, broad-chested and valiant, daring the world to drop its tears on him.

On a Monday night it is raining, but he only knows because I told him. Because, in the quiet moments between the stanzas of our conversation, I could hear the droplets making their way down the walls. I could smell the moistening concrete. The thickening plume of clouds.

I want to tell him that rain tastes like grilled cheese triangles from my mother's kitchen. That the arrhythmic pattering of the droplets crack open my heart like backseat car windows through which little fingers reach without knowing what for.

Our bodies slip into one another like the buckle on a seatbelt. Safety net. Each crook and groove settles into position, and it is as if I can hear my

bones nestling into each other, reassembling themselves into the place his arms have created.

Water molds to fill the space it is given.



He starts smoking again on a Tuesday. Says he'd rather smoke and die young than live to a hundred without his stooges. He has to explain the slang to me.

I am envious of the ease with which he departs the bed. He seems to look forward to the act of leaving—to the anticipation of filling his mouth with a taste other than my own.

He is reclined on the balcony in that familiar fashion of man—limbs expanding into the space no one asked them to fill. His lips kiss his cigarette with a gentleness my own will never know. Love me like your stooges, I think. He breathes life into

the air from dead lungs and sets his eyes upon the yet unwritten stories of the world. He knows his place among the pages, revels in his own agency to pluck words from the paragraphs of strangers and make them his own.

My heart is a tropical ocean storm. Its tides fold and wrinkle like my bedsheets once we have left them. They remember the score. Keep track of the quiet moments in which the wind shifts from *leave me* to *love*. When he has gone I will lay my cheek on the cold fabric and trace the memory recorded there. I will search through the flicker of his eye, the way his hand glides effortlessly through the space between us, and I will try to decipher the Morse code of his uneven heartbeat.

He moves through this city like wind. I move like water, dripping and undulating and splayed on the floor. When I fall I splatter.

Later in the night we will swipe through each other's dating apps. Neither of us will accept any matches. Are you having sex with other people, I'll ask. He'll say he isn't, and I will know, somehow, that that is the truth.



Wednesday the city is anxious with the fleeting promise of spring. The mortality of the moment is everywhere. I lap it up anxiously, feel the drunkenness of warmth and unknowing seep through my veins. I feel as if I must announce my love to the world.

I wish I had love to announce.

That I might rush to his unsuspecting door and pour my love into the space between us. Please,

I would say, take it.



On a Thursday night we are out to dinner at what other couples might call "their" restaurant. He speaks to the waiters in Italian and says he feels like he is home. I watch him with wide, pleasant eyes, enjoying the way the sounds tumble from his lips and flit like lightning bugs through the air between us. I exist only on the outskirts of his joy. In moments like these, I can feel its warmth tickling my arm, teasing me.

Sometimes during these conversations, the waiters turn and apologize to me. *Mi piace ascoltare*, I learn to say. I like to listen.

It is the same phrase I said to him the first day we met. Four hours in he realized he hadn't learned anything about me. He said, I'm talking too much.

No, I replied, I like to listen.

It is at the same Thursday dinner that he suggests I join his family reunion in Kenya. Come, he says. Why not?

I laugh, trying to imagine the scenario. Hi Mom and Dad, this is Sophie—the girl I fuck and hold hands with on the street and sometimes take to dinner.

You don't actually mean that, I say, and we both fall quiet.

It is the kind of silence you can listen to.



He goes away for a weekend, and I spend Friday wondering whether I should have told him

to text me when he landed. For all I know he is dead.

Once he joked that if he were to die in New York it would probably take a few days for his family to even find out. The eggshell casing of my heart quivers at the thought, but he is unfazed.

Yeah, I reply, I might be the first person to realize.

I try not to think about making that call to his mother.

For most of my young adult life I believed I was the kind of girl that guys fall in love with. That I was that perfect concoction of sweet book-reading non-smoking home cook early dinner animal lover girl-next-door, with more-or-less average hair and a more-or-less average body. Who was just pretty and endearing enough to be loved and not lusted after. Who men would want to marry whether I wanted them or not—a homely Artemis.

I believed that if I waited long enough, sat pensively on benches in the park, read my book in the not-quite-obviously-but-obviously visible spots in The Strand, smiled at attractive strangers parking their Citi bikes—that love would show up for me. That one day, it would knock on my door, with sunflowers and frozen yogurt and maybe a kitten.

Welcome, I would say, I knew you would come.



Saturday morning my notebook lies bare-chested and goose-bumped on my bed—pinned down by the weight of words I can't bring myself to produce.

Instead I transcribe tidbits from the notes app

on my phone:

the world seems to yield to him
does a window crack on both sides of the
glass
a place I haven't touched you

I want to write about love, but I am thinking about desire. About the hand that tears my organs from their sockets and leaves them wrapped and bowed at his bedroom door. About how the longer I spend in his embrace, the more intensely it aches when he pulls away. Like dried wax torn from skin.

Perhaps simply spending a critical amount of time together, both intimately and not, necessitates a certain degree of affection. He is my friend, after all. We laugh like friends and we fuck like pornstars.



On a warm Sunday, he decides to be generous with his not-love. He holds my face in his hands and looks at me with something like tenderness in his eyes. His gaze is rounded and pillowy like challah. It tears easily at the seams.

He traces musical phrases across my spine, tickles my feet where he knows I am vulnerable. In the evening he holds me to his collarbone and we watch the lights of the Empire State Building cast themselves over the city. I sense his eyes on me but won't meet his gaze—fearing any move might shatter the moment's fragile intimacy.

I walk home at eleven, trying not to think about my 6:30 alarm. Rain falls gently on the unquiet grid of the city. Small puddles grow in the spaces between the street and sidewalk—water curling easily into the crevices it is allowed.

SOME COLOMBIAN RESTAURANT IN JACKSON HEIGHTS

Alexa Quitian



I walked in, unsurprised
Same yellow wall, paintings of regular lives
We find comfort in the known,
so I guess you'd like it too

I didn't look at a menu
Ordered in Spanish
The waitress said, "mi Amor,"
so I guess you'd like it too

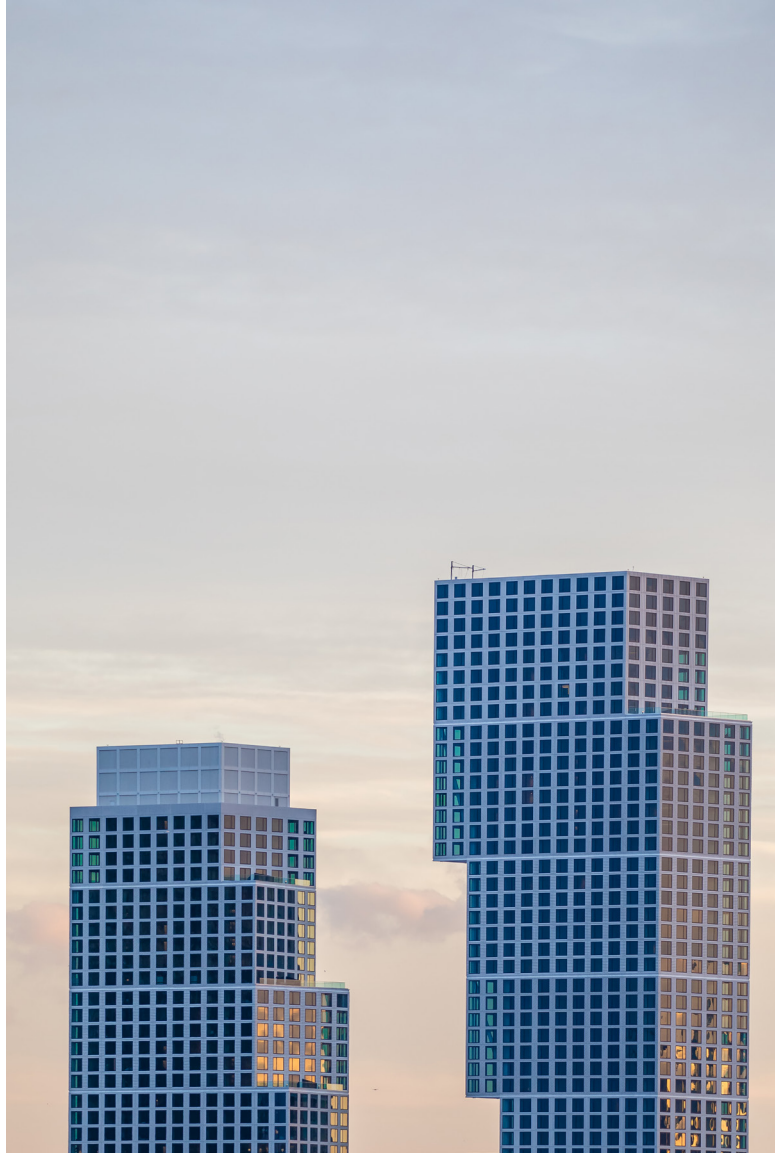
I heard talks about people they know
Gossiping about people they don't
It's that good silly banter
so I guess you'd like it too

I burned my hand with the plate
One spoonful of sancocho
So hungry, it's gone
so I guess you'd like it too

I'll never come back
I'll forget its location
I'll get lost in the station
so I guess you'd like it too

COLOR THE WORLD

Angela Xu



Angela Xu

DREAM CHASER

REAL/ISM

Helena Johnson



For Malevich

We are all Real Boys on a White Plane.
We set out in the morning
our fears larger than the expanse of
earth and sky that we can sometimes see.
Mom made us breakfast
some of it ended up in our bag
to finish later
we are never that hungry for breakfast.
We walk with our hand clutched tight
on that very silly bag
holding what little things we yet know
that will form the basis of all we are yet to know.
For now we focus on the close
the tangible
the cold, cold breath of too early morning
raising the soft hairs on our arms, one of which
is now tired.
Although we have lived so few days
of the whole long thing of it
there is some knowledge that seems to only find itself
in those seconds
when we are walking from home in the crispness of
morning

there is a calm
an excitement
that cares not for a name.
Perhaps it is that earth and sky that we sometimes see
perhaps it is knowing there is more.
The thought flits by
with the wind we dare scorn, reminding us of here.
We are all Real Boys on a White Plane
a knapsack
and no destination.



Kaitlyn Wigmore

WARPED REALITY



CESSPOOL Cameron Cave



In the backyard of my father's apartment, our pool was wasting away. Returning to nature would be more appropriate.

Where blue pool floors brightly shined from neighboring houses, murky green hardly peeked from beneath a gray skin of scum and algae clumps. The water sat dankly still, apart from the minor incursions of tadpoles and turtles.

The air smelled sour. Matcha-green earthy notes mingled with heavy, foul fermentation.

The cesspool, a result of my father's neglect, continued to flourish. It's almost impressive to achieve such biodiversity in so little time. Maybe all sterile water yearns to hold life again.

My father was a businessman. Clean-shaven,

primly dressed, spick-and-span, quick to smile, and given to laughter. Our pool was blue once too.

A business partner declared bankruptcy. Entwined in a bad deal, my father's new company toppled long before any of its debts were cleared.

Smooth chin gave way to stubble, to tumbleweed growth. Pants to slacks to shorts. Eyes filled with some new emotion stuck to my back. A sentiment showing resignation. A brow-set sorrow, striving to strangle that despair and leave progress in its place. Even if that progress didn't involve his children.

What can you do as a child? When you see your father savoring a tomato, smothered in salt? When he's so out of a job he's looking for

work in other cities, in other states?

You can clean the pool.

The pool scoop was an adult's tool. Eight feet in length, its polished silver body had long been overtaken by dust and patchwork rust. Flaky orange metal crunched and fell like piecey autumn leaves under my grip. Hefting the unwieldy rod was a struggle. An accidental smack to the white-paneled house sent my heart racing, but a look through our rickety screen door showed a hunched back, scrolling through rentals in a state away from here.

I shuffled towards the middle for better control. From an outside view, the tiny child and his comically large net must've looked ridiculous, but my heart was filled with pride. Pride for the service I was paying to my forlorn father. Hope that it would be enough.

Straining forearms twisted, plunging the net and breaking the top layer of scum with a flat smack. Skimming the pool took a huge effort. Working my way through the algae and collecting more and more muck felt rewarding. The exposed water looked black and unending, somewhat dampening my estimated progress. Waves of mold and earth and growth invaded my nose. I desperately wanted to back away. To drop the stick and enter the house, but I wasn't just doing this for me.

Resolutely, I lifted the scoop's tip. Reentering further in and slicing another line. The large net was quite full. I'd have to empty it.

Upon lifting, I found the water was deceptive.

In open air, the tool was almost unliftable . . . No, I could do it. Small knuckles flared white and a great heave threw the organic mass to the pool's side, spattering sloppily onto the yellowing lawn.

Two distinct lines stood starkly visible, but algae slowly spread into the empty space. I had enough time to make out many rapid movements beneath the surface. Hundreds of dark slivers retreating from the carved light.

Eyeing my algae pile and comparing it to the large pool, I worried that my task might prove impossible. I'd hardly made a dent in the growth. Nature seemed a difficult beast to tame.

The sun stood high in the sky. Swiping sweat from my brow, I hoisted the rod once again. I'd need to go faster, gather more.

Almost manically, I slashed line after line in the pool. The algae was visibly thinning. My marks stood longer and the spread seemed to weaken. I was winning against the growth. In a frenzy, shapes beneath the water darted back and forth. Maybe they welcomed the sun's intrusion? Maybe they'd been trapped under the algae as well, thirsting for some light?

I was doing a great service. To the water's inhabitants, to my father, and to myself. I loved my father's laugh. His bushy face and graying hair looked alien to me. Unnatural and unwelcome. I loved my father but neither of us seemed thrilled about what he'd become.

Maybe that's why he hardly smiled anymore. Just like the water dwellers, he didn't appreciate

the growth: the copper nest that had overtaken his jaw. My father likely couldn't do anything to stop the spread. Powerless to machinations beyond his control, his beard grew wild and impeded his light.

I had to do all I could to help my father. Although these small creatures were powerless, I could clear the algae and bring light. It was my responsibility.

Chest swelling with pride, I swept with renewed vigor. The algae seemed to disappear under my care. The thick layer of scum had reduced in height, and handling the scoop had become easier. I was able to make four, five passes before emptying the net, and my progress only increased from there. My father would be so proud!

I turned my head, hoping that he'd been watching my efforts and appreciated having such a dutiful son.

The torque of my body carried the scoop as well.

A metallic smack vibrated through the stick.

A second passed before a tremendous force crashed into my back, slamming my head and taking me down. Down, down, and into the pool.

I gasp. Horrific. Wretched. No sight, no time to try to see. Turbulent, dizzying, and horrible. Swirling and gasping. No air but water. Not water but liquid. Everywhere. Chunks and weeds and spidery webs and tangles and crying and

screaming but more water invading and not seeing but blackness and bubbles and tears. Slicing limbs and flailing and crying. No air but gasping. Breathing water but choking. Trying to wrench my way up but I retch water and where is up? The darkness stretches. Slamming and scratching. Hitting something. A wall! A wrench! An iron grip around my wrist. Yanked hard enough to hurt. Light explodes and I gasp and I cry and I retch and I'm hugged and I'm standing and the shadow is gone from my father's face and he's panicking and asking if I'm okay and I cry and I'm brought inside to the shower.

I'm brought inside to the shower and he blasts the water and it sprays cold but warms and I'm regaining my breath and I retch and I'm soaked and the water comes down dirty. The water looks brown in the bath and lumps fall and fall and fall. Hundreds of black lumps splatter into the yellowed-white bath into the brownish-green water and crack and the creatures die.

Tadpole blood is reddish-green. Like copper. Like rust. Like a rusty pool rod that sent a screen door falling into my back and copper like the spirals in my dad's beard and black like the tadpole corpses collecting and blocking the drain. Collecting but not swimming. Piling because they're dead and I cry.

My father moved away that month. The following renters drained the pool before cleaning it.

When I close my eyes, a thousand inky tadpole corpses float by. Dark but definable against the blackness. Sometimes I want to scream, but I'm choked by the algae. Silenced by the darkness that I'm helpless to prevent.



Kayla Gilly

UNITTLED



**MARIE KONDO MADE ME A WITCH
AND OTHER “MATTERS OF FACT”
FROM DECIDING TO BETTER MYSELF**
Lore Skoulatos



“From the moment you start tidying, you will be compelled to reset your life. As a result, your life will start to change. That’s why the task of putting your house in order should be done quickly. It allows you to confront the issues that are really important. Tidying is just a tool, not the final destination. The true goal should be to establish the lifestyle you want most once your house has been put in order.”

–Marie Kondo, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*

In her #1 *New York Times* bestseller, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, Marie Kondo lays out the game plan for how to completely reinvent your space—and yourself. The KonMari method appears as a peculiarly fresh way to fold clothes and spring clean, but it ends up being much more than that. The KonMari method is actually about finding catharsis by addressing the clutter of your life and organizing your joy. The basis of the KonMari method is to keep what Kondo

says “sparks joy” and let go of what doesn’t. It is a purging and repurposing of your current possessions while reformatting your thoughts. She wants you to reflect on what has meaning in the world and in your home. Under a unanimous vote of my book club, we had decided to read and implement Kondo’s “Life-Changing Magic” to see how truly enchanting it was.

If the title wasn’t a complete giveaway, then I’ll spoil it for you now: there is true magic in Kondo’s words. It was almost as if I was reading

the spellbook of a master witch, albeit of dusting and laundry, but magical nevertheless.

Her book teaches the physicality of mindfulness. Kondo reinforces the idea that the internal (inside our minds and bodies) and external living space are symbiotic. Your mental state is reflected in your living space. Kondo states, “People cannot change their habits without first changing their way of thinking” and “Visible mess helps distract us from the true source of the disorder.” The cleansing process Kondo directs the reader through is surprisingly more spiritual than physical. It is a testament to the human ability to let go in order to live better.

Her words resonated within me in a way that made me feel unsettled. It was the realization that I was uncomfortable with my lifestyle and how I have led my life for most of my life. The thought crossed my mind, “Do I know myself anymore?” This was most prominent in what I owned. Most of it was not indicative of who I am—or was. My possessions were things that I held onto out of guilt. Guilt is something that is confused with pleasantries far too often. Those graphic T-shirts, bold art prints, and nerdy knick-knacks given to me as gifts by people I love were the physical embodiment of my unhealthy social behavior.

My social tendencies of saying “please” and “thank you” and “sorry” were in excess. It was always for others to feel comfortable at my expense. It was there in the Star Wars salt shakers, game-inspired wall art, and psychedelic cat shirt. They were reaffirmations of the unhealthy amount of guilt I harbored inside me and how easily I agreed to like something for others to like me.

I felt that if I threw them away I was ungrateful.

I also felt that if I threw them away that the givers would know and stop liking me. But they were never used, or only put out when the giver came over. They were not pleasant reminders of the people I love because every time I looked at them the only thing I felt was neglectful. Even as I write, a pang of guilt comes out with this truth, but that feeling has been curbed by this process.

The KonMari method did not only have me meditate on the physical clutter but the mental clutter, the thoughts that circulate in my mind. The challenge posed throughout the book is to evaluate why you are the way you are, and what are the indicators of this. Why did I feel guilty? Why did I want so desperately to be liked? Why couldn't I just let it go? For me, the biggest part was addressing this now-instinctive behavior. I later came to understand that it was conditioned behavior—unnatural. I wanted to appear kind, likable, nice, and normal. I think everybody does, but this was an extreme. With all of those “likable” traits I knew I was not open and honest to others or to myself. I was so afraid of the reactions I would receive that I suppressed parts of who I am. So, following Kondo's advice, I let go of the behaviors that did not “spark joy” and reintroduced the “me-ness” to myself.

Physical purging and organizing were therapeutic to say the least. The way I dressed and the activities I partook in were in-review for joy-sparking. Most of my physical life did not “spark joy,” *surprise, surprise*. I did not realize how incredibly self-conscious I had become. During the process, all of my clothes were put on trial. The goal of the closet purge was to only wear clothes that made me feel good all the time—from loungewear to formal wear, and all in between included. If it was not worn regularly, or

was only kept on the pipe dream of losing another five pounds, it was dropped in the donation pile. The closet clean-out was an excellent first step. It was moving to see the physicality of what was purged and, as Kondo likes to do, “say goodbye” to it. I could see my physical guilt being efficiently managed and it allowed me to start managing my mental guilt. It led me to start embracing my love for pink despite a lifetime of distancing myself from hyperfemininity to seem more “cool.” I ditched the video games I only played for my husband, switching out looter-shooters for my watercolors. I stopped letting people be rude to me without a response. I believe that was the hardest, to command respect; taking shit from people definitely did not “spark joy.”

Since my KonMari cleanse, the decision came to make an active effort to be vocal about who I am. Each time I was open, honest, and proud of myself I felt a layer of anxiety shed and felt the magic sink into my skin. There was peace and happiness every time I showed my true self even if I was nervous at first. I am no longer a secret to myself and others. I am no longer the vision of what others want me to be. Just as the clutter of those gifts had left my home, the clutter of what others wanted for me left my head too.

Sometimes, I felt my interests left me with profound loneliness. They are mostly individual hobbies. In the past, if someone showed interest in me I did not want to disappoint, so I became what they wanted. This led to failed friendships, failed relationships, and especially failed career prospects. Careers are a big thing, especially when there is pressure to achieve. I would pick up careers for all the wrong reasons and run myself into the ground trying to achieve the heights of career-oriented goals. And every time there

was a line in the sand I would not cross it despite bending over backwards before. Understanding dishonesty with myself and others as the reason for my prolonged loneliness was a tough pill to swallow. There are many factors to blame for this conditioned behavior (e.g. movies, TV, social media, family, friends, society) and those are important to acknowledge, but I was the one deciding to act. The next act was named “change.”

So, back to the title: how does all of this make me “all of a sudden” decide to become a witch? Kondo says, “The question of what you want to own is actually the question of how you want to live your life.” I felt I had lost who I was in my quest to achieve who I thought I wanted to be. Realizing I wanted none of those career achievements was the biggest piece of clarity I could ask for. Just like those knick-knacks, I was surrounding myself with the goals others wanted me to achieve. I made it my mission to get to know “me” again. I mentally sat and did a KonMari cleanse, listing all that I love untainted by the influence of others. Everything from hobbies to fictional characters made the list, and between them all was the word in the title of Kondo's book: magic.

It wasn't necessarily a career change; you can't really switch from client services to coven séances on the resume. However, magic allowed me to sit down seriously and evaluate what I wanted out of my life, my relationships, and my career. My new creed is as follows: “I will pursue whatever will spark joy in my life without shame. I will not let embarrassment or fear stop me. I have alienated my true self out of the fear of being judged by my peers. Embracing my interests will lead to supportive relationships with others. There is no reason to fear being alone, there is

no reason to fear being myself.”

I thought personal identifiers were not necessary for me, but they ended up being a huge factor in reclaiming my sense of self. To use the term capital-W Witch as an identifier was a big leap. From childhood, I craved magic so fiercely. But magic is for children, they say, for fiction and fantasy, there is no place for magic in reality . . . so they say. I wanted to breathe the magic back into my life. I wanted to take ownership of that magic. Already, I was doing and believing in the same things Witches do—believing in myself and in magic. All that was left was to take the plunge and call myself what I always felt I was: a Witch.

It sparked joy.

I was lucky enough to have a support system that embraced me in my totality. One of the most important feats in this process was I joined the ranks of my support system—I supported me. They did not care what I did as long as 1. it did not hurt anyone and 2. it made me happy. And you know what happened? Because I expressed a genuine passion in my interests, my loved ones gave me presents I actually liked! *Shocker!* I was able to make new witchy friends who also loved the prospect of magic and sisterly support. It even led to me finding a career path that sparked joy as well, something I thought I would struggle with indefinitely.

Deciding to reinvent and reevaluate yourself, and your life as a whole, is a tall order, but not an impossible task. Tough, emotional, and

freeing are just a few words to describe the experience of the KonMari cleanse. Getting rid of possessions can feel like a true loss, and there is no negation to this feeling, but the weight lifted is a gift. I am not Marie Kondo, her exact expertise is a magic all its own, but my takeaway from her teachings is exactly what she promises in the title of her book: tidying up is life changing.

I am hesitant to say one side of tidying up is more important than the other: the change in mindset is revolutionary, but the peace from an organized living space is astounding. It all works in tandem. I didn't just decide to call myself a Witch and say “Okay I'm done! Called myself a Witch and that's all I needed.” If anything, it sparked the fire for me to keep my KonMari mindset. My candles have a color-coded organizer, my tarot cards have boxes where they sleep when not in use, and on a less witchy note, my closet is organized to the point that I can reach in and grab exactly the dress I want without looking! Now *that* is real magic!

The term Witch is interchangeable for each person, although I totally believe Marie Kondo is a Witch in her own right (and rite). From reading her book, the ability to choose who and what you are is a personal meditation. Marie Kondo made me a gardener, a good friend, a better daughter, a more loving partner, a pink lover, an academic, a more mindful person, a Witch.

What does she make you?

“Many people carry this type of negative self-image for years, but it is swept away the instant they experience their own perfectly clean space. This drastic change in self-perception, the belief that you can do anything if you set your mind to it, transforms behavior and lifestyles.”

—Marie Kondo, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*





Hunter Thompson

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GRANDMA EATS UP MEN IN SECRET ROOMS

Samantha Long



Hear this, caught fish of a woman! Nod or shake your head and Salt the earth behind you with scales . . .

And say the thing until you are it. Hard-mouthed, Noseless, a wonder. Is your beak curved up for nectar or for flesh?

And, its belly, underneath, a tent for captured fish, pillow and blanket, a name sleeps soundly there.

The cloth we are cut from is pashmina and a castle And the same. Chagorah, untied in haste and by unholy hands.

Were we attracted to the same kind of men? The ones who build temples under your skirt before lifting it.

Which is the whisper which undresses you? In through the ears. Three piercings each ear and three ears on the body.

Two for the sides and one for the back of the head, two for hearing And one for listening, hearing is the belt and listening is the unfastening.

Then, the birth of a new fowl-mouthed crown—Ancestors moan. If we go outside they may laugh at you. All because of this:

A two-eared man says he thinks you are beautiful and that there is something about you women with beaks and heaps of hair.

Will he think you are beautiful when your dress gives way to your peacock cape like a palace rising behind you, in the distance,

In the fog, following you always, like a warning, Like a name? This, a shape to take when you are a ghost.

MOTHER'S CHILD

Grace Doherty



My mother has a favorite brown sweater. She wears it often, too often. We tease her for it. It's pilling and worn thin and has turned the chalky color of cheap chocolate that has sat out for too long. The brown sweater has become so much a part of her that my sister and I now fight over its inheritance. I'd give up our grandmother's antique engagement rings, even the sapphire copy of Princess Diana's. I just want the sweater. But the thought of a world in which the brown sweater belongs to anyone but my mother, a world in which she's not here to wear it, that's a world I'd rather not imagine.

She is an August baby, born in the month of poppies and lions and summer's end. But I suppose in Claremont, California, summer never really ends. She was her sister's third birthday present, crashing the party before the cake was even cut. She was given the name Caroline. It

was her father's turn to choose, and he was a Kentucky-bred working man whose second daughter was to have a name that rang with Southern charm. Her name has led to a sort of debated lore within the family: was it meant to be Caroline or Carolyn? It seems to be a tale of accents lost in translation. My fresh-from-labor, twenty-five-year-old British grandmother filled out the birth certificate with a name that ended in an "e." But "Carolyn" was what both her mother and father called her. To everyone else, she was Caroline, Caroline Adair Van Sant. I like Caroline more anyway. Carolines have songs written about them.

She is her mother's child. They would cook together, shop together, dance together. She was the small toddler, nagging at her mother's hip, begging for nothing more than her company. I laugh and tell her that I might have known a

child like that. She says, "Me too." She's calling me from the balcony of the apartment that her sister and mother share in Palos Verdes. It's the only place where she can find cell service and privacy. I know the spot well; the balcony is decorated in nearly dead potted flowers and nearly empty bags of soil. I can hear some birds and some traffic and some anxiety in my mother's voice. She has a doctor's appointment tomorrow.

"She was always my friend and we were always companions, who enjoyed companionship," my mother says, referring to her own. "I was kind of like the shy child that maybe didn't have neighborhood friends . . . I was the one that stuck close to my mom." I tell her again that this certain type of child sounds familiar.

I, too, was a friendless child who held their mother close, sometimes even too close. Part of me thinks I still am. When I was five years old, my mother put me in a summer gymnastics day camp. I made it only two days. My lack of coordination and athleticism wasn't the issue, though it was a minor factor. It was the fact that I couldn't stop crying. They were the same tears I would shed every preschool morning as I watched her drive away from my Montessori schoolhouse. They were the same tears I shed when I drove away from her, 2,539 miles away. I missed my mother too much. I don't think I'll ever stop.

"We had a blast the summer before I went off to college," my mother says, with sudden giddiness in her voice. Her father went to a month-long, doctor-ordered rehabilitation center to "naturally reverse heart disease." "We could go to all the shopping malls . . . we could be gone and didn't have to answer to anybody." They

could stay out late and drink at noon. They could be the next Bonnie and Clyde. They didn't do any of those things. Instead, they ordered Chinese takeout for dinner, and they ordered it the way *they* liked it.



My mother is convinced that I can read her mind. It bothers her. She pesters me to stop, complaining that I am invading her privacy. I refute her argument, attempting to assert that I have no such telepathic powers. Rather, this is just a consequence of our closeness. I know what she's thinking before she says it. I know how the thought ends before she finishes it. I'm certain that the apple did not fall far from the tree. Sometimes, I think it didn't even fall at all.

When I was a child, I was often told that I looked like a miniature version of my mother. Even more often, I was told I looked like "the girl from *Little Miss Sunshine*." I took the former as a compliment. I'm not so sure about the latter.

I think I have my mother's eyes, though I used to wish I had my father's. His are perfectly powder blue, like the sky in a Claritin commercial, or the suit he wore to prom in 1979. But they're cold. My mother's are dark. They carry mystery and worry. They're the eyes of a mother. In the sun, they turn an amber hue—it's the color of warmth, of welcoming. She loves the sun. I think the sun loves her too—it has adorned her arms with freckled memories of days grown longer and people grown older. We used to have a routine of "hugging in the sunshine." The title is quite self-explanatory, as the act consisted of, simply, hugging in the sunshine. She gives good hugs, hugs that mean something. She announces the

end of a hug with a pat on the back, though when brought to her attention, she denies that this is something she does.

My mother is terrified of rodents and lizards and cotton candy. For her birthday, she bought herself a cherry-colored George Foreman grill. She loves British period-piece movies and *RuPaul's Drag Race*. She drinks red wine out of tiny plastic bottles and ends every night with an embrace. In college, she took up Greek folk dancing (she's not Greek). She collected teddy bears in her twenties. I got a drawing of one tattooed on my arm at nineteen. She hates tattoos, but she likes me. She is horribly judgmental and even more horribly aware of it. So am I. She says she's always right, and I agree. Unless I am right, which is *almost* always.

She is a daughter, a mother, and twenty years ago she assumed her most important role—my best friend. Sometimes, our closeness scares me. I'm frightened by the fact that someone can know me so deeply and so earnestly and still love me so. I'm frightened by the fact that no one else can or will ever know me as deeply or earnestly and love me so unconditionally, because no one else can or will ever be my mother. I'm frightened by the fact that someday I will have to buy my own brown sweater, one that will fade and tear and pill, one that will be only my own, and not my mother's. But until then, I have hers.

NEVER...

Michael P. Kelly



again take the risk
i once knelt
before Miss Emily's
feathered hope
life slowly plucked it bare
crashed to the ground
turned into tear-moistened dirt
where fertile awful
ambivalent acceptance
sprouted ugly barbed branches
yet still—
my desperate insane reaching
yearning
for light—
for life—
for love—
to nurture this withered
second-hand heart

HAUNTED HOUSE

Monserrate Delgado



Her thoughts are
A bouquet of sprockets
A silhouette in the pale moonlight
And as visible as whispers
Tiny whispers flutter
She's floating
Floating above shattered glass
She's searching
Frantically searching
For the door
The glass below her rattles
As she travels
Quickly, quickly
The sprockets are spinning
The whispers flutter faster
In the pale moonlight
I hear laughter
A devious sound
And the shattered glass is slowly rising
Pointing towards me in the most
Taunting manner
As I travel
My vision is smeared into the midnight
Into some obscurity
And the banshee is still searching
My eyes open and the darkness captures

What was once lost
Thunder
Thunder and lightning illuminate
The house that's getting smaller
I'm looking back
Finally getting away from
All that madness
The house is haunted
And the ghost is frightening
The woman
She must have passed away there
I'm gone
Gone with the whispers
Fluttering into the shadows

ONE WITH THE NIGHT

Montserrat Delgado



My dear, our moth is indeed a nocturnal creature.
One that can only be animated by my touch.
Can you imagine passion under the dim moonlight of a lunar eclipse?
Or your mind, body, and spirit in perfect unison,
not only with each other but also with the heavens?

Liken the moth, fluttering at night, to your deepest and most sacred thoughts.
Lying on your back, feel them finally breaking free from the farthest corners of your
consciousness.

Feel our moth descending from your neck as its tassels gently brush against your skin.
Feel it slowly caressing you until it has found its way to your navel.

Look to the moon now as it shifts simultaneously with our moth's downward journey.
Feel your perspiration gathering as the heat rises from your body.

Allow our moth to find the crease of your upper thigh.

As if pleasure is your only refuge.

Speak your lust aloud in multitudes. For as day breaks you bask in the sweetness of total
satisfaction.

Close your eyes and know that your truest thoughts and spirit have transcended your flesh.
Know that we are one with the night.



LE LABOR DE MIS MANOS

Maite Armstrong-Matta



WAITING

Zhuoer Chen



To be erased from the pavement.
A soaked leaf
moist shadows on that coarse surface
How a kiss lingers—

to be told:
A gaze, a turning away.
All I need is one bus stop
to know what to do

To take a departure
in my arms like a baby
and remember the scent.
So that even the rain cannot wash away

the woman outside
of her own words.
What else can one say
than fragments

Of riddles.
“To hold, to let loose.
To confuse.
To put back together something unrecognizable.”

To recognize, *then*,
and to reconcile with,
the secret tragedy
in my sign that afternoon.

MAHABHARATA: THE BOOK OF END

Yiwei Lu



As Yudhishtira saw all those who died
At Kurukshetra, tears streamed down his face,
Each one that's present here in shining grace,
Was not so long ago in mangled form,
Lost, scattered among those lifeless heaps
Across that boundless plain of hell on earth.
His years as king did not make him forget
That horror, even after they had bid
Their farewells to those fallen ones
Beside the banks of Ganga. Grievances
Had not been put behind, but hurriedly,
The thousand shards of broken glass are swept
Beneath the exquisite rug of history.
In daytime as he reigns, the Sun God Surya
Brings light upon its threads of silk and gold,
Thus spelling out in Sanskrit, “Progress.” Yet,
At night when all is quiet, he hears the sound
Of crackling glass, and dreams his feet aflame,
Ignited by Ghandari's gaze . . . for this?

Lord Dharma sensed his doubt and put a hand
On Yudhishtira's shoulder: “Oh my son,
Have you not cleansed yourself entirely
From feelings latched on puny flesh, not soul?
Outgrow your past naivete! Return
With me to the eternal Brahma. Come!”
But Yudhishtira shook his hand away,
And rushed headstrong into the smiling throng.

It was not simply grief, nostalgia that
He felt. Indeed, as Dharma said, when they
Had entered heaven, earthly forms are shed
Behind along with earthly thoughts; the soul
Alone remains. Then what was it that flowed
From Yudhishtira's eyes? He stared into
Those happy faces for an answer—is
This dharma? Everything in life on earth
A mass illusion; whereas heaven, truth?
Their smiles of seeming equanimity,

Did radiate both peace and emptiness.
Each one a different person previously
On earth, now in their souls' complexions turned
The same. All differences that bound us to
Destructions, first were mediated through
The Dharmic caste on earth, ensuring reigns
Of meritocracy, protecting man
From total war. Then as all souls "mature"
Through countless lives, humanity has reached
The end of history—All pain that had
Been caused by human instability,
Now overcome through dharmic tolerance;
While sufferings unjustifiable
Through dharma—entropy—are rationalized
As karma from the unknown previous lives.

Lord Dharma sighed, "My foolish son, do you
Not see? The cause for your confusion here,
As well as back on earth, precisely comes
From karma which were not depleted from
Your life before. Behold! Your very past!"

And with these words alone, Lord Dharma tore
The veil of time from Yudhishtira's eyes.
"What do you see, my son?" "I see . . . I feel . . .
I mean I cannot see, but I assume
I'm in a forest, like the one where we
Were exiled. I hear the songs of birds,
And rustling of the leaves. I am alone
In lotus pose, and meditating through
The karmic cycles . . . I am so at peace,
As if I'm on the brink of Moksha . . . Wait . . .
There's someone near . . . I hear no footsteps yet
The birds are singing louder . . . No, I can't
Allow myself to be distracted from
The one true path of dharma . . . Om . . . Om . . .
Om . . .
The air is om . . . so sweet . . . like blooming flowers

Before my face, and I'm the bee that plucks
The sweetest . . . Om! I hear a footstep . . . Om . . .
Before me . . . gentler than a fawn's gait . . . Om . . .
I hear it scratching . . . Om . . . the dusty ground . . .
It scratches on my heart . . . Om love! Om love!
The dirt it raises is of Kama's ash
That thrills my heart with burning lust and love . . .
A glimpse . . . a glimpse is all I need and I'll
Be back on track . . . "What do you see, my son!"
"I see now light. I see that tender toe,
Which barely grazed the ground yet deeply
etched
Into my heart . . . the toenails must be made
Of pearl and ivory . . . the curvy leg
Like polished ebony connects those dots
Of jewelry . . . "Then what! Look at her face!"
"Rakshasi!" Yudhishtira felt that shock
Himself, immersed completely in the trance
Of his past life. Those raw desires just like
A newly kindled candle now is plunged
Into the icy water.

"You see now
My son," said Dharma in his lulling voice,
"Your feelings of misplacement in this life
Derive from your tapasya undone
By that rakshasi. She had sabotaged
Your karmic cycle, and degraded you
From Brahmin to Kshatriya. Knowing this,
Your soul did drive your body through this life,
As an experienced charioteer would steer
The horses from the rocks and ditches, far
Away from earthly temptings as it could, without
Your conscious knowing, in particular
The women. Pry into your memories!
Were your concerns for Draupudi sincere
When she had been humiliated in
The gambling hall? Did your discomfort come
From witnessing a loved one hurt, my son?"

Or was it narcissistic shame for not
Protecting her as king and husband? Blame
Kaikasi! You of all should know the fruits
Of karma that you reap come from the lives
before.

And it was her who sowed the seed at first,
Of which its bitter fruit you now ingest."

"I cursed her, father . . ." Yudhishtira spoke
Reluctantly, "I cursed her even though
I was the one who had allowed myself
To be distracted . . ." "No you mustn't think
Like this . . ."

The calmness left Lord Dharma's face.
He quickly walked to reach his son before
The dangerous train of thought should burn out
all

His dharmic deeds of past, but then a tear
Had fallen on his hand. The tiny drop
Had singed his hand, as if it had contained
A thousand suns within. Lord Dharma drew
His hand back from the burn, while wailings of
Yudhishtira rolled on . . . "To see that she
Is not what I thought . . . Anger coursed through
me
And I had fired venom through my mouth:
'Foul woman, can't you see? You with your gait,
As heavy as an elephant, disturbed
Me from my path to moksha. May you bear
Such ugly, savage children, dark and cruel
As if they were damnations to the world
Itself.' . . . What have I done?"

Yudhishtira
Broke down completely. His ethereal form,
That seemed as light as feather, now slumped
down
Against the heavens' floor, more heavy than
His brother Bhima's steps, as if it bore

The weight of all eternity. His tears
Nonstop now formed a puddle round his head,
And sizzled as they touched those ones around
Him with enlightened smiles.

"Be blind again!"
Invoked Lord Dharma through his Vedic powers,
"But father, I was never blind." In peace
Yudhishtira sat up in lotus pose,
And let his tears run free like a waterfall.
"I've chosen blindness as Ghandari did,
All in the name of dharma. Whereas time
Is but the window through which sometimes light
Refracts, thus conjuring the image of
An object that's not there, our Dharma has
Become that curtain which we close upon
Ourselves, attributing all light as mere
Illusions, having the audacity
To claim we've found the truth in that recess
Of total darkness in our mind. Tell me,
Father, what is the cause of suffering?"

"You know already," said Lord Dharma while
He walked around to find another path
To get to Yudhishtira, where those tears
Of fire could not get to him. Though his tone
Was just as sweet and loving as before,
The light of grace around his body was
No longer gentle—there was menace in
That light, and sparks jumped up from time to
time
As if unseen blades clashing by his sides.
"All sufferings are caused by man's desires—
They block the dharmic path to happiness."
"Or was it dharma which had blocked the path
Of humans' natural way of being?" "Stop
That blasphemy!" snapped Dharma, "You well
know
Your love for that Rakshasi was what led

You to your current sufferings.”

“Was it?”

Or was it dharma that had blocked the path
Of natural yearnings, distinguishing
Our simple joys from seeming feelings of
Transcendence? Tell me, when Valmiki saw
That arrow penetrate the lovebirds’ chests,
Was it the arrow which had struck the birds?
Or did the love of those two birds obstruct
The arrow’s path instead? Was Kama’s love
For Shiva that which blocked his dharmic path,
Or was it dharma which had blocked their way
Of love instead?”

His tears now soaked into
The people round him. Nothing seemed to
change

At first, but just as figures made of clay
Are put in fiery furnaces, the heat
Builds up eventually, And once you see
Its features change, the gentle process of
The metamorphosis does soon cascade
Into a full-on avalanche nonstop.
The peoples’ smiles, which seemed so genuine
Before, appeared now superficial, cold,
As if the skins around the mouth were carved
Alone in that position. Then their brows
Drooped down, together with the corner of
Their eyes, in contrast to the smiling mouths
Below. They looked horrific now, indeed!
They laughed and cried the same time, like they
heard

A joke of darkest humor. Ha! Ha! Ha!
The joke is dharma! Millions died to make
The world a better place. What’s more! As if
They haven’t heard enough, they wrote
It down and gave it to their children for
A second laugh!

“Enough!” Lord Dharma lurched

At Yudhishtira from behind. And when
His hand was just a hair away from his
Son’s neck, another gush of burning tears
Poured right onto his forearm. “Argh!” he gasped
And stumbling back two steps, he slipped onto
Another puddle made of tears. He saw,
While writhing on the floor in pain, the ones
Around Yudhishtira, their smiles had now
Completely melted, men and women all
Were crying by his side, their tears flowed on
And further melted away the smiles of those
Beside them.

Peaceful silence which had filled

This place was shattered now, replaced by cries
Of mourning all throughout the heavens’ realms.
“Oh all my children died in bloody war!
Not one of them was left!” “My husbands! Why?!
All five of them were there when I was raped,
Not one of them had intervened!” “My love
Rejected me though I was pure. It was
That old fart who had kidnapped me! I am
The victim!” “Bhima bullied me when I
Was young!” “That stupid hulk of meat had broke
Kshatriya dharmic code and killed me in
Our duel with unjust means!” “Same here!” “Same
here!” . . .

“This madness stops now!” Dharma stood,
having

Regained composure, “Karma is the cause
Of all these sufferings! Your acts against
The dharmic code in previous lives is what
Has made you suffer in this life! Submit!”
“Oh I will not submit.” Lord Dharma glared
At where the voice had come from, there he saw
No other than the mourning Draupudi.
She did not scream, nor actively project
Her voice across the space, yet something in

Her voice demanded all attention there—
As wailings softened into gentle sobs.
“Enlighten me, Lord Dharma, how did I
Not follow dharma in this life? Explain.”
For a long while, no response came. As if
The mortal feelings of embarrassment
Could not be processed by his higher mind,
Lord Dharma simply stood there numb. “You did
Curse dharma, you spoke in wrath against
The code of virtue and . . .” “And why have I
Done so?” She interrupted in the most
Polite and natural way. “Well . . . karma works
In ways of most complexity you see . . .”
“Oh don’t be glib with me, Lord Dharma, please.
Through Yudhishtira’s tears, I see now too
Of my own past. Believe me when I say,
That I’ve done nothing wrong in this life or
The one before. In fact, some of you might
Have even heard of what I used to be.
The legendary Rama, righteous one,
Had been my very husband—Sita was
My name, and I have always acted in
The name of dharma. What you do not know
Is that Lord Dharma granted me three boons,
As some rewards for my ‘resilience.’
The first time, the night before my wedding,
As I was in my room alone, having
Dispatched away the servants, suddenly
My father Janaki had come to me.
He held my hand, with tears that brimmed his
eyes:

‘My dearest daughter, you know not of what
I just dreamt of: your marriage with Rama
Would make you suffer more than anyone else.
One moment you are happy, then the next
You are bereft of all your joys on earth—
All hope you have to bear through sufferings,
Will be blown out by him, whom you love most.

Curse dharma, Sita! Run away from all
That suffering ahead. Curse dharma!
I simply shook my head, and there appeared
Lord Dharma standing where my father was,
And promised me a boon, and so I said:
‘May whom I marry in that coming life,
Be also the most dharmic on earth!’
And then when Ravana had kidnapped me,
He said to me while flying through the sky:
‘O Sita! The most precious one! I will
Give everything to you, in honesty.
The most exquisite jewelries, kingdoms wide
And reach as far as Indra’s thousand eyes
Could ever see . . . Also I’m good in bed,
You’ll be the happiest woman who ever lived!
Curse Dharma! Choose me instead of Rama!’
Again I shook my head. And that night when
He locked me in Asokavana, winds
Had blown some leaves before my eyes, and as
I brushed them off, Lord Dharma stood again
Before me, offering another boon.
‘I don’t blame Rama or Lakshmana, there
Were only two of them defending me
Against the thousands charms of Ravana.
I wish whomever that I marry in
Next life shall have more than four brothers to
Protect me . . . actually no, make it five!’
And then that night, which I shall remember
For all eternity, that Rama said
‘I’m sorry, Sita . . . I can’t make you queen . . .
It’s complicated . . . politics are not . . .
I know you’re good, my love, I know you are!
But dharma calls me . . . I cannot refuse . . .
Curse dharma! Dharma made me do this deed!’
I couldn’t believe what he had said, and I
Did not know what he meant when he had said:
Curse Dharma . . . whether he had wanted me
To do so, or was cursing by himself.

I simply shook my head at him, in lack
 Of any better responses . . . and boom!
 A tear which hit the floor, I'm quite unsure
 If it was his or mine, had turned into
 A miniature Lord Dharma, holding up
 A finger to me—oh, that cursed boon.
 I said in tears at tiny Dharma: 'Please!
 Let me not marry to a king in my
 Next life! I don't care if he's brahmin or
 A wagon driver's son, or even a
 Dumb cook! Anything but king, anything!'"

Now Draupudi had told her tale, the sobs
 Had dwindled down to silent tears, the ones
 Who're newly joined in others' tears did not
 Make any sound either, even Dharma,
 Stared blankly so at Draupudi. His lips
 Smacked futilely against each other, words
 He could not find were forced upon his mouth,
 —An archer drew, but had no arrows left.

Draupudi went on like she sensed nothing:
 "What karma made me suffer? Or what boons
 Did make me happy? I'm the cause alone.
 I suffered as I had allowed myself
 When I had put my faith in what's beyond.
 The truth is simple: dharma only comes
 In hindsight, when someone does virtuous
 things,
 We say they're done by dharma; when someone
 Commits some evil deeds, we say he's strayed
 From dharma—righteousness and virtue are
 Its synonyms. Does righteousness protect
 Those who are righteous? No. The righteous
 ones
 Are those who uphold righteousness. Therefore,
 By that same logic, dharma did not fail
 Protecting me, as I had once begrudged;

My husbands were the ones who failed me.
 I used to not be able to conceive
 Of why would dharmic ones do evil deeds.
 And now I see, no universal cause
 Of dharma's there—the light from dharmic deeds
 Does not outshine the shadowed parts. People
 Are not all dharmic or all adharmic.
 They simply are until they aren't. That's all."

"That is not all!" Lord Dharma found his voice,
 "The world moves on and dharma moves it on!"
 With new-gained resolution, he invoked
 The Astras from his mind. "Can you recall
 The time where Dharma wasn't there? You can't!
 For dharmic codes uphold the basis of
 Your human worlds. How dare you call the truth
 Of dharma simple? How dare you say you
 Know dharma?"

Astra flew above the crowd.
 It seemed so bright—disintegrating all
 The shadows of those who were present there.
 Yet no one ran, or screamed, or feared at all.

People spoke, people repeated themselves:
 "I know dharma! It was the arrow which
 Had shot the birds before Valmiki's eyes!"
 "I know dharma! It was that horse that toured
 Around the many countries; Arjuna
 Had conquered all of them by dharma's name."
 "I know dharma! It was that gambling game
 That I had played with Shakuni. It is
 Determined by one's better dharmic skills
 Of doing what's good publicly than not."
 "I know dharma! It was that bridge they built
 That stretched so far to rescue me, and yet
 Prolonged my pains eternally. That bridge
 Had also been that dress which stretched so far

To save me from my shame, which had instead
 Submerged me in that shame forever more."

The Astra flew toward Yudhishtira,
 Bearing the weight of planets, faster than
 The speed of light or thought. That cosmic ray
 Of pure destruction landed on his head
 With a muffled thump, fell limply down
 Upon the ground, like a paralyzed snake.

Lord Dharma stared in disbelief and shot
 Several more at different people. Yet,
 Though they seemed even bigger, faster than
 Each one before, all Astras fell upon
 The ground the same. "How is it possible?"
 "Because we understand. Do you know what
 The Astras are, my father?" Like nothing
 Ever happened, Yudhishtira sat there
 Talking calmly to his post-shocked father.
 "Whenever violent injuries were done
 Against the dharmic code, and unaddressed,
 That force accumulates. Its milder forms
 Become the karma as we know today;
 Yet when that force was too much even for
 Our reincarnations to channel through,
 They then become the Brahma weapons. Look!"

Yudhishtira picked up that Astra which
 Had hit him. "It's a thumb." Lord Dharma said.
 "You know who it belongs to, father." "Yes,
 It's Ekalavya's, that Drona had
 Made him cut off so Arjuna
 Became the greatest archer." "That's not all.
 While Drona sought revenge from Drupada
 For ditching him because of class difference,
 Drona himself ditched Ekalavya
 By differences of caste . . . Look here father,
 What do you see?" "These are . . . oh I can't . . ."

"These are the thighs of Duryodhana, they
 Were cut clean through when Bhima hit below
 The waist against the agreed-on dharmic code
 . . ."

"I cannot . . . no . . ." Amongst the weeping ones,
 Lord Dharma could not hold back anymore.
 Such pain, such sufferings, in such crude forms,
 Without a better name—pain as it is.
 A tear had fallen from his eyes as well,
 And then another, then another more . . .

They all cried on, their tears flooded heaven,
 And when it was too heavy for the clouds
 To bear, the heavens simply cracked open
 And all their tears streamed down, which
 would've filled

Five hundred thousand Ganges, if not more.
 The tears fell down upon all time and space,
 And put out all the flames in time and space,
 The Kandava no longer burned, Agni
 Himself was drowned. The fiery pit at which
 The great snake sacrifice was held was
 drenched

In water, snakes which had been writhing in
 The heat of flames, were now contorted in
 The gentle suffocation of the tears;
 The torches lit at night by Arjuna
 At Kurukshetra for their night attack,
 Were also out. The living floated, soldiers,
 Elephants and horses beside the dead . . .
 The Krishnas smiled their understanding smiles—
 Exact same angles, across all time and space,
 When earthly, deadly water from heaven
 Was above their mouths . . .

the rest was silence.



Kaitlyn Wigmore

DOLL FACE



UNTITLED

Tessa Dillman



BONZI THE GREAT

Helen Ruckelshaus



In the second month
I invented the Swiss Army knife
The night I slept in branches

I wanted to name my tree Goliath
I knew that was not her name
But I wanted to name my tree Goliath

Plaid Mondays:

They want us to look down, she said
The woman who wore herself
Who saw elves in pockets of heat

There are spaceships on rooftops you know
Lookup, she said, there everywhere

A man with a saffron beard
Rice cooker sample sale
Five loose fingernails

I know why you left,
I know this now

I just don't find acorns buoyant anymore
Or call my mother
Oh Nikki

Oh Nikki
Tell me straight up

Did we make it?
Did it all bend
And melt

Oh Nikki
How shameful I am

I wrapped the whole thing in velvet
Which I also invented

I saw your belly
I saw your belly

Come quick, tell me Lorca with your teeth
Whisper
"No one understood the dark perfume of your womb"
"No one knew you tormented a hummingbird between your
teeth"

Instead
The anything else

Blued hips
You can tell
When he is unaware of it all

I remember
I remember
I remember
It all

In glory
In shame

In pomegranate hue
I remember it all
Adieu
Adieu

I dreamt that I kissed your father
And that he longed me to do it again

I killed my Bonzi
John died
Zach died
Billy was quiet

Streetlamps opening up business before their night shift
All is so rushed

Old acupuncturist fired me
My lateness soured her medicine
An award-winning saga

Selma Tipson
The tick of the tongue
Purring teeth like a sweet thumb
Sel-ma Tip-son

I was late because my back threw out
And gave out all its parts

To the sick
To the mighty

Selm-ma
Selm-ma
Selm-ma

This is it
This is where I am beautiful
Forgive me





FEVER DREAMS

Dylin Taylor



UNTITLED

Santana Kavanaugh



I

I met grief at a young age at the fault of a bullet that shot my chances of ever growing up with a father. I'll never forget the sounds of my mother's cry. Like a wounded lion, she called out for me. I could feel the vibrations through the wall. Ignorant of my fate, I ran into her room prepared to comfort her. Her skin was still damp from the shower. She dried herself and then uttered the words "*Your daddy's dead.*" Time froze and it felt like I was dreaming. I ran to my bed and shut the door. I remember hoping that maybe if I shut it hard enough, I'd wake up from the nightmare that was now my reality.

The following days were a blur, but I remember my first binge. I stuffed my face with turkey sandwiches at my father's wake. They were still cut like triangles when they appeared, half-chewed, on the Olive Garden floor. I ate

and ate and ate and with each chew I became dependent on filling my stomach to deflect from my newfound grief that depleted my heart. I was seven years old and had developed an eating disorder before I'd even heard of the term. I remember carrying a stuffed bunny around for years. Her name was Stuffy. She was a light brown Build-a-Bear with a pink button nose that you could hardly make out because of the dirt that buried it. Stuffy was my seventh and final birthday gift from my dad. I remember the anger I felt toward my mother when she finally washed her. How I cried when Stuffy no longer smelled like him. I clung to every piece I had left. I wore his shirt to bed and even took his singular boxing glove to school. It smelled of leather and his perspiration, but that morning, I was just excited to take a piece of him with me. I couldn't wait to get to class and tell everyone how cool

my daddy *was*. How he *was* a boxer and *was* good at it. The first person I revealed the glove to was my teacher. I thought maybe she would play along and pretend to listen to what I wanted to say. Instead, she made someone else answer my cries for help. *"I think you should take this up with the school counselor,"* she said. The school counselor sat me down with eyes of pity. I remember her telling me to tuck away my *bad feelings* at school. It was clear. I was nothing more than a distraction. No one wants to bear the blues of a child. I remember feeling like a burden when I wanted to talk about him.

I was too young to grasp the complexities of grief. I was seven years old and his absence never sat right with me. I had just seen him a month ago. Now I'd never see or hear from him again. How was I supposed to manage *that*? I remember the day I exchanged pitiful eyes for looks of discomfort. Dead dad jokes became my way of catharsis. It was the only way I could talk about him without being sent to the counselor's office. I remember the feeling of exclusion when my school put on a father-daughter dance three years later. I remember constantly feeling as though something was missing. Looking back, I don't remember much of those years at all.

"I'd go to the dance too, but my partner died..."
"...If you don't laugh, it's not funny, it's just sad."

II

I always hated the end of the month. By that time the food had run out and there was nothing left to do but wait for the credits to hit the EBT card. It was a waiting game between us and the food stamp office. I remember the stress on my mother's face as she sat worried about what our

next meal would be. I remember how hard it was for me to sit and watch my baby siblings starve. The bill collectors never knew mercy. When the electricity was off, we would huddle together in my mom's bed like bluebirds for warmth in the winter. I remember the rumbling sounds of our stomachs crying to be nourished. I remember each time I flushed the toilet with buckets of water, I felt a sense of relief. No more would I have to bear the smell of urine and feces. A rather intrusive reminder of the poverty that struck us. I remember I couldn't wait to get to school. There I'd find light, running water, and meals responsible for filling my belly each day. I remember I always loved school because it distracted me from the reality that confronted me when I came home to my dark room with no electricity. I shared it with my siblings. We sat in the dark together. I remember feeling guilt before shame.

My siblings' fathers never stuck around and my mother spent more time in the hospital than at any job she'd ever had. We were broke and my father could no longer fill the gaps that my mother didn't. I remember after my father died, I went from having two cakes at my birthday parties to having none at all. There were many nights when my family had little else to eat but cans of corn and boxes of spaghetti given to us by the local food pantry. I remember feeling guilty for binging when I knew food was hard to come by.

I remember even with empty bellies, my mother chose to never voice the fact that we were poor. It was something I comprehended on my own as I watched what my four little siblings took in. I remember the times I played dress-up with my sister to distract her from her hollow stomach.

It was during these times that I felt obligated to protect them as much as I could. I considered them my children more than I did my siblings. As they grew up, I saw my younger self in each one of them. They couldn't understand why we impotently flipped switches as they refused to give light, or why the taps only dribbled water into a small puddle. My responsibilities as an older sibling started with my little sister's first breath, though the weight of that responsibility didn't become clear to me until I watched my kin grow up alongside me in poverty. I remember feeling obligated to protect them from our unfortunate truth.

My mother graduated high school, then completed an associate's degree at a community college while raising me and my siblings. To some, that is nothing more than a subpar accomplishment, but in my family, her achievements were the equivalent of getting into the Ivy League. Over time, the value of her degree perished which caused my mother to start her own battle with depression and ultimately choose unemployment for the better part of my life. My mom is the only person my siblings and I have to look up to. I knew at a young age that I wanted my siblings to have more to look up to. I remember realizing that if anyone was going to break my family out of the vicious cycle of poverty, it was going to have to be me. I was going to have to set a better example. I was going to have to do something big in order to inspire my siblings to want more than what they were given. I remember why I did thirty-two extracurriculars in high school: Mock Trial, lacrosse, Teen Court, Beta Club, Young Democrats, National Honors Society, student council, French club, debate team—I could go on. We grew up in what I would

call Bumb Fuck, Kentucky. I knew that if I worked hard enough, I could get a scholarship to a good school far away. Not only did I desperately want to ditch my small rural town, but I also needed to avoid my life at home. I remember home never feeling comfortable. It was just an indication of how much I didn't have. With no money and no support, my home was the source of my long-standing battle with my depression. I remember school being my only escape.

My siblings are what first pushed me to get an "A" in my middle school honors English class. They are what inspired me to want to go to a fancy school and be a lawyer. I know that if I am successful, I'll be setting the standard for them. I remember the pressure to work hard for them. I remember the day I shifted my focus from grieving to inspiring my siblings. I look back and recollect the memories I can still remember with my dad. I remember when he told me to throw away the pills that my mother gave me for my ADHD. He said "You don't need that stuff, it's junk," then suggested that I hide them in my mouth and spit them out when my mom wasn't looking. I know in another life, my dad would've been my best friend. In another life, he would've done for me what I try to do for my siblings. He would've given me the support that I always needed, he would've been there for me. In this life, though, I make it my priority to be there for my siblings. In retrospect, my father's death was not a nightmare but rather the beginning of my dreams. I guess that's what keeps me going, knowing that if he were still here, he'd be proud of me.

UNTITLED

Samuel Goodman



I awaken from a wonderful dream
Im still in prison
I wanna go back to sleep
I awaken from a terrible nightmare
Im still in prison
I wanna go back to sleep

Somedays are better than others
when adhorrent is familiar
Not flinching when you witness violent beats

Gratitude and Grieving
these are not mutually
Exclusive concepts

Some writers want you to feel the pain
they convey making words drip
with the emotions of their souls

I just want to excecize my pain
not wishing for a soul
to ever feel that way

Im only human I long for connection
let it be over our thriving after survival
recognizing everyone struggles
Life is realitive. It doesnt only you can-
make yourself its victim
No one deserves it.



EXIT

Tony Wang



WHAT IS THE PRICE OF LIFE

Thomas Greene



What is the price of life
Is the value the same now
Am I worth my weight
by what do I measure on what
Is there any difference,
the man that I am

I wonder its worth
as it was at my birth?
being the man that I am
scale do I stand?
in the man the world sees
and the man that I see myself to be.....



UNTITLED

Kayla Gilly



A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN:

MENT-TONE "A"

Jalon Shabazz



The day is historical and highly criticized. From a bird's eye view, it appears that numerous ant colonies have converged on the place of the monumental "I Have a Dream Speech." Black, red, yellow, and white. All shapes and sizes. The harmony of order. The parties are at odds, yet hopeful and optimistic. One is stubborn as an ass and the other territorial as a bull. From common brethren to high-ranking militant minds, their coexistence peacefully secured the Columbian District Mall. It's a great day, and yes, we can celebrate the audacity to hope for change. The trumpet sound was translated into a message that ment-tone "A," which vibrates consonantly at 440 revolutions per second. Symbolic to captivity. The momentous occasion cracked open even wider the door of the lion caged yet steadily pacing the road to exodus. The hemo flows conducive through the veins of the event as red and blue platelets are attentive to the light projected on our nation to expand our breast for more inspiration and faith of the mustard seed to do greater works. Carrying more power and more life today because the fruitful hymenopterous campaign should someday lead to a new and better people, a new and better America, a new and better world. The bitter sweet spirit pledging service in the Mall where progenitors were once sold. This day reflects a pool of life, pledging allegiance toward a perfect union. What a beautiful and special phenomenon that has engraved itself into American history and influenced many generations to come.

I DON'T CRY, I CRIED

Armaan Ahmed



I don't cry, save onions. Be it vaccines at the doctor, James Cameron's *Titanic*, beautiful music, a lost pet, joy, anger, hope, hopelessness—my eyes remain dry. Aside from their physiological function—to lubricate the eye—my body seems incapable of producing the saline-laced dew.

In my eyes, the inability to cry out of emotion is not a marker of masculinity or even any form of fortitude. In fact, I have always thought the opposite. This is why, though perhaps odd, I have always expressed insecurity in relation to my not crying. It has led to me feeling robotic, a suppression of my humanity. This had led to the incredibly ridiculous and ironic phenomenon of me feeling the tiniest bit jealous when comforting a crying friend.

Some have offered me the consolation that to not cry is simply a genetic trait like any other physiological phenomenon. Some

don't sweat, others have runny noses, a few drool in their sleep. But emotional tears are an altogether different sort of bodily fluid. They are the physical manifestation of our emotions, our consciousness, and our humanity. There is no other species that sheds emotional tears. This conundrum has produced a multitude of explanations. They are plentiful, wildly varied, and as old as Judaism.

The Old Testament describes tears as the by-product when the heart's material weakens and turns into water. In the 1600s, a prevailing theory held that emotions heated the heart, which in turn generated water vapor in order to cool itself down. This "heart vapor" would then rise to the head, condense near the eyes and escape as tears. In 1985 biochemist William Frey popularized the idea that crying removes toxic substances from the blood that build up during times of stress. Charles Darwin declared

emotional tears “purposeless.” Even today, the biological-evolutionary function of emotional tears remains unclear. What is apparent, however, is emotional tears’ importance to the human experience.

What bothered me about my inability to cry was not so much the nonexistence of the act itself, but more the indication that my emotional experience was flat. Crying is the result of emotions becoming too great to keep inside. Tears are the texture of our emotional curve. Thus not crying did not feel like a character trait. Rather, it suggested the scary thought that my life had not yet had a visceral enough experience to bring me to tears. Not crying was not living.

My strange victory came on the evening of March 12, 2020. A little over a month before on January 28, I had arrived in Paris for a semester abroad. I had always wanted to live somewhere abroad rather than simply passing through. I wanted an experience with no temporal end date in mind. An experience long enough to become numb to a place’s landmarks and sensitive to its detail.

By the end of the first week, I was curiously comfortable in my new environment. The obligatory first-week icebreakers had etched a handful of familiar faces into the front corner of my brain. It was not even the second day, walking down Rue de Rivoli, when one noticed me and a moment later invited me to dinner.

Moreover, coincidence gifted me a second favor. In almost comical levels of stereotypical romance, my girlfriend had also chosen to study abroad in Paris that same semester. Thus we found ourselves in love, in Paris, sarcastically mocking the whole situation all the while. As it turned out and unbeknownst to me, the group of people to whom the familiar-face-turned-future-

friend was taking me included none other than my Elizabeth!

Niceties turned into conversation, and the beginnings of friendship formed. There was by the end of the night some unspoken sense that we had all the right ingredients for a meaningful group of long-term friends; that if, given only a few weeks, the trajectory which we found ourselves at the beginning of would no doubt throw us together. The stage was set, these four months would no doubt be the most memorable days of my college experience.

The same day I landed in Paris, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, landed in Beijing to meet President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China. He was there offering assistance for a new viral outbreak known as COVID-19. At the time the virus was a relatively local phenomenon, something that the average global citizen may have heard of one morning on the news on their way to work.

By February 27, a few short weeks after the beginning of the semester, NYU Florence had closed. France confirmed its first case a few days later, quickly becoming a hotspot. Checking the number of confirmed cases each morning became a sick ritual.

Almost as fast as the virus spread, our confidence in a full semester abroad shattered. By March 4, NYU gave us the option to go home. The possibility of being forced to leave Paris was sprinkled into every other conversation. Concerned undertones leaked into tri-weekly calls with parents. A consensus was reached: it was only a matter of time.

March 11 was the last day I saw my professors in person. NYU had chosen to hold classes remotely while, for the time being, allowing

students to stay in Paris.

3,828 miles away, the sun was setting over DC. President Trump, in an unexpected address, declared a “complete shutdown” of flights from Europe. The next morning I woke up with a text from my parents containing within it a one-way boarding pass for a flight scheduled to take off in 32 hours.

Humans: irrational, hopelessly hopeful, and idealistic to the point of their own destruction. The distance between our objective and subjective realities is perhaps greater than any other species. That morning of March 12, “leaving Paris,” “leaving my friends,” did not cross my mind. A clustered amalgamation of hurried logistics, bucket-list items, and some semblance of a last-day plan buzzed around my skull. Though the predicted prophecy had prematurely manifested, I psychologically pushed it back, preserving a few more precious hours of sanity.

Two months compressed into a day. Breakfast at La Cafeotheque, Van Gogh at the Musée d’Orsay, views from the Arc de Triomphe and later from the Eiffel Tower, dizzying Monet panoramas, the Grand Palais’ enormous glass ceiling, nostalgic conversation over French 75s and jazz at Harry’s New York Bar became a rapidly written flipbook. The day was a crystal-clear blur, a perpetual instant. The illusion, however, soon came to an end. My time was up, it was time to say goodbye.

But there were no goodbyes. The now-friends were understandably absorbed in their travel plans, some even already in flight. Like a novel with the last chapter torn from it, there was no closure. The status of our ability to remain in Paris had changed so abruptly that the last time I had seen these friends, only 48 hours ago, we were blissfully discussing possible cities

throughout Europe to visit.

Wherever I live, I bring with me a growing collection of Polaroid photos of people important to me to hang on my wall. My room now packed into a suitcase, it had come time to take down all 63. One by one I peeled the double-sided tape from the wall, a face falling to the floor with each. The air turned stiff, my throat became dense, and tears with an altogether different chemical composition than those shed when chopping onions ran down my face. One hypothesis holds that a higher protein content makes emotional tears more viscous, making them stick to the skin more strongly and run down the face more slowly, allowing them to be seen by others. However, there was no one whom I was shedding these tears for.

If perhaps a decade from now I find myself nostalgically reminiscing with a friend and am asked to recall some of the best stretches in time I had ever experienced, I would have no trouble imagining my answer beginning with “well, during my sophomore year when I studied abroad in Paris . . .” Time not yet had and never to be recreated felt ripped from me. The mathematical laws governing the trajectory of our collective friendships had proved fallible; there was no gradual drift, not even a quick turn, but rather a pointed right angle. These were tears of loss, tears of sudden change, and tears of distress.

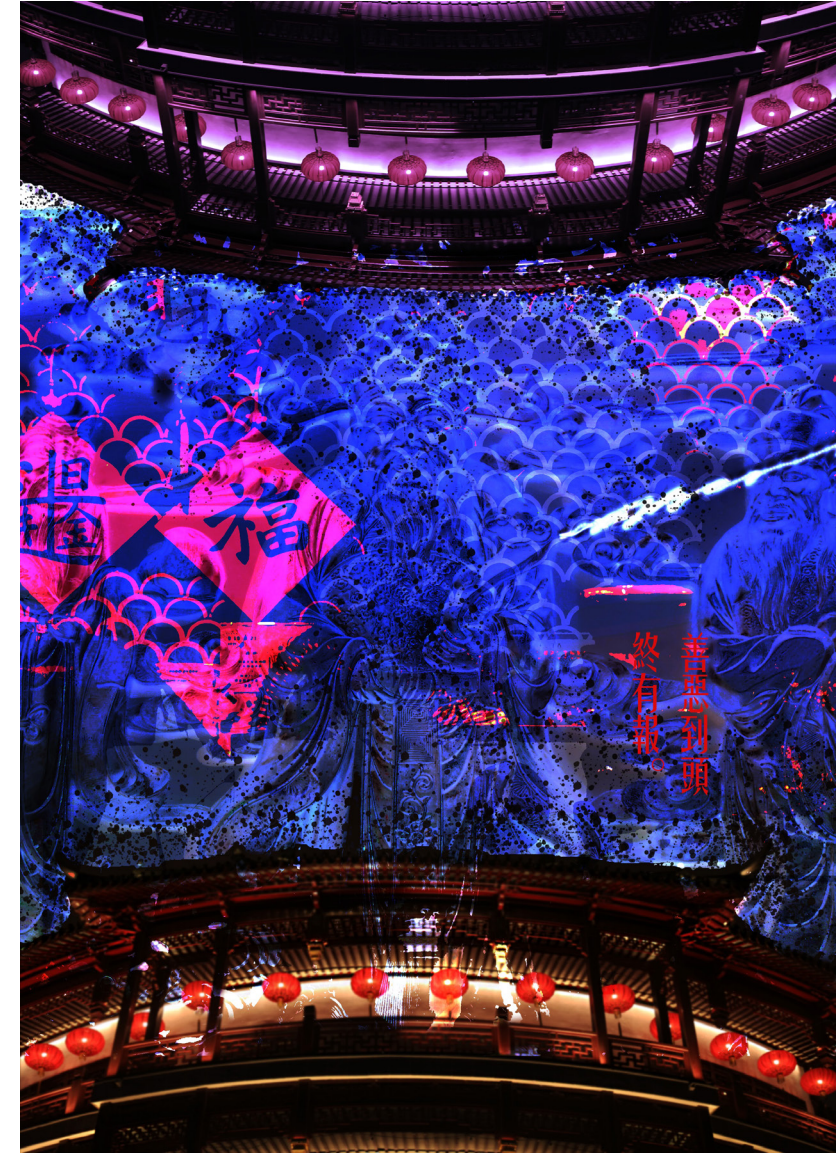
Yet these were complicated tears. Yes, they were tears of selfish sadness, but they were also tears of relief. I don’t cry, I cried. The texture of my emotional fabric had at long last turned three-dimensional. Automatic, indifferent, merciless tears. Try as one might, true emotional tears can never be produced on command. Thus what followed was potentially the strangest weep in the history of humanity: tears triggered

by sadness, and sustained by comfort. There was understanding in the tears. They made clear a sensation previously perceptible yet indefinite in form: being at the mercy of one's own body.

As it turns out, crying, at least the operation itself, isn't particularly anything to be jealous about (but what is this, a review?). However, its meaning lies far outside the simple act. For thousands of years, humans have tried and tried again to conjure some specification to separate "us" from all other species—the soul and consciousness being the leading candidates. However, after numerous nineteenth-century experiments failed to observe anything escape the body seconds after death, and an increasing amount of data has suggested that we are not as unlike other animals as we may have once thought, these claims have thus far proved unfounded. Perhaps I will add to the impasse by offering another definition into the mix: to cry is to be human, and to be human is to cry.

I have come to the conclusion that life is like a sheet of newspaper used during a toilet paper shortage: it is much, much better crumpled than stiff. Whether positive or negative, with excitement or grief, confidence or fear, understanding or confusion, life's emotional fabric is better textured. Visceral experiences are the grooves—and we had better want them, for it is those deep areas within our sensations from which emotions grow.

So I, the eternal optimist, have come to believe that instead of seventy-one days lost to fate, it is in fact a hundred tears—each a drop of my humanity found—that should be counted in my mental memory bank, and maybe I'm better for it.



MOTHER AND CHILD,
ANGLO-SAXON ALLITERATIVE VERSE
Scott Hightower's Fall 2022
"Art and Craft of Poetry
Practicum"



Whose fentanyl death will be the next disaster?
Whose mother's child will we mourn in church?
Which dealer will have cash in return for candied
Ashes? The unslumbering wind sweeps dime-sized
Sweetness away like snow. Cutting
To the chase, the wind will decide.



DÉJÀ VU

Yuhanxiao (Maggie) Ma



POCKET PROPORTIONS

Lydia Reed Sheffield



Crawling into
The tunnel of your eyes
Empty sockets become
Pockets
Filled to the top
With honey
Melting like a candle wick
Drowned in wax
I sit in that
Space between your nose
And ear
Dangling my legs off the edge
Of a cheekbone cliff
I wish you wouldn't loom so large
I'd like to fit you in a jar
Keep you in the pocket of
My overalls



THE REAPING

Eliq Zong



THE LANGUAGE OF BIRDS

Samantha Long



After all, I will carry you someplace new
With words that are not yours.
On bird's back to The Promised Land, *loudly*,
You are undying there.

At the entrance to it there is a fat crane. He called out
The way he could but I don't understand the language
Of birds. Mammals like me move our mouths
Like this.

He does not often open his mouth to me gently.
A crane like that cannot lick his paws clean like
I can. He has no hands to wring dry of sadness. One of
These days I will hear your voice as more than sound.

You can touch my hair if I can touch your feathers
You show me yours and I'll show you mine,
These days are the best and only of me.
And what day is it now of this Forever-Kaddish?

Mourning, groaning on and on for the love of you, skin
Stretched drum tight across the love of you, and
Now you're on a moon that needed
A face. And what a face on you.

To me the dark side of the moon's face is
Just a port wine stain.
When I was younger, your face was a map. Red sea,
And land. When you were younger, I was younger.



ALL VOWS

(ON KOL NIDRE, WE SING)

Abe Kaye



the constant drops of water
a hundred drums beating
it has been raining for
a thousand years

the choir is playing in my head
the hum of throats
like bees

the cantor sings
the sound of the waves
of thunder of fields

he has been
singing for
a thousand years

one more time
kol nidre
this time under
stone arches
this time wrapped
in velvet
once as
a slave the
other as a prince
it is the same song for
everyone

even for
the skinny ghost
who is hungry
and thirsty
(he is too shy to tell us he
knows too well how to be discarded
he has learned to speak quietly
and remembers not being allowed to sing
or to pray. he knows there is no
difference between singing and praying)

in the desert
it was sung
in Berlin
in Los Angeles
in Babylon
in the middle of a Sea
a third time
dressed in white
kol nidre
stillness in the air
where no fabric moves

the choir is still singing
it is only us who have
started to join in again

forgive me
if I forget the words
or if I did not sing with
you a few hundred years ago

though I am ancient
and laugh when I hear
the name of our country
as if it exists

forgive me if
I betray you in these lines
my sentences are archives
and my words are easily forgotten—

only the melody has
not escaped me



UNTITLED, NY 2022

Benji Hsu



SELF PORTRAIT AS A HOUSE

Sophie Mulgrew



I coat my walls in lemon zest,
a meek attempt
to dissuade
your lingering scent—
aching in the rafters
and bending
beneath the floorboards.
On the mantel
there is an empty frame
reserved for silence
and unwanted guests.



MANUELA

Pilar Cerón



TWO MONTHS

Virginia Morford



Two months on West 17th Street

If you don't count that last week of august, or the visit in july.

60 sleeps with no door, and hearing whispers of trying to keep quiet in the kitchen making breakfast or late night snacking chips falling into a ceramic bowl.

I find it interesting how I attach sounds to familiar actions, and the way I can recognize them in a half 9:30 am slumber.

Like opening a tea bag, ripping the top of the plastic casing, or the crack of an egg against the countertop.

Two months without curtains or a desk chair.

And drinking tea every morning and showering with the lights on.

Our apartment smells like white rice when I come and reminds me I don't live with my mom anymore who never cooked it because it wasn't a whole grain. She always burned it too.

A big bag of it sits in our cabinet that ruby can't reach without my help.

We buy tissues, and dryer sheets, which didn't exist before.

I could buy nutella if I wanted to. Or white bread.

Two months of getting used to the smell of meat cooking, and walking up and down five flights of stairs.

I found that if I get distracted between floor 2 and 4 it goes by fast.

But I don't have time to forget things because I'll be two minutes late and out of breath.

The super turned on our radiators last week and it woke me up in the middle of the night.

I changed my sheets twice and turned over the cold pillow.

I like lighting candles in the morning and falling asleep early.

I'm starting to learn a lot about myself. I like to do laundry, and fold the crisp warm smell into neat piles. I hang my clothes in color order and stuff things under my bed like posters and a suitcase of winter clothes.

I like smelling good. And brushing my hair. I've been keeping it straight and long recently, and golden.

Buying coffee out, remembering to tip the barista, and taking long walks in the west village. I like seeing people on saturdays with their dogs and a bag from the farmers market. I like the way people dress like it's fall when it's warm out, and walk in pairs.

My feet hurt everyday and there's just about one pair of comfortable shoes I have left.

I started biking, I have gotten used to one-way streets even though I still look both ways like my mom is whispering it into my ear at every intersection. Music helps. I play it loud.

I like to talk in class. I get shy with boys I sit next to. But I'll talk to everyone at a party.

I love moments with friends and the cashmere sweater ruby wears around the house.

I love saying good mornings and good nights.

I love when my roommates and I all get home at once, and eat at the dinner table.

I like the smell of garlic and shallots, and that time alicia did the dishes after I was out late.

Two months of getting dressed. Two periods. And two months of summer job money, weekends, accutane, making dinner for myself, homework, vacuuming, flossing in the mornings, being on time—being early.

Two months away from Whitney Street.

BORDERVIOLENCE

Graciela Blandon



Oh, you wanna see some Borderviolence?

Some Breaking Bad, big boy, one-night-only Borderviolence?

Some it-could-never-happen-here, Marty Robbins, barbed wired, blockbusting Borderviolence?

"I wanna save the migrants!" Borderviolence?

Belligerent, bloodsoaked, bourgeois, binational B-b-b-borderviolence?

I'll show you some Borderviolence, vato—

my Borderboyfriend Borderbrokeupwithme today.
and that shit

was Borderviolent.



ODE TO WALNUTS

Helen Ruckelshaus



SOMEONE'S HOUSE

Zhuoer Chen



A clock paused
A candle bent
A closet in the study room
Seven tables.

If anything
There is something in that closet's lock.
Small like
a question

a mole
a condition
a grave with no name on it.
Is that true?

That I want you
like a piece of furniture.
Some creature crawls in
and chokes on its desire

the same way she waits for him
at one of the tables, wondering—
With what strength does he chew?
Not write, but chew?

The things someone has thought
in someone's house.

TWO RATS CONTEMPLATING THE MOON

Yiwei Zhao



The moon
Makes me think of: the sea.
Makes you think of: darkness.
Makes us think of: pests and fallen angels
Jesus walking on the gutter, while the gutter
Thinks of: the reflection of water, and the chosen ones
Who descend to us, winged with disease and divine light
Sickness thinks of rats. Rats almost reflect on themselves
Eons ago, epically in Sodom and Gomorrah
They were humans, relegated from the City of Angels
And what should humans think of?
—The opposite of human, rationality
Think of the back of the moon
The unknown black sea, the plague map, watermarked
By constellations of splendor
Collapsed one after another
In the memory of the unremembered
Legends of great flood water
I think of: you. Wish.
Let you think of: me. Lunacy
That you think of love, fear to think of
The diagnosis. The judgment day when
Pharmacological midnight thinks of

The moon's fever, Lunatic visual effects.
Think of the tenderness of the all-American continent
Chaos and spasms of moody tranquility
Duality, refused dirty dusty angel-pests
Think of the awing shock, a yellow stare
Electrical headlight, shuttling through merchants
And beggars, survivors from the fall of Rome and
Babylon parlors and sickhouses, salted fields
Think of the timid fog glistening in the breath of the heavenly
Ripples, the honey gutter with brownish, shy rats' furs
Tiny quiver of whiskers, psalm soundless,
That they faithfully chant and almost remember
No longer angels as they've outnumbered humans
Fallen they are living upside down
In the sewer, drinking moonlight from a manhole cover
Dripping, hold their heads high up
To think of an obscure, steady night
They bend over the moon's reflection on the gutter
And think of a flat, stable plight.
No above and no below. The obscure light
That they love, holy, that they may contemplate, when we
Think of a cheesy moon.





CONTRIBUTORS

- ▲ **ARMAAN AHMED** is a graduating senior concentrating in the Experience of Creativity, investigating the phenomenon of creativity through philosophy, art, and in true Gallatin fashion, a myriad of other disciplines. Armaan is an avid film photographer, writer, climber, cook, and overall serial hobbyist. He plans to study continental philosophy in graduate school following graduation.
- **MAITE ARMSTRONG-MATTA** (b. 1999, México and raised in Puerto Rico) is a studio art major with a minor in Italian studies, graduating in May 2023. Her work primarily centers on the intersection between music and culture, mixing mediums like photography, textiles, and printmaking. She is planning on continuing her art education after graduation.
- **GRACIELA BLANDON** is from El Paso, Texas and won't let you forget it! At Gallatin, she has researched borders and migration as a Global Human Rights Fellow, Urban Practice Fellow, and Horn Family Environmental Scholar. She is graduating this year with a concentration entitled *Class Struggle and Culture as Praxis*.
- ▲ **CAMERON CAVE** is writing. He'll graduate from CAS in 2026 and is reading everything he can in the meantime. His goal is to fully fall into the fantasy worlds he creates and get good enough at Japanese to read Murakami untranslated. He has taken "Fiction Writing" and "Writing for Children" at Gallatin, and dearly misses roundtable discussions on top of a skyscraper about the craziest ideas 15 over-caffeinated students could conjure. Eventually, he'll write a story so sweet that it'll give the whole world a toothache. Read more of his writing at cavewrites.myportfolio.com. Critics say, "It's good!"
- **PILAR CERÓN** (she/they) is a senior at Gallatin studying art, theater, fashion, and justice through her concentration, *Storytelling and Creation for Liberation*. She also holds a minor in Chinese. They are a first-generation college student and an NYU Martin Luther King Jr. Scholar. She loves good food and good music.
- **ZHUOER CHEN** is someone who films, writes, and makes pauses. She is currently studying film and comparative literature at Gallatin. Her films have been recognized by festivals in the United States, France, Russia, Sweden, Germany, and China.
- ▲ **MONSERRATE DELGADO** will be graduating in May 2023. As a liberal studies major, he concentrates on social consciousness and writing. In furthering his education, he will be focusing on a degree in business administration. He would one day like to let the youth in marginalized neighborhoods know that there is freedom in education and there will always be someone who cares about their creative expression.
- **TESSA DILLMAN** is a first-year student at Tisch's Department of Photography and Imaging. Her focus lately has been on photographing children. The nuances of a child's emotions are spontaneous. She loves capturing their uninhibited expressions.
- **GRACE DOHERTY** will graduate from Gallatin in May 2024 with a concentration in Creative Nonfiction Media, with a focus on memoir and essay writing. Her work will be published in both the *Gallatin Review* and *Confluence* this spring.
- ▲ **KAYLA GILLY** is a first year in the Photography and Imaging program at Tisch. She is a multimedia artist, merging analog and digital photography, moving image, and digital manipulation in her work.
- **SAMUEL AARON FUREY GOODMAN** is an NYU student and an aspiring entrepreneur and artist. He is working toward his degree in the hopes of going to graduate school to earn his master's and possibly a PhD that will help him make an impact and create a better world through his ideas, arts, literature, and future start-up work.
- **THOMAS GREENE** has been working towards his associate degree in social work. He dreams of working with at-risk/high-risk youth in his community and beyond. Thomas's motto is "How can someone teach about antisocial behavior if they have never been in the same situation? I was that antisocial youth, struggling for years with my behavior, and if I can affect one life I can change a community and maybe more."
- ▲ **SCOTT HIGHTOWER'S FALL 2022 "ART AND CRAFT OF POETRY PRACTICUM"** Kink Katherine, Sabina Bean, Classy Caroline Glass, Emma Crema, a tune for Neptune, River Jordan, Simple Sidney, Helen R of Troy, Zebra Zoe, Matcha Maliha, Sophie Femur, Wise Chloe, Yiwei Freeway (Aether), Etruscan pot (Prof eS). We all have big dreams. We all daily try to do our part at being a part of the ongoing creation of the world as we understand it.
- ▲ **BENJI HSU** will graduate in May 2024 with a concentration in the *Shifting Optics of Looking Asian* and a minor in studio art. He uses lens-based projects to navigate societal constructs of race, while also reflecting on his own identity. Benji has shown work at the Gallatin Galleries and Mamdouha S. Bobst Gallery.
- **HELENA JOHNSON** is a junior in her first year at Gallatin studying modernity through the lens of fashion, art, and literature. With a focus on modern art, Victorian literature, and fashion history, she works to make sense of why the rules of our society exist today. She has published pieces in *Confluence* in addition to the *Gallatin Review* and is always working to expand her understanding of history through the arts.
- **OLA KARASINSKA** is a first-year student pursuing a degree in collaborative arts at Tisch. She comes from a primarily visual artistic background, with a concentration in oil and gouache painting, but is also a multimedia artist who creates experimental works with different mediums of expression. Most of her works explore and analyze the world of subconscious dreams and desires. More of her art may be found on Instagram at [@deluridium](https://www.instagram.com/deluridium).
- ▲ **SANTANA KAVANAUGH** is a second year at Gallatin pursuing a concentration in Critical Race Theory, Human Rights & Minority Studies. She first discovered her passion for writing in her seventh-grade English class after discovering the works of Maya Angelou. A zealous Kentuckian, she's collected over four years of experience in the social justice field. With her matter-of-fact style, Santana uses her work as a tool to advocate for both herself and the Black community.
- **ABE DASSA KAYE** is a sophomore at Tisch studying film and television. Outside of his academics, Abe performs with After School Improv and enjoys writing poetry, photography, and rollerblading all day long.
- In almost four decades in prison, **MICHAEL P. KELLY** has tried to maintain a healthy diet of anything that deeply touches his heart, mind, and spirit. He is deeply indebted to the NYU Prison Education Program for providing another opportunity to experience "freedom" while incarcerated. "*Self is the only prison that can ever bind the soul.*" —Van Dyke
- ▲ **SAMANTHA LONG** will graduate from Gallatin in May of 2024 with a concentration in Creative Writing and the Arts. Her focuses include poetry and prose, visual arts, publishing, editing, and curatorial work, and she is particularly interested in working with creative writing and art as portraiture.
- **YIWEI LU** has submitted his long-overdue IAPC under the title *Modern Aesthetics: a Critique on Subjectivity*. He used to study classics, psychoanalysis, theater, and literature, but his current focus on history is making him realize that these are all mere symptoms of bourgeois naïveté. Please reach out to him via email, y17378@nyu.edu, if you would like to work with him on any writing/acting/film projects or get his autograph—he is full of brilliant ideas and constantly in need of social validation.
- **YUHANXIAO (MAGGIE) MA** is a junior at Gallatin concentrating in Media, Arts, and Technology with a minor in philosophy. She mainly works with multimedia installations on the paradoxical relationship between humans and machines, and does research in the field of human-computer interaction.
- ▲ **VIRGINIA MORFORD** is a Gallatin student from San Francisco studying the impact and reflection of art on society, specifically in photography, fashion, and contemporary painting. She writes poetry in her free time, and looks at it as an extension of her everyday art practice.
- **SOPHIE MULGREW** is a junior at Gallatin studying mixed media expressions of literature. She is interested in the relationship between creative writing and visual arts. Her work has been published in *Musée Magazine* and *Thin Air Magazine*. Find her on Instagram [@thesophisticatedscrapbook](https://www.instagram.com/thesophisticatedscrapbook).
- **ALEXA DANIELLA QUITIAN** is developing her concentration in Media, Entertainment Marketing, and Latine Representation. Writing poetry recently became a new interest of hers, frequently exploring the elasticity of love. In particular she questions how this familiar emotion materializes in culture, family, friendships, places, and oneself.
- ▲ **HELEN RUCKELSHAUS** is a junior at Gallatin concentrating in Quantum Healing, Lovingkindness, and Creative Writing. Helen finds gems in the collective pool of unconditional love which she uses to build her poetry and art, using her psyche as the plaster, paint, and property.

- **JALON SHABAZZ** will graduate in May 2023 with an AA in liberal arts. He is concentrating on pursuing a BA in social work. He believes that collaborative education is the key to unlock all cages of circumstance.
- **LYDIA REED SHEFFIELD** is a sophomore currently concentrating in a blend of independent design, poetry, and entrepreneurship. She is also pursuing a minor in technology, management, and design. Lydia has been a lifelong dancer, daydreamer, and lover of plants. One of her poems titled "Beneath the Lithosphere" was published in Gallatin's *Confluence* just last year.
- ▲ **LORE SKOULATOS** is in her first year in the XE: Experimental Humanities & Social Engagement master's program at NYU. Her studies are in philosophy, literature, feminist theory, and creative writing. She is also the XE Student Representative and Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Caustic Frolic*, XE's interdisciplinary literary journal.
- **DYLIN TAYLOR** (she/her) is interested in creating theatrical work that challenges our preconceptions of identity to reveal the deep connections we share with strangers. She likes to create art in several disciplines, but has concentrated in studying theater direction in the Collaborative Arts BFA at Tisch.
- **HUNTER THOMPSON** will graduate from Gallatin in Fall 2023 with a concentration in Prosthetics Reification, which concerns gifting, wishes, memory as material, video games, and philosophy of math. Select exhibitions include EGX's Leftfield Collection in London (2019), O'Flaherty's in New York (2022), Ritual Transmission Agency in Australia (2022), and an upcoming solo show at Mariyasha's Cabin in Australia (2023).
- ▲ **AUGUST WANG** is exploring the extensive possibilities of visual art in his study at NYU of interactive media art, film, and computer science. In the near future, he's excited to engage with emerging arts that seek the connection between arts and technology.
- **TONY WANG** is a lens-based artist and director graduating from Tisch Department of Photography and Imaging in May 2023. Tony's photographic works lie on the intersection between collecting cropped compositions from daily moments and staged experiences with collaborators. Tony has built a reputation for using the moving body and camera to express intimate emotions in his experimental art films and documentary shorts.
- **KAITLYN WIGMORE** is a sophomore at Tisch who is pursuing a degree in photography and imaging, along with a minor in philosophy and film. Much of her work is based on surrealist concepts and the intersection between documentary and fine art.
- ▲ **SAMANTHA ESMÉ WILLIAMS** is a Steinhardt sophomore majoring in studio art. Her artistic practice is dominated by drawings, especially those created using her favored technique of pointillism. She explores themes of nature, suburbia, and memory through her artwork.
- Born in Shaoxing, China, **ANGELA XU** is a junior majoring in photography and imaging at Tisch. Her photographs reveal creative and healing moments in life through color and light.
- **MICHAEL ZHAN** is a Tisch junior learning photography and imaging. His specialty focuses on creating high-end editorial fashion portraiture. Michael has published his work through Flanelle magazine and might publish a body of work in *Vogue Magazine's* March edition.
- ▲ **YIWEI ZHAO** has been working on the art and craft of poetry since 2022, majoring in history and East Asian studies. She has a wide range of interests in science, music, painting, anthropology, and so on. She is planning future studies as a student at Gallatin and a city pedestrian with poetry vibes as well.
- **XY ZHOU** will graduate in May 2023 with a concentration in Translation Between Mediums and a minor in law and society. They are planning future projects with support from a fellowship at the Newington-Cropsey Foundation and as an LES Young Artists of Color Fellow.
- **ELLA ZONA** is a North Carolina-based brand designer, social media manager & studio artist. Ella majored in studio art and minored in the business of entertainment, media, and technology during her time at NYU. She received her degree a semester early in December of 2022, and has since continued to build her business, Zona Creative Solutions, and grow in her work as the Lead VA at Boho Business Co., a Florida-based boutique agency.

