

the  
**Laurentian Magazine**

FALL 2020/SPRING 2021

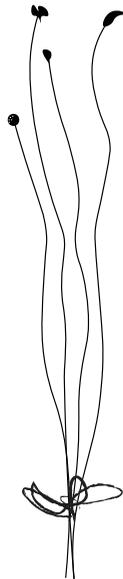






The  
**Laurentian Magazine**

Fall 2020 - Spring 2021



Feed your Starving Artist

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**SINCE 1888**

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POETRY

# My Party Hat Broke

BY MARLY DAVIES

---

I am sitting on a porch stoop wearing my favorite jeans –  
(they were my mothers),  
she is currently on Mars.

I miss her and sometimes her absence  
turns into elephants that sit  
and watch me drink my coffee.

She sends me postcards from  
time to time  
and when they arrive the elephants get to wear party hats.

They look at me and tilt their giant heads dawned in teeny party hats –  
wondering, worrying.  
Sometimes they sit on the stoop with me and we watch the neighbors.

They bring their groceries home  
and pick up their kids from soccer practice  
and me and my herd of elephants in our party hats watch closely:

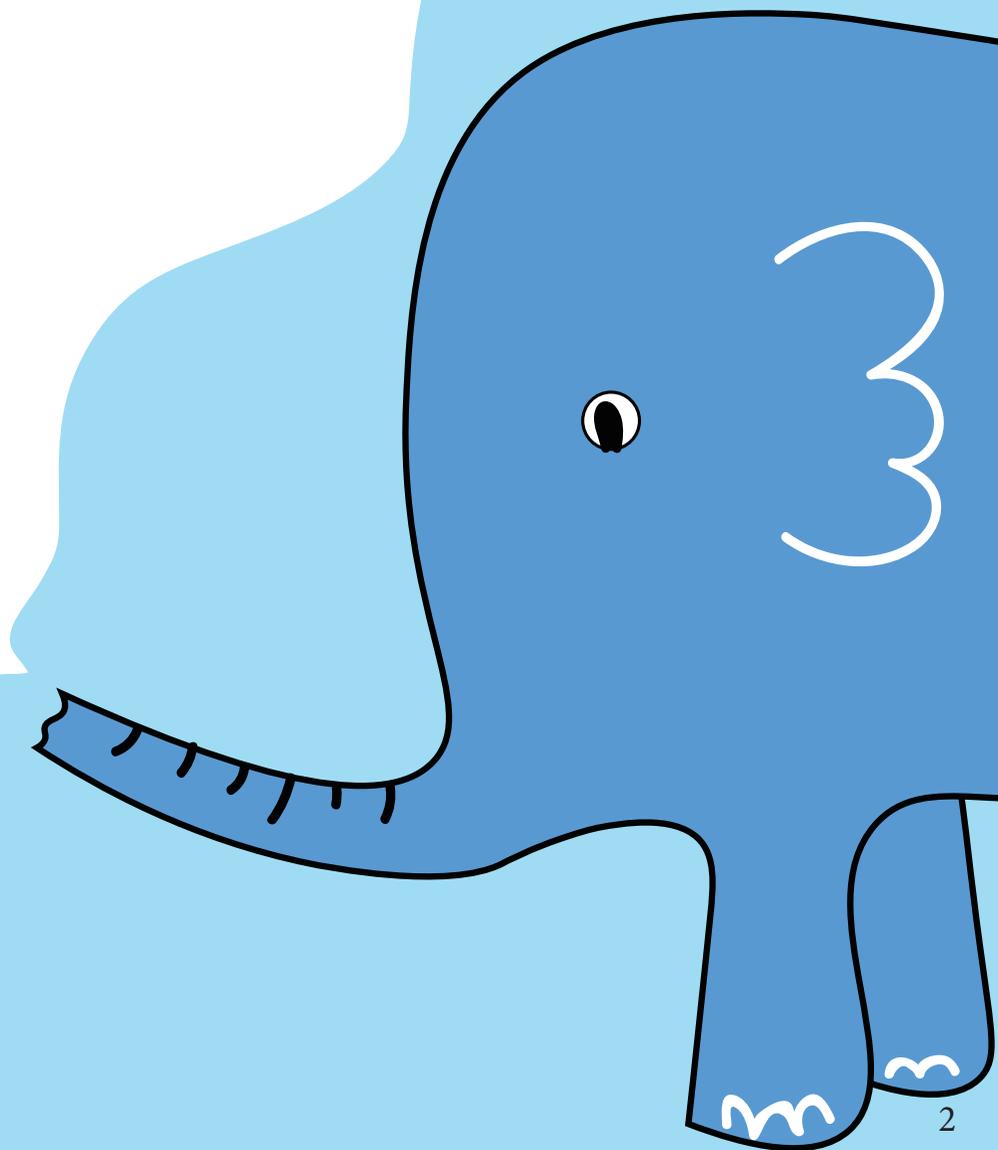
we want to know who is acting.

The actors grow tails out of their lower backs and we point and giggle  
mischievously.  
They try to hide them from us with shame  
dripping from their movements – but it is too late.

Everyone else gets a party hat  
(there aren't very many) –  
and when the mail comes all the elephants turn to view me.

and they hold their breath and close their ears  
and hold each other's feet.  
Because elephants only have feet.

and I open my mail in my mother's jeans,  
(my favorite jeans) –  
and swallow every ounce of licorice my gut can handle.



FICTION

# IN THE GLOW OF THE MOON

BY RACHEL SIEGEL

---

**T**he island of Ukvald was small and only 60,000 people total. Water, blue as lapis lazuli, beat against the sides of the island and turned rocky cliffs into sandy beaches. Nearly forty percent of Ukvald touched the water, and the heart of the island laid on these coasts. Each day, the ports bustled with activity as men loaded ships and set up small markets to sell their

wares. Most of Ukvald's soil was rocky and of poor quality for crops or grazing, so its people relied on imports. Despite these natural failings, the island was best known for its cotton and wool.

On the first day of each month, a large ship made port and the men of Ukvald unloaded pound after pound of cotton and wool. The materials were then

passed on to the women who would weave them into the most elegant and intricate clothing and tapestries that would be sent out when the ships returned the next month.

Being born on this island meant your future was predetermined.

It cooed at the baby as he bounced her in his arms, and he knew there was nothing more important to



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIN JUN LEE

son we aren't teaching you how to swim."

After that, Cece watched the ocean more intently. On some days the foamy white capping each of the waves made the blue waters look grey. Those were the days that she knew high winds, rough waves, and a storm would be coming. Cece loved how the ocean didn't obey anyone's rules but its own, and she dreamed of one day travelling to its furthest corners and conquering each danger she encountered along the way.

But first, she needed to learn how to swim.

The next night, Cece laid in bed and watched the full moon rise higher and higher in the night sky. She held her breath as she listened for noises in the next room. Her parent's conversation had died out two hours ago; they should be asleep. She opened her door, only slightly, and peered out. The lanterns and candles had all been extinguished.

As quietly as she could, Cece took a candle and a single match from the cupboard and headed to the front door. The hinges were old and had a bad habit of creaking whenever the door

was opened or closed. She closed her eyes and pulled, sighing when it stayed quiet. She left it cracked once she was out; it would make it easier to get back in later.

The moon was directly overhead and cast more than enough light over her. Still, she clutched the candle tightly in her hand in case the night darkened before she made it home. She ran to the dirt trail that would bring her to the ocean. The ground was soft under her bare feet and she stretched her arms wide to catch as much wind as she could.

Cece didn't stop until she made it to the beach. Never before had she been there alone. Somehow the beach seemed larger than usual, as if she could walk the length of the water and never have to return home. The crash of the waves was louder, echoing a promise of freedom.

In the glow of the full moon, the ocean looked more appealing than ever before. The waves rolled leisurely towards the shore and Cece felt the familiar urge to sink into its depths. She crept closer, step by step, until the water was up to her knees. She wasn't quite sure what she was supposed to do, she had only ever seen her father swim.

Some part of her, deep in the essence of her being, whispered to her in the wind. Come deeper, it said. Be free.

Cece took two more steps before the sand dropped from beneath her feet. She scrambled desperately, kicking her legs and splashing salty water into her face. It took her a full minute to realize that her head had not once dipped below the surface. She allowed her instincts to take over, and she moved her limbs with precision.

To her delight, she moved closer to the moon's reflection on the water. She continued to swim and experiment with motions and, as her confidence grew, she drifted further from the shore. Once she was completely enveloped in the light of the full moon, she took a deep breath, stretched out her arms and floated.

The next morning, her mother couldn't understand why her daughter was so tired and why she smelled strangely of salt.

\*\*\*

Over the next three years, Cece continued her secret trips to the ocean and even taught her best friend

NONFICTION

# YELLOW

BY CHLOE MCCONNELL

---

## Sun, 8 yrs old

It blares down on me. Hot and heavy. Oppressive. I kick the dirt, shoving it out of the way. Dig a hole, climb a tree, throw rocks at each other until one breaks open. The usual fun of a friendless summer. I am tan.

The rocks are a particular point of interest. Sometimes I'll find fossils. Little shells or leaves pressed into the heart of the stone. A secret for me to find. Like finding my sister's diary tucked in between her mattress and bedframe. I've gotten particularly good at finding both.

I can pick up a rock, feel its weight in my hands, look at the layering across the sides, feel the tex-

ture beneath my small hands, and know: there's something inside. I'll raise it above my head and throw it down hard against a boulder. It will shatter, and I'll scurry to pick up the largest pieces from the grass where it falls. To keep the anticipation building, I close my eyes before turning it around. A present to myself, the fossils inside.

I find a rock with gems in it. Glistening, smooth and shiny, a pale precious pink. "Rose quartz," my mother tells me.

Not worth much, but I treasure it nonetheless.

I put it by my bed to sleep. I bring it in for show-and-tell. I hold it up to the window to look at how it refracts the sunlight. I try to catch



ARTWORK BY CHLOE MCCONNELL

POETRY

# INTERVIEW WITH A BOY WHO LOVED

BY SOPHIA GREEN

---

*How do you love someone?*

“Completely one sided,  
You can’t let love be ignored”

Isn’t it heavy?

“Dance through hell for it.  
Sacrifice your end without thinking”

How can you ignore your self burning?

“Put the rays of future in your hands and  
Bare the blood of being alive screaming”

What if you have no voice?

“If you love someone  
cut off the privilege of death  
and live for them”

What if that’s too hard?

*Why do we hurt others?*

“We are human  
We feel pain and respond  
With dripping betrayal”

But I don’t feel human anymore.

“Humans injure to

Reduce the rising threat  
Of devastating Harm

Humans inflict pain  
To fix the damage  
Of youth”

“This is magnified fact  
Though behind the seams  
Muted wisdom sleeps”

*Why do we cry?*

“When we feel real emotion

We release the pain that  
Peaks from behind our skin  
And

Threatens to rip us”

*How do you ask for acceptance?*

“You don’t”

“It is impossible  
To feel Liked  
Adequate  
Equal”

“No one is me  
I am different  
I am myself”

“I am not changing”  
“Accept this.”

But I would never have hurt you

But I already feel broken.

But maybe you’re wrong  
maybe this will be different.

I understand.

I remember.

Your love

Has made you

Humanity’s

Greatest pride.

lips that moved as they pleased and I celebrated in silence.

## Arms

My arm's length causes them to feel awkward and evade control as the long bones stretch far in whichever direction. Along with my lips my arms felt - maybe most of all- the need to validate my anxiety. I would walk with my hands crossed tightly in front of my chest like an angry parent waiting for their child to come out of school. I would do this while walking through the hallways or down the sidewalk. The way I crossed them was the way my shyness told me to hide. It was one of the best ways I could take up less space, worry less about confrontation with others, or at least my arms were my brains way of telling me so.

Then one day I chose to let my arms belong to themselves, and not to my desire for smallness. I chose to leave my body vulnerable, arms and shoulders at my sides, my chest leading my strides. I no longer wanted my arms to grab each other, holding my body to itself.

I celebrated silently as my arms eventually stopped wishing to assume their  
crossed

“Our body is a reflection of our mind in many ways, and as I try to transform my mind into a place I can inhabit easily, my body must also be a part of that transformation.”

positions, and I walked my way, arms uncrossed, into a new way of being.

## Shoulders

My shoulders are the testament to discomfort. Sometimes I don't even realize they are shrugged when they are tightened and drawn close to my body. It is through them that I further minimize my presence, validate my shyness, and ultimately apologize for my existence. So it is also through them that I try to relax into my being, and shake the urge to say sorry. I started relaxing my shoulders in order to stop allowing them to com-

pensate for the tension I felt when around others.

At a sleepaway camp, during our daily classroom time, one of the counselors gave a lecture about screen-plays, and discussed gestures and movements.

He pointed at me and said: “For example, you can tell she's a little bit uncomfortable by the way she's sitting.” I was sitting how I was used to sitting, and in reality, perfectly happy to be where I was. Only I did feel an inherent discomfort around others that my shoulders would not let me pretend that did not exist. At the end of the lecture I knew that discomfort would be a part of me as long as I let my shoulders tighten unchecked.

Although I wish to always keep my shoulders calmly at my side, a lot of the time they still reflect my shame and discomfort. Some days I forget to scold them for what I have taught them, for what they have learned, for what has become a part of them and for what they must now unlearn. That is why I praise them even more than I would ever scold them when I catch myself sitting in a manner that

might, by chance, strike a teacher as comfortable rather than uncomfortable. I silently praise my relaxed shoulders.

## Back

Similar to my shoulders' stubbornness, most of the time I don't notice my back is hunched when it is. Sometimes I don't notice the way my back helps me shrink into my chair when I'm called on in class, or the way it hunches itself over as I sit around a big group of people, boasting their big voices. I started telling my back to straighten itself, to not carry the burden of other people's thoughts or gazes— or of my *own* thoughts. With

my back I apologize for my existence, and I wish to apologize no more.

One day I sat at my desk with my back hunched and eyes focused on the words of an article I was reading. I thought about my desire to stop apologizing through my back, so I sat up straight and felt the power of that position that has been foreign to me for so long. I was not used to sitting up straight. I was not used to declaring my full presence without any attempt to shrink from it. My back made me feel declarative and tall. But backs have always been strong and mine is strongly stuck in its ways. So my back and I play a constant game of back and forth, hunched and

straight. It has not yet learned to instinctively stand straight. Nonetheless, every reminder and subsequent straightening is a rejection of my desire to apologize, and a validation of my presence, straightened back and all. I celebrate these momentary feelings of power from my straight back, and cherish the idea that although it feels unnatural to me, it is the power I should have felt all along.

## Fingers

My fingers have received a pass to be as awkward as they wish, to reflect as much anxiety as they wish, and they do important work. They are shape shifters. Unlike my



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIN JUN LEE

PHOTO STORY

# FORBIDDEN CROWNS

BY KALILA CALAME

---





The aim of my photo story, *Forbidden Crowns*, is to show that Black students shouldn't hide their uniqueness and succumb to the pressure of white spaces. This overall idea was the result of conversing with a Black freshman at St. Lawrence University, who tried to make herself invisible on campus. She expressed that she felt the need to assimilate, try not to be too "ghetto" or too loud, and she frequently described this as "hiding." I then talked to some other Black students on campus, and they felt similarly.

This is the outcome of going to a PWI, a predominantly white institution. At these institutions, students of color, specifically Black students, are accepted at a disproportionate rate compared to their white peers. As a result, these students feel the need to assimilate or hide within themselves, in order to navigate

through these white spaces. I too can also relate to their experiences.

Personally, I have had a similar experience in all-white spaces. Like many other students, I have always tried to make myself smaller and fit into an "acceptable" box to please the masses. Some may also describe this as internal and external code-switching. This photo story was meant to express how Black students feel in these spaces and show the light they appear to have lost.

Through the use of a body oil and gold glitter mixture, I wanted to represent their light, their uniqueness, still being inside of them. I choose to specifically use gold because it would be a bright stark contrast against the various brown skin tones. I used single spotlight lighting with a black backdrop to show their natural shadows and have the gold be the center of attention. Through this combination, I was able to make the gold mixture look as though it is encrusted in the skin, almost as though it is actually coming from within them.

For this piece, I took inspiration from three Black artists/photographers. The first artist I was influenced by was Kwaku Alston. His photography has been featured in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, etc., and various movie posters like *Us* (Alston). I

POETRY

# Moss Grows Here

BY EMMA HAGADORN

There's a fallen tree on the trail  
Strewn across the rain-beaten leaves like a fallen soldier. Broken  
branches prickling the bark  
Hooks that will grasp anything they can  
Scratching and scratching and scratching

Moss grows here  
I know it does because it told me  
In whispers of water over rock  
Ice knocking the shoreline like a friend at the door  
Leaves skating over water  
Living and dying and living and dying

I am no longer human  
I have been here for too long  
I have become something else  
I have become as tall as the mountains  
Peeling myself away like birch bark  
Layer after layer after layer

Moss grows here  
Stretching over the ground  
Invading available space with ease  
Take care not to step too closely  
Or you might sink into the ground  
Further and further and further

You're almost part of it  
It's your choice really  
Your roots cannot grow where you are not  
If you listen closely  
Put your ear to the ground  
You'll hear them, too



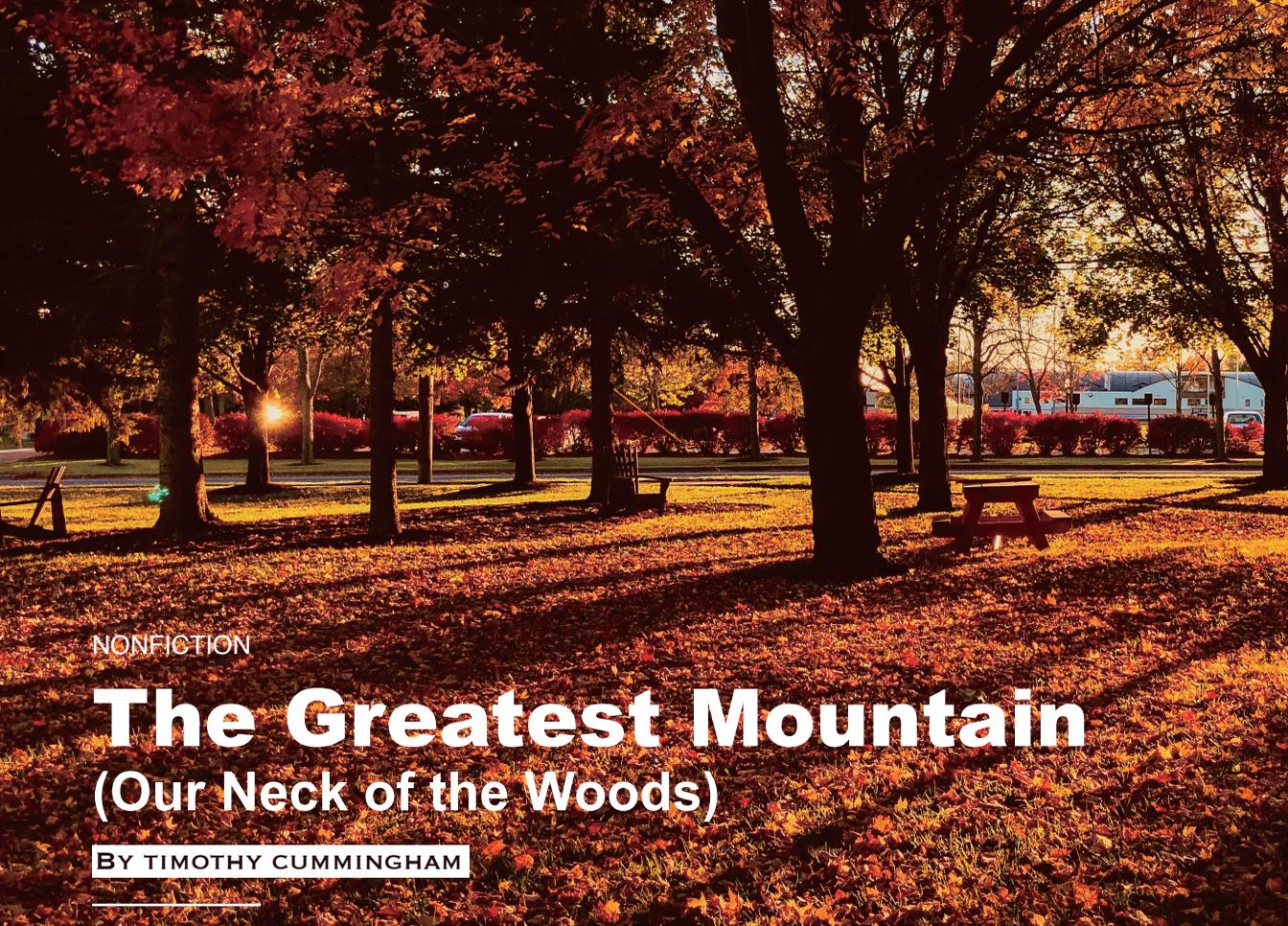
POETRY

# What Really Happened in Astronomy Class

BY EMILY HARRIS

You're standing on the earth. The earth is standing in the universe. We lay down together on the soft grass and look up at the darkness, the stars, the oblivion. Together we make friends with the stars. I whisper in your ear, "imagine you were not looking up. Try looking down at the universe. For in space there is no up or down." You look and you fall off the face of the earth. Down you go taken from my side. Suddenly, the earth pulls you back. Your body plays catch with earth's gravity. We become separated but never alone, for when the stars are your friends everywhere is home.



A photograph of a park in autumn. The ground is covered in fallen orange and yellow leaves. Several trees with vibrant autumn foliage stand in the background. A wooden picnic table is visible on the right side of the image. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

NONFICTION

# The Greatest Mountain (Our Neck of the Woods)

BY TIMOTHY CUMMINGHAM

*"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul." - John Muir*

## **Camp Number 5 - Family**

I was built at the beginning of the 20th century and floated across the northeast cove of Moosehead Lake to my final location at Camp Number 5. I met my first family in the summer of 1932, a family with two sons. I remember hearing their laughter reverberate off my log walls, the smell of wood smoke forever infused with the oakum that insulates my rustic interior. During the summer the two boys, Donald and Robert, played with the water of the Northeast Carry, running from my heavy oak door into the water, swing-

ing their arms to fight off the clouds of mosquitos on their way to wash off. The boys, as they do so well, grew up fast and before long Robert introduced me to his children, Linda and Tim Burt. Nearly 30 years after Robert was a boy my bones are still strong, providing two rooms of shelter in the great North woods of Maine. Linda and Tim Burt were just as adventurous and even more rambunctious than their father and uncle were years before. Countless hours were spent at my table, eating dinner, and playing cards under a propane light as loons called out across the northeast cove of Moosehead Lake. Linda and Tim Burt fought, cried, laughed, and came to find home in the woods on the dirt roads patrolled by moose and bears.

mountain, each bringing with them their past experiences and reasons for coming to the trail they are on. I don't teach lessons anymore. I and my mountain family are the classroom where the individual can be undistracted and learn from their effort. Tim has sat on my summit, contemplating this rush, the warmth he feels that causes him to smile no matter how tired he is. In this place, Tim, as his namesake once did, realized he wanted to live to protect these woods. In a naive way, Tim believes people are their happiest where the air is

clean, the ground free of trash, and the only cost to have experiences like this should be the cost to get there. His ideals will change, but in this land, these rivers and mountains and man eating bugs have shown Tim the importance of recognizing the trail we leave when we go outside, and knowing when we are overstepping and taking more than our fair share of what our planet can offer. For this land does not belong to the humans, nor the birds, fish, or moose. This planet is here for all the living things.



PHOTOGRAPH BY  
PAUL-HUDSON ERWIN



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIN JUN LEE

FICTION

# Left Behind

BY PAIGE MESHCON

---

I was staring at my laptop, my eyes skimming over the screen, when the doorknob rattled. I looked up just as the door swung open, the hinges squeaking. Mick shuffled into the apartment, his arms shaking with the weight of three grocery bags on each arm. He let out a huff of air, his face scrunched in exertion. “Hey, slacker, come help me with these.”

He unceremoniously dropped the bags to the floor. He shook out his arms, a look of relief crossing his face. I shut my laptop, stretching my arms and looking around the apartment for the first time in two hours. The sun hung on the horizon, washing the apartment in an orange glow. Mick has lived in this place for three years now. The apartment had an open floor plan; the kitchen was connected to the dining room, which flowed into the living room. The bathroom was the only place where privacy could be found. The apartment was small, but cozy.

I unpacked the bags as Mick went to get the second load. His footsteps

thumped against the stairs as he came back in, dropping even more bags to the ground.

“Are we cooking for an army?” I asked with a laugh. I poked at the bags, searching through their contents. I held up a pack of steak to Mick and raised an eyebrow. “What is this for?”

“Oh.” Mick looked away. He ruffled his hair. “I thought I could make those tonight. We could have a nice dinner.” He looked down and rummaged through the bags. He kept grabbing items and putting them back down.

“What for?” I asked. Mick’s eyes widened and I suddenly remembered what today was. “Oh! I completely forgot. How did the interview go?” Mick had an interview with a local publishing company. He’s been wanting this job forever. I’m surprised he didn’t mention it when he came home.

Mick’s face cleared at the mention of the interview. He smiled widely. “It went really well. They

ashamed at the thought of hurting him. It was like a part of me was still back there with him in the apartment, pleading for me to return. I wiped the tears from my eyes.

I cried that night, too. I cried when I crawled into bed with my mother. I cried when she hugged me tightly, rubbing my back in slow circles.

She shushed me, rocking us back and forth. Once I quieted down, she continued. “Kayla, he didn’t love us. Look at me,” she said firmly. I looked at her, wiping my eyes. “The people that love us stay. They will always be there for us. He didn’t love us. Okay?” She kept staring at me until I nodded. She nodded back. We stayed

curled up together the rest of the night.

I looked up at the apartment building, searching for Mick’s window. When I found it, my mother’s words resonated through me. Mick is the only one who has stayed. Everything he has done for me, for us, came rushing back to me. In that moment, there was no denying that Mick loved me.

I jumped up at this realization, hoping I’m not too late. I ran up the steps and pounded on his door. When it opened, Mick looked at me, hope blooming on his face. I didn’t give him a chance to say anything before I ran into his arms. We stayed like that for a while, just holding each other.



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIN JUN LEE

POETRY

# DEAR THE BROTHER I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD

BY THAO NGUYEN

---

My mother's water broke when she was walking in the factory yard, the metal-cutter went bam bam. Muscles twisting, muscles squeezing, muscles forming needles that stab from the inside out. Like the metal-cutter. Bam bam. She said it was too soon for the hospital, her hands rusted with new-earned pennies. The coins ran into her embroidered pocket, cling cling. Her water broke, a splash of oil on the concrete floor. The machine inhaled oil from her hand, bam bam, it yelled as the fresh metal pieces came greeting that glazing summer. Opaque smoke covered her eyes, one crowded morning. Cling cling the coins ran into her pocket, she couldn't feel the muscles pushing no more. She stood there, gutted herself to oil the damned machine. His air emptied, her oil exceeded. He was born without a blub, I heard a woman mourn instead. The metal-cutter went bam bam. The coins ran cling cling. Just his cries I couldn't find.

PHOTO STORY

# Delicately **ANGUISHED**

STATEMENT AND PHOTOS BY SARATH NOVAS

---

*Delicately Anguished* is a series not only about the illusion of photography, but one regarding mental illness. Specifically, it tells the story of a young woman who is finding it difficult to continue to live a regular life during quarantine while also handling her mental illness. In the

photographs, the girl is not only anchored to one place but she's also anchored within herself, not allowing herself to indulge in any sort of emotional connection to the place she's stuck in. Playing with how much information I reveal through exposure and also experimenting





on the first. I admit that this was totally by accident, but a moment of alchemy that I began to appreciate. Through studying and observing fine art photography, studying the master photographers of the past, and through my own experimentation, I've learned that photography can create and reveal the uncanny in the ordinary. It is a tool for storytelling but uses a language that

will only reveal more questions than answers to the human condition. Being behind the camera allows me to see the world in a new light. It can mesh a physical and mental space. This became even clearer for me as I looked through the camera during quarantine in my own private and quiet personal space.

POETRY

# CHANGE

BY BRIAN UCETA

---

I saw a penny on the ground  
But I left it there  
Shining  
Evenly coated with a bronze complexion  
Hoping that I would reconsider and slide it into my pocket  
Because pennies are just like us  
We all want to feel wanted.  
Pennies are just like us.  
Stepped over.  
Misused. Mistreated.  
So, I'm sorry, penny.  
The harder way was meant for you and this is just my  
Two cents but look at the coin  
They put Lincoln in black face for signing the emancipation proclamation  
He was considered a traitor so they separated him from the other coins  
And made him an outcast  
For trying to elevate us, get it?  
Me, and you.  
Probably think that I was overthinking this,  
there was no correlation  
between race and currency  
And maybe you're right  
Maybe that penny is just another useless penny  
But the fact remains that if we saved enough of them we could make change  
But the only reason we get saved is because enough of us can make them dollars  
By trapping, rapping, or passing a ball so we  
Can become profitable.  
But it's hard for us to make change when we only see ourselves as pennies  
But we get seen as threats so we are murdered  
On balconies and inside of passenger seats and leave  
nothing but dreams and hashtags behind us  
as footsteps  
as warnings  
For those who walk in our shoes.



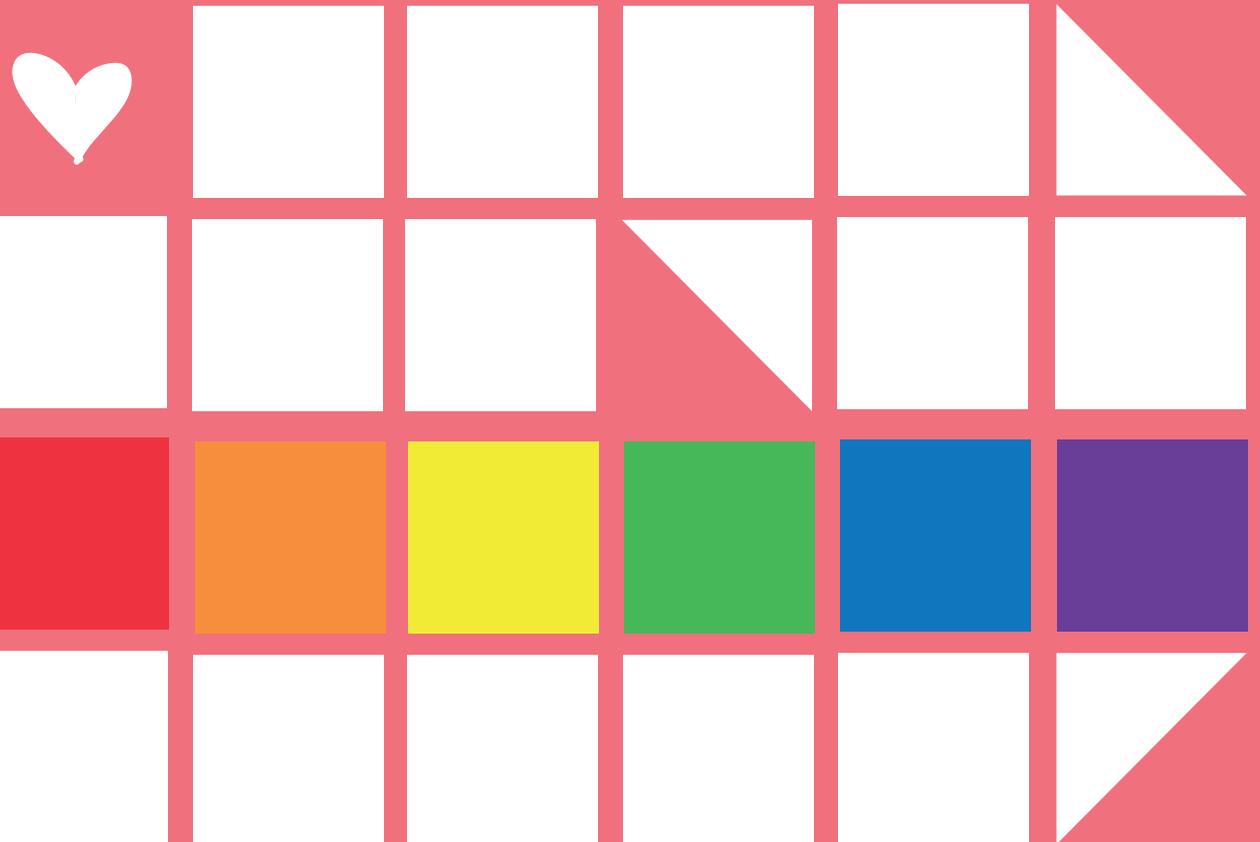
WRITING CONTEST

# VALENTINE

We asked our peers to send us haikus that celebrate love.

## 1ST PLACE: HANNAH RUTKOWSKI

Love is when friends say  
“The blush returned in your cheeks,  
You dance everywhere.”





FICTION

# How to Fall Out of Love With Your BestFriend: A Recipe for Disaster

BY SOPHIA GREEN

---

NONFICTION

# THIS IS FOR MY NEIGHBORS: the loners of my life

BY THAO NGUYEN



I am on the plane now, from Hanoi to New York, alone. They changed my seat to business class since someone took mine. I'm not complaining though; a lovely flight attendant just gave me a bag of Bulgari perfumes, some moisturizers, and a comb. A comb. God, I forgot my comb. I bet Mom will return home, see it on my desk, and think

*I told you so* silently in her head. Well, the lights above the passengers are off now, the plane has been floating on air for a while, and the lady sitting next to me is sound asleep. And there is me, a little Vietnamese girl who should probably stop thinking about home.

Well, God knows why, the shack within the farming field keeps sticking in my head. Let me tell

you, whoever lives there must have been really brave because they built themselves a narrow plank concrete bridge over the ditch connecting the house with the village road. The ditch was really deep, I once almost ran my bike into it. The roof was a row of banana leaves, tied together by some pink plastic rope. They couldn't afford the paint, so their walls



were pure concrete-gray. Sometimes when my uncle drove me back through the pouring rain, I saw their buckets catching the water leaking through the leaves on the roof. Occasionally, when I drove Nhung back to our house on my floral bicycle from our grandparents' house, I would see the mother holding hands with the son, both walking barefoot on the road, laughing.

The woman's face was carved inside my mind, like I had seen her before but couldn't remember when or where. Maybe she was my nanny, working in my house and feeding me spoons of milk. There was just something about that face.

They had a water stand under the big old banyan tree. I never stopped for drinks. I guess it is because

all the big old trees are the haunted ones. They had water bottles, some Red-bull, and canned lemonade. They also made their own iced tea in the red bucket I saw catching the rain. Sometimes a scooter would stop by. Just sometimes. They had a chunky old black and white TV with silver antennas, and it played countryside music. Her clothes were somehow

now knew why mom didn't let us go out after ten. I should have listened. From that night, I avoided taking friends to my house and I lied about my address. I wanted to save everyone from the truth, to let them live in the illusion that I had been living before. Now the vast green field is filtered with sparks of red lights. I never bothered to look at the misspelled words on the motel sign anymore.

One night, I was walking back from my late-night tutoring, sheltering myself with my earphones. The street was dim with street

lights as I saw two shadows approaching. I was thinking of some couple taking a night walk as it was July, until cold hands touched my back. "Where are you going, dear?" I ran away, their giggles haranguing my ears.

Those men were alcoholics and abusers, who belonged to the 10 pm world. They tried to infiltrate my world of daylight. I would see them hit women right in front of my house. Mom kept me from seeing it, but I couldn't help but peek my eyes through the holes of the door. I could see her bleeding, hair of a million

colors torn away by the fight. Her stomach hit with fists. Tears streamed down her face as he picked up a brick from our wrecked sidewalk. I turned away as I saw the rushing gas lady out of the corner of my eyes.

The neighborhood took a week to settle down after the fight. It never settled inside my head. So, I went to the hair salon for a haircut, just to get some peace to my tangled mind. I was the first daylight guest since they opened. The owner was nice and very careful with my hair, but I was in a bad temper. The woman

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THAO NGUYEN



bought one for me, but I never ate because I thought my classmates hated the smell. She had Mom's attention, now even my uncle's. She always pulled the 'hello' and 'goodbye' trick to get everyone to like her. Every time. One day, I got sick of it and yelled, "You've already said goodbye. That's enough. I bet that's why you don't have friends. Shut up!" She smiled like nothing happened, and my uncle drove away and started talking to me. "What's the matter with you?" I remained silent. "I mean, we all know she has problems, but why can't you be just a little bit more sensitive?" I, again, remained silent. Inside, I was screaming a thousand questions. She has problems. My uncle just said she has problems. *Who is he to say that to my little sister*, I thought to myself. She is perfectly fine, and perfectly annoying.

That night, I couldn't fall asleep. My older sister was breaking up with her boyfriend through the phone, her cries squeaking into my ears. My brother was playing online games in the other bed, the slightly blue light from

the laptop's screen covering his face. And Nhung was sound asleep when I started to reminisce about our old hideaway: Grandpa's house. I remembered that Mom would drive us away from their house to the crossroad near the post office, where thousands of motorcycles passed by. I was sitting in the car when Mom walked Nhung out for a meeting with the speaking teacher. Why speaking teachers?

I realized I was five when Nhung spoke her first words. Which means she was three when she spoke her first words. But that couldn't be the problem. Every once in a while, there could be someone who was slow in speaking their first words. No big deal. But Mom was always too busy to take care of us. Nhung and I then sat and watched cartoons since we were born with our bimbim in hands. I learned English through those subtitles, but Nhung learned to live like a cartoon character. She lived in her own world, a world where everyone was a character and she programmed herself to respond like a cartoon character. She was too weird that she had no

friends. Maybe Mom had to make friends for her.

Well, Nhung didn't care. None of us cared, except Mom.

It just made me think that they are both so alone in their own worlds. I watched Mom cover the wound, eat the pain by herself, day by day watching her daughter get addicted to cartoons. While Mom thought she could fix everything secretly by herself, Nhung was just sitting there watching animated television. Everyday. All alone.

Well, now I wish that that motorbike was here with me on this plane. You see, I rode through all the new kingdoms on it, behind the head that was then covered with gray hairs. Now that I think about it, the cheerful gas ladies whose names I never bothered to learn were actually staying at the gas station, calling it their shelter. The motel owners were divorced, and they forced their son to work at night. The dog passed away, but my mom kept telling me to visit the carpenter's shop and feed it. Now, Nhung takes turns feeding it since I'm gone. The evergreen field surrounding the neighborhood



is being abandoned by the farmers, as they can't make money. Well, all sorts of stuff happened throughout my childhood, but I guess it's for the better. After all, alone on this plane, I'm thinking about them, the loners of my life. 🌱



“PETS OF SLU”  
- ARTWORK BY  
SUZANNE RICKARD



FICTION

# Where Nothing Meets Nowhere

BY TYLER KARASINSKI

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The alarm clock blares like a roaring engine. Wake up. Go to class. Eat. Come home. Eat. Drink. Sleep. Breathe in and out, for the day is now over.

The alarm clock burns like the summer sun; its drops of blinding light fall and burn the skin of people below. Unrelenting. Wake up. Repeat the routine. Class. Home. Eat. Drink. Sleep. Take a deep breath, for this day has now ended, but don't forget to breathe in because another is queued to begin when the clock strikes twelve and the restless sun rises once

more.

Sleep flashes by in an instant, and each day is featureless and plain. One morning the rain falls but it's overcast clouds offer no permanent change to the landscape below. The hills still roll, the plains still lie, and the view outside the window remains the same. Suffocating. Isolating. Indifferent to opinion and emotion. Indifferent to comfort. The alarm clock blares once more.

The boy drags his arm, weighted with morning grogginess, and lets gravity



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIN JUN LEE

take hold as the hand falls, silencing the relentless beeping. His eyelids crack apart as simple, plain sunlight casts shadows across the room, dancing in their daily ritual to the beat of his constant heart. The floorboards creak as they always do, groaning for the aging house to hear as feet land with a resounding thud, another beige metronome of each day. Regardless and free of change. Free, as it always is, of any interesting remarks.

The boy opens the closet door and pretends to be interested in the choices he

has. Does he wear the blue t-shirt with the simple graphic, showing distant waves crashing on some shore that

he will never see? Or does he choose the red, plaid flannel, reminding him of someone in a San Franciscan coffee shop that he will never visit? Does it matter? He believes that today's events will happen the same no matter which pattern he shows on his sleeves. I know that he is wrong, that today will be extraordinary, but he chooses the t-shirt anyways as he remembers some vague and meaningless

image of a weatherman mentioning this afternoon's heat from his studio in Anywhere, America.

The boy's car doesn't start at first, and he chuckles. As the ignition system churns the pistons he grins stupidly though the dirty windshield, squinting as the sun hangs far away, suspended between the horizon and the clouds in a lame game of hide-and-seek between the trees. This inconvenience provides change. It is something new. This boy's name is Jude.

The rusted running board offers a sly groan as Jude climbs out to open the faded hood, and he silently pleads that it breaks as well so that he may spend his day differently, hidden from the monotonous world and the plain sunlight, beneath the mud-caked undercarriage and the fading beige hood of an aging Ford, hoping to mend faults like phantoms that can only quite nearly be identified. But, after a slight tug on a cable running to the battery, the engine roars to life.

**“Long ago I decided  
that this field is idyllic.  
It is Good.”**

At school, the walls are beige, and the floors are tan. The lights above buzz with electric heat and cast sterile blue through halls like arteries kept pumping by machine. His first class is something mundane, something about what people believe is human psychology; to think about thought. Jude learns about this from desks in perfect rows and columns, just as

they always are, each day that passes, and sits at the back when another similar boy walks in. This boy's name is

August. A pit of guilt forms in Jude's stomach.

August thinks that he hates this lecture. The class itself is fine; the teacher is alright and the lessons interest him, but he thinks he hates it anyways. He thinks he hates it because he sees Jude. He thinks he hates that Jude stares off into space each day, never wavering from routine.

He thinks he hates that he never sees Jude in town, either driving down main street or looking over a mediocre menu at the local diner. He thinks he hates that Jude's so silent, and he knows he hates that he worries for Jude. He knows it hurts him to see him so silent.

The aging blue chair groans as August sits down, not too close to the front, and probably too close to Jude. He can't yet decide if that is a mistake. Jude's eyes flicker as August settles into the adjacent seat, and then dart away when he notices the tentative stare. Yes, he decides, it was definitely a mistake. August speaks first.

“Morning.”

“Morning.” The twin words ring with uncertainty and tension like elastic rope drawn taught with conflict and emotion. August clears his throat in an awkward moment of silence and debate over whether this conversation is worth sustaining. For now, it is not.

As Jude and August struggle to continue, I stand alone in a field where nothing meets nowhere. My ankles brush past the swaying grass as I glide towards the tree line. The sun beams its yellow glow; coasting me in warmth and care. I walk,

but the trees with their rustling branches never grow closer. The grass and soil move with me and I am once more where I began my journey, but I am not afraid. I know in my core that nothing could harm me here. The birds dance on the breeze and the flowers bloom in a kaleidoscope of color. The sunflowers tower and sway over the daffodils while the deer graze and the lion sleeps on her rock. Long ago I decided that this field is idyllic. It is Good.

The pages I clutch in my hands are yellowed and frayed. Each woven fiber courses with purpose and possibility and my fingers shake with the excitement of knowing where the wind will carry my words. I raise my hands above my head just as the gust sweeps across the plain. I

see it first in the trees and the birds as they bounce with the new current. The sunflowers are pushed forward and the daffodil petals whisper sweet nothings to the wind. The deer scamper off to a new pasture and the lion raises her head with lazy curiosity. As I feel the air pulse around me, I look to the papers cast against the perfect blue sky with cotton clouds and let go. I nod to the gust and it smiles as the papers twirl like songbirds over my head. They grow smaller as the wind pushes them past the branches and over the horizon, gone from my view.

Jude is beginning his assignment when the papers reach the classroom window. My friend, the wind holds them there for him to see.

The pages spin a tale of small children playing in the fresh fallen snow, of lessons found not in the classroom, but in freedom. They catch snowflakes on their

tongues as towering pines sway with the winter wind. A soft carol bounces to their ears from a nearby village as its homes spill inviting, orange light into the blue abyss. Overhead, the Moon shines true to the night in their everlasting dance of darkness and illumination while the children twirl, creating magical, twinkling flurries, happy without meaning. A melodious call rises from the village, and the children return home. Warmed by the loving fire and nurtured by the freeing cocoa they laugh through their shivers and reminisce on the day's happenings. They had danced for pure joy and twirled for happiness alone. Their memories of flurries and carols lull them into a resounding sleep.

Jude and August look to each other before letting their hungry eyes linger on the written words. Their adventure has begun, and I eagerly await their arrival to the field where nothing meets nowhere.



POETRY

## [IF I WERE ON A SAILBOAT IN THE MIDST OF A STORM]

BY CHYANNE TURNER

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If I were on a sailboat in the midst of a storm  
I could look down towards the violent waves  
and I would still see your reflection  
gently smiling back at me

To me, the tattered, failing compass would look like  
your calloused, guiding hands  
And the shrill whistles of the wind would become  
comforting whispers in your voice

As the night went on,  
I would dread to forego our final goodbye  
just as I would fear the collision to be had on a rocky shore  
And I would liken the sting of the raindrops  
to the pain of our inevitable parting

And in the morning,  
when I am safely laying upon the beach  
and I am finally allowed to unclench my eyes,  
I would only be saddened to find  
that you were not standing there before me.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIN JUN LEE

# AS I WALKED OUT ONE MIDSRING MORNING

BY CHRISTIAN HOVEY

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Last week I had my first relaxing weekend since landing in Spain. This primarily consisted of movies, homework, and walking in the park. This abundance of time, accompanied by *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* (a book about a man who walked around Spain in 1935 with nothing but a violin and a sack), resulted in an overwhelming wanderlust. To quench my thirst for the unknown, I reserved a bed in a hostel next to a National Park 30 miles north of Madrid. As I am writing this, it is 20 degrees Fahrenheit and the wind pushes my feet from under me.

I woke up at around 8 and packed my things (a pencil, an eraser, a notebook, a dangerous book, *As I Walked...*, and a Spanish

Art textbook). I dressed in jeans, a flannel, sweatshirt, jacket, and a pair of Puma sneakers, drank some coffee, and boarded the metro. The higher the metro went, the needles changed from green to white and the trunks from dark to light brown. We ascended and kept ascending, past small suburban towns and rural homes. Amid the wrinkled and bored faces on the metro emerged ancient pines.

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*A boy dressed in white with a straw brimmed hat runs to an apple tree and starts beating it with a stick. The apples shake but do not drop. Clint in his cowboy hat and poncho points his revolver and fires at the branches. Dry, desolate*

*mountains paint the background as he fires. One apple. He reloads. A cigarette between his lips. Another apple down. Eyes focused. Another apple. A mustached man from above aims. Another apple. Eastwood squints and glances behind. Three more apples. Clint puffs his cigarette, squints at the mustache, and looks down. Bravo.*

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The train suddenly stopped. The ten other passengers, just as they heard the first squeak of the brakes, packed their bags and zipped their coats. The doors opened, the snow pants and bags disappearing in a flash. I hopped onto the platform and saw the station before me. I walked up the road, figuring the station was too small to be my residence and source of food for the night, only to realize that, other than the closed “Mountain School” and hiking center, it was the only building near me. I peeked my head into the station, saw a husky beard manning the bar, and decided to just get going on my hike.

Marching up the inclined road, I veered and followed a path towards the hiking center. Inside, there were two middle-aged ladies behind the counter. I asked for a map and, with an eye roll, one of them approached me. As I asked her which path I should take, her eyes widened re-

alizing I was not from around here and needed guidance. She smiled, alerted me of the wind advisory, and directed me to a short hike just below the summit. When she asked where I was from, I told her Estados Unidos. She muttered USA under her breath a few times before saying, “Buena suerte.”

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*It had seemed just and right and necessary that the men who ran were shot. There was nothing wrong about it. Their running was a selfishness. The fascists had attacked and we had stopped them on that slope in the gray rocks, the scrub pines, and the gorse of the Guadarrama hillsides. We had held along the road under the bombing from the planes and the shelling when they brought their artillery up and those who were left at the end of that day had counterattacked and driven them back. Later, when they had tried to come down on the left, sifting down between the rocks and through the trees, we had held out in the Sanitarium firing from the windows and the roof although they had passed it on both sides, and we lived through knowing what it was to be surrounded until the counterattack had cleared them back behind the road again.*

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The hike on a sunny day would’ve probably taken 45 minutes. At first the weather wasn’t bad. Out of the hiking center, I saw an eagle gliding through the

blue sky and light clouds above. It swayed back and forth, enjoying the views with me. We overlooked the mountain ranges in the distance. They are as if my native Idaho Sawtooth bred with the Adirondacks. The rounded ridges stretched deep down the valley, frosted with white.

At first, I followed a couple decked out in expensive hiking gear, obviously from the city, wearing furrowed brows and contemplative squints with Loewe leather boots. We came to a little lookout but most of what I admired were soft mists covering the top third of the mountains ahead. So, I continued my march through an increasingly narrow path marked "Penalara Lagoon." The wind strummed the branches around me like guitar strings, me feeling little of the reverberations.

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### *Taraxacum penyalareense*

*My darkness. A blotch of blue, white softly pulsing from around. I am warm in its cold. My body crippled, torso folded to the side, legs shriveled, hair withered. My home, frozen, still. The world hums. Its quiet beat tickles me. Tickles my home. Tickles my darkness. The world plays with me. I envy the trees. They see what cracks.*

*They see what moves. They see this game. I wait. I listen. The beat now violent. My darkness a cold, dark blue. No white. Whistles. Screams. Distant crashes. Crashes so close my home rattles. Tickles replaced by stings. Sharp, long stings. Stings always longer. Crashes turn to whispers. Orange, my darkness lighter. The humming returns. Songs welcome it, joining in. The world lifts its foot. Jumps. Hums. Sings. An orchestra. Orange. Yellow... Blue.*

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Rounding a corner, the pines opened to the mountain faces and my first jaw-dropping view. There was a steep drop from the trail, below waves of hills populated with ice from the mist. I could see well off into the distance, down the valley a shade of blue kissing a far-away lake. Everything was frozen in time. The clouds, moving swiftly, had been following the same path for ages. They knew the way.

Then I was knocked on my ass. A gust from the ancient clouds hit me like a linebacker. From then on, the ascent felt like high school football practice in November: on hands and knees, red palms and cheeks, snow spitting in my eyes. However, like those November afternoons on the tundra hitting the snot out of the person across from me, there was



PHOTOGRAPH BY MIN JUN LEE

a payoff. The views kept getting better with each crawl.

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*Silene ciliata*

*My darkness. A ring of purple. White. Neck crumpled, one foot broken. Warm. It is warm. My home. Frosted. Still. Warm...er. Orchestras awake. Orange in purple. The day blossoms. Pins poke my body. Warm pins. Orange. Warm. Thunder never hurts me here. Hums beckon me. Down. My home. Ancestors saw dark purple. We move. We search. White. White. White. Pulls. Legs first. Head last. Purple smaller and smaller. White.*

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Making my way up, I came upon a shack and bridge which stood guarding the lagoon ahead. I stood on my feet as a group of three crossed the bridge, shivering in their lined coats and hats. Out of the haze from their exhalations came "Hola." I responded, "El tiempo es fantástico, no?" They smiled, glancing down at my Pumas as I slipped again right before the bridge. Behind I hear "Buena suerte."

My focus shifted upward. Dark clouds slowly engulfed the ridge ahead. The lagoon under the ridge: my target. I needed to get there. On fours again, my feet kept slipping. As my fingers led me, the dark-

ness kept creeping. A quiet thunder pulled my fingers. Up, the darkness a dark grey. Everything seemed white or a variation of it. Blue winked before veiling herself in it.

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*Festuca aragonensis*

*My darkness. A light green. Home. Forever. Winds and whites pass. Freeze me. Freeze me. There is nothing else. The tears. The roars. The silence. Same. Forever. Crowded. Silence mutters. Murmurs. Warmth slips to Heat. Heat fills us. My toes clammy. Freeze returns. Warms me. I am home. My green darker than those before me. Heat burns green. Murmurs. Charcoal. Burnt green. Consuming. My green. Losing. Slipping. My toes no longer grip. Help.*

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I looked downhill. White. The soil fragile to the touch. Maybe it too feels.

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*Doubt flashed in and out with the blue above. Was it worth it? I kept moving, letting the darkness pull me. I had no expectations. I only lusted for difference, a sight unknown to me, my ancestors. What little I knew of my father's past*

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIN JUN LEE



NONFICTION

# ON MEMORIES

BY RACHEL SIEGEL

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almost believe it. But the truth is, it is very unlikely that anything would have changed. Perhaps I would have remembered one of the trips we took to Catskill game farm when we visited her in New York. Maybe it would have been the time that I took her hand and led the way forward so I could stare down a deer with antlers as big as I was.

But I can't say that I would have asked her any more questions about herself. Even now, I struggle to ask questions to the people I care about. Sometimes I don't think of everything I'd want to know until the moment's passed. Other times, I'm afraid to upset the person by pushing too far. I also doubt that I would have had much more patience as

she tried to teach me how to knit. It was only recently that I achieved the patience necessary to be bad at something long enough to be able to improve.

She took her last breath at St. Luke's hospital in Utica, New York. Only two nights before she had been rushed to the emergency room with pneumonia, likely caused by something she had not been able to swallow correctly. It was only two days later that my mom and her two sisters were forced to make the decision to take her off the ventilator.

It was a sunny September day. Under any other circumstances, I would have been running around the neighborhood with my friends. I remember sitting in the waiting room, staring

at the mauve walls and thinking that my grandma would be fine. It just wasn't the kind of day that a person dies. The hospital limited the number of people allowed in her room, which meant I spent most of my time in the hard plastic chairs, staring at whatever was playing on the TV. A couple of hours later, each of the kids—myself, my sister, and my two cousins—took turns going into her hospital room to say goodbye.

The monitor in her room was still beeping at a steady pace, but all I can remember is the harshness of the white—white walls, white floors, and scratchy white sheets. I could feel my mother's eyes on me as I neared the bed and took my grandmother's hand—

still warm from the last person who held it. My throat tightened as I looked at her pale body, her only motion the faint rise and fall of her chest. She didn't even look like herself.

"I love you," I told her. My voice was barely above a whisper. "I'll miss you."

Even at the time, the words felt hollow. I wanted the perfect words to say; some big, final goodbye that could encompass everything I was feeling. But there is no perfect thing to say, so I settled on the simple truths I knew. I love you. I'll miss you.

She died that evening surrounded by her daughters. Though she had been dehydrated for the last two days, my mom swears that she saw a single tear fall down her cheek just moments before her heart stopped.

That November, just after our first Thanksgiving without my grandmother, my mom decided that it was time for my sister and I to learn how to bake pies. She was outraged by the pies her sister had made. The edges of the pie crust were blackened, and the center was soggy from the store-bought filling that made my teeth hurt after



**Though she had been dehydrated for the last two days, my mom swears that she saw a single tear fall down her cheek just moments before her heart stopped."**

a single bite. I'm still not sure which of these offenses my mom considered to be the bigger crime.

"That is not how you make a pie," she had said during the car ride home, her arms stiff and her knuckles white as she gripped the wheel. The next day, she took out the red and green wooden box that holds hundreds of recipes she had collected throughout the years and found the one for apple pies. From the kitchens of: M♥M it said on the top.

The recipe card was so thin I thought a single touch would rip it to pieces, the oil stains left the text smudged. But my mom had been baking pies for so many years she practically had the recipe memorized. She directed my sister and

I around the kitchen and taught us how to use the pastry blender and how much water to add so that the crust will come together without turning sticky.

"You can never have too many apples," she said, piling them higher than the ridge of the pan. I told her we had just one slice too many and popped the cinnamon and sugar-coated apple into my mouth.

If I had been left unattended, I'm sure that first pie wouldn't have come out much better than my aunt's. It took me four tries to roll out the crust, each time it either stuck to the table that I had not floured appropriately or I'd rolled it out so thin that it began to tear when I tried to put it in the pie pan. Finally, I gave up on the task all together and claimed I needed to watch my mom roll it out one more time before I could do it on my own.

While my mom helped me roll out the crust, I was struck for the first time at how closely my mom resembled my grandmother. They both gestured with their hands in just the same way as speaking, and the calm tone that she used to teach me reminded me of my grandmother's attempts

