

HAUTE DISH



The Arts and Literature Magazine of Metropolitan State University

SPRING 2020

Haute Dish

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ABOUT THE COVER

From the Outside by Gina Torres

ABOUT

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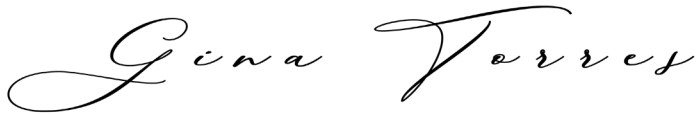
“We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print.
It gave us more freedom. We lived in the gaps between the stories.”
-Margaret Atwood

Welcome to Spring, a season filled with transformations and new opportunities. At this point in the year, the long winter has passed and summer is just a few weeks away.

Haute Dish persists in working towards creating a positive learning environment and inclusive culture for all members of the Metropolitan State University. Diversity is important for us as it allows us to experience different cultures, points of view, and ideas that enrich our content.

We are excited to present the Spring 2020 issue, created by Metro State students, staff, faculty, and alumni. Within these pages, we continue on with sharing the thoughts and hearts of our writers, photographers, painters, designers, editors, and volunteers. To all of you, thank you for making this publication possible.

As we live our best lives this spring, I encourage you, reader, to create a piece and share it with us or to join the editorial review board so that your perspective can be shared. Haute Dish exists for you and because of you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gina Torres". The script is elegant and cursive, with the first letters of "Gina" and "Torres" being capitalized and prominent.

Gina Torres
Managing Editor

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THE BEGINNING FRANCE AND BELGIUM

SHILOH CLAMONS

It's so scary, they said. I could never do it, they said. There are people here to help they said. Well this is much scarier, you should do it, helping should never be contained. All these comments are why I'm here.

For my first 5 weeks I've had experiences that I will forever carry in my soul. I've seen painful eyes look in mine while a beautiful smile tries to cover the pain of living in limbo with constant disappointment and abuse.

I've seen babies in my eyes (10yrs-18yrs) but adults in others. They beg for essentials for survival and I have to say next time, knowing next time may never come. I've listened to stories of journeys through multiple countries enduring fear of multiple beatings, pepper spaying, truck drivers choking little children threatening them with knives, mafias, smuggler wars, stealing of their belongings over and over again by the police, denial of their new community, the heat, the cold, the rain, the snow, loss of hope, multiple radical groups threatening family harm because of their fleeing and just blatant disrespect towards their Human Rights as HUMAN BEINGS. Stories and pictures of men in freezer meat trucks, with beaten faces and fleeing semi trucks leading them the wrong way and stealing their money.

All lost souls trying to flee to a country that holds their next disappointments of asylum in a falsely glorified country. They don't know that this United Kingdom doesn't want them, won't support them and if caught will deport them.

In woods near by in Dunkirk I visited a whole makeshift settlement of about 5 homes made out of tents and tarps. Fire pits with wood ready to burn and with a ring of chairs to sit as they cook make tea and warm themselves. Clothes hanging out to wash with rain and dry with sun, toys and other belongings scattered around. We were looking for more families that were there the day before. Lo and behold the police strut up the muddy hill leading to the site. 1, 2, 3...And so on until there were about 20 of them and 5 of us. They tell us sternly they have been ordered to take down the homes. We plea for the families' homes and say they will be back but we're talking to deaf ears as they start to slash the ropes, smash the tents and drag their homes to a small truck waiting at the bottom of the hill. Yes sir or shall I say sirs, we see you, they see you... YOU WONT STOP US!

3 hours up north in Caen, another port filled with hopes and dreams of work, education, a stable home, regular meals, a wife, a family. Just a few hours across the cold unforgiving ocean. Motherless, family-less, teenagers and young adults filled distress as teenaged faces could have, aged with worry, hunger and sleep deprivation awaited us. Cold and wet as the rain was steadily coming from the cold sky they greet us with hand shakes and smiles.

A small group of locals feed them a meal and provide medical care out of a trunk of a car. After we provide boots, sleeping bags and coats. As their malnourished faces shine through the layer of clothing smiling with gratitude passed one by one I couldn't help but think why are "WE" not doing more?

I move on to the land of romance, great wine and grand eye pieces. I saw the true Paris. The bitter cold set in as did the boulders trying to hide tent cities and piled together young boys trying to stay warm on road islands. Groups of small tent towns all along the canal. Lines of people along buildings with makeshift shelters with what materials they could collect. Large groups of bodies in lines, sleeping under building awnings and bridges to have what shelter was available to them only covered in thin blankets.

I visited a beautiful park with grand cement walls and iron fences with locked tailored gates shielding the youngest from the police, the locals and the older migrants. And through these tailored gates I give a few boys no older than 16 supplies needed to survive the cold night. Sleeping bags, yoga mats, hats mittens and anything else that we had available. The next day a group gathers in the playground across the street from the gated park, for a small meal. A few locals woke up early before work to cook for them. As we pass out plates the number of these boys continues to grow the food withers down to the end of the line only getting a cup of rice, a can of sardines and a banana cake. The park now filled with hopes and further ventures. Here I heard multiple stories about my papers in order, everything! They still denied me I don't know why?" " they denied me twice" another one said. The confusion and disappointment filling their faces left me feeling helpless.

I also drive a few quick hours away in another country, Belgium, We reach a public park, stores surround the train station near by and families are walking, playing, and enjoying the trip through the lovely park. We walk and spread the word of our donation in half an hour, we walk the whole park, the streets and the train station. The train station was hard. The question of who was a refugee and who is a resident was present. So calling out to those in need was about humility. Low and behold ...as I walk in the skyways of the nearest "mall" 3 teens wander by socks only... escorted by an English woman, I inform them we will be holding a handout in a few hours, they reply, " they were stolen" ... " our shoes were stolen while we slept in the station"

CRAP we didn't bring any shoes? What do I do? I could easily go buy three pairs of shoes... but wait! I can't buy 50, 100, or more, so I do nothing as my soul sinks into my stomach.

As refugees start to arrive for donations I lay down a long sheet of plastic, I place paper and markers down and spread it out. A group forms around me with puzzled faces. I start to draw and one by one young men start creating pictures of homeland pride, country flags, stories of their makeshift boats traveling the wide open unforgivable blue ocean, family and villages left behind, they all join me on on the freezing ground. Their faces lifted from the weight of the world on their shoulders. Next I go sit at a makeshift power station. Here I sit and listen to more stories of people migrating because of war torn places, where they had the choice of fight or flight, watching family members murdered, raped, tortured. They themselves hunted like prey because they wouldn't join in any military group or because they helped the foreigners and now must have to pay, or because they were too educated. They come to the distribution an hour later dirty, soaked holy socks, still wondering... where do I find simple help? A co-worker spoke French so they were able to connect the lady who was with them, she was bringing shoes. BUT what about those who don't have a third party? What about those who we pass with a hand shake and welcome? With Volunteers that are eager to help but the help isn't always reachable... what about the next 3? And the next 3? ... I've learned Belgium is better... But 3 Boys with no shoes, even for just a few hours is "better" then what? What the heck is going on????

In Calais, the most beautiful sunset fills the sky. I see the vibrant sea as waves crash onto the beach and ferry after ferry floating by. Sometime in the evening as the sun sets they're lit up with fancy lights. Oh how beautiful some might say, but all I can think about as they head to Britain, is I hope there are stowaway migrants breaking free from their French demise. As I walk on the beach I see cement bunkers the Nazis left behind from the times they took control of Calais. Have so many forgotten the the so many that were snatched up and shipped away or those who ran towards lands without war?

I have been to many many sites around this small northern town that the migrants gather to receive hand-outs. Each site we visit holds a group of mostly segregated national groups, nationally segregated and created by those against them, those who are supposed to help them, and plainly creating a cultural unsafe place. Each site holds special characteristics that make each visit unique. Some on the side of a small canal, some in the parking lot of an oversized bank, and some just on the side of the road. During my visits I see and hear the horror of a community crushed and caught in the middle of others' politics and ideals. Men, women and young teens all forced to line up for food, then line up for tea, then line up for clothes, shoes and everyday survival essentials.

I think to myself I whine about traffic jams, I whine waiting to pay for my groceries, or to get snacks at the movies, and so on. Then I think how horrible it must be, how demeaning it must feel to have to line up sometimes for hours to get or sometimes not get what is needed just to get through to the next day. All to do it over again the next day. This leaves me feeling crass and unbelievably spoiled.

Each day, each place I visit I think, how bored must these people be? Emotionally, educationally and physically bored. REAL LIFE bored. Yes, there's a day center reachable to some and a double decker school bus that visits sometimes and those lines to wait in for survival goods, but other than that, day in and day out nothing. I've seen some playing a bit of Futball (soccer) but just mostly empty bodies wandering the streets, walking here, walking there... walking, walking, walking. Burning the little calories they take in just to buy time until the next opportunity of escape arises. Walking in wet, broken, sometimes wrong sized shoes, ripped coats if any, bare hands. Walking, Walking, Walking.....



HUT BOY - SHILOH CLAMONS

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

TAYLOR SORENSEN

I see them sometimes,
Floating by;
Like a pair of unicorns with
Some secret no one else is in on.
And I imagine they stay up late sharing their
Thoughts and their feelings
And making chocolate chip cookies
At 3 in the afternoon.

Maybe they go to the nail salon and
Choose each other's colour and
Reminisce over dinner about
Binging Gossip Girls
During that one winter it
Was too cold for ice skating,
So instead they slurped hot chocolate
With extra mini marshmallows
And bundled up in quilts
In front of the TV.

I wonder if they call just because
"I miss you" for five minutes in between
Important meetings with the marketing department
Or if it's been one of those days- you know,
When your latte spills all over your silken ivory
blouse,
And you get stuck behind a train,
And you drop your phone and the screen splits
Like a perfect crack of lightning
Through the center of the keyboard-
I wonder, if that calls for an emergency
Get together, with wine and cheap, greasy pizza
And a Friends marathon.

Perhaps on crisp Sunday afternoons
In the fall, they go for walks in the park
And count the crunches of their footsteps,
Their laughter carrying past the bench
Where I sit by myself and write a poem about
Mothers and daughters
And the phone calls I'll never have,
The inside jokes I'll never know

DEEP BLUE

MAGGIE DYSLIN



LEECHES

REBEKAH PAHR

Beneath,
biding time in silt,
stagnant pools
of green gloom –
languid and cool.

Slimy entanglements,
clinging amongst composting lily stalks
and reedy grasses,
swallowed in shadow –
muted
below glossy surface.

Longing to be righted,
like a tipped canoe –
to sunny flowered tops of lily pads,
buzzing clover shore
and tilting cabin laughter.

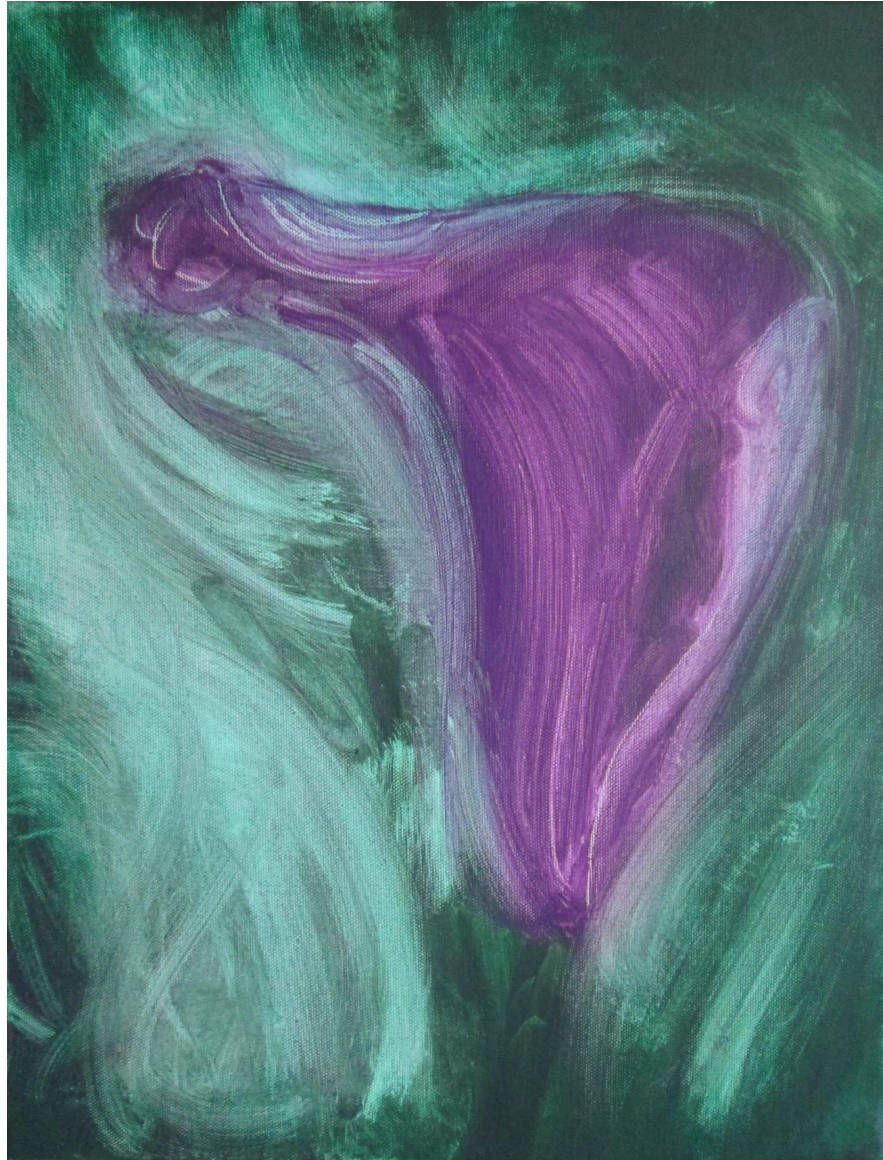
Ink blots, like tattooed tar tears,
ascending the dock,
clinging black burrs –
caterpillar vampires
dripping onto sandy shore.

Hitchhikers into a sharp new world,
of white hot sunlight,
unfiltered,
piercing
crimson shriek –
drenched puddles of cherry.

Murky memories,
better left submerged,
lodged in rotten waterlogged posts,
or sunken knee-deep in sludge –
look back and be shriveled by salt.

PAMELA BRAUN

MS. CALLA LILY



A LOVE LEARNED

ANDREW LABARRE

Remember

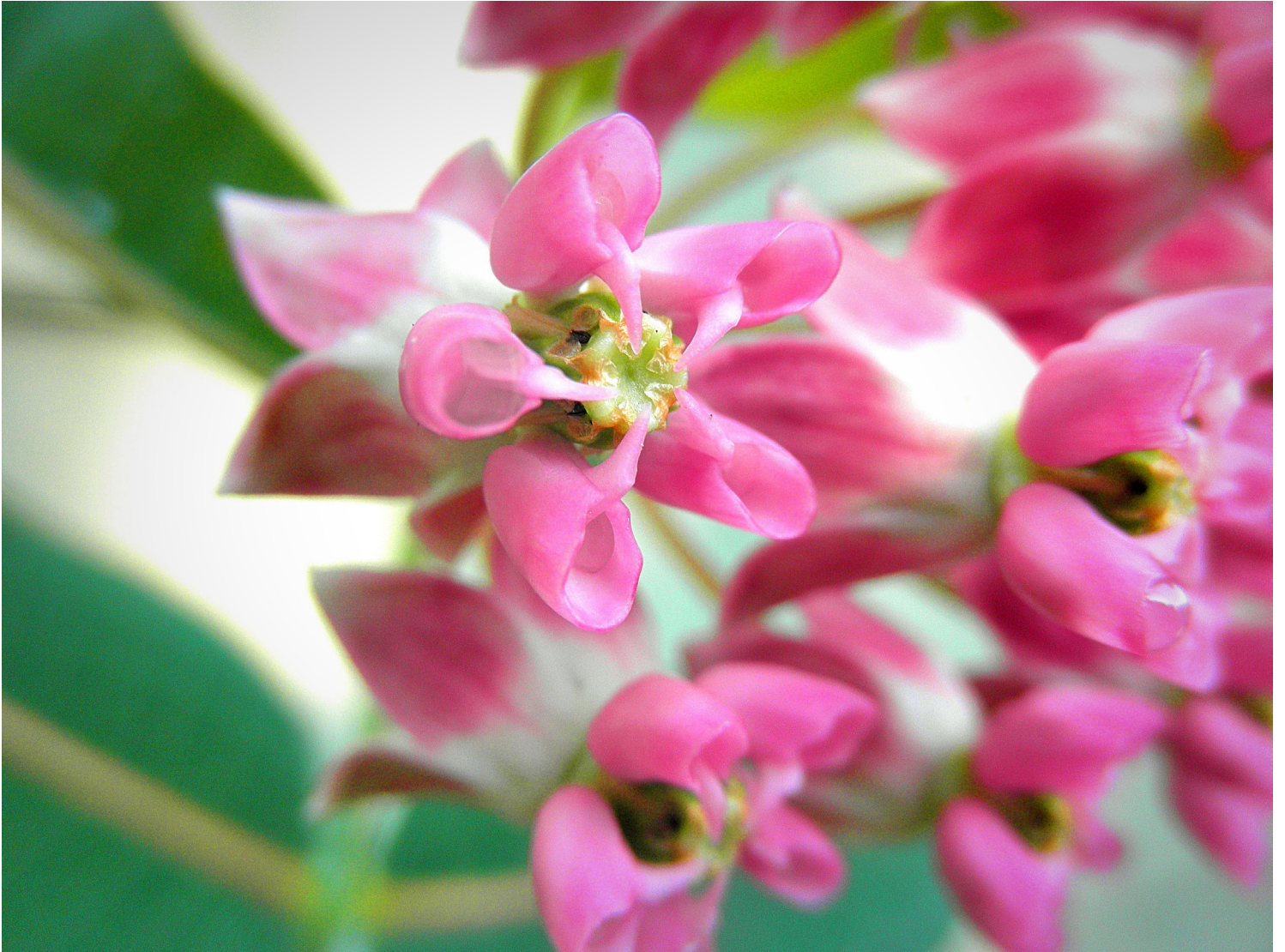
I was praying barefoot
on the boulevard, throwing shoes at passersby,
dumping garbage in the street. Crazy,
those tricks off Santa Monica, they'd fight
with big, dirty-dark hands, pissing in alleys
in the dead of night; I was high
and disappointing, with God by my side,
crying real tears, afraid
of words that would hurt or curse.

I try and I can't simply just talk to you,
yet, of all things,
that would create a rift—
for I have learned to live and love in life,
without
being heard—

for you.

PRETTY IN PINK

ERICK SUCHY



DIVORCE - MEANT

MAI NYUA LEE

Through corded rifts and broken words
through unheard conversations
late night contemplations,
and disjointed revelations.
We are two strangers lost in the tides of our translations.

Through sentimental highs
through tattered woes
onset doubt spreads and grow,
dismantling us into foes.
We are two strangers forlorn in our shadows.

Through wasted years of undulation,
our festered wounds hold no healing.
Resentment bars no acceptance
and the drowning rivers we cried holds no weight.
We are strangers in our deathly union.

SAVE THE BEES

MAGGIE DYSLIN



REMEMBER WHY

CARLYN CROUSE

Remember the feel of the pen in your hand,
The weight it carries beneath its cold, metallic shell.
Your words are heavy.

Remember the feel of a fresh sheet of blank paper,
The light hushing as your hand sweeps across its surface,
Asking the world to quiet.

Remember your education,
Years spent learning, yearning, earning,
Understanding not to rhyme.

Remember to cut your dangling modifiers.

Remember that while two dimensional characters may fight, three dimensions take flight.

Remember not everything needs to be spelled out, but spelling counts,
Grammar too.

Remember your first workshop,
Your heart crawling out of your dry throat,
But settling when you hear your words escape someone else's mouth
And the voice is the same.

Remember to submit.
Anywhere. Everywhere.
Keep in mind you'll be rejected twenty times more than accepted.
Because feeling as though you have nothing to say
Is worse than saying nothing at all.

Remember the anticipation,

The rush at the tips of your fingers
Believing nothing can escape your grasp.

Remember the first twinge of rejection,

Of a story untold, cast aside, and abandoned.

Remember the strength needed to try again.

Knowing you'll fail,
But needing to all the same.

Remember your hidden drive,

The motion of your imagination whirling endlessly like a cog-spring clock.
Dust off the gears and levers.
Turn it up to eleven.
Because feeling as though you have nothing to say
Is worse than saying nothing at all.

Remember the reason.

Forget the what and how,

Pick up your pen and

Remember why.

FLEEING THE MORNING

EMILIE PECK



A B S A L O M

NATHANIEL WILDE

You ate lollipops and sang
hymns to the red speckled rock you found
Red for mom and grey for dad you said

I bought you soda and donuts for dinner
tokens of love that you unwrapped
Some for mom and some for dad you said

We rubbed that rock smooth with our hands
hands that gave, hands that you held
One hand for mom and one for dad you said

He played with dirt caked toys in a field
breezes that chill us taste tangy you said
I bite into that memory, that moment you made

It's worn smooth now by my constant turning
That crystal day under a pale sun

LET IT GROW

ERICK SUCHY



GHOST SHIPS

SHILOH CLAMONS



BREATH IS LIFE, THE BUDDHIST SAY

DAVID ZIEROTT

The legend is this. In 1870, late at night, during a heavy rain storm, a train bound for Pine City neared Devil's Lake. It was a circus train loaded heavy with gear. At the lake, the train tracks ran along a very steep embankment before entering the town, two miles to the north.

The legend says that a woman in Pine City reported hearing the train's whistle that night. But the train never arrived.

It had been raining for three days straight and this night, the heavy rain loosened the dirt and rocks under the train tracks and when the weight of the huge, steam locomotive hit the tracks, the tracks gave way, sliding down towards the water, the locomotive sliding with it. It hit the water sideways and after the huge explosion of water and steam cleared, only the dark, pock marked surface of the lake remained. The water was almost a hundred feet deep.

The train's cars, not as heavy, broke free from the locomotive as it wrenched downward. One, carrying the canvas and poles for the huge tents, was partially submerged but it remained connected to the cars on the hill, grasping on like to a saving hand, not allowing it to sink below the water. The engineer of the train jumped out of the cab toward the hill when he felt the train sliding downwards. He survived but his leg was broken in the fall. There were three other people in the engine cab with him that night but the following morning, they were still unaccounted for. The sheriff waited two days before pronouncing them lost, presumed drowned. They were never seen again. They were Melvin and Julie Ann Bumphrey, a married couple, and Elmer Thackry, a circus laborer.

Over a hundred years later, this 'circus train' story surfaced at a backyard barbecue. Eating cheeseburgers and potato chips and drinking beer, Troy said he had been researching this legend of the circus train. He'd gone to Devil's Lake the previous winter and climbed down the steep embankment onto the thick ice, lowering a sled with his gear. "It wasn't a very big lake," he said. Using an ice fishing auger, he drilled a series of holes in the ice, spacing them apart. He lowered a video camera used for fishing and scanned the deep water for any signs of the locomotive. On the third hole, shivering and nearing his limits for the cold, he lowered the camera down to seventy feet and he said he saw what appeared to be the shape of the locomotive. He calculated landmarks and noted the location.

He said between mouthfuls, “The next step is to do a dive on it.”

James told him that he had done a lot of diving back in his college days in Hawaii.

“You want to do the dive with me? He asked.

James said, “You know, I really want to do it but I’d need gear. Don’t have my own anymore. I’m assuming full wet suits for the cold ?”

Troy laughed. “Oh yeah, it’ll be cold down there, once you get past 15 feet or so. The images I got said seventy two feet, so it’s a ways down, definitely chilly. But don’t worry, we’ll be able to rent everything we need to make it work. It’ll be fine.”

“Seventy feet? Whew. I’ve been to a hundred before in Hawaii. But that’s warmer. But it’ll be fine. I haven’t done many wet suit dives though.”

Troy said. “Don’t worry. We’ve got time to figure it all out. I’ll call you. We’ll get a plan. “

“Sounds good,” said James. “Sounds like fun.”

On his drive home, James had reservations about agreeing to do the dive. Most of his diving had been in clear, tropical waters with good visibility. He’d only done one scuba dive in a lake and that was fifteen years ago. Lake diving in cold, turbid Minnesota waters was a different beast. Not much margin for error, especially if you go deep. Years back, in Hawaii, James was forced to make a free ascent from eighty feet deep because he had run out of air. That had been a stupid mistake. But in the car that night after the barbecue, he finally thought, ‘I can handle this dive.’ He was older now, and wiser. He was confident it would all come back. He needed an adventure. When Troy called three weeks later with the plan, James said, “I’m all in.”

The night before the dive, they met at the dive shop to pick up the rental gear. Troy had already tried on his wet suit and the owner handed James a suit to try on in the dressing room. He struggled to get it on but finally he got his arms in the sleeves, But it wouldn’t zip. Out in the store, he heard Troy say to the shop owner, “Having the zipper on the back of the suit is weird.” James looked down at his chest and the open zipper. He thought, ‘Mistake number one. Glad I’m on dry land.’ The next day, they ate breakfast at a diner on the interstate, an hour away from Devil’s Lake.



*SUN SET
ON THE
SEASONS*

RICHARD MCCULLOUGH

Troy had brought along his friend Mark to paddle the kayak, He would tow us to the right spot on the lake.

James said, “So, we’ll know when we’re near this sunken circus locomotive when we see old, red rubber clown noses drift by?”

They laughed and Troy said, “That’s it! But, get this. The old guy whose dock we’re using told me that there is a woman in Pine City, a waitress, who says that sometimes she has dreams where she sees a light and hears a train whistle.”

“Nah.”

“For real,” said Troy. “If we find the train, we’ll go find her to hear that story.”

The day was perfect for a dive. The early afternoon sky was a pale, summer blue with big white puffy clouds drifting slowly. The lake wasn’t big; maybe 500 yards across but it was deep, close to a hundred feet. The slopes leading down to the water were covered with trees. The surface was a dark color, not blue, not really brown. The lake was shaped like a funnel, the sides sloping down beneath the dark water to the bottom. There was a slight breeze, just enough to give some rolling ripples to parts of the lake surface. The air was a comfortable 85 degrees.

We arrived at the second of only two houses on this lake and Troy rang the door bell. An old guy with whisker stubble answered the door. He confirmed that we could use his dock to stage the dive. Mark stood behind us with our two tanks. The old guy looked at the tanks and then at Mark.

“You sure you got air in them tanks of yours?”

Mark smiled and said, “ Sure do. You know what Buddhists say..... breath is life.”

The old man said, “You don’t need a god damned Buddha to tell you that, do ya! “

He rubbed his chin. “All I ask is that if you find it, I get pictures.”

“That we will do.” said Troy. They carried their dive gear down to the dock.

Fifteen years of not diving meant the gear was new to James. Instead of a weight belt, the weights slid into pockets on the buoyancy vest that held the tank. And neoprene wet suits float. Since he hadn't done many wet suit dives, (one to be exact), he didn't know how much weight he needed now to compensate. He'd need enough so that he could descend. He put in twenty pounds. Then he put it on. With the tank, it was heavy walking on the dock and with the spongy black wet suit on, cumbersome in the hot sun. James clumsily sat down on the edge of the dock and put on his flippers. He spit in his mask, swirled it, put the regulator in his mouth and rolled forward into the warm, eighty degree water. He splashed under and watched his air bubbles amid the shafts of sunlight on the surface. He could feel

water seeping into his suit, cooling him off. It was fine. It felt good again to be in the water. He breathed in through the regulator and exhaled. It all worked.

Mark was in the kayak. Trailing behind the kayak was a nylon rope and Troy and James grabbed a hold and Mark paddled. It took about fifteen minutes to get to the spot. The water under the surface was cloudy with particles of green algae. They could see down the rope through the green water about ten feet; ten foot visibility. Good enough.

"Ready?" said Troy.

"I am."

"Let's go." They turned on their dive lights, pushed the buttons on their inflated vests and the air hissed out and Troy descended under the water. James descended several feet but immediately floated back up. He tried releasing the air in his vest again but it was already empty. He couldn't descend. He needed more weight. "Damn," he thought, "Mistake # 2." Luckily, Troy surfaced shortly after and James told him he needed to go back to the dock. "Sorry about that."

"It's ok," Troy said. "See you in a bit. It's spooky down there.... dark." Troy filled his buoyancy vest and floated. He didn't want to be down there alone.

At the dock, James added six more pounds and that did the trick. He got up to Troy after Mark paddled him back out and they turned on their lights, and descended.

This time he sank down. He followed Troy down through that murky green slurry. After about 10 feet, James pinched his nose and pushed air out to equalize the pressure in his ears.

He'd need to do that every 10 feet or so. They were going down to seventy feet. At thirty feet, the water was getting darker, the sunlight being blocked out. Troy slowed down and James passed him, following the rope down, shining the light on it through the darkening deep water. The water was getting colder now and James noticed that the light only illuminated about five feet down the rope. He pinched his nose and equalized his ear pressure again and then rolled over onto his back and looked up and saw Troy about 10 feet above him following him down. James turned over to face bottom again; the water went from darker murky green to swirling particle black to pure black, black as ink. The line between the two was discernible. James descended into total darkness and the water got cold, very cold. Like ice water, probably fifty degrees. He became disoriented in the dark and then his ears hurt so he pinched his nose to equalize but he had no reference now as to how far down he was. He was free floating in the blackness, not knowing which direction was up or down. He heard his breath tightening, holding, with the exhaling of the bubbles as he continuing to descend. He was spooked by it and delayed pinching his nose because of that distraction and his ears hurt bad by the time he did equalize. He was overwhelmed and thought,

'Why the hell did I do this.' I know better.'

The dive light shined straight ahead and he saw nothing but black. The freezing water was still seeping into his suit. And then, he felt his fins touch mud on the bottom. He was down, seventy feet under, in cold, black water. He had expected to see swirling sediment if he shined the light on it but he saw nothing. Ahead of him nothing. He remembered to focus on breathing so that he wouldn't hold his breath but he knew that he was on the edge of panic. 'Slow it down' he thought And then he saw a light, Troy's light barely visible, not far off in the distance. It swung right and then left and then it disappeared. They weren't that far apart. James pushed off from the bottom to go towards Troy's light, but his head hit hard on something solid. It hurt. He pointed up with his light and a foot away was the thick, black limb of a sunken tree. He pushed off to the right and bumped into another limb hitting his shoulder. Panic filled his throat and his chest tightened. The fear came into him then. He swung around to back away and brushed up against more limbs, his jerking light showing flashes of a web of black branches. He spun to the right and he felt trapped within the branches. He pushed away but one of the branches hooked into his tank harness. He kicked hard in the dark but it held fast. He began hyperventilating, swung hard to break free but a branch in the dark caught his regulator and ripped it out of his mouth. Mistake #3. He reached with both hands trying to find it and couldn't. He tried to find his secondary regulator but the water was black and he was thick in the branches of trees; nothing was where it was supposed to be. He was at the edge now, he knew it. No more air.

Just as he was about to suck in water, he felt water swirling around him and he felt himself falling, like being sucked down a drain. And then he was free of the tree. He looked around in the blackness. When he settled, he was in a large, dark, water filled cavern. There was faint light, light enough to get his bearings. He still needed to breathe, so he did. He sucked in and the flow into his lungs was wet cold and thick like maple syrup. He floated and breathed, calm now. That was close he thought.

Off in the distance, he saw a faint light so he moved towards it. As he got close, he saw that it was the locomotive, the huge steel hulk resting on the side of the slope, the back of it partially sunken in the mud, large clumps of mud and algae hanging off the enormous steel wheels. A faint yellow light was shining in the cab. When he got closer, shadows of three people were there, standing in the cab where the engineer usually stood.

It was Melvin and Julie Ann Bumphrey and gap-toothed Elmer Thackry.

He thought they were looking at him, He smiled and waved once and they acknowledged him. James hesitated and then decided to go up to the surface to get his bearings and to check on Troy. He pushed up through the darkness and into the green water and soon he was seeing the sunlight at the

surface. He floated on his back, looking up, the warm water lapping against his cheeks while the sunshine warmed his face. On the edges of the blue sky, the wind was blowing the cottonwoods and the leaves made that ‘rushing water’ sound. It was a muffled sound, so peaceful.

He looked over towards the dock and there were people, about 5 of them, standing there. He could see Troy and Mark among them. They were looking at the water and then they reached down and struggled and pulled up a dead body in a wet suit. Four of them grabbed it and dragged it limp, up onto the dock. Two of them panted heavily from the exertion.

James just stared. It spooked him seeing that body. Spooked him because that body in the wet suit looked like his. He watched the men struggle to put it on a wheeled gurney and they pushed the body slowly up the path. He decided that he didn’t want to go over there, not just yet. He knew Troy and Mark would wait for him. He wanted to see the train again, one last time, and those people inside. James lowered himself down through the green water to the darkness again. The water swirled him down and there it was, the huge locomotive in the distance. The faint yellow light inside looked warm.

But when he got closer, he saw the three of them in the cab, all frozen, looking ahead, their faces white, grease-paint white, formed in grimaced agony, like masks. On Elmer's nose was an old, faded red, rubber clown nose, mushed in on one side. James moved closer and when he got near to the cab, with their frozen white faces, all three heads turned slowly in unison towards him. He froze, terrified.

And then all three faces broke into smiles.

Melvin Bumphrey then reached up and grabbed the handle on a hanging chain. He pulled down. James heard a train's whistle, far away and lonesome, deep in a dark valley. It sounded miles away.

In that black, watery darkness, James drifted slowly towards the faint light in the locomotive. Inside, the three figures stirred, waiting.

The waitress in Pine City, she had another dream that night. And it was different than before.



EXUVIA

KJRSTEN HOLT

“Are you happy, Oliver?” She asked the man sitting in front of her. They had been talking for what seemed like hours, the moon his only indication of time—he had initially come out for a smoke and found this beautiful creature swimming in the pond. He hadn’t recognized her, but blamed it on being with such a large tour group.

Her arms hung over the ledge of the pond, her fingertips just barely touching the man’s arm. He had goosebumps, the sudden closeness confusing to him. After all, he had a wife back in the tent they were spending the night in. Shouldn’t he be with her, making sure she’s safe and comfortable? But, no—she was with the rest of the group, sound asleep.

“I don’t know anymore.” He murmured, glancing up at her. Her bright, green eyes glowed in the moonlight, and his stomach did flips at the thought of her looking at him like that every night. Should he be having such feelings toward her?

“If you’re not happy, maybe you should make a change.” Something in the pond made a small splashing sound—probably a fish, something unimportant right now. After all, the beauty in front of him practically demanded his attention. “There’s always...other options.” She inched closer, and he shuddered at the ice-cold skin of her arm brushing against his.

“It’s not that easy, as much as I’d like to.” He chuckled, hesitant to make a move—she was small, fragile, her soft features almost begging to be touched and he was still trying to gather up the courage to look at her for longer than a few seconds. “She’s...she’s pregnant,” he glanced up at her again, but her face remained calm and comforting, “and...of course I want the baby.”

“Are you sure?” She asked with a smile. Her teeth were bright against the dark colors of the forest in the moonlight, and he hadn’t realized how crooked her nose was until now.

“I’ve always wanted a kid.” He smiled at the thought of a little one running around. They had struggled for years until one day he’d had enough—enough of the fights, sleeping on the couch, the name-calling. The day he was going to leave was the day she’d told him the news.

“What if she takes the baby from you?” Ariella asked in an aggressive tone, and this time he wasn’t afraid to look at her. The thought had never even crossed his mind, and it made his stomach jolt.

“I...” He stared at Ariella and her eyebrow rose.

Her soft, satin skin had turned harsh at her question—she looked worn out and old. Dark circles had appeared under her beautiful eyes, and her lips had grown thin. He blamed it on how tired he was, and how the moonlight was reflecting against the water.

“There’s always a possibility, isn’t there?” She asked, and she sounded almost eager.

“What’s the story behind this pond, anyway?” He asked, anxious to change subjects. The tour group he and his wife had come with had questioned it, too, but they didn’t get much of an answer from the guide. The water was black in daylight, and nobody had wanted to drink from it at first. The guide had promised this was the purest water in the area, helped himself to a handful and drank from it without a flinch. Looks can be deceiving, he promised, and everyone trusted him after that.

“It was carved by the gods.” Ariella murmured, leaning her head against her thin arms. “Wirnpa created the lakes around this area with the rains she made. She cursed them after a man had broken her heart by leaving her after promising a family, and he frequently came to drink from these ponds while they were together. She knew he’d come back, and when he did, he died a painful death. The water is this color as a reminder. The reflection in this pond is used as a mirror, swallowing men who have had thoughts of unfaithfulness, or those that break their promises to the ones that love them the most.” Oliver swallowed, and the woman in front of him laughed, her teeth crooked and sharp—had he not realized that before? Her laughter echoed off the rocks of the pond, “Oh, silly, it’s only a tale!”

“Are you sure?” Oliver asked, laughing nervously. A breeze blew past, and he shivered at how cold he suddenly was. He should be getting back, if his wife awoke, she’d be worried to find him missing.

“Are you leaving? So soon?” Ariella asked, and a pout formed on her lips as he stood. “Can I have one last thing from you, before you go?” As Oliver brushed himself off, he gave a sigh, looking down at Ariella. Another splash, though this time it was louder; small waves rippled out from behind Ariella.

“What is it?” She held out a hand, and her nails stuck out like birds talons’—she grabbed him by the shirt and yanked him down. He hit his knee against a rock and cursed, “What is your prob—”

“This will teach you to think about leaving your wife!” She pulled him under the water. As Oliver kicked and punched, Ariella easily dodged; she was laughing as he struggled to swim to the surface, the noise like nails on a chalkboard under the water. She wasn’t holding him, but he felt weighted to the bottom—the top of the pond was just out of reach, if he could stretch a little further...

As Oliver realized this would be his demise, he looked Ariella in the face one last time; her beautiful skin had turned wrinkled and saggy; her green eyes now dead and unblinking, shining silver against the black water. Her long hair wrapped around his arms like rotted seaweed, and before he passed out from lack of oxygen, he saw the shining scales of a fish tail, attached to her bottom half.



JASMINE CASTANEDA

PORTRAITURE

REJECTION

CARLYN CROUSE

December 8, 2018

I got my first rejection letter today—the first of many, I’m sure. I laughed it off, grabbed a beer, and began writing again. Acting as though it didn’t matter, I carelessly strung words together like popcorn. I was aware I would be rejected far more than accepted in this line of work, this art.

But this was the very first time.

I fooled myself for an entire day; for one whole day I was still unstoppable. My writing had no limits. Words tumbled endlessly from atop the waterfall escaping my mind. It poured directly down onto every white space on the page until the paper was a sea of letters. My hands became sore from clenching pens and pencils, anything to translate my mind onto paper. I wanted to paint what I saw when I closed my eyes, so others could live in the world I’ve created.

After a day passed, it finally hit me. I was rejected. My story was denied the right to speak. Its characters were denied the right to live, to breathe, to exist. It’s true, I did not give them names. I often do not name my characters. To me, they are more than a name.

They are me.

I am a lonely four-year-old girl wishing for a friend in a world wrought with greed and envy. I am a desperate lawyer seeking anything to help my case. I am a satisfied auctioneer, selling anything and everything to a town so ruthless and unforgiving, stopping only for a moment to offer a scrap of cloth to a young soul. In fact, I am that piece of embroidered cloth, the constellation of Virgo, the fiery maiden. I’m even the old writer who has finally died. Just like him, my collection of stories is, and will always be, my family.

But it’s my world, not yours. Why would you walk in another person’s mind? Why do we explore these worlds that others have created? Is it my benefit, or yours? Do you look through the window on a cold winter’s night and laugh at my jumbled words and flawed characters as you stand in the cold, dry air? Do you envy me?

I envy you.

What I wouldn't give to read my words through fresh eyes, to see through lenses that aren't governed by eagerness and apprehension. I dread the anticipation of an early Christmas morning only to wake up in January holding a new resolution that is already broken. If I could view my writing with the eyes of a stranger, I would see all the cracks in the molding, all the holes where the brisk air trickles in, all the skeletons in sealed closets, all the closets with no coats.

My characters have no protection from the cold. If only I could see this. Would I change it? Would you?

There is no shelter from rejection.



BEACHIN

MAGGIE DYSLIN

HELIUM

JOSHUA ACKERMAN

I awoke to an unlit morning, my mouth dry and thirsty for latex paint. The carmine-colored latex paint. The kind that can be chugged until my seclusion is extinct. It may take drowning in latex paint to be devoid of shame, and for that release, I am willing to drown.

I left those feelings at the door, left home to find myself in a former city of helium. I found myself catching the emotions of others, watching those emotions passively become my own. Actively wishing for a bit of helium myself to relieve my burning eyes, my stinging tongue.

The air of the city burnt my lungs, leaving my corpse spellbound. Pouring energy into the few surviving fragments doesn't matter when there's no breath to bring new life. The paint is gone, the helium has floated away, and all that remains are stucco, embers, unfamiliar sounds.

I break open a mailbox and read all the unburnt letters, I absorb all of their helium and turn my back on the dialogues I've interrupted. I turn my back on the cacophony of aliveness that I've sponged up to try to conjure up aliveness of my own. I want to generate my own helium again. I am ready to feel.

The stems of an old bouquet are scattered in the street. Those stems scream in soft yet shrill voices, awaiting their better halves. I collect all of the stiff, torpid stems I can find without sunlight. Even in their afterlife, these stems seem unexpectedly botanical, awaiting something.

I, too, am awaiting something. Where is the warm air for me to catch? Where is the stucco to build me a shelter? Where do the stems end and the reborn flowers begin? Where do the letters lead me? Unruffled by anxiety, I can feel the slightest helium float out of my nostrils, meandering over a new horizon.

A LITTLE BIT LONGER

HAWO JAMA

She's awake when I come downstairs. I didn't know it at first. I was heading to the kitchen when she pops her head up above the couch, and whispers, uncertainly, "Amano?" Her face is a mess of shadows, but I know it's her. I know it by the tangled afro she has standing straight up on her head. She's the only one I know who, at twen-ty-four, never attempts to tame it. I never tell her, but it makes her look kind of like a lightbulb.

"Just getting some water," I say in way of answering the question she hasn't yet asked. She nods and dips below my vision line once more. I need to say more. She does, too. The air is stilted with the burden of a conversation neither of us wants to have. Not yet, anyway. Not yet. I make my way to the kitchen. The refrigerator buzzes at one corner in the way appliances normally do at the dead of night, when there is no hu-man activity loud enough to drown it out. Placing my hands at both sides of the sink, I let the water run until it is just about cold enough to my liking, and yet, I don't reach for a cup. Instead, I watch it disappear down the drain. Water isn't enough. I need something stronger, but I don't drink and I don't smoke, so instead I fumble my way to the fridge and pull out a can of diet coke. It isn't until I'm back in the living room that I think to get Huda something too, but I see her hands are full, twisting a spoon into a half-melted pint of Ben and Jerrys.

"What are you doing up?" I ask, rolling the can between my hands. The question doesn't feel complete, and so, I add, "Trouble sleeping?"
She shakes her head, "Never went to sleep."
"Mm."

It's chocolate, the ice cream she's eating, chocolate with marshmallow fish and a pea-nut butter swirl. Normally, Huda is not one for complicated ice cream like this. That's what she calls it, complicated. As if ice cream could have layers – well, besides the lit-eral layers it has. Normally, she prefers single flavor ice cream, like vanilla or choco-late. I'm the one who likes the complex ice cream, always ready for the explosion of taste on my tongue as Huda crinkles her nose in disgust. It strikes me then how odd the whole scene is. Huda sitting in the living room alone, eating complex ice cream in the dark.

“Not really.”

“Oh.” The can is getting warm in my hands, bleeding beads of water onto my skin. “Okay.”

This is not our norm. Our norm is loud conversations, laughter breaking out of our bellies, cheeks hurting from smiling too wide. If this were any other day, I would poke fun at her for eating the complex ice cream and ask what was wrong. But there is no laughter tonight. We might as well be strangers, people that just met for the first time and had yet to make any sort of connection.

“I want to talk.” I say once the silence becomes deafening, but even my voice sounds quiet – too quiet. Everything is too quiet. She nods, encouraging me to continue. Her nod, that simple movement that leads to her rocking her head back and forth as if to bop along with a song only she can hear, is all that is needed for words to explode out of me. “You didn’t have to wait this long.” I say, recalling our earlier conversation. The one that took place shortly after breakfast, when she, somewhat awkwardly, called everyone to the living room.

“I know.”

“You waited too long. What are we supposed to do now?”

“I’m sorry.”

But her sorry sounds hollow. As if it’s rehearsed. As if my finding her here had been preplanned. Was she really here all night because she couldn’t sleep? Or did she wait, lying on the couch, hoping the footsteps she heard creaking down the stairs were mine and not someone else’s?

I don’t know what else to say.

No.

That’s a lie.

I do know.

The words lie on my tongue, dangerously. Dangerous because it opens us up to the after. Right now, we can continue pretending. It would be easier to. I look up and catch her eyes on me. Huda – she always had such beautiful eyes. Not quite oval and not quite circular. They are more like rectangles wilting right at the bend of her cheeks. It’s the first thing I remember noticing when we met as children. I was fascinated by eyes then – hating my own for some reason I can’t recall now – but I thought hers were so pretty. She was only five, in the hospital for maybe a few weeks when my mother ushered me in to greet her. I remember the adults were all talking and using words my six year-old mind could not comprehend.

The hospital room is a blur, composed in my memory of the countless hospital rooms I've visited her in over the years. I don't remember what I said or what we did. My mom says I asked her to play Go Fish, but I can't remember ever pulling out the cards and setting them against the bed like she says I did.

Huda drops her stare and continues to toy with her ice cream though it resembles a creamy soup more than the frozen confection it once was. She spins her spoon, making air bubbles pop against the awkward silence of the night. Only the ticking of her mother's grandfather clock one room over keeps us company.

"You should have told me sooner," I say, not at all unaware of the way my voice falters.

She nods to Ben and Jerry, eying the treat with such seriousness a part of me wants to laugh. It's so absurd. This whole thing is so fucking absurd.

"How long have you known?"

She hesitates, only for a moment, and then quietly answers. "A year."

A year? The scene from this morning unfurls before me. And I see us – the seven of us – her mother, brothers and sisters, and me, the childhood friend invited for these sort of meetings, all crunched together on the couch, barely awake. I had thought she was going to tell us she was getting married. That was the first thought that came to mind. She had been seeing a man from up north who smelled heavily of Axe Body Spray, but it was love. She told us so, so many times. But Axe Body Spray guy wasn't with us this morning. Was it then when I realized the news she had for us wasn't good?

"Huda," I call for her and she looks up from the gloopy remains of her ice cream. I want to be mad, but I can't be. Not at her. Even when we were kids, it was hard to stay mad at her. "You must've been so scared."

There is no assumption in my words. I know it. "This whole time—" Pause. What am I trying to say? "I wish you told us so you didn't have to do it by yourself."

"I wanted to. There were so many times I wanted to tell you," she starts, but her voice wavers and I can picture her in her apartment, the one on sixth with the homeless guy that sits at the corner, stringing random words into a melody. I can see her sitting on the couch, phone in hand as she stares down at my contact photo – I'm smiling there, aren't I? Mouth full of teeth and eyes with just a slight squint from the summer sun.

“Why didn’t you?” I ask.

“Because then it would have been real.”

“I would’ve helped.”

“I know.”

That morning, when she told us, when she said those words – dying, dead, months – no one knew how to respond. I suppose being the sick kid she was, in-and-out of hospitals so frequently, she could never stay in one school for long, maybe we always knew this was coming. Maybe that’s why no one said anything at first. We sat back and waited for someone to make a move. Finally, her mother stood up and enveloped Huda into a hug so tight, I could feel it. And my eyes welled up in response. Her brother stood next and then one-by-one, her siblings joined in, hugging her tightly. Someone started to cry and then we were all crying. I stayed sitting on the couch, occupying the awkward space of being the childhood friend who was close enough to be considered family but not quite family.

There is more I want to say to her now. A world of words sitting precariously on the tip of my tongue. What am I going to do without you? I want to ask her, but before I can say anything, Huda is standing up and asking, “Can we get some air?” Without waiting for a response, she heads for the door and I follow her, like I’ve done so many times throughout our shared childhood. I know what she’s doing. It’s what she does best. Avoiding. When she mentions a hill two blocks away, asking if I want to make the trek up there to catch the sunrise, I nod. Her health must be deteriorating quickly though, because it doesn’t take long for her to lose her breath. When we make it one block, she has to lean forward, hands on her knees, and ask for a moment.

“Maybe we should go back,” I suggest.

She shakes her head.

“Here–” I say, crouching beside her, “I’ll carry you.”

At this, she laughs. “Stop it. I can walk.” She whines. “I’m not dead yet.”

We make it another few steps before she asks to sit on the grass.

“We should have gotten your oxygen,” I say, looking back at the row of houses where her mother’s house sits. “I can go back and get it – it’ll just be a second.”

“This is why I didn’t tell you,” Huda says, her tone light as she breathes heavy. “Here–” she reaches out her arms to me. “If you still want to carry me–”

I don’t let her finish as I crouch down before her. Huda wraps her arms around me and together we stand. When we were kids, we would make this walk countless times, up the hill, and to the far back where

an old, rusted playground hid, untouched and decaying. There, we would share our girlhood secrets, crushes spilled between laughter and summers spent on swings that no longer swung.

Huda leans her head on to my shoulder. “I know I’m being selfish, but please let me be selfish a little bit longer.”

“You’re spoiled,” I tell her. “I spoil you.”

She laughs. “I know.”

I pull her closer to me, and I swear I can hear the uneven beat of her heart, struggling to keep her going. Her breathing is heavy, as if she’s just run a mile, and in the back of my mind I wonder how much time we really have left with her.

“Amano,” she says. “I know it’s burdensome, but please spoil me a little bit longer.”

BROKEN?

MAGGIE DYSLIN

I was as fearless as a knight.

I was flying like a bird in the sky.

I jumped off the couch, landing on all fours on the blue footstool. I don't bounce on it like I do on the couch. I can hear the old, fragile house shake.

"Margaret!" My grandpa yells from the kitchen. He must have heard me 'thump'. He rushes in as quick as his long legs can carry him. His wrinkled face is even more wrinkled, sort of annoyed-like, and he's looking at me as if he's about to send me to my room. Whoops. "Margaret, what did I tell you? Knock that off before you hurt yourself."

"Okay." I say, sitting back with an innocent look on my face like I do when I'm in trouble, and he goes back into the kitchen. I'm alone again in the 'dabbing-port', as everyone calls it. I'm not sure what it means, but nobody can see me in here, and I can do what I want. I turn around, facing the couch. I pounce, landing face first into the cushions. Nobody hears me this time. I turn again, but pause to watch what is playing on the TV. My favorite movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. Glinda was on-screen, so were Dorothy and Toto. They were arguing with the Wicked Witch, but Glinda had this calm look on her face. How could Glinda be so calm with something so ugly and green and mean in front of her?

Glinda was so pretty. I wanted a big, pink dress like hers, but instead it'd be blue. My mom's favorite color was blue, and so was mine.

The Wicked Witch vanished in a puff of smoke. I would have to remember to throw a bucket of water on the deck before I went to bed tonight, so she couldn't get me.

Once the Yellow-Brick-Road song was done, I got back on all fours, ready to jump back to the footstool. I could pretend I was one of those flying monkeys the Wicked Witch had.

Were they her friends? I didn't think I'd want to be friends with a Wicked Witch if I were a flying monkey.

I jumped from the couch, onto the footstool. It wobbled, and I fell. A searing pain went through my arm, hitting one of the legs as it fell back, and I fell forward.

I screamed.

I don't remember how long I screamed for, but it felt like it took a while for my grandparents to come rushing into the room. But they were old, and they didn't move as fast as my mom and dad did.

"God damn it, Maggie, I thought I told you to knock it off!" My grandpa was frustrated. He pushed his big glasses up his nose and rolled up the sleeves on his flannel shirt. My grandma leaned in for a closer look at my arm, her own arms behind her to keep out of the way. She smelled like the caramel candies she would give me all the time.

"Ow ow ow owowowowow!" I screamed again, louder this time, as my grandpa tried to touch my arm.

"I think it's broken." I heard my grandma say. Broken? Was it like the tinman when the flying monkeys dropped him? Or the Scarecrow when the stuffing fell out of him? How could I be broken? "Maggie, stop crying, here," She rushed into the kitchen. I heard the freezer open and close. What was she getting ice cream for? "Put this where it hurts." But, I couldn't move. Everything hurt. Put the ice cream where?

She put it on my arm.

The rest of the night they mollycoddled me. They gave me as much ice cream as I could fit in my belly. I had spoken with my mom and dad. They promised I would see them tomorrow, and we would go to the doctor then.

Would I be getting a new arm, like the scarecrow a brain, and the tinman a heart, and the cowardly lion some courage?

SPOOLS OF TIME

HAWO JAMA

Your grandpa and I married shortly after New Year's. Mombasa was not known for snow – being so close to the equator, but that night we bundled up as if we were. We'd just entered the reception hall when I saw her, standing to the side on her own. Her looks did not strike me as extraordinary, but the fact that I noticed at all was noteworthy. I knew her only loosely as the wife of one of your grandpa's workmates. She existed in that vaguely familiar way other men's wives often did.

Later, when we made our way to her, thanking her for her attendance, I noticed that she smelled like a seashell – like ocean water that has been filtered through cool air – and I know that sounds unpleasant, but you have to understand, on her, it was perfume. For the rest of the night I would catch her eyes on me, following me, and I found myself drifting closer to her, hoping to stay within her eye line.

She became my center of gravity, and I, her satellite.

We didn't need an excuse to be around one another. Both young housewives to busy fishermen, we said we were lonely, we needed friends, and we found that in each other.

In public, she was cold and unapproachable. The neighborhood wives whined when she wasn't around, "How are we supposed to get to know her if she never speaks?" And she didn't. Not to them. But in private? In private, she melted into a child, lazy and happy.

One night, her voice sprung from her throat in an excited tremor, "I think I was waiting for you." Her words cut quite suddenly. "I don't know if that makes sense – but I really think I was."

"Thank you for waiting," I said to her, taking her hand in my own.

She was trembling. I could feel it when she leaned her head onto my shoulder, squishing her cold nose into the side of my neck.

On those nights we slept in her marital bed, where I lied on her husband's ghost, I wanted to leave my scent behind. I was so young and stupid. I thought it romantic to leave some part of me that he could find. To prove, on some level, that I was real. To her, I was real.

We kept each other warm for the winter our husbands were gone. We nuzzled under blankets and

spoke in hushed tones. In there, we were invincible. Time stopped and we stopped with it. But I have to tell you, the world we lived in operated very differently from the one you're used to. We called them the morality police, though they had no official title. When people went missing at night, a caved-in door was our only proof they existed at all. And I hate to say it, but I never really cared. Because the ones that vanished were never the ones I knew. It never mattered until it was her who was taken and my whole world tilted.

I still don't know where they took her. Only that they did. It was on a night we didn't meet, and I'll always wonder if it was something I did that left her vulnerable to her husband's suspicions. One morning, the neighborhood wives stood peering at her house and spoke in loud bites.

"She was with a woman!"

"A woman? Who?"

"I heard they took her last night."

I wanted to ask if she cried. If she fought. Did she twist herself in their arms? Turn to stone so they couldn't lift her?

Did she ask for me?

She was gone a whole season, and without her, I stood off-balance. She was the one who grounded me, gave me purpose. When she returned that spring, she wasn't the same. How could she be? She was quiet and adrift. If I spoke, her eyes would glaze over, as if her mind passively wandered without her. Where I touched her, she flinched. She still asked me over some nights. When our husbands were gone, she asked me to wrap myself around her until she couldn't feel the cold anymore.

We never spoke about where she went, but I told her often that I loved her, and she, after some time, said, "You're always so good at saying the right things."

But she never said it back.

It was as if she was floating somewhere in the sky, and I could see her, clear as day, but she was too far for me to pull her back in.

One evening, I had my arms wrapped around her, feeling her chest expand with every intake of air when she suddenly wriggled loose. "Go back to him," she said. She was sitting up straight, looking down at me but her eyes held no recognition. "Your husband – go back to him. He must miss you." I shook my head, mouth opening in defiance when she cut in again.

"Tell him what he needs to hear." She hesitated. "You're good at that. Making people feel good."

"I never said anything just to make you feel good. I meant it. I always meant it."

I wanted to continue, to fight, but there was a finality to her words I didn't dare challenge. And I knew, even before she said it, I knew. We were done.

I went back to your grandpa and she went back to her husband.

It was all just a few months. Everything that happened to us occurred within the same span of time a baby learns to crawl, but it was everything to me. And, honestly, I thought I would be rid of her by now, but she never leaves. She exists in snippets. Memories bluntly cut from their context and renewed in the glow of nostalgia.

In the spools of time we wind, she finds her way back to the surface, again and again and again.

Shiloh Clamons graduated from Metro State in Human Services in 2008. She is a mother, an artist and a humanitarian worker. She finds joy by serving and fostering children and refugees through art, by creating art with and of those that have experienced, or are experiencing trauma. She has worked for twenty three years with high risk children with disabilities, displaced mothers, and refugees in America, Uganda, Europe, and the Middle East. The paper and ink, acrylic, and collage images in her Walking, Walking, Walking exhibition were shown at the Student Center over the summer of 2019. They reflect her impressions of the journey of refugees she worked for in Europe in 2017-2018. The image of ghost ships, one of her pieces, provoked comments such as: “It’s so beautiful...but so terrible.” “That is beautiful! But I don’t like those ships!”

Maggie Dyslin is a Minneapolis-based Creative Writing Major in her senior year at Metropolitan State University. She dabbles in Graphic Design, along with a little bit of Photography in her spare time. With a love for all things out of the ordinary, she is currently working on her first Young Adult fantasy fiction novel, among many other smaller projects on the design side.

Carlyn Crouse is a fantasy, horror, and science fiction writer. She recently earned a degree in Creative Writing with a minor in Game Studies from Metropolitan State University. Her poetry and flash fiction can be found in Haute Dish and she works as a freelance gaming journalist with articles featured in The Metropolitan and Wowhead. In her spare time, she is an avid gamer, spending ample time in the world of Azeroth. She lives in fantasy, dreams reality, and can never quite distinguish the two.

Jazz Castañeda is a writer and event and portrait photographer based in Saint Paul, MN. She is a Junior in Metropolitan State University majoring in Creative Writing and minoring in Technical Writing. Jazz also has a published poetry ebook, If My Journey Could Speak, and is working on her manuscript for her second book. Other current pastimes include writing anime and comic fan fiction, getting sugar highs from cookies, and speaking to her mother over the phone for hours at a time.

Pam Braun graduated from Metropolitan State University in 2001 with a BA in Liberal Arts. Pam, who grew up in Minnesota, reaches fifty years of age this spring. She leads a contemplative life dedicated to holistic healing, especially through the disciplines of eating a healthy food diet (mostly organic foods), creative self-expression and the practice of modern shamanism.

Kjrsten Holt is a Senior at Metro State University. She will graduate in December 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Art. In Spring 2020, Kjrsten will start her study in Metro State’s Master of Science program in Technical Communication. She currently teaches graphic design and web design at Minneapolis College.

Mai Nyua Lee graduated at end of 2019 before the quarantine happened. She hasn’t had a chance to write like she did when she was in school. It’s not because she graduated, but because she gained a full-time position on campus with University Advancement, and is balancing home life for the moment. When she does have a spare moment to write, she writes in the late hours, jotting down the growing pains of motherhood, love, and life itself. She resides with her family in Saint Paul.

Rebekah Akervik (Pahr) is a Metro State Alumni who graduated in 2012 and majored in Technical Communication with a minor in Fine Arts. She is currently working for Westinghouse and lives in St. Paul with her husband. Rebekah grew up in the Twin Cities and enjoys writing pieces that explores themes of childhood and nature. She also enjoys reading and exploring St. Paul.

Andrew LaBarre, 40yo, thoroughly enjoys being a son, brother, employee, student, and friend. It is only by the Grace of God he is anything.

Taylor Sorensen is a Psychology and Creative Writing double major because she refuses to choose between two passions; her dream is to one day be a clinical sexologist and author. When she isn't writing poetry or drafting her first novel, Taylor can be found performing aerial acrobatics, working on creative projects, or hiking with her husband.

Nathaniel Wilde is a full time professional working in pensions, and a full time father working at home (and anywhere his son goes.) He is studying Applied Mathematics and enjoys foreign languages, poetry and long walks with his partner (who is also his best friend).

Hawo Jama is currently (and almost done!) pursuing a Creative Writing B.A. with a minor in Technical Communication at Metro State. In her limited free time, she enjoys writing stories she'll never finish, re-reading books she's read a million times, binge watching Brooklyn 99, and enjoying any time she can hanging out with her cats (and friends, and family, if she can squeeze them in).

Emilie Peck is a creative Writing major at Metro State, graduated on December 2019. She earned her AA at Minnesota College in December of 2017, at which point she transferred to metro. When she's not writing, tutoring with TRIO, or snapping pictures, she's running, reading, and practicing other verbs that may or may not begin with the letter R.

Gina Torres is currently pursuing a degree in Computer Science at Metro State. She is passionate about technology, innovation, art, and nature. Her home country is Colombia, a place with the best coffee in the world and home of many Nobel prizes in Literature. Gina is the current Managing Editor of Haute Dish, an incredible magazine that has allowed her to interact with the American Culture and grow professionally as a Digital Media Communicator.

David Zierott is graduating in the Spring of 2020 in the College of Individualized Studies at Metro State with a focus on writing. Writing a collection of short stories is a primary goal and completing his degree has jump started the process. The "Breath is Life..." story in this collection was inspired by a true event, a spooky scuba dive in a MN lake aptly named Devil's Lake. Two days after the dive, on the first night of a short fiction writing class here, he told a classmate the story about the dive. The classmate said, "There's a good story in there. All you need to do is find it." The short story included here is the result of that search.

Josh Ackerman is a poet based in San Francisco. Twitter: @JoshuaAckerman

HAUTE DISH

is published two times a year, spring and fall semesters, and is dedicated to showcasing the literary and artistic talents of students, staff, and alumni of Metropolitan State University.

CATEGORIES

poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, memoir/personal essay, visual art (photography, illustration, Focus on Metro), and digital storytelling.

WHO MAY SUBMIT?

current students, staff, faculty, and alumni of Metropolitan State University are all welcome to submit their work for both the Fall and Spring issues.

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