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contemporary art & text to bring you down

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letter from the editor

I look for a topic with multiple points of entry whenever I plan out an issue. The word *crush* came to mind as there are three distinct and common definitions for it: a one-sided infatuation, the physical act of compression with the intent to destroy, and a feeling of overwhelming disappointment.

Upon personal examination, I realized that I most often used the word in terms of emotional distress. The weight of the world is immense and yet I am compelled to uphold it. I'm crushed by dozens of deadlines and obligations and still I complete them, albeit with the determination of the worst marathon runner in the race; I may be the last to cross the finish line but I will eventually get there. The intangible things that I carry are heavy and so I cannot move quickly but nevertheless I have agency, determination, and some strange courage that compels me to compete despite my fear of failure and foolishness. I am being crushed by internal and external factors but I am not flattened (yet).

The work presented in this issue speaks to all of the various facets of the theme but the most common approach was to examine it as a one-sided desire. I find this fascinating as infatuation initially seems like it is an external sensation but it is actually generated entirely from within and projected at a target deemed worthy. In this instance, the verb "to crush" is inflicted on others but it has a great emotional cost to the self. Yearning for another person's affection is one of the foundational concepts that echoes throughout the history of poetry and art, and it still resonates powerfully today.

In addition to the meanings listed above, a newer definition of the word crush involves success and power. "Crushing it" implies taking ownership, asserting dominance, and winning with a clear and decisive victory. The multiple meanings of this word empower us as readers and viewers to muse about several aspects of the human experience at once. Where do we choose to place the weight of our worries, our affections, and our goals? Whatever you decide to engage with, I hope you're crushing it.

Amber ♥
Editor, *Sad Girl Review*@ambervisualartist





selected poetry







Katy Haas / @katyydidnt / feral flower (previous page), missed connection ii - postcard (inset)

Katy Haas is a poet from mid-Michigan whose hobbies include blowing her nose and eating bread. She edits reviews at NewPages.com. Her collage poems can also be found in Riggwelter.

But Lord, I'm So Forlorn, I Just Can't See No Unicorn

/ Kelly Gangeness Le

*The title of this poem is after a lyric from The Irish Rovers' song *The Unicorn*.

I.

The world is a bath I want to drown in, yet I haven't joined the unicorns in their nonexistence.

Husband, you found me chin deep asleep in the bath with vomit in my hair as if it were conditioner.

I hope my pale thighs shivering from the champagne binge resembled the shifting shine of my opal

engagement ring. Or, at best, the curled hip of a unicorn in rest, pink translucence. But I'll never know.

II.

Did the unicorns care when Noah and his ark left them to drown?

According to The Irish Rovers song "The Unicorn," they were having too much fun to notice the water rising.

In the plot of The Last Unicorn, the unicorns hide in the water from the Red Bull. Did you

know unicorns invented Roman bathhouses, thousands of meters, the size of my delusions?

Then, centuries later, unicorns patented the hot tub in 1967.

III.

Did you hear unicorns are also skilled psychotherapists? I have talked with them in the bath for a couple of years

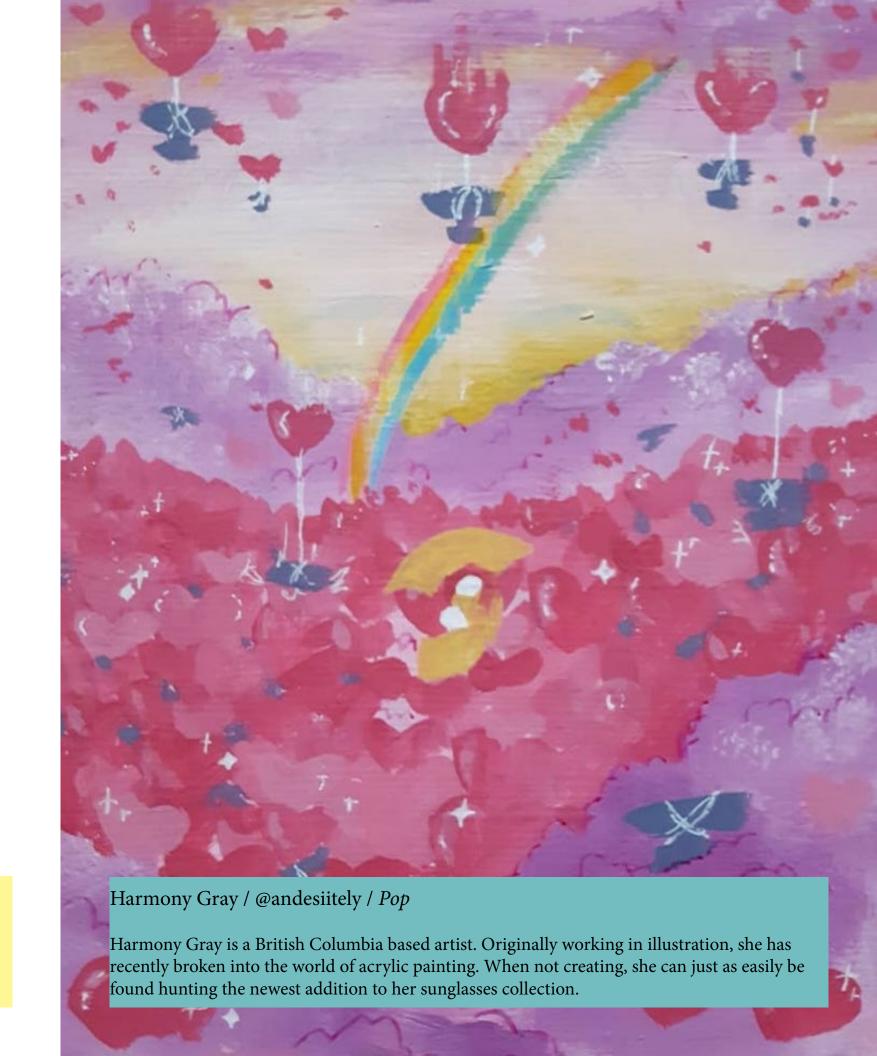
now. I told them how I kept my virginity for 23 years all for you, and they applaud me with their hooves.

Unicorns adore virginity. That's how I found friendship with them, despite their professional demeanors.

But not anymore, since we married.

Kelly Gangeness Le / Twitter: @marshmallowtomb / Instagram: @kellyxcry

Kelly Gangeness Le graduated from the University of New Orleans Creative Writing MFA program in Spring 2019. Her work has appeared in Menacing Hedge, Ellipsis, and Periphery. Her poetry focuses on paradoxical aesthetics concerning horror and humor, family and isolation.



weighted blanket

/ Alexis Diano Sikorski

there's an elephant sitting on my chest like in the copd commercial and i'm too scrambled to be an egg please take me off as your emergency contact i'm not the one i promise you i'm not the one oh love i can't

breathe

and i know i should do it on my own i should do it but i won't it's so easy for me to call it fate when i'm choosing to be so careful oh love i can't

breathe

and it's not your job to make me but i'm so restless and i don't want my legs kicking you in the night oh love i

can't

explain

but i wish i could for you oh for you i'd call myself fixed and release myself to the streets as a cat prowling my own land and keeping all others away even if it meant i'd never rest again oh my, love, me

шу,

breathe

Alexis Diano Sikorski / @sikorskidear

Alexis Diano Sikorski is a queer Filipina-American dog mom floating around DFW, Texas, and all she wants is a really good massage. She has work in TERSE., Burning House Press, The Collapsar, Moonchild Magazine, Vagabond City, Queen Mobs Teahouse, and more. She's a bit melodramatic, reads way too much fanfiction, and likes looking out of airplane windows. You can find her daydreaming or caring for her plants.

faulty echolocation

/ Callie Zucker

The neighbor's daughter just learned about sonar in animals; she read me facts over plastic plates and defrosted peas.

Bats, she read, let out calls and wait for the echoes to return, and this is the way they construct the world around them.

She was thrilled, and so was I, but I couldn't help but wonder; would a bat know if it couldn't emit the right frequencies for echolocation?

If while the others bounced echoes off of one another and dodged the branches as they came, the hills as they rose,

If a bat might send out calls of some unrecognizable hertz and wait the whole night for the echo's return to keep flying

only to find when morning came, the only sound that returned was the one it made itself, circled round the world just to get back

to exactly where it came from. And would a bat hear this long-awaited return and celebrate that

this! This came from me, or would it think this, this took a long time to return.'

Callie Zucker / Twitter: @eggshellfriend / Instagram: @zuckercalathea

Callie Zucker is an emerging writer currently pursuing a Creative Writing major at Colorado College. She splits her time between Colorado and California. Her work can be seen in december magazine, Barnhouse Journal, Lockjaw, and others.

Bottom-Feeder

/ Nicola Kapron

The sky of my world is the ocean of yours. I could soar into the stratosphere and still be nothing more than a bottom feeder.

Gutless tube worm, knife-faced goblin shark, is this what you see when I paddle up to meet you?

Angels fly overhead. You leave with them and come back hours later, stinking of booze and bad decisions. Expecting me to forgive you.

My fins could carry me no higher, but I watched, jealous, as the clouds kissed the waves. The rain fell and I forgot what your smile does to meor at least, I wished to forget.

I do not want to think of you again.

But since when do we have wishes granted? You are still plucking flowers, "She loves me, she loves me," and I am blowing dandelion fluff into the void. And so I lie dreaming of deep water, counting the days till your fishing line snaps. Counting the names on the palm of your hand. You wrote down all your soulmates to keep track.

It might have worked, but you kept adding more.

"I'm sorry, I'll be better, we'll fix this."
You lie and lie and nothing changes.
I'll either starve with your hook in my mouth or bite off your hand to get free.

I cannot breathe your air much longer. Someone will have to die for us to get off this ride. I hope it's you.

Please, god, let it be you.

Nicola Kapron / facebook: Nicola Kapron

Nicola Kapron is in her 5th year of Digital Media Studies and Creative Writing at Vancouver Island University. She has previously been published in Portal Magazine, Rebel Mountain Press's upcoming anthology *Disabled Voices*, and Mannison Press's anthology *Little Girl Lost: Thirteen Tales of Youth Disrupted*. She lives in Nanaimo, British Columbia, with a hoard of books—mostly fantasy and horror—and an extremely fluffy cat.

Movie and TV Scenes that (Bi)sexually Awakened Me

/ Emily Duren

LeAnn Rimes and Piper Perabo dancing on the bar to Can't Fight the Moonlight, *Coyote Ugly* (2000).

Christian Slater staring into Winona Ryder's eyes as she bites into a Twizzler at the convenience store, *Heathers* (1988).

Jeff Goldblum, in all his ripped shirt glory, chest heaving, staring intently into the distance (honestly, just everything about Jeff Goldblum), *Jurassic Park* (1993).

Badass feminist icon and possible murderess, Sharon Stone, using her vagina to distract a team of seasoned interrogators, *Basic Instinct* (1992).

Tyra Banks in the orange two piece, *Life Size* (2000).

Heath Ledger (and his curls) brooding at his desk, 10 Things I Hate About You (1999).

Sarah Michelle Gellar teaching Selma Blair to kiss, *Cruel Intentions* (2001).

Jennifer Love-Hewitt in the blue tank top, *Can't Hardly Wait* (1998).

Every time Mariska Hargitay whips out her handcuffs, and asserts her dominance, to arrest a perp, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (1999).



Pretty much any scene where Elizabeth Berkley is dancing suggestively with another woman (I really should have known something was up), *Showgirls* (1995).

Sherilynn Fenn manipulating every man in town in her plaid skirt and oxfords, *Twin Peaks* (1990).

Tie: Eliza Dushku's insane gymnastic skills during her audition/Gabrielle Union and her squad confronting Kirsten Dunst for stealing the Clovers' cheers, *Bring It On* (2000).

Dana Delaney anytime she does something conniving, *Desperate Housewives* (2004).

Stacey Dash with a nose ring, Clueless (1995).

Milo Ventimiglia, when he gives Alexis Bledel the book with the marked up pages, *Gilmore Girls* (2000).

Emily Duren / Twitter: @edurenwrites / Instagram: @whylime__

Emily Duren writes essays and poetry about the human condition. She received her MFA in creative writing from the University of California, Riverside–Palm Desert and, when not writing, can be found watching true crime documentaries and reminiscing about the '90s.

You & I

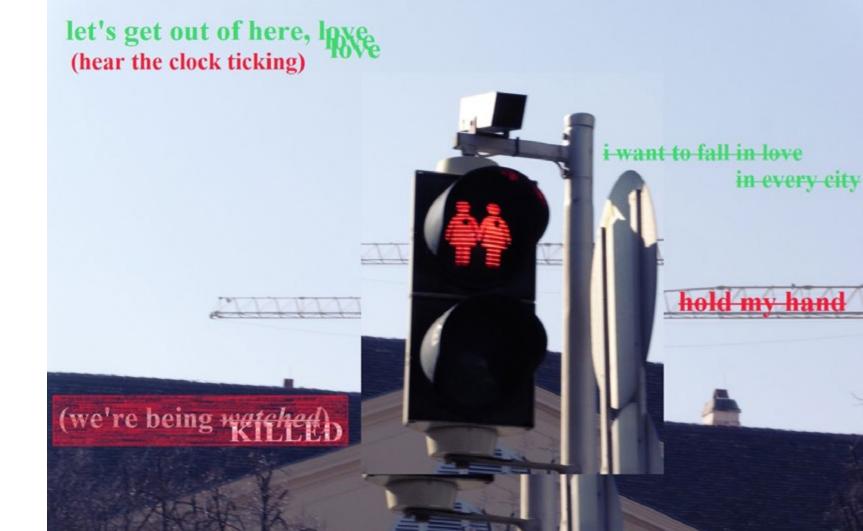
/ Ivanka Fear

I write my poems. I write my stories. You write me right out of your life. I wait for the rejections of my submissions. You reject all my attempts at reconciliation. I hear there's a 1-2% rate of acceptance. What are the odds of someone loving you as much as you love them?

I write my poems, I write my stories for you. You direct my life into your slush pile. I try to rewrite my life. I proofread, I edit, I revise. You don't really read me anymore, you won't even try. I watch the "no" slips pile up faster than I can write. What are the chances of someone wanting you as much as you want them?

I write my life for you to read, expose my pain. You rewrite my writing, excising me from your life. I can't accept your rejections. You can't accept me with my spewing passion. I feel too much. I take everything literally. What is the likelihood of someone needing you as much as you need them?

I'm no mathematician, no magician pulling rabbits out of a hat, just a writer pulling my emotions through this hole in my heart. But the statistics don't lie - 99% of relationships fall apart (or fail to be what you want them to be). So I spin my fantasies, my romantic tragedies, my cosmic mysteries. What is the probability of someone loving you as much as you love them?



Caroline Grand-Clement / @octopodeshearts / every city is the same city (above)

Caroline Grand-Clement is a queer eighteen-year-old studying English & Scandinavian literature in Lyon, France. She dreams of art in any form, falling stars & late night conversations.

Ivanka Fear / You & I

Ivanka Fear is a retired teacher and a writer from Ontario, Canada. She holds a B.A. and B.Ed., majoring in English and French, from Western University. Her poems and short stories appear in or are forthcoming in Spadina Literary Review, Montreal Writes, Spillwords, Commuterlit, Canadian Stories, October Hill, Adelaide Literary, Scarlet Leaf Review, The Sirens Call, Utopia Science Fiction, Bewildering Stories, Polar Borealis, Aphelion, Wellington Street Review, The Literary Hatchet, Lighten Up, and Sad Girl Review.

a collection of open letters, but they're all addressed to me

/ Kelsi Long

to the girl in the red subaru parked outside bonnie brae ice cream trying not to cry:

everybody can see you. the way you're biting your inner lip, screwing your face up into a tight scowl. you read in a magazine once that making a funny face stops the tears from flowing. you never cry at anything and you're not about to start. somebody standing around out there ought to buy you an ice cream: triple scoop of amaretto peach, your favorite, in a cake cone, also your favorite. none of them will. you understand, but that won't stop you hating them a little bit. it's ok to hate them a little bit.

to the girl standing in the condiment aisle, just staring at the mayonnaise bottles, for forty minutes:

maybe you should figure out a way to pay for therapy.

to the girl eating chocolate frosting right out of the can with a dirty teaspoon:

there is no wrong way to feel. no wrong way for gutting sadness to taste. but please wash the spoon next time.

to the girl melting into his chest when he hugs her from behind in the tchotchke shop at the mall:

oh, honey. baby, you stupid little pat of touch-starved butter, oh. you won't ever forget the way it felt. the searing heat of his huge, capable hands creeping across your stomach. the way they came to rest on your hips, the hips that you know are simultaneously too big and too bony, as if they'd been there forever, as if they couldn't wait to come back. he never hugged you like a friend. he leaned his chin into the warm little hollow of your neck and breathed something funny into your ear and for a second you felt like maybe this wouldn't end badly.

to the girl at the sofi tukker concert, slumped against the wall, having the worst panic attack of her life:

be nicer to the woman with the glittery face paint who leans down to ask if you're ok. you're probably bringing the vibe down a little bit. she is not required to be nice to you, and yet there she is, kind eyes framed by butterfly wings, a soft hand on your shoulder.

to the girl standing at the train station, hands on her hips, glowering at the ground:

you don't have to cry if it makes you feel like shit. crying isn't cathartic for every-body. it's not a panacea. sometimes it's just a dehydration headache. a streak of snot across your upper lip.

to the girl parked in front of his darkened house, staring into his darkened windows:

if you brought eggs, get out and get cracking. if you didn't bring eggs, turn around. go home. (you never bring any eggs.)

to the girl ugly-crying in the grass by the playground because "once in a lifetime" just came up on shuffle during her morning run:

this won't be his song forever. someday, you won't even remember his middle name. (steven.) the color of his eyes. (spit-shined sea glass.) the way he smelled. (cedar, laundry soap, green apples.) you are so, so lucky that nobody in this neighborhood visits the park on monday mornings, or else you might have to explain yourself to some cheerful mommy, and that would definitely break you in half. it's a beautiful morning in june, and in a few months you will be living a nearly unrecognizable life. let the day go by. let the water hold you down.

Kelsi Long / @tweetsbykelsi

Kelsi Long is a Co-Managing Editor at Hunger Mountain and the Poetry Co-Editor at Mud Season Review. Her work has appeared in Crab Fat Magazine, Memoir Mixtapes, and elsewhere. Born and raised in Denver, Colorado, she now lives in Montpelier, Vermont.

starfruit

I've had moments when I woke up panicking,

not sure if I really existed. everything was

once made of love, but I don't have the guts to

prove it. I could have sworn we almost made it

(didn't we?)

but I looked into the horizon

and saw sharks' teeth and doors with heartbeats and

yes, I've been wrong before, but this time really

gutted me. forgive your mind for how it strays.

forgive my hands for what they ache.

forgive me.

Wanda Deglane / @wandalizabeth

Wanda Deglane is a night-blooming desert flower from Arizona. She is the daughter of Peruvian immigrants and attends Arizona State University. Her poetry has been published or forthcoming from Rust + Moth, Glass Poetry, Drunk Monkeys, and Yes Poetry, among other lovely places. Wanda is the author of *Rainlily* (2018), *Lady Saturn* (Rhythm & Bones, 2019), *Honey-Laced Garbage Dreams* (Ghost City Press, 2019), *Venus in Bloom* (Porkbelly Press, 2019), and *Bittersweet* (Vegetarian Alcoholic Press, 2019).

sometimes when my limbs go numb, I like the feeling of being maybe more than one person. of finally wandering out of this body. of brushing my own skin and praying it was really you from the other side of the planet. I am sewed up by minor tragedies. dealbreakers and verdigris I'm a pantoum and I keep going in circles. I love that moonlight is a verb and you are so many beautiful nouns. look at all this unsustainability, this tinnitus, these desert-born bodies scraping helpless against metal. this fucked eternity you promised me, laid out in a flattened thinking of you feels like an invasion of privacy, shoebox. but I don't know how to stop. I'm sending my love with a tide of nectar, a pile of Wellbutrin, and a newborn spine. do with it what you must.

internet disassociation

/ Erica Brandbergh

logged into an old yahoo account and immediately regretted the decision when i came across old correspondence in a folder labeled "homework" a red herring in case one were to go searching to pry into the private life we shared

words we once fed each other i found nurturing, thought to be laced with mutual feminine understanding obsession mistaken for unconditional love

if you go, i go imposing dark lettering comes into view my stomach churns at the thought of ever having found that romantic

resenting our connection would continue to let your memory creep between the spaces in my ribcage seep through my fingertips but i do not know any other way

this is just how i feel about you now other days i think fondly about how seventeen year old me thought you may as well have been my angel

(are you sure you want to exit?)

(yes)

<u>(no)</u>

Erica Brandbergh / Instagram: @ericabrandbergh & @pure.sighs

Erica Brandbergh is from the suburbs of Pennsylvania. She completed her BA in English Writing and Communication Rhetoric at the University of Pittsburgh in 2018. Her writing focuses on themes of femininity, identity, and healing. She currently lives in Perth, Australia with her boyfriend.

Not Many Guys Would Like That

/ Elspeth Wilson

Not many guys would like that, he said. And the *that* was a specific thing but it was also me. Not many guys would like the way your arms are hairy - but it's okay because I do. These words make me hate myself because they make me pleased.

Elspeth Wilson / Twitter: @ellijwilson / Instagram: @projectpleasurable

Elspeth Wilson is a writer and researcher interested in all things gender and sexuality related.





Boys / Sidney Wollmuth

I think about boys the way one thinks about project deadlines.

It's been four days since I've made any progress, since I've molded my yearnings into something resembling a confession tape.

I want your glasses —
I think if I put them on that I
will be reminded not everyone
sees loomings the way
I do.

It's not always gel pen letters and movie tickets.

For one, dinner is a feast, for another, dinner is you-know-that-sounds-good-but-not-right-now.

I find I'm like a mosquito. If I wasn't always biting people, they might forget that I'm there.

Sidney Wollmuth / @sidwollmuth

Sidney Wollmuth is currently attending the University of North Carolina Wilmington Honors College where she is double-majoring in English Literature and Creative Writing. She loses a lot of things. Her writing has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing competition, Rookie Mag, Pittsburgh Poetry Houses, and Oprah Magazine.

Persephone's Lament

/ Elka Scott

Elka Scott writes short and novel-length fiction as well as poetry. They studied creative writing and psychology in university and are currently working to become a creative writing therapist. Elka lives in Saskatchewan and recently received a grant from the Saskatchewan Arts Board to write their first graphic novel.

Love is a dead thing, It is a corpse with hair that keeps growing, It is a light bulb slowly burning itself out. I have become accustomed to the scents of decay, The fetid smell of charcoal clings to my skin.

My mother sang me songs of life and beauty. We danced together under blistering sun rays and freezing water. When she calls me I tell her that everything is fine. Even though My husband holds me with cold dead hands, Hé whispers me the secrets only the damned know.

Everything is fine. My husband loves me very much, Enough to keep me inside Away from the whims of the weather. I watch rainfall from my window And snowstorms on TV. It is cold enough in my home without outside interference.

Love is the dead earth, Love is falling snow, Freezing when it meets the earth. It makes what was dark grey shine Like ice over a sidewalk. I cannot rid my skin of sleet or dust.

My mother wove flowers into my hair like a gardener. We walked together through blooming fields and let pollen rest on our cheeks.

When she calls me I tell her I don't garden anymore,

Everything is fine.

I just have no more time for frivolity like that.

My husband tucks me into bed with brimstone on his breath.

He watches me sleep like an ancient corpse.

My husband pulled out my flowerbed one still-growing bulb at a time

He hates anything

That reminds him of spring

I cut my hair, warm and waving like a summer stream

Before he could.

I keep the strands in my drawer

Next to my spades.

Love is a rotting fruit, Something sweet left to wither and die. It is forgotten in the fridge, Scent clinging to the plastic around it Even when the remains are removed. It is the way my eyes are used to the dark When I was born into divine light.

My mother fed me sweet honey suckle from her bosom, We planted promises within the earth and waiting for them to bloom.

She calls me,

I no longer call her.

I can't remember the sound of her voice.

My husband feeds me seeds so my love for him will grow.

Hé promises that I cannot control whether or not they sprout.

Love is a dead thing,

It is the way my husband touches my tongue. I touch his face and feel my own skin,

I kiss his lips and my blood runs lukewarm.

My husband loves me.
He does.
He loves all things dead and dying
Like old trees
And obsolete media
Like little women
Bodies grown too quickly
For their minds to adapt.

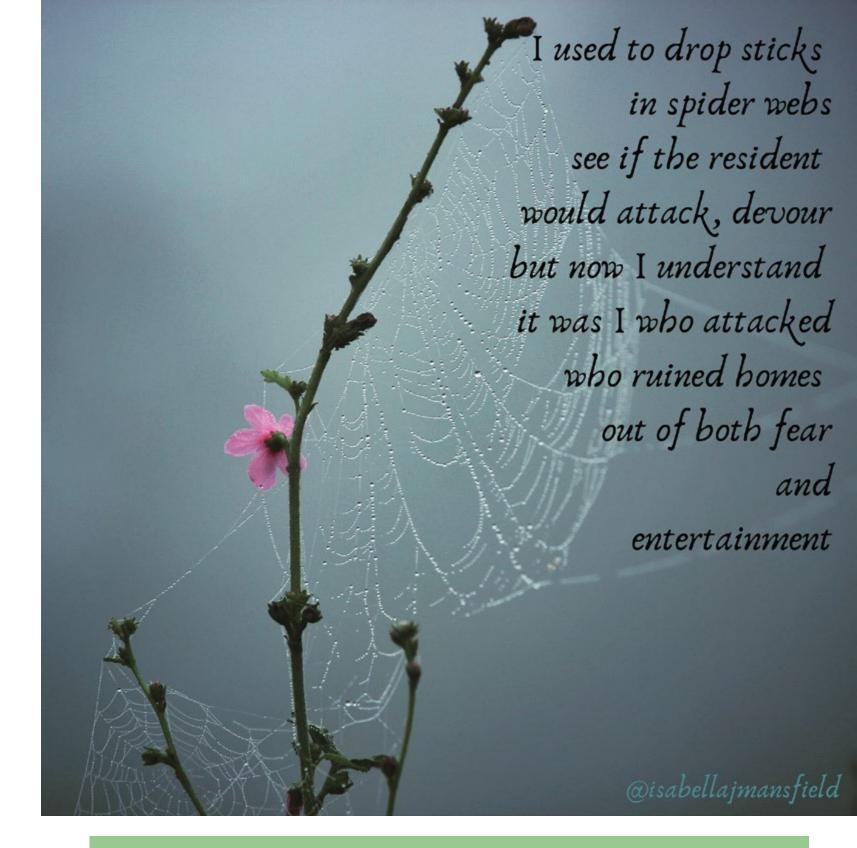
My bones splinter under his weight.

Everything is fine.
I am the Goddess of death
Cradling broken saplings and old memories in my skeletal hands
I visit my mother faithfully
And bring less of myself each time.
My mother buried me in my wedding dress,
It's gossamer sparklings and spiderweb lace
A fine shroud,
Dampened by the dark earth.
We sing together songs of darkness, grief and necrosis.
I am the Goddess of death
My husband tells me
She will praise me by my new title

I am the Goddess of death
I only wear black clothing
I do not know who I am mourning
But I see her only in the mirror.

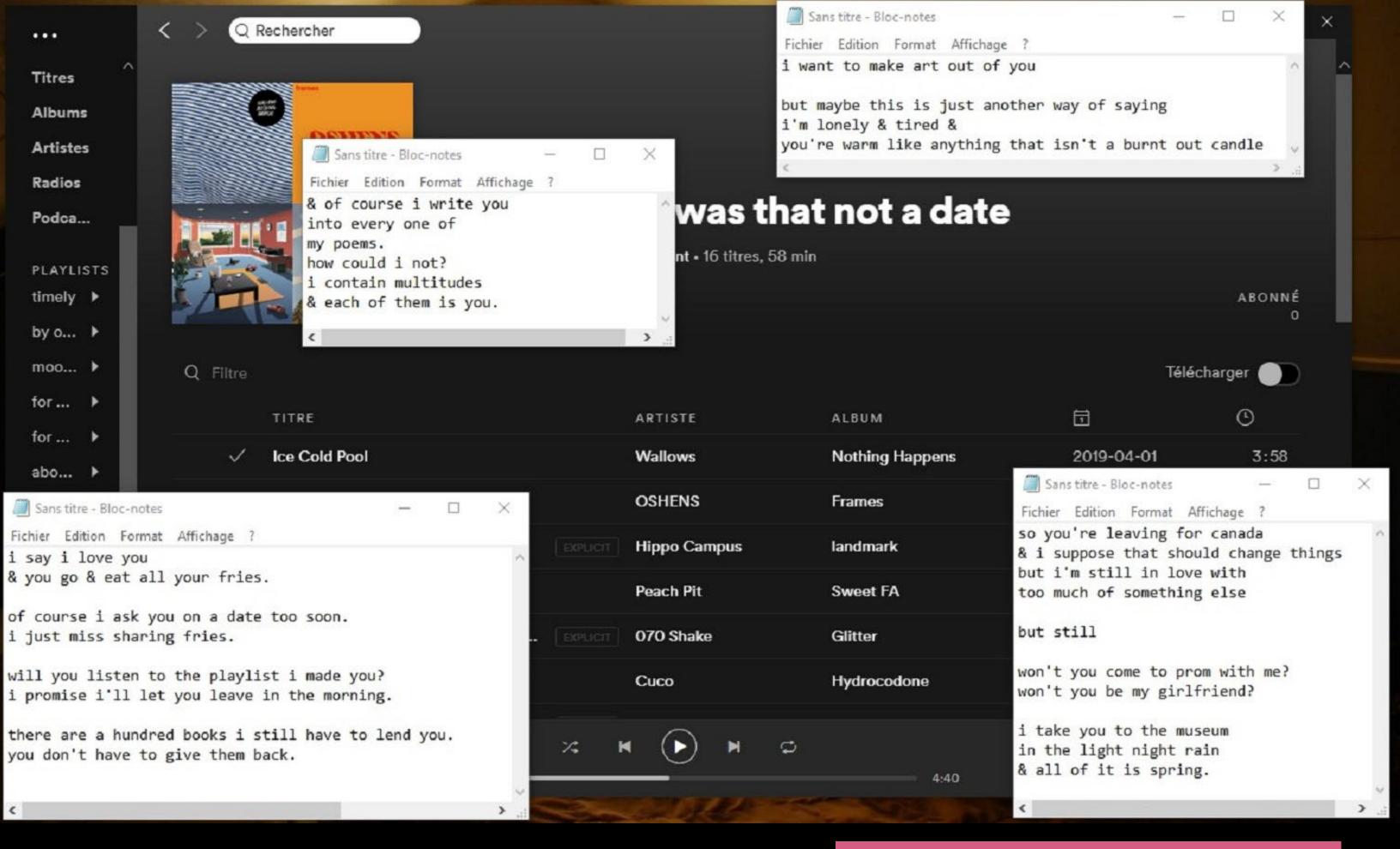
Or she will forget my face entirely.

My husband has dead eyes and corpse fingers. They circle my wrists like bracelets. I've become addicted to the touch of the end.



Isabella J. Mansfield / @isabellajmansfield / Homewrecker: Homewrecked

Isabella J. Mansfield's chapbook, *The Hollows of Bone* (Finishing Line Press, 2019), received a Pushcart Prize nomination, and centers around anxiety and its many forms. In 2018 she won the inaugural Mark Ritzenhein Emerging Author Award. She lives in Howell, MI with her husband and son.



Third Person

/ Aoife Riach

trawling through a list

of contributors ten

to a page information loading slowly and

downwards a skirt billowing

to the floor to see your photo even though your

face isn't in it to read your three line bio

I know by heart spending seven intentional

minutes clicking waiting searching to stumble

upon you seeking you out i will never say

you didn't trip into my line of vision I will

never type your name into a search bar

Aoife Riach / @aoife_riach

Aoife Riach is a queer feminist witch from Ireland with an MA in Gender & Women's Studies. Her poetry has been published in College Green Journal, Sonder, Channel, Impossible Archetype, Abridged and other magazines. She was a 2019 Irish Writers Centre Young Writer Delegate and her poem "Vancouver" was selected for the Hungering curation of the Poetry Jukebox.

You Rise First

/ Babo Kamel

The new perfume of him confusing your skin and this good man rolls over into the vestigial warmth of your body, as if somehow he could muse his way back

into the space, that just before was you

curled against him: the pearls of his spine, breath-warmed, your arm draped over his chest

All this before you slip from the sheets and your kisses begin their practiced retraction

from his sleep-salved mouth: those artless lips.

Downstairs, like footprints in reverse, the kitchen floor's chill cleaves to your bare feet:

each tile, a cold reminder to keep moving through what's becoming a routine, in progress:

he sleeping upstairs while his scarecrow—felt hat on the table, grey jacket slip covering the chair, keeps watch over last night's wine.

Out of this you are already constructing the man.

Babo Kamel / www.babokamel.com

Originally from Montreal, Babo Kamel is a four-time Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee. Her chapbook, *After*, is published by Finishing Line Press.

Good Night Texts

/ Nikolai Garcia

Said I was from L.A., but nowhere near the beach. I don't even know how to swim.

Because she can't sleep, she texts me until 3 AM. I'm three hours behind; her words lift me into midnight.

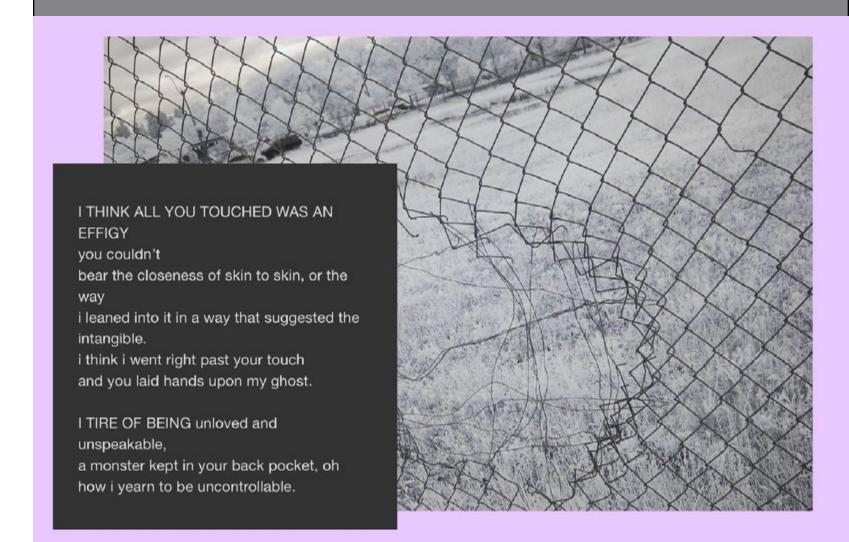
Told her—and the moon my secrets; gave her my real name. She said that she loved me.

Told her I loved her too. She said I didn't have to say it back; sent me a selfie from Dunkin Donuts.

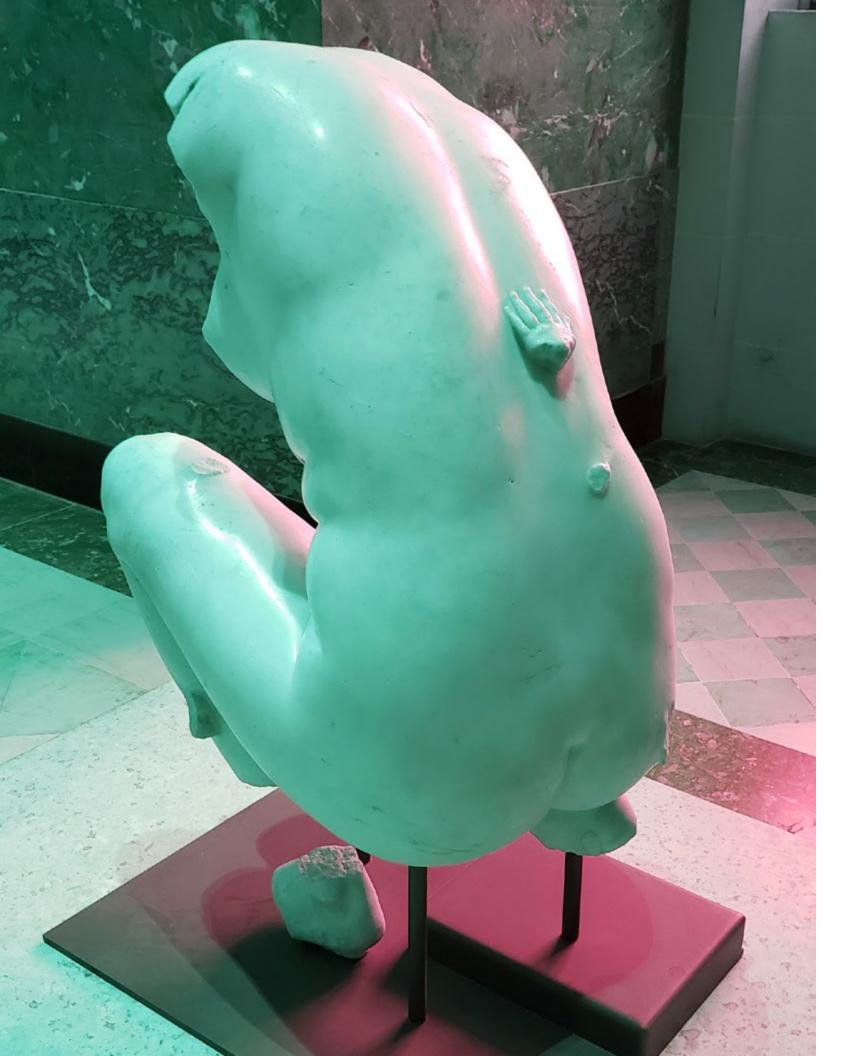
Because I'm South Cali, I text: Your eyes are like two dirty swimming pools. I whisper to my phone: But I don't know how to swim.

Nikolai Garcia / @HelloKommie

Nikolai Garcia is Assistant Editor at Dryland. His first chapbook, *Nuclear Shadows of Palm Trees*, is out through DSTL Arts. His second chapbook, *All the Sad Music*, is forthcoming with Ponte Las Pilas Press.







throw me back

/ Rebecca Kokitus

I'll be the first to admit: I've been trying

to smoke you away like bug-bombing my brain

yes, everything still reminds me of you but it's whatever

this everything was mine long before it was yours

your chest is a crawlspace that locks from the outside

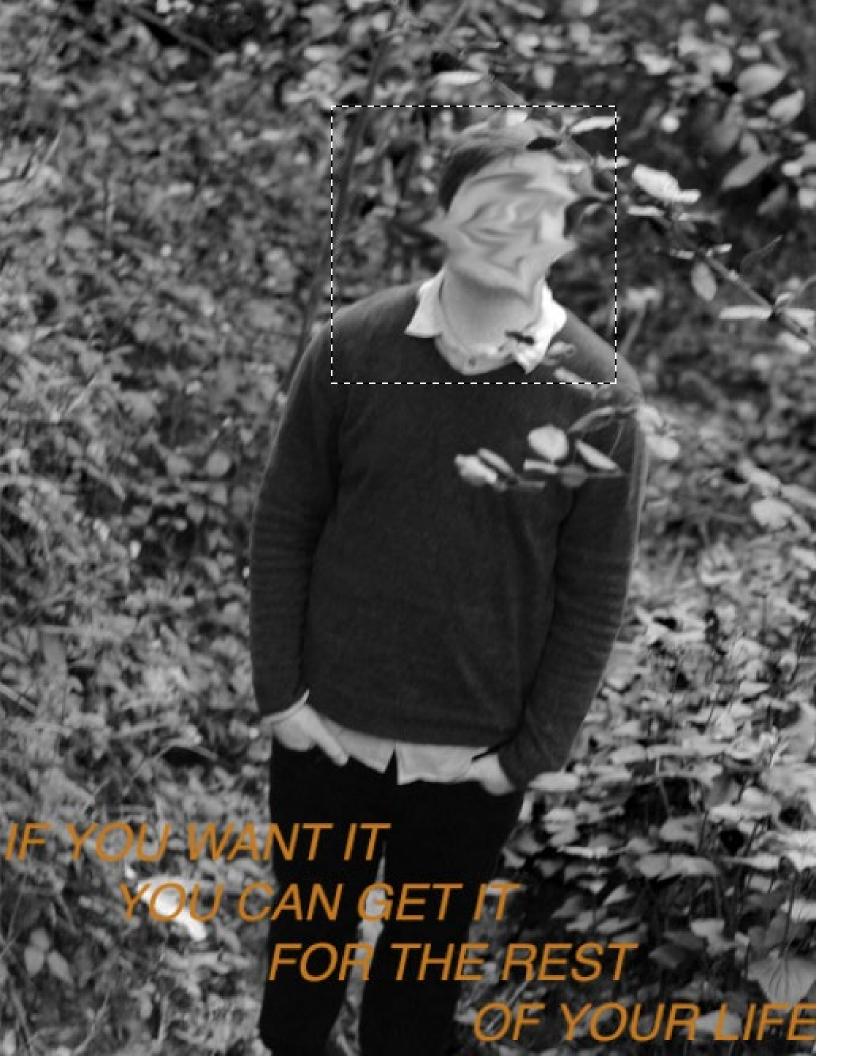
and the lighting is yellow and horrible as a morgue

throw me back like a fish not worth a story

like a girl not worth a poem

Rebecca Kokitus / @rxbxcca_anna

Rebecca Kokitus is a poet living and writing in the Philadelphia suburbs. She is a Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominee, and the author of three poetry chapbooks. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram at @rxbxcca_anna.



examining social dynamics with artist Milena Bee

Milena Bee's photo series *social dynamics: R U A LVR OR A FGHTR?* was created over four years between 2014-2018. In this collection of images, the artist strives to understand the behavior implicit in desire and the longing associated with love and loss. In this way, their work functions as a diary— a chronicle that exists apart from their corporeal form, yet employs lived experience. They live in Los Angeles, and are the co-founder of the newsletter-style zine All Guts No Glory, found on Instagram @agngmag. Discover more of Milena's work at www.milenabeeartistry.com.

Your series 'social dynamics' features photographs combined with text. What was your process for selecting the text?

The majority of the text comes from my poetry - which, in turn, can be heavily inspired by my interactions with people. If someone is in my life even tangentially, I'm thinking about it, and examining what brings us together and what, if anything is driving us apart. Some are lyrics taken from songs that have a lot of significance to me. It could be from a song that I've bonded with someone over, or something I've been holding closer to my heart. It all comes from my feelings.

The words are bright and colourful whereas the photographs are in black and white. This contrast seems important to the series.

The color contrast is partly for visibility, and partly based off of emotion. I don't have synesthesia exactly, but I do tend to associate colors with people and emotions, and especially if we're going through a tough time together. One is pastel pink, and I was trying to evoke a real sense of mutual hurt with both the color and text choice. Black and white is meant to cut off emotion to an extent - and yet invoke it with the intentionally blurred and framed faces.







This series is currently on hiatus. If you were to continue making work for this project again would you select your text and images in a similar way?

Yes, I would! Portraiture still feels like a big part of my photographic practice, and I'd say my poetry is still accessible enough to use. My hesitation comes from the inherent need and usage of close connections, and being sure that I'm either gentle, or innocuous, meaning I wait long enough after we've distanced or lost touch, but not too long so that I seem obsessive. In a way it's very therapeutic, as it publicizes the emotions I toil over in my diary in a way that isn't too obnoxious.







Crash

/ Sophie Panzer

Sophie Panzer recently graduated from McGill University and spent a year teaching English in the Czech Republic. She edits prose for Inklette magazine and is the author of the chapbooks *Survive July* (Red Bird Chapbooks 2019) and *Mothers of the Apocalypse* (Ethel Press 2019). Her recent work has appeared in Josephine Quarterly, Lavender Review, LOL Comedy, and Anti-Heroin Chic. Find her on Instagram: @sjpanzer97

This work first appeared in Nasty Wytches, Volume 1.

I

You try not to imagine her in winter: Round cheeks flushed into apples. Snowflakes settling in long lashes. Frozen clouds of breath drifting past dry lips.

Falling in love is like being slit down your abdomen and having all the dark slick things inside you exposed to open air, where they glisten and pulse and make you understand that you have never been vulnerable before, not like this. You are frozen in the moment you know your car and a stranger's car are going to collide, and your senses are screaming as they realize this and you feel the anticipation might kill you before the crash does.

But you are also being thrown high like a featherweight child, laughing and intoxicated by someone else's strength and the knowledge that one day in an impossibly far away future you too will be able to throw an entire person into the air, catch them as they fall, and save them from cracking open and spilling out onto the ground, again and again and again.

These feelings of desperate helplessness and ecstatic power swirl around each other in your mind like a ballet of oil and water.

You feel unworthy. When you are picking at scabs or biting at nails or waking up with drool on your pillow, it is hard to believe that any creature as disgusting as yourself could ever deserve to be loved. You want to cocoon yourself in the gray matter of your beloved's brain, so you flinch away from yourself and your desires as you would from any other parasite.

II

It's your first real summer job. The kind with a paycheck and tax forms rather than cash doled out in the dining rooms of tutoring clients. You're ridiculously nervous – suddenly you're part of a "staff" and have to fill out "timesheets" and attend "training," an all-day affair consisting of safety lectures and ice-breaker activities like Capture the Flag.

You first catch sight of her as she enters the rec center ahead of you. You notice she looks familiar, someone you might have seen in the halls of your high school during your years as an underclassman. Then you remember the pictures in the sports section of your local paper, with her up at bat or pitching in a red and black softball uniform. She had a ponytail then, but her light brown hair is short now, sticking up in a way that reminds you of sparrow feathers.

One of the first activities directed by your new boss involves finding other counselors in the room whom you don't know and inventing creative handshakes, each one more complicated than the last.

You make eye contact during the third round and pair up. Your fingers glow warm as they grasp hers.

III

She does things that make you ache.

She lets the campers cover all of her exposed skin with dirt. Sometimes she's getting a mud mask at a spa, others she's a human garden with dandelions tucked behind her ears and grass stuffed in her pockets. She doesn't take it off, either, just grins and walks around all day like a freshly dug potato because the kids love it so much. It makes you want to grab her by the shoulders and kiss the earth from her lips.

Your boss is really into team building. On the last Wednesday in July she invites all the staff to participate in an annual event known as The Challenge. The counselors show up at the rec center at nine PM, break into teams and complete a series of scavenger hunts, trivia games, and relay races for points until around midnight. The team that collects the most points gets their picture stuck on the wall of the supply room and retains bragging rights until the following year.

The reigning champions are the Ninjas, a group of usually goodnatured head counselors who turn into smack-talking fifth graders whenever The Challenge is mentioned.

Your team, assembled hastily the day before, consists of everyone who was passively rejected by the other groups. You call yourselves the Assassins and wear red bandannas. You also paint oily 'A's on your faces using a tube of red lipstick you brought from home.

She holds very still as you paint her skin, but the tremor in your hands makes the lipstick smudge. She lets you correct it with your fingertip. It's the second time you've ever touched.

Turns out, the games play to your strengths. You can solve word puzzles in your sleep and your trivia skills are on point. Even the relay races are not bad. In fact, they're so not bad that the Assassins actually end up beating the Ninjas.

It is midnight when your boss tallies the points and announces the winners. You and the rest of the Assassins are elated, but everyone else is tired and bitter, muttering about having to get up for work tomorrow.

You two are among the last to remain behind cleaning up the board games and art supplies. She offers you a ride home. When she turns the key in the ignition, one of your favorite Eagles songs blasts from the speakers, the one you and your dad have sung on road trips since you were old enough to pronounce the lyrics. "Sorry," she says, reaching to turn down the volume. "Classic rock. I was listening to this to get pumped up."

You are so adrenalized that you almost blurt out something you shouldn't. "No problem," you manage.

You spend most of the ride recounting the details of your victory until you arrive at your street. As she turns, you take a deep breath and say, "You're queer, right?"

"I'm genderqueer," she says.

"Do you have a preferred pronoun?" you ask.

"I'm fine with 'she' for work," she explains. "He' is cool too, though."

You smile and say, "I can see why you stick with 'she' for work. I mean, I like the other counselors, but they're not always super sensitive about that stuff. It's this house," you say as the car approaches your home.

"Tell me about it," she responds, pulling over. "During the puppet show when that guy dressed Kyle up as a fairy godmother he actually posted in the group chat, 'Puppet master dressed me up as a tranny, but we're not gonna talk about that."

"Oh my god." You think about the six year old who you know came to camp last year as Olivia and returned this year as Oliver.

You know you should probably go inside, but you can't stop yourself from saying, "I'm bi, if that matters." Somehow the statement doesn't quite fit into the conversation even though it has to do with what you've been discussing. "But I'm a girl, so I don't have to deal with the pronoun stuff. Thanks for the ride, I'm going to get out of your car now."

"Bye!" she calls. "Get some sleep!"

As she pulls away, you realize that you still don't know her sexual orientation. You wonder if she's asexual, like the first girl you ever fell for.

You lie in bed for the rest of the night, wide awake and wondering if there is a polite way to tell someone you want to hold them so close that the boundaries between your cells disintegrate and your bodies morph into a glowing mass of plasma occupying the same space in the universe.

There are some moments that make it difficult to believe in coincidence.

You and your boyfriend are going out to dinner during the first week in August. You are planning to break up with him at some point in the evening, and you have no idea what you are going to say. On the way to the restaurant you stop at the bank near the train station. It is 6:45 and commuters are streaming past in cars and on foot. They look strikingly similar to schoolchildren, except they are dressed in suits instead of uniforms and carrying briefcases instead of backpacks.

Your boyfriend drives to a busy corner and tries to make a left turn, but the cars are coming by too quickly. He finally edges past the stop sign, but he miscalculates the distance between him and another approaching vehicle.

You see the car getting closer and closer.

The impact is not hard enough to cause injury. Unsure of what to do, the two of you decide to park in a stranger's driveway. As you move away from the corner, you peer out the window to see the other car.

When you glimpse the face of the driver, you can't help it: you laugh. Hysterical, wheezing giggles that sound more like hyperventilation than actual mirth.

If this were to occur in a novel, this would be the point where you stopped reading, disgusted that the author would resort to such a cliché and unlikely plot device to illustrate the inner conflict of a character.

You get out of the car, and your gaze meets hers.

"Hey," you venture, still trying to smother hysteria.

"Hey," she says, with a grimace that is somehow also a smile.

She and your boyfriend exchange insurance information and call their parents. You attempt to be helpful by dialing the non-emergency police number and offering them both chocolate you have in your bag. An officer arrives, takes everyone's IDs, and fills out paperwork for half an hour while the three of you stand on the sidewalk.

Your boyfriend is shy, so he stands there and listens to the two of you talk. Topics of conversation include camp, college, and the high school she attended two years ahead of you.

She is calm and upbeat throughout the whole thing, which astounds you. She came to work this morning with a headache and swollen lip that later revealed itself to be sun poisoning. She got a rash from the poison ivy at her campsite. After sign-out she babysat for the entire afternoon, and now this. Any one of these things would be enough to make you have a mental breakdown.

Neither of the cars are badly damaged, just a dent in his door and a scrape on her fender. "Have a good date!" she calls cheerfully before driving away.

You turn to your boyfriend and ask him to take you home.

VI

The next day the two of you arrive at camp and recount the story to your coworkers. You are elated, briefly – it seems like you finally have something to bond over. In fact, you are so confident that you break up with your boyfriend that afternoon, citing the looming reality of college and claiming you want some time to get used to being single again before you leave.

But as the days go by and your conversations with her remain brief and superficial, it seems like you are growing more distant. One day she leaves you as you exit the rec center with an apathetic "See ya," even though you usually walk with her towards her car in the parking lot. It descends on you like slow poison: no one who felt close to what you feel about her would have walked away in that moment. Sure, maybe she was worried about getting to her second job because the weekly afternoon meeting ran late. But you know, deep down, because of something in the voice or the eyes you have come to focus on so intensely on, that your best bet is to ignore her until she goes away.

You stop making eye contact with her in morning meetings. Stop lingering in the parking lot in hopes of running into her. You throw yourself into preparing to leave for college, look up every detail about paying tuition bills and navigating campus.

VII

What you want to say to her on the last day of work, after the frisbees and hula hoops have been packed into boxes and all the campers have gone home:

"I love your nose. And your eyes. I love that at the end of the day you are inevitably covered in mud, paint, marker, or some combination of the three, and are completely happy about it. I love that you own not one but two pairs of those ridiculous shoes that look like gloves for your feet. I love that you had 'Take It Easy' by the Eagles playing in your car that time you gave me a ride home. You are funny and kind and sincere and laid back and I'm a neurotic mess and I expect nothing from you but I wanted you to know these things anyway."

What you actually end up blurting out in a panic as it dawns on you that your time in her presence can now be measured in moments, not hours or days:

"See you around!"

VIII

Your campus is beautiful in winter. After the first snow the grand stone buildings emit wisps of smoke through their chimneys against the backdrop of a frosted Mount Royale. You live in an old church that has been renovated to serve as a student dorm, and it looks like something out of a storybook. Even Leacock, the ugly concrete block that houses most of the giant lecture halls and Arts departments, looks pretty framed in white.

You have a paper due for your Race in Latin America class. As you make your way to your professor's office you catch sight of someone with hair like sparrow feathers.

For a moment you forget to breathe. But you walk on.



iced coffee & oranges

(or how I crushed my corporate coffee dependence)



Coffee is part of my daily ritual and it's become a way to bribe myself into alertness and activity. I used to go through the *[insert INTERNATIONAL COFFEE CHAIN]* drive thru so often that the baristas would recognize my voice and order as I greeted them. The compelling force of this habit was costly and at odds with my personal ethics. I was supporting the expansion of a massive corporate chain that underpays workers just like me. So that's when I began to experiment with ways to prepare iced coffee that were cheap, fast, easy, and required only a few basic kitchen tools.

PS: If you actually own a coffee maker this becomes a lot easier for you.;)



Directions:

- 1. Fill 1/3 of the jug with cold water.
- 2. Place cheesecloth over the top of the jug and secure with elastic. You want to create a little pocket for your coffee grounds to be placed in, so make sure that your elastic and cheesecloth are snug and secure.
- 3. Place 14-16 tablespoons of ground coffee into the cheesecloth.
- 4. Boil water. Slowly pour the boiling water on the coffee grounds in the cheesecloth, stirring occasionally. Resist the urge to press down on or squeeze the coffee grounds—it'll just make it more bitter. Fill ½ of the jug with boiling water, then dispose of the grounds and cheesecloth.
- 5. At this point, your jug should now be ¾ full with black coffee. Wash all 3 oranges. Cut 2 and a half oranges into slices and toss into the jug.
- 6. Twist the leftover half an orange on the juicer and dump juice into the jug. Top with additional water, if there's room.
- 7. Chill overnight. Add any sweetener if desired. Enjoy over ice.



Prep time:

10 mins, chill overnight

Ingredients:

- 14-16 tablespoons of ground coffee
- 4 oranges, or more to taste
- OPTIONAL: liquid cane sugar, or other sweetener

Kitchen Tools:

- large jug or pitcher
- kettle or pot
- cheesecloth
- elastic band
- manual orange juicer
- knife
- spoon





SGR Book Club

The Illuminations Project By Shary Boyle & Emily Vey Duke Find this title: ask your library

From the book: "The Illuminations Project was created by Shary Boyle and Emily Vey Duke between 2003 and 2014. The two artists invented a system in which drawings and texts could be exchanged freely and equally, with words inspired by images as readily as images were inspired by words. The project began with an initial text composed by Duke and sent to Boyle, who produced a drawing in reply ..."

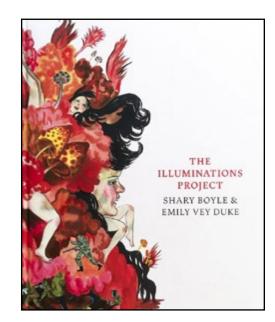
This is a beautifully twisted picture book for the cynical feminist. Shary's images feature loose brushwork and intriguing scenes that defy full meaning. Emily's poetry creates a liquid narrative that flows through their strange landscapes and she provides descriptions for feelings that are hard to define. Be warned: there is plenty of thoughtful sexual content.

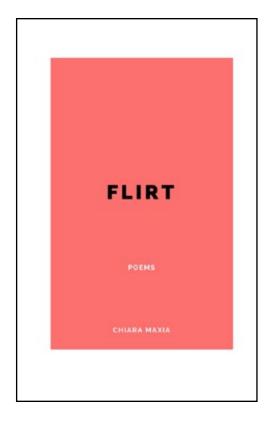
Flirt By Chiara Maxia

Find this title: https://www.chiaramaxia.com/shop

I drink mud and honey from a broken cup. I hurt my lips, I bleed. I swallow all of that wet dirt. To taste a dash of sweetness.

Flirt is Chiara Maxia's first book of poems. She possesses a Lana Del Rey-like flair for simple, feminine imagery. Chiara documents her wanderings across Europe and Russia with lines that are short and sharp. She yearns for home, for herself, and for meaning in life. This little pink book would pair perfectly with a cold, black coffee and a cigarette.





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