



10th
anniversary issue

Underground Pool

Spring 2020

Underground Pool

Issue Ten Spring 2020

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AUBREY RICHEY,
DOLLHOUSE

Letter from the Underground

The *Anthropocene* is the current geological age: the age defined by humans, our presence and impact, our greatness and our badness. This 10th Anniversary Issue of *Underground Pool* features prose, poetry, and visual art exploring the implications of our presence on this earth, on what we have deemed (and perhaps *doomed*) to be our own.

This collection exists in the *Anthropocene*, its many corners and open fields. It will take you down city streets, through forests, inside apartments, and into some places accessible only to the human in its own world, only translatable through language and art.

Although *Anthropocene* is a word often invisible to humans, it is our ever-looming presence whose effects exist in every moment. There is concrete as well as nature—at some points, the concrete nearly becomes the nature. This is our reality.



Laura Miller
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Purple

CARLY J. DAGIT

Holding my breath under water
was my favorite game as a child.
There is no king of the pool.

I taste a penny under my tongue.
What instrument is wailing in my ears?
I scratch at the concrete for silence.

My legs have to do all the work
but they get to choose the destination.
When was the last breath I took?





Pinecones

KAT MOORADIAN

I went into the woods alone again today. I know it's against the rules. I like walking on the fallen trees and feeling the rotting bark under my shoes. Pine needles and dead leaves live in the same universe as my Famous Footwear low tops in Pink Glitter, with the small blue daisy keychain attached to the metal hole the laces go through. Frogs don't wear shoes. I begged you to buy me the Pink Glitter sneakers because they were the first thing I saw in the store, and I always beg you to buy me the first thing I see. The black leather loafers fit the school's dress code but I wanted sparkles. You gave in, and I still don't have shoes for school, and I wish you hadn't given in. So I'm ruining the Pink Glitter shoes in the woods today because I feel guilty but I don't feel sorry enough to ask you to drive me back to the store. I wish you had bought me the black leather loafers that were so ugly they made me want to cry.

I really want a frozen pizza. You took me to get real pizza but that isn't what I want. You sat across from me, and the young Italian guy with the weirdly trimmed goatee kept looking at us over the counter. I drew on a napkin. I drew wild cars and swords and an apple. That's all I could think of to draw. You said we should leave and I said I didn't want to but we both got up anyway. And when we got back in the car, we couldn't drive it anywhere because it needed gas and we had used the money for the gas on the pizza. And it wasn't even a frozen pizza. So I'm in the woods picking mushrooms and imagining some are poisonous and some are edible and really wishing the mushrooms were red and white with large white spots but they're small and pale brown and feel like dead fish. Fairies live under mushrooms.

I really wish the large hole I found in a dead tree had something inside, like a marble or a magic wand or a letter to someone's secret admirer, but it just had some wood chips in it.

I don't want to go back home. I wish Dad hadn't taken the fridge when he left. He just took the ice cream out of the fridge and threw it on the floor and it's still there and the ice cream is all liquid now and smells bad. I hated watching him struggle, red-faced, arms around the fridge, moving it inch by inch out the door while you watched him silently, shaking. There's a big hole in the kitchen and dirt and dust balls where the fridge used to be. You said you think mice were

**I'm going to dig
a hole into the
ground until the
dirt gets cold**

living under there. I wish a mouse would come and find me in the woods and teach me how to make an acorn palace. I wish Dad had taken all of the furniture and left us cold and alone. I wish he had taken

the walls and the basement and the electricity because right now the house is stove, lamp, bed, Polly Pocket, dust, mold, Rubix cube, Littlest Pet Shop, cup, deodorant, yoga mat, Zhu Zhu Pet, Barbie Beach Collection, Barbie Elsa from Frozen, Barbie Christmas Collection. The house right now makes me feel even worse than if we lived in a hole in the ground. In fact, I'm going to dig a hole into the ground until the dirt gets cold and I can stand up in the hole and look out, and I'll invite you over for tea. I think I've always known that I have a power, but it's not the power I wanted.

But the ground is full of rocks and I don't have a shovel and my hands are covered in moss and dirt from digging and I only got an inch deep. So instead I pick up a pinecone from the base of a tree. I position my body like a statue I saw once called David and Goliath. I aim the pinecone at the sun and throw it as hard as I can. It doesn't do anything but it feels good trying. And I wish we had money for my multiplication flash cards but you spent it on the new Bratz Doll because I begged you for it and I don't think I can forgive you for that. So I throw another pinecone at the sun. And I think of how Dad stopped looking at me when I was eight and got my hair done with colorful beads and thread and Dad couldn't afford to fix his headlight after that and got a ticket so he couldn't afford to fix the headlight even worse. I chuck a pinecone so hard it bounces off the sun. I don't think I wanna know who I am, when it comes down to it. I wish with all my heart the sun would fall down and eat me up.



Lavender

SARAH GELLERSTEIN

So,
I cleaned out my closet
And I vacuumed the rug in my room
Although it still doesn't feel clean
I cut my hair
And I showered, and shaved my legs
I did my laundry, and watered my plants
I cleaned all my dishes
And I cooked all new food
I called my mom, while riding the bus
But later, I stopped riding buses, and trains



OLIVIA RIPKE,
UNTITLED

So I walked everywhere
But I got tired of walking
So I bought a car
And drove it around instead
I stayed out all night
Drinking and smoking and dancing
with strangers—or laughing
and talking and loving with friends
I avoided my bed, sleeping anywhere else
Then I came home, and couldn't get out
from under the covers
Hiding away, for days at a time
Watching the same TV shows over and over
Listening to the same music
And then when that got old, some new music
I got up, and I swam, and I stretched, and I ran
And I lay on the ground
All out of breath
Feeling the grass and the dirt with my fingers
I tried to feel happy, but couldn't
So I read, and wrote letters
Signed with a heart, and my name at the bottom
I crocheted a blanket
And wrapped myself in it
I painted the walls pink
Just to paint over them, white again
I scraped up the floor
And hung pictures I made
And talked about them
What they mean, what they could mean to someone, to me
I prayed to G-d all the time
Then I stopped
I worried about one thing meaning another
Then I stopped
I loved
Then I stopped
But I didn't really stop
I stayed home, and was bored
Then I moved somewhere new
And cried in my bed, wishing for familiarity
I walked in the cold at night
When the air was clearer
And the stars felt closer
I drove to Niagara Falls
To put myself in the ways of something beautiful—something bigger
I slept in the desert that I read about as a kid
I swam in the water
With the seaweed tickling my legs
With the sand soft, below my feet

And the salt stinging my lips
I hiked up the mountain, all the way to the view
And peered down at all the things that were big,
but looked small
And didn't seem to matter from way up high
Then I got lost
And found my way home again
And when I got back down to the ground
Everything was big once more
I remembered that I was still high strung
I got all tired out
So I fell asleep early
And dreamed of alternate realities
Where things played out differently
Where I said I was sorry
And people forgave me
Or maybe no one got hurt from the start
Where love was much easier
And all that really mattered was good intent
Then I woke up
And was cold
I put on warm socks
But still couldn't feel my feet
I wasted time
Feeling weighed down and compressed
Like the air was heavy and thick
Like the sky was grey
And the trees were bare
And the world would never be beautiful again
But the trees grew new leaves
Shading the streets
From the sun, and the blue sky
That came back for me
The flowers came up, and were beautiful
And the world proved me wrong
That it's never the end
That it's never forever
Never that dramatic
Never that stupid
That silly, and naïve Like
I can be sometimes I
broke some rules
And I was an asshole

I made some assumptions
And a few mistakes
But I said I was sorry
And I prayed and I fasted
To atone for it all
And that's all I could do
Right?
I'm trying to change
To start new
To give love
And to take it, where I can find it
To hold on to it
Or learn to let it go
To water things
And wait and have patience
To give things time
And let waves blow over
To forgive
And to be kind
To believe that nothing is really so bad
That there is always room
So,
I planted some seeds
That I never thought would grow
I waited for weeks
And I wasn't sure
But they did come
And start to sprout
Little lavender leaves
Delicate and small

It Still Hurts to Think About

SAMANTHA MEDINA

you carry rocks home peel the
mold and fear the mist God, I
wish you wouldn't say that,
—answer of novelty

dim intuition to smother wit
unfamiliarity becomes you

but I remember, yes

don't
you? you used to tread ants in the summer
snickering superiority, —complex? towering
shadow.

and them like me,
never stood a
chance.

I remember when I watched a pillow
swallow you w h o I wish I had
known what to say held hands

in silence that held
us

withered before me in warm palms

but

it wouldn't matter if I told you how it felt
you will sing her name





Hivers

NYEREE BOYADJIAN

*You'll stay asleep until a fly jizzes in your soil.
That is when enlightenment can begin,
if you have the right potting.
The right potting is mine,
a big plastic orange bulb
with no hole at the bottom—
the start of the epiphany.*

*You'll stay asleep for a while.
Everything you experience during that time will be felt,
but through thick, dischargey dream walls. A placenta.
Sunflower seeds given to a college boy after a breakup.
He pours too much of you into the soil. You will root
rapidly, and no one will have the energy to bind you
to stick with string. You will never forget the feeling
of riding in the car to leave his hometown.
You think of the highway when you're caught in a rainstorm.
You'll never be sure if you're surviving it.*

*That's another thing about potting like mine,
it drowns as fast as it grows.*

We started as a batch of sleeping seeds scattered tightly around damp dirt.
We exhaled faint snores. We grew into each other.

We came up as four sprouts instead of one, whispering to each other
about the feeling of air on our leaves and trying to figure out what it meant to
breathe. I was the only one in my pot who made it to budding. I didn't know
what loss meant then. It didn't sting anywhere. There was a constant silence
through my stem, my tiny leaves, my soil.

During my flowering, there were three of us sunflowers on a little
balcony. Soraya sprouted in a painted pink pastel pot, Orange Hobbit in a
basic clay pot, and me, a Harlequin, in an orange bucket. I was fed avocado
peels, the residue of their creamy consistency mixing with the metallic taste
of the blood mosquitoes pissed. That is how I grew massively. The sight of
me should've brought smiles. My roots were strong, my yellow was vibrant.
If it had been an old lonely woman, as opposed to a college boy, I would've
been repotted in some lawn a long time ago.

There was no lawn. I was left in the ever-growing pot. Chunks of
food scraps that would take years to decompose were shoved into me.
Sometimes he'd shake some more soil on top of the browning apple core.

**There was
no food, no
bugs to fall in
love with.**

My roots were feening to escape, addiction before trial. They spent the seconds sprawling, pushing the plastic, trying to break through it. Inmates of a dark, cramped prison. There was much controversy in the way human hands were talked about around here. The old heads grew up not needing too much of them. The world worked in their favor: it rained when it needed to, and stopped when it needed to.

We young ones defended our need for the hands, blamed it on the bad climate we heard so much about. Wondered if it was something the old heads did that made all the humans stop wanting to hold them.

When fall came, my hands went missing. I didn't see the college boy for days at a time, and even then, the most he'd usually do was pick cigarette butts out of me—more than he did for the others. I was always the biggest and I was always the favorite. Fall came and the sun kept on beating heavy,

drying me out. I came to terms with being stuck in this orange bucket forever. There was no food, no bugs to fall in love with. The lack of life surrounding me led to sensory depletion. Everything went silent again, nothing moving underneath me to absorb. Anytime he remembered to water me, I took up a full cup, and then he was too lazy to come back for the other two. I watched the Hobbit and Soraya shrink into flat soil. Morph downward from skinny sunflowers into lanky, burnt shrubs. I created a fantasy where a trace of magic had gotten laced into my seeds. Where I had been genetically modified in some Oregon ghost town, or the sand my soil started out with had migrated from some evaporated part of Pangea. I envied the boy's body, his ability to create sound through footsteps or coughs. I envied the way he disappeared. All I could think about in the presence of his vibrations was my one car ride. The only time I'd ever moved.

I floated with elation on breezy nights, savoring every centimeter my leaves got to sway. It reminded me of sticking my leaves out of college boy's car window and feeling the pain of the wind. Still, nights dragged. I felt myself suffocating. I waited for the morning when the sunlight could feed me, temporarily replenish me like a hospital IV. Some days it was too powerful, and I went unconscious by the afternoon. Dehydration makes drowning look like heaven. I sizzled and wilted in the sun, my grasp on life deteriorating with my body. The screaming of children falling off scooters below the balcony turned to whispers and then nothing. It stayed silent until I was watered again, by whatever came first, my human hands or the rain, the air conditioner's drip. The sun came and went by its own free will. The mosquitos disappeared in a day. The bees had their nest to hide in. I wanted to experience it so badly. Not only the flying, but the togetherness, the way their honey was needed. No

one was picking seeds out of me. No one was waiting for me to rise up from some unknown place and illuminate the universe. I grew uglier, my stems thin and skinny. The petals that didn't fall off faded to a pale beige, and most of the time there was nobody to notice. I built up more fantasies of being repotted. I dreamt of the neighborhood climbing up the wall and jumping over to the balcony, to watch me grow. The thoughts always ended with me feeling like someone had picked my leaves off. I wanted to be an ant in the colony, a member of the beehive, even a plant in a garden. I didn't want to stay conscious through this stagnancy, with a view of nothing but two hundred cement tiles on the wall and a hardwood floor I hoped would cave in at any minute. The worst part was that it wasn't up to me; I couldn't wilt even if I wanted to. Every time I dried out, I came back.

I thought back to drying out when the cold started

**I wanted
enough of his
saliva to alter
my DNA.**

**The flies woke
me up by
cumming in
my soil.**

to sting me. I longed for the warmth of the sun, while taking solace in the fact that the earth around me was changing. I didn't know the potential of the winter. I didn't know if my soil would finally flatten and I would have no chance of revival against the snow.

I still don't know, at least about the snow. Before I got hit with it, college boy picked me up and moved me indoors. Maybe three feet away, the other side of

a glass sliding deck door. The house cat nipped at my leaves and the bites sent adrenaline through my stems. I wanted enough of his saliva to alter my DNA. I could smell the litter box's potent odor.

In the beginning of my indoor life, I was watered religiously. College boy's friends drummed two flights of stairs below me, and I vibrated to the rhythm. When my human hands stopped coming and passed me on his way down the stairs every morning, I knew he saw me

dry. I wondered if he was busy, or lazy, or just wanted me to die. I thought back to the old heads and how they always told us to never trust a pair of human hands. It was nothing the old heads had done; the humans were the reason we were in this mess to begin with.

There was a glass sliding door that separated me from any wind and weather. It was harder to feel the sun. The cat got bored of me, or maybe I made his mouth itchy. I aged in ugliness. Everything turned to whispers.

At night, the house filled with thick smoke. Eight-month-old mango peels sunk deeper into my soil. I would get loopy and wonder how I could explain to someone mortal what it was like to shut on and off.

♦ ♦ ♦

The flies woke me up by cumming in my soil. It was May. I was flat. He put me outside, poured some water over me, and fed me fruit scraps. The flies feasted, orgasming and shitting all over me. The apple seeds fell and nested near my roots.

The banana peel dispersed sweetness through my stems. Trapdoor spiders dug in my moist dirt. They spread their silk, and silently waited for prey to trick. That's how much there was left to compost. I absorbed the remains of dead insects. I pretended it was a choice, to hold onto their lives by letting them break down inside of me. I was getting fed several times a day, but the spiders were skilled in killing the bugs that ate my food scraps. I alone wasn't enough to decompose the head of iceberg lettuce, and shred dirty napkins.

I wondered if college boy fell in love with a gardener and was now cooking healthy food for two. I was watered and I was tended. It lacked consistency but it was more than I expected from my hands.

I wasn't unstuck yet. I sprouted nothing but a couple of weeds. The earth wasn't what the old heads made it out to be. April showers came in July. The liabilities of a bottomless pot. I wondered how things would be if college boy just planted me in

something with a hole at the bottom.

I was soon starving for the scraps I had once felt gluttonous toward. The early bird gets the worm, and the rest are reduced to compost. They took our peach pit, devoured our rotting blackberries. The bugs that made it past the spider started to go hungry. College boy took God as rain, and didn't feel the need to check on me.

Water filled to the brim of my orange plastic bucket. I accepted my second coming of death. This time I would go out differently; it would break the stagnancy. The rain thuds turned to whispers and then to nothing.

♦ ♦ ♦

During our second summer together, I felt the guilt of college boy dripping through his smoker spit. He threw his cigarette butts over the ledge. He didn't touch me until August. First water. I was still numb, half asleep, when he dug his fingertips in the dirt, making tiny holes inside of me to slip in earthworms. Then, the

**I absorbed
the remains
of dead
insects.**

**The flies
came back in
ginormous
swarms.**

grocery store archive came.
A grand apology. The top
of a tomato, paper straws,
grape vines, the cardboard
toilet paper roll,
broccoli stems,
Greek yogurt,
cucumber ends,
eggplant leaves,
coffee filters. He

poured more soil on me, and I
felt squished. Claustrophobic.
I had just woken up, and was
overstuffed, overwatered,
trying to focus on absorbing
the sun. I underestimated the
earthworms.

I felt them running
through me, tearing through
chunks of food and digesting
within seconds. A dizzying
effect. Like when the house
would fill with smoke at night.

The more the worms
ate, the more heightened
everything became. I was
their new home, their safe
haven. Every flavor left its skin
and seeped into my stems. I
could hear the worms telling
stories to each other and to
me. They, too were amazed
at the amount of food. Often
they took in too much, and
quickly vomited or heavily
urinated. But they were happy,
living in my soil and eating

around my body.

I stayed awake at
night feeling myself grow. I
was becoming something
different. I wasn't sure what
it was—I thought maybe
mint. It was becoming harder
to differentiate my roots
from the hive mind that was
growing underneath me. The
flies came back in ginormous
swarms. Their buzzing
echoed and I felt like I was
buzzing too. They trusted
me. They laid eggs in my dirt.
I experienced the birth of
various bugs, as the birthed
and the birther. I held the
babies in their infancy.



Our leaves turned too light to
be mint. We survived drought
and negligence, with brown
wilting leaves that somehow
stayed sturdy enough to hold
unripened fruit. Tiny green
balls that would morph into
cherry tomatoes.

We cracked the placenta.
We grew upward. We
sprawled out of my orange
bucket. Our roots were the
hybrid of multiple species.

We experienced things
without them being vicarious.
We felt the gutting pain of

losing my tiny red babies.
They would fall off the
branches that needed more
space, or into the bucked
teeth of a raccoon.

During a storm, baby
tomatoes would roll off of
me, and we dreamt of being
able to catch them. We
wanted the human hands to
pick them up and push them
inside our soil, so we could
rebirth their very same seeds.
We didn't care how crowded
the pot became. We knew by
now we would never crack
the plastic.

We watched an
opossum feed my baby to
hers. We wanted our babies
to live, as much as we wanted
hers to eat.

We still sometimes
fantasize about disappearing.
We still wish we could speak.
We want to tell our hands that
the point of life is to evolve.
To teach him the importance
of merging. There is a hive
mind inside of me made of
the bodily fluids of bugs. The
rotten fruit we eat once lived
the same life as us. We have
learned to feel the sunlight
from their farms. We have
learned to distinguish the

taste of different fertilizers.

Sometimes, the worm
food inside is eaten and
digested within me so rapidly
that I get overtaken by a
memory that isn't mine. I

transport through
time, as a cucumber
seed in a Kentucky
farm. I can hear
the old heads, the
unpicked crop,
begging me to stay. I go
numb from pesticides I've
never felt. The communities
living and dead inside of me
change with the seasons and
grow bigger with the years.
The bottom of my soil has
never shifted, but I can still
feel the roots of past plants.

**We watched
an opossum
feed my baby
to hers.**



Smog has been overdrafting my checking account

NYEREE BOYADJIAN

At least, the birds can eat the apple pieces
thrown when trying to avoid the way
the workshops' whispers crack
the cortex. Spiral the limbic system

that comes with fake laughter
the kind done in iambic
the will to measure
metronome is the same to
eliminate *soy, dairy, gluten*.
Wear a beige bow to distract
from the Klonopin turning
my nostril hair into monkey bars.

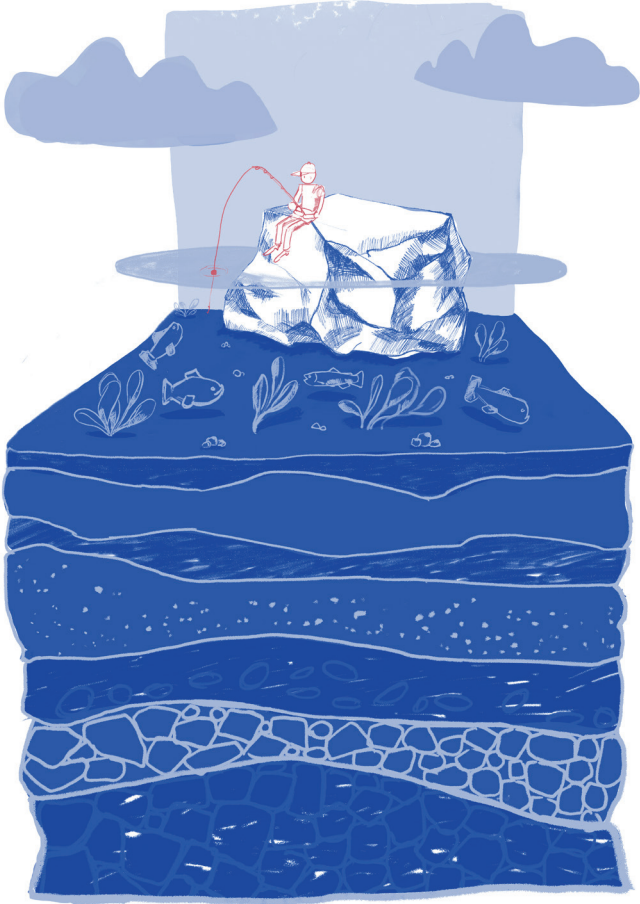
Oh, transport the children
kneeling in crayon on my college balcony
playing connect the dots with hospital socks
rolling around the grass in Iowa city,
dressing it up like beanstock.

They fill up their molars with prescription fluid
and I say, one day
you'll grow taller than a parking meter.

First thing you'll steal off this one-story stoop
will be a doormat, next the pumpkin.
The clean one, unwrung with warted fungi.
Last, you will come for the hanging skeleton
dressed up like a masochistic clown.

It's easy to write to the sound of piano
when ear canals have been put
through the shredder and collected
again, warmups in I-V-ii.
I have learned the front teeth
are good for gripping.





WILL DOWD,
FISHIN'

Wildfire of an American Prairie

JOHN TOM RACZKOWSKI

I • Boy Soldier, USALAND

He could weave words that made road maps to his own worlds. In USALAND, where he survived, his father once claimed that writing was for weaklings, not tough guys. And then: "Enlist to protect my freedom!"

His parents wanted him to be anything, as long as it was in their image. Malleable and compliant. They brought down the executioner's axe when he veered from their one-way street. Their hands grasped at steering wheels being written away.

The boy went on to discover a voice unfamiliar, hidden like the driveway at the end of a cul-de-sac, once forbidden. The realization that the voice was what the boys could've been! All while writing thank you letters home.

II • Martyr of America: The Tin Man

"I want you to always recycle your soda cans."

The tin man lives on to sing songs about hearts, he can even dance the can-can. No, that's reserved for real humans. He's just a can who cannot be a man, only act like one.

Soda cans die, and are recycled into heaven, Metal heaven, with tin roofs above sheltering the world from acid rain. A can can be compared to a man, look at the tin man. He almost died from metal paint inhalation, but he survived. A true American staple.

Poor tin man. Can man. Made of tin, the cheap resource used as substitute for finer steels in building structures. When building monuments don't use tin, throw it in the bin. You need Grade A steel, A as in American steel. Why not steal it from across the pond? They're quite fond of us, ever since moving out, I hear. Oh dear, send backup in case dinner gets out of hand. Offer them land, for the steel, but not much, whittle them down to just the coast, at most. Send over the tin man to show our grace, to save face, keep our cards close to the chest. At best, you get enough steel to build a true monument to man. A metal woman.

III • The Ballad of Lady Godiva as a Three Course Meal

The cafeteria is a choir of slurps
and slopping sounds, the lunch lady is serving
chocolate cake on a platter. Does it matter
that she is Lady Godiva riding her horse legs
through her city as we pity the poor woman
woefully doing her duty, or is she?

There isn't a single name for horse meat.
There isn't something served unless it is given,
but if it isn't given, what good does it serve?

Something isn't food until it is eaten, but
if it isn't eaten, then it is something.
If I gobble up my horse leg whole, which is considered
a late brunch, it becomes the drumstick
I ought to have thought about
taking smaller bites.

IV • American Grilling: A Love Story

He is a misshapen canister,
she, the fifth horseman of the apocalypse,
the kind of woman that smokes in the shower.
This is an All-American dream: Comparing
morning dew on a fresh cut lawn to the
gunk in his eyes every morning, the uneven
wearing of the soles in his Sunday's best.
The soothing tone of the conveyor belt
heading toward a chasm of chaos, reassuring
her the revolving door at the end has no exit.

30

A strip tease is considered a form of bullying, the
torso a butterfly net full of dead monarchs
revolting. To undress the Moon herself is to find
mercury in retrograde. The first drop of sweat is
never the first drop of sweat. This is achieving
immortality: preserve the injured and elderly
in mason jars, appraise at a higher value.

The shortness of breath after impulsively lying,
the handshake and promotion to follow it. This is the
cathartic sensation of picking at scabs too soon: tender,
pink, medium rare. The frantic dancing of an engagement
ring in the garbage disposal, more blissfully unaware than
Ben Franklin smoking American Spirits.

Hospitals

ACE HOBFOLL

hospitals are deadlly quiet
they are
controlled
chaos
and silence
i am sitting still at her
bedside
she is breathing
quietly
everything she does is
quiet now
she is not a quiet person
wheels squeak softly down
winding
hallways
you would not think
hospitals
and winding go together
when i think of hospitals
i think
straight lines
dull brightness
she has become a dull
brightness
the iv in her arm is
dull
but the twizzlers on her
bed are
not
she has not touched them
yet
she said she will eat them
later
but she is not hungry now
she is never hungry
anymore



KYRIE CLEMMER,
DECEMBER 2018



Seat

EVAN MULHERN

"You're sitting in my seat," he said, squinting at me like he could barely see my face. "Do I know you? This class has been going on for three months now and I don't remember ever seeing you here."

He was an older man, definitely older than most of the people rushing to their seats before class started. Somewhere in his mid-thirties. He had a black buzz cut and Joseph Stalin's mustache. He was dressed like a lumberjack father, in boot-cut jeans and a plaid brown flannel, with tan boots to complete his tree man aesthetic. It was ruined when he took out his glasses to see me better.

"I snuck in here," I replied. "I'm trying to learn how to write better. I've never been good with my words or expressing myself and I was walking past here today and I just felt the urge to come in and prove to myself that I could take a chance and change my life for the better, you know?"

"Oh I understand." But would he so quickly? He sighed. "I really wish you'd have chosen a different seat, though. It's one of the few seats where you don't get the sun in your eyes. All the other ones are taken already. But I shouldn't have declared it as my seat. In fact, I'm never going to sit in that seat ever again. I don't deserve it. I arrived late to this class, therefore I will punish myself accordingly by sitting where the sun gets in my eyes, along with the majority of the class, who also showed up late."

"Dude, you can have the seat. It's really not that big of a deal."

His cheeks started getting red and he was puffing his face like an eighth grader whose parents just told him he couldn't watch Jake Paul anymore. I started feeling badly for him; I'd never experienced someone feeling so much ardor towards something as simple as a seat.

"You really mean it? Because I would hate to take this from you. This means everything to you, but it also means everything to me, you know? Like I've wanted this for so long. I look forward to this everyday. That seat literally saved me from quitting college for the fifth time. I wouldn't even say it's the seat. It's the idea of the seat. No one else can have the seat because it's mine and I'm sitting in it. There's no sun, it's further away from all the other seats, I can doze off during the lecture or read an article. There are endless benefits to this seat here. You really want to give that up?"

He had a black buzz cut and Joseph Stalin's mustache.

I thought about that for a second. He had a point: it was arguably one of the best seats in the room. I stopped feeling badly. It never helps to just feel badly for someone without doing anything about it.

"Listen man, I understand where you're coming from," I started. I had to let him down gently since he was clearly on the brink of a panic attack. "But let me give you some perspective for a second. What if I told you each seat has endless possibilities? Like look at that seat over there. It's closer to the teacher and the board is blocking the light from the sun. You could sit there and follow the lecture more closely and you

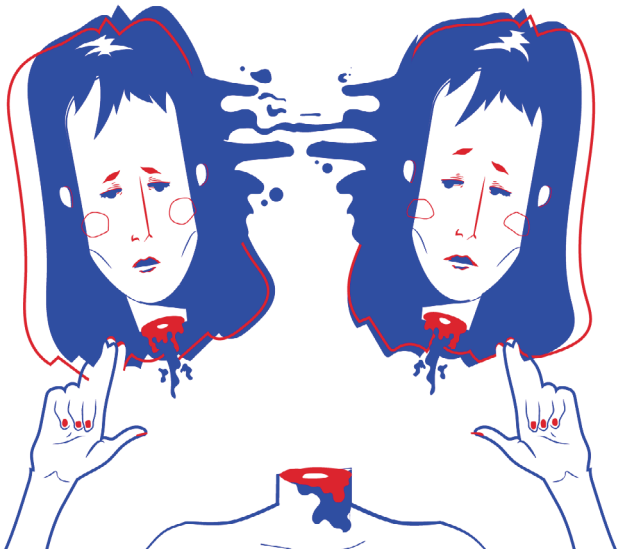
would learn enough to make a better career for yourself. Or this seat over here. There's a pretty girl sitting over there. Maybe if you sat there you guys would start talking and you'd hit it off. You'd go on a few dates and get to know each other better, and then maybe it wouldn't work out and you would stop talking but hey, guess what? At least now you know which seat not to sit in. That would be a learning experience. Do you see what I'm saying here?"

The man looked at me, puzzled. Like he wasn't picking up what I was putting down. Then he gasped loudly, as if he'd finally understood his purpose in life. He put his hands over his mouth, trying to hold back a scream. Tears formed in his eyes. He jumped frantically, like he wanted to say something badly but he just couldn't allow himself. Everyone was staring. After thirty seconds, he stopped. He took his hands from his mouth.

"You're right. I'll go sit over there. Thanks."



ANGEL JEFFERSON,
DEJA VU



Earth to Amy

AMY GARDINER-PARKS

I couldn't hear her no matter how loud
She called my name. She called
It la la land, that place where I got lost.
Thoughts
Tumbling through a tiny head.
I was encapsulated in daydreams,
Enraptured, wrapped up in wondering,
My mind wandering miles from home.
Oblivious
To the world around me.

Yesterday, I missed my turn.
Too busy thinking
My feet kept walking, working
On autopilot.
Dirty shoes dancing a rhythm I know
With eyes closed
Left
Right
Left
Right
Should have turned right.
It's ok, I know my way from here, but
Unfamiliar sidewalks still make me
Uneasy, life would be easier
If I wasn't always in my head.

Mason jar of cold brew, held
By sleepy hands in between clicks
On a keyboard. Tiny friend curled beside me
On my bed of constellations, concentrate.
Try to
Triangulate my thoughts into words,
Words are just symbols,
Rearranged in relation to each other.
Everything
Is relative. Time
Means nothing until you let it
And it means even less to me, lost
In translation, transmogrified,
Something else entirely.
I wish I could be somewhere else entirely.

Toast

KAITLYN CURRIER-GRAVES

"Or, maybe I'll have the French toast," he said. His eyebrows were stiff like newspapers. He had always hated French toast.

I came to the realization I was losing myself, there in that dingy IHOP. It was dressed up in old pine boards in place of laminate in order to make the little diner feel more authentic to the surrounding woods. As if corporate America didn't suck on the unique experiences of living until they were smooth and rounded and colorless. Like candy canes.

I came to the realization I was losing myself, sipping water and trying to make eye contact. I simply felt it go. I saw it leave. Something orange, glistening, and rounded at the middle.

We had come there, together, in some last-ditch effort to fix something. I wasn't ever really sure what it was. He had been given the opportunity to be in my life twenty years ago, squandered it, and somehow these half-silent dinners were meant to slowly fix the wounds he didn't care to know I had.

"I don't like French toast," I said, with unconscious sourness in my voice. Like a 16-year-old retreating to their room, I hid behind my large plastic menu. I looked at the pancakes.

"That's too bad," he said plainly. And nothing else.

And that's the problem.

We made painful small talk. He found some scrap of politics to rant about. I avoided speaking. It wasn't even intentional. My mind just slowly drained. Out of the ears. Down the arms. And into these sweaty, clammy palms. No more things to say.

The food came.

Some pancakes and sausage for me. French toast and peaches for him. They put a smiley face into the chocolate chips in my pancakes. I lost my appetite.

I watched as he poured syrup. He picked up a knife and cut deeply into a peach. Orange, glistening, and rounded in the middle.

I was going to vomit.

"I have to go," I meant to say, but only the final word made it out.

He watched me walk into the poorly lit hallway where the bathrooms were. My feet stuck to the ground on some syrupy residue. My presence announced with a crackle in every step. It rang in my ears.

I ducked in and out of the kitchen exit before one of the cooks could catch me.

I ran to my car. I drove. I drove until the trees gave way to fields. Until I could see the moon. Orange, glistening, rounded in the middle, and more substantial than breakfast foods.



JULIAN LLOYD





Portrait of My Mom in December

SARENA HARMON

Mom sits cross-legged in the chair,
switches to another Candy Crush game,
stops to feed the dogs.
They protect her from the chill.
Charchoz whines and creeps on the chair and
Luna lays quietly at her feet.
Her pale hands and feet crack and splinter.
She longingly looks out the window
there is no sign of life but
the tree in the front that breaks the
wind battering at the house.
The bushes are hollow.

At least the trash won't rot.

At night, the snow in the sky
seeps deep into the marrow
of her bones and she waddles
to bed and groans as she lies down.
Mom plays her games and eats her candy.
No teeth.
I push the door open
I hold my breath in the dark until
she makes a quiet *puuh*
I shut the door with a *click*.

Big Girl Panties

SOPHIA OGDEN

Joanna Winslow was *not* about to be the only girl in the entire eighth grade class of Pyle Middle School to have to wear Spanx at formal.

"I get it, I'm fat!" she shouted at her mother, throwing her hands up in the air and rolling her eyes. "But guess what? Spanx aren't these magical panties that are going to instantly make me thinner!"

"You are *not fat*, Joanna!" her mother cried in return, feeling she was at what mothers liked to call "wit's end." "You are...a bigger girl. And wearing Spanx is just something that bigger girls have to do! You'll look all weird and lumpy in your dress without them!"

Now, as she liked to remind those around her, Joanna was no fool. She had always been a feminist, but had only recently discovered the word and the identity connected to it thanks to the Internet. Poring over article after article on all the blogs she could find with "bitch" in the title, Joanna had realized: *why, yes, it is unfair that women have to do so much more than men with so much less*. (It wouldn't be until high school that she would discover intersectional feminism, unfortunately.) Of particular interest to Joanna was the idea that women, particularly fat women—not curvy, plus-size, overweight, but *fat*—should embrace their bodies and flaws, not hide them behind, in this case, too-tight panties.

"I don't really care how I look, Mom. Looks don't matter! I'm smart and I'm nice and I'm funny, so what does it matter that I'm fat?" Now came the time when Joanna started busting out stats. "And you know, I read an article that claims almost half of kids between first and third grade in this country are super-worried about becoming fat—isn't that messed up? I mean, there are nine- and ten-year-old girls out there *dieting*, and it's products like Spanx that make them insecure because—"

She stopped abruptly, as her mother gave her The Stare: the stare in which Mrs. Winslow looked to be trying to control Joanna via her mind, to sew up her mouth once and for all telepathically. Joanna just sighed, rolling her eyes once again.

"Whatever." She went upstairs to her room.



Later, after posting about the argument on Tumblr (so furious that she came up with a new, empowering url: fatgirlrising.tumblr.com), Joanna crept down the staircase before pausing. She heard her mother sobbing in the kitchen. In disbelief, Joanna exhaled through her nose. Her mom was *crying* over this? Pathetic. They were *Spanx*, for God's sake.

"I try to explain it to her," her mother told her father through labored, weepy breath. "But she doesn't want to listen!"

Please! It was her mother who wasn't doing the listening! Time after time, Joanna tried to reason with her, tried to show her the error of her ways through logic, but—

"She just comes at me with her *feminism bullshit*!" her mother spat.

Okay, that one hurt. It hurt, in fact, like a knife hacking through Joanna's heart.

"I just don't want the other kids to make fun of her."

And then her broken heart fell to the ground, shattering.



To say Joanna wasn't the most universally-loved girl at Pyle Middle School would be— well, not an *enormous* understatement, but an understatement nonetheless. For Joanna was three things that, according to the Sacred Rules of Middle School, a tween girl should never be: smart, outspoken, and fat, emphasis on the third. It's not as if she didn't have friends. She had, as so many tween girls do, a best friend, Dana Ackerman, who preferred to go by Danny and was perhaps even more overtly feminist than Joanna. It was Danny, as a matter of fact, who had first gotten angry about Joanna having to wear *Spanx*.

"Your mom is being a female misogynist!" she declared loudly in the halls one day, though the hall was already loud enough that no one paid attention.

"Is that a thing?" Joanna asked.

"Well, it's what she's being. She'll probably make you wear high heels and cake makeup on your face next. You're not gonna let her, are you?"

Joanna didn't answer as they entered the cafeteria and made their way to their lunch table, which was filled with awkward, acne-ridden, anime-loving boys— exactly how they liked it. What they didn't like, or what Joanna didn't like in particular, was the treatment given to them by the rest of the eighth graders.

“She just comes at me with her feminism bullshit!”

There was the boy who refused to help Joanna out of the back of the school bus during a fire drill, so as not to be seen touching a fat girl. There were the girls who said Joanna shouldn't bother to audition for the school production of *Annie*, as she would be too big to fit into any of the costumes. And there was that damn PACER test, where Joanna would repeatedly get the lowest score and, for the rest of gym class, become a bigger social pariah than before.

So alright, maybe her mother had a point. But Danny had one too, and it was a better point. And besides, it was middle school, where a best friend's word overruled that of a mom. Therefore, Joanna was not about to be wearing any Spanx, thank you very much.

♦ ♦ ♦

It was later that night when Joanna's mother came into her daughter's room, eyes still blotchy and red. Joanna, already in bed scrolling through Tumblr posts about *Gravity Falls*, the sexism of Disney princesses, and quotes from showtunes, was about to speak when her mother started.

“Remember last week's episode of *Starlet*?”

Joanna was taken aback. “Uhhh...”

Starlet was currently Joanna and Mrs. Winslow's favorite watch-together show, a soapy behind-the-scenes look at what it took to create a Broadway musical, which apparently included lots of drama, lots of catfighting, and lots and lots of sex.

"Mary Leigh is your favorite character, right?" asked Mrs. Winslow, referring to the seasoned Broadway actress at the heart of the show. "She was wearing Spanx in that one scene! You know, when she's getting ready for rehearsal?"

"Well, yeah." Joanna shrugged. "Because she's an actress."

"Because she's a *grown woman*," Mrs. Winslow retorted. "And that's what women do— we suck it up and we suck it in! I know it's not fun, Joanna, and I said as much to my mother when I was your age and she had me wear a girdle. But do you know what she told me?"

"You wouldn't have looked as good without any Spanx!"

Again, all Joanna had to say was: "Uhhh..."

"They're a rite of passage! They're panties for big girls and you're a big girl now, Joanna. And if you won't wear the Spanx for that reason...at least wear them for *me*."

Not even Joanna could find something to say to that. Nothing, except:

"Fine. I'll wear them."

♦ ♦ ♦

The night of formal came quickly after the Great Spanx Debate at the House of Winslow. Joanna's gown was, as she imagined it, something a modern-day Marilyn Monroe might wear: short, floaty, a hot flirty pink, and the type of material that would greatly show off her belly.

"See?" said Mrs. Winslow, slightly smug. "You wouldn't have looked as good without any Spanx!"

After the five-minute struggle of putting the Spanx on her body, Joanna turned around and saw, in the mirror, a mini-version of her mother, or even her grandmother. Mrs. Winslow confirmed as much: "You look just like me in my girdle on prom night!" She laughed.

Joanna's hair was curled, her face made up by Mrs.

Winslow herself, and finally, the dress was slipped on along with a pair of shiny silver heels (both items bought on sale at JCPenney). This time, in the mirror, Joanna saw Mary Leigh, the Broadway darling, or even Marilyn Monroe herself. It was a sight she could get used to.

Photos were taken, and then Mrs. Winslow escorted Joanna to formal in the family SUV, making a stop to pick up Danny on the way. Danny had her long hair done loosely, and she wore a black skater dress.

"Mom even let me do my makeup myself," she announced proudly to the Winslow women. Danny didn't look as glamorous as Joanna, but something about her looked more comfortable. She looked like, well, *Danny*.

"I'm guessing your mom did your makeup." Danny frowned as she noticed Joanna's more professional-looking mascara, eyeshadow, and lipstick.

"Yup!" Mrs. Winslow declared cheerfully from the front seat. "My little girl got all dolled up, thanks to her mommy."



The theme of formal this year was Midnight Masquerade, meaning dollar store-bought Venetian masks were handed out as tickets were handed in. Joanna had hoped that the cafeteria, where the event was held, would look a little more like the set of *The Phantom of the Opera* than it ultimately did: there were some gold streamers, and a giant painted clock pointing to midnight, and that was about it.

All of the girls who had arrived in heels— so, all of them except for Danny— dedicated a corner of the cafeteria to leaving their painful shoes behind in order to hit the dance floor. Compliments were tossed back and forth between them all— including one from Summer Goodman to Joanna, which was odd, because Summer had spent most of seventh grade making Joanna cry in math class. Eventually, however, the boys joined in and the dance floor turned into a grindfest, one in which Joanna was not about to participate.

Instead, she made her way over to the snack bar, which

was headed by her history teacher, Mrs. Jenkins. Small talk was made between them, and eventually, Mrs. Jenkins offered Joanna a Capri Sun.

"I can't," Joanna said with a smile. "I have Spanx on, and if I have to pee, then I'll have to take them off, and put them back on, and—" "

Joanna stopped when she saw the look on Mrs. Jenkins' face. Her teacher was still smiling, but something in her eyes felt like a mix of shock and pity.

"On second thought," Joanna reached for the juice pouch. "I am a bit thirsty."



Later that evening, Joanna and one of the boys from her lunch table, Elio Garcia, were sitting down and debating who should play the Fantastic Four in the next movie reboot.

"John Krasinski and Emily Blunt would be way too obvious," said Joanna. "They're what everyone is expect—"

Only then did Joanna feel the urge to pee like she never had before.

"Hang on a sec, dude," she told Elio. "I gotta pee."

Danny was grabbing another handful of pretzels from the snack table when Joanna grabbed her by the wrist.

"Thanks a lot, Jo," Danny muttered. "You made me drop my pretzels."

"Forget the pretzels. We're going to the bathroom."

"Ew, together? Why?"

"I'll show you when we get there."

After waiting in a ridiculously long line, Joanna found herself begging Danny to enter a stall with her. "I think they're going to make out in there," she heard Leslie Pritchard whisper to Sierra Dunne.

"Danny, please, I need your help to pee," Joanna said as matter-of-factly as she could, garnering laughs from Leslie and Sierra as well as a look of disgust from Danny.

"You're being weird, Jo." Danny shook her head as she headed into the stall. "But whatever."

Once safe in the stall, Joanna flung up the skirt of her

dress and whispered, "My mom got to me. She made me wear the Spanx, and I know I shouldn't have, and now I have to pee, and—"

"Yeah. I know," Danny said flatly.

"Know what? Know that I have to pee? Yeah, I told you."

"No. I know that you shouldn't have worn those Spanx."

Joanna's face went blank as Danny reluctantly reached towards the top of her Spanx in order to pull them down.

"Thought you were different than this," Danny grumbled.

"I am!" Joanna insisted as she helped to pull down her Spanx, making not-so-great progress. "I just— Mom really wanted me to. I don't know. Is it really that bad?"

Danny said nothing. Neither of them did, instead working in less-than-harmony to pull Joanna's Spanx down to her knees. At last, they made it, and Danny turned around to let Joanna pee.

"Danny," Joanna whispered, "do you want me to say sorry?"

Danny opened the stall door and walked out, leaving Joanna to reassemble herself.

"You done in there?" cried Tina Grasso. "I gotta take a shit!"

♦ ♦ ♦

Formal ended uneventfully. Mrs. Winslow arrived to take Joanna and Danny home.

"Did you girls have fun?" she asked, oblivious to the night's events.

"Yeah, sure," Joanna answered. Danny stayed quiet, her arms crossed.

Joanna looked from her downcast, disappointed best friend to her calm, cheery mother. She didn't know what to say to either of them— whether to apologize to Danny and shame her mother, or vice versa. Through her dress, Joanna plucked at the elastic band of her Spanx, like a sad guitar chord. Soon, she reminded herself, she would be home, makeup removed, hair washed, and her favorite flannel pajamas on. She couldn't wait.

♦

Courage

TYLER ECONA

(after Anne Sexton)

at first it had almost clawed back up my throat.
terrified of death, it crawled behind my eyelids
hoping for a safe place,
instead shriveling under my psyche.

so, the rest of the dwelling unsupervised
fireplace left barren, it thickened
branching vines and wilderness
a feral soul with a fervor for
internal cataclysms,
annihilative tendencies,
cancer of the household.

I don't know how it happened, exactly—
but I *can* pinpoint the moment
one-hour after hacking up murky-dark matter
I stared at it in the palm of my hands. it had substance,
potential, even.

it stained my fingers as I turned it over,
inspecting the deformities—
damaged from the fire it failed to kindle,
instead producing some underground explosion.

I suppose I'd been bleeding, maybe that was it
crimson alarm, something ruptured.
YOU NEED HELP etched into the underbelly
of one small chunk of coal.
realizing it then—
drumming heartbeat,
thumping rhythm,
vines unwinding,
I heard my ribcage rattle
courage
courage
courage



KARA WILSON,
SARAH'S LAUGH



My Dream of a Scribe

KEELY BRADY

A girl blessed in her hands
in a hazy room, scrolls
surround her
sitting at a desk
with wood carvings around the rims
eyes. they are eyes.
an armoire to her left
matches but is even more extravagant
she faces the moon
through a window as tall as the room
the sky is orange,
the moon is red,
the room is blue.

53



BRIANNA BENDER

Lucille Ripper

CARLY J. DAGIT

Freshman Year
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio 1975

*Is this the real life?
Is this just fantasy?
Caught in a landslide
No escape from reality
Open your eyes
Look up to the skies and see
I'm just a poor boy, I need no sympathy
Because I'm easy come, easy go
A little high, little low
Anyway the wind blows, doesn't really matter to me, to me*

—Queen, “Bohemian Rhapsody”

Lucille? The peppy fake blonde called her name through bleached teeth and a wad of Juicy Fruit. The only thing cornier than the decorated orientation table was the *homemade name tag this bitch had on*, she thought.

That's me. And it's Ripper. She was a natural blonde.

Yep! Lucille Ripper... She flapped her clumpy eyelashes.

No, just Ripper, she said matter-of-factly. She tried not to be condescending; her ex's criticism still rang in her ears from that time at Ziggy Mad Dogs.

Ripper didn't attempt to match the energy of her welcome party. She approached the table and wrote RIPPER on her name tag and slapped it to her XL Aerosmith T-shirt, which shrouded her skinny honey-colored body from sight. When she pivoted back toward the other lost souls at freshman orientation, she noticed a small mousy redhead quietly snickering to herself. She had a racing thought: *that's not really who I'd imagined I would hang out with in college.* She'd imagined herself meeting a lot of long-legged broads with sharp-featured faces who would introduce her to men with lots of money. Not really, but sometimes she thought this. Coming from New York, Ripper felt the same obligation every kid from New York did. The obligation to move up in life. To mingle with those you want to be like, so you eventually morph into them, the way her parents and her friends' parents had all morphed into one shiny clueless breed of adult. It looked easy.

She had dated a boy from Brooklyn, a whole two years.
Fuckin city scum, might as well be gum on the bottom of my shoe.

She used to think things like: *releasing doves is both classic and avant-garde or would it be controversial to wear off-white at our wedding?*

She felt *embarrassed* by who she had been in that relationship. Selfish.

There had been an internal shift when it finally ended. She hadn't known who she was. She knew that now.

**Ripper
was lost.
Ripper was
selfish.**

It made her feel like she wasn't so different from the adults she'd watched sip from champagne flutes and laugh about the way the wind flicked their hair into their swamp of lipstick. *Their tacky bright red lipstick. Pathetic peacocks.*

However, Ripper was the kind of girl who went to college with that shred of naivete telling her: *you might still turn out to be someone totally different.* She was okay with settling for sequins and false wealth but college would be one final trust fall into the mist of identity.

Even still

Ripper was lost.

Ripper was selfish.

These felt like facts set in stone and she was scared of herself because of them.

That's cool you go by your last name. I go by my first name. It's Penny. It was the little redhead interrupting.

Hey there. Thanks. I think I'll call you Copperhead. To be perfectly honest, Ripper was stoned.

Toys in the Attic, dope. Penny investigated Ripper: not much taller than her little self. Ripper was wearing a massive T-shirt making it look like she had no pants on, just her Doc Martens and a mane of ashy blonde hair that could qualify as both a hat and a scarf in the bitter cold.

Aerosmith is the new groove, yeah. Hey, are you cool? Like, you know... She smoked an invisible joint.

Penny snickered like before. *How else do you get through dumb shit like this?* She had a talent for whispering.

Ripper felt warmth swirling in her chest. She liked Penny.

Listen, Copperhead. It is mission Ditch Orientation and we are having a Code Red, do you hear me?

Penny snickered louder, arousing attention, but Ripper signaled toward the cracked door of the lecture hall with a silly, militaristic intensity. They would have to crouch behind the huddle of classmates at the base of the classroom and parade through the rows of wooden desks—a task they didn't think it was possible to do subtly. But neither of them seemed to care anymore; they nonchalantly waltzed away halfway through their crouch-and-crawl plan.

Where are you living at? Ripper fumbled through her leather crossbody for a pack of Camels.

The East Dorms. Shit show, let me tell ya.

Concrete jungle over there. I live in West, those nice brick ones. Pretty sweet, I got no roommate. Girl dropped out.

Before school even started?

I know, living the dream, right?

They cackled with the relentless striking of Ripper's matches. It was a windy day.

Where ya from? Penny bumped her shoulder into Ripper, like old friends catching up.

New York City.

Ha, concrete jungle?

Yeah, concrete jungle.

I'm from Kent, Ohio.

Kent State, right?

Yeah. Kent State.

Don't wanna talk about it?

Why don't we spark this... Penny was holding a little one-hitter from her pocket and made the sweetest face at Ripper, who nodded with affection in response.

Copperhead, you dog!

**Penny was
holding a little
one-hitter from
her pocket**

The girls wrapped around the dorms on the west side of campus, where they found a grove of young oak trees that would hide their little bodies, pretending to be a forest. Penny wore a green flowy dress with bell-shaped sleeves and beat-up brown boots. Ripper thought she could have been part of the landscape, like a trickling Irish spring or a soft four-leaf clover that belonged there as much as any juvenile tree. They heard rustling in the dry autumn leaves, and the snapping of sticks beneath platforms. A gust of brunette hair landed in front of them as Penny, out of panic, put out the joint inside her leather crossbody.

Woah, shit, that's my bad I didn't mean to interrupt.

The young girl who had tripped and landed in their sanctuary popped up with ease. Her white tank top and yellow corduroy jeans were now caked with moss and dirt on her breasts and knees.

You guys know a good spot to smoke, ya know... She made the invisible joint gesture, to the girls' amusement.

Penny and Ripper started heaving laughing, grabbing each other's arms as hard as they gasped for air.

What's the big joke? Do I have a case of mossy tits or something? Why yes I do...

Pffftttt. It's not that. We're just really stoned. Penny squeezed her words out through laughter.

Yeah, you're like, you're like Big Foot if Big Foot was actually just a cute tall chick wandering around looking for a spot to sesh.

There is no proof I'm not Big Foot. The stranger was witty; the girls liked that.

My name's TK. Mind if I roll up?

The long tan girl stayed planted on her side. She was taller than most of the vegetation. She lay casually, like a goddess, and smelled of honeysuckles.

Not in the least, Penny muttered, while attempting to doctor her joint into smoking condition once again.

I'm Ripper and this is Copperhead.

I'm Penny, she snorted. We just met at orientation. She

stuck her tongue out with innocent distaste.

Fuck orientation. Pretty sure people don't need to be walked around campus to learn where shit is, or like, spoonfed information about clubs and teams. Man, just get a life. It will happen organically. She waved her hands in the air for emphasis.

TK sounded like a writer, Ripper thought.

Three girls sat and spoke for hours about the absurdity of being college freshmen in a new town. They felt the daylight press through a canopy of flimsy branches, just to touch them and warm their skin. At least Ripper thought so. She had always felt a sort of friendship with nature; she recalled, as a child, the sunlight feeling like a blanket spilling over her room. She sat quietly, smelling Penny's shampoo gather in the air, and following TK's long spindly fingers as they picked brush out of her textured clothes. She wanted to remember every little detail about her afternoon rooted in an oak tree grove with two beautiful strangers. She knew they couldn't love her the way she already loved Penny's freckles, contracting and expanding across the canvas of her body like the dalmatian she'd grown up with. She even loved TK's burnt voice, how she spoke progressively and beautifully, piercing holes through her own narcissism.

Ripper began to realize

Penny was selfish. Penny was lost.

TK was selfish. TK was lost.

But for just a few hours, in an oak tree grove behind the West Dorms, the anxiety of youth was suspended in the air like mint-colored clouds.

Nothing really matters

Anyone can see

Nothing really matters nothing really matters to me

Anyway the wind blows

—Queen, “Bohemian Rhapsody”







12th Street Jewels

ERIN LESO

A simple corner store,
nothing more.
But far more than less
when it comes to hidden treasures.
Just wait until red neon lights
brighten up an emerald sign
that reads BAINBRIDGE ST after closing time.
Then face the once-faceless silver tin shade
that wraps around the windows
of Forman's Pawn Shop.

Mario is painted mid-jump
to reach a green mushroom,
trying to achieve a thrill.
Just as Pac-Man accepts dots and fruit
until he is blessed with a juicy ghost.

You laugh
at these silly metaphors
you know you wish for yourself,
but they're nothing
compared to the pink, purple, and black letters that conjure the words
ODDITIES and CURIOSITIES.
They create the illusion of mystery through graffiti.
Especially with Mr. R F PAWN, surrounded by green ink,
who appears to be an eccentric but kind old man
who welcomes other oddballs into his store.

His doors remain open to remind those
that while the cracks in the concrete only sprout weeds,
pennies certainly fall from the heavens
when you least expect them.

Vintage baby dolls crawl along glass countertops
that present undervalued diamonds that were lost at sea.
There are baseball cards spanning decades, and children's books
from the 50's and 60's with tears and a possible message from a grandparent.
Every item has a strange story
and reason for being given up.
But you certainly won't find them
at one of those tourist shops in Las Vegas.

These materials are too peculiar,
but they have a home
and witness more magic within nut brown bricks
than royalty ever will.

61

The Moon Rabbit

AMY GARDINER-PARKS





i
wonder
what
he
thinks
about.

No Song

AUBREY RICHEY

Three school-aged children with eyes-wide-open stand around me in a circle. They look down at me on the rock I have fallen onto. It is autumn. Mid-October, to be exact. The air finally feels absent of any remaining traces of summer. The backyards of Elliot, Malcolm, and Clem all meet deep in the woods. It's a special spot where the three of them spend most of their after-school hours together. They created their own world there. Clem's dad built her a treehouse in these woods years back, when it was questionable whether or not it was safe for her to climb up to it since she was so tiny. But now, she can climb up it blindfolded if she needs to.



These woods are theirs, but they are also mine. My eyes are closed, my body is stiff, my spirit is free. I am on the rock by the creek. The kids haven't talked yet. The wind whistles through the tree's leaves, the creek rushes and bubbles, and together the two create a somber song. The position I am in does not do me justice. This is not what I looked like moments before. My wings aren't spread. They are tight to my body, and my claws are facing up in a curled and awkward position.

The tallest, lankiest kid, Elliot, is the most affected. His eyes are swelling and locked on me. The other two, Clem and Malcolm, look back and forth from each other, to me, and then to Elliot.

"You crying?" Malcolm asks Elliot.

"Yeah, maybe. Whatever. Let's leave."

"Over a dead bird?"

"Yeah, maybe. So."

Clem is quiet. She's temporarily aloof, staring down only at me.

"I mean, it's okay," Malcolm says, more gently now.

"I know it's okay," Elliot says fast. He lifts his shoulders up and clenches his fists slightly, not in an angry way, but a way that allows him to gain some kind of control back that he felt he was losing. As he tries to compose himself, he takes a deep breath in through his nose. It's stuffy.

"Okay," Malcolm says, backing off.

Clem is still looking down at me when she begins to cry. More audibly than Elliot's cry. The two boys look at her. She apologizes.

"I'm sorry, Elliot."

"It's fine."

"I shouldn't have showed you this."

"Don't worry about it."

"I made you cry. I showed you a dead bird. I'm stupid, stupid, stupid. Why would I show you something dead?"

"Clem, I don't want to talk about that stuff," Elliot replies, walking away from his friends, and me, still on the rock.

Clem weeps louder now that her friend walked away.

"I'll get him." Malcolm pats Clem's shoulder and then chases after Elliot. Malcolm and Elliot talk in the distance under the tree house. Clem is still weeping, and now she is poking me with a stick. Not hard pokes, just soft ones. Checking on me, I guess. I don't move a muscle. I don't wake up. I can't. I don't open my eyes. I almost fall off the rock, then Clem stops poking me.

I can tell she doesn't want me to fall. The boys come back, and everyone stares down at me again.

"Elliot said he wants to have a funeral but he doesn't want to talk about his dad," Malcolm whispers to Clem.

"A funeral?"

"A funeral."

"For...?"

"For the bird."

"Oh, yeah." Clem looks at Elliot and then looks down at me, still on the rock. "Right... for the bird."



Four months prior to the day I fell onto the rock and stopped moving for good, on a hot and humid mid-summer day, screams and cries came down the hill to the woods from Elliot's house. I flew up to the house on the hill and perched myself on a telephone wire near his kitchen window. He and his mother were fighting—one of those fights that sticks with a person until their dying day, even if it becomes hazier as time passes, one that will stick and sting forever, no matter how misconstrued it becomes in memory.

"Elliot, do not argue with me on this. You cannot change this. It's fixed. It's decided. It's set in stone. You can't change anything." His mother was exhausted from crying and yelling all day. Her eyes were red and looked sunken in. Her voice was shaky. She was heating up tea in the kettle and on the phone with someone at the same time she talked to Elliot. She gave both the phone and Elliot only half her attention and devastation. She pulled at the telephone cord as if trying to snap it in half, although maybe not consciously. Elliot clenched his fists and began arguing back at his mother.

"I know! I can't change the fact that dad's dead! I can't bring him back but I can at least still see him! I want to fucking see him!"

That was the first time Elliot had cursed.

"Don't you fucking curse at me," she yelled, and Elliot gave a sarcastic laugh, due to the irony.

Elliot had never been this angry before. Or sad. Elliot had never been this much at once before. He wanted to cry, scream, laugh, hide away, and break things all at once. But he just stood there and stared at his mother. His face went dull, and he became silent. His eyes swelled up, he clenched his fists, and he took deep breaths through his nose to compose himself. He glared at his mother in disbelief with red swollen eyes, similar to the way he looked at

me on the rock four months later.

"Oh my life, my life, my life! For God's sake! My son's cursing at me and his father has gone and killed himself!" she said to whoever was on the other line, and they told her to calm down and be strong for Elliot, but Elliot couldn't hear that.

"Elliot, I'm sorry. But the funeral is too soon, and you know it's all the way in Texas. We don't have a plane ticket. And quite honestly, with the way he died, I think it'd be best if we didn't go and see him. It's not logical. We just can't go. I planned not to go and we're not going and that's how it has to be. We both haven't seen him in years and you know the relationship I have with him and—"

She pulled at the telephone cord as if trying to snap it in half

"It's not about you!" Elliot shrieked, the sound so piercing that his mother stood still, stopped everything she was doing, and put the phone down. She didn't hang up. She just put it down on the counter and then slowly walked towards Elliot and gave him a very, very tight hug.

"I'm so sorry," she said weakly, barely audible. But she meant it.

They both cried. They cried until whoever was on the other line hung up. They cried until it went from sunny outside to dark blue to dark black. They cried until they went from a hugging position to lying down and cradling each other on the kitchen floor. They cried until the tea in the kettle went from hot to cold. They cried until ten or so more birds flew by me and landed on the telephone wire, sat with me for a while, then left. They cried until they had no more tears, and then they just lay there together in silence.

♦ ♦ ♦

"I think we should bury him," Malcolm says.

"Me too," Clem replies. "I can get the big metal shovel."

"I want to wear all black," Elliot says.

"Let's change clothes and come back. I'll bring the shovel."

"Okay."

"Okay."

"Meet back in fifteen minutes?" Clem asks.

"How about an hour, actually, if that's okay?"

I want to take some time to get prepared. It's six or something right now. Meet at dark?" Elliot asks, seeming more lively, but also serious and determined. Clem and Malcolm give each other a look.

"An hour? That's so long. Come on, Elliot," Clem whines in the nicest tone she can muster.

"Well, I should probably eat something anyway," Malcolm says. "And doesn't your mom get angry when you're late for your dinner, Clem?"

Elliot stares at the two of them, but his mind is somewhere else.

"Come on, Clem, don't rush it. I'll see you in an hour," Malcolm insists.

"No, you're right, my mom would be mad. I should eat too. I'll see you all in an hour then," Clem says, apologetic. The three children run up the hill to their three different houses.

"I don't like death, Malcolm. I don't want to look at it anymore."

I am on the rock still. A fox walks by me and I fear it taking me away, but it doesn't. Perhaps out of respect. The faint sounds of three families eating dinner travel down the hill to the woods. The sky goes from sunny to dark blue to dark black. The temperature drops.

Forty-five minutes pass and Malcolm comes down first, wearing a black hoodie and basketball shorts. He sits right next to me and touches me, unafraid.

"I want to do good things," he tells me, as he strokes my feathers. "I want to do good things for everyone."

For a moment it seems as if Malcolm might tear up, but he doesn't. He shakes it off. He slowly taps his sneaker rhythmically on a nearby rock; every move he makes feels intentional and thought out. He picks me up and looks at my closed eyes. He handles me carefully, like I am made of porcelain. Like I don't belong to him and he wants to take good care of me. He touches me like I belong to Elliot. When Malcolm asked Elliot if he was crying over a dead bird, he only asked out of curiosity. He didn't mean to make fun or tease. Malcolm puts me back down on the rock. He doesn't say anything else to me. We just sit together for a while.

Clem runs down the hill with a shovel the size of her whole body. She glances at me and then glances away, afraid to fully look at me. She shovels

without talking. She is wearing the black dress she wore to her chorus recital earlier that week. She is getting it dirty like her mother told her not to. Malcolm helps her dig the hole. It's about a foot deep now, big enough for me.

"I brought a coffin," Clem says. She runs over to her backpack to take it out. It's a little shoebox. "And I brought a marker to write his name on it. The bird's name. But we have to pick a name first."

"We'll wait for Elliot to come first before we name him," Malcolm says, taking the marker from Clem's bag. He takes out a flashlight.

"Yeah," she replies, nervously. "I don't like death, Malcolm. I don't want to look at it anymore."

"It's fine, we're gonna bury it."

"Yeah, I guess so. It's fine. I feel like we should sing it a song or something."

"That's a good idea, but I don't know what song."

"Me neither."

"Do they sing songs at funerals?"

"There's music sometimes."

"We should have music."

"Maybe Elliott will have a song."

"Maybe."

"Have you ever been to a funeral?"

"Yeah, a few. A while ago now."

"Oh. Wow," she says, in a whisper. Almost to herself. "I haven't been. I've been thinking about them though, since—"

"Yeah."

"What are they like?"

"Funerals? I don't know..."

"Are they bad?"

"Well, not entirely."

"I imagine them scary and sad and just bad."

"They're kind of a celebration, even though they're sad."

"Whaddya mean?"

"I dunno, Clem. Everyone shares memories. Sometimes people laugh..."

"Hm."

"And it feels like there's a lot of love in the room, and—" He pauses. "And everyone says goodbye together, and it feels good to be together."



Clem just looks at me, but for a second, it seems like she is looking through me instead of at me. Her face looks sad.

Elliot comes down the hill next. He apologizes for being late while brushing some leaves off his clothes. "Don't worry about it," Malcolm reassures him. Elliot's wearing black jeans and a black knitted sweater from three years ago that he found deep in his closet. He looks nice. He looks composed.

"How do you think it died?" Clem asks.

They all speculate about different scenarios—flying into a tree, old age, disease, getting shot by a hunter.

"It doesn't matter how it died. I just want to show our respect," Elliot says, proudly. "It was a living creature. It flew around. It had a full life. It was free."

"It was free," Clem repeats. "Here, Elliot, write his name on the coffin."

Elliott writes BIRDY in all capital letters on my shoebox coffin. He picks me up from the rock and places me carefully in the box without closing the lid. The woods are dark at this point, and the kids are holding flashlights. It's freezing now. Clem's shivering in her short-sleeved dress. They all look down at me. They each look sad in different ways. They each look happy in different ways. There are tissues in the box holding me comfortably. Elliot requests that his friends all say one or two good things about me before they bury me.

"I don't know what to say. I didn't really know him," Clem says.

"I'm sorry."

"You can make up a memory or something. A memory of the bird. Something you think the bird did. You know. It's a funeral. We have to talk about the dead."

"You go first, Elliot," Malcolm instructs.

"Okay, once Birdy flew so high he practically flew all the way to heaven, and all the other birds wondered where he went. They missed him. But he came back! And all the other birds greeted him. They were really excited to see him again," Elliot says. His eyes lock onto me in the box, occasionally peeking up at his friends, who give him their full attention. "Birdy had a family and him and his family did a lot of activities together, like playing in the backyard and building cool stuff together. A lot of little birds never get the chance to do things with their dads, so Birdy's hatchling was very lucky. Birdy was a good bird dad to his hatchling," Malcolm says, putting an arm around Elliot.

"Do you think he was?" Elliot asks.

"Of course," Malcolm says, and Clem nods.

"Birdy had a hatchling and he loved that hatchling very much. They had a lot of fun together," Elliot explains.

"What else did they do together?" Malcolm asks.

"They played checkers," he says, a little shyly.

"And chess when the hatchling got older?" Malcolm questions Elliot.

"Yeah." He chuckles a little. "And chess when his hatchling got older."

"And skiing. And baseball games. And puzzles on the dining room table that would stay there half-finished for months," Malcolm says, which makes Elliot chuckle once more.

"Yeah, so many puzzles. And he made soapbox cars for his hatchling to race in. They never won but it was always fun still. And he collected stamps with his hatchling, too. Well, he collected them alone because he was very

He picks me up from the rock and places me carefully in the box.

specific about which stamps made it into his collection, but he showed his hatchling each new stamp he'd add. He was always very excited to talk about his stamps. His hatchling thought it was so cool, even though he didn't get his dad's excitement. He was just happy to see his dad so happy. Birdy kept all of his stamps in a dusty box that nobody was allowed to touch. He was so serious about it. He was a nice guy but he'd still yell at his hatchling if he ever touched his stamps. Hold on. I want to put something in the coffin." Elliot reaches deep into his pocket and pulls out a single stamp. "I stole this. It's not mine. So I'm going to bury it. With Birdy."

He places the stamp next to my stiff body. There is an image of Neil Armstrong landing on the moon on the stamp, with text that reads: FIRST MAN ON THE MOON. Elliot is choking back tears. He says, in a cracking voice, "I just thought it was cool. I wanted it really bad. So I took it."

And then it is silent, and the three kids are looking at the image of the man on the moon instead of me.

"It's okay, Elliot. Don't beat yourself up. Birdy's forgiving," Malcolm says.

"I didn't know Birdy very well, but I heard a lot about him," Clem says. "I know that Birdy was really loved. I heard lots of stories and I could tell he was a really special bird. Not like other birds," she says, hesitantly at first but then

confidently. "I mean most birds don't collect stamps. That's pretty cool. Do you think he ever flew as far as the moon?"

Elliot wipes his nose on his black sweater and says, "Oh, definitely. He was great at flying. He could fly fast and far. He was great at a lot of things. He was such a great... bird." He pulls at a string coming undone from his sweater as he looks down at me.

"He was a great bird because he never shit on anyone," Malcolm says, putting a much needed pause on the seriousness of the conversation. The kids all crack up for a bit until Malcolm continues, "He will watch down on us as we play in the woods, and we'll always remember him as we play."

One after another, they repeat: "Rest in peace, Birdy."

Clem kneels down and picks up the stamp next to my beak. She places it on my chest instead. She takes Elliot's hand and kisses the tips of his fingers and then directs his fingers to my forehead. Elliot leaves his fingertips on my head for a moment before pulling them away.

"He loves you," she says to Elliot, softly.

Elliot looks at her and nods. He walks around collecting acorns, leaves, pinecones, and anything he can find. He surrounds me with them.

"He looks beautiful," Clem says.

"It's time to say goodbye to him," Elliot says, remaining calm. Nobody speaks for a moment.

"Come on, guys, say goodbye," Elliot says. He nudges Clem to speak first.

"Goodbye," says Clem. Clem takes a deep breath in.

"Goodbye," says Malcolm. He exhales deeply for Clem.

"Goodbye," says Elliot. "Thank you."

The kids all get on their knees to look at me one last time. One after another, they repeat: "Rest in peace, Birdy." Elliott closes the box and I am completely enclosed in the dark coffin. Malcom picks me up and places me down in the hole that he and Clem dug. Clem shoves the dirt pile back on top of the hole. Elliott packs down the dirt with his shoes.

"Maybe we should sing him a song before we leave," Clem says, thinking

back to earlier.

"I don't know," Elliott says.

"Do you have a song suggestion?" Malcolm asks Elliot.

"No," Elliot says calmly.

"Do you want us to pick a song?"

"No," he says again, calmly.

"Are you sure? Lots of funerals have songs. It could be nice."

"It's alright. Not every funeral can have everything."

"So, no song for the funeral?"

"No song," Elliot says with confidence. And then it's over, and the three of them reflect for a moment in the stillness.

I am underground with a stiff body in a shoebox that says BIRDY on it, filled with tissues and acorns and a stamp with the man on the moon. Three school-aged children stand around my grave past their curfew.





Bios

Brianna Bender (Illustration '21)

combines folklore and creepy themes with the tendency to draw flowers and stars all over any handout she receives.

Nyeree Boyadjian (Creative Writing '21)

is an LGBTQ+, Queens-born writer whose work has appeared in anthologies and journals such as *Brine Literary Journal* and *Red Cedar Review*. She is the recipient of the 2018 Stephen Berg scholarship and a graduate of the University of Iowa's International Writing Program's 2019 Summer Institute.

Keely Brady (Creative Writing '22)

is a spoken word artist from Pittsburgh. A poet and a painter, expression is how she hopes to reach the world.

Peter Bussard (Illustration '21)

is an avid reader, eternal student, and lover of peanut butter. He deeply enjoys mountain hikes and grappling with existential dread. He'd like to be able to backflip one day.

Melissa Castillo (Illustration '21)

is a character designer who likes creating comics and illustrations of female minorities and of her fat cat, Caleb. She also enjoys watching Disney movies and aspires to work for their studios one day. You can see her cat's shenanigans and her work on her insta @melrosedesign.

Kyrie Clemmer (Film + Video '20)

is a non-binary multimedia artist that focuses on film, photography, and installation art while living under the ideology that anyone can boogie to disco music.

Kait Currier-Graves (Theater Design + Technology '22)

is a theater artist specializing in lighting and sound design.

Carly J. Dagit (Creative Writing '21)

is a fiction writer and poet. She paints and listens to records in her free time with her kitten, Viper. She hopes her work transports her reader somewhere worth remembering, and that hopefully each piece in some way validates the complexity of human experience.

Patric Dempsey (Graphic Design '20)

is a designer with a passion for music, who is continuously merging both mediums in his art. Always drawing inspiration from poetry and song lyrics, he uses other mediums to problem solve and push his design work.

Will Dowd (Illustration '21)

is an illustrator who constantly goes between mediums and styles.

Tyler Econa (Writing for Film + Television '23)

is a nonbinary writer whose work has been nationally recognized by the Kennedy Center, the Scholastic Art and Writing awards, and others. Their work has appeared in publications such as Susquehanna University's *Apprentice Writer*, *Polyphony Lit*, and Scholastic's *Best Teen Writing of 2019*.

Alexis Eusebio-Baskerville (Graphic Design '21)

is a graphic designer from New Jersey with interests in web design, motion graphics, and fiber/textile studies. She enjoys listening to music, going on road trips, and watching movies.

Amy Gardiner-Parks (Illustration '21)

is 77% jokes taken too far, and 23% bees.

Sarah Gellerstein (Art Education '20)

is a visual artist studying to become an art teacher, who sometimes writes poetry for fun.

Sarena Harmon (Creative Writing '22)

is just a girl who gets distracted when seeing animals in the street. In a magical twist of fate, she found herself writing what she loves in a school she loves.

Ace Hobfoll (Creative Writing '21)

is a writer who enjoys talking about his cat, his girlfriend, and the fact that he's from Chicago.

James Izlar (Photography '21)

is a photographer who likes to bend reality with his images. James will also probably try to get you to listen to Kate Bush.

Angel Jefferson (Graphic Design '20)

is a spirited designer, illustrator, and musician. Her work is influenced by love, loss, and mid-century modern aesthetics.

Erin Leso (Creative Writing '20)

is a poet, fiction writer, and playwright from Philadelphia. Her poetry explores dreams and music. Her stories play with family dynamics. She loves musicals, dancing to the radio—or, on New Year's Day, as a Mummer—and classic rock.

Jason Lin (Drawing and Painting '22)

is a visual art student, still trying to learn new things.

Julian Lloyd (Illustration '21)

is an illustrator/ animator with a passion for anime, video games, and sweets, who also likes ducks and round things!

Samantha Medina (Creative Writing '22)

is a student and poet who enjoys experimenting with music and other mediums on the side. Originally from Jersey, right outside of New York, the city has always been a huge influence in her life, with Philly being her new home for the past two years.

Laura Miller (Creative Writing '21)

is a Philadelphia-based poet and musician. She rides her bike, descends willingly into the chasms of reality, and bangs the drums in a femme psych-rock band called Bröthers.

Kat Mooradian (Illustration '21)

is a graphic novelist who likes mayo and isn't afraid to say it.

Mikayla Morell (Creative Writing '20)

is happy to have found something that makes her feel more human than anything else has thus far in life. She will miss UArts.

Evan Mulhern (Music Business, Entrepreneurship, + Technology '21)

is a musician/writer from the land of Southern New Jersey, where he spent most of his days writing songs and poems about how sad girls made him. You can find him making fun of New Jersey police officers or screaming into a microphone in his roommate's room.

Mario Dante Napoli (Photography '20)

is a multidisciplinary artist and photographer whose work investigates the relationship between the familiar and unfamiliar.

Emma Oehlert (Animation '20)

is mostly a visual artist with additional interests in singing, traveling, and cowboys, who gets an adrenaline rush by knowing useless trivia.

Sophia Ogden (Creative Writing '21)

likes to write and thinks she is good at it. She also enjoys deliciously unhealthy foods, superhero movies, and talking about how she's from Delaware. She hates clowns.

Zack Peacock (Graphic Design '20)

is a Graphic Design student from Baltimore, Maryland. He likes skateboarding, photography, and listening to sad music in bed.

Dahlia Phirun (Craft + Material Studies '19)

is a visual artist who explores her work around the human form combined with other creatures. She enjoys reading about cognitive psychology, riding her bike under the rain, and trying new ice cream flavors.

John Tom Raczkowski (Creative Writing '23)

is a writer, essayist, and poet who is constantly working to push the boundaries of the written form. His goal is to own more cats than Ernest Hemingway. Currently he has two: Uncle Walter and Lunchbox.

Aubrey Richey (Photography '20)

is a lover of narratives, colors, and feelings. She incorporates all of these elements into multiple forms—photography, writing, doodles, videos, and more.

Olivia Ripke (Graphic Design '20)

is a graphic designer and photographer. Her favorite medium is medium format film photography.

Jamie Stow (Photography '20)

is a senior photography major. Her work centers around identity and family. She also enjoys photographing concerts and spending time with her cat.

Ben Thompson (Illustration '21)

is an artist and illustrator from Upper Darby, Pennsylvania who enjoys rootbeer, Malcolm in the Middle, and Peter Gabriel!

Kevin Valentin (Film + Video '18)

does photography as a hobby. First choice in life was clown college but that no longer exists. So he did the next best thing and went to art school!

Dahlia Visconti (Illustration '21)

is an illustrator who likes to draw cozy cabins, middle fingers, and existential hodgepodge. She loves dogs and comics, and procrastinates by playing Tetris.

Kara Wilson (Photography '20)

photographs the details of her life. She also loves Tom Hanks and Eddie Murphy.



JAMIE STOW,
ROAD TO NOWHERE

