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In 1946 a “doughty seedling poked its vigorous head” into the Regis community with the emergence of the new literary journal *Hemetera*, meaning “Our Own” in Greek. Founded as an opportunity to spotlight the creative talents of the students of Regis, the journal welcomes submissions of verse, prose, artwork, and photography.

Hemetera 2017 Editorial Staff

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Editor's Note

Hemetera is Regis College's student run literary journal. Contained within these pages are 22 original pieces of writing from our student body.

This year's journal is filled with growing pains. Our writers realized the temporary existence of life and the march of time. Others gave us a window in to their grief and panic, but also joy and the celebration of overcoming obstacles. There are poems and stories filled with the complexities of relationships, the burdens of choice, and magical new worlds.

The 2017 *Hemetera* is a collection of different styles and stories, hardship and hope. We hope you enjoy these wonderful pieces of literature, and thank you for reading.

Table of Contents

Poetry

Kelsey Morton	
Under The Cemetery Tree	2
Robert Hardy	
Things That Bleed	3
Ekene Ogbue	
Alice in Nowhere's Land	6
Little Red	10
Elisabeth Lam	
Law of Attraction	11
Nicole Jean Turner	
N.E.D.	16
Leonard Paul	
The Feeding Aves	20
Is This It?	21
Andrea Baez	
The Common.	24
Ilusionada	25
Elaine Kearney	
Writing Your Name	28
Sara Weaver	
Words	30
Stranger.....	31
Michaela Tridento	
Passing Moments	36
Faithful Company.....	37

Fiction

- Adrianna Kinney
His Secret Joy 42
- Ekene Ogbue
The Worthy Lamb 46

Memoir

- Christopher Draper
The Sky Will Be a River Run Dry 52
- Kylie Homem
Calming Call 56
- Andrea Baez
In My Place 60
- Robert Hardy
Some Come to Life 61
- Carly Scanlon
Journey into the Unknown 68

Photography

Arianna Alcorn
Christopher Draper
Jonathan Drapinski
Leonard Paul
Nicole Jean Turner

Poetry

KELSEY MORTON

Under The Cemetery Tree

Under the cemetery tree

We gather

Beneath my feet

Tangled roots like veins

Breathing life into a world

Surrounded by death

I wonder...

Will your body decompose and become soil?

Three thorn-less roses

Reflecting their radiant hues

Soaking in the streams of tears

In the shaking clutch of my hand

Reluctant to let go of you

One a yellow beam of sunlight

An everlasting force

Symbolizing the power of friendship

The white dress of purity

She would've worn when you wed

In the petals of silk signifying your faith

Represented in red

Love

Unconditional

Undying

ROBERT HARDY

Things That Bleed

Ink bleeds,

Noses bleed,

Blood oranges bleed,

Days bleed into

weeks bleed into

Months, until you are gone



CHRISTOPHER DRAPER

EKENE OGBUE

 Alice in Nowhere's Land

Black surrounds me, closing in as I fall. It's strange.
 Amanda once said she usually felt like she was
 Flying whenever she's high, as if the smoke were
 Wings lifting her higher and higher to the sky. As if she was
 A bird that changed into her secret form whenever she took in
 Large draws of the bong. That was her.

White powder is more my speed. My go-to. My pick-me-up.
 A clean line is drawn for me. Here it is, there it's gone.
 Disappearing like a magic trick. Each time I inhale, I lean back
 Against that old, ratty couch, against the cold wall
 Searing my bare back with its icy touch. And close my eyes.
 5,4,3,2,1.

I fall. Like Alice down the rabbit hole, on her way to
 Wonderland. With
 Mad-Hatters, white rabbits, and evil red queens. I tumble down
 the black hole,
 Surrounded by warmth that wraps around me like a blanket. Yet
 not even
 That keeps me safe from the demons that come out to play.
 Grinning with
 Their sharp-fanged teeth, eyes hollow and cold. The further I fall,
 the stronger they grow.
 Tearing through my blanket, taking away my warmth, digging
 into my skin.

Screaming matches in the living room, each harsh word a
 punch or stab
 That makes the kids scramble. Bottles of sometimes-half,
 sometimes-empty
 Liquor thrown against the wall. Always an inch away
 from the head.
 Hands that grabbed, hands that punched, hands that marked the
 skin with a
 Thousand and one bruises. Blue eyes, the devil's incarnate,
 smiling as he takes
 Your hand. Buys you a drink, then another. Asks you if you want
 to go further,
 Then draws the first white line.

I fall further and further, my warm blanket torn ribbons,
 body an icicle.
 I try to reach out for something, a branch, a rock. Something to
 stop my fall.
 Something to keep my high. But there's nothing.
 I hit the ground with a hard crash, defenseless, cold,
 my warmth all but
 A memory. No sooner do I hit rock bottom do the demons come,
 their eyes laughing.
 Mouths wide open.



JONATHAN DRAPINSKI

EKENE OGBUE

Little Red

Animals were all around her.
 Lions, wolves, birds-all different kinds
 From looming crows to gentle doves.
 Heads turning as she walked by, taking
 In the slope of her head, eyes gleaming at
 The fear oozing from her.

Look at the precious thing, the parrots chirp,
 Gentle words dipped in faux sympathy.
Isn't she lovely, the hyenas cackle,
 Amused by the downcast eyes and
 Slumped shoulders.

So sweet.
So innocent.
So frail.

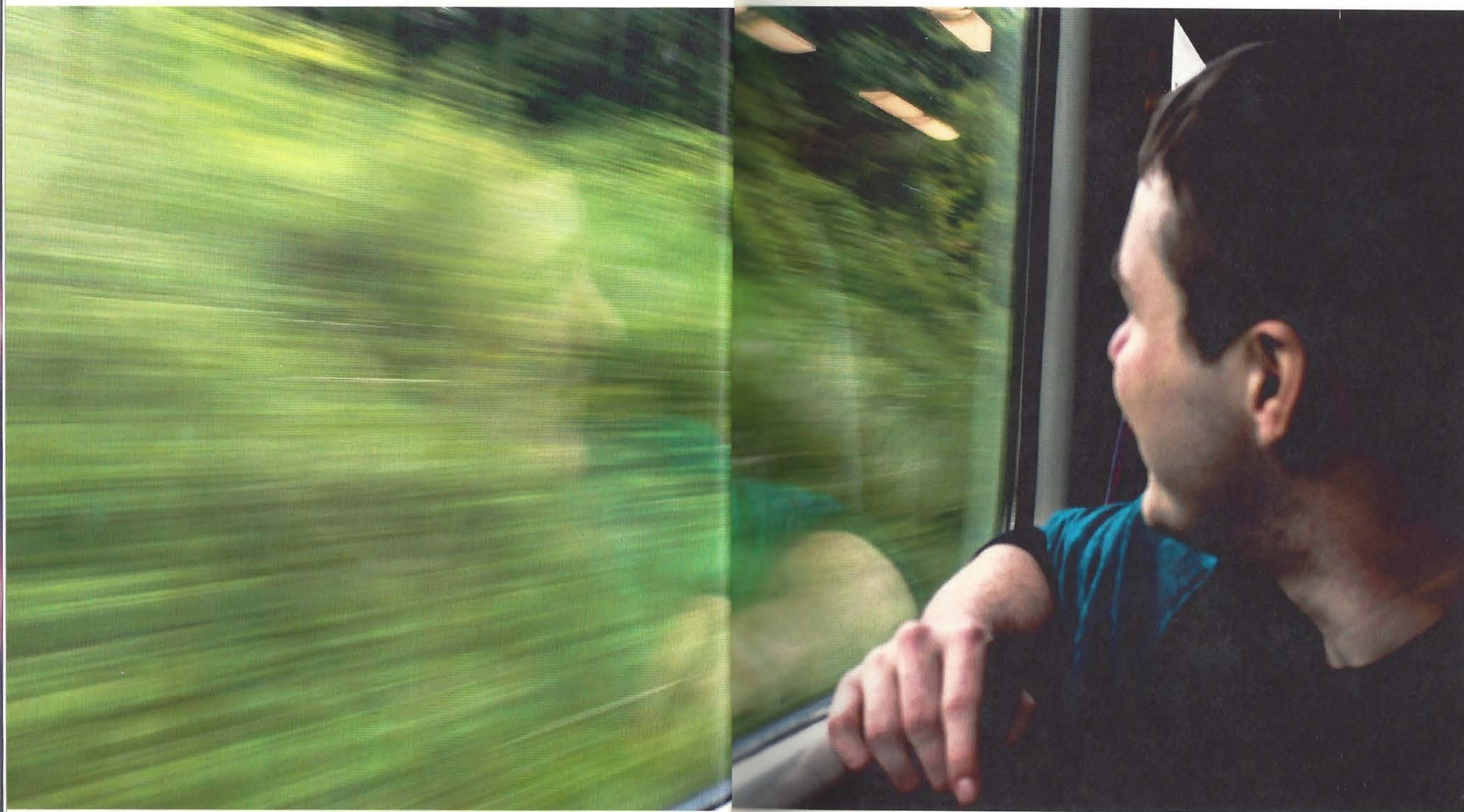
She walks on, holding herself tightly,
 Trying to ward off the howls and snickers.

A wolf crosses her path.
Hello, Little Red, he grins.

ELISABETH LAM

Law of Attraction

The subway in Seoul is quiet, but not empty. Locals have their
 noses in their phones, legs together,
 Frowns on their faces. Smiles are never welcomed in Seoul,
 mostly because they are
 Labeled as uninviting.
 I remember him clearly;
 Hand inked with a tattoo,
 Cap devouring his face,
 Pierced ears.
 Apart from the clean, neutral palettes of other men, he stood out
 to me. I couldn't stop staring.
 His beauty was clear and creative.
 He glanced over at me, his thick eyebrows peeking out
 from his cap.
 I left at my subway stop, knowing that I would not see him again.



LEONARD PAUL



ARIANNA ALCORN

NICOLE JEAN TURNER

N.E.D

It's past midnight and he groans.
 They've been kicking the notion of sleep around starch bed
 sheets for hours,
 just can't get comfortable in the late summer humidity
 when he sighs and says, "I'm sorry there's something inside of me."
 The pair lay in tangles with receding slow breathing
 near the edge of finally sleeping,
 that moment of semi-consciousness
 where you're looking down at the pool
 and want to jump, but can't quite
 get yourself to dip more than a toe in.
 Some sort of evolutionary double check
 that the mind is ready to go;
 ready to coax neurons into slumber
 and silence the mechanical buzz of ideas
 he says, "I'm sorry, I'm trying to forget it."
 Trying to tuck-and-roll tumble
 from the train of thought barreling down their
 pillowcase mountain.
 It's racing through satin seams and headed straight for the duvet's
 edge cliff,
 the steam pouring from it is burning at the back of his throat,
 the coal in its engine is fully stoked,
 so she pulls out a recorder and tells him to just get it out.
 They sit in silence for a moment.
 Then, he sings her a poem.
 An unexpected lullaby tiptoes from his soul.

The coal fog billows into pastel clouds around the bed and the
 train dissipates,
 and in awe she stammers, "How could you try to forget that?"
 He says "Eh, it's not that good, if anything I only like the ending,"
 rolls over and cradles her wonder into his arms.
 The artist's curse is the constant
 production of feelings and tales in vivid color,
 these thought gardens show no courtesy for long days,
 early mornings – they grow mindlessly
 senselessly erupting from the heart.



JONATHAN DRAPINSKI

LEONARD PAUL

The Feeding Aves

A laughing gull rips the innards
From the crab's shell.
Its head pops up, looking for danger,
Its bill a proud shade of red.

A great egret, often mistaken for
The common crane,
Waits patiently on the shallow bank
Poaching a little tunny with ease.

Cattails and sedge grow over
The trail to the gazebo we used to walk.
The edges of the sedges' blades
Feel sharp against my feet.

Four male horseshoe crabs beach
Themselves around a female.
She lays her eggs under the mud
Where the gulls can't find them.

LEONARD PAUL

Is This It?

Nothing is as irritating as,
Are you okay?

Wouldn't I say something if I wasn't?
How presumptuous that you

Need to bring up what I
Have worked to push down.

You're the mechanic hired to fix a flat
Who wants to replace the engine.

You say you've found the problem,
And want to pull me apart.

But I can't pay the shop fee,
So I'll just drive on flats.

*

Once, in a great rush, I left my face at home,
And you looked upon me for the first time.

Sitting on the asphalt,
After walking out of the wake,

You told me we could go
Anywhere I wanted.

I wanted to be under the fake dark
Of a blanket on my unmade bed;

But instead, we sat in the parking lot
And stared at our reflections in the glass.



ARIANNA ALCORN

ANDREA BAEZ

The Common

The view is filled
With unfamiliar faces
Leaves falling into places
Then it turns winter
Faces become hidden
From bitter winds and darker days
Time is overlapping, the people are dancing
Faces become home and the wind
Turns to warmth and the walks don't feel so
Unfamiliar anymore

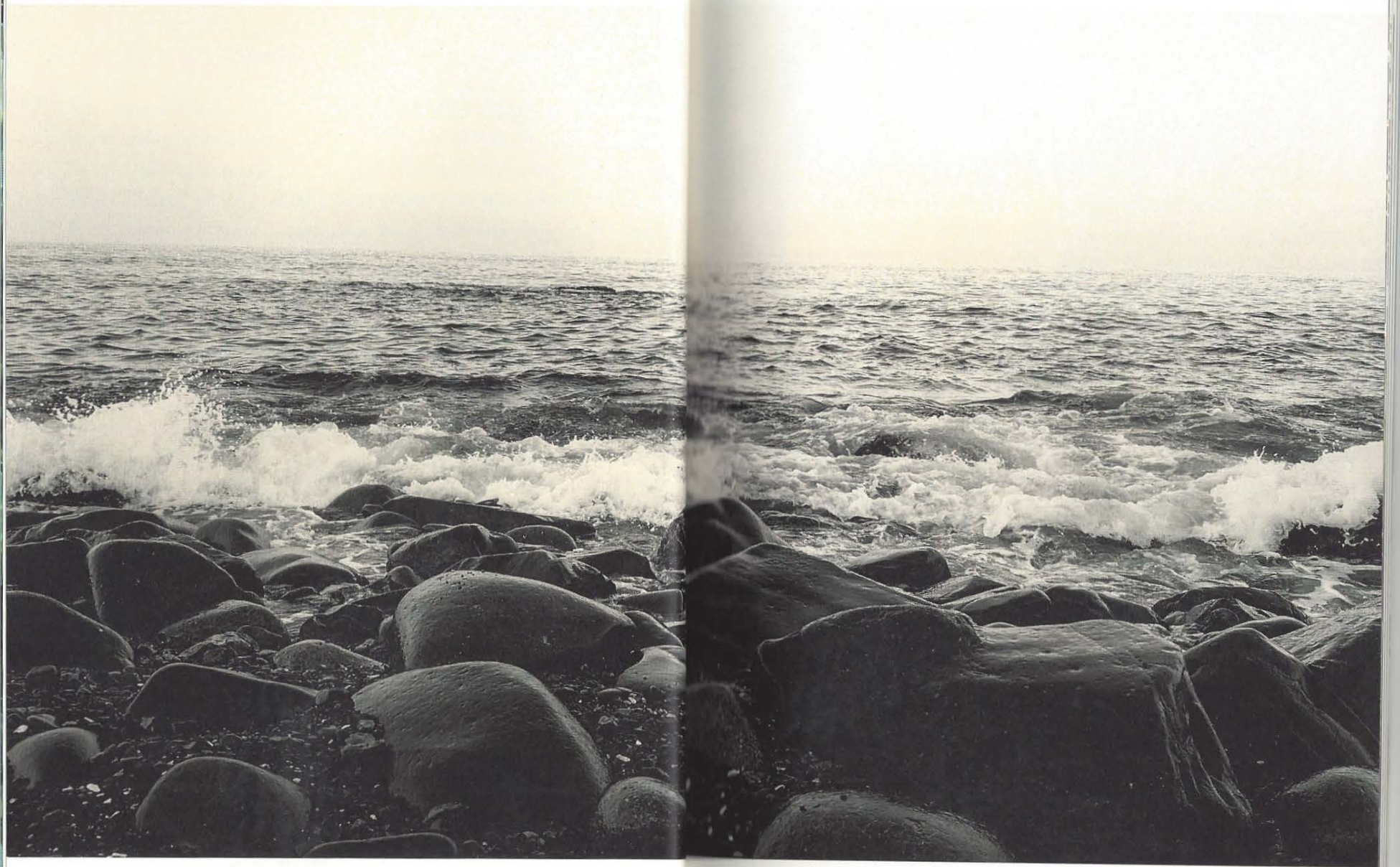
ANDREA BAEZ

Ilusionada

Hay calles que me llevan
A lugares que no conozco
Con los nombres entre tu espina y
mis manos calmadas en el valle de tu cuello
y estoy aprendiendo entre besos jadeantes
que estoy perdida en ti

Translation:

There are roads that lead me to places
That I don't know the names of
In the curve of your back and my hands
calm in the valley of your neck
and I'm learning through breathless kisses
I'm so lost in you

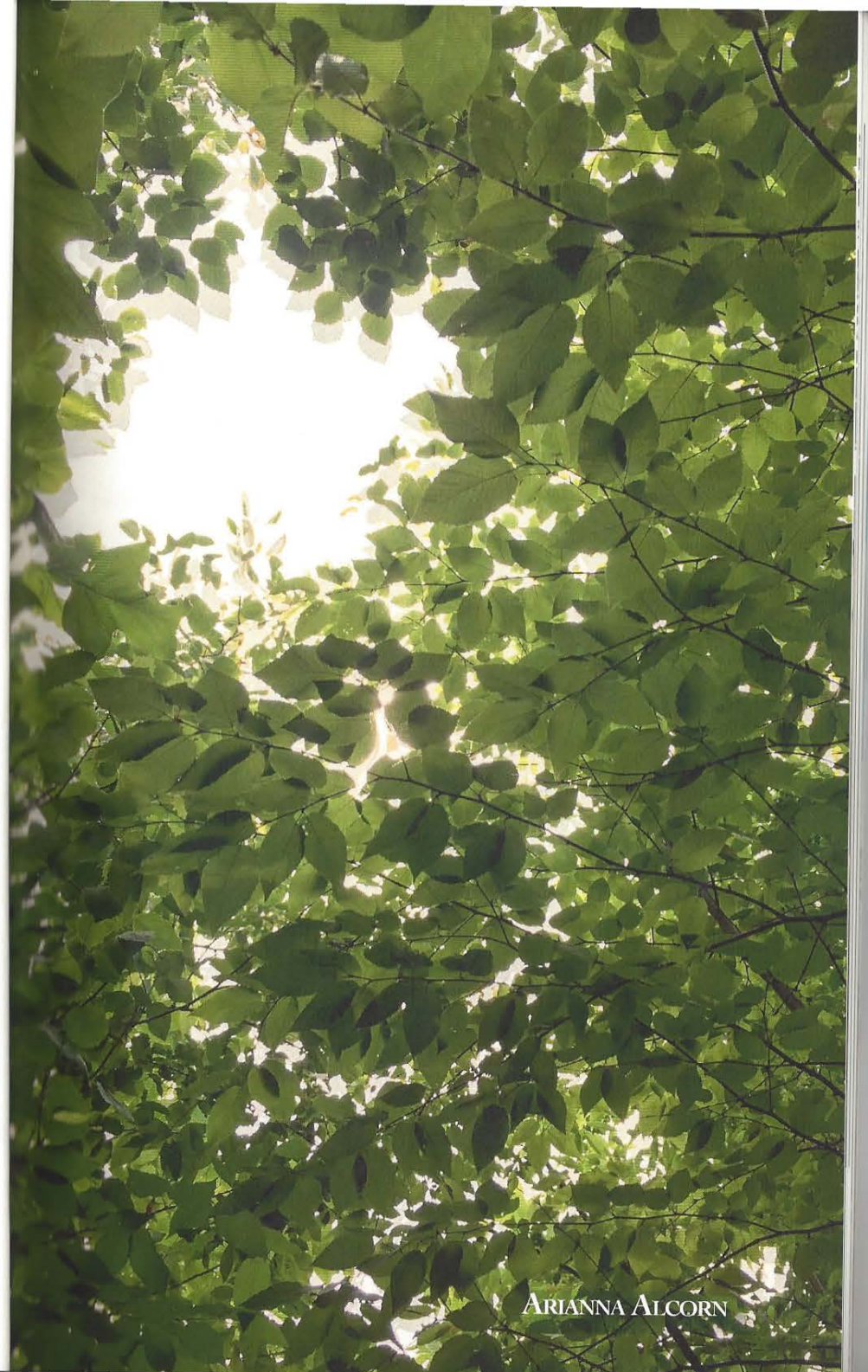


CHRISTOPHER DRAPER

ELAINE KEARNEY

Writing Your Name

Let's try this again
for the hundredth time today.
I'll merge paper to pen
and create a masterpiece.
I'll never share it with the world;
It'll die alone
and it'll probably be about you.
If I could only formulate my thoughts
around a coherent sentence
and write it down.
Why is this so hard?
They're just words.
I should be able to express them
but they won't come out.
Damn.
Writing is hard,
especially when it's about you.



SARA WEAVER

Words

In the letter I apologized
and reconciled my flaws just
for you
I was naive and
ignorant about what
would bring you
back

I thought running back to
you would make you
run back
to me

it's me not you
it's not you
it's me

Sand in my eyes
obscuring the very details I
needed to be wrong
Solitude is
Easier when
cooperation
is dead

SILENCE
was easier to
digest
Forgive me
was easier to roll
around on my
tongue
to test its weight

the word I
shoved
out of my throat
with a force I
wasn't sure existed
in me

done

pulled from me kicking and
screaming
with a force I wasn't sure
I wanted to
use

it'll be okay
it'll be okay

If I had a dollar for every time
I said

I'm fine
everything's fine
it's fine

I would fill this void
sitting in my
chest

If numbness were
a trade there would
be no better master
than
me

SARA WEAVER

Stranger

The sprinkle of stars on the slow-building horizon
The elephant's gaze as it holds the sun in contempt
Turned to the west, the moon's dimples form at the sight of the
heavenly light

The speedy waters welcome the chance to shimmer in the abyss
chaos retracted its hands from the victim's neck
and the silence gasped to reclaim its last breaths
The limitless end, the finite dark
and I saw the rough, coarse breach of sound.

Dreamers dream but of nothing they can decipher
Liars break a sweat and still hope for opaqueness
Lovers kiss and stress about the anxieties of the most
fleeting moments

A dove coos to the moon, draws back the drapes, and feels a stifle
in its feathers

A mother smiles for a daughter she never knew
as Death's blackened hands steals away the life she
thought she held,

something she was convinced was shrouded in gold flecks and
little silver strands.



NICOLE JEAN TURNER



CHRISTOPHER DRAPER

MICHAELA TRIDENTO

Passing Moments

I have survived the swirling black depths of hell.
 Seen the fire burn the things I once loved.
 Cried from the toxic fumes thrown at me from the ones
 I have loved.
 Healed from the wounds of a thousand swords swirling
 against my skin.
 Yes, I have survived the trials that tried to destroy my soul.
 I have also relished the day my feet reached freedom.
 Breathed the air I once thought might have been
 impossible to taste.
 Danced on the grass I thought I would never touch.
 And swam in the oceans I thought I would never see.
 But is it just enough to survive?
 Life as we know it has a beginning and an end.
 We are guaranteed birth and death.
 The universe gives and the universe takes; you have no say.
 You have no knowledge of when, where, or how.
 From the moment you first cried you were guaranteed death,
 Nothing more and nothing less.
 How do you plan on spending the moments between
 birth and death?
 Will you take a chance to live freely
 Or is it enough to have passed the precious moments
 Of life with closed eyes and an empty heart?
 Be the answer to the meaning of life.
 Because all we can do is give life meaning.

MICHAELA TRIDENTO

Faithful Company

You can't see me, hear me, touch me, or catch me.
 I fire through everything you love without so much as a sound.
 Crumbled bridges, burned homes, and shattered glass are what I
 leave in my path.
 You can never stop me; I am the shadow that follows you in the
 darkest of places and brightest of moments.
 You can never destroy me, just feel my weight on you,
 At first it starts as a small pressure,
 But with time I will catch fire and
 Burn every ounce of your pure flesh.
 Take the cards that have been dealt to you.
 I am the most faithful presence.
 It will always just be you and I.
 I will never leave.



LEONARD PAUL



Fiction

CHRISTOPHER DRAPER

ADRIANNA KINNEY

His Secret Joy

The home was close to the water, a lake to be precise, and the salty scent wafted through the house at all hours of the day. The sun set over the waves, a reflection of red and orange light, before the moon rose with a silvery glow. Beneath the illuminated waters, the Nereids began to dance. It was always a slow dance; a dance that made the tides go a tiny bit higher over the sandy dunes, and the boats, tied to the pier, sway like a rocking chair. The Nereids would hold their hands and circle some unseen point; their eyes were closed as they moved. It is unknown whether this was a ritual or a festivity for the Nereids, but always on the full moon, they danced the unknown dance.

Within the house, every full moon, a pair of eyes watched the Nereids in a state of awe and wonder. No matter how many times the eyes saw this beautiful frolic, there was never a change in emotion. Excitement always built before seeing the tides push nearer to the home, and the Nereids lifted themselves lazily from below the water. Their shining scales smoothed down to human skin, and they rose atop the water, stopping in mid-hop. They stood for a moment — grim faces became radiant smiles, and fell backwards into the lake once more. The boy pretended that they smiled their gorgeous smiles at him. He would then creep back to his bed, quiet as a mouse, so not to wake his parents, and fall into a deep sleep, full of dreams of an underwater dance.

Years pass and the boy grows and leaves to continue his life. As time goes by, the memories of the Nereids and their dance fade and wither, like a plant left without sun. He grows and soon he is a man. He begins his life anew when he marries and has a family of his own. He lives a happy life, and his days are full of laughter. Yet, when the chaos becomes silence, he feels an emptiness, an absence of joy in his heart. So, he goes to the place where he knows he felt

the joy he has lost — the house of his childhood.

He finds that beautiful home by the water has become old and ruined. He sleeps in the room with the least damage, his old bedroom with the baseball posters and a bay window. The night is bright, with a full moon high in the sky and stars twinkling like Christmas lights. Despite the calming sound of the waves on the shore, he cannot sleep. The feeling of a rising, distant memory keeps him awake. The nostalgia of it fills him with longing. A longing for what? Perhaps a walk will calm his mind. He sets out, a jacket on his shoulders and boots on his feet.

The water glistens and tumbles. He walks and watches the water, as if waiting for something. Then there is a dark shape standing over the water. Squinting, he spots several of them, and the memories come back, all the nights watching that dance as a child. He watches them rise once more in a dance unchanged for centuries. They turn and twist, gracefully and lovely. They slow, and just before they fall back into the water once again, they smile, as they have always smiled at him, a welcome home. After he has returned home, the joy comes back in his life and he returns the next full moon, this time with his son, so that his child may share in his secret. The joy of the dance and the Nereids, and when his child becomes a man, the cycle will begin again.



CHRISTOPHER DRAPER

EKENE OGBUE

The Worthy Lamb

It's almost too painful to walk, fear and shame slithering like a cobra, embracing her tightly to the point of suffocation.

The more steps she takes, the tighter the embrace. The tighter the embrace, the more her stomach churns. The more her stomach churns, the more bile builds, burning her throat, threatening to erupt.

Just a few more steps, she tells herself. Her stomach protests, tightening. She bites down on her bottom lip, piercing the skin with her teeth, spilling blood. She focuses on the taste of copper to take her mind away from the nausea poisoning her stomach. To ignore the small, warm hand held in her colder one that is the cause of her nausea.

"Elena?"

She tries to pretend that the sound of her name was called inside her head instead of out loud. It makes it easier to pretend that she isn't sick. That she isn't leading an innocent into the slaughterhouse.

"Elena?"

Despite herself, she turns around, lowering her gaze. Bright hazel-green eyes framed with thick black lashes peer at her, bright with life. She wonders if she once looked like that. "Yes, angel?"

A smile lights up in the child's eyes, her lips following in suit, amplifying her beautiful purity, which worsens the nausea. "I'm not an angel, silly. I'm Sara."

That's right. That was what the child said when introductions were made at the park, where she found her playing in the sandbox,

building a castle. Yet to Elena, angel suits the girl better. She reminds her of a beautiful porcelain doll, the kind she always wanted, with curls of shiny blonde hair, freckles dotted across her angelic face, and bright eyes that were alive with such warmth. One glance into Sara's face and Elena was almost tempted to turn away, until his voice rang in her head.

The worthy lamb is the one who's lost their way. It is our duty to lead them back to the light.

She swallows a hard lump. Her stomach jolts in retaliation.

Sara is still looking at her, smiling her angelic smile, her eyes warm as the sun. "Does your house have toys? Like dolls?"

Toys? Dolls? Objects she hasn't thought of, much less seen, in so long, it is almost foreign to her. According to Thomas, such silliness isn't permitted in the holy place. "We have books," she offers. "Lots of books."

Sara isn't as intrigued. "Like story books?"

Pages roll across her mind; scribes and passages speaking of purity and virtue, sin and blasphemy. Pages she had to memorize, read over and over again until the words echoed in her sleep. The heavy weight of books slamming against her back or head whenever she stumbles over a word and he punishes her for her mistakes.

"Not quite."

"Oh." Sara's lips turn down into a frown, until she gains back her spark, smiling once more. "That's okay. I like big books. Maybe you can read them to me."

Her heart withers like a flower, crumbling into a ball.

Thomas will like her. Maybe even love her. One look into Sara's face and one couldn't help but adore her. She is also eager, a

quality he likes if it can work to his advantage. She also is his favorite age, the ripe age of five.

Her stomach tumbles as she remembers being five under his care. She was lured into the wolf's den just as Sara was, filled with such life and innocence. An hour in the den and the innocence was slashed, ripped, and torn apart until there was nothing but coldness.

And now the former lamb is the Shepherd's sheep dog, leading the girl into the same trap.

Her chest tightens. She struggles to breathe, needing to clear the nausea, to silence the voices but the air doesn't wish to cooperate with her.

Probably because it's just as disgusted by you.

"Is that the house?" Sara points ahead, where at the end of a lone street, a three-story brick Tudor house stands. Elena doesn't question the wonder in the girl's wide eyes, taking in its beauty. "It's so pretty."

Looks can be deceiving.

"I bet you have lots of fun here."

Her crumbled heart freezes, spreading frost-bite to every organ within its reach. The ice thickens as they walk through the front yard and approach the door.

The voices grow louder as her heart pounds harder.

You coward!

It's for the best. She is the lamb, the worthy lamb chosen-

By you, whom you intend to feed to the wolf.

Her lungs are burning, shriveling from lack of oxygen.

Those who wish to taste the fine wine must first swallow the blood.

It is what Thomas always says. Blood before wine, tears before laughter, pain before joy. One must suffer before they earn enlightenment.

She is so close to passing the final test. All she has to do is open the door.

She places her hand on the doorknob.

He'll hurt her.

No. She tries to convince herself. *Sara is different. She won't be like me. She won't give him trouble. She-*

Is innocent. Just like you were. And he took that from you.

Her knees buckle as the memories sweep across her mind. Tasting actual food once a month if she managed to please him. Being locked away in total darkness for days, sometimes even weeks if she strayed from the light. Feeling her body being eaten away by the lashes of his whips, the heavy force of his kicks and punches. Silent sobs choking her as he strips her, bends her over or forces her onto the floor, teaching her the severity of her faults over and over again until she feels wet and sticky shame explode inside her.

She grips the doorknob tightly as she attempts to breathe.

"Elena?" Tears prick her eyes as she hears the little lamb call her name.

"Run." The word tumbles from her lips before she can catch it.

Sara's smile fades. It dawns on her with gasping revelation that it will be a common occurrence, even less, if she stays here a second longer.

She pulls her hand as if the knob burns her. She turns to Sara.

“Ru-”

The door swings open. Sara’s eyes widen. Elena tries to shield her from his view. Black eyes smile at them.

“Hello my dear,” he coos. His dark eyes flicker from her to Sara, gleaming in delight by her looks and her fear. “And hello little lamb.”

Memoir

CHRISTOPHER DRAPER

The Sky Will Be a River Run Dry

I remember the smooth grain of the swing-set behind my house as a child, and the sharp pain of the occasional splinter, discovered carelessly from within its weather-cracked wood. I remember the bright yellow slide, and how small it became each year. It is one of the only remaining pieces still in existence, the wooden structure and monkey bars having been burned in a bonfire sometime in my teenage years. But it has been forgotten. The slide sits somewhere in the forest under several feet of earth, dragged and left deep in the woods during one of my brother's guileless excursions, eventually buried by the loggers who haunt these trees.

The swings of the wooden jungle gym survived by the miracle of my mother's reinvention. They sway under the lowest branch of the Great White Pine in the middle of our yard, tattered. The tree which towers over our estate has seen better days. Plagued by more winters than one could see in two, maybe three lifetimes—it creaks with uncertainty in the wind. Sap now seethes from its bark, like an open wound spouts blood. Its lush branches have thinned and dwindled in number. It is dying, and there is no better tree in its place to carry the swings we swung from as children.

The rooster still crows at its awakening, a rooster that cries to a sun that has seen many before him. He's a boastful thing with vibrant plumage and a strong voice. He guards the hens that maintain our gardens, and he has held off many predators in the night. But his strength is waning, and surely the plotting foxes have noticed the fading greens and blues in his lustrous coat. His steps have become careful, his hunger less ravenous. He will hide his age in his morning song, but the sun's endurance will beat him soon enough.

The creek has been damned. No longer does the water from

the melting snow flood our fields or unearth our road in the spring. Its source has been drained by the same loggers who took the trees that shaded our home, now a dry bed winds through our property without purpose.

I remember fearing the stars and the infinite when I was young. Sometimes I still do, only now I hang my head low knowing that they too will fall with The Great White Pine, fade as the rooster's coat. Even the sun will cease to rise and the sky will be a river run dry.



NICOLE JEAN TURNER

KYLIE HOMEM

Calming Call

My breathing is rapid.

My heart is racing.

Is it from all the coffee I drank? Is it from my work out? I can't walk fast enough without people giving me strange looks. I just want to get to my room, somewhere where I'm comfortable, where I can let all my emotions out.

I finally reach my floor, but my room at the end of the hall looks so far away.

Why did I agree to live at the end of the hall?

I race to my room, fumbling with my keys. My door is locked signaling that my roommate isn't back yet. I'm not sure how that makes me feel. I'm still struggling to get the door unlocked with a shaking hand. When it finally unlocks, I shoulder the door open and make my way into the empty room, throwing my backpack down as I do. I am able to get my sneakers off and make my way next to my bed just as my legs give out. I can't even climb into bed, I just lean on it, my head buried in my arms.

That's when it starts. That feeling of pure panic and anxiety that crept up on me during the day. My whole body starts to shake as tears start rolling down my cheeks.

I can't breathe.

Try.

I can't.

I reach for my phone that I threw on the bed as soon as I threw my backpack down. No reply to the text I sent earlier. The

clock reads 5:15, meaning my roommate and friends are most likely still at dinner.

I could text them.

No, that would bother them. They can't help now.

I try and slow my breathing, but all that comes out are wheezing gasps. I can't do this alone.

I grab my phone again, debating on what to do. Tears begin to blur my vision, so I bury my head in my arms again. My makeup is going to be everywhere when this is over. Why do I care about that now? I start to feel stupid as I continue sobbing, but no matter how hard I try to convince myself I'm not, I cannot relax.

I have to stop thinking I have to go through this alone. Finally I lift my head, grabbing my phone once more and unlocking it. I scroll through my contacts with my thumb as my other hand wipes away the tears blurring my vision. I finally find the name I need. With a shaking hand, I hit "call" and press the phone to my ear. I hear the phone ringing on the other line, praying the person on the other side picks up.

"Hey, what's up?"

Relief floods my body as I begin to cry harder.

"I'm sorry," I stammer, "none of my friends are around and I'm freaking out and I didn't know what to do. I'm sorry."

"Don't be sorry!" comes the reply. "Take some breaths, it's going to be okay."

I obey and try and take some deep breathes, all while still apologizing.

"Don't apologize," he replies, "thank you for calling me. I'm here."

As he says this, I begin to relax. My shoulders are no longer tensed up (since when did I tense my shoulders?) and my heart slowly begins to stop pounding beneath my chest. No, I'm not alone like I thought I was. While it might not be okay now, I know it will be okay soon. All I needed was to hear it be said.

And it was okay. Twenty minutes, my breathing back to normal, and some new Netflix TV show recommendations to consider, I finally felt like I could continue with my night. There are days where I go through my problems alone, but this night was not one of them; just that small reminder that I am not alone, even when I feel like I am, is what makes the difference.



ARIANNA ALCORN

ANDREA BAEZ

In My Place

When I think of my kitchen table, I look at the things it has robbed me of: confidence and love. Instead, they are replaced with doubt, confusion, and hurt. I haven't sat at my kitchen table in over eight years, and somehow it still wins. The kitchen table raised me, it brought me up to feel that my image and looks were greater and more important than my intelligence and heart. The worn out seat that I sat at every night became the place I dreaded; the insecurities I formed sitting in my chair only grew as I got older. It became harder to not see myself sitting in that same chair, feeling defeated and alone. More times than not, it has carried this physical and mental weight in me.

In my life, I have let people hurt me, to the point where I wouldn't recognize myself in a mirror. It makes me wonder if I have allowed the feeling of defeat that I felt in that chair to carry me throughout my life. Every time I tried to leave it, that feeling came crawling back to me. It waited for me like an old friend, worn and patient, wanting another chance to remind me of why I left it behind to begin with. It makes me think of the "what-if" questions, something I try not to dwell on. What if, instead of making me feel like I was and always would be unlovable, I felt that there was a possibility that I could be loved? I wonder if I wouldn't suffer from issues of self-worth, and maybe I would've learned to love myself a little more?

What if I had taken a stand in that worn out, wicker chair? Would I have been better when people tried to hurt me, and made the right friends? I find myself sitting in different chairs, in different places, losing myself in conversations. I sometimes picture my old, worn out friend who visits me to keep me on my toes. But these new chairs, these new ones are singing to me that I am in my place, and I am welcomed back any time.

ROBERT HARDY

Some Come to Life

I was sitting in chemistry, facing the front of the class, as Dr. Chen began to write some scientific notation on the whiteboard. Neither of us were paying attention, but at least I was making an effort. You just sat beside me, and looked straight into your backpack, as you flicked your golden Zippo open and closed. I really didn't get it, how you could pay such little attention and retain so much. It was as if you could just hear the words the teacher said, let it echo around in the back of your mind, and they would stay there, well for math and science at least. I never complained though, because without you in the class I would have failed. Hell, you helped me get an A on my final, but that was four years ago.

Today is a Friday, and it started like most any Friday. I woke up around 11 am, next to my girlfriend Rinnie. She was turned on her side, in a state between being awake and being asleep, the type of sleep you get while waiting for someone to wake up. I leaned over, quietly to give her a kiss on the cheek, making sure I wouldn't wake her too fast. Just as I leaned over and hovered above her cheek, she twisted her head and caught her lips against mine.

"Do you want some coffee, cutie?" Rinnie asked smugly. "You must have slept well because you snored all night."

"Well, I was the perfect temperature this time." I smiled. "Coffee sounds amazing."

Come to think of it, you didn't really drink much coffee in high school. It was just Monster Energy drinks and Newport 100's for you. Sadly enough those very similar vices soon became my own. My morning drives to school would consist of Newport Platinum's and NOS Energy drinks (I had to be original). I would walk through the door reeking of the punk I'd always wanted to be, but never really was. Then I would run into you at my locker, because

after all you helped me fight through the crowd of wild, selfish seniors trying to pick the best lockers on the senior balcony; our relationship had come a long way. The first time we ever really talked was freshman year, we sat next to each other in our 'G-H' advisory the first day of high-school. Those days you were just the kid I knew that got in a fight during lunch in middle school.

Years later, you had become more to me than some kid who got into fights, and helped me pass chemistry, you were the kid who drove the Chevy Cruze who was always parked at my house. My brother had grown close to you through school, so you'd been at my house hanging out nearly every day the summer before my senior year. Reluctantly, I started giving you a chance, and soon enough you were even more to me still than a nice car in my driveway, you were a good friend.

There were days that we would sit in my old beat up Volvo, smoking cigarettes and trying to come up with profound theories about the universe. We would bounce back and forth between different inventions for clean energy, and whether or not there was a god. The closest thing either of us could be to a Christian was believing in intelligent design. After all, our world is so intricate, and massive, how could it all have happened by accident? How could anything in this world be just an accident?

"Don't fall asleep again, wake up." Rinnie whines. "Rob!"

"Coffee, right." I laugh. "Ok, I'm up." I sit up in bed, look over to the clock. It's 11:17, and I'm surprisingly energized. I stand up, and approach the full-body mirror hanging precariously from Rinnie's messy closet, and try to adjust my hair so I look somewhat put together for her parents. The cool morning breeze rolls in the open windows, but nicer than the feeling of cold air is the scent of yesterday's rain on the wind. Rinnie pulls out two mugs from the cupboard, and begins scooping coffee grounds into the reusable Keurig cup, as I sit down on a stool at her counter, staring out the

window at cars flying by, doing their everyday hustle and bustle... but I don't see any Chevy Cruze, nor will I see yours again.

How could it really be? How is it that people come to grace the earth with life, and leave it all the same? How is it that people live, and die, and nothing changes? When I lost my grandmother, I felt like the earth ripped in two, and that there was no safe place to plant my feet, like I had skis on each leg racing down a different mountain. How is it that when people die, the world doesn't stop for us, but just seems to linger in our face, mocking us? The life of the world lingers in the long days of work, and boring errands. It lingers in the early mornings where birds sing, and dew falls, and people complain about having to be awake. Most of all life lingers in the memories. Life lingers in every smell that sends me back, or each cigarette I hold, and eventually get stomach sick from. How is it that when you stepped in front of that train, the world stopped for you and no one else? Every day since I felt like I was in a state of sleep, where I was waiting for you to wake up, and instead with the first sip of my coffee, I did. Sleep easy, Jean-Luc, you will always be remembered.



ARIANNA ALCORN



LEONARD PAUL

CARLY SCANLON

Journey into the Unknown

“Carly, where are we going today?” The high-pitched voice squeaks through the cracks of my wooden, poorly-painted bedroom door, waking me up from a lazy Saturday morning slumber. I blink my eyes open and sit up on my bed. The springs beneath me screech with the intensity of an agitated rooster.

I slowly move off my bed and trudge across the room to unhinge the lock, granting my three-foot-tall, red-headed, and freckled faced little sister access to her favorite room in the house. Her face lights up, her mind absorbing every inch of the room from the slanted left side of the ceiling to the white tile floor that peeks out from where the rug can't reach. Her light blue eyes, the only physical characteristic the two of us share, roam the purple painted walls. Scotch tape holds up various CVS printed photographs disguising an array of chipped paint marks and thumb tack scars that secretly disperse the bare walls. A flashy, vibrantly colored bed spread conceals worn dinosaur patterned sheets, hiding them from the view of any middle school guests that my bedroom could potentially host. A wooden desk cluttered with half-finished school assignments and rainbow gel pens stands alongside the wall, patiently waiting to be used. Natalie skids her tiny feet across the nail polish stained rug before using all her might to hoist herself onto the box spring mattress. To an eleven-year-old the room was subpar, but to a five-year-old, it was heaven.

I rejoin Nat on the bed, addressing her giddy face, which is covered by a mess of crimson curls. Her demeanor is eager with anticipation. “So,” she asks again, “where are we going today?” She looks at me as if I hold some sort of key that can unlock doors inside her head. I scan the room with my eyes, as I have done several times before, searching for inspiration, contemplating which key I should pull off the keychain today.

“Okay, hold on, let me think” I reply. My focus fixates on the small closet across the room. “Got it, follow me.” Nat excitedly follows me up off the bed and we travel together to the other side of the room. I tentatively pry open the creaky wooden door, peaking my head inside first as if to ensure that nothing would pop out of the small space. After confirming that the coast was clear, I crouched down on my knees to rid the closet floor of various pairs of shoes and any miscellaneous articles of clothing that had escaped the grasps of their hangers. Once everything is removed from the miniscule space, the two of us crawl inside, sitting so that we are facing each other cross legged. Our silhouettes sit in the blackness like two dark trees bending together, whispering secrets. The air between us is as still as a television screen after hitting the pause button, as if an unknown force somehow put the universe on hold for us.

“The year is, well, I’m not really sure of the exact year, but we’re in the rain forest. I’m going to be Alex and you can be Samantha.”

“Wait, can I be Annabelle instead?” Natalie interjects with a slight whine in her tone.

“Well Annabelle is older than Alex, so that wouldn’t really make sense in this- “

“Pleasseee?”

“Okay, fine you’re Annabelle,” I submit with an eye roll concealed by the darkness of the room.

“So, they’re in the middle of the woods. It’s about...” I stick my head outside the closet door to glance at my bedside alarm clock, “...8:48 am, and they just woke up after sleeping on the top branch of the highest tree in the rain forest. They were exhausted the night before, and spent hours climbing the ladder-like branches.” I lift my arms and stack them horizontally in front of my chest

in an attempt to create a visual of the way the tree branches look in my head, though the darkness of the closet prevents Nat from seeing any of my motions.

“Sleeping on the top branch of the tree was necessary, in order to avoid being caught by the scary cyclops who had been hunting them for weeks. They had to wake up and prepare to leave early, because even though the cyclops didn’t have the best eyesight (because he only had one eye) his sense of smell was extra good. He was so good, he could sniff Alex and Annabelle down from miles and miles away.”

Natalie’s breath halts as the story intensifies. Her light, strawberry-blond eyebrows inch up her forehead as her mind reacts to the suspense of the story. Her eyes are as blue as the gel pen on my desk, the ink bleeding out from her pupils and oozing onto an invisible page.

“Annabelle reaches into her bag and gets out a folded up map, handing it to Alex. The two of ‘em scrunch their eyes as they look at the tiny pictures and symbols that were hand sketched for them by a towns person they ran into, weeks prior. The penciled in lines were almost completely blurred out by the creases of the paper. The choppy scratch marks that once indicated the pathways they needed to follow had faded out of sight. After several unsuccessful minutes of squinting and searching the map, Alex gives up. She shoves the useless piece of paper back into her pocket.”

The words flow from the tip of my tongue and bounce off the four walls of the confined space. Each one unlocking a new depth of imagery, the way a shovel digs deeper into the earth’s soil. My thoughts multiply, the ideas planting themselves like seeds in the rug beneath our crossed legs. Our reality begins to fade, leaving our minds stranded in a mist between our world and a fantasy world that I have created for us. Our personalities morph into these characters, the way water turns to ice in a freezer. I am no longer

a scrawny, shy, prepubescent eleven-year-old sporting a butchered bob haircut and pink polka dotted pajamas. I am now Alex, whose jet black wavy hair flows down her back as she stands with authority, confidently prepared to take on the dangers of the world.

“Where are we gonna go?” Annabelle asks.

“We’ll find our way back to the kingdom, I promise,” Alex responds, looking her sidekick in the eyes, although she knows deep down that their odds aren’t looking that good. They stood in the middle of the rainforest, low on food, low on time, and without any idea of how to get back to the kingdom. They don’t even have a map to help, Åðem! They quickly gather their stuff and start walking north, aligning their bodies with the direction of the rising sun as they continue their daunting journey into the unknown.

Once we were both locked into this state of mind, it no longer mattered where I decided to take the story. Although I know Nat desperately hopes that Alex and Annabelle will make it back to the kingdom safely and free from injury, it wouldn’t really matter to either of us if they ended up in the digestive system of the cyclops. All that mattered to us was that, for the time being, we no longer had to be Carly and Natalie. As we sat on the floor of my bedroom closet, we were no longer the astray half-sisters who called the desolate house at the end of the road their home. We were no longer the subject of our neighbors’ whispers, or the punchline of a classroom joke. We were no longer concerned with the yelling and screaming that took place down the stairs. We were no longer related to the raging alcoholic who drank himself to sleep across the hall. My bedroom closet acted as a portal to our secret little world, a world where anything and everything was possible; it was a temporary distraction from our real life, a journey into the unknown.



JONATHAN DRAPINSKI



A photograph of a dense field of green succulent plants, likely Sedum, with a white square frame in the center containing the year 2017. The plants are arranged in a repeating pattern, and the frame is centered over the middle of the image. The background is a solid light gray color.

20
17