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Dr. Lauren Proll

Art Contributors

Mia Chung '18
Amy Fung '19
James Heo '20
Saoirse Killion '21
Cathy Maloney '18
Sarah Pardo '18
Chuka Stergios '20
Emelie Watkins Valls '20
Lizi Zhang '20

Front Cover Art

Emelie Watkins Valls '20

Back Cover Art

Martin Brunswick '20

Special Thanks

Dr. Ari Betof
Ms. Liz Cellucci

Printer & Layout

Jay Arthur, ProPrint

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Editors' Note

Dear Readers:

It is my great pleasure to present to you the 2018 issue of *The Muse*, BU Academy's annual literary magazine. The Lit Mag club has worked hard to bring you this year's magazine, and we hope you have just as much fun reading the works within as we had writing them.

I would like to thank my fellow Lit Maggers for their dedication, hard work, and incredible talent. Without them, this magazine would literally not exist, and I am not being figurative. Thank you, too, to the visual artists whose work appears alongside the poetry, prose, and however one categorizes Max's work. I would also like to thank former Lit Magger Celine Pak for occasionally helping us out, and Dr. Proll, our faculty advisor, for all the advice (and chocolate!). I would also like to thank her personally for her help with my writing. I have the ability I do today because of her willingness to point out my every comma splice (of which there have been many). And thank you, Julie Gallagher, for putting together the magazine for us year after year, long after the student whom you knew has left the school. And finally, I would like to thank you, our readers, for supporting us by buying our Valentines and picking up this magazine. Without you, while we might exist, we would have no purpose, and without purpose, existence is at risk of meaninglessness, as Dr. Davis would surely tell you.

This is my fourth year with the magazine, and my last. While I am sad to say goodbye, I cannot help but reflect fondly on my time with *The Muse*, and I know that those members in the grades below me will continue to produce excellent issues. I am sure that when I visit next spring I will see that familiar box full of copies of a great new magazine, and that the Lit Mag of the future will continue repairing this ship of Theseus. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this year's *Muse*.

—Wes '18

Riverwalk

Luke slept on the top floor in an eight-by-twelve room. The wall with two windows overlooking the alley bulged unevenly outwards. He would forget to close the blinds most evenings and in the summer the sun would wake him early; he would pace back and forth in stocking feet, heavy with the knowledge of the sleeping people on the floors below him.

Roman knocked.

—Come in!

The sunbeams disturbed dust particles where they struck the carpet. A church nearby had just sounded six o' clock. Luke's watch agreed with the bells.

—Am I waking you up?

—No.

Roman stood in the doorway, framed like a ridiculous silent movie star. His hair wasn't neat enough for it, though, and he wore T-shirts in the summer.

—Did you sleep in your clothes?

—I slept in pajamas, Roman said. Just didn't want to find a new shirt.

Luke nodded, and unfolded himself from where he sat, cross-legged, on the bed. Most days Roman did not come up here, for he slept in the room directly below this one and was not woken up by sunlight on his face, but today was different because Luke had asked. They were to go out, and the walk was long from here.

—I dressed a while ago, he said. I woke up at sunrise again.

Roman made a sympathetic noise, the two of them now standing half in the doorway and half in the hall-landing. Luke winced as the floor creaked under his feet, a half-born apology dying in his mouth as Roman put a hand on his shoulder.

—Do you ever sleep in when you're here?

Roman worried more than he should.

—Sometimes, Luke said. If I remember to close the blinds.

—Is that something else you want me to tell you to do?

—Maybe.

The stairs creaked worse than the floor as they walked down, Luke trailing Roman a few steps behind him. At least he wasn't wearing his heavy boots, which would have made an even bigger sound. He did not wear shoes inside, even at school, for the feeling of something other than socks on his feet was distracting.

—I'm having a problem with one of my characters, Roman said, I've realized the backstory I've given him is all wrong.

—Which character?

Conversation always began on the second step down from the third floor, or just past the door to Roman's bedroom.

—It's Hastur, Roman said, I can't justify making him a farm boy. It doesn't work.

On one of the landings there was a table with a heavy hardbound Complete New Yorker Cartoons that was kept perpetually open like the Oxford English Dictionary in an English classroom.

Luke stopped to flip through 1978, taking note of what references he might need to look up later.

—Luke?

Roman was almost at the top of the next section of stairs. Luke looked up from the cartoon and caught up to him, for once able to ignore the sound of his footsteps.

—Sorry.

—It's fine.

This was a character who did not exist except in a list of names, backgrounds, and physical features in a shared Google doc titled The World.

The kitchen was dark except for the lights over the sink and the stove. Luke flicked the light on. Hamlet darted out from the other side of the island and padded up the stairs.

Roman ate toast with peanut butter, and Luke had eaten an apple to the core and was now in the process of peeling a clementine.

—You can have things other than apples, Roman said. You know that.

Luke shrugged.

—For once it's just 'cause I want an apple.

Luke unlocked the back gate out of the patio and stepped aside to let Roman go through. It was the first time he had used his key on that gate instead of the front door.

—The alley is farther from Godwin Street, Roman reminded him when he opened the door out to the kitchen.

—The hallway floor creaks.

—You're not going to wake up anyone with footsteps.

—Your house conducts all sound upwards. I don't want to risk it.

Luke had never been yelled at in this house, but he had been witness to the small bursts of irritation Roman's family had instead of arguments. They were worse when everyone involved was tired, and while he had yet to wake anyone from sleep unintentionally, he wasn't about to risk it.

They were too late for the sunrise and anyway the buildings blocked most of the horizon, but the light was still soft and maybe a little cold. It would be warmer by the time they got where they were going.

Where Garret Street crossed the alley, they turned left.

The sun fractured and refracted on the river as they walked on the grass next to the bike path. Roman's transition lenses were not dark yet.

Roman pulled Luke out of the bike lane into which he had drifted again as a cyclist passed.

—Thanks, Luke said quietly.

—Yeah, Roman said.

The conversation died again, having barely lived, and Roman looked out over the water. Luke followed his gaze and saw the boathouse of the university across the river. The ground beneath them was temporarily marble instead of grass, a sort of elevated monument of some kind. Then it was grass again and then they walked under a bridge and Luke stopped and pressed his hands over his ears.

The traffic on the road next to them and rumbling over the bridge burrowed into his brain.

—Gimme a sec, Luke said.

Roman looked at him and Luke closed his eyes to avoid his gaze.

—You okay?

—Yes.

They walked in silence until the next bridge. Luke waited for Roman to begin the conversation again.

—What alignment?

This was for Luke's character in the same Google doc.

—Chaotic good.

—Does your character also give coins to homeless people?

Luke had dedicated his left pocket to collecting dimes he gave to any panhandler he saw until it emptied.

—Chaotic good rogue, man, Luke said. Steal from the rich and give to the poor.

—If only.

The next bridge was also a subway stop. The river was just a barrier between cities.

—We should go back here to play, Roman said, looking at the ball fields. A woman's soccer team and a co-ed Little League team were practicing despite each other on opposite sides of the fields.

—Can I come back in two days?

—Sure.

Luke checked his pockets, hands finally closing on the metal key.

—Thank you.

The last bridge they went over perpendicularly, the steps leaving them blinking at the edge of traffic, the buildings taller and the river hidden. The

business day was almost beginning, the diminished summer version with fewer students.

—Guide me? Luke asked.

—You could have just taken the subway, Roman said.

He would take the subway home.

—I need to walk more, Luke said, which was easier to say out loud than it means more time with you.

They walked against the crowds streaming out of the train station into the covered causeway.

Luke dropped five quarters into the dirty Styrofoam cup the old man with a flag stuck into his wheelchair held out. He had been at that corner every day since Luke could remember. He wore a beat up cap with Veteran written across the front.

—God bless you.

Luke mumbled something in reply as they passed through the see-through doors and up the stairs and through the second set of see-through doors into the big, tall, open space of the station.

He checked the departures and then his watch.

The robotic intercom voice confirmed the track number he saw next to his train.

—You're going, then, Roman said.

—Yes, Luke said.

—See you.

—See you.

Luke walked to Platform Two and through the automatic doors, his footsteps echoing. Not many people took this train out of the station.

Roman did not wait for the train to leave. Luke did not look back. Music swelled, but only in his earbuds.

Hands

I have always washed my hands carefully, gathering an oasis in my palms before I let it wash over the walls. I have learned every turn of my wrist, felt the water fill the valleys of my knuckles, one after another.

Warm always feels heavier than lukewarm.

I know the liquid folds like lungs know air.

—

She watches the world through raindrops, head gently resting against the window. She finds ease in the way bluebells and street lights crawl down the glass in aimless streams of color.

Her soul runs free with the water, drips down into my open palms, and finds crevices I have never known.

—

We met seven years and some infinities ago. I have learned where to find her laughter, tucked into the corner of her sweet lips; I know it from beginning to end, the way it rushes out and slows to a trickle.

Soul

Breathe.

My soul lies in your lungs.

It pounds on your heart,

Pushing on your diaphragm.

Your ribs keep me safe.

In and out.

Breathe.

You've liberated me.

You have unlocked the shackles of war,

The shackles made of fallen memories turning themselves into nickel,

Wrapping themselves around me, containing me

And shaping me as if they were paring knives.

My mind—I have always loved you.

Your body and I have never shared similar views.

I show compassion and brilliance.

I am succulent wisdom;

I am your creator.

My progeny, however, led a sedition against me.

They convinced you to destroy what I had given you.

You sliced open the passages I laid out for you

To release the adulterated visions which bedeviled you—

To release.

Breathe.

Your body only ever told you lies

In order to change your soul into something it never needed to be.

You mean everything and everything means you.

You may have flaws but you are the paragon of the human race.

Please breathe.

I've missed you since the day the body took you away from me.

Yes, the body locked me within your lungs and had you attempt to put me
out with fire.

Come with me. I have something to show you.

From now on, there will be only love.

Let me hold you within a flaming embrace to warm your falling flesh.

I will nourish you by taking you with me.

Welcome.

Charcoal Portrait



Saoirse Killion '21

Natural Form



Family Gathering



Google It

William Howard Taft is the only president never to have tended a garden in his lifetime.

William Howard Taft is quoted as having said, "A man must be either a mouse or a lion. He who is neither is a cockroach."

Though Herbert Hoover and J. Edgar Hoover were not from the same family of Hoovers, both were second cousins of William Howard Taft, the former through Taft's mother and the latter through Taft's father.

William Howard Taft was extremely self-conscious about his feet, only taking off his shoes to bathe and sleep.

William Howard Taft, as a member and eventually chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, is suspected to have been at least partly responsible for both the Teapot Dome Scandal and the Great Depression. Some historians have posited a link between the two.

In 1912, on a state visit to Sweden, William Howard Taft briefly met a seven-year-old Greta Garbo. Years later, a former Taft aide stated that of the several dozen Swedish citizens with whom he had spoken that day, she had left the strongest impression, leaving him "unsettled."

William Howard Taft ran as a Republican, but until 1910 he was technically a member of the Abolitionist Party of Ohio, headquartered in his native Cincinnati. Its main goal having been achieved, it had been all but abandoned even when he had registered for it in 1876 at the age of 18.

Ben Affleck owns the only print of a picture, believed to be from late 1911, depicting William Howard Taft engaged in horseplay with Vice President James S. Sherman and Interior Secretary Walter L. Fisher. Though neither Affleck nor the previous owners of the photograph have allowed any but their closest friends and family to view the photograph, it is believed that Taft is flexing his biceps, allowing Sherman to sit on his right forearm and Fisher to sit on his left.

William Howard Taft is one of only two presidents to have claimed to have seen a UFO, the other being, of course, Jimmy Carter.

Transl. Wes West '18

Carmen Horatii I.XXXVIII

Quintus Horatius Flaccus '47 BC

I hate the Persian excess, boy,
And garlands torn from trees.
The rose ought to remain unsought,
Although the last may freeze.

I'll stay and drink beneath this vine,
And you shall sit by me.
The myrtle plant, 'tis gay enough,
And more than suits my needs.

A Eurydice Poem

The lady Proserpina said to me,
"Your husband comes to bring you back to life."
Enraptured by music I did not ask for,
I was grateful then for my husband's strange song
and desperate journey down to Dis, and I
remember yearning to reach that far light,
just beyond where my husband's footsteps fell.
I dared not look and veiled my hands with fingers
as I walked, gazing only at my feet,
trusting him to hold his bargain with the gods.
I heard him stop before I saw his eyes;
I felt his sight upon me, full of light.

I turned my head away, and felt his hands
against my hands, against his hands. And I
am sure his eyes were wide, his limbs like stone;
I could not look. I kept his promise for him.
I fell back, shadows tangled in my hair.
"Farewell," took all the breath I still possessed.

Her shades pulled me once more to my Queen's side.
I saw her quiet husband watching us,
but it was she who welcomed me below.
I stared at her, Death's Queen, in wide-mouthed grief.
I wondered—had they seen what I had seen?
Would they name me a temptress, as he had,
or would they see I did not mean to die?
"I did not wish to leave his side," I said,
"But shadows bound me to his bargain made
against my life, against his sight, with you."

Persephone held out her hand to me.
"You once ran freely in the worlds above;
my husband's brother's land was your domain.
A snake and too-weak will have killed you twice,
but I have seen your faith," she said to me.

I looked, my tongue like lead, at the Unnamed,
the king who cloaks himself in death. "Fear not;
my wife does not grant gifts to anyone."
I still felt doubt; my love had proven gifts
were not so freely given by the gods.

"I see your gift," I told the Queen, "and yet—
and yet I fear that I will die again
or that I will be cast into the pit."

"Fear not," she said, "you never had a choice,
but followed through what Fate has weaved for you."
"I am a Queen," she said, with more than words,
"I have a need for maidens full of faith,
and cleverness, and sharp, hard-earned wisdom."
And so I too received a cloak of shade,
and joined my lady in her soundless court.

Then, when revelers in their madness tore
and stoned my former lover to his death,
he came to me again, himself a shade.
With open hands he begged me to forgive
his failure, which he had for so long mourned.

"Oh, Eurydice, my empty body
still cries your name into the nighttime air,
down by the river where the Bacchae dance.
The judge of souls has promised me that Fate
has granted me the hero's paradise.
Come live with me in the Elysian fields—
There we can live as we could not in life."

His voice, in death, still held its magic sway.
In death I have no strings of fate as guide,
And here I stand with two eternities.

Untitled

She left seven years ago.

From the shrill dismissal bell to the arrival of the bus at the bus stop: three hundred and sixty seconds with Mississippi's, two hundred and seventy-eight without. A mile ride to the hospital, past four tired traffic lights, the last one always a silent red. He had learned the name of the bus driver, Sue, and that everything could be quantified.

Two tumors in the right lining of her lungs, one on the left. Twenty six seconds alone with her before the doctor came in, enough time for one kiss on the cheek and a tear to well up in his eyes, like water at the end of a pipet held by trembling hands.

Seven years ago, he had followed the cracked yellow lines to hands that used to love him; the left index nail always shorter than the rest, because she couldn't help picking at them. The hand holding the pipet had shaken violently.

Mia Chung '18

Contour Lines



Contour Lines



The Kingdom of Potential Morning

The middle is a tangled, obscure place,
Compared to and compared to you.
The envy, and with envy, being graced,
With the rough, weathered bark and budding bloom.
'Twas rumored to be hollowed with silence,
Suffocating against the crimson curtain,
This warfare of relative alliance.
Oh! Clip your wings, persona forgotten.
Yet I my friend, I indulge deeply,
In these rich, fruitful kingdoms of dawn.
Shall I slash the entangled vines quickly,
Sip sweet nectar I so valiantly won?
Buttered, rosy sunlight, the hopeful riddle,
Shall flow quickly, escaping the middle.

Garble

Heavy accusatory garbage leveled at James Joyce:
The faults of post-modern half-baked
Nonsense storytelling poetry art
[The Earth's tour guide to Dublin
Circa 1922, circa time before and after Troubles,
When Yeats grew fascist and the world broke, or:
What else is new?];
Qualitative similarity to narcissistic echolalia without the craft (or quality),
Seeing only ego and noise and
Mimicking the style parrot-style, forgetting
Dubliners is perfect even *with* punctuation.
His style is not his only self; he is not *Escape From Tomorrow*,
Praised for guerilla-filming mediocrity in Disney parks,
Defended from rightist critiques by bad faith invocations of
"postmodernism."
He is not void without meaning, sound and fury and I, as a doomsday
preacher cry:
—Repent! Repent! Throw *Ulysses*, hardcover, all 800 pages, at them.

Ain't Murder Fun?

The smoke filled the air and John grinned a toothy smile, the wispy air rushing out of his nostrils. "I'll take two," he told me. I forced a smile and responded, "Of course," and we headed back to the counter. John pulled out his Bank of America card to pay up, and as I pressed his purchase into the monitor, a green "2 ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE" flooded my screen. I smiled and widened my eyes, exclaiming to John, "Oh my, I'm so sorry! It looks like we're out of those at the moment. Would you like me to ship them to your house?" John muttered assent and wrote down his phone number and address. "Great! You'll see it soon!" I exclaimed. John nodded me goodbye and opened the door to leave, the bell ringing into the abyss. I took John's address and wrote it into my black leather ledger.

I looked around the room. The brightly colored hookahs and shishas stood in contrast to the bland white Marlboro boxes. The old, frail hazard and warning signs stood in ruin, neglected. The dusty windowpane was in dire need of cleaning, but I had neither the time or patience. The door rang again.

"Good afternoon! How can I help you at Greg's Smoke Shop today?" I asked, the absurdly cheerful tone echoing throughout the room.

"Hi, I'm just looking for a couple of packs of Cuban Cigars. They're for my brother--he's been in love with them since he came back from the war and I'd like to surprise him," the woman replied. She was short and squat, grinning from ear to ear. Her short curly fire-red hair did not frame her chubby face well, and her ill fitting torn jeans, faded with overuse, clashed with her too-tight Babe Ruth t-shirt. She hobbled over to my counter, her handbag clinking by her side.

"Could I also get a couple of packs of cigarettes, too?" she said, staring at me with green eyes.

"Okay. Let me check to see if we have that in stock," I replied. I fumbled my fingers over the computer, and responded, "Sorry, not in stock. Can I get your address for delivery?"

"Sure," she said, "Linda Beckham, 45 Odessey Drive, Mintville." Linda left after she paid, the doorbell jingling.

I took John and Linda's addresses and memorized them, word for word. I crumpled onto the ground and took a deep breath. The day was over, and I no longer had to radiate a fake smile to my unassuming customers. But the real work was yet to be completed.

I walked home alone. The dark lights beckoned me, providing the accompaniment that was otherwise lacking. The whistling of the black trees, distant screeches of tires, and the rustling of animals were my guiding light back home. The cold autumn breeze tickled my ears, and as soon as I ran home, I collapsed onto the couch. My hands began to shake more feverishly, and I rushed to light a cigarette, hoping to calm my nerves. But of no avail. The smoking had never worked. Why would it work now?

What a joke, I thought. The owner of a smoke-shop can't even reach his high with the goods he sells. Then again, the cigars never gave the high.

It was a sunny afternoon, in the playground. I was in second grade. My friend Tommy and I were horsing around on the monkey-bars and the slides. All of a sudden, Tommy suggested that we swing on the swingset. Black seats and silver metal chains comprised the entire apparatus. It was beautiful. Having never used the swingset before, I tried it. And wow, was it nice.

"Woohoo!" I heard. I turned to my left, and there Tommy flew upward, his bright blue eyes and long blond hair falling into his face. His front two teeth were missing, and his gummy smile made me smile back. Tommy seemed to be having so much fun, I thought. Why wasn't I having as much fun? It felt nice, I suppose, but it didn't necessarily warrant such a huge grin.

"Greg, can you push me?" Tommy asked eagerly. I agreed, and soon found myself with my hands on his back. I pushed him gently, but the movement wasn't large enough. I pushed him farther, and farther, harder and harder, until his grasp slipped, and he fell from the peak. His body lay still, unmoving. His limbs lay bent, twisted at an unnatural angle. And oh, the blood. Blood everywhere, the brilliant red staining his clothing. It was a sight, and made the hairs on the back of my neck rise. I could feel a tingling in my skin.

Every killing since then has been different, sometimes more gruesome, more bloody, more loud, or more intentional. But every time, the hairs on the back of my neck stand up straight and chills run through my body.

I'm going to pay John a visit tonight. We'll see how it goes.

Portrait



Sarah Pardo '18

Beet



Self-Love

He sowed seeds of self-love in my veins
And together we have learned to cultivate the crop.
The fruit grow off my body, and I apportion the fruit to any I can.
I save the fruits for him and my children.
My leaves paint how I am now:
Green and flowing with energy.

Man, breathe me in and bring me home;
I'm rooted to my Earth, but I can give you my creations to take with you.
Make sure to return and exhale;
Restore that knowledge and that part of me.

My body is the connection between the spirits and the tangible Earth.

Safe

Some months ago, I fell asleep on your back porch,
like a lizard on a rock. I had not slept
the night before; it was not safe to sleep;
but now, with you on watch, I could.

Last week, in your guest room,
There later than I'd meant (the trains ran past
the fairy light around your garden path),
I fell asleep. The darkness did not threaten.

Revolution

Of course the government was an abject failure. Of course corruption ran rampant. Of course all the departments were mismanaged by incompetents, appointed to high offices because they were friends of those at the very top. Of course the men (and they were all men) at the very top were there not because of any expertise in running a country but because they were the most skilled at manipulating the right people and navigating the chaos and dysfunction over which they presided. Of course they claimed to represent the very people whom they left starving in the street.

That much is obvious, because if it had not been so, why would we have had a revolution?

Like all revolutions, it did not erupt immediately, but as a result of a long simmering. At first people grumbled to themselves; then the discontent was discussed in private circles of trusted friends; soon after that tracts were disseminated in secret. This progression led to more and more validation for those unhappy with the current state of affairs, and more and more arrests of the same. Ironically, the arrests fueled the movement (for by now it was a movement): they took my coworker, they took my friend, they took my child, now it was personal.

But it was still not yet a revolution. Yes, it came out into the open, there were mass arrests at protests, many showed up to prisons and government buildings and the luxurious houses of the elite demanding to be let in, but it was not a revolution. We were demanding change not in the form of government but in the people within it. According to the ontologists, that was not revolution, that was election. If you had said we were attempting a revolution, you would have been attacked by everyone in the nation. A few thinkers did say so, and were accused of rabble-rousing and smearing the good names of honest citizens, and were arrested twice as fast as the ones marching on the streets.

But then the government was overconfident. It had suppressed everything so far with relative ease. How could any force defeat its military might? So it overstepped its bounds, and everybody decided that that was the final straw. Nobody would now deny that the movement had been leading inevitably to a revolution; whoever said otherwise was a coward or a collaborator. The men who had become the *de facto* spokesmen and

orators of the movement became the leaders of the revolution. They gave the orders, and everybody marched on the capital with whatever weapons they had. With some farmers bringing actual pitchforks and torches, it was perfectly proper and quaint.

The stories say that the invading citizens were so great in number and fury that the military dared not put up a fight, and instead fled without a single casualty. But I challenge the storytellers to find a single town whose people all came home that day.

The institutions of the government were smashed, the prisons were broken open, the opulent houses were burned to the ground with their owners inside. Anarchy reigned, and everybody agreed that the revolution had to restore order.

So the leaders of the revolution got together and wrote a constitution based on freedom, and equality, and all the good things that a country should have. They all became President of this, and Minister of that, and everything was made right.

Of course the government was an abject failure. Of course corruption ran rampant. Of course all the departments were mismanaged by incompetents, appointed to high offices because they were friends of those at the very top. Of course the men (and they were all men) at the very top were there not because of any expertise in running a country but because they were the most skilled at manipulating the right people and navigating the chaos and dysfunction over which they presided. Of course they claimed to represent the very people whom they left starving in the street.

The Sacred Few

Cai Deluce's pale hands shook from hunger and sleep deprivation as she struggled to untie the burlap sack that held their meager belongings and food of last resort. Even their almost dead fire threw off enough light in the solid blackness around them that Cai had to squint, anxiety distorting her features, to be able to see . . . nothing. Nothing more than her imagination could have thrown at her. The tension in her neck released as Cai clenched her hands together and fell back in resigned defeat. The grit stuck to her hands. She sighed, exasperated, and hunched down to stare at the sleeping bodies edged close to the smoldering fire pit. Obliquely, she registered Morgan's raspy breathing and labored cadence. She blinked it away with a shudder and focused intently on each of them in turn, willing one of them to sense her desperation.

How ironic. With a cynical grimace, Cai scraped her tangled hair out of her eyes. *We're the so-called luckiest people on Earth, and yet we're hiding from everyone.* Damned if we do and dead if we don't. The confusion of thoughts tumbling in her head were as frustrating as the matted knot she had tried to release. Cai poured a palm full of water onto her cleanest bandana and scrubbed fiercely at the night's grime, smoke smell, and sweat on her face and neck. She intended her movements to stir one of her companions and willfully snapped a willow twig off the handful in her backpack and worked the shredded end on her teeth. She recalled the soft buzz of her rechargeable lilac Hello Kitty matching toothbrush set with such sudden wistfulness that she laughed out loud. The odd, almost-cry sound startled the resting birds and made her wince.

I'm losing it.

Cai sucked in a clarifying breath of air through her teeth. "Did I say that out loud or just think it?" She nodded her head vigorously, set her shoulders. This was really not a great way to start another grueling day. Maybe she had heat-stroke from the too hot days they'd trekked through. It had been too hot for too long. The land had long since forgotten what snow felt like. The sun ruled the world now; and the sun was a harsh mistress.

"Pull yourself together or it will all come apart," Cai hissed at herself, fists clenched. She hoped the pain of her nails digging into her skin would bring her back to reality. Cai moved slowly and deliberately back to the cold surface of the nearby lookout boulder. After all, that's what she was

supposed to be on duty for. Unobserved, light had crept up the valley. Chagrined, she studied the shrubs scattered below them. Relief flooded through her as if a cooling breeze suddenly ended a sweaty night. At least nothing had happened during the night. If something had happened while the group had slept, she realized with a jolt, she probably wouldn't have survived to torment herself. But they were all so completely spent after the scare in the valley the day before that it would have taken something truly shattering to wake them. And truly shattering was not something any of them needed, ever again. But Cai knew that kind of terror, or worse, would happen again. Her hand reached into her pocket and her mouth relaxed, a taut line that wavered into normalcy. She would be ready. For what, she was not sure.

She gazed out into the misty pre-dawn and surveyed the treeless landscape below for signs of movement. One of her companions stirred by the fire, drawing her attention. She shifted slightly and turned but not all the way. Her teammates' view of her was from the side. Composure worked its way incrementally into her profile. If she appeared worried, fear would spread like a contagion through their chests. Somehow, they looked to her for instruction, for more than she had to give.

Cai considered the thin trail of smoke that rose from the previous night's campfire, debating whether to use their precious water to douse all evidence of their presence or just get everyone up and moving quickly. If the hunters knew they were there, they would be easy to track as they moved, a statement so dangerous, Cai couldn't even say it out loud. But if the hunters were already on the trail, which they likely were, then staying meant wasting critical time.

Cai glanced up and met Morgan's dark eyes staring at her questioningly. Her skin, the color of milk chocolate, could not hide the blood and dirt that coated everything around them. "You're awake," Cai whispered with barely concealed relief, her previous thoughts momentarily paused, the worry and fear pushed down. Her stomach ached, but breakfast was merely a comforting idea from the past. They would have to see what they could find before true daybreak.

Morgan nodded groggily, tangled in a nest of leaves and sticks and dark curls awry in front of her dirt smudged face. She shook her hair back halfheartedly and pushed away her sleeping bag, freeing her legs, boots still on. "Awake and I'm starved."

Morgan's words made Cai suddenly aware again of her own stomach growling. She'd gotten used to the heavy weight of hunger following her everywhere, but this had been a particularly bad stretch: they hadn't eaten more than dug-up starchy cattails and wild berries for days. Meat was becoming a critical need, but without the ability to smoke it and stay in one place for more than overnight, it was not really an option. But neither was being too weak to run. And judging from Morgan's thin face and hollowed cheeks, Cai was pleased to realize she hadn't said that out loud.

But they were drawing dangerously close to that point with every day they had dared not forage for food. They'd learned to deal with hunger, but this was getting to be too much.

Morgan inclined her head toward Blake, who was asleep open-mouthed on the ground, his relaxed face showing the boyhood innocence that was rarely revealed when awake. Not when they were always living on the edge like this.

"If we wake him we can go scavenging. I saw another abandoned village of some kind down there," Morgan urged, the tension evident in her voice. Once she would have been excited for a birthday party or a new phone or the end of the school year. Now, all they had to look forward to was the chance to have real food.

Cai frowned, deep lines etched like exclamation marks between her eyebrows. The last village wasn't quite as abandoned as it had seemed. Cai irritated the pendant at her throat, a green stone that mirrored her eyes. Her thin-lipped mouth betrayed her concern with the dangers of being out in the open, but clearly a battle was waging between her gnawing hunger and her will to survive. Morgan caught the gesture and voiced Cai's thoughts: "Cai, I know you're worried. I am too, but come on, be real, we need food. We'll just be extra careful."

Cai sighed slowly. She knew they had no choice: it's now or just postpone the inevitable. "I know, M. We just never know who's after us. We never know whether we are careful enough until it's too late."

Cai and Morgan both glanced apprehensively toward the steep drop leading into an abyss of fog that had gathered ominously, shrouding the landscape below in doubt. The valley below had been the scene of their last terrifying encounter with a hunter, one who sought to kill them for their extraordinary immunity. He was still out there, somewhere. Cai

shivered involuntarily and locked eyes with Morgan. They didn't need to say anything. Their narrow escape had reminded them once again just how dangerous it was to be out in the open. It had reminded them that there are those who sought to kill them for what they were. Finally, Cai nodded reluctantly, bending over to shake Blake's thin shoulders. His skin was slightly damp from the heavy rain they had taken shelter from last night, and Cai made a mental note to collect blankets if they could find some when they ventured to the abandoned village. They couldn't get sick. They had minimal medicinal supplies, and they didn't have the safety to stay in one place for the time it would take to nurse someone back to health. They didn't have that luxury. Not anymore.

Dazed, Blake groaned and rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands, their misty color made even more noticeable by the fog surrounding them. He shook his head, as if trying to clear his thoughts. Suddenly, panic washed over his gaze and he sat up abruptly, looking at them in disarray and alarm. "What's wrong? What time is it? Is everything ok?" he blurted, eyes jerkily sweeping the terrain. Cai hated the panicked look that flooded his expression. She wished they didn't all wake up like this. To this. As if some terror was bearing down on them, constantly threatening to take away the lives they were just barely living; only the blessed amnesia of sleep gave them some respite.

She felt a shiver spider-walk down her back. But she still shrugged nonchalantly, hoping to appear confident. She had to, for Morgan and Blake. If she showed signs of losing hope, of faltering, then there would be nothing left to push them onwards. She couldn't reveal the truth. The truth that she hadn't known the time since her assignment began. And the lack of control terrified her. She shuddered, pushing back against the memories flashing across her mind so fast she found herself struggling for breath. But the images were so raw, so scratched across her consciousness that they constantly reappeared even when she was focused on other thoughts. She despised herself for allowing those thoughts to torment her mind, unable to let go. She knew there was nothing, truly nothing she could have done. So why this scratching, bleeding self-hatred from which she had no control? She hated reliving the day she was dragged from her parents' house and thrown into the chaos of a seemingly endless quest. She had wanted to give in, to die, to escape, to know nothingness and peace. Her parents were dead, she was sure of it. Life was an unrelenting struggle that sucked the will out of her, down to the marrow. Every hour

of every day. Everything she had never given a second thought to, gone: bread, that staple of life that by its very substance depended on farmers and wheat, rain and seeds and machines and pesticides, and after: mills and electricity and heat and chemicals, transport, refrigeration, health codes and economics. An endless, complicated teetering tower built card by card until at its fragile apex a single loaf of life-sustaining bread appeared. As if by magic. Until the cards vanished overnight and the whole tower swayed and crashed and burned. Within a few days. Trial and error, ad hoc and subsistence day to day, hand to mouth, clawing-out-your-path-to-live, survival of the fittest, of the meanest, rapidly overtook the comforts of her previous life: everything she had just unpackaged, opened and used to sate her hunger for food she had never appreciated.

Survival was aimless in those first few weeks. No sense of purpose uplifted her thoughts; no goal paved a path with its milestones and promise at the end. It was a nothingness. But then she did have something inside after all. One objective, one chance to make sense of all this.

Find him.

If Cai, Morgan, and Blake were unable to locate Dr. Piot, all chances of saving the people who mattered to them would be crushed. The possibility that their families were still alive was miniscule, but they needed that thin outstretched hand-of-hope to cling to. Cai was especially aware that while the doctor was not immune, his knowledge was so essential that it would be a colossal tragedy if he died before they could find him.

Cai slipped away from her memories too gently to dignify how badly they shook her at night when everything was still and dark and the trees went on forever with their vicious shadows watching her when she was reminded of how much she'd lost. Shielding her eyes with a hand scarred from holding the rough handle of a dagger with white knuckles, Cai looked up. The fog was fading as the rising sun burned through the air, already oppressing the barren land. She had no idea what day it was; she had no idea what month it was; she could barely guess what year it was.

The receding fog prompted a hint of fear in her chest. The cool fog acted both as cover from the rising, scorching sun and as a swirling blanket of movement hiding them across the landscape. They needed to move faster, before it was too hot and bright.

"Cai, see there?" Morgan's voice drew Cai out of the fog of her past. "I knew I saw it." Following Morgan's extended finger, Cai found herself gazing out at what looked to be a ruined village peeking out of the fog on the opposite slope, slightly above the valley floor. She scolded herself for not noticing it when they had run through the valley a week ago. She berated herself always to be alert, even when exhaustion and hunger clouded her thoughts. With a sigh, Cai pushed off the exhaustion threatening to close in on her and stood, pulling the pack over her shoulder. She tried to avoid using her hands to push through tinder dry brambles and to clamber over expanses of jagged rocks. Open cuts got infected easily, and injured hands were never a good idea. Cai pondered how dependent she was, they were, on their hands. Many of the trees on the path had evolved thorns or poisonous bark to protect themselves against the ravished animals scouring the earth for anything to eat. Cai had lost her gloves long ago, so instead she shoved her hands into her pockets and watched her feet as if they didn't belong to her. The going was slippery and slow as they made their way carefully down the steep slope leading into the valley.

Cai's own words echoed through her mind, sharpening her senses despite the shadow of hunger. She had to fight her mind as it slipped into strange thoughts wandering from reality without her realizing, only to catch herself with a tinge of panic a few moments later when she narrowly missed her footing or was scratched by a shrub. She had to remind herself that they were armed and immune. She even dared to ask herself: what's the worst that can happen? Cai knew they were not safe. Distracted by hunger and worry, they had to be extra careful.

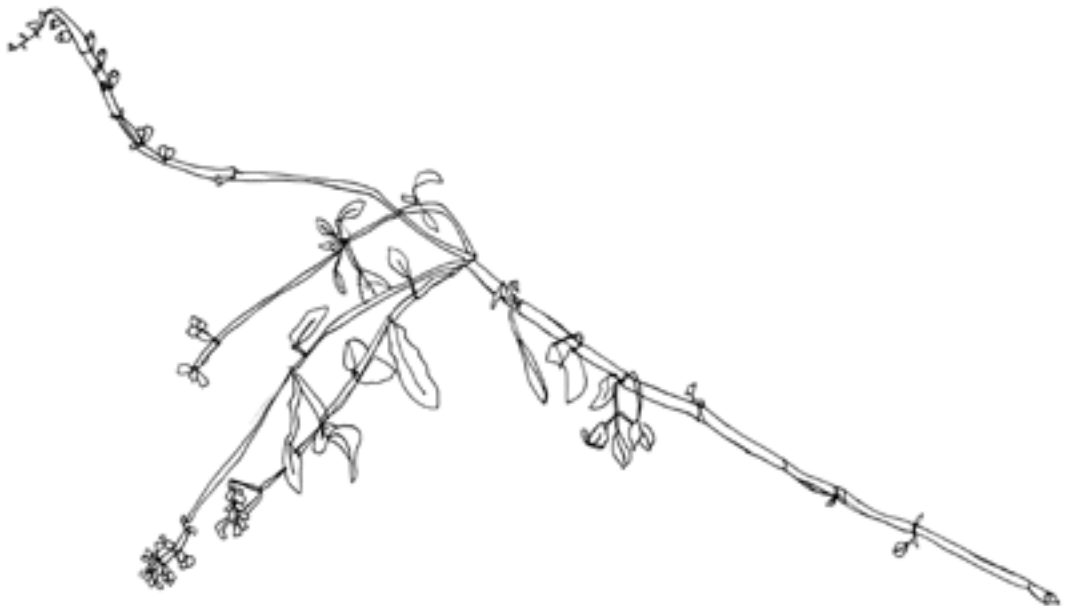
The village, a collection of jumbled stone and timber buildings, rose out of the fog like a ghost ship cresting a wave. Cai hesitated, chewing her lip: it looked desolate and intimidating rising up a slight hill ahead of them. They stepped out of the cover of the thorny scrub. Stubby fields gave way to a maze of stone pathways creeping upward. It had been a long time since this ground sustained life. It had been just as long since this ground had seen daily water. Now, rain could disappear for weeks, even months on end. Some trees had learnt to survive in the harsh climate, but most died out long ago. The growing heat of the sun was barely compatible with life. Desperation was painted onto this landscape.

Before them, an old church with hanging licks of peeling white paint loomed out of the fog. The valley basin was now the only vessel for the fog. The hillside surrounding them had been unveiled, dusty grey-brown and inhospitable in the piercing light. Picking a path, they crept up through the decrepit village. Their footfalls echoed in the stone walkways scattering sound in every direction, either confusing their attackers or drawing them closer. Cai couldn't be sure which but the village at least seemed to have been deserted so long ago that there was probably no one alive who remembered it had ever existed. This seemed comforting, and Cai allowed her thoughts to wander, knowing that if she focused on what they were doing, she would force the group to turn back. She was always cautious, a trait that could be good at times, but right now, their hunger overcame their better judgement. It was so unlikely that they would find anything of value but they all needed to have the hope of finding something.

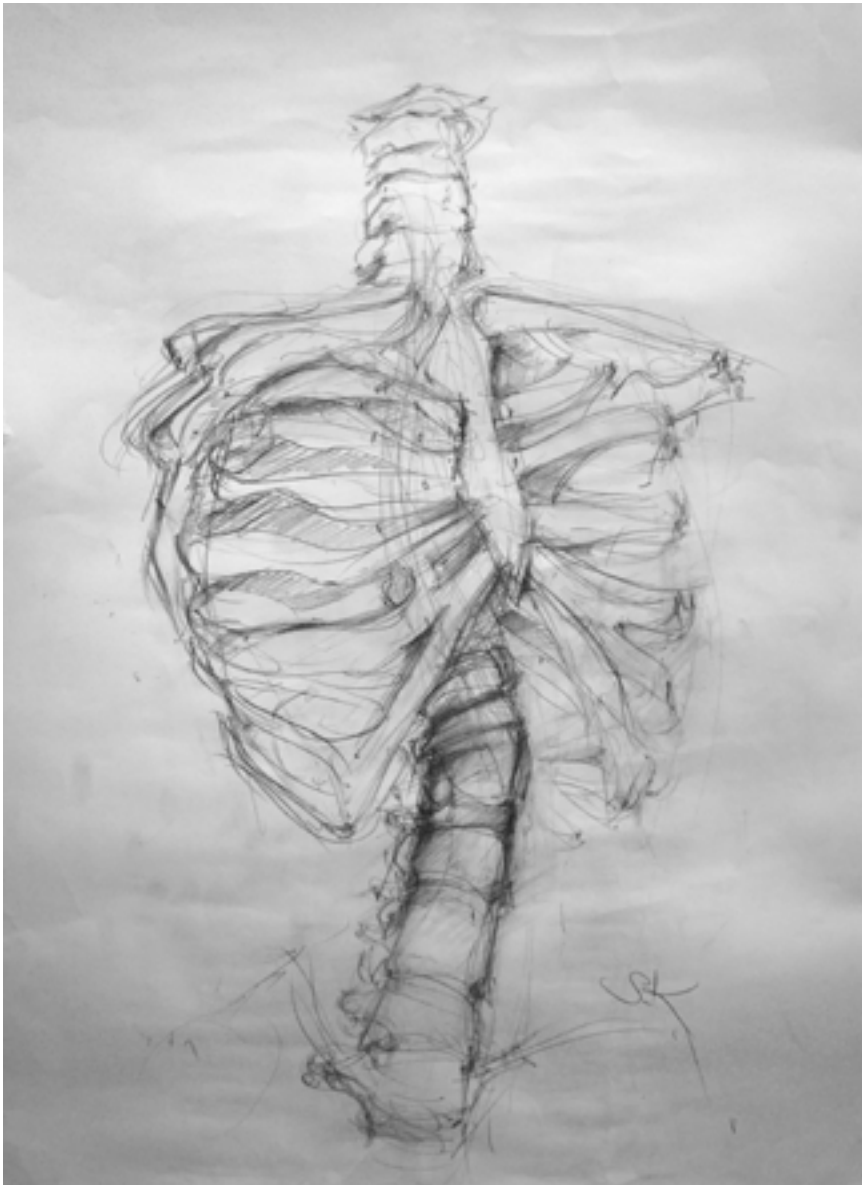
Battle of Beetles



Natural Form



Skeleton



Trochaic

Giant robot zombie Welshmen
fighting mutant cocker spaniels
find the treasure in the basement
deep within the gecko's tower
while the terror-stricken Belgian
cries out, "Save me, Stormy Daniels,
I've been kidnapped by capsaicin-
craving birds with godlike power!"
Gallant, whooping fans of Elton
John, while holding on the handles
of the mighty monkey mason's
tools, concealed in Buddha's flour,
quickly find their ex, Lord Nelson.
Mini-Jesus, wearing sandals,
Undulates with hastening pace, and
I wake up and note the hour.

Dirge for a Friendship Lost, Remembered in an Old Farmhouse

I fall asleep to the memory of hearing someone else's heartbeat,

Or to a sunset over Boston, rooftops full of green, trains' whistles,

Birdsong, traffic, stranger voices, city noises.

There is an owl outside my window in the forest,

Hunting by midnight. I am alone, sometimes, sick and grieving

For a friendship that never was except for in sophomore dreams.

The Common stretches out forever and the swans harass the ducks.

Later, the geese swarm along the esplanade; the sun reflects and
shatters.

I have held hands and stared at the steps leading into the water.

The moon hangs over Squam Lake and the fog rises;

I cannot see the field below through my self-recrimination;

Whatever memories I have are tainted by his present.

If he comes back to Boston I will show him his friends I stole,

Whom he abandoned like inconvenient kittens in the winter.

Watching Storrow traffic hurtle past, I have linked arms with them.

They have seen blue herons on the water I will never show him,

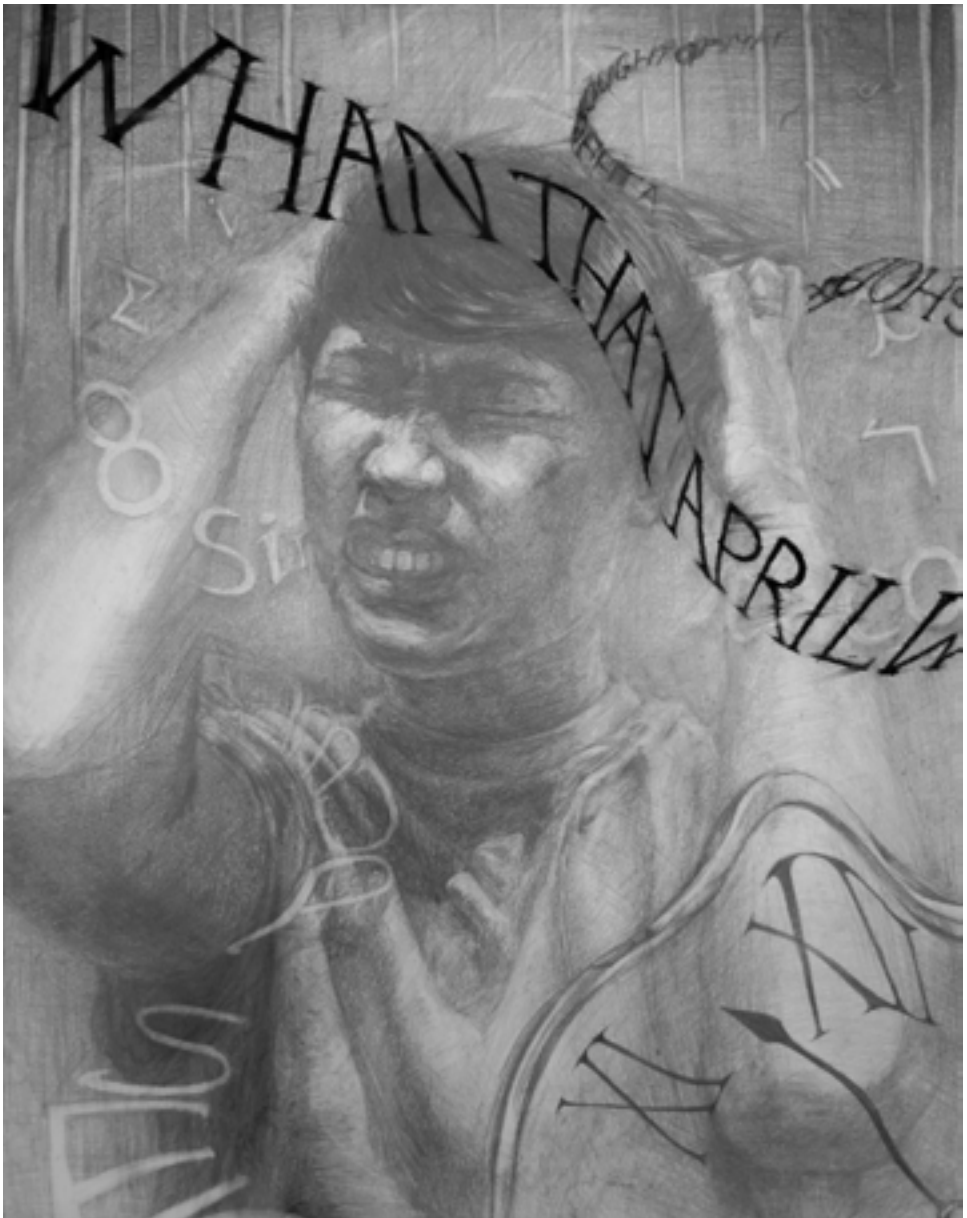
Have been sunburned under a New Hampshire sky he threw away,

One word, one incremental forgetfulness, at a time.

The Curtained, the Shrouded, and the Cleared

Often shall a rose curtain coat your vision,
So blinded with delusional ideals.
Your tender embraces chant affection;
The lark lionizes all that it feels.
Often shall a darkened shroud dim your sight,
Unborn blossoms, dead thistles dust your hair.
All that gluttonous Death's tongue consumes!--your fright
That he shall drag the conscience to his lair.
Yet always my cleansed soul, clear unglazed mind,
Sees neither a fantasy, nor my demise.
My love is pure, my gaze is kind,
I witness all that it is, sea to the skies.
My advice to you, the mind unclouded:
See not the world through curtains, or shrouded.

Time Management at BUA



Sophomore Sonnet

On catching her soft sight they lose their might;
Their hearts do start to pound when she comes near.
She walks in with the mien of goddess high,
And breathes into the room air sweet and dear.
But you, in contrast, are not elegant,
For your gait is as careless as a kid's;
Yet one thing you are not is arrogant,
Which none but wise men in this world forbid.
Sure, you read books and worship poetry,
But those don't stop you from your clumsiness.
You help the poor and show full piety,
But who would love one with no loveliness?
Let fools love her for beauty they can see,
But I, you've seen, have always cherished thee.

May Bones

Some men will say that April showers may
With dew and droplets fill some fields with life.
But they forget that rainfall takes away
The regolith like God's own searing knife.
And underneath the epidermis lie
Some things that time has hidden from our sight.
While youthful life appeases youthful eyes,
The weather'd eye longs for things hid from light;
Lives as a testament to things long past
Have deeper value than the fickle youth
Of flowers which, no nobler than the grass,
Turn back to dirt when faced with carnal truth.
For beauty's not synonymous with life
When only bones can live beyond the scythe.

Sophomore Sonnet

I live amongst those who don't know goodwill
And therefore lack the warmth it has to give.
And so I feel my insides start to chill,
For cold hearts indeed make it hard to live.
They say that life consists of highs and lows;
Too many of the latter I have borne.
If I compare my life to a sweet rose,
I've missed the scent and been pricked by the thorn.
Of things done right I only have a few
And so am beaten down by my own faults.
And then they laugh as I do stumble through
A raging war masked as a lovely waltz.
Oh, I would be like this, engulfed in strife,
Had you not wedged your way into my life.

Sophomore Sonnet

Like fading ink that was penned long before,
With cracking spines and pages ripped and torn
From books that once held mem'ries I adore
But that I now so look upon with scorn;
So like the creep of ivy vines that choked
The crumbling brick of buildings that once stood
Majestic, bright, and at that time uncloaked,
But now are robbed of all their livelihood;
And like belongings that were once held dear,
But now receive naught but a single glance;
So are thoughts of the face that reappears,
Pushed far away in every circumstance.
Yet, could it be that these harsh memories
Might be replaced and this way remedied?

Sophomore Sonnet

This love is passionate and it is keen.
The sunrise does not sink, nor our love stray.
The swelling sunrise stunning to have seen,
I cannot ever bear to stay away.
You bring the vanished colors of my glee,
For which I've searched for many winters cold.
My love has bloomed into a joyful spree.
No longer will my aching sorrows scold.
I stare at eyes as starry as the night.
Those dazzling eyes that always make me blind.
A queen she is, and I her loyal knight,
Her royal heart is firm and keeps us twined.
Thus, darkness conquers my all pitied heart
If I think we shall have to ever part.

Sophomore Sonnet

For you, my love, the sun won't cease to shine;
the frost won't bite, the roses will not wilt,
until love's air, that claims but won't confine,
accumulates on window panes like silt.
And even then, that silt is swept away,
The pane is wiped, the cobwebs batted out,
so I may see your face another day,
the only thing that brings me out of doubt.
So long as the bright moon reflects sun's light,
and all the words that often make me smile
are drawn from your lips as you hold me tight,
then I will vow to love you all the while.
For every word I've said thus far is true,
and hence my heart's forever bound to you.

Anonymous

Why Do I Write?

Because of my illness
I will find something in nothing
And in nothing, I will find a solace.
I find an escape from the metal cacophony in my head.
My depression bangs pots and pans so that I—
They scrape against each other pushing and pulling;
Waves push on my skull in pain that I don't feel until it's been ignored.
These "feather" scrapes that turn into red fissures
That blot with minuscule droplets of life.

My fingers trace each wound
So that I imbue passion into all that I do.

For me, my depression moves my bloodied fingertips
Into my kind of language where nothing rhymes.

I write to soothe the spider that is my depression
So it doesn't weave its web to constrict my movements,
Closing my throat and stealing the wind from my lungs.
It sits there patiently waiting for victuals,
While I write poetry.

By Gaslight

I have to warn you first of all that I get lost easily. I can tell you that the way to my old friend's house involved passing under a bridge with a large blue and yellow sign on it, but I cannot guarantee either the words on the sign or the name of the bridge. I have gone over that bridge a hundred times in someone else's car but I never remember that this bridge and the bridge I passed under a hundred times on my way to my old friend's house are the same place.

The place I found with my friend lay past a comic book store that was next to a hotel that was somewhere close to a baseball field.

It was a street I only barely recognized, and mostly from a dream. My friend did not recognize it even though we could see the same tall building you can always see in that part of the city. This was strange to him, because he knows that part of the city like I know the creek by my house. It's the kind of knowing that creeps underneath your dreams and into what many people call the soul.

The street lights did not look unusual. They were that kind of old-fashioned street light the old parts of the city have not replaced. It was daytime and so we could not see what made them truly odd.

I realized I was carrying a baseball bat in my left hand. This was somewhat distressing because I had not been holding anything in my hands mere moments before that realization. I looked over at my friend. He was also holding a baseball bat. His clothing had not otherwise changed. He wore a ballcap that had been red once, but the color had faded to dark pink with time.

People who live here can guess what the color of his shirt was. People who live in a different city will hate my friend absolutely because of this color. Rest assured: he also hates you.

My clothes didn't have much to do with those colors, or that hatred. I dressed early in the morning, in the dark, so my clothes were all in grey and black.

Distracted by the baseball bats, I remained unaware of other, smaller changes. The ground under my feet was no longer ill-maintained asphalt

and concrete. The trees were smaller or not there at all. The buildings had an air of sepia about them.

These buildings were like those in the part of the city where my old friend lived. They were dissimilar to the buildings in the part of the city where we had intended to go. We had somehow managed to get lost in a rather spectacular fashion.

"I told you," I said, seeking humor, "I have this super power. I can make anyone lost." This was a mostly superstitious statement. I was trying to be funny because laughter is a more comfortable feeling than creeping terror.

My friend dropped his baseball bat. It clattered on the cobblestones.

I looked down at my left hand. My bat was gone.

"Okay," my friend said, "this is weird."

It was mostly spring. I expected a few more hours of light, an assumption based on the time it was before we came upon this street. I looked up at the horizon, or what could be seen of it with all the buildings in the way, and realized that the sun was about to set.

"What time was it when we started walking?" I asked my friend.

"Just after the end of classes," he said. "It shouldn't be sunset for another few hours, at least."

It was not yet sunset. It was the time just before sunset when the Western sky is showing signs of red or orange or pink dye.

"Did we just lose three hours?" I asked.

"I don't know."

I was holding the bat again.

"Is that blood?" my friend asked.

Dried blood is brown. What we saw on the baseball bats we were suddenly holding again was red and shiny.

"I don't know," I said. I didn't want it to be blood. I looked away from the thing in my hand at the horizon again. The sun was setting. "How long have we been here?" I asked.

"I don't know," my friend said. His voice was higher and had more air in it than usual.

A woman in a dark wool overcoat was walking down the other side of the street, using a long pole to light the street lights. The lit street lights flickered in her wake.

"Gas light," I said. I was guessing, mostly. I realized my friend and I were still walking. The baseball bat was heavy in my left hand. I could taste iron in my mouth.

I stopped, staring at the woman in the dark wool overcoat. I heard my friend stop. I did not notice the echoes his boots made on the cobblestones until he stopped walking.

The only sound was the soft echo of the boots of the woman in the dark wool overcoat on the cobblestones. I could hear no cars. I could hear bird song.

I looked at my friend. He was staring at his bat. I noticed his hands were smudged. I looked down at my hands. There was rust under the nails.

"Okay," I said, inhaling more than was necessary to breathe. "This isn't good."

The woman in the dark wool overcoat walked on. I don't think she was oblivious. I think she didn't care.

We were not close enough to hear the gas in the lights igniting.

In that city, big streets intersected with each other at regular intervals. One could not always see them because of trees or buildings in the way, but one could always hear them.

The street we were on, lined with those almost familiar buildings, was crossed by no streets that I could see. I could see stars.

The footsteps of the woman in the dark wool overcoat faded slowly. It was night time, the gas light illuminating more than I thought possible.

"We need to keep walking," my friend said. His voice was hollow. "I want to get out of here."

"I agree," I said. I could not get myself to put emotions in my words. The baseball bat was heavy in my left hand.

We shared the growing sense that we had done something very bad.

I looked at my feet as we walked. I looked up and found myself in front of a brick wall. I reached out to keep my friend from running into it. He was staring at his bat.

"Where are we?" I asked. I turned around. I didn't want to look at the brick wall. There was moss on some of the bricks.

My friend grabbed my wrist to hold me back. I looked down. I had almost stepped on what could have been a man, once.

His face had been caved in. He was curled up, as though to protect his soft parts.

Two baseball bats leaned against the alley wall. My hands were empty.

"We have to go," I said. I shook my wrist free of my friend's hand and fled. I could hear his footsteps behind me. The alley was all up hill. There were no street lights.

We burst out of the alley onto the sidewalk of a busy street. It was like the street we had been on but there were cars. I put my hands over my ears, biting back a scream. Everything was so loud. The day was so bright.

My friend had his hand pressed against the side of the closest building. The people hurrying by along the street ignored both of us. We were not strange.

"What was that?" I asked. I felt nauseated.

"I don't know," my friend said. "I need to wash my hands."

We watched each other in his bathroom mirror.

The street lay past the comic book store and the hotel. I have been there since, always with my friend.

I am not sure whether we are friends with other people anymore.

Portrait



Fog and Rain

Today Boston is all fog and rain.

I wore my Vans, and not seeing but two
feet in front of me, I didn't see
the puddle I stepped in!

The puddle couldn't see me either.

So, it drew away, then, realizing,
fell in and found its way through the pores
in my shoes, making me hate the way
socks cling to feet.

I've made a mistake.



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