


INTERVIEW

Volume 58 | 1

EDITOR'S NOTE

With the paint strokes and strong contrast of *Windhover* LVIII, *Windhover* staff wanted to remind ourselves and our community that art is for all! As an annual publication, it's our job to aspire to a professional level of publishing, but sometimes, we forget that art is meant to push boundaries. Our designers drew inspiration from punk and zine culture to create this edition, hoping to usher in a new, fresh era for *Windhover*. Our content editors continued this year by selecting pieces that felt like they had a pulse on our community. With a record number of volunteers, new ideas were constantly flowing. New perspectives were painted over old. In February of 2024, in the midst of finishing the book, *Windhover* hosted a "Rhyme and Zine" night in collaboration with NCSU Libraries. The event started as a small seed planted by the work of volunteers Will LaMarche and Delaney Urchuk. That night, dozens of NCSU community members came and crafted their mini magazines. With paper scraps, glue sticks, and scissors strewn about, the crafters soaked up the beautiful spoken word and music performances. That night, the *Windhover* staff was reminded that our publication has a world of possibilities.



Rounding out my fourth and final year with *Windhover*, I want to thank all the folks who made this edition and all the ones leading up to it some of my best memories. Thank you to all the volunteers who push the publication into the future and do the priceless work of reviewing our submissions. Thank you to Cora and Katharine who have spread their design wings and truly taken flight with this edition. Thank you to Alex who captured *Windhover's* new look before anyone else as promotions designer. Thank you to Tuesday and Theo for endless nights of reading and making sure every word submitted was cared for. Thank you to Ben for continuing to advocate for our visual artists and choosing visual pieces that pop off the page. Thank you to Nicole for joining this team and improving *Windhover* from our social media to our podcast to our website presence. How did we ever do anything without you? Thank you to our advisor Patrick, who has taken over the *Windhover* supervisor role as we look for a new advisor. I've had the time of my life crafting with y'all!

Stay creative,

Ryly Zallen

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All time seemed to slow, the
braying hounds with lips
curled back over bone white teeth
danced beneath your tree.

Eager and bloodthirsty,
forgetting you would
greet them with a
hatred of your own.

I stood in the fray as
judge, jury, and executioner. With a
knot in my stomach, we met under this
leaden sky. Your

maw opened wide,
never yielding. My fearsome
opponent reduced to
prey. I can't help but

question, will I
reap what I have
sown?

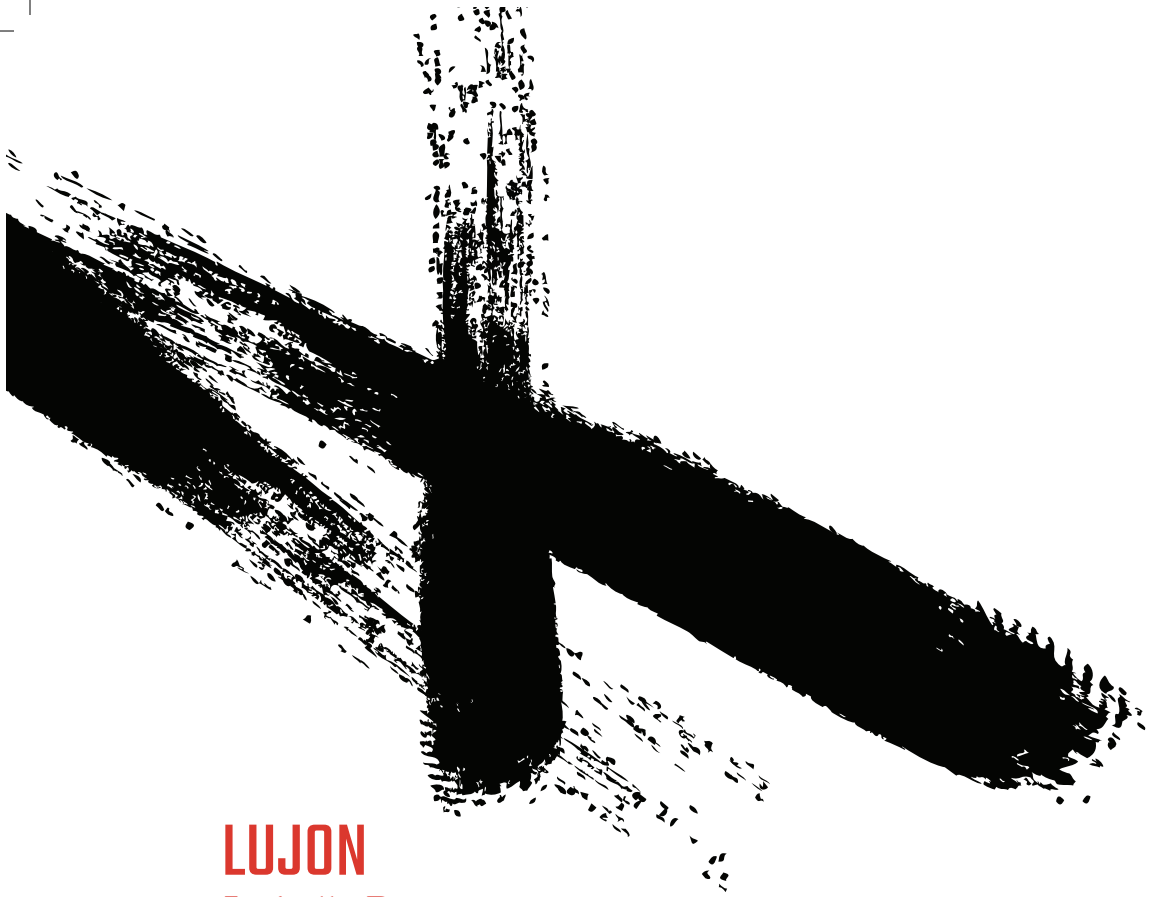
A BEAR HUNT IN MID-NOVEMBER

Alyssa Giorgino

THE BLACK BUTTERFLY

Daniel Knorr





LUJON

Isabella Rayner

smoke billows through the new york jazz bar / I'm a thousand
different people in a thousand different places / but I'm sure you
won't remember my name / do you hear the sound? / of bells
chiming down the streets of God's own country / petals gripped
between thumbs, limestone matrimony / I could die today and
tomorrow / and the waters would roar all the same / everyone
keeps walking / feet first, head down, we're headed to the ocean
/ shaving down the wind-whipped white coast / well, can't you
see? / this is where / Neruda will call out to me / bloodstains
and tombstones / for my veil is shredded / and there's no crawl-
ing back to heaven / for people who were born to be like me

an orange split in half,
one horizon wedged between my lips—
the cold cracking between my teeth like a seed.

i try to sleep, but there's a
cosmos cleaved against my skull,
spilling half-formed blood,
something never meant to be shed.

in sleep, i pull at the peel,
it breaks so cleanly—
it asks to be quartered.

the third head rises at my heels,
and takes its due,
(peel and all),
a galaxy strung between its teeth,
its glimmer of drool, like pearls,
another sacrifice,
meant to be left unknown.

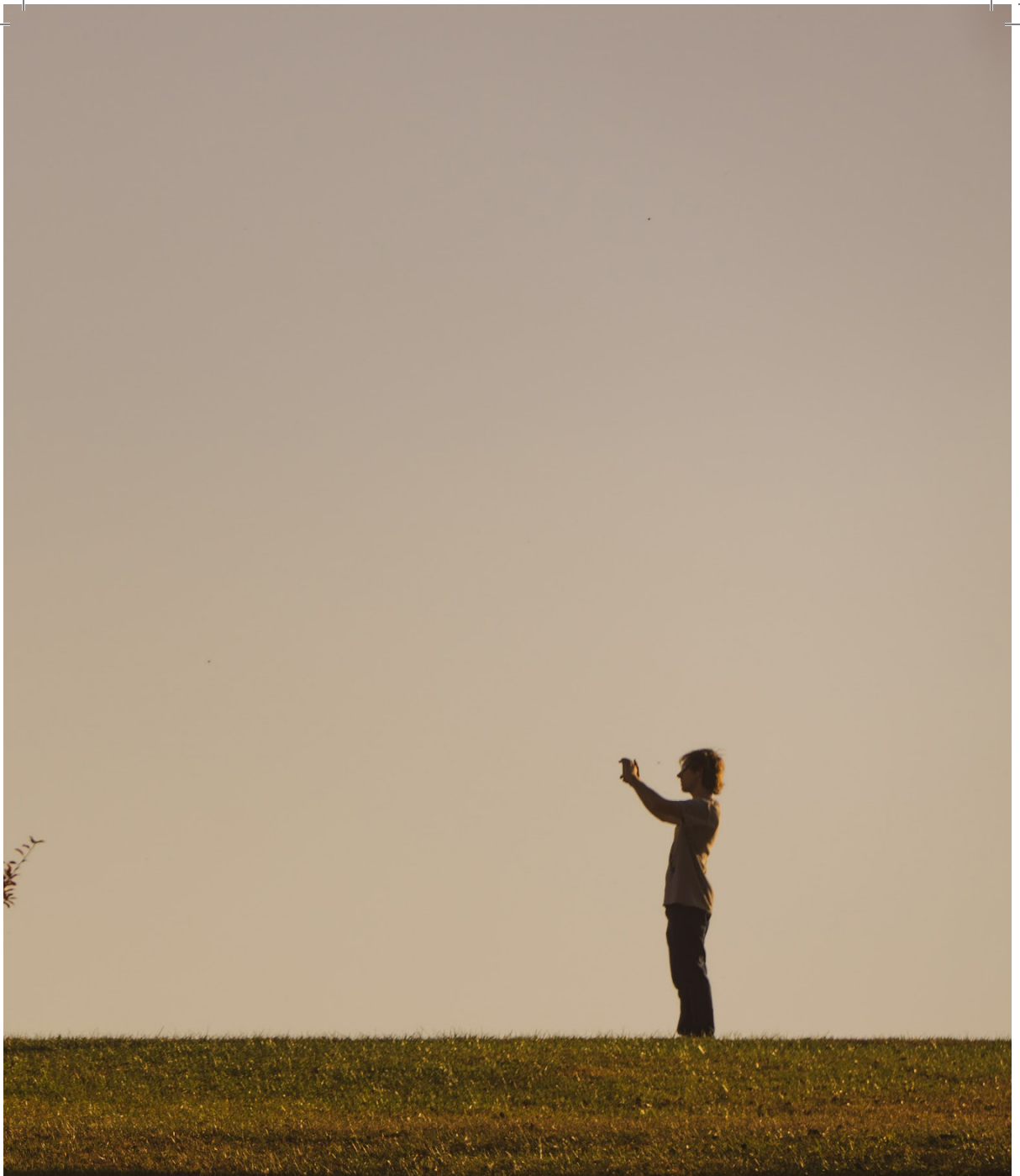
the monster gnawing at my bones,
still left unnamed.

(i feel its wet nose on my palm,
leave a space beside me,
we breathe in unison
it hides when i awake,
and together we sleep
equally satiated)

Krushī Bandam
PEELED AWAY

Krushī Bandam was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.





PICS OR IT DIDN'T HAPPEN

Sophie Frain

TIME, SPACE, AND OTHER TRIVIALITIES

Roshni Iyer

There are certain certainties of which Madhu can count on. One: The world has existed long before she did, and it will exist long after. Two: She would find Selvi again—and then they would both die.

And most of all, this, number three: She is tired.

I.

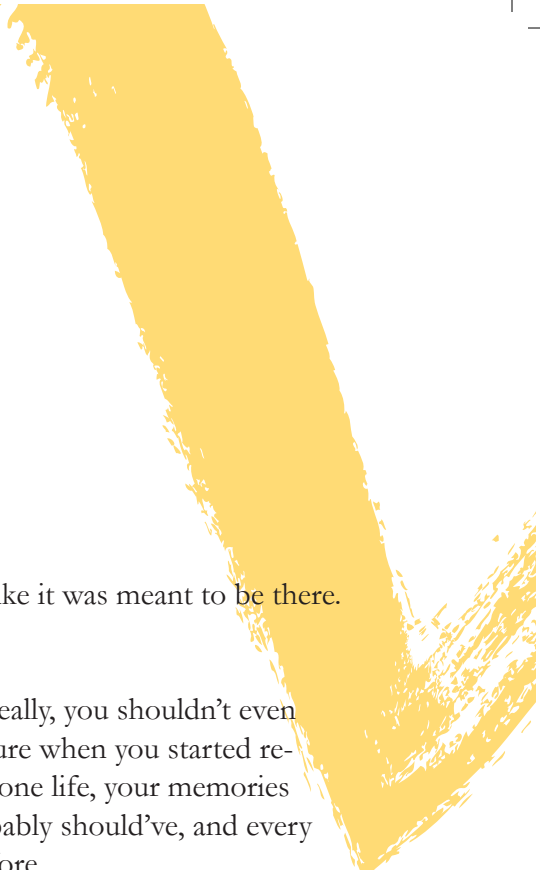
She is wearing yellow when you see her first. It's at a market, and you have gone over to look at the mangoes the vendor has laid out for the day. The girl is eyeing the pomegranates, and she smiles when she sees the color matches your burgundy saree. You hold up a mango to hers, and buy a dozen.

When you see her at the market next, you find the courage to ask for her name. The smell of earth hangs thick in the air, and the warmth of it wraps around you. Monsoon season won't arrive for a few months yet, but the sky holds a promise you can't quite name.

Selvi.

Naan Madhu, you tell her, and she smiles, wide enough that you see the dimple in her cheek that you didn't see last time, and the sky gets brighter.

You say her name over and over that night, when you think no one can hear you. *Selvi, Selvi, Selvi.*



The name fits in your mouth, like it was meant to be there.

II.

You don't know when it started. And really, you shouldn't even know as much as you did. You aren't sure when you started remembering your past lives, just that in one life, your memories didn't get wiped as cleanly as they probably should've, and every life since has remembered the lives before.

It was just flashes, at first. A glimpse, here and there, in dreams—snatches of a girl you didn't recognize but knew anyway.

You didn't know her name, until one day, you did. You thought, *Oh, if only I knew her name*, and then you did. *Selvi*. Has she always had that name? You aren't sure—but she must have used that name, at least once.

Nowadays, you write down anything you remember in a little notebook. It was overpriced, but the pages have gilded edges and the cover is a soft leather, and usually these notebooks stay unused because you find them too pretty to write in.

This seemed important enough a cause.

After the dreams started, after you remembered, you watched a YouTube video on how to sew and added a little pocket in your favorite jacket, so the notebook is always on your person. Just in case.

III.

“Do I know you?”

You turn to face the voice, and you’re taken aback by the intensity of piercing brown eyes meeting yours. Dark hair frames her face to her shoulders, and the rest is pulled up into a messy bun. You don’t think you’ve seen her before, but something about her is familiar all the same. Her warm yellow and green dhavani is bright against the gloomy dusk.

She’s still waiting for a response, head tilted, and it takes you a minute to remember how words sound. The sounds of the town have faded to the background, even though horses are still clip-clopping past the streets behind her.

“I’m... not sure.” Very intelligent. Great answer.

She still smiles, though, so evidently, shockingly, you haven’t ruined it already.

“I’m Selvi,” she says. “What’s your name?”

“Madhu,” you manage.

Her eyes are bright looking into yours.

IV.

When you trip and wipe out on the bricks, you expect it to hurt worse. Despite not being the most coordinated individual, it’s been a good few years since you fell this badly, and you’d rather forgotten what it felt like.

“Oh my god,” a girl says, running over from the other

side of the road without checking for cars. Someone driving by honks their horn at her. She holds out a hand. “Are you okay?”

She sees the blood welling up on your knees and pauses. “Silly question.”

You take her outstretched hand, and then it stings a little, especially where the girl holds too tight over the parts of your hand that got scraped up. “Ow.”

The girl looks very worried, and you wave a hand. “I’m okay, mostly. There’s, like, this buzzing feeling in my knees but—it’s probably fine.”

“Do you have to get anywhere?” she asks. “I can help you walk.”

You finally get a good look at her and freeze for a moment. Her hair curls down her back, held away from her face with a few small clips, and her thick eyebrows are scrunched up. Alarm bells are going off in the back of your head, but something about being around her is dulling your senses.

Say something, headass. “Don’t... do *you* not have somewhere to be?”

A corner of her mouth quirks up, “I mean, I have class in ten minutes, but I’ve been looking for an excuse to skip all day. Maybe this was fate.”

You grin at her. “Me eating bricks was fate?”

She straightens her shoulders, her face growing solemn. “This was destiny. We were meant to meet like this.”

“Well,” you say, laughter spilling out like the blood dripping down your knees. “Who am I, then, to argue with destiny? I’m Madhu.”

The girl is just a little shorter than you, and steps closer to let you hook an arm around her shoulders. Her shoulders are small, but she is warm and sturdy and steady. It’s a little awkward, but not as awkward as you expected.

It’s only when she says her name that it hits you, dully, in the back of your mind.

“I’m Selvi.”

Oh. Oh, God.

V.

Selvi had always had a looming sense of her own mortality. Most children don’t have a real concept of what *death* means, but for whatever reason, Selvi figured that out early.

For whatever reason—which meant the night terrors.

They had started young, and when she was little, her parents had taken her to sleep doctors to figure out why her nights were plagued with horrible visions of her dying. By the time she was in high school, she learned to act like it was getting better, just so she wouldn’t have to go to any more goddamn doctors.

Selvi got very good at pretending.


Her parents left well enough alone about the sleep now.

She used to write them down in hopes that getting it out of her head would help—*It felt like the skin was being ripped off my bones. I suppose they were*—but if anything, she just remembered them better for the next time she dreamed. Instead, she would put on music or an episode of something the second she woke up, in hopes that she'd forget quicker.

There would be a girl there with her, but Selvi didn't always let herself remember this. Most often, they died together, but there were the dreams where Selvi was watching the life fade out of her on some old, rickety-looking bed. Those dreams were worse, somehow, than dying together. Selvi didn't know who she was, but with how she felt in those dreams, she knew the girl meant something to her. She was something vital. Someone she should remember, though she didn't know how or why or from where. (*Watching her die felt like I was dying. And I think I died soon enough after, though I don't know what illness took me, if it was the same one that got her or simply the grief of it.*)

Reliving your death was heavy enough, but watching someone you love die was somehow still worse.

And so Selvi stopped writing it down. The less she tried to remember, the less she did. The night terrors still knocked on her door and then broke it down, and sleep never came easy—but by morning, the memory would start to fade, and perhaps this was the best Selvi would ever have.



By the time Selvi remembers the girl she dies with in the dreams—*you*—she’s almost forgotten that you exist. It’s not until later that night when she wakes up, heart racing at some witching hour, that she realizes. Your face was different in the dream, of course—it always is—but the feeling is the same one she had meeting you that day.

It’s you. *It’s you again.*

VI.

“How’s your knee healing?”

You look up from your book in surprise. “Selvi!”

“Hi.” She waves at you, a grin cracking her face in half. “I hope I’m not ruining the mood when you’re trying to read.”

“No,” you say, closing the book with a snap. “Not at all.” You gesture to the hammock you’re laying on. “Do you, uh—want to join me?”

Selvi tilts her head, and when she scrambles on, trying not to rock it too far, you shift your weight so you don’t tip over.

You feel kind of silly, now, because lying across from someone seems like a thing people would not do only the second time they meet, but Selvi is looking at you intently and it’s too late to back out.

“So? Are your knees better?”

“Oh!” You look at them, still bandaged—though no longer with the ones she gave you that day—as though they’re suddenly very interesting. “Better. Getting in the hammock was kind of a bitch, but it was worth it.”

Selvi nods. “I would use the hammocks if both my legs were broken.”

A laugh bursts out of you, and then settles into silence. You wonder if you’ve always been this awkward or if it’s a product of being around her.

“Did you have makeup work for the class you missed last week?” you ask finally.

“My math class? He records all the lectures, though it’s not like I’d understand either way.” Selvi makes a face. “There’s a reason my major is English, y’know.”

You laugh again. “Is it a gen-ed you put off?”

Selvi looks sheepish. “I’m not good at planning ahead.”

“I get it,” you say, fiddling with the pages of your book. “I’m a philosophy major. Some people are built for STEM, and I am *not* one of them.”

“Philosophy! That’s interesting. What made you choose it?”

“It’s kinda funny—I watched *The Good Place* and got big into existentialism. I like the idea that we are all, like, in control of our destiny, and I like thinking about how human beings want so badly to matter in a universe that is so so much bigger than we can ever even comprehend.”

If Selvi is surprised by the nosedive into such a conversation, she seems unfazed. (This serves only to impress you more.) “I *love* that show! And I get that. I think that’s the kind of stories I like to write, y’know? About finding meaning and purpose in a world that will never care about us. About trying to do better. And about finding people who make the world feel less vast.”

You are glad your skin is too brown for you to really blush. “Yeah.”

This time, when a moment of silence settles over you, it doesn’t feel as weird.

“I’m still reeling from how many band-aids you had, by the way.”

“Funny that you’re reeling more from that than the *actual fall*. I haven’t seen anyone trip that badly with little to no provocation.”

“Okay, rude,” you say, feigning offense. “What can I say? I’m accident-prone.”

Selvi grins at you, unabashed and unrestrained, and you blink hard to refocus on her words. “Even better that I was around. You’re accident-prone, and I’m always over-prepared for emergencies.”

“I should always have you around, then. Just in case.”

The smile drops off Selvi’s face, and you don’t register the words you said to surprise her so much until you play it back in your head. “I—”

“In that case,” Selvi says, brown eyes glinting. “I should give you my number.”

W.

*Continue reading this story online at
windhover.ncsu.edu*

HIRAETH

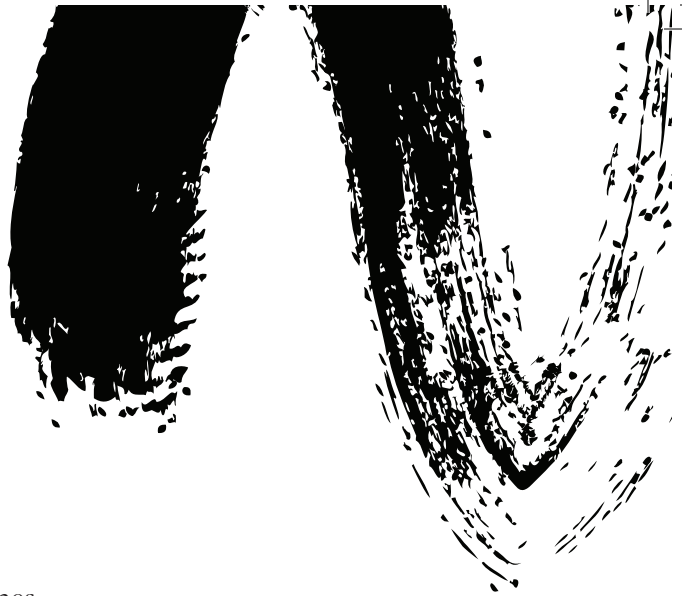
Dedan Wilkins

They take care of me here,
 they don't make me
forget myself like you do but
oh well.
 I'm here,
again on the rooftop,
 watching the stars dim alongside the cul-de-sac like
that one thursday morning I can't seem to let go of
 but trust me, I'm okay. The window is only opening
and the air is still air even
 if the pieces get scattered. And you might not
believe me but inside
 my head
where you are everything,
 everywhere is
safe. Dear Khadija, if you're reading this then
 I want you to know I met a woman
once, who's eyes looked like mine
 and I let her tear me in two. Call out my name,
for nothing but
 noise. I'm too afraid to tell you more, but

silence is only a sound
trying to bury itself.
Much like a father,
trying to neglect his flames. How quickly when inside,
you become my savior.
How quickly, a man in love
melts to his knees. The way I look up at your chin,
and hold my gaze against your lips like
a baby half-mooned
across the horizon but this time I promise,
I'll learn what it means to
paint the sky in your image. And this time, the day
won't be long gone in our arms and our hearts too
heavy to say goodbye
but we'll say it anyway
because the stars
are just stars and this moment
is just a moment
which means we will find our way back home
even when our bodies
are miles away
even when the words
are all that make us
whole again.

Penelli Yang
MAGNOLIA





The wisteria dances on its vines
like a cluster of grapes in the trees
carpenter bees bump themselves
into wooden benches in courtyards.

The sun sets late and paints the sky,
I want you and I need you and I want you.

Bushes swamped with white azaleas
heap like giant hills of snow,
the mornings are frigid and
the evenings are pleasant.

The faint moon watches over us like a hawk in the sky,
I could die if I don't touch your skin again.

APRIL
Nina Kudlak

AUDIO

Listen on windhover.bandcamp.com

Jayda Murray
A SIREN'S SILENCE

HOSTAGE VIDEO 1

Nick RiCharde



VIDEO

Watch on windhover.ncsu.edu

the first time i saw you
my mind took a journey

we became the ambient clouds
stirring around in our atmospheres

some days 75 degrees and sunny
others a bit more cooler and forecasted for rain

DAYDREAMING

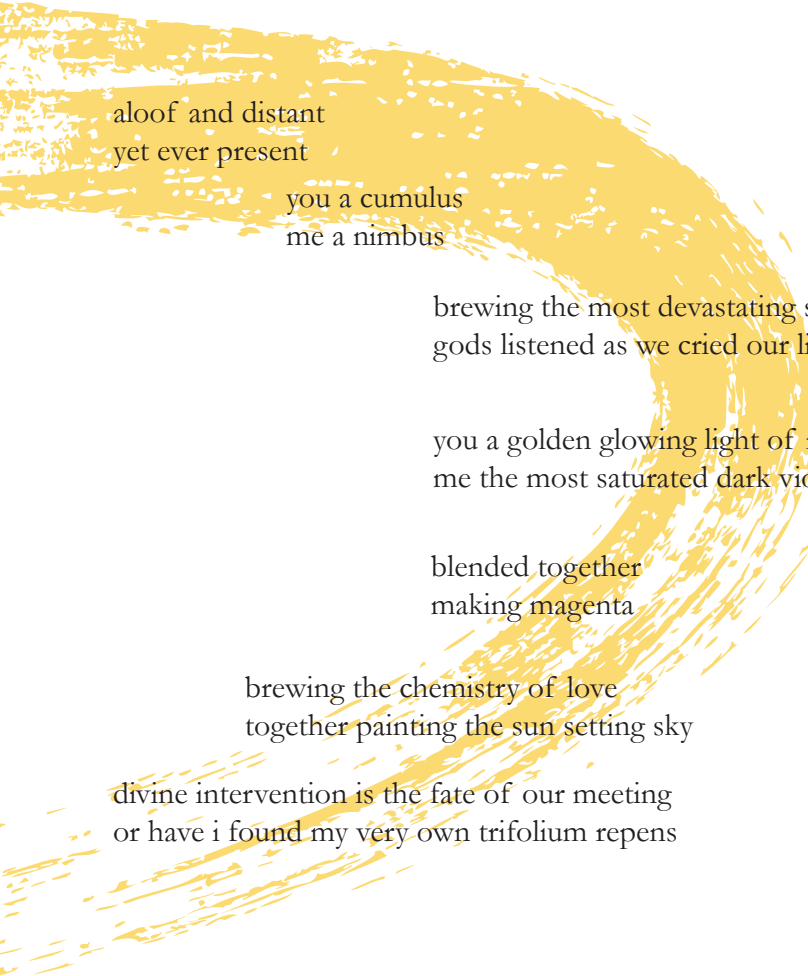
Leila Ganim

and i don't hardly know you
but i would absolutely like to

crimsoned and clovered
over and over again

and then you came walking over
my heart began to thunder

because darlin' if i were you
i'd avoid any pursuit



aloof and distant
yet ever present

you a cumulus
me a nimbus

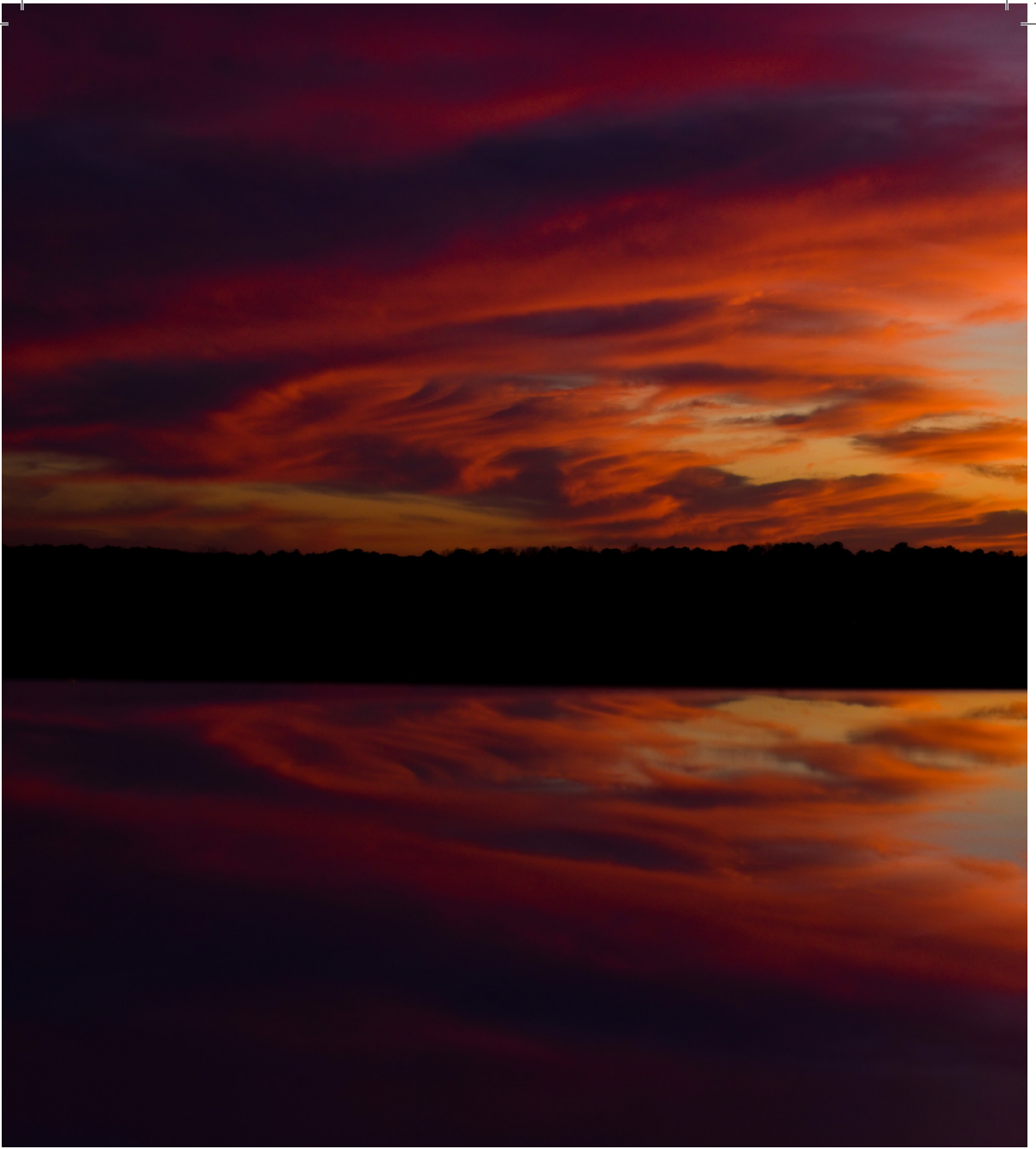
brewing the most devastating storms
gods listened as we cried our lightning

you a golden glowing light of red
me the most saturated dark violets

blended together
making magenta

brewing the chemistry of love
together painting the sun setting sky

divine intervention is the fate of our meeting
or have i found my very own trifolium repens





HUNT LIBRARY SUNSET

Jeremy Byrne



LONGING IN LEMONGRASS

Leah Tran

In Saigon, there is a longing in the scent of lemongrass. It's tangled in the pressed coffee and sweetened condensed milk drunk on a flimsy plastic chair. You feel its citrusy tease under the old spinning fan hung in the corner, and as sweat drips down your neck after a long day.

It's swirling in the humid heat at the markets where towers of cloth almost touch the sky. You'll taste it too, in the *com tam* you eat on the side of the road in the morning, through the freshly grilled pork chop. You'll ask for more to take home, but the *có* will *tsk* and tell you that was her last one as she packs up her metal cart.

It never leaves, either. It stays there amongst the sound of honking motorbikes and barking dogs—well into the night. People linger for a little longer outside to just catch a little bit of it. Especially those who have lived long enough to know a time when only the musty, deadly scent of the American orange herbicide filled the air.

At times the scent of lemongrass is even threatening, when your legs brush past its pale green blades on the way to

your great-grandparents' grave, cutting through the smoke of burning incense and your *mè's* tears. And it cuts through you too as she stands before them and asks for forgiveness for coming home too late.

There was once a time when you were afraid of it. When your *mè* would use the flat side of her knife to smash at its thick flesh. It was overwhelming in the air as she placed it in the pot of *bun bo hue*, and too much for your young Americanized tongue. She'd shake her head when you plucked its bits out from your bowl and tell you: It's good for you. You will miss it.

Perhaps she only said it to remind herself as well. How she too will look for it the same way she looked for a home here. Because she always had. Because home was never really hers in the first place and even though this place has become something close to it, it will never be. The only home our hearts know is the longing for something that could never quite be ours.

And somehow, you know that too. It's all in the way that you still call that city a name the rest of the world has decided to bury. It's clear when you follow the scent of lemongrass from the run-down restaurant outside the Asian market. Even more, when you place its old and frozen bits into the pot of boiling butternut and coconut milk until it's all one can smell in the air of your apartment. When you make your friends taste a steaming, silver spoon of it and you only hope that they can taste the never-healing wound in you.

If they could see that it is a longing that always has been. A longing that never ceases. A longing that only ages with you.



Leah Tran was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.

Anna-Lukas Banas

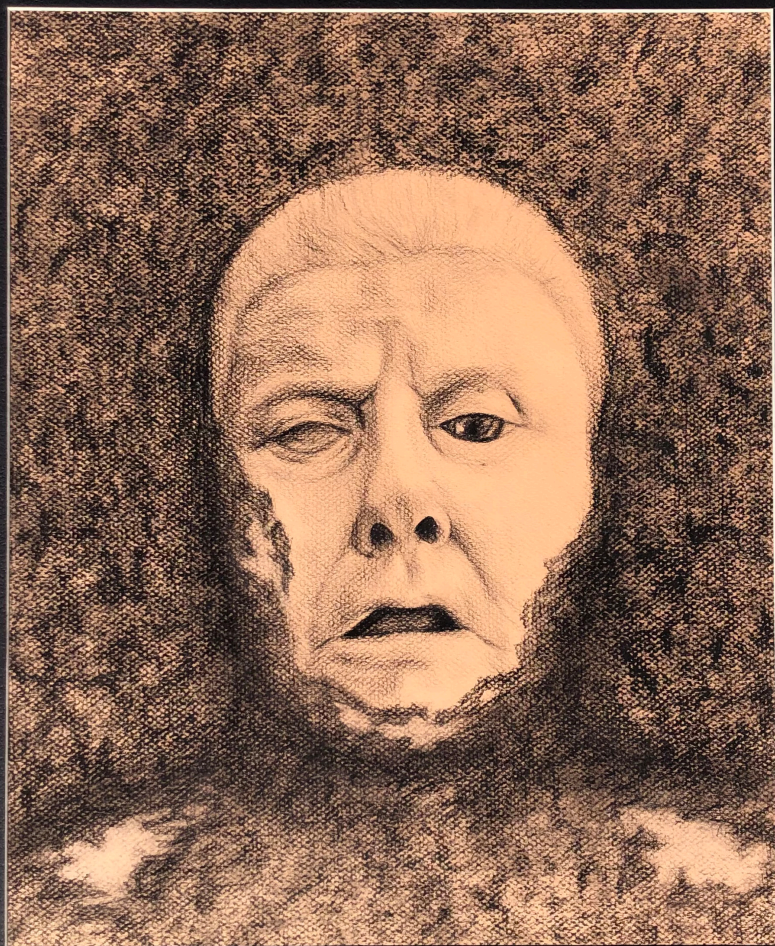
AUTUMNAL GRIEF

fall leaves
my body
riddled with homesickness

my stomach swells with the decomposing
remains of a skeletal wood,
fermenting into the unbearable ache
of nostalgia

this liquor spills from moth-torn holes
and gathers in pools
within the pores
of my bones

softening to rot
in the shallow grave of my memory



WHY WON'T YOU STAND?

Jordan Webster



ALL THAT REMAINS ELSEWHERE

Dedan Wilkins

Another country burning on tv
and there you are standing
in the open again
someone who is dead already will tell you this is where you
learned to pray.
Dried blood spread across your cheek
like a rose caught in a snowstorm.
The reporters running to ask what happened
the way your mouth stood motionless
still as the page, forgetful
of its own ink.

Her carelessness, *Ma'am what happened here?*

Here, as if the story didn't already tell itself
because that's all we are

is here, and that sometimes
is too much. Because it wasn't the sound of the F-16's but
the feeling of

knowing I'm alive that scared me the most.
The way I carried my children

the smell of blood
how it poured into my nostrils

like a flower waiting
to bloom

the street full of rubble
the places we entered
how even the body when unbearable, in ruin

too can be beautiful
it too can be human.

And all you want is for someone to tell you
hey, your family will be fine even if you're not there.

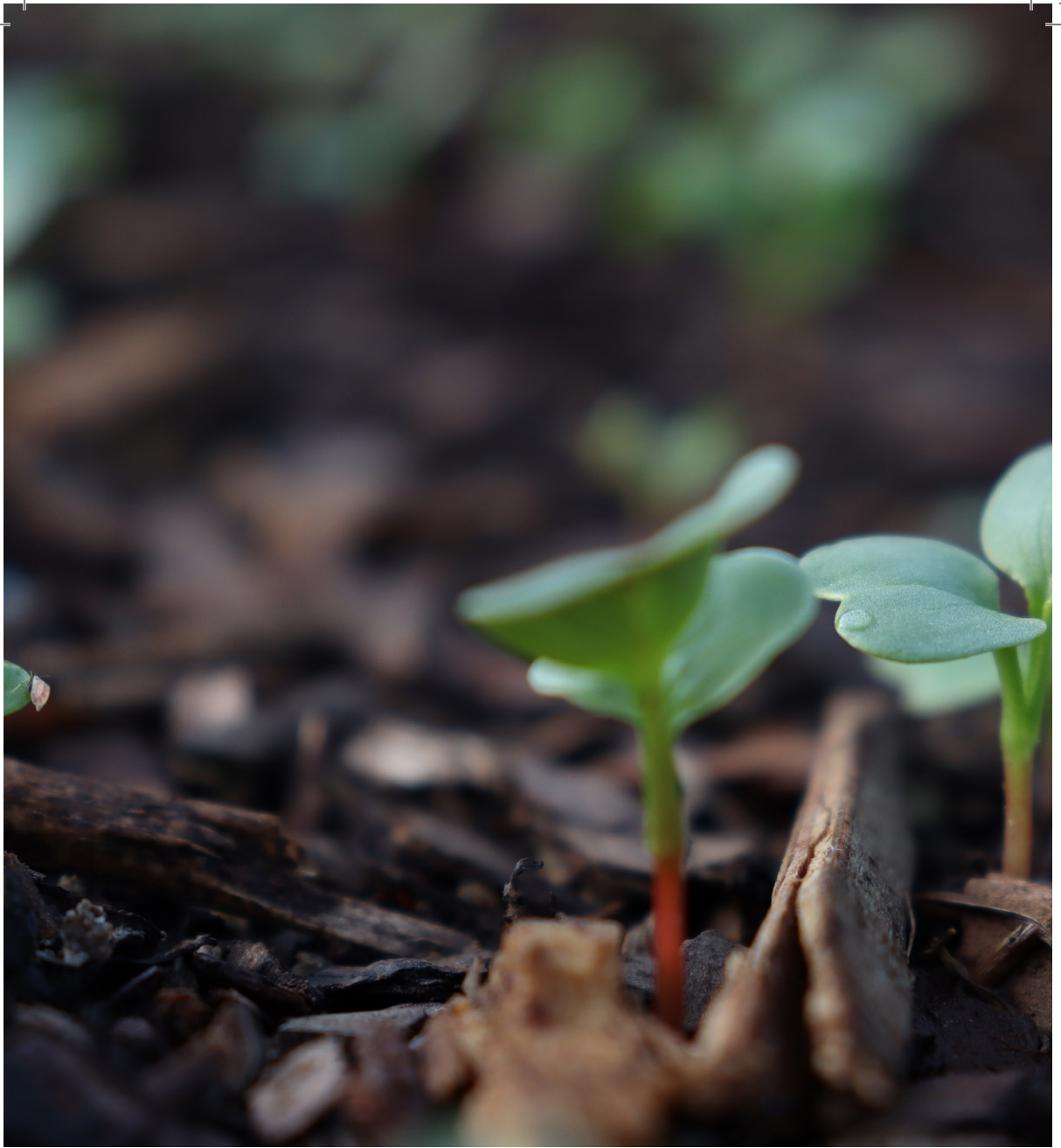
You want someone to tell you that your prayers have been answered.

Which means you want someone to tell you if

your family made it to heaven.

That tomorrow morning you will wake up to the singing of angels

that tomorrow morning
you will wake up.



SPROUTS

Chloe Allen





PAINTING THE CANVAS WHITE

Will LaMarche

I took down an old painting,
a gift from an awful friend.
It was a waterfall in a forest, I think;
when I first got it I hung it upside down.
So I've chosen to paint the canvas white
and purge the unattractive from my room.

It's a crime, I know, to expunge an art piece,
but they only took an hour to make it.
I pour white paint onto the canvas,
and pick my largest brush to usher in winter.
A blizzard befalls the vague greenery,
every shade now smothered in snow.
The river has frozen and flurries stack atop it,
even the waterfall freezes up.
This snow does not melt but sticks,
and if the color bleeds I will bury it again.
On my fresh canvas I see an open door of choice,
Choice that I am to make, for me and only me!

Will LaMarche was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.

I think of a winter scene.

I think of greenery.

I think of a river.

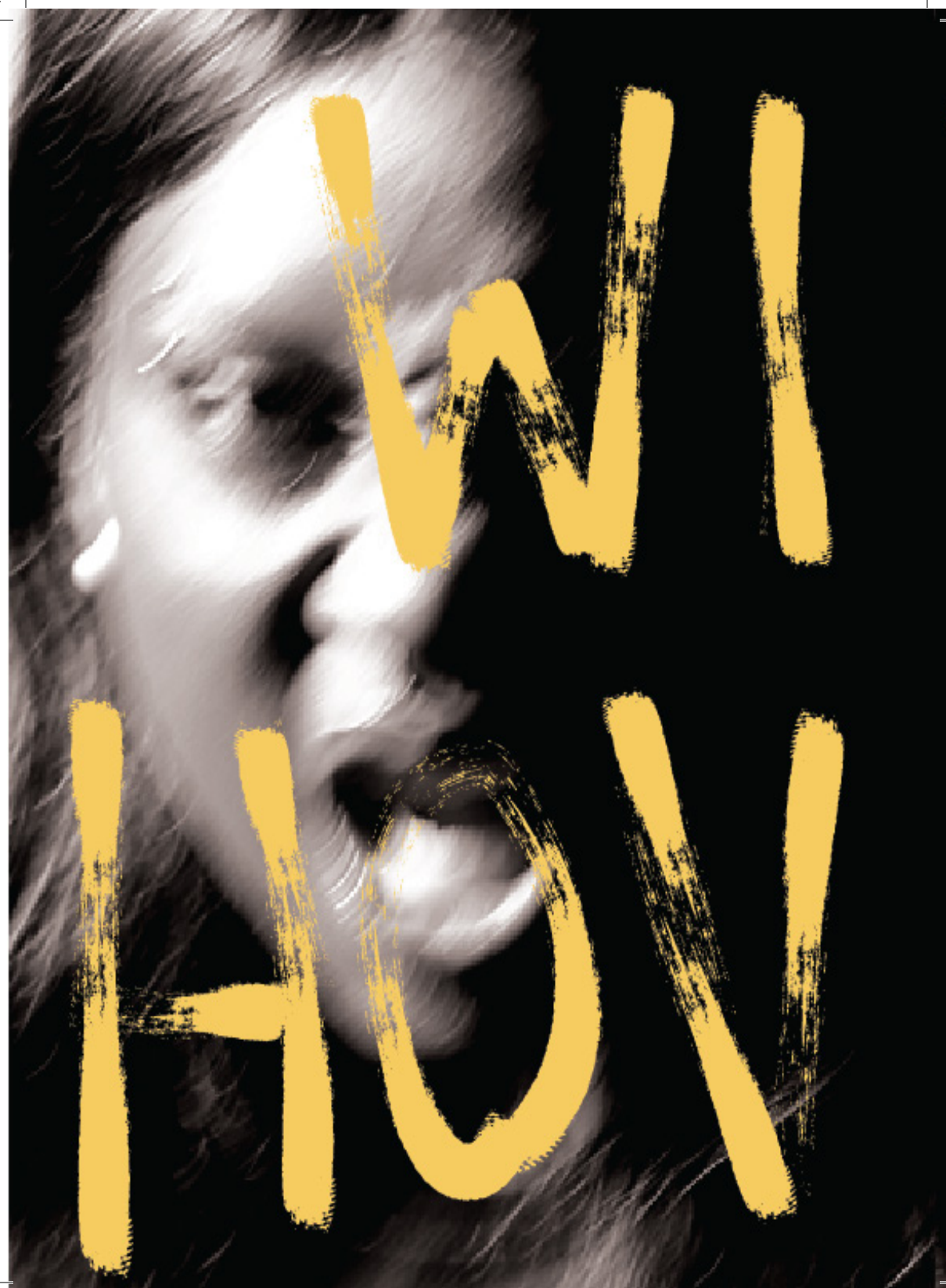
I think of the world I laid to rest;
and I think of nothing else.

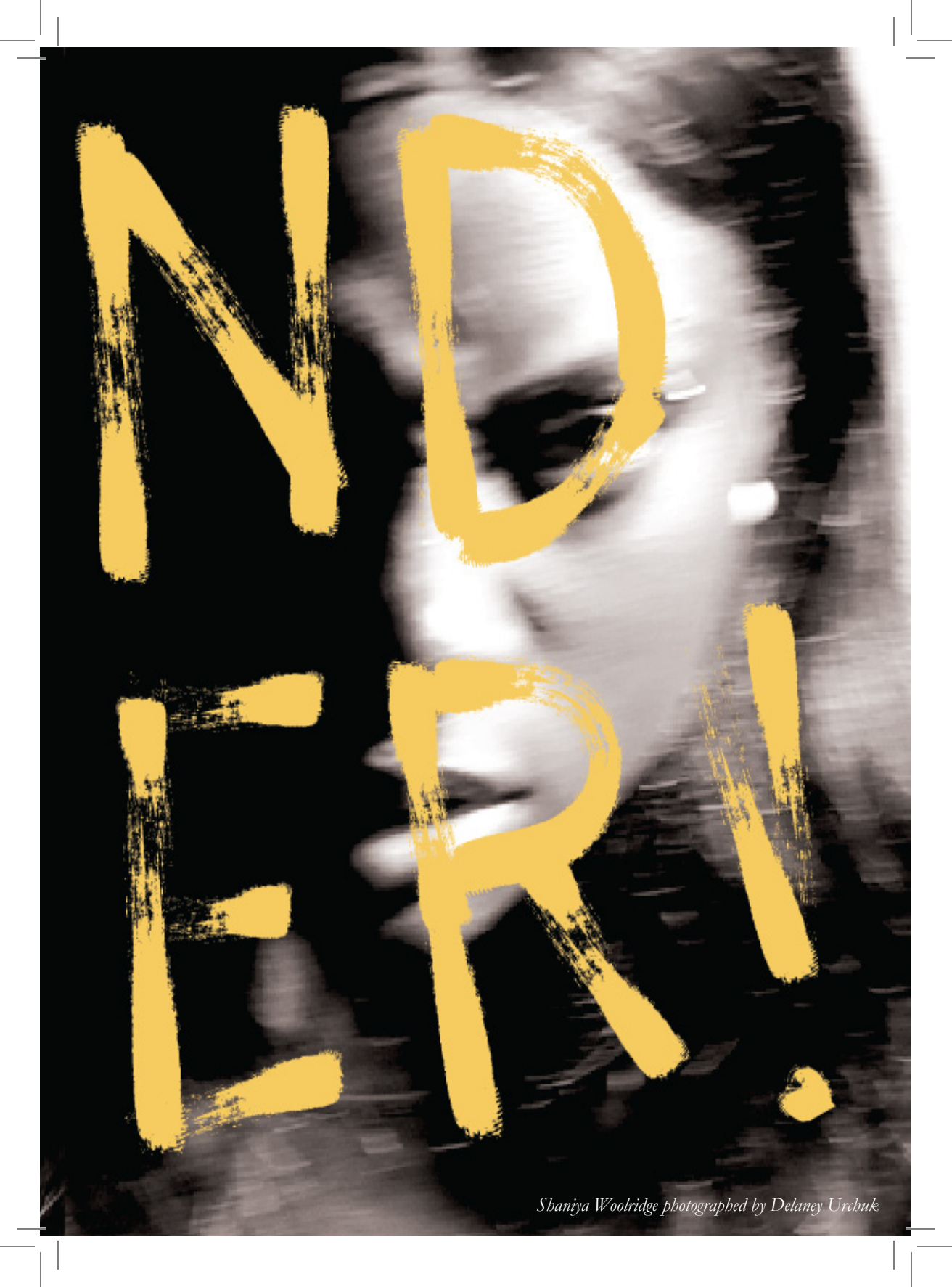
I think of poems mutilated.

Small words like fingers and toes,
the first to feel frostbite.
Those omissions blister ,
it may not seem like much.
Then whole lines begin to break open,
meaning escapes or stays to die.

It becomes language read as flowery,
because everything else was frozen over
no imaginative tendons
only a skeleton
to be buried beside

I hope it bleeds through.





NO
FEAR!

Shaniya Woolridge photographed by Delaney Urchuk

SUGAR LUNGS

Leah Tran

how does it feel to hold your sweet breath in?
to let your honeyed thoughts stick
to the bottom of your ribs
and to have everyone buzzing for just a morsel.

do you ever taste the slight metal?
when your teeth sink into your tongue
just before you let some of it slip out
into the wanting lips of others.

does it color your chest red?
the burning fire in the pit of your stomach
that keeps all of your sugar warm and melted
enough to satisfy your hungry, needy heart
with its oh-so-temporary fix.

tell me, how long do you wait before it becomes too hot?
and your lungs that were once so sweet
become empty with only the bitter taste
of all you could've said.

i've waited a long time too,
sugar lungs.

is it too late for us to be sweet again?

Leah Tran was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.

When the sun goes down
That's when you come round

While people are asleep
you crawl and creep in my bed
The smell of lust reeks on your skin
We said last time was our last time
Yet here we are again

Wrestling in the sheets
Our bodies clash like an old drum beat
Tonight we're percussionists
Tomorrow morning, we'll be strangers

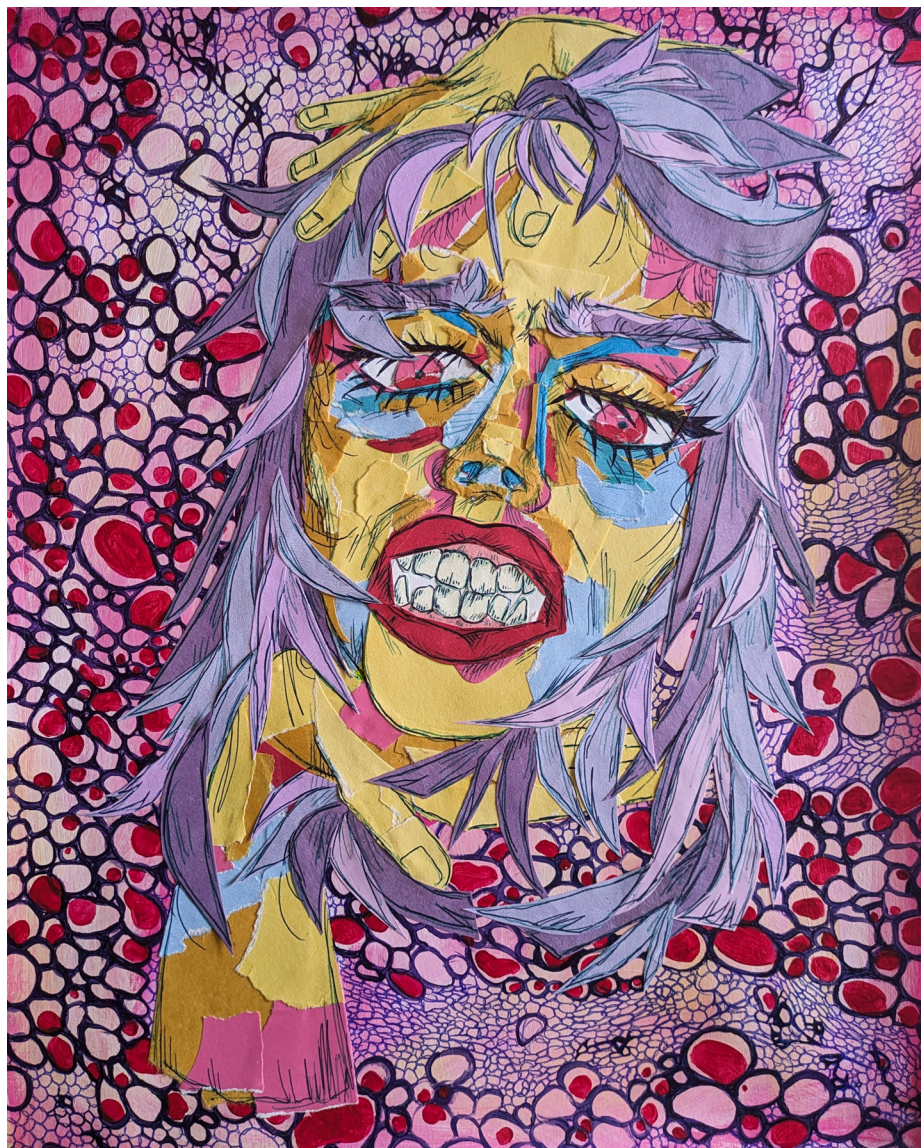
I can't replace you
You're truly a specialist
But for now I'll pretend you're expendable

As our show comes to an end
You grab your things and return from where you came
A part of me leaves with you
I know it'll return along with you tomorrow
Around the midnight hour

MIDNIGHT HOUR

(Inspired by Miles Davis' "Round Midnight")

Jarek Harris





JUNEBUG

Ally Jurek

R.K.
ALIVE!





I stare at the wildgrass
while I rot
on the alkaline earth
steeped in the vinegar sun.

Apple cider hills are too slippery to dream on
they send me in wormhole portals to
where im not burning;
still I'm
spinning
in my own head (fizzing burns my brain).

The bubbles turn into rocketry in my heart.

BAKING SODA

Sruti Bontala

I run with the propulsion of a 5th grade volcano project
my molten core is milliseconds away from breaking free
from the boundaries of the physical,
fueled by emotions as grand as the interstellar
and as meaningless as baking soda.

The wildgrasses bend as they absorb my radiation
cataclysmic,
obnoxious,
invisible,
ornate ordinary scatterings lay in paintings where I used to sit.

Put the yellow tape up
so the waste doesn't spread
and so the bees don't come near
and never the bunnies
and hopefully not even the deer.

But make it bright so
everyone
can
see
destruction.

Sruti Bontala was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.




BITTERSWEET GROWTH

Jordan Webster

Who do you think you are
to think you know my name?
Millions of years ago, in the light of the fledgling moon,
my mother's tides cast me in her image
Carapace of steel, Prosoma of bronze
emboldened with the gift of her resolution
I braced waters astringent with death and dying things
never to be touched by currents steeped in crimson
Yet you think to cull me from these depths I hold
and dismember my sacred body, classify the divinity of
my soul
The sea, for the immensity of her devotion, is merciless
but it is this vivisection of myself and of my kin which
massacres me
My blood runs blue with ancient indignation
an heirloom passed between centuries of raging ocean
storms
You render me an etching of lacerations—a sacrifice for what you
think is order—
without a drop of thought for my sanctity
Nevertheless, I know I am of my mother's flesh, and though salt
may crystalize in my veins
even in this I will thrive

DRAWING OF A HORSESHOE CRAB

Anna-Lukas Banas



i was born an explorer, knife in hand,
(but love changes you.)

this traveler will gift you a language and sixpence,
crystallized cicadas hanging from a windchime,
their corpses clicking softly with your summer wind.
you keep them singing, you keep them dancing, darling,
(they only have another sunset till they know the song knives sing.)

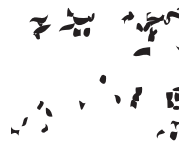
i would hold you so close that you might stamp yourself in me,
that when I look in the mirror,
the ink tracing your veins has transferred over my body,
and i become a map of you ; a map of the knowable world ;


(the wishing - that is permanent.
i must keep reminding myself, the pain is not.)

this wanderer will dive,
translate the markings on the inside of a fin
(stalagmite written, ocean worn edges -
water stings, sharp as any blow.)
i will gift you memories of an eclipse,
whispers of a dark before you burned,
stories even your borrowed tongue, honeyed tongue, cannot sweeten.

WANDERER'S LAMENT

Krusha Bandam






this traveler will gift you vintage pearl clasps.
there's a catch (i slip it into my pocket) as it flows down your
collarbones,
the curve of your neck,
smooth and mathematical and universally perfect,
goosebumps on mortal paradise - heaven, marked up and
trembling,
my breath collecting over your cosm like a fog, storm unbroken.

(irises amidst the white of seafoam,
the wire of the siren's call,
wrapped around your throat)

i know why they put girls like us behind veils.
men do not understand borders,
they will trample lash lines, overturn soil,
mark up the maps our bodies grew over.
(don't worry, i'll go slow as fire, and we can kiss in between the
sweet ash.)
men cannot look into our eyes as the sun does,
but on their knees in the dying twilight, amidst poisonous buds
this traveler wonders - what is love but a final resting place?
(i lick my lips. they are so dry.)



don't bring a knife to gunfight, the men say,
(travelers can keep secrets too.)
i fit in between your lips so perfectly -
a violence time cannot reach ; a violence time cannot bear but envy
do gods understand metal? can you taste the iron?
- a bullet, firmly fastened in your core
(this is something you cannot make, dear,
eternal fire may burn longer, but never hotter.)

this wanderer cannot be changed,
and no matter how far i run,
you are never far.

you can chain me away but there are still gaps between your ribs,
windows in your capillaries,
rose tinted / blood haze / lovesick
(i dream of cool menthol and ricocheting hearts
and craters of a love curdled, ruddy against your face)
i'll crawl out from your living cemetery,
warmed by your core.
(a worm in your core , fallen apple , strangled by the tree)

wanderers were born running -
remember, you hunted me once.
don't you remember?

Krusha Bandamvas a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.

Katie Winslow
COME HOME




Vy Hoang

ANYONE CAN SEE I'M QUITE LUCKY

I wish everything was poetry, and I never had to talk about it.
I wish you thought of me
every time the sky
 washed everything blue
and every time you saw a beetle struggle
 to flip itself from its back.

I look to everything for absolution:
The honey bees, the reflection of every car window,
the silence
 I fill like a prescription.

Suffering demands a witness
the same way sound
requires a material to move through,
the same way a child
just wants you to ask the right questions
 so its stories can pour out
 in an ugly torrent of honesty.



It's easy to be good, I said.
But nothing's easy.
It's not your fault.
That was you.

Nothing is my enemy. Everything
is just another branch
of a tree reaching in desperation
for light or warmth.

And what a blessing it is
to have arms that reach
and a mouth that wants
and legs for you to pull apart.
It's not like you can help it.

I begged God to make me perfect, but he just made me brave.

Laura Whittaker

N'AWLINS

The Big Easy
where everyone likes it hot
the Cajun cuisine
drowning in Tabasco
that fiery jazz
from dear ol' Louis
crawfish boils
sizzling with peppers
an all-day event
The Queen of the Mississippi.
Humid enough to fog up sunglasses
after taking one step out the door.
A place with drive-thru daiquiris
great for the endless bumpy roads.
Watched over by the saints
sent from heaven
or sometimes hell.
Where purple, green, and gold look great together
when that fat Tuesday comes around.
Cries ring out through the French Quarter
“Throw me something, Mister!”
“Geaux Tigers!”
Beads hang in ancient tree branches
bringing color to southern moss.
The riverwalk and streetcars named Desire.



St. Charles, Magazine, Bourbon Street.
Church here,
Voodoo shop there.
Sno-balls sold on every corner
 some sort of escape from the heat.
“The Paris of America,”
the port city filled with dancing, food, and gators.
Where Katrina drove her damned Chevy in the levee
 that’s for sure.
Lake Pontchartrain and Tchoupitoulas.
A place where the saying goes:
 Laissez les bon temps rouler.
and accented voices holler “Where y’at?”
The only place that feels like home,
NoLa

This poem was submitted posthumously by the loving parents of alum Laura Whittaker. The piece underwent standard, anonymous review, and we are delighted to publish it here.



STRANGERS

Alex McRorie



Jordan Webster
THE PUMPKIN COACH



CITY

Carter Norfleet

The streetlamps mimic the moon. Contained within each product of man, a singular celestial body to rival the satellite that hugs the weight of the planet. Below the moons, there is stillness. Warm, cigarette smoke breezes drift languorously through the boughs of sparse foliage here, walking softly as though through an art exhibit. There is no purpose to the quiet, only the instinctive urge to uphold it, to preserve it for others to enjoy. It is so often that silence is broken, that when faced with true auditory nothingness, it is treated as a sleeping baby. The cars don't observe this practice, choosing to be as boisterous as they are during the day. They make up the heartbeat of the city, the thumping rhythm of bass from speakers spelling out the pulse of concrete and electricity. This is very different from home. In the mountains, there is only perfect silence. The nights are black like melting chocolate, and the stars in the sky are beyond description. There are no stars here. When you look up, the red and green lights of airplanes fade in and out miles above. The lights of passing planes aren't looking for anything serious; they aren't looking to settle down like the stars are. And that's okay. I've learned that sometimes what you want is different from what will

inevitably happen, and your wanting has no bearing on the outcome. This isn't because life is cruel, or doesn't want to listen—; only because it can't. I'm sure that if the universe could, it would wrap me up in its infinite kindness and let me know that things are going to be alright. But it can only watch from afar and smile with profound sadness, because it sees what happens in the end. I worry about the world a lot when I walk down the street. I often think that everything around me is going to shit, and then I get grumpy. This is usually when my friend, who is a musician, tells me that I, “am an old man, and need to be more positive.” I say that she is a musician because I think everyone needs a musician as a friend. A musician is a person whose sole purpose is to be done. Once you are done with a piece of music, you're finished. It's out in the world, and it will never ever be just yours again. I heard that somewhere, I think. I often lie awake at night, my face inches from the ceiling in my crawl space-sized loft. The AC is on the fritz. Maintenance is coming by tomorrow morning, says my landlord. I feel gross, but I don't notice because I am trying to remember things I overheard during the course of the day. I have a habit

of writing down words I like when I hear them. It's fun to go back and look at what I've written down, and when I'm feeling sad or bored or whatever, it's nice to have words that I like visit my brain and cheer me up. I sometimes wonder if someone out there has written down something I've said. Not anyone who knows me, but a stranger. I once walked by a land surveyor, or walked up to a land surveyor and stopped, because he was pointing some equipment that looked important at who knows what. I asked him if I could walk by, or would that be disturbing him, and he laughed and said, "You're good, just shooting lasers, that's all." I'm sure his intent wasn't to say something profound. If you said those words to someone three decades ago, they'd laugh. Now, it's as normal as discussing what you got at the grocery. I guess there's hope for me, then. He wasn't planning on making an impact on me, but he did. It's nice to think that maybe, someone out there wrote down something I said, and every so often they remember it and it makes them smile.

w.

NOTHING'S NEW

Vy Hoang



Krusha Bandam

A LOVE LETTER TO MY FUTURE GRAVE

this is a love letter to my future grave.

you will know me better than anyone else. we will spend a lot of time together, i think. you will not have a name; you do not need one. i have loved you before—on june seventeenth, when i trekked into the woods by myself. you sit next to a sleeping beast, the soft spot on the lip of a manmade river, blushing in red clay. and when it rains, you run faster than i've ever seen, a delicate cadence on the slopes of the riverbank, coloring the water with stories men could never read.

everything grows soft in time. i am excited to grow soft with you. maybe my hair will even turn red, a glorious coppery red, a red the beetles will call home, as they burrow deeper into your walls, just like i've always wanted. maybe i'll have neighbors, lovely neighbors, and you'll tell me about the sun in rain soaked slurries, things that drip drip drip in the soil, light captured in every raindrop. we can trade stories, you and i, as you burrow into my skull, moss growing over each hallowed, hollowed out curve.

(do you want to hear one now? on birthdays, i used to blow out a candle. would the wind do that for me, do you think? on a warm night in april, a thing that grows lips, i can teach it english—even telugu, if it wants—every dandelion seed gone drifting a wish made tangible. soft, threaded with starlight.)

Krushbi Bandammas a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.

i can't believe i forgot to mention it—we can see the stars from here. did
your roots grow to match?

... ..

you are good at answering questions. dirt is dirt and the worms dance and
they don't need mouths. not really. maybe you can teach me to turn soil
one day, and i can grow things that aren't crooked. flowering. that's the
word. growing things is hard. language grows too; you cannot own it. you
cannot control the dead. all you can do is translate. this is why i write to
you simply. this is why i write while i'm alive.

how can i speak (write.) of love while my heart is still beating? trees cannot
tattoo their rings. they must grow them, imprint them, brand them onto
their insides and rejoice when they are cut open.

if they dig up my bones, know i'll miss you.
(don't worry, i'll visit you even when i'm gone. let me translate
one last time.)

i love you = i will return on the star-speckled back of a deer,
with its soft nose brushing up against the
summer grass, its tongue click click clicking.
(you probably know this already. is alright if i tell you anyway?)

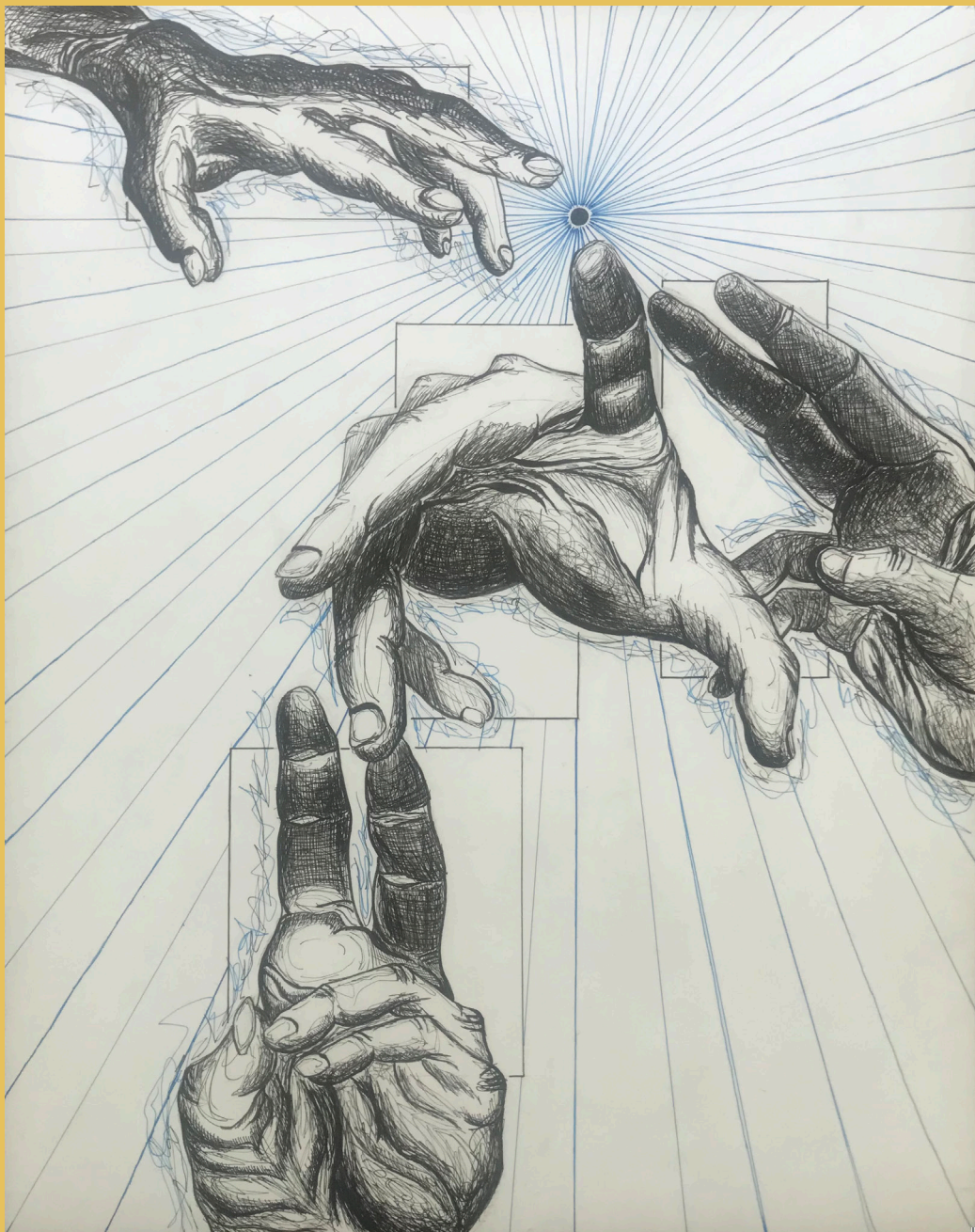
W.



Alex McRorie
PORTRAIT

REACH UP TO DIZZY VACUA

Nathanael Leclercq



LA VITA NUOVA

Jayda Murray





LA VITA NUOVA



Ben Price

PANERA BREAD 434 W. FRANKLIN ST. MARION OAKES, FL

Panera Bread: 434 W. Franklin St. Marion Oakes, FL

TWO STARS/ FIVE STARS – Service Date: 8/25/21

I almost had a wonderful experience at this Panera Bread location. It was Tuesday, 3:43 p.m. in August. The flies bit my ankles as I jaunted past my usual haunts on Franklin and Main Streets (like the family-owned Johnston's Grill and Bobby-Dukes Café), but I needed something new. Something, that Tuesday, which would sate my appetite. I passed this Panera. Their sourdough's yeasty delight sank its hooks into my nose (as did their splendidly simple green logo [how eye catching!]) Well, I heard from my long-time partner, Thomas, about Panera's "Broccoli and Cheddar Soup" and how it was to die for. I walked in.

One of the staff members of this establishment—Xerxes, I wanna say—had a smile wrapped around the bottom half of their face signaling – no, ordering – me to walk forward. Through their sweaty, moppy brown hair and dead eyes, I felt something sinister here. I turned around, but there was no one behind me.

Xerxes looked into my eyes. They pulled me forward with gravitational strength greater than a dwarf star.

I had to eat. I had to explore this subconscious fear

dwelling within me. Xerxes, this sole being with a smile plastered on their unwavering face, stood motionless behind the cashier box. Regular restaurant noise was drowned out by murmurs and whispers. Everything shied away except this moment of intangible attraction between Xerxes and me. I blinked. Then, I stood before Xerxes, even closer now. My breath and theirs mingled in the small space between us. Their overwhelming presence towered over my meek soul.

I whispered, “Could I get a—”

“You, Sheela Mavers, want one broccoli and cheddar soup with fresh bread and a fountain drink. That’ll be ten seventy-nine. Your order number is seventy-five. Listen close, as not to miss it being called. That will be cash, not card. Thanks for coming to Panera Bread,” said Xerxes.

Xerxes knew my every move. They read me. I was too open here. Their illuminating soulless eyes; the sweat-stained green Panera uniform rippled when Xerxes grabbed my crumpled bills from my shaking palm. My eyes glazed over. My mind entered a semi-conscious trance.

What had just taken place? Did I order that food? Where were those words coming from? Did Xerxes’ lips even move?

I took my change and put it into the tip jar overflowing with pennies. I turned, grabbed the soda fountain cup in Xerxes’ extended hand, and sat at the nearest empty table. There was a buzzing coming from within my head.

Bzzzz buzz bbbzzzz brzzzz bbbzzzzzzzzzzbbrrrrrr-
rzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz bzbzbzbzbzbz

“Order seventy-nine! Come pick up your damn food. We’ve been calling for five minutes,” said a voice stemming from the kitchen of this establishment.

That was me. That was my number. I stood from my chair. There was a new sweat stain imprinted on the seat. I shuffled forth and grabbed my order without meeting the piercing gaze of the frustrated employee. I returned to my table. Alone, but with food, which was a cooling bowl of viscous yellow liquid and green chunks of what might be broccoli. The bread, however, was toasted to perfection—a little char and warm enough for butter to spread all over. I glanced up from my tray before I took my first bite.

It's a habit of mine to see how others enjoy their meals right before I dig into my own. I need to know what they think before I taste, then understand why they feel that way after I swallow, but that day in Panera Bread, I was the sole customer. How long had it been like that? The silence grew louder as I looked around to find one other customer. A shot of cold ran through my arms. Goose pimples covered my flesh. All I could think to do was warm myself with cheesy broccoli goodness.

The First Bite:

When one dips their spoon into the nectar of the gods known as “Cheesy Broccoli Soup” from Panera Bread, one momentarily loses consciousness and control stemming from the mixing of aromas that come from the tangy, sharp cheddar and sweet, creamy milk base. A spoonful of the sun is supposed to weigh a ton, but this, this was light, dreamy, and divine power folded from the rays of our golden orb. The cheese mingled with the crunch from the slightly undercooked broccoli and turned my tongue into a dance-off between rivals. The two danced and swung and fought and sparked. Their



fiery footsteps echoed down my throat. The cheese swirled around the broccoli, the broccoli around the cheese. Their eyes interlocked into each other's musky gaze. They embraced in the folds of my stomach. It's true love springing forth from bitter hate.

The Second Bite:

I took a piece of Panera's bread and dipped it into the golden, cheesy goop of a soup. Fresh salty bread and and and—

What. What was this? A horrid texture enveloped my tongue. Stringy fibers wrapped around my mouth like a boa constrictor does its prey. I spat a mouth full of bread and cheese onto the tray before me. Slightly chewed bread, cheese and a long, wiry, black hair sat before me.

Devolved Chaos – “Madness”:

How could they how could they how could they! Do they know me? Everyone here knows who I am. I am Sheela Mavericks. I run this fucking town. This upstart, snotty Panera Bread... this Xerxes, they put this stain and vile hair in my food. I bet they spat in it too.

I did nothing. I brought them business. There was no one here. I alone bring in money. I alone have the say in Marion Oaks. I am the queen of food here. There's nothing here. I am here. Golden delicious sun gloop. The cheese is worse than imitation dog shit. How could they serve this to me?

They will never serve another customer as long as I live in this town. All my lovers of food in Marion Oaks, all my foodies, my friends, my community. I implore you to never touch a filthy Panera

Bread again. How can we stand this corruption of our good name? How can we survive with corporations such as this taking over small businesses like Johnston's Grille?

They're next. You know that. I know that. We're all fucked. Devious, crooked capitalists will ruin us all. We're next in the food chain. Once the foodies and critics and dissenters from corporate praise are seen as a threat (and we ARE), we'll be killed then fed to you, The People.

So, what are we going to do about it? I cannot sit here in silence anymore, suffering with the millions of folks just trying to get an honest meal for a reasonable price.

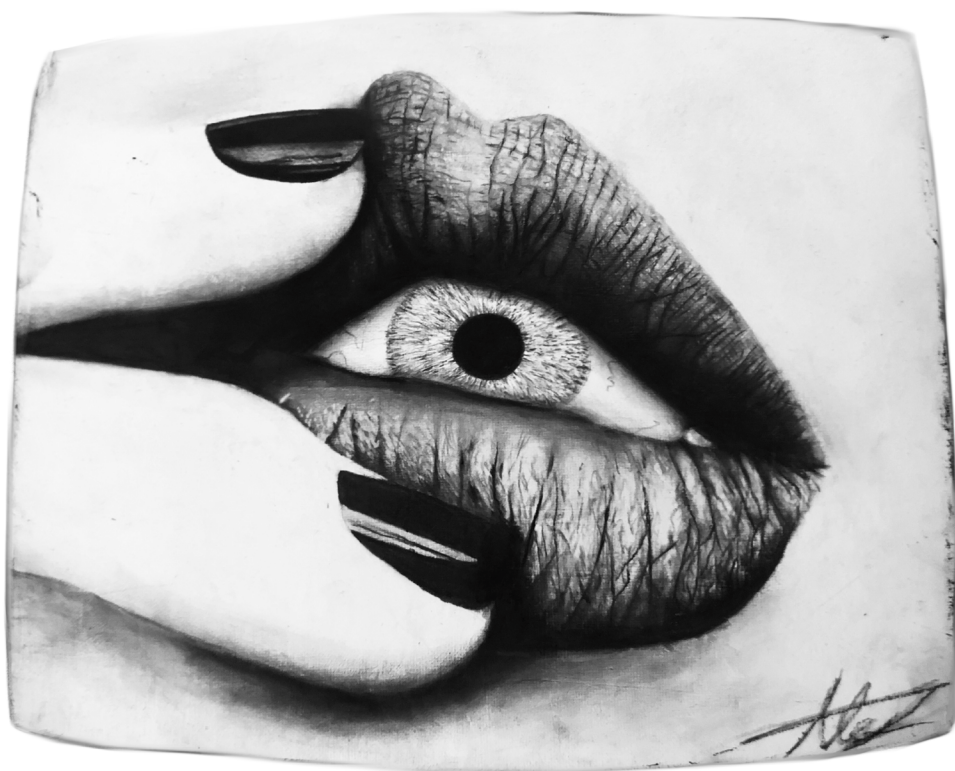
Panera Bread, damn you to hell. I hope someone finds a way to burn you to the ground. I hope I get the chance to watch the fall of your false empire. May your crown be fake; may your throne be brittle; may your rule be brief.

(Two stars for the well mixed Sprite in Panera's soft drink machine.)

-S.M.

W.

Alex McRorie
LIPS



MY PREMATURE DEATH IN A WALMART SUPERSTORE

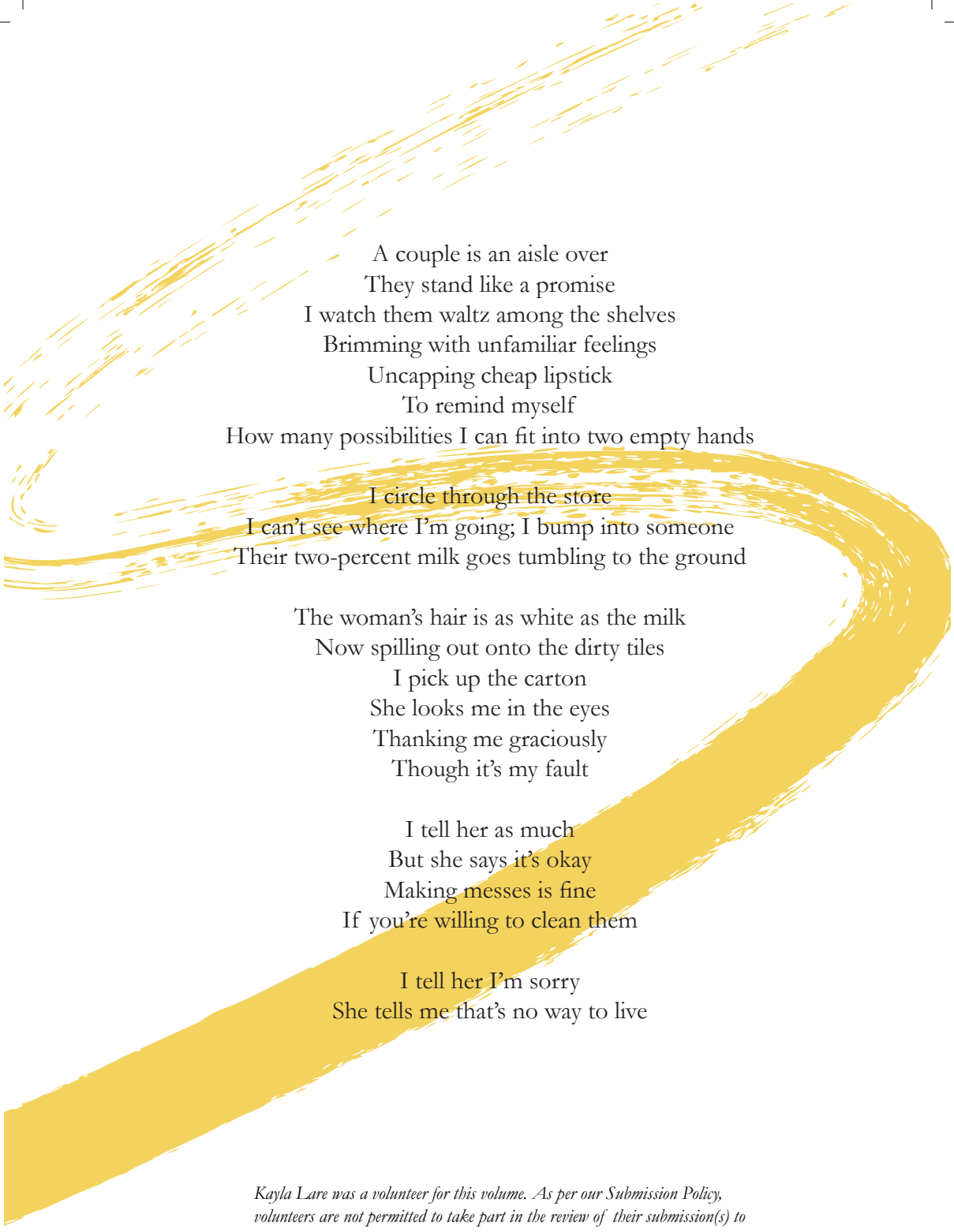
Kayla Lare

Hell isn't lit by fire, it's lit by fluorescents
Fluorescents that cast the shelves in an eerie shadow
That paint pomegranates in an artificial glow
A liminal space, a jump through time
A suspension between necessity and desire

I'm in the cereal section
Between Apple Jacks and Cheerios
Searching for the past in something palpable
There's a small boy next to me
Mourning a box of Lucky Charms
As his mother's nimble fingers grab for the oatmeal
I smile as he whines
Basking in the comfort
Of discovering constants in the midst of chaos

I move past the groceries, my eyes straying
To two teenage girls trying on cheap sunglasses
When one isn't looking
The other tucks a pair into her coat pocket
I wonder absently if I had noticed
When my innocence outran me like this
When I began to think of happiness as something I could steal





A couple is an aisle over
They stand like a promise
I watch them waltz among the shelves
Brimming with unfamiliar feelings
Uncapping cheap lipstick
To remind myself
How many possibilities I can fit into two empty hands

I circle through the store
I can't see where I'm going; I bump into someone
Their two-percent milk goes tumbling to the ground

The woman's hair is as white as the milk
Now spilling out onto the dirty tiles
I pick up the carton
She looks me in the eyes
Thanking me graciously
Though it's my fault

I tell her as much
But she says it's okay
Making messes is fine
If you're willing to clean them

I tell her I'm sorry
She tells me that's no way to live

Kayla Lare was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.

METAMORPHOSIS

Daniel Knorr



GROWING PAINS

Alyssa Giorgino

“Penny
for your
thoughts?”
Well Father,
in these
classrooms saturated by holy, fluorescent lights,
kids are gunned down before they can sprout
and grow.
Bullet holes
pepper
the walls;
a red wave
rises and
recedes,
ebbs and
flows.
You told me
everything
happens
for a reason,
but this decay
and endless
cycle of rot
is godless.



OSAGE ORANGE TREE

Anna-Lukas Banas

Fingertips stick in drips of bitter milk
trickling in tender streams from a split core.
Gentle hands peel apart lush nodes of fruit
sweet perfumed flesh in the mid-Autumn chill,
but taste so bitter throats clot with lost words—
Oh how the Osage Orange can make mute.

I pray, dear tree, for what secrets you keep
each whisper enclosed in vibrant allure
nurtured by roots centuries deep in the earth.
In quiet splendor I come forth to seek
this too—

MOUNTAIN MORNING

Jeremy Byrne



Robert Carl Swann
SCBMH



DUST

Will LaMarche

Stardust to table dust,
And back again, someday, I trust

A mug placed slightly too hard
Something you'd never discard

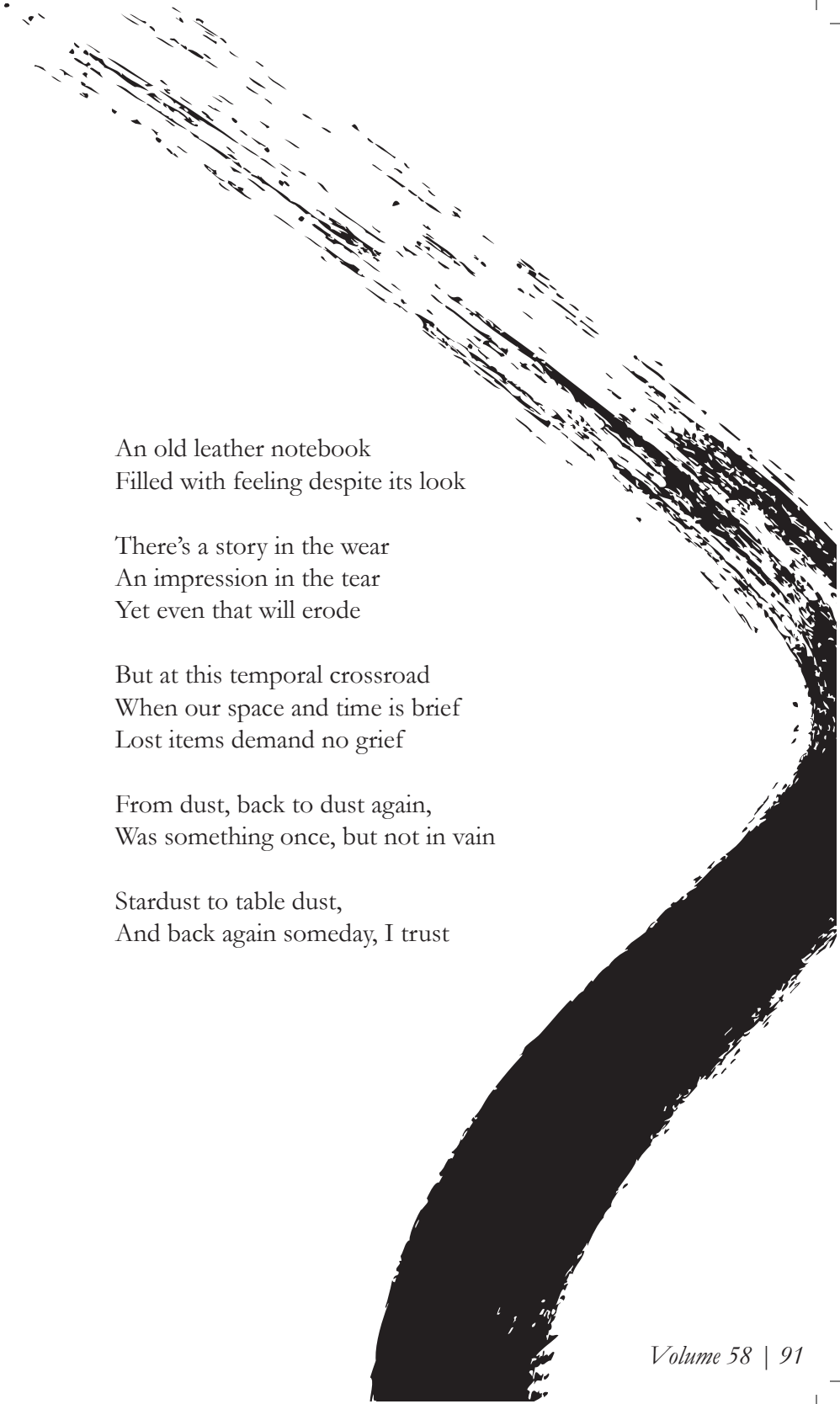
Some dirt tracked in from a hike
On some shoes you didn't think you'd like

A keychain starting to chip
Held lovingly in your grip

A ring you wear everyday
Even when rust breaks away

Some headphones built to last
May be lost and join the past

Will LaMarche was a volunteer for this volume. As per our Submission Policy, volunteers are not permitted to take part in the review of their submission(s) to prevent subjectivity and bias. The acceptance and consideration of their piece(s) is decided by the editor in chief based on a pre-established critique process.



An old leather notebook
Filled with feeling despite its look

There's a story in the wear
An impression in the tear
Yet even that will erode

But at this temporal crossroad
When our space and time is brief
Lost items demand no grief

From dust, back to dust again,
Was something once, but not in vain

Stardust to table dust,
And back again someday, I trust



MAZE OF: VULNERABILITY

Andrea Guevara Molina

Christopher Murphy

MIRROR-BREAKER





**VOL
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*Shaniya Woolridge photographed by
Delaney Urbuk & Cora Jones*

COLOPHON

Printed by Triangle Web Printing in
514 United Drive, Durham, NC 27713

Typefaces used are Binjay for logotype, 30 point Teko for headers, 15 point Garamond Bold for bylines, and Garamond Regular, Bold and Italic for body copy

Pages printed on 70# Lynx Smooth Text White, cover printed on 100# Lynx Smooth Cover White

Created with Adobe InDesign 2024
1,200 copies distributed free of charge on NC State's campus in Raleigh, NC

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