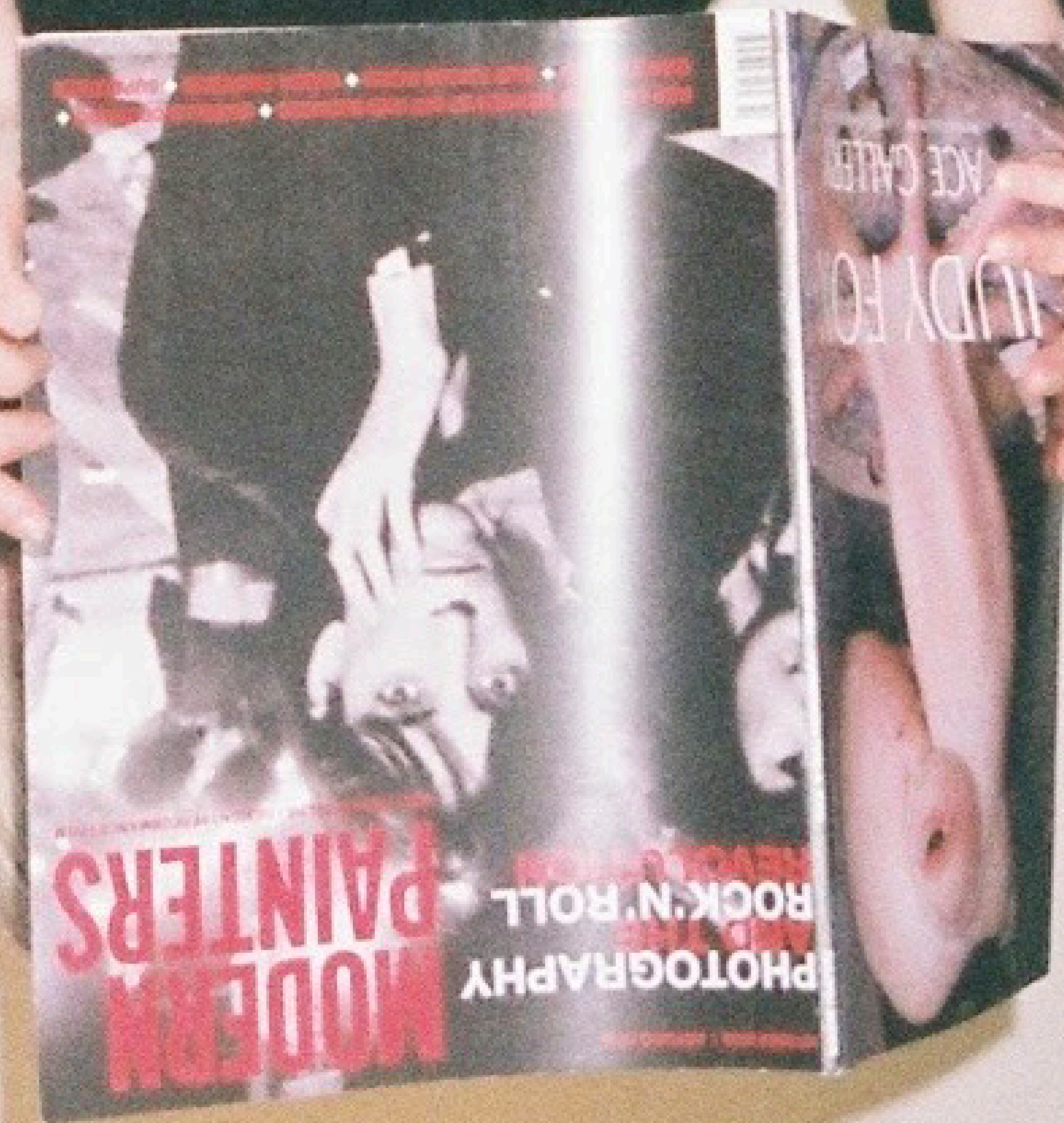




Main SQUEEZE

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Main SQUEEZE



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Sam Hennessee

Eden, North Carolina

i don't fuck you 'cause it's cute i do it 'cause
we broke down in the taco bell parking lot,
and you stopped me
from breaking down too.

we ate Crunch Wraps and talked about how
some kids want to party but
that doesn't mean they don't feel too.

we shared your last cigarette. my car started
an hour later and i pretended that
everything we said didn't matter, even
though it did.

it really did.

these days it's hard to just sit
and watch the snow. gotta have
a drink. gotta smoke some weed. gotta
drown me out.

'cause i don't see you anymore.

at least not around here. i see you in my
bruised kneecaps. in empty wallets.

in 65 mph speed limit signs.

but you aren't Adam.

i ain't Eve.

you're barely Samson, you never even let me
cut your hair.

Julia Saunders

Ben's Paint Splattered Teletubbies Shirt

the other night Ben cried
on the dirty floor of our apartment
his mom spent twenty minutes on the
phone with him
yelling that he couldn't tell their family he was trans
that she missed her little girl
I'd never seen him more upset
back propped against the coffee table
tears and snot running down his face
his hands twisted up
in a painted splattered Teletubbies shirt
when his mom finally hung up
he looked at me
and asked if transitioning was worth it
I squeezed his hand
and told him that his happiness was worth everything
I don't think he believed me
I sat with him until he fell asleep
afraid to leave him in case he relapsed
school got too stressful for him
he started skipping classes
and he wouldn't come to meals
I did everything I could to keep him going
but he's home now
living with his mom again

Matthew Watson

Blot and Mass Spectrometry

I'M NOW ALLERGIC TO certain types of art. This new phenomenon spreads across my skin like a strawberry rash.

Do their protein compositions mimic snake venom, but with an L-chiral structure? The benign stacks have flagged molecular danger by stuffing themselves in. They wear the signal protein receptacle like a bursting children's suit.

Maybe these false flags are okay. I heard pine nuts are expensive and linked to esophageal cancer. You could hang out in the humid winters of Thailand with nylon-clad Mormons and never touch any pine nuts. Perhaps my defenses are correct about these art allergens. The lymph harbor a national defense system trained well enough to recognize terrorism.

It's not something we have control over. Maybe you wouldn't have so many allergens if your parents didn't coddle you from all stimulus, or if your mother hadn't smoked throughout her pregnancy. I think everyone hates your dead wolf poem and we're just too polite. Lynch has made better films. There are a lot of new post-modernism videos online and that is why you have good taste. Do you think I can still have good taste? I almost gave a dollar to the Jerry McGuire pyramid.

Attractive women and balding yogis preach mindfulness but you can't be mindful to digest art. A mindful moment mercifully whatevers us from art. It's a restorative fast that when practiced intermittently will induce youthful autophagy. Begin recycling yourself. Be cold. Really, it's not the wolf poem itself but your approach. Everyone knows the difference between microwaving a potato and baking one. The language you chose was chemically more like Pepsi. I know it's safe to eat artificial strawberry but why would I want to? The sugar-pink milkshakes at Carl's Junior numb my hands and the whole atrium smells like oil and salt. That's something you can always add and never kill anyone. At least not immediately. Just add a little salt.

RIGHT:
Scott Garriott
**Faded Historical Flower Movement
(Detail)**



Alexander Palacios

Tracing Color

WRAPPED IN THE SLEEPING bag her parents had shared in Yellowstone, Annie lay on the bed with her feet against the wall waiting for the raspberry sunlight to clean away the lingering squirms of lysergic confusion, but instead she learned how powerless the sun can be. Skitters of color danced across pale surfaces like her stomach, her wrists, the walls, and the bathroom sink. Her veins hummed in remembrance of everything she saw on her eyelids. If she held her fingers close together they vibrated, and it felt good to stretch. Her body was one of the bridges stretching across the water groaning under the weight of traffic, swaying in the winds of April. She went for a run to slow her mind.

Annie cut through the park blocks heading for the river, but she had to stop when she came across the commotion outside her old apartment building on 11th and Columbia. The front steps where she dropped a watermelon last summer were lined with yellow tape. Police officers filled the sidewalk, and one holding a notepad talked to a little blonde boy with caramel skin. A small crowd formed across the street.

A middle aged woman with a large nose tapped Annie on the shoulder and asked if she'd seen what happened. Her nose hid secrets.

“No. I didn't see anything.”

“I wonder what happened to her,” said the woman.

“Who?”

The woman pointed out a pair of horizontal legs at the top of the steps. Annie imagined all the time throughout time she'd spend in that waste position over the course of forever.

“Did you know her or something?”

“No, but I used to live there.”

“When I was looking down from my kitchen I recognized her. She used to come into my store all the time. Did you hear all the screaming? Is that why you’re crying?”

“I didn’t hear anything. I was just on a run.”

“Oh, you’re a jogger. You’re not dressed like a jogger. My sister’s into all that stuff. You know, you kind of remind me of her son. He’s a weird kid. No offense. He considers himself an artist because one of his paintings ended up in that museum next to Fred Meyer. Kept calling me telling me to see the painting. Well I went. It had pretty colors I guess, but I don’t know. Honestly I don’t think it’s very good. Jesus, is that blood?”

Paramedics lifted the girl at the top of the steps onto a stretcher and wheeled her into the back of an ambulance that drove away without flashing lights or siren. Annie couldn’t stop thinking about racing shopping carts down the hill next to her aunt’s house with her sisters and the boys from Guam who lived across the alley. She was small for her age so they let her ride in the cart up the hill after each race. Nobody ever lost. She couldn’t shake from her mind the vibration of the wheels on the asphalt, or the sudden jerk from the curb at the bottom, or the seconds that stretched before she landed in the tall grass.

What she wouldn’t give to float like that.

The crowd shifted focus when a bald man came out of the building behind them.

“What a horrible way to start the day,” said the woman.

“I know. Just terrible. Especially for the kid,” said the man.

“What kid?” asked Annie.

“Didn’t you see what happened? I watched the whole thing. At first it sounded like they were having an argument. It all just got so out of hand,” said the man.

The man curled his lip inward, shaking his head.

“What did you see?” said Annie.

“Well I have to talk to the police, but basically it was a mother and daughter. They were fighting and it just escalated. At first I thought nothing of it because it died down so fast and out of nowhere, but when I looked out my window the kid was just sitting on the steps alone, and I thought that’s kind of weird. So I kept watching, and then the daughter came out screaming like ‘get out, get out, you need to calm down’. But that’s when I noticed the mother had this kitchen knife. She wasn’t like trying to stab her or anything, she was just holding it and shaking. Then the kid started yelling at the top of his lungs, and I think the daughter made a move for the knife. I guess that’s when it happened. That’s when I called the cops.”

“So the mom stabbed her?”

“Here’s what I’ll say: Before they went inside she was screaming about the daughter’s boyfriend. It was hard to hear what she was saying, but multiple times I heard her calling him a ‘spick’. I have to go talk to the officers,” said the man.

The crowd dispersed. The woman shook her head and touched Annie on the arm again.

“I know it’s sad, but these things happen all the time. It’s best not to dwell on it. Don’t cry.”

“I don’t think I’m crying.”

The woman nodded and turned around to go back to her building. Annie stopped her.

“What’s your nephew’s name? I want to find his painting.”

Annie called me later that day, and we went to the art museum together. I could tell she kept her promise and had taken way too much in silent darkness. The evidence revealed itself in the way she chewed the inside of her cheek, and the way her eyes traced every color. When we found the painting she was silent for a minute. It was a giant canvas painted orange in heavy strokes. The paint was so thick it felt like a sculpture.

A thin green line traveled down the left side. I told Annie I didn't get it. She spent the rest of the afternoon regarding me with stories of Yellowstone, and shopping cart races, and cruel mothers and the sensations she learned to relish while moving between cracks in the clouds.

Halyn Gwaltney

Sunday

it's time to leave
but take the warmth with you
anointed in today
our color palettes colliding
into deeper intimacy and understanding
history allows us to be in sync;
breathing heavily
new arrivals and the sunset bleeding
 through windshield reflections
i'm done being proud
make me soft
make me full of
make me full grown

Jay Firebrand

Morbid Kid

When I was 12 I wanted to drown. What I mean is I told
my momma,
and she said to me I was the most selfish kid she'd ever met
Go grab a rope, she said. You can jump from the rafters,
she said.

Let me teach you the noose
I guess what I'm trying to say: is that the world
felt longingly
toward the somewhere else, And nothing felt like a better
option than
this something.

What I mean is that I wanted to change. So I swallowed the
bottle of pills

Don't worry; I swallowed a gallon of milk and ran, and all
of it sloshed inside me,

The milk I mean. Momma didn't know what I did.

No one ever really does and it really didn't matter because I
was the wrong thing.

The gross thing

I wanted to run away Momma said, go, you'll still be you
Momma said.

Don't matter where you go you will still be you,
Momma said.

If you can't be happy with what you have you never will be.

I wanted to be happy, I asked does any of this get easier?

If you are depressed now she said: let me tell you life's
gonna be a bitch.

Toughen up or run away, you coward.

But would my stepfather stand outside my

room at night
and mutter to the cats about the slut sleeping in my bed if I
went somewhere else?
Or would I still be the selfish girl who wanted to kill myself.
They always say to the suicide kids “you’ll only pass your
pain forward”
so you bare your back and let it press in.
You cover your skin so the hurt can end somewhere.
Better me than you; better me than you, I think.
What I mean is that change feels so bad. It’s the worst right
before you do it.
For example: our love feels better on a bed with springs.
Maybe I could be clearer. I’m glad the dogs ate our bed,
I like it when things change. It’s easier to see goodness
in newness.
And It slows the painful spread of badness through oldness.
I am glad the dogs ate our bed, I like having a bed I was
never a slut in,
you never knew me when I was a slut in my bed.
Or that I used to be a grown man’s plaything
I guess I never figured out where to go
Maybe I never wanted to go somewhere. I think I wanted to
go to someone.
I used to steal my neighbors’ internet. You used to like my
posts that I made on facebook.
You said Let’s have a meme battle.
You said I was a dork. I said I needed a friend.
You sent me your number and I called that night; walking
my dogs in the dark
and I told you I wanted to drown,
You asked me why? In that moment something slid out
of line.
and started running back to that house. It ran up and down
the halls and swung

from the ceiling jumping up and tapping on all the
door frames

I said because I feel lost. I said because I feel sad. I said
because I feel lonely

You said me too, and it all sloshed inside me

But it probably wasn't the milk

Sam Hennessee

Things That I Am Afraid Actually Happened But I Know Did Not

I.

i took a needle with a light teal thread
and used the needle to
dig
into the backs of my knees in order to pull out
and tie my veins together,
cinching tight
and ripping them with their force.
no blood comes out and i am not in pain,
just in misery

II.

i sit on a couch in an apartment
that i think i was in once, maybe a spring break ago,
covered in my own vomit,
alone
and the sun shown through the blinds warm
against my back.
i can't look down
because i know i ripped the tattoo
on my left bicep off
and my arm is bleeding

III.

a river stands before me.
it is the middle of a gray day but
no one else is here, just my car
and me.
i am not wearing shoes
and step on blackberry thorns
as i walk into the water
to drown

IV.

i light a cigarette in the classroom and
everyone looks at me.
no one stops me, they just
look and breathe like they can't imagine
why i'm doing this. i bite
down on the filter and the ash drops
and burns
my bare thigh.

V.

i eat baby carrots in my
2002 Ford Taurus
and click my off brand zippo lighter
that has a lady playing a guitar, dressed
as a pinup girl. it cuts her in
half
when i open it
and i bite my pinky off
with the same force it takes
for the baby carrots.

Julia Saunders

Wolff's Law

they say that your bones adjust
to the weight that's added on to them
my bones have adjusted
to every pound brought on by risperidone
and clomipramine
and depakote
to every depression fueled ice cream binge
the brain's not a bone though
can it adjust
to the weight of another diagnosis
another accusing text from dad
another flashback in the middle of class
another cousin overdosed on painkillers
what else will test it
how long until the razors
and pill containers look tempting
how much can it withstand

Paloma Maria Freitas

London

My father makes an international call to tell me Notre Dame is burning.

But we end up arguing about whether or not the chicken place we went to in Ottawa was a Nandos. He comes back around again to young basque men and how I need to marry one. I could divorce the guy after my father died if I wanted. As a wedding present, he would even throw out that landscape of the road through the dark woods hanging in the dining room and let me paint the back stairs white.

Tyler Noland

Things That Have Happened to Me Since Leaving California

I skipped my second class on halloween to meet up with a boy I thought was exciting. I drank half a jug of sangria at 2pm and fell asleep on his bed when he left for rehearsal. It was the most comfortable bed I've ever slept in.

I smoked my first cigarette outside the dorms. I had to go on a run directly afterward.

I cried during my only run in with the police. He had on black nail polish and only referred to me by my last name.

My friends convinced me I had a crush on a guy who smelled like stale laundry and an over cooked cinnamon muffin. On our date he told me his main interests were cats and dogs. I let him kiss me so it wouldn't be so awkward. I cried in the shower for an hour the next morning because I could still feel his hands on my upper thigh.

He made me spend an hour explaining to him why we couldn't go out again.

A girl I'd just met told me about every sexual encounter she'd had in the last three months. She then asked me, "where's the craziest place you've ever had sex?" I said I hadn't.

She said, "good, keep it that way."

My best friend and I flirted with some italian doctors who didn't know what otters were.

I lost my virginity the weekend my roommate went out of town to break up with her boyfriend. Afterward when I texted

my friend about it, he wanted to have a conversation about the times we kissed in high school.

My 24 year old coworker asked me if I wanted to climb on top of a hotel at midnight. For a week after that I thought I might be in love with him.

I drank homemade alcohol every weekend for three months. I stopped hooking up with a guy partly because he didn't know what outsourcing was. He was very sweet and sometimes I feel sad.

My roommate and I smoked out of apple pipes for six months. I think we both felt like we were experiencing the parts of high school we missed.

My best friend and I met a guy wearing a rick and morty shirt while looking for clubs in berlin. We ditched him by hiding in front of closed mall. Somewhere there is a photobooth strip he convinced us to take with him.

One night we all drank so much bang we felt drunk and threw a dance party in the park.

I gave my spotify to a guy I went on a date with. We never saw each other again but he frequently listens to my playlists. I never felt so simultaneously flattered and insulted.

I think I fell in love at 3:30am in lithia park.

Nicole Arntson

Nothing Has to Be Good

we facetime when we don't want to die or be here either
scanning photographs onto photographs and receipts
and **nothing has to be good**

“oh my god i can't wait to sit across from you
and heart vomit”

moving all over the city for second chances
addicted to reinventing ourselves and changing our faces-
on the day we wake up

i'll stop picking my lips

you'll stop spilling secrets on the internet

and we'll pick tangerines, like we can any season

i hate photographs of myself

you talk about your dreams but you've never done anything
about them

you said you would but never did

all of the things we said we would but never did or couldn't
over diners and spilt coffee and shower beers

like a crumpled receipt

like the first time you hated the city

but you're so passionate about being here because death

and i just want to be beautiful

a playlist that spills your secrets

songs you'd dance naked to

it's cold today and i'm never warm enough

chest, still

wind kissing my thighs

leaving suddenly, like wind

color block what you like and what you don't

i don't smoke anymore

so my lungs can carry the weight of things you can't say
nice and blue

NEXT PAGE:
Isabel Underwood
Honeybaby





Jazzmin Li
Home

Sam Hennessee

Placeholder

My skin is so pale it's translucent. When the sun comes out for the summer, the indian summers, I never tan. I just become less see through, less plastic, less glass, less gelatin. If I held the light from my phone to my chest I would be able to see all the way to my heart, watch it beat, pump blood all through my veins. I don't have the same heart that I've always had, the tissue replaces itself 1% every year. At least that's what the Swedes say. I believe the Swedes.

Have you ever felt something that feels like an end? End of an era end of a phase. End of a life. We are consumed by ends thinking that they lead to progress, thinking they're necessary. Unfortunate that we cannot outsmart the genius of other ends, ends that have always known better, ends seem divine. Things end when we're living them, it's hard to tell. We guess it was greater than the sum of its parts.

Where did the parts go that I didn't want to lose? I am held back by the roadtrips to Forest Grove, closets where my summer clothes dropped to the floor, of my own enoughness. I wade through rivers of screaming matches. It didn't feel like an end then, only a pause. I kept freckles, the scar on my arm from when Arielle was on meth trying to fight me with a knife, The imagined progress. Blood doesn't dry pretty so we scrub it off with heart-shaped sponges and water from the bathtub. I try not to keep the stains.

I do ugly, mean things, lash out when I'm hurting, like the rest of us. I worried too much about what was going to happen when I die and forgot to ask what would happen to everyone else. We still decompose after we get embalmed. It's just

slower and worse for the environment.

I just remember four in the morning. What the overhead light looked like. My window felt like closed. What the drywall would feel like under my nails, about how much it bothers me that our horizons never match. The wall at the bottom of the stairs felt like as it cracked against my weight. My skin feels like when it tears in the cold.

What does it feel like to be wanted? More than wanted? Desired, obtained, thrown aside, the repetition that perpetuates it all. Thirty-five percent of smokers don't think their cigarette butts are litter because they seem so small. Insignificant. How small. And insignificant. How we only tell ourselves that we want the things that we want in an undesirable quantity until we finally find the one we do want.

Now it's not just cigarettes anymore. I watch friends snort coke off of iPhones talking about how their job at McDonald's doesn't pay the bills like it used to. We drank horse water. Hose water. Piss water. Beer. The pregnancy tests they sell at the dollar store really do work. So does the coke I guess. I wouldn't know. Never needed to.

RIGHT:
Susannah Perillat
Exit



Linda Crate

it's beyond me

you hide behind the myth that you're good,
but i don't know if any goodness resides in you;
a good actor perhaps but i doubt person—
don't try to convince me of your virtue,
when your demons have smiled and smirked
and taunted me all these years later;
i remember how my voice was rendered moot
somehow only your yes mattered not my no—
those three stolen kisses,
and when you tried to force yourself upon me;
but that adrenaline rush kicked in and gave me strength
enough to push you aside and run to my mother's car
like it were a getaway vehicle—
she couldn't pull out of your driveway fast enough,
and years later on another rainy day you found
me in college;
said to me with that evil grin, "i bet you
don't remember me"
when you know full well i could never forget—
so every time someone tells me you're a good man my mind
calls them a liar, a fool, a false prophet;
it has nothing kind to think of them in that moment
yet i always keep my silence because people believe what
they want—
some won't ever believe me even though my story is truth,
and that rubs me the wrong way;
how you've convinced anyone you're a good man
is beyond me.

Sophia Santana

Time

I stopped believing in the linearity of time
when I began to find myself again and again
on your doorstep.

Even as different faces presented themselves to me,
it was you I always searched for.
It was the hole you left I could not fill.

I stopped believing in the linearity of time
when I began to find myself again and again
in the hallway
outside the locked bedroom door where I cried
to be let in
and no one answered.

A part of my soul broke off there,
and stayed.

A part of me that will always be cold and alone,
no matter whose arms I wrap myself up in.

I stopped believing in the linearity of time
when it again and again refused to heal my wounds
While they tear open again each time the earth rounds the
sun and

The day we buried you rises up again in
my throat again

Like water filling lungs

Like no time has passed at all

Like the world is going to end

Like I'm dying I'm dying I'm dying I'm dying I'm

Waiting for the day when time can sort
itself out again.
Cogs turning, reuniting me with the rest
of the world
that left me for dead a long time ago.
But I am not dead.
My soul, shaken to pieces, and hidden away
feigning death like the freeze response of prey.

I wait.
For time to trace my skin again,
to welcome me back from this penumbra
that leaves me
just outside the light of waking,
for the color to climb warmly back to the skin
of my face.

I'll believe again in the linearity of time when
all my waiting comes to an end,
When hope no longer leaves me abandoned
outside the
same locked rooms,
When my soul wanders back to me and
Lays her head in my lap and
we laugh and we braid each other's hair.
I thought the world left me for dead a long
time ago.
But I am not dead.
Like a sapling resting softly under snow,
I play an ironic game of waiting
for the time I stopped believing in
to set me free.

Reilly Nycom

Untitled

I don't have time
To wear the selves
I once wanted to be.

They sit in my closet on wire hangers
Waiting for a body I don't have.

Standing in front
Of my full-length mirror,
I model photographer,
Seamstress,
And film director.
Even beekeeper,
Pushed to the very back.

Each fits like a heavy suit of armor,
Made for someone else.

One day I dream of a three-piece suit,
Crafted from the fibers
Of ambitions I haven't discovered.

A perfect fit
For the self I hide
Under layers of ill-fitting attitudes
And shoes made for other feet.

Lindsey Bellefeuille

Small Talk

Did you change your hair?

She had.

Why did you cut it? It was so pretty before.

Did you hear about the weather?

They had to close the freeway again.

“Woah, that’s crazy”

And the conversations went pretty much like that

Until she died.



Sophia Santana

The Uncertainty of the Self

Nicole Arntson

All My Friends' Boyfriends Are Dying

We keep saying, "Fuck death"
as if the words serve as shields
All my friends' boyfriends are dying
She says presumably we are dying, too

Each one feels like a broken arm
and we can only get so many memorial tattoos
We mail each other art supplies and I convince everyone to
move to Oregon
All our advice from now on is, "Don't wait"

Making collages, eating tangerines
We take more portraits of each other
to look back on with wrinkled hands
More "good morning" texts, more "I love you" texts

We're more intentional now,
passionate about gratitude and defying fear
I hate that I wouldn't feel this alive
if it weren't for all the car accidents

She says she is reborn
She wouldn't have finally moved,
or written that book,
or started really living
if it weren't for all the car accidents

Julia Saunders

Times I thought my world was ending

That time I missed a step on the stairs and slid down two
flights and
all the breath flew out of my lungs

That time my ice cream fell off my cone onto my new
velcro shoes
the ones with sparkly kitties
and my socks got soaked through with mint chip

That time a boy on the playground saw me kiss my
friend on the cheek
and all his friends laughed and called me gay—
turns out they were onto something

That time a car rammed into us on
the Bay Bridge headed into San Francisco,
dragging us into three more cars—
I woke up the next day with shoulder pain so bad that I
couldn't stop crying

That time that I said I hated mom for making me do chores
and dad bent me over and slapped me so hard
that it hurt to sit down for days—
mom cried the whole time

That time that I heard heavy footsteps in the hallway
and emerged from my bedroom to see paramedics rushing
past with dad unconscious on a stretcher

That time I watched dad lie on a hospital bed
half his skull removed
and his left side paralyzed

That time a tv remote almost splintered into pieces against
mom's head
dad standing there
unapologetic for launching it at her

That time that CPS workers came and sat me down
they asked if I felt safe—
What do you say to something like that?

That time my cousin downed a bottle of pills—
I cried into my brother's only dress shirt
at the funeral

Kei Oni Garcia

Awake

And so you say that you condemn love
When in reality your blood is too loud
In the morning when you wake up
For you to truly hate anything
Other than yourself

Emily Perry

In your arms

In your arms I lie tonight,
While thoughts still race in my head.
Can you hear them?
Will they wake you up? Will you be mad at me?
I'm scared—what if I toss and turn so much you kick me
off the bed?
I think I have to go to the bathroom—when I get back, I'll
be cold.
Will you still want to hold me?
What if I fart?
Am I doing this wrong, me in your arms?
Wait—let me readjust.
I'm a side sleeper. No, a stomach sleeper.
I can't decide.
What if I have a funny joke, or an idea, would you want
to hear it?
Your arms are new and unexplored territory,
Where no me has gone before.
Get it?
Oh, you're asleep already.
I suppose I should as well.
Wait!
I'm told I mumble in my sleep—I hope that
doesn't wake you.
I'm sorry, I wish I were better at being in your arms.
No.
Stop.
Deep breath in,
Deep breath out.

I'll be okay.
You'll be okay.
We'll be okay.
This is okay.

This must be what infinity feels like.
I like it.
I promise not to worry so much, next time I'm
in your arms.

Good night.

Emily Perry

Blockbuster

When I went to the last Blockbuster on Earth,
I thought of you, so I got you a sticker.
The look on your face when I showed you
Made my whole day.
Are you still going to put it on your new laptop?

When I went to where Jurassic Park was filmed,
I thought of you, and sent you a video.
You were jealous, and I asked if you wanted
a souvenir.
You said yes and asked for a T-Rex.
Are you still going to bring Sexy REXY to LA?

I gave you the dino so you'd have something to
remember me by.
Little did I know, I made a bigger impression on you than
I realized.
That is to say, I'm sorry it took me two months to realize
you were flirting with me.
It was all like a bad Romantic Comedy, where the girl
doesn't notice at first.

But now it's obvious:
When we showed each other our short films,
When I sent you my first movie review,
When you told me to ignore the Mean Girls
at work,
When we talked for an hour about the Back to the
Future series

When you gave me free Junior Mints even though you
weren't supposed to,
When you Facetimed me as I walked home, made sure I
got back okay.
It was all right there, in front of me.

Now we're almost strangers again,
With me checking my phone
To see if you've responded to my memes,
Trying to hold on to what's left, to have a
conversation again.
You said I can do better,
Yet I can't seem to get you out of my head.

Now you're off to LA, off to live your dreams,
And I wonder if it was me who made you want to go,
After what I said to you on pain meds and period cramps;
In that haze I thought talking would make things better.

My problem is, I bottle things up
And put them away,
Where I tend to forget them,
Until it's super inconvenient.
I've opened those bottles before,
And I don't like remembering what happened those times.
That's why intimacy makes me nervous;
That's why you made me nervous.

I wanted to make something work,
I understood the distance, the risk.
You wanted to keep things simple,
You didn't want to go down that path.
And I've come to understand that that's okay.

You told me you cried when I was leaving for school;
I cried when you told me you decided to leave.
Since I'm not there to see you off,
It feels like the credits are already rolling.

I hope we can at least stay friends,
And catch up every so often,
Keep up our Snapchat streak,
Maybe facetime once in a while,
Just to check in.

Thank you for all that you've given me.
Not just the posters and old merch,
But the fond memories of sitting behind concessions,
Of cleaning theaters and arguing about Star Wars.
Next time I go to the last Blockbuster on Earth,
I'll get you a shirt, like you asked.
And I hope someday to find your films there,
An aisle away from mine.

Reba Crawford Hayes

I am a free bird and no net ensnares me

Maybe that was true until it wasn't
and I couldn't tell if it was just the lingering
feeling of you in my room or if it was
something more real more raw more unknown
blowing through the hallway
taking me by surprise
poking me in the small of my back.
In the morning I woke up and the warmth
was coming off you in waves.
I tried to remember the feeling to store
it up for cold moments like keeping
a light for the dark but it was slipping
through my fingers.
I came home in the afternoon and stripped my bed.
You were the bird.

Jordan Skidgel

Pancakes

ALL I WANTED WERE SOME goddamn pancakes. But Mole had to take a piss and we were near an empty park and Blaire wouldn't stop playing with that stupid lighter. In the early hours of the morning there was no one around. Mole figured, what's the harm? So there we were, Mole in the bushes, Blaire and I on each side, keeping watch but doing a shit job of it. I was focused on a bird ripping a worm from a tree, wondering if I were a bird or a worm, and Blaire kept playing with that lighter. Flicking it, open, closed. Open, closed. Open. And then she dropped it.

It was four am on a Thursday morning because Buckwheat always threw the best mid-week parties. He was stupid like that. But we kept coming to them, so I guess we were all stupid like that. The cops showed up around three, so we booked it. Mole was the only one not too crossfaded to drive, so Blaire and I sat in the backseat arguing over which Dick Van Dyke character was the best.

My cloudy brain saw a 24-hour diner sign, and fuck did I want some pancakes. So we swerved for the exit and drove for the neon sign until Mole's empty Hydroflask caught up to him.

And then the park. And then the lighter. Falling. On fire. The park was on fire.

Mole turned, stream still strong, eyes wide on the growing flames. I was still watching the bird and the struggling half-dead worm when Blaire grabbed my arm and dragged me to the car. Mole ran slightly in front of us, trying to pull up his pants as he went. None of us thought to stomp out the fire. None of us thought to check if anyone was around. None of

us thought about being seen.

We drove the rest of the way to the diner for our pancakes. The fire burned on but my mind was back on some sweet, syrupy breakfast food.

The pancakes were within sight when red and blue flashed behind us. We turned and laughed for the poor bastards that they were there for. And then they surrounded our car. We poor bastards.

The pancakes were almost on the table when the cops walked in. Asked for some kids with our description. Were pointed in our direction. We stood and tried casually to walk to the door. We nodded and smiled at the cops, attempting to slip by. We were almost out. And it wasn't until I was on the ground with the cops around us and my hands twisted behind my back and pancakes still on my mind that I realized I was the worm.

Carlie Young

We're Fucked!

We're fucked because your family says we're fucked
and because we should have gotten married in a church
instead of a bookstore
even though my dress showed cleavage and yours was off-
white instead of virgin
and because of this whole person loving person thing is a
flash in the pan
but yes, we're fucked because of the church.

We're fucked because of that summer I tried to learn how
to whistle.

We're fucked because of that time I was so tired I kissed the
leather interior of my truck
and it took me fifteen seconds to figure out that it was not
your thigh.

We're fucked because somehow we are exactly like
my grandparents.

We're fucked because of that time I waited for you on
a rooftop,
and you were late and I fell asleep,
and I woke up to a bunch of Japanese business men staring
at me
and one of them said "are you alright darling?" in an
English accent
and I screamed "toire!" because I'm not fit
to be in society

and I ran away but when you texted me
“where are you?”
I walked back up and said I hadn’t waited at all.

We’re fucked because not only can you sleep,
but you can sleep through anything,
even two AM aggressive scone making.

We’re fucked because my dog never liked you and you never
liked her and then she died
and then I fell in love just as hard with the dog you replaced
her with.

We’re fucked because bartenders never card the nineteen
year old in the wedding dress.

We’re fucked because I met you too early
to be patient.

We’re fucked because sometimes I think you like that I have
to be stoned enough to stand.

We’re fucked because of that summer I got obsessed
with tea
even though you are allergic to oranges and hibiscus and
chamomile and bergamot
and I stuffed our studio with things that could possibly
kill you.

We’re fucked because I would probably follow
you anywhere.

We’re fucked because all of my opinions are now
your opinions.

We're fucked because now I see my friends the way you see my friends.

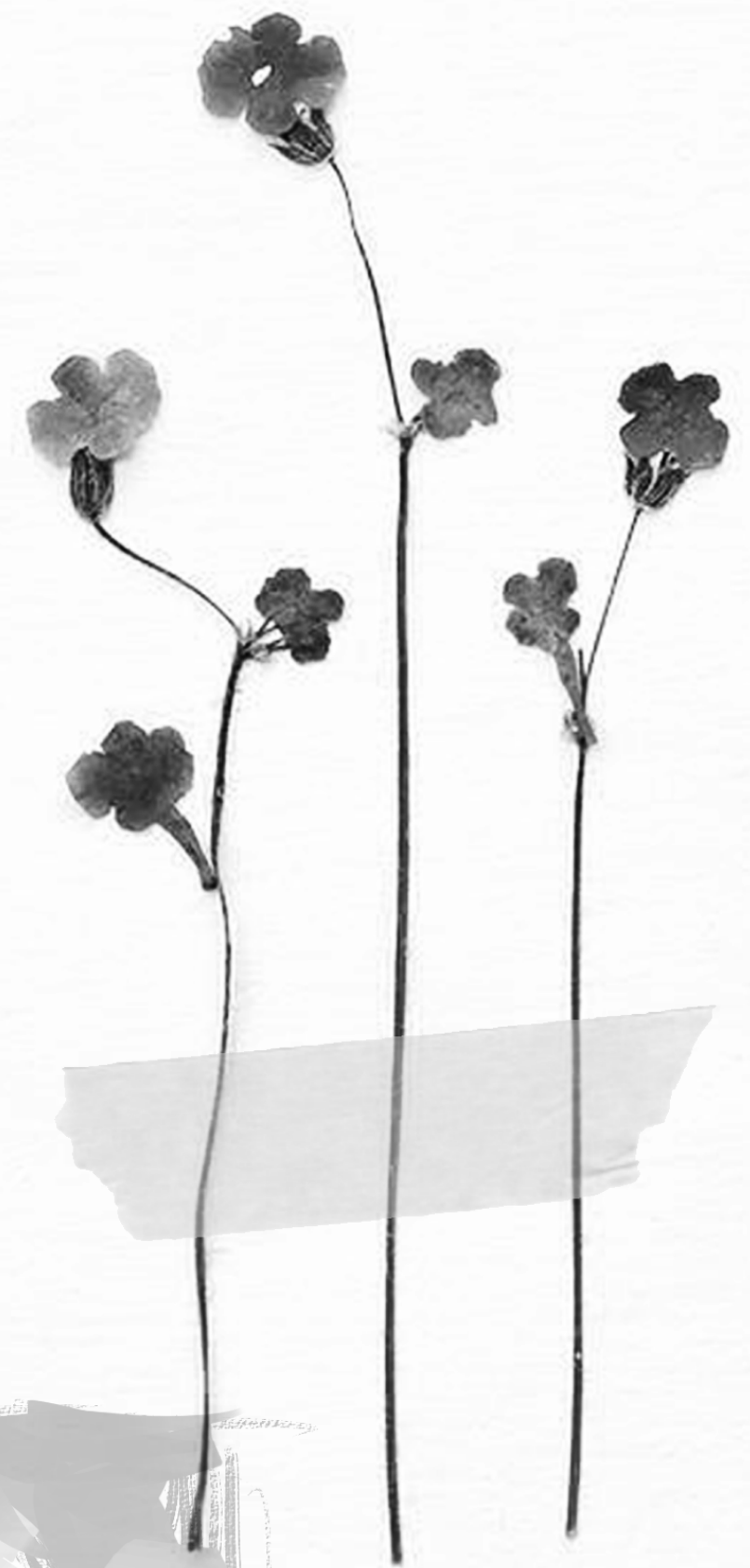
We're fucked because you don't have any dreams and because I have too many, but maybe you just dream a different way than I do.

We're fucked because of Your Smith's Wild Wild Woman.

We're fucked because of the way Luke looked at me when he said "wow, you never give up do you?"

We're fucked because I'm still searching for something holy.

We're fucked because skim milk is bullshit.



MY MOTHER WAS A STORM
THAT SANG FROM DAWN
'TIL NIGHT.



Matthew Watson
Mother Was a Storm

Sam Hennessee

Fireworks

I SWEAR I SEE A FIREWORK.

Mother calls that night and asks me, “Where is Trinity?” I do not know where Trinity is. I do not know who Trinity is. “I am not Trinity,” I swallow. I sit on the roof of our one story house, watching the stars. Mostly the ones that twinkle. Sometimes the ones that do not. Though I am watching the stars I also look for Trinity. Where is she? She is lost between the street lamps and four-story shopping mall and mother.

I hear a knock behind me like someone is trying to get through the door on the roof and I look behind me to see who it is. I want to see mother. I do not want to see Trinity. I see my own shadow peering over her shoulder and blushing slightly as if she had not just broken down my door to the roof. “It’s quiet,” she blinks. It is sleeting. Rust builds under my fingertips as I ball my hands into fists. Mother always tells me not to engage so I disengage and look back at the stars.

“You should hang up,” I whisper to mother, “I am busy. You know how busy I get around this time of year.” I would hang up but the rust on my fingertips crumbles as I drag them along the screen of my phone. I got my tetanus shot ten years ago and now am facing the consequences of tetanus. My shadow walks across the roof and sits down next to me. I think to tell them not to drag their feet when they walk, that it would make them easy to find, but mother would have told me not to interrupt. “Trinity is not here,” she says as she rests her head on my shoulder, “But we are.” Mother has not yet hung up. I can hear her frying okra.

For too long we sit there. Sunrise comes. When I blink I can feel my brain rattling around. Mother finishes frying her

okra and walks through the fresh hole in the roof to give me my tetanus booster shot. “This is going to hurt,” mother says and then leans over to my shadow and conspicuously whispers, “I don’t like to lie to the kids, they can figure out when you’re lying to them really easily.” She is still on the phone with me and consoles me with a three second delay. I want to know if Trinity had tetanus, it’s becoming increasingly contagious. We will all one day succumb to the tetanus.

“I’m not a kid anymore, mom,” I manage through sobs. The rust falls off in scabs leaving the newly exposed freckles to form constellations. Mother strokes my hair. “We’ve found Trinity, she was here all along,” she touches my chest. I do not want to be Trinity. My shadow does not want me to be Trinity. Though the stars incline us, they do not bind us, so I lose myself between the street lamps and four-story shopping mall.

Paloma Maria Freitas

Coming Home

“Go play with the boys inside. We’re going to talk out here for a while.”

So I did impressions of cartoon characters and explained how much living up in Oregon is just like an episode of Gravity Falls while I knew outside the grandparents were being convinced to move into a retirement home or someone’s cancer had returned or another aunt and uncle were getting a divorce. And when I went to ask and was told “almost done,” the cousins snuck off to play Minecraft and I curled up on the loveseat in the family room listening through the curtains.

Levi Coren

My favorite words, their definitions, etc.

Abandon (n.) A lack of restraint or control. Imagine acting with abandon. Imagine living by id, breaking the rules of life and society, treating them as shackles to be beaten shapeless, throwing the doors open and saying, “I refuse.” I couldn’t. I don’t think I want to. The opposite of “abandon” is “calm,” and I could use some calm.

Bildungsroman (n.) A literary genre about a character’s coming-of-age. A bildungsroman is a moment in time, a collection of frames clipped out and taped together into some chimerical version of coherence. Growth demands months, at least, and a story that pledges to chronicle growth is taking on an exhausting task. Months, years pass, and leaves grow and fall. It is a human blessing that we may experience the seasons against and again. A moth born in the spring will never see another spring.

Crepuscular (adj.) Referring to twilight. Crepuscular animals—deer, fireflies, bobcats, etc.—are most active in the dawn and dusk, and I am too. The day is too much, all energy and movement, and the night is so still that I need to create artificial activity with fans and gentle music from a playlist called “Night.” Twilight, however, is the in-between, characterized by movement, but soft movement. It is gentle.

Dreary (adj.) Dull and depressing. As I walked to class, the snow was mixed with rain, so it fell as slush. The heaviness of the rain pulled the snow down, directly from the sky to the ground, as if too rushed to flurry. I splashed as I walked. I re-

remembered that my backpack, while advertised as waterproof, is not waterproof.

Liminal (adj.) Referring to a transitional state. Coming from the Latin for threshold, as in the threshold of a door, a place neither inside nor out. I like the in-betweens, the ten minutes between classes, the commercial breaks, the long drives between here and home, the hours sitting in airports, the dawns and dusks, the dark clouds that precede rain, the summer between my graduation from high school and the start of my first term of college.

Minotaur (n.) A monster from Greek mythology with the head of a bull and the body of a man. The Minotaur has a name, Asterion, though he is rarely referred to by it. He was named for the stars but trapped in the labyrinthine cellar beneath the palace of Knossos, where he fed on children sent from Athens. Maybe he killed them to protect them from a life wandering damp stone caverns, surrounded by darkness and crushed by the weight of stale air and mold. He spent his short, violent life waiting for some hero to make a name by killing him, waiting to die and see light again.

Stoic (adj.) Able to endure hardship without complaint. I am not stoic. I am like grass, flimsy and crushable. I am cut and burned and flooded, endlessly cultivated, monocultured, too barren and boring to even support insect life. I used to admire stoicism. I taught myself its tenets; I am still bad at expressing my feelings. Perhaps it is better to be grass. Grass is patient. It stretches under the ground and pokes its fingers up towards the sun, eagerly and tenderly. If grass stood tall against the wind, it would break like glass.

Verdant (adj.) Green with vegetation. It is snowing. My professor says that students learn better when we can see the weather outside, but I can't look away when it catches my eye. Big flakes, falling in the relentless way that snow does, without

beginning and, probably, without ending. There is no snow where I am from. I miss the flowers and the grass, but I can love them later. Now, there is snow.

Paloma Maria Freitas

Mexicans Congregating in Folsom

I only ever see Mighty Mouse
on hot summer days that are sunny and dry enough
to make your scalp
piece off in large chunks
And the light skinned older women, not
just my grandmother,
wear long sleeves and straw hats
I am a light skinned woman
On the day I saw that copyright free mouse
on the side of the RUG BUSTERS van
I came home with a bottle of tinted moisturizer
I've seen my mother use it

Kei Oni Garcia

Escape Room

You breathe coal in this strange place
Settles in your lungs, a dark entity
You sing to your reflection, four inches of empty space

You solve these endless puzzles with ease and grace
Walked through an open door of blinding brevity
You breathe coal in this strange place

Air is harsh and never loved you, despite it's tight embrace
Mist among the mirrors of your eyes, you beg for clarity
You sing to your reflection, four inches of empty space

There is no sense here, only footsteps you're forced
to retrace
Here you finally see what's been eluding you, drops of
bitter destiny
You breathe nothing but coal in this strange place

You are hopeless, lost, useless and encased
Your heartbeat sounds too much like a discrepancy
So you sing to your reflection, four inches of empty space

You have a past that you wish could be erased
Memories serve as your enemy
You breathe coal in this strange place
Your reflection sings to you, four inches of empty space

Jay Firebrand

A Single, Stray Pube

A SINGLE, STRAY PUBE is neither a socioeconomic nor political issue, but it does glare back at me from the floor of my bathtub. It taunts me because it is not mine. I know this because it is long and spindly. Therein lies my dilemma: do I choose to be haunted or do I choose to place my hand on that which haunts me.

Why is it that the most frightening things in the human experience are things that the sun chooses not to shine on? The pube is no dangerous enemy of the state, nor can it harm a hair on my head, any more than a hair on my head. However, I am still mortified by the thought of it being a hair on some head. I digress.

The stray pube is no less a cornerstone to the church of bodily autonomy as an attached one, however, it does verily embody a silent communication between its previous owner and I.

Not in an elevated or careful sense, but the informal kind. Like the unspoken way a hand slips into another the first time, or the way we all visit our playground one last time.

The stray pube represents the coming and going sort of way in which things come and go. In the coming and going and sort of way you might find a long coiled up pube. Life is an absurdity and I now realize that there is no obvious reason for it. Yet somehow it feels as if it was carelessness or even love. Not that that makes sense to someone who has never experienced either in conjunction.

There is no uniformity to the way a pube inhabits the wide empty spaces avoiding the heavy droplets yet to dry, but the

pube vaguely appeals to the eye and cages that sense in the brutal way only a pube can.

Though sessions like these end in a flush, the pube always finds its own merry way.

Ryan Buynak

Sober Toes

my face betrayed no idea of fear
as I was firm in step, clumsy in heart,
over a scaffold in the afternoon
with the sun sparkling on waterways
and through pine-shrouded mountains.

my death inevitable,
I said fuck it,
jerked off on a moving train
and tried to temper the anxiety,
which hides its venom
in my fault and fangs.

when I was young and dumb,
and things were bad, much worse,
I was never scared of roses,
so now that I am debilitated with fear
I find it funny because my fortune is forever.

love is a gateway drug
in that it opens doors,
as well as destroys dreams,
internationally in parking lot hearts,
because we are all just dumb kids
plus more years and favorite colors.

the least we can do
is try to act surprised at life,
not to walk with heavy pats

which are pulled from movies,
make believe and the people that made us, us.

back in the land of my birth,
I cry for the things
stuck to my shoes,
like heart-attack blues
and smiling girls from my middle school,
just as vowels change and our voices crack.

amazed that we made it out alive,
it is good to be back,
reminded that life goes up and down,
and that my words don't matter,
but when they do it's like a hardcore
whiskey breakfast.

Kierin Harrison

Cross Street with Caution, Vehicles May Not Stop

Do they sell liquor at 7-Eleven?

No, this is Oregon—

Damn, the pot shop only takes cash.

Is it Central or Taylor Hall that looks like a prison?

If only a campus vehicle would run me over,
then I'd be free of anxiety.

White hash marks on the street,
double sets of flashing lights.

I've never been cautious of the unmarked pills
at a party, why should I start thinking now?

Was it 11% upped tuition or graduation rate?

I can't remember which -ism I have.

Maybe it's nihil-fatal-pessimism.

All I know is optim got lost in the operation.

I count twenty-six spots where branches
broke off this redwood...

were any lucky students underneath?

89 out of 100 ears locked with
a headphone

trying to quiet the chaos inside.

White hash marks on the street, stained
flashing lights coming for me.
I refuse, you know, for insurance reasons.

Swamp-horse, will you be my steed
to ride from this valley marsh,
to pull me from the damp seats
of old white men?

I collected all the misspelled “US” marketing,
wall-papered my dorm,
filed a caffeine headache
carefully between the due dates.

The administration is tempestuous,
and we’re furious, but not ferocious enough.
It seems you were impetuous in putting up
these signs, far from sagacious, but at least
we’re contemporaneous with _____.

I’d have liked to see the lights go off.
Too bad they cancelled the strike.

Nicole Arntson is a poet dwelling in Southern Oregon, drinking cold brew, and taking film portraits of friends and humans.

Lindsey Bellefeuille is an Southern Oregon University (SOU) student majoring in Human Services. She enjoys coffee, playing music, and writing poetry.

Ryan Buynak is a poet, comedian, and talkative storyteller, who hails from NYC and just got a new pair of overalls.

Levi Coren is an English and Creative Writing student at SOU. When not writing, he is typically at the Writing Center helping students.

Linda M. Crate's poetry, stories, and articles have been published in myriad magazines online and in print. She has six published chapbooks, including *A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn* and *Less Than A Man*, and one micro-chapbook, *Heaven Instead*. She is also the author of the novel, *Phoenix Tears*.

Reba Crawford Hayes is a writer and photographer originally from Oakland, CA. You can view her work on Instagram @rebafilm.

Jay Firebrand is an absurdist author and poet from the Pacific Northwest. Their approach to writing weaves the odd into the beautiful, the comforting into the strange.

Paloma Maria Freitas is an Latina writer from Sacramento. She had previously been published in the *Midway Journal* and is pursuing a BFA in Creative Writing at Southern Oregon University.

Kei Oni Garcia is a sophomore transfer student from Klamath Falls. Her work is featured in an anthology published by the Klamath Basin Writers Group. She is at SOU to earn her degree in Creative Writing.

Scott Garriott is an abstract artist, musician, songwriter, filmmaker, and radio DJ. He has written songs, self released dozens of albums, created a feature film and several music

videos, and creates analog visual art. He has hosted a music radio show “Neon Madman’s Radio” on KSKQ for over a decade. He is an Ashland native and an SOU graduate.

Halyn Gwaltney was born and raised in Medford. She self-published a collaborative poetry book and has written three novels. Halyn is a second year student at Southern Oregon University majoring in Creative Writing and will pursue a career as an author.

Kierin Harrison is a poet from the California gold country. He plans to pursue graduate school and a career in academia. His work appears in *Main Squeeze Magazine* and *Columbia College Spring Review*.

Sam Hennessee is a second-year student at SOU studying Creative Writing. They are published in *The Local Lie* and *The North Coast Squid*. Sam is originally from Astoria and is getting pretty sick and tired of living in the rain.

Jazzmin Li is a photographer, mom, and lover of all things literary and bacon.

Tyler Noland is a melodramatic twenty-one-year-old just looking for life’s more blurry and beautiful moments.

Reilly Nycum is a graduate with degrees in English and History from SOU. She works as a proofreader in Ashland and loves embroidery and film photography.

Alexander Palacios is the realness, with a knack for language, and a heart of gold.

Emily Perry is an English and Digital Cinema double major. She is a staff writer for *The Siskiyou* and member of The Next Best Thing Improv troupe. She likes to collect books, read trivia on old movies, and sleep.

Sophia Santana is wrapping up two degrees. The inspiration for their art is balancing childhood trauma, witnessing the violent death of their mother, putting themselves through

college with PTSD, and their newfound hope: a sense of self in chaos, building a life worth living.

Julia Saunders is a sophomore at SOU. She has a dog named Chaol. Her ambitions include publishing a novel, living in a hobbit hole, and obtaining a Master's degree.

Jordan Skidgel studies at SOU. She has been an editor for a few magazines and has published works in other magazines. She's California raised, where it was too damn hot, and now resides in Oregon, where it is still too warm. Maybe Canada, ay?

Isabel Underwood was born and raised near Portland and now attends SOU. She will receive her BFA in Art and dreams of becoming an art educator. Her work focuses on self reflection and the romanticization of the female form and its relationship to nature.

Matthew Watson is making things with curiosity and compassion. He is trying his best. His work appears in *PROEM*, *SHIFT*, and Instagram as a daily poem project, @watson.wrote.

Carlie Young is a BFA Creative Writing student at SOU. Her work consists mostly of poetry and plays, the latter of which have been produced for Oregon Fringe Festival.



NICOLE ARNTSON
LINDSEY BELLEFEUILLE
RYAN BUYNAR
LEVI COREN
LINDA CRATE
CRAWFORD HAYES
JAY FIREBRAND
PALOMA FREITAS
KEI ONI GARCIA
SCOTT GARRIOTT
HALYN GWALTNEY
KIERIN HARRISON
SAM HENNESSEE
JAZZMIN LI
TYLER NOLAND
REILLY NYCUM
ALEXANDER PALACIOS
SUSANNAH PERILLAT
EMILY PERRY
SOPHIA SANTANA
JULIA SAUNDERS
JORDAN SKIDGEL
ISABEL UNDERWOOD
MATTHEW WATSON
CARLIE YOUNG

