QUIZ & QUILL

OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE | VOL. 100 | SPRING MAGAZINE 2019

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LUMOS

Sierra Lawhead

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SUBMISSION POLICY

Q&Q prides itself on publishing the highest-quality creative work. Therefore, every precaution is taken to assure writers' anonymity during the selection process. Only the advisor of Q&Q knows the identities of those who submit work to the magazine until after staff members' selections are finalized.

LETTER from the EDITORS

DEAR READERS,

As our journey with Quiz & Quill comes to an end, it's time to reflect on what surely was a memorable year—the 100th year of a wonderful publication that holds a special place in our hearts. From planning a retro chapbook that pieced together 100 years' worth of amazing student writing to organizing the centennial celebration of the century, we have tried our best to honor the history and the integrity of Quiz & Quill.

But it wasn't easy. We juggled honors and senior projects, battled InDesign and its many frustrating quirks, and spent countless hours planning the most ambitious reunion of Otterbein writers and Quiz & Quill alumni that has ever been done. Nevertheless, we hope we succeeded in celebrating a publication that archives 100 years of written history as told by Otterbein students, and one that has welcomed us and nurtured us into the writers and people we are today.

The retro chapbook, centennial celebration, and the spring magazine you now hold in your hands would not be possible if it weren't for Quiz & Quill's wonderful staff. They are the backbone of this publication, the real heroes that dedicated their time to select the beautiful pieces you're about to read in the following pages. Thank you to our faculty advisor, Shannon Lakanen, the beating heart of Quiz & Quill—without her guidance, hard work, and wit, none of this would've been possible. She will be missed as her time as advisor comes to an end, but she will certainly never be forgotten; a piece of her will always be a part of Quiz & Quill. To Jeremy Llorence, Quiz & Quill's next advisor and the first creative writing professor us editors had here at Otterbein our freshman year, we'd like to say that the future looks bright with him at the helm. We know he'll do great things for Quiz & Quill—right on, man.

Lastly, we would like to thank all the talented writers who submitted to the magazine this year. The submission pool was teeming with talent, and it was a pleasure to read all your hard work. We hope you, the reader, are as blown away by these pieces and this magazine as a whole as we are.

Happy birthday, Quiz & Quill. To you, we will forever be grateful for all the memories. Here's to 100 more.

BEST,

ABBY & ALEX

MANAGING EDITORS

SLEEP

Kristin Gustafson

Oh, you invisible seductress
begging my eyelids to droop
at the most inconvenient times:
classes, crucial conversations,
operating heavy machinery.
You make highways
too comfortable for my liking,
all the markings on the road run together
like a watercolor painting of only white, yellow
and asphalt.

They suggest brews to rid myself
of your sensual grasp.
Yet my body already shivers
with the love-child of anxiety
and depression -
and the latter is not keen
on missing a rendezvous with her lethargic lover.

My bed is a safe haven amongst the
war zone of my life. My blankets
provide the warmth that a lover once did.
It is easy to replace things
when they only serve one purpose.

These cold bones cannot shiver
much longer. They are tired from a
long day of holding this body upright,
going through the motions of normalcy.
I will give in, soon, to the heavy harlequin
begging my eyelids to droop,
at the most convenient times.

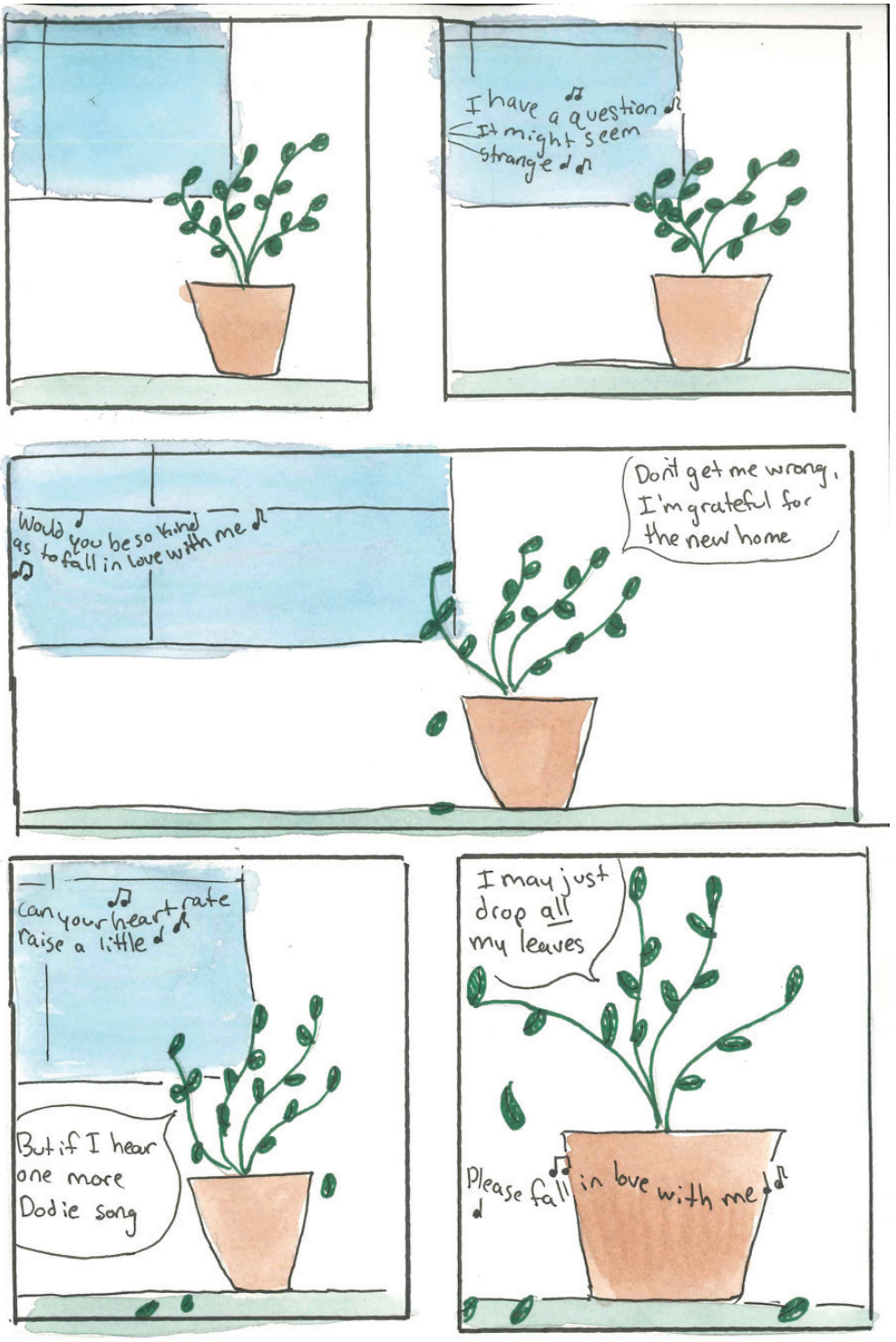
NOT EVERYTHING CAN BE A SONNET NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WANT IT TO BE

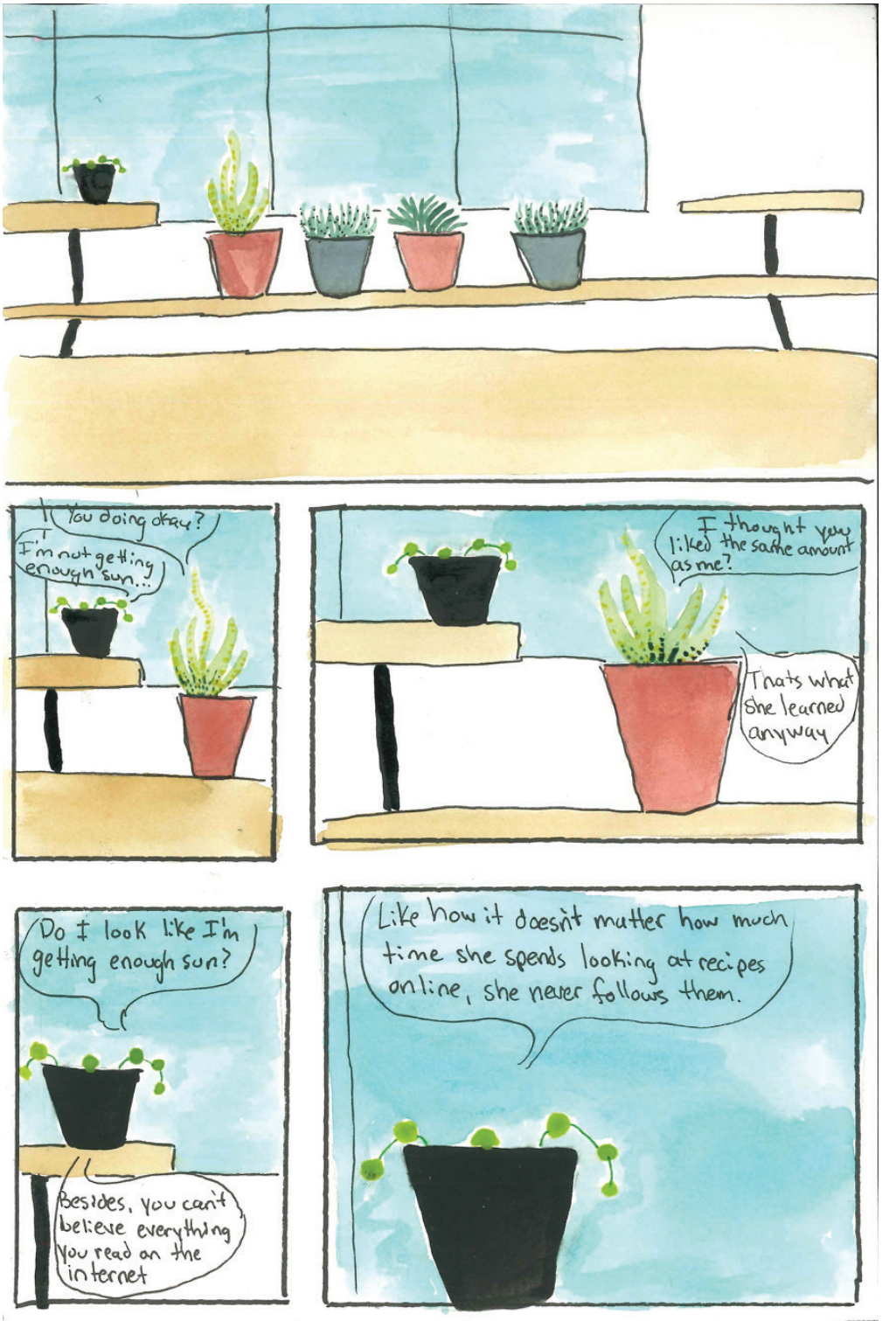
Gyasi Hall

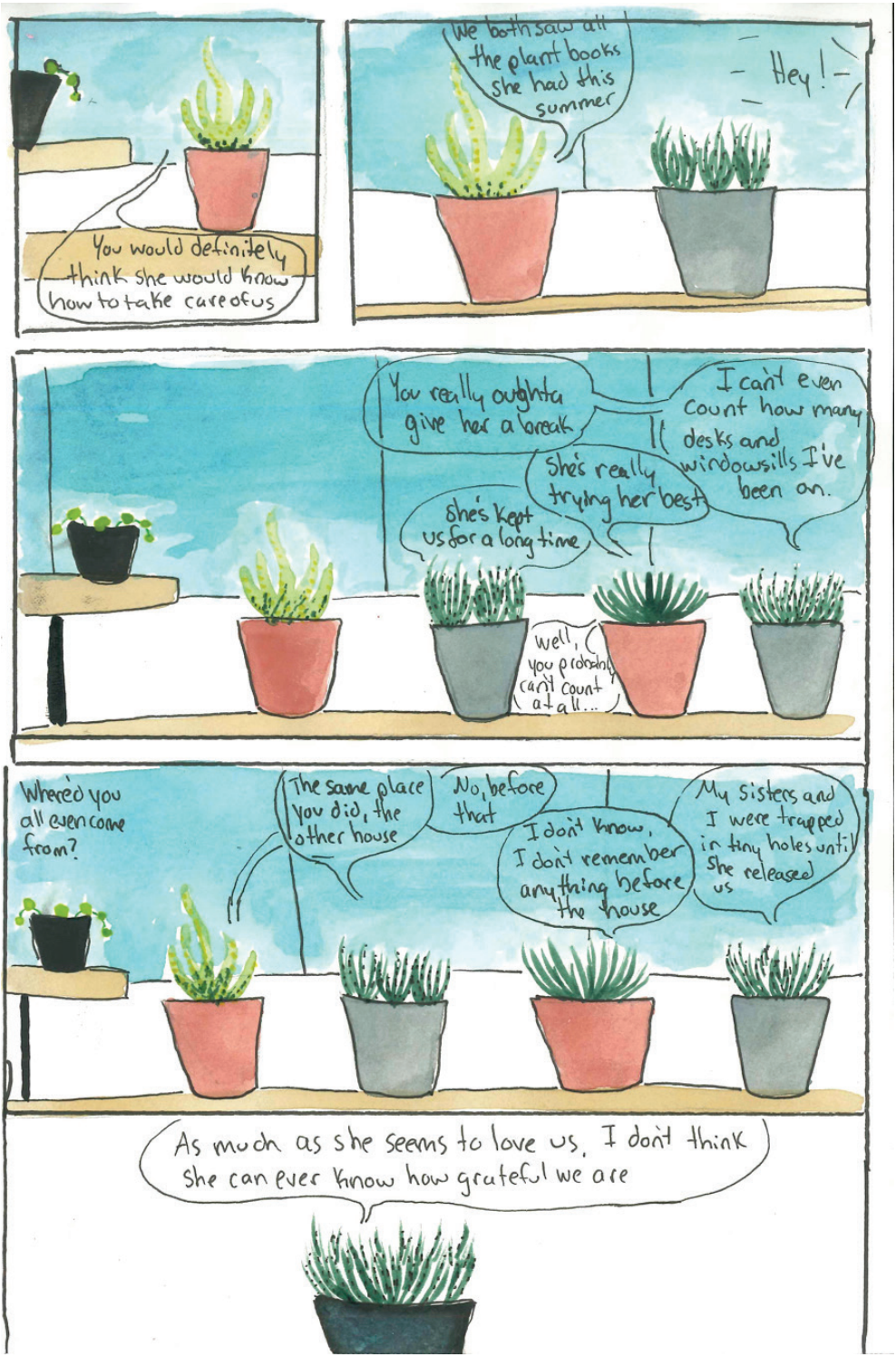
No matter how long I live, I fear that Ars Poetica will never not feel
Like the kind of cop out that blooms eternal, floods the land with its
Gorgeous fountains, reaps what it sows, etc. I love you, and so I trust
That when I call myself a pervert you understand that it has more to do
With spiritual hang ups than the amount of dishes in the sink, or how long
They've been there, or how long it's been since I've done laundry. This is the
Kind of want they build churches to chase after and I'm sorry for that too. The
Last girl I slept with moved back to defiance OH and became a mother and I
Am not the father and today is her birthday and facebook had to tell me that
Even though I was in love with her the same way a horizon is in love with its
Own distance so maybe I don't care as much as my poems would have you
Believe but love is still love even if it's not anymore and by slept with I mean
The most intimate form of connection two people can foster in a bed: lying
Unconscious and breathing without thinking and holding each other just so

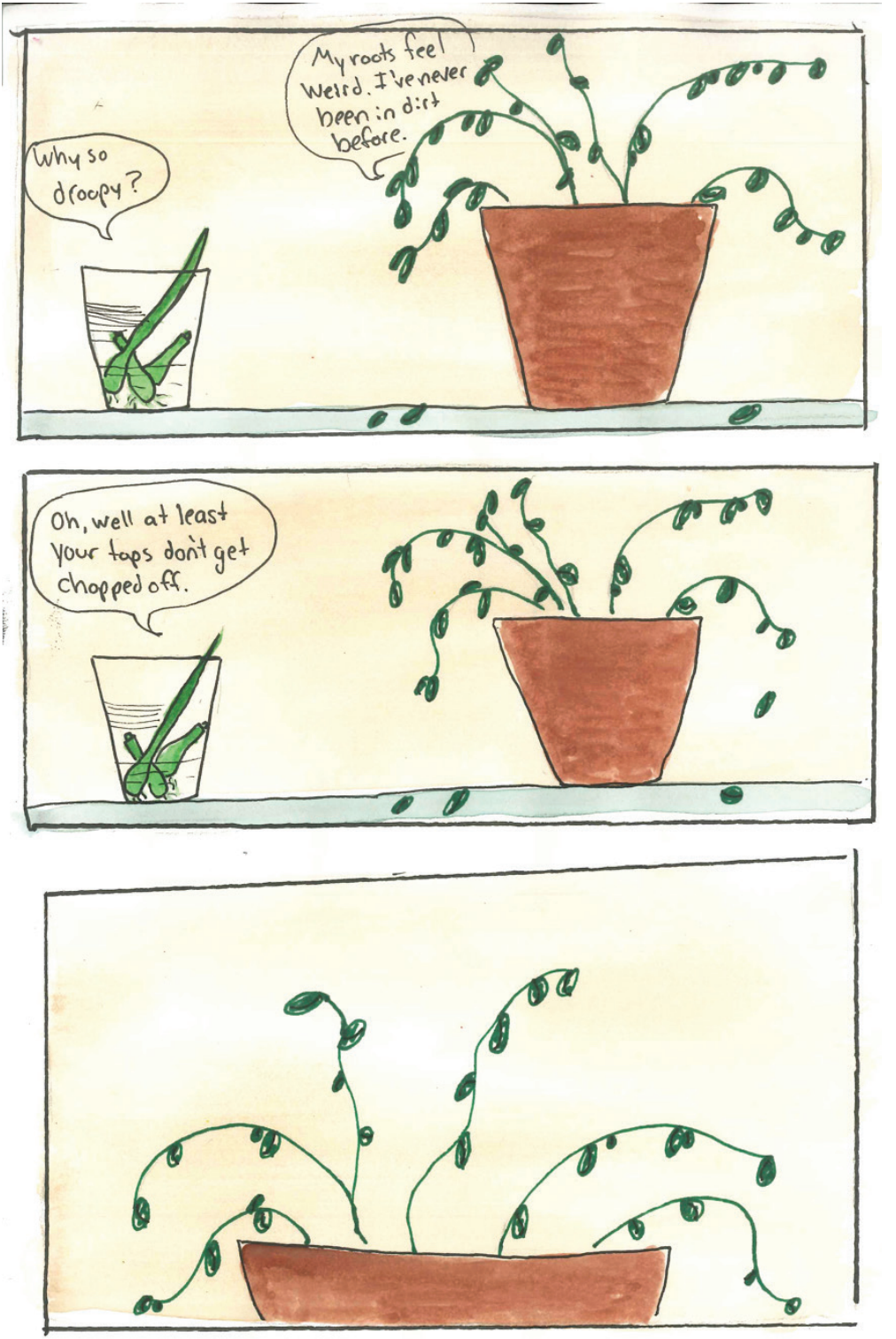
FALLING LEAVES: A HORTICULTURAL MEMOIR

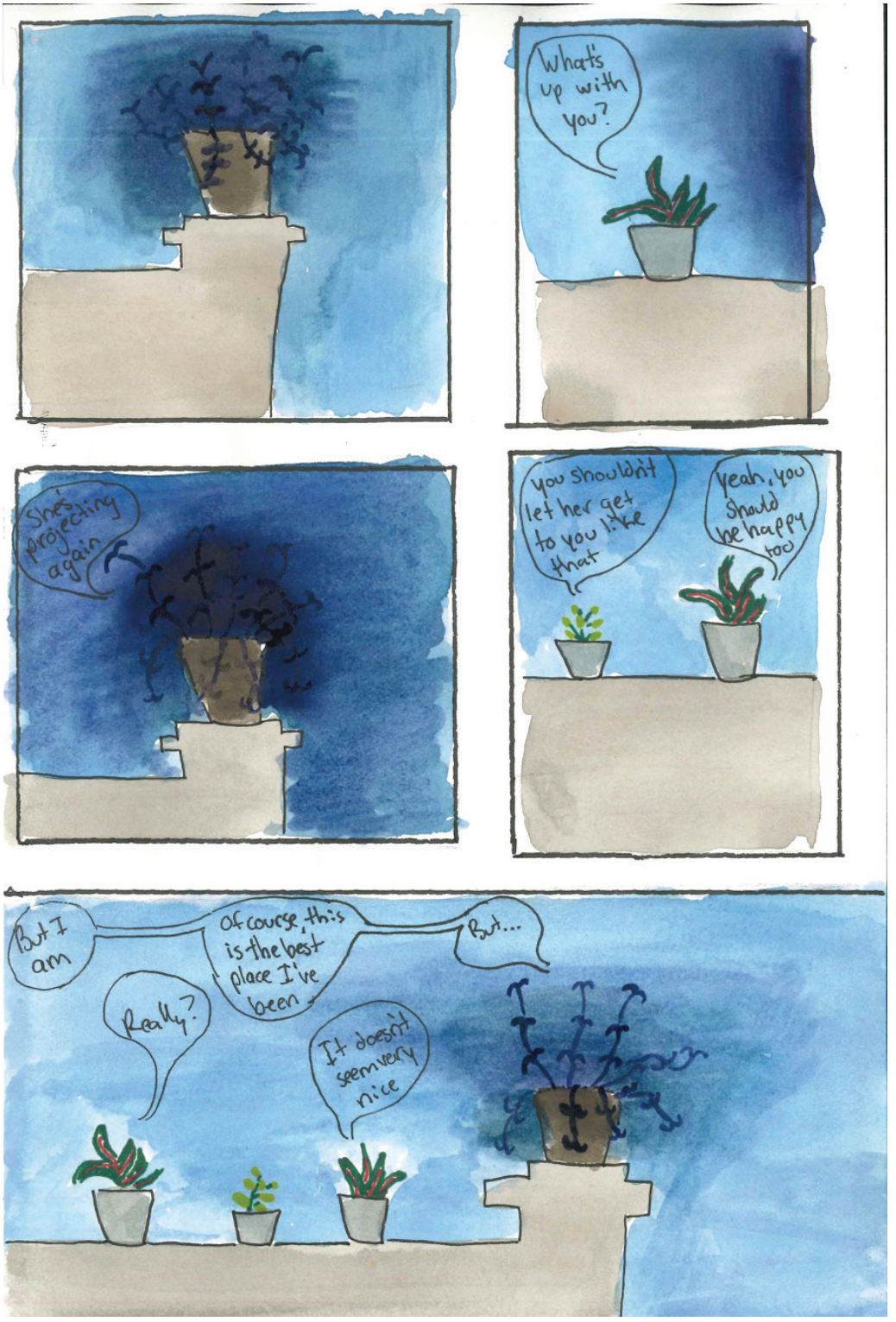
Casey Hall

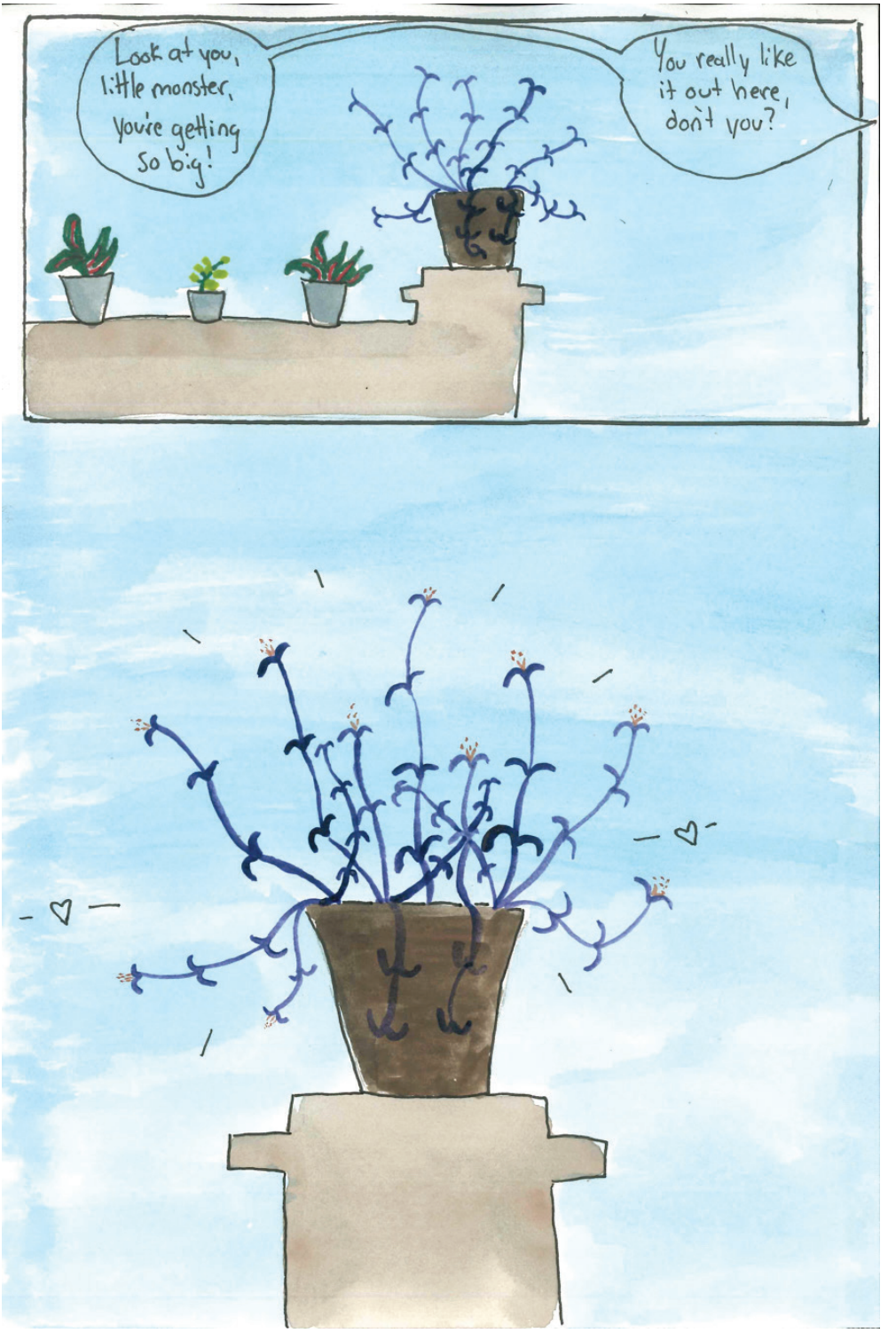

I have a question
It might seem strange
Would you be so kind as to fall in love with me
Don't get me wrong, I'm grateful for the new home
Can your heart rate raise a little
But if I hear one more Dodie song
I may just drop all my leaves
Please fall in love with me

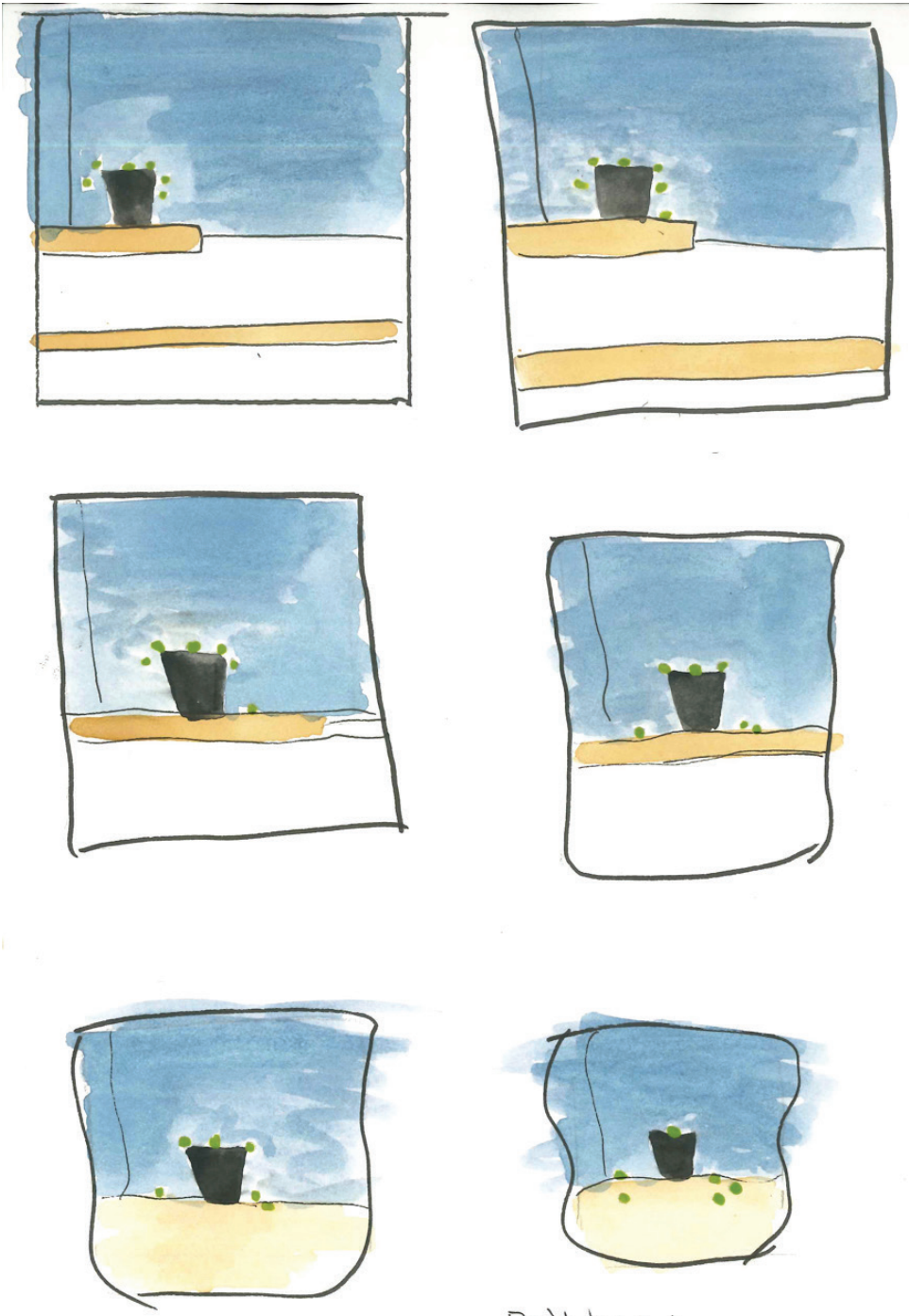

You doing okay?
I'm not getting enough sun...
I thought you liked the same amount as me?
That's what she learned anyway
Do I look like I'm getting enough sun?
Besides, you can't believe everything you read on the internet
Like how it doesn't matter how much time she spends looking at recipes online, she never follows them.


You would definitely think she would know how to take care of us
We both saw all the plant books she had this summer
Hey!
You really oughtta give her a break
I can't even count how many desks and windowsills I've been on.
She's really trying her best
She's kept us for a long time
Well, you probably can't count at all...
Where'd you all even come from?
The same place you did, the other house
No, before that
I don't know, I don't remember anything before the house
My sisters and I were trapped in tiny holes until she released us
As much as she seems to love us, I don't think she can ever know how grateful we are


Why so droopy?
My roots feel weird. I've never been in dirt before.
Oh, well at least your tops don't get chopped off.


What's up with you?
She's projecting again
You shouldn't let her get to you like that
Yeah, you should be happy too
But I am
Of course, this is the best place I've been
But...
Really?
It doesn't seem very nice


Look at you, little monster, you're getting so big!
You really like it out here, don't you?


Don't be sad.
You did the best you could.

THE BARN BURNED DOWN
19 APRIL, 1910

J.r. Gill

The closer you stepped towards the house the colder the air got.
The barn my Father had built twelve years ago was on fire.

When I was real little I remember my Grandmother picking
dead baby rabbits out of the mesh hutch inside the barn.
She plucked at them like a chicken to feed and placed them in a tin bucket.
She'd pour their corpses out like morning coffee for Grandpa in the back field.

My Father tossed water out on the night grass to keep the fire from crawling
any further with the same tin bucket.
The dirt was mud now, and the barn was burned down.
Left in its place a heap of fire taller than me.
My sister cried because she was little and scared.
I had tears in my eyes, but I couldn't tell you why.
Dad stood watch over the flames all night.
Just stood there.
He'd sent me and Maw and my brothers and sis to bed,
but I got up and snuck to the back door and watched him.

Grandma said them dead rabbits couldn't handle the cold.

The next morning, Dad told me he'd need to pick up a second job to make up
the money to build a new barn.

THE FLIES KNEW FIRST

Emily Tepe

My aunt told me once that flies can tell when something is dying. The scent of death draws them, in hordes, and they mass around the poor being, drowning it. Or suffocating it. That fact makes me unreasonably mad. Why should flies, such insignificant, unintelligent, inferior animals, be allowed such intimate information as when something is dying? A more philosophically-minded person may call it ironic, the human race wasting away in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, yet remaining ignorant to when their own lives will end. I don't call it ironic, I call it sad.

Friday mornings were supposed to be the most exciting—the culmination of an entire week spent in riding lessons, practices, and hours plaiting the flowing manes of each horse. I saw the cycle occur over and over again, week after week, as groups of children arrived to the ranch Sunday afternoon, their eagerness clouded by gnawing fear and reservation. By the time they left, early Friday afternoon, all of that fear and reservation was transfigured into confidence, pride. Some of the girls would have tears glinting in the corners of their eyes, illuminating the hint of dread that each child felt at having to return to the real world—the world of parents that don't love each other like they should and bullies at school who called them fat or laughed at their dyslexia. I was made painfully aware of the lives each child sought to escape through a week of camp, and therefore made it my ultimate goal to never give them reason to see the ranch as anything but their perfect escape—a paradise.

I watched in muted agony alongside my fellow counselors on the Friday morning, watched as Cameron and Katelyn walked on each side of Maverick. From the point at which they led him out of the tree line, the trio would appear a perfectly ordinary sight, two ranch workers and one old, small, black horse. Except that Maverick wasn't old … he wasn't even small. At fourteen years old, the height of his equine life, Maverick was, by all effective standards, the ideal camp horse. For the kids, he was the sportscar, spirited and daring, he flirted with how fast they would think they wanted to go, and always pushed them just slightly past. Each week, I was bound to hear the delighted, if not slightly frightened, squeals of the camper aboard Maverick, majestically cantering down the arena rail, even though they should have been trotting. Hands clutched around the saddle horn and a desperately excited smile on their face, the kid couldn't even see how amazing that horse looked, floating through the sand with head and tail proudly waving to the delight of anyone who saw.

What's more, Maverick wasn't just black. His brilliant white marks were his most distinctive feature, gracing his face, neck, legs, and barrel. Each splotch was clearly defined and gave him the look of an expensive, expressionistic piece of art. On the Friday morning, however, he was solely black due to the swarms of flies covering every inch of his pathetic frame. If I had been withholding any shriveled, hidden away piece of hope for his recovery, it disappeared when I saw the flies.

In retrospect, I should have known from the moment Maverick didn't come in with the other horses that Friday morning that hope was a pointless frivolity. Each morning, as the sun rose, the entire camp traipsed down to the red-walled barns to watch as the herd galloped in from a night spent on aptly-named "Horse Island." A fenced land-bridge separated the horses' wooded home from the main section of the camp where they would be tacked up, ridden, and loved on by the children. Knowing that their breakfast awaited them in their stalls, all fifty of our diligent workers would run abreast into the holding pen. There, they would stand patiently as their child fiddled and fitted their halters over the horse's attentive ears. My position was in the center of the pen, monitoring each child who walked in and out of the holding pen. They would walk their horse to the tie rail, give them feed and hay, then begin grooming and tacking for the infamous Friday "Show-deo." Not really a show, and not really a rodeo, this tradition allowed each kid to demonstrate to their parents arriving to bring them home that they had, indeed, learned how to ride a horse. Head-to-tail, follow-the-leader-style, the individual riding classes paraded around the ring and weaved through a simple course while their parents watched through the lenses of their cameras.

That being said, I was parked there, in the center of the holding pen, when little Michael walked up behind me and pulled on my sleeve. His four-foot frame begetting far more power and bravery that one would assume, this nine year old had impressively maneuvered Maverick throughout the week's activities, the two of them making a pair like something straight out of a Hallmark movie. As if he knew Michael couldn't reach his ears, the horse would softly lower his mighty head to allow Michael to slide the halter over it each morning, and each hoof was placed with the utmost gentleness, so as to never crush Michael's booted toes. In turn, Michael reveled in Maverick's speed and agility, and while at times I, the instructor, feared for his tiny life as they raced around the arena, Michael was having the time of his young life.

"Teacher!" (Michael never called me by my name), "I can't find Maverick. He normally stands over by the water trough and he isn't there."

I had heard people talk about your heart dropping into your stomach before, as if a toxic mixture of fear, guilt, and anxious anticipation just weighed it down so

heavy, it had nowhere to go but down. This was the first time I can remember realizing that those words are more than just a saying. The weight on my chest became unimaginable, and my eyes must have reflected the desperation with which I mangled out an excuse for Michael to leave the pen and escape the savage reality that had surely befallen his steed.

"Oh, hahaha, silly Maverick," I choked out. "He missed the memo to come in with everyone else! Tell you what, Michael, you head up to breakfast with the rest of your cabin, and I'll send someone out to Horse Island to grab Maverick and tie him up for you."

He took the lie without a second thought and ran to catch up with his friends headed for the mess hall. It wasn't until every last child was securely out of sight that I turned to Jen, my supervisor, and told her in simple terms that Maverick didn't come in that morning. Her eyes reflected my own: confusion, fear, and then—realization.

Three days prior, I was leading a trail ride through the two hundred and fifteen acres that the camp owns when Maverick laid down … with a kid on his back. He didn't roll on the poor child or anything, it was actually so nonchalant and nontraumatic that the kid simply swung his leg over the saddle and stepped off. Dismounting my own horse, I assured the frightened, gangly middle schooler that it is not particularly strange for horses to lay down sometimes, and he shouldn't be worried. I got Maverick back on his feet with minimal coaxing, and secured the kid back into the saddle. I took the lead rope that I always hang from my saddle for situations like these and clipped it on Maverick's bridle, leading him the rest of the trail to assure he would not lay down again. As it was, I'd have to do a write-up on the incident.

There are two reasons why a horse will lay down while being ridden: either they are sick and colicking, or they are being ornery. Maverick wasn't the mischievous or naughty type, yet I hoped the latter to be true because a horse colicing means that something in their organs is severely wrong. Sometimes their intestines are twisting around each other, blocking anything from going in or out, until the lining ruptures, spewing intestinal fluid into the body cavity. Sometimes, there is a build up of some foreign substance in the stomach, causing irritation or pain. Best case with colic: the horse works it out themselves or with the help of some injected drugs. Worst case, the horse has to go to the vet for major surgery, which they rarely survive … that is, if they make it to surgery at all.

Paperwork filed in the desk and children filed back onto the bus, I went to inspect Maverick for any symptoms of colic. I'm no vet, but any true horse person knows some of the tell-tale signs: muffled stomach noises, diarrhea,

kicking at the stomach or more attempts to lay down, raised body temperature. I couldn't find anything amiss, so I called the ranch manager, Jackson, and explained the situation. He, too, gave Maverick the once over and couldn't find any signs of colic or illness, but instructed me to keep a close eye on him for the next few hours. "I'll give the vet a call, as well, but I doubt she'll be able to come out before next week. I can always cancel if he seems normal for the next few days," he assured me.

Maverick laid down once more that day, but I still saw no other signs of colic. All that day and all day Thursday I kept a watchful eye over the horse, but the initial scare had passed and he acted fairly normal throughout the morning lessons. There was the fact of his breathing: far too heavy for only an hour of being ridden—but it was a fairly hot July day, after all, and Michael sure loved to go fast. Then, while waiting tied to the rail, his droppings were somewhat diarrhea-like, but he was probably just dehydrated. I walked him over to the trough and didn't let him free until I was satisfied he drank his fill of water.

Maverick was not one to remain hidden in the trees while the rest of the horses ran in for breakfast. In fact, he normally headed up the herd. I knew that, Jen knew that. Cameron and Katelyn knew that, and I watched their faces fall as Jen asked them to walk out and try to find the horse and bring him in. Each torturously slow step that Maverick took towards the holding pen, supported by Cameron and Katelyn, stomped the guilt I felt; I had seen the symptoms—I had seen them and I did nothing. Jackson, the ranch manager, had come out of his office in time to hear the news, and watched with us. From an aerial perspective, we must have looked incredibly strange, our little group. No one stood within ten feet of another, no one spoke, and no one reached out to comfort their neighbor. Our solidarity gave us strength, and to comfort Sami standing to my left would actualize that there was something worth being sad over.

The proud black and white head that had just days before soared high drooped close to the dirt, and with every other step Maverick would hit his chin with the hoof that reached forward, gaining ground. It must have hurt, the constant banging on his mouth, but not as much as it hurt to lift his head, it seemed. Flies dripped off his body along with the sweat streaming down his neck and the back of his legs in frothy, white droplets. His tail, which Michael had painstakingly detangled the day before, was caked with his own feces. That, and the overwhelming stench of death permeated the air, yet we all drew in towards the wretched animal, much like the flies. Even though my hand came away stuck with dead flies and Maverick's sweat, I stroked his kind face and whispered soothing syllables. Looking back, I was probably speaking more to myself than to him because anyone could tell he was beyond saving. Jackson

was the only person in the pen that didn't immediately crowd the horse, smother a gasp, or offer a calming touch. He remained by the fence, with a broken yet calculating expression. Without a word, he turned around and headed back to his office and returned minutes later with a locked gun case.

There was no need to explain what his intentions were when Jackson finally approached Maverick and slipped the leadrope out of Cameron's hand. Jackson could often come off as overly businesslike, cold, even, but the care with which he walked Maverick back onto the island showed how much the sight of Maverick's decrepit form saddened him. No one had to be told to stay behind, remain in the holding pen, because none of us wanted to see Maverick die, however merciful the gunshot would be. At long last, we began to comfort each other and offer distracted and prolonged embraces. There wasn't much to say, and we all still reeked of Maverick's death smell, so we simply waited for the shot to ring out. We took the time we had to grieve, cry, or simply stand in a daze; that is, do all the thing we could never do in front of the children.

Jackson came back into view still carrying the gun case in his left hand, which was still locked, and Maverick's halter and lead in the right. Our confusion must have been apparent, and had we not witnessed the state Maverick was in, we could have grown a seed of hope. Maybe Maverick had undergone a miraculous recovery and in a renewal of strength and energy pulled away from Jackson and galloped back to the trees. But we had seen Maverick. We had seen the flies.

Jackson drew a deep, sorrowful breath before appeasing our muddled thoughts, "I barely got out of sight before he just dropped down and died. I was still holding the leadrope." He kept walking through out dumbfounded posse, straight through to his office. Cameron said he saw him in there hours later, crying.

Sami cried. Hannah cried. I didn't. Sami clung to my shoulder, trembling gently, and her tears darkened my blue button-up shirt. If I'm honest, I would have liked to cry along with her—yet tears never come to my call. Emotion swelled inside of me and a tempest surrounded my heart, but not a salty drop surfaced. Maybe crying would have been too simple. So, I didn't cry. Jen didn't, either. It was actually Jen who was the first one to speak, questioning, "How did it happen so quick? Did anyone notice something off … was he sick before today?"

I could have just stayed silent and kept my aching suspicions that the behaviors I noticed the day before were precursors to Maverick's shocking death. Unfortunately, I have never been good at staying quiet, even when I would be better off doing so.

"Well, two days ago he laid down, and then yesterday he had a little diarrhea and was acting a bit lethargic, but I told Tim and he said—" She cut me off with a sharp, "Why didn't you tell me? We could have called the vet … we could have saved him."

A slap in the face would have been a kinder punishment, and her words skipped my ears and implanted themselves directly onto my brain, repeating themselves over and over. Quite suddenly, I was overcome with the nauseating realization that I may very well have just killed a horse, a good horse. As to her question, I didn't have a reply. She knew I didn't, and walked out of the holding pen. The rest followed after a final moment of grief. I was just steps behind. There were still children to care for, after all, there were still parents arriving, expecting to hear the joyous camp stories and inside jokes and meet the energetic soul that was in charge of their child all week. My heart had fully descended into my stomach by this point, and the guilt, hurt, and sorrow made it so every footfall was accompanied by pain that ricocheted through my body.

By the grace of God, we made it through the festivities of that morning and early afternoon without any tears, without news of the dead horse on the island reaching the children. This was their perfect escape from the world—their paradise—and there are no dead horses in paradise. We gave Michael another horse to ride in the "Show-deo." The horse was Dollar, who didn't have a rider that week. The poor boy was sad, and for good reason, being that he couldn't show his parents his beloved Maverick. Thankfully he bought our excuse that Maverick was a bit under the weather that morning. The shiny new palomino pony we put him on soon erased any bitterness he held over losing his black and white steed, and he raced around the arena with the joy of a child that has just had the week of his life. He brought in the joy the day deserved, whereas I was just trying to maintain the semblance of a smile. I felt like a heretic, taking pictures with my campers and meeting the grandmothers. I couldn't overcome the battle waging inside of me; "Do I want them all to leave so that I can escape the oppression of their joy, or because I don't want to pollute their genuine smiles?"

Once the parents drove away, their kids already falling asleep contentedly in the back seats of their minivans, Jen approached me for the first time since rebuking me earlier that morning. I wasn't mad at her—far from it, I knew I deserved those stinging words and more. She surprised me by offering an apology for what she said. "It was no one's fault, Emily. Horses die. People die. We stop it when we can, but the fact remains that we can't stop them all."

This comment did nothing to lift the cemented mass in my gut, but I had always looked up to Jen, so I was pleased to be on good terms with her once again. The tempest within me had settled somewhat, enough to name guilt,

sorrow, frustration, and embarrassment amidst my host of unwelcome, parasitic inhabitants. Done fighting, I allowed the beginnings of their somber power to work through me as I, and the other counselors, cleaned up the stands and the cabins, as we always do after a group of campers leave. Our team of staffers had a meeting, debriefing on the strong points of the week and the areas where we could improve. Jackson ended with a few words about Maverick, since that was the only memory most of us would take away from the week. His closing remark was little more than, "take some time this afternoon. Cry, scream, pray, do whatever you need to do so that when Sunday rolls around and a new group of campers drive into this camp, you can be fully invested in the job ahead."

Sure enough, I found Sami crying a few hours later. Hannah didn't come out of her cabin until the next morning. Me, I walked back down to the barn, through the holding pen, and out onto Horse Island. There he lay, not twenty feet from the land bridge. A crew would come in a few hours to bury him, right there, on the island, but I wanted to see him before they did. I didn't have any last words to say over him or tears to help wash the flies away, so I just stood and looked at him for a while. After a few minutes, I turned to find that one of the younger horses was standing right behind me, her gentle hoofbeats having been muffled in the sand. She stood patiently as I stroked her bright, alert face and admired her dappled, shining coat. I breathed in the scent of her. Horse smell is a delightful harmony of earth, hay, sweat, and power. What I smelled on that filly was nothing like the perverted scent that had drawn the flies to Maverick's decaying body; the scent that had grown so strong that even I, a human, had been able to perceive it. I longed to forget the events of the morning, to remember only what living horses smell like. This was an impossibility, I knew, for even as I write this I can recall the stench. Nevertheless, I remained, breathing in the smell of the earth, hay, sweat, and power until the young horse became bored of my fawning and walked away as quietly as she came. I took my cue and left as well … left Maverick to the flies.

NOOKS

Mary Jackson

NOT EVERYTHING CAN BE A SONNET NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WANT IT TO BE

Gyasi Hall

The rainwater looks like oil as its slides down my window and I once again have
To act like I give a fuck. Bible study starts in 10 minutes. I haven't eaten since
Noon. God tore up Egypt to free his homies so why not Columbus? My faith
Is in God, by which I mean homies, by which I mean all the ways the homies
Invoke God with they smiles and they poetry and everything else they build
From scratch while being surrounded by the kind of sorrow that is a swamp.
The sidewalks on Fourth Street are soaked and I once again find myself studying
The ecology of flood, the anatomy of expulsion and how it pools on this serious
Earth. God asked Cain if he killed Abel and Cain said *Nigga please*. Maddie
Walked around the beach house, tall and stunning in her bikini, looking for a
Tanning partner. God knows I've never let the sun kiss any part of my body
Long enough for it to leave its solar lipstick, but for her I'd be down. We started
Talking about family and 20 minutes later were sitting close to each other,
Hunched over romans 1 because I couldn't remember when I'd last talked to
God and her smile was the sun and when Paul says *I thank God every Time I Remember you* all I hear is *Jesus what a beautiful day*

TO RUN DRY

Claudia Owusu

INT. NYAMEKYE'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

NYAMEKYE, 23, sits on the floor at her living room table with her laptop open before her. The room is dim, and the glow of the laptop screen flushes NYAMEKYE'S distraught face. She nurses her cellphone to her ear. FOCUS ON the laptop screen, where the editing tool Lightroom or Photoshop is pulled up with photos NYAMEKYE has taken in mid-edit.

AUNT FREDA
The funeral is this Saturday. We are all hoping to see you there, especially your mother. She's heartbroken that you haven't called.
(a pause)
Hello? Nyamekye, are you there?

NYAMEKYE
I'm listening, Auntie.

AUNT FREDA
I know he wasn't the best father, but he loved you more than I could ever explain. His alcoholism could never erase that. Mensah was just hard of hearing. You tell him, "don't go," and he's around the corner, "don't touch" and it's already in his pocket. And you know what, the funny thing is you remind me so much of him.

CUT TO:

INT. ART INSTITUTE - MORNING - SAME DAY

NYAMEKYE knocks lightly on PROFESSOR AMOAH's office door and a voice calls from inside.

PROFESSOR AMOAH
Come on in. Have a seat.

NYAMEKYE enters, humble like a child who has been caught stealing, and takes a seat. PROFESSOR AMOAH pours two cups of coffee. She walks over

and hands one to NYAMEKYE. FOCUS on the vapor rising from the cups, the sound of sipping. PROFESSOR AMOAH sets her cup down.

PROFESSOR AMOAH (CONT'D)
Listen, Nyamekye. You've been placed on academic probation until the end of the school year. You're in jeopardy of expulsion if your grades continue to drop. As your adviser, it's my responsibility to help you, but you have to attend all of your classes and keep up with the course load.

PROFESSOR AMOAH hands NYAMEKYE a flyer.

PROFESSOR AMOAH (CONT'D)
I've added your name to the list of students curating next month's art show. I want you to show me that you belong here.
(a pause)
Did you bring your portfolio?

NYAMEKYE reaches into her backpack. Her hand brushes past her phone, which is buzzing with notifications: 13 missed calls from "Mom." She grabs the manila folder from her backpack and hands it to PROFESSOR AMOAH. PROFESSOR AMOAH looks through the photos. Each one has to do with the sea and fishermen reeling in their nets.

PROFESSOR AMOAH (CONT'D)
You seem to be pretty fond of fishermen.

A memory of her father, MENSAH, sitting on the shore laughing with other fishermen spills onto the screen. The men cling tightly to their nets, relying on each other for support.

NYAMEKYE
We lived by the sea growing up. My father's friends were all fishermen.

PROFESSOR AMOAH
Oh, so your father was a fisherman?

The memory dissolves and NYAMEKYE focuses on her conversation with PROFESSOR AMOAH.

NYAMEKYE

Yeah, he used to be.

PROFESSOR AMOAH

I see. Well, Nyamekye, these photos are interesting, sure. But, I'm going to need you to dig deeper.

NYAMEKYE

What do you mean?

PROFESSOR AMOAH

We need to see your passion.

(a pause)

Listen. Use this exhibit as an opportunity to open up. Allow yourself and everyone out there to see your true potential. Don't you think that's what your father would've wanted?

CUT TO:

INT. PUB - EARLY EVENING

NYAMEKYE and her friends, KUUKUA and ALEX, hang out at a restaurant pub. Her friends dance excitedly on the dance floor as NYAMEKYE looks on from the bar table, lost in her own world. KUUKUA walks over to NYAMEKYE and grabs her hands, trying to force her to dance. NYAMEKEYE is amused but refuses and KUUKUA eventually gives up and takes a seat.

KUUKUA

Are you okay?

NYAMEKYE

Yes. Are you?

KUUKUA

It's just that you're not acting like you're okay.

NYAMEKYE

And how am I supposed to be acting?

KUUKUA

I don't know? Sad? … Well not sad, but you know what I mean.

NYAMEKYE

Look. I promise if I want to vent about anything, you'll be the first one to know.

KUUKUA
Promise?

NYAMEKYE
Promise.

KUUKUA
You know I'm here for you, right?

NYAMEKYE
Yes. Yes. Now go dance!

NYAMEKYE pushes KUUKUA towards the dance floor.

CUT TO:

INT. NYAMEKYE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

NYAMEKYE enters the apartment and drops her backpack off at her kitchen table. FOCUS ON the emptiness hanging in the room, the television flashing obscure images. NYAMEKYE grabs a bottle of beer from the fridge.

NYAMEKYE takes out her laptop and begins to revise her edits. She pulls out her camera and scrolls through, trying to find new images. She empties her backpack, each object seeming heavy in her hands. The flyer PROFESSOR AMOAH gave her earlier in the day falls onto the counter.

NYAMEKYE trails over to the fridge and grabs another bottle of beer. She takes a long swig and returns to the laptop screen.

PROFESSOR AMOAH (V.O.)
Show me that you belong here.

AUNT FREDA (V.O.)
No amount of alcohol could erase the fact that your father loved you ... you remind me so much of him.

NYAMEKYE takes another swig of the bottle.

NYAMEKYE

Hell, maybe I am so much like him.

She stares at the flyer, anger bubbling in her chest. She picks it up and rips the paper to shreds.

A cloud of smoke gathers from the living room as she slips deeper and deeper into a drunken daze. She feels as if she's floating. The smoke calls out to her, growing bigger and bigger with each step. She stalks it. Draws near like a curious child. She walks the length of the kitchen to the living room, where she discovers a large box sitting in the middle of the living room. A small light pours from inside the box as the smoky fog bellows.

NYAMEKYE kneels before the strange box. She is unafraid. She reaches inside and discovers a fishing net. As she unravels it, a collection of photos falls out. NYAMEKYE rises and steps inside the box. She folds herself calmly inside it. She looks through the collection of photos, holds one up close to her face as the smoke takes up the air of the room. In the photo, a man stands, smiling brightly by the sea.

Sound of waves crashing. NYAMEKYE holds up a seashell to her ear. The sound of her television is replaced by a whistling wind and the voices of fishermen calling. The waves grow louder and louder, as if it is in her living room. As if she herself is at sea.

MENSAH, 30, sits in the sand, surrounded by sand castles. A look of worry masks his face.

MENSAH
Hello? Are you alright?

NYAMEKYE turns her head to an open sea spread out before her.
She is on a boat docked at shore.

MENSAH (CONT'D)
Do you need me to call somebody?

NYAMEKYE looks at the photo in hand and stares at MENSAH. The same disheveled hair, the same curious eyes. NYAMEKYE folds the photo and shoves it into her pocket.

NYAMEKYE attempts to stand, but her legs fail her. MENSAH rushes to her side and leads her to the sand.

MENSAH (CONT'D)
Here. Have a seat. The sea sickness should wear off in no time.

A young girl, 7 years old, runs up with a packet of water and hands it to NYAMEKYE.

MENSAH introduces the two girls.

MENSAH (CONT'D)
This is my daughter, Nyamekye.

MENSAH points to the little girl.

The YOUNG NYAMEKYE plops down on the sand and continues to build her sand castle. OLD NYAMEKYE takes a sip of the water.

EXT. SEA SHORE - SAME EVENING

MENSAH and OLD NYAMEKYE sit by the sea shore. MENSAH grills corn over an open fire. YOUNG NYAMEKYE races across the shore, running and laughing every time the sea draws near.

MENSAH
You would think she was born from water the way she loves the sea.

MENSAH hands OLD NYAMEKYE the fresh corn.

NYAMEKYE
(shyly)
Me daa se. (thank you)

MENSAH turns the corn over in the fire.

MENSAH
You don't talk much do you?

OLD NYAMEKYE says nothing. The sound of YOUNG NYAMEKYE giggling rings through the night and mixes in with the cry of the waves. The pair watches her in silence.

MENSAH (CONT'D)
I hate the sea.
(a pause)
It could care less about what's weighing you down. Some days I return with more than I need and I can go to sleep knowing that my family is fed. But other days I come back empty handed and with a mind full of worries.

YOUNG NYAMEKYE turns and waves at her father. He waves back.

MENSAH (CONT'D)
She makes me want to be happy.

OLD NYAMEKYE
Are you not happy now?

MENSAH turns and looks at OLD NYAMEKYE.

MENSAH
No. Not really.

The sound of an alarm clock rings over the sound of a crashing sea.

CUT TO:

INT. NYAMEKYE'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

NYAMEKYE startles awake on the kitchen floor surrounded by empty bottles of beer and her laptop. The sun pours in through the windows, blinding her. She rummages through the spill of notebooks and ripped papers, looking around for her phone. She mutes the alarm and sits up on the couch. She tries to recollect, think back to the night before and what exactly happened. She recalls MENSAH's face, the sound of the beach.

MENSAH (V.O.)
I hate the sea.

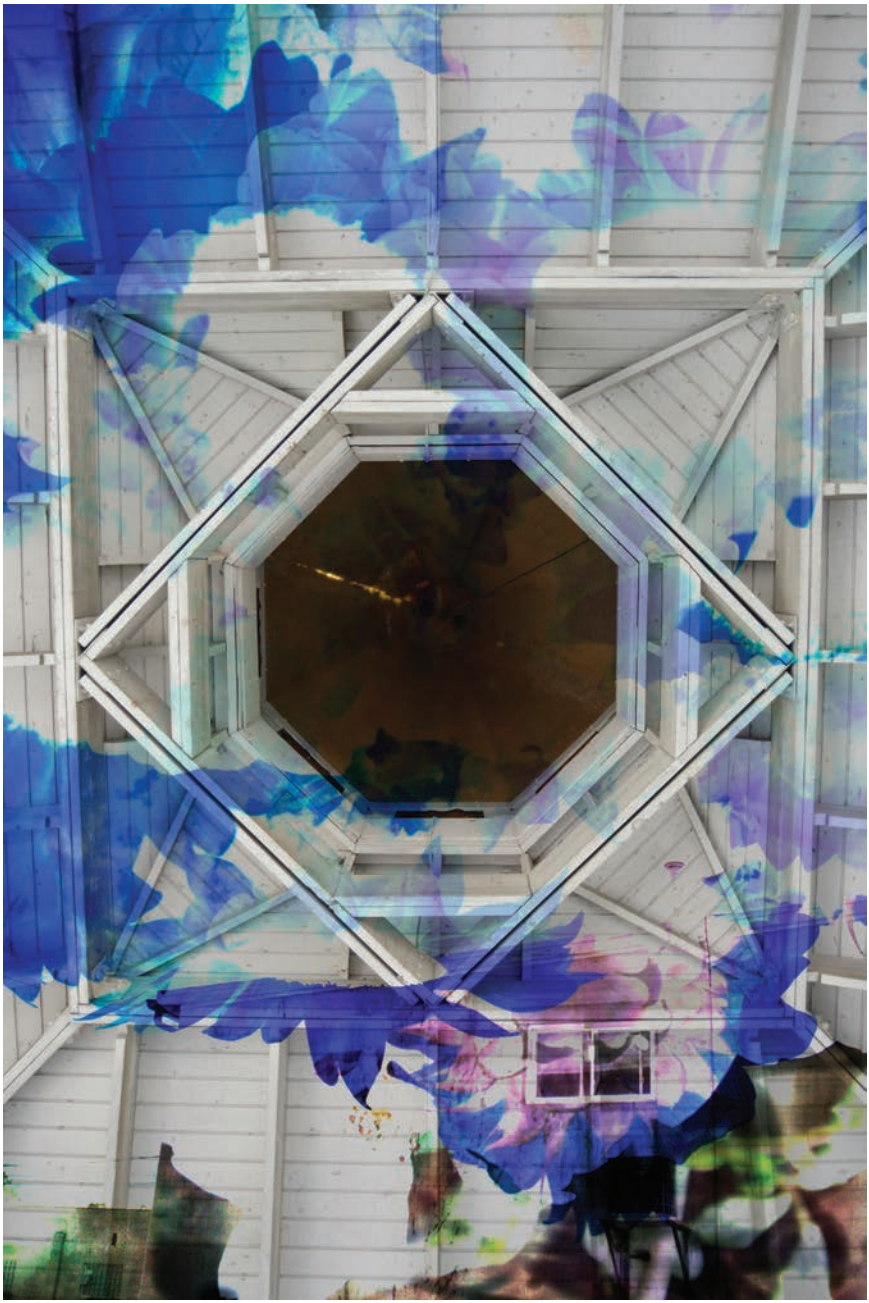
NYAMEKEYE reaches for her phone and begins to dial a number. The person on the other line picks up.

NYAMEKYE
Hello? Ma?

FADE OUT.

COBALT

Sierra Lawhead



BODY HONESTY

Abby Studebaker

I cannot dance. I have never been able to dance.

That's not to say that I don't have rhythm. Years of band, choir and singing along to the radio mean that I can stay on beat with the best of them, clapping my hands in time to a concert while the rest of the crowd speeds up maddeningly until even the performers seem uncertain of the pace.

What I mean is that choreography is beyond me. Understanding what to do with my hands while my feet do something else. By the time we get to the eighth beat I've already forgotten the first, and the whole confusing mess must start over again. There are some people who are born to dance, who understand the way one motion moves seamlessly into another and builds into a story, contained in time. It's not even that they can remember the next step so much as that they understand the piece as a whole, and so the next step seems intuitive, predestined.

Still, I can manage the basics. Swaying to the blaring hip hop at a party, jumping up and down to 2000s top hits with my friends. Everyone has in them some ability to dance, whether they like to or not, and whether we interpret dance in the strictest sense of the word or more broadly. We are all governed by what our bodies can do and what we make them do.

My favorite times are when my house is empty and I have reason to believe that it will be for some time, and I have found a song that shakes me, and I careen around my living room or my bedroom or my kitchen, lifted up and alive. My grandma hates listening to music on the car radio, and I've never understood why. But she'll sing hymns in church.

There is a freedom that comes with giving your body over entirely to the impulses of rhythm and letting it take you where it wants. I may not be a traditionally good dancer, but dance is one of the few things that has traditionally made me feel good.

There was a show on MTV called *Made* that ran from 2003-2014. In each episode a teen would set out on a journey to be "made" into something. With the help of a Made "coach," people were made into singers, athletes, skateboarders. Dancers. Just a few weeks and the girl who couldn't clap on beat to save her life was performing a sexy dance routine on stage at the school talent show in front of hundreds of her peers, fearless and confident, moving on a new plane.

My sister danced for five years—nothing competitive, but she took lessons in tap and jazz and maybe hip hop. I remember looking forward to her recitals, going down to the big theater (and I'm still not sure exactly where this theater was; it remains an image in my childhood memory that I'm ok with forgetting the specifics of) and watching number after number being performed against a colorful backdrop with a stylized music staff and floating music notes on it. Children younger than me all the way to teens who seemed so tall and graceful and mature spun on stage. I didn't long to perform, but I did long to move like they could move, in sync with the music and in love with the motion.

I've thought about the things I would want to be Made into. A version of myself who is smaller and yet also capable of bench-pressing my bodyweight. Someone who is good at an underrated yet impressive skill, like yo-yoing or embroidery. And always a dancer. I'd give more than I'm willing to confess for the lightness of my feet to match the lightness of my chest when I hear a song and begin moving, spewing honesty from my body.

I have watched thousands of YouTube videos of dancers. I've even watched a few tutorials, trying to mirror what I saw them do so flawlessly, but what I see in the mirror is a far cry from a body in control of itself and a mind that can focus long enough to remember that body. The tutorials slow things down, but not enough. They try to walk even the most novice viewer through the routine, to offer up the secrets that went into those bodies doing what they did so well, but still I don't understand and so I close my laptop, discouraged.

They (the proverbial "they") say the more you move the happier you are. The more I move the happier I am, but also the sadder I am at the ways my body traps my limbs into a set pattern of trajectories, the same pirouettes and paths every time. I feel like I've relived the same moments in my life a hundred times. Humiliation feels the same at 22 as it does at 13. So does melancholy. So does joy. It's like my mind and my body have only ever moved in certain types of orbits and wouldn't know how to create anywhere else.

I know that I'm incredibly blessed to have the body I have, to be able to move freely and without assistance and in powerful ways. I am healthy and capable of doing things with my body that bring me joy. I can run. I can work at a job where I'm on my feet all day. I can touch my toes (but not first thing in the morning). When I need to go up three flights of stairs, I can. These are things I try not to take for granted and yet I take them for granted every time I sprint to class or complain about traffic.

The thing about dancers is that they exude a confidence that I've yet to see in many others. Not only do they know that they will execute the choreography that they've practiced or the freestyle they're about to attempt, but I imagine

they find great joy and therefore great confidence in the fact that they are allowing themselves to exist in a space where nothing is not allowed, where it is safe to be raw. We've sanctioned dance to certain corners, to classes and performances and weddings. You can't just break into dance at the office without curious looks or concern. Dancing in public just to dance is not a thing, at least in my experience, at least not without becoming a spectacle. Maybe it's because something so intimate needs to be closely regulated, strictly controlled and cordoned off so as not to upset our ideas about freedom and bliss and honesty of the body.

There are rules that govern happiness, when we may allow ourselves to feel it and when the world around us allows it to be seen. Dance is a physical expression of our most honest selves, a release that brings relief and refuge from guarding our feelings all the time. When I dance, and especially when I dance in the places that are not conducive to it (like my bathroom) I reclaim another corner for honesty.

When I was in the second grade, my best friend, Justyne, and I performed a dance to the song "The Call" by the Backstreet Boys at the talent show. I still don't understand how the song got approved. It's about a man who cheats on his girlfriend while out with his friends one night, lying to her on the phone about where he is. While we danced on stage, we got our gymnast friend, who was really more Justyne's friend than mine, to do cartwheels and flips on the floor in front of us just in case our routine was boring and the crowd wanted something else to look at. We laugh about it now, re-watching the old footage of our eight-year-old bodies running around and her doing the same round off again and again, back in forth in front of the stage for three minutes straight. But there's the question of why we thought we needed her at all. This was my first and only time dancing in front of a crowd, and I did everything possible to remain unseen, to distract from the movement of my body in all its clumsiness and effort, from the original choreography that Justyne and I had put together and had been so excited about in the safety of my bedroom or hers as we practiced.

I am still learning to be patient with my body. To reconcile how it feels to move with how it looks when I catch a glimpse of myself in my bedroom mirror, mid-spin, half ballerina and half top about to fall as I try to translate the cadence of a melody into something physical. To understand how the weakness and the strength I feel, the physical limitations and freedoms, manifest themselves in the sweaty face staring back in the gym mirror, straining as I try to move a physical weight from one place to another, frighteningly aware of everyone else in the room, refraining from moving to the music blasting from my earbuds. There's a disconnect between me and my body. Between what my body is and what I

want it to be. Between how it accomplishes carrying the weight of a life every day and how I wish it moved in braver spaces.

UNTITLED

Meagan Coultas

I don't know if my breath was the one fogging the window that I sat beside and I don't know if people could see my knee bouncing and my bones rattling or hear my heart twisting coiling around itself like a snake but I sat alone at a table in a café with a young couple behind me. The boy and I had our backs to each other and the girl sat across from the boy and she was drying the tears as they came and wishing her mascara back onto her lashes but it wouldn't stay. She was begging the boy to just come back home with her and they could talk it out but he said no, no he wanted to do it here in a neutral space and I wondered just how neutral this space really was with my heart breaking like some voodoo doll pain at every muffled sob I heard the girl utter. She wished her mascara back onto her lashes and dried her cheeks with the tips of her fingers carefully, carefully, and she told him she was sorry but he said it's not her fault, it's not his fault, it's not anyone's fault it's just what happens sometimes and I heard an echo of you squeezing out from the coil of my heart. I felt my eyes welling with my own tears and I gathered my things into my bag and stood up to leave but as I pushed my seat back to stand it pushed against the seat of the boy behind me. Sorry, I said. Sorry, he said. The girl did not look up but I looked at her and said I'm sorry and I hope she knew just how sorry everyone should be for breaking us the way they do but I only turned and walked out of the café to my car. I'm sorry, I'm sorry nothing ever stays.

SHOWER

Kristin Gustafson

Meteor wall shaking me holy - seeing muddy stars

beneath my eyelids.

Please do not wake the slumbering peasant -

she works hard for her pay.

Awake in the new night,

I never thought I'd see a celestial event so grand.

Meteor shower amongst the sleeping,

only ceasing when the sky's tears are all dry.

Falling from various heights,

fickle only in how they land.

Some intact, others in pieces,

of an indescribable whole.

I think to wake my wistful roommate,

but she would only complain

she had a long day of labor,

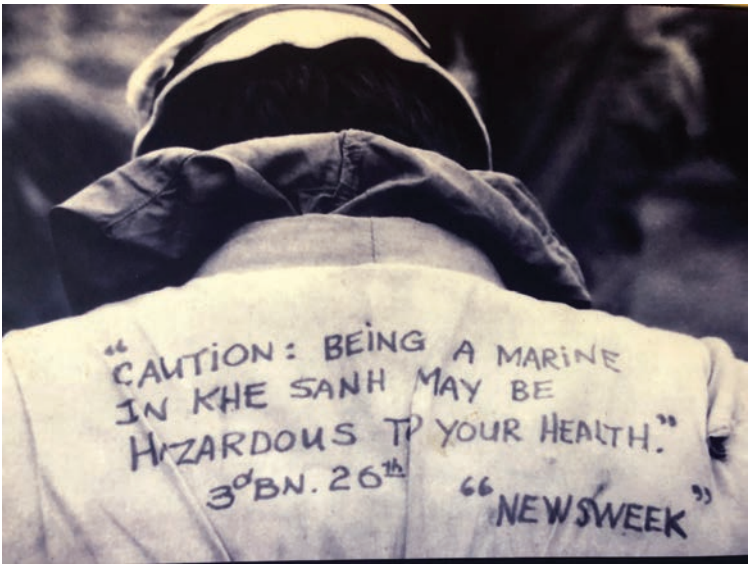
without much love to show for it.

But right outside, space is raining

its respectful thanks for her work.

AN OPEN LETTER TO NEWSWEEK'S KHE SANH MARINE

Alex Futo



A photo of a photo taken inside the small museum on the Khe Sanh Combat Base in Vietnam by the author. The original photo was taken by Rick Merron on February 21, 1968.

I. CAUTION: BEING A MARINE IN KHE SANH

Do you feel like a hero? or
has the glory eroded away
into exhaustion, into fear?
Do you feel like a king atop Khe Sanh with the enemy
groveling at your feet,
or a pig gone
to slaughter?
Can you sleep
at night as they cry
at your feet, thirst for your blood?
or do your tears, your grief, matter most?
Have you held a brother's last breath in your arms,
coated in his blood, your blood, *their* blood?
You are faceless, back to us, identity stripped down in military fashion.

Do you have a voice
or does Newsweek speak for you?
Does your pride hide your face, mask your pain,
because you're told there is no such thing as a
vulnerable marine.
Your shoulders are slumped,
how many kills press down on them,
how many regrets?
Where are you, marine?
Why can't we see what's in front of you
as if there is no forward,
no future?
Are you looking down at fallen comrades and enemies, or
down at your boots, thinking, mourning your death as you live, or
are you daydreaming, thinking about home, or
is this just a pose,
a marine bravado boost,
nothing more?
Is this the only way to let them know your torment, your pain?
Are you mocking Newsweek's quote for sugar coating your hell,
switching hazardous
to bullets flying and catching
on bodies trying to live,
or becoming a symbol to its truth,
echoing it so the folks back home can hear you
all the way from Khe Sanh,
your home away from home but not home.

II. MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

You take enemy fire daily, nightly, in your dreams,
watch your brothers get injured, killed, for a cause you don't know,
but have to fight for, die for, but can't live for.
Are you green or collecting dust in combat?
Have you taken a life – Vietcong? Villager? Man? Woman? Child?
Innocent?
Do you carry these lives with you,
is that the weight dragging your shoulders down?
Have you been shot, hurt by war, learned "real" pain?
Are you afraid to take a piece of the war with you back home,
if you make it back home,
you in however many pieces?
Are you in a dark place, screaming, flailing,
as a flag tucks you in and lays you to rest?
Speak up, I'm listening, marine.
But are they listening back home? or

are you already
Buried.
Gone.
Forgotten.
Nothing, but
a number in a
Newsweek headline.

3RD BN. 26th.
Once a marine,
always a marine,
till death do you part
beneath the red, white, and blue.

"NEWSWEEK"
If you're alive,
do you hear Khe Sanh
calling you back
in your dreams?
Do you hear the 3 million
dead calling?
Will you listen?

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

Lance Kriesch

STREAM OF PRO/CON-SCIOUSNESS ON A CHOICE I'D MAKE REGARDLESS

Abby Studebaker

Con: When I was in high school, 16 or 17, I drove down to Georgia with my parents to visit a college. Of course *I* didn't drive. My dad alone has driven the entire route on every road trip our family has taken since the first ones I can remember in our massive green van, a boxy television parked behind and between the two front seats that saw more Disney VHS's than I've seen states.

I imagined Emory University to be just as it ended up being, stately white brick buildings and flowers blooming everywhere, a citadel with the kind of energy that houses on hills have. It was the first stop on my college search. As we drove home that night, I stretched out across the back seat of our latest van, this one a more modern, red version of the mammoth from my childhood, and cried as quietly as I could while pretending to sleep on the eight-hour drive. The school had thoroughly underwhelmed me, the first bust in a long line of tours and pamphlets and info sessions, but even harder to stomach were the 500 miles and four states we had to beat beneath our tires just to take the underwhelming news home. Far was what I had daydreamed about, what I thought I had wanted.

Snow Patrol's "Set The Fire To The Third Bar" might be the saddest song I've ever heard. At least top three. I listened to it nonstop after my dog Scout died, our second dog but the first I remember. I listened to it nonstop on repeat along with a Blue Foundation song when I wrote a story in middle school about a girl who ran away to Lake Erie. I wrote that on the computer in my dad's office and saved it to a flash drive I no longer have.

I could I could I could. I could discover a knack for glassblowing or a keen love for spelunking. Those are the what-if's that fill my musings about the gray area after graduation, the big forever left with life. I could discover a love of glassblowing, but only if I move to Seattle or Boston or some other city or state. I could discover a love of glassblowing, but only if I stay here. How to know which declarative is true.

The idea of a place is almost always better than the place, a claim coming from someone who may not have been to any of the right places yet. The pins on my map would be stuck into California at three and too young to remember our trip to Disneyland; picking wildflowers in Colorado while we took pictures of my mom's side of the family, the same way we do every five years; a soccer camp

in upstate New York when time was ticking, and the Common App was sitting unstarted on my desktop. If I visit all the countries I've always dreamed about, would I feel alive in the way I do when I read about them? Or would I come back disheartened, disillusioned, disenchanted by all the ways that places and people don't live up to expectations.

If you asked any of my family members where I would end up, they would immediately know the correct answer. It's A, Ireland. I begged to go there for every vacation, to see the moors and the cliffs and the old stone churches. I swore up and down that I would get married there, or honeymoon there, or live there. To this day I've never been out of the country (I'm planning on changing that). The closest I've gotten was an island in Lake Erie perched halfway to Canada, or at least halfway to a line that marks a change in legal status but really just looks like the same chopping waves that move on both sides of it. If rock paper scissors got a makeover, wave would beat line. Wave would beat everything. I saw my best friend from high school, the one I went to the island with, for the first time in three years recently. She texted me first. I saw her again the day after my 22nd birthday, a month after that first reconnection, the first in what will hopefully be many attempts at a mending. She's been to Ireland. She's thinking about buying a house in Columbus, to share with her boyfriend once they get married. They have a dog named Moonshine.

The only thing I know about graduation is that I'm taking a dog with me wherever I go.

I haven't given a single thought about apartments, a car, paychecks. Just me, the job, the city, the dog. Mostly the city.

I think I want to leave where I am, but I'm not confident enough about that feeling to know why I have it or if it's true. Maybe Columbus and the people here are right where I'm supposed to be. But here's the thing—I'm not a religious person, not a spiritual person, not one to believe in fate or planned paths. But I do believe that the only choice you're capable of making is the one you end up making, and that missed opportunities are the saddest songs because they're the ones we'll never hear. Maybe that's all counterintuitive.

Our most recent family reunion was in Paducah, Kentucky. The Barkley Regional Airport, The Region's Premier Airport for 75 Years!, has one plane that only provides connecting flights to Chicago. As I waved goodbye to my sister, I wondered if she was scared when she saw the tiny airplane with only a handful of passengers or if she was just annoyed that to get where she wanted to be there was only one path she could follow, and it was an uncomfortable one.

At that same reunion, I had at least ten relatives ask me what I planned to do

after college. When I replied that I didn't know, that I like Columbus a lot but I might want to look for jobs somewhere else, they earnestly encouraged me to get out of the state I had lived my whole life in "while it was easy to," like if I didn't I would be trapped. Like leaving is easy.

An older man came up to me as I flipped through the scrapbooks laid out on a table. At family reunions of Catholic size, it's common to not know how on earth you're related to half of the people there—80% of the names are a complete loss.

"Now's the time to do it," he said as I tried to pinpoint whether he was my second cousin or my first cousin once removed. "You're young, unattached, no kids or a job holding you anywhere. You have a boyfriend?" I shook my head, and he continued on as if that was the deciding factor. "There'll never be a better time. When you have a family and career you just can't explore like you can in your twenties." I'll freely admit I'm bad at remembering conversations, but that's the gist of the conversation my third cousin carried on as I nodded and agreed and wondered inside why everyone wanted me gone so badly.

One of my best friends from college moved to LA in April. She always said she would do it, and within a month of arriving she started classes at the grad school she had always wanted, got a boyfriend, and fulfilled her dream of going surfing. I haven't visited her yet. I'm going in December. I hope it's as wonderful as it seems from here.

I could discover a knack for glassblowing. Or I could be the exact same person I was 2000 miles east, face the same roadblocks, the same self-doubt, the same self-made stagnation. I will be in the same broken body until I do something to change it, no matter the time zone or the altitude or the minimum wage. One thing that keeps me from burrowing into the hole I've already made is asking "Do I want to die without … [insert word]." Do I want to die without trying to make a life for myself on unfamiliar corners and inside new coffee shops. To know nothing again is a blessing. I'd pay to relearn how to know ordinary things. Maybe I feel a strong way about *Ohio* coffee shops but must reserve judgement on coffee shops everywhere else.

Where do I want to do the things that I don't want to die without doing.

For someone who cried at the thought of moving eight hours away for school, I rarely go home now. For birthdays, for holidays, for doctors' appointments, but not for weekends. Not for the summer. It's not because I don't miss home, I've just been busy building another one here. Could I build a third and still keep them all? How long can you claim a place as your own and belong there wholly when you're not physically there?

I see posts from people I went to high school with, people who live in the same town we went to school in, who have babies and jobs and are in sororities and have friends like mine. They are happy. But if I had stayed, I would have failed the part of myself who didn't want to die without. Without seeing that I was capable of starting over somewhere for the first time. A restart is not wasted, even if you squander it. Especially if you squander it. Give yourself enough restarts, and eventually you might see change, an evolution. It might take a lifetime. It will probably take a lifetime. My mom told me not long ago that I moved out when I was 18, and I realized that I had never seen it that way. I have full bookshelves in my room in that house, along with a comforter she quilted for me and the clothes I haven't worn in years but keep just in case. I wonder if she realizes how little three years away has changed me and if she'd be disappointed. Maybe it's one of those things you just can't see when you're in it.

It's like this. You're every Disney princess ever. You're Moana or Belle or Jasmine. You just want to get out of where you are. It's not bad where you are. It's a beautiful island, a provincial village, a palace turret. But you want to see what's out there. It's not the horizon that keeps you from going; it's the people you can't take with you that root you in place.

Why does it feel like coming home, like comfort, is a failure of some sort?

I'm sure there are lots of reasons to leave. To search for coastlines, cliffs, or waves that are new. To trust myself with another start-over, to get out of it what I want. To figure out what I want because so far, I can only write Ohio.

A friend of mine wants to be a photographer, or at least she did the last time we talked about things like that. She wants to buy one of those tiny houses, the ones they have shows about on HGTV, and drive it around the country to take pictures. A family I follow on Instagram (and if I'm being honest it's their two dogs I follow) just sold their house and bought an RV. They're taking a year to visit all 50 states with their three young boys (and said dogs). Every city a new start. Who has that kind of trust?

I read a lot as a kid. Lots of fantasy, lots of dystopian novels. Lots of stories rooted in journeys. That seems like the go-to for young adult narratives and I'm not saying it's bad but I'm also not saying I agree with it. I read about journeys to other countries, magical lands, parallel universes. They make a journey seem like the only way to come of age and that coming of age happens when you're 14. Still, my greatest hope is that somewhere, or at some point, dragons exist(ed) in the world.

Can you feel at home in the idea of a place you've never been to. Does it even matter to have a "home" if I'm young, unattached, no career, no boyfriend, no

inspiration. I think that every time you pick up and start over you are young again.

It's possible that I'm more unhappy with where I am inside than with the physical place that I'm at. That I'm just projecting onto my environment all the worries I can't escape. Still, a change of scenery couldn't hurt—even if leaving sounds more appealing and yet more repulsive each day. Maybe you can't unlandlock yourself just by picking up and planting roots by the Pacific, but it sure would make for a lovely view by which to sort through your own tangled insides. Maybe horrible failure and homesickness is worth knowing that there are surprises out there, and I still have time to collect them.

BATHTUB

J.r. Gill

A bathtub full of organs and pills
(The sun burns white over the hills)
his final resting place,
(the heat feels wonderful on his face)
the outermost cells of himself
(he reaches for a container on the shelf)
the only thing stopping him from
(pops the lid off with his thumb)
dissolving away into everything
(from the window, the breeze of Spring)
he isn't.

THE NIGHT I LEAVE DANSOMAN, LAST STOP

Claudia Owusu

I lay back with my head resting on Abena's lap
try to conjure a departing prayer, a final funeral rite
for this taste of fog as language
for this country as wedded ghost:

Oh dear
the country I want does
not want me back. *Oh dear*
I am blood run cold at the last pulsating vein.
I am garbage. I molder. *Oh dear*
Oh dear all the hanging stars could never redress
all this buried sorrow
all this waiting to be approved
Oh dear sing me a sad song
let it be soulful. let it serenade
like a drunk man's neverending goodbye

let us reach a final resolve
cast me as traitor, as loose thread

I sing until I get to the parts I no longer remember
interrogate me
question my allegiance
the cause for the country I write
as savior

TO GO BACK

Kristin Gustafson

as the city slides into a quiet slumber
cars zoom but only in slow motion
only as fast as leaves can drift to earth
and these leaves are taking their time nowadays
lazily floating
picking up any wind to procrastinate
the inevitable
just as we all procrastinate
put off
ignore
the inevitable
the damp dark that looms 'round every moment
the sweet mist that valleys hide, gives coffins condensation
rots through wood, flesh, bone
grim reapings 'round every moment
that your friend decides to drink
while on medication
while on antipsychotics
while driving
while looking for a reason to live
and you wish you could take him back
to the leaves
glue him back on the tree he came from
back when his greatest fear was falling

FORGOTTEN THINGS: A HISTORIAN'S TALE

Mary Jackson


We have a new location.
The Scouts search ahead and tell us where to go.
Then we go there.


We travel a lot, and to many different places.
Agaricale Village


Everything we find is important.
But the most important things are...


...the ones that tell us about the past
...and what happened then.
Welcome

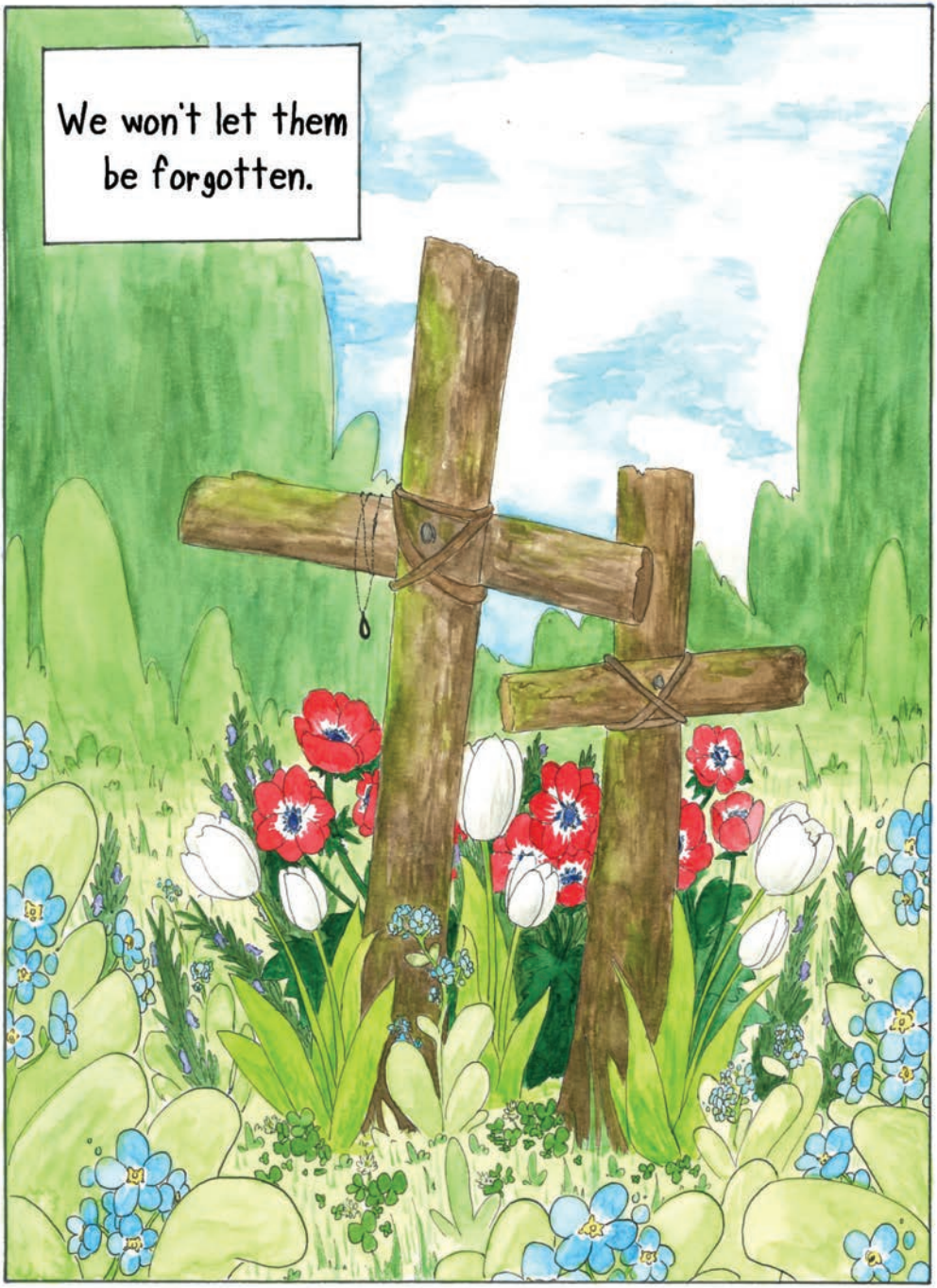

We don't know what happened to the people who lived here before.
U.S. AT WAR


The big papers talk about a war.
SAT WAR


Anything after that is a mystery to us.


It's like they all just disappeared,
leaving everything behind in their haste.


But no matter what...


We won't let them be forgotten.

LOCKER ROOM TALK CONT.

Elise Woods

A few coworkers drank Fireball Whiskey in their tumblers as I ladled sauce on crusts and sprinkled cheese on top. I was frequently criticized for applying too much mozzarella, the second most expensive ingredient next to sausage. I began as a cashier at the front, but despite what I assumed my new boss expected of me—a nineteen-year-old white college girl bound to be good with money and friendly to customers—I was much more useful in the line with Mike—a six foot four giant of a man, weighing in around 330 pounds—busting out pizzas, heating up chicken wings, and assembling Italian subs. Mike worked at a pizzeria to help pay for his kid's college, and he was patient as I learned the menu. We worked symbiotically, shifting positions pizza after pizza, his white rag either slung across his shoulder or dangling from his shorts. I didn't like most of my coworkers, but I liked him. One guy often teased me, occasionally slightly pushing or poking me. His girlfriend who answered the phone and boxed pizzas didn't say anything about it, just laughed. My boss had a big heart but was a poor leader, too patient and trusting with his less-than-mediocre employees. A few months later a coworker told me that after work one night, Mike got drunk and relentlessly begged her to *suck his dick* as she drove him home. I quit when summer came. I never saw Mike again.

For a month, I worked with students at a soup kitchen every Tuesday afternoon. We cut pounds of apples and picked grapes. We stirred pots and baked casseroles. Trays were assembled, and people lined up for their dinner, looking tired. Ms. Rose, a short woman, stood high on a chair behind the counter and strictly enforced the one cup of coffee rule. A police officer came by mid-afternoon as people filed through the church. I liked that he always remembered my name, but I thought it was a little weird when he told me he liked my smile. He helped stack chairs and heaved the stacks back to the closet. When he asked if I worked out, the officer told me he could tell—that my body was in good shape. What I didn't tell him was that I was actually the thinnest I had been in several years primarily because of my depression. But at least I felt thin. I returned home to North Carolina a couple weeks later—my depression pushing beyond what I could handle—and I never saw the officer again.

I failed to perfect the art of the latte or the pearl sugar Belgian waffle, but I did yell at a middle-aged man for taking unsolicited pictures of me as I worked for eight dollars and fifty cents an hour. He'd come in several times before, and Mariya told me he sometimes took pictures of her. Once or twice he came in when students that lived in the nearby apartments trekked to the bus, and I wondered if his particular seating ritual in which he meticulously adjusted his chair was designed to perfect his view out the window. I was at a loss for what

to do—all I had was suspicion, perhaps gossip or paranoia. No evidence. But weeks later I was working alone when he sat down, his phone angled towards me at the waffle bar. I asked him if he was taking pictures of me, and he was immediately defensive, clearly offended. I never saw him again.

The Christmas of 2016 my sisters and I explained workplace sexism to my father. One of us had cautiously asked if he had voted for Trump, and despite our relief when he said no, we were further confounded when he declared a sort of pity for the president, the "locker room talk" and all. He said workplace harassment towards women was not nearly as widespread as it had been marketed in the media, that he did not understand why women felt targeted or offended by Trump's election. I shouted at him with rage as the car scoured along the skinny Carolina road in the dark. I mumbled Trump's comments about the woman he'd said would look better on her knees, only loud enough for my sisters to hear, and they were stunned. Using Trump's words like *pussy* were too corrupt for my father's daughters but not too corrupt for his country, or the country in which his daughters lived. He forbade his three daughters to use words like *shit*, so our explanations of our frustrations with Trump were forcibly distilled, unjustly purified. When I reminded my dad of the guy that shoved me at the pizza place and the police officer that liked my body and the customer that took pictures of me, he quieted for a moment. I also reminded him I was twenty years old, that I have had four jobs—three-fourths of the experiences complete with a Trump-like creep. My dad softened for a moment, but the women—his wife, his daughters—in the back seat of his Acadia did not and would not change his mind.

I wait tables now, and when we eat out as a family, I urge my dad to tip heavily. I tell him about the men who tell me I should smile more, and when he asks me why they say that, I remind him I make minimum wage at the very least. I remind him that I am paid to serve food and to be friendly with customers, not to smile at men who sit at the bar while I clean their glasses. Despite his request for further defense of my neutrality at work—my "*working* bitch face," I suppose—my father is a feminist. He raised my sisters and me to be independent, urging us towards education and leadership roles. My father was also a colonel in the Army. He had four brothers and an abusive alcoholic father. He told me I could be anything except a cheerleader and do anything besides join the Army. The Army is a man's world, he says. And I wonder now about the pizza place, the soup kitchen, and the waffle shop, and I know he is a man in a man's world everywhere he goes.

IMPERIAL CITY

Alex Futo

CHRONICLES OF THE AMERICAN NOBODY IN VIETNAM

Alex Futo

"Like many of my friends whose numbers had come up wrong in the lottery, I set about securing my salvation." *– James Fallows, "What Did You Do In the Class War, Daddy?"*

Marshall Cox's little brother, Jimmy, was a college boy. A boy with a bright future stacked on his shoulders because he had the brains to write a 30-page research paper on the American psyche during World War II. Hell, he was the type of boy to register for an AP Calculus class just for fun and ruin all the curves. Jimmy was something special, they all said. Jimmy had prospects.

Now, the Cox boys didn't come from big money or high ambitions. No, they came from the sweat and aching bones of their mother working doubles at the diner down the street, or from their father selling cheap beer and a pack of cigarettes to deadbeats at the local convenience store. They were born to be nobodies, to wear their parents' working class legacies as hand-me-downs until they kicked the bucket. Marshall figured his best shot was bussing tables at the diner until something better came around (which was another way of saying he didn't know what he wanted to do for the rest of his life, and he doubted he had much of a future, anyway). He was the Cox brother smoking cigarettes under the bleachers with all the other nobodies instead of writing fancy research papers or taking AP Calculus. He figured he'd eventually find a girl, settle down, have a family, and work a shitty job that was just enough to put food on the table. He never expected anything more than that.

But damn it all, Jimmy wanted to be a somebody. He turned into a scholarship shoe-in over at Yale, spending most of his days with his nose in a book and daydreaming about becoming a lawyer up on Capitol Hill; Jimmy had always been a political nut. While he studied and experimented with college nightlife, Marshall stayed behind and bussed tables. He was too busy to call, he said, but Marshall knew the truth. His brother found all the somebodies like him and didn't want to be caught dead with his working class family with no ambition. It was a "guilty by association" sort of thing.

But fast forward to where they were now, their numbers freshly picked in the draft lottery only a day ago, and suddenly Jimmy was calling him again.

"Marsh, I know how we can dodge the draft," he said, panting over the line. Sounded like he just ran a marathon or something.

"I ain't going to Canada, Jimmy." Those were the first words he'd spoken to his brother in months.

He laughed. "Who do you think I am, Marsh? No, there's a better way to do it. No leaving the country, no prison time, and no dying in some stupid war."

"I'm listening."

"You just have to fail the draft physical. I've been talking to some med students and they all say that's the best way to do it. Drop as much weight as you can, and boom! You're safe from Vietnam." He sounded excited, like he'd just found the cure for cancer or some shit. "I'm almost at 120 now. Yeah, you can't turn a toothpick like me into a soldier." He stopped to laugh. "I think I'm better off staying at Yale, don't you think? This war isn't for guys like me."

There was something about the way that Jimmy said that last part that made Marshall snap. "So it's for guys like me, right?"

"Marsh, I didn't say that."

Marshall laughed. "Nah, man, but I can read in between the lines. Don't have to go to some fancy Ivy League school to figure that out. So, fuck you, man. Just, fuck you."

"Marshall, you know it's not like that." He stopped and sighed over the line, and Marshall imagined him pinching the bridge of his nose. He did that a lot as a kid when he thought too hard. "I want you to promise me you'll take my advice. I know we haven't been close in years, but c'mon man. I don't want to lose my brother. Please."

He stayed quiet over the line for a minute.

"Marshall, you still there?"

"Look, I'm not a coward, Jimmy, and I'm not special like you. They say a lot of nobodies like me are fighting this war, so maybe I should go join them. You went off and found your people, now it's my turn."

"Marshall, please—"

And then he just hung up and settled on going to war.

***

"Northup was on this patrol and I noticed written across his helmet was 'Kafka for President.' Almost all Marines and soldiers wrote things on their helmets, but usually they were predictably obscene or the names of their girlfriends." – *Tom Mayer, "Kafka for President"*

It didn't take long for Marshall to learn that writing on his helmet was the closest he'd ever get to having an opinion in this war.

"Hey, whatcha want on your brain bucket, Cox?" Harrison asked while they huddled around some buckets of soap and water and scrubbed dirt out of their uniforms. He was one of the only five black men in Marshall's squad. The man was built like a tank with a big-barreled chest and arms big enough to crush your head like a grape if he trapped you in a headlock. He wore a purple bandana religiously (said his girl back home gave it to him) and cut his sleeves at the shoulder. His helmet read, "Born To Lose." When Marshall had asked him about it, Harrison just replied callously, "You see how they treat black folk back in the states? Hell, I think I get more respect here from the gooks."

"I don't know, Harrison. I gotta think about it."

"Brother, you think too much. Look over there at Tiny. Didn't have to think too hard to pull that one out of his ass."

Tiny stood about 30 feet away, smoking a cigarette and chatting up Jenkins and Quinn by the latrine. He got his nickname on account of being only 5'7. His helmet read, "Don't Shoot, I'm Too Short." He got tired of all the short jokes and just ran with it. He was a real riot once you got him going. Harrison said that if he didn't already have the nickname Tiny, he'd be a Joker for sure.

Jenkins' helmet read, "Make War, Not Love." His girl broke up with him after she found out he was going to Vietnam. "She didn't want to get too attached," was all he said. He figured killing as many VC as possible would take his mind off the heartbreak. His kill count, currently 63, was constantly updated and written next to his motto.

Quinn's helmet read, "Nuke 'Em Till They Glow." He wanted nothing more than to leave Vietnam and watch it get bombed to hell. "Why are guys like us on the ground getting killed when we have the firepower to kill all these gooks?" he'd say. "Bomb the hell out of Vietnam and leave us out of it, man. I don't owe

these sorry motherfuckers nothing."

Only a month into his tour, Marshall didn't have much of an opinion yet like his squad. He was still too green, having seen no combat or any VC yet. Though his squad would argue that all Vietnamese were VC; if you don't see it that way, you probably won't last long, they all told him.

"I really got nothing, man," was all he said.

Before Harrison could reply, another voice interrupted.

"Think of it this way, Cox. If tomorrow you're blown to bits and all that's left of ya is your helmet, what would you want it to say? Those are the last words you're taking to the grave, marine. Choose wisely."

Their squad leader, Sergeant Weaver, casually strolled by them, toilet paper tucked under his arm, and left Marshall stuck on his words. If there really wasn't anything left of him, what would his last words be on his helmet? It took a minute, but he got an idea.

"Hey, whatcha scribbling down, Cox?" Harrison asked.

He finished and showed Harrison his helmet.

"4/13/1945 – I'm The Nobody Fighting Your War. When I Die, Will You Remember My Name?"

***

"Murder, torture, rape, abuse, forced displacement, home burnings, specious arrests, imprisonment without due process – such occurrences were virtually a daily fact of life throughout the years of the American presence in Vietnam." *– Nick Turse, "Kill Anything That Moves"*

"Kill anything that moves."

Those were his orders. He watched his squad—Harrison, Tiny, Jenkins, Quinn, everyone—storm the hamlet, guns raised and ready to shoot. He was there running with them, he realized, but the entire scene moved in slow motion. He processed everything in flashes, like a moving picture that went frame by frame.

Frame 1: A young Vietnamese woman screams and attempts to escape before they breach the hamlet when Quinn shoots her in the back not once, not twice,

but three times. She falls and hits the ground in deafening silence.

Frame 2: An old man is on the ground crying, tugging on Tiny's pant leg. Tiny hits him with the butt of his rifle so hard, the man doesn't move. Then, Tiny throws a grenade into the old man's hut. He hears a baby crying just before the *boom*.

Frame 3: Jenkins pulls a struggling Vietnamese woman into a hut. One hand covers her mouth while the other creeps up her shirt.

Frame 4: Harrison yells, "Yeah, get some!" as he fires at all the Vietnamese—women, children, old men, old women, all innocents—trying to escape, trying to survive. No one is fighting back, just running for their lives.

Frame 5: A child, no older than ten, walks out of a hut amongst all the chaos.

Frame 6: He's carrying a rifle, but it's too big for him. He keeps trying to adjust it in his arms.

Frame 7: He's yelling something in Vietnamese at Harrison from behind.

Frame 8: "Put it down!" Marshall screams, pointing his rifle. "Damn it, drop it now!"

Frame 9: But the boy doesn't listen. He points the rifle at Harrison's back.

Frame 10: Marshall pulls the trigger and the boy falls.

He remembered it all in frames. He remembered Sergeant Weaver torturing a young boy for information, threatening to cut off the boy's finger (which he did). He remembered a little girl on the ground, crying hysterically, clutching her dead mother's arm like a lifeline. He remembered Quinn holding a rifle to a woman's temple, calling her a whore and shooting her dead moments later. He remembered killing the boy with the rifle, and then a woman, and then an old man, and then another child, and the list went on and on. He remembered that after the initial shock of killing the boy, the rest of them felt routine. He remembered feeling some sort of release from killing these people. God, he was a killer. They were all killers.

When it was all over, and the village was nothing but corpses, flames, and smoke (protocol, Sergeant Weaver had told them, to clear the area and dispose of the bodies), Marshall keeled over and threw up.

Harrison clapped him on the shoulder from behind. “Hey, just tell yourself they’re all VC and it gets easier. Everyone in this goddamn mess of a country is VC, I swear. Men, women, children ... they’re all gunning for us, Cox. It’s kill or be killed around here. You remember that, brother.”

He threw up again.

***

Tet Offensive (Jan. 30th – Feb. 24th, 1968) – the NLF organized coordinated attacks across South Vietnam, surprising the American military during the Vietnamese Tet Holiday. The NLF exercised traditional over guerilla warfare tactics and was ultimately defeated, but they succeeded in reducing the American publics’ morale about the war.

If anybody asked, Marshall would say Khe Sanh was designed to chew up and spit out Marines like a meat grinder. His regiment had gone a month straight under heavy fire with the Vietnamese just pounding them with a barrage of artillery. On January 21, 1968, no one was prepared—all hell broke loose when hundreds of mortar and artillery shells just started hitting the base. Men were diving for cover in trenches and bunkers, blinded by the explosions. Some marines were there one second, and gone the next, completely eviscerated by heavy ammunition.

Marshall remembered being completely knocked off his feet and blacking out. He woke up on his back, sore, to bombs still dropping and someone screaming next to him. It was Jenkins, screaming and trying to reach for something that wasn’t there. Shit, Marshall thought, there was nothing there below his waist. Both legs, gone.

“I can’t feel my legs!” he cried out.

God, there was so much blood. Marshall crawled to him and shrugged off his jacket to use to stop the bleeding, but it was soaked in seconds.

“I need a medic!” he yelled, but no one could hear him over the explosions. No one was coming. So he stayed with Jenkins, going against all his instincts to run for cover, and watched the poor bastard cry about the girl who left him and how he was too young to die. But he did die, and Marshall had to leave him to run for cover in order to survive.

Quinn was in the mess hall when several mortar shells touched down and demolished it. Weaver was injured when a truck exploded near him, but he was

cleared for duty after a few days. Tiny's shoulder was just grazed by a mortar fragment, and he was also cleared for duty after a week. Harrison and Marshall survived mostly unscathed aside from some cuts and bruises.

A couple more weeks and rounds of artillery later, and Marshall went out on patrol with Harrison and a dozen other men to locate where enemy artillery fire was originating from. Only Marshall made it back alive after they walked straight into an ambush. The Vietnamese appeared out of thin air, surrounding and corralling them like sheep. They fired from all sides and decimated the entire squad in a heavy stream of bullets. Marshall had to use Harrison's dead body to cover himself, to help him play dead and hide from the Vietnamese. Luckily, they got distracted and walked away, and Marshall escaped with his life.

It was February 21st now, and Marshall's regiment finally had a moment to breathe. The break in the barrage sounded so foreign, so quiet, that sometimes he wished for some kind of artillery background noise to drown out his thoughts. A run down marine alone with his thoughts was dangerous.

"Hey, Cox. Check this out, man. Newsweek is writing about us!" Tiny said, shoving a newspaper in his face.

"Caution: being a marine in Khe Sanh may be hazardous to your health," Marshall read, staring blankly at the text. He thought of Jenkins, Quinn, and Harrison, and the men, women, and children he'd killed. This war—*his* war story—flashed behind his eyes liked a horror picture show, and all they had to say was this war was hazardous to his health? That was how they explained his experience—*his* hell—to the people back home? Just, hazardous.

Marshall suddenly stripped off his jacket, took out a marker from his pack, and started writing.

"What are you doing?" Tiny asked.

"I'm modeling for their goddamn war. So shut up, and go grab that dumbass photographer. Tell him I've got the perfect shot for him."

***

"If you don't care for obscenity, you don't care for the truth; if you don't care for the truth, watch how you vote. Send guys to war, they come home talking dirty." – *Tim O'Brien, The Things They Carried*

"Sometimes I wish I came back home in a body bag, y'know," Marshall said, taking another shot. He didn't know what number he was on, but the alcohol was starting to hit his sweet spot.

"Don't talk like that, man," Jimmy said, shaking his head.

"Hey, I asked you here to listen, remember? So listen up."

Jimmy sighed and nodded.

"First things first, I killed people, Jimmy. Not even all bad people, but women and children, too. I killed without even blinking sometimes, and sometimes it even felt good, like I had some kind of higher purpose. I could be a somebody in Vietnam, y'know? The more bodies you dropped, the more street cred you had. Kill anything that moves, they said. And now I've got blood on my hands that I'll never scrub clean. How am I supposed to live with that?"

Jimmy tried to say something, but Marshall stopped him.

"I've seen men completely wasted, man. Like, one second my guy is there, and the next he's not. He'll drop dead, or there won't even be a piece of him left depending on what hit him. A buddy of mine got blown apart—he had no legs, Jimmy, and he just bled out in my arms, crying like a little sissy. Hell, one of my closest friends, my brother over there in 'Nam, was shot dead right in front of me and I had to use his dead body as a cover to hide from the enemy. How fucked up is that?"

Jimmy looked sick, but he wasn't finished. No, his liquid courage still had some gas in the tank.

"None of us belonged in that hell hole. The Vietnamese never wanted us there, we weren't their knights in shining armor. Hell, half the time you couldn't tell a friendly gook from an enemy gook with how they treated us. And y'know, sometimes I don't blame them. I'd get pissed too if someone walked into my house and told me how to run it. All they wanted was to kick our sorry asses to the curb, and they lived and died by that motto. That's hardcore. Sure as hell fought with more heart than our guys. We wanted out of there from the get-go, and they just wanted to be left alone. Makes sense, right?"

"Marsh, I—"

"Jimmy, sometimes I wake up and I'm still there. I look out my bedroom window and I see that godforsaken jungle. Or I look in the mirror and one of

my guys is standing behind me in the reflection. My neighbor will turn on his lawnmower and I'll jump for cover like I'm back at Khe Sanh. I'll turn a corner and I'll be staring down the barrel of a rifle with a young boy on the other end of it. Man, it's like I never left Vietnam." He paused. "It's like, when you're there, all you care about is living long enough to get back home. Well, I'm home and no one gives a shit about me because I'm the nobody who fought in a war that everyone hated. What am I supposed to do now?"

"You'll figure something out. You can beat this, Marshall. I know you can."

Silence stood between them for a few minutes.

"I wish I came back in a body bag because it sounds easier. Dying, I mean. You don't have to think about all the shit you did or saw if you're just dead."

Jimmy stayed quiet.

"We lost, by the way," he tacked on at the end. "Just so you know."

And with that, his liquid courage was on empty.

TOWNIE

J.r. Gill

Stacy's Pizza,
formerly Dave's Pizza
formerly Mike's Pizza
formerly Dave's Pizza before,
got robbed last night. Kicked in the back door.
First robbery to a business on Adams since '04.
People from around here don't rob the main street. (Must've been people from out of town.)
People from around here rob houses. Smash the back window. Head to the bedroom.
In and out. Hidden cash, jewelry, and a small tv means
another sandwich bag of pills,
a couple spoonfuls of that stuff that
takes you somewhere that isn't here.
Isn't this town.
A 17 year old OD'ed the other day looking for that place.
I've heard rumors about that place.
At sunset I look out at the horizon. Above the soy fields that lead out of town stand figures
some tall some short all dark like night and waving at their neighbors in town.
They've gotten away.
They made it to that somewhere.
I've heard rumors. Maybe I. I could. But.
I've heard rumors. But I'm not trying to leave town right now.

OUR LAST & ONLY LABOR DAY

Elise Woods

Your mom told me about tomatoes, squash, and green beans
She and your dad grow.

What I didn't tell her was that I kill most succulents—
Those little green plasticky shrubs—
I poured too much water in those
Infant terracotta pots.
I suppose they drowned—
It was an accident—
Because I gave them too much water.

I gave them too much,
But what was I to do with all my water?

I had so much to give.

I asked you to walk with me through the garden,
Past the two bulgy Dobermans and ripe chicken coop—
You laughed when I called you *my country boy*
"If *I'm* country, then you don't know what *country* is"

Without warning you grabbed my waist, pulled me over your head
Onto your shoulders.
I screamed, giggled, feared I'd hurt you
Even though you'd wrangled me—
I didn't ask for this,
To suddenly rise ten feet tall,
To putter around your parents' garden as the summer sun set
But when you told me
You'd never leave Ohio, your parents, your niece—
I wondered about my parents, my sisters, my hope for adventures—
And I realized it again:
What was I to do with all my water?
I didn't ask for this.

This country boy didn't kill plants
Because his mama watered them for him.

DAYDREAM

Rachel Nitchman

HARD WORK

Claudia Owusu

the taxi driver notices my soft hands before I can hide them
in my lap. asks what kind of work I do. easy work. nothing
grueling enough to ache the body when turning over at night
nothing like him whose hands feel like rocks—
calluses arranged perfectly along the draw of his palms like spoiled
fruit or a bouquet of flowers. I could talk and no work / word is good enough
and so I listen: *duped out of 2 days' work just yesterday. 150 Ghana cedis*
gone to government criminals for parking violations. They hound you
like you fucked their mother. I stare out the window, out at the city,
at the hordes of bodies still wrestling against currents

UNTITLED

Meagan Coultas

The man who assaulted me has a degree in astrophysics.
He has a rescue dog.
He plays guitar.
He reads books in his spare time.
He always wears his seatbelt and
Holds the door open for other people and
He is the kind of man that made people wonder if I had
Asked for it.

FOR BOBBEE

Riley Smith

Small downy feathers
line the shelves you used to walk,
soft and white and cold
without your body to warm them.

You used to tear at the
worn-out pages of the well-loved books
you found there, not bothering with
silly things like titles or summaries, just

Ripping, shredding, nibbling
with your delicate beak,
smaller than the nail
on my pinkie finger.

We still keep the feathers,
clean around them every Monday,
moving them to a little jar bought
at some garage sale last summer.

Last summer, when your chirps still
rang through the house,
from your newest perch by the
living room window, overlooking the lawn.

Last winter, when we moved you
To the window in the dining room,
Because we had no place for the tree.
But boy did you love Christmas music.

The smooth jazz of the Charlie Brown
Christmas special
Had you bobbing your little head,
Swaying with the beat on your favorite
Green plastic swing.

We buried you there,
in front of that living room window,
next to the only living tree in our yard,
Mom's favorite, the ginkgo.

It was windy.
It rained.
I had only been home from England
for about three weeks.

Gone for six months,
And during our precious last
days together
You were
suffering.

Egg-laden, with a broken leg,
We did our best to nurse you
Back to health,
But we were too late.

There's only one other creature buried in our yard,
our dear Maggie turtle, next to a tree we've just cut down.
I don't remember her as well as I do you –
her being a pet from my childhood –

But I miss you both equally,
deeply, painfully;
At least I know you're not suffering,
No longer chirping in this too-quiet house.

TOKENS OF GENOCIDE

Alex Futo

NOT EVERYTHING CAN BE A SONNET NO MATTER HOW MUCH I WANT IT TO BE

Gyasi Hall

On the way to a church retreat we stop off at DC just to see the sites and Ryan
Tells me about this underground fungus somewhere in Oregon that stretches
Two and a half miles and is thought to be the largest living organism on the
Planet and It is still growing and when I say I've always wanted to kill myself I
Mean that Ryan gives people the perfect metaphors and doesn't even realize it
I mean that today I was rotting in my bed watching the shadows grow longer
On my wall and I want to become that which grows and gives and no one
Else sees save for the gifts that pucker up from beneath the surface I'm saying
I love myself enough to take a shower but not enough to want to stick around
I'm saying I am mostly miles of stretchmarks and good intentions and maybe
That is enough I'm saying that the washington monument was closed and
From the outside it just looks like a metaphor everything looks like a metaphor
Everything curls itself around my sadness and talking about this shit sounds
So cliché and that's a metaphor too so when Ryan asks me what I'm thinking
About as I look up at the ancient stone I feel like maybe, one day, I'll tell him
The truth

A EULOGY FOR TAM TÒA CHURCH IN ĐỒNG HỚI, VIETNAM

Alex Futo

I'm sorry that you've become the monument of a war crime, a constant reminder of your destruction standing as a plaque in front of your doorway—always reminded, as if you could ever forget. I'm sorry that you awoke to heavy fire along the river, to planes dropping bombs, and I'm sorry that you could only stand in place as parts of you fell to ruin. You are only a face now. A face stained by smoke and death. You've lost most of your body to war, to the "American aggressors" written on your plaque. Your chimney stands tall on its own behind you, but you may never know that. You only look forward, watching mournful faces pass you by. While some don't even spare you a glance. You're already blending in against your will.

It is my mournful face you see reading your plaque. It is my words, American words, infringing on your being and way of life by telling you that your story is sadness and destruction and nothing more. Maybe some look at you with pride because you refused to kneel, because you are a memorial of a war won, not a war lost. I can hear children playing down the boardwalk, only a short walk away from your feet. Families stroll on the boardwalk, holding hands, smiling, and laughing as if there is no pain here. I see boats out on the river and fishermen setting traps for the morning. I see people living, people thriving, and I'm the only one mourning you. I understand if you don't want my sympathy. I'm just another guilty American standing in front of you because of a war that wasn't my fault. I'm stuck in that paradox and can't help but ask more of you.

Did people die praying inside your body? If they did, do you still hear them? Have you slept in 50 years? Do you have nightmares about bombs and a destroyed city where no children played a short walk away? Did you glare as American soldiers marched past your mangled body? How long before you forgave them? Have you forgiven them? Do you miss your life before war, as a church, not as a monument? Does nature pester you with her ivy, roots, and flowers sneaking into what's left of your foundations, becoming a part of you? Or do they heal, nurture you? Have you seen more faces like mine, mournful faces? How do you live in the aftermath of war?

I'm out of questions. All I can do is stand in front of your face and read your plaque in mourning. But you deserve better.

You are a testament of strength and resilience because when your city fell, you stood tall on your own. There was the river, you, and rubble. You deserve my respect because my country couldn't defeat you. You are Đồng Hới's resolve, its spirit, its heart—never forget.

THE PELICAN MASK

Rachel Bell

He wears red feathers
and a pelican mask—glinting
with scars made of mother-of-pearl
        -of-great-price
The white of his eyes
at the center of its caverns,
a solemn voice beneath
its wooden beak, craning
towards his chest

And it is night
And the people bathe in firelight,
        in starlight,
in juniper and frankincense
And they sing like swallows,
they dance like starlings
Their hands say hunger
for what can be touched—
what is warm, what is wild

The man in the mask knows
that we are born in blood
        and breath,
and bloodless and breathless
we wither into words,
words into nothing
The man in the mask knows
it is not death that is
the opposite of life

The stars bleed water
and a grain of wheat dies
Their knees kiss the earth,
their sapling souls
        sprout wings
He exposes his face,
throws the mask into flame
The feathers catch fire,

the oaken beak burns

And out of the ashes
a pelican rises
to pull up the sun—
to save the whole of us.

MEDICINE WHEEL: PORTRAITS FROM ROSEBUD

Abby Studebaker

I. (waŋc̄i)
There is a people here, whose
voices have echoed and meandered for millennia
down hills of ancient proportions and side streets.
Smoky air sings of loss, but also courage,
the bravery to hold life
and live it as nations do.

II. (nup̄a)
There is poverty here—
we feel it in the homes, in the soup kitchen.
There is heart and respect here—
we feel it in the children, in the songs, in the fields.
We see it in the dancing bodies at the powwow
and the luminous warmth
as we attempt to play Lak̇ot̄a games
and look through Lak̇ot̄a eyes.
—
When Iŋyaŋ drained its blood
and flooded the earth with its creation,
it gave until the job was complete,
and scattered its broken pieces across the land.
When the wind sweeps up from the south,
bringing sweetness and youth with it,
put these in your mouth. When an old man trusts you
or a teacher places the words in your hands
and says, "Build with these," do not take them for granted.
When the sun dance unfurls before you,
be still and listen, hopeful for what's next.

III. (yamni)
We are the next in a long line of visitors,
trying to give back what was taken.
Like water runs towards the sea they press on
in the turning of seasons and burning of sage for healing.
In the warm, soft blackness they lean into the pressure
like trees in a river, roots dug deep.
—

If you are lucky and strong, you'll take the words
the ones your elders sing,
and learn them like pebbles,
touching their smooth corners.

IV. (toṗa)
We are all treading a circular path,
digging our feet into different lands and
hoping for an answer.
—
Miṫaḵuye Oyas'iŋ.
I have two sisters. A brother. A mom and a dad.
But everything is relative for the Laḵoṫa.
Everything is woven together like a basket
and turns like a wheel,
the beings of the earth mirrored in the universe
in never-ending parallels
of beads delicately strung and sewn.

TAIFA

Claudia Owusu

pee-stained bed sheets hung out on the line for the world to see
we spent our school break waiting for rain

& then waiting for a ride to the beach
when the rain came first we ran out in herds

to retrieve the clothes from the line
& then we built a well

we descended into its mouth
pulled up rainwater by the buckets

& heaven really was the little circle of sky that blinded
the echo of our voices slapped together with laughter

even when our toes were thick with grime
even when mud lotioned our forearms like a second skin

UNHINGED

Rachel Nitchman

AUTHORS & ARTISTS

AUTHOR & ARTIST BIOS

Rachel Bell is a senior creative writing major at Otterbein University, where she has been published in *Quiz & Quill*. As she looks to the future, she is only certain that she wants her life to follow Mary Oliver's instructions: "Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it."

Meagan Coultas is a senior creative writing major with a strong passion for both poetry and essay. She loves that both genres can tell a full, captivating story, and hopes her work in each achieves this goal.

Alex Futo is on the brink of graduation and doesn't know what the future holds. At the very least, she hopes she can write on her own without being told to.

J.r. Gill: Filthy heathen. Folk Hero. Student of Dr. Hunter Thompson.

Kristin Gustafson is a senior creative writing major and co-founder/president of Poetry Alive.

Casey Hall: is a senior creative writing and women's, gender, and sexuality studies double major. She has loved her time at Otterbein including being the president of FreeZone, a member of Quiz & Quill staff, and a part of the SOAR team. Her goal is to work in a library or in a non-profit organization and to help change people's lives for the better regardless of where she ends up working. She is currently working on some writing projects that she hopes to eventually publish.

Gyasi Hall is a poet, essayist, playwright, film scholar, cereal enthusiast, and general nerd from Columbus, Ohio. His work has been published/produced by *Quiz & Quill*, Thoughtcrime press, *Get Lit*, Z Publishing, and MabLab Theater. His debut chapbook, *Flight of the Mothman*, is forthcoming from The Operating System in spring 2019.

Mary Jackson is a sophomore at Otterbein University majoring in creative writing and minoring in both studio art and business administration.

Lance Kriesch: I am a junior studio art major from Delaware, Ohio with minors in journalism and nature studies. I have concentrations in photography and ceramics, but intend to pursue photography as my career path. I have been studying photography since my junior year of high school and prefer to shoot nature and wildlife.

Sierra Lawhead is a senior studio art major with concentrations in photography and communication design.

Rachel Nitchman is a senior majoring in art and creative writing, with a specific love for photography and the essay. She would like to do a great many things, but would most like a job doing one or both of the above vocations, and, of course, to befriend a couple cats. Her highest ambition right now is for both herself and her plants to survive this semester. She only sees one of these two things happening, but she can dream.

Claudia Owusu is a senior creative writing major at Otterbein University with minors in film studies and race & ethnic studies. Her work has appeared in *Quiz & Quill*, Otterbein University's literary magazine, *Wusgood.black, 20.35 African Contemporary Poetry* through Brittle Paper, and *Ohio's Best Emerging Poets* 2017 and 2018. Her short film, *Zora* (2017), was showcased at the Nkabom Literary Art Festival in Accra, Ghana and Lome, Togo. Her favorite book, if she had to choose, is *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston; and her favorite song, if she had to choose, is "Hey Baby" by Stephen Marley.

Riley Smith: I am a senior English literary studies major with a minor in Latin American language and culture. I have been writing as long as I have been a student. My desire to write often has lead me to trying as many different genres as I can; from journalism with my high school newspaper, to historical essays, and now mainly critical analysis as an English major, there are few styles that I haven't attempted. I hope to continue writing until my fingers fall off my hands.

Abby Studebaker is a senior creative writing and journalism and media communication major from New Carlisle, OH. She'd like to thank Quiz & Quill for being a light in her life while at Otterbein, a group of likeminded bookworms who love words just as much as she does and who have inspired her in more ways than she can name to write, to read, and to be a member of a literary community.

Emily Tepe is a sophomore sociology and communication studies major from Chicago, IL. She is a part of the equestrian team and has always had a passion for writing and reading the works of others.

Elise Woods is a senior theatre and creative writing double major. She grew up in Texas and will be moving to Indianapolis come summer. Although she is embarrassed by the enormity of her sweet tooth, she never turns down an invitation for ice cream.

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