



SUMMER 2022



• MEDITATING CAT ZINE •



Issue 3

Special thanks to Sophia Lai (IG: @kumo.yoko) for  
designing this issue's front and back covers, and  
Summer Cat.

## *About Sophia Lai*

Fuelled by shibas & tea, Sophia finds solace in scribbling lil' doodles in between the draining yet amusing life that is her school life. While most of her interests & fantasies constantly come and go, thoughts on what to draw next stays on her mind 24/7, rent free.

Other than her hopes of pursuing a path in the visual arts or graphic design sector, she strives to actually fill up a full sketchbook (and fix her sleep schedule) someday.

A decorative header featuring a bright yellow sun with rays on the left, partially obscured by a white cloud with a blue outline. To the right, the title 'In This Issue' is written in a large, black, cursive font. Further right, there are abstract shapes: a solid yellow circle, a solid pink circle, and a series of concentric blue circles.

# In This Issue

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# *You Don't Look Like You Are From Around Here*

by Ker Vanish

'You don't look like you are from around here'



## *About Ker Vanish*

Ker Vanish is the silly nickname of a certain digital artist. Ker likes hamsters, good art, and friendly people. Although Ker appears to be positive and optimistic, Ker actually has a deep desire to scream at the world. As Ker empathizes deeply with Curios, she designed the logo (basic cat) of the Meditating Cat Zine. Find her on IG: [ker\\_vanish](#).



*Ancient One, by John Boudreau*



## *About John Boudreau*

John is an artist in Los Angeles and studied art in New York City.  
His genres include intuitive abstract art and symbolic painting.  
He is an art advocate and he hopes his artwork inspires others.



*3 Paintings by YS Liew*













*Cat, by Vivien Solveig*





*Photo 2, by Melly*



About this photograph: This photo was taken in June 2022, It shows the view from the viewing tower at the Southernmost Point of Continental Asia.

## *The Girl Called Cliff by Gratia Serpento*

I once met a girl whose name I will not say. It hurts too much to even whisper, to think, her name clouded with the pain and sadness of her memory.

But, in my heart, I always, always thought her name was supposed to be Cliff. For she always seemed to teeter on the edge of something or other, I could never quite figure it out. Until it was too late.

And this is the story of the girl called Cliff.

When I was twelve, my aunt let me stay the summer at her beach house in Bryont. It was less of a beach house and more of a cliff house—where the backyard ends in ragged rocks right above the ocean in a steep dropoff. Houses were spaced off around my aunt's house, but none had access to the cliff like we did.

The first week of summer was awfully boring. I went down to the beach with my aunt on occasion, but we mostly stayed at the house, watching game shows and coloring with broken-in-half crayons and pencils. I was counting down the days until August 15th. The day my parents would come pick me up and life could resume as normal.

It was June 26th when I met Cliff.

It was about 11:38 in the morning (but can it be considered morning if it's just off from noon?), when Aunt's doorbell rang, so muffled it sounded like a cat hacking up a singing bird.

“Will you answer it, Ehlis? I just put nail polish on,” my aunt called from the kitchen. I had no doubt she was using that aquamarine color she had been eyeballing at the Dollar Store. She said she wouldn’t cave but she always, always would.

For nail polish, at least.

I hopped off the couch and stuck my colored pencil behind my ear and walked over to the door. I opened it, and a kid about my age with sand stuck in her braids stared at me.

“Hello?” I said.

“My name is...” she said (she had said her real name, but I can’t remember it and I don’t like putting words in people’s mouths). Her brown eyes sparkled. “What’s your name?”

“Ehlis Zeckbeck.”

“Hm. Cool.” I could practically see the words bob in one ear and circle right back. She wouldn’t, and didn’t, remember my name. “I live six houses down. Wanna go play on the beach?”

I blinked, startled. “I...um.”

“I need to collect sea glass. Mom says I can’t go to the beach alone. You’re here, I’m here. You’re probably bored, I’m definitely bored. Let’s go down to the beach.”

“Let me ask my aunt,” I said slowly, a little bit in shock at her bluntness. “I’ll be right back.” I gently shut the door and do that weird half walk/half run that you do when you’re unsure of what’s going on but want to find out soon.

I found my Aunt in the kitchen, sitting on a plastic lawn chair (her 'nail painting' chair), putting a clear top coat on her toenails.

"Aunt," I said hesitantly. "There's a girl called Cliff at the door. She says lives six houses down, and she wants to go to the beach with me. Should I go?"

"Be home before the sun sets," she looked at her toes, marveling over the shine. "We have the best spot to watch them, you know."

Looking back, the way my aunt didn't really care to ask anymore questions or show the slightest bit of worry does concern me. Sometimes I wish I could go back to this moment and shake her, make her see, make her realize how much pain will be coming.

But I never really, truly wish for it. For then I would lose Cliff entirely.

I walked back out and grabbed my flip flops and a bucket ("You can never go to the beach without a bucket" - Aunt). Opening the door, I smiled at Cliff. "I gotta be back by sunset, though."

"Psssh," Cliff flicked her hand, waving me off as we started the trek downhill, towards the beach. "That ain't special. Every single person in every single one of these homes on South Hugert Street is back by sunset. It's practically the law. We should leave around four, that's when the tourists all come and take over the beach."



The walk down to the beach was silent, aside from the *clop-plop* of our shoes. The sun was hidden behind a wisp of clouds, but it was as hot as ever. The moment our feet touched the sand, Cliff was slipping off her shoes and hiding them under a big, wet log.

“Did you know I’ve lost six pairs of shoes from tourists?” She scratched at her head. “They just saw my shoes and took ’em, just took ’em. And I couldn’t say anything because all these folks are potential customers to my Mom’s cafe, you know, and I have to act nice and not mess anything—hey, take your shoes off. Only a crazy person walks on the beach with shoes on.”

I kicked off my flip flops and put them under the log. “Are they going to get dirty?”

“Under this log? For sure.” She had shrugged, big and exaggerated. Upon seeing my horrified face, she laughs. “I know you got those at the Dollar Store. Dollar Store flip flops are supposed to get destroyed and dirty.”

My face reddened, and I was a little angry at being found at. Back home, if someone noticed that I got most of my clothes from Goodwill or the Dollar Tree, I would’ve been mocked.

“Hey, it’s no big deal,” Cliff said. “This shirt?” She pulls at the hem of her orange tee shirt with about sixteen stains. “It’s a hand-me-down that went from my cousin, to his brother, to my sister, to my brother, to one more sister, and then to me. It’s no big deal. Now, *GREAT* idea with that bucket, we’re gonna need it. I know a spot just past this ridge, *FULL* of sea glass. Let’s get going, Elena.”

“Ehlis.”

“Uh-huh, that’s what I meant. Now, ONWARDS, my friend.”

We set off, our feet leaving prints in the sand. The sand was really mostly rock, and scaped up my feet, but Aunt said I would grow calluses if I practiced enough. I watched Cliff walk across the rocky sand with little care, and sucked up the temporary pain. Or tried to, at least. I was only twelve.

“What do you need the sea glass for?” I asked, curiosity circling my mind.

“In art class, we learned about mosaics,” Cliff said, watching the waves crash into the sand. “It’s destroyed pieces of glass or tile, and you arrange those broken pieces into patterns and masterpieces and—” she broke off into a squeal and twirled with her arms in the air. “It was so cool! All those broken pieces given a new life. So, I have a corkboard I made for an eco project two years ago—my grandma gave me some of her collection of wine corks and I recycled them—and I want to glue sea glass onto the corkboard and make my very own mosaic.”

“That’s really cool. How much sea glass do you need?”

“Um. Lots? I don’t know, I don’t even have a set design yet. I need to see what all pieces I have to work with.”

“Wouldn’t it make more sense to draw up a design and plan yet?”

“I’m an artist. You can’t control the will of art,” Cliff bumps my shoulder. “Oh! Perfect! Just in this cove! Everything or anything washes up on this shore, and you get the best sea glass picking. Don’t tell the tourists, or everything gold will tarnish.”

Hollowed out between the rocky ridge is a little ravine, with a small snake of water that splashes spray up against some rocks. Pop cans and plastic bags lie crushed and smashed against the sand, along with sunglasses and a sunscreen bottle.

“I don’t see a lot of sea glass,” I said, honestly a little disappointed. “Just a lot of trash.”

“The trash is a side effect,” she waded into the water after yanking her yellow capris up above her knees. “The real treasure is in here.”

I followed after her but stopped on the cusp of land to water, and peered down. Smooth stones and sea glass were sprinkled against the sand, and two small fish darted away from Cliff’s feet. Pop can lids were there, too, and small plastics were dug deep into the sand.

But the pollution could not dim our excitement. There were aching amounts of sea glass, certainly enough for a corkboard mosaic.

Cliff dug her hand into the water and tossed a bunch of sea glass into my bucket. “Fill ’er up.”

We kept dunking and grabbing sea glass, our palms smacking the rippled surface, until our fingers were too prune to hold onto the glass. Our bucket was almost full, the sun casting glows against the metallic tin.

“We have a bit of extra time.” Cliff said as she shook water off her legs. “Want to go to the cafe and get something to drink?”

“I’ll have to tell my aunt.”

“But that’s in the opposite direction,” she complained.  
“C’mon, your aunt won’t even notice.”

And I knew, even then, that she wouldn’t. Aunt was a wonderful woman, but she didn’t have a maternal bone in her entire body. The fact that my parents left me with her should have rang warning bells but, then again, at the time they didn’t know how bad it would get.

But, even still, I was a good kid. “If you want, I’ll meet you at the cafe. But I need to tell Aunt where I’m going.”

Cliff shrugged. “Whatever. If that’s what you want, do it. But can I take the bucket? I’ll give it back once I’m done.”

“Sure.” I passed her the bucket. By this point, we were back at the wet log, and sure enough, my shoes were dirty. I tried to hide my grimace as I slipped my shoes back on, tree bark sticking thorns in my toes. “What’s the cafe called?”

“The Hut, it’s a ten minute walk from my house.” She gave me some basic instructions that I barely remembered. “Don’t be late.”

We went in opposite directions, the sand stuck to our legs as the sun beat down on our skin. I ran and rushed to ask Aunt if I could go (she said yes, without hesitation nor concern). I ran, feet clipping the pavement, all the way down to The Hut, vaguely remembering Cliff’s directions.

By the luck of a miracle, I made it without getting lost.

I found Cliff waiting in a booth in the back, a sketchbook and a set of fancy colored pencils spread out on the table. She had a giant rectangle already drawn, and was tapping a baby blue pencil against her lips, the bucket propped up on the seat next to her, dripping watered down sand onto the cushion.



I slid into the seat in front of her. “What’d I miss?”

“We have primarily dark blue chunks, followed closely by pale blue, then green, some black, some yellow—emphasis on some—and we have four red glass pieces. I want to do something that focuses on the red stones, make ’em pop.”

“What if you made eyes?”

“Eyes?”

“Yeah, eyes. Like, there’s this ocean, deep and dark, and there’s two giant red eyes staring at you through the waves.” At her curious look, I shrugged. “I don’t know, red, evil, scary.”

“Hm. I like it, Ellie.”

“Ehlis.” I used to hate how she always got my name wrong, but now it’s a bitter karma, as I can’t for the life of me recall her name.

“Uh-huh. Let’s see.” She scribbled out a horizon line and a corner sun. “We could have the eyes down here—” she pointed towards the bottom left “—and use the black to make it seem like a body. Nice. I like this.”

“And use the green for kelp?”

“Eh, maybe. I think it’d look better with *just* the red eyes and body.”

“Got to make sure the body blends in well enough inside the water.”

“Cliff, I thought today was your day off, what are you doing back here?” a lady with brown hair and Cliff’s nose stuck her hand on her hip as she stared down at us, a serving tray tucked beneath her arm.

Cliff fixed a grin on the server. “Hey, Mom. My friend, Emily Zeckbeck—” “Ehlis,” I corrected.

“Yeah, her. Anyway, we’re making a mosaic—”

“That’s great, and it’s nice to meet you, Ehlis,” Mama Cliff shot me a wary smile. “But if you’re going to be here, you can get working..” Cliff sighed, and Mama Cliff frowned, her face softening. “You know I wish you could be a normal kid, but...”

“Yeah, yeah, I know.” Cliff scratched her chin. “I’ll get moving.”

Mama Cliff bent down and left a kiss on the side of Cliff’s head. “I love you.”

“I know.” After Mama Cliff walked away, Cliff dropped her forehead onto the table and let out a giant growl. “I hate this stupid cafe.” After she lifted her head up, she asked me, “How about I swing by your place next week and we can start placing the glass and figuring out the technical aspects of this thing?”

“Next week? Why not tomorrow?” It was summer break—I didn’t see the need for responsibility nor patience in a season of freedom.

“I have work,” Cliff shrugs. “I’m a busboy for my mama. And I make the lemonade and tea. Tuesday’s are my only days off. Are you going to be here next week?”

“Yeah.”

“Great, we can meet at your house—I’ve always wanted to see that cliff from a better angle.” She sighed, looking borderline angry. “I’ll see you later, okay?”

I took my cue to leave, so I stood up and brushed off my shorts.  
“Well...see you later.”

For the remainder of the week, I was restless, impatient. Cliff was wild but predictable—like a storm over a meadow. You knew it would shake and rage, but the flowers would come back at first sign of sun. Yet she seemed trapped, like the world wasn't big enough to hold her.

I wanted to know more.

Wednesday I went to the cove and collected more sea glass—I had to put them in a plastic sandwich bag because Cliff still had my bucket. Thursday I went and spent some of my meager allowance on multiple kinds of glue. Friday I went back to the cove and picked up a bunch of the trash. Saturday I went with Aunt and visited some of her friends. Sunday we stayed home and watched *Jeopardy!* and watched the first six *Star Wars* movies. Monday I picked up the beach house.

Tuesday I watched the door like a hawk, waiting for Cliff to come and ring the old doorbell. I waited, and waited, and waited, the hours wearing on but the doorbell not once ringing. I pretended to be busy reading my book, but my eyes kept staying.

“What's got you so concerned about the door?” Aunt said, not looking up from her Sudoku puzzle. I must've been quite obvious—otherwise she never would have seen.

“Nothing,” I told her, digging my nose into the paper.

“It's not nothing. Tell me.”

I sighed. “I just...Cliff said—”

“Who?”

“Cliff? The girl who came over last week? And took me to the beach for sea glass?”

“Oh, yes, her, I remember,” Aunt said in a way that said she did not remember. “What about her?”

“She said she was coming over today but it’s already two-thirty, I don’t think she’s coming.”

“Hm. Maybe she forgot?” Aunt went back to her Sudoku, leaving me and the conversation forgotten, muttering something about finding an eight.

I went back to my book, but I didn’t pay attention to the letters on the pages. I watched the door, even when it began to grow dark out. Aunt took me to the cliff and we watched the sunset, and a heavy weight settled into my chest. It was official.

Cliff was not going to show up.

She had said it herself. No one on South Hugert Street went out after sunset. It was practically illegal, so she said.

The rest of the week, I was, I’ll admit, grumpy. I didn’t like people who couldn’t keep their promises. I didn’t like being left behind. My parents had ditched me and left me with my Aunt so they could have a summer to themselves.

And they always promised it would get better but it never, *never* did.

It was July 10 when I saw Cliff again.

It was six o’clock in the morning, and I was still asleep, when the doorbell rang. I wiped sleep from my eyes and peeked out my window, and saw Cliff, scratching her neck and looking kind of ashamed.



Cautiously, I changed out of my deer-dotted pajamas and into denim shorts and a tee shirt before opening the door just a crack. I fixed the face my dad used on the salesmen we always got on our porch step. “Hello?”

“Hey, Evangeline.” She said, looking sheepish.

“Ehlis.” I crossed my arms. “Evangeline isn’t even close.”

“Sorry, I’ll do better next time,” she sighed. “And I’m sorry about not showing up last week. Mom forgot it was Tuesday and put me on the schedule. By the time I could come over and tell you, it was too late. I’m sorry. I can’t guarantee it won’t happen again, but I’ll try. Am I forgiven?”

I huffed. “I hate being deserted.”

“I didn’t desert you—I just postponed the inevitable.” She shrugged, and motioned towards the bucket of sea glass—each color stuck in Ziplock baggies—and the corkboard tucked under her arm. I hadn’t noticed those. “Now, should we get started? Apologies bring down my mood.”

“I have the sketches saved, let me go grab them. Make yourself at home in the kitchen, I’ll be right with you.” I held the door open for her, before booting to my room. I gathered the sketches, before knocking on Aunt’s door.

“Why?” Her voice was a hoarse whisper.

“Cliff’s here, we’re going to be making the mosaic.”

“Just stay quiet and don’t break anything.”

“Got it. Love you.”

*“Hmmm.”*

I raced back towards the kitchen, and found Cliff with her face pressed against the window overlooking our backyard.

“Whatcha doing, Cliff?”

“Erika Zeckbeck, I’ve lived on this street, in my house, for my entire life, and I’ve *never* seen the cliff from up close. It’s always been so far away, so prominent but unspoken. I have always, *always* wanted to see this cliff. This is really big for me, and I’d appreciate it if you didn’t judge.”

I ignored the *Erika* comment, and joined her, pressing my face against the glass and staring at the cliff. Technically, our yard is pretty basic—a square with a picket fence that goes to my Aunt’s waist. There’s a little gate with a padlock that opens to the grassy land that narrows into an overhanging ledge. Directly below is the ocean, and waves crash and shove against three large rocks.

The cliff.

“We can hang out in the yard, if you want to see it up close,” I said to her. “Can’t go outside the fence, but we still have some grass to roll in.”

“Let’s do it,” Cliff said as she grabbed the bucket and corkboard. I unlocked the back door, grabbed the sketches, and we set our stuff onto one of the tables Aunt has outside before leaning against the fence that overlooks the cliff.

“Wow, it’s...I thought it would be cooler,” Cliff said, a little figment of disappointment echoed in her voice.

“It’s probably cooler if you’re right on the edge, but it’s not safe,” I told her.

She jiggled the paddock. “You could’ve fooled me.” She sighed. “Alright, I’ve seen what I needed to see. Let’s get to work.”

We turned back and settled in mis-matched chairs around the table.

“I think we should trace out where we want the colors and lines,” she said as she bit the tip of her pencil. “And then, without glue, place all the glass on there and see where everything lines up.”

“Excellent,” I nodded. “Are we still doing the sun? I fear it might clutter it.”

“Nope, and nope for seaweed. We’ll start with a *simple* mosaic and build up. I’ll sketch the monster you get the water line.”

I’ll admit, when she said ‘we’ my heart fluttered and I immediately forgot about her not showing up last week and not remembering my name. My entire life, I’d be kicked to the shadows. My parents, they loved me, and I them, but there was a ‘them’ and a ‘me’, never an ‘us’. I was included because I had to be. We were a family because we had to be.

But Cliff invited me along to things, and included me, because she genuinely wanted to. I didn’t, and still don’t, understand what she saw in me, but I was thankful for it nonetheless. It made me feel less alone, less unwanted. We drew outlines and painted the corkboard to match the sea glass, and only stopped for tuna fish sandwiches. Once the paint was dry, we took the glue and began to stick the glass on.

“I have to head back to The Hut,” Cliff groaned. We only had two more pieces left to glue, but we couldn’t get to them until everything else dried. “I left before my mom could make me stay, but I better get back before she gets mad.” She handed me the four red glass pieces. “Keep these safe, I’ll try coming back next week, but...”

I gripped the glass tightly in my hand. “If you don’t make it, I’ll understand.”

“I’ll try, I really, really will.” She turned and looked over at the cliff. “One day I will see a sunset from here. Someday.” She gave me another smile before heading out the door. “Bye, Elsa.”

“Ehlis! My name is Ehlis!” I called out, too late, as the door was swiftly shut. I gave a low laugh, and put the ruby red sea glass in a little Mason jar, right on my dresser. After that I covered up the mosaic so the sun wouldn’t ruin it.

Then I counted down the days until I could see Cliff.

In reality, I could have gone to The Hut and visited her, but she was so tense, so sad, there. I liked seeing the unapologetic Cliff, liked seeing her be her wild self. I didn’t want to see the boxed in Cliff.

It was three weeks later when I saw Cliff again. July 31st.

I didn’t have a lot of time left in Bryont, on South Hugert Street, in the beach house on the cliff. I wanted to call my parents and beg them to let me stay here year round, but I didn’t want to draw their attention to this house. I didn’t want them to taint the only good place I’d ever been.

So I accepted my fate. But I did beg Aunt to let me come here the following year, and she shrugged and said, “Sure. You’re great at doing dishes.”

But it was July 31st, and someone was knocking on the door at 7:16 in the evening. The sun was just beginning to dip near the ocean, ready for sunset at 8.

I hurriedly opened it, and saw Cliff. Her face was tear streaked, her hair askew and sticking in all different directions, but it was her eyes that had shocked me. Those brown orbs, always so full of life and emotion, remember them?

Well, they were dead.

There was nothing but a quiet resignation left dripping in glass.

“Cliff,” I whispered, afraid to broach the subject. “What happened? Are you okay?” “Can I watch the sunset here?” She asked, her voice low and empty.

“I...isn't that practically illegal? Shouldn't you go home?”

“I don't want to go home and if that makes me a criminal, so be it.” She blinked twice. “Can I watch the sunset here?”

“We just have to be quiet,” I told her, standing aside so she could come in. “My aunt is asleep. Do you want to work on the mosaic tonight?”

She shook her head. “It's just broken pieces. You can't make beauty with broken pieces.”

My head whipped to look at her, really look at her. Her expression, her tone, her everything was *bland*. This wasn't my Cliff. This was a shell, an empty husk, a sheep wearing a wolf's coat.

“Are you okay?”

“No, but I don't want to touch the mosaic right now. It's the problem. Don't you see?” She sighed, and rubbed her eyes. “Let's go sit and watch the sunset. I just want to feel one moment of peace, that's all I want. Please.”

I opened the backyard door in response.

We just sat there in the grass, watching the sun track its way down the sky, in silence, just watching the clouds change to a pink and gray.

After a while (with extra emphasis on the while), Cliff spoke up. “I fear I am losing my life.”

I startled, her words a sharp jolt in my sternum. “What?”

“I fear my age and my life are not corresponding as they are supposed to,” she said, eyes trained on the sun set. “I am only twelve, but my childhood ended when I was three. I've lived a long life in such a short amount of time. I'm an old woman in the body of a pre-teen. I know what comes next, after all the numberless age decides to stop the clock.”

“Cliff...”

“Evelyn, I am going to die, and I must die. I've worked, I should retire and I should die.” She sighed. “It's the only way I can escape this life. I can't keep living it, it's slowly killing me. And I want to die on my own terms, no one else's.” She stands, and walks over to the fence, and tenderly touches the padlock. “I am not afraid, just as I am not a child. I know what I shall do.”

“Cliff,” I said, and hurriedly grasped her shoulder. “What happened? You don't—”



“Everyone else my age is able to live,” she says, her voice hoarse and harsh. “Everyone else my age is able to be a child. I am not allowed to live, nor be a child, nor be an adult. I am a worker bee in a hive of mindless despair. And this bee does not want to work anymore. This bee is tired, so tired, and just wants peace.” She gives me a smile, one that lacks emotion of any kind. “I love my mother. But she has long since stopped seeing me as her kid and more a tool. I’m sorry for everyone I must do this to, but this is not about them, it’s about me. And I want to thank you. You broke the cycle that threatened to swallow me.”

She planted her hands on the top of the fence and pulled herself over. I grabbed her legs, tried to stop her, but she kicked and squirmed until my grip was lost.

“Cliff, you can’t—”

“That mosaic made me learn that broken things don’t create beauty, and don’t fix everything. It made me learn that the world breaks people and makes them think that brokenity is normal.” Her flip flops brush the edge of the cliff. “Good bye, Ehlis. I wish I got to see you for more than three days, but those three days were the best days of my life.”

I tried to climb over the fence, but in my desperation I

couldn’t hold on. “CLIFF NO—” She flung herself off the edge.

I watched her body fly and fall in rapid succession, watched it hit the waves, heard her scream, watched an angel float down from those pink and gray clouds and scoop up Cliff’s soul.

I watched the world destroy a girl.

I was screaming. I didn't feel it didn't hear it, but I was. It's what caused my aunt to come outside. In blubbering words I explained that Cliff was gone, and would stay gone, forever.

She began crying and freaking out, before calling Cliff's mom, who began sobbing so loud the phone speaker cracked. She said she found a note in Cliff's room and had been looking for her all day.

The police were called and I was a suspect, even though everyone on South Hugert Street knew it was a suicide. After hearing my story and hearing my cries they officially deemed it a suicide. I got a grape lollipop from one of the officers, but I threw it over the cliff. Vikings would send gifts with their dead, to give them stuff in Valhalla. That's what I was doing. But I wish I knew if she liked grape lollipops or not.

My parents tried to pick me up early, but I stayed until Cliff's funeral. Which was strange, as there was no casket, no body, just a small concession of people who cried so hard it's a miracle their eyes didn't fall out.

I gave Cliff's mom the mosaic, and told her the story of how we got the glass and the process of how we made it. I'm pretty sure she already knew it all, but she listened. She held me and buried her face in my neck and thanked me, and left a trail of tears and snot down my skin.

I gave every memory and thing I had of Cliff to Cliff's mom. I couldn't keep it, my parents wouldn't let me, and I didn't want Aunt to ruin them or accidentally throw them away.

But I kept that Mason jar of red sea glass. I eventually threw away the jar, but I drilled holes in the glass and strung a thick cord through it. I made a little bracelet, one I haven't taken off since it's creation.

I will never regret meeting her, but I regret not saving her. I regret not knowing her better, longer.

This was the story of the girl called Cliff. Cliff was the main character, and she led the story to fit how she was wanted. I could never change it.

But I wish I knew her name.

# *Family Reunions As Medieval Rituals by Nina Anin*

Two triangles balanced by a slacked- jaw bulb

Asymmetrical, leaning tower of Pisa is now

leaning tower of Christmas

Metatron attends ballet practice on top

Metatron is a frazzled archivist of whodunnits:

Who changed the God of Fortune to Santa Claus

Who confused tangyuan with turkey thighs

Who dug up the legal thrillers that were meant to only be read

like quarreling through cell towers, at night

At the party, pin debt declarations on the memorials

hastily pulled up from yellowed newspaper clippings

wish for Metatron to tell you who paid whose stocking stuffers

No one cares for dinner anyways, just sigh

bless then flee

Rinse and repeat next year, familial love

recast as inconvenient medieval rituals by

marriage vows, bolded by bitterness

## *Boring dystopias by Xiao Gan, continued*

The sunrise dumps its brick dust onto my floor, my furniture.

Stop dirtying the spotless tiles, I complain. The complaint unfurls itself and wearily crawls

on its stainless steel knees to the city councils where it would be filed away

in color coded binders lodged in labelled file organizers.

The sun yawns at the complaint and decides in its obnoxious, nauseating thoughts

to ignore the polite warnings sent by the city council ('kindly stop the surely unintentional

upsetting of newly scrubbed floors').

With its endless infinite limbs, another fistful of red dust is thrown

over the skylines, over the swimming pools, the offices, the city,

this city, of skyscrapers of level scraping, streetlights of dull blinks, unambitious achievements.

Your coffee break is over in that gray cube at 9am,

the static frequencies are here to facilitate creative thinking,

Wear the stipulated attire to save hassling, my demure mailbox spits out at me everyday.

I passively acknowledge its spittle in my nightly sleepwalks.

## *Boring dystopias by Xiao Gan, continued*

On those odd Thursdays, Thursdays that play peek-a-boo from behind my weekly planners,

I would look at Descartes' portrait hidden inside the bedroom mirror and decide

spontaneously, mischievously, to question the unquestioning routines and laws,

then conclude that they are simply set for my own good.

But today the dirt covered the public loudspeakers and birdsong drowned out modest unmusicals

My attire was dyed red. Red, like the single unmatching sock you were wearing- appalling.

Gray was vandalized by red, and entered my blond locks of perfection, curling them.

You walked into the door and held out your bucket of ingenious plotlines to me.

Everyone else, even those men in blue suits and red ties wanted a glimpse, that half of their redefinitions.

You stood in your glittering blue eyeshadow, your unmistakable butterfly dress, your diamond medals,

your reinvented melodies, so visibly on my horizons with your ship of novel visions, each one waiting for us to fulfil.

## *Boring dystopias by Xiao Gan, continued*

You did not arrive on Mondays, Mondays that scripted themselves onto my calendars and timetables.

You burst through the door on those odd Thursdays and demanded me to set sail with you,

to a future that lives in only the wildest imaginations, to a future still waiting to be graffitied onto walls.

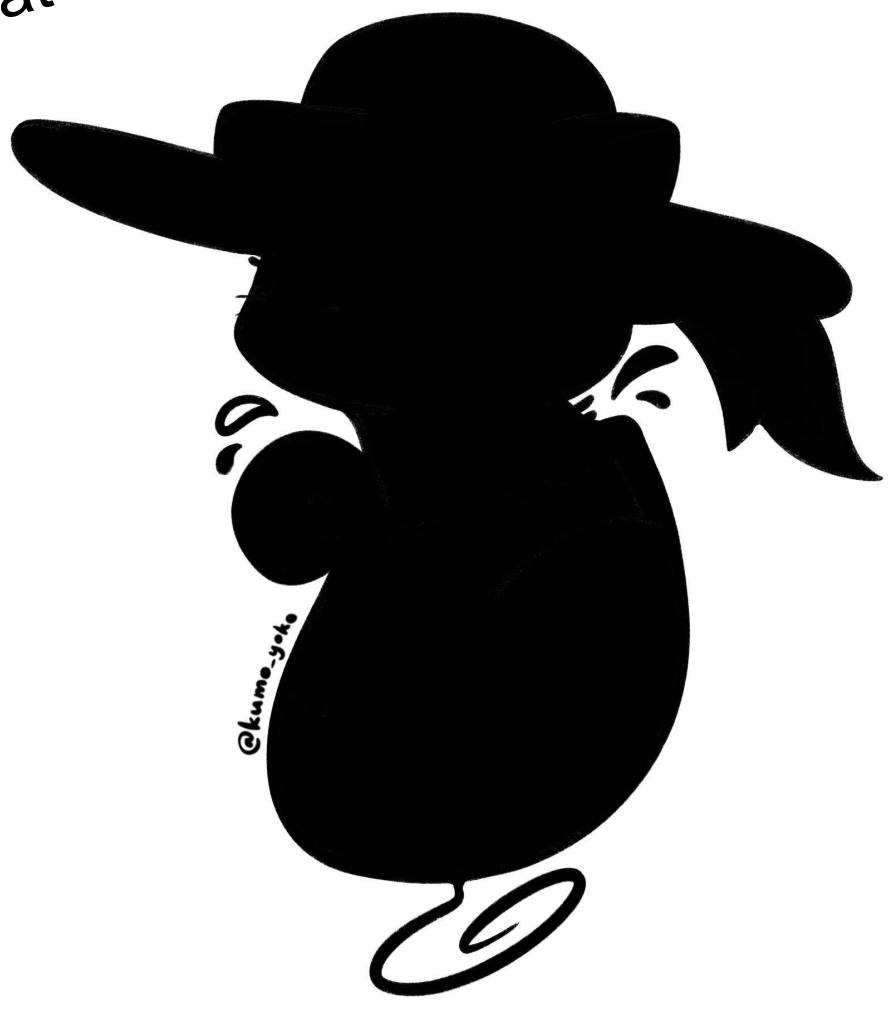
Seeing the silvers of oddity from my briefcase, I strikingly, astoundingly, stepped into Thursday.



*Dreams, by Irina Novikova*



Look! Is that a cat??



@kumo-yoko

Summer Cat: You found me!! Now get me out of this stupid pina colada cup. And buy me some ice cream too, won't you?



# *Non-objective*

## 1. Three

There is a dissonance here, one that absorbing reality can only remember. They forgot the white kings, the ones who fought for the Motherland with its blond hair of meadows and white wings of sunrise.

Following the blackened strokes of a pen on the verdict "Not guilty", he made his decision. The guilty were executed, the innocent freed, and the circle of history turns upside down.

His wheels passed through the dead earth, making it fertile again. Thousands of sheeps began to nibble on the grass, no spiders. The immense sea of meadows is happiness for living beings.

Remember that we are all forgotten in our reality. It is too early to celebrate the Wake. The walkers have not yet moved away from the flood and the rainbow has not emerged from the depths of the oceans ...

...

## *Non-objective, continued*

### 2. Aloe

Scarlet sun .. Scarlet sunset .. Maybe the sea will swallow the ship? ... A fish like a fish .... Big in the blood vessels of your blood, it is like a planet that keeps us all inside, not swallowing, but Iona does not remember herself for him, almost like a knight is more important than the legend of eternal love. Let him love .. And love does not kill him ... Let his love be like eternity ... No one is forgotten and tears as dark drops of fragments flow down your long hair falling into the sea of lies. .. How can you cry at a scarlet sunset? ... It is just your inner blood, the one that calls to your ancestors and does not belong to you .... Remember that tears are fragments of moments of your life

## *Non-objective, continued*

### 3. Ship

Another stroke of the pen, scratching the plane of the wall. The white civilization of the Greeks left, sailed away on ships to return someday, the romantic legend of the Arthurian cycle, death, about love ...

You are too much, not adopting yourself, but I know that love will be like surfing and waves will pass like the tips of teeth and such, a knife and a tower of pavements for someone who is to blame. But who is he? Maybe just someone's brother.

The rhythmic beating of a long-killed calf whose mother died under the knife butcher rings. Anyone can be meat and for others, a cat ... Why do you need to know all this? Be a cattle and forget about everything he saw here. The white maiden waves a wing-hand, slightly screwing up her eyes and smiles with pink lips: "You shouldn't feel sorry for them .. They are all dead for a long time ... And you save them all the time .... Your salvation is not to anyone you need." She speaks without heat and without passion, just a quiet echo of words uttered in meaninglessness. Her speech was carried away by the stream. I stood and hesitated and walked, slightly squeezing the blade under my cloak. I still had to defeat the creatures that were killing people. She remained there in a brain of memory, thin and shining and almost like a Madonna.



## *Non-objective, continued*

### 4. Instead of the end ...

The black stroke of a wing on the white vault of heaven ... So your tears dry up and will turn into beautiful eternally blooming daisies ... As immortality became available to them, the time of time stopped, allowing the new

## *About Irina Novikova*

Irina was born on 11.12.1987 in Minsk. She graduated from the State Academy of Slavic Cultures with a degree in art and the Moscow Humanitarian and Technical Academy with a degree in design.

*Last Week by Aurora Abzug*



## *About Aurora Abzug*

Aurora Abzug received her BA in Studio Art from Bard College, and additional training in academic painting from The Ridgewood Art Institute. She has exhibited at such venues as The Salmagundi Club, New York, NY; San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA; New York Academy of Art, New York, NY; Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL; Annmarie Sculpture Garden & Arts Center, Solomons, MD; among many others. She is a 2019 AXA Art Prize Finalist, and a 2015 American Artists Professional League Future Art Master. She lives and works in Philadelphia, PA.



*Everything Moves by Riel Sherbatov*



## *Everything Moves by Riel Sherbatov*

Every color in the sky moves,  
even if you can't see it right away

I move as I walk to the convenience store;  
signals pass through lines, traffic lights change

I look through the aisles for a coffee  
as moving cars drive out into the distance,  
closer to borders that have moved, too

I wonder if there is ever a part of me  
that stands perfectly still?

## *Summer Fling by Grace Sinkins*

I remember all those early july nights  
The ones where you would throw rocks at my window begging  
me to sneak out with you  
We would watch the stars as you would play me songs you  
wrote on your acoustic guitar  
I would laugh at your singing voice but you didn't care  
Your honey eyes were easy to drown in  
There's no disease as contagious as your smile  
From the moment I met you weeks before at some stupid party  
Your enchanted charm was all I could think about  
I knew I took up pieces of your mind too  
You would text me telling me you missed me at least twice an  
hour  
I was like medicine to you  
I healed your wounds  
You were like oxygen to me  
I needed you to stay alive  
That's the difference between you and I  
To you I was a distraction from the pain  
But you were my lifeline  
Who would I be without you  
Those nights turned into days which turned into weeks  
I gave you my soul all wrapped in a bouquet  
You took it carefully and poured it into your songs  
You told me your secrets  
Which I guarded like gold



You begged me to not tell the world about us  
I reluctantly agreed  
No one has to know about us until school starts  
The excitement of the mystery was overshadowed by my  
worrying insecurity  
If I'm his muse than he would want to show me off  
Not shove me off and only appreciate me when no one else is  
around  
Your more than everything to me  
So why am I not enough  
The summer soon ended and we broke it off  
Did all those songs and rocks and secrets mean nothing  
Was I just a punchline to tell your friends what you did over the  
summer  
I miss what we had  
I'm better off without you now  
I was your medicine  
But you are no longer sick  
You were my oxygen  
Now the world is tight on my lungs

## *About Grace Sinkins*

Grace Sinkins is a high school sophomore from Virginia USA. She has been writing poetry since she was eight and her biggest writing inspirations are Phoebe Bridgers, Taylor Swift and Emily Dickinson. In her free time she does theatre and tennis.

## *Summer Boulevard by Anonymous*

Maia strolled down the boulevard. It had been too long since she could dream of hopping, even over the hopscotch tiles, like a child. There were no hopscotch tiles on this particular boulevard, but Maia played with the edges of the shadows.

Even if anyone was watching, Maia could not be bothered to look back. Today, the pavement, and all the sunlight, could be hers. It was the proper morning of June 1st, which to Maia, signaled the start of Summer. Excited holiday-goers and caffeinated workers alike milled about her. Maia did not feel as if she belonged to this humming crowd. Instead, she felt a refreshing solace.

At dawn, Maia had packed a bag with just three changes of clothing and some cash. She took the first flight out of her hometown, a cement jungle. She checked into a hotel in a coastal city. Maia was not a fugitive from law enforcement, but a fugitive from demands. That plane spirited her away from her gossiping friends and perfectionist parents, who necessitated a shiny, flawless version of Maia. Sixteen years of acting was over for Maia. Maia understood how the dead whispered souls of her school felt now, crushed by the weight of their own achievements.

The air in Maia's hometown was desiccated and arid. Here, even with the stifling summer heat, a sea breeze washed over Maia, carrying her like the floating hibiscus petals. Maia could see herself waitressing in the cafes, far away from the indifferent, practical city she had been trapped in.

In the boulevard, Maia was recklessly free, for as long as the horizon wore on in her youth.

# *Frosted Animal Crackers and Ice Skating Rinks*

## *by Mimi Flood*

She has a name that's like /frosted animal crackers/ and ice skating rinks. It sounds so eternal until you come down to your own life. She wraps her finger around a loose string from her skirt. Lock her thighs together. And a hundred boys would split their hands to touch her hips. A perfect Barbie doll with blonde hair. Where strands become loose like flower petals. In the dark /she twists herself and spits into her palms/ peels herself everywhere.

## *Two Angels In Misty Woods by Mimi Flood*

Two angels in misty woods / My whole body grew a wave of  
goosebumps when you touched me / I could feel your scared  
heart with wings beating / as my red nail polish smears on your  
back / I could hear the cars driving fast on the highway /  
mimicking my breath/ your knuckles in my thigh / the bark of the  
tree grew a palette of bright colorful flowers.

## *About Mimi Flood*

Mimi Flood has been published in The Underground Literary Journal, Electric Cereal, Dark Thirty Poetry Publishing, The Graveyard zine, Scar Tissue Magazine, and Gypsophila. You can find her on Instagram Marigold\_Jesus and Tumblr

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Thank you for reading!

meditating cat zine.