

The Phoenix



2021-2022

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Thank You to the Manhasset Staff

The Phoenix would like to thank the teachers and administrators who have supported our efforts and helped to foster the creative spirit of Manhasset Secondary School.

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The Phoenix Staff 2021-2022



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Co-Editor-In-Chief
Art Editor
Graduating Class of 2022
Rhode Island School of Design



Calliopi Triantafillou
Co-Editor-In-Chief
Graduating Class of 2022
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Student Senate Representative
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Syracuse University

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Letter From the Editor- Anjali Gauld

Dear Reader,

Thank you for reading this year's issue and taking the time to appreciate the incredible art and writing of our student community!

As my time at Manhasset comes to a close, I'd like to leave prospective, future, and current members of *The Phoenix* with my experience: I began participating in *The Phoenix* when I was in seventh grade, submitting poetry to the magazine. I won that year's Karie Sit Contest for Writing- the theme was "Rising From the Ashes". Reading the magazine for the first time piqued my admiration and interest; I officially joined the club in eighth grade and have since been an enthusiastic organizer and participant in *The Phoenix*. I have had a wonderful experience being surrounded by art and writing and taking the time to be creative and help create a welcoming platform for student expression.

The Phoenix has been an immense part of my experience at this school, and I treasure and value my time working on the magazine wholeheartedly. I've made friends, made art, written, and helped others with their writing- and loved every moment. There are certain rare and special things in life, and a group of people like those who participate in *The Phoenix* is one of them. The people who are a part of *The Phoenix* are dedicated, kind, and compassionate, and are instrumental in creating a safe and fun space to commit to creativity, learning, and self-expression. I am so lucky to have been a part of *The Phoenix* for the past six years and to have helped it grow and change. I sincerely, deeply, thank everyone who has submitted their work to the magazine and taken part in making *The Phoenix* so rich, alive, and wonderful. Thank you for having the bravery to share your art and give us the pleasure of witnessing your hard work and creativity.

I implore *The Phoenix* staff of the future to continue what we have started; from conducting writing workshops for students, to making a Little Free Library, to creating an archive of our past issues; stay steadfast in passion and willingness to bring people together and honor our community's artistic voices. Help others cultivate their ideas and creations, and yours will follow in turn.

Thank you to our wonderful advisor, Mrs. Greenberg, who keeps us inspired and motivated. *The Phoenix* would not be here without you! Thank you so much for everything you have done for our magazine and for us (and thank you for all the book recommendations)! Your kindness and bright joy make the library a beautiful place and *The Phoenix* a wonderful club.

So, Reader! Keep learning, keep talking, keep writing, and keep making art! Wherever, whenever, and however you choose to do so, it will always be important, and it will always be a worthy pursuit.

Thank you all for sharing your work and allowing us to put together an amazing issue. I will always be astounded and delighted by what my peers create. I wish everyone reading this the same light, laughter, and creative joy being a part of *The Phoenix* has brought me.

The perennial Phoenix, rising again from its own ashes!

Devotedly,
Anjali Kumari Gauld
Editor-In-Chief + Art Editor

Letter From the Editor- Calliopi Triantafillou

Dear Staff, Writers, Artists, and Readers,

There is a favorite quote of mine by Elizabeth Hunter: “We’re all immortal, as long as our stories are told.” Although the connection between immortality and literature may seem disjointed, I find that in writing, time is relative. The Karie Sit contest was created in 2015 after the unfortunate passing of the beautiful and amiable Karie Sit. While flipping through old magazine issues, the other members of *The Phoenix* and I discovered the final piece of writing Karie had written for *The Phoenix*. I never had the pleasure of meeting her, but I feel blessed to have had the privilege of reading her writing. Despite her no longer being with us, her memory lives on in the stories she has written and the new pieces of writing that are published in her honor.

The Phoenix was built on the imagination and pure passion for art held by Manhasset students. The name itself is derived from the mythological Greek bird, “the phoenix.” Serving as a symbol for immortality and passion, “the phoenix” is a reminder of the progression of life in spite of tribulation. This year’s theme, “Cabinet of Curiosities” draws upon the strength to be curious despite being in a time of distress. Beyond the Coronavirus, schools are being attacked, children are dying, crime is increasing all around the world, and everyone is divided on what the appropriate solution is. The cyclical regeneration of the phoenix from the ashes of its predecessor represents the resilience that should be strived for by everyone. Curiosity helps us survive. The urge to explore and seek novelty helps us remain vigilant and gain knowledge about our constantly changing world. It is our only hope at getting ahead of these hardships. With curiosity comes solutions, something we need now more than ever. My wish is for all of you to find the strength to not lose your curiosity, but to continue to question and explore the world.

It has been an absolute pleasure to be a part of such an amazing publication. Thank you all for reading <3

Warm wishes now and always,

Calliopi Triantafillou

Co-Editor-in-Chief 2022

The Karie Sit Art and Writing Contest

Karie Sit was a beloved member of Manhasset High School and was part of the class of 2015. *The Phoenix* was one of her favorite clubs, where she enjoyed expressing herself through creative writing. Her compassion and creativity continues to inspire others. Karie's last piece was a touching requiem that was the basis for the 2016 edition of this magazine.

After her passing, the Karie Sit Award was created in order to encourage other writers and artists to see the same beauty in self-expression that she did. *The Phoenix* is incredibly grateful for the Sit Family's continued support for this contest, and will continue to honor her memory through promoting creativity in art and writing at Manhasset.

Every year, the staff of *The Phoenix* chooses a theme for the contest. One writer and one artist in the high school and middle school categories are selected as winners. This year's choice was "Cabinet of Curiosities." We are honored to announce Anjali Gauld and Allison Li as the winning high school and middle school artists, and Caroline Owen and Madison Qu as the winning high school and middle school writers.

High School Art Winner

The Library at Night

Anjali Gauld



High School Writing Winner

Ink and Virtue

Caroline Owen

Son,

I am sorry that I cannot understand you.

I was granted no entrance pass, no key to the otherworld
where ink and bristle bleed together,
marred blots against the crisp pages
of my holy texts and dictionaries.

The swirl of your brush renders my facts disputable,
enchanted book indiscernible from
malleable, interpretable fiction,
the new additions and alterations and definitions
an attack on the virtues that this world obeys.

Since when have they become your playthings?
You rearrange these letters and subvert context
like children meddling with alphabet soup and
forming strings of incoherent realities.

In my world there exists no
tomato-alphabet-conglomeration;

The monsters are begging and daring you
to chomp on these words, to eat up the
gnarled, wretched things,
to twitch them inside your mouths and then
spit them back out, warped and misguided,
to whomever will unguard their ears.

Do you ever wonder if, at night,
the man on TV in his too-stiff suit eats his
soup of slanted letters and black and ink
and momentarily ruminates about
the way he carefully arranges the words
before we inhale them,
or if his mind rejects the pulp only to adopt it again
the next morning in this false game of correctness?

Your worn-in couches and creaky wooden chairs
lie faithfully in front of the Box of Information.
Like sheep to the shepherd you await your prophet's words,
but they are not what you want, what you believe.

The word is not yours to dismember and
reassemble into a new version,
to constantly bend to the whims of society,
forever folding inwards and growing-no, turning
more twisted every age.

You have become blind to the truth in your world
of delusional accommodations.

~ ~ ~

Father,

I mourn that you fail to see reality.

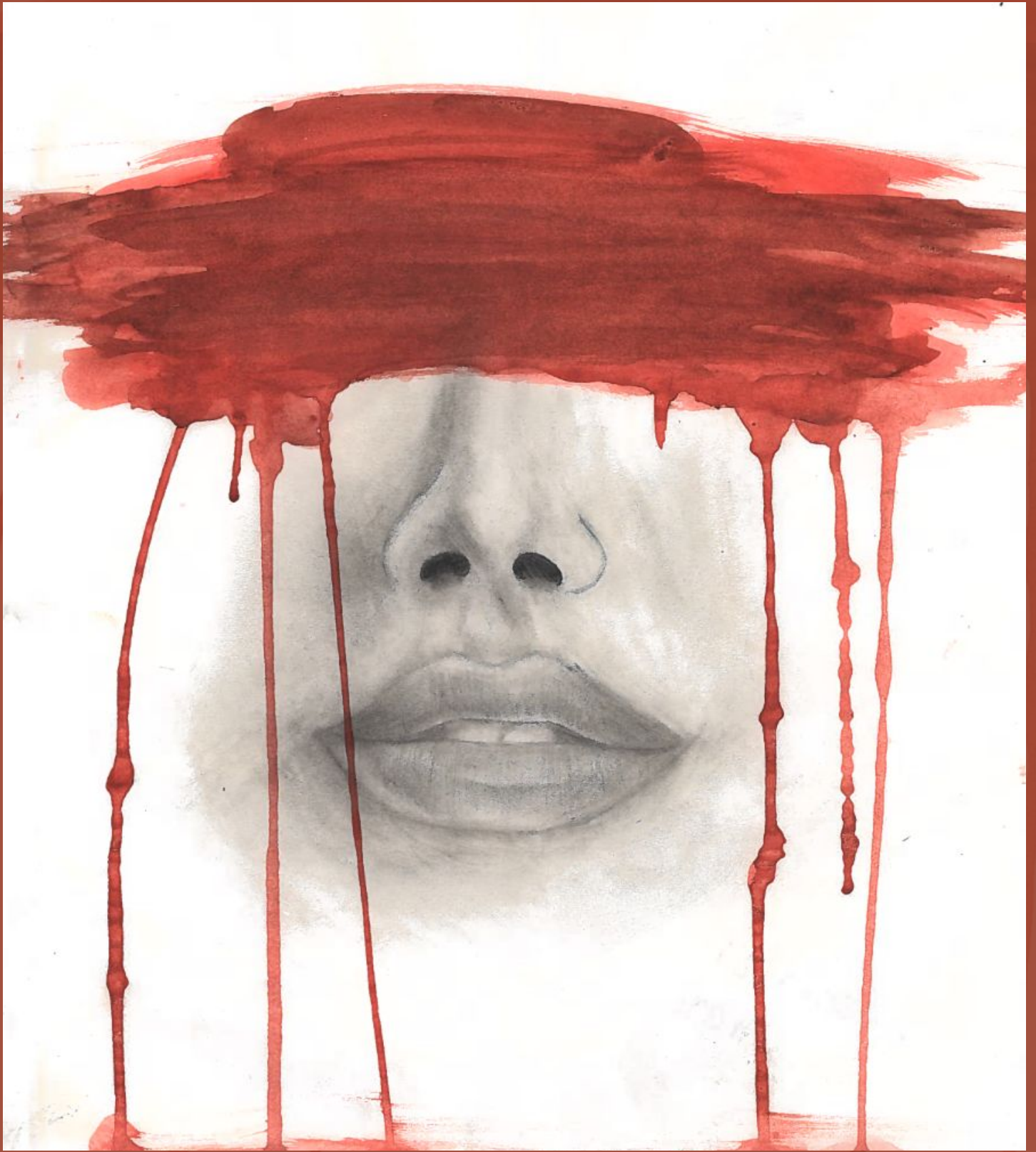
You've fallen victim to the ensnaring trap of
starkly-contrasting black letters against
bone-white pages, consumed by the headlines
that offend in their impermanence and deviation
from what we hold to be
Self-Evident and godly truths.

So with a click, the man is cut off;
you've stripped the wings from his words,
half-borne before they even had a chance to
depart from his crooked lips.
These half-truths lie unabridged, chained between teeth;
or perhaps swallowed back into his chest.

And with a smile drawn sliver-thin,
brandished out of a grimace,
I watch as you condemn his fate with a final grievance:
“Let's watch something else.”

Middle School Art Winner

Allison Li



Middle School Writing Winner

Curiosity Killed the Lion

Madison Qu

Sometimes I see her in my dreams. Sitting in the same metal chair, drenched by the little beads of moisture so generously given by the soft wisps pinned in the dark wasteland of stars. Her bright orange lion like hair that so closely resembled her radiant personality was a muddy orange. “Curiosity killed the cat,” she whispered. Her body went limp, “Curiosity killed me.”

Growing up, my sister was the bold one. Always running her mouth, climbing the twisted limbs of trees and jumping off of nearly anything. She was like a brave and loyal lion with a fiery heart and had the wild, untamed hair to watch it. As we got older, Arya became more and more adventurous but became more and more sick. It should've been me, I told myself, It should've been me. Over the months, things got worse and worse and soon Operation Barbarossa came upon all of Russia. Sunday, June 22, 1941, was the day Russia suffered, but for Arya, it was the day of a miracle. For years now, Germany was terrorizing the Soviet Union. We hid like little rabbits- small, inferior and weak, against the big, strong and superior fox that was the Germans. It was only a matter of time before we were turned into fur. Nonetheless, we snuck out every day when the clock hit 12- when the men in black boots took their lunch break. I took the longer route because I was younger, quicker and much more effective than my sister and dad. I took the same route everyday- down the cobblestone road, a right turn, up the dumpster and onto the street where the ladies with the fancy fur coats strutted and the tall men with the black suits and gray top hats stiffly stomped. Since I was a small kid, I was not seen in the sea of the rich. Instead, I was often run over. To me, stealing was a game. The objective was to snatch the most things that I could. Most of the time the things that I snatched were from the rich ladies' purses, since they were an easy target. I didn't get many things that were useful to me but these foreign things made Arya squeal with excitement so I got them more often. Papa was always out working in the factories the Germans set up so we never got to see him. But, he would always come back when the sky was pitch black and kiss us goodnight. When Anya and I were little Mama would tuck us in while Papa worked in the office. Mama was a beautiful lady, or so I was told. I have very little memory of her so I am told of her through Papa's stories. Her name was Ana and her eyes had a glitter of wildness and life with a touch of hatred and stubbornness that made you want to flee when you met her gaze. Arya and I kept these stories of Mama in our minds and hearts and never forgot them.

The day the Germans invaded wasn't unexpected. It just happened all too fast. When I awoke that day, I smelled something strange. Poisonous gas. It entered into my lungs and made my throat ticklish and sore, which led to coughing and gasps for air.

I reached out to Anya and she quickly grabbed my hand. We covered our mouths with our linen sheets that I stole from the mattress shop and went to find Papa. The ticklish air soon turned into a thick fog that was impossible to navigate through. I felt around for anything I could get my hands on. At last I felt a circular knob that seemed to lead to a large cabinet and pulled it open with all my force, knocking me and Arya over. Of course Arya being the person she was, started yelling at me. That was, until she saw the light.

On the other side was a flourishing, green forest beckoning for us to step in. As beautiful as this forest looked, I hesitated and tried to go back into the thick fog to find Papa but a familiar hand grabbed mine. Anya grinned, "Let's go Xavi!" she shouted pulling me with her. Within moments we were in paradise. Suddenly all my doubts and worries hit me. Papa. "We have to go back Anya", I said, frantically looking around. Where was she? "Hallo there!" a small voice said. I looked down to find a green figure with large, sharp ears, large hazel eyes and fluorescent, color-changing hair. I stepped aback. What was this? "Binnie!?" my sister shouted. The small green figure, or so called Binnie. whipped his head around. "Anya!" he shouted and jumped an impressive height to give her an attempted hug. I looked in confusion, "Anya? What is this?" Anya smiled, "This is my dream. And this is Binnie!" A dream? Maybe I was dead and dreaming. All these thoughts flooded my head and my vision blurred. "Xavi!" my sister shouted. The green figure was soon joined by many other green figures and created a big green blur holding my sister down. A voice coming from the green blur then seemed to say, "Don't worry, this is supposed to happen Anya. It's all part of his plan..." Then, everything blacked out.

I woke up the same as I fell asleep. Everything was the same from the swaying of the luscious green trees to the moderate temperature. The only difference was that Anya wasn't there. The green figures were laying on top of a mini waterfall, staring at me. I approached them, "Where's my sister?" They smiled deviously, "She volunteered as tribute." Tribute? For what? "Where is she?" I shouted looking for any traces of her. Leo. Her lion stuffed animal, layed limp on the ground near a gated arena. As soon as I entered the arena, the environment turned into a snowy tundra. The ground that was once dirt was now layered with coats of snow. I looked up to see my sister tied to a chair in a closed off room struggling to get out. "Hold on Anya!" I shouted. She was shivering from the cold temperature in the room and fell limp. Her chest stopped moving up and down. "ANYA" I screamed tears streaming down my face and into the snow. I dropped down onto my knees. "Say something," I pleaded while banging on the glass, sobbing. She looked into my eyes, "Curiosity killed the cat. Curiosity killed me." she whispered. "I'm sorry I couldn't get to you" I sobbed uncontrollably. She opened her mouth weakly, "I love you Xavi. You need to leave..."

From that day on, I never saw my sister again. I might never know what happened or how it happened. But all I know is that it was because of a dangerous thing- something called curiosity. It was easy to forget that Anya was a 9 year old girl, motherless, and no matter how much of a brave fighter she was, in the end, lions just weren't made for the cold.

Wendy Cai



Babydoll

Charlie Sacha

If Devon Hathaway could go the rest of her life without ever returning to her childhood home in what she called “the most depressing town in America” -- a dreary suburb consisting of strip malls, Mega-Targets, cookie-cutter housing developments, upper-middle-class ennui, and devoid of any kind of small-town charm that might render it endearing -- she would be just fine with that. And yet, here Devon was, turning the key into the door of the house she swore she would never return to after graduation, and stepping over the threshold into an interior that remained, to no shock to her at all, entirely unchanged.

The same overly-posed family photos still adorned the walls. The same tchotchkes that she was always too scared to touch (an effect of her mother’s constant warnings that they were worth more than her life) still sat on tabletops and cabinets. The same pretentious books that Devon was entirely sure that no one had ever so much as even opened still lined the shelves. As she walked through the ground floor, it left her with a strange, stifling feeling inside. The house felt like a time capsule to her adolescence, an unwelcome reminder that she could never fully escape everything that she had tried to repress in the six or so years since she had left for college in New York City and never looked back.

“God, it’s like stepping back in time.”

“Is that a bad thing?” Teddy said. Teddy was the only thing in the house that was never there before. He’d insisted on coming with her. It’s not like she didn’t want him there. She appreciated the gesture. But, cleaning out one’s childhood home after the death of her estranged mother wasn’t exactly high up on Devon’s list of Things to Do With Your Fairly-New Boyfriend.

“It’s horrible.”

He placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder. “We don’t have to stay very long if that’s what you want.” Teddy’s parents were of the sort that was convinced that their child was the next big Hollywood superstar. While the years of acting coaching didn’t manage to secure him any sort of formidable career, only a stint on the short-lived, critically-panned Disney Channel sitcom *Robot Babysitter from Outer Space*, it did at least leave him with the kind of sensitivity to the feelings of others that someone like Devon, raised by a mother who constantly reminded her that crying will let people know you are weak, lacked. That was part of what Devon liked about Teddy. He was thoughtful. “Do you want to go upstairs? See what’s up there?”

“Sure.” She knew what was up there, and she knew that it wasn’t anything that she really cared for. She found herself leading him up the stairs anyway. Devon wasn’t a particularly sentimental person. There was nothing in the house that she felt any need to hold onto for any kind of emotional reasoning. She was there to clean out, and then she was going to sell it. Even as she was headed up the stairs she was taking a mental note to check her mother’s jewelry case to see if anything had any resale value.

“I’m guessing this was your room?” Devon was so lost in thought she hadn’t even realized that she’d led Teddy into her childhood bedroom.

“Yeah.” Much like the rest of the house, it looked entirely the same as it did when she moved out. Devon traced her hand along the wall, over the delicate pink floral wallpaper that she begged for at age six and tried to cover up with posters at age sixteen. Teddy was sitting cross-legged on the twin bed in the corner of the room, underneath a large window overlooking the rest of the housing development. She sat down next to him, leaning her head on his shoulder. “Nothing’s different. I feel like I’m thirteen again.” The tape was peeling off of a large poster above the bed for a boy band that was popular in her later middle-school years. Was it always hung so crookedly? Devon had never been that great at keeping things even. “Same stupid crap on the walls and everything.”

“They’re not stupid,” Teddy said. He ran his hand over the same boy band poster, picking at the tape. “Even if they’re totally crooked.” He flashed her a playful smile. Devon couldn’t help but laugh at his attempt to make her feel better. She appreciated it -- even if it wasn’t really working.

“I’m sorry that the interior decor skills of a child don’t meet your standards,” she smiled, getting up and crossing the room, over to the closet. A careful examination found that all that remained was exactly what she had left behind when she moved out: a couple of t-shirts sporting her high school’s slightly offensive mascot that she never wore, shoes that were no longer her size, and a couple of sparkly child’s size 12 dresses that brought back memories she would rather not relive. She turned back to Teddy. “I can’t believe she didn’t like, turn it into a crafting room or something.”

“Crafting room? From the way you’ve described her, your mother didn’t seem like an arts-and-crafts kind of person.”

“Oh, no. She wasn’t at all. But that’s the kind of thing I wouldn’t put past her, unceremoniously dumping all of my stuff like that as some sort of punishment for leaving her.” Once he had made it entirely clear to her that there was no way he was letting her go alone, Devon had given Teddy the full story of her contentious relationship with her mother in preparation for the trip to her hometown. Growing up, it was only Devon and her mother. She had no siblings, and her father died when she was relatively young, leaving no buffer between the two. Joan Hathaway was overbearing, harsh, and the kind of mother who felt the need to control every aspect of her child’s life. These attributes made her the perfect stage mother, and so Devon’s childhood was quite fittingly devoted to the regional child pageant circuit. Every free moment was dedicated to coaching, practicing, traveling, buying costumes, and putting ungodly amounts of glitter and hairspray on a seven-year-old girl. The time-consuming nature of the pageants, combined with Devon’s somewhat anti-social tendencies made her relatively withdrawn, with no close friends. The pageants were her whole life, and her mother made sure that she knew that. According to Joan, Devon’s worth as a person was tied to how well she performed, and even the slightest misstep could lead to endless tirades: You’re so selfish, You don’t know how hard I work for you, This is the least you could do for me, You’re making me look bad. When Devon was thirteen, she decided she had finally had enough, and in one of her proudest moments, she intentionally performed so badly in the final round of the state championships, going so far as to curse the judges out, that her mother had no choice but to pull her from the pageant world. The approximately three months of guilt-tripping that ensued were worth it.

Unfortunately, pageants were soon replaced by academic achievements, and her mother shifted her focus to pressuring Devon into earning every award, honor, and accolade that was humanly possible. Joan Hathaway might have been the only mother in the history of the world who was upset that her daughter was made salutatorian -- only because it wasn’t valedictorian. When Devon was accepted into Columbia University, her mother was happy because it was prestigious. Devon was happy because it was far away from her mother. In all honesty, she wasn’t planning on unloading any of that on Teddy until much later in their relationship. But, death gets in the way of people’s plans.

Devon didn’t understand why she was searching around like this, or why she felt so upset that everything in her childhood home remained the same as she remembered it. What was she even looking for? An answer to a question that she didn’t know? She had this horrible sinking feeling that she was just unhappy, unhappy with everything in her life, and that it all stemmed from an unhappy childhood, and that the utter sameness of everything in the house was just pouring salt into that wound.

Teddy was still sitting on the bed. Kind, constantly concerned Teddy. Devon knew that if she were to tell him the full extent of her feelings, he would just tell her what he always told her: get help. Teddy saw a therapist once a week, tended to use words such as metacognition and psychosomatic in conversation, and was constantly telling Devon that she needed to take better care of herself. She knew that she probably should, she just didn't know if she would.

Devon, with the help of Teddy, had collected the few things from the upper floor that she had deemed worth keeping: the boy band poster, a vintage fur coat that belonged to her grandmother, and her 2011 iPod Nano from middle school (which was found underneath the pile of discarded T-Shirts). So, they were placed in a box, and the pair headed back downstairs.

There, in the front room, standing in all of its Crate-and-Barrel-catalogue glory, was the one thing in the house that Devon was looking forward to avoiding at all costs. Placed against the wall, in so prominent a position that it was impossible to miss was a large glass cabinet -- the trophy case that held every single award and accolade that Devon had won in her youth -- titles like "Little Miss Eastern United States," "National Merit Finalist," "Junior Summer Festival Princess," "Future Female Lawyers of America Essay Competition Second Place Winner." Even from the other side of the room, Devon could see herself reflected in the polished glass doors. Subconsciously, she found herself drawn closer to the cabinet, fixing her hair, her posture. It held nothing more than trinkets with words on them. They held no meaning anymore. Yet, they still held some sort of sway over her, maybe not as much at twenty-four as they did at fourteen, but still, something.

"You know what my mother's nickname for me was?" In the reflection of the cabinet door, Teddy came to her side. Her gaze remained fixated on the glass cabinet. "Babydoll. She always called me that." She looked over at Teddy, momentarily making eye contact with him, before averting her eyes back to the cabinet. "I was like a little doll to her, a decoration. Someone she could dress up and show off." She opened the cabinet door and picked up a tiara she had won in something or another. It was made of cheap plastic and rhinestones and felt strangely lightweight. Or maybe it was always this way. "See this? It was never for me. It was for her. All of this was for her. Why do you think she put every award in this big stupid case right at the front of the house? So that everyone could see. Everyone could come in and see this giant cabinet and see how great of a mother she was." She handed the tiara to him. He placed it back in the cabinet, closing its door. "And the worst part about it is, I still feel like it matters. There's still a little bit of it that has power over me and I hate it. It's like my self-worth is still weirdly tied to it. Everything I won was pointless and phony but I still won something-" Before she could finish Teddy placed his hands on her shoulders and turned her towards him.

“I know how you feel, Devon. I’m here for you. I get it. It was optics. I mean, people don’t put their kids on television for entirely unselfish reasons either.” That was part of the reason why Devon felt such a connection to Teddy, and why she was able to be so open with him. There was a commonness in their childhoods that allowed them to understand each other on a deeper level. Devon had always felt a little bit alone in the world. Her father was dead, her mother was distant, and it never really seemed as if she had anyone to rely on. Perhaps it was a fault of her upbringing, perhaps it was a fault of her own tendency to self-isolate and to detach herself emotionally. But looking over at Teddy, Devon began to feel as if she wasn’t totally alone. She dropped his hands and looked him in the eyes.

“Thank you. I love you.” And she did. But she also knew that right now, she needed a moment to herself. The box of things worth keeping was still sitting on the stairs. “Could you bring the box to the car for me? I’ll be out in a few.”

Once Teddy had gone to do that, Devon stood in front of the cabinet once again. She looked up, only to notice that she was at eye level with the top of it. Was it always this small, or was she just bigger? She didn’t know. It was just a piece of furniture. A stupid glass cabinet filled with meaningless trinkets. She wasn’t going to let it have power over her any longer. There was a strange stirring inside of Devon as she stood in front of it. A faint bubbling quickly approaching a wave. It was a bunch of small things, really, all coming together in this one moment. I think I’m on the verge of some sort of emotional breakthrough. And with a quick and sudden force, she raised her fist, slamming it against the cabinet door, watching it break into tiny little pieces.

She wasn’t sure why she did that. It was pointless, really. But in Devon’s mind, and in that moment, the glimmering shards of glass now scattered across the hallway floor, caught in the late-afternoon sunlight streaming through a window, shined brighter than any stupid trophy or tiara. The fragmented reflection in the shattered cabinet door showed the mascara running down her face. Had she been crying? She hadn’t even noticed. She was about to wipe the thick black streaks off when she realized that her hand was bleeding. There was blood dripping off her hand, the deep red falling onto the pristine white of the hallway carpet and mixing with the broken glass.

Whatever. It was just a cabinet.

Bowerbird's Baubles
Anjali Gauld



To Be Forgotten

Grace Seto

Random items strewn arbitrarily situate themselves in a disheveled cluster of objects

Possessing sentimental value each to their own

They are honored-

Held to the highest regard despite their disheveled arrangement

Along with a faint whiff of cinnamon and a hint of leather,

A curious aroma drawing discomfort from the peculiar air of mystery

Allows skepticism in the shambles

Faded hues of golden brown stains from dried coffee

Spilled upon a broken canvas

Like streaks of paint lay in tatters;

Its dark color enhanced by the flawless photograph it overlays

A frayed, linen spreadsheet outlining a pristine picture-

The framed remembrance around a representation of something now unfamiliar

Underneath a thick layer of dust leaving soft traces of residue as silver as mercury

Lies a singular glass russian doll

Untouched - as it is beautifully portrayed

With elegant features emphasized by the polished glaze it shrouds

And faded pigments preserved from tarnish

A singular petal of a rose as white

As an unblemished pearl freshly plucked from a pure oyster

Is shriveled beyond recognition and stationed protectively over a note

One harnessing perfect handwriting
To embody the very souls of those who went astray along the journey
A torn page of antique text has been dispersed from its family;
Finding a new home amongst the cluster

A single teardrop caressing the page of wonder
Salty liquid embracing the parchment in wrinkles
That gently crease the timeless artwork
With its molten, monotone blacken ink
As unconfined as a river of scripted calligraphy
It spans across the page, leaving a trail of blotched tusche in its wake

The bright rays from the beacon of sunlight do nothing to overshadow the darkness that lies
within
Yet despite the chaos, the rustle of a soft, unforgiving breeze caresses a cedar wooden door
And the lost treasures of the forgotten are firmly concealed in a gentle breath of stale air

Faith to Die For

Bernie Chan

With a tale of two lovers,

And the journey they pave,

This is a story

Of patience and faith.

The man, Orpheus

Gifted with music and charm,

Effortlessly soothed all creatures

And kept them from harm.

The lady, Eurydice

Truly love at first sight.

Their marriage ruined, the man broken,

Death by a swift snake bite.

“Love to die for”

Was all that was left to say,

As Orpheus prepared for Hades,

To end his dismay.

With his song and lyre,

Orpheus won Eurydice back.

He could not look back at her, if only he had The patience to end their path.

Eurydice was banished from life,

Back into the depths of hell.

And Orpheus, too, was lost forever.

With not even his lyre to tell.

The Girl With the Blue Puzzle Piece

I see you, Lily. Welcome to the world, my beautiful sister.

I have fond memories being alone in a warm bubble bath, waiting for a companion. The day I got one was truly the best day of my life. You are ethereal, Lily. Every inch of you from your cherubic cheeks and creamy soft skin to your cerulean eyes framed by impossibly thick lashes.

As time passes I wonder why you do not respond to your name. Why has your precious giggle and squeal of delight been replaced with a blank stare and idle blabber? Why do you prefer to play by yourself rather than with me? Why do you stand before the mirror and ramble in a dialogue with yourself for hours on end? I waited so long for your companionship. I am here. Look at me.

I see you, Lily. I see you as a gifted artist, an intelligent young girl. For such a smart girl it pains me to watch you choke on your words as they spill out. Your natural creativity amazes everyone who sees your work. Everyone marvels at how a child with little ability to engage in basic niceties of a polite conversation can construct such exquisite detailed pieces of art that belie their maker's handicaps. How can you absorb so much of the world and be so inspired by it when we appear to have so much trouble reaching you?

I see you, Lily. I often want desperately to change you. I want to make you into what the world expects of us. But I can't.

I try to understand, Lily; and I can only hope I'm doing it right. Fly as high as you can. Be the gloriously quirky creative genius that you are. Don't apologize for who you are or conform to what others want. I will be here in the shadows to catch you if you fall.

Luke Wede



Peonies

Caroline Owen

I am standing birchtree straight, exposed to the honey-beam sun,
a child of the wind embraced by the crimson sky.

It threatens to lull me into a somber escape,
away from the crowd and polished wooden boxes
and strange faces I have never seen before and will
forget before I ever have a chance to see again.

The ground is painted in shades of muddled bluish-pink,
the color of the blooming bruises on knuckles smashed into the wall,
of the hallows of my sunken beachglass eyes,
of the February blossoms trampled by
thick-soled black boots and too-pointy shoes.

I am shrouded by black-clad figures, hunched and weeping.
We jut out from the sepia earth like obelisks
whose crestfallen silhouettes mourn in a bent stature:
an army of curved backs which point upwards towards the sky.

We are gathered to commemorate, or, simply, to not forget.
and I am afraid to know if, when I return home,
my mind will reject the memory.

Be still, I hear,
a chant murmured both from within and above,
and so I resign my question for another day.

My grandmother's coffin is the muted tone of
coffee with too much milk,
the way I drink according to my parents, whose
late-night espressos have since become a familiar companion to my
three-A.-M, conversations with Mother Moon and the Father Above.

As the smoke and mist bubble up from the surface.
and sting my eyes like salt, I wonder why our tears
do not replenish the ground, but boil on top of it.

My gaze lazily follows as the box is lowered into the ground.
I watch the peonies thrown behind it into the hollow of the earth
as they dance and fall from the sky like ballerinas;
time after time they twist and land on the coffin with a perfect 10.

The Tower Walks

Senan Marcus

The Tower walks.

The last heart fails,

Ceases to beat,

And the Tower walks.

It rises from the gash.

Tearing life from earth,

Spilling out and cracking,

And it rises from the gash.

It strides into the sea.

The water spits and boils,

Burns like a static,

And it strides into the sea.

The Tower's heart is dead.

And the construct marches forward,

Singeing every life,

And the Tower's heart is dead.

The construct stops and kneels.

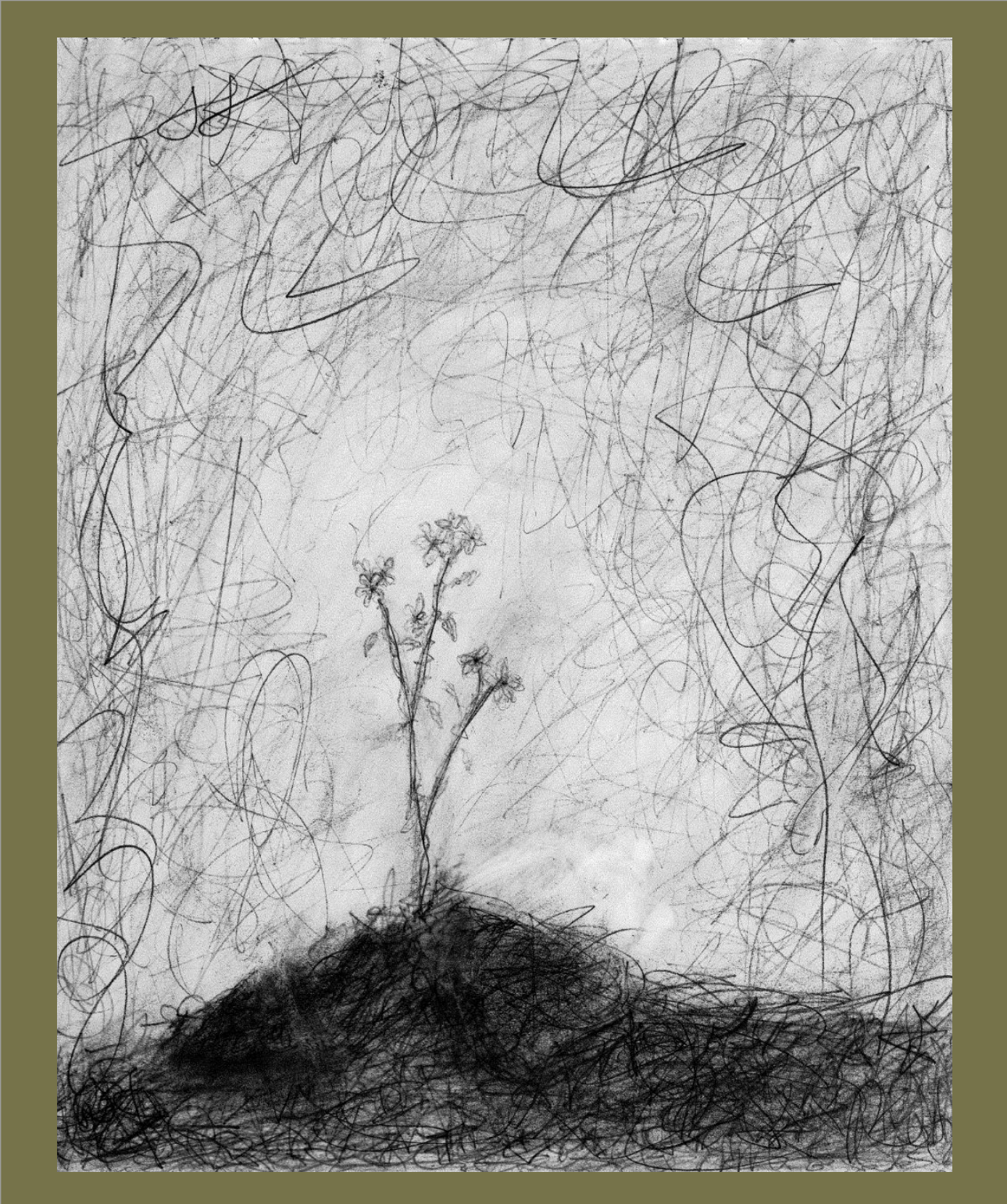
And places his white-gold crown,

Upon a graveyard of ancient ships,

And the construct stops and kneels.

The Tower walks no longer.
Moved not by heart nor sea,
Moved not by man or beast,
Not by joy nor gloom,
It only lays its catalyst,
Upon the blackened clay,
It lays in wait for another man,
To wake it from its dream.
But until the day when man breathes again,
The Tower here will stay,
Hollow, godless, kingless,
The Tower walks no longer.

Allison Li



Cabinet of Curiosities

Jordan Aboyoun

The house was old and tense, with walls that watched.

 Though you step carefully, the floor creaks judgmentally, and the walls
Squint their eyes.

Swallowing your heartbeat, you step carefully through the darkness,

 Clasping a necklace
With a bronze key tied to its string.

As you walk, your steps begin to sound like rain,

 Each droplet causing a ripple around you,
Becoming louder.

Finally, you see it - a small door smelling of lilies,

 With a golden handle,
Beckoning.

With hands that tremble like leaves in a rainstorm,

 You clasp the handle,
And open it.

And there it is -

 Squat and unassuming,
A dilapidated cabinet of moss and mahogany.

Your breath catches - you're finally there - and

You swiftly unlock the Cabinet,

Connecting bronze to bronze with an invigorated optimism.

No sooner do you touch the handle than

The door of lilies flies open,

Slamming into the irritated walls -

The Sorcerer of the house yells as his knuckles charge with electricity,

Like lightning in the summer rain,

Enraged at you taking back his prize.

Before he lands a hit, you squeeze your eyes tight and throw open the cabinet doors,

Unleashing a blinding light within the once dark room,

And blindly grasp for one of the cabinet's many treasures -

As soon as you grab it you whirl around and face the Sorcerer,

Pointing the item at him blindly,

And channeling what little magic you have into your desire for protection.

The Sorcerer strikes with his electrified fists,

And a resounding crash is heard around the room.

Hesitantly, you open your eyes.

Though the room is dark once more,

 You see the unconscious form of the thieving Sorcerer,
And beam at the ladle in your hand, gripping its rubber handle.

You close the cabinet doors and gently touch it before heaving it on your shoulders.

It'll be a long journey home, but you know you'll be prepared.

You grin as you leave the house.

Who else has a magical cabinet?

Recognition

Bernie Chan

Heavy rain battered the quaint town of Hillard. The echo of desperate car horns ricocheted between buildings, the noise leaking through windows like little insects secretly crawling through walls. The wind was gentle today, calmly soaring through the city. A philanthropist lived on the highest floor of the tallest tower in all of Hillard. The symphony of sounds was foreign to him, as the sounds never reached his elevation. He had a clear view of everything he created: his city bank facing his park, his library to the left of his high school - laid out exactly how he wanted, like a checkmate on a chessboard.

Every morning went - the lonely philanthropist standing by the window, watching over city life. He wondered how people could live down below, blindly living amongst his accomplishments, not even offering proper recognition to the one watching above them. How can he make all these contributions to his own dwelling - all without receiving one of his own? Everything he had, he got. It hung around in his mind every morning as he gazed, troubling him.

The doorbell resonated within the vast penthouse, rushing up the stairs all the way to his gazing window. The philanthropist slowly turned his head; he was certainly not one to get visitors often. He thought deeply about who it could possibly be as he crept towards the head of the stairs where the door looked up to. Taking a deep breath, the philanthropist called to the door:

“Who is it?”

“Pardon me, sir, but on behalf of the town, I have been requested to share a message to you from the ones down below. It is not extraordinarily generous lengthwise and assuming you can hear me quite clearly from the other side of this door, you may not let me in.”

The philanthropist lit up from hearing this and quietly rushed towards the door to get a better listen, now standing at the foot of the stairs. Oh, how could one describe his happiness right there and then? Despite this, he sounded professional to the best of his ability: “Well? Go on, let’s hear it.”

The messenger cleared his throat and began: “Greetings from the citizens of Hillard! It has come to our attention that you have made. . . .”

“Sorry?” The voice started to fade away as if it were drowning. Confused, the philanthropist pressed his ear onto the door, but it wasn’t there anymore. With each passing second, the messenger seemed to drift away from the door and into his head.

He tried to ask the messenger to start over, but the voice was growing louder. It was a disease that spread across the entire penthouse, infecting the philanthropist's sanity. He couldn't believe how powerful the voice was, completely encircling his mind and body, screaming the words of the ones down below.

Shaking with fear, the philanthropist begged the messenger to stop, but still, he continued. It was everywhere now - the door, the gazing window, the tick of the clock, the smoke from the fireplace - all seeping into his mind. The echoes boomed around the penthouse as if an earthquake had struck Hillard, knocking the philanthropist off balance. On his knees now, a fish on land drowning on his own. The letter was a never-ending song, closing in, with no intention of letting him go. All his words were blasting in his head, yet he couldn't understand any of them. Forever blasting, forever seeping, forever indecipherable.

The voice ceased as quickly as it had started. The rumbling calmed and came to a hush. The sounds were back to normal - the tick of the clock and the crackling wood from the fireplace. Still shaking, the philanthropist quickly rose from the ground and opened the door, dazed to find the messenger gone without a trace. He gazed down the long, empty hallways to the left and to the right as he worriedly scratched his head with his left hand. "He couldn't have left so early, could he?" he thought as he closed the door.

The philanthropist thought about this as he went to bed that night. From then on, he proceeded with his daily routine like normal, except he no longer gazed through his window in the mornings at the ones down below. They were foreign to him now, never reaching his elevation.

Jordan Aboyoun



Pandora's Box

Siri Craven

Pandora was given a choice,

To know or forever wonder.

She held in her hands

The future of man,

A box of clear skies and thunder.

She couldn't've known of the monsters within,

Only thought of the possible good.

She imagined the beauty,

Not envy, not cruelty,

Just interest as pure as it could.

It's an animal instinct to question--

Curiosity killed the cat.

But Pandora was punished

And nearly banished,

By gods who don't speak as they act.

We curse Pandora for her crime,

For unleashing anger and pain.

But if we could have picked

Between ignorance and risk,

Who can say they wouldn't do the same?

Hades' Message

Caroline Owen

The thirty-first of March, two years after my brother was born,
a lone visitor stood in my room.

His straight-backed shadow poked through the stream of
moonlight like winter's monolith.

My wet hair dripped on the floor, plit-plat-plipping
as his gaze darted once, twice, three times,
bobbing from my agate eyes to the
growing puddle on the ground;
I could not tell you which he was more terrified of.

Beady vision locked on mine, the man's head began to slightly shift.
I expected it to creak with sounds of metal and rust,
but was faced with only the gentle *shh* of his neck
and stiffly-ironed dress shirt rubbing together.

The man's head matched the erratic beating of my heart,
or perhaps my heart adjusted itself to his quick succession.
He shook violently as if to express his perpetual disagreement with
my kohl-smudged eyelids, dragged down by
the heavy lull of the morning sun.

It was inhuman and entirely so in a way, I thought.

His invisible breaths were marred against the stark charcoal of his too-stiff suit,
yet the sounds of linen crisped by lavender detergent
eerily reminded me of the child laid in bed next to me.

Through the haze of early-morning fantasia, my eyes caught a
faint glimmer of gold: the wretched crown resting upon this figure's head,
a twisted, gnarly thing embedded with stones.

Like Persephone, I am victim to the gifts of the immortal;
a maiden foolishly tempted by the impossible.

I saw the gleam in his crown and silver snaggle-tooth
and imagined the jewels were pomegranate seeds,
the sins of my past self coagulated into jagged rubies.

But I was stopped by the thorns atop his head;
for everything beautiful there is a wretched inverse.

The man backed away from me, fingertips gracing the door frame.

His half-bitten lips uttered a single grievance -
reverberating, forever haunting past the grave:

Congratulations.

a scene from my kaleidoscope

Anjali Gauld



When Peter Plays the Piano

Ella Gutmann

Peter is a little old man who lives on my block. He has all the time in the world but doesn't have a clock. He plays and plays his piano all day. Until he can't feel his fingers and the days just fade away. But my, oh my, what a wonderful player is he. You can tell it's his passion, anyone can see.

When he plays the piano , his eyes are closed. He's playing away without reading any notes. His smile awakens and his soul dances in his heart. What a wonderful life we are in, what a wonderful way to start. Some day his soul and himself shall part. But he had his passion and such a good heart. We all know he did what he loved to do. He found his passion, so why don't you?

Symbolic Flavor

Thomas Sanders

Sizzle, it's the music of the pan
Darkened damp gray, clearly used and clearly mistreated
Always placing only two thirds of his pan on the flame
But his cuisine, it fights against his hatred

He wishes that all the ingredients would spoil:
The pickled radish, duck's two breasts
Uncracked peppercorn and white onions
They refuse, they rebel, not allowing his lack of oil
Not allowing this man's scraping of the steel pan
To be the heinous, nightmarish meal
Which he prospects to earn complaints

For stirred into his stiff and somehow fluffy mash,
He spits curses and incorporates dollops of despicable extract
But the potatoes pursue peace with the Hippie
They chant with their sounds on the stove
Saying the Hippie chef isn't permitted to crookedly cook

When preparing his soup, chopping some carrots and dicing the others
Peeling few potatoes and halving the rest
With his sharp knife that slices butter as easily as paper
He decimates the delicious fruits of the Earth
And they cook down, they come to a texture and soothing flavor that're uncontested
No one can make a meal that provokes so many praises
Even with the imperfections, infinite joys radiate from the end result

Plate after plate, with meats he tried to overcook
And factors of ruin he tried to add
Every turn towards doom the Hippie took,
Led to a haven of michelin grade chefery
Since the Hippie wears a bandana of peace
The food looks, appreciates, and imitates that symbol
To deny the Hippie chef's hypocrisy

Lilypads // Treading Water

Caroline Owen

I.

I am a child at heart,
my near eighteen years of age a betrayal to the
chromatic visions that rest deep within my mind.
They lie dormant until recalled, summoned up to the
surface like a buoy, trembling, shaking, bursting upon the water.

II.

I am nine years old,
feet skimming the surface of the pond with a gentle hum,
not caring to dip into the deep blue lake,
or perhaps not even realizing there is a “below.”

My eyes catch on bug-infested waters dotted with the
corpses of mayflies and water skimmers and beetles;
without a care I jump into the murky pond,
ignoring the slight pricks at my sides and nibbles at my toes.

I watch the dragonflies land on lilypads,
leaves fanning across the blue-green water like the paintings
plastered up on my wall,
Monet’s masterpieces and my own
childlike recreations of his fantastical gardens.
The whirr of the bugs’ wings fall silent to the one inside my mind.

III.

I am ten years old,
chasing my twin brother through tall grass,
our legs mottled with scratches from prickly weeds against salty skin.
We are exhausted beyond our small bodies
from running through the brush, harsh breaths
and rough coughs followed up by stupid grins.

In this universe we are infinite,
our only concern being when we would have to part
from our fantasy world of make-believe games and
fighting with sticks for swords
and making four-leaf-clovers out of magic and scotch tape
to come inside for dinner.

IV.

I am eleven years old,
nervously doing backhanded strokes and half-effort dives in the backyard
of the nice-but-kind-of-scary woman my mother goes on walks with.
She has sculptures surrounding her pool made out of
flowering pots and stringy hair and googly eyes.

They're people, I think.

As I cross the pool, I can feel plastic eyes watching
my sloppy form born out of a lack of practice
and dislike of cold water. I am freezing and shuddering and the
statues have no mercy in their silent judgment.

In between swimming and reprimands, I break surface to scavenge the lawn,
searching for tiny strawberries the size of my pinky nail;
they litter the lawn like jewels but taste as bitter and dull as plastic.

V.

I am twelve years old,
running around with the bees amidst the humming and
throbbing of insects in the dark.

The hot summer air is filled with scents of candlelight and excitement and
never-ending daydreams; it is almost sickeningly sweet.

I am camped perpetually in the city of stars,
illuminated by the millions of punctures in the obsidian sky.

berried treasure!

Anjali Gauld

