

# THE BEAT

VOLUME XXV



DAVID GEFFEN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT UCLA  
JOURNAL OF ARTS & LITERATURE

# EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

We are honored to present the 25th annual edition of The BEAT, the David Geffen School of Medicine's journal of art and literature. As we celebrate The BEAT's 25th anniversary, we want to acknowledge the goal that the initial group of medical students in 1998 had in mind when starting this magazine, which was to create an enduring medium for the expression of literary and visual art in our UCLA Health community. For the past 25 years, The BEAT has consistently provided a space for faculty, students and staff to showcase their talents and creativity, submitting moving and thought-provoking pieces that allow them to reflect on their past experiences, both in medicine and life in general.

As always, we are strongly committed to maintaining humanism in medicine. We sincerely hope you enjoy the 2023 edition of The BEAT.

Angela Pham, Kate Coursey, Maggie Tsang  
Editors In Chief of The BEAT

And The BEAT goes on...

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by Aarushi Saharan  
WASHED ASHORE  
by James Asuncion

### LITERATURE

THE PAINTING  
by Kate Coursey  
HOSPITAL CAFETERIA FOOD  
by Juhee Agrawal

Special thanks to Mary Ann Triest and Aurora Reyes from the SAO for helping us continue the tradition of The BEAT.

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We welcome submissions from all faculty, staff, and students at the UCLA Health Sciences community at <https://medschool.ucla.edu/education/md-education/student-life-and-events/ucla-beat>

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## *Experiencing Medicine Through Culture*

by VAIBHAVI PATANKAR

# *The Citrus Scale*

by BEAU SPERRY

Before rounding, they told me  
to tell you that it had grown to the size  
of a small orange. Which is to say  
that it had grown  
to the size of each clementine  
you pulled from branches  
bowing low to every sidewalk  
in Pasadena, the way your father  
sliced each rind to fill the house  
with the sweetsharp air  
of spring. All my life  
I've yearned for shapes:  
shadows, spaces to fill  
a lack. Here, I set out  
to describe for you this sphere  
which refuses to take the shape  
of itself. In this moment, I cannot conjure  
this orange for you, cannot pick this orb  
from the orchard of my mouth  
to offer—still reaching for the branch I am,  
still stretching on what sidewalk  
I have left.

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# *a thief of night and time*

by AUDREY NGUYEN

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London, England  
1907

“Get back here!” came an angry voice.

Ida bit back a grin and strode quickly away, her boots clacking on the dark cobblestones as she disappeared into the night. A pouch of coins jiggled heavily at her belt—the winnings of yet another game she had won that evening. This haul had come from a dice game played in an alleyway off Regent Street with Ole Edgar. He was a grumpy man who enjoyed a little risk every now and then, but a glass of cheap whiskey even more so. Ida recalled showing up at his makeshift table just thirty minutes prior, a harmless smile dancing at the corners of her mouth.

“You again?” he had muttered, peering at her dark trousers and the equally dark hood of her cloak. “The Swindler’ herself, here to grace me with her presence. Must be my lucky day.”

“C’mon, old friend,” she had said. “One game of Liar’s Dice—your favorite. Winner takes all. What do you say?”

He had hesitated only for a second before withdrawing five dice from his pocket.

“One game. But no tricks—I got my eye on you, Swindler.”

Unfortunately, he had chosen the wrong night to enjoy his whiskey. Ole Edgar had a weakness: greed that compounded the thrill of an exciting risk often overtook his rational wits. Far better for Ida if he underestimated her abilities too, which he often did. Still, a part of her had wanted to correct him: though she had acquired somewhat of an unflattering nickname for herself in these neighborhoods, she wasn’t a *swindler* exactly—more of a (pickpocketing) magician. Which is why he didn’t quite see how she had switched the dice with some of her own more weighted ones, or how she had expertly slipped the silver watch from around his wrist when he was distracted by another round of losses. It was called Liar’s Dice, after all.

“There she is! There’s the thief!” Ole Edgar’s voice pierced the air, and Ida glanced quickly over her shoulder to see him and another young lad following her briskly, weaving through throngs of people on the street.

As others turned to stare in the direction of Ole Edgar’s pointing finger, Ida hastily darted through the crowd, adrenaline pumping through her veins. The night breeze felt crisp and cold against her cheek. Gray clouds hovered overhead, as if the sky might open with raindrops at any moment. A damp and unpleasant smell clung thickly to the air, reminding her that the River Thames flowed not far away.

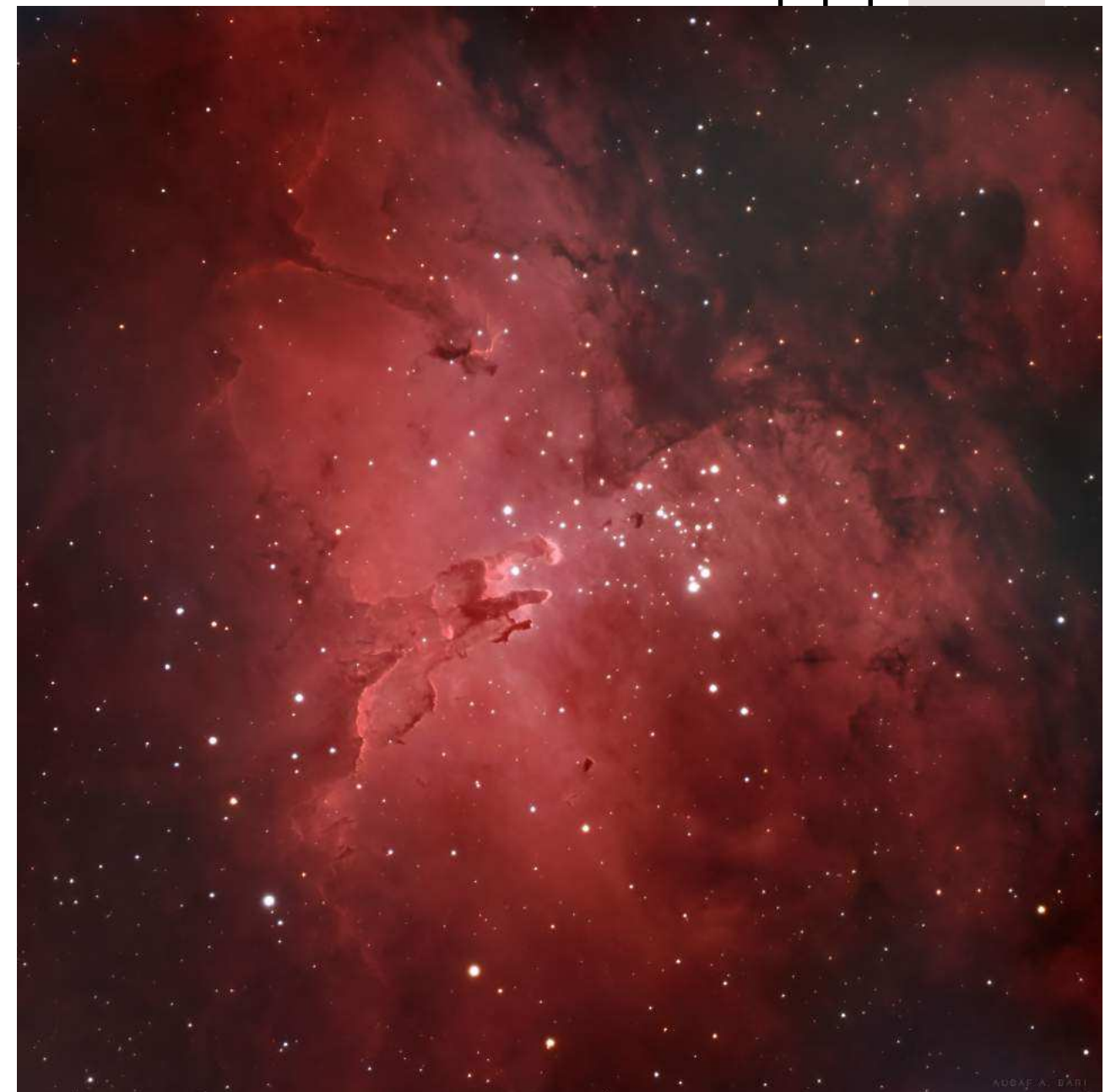
She rounded a corner and stopped abruptly in her tracks. Bright lights shone ahead, almost blinding her with their whiteness. She squinted and cast a hand over her eyes. When her vision cleared, she saw a short and rather unassuming building constructed with rusty brick and paned windows. The white lights framed a large banner with bold red letters that read, “THE TIMEKEEPER’S COMPANY PRESENTS: *THE ALCHEMIST’S SORROW.*”

A large crowd of people milled about the entrance. They dressed in extravagant splendor: the men sporting crisp dark suits and tall hats, and the women in elegant long dresses with corsets rimmed by white lace trimmings. They whispered excitedly behind gloved hands, peering over each other’s heads, trying to push inside.

Behind her, Ida heard the clattering of familiar footsteps—Ole Edgar and his companion. She hesitated, then quickly slipped into the crowd. The others did not

# *pillars of creation*

by AUSAF BARI



# crystal

by NATALIA ERMOLOVA



seem to notice her sudden appearance or unusual outfit as they closed in around her, their eyes remaining fixated on the theatre entrance.

It was then that Ida felt a strange, soothing calmness sweep through her—like an invisible blanket was being draped over her shoulders. The calmness nestled deeply into her skin and bones and released the tense knots of muscle in her shoulders. She felt her racing heart slow to a steady beat. Inexplicably, she too felt drawn to whatever lay ahead, whatever awaited her in this theatre. It sang to her, beckoned for her to take another step, then another. As if she were in a trance, she let the flow of the crowd carry her towards the arched doorway.

“Come one, come all! The show is about to begin!” said a doorman in a jolly tone. He was a short man with a brown

mustache and dark suit much like the others. He caught Ida’s eye as she approached. She thought she saw a flash of red irises, the gleam of sharp teeth in his grin.

A chill ran down her spine, but still she could not resist. As she passed through the entryway, a new sensation arose: a cold wave, like a thick curtain of ice water, passed through her. When she emerged on the other side of the doorway, she found it suddenly hard to breathe. She gazed down at herself and gasped: her clothes had changed from the dark cloak and trousers to a rose-colored dress with lace at the hems and a corset tight around her chest. The silver watch she had stolen from Ole Edgar was clasped around her wrist, though she had not recalled putting it on.

*Impossible*, she thought.

Before she could process this further, the air filled with gentle violin music,

drawing her attention towards the orchestra of black-clad musicians at her left. Around them, rows and rows of red velvet seats formed an amphitheater, its vast semicircle enclosing a grand center stage. A glass-domed ceiling stretched high overhead in a magnificent arc, seeming to belie the short square building she had observed from the outside.

As she and the others took their seats near the front, Ida felt that something was very wrong. She tried to hold onto this feeling, to explore it further, but she found she could not. The warning bells in her mind were nothing but a distant memory—a feather floating just beyond her reach, not bearing enough weight to sink into her chest the way that calmness had consumed her moments before.

“Pardon me. What is this? What are we about to see?” Ida murmured to the couple seated beside her. They had been chatting eagerly with one another, but now the woman turned to her. She wore a dress the color of lilacs, her auburn hair piled on her head in thick curls.

“*The Alchemist’s Sorrow*,” she said. Her voice was like music, her green eyes dancing brightly. “The best play in all of England. You’ve not heard of it?”

“I cannot say I have.” Ida frowned. She had grown up in the East End, starving and stealing alongside some of London’s most impoverished. Attending theatrical productions was the last thing on her mind. Yet she was an experienced thief in the night and knew these streets like the back of her own hand. Come to think of it, had this grand theatre always been there in that street corner?

The lights dimmed, and the red curtains parted. A handsome young man in a black tailcoat appeared at the center and bowed to polite applause. He appeared to be in his early twenties, his black hair matched only by a set of coal-black eyes. A bright gold chain danced at his waist and ended in the front pocket of his tailcoat.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen,” he announced, his voice echoing across the theatre. It was full, Ida noticed, every seat filled with a man, woman, or child. “I am the Timekeeper, and this is my Company. Tonight, we bring

you an evening of entertainment that will last forever in your memories. Without further ado, I present to you: *The Alchemist’s Sorrow*.”

He drifted into the darkness, arm still extended in a sweeping gesture, as the spotlight shone on the scene behind him.

The lead actor emerged, and the story unraveled. It was indeed a sorrowful tale, Ida thought, about a young man named Jameson who had been seeking a cure for his ill-stricken wife. Unable to find success in western and eastern medicines, he had turned to alchemy. In this science, he sought to learn how to create the panacea—a remedy for any ailment. He journeyed throughout all of Europe, consulting famous immortal alchemists who had succeeded not only in making the panacea, but the Philosopher’s Stone of immortality. He begged them to share their secrets.

“I am trapped in this unforgiving race against time,” the lead actor playing Jameson declared with melodramatic flourish to a rather angsty Nicolas Flamel performer. “Won’t you help me?”

But the immortal refused. In the end, the illness claimed his wife’s life. It was not until decades later, in his old age, that Jameson finally discovered the secret to an eternal life free of illness that he had long searched for.

When the play ended to astounding applause, the lights turned on and the curtains drew shut. The man who called himself the Timekeeper reemerged. The spotlight cast a stark paleness over the skin of his sharp jaw and cheekbones, making him appear ghostly and ageless.

“Thank you all for your attention,” he said. His gaze swept the crowd, fastening on Ida. He cast her a friendly smile that somehow felt like knives in her chest. “We certainly hope you enjoyed your time. Please, help yourself to our finest refreshments on the way out.”

Ida saw then that the luminous gold chain dangling from his waist coat ended in a gleaming pocket watch. He was clasping it tightly in his gloved hand as he waved for the viewers to exit.

Everyone stood and began to leave. Ida turned to comment to the woman in the lilac dress, but she had disappeared into

the crowd. As Ida headed for the arched doorway with the others, she felt again that distant sensation of—fear? Wonder? She couldn't tell.

She felt perplexedly numb as she passed through the doorway, swallowed again by that curtain of ice-cold water—only to find herself once again inside the theatre. Its velvety red seats filled her vision like a bloodstain on white sheets.

This time, instead of a rose-colored dress, she wore one of deep emerald green and carried a delicate parasol. Ole Edgar's silver watch gleamed at her wrist. Ida hardly noticed the other audience members passing by her to take their seats. She was frozen in place by the pounding heart in her chest and the breath caught in her throat. Bewildered, she moved towards the doorway to leave—and found the doorman standing before her.

"Come one, come all! The show is about to begin," he announced. His red eyes met her gaze, and she felt that calmness grip her bones again. "Lady Ida, please take your seat."

As if her legs were not her own, she turned and followed the flow of the crowd. Absently, she tugged at the watch encircling her wrist, willing it to come off. It didn't budge, its chain more a shackle than a bracelet.

She had thought she was a magician, with all her clever tricks and knack for deception, but this—this was true magic. Dangerous magic, the kind one didn't dare to believe in and could not even begin to comprehend.

"Pardon me, what is this?" Ida heard herself say, turning to the person beside her. With a jolt, she recognized the woman with the auburn hair. Whereas before the woman had appeared lively, almost youthful, she now looked distressed. Her graying hair had fallen loose from her bun, and wrinkles creased the corners of her eyes as though she had aged several years. Her face smoothed into a mask of cool calmness.

"*The Alchemist's Sorrow*," said the woman. Her voice was like broken glass in Ida's ears. "The best play in all of England."

London, England  
2016

Nate had only walked two blocks by Westminster Abbey before he decided to pick up his pace. He knew he'd be in trouble with his boss for missing the news article deadline, but it hadn't exactly been an easy week. Between moving from his old apartment to caring for his three younger siblings, it was only a matter of time before he—well, ran out of time.

Above him, a small hint of early morning sun had managed to peak its way through grayish-white clouds. In the distance he could see Tower Bridge stretching across the River Thames. He drew his briefcase closer and steeled himself down a less crowded cobblestone walkway towards his office building.

His phone buzzed in his pocket—a text from his boss. It read, "Nate. Where are you?"

He sighed, quickly typing out a response: "I'm on m—"

He glanced up in surprise as the metal door of a rather unassuming building to his right thrust widely open. It nearly clipped him in the face, but he had dodged aside just in time to narrowly avoid a collision.

A young woman burst out of the doorway. For a moment, she and Nate looked at each other in utter shock. She was dressed in a blue gown that looked like it belonged in Edwardian London. Dark hair framed her face in tangled locks, and her gloved hands were clasped tightly at her chest.

Nate looked from the woman, to the sizable dent she had made in the wall from her wild opening of the door, and back. She was breathless, eyes wide and shining. She could not have been older than eighteen or nineteen years old.

"Pardon me," she said. "Where am I?"

"London," he said, somewhat unhelpfully. In a gentler tone, he added, "Are you lost?"

"I do not know. I—" She broke off. She looked increasingly ill as she gazed about her surroundings. He tried not to feel self-conscious at the frown that creased her

face upon seeing his jacket and slacks, the cell phone in his hand. She was staring at him as though he were a floating elephant dressed in a swimsuit from the latest issue of *Vogue*.

The half-written text to his boss was forgotten now. Something was off about this woman, though Nate could not quite place what it was.

"Well, if you *are* lost, I might be able to help. I grew up around here. It'll be alright," he said, trying to sound reassuring. He gestured at her gown. "Are you heading to a play, perhaps?"

She visibly flinched and shook her head. There was a long pause. Then, in the softest whisper, she said, "What year is it?"

An odd question, but he answered anyway. "2016."

Pain flashed across her face, and she let out a shaky breath. What was it about her? Perhaps it was her inhumanly coal-black eyes, or the way she spoke and dressed like she belonged in another world.

"Who are you?" Nate asked, taking a step away from her.

The woman's hands, which had been clenched tightly into fists, slowly loosened. In her palm laid a pocket watch. Nate thought he saw a rust-colored stain on the bright gold chain.

Her eyes met his. "I am the Timekeeper," she said, as though reciting a line from memory. "And this is my Company."

## *i wanna live here* by JON SALAZAR



# *headlights*

by NICHOLAS HAMILTON

The beginning of a new era,  
the rush of running down the beach,  
aware of big waves yet to come  
yet unrelenting in my strides.

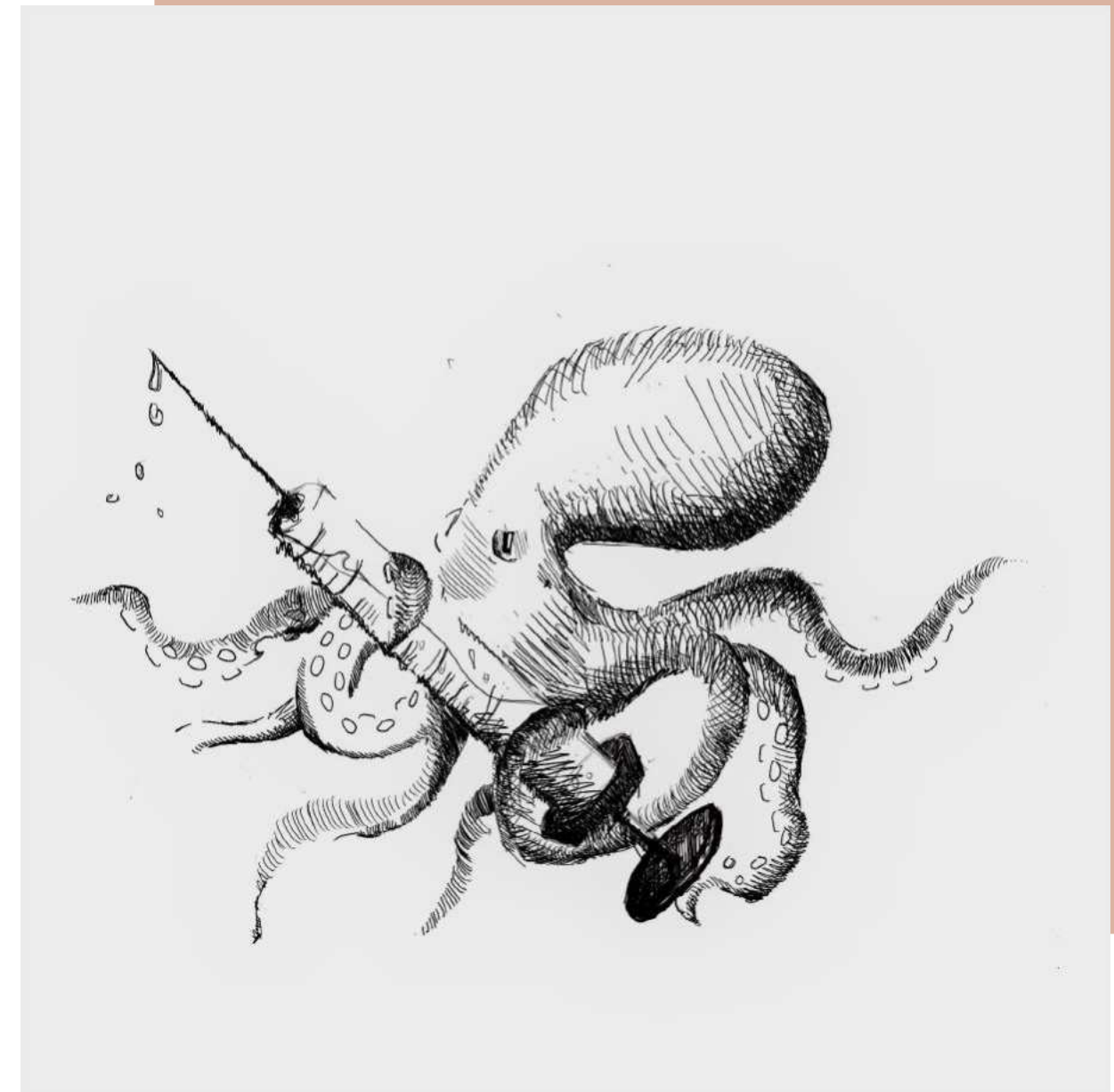
We listen to the first lecture of orientation  
he says “to your families, you already made it.”  
So many years of working towards this day,  
and my lacrimal glands were definitely earning their pay.

They started off slow,  
but told us they would be more  
BAM!  
September was a drummer boy we knew was coming  
but still wasn’t prepared for.

Two years of my research, 80% of it covered in one lecture.  
One major, now a week of classes.  
Entire hospital wards of medical conditions in three days,  
each one five slides, 15 bullet points,  
all now my responsibility.  
Each patient, person, parent, partner, my responsibility,  
to care for them, listen to them,  
find bullet points that link to the next bullet points  
which lead to a treatment, a cure, a “we have some bad news”

I don’t think I understood anxiety until my first medical interview.  
I’ve never felt more LA, more Hollywood than in that white coat,  
wondering if my stethoscope,  
constricting around my neck,  
could hear my heart beating, as I said  
“So tell me about what brings you in?”

When you rely on those 12 hour study days  
when you realize your responsibility,  
the reason you study a life,  
and the pure inadequacy you feel to treat it.



## *boosted*

by JAZLYN CHONG



## CONVERSATIONS WITH A PENGUIN

by KATE HOLLAND



HOPE

by STEPHANIE PUNT

They say medical school is like drinking through a fire hose,  
it's a fight. It's surreal and validating to get it right,  
but error is what keeps me up at night.

What if what if what if a song on repeat,  
a useless unrelenting Lullabye,  
wanting to change medical culture,  
but hearing from some "you lie, doctors are Satan's ally"

When I first flew home,  
I was up three hours learning about most common emergencies on planes,  
in case there was one.  
I was flying Spirit, it was likely.

And when it did happen, on an international flight,  
I understood what a deer feels like as the car drives near.  
They honked twice, but I  
paralyzed in the position I put myself in, utterly helpless.

I had written once in 18 months, but I had a poem in my hand before we landed.

The person had a hypoglycemic episode, and was ok.  
Common, and I would know what to do,  
my mentor later said I was right to stay seated, others were still more qualified than me.

I nodded, and agreed, and asked,  
"when do I get up when they ask?"  
He said "not now, likely not soon, but one day,  
they'll ask, and you'll get up and help,  
not realizing until it's over."

My mentor smiled,  
his eyes two headlights,  
me seeing a future in this field,  
wondering if his white coat is still more costume than career,  
if the stethoscope surface still constricts.  
If he ever still feels like a deer.



## *happy birthday*

by YASMIN SAFDIE

Somewhere downtown  
Under a bridge  
A displaced shopping cart  
Pushed by a displaced human  
Navigates broken sidewalks.

The silver string  
Of a half inflated  
Heart shaped balloon  
Fights the wind to stay.

To those passing by  
A warning sign  
A reminder

That even the desolate  
Have existence

Happy Birthday

# Lessons from Grandpa

by BEZA MENGISTU

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You're sitting on the couch with your feet propped up on the leathery cushion when your father asks you to lower the television volume. Your mother walks in soon after and joins you on the couch.

"Your mother and I have something to ask you," he says, looking straight at you. "And we want you to be honest."

You can't remember the last time you told them a lie, so you nod your head while studying their expressions. You aren't sure if you're in trouble. "Okay."

"My parents are coming from Ethiopia to live with us," your father says, "and since you're living in the dorms during the week, how do you feel about giving up your room?"

Oh, you say, that's it? Of course that's okay. You're going to meet your grandparents for the first time.

\*\*\*

You give up your room when they move in, and you love the placidity of your mature self, the way you're unperturbed by change. You don't know many 18-year-olds who sleep on the couch every time they go home.

You feel curious and nervous when you feel your grandfather's firm handshake for the very first time—he has an unnaturally strong grip for a man of 72 years. His wife, your step-grandmother, anchors you to her body and drowns you in wet kisses before asking you your name and whispering how much she loves you. She laughs and you laugh along with her, this woman whom you've just met, and you feel even better about giving up your room. These people gave you their love before ever meeting you, and you find that although you can't reciprocate their love just yet, you desperately want to try.

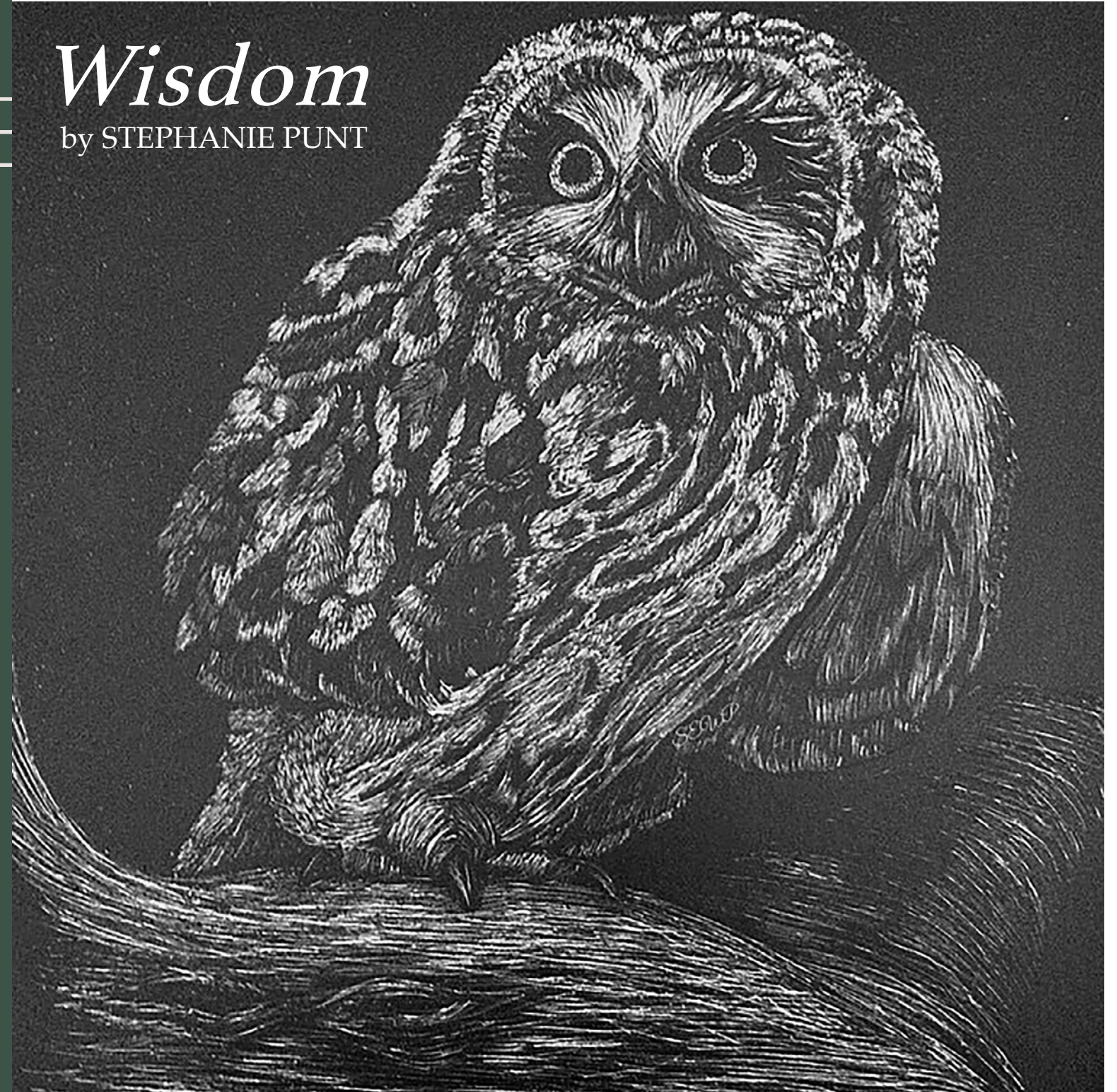
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You learn that you like having grandparents. You revel in your patience and the way you're unbothered by the first month or two of their stay, during which you spend many sleepless nights tossing and turning on the couch. They're worth it.

Your grandmother is a simple woman. She insists on cooking and cleaning as soon as she wakes up every day, and despite your best efforts to convince her that *she*

# Wisdom

by STEPHANIE PUNT



is the guest of the house and should relax, she can't help herself.

"Can I make you some tea?" she asks you. "How about some lunch?"

"No thanks, Grandma," you say. "I already ate."

"You must eat more. You're too skinny. I'll make you some tea."

"No, really," you say, rubbing circles on your stomach to illustrate your point. "I'm very full."

She serves you tea anyway.

Your grandfather is not as simple. He looks nothing like the charred parchment—brittle and falling apart—that you'd imagined him to be. He's an antique mosaic full of intricacies. There is so much you don't understand about him, so many secrets to unlock. So you listen. He loves to tell you stories. He often sits on the couch, his feet propped up on the coffee table and his hands folded over his beer belly (like Homer Simpson), strange sounds spilling from his lips in Amharic hieroglyphics that you must decipher.

He tells you things you never knew about your father when he was your age—how he loved reading books, how his poetry had been published in local magazines back when he was in high school, and how he was the ping-pong champion of the neighborhood where he grew up (you make a mental note to ask your father about that last story later).

Your grandfather also tells you about the importance of discipline and obedience. He is proud of the way he raised your father with an iron fist, unrelenting and merciless. One time your father came home late from school, so your grandfather

made him run outside and return with a sizable switch from one of the acacia trees in the backyard so he could receive his whooping. Your father learned his lesson. Unfortunately, your grandfather says, obedience has eluded your grandmother. She's a little silly in the head and sometimes forgets to do what she's told. Sometimes she doesn't do her duties properly—she serves him food that's too hot, and sometimes too cold. He can only repeat himself so many times before she has to be taught a lesson too.

At this, you realize that you are perhaps not so willing to listen as your self-proclaimed maturity once led you to believe. A few more stories, the most recent one about your grandfather's ardent respect for one of Ethiopia's greatest Communist dictators, and these story times are requiring more patience than you expected. By the time your grandfather tells you about the proper role of a woman in the household, you realize that your hands are balled into fists at your sides.

"You know, Grandpa," you say one day, "I used to play sports in high school. I played volleyball."

His face lights up with pride. "Bravo! Molto bene." For whatever reason, he starts speaking in Italian when he's excited.

"I even played soccer a little," you continue, hoping to earn another Italian accolade.

He laughs a throaty laugh and gives you a thumbs up. "Women in America are so daring, playing men's sports without fear." He shakes his head in disbelief. "It's just amazing."

You are reasonably certain he doesn't know how condescending that sounded. You laugh along with him, but you don't

look directly into his eyes. You keep smiling, keep listening to his stories, realizing you are foreign to the world that your grandfather once knew. At first, you want to understand. But then he asks you why you wear trousers and you almost choke on your spit.

"Uh, 'cause they're comfy," you say. "Women wear pants all the time."

"Is that so? More comfortable than a dress? Even the tight trousers that hug your hips and legs?"

"Yeah, Grandpa."

"I see," he says. "I guess that makes sense. Trousers are more comfortable. Of course...of course." He nods his head with more conviction now, seemingly sure of his conclusion. "Yes, this is right."

You idly picture yourself running back to your dorm room at school and filling your closet with jeans and sweatpants and sneakers. Or worse—coming home in a suit and tie, your hair cropped short like a boy and your hands in your pockets as you sit casually with your knees spread wide. Your grandfather would have a heart attack.

"What's so funny?"

He sees you chuckling to yourself. "Nothing, Grandpa, just thinking about stuff."

You tell him that a woman can do anything a man can do. That she can wear what she wants, go to school, get a job, and support herself. That she can do anything.

"Well of course," he says. "This is America." Then, after stroking his bristled chin, "But you must never forget where you come from."

He says it like a warning, as if you're somehow becoming too American for his liking. You want to remind him that this *is* where you come from—you've lived in Los Angeles for 12 years. But before you can say anything, your grandmother brings you more tea.

\*\*\*

Over the next few months you learn that the more time your grandfather spends with you, the more he loves you, and the more indifference you feel for him. You still haven't figured out how to love him yet.

Unlike you, your mother has no problem expressing how she feels. "He's a horrible misogynist. He treats his wife like a servant and abuses that poor woman. She tells me all the time how bad he's treated her."

He can't be a misogynist, you say. He's so nice to you. Just a little confused.

"I told him to stop ordering her around," she tells you. "And do you know what he said to her when I left?"

"What?"

"He said that if she didn't keep her mouth shut, he wouldn't hesitate to break her nose."

Silence.

"And you know what else?" your mother continues.

"W-what?"

"He asked me why your father lets you go away to school."

Now who's confused? He *lets* you go to school? Your father would never say



## ***GOOD MORNING, MATTERHORN***

by ZHUANG T. FANG, MD

something like that to you; was he really raised by this callous old man?

You try to picture it—your father coming home from work and expecting you to be in the kitchen rather than studying. Waiting to be served tea while he surfs the channels for the game. No, your father doesn't have time to sit around and watch games. He's barely home. He works 20 hours a day, five days a week. Tuition is high. Textbooks cost money. On top of that, there's rent to pay.

You see your father for a few measly hours a day whenever you're home. His skin is sagging and his hair is receding, but his eyes are always smiling at you. Always proving he loves you without ever saying it. Do you need any money? Surprise! I have your favorite—caramel frappuccino with extra caramel. And look, when they asked for my name, I told them it was Voldemort.

Your father has never told you he loves you, but it was never a question that needed confirming. Your grandfather says he loves you every day. You learn that the only thing they have in common is the Homer Simpson beer belly.

\*\*\*

Your grandmother is sitting on the couch and you see her head nodding off, bobbing up and down occasionally.

"Grandma," you whisper. "Go to your room and sleep."

She jerks her head upright and you're leaning over her so close that you can actually smell the oregano and black pepper from today's lunch on her clothes.

"I wasn't sleeping," she assures you. "I'm wide awake."

"But it's eleven o'clock." Your grandmother never stays up past nine.

"I'm fine, really. I want to finish this show." The television volume is on mute.

"Alright," you say, still unsure.

You walk over to your parents' room to bring her a blanket, but when you come back no more than three minutes later, your grandmother is nodding off again. Her feet are delicately tucked underneath her body and you realize that she's probably cold. You were right to bring a blanket. You wrap it around her and she looks so peaceful that you leave her there and grab more pillows and blankets, this time for yourself. A tiny sinking feeling gnaws at your stomach when you set up a makeshift mattress on the floor with the cushions and pillows from the rest of the couch, half thinking about making pillow forts as a kid, and half realizing that your grandmother doesn't want to sleep in the same room as your grandfather.

\*\*\*

The few days that you come home from school, you watch as he flips through the channels on the television with his feet sprawled on the living room table. He wakes up as early as your grandmother, waits for her to serve him breakfast, and spends the rest of the day on the couch. He even learns a few English phrases from Anderson Cooper on CNN and, like a child who has learned to read for the first time, proudly shares them with you.

You wonder how such a sentient being could be so cruel. He is foreign to the world that you know, and your indifference continues to grow. Perhaps you just need to get used to him. Maybe your inner feminist just feels threatened by his ill-treatment of his wife. Or maybe it's because all you see is a sedentary old man who, unlike your loving grandmother, has no redeeming qualities that you can see. Maybe you're just not looking hard enough.

# *CPR FOR THE SOUL*

by YASMIN SAFDIE

A pair of hands try to rest on a pair of knees  
but the trembling makes it difficult.

She sits in front of me.

A brave single tear opens the pathway  
to many that more brazenly follow.

*Are you contemplating not existing?*

The silence is accompanied by  
a barely perceptible nodding of the head  
Interrupted by an anguished *yes*.

Her voice, a bleeding wound  
whose scab has been picked off too many times.

Her eyes avoid mine as I search for life.

I try to take a deep breath.  
My viaducts congested like a freeway during rush hour.

I take a moment to review the steps and begin.  
I position my body in the right angle,  
Stretch my arms  
Right hand over left hand  
Left hand over her fragile soul  
I begin compressing

Tell me about a time when your body vibrated to the rhythm of the universe.  
Compress  
Tell me about the bombs that paralyzed and deafened you.  
Compress  
Tell me what the path needs to look like so I can help you find it.  
Compress

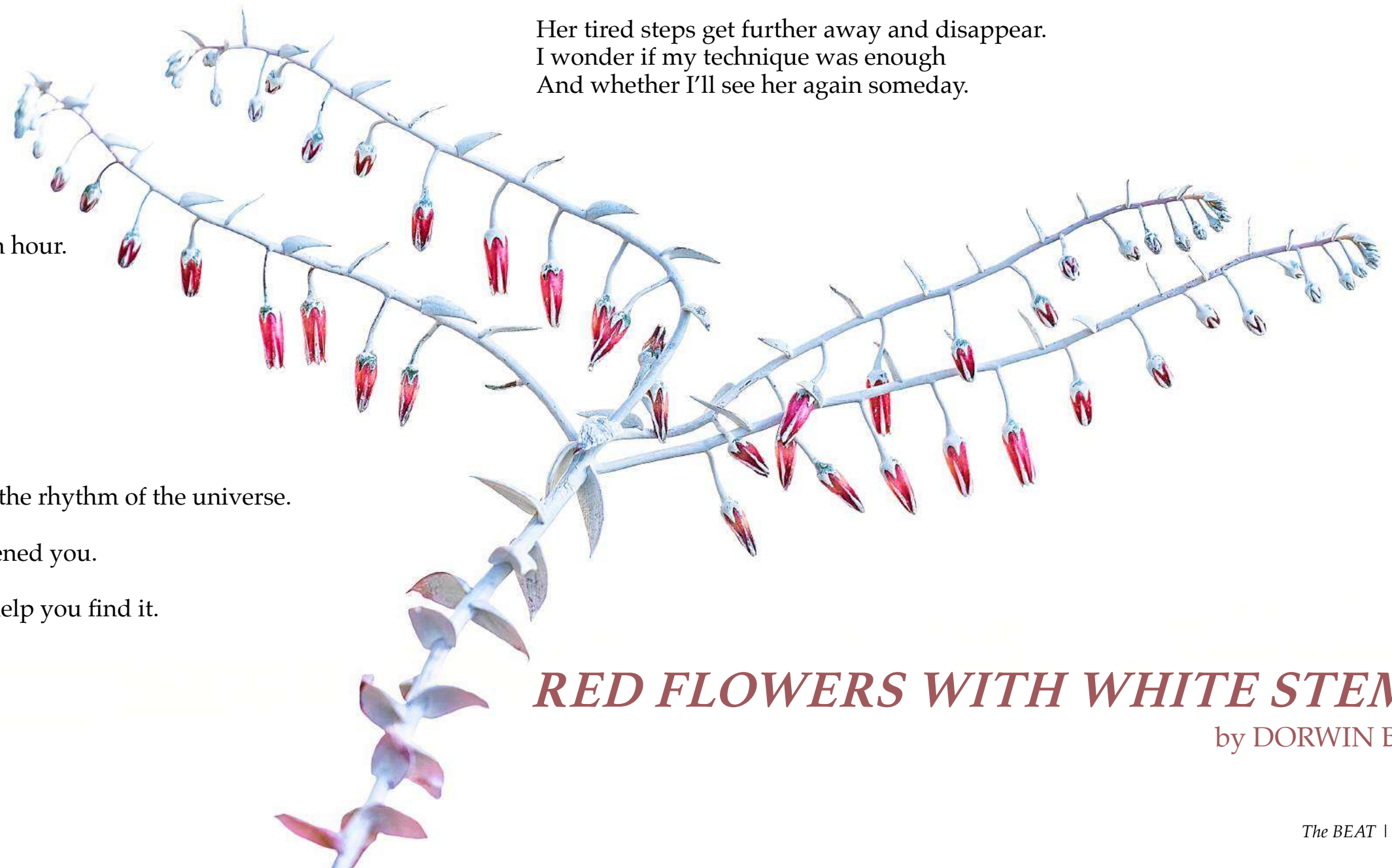
I wait for a response,  
The pulse is weak  
Uncertain of wanting to be heard

I wipe the sweat off my nervous heart and get closer.  
I tilt her head back  
Pinch her nose  
And begin breathing into her all that I carry within my chest

An acknowledgment to the senses with which we experience this world.  
Breath  
The fragility of things which means that things end but also that things begin.  
Breath  
That I see her, that she matters, that I believe in her future.  
Breath

I take a step back.  
I look for something in her face to tell me if this is working.  
My chest feels empty. My arms are sore.

Her tired steps get further away and disappear.  
I wonder if my technique was enough  
And whether I'll see her again someday.



## *RED FLOWERS WITH WHITE STEMS*

by DORWIN BIRT



## *LITTLE OR NO COLOR*

by AARUSHI SAHARAN

## *RETURNING HOME*

by STEVE CRAMER

Death creeps like a monitor up a sand dune,  
Licking the air that guides it,  
The cursor, blinking green like a fly hopping along a mashed squirrel in the road,  
Slows through the night, jerks, then is still.  
His arms drop to the sheet, fists let go of the metal bed rails,  
Fists that he'd shake at trees and voices and recoiling moviegoers in line,  
And that squeezed the insulin vial, unopened, in the pocket of the jeans in the bag  
that his brother will claim by the end of the shift.  
His jaw slackens, without a groan, then,  
His breath floats past the back of the yellow-toothed mouth and out the nose, into  
his briefly-crowded room,  
Sneaking past the nursing station, into the hallway,  
Down a shaft, past the lobby with its instructions for hand washing,  
Carried by the morning breeze, under the trestle bridge where his flattened  
orange puffer jacket still sits, in the same place as yesterday,  
Down the boulevard that he cruised until driving was not possible,  
It rustles the needles on the pine tree next to the Domino's where he once worked  
for 3 weeks,  
Drifting around the corner and down the street,  
Then between the bars and through the window of the bedroom in the house  
where they once came for his mother.

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# *I'LL HEAL YOU ANYWAY*

by SHIVANI DAYAL

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I sit alone in nature's majesty,  
so that I can heal my wounds and acknowledge hers.

I've learned I must venture into nature by myself —  
it's the only way to make sure I can hear her.  
In silence, I place my hands on her surfaces —  
in grass, on rock, in water.

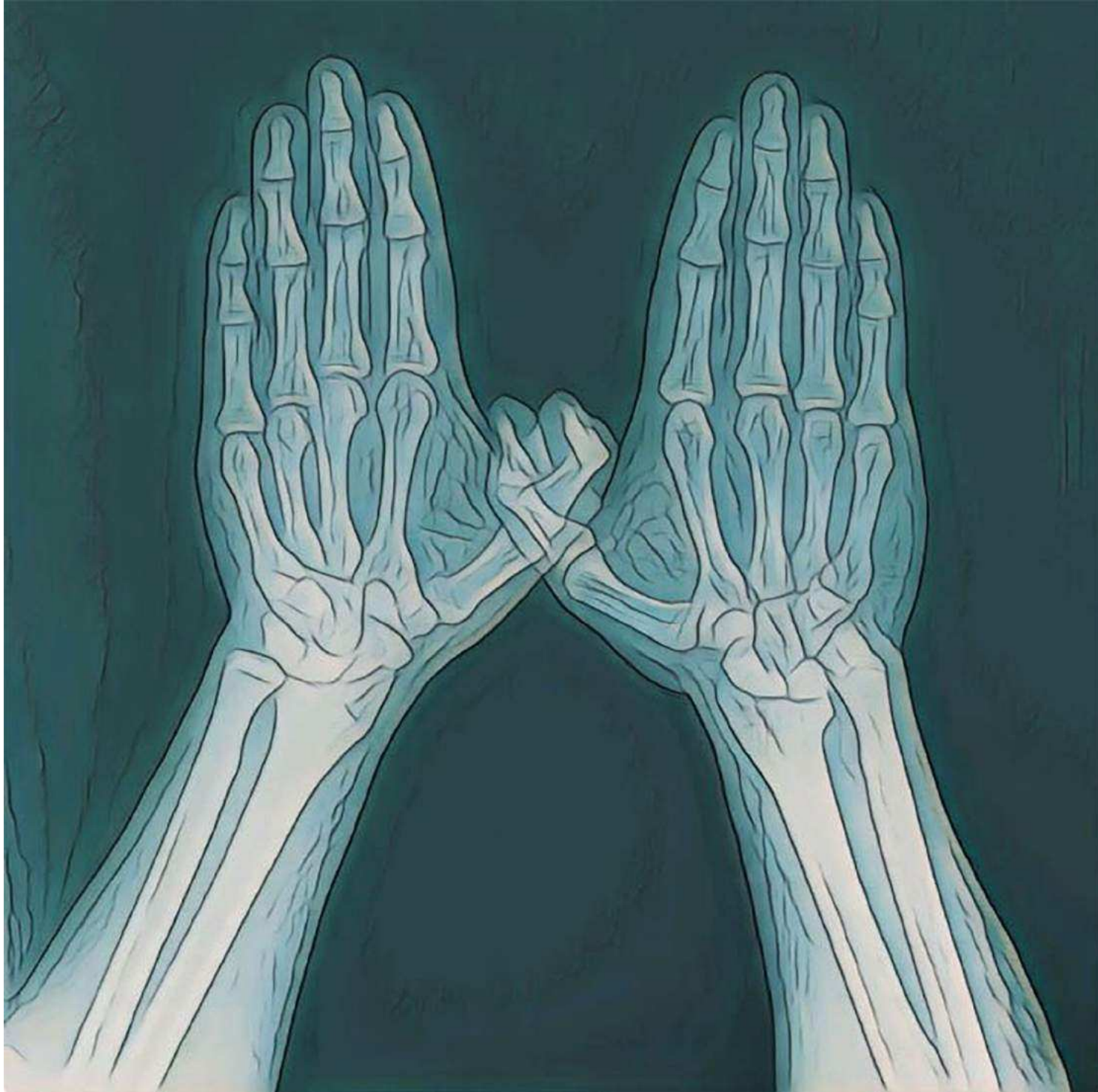
"I'm sorry for what we've done to you," I whisper  
*"I'll feed you anyway," she says*

"I'm sorry for what we've done to you," I whisper again  
*"I'll heal you anyway," she says*

I look out at the world around me,  
the world that has hurt me and caused me pain.  
*"I'll heal you anyway," I whisper.*

## *GRAND CANYON MILKY WAY*

by NEIL PARKER



## *ELEMENT AIR #2*

by EDGAR LUNA

## *PRE/CLINICAL (AFTER NETTER)*

by BEAU SPERRY

Thank you for the orientation materials, and for your time.  
I have a couple questions:

Do you mean to tell me  
the body's veins are not a true cerulean,  
that blue to sing to,  
but are instead a glistening gray— a winter  
highway at night? The way they float the body heartward  
(the chest's blaring bugle) in itself a prayer, both caress  
and gentle push?

Next, then, I am sure you will tell me  
the sounds we notch, count, the ribs  
a hollow catalogue: holosystolic,  
blowing, crescendo-decrescendo  
are an actual inventory of noise? I cannot believe  
these drums beat in rhythm, these rhythms  
set the chest's cathedral to dancing.

Surely, though, there must be some mnemonic  
for grief—a way to place in context,  
to mark as read the family's tearful gaze,  
to place aside the pile  
of flashcards for which each answer is  
"I'm sorry" or  
"what are you feeling" or  
"it will get better" or  
"it will not get better" or  
\*crouch before patient, be still\*  
and to live inside yourself, steady, momentous?

This, at least, we have— or you have  
and have to teach me. Right?

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# the painting

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by KATE COURSEY

The day she first met Claire had been unseasonably warm for upstate New York—that much Helena remembered. They met in the college library, an old building lit by high, vaulted windows; sunlight burnished each frosted pane in rich gold, filtering down through eddies of dust to cast a diffuse glow over the narrow shelves.

It had been the first day of sophomore year. Both girls were waiting for their professor to arrive. Claire had worn overalls hand-embroidered with daisies, her black hair braided with jeweled clips. She'd smiled, offered Helena a gummy worm from a half-empty packet.

An insignificant memory. Yet Helena had examined it many times since then, mostly during fits of insomnia, when she lay awake amidst the soft *shush* of her husband's breathing and the occasional creak as the bones of the apartment building settled around them.

And somehow now, 15 years later, Helena was unsurprised to see Claire standing in the queue at the bakery where she worked, tucked away on a narrow London street between a used bookstore and a charmingly-overgrown park. Claire's eyes were downcast—scrolling through her phone—but, as if sensing Helena's gaze, she looked up suddenly, past a group of schoolgirls, through the warm, caramelized haze of fresh pastries, and found Helena behind the counter.

Claire's lips parted in recognition. Helena's pulse was suddenly outside her body, beating in time with the percussive gusts of air that slipped through the door as it opened and closed.

"Excuse me." A customer waved to get Helena's attention.

"Sorry." Helena passed the woman her croissant.

The queue moved slowly. Claire's attention flickered away briefly, to the cashier. She ordered coffee, an éclair. Then she drifted down the counter, hugging her long, oversized wool coat, toward the spot where Helena stood. The air was too thick to breathe, sticky and cloying in Helena's throat.

"Hey," Claire said.

"Hey."

"It's been a minute."

"Or two."

Claire's lips twitched. "You work here?"

"I do."

They stood in silence, measuring one another. Claire's phone buzzed. The queue had grown, customers clamoring to grab breakfast before the next morning train.

Helena scrawled her phone number hastily on the edge of a napkin, passed it across the counter, followed by Claire's steaming coffee and pastry. Claire left. Five minutes later, her text lit up Helena's phone screen.

*I'm in London until Friday. When are you free?*

The Underground was alive that evening, even moreso than usual, thrumming with music and trains exhaling hot air through a labyrinth of tunnels. Helena had always enjoyed watching the train windows flick past as she stood on the platform—somehow, they reminded her of branches in a storm, leaves parting and closing outside her childhood bedroom window in Vermont, revealing patches of steel-gray sky. She'd painted the Underground many times before, and in fact her first exhibition during her MFA had been a series of paintings depicting trains, blurred figures just visible through grimy windows.

## indulgence

by SUE ELLEN ZHANG



"You were friends with her in college?" Helena's husband, Luis, asked when she got home, sinking onto the couch next to him with a bowl of pasta.

"More like acquaintances."

"Oh. Well, do you know why she's in London?"

Helena turned a piece of pasta with her fork, watching light catch the glistening slick of melted butter. "Book signing, maybe?"

"She's an author?"

"Yeah. Shorts stories, and a memoir."

"Have you read her stuff?"

"Some of it."

Luis glanced at her briefly, his expression unreadable. "When was the last time you saw her?"

*Two girls, sitting across from one another in a dimly-lit dorm room, the air sour with vodka and stale lavender perfume. A breeze from the open window raising goosebumps along Helena's arms. Helena hadn't been able to look at Claire when Claire got up and left. She could only stare at the scuffed linoleum floor and wait for the door to close.*

"Must've been senior year," was all Helena said.

Luis nodded. He knew when to press and when to let her be, and Helena had never felt more deeply thankful for this quality than now, when her nerves felt wired to a fuse, poised to light up at the barest touch.

"I'm going to paint." She kissed him on the cheek. "Don't wait up for me, okay?"

Helena's studio had a chaotic quality to it—as the best artists' studios do, she told herself, although in fact she just didn't bother to clean. Canvases littered the plywood table and leaned off-kilter against walls, some half-finished, others blank, luminous, expectant. She sank onto her stool, tucked her knees to her chest. If she was still long enough, the scent of turpentine and paint and old wood would envelop her so completely she might as well be a painting herself.

As far as Helena could remember, Claire had seen her paintings only once. They'd had different friend groups in college—Helena the cross-country team, Claire the improv troupe—but it was a small enough school that they often shifted into one another's orbits, exchanging smiles on

the sunlit quad or settling at the same café table to sip lattes over midterms.

It had been at the college's annual artist showcase their senior year. Helena had chosen three paintings from her portfolio to display—all still lifes—and Claire had wandered past her exhibition late in the evening, when crowds had begun to disperse.

"These are incredible," Claire had said, nesting a seemingly-untouched glass of wine against her chest. "I had no idea you were this good at art."

Helena had flushed, murmured her thanks.

"Did you paint growing up?"

"Not so much. I drew a lot, though."

Claire lingered over a painting depicting the inside of a laundromat—her eyes traced the soft interplay of color, the reflections in the washing machine doors.

"You got this so perfectly," she said.

"This gap here, between the two washing machines...I used to crawl around when I was little to find quarters between them." Claire chuckled. "My brother would distract the laundromat workers while I did it. Usually could find enough to pay for a load or two for the week."

Helena's fingers tightened involuntarily around her own wine glass. Most of their classmates had grown up attending private school and vacationing in summer homes. She had thus always assumed that Claire—who tonight wore scuffed high-tops and a loose pink flannel shirt fraying at the sleeves—thrifted old clothes for fun, for the thrill of finding something unique. Not out of necessity. Yet here Claire was, describing a scene that Helena might have plucked from her own childhood—the ever-present panic, submerged just beneath the surface of her parents' whispered conversations about how they would clean their clothes, keep the power on, string together the next month's rent?

"Where did you grow up?" Helena ventured to ask. "You're from the northwest, right?"

"Small town in rural Washington. Nobody's ever heard of it. My parents ran a convenience store, but then it went under."

"Oh. I'm sorry to hear that."

"Life happens, right?" Claire straightened, turned toward Helena. It was the first time, but not the last, that Helena felt Claire was *seeing* her, looking at something personal and untoward and perhaps even a bit ugly. It made her vaguely uncomfortable.

She had looked away, said goodnight. They parted, and Helena put the encounter out of her mind; it was easier, after all, to not think about such things.

After some time, Helena stirred from her spot on the studio chair. She drifted aimlessly for several minutes, as if she couldn't remember exactly where the painting was stored, then dug it out from beneath a pile of sketches. Shades of deep purple and gray muddied one side of the canvas; the other was starkly lit by the glow of cheap tiki lamps that all the fraternity houses had purchased in those days. A woman sat on a stool—Claire. The people around her were bathed in shadow. Helena propped the painting on the easel and stood back. She'd worked on the painting many times over the years. It was mostly finished, except for the details of Claire's expression. Those details, Helena had never been able to bring herself to complete.

Luis had fallen asleep on the couch when Helena returned upstairs. She tucked herself next to him, breathed in his reassuring scent: spiced soap, pine trees, a touch of cinnamon. Luis had never minded her silences, had never pushed her to speak.

Yet now she was going to meet Claire again, in just a few short days, and she could not remain silent, not after all this time. But what did she want to *say*?

Helena grabbed a pen from the end table. There was nothing to write on. She opened her phone instead, started a note.

*Thank you for...*

She stopped there. For...what?

She deleted it. Started again. Two hours later, she had managed only a few short sentences, mockingly bare against the fluorescent backdrop of her phone:

*I think about that night often, and about you. You were so brave. I've gone to therapy. I'm doing much better. I'm not surprised we ran into each other.*

*I'm sorry.*

The words were woefully inadequate, she knew, and even reading them she felt stupid. The barest blush of dawn was beginning to seep through the curtains now. Helena stared at the phone until her eyes burned, willing herself to find an answer buried in the sparse text.

None emerged, and she had drifted into half-sleep when Luis woke and ushered them both to bed.

Helena had painted Claire with careful attention to detail—the delicate bracelet she'd worn that night, her left ankle hooked at a sharp angle behind the right, the way strands of hair had slipped from her bun to trace the contours of her shoulders.

She had never painted *him*. Not directly, at least; yet she found he often infiltrated her paintings nonetheless, hiding in the uncomfortable distortion of shadows, faceless women, men whose silhouettes pressed up and out against the edges of the canvas, threatening to burst free.

He'd been their same year in college—self-possessed, funny, athletic. Helena had developed a crush on him sophomore year, after meeting him briefly at the gym.

"He's got a girlfriend," her friend Sarah told her. "No use going there."

But by their senior year he didn't have a girlfriend, or if he did, he didn't care.

They'd talked briefly at the party that night—a graduation event hosted by one of the fraternities. Helena had come with two friends, but they'd wandered off, so she was alone when he approached her.

His attention flattered her at first. She had always been drawn to the rich, deep timbre of his voice, the dusting of stubble along his jawline, his broad shoulders. He'd offered her a drink. This was his house, and his presence filled the space around her, commanding and insistent.

Helena hadn't been ready for that insistence. She hadn't been ready for the strength of his hands, the forceful way he'd pressed against her on the dance floor. She had tried to pull away—the heat was getting to her, the slickness of others' sweat roiling her stomach, and she needed space from his crawling hands. But he'd only yanked her back, wanting, *taking*.

When he led her away from the dance floor, it was with one arm clamped vice-like around her waist.

Helena's head swam—from alcohol, from fear, from the scream that was building inside her but somehow wouldn't come out. She had cast around for her friends, but they had vanished.

Then Helena saw Claire. Claire was seated on a barstool, drink in hand, but her eyes were clear and focused when they met Helena's.

A hundred words, a thousand, passing like an invisible current through the air between them. There was nobody in the room but Claire, nothing but the flare of understanding that burned even through Helena's panic.

The crowd surged. Claire disappeared, and Helena was pulled away, her protests swallowed by the mass of shifting bodies.

They were set to meet at 4:00pm at Regent's Park on Thursday. Helena arrived an hour early, too anxious to sit, her feet kicking up swirls of late autumn leaves as she paced.

"Hey."

Claire lingered in a pool of sunlight. She was dressed unremarkably—dark jeans, sweater, a cream-colored scarf—more subdued than her clothing in college, but it suited her now, this older version of the girl Helena had barely known.

They wandered, paused to watch birds nesting in the trees, climbed toward Primrose Hill. They made careful small talk. Helena's guess had been right—it was indeed a book signing that had brought Claire to London. Helena didn't mention that she'd bought a copy of Claire's memoir a year before, when it first came out. She hadn't read it...somehow, it had felt like an invasion of privacy. But she'd read reviews with a strange fervor, could practically recite them from memory.

"Tremendously sharp, witty, and compassionate—Claire Zhang is a force to be reckoned with."

"Filled with moments of heartbreak and clarity, this debut memoir is an insightful look into the complex interplay of class, race, and gender that shapes life in rural America."

"It's strange," Claire admitted.

"Having other people—strangers—read about your life. I don't think I was really prepared for it. But I guess you would know what that's like."

"How so?"

"Well, you're an artist, right?" Claire darted a glance her way. "I'm not surprised. You were always so talented. I saw an article about your work on Twitter a while back."

"Painting isn't quite the same as a memoir, though."

"Still, there's something personal in every painting, right?"

Helena didn't answer. It was true, and she had woken in a cold sweat for weeks before her first gallery exhibition, terrified at the thought of exposing herself.

"I'd love to see some of your recent work," Claire said.

A bench perched at the top of Primrose Hill. Helena tugged at the collar of her coat to loosen it; she was suddenly hot. From here the whole of London opened before them—skyscrapers glazed honey-gold in the setting sun, the distant curve of the London Eye, peach-cream clouds with bloodied undersides hanging low on the horizon.

They sat. Now was the moment, Helena knew, but her hands were clammy, and she found her mind blank, as it all too often was during moments that mattered. But she had to try.

"I have something to say." Helena paused, took a deep breath before continuing. "I wanted to say thank you. For what you did that night."

Claire shifted slightly. Helena stared down at her hands, cupped in her lap, at her chipped pink nail polish and the blue-stoned ring Luis had bought her last summer.

*The darkness of his bedroom. His body, heavier than she ever imagined. Helena was stunned, immobile, couldn't breathe.*

*A door, opening.*

*Claire's voice. Shouting, dragging him off.*

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" he had yelled.

*Claire's hands—cool, dry—frantically pulling her up off the bed, out into the hallway.*

*"Bitches."*

*That's what he'd called after them as they fled, through the main room littered with empty bottles, out into the warm evening, where Helena*



## loose myelin sheaths

by MARYAM SEYEDSADR

*had thrown herself down and vomited in the bushes.*

"I thought you were avoiding me, after," Claire said. "I wanted to talk to you. But...I never saw you around."

"I didn't leave my dorm much. I think maybe I was afraid to see you."

"Why?"

Helena closed her eyes. How could she possibly give voice to a shame so big it had enveloped her? It had taken years to

chip it away, years of self-destructive coping followed slowly by therapy, sobriety, a full scholarship to an MFA program in London, meeting Luis, trusting Luis.

Instead, she asked, "Weren't you afraid? When you came into the room. He could've hurt you."

"Of course."

"So why did you come after me?"

Another pause. Claire shifted again, and this time Helena looked up, met her

gaze square on.

"I suppose," Claire said slowly, worrying the edge of her lip, "because I wished so much that someone had come after me, the year before."

Helena nodded. This knowledge did not surprise her...somewhere, deep down, she had known it, had felt it in the tenderness with which the other girl had fixed her skirt afterward, led her back to her dorm, wiped mascara from her cheeks, whispered calming words she couldn't now recall.

"I want to show you something," Helena said.

She pulled the phone from her purse, opened it with trembling hands. Found the photo. Hesitated only a moment before passing it to Claire.

Claire's fingers hovered over the screen, as if she might reach through and touch the painting.

"This is me," Claire breathed.

"Yes. It's you. I'd like you to have it. Only if you want it, of course."

"This is..."

Claire stopped. Shook her head. She might have been crying, it was difficult to tell; in this light her eyes were bright and glittering and fierce, just as Helena remembered, just as they appeared in the painting, the painting that said more than she could've ever expressed in words. The painting that was all Claire and Claire's bravery and none of him, not even a little bit. Finishing it last night had left Helena's skin tingling, and she had climbed up to the apartment roof without a coat to soak in the cold, pale morning.

The two women sat together. Helena had nothing to say, but she knew it didn't matter. Claire had taken her hand. Helena felt herself thawing in the crisp autumn air, shedding the last remnants of something that had lingered and curdled around her for 15 years...a scent, maybe, or a feeling.

She took a deep breath and exhaled, let it evaporate into the darkening sky.



## *flowers*

by NATALIA ERMOLOVA

## *iron and water*

by BRANDON WOLFELD

I.

Since I was a child

I wanted a secretary desk.

My first time in the wild,  
(A tiny room in Hollywood)

Alhambra had one that I could

Have for 100 dollars. Not picturesque,

Didn't sport an arabesque, but it was

"Real" (heavy), strong (inflexible), compact  
(terrified of taking up space).

II.

When I was 20 I thought I wanted that:

To be strong and useful and agile.

Suave and bold: a fighter and a diplomat.

But every day I felt more and more bent.

I hadn't the lexicon to read myself. Pent

Up self-resentment does a thing to you.

Lignification. Wood is strong and sturdy,  
but splinters and is wont to rot.

Skin grows and sheds; Wood does not.

III. In the palliative clinic

"I feel like my body is falling apart"

As if he were so many gears, brass  
bearings and double-action diesel heart.

Confusion as the steel melts away,  
baffled when wrought arms fall and decay.

We are more akin to a buggy pond,

Where I would abscond at twilight's summer,

Only varying in organization and proportion.

Always on the cusp of dissolving into peat moss.

# Rhythm

by ZHUANG T. FANG, MD

Sitting in a tiny dark room  
Close, shoulder to shoulder  
Almost feeling each other's heart beat

Jazz, just like cardiac anesthesia  
Is all about rate and rhythm  
Yet, in the operating room  
tachycardia and dysrhythmia drive us crazy  
But in this tiny dark room  
This sophisticated, Loosely Organized  
between AFib and Aflutter  
flooding within our blood, into our brain

I like jazz, a dancing chaos of sound  
The mixing of trumpet, long horn, saxophone,  
piano, bass, and a restless drummer  
More complicated than my 622 mixtures

We are not drunk  
But almost in a dance  
Clapping and cheering, disoriented.  
Under the watchful eye of legends  
Staring from the wall with the most satisfied smiles

It is the soul of jazz, hidden in  
the faded and discolored oil paintings  
Singing blue, escaping from the little old house  
To the nearby Bourbon street  
Telling story of the Mississippi river

Sipping on whiskey, the trumpeter sings  
"While wandering on a New York street  
My heart stays in Louisiana..."  
Strong, Loud, Then a whisper  
The trumpet starts mumbling  
Up, Down, as if asking  
Gathering from every corner of the world  
Are you homesick tonight?

2022.10.23. UCLA DAPM social in the Preservation  
Hall, New Orleans, Louisiana

# 旋律

我們擁擠在暗淡的小房間  
肩膀挨肩膀，几乎聽到彼此的心跳

爵士樂，就像心臟麻醉學  
心率和旋律是主導  
手術室裏的心率過速或混亂  
會讓我們瘋掉  
然而，在暗淡小房間裏  
這微妙而略帶節奏的心率過速和混亂  
介乎於心房顫動與扑動之間  
翻滾在我們的血管裏，沖入大腦

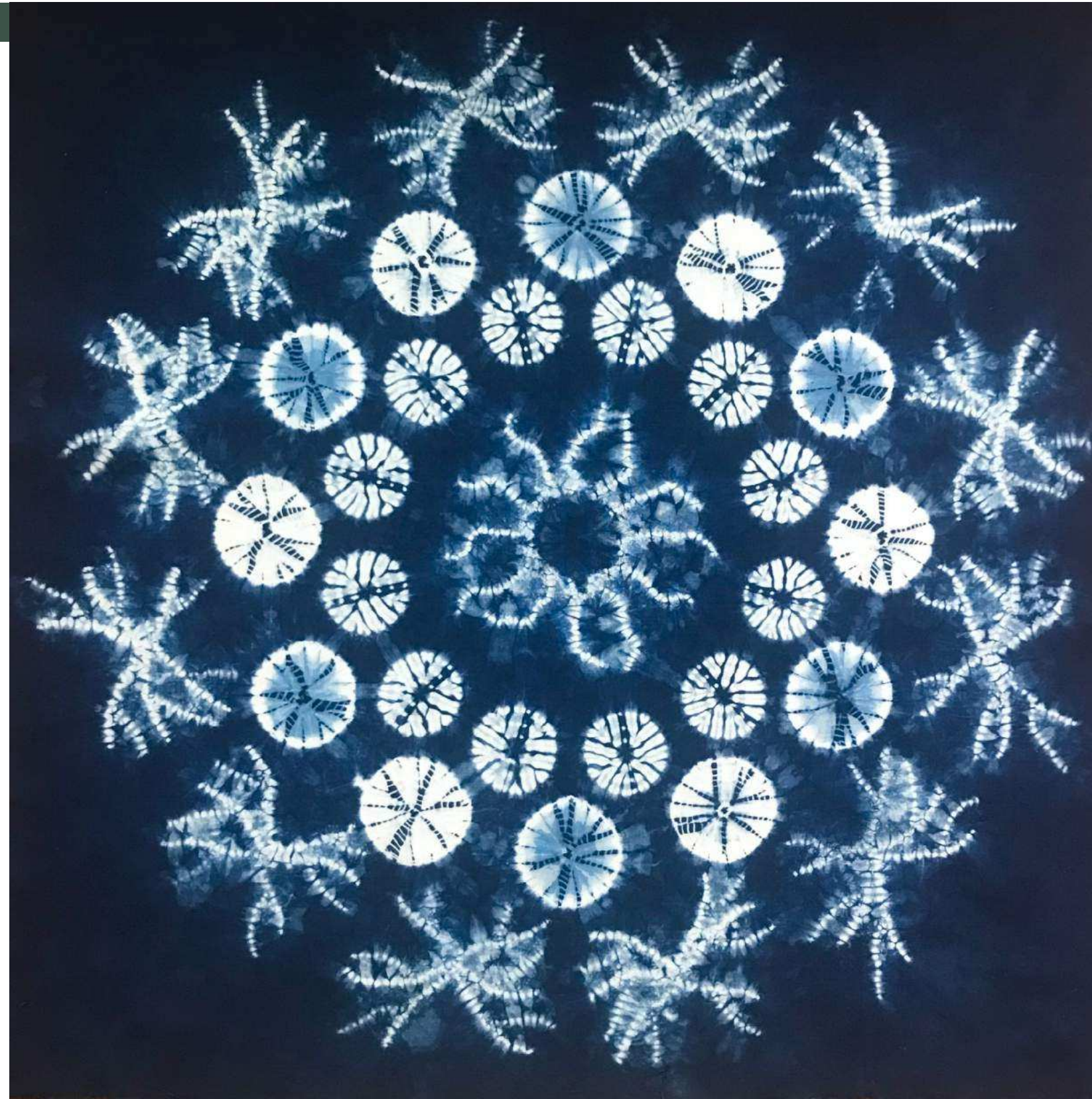
我喜歡爵士樂舞蹈般的狼藉  
如調味於小號，長號，莎士風，鋼琴，大提琴  
以及永遠坐不穩鼓手的大雜燴  
比我的 622 混合劑更加複雜

我們都沒有醉，卻如瘋癲般  
失態地拼命地鼓掌和喝采  
毫無意識到牆上爵士家們的注目  
以及流露出來心滿意足的微笑

這就是爵士樂的靈魂，隱匿在  
繞牆垂掛的斑駁褪色的油畫  
吟唱著藍調，並從小小的暗室  
溜達至波鉢街  
傾訴著密西西比河的故事

呷一口威士忌，小號手唱著  
“當我在紐約街頭流達  
我依舊心系露易絲安娜”  
小號聲忽強忽弱，近乎於喃喃自語

忽高忽低，似乎在發問  
我們都來自五湖四海  
今晚，你是否也思鄉了？



# Neuroimaginings

by TAKAKO KATHERINE TAMAI

INTERPLAY  
by YOON KYUNG LEE

Grandma, do you remember? When we lay  
Side by side, the floor as our bed  
As you told me stories, and we lost track of time.  
I can still hear the laughter in our home,  
Feel the squeeze of lungs, till no breath was left,  
The steamy air of another summer passing by.

All before that day we were too late to come by.  
We entered the hall where - on the ground - you lay.  
I didn't know back then that we should have left  
Right away to the ER. Instead, we took you to your bed.  
We thought the safest place would be home,  
And didn't realize there was a chase against time.

Because what you had was a stroke, your first time  
Which changed everything. You no longer could live by  
Your own strength, so you went to the nursing home.  
You started to stutter with words that relay  
How scared you were when you couldn't stand from bed.  
But, since I was starting med school, I left.

Guilt sat on my shoulders because I left  
You behind, during the time  
you needed me most. Many nights in bed  
I wondered how you were doing in yours by  
Yourself. Beneath my studies underlay  
A desire to know what should've happened at home.

Shifting through rotations, my thoughts drifted from home.  
Then, one day, pager rang CODE: patient with left  
Sided weakness. Inside the CT, she lay.  
Scanned the image, quickly, carefully because time  
Is brain. Before 4.5 hours passed by,  
tPA – we made it! Patient returned to her hospital bed.

Next day, as I rounded at the patient's bed,  
Her family mirrored mine. The hospital looked a bit like home,  
And I couldn't help those "could-be" thoughts rushing by.  
Could things be different if I had known the hours left  
To treat you right? I'll never know; I can't turn back time.  
I can only learn, only promise to never again delay.

Yet, I still hold an interplay of feelings at the patient's bed  
From time to time, as I remember your nursing home,  
The day I left, and telling you, "Goodbye."

MT LOWE AT SUNSET  
by LARRY MAO



## *WASHED ASHORE*

by JAMES ASUNCION

# *TREE HUGGER*

by SHIVANI DAYAL

I was raised by a tree hugger —  
A woman who told me to speak to the moon,  
to give my sorrows to the ocean, to listen to the wind.  
So I've given hugs to a fair number of trees —  
but I wasn't expecting a tree to ever hug me back.  
Yet that's what happened today when I climbed into a tree,  
as adults sometimes secretly do.

I curled up in the center of this ancient being,  
letting the branches wrap around me, spiraling towards the sky.  
This space felt built perfectly for me,  
like a child fits perfectly into her mother's arms.

A relief after I spent this morning with death,  
the smell of formaldehyde still pungent on my hands  
after being belly deep in a cadaver's abdomen,  
So I chose to spend the afternoon with life —  
with green shoots poking out of damp earth, sparrows chirping,  
and fresh water babbling happily down a stream,  
Reminding me that life is just an accumulation of sensory experiences,  
the meaning of which is up to us to ascribe.

One day I will be gone —  
nothing but a whisper of a life once lived.  
But this tree will still be here,  
rooted in the earth deep enough to withstand the tumultuousness of time.  
So I place my soft hands on her rough bark and imbue some of my life force into her,  
imprinting a memory into the eternal energy of this being.

One day I, too, may be reduced down to the smell of death on a medical student's hands —  
I hope she finds a tree to hug for me.



*hermosa flying*  
by MARTHA MEZA

*the seafarer*

by AUDREY NGUYEN

Linh couldn't remember the last time she'd had a full meal. All she knew was that for the past week, she had savored only two meager handfuls of rice a day. The meal often came to her cold and undercooked, sometimes with a cup of metallic-tasting water. She would spend all day eagerly awaiting mealtime, only to feel deeply unsatisfied after each gulp of food.

Despite the circumstances, she found herself constantly yearning for a delicious reminder of home. Today, she felt a particular craving for a bowl of *thịt kho*: braised pork and eggs steeped in caramelized sauce—the kind that Ma often made for her after a busy day at school. Her stomach growled at the thought.

There was a tug at her sleeve, pulling her from her hungry daze. "Chi," said her little brother Cuong, referring to her as 'sister.' "What's wrong with her?"

Linh followed the direction of his gaze. They both stared at a woman sitting across from them on the boat, her tan clothes ragged and stained with dirt. Daylight shone on her salt-and-pepper hair, the gray strands strikingly white against the damp black locks that spilled past her shoulders. Dry, parched lips matched her closed and sunken eyes. Her sunburnt and wrinkling skin was a thin sheet over fragile bones.

"She's sick," Linh replied simply. Her throat felt tight at the sight of the woman, who felt foreign yet familiar all at once.

"Why?" She clutched her ten-year-old brother tighter against her side. "Because she's thirsty, and there hasn't been enough water to go around."

While indeed there was a shortage of food and water, Linh couldn't be sure that that was the reason the woman looked so ill. All of the passengers on the boat looked haggard to some extent, some worse than others. Days at sea, crammed onto a floating vessel with hundreds of others and few belongings, would do that to any person. After all, there were costs to escaping in secret—costs that Linh hardly dared to dwell on.

She remembered the night of her escape vividly. Her uncle, a high-ranking official, had managed to secure her and her brother coveted spots on a southward-bound fishing boat that was set to leave at midnight. In a cold and militant manner, he had given her clear instructions on where to go and who to meet with. He had told them to pack quickly and lightly, and to leave everything non-essential behind. Perhaps the most jarring news he delivered, however, was that he and her mother would not be joining them.

"Ma, why can't you come with us?" Linh had asked, as she and Ma rushed about the room throwing her belongings into a small bag. Linh was fourteen years old, but in that moment, she felt five.

Ma had paused her packing to place a gentle hand on Linh's cheek. "I have to stay behind, just in case."

"In case of what?" "There's still some business I have to take care of here."

"You mean the jewelry shop?" Linh asked, feeling as though Ma's answer was not really an answer at all. She was referring to the jewelry store that Ma owned, which had been a family business that was started decades earlier by Ma's father. It had

become somewhat lucrative, enabling Linh and her brother the rare chance to take a car to school and to live in a more comfortable home—until everything had been taken away.

Ma nodded, looking as though she wanted to explain more, but she either could not or simply chose not to. “And there are only two spots available on the boat. You and Cuong must take them. You must. We don’t know when or if this chance will come again.”

“I don’t understand,” said Linh. “It’s dangerous. The stories I’ve heard from my friends at school—”

“I know, con gái.” Ma’s brown eyes were dry when she referred to Linh as her daughter, but her voice sounded tight. “I know it’s hard to believe, but it’s even more dangerous for you here, now.”

“More dangerous than the sea?” Linh was skeptical.

“A better life awaits you out there, than in here,” Ma said. “Remember what happened to Ba, to your dad? I can’t let that happen to you and Cuong.”

Linh could not find the words to reply. She must have looked a little pale, because Ma had sat down close beside her on the bed. In her hands she held a striped blue shirt, which she had handed to Linh.

“This shirt is special, and I want you to take it with you,” said Ma. “There’s a gift in it—one of the few pieces in our family that I was able to hide from the soldiers. It’s here.”

Gently, she took Linh’s small hand and placed it on the collared neckline of the shirt. Linh had felt something cold and solid beneath the fabric. She instantly recognized it: a thin yet sturdy chain, smooth and rounded in texture. Her mother had sewn a necklace within the seams of the garment.

“It’s the gold necklace from the shop window,” said Ma. “The one you’ve always liked. With the jade flower.”

Linh recalled that one well. She used to spend her afternoons and weekends off from school helping Ma at the jewelry store, learning everything from sizing diamonds to valuing karats of gold. She had always favored the one with the jade flower, found it beautiful with its simplicity.

She had traced her fingers over the shape of the petals. It was hardly

noticeable through the fabric, a testament to Ma’s expertise in clever stitching and needlework. Linh understood that it was safer this way, hidden from greedy enemy eyes, but risky nonetheless.

“Thank you, Ma.”

“It’ll be our secret,” her mother had said with a wink.

The rest of the evening had been a blur: frenzied packing, consolation of a crying Cuong, heartbreaking farewells, and harsh whispering in the night. Money had exchanged hands and a boat reluctantly boarded.

The first night had been the hardest. Linh kept Cuong glued to her amid the throng of unfamiliar faces, trying to ignore the sickening feeling that seized her stomach. Whether it was simply seasickness or the gut-wrenching sensation of loss—loss of home, family, or a precious life left behind—she did not know. Her sleep had been wracked with nightmares of grim stories she recalled from friends: boats invaded by pirates who stole everything that mattered, like the jade necklace that Ma had given her, among more unforgivable violations; thunderous storms that punctured holes in wooden floors, allowing the ocean to swallow the ship’s occupants in mere seconds; ghosts of loved ones who had been long lost at sea, emerging amid the blackness of the silent ocean to walk among the living.

Her sleepless nights only served to exacerbate the growing soreness of her muscles, stiff from sitting curled up all day beside the others. Meanwhile, her days were spent staring at the ocean’s hazy blue horizon, wishing but also not wishing to see another boat or sign of land. When one encountered another at sea, it was hard to know whether they were friend or foe.

Sometimes, she thought of Ma. *Why did you leave me here alone?* she would silently scream to herself. Resentment would sear through her chest, only to be followed a moment later by fathomless longing.

With each passing day, Linh felt more and more like a prisoner, wanting nothing more than to be off this rickety boat. She had lost track of the number of times she was shushed for speaking above a whisper. She had grown tired of sitting in complete silence amid the pitch-black darkness

of nightfall, holding her breath as her heartbeat thrummed in ears, so they would not draw unwanted attention. She felt like a bird who had been set free—only to be confined again in the cage of a new owner.

On the fourth day, she had started to play a game with Cuong to distract him from the wretched smells and sharp hunger that seemed ever-present. The two siblings pretended to be seafarers, meant to live a brave life at sea. They gave themselves new names and identities, pretended they were sailors on an important quest for an ancient king. It was only in this make-believe world that Cuong seemed to come alive, returning to his usual animated self. And Linh had to admit that it was easier to live in an imaginary land where they had chosen their own adventure, rather than the new and confusing reality that had

been thrust upon them.

A soft bell chimed through the air, jolting Linh back to the present. The dinner bell. Slowly, she registered the warmth of Cuong by her side and the gentle rocking of the boat on ocean waves. The sharp tang of salt and sweat filled her nose.

From the corner of her eye, she noticed food passing between dirt-stained hands. She couldn’t help but recall how, a few days prior, she had seen a greenish-looking passenger inadvertently retch into the pot of rice as it had gone around. It didn’t help her appetite then, and despite her hunger, it wasn’t helping much now.

Cuong rubbed his belly, his stomach growling much like Linh’s had done earlier that day.

“I miss Ma’s *thịt kho*,” he whispered, as they received their shares of rice and



**ANDROMEDA GALAXY**  
by AUSA F BARI

water.

“Me too.”

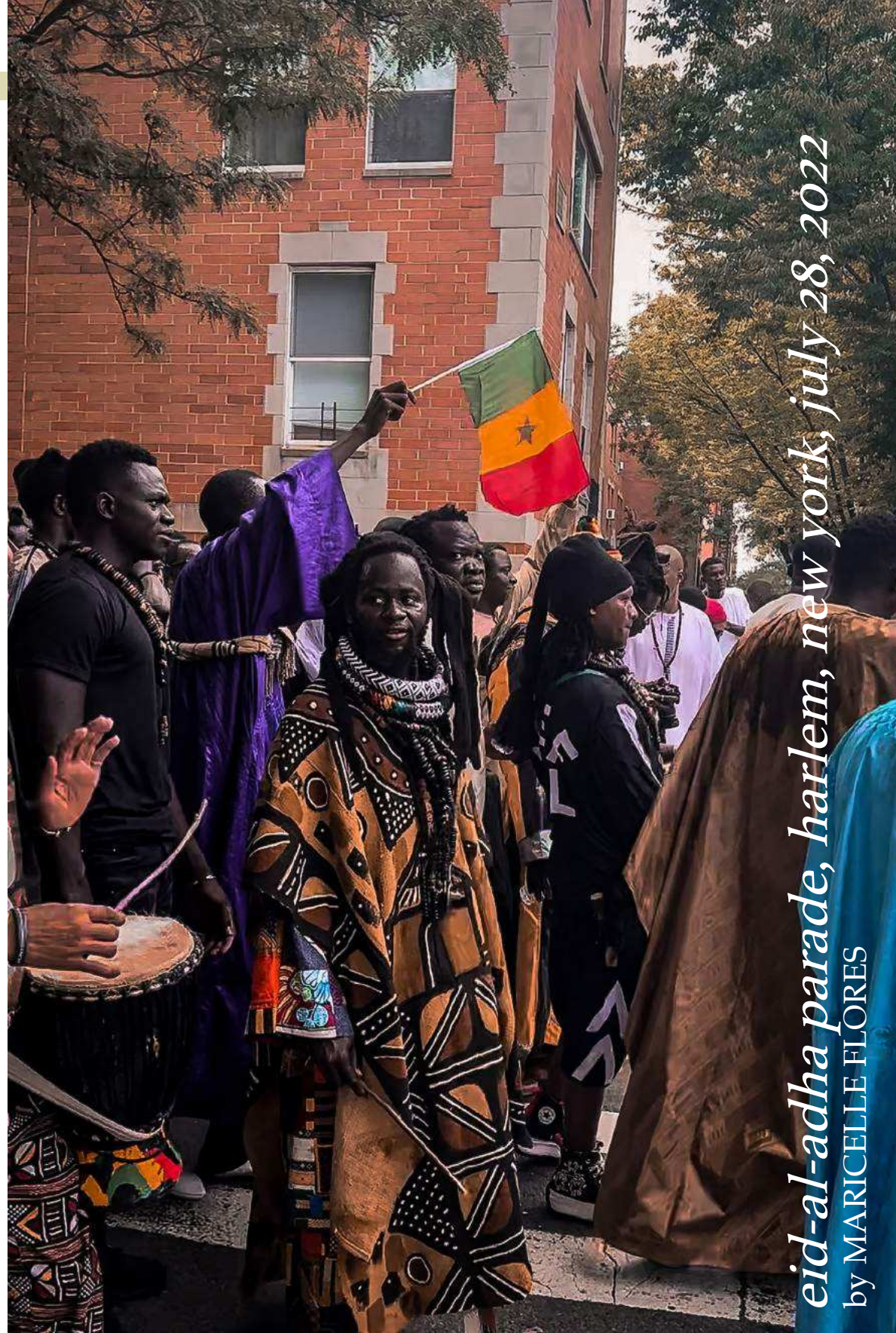
As Cuong nibbled at his rice, he stared thoughtfully at the water cup. Without a word, he leaned forward and offered his portion to the ill-appearing woman with the salt-and-pepper hair sitting across from him. She started in surprise.

It was then that Linh realized why the woman had felt familiar to her before. It was because she reminded Linh of Ma. Ma, with her graying hair and kind brown eyes. Ma, her delicate wrists encircled with gleaming gold and jade jewelry that had once been proud family heirlooms, before their livelihoods had been stripped from them. Ma, standing at the kitchen stove explaining to Linh the right way to stew caramelized pork to a tender perfection.

Linh reached up and gently touched the collar of her shirt. The steady firmness of the jade necklace eased the ache in her chest and strengthened the resolve in her heart.

In that moment, Linh felt that she was not a seafarer at all, despite her and Cuong’s burgeoning imagination. The pretense did not do justice to the sacrifices her family had made to bring her and Cuong on board. It did not represent the circumstances that had compelled them to make this choice, circumstances that risked innocent lives and tore families apart, all for the chance to grasp at a foreign and elusive future. Most of all, it did not capture what it meant to leave home behind, only to start over in a new place, learn a new language, and find a new community.

As the older woman hesitantly took the cup from Cuong’s insistent hand, Linh heard the echo of a surprisingly resolute voice in her head, one she had resisted in her seven days at sea: *You are not a seafarer. You are one of the Boat People.*



The Boat People.

Slowly, she leaned into these words. She let them dance around one another in her mind, even allowed them to linger at the tip of her tongue. The cage around her seemed to widen a little. And for the first time in a long time, she felt free.

## articulations

by FAHIM MAHMUD

The failure of my articulations  
is evident in my poetry.  
For my proofreader does not see  
the thoughts hidden plainly.  
If only they knew:  
    my own encyclopedia  
on my pillow, breeding misery.

Is it my words?  
My nouns, my verbs?  
Frantically hiding behind my N95...  
Can they see them?  
My hollow, incarcerated dimples,  
    off somewhere in Xanadu.

Every morning, every 18:40,  
every May, every Wednesday.  
When the alarm rings.  
Eternally, everything,  
who stops...

Is it my eyes?  
Hidden in plain disguise.  
Unintelligible twins  
locked onto yours in passing.  
    A bridge in the night:  
a light here, a darkness there.

So many days spent idle  
Every second of every week  
Anxiously awaiting, anticipating,  
My own eleventy-first birthday.

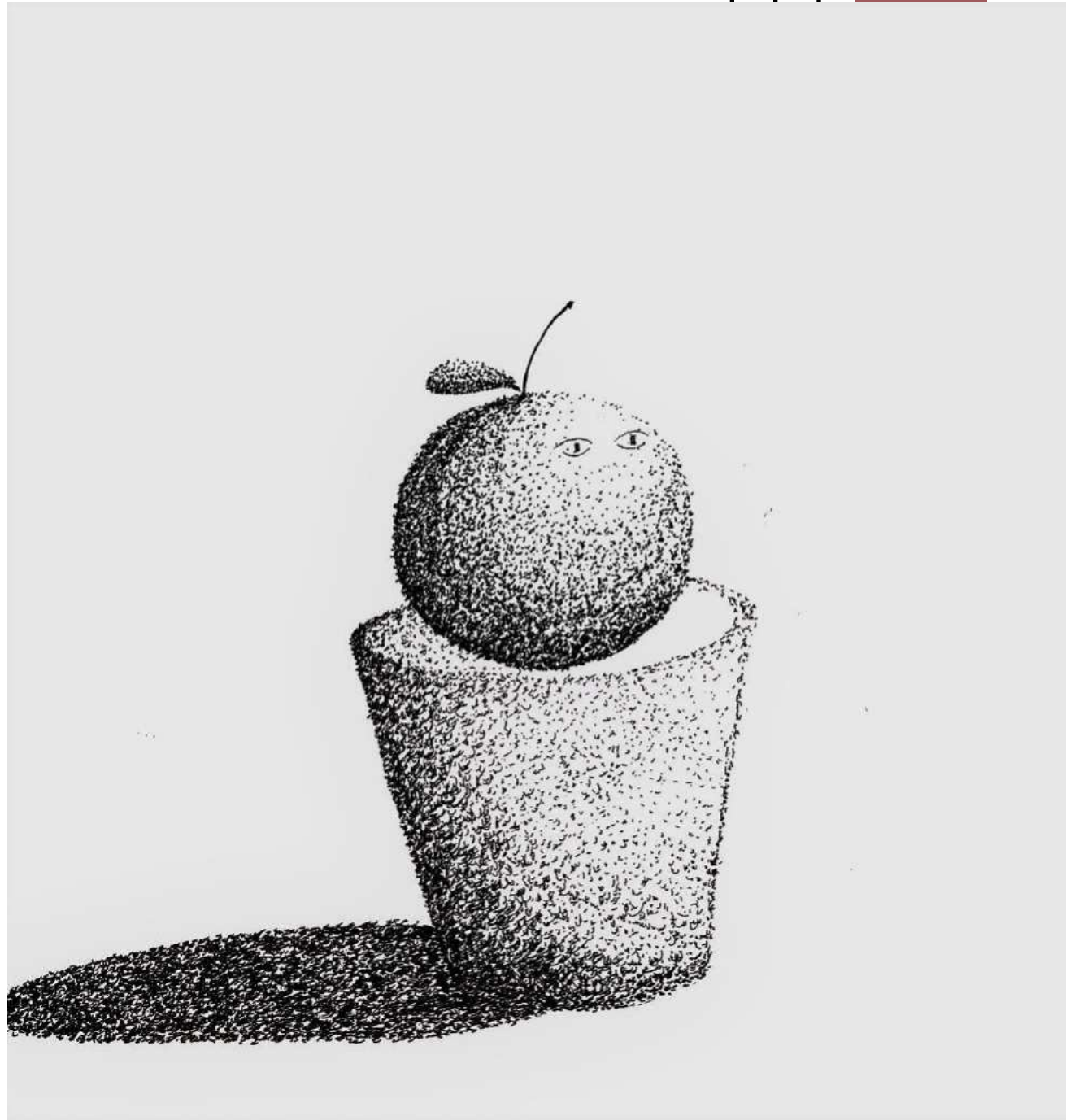
    So long in search of a golden key  
trapped somewhere between  
*One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Kafka on the Shore*

Perhaps it is my factory heart  
tugging at my strings  
like a... harp?  
no, no... a lute.  
a toddler unavailingly swaying  
*lub dub lub dub dub lub dub dub*  
a quite unreadable progression.

who stops for the clouds  
on a warm autumnal day  
    who meanders with me  
on a slow-dying night  
i know it not my pen  
my dearest friend and adversary.

These are the failures of me, myself,  
    My poetry.

*new day*  
by JAZLYN CHONG



*hospital cafeteria food*

by JUHEE AGRAWAL

strawberry and cheese croissant, selected as a pick-me-up  
he doesn't need antibiotics anymore  
we can take out the needle that's been stuck in his arm for weeks

chicken lettuce wrap – the chicken is more moist than expected?  
he nearly fell off his ladder but is peeing less in the middle of the night  
we'll switch his meds, let him try out new side effects

veggie burger, consumed in a quick 3 bites  
her kidney is gone, and its absence will save her life  
but I wonder if the other one will get lonely

black bean burger; a little dry, gets stuck on the way down  
he is left incontinent, but cancer-free  
and the margins are beautiful; that counts for something  
a relatively uncomplicated quarter-day affair

sea salt and vinegar chips—  
he needs 6 rounds of chemo  
and then we hope he never sees the OR again  
a crunch, the lingering taste of salt on my tongue

in the floors above, life and death play out across sterile fields  
morbidity and mortalities and miracles and more  
“that'll be \$3.65.” a beep. a smile. a nod.  
Return To Cafe – I mean, clinic – in 12 hours for follow-up.

## *strong hands provide*

by CHARLIE STOUGH

"This *must* stop," Den's mother had said, her voice hard as stone, after the second time in a full turning of the moon Den had returned home with scrapes on her knuckles and a gash across one cheek. "There are days your father cannot find you in the fields, and at night..." Her mother had fixed her with a look that Den knew too well. "At night-sometimes you are not in your bed."

Her mother had stopped her none-too-gentle tending of the cuts and jabbed a finger into the palm of Den's right hand, an intense light filling her eyes. "Strong hands provide," her mother had said, locking Den's gaze with her own and turning her right hand over to reveal the torn skin, "not...this."

Den made a face as she remembered the moment, now some two span past, as she made her way through a clearing filled with grass made tall by the summer rains. She had wanted to protest, but the words had withered in her throat. Her parents loved her without condition, she knew that, but she also knew they feared her spirit would one day be her undoing.

As a child, she had liked few things more than roughhousing with the other children from the surrounding farms. It had not been an uncommon occurrence for her to return home, having slipped away after finishing the day's work, covered in dust and bruised. This had continued as she had aged, but the childish antics had been replaced by confrontations and scuffles fueled by her height and strong sense of justice. This behavior was excusable for a girl who had seen a dozen summers, but for a woman who was now nine-and-ten – if one were to have believed the steely look in her mother's eyes – it was unthinkable.

The sun was warm on her face as Den moved through the tall summer grass. She held a rope in one hand, its coarse strands biting into her palm, pricking the flesh beneath her calluses. On the other end of the rope was a shaggy ewe, her wool dirtied from trampling through the dust. The ewe bleated as Den led her on.



REFLECTIONS AT LAKE LOUISE

by NIMA GOLZY

"Nearly there," Den soothed, as the tall grass gave way to a rocky slope thick with conifers, their gnarled roots snaking between boulders of various size. The ascent was steep, and for someone unfamiliar with the land, nearly impossible to traverse. But Den knew of a path that crisscrossed the face of the slope, a trail used only by small creatures and deer, that would take her over this hill and into the valley beyond. The going was tough, and the ewe bleated loudly in protest at first, but the effort needed to continue the climb eventually silenced her cries.

As Den followed the path, rope taut behind her, she thought again of her family. Things in the countryside were different now than they had been five summers ago. The headman of the local village, a kind man and a friend of her father's, had died suddenly one night. The village council had elected in his stead another man who boasted a large herd of cattle and was known to flaunt his

relative prosperity. When her father had learned of the news, he had shaken his head and grumbled about "underhanded business" on the council.

Afterward, life had gone on as it always had. It wasn't until many months had passed that men sent by the new headman had visited every farm and hovel in the valley, informing each of an increase to the yearly gift made to the village. The gift had been in place before even Den's parents had been born, and was an annual ritual of giving – usually of grain, vegetables, bread, or livestock – in preparation for the harvest celebration that was for Den the highlight of every season. A portion of the donations were stored away to help support those in the valley who could not provide for themselves during the subsequent year. Within Den's lifetime, the gift had remain unchanged.

The first increase had been met with good cheer – the harvest had been plentiful,

and there was more than enough to go around. The following autumn, the gift had been increased again, and each year after that. Den's memory of that time was broken, but she remembered there had been violence. Men who her father knew had been injured and some killed. The increases continued. Once, Den's family had cared for a small group of livestock: sheep, goats, even a dairy cow. Now, they had only chickens and a single goat for milk.

It was hard for Den to accept this treatment to her family and the families that she knew. Many nights, she let the anger roil within her until her vision blurred. She had overheard her father saying to her mother that he was unsure there would be enough grain to last through the winter.

Den's foot caught on an outstretched root and she fell forward, landing hard on the path, the wind knocked out of her. After a few ragged breaths, she cursed herself audibly. She felt an emptiness in her hand and turned quickly around. The rope and sheep were gone. Den stilled herself and listened, but could hear neither the rustling of plants nor the bleating of the ewe. She sagged into a sitting position with head downcast. An aching of her hand drew her gaze downward and she saw that the fall had reopened the almost-healed skin around her knuckles. Den sighed, thinking of what her mother would say now.

Her mother was wrong about one thing. Den had not been fighting, at least not in the sense that her mother believed. She had received her first set of recent scrapes after a brutish looking man, who Den vaguely recognized as one of the older boys she had roughed around with as a child, had come to take their last sheep. Den had been alone in the pasture when he had come, demanding the sheep in the name of the gift, and had launched herself at him. The man, unprepared for resistance, was soundly beaten and ran off back to the village.

Two span ago, he had returned with a club and the same demand. He had taken the sheep, and it had snapped something inside of Den. The next day, she had shirked her work and marched into the village, bursting into the headman's hall and demanding the return of the sheep. She was met with

laughter and hands pushing her out. Den, unable to control her fury, had unleashed herself at the hands denying her justice. She was eventually forced to flee.

And so now she sat in the middle of a dirt path deep in the forest. Sweat trickled down her forehead and she wiped it away with a lazy movement of her hand. A bleating from further up the slope, near the top of the ridge, caught her attention. Leaving the path, she cut through the underbrush and moved as quickly as she was able toward the sound. As she neared the top, the slope leveled out, and she bounded across a small stream making its way down the hill toward the valley. Her foot caught the wet side of a boulder nestled against the stream and she fell, crashing.

The ewe's bleating was loud in Den's ear as she raised her head off of the moss-carpeted ground. It took a moment for the wooziness to fade, her right arm aching dully from the attempt of catching herself. The ewe bleated again, distressed. Den frowned, taking her eyes from the ewe and looking around. She was in a dell, its edge ringed by wide conifers. Scattered throughout the clearing, atop the thick layer of moss, were pieces of stone that glowed starkly white in the shade of the trees. Den picked one up that was closest to her. It wasn't stone: it was far too light and its texture, too familiar – it was bone. Den looked to her right and the empty eye sockets of a goat's skull stared back at her.

"They say goats are disappearing," her father had told her and her mother a span ago after being visited by some men from the headman. "From their pens," her father had added with a smirk. "They say sheep too, and just yesterday, a heifer."

Her mother had raised an eyebrow, but her father had shaken his head. "No, I have no part in it," he had said, looking through the open door of their hovel to the pen where the chickens were kept. All were accounted for. "Perhaps it was a *galvorzes*," he had said with the faintest of smiles, alluding to the giant horned lizards that were said to eat misbehaving children as they slept. Her mother had smacked her father's arm, biting her lip.

A rustling near the edge of the dell opposite Den drew her from her thoughts. It was not the scaled bulk of a *galvorzes* that burst through the trees but a group of five men. "I told ya, *miesh*, it was her!" the man in the lead said, his finger outstretched in accusation. All five men were armed in some way, mostly with clubs. From behind the leader stepped a man dressed in finely spun wool and wearing a leather tunic dyed red. On his hip was strapped a long-dagger, its hilt ornately carved, the craftsmanship of which could not be found in the valley.

Den scrambled to her feet. "So this is our goat thief," the man – the headman – said. His voice was dry, empty of malice, but ever so slightly amused. He surveyed the clearing, noting, as Den had, the scattered bones. "Far too many to fill your stomach alone, I think." Without lifting his gaze off of Den, he asked, "Tuyve, remind me how many animals have gone missing?"

The man called Tuyve thought for a moment. "Ten goats, seven sheep, and two cattle, *miesh*."

"Nearly twenty animals all together." The headman clucked his tongue and shook his head. "Yes, far too many."

"Tell me," the headman continued, "who else was involved in this scheme? I will assume you were acting on the behalf of another. If you are forthcoming, perhaps your family may even be able to keep their milk goat. Did the Lyrens seek your help, or did your father lead the whole thing?"

"*Miesh*, she could be of *zalraj*," a man who Den knew to be named Kelin said, his speech low and hissing. *Zalraj* were said to be powerful magi, using the blood of animals to bind the spirits of the dead to their will. "*Jaleem sengash*," Kelin intoned.

"*Jaleem sengash*," another man echoed. The headman turned and regarded Kelin with a withering look, his brows furrowed. "She is a child and is no more *zalraj* than you or I. You see her hands? She bleeds just like the rest of us."

Something brushed up against Den's thigh, making her look down. The ewe had its way over to her. Den ran her hand through the thick wool and found the rope. Slowly, she coiled it around her palm.

The headman turned back around and smiled. "Surely, you don't think you'll be able to keep that one as well? All of you, take

the animal and the girl."

After a moment's hesitation, the four men advanced advanced.

Before they had closed half of the distance, Den began to whistle. Not a tune, but a long, warbling intonation of sound, the note of which seemed to reverberate through the air.

The men stopped, wary. "*Zalraj*..." Kelin hissed.

The headman, momentarily transfixed, looked between Den and Kelin and scoffed, shouting, "enough, take the girl-!"

The headman's last syllable was overtaken by a distant, shrill cry, as if the honk of a goose had mixed with the roar of a bear. The cry came again, louder this time, making the trees shake and rattling needles to the ground.

"*Jaleem sengash*..." Kelin breathed. Out of the sky exploded a dark red shape. With a crash that shook the earth, it landed behind Den and scooped the ewe, rope and all, into its open mouth. With a single gulp, the ewe was gone.

The clearing was silent, the men frozen where they stood, staring at the red behemoth behind Den. She could feel the hot breath of the creature on her neck and back. Slowly, she turned.

The beast had an angular head sitting atop a thick, muscular neck. Head and neck alike were ridged, with small, bony protrusions sprouting from the creature's body along the length of its neck and back. Its bulk was about the length of four men laying on their backs and placed head to toe, and its tail, which swished in the air,

agitated, was about as long. From its head sprouted two horns of white bone, angled backward, and against its body rested two massive wings, webbed and veined, like those of a bat.

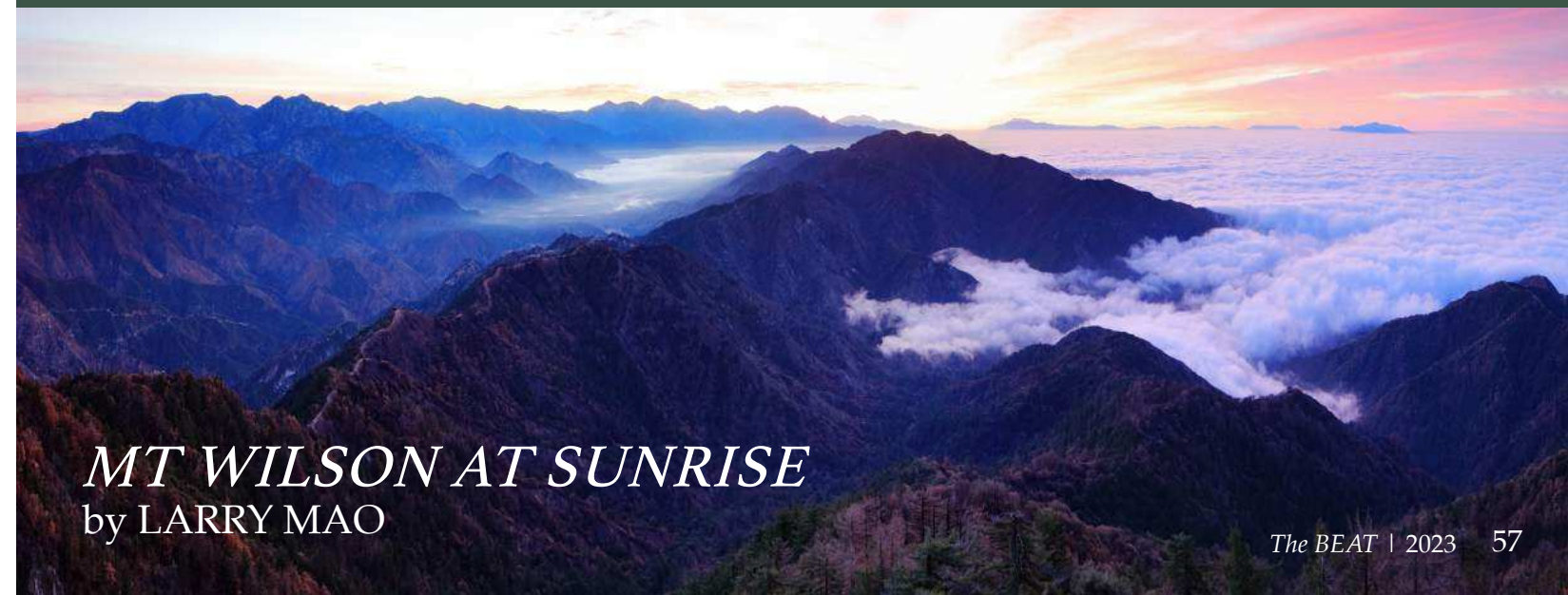
"*Saneesh valind*," Den said softly as she looked down the muzzle of the beast, its ridged back rising slightly above her head.

"*Saneesh valind*," she repeated in a soothing voice, and began to walk toward the creature. The beast considered her with golden-yellow eyes. When Den was about four paces away, the beast made a high-pitched chirping sound underscored by a deep rumble from within its chest, and bobbed its neck. "*Sanessh valind, ji mino zejan*," Den said, smiling, as she came up besides it. With an outstretched hand, she stroked the creature's neck, and the creature uttered a deep, rumbling hum from within its belly. Its hide was smooth and warm, its heat flowing into her hand and easing the pain of her torn knuckles.

Den uttered another word in her language and the beast lowered its left side, angling it toward her. Grabbing a hold of some of the small spikes on its side, she scrambled awkwardly up the creature's side to the base of its neck where, as she had lashed and tied them previously, lay thick rope wrapped round the creature's neck.

Den took a moment to balance herself, the creature raising its left side and resuming its stilted position on its rear legs, and then wrapped her hands around the thick cords of rope and gripped them tight. *Strong hands provide*. She smiled.

With pressure from Den's legs, the creature roared, and the men fled.



*MT WILSON AT SUNRISE*  
by LARRY MAO

# BIOGRAPHIES

## LITERATURE

**Audrey Nguyen** is a rising MS4 and current LOA student pursuing her MPH in Health Management at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. A long-time enthusiast of the fiction and fantasy genres, she loves using creative writing to explore the question: What does it mean to be human?

**Beau Sperry** is a third-year medical student at DG-SOM. Originally from Salt Lake City, his interests include creative writing, nonfiction, and whatever else he has time for.

**Beza Mengistu** - Just a first year medical student who enjoys writing in my free time!

**Brandon Wolfeld** is a recent east coast transplant in the palliative care department. Aside from his clinical work, his research interests include psychedelics in end of life care and prognostic awareness.

**Charlie Stough** is a staff member of the Broad Stem Cell Research Center. He enjoys reading, writing, and thinking about dragons in his spare time.

**Fahim Mahmud** is a third-year medical student at UCLA. Much of his writing influences stem from his studies of authors who sought to break down the underlying subjectivity of "reality." His dreams include publishing a children's novel, being his patients' favorite doctor, and having a Bernese Mountain Dog.

**Juhee Agrawal** is a 3rd year medical student who grew up in the suburbs of Birmingham, AL. She has written poetry since a young age, using it to capture her experiences, describe nature, and sometimes to simply have fun rhyming.

**Kate Coursey** is a fourth-year medical student at the David Geffen School of Medicine. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, creative writing, and reading literature for adults and children.

**Nicholas Hamilton** is a second year medical student from Cincinnati, Ohio. He plans on also obtaining his MPH and work with underserved communities.

**Shivani Dayal** is a nature lover, amateur poet, travel addict, and medical student. She also earned her Masters of Public Health and hopes to bridge public health and medicine.

**Steve Cramer** - Neurologists observe, and treat, the body and the mind.

**Yasmin Safdie** holds a B.A in Social Welfare from U.C. Berkeley and a Masters in Clinical Social Work from Columbia University. She has dedicated her professional career to working with populations who have been historically marginalized and underserved. Her work is guided by a personal commitment to social justice, cultural humility, the belief in dignity and worth of every human life, and a desire to bring healing to society through the power of community and radical love.

**Yoon Kyung Lee** is a fourth year medical student, interested in studying aging and geriatrics.

**Zhuang T. Fang, MD** - I have been publishing poetry in Chinese in the last 10 years. This is my first attempt of the bilingual poetry (English and Chinese).

## VISUAL ART

**Aarushi Saharan** is a first year medical student at UCLA DGSOM. She is a former chief editor of the Journal of International Society and Culture and enjoys reading, photography, and being in nature.

**Ausaf Bari** - I am a functional neurosurgeon and neuroscientist and my specialty is implanting deep brain stimulators into the brain to treat various movement and neuropsychiatric disorders.

**Dorwin Birt** is a Computing Support Coordinator in the UCLA Intellectual Development and Disabilities Research Center. He was born long ago and far away.

**Edgar Luna** is a 35 year old father of 2 boys. Entered NFT art space. Incorporating art and medicine to create awareness for ASL.

**James Asuncion** is a MS4 in the Medical Scientist Training Program. His PhD is in neuroscience and is going into psychiatry. His photography is a reflection of a turbulent mind and cosmos.

**Jazlyn Chong** is a fourth year medical student who loves the outdoors and drawing random things, especially small animals and fruit.

**Jon Salazar** - I'm an alumnus from UCLA HSSEAS (ChemE, Class of 2003) who's now manager of Dr. Tontonoz's Lab in Pathology. Photography is my favorite hobby, and I snap images of all kinds, people, places, and things. Certain images inspire me to create kaleidoscopic, surreal collages, two of which I will submit for consideration to be included in this year's BEAT.

**Kate Holland** is a second year medical student at UCLA born and raised in Akron, Ohio.

**Larry Mao** is a nature lover, especially a landscape photography fan.

**Maricelle Flores** - I am a first-generation Filipino American grad student at UCLA's nurse practitioner program. I am an avid social justice & mental health advocate because of my personal and professional experience in cancer care, as well as being a survivor of trauma & divorce. My research focuses on fostering a culture for equality, diversity and inclusiveness in the healthcare realm. The photographs depict my healing journey in a culturally rich environment when I moved to Harlem for the summer of 2022 after leaving a toxic marriage.

**Martha Meza** - I am passionate about working with underrepresented communities and people who use drugs through a harm reduction approach. With education in Psychology and Art, I am able to bring a creative perspective to mental health and substance use.

**Maryam Seyedsadr** - I have a PhD in Neurobiology and my research is about the autoimmune disorders of central and peripheral nervous system. Due to my background and my experience with microscopy, I am passion about bring art to science or science to art!

**Natalia Ermolova** - 20+ years at UCLA. Love my work, my family, my life.

**Neil Parker** - There is so much beauty in the world and I have tried to capture a part in my photography. it has been an honor to be involved with the BEAT now 25 years.

**Nima Golzy** completed medical school and residency training in Internal Medicine at UCLA and is currently part of the Hospitalist faculty. He has visited nearly every US state and National Park and enjoys hiking and photography.

**Stephanie Punt** is a post-doctoral neuropsychology fellow, working with the Operation Mend team. She loves spending time outdoors and creating art.

**Sue Ellen Zhang** - Using art to navigate the vast world (within).

**Syed Shahyan Bakhtiyar** is a PGY4 General Surgery Resident from the University of Colorado, currently working in the Cardiac Surgery Outcomes Research (CORE) Lab at UCLA.

**Takako Katherine Tamai (Kathy Tamai)** is an Assistant Project Scientist by day and a shibori artist by night. She discovered the ancient art of shibori, or Japanese tie-dye, while living in Japan. Science often influences her art, and she created Neuroimaginings based on the work of her collaborators at UCLA, who have developed a new tool to visualize single neurons in the mouse brain.

**Vaibhavi Patankar** is a staff research associate for the Kitchen Lab in the UCLA AIDS Institute. She recently graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor of Science in Molecular, Cell, and Developmental Biology and hopes to pursue a career as a physician.

**Zhuang T. Fang, MD** - I am an amateur nature photographer and a medical doctor who truly believe that medicine is art beyond science.



