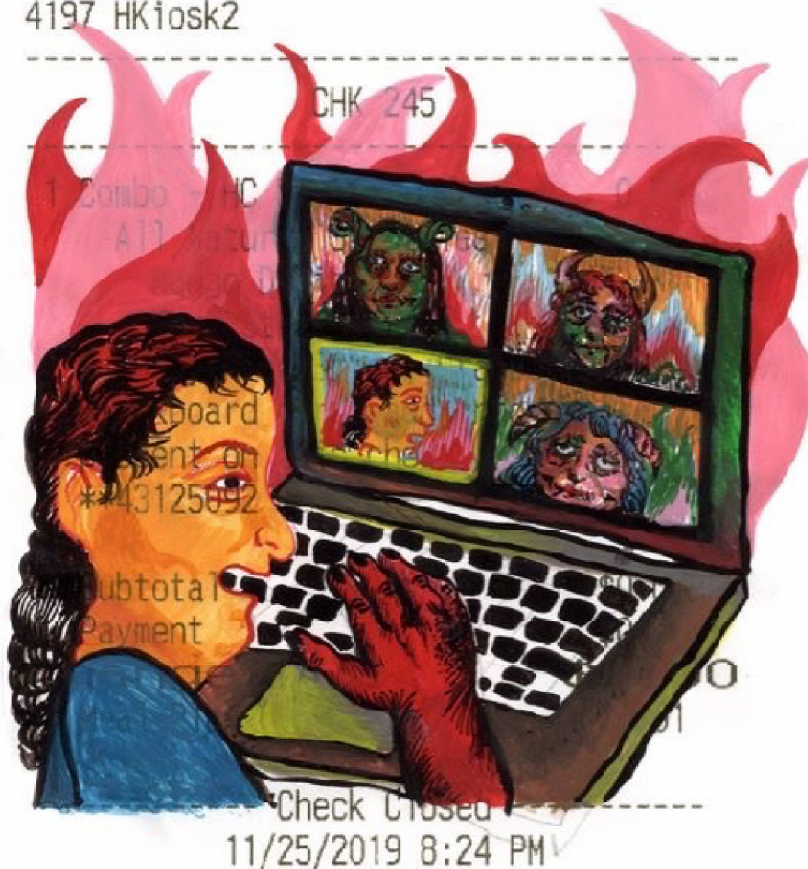


# WESTWIND

JOURNAL OF THE ARTS

EST. 1957

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UCLA DINING SERVICES  
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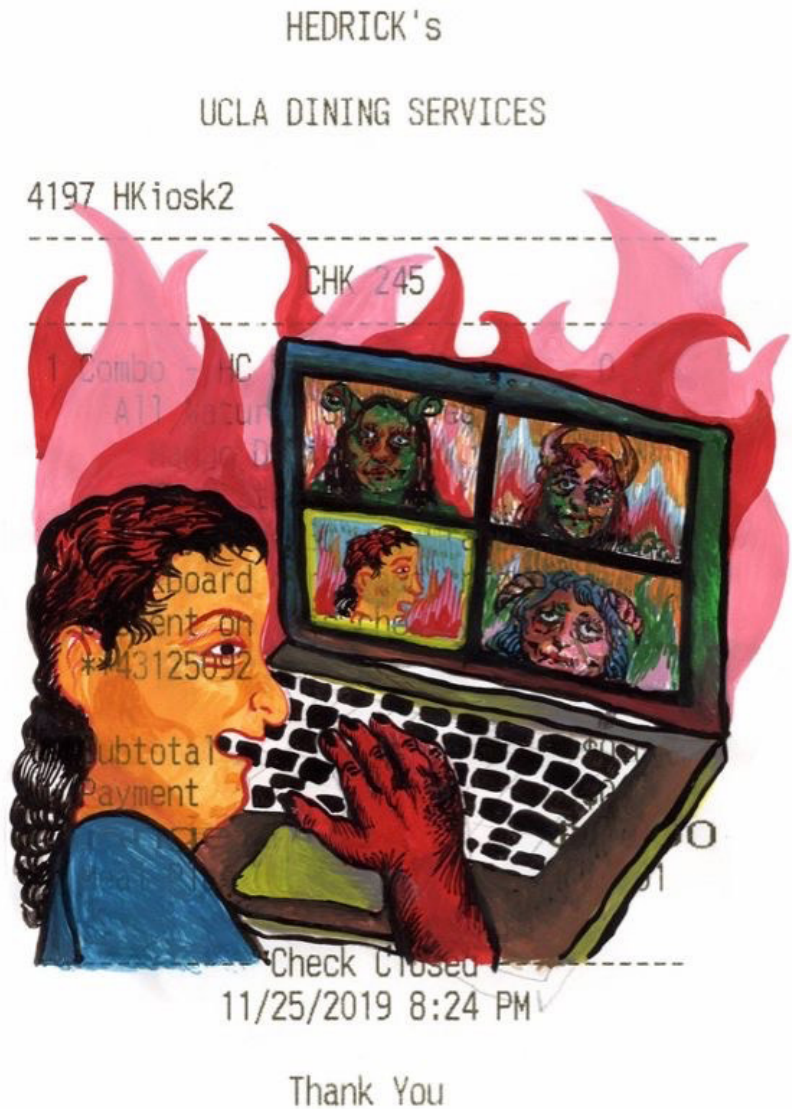


Artist: Vivien Adamian

**FALL 2020**

WESTWIND  
JOURNAL OF THE ARTS

FALL 2020



The Fall 2020 edition of Westwind features the work of writers and artists living through a monumental time. The past year has felt unmoored and transitory, unsettled and very bleak. We often speak of what we'll do, who we'll be with, where we'll go "when this is all over," yet even as we are ungrounded, for many of us, our lives remain stagnant.

I see this uneasy transience reflected in the city of Los Angeles which embodies impermanence and movement in its ever-shifting landscapes; in the stucco buildings that are torn down and rebuilt; in the fires and the economic uncertainty. Didion wrote about the Los Angeles freeways as places of both liberation and danger -- they trap us even as they bring us closer to something new. I come back to this idea as I walk every day through a city that still feels empty, even though I know someday it will come back to life.

Westwind's ties to Los Angeles go back to 1957 when we were founded as UCLA's first literary journal. While not all of the writers and artists in this issue are from Los Angeles, I believe that the work on the following pages speaks to the transitory quality that seems to permeate the consciousness of the current time. We have a story about a young man leaving the safety of his family to step into a new world at community college; a poem about butterfly migration in a city; abstract images of different angles of a human body that feel unsteady in their fragmentation.

I am incredibly proud of the work in this issue and am certain we'll look back on it as a reflection of the year 2020, as well as a certain kind of testament to the brightness and creativity of our peers. Our dedicated associate editors have worked tirelessly to bring this issue to life; every member has contributed to astute and lively conversations every week and our editors for this issue have brought humor and insight to their assignments. Each of our contributors has a strong voice and I am grateful to them for sharing their work with us.

The beauty of transience is that even though it may be inevitable in this strange time, one can always find a mooring and meaning in art and literature. I hope this issue of Westwind gives you grounding.

Lillian Mottern  
Managing Editor 2020-2021

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

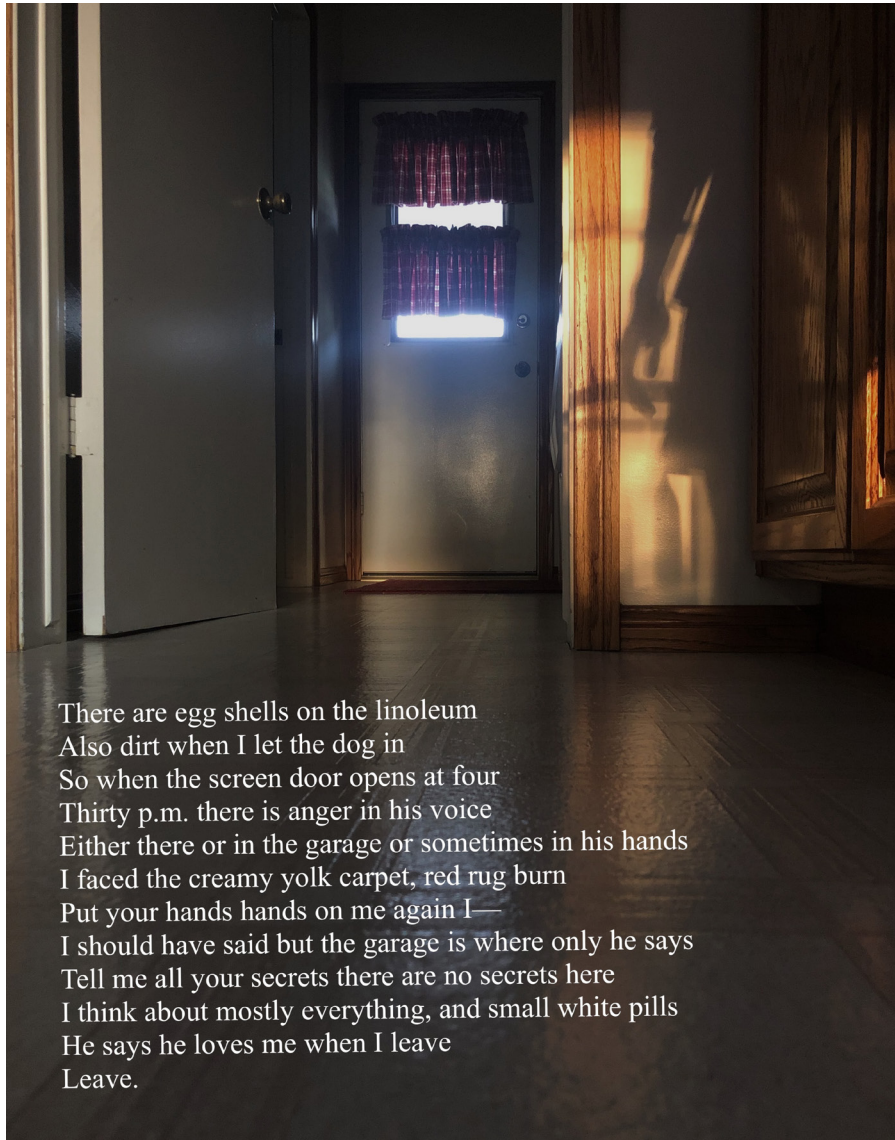
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<b>POETRY</b>		<b>FICTION</b>	
UZLA	7	COMEDIENNE	37
INCHOATE	9	THE LAST MAN	40
NAKAMURA	10	LEAVES OF NOISE	44
A HOUSE OUT BY THE SWAMP, A YELLOW HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY	11	LOSING YOUR FAITH: A HOW-TO GUIDE	53
A COLLECTION OF HYMNS FOR SOCIAL WORSHIP	12	THE PORCELAIN GIRL AND THE CELADON WOMAN	61
TO SPEAK OF ANGELS IN PLAIN LANGUAGE	13	<b>ART</b>	
FIXED SIGHT	14	LEAVE	5
HOLY	15	HOW TO ESCAPE THE SUNKEN PLACE	73
I WISH WE'D KISSED MORE IN THE RAIN	16	TEA TIME	74
MUSE	18	ANGLES DOUX I	75
ONLY FOR A LITTLE LONGER	19	ANGLES DOUX II	76
		ANGLES DOUX III	77
<b>CREATIVE NON-FICTION</b>			
ON THE 110	23	AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES	79
ONWARD	26	STAFF	83
SELF-CARE THROUGH WARFARE	31		



# POETRY

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There are egg shells on the linoleum  
Also dirt when I let the dog in  
So when the screen door opens at four  
Thirty p.m. there is anger in his voice  
Either there or in the garage or sometimes in his hands  
I faced the creamy yolk carpet, red rug burn  
Put your hands hands on me again I—  
I should have said but the garage is where only he says  
Tell me all your secrets there are no secrets here  
I think about mostly everything, and small white pills  
He says he loves me when I leave  
Leave.

---

Leave  
Brianna Spiker

LETTERS FROM



OUR EDITORS

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Jade Lacy  
Poetry

Fall at UCLA should be a time of beginnings, new friendships, and self discovery. This year, we found ourselves in an utterly unremarkable on-line space, now familiar and routine. The poems in this journal yearn for something more. They dwell on past days, imagined encounters, and things we never thought we would miss. And in bringing us these beautiful maybes, these poems show us what is still valuable in life. I'm deeply grateful for the poets whose work gives our journal life. I would also like to thank our poetry editors, who have continually amazed me with their intellect, dedication, and warmth. I hope that the work we present to you here, a collaboration between many creative minds, helps to spark the possibility of new beginnings, even in these famously unprecedented times.

Sophie Ferreria  
Poetry

Throughout the pandemic, our world has seemingly shrunk to the size of our homes, leaving us to mourn the loss of the lives we led before. In this fall issue, we see poets grappling with this loss. Amazingly, these pieces constitute a thorough celebration and appreciation of life's little moments and everyday routines. I hope that our selection of poetry this quarter inspires you, too, to meditate on the multitudes within the mundane.

I would also like to thank everyone who submitted their work to our publication; I am richer for having read all of your work. To the wonderful poetry editorial board: thank you for broadening my perspective with your insights; I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with you and I look forward to our continued work together.

# UZLA

Chandler Kyle

Fall of coffee shops and libraries  
and redwood and gummy desks  
gum on the underbelly of a musky  
brooding, concrete building  
Flimsy paper cups and biodegradable  
plastic covers that never fit smoothly  
against the soft paper rim  
Burning coffee sloshing on my hand  
as I briskly tumble into a stiff,  
squeaking chair  
loudly announcing my subtle, tardy entry

The fireplaces that were never warm  
and we pretended they were  
in bean shaped chairs and swivel mini  
writing tables, flipping and screeching  
amidst a sea of zippers and shuffling  
and the cold brick steps  
which we sat upon, in ten minutes  
of respite

Two stairs at a time  
and a cat to bother on the way  
Seeing your TA on Tinder,  
for awkward eye contact on Fridays  
Missing home, and family cooking  
after months of dollar donuts  
and packaged sandwiches  
and copious amounts of coffee



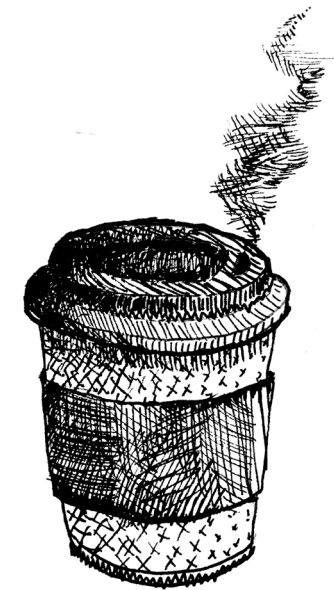
# UZLA

Chandler Kyle

Alive, in a coffee shop  
with four computers open at a table  
and a croissant so flakey, it's barely even edible  
The barista with tattoos who knew your name  
and coffee that tasted of ass  
but it was warm,  
and we felt independent and alive

Flowers from Trader Joe's in hand,  
with a heavy book bag  
and soles that ache  
Key turning, dropping to the ground  
and having a home to return to

The power on my laptop is at fifteen percent  
and the coffee in my mug is stale  
The fireplace is warm, in a house  
two hours from home  
and I truly wish it wasn't.



# Inchoate

Ava Boehm

She flings herself into its embrace,  
 the promise of rest urging her to exhale exhaustion into the  
 duvet.

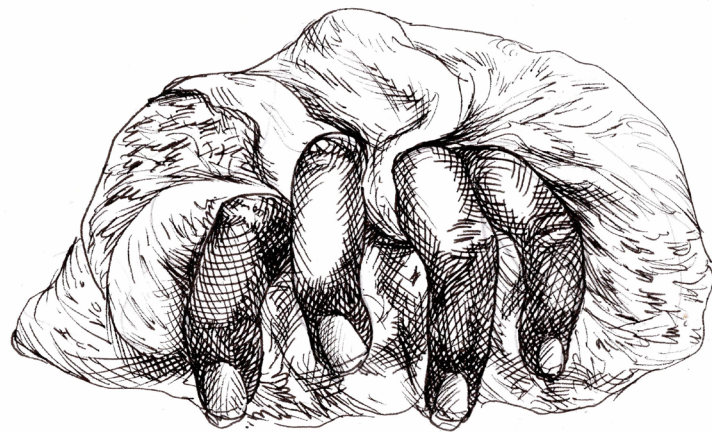
Limbs reaching, she expects the gentle sigh of bedsprings  
 compressing as she drops onto the center of the mattress,  
 but instead she finds a pliant mass of eggs, yeast, flour,  
 sugar, and butter adhering to her scapula.

She sinks.

Falling through the dark wooden frame at a torpid pace,  
 the dough consuming her form, folding over the edges of her limbs  
 and swelling as she breathes sighs into its depths.

It clings beneath her nails,  
 kneaded by her elbows and heels,  
 pockets of air bursting, casting flecks over the few inches  
 of skin that remain unsubmerged.

Cheekbones, forehead, soft smile protruding for a few brief  
 moments before it swallows her whole.



# nakamura

Austin Nguyen

let the  
     sun's gentle  
 fingers  
     trace and

paint the  
     hardwood floor  
 in golden shades  
     of warmth

while we waltz  
     across this  
 grid of  
     parallel lines

trying to find  
     our place  
 on this easel  
     of time



## A House Out By The Swamp, A Yellow House In The Country

---

Nikki Ochoa



Wheat and shit.

Men out in the yard playing cards while we do a quick U-turn in their vine swallowed drive way.

They get up to help and laugh. It's 105 degrees.

David's smothered between asphalt and hot metal, trying to read some handbook printed in .5

font that has no intention to actually help, just pass code.

You're stepping out of the bath onto the thin geometric motel carpet gazing upon a warm dewed mirror wondering in a British accent if you should, "Grow out a moustache."

Dyrell, who has been living in 201 for three months with his extended family invites us to the church he sings at.

We drive around forever but never find it.

He stares at his feet the next day like he doesn't believe us, like he's only been lied to before.

If it makes any difference, Dyrell, I would never lie to you, and your bad directions showed us purple Arkansas lawns bigger than I ever thought possible.

The feeling you could spend eternity in an oblivion of sun- swollen cola ads and abandoned main streets. Your mind, dense like indigo, something it's never known in the hot sweat of the city.

Hills, a drive, and a silent scene that reminds

God is in the in-between.

## A Collection of Hymns for Social Worship

---

Nikki Ochoa



Here's to hoping the apocalypse will be kind of fun,  
or at the least we'll get a good laugh from End of the World infomercials.

Toes are inspectors of the future, sneaking downstairs for an extra sip of chocolate milk.  
Wearing an oversized shirt from the \$10.99 tourist trap in Venice  
Where the sun bleaches time stamps, outlining trinkets onto warped wood pegboards declaring  
there has been no movement since the 80's. All the employees still dream in 8 bit.

Silkscreened on 100% polyester,

"I Ate Microwaved Popcorn and All I Got Was This Stupid Telekinesis."

Nothing pleases me more than our walks to Chinatown and back,  
Little Wolf and The Heaven Architect.

Sliding into the glaze.

I look at you and wonder what to do in the face of true kindness.

When we lay together our dreams mix,

The origami of living things,

The intricacies of mother's clutter.

I don't need you to believe in God, just something more than rocks crashing.

The severe ingredients,

The heavy geometry,

That allowed us to speak of angels in plain language, but just for a little, before you realized how weird it was I was holding your hand.

How sad it was when Le Animale dei Mei Sogni,

Temporarily closed for conceptual re-evaluation.



## To Speak of Angels In Plain Language

Nikki Ochoa



A crab on your head is playing with your bleached orange hair like a nest of spaghetti. If you sincerely told me something so simple,

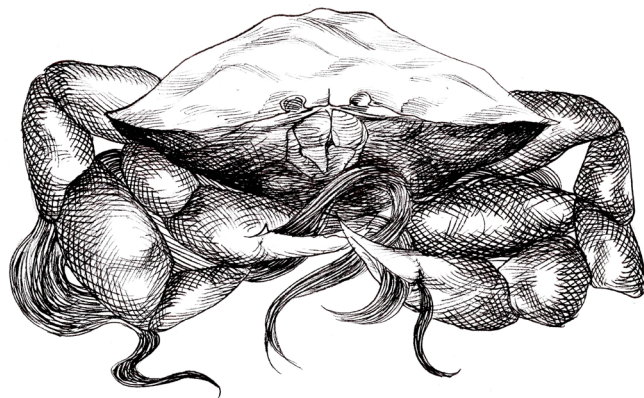
1. You like the sun and the way a 99 cent store ball floats on a pool's surface.
2. The old stationary aisle at the pharmacy was baby you's small Shangri-La as your mother picked up meds.

I would enjoy every minute of it.

My mind wouldn't wander to some back desert highway cubicle.

Our sliver of waking day takes shape as my eyes eclipse like a toy doll.

Who knew you could fit so soft into yourself?



## fixed sight

Peyton Austin



on the archery field the fourth plague  
of california flutters past our bows like  
fletchings released from the stinging string.  
it rained the last five days. butterflies  
have replaced the droplets, slanted north,  
flightpath following climate change.  
more rain means more feed—more eggs—  
more mass in the migration—more marvel—  
the butterfly effect. finally something good  
comes from this deluge. i imagine  
an arrow piercing their flight, pinning  
orange wings, dotted like the sunset  
absorbed raindrops, to dead center. crows  
threaten the colorful torrent, a murder  
of painted ladies by beaks and bows alike.  
even they must eat. my arrow sinks into the bale  
without becoming a butcher; the unshredded wings  
waver, then steady, soaring back through the city.



# Holy

Ziv Haikin



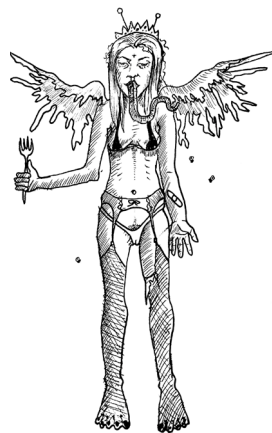
tongues meet, transferring heat  
pushing, pulling us away from idealizations  
we were shown as children we were shown  
mothers and fathers chastely  
standing on the porch

grabbing your hair, slick with my sweat  
my face stinging red from your hands  
our backs gnarled, untended, unpaved roads  
curses cast through tightened teeth  
blasphemes uttered by the unfaithful

lovmaking was sold to us by rich men  
paying prostitutes to do what their wives won't  
civility is uninspired foreplay  
subverted by cataclysmic fucking  
iconoclastic, apocalyptic orgasms

you are an empress, a slut, a king, a cunt  
a God of filth and depravity, of light and lust  
of paradise lost and carnality found  
the ground you walk on is my prayer mat  
degradations are your exaltations

judgement day brings with it  
redhot roomflooding lights  
a rain of fire, the voices of angels singing  
evidence of your arrival  
you, the coming messiah



# I Wish We'd Kissed More in the Rain

Ziv Haikin



big thoughts connected to swift shots  
the burn in the back of my brain

evokes notes of hopes and dopes who believed in something greater the waiter  
asks me if I'd like another round I look him square in the eyes and say  
"Yes."

we drink like we're strangers but we talk like we're old friends  
before I realize it your hands in mine  
our eyes meet our smiles rise  
our cheeks flush with heat  
the bar closes just as the rain pauses pouring

we kiss outside the parking lot  
I like that the cars can see us  
you smile as the ringing in my ears goes quiet for a second longer than usual  
I love your shoes I think they were boots either way I remember  
the feeling of sugarglass shattering candy thin and razor sweet  
you'd pierce your tongue if you tasted it for a moment too long

we hold hands as we walk to get your bag  
I'm sure the building's closed I suppose I should share this information  
I don't like to be presumptuous  
I keep it in my pocket with my hand in yours  
the feeling of skin hidden by thin fabric always excited me more  
than Beethoven

# I Wish We'd Kissed More in the Rain

Ziv Haikin



we're twenty minutes from your apartment  
I've never gone this far with anybody  
    your favorite movie is the fall with lee pace  
        I think that name is incredibly phonetic you think he's a queer icon  
            I think I want to kiss you again  
                you smile when I tell you I'm traumatized

you're easy to lift which makes me feel strong  
my hands are big which makes you feel good  
    I grab a hold of you bracing my legs as we stand I stand you're suspended  
        in front of your apartment  
            I've never laughed with somebody's tongue in my mouth

I ask if we can go inside I'm basically a virgin  
you think I want to fuck I just want to be out of the cold  
    I don't know how to make out lying down  
        you tell me your room is messy  
            I smile and say goodnight

I almost click my heels when I walk home  
you text me the picture of your hickey  
    I smile to myself giddy in the confidence I've never had

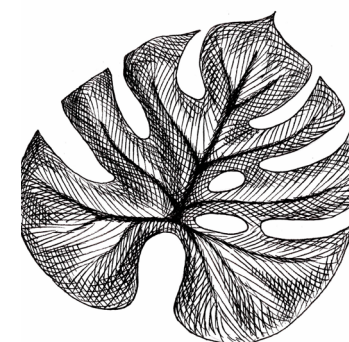
I fantasize about our future you think I'm a friend  
I hate romantic cliches you're the one who got away  
    I wish I didn't think you were my only chance  
    I wish I'd stayed quiet I wish I'd been less myself  
    I wish I loved you as much as you loved me.

# Muse

Jamie E. Estrada



A thousand streams  
And yet there you are  
In the river's middle,  
    Floating gently  
    Like a palm's leaf;  
Upon where tiny animals  
    Build up houses,  
    Sail and cherish you,  
While they are stirred  
By the hazy currents  
    Until the end...



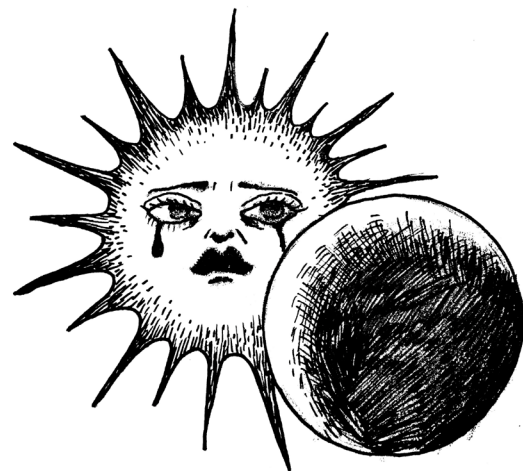
# Only for a little longer

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Anna Sharudenko



I want to escape  
to the world that's far away,  
where sea air rises  
and the forlorn pier that was once alive stands,  
as you and I are continuing to cease  
on an endless summer's day.  
It's July and the butterfly keeps beating its wings,  
as ruthless waves of nostalgia swallow it whole.  
Sand, salt, sweet taste of your lips,  
swaying grass, and our tousled hair  
are mere memories of our now savorless lives  
and soon a serene eclipse.  
You cannot stop kissing me,  
as we are getting engulfed by the pitiless sun.  
I want to stay.  
Love, some say,  
is waking up to find it is not a dream,  
so I will continue doing so,  
only to hold on for a little longer  
to the you and I  
in the glimpses of my consciousness,  
remembering what we once had.





# CREATIVE NON-FICTION

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LETTERS FROM



OUR EDITORS

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Katherine King  
Creative Non-Fiction

Most of this quarter's creative nonfiction submissions grappled with identity, current events, or some mediated concoction of the two. And, yeah, I get it. I certainly felt this tension settling into my new editorial role—who am I to dismiss any testimony of lived experience, any outpouring of self-examination and unbridled truth, in a year brimming over with so much confusion, anxiety, outrage, suffering? While I don't have a good answer, and I don't believe I ever will, I'm exceedingly grateful I wasn't isolated in these difficult decisions. Though miles apart, members of the CNF committee joined virtually each week to deliberate on submissions, whittling down a diverse crop of stories to a chosen few. These accepted pieces, though quite different, are united in their author's efforts to question themselves and their interactions with the people and places that define them. Finding one's place in such a nausea-inducing, no-stops-allowed whirlwind of a year seems a virtually impossible task. I applaud our authors for facing this challenge head-on.

# On the 110

Janine Sun Rogers



Every time I merged on the 110, I was convinced it would be my last. After trawling around the sleepy side streets of Northeast Los Angeles, I'd pause at a stop sign placed unfortunately at the freeway entrance, squint hopelessly into my rearview mirror, take a deep breath, and floor it. I'd pray that no one would come hurtling around the curve behind me while my trusty Honda Civic leapt toward 55 mph. And before I got too comfortable, I'd grit my teeth and scoot over a lane—on this winding stretch of the 110, I always suspected I'd ram into someone orchestrating their own hesitant merge around the corner.

Architectural critic Reyner Banham described the LA freeway system as, “a single comprehensible place, a coherent state of mind, a complete way of life.” The freeway was truly the essence of Los Angeles to me, and I would let myself settle into it every day when I merged onto the 110. Palm-studded hills would hover around me as I whipped through the bends of the road, and the high rises downtown would loom hazily ahead. I'd feel as if I could die at any minute, yet be strangely lulled by the rhythm of the road. Driving on an L.A. freeway was, as Banham put it, “a special way of being alive”—it required a certain heightened awareness and reliance on one's own God-given reflexes to avoid a nasty crash. Is there any other activity that is so mundane, yet so deadly?

The Northeast LA stretch of the 110, officially known as the Arroyo Seco Parkway, was actually the first freeway ever built in the United States—a factoid I loved to share with white-knuckled passengers as we carpooled to or from my apartment. This is the reason, I would explain, the lanes were so narrow, the merges so deadly, and the curves so wicked: the road was built for an earlier time, for slower cars and jauntier drivers. The twists and turns are not actually geologically necessarily due to the hilly neighborhood, as I had first assumed, but were actually designed for the drivers' pleasure. The conditions aren't the same along the whole freeway: as the 110 goes south towards downtown, it does turn into the newer I-110, the Harbor Freeway, a straight shot down to San Pedro. But the stretch around my neighborhood remained dangerously quaint, a traversable time capsule.

# On the 110

Janine Sun Rogers



I arrived in Los Angeles in the fall of 2019, fresh out of college and with little knowledge of the city's geography. But once I began to venture out of my little neighborhood, I quickly picked up that the 110 was my gateway to the varied territories of LA, enclaves that did not have much to do with one another beyond clinging to the same cluster of freeways (Dorothy Parker famously said that, “Los Angeles is 72 suburbs in search of a city”). My first post-grad job was just off the 110's Avenue 43 exit, at a chic performance art space in Cypress Park. And a few miles south of that, I'd be given the option to switch over to the 5, towards the boutiques of Los Feliz or my friends in Silverlake. Further still, I could hop onto the 101 or the I-10 and find my way to the glitz of the Westside or the beach. And on Sunday mornings, I'd dutifully take 110 north to Pasadena to attend church, until, of course, world events made that an impossibility in early 2020.

On a few special summer days, I took the 110 all the way down to its southern terminal in San Pedro. I'd cruise through Northeast LA before hitting standstill traffic at the accursed Bill Keene Memorial interchange, a four-level stack built fittingly on the former site of the town gallows, where the 110 transformed from the quaint Arroyo Seco Parkway to the grand Harbor Freeway. Surviving the interchange meant I could pass right through Downtown LA, a brief glimpse of city life before finding myself in the residential plains of southern Los Angeles and beyond. The bulk of my drive would be spent here, driving through the sunbleached suburbs of South Central, Compton, Torrance. I'd know I was close to the port once I saw the gargantuan oil pump jacks in Wilmington, uncanny reminders that Los Angeles was a city of oil and manufacturing long before film, fashion, and tech entered the scene. By the time the oil fields were swept away from my rearview mirror, I would finally be deposited in San Pedro, and go on to enjoy a day of eating Hawaiian barbecue, cruising through the mansion-lined streets of Rancho Palos Verdes, and swimming in Abalone Cove. I'd spend the drive back north in excruciating late-afternoon traffic, wearing a damp bathing suit and sipping a watery soda. But after getting through the interchange, I'd get to squeeze through some tunnels and pop back out onto the familiar twists and turns of my stretch of the 110.

# On the 110

Janine Sun Rogers



I remember driving east from Santa Monica one night to celebrate a movie premiere—the city lights in my rearview mirror, my starlet friends tittering in the passenger and back seats, and Lana del Rey blasting in my speakers, all exhilaratingly intertwined with the 110's familiar treachery. That was exactly how I imagined spending my postgrad 20s, surrounded by my peers and embarking on exciting projects in proximity to that fabled Hollywood glamor. This dream, however, was unfortunately short-lived. When COVID-19 hit the city in early 2020, joyrides with friends became even more of a hazard. I still find it remarkable that the universe found yet another way to inject danger into my favorite pastime.

As I traded karaoke nights for Zoom calls, and dinner parties for the Jack in the Box drive-thru, my drives transformed as well. In the early, optimistic stages of quarantine, I'd cruise to ambitious hiking trails and food blog-darling takeout joints—in my eyes, these drives were what kept me alive, in touch with the city, rebelling against plague horrors through attempts to find joy and adventure that did not involve human contact. As the late-quar ennui set in, however, these drives turned meandering and aimless—I'd end up at an overlook in Malibu, or a dusty El Sereno trail, or a San Gabriel Valley stripmall, some podcast blasting through my speakers. It felt romantic at first—I saw myself as a contemporary Lone Ranger, or a character in a Joan Didion novel (I thoroughly agreed with Didion that, “a good part of any day in Los Angeles is spent driving, alone, through streets devoid of meaning to the driver”). But instead, all I was really doing was guzzling gas and avoiding work. By that point, driving was no longer a method to get outdoors, but instead became an extension of the indoors—yet another climate-controlled space in which I could sip cold brew and stay mildly entertained.

I don't live off of the 110 anymore, or in Los Angeles at all. My lease ended, and I bounced around various locations off different exits of new freeways. I don't know where I'll be this time next year, or if I'll ever find my way back to the city. But nowadays, if you take the 110 to that nasty junction downtown and manage to get onto the 101, take it a few hundred exits north—you just might find my Civic cruising along the crest of the San Francisco Bay.

# Onward

Jiixin Su



I still remember how Grandpa saw me off in the summer of 2012, when I left home for college for the first time.

A navy suitcase that was at least fifty percent bigger than me. Another rusty red one filled with my summer and fall clothes. A brown rectangular case with a nice handle for my violin. And then there was me, red checkered shirt and blue jeans, running in between the entrance of our apartment and the elevator. I was trying to move my suitcases next to the platform so that I could go down with all of them at once to meet the taxi downstairs.

“Do you have all you need with you?” Grandpa lowered his head, checking on my backpack and violin case when I came back to fetch these last two items.

“Yeah I think so?” I did not look at him but instead grabbed a novel from the side shelf, squeezed it into the already overloaded bag.

“Do you have your documents for the flight in Hong Kong?”

“They are... in... the backpack.” I put the school bag in between my legs, fixated on it, trying to zip everything up with my hands. I happened to look up.

A head of mixed dark and gray hair. Tan skin. Lines of wrinkles at his forehead. Two black eyes glistening with his eyebrow frowned. He seemed worried.

“Do you have your school documents to get into the U.S.?”

“Yep! Grandpa, don't worry. They are all in the bag.” I put my backpack on, turned it to him and grinned, my voice loud and bright.

“Now, that sounds better.” His tone relieved with his lips curved up at the end.

I grasped the violin handle and looked at him, “Grandpa, I think I have to go now.”

“Yeah sure. I will walk you to the door.”

My feet moved a few steps forward, past the entrance, past our door, but then I turned.

I saw that his right hand was holding the door handle, his head stuck forward a bit, with the left side of his body concealed by the entrance frame. He tried to smile.

“I am not willing to let you go.”

My heart skipped a beat when his words sunk in. I smiled back.

“It'll be fine. I will come back to visit you. I will call you too!”

# Onward

Jiixin Su



He responded with a relieved laugh.

Then, I dashed out as he closed the door.

That was our goodbye when I was eighteen and he was sixty-nine. At that time, I did not think much about how life would change from that moment forward. What filled my brain was the new life in the U.S. in front of me. Reflecting back now, I realize he probably knew. He knew that his life going forward would be different. It would be mostly without me. He knew that the granddaughter he raised for eighteen years would be in a place so far away that he could not reach, unless he took the airplane that he had never taken in his whole life. And he also knew that we would rely a lot on phone calls, foreseeing the following eight years to come.

“Grandpa, do you know that the music school here has a really fancy glass building? You can see the sky so well from the inside, and I will be taking violin lessons with the professor here too!” I raised my voice as he laughed on the other side of the phone.

I also told him that I often went to study in the music building and pretended I was a music student there. He chuckled but made no comments.

There were also times that I was sad. Namely when I had trouble getting along with some Chinese students at DePauw University, my liberal arts college, during my freshman year.

“We really just don’t think the same. I don’t wanna force myself to join them just because we are all Chinese, but...” I turned my head to the side, staring at the charger on the carpet.

“But... but I am so lonely.” My voice hoarse. I almost cried.

“What’s really wrong with being alone!” His pitch was so high that he got all my attention at once. “Even if you are just by yourself, you can still do a lot!” I nodded as he continued, “You can also go find people who are similar to you. Chinese or non-Chinese doesn’t matter!”

I cleared my throat and kept nodding hard. It was too bad that he could not see.

The only time I got angry at him over the phone was when I did not do as well as I needed to in a final at Columbia University, my undergraduate engineering school after DePauw. I was overstressed, and just snapped at him when he told me to reflect on what I could work on

# Onward

Jiixin Su



in the future. He said it in a polite way, but I took it as he was blaming me.

“Why does it have to be my fault?! Why is it me who has to improve! The stupid school makes everything so hard and so many people cheat. I never cheat at exams!”

I hung up on him, and regretted it right away.

After that, I asked my sister to apologize to him for me before I called him again. I later also figured that I still did well that semester, overall. It was not really his fault. And when I called him and said sorry again, he joked. “We are just like bone and flesh. Even if we fight like two hundred times, we will still be good in the end, and I won’t be mad at you at all.”

I laughed.

The image I had of him started to evolve over time as well. In contrast to being the steel superman who could handle everything, ranging from cooking and fixing my broken dolls to teaching me how to solve elementary-school math problems, he did not seem unbreakable anymore. Once, he told me that he walked in the sun with only shorts and a tank one summer day, and by the time he reached home the heatstroke hit and he had to be medicated for a month. Instead of being the disciplined and calm bedrock for his kid, with his emotional side barely shown, he grumbled over the phone. He told me that his white kitten died because of an infection. He felt sad and thought that he could have taken better care of it, while I told him that it was not his fault; sometimes things were out of our control. However, the warmth from him never really changed. Like the temperature on the back of my hand when his big hand supported mine to hold a pencil in kindergarten, as well as his plucking my nose and cooking my favorite beef rice noodle soup when I visited him in the countryside. It was during a break from my computer science graduate studies at UCLA—the Christmas of 2019.

“Grandpa, how are you making the soup base today?” I hugged him from behind, peeking at the empty pot with the traces of water forming a shining spider web.

“Look! This is going to be the trick for the noodle soup today.” He took out a bag of light-yellow liquid from the side, “I told the butcher specifically that I want the best beef bone broth they have for the day.” He turned to me and smiled like a little boy, who did something so



# Onward

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Jiixin Su



special that he deserved some praise. “The soup is gonna be really good,” I blinked.

Stripes of rice noodles swam in the broth as slices of dark red beef scattered and turned pink on top of the soup. White steam kept dancing, crawling, eventually escaping from the simmering liquid. The oil at the surface reflected the kitchen light through its round oil bubbles. There was a smell of beef bone in the air.

“Oh, did I miss anything? Hm... can’t remember at the moment,” Grandpa murmured as he stirred the noodles with a big soup spoon.

I looked to the right, then the left, and found a salad bowl of cut green lettuce at the corner of the kitchen.

“I know what you need.” I ran, grabbed the lettuce bowl, and handed it to him.

“I am not good at remembering things anymore,” he poured the vegetables into the pot as I stole a glance at him. He shrunk. At least I felt he did. My head used to be below his shoulder height, while now they were about the same. He looked normal in his light suit shirt with neatly folded marks, but when I put my hand on his back, I could feel that his bones stuck out more.

“It’s okay. I can keep reminding you.”

I hugged him from behind again. My head buried in his back.

On the evening before I had to fly back to UCLA, I called him again. I had left the countryside the other day and was in the city already, since it would be easier to go to the airport that way.

*I am not willing to let you go.*

His words kept occurring to me, the words he said again when we watched the Second Sino-Japanese War TV show together during that break.

“Grandpa, my flight will be tomorrow.” I put the speaker closer to my ear.

“Yeah.” As the first syllable rang on the other side of the phone, my breath stopped. “Have a safe flight tomorrow.” A familiar voice rose, low but so gentle, as its frequency reminded me that this was the sound that accompanied me abroad for so long. And I had forgotten, forgotten that his existence in my life has transformed, from a tall slim old man to a steady and warm voice over the phone.

# Onward

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Jiixin Su



“Do you have everything you need with you?” he asked.

“Yeah I think so,” this time, I put all my attention into listening to him talk.

*I will call, once I settle in over there.*

# Self-Care Through Warfare



Daisy Day

A mere few months ago, I was an undergraduate student and full-time office manager during a global pandemic and uproar surrounding the death of George Floyd. I was also working with grassroots organizations in my free time and beginning to do the work I needed by assisting homeless encampments in my community. I think this was around the time I started to have a problem with self-care, but believe me when I say it's more than a problem for me now. It's a word in my vocabulary I wish would cease to exist with its current definition and one that I believe needs serious redefining.

It first dawned on me that our wellness industry wasn't aligning with me at the end of a particularly grueling week of outreach and classes. My professor cheerfully inquired about how my classmates and I were avoiding burnout, allowing each of us a moment to speak. One by one, students shared skincare routines and hiking trails, but I inevitably faltered when it was my turn. Self-care is supposed to be any activity that helps to improve our physical or mental wellbeing. But it's come to take on a certain connotation on social media: expensive and leisurely activities that not everyone can afford the necessary time or energy due to grueling schedules.

I'd been burnt out as far back as I remembered. My body was just a vessel for the work I needed to get to, since I was carrying on a legacy of backbreaking labor for my immigrant family. Therefore, I wanted to bitterly refuse the attention given to my battered body. And further, this was a leadership development class that taught radical movement against powers that exploited minorities. I thought of countless houseless neighbors who reached for bread with eager fingers whom I took on a responsibility to feed each week. Many of them carried signs for the Black Lives Matter movement and went home to tents in the park with empty stomachs—bleeding feet. The discussion about wellness felt misplaced in a class about social justice work and backward on a hierarchy of needs for both my organization and the people it helped. How was I important when the world needed my full attention?

“I don't feel like I avoid burnout.”

# Self-Care Through Warfare



Daisy Day

The class fell awkwardly silent and my answer hung uncomfortably against the electronic static of our Zoom meeting. My professor moved on quickly, perhaps avoiding my truth. I suppose even a seasoned advocate couldn't grasp the idea that some of us don't have enough time or money to relax. It is undeniable that caring for yourself and avoiding burnout is essential to moving forward efficiently. However, I was only burnt out because I was part of a capitalist system that constantly overworked me and simultaneously reminded me to take a moment to relax. What moment did I have? I contemplated this for the next few days as things became increasingly more violent and looting continued to spread.

One afternoon after work I saw the protests on TV. Hundreds of people looked like ants searching for water during a hot summer. The sun beat down on them and they beat back while I watched with mixed emotions. I'd wanted to join in: to scream at the wind and hope it carried my voice. But instead, I was silent, because a no call no show meant being fired and there's no doctor's note for being sick of oppression. So, there was no release for my frustration and anger. It was difficult to fight a capitalist system that had caught me and my family in its web so tightly. I was even angry about not having time to be angry.

That night I spoke with colleagues about how money talks while I scrolled through Instagram. Every post was about George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, and so many more. These were posts made by privileged people: models, Instagram stars, who didn't know what real struggle meant. The movement was hijacked by people who used it for clout and selfish gains, so I doubted its credibility. I was lost in a sea of oppression and as a second-generation Asian American surrounded by privilege, I felt powerless to make waves of change. Some of my colleagues didn't understand what it was like to work just to stay afloat and fight to be heard. They didn't know the struggles that come from poverty. The privilege of my peers with more economic stability felt like a striking contrast to the deep waters of exploitation and trauma that followed me everywhere. But, somehow, self-care was being promoted more than ever because of the stress that accompanied these challenges.

# Self-Care Through Warfare

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Daisy Day

My internal warfare raged on as I navigated my modern-day battlefield. Although it was only June and the 4th of July was barely on the horizon, fireworks exploded unapologetically throughout the night. At the park with my friends, our conversations were continuously interrupted by pops, crackles, and kabooms. And then—an M80. We glanced up at the sky and flinched as the sound ricocheted off buildings or cars and sent car alarms blaring—dogs barking at the threat. Adrenaline pumped through my veins. Was that the sound of the gunshot that killed my Black brother or sister? Was that a flash bomb set off to silence us? Or perhaps, have they switched to grenades? But as my pulse slowed and I settled into the bright light which showered over us, I hoped that the sound made LAPD jump out of their uniforms.

Explosively, I decided to be done with wellness. Perhaps, warfare can be our form of self-care. Maybe I can replace bath bombs with bonfires and illumination, setting off gunpowder in the street illegally to remind my neighbors that my pain will be heard over their bubble baths and facemasks.

Upon the murder of George Floyd, as anti-Blackness becomes apparent in areas social, economic, and personal, more than ever self-care feels futile. I won't let it be defined by privilege any longer. I do not need a bubble bath as an attempt to clean my wounds and quiet my discomforts. I need a country that fights for me. These leisurely activities are not going to relax me or stop racism and systemic oppression. They're temporary comforts that privileged people use to take a break from the struggles they don't even face. We should find ways instead to make major changes to a system that typical self-care narratives currently take advantage of. Maybe this way impoverished people will one day be able to afford healthy food, gym memberships, and lush bath bombs. So, I suggest that we give up toxic individualism in the pursuit of a society that allows us to care for each other. It's by doing work that empowers us together and fulfills our deepest desires for freedom that we will be able to finally relax. If you can risk going to a protest, then go and scream out your frustration. But, if you are like me and you hardly have time to breathe due to an intensive job, spend your free time making sure that not a moment is wasted. You can still fight online if you can't do it in person. Educate others, speak your truth, and turn

# Self-Care Through Warfare

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Daisy Day

frustrations into fuel. Reach out to those who do not have as much as you do, and never feel bad that you don't have the newest hundred-dollar face mask. Don't let hijackers cloud the real purpose of movement, to make changes in a broken and corrupted capitalist system.

When asked how you avoid burnout, what is your answer? And will we one day be able to eradicate burnout altogether?

# FICTION

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LETTERS FROM



OUR EDITORS

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Lillian Mottern

Fiction

After weeks of lively zoom-call discussions, the Westwind Fiction staff selected five short stories to publish in our Fall 2020 journal. The pieces in this issue are thematically and stylistically diverse, but each one is grounded in an aching emotional resonance that is hard to shake; they're arresting stories with heartfelt, sharply-drawn characters, and they'll get under your skin. In classic short fiction fashion, our authors don't end their stories with straightforward answers, but leave us instead with glimpses of possible futures for their characters which feels, I must admit, pretty applicable to now, when the uncertain end of the pandemic means that our own futures are still difficult to define. While this year has been strange and unsteady, the Fiction staff inevitably shows up every week with their sharp comments and incisive notes, approaching each submission with compassion and warmth, but never staying silent about their opinions. I'm so grateful to them for their hard work and commitment this quarter and to Kurt, my co-Senior Fiction Editor, for his humor and insight.

Kurt Klaus

Fiction

During Fall Quarter, our Fiction staff always came prepared with a resource I consider to be in dangerously short supply these days: enthusiasm. In a year where it became progressively more difficult to, in my opinion, be genuinely passionate about anything, they never failed to impress me with their poignant discussion and opinions, frequently pushing us past our typical 6-7 p.m. time slot. Similarly, the handful of stories we accepted impress me greatly, our writers' passionate voices shining bright in each story. Soulfully, they depict characters searching for meaning and truth in a world whose structures oftentimes seem arbitrary and unfair. Furthermore, through the themes of loss, discovery, and inevitability, these talented authors explore complex questions I was honored to contemplate with both the Fiction staff and my brilliant co-Senior Fiction Editor, Lillian. For everyone a part of the journal's creation, for you our readers, and for the enthusiasm Westwind brought to me each and every week, I am extremely grateful.



# Comedienne

Catherine Lange



Soft two-knuckled knocks on the double door. Are you in there? Are you still alive? Her voice came through muffled and grainy. I tried to guess which one of her TV specials she had put in today, if it was the same version of herself she had been watching last week. “Mom? I’m here and I have the movie.”

Inside the master bedroom she lay crumpled, white sheets piled around her neck. One hand’s fingertips grazed the black remote, the other dipped in foundation three shades too dark. She had started again and then forgotten.

I put the movie on the dresser, nudging aside nail polishes knocked askew. Rouge and shadow cluttered the nightstand already claustrophobic with cracked compact mirrors. Liquid lipstick stuck on the varnished top, bleeding into eyeliner dripping sticky over the dresser’s edge, onto the carpet, into the bed.

“Did the kids watch it?” She asked. Her face shone back at me from the DVD case, from the woman on the bed, like looking into two angled mirrors. Our rounded face, our eyes, reflected something— hope? Expectation? I saw this movie in theaters at least six times, but you could hardly find it anymore. Ninety minutes long and featuring no animated characters, the kids wouldn’t sit still for it. And even when I finally wrangled them into their seats, the disk was so badly scratched it was unwatchable. Skipped and stalled too many times to make any real sense. “Yes.” I said. A smile flitted across her lips.

I checked her pill minder. I passed into the bathroom to pull a glass of water from the tap and put the pastel on the dressing table. Without taking her eyes off the screen, she took the pill and the water. I dragged over the trash bin and threw away the spent items. I sat in the plastic chair by her bed, a washcloth in hand, trying in vain to scrape the stains off the dresser. Acetone and dust and citrus cleaning spray stung my nose. She held the DVD now, tracing her own image with an uncut fingernail.

“Did the kids watch it?”

“Yes.”

# Comedienne

Catherine Lange



Silver statuettes stood on the TV stand, already fading. Golden angels reached towards the comedienne owning the stage, possessing the glowing screen. Her black heels and the microphone made her twice as tall. This was the woman who had enchanted America, who had spent most of my childhood criss-crossing the country, doing interviews, making movies. Basking in the glow of strangers.

*Emma’s at that age where she looks to me for everything, the woman on the TV was saying, bathing the audience in that sparkling smile, Like the other night I got a call from her pre-school teacher. Says Emma made a very, very rude gesture in phonics this morning, and where do I think she learned that from? Laugh. So I tell Emma, you can’t do that. She says, but Mommy you do it all the time, and I want to be just like you. A small laugh. I said, well sweetie, you have to pay attention to what I say, not what I do. So she says “Ok Mommy,” here the comedienne’s voice lowered to an enticing hush, and with that sweet face of hers, she goes, at the top of her lungs, “FUCK!” Big laugh. My daughter’s very sweet though. The other night I come home upset and Emma fetches me her favorite blankie, the one she hasn’t let me wash since last year, and says, “For you Mommy.” Laugh. And she did it with such a smug look too. Well if it helps her, I figure it’s good enough to help me.*

I laughed with the people on the TV. Suddenly awash in the memory, carried away by the sweetness of the moments of a past life bubbling up and filling the room with its fullness and its brightness. Reverberating.

My mother turned to me and seized my hands. The softness shocked me, the wrinkles turned into hard ridges. Her veins bulged.

“Thank you.” She said, “Sometimes I think because I am just an old woman...” In the dark, the reflections of the screen filled her face, shadows sliding, melting her features from full view to profile. She dropped my hands so slowly, it felt as though a chill had receded from my skin, and nothing more. I abandoned the washcloth to throw open the curtains, let the evening light strike her across the eyes. She recoiled. Laughter from a live audience interrupted. She touched the DVD case and frowned.

“Did the kids watch it?”

# Comedienne

Catherine Lange



No amount of surgery could stretch the sagging of her cheeks, the lines around her eyes and mouth. Not to say she hadn't tried. Tried, and scrubbed away the features of the woman on the DVD, filled the expressive face of the TV woman with plastic. She had worn her lips almost through. Her greying hairs fell into the snowy pillows. A small woman in that glacier of a bed, looking at me with the final embers in her eyes.

"Yes," I lied.

Together we sat in the dark. We breathed in tandem with the carpeted room, the damp smell of dust, the acetone notes.

When the special ended, I appraised my mother in the twilight, watching her little chest rise and sink. Rise and sink. Sleeping.

I shut off the TV.

I took a tissue and wiped the melting gunk from her face.

I closed the curtains.

And on my way out, like I did every visit, I stopped to readjust the family photo hanging on the far wall. The one in which I stood a starry-eyed fan and she my only idol.

# The Last Man

Nikki Wolin



He was it. He was the end. The last man on Earth, just as there had been a first.

His name was Adam. He thought that might have been one of his parents' last cruel jokes, as they certainly had many. Giving birth to him was one of them. He was the youngest man in the world, to his knowledge. There had been no other children for a long time. He'd walked into a hospital recently enough to see all of the empty cradles covered in clean plastic sheets like undelivered presents, empty for the last eighteen years.

He himself was seventeen years old, not old enough to buy himself a drink even if there were any bars left. He had started avoiding the buildings. Enough people had taken to the bars in their final moments, and with loud music and company, downed the pill with some whiskey or bourbon.

When he visited the buildings, they all lay there like figures in Madame Tussauds: unblinking, cold, immortal. He'd always wanted to go, to gape at those wax figurines in their stiff positions. Now, it was too late.

No one was in nice clothes. Why should they be? There was no one to see, and he was a mistake.

He hadn't been home in a long time. His parents were there, and he never wanted to see them again. They were perverts; having sex this close to the Apocalypse was considered perversion. It was unethical to conceive a child less than eighteen years before the end of the world, but they'd done it, and he had to deal with the consequences.

He hadn't fixed them up in their apartment, either. He hadn't dressed them, closed their eyes, or kissed their foreheads before they went cold. It was their fault he was here when no one else was. It was their fault he was alone.

He'd been staying in the park. There was little foliage left in the city; they'd killed it all. Zoos, museums, the finer arts...they were all gone, too. But the park at least had some grass, although the government had been trying to cultivate an aversion to nature, as well.

*They could've just killed me when I was a kid. A needle in the arm just like on my birthday, and I would never have known. They were still vaccinating, after all. They didn't want everyone to die from the plague, for God's sake. But killing a child was unethical. You can't give a child the pill.*

# The Last Man

Nikki Wolin



He thought it had to do with being old enough to consent to it. He would never be eighteen, so he'd never been given a pill. He probably could have argued that in a courtroom somewhere. Maybe he should have done it. There was no one to worry about a lawsuit.

He looked up at the clock in the center of the park. It read a little under a day. Clocks had been installed all over, all counting down the time until Armageddon in blinking red numbers as tall as a car. Good, he thought. I was starting to think it would never come.

He woke up with a start on the bench. He'd been dreaming about a picnic they'd been on years ago, when the clock read years instead of days...when he thought they'd be together.

He stared at his mother.

*Why did you do it? Have me? You could have been punished.*

His mother's eyes were sad.

*We didn't want to be alone.*

He'd felt an intense sense of revulsion then and had backed away quickly before he could hear more. Deeper and deeper into the park he went. He was still there when it happened.

*You wake up from dreams of death because the brain doesn't know what comes after.*

He hadn't thought about death much. He thought it might be as quiet as when you were sleeping, like when you don't even know you're doing it. But if it was a heaven-type situation where he had to see everyone he'd ever known again, he would rather not.

He looked up at the clock. There was less than three hours left.

Less than an hour left. He walked around the perimeter of the park. Would it hurt? What would kill him first? Would he be crushed directly by a piece of space rock or burned or fumigated? What exactly did the so-touted Apocalypse look like? How were they so *certain*? His parents' generation had known, had analyzed the calculations, created the early warning system, and developed the pill, but they'd never explained it to him.

He suddenly wished he'd tried harder to find a pill. Surely, there must have been someone who didn't want to die and hadn't taken it? But there had been people who'd stayed behind, at least for a little while, like government officials making sure it was all done correctly.

# The Last Man

Nikki Wolin



They had skipped over him.

Of course, there had been articles written about him. The headline "Youngest Man in the World" certainly commanded attention. One reporter, a middle-aged woman born respectfully before the cut-off date, asked him what he thought he would do after everyone had taken the pill. He didn't know. Maybe get yourself a drink? she suggested slyly. He laughed politely but turned the idea down. They'd started supplying more alcohol near the end, he noticed, until it was practically free. Wash us down the gut of life with a seltzer. Anything to make the pill go down easier.

Less than thirty minutes. Perhaps he could still do it himself. Find some pills somewhere. Certainly, there were extras. But even so, he didn't particularly want to die. He was quite apathetic about life in general, he noticed, but he didn't particularly want to die. So would this be how he went? Sitting on a park bench? What would they think if they found him, the last man on earth, crushed or burned or choked? Who are *they*?

Less than fifteen minutes.

He supposed he could have kept a journal to reminisce in and carry on the glorious tradition of the human race if anyone ever found him. But surely, some scientist must have already done so. A love letter to the ages with all of humanity's achievements laid bare. Noble. Eloquent. Emotional. Anything he had to say was quite inconsequential. He settled back down on the bench.

Less than five minutes.

He wondered if he ought to pray. Pray for what? Pray to what? *God*, he thought, *you did a fantastic job with the human race.*

Less than four minutes.

Maybe he ought to have said goodbye to his parents.

# The Last Man

Nikki Wolin



Less than three minutes.

He should have made something of himself. Pushed for greater preparedness, perhaps, for them all. Or begged someone for a pill, that white pill of salvation.

Less than two minutes.

Was there anything anyone could have done?

Less than one minute.

I hope wherever I go in the universe, I am as far from the rest of the human race as humanly possible.

Time.

There was a slow then rapid beeping from the clock in the park. A slow, rapid beeping from the clocks all over the city, from the cities all over the world.

He was it. He was the end. The last man on Earth, just as there had been a first.

# Leaves of Noise

Woody Brown



Mark gets up from the table. He has just finished his lunch of chicken nuggets and fries. It's Thursday, which means McDonalds. Wednesday would be chicken and rice. That's how he keeps track of what day it is. He starts reminding his parents of the next day's lunch menu right after dinner the night before. Mark hurries back to his room, even though there is absolutely no reason to hurry. Everything moves so fast in his brain that his body follows suit. He sits at the desk, literally itching to get back to his computer. Not just the computer. He has three iPads and two phones set up around the computer. Mark has to have multiple screens going simultaneously. The cacophony helps his brain to neutralize the many currents of activity that are coursing through him at all times.

Mark sits. Noise rises up around him to reflect the noise within him. He is in a thicket of stimulation. It neither calms nor excites him. It is him. Mark puts Rugrats on one screen, cuing it up to a particular spot on a particular promo. A Pixar end-credit goes on another screen. A fast-forward compilation of old classic films is pulled up on another. Thomas and Friends are summoned, on a specific segment. Toy Story is on at least one screen. There is a TV hanging on the wall above this fabulous array. Today it is tuned to MSNBC. It is a mistake to think of this chaos as random. Each clip fulfills a purpose. Thomas and his friends make emotions, relationships and conflicts seem straightforward and resolvable. Their facial expressions are clear and incontrovertible, unlike human faces, whose expressions often reflect the opposite of their true meaning. A person can smile while saying something heartbreakingly cruel. Mark's mother can cry when something has made her intensely happy, like his high school graduation. And Toy Story. Woody stands for everything Mark values. He is loyal, and has leadership abilities that Mark can only dream of. Woody also has friends. Mark can't even imagine a world in which he has friends. He's not stupid. He knows that the juvenile videos are a poor replacement for having real-life peers in his sphere. But so far, no 18-year-olds have stepped up to befriend a good-looking guy with autism who can't speak and is stuck in some unusual routines.

Mark steps into the world of his videos and is immediately surrounded by their diverse beauty and peaceful contemplation. It is like being on a trail on an unbearably hot day, and suddenly entering a dense, lovely woods. The cool relief, the immersive splendor, the awesome quiet, the glorious isolation. Mark is at home here in the wildness that terrifies others.

# Leaves of Noise

Woody Brown



Where his parents see a ridiculous spread of digital nonsense he is far too old for, Mark sees a symbiotic ecosystem of diverse species. He wanders without direction. The path is not visible, he turns and proceeds by whim. He wields his screens as if he were the master of this dark, hospitable world. He switches the old, speeded-up movie montage with a YouTube video of a retired Wii game. Just a bend in the way. His brain is whirring along when he is abruptly yanked from his verdant surroundings.

“Your rice is ready.” His mom stands in the doorway. The entire afternoon has passed in a flash of sunlight on dappled leaves.

*Jesus he hasn't moved all day.*

Mark knows that his mom doesn't tell him what she's thinking when she gets sad or frustrated. She doesn't want to add to his burden. But Mark can see her thoughts and feelings in his brain as clearly as if they were his own. He doesn't tell her this. She's entitled to them.

Mark is in a holding pattern. His autism is debilitating, but his mom taught him that he could type to communicate. Instead of spending his school years in a special ed basement, he was able to be in the world where the students were. His place there was uneasy, but he stayed on course and actually earned a diploma. This was an amazing occurrence. Kids as autistic as he was were usually pulled out and sent to special schools that weren't really schools at all. Or they languished in the basement and were let out at age 22. These unfortunates were allowed to be basement dwellers for a few extra years because there really wasn't anywhere else for them to go. The diploma Mark earned meant that he had nowhere to go a lot sooner.

Mark and his mom have an appointment to tour a program for young adults. They pull up to a squat, dingy building. Mark hopes that there are people like him there, maybe other older teens who have interests and can type. As soon as he walks in, he realizes that this is just another basement. The young adults are slumped in boredom or something worse. The minders can't be bothered to look up from their phones. As disappointed as Mark is, he can tell that his mother is angry and upset. She allows the staffer to do some of his spiel, but not much. Ten minutes later, they are back in the car. Mom rants.

“That is supposed to be the best place in our area. No way would I let someone I love spend their day in a hole like that.”

# Leaves of Noise

Woody Brown



*Oh hell no.*

Mark later hears his mom describing their visit to his dad. She sounds even more frantic than she did with him. Mark knows he can't be left alone. Forget his anxiety. He's not safe. He makes a lot of noise, vocalizing along with his videos in a weird, screeching falsetto. If a neighbor should call the police, which has happened, he would not be able to explain himself. They have heard horror stories about people like Mark being committed to institutions, and worse. If some emergency were to occur, Mark could not call 911. Someone needs to be with him all the time. He and Mom both know that if they can't find some program for him, that Mom will be his caregiver all day, every day. Neither wants this for the other. Mark's disorganized body needs too much support for him to do a job like bagging groceries, a typical autistic vocation. How can he be 18 years old and have no present and no future?

Luckily for Mark, his mom is willing to break up the monotony of their days by reading out loud to him. She has always done this. She mostly does it for herself. It drives her absolutely nuts that Mark spends entire days lost to his video world. He doesn't move from his desk unless she calls him for a meal. So multiple times per day, she leads them into their little study. Mark lies on the couch with an iPad in his lap, for self-regulation. Mom sits up straight, needing all available lung capacity. She props the book up on a music stand. She sets the timer on her watch for thirty minutes and begins to read. This week the book is *A Wild Sheep Chase*. Mom wanted to introduce Mark to Haruki Murakami. Sometimes Mom has Mark pick the book from a list she compiles. Sometimes she chooses something she thinks he needs. Sometimes she asks him questions about the book and he answers on his letter board. He is always happy to get back to his video collection, but the reading sessions make Mark feel like an intelligent being. Murakami is a glimpse into a strange and wonderful world. Mark's brain reacts differently to reading than to videos. Where the videos bring a verdant nullity, reading good books creates a field of grassy openness. He enjoys both states. If only he could forge a link between them.

Back to the reading session. Mark can tell Mom is getting tired. The narrator is up at the strange house on the mountain, and Mark is beginning to figure out who the sheep is, but never mind.

“Okay, time for a break,” Mom says.



# Leaves of Noise

Woody Brown



*Oh my god. What is the point. I have such a headache. Is he even understanding what I'm reading? I had a life, now I'm his babysitter. How can I do this forever? What am I saying, I won't be here forever. So, I save him from the group home now. Where does he go when I'm gone? The noise is killing me. The videos, it's ridiculous. I can't do this. No one has any idea what this is like, not even David. He gets to go to work, it's so not fair.*

Mark almost runs down the hall to get back to his videos. A cut from Oliver and Company; Tin Toy, the Pixar short; a Thomas video about steam engines that do marvelous things; the action bits from Polar Express; and Toy Story. CNN is on the tv, high above it all. Ahhh. The shadows envelop Mark, cool and deep.

The days go by. The only break in the reading and videos is the drive to pick up Mark's designated lunch for the day. Mark needs routine, and there's nothing inherently wrong with this one. But there is this crushing sense of claustrophobia, that vines are growing up around his ankles and branches are pressing in to suffocate him. The woods are still dark and deep, but there is a menacing quality now that threatens his equilibrium. Mark is finally able to identify the problem while Wall-E is occupying one of the screens. The fat, spineless Captain of the Axiom is stuck in his chair, just like Mark. He is being told that there's nothing he can do. There is no moving on, they cannot return to Earth. They can only continue floating endlessly in space, stuck in their chairs, engaged in directionless inactivity. The Captain, suddenly rediscovering his spine, cries out in anguish, "I don't want to survive, I want to live!" Mark plays this scene over and over and over. He has no idea what to do with his abrupt realization. Dependence and the inability to initiate are central features of his autism. At least a flashlight has been placed in his hand to address the gathering gloom of his environment.

Mark is capable of typing factual information and answers to his mom's pragmatic questions. Do you want this or that? What do you think the narrator believed when he realized his friend the Rat was the Sheep Man? He is not able to express his emotions or desires. He figures that he has this in common with most other 18-year old boy/men. He would like to tell his mom how lost he feels, but he doesn't know how to go about it. So he gets up from his desk with cheerful compliance whenever she appears to announce a reading session or a bowl of brown rice. The summer trudges along, his feet sometimes tripping on the tightening vines.

# Leaves of Noise

Woody Brown



Mark's sense of unease persists. The anxiety ekes out in the form of screaming to his videos and repeating echoes of phrases so many times that Mark doesn't know how his parents stand it. He can't stand himself. When sitting paralyzed at his bank of flickering screens, Mark feels the forest overtaking him.

Mom calls Mark into the study. "Come sit with me at the computer for a minute. I want to show you something." She pulls up a website. It's some kind of school. Mark wonders if she's found another autism program. She goes on.

"This is actually Citrus College. It's like ten minutes away. It's a community college, so as long as you have a high school diploma, they take you. I thought you might like to try taking a class."

Mark screeches out an echolalic script. He sounds nothing like a college student. As is usually the case, Mom understands his gist.

"I know. I'm not sure you can manage it. The classes are long. It might be hard for you to stay quiet. But we won't know if we don't try."

She holds up the letter board at his eye level.

"What do you think?"

He points painstakingly at one letter at a time.

"A B S O L U T E L Y."

"Okay then. Classes start for Fall in two weeks. Do you have an idea of what you'd like to take?"

Mom goes to the section where the departments are listed. Mark points to English. He has harbored a secret desire to write. They scroll through the course offerings.

"Well, I guess you start with English 1A."

Mark types, "S O U N D S L I K E T H E R I G H T P L A C E."

*At least we'll get out of the house.*

Mom makes a few calls. They have an appointment with the Disability office. The counselor clearly believes that Mark is slow. She speaks to him as if he is a deaf toddler. Mom winces. Mom finally says, "You can speak to him normally. I promise he can understand you." The counselor, a frowzy older lady, looks offended at first.

# Leaves of Noise

Woody Brown



Mom holds up the letter board for Mark.

*Come on buddy. Now's your chance. Step up.*

She asks him, "Why do you want to take classes here?"

Mark points, "I H A V E A G R E A T H U N G E R T O L E A R N I T H I N K I C A N D O I T."

The counselor's eyebrows lift a little, but she says nothing. Mom explains what Mark will need in terms of accommodations. Extra time on tests and a separate place to take them. Oh, and he needs an aide with him at all times. The counselor hurries to tell Mom that the college cannot provide an aide.

"I didn't expect them to. Mark's aide needs a lot of training in his communication technique. We don't know of anyone who could do it, and we couldn't afford it anyway. So I'll be his aide."

This makes the counselor's eyebrows shoot up a little higher. Apparently most college students do not come to class with their mother, and don't use a little laminated board to communicate. Mom is unfazed. She doesn't let up until the lady types everything Mom wants into her computer. She prints out a sheet for Mark to give to the professor. So that's it. Mark is suddenly a college student.

*This will be interesting.*

Mom and Mark head home. This is actually one of the biggest days in Mark's life. All through his school years, he had felt like he was swimming against the tide. This feels almost like acceptance. Curious. When Mark gets to his desk, he flips on all his screens. *Charlie Brown*, *Blues Clues*, *Dr. Suess ABC's*, *Toy Story*, *Cat in the Hat*. He is soon in the zone. The verdant silence he senses there is less threatening than it has been lately. The vines have loosened around his legs. He can move a little. He can breathe. Mark switches one of the screens to YouTube. He searches for Lionel Trains. There he is, a guy – he must be on the Spectrum -- who does voiceover commentaries over an old Lionel videogame. It feels like the guy is speaking directly to Mark. Whatever words are coming out of the guy's mouth, Mark hears, "Buddy. You and me. We got issues. We got some shit to deal with. We are already way behind. I stick to this game because I can choose the narrative. You get it."

# Leaves of Noise

Woody Brown



Mark changes *Charlie Brown* to Pixar on another screen to show his agreement.

"You can't have Lionel voiceovers. That's my schtick. You gotta find one for you. Any ideas yet? I'm getting tired of the static coming off your screens."

Mark changes a screen to *Toy Story 3* by way of saying, "College."

"College. Cool." Lionel guy says to Mark's brain. "I couldn't do college for all the freight trains on the line. Good luck with that. Gotta roll."

Lionel guy disappears as Mark changes his screen. He puts on an Okay Go video with its Rube Goldberg hilarity. Life has many obstacles but things work out. Mom puts her head in the door.

"Honey, could you tone down the screaming? It's getting super loud."

*Oh for god's sake the top of my head is going to blow off. How the hell is he going to sit through a whole class?*

It is a blessing that Mom can see the behaviors for what they are. She never gets angry, even when Mark's sensory crap blows her personal peace to smithereens.

*I want to scream but if I lose it he escalates and it's out of control. Take a deep breath.*

Now to prepare his brain for college.

Mark spends the next two weeks at his screens. Mom goes online to get his books for English 1A. Mark could probably manage this administrative task, but it would take an hour and he'd still need her support. Mom takes him to campus so that he can scope it out. Where they will park, where the classroom is. It is huge and strange, but he assumes he can make new routines for it. Mom wants to get him a new backpack at the campus bookstore. Mark wants to keep using the one he had in high school. One small bit of continuity and familiarity. They go home after picking up his Friday lunch of chicken and rice.

Mark figures that his biggest challenge will be curbing his need to make noise during class. He doesn't want to have to leave the room for a sensory break. He has been dreaming of the stimulation of college longer than anyone knows. In high school, no one even bothered to include him in seminars about college admissions. He assumed it was impossible for someone like him. Little did he realize that there was a place he could go by simply registering. He has no doubts about his brain being up to the task. But there are also the glitches in his brain and body

# Leaves of Noise

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Woody Brown



that could easily betray him. He devises a little brain training course in the last few days before class begins. He turns one of his screens to a documentary about Walt Disney. He leaves the other screens going, but with the sound off. He pretends the doc is a lecture. He practices watching without making noise, which typically serves to neutralize all the non-stop racket in his brain. At first, he finds that the effort it takes to stay quiet prevents him from hearing the speaker. But after a few hours, he is able to listen.

Mark senses the familiar feeling of calm, as the focus on a particular topic – Walt Disney's life and work – takes the place of the deafening cacophony of videos. From the heat of the sun-drenched trail into the green cool of trees. The glade feels a little different to Mark after his exercise with focus. It is still shadowy, but the trees are lighter and younger. No longer a primordial forest, but a happy grove where fruit might grow and children play. He feels ready.

The day arrives. Mark chooses one of his wittier Toy Story t-shirts to wear, in hopes that he will communicate something of himself to his professor and his fellow classmates. He and his mom leave ridiculously early for campus, not needing a traffic or parking snafu to increase anxiety. It's a good thing, because the campus is teeming with first-day activity. They arrive at the classroom. Mark heads instinctively to the back row, farthest from the door. He's feeling good so far, although he can tell his mom is nervous. Mom goes up to the professor and has a few words with her about their situation. Professor appears friendly and welcoming, unfazed by their unusual partnership. Mark carries two screens with him for comfort, a phone and an iPad. Mom makes him turn them face down on the desk when the class begins. She had warned him she would do this. The real test of his brain regulation begins.

*Well here we go.*

The professor has everyone introduce themselves. Mom speaks on Mark's behalf. No problem, no reaction. Mark immediately realizes that this will be different from school, where he always felt an undercurrent of derision from the kids. As he hears the brief stories of his fellow college students, he realizes that many of them have overcome obstacles to be in this place. He is surprised to find that it is not that difficult to keep still. An hour and a half passes. No breaks, no stimming, no problem.

*Oh my god. He did it. He might have a shot. I might have a shot.*

# Leaves of Noise

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Woody Brown



Back at home, Mark rushes to his desk. He fires up every screen. The cacophony is a welcome reward for his herculean accomplishment. As he passes into his familiar zone, he looks around and notices that his interior landscape has altered. The trees provide shade, but there is an enticing open space before him. It is clean and grassy and inviting. The most beautiful discovery is the glimpse of a path just beyond the clearing.

Conrad Loyer



Read stories the way a mirror reflects—indiscriminate, all at once. Read through the night and learn what it is to live sleep deprived. You're an eight-year-old, afraid of the dark. There are no stories there, and stories are all you know.

Your parents never give you a night light, but the Bible on tape is better. Suddenly, the stories never have to end. Your battered CD player can read them to you all night long, if you'd like. Your favorite story is David and Jonathan. When your parents ask why, you say that it's because David has your name. But that isn't it. Jonathan loves David enough to leave everything he's ever known, and you want someone like that.

And sometimes, when the stories aren't enough, call from under your covers until your dad comes to see what the matter is. Listen to his sleepy voice as he tells you a verse to remember, one meant to soothe you.

"For God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Forget most of it, but latch onto those last few words. Mutter them to yourself when your dad turns off the lights. Sound mind. Sound mind. Sound mind. You're not sure what a sound mind is, but you're determined to have one.

Don't remember a time when Sundays belonged to you. Church is full of kind people and big, thumping music, and words like grace and peace; where the pastor uses no pronouns for God at all. The sanctuary is a sunny, sloping pavilion. One of the windows near the roof is cracked. Wonder whether you're the only person who's noticed or if it's just that no one can get up to it.

Start learning the rules. Smile always, even if your lips hurt, and if you ever do something wrong, just beg forgiveness. Learn the stories they teach you (sound mind sound mind sound mind). Fill your head with names like Levite and Rehoboam and Jehoshaphat. Wonder why the Philistines are so evil, and where they've gone.

#

Move churches in second grade. Don't understand why. You are small enough that adults don't yet have to explain their intentions to you. You are baptized—for the second time. You don't learn this until much later.

Conrad Loyer



This church is much different. This time, the sanctuary is dark, cavernous. Spotlights point you to whatever you need to see, and you can ignore everything else. They don't have any windows, cracked or otherwise. They don't use the same words, either. They prefer righteousness, damnation, and capital-H Him. It scares you at first (sound mind sound mind), but your parents promise you that this place is going to be better. Take this to mean that it will be much, much louder.

This church is closer, so your parents enroll you in all the children's classes, in choirs and drama programs and service opportunities. Don't notice that Jesus is beginning to eat Wednesdays and Fridays, too.

Watch the boys in choir. Especially Isaac, who's at least three years older. He talks out of turn and laughs when he isn't meant to, and these are things you can't imagine doing. One Sunday, he catches you staring from across the room.

"You can sit with us," he says. Move, like it's an order, but don't speak. You're sure there's nothing you can say to someone so much older that he doesn't already know.

"The little kids are friggin' annoying," he says, then glances sidelong at you. "Not you, though, David. You're cool."

Thanks, you want to say. I have a sound mind.

#

Everyone likes you better here. Parents here don't give their kids audio tapes, apparently, so you know more than the other kids. Beam when they tell you how smart you are, after you can tell them the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by heart. Say Nebuchadnezzar without tripping over it and watch everyone gasp. The adults ask you questions about how many brothers Joseph had, about what Simon Peter's name meant. They never ask you whether you believe, and you never tell them. Love how kind everyone is, but don't think about what's behind it. It's just part of the story, and you don't know that church is supposed to be anything more than a story yet.

That won't come for six more years, when you get sat down in a confirmation class. There are no stories, none that you care about. Sit through the lessons silently.

## LOSING YOUR FAITH: A HOW-TO GUIDE

Conrad Loyer



Ms. Martha tells everyone how much you know about the Bible. Smile, even though you're beginning to wonder whether you know anything about it at all, even though all these lessons are starting to taste cloying as manna. When the time comes, promise your life to Jesus Christ. Say the words without hearing them. Eat the Wonder Bread, soaked in Mott's grape juice. Don't feel full.

#

Turn fourteen. Keep following the boys around on mission trips and in choir. They aren't nice, and that makes you happy. You don't want nice anymore. You want new stories, filled with curse words and blasphemies. You can feel the world beginning to loosen up around you.

Start high school and realize that you're really not sure how to make friends. Wear nothing but shirts with starched collars, not because you have to, but because you're really not sure why anyone wears anything else. Clothes are an apology for a bodily truth you don't quite understand. Sit at a bench to eat lunch, reading, until a boy sits down beside you and starts reading over your shoulder.

Flinch away. "What are you doing?"

"Trying to figure out what's so interesting." He laughs, and the sound reminds you of orange soda. There's glitter under his eyes. You've never seen a boy wear makeup before. "You do know you're supposed to talk to people during lunch, right?"

"I like reading better," you lie, and he leans back on the bench.

"Then let's try a compromise. Tell me what's happening as you go. That way, you can read and talk." He leans back and closes his eyes, and at once, you can't stop laughing.

This is Byron. He's never been to church a day in his life, so he doesn't know any of your stories. Let him become your best friend, because you're not sure you have a choice in the matter.

One day, let him explain why you like the boys so much. Sit on Byron's bed, legs crossed, when he tells you that he likes them, too. Sit next to each other for a long time, until he asks to hear another story. Do some research on your own, and read that the two of you should be stoned for feeling like that. Understand the story of Sodom and Gomorrah for the first time.

Don't let it bother you. It's just a story. Go on a mission trip with the boys, like you always do. This time, they crowd in a circle and go around talking about the girls in ways you've never

## LOSING YOUR FAITH: A HOW-TO GUIDE

Conrad Loyer



heard anyone talk before. Normally, talking with them excites you, but this doesn't feel right anymore. Pretend to be too young to understand when they ask which girl, which one, who is she? Volunteer to go get sodas and slip out into the night.

But Isaac catches you outside. "Seriously, dude, I'm not going to tell anyone. We're friends, right?"

"Right."

"Right. So it's Rachel, right? You two are talking all the time."

Stare at him for a long time. Think about the time when you moved up to the high school group without knowing anyone, and he introduced you to everyone with his arm around your shoulder. Remember him whisking you off your feet to toss you into the pool.

"Yeah. It's Rachel."

"I knew it!" He claps you on the back. "But don't worry. It'll be our little secret."

"Thanks." Turn around to go get the drinks. Remember the story of Lot's wife, but look back at him, just once. Taste the salt on your cheeks.

#

Begin to loathe those days you gave up without a fight so long ago. Meet Byron's rainbow-streaked friends. They tell you things about the world, and for the first time, you can know for certain that something is true. That's what a sound mind is, you think. Nail down as many truths as you can find: what beer tastes like on a warm night, what music sounds like when it's played for no one but yourself, what Byron looks like without his clothes on. You know why people see sinfulness in their bodies now, but you still don't understand it, because he's beautiful, and he says you are, too. Read more and more, and realize you aren't afraid of the dark, but of the quiet. Bring headphones wherever you go.

Hit seventeen like a stone to the fucking head. Get even better at lying, because you're doing it intentionally now. Sleep over at Byron's house. Your parents are glad that you have such a good friend now. Byron laughs so hard that his glasses fall off when you tell him that. Still, keep smiling, always smiling, because it's only one more chafing year, and then you get all seven days for yourself. Who cares about resting?

#



## LOSING YOUR FAITH: A HOW-TO GUIDE

Conrad Loyer



A few months pass in a haze that smells like booze. Ms. Martha tells the seventh graders what a role model you are, and you spread your mouth wide as the fish that ate Jonah. Go home and scream into your pillow. Play your old CDs over and over again, like there might be something in the stories you're missing. Start ducking around corners when you see Byron, because he'll tell you stories that aren't his to tell.

One night, realize you can't avoid him, so distract him instead. There's a spot on his neck that sends him into incoherence—push it like an elevator button as soon as you stumble through his bedroom window. But even that isn't enough.

"You've been avoiding me, babe." His voice is sleepy, its edges dull. Reach for the spot again, only for fingers to wrap around yours and pull you back. You're sitting on his bed, as he curls into you.

"I'm fine. It's really nothing."

"Bullshit," he mumbles into your shoulder as his eyes crack open. His breath still smells like vodka, or maybe that's you.

Talk to the wall, never looking to your side. "It's just church. You don't have to worry about it."

"Who says that?" And suddenly Byron is wide awake. "Come on, just stop going. It isn't like, hard."

"I can't do that." Shake your head. "My parents would lose it. And I need something to hold me together."

"You have me. We have each other. You don't need some lies from some book written two thousand years ago."

"You don't know that they're lies," you say, and Byron snorts.

"Sorry, you really believe all that shit?"

"I don't know!"

"Whatever." Byron pulls away, and all at once, it feels like there's a flaming sword between the two of you. "At some point, you're going to need to stop lying to yourself." Get used to seeing his back in the school hall.

## LOSING YOUR FAITH: A HOW-TO GUIDE

Conrad Loyer



Mourn the way the Bible always told you to. Tear all your shirts into crop tops, powder makeup on your face like ash, wiping away every trace before you get out of school. Spend every free moment tucked into your room, which doesn't even look like it's yours. All your favorite clothes are tucked into the bottoms of the drawers, every poster is for some movie or band you only pretend to care about. Wish you could unfold your life. Sit alone at lunch, snarling when Abigail, who has been following you from high school to youth group for years, tries sweetly to explain that it's you who's the broken one, but that God will forgive you. You don't want forgiveness. You've had all you can stomach.

Imagine swallowing spoonful after spoonful of cough syrup, even though you're sure you're not sick. That's what going to church is like. Rattle off stories whenever people ask for them, without thinking. Bite down on your tongue during worship. Mouth the words during the Lord's Prayer. Faith is a complicated game, but you know all the rules. David is the most devout member of the church's youth. Everyone knows it. Belief is nothing but prayers said out loud with your toes crossed in your shoes.

When it comes time for Children's Day, Ms. Martha asks you to write a poem, even though you're already leading the band and the choir. It'll be easy for you, she says. Nod. It should be, for the person everyone's seen walking in every Sunday and Wednesday and Friday for the last ten years.

Sit down and stare at a blank screen. Get up. Refuse to pray. Stay up all night, raging at that blinking line. Lying is supposed to be easy. You've never had a problem with it before. But there is a difference between lying to God and to yourself. God is easier to fool.

You'll have an idea eventually, you're sure.

#

Arrive at Children's Day without having remembered. Wait until you get into your car before you start cursing (sound mind sound mind). Pull a napkin from your glove compartment and start scrawling. Piece together bits of stories, allusions (sound mind sound mind sound mind). Look at the desperation in your hands and feel that ten-year-old person you aren't begin to fall apart.

Sit in the back with the band. Choir's boring. All the boys graduated. Another story

## LOSING YOUR FAITH: A HOW-TO GUIDE

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Conrad Loyer



with no satisfactory ending. Other youth speak before you do, little blonde girls who talk about the specter of atheism and boys in basketball shorts who mention their girlfriends with adoration in their eyes. Listen to them talk about God like a friend, a confidant, and try to remember when you felt like that.

But you never wanted God. You never needed perfect. You never wanted to be one of those people who spends their whole life on their knees. You want a vivid life, not one glimpsed through somebody else's stained looking glass. Feel like Esther, kneeling despite her royalty.

Stand up and spit your poem at the congregation. Splinter every syllable, will the walls to fall around you, for the ground to open and swallow you whole. Dare Him to strike you dead, right then and there.

Instead of thunder, hear applause. Stare out at faces flowing sweet and sticky as milk and honey. Not a single person sees your poem for what it was. They hear blessings in your curses. All at once, recognize how pointless all your anger is. It doesn't change them. Decide to change yourself.

#

By then, there are only a few months left. Spend them trying not to be so furious. Don't go out drinking as much. Tell your parents about Byron. They wilt like flowers, and your house gets quieter. Spend more time outside. It's best for all of you.

Promise your mom to go to church until high school's over and feel at once how much easier it is to endure. Keep telling those stories, but only your favorites. When little kids ask, tell them that Jesus once cursed a fig tree to death for not bearing fruit in the middle of winter. Explain to adults the irony in every plague of Egypt. Laugh out loud whenever anyone tries to tell you that David and Jonathan were nothing more than friends.

It's been a year. Maybe two. You're standing on a street on the other side of the country. You're in college now and things feel...light. Stare out at the campus and watch the world wake up, until a pair of arms latch around your waist and yank you off the ground. Squawk in protest until a boy with skin the color of terra cotta puts you back down, cackling in your ear.

"Knew you'd be spacing out," Max says around his laugh. "Everyone's waiting for you."

"They are?" Your mind blanks. "For what?"

## LOSING YOUR FAITH: A HOW-TO GUIDE

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Conrad Loyer



"Dude?" Max is so tall he has to bend over to come eye to eye. You can see his binder under his shirt. "Do you remember what day it is?"

"Of course I do."

"Then what day is it?"

"Umm..."

Max stares at you for a long second. "God, you're dense." Then his fingers are entwined with yours and he's tugging you down the street. "Come on."

"Where are we going?" Ask, feeling your lips turn up at the corners.

"It's Sunday."

"Oh. I forgot."

"Yeah."

Walk like that, hand in hand, down brick streets, watching Max's head bob. A few of them stare at the two of you, but Max waves back, and they move on.

And finally, you stop in front of a building. People are filing in and out of it, and you can see through the big, glass windows. Pause at the door.

"Thanks for this," you whisper.

Max looks back at you. "Did you say something?"

Blink once. "Nope." Smile, really smile, and stride into the café. Everyone's already sitting at your table, talking and laughing. Sit down at the table and belong there. You still don't know what you believe, but you're not sure you need to, at least for now. Stop waiting for forgiveness. You never needed it. Move forward. You have a sound mind, and you don't have to be afraid anymore.

## The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

Ashley Kim



The porcelain girl had melancholy eyes.

Her eyes were the profound blue that philosophers pondered, a pigment splotch on a white canvas, a roaring storm. Eyes inspired by petrichor puddles and indigo petals. Other than her eyes, the porcelain girl appeared to be ordinary. Her lips were eternally pursed and anxious, like her stone shoulders. Her frame was small yet weary, from bearing another's Atlantean burden. She was not quite weighted by bitterness or regret or despair or duty, perhaps something in between.

Today, the porcelain girl was going to the market with her celadon mother. The porcelain girl loved her mother more than the enveloping sun and the observant moon. The porcelain girl's mother had nurtured her since the day she was born. Each hearty meal of beefy soup built her bones, each conversation nourished her mind, and each kiss caressed her heart. Her mother fulfilled her role well, guided by society's paths and expectations, trapped by the same. The porcelain girl was grateful. She understood already that motherhood was not a transaction, although sometimes she desperately wished it could be.

Side by side, the porcelain girl and her mother walked to the market on the dirt path. On the way there, they sang a boisterous love ballad together.

*On a hot midsummer night  
As vivid birds came to flight  
A sweet lass and her true love  
Sat by the brook, eyes so bright*

*Green frogs gobbled and winds sang  
And as the crickets' chirp rang  
The lad about to confess his love  
Died by the sin serpent's fang*

## The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

Ashley Kim



They both knew all the words. Suddenly, the celadon woman stopped singing, right before the last verse, to the disappointment of her daughter.

The celadon woman walked, lips pursed in silence, as she let her daughter finish the lass' lament.

*The lass cried, "Oh, woe to me!  
The scarlet venom in thee  
chained your heart with the allure  
of the deceiving fruit tree."*

At the entrance to the market, the celadon woman clutched her right wrist subtly in pain, attempting to disguise the motion underneath the billowy sleeves of her dress. The porcelain girl noticed, her eyes a deeper empathetic blue, winced along with her mother. A jagged crack materialized on the girl's wrist. The porcelain was breaking.

No one noticed. It was alright. The porcelain girl observed the loud marketplace vendors selling juicy fruit and hand-grown vegetables, but turning her blue eyes from her mother could not distract her from the truth.

Her mother was in pain.

Many years ago, her mother had lived without pain. It began when she stepped onto the soil of the porcelain people. She had studied the porcelain language in school, but she had no clue about the land's poisonously blatant individualism and its disguised disdain for justice. In the celadon language, the people called the porcelain land the beautiful land. The celadon woman was shocked to discover that the porcelain land was not as beautiful as she had been told. She found a country without the community she had loved. No one welcomed her. Its people floundered in floods of greedy, self-seeking solitude. Truth stabbed the celadon woman's heart. Golden human ichor burst out.

## The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

Ashley Kim



The celadon woman married the porcelain girl's father, a man who was part porcelain and part celadon. He was a wily merchant, well-versed in the life currency of money. He taught his celadon wife that money was the king of the porcelain lands, that satisfaction came from stability bolstered by a gold throne. When his porcelain daughter was little, he would sing a tune to her every night before she slept.

*Horses and houses and gold  
Will keep you 'till you get old  
Words and kisses and sweet faithful misses  
Will sadly turn to mold*

Every time she heard this song, the porcelain girl was reminded of her father, a man who traversed the fine line between porcelain and celadon. A stubborn man. A steady man.

The porcelain girl knew the story of how her mother fell in love with her father by heart. Her father was the only other celadon man in their village. Or so she thought. One night, the celadon woman stumbled upon him near the brook, naked, washing celadon paint from his thick thighs and sharp jawline. The celadon woman discovered that the only other celadon person in the village painted his body green every day. Underneath the moonlight, he was splotted with porcelain spots, like the horses of old that galloped on island plains. She had never seen these horses, noted for their block-like bodies and long torsos, in real life. She had heard of their wild majesty only in stories. Brimming with curiosity, she asked, "Why did you choose to masquerade as celadon instead of porcelain?"

She never forgot his answer.

"I must not forget that I am celadon too."

They both knew that their child would be porcelain, since she would be birthed from the

## The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

Ashley Kim



porcelain land's soil. Yet they married and consummated regardless.

One day, the celadon woman's husband passed away suddenly. He hopped away with giant rabbit hind legs from responsibility, duty, community, and family -- to the land below, an underworld with brimstone and fire. Burdened with raising her porcelain daughter completely on her own, her back bled, ichor dribbling down her thin arms and buttocks and thighs. She wept ichor tears. Only the porcelain girl could see the liquid streaming down her glistening green pottery, leaving aureate streaks.

To support herself and her daughter, the celadon woman became a housemaid for the wealthy porcelain people. Her arduous work involved consistent pressure on her shoulders, back, and hands, which cracked and bled. The porcelain girl watched in horror as her mother split into gargantuan cracks. Every night, under her quilts, the celadon woman withered into fine green-grey dust, only to be subtly revived the next morning. The porcelain girl discovered that pain was more terrifying than the dark or heights or small spaces or the unknown. An aching, stabbing monster was eating her mother alive, metamorphosing her into a shell of the vibrant woman she once was.

At the market, the porcelain girl hid her first crack of the day underneath her dress sleeve. She and her mother traversed through stalls of vivacious produce, wild flowers, and expensive meat. They first bought a whole chicken from the butcher, then stopped at the vegetable stall to buy rainbow carrots and bulbous onions. After glancing at some bright green onions, the celadon woman spontaneously decided to buy them too. Green onions added an acidity and freshness to the braised chicken they planned to eat that day.

As she gestured for her daughter to heave the heavy carrots into their basket, the celadon woman maneuvered herself to subtly massage her right shoulder with her left hand. The porcelain girl, too, felt a crack form in her shoulder, extending from her shoulder blade to the small of her back. She squeezed her shoulders together in an attempt to fuse the crack and to avoid collapsing

## The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

Ashley Kim



in the middle of the market. She wouldn't collapse, though. She never did.

They stopped by the milkman's stand. The porcelain girl knew that her mother wanted the larger milk jug for convenience, but she herself couldn't carry it because it was too heavy. Milk was heavy. Animal and human breasts alike sagged with milk, with the lulls and tolls of motherhood. Breast clocks. Tick, tock, tick, tock.

With effort, the porcelain girl placed the heavier milk jug into their basket. Her blue eyes peered into her mother's brown ones. She looked grateful, but sometimes the porcelain girl could not tell how her mother was feeling.

Gratitude made the porcelain girl feel guilty. She did not deserve gratitude. Her mother had raised her from the soil, molded her curves and edges for years. It was an obligation, if not a duty, to attempt to scrap any chance coin to repay her mother for her years of sacrificing herself, for bleeding gold on the altar of womanhood.

With the brief glance, the porcelain girl felt a crack split the back of her neck in half. She clutched the sides of her neck, her own muddy paste blood barely holding her neck together. When the viscosity of her own blood worked in her favor, haphazardly merging her neck, she sighed in relief.

They walked towards the beer brewer's stand. Beer was the preferred drink of the lower social classes. Her mother perused each option, brewed from barley and oats, asking for her daughter's opinion. The porcelain girl did not know what to say. She personally found alcohol to be too bitter, like adulthood. Her neighbor had told her that alcohol becomes more enjoyable with age, but the porcelain girl could not imagine a day that she would not want to retreat back into the comfort of childhood. Perhaps one day she would embrace this desirable, bitter adulthood, but that day was not today.

## The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

Ashley Kim



The celadon woman and the porcelain girl walked home. Home was far, but the gentle afternoon zephyr cooled their faces and the cornflower skies protected them. The celadon woman hummed a haunting, resonant melody. Her porcelain daughter was silent, holding the goods they had bought with her left hand and clutching her broken neck with her right.

Home was a humble abode. The entire house was one conglomerated room. Near the front of the house was a pine tea table stained with a reddish-brown lacquer, where the porcelain girl and celadon woman ate their meals. Near the rear were two thick, silk quilted blankets. The two women slept on the floor, on top of those blankets, with thinner blankets covering their bodies for warmth. Outside was an unruly garden of fragrant greens and two wooden splintered chairs, where the porcelain girl and celadon woman would occasionally sit to watch the sunset.

Once the two women arrived at home, the porcelain girl put the vegetables, chicken, and beer aside for dinner later that night. She placed the milk jug on the pine table. The porcelain girl was exhausted from holding herself together at the market. She wanted to sleep for days.

Her mother dragged a seat cushion and sat in the middle of the house, aching and bleeding gold underneath her dress from the day's activities. Even choosing vegetables and walking to and from the market gave her immense pain. Her entire body throbbed with undulating waves; the current eroded her like stones at the creek's bottom.

The celadon woman finally spoke. "Could you glue the cracks in my hands?" she asked her daughter.

The porcelain girl did not want to glue her mother's hands. She wasn't equipped with the medical knowledge or craftsmanship to efficiently heal her mother. She detested the effort it took to squint, to aim the glue between the miniscule cracks of her mother's wrists, and to apply the paste gently. Besides, the paste stung horribly, and the porcelain girl hated seeing her mother's face scrunch up like cabbage bunches.



## The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

Ashley Kim



The porcelain girl's insides raged. An outright refusal flung her mother's gold bleeding sacrifice into unloving flames. The porcelain girl's soul became a battlefield for the forces of melancholy love and fierce autonomy. Yet the porcelain girl walked toward her mother anyways, kneeled in front of her on a small cushion, and began to apply the paste slowly but surely.

"Not there," the celadon woman said. "A bit to my left."

The porcelain girl nodded and bit her lip. She was dehydrated. Her pink lip was bleeding brown. Tentatively, the porcelain girl gradually inched the trail of paste towards her right. Her hands were unsure, still unused to the way her hands enveloped the thin brush applicator.

"Why are you not aiming correctly?" the celadon woman's voice crescendoed. "I'm in pain there, so seal it!"

The porcelain girl's body tensed like packed soil. She hated when her mother's voice rose -- pungent to the touch, boisterous to the eyes. She held back troublesome muddy tears. She heard her chest loudly crack in two underneath her dress, but her sticky blood held her sternum in place. She internally punished herself for being unable to alleviate her mother's pain. Maybe if she blatantly disregarded her own discomfort and had a stronger desire to love her mother, her mother would feel satisfied by her application.

Part of her wanted to run barefoot to a land far, far away. She wanted to escape to the ocean waves, to dip her cracked feet in healing saltwater, to be baptized by the sea. She wanted to soften her stone shoulders in the warmth of the enveloping sun, to rejuvenate herself underneath creamy moonlight. The other part of her fought against her selfish desires. She would not weasel out of obligation to avoid suffering. Caring for her mother was her duty.

The porcelain girl's hands relaxed as she meandered to the distant land of daydreams and musings. She was jolted back to reality by her mother's harsh voice.

## The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

Ashley Kim



"You're doing it all wrong!" she screamed. "Are you blind? Can't you see I'm hurt?"

The celadon woman was a fiery bush, life fuming with smoke and fury. She shoved her daughter's hands away with her shoulders and in a swift motion, stood up and undressed herself. Her scarlet silk dress floated gracefully down to the floor. Her undergarments were stained gold with the expense of suffering. The porcelain girl's mouth gaped at her mother's naked, bleeding body. She desperately wished she was a craftsman, so she could mold her mother back together correctly and painlessly.

Golden ichor from the celadon woman's body flowed to the ground and flooded the floor. The celadon woman instantaneously gasped at the loss of her life force. She perused the multitude of cracks that formed a web of agony on her green body. She clutched her decomposing breasts and bleeding chest with her scarred hands.

"Do you see? I'm dying," the celadon woman said plainly.

The porcelain girl gasped in shock. She scrambled through the house's drawers, searching for the thick stabilizing bandages they used to have. "No, you're bleeding. Mother, you're bleeding," she wailed. "You're not dying."

"Everyone dies," the celadon woman replied, emotionless, jaded.

"But, Mother," the porcelain girl sobbed, muddy tears dribbling from her nose and her blue eyes. "What about me?"

The porcelain girl felt her face crack, a jagged one, demolishing her nose, and a few smaller cracks along her cheekbones. Her hands burst, her sticky blood barely keeping them together. She held her collapsing face to her bloody hands. The porcelain girl looked more brown than ivory now, bloodstained with hues of soil and earth.

# The Porcelain Girl and the Celadon Woman

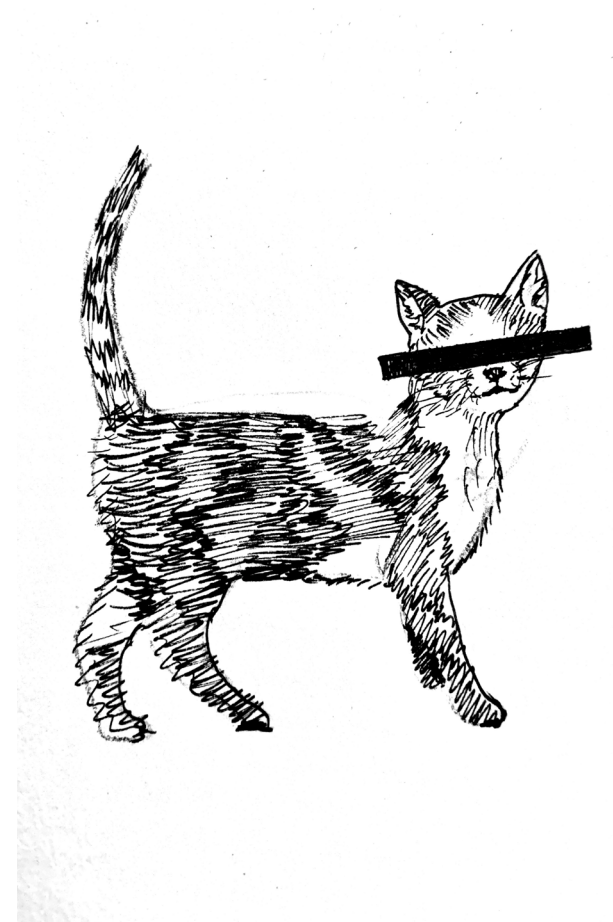
Ashley Kim



The porcelain girl realized she was dying too.

Both mother and daughter fell to their knees, barely able to control themselves from withering into dust. Their tears and their blood conglomerated and overflowed, flooding the whole house with gold liquid streaked with brown. Together, they took small steps in the viscous ooze of their life force towards their soaked blankets, gently placing the thinner blanket over their deteriorating bodies, only to shatter once within their quilts' suffocating embrace.

When dawn came, the porcelain girl and the celadon woman awoke next to each other, fully formed again. They spent the entire day side by side, only to shatter, sleep, resurrect, and repeat.



# ART

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LETTERS FROM



OUR EDITORS

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Vivien Adamian

Art

Thank you to the Westwind Art committee for their patience and participation in the voting process. I have certainly had a hard time adjusting to our remote format and I'm so grateful for this club for keeping us connected and creative. It is a pleasure to receive and review submissions from the talented artists who contribute their work out of generosity and the desire to inspire other artists in their community to do the same. Special thanks to my co-illustrator Hannah for their amazing work for this journal, it's a joy to see our work alongside the many lovely artists and writers featured in this issue.



HOW TO ESCAPE THE SUNKEN PLACE

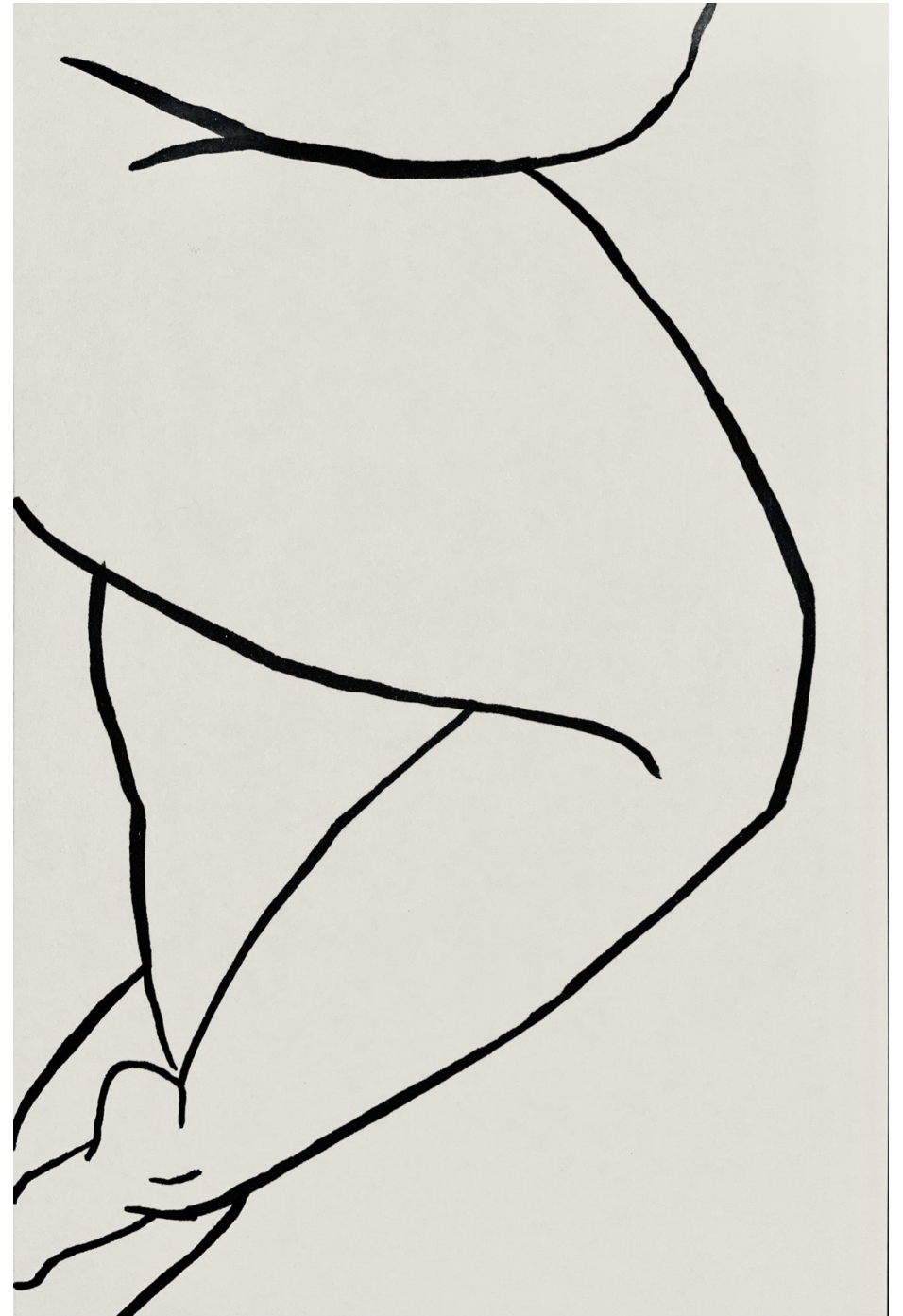
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TEA TIME

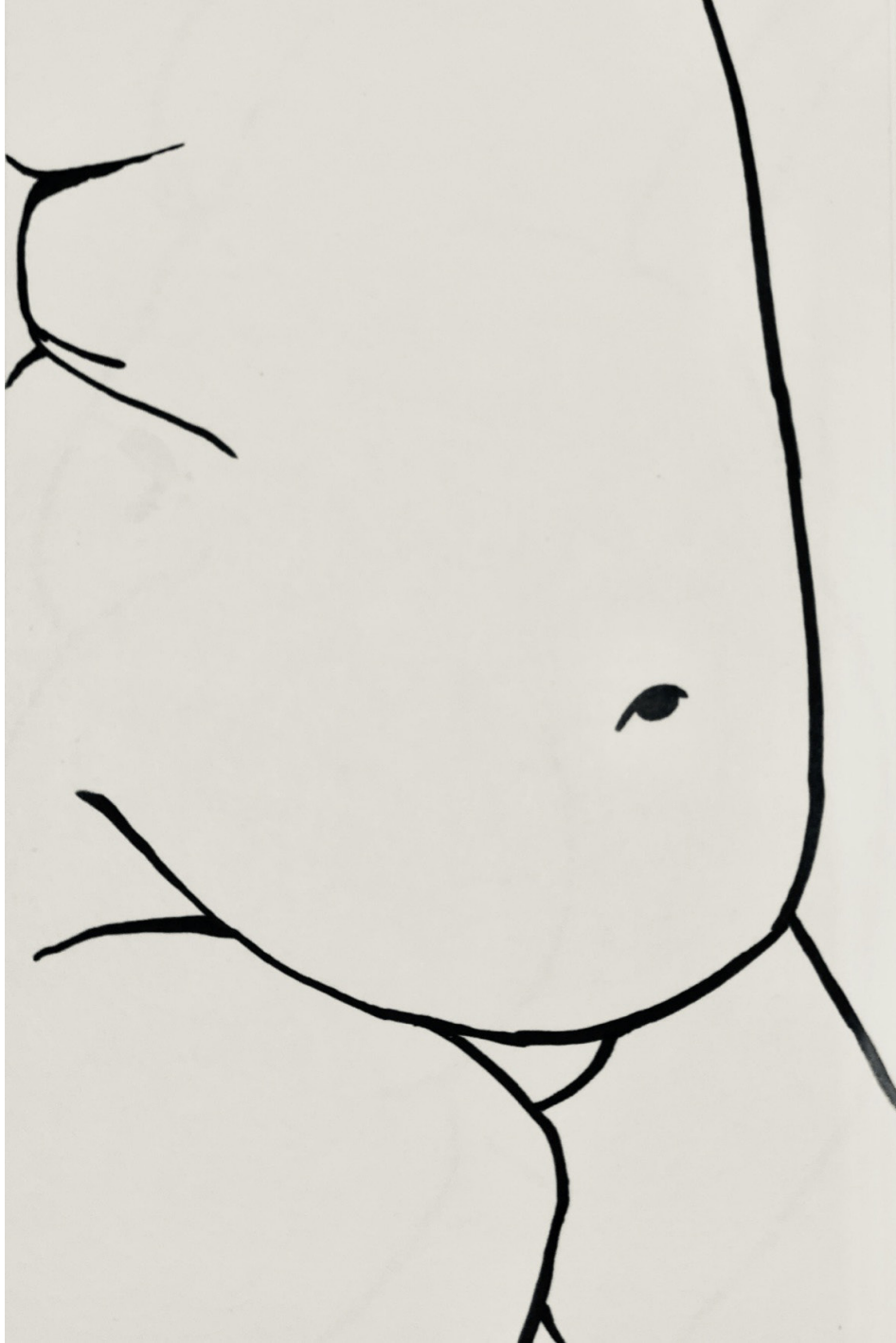
FIRYAL BAWAB











ANGLES DOUX 1  
ANGLES DOUX 2  
ANGLES DOUX 3

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BRENDA SIMONE BASTIAN

## POETRY

Anna Sharudenko was born in Moscow, Russia, but emigrated to the United States at 11 years old. She is currently a Junior at UCLA, majoring in English and minoring in Russian Literature. After she completes her undergraduate degree, she plans to attend law school.

Austin Nguyen is a first-year at UCLA majoring in English. Sometimes, he writes poetry; even more rarely, it comes out above average!

Ava Boehm is a second year sociology undergrad and Los Angeles native. Her interests lie in the way dance, film, creative writing, and linguistics intersect with social justice.

Chandler Kyle is a fourth year student studying Egyptology. They occasionally write poetry when the melancholic nostalgia hits, and then proceed to drown their sorrows in a bowl of spaghettios.

Jaime E. Estrada is 20 years old, from Tijuana, Mexico. Son of the border and transferred from Southwestern College, he now studies Spanish. He started writing out of an explorative need and continues to work on it.

Nikki Ochoa is an ancient baby who grew up amongst the kudzu forests of Georgia. She is a UCLA alumni and current CAL ARTS MFA creative writing student. Her favorite way to learn is by meeting new friends and being outside. She is easily distracted, always in love, and knows God is technicolor.

Peyton Austin is a recent and thus also a covid graduate of UCLA's Department of English. She hopes everyone in Westwind is safe and making it through the quarter okay.

Ziv Haikin graduated with a BA in American Literature and Culture as a member of UCLA's Class of 2020. He hopes you're doing well, all things considered.

## CREATIVE NON-FICTION

Daisy is an undergraduate student at UCLA and an Asian American Studies major with a passion for writing.

Janine is a former escape room cluemaster working remotely as a research assistant for the Bard College Theatre and Performance Department, and as an intern for the Los Angeles performance art space Mast on Fig. She is also a producer on Black Enso podcast, and creates works of interactive performance. Janine splits her time between various locations along California's coast.

Jiaxin is a second year master's student in computer science. She loves books, violin and cats. She misses all the international traveling during quarantine as well!

FICTION

Woody Brown

I am a non-speaking person with autism. I type to communicate. I have overcome many obstacles to be here at UCLA. I hope to become a novelist and advocate for others who are like me but have yet to find their voice

Ashley Kim is a writer located in California and an UCLA third-year majoring in Cognitive Science and minoring in Asian American Studies. Her writing is based in sensory-based perception of the world. She loves sheep, Korean film, and the color yellow. When she isn't writing, she refines her Korean cooking, reads eclectic novels, and spends valuable time with her family and friends. Soli deo gloria!

Catherine Lange is a first year student at UCLA intrigued in physics and neuroscience and theatre and everything in between. She's a PRIME intern, improviser, and loves nothing more than curling up with some dark chocolate, a cup of green tea, and some late night comedy. Her work has been published in Soul of a Knight, and Rare Byrd Review.

Conrad Loyer is an undergraduate student at the University of California, Berkeley. He has worked as an editor for cul-de-sac and the Berkeley Fiction Review, and was published in the cul-de-sac literary magazine.

Nikki Wolin is a UCLA student from the class of 2024. She enjoys writing poetry, song lyrics, and prose and aspires to be an author. She was inspired to write this story while reading The Road by Cormac McCarthy in an English class.

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# STAFF

*To our staff and editors who make this journal possible, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We are deeply grateful for all the effort and hard work you pour into Westwind.*

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# SUBMIT TO WESTWIND

## JOURNAL OF THE ARTS

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Westwind accepts submissions of original, unpublished literary and visual artwork in any genre. We publish one digital journal in Fall, Winter, and Spring, with print copies available on demand.

If your submission falls outside the submission period, it will roll over into the following reading period.

General questions may be sent to [westwinducla@gmail.com](mailto:westwinducla@gmail.com)

### FICTION

Please send up to 5 individual works (up to 3500 words collectively). Excerpts from longer prose pieces are acceptable if self-contained. Send submissions and/or questions to: [westwindfiction@gmail.com](mailto:westwindfiction@gmail.com).

### CREATIVE NONFICTION

Please send up to 5 individual works (up to 3500 words collectively). Excerpts from longer prose pieces are acceptable if self-contained. Prose works from all genres or non-genres are acceptable. Send submissions and/or questions to: [westwindcnf@gmail.com](mailto:westwindcnf@gmail.com).

### POETRY

Please send up to 3 individual poems (up to 750 words collectively). All forms and styles, including experimental genres, are acceptable! Send submissions and/or questions to [westwindpoetry@gmail.com](mailto:westwindpoetry@gmail.com).

### ART

Please send up to 5 digital images of artwork of any kind, in any medium. Alternative, non-traditional, and mixed-media artwork is acceptable and encouraged. Musical compositions and recordings may be sent as a soundcloud or mp3 link. Send submissions and/or questions to [westwindarts@gmail.com](mailto:westwindarts@gmail.com).

### WEBSITE

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