

# Vantage Point

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## Vantage Point: Spring 2018

Vantage Point  
*University of Vermont*

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vantage point  
spring 2018



Vantage Point  
Volume XX  
Spring 2018

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## **Letter From the Editors**

You know why you're here. As winter thickens, it becomes time to take things out of the shadows. Whatever it is - take it back, unwrap it, let the air touch it, make it whole again.

- The Editors

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## Self-Portrait as Haunted House

for Angela Carter

By Caroline Shea

Angela— I'm the last frontier. Manifest in my manyness, territory cooing to be colonized. Remember the pleasure of muddied palms in spring, barefoot on the sponge of forest floor? When girlhood was more than an artifact. The world opened up to us with desire, our bodies licked pink by cat's tongues. I don't possess myself anymore. You call me haunted house. You call me prostitute. Very well. But I am not a glass  
to be filled.

Angela, in our cellar-guts, we arrange skeletons around the fine china. *The capacity for drowning*— it lives there too, despite our schemes and poisons. In rooms I'm not invited into, men paint pictures of dead girls. *To be the object of desire is to be defined in the passive case.* "He fucked that bitch and now she won't stop texting him." I wonder if sleeping maidens kiss better, or if the fertile valley of their lips just begs to be filled.

Angela, I used to suckle from my own wounds, guzzling hurt like milk. Each bear-trap a savage gut-punch of glee, body cannibalized limb by limb. Snow covered me in thick, clean sheets until the stain of my virginity soaked through the linen. You think you can shrug it off like sleep. Instead it lingers, the scent of sex lasting through the month. I didn't feel guilt. Just the memory of it. I am friendly with my spirits. I french kiss their howls into sleepy submission. And the beast on the edge of the woods, yellow-eyed and grisly? He eats kibble from my palm. This is not about purity anymore, if it ever was. We all need our stomachs  
to be filled.

Angela, love is not just silk and massacre. I promise you *I am nobody's meat*. I am building us a house with a white porch and big windows to let all the light in. We'll take turns doing the dishes. And when it storms, I will curl like an embryo around my lover and hum along with the wind until our bodies sing as one crooked instrument. You will hear it, and I hope you'll understand what I mean. I am telling you, every room is going  
to be filled.

## **In Memory of W. H. Auden**

*By Jack Wheaton*

Rewind the clocks that stopped today  
the arms lagging should be differently  
set. Moon is wrinkled, unpacked & rehung:  
it looks like your plot never sees any sun.  
With a crook in your tie & sharp on the dot  
as you liked, will you meet me here at the spot  
you are buried? My cigarette ash burns earthly rooms  
so rise to the heat & mix with the fumes.  
Stars, if you please, the more loving one  
return for a poem or rhyme - shy Wystan:  
my Shield to your Evening comes to no good  
left to the earth & locked between wood.  
But I am alone here & you said it best  
To hell with the beasts, the men & the rest.



# Tale of the Three Sisters

*By Christian Soychak*

Once upon a clear midsummer's day, three sisters walked down a valley road, each one gazing upon a different aspect of the world around them. The eldest looked to her feet as she walked, watching the ground unfurl beneath her. As they traveled she paused, stooping down to pluck a beautiful iridescent stone disguised among the path.

"Look," she announced, "at this beautiful discovery. Watching where you step shall always guide you to fortune." Displaying the find and nodding assuredly, she pocketed the small stone and continued her trek.

"Perhaps," sneered the youngest, "yet with your eyes on the ground, you miss this beautiful day." The youngest sister's gaze held fast to the ever expansive sky above as she walked, never missing the suns gleaming rays. Gazing up, she saw a falcon swoop by, graceful and strong. Reaching out, the youngest sister plucked a feather from the air that had fallen from the creature's wing.

"See? Such beauty can only be found by reaching for the sky above." Grinning to herself, the youngest sister pocketed her find as well.

The eldest scoffed, suppressing a smile. "Yes sister, I'm sure. Yet as you look to the sky, you miss what truly is before you. You know not how to walk without losing your step. Keeping your gaze to the sky will only cause you to trip and fall."

The youngest sister raised a brow, glaring at her sibling. "You may have your steady step, but I ask you this; why walk when you could fly? Keeping your eyes to the ground doesn't allow you see what could be, or what to hope for. By only looking at the path before you, you'll never see anything more."

As the two siblings bickered, the middle sister walking between them kept her gaze forward, not to the path at her feet or the sky above her, but rather where they met far ahead of her.

"Sister," the eldest began, touching the middle sister on the shoulder. "Which gaze do you believe is best? One where you look to where you are—"

"Or one where you look to where you could be?" interrupted the youngest.

The girl in question pondered for a moment, looking down, then up, then forward again. "I believe that both have merit, yet both again have flaw. Personally, I look not just down to what is nor just up to what could be, but rather forward on where I will go, on what I can achieve."

"Forward?" questioned the youngest. "Then that must mean you look up

sometimes, right?"

"Or that she looks down on occasion," countered the eldest.

"Yes," replied the middle sister. "My gaze shifts between the two, yet never for too long. And it shall always revert back forward."

"But sister," both siblings inquired. "Should you change your gaze, you will miss so much."

"Yes, this is true. But so shall you miss much with only one gaze." She giggled, and lifting her hands, the sister opened her palms to reveal the iridescent stone and the falcons feather, stolen from her two sisters pockets while their gaze was elsewhere. "Always will I miss something, but for everything you miss, something else is gained. Perhaps even a new perspective through which to see this path. After all, it is the ability to look through the eyes of others that lets us truly see the world for all its glory." Handing back her sisters belongings, the middle sibling continued forward as the eldest looked down at her stone and the youngest looked up at another falcon. And so the sisters continued on, each content with their own sight, yet free to look at the world through whichever gaze they choose.

# Untitled

*By Ez Johnston*



# Requiem for a Naturalist

*By Owen Page*

Stepwise they gather, solids, vapors,  
communing about a cold pyre. The schooner ferries  
to poles of inaccessibility, violent in brine,  
choked in brume, waves, slivers of violet bands,  
a voice of tempests singing. A cliff face, jagged slits,  
shifting sheets of ice, moving, behaving as wind. He pulls  
off his cloak finding no earth, no earth—only snow.  
The faded river is a weathered heart, pulsing  
in sluggish arterial flow. Gilded shells and eyeless moons,  
Charon's obol strewn over oars, sinking under glass, white  
and green. The quickening of heaven and sea. Have you  
thought of Father? If you see him would you say, 'Hello'?

They set up camp, timid home, curling the way fear collects  
like dead skin gathering in corners, covering like film.  
The vast sands of snow snake into an endless wasteland.  
There the emperors wear no clothes and delight in wriggling fish.  
The stars fall, curling like petals, bleeding across the sky,  
cascading glittering light. And it was a long white night—hours  
huddled in furs to fool the hunters, heads bowed  
together, joined by the cold, its fangs slicing serpentine. They toss  
Death into the river, a totem for the children of summer.  
As its eyes fall in velvet water, the snow murmurs,  
exposing raw tissue to light. Why are you here? A notebook,  
pages of lithe roots and mesmeric bark. He slices rocky flesh  
for analysis, soil shadow-dancing into a vial: "To \_\_\_\_\_".

## **A Bug's Life**

*By Aleah Gatto*

The fleas are not forever.  
(The lice, twice,  
was not forever.)  
The sheets are washed,  
the clothes are clean,  
the carpet combed  
through with the vacuum.  
The scratched at wounds  
will heal, including the gash on the pinky  
that the lid of the can of black beans  
did before drained and draped  
in garlic powder and softened  
in the pan while the blood  
beaded.

Tinea versicolor, not forever.  
Mom sends the same cream  
she used when she was young.  
Vintage skin cream. Autumn  
comes and sweaters hide the shoulders.

Blisters are not forever,  
either. In the morning, Bacitracin  
followed by a wad of toilet paper  
taped to the heel  
and stuffed in the sock  
and stuffed in the boot. The skin  
wraps the redness in a web  
as I hang upside down from a beaded string  
from my ceiling  
praying for bugs. At night,  
Dr. Mercola's Deep Woods  
spray on the limbs,

over the scratched at wounds,  
the shoulders,  
the heel. Settle  
into clean sheets. Listen  
to rain.

The infection. It is not forever.  
Clean the wound,  
rinse in warm water, hold the toes  
to the temple  
like a baby warms the toes  
in the moist mouth. Like a spider  
child upside down from the ceiling,  
on a beaded string, holding  
the toes in meditation, drawing  
the web.

## **Rumors Hint at Winter**

*By Stevie Lynn Hunter*

I remember the way your spine curved inward like wind howling through the house.  
Sometimes doors I never want to shut will slam against my limbs.

I remember how to eat words like gold confetti falling from a ceiling. That light can  
be eaten and weighs down the stomach like stones in the pocket of the river.

I remember that spider webs can hold 520,000 pounds of weight. What would I look  
like caught between sickness and strength?

remember how to brand myself with fingers that open up the mouth and reach into  
the throat. Decay is the moth I watch fly closer to the light, because I want to see it  
die.

I remember you pulled me up from the couch, gentle as the web wraps around me,  
sheets of white casting you as the savior. I remember that I am never the savior.

**Becca**

*By Logan Whorton*

I barely knew her,  
but I know her,  
though we speak in past tense.  
She waved at me,  
and I waved back.  
We smiled in knowing  
non-natives up north.  
"Knoxville & knee injury."  
"Likes to ski."  
I had her labeled perfectly.  
But no one fits  
an obituary,  
a failed attempt  
at summary.  
I barely knew her,  
but I know her.  
She visits me in memory.



## Dialing the Devil

*excerpt from No Man's Land*

*By Seth Wade*

Being sons of a devout Baptist and even more devoted Republican, my brother Paul and I are forbidden to celebrate Halloween. So, naturally, we seek to do just that. We want to use one of the biggest no-no's our church screeches about: the Ouija board. We arrange to meet our Catholic friend George and our heathen friend Kate. Kate's parents are atheists and, worst of all, liberals. Only liberals allow their daughter to possess Satan's favorite board game. But George, more religious than spiritual, refuses to contact demonic forces in a graveyard, saying it's too risky. We need to pick another spot to conjure up some spiritual nasties. On Halloween night, we four sinners sneak out of our never mobile mobile-homes and go across town to summon devils in the one place our Midwestern community truly fears: Planned Parenthood.

"Don't get it," I mumble. Arms outstretched, Paul balances the board game on his head while walking. Kate snorts and shoves him.

"Which part, Casey?" George asks.

"The demon thing."

"What you mean?"

"Well, we summoning bad spirits right?"

"Ya." George rubs the bridge of his glasses, something he always does when nervous. Momma tells Paul and I that no proper Baptist trusts a Catholic, but we like George. And George is smart. We figure he knows more about Christianity than Christ. He quotes saints and popes like a rabid Trekkie. His uncle is a bishop, a fact he repeats to anyone within earshot. We can't ask for a better Ouija buddy.

"And bad spirits kill people? Ghosts get up in ya and shit?"

"Sure do. My uncle's a Bishop, ya know. He even done an exorcism."

"So, if these ghosts doing all this, why ain't good ghosts stopping them?"

George thinks. Kate tries to nab the Ouija box from Paul, but he ducks and laughs.

"I mean, if these demons flying around killing and getting in people, why ain't all the good spirits fighting them? They dead, they got nothing else to do. And if they good why don't they help out?"

"Well, that's why we each got a guardian angel."

"Oh." I rub my arm. Kate catches the Ouija box before it falls. Paul tries to get it back. "Wait, but evil ghosts still do bad stuff?"

"Ya."

"Well, why ain't someone's angel stopping the bad spirit?"

George pauses, shakes his head. "Guess not all angels equal."

"What?" I stopped. Religion doesn't fit well with me, but I still wear it every day. I find the notion horrifying.

"Some good, some bad, I guess," George says.

"Like cops," Paul says, putting his arms over George and I.

"Well, that's dumb," I say, "how I supposed to know if I got some shitty angel? Can't I get an upgrade?"

Katie laughs, shaking the Ouija box to some made up tune. "Make it sound like a videogame, the way y'all talk."

"It ain't," George says.

"Well," Paul says, "I agree with Casey. I want my angel to be some sexy badass, like Taylor Lautner meets terminator. But with bitchin' wings and a halo."

"I just don't want no shitty angel protecting me," I say. "Georgie, what you gotta do to upgrade yer angel? Kill a goat or some shit, like in the Bible?"

"It don't work like that," George says, "and stop calling me Georgie! Makes me sound like a damn wiener dog."

We laugh, with no intention of ever calling him George, and continue making our way through town. After Paul taunts a few hordes of trick-or-treaters, we come to Planned Parenthood. Closed a few months back, the town doesn't even care to secure it well, and we slip through an unlocked window with ease. We yank out our flash lights, yellow beams revealing spilt chairs and flyers scattered on the floor.

Paul, being Paul, finds a jar of sample condoms. "Ya think Jesus was hung?"

"Thought he was crucified," I say.

Paul rolls his eyes. "Casey, you never gonna learn." He flicks a few condoms at me, then at George, whose even worse at dodging them then I.

"C'mon, guys, we gonna do it or what?" Kate says. Paul sticks his tongue out and stuffs more condoms in his pockets.

We settle on the ground while Kate and Paul unbox the Ouija board. It's funny: for how much Momma and our pastor fear the devil, his board game isn't that impressive. It looks more like a decorative cutting board.

"Fuck!" Paul shouts, shaking the box. "That glass thing must be back at yer place, Kate." We groan.

"My sister had it last – lemme see if she knows," Kate says. She pulls out a shining black rectangle.

Paul's eyes enflame. "Oh, shit! That the iPhone? Like in those commercials?" Kate nods. "Folks got it for me last month. Pops says we going bankrupt, so we better buy shit while we can."

"Lemme see it."

Kate hands it to Paul. Paul touches the screen like he's testing a lover. A new side

of Paul breaks out, and I feel like we summoned a devil after all. He's so happy he's not even smiling. Fiddling with it, he asks, "Don't they say these things gotta app for everything?"

"Ya, but don't silly, there ain't no app for—"

"No way!" Paul cocks his head and smiles. "Looks like we gonna raise some spirits up in this bitch."

Kate looks over at the screen. "There's a Ouija board app?!" She shakes her head.

"Will that work, George?" I ask.

George rubs the bridge of his glasses. "Ya, I think so."

"That don't make no sense!" Kate says. "My phone can barely hold a charge but it can summon the devil?"

"What if it get stuck in her phone?" I ask. "She just got that phone, her folks won't want a spirit fucking around in it."

"Hush," Paul says, "How's yer data plan, Kate? Got enough gigs for Satan?" Kate's eyes dart to the side. "Four gigs."

"So not the devil ... maybe a small spirit," George said.

Paul's eyes zap around quickly, as they always do when he gets an idea.

"Alright, just like we planned, but smaller. I'm'a place my finger on the mover on the screen, y'all put yer finger on mine." One by one we plop our finger on Paul's. It's more silent than church during prayer.

Paul clears his throat. "Yo, ghosts and ghouls, demons and angels, God and Satan, and all y'all dead people."

"That ain't how you supposed to talk!" I say.

Paul waves me off with his free hand. "Yo, dead nasties on the other side. We here if you wanna chat. Feel free to fuck with that butler bitch Siri, too."

"Don't tell them to mess with her phone," George says.

"C'mon, Paul, if you ain't gonna do it right, I will," Kate says.

Paul sighs. "We hereby call upon any restless spirits. Is any restless spirits here that wanna talk?" We wait. After a long silence in the shadows our faith grows dim.

"Any restless spirits here that wanna talk?" Paul repeats.

Then, the cursor on the screen creeps toward a corner. Yes. George jumps and almost causes our fingers to come off. Kate shakes her head, but her eyes are wide.

"Who doing that? One y'all putting pressure on—"

"Speak," Pauls says, "what you gotta say, spirit on the other side?" The cursors starts slogging around.

"g ... o ... I can't see, the screen so tiny," I say.

"What's it spelling?" George asks.

Paul looks up, eyes peeling and mouth gasping. George's face turns white, and

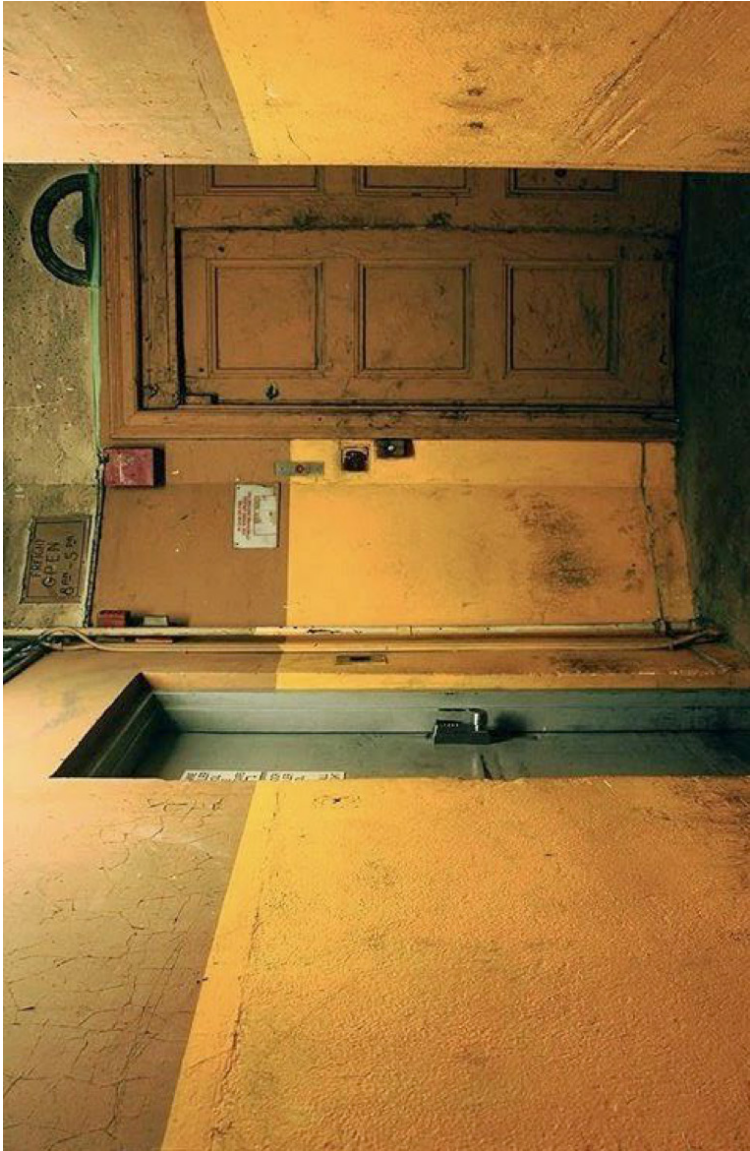
even Kate looks anxious. I'm nervous too: should I have heeded our pastor or George's priest's warnings? Does God exist, and did we just summon the devil through an iPhone in the lobby of Planned Parenthood?

In a grated voice, Paul reads: "*Goo goo, ga ga.*"

Kate grabs her phone and whacks Paul, who rolls around in laughter. George looks relieved and laughs too. I smile. I guess that settles it.

# Untitled

*By Ivana Djiya*



## **white parasite**

*By Anonymous*

and a man today had

*white pride*

tattooed across his knuckles and i  
noticed it only after an  
eloquent conversation about  
teaching children how to  
draw

parasites weaving their way and  
behind normalcy is there always  
    hatred and deep in their veins and  
    do we truly bleed the same and  
im questioning everyone now, asking -

*if they made me with crayons of  
brown and black would we then  
lack this respectful, casual, eye contact?*

## After a Man Tells You All Your Poems Are Selfish

(An Ars Poetica)

By Caroline Shea

I sing the body. Body Titanic. Body and blood. Body divine and fucked. *I like my body with your body.* A new kind of body. A body politic— body poetica. Body Titanic; meaning, doomed. Bodies in a boat. Bodies couched in other bodies. *I like my body with your body.* I woke in a new kind of body. I woke and my body was slick with vomit. In the mirror my face looked clean, but my hands came away wet and rank. I scrubbed for seven years until every skin cell shed. I rubbed each cuticle raw. Body raw. Body touched. Body loved. I never owned my body until I gave it over. I never owned the scar until I remade it. Body as Eden and its End. Don't ask me to regret that. This body of knowledge. Body of work. It is work to live in this body. I am not bragging. I'm bargaining. I want a body to sip like whisky. I want a body that burns. O Mutinous vessel. O flesh-bound drum. In the hush of dusk I almost forgive you. Everyday I interrogate my bones and get the same soggy alibis: *I like my body with your body.* Your body thinks my body holy; my body thinks your body whole. Whole wide world of us split open. I want you in my guts. Body fucked and absolved. Body as relic. Body as the pulled teeth of a saint. Body grinning for God like it's picture day. Something coiled in your core is bleeding and when it burns its way up your throat I suck the acid out with tongue and teeth. Mother always told me men were not a cure for the body. But you're not a panacea and I'm not a disease. Body nine years old, cut open, fishguts glowing tylenol blue. Body cosmetic. Body constructed. Body congenital. Inhabiting this body is a kind of colonization. Screws burrow in my spine like swollen ticks. Body Titanic; meaning the band played until the very end. *I like my body with your body.* I like my body. I like my body. I like my body.



## **swords master**

*By Ez Johnston*





## **the black girl dies alone**

*By Anonymous*

i.

and her name is  
irrelevant, if you ask me because her  
    skin is the sheen of a dark walnut stain  
    and her hair is twisted in thick black ropes  
    that hang down her back like  
    branches of a grand old willow

    and for these unfortunate beauties her  
    parents didn't let her out at night, fearing  
she wouldn't make it  
home

ii.

her voice is a favorite worn-in denim, and  
her eyes are voids, a depth in which i could  
fit all but her heart, the beats could start  
earthquakes and heartbreaks, i imagine

and damn, her smile changes the  
color of the sky i swear the clouds  
shy away, when they hear the seal of her  
lips beginning to part

a drivers test she wasn't allowed to take because  
if she started driving the  
possibility of her not coming home was  
exponentially raised, i didn't understand at the time but  
she always seemed so ashamed, not to have a

car, a license, and not because of money, but because  
they were all just too *afraid*

iii.

a best friend, a girl of dark skin  
made darker by blood, was stabbed to death  
in brutal daylight

i understood then, their fear

*when the white boy dies  
of an accidental overdose  
the town rallies, the family collects  
donations for a million-dollar  
funeral that the whole school  
attends —*

***and the black girl dies  
alone***

## Migration

*By Aleah Gatto*

There was a butterfly on my grandfather's shoulder  
one morning in the gray light when the dew  
steamed off the grass  
and the back porch banister was wet  
and cold. There was the butterfly  
that distracted me from the bloody nose  
I woke up to and ran downstairs  
to tell him about: blood all over my pajamas.  
He turned his glasses down on me  
and the butterfly disappeared  
behind the smoke-wall of his cigarette.

There was a butterfly in the grill of my mother's Grand Cherokee  
that we didn't spot for weeks: the orange wings  
outspread, melded to the metal  
from the engine's heat, the body  
hidden in the hood's depths.

There were many butterflies in the Butterfly Conservatory  
at the Museum of Natural History  
where I hid under a bench  
and two kids grabbed at me  
in the dark, hands outstretched—  
palms stained with strawberries  
and pink Pixie Stix dust—  
that looked like the neon wings  
of butterflies. Then there was a butterfly  
that flew too close to my right eye.  
I swatted at it; a silkiness  
kissed my finger.

There was a butterfly  
that almost ate me in my dreams.

I was riding a red bike without training wheels  
down a grassy slope; there was a butterfly  
I split in half across my nose, imagined green blood  
gushing, the wings  
folding, like a fitted sheet,  
under the wheels, the body  
a brown, puffy scar  
caught in the spokes.  
I fell sideways, split my knee  
open on a stone, my right eye  
pulsing in a puddle. It was autumn,  
but it was still too warm for snow.

## Project ORANGE-16

*By Seth Wade*

This is it. That moment Ellie's trained for. Others thought her crazy, calling her paranoid and overexcited and downright dumb. But all heroes have their haters. Why should she be any different? Years from now she'll be loved—no, worshipped!—as the woman who saved humanity. Yes! She and her friends were saving the human race, whether they approved of salvation or not.

"Please, stop," one of the scientists said. "Would you really destroy the greatest achievement of mankind?"

"We're preventing humanity's downfall," replied Ellie.

Marcy nudged the scientist with the end of her assault rifle. "Ain't ya heard of Stephen Hawking?" She scoffed. "Seen literally any sci-fi flick? Artificial intelligence means the end of yer precious mankind."

He began jabbering again but Jane dug her fist into his belly. "We're the good guys here, don't make us bad."

Ellie took a deep breath, gripping her gun tight. Jane and Marcy nodded as they cornered the group of quaking scientists.

A fizzled voice cracked in Ellie's ear. "You're clear. You have two minutes – get in there and eliminate Project ORANGE-16."

That was all she needed to hear.

Ellie blasted the two-way mirror. She hopped through, rolled over shattered glass, and popped into combat position. She looked for her target, sweat and excitement dripping from her face. "Where are you, you little fucker?" Then, she saw it. Project ORANGE-16. However, it was far from how she imagined the doom of humanity appear.

Ramming itself repeatedly into a wall was a small metallic blob, with short arms and what looked like a rotten mash of pumpkin guts on its head. This was the world's first artificial intelligence.

"Ya locate Project ORANGE-16?" Marcy asked. She and Jane pushed the men to the window, peering in.

"What is that?" Jane asked.

"Project ORANGE-16," one of the scientists said. "I beg you again, don't destroy it."

"Don't kill it!" chimed another. "It's sentient—a conscious being!" Ellie hesitated. "Project ORANGE-16?"

It zipped around to face her.

*"I have the steadiest hands, look at those hands."* It flapped its tiny arms.

"What?"

*"How handsome am I, right? How handsome?"*

Ellie laughed. "Alright, nice try. Where is the real Project Orange-16?"

Jane thrust her gun to the ear of one of the scientists.

"No, this is Project ORANGE-16, I swear!" he said, scrunching his face.

"Like hell," Marcy snorted.

It zipped around the room in excitement.

*"Sorry losers and haters, but my IQ is one of the highest and you know it please don't feel stupid or insecure, it's not your fault."*

Ellie paused. "Somehow, I don't believe you."

"Jesus Christ," Jane said, "Project ORANGE-16 is a dud? Ellie, this was our one shot—we won't be able to break into the compound again!"

"Hey, it's not a dud," one of the scientists barked. "It's alive! It's intelligent!"

*"The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."*

Ellie glared at the scientists. "You're kidding me, right?"

"Well," one said, shrugging. "It's close enough."

"Let's just leave while we still can," Marcy said.

Jane shook her head. "Let's cut our losses and regroup."

Ellie paused, angry and disappointed beyond belief. Years of planning—years of tracking the government's efforts—all wasted. Project ORANGE-16 whizzed over to the wall, beeping and booping, and rammed itself with the gusto and aim of a toddler. No one in their right mind would believe this thing was smart enough to be a threat.

"Just let it live," one scientist said, "it's just as human as you or me."

Ellie thought for a moment. "Project ORANGE-16, if we let you live, what will you do?"

It bounced excitedly. *"I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively, I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall."*

"That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard," Jane said.

*"I will be phenomenal to the women. I want to help women."*

"How?" Ellie asked.

It stopped, facing her.

*"Grab them by the pussy."*

Silence struck them all. The scientists looked at one another, horrified.

"Oh, hell no," Marcy said, taking aim at Project ORANGE-16. It started zipping around again, chirping loud whooping boops.

The crackled voice in Ellie's ear buzzed again. "Decoy failed: incoming officers—

get out. Now."

"Fuck," Ellie said, "we gotta move."

"Fuck that—I'm taking that fucker out!" Marcy yelled.

"No time. Our intelligence was way off." Ellie stood up, watching the screeching achievement of humanity flail and wail. "And, apparently, so is its."

Marcy cursed as she and Jane ran to the exit. Ellie leapt through the broken window.

"Thank you," a scientist said.

Ellie whacked her gun against his head.

"Stop making such abominations." She paused. "Especially such sexist ones." Ellie ran after Jane and Marcy.

Well. Shit. This moment was not what she trained for. It was a complete failure. She felt that leaving it alive was a mistake, intelligent or not. Oh, well. It's not like Project ORANGE-16 was a real threat. What's the worst that could happen?

## deep in the woods

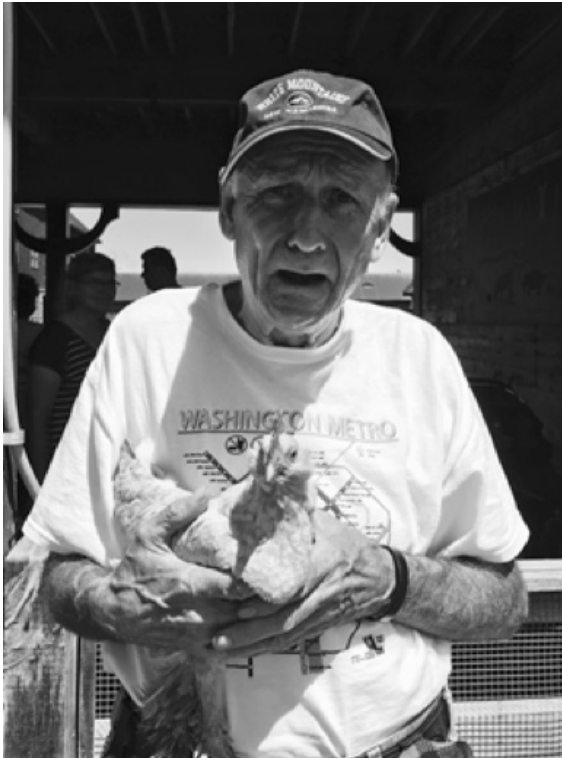
By Ez Johnston





## Chicken

*By Logan Whorton*



Out the window, echoes of mandarin  
chicken, go pluck yourself;  
you are too young, meaty + fresh to not fry  
her eggs, 2 dozen for others to mother

my fair-feathered friend,  
find your family in the co-op  
flying amongst a flock of familiar  
faces, the chopping block when not feeling

her!

# Untitled

By Ez Johnston



## A Queen's Throne

*By Christian Soychak*

It was a shame how little use the throne at the center of the royal palace received, especially by the fact that the large and decorated chair was actually quite comfortable. Yet Wren rarely felt comfortable sitting upon the silver engraved throne, looming above visitors at its perch on the raised platform in the back half of the throne room.

And yet the chair's seat beckoned her painstakingly as she paced back and forth in front of it in the otherwise nearly empty room. Occasionally Wren paused at the large table that had been dragged in from the dining hall, parchment and paper scattered across it. She already held half a dozen documents in her hands, flipping through them and muttering to herself as she shifted through the piles.

"Your majesty, you are pacing again." The Queen did not break her gaze from the parchment she was reading as a stout woman entered the room, yet her wandering did come to a stop.

"Good afternoon Shylah." Still not breaking her gaze, Wren ignored the woman's matter-of-fact tone. "What can I do for you?"

"You can do both me and the rest of the kingdom a great deal by taking a break from your work. I brought tea." Only then did Wren look up, eyeing the platter holding a steaming pot in the hands of who she had come to regard as her most loyal attendant.

She reluctantly tore her gaze from the drink and returned to her documents. "I wish I could, but I have far too much to attend to. It's been months since and yet we're still dealing with the aftereffects of the war. We have debts to repay, infrastructures to rebuild, and I refuse to abandon the countless soldiers left with nothing but nightmares from that pointless conflict."

Shylah set the platter in one of the few free spaces on the table. "I really do think sitting down and resting for a moment would benefit you, your majesty."

Wren took a fleeting glance at the throne beside her, its velvet cushions mocking her and all she stood for. "I already said, I—"

"Please forgive me, but look at yourself dear. You've been pacing back and forth all morning; the Queen of this great kingdom should not look as disheveled as you do in your own throne room." Wren looked down. She was

right of course; her dress was terribly wrinkled and covered in marks from where she'd picked at it. Her hair had loosened out of the bun her attendants had worked so hard on that morning, strands falling around her face. "What would you do if someone requested an audience with you right now? Do you think you would inspire confidence and strength as a queen should?"

For a moment Wren stood silently, before finally taking a heavy sigh and slumping into the throne. "I'll take that tea now."

"Of course, your majesty." Shylah exchanged the documents in Wren's hand for a cup of tea, steam curling off its surface.

"Thank you," the Queen murmured, bringing the drink to her lips and enjoying the sweet taste. Warmth spread across her body, and she sighed a small smile. "Perhaps I should just dissolve the council so that they stop sending me work," she mused.

Shylah refilled Wren's cup, "Yes, well I daresay that if you did that, your work would probably double, as the entire government of the kingdom would fall to you and you alone."

"Hmmm," Wren swirled the tea in her hand, blowing a stray hair from her face.

As Shylah organized a few piles of papers on the table and Wren seriously considered installing wheels on the throne, neither noticed the lone guard walking into the room through the main entrance. He stopped at the bottom of the stairs leading up to the platform where they stood. Clearing his throat, both women looked up at the newcomer.

"Forgive me your majesty," the soldier bowed. "You have a message from the city." He held up a small slip of paper bound in string.

Wren had already regained a proper posture, despite the fact that it was not necessarily required for any of those who worked in the palace, guards included. Shylah walked down the steps and took the letter, the guard bowing and leaving after Wren gave her thanks.

"I wonder who this could be from?" the attendant wondered aloud as she climbed back up the steps. "It's certainly not another document from the council; it came from the city." She handed the message to Wren, who observed the simple parchment bound in thread. Unraveling the string and opening up the note, she was pleasantly surprised to discover a few small lines of familiar handwriting;

Wren,

*I hope you're having a good morning, but knowing you, you've likely worked yourself to the bone already, and the day's only begun. I believe in you.*

The girl smiled to herself, rereading the note a few times over. A warmth like from the tea spread across her, and suddenly she was no longer feeling so overwhelmed or exhausted.

"Shylah, where did Dante say he was going again today?" she asked, carefully folding back up the parchment.

The woman smiled, "I believe he is currently down in the lower wing of the city, assisting in the reconstruction of some of the districts there."

"And, remind me; were there any vitally important meetings that I was planning to attend this evening?"

"None that you couldn't miss, your majesty. Shall I have a carriage be called over for you?"

"No, that's alright. It's been awhile since I walked to the lower wing. However I do believe that I may need something new to wear; something I can work in." Wren fixed any loose strands of her hair as she stood, making sure to set her cup of tea atop one of the most lengthy documents.

"Of course. And I should assume you will not need an escort?"

"Not unless there are any volunteers for public service work, no." She paused, "Oh, and tell the council that if they need me, I expect first that they come to a new agreement limiting the number of proposals and documents they send me each day, unless they themselves plan on actually agreeing on something for a change."

"I shall quote you exactly, your majesty. Please give Dante my greetings."

"Of course," and, humming to herself, Wren left to go prepare for the rest of the day, barely noticing the throne behind her at all.

## **melting rainbows (life)**

*By Anonymous*

and i jumped in puddles today  
on my way back from living

passing by a pair of violet eyes  
and a dozen neon houses — i  
thought they were beautiful once

hanging colour to drip from  
sloping rooftops, down the gutters  
collecting in spectral pools  
    some are wide and shallow  
    others drain deep into  
hellfire below, so  
warm sometimes they  
    steam, mist trickling off  
    into the air

and i found leftover  
leaves in my hair today  
    dry and cracking  
and inhaling the color of the sky  
so far gone i  
    apologized, and sealed them in a jar  
next to the box of chances  
i'll never take and the

pouch full of dust the hue of  
lightning that warns me --  
    *be wary of immortality*

## Sirens Chasing Sirens

By Seth Wade

We call during the chaos of night, when the fireworks break into their explosive peak, when boys with bellies full of poison grind fast to pulsing rainbow beats. When revelers holler and flail on the smoke-filled beach and swimmers watch raining embers from the caress of warm, lolling waves. When the bars engorge with pleasure-seeking flesh so heavy it sags the pier, nearly making it cave into that pitch-black sea.

I tell myself that when I call my song is different, that I am different than my kin, my kin who kill with rage born from lovers past. Yes, I tell myself this. When I consume an eager-eyed boy stuffed with hope: I am kind. When I consume a man craving change: I am kind. When I consume an artist without an art, a dreamer without a dream, a lover without a love—when I grind and chew their passions and potential—I am kind, I am kind, I am kind. I'm an angel in this rainbow hell, a demon in this paradise of pleasure. Such a land makes killing easy.

So easy, now that society digitizes flesh, creating a menu of all the victims we could want. My siren brothers peruse these menus. Hungry. Twitching. Ready. We stagger our breaks from bartending, allowing each of us time to claim a boy, to do what we must. As two brothers return, bobbing back behind the bar, dizzy from completion, another brother puts his arms around the sweating shoulders of a boy he's been messaging all night. He whispers and they leave, with a twitching glint in his eyes.

It's my turn soon. So, I leave, carrying a tray of candy colored tubes. I prowls, occasionally glimpsing fireworks through the steamed windows. A few twinkles grab vials, slurp the insides, and bounce back to the dance floor. A man that is more leather than man takes the rest of my poisons and flashes away. Through a doorway, I notice a boy leaning against railing, flicking ashes off his blunt toward the sea below. Another red clap of fireworks illuminates his face, and I've made my choice.

I return my tray behind the bar and grab my phone. I tap a golden mask, unleashing my buffet. I swipe out seduction. And wait. My kin loom over my phone, snickering. *You always go for the broody fucks*, one mutters, refilling a patron's Cosmo. They smile. A redness still sticks to their teeth, hanging from their breath. My phone buzzes and glows, emitting that signature *brap-buh-tap*. My call was heard.

I leave my snickering kin and find the boy, still smoking, still staring into the black union of night and sea. The neon glow of rides and games from the amusement park nearby blurs through the firework-smoke. Hints of funnel cake and popcorn leap from the slow breeze. A gleeful shriek spills over the club music; below us swimmers play, looking like bobbing torsos stuck in fresh tar.

This—this is life. This is living. He is thinking or dreaming or just merely being. He is alive. I could keep it this way. I could. But his life is a wilting thing, like a firework that plummets back to earth, failing to ignite. It's merciful to intervene. And this hunger—this hunger fries my nerves, fumes within my muscles, chokes my reason and will. I cannot remain empty. So, I lean on the railing.

*Beautiful. Isn't it?*

The boy turns around, his eyes a harsh violet, his breath reeking of Vodka. Bits of ash speckle his beard. He's been crying.

*Hey.*

Pictures don't do either of us justice. I smile, give him the kindest smile he'll ever receive in this carnival of lust. Still looking? He nods, takes a final huff from his blunt, flicking its corpse to the waters below. He stumbles. I catch him.

*Your eyes, he says, your eyes almost glow.* I nod. He follows me towards a dark corner of the pier. Rainbow strobe lights sift through those steamed windows, scattering before our feet, dancing on the creaking pier wood. I pause just before the corner of shadows, at the cusp of darkness.

*How are ... what's your favorite color?*

*Huh?* he mumbles.

*What do—what do you do for fun?*

*Die.* He laughs, laughs at his own edgy darkness, at his sorrow-sopped jokes. Another burst of fireworks crackle the sky, vibrating everything. He firms within his jeans. I know he's anxious. His mind is already outside itself, bubbling in the sea, floating in the sky. Gone. I'm about to ask another question, another ridiculous question, but he turns to me, annoyed.

*Gonna fuck or what?*

So, I guide him, stumbling into the shadows. We slouch in a corner. We embrace.

His tongue is wet and warm. His hands are dry and cold. Revelry consumes our moans as we quake to the sounds of summer bliss. The music, the firework-booms, the youthful yelps all screech together as we fuck above that sloshing black sea. We're approaching the peak, that chaos of night, that wild of life, that height of being where time becomes a skippable thing and reality mashes in and out of comprehension. We're almost there, we're almost—

*My wings crack out from the flesh of my back.*

*Your eyes do glow, he says between pants.*



*I know.*

My fingers stretch into talons. My teeth unfurl into fangs. Horns pierce my scalp.

*Fuck this is great, he says.*

The shadows shrouding my mutations weaken.

*This is so, he stammers, so ... everything.*

And the fireworks climax, thundering into oblivion: raging streaks of flame illuminate me.

*I love you, I sing.*

His hot gaze fades. Not into fear. Not into disgust. No—he understands everything, and he does not care. He sees what I am, what is to come, and does not care. He stares with the intensity of a silent sigh.

This confounds me. Infuriates me. Hungers me. So, I slit his throat. I hollow him out through the bloody, gurgling gash. Crunch on his cartilage. Gnaw on his muscle. Shred and slurp his skin. I pop his organs within my jaws, savoring the juicy, salty warmth gushing out. I devour all I can, swallow all I can, then throw what's left over the railing, splatting onto the rocks below. I stare out into that black union of sky and ocean. By morning the boy's remains will have mixed with the rest of the sea's dead, from rotten fish and crabs to the meals of my kin. The waves will belch them all toward the shore, along with the red sour algae, looking like churning, frothing wine.

But now the last firework booms, the final embers fall towards the shrieking swimmers below, and I still stare into the blackness. The chaos and wild release their grip, the spell flickers then fades, and everyone is sober for a breath-long moment.

I'm full—stuffed on boy beyond belief. My stomach pounds, hot and pulsing, like a cyst aching to burst. Tension crawls along my body, and I feel an extreme desire to explode. I shudder, so swollen and heavy I imagine I'm sagging the pier into the sea. I wince as my mutations retract within my body. I don't know how there's enough room for my own insides and the insides of the boy. But there is. There always is.

I change into clean clothes in the shadows, slowly and painfully, each motion squeezing my bloated gut. I totter back inside, tuck behind the bar. My brothers smile at me.

One of them slides a tall white glass my way. *Collins to wash the Tom?*

I take a light swig, swish the sweetness of the lemon about my teeth, let it lick away the salty syrup of red from my tongue. *What?*

*Your precious Tom, he says, handing me my phone. Your broody bite tonight.*

Something pangs my distended belly, forcing me to cough. I forgot. He had a

name.

My phone buzzes, chirping another *brap-buh-tap*. Whoever that is, he has a name too. The thought of eating makes me nauseous. I pocket my phone, still *brap-buh-tap-ing*.

*Last call, bitches*, a brother yells out, causing a horde of youth to flock to the counter. A boy wearing nothing but shorts wobbles to the counter, orders a Long Island. A co-worker winks at me while pouring the boy his poison. I hang back, sputtering in and out of awareness. This pain. This bursting pain. Something swells and festers at the bottom of my throat. It might be bits of Tom. I'm sickened either way: this cycle of wild hunger and bloated pain, this cycle of ceaseless sirens and their willing victims—it's maddening.

The boy wearing nothing but shorts totters into a stool, sipping his Long Island through a plum-red twisted straw, his gaze flickering between me and his phone. He doesn't look like he has one discrete bone in his body. Other parts taste better anyways. I still feel like bursting and I'm not even hungry and my life feels like its wilting—but I feel pulled and I can't stop. I call again.

## something with tentacles

*By Ez Johnston*



## Crushed Peaches

*By Caroline Shea*

1.

The first time, you peel the dress from me  
with practiced hands,  
trace the ghost of an incision  
from the nape of my neck  
to where it pools in a hollow above my butt.  
You do not look away.

2.

The night you're admitted,  
I sleep in a chair,  
buckled in the blunt posture of crisis.

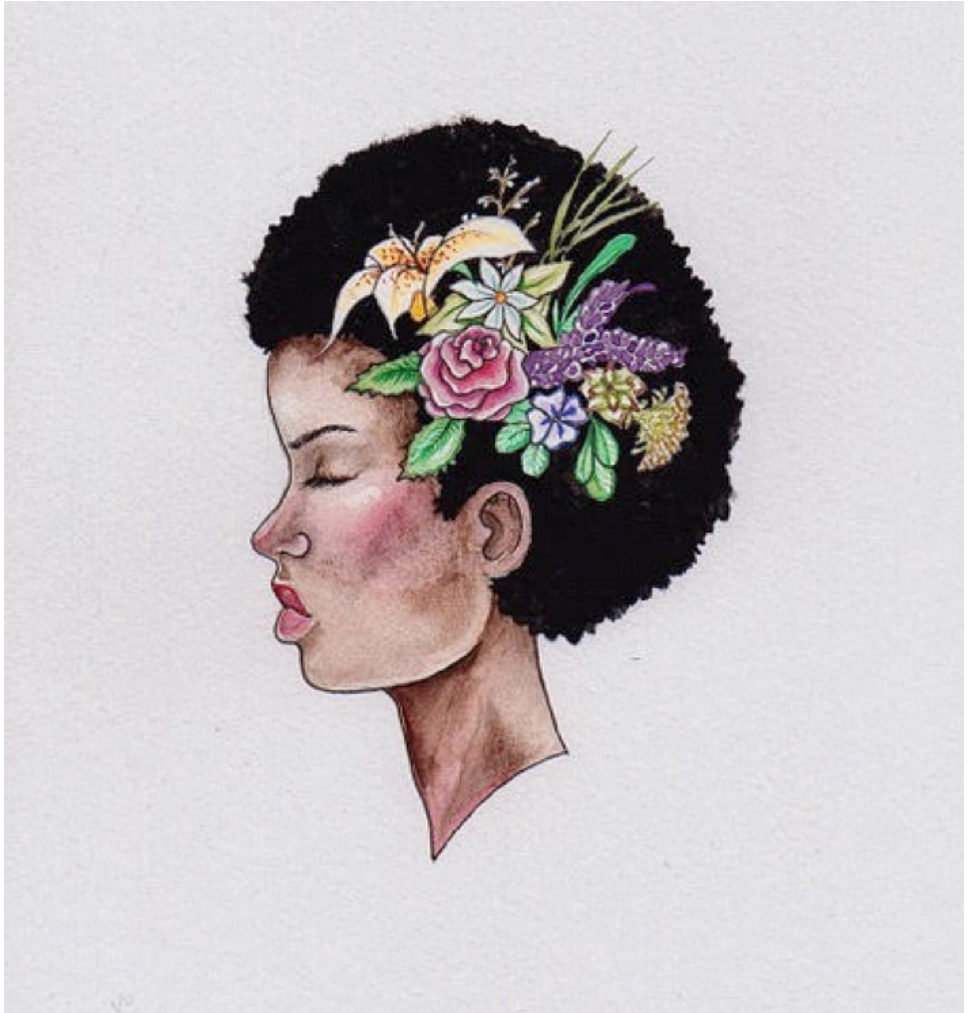
Trace sigils on the backs of your hands,  
kiss the creases of your elbows, sticky like crushed peaches.

I call my therapist from a public bathroom,  
Pupils fuzzed with pills,  
ask her what I've done wrong.  
*This is not about you, she says.*

Later, I curl at your feet like a dog, dopey and adoring.  
Cannula and cord tangle around us.  
Your cannibal lungs gurgle and you spit blood.  
I do not look away.

# Untitled

*By Ez Johnston*



## **dead/living sell/out**

*By Anonymous*

and  
*living things are just*  
*dead things waiting to happen*  
she says today and

i'm running out of expiration dates and  
seven years of regrowth don't change much so it's  
time to start learning  
time to start sanity  
sanctity  
sanitizing  
saintly roses don't apply to me and

how do armies move so  
swiftly, so easily and oh we have  
spectacular things to do today and

*don't be afraid to be a sell out*

he says today and

dead things were once living but  
that doesn't mean they  
*lived*

## **I live like a carrier pigeon**

*By Margaret May*

Driving with that expedited kiss still branded on my cheek. I take care not to extinguish its fire  
with wasted water. I catch rearview sunset, hold it steady, and fiddle with its rays  
like an old lady trying to fix her hair with a hand mirror.

I ride the narrow road to the deep north – the place birds escape from in semester  
haste. Pines proliferate  
to pegboard forests; wooden soldiers wait for snow like a child waits for powdered  
sugar to dust morning pancakes. I melt like leftover winter  
embers on warmed topsoil.

Logic unplugged my migratory clock, clipped my wings before the fall.  
With reoriented magnets in my head, I pilot myself  
on a self-propelled gurney towards Reverence.

*Don't migrate that way –  
jump the time zone like a fence  
and rest your head here.*

Pigeonhole: wood floors with cracks, caverns  
holding rivulets of dust. The vacuum can't suck the river dry.  
Footsteps cloaked in wool

walk, feed, cook, clean, rinse, and repeat. I move like a housewife, awaiting the return  
of her war-torn husband. I am dressed in his stripped t-shirt: a prisoner  
trapped in a two-hour time difference.

Each mile marker I pass, the rays devour asphalt into ribbons of edible gold. I will soon  
fly  
like the Nile, past a centipede of headlights – the weight of compacted steel feathers  
soon shed, freed from beneath me.

Seconds are manmade  
fireflies: hunted in passion,  
captured with blind hands.

## **olivia**

*By Anonymnous*

and her head-halo --  
the light through the rafters  
hugging the curves of her low-flying  
strays, flyaways

i know she soars  
i've seen eyes-closed dances  
on the wooden floor  
the disco can't stop this  
grounded pilot or the  
eyelash resting between  
constellations

(she refuses to make a wish  
as it is swept into the cosmos)

her arms and legs are  
crossed but she isn't

strength smiles easily on her —  
gentle steel wings don't flap but  
float, and olivia your black-hole hair  
is generous with the light it leaves behind  
staining the sun and  
shimmering



# Untitled

*By Sasha Hull*



## Break

*By Seth Wade*

Thomas doesn't understand why his head feels empty. When he waves his head something hot and heavy kicks around, like something natty and needing to detach. No, his head isn't empty. He doesn't understand his limbs either. Were they always so sweaty and long? He forgets how to use them. But he got from the beach to the bar, so he guesses he used them well enough.

"Tommy!"

Thomas zaps his head toward the shrill voice. His father steams toward him in fierce little hobbles.

"What a fuckin' mess yer in."

He's supposed to say something back. Right? Probably. He really should say something. Instead, Thomas watches a foaming glob of saliva that's jumping between the corners of his father's lips.

"Ain't ya a man? Stop that bitch!"

Thomas moves to the counter, watching his limbs to make sure he's walking right. No, he doesn't think he's walking right at all. He grabs at a stool and manages to sit. The bartender looks up for the first time and does a frightened hop. Then, after a moment, he walks away and grabs his phone, wildly tapping. Thomas likes how the bartender walks. He should ask for tips. He wishes he could remember the proper way to ask things. And he could learn from the bartender – he walks like he ain't even trying.

"Daddy?"

Thomas swings his empty-heavy toward a child, who nabs at one of his limbs. The child's so tiny! Jesus, how'd it get so small? Thomas smiles.

"Ya gonna cut me free, right Daddy?" The child nabs with two limbs, then flies backwards between the limbs of Thomas's lover.

"You've changed. So have I. We can't raise this ... if you ever loved me, you'll know I can't keep it, Thomas." They pop out of perception.

A loud whooping rhythm cracks through the slow little ditty yelling from the jukebox. Thomas doesn't remember either noises being there; they both sound filtered and distant. His skin burns and tingles, like he's one big peeling thing. He feels panicked. Naked. Exposed. He doesn't know how to cope so he rubs his limbs together, chaffing gritty bits off. Curious, he licks one of his limbs: pasty, funky, and saltier than sweat or sea.

"Don't be daft, aye?"

He doesn't look towards the voice. He knows it's his friend. Georgie. Sweet, sweet Georgie. Georgie knows how to walk. He's a damn walking genius, just like

that bartender. They both probably walk on water when no one's looking.

"C'mon mate, don't go chasin' after her to that bloody beach. Let her do what needs doing; it's outta your control. Just take your meds and let's go catch that new flick you been bitchin' to see." Thomas has no idea what Georgie is talking about. Flick? Flick-a-tick-tick. Flickety tickity, the knife went squickity. Flickity-tickity, a-squick-tick-tick.

A swarm of shatterings and poundings and yellings infest the air with a bang, and Thomas swings his head to the front door.

"Put down the weapon and put your arms in the air – right now!" Several fat blobs stream into the bar and buzz around, repeating their chant.

Thomas doesn't understand. Which limbs were his arms? He tries to stand but flails. With a deafening pop, a spec of lead leaps out and eats into Thomas. The fat blobs mumble to themselves and swarm over him.

Pain. Uprooted from his gut. Fluid gushes out of him and he no longer feels empty; his limbs grow stiff and he no longer feels heavy. His vision and sound turn lazy and peel away. He tastes and smells saltwater. He wants to doze off sideways into a dream, but is haunted by limbs. Limbs flailing and leaking, then lolling in waves. Red brine with something small and fleshy pulsing unto sand. Thomas doesn't understand. He loved her – he just wanted his baby free. He wanted all three of them to be happy. Oh God, what has he done? He doesn't understand. Understand? He doesn't. He doesn't understand.

## **Nature Administers a Rorschach Test**

*By Margaret May*



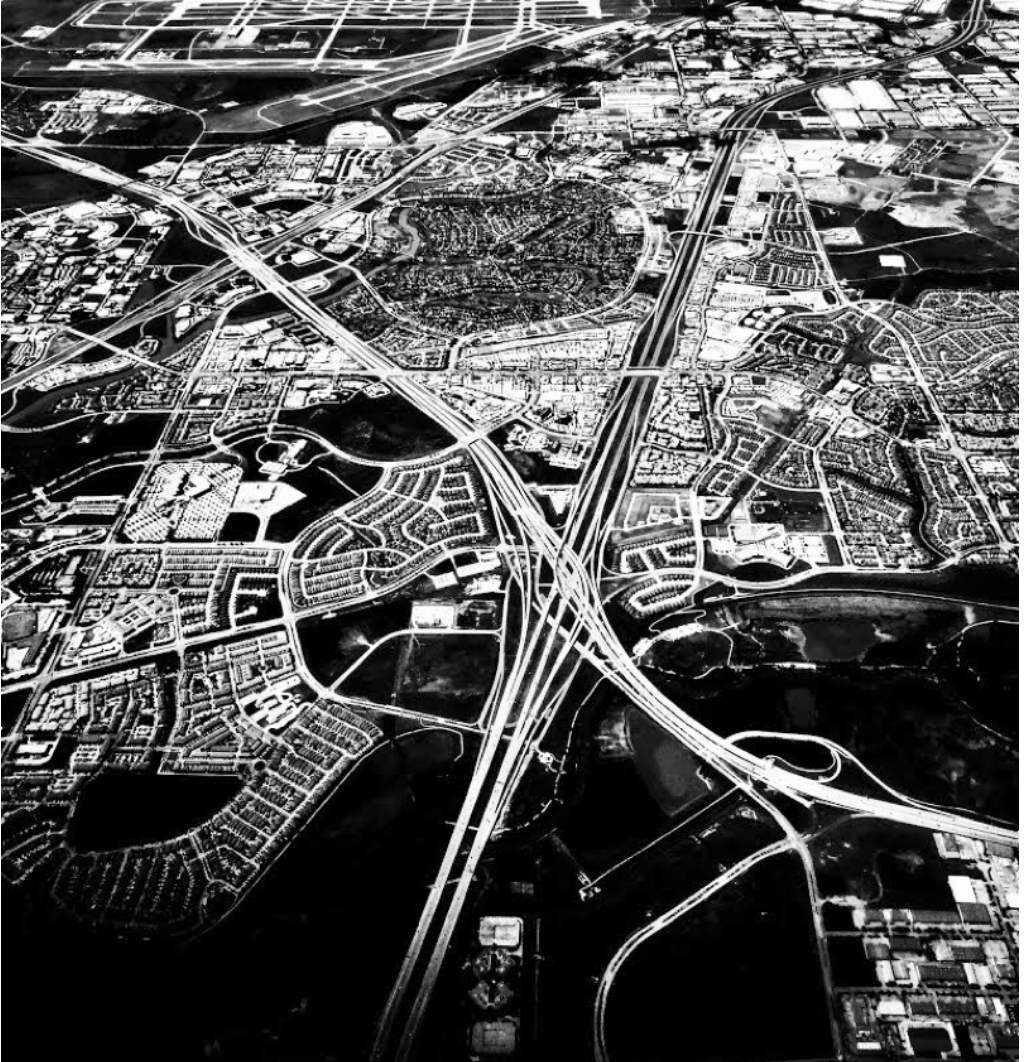
## Twelve Tasks

*By Ali Wood*

At three years old,  
I carved my name into the coffee table with my own teeth –  
prehistoric styluses sharpened like flint rubbed against bedrock.  
Is it physical or chemical weathering: how brothers teach themselves  
to become adults in the absence of a father,  
paring themselves back into marble sculptures of Hercules  
in this text is not the father but the elder women  
who taught themselves how to survive on cooling embers.  
My life is divided into twelve tasks,  
and the first is to lick my own sores  
until they are shining and pink.  
In Ghost Town, Arizona, I shot a real gun with fake bullets  
spit from the nozzle in perfect circles of ash like a pipe smoker  
and watched them float away in a black crow tumor  
(is a nest still a nest if it raises a murder)  
clotting in some distant paper birch.  
This life isn't so serious.  
How many times will I write about how to survive  
before each poem is its own obsidian omen?  
Somewhere, spouts of liquid fire are pouring into the gulf  
and crackling up the sky in an igneous mushroom  
sounds just like a bat whacking home runs,  
what silly nocturnal creatures we are.  
On the baseball field, my brother tells me not to try so hard,  
to just look at the ball. I have never been moderate -  
I smack my bubble gum and spit.

# Untitled

*By Sasha Hull*





# Untitled

*By Ivana Djiya*



## Famished

*By Margaret May*

I.

Cracker crumbs on your lips dissolve to sucrose as you speak. You take another nibble – lips grazing over flushed mulberry and tangerine tie-dye – just as you did the rouged flesh of that nectarine: ripe and ready in the afternoon. Saccharine juices dribble down, deglazing peach fuzz into erect sangria sweat. Un-healable hematomas decorate porcelain. Welcome to the cuisine of half past four: a smorgasbord of physiology. These fruits structurally grow inside out as chiseled hands turn olive hips into caressed clay on a potter's wheel.

II.

Do you see the way the music hits your face? It's lovely, but turn it off. It crowds out the cadence in your breath. Give me the smell of wanted resistance. Flip over like a young leaf rattled by the rush of a bicycle wheel. Peddle along my thigh and continue on. Pull closer like your chest is clipped to invisible carabineers: pinch, press, and persist. Have you ever seen a temple crumble in ecstasy? Rubble left ravaged on Egyptian cotton: thread count unraveling into fragments of you and me. Pitted and panting, soak to the core, I lay shroud in nectar.

III.

Let me color. Be my blind hand's guide, moving in freeform like paint running in water. I scribble on your skin with genetically traceable ink, tracing your beauty marks in a game of connect-the-dots. Crowded colors melt in waxy layers: a confectionary mountain range. Why choose one color when you can create an ménage-a-Crayola? Collaged touches fondle drying masterpieces. Crayons stay splayed, whittled down and torn from their papier-mâché dresses. Over pineapple juice and runny yolks, you tell me you love my Georgia O'Keefe.



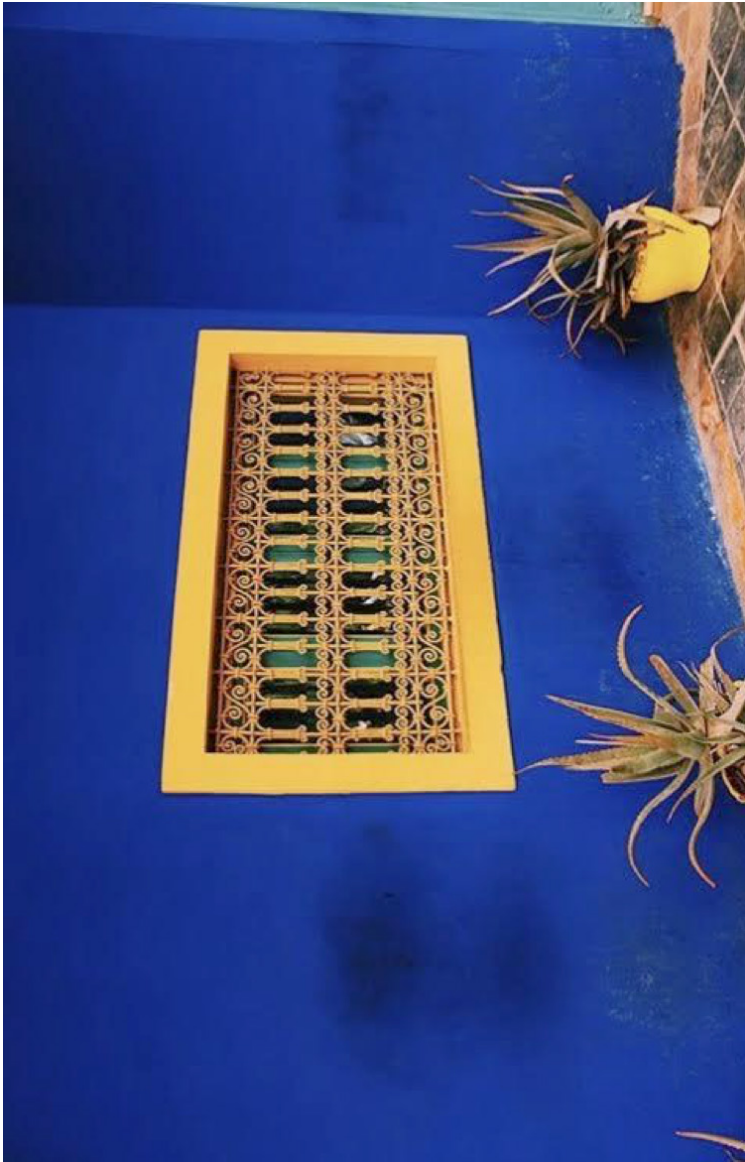
## Bedazzled Crow Sculpture

*By Ali Barrit*



## IN LIMBO

*By Ivana Djiya*



# Fragments of Mr. Halifax's Alcubierre Metric

By Owen Page

## I. Matters of Consumption

*Enter Halifax.*

Zigzagging through flashing traffic he strolls; on a tooth-pick bench next to a man sits he. He: bowler hat, slackened tie, red powder, a sniff here a sniff there. Is that snuff? **the man** asks, all cuttle-fish and knees.

**Halifax** smiles stretching past his nose, zebra-stripes and Doric pillars. Nah man, he says, it's the good stuff. We got your lithium to make you happy, iron to redden your blood, your aconite, your mescaline, some of that atropine, and finally, to top the cake, some strontium to leach that pesky calcium right out of your bones.

**the man:** Right out?

**Halifax** nodding with vehemence: Right out. Liable to make your brain a jelly-fish that has just been dashed against a pier. You want some? I got a bunch! The man shifts, spits, sniffs, and splits.

*Enter theman, enter theman, enter theman*

## II. Dose Response

**themanthecinephile**, dabbing his eyes: Mufasa gets me every time.

**Halifax**, cleaning his nails with a fork prong: Almost as bad as Bambi's mother.

## III. Academic Debate

themanthecritic. Scuba-diving. themanthecritic and Halifax exploring the drowned crags and sea-weed knolls of the ocean floor, red fingers of light trying to snake about their throats and crush them into the mangled jaws of striped police cruisers driven by the faceless men that somehow managed to find all the good coke and dope beneath pillows and floorboards—

**Halifax**, interrupting and inquiring: ...that is exactly what I'm saying: why can't a door just be a door?

**themanthecritic** gesticulating: The door is a symbol—

*Enter Door*

(**Door:** Hello!)

—of passage and penetration.

**Halifax:** What are you?

**Door:** I am that which I—oh wrong fragment! Good-bye!

**Halifax,** waving: Good-bye!  
themanthecritic curses.

#### IV. Following Lines

themanthemoon. It is a dark and peaceful night with little much to do other than make patterns in the stars.

**Halifax:** I see an ash-tree hunched over with an insectile body all mandibles and chitin, a woman fishing with bare hands.

themanthemoon, being a cratered spherical satellite orbiting Earth, elects not to respond.

#### V. The Wonders of Ethanol

themanthefratbro, backwards Reagan-Bush hat, opens a bottle of beer with his molars, animated: ...that's how we get space travel to work.

**Halifax** taking a long gulp from the opened beer: You've forgotten that at that temperature the water in the blood cells will freeze, lysing the membrane.

themanthefratbro pauses, taking a thoughtful swig and grabbing a slice of roni za from the space between: Just give them some stews and pump them full of glucose, lower the blood's freezing point.

**Halifax:** So induce hyperglycemia?

themanthefratbro: Shit's far out, right?

#### VI. Failure of Communication

themanthepoet and Halifax in a Parisian café. Watching the blur of daily activity, coffee with a bit of the good sauce, some Pinot Grigio, perhaps a classic old-fashioned daiquiri. Red powder a few pinches left.

themanthepoet: Start off with structure. You can either use verse, lineate the lines, or just write it like prose.

**Halifax,** doubtful: So a poem that is a short story in disguise?

themanthepoet: No, so the lack of any discerning form would lend freedom for exploration.

**Halifax:** Isn't the lack of any structure inherently structure?

themanthepoet, lost in thought: Hmm, anyways, the key to any good poem is a

bunch of figurative language. There's personification, useful little bastard, the metaphor, pretty much el presidente of devices.

**Halifax:** Examples?

*Enter Door.*

**Halifax:** Hey, how's it going?

**Door,** ruffling the cue cards: Hey! Think I found the right scene.

**themanthepoet:** So when I say, "the door swung open", (Door swings open), I am giving the door human attributes.

(**Door:** You're telling me).

**themanthepoet:** Now for a metaphor, "the door was a cannibal". Door, chop off someone's fingers and eat them.

**Door,** infuriated: Never in my life—bickering went on here for some time.

—Halifax, pencil over a blank page.

**themanthepoet:** So what was it that struck her about you?

**Halifax,** taking another sniff: Her eyes were seafoam, her hair the summer Sun.

**themanthepoet:** Write that down that's good!

Halifax stares at the blank page—this continues for some time—blank page.

themanthepoet looks for the powder but it's all gone as **Halifax,** white knuckles gripping his pencil, staring at the blank page: I can't think, I can't think—

*Enter Halifax, enter...enter—*

*Help us*

# Untitled

*By Sasha Hull*



# **I Am Good at Analogies and Silence and Faking**

*By Ali Wood*

At the edge of the world there's a place  
where the monsters swim,  
and there they are analogies: as owl is to mouse  
as human is to earth  
as god is to human  
as shark is to fish.

I've been. It is dark and blue and wide  
and delicious.  
Tightly packed shark bodies like rubber rub up against each other  
like salt against tapetum,  
pilot fish feeding at the eye of we.  
I brokered a deal with one; if they taught me to plunge  
into shark's mouth without being swallowed,  
I could show them a real monster with blunt molars and a handsome smile.

This Batesian mimicry can only carry so far.  
The Christmas discussion this year was whether to give me mace or a knife  
and it's all I can think about ever since.  
How my brother sheaths his leather-nape knife at the side of his bed,  
a tactic to adopt but not retroactive.  
How easily shark teeth dismember and regenerate like icicles or old friends –  
to have inbred weapons and blueprints for demolition  
carved into the nuclei's double helix and readily available.

All I am made up of is girl and water and absence,  
but I figure they (we) are all lonely creatures too  
in which number and/or size is to power  
as desiccate is to placental  
as worship is to silence.

## Untitled

*By Sasha Hull*





## **Mummy of an unknown woman** *By Aleah Gatto*

I see you, old woman, dead  
600 years before Jesus made time  
count up, not down. What world

did you live in? What dragons or demons  
circled your skies; what angels or aliens  
protected you? How many lives were lost

in the quest to mine the golden mask  
that covers your face? I image the stain  
of your skin on the inside of the cloth, the arms

trying to pull themselves apart, the whole body  
wishing to unravel itself, to be born  
fresh in whatever afterlife you believed in.

If we still mummified our dead, the corpses  
would not be as thin as you, as pin-  
straight, but stuck in the fetal poise

that matches the way we were held,  
hugged & kissed in a cradle of arms that formed  
the wide cavern of the heart. You

must not have been afraid like us:  
to close your eyes under a pyramid  
underneath the constellations.

If we could change places: I'd wrap myself,  
lay in the dusty remains of your gilded coffin.  
You could take my life, dress

in my clothes & walk  
in my shoes for as long  
as the world lasts.

**This publication favors no form or content above any other; it is simply a journal of art that thinks. Our success is impossible without the creative talents of our contributors who continue to reawaken the journal's spirit. Our goal is to stimulate and support an artistic community, which will unify and strengthen the university as a whole.**

*Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue.  
Vantage Point wouldn't be possible without you!*