Crosscurrents: Spring 2022

Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound

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About the Cover Artist

My art practice is deeply personal; it’s about capturing moments in time and being able to reflect on the ways that I have experienced consciousness. When I look back at art I’ve made in the past, I’m able to connect with my past self and inform the ways that I will exist in the future. I desire to be able to communicate through my art and engage with those who can also gain something from seeing and reflecting in the pieces that I create. Miraculously, all of our collective experiences have led us to this distinct point in time. I hope you enjoy <3!!

- Mia Holbert
@wormia @sillysexyart

Founded in 1958, Crosscurrents is a student-run magazine dedicated to promoting the visual and literary art of the University of Puget Sound community. We at Crosscurrents are proud to uplift the creative work that we publish and to sustain a journal that reflects the voices and vision of our student body. Committed to free expression and the honest exchange of ideas, Crosscurrents strives to represent the breadth and originality of the best writing and art produced by Puget Sound students.

We hope that Crosscurrents not only provides a platform for the artistic truths within, but that it also opens a doorway to further opportunities in art and literature. Most of all, we are committed to the principle that the voices of the Puget Sound creative community need to be heard, and we look forward to hearing yours.
Editor’s Note

When the humidity of a Washington summer and the anxiety of finals are just beginning to creep through the drafty windows of Wyatt Hall, the editorial staff of Crosscurrents abdicates to our cave of a Media Room to make the spring layout. Suddenly the room becomes a patchy black and white art film - everyone dons suits and ties, removing their typewriters from sleek briefcases, shaking martinis, and double-checking that their fedoras or berets sit at a rakish enough angle. The room becomes hazy from the incessant chain-smoking of French cigarettes, and the nibs of old pens spill alongside too-strong coffee. Or maybe that’s just how I remember it.

What actually happens is we disappear in a flurry of printouts and notes, moving art to pair with poems and sighing at the loss of every piece that didn’t make it in. Then we notice how empty the Media Room is. Two vacant offices watch us as we work: one for Wetlands and one for Elements, both tremendous campus publications. While we love the work we do at Crosscurrents, and we hope you all do too, we are nothing without the artistic community around us. This includes our sibling publications, whose work is just as important as ours, even if it has been halted by the pandemic. Fortunately, I hear they will both be sharing the Media Room with us in the fall, providing an avenue for more students to use their voices in the medium of their choice. Until then, we have a lot of those voices in these pages. Without further ado, here is the wonderful cacophony of Crosscurrents.

Cheers,

[Signature]

[Signature]
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Hawa on Delaney
Tim Hogan
Film Photography
Memory of a Car Fire
Andrew Benoit

I remember running towards that
car fire. Following the smoke,
a cry for forgetting
what we remember by reference
Like waking up. Like eating. Like
Breathing. The smoke soothes my lungs.
It’s a side effect, but I don’t believe in anterior causes
pretending I’m satisfied with sequels
That blur the line between Digital and Despair
I hate the ego, aware of the irony but furious
I can’t write a poem without, I
am running my finger over my tattoo I wonder
If the stars are lonely now we can’t see them?
Can you ever touch the lump in your throat?
Would she still smile how I remember if she had lived
past 8th grade?
I can’t compete with questions or
answers couched in metaphor like a dog running into traffic
like the man crying over a burnt-out shell of a Toyota
Blaming the medicine. Only given because
My parents loved me. Blaming the system
Conveniently, like a friendly kiss on new years eve.
More metaphors, they must reveal
I’m scared. Reciting Shakespeare
Wishing for a more beautiful ennui
That I may drink from culture
I remember wrong. I wasn’t following
I remember chasing
All drawings in the book are ballpoint pen, black and red ink, colored pencil, and graphite on watercolor paper. The images in the table of contents and back cover are from an old encyclopedia.
Lee Beaton was only six years old when she saw her first each-uisge. Despite Alasdair’s warnings, she went down to the beach by herself and spent the afternoon playing on the pebbled shoreline. She liked exploring the caves that were only accessible during low-tide, poking at the sea jellies caught in the pools and the frilled anemones that dotted the sharp rocks while her footsteps echoed off the wet, chalk-white walls. She collected clumps of seaweed, tossing the fragrant, wet masses into her basket and pretending she was one of the fishwives who patrolled the beach looking for any scrap of sustenance the island was willing to give up.

Black clouds rolled in from the far-off mainland, turning the day into night much quicker than the sun would have liked. Lee crept from the cave and stood upon the rocks, her grubby, damp fingers balled up into fists as if that would keep them warm. They smelled of dirt and cold and soft, ocean things. She turned her back to the waves, arms clasped to her middle against the autumn wind, and started towards the path worn in the cliffside. A soft huff of breath made her whirl back around.

A dark shape slipped from the sea. The each-uisge’s head rose above the white water of the breakers first, salt spray snorting from its slitted nostrils. The clatter of hooves against rock squeezed the breath from Lee’s chest, and she stood frozen. Alasdair had told her never to run from an each-uisge; they liked nothing more than to chase their prey, and yet it seemed impossible to simply stand here watching.
Lee’s little fingernails dug into her palms. The each-uisge was a thing of beauty and horror, its narrow face carved from ebony. It had a strange, swaying way of walking over the rocks as if it were still snaking through deep water. Its eyes were fixed on her, and its wide mouth cracked in a terrible smile. Lee could smell the creature, the stench of copper blood and rotting meat mixing with the raw saltwater smell of the ocean. A clucking growl-hiss shuddered through the air between them, and Lee’s foot moved back one small step. At the movement, the water-horse’s sharp ears perked with interest, and Lee froze, her chest tight with terror. The water-horse grinned at her, its mane dripping saltwater onto the pebbles with a low pat pat. It lifted a hoof, but a warbling cry from the water caught its attention.

A gray-speckled seal bobbed in the waves, its black plum eyes fixed on Lee. It gave another of its strident calls, and the water-horse surged towards it. With the low sloop of water closing over a fat body, the seal was gone, and the each-uisge plunged into the sea after it. Lee ran up the cliff face, her fingers seizing a purchase on the scraggly heather and gorse bushes that lined the trail. She didn’t slow until she reached the cottage.

After she had calmed enough to tell her story, Alasdair made her a cup of tea. They sat together on the stone floor before the hearth. He took one of his great leather-bound books down from the shelf, its spine creaking and its heavy pages going shick-hish as his big hands turned past charcoal sketches of pùca and caointeach. He stopped on a page dominated by an each-uiisge. Lee eyed the serpentine arch of the creature’s neck, the sharp points of its teeth. Alasdair’s spidery cursive took up the rest of the available space, and her eyes lingered over the words.

“You must promise me something.” Alasdair fixed her
with his gray eyes.
“What?”
“Never turn your back on the sea again.”

’S mairg san tìr seo

The frantic knocking came fast and heavy on Lee’s door. She had fallen asleep at her desk, slumped over ink-smudged papers and jars of herbs, and she jerked awake with a clatter of glass vials. Aonghus had not moved from his place sprawled by the fire, his long hound’s tail thumping the stone floor, and Lee relaxed. If her visitor had been faerie, Aonghus would have leapt up with bristling hackles and bared teeth.

“Torran Cather?” Lee rubbed at one eye, her body slouched against the open door. “What are you doing here?”

“Lee, ye hae to come down to the beach.” Torran was breathing hard, his sweater soaked with rain. He smelled like the sea.

“What’s wrong?”
“I...it’s...just come. Please.”

Torran warmed himself by the fire while Lee dressed and strapped her sword across her back. The hag stone she had hung above Murphy’s stall swung in the wind, and the horse whickered a question. Lee swung onto his broad back and Torran got up behind her, one hand crushing his cap flat to his dark hair.

“Is it an each-uisge?” Lee asked. Faerie things always made Torran nervous, but few creatures could unsettle him more than the beasts that had carried his father into the sea. The fingers of his free hand curled around the edge of the

*  Dogs are not fooled as easily as people.
saddle. He didn’t look at Lee.

“I cannae say,” he finally mumbled. “We...we couldnae tell.”

A storm was coming. Fog muffled the cries of the gulls and gannets, and Lee felt as if the gray-white world were pressing in against her, thick in her lungs and heavy on her skin. She left Torran holding Murphy up on the bluff while she strode down to the black rocks of the beach. The salt-scored breeze yanked her hair from its plait and lashed it across her cheeks as if trying to draw blood. The sea was as hungry as the water-horses.

A misshapen form lay just out of reach of the waves, fishermen clustered beside it. They were a solid wall of cold-cracked hands and hard eyes narrowed in a permanent squint, and for a moment, Lee thought they would not part for her. They stared at her with their sharp faces, but Mr. Buchanan cleared his throat and they moved aside. Someone had draped a blood-spotted white sail over the body. Seabirds shrieked overhead, drawn by the promise of carrion. The fog rendered them invisible and eerie, disembodied spirits hungry for flesh and souls, and dread snaked through Lee’s stomach. When she pulled the sail back to study the body, many of the fishermen turned away. They were used to offal and blood, but they couldn’t look at this thing that used to be one of them. It was little more than a torso, the limbs and head torn away and the stomach ripped open. Entrails spilled out into the breakers.

“It was a water-horse,” she announced. The lungs and heart were missing, but the liver was intact.

* None of the each-uisge’s victims have had the time and forethought to ask why the creatures always leave their livers bobbing at the surface.
She tipped the body to look at its back. A scratchy tattoo of a selkie woman took up one shoulder blade, and Mr. Buchanan swore and pressed his hand to his mouth.

"Hamish, go on to the Cargill house and tell Iain’s mother we found him."

"Have your boys stay out of the water until this storm is finished. More each-uisge will come ashore before it’s over,” Lee warned.

“Aye, I will.” Mr. Buchanan heaved a great sigh. His eyes held the wisdom and weariness that came from fifty long years fishing the waters of Eilean Sìth. “Thank you, Miss Beaton.”

Lee volunteered Murphy to carry the rest of Hamish to the Cargill house. She rode behind the sail-wrapped form, her thoughts dark. Alasdair had been gone seven years, and each autumn, the each-uisge were getting worse. What was she supposed to do without someone to help her? She could not fight these strange and terrible creatures all alone.

‘G ithe dhaoine ’n riochd a bhìdh

The cries of the panicked seals drew Lee from the main road to the cliffs overlooking the sea. She pulled Murphy to a halt at the edge of the cliff and stared down at the beach. The dark heads of the seals bobbed close to shore, and one left the pod to drag her heavy, gleaming body through the white breakers. Were they fleeing something in the water?

A man lay face down on the beach, his arms outstretched as if he’d been clawing through the rocks, and Lee hissed

*Sìth: Gàidhlig for peace and Gàidhlig for faerie. Mainlanders call this place the Island of Peace, but the locals know better. Now, so do you.*
a low curse full of deep feeling. She had already lost four fishermen to the each-uisge, and now here was her fifth. She nudged Murphy down onto the beach. The seals stared at her with their round eyes as the horse plodded over the rocks. They had such intelligence in their faces. Were they only animals, or had a pod of selkies gathered to mourn the dead man?

A seal lay beside him. His wife, saying goodbye before she went home to the sea? The seal’s wet nose prodded the man’s side. His hand twitched, his head moving as if he were trying to lift it. The seals sent up another eerie alarm, and Lee turned in her saddle to watch the shifting waves. The seals fled moments before the sinuous form of an each-uisge rose from the water.

The abrupt silence warred with the pounding drumbeat of Lee’s heart. Her fingers tightened on Murphy’s wet reins. This water-horse was one of the biggest Lee had ever seen, white except for a massive, crescent-shaped scar that pocked its barrel-shaped belly. Its keen eyes were fixed on the man, eager for easy prey. The creature curled back its lips to scent the blood in the air. A pleased sort of clucking chuckle rattled from its deep chest, and the sound sent frissons of terror down Lee’s spine.

Lee drew her sword, whispered a prayer, and sent Murphy careening forward. Aonghus snapped a warning to the water-horse, and his courage kindled fierce pride in Lee’s chest. The faerie snorted, surprised, prancing back a few steps. Aonghus worried at the creature, snapping at its hooves and snarling, trying to drive it back into the water.

* The seal-women are an each-uisge’s favorite meal and an island man’s favorite wife. Both situations end in the women being swallowed whole.
Murphy trembled beneath Lee. He was brave, but he had a land horse’s fear of the each-uisge. The creature lunged towards the prone man, and Lee had to slide from Murphy’s back and rush to meet it. She raised her sword and set her feet with a brave shout, and Aonghus dashed to her side with bristling hackles. The water-horse studied her face, and the cunning in its cruel eyes stole her breath. This is what the sea herself would look like if she had a face.

The water-horse reared. Lee jumped to the left, Aonghus to the right. He snapped at the each-uisge’s flank. It darted away from him, and Lee’s sword cut a wide swath through the air. Together, they drove the beast between them, forcing it back to the seething sea little by little. As soon as the dark waves closed over its pointed ears, Lee ran to the man. The each-uisge would return, and she did not have time to bury her face in Aonghus’s fur and thank him for his bravery.

Blood had pooled on the rocks. The man’s pale feet were bare and his hair lay in curling tangles against the nape of his neck. He wasn’t wearing his kilt properly; he had only knotted the length of tartan cloth clumsily around his waist. Aonghus came up to sniff at the man’s outstretched hand, and when the hound growled, Lee turned suspicious eyes on the man.

She nudged him with her boot. His sandy hair was wet, his clothes and skin dry. She steeled herself, gave Aonghus a warning look, and used a quick hand to shove the man over onto his back. He was heavy, thick with muscle, and either her grunt of effort or the impact against the rocks roused him. Lee darted backwards with her sword raised, but the man did not wake. His eyelashes were long and red. He murmured something soft in Gàidhlig, moaning, and lifted a blood-soaked palm to the knife wound in his stomach. The Cather family crest had been branded across his ribcage,
and Lee stared at the ugly scar with dread in her heart. When Torran Cather had been only a young boy, his father had stolen an each-uisge from the sea. After seven years of pulling a plow, the water-horse escaped back to his mother and took Roger Cather with him, the man stuck fast to its back by the creature’s magic. Roger’s liver washed ashore the following day.

“What are you doing on my island?” Lee murmured. It was rare to see an each-uisge in human form, and the edges of his wound were blistered as if he had been cut with something made of iron. Who had he met on the island, and why had he been so far from the sea?

Lee’s soft voice woke him. His brow furrowed with pain, and his fine-boned hand came up to clutch at the silver chain at his throat. When he realized a human stood over him, his eyes went wide with fear. He could not look away from the polished steel of her sword.

“What are you doing here, each-uisge?”

“Please,” he rasped. The island’s low brogue softened the rough burr of his voice. He looked up at Lee with a terror she recognized. She had felt it as a little girl, staring into the dark face of an each-uisge.

His eyes fell closed, his fingers going slack on his necklace. She kept the point of her sword nestled against the hollow of his throat as she unfastened the chain. He did not wake, but as the chain settled against Lee’s collarbones, a peculiar feeling ran through her. She could not leave him here. His kind would come from the heaving sea and eat him in pieces, and the blood on the beach would weigh on her just as much as it did when it belonged to her fishermen.

* It’s a little like lying against another person and feeling their heartbeat against your shoulder blades.
It took Lee two tries to get Murphy to come to her. She took his reins in her hands and studied the beautiful face of the dying water-horse. Murphy stood shivering as Lee hauled the heavy body of the faerie across his back. With a single backwards glance at the waves, Lee began the trek up the cliff face, her heart heavy and uncertain in her chest.

She took something from the sea, and now the sea would take something from her.
and when we will be in our 30s and a little bit tired, when our wallets won’t be empty and your kisses would be hasty as we run out the door, when the stiffness of your shoulders would stay like the love in our 20s, i would pour you tea before we leave on the roads or maybe to classrooms or cubicles which would noisy and rushed, i would love to sit on the counter in our kitchen on a sunday morning when you do the dishes while i nag about how the newest movie we saw was crap, i would love to kiss you under the sheets at 11 on a friday night and do the taxes next morning on our saturday brunch, i want to love you like life, everyday and every moment, i want to love you like you being a part of my every little concern and bigger futures of mine, i want to love you like everything and nothing, i want to love you like blushing because a coworker asked who my lover is because of the new earrings i wear, i want to love you like i don’t really know, i want to love you unexpectedly, i want to love you like conversations about what if we met like kids or maybe like musicians, i want to love you like taking your last name because it’s the same length as mine.
White Perfection
Chloe Pargmann

I want perfection sans whiteness.
yet how can I be perfect in this white world
how come they get everything
and when I get a moment of peace
now too much power
to wish and wish yet all i can ask for
is a clean slate with no hierarchy
but how clean of a slate can it get
how hard is it to cleanse whitewashing
nothing will be clean enough to erase this damage
no amount of scrubbing can undo the bleaching stains
in the future you can be perfect
if you give yourself to the colorless
but at what cost is to give yourself to them
to give away your glory
why is paleness the ideal
there is so much brightness in the world
that brilliance and glow is indescribable
not dark and dirty as they like to say
with such beauty, grace and dignity
much more than they could ever have
the radiance of our presence creates such love
people lust for such glimmer but never fully love it
i wish for perfection but will never achieve it
all i can have is quintessential love for me
What strikes me about this powerful poem is the way the author uses language to convey a sense of instability. For example, to whom is the poem being addressed? Sometimes the speaker makes declarative statements—presumably to all readers—and at other times the poem asks questions like, “why is paleness the ideal,” a question that seems less interested in who is listening, or an answer, and more interested in the question itself. Occasionally the speaker appears to be talking to themself (“how can I be perfect in this white world”), but even the speaker shifts from “I” to “we” with an implied they being invoked throughout the poem. The effect of these shifts in speaker and audience is a sense that the narrator is processing their subject matter as well as their position as a speaker—that the speaker is unsettled by the topic.

This sense that the poem’s narrator is unsettled is furthered by shifts in capitalization. The first line begins with a capital “I” in a complete sentence conveying confidence and surety. “I want perfection sans whiteness” the speaker says. But quickly the speaker becomes a lowercase “i,” the sense of self made smaller as we progress through the poem. And the poem begins shedding its punctuation and certainty, opting instead for a narrative without periods and question marks, as well as fragmented thoughts and jarring line breaks. For example, the lines “and when I get a moment of peace / now too much power” pushes us forward through the speaker’s thoughts as if we
are in a stream-of-consciousness or rant.

The stable moment in the poem is its first line. That line is also notable for containing the word sans, the only word in the poem that is not contemporary English. It is interesting that in a poem about racism, the one word that isn’t like the others is a word that means “without or dispossessed,” a word which has resisted naturalization from its linguistic origins.

I felt unsettled as I read “White Perfection.” The poem engages language brilliantly, demonstrating how white supremacy feels to one who is not white. Even when we get to that last line about self-love, we can’t shake the turbulence caused by the unconventional language up above. By the end, we know that the speaker’s self-love comes at a high price.
sweet heart
Anabel Richard
Ink on Paper
Forgive Me
Katerina Wearn

For you, I would lose my sight,
If only to hear your voice.
And if only I could see you,
I would have no need of sound.
But I have neither. Only a photograph,
And window fogged memories
That cut,
Like ice, into my life.

I remember
Teaching you to speak,
To walk,
To eat,
To breathe.

I remember
The hole in your neck
In your head
In my heart
In our lives.

And I wished you would say something.
Because when I saw those deep hollow eyes,
I feared a hollowed mind.
Somewhere distance,
That my voice could not reach.
To you, in those days,
Who was I?
Surely not a daughter–
A father would remember her face.

I would ask you for advice,
But you never did–
Never could answer.
I know that,
And I thought I could forgive you,
   But now,
I am sodden with rage.

Just because you did–
   Should I suffer too?
I should be blooming,
But I am wedged within concrete.
These slabs of past
Restrain me.

And now I’m counting the days.

For each holiday and
Each birthday I wonder
Will I grow older than you?
Will I see more of the world
   Than you
Ever could?

And will you ever
   Forgive me
   If I do?
Dakota Red Teapot – Igneous

Nuka over Cobalt Blue

Meigan Basile

Stonework

Dakota Red Teapot – Igneous

Nuka over Cobalt Blue

Meigan Basile

Stonework
Meigan Basile is graduating this semester with her degree in International Political Economy (IPE) and a minor in Global Development Studies (GDS). She is poised to enter an adult life and career that addresses the most severe challenges and policy questions that society and civilization have created, are constantly facing, and are responsible for addressing—she also made this masterful teapot. This year Meigan has found a love of clay and revealed her remarkable talent in the ceramics studio here at University of Puget Sound.

We talk all the time about the virtue of this creative space on campus. Meigan has told me that in IPE and GDS every question is about a current or looming crisis, how to keep the world from falling apart, how to create a better, more sustainable, more equitable civilization and that being unsure or wrong means people suffer in poverty. Ceramics provides for her a place to explore more casual curiosities, to try things on a whim, and to learn from unplanned results and failed attempts in a supportive and safe space. She has taken to it with remarkable skill and passion and through the consistent presence with that process this year has made this remarkable piece of art along with many others—she has also completed her thesis addressing domestic food insecurity.
This teapot is about the pursuit of beauty in the formal balance of a vessel, spout, handle, lid. It is about the joy of opening the kiln to see how the glazes move and colors interact. It is about the small personal accomplishment of controlling the flow of water as the finished pot tips forward, the creative energy and passion for making, the rest and recuperation that an art studio space can provide an academic community.
First Communion
Sara Orozco

Sepia photographs of you
In that starchy white dress, bound in
Thick woven binders water damaged
After years abandoned in a Californian crawlspace

In third grade you spilled syrup
On your freshly ironed communion dress,
A big brown sticky stain embedded itself
Into the pure cotton fibers

In between sobs you told your mother
And she must’ve yelled, she must’ve
spanked, shook a finger,
Before she made you take it off

In that feverish, urgent way
Mothers work on something
When pressed for time, she exorcised
That brown maple stain

And I can’t see a trace of it in the photo.
There were times when I spilled, kicked,
Rubbed, ran, tore, tripped, split,
When I came home my clothes were in tatters.
Other girls asked me if I was scared
To go home, show you the ruins
Face your wrath, impending doom
I didn’t know what that meant

I made my stains and plenty more without second thought.
You never told me how hard you had to work to get them out.
Europe Collage  Darby Mulligan  Found Object Collage
A Jarring Realization
Gabrielle Jett

I feel like
I’m trapped inside
of a jar

a pinhole poked
in its lid
sounds are muffled
oxygen seeps in

I’m disconnected from
all that’s relative

I don’t go
through the motions
I hunker down,
sit in them,
ruminante and live
life in them
No, in one
a singular one
I stay resigned
to this motion
to this stillness
to this notion:

I am detached
by some glass
and not by
my own doing
A rebuttle,  
A REBELLION  
(if you will) (must be read aloud)  

Attack the pack, attack the arduous aardvark pack, apple jack  
Back the smack, bumblebee black  
    Bricka brack  
Cack a mack, cardiac attack, pussycat cookiecat, cookie no cap  
    Oh! A tack! The pack!  
Dummy rummy, this mummy don’t drummy  
Eat, sleep, repeat, beat, no meat. Earnest ear picker.  
Flicker my bicker™ fry my fries, flamey flame filet. Fish fly away.  
Gator Slater game player. Grainy grin rainy gin gamer.  
Hold up homie, homie got hacked. Ho ho Holes came out in 2003™  
Itching inklings in industry. Itinerary: don’t fall ill in imminent inner dinner.  
Jif pif. Just jipping jif off jumpy jelly-jammed jets.  
    PB&J smack!  
    Kling-on kipper, a real-life kisser. Kiss, krust, krimp, kut, kiln blown flicker.  
    Lick the lust lamp. A lavalust lamp losing lotta lemon-lime liquor.
Butterfly Girl
James Addicott

No saintly mission nor spirit of altruism led me to share a Monday afternoon with the Butterfly Girl. It was my shift, and she was bored. I came to the three-numbered room, donned gown and gloves, tucked my ziplocks of single-use craft supplies under my arm. As I gelled my hands with sanitizer, I saw the laminated sunset on her door. The sunset that means hospice. Brainstorming a craft activity to do with a blind girl was the easy part. But what do you say to a teenager with a sunset on her door?

I started with my name.

The first thing she asked me:
“Do you sing?”
I do. The second thing:
“Do you know any Taylor Swift songs?”
Unfortunately not.

Why waste time with small talk?

She allowed me to sing my indie tunes—so long as I stopped periodically to give her a turn. As the Butterfly Girl sang, I could feel in real-time that she was building up the sound of her voice in my long-term memory, watering a great tree that would grow to out live me. And she never even lifted her head from the pillow. What power in a song with the strength of a quarter of a lung.
When we ran out of words to songs we could recall I pulled out the ziplocks of Halloween-themed pipe cleaners. “These ones are black and orange,” I said as I placed them in her hands. “Mine are black and green.” I looked at her fingers—not her eyes—as we talked and worked at our pipe cleaners. Somehow she could tell when people looked into her eyes and she didn’t like it. The shapes of our favorite animals slowly emerged in our hands as the real sun was setting outside her window.

To all those who tell me they could never work with the dying,—“It’s just too depressing”—I don’t understand you. I have a black and orange butterfly above my desk, and I can still hear the Butterfly Girl singing.
In the Vein of the Rainforest
Fletcher Crone
Digital Photography   4000 x 6000
Testimony
Sabine

i. Spread the bread and butter
Sing to me, I would call from my bed, white comforter to chin, a bare foot hanging off the edge, big toe wiggling.

When it’s springtime in the Rockies I’ll be coming home to you
Little darling of the mountains
with your bonny eyes so blue

She sang in her high voice, lifting me a few feet off the bed, floating in her words.

Once again I’ll say I love you
while the birds sing in the trees
Once again I’ll say I love you
in the Rockies far away

The door would shut, then open again a moment-- twenty minutes?-- later, letting the hallway light create a long white triangle, floor to wall to ceiling.

Spread the bread and butter

He’d say it first.

Spread the bread and butter

Then we’d say it together, as all corners and edges got tucked
in firmly, outlining my body. His hands would start at my eyebrows, brushing my eyelids, nose, chin, shoulders, legs, down to my toes. Repeat.

*Spread the bread and butter.*

*Spread the bread and butter.*

A kiss on the forehead. Door open or shut?

ii. Boys
The holders of the Priesthood line up, back to us, in front of the specifically folded white and lace table cloth, covering the table, creating lumps and craters out of the hidden trays underneath. One by one the brethren reach their hands up to take the trays offered to them, white plastic with a clear handle, and carry them down the aisles, starting off as a unit and dispersing between the rows in complete organization. When they get to your row, a right hand will be stretched out revealing slightly smushed hand-torn bite-sized pieces of fluffy white sandwich bread, which you will take a piece of gently, quickly placing it on your tongue, feeling the starchy sweet of whiteness dissolve and stick, and swallow as you reach up for the whole tray and hold it out to your dad or mom or brother. Then you must sit in silence. And you must think about Jesus. And you must be reverent. And fold your arms. Only for your Jesus thoughts to be interrupted by another right hand and delicate wrist with another tray, this time teeny tiny paper cups of tap water, all lined up. You must take one, down it like a shot, and wash away the sticky clumps of white on your tongue and throat. Once the sacrament is over, the members of the Priesthood are thanked and dismissed to their families, and you can take out your drawing pad and colored pencils. But you must stay quiet.
iii. Choose The Right

They told me of eternal life-- it’s real! If you memorize all thirteen, you can get a CTR ring!

One is simple, easy, true. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

Seven is my favorite. And Lily told me the tongue is the strongest muscle in the body. But what is revelation? We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth. And so forth?

I am the most proud of thirteen. It’s the longest one. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

iv. Worthy

In my bishop’s interview, I lied. Have you committed theft? No. Do you obey the law of chastity? Yes. Have you masturbated? No. Do you consider yourself worthy to enter the Lord’s house and participate in temple ordinances? Yes. I’m pretty sure we all lied.
In Loving Memory

Hannah Williams

The house had been elegant, once. A wrap-around porch encased the yellowed, shingled walls, and the trellis, now stripped of paint, boughed under the heavy perfume of wild roses. The house stood as it had for eighty-years, and Nora, transfixed before it, felt a familiar uneasiness settle into her body. She half expected the shadow of her seventeen-year-old self to slip out from the wideset doors and run for the road snaking behind her. But nothing stirred and Nora began to feel silly rocking back and forth on her heels, waiting for some invitation to bring her inside.

The door opened with surprising ease, and she surveyed the sudden emptiness in front of her. Dust drifted through the air, settling into the cracks and crevices of stained hardwood. Despite the heavy heat of September, a shiver ran along her skin. It was strange to see a house so skeletal. Abandoning any apathy, she wanders through, peeking into the vacant rooms, searching for some relic of the past. Any indication that this was, in fact, the house she was raised in. The house that, at just seventeen, she’d sworn she’d never return to.

All was still. No creaks of wood or haunted noises—nothing to suggest the life within these walls. Tentatively, Nora reaches one hand, tracing a crack in the faded wallpaper. She remembered the day she came home to Dee, covered in plaster, wrapping half the house in yellow, floral vinyl. Isn’t it pretty, baby? Why should only the garden get to see the flowers?

It was horrid. But she spent that afternoon padding after her mother, passing the adhesive back and forth obediently, smiling and nodding as her mother ruminated on just what else they should change about this house.
Nora drops her hand. It was a strange feeling, returning to this ghost story.

She finds herself standing in the frame of what had been her room. Light floods through the window, mingling with the lingering darkness that stains every corner. How many times had she sat with her forehead pressed against that window to study the reflection staring back at her? She’d always had a serious face, the kind that made adults comment on how mature she was for her age, and the other kids picked her last for their games. Despite her best efforts, Nora had shot up in height well before the other students at her school. With her willowy frame and shadowed eyes, she looked nothing like the glamorous photos of Dee scattered throughout the house. Dee wore her six-foot figure with austentatious confidence. Nora knew her mother was beautiful because, well, she’d call herself as much, but she knew it too in the lingering gazes that followed them when they’d leave the house. Men were greedy with their stares, and their wives were never too pleased when Dee would flash a smile back. Nora often thought of her mother as the sun when this would happen. Quick to burn and blinding.

Often, these were also the days that began with Dee pressing her nose to Nora’s until she’d awake. *Hey baby*, she’d say, eyes gleaming. *You and I, we’re gonna have an adventure today. How’s that sound?*

It wasn’t really a question. If it was, Nora would have still always said yes.

These were the days Dee burned brightest. She’d adorn herself in a full face of makeup, toss her blonde curls up and spin around the house in the prettiest dresses. Nora never knew where these accessories would come from, seeing as her own closet consisted of two pairs of working pants on rotation and a small collection of dresses passed down from
Robinsons’ eldest daughter (who had the unfortunate taste of a girl who chose to go to Catholic school). But every once in a while Dee would surprise her with something soft, vibrant, and perfectly fitted, and Nora would keep her suspicions to herself. Together they’d jump in the Civic and peel away from the house, kicking up dust and blasting whatever Dee fancied until they were hit by the hot stink of the city. They’d wander downtown, and Dee would fill her head with stories of her teens. They changed a little every time, but were told with such detail and conviction that Nora would hang onto every word, imagining a world far bigger than her own. They’d lick salt and grease from their fingers at the food court, split vanilla milkshakes and run around department stores they could not afford. Nora would allow herself to slip into character, happy to imagine this life for herself. A life where she made her mother laugh: a life where her belly was full and she felt just as pretty, just as grown, just as free as the woman whose hand clasped her own. But eventually the sun would dip below the buildings, and with it, the reverie would turn in on itself, shrivel, and fade with every mile back to the house. By the time they were turning down their road, Dee’s face would be hard and distant, framed in the soft shade of cigarette smoke, and Nora would remember once again of the life she did have. The one with a mother on good days, a stranger on others. A house of half-finished projects and empty cupboards and far too much space for just the two of them. Her mother would disappear into her room and Nora would stay seated in the car. Closing her eyes, she’d hold onto the tart scent of the city and smoke and perfume until finally, dulled by sleep, she too would enter the house, fall asleep, and dream of home.

Nora leaves the room, releasing a breath building painfully in her lungs. For a house completely vacant, it was host to far more memories than Nora was feeling ready to meet. They
were pouring into her with little consideration. She needed air. Finding her way to the porch, Nora sinks to the wood, burying her head in her hands. She’d resolved herself to this return the minute she’d learned of the planned demolition in a facebook thread, of all places. Some well-meaning relic of her past added her to the page making plans for a final estate sale just four day after the hospital had called to confirm Dee’s death at 11:07pm, August 12th, 2015. The lung cancer had remained untreated for too long. Lung cancer. She’d had no idea.

She did not consider returning for the funeral. She’d received notice of the public plot in which Dee was placed, of which she would not visit. Dee may have only recently been buried, but she had been dead for years.

But the house-- the house was the one thing that could bring her back.

She feels the warmth of the porch stretch beneath her. Pressing her back against the rail, she reaches out a tentative hand, feeling the coarse wood against her palm. Closing her eyes, she furrows her brow in concentration. All she hears is the pounding of her own heart, heavy against the chest. She waits.

Nora returns two days later with the back of her car full of paint cans and tarps shoved between tubs of plaster and caulk and the random assortment of tools mercifully forgotten in the shed beyond the house. When she’d arrived at the town council building the other morning, claiming her right to the estate, she’d been regarded with surprise, suspicion, and lots of local curiosity. Deed withstanding, she looks now at the project before her: shingles coaxed down by gravity, broken floorboards and the damp stink of mildew strong in her nose. It’s very old, they’d cautioned. *It would be safer to tear down.* But Nora was resolute. She has debts to pay, and if that involves
learning how to renovate a goddamn house? So be it.

It shows its age in dust and stale air. She opens cupboards, swings open every door to peer into the rooms with an intensity that surprises herself. Days pass of taking inventory, pulling up heavy planks of wood, heaving tools back and forth across each room. Nora takes her time, working methodically through the house- diligently and without rest. And with every day that passes, she urges the house to wake. Nora feels for it under her hands, which are in constant motion, fixing, prodding, building. She listens for the heart she knows as well as her own. The walls say nothing.

They’d met each other slowly. On the days Dee never left her bed, Nora would pad quietly from her room, arms clutched against the pervasive dampness that never seemed to leave the house. Her routine was steady: light the stove with a match, let the bitter taste of coffee trick her belly into being full. On one particularly dark December morning, the cup was waiting for her, steam curling into the air in welcome. On the nights Dee forgot to come home, Nora would wait obediently by the door. She knew better than to try and find her, knew too little not to care. Her head would eventually roll to her chest, her tired eyes growing heavy. She’d awake in the morning to find the door safely bolted, curtains drawn to keep the little warmth it could inside. But the house did not care for Dee the way it did for Nora. More than once, Nora returned from school to find Dee slumped against the porch, smoking a cigarette in angry puffs. *Locked me out again* she’d say through gritted teeth. Under Nora’s touch, the door would swing open, and Dee would storm inside.

Around Dee, the shadows lingered.

Nora has no method for reconstructing what has only ever been broken. She spends her days waxing the floor until it gleams, only to return to it dampened and stained the very
next morning. She strips away that awful wallpaper, but the primer she splashes on refuses to dry. No matter what she does, no matter what it fixed, the house remains as it had the day she returned. As the porch rail she had just managed to steady collapses beneath her, Nora throws herself down on the ground in frustration. She was kidding herself, pretending to know what she was doing here. After years spent forgetting this place, she has now scoured every inch. If she has to remember, at least she’ll do it on her own accord.

Nora wipes a trace of sweat from her brow, taking a break from the late September heat. Soon, the season will shift. It will begin with the slow creep of fog through the hills, blanketing the oaks, and slowly the days will struggle against the lingering nights. She remembers the seasons she spent watching the world cycle from this very spot on the porch. She’d loved the fog as a little girl. It made her think of fairies and ghost stories, old movies and the holidays. But the older Nora got, the more she noticed her mother slip away with summer.

Winters had always been the worst for Dee. When the nights were at their darkest, and the days struggled to make themselves known, Dee wouldn’t sleep. She’d simply sit in the darkness, her eyes fixed on some memory she chose not to share. Hours would pass without an exchange of words. She rarely left the house. The days of pink, city illusions were gone. Sometimes, Nora would still wake up to her mother rushing into her room, dressed in frills and singing of all the new places they would go just as soon as we can leave this town, baby. But the dresses looked different now, hanging sloppily off her thinning frame, and the makeup and jewelry all felt garish when the rest of their livelihood was left so unadorned. So Nora refused to play along, and Dee, defeated, faded more and more into her shadow. Nora
took to managing most things around the house, picking up extra shifts after school at the local diner. She was old enough then that her neighbors didn’t just think of her as *Dee’s girl*, but a woman unto herself. Nora reveled in the chance to be known. The extra money went straight to keeping the house above their heads, but she began to slip the extra tips into a tiny slit on the right corner of her mattress. On days that were particularly dark, she’d pull out the carefully folded bills, and dollar by dollar, count down the promise of a better life.

Nora sighs, rubbing away at the memory with the palms of her hands. She wonders, not for the first time, what Dee had been like in the years after she left. It was hard to imagine her living as long as she had on her own—not in this house. She hates to admit it, but there was always a part of Nora that ached for the woman Dee could have become. A much larger part of her, however, remembered the woman she had been. Those thoughts kept the grief at bay.

Nora glances down at the crumbling porch, evidence of a day’s work erased.

*All I want is to heal you.*

She was growing worried at the pervasive quiet of the house—surely by now it would have made itself known to her. But here it sat, quiet, like any other house. Something was wrong. She could feel it, a warning tracing her spine, fingernails on glass.

All at once, a single creak. The house shifts, as if sinking into itself, and Nora leaps to her feet, dashing inside. She follows the wall, listening, feeling, waiting.

She finds herself at the door to the only room she has yet to greet. Cold air sneaks under the floorboards, curling around her legs. The house creaks again, relentless.

Setting down the kit, Nora pushes the door ajar and steps gingerly into the garage. The air sits heavy.
The memory swallows her whole.

She’d awoken to the sound of every window exploding into a thousand shards. In a violent torrent, October winds rushed in to mix with a ragged, guttural howl filling the house, piercing Nora’s ears and sending sleep fleeing from her bones. Clutching at her head, Nora lept from her room, feeling the burn of glass crunch under her bare feet. Room by room, she searched for Dee, yelling out in her panic, Mama, mama. She found her in the garage, head slumped over the rusted steering wheel of the old Civic, engine still running. The noxious exhaust hit her nose in full force. Eyes watering, she peeled the car door open, pulling Dee across the seat and into the small cove of her chest. They stayed like that for a while: Nora rocking her mother back and forth, eyes fixed on the empty bottle. As fresh air flooded through the broken windows, the howl settled into a dull ache that pressed itself against her skull. She felt for the pulse she’d grown to know as her own, closing her eyes to focus on the concrete below her. There. A soft beat, distant and weak.

Dee sputtered awake, leaned over her daughter’s lap, and retched onto the floor.

They didn’t speak of that night again, her and Dee. Her mother spent the next day in bed. Nora swept up the ruined windows, dressed in layers of old sweaters in defense against the cold. She taped old newspapers over the empty frames. When Monday came, she’d call to have them replaced. A repair man would arrive, his large frame stuffed in blue overalls and a wild tangle of a beard barely hiding the bemusement on his face. Every window?, he’d ask. Nora would shrug. She’d pull a crumple of bills from the old sugar tin hidden in the pantry. He’d let out a quiet sigh- kid, this doesn’t even cover half of it.

Nora tastes the tears before she registers they had begun to
fall. She can smell the stink from all those years ago, burning the back of her throat. Through blurred vision she fights her way back into the house. It sits in its atmosphere of stubborn silence, and Nora meets it with a scream.

*Wake up, wake up, wake up.*

Nothing.

*I am trying to help you, I am trying to save you, let me fucking-*

She grabs hold of a hammer, lets it fall with her tears, and the guttural warning howl that had shook her awake all those years ago rips from her own chest as she pleads-

*Wake up, wake up, wake up.*

The hammer crashes into a wall, slicing through the frail sheet wood in a perfect arc. The house gasps. She heaves again. Her tears are rivers unleashed, spittle flies from her mouth and when the hammer grows heavy, she uses her hands instead. Splintered, the walls crumble down. The stink, which should have faded with the memory, continues to pool from the exposed frame. She freezes, feeling it burn in her throat, tasting of bile. Nausea twists the pit of her stomach. Holding her hand to cover her nose, she stares at the shadow of black mold suffocating the interior of the house.

With a momentous shudder, the house begins to breathe.

Nora allows herself to fall, her legs sinking beneath her. She was too late.

Nora crawls over to what’s left of the wall, the only part still sturdy while everything else falls apart. She breathes in deeply, and the walls breathe with her. Slowly, as one, they exhale. The dust picks up off the floor, flurries streaked by the fading sun, before settling back amid the cracks of the stained hardwood. She closes her eyes, letting her pulse slow to match the fading rhythm of a house.

Once, twice, it eases into its final rest.

*Hey, mom. I’m home.*
Where does memory reside? Brain imaging studies suggest that our recollection of events, what’s termed episodic memory, is the result of communication between specific regions of the brain—in particular, the hippocampus, neocortex, and amygdala. However valuable such correlationism is to the field of neuroscience, it tells us little about what remembering feels like. Experienced subjectively, memory is an unpredictable combination of voluntary and involuntary processes that extend beyond the individual’s body, even as they are centered within. This spatialized quality of memory forms the basis for the “memory palace” of ancient Greek oratory—a mnemonic device which imagines the various parts of a speech inhabiting different rooms of a building—and provides the central trope of Gothic fiction, in which architectural form embodies transposed personal and family history.

The Gothic mode is at the forefront of “In Loving Memory.” Nora, the protagonist, has returned to the “ghost story” of her childhood home following the death of her mother Dee by lung cancer. Unable to contend with Dee’s bipolar disorder, and the alcoholism and food insecurity that ensued, Nora had left home at the age of seventeen, estranging herself from her mother. Now the inheritor of the house she once fled, Nora is driven by her own financial need to renovate the dilapidated structure, which everywhere bears testimony to Dee’s mental illness and to their shared history. Floral-print wallpaper still clinging to the walls (its yellow a nod, perhaps, to Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s famous short story)
and reeking throughout of mildew, the place is just as Nora remembers it, a “house of half-finished projects and empty cupboards and far too much space for just the two of them.” Like any good Gothic story, the house has a mind of its own, resisting Nora’s desperate attempts at DIY: floorboards shed the layer of wax she applies, primer refuses to dry.

Spatialized and internal memory merge in the story’s climax, when Nora, following a creaking noise within the house, enters the garage, which she has been avoiding. At that moment she is overwhelmed by the involuntary memory of a scene of repressed trauma in which Dee, an empty bottle in her lap, crashed her car into the garage. The story’s syntax makes clear that at the moment when past irrupts into the present, agency belongs not to Nora, but to the memory itself, which “swallows her whole.” Using the hammer with which she has armed herself, Nora reclaims her agency by breaking through the garage wall, exposing the infectious black mold within, allowing the house—and herself—to breathe deeply for the first time in years.

That the nauseating aroma of decay should serve as a memory trigger coincides with the neuroscientific account of the interactions involving scent, memory, and emotion that occur within the brain’s limbic system. Functional MRI and other forms of brain imaging that enable scientific research of these interactions are a powerful objective technology for exploring what happens within the human psyche as seen from without. Narrative fiction such as “In Loving Memory” reminds us that imaginative literature of all genres is a powerful subjective technology for exploring the human psyche as experienced within.
Solar Flares Plate
Kendyl Chasco
Wheel Thrown and Altered Stoneware, Soda Fired
do re mi so la ti do [-ha]
Dominic LaFratta

Roads of rasp, symphonic like crashes, the harmonics of pothole amphitheaters truly astound. Roadside ensembles sing their way through the round, and a round, as merchants percuss the lost and the found.

Songs of dissonance, circadian in rhythm, just everyday people on the two and the four. Quantized to the broken, scratches and skips galore, what’s really the rpm of the daily score?

Hums from the bees aren’t fickle in bloom. Like pollinators of tunes, crescendos have the reach to wed. If deaf do us part, and the purist performance pauses for applause, the music is never dead.
In the city of a thousand bells
Rachel Visick

Waking up in the peach-colored clouds of a Sunday morning, I can breathe the rain-wet air like spring and the city still sleeps off last night’s repast.

*Birdsong is a universal language;*
I remind myself when I latch the gate behind me, as I move into the street, discrete, holding onto air, onto nothing in the tram car, watching snails on the sidewalk. *Gastropods can be understood without words.*

At 7pm, every church in the city rings its bell, losing each other in a raucous chorus and when the reverberations reach me, I am alone, the scent of sausage and mustard grain drifting towards the open window;

somewhere across the sea you are waking up.
Hello? I’m making dinner when you call. Simple as cradling the phone between my shoulder and cheek, twirling the cord in one hand, stirring onions with the other. Your voice unfolds in my ear like a quilt in the late summer light, still lingering at 9. I wonder how much darkness your words passed through to reach me on the other side of the world. I tell you about the garden, full of squash and corn, ready to make your favorite soup. About the wild strawberry patch in the meadow and how my heart runs down porch steps each morning to find a new day at the bottom. You tell me about oceans filled with sunlight, orange trees, a newly discovered shellfish allergy, and buildings where every arch is a doorway. You tell me everything, but I want you here to braid my hair and press your hands down on my shoulders. I want to speak to you by dropping wild berries into your hands, one at a time. The sun goes down and I sit on the porch, wrapping the cord around the door frame, tucking myself into your laughter. You speak the circumference of the world to me, and in the first hours of a new day your voice becomes a shoulder to rest my head on, a hand tender against my cheek.
Rememory Machine
Found Object Collage

Charlotte Nabors

All items in this collage were found as bookmarks in Collins Memorial Library.
I remember hot summer days at camp when all the kids would clamor for fruit. It felt like a game, if you asked enough, maybe the counselors would give it to you. The best prize you could win was watermelon. I didn’t like fruit, so I got to be a neutral observer standing on the snack-time bleachers, three seats away from anyone else. And my research conclusively proved it: watermelon was the universal favorite. Sometimes I liked watermelon, just like all the other kids. But I felt tricked and betrayed when I bit in and it was soft and mushy. So I gave it up entirely, not worth the risk.

Maybe it wasn’t fair, my hatred of the watermelon. But by the time I was old enough to stop going to camp I despised it. The rind seemed so thick and strong and impenetrable. But it was so clearly a ruse. Everyone knew how soft the inside was.
They knew they would cut into and the vulnerable core
they only hoped it wouldn’t be too soft.
The poor watermelon, the games it was forced to play. If it was too hard no one would eat it.
Too soft and they wouldn’t enjoy it.
When the kids like you for being soft, how do you know what’s too soft?

I hated the way the watermelon allowed itself to be cut into. They wouldn’t have judged its softness if it hadn’t allowed itself to be pried open in the first place.

I was more cynical than the other kids.
They got to love the watermelons most of the time.
They got to love the normal watermelons.
They could forget about the ones that they didn’t love. They got to hate the soft watermelon, to complain about it, to spit it out. But then they could move on. It was so unfair.
I felt my hatred more strongly than they did.
They hated the watermelon that was too mealy, or too soft, or too far away from the other kids on the snack-time bleachers.
But I hated it more.
Rain
Emma McCarthy

Californians fear the rain as if it’s chemical: it comes down in a mere drizzle and you see people running from cover to cover, unburying their umbrellas from the back of their cars. The roads hold a thin layer of water and suddenly no one wants to be on the streets, causing swerving and accidents along the roadside. The water makes coats wet and heavy, a new weight on one’s shoulders. “Suicide weather,” as my boyfriend calls it. The words escape his lips as he asks me why I decided to move to Washington. At least here, the rain isn’t feared, it’s not a symbol of darkness or depression. It can’t be “suicide weather” if it happens all year long, it simply is the weather, a way of life. Washingtonians know how to drive in the rain, live in it, thrive in it. The rain may be frowned upon, but there is no running or sea of umbrellas. It’s accepted and, in some cases, welcomed.

I’ve always loved the rain. The thought of cozying up under some blankets with an excuse to stay indoors and be lazy; to read books that have piled up on my shelves, holding a hot cup of green tea, a dog sprawled on my feet. Having grown accustomed to severe droughts, it felt pure to have the scarce resource fall from the heavens to bless my skin. The rain would bring me joy, dancing around in my little rainboots, splashing in puddles and giggling to myself. I’d come inside with dripping hair and a large smile on my little face. I feel even more in love with it in my darkest of days, the rain an acknowledgement of my pain, weather that doesn’t invalidate my emotions.

It didn’t rain the day of my grandmother’s funeral.
Looking up to the sky, I could see the sun shining down on me, mocking me with its glow. Even the priest commented on the weather, claiming that my grandmother must be with us, making sure the sun shone down on all of us to warm our souls. I prayed to my grandmother that night, I prayed for the rain. I begged her to let the tears fall from the skies rather than from my red, puffy eyes. I couldn’t stand to be showered in the heat, not when I felt dark and gloomy inside. I wanted to feel as though the world hadn’t abandoned me, as if it could reflect how I felt. It feels impossible to grieve when even the sky is telling you that you should be happy: Where’s your smile? I knew my family felt the same, my mother walking around with dry eyes trying her best to still be the host even with her own mom newly in the ground. It wasn’t until after we had come back home where the doors and windows were shut, gaining the privacy from the sun, that she was able to mourn.

It was raining the next time I saw tears fall from my mother’s face. At 1 am in the emergency room, she saw her daughter strapped to wires trying to solve what would be the longest mystery of my life. Feet tapping and eyes threatening to close with the weight of sleep, I had to be strong, if only for my mother. The doctors ran all the tests they could think of before sending me out at 4am. The rain fell upon us once again, confirming that we had made it out alive. While the mystery of my health continued to go unsolved, it still hadn’t broken me down. She enveloped me in a hug, her tears mixing with the rain so I couldn’t tell which drops were filled with salt. We were nourished by the water, our worst fears washed down the drains with it; I would live to fight another day, I could finally rest.

I’ve never been one to rest. My body decides that it wants to work while I’m sleeping, not able to fully come to a halt as
it attacks itself, trying to fight off any invaders. It doesn’t know when to stop until my body itself becomes the sole target; my blood becomes thin until I bruise, my muscles begin to break down, my mind can’t keep up through the pain. The rain washes this away. The rain gives my mind peace, the sound on the windows tapping away the intrusive thoughts until there’s nothing left but pure bliss. The silence speaks louder than any comforting words a person could provide. The soggy weather, as much as I love to feel it on my skin and let it wash away with my tears, often keeps me indoors, finally a chance to kick my feet up on my bed and take a minute to myself to take a breath. A much needed and crucial breath: exhale completely, then inhale instinctually. Even if it doesn’t stop my body from breaking down itself, it allows it to catch up. It slows the time so my muscles and bones can finally mend, my blood can regenerate in peace, and my nervous system can relax. The rain becomes what I need to heal.

Sometimes I feel like the rain. People often look at me with remorse once they find out what’s been going on, or handle me like a droplet of water, easily destroyed and often lost. Many see what could be perceived as darkness or depression omitting from my body: a light which has begun to dim. But I know better than this. I have accepted this and can see the comfort in the consistency of the rain. I now know how to drive in it, live in it, thrive in it. Simply, my way of life. Not “suicide weather”. Resurrection Weather, as it still pushes me to live, to fight another day. I feel connected to the rain, a pull towards the heavens blessing me with its healing powers. The rain and I are one in the same.
A Microscopic View of my Blood

Bismikado
How to Make Love and Cook Seafood
Sabine

One night she fucked the frothy beast. Dark waves crashed against her skin, and the fog left them alone in the wildness. Icy water slammed into her head, everything was muffled and screaming. She thrust her heavy body deeper still, arms slapping the surface, hands gripping darkness, steady bare thighs bracing against the current. She buried her feet into the sandy floor, shivering, as she moved her hips opposite the sea, entering into the jagged edges of the waves as they charged towards her, and pulling back with a forceful rhythm as they did too. Salt seeped inside of her, scratchy and wet, her eyes stung. The ocean was an onion and she was holding the knife. As she came, her body shook, the roughness thrilling all her senses. Then she turned her back quickly, and walked, full and warm towards her clothes that lay in a pile on the empty beach. The sea lover did not look back at the beast, who was left panting, unsatisfied.

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“Fuck.” She groans, pinching her finger with her other hand to stop the blood. She looks down at the counter, red drops on the diced onions. “Fuck.” No one looks up. She finds the kitchen’s first aid kit from the storage closet by the big sinks in the back. It’s limp-- mostly empty, and only has Charlie Brown bandaids. She chooses the Snoopy one, and brings it and the tin of Bag Balm into the cramped staff locker.
room.

“Hey,” The creepy sous chef, Cait, winks at her, then grabs a clean apron from the shelf above the coat hooks and pulls it over her head.

The sea lover tosses the sheer red and white bandaid wrapper into the trash, and looks up at the sous chef, whose short black hair frames her freckled tan face. Cait’s green eyes are filled with desire. And the woman with the Snoopy-wrapped finger can see desire from a mile away.

“I’ll fuck you in your car right now, if you want.” Her directness catches people off guard, but it usually works in her favor.

Cait blinks, “We’re still waiting on the oysters and halibut to get in,” she looks at her phone, “But, yes?” She says, surprising herself, then pausing in the doorway unsure what to do next. The short black hair turns and crosses through the salty kitchen, and out the alley door. Snoopy band aid follows, slipping the Bag Balm into her pocket, the herbal medicated smell reaching her nose and tongue. That’s all she tastes in the cramped car as she slides her hand into the sous chef’s pants. And when she presses her hand against Cait’s throat, all she smells is onions, on skin and hair.

“What do you like?” Cait says wryly, interrupting a kiss, sliding her hand slowly down the sea lover’s spine with a tired finger. “What makes you feel good?” She whispers, drawing out the vowels. The sea lover shakes her head. Her throat aches suddenly. She swallows dryly, then looks at the woman half-naked against her, “I like fucking you.” It comes out unintelligible and hoarse and unsure. She shrugs her shoulders and kisses Cait quickly until horniness beats curiosity.

She’d always liked doing the fucking, having the upper hand-- literally. She liked the performance of it, the
awkwardness, the drama, she liked knowing what to do. She’d watch porn to prepare, watch the way the men gripped bodies, where they looked, what they said. She knew what they all wanted, just by looking at the waves in their eyes. When Cait finally re-remembers the late fish and hears the seafood truck beeping into the back alley, she shoves her wide legs into wide pants, and beeps the car locked behind them, shooing the Commis chef who fucked her towards her prep station, and marching to the vendor entryway to intervene the arguing between fish monger and chef de cuisine over price per pound.

After she cleans her station--tossing what was contaminated with her blood, the sea lover dices clean onions and celery for the chowder, then shucks a hundred and twenty-six oysters. It must’ve been an early lunch for the lawyers at the office building across the street. Or maybe a private-school-family brunch. Or just 22-year-old techies trying to show off. The kitchen is steamy and loud in the late morning rush, and it’s prepping and chopping and cleaning. She doesn’t even run into Cait once. Her wrists are sore by the time there’s a lull and she can take lunch. She leans against the brick wall of the alley and smokes a cigarette and a half, between bites of last night’s dinner rolls spread with their famous herbed butter. Cait steps out, metal door clanging against the metal frame.

She looks up at the short hair. “What?” It comes out more of a growl. Is she angry? She steps on her half-smoked cigarette, and looks up.

“This morning was,” Cait pauses, still thinking, “fun.” She’s disappointed that the word she landed on was “fun,” but winks anyway, trying to cover up the cliche.

What’s with the winking? “Was it?” The sea lover offers Cait this barely-a-sentence response, and looks at the ground.

Cait laughs a nervous laugh, “You’re not much of a talker,
huh.” Her dark eyebrows scrunch above tired eyes. “Wanna get food after work?”

“I’m going to the beach after I’m off,” says the sea lover.

“Dinner rolls and cigarettes aren’t gonna cut it for dinner.” Cait looks at the sea lover’s hands, reminding herself of the confidence she’d felt this morning. “Let me take you out first.”

A crate of shallots and fennel bulbs waits at her station when she returns from lunch. And then clams, mussels, shrimp, and halibut appear on a tray of ice—no one makes the cioppino as well as she does. Her hands take the most interest in the shrimp, peeling each one carefully, fingers sliding from belly to tail, carving out the veins, greyblue and limp, and placing the cleaned bodies in a bowl. Her mind drifts from shrimp veins to the seaweed and bull kelp she often finds on the beach, greygreen and limp. When she was little she’d make a lasso out of it, swinging it around, annoying her brother. How her cheeks stung when he’d retaliate, using the kelp as a whip, cold salt and grit on her face. Her eyes refocus onto the pounds of mussels and clams staring up at her.

When she gets off work, Cait is waiting in the alley. “Hungry?” She asks. Her hair is darker than it was earlier, thick and not taking no for an answer. The sea lover follows Cait into her car, and doesn’t say a word as she complains about the damn saucier who can’t even make a good bechamel, and the new wait staff that can’t keep up with orders. When asked if she likes it at the restaurant, she doesn’t respond, so Cait just keeps quiet after that. She parks on 45th and Judah in front of a small place advertising $3 margaritas and a $5 California Burrito.

“We work at one of the best seafood spots in the city and you’re taking me out to fish n chips?” She glances away from the paper menu that’s taped to the wall next to the door, and
looks at Cait with stormy eyes. Cait doesn’t respond, but clicks the car door locked behind them and goes in to order. They sit at the only picnic table on the sidewalk under an outdoor heater, and the food’s on the table.

“Holy shit,” the sea lover says, blinking at the trays of sound and color in front of them. Cait smiles. And they eat.

The fog secludes them, alone, two consumers, just the sounds of eating, and sipping, and avoiding eye contact. Together in the flavors of the sea, sensuality in the textures, the saltiness, the heat. She cuts the $5 California Burrito in half, spilling red and green and yellow; the fish n chips are fried in a thin batter and served with minty peas, mushed on the side, and malt vinegar for the chips; there’s a biting ceviche with grapefruit and jalapeno, this place really is doing too much; and a buttery black cod grilled crispy on either side, slathered in miso mayo and slapped between two buns; and sides of fermented carrot hot sauce and housemade pico de gallo and avocados. The mouth of the sea lover is as strong as her body, with thick dark lips that curl up at the ends, a jaw that hides its power, but still knows how to bite. She’s worked in food, hell since she was a kid, dishwashing, then serving, now prepping and cooking; her taste buds have been trained, she knows wine pairings, she can make a perfect lobster thermidor. But when she eats, she fights. Hers is a mouth that knows how to taste, her tongue meets every bite with an authoritative curiosity, her teeth shine white against her lips, chewing and chewing, and swallowing.

They bus their own dishes and Cait winks at her. She knows exactly what the winking woman wants. Cait pounces before she can leave, pushing her tongue against the sea lover’s teeth, salty from the margarita rim, and garlicky spicy. Cait tastes good, and she kisses back for a few seconds, breathing in Cait’s grease and freckles. But pulls away swiftly, leaving
a head hanging in the air, lips towards her, asking for more, but she turns towards the west, walking down the sidewalk, feeling Cait’s gaze on her ass, and does not look back.
The beach in this city is a foggy, scratchy place, where the waves are rough and real, shaking and foaming at the mouth like a rabid dog. And that’s how the sea lover likes it, wild, demanding her to take it. She exists to take it. The beach is empty—high tide, and wind ruffles the beach grass like feathers. Sand blows into her eyes, and inner elbows and hairline. The water glistens, fading fast, as night swallows day, gurgling, washing it down. The moon must be somewhere, but not visible to her yet. Some of the brighter stars are sprinkled in the black sky, but the lights of urbanity compete and win. The ocean is darkness and she is a silhouette against the only city she’s ever lived in.

Her wiry black hair is greasy and fishy from the humidity of working in the kitchen, and the wind tempts strands loose, flicking against her neck and chin. She thinks about the time she heard the creaking bed frame from the other room in her apartment, and then a low-humming uhhhh-- her roommate and a stranger. And how she jerked off quietly, straining to hear the words and moans coming from the room across the hallway. Once she heard the front door close, she emerged from her musty room. In the dim, buzzing kitchen, she lowered two farm eggs into boiling water, and set the timer for five and a half minutes. Cut open on toast, the red-orangey yolks drooled out, pooling around the bread. Once it was gone, she licked her plate, and her roommate returned, said hello and disappeared into their room. She left her dish in the sink.

The sea lover faces the sea. She’s not sure about it this time. A wide yellow moon has appeared above the outline of the city, emerging out of pollution. The moon controls the tides.
She heard that once, and now wonders, how exactly?, and turns back around, watching the crashing and retreating, listening to the sea’s body throw itself against the sand again and again. She slips off her clothes, her strong body shining in the moonlight. Toes greet sea foam. The blackgrey water mirrors the sky, moonlight echoing across ocean and air. The sea is wilder than usual tonight, soup boiling over, body thrashing, uncontrollable. She bends her knees against the current, trying to root her feet into the sand, but the floor of the ocean is moveable, untrustworthy. Cold and salt fill her ears, rushing water pounds against her body, grabbing her with the strongest hands, and throws her to the floor. The salty beast is angry tonight. It holds her down, presses up against her, licks her neck and breasts with a rough tongue, a sucking mouth, reaching into her with sharp stinging fingers, taking.

She can’t feel her body anymore, except a dull warmness pulsing in her wrists and throat. Her eyes are still pinched shut as she shakes curled in the shallows, next to the sand dollars, where the sea spit her back out. She opens her eyes after a short lived death, blinking in the briny darkness, ears clogged and ringing, body burning in the numbness, and drags herself away from the horrible sea, the beast who fucked her how it wanted, and turned its back just as quickly.

She stumbles in the sand, alone, shivering, eyes raking the shore for her things. Where is she? How long was she held by the waves? She finds her pile of clothes. Her skin stings against her jeans, rubbed raw by the waves, and she pulls her phone from the back pocket, clicks it on, but doesn’t know who to call, clicks it off. Her eyes adjust to windy dimness, and they slowly squinch up towards the water, who crashes and retreats, ignoring her.

“What should I do now?” The sea lover shouts, her voice
rough, and thick with salt. She huddles in the beach grass, cold wind whipping her dripping hair against her cheeks, not knowing how to apologize. “What should I do?”

She wakes up the next morning foggy. Her body aches, and stinks of fish and life and death, reeking of reality. She scratches her legs, itchy with caked sea salt and slime, and her stomach grumbles up at her, insatiable. She boils water for eggs and for tea, and stands in front of the stove, barefoot, staring, and remembers. In her dream, the beast responded in its deep, crashing voice, “Go away, I’m busy.”