



Bottom memory
Brush unexpected
in summer, cool
on a sweat-soaked
fireflies land on you
keeping you outside

Build a fortress,
Don't mind me!
And I will slip my memories
gently
calmly



Backtrack
And me.
Me, car accident. Imag
concussion, I'm confused, I forgot
with yellow fingers. She stands o
cigarette; head bows towards the
from pocket, draws a line. Me
Feral eyes level ag
crossed off of



EQUINOX

LITERARY & ARTS
MAGAZINE

ISSUE 4, 2016

CAMPUS HONORS PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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About the Magazine

Equinox is the literary and arts magazine that is exclusive to the Campus Honors Program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It was created, organized, and published by Chancellor's Scholars.

The mission of *Equinox* is to share the artistic and creative talents of CHP members. Its name, borrowed from astronomy, reflects this mission: the vernal and autumnal equinoxes are days of the year when day and night are seen equally. The duality of day and night reflects the balance between academic and artistic achievement among Chancellor's Scholars.

Acknowledgments

Equinox extends thanks to all submission reviewers and editors for collecting, reviewing, and selecting submissions for publication in this fourth issue.

We additionally thank the CHP Computer Administrators—Zach Brewer, Sanjit Dutta, Christina Ernst, and Abhishek Nigam—for their assistance in making this issue an online publication, the Honors Student Council for co-sponsoring the release party, and all of our student contributors for making this magazine such a success.

Endless thanks, also, to CHP's own Professor Paul Diehl, Merinda Hensley, Julie Woolsey, and Associate Director Elizabeth Rockman, who advocated on our behalf for the opportunity to publish with the Illinois Office of Undergraduate Research this year.

Finally, we wish to thank the Campus Honors Program for their assistance in making this printed publication possible.

Your dedication, time, and contributions were invaluable in the continuation of the magazine. *Equinox* Issue #4 could not have been created without you.

Staff

2016 Executive Board:

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Works (left to right clockwise) by Kylie Petlak, Miriam Horsley, Grace Deetjen, Sam Walder, Kevin Cheng, Danish Majid

Letter from the Editor

Dear readers,

I enthusiastically welcome you to the fourth issue of *Equinox*, the Campus Honors Program's very own literary and arts magazine formed out of numerous hours of dedication, creativity, and hard work of Chancellor's Scholars. Filling this magazine are various works of art, poetry, prose, and photography ranging from a creatively-crafted image of dessert to the pages of a mind-blowing story on the Sisyphus Effect.

This year has certainly been a transition year for *Equinox* as three of the members of last year's executive board graduated. And along with them, went the last of the wonderful "founding mothers" of *Equinox*. However, the legacy of their groundwork has not left us, and *Equinox* continues to be made up of passionate staff and passionate artists. Sure, the first couple weeks they had their own mountains to cross with several of us being thrown into new territory. But these mountains soon became hills... and then suddenly these hills turned into something...well, something that hills aren't supposed to turn into. They turned into (wait for it)... *Equinox*.

As I rewind time in my mind, I look back to my experience being in *Equinox*. I had considered working with *Equinox* because I really liked books and enjoyed looking at art. Now, here I am, loving every moment of being part of the creation process of Issue #4 of *Equinox*.

And here we are. Here you are, reading this letter and the rest of this wonderful magazine put together by our creative managing art editor, witty copyeditor, clever managing writing editor, talented artists, and diligent staff. Now, I present to you the fourth issue of *Equinox*! I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we all enjoyed making it.

On a side note, get excited for the sequel: *Equinox* Issue #5!

Sincerely,

Velvizhi Rathinavelu, *Editor-in-Chief*

I. Poetry

Maxilopolis

Sam Walder

Sunday hitchhiked to Friday
Passed through Chicago, admired the
Sears Tower, its head lopped off
Dreamed and wagged its tail, then
Galloped back home

What a vacation! I saw Sunday
Eating a cronut around Millennium Park.
“Hey, lazy bum! What are you taking a break from?
You get to lie around doing nothing forever”

Sunday stared at me, mouth full of croissant flakes
“What work have you ever done?
What trees have you sawed?
What goods have you sold?
Fish caught,
Floors mopped,
Cities built?
You’re as lazy as a loon,
With a tenth the voice”

I sat down and stared at my shoes for a while then
Stared at other people so I seemed normal then
Stared at buildings so I seemed normal

I’d like to live in Sunday—no,
Give me a life full of Wednesdays
Where I can work and sacrifice for something real
As long as I can—
Everyone needs their Sundays.
No,
If I could plant my brain in infertile soil
Sprinkle it with my blood
So cities can sprout,
Tear me apart, surgeon!

And now I can’t stop holding my head in my hands.
Seriously, I’m okay, I’m
At the age where I can still spell-check my typos.

Sunday hitchhiked to Friday,
And it couldn’t get back again

Again.

Haenah Kim

It's lonely again.
 Just swinging my legs back and forth over the air,
 the wind passing by my ears.
 Whooshing.
 Hearing the cries of people distant,
 people too far away to make a change in my decisions.
 It can be so far down, and yet so far up;
 it is just swaying from side to side,
 trying to decide which way is better.

It's lonely again.
 Feeling my hands gripping the edge
 to the point where it's just dull,
 a background sensation to my thoughts.
 There's a lot of shrieks,
 calling out to the world that would not hear.
 I don't know why they bother.
 Life is too long anyway.
 I need to make a decision, quickly,
 but it doesn't come any faster.

It's lonely again.
 Swinging my legs, not a care in the world.
 So many people below me,
 taking the leap might hurt many more than just me.
 Does it matter? Should it matter?
 I could leave this place and fly free through the air,
 no matter what the adults say.
 The sun is starting to move,
 I should finally decide,
 before my time frame is over.

It's lonely again.
 My fingers are starting to lose their grasp,
 tired from trying so hard.
 I could let go, it wouldn't be that hard;
 I could ride the wind like a leaf.
 The sun signifies it's been minutes,
 minutes too long for my mind.
 Doubt.
 Doubt is everywhere.

It's lonely again.
My mind begins to return back to world.
I can hear the shrieks of those around me.
I can tell the pain for them would be more than any
inflicted upon myself.
There come the rings,
so subtle the rings.
My moment has almost passed.
My decision has almost been made.

It's lonely again.
But whatever,
the calls beckon me to come.
I should step down,
I'm missing my chance.
The shrieks start to fade once again.
Their tone is different.
Angry.
Have I made them so?

It's lonely again.
I can hear the angry voices call to me.
My decision needs to be made.
I should listen.
But my pain is still there,
my loneliness still existing.

A final call.

I sigh.

I stop my swing without jumping,
and slowly peel myself off.

Recess is over and I need to go back inside.

2014

Somewhere

Thomas Metcalf

This place lives somewhere
in concrete and in plastic
along highways and cul-de-sacs
under gum-covered desks

People are not alive there
they live there
and watch the years recede
into golden waving wheat

Measuring lives in ones and zeroes
Measuring lives in volume, not weight

Fresh-cut grass spins a new story
(The smell seeping into fabric)
Dead men did, children will, you don't
think of anchors or forlorn glory
Because movies are still promises

There are pictures of trees
and statues of people
that smile and shine
and look very pretty
But they all move slower at a distance

Endless black deserts
meet the sky in a kiss
where a town consumes eyes
and runs faster than desire

There's a man on every corner
Yelling at empty ears
Ten-dollar words can't pay his mortgage

When we leave, the words and the noise
and the drinks and the joy
and the sex and the shouts
and the smoke and the doubts
and the bedrooms
rise up, dissolve,
and become new breath
to breathe the same questions:

Do you see the beauty in dirt?
Do you see the beauty in ash?
Can you hear the sound of thick rushing blood?
Did you melt yourself down?
Did you sink into the soil?
Did you say, "I love you mom"?
Have you seen a padlock mouth?
Have you made one from two?
Can't you see the beauty in dirt?

Birds are flying east
They can't leave
Rain destroyed the grasses
The grasses will be missed

A Fox Named Silence

Haenah Kim

white fur streaks the woods
nothing is heard nothing to say
a white blur does the unthinkable
do the things it hates to do
just to stay alive

silence

an angel who sits at the altar
bathed in white and tears
an angel who is broken beyond repair
has nothing to do nothing to fake
after the pain

words are pain

pale skin sits on a bed
whitest hair on her head
nothing left to even feel
a girl past her prime
hardens quickly

noise is a curse

pale footsteps echo slowly
open-back gown flowing stiffly
weak fingers grasp the wall
blood poisoned by her own cure
nothing is true

promises are false

golden boy visits the silent poisoned
gift in hand
fluffy white fur with oblivion eyes
nothing to know
comfort is nothing

hope does not exist

8 ♦ Poetry

rush to solitary confinement
white toy taken away
alone and lost
chanting cant
i cant

days are nothing

escape is impossible

Untitled

Anonymous

I will still your heart
To let it beat after you part
It would be a crime.

Waning

Chelsea Peterson

I am eternally unsatisfied like the moon,
waxing and waning.
If I ever feel full,
it's only for a night.
Most other nights,
I'm only a crescent of a person
when everything seems perfect
the weather, the mood, the laughter and friends
still
a sliver is sliced from the edge of my heart
giving my throat an uneasy taste
and I never feel quite right

Sonnet for Cheap Donuts (written in CHP's HIST 295)
Sam Walder

Whisky, gin, and driving far too fast
Were drugs I sought to patch my broken soul
In kinship found in morning's sweet repast
'Twas only deep-fried dough could fill the hole
For just three bucks save one small copper piece
A score of sticky joy-balls can be yours
It's breakfast, say you? Nay, it's heaven's feast!
O Entenmann's, you're God's confectioner!
I weep for March 13th when they expire
Their epitaph's eternal in my gut
My poem's spirits never have been higher
I'll yell it, moan it...I'm a donut slut!
A woman's charm has stolen me in part
But cinnamon and sugar stole my heart.

trapped in This light

Haenah Kim

silence favors the dark
and those that fade into the far
traces of their silver strings
mark the floors and the walls
step into the shadows
weak embodied revealed
into the light
paths of instinct bastardized to
only scars

Fall 2015

A day swept away

Chelsea Peterson

Blowing coolly across the prairie and my neck,
The swift wind carries the morning away.
Gusts come and go,
Each taking a part of the day with it
One takes the chilled dew-tipped morning
The next the rising heat
Another the high noon
And the humid afternoon
Sweeping and sweeping away the time
Until, the day
Gone
Rustles in the tree leaves up over the hill to the east
Parting with the last wind

Never Fades

Haenah Kim

For that lost in memory
never fades in the trees
they'll whisper and speak
to help those in need
but we have long forgotten
what it means to be in plead
For languages lost in memory
never fades in the trees
and the children who
stop and listen
learn what the ancients knew
For bonds lost in memory
never fades in the trees
For the ones that speak
of bonds and languages long forgotten
are never lost in the trees

Fall 2015

Letter, June 12

Sam Walder

Streets climb from solitude towards love
Built out of the ocean spray, buttressed by
Pacific winds. Where were you when I
Ran that night, my one companion hanging above?

Streets dart from care towards worry
The shops steal but don't sell
Shopkeepers laugh at your descent to a pell-mell hell
Mist turns to snow, a flake to a flurry.

Streets fall like boulders towards the cliffside
Pray to your brakes, bow your head
Ah, to hell with it! Take the plunge instead
Tears add flavor to the riptide.

Now, now. A frown becomes a smile, a seagull a dove
Though it's made of walls
A city's not a prison at all!
Follow the lamps. Streets climb once more towards love

Beautiful People

Anonymous

Beautiful people pass on the street
With small, secret smiles, lifted eyes meet
But lonely people, they hurry on by
Blinded to life by the tears in their eyes

Come together, break apart
Drift, spin, whirl, dart
Try so hard to find your heart
Sometimes we don't know where to start

So many people you see in a day
Rushing or waiting, each goes their own way
Walking or running or just standing still
Each living and loving, as well as they will

But once in a lifetime
Without reason or rhyme
Two perfect paths find
Their new heart and mind

Come, hear the horns
A sweet siren call
Come, hear the drums
The beat before the fall.

Losing One

Haenah Kim

I am safe within my covers,
tucked securely in with two kisses on my cheeks,
the door closed and the world far away.
I can't sleep today,
there's a creature on the wall,
bright and curvy,
waiting on the wall.
The courage to touch it is too far away
with its low rumbling constant and loud.
It flickers, it fades, but always returns,
disappearing with large shrieks
reappearing with loud thumps.
It dances upon the paleness of my wall,
always there, and always forever.
A gust.
It's louder than the rumbling of the creature.
I want to help it fight the breathless whirlwind that threaten to take it
away
but I cannot get up to reach with my stubby little fingers
that one day will become like my mother's.
I want to help it fight the sweeping darkness,
but I cannot fight the chains like my father can.
The wind starts to die and darkness returns.
The creature is gone, but the rumbling is still there.
But soon after, there is a loud clap,
the deep dark thud, and the rumbling fading into the distance.
Never seeing the beautiful creature again,
gone
as a companion to the one that left me,
alone and chained tightly to a bed,
hearing all that was said and done.

Fall 2014

O;
Sam Walder

Stone memories last a lifetime
But they're crude, bulky, hardly worth a neuron
Give me silk memories!

Cherished, stored safely, brought out
only for special guests

Brick memories can only build walls.
I prefer paper memories, bound loosely, bound to
Wither and crumble unless placed gently
in a cool library,
consulted solemnly

I love cotton memories that
Brush unexpectedly against me
in summer, cool and refreshing
on a sweat-soaked night when the
fireflies land on your fingers and pulse,
keeping you outside just a bit longer

Build a fortress,
Don't mind me!
And I will slip my memories in the cracks to
gently
calmly
bring your fortress down

Second Thoughts, Loneliness, and Drowning

Haenah Kim

Silence has never been my style,
 I choose to blast my music,
 I choose to talk loud and clear,
 I choose to laugh a hearty laugh.
 My shades are down,
 my hands are out,
 I drive like the way I walk about.
 I don't need a girl to be by my side,
 I just need to drown the silence
 of second thoughts.

Silence has always been my style,
 fading my music to a soft hum,
 talking softly and kindly,
 laughing a light laugh.
 My hair is kept away from my face,
 my hands are safely next to me,
 driving calmly through the days.
 I like having people with me,
 needing to drown the silence
 of loneliness.

Broad daylight is the best way to go,
 my station turned up so that it floods the streets
 with a loud bass beat.
 I teeter a bit past the common speed,
 the speed limit was never followed anyways.
 Chatting amongst people with my phone,
 I still drive alone.

Warm sunlight bathes my skin,
 music off so that I can listen to my best friend's chatter
 as it echoes off the other cars.
 I teeter on the speed limit,
 choosing to go a tad slower than common to ensure safety.
 Letting silence be our breaks,
 I drive with company.

ding ding
tchaka tchaka tchaka
ding ding
tchaka

...
ding ding
ding ding
ding ding?

A phone lies in the middle of an intersection
 still going off with texts,
the owner lays unconscious and bloody
 but relatively okay.
A photo floats near the phone
 two smiles with a drawing saying BFF,
the owner lays in shock with the arm bent morbidly
 but the companion is halfway out of the car
 with a glazed look
 focused into
 the distance.

I don't drive much anymore,
I choose to walk.
While my fashion is still loud,
 my mouth remains still.
Silence drowns out the regrets.

Silence has grown a part of me,
choosing to avoid driving at all costs.
While I might seem okay,
 my smile rarely surfaces.
I choose to drown in my silence.

Portraits of a Seventeen-Year-Old Girl

Lily Benig

The voice of an angel,
the voice of a mime.

I *cannot* tell you what she said
you must help.
Clearly, you must.

Hell is a long way off but I try to make it special for you.

Thin tights and red lines and
red tape without escape,
I gave her time.

The girl is a dime but she won't meet my eye,
I cannot contain, deep in my head and my feet
A look one of a kind.

A smile elicits a smile companion
but the second, with the strength of straw,
is worrisome.

I promised to love her all my life
but fear has enticing assistants.

Rips and tears and screams and tears
I can't see out -- today is great
Please see your words are an eyesore
I can't won't no no no not
And his smile takes me away
But the voice allows nothing
She ALWAYS wins.

A roller coaster without in between,
attempts to protect and to help,
falling flat.

I swore I would save you on my life I would save you
I swore the tempest would leave and leave you
and leave me
and leave you and me in that same place
but this time I'd do you right.

She stands beyond my conception of limits
She stands alone beyond my limits
She stands alone
She stands

Half a flower worth half my time
Won't amount anyway;
I'll give her a ride.

Her knife in my side,
and mine in hers.

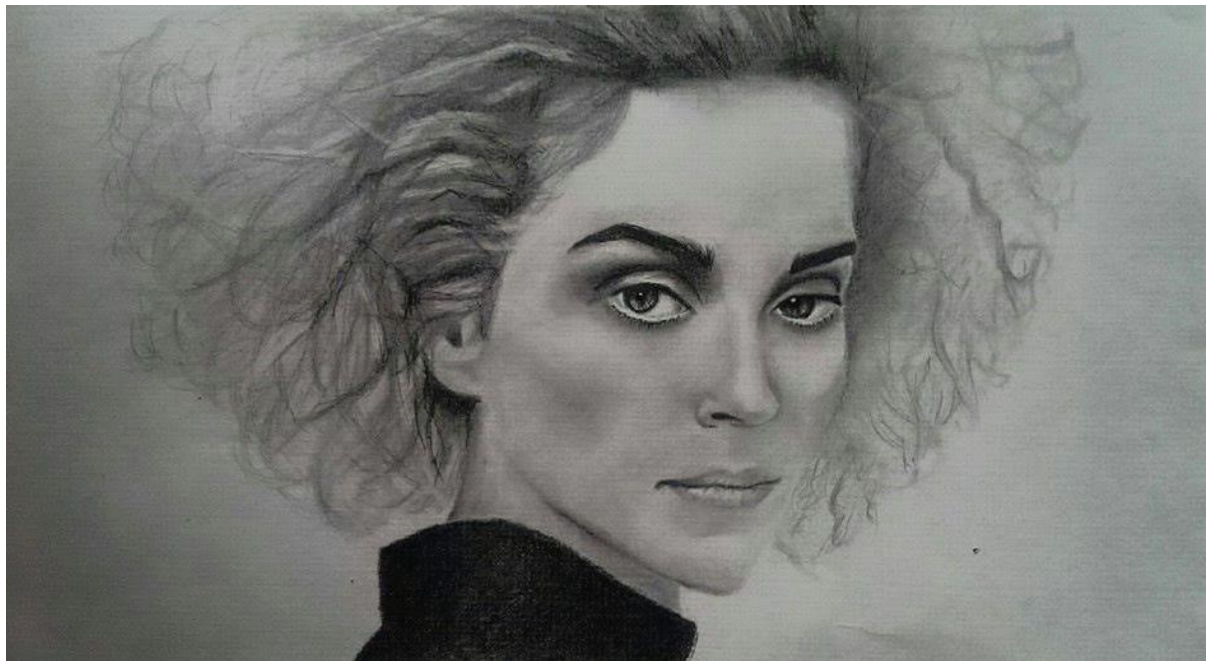
My friend is a wonderful listener
but understanding is flighty
and the smile means she's alright.
Alright?

She sometimes wins.

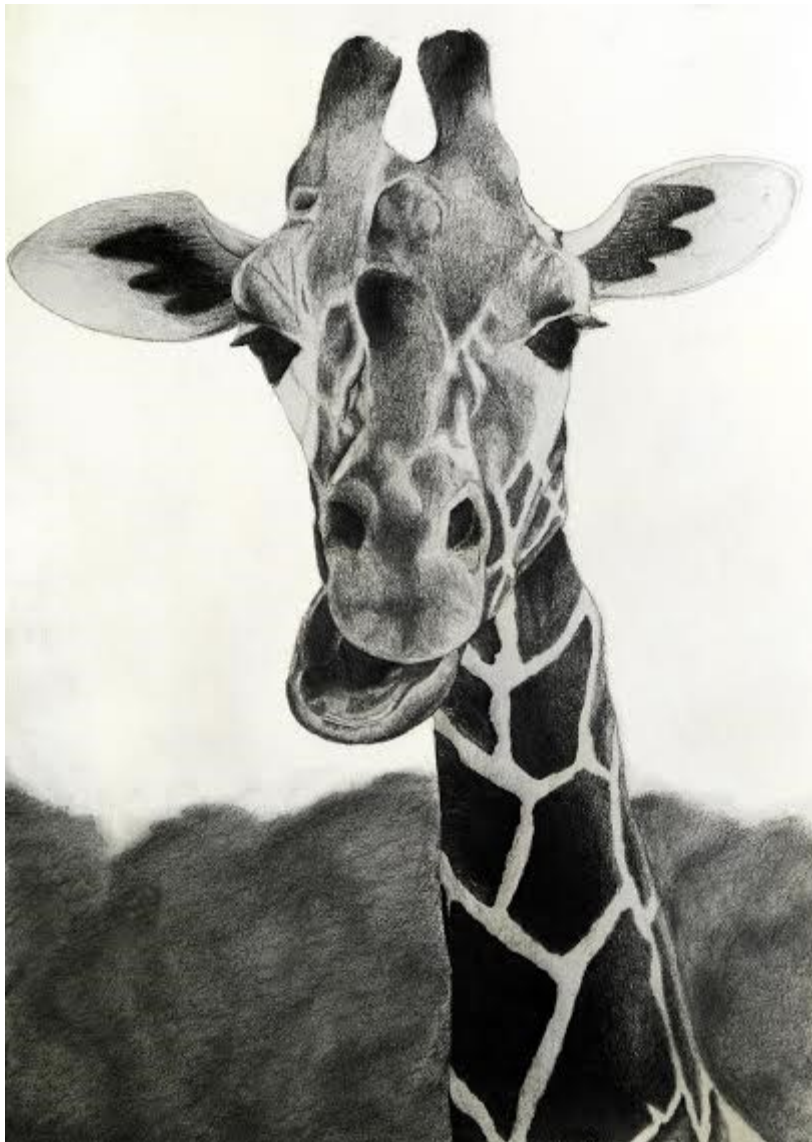
This marks the one. Two marks the twelve.
Everything before has never existed.

I love; it's enough.
And the bird can be free.

II. Art



St. Vincent, Kylie Petlak
Drawing

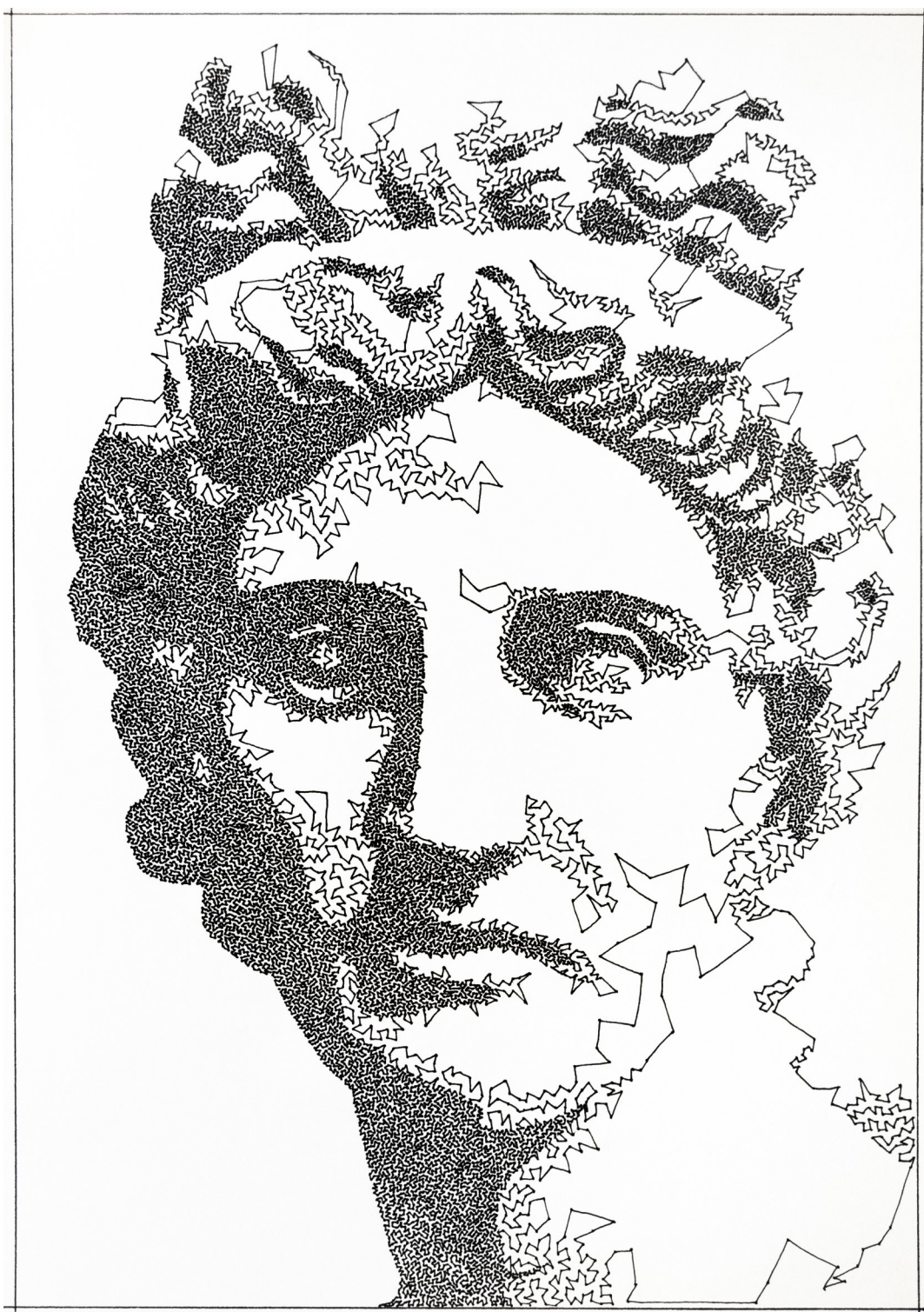


Giraffe, Charlotte Hunt
Drawing

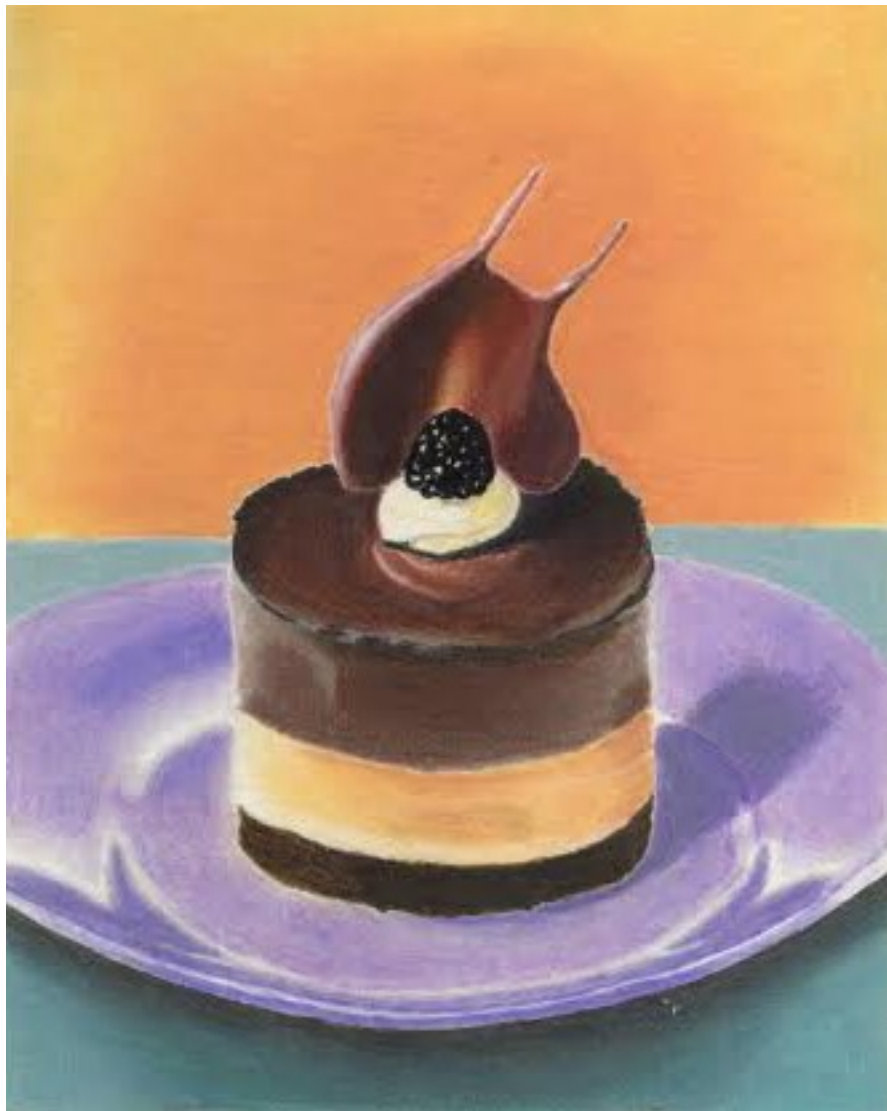


Pysanka, Erik Kountz
Painting

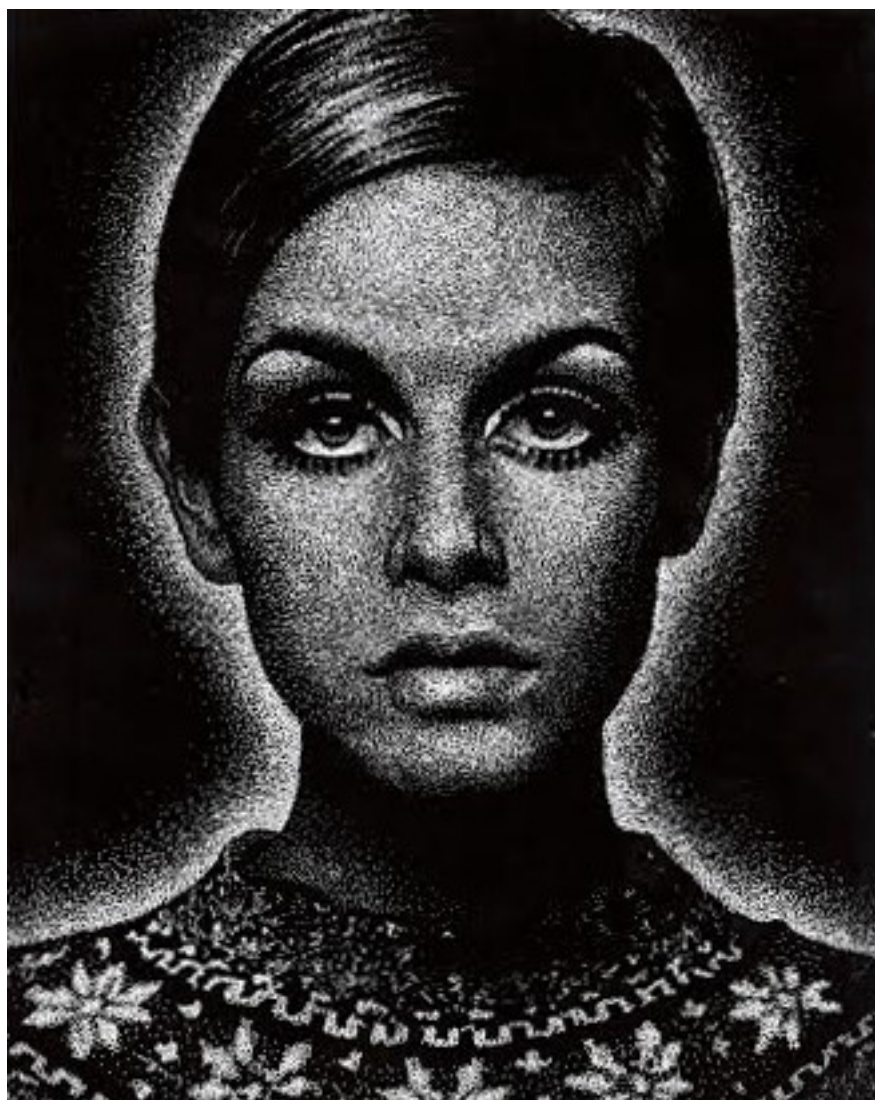
Equinox Issue #4 (2016)



Apollo, Charlotte Hunt
Drawing



Chocolate Mousse Trifecta, Danish Majid
Drawing



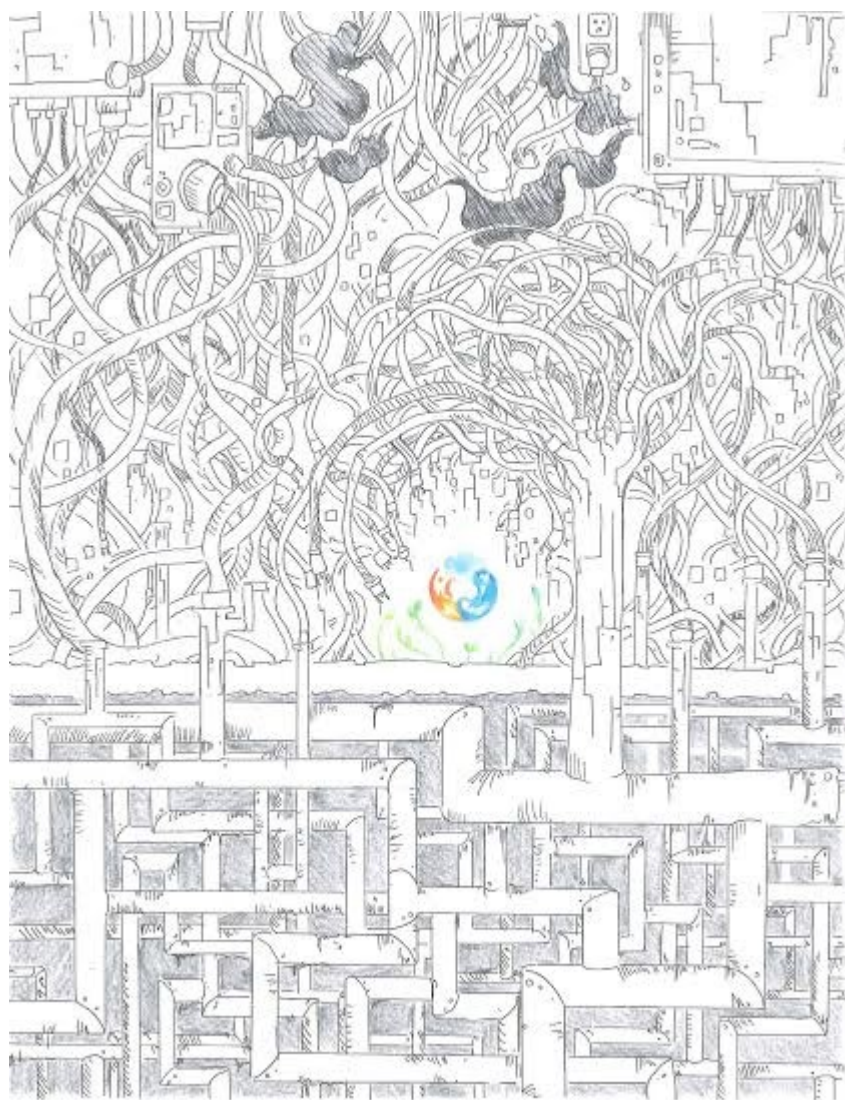
Twiggy...with DOTS, Kylie Petlak
Drawing



Desert Procession, Danish Majid
Drawing



The Final Frontier, Charlotte Hunt
Painting



Elements, Jessica Chen
Drawing

**Elements is a collaborative art and poetry submission by
Jessica Chen and Nathan Stables.*

Elements
Nathan Stables

We once spoke of harmony as an attainable goal
and reveled in the elegant differences between the nations.
There was never a world without conflict or enviable power,
nor was there a real danger of losing touch with the most basic elements
of nature, of reason and of living.

Since then, we are more connected than ever, unified through
virtual portals and linked by an eerie reflection
of artificial light in our eyes. A revolution of multimedia;
everything changed when the screens took over.

Our grasp of the ancient ways, maybe not entirely lost, is certainly
shaky in the hands of change. Instinct shouldn't need convincing.
Our minds move disjoint from our actions, too fast for our will and senses.
Society continues to move forward, leaving humanity stagnant and stuck,
betrayed under a coat of metallic dust.

Turn to look out at the world. Can you feel the
squish of the mud as your feet sink down? Does the wind whip your hair
wildly or blow kindly onto your neck?
Place yourself back in those moments of striking realization.
A fall downpour drenching your
clothes, reminding you what it means to feel alive and sentient. To walk
from a chilly shadow into warmth and the sunlight stroking your back.

Can you feel it? The pulse of the most basic tenets of life? Or are you
removed from the very elements that make living possible? There is
a plague of separation, a loss of natural sensation.

No singular force can salvage a society that has become so far-removed.
The Earth will cry and people will suffer from our shortcoming.
The ground may quake, the land ablaze by purifying fire, great
waves to wash away evidence of our shameful deeds, boisterous gusts
to blow away signs of our so-called advancement and marvel.

For too long we've fought what's always been inside. No feat of
engineering can replace the elements of living, so why do we try
to take advantage of or ignore the facets of our making? Time is
the one element we can't bend to our devices, and the least forgiving.

This is not a public service announcement nor should we feel guilty or lost without action. Time may not waver or wait, but there still is time to change, maybe to regress.

It will take time to disconnect, clean off our metallic obsessions, unwire our virtual selves. We don't need to dance through ceremonial flames or christen our new lives in cleansing water. We needn't construct clay obelisks out of reverence or hike skyward to the clouds and experience thinning air to appreciate the beauty in breath.

What we need. To Feel. To Laugh. To Love. A change and an embrace of the past, the present, and everything we can accomplish. To acknowledge what we came from and to pay homage to the elements that make us human and worth fighting for.

III. Photography



Laputa, Miriam Horsley



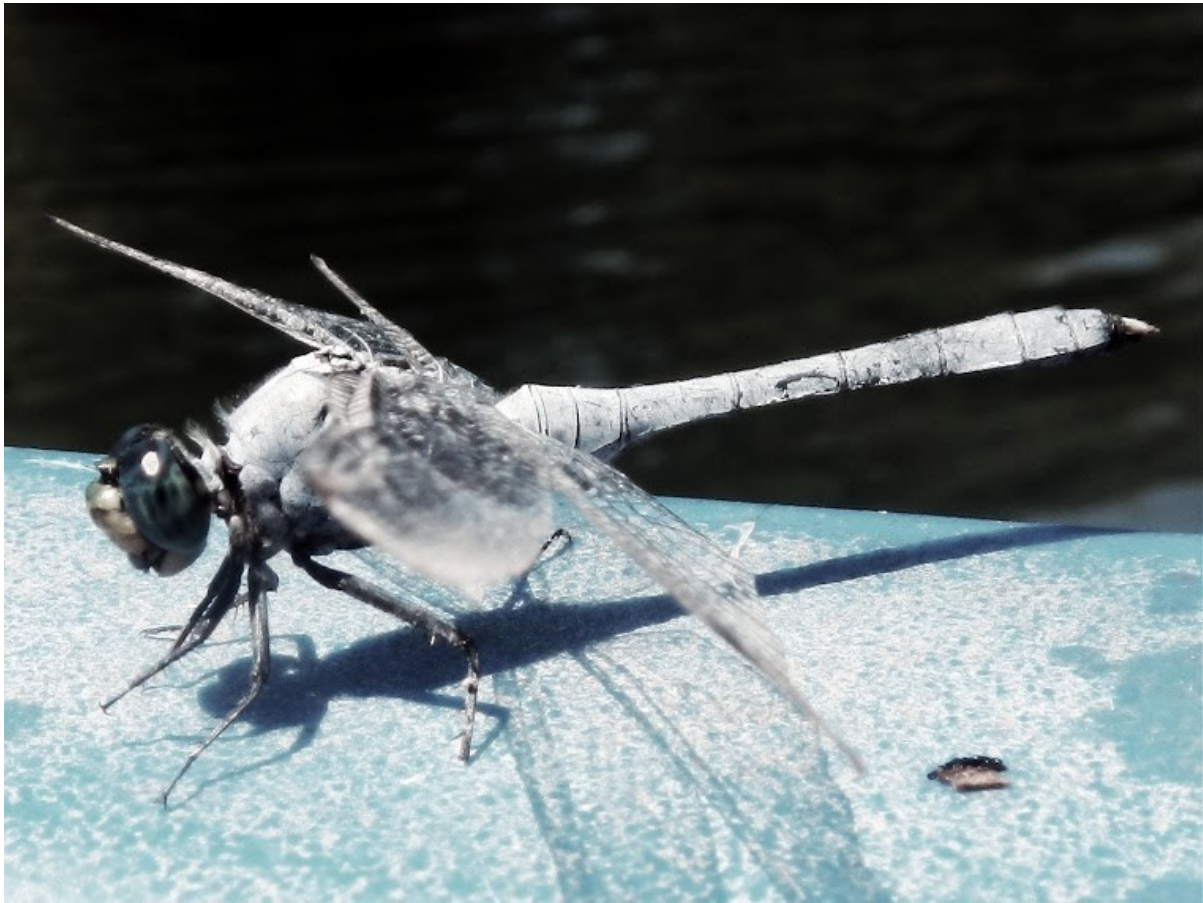
A Collection of Deadly Insects, Grace Deetjen



Untitled, Thomas Roadcap



Rocky Beach, Charlotte Hunt



Astronaut, Grace Deetjen



In Line, Kevin Cheng



Daintree River, Charlotte Hunt



Ariadne's Thread, Miriam Horsley



Lanes, Grace Deetjen



Reflections of a Resilient Nation, Kevin Cheng



Untitled, Thomas Roadcap



Ascension, Velvizhi Rathinavelu



Viridian, Charlotte Hunt



Center of Attention, Kevin Cheng



Pinecoronet, Miriam Horsley



Pinecoronet, Miriam Horsley

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Mossman, Grace Deetjen



Daintree Forest, Charlotte Hunt



Untitled, Thomas Roadcap



Life's Pretty Alright, Grace Deetjen



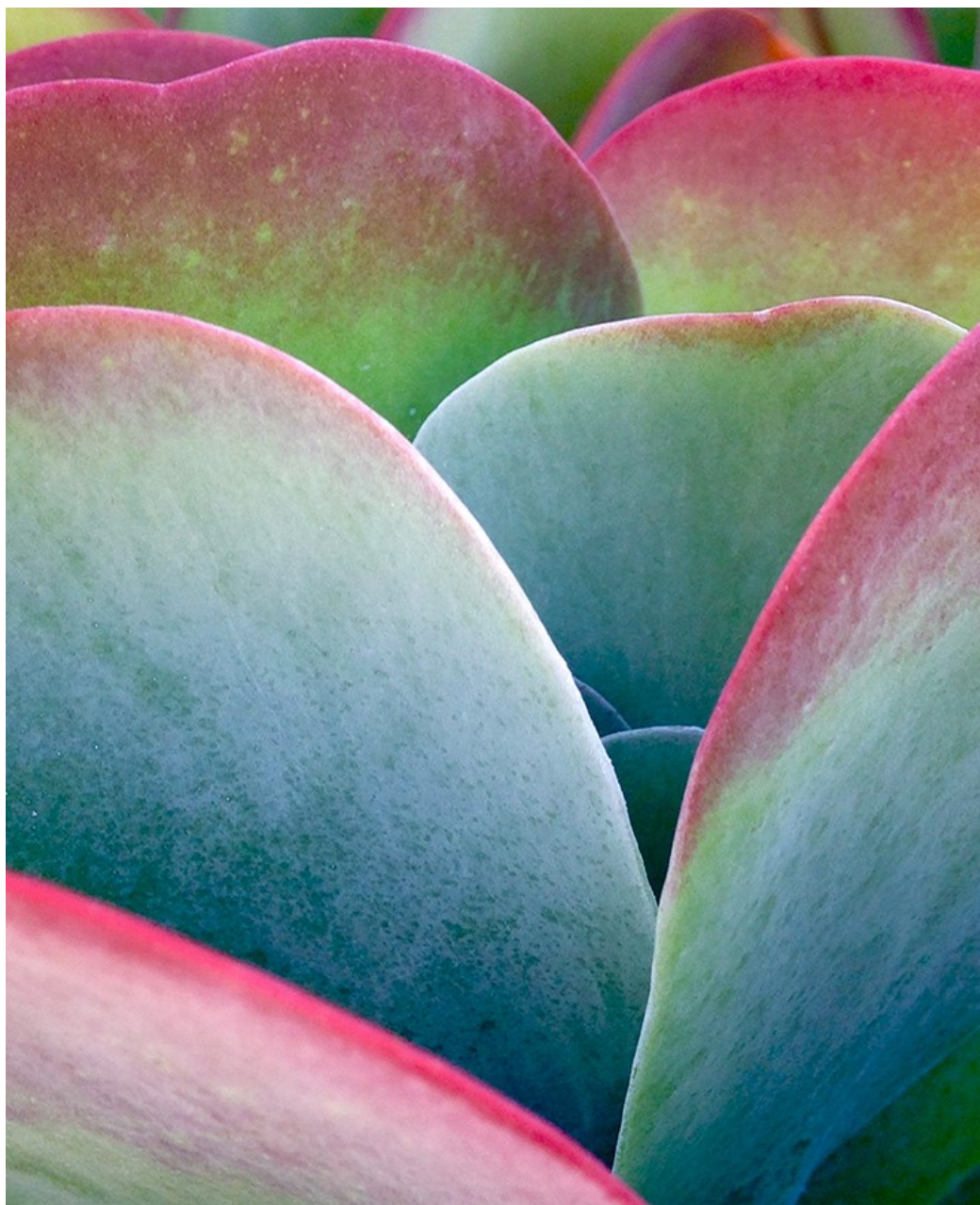
Forest Path, Charlotte Hunt



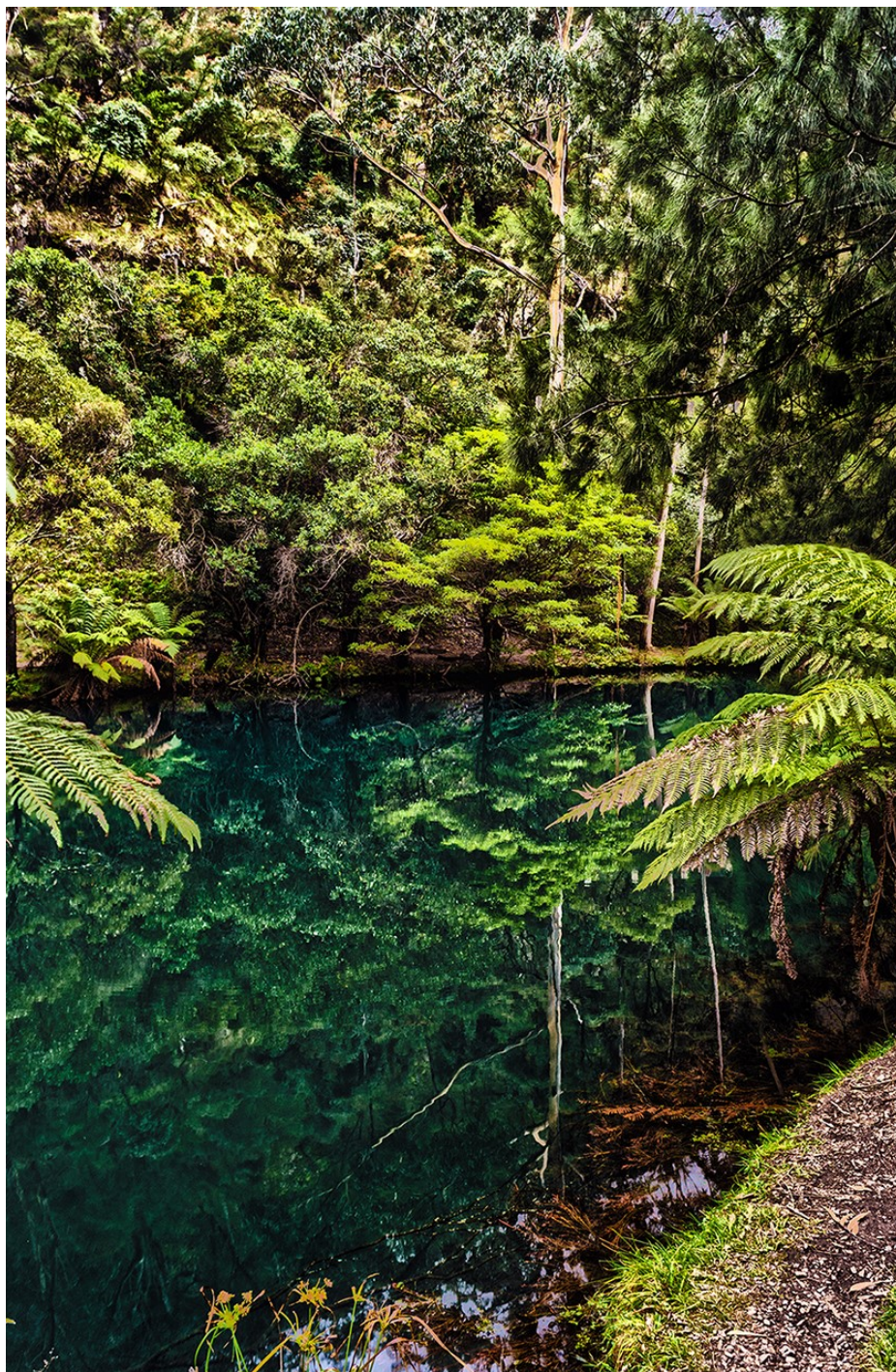
Summer Stroll, Kevin Cheng



Upside-down Highway, Grace Deetjen



Aurora Kalanchoe, Miriam Horsley



Acqua, Charlotte Hunt



Birdland, Velvizhi Rathinavelu



Untitled, Thomas Roadcap

IV. Prose

The Sisyphus Effect

Miriam Horsley

I'm already late and the car is rasping and heaving to turn the engine over, the clouds tell me I will wish my umbrella weren't on my kitchen table; phone, *check*, notes, *check*, my meeting starts in forty minutes and the construction on 224 will hold me up for ten. Damn it, where is my ID? In my bag. In my bag? Yes.

The car shifts into a pattering rumble, gummily peels away from the curb, and the light is gre—it's yellow, I can make it...on a red. Fists clenching, unclenching, I merge onto the uncongealed highway, no turn signal and no one cares because they don't use it either. Traffic cones litter the road and the cars clot in the right lane; speedometer at 67...43...2. Heaven roars in indignation, settles. Driver's chair moans as I sink back, hands melt from steering wheel, foot resigns itself to hold the brake: inches pile into eighth-miles, fourth-miles, half-miles. Twenty-seven minutes to the meeting, well, there's no use worrying about it in construction—seriously, twenty-seven minutes? Should've grabbed the umbrella, I still have twenty-seven.

Silence trapped in the cab, harmonized by a rattling diminuendo deep in the A/C, whispering against the windows—a suction of air mauls quiet into chaos. Passenger door's open and a corpse is in the cockpit: skin and bones, draped in black; amethyst knuckles, jaundice fingertips. Hands on the wheel, leaning forward, straining, sputtering—in a rush—threw notes into the car—didn't lock the door—

"What the hell?" Civilians shouldn't be allowed in work zones, hitchhikers shouldn't be allowed in work zones.

She offers an unhurried glance with eyes framed by kohl and lack of sleep, Band-Aid fingers crunching into a fist around a cigarette, storm clouds pouring from her mouth. A/C whines, door shuts.

"Get out of the car—" bullet words, shoot to kill.

Smog rolls on the ceiling; get out of the car get out of the car get out of my car—

"Drive," desperate pulls on the cigarette and eyes heavy-lidded, feral.

An invective forms on my tongue, rolls onto my teeth: ready, aim—

A horn screams behind me; I jolt—End Construction Zone, Speed Limit 60, nineteen minutes, I didn't have time for the umbrella. Hands fly in aborted gestures, curse lingers over the center storage console, I floor the gas.

"I'm only going to 6th Street; you're getting out there."

"I'm only going as far as you are."

Speedometer at twentyfortyfivesixtyeightseventytwo and a storm is cumulating under the roof, fourteen minutes, get out of my car, twelve minutes; feral eyes forward, a flare of red—

Cacophony of metal, woodwind of glass, twist of rust, percussion of bone.

A meaningless mirage of sound, sharp light pulsing and black holes swallowing my vision as they shovel me off the ground. A glimpse of death—thin and broken, upside down, eternal sleep clouding insomnia eyes; mangled ribs and split lips and the blood crawls from her temple across stained hair and past the cloven crown, dripping off the broken pieces of an incomplete halo around her head. Smoke curls from fire

crushed between fingers.

—I open my eyes and they water; a tentative sniff and my nose burns, assaulted with sterility and stale oxygen. Language assembles and I match it with a uniform: blue and white, clipboard, stethoscope.

Her words curl through my ears: collision, concussion, safe, miracle, miracle—

“—hiker,” my voice is tinted with sandpaper; jigsaw-grammar sentences.

“—ssenger, she—” My kingdom for a glass of water.

A smile peeks through her concern because that will be the concussion, I’m confused, a guardian angel caught me and I’m safe; I’m on medication and don’t worry they have my phone, my wallet, my notes, my book, my book? They have my umbrella. It isn’t bent; of course not, it’s on the kitchen table. I must be confused. I don’t have a book. She leaves; I scrabble for the bedside table—ripple of paper, crest of leather, pull it towards me. Thumb skips over ridge of pages, each one rises in an arc and falls left; meandering rows of doctor’s font, list after list after list of names and descriptions: Rebekah Bosworth, smallpox, Luke Kendall, bullet, Esther Hill, overdose—names, struck through with a black line. Pages losing age spots, straightening dog-ears and uncurling water damage; the book is too small for these thousands of pages, and the strikeouts end.

Backtrack—past Leah Nguyen, heart attack, Noah Sorenson, base jumping—
And me.

Me, car accident. Image blisters against the stark white, my brain tumbles, it’s the concussion, I’m confused, I forgot my umbrella, me, car accident. Me; the book is ripped away with yellow fingers. She stands over me, bony and not broken, fingers still caging a misty cigarette; head bows towards the open book and she clamps her smoke in her teeth, draws pen from pocket, draws a line. ~~Me. Car accident.~~

Feral eyes level against mine, worn, defeated, a glimmer of revulsion. It fades: I have been crossed off of the to-do list. She turns, spits smoke; I can still see the curved stain of blood around her head reaching towards impossible completion. Divinity, interrupted.

Cigarette falling to the floor, ash dusting the tile, flame fighting its demise—I watch it go out, a door opens and ushers in a patter of feet, a distant telephone.

—the umbrella is on the bedside table.

The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight...there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor.

Albert Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus”

Visible Cities

Sam Walder

Jeju-ci

Jeju-ci lingers in the memory not for the fatty black pork or the old fortress; not for the wind off Mt. Hallasan; it is for the glance exchanged between the girl sitting backwards in the passenger seat of a Kia and the boy with dyed red hair carrying a violin. She stared at the violin, he stared at her bare legs. Then the world started up once more.

Seoul

In the shade of cartoon-character umbrellas walk old women with curly hair and heavy lipstick. They pass fashion boutiques, skin care shops, plastic surgery offices, and the young consumers of these extravagances. They prefer not to remember their tame youths. Instead, they look at the porcelain, plastic girls walking by on the street and imagine that these girls were them, the old women. The porcelain, plastic girls, underneath their mask-like sunglasses, think porcelain and plastic thoughts. They recognize the fashion boutique, the skin care shop, the plastic surgery office as necessary parts of their charmed lives. The future is this afternoon; it takes place at Châtelaine and Olivia Lauren. The future is tonight, and future me is prettier, has clearer skin, bigger boobs, double eyelids.

As the two generations pass each other on the street, the old women look back in time at the young women and the young look forward in time at themselves. Looking backward, looking forward, what's the difference anymore?

Fuzhou

Beyond the city of Fuzhou, past one hundred apartment blocks, one thousand trucks, and one million honking scooters, you find Drum Mountain. At the top, shirtless old men with guts and muscles smoke cigarettes and do push-ups. From up there, Fuzhou is invisible in its smog. Being unremarkable, the city hardly lingers in the memory. Losing your sense of direction, you might descend Drum Mountain on the wrong side and, having forgotten about Fuzhou, find yourself in a nameless rural village. Arriving in April when the tea leaves are being picked, a woman is singing while washing her hair in the creek, and the smell of ginger in oil makes you drool, the whole village glows even without streetlamps. It isn't so hard, at that moment, to convince yourself that you're not traveling, you're not lost...you're coming home.

This is not a rare occurrence, and in this way, the little village expands. The men take wives, they have children, they buy scooters. Fuzhou, meanwhile, empties. So in no time at all, the city becomes two cities mirrored across Drum Mountain. But since the smog is not so bad in New Fuzhou, anyone who climbs the mountain comes down on the new side. Of course, New Fuzhou begins belching out smog in no time. One day years later, you walk up Drum Mountain again and accidentally descend into the forgotten Fuzhou. You pass by the elementary school where you played wall-ball, the streetlamp where you kissed your first love in the snow, and the train station where you waited and waited and waited. Poor you: memories can only travel forwards in

time. Once they're gone, they're gone. You do not recognize the school, the lamp, or the train station. And so when you cross Drum Mountain the second time, you find yourself lost in a foreign city, a ghost town where even the ghosts are gone.

Tabuse

Elementary school kids in Tabuse wear the same uniforms, sure, but they also carry identical bags, wear the same color-coded slippers, walk underneath the same yellow umbrellas when it rains, give identical answers to prefabricated questions, and walk not just similarly but with exact, kaleidoscopic strides. At the piano, they can all play the first three bars of Für Elise but stumble on the E in the fourth bar. In fifth grade, every student will trip in front of their crush and stay up all night thinking about what an idiot they are. As they grow older, their lives branch out on the surface, but internally they grow in the same way. The mailman will feel identical superiority towards the man with the unkempt hair as that man feels towards the mailman because of his untucked shirt. Two lovers will be equally unsatisfied in each others' arms.

People in Tabuse are all unhappy. When they look into the eyes of others, the people of Tabuse see themselves reflected in perfect, dirty mirrors. Every bit of jealousy and insecurity is added and multiplied amongst the population. And there is no salvation for Tabuse: none of the people here are friends.

Hiroshima

Bomb city, I'm constantly reminded. Not by anything on the streets or the lack of old buildings. The old castle has been rebuilt. To enter a Thai massage parlor on the third floor of a whitewashed building I have to squeeze by a fat man wearing a white undershirt in a cloud of cigarette smoke. I dry off from the rain in a rank green elevator next to a diabetic taxi company owner. He's paying.

Bomb city, I'm reminded while the immigrant woman maneuvers around my body silently as if this is a sacred ritual. The diabetic groans behind the curtain separating us. In Normandy, my grandfather bayoneted a German. So he proudly said until when ninety-three and drunk he admitted that he had never been in Normandy, that he had in fact sorted papers for the shipment of boots between '43 and '45. She lifts the little towel barely covering me and rubs oil up my leg. I think about ceiling fans and ISIS and the bomb. There are big fans and little fans. Red fans and blue fans. When have I last seen a blue fan? She puts the towel back and cracks my toes. Bomb city. Crick. Crick. Crick. After Grandpa's death, my brother checked the U.S. Army records. He had been in Normandy after all.

Wenzhou

It's dismal. Concrete, gasoline, mud, sweatshops, raw sewage, brothels, the screams of women at night, heavy fists pounding on hotel doors in the morning. The governor has a row of chairs set along the walkway to his front door for when he gets home drunk and can't walk 100 feet without resting.

I've sent him letters, and he said he got them, but he hasn't said anything about them. Just one 'yo' sent on Facebook the night before he threatened to kill himself and said fuck you fuck you over and over again.

And the sun doesn't even shine here. The smog is thick. It seeps through my ears and deadens my thoughts. My spine is set in a curved vice. I slouch around and only look at the concrete, the mud, and the sewage.

I close my eyes and look up. It hurts, my back hurts, it is clamped in place and my eyes are forced back down. My eyes hurt but I think it's the smog. I buy a pack of Taishan cigarettes. I smoke three and then try to offer some to strangers to start a conversation but they avoid me, they don't look me in the eyes and I shuffle on, the vice tightening, my spine bending, my eyes fixed on the concrete, the mud, the sewage, the garbage, bumping into people in the crowded mess, trying to find my way to the train station to escape this ugly city, this pit. I reach the station but my wallet is gone.

Kyoto

City of ten thousand shrines. City surrounded by forest. Quiet city. Tourist city. City spared. She was lonely; she got up early and went to a temple on the Eastern hills. The Russian tourists were loud and ignorant and so she felt lonely and bitter and didn't want to see anyone. City of drums and festivals. At Nanzen-ji she walked along the aqueduct until all the sounds faded and there, suddenly, looking down at her from the top of a slope were three deer. They left; she followed them. City born of war. The deerpath twisted along valleys full of ferns, tall brown maples, carpets of moss, birdsong. She walked for three hours and felt okay again. City where at a baseball bar two men from Osaka, a woman from Fukuoka, and a boy from Chicago shared fried food and beer and laughed, laughed, laughed at how funny it was that of all the friends they would never have, these might be the closest ones of all.

Arles

Everything is closed in Arles. Walk to the Roman amphitheater and you'll find it under construction for the first time in two thousand years. The Van Gogh hospital is shut on Tuesdays for some reason. Drive a ring around the old stone walls—every gate is shut and bolted, plastered with colorful posters about a festival that will start very soon. The whole town is getting ready for this festival. It's whispered in the streets. Like a lidded stew on simmer, Arles is calm and hushed on the surface. But a flash of activity in an alleyway, a quick yelp from a second story window, a meaningful glance exchanged between two old men passing my one another in the empty square build up a deep tension. And slowly, while you're busy thinking of something like, "I wonder what the weather is like back home?" it starts—the sound of hammers. Everywhere it resounds. Every alleyway, every backyard, and behind the closed gates of the Roman amphitheater, it resounds. Everywhere—the sound of hammers, hammering something important and festive. But before you can find out what the great reveal is, you need to take the train to Paris. You have a flight to catch. Part of you wonders as you regretfully leave if the whole thing is a sham. Perhaps no such festival really exists. You haven't heard of anything interesting there and an internet search later

reveals nothing. But perhaps what you were seeing was actually the festival itself—a ceremony so old and sacred even its participants cannot see it, cannot understand it.

Cracked Spines

Miriam Horsley

My father sounds like a dictionary. The *t*'s in butter never slide into *d*'s; his *goings* are never *goins*. His dialogue is peppered with words found on standardized tests. In response most people smile, ignore the word, resume the conversation; his children are not so lucky.

"Do you know what quixotic means?" he asks. I press my lips into a line, hoping the question goes away.

"Look it up. The dictionary is in the living room; the encyclopedia is in the computer room." He is already reimmersed into *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. My father knows the answer; I understand it is my job to figure it out.

Years later, it is still my job. "Dad, can I get the new *Pokémon* game?"

He puts down his pipe. "What did the critics say?"

I unfold my report for him: reviewers on two trusted gaming sites rate the game highly for originality; players give it a similar score. Overall response is positive, and the price has decreased since the game is a few months old.

"Consider getting it after school is out for the summer."

When I get the game, I share the exciting parts with him.

My father loves to share. He shares stories, wryly remembering his electrocution on a cow fence and admitting how often he questioned the sanity of his peers in drama school. He shares emotions, voice rising and falling in narration, and he knows how to make people laugh. His years of performing *Hamlet* and *Don Giovanni* turn regular tales into fairy tales.

"Where did we leave off?" he asks, grabbing *The Chamber of Secrets* even though, at age ten, I'm old enough to read it myself. I jab a finger at chapter three.

"Didn't we read about the flying car already?" He knows we did, but I am unyielding. "Well then, we'll read chapter three..."

Nothing about books escapes my father, even if he lets his young daughter think he never notices her stealing *The Princess Bride* from his bookshelf. He knows every smooth Easton Press spine of the classics as well as each fractured spine of ten-cent novels bought in college; the pages wrinkled with water are no less loved than those edged with gold. Each time my father closes a cover, he has an opinion about what lies beneath. The books leave their scent on him, decomposing cellulose and vanilla, mingling with pipe tobacco.

Before he smelled of pipes and pages he smelled of theater makeup and metal scissors: a combination of practical hairstyling and hopeful acting that led him to the pinnacle of the American Dream and then shoved him back into the American Reality of square offices and the type of government badges that James Bond doesn't use.

"Do you want to go to work for me?" he asks on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. "We can switch jobs."

"I don't think I could handle banks, and I doubt you could handle trigonometry."

"I once used trigonometry as a witness in court to find out how fast a car was going."

"I don't think you did that."

"I did. I used math outside of school."

I glance at him over my cereal. "No one uses math outside school except math people."

"I did."

He leaves for work in self-buffed shoes and self-pleated pants; his bow ties and braided leather braces would not be out of place on Winston Churchill, though perhaps his trifocals would be.

In performance he looks much the same, just with a more festive bow tie.

Holiday season 2012 finds my father on the stage of the Wildey Theatre; he sings at the request of his former classmates. I have never seen him on stage before but I am familiar with his posture: shoulders square, spine straight as it can be at fifty-eight years old, tongue poised for enunciation, chest inflated with the anticipation of sound—"O Holy Night" moves the audience to tears.

"Can you believe this guy works in *banking*?" his friend asks after the applause quiets. My father offers a chuckle, nods to the pianist, exits stage right.

Were he to defend his actions, he might talk about how he lived in New York for many years—"Off of carrots," he interjects, "and celery"—or how New York barely provided for him; it wouldn't and couldn't and didn't provide for a family. He moved out of New York.

"I won't make you do a job you hate, but you have to be pragmatic." He doesn't mention himself. "Do you know what pragmatic means?"

Synthesis

Miriam Horsley

He told me his name was Geddy, after the lead singer of the 70s rock band Rush. I knew him as Chris.

“But my name is actually Geddy. In kindergarten, people called me Spaghetti, and then I went by Chris.” I never asked if his middle name was Chris or if he just picked it randomly, but then again it never crossed my mind that he was lying.

The name Spaghetti might have worked: in middle school he was all skin and bones and a mop of unruly hair, the first to badmouth the big guys and to slide out of confrontation. He showed up to class sometimes, draped over his chair with an excuse on his tongue to be used when convenient, but rarely paid attention.

He turned up one day with a cloth wrapped around his arm.

“Busted it skateboarding,” he said proudly.

“He’s lying.” My friend quirked an eyebrow. She grabbed his arm and he yelled; later when his arm hit a desk he didn’t seem to care.

Though Robin is a classic sidekick of the superhero world, the persona of the Boy Wonder is a synthesis of separate characters that have evolved into the hero we know today. When he was introduced to the Batman comics in 1940, Robin’s alter ego was Richard “Dick” Grayson, the youngest of a family of acrobats who was taken in as Bruce Wayne’s ward after the murder of Dick’s parents. Under the tutelage of Bruce, Dick embraced his role with an element of humor that contrasted the somberness of Batman—a proverbial Watson to *DC Comics’* Sherlock. However, when he grew older, Dick’s rebellious independence caused him to break from the role of Robin and become Nightwing, the prodigal son of the Batman Family.

Chris and I spent passing periods talking about manga, some of which I was introduced to because he lent me his books. We discussed the beginning of *Bleach* and the end of *Death Note*, and the rest of our conversations were about *Naruto*: how we both wanted to be ninjas, and how much he hated Sasuke. The six minutes before history and shop and reading classes weren’t long enough to finish our talks, but we found an equal ground even though I had never skateboarded and he refused to read.

After the creation of Nightwing, *DC* recast Robin, and in an effort to avoid public backlash they copied the previous sidekick: Jason Todd had the same backstory as Dick. A rash nature and hot temper that made him prone to excessive brutality were his only distinguishing features from his predecessor—because he was still an accomplished acrobat and had a fondness for wit, many fans failed to notice the difference. Those who did were outraged: in response to a reader’s poll, the Joker killed Jason.

Sharing our love of gaming was difficult: the closest I came to understanding that part of Chris was in *Zelda* or *Kingdom Hearts*—they were in the center of a Venn diagram which on my side included games that were E for Everyone and on his contained M for Mature. Another split: we had different systems, and couldn’t pass

games back and forth.

"I'm doing my book report on *Halo*," Chris announced as he walked to the front of the class. The responsive snickers made our teacher suspicious, but he didn't investigate. I knew too little about *Halo* to know if Chris made his report on a video game, and I decided not to ask.

When he was done, he had a cheeky grin plastered on his face.

Tim Drake was Jason's replacement. The Drake family was present the night the Flying Graysons died, leading Tim to deduce the identities of the Dynamic Duo. As Robin, Tim not only fought crime but also became a psychological support to Batman who was reeling from Jason's death. Tim's Robin became a detective rather than an acrobat and, instead of changing his hero persona in rebellion, he discarded the mask when his father discovered his secret.

Chris and I never talked about why he missed school so much. I assumed his absences were suspensions, but as far as I knew Chris was harmless: he shot rubber bands but never hit anyone. Threatened, but probably couldn't beat anyone up. His greatest crime seemed to be not completing assignments, but if that was what administrators talked to him about, their lectures didn't work.

I found out two months later than everyone else that students had taken to smoking pot across the street from the school, but didn't think much of it.

Chris wasn't in class much after that.

The fourth Robin was illegitimate. Holding the title for under three months, Stephanie Brown, former girlfriend of Tim Drake, took up Robin's mantle after Tim laid it aside. Her specialization in stealth and combat, learned from her criminal father, returned Robin to an action-based role, but she was hardly acknowledged by fans and characters. Batman mistrusted her due to her tendency to disobey orders and stripped her of her title. In an attempt to redeem herself, Stephanie embarked on a mission that resulted in her death.

After middle school, I never once saw or heard about Chris. He popped up occasionally in memory—people discussing *Kingdom Hearts*, the announcement of the ending of *Naruto*, someone falling off their skateboard—but if he went to high school, it wasn't my high school.

I decide to satisfy my curiosity. Checking his Facebook (under Chris, not Geddy) reveals he worked at McDonald's, and he looks the same except for a tidier haircut. The rest of his wall surprises me. It is peppered with apologies to unnamed friends. Resolutions to stop doing drugs. Pleas to friends who care about him.

A recent post says, "Who ate shit and broke his arm. This Guy. No more xbox."

We still don't have the same gaming console.

The last Robin, Damian Wayne, son of Bruce Wayne and Talia al Ghul, was raised as an assassin. He took on the role of Robin at his mother's request to usurp Batman's power, and his cruelty was in stark contrast to a hero's ideals. Originally

ruthless and arrogant, Damian reforms after he works alongside his father; he strives to restore his relationship with Bruce and rectify the violence of his childhood. He breaks with his mother and, before he is killed, defends his actions saying, “Being Robin is the best thing I’ve ever done...this is the life I’ve chosen to lead. I don’t need you to save me.”