



ISSUE - 4

AUTUMN - 2022



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Special thanks to Sophia Lai for designing this issue's front and back covers, and the Fall Cats.

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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.

Find Sophia on Instagram at [@kumo.yoko](#)

Hope You Don't Fall by Liath Murdoff



Doin' Time by Liath Murdiff



Not The Prettiest by Liath Murdiff



SHE'S NOT
THE PRETTIEST
BUT SHE'S,
GOT A GREAT
PERSONALITY

About Liath Murdiff

Líath Murdiff is a Fine Art Paint student in the National College of Art and Design based in Dublin, Ireland. Although she is a fine artist, Murdiff loves to bring her ideas and paintings into a graphic and digital light. Her work typically starts from found ephemeral objects and imagery and organically flows into themes such as childhood and cartoons with satire and whimsical ideations. Her current work focuses on coincidences in day to day life and using muscle memory to create movements that shape the works naturally. Murdiff has a fascination with bright and fluorescent colours which are compulsively included in all recent works. She also runs a growing art Instagram page and has recently opened her own Etsy store where she sells hand-drawn tote bags and prints.

Find her on Instagram at [@_ketchupontoast](#)

Freshwater Wash by Jo Curtain

Freshwater Wash photo collage depicts Picola Silo overlaying images of Barmah National Park.

Picola is a small town in northern Victoria, Australia. Picola Silo was painted by Jimmy D'Vate, depicting a Superb Parrot on a backdrop of the Barmah National Park.

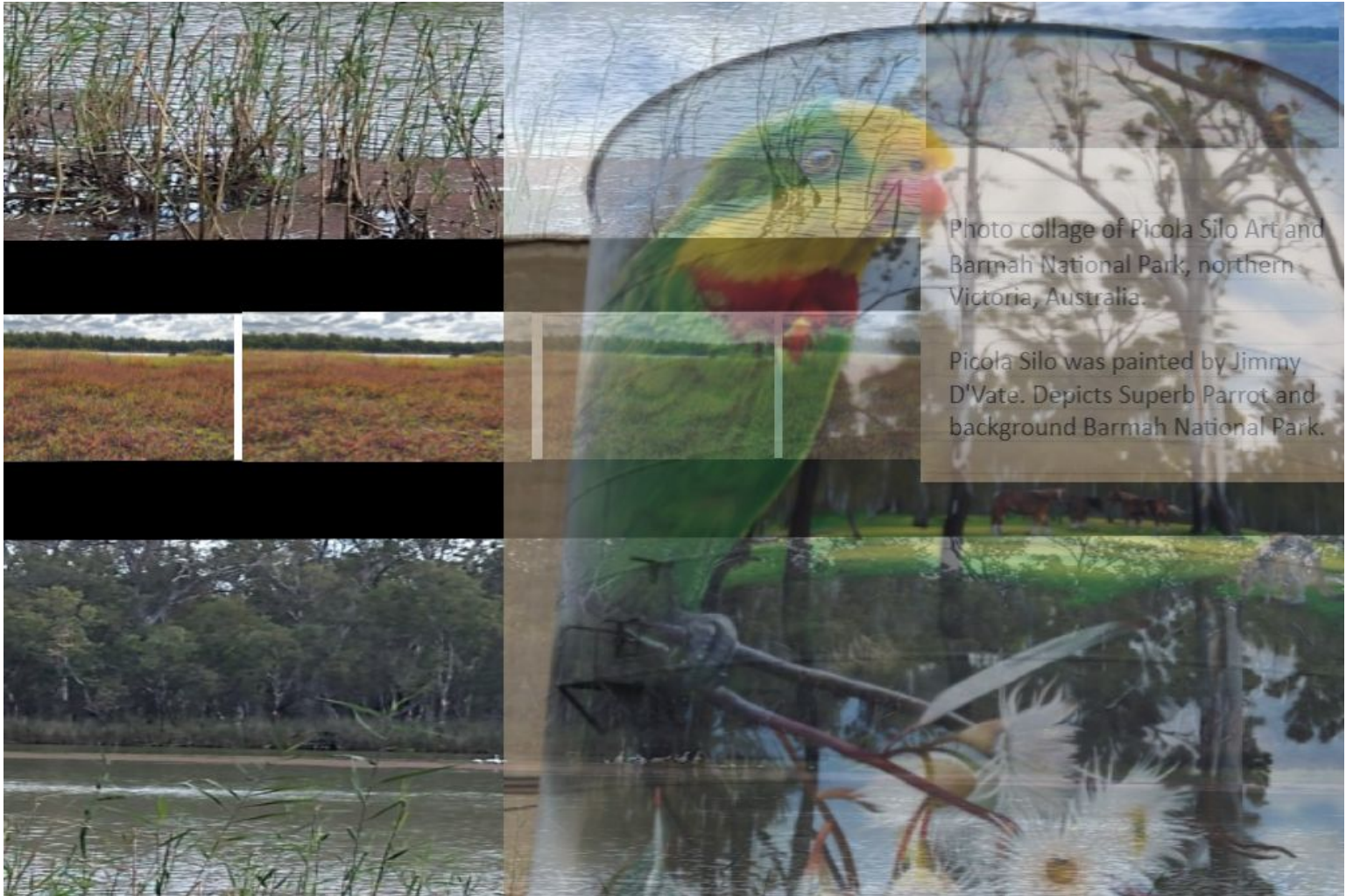


Photo collage of Picola Silo Art and Barmah National Park, northern Victoria, Australia.

Picola Silo was painted by Jimmy D'Vate. Depicts Superb Parrot and background Barmah National Park.

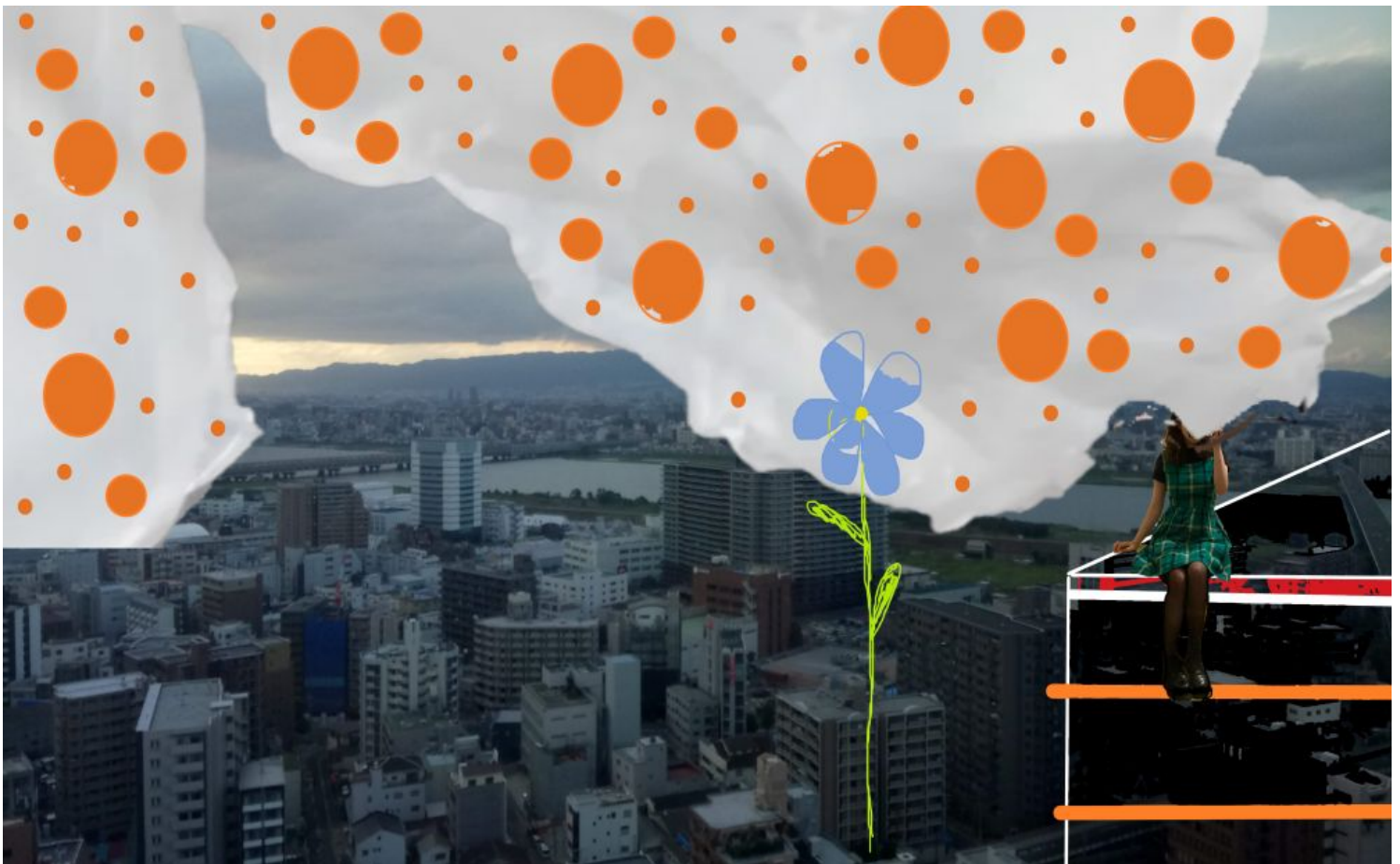
But Alice Takes Her Breath On The Precipice

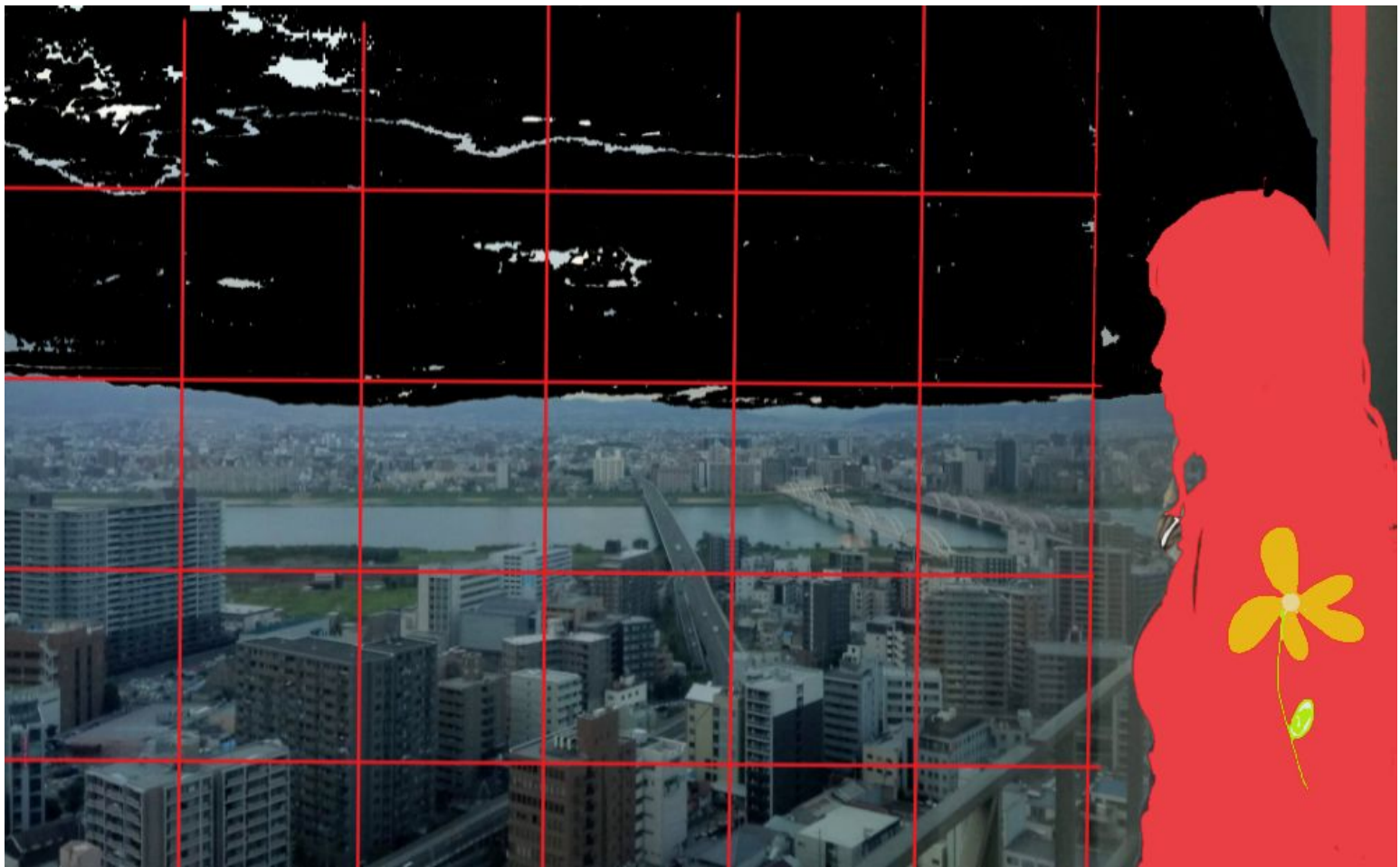
by Jo Curtain

I can't find the words to describe it. The more I try, the more my voice escapes me. My dad used to say I could talk underwater, but these days, words get stuck in the back of my throat.

I seek out solitude in a city of millions to escape the excruciating shame, a growing awareness of insignificance—what did it really mean? I am not the first to feel a sense of hopeless insignificance, but it scares me to think that my body and I mean nothing.

I take my breath on the precipice, the space between what I desire and reality.





About Jo Curtain

Jo Curtain (she/her) is a poet and short-story writer. She is the editor of Anomaly Street: poetry with a difference. A Geelong Writers publication. Find her work in Geelong Writers anthologies, Blue Daisies Journal, Sour Cherry Mag, Pocket Baby Zine, Coffee House Writers & elsewhere.

Covered by Keely Mclavin



Endless by Keely Mcclavin



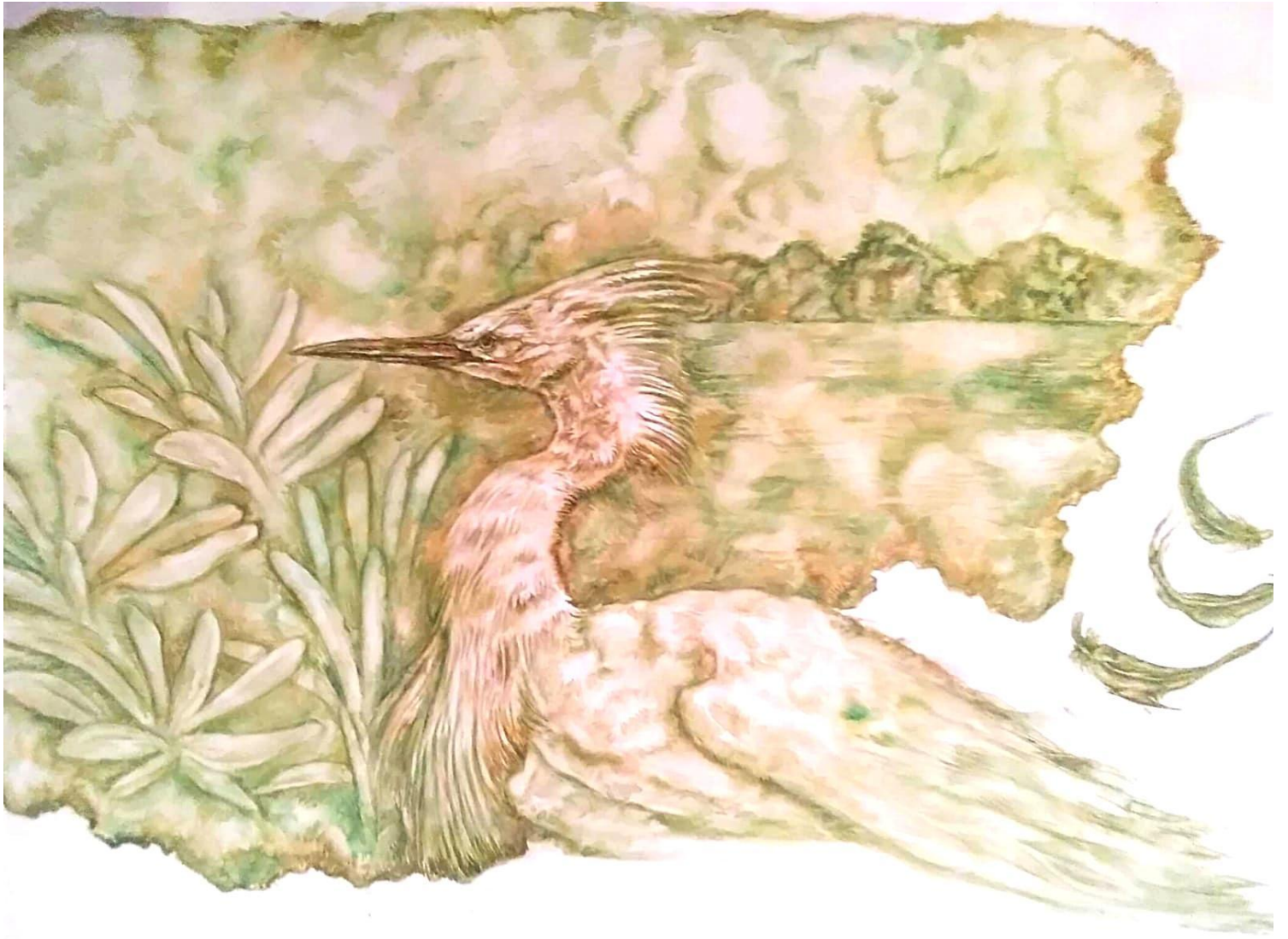
About Keely Mclavin

Keely Mclavin is an Irish based multidisciplinary artist who works primarily with drawing and text. Her practice explores themes of mental health specifically dealing with the de-stigmatization of the mental illness borderline personality disorder (BPD), womanhood, the body, feminist critique, sexuality, gender and identity. The artworks created are an attempt at creating mutual empathy amongst viewers. Works shown in this practice are often autobiographical showcasing the artists emotional intimacies and experiences.

On The River Bank by Irina Novikova



Egret by Irina Novikova



Trees Grow Through Us by Irina Novikova



About Irina Novikova

Hello! My name is Irina Novikova. I am an artist, graphic artist, illustrator. Drawing began to interest me from an early age, the first subjects for me were Fantastic birds and animals. By my first education I am an art critic (State Academy of Slavic Cultures), by my second I am a graphic designer (MGTA). The main techniques that I use are watercolor, ink, gouache, acrylic. I love experimenting and mixing different materials. I draw a lot on environmental topics. The first big series that I drew is the "Red Book" dedicated to rare and endangered species of animals and birds.

searching by Vesper North

i.

staring into the nebula of a

dead eyed god

you search for the souls so carelessly tossed—

the ones scarified for a deity

to which you have no fealty

how else will you find love but in a lost cause?

swimming towards stars—past a pasture of dust

seeking to escape the

darkness inside

oh—

how you'd hide under the likes of eros and aphrodite

hoping to find rapture in a bedroom

(as much as you've had your fill you

find yourself

emptier still...)

ii.

what can be done for a creature so undone—

longing for respite in the arms of the divine

maybe—

just maybe

you'll be more than our kind.

let the forest gin by Vesper North

carved by infinity
into a house of scars—

the endless days past in
waves delivering

blow after blow

until the canvas of his frame
turned violet
and blue

he stands an animated corpse
staring 'twixt the vines,
longing for the honey of
levity, desperate to know beauty

he wonders how to reach that
which is golden: the finest
flower of ecstasy, bubbling, bursting...
springtime made flesh

sweet trees drip silky nectar
onto the forest floor
*how wasted it is, he thinks,
lest it fall between lips.*

he watches as they
dip their head in the
morning hour, shedding
tears to feed the grass

[sigh]

i'm thirsting for more, they say

*give me a sip, he asks
and never let me go.*

please, let me go.

untitled. by Vesper North

what lingers
in the silver silence as
you lull your eyes to sleep?
what sprites come
to spite your ticket to
dreamland?
have you been bad?
what demons
ward off the gods
to keep you from
your rosey reverie?
where you're free
to feel as you please—
what ease
it must bring you to know
you are not alone
but alas
here you lie—
awake
what will it take?
only you can answer that.
are you deserving of peace
or have you squandered the chance?

pomegranate jam by Vesper North

the light creeps under the door — just slivers
of illumination — makes me
shiver — how lovely it is
in these lavender hours.
the cadences of longing
following the interminable
humming of a broken heart.

About Vesper North

Vesper North is a writer (among other things) who enjoys creating things, cats, and Irish good-byes. Their work has been featured in "Ouroboros Magazine."

house by Hannah Levin

they never tell you about the part where your heart has already fallen

before you realize the love was poison. you don't realize until you're already drowning that the ruthless words have punctured holes, making it impossible to float. but you float anyway. might as well try, the poison is already in your veins. the screams come and you close your eyes and you're in the clouds. you're only dreaming but it feels like you're there. you're in the atmosphere. the mist is warm. until the dust flying off the chipped paint on the walls begins to suffocate you and you suddenly remember to flail, try to stay afloat. the water is thick like molasses. the words are heavy. you can almost feel your chest collapse in on itself. the structure can't last forever. you can decorate a house but the floorboards won't handle the weight of an unstable heart. you can paint lust across the walls but if the beams are rusted the stress will force it to crumble in on itself. even the most beautiful home will never sustain the burden of a poisoned foundation.

About Hannah Levin

Hannah Levin (she/her/hers) is a freelance artist who creates in many different forms including painting, sculpture, jewelry, and poetry. She recently graduated with a degree in Expressive Arts Therapy and currently lives in Boston, Massachusetts.

Handsome Boy by Lyndsie Conklin

He balls at our feet

just to stir in his sleep.

Canines peek in snarls

only the sweetest dreams

and a belly exposed position

could uniquely provide.

His paws, pink on the toes

gifted with various sizes

of the whitest socks,

awkwardly bend and reach

finding comfort for his nap.

His ginger and white patterns

give him a mustache

and a stark lapel

contrasting the flames

of his limber spine.

When excitedly awake,
he speaks in a singular tongue
only changing the inflection
to tell us of his needs.

Often, it is just to hear
himself echo and roar
before he nestles back
into afternoon sunbeams.

His left ear is docked
and his tail mangled
from traumas before our time.

Yet these distinctive defects
create his dapper demeanor;
he is our handsome boy,
our friend through many lives.

Never Alone by Lyndsie Conklin

Urgency and company
requires the door to close,
lock it, turn on the fan,
maybe the shower. Intruding
curiosity bangs on the door,
and bellowing criticism
for lack of inclusion. Yowling
and whining soon begin,
because how could you
be without? Be within without?
So you break away and unlock
the door and extend
an apprehensive invitation.
The begging fiend intrudes
slowly and after a few
coaxing reassurances.

You repeat your routine,
lock the door, turn on the fan.
Your guest bumps against
the bend of your knees
and chimes with a content buzz
because how could you not
be without? Be anywhere without?
Sounds from beyond
the closure of privacy,
begin to charm and entice
with invisible sounds social
interaction: pets and adornments.
Back to the door banging,
And bellows for exclusion,
your critic withdraws
their initial questionable retort.

You cannot react

you gave a without. Disagreements

rise in cadence, echoing

in chanted repetition.

You finally can give freedom,

and the persistent protester

lingers behind, soon running

to the next infraction, a meal

not being immediately accessible.

You comply to the demands

because love and an existence

without, without this creature,

would feel so alone.

She Forgot The Sugar by Lyndsie Conklin

We had sliced it up,
gave every overstuffed eater
a slice, covered in Cool Whip
(never enough Cool Whip).

But something was off.

The dessert had grayed,
speckled with clove browns.

We slightly questioned
but she swore up and down
that she did everything correctly.

We nibbled believing her lines,
appreciating her joy.

But the taste was lacking,
remarkably bland, and wrong.

We smiled, hiding our discomfort.

She smarted up to our act
and forked the panned middle,
disregarding the previous cuts.

Instantaneous reactions
sour her face as she shouted:

“Oh! Shit!”

We rolled in laughter,
joyously filling the kitchen.

We forgave her blunder
knowing her attempt mattered
(she made it with love).

While we went without
a tradition of pumpkin pie,
we have now made a custom
of reminding grandma
of when she forgot to add sugar.

Some Other Place, Some Other Time

by Lyndsie Conklin

Some other place

because this one wasn't ours.

Transports of our wishes

fell upon the deaf ears

of deities, perhaps due

to our vigorous misbelief

that somehow our fates

could be suddenly altered.

Because other worldly necessities

kept us away. Maybe needs

always eclipse wants

or meticulous outlines

of something that could never...

Yet we still share dreams,

as if it will manifest reality,

uniquely calcify onto solitude.

As if magical happenstance,
could recur, repeat, and run
in defiance of destiny,
working against the grain
of our own priorities, forgetting
just for a moment,
because all we want is one place
to be our own. Momentarily within
some other time.

About Lyndsie Conklin

Lyndsie Conklin (she/her) is a Montanan transplanted to Colorado, living with her husband and cat, Beans. She enjoys getting outside, being a cat mom, breakfast foods, Diet Coke, and (of course) writing poetry and erotic fiction. Lyndsie attempts to find romance, beauty, and darkness hidden within the little things while highlighting these little, gross beauties within complex, current topics, such as mental health and LGBTQ+ and women's issues. Lyndsie holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from Western Colorado University and a Masters of Education in Higher Education Administration from Post University. Some of her work has been featured in Soupcan Magazine, The Sleeve Magazine, and Dreamer by Night Magazine.

Pudge by Leanne Su



Pudge by Leanne Su



About Leanne Su

Leanne Su is a second-generation Chinese American woman from Seattle, WA. She is currently studying as a Ph.D. candidate in aerospace engineering at the University of Michigan, researching high-power electric propulsion. When she's not breaking or fixing thrusters, she's usually embroidering, swimming, or taking cursed pictures of her cat Pudge.

My Cat, My God by Bobby Parrott

Felined asylums to unwind, each time

I inhale from my helmet of beetles.

Wakened in the middle of a busy street,

I play broken and stupid. Which works.

But this facade unsyncs the clocks

in my in-house mouser app. Let simple

mercy slow-blink the vicious. Grow old

with me, I implore my cat, in secret hopes

for more than that, bite-urge ally, sulky

in soft fur, retracted claws, velvet toes.

She mmrrows me her tilted eye, energizes

sub-aurally her latest poem—

As omens flow my soul to keep,
I swerve the car and burn the heap;
your mansions sway up on a hill
expanding heartbeats flay the kill.

In barely audible footsteps my thoughts
purr her soft, pebbly drone. And when she licks
my eyes, the gravelly violence softens her

scratch into a prayer. We tumble into a snarl
furry with the silent hiss from a whisper.

She sets my clock to never, runs it down to

the root rising behind her ribcaged ravens.

All of the shadows in this church, my kibbled
proposal on knees, almost of cathedrals.

Our Favorite Aliens, Leaving? by Bobby Parrott

With it's complicated eyes, the Bumblebee
charges air like a robotic micro-probe

in from Alpha-Centauri. Landing-gear legs
dangle willy-nilly before it like grapplers
clenching salvage, though coated in pollen,
thick lemony dust born of a plant's urge

for togetherness. Facets of the bee's ocular
google video thousands of images, each
wired to discrete fore-brain monitor hubs
running in parallel to enable lightning
agility in warm summer air. And what's more,
bees don't fly like other insectoid beings—

Their tiny wings could never push enough
atmosphere. Rather, their vibratory buzz
oscillates a frequency to resonate with Earth's
gravitational field, a buzzing yogi's levitation

inside the planetary flux. From where this
capability? Did Yeats know in his bee-loud glade
that beez-z-z were extraterrestrial? In my own
stagger of gravitational privilege, I'm pulled into
the miniature earth-devouring cat mind
their home planet Z-Z-z-z-Zebron sent along

to empower these essential creatures' draw
on Earth's televised self, complete with a plan
to decolonize us, project an event horizon
we could never have expected, our wave-form
future collapsed to a non-swarm lethality.

About Bobby Parrott

Bobby Parrott has an MFA in Creative Writing from Southern Illinois University. His poems appear or are forthcoming in RHINO, Rumble Fish Quarterly, Atticus Review, The Hopper, Rabid Oak, Tilted House, and elsewhere. Immersed in a forest-spun jacket of toy dirigibles, this queer writer dreams himself out of formlessness in the chartreuse meditation capsule known as Fort Collins, Colorado ****slow-blink****.

Sufferance Of A Half Lover by Ruchi Acharya

The half-lover dawns
my *crown shyness**
Evening remains hoarse
 and love in blindness
Weighing my unclaimed heart,
 he's still in my veins
How to unshackle my free will
 heaped from his pain?

I want a sweet escape
in the comets' night
Float among the clouds
 and jive more in my life
mouth to mouth, hugged in his breath
 I can't unwrap my emotions
My love letter has been penned
the seal can't be broken.

His magical touch
 evanescence
 to my skin and soul
Heavy breaths and
 slow movements
 are taking its toll
 settling the dust
over bitterness and betrayals
I feel rendered in his arms.
Oh! The way he cradles.

Must I leave him
and be a zillion time
more exasperated
Must I stay and wait
for this luscious dream
to get saturated.

About Ruchi Acharya

Ruchi Acharya is the founder of Wingless Dreamer publisher. She is an Oxford University summer graduate in English Literature. She has been a contributor to multiple writing platforms such as The Pangolin Review, Borderless journal, Overachiever magazine, Rigorous Magazine, Detester magazine, Muddy river poetry review, Loose Tooth Magazine, Rhodora, Mulberry Literary, Seaglass Literary, Flare journal, Chasing shadows, Analogies and Allegories, and Maythorn among 50 others. As of 2022, she resides in Chennai, India enjoying the coconut water, palm trees, sandy beaches and sunkisses.

"All worries are less with wine" - Ruchi Acharya, Wingless Dreamer Founder

End Of The School Year by Grace Sinkins

It's strange how one could sit next to someone the entire year

And not know anything about their way of life...

...who they love...

...who they want to be...

...who they turn to when life gets tough...

I wonder what they think of me

Or if they even think of me

It's hard to accept that we are all equally insignificant in the story of this school

All of us are stuck in the background but convinced it's our movie

When we graduate we will be forgotten

Briefly mourned by teachers who will then form an attachment to the next class of students

And then we beg to keep in touch with people we have no desire to see again

My friends are the exception

I learned my knowledge for life from them

They make the messy melodramatics seem worth it

The late night bad decisions

That should call for self loathing

The girls and boys who claimed they loved us

When what they really wanted was the feeling of validation in
romance

It's compelling yet disappointing

To think that this will all slip away

We will just be a cautionary story to tell our kids

About how to have fun without making mistakes

We will leave this godforsaken town

Move on with our lives

Work a nine to five and realize the self hatred only grows
stronger

Sooner rather than later

We will fade away

And be a pretty picture on a yearbook page

About Grace Sinkins

Grace Sinkins is a high school poet from Virginia. Grace has been writing poetry ever since she learned that Taylor Swift writes her own songs. Grace mainly writes love poems or poems regarding that hardships of being a teenager. Grace does theatre, skateboards and plays the drums in her free time. Grace's poems have been published in the graveyard zine and the Archive Of Prospects. Grace hopes you remember to drink enough water today.

*Nonnet By A Lonely Drunk Man by Saptarshi
Bhowmick*

Stored into small glasses of rainbow

coloured monotony - orange,

yellow, red, indigo, blue,

violet, green lit up

like fluorescent lamps

in my drunk life.

Where cloistered

mind lacks

life.

First Love by Saptarshi Bhowmick

Like the moisture in the air,
all gathered up,
soliciting the ptygmatic emotions that
exhilarates from a naïve heart.

A bouquet of roses, a solitary lunch-break,
the sound of water in the basin,
and a day's toil of reluctance
all combined, found itself into a microscopic world.

The world that was not foreign to Hades
and Persephone from the ancient times.

I found myself in it:

Though lost in the euphoric ambience,
a minute past like a second and
an hour like a minute
as I stare through the rhizomatic pupil
of my first love.

But she, indifferent to my notorious yearning,
remained glued to her phatic conversations.

And thus, a spark,

evaporated before even finding a lath,

with no bells tintinnabulating the chime of love.

Badminton Strings by Saptarshi Bhowmick

I once learnt to set up strings.

The winter in our town was celebrated with

Badminton games. It was not hard,

nor too easy to settle like a nest.

One thin piece, separated by modules

counterfeits the exact replica of a net stockings.

With each liver pulled in motion, it is melancholic to astray

the linear shifting of a thread.

Like how a needle stitch, through the binary of

an arbitrary hole,

the string goes in with rhythmic gesture:

it sings and fills the gap of the round.

I saw them, executing the finishing touch

by a tap of a heavy finger,

and suddenly one hears the tintinnabulation

of A ring. Same as those bell jars

That stayed in the mechanic's backyard,

with no purpose they soaked the sunlight.

About Saptarshi Bhowmick

Curating the solid imageries taken from real-life experiences, Saptarshi Bhowmick makes his sanctuary of sublime poems. Each of them toils to tell you a different story, but only a few try actually to comprehend it. And the little praises he collects fuel him further to write one. Aside from being famous for his bilingual poems, Saptarshi got published in many International Magazines, including The Rainbow Poems, Tofu Ink Art Press, The Antonym, Wingless Dreamers, Sparked Literary Magazine, MOIDA, The Compass Magazine, SeaGlass Lit, Aster Lit, Firefly_Archives, The Graveyard Zine, The Dried Review, Meadow Mouse. (He also featured two flash fictions in Overtly Lit, and he is really proud of it)

A Dead Boy by Cherry Wong

‘ATTACK!’ The lieutenant yelled.

I leaped over the top, a trench maneuver I had perfected in the past months.

Along with my French comrades, I rolled down onto the gravel field of No Man’s Land and laid flat on the ground. I remained static for a second, but the world enveloped around me, refusing to remain silent, vibrating with the energy of war. Within seconds the German sniper took his move, and he fired, so ruthlessly with such an atrocious expression that I wished I could have ripped him into halves. A French squad in proximity toppled down, and I shook my head in utmost pity as their lifeless corpses shriveled up against each other, pools of scarlet milk seeping out from their threadbare uniforms, their pale baby eyes staring at the blue-hued sky with a crestfallen dim. But I had to keep going.

I inched forward as balmy rays of sunlight radiated onto the battlefield. A soft breeze tickled my blonde hair. Yet the wind was brewing, it was fizzling in excitement – I got up and sprinted, risking a clean fatal shot by the sniper for I knew what was coming next would be worse –

A shrilling screech rang out behind me and I gasped in horror as a French soldier got picked up by the shock waves of the bomb. His arms flailed as he sailed across the air like a piglet in the ocean before landing in a distorted hump beside a mountain of corpses, with his nose shining red, his limbs twisted at horribly unnatural angles that hurt to watch, and his eyes closed.

I fumbled for my rifle from my haversack. Attacking was the only way of survival on this callous piece of land designed to kill all it held. I removed the cover off its muzzle and grasped it firmly, my eyes searching over the horizon for the iron crosses of the Germans.

It occurred so quickly.

The German infantry sprang out from their hiding places – a line of ragdolls – and surged towards us like a herd of killer bees, their bloodshot eyes filled with murder, glowing under the shadows of their helmets. They were not like us, I always told myself. They were more blatant, and they were eager to spill our blood. They were not soldiers. They were soulless monsters, tramping the earth like machines, with no guilt or empathy. And therefore I had every right to kill them.

May God bless me.

They charged, their firearms in position, their barrels pointing right at our faces. They charged, with murderous grins, as they were so confident they would win. They charged, gunfire flying, ammo loaded, inches from me.

And I fired, lethal rifle as my companion, as I rose above all in a state of glory so fitting of a soldier, and hit every single target – the front line of Germans fell, their heads all blown off, rolling to my feet, sticky and slimed with gross, pungent blood. Their supportless, decapitated bodies with sagging arms fell to the ground in sounds of thumps. My French comrades roared in approval of my wee victory, and they too raced forward on their feet, no longer crawling, but marching towards the sniper cowering behind his ground-based artillery. But as I followed in jogs, slapping another set of bullets into my firearm with my gritty hands, I caught a glimpse of one of the German soldiers I had shot down. He had curly, chestnut hair and a pair of open emerald eyes, with such small palms and skinny limbs.

He was no more than a dead boy.

would you like peace? i would, at least
by Cherry Wong

Part I: Proposing a Christmas violation

Infoslide: You are a Western liberal democracy in a four-year long brutal and bloody war of attrition against an imperialistic dictatorship. Every Christmas, there is a football match between the two sides and a ceasefire. Attending the match are high ranking political and military persons of both sides (Achte Minute, 2020).

Motion: THW violate the ceasefire and kill the leaders (Achte Minute, 2020).

Panel, as Prime Minister I will first go over the framework and definitions of this debate before moving on to the actual argumentation. On Opening Government, this House represents a Western liberal democracy engaged in a four-year-long brutal and bloody war of attrition against an imperialistic dictatorship. We define Western Liberal Democracy as a political system that believes in freedom, equality, and liberalism, while the imperialistic dictatorship in question is the country suppressing the democracy, having used force to acquire control and power over important officials who have recognizable power in the latter.

Given the situation that every Christmas there is a ceasefire, defined as an agreement to stop fighting to allow discussions about peace, in the form of a football match, with high ranking political and military personnel such as lieutenants, commanders, chief ministers, and chancellors from both sides attending, this House would violate the ceasefire and kill the leaders. The key question in this debate is whether or not to violate the ceasefire, and if Opening Government can prove to you beyond reasonable doubt that violating the ceasefire will do more good than harm then this House wins this debate.

Moving on to my substantive material, I will first explain why the violation can effectively end the war. I will then move on to the unnecessary nature of the ceasefire. My Deputy Prime Minister will further elaborate on the negative impacts of not ending the ceasefire.

To begin with, violating the ceasefire can effectively accelerate the pace of the war and potentially lead to the ending of the war, something that is most desired. Indisputably, the ceasefire violation will result in escalated conflict. As the Western liberal democrats, we will wait until the football match is going well and smooth, with a peaceable atmosphere in place and everyone enjoying themselves. Then, we will take action to ruin the concord and wreak havoc. There are two potential tactics we may take.

would you like peace? i would, at least

by Cherry Wong

We can either stamp out onto the field and assault the army of the imperialistic dictatorship without warning. The army will react to our surprise attack quickly through violence, and our attack will either succeed or fail. Or, we can attempt to assassinate the enemy leaders, who are the bearers of all the concentrated power in the enemy's military and government. If we succeed, the enemy will be leaderless and overwhelmed. Their army will fall into chaos and confusion, and our democratic army can seize the opportunity to launch our attack on them. If we fail, our act of assassination will trigger an aggressive response from the enemy's army without question. Of course, the best scenario is to end on a high note – that is, to win the war by violating the ceasefire. Whereas even if the violation ends in failure and we lose the war, we still benefit to a great degree as the war will end. Note that the war has already dragged on for four years, and our side has been suffering from grave casualties, heavy military expenditure, and drainage of national resources ever since the war began. With the burdening costs of war, there is no reason to allow it to drag on for a fifth year. Therefore, based on the goal of ending the war as soon as possible, it is only reasonable that we violate the ceasefire.

Secondly, the ceasefire is unnecessary. Ceasefires are established to allow peace negotiations. Yet if the Christmas ceasefires in this war had been effective, the war would have ended four years ago when the first ceasefire was held.

Yet ceasefires have been held annually for three consecutive years, and the two sides are still engaged in warfare up to this date. This proves that the past ceasefires were nothing more than temporary festive luxuries for the soldiers trapped in this whirlpool of chaos and bloodshed. They created charming illusions for the soldiers, that the war had ended, that peace had returned, and that the fighting was over. But right after the end of the ceasefires, the soldiers were roused from their dazy states, only to realize the war had not ended and they were forced to return to the world of combat and blood again. This year's ceasefire will be no different. It will provide nothing more than false hope for the soldiers. It will meddle with their mentalities and deceive them. It will harm the soldiers on the inside. Not to mention in the aftermath of the ceasefire, the soldiers will be forced to go against their morale and shoot the very same people who played football with them not long before. The guilt that comes with such will tear them apart and torture them within. The initial purpose of the ceasefire to bring peace is completely defeated for it does nothing more than prolong the war and wound the soldiers mentally. Hence, we can conclude that the ceasefire is pointless. By violating the ceasefire and ending the war quicker, we see a much more ideal scenario: the soldiers can play football in their respective homelands with no belated fighting to worry about.

In conclusion, the violation of the ceasefire can bring about an accelerated ending of the war, which is crucial to the restoration of peace and stability on both sides. The ceasefire itself also has no purpose and can be seen as unnecessary. For the reasons mentioned, this House is proud to propose.

Part II: That's humanity, and that's Christmas

24th December 1914

I was over the top.

One by one, we leaped out of our trenches – tentatively, hesitantly, yet indeed...

It was happening.

Along with my English comrades, I rolled down onto the gravel field of No Man's Land and laid flat on the ground. I remained static for a second, but the world enveloped me, refusing to remain silent, vibrating with a whirl of energy I had never sensed before.

Our squads moved forward, as the men from the other side advanced towards us little by little. They were not like us, I had always told myself. They were blatant, and they were eager to spill our blood. They were not soldiers the way we were, as we fought simply to uphold the honorable cause of defending our country.

They were soulless monsters, tramping the earth like machines, with no guilt or sympathy. And therefore I had every right to kill them.

But now I saw the Germans soldiers – the youth, the young. Kicking at pebbles along the way, scratching at their tufts of hair, surging forward in almost what seemed like... excitement. They looked ecstatic. I could feel the bliss blooming from them and see the sunlight smiles on their faces from afar. They had emotions, just like us. Without their usual pointy helmets and murky viridescent jackets, they looked every bit like us. We were humans all the same. The monstrous beasts I had been trying to kill a day ago were gone.

Yet they could be acting. The evils of their sins and souls concealed deep beneath their friendly faces. Their rifles and firearms hid behind their backs, waiting to blow our heads off. Using the ceasefire as an attempt to start a massacre. We would be foolish to fall for their trap.

All of a sudden, a cheer erupted across the field. Both our sniper and that of the Germans were clambering down onto the ragged piece of No Man's Land, unarmed. A soft breeze blew past our heads. The wind brewed, fizzling with a hint of thrill. We all wrapped our coats around ourselves more tightly and inched through the snow in huddles, reducing our distance from the opposing side.

At some point, a pair of luminous eyes glimmering blue found mine in recognition. He had curly, chestnut hair and a long nose, small palms, and skinny limbs. A sling was applied to his left arm.

I silently condemned myself for what I had done the day before.

But there was no hatred in the eyes of the boy. Instead, there was blessing.

My raw feelings and muddled thoughts melted into the dirt as the balmy rays of light sliced through the air, warming my throat, dissolving the acrid in its midst.

I was sick and tired of the meaningless war. Let it fade away behind me. No longer did I care about the authenticity of the breathtaking smell of peace placed before me. If I were to die I wanted to die a happy man.

This was our hour.

Our liberation from the atrocities of the world.

Our moment of humanity.

Our state of peace.

A soccer ball was produced as champagne spilled, gleaming in the hearth of Christmas.

About Cherry Wong

Cherry Wong is a 15-year-old high school senior from Hong Kong. She loves writing, and especially novels of the fantasy genre that are layered with unpredictable, twisty plots. Her writings have been published in-school and by the Hong Kong Young Writers Awards. Apart from writing, she also has a great passion for law and loves mock trial and mooting. She aspires to become both a renowned author and an outstanding lawyer when she grows up.

Oo is that a cat we see??



??

@kumo_yoko

I bet you thought I was a pumpkin at first heheh! Now let us go eat some real pumpkin soup hmph



Sigh, I gotta find a bigger maple leaf to hide underneath next time...Want to play another round?





A Memory Of Loveliness by Marc Issac Potter

What is the memory of some imagined loveliness?
Flowers, certainly - and roses most assuredly - are lovely.

The chickadees are slowly walking, like tiny chicken hens, strutting, dancing through the blossoming dandelions ... These calm chickadees are quite lovely. And, I would say, that my sister Evangeline, in her way, was lovely.

My sister Evangeline - that was her formal name - was a tall thin girl, all of 13 and a half years. No degree of happiness came to her face, because even at 13 Evangeline was a determined and accomplished girl. Rarely, when a smile would light her face, I knew what loveliness was; I could see that Mom was proud of Evy, not just because she was good at grooming the hogs for 4H, or her sewing, or her horse hiding abilities - no I think Mom loved her because she was a girl, soon to be a woman, and Mom, you could tell was proud of all 5 of her girls, and women in general; I think Mom felt that women got the short shrift of things, the short end of the stick. She would not say this out loud ... how Evy's voice went up and down and sideways like a piano player that needed tuning or a church choir member, still drunk from Saturday night rabble-rousing.

Mom and Evangeline had a special bond, like Bonnie and Clyde or the Little Rascals on the radio.

The day my sister Evy hung herself on Grandmother's largest Oak Tree, the ants on the middle anthill were, quite mistakenly, busy discussing a baloney sandwich. At the time I knew nothing of what had happened - I would not find out for more than a decade.

... I was trying to explain to the ants that this was not a baloney sandwich - the ham was uptown ham - that the people Mom worked for had given her some uptown Black Forest Ham and them - the ants - ought to damn well appreciate it. I only swore in front of the ants, not in front of the goats, and certainly not near the "banny" rooster - the colorful banty rooster is very quick and will use any excuse to bite me on the heel.

Grandpa came up beside me and said, "Boy let's go in the barn, I need to talk to you." I thought I was getting a horsewhipping, but if so, why did Grandpa not have me pick out a green switch from one of the young cottonwoods that he had planted?

"Son, you know how sometimes when a mare has her foal, she gets sick, and sometimes she even dies, like what happened over at Jenner's last year? You know what I mean?" Billy Jenner is the oldest boy in the Jenner family - well I wish we were best friends, but still, we were pretty close; I could not understand why Grandpa was calling me son - I was his grandson.

Grandpa was acting more gentle than usual, more like Grandma than his usual self, and he kept touching me on the shoulder, which was odd; something that he normally did not do. I figured - certainly somehow - I was in for a whipping - even though this time I did not know what I had done wrong - even though as usual I did not feel I deserved one. I remember thinking: why were the ants having such a nice meal and I am being punished.

Anyway, Grandpa said Evy was going away for a while and no one knew when she would come back. I figured she had gotten knocked up without getting married first and they sent her off to a nunnery or a boarding school, but I was not supposed to know about those kinds of things just yet. And what did that have to do with Jenner's mare dying last spring?

Momma was crying an awful lot during dinner and Dad was his usual quiet self. I was busy putting scraps in my overall's pockets for the ants; our mutt dog Spotty who could smell the scraps whined as usual. Not only was Evy nowhere to be seen, but my cousin Carrie, who lived with us because her stepdad beat her so bad - Carrie was nowhere to be seen either; maybe she had been sent to bed with no supper.

The Melbournes, who lived a good distance along the railroad track ...Mrs. M knocked at the door; she apologized for interrupting supper and I heard Mom whisper "he doesn't know." The two ladies, Mother, and Mrs. M had a good cry out on the porch. Mrs. M seemed to know about Evy going off to the nunnery because she brought two cobblers to mark the occasion - one was blackberry and one strawberry - so Evy going, you see, was kind of paying off in a certain way. At least I thought so at the time.

When we visited Grandma and Grandpa, they always, and I mean always - ate with us ... tonight they were nowhere to be found. "Your Grandpa had to go into town on business," Dad said, even though the sun had set a while ago and nothing in town was open. I was hoping to get back home. I wanted to visit the red ants in the moonlight as I gave them the scraps that I had collected.

.....

Over the years, Carrie and I of course fooled around together, as cousins usually do; I did not go too far with her because I did not want her running off to the nunnery. You would have thought Evangeline would have come back, but she never did; I finally figured out that she probably liked being a nun and I supposed that she gave the baby away.

Carrie got married to a football player and I thought she and Jethro would certainly leave town, but he did not make the team at Jefferson College - so he, Jethro, went to work at the Ford plant just like the rest of us. One day Carrie and I were sitting in her new shiny green 1968 Camaro convertible - that car Wow! And Carrie's legs that day Wow! Yes, even though now she was a married woman, we had stayed quite good friends; we each told the other our troubles. Today Carrie was telling me how she and Jethro had been trying for a baby for almost a year and nothing had happened yet.

“You mean you are not pregnant yet.?”

“Yes dumbbell,” Carrie said, straightening out her skirt, “Yes and I wonder if Jethro will eventually leave me?”

“Well, you can always join the nunnery,” I said, which was something I had frequently said over the years any time it was Carrie's turn to tell me her troubles. Carrie turned in her driver's seat and stared right at me, as though she was going to give it to me with both barrels. “Martin,” she said. She nearly always called me Marty and not Martin.

“Martin,” I have to tell you something. This seemed even more serious than her marital problems.

“What Carrie, what is it?”

“Evy ... Evangeline.”

Yes, “ I said.

“Evangeline never did go to a nunnery or a boarding school or to live with our cousins in Tennessee.”

“Okay so what happened?”

“Marty, she hung herself - she hung herself to death on the big oak tree - you know the one cattywampus of the front porch.”

“The one by the mailbox side of the porch?”

“Yes, Carrie said, I was in my room doing math problems right there after school; I was concentrating like all get out on long division, and then I happened to look up. She was- well - blue and her head was at an unusual angle like an overripe cucumber. And then I realized Oh My God, she is up in the damn tree and she is just hanging there - that means ...”

Carrie took my hand and started playing with each of my fingernails in turn, which was her way of doing things.

“I meant to tell you all these years but your Mom and Dad don’t know that I saw it happen.” The silence pronounced itself; the silence stuck solid.

“Oh my God, Carrie, you have been living with this all this time, by yourself.”

“Yes.”

“Oh my God, Carrie, what can I do?”

I stared at Carrie and somehow - I wanted to think it impossible, but I also, at the same time, stared straight ahead out of the shiny new windshield. I imagined a chickadee on the hood of the car, strutting through a field of dandelions. "Let's go for a drive," Carrie said.

So we did. We took a drive up route 122 through Ashland, Paintsville, and other parts of northeastern Kentucky; it is pretty this time of year.

About Marc Issac Potter

Marc Isaac Potter (they/them) ... is a differently-abled writer living in the SF Bay Area. Marc's interests include blogging by email and Zen. They have been published in Fiery Scribe Review, Feral A Journal of Poetry and Art, Poetic Sun Poetry, and Provenance Journal. Twitter: @marcisaacpotter

Jimmy, A Different Plumber by Marjan Safiyari

Jimmy is a good-tempered plumber. He is different from the other plumbers as he is used to speaking to the kids in a kind way that makes them happy. Sometimes he prefers to get help from children as he loves the way they speak to him.

One day, when Jimmy was taking a nap, his phone started ringing. He picked it up. Mary was on the phone and wanted Jimmy to inspect her kitchen pipes.

Jimmy got in his car and drove to Mary's house. When he arrived, he saw a sad boy near Mary's house with a toy car in his hand. Mary noticed Jimmy from the kitchen's window, and left the kitchen to open the door. When Mary opened the door, Jimmy said a cheery greeting to Mary. When he went to her kitchen to see the problem, he realized that these pipes needed to be replaced. Jimmy informed Mary about the exact problem of the pipes. Jimmy sought help to replace the old pipes with new ones, but this work was hard for Mary.

Jimmy went out of the house and noticed the sad boy. The boy sat on the grass, under the shadow of an apple tree. Jimmy got closer to him and nudged him gently. Jimmy asked for his name but the sad boy was reluctant to answer. Upon seeing this, Jimmy sat on the grass next to him and started speaking for a few minutes, then asked what was wrong. After a minute, the sad boy showed Jimmy the broken tire of his red toy car. Jimmy looked at it and realized that he could fix the tire of the toy car. After Jimmy's great effort, the boy's frown disappeared, replaced with a radiant smile.

Jimmy asked him for some assistance to change the old vessels of Mary's house to new ones. The happy boy gave Jimmy his positive answer through his big smile and shook hands with Jimmy. And a few seconds later, he introduced himself to Jimmy as Tom.

Jimmy was delighted to meet Tom. They walked to the house and started changing all the pipes. When the work finished, Jimmy thanked Tom for his tremendous help. A bit later, Jimmy decided to pay Tom for his great work but Tom rejected Jimmy's offer. Tom looked at Jimmy and told him that Jimmy had already compensated by fixing his toy car and comforting him. After the fiasco, Tom said goodbye to Jimmy and returned home.

Mary was grateful to Jimmy for his wonderful work and Mary insisted on paying. Jimmy had wanted Mary to keep the money for a rainy day. After mulling over the dilemma, Jimmy requested Mary to buy memorable and beautiful gifts for all the children in town. Mary was happy that they could arrive at this wonderful solution. Mary was a bit curious to know why Jimmy made such an interesting decision. Jimmy looked at Mary and told her that he wanted each child in town to be as merry as Tom had been after Jimmy fixed his toy car.

'Children like to have gifts because they are still children. They should have many blessed moments in their childhood, so that they will grow up to be equally noble adults. Since children are our future, it is vital that we support them from young', Jimmy mused.

According to his wishes, Mary went to her room and brought a bottle of coins and gave it to Jimmy. Jimmy appreciated her favor but told Mary that this important work is hers to do as well. Only when all hands are on deck, can change be achieved. Happy tears gathered in Mary's eyes, Mary was so grateful to Jimmy for his profound personality and his love of peace.

Days passed, and everything changed through the thoughts of Jimmy. Jimmy was excited to see that his heartwarming ideas have changed the lives of children and the thoughts of all his people about the future.

Emanuel & Emma, An Unforgettable Night

by Marjan Safiyari

In a maze alley in autumn, a blue cat wearing a red hat stood on his shaking legs beside an abandoned house with a small store. His feet were not shaking because of the weather, but because he was starving. His name was Emanuel and he was a mild-tempered cat. He just liked to smile and be happy.

Emanuel looked everywhere but no one was there to give him even a small piece of food. His stomach started groaning. Emanuel looked at the sunset on the horizon to divert his thoughts from his hunger. A little bird came and sat on his red hat. Emanuel preferred to not hurt the little bird as she seemed to be so tired of flying and just wanted a place to have some rest.

After a few minutes, a black cat with a yellow ribbon on her head passed him with her white bike. In front of her bike was a basket filled with some brushes , a canvas , a small easel and a palette. The yellow ribbon black cat stopped and moved her bike to Emanuel. She got closer to him and praised his look. She greeted Emanuel and introduced herself. Emanuel picked up his red hat and saluted beautiful Emma.

Emma explained her view of Emanuel's appearance in an artistic way. She expressed him as a fluffy blue sea with curly furry blue waves that a big red fish swam in. Her words made Emanuel really delighted, so he forgot about starving. A big energetic smile appeared on his face, his green dancing eyes shimmered on the face of Emma.

Emma asked him if he would like to join her to go to the beach. Emma felt as if she was in a dreamy painting. She wanted to paint a romantic scene of sunset with Emanuel's magical presence in it. Emanuel accepted her invitation quickly without any pause. Then he sat at the back of Emma's bike and they went toward the beach to have an unforgettable moment together.

When they arrived at the beach, Emma set her bike on a big rock and picked up her painting instruments from the bike basket. She chose the best scene of sunset and wanted Emanuel to be her model for this special scene. She painted in a charming way when her work finished, Emma wanted Emanuel to come and see her art. Emanuel felt that he was the hero of this scene because Emma painted him as a magician in the sunset, with a red hat and a stick in his hand. He formed a big red fish as part of the sunset sky

Emanuel started applauding and just encouraging Emma to continue doing what she had just done. Emma got cheerful when she saw Emanuel's enthusiasm. Emma preferred to have a great night at the beach with Emanuel so she made a small fire at the beach near the bare seashore. She took a bag from her bicycle's basket. Inside were two sausage sandwiches. She retrieved them and then gave Emanuel one of the sandwiches, Emanuel thanked her and asked her why she had brought two sandwiches. Emma told him that she always makes extra sandwiches for a friend that she may find.

Emanuel just stared at her and pondered "How can a person be so kind and think about other people? She created such memories for me" Emanuel had no words to praise her personality, he just showed his satisfaction with a thankful smile.

Emanuel thought a bit, then picked up his hat and gifted it to Emma. Emma told him "No, I can't accept it, because it belongs to your breath and your special soul.

Emanuel was amazed by what he just heard. He looked at Emma and told her that he thought that she was a real angel. Emanuel skipped towards the sand smiling the time he just had, happy that fate set Emma to brighten up his lonely world. He approached Emma and wanted to dance with her. On this fantastical night, all the audiences in the sky were willing to see their elegant dancing. They started dancing and kept dancing on the shore in the presence of the moon and small stars.

After that they got tired of dancing then decided to lie down beside each other. They looked at each other and they were so cheerful to have these odd but fantastic moments. Their heartbeats made the strangest sounds. A while later, they heard peculiar murmurs from the night sky. When they looked up, there was a group of stars which were getting down from stairs in the sky. The stars moved around Emma and made her like a beautiful bride, while the moon approached Emanuel, and plucked a piece of night from the night sky to make Emanuel's tie and groom suit.

The sky of night and calm sea set up a beautiful wedding ceremony for Emanuel and Emma. The small turtles got out of the sea, making a beautiful pathway. A group of orange crabs and lobsters also got out of the water. With bright oysters, their pearls and seaweeds in hand, they started decorating the special night for Emanuel and Emma.

The stars sang a song of love and happy moments of being together forever and the moon stood in front of them. The moon performed the role of priest for their wedding ceremony. Afterwards the bright priest wanted them to kiss each other and embrace in honest love.

Emanuel and Emma took their hands, and decided to build a new future with what they have.

Days passed, and their decisions to build a new future started taking shape. Emma sold all her wonderful paintings and Emanuel became a funny hospital magician. He knew how to make the sick patients happy. One year later, they bought the house where Emanuel had met Emma for the first time. They bought the abandoned house, and Emma sold the beautiful postcards and paintings she made in the store beside it.

They lived in an easy, simple and cozy way. Nothing was important to them, except being together forever, peacefully.

Two Artworks by Marjan Safiyari



@coralline_white
Boats are the Piano
keys on the Sea.
M.Safiyari

And I'd like to
know who I
am



You are that Unique
Musician.

About Marjan Safiyari

Marjan Safiyari is a published fiction author. She was born on 23rd July 1989 in Shiraz, a captivating city of many soothing scenes and sounds. She has a BA degree in English literature at the Zand Institute of Higher Education. Her first book, titled 'Devil Shadows And Golden Lantern With Other Stories' was published by Austin Macauley Publishers in London

The Broken Mirror by Oskar Leonard

How has it both
captured and shattered
your features?

This eye of yours
is a million shards,
trembling with light.

Like embers, they
die, but we both know
everything does.

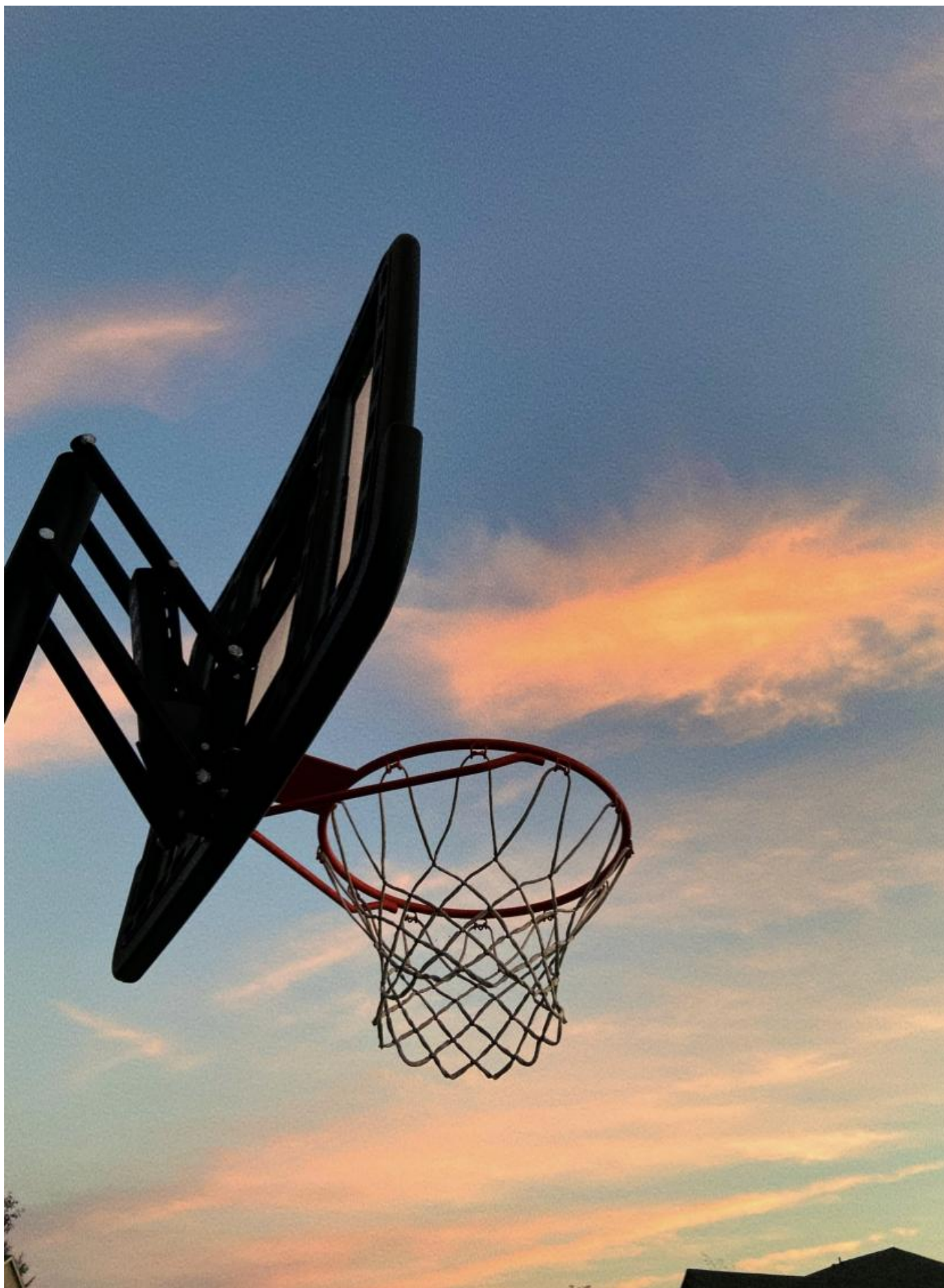
Your skin- it stretches
beyond the possibilities
of your beautiful atoms.

Yes, your separation
is a work of art,
and a broken mirror.

About Oskar Leonard

Oskar Leonard is a trans author and poet from the UK, as well as a senior creative writer at TUGZ Magazine. He has written ten books: four novels, three poetry collections, two novellas and a short story collection. His short works have been featured in publications such as Adoxography Literary Magazine, The Bibliopunk Lit Zine and Juven.

The Metal Print by Liliya Ustinova





About Liliya Ustinova

Liliya Ustinova is a creator of many mediums, from photography to writing and more. She is extremely passionate about sharing her perspective on the world with others. Finding the beauty in every simple moment, Liliya hopes to spread her zest for life with those around her.

When a star is born by Liew Chooi Chin

I am a star,
shining out of the night sky
like a doll's eyes.

I guide your plane from Heathrow to Haneda;
log your running routes on Strava;
remind to you to bring an umbrella;
and watch drama.

When a star is born,
it has work to do.

About Liew Chooi Chin

Chooi Chin studied Library Sciences and Computing (which she absolutely hated) at university. She now lives at a coastal city with a sneaky cat who regularly sneaks into the kitchen to steal food. Chooi Chin continues to enjoy writing. Her other hobbies include studying Japanese language, playing the piano, and trying out fantastically whacky recipes.



THANK YOU FOR READING!

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