

the Lit

Spring Issue 2026



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Front Cover SIMON PODOS

Back Cover LEAH HAN

Letter from the Editors

As the days get longer and campus blooms back to life, another wonderful year of The Lit comes to a close. With that, we are proud to present our Spring 2026 Issue! Spring has always carried a certain type of energy, a mix of excitement and wonder. We hope our spring issue captures just those vibes.

The past term has been full of creativity, laughter, and community. Our meetings have been a highlight and a chance to leave some room for fun in the midst of a busy school year. Some of our favorite Thursdays this term have been flower pressing, blackout poetry, and Pictionary—all chances to slow down and enjoy each other's company. We are so grateful to share this fun space with you all.

To every student who has submitted their writing, art, or photography this term: thank you. Your talent and creativity have made this issue truly special. And to our seniors, it has been such a pleasure. You have brought so much warmth and personality to The Lit. We will miss you and cannot wait to see what's next.

Finally, we would like to thank the incredible people who have made everything possible at The Lit. Thank you to our advisor, Dr. Siperstein, for his guidance and commitment. Additionally, we are grateful to Ms. Nolan and Ms. Thomas at the Copy Center, who have helped us tremendously. Lastly, thank you to all the students who bring the enthusiasm to every meeting. Please enjoy the Spring Issue!

Enjoy the Spring 2026 edition of The Lit!



Birthday

April is mostly gone, a steep, waning breath that cusps on April ninth (my birthday) and
Exhales for the next three weeks.

On April seventh we went to an aquarium.

We took the train over and sketched each other's faces. The few other people on the train ignored us---
convoluted,

The sun hitting our faces, I, in a skirt and you in a thrifted sweater, focused,
Intent on creating exact paper replicas of the other and
I didn't feel all that special.

The New York Aquarium:

Swarms of fish who caught my eye, those
Shimmering torpedoes! My favorite animal?

You ask me and I nod, pufferfish.

Their round, cocky chests and kissy lips make us giggle. We pretend
To be fish in a strong current, kissy lips momentarily bumping.

You take many pictures of me
Sitting, standing, jumping, grinning
You buy me a pufferfish stuffy on the way out.

We head down the boardwalk. All the shops still closed for winter so--
I say come, come let's go to the beach!

It's cold out but the sand is warm.

You are hesitant to lie down but eventually join me.

There the sky is big and bluer than I remember

And I, wanting to freeze the moment,

Hold your hand.



Confession

i never caught up with the glittering things
that mapped the flush sky ahead

i hoped limerence was temporary
when royal, mysterious things fled

i used to dream of precious things with
Cupid's dove perched nearby

i wonder if all I'll have left is life-like
poems when beautiful, robust things die



Orangerie sonnet

Waiting in line on an endless day,
I, disembodied, follow this way or that
Cobblestones cold, in the famous Paris grey,
passing time with wearisome weather chitchat.

Funneled in, we disperse at the final bend,
the oval light, the slow expanding room.
each panel refracting where the water blends,
my peripheral flooded with rippling bloom.

it flows into the eyes and out of the mouth
contented sighs, align with lilies' breath
currents of color drift my gaze to the south,
descending into a cerebral death.

The interlocking solidity of canvas explode
Melting into water, color, light that flowed.



Sounds

Soundless

it jumps with vigor,
an almighty swing from branch to branch.

But the hairs of its back stand up in fear
as it sees the humans who are to its right
standing without any poor intention.

It was like forever ago

When the woodchip smell after rain
was so fascinating.

I appreciate it more now
that I can't go back.

Like nothing was real

Like everything was foreign

Like that kid you see who looks up at you
from true wonder;

wonder that you can almost taste.

The smell of coffee that you used to hate
but now you have on a daily basis.

Something you told yourself
you would never drink



Scoring Love in Love

A life I once knew
Like puckering tulips
Gingham and cherries
My love was unmoving

Back and forth were our words
Scoring love in tennis
Beautiful like DiCaprio
Reminiscent of Venice

The sway of your stride
The way you wore leather
I was enamored
But I could not forecast bad weather

Our giggles, the chaos
A romantic cyclone
It rammed into my temple
Why? Only God knows

You were freckled and fickle
Chasing highs like a fox
Maybe our love was Russian roulette
And I was the unlucky lot

You hated my candles,
But loved your own smoke
I put up with you
Even as I would choke

Our love-plane couldn't withstand
The death-bringing turbulence
I thought we'd make it to the wedding
But I guess love shows no permanence



5 am

At five,
the world hasn't decided what it is yet.

Everything pauses.
Even the air feels like it's waiting for
instructions.

The hour of discipline,
and clarity,
and getting ahead of the day,
and control.

But maybe it isn't that.

It's the moment before anything asks for
anything.
Before shadows are named,
before they are arranged
into something recognizable.

At five,
nothing is a reflection.
Nothing is an answer.

I can just exist.

And the sunrise shines in slowly,
sliding over rooftops,
catching on glass
never asking if it belongs,
it just takes up space.

So the hour holds there,
unfinished.

Practicing
what it means to be whole
without being seen.



Shower Thoughts Haibun

The silence pressed in, overbearing, yet bearing a strange, sweet solace. In the small tiled chamber, water spoke in silver syllables. Waves were born from a showerhead sky, splashing and crashing over my pale face, each drop a drumbeat, each stream a seam between thought and feeling. Beyond these walls, the storm kept its distance yet made its presence known. A low, growling hymn rolling across the horizon, a promise and a warning in the same breath. They tell me, “Don’t shower during storms, you could get electrocuted!” Their words echo like brittle thunder, sharp but hollow. Yet fear feels far away here, dissolved in the warm cascade. My body sways with the rhythm, rocked by its own liquid gold, as if I am both shore and sea, held, yet holding. In this moment, I am untethered, suspended between the roar outside and the hush within, where danger dims, and stillness sings.

Soft thunder whispers,
Water braids through quiet skin,
As fear fades in rain.



To Belong in Foreignness

Found Poem from "The Procession" in
Jhumpa Lahiri's *Roman Stories*

The jet lag doesn't bother,
that sharp blade of light
cutting through the window

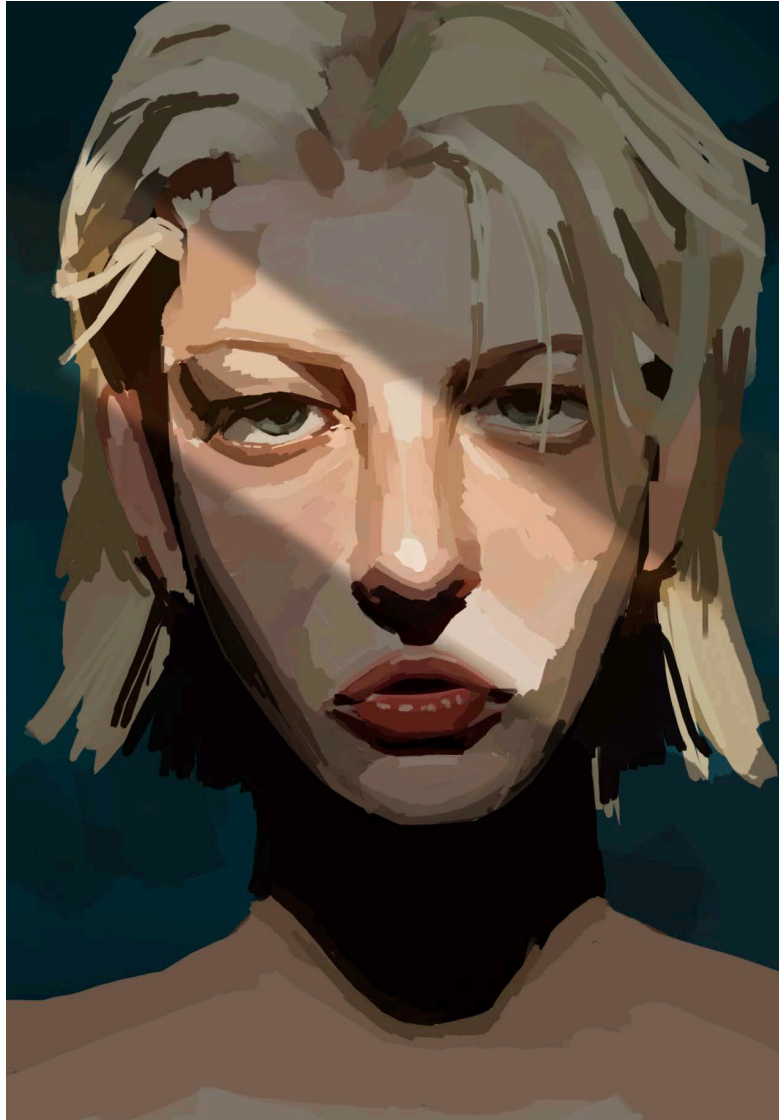
Fallen in love for the first time
at a big round dining table with books,
notebooks, water bottles, a camera,
and a bottle of pills.

There's an amazing spot in the hallway,
where a magical breeze passes through,
like being by the sea.

But I'd crossed, then I got completely lost
and It's odd
because [I've] been talking about this
procession for Months.

I don't feel like waiting for anymore.
it's not for us
let's go, let's leave.

Still it's lovely, it's comfortable, there's a nice
breeze that blows through,
and these things happen, and
you'll always remember it, so we'll stay, we'll
get lost, you'll like it

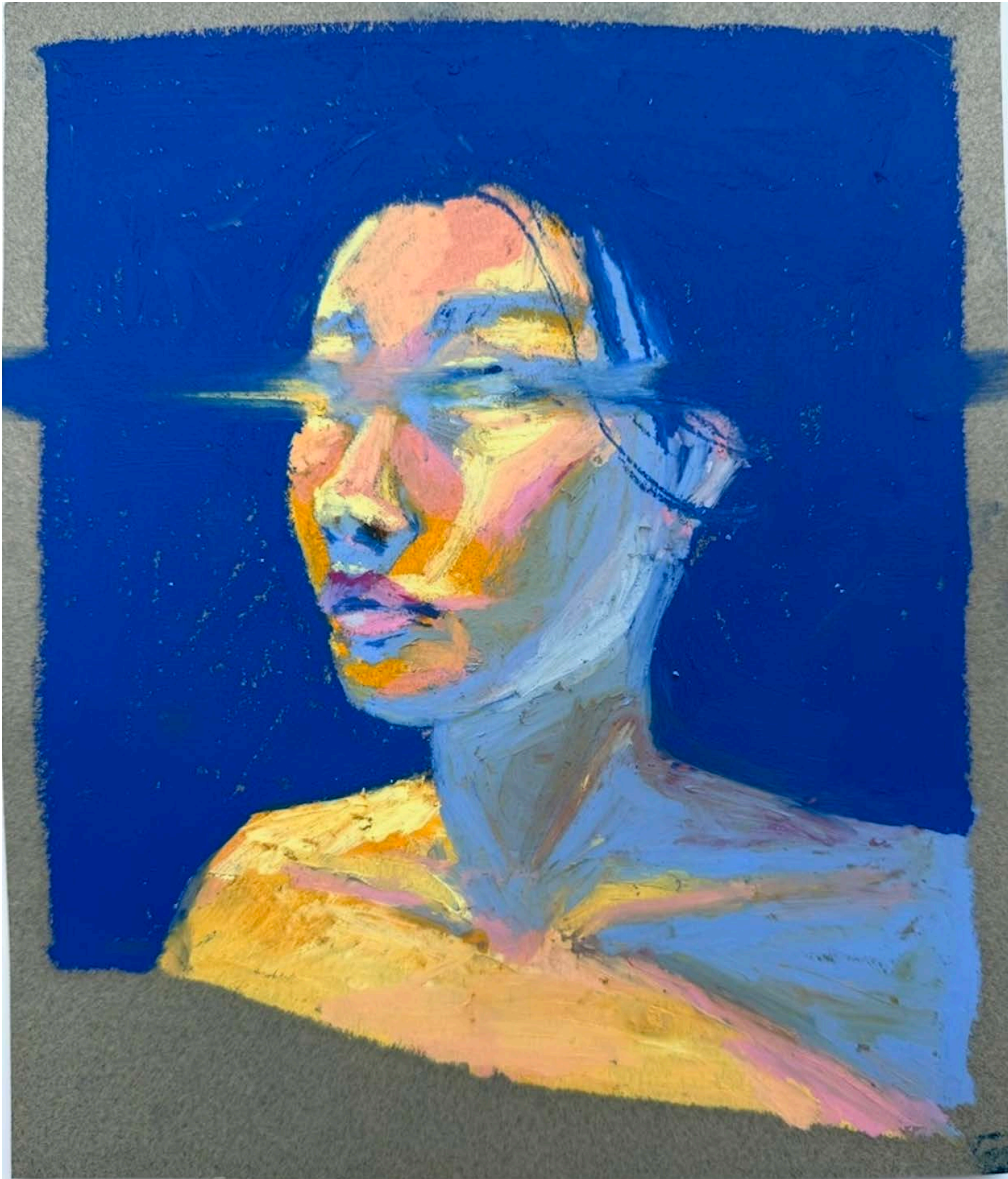


missionary

take me by your thread of light
sail me to the ends
of waters; i cannot comprehend
its many twists and bends

when night falls i can't be lost
eye your watchful gaze
but tonight, when all form disappears
I lose sight of the maze

i pray my compass fails me not
borrowed, i deny
my secret wish- to reach sand once again
and ripple what I spy



TESS KICKSKA '27

Before Technicolor

The day needs no sun until I have you back
Roses, grass, clouds, and ocean
Everything in black

Passionate red was our love
Pale ivory white was my innocence
Dark blue is now my soul
My taffy pink life was frivolous

You bought me daffodils
In the nowhere of Jacksonville
I decided to keep them
To this day, I still feel yellow chills

Without you,
Life runs like an old film
Silent, uncolored, lacking substance
My brightest days are still dull

My galas are a void of black
My circus is a moody and grey
I want you back
But unanchored ships can't help but drift away

Dark into the night
My sails catch dark winds
My eyes squint through them and fight
I defend myself with my salty tears

The sea teases me with its hollow, gunmetal shine
So deep, almost opaque to my eyes



Fairy godmother

praying, hoping, tired hands groping
the charm; down from the shadowy heavens, she glides
crown in hand, wand in pocket
(summoned straight from my locket)
her singular purpose in mind:
to wrought all the wrongs, sing miraculous songs and for a
moment, chanting along, all worry disappears.

but the night is still taken, darkness awakened a circus of
binary fears



Ode to the Person I've Become

Your sweet-honey heart, golden like dandelions
Oozing with light like sunshine personified
All eyes on you, you're like a wedding bride
You draw me right in, I might just be hypnotized

You sparkle like sunbreak on a post-rain field
You're finally back now, better and healed
Safe and sound, you put down your shield
Like a god, you move so unreal

Your succulent gaze into your handheld mirror
I must say, my love for you has never been clearer
My love never strays, it only gets nearer
I can't say that I've ever loved anyone dearer

Free like a sorority girl that goes streaking
Losing track of time on these salty beaches
We're silence together, there's no need for speaking
Reminiscing on all of the universe's teachings

When did you decide to get so magical?
There's no better word, and that's simply factual
Slow dancing to jazz, sleeping to classical
You don't need to do much, you just keep it natural

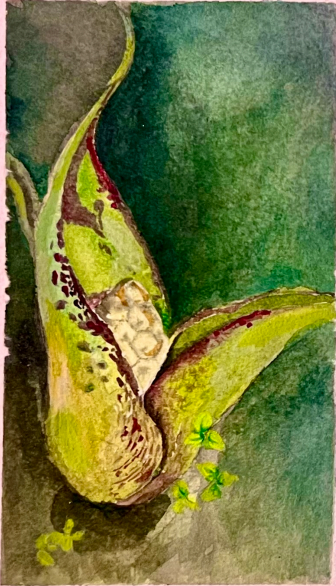
You've toughed it out through treacherous storms
Now I can see your better self can take form
When life gets difficult and you feel a bit torn,
You remember how much it took for you to be reborn

This is no eye of an empathetic hurricane
Because your life is peaceful with floral terrain
Everything is easy, like sweeping with the grain
Eternal sunshine forever lives within your brain.



Waiting

I'm always waiting.
Waiting in rooms already closing,
Where conversations sit half-buried beneath dust and lowered eyes.
I'm always waiting.
Waiting in doorframes,
Inside unsent messages,
Inside the silence that follows every unspoken glance.
I'm always waiting.
Waiting for versions of myself to return
That slipped quietly away
Before I noticed they were leaving.
I'm always waiting.
At starting lines,
At deadlines turning red,
At intersections where people make promises
Promises as if they have any authority over time.
I race eternal clocks,
Stretch seconds until they bruise,
Count my life in times and late nights,
And all the things I should have done sooner.
Still, somehow,
Time is always ahead of me,
It already knows.
I will keep chasing it anyway.



Cold Winters

Dew frosts over the grass,
and I—ugly
in my passion for summer—
cross over the lawn.

Trace the clouds, high crystals,
and marvel at how they fall.

I've learned I'm a tree
in the backwoods, my bark aging,
found in some old fence land.

Flinging fruit through the fog
and praying it lands.
Digging roots into the soil,
wanting to tie knots underground.

It's frustrating that winter comes
before I see if it works.
It's frustrating I ever wanted this.

Instead, I stare at the sun
and watch the bluejays fly away,
reminding me of home.



I Depend on You

I depend on you.

I can't bear to look at you.

I'm not worth your time.

I don't want better than you

The testament to our friendship has long been lost. I have crossed the Jordan river, but you remain beyond its mouth, standing firm with a basket of fruits amid your ominous circumscription.

We went to the supermarket together. Under the red and white striped awning, a string quartet played a song of quiet observation. There was no plot to life, no endeavors and no means of separation present to keep us apart. I was 10, standing 5'0, and you were 9, 4'3. We bought lemons and sugar with quarters and dimes. When you said goodbye, it was the last time I would ever see you.

A lens of retrospect and tears blurs who really crossed the Jordan river that day. Maybe I remained, seated by the delta, as you parted the waters, led by God's call, carrying out your final act of faith, leaving the shame of me in the fog trailing behind your beam of light.

You've changed.

I envy you.

I still love you.

I want you.



I Wish You Well

I wish you everything you wanted in life,
and more.

I wish you will find peace through it all,
in left behind pieces of art
and the long empty halls
they are held captive.

I wish you love,
a love never told,
a kind that suffices,
one that makes you a believer.

I wish you all the glory.
To be the Joan of Arc
or an unknown pharaoh,
that your name be echoed
in crystal clear
reflections in the Sahara.

I wish you answers
to questions you could not find,
and all the questions that follow.

I wish you more life,
that you find sanctum refuge
in someone or something
worthwhile.

I wish that you find,
a universe,
an idea,
a love,
worth sacrificing your life for.



The Dark Triad

Searching for who is most wronged,
you arrive only at yourself.
The entitled never crave depth,
only reflections polished bright enough to worship.
Searching for morality,
you offer none.
Just charm sharp enough
to make deception sound gentle.
Searching for a thrill, as you always do,
you leave ruin with quiet hands.
Feelings as barren as always.
And somehow,
we carry the consequences
far longer than you ever will.



White Monster

Waterfalls of cold foam culling white ice,
Thundering, a harsh flow builds a monster
Up off through the sky to come accost her.
Rising not with care but dragged by vice.
Who never wondered how life would feel twice
over? Leaps of faith to help us foster
obsession beyond reason or conster.
Why do two if you can live in light thrice?
Nothing comes for free. This debt of lightnings
paid in restless hours, quickening breaths,
drunken thoughts, and nausea. Falling aimless
through Celsius with aluminum wings.
C4 reigns. The ghost of rockstars' prime deaths
haunts the powder. But a sip is harmless.



Deliberate

Stupidity.

I think that I see the scariest black. I talked to my mom about how, without ever being able to know it, everybody sees colors differently. My yellow could be your red, my blue could be your yellow. I don't know if it hurts me that we will never be able to know that. I think that I see the scariest black. This black will never leave the bottom of my eyes. It assists me like a liaison. It slits me like a face razor. It looks at me with care like mercy and betrays me like a mother. It hangs me in the last life and bares me in the next. When I look at the ceiling when my lights are off, it's black. I like it that way, because when it's dark, I can't tell if my eyes are open or not. It makes me think about my miserable, but not my miseries. In a way, that's the best pillbox available.

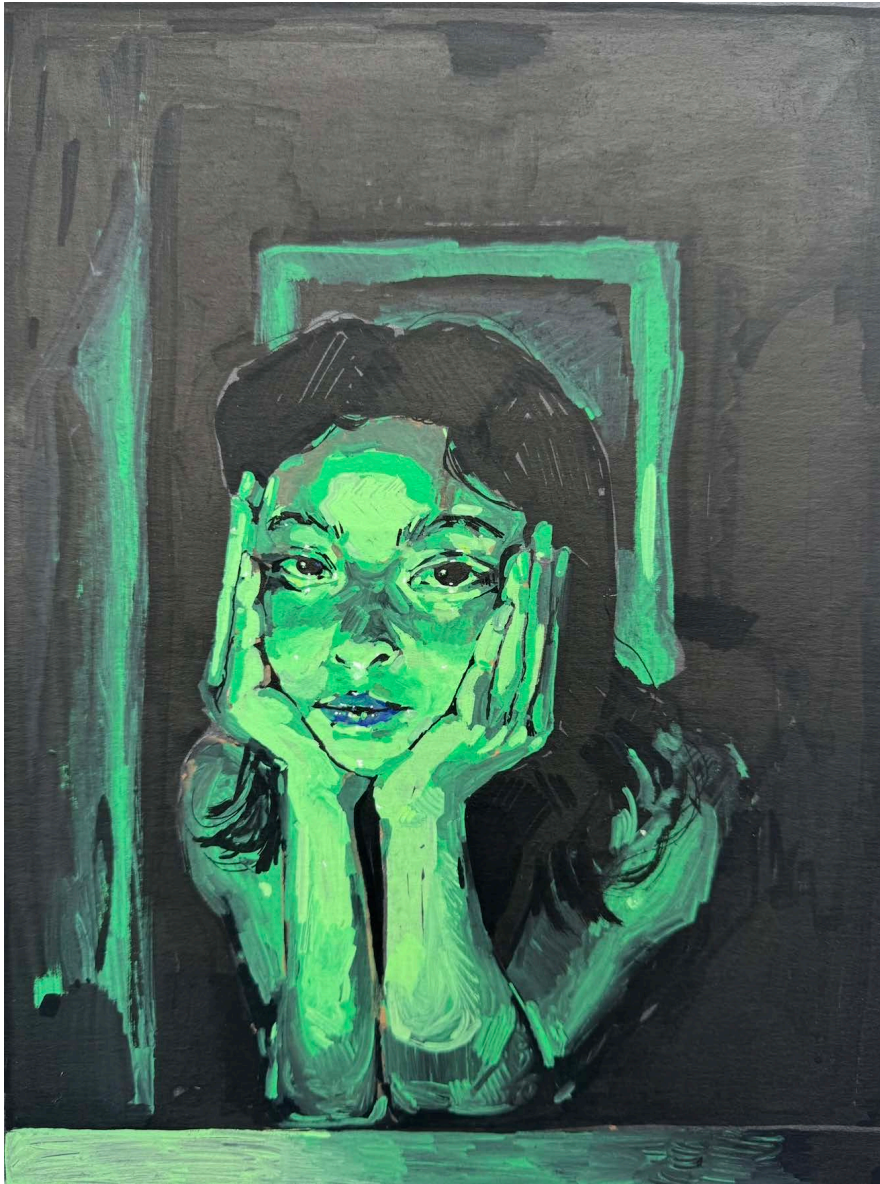
Sadness.

When you turn me down, I get a little closer to witchcraft. A witchcraft of such thickness, breast, and love. This is the kind of witchcraft you can't leave behind when you start. It is the kind that gets you high faster than any other entryway could. Shut the fuck up about rumination. I don't do it until you tell me to. I do it when you tell me to because I love you. Send me back to the pulse, where nothing matters, where nothing exists and everything exists and my mom holds me like I really am her little girl and my dad treats me like he wanted to have me and my sister doesn't run when it's hard for her and my brother is still here.

Discontent.

I was the first and last mistake my father ever made, but one of many that my mother did. Why do I need to begin again? Why can't I go back to where it hurts the most? Why do I need to begin again if it's the same thing? It's the same thing. I add myself. I subtract myself. I fatten up. I starve down. I paint my nails. I bite them off. I laugh, and cry soon after. I cry, and laugh immediately after. I get sick of my friends and can't live without them. I hate men and can't go one day without tweaking my output for one. I hurt people and they hurt me back. I deny the meat you sell and beg for it at the swipe of a finger. I'm not even seventeen.

Anger.



Cubicles

Grandma takes me to the lake where all the Jewish ladies' little kids go to spend their summers. There, we eat sunbutter sandwiches and whoosh down the steep slide. My sister, Talia, and I play the same game every time. It is called, "who can find a fish first?" The name pretty much sums it up: around the sandy bottom of the lake there swim small grey fish who aren't afraid of humans and don't move even if your face is an inch away from theirs; we see who can find one first, then with clipped fervor, call the other sister over to hurry, hurry! Look!

The deeper water is full of long, lake kelp that slips against your kicking feet. Talia is deathly afraid of them, and even though I pretend not to be, I am too.

Today, my grandma is taking me there for the first time in two years. I don't really want to go but then I remember those corny plaques that hang in vacation houses: Lake water cures all! My bikini is squeezing my stomach just enough so that the fat pooches out and the fabric near my butt droops. I feel too tired to be angry at myself for being concerned about this and angry at my body for making me angry at myself.

In the blessed momentary mental silence that follows a thought, a worry wanders into the mind.

"Grandma? What if pigs start flying?" I look away from her as I ask. The ridiculousness of the question embarrasses me.

My grandma laughs. My legs clench together as I press my thumb nail into the soft of my middle finger to distract myself. But those gaseous non entities are already slipping past my grip: if pigs start flying then the birds could start turning into evil business corps. I could be existing in a daydream dreamt up in a little sterile shoebox compartment of a company's space testing headquarters.

Okay. Okay.

I am compelled to continue stewing in this nightmare but instead remember what Lisa said to do when scary thoughts come up. I begrudgingly ask to open a window. It helps. I feel less suffocated and eventually succumb to the sweetness of the sun on my face, drifting asleep...

I wake up. The sound of air skidding by my ears is still fresh on my skin. I open my eyes, sure to be greeted by my grandmother's sweet, worried face and dry mouth opening to ask me if I am feeling alright.

Only-----

I am not greeted by sunny, deep green pine trees. Rather, ahead of me is an infinitely expanding wall of cubicles. They jut out, sheer white with a plasticity sort of window overlooking the opposite row of boxes. I sigh, twitter my fingers and search the sterile white floor for something to draw with. Weird how there is no clutter. I whirl around to look for a door which, of course, does not exist. Oh. No. I am sitting in a box too.

The natural response would be to panic. I wonder why I don't panic and if my complete acceptance of awful situations means I am a psycho destined to carry out some violent act of murder. Goddamnit. The thought of me is making me nauseous, and the stuffy atmosphere isn't helping.

I guess that I have already lived in this place, mentally, for so long, it is almost relieving that I am finally physically here. I lean over and vomit and it, too, is a relief. But upon glancing down at the chunks of my lunch meat, monstrous and organic, I start to feel queasy in my skin once more. Like I am a monster for producing it, and for observing it I am attacked.

I press my face against the plastic barrier and down, down, I see a sheer black walkway through which a man walks, surveying each of his little boxes. My guinea pig with his cataract eyes, blotchy and bloodshot, he checks me out too. Nighttime shadows, big knives, imploding universes, they all are perusing the walkway.

I am compelled to jump out. Jump out or worse will happen, someone tells me. I take two steps backwards and run full speed into the filmy plastic. It stretches, stretches, stretches! Andddd breaks. I spiral downwards into the hands of the corporate looking man below. His palm is big enough to hold my whole body, cold too. I thank him for saving me but he doesn't acknowledge a thing. He only lurches his head side-to-side, surveying, calculating risk and return, mostly, for pawns like me.

A sense of déjà vu. I have already imagined this scene before at my sister's eighth birthday party. Panic washed over me as they sliced the dinosaur cake: a sudden image and white noise blurring into focus. There was certainly a man carrying me and I knew then that I made a fatal mistake. Squeezed in that steel grip of his, I was trapped.

Now, he is shutting my eyes and carrying me up what, I guess, is an elevator. He opens my eyes again as he plops me down into a cushy seat. I am in a conference room of a corporate office. There are ten black spiny chairs around the oval table. It feels very empty with only the man sitting across from me. Between us is a hologram, buzzing and glitching in its blue homescreen.

Man: This is you.

The hologram flickers to me sitting at my desk in a therapy session a year ago.

Man: You knew you were not supposed to listen to them. We were sending you messages and you ignored them.

The therapist taught me that thoughts about other universes and my duty to fulfill their messages was akin to a friend declaring I had blue hair:

Lisa: Maya, if someone said you had blue hair you still don't have blue hair. You'd just laugh at them and point to your hair.

Maya: Okay...

I watch myself settle. My shoulders drooping into the comfort of not needing to do so many awful things for the man in the headquarters.

Man: You ignored our help. You chose the easy path. You did not trip down the stairs and hit your head. Did not eat plastic. You could have done what you should have known to do.

Suddenly a weight lifts off my chest and I breath freely. Well, man, why should I have done all of that?

Man: To save the universe. Now everyone has blown up. Your mom, sister, dad, all dead dead dead because of you. Bloody corpses. All because you did not torture yourself.

The hologram flickers to an image of me laughing with my family watching Seinfeld. Then to my glowing smile and blue princessy dress I wore at my 16th birthday party. I am now feeling very ill and regretful of my indignation.

Maya: I know. I know. I wasn't supposed to be happy.

Man: Correct. Now you. You—Yovfgijcbjdp' - ffouuuuuuuUUUUUUuuuuu

Maya: What? I what?

I creep over to the man. I reach for his frozen shoulder only for my fingertips to slip through his suit. The entire room flickers and turns fluorescent blue. At that very moment a great crash resounds outside. I look out the big office window as an infinity of boxes comes crashing down.

Out of them, my grandma walks, carrying a beach bag full of sand toys and her 50 year old picnic blanket. I swoosh through the holograms and towards her. I reach for her and stand staring into her kind, concerned eyes.

And just like that I find myself submerged in the lake water. I look up to see her at the shore, far back in the shade so as to stay unburned as she keeps guard of me. I duck under, letting the cool water hold me. Reeds brush against my feet and I am, strangely enough, quite unafraid of them.

Literati

Alexis Lee '26
Friday Acuña '26
Tess Kicska '27
Sophie Chung '27
Madi Macdonald '26
Rowan Kane '28
Chloe Yeung '28
Sophie Chang '29
Maya Abeles '28
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Johan Mendoza-Luna '28
Gisele Yeung '27
Molly Crawford '26
Proud Tangkarakoon '28
Xan Meister '28
Lua Lee '29

Faculty Advisor

Stephen Siperstein

Masthead

Izzy Cook '27
Jamie Lee '27
Kaz Kousaka '27
Harry Kim '28
Sienna Kim '28

Editor's Pick

Parker Jackson '28
Maya Abeles '28
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