

# WESTWIND

UCLA's Journal of the Arts

WINTER 2019

For over fifty years, *Westwind* has been printing poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, art, music, and everything in between.

*Westwind* welcomes submissions from new and experienced writers and artists. We seek to cultivate and sustain networks between artists, writers, poets, and readers surpassing the bounds of UCLA's campus, in which we were founded.

Reflective of our inclusion of a variety of different art forms, *Westwind* encourages work to abandon formulaic and traditional demands and expectations. While we accept every medium, we remain appreciative of other kinds of work which furnish conventional forms of writing with contemporary values and concerns that resonate with our readers.

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# FICTION

The humanities are often dismissed by the world at large as unimportant. Because we, who love the arts, who love the written word, who love language, devote ourselves to the pursuit of what some may call ‘aesthetics,’ rather than science or knowledge, what we have to say may sometimes be deemed irrelevant. I am not the first to defend the humanities, and I certainly will not be the last, but I will say this: we who study the humanities hold power. It is we — the writers, artists, and creators — who use our talents to ignite a spark in people’s hearts that allows them to remember what makes life interesting and fulfilling.

Our job at Westwind is to tend to the flames lit by those sparks, to help stoke passions, and ensure that the fire keeps going. Together, our editors and writers have shared laughter, tears, and a lot of hard work to craft this collection. There are many stories in the journal you see before you — stories that we’ve written, polished, and poured our hearts into — and it is my dearest hope that the voices you hear in these stories speaks to you and lights up sparks in your heart. This journal is our open invitation to come and join us by the fire, to warm yourself with the reminder that all stories have value, that all voices have a different story to tell.

*Christine Linh Nguyen*  
*Senior Fiction Editor, 2018-19*

# POETRY

This quarter, the members of the poetry editing staff did as poets do and tended towards the succinct, the edited, and the compact and powerful. We were very selective with our published poems, narrowing down the outstanding field of submissions to a handful of exceptional works. In this rigorous curation process, we have widened the world of our journal beyond the immediate UCLA community of students, faculty, staff, and alumni with works by poets from the Greater Los Angeles Area and one particular poem by a writer from Egypt. We are honored and proud to amplify these writers' sophisticated, empathetic, curious, and diverse voices.

In accordance with our appreciation of specificity and concision, over the last few months, the poetry editing team has evolved into a tight-knit group of writers enthusiastic not only about the art of poetry but also about honoring and lifting up each other's perspectives. Getting to know all of the immensely talented, kind, and wonderful Westwind Poetry editors has been an absolute pleasure, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to have served as Poetry Senior Editor and Arts Senior Editor during my final months at UCLA before graduating. The people and the poetry in Westwind are very special to me, and I hope the art in our Winter 2019 Journal delights, empowers, and inspires you as much as it does me.

*Eric Fram*

*Senior Poetry Editor, 2018-19*

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# TALES FROM A MOTHER

---

By Casey Monahan

“This one time we were in the mosh pit for The Clash, headbanging to ‘This is Radio Clash.’ I was getting completely trampled, so my date picked me up and threw me onto the stage. He was huge, mind you, like 6’7”. Anyway, the second I hit that stage, I got tackled by security, but getting to see the band from that close was totally worth it.” My mom finished wiping the jelly onto my sandwich. Four-year-old me didn’t care much. My attention was directed at the Wiggles on TV singing about fruit salad.

“So then the neighbors got really mad because I was jumping over their kids on my bike. I never hit anybody though and the kids all laid down voluntarily, but now that you’re the same age, I can see why the neighbors were so angry.” She squeezed my hand before letting me climb onto my own bike, training wheels officially off. I froze in fear and immediately fell, landing hard on the kneepads my mom had insisted I wear.

“My friend pierced my ears for me at a sleepover party. She used an ice cube to numb it and then stuck a belt in my mouth to muffle my screams.” She glanced over at me, rolling up a sleeping bag for my first sleepover. “But it was a terrible experience. You should wait until you’re thirteen.” I was afraid of needles anyway.

“And then we spray-painted the bridge with our school’s name, but the rival school showed up and started shooting flare guns at us, so we fired back. Your father threw me into the boat and we were getting away, at least until a police helicopter showed up. Don’t you just love school spirit?” She put down the paint brush and admired her work. I was coated from head to toe in blue and orange face paint for my 5th grade spirit day. I washed it off as soon as I got to school.

“I shaved half my head once, and when I came home, my dad said that I looked like a piece of roadkill that’s been left out for a week. He was right of course. It did look pretty horrible, but it’s just hair. It grows, so who cares?” She patted my head as we waited for my hair-

cut appointment. I smiled thinly. *So much for wanting a good 9th grade yearbook photo.*

“When I went to prom, I was gone for over twenty-four hours without saying a word to my parents. Don’t be like me. Please text me when you’re on your way home or if you need me.” She beamed at the much-too-pink dress she’d gotten for me. I didn’t want to go to prom, but I never mentioned it to her.

“I failed all my classes freshman year, probably because I never attended them. One of my professors asked me who I was when I walked in to take the final. Anyway, I ended up having to switch out of computer science since I was failing and it was so boring. You should do something more interesting, like communications. That’s what I did.” I stayed in computer science all the way through college.

“My first apartment was in the sketchiest part of town. There was a stabbing right in our parking lot, but at least we got free decor. I furnished my entire living room from a nearby dumpster. It worked well enough.” My mom sat on my white couch with her feet propped up on the mahogany coffee table. I flinched at the vulgarity.

“You know, I started laughing during my wedding ceremony with your father. Didn’t even say ‘I do’ because I was choking on my own laughter, so everybody just assumed that I agreed. I guess that means we’re not even officially married, but we love each other so in the end, it doesn’t matter.” During my ceremony, I glanced at her when I was about to say, ‘I do.’ I chuckled at how goofy she looked in formal attire.

In the hospital, just before I gave birth to my first child, I had an anxiety attack. My mom walked in to my hyperventilating. She grabbed my hand and didn’t let go until my breathing finally calmed. “Right after I had you, I felt like I did everything wrong: I fumbled with your diapers, I couldn’t make you stop crying, and every time I tried to burp you, you would throw up on me. It was the most anxiety-inducing experience I’ve ever had, but then you laughed for the first time. In that moment I knew that even if I messed up, I’d never stop trying to be the best mom that I can for you.” My daughter came a few hours later, and when I was alone with the little bundle resting on my chest, I whispered into her ear.

“This one time...”





In the Jewish faith, it's bad luck to name one's child after someone who is still alive. As a result, we name our people after the dead. We name our people after grandparents and distant relatives. We name our people after our ancestors who walked the desert for 40 years. We name our people to uphold a great and long standing Jewish tradition. I am not named for any of these reasons. I am named for the dead, but more so than anything, I am named after her.

I am named for love.

My father grew up in Holon, a large suburb located in the central coastal strip south of Tel Aviv. He was about 17 when it happened and so was she. When I think of first loves, I think of the movies. Oh the drama, the romance, the heartbreak. When I think of my father's first love I think of those same things. I imagine the sweltering Israeli heat tanning their skin as they smoke cigarettes and drink Coronas together. My dad's hair was brown then. So was hers. From what he told me, and a stoic man like my father never tells me much, was that it wasn't her fault. She was driving a motorcycle when she was hit by an oncoming car.

Her name was Katya.

Her death left the kind of scars that turn a man against the world. My father is covered in these kinds of scars. After the accident, he decided to leave Holon and go to Dahab, a small town on the southeast coast of the Sinai Peninsula where he lived with the Bedouins for one year. The Bedouins, for those who are not familiar, are nomads; desert people. Back in 1976 the Sinai Peninsula still belonged to Israel, a trophy of Israel's triumph in the Six-Day war. Back in 1976 it still belonged to my father. He lived and traveled and grew his hair out. He walked the desert and mourned alone, together with these people, in biblical fashion.

What love does to a man.

When I heard this story I was 14. For fourteen years I never even gave so much a thought to something as basic as my own name. Six years later and knowing what I know now about the nature of my

name, it doesn't really feel like my own. It's a strange kind of nostalgia. I keep her memory alive, for my father's sake at least. A noble task, I guess. Of course, my mother thought this gesture was sweet. Perhaps she believed that despite his violent childhood, his past as a soldier, his constant brewing inner rage, that this was just the only way this man knew how to show his love.

My father the hopeless romantic.

He showed me an old picture of her once. She was pretty and exuded a youthful glow, something I'm sure attracted my father to her. It was strange seeing him hold onto that picture. With her long brown hair and blue eyes, Katya and I share a passing resemblance. We stared at it in silence. We stared at her in silence. His hair, still long, has since turned gray. His hands are calloused over, worn out from decades of manual labor.

Her hands were still soft.

A couple weeks ago I looked up the actual meaning of my name. When I found out, it seemed like a bad joke. Kate, in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew means pure. Pure, a word I would never associate with my name or myself. Given the origin, given the death, given the loss and the mourning and the heartbreak, pure is the last word I would have come up with. I reserve that word for someone like her – someone who died young and beautiful and innocent. Not someone with a beating chest, who reminds her father of the girl he once loved. I am older now than she ever was.

My hands are calloused too.

# THREAD

---

By Peyton Austin

My mother buys anti-aging cream  
and/or de-aging cream and/or  
anti-wrinkle cream and/or youth  
serum and

there are barely any woman her  
age on the TV screen. There are  
even less women older than her  
on the TV screen. When they do  
appear, all appear in foundation  
and

mascara. This can't be a bandage, I  
think. This is the wound.

This is not a thesis statement.

INT. YOUNG GIRL'S BEDROOM  
- DAY

GIRL #1 (11-years-old) curls her hair in front of a mirror. GIRL #2 (also ME, same age) watches her.

GIRL # 2

Why are you doing that? We're only gonna see a movie.

There is no argument.

Beat.

GIRL #2

It's gonna be dark. No one will see your hair anyway.

Beat as Girl #1 keeps curling.

Work with a coworker I've only met before once or so. In a five hour shift, she mentioned that she's not skinny three times, even though she is. They are brushed off mostly as jokes, but the lament remains underneath.

This is not a theme.

"If only I didn't eat so many carbs," she says, "then I'd be skinny."

I don't laugh. "You are skinny," I say, confused, worried. I do not say this as reassurance, because it is fact. She brushes this off too.



My friend and I walk through the streets of Old Town Pasadena. We chat about movies, what each of us are currently writing, school, people we've met, the arcade we've just come back from. "I'm thinking of cutting my hair short," I say. "I want a boy cut."

He shakes his head. "Don't do that."

It's more anger than confusion. "What?"

"Don't cut your hair," he says.

He doesn't look at me the entire exchange, but he doesn't need to. I already understand: to see is to own.

This is not even a motif.

Do not be mistaken. There are no winners, no better-offs, no possible survivors here.

This is a thread.

In response to a short story I wrote:

As a male I  
was having a hard time  
not wanting to leave  
the room listening to  
Savannah talk

The thread goes nowhere.

about, like omg,  
boys, and like, shopping!  
I remember being so bored  
watching my ex girlfriend  
try on dress after dress.

At the mall food court I watch  
a group of young girls, middle  
school like I used to be. They wear  
short shorts like I used to, like I  
currently do. They wear v-necks  
like I used to, like I currently do.

They do not feel my eyes but I feel  
theirs. I feel them watching, learn-  
ing, mirroring. I am their mirror  
as oracle, telling their future, and  
they are my mirror as mediums,  
showing my past self. I want to  
reach into my skin and shatter all  
reflections.

There is no development.

A fall quarter syllabus, rewritten:  
Woman barely mentioned.  
Woman raped.  
Woman raped but in film.  
Woman barely mentioned.  
Woman raped.  
Woman a full complex story.  
Woman pregnancy the main focus  
but in film.  
Women beauty the main focus.  
Woman a full complex story.

Its fibers are anecdotal.

a spot spun on my skin  
white and pink my mother  
cannot bear the sight  
seemingly since she buys  
more and more acne creams  
i don't ask for i stash them  
in my mirror my mother knows  
because the next one appears  
sitting unopened on my sink

The strands do not dénouement.

Once in high school, in an attempt  
to get me in line, my male teacher  
said, "Sit down, woman." He did  
not say my name—he knew ex-  
actly what to say to exert control  
over me.

I turned red. I followed his order.  
Which means I accepted his rep-  
rimand and I accepted his naming  
of me.

There is no conclusion.

I was the opposite of him: I had  
no words. I think that's the worst  
part, the most shameful.  
My lack of response.

# THE END OF

---

By Chelsea Olsen

light is mother's milk  
water our soul's pubescence  
dirt our last embrace

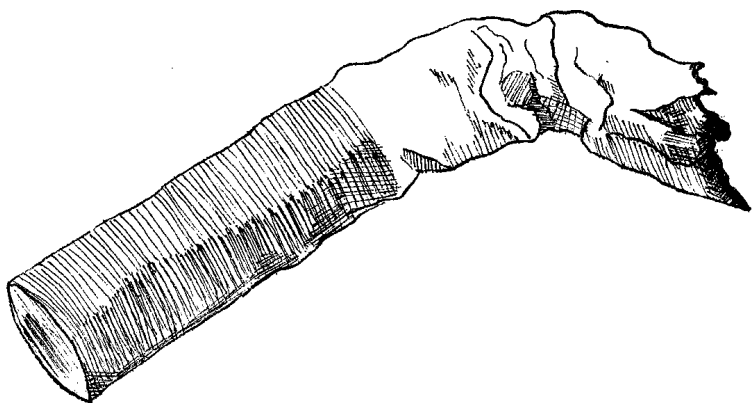
I am a space rock  
in my orbit's other end.  
I will eat the sun

I am an apple  
even the worms have left me,  
fat with my raw core



wind worn, weak and weary,  
deep on desert highway, still  
I am a poppy

we are cigarettes  
lit in the mouth of the Earth  
flicked, we end as ash



# THE WONDER YEARS

---

By Frank Fiore

In 1991 and 1992, I spent alternating Wednesdays in front of two different television sets. The first was our old, fifty-two inch family room *Zenith*. Its color was dull, the remote never had batteries, and there was a dent in the cabinet from the time my mother shattered her favorite ashtray, missing my father's skull entirely. The other television I watched was smaller and sat on the kitchen counter of my father's girlfriend's apartment. Her name was Svetlana. I can't recall the brand of her television, but I know it wasn't a *Zenith*. Its antennas had to be far apart in order to pick up a good signal, otherwise there'd be static. Every Wednesday night at eight o'clock we all gathered around these two television sets to watch *The Wonder Years* — me and my mother on the sofa, one Wednesday, and me and my father and Svetlana at her kitchen table, on the other Wednesday.

Usually my mother fell asleep halfway through the episode, long before Kevin Arnold's droning narration settled on the any profound coming-of-age insight. I worried, sometimes, about my mother's lit cigarette, that it might burn down our house while she slept. *Mom, mom?* I'd say, in a voice yet to break, but with no response I'd have to ease the cigarette from her hand and stub it out myself. I'd turn back to the TV and wouldn't look up, it seemed, for a full week. By then, my father had already crumpled a napkin onto his diner plate and was leaving through the patio door, a bowling bag lugged behind him. Maybe he went bowling once or twice, but really, he could've been anywhere. Svetlana would yell at him in her thick Bulgarian, hands up against her ribcage like Lynda Carter with her golden bracelets and Lasso of Truth. She'd gesture her fist at his empty chair and then tell me in bitter English, "Your father is a mother f—" before biting her bottom lip and sitting down in a huff where we continued our television ritual.

I don't remember much of *The Wonder Years*, but I do remember that Svetlana always had something to say while we watched it. She told me once that Winnie Cooper was too tall for Kevin Arnold — how men and women need to be the same height, but it was okay if the woman was shorter because a woman can just wear high heels. She told

me how the show's theme was a cover of a song sung by Ringo Starr, and when I asked what was a Ringo Starr, she pulled out a cassette tape and played it until I understood. Occasionally, Svetlana would give her own voiceover narration of Winnie Cooper. She'd say, "Oh Kevin" and we would both laugh because each time Svetlana would say it with a different inflection. Oh *Kevin*, with eye-rolling disapproval. *Oh* Kevin, almost swooning. During the commercial breaks she gave historical context – how the show was set in the late nineteen-sixties, and what were hippies, and who was Richard Nixon, and why all the televisions in the Arnold household were showing grainy war footage. She also said that Jack Arnold, Kevin's dad, looked exactly like her father back home in Bulgaria. They both had the same strong jawline, the same low brow and stern temper. In the episodes where Jack Arnold had more involvement in the plot, Svetlana would sit forward in her chair with her arms folded, studying the screen very quietly.

At eight thirty, before the *Growing Pains* title sequence had even begun, Svetlana would switch off the television. She'd yell, her voice carrying over the running kitchen faucet, that if I didn't finish my homework she would walk me all the way to school the next morning and in front of the entire sixth grade, kiss me on the lips. It was a threat that Norma Arnold, Kevin's mom, made in one of the early episodes we watched together. Svetlana thought this was the funniest thing, laughing deeper each time at her own impression of the sitcom mother. She'd kiss her lips toward the kitchen table, hands busy with the dishes, soaping up the insides of small glasses of partially dried milk. When I finished my homework Svetlana would look it over, correcting my pre-algebra and testing me on my weekly vocabulary. If there was anything that was meant to be signed – field trip waivers, permission slips for videos in health class – anything I hadn't shown my mother earlier in the week, Svetlana would sign it. Once, while I was cleaning out my backpack she discovered a failing grade on a recent biology exam. I had forged her signature at the top. She was livid, but only for a moment. Then she taped the exam to her refrigerator beside a photo of her family, demanding a higher grade by the end of the month. We replaced it with a B+ the following week. Then we watched the nightly news, and afterward, *Married... With Children*.

Svetlana made coffee around ten o'clock. She worked the night shift as a nurse at the hospital and her floral print scrubs seemed only to get more vibrant with each wash. As she clipped her hospital ID to her breast pocket I would begin to blush without fully comprehending why. I still wonder. Then Svetlana would fix us two dishes of baklava, which she said tasted even sweeter back home in Bulgaria. We would

sit there eating the rich pastry in front of the television as she reminded me of things I already knew – where the extra blankets were kept, what time I should wake up in the morning for school, and how Sally Bennett, who stopped sitting next to me at lunch, was a hussy and not worth my time. Svetlana sipped her coffee, slowly, from a mug we had painted together. I remember sitting there in her tiny kitchen, leaning forward, and considering it in her hands. It was chipped on the side, the handle was missing, and whatever we had painted was hidden behind Svetlana's thin and interlocked fingers. She had several other mugs, but she only ever used that one. Sometimes she allowed me a sip of her coffee as long as I promised not to tell my father. I'm not sure if she ever noticed where I placed my lips against the ceramic edge. Eventually, we heard the sliding door latch click open and a bowling bag drop on the living room rug. Svetlana, without a word to my father, left for the hospital, her mug still warm on the kitchen table, the television still murmuring.

In 1993, *ABC* cancelled *The Wonder Years*. As Kevin Arnold matured the producers wanted to shift the tone of the show to reflect a more adult narrative. The network, however, felt this was inappropriate given its eight o'clock time slot. This, coupled with the show's declining ratings and escalating costs, caused *ABC* not to bring it back for their fall schedule, not even as reruns. I don't remember exactly what happened to Svetlana, but that year my father got his own apartment and my mother got full custody.



# OUR MILWAUKEE MONARCHS

---

By Frank Fiore

(7-47-3)

There will be no postseason for the Milwaukee Monarchs. With tonight's scoreless effort against the Regina Rattlesnakes they have extended their losing streak on home ice to seventeen, setting a new franchise record for futility. But this particular loss, their league-leading forty-seventh of the season, is even more significant because they have now become the first team this year to be statistically eliminated from playoff contention. The Monarchs have simply fallen too far in the conference standings; an insurmountable fifty-one points behind the team currently holding the lowest wildcard spot. There's just no way to sugarcoat it. In springtime, after the long grind of the regular season, there will be no more hockey in Milwaukee. No pucks in nets. No toothless grins. No glorious goal horns. And most importantly, no silver grail. By mid-April the stadium ice will all be melted and the seats will become even emptier than they are now. By then the concession workers will be unemployed, the mascot a lifeless husk, and the radio play-by-play crew officially off the airwaves. There are still, however, twenty-five games remaining on the schedule.

Twenty-five more meaningless instances of skates being laced, of national anthems being sung, and of our ailing organ churning away to revive the spirit of this sorry, dilapidated excuse for a hockey squad. Our Milwaukee Monarchs! League leader in goals allowed and sticks broken over the crossbar. Hurrah! Setting records for opposing team hat tricks and neutral zone turnovers. Milwaukee! Come for the promotions if not for the play – one-dollar hot dogs and free beer if the home team scores by the end of the first period. Go Monarchs!

(7-55-3)

Tonight we lose again: 1-3 to the Saskatoon Sturgeons, our lone goal coming late in the third with a minute left on the game clock. When we pull our goalie for the extra attacker, Saskatoon heaves the

puck full ice for the empty netter. A further insult to injury, and we have plenty of injuries. They pass the puck around in their zone, tape-on-tape, running out the clock. This would be a disappointing loss for a lot of fans, but by now most have most have already filtered out into the parking lot, their car heaters burning up the light frost on their windshields.

Aabye Sørensen, our team captain for fourteen years, is the last to leave the ice. He's retiring at the end of the season, returning home to his native Denmark. Since his Achilles tore he just hasn't been the same. On his way to the locker room he guides his hockey stick over the boards, into the small hands of a young girl wearing his jersey; #24. She's missing her front teeth too. Before Sørensen leaves the rink he looks up at the rafters, at two dusty banners alongside a few memorable surnames and numbers. The Zamboni slowly rolls onto the ice, collecting the skate-cut snow, repairing notches and cracks with recycled slush, laying down a thin layer of water. It freezes quickly, forming a cold revived sheet of white.

"What is it like?" a reporter asks Sørensen during the post-game interview. "What is it like to be playing these games now that you know your Monarchs aren't competing for the playoffs anymore?"

"Oh, you know, you're not thinking about that when you're out there on the ice. You know? You're thinking about the next goal, about skating hard, about getting a clean zone entry, about positioning. We're all just taking it one shift at a time out there."

"How tough has it been for the team this season, especially after all the success you had in those cup runs just a few years back?"

"It's been more than a few years, Jim."

"True."

"It's tough though. I'm not going to lie to you. Those of us who were around for those cups – Me, Simon, Augie, JP, Freddy Wilhelm – a lot of despair on those faces. When you're a hockey player and you're not playing good hockey, well, you feel like you're nothing. But we're all men here too, you know? We've got wives, kids. A lot more important things out there than making the postseason."

"About your retirement..."

"Look, hockey's life to me – winning, losing, dropping gloves – but you gotta know when it's time to hang up the skates. I'm thirty-seven now, an old man in this league, and there's plenty of talented young players in this locker room alone who are just faster, stronger, and sharper. They still have a lot to learn about hockey intangibles, but they've all got potential. I'm leaving the game in good hands."

"Thank you for your time."

(7-68-3)

Another loss: 3-8 to the Helena Hawkeyes. Augustine looks damn slow out there. Maybe he came back from injury too soon. He's really a great goaltender when he's healthy, quickest glove in the game. Makes a person sentimental for all those miracle saves he used to make, just when everyone in the crowd thought we'd given up a sure goal. The communal sigh of relief when the puck bounced off Augie's stick or disappeared into his glove was flat transcendental. We were invincible with Augie in net. We had complete faith. But that was a long time ago.

Since then our core has aged, retired, or been traded away for poor replacements. We're not cohesive anymore. We have no identity. But you can't fault our current roster, not entirely. Look at the coach. Look at the system. Look at how well Cam Alberts has been playing since he got traded to the Sioux Falls Swans: twelve goals and twenty assists, twice as much as he produced for us this season and in half the games. He was the heart of our Monarchs too, our solid second-line center. Now he's the heart of another team, pumping life into their wooden sticks, cycling the puck with their man advantage. The Swans clinched their playoff berth a while ago. In April we'll raise our glasses for Sioux Falls, for Cam Alberts and our proxy success.

Some fans don't mind losing though. Some fans are even rooting for it. The lower we sink in the standings the better odds we'll have in the draft lottery. Who knows, they could be right. They say one or two solid teenage prospects, an elite defender or a slick wrist shot, can turn this team into a contender. Next year, they say – all we need is a savior, one high draft pick, and he will lead us to our projected paradise. Next year, they say – we're only one or two seasons away from hoisting up that silver grail once again. With every increasing tally to our loss column, these fans revel in their statistics and their optimism for some vague future, some resurrected glory come next June.

Other fans spit on this logic. For them, to cheer for a loss is irreconcilable with the spirit of being a Monarchs fan. This year, they say. We say. We might be plagued with injuries, we might be last in Corsi percentage, we might be clinging to a stale grind-'em-against-the-boards system in a fast finessing league; our power play an embarrassment and our forechecking nonexistent – hell, we might never win another game, but goddammit there is beauty in these losses. There is still hockey in these losses. Whatever success greets this wonderfully defeated team next season; whatever our roster looks like when we've got new prospects, new coaches, when we've made a few offseason trades, when Sørensen retires – that's all just speculation. To seek a loss for a future ill-defined, however high the draft pick, neglects the actual

beauty of this sorry, dilapidated excuse for a hockey squad. Make no mistake, our Milwaukee Monarchs are not a good team, but they're our team. They're the only one we've got.

(7-71-3)

Our last game of the season starts in a few minutes. We're playing our in-state rivals, the Madison Mallards. There's a small ceremony before the game in appreciation of the oft-overlooked playing career of Aabye Sørensen. The stadium is nearly empty, only diehard fans remain; scattered forms of life sipping beer and breathing fog into frigid hands. A voice echoes from above; "One more round of applause please, for the twenty years Aabye Sørensen has suited up for the black and gold." The Mallards' players tap their sticks on the ice out of reverence, a tradition carried on for generations of hockey. Sørensen waves to the crowd. In a few minutes, every Monarchs' fan in attendance will root for Mallard blood, spewing insults, celebrating cross-checks, taunting their penalty box, and praying for sweet victory over feathered fowl. But for now, while the Madison Mallards tap their sticks in tribute, there is only a reciprocal respect.

During the pregame huddle, Sørensen winces with the pressure of his left skate carving up the ice. The team crowds around him one final time – Simon, Augie, JP, Freddie Wilhelm, the rookies, the three defensemen on one-year contracts, the left wing fresh off the injured reserve. Who knows if any of them will be Monarchs come next season. Or still in the league, for that matter. Freddie Wilhelm is weeping, tears streaming into his thick walrus mustache. He cries every April, sometimes also in June. Sørensen looks up once more at the jerseys and banners hanging in the rafters, once more before the final pre-game horn blares its noble sound.

There will be no postseason for the Milwaukee Monarchs. There are still, however, three periods of hockey left to play.

# LAST MEMORIES OF A RAINDROP

---

By Grace Li

I've worn green and blue and sunsets  
Though I wished I had lived in an iris  
Though I could have been born  
Something else, a shooting star,  
A tree crashing in the Amazon,  
Still, mother I don't want to leave  
This cloud spun on soft nimbus down.

I once saw a photon fly right past me.  
It bent time a little out of shape and left  
A few wobbling air waves in its wake.

Seven thousand feet from the ground.

Oh stall the force of the air! wait and let me  
Say my goodbyes to the wind  
Before the ground falls on me.

I've seen cities of droplets spun into being,  
Crowding me in so many languages.  
Some had condensed up from the Atlantic and some  
Had floated out on the breeze of spring kisses.

We all knew we were going to fall— I wondered  
Who would be going with me and what day  
And was I going to be one of the first, the noticed ones,  
To play the light prelude on the tips of eyelashes?

When I was younger I dreamed of being  
The biggest, roundest of the bunch,  
I was going to end as a whole puddle someday.

But there was always some other heavyweight,  
Some freakish hybrid between  
A soap bubble and fire extinguisher.

I gave up and tried to work on  
My rhythm, as much as could be possible  
In a symphony with no conductor  
Headlining a one-night show.

No rehearsal, just a single chance to get the timing right,  
To land the perfect beat that would leak  
Through the rooftop into the background of dreams.

It seems that the whole earth is leaping up  
To meet me now.

I remember harmonizing with the thunder, who always  
Shook a whole bunch of us loose, but still I held on tight with all  
The surface tension I could muster.

I've heard the myths of what our ancestors did,  
Illuminated prisms across the sky,  
Saved whole villages from death  
And eons ago carved the basins of the Earth.

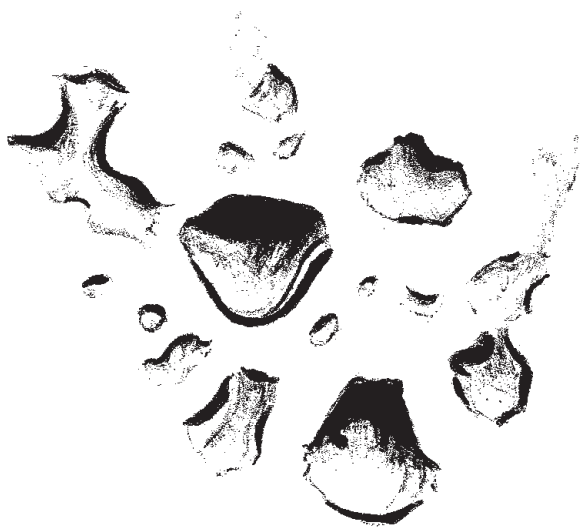
(Mother tell me, is the afterlife Niagara  
Or the desert?)

Now fifty feet.  
I can see the rooftops  
The dim whiteness of crosswalks widening...

I'm crossing between alleys of solid rain,  
We're hysterical, sheets of screaming water,  
Mazes of light, roaring down,

billions falling next to me.  
They'll never find me, any trace of me  
And the sidewalks too will trickle into the sea—

No, I should have been a tear carving down  
The eyes of an automobile  
As it tries to forget and wipes me away



# SIX WAYS OF KEEPING TIME

---

By Grace Li

measure the angle of morning cast on two lovers, dressed  
only in the shadow patterns of the window panes. light  
trickles down in a constant drip drip, blowing wet kisses  
at the dust motes, shoving a power burner under the sky.  
the frozen watch rises from its dream and whispers  
settle down, settle down

“at two tomorrow? / yes, perfect. / you said two o clock  
sharp? (three minutes to brush teeth two minutes to comb hair  
ten seconds to lock door eight minutes to bus stop)”  
yes I’ll be there at two thirty sharp. “thank you so much  
for your time / thank you / thank you”

what is it about the rain and its one two one two and its  
song without swing and its tedious polyphony  
what is it about the rain that forces itself onto the roses  
that traces its manifest destiny across passenger windows  
that tick tocks an incessant *settle down, settle down*

I will not set the timer! I will just know! I don’t need instructions  
for my TV dinner! take the long way home! spend an extra  
six minutes and twenty eight seconds! or twenty nine! life is long!

death is long! a head count of forevers : the length of  
love in a second hand tick : eternal alarm clock that won’t shut up  
crawls into your skull after making love : on peaceful nights scream-  
ing

SETTLE DOWN SETTLE DOWN



measure the angle at which love hits a darkened room, count  
the careful breaths shorter than eyelids blinking, heart ticking  
time hovering outside with its faint whimpers of *let me in, let me in*  
until it settles down, settles down

# GHAZAL OF DEPARTURE

---

By Grace Li

A drawing of the love scene that is yet to happen  
hangs in the space between your lips parting

All lines converge towards your figure half-  
interrupted by the sheets, under my fingertips parting

The dishes drip blue in the ceramic twilight, landing  
where lovers wait on airstrips parting

Your belt is undone and I am empty  
as a drum, down the middle unzipped, parting

We are as vanishing planes before we bend away  
into dreams, onto our separate trips, parting

You are a bare library with no shelves, read  
in the light that lingers after infinite curtains parting

I tumble into the laundry of your scent  
stretched like a far-flung field, hips parting

We play to the eternal rhythm section of water  
its tight fills under love's grip, parting

At closing hour when the taps run dry, a part  
of me slips out and runs after the ships departing

In the room where you lie waiting  
the prelude to the waves is your lips parting

# HOW TO BECOME A PESCATARIAN

---

By Abraham Ramirez

Get into a Portuguese knife fight  
when you wander L.A.

Your mask's been compromised.  
Accept the future.  
Savor Pop Art.

Don't be late to your deadline.  
Melancholy footsteps  
among faded stars.

Question Jesus.  
Go to Confession and lie.

Thoughts have been heavy  
on your eyes aimed  
at purple-hazed skies.

Crave home cooked food.  
Don't get distracted by the smell  
of beef on the grill.  
It's not as good as sex.

# FIRST CLASS

---

By Gordon Sun

It was finally time to go home.

With a few whispered words, the airport attendant accompanying me to the gate handed me over to a young stewardess when we boarded. My daughter Jessie went into the economy class section on the right. I was surprised, however, when the stewardess steered me in the opposite direction, toward the front of the plane.

I know we can't afford this--maybe Jessie was able to get a free upgrade?

The first-class cabin was luxurious and well-lit. Seats were long and wide enough for a person to lay almost completely flat. Each pod had its own partition, spacious storage compartment, extra-wide TV screen, and inviting pile of blankets, pillows, and slippers. We passed a young couple, probably honeymooning, snuggled together and whispering sweet nothings. I was pleased with the flight attendant's personalized attention as she kindly tucked me in with a thick wool blanket.

The last time I traveled this far was over fifty years ago. I had shivered in tattered clothing in the musty hold of a cargo ship, crammed among countless wary, fearful strangers. Above us, hostile men had barked out harsh commands as food and water grew scarce...

"Would you like another drink, sir?" the flight attendant asked a middle-aged man in a dark business suit sitting across the aisle. The man nodded as he finished sipping a martini.

Moments later, the plane took off. The flight was pleasantly calm, and I hardly noticed the hours passing by. After we landed, the same stewardess who brought me on board helped transport me to the exit row. My daughter was already there, waiting with her carry-on.

"How was the flight, Jessie?" the flight attendant asked.

"It was fine," Jessie replied softly. "Thank you for accommodating my mother."

"Of course. I'm glad that we could upgrade her to first class," the stewardess said as she gently handed me over to my daughter.

“I think she would’ve loved this...and now she’s finally home.” Jessie smiled, tears rolling down her cheeks, as she reached out to accept the elegant urn containing my ashes.



ANGEL OF DEATH BY ERIC FRAM

# THEY SAID IT WAS ALRIGHT

---

By Nacho de Vera

“*Pare*, you eat yet?” Claro yelled. He was waving a brown paper bag, steam still rising from the open top.

From across the gym floor, Martin could smell the salty-sweet of fresh bread as it wafted above the regular scents of sweat and rusting iron. He and Claro worked at their neighborhood gym, which offered dirt pay and had them come in as early as 7 am on Saturdays. The only reliable breakfast at that hour came from the bakery down the street, a place that Martin loved- he was never truly awake until he’d had a mouthful of their pan de sal. “You know I can’t get breakfast at my house,” he said.

“*Konyo*, here. Eat.” Claro pressed the bag into Martin’s hands. “Keep your strength up.” Claro was the sort to say those kinds of things, as if all of life were a 12-round bout. He lived his own life that way, and on Saturday mornings made Martin live it with him, insisting they train before the morning crowd came in. That particular morning, however, Claro was preoccupied by some disturbing news about Martin. It needed to be addressed, and he hoped working up a sweat would put his friend in a talkative mood.

An hour and a half later, he was screaming into Martin’s ear. “Push, *konyo!* Up! Up!”

Martin groaned beneath the weight of the barbell on his shoulders, face purple as he slammed it against the rack. Claro slapped him hard on his glistening back, leaving a bright red handprint on the bare skin.

“Gorgeous set, fucking gorgeous. You’re getting stronger, if only you’d eat enough. *Putá*, I have to practically force feed you.” Martin did not respond, still catching his breath, and Claro took the opening. “Hey, I saw Sepi yesterday,” he said.

Martin closed his eyes. His younger brother, Sepi, was a shrimp of a freshman with a chip on his shoulder. Sepi had gotten into trouble again; Martin knew it would come up, but only wished the peace might have lasted a little longer. He savored his Saturday mornings and his

time with Claro, and was hesitant to disrupt either. Especially for this. “So you saw Sepi. And?”

“What do you mean, ‘and?’ *Tangina*, what happened to his face?”

“Usual. Some kid beat the shit out of him. Last week Sepi busted someone up, word is his brother returned the favor.”

Claro reached over and slapped Martin on the side of the head.

“*Put*, and you’re just gonna let that go?”

In truth, Martin knew the whole story more intimately than he wanted to. He was there for the making of it, at the dinner table when his father convinced Sepi to deal with his problem.

He’d been distraught for weeks. When their father finally slammed his fists down and demanded he say it straight, Sepi reluctantly told them his best friend, Ethan, was gay. He had just come out. For a moment, as he said it, he locked eyes with Martin. And Martin felt words swelling in his throat, but found himself unable to speak. His father, however, had no problem with words.

“*Putangina, bakla si* Ethan? The faggot’s slept in my house. Sepi, you can’t let that shit stand. Knock it out of him if you have to, you hear me?” He made it impossible not to.

The next day, Sepi left school with bloody knuckles and a letter from the principal, but came home to a standing ovation of one. Over dinner, he was more silent than his brother had ever seen, lips pressed so tightly that Martin began to imagine they were sutured together. Sepi merely prodded his carrots as their father ate noisily, pausing only to slurp his drink or squeeze his son’s shoulder.

Three nights later, Sepi didn’t make it home for dinner. He woke up behind the tool shed at the back of his school and limped home long after sundown. Martin finally found him walking along the highway at midnight.

Sepi entered Martin’s car without a word before bawling in his brother’s lap. Martin felt the swelling in his throat again as Sepi shuddered, but was afraid to speak. Instead, he settled for brushing his hand gently against his brother’s head. He could feel the dried blood matted into his hair, the tissue tight and swelling around his eye, his ear bloated and oozing. Above all, he could smell it, the metallic tinge of open wounds, the salt of sweat, the sour, earthy stench of lying in the dirt for hours.

Martin held his little brother until he wept only in quiet breaths. Then, when the breaths finally became snores, he drove them home. Later, he would hear that Sepi was jumped by Ethan’s older brother, a senior named Antonio who Martin had known since they were kids.

“Martin?” Claro was getting impatient. In his view, these things



only went one way, and the longer they waited to respond, the worse it made Martin look. “We gotta do something, that’s your brother. It’s little Sepi.”

“Not so little anymore. He played tough, he paid the price.”

“*Putsa*, what’s wrong with you, Antonio took that shit too far. I saw Sepi in school today, he can’t see out of that eye. What the fuck?”

Martin took a breath. More than anything, he wanted today to be a regular Saturday.

“I know where he goes on weekends. We can even the score...” Claro’s voice sank away. Martin knew the way of things. He knew it like he knew Claro and like he knew his father. So he stayed quiet.

Quiet as he followed Claro to his car. Quiet as they drove and the sun slowly dipped below the jagged cityscape.

Claro parked the car in a dim side street across from a slanted house whose deteriorated walls had long surrendered to the elements. It felt uncomfortably familiar to Martin, who saw his own home in the dilapidated details, the same rusting fence, the tiny front yard that remained brown year round.

Some time after eight o’clock, the crooked screen door swung open and Antonio, shouting curses behind him, stepped through and slammed it shut. He entered his car, a ‘93 Civic with mismatching doors, one black one silver, and streaked through the narrow streets of his barrio. Claro started his car and followed.

At eight thirty, Antonio parked outside a convenience store and stepped out. He would make it twelve steps before Claro struck him across the back of the head.

Antonio put up a fight, or tried to. At first, Martin felt sick watching Claro throw him around like a ragdoll. Claro was big, far larger than most other kids their age, who were stretched thin by growth spurts and had yet to fill out their frames. Antonio was no exception, his swings so easily absorbed by Claro’s meaty arms.

“Jumping freshmen now, Tony?” Claro backhanded him, hard, across the face.

But Antonio would only look at Martin. “This is bullshit. You know Sepi had it coming, *siya ang may kasalanan!*” He said, spitting. “At least do it yourself, like I had to.”

Claro turned to Martin to gauge his reaction, but the blank look on his face told Claro he would have to handle it himself, like always. He slapped Antonio again. “Shut up. You fuck with Sepi, you fuck with both of us.” Then Claro began to work him in earnest.

As he watched Antonio’s helpless, ragdoll body, Martin could only imagine Sepi being pummeled. He pictured him on the ground, eye

swollen shut, blood pooling under his head. Sympathy and vengeance danced around him like opposing winds in a storm, threatening to rip him apart.

“Stop, Clar.” Claro began to protest, assuming Martin was calling for mercy. But that was not the case. “Now.” Martin said. His voice was steady and low, carrying an evenness that implied danger. It shocked Claro into silence and made him step away from Antonio, who was still on his feet, bleeding from the mouth.

Martin slammed a fist into Antonio’s stomach. It knocked the air from him in one burst, and as he tried to find his breath, Martin hit him again. He pictured his brother smiling, but the image of Sepi warped into a bruised, bleeding version of himself. It demanded only one thing of Martin, which it whispered over and over. “Again,” it said. “Again.”

He obeyed.

After he finished, Antonio was unrecognizable. He croaked through gasps of air, red bubbles collected at the corner of his lips. One of his eyes looked about to swell shut. In that moment, he bore more resemblance to Sepi than Martin ever had.

On the ride home, Martin’s hands would not stop shaking.

“Hey. Hey, we’re here.” Claro gently took his hands and held them between his own. “Calm down. You’re okay.”

Martin looked at Claro as if waking from a daydream. He seemed confused to see their hands entwined and pulled his away.

“I’m fine.”

“Yeah.”

Martin stared out the passenger window and, to his surprise, found his vision blurring as tears filled his eyes. He took a deep breath to compose himself, but all he could focus on was the smell of blood. It had dried between his knuckles, deep in the grooves of his skin, like burgundy veins, so that he could no longer tell where his skin ended and the blood began. All the words that he had let die in his throat burst from him then in a desperate, unintelligible wail.

Claro grabbed him with both arms and pulled him in tight, repeating, “You’re fine. You’re fine.”

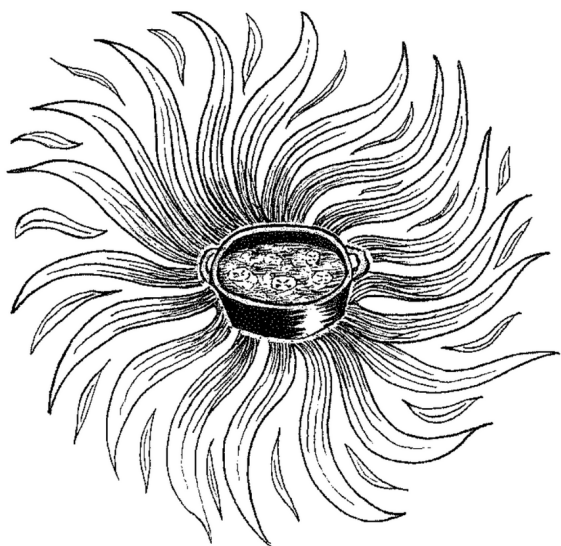
# A COURAGE WOMAN BOIL THE BANANAS

---

By Amirah Al Wassif

a courage woman boil the bananas  
a courage woman boil the bananas  
and watches her people on Haiti mountain  
run away behind her dream  
with curly hair and hidden pain  
she bribes the sun with her smile  
to dissolve the hot and murmured  
“Amen”  
a courage woman boil the bananas  
and never experienced their taste  
always surrounded with tents and hungrier  
much secret there, in her chest  
counting the footsteps in the sand  
reveals how many persons are lost!  
the Haiti girl plants the corn with her father on the  
highest  
she tides his body with the robes, she trying her best  
and to make our life better  
what should we do?  
if we through our ages truly suffer  
if all our times were blue?  
a courage woman boil the bananas  
and touches her baby skin  
“Work...Work” a sound around cries in the space said  
by men  
she tore the tent with a huge passion  
she never understands what is meant of station  
where everybody needs to dream, to travel  
but there is not her reality level

a courage woman boil the bananas  
and watches her people on Haiti mountain  
run away behind her dream  
with curly hair and hidden pain  
she bribes the sun with her smile  
to dissolve the hot and murmured  
“Amen



# FISH WRAP

---

By Chad Greene

“I saw you tonight. I saw what you did – or tried to do.”

Kowalski sighed and dug a roll of dimes out of the pocket of his trench coat. He yawned, as if I hadn't just ambushed him in the newspaper's parking lot at the end of his late shift on the copy desk. Then he began rhythmically rolling the coins back and forth by curling and uncurling the fingers of his right hand.

I glared at the big old bastard, at the pinstriped suit that he wore under the trench coat, at the snap-brimmed fedora that covered his bald spot. The only thing missing from the ensemble was that white slip of paper emblazoned with the word “press” reporters always have tucked into their hatbands in black-and-white movies.

“Alright, enough with the silent treatment, Danny Boy,” he said. “I give. What exactly is it that you saw me do – or try to do?”

“You tried to erase my story from the board when the city editor pitched it for tomorrow's front page. I busted my ass on that story, Kowalski, and you had no business trying to bury it inside just because you – shit, I dunno – got something against me 'cause I don't wear a goddamn suit to work everyday.”

“You ever think it might be your language I object to, not your attire?”

“Are you fucking serious?”

“Jeez, calm down, Callahan. Got your Irish up, did I?”

“My ‘Irish’?” I asked. “Hate to break it to you, gramps, but the last name's pretty much the only Irish thing about me. My grandfather's a half, my father's a quarter, I'm only an eighth. I mean, just 'cause your last name's Kowalski, I don't assume you were fucking born in Poland.”

“I was born in Poland,” he said quietly. “Listen, Danny Boy, Irish or no, it's obvious you're too worked up to discuss this right now. What say you meet me for an eye-opener first thing tomorrow, and we'll talk this over? I know a place down by the docks in San Pedro where we won't be disturbed.”

“Fine. Whatever,” I said. I'd downed some shots of whiskey after work to rile myself up. Suddenly, though, they were just making me

sleepy. "Where is it?"

He gave me the address, and I promised to meet him at six.

When Kowalski showed up the next morning, I was squatting down in front of a newspaper rack, admiring the placement of my first front-page story through the glass. It only ran for a little over half a column before jumping inside, but my byline was above the fold. I wondered how much it'd cost to get a copy framed.

I didn't realize Kowalski was standing there until he laid his right hand on my left shoulder. I fought down the urge to jump, just barely.

"What happened there, Kowalski?" I nodded at the white lines of scar tissue crisscrossing the back of his hand like the freeways on a map of Los Angeles County.

"Back in my sports writing days in Chicago, the associates of a certain 'legitimate importer of olives' decided that it was in their best interest if I couldn't type up a story about the bribes they were slipping to baseball players during playoff games. They took a bat to my hand."

"Shit. Did you file the story?"

"Course. Joke was on them: I'm left handed."

He pulled those damn dimes out of his coat pocket and started rolling them back and forth in his right hand. "C'mon. Place we're going's a little closer to the water."

"What's the deal with the dimes?" I asked.

"Reporters used to always carry a roll in their pocket for phone calls," he said.

"Ever heard of a cell phone?"

Kowalski shrugged.

"Well, how about inflation, then? You heard of that, right? It's been years since a phone call cost a dime. You'd have to plunk half of that roll into a pay phone – if you could find one – just for a local call."

Kowalski stopped walking, looked down at the coins in his open palm. "A roll of dimes, Danny Boy, has other uses," he growled and made a fist. He held it up for my inspection. His knuckles were white and tight. "Learned this use growing up on the South Side."

I gulped.

As we walked on in silence, I started to think about how I always got disoriented down here on the waterfront. I started to think about Kowalski and his roll of dimes, about ill-advised detours down dark alleys and long walks down short piers.

"We're here," he finally said.

I wrinkled my nose at the rank odor.

“Christ,” I gasped. “That doesn’t smell like coffee.”

“Who said anything about coffee?” Kowalski asked. “I said an ‘eye-opener.’”

With that, he shoved me through the door.

Inside the fish market, the merchants practiced their trade, plunging fillet knives into the bellies of former denizens of the deep.

Kowalski made a beeline for a booth near the back of the cavernous warehouse, where he inspected the catch of the day until his eyes fixated on, of all things, a flying fish – one whose flight path had apparently strayed too far from the friendly skies over Catalina Island.

“Thought these things were protected,” he said to the guy behind the counter.

“Every once in a while, one gets caught up in a net,” the fishmonger said, setting down his knife and wiping his hands on an apron that hadn’t been white in a very long time.

“Yeah,” Kowalski said softly. The fish – dark blue on the top, but pale gray on the bottom – seemed to mean something to him. “Wrap it up.”

The fishmonger looked me over with an appraising eye, then squinted down at something behind the display of fish. “Dan Callahan?” he asked.

“Hey, what the hell kind of set up is this?” I backed away from the counter.

Kowalski shirt-collared me before I could get away. “I bring all the young hotshots down here,” he said. “Think it helps ‘em put things in perspective.”

With his free hand, he thumbed a bill out of a worn wallet and pushed it toward the fishmonger, who handed Kowalski a paper-wrapped package in exchange. The editor tossed it against my chest, then turned to walk away.

“Congratulations on your first front-page story, Danny Boy,” he said, not waiting for me to tag along.

I looked down at the fish in my hands, and realized that it was wrapped in the today’s front page. The fish oil had soaked through the cheap newsprint, and as I turned the package over in my hands, the ink that had once formed the letters of my story smeared my palm.



THIS DRINK COSTS \$17





LORI AND CHEL WITH FLOWERS  
BY TIMOTHY CALLA

# THE MAN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

---

By Claudio Saez

The man at the bottom of the stairs

He visits at night, alone, this blot  
He stares at me from an empty lot  
His fingers are missing, he's constantly chewing  
I draw the curtains to stop him from viewing

Another evening ruined when I return home  
He stands and stares, mouth dripping with foam  
He seems to inch closer when I look away  
His skin, like his eyes, blank and grey

I cry for a moment, then fume with anger  
Bottom of the stairs, this sickening stranger  
He waits for me to throw out the trash  
His lips are peeled, his teeth are gnashed

He makes no sound, his greatest feature  
He's standing still, this hobbled creature  
A mangled up nose, no wrinkling crease  
I run up the stairs, "I'm calling the police!"

His body twists and snaps behind me  
The officers' arrival is untimely  
They laugh and make jokes--my descriptions ignored  
They leave without seeing the scrapes at my door

I am not safe--insomnia wreaks  
I hear his footsteps whine and creak  
It's not like I'm rich, he has nothing to gain  
Am I losing my mind, am I going insane?

I wake up at night, in pain--attacked  
There's blood in the bed, a bite on my calf  
He is now in my home and the clock reads three  
The visitor is real, and he has come for m

Flesh looked soft. I chew.  
I can finish poem too.

# MORNINGS

---

By Olivia Rose

Heartbreak unheated  
pounds in the abdomen  
like a half-chewed apple  
or a handful of dirt.

On the bookshelf:  
self-help,  
crystals,  
an urn of fetus ashes.

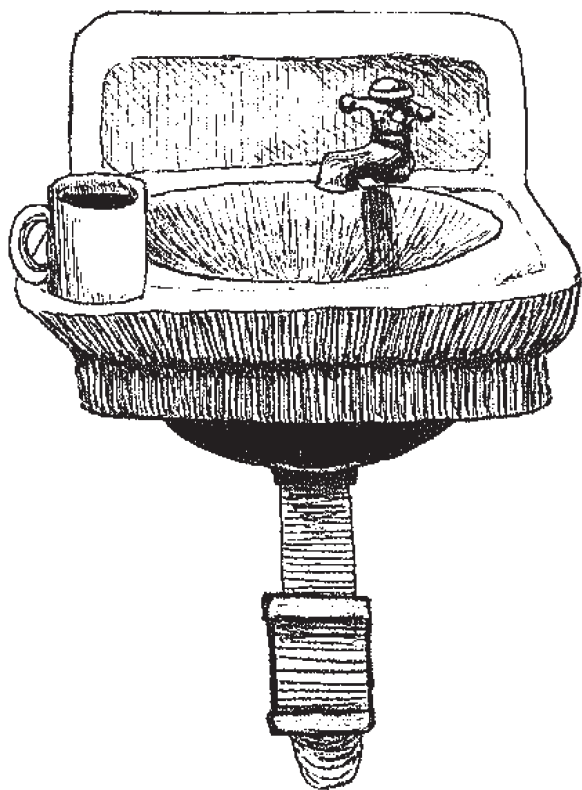
Mornings:  
a film of dried saliva on the bed sheets,  
white noise,  
cold coffee by the bathroom sink.

This is what happens—  
a dripping faucet  
in the distant kitchen,  
a teapot mildewed  
with St. John's wort,  
an unfilled frame on the fridge.

This happens  
when you kill the baby.

If not then, when?

We would have left him in the car  
on a sunny May morning—would have  
put him face-down in the crib—  
would have forgotten batteries  
for the monitor—would have  
forgotten how to hold him



# TO WANT LOVE

---

By Olivia Rose

1.  
I stand tip-toed  
in the center of a funeral  
I wasn't invited to.

*This is not your loss.*

I peer to see the casket.  
I peer to see the mangled corpse.

2.  
My life, like a wild dog's:  
without companion.

An animal cannot want to want.

3.  
To want love is to want loss.

4.  
A woman takes her son to the train tracks,  
bear hugs the boy, dives under the Light Rail.  
I see her breathless body  
by the boy's severed leg.  
She wanted love for him and love  
for herself.

5.  
We are a group of coffee-drinking train-takers.  
We are a swarm of catechists  
gazing in horror at the mess.

“Only an animal could do such a thing.”  
A childless man scoffs in disgust.  
I think to myself,  
*There is nothing more human.*

6.  
Can an animal want not to want?

7.  
I want to see myself in this woman gutted.

How nice: to terminate together.  
How nice to have something to terminate.



8.

The time has come.

I think the time has come that I want to want loss.

I have broken into a memorial service.

I have evaded selfless apathy.

My body forms a chasm.

I want myself etherized.

I want myself waking

with a limb inside me.

This is what it means

to be in the role of human I assume:

to join a body with your own

to be bigger,

to join a body with your own

for something to cut off.

I want a companion to become my body.

I want to cut off love like a mangled leg.

9.

The policeman saved the boy.

The boy: three,

standing with a crutch to see

the closed casket.



# LOVELAND

---

By Eric Fram

The night the Loveland Frogman ripped Peter Piltdown's heart from his chest and replaced it with a goopy green egg full of lovey-dovey glow stick juice was also the night he fell deeply in love with Jenny Haniver. He had only completed one half of the necessary crossfading to put up with all of the personalities in the theater department when he ordered the Uber from his apartment to Loveland City College.

"Peter?" asked Dominic, who matched the unceremonious low-angle selfie on the Uber app.

"Hicc- yep." Peter rolled into the red sedan, and his head weighed him down across the backseat. It occurred to him that he needed to sit up, so he grabbed a chunk of his hair and pulled. Peter imagined his face rising from the seat and a sober smile metastasizing on his face. But he discovered matted gray nylon against his cheek and straightened. Peter leaned his head against the window so that his eyelashes tickled the glass, and he watched the shrubs at the bank of the Little Miami River throb in the streetlight.

"Nice night, huh?" said Dominic, his eyes waiting in the rearview mirror.

Peter returned his attention to the window. Dominic's eyes sank from view.

The phone in Peter's hand vibrated and displayed a reminder: Entrance to tunnels is in creek behind Little Theater. Hot girl's name is Georgia Cardiff.

He had dropped hints left and right since forever, but Georgia did not pick them up. They had worked tech together on Spring Awakening, which you would think is the perfect hookup show, but she would not bite. Still, Peter remained interested because she was an actress but not an actress.

One time, Peter caught Georgia during a break backstage and tried some of the moves his friends from high school had shared with him. Georgia intently stared at her laptop with her earbuds in. Peter approached from behind.

"Hey, Georgia. What's up?"

She jumped and minimized the window that was open. It appeared to be a gallery of digital animal drawings, but Peter was not quite sure. That window was usurped by a YouTube tab.

“What are you watching?”

She paused the video, and the lizards on her screen froze in place. “Chameleon mating rituals.”

“Mating rituals, huh? I think I know a thing or two about that.”

“Somehow I find that hard to believe.”

“Uh, um, uh, so, that’s herpetology, right? You need a guy who’s down with the herpes.”

“Excuse me?”

“Never mind, bye.” He would definitely get there eventually.

That other girl, Jenny – she was an actress. Nay, a performer. Everything she said and did was a performance of her actresshood as far as Peter was concerned. Pulling props for Hamlet? Break out the English accent. Carrying rugs out from the storage room? Grab the biggest, heaviest one and hold it over your head so everyone can see you perform the role of rug carrier.

O, Great Carrier of Rugs, please do shut up.

Peter just got people from observation: Georgia was cool. Jenny just did the most and had to be the biggest and best all the time ever. Peter did not want to deal with that. Unfortunately, everyone was invited to party in the prop shop, even the personalities. The last time the tech team threw a party, five people showed up. That was the whole tech team. So of course they had to invite the actors, because they made up the majority of the theater department. And they brought better booze.

The prop shop party was a Loveland City College tradition now. Students would sneak in through the tunnels that connected most of LCC (and that, yes, were off-limits and completely illegal to enter, but also who cares?) and which by some inexplicable design decision fed into the theater department’s prop storage room. Sometimes they would invite an engineering student if the locks were new and fancy. Then they would spend the night drinking and maybe steal some of the expensive props, which was okay because they paid tuition. One guy would have gotten away with stealing a faux deer head wall mount had he not graffitied his name on the wall in Sharpie. Not a smart move, Jack Skvader Class of 2009.

As the Uber rounded a corner toward LCC, Peter saw in his peripheral vision a yellow light. He and Dominic both turned to watch sparks rise from the riverbank as if from fireworks. The sparks cast blotches of shadow on the road and disappeared about ten feet off the ground, incandescing and vanishing in rapid succession. Their light mesmerized

and confused Peter, and he kept staring.

Even though Peter knew the answer, he said, "Did you see that?"

Without slowing down, Dominic looked back over his shoulder at Peter. "Yeah. Probably some kids got their hands on a sparkler."

"I don't know. Looked too big to be a sparkler."

"Well, I think it was."

"Well, I don't."

Dominic frowned. Behind the driver Peter saw the spinning circle of street lit by headlights, and beyond that light, a figure sprouted from the road.

"Look out!" Peter barked, pointing through the windshield.

Seemingly out of impulse, Dominic braked hard and sent Peter headfirst into the seat before him. The impact sobered him up well.

The car screamed to a stall, and the figure – stout, about four feet tall – hid its face, flinching for a moment before running off the road into darkness. As he rubbed his forehead, Peter inspected himself for broken bones and then for seatbelt burns. All he felt was a sick knot in his stomach.

Dominic ejected the iPhone that was mounted to his dashboard and struggled to press the screen through the tremors in his hand. A message appeared on the screen, and he held the phone to Peter's face as he clicked YES.

"Ride's cancelled," he said, his voice shaking. "Get out."

Peter could not protest. He exhumed himself from the car and lingered at the door.

"You know this means you're not getting a tip, right?" he said. His hands clung to the door as the car pulled away. Peter stood agog in the dim streetlight. "You weren't getting a tip anyway!" he yelled after the sedan, which soon shrunk into a red pimple and vanished.

His phone glowed: How was your ride with Dominic? Rate your driver and leave a tip.

"Screw you."

He opened Maps and saw that he was just across the creek from LCC and could walk there in five minutes. Keeping to the shoulder, he hurried toward the next major street, quietly panicking over the figure – person? animal? – that had leapt into the creek. Before he could even hope for it not to return, a crunch in the bushes broke his step, and he froze.

Maybe if I stand completely still, I won't get axe murdered. The streetlight cruelly blew his cover.

The short figure burst from the creek. "Ribbit!"

"Ah!"

“Hello!”

“Ah!”

Closer inspection revealed the figure to be a bipedal frog that rose almost to Peter’s shoulders. It stood with its legs wide, as if sitting on a large rock, and its warm green skin seeped with goo that caught the streetlight and threw it back at the moon.

“Oh, my God. You’re the Loveland Frog,” said Peter, wondering how he had managed to produce any words at all.

“I’m a Loveland Frog!” it said with a sprightly set of finger guns.

“And you talk?”

“Yes.”

“This just has to be a bad trip.”

“I take offence to that. I think I’m a great trip.”

“Oh. So you’re, like, a nice monster. That’s good.”

The Loveland Frogman opened its mouth wide and laughed. A fly escaped its throat and flew off into the night. “I am. Except this part.”

The heavier-than-expected frog threw its full weight into Peter’s stomach. He fell back and smacked his skull on the pavement. Stars circled his vision like yummy flies.

“Sorry! I went in too strong. This won’t hurt,” said the Frogman, laying its slick webbed hand on Peter’s chest. The points of contact glowed a fleshy pink, and fiery flecks of skin began to flake off and float out of the holes in Peter’s button-down. With each quick and numb breath, a layer of cotton and flesh burned into the night, leaving a gaping hole around his beating heart.

The Frogman reached into the cavity and stirred around Peter’s heart with one of its claws. Slowly, the squirming heart rose through the air and landed softly in the frog’s hand. As his vision faded, Peter watched the frog straddle him and squat with intention. Raising Peter’s heart to the sky, the Frogman again opened his jaw wide, wide enough to unhinge his jaw like a sun visor on a baby carriage. It dropped Peter’s heart into its mouth and squeezed hard. The frog clenched and ribbited until a fluorescent lime egg slid out from between its legs and into the dark hole in Peter’s chest.

Peter’s vision cleared, and everything around him shone as if under black light. With a gasp, he sat upright and grabbed his chest, finding the pit neatly covered by unscarred skin.

“What just happened?”

“You are my surrogate!”

“I don’t know what that means.”

“I gave you love, my new friend!” The frog’s face stretched into an ecstatic grin. “Here’s how this works. Oh, I wish I had brought along

a scroll or – ooh! – maybe a stone tablet of some sort. Anywho, you will fall madly, irrevocably in love with the next person you see. And then you'll, you know, go to town and bear my frog offspring! I am so happy for us!"

"Oh, no. No, no, no, no."

"Oh, yes. You can't escape this. And before you try anything, if you kill me, you destroy your own heart. That would be bad. Now, go fall in love!"

"Wait, I have questions. Can I just fall in love with anyone?"

"Yes."

"Like, a picture of a person?"

"Um, no."

"Or like...a dude?"

"I suppose."

"What if I look into my own reflection? What happens then?"

The frog paused. "Just follow your heart," it said, pressing a claw to Peter's chest.

"It's not my heart though."

"Metaphorically. Conceive by midnight or you lose your heart forever. Happy courting!" it said, and it skipped into the creek and out of sight.

Peter remained on the side of the road in shock. "That was all wildly under explained."

A car rumbled in his direction.

If I make eye contact with whoever's driving that car, I'll fall in love. I need to keep my head down, he thought. So he craned his neck forward and focused his eyes on his feet, warily making his way into the creek. He followed the reeds to the bottom of a concrete wall and searched with his fingertips for a door.

"Peter? Hey, how are you doing?"

He recognized the voice as Georgia's and suddenly became conscious of his posture.

Having my head like this makes me look short. I'll move my shoulders back to make me look bigger. But now my arms look smaller compared to my torso. Maybe I'll flex. Oh, no. She can totally tell I'm flexing. But if I stop flexing then my arms will look even smaller.

"Uh, Peter? Hello?" He could feel Georgia wave her hand near his cheek. "You okay?"

At this moment, Peter could have looked up and become completely enamored with Georgia or continued staring at his feet to ensure she forever saw him as a grade-A weirdo. He already basically had a thing for her, but did he want to love-love her? He was not ready for that type

of commitment.

“Yep, just, uh, um...my eyes are dilated. From the eye doctor.”

“The eye doctor?”

“No, I mean the drugs.”

“What drugs?”

What’s a cool drug?

“Uh, Molly. Can you open the door?”

Georgia complied and led him with a hand on his back through a quiet and wet corridor lit only by the flashlight on Georgia’s phone.

“Are you okay to be out like this?” said Georgia.

“Yeah, I’ll be fine.”

Be cool. He promptly headbutted a wall behind which emerged a low growl of conversation.

“You sure about that?” said Georgia.

Oh, she’s the nurse-my-hangover type. Nice!

A hinge moaned and with it a pyramid of yellow light widened over their feet. There was a lull before the voices switched back on. Pairs of shoes clustered between plastic boxes and stepladders. A Styrofoam mannequin head bounced into a stack of mock soup cans which scattered upon impact.

“Do you need a drink or something?” said Georgia.

Wow, truly wife material. If he had to fall in love with someone to avoid looking like a tool, there were worse people to drool over than Georgia. He inhaled, preparing for a warm wave of love to wash over him. Peter slowly raised his head, palms sweating, mind spinning with church bells and SUVs and matching headstones, and his sight fell upon the new woman of his dreams: Jenny?

He had no time to consider Jenny’s personality – personality – before gargantuan heart eyes bulged out of his head. The bustle around Jenny faded gold and exploded as fireworks.

“You’re pretty, hi.”

Jenny was taken aback. “Oh! That’s nice.”

“You’re pretty.”

“This must be the Molly,” said Georgia.

“Oh, it’s not Molly,” said Peter, staggering backward. “It’s Jenny. And it’s true love.”

“It’s what now?” said Jenny.

He thought hard. “You’re pretty. Let’s have kids. I’ve already decided on a boy’s name: Peter. After me. I’m stuck on a girl’s name. Maybe Summer. Wait, no – ‘Summer’ wears body glitter. We’d probably have a boy anyway. You have that energy. We –” He grabbed her hands. “– have that energy.”

Georgia rolled her eyes and turned to Jenny. "I don't think he gets it," she said.

"I'm nervous. I have to pee," Peter announced. His bladder dragged him to the door. It was locked.

"What do I do? What do I do? Gotta pee! What do I do?"

He spotted a bucket. It probably was not going to be used for anything important anyway. He escorted it to an unoccupied corner of the prop shop.

Peter unzipped and let loose. Something down there bubbled and seized before hundreds of tiny kidney stones painlessly exited. The bucket was soon filling with tiny green eggs no larger than the tip of his thumb. They landed in the bucket like spoonfuls of Jell-O that bounced off each other.

An unloving part of his brain told his stomach to evacuate itself. Peter heaved and ejected more and more green eggs from his mouth, each individual egg rubbing his throat on the way out.

The bucket was full and pulsing with the eggs. Peter hobbled through an aisle of wigs and another of empty Coke bottles, leaving the bucket at the gate of the furniture cage.

He found Jenny and Georgia absorbed in conversation with some other actors whom he did not recognize and tapped Jenny on the shoulder. She whipped around and clasped her collar.

"Uh, my love, I'm having a problem."

"That's more than clear, Peter."

"No, uh. I don't know how else to say this, but I just laid some eggs. Out of my pee hole."

"Oh, wow, you really are tripping," said Jenny.

Peter had no other choice. He pulled Jenny aside and held the bucket to her face.

"See? I wouldn't lie to a snack like you."

It was longer than expected before Jenny screamed. "Get that away! Where did you get those eggs from?"

Jenny's alarm caught Georgia's attention. "What's going on?" asked Georgia.

"Peter says he laid these eggs," said Jenny.

"You lay eggs?" Georgia said, her face twisting.

Peter raised the bucket. "Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" she said.

"What?"

"Have you seen *The Shape of Water*?"

"What?"

“The eggs,” Georgia clarified. “I’m into them. Heard of oviposition?”

“Oh, Jesus,” said Jenny.

“I’m just saying, if you’re interested in me, I’m interested in you now,” said Georgia.

“No, thanks. I love Jenny now,” said Peter. “Also that’s disgusting.”

“Your loss,” said Georgia.

As she sauntered away, a stack of boxes containing Christmas tree ornaments tipped over and collapsed at Peter’s feet. He looked up to find a frog face peeking over a high shelf. The face quickly disappeared like a freshly whacked mole.

“That’s the egglayer!” said Peter, climbing over the boxes. “The frog!” He stumbled full-speed into the next aisle of fake plants. Jenny followed a few steps behind.

Phony fronds battered Peter’s face as he pursued the sound of the frog’s sticky steps. A potted plant that hung by chains from the ceiling bonked him square in the forehead, as if he needed more problems. He lost the sound of footfalls and stood absolutely still. Jenny caught up to find Peter bracing with his arms outstretched, like a loopy Steve Irwin.

“What are you doing?”

He shushed her. “It’s hiding.” He walked on the tips of his toes and inspected each plant, gingerly reaching between leaves and batting around for contact with the Frogman’s slick skin.

“Stop slapping those plants! You look like an idiot,” said Jenny.

Peter pivoted on his toes to find her rubbing her temples. “Because I love you, I find even your most grating qualities endearing, and that includes your incessant need to act out everything. What’s in here –” he said, poking her forehead. “– doesn’t always need to be out here,” he added, mimicking the way she rubbed her temples. “But I love that.”

Jenny tentatively dropped her hands. “I, uh – wow, I really hope you fall out of love with me soon,” she said, folding her arms.

Peter swiveled his hips and folded his arms, affecting a big frown.

“What am I supposed to do with my hands, Peter? Huh?”

A plastic palm leaf shivered above them. The Frogman intently stared down.

“Ha! Caught you!” said Peter.

The frog untucked its legs and hopped down, landing softly between them. “No, I caught you. Caught you in the middle of a spousal spat, that is.”

“What is that?” Jenny yelled.

“My dear, don’t be overly dramatic,” said Peter. “That’s the Frogman.”



“How can you two ever conceive under this type of stress?” said the Frogman.

“Conceive?” said Jenny, eyes widening.

“Well, duh. You’re going to have my children,” said Peter.

“Actually, you’re carrying the eggs,” said the Frogman to Peter. “You’re the one with the great fortune of bearing the next generation of Loveland Frogmen.”

Peter paled. “No, that’s not how this works. She’s the life-giver in this equation,” he said, gesturing toward Jenny.

“Nope,” said the frog. “I chose you. You’re the mommy.”

“Okay, now I’m interested,” said Jenny.

“This has to be a mistake. You said that I had to conceive. That would involve...” He inserted his right index into a circle formed by his left thumb and forefinger. “You know?”

“This doesn’t make sense,” said Jenny. “Where do I factor into this if Mother Goose here has got the eggs?”

“Wait, yeah, she’s right actually,” said Peter.

“Don’t sound surprised, numb nuts,” she retorted.

“Oh, um, well...” said the Frogman. “It just sorta seemed like the thing to do.”

“That’s not a good enough reason!” said Jenny.

“No, no, you don’t understand. You two have been given a fairytale ending. All the human books of old that tell of magic spells and ultimatums – they all depend on love! How else would you have done my bidding?” explained the Frogman.

“Oh, my God,” said Jenny. “I’m just a pawn to you!”

“Basically, yes,” said the frog.

“And the conception thing?” added Peter.

“I don’t know; you humans seem to like that,” said the frog.

“So you got this idea from – what? – reading fairytales?” said Peter.

“How do you think a frog learns English?” said the Frogman.

“Unbelievable,” said Jenny. “So how do we undo this?”

“I don’t have that authority,” said the Frogman.

“Well, who does?” said Jenny, crouching eye-to-eye with the frog. “Because I’m not letting this dingdong fawn over me for the rest of his life.”

“Ouch,” said Peter.

“The Frogman,” said the Frogman.

“I thought you were the Frogman,” said Peter.

“No, I said I’m a Frogman. There are Frogmen, like me, and then the Frogman. He’s in charge because he’s two inches taller than the rest of us.”

“An alpha,” said Peter. “Like me.”

“Definitely not like you,” said Jenny. “Take us to your leader, Frogman.”

The frog slouched and twiddled its webbed fingers. “I don’t think the Frogman will approve.”

“Oh, yeah?” said Jenny. She vanished into another aisle before producing Peter’s bucket of eggs. “I’m sure the Frogman won’t be happy when I flush his babies down the toilet!”

“Hey, I made those!” said Peter.

“Fine! I’ll take you to the Frogman, scary woman,” said the Frogman, proceeding towards the fake fruit section.

“You take this just in case,” said Jenny, pushing the bucket into Peter’s arms.

Peter and Jenny watched the Frogman shrink over the bank of the Little Miami River, where it had instructed them to wait.

“I’m bored. It’s a beautiful night. Let’s make out.”

“Let’s not.” She approached the water, and Peter followed. Over the shush of their feet in the tall grass a chorus of chirping arose. The wet knoll peeled back to reveal a conference of frogmen – ten, maybe fifteen of them – engaged in passionate conversation.

“Ribbit.”                      “Ribbit.”                      “Ribbit.”

“Ribbit.”                      “*Ribbit!*”                      “Ribbit.”                      “Ribbit.”

“There’s so many Frogmen,” whispered Peter. Immediately all of the Frogmen turned to him.

“Ah,” said a taller frog, stepping forward with a shimmering wand in its hand. “You must be the bearer of my seed! Pleased to meet you. I am the Frogman.”

“I got that from context,” said Peter. “Can you un-pregnant me?”

“It’s not that simple, you see --”

“Look, forget this egg business,” interjected Jenny. “Just make him fall out of love with me.”

“That I can do,” said the Frogman. It aimed its wand and the sky, shooting out a cascade of brilliant sparks that rained over Peter. Each spark landed on his skin and dissolved in a hot red flash. He convulsed and his hair stood on end until the last spark hit. Then he was still and silent.

“Did it work?” said Jenny.

Peter rubbed his eyes, and they snapped open. “Ew.”

“It worked,” she said.

“But you still have to carry the eggs,” said the Frogman.

“Come on!” said Peter. He dug his feet into the ground and wound

up into a tantrum.

“That is,” the Frogman added, “unless your friend wants them.”

“I think I’ve carried enough eggs tonight,” she said, swinging the bucket. “Why do you need us to carry the eggs anyway?”

“We’re all males,” said the Frogman. “We depend on human surrogates for reproduction.”

“That makes a surprising amount of sense. I’m still not doing it,” said Jenny.

“Then it’s settled,” said the Frogman to Peter. “You will carry the eggs to term.”

“Wait!” said a voice from above. Its owner approached the Frogman, lit only by the moon. “I want the eggs.” It was Georgia. “I really, really want those eggs.”

“Are you certain?” said the Frogman.

“She’s definitely certain!” said Peter.

“Shut it, Peter. Do you want me to take the eggs or not?” said Georgia.

Peter nodded silently.

“As you wish,” said the Frogman. It pointed its wand and in a flash of light Peter lay supine in the mud.

He held his hand to his throat and felt a pulse.

“Yeah!” said Georgia. “I’ve got frog eggs in me now!”

“Well, I’m out of here,” said Jenny, climbing out of the riverbank.

Peter caught her silhouette in the moonlight. It twinkled like a star and burnt out.

“So,” said Peter to Georgia. “Want to hang out sometime?”

“Nah,” said Georgia, palming her solar plexus. “I’m good.”

The Frogmen dove one by one into the river, wetting Peter’s feet with each splash. He squeezed his toes against his damp socks and pictured Georgia kissing a frog.



# Contributor's Notes

**Amirah Al Wassif** is a freelance writer (28) years old from Egypt. She has written articles, novels, short stories, poems, and songs. Five of her books were written in Arabic and many of her English works have been published in various cultural magazines. Amirah is passionate about producing literary works for children, teens, and adults which represent cultures from around the world. Her first book was published in 2014, and her latest illustrated book, *The Cocoa Book and Other Stories*, is forthcoming.

**Timothy Calla** is the embodiment of introverted insanity, crippled with the need to express himself through creative writing. As a student at UCLA, he is constantly making feign attempts at controlling this desire to create, but utterly failing as the world of around him melts into his anxiety driven work. He also likes taking pictures – check ‘em out on Instagram @andtimbre.

**Nacho de Vera** was born and raised in Manila.

**Kate Eplboim** is a literal Gemini. Everything makes her angry. She was born in the San Fernando Valley. She's also 5'5".

**Frank Fiore** was born in a suburb of southeast Los Angeles. He is a transfer student at UCLA and has been pursuing a B.A. in English since a four-week love affair with Anna Karenina, nearly a decade ago. He is a current Westwind Fiction Editor and has previously worked as part of the editorial staff of *Bravura*, the literary journal of Palomar College. Aside from writing, he also enjoys JPEGs of mountains and valleys, as well as visiting with the grazing American bison at the Museum of Natural History.

**Eric Fram** is a senior English major with a concentration in creative writing – poetry and a theater minor at UCLA. He is also the Westwind Senior Poetry Editor and Senior Arts Editor for 2018-19, and he has been published in Westwind, Plum Tree Tavern, plain china, and Kol Ha'Am.

**Chad Green** is a graduate of the Master of Professional Writing Program at the University of Southern California and an associate professor of English at Cerritos College. Whenever he isn't planning lessons or grading papers, he is attempting to put together a novella-in-flash-fictions tentatively titled Trips and Falls.

**Grace Li** is a graduating student at UCLA. Finding an open room in the Music Building usually makes her happier than going to class. She hopes to both make a concept album and a book version of a concept album someday.

**Casey Monahan** is a third year neuroscience major at UCLA. She is an editor for the Undergraduate Research Journal of Psychology, and has been published in Linea Magazine.

**Chelsea Olsen** spent her teenage years homeschooling herself on her family's ranch in the high desert of Southern California. She is currently pursuing her Bachelor's in English at UCLA and is caught between applying to law school or applying for a Master's in publishing. Her poetry focuses on ethical introspection (or lack thereof) and a want of social justice.

**Abraham Ramirez** majored in English while at UCLA. He is currently on a path of self-discovery to gain inspiration for his writing. In his free time, he likes to explore the Californian outdoors and hangs out with wild animals.

**Olivia Rose** is a fourth year student majoring in English Literature and Comparative Literature. She has completed the creative writing concentration in poetry for the English major. Her main areas of interest are poetry writing, literary theory, and Hebrew Bible.

# WESTWIND

## UCLA's journal of the arts

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