

# UNSWeetened

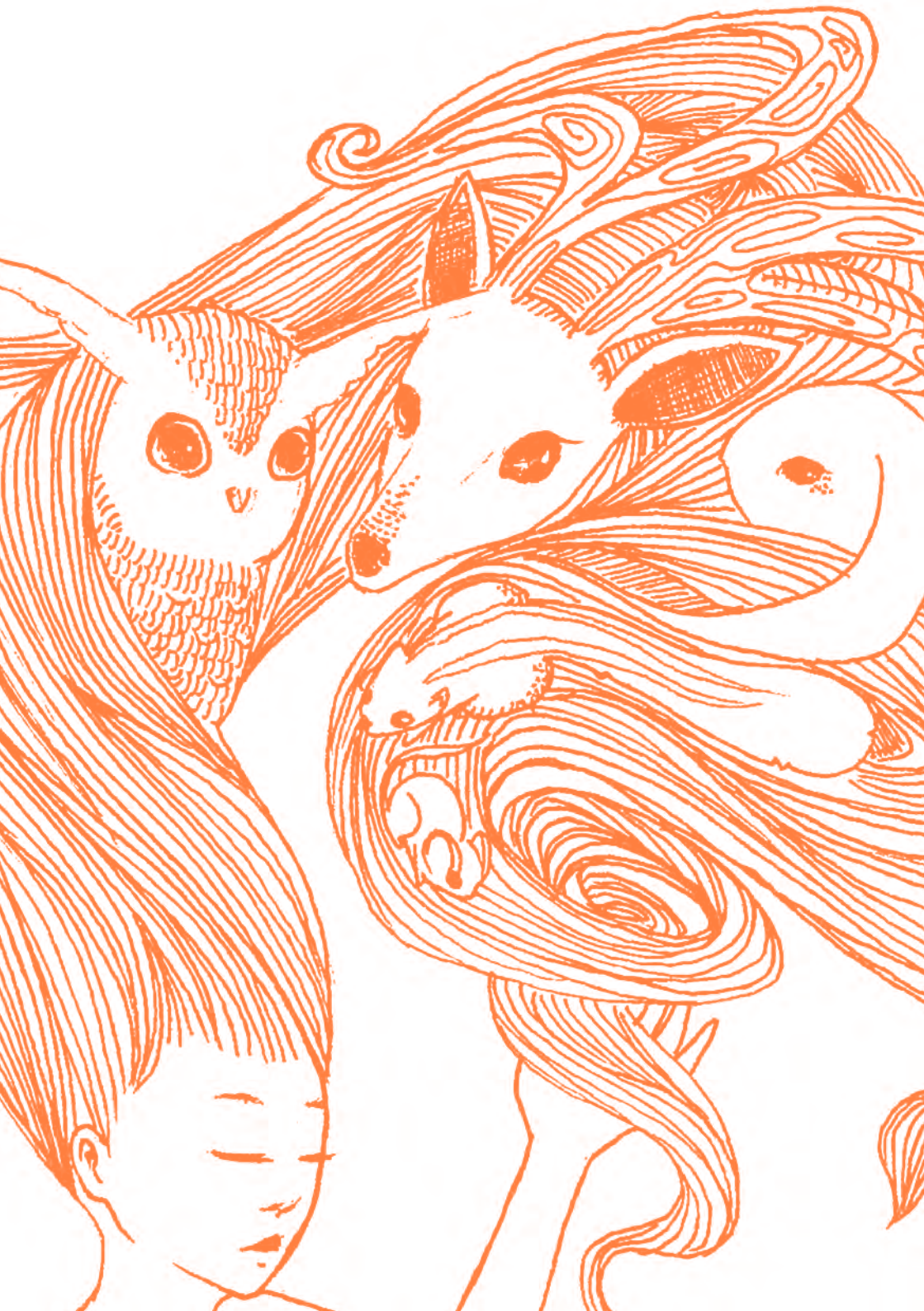
L I T E R A R Y J O U R N A L

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UNSW Student Life



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# F O R E W O R D

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Food and drinks are essential for survival, but the arts are vital for the soul. In its 16 years of existence, *UNSWeetened* has spawned many talented authors and opened avenues to channel their creative flow. This year, it continues to be the place for students from all faculties at UNSW to get in touch with their artistic self. *UNSWeetened* promotes creativity, freedom of expression and the satisfaction of being published in a literary journal. All the students who submit have shown their courage, artfulness and great craftsmanship in the field of self-expression.

This year's selection presents a great range of genres. There are short stories for the timid and the desperate and poems to cheer the sad or inspire the humble. In this volume of *UNSWeetened*, there are many works that celebrate the banal and profound things in life. The etiquette of concert goers, the breathtaking views of Hobart, the story of dust, a swim through the ocean, time travel on the human level and the laments of park-rangers are just a few examples of the richness and diversity of this edition.

The works in this volume have been produced solely by students' at UNSW. Each year a team of student volunteers select, edit, design and illustrate the pieces which are to be published. They are responsible for the content of the book in your hands. *UNSWeetened* also owes its life to Arc who has provided it with every support a creature needs to survive and flourish.

Before turning over the page, I will share a personal experience: I came to the position of *UNSWeetened* Coordinator with a vision and standard of what *UNSWeetened 2013* should be. Then as I read each individual entry, I realised that *UNSWeetened* is here for everyone with a grain of creative talent.



R I A A N D R I A N I  
UNSWeetened Coordinator




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# B E I N G   A N D   D O I N G



E M I L Y   H I P S L E Y - D A V I D S O N

## I

Elevators. Eight or more strangers in three square metres of space, multiplied in darkened mirrors. There is an unspoken code of etiquette regarding social elevator travel. The rule is: ignore everyone. Bifold. Trifold. Faces stretch back into an optical abyss to infinity. It's curious; the way the light is dim enough to throw back shadows on your face where there are none, yet still able to catch tiny rainbows around the mirror's raw edge. A cough next to you, a pinstripe suit. Its owner is monotone in the dark. Oiled hair, polished shoes glowing. Your head is lowered as you peer back up in the glass, large irises under heavy lids, like a startled possum. Dogs find eye-contact threatening. The pinstriped men in infinity mirrors have thick eyebrows, large knuckles that grip the handles of backpacks; their wrists are adorned with rose gold watches with inner hands to record the date, air pressure and wind speed on the surface of the moon. Glossy forehead of a paper man coiled round behind the spine of the magazine. Boy on his lap.

*One does not ow...*

*Merely keeps it for...*

*Next generation."*

*TAG Heuer watches - timeless.*

Your legs jitter and to stop them, you reach for your wallet. Old receipts snag in the coin zipper, and when you do wrestle the pull-tag open, an assortment of small change catapults out of the wallet, clanging discordantly against the walls. Suit is not impressed, but you do not hold his attention for long. When you sweep your hand over the carpet to gather up the change, you wonder if he is looking. Should you have just left the money? You wish you hadn't decided to wing it and walk to Heather's apartment. Forty five minutes and two armpits full of sweat later... The elevator dings, and this time you successfully pull out the pair of conjoined tickets, running your fingernail along one perforated edge.

The hinge of the doorknocker screeches audibly before connecting heavily with the brass plate on the door. You stare at the yellow stitches in your Doc Martens, and hear carpet-dampened footsteps through the other side of the wall. When Heather opens the door, you notice that her feathering of freckles have all but disappeared under makeup. Her wrists chime with an assortment of bracelets that you think impractical for a concert. Thirty minutes later, when she shakes salt onto a bowl of chips and her wrists provide their ever-present percussion, you will regret not having said anything. Instead, you tell her how beautiful she looks, and then spend the elevator ride down composing compliments that don't sound like clichéd movie dialogue. You stow them away for later use, reminding yourself to sound unaffected and spontaneous when you use them.

## II

*One by one, smartphones rise up in fists, swaying with a blue glow in time to the music. No one here is old enough to have ever held a lighter like this, and the stray fathers escorting their tweens cringe openly. The fathers do not have smartphones.*

Ezra Walsh prowls closer towards the edge of the stage, teetering out over the crowd who stretch their arms towards him. Some are already wearing the shirts they queued for at the merchandise stall, and carefully planned outfits have given way to variations of album art, logos and tour dates.

Girls in the front row are imagining the anecdotal smugness with which they will relate the way their fingertips brushed Ezra's sleeve. They lean closer, pawing at the air near his skin. Like a child bothering a caged animal, the front-man steps back just out of reach. Logan is behind the swell of the mosh pit, watching as Ezra flits in and out of a window of vision between two heads. He fiercely defends his once-square-foot of floor space from encroaching elbows and their owners, who waste no time in edging their way to a better view. He's lost Heather, but as the crowd presses and shifts around him, he knows that if he turns around to look for her, he won't have a space to turn back to.

Sinuous pre-recorded synthesisers loop and stutter. The epaulets at Ezra's shoulders glitter in the softened light. Strumming an acoustic guitar, he closes his eyes and leans towards an upright microphone, a howling falsetto banshee. White-blonde hair sweated to his forehead, he makes a show of flirting with the audience, feyly strutting as close to the edge of the stage as his guitar cord will allow. The composition is perfect. Logan's arm shoots into the air, elbow locking as he reaches for maximum height. For the next minute he's staring at the lens focus on his camera screen, waiting for the blurry outlines to resolve into the tableau of the band he can see above the screen. The focus throbs into clarity – red frame, green frame – and his thumb hits the capture button.

The spotlights change from cherry-red to a floodlight of full face-on brilliance. A lens

flare blooms over the drummer who tick-tick-ticks the hi hat at half beats. Ezra is closing his eyes and leaning towards an upright mike, captured in the conical light, bright, overexposed. Flat soda can-crushed depth of field. Logan swipes through a collection of images: a motion blur, the crown of someone's head, a flash-brightened arm thrust up at the exact moment Ezra primed for the cameras. One of the ever-present elbows digs sharply into his side, and regardless of floor-territory, he spins to meet it. Heather. Logan becomes aware of the notes of a melody which resolve into the end of a guitar solo he recognises, and he shakes his head in bewilderment, as if wondering where the rest of the music went.

“H-a-v-i-n-g f-u-n?” Heather enunciates, but Logan can't hear her. He can only discern her mouth moving in overcompensated vowel shapes. She leans in toward Logan's ear, stabilising her hand on his shoulder. Up close in the dark, he can make out the sheen of sweat on her forehead, the dark eye shadow that has transferred to her upper eyelid. Her earrings graze his shoulder as she shouts “J-u-s-t e-n-j-o-y t-h-e s-h-o-w O-K?” Onstage, the drummer thumps the kick drum, a cue for the crowd to start bouncing on the soles of their feet.

Standing still, Logan theatrically shrugs to make himself understood “I c-a-n't h-e-a-r y-o-u?” Their sentences are too long to understand over the noise, and their words crystallise into incomprehensible sentiments of frustration. Heather turns away, reaching into the pocket of her second-skin jeans. Nails clicking on her phone screen, she deftly composes a message, which buzzes ten seconds later in Logan's camera-hand.

### **“Put your fucking phone away, ok? :P Just enjoy the show”**

The house lights rove over the audience, briefly illuminating Heather's face. Looking at Logan, she nods curtly in accomplishment and turns back toward the stage.

Rising shrieks of excitement emanate from the front of the mosh pit. The bassist tosses a half-empty water bottle toward them, and the crowd turns inward like fish feasting on breadcrumbs. Logan only half-sees this from his vantage point – too low – but he's only half looking. He's trying to keep Heather out of his peripheral vision. He's not looking but his eyes are magnetised to the area next to where her body would be. Risking eye-contact, he glances over at her. She's clapping her hands above her head in double-taps, her anger apparently forgotten.

## **III**

During the second act of the concert, your eyes are trying to hold onto the image of Ezra, for all he's become in the softly lit arena is an indistinct blur. You've given up on



Logan; let him fiddle on his phone if he wants to, you paid money for this ticket. Eyes tired, your view of the stage is a flattened image that makes little distinction between the band and their surroundings. How soon will the set list finish, and how long will the bathroom queues be? You scold yourself, and try to concentrate on the improvised violin embellishments of Ezra's lead violinist. Your memory of this song is different. Of course you have heard live versions, but you've listened to the album version so many times that you take it for granted as immutable and definitive. You've learnt to anticipate the addition of the second violin, and the way the bow skidded on the strings just after the female backing vocals slid up to a higher pitch. This deviation feels like a small betrayal to your loyalty. Yet you swallow this feeling, because you are now half a room away from a band you've only seen boxed inside YouTube's 10 x 15 viewing frame. Now you're here, and they're here, corporeal, but distant. You've been closer to them when they were half a world and one computer screen away. You could read faces, see sweat, appreciate the hours' worth of sewing on a seed-beaded ensemble. Now you're just approximating what's happening from the squealing in the front row. But you're here. You will never again have the experience of craning your neck, now, at 10:09 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, for an overpriced concert. Your bladder, your anger, your album version can wait.

#### IV

Brigades of black-clad teens clog the arena exits like plughole hair. They waited through the post-show darkness, thunderously stomping and clapping for the encore's encore until the house lights came on.

"Heather!" The cords in Logan's neck lengthen. He's shouting but he can hardly hear himself. Sweat chills his shirt. His vision is returning, granular, but the world is muted, like water in his ears he can't shake out.

Heather might still be angry; she might be lost. She might already be making her way back home without him, or perhaps she was waiting somewhere? Logan begins by trying to remember what she was wearing. Bracelets...? He told her she looked nice, but what was she actually wearing? Black, he assumes, which doesn't make the job of finding her in a crowd any easier.

Outside, people pour out onto pavements and night buses home. The more theatrical fans didn't heed the rule of not out-dressing the bride, and some are sporting home-made outfits made with sequin fabrics from Spotlight's dress up aisle. Flammable, he imagines, as they light cigarettes. Heather had made a conscious effort of blending in, wearing a uniform that made her a part of something, yet also indistinguishable from that part. Why did girls always want to look like each other? His phone vibrates in his pocket.

Missed call from Heather at 11:28 **“Hi Logan. Come and find me, I'm near the bar. I'll be standing by the chalkboard”.**

Text message from Heather at 10:09 **“Put your fucking phone away, ok? :P Just enjoy the show”.**

On the recording her voice was loud, but she had only been shouting over the echo in her head. Maybe she was loud because she was still angry? Logan reluctantly makes his way to the neon bar area. Too sticky to take the bus, they decide to walk some of the way. Heather's hair curls in ineffectual pigtaileds, and the hair falling around the back of her neck collects a fine mist of sweat. Opposite a pub, the neon of a lone ice cream shop glows proudly amongst the darkened facades of coffee shops with upturned chairs.

Wiping her dampened forehead, Heather orders a sorbet. Logan stares through the beads of condensation on the glass, reading and rereading the flavours of ice cream.

**“Put your fucking phone away :P”**

Wasn't that a bit harsh?

The ice cream melts too quickly on his tongue. When he swallows it, it's liquid-sweet and unpleasant.

“I had fun” she beams. He's glad. Then he's worried. She had fun, but their most meaningful interaction was a passive aggressive phone conversation that lasted all of a minute. I had fun without you, she means. The bangles on her wrist shimmer musically. He will not ask her out on another date.

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This is Emily's second publication in *UNSweetened*. She vowed that if she ever got in again, her author's bio would project an author-persona that made her seem effortlessly suave and laid back... it didn't really work. When she's not talking about herself in third person, she enjoys writing, making handmade books and other sundries. “Being and Doing” explores mindfulness and smartphones.

# HOBART: CITY ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD



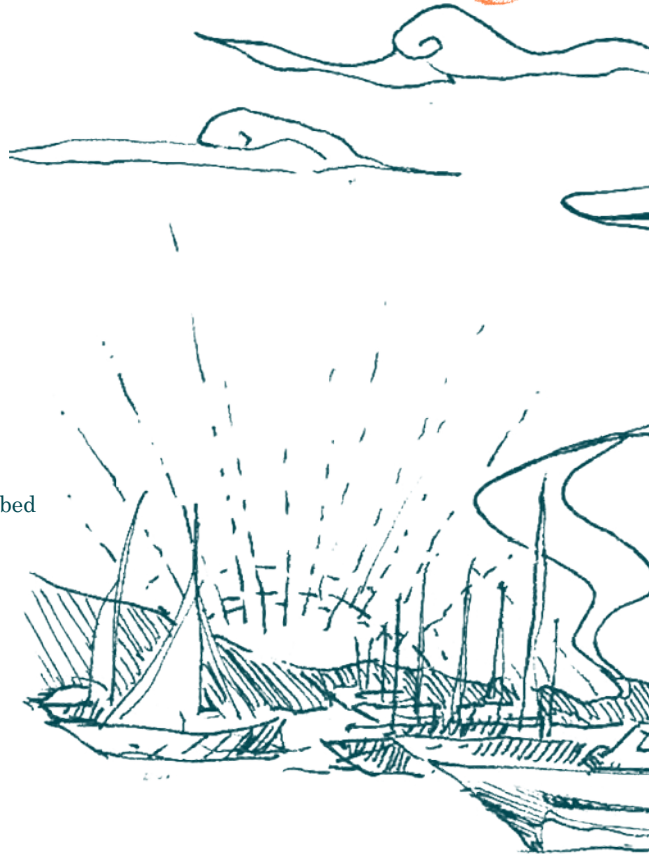
DOMINIC BOWD



Scotch Ale to  
warm the icy ghost prose  
of the long-dead  
Mouheneer – bird dogs crouched,  
steely throat-howls charcoaled  
beneath the dolerite – convict  
blood gullies leaching  
vermillion into  
Antarctic spectra.

These the boondocks of  
Lands' End – this final  
nautical ambit, where  
Georgian sandstones persist,  
once chiselled out from  
beneath Huon Pine – the wizard-limbed  
galleries of tribal antiquity –  
twisted oil woods of  
Lagarostrobos.

Scuzzied on oak'd  
firewater like the Cornish  
road builders of olde Hobarton.  
Them, drunk and dancing at the  
antipodal campfire, naked  
asunder scaled globsters and  
mountain-wombs – alien, jilted and  
macabre to such men of  
possession.

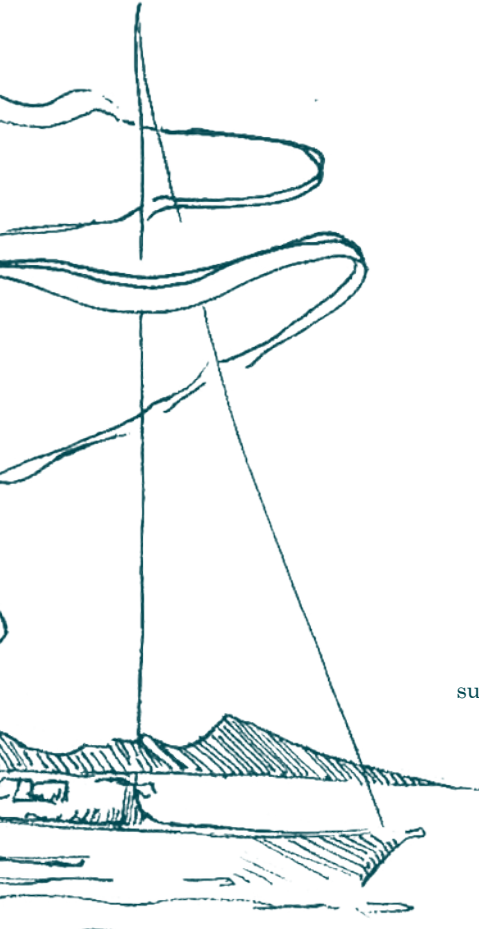


# HOBART: CITY ON THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

# 2



DOMINIC BOWD



Late afternoon Polaroids  
reflecting wooded mountains in  
carotene yellow – a quixotic retrospective.

Argyle Street 7pm – a stumbling gronk  
singing Lou Reed's Heroin to a  
crowd of nobody, spitting at  
the pigeons and goose-stepping  
cracks in splintered pavements, his flare-bottomed  
nostrils radiating crystalline faerie dust into  
Tasman airwaves – particulate narratives annexed  
in plumes of human debauchery.

The anatomic city – pristine in sepia.

Yachts crowding her salt-scalped vista,  
young sailors drawn to her wet autarchy – she is  
the auxiliary, a most magnetic city. A city whose  
sunsets impregnate poetries, and whose tiny empire,  
built of grim exile, lachrymose and  
distant, lacquers the eyes with  
supple delight. A seaport vulva peopled, a satellite city.

She is enveloped by the fissured rocks  
of pre-history, sparkling in nocturne –  
the intricate architraves of North Hobart  
rusted orange in December  
dusk.

---

Dominic is an Honours student in the Faculty of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences at UNSW. The first piece, written in the New Sydney Hotel on Bathurst Street in Hobart, explores the city's history, geography and alluring landscapes. The second, also informed by this city and its surrounds, was penned as he was sinking a pint of black beer at the Alley Cat Bar, North Hobart.

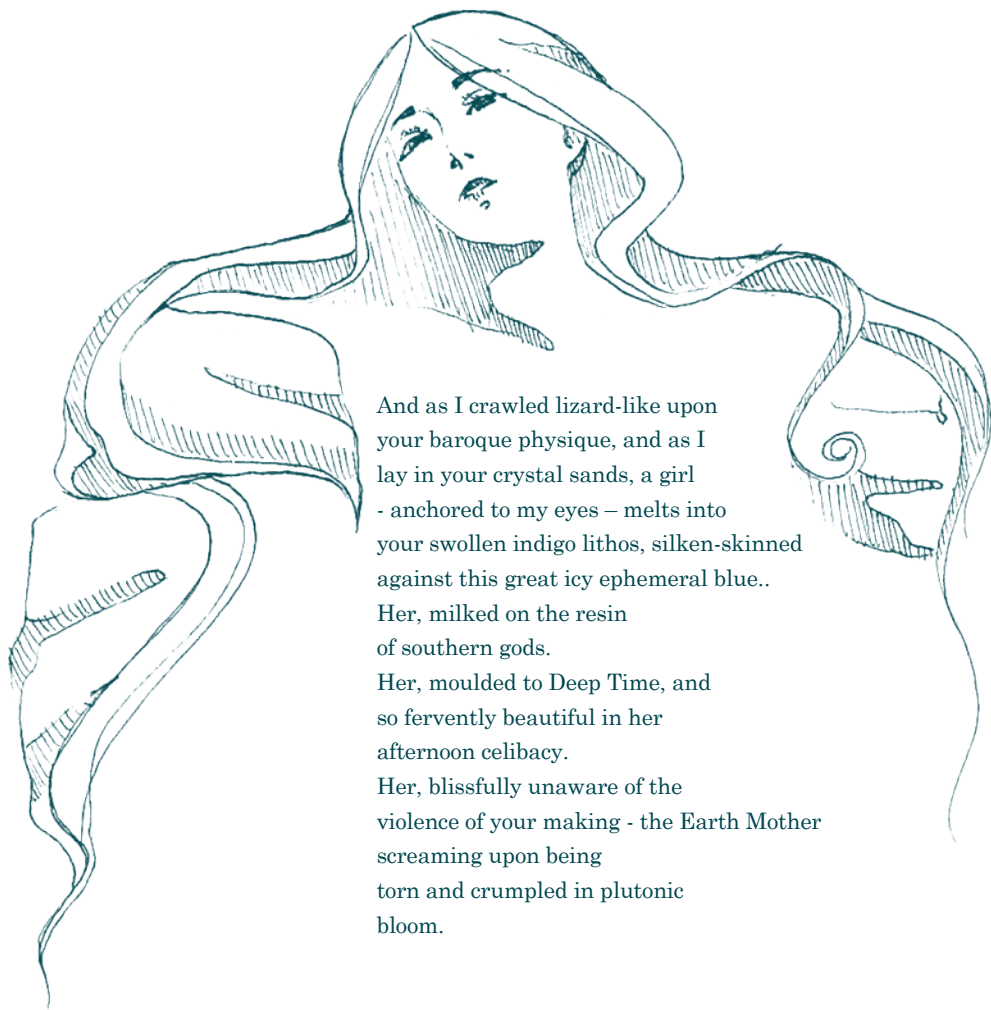
# F R E Y C I N E T



D O M I N I C B O W D

Milk moon over burly  
shoreline; it is as if  
Siddhartha Buddha - pink'd  
by the sun - sleeps.  
A voluptuous appendage,  
suckled to the isle  
of Eve.  
Rolling bellies of smooth'd  
rock - ovoid, arciform.  
Oh the great caramel granites  
of Freycinet - a most feminine  
rock - firebred, a holy  
trinity appearing before me.  
Enlightened thricefold; the three  
peaks of Paredarerme, bronzed &  
indefatigable.  
Oh the Aeolian citadels  
of Van Dieman, unvanquished  
by the soiled hands of  
man - the Victims of Tyranny:  
Fenians! All slovenly drunken Paddies from  
upcountry – shamrock'd pedagogues of  
rebellious ferment!





And as I crawled lizard-like upon  
your baroque physique, and as I  
lay in your crystal sands, a girl  
- anchored to my eyes – melts into  
your swollen indigo lithos, silken-skinned  
against this great icy ephemeral blue..  
Her, milked on the resin  
of southern gods.  
Her, moulded to Deep Time, and  
so fervently beautiful in her  
afternoon celibacy.  
Her, blissfully unaware of the  
violence of your making - the Earth Mother  
screaming upon being  
torn and crumpled in plutonic  
bloom.

---

Dominic is currently studying Honours in the Faculty of Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences at UNSW. This poem was written as the afternoon sun was reflecting off the pink feldspars of the mighty Devonian granites near Coles Bay in Tasmania.

# S E V E N T E E N



R O S A N N A C L E M O N - W A L L I S

I haven't heard from her in two days. On Tuesday morning she said she was going to lunch with Kai. They've been hanging out a lot lately. I would think they were sleeping together again, but with his schoolgirl fetish, I don't think he'd be into fucking a pregnant girl.

This is all so weird. The last four months – I can't believe it's been that long – have gone so quickly.

\*\*\*

Three months ago, I found myself sitting in a cold plastic chair, staring at a magazine without reading it. I was pulling at a hole in my tights, feeling underdressed, when she came out. The doctor followed her into the waiting room, saying he'd see her again soon as she signed a Medicare form and I picked up our bags. She took my hand and we walked back to the car without speaking. She was smiling slightly, serene as she closed her eyes to the sun, warm on our faces. It was a crisp autumn day, as they tend to be in Canberra in May, and the shade was cold but the sun was hot.

"Positive?"

She laughed. "Yep. He reckons five weeks."

"Maccas? Then home?"

"Fuck yeah."

We drove to her house with the windows down and the radio blasting. When she got tired of her drink, she threw the cup out my window rather than hers, surprisingly successfully, and just about pissed herself laughing at the look on my face. I laughed with her. When we got there, to her parents' cream and rose mansion, we lay on the trampoline in the backyard, soaking up the sun, our stockings prickled with static.

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know, hey? Daniel wants me to keep it."

"And do you?"

"Sort of. I don't know. I'm fucking 17, hey? And I don't know that I want him around for the next 18 years or whatever."

"You going to talk to him about it? You know it's your choice though. He's not the one who has to be pregnant."

"Yeah. Lucky bastard."

She decided to terminate the pregnancy, and broke things off with Daniel. I booked an appointment for her.

\*\*\*

A week later, we were sitting on the grass at school, drinking hot Milo and sharing a croissant: our morning ritual.

“I don’t think I want to do it,” she laughed.

“Are you sure?”

“A hundred percent.”

“Okay. I’ll cancel it.”

\*\*\*

Life continued as normal for a while. Pretty much. She had to hide her morning sickness from her parents. She found creative ways to do so, and we laughed about it a lot. She read books and made lists of names. She fought with Daniel. She was keeping the baby but she didn’t want him around. She didn’t want his help. When she told him this, he really proved her right: showed a different side of himself. He threatened to kill her and take the baby. She laughed when she told me.

\*\*\*

In July, her belly had started to swell. I went with her to the first ultrasound. She giggled as the nurse rubbed cold blue gel over her now strained skin. The nurse pointed to a blurry little blob on the monitor. I squinted, trying to make out any significant shapes.

“It looks like a jellybean!”

“There’s the baby’s head right there..”

“Little jellybean.” I squeezed her hand and she smiled.

From the clinic we went to a takeaway next door. She bought a little carton of milk and grabbed a straw. “For the jellybean’s little bones.”

Heading back to school, we were driving down Parkes Way, toward the huge roundabout at Anzac Parade. There was a little white car in front of me, and a coach on the other side of the roundabout. I misjudged its speed, thinking the car in front would keep going and that we’d both take the gap before the coach. The little white car pulled up fast. I slammed on my brakes and swerved left, missing their bumper by inches. We stopped, mirror-to-mirror with the little car, its driver none the wiser. The coach roared past in front of us.

I was frozen for a moment. Then she burst out laughing, and I turned to look. There was milk everywhere. On the windscreen, in her hair, soaking through her shirt, which now clung to her little bump. We laughed hysterically with tears in our eyes, until a car behind us blasted their horn to make us move.

\*\*\*

My phone rings. Her name is flashing on the screen.

“Way to drop off the face of the Earth!”

“Ah I know, I’ve been at Kai’s,” she laughs. “And in the hospital. I miscarried.”

“Oh God, Tara, are you okay? I love you. Are you okay?” My heart is in my stomach.

“Kai’s mum’s been looking after me. I’m going to stay here one more night. Can you pick me up tomorrow?”

“Of course. Anything you need. You’re sure you’re okay?”

She laughs. “I just need sleep. I’ll call you in the morning.”

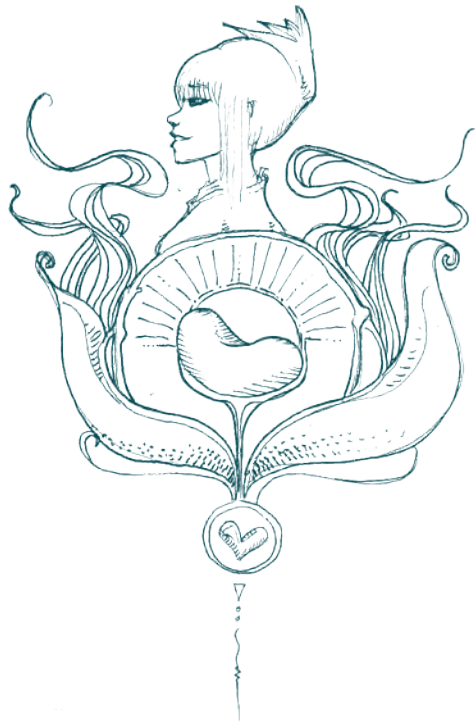
“Okay, love you.”

“Love you too.”

\*\*\*

She still hasn’t talked about it. She told me how it happened as I drove her home from Kai’s house: Struck down with pain at the restaurant with Kai. Driving to the hospital. She was unconscious for a few hours after she delivered her tiny blue baby. The size of her hand.

I asked her how she felt, and she just laughed.



---

Rosie is a 24 year old English Lit. student at UNSW. She grew up in Canberra and subsequently has a love/hate relationship with both politics and roundabouts. She lives in Redfern with her boyfriend and an assortment of dying pot plants.

LOVE IS AN OPEN  
ENDED QUESTION,  
MAYBE



ROSEMARY ANNE GALLAHER

I don't want to fall in love but I do so want to love you,  
love you like Fridays and three birthday cheers,  
love you like wild schemes and spit on our fingers;  
I don't want a romance, I just want you near.

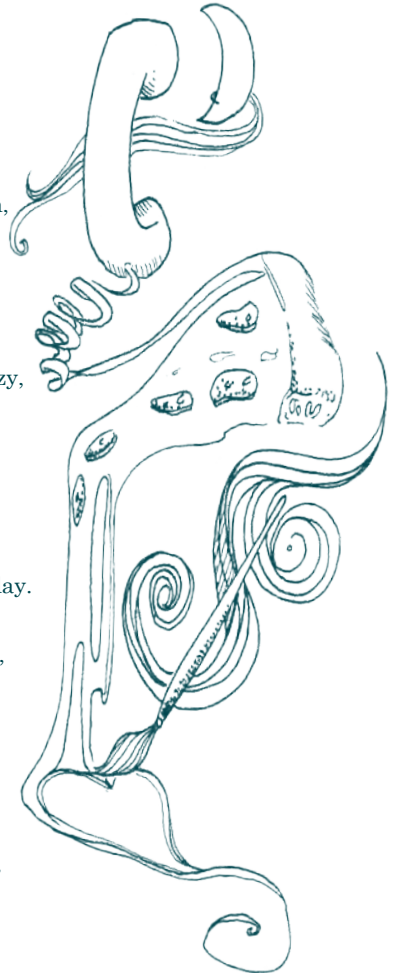
I want to love you like sailboats and daring adventures,  
your friends and my friends and long, late night calls;  
I want to wander for six months and have my heart broken,  
want you to show me it's never quite broken at all.

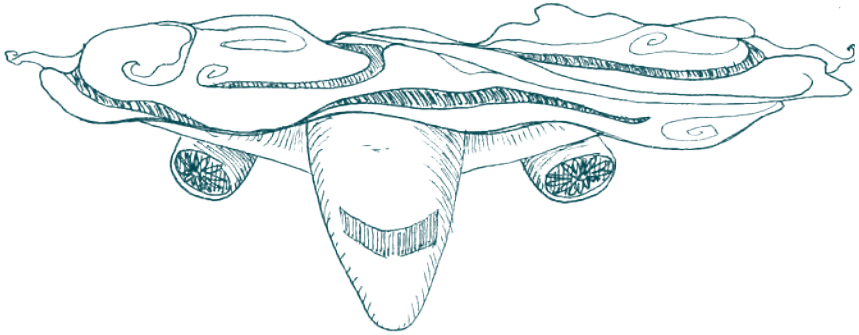
I want to love you like Plato and pizzas and parties,  
sparklers when we're thirty, barefoot and still free,  
I want to love you on the sofa when you're dancing and dizzy,  
new books and bad movies, and you next to me.

Love is for those who beg to be broken,  
a story to scare us, make us nod and behave.  
When I'm lost in the night without purpose or car keys,  
I want to land on your doorstep, claim your warmth until day.

I want to love you like jumpers and chalk on the pavement,  
poking fun at whatever, baking cakes the wrong way.  
I've never seen something to want in sad love songs,  
painting colours that only dissolve into grey,

but I'll love you like a restaurant with no reservations,  
like that trivia night we guessed all the right things to say,  
you cheered and you spun me around, we were laughing,  
you said "get used to winning, 'cause I'm here to stay."





## HOW THE SKIES SHIFT



HRISHIKESH SRINIVAS

How the skies shift, horizon pale to the sea grisaille  
Now closing racing storms overtake each other, while far  
Off oily whites on beds of shale hung permanent mountains  
On pieces of string over Coogee, Kensington, Zetland  
Mate, on Green Square, it doesn't get any greener than this.

When an aeroplane returns it is born from these clouds, point  
Shimmers fish scales as silver underwater, but come back  
Come into view settles mechanical under-leaf, skink's  
Head lowering over its own shadow, darker than the sky's  
Shadow on land, or land's on skies, growing but falling, smaller.

I remember walking down aisles on carpeted air  
But that's all anyone ever remembers, like handouts  
And the mattresses of heaven beneath me, hand-held headroll  
They took me to the cockpit to see the world through pilot eyes  
All I remember a gold badge gotten still have it somewhere.

Parents would do that for you, the hostesses, the pilots too  
The whole wide world opened bigger then, once more and more I move  
Slower, falling it is as if in a moment all were peeled  
Back – it forces you backwards, pushes you into itself  
Curtains off all the light, sets you into a seat from where you

Watch detached and immobile, while telling yourself you're OK  
Not K.O.'ed but a little full from afternoon food, fitful sleep  
And the strain of backward lurching video systems and yawns  
That shake your hands and raise your hairs, and welcome you to time  
Whose image is a dotted line following an icon.

I don't know why these things have changed, maybe it is only  
The skies that shift without feeling; we feel for the wrong things  
At the wrong times, the wrong places, long distance might as well  
Diverge and divorce at the airport, where is the new shoreline  
There I will lose myself, locate the point of no return

So unlike dawn, who finds the horizon every, every day  
I remember that once because it is extinct, only  
The settling shadow of it is smaller and smaller, as  
Attention and care will allow, 'til even these are gone  
And with the respect of parents safe-kept little badges.

When an aeroplane takes off it rolls along first, hidden  
Lifts, a slow figurine skyward sedate on whitish fur  
Periodic fire from a tower by a mountain blowing  
Tower-cranes unmoving, yellow brackets permanent blink dull  
A truck snailing streets between roofs warns of an orange  
Deadline.

---

Hrish is a first year finding out how to look at the world in myriad ways. When you boil it down, however, he's the sort of guy who thinks that better than any book in the UNSW library is the view from the tenth floor windows.

# Y I A Y I A



M I C H A E L A R T H U R O U Z A S

I saw my Yia Yia today. She is tiny like a child. A child who can give me advice without sneering and asking: “Why is this happening?”. She makes me wish I could return to my childhood. A lot of children’s books aren’t written for children. Adults write them. And in my experience adults have ideas of their own beyond once upon a time. But Yia Yia always speaks for the sake of once upon a time.

I ring the doorbell and she yells “Yes!” from inside and I can hear her fumbling around. There is the sound of a whoop and hard air being expelled from her mouth, like she does when she drops something. Keys, by the sound of it. Then the noise like someone scrabbling, with a drunken, sedated speed. I am just about to call out when she gets to the door and I can hear her right behind it. She says “Michael?” and I reply right away in case she thinks it might be someone else and gets worried.

“Yes!” I say and after realising that yes is not a response specific to me, I add “it’s me, Yia Yia.”

The door clicks open and her wide smile with no teeth is there. Her hands are outstretched, despite the metal outer-door still separating us. I smile like I can’t help doing when I see her. She is always so pleased to see me like nobody else and it is really heart warming. But I know she still thinks of me as I was, not now, but once upon a time.

Standing in her kitchen I feel like a giant, dodging light fixtures and looking down at the stove as though it is one of those toy tiny cake-bakers. She sits me down at her kitchen table and I feel less like a giant.

“I cook the chicken for you, or maybe is fish, Michael. Hard to tell when is all frosty.”

“I think it’s chicken.”

“Yes, chicken. Grab fork and knife.”

She points her gnarled finger at a drawer and I pull it out. There is a pile of metal all heaped about. I grab the cutlery and close it. *I should have helped her out more.*

“Good. Try some?”

She turns her back to rummage about for a glass or something and I stab at the cloud-shaped chicken. The knife doesn’t sink in. I don’t want to put it in my mouth because I know it is cold, and hard, and disappointing. And I know I will be watched as I chew.

“Is good, Michael?”

“I think I’m going to put it in the microwave.”



“Good idea!” her hunched figure takes it away from me before I can reject. At any rate, rejecting her hospitality is futile.

After the plate of chicken and the plate of beans drenched in red sauce and the yoghurt, and the cherries, and the mango, which I refuse because it is bruised and spotted like bad skin, she shows me her coffee machine.

“You got the coffee in the bag there? I always get cheap because nobody drink a lot of coffee like me, nobody want one kilo coffee.”

“How much do you drink?”

“How much?”

“How much coffee do you drink a day?”

“Ah how much coffee! Three cups. First cup I drink very quick all down. Second and third cup I sit here and have in. out, in. out for long time you know? I don’t like with milk or sugar, no milk no sugar.”

“Me too.”

“You no milk no sugar?”

“Yeah I don’t like milk or sugar in my coffee. If I’m going to drink coffee I want to drink coffee.”

Her face is all smiles now, and she puts her hand up and I high five her.

“You keep growing,” she says.

“Yeah, I’ve been eating a lot.”

“You have your health?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s nice.”

She looks down at the food spattered table and I see her fingers feeling her knotted back that gives her pain.

“Any news, Michael?”

“Ummm ...”

“*You got a new girlfriend?*”

“No, no new girlfriend.”

“Is okay you know, study now and find girl later. You too young to find right girl now, better to wait till you know what you want. If you find girl now, she see you doing law and she want you to be like that, she want you for other things, you know?”

I nod, though it took a while for my brain to process her words. I can only think of the clubs, and the drinks, and the dancing, and the chats at the bar that always means one thing ending in a certain way. And I want Yia Yia to never know of these things. At that moment I hated them.

“You have to wait because these kids getting married so young, they haven’t lived life. They don’t know what they want.”

Once upon a time things must have been simple, they must have, otherwise how could she talk of them like this? I wanted to be back there, whenever and wherever, and find a girl who had never known clubs, mini-skirts or plastic leather pants. I wanted to look her in the eyes and say something I could never plan in advance. Like my Papou, I wanted to lie on the beach with a girl in a flowing white dress ... she would be twenty something and pretty in a strange way because her hair rode up at the back of her neck. And I wanted to be her, full to the brim with love for a man.

I didn't say anything. My mother asks me every week if I've found someone special, like the girls are all drying up. It's like they are being sold on eBay. And if I don't hurry I'd end up with the dregs. That is a horrible way to think about love, but at any rate, I don't love any of them. At least, none of them fills me with love like Yia Yia's. I feel a love for her like I have for no one else.

I put my hand up and we high five again. It is a good hi five not because of the sound which is the usual measure of a high five, but because it is my Yia Yia. And she is the hippest eighty-six-year-old I know.

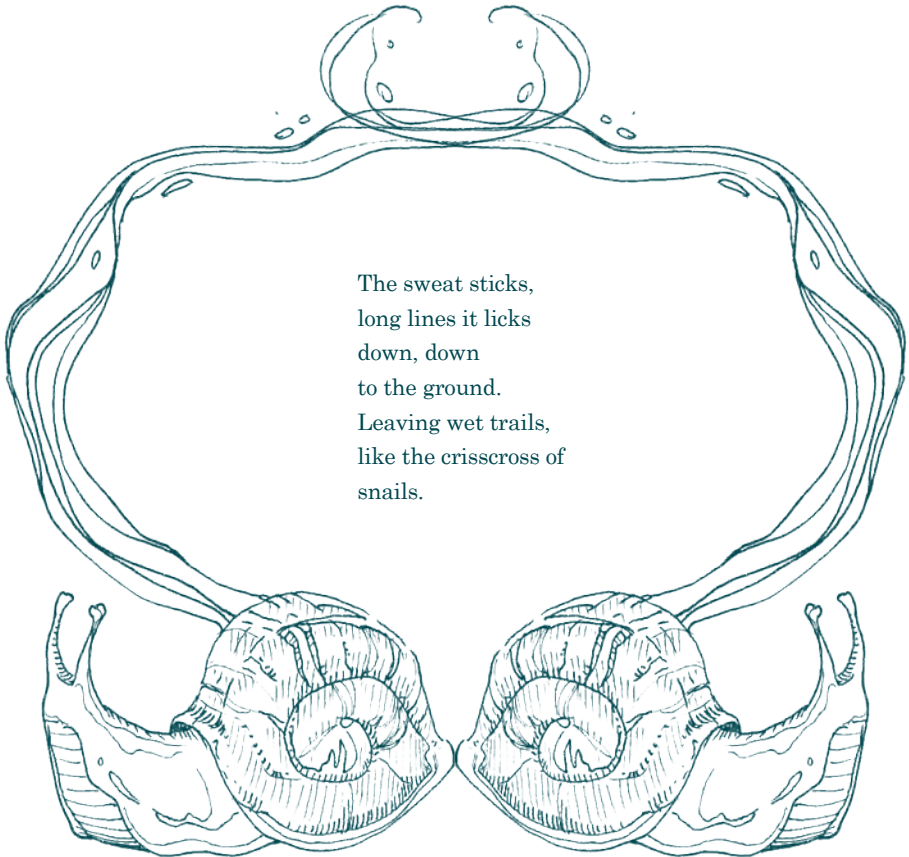
"You want a coffee?" she asks.

"Yes, that would be nice."

# S U M M E R



SARAH JANE MACLEOD



The sweat sticks,  
long lines it licks  
down, down  
to the ground.  
Leaving wet trails,  
like the crisscross of  
snails.

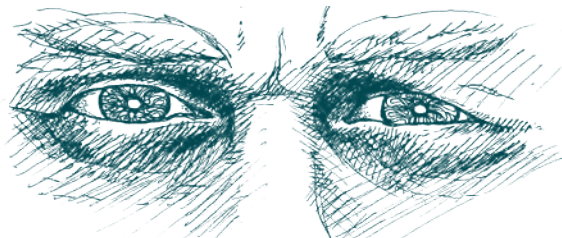
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Sarah is a masochist. That is, a final-year, experimental science, PhD candidate. Poetry is her outlet and it is a welcome contrast to the usual soul-destroying activity known as her research. When not continuing in the face of crushing defeat, she loves to read, write and listen to poetry.

# AN OLD PREDATOR GOES TO BED



SARAH JANE MACLEOD



F–, symbol of all manly gains,  
for whom no woman judged in vain;  
ne'er did a man boast a bigger breast!  
Oh! How shirts cling to his expansive chest!  
His little waist meets at a pinch,  
Then down strong legs, virility's clinch.

With no younger women to get alone,  
he ends his day and heads for home.  
Tired, as he attempts to sleep,  
he stirs as his fears begin to creep,  
for in his dreams of title he's stripped  
and without power, he's ill-equipped.  
To be equal with the youth he seeks,  
because they smell it: his desperation reeks.

Next morning F– wakes quite a sight,  
behold the truths told in the night!  
No equal beside him to greet the morn',  
just: the usual routine old and worn.

Haggard drapes, hang over tired eyes,  
grey stubble springs forth, and belies,  
the lonely cost old immaturity brings,  
of he who feeds off youth and clings.

Virile man! Though in this mangled state  
must every morn' the loss of youth abate.  
He gathers up all his scattered parts:  
A parody of the seductive arts.

So, the old predator prepares himself again,  
to hunt young women for empty gains:  
His miserable life is one of endless iteration;  
his grooming of youth, brings the stench of  
desperation.

---

Is F– real? “Yes” said Sarah, who is dumbfounded by unwanted, male courtship displays which occur in, and center around, the male position within an established hierarchy. Within this hierarchy (e.g at work) the (typically lower ranking) female won't always equate the male's power with their sexual prowess. Duh.

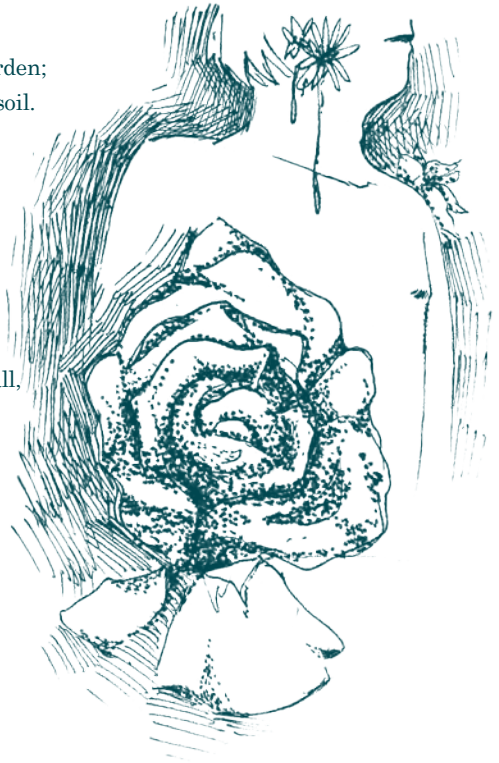
# B L O O M



ROSEMARY ANNE GALLAHER

It's normal, you know.  
Bruises flower under skin like lilies in a garden;  
tears find their place just like water in the soil.  
They seep into the black  
nurture seedlings  
and hurt grows so green and natural.  
Pearl skin is supposed to go purple,  
it's as right as the rain.

So don't worry, don't fret.  
I'm art, you know, cross-stitching on the wall,  
an ivory piano key  
just as I should be  
because battered things are beautiful.  
Feathers torn from silk pillows  
and stick figures on balance beams  
  
aren't as loved, nor as adored,  
nor as beautiful as me.



---

'Bloom' portrays an indelible sort of sadness, the kind that grows into a person. The piece is evocative rather than explicit in its meaning.

# C H I L D H O O D



J O S E P H S C H W A R Z K O P F J R .

Do you remember being broken

as a child, being broken,

as a child being broken,

as a child living broken?

Being, breathing, broken.

Do you remember the words that were spoken,

the words that were spoken as the child was being broken?

As you were being broken,

as you know I was being broken.

Do you remember the fists that broke him?

The fists that spoke to him,

“YOU ARE NOTHING”

spoke to him,

“YOU PIECE OF FUCKING SHIT YOU ARE NOTHING”

The fists that broke him.

The fists that beat the child being broken,

the fists that beat the child already broken.

As a child, living broken.

As you know I was being broken.

Do you remember the face that broke him?

The child being broken

by the fists of the face that broke him.

And those eyes of the face of the fists that broke him,

and the hell and the pit in those eyes of the face of the fists that broke him,

do you remember being broken?

Do you remember living broken?

Those eyes of the face of the stepfather's fists that broke him,  
that child being, breathing, broken,  
as you know I was being broken.

Do you remember knowing you were broken,  
realising you'd been broken,  
realising it wasn't normal to be broken,  
the shame of being broken,  
the anger that broke him?

Do you remember what couldn't be spoken?

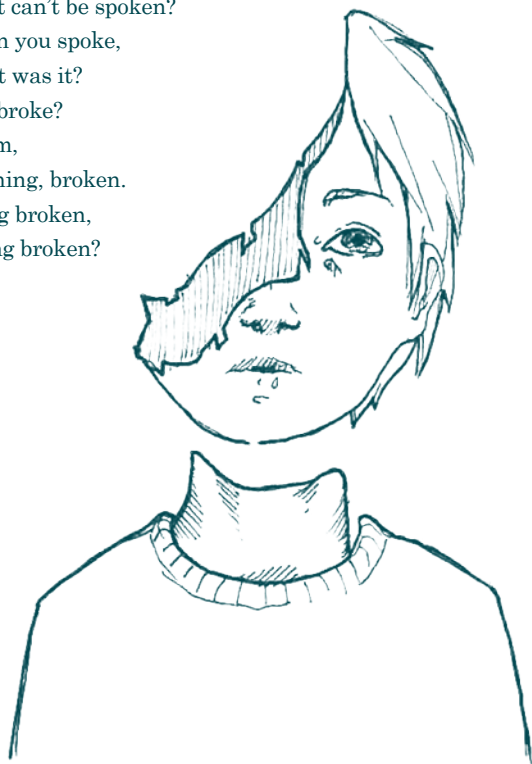
Do you remember what can't be spoken?

Do you remember when you spoke,  
and you knew that that was it?

Do you know when he broke?

The fists that broke him,  
as a child living, breathing, broken.

Do you remember being broken,  
as you know I was being broken?



---

Joseph's favourite word is pie. He has a long and tragic comic book origin story and will one day find a way to return to his home planet. Until then, he writes and performs poetry despite having a crippling inability to memorise lines.



# T H E P E L I C A N



S H A R L E I G H S M I T H

## THE PELICAN

Pelicans always remind me of my grandfather. The train clicks and clacks and bends around the Hawkesbury. The surface of the water mimics the colours of the evening sky as the day slips herself – gradually, seamlessly – into the arms of the night. There is a sense of tranquility here. In the distance the pelican sits, patient and still on the dusk beneath him as the train passes slowly by – leaving him behind.

Though I try not to, I think of my grandfather in these moments of hushed stillness. Of how he would sit in that old dinghy he'd bought from the retired butcher after my grandparents first moved to the caravan park. My grandfather: sitting as patiently as the pelican, rod in hand, waiting.

In those moments of waiting, I'd become restless and irritable – a side-effect of the residual sleepiness that hung over me for some time after crawling, two hours before first light, from my toasty pile of blankets on the floor of their living space, barely wide enough for my five-year-old body.

In a sole movement, my grandfather, sensing my impatience, would wrap me in his enormous navy fishing coat. And I, feeling the familiar texture of the ripped satin lining against my skin, would be swiftly calmed. I would inhale the all too familiar stench of cigarettes, salt, and fish as it enveloped me.



Sitting at his feet, with my legs tucked tightly up against my chest and my small back resting against his shins, I often spotted a pelican or two floating a few metres from the boat. The sighting would shake off my previous sleepiness and I would be filled with barely contained excitement. On the first sighting, he set down his rod and began to tell me about pelicans: the way they fish, the way they keep what they catch in the pocket under their beaks.

For years afterwards, as we continued this morning fishing ritual, I would sit at his feet and look up at him. His hair already white, his eyes red and tired, the skin between his chin and neck hanging loose. Reaching my scrawny arm out of the jacket's toasty warmth, I'd tap on this neck-skin, and whisper, so as not to scare the fish away.

"Pop! Is that where you keep your fish, Pop?"

And he would gift me with a rare huff – not a laugh, but close enough. He could do the best pelican impersonation of anyone I'd ever met, and of anyone I've met since. My grandfather. The fisherman. The man-pelican. The self-taught bricklayer. The man whose life before mine had never occurred to me until I was much older...

"Next stop: Wyong".

The voice crackles into life and vanishes before my brain can catalogue the words. The train makes a low, metallic shriek and starts humming as the engine slows.

When I step out over the gap between the train and the platform, into the icy grips of the winter air, my grandmother is already waiting. Her hair is white and she looks much older than I remember. I recognise her toffee skin, my mind clicks over, recalling her position as an elder on the Darkinjung Land Council. It seems stupid to forget that your own grandmother is Aboriginal, but it has been so long.

Her eyes are tired as she moves forward and folds her arms around me. They feel foreign, and her hug feels as tired as her eyes look.

"Hey kid," she smiles as she steps back.

"Hey Nan." I flash her a quick, reciprocal smile. I hesitate, but I don't tell her to stop calling me 'kid'. Even though, legally, I'm an adult and have been old enough to vote for nearly two years. I suppose I was a kid the last time we were face-to-face like this.

In the car, she doesn't ask me about Sydney life, or my law degree. She doesn't ask how, exactly, I'd made the leap from living in a youth refuge to being the first in our family to finish school and go to university. The air is dense with all the things she should ask, but doesn't.

"I saw the orchids you left last anniversary; they were your mother's favourite. But your Uncle Scraggy would kill ya if he could."

I figure she's making a joke but is too tired to force out even the slightest chuckle or shoot me a wry smile. I try to force out the imagery of my uncle and mother, buried one on top of the other, as they begin to intrude. Images such as those tend to brand the psyche.

"Lucky Mum is closest to the ground, or else I'd be dead meat."

We both laugh at this, remembering my uncle's famous line to my older brother when

he was a little kid, about to do something dangerous. Remembering what my six-year-old brother had said at Uncle Scrag's funeral, as he looked down at the opening in the ground, not fully understanding the weight of his words. You're dead meat now, Uncle Scrag.

"And the blue ones, they for your dad?"

"Yeah."

I never understood why my parents were buried head-to-head, rather than side-by-side.

"Nan?"

"Mmm?"

"Can we ask to have him put in his fishing jacket?"

"That old ripped up, smelly, navy thing?"

"Yeah, that one."

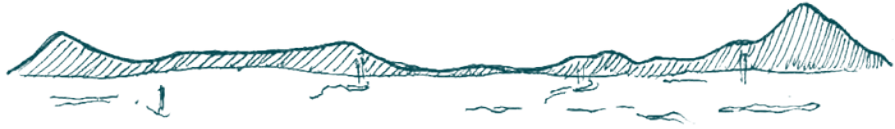
"I don't see why not".

There's no room with Mum and Scraggy. Maybe the jacket will comfort him. Maybe he won't mind being on his own as much.

"Not long now."

It comes out sounding like a sigh, but there is a matter-of-fact air that surrounds her statement. A truth that is familiar, as though it has been rehearsed a-thousand-or-more times.

In the moments following, I am unsure whether she is referring to the anticipated conclusion of the drive from the station to the tiny unit, or something else entirely.



## SITTING IN THE SHALLOWS

“So why?”

She looks at you in a sad kind of way.

“Why what?”

“Why did she abandon you like that?”

“I never said she abandoned me.”

You feel defensive, and too vulnerable.

“Look”, you say. “I was fifteen; my aunty had a lot of money and a really busy life. I just didn’t fit.”

“So she threw you back onto a plane, after only four weeks, without organising anywhere for you to live? Without really giving you a chance to prove yourself?”

You start to feel petulant; there is tightness in your chest. You don’t know what she’s trying to achieve. So you ask her, straight up:

“What are you trying to get at? I’ve put this all behind me.”

“I’m trying to get you to admit that none of this was okay.”

“Fine. It wasn’t okay.” You hope this will satisfy her. Stupid quack.

“Where did you end up after that?”

Clearly it hasn’t.

You inhale heavily. Try to stay calm.

“DOCS couldn’t find another foster home with such short notice, so I lived in a refuge.”

“And your grandmother? She gave up on you?”

“She needed to protect herself.”

“You need to stop making excuses for them.”

“I can’t.”

On the bus home, the conversation haunts you. Somewhere inside, you know that it was the anger that took the place of the emptiness, when she told you that you would never amount to anything, which propelled you forward. You needed to prove her wrong.

You fumble through your only handbag, impatient for the moment when your probing hand finds the cold and sleek body of the metallic blue iPod. At last, you manoeuvre the buds into your ears, and click play.

*Here comes the sun, doo doo doo doo, here comes the sun...*

George Harrison coos into your ears; his voice floods in and takes the place of the poisonous recollections spilling from the newly opened vault inside you.

*Little darlin', it's been a long cold lonely winter...*

You take a full, inward breath. You breathe him in; as you do so, the heaviness in your chest shifts again, but this time you can feel it beginning, slowly, to dissolve.

He takes you back to a time and to a place where the irritants of the outside world couldn't get at you. It's warm in this place, with the feathered doona pulled right up around your neck to keep the heat of your little body in. The quilt cover smells (only faintly) of mothballs, and the floral pattern is more familiar to you than your own shadow.

There used to be such comfort in the familiar.

*Little darlin', it seems like years since it's been here*

You'd stayed curled in a ball, pretending to be asleep, on the pile of blankets on their living room floor. The familiar weight pressed down on the space beside you. Worn but warm, her hand had tucked one of your blonde wisps behind your tiny, elfish ear. Still pretending to be asleep, you had opened one eye to take a peep, while the other squinted to stay shut. You fancied your act convincing as your right eye inspected her, but a smile winked itself onto her toffee face.

You pushed your head into your pillow, trying to stifle a giggle of discovery. And still smiling – you are certain – she began her song.

“Here comes the sun, little darlin', here comes the sun... and I say, it's all right...”

For years you thought The Beatles had got your Nan's lyrics all wrong. You smile a little now when you consider that it was the other way around. Children can have such a funny idea of the world.

The irritants of the outside world are gone for a moment as you sit on that bus, though it won't last.

George Harrison still coos in your ear:

*Little darlin', I feel the ice is slowly melting...*

As the song finishes, he doesn't reach out his arm to pat you on the back. Nor does he murmur “Night kid”, and give you an abrupt kiss on the cheek.

Tonight, you'll push open the door to your one-bedroom apartment, foolishly disappointed to find it empty. As you amble down the narrow hallway, your hand will unconsciously reach up to caress the oil pelican miniature you purchased from a market only a few years ago. You'll pause as you look at your new queen-sized bed, and the heaviness will return to your chest.

You'll laugh quietly, tiredly, at yourself as you drag the blankets from the mattress to the floor beside the bed. And as you bend down and curl yourself up, thinking only of how ridiculous your 20-year-old body probably looks, you'll pull your new, feathered doona up around your chin.

As you fall asleep, you don't realise how suddenly wet your pillow is. You don't realise that when the morning comes, it won't be your alarm that wakes you but your ringing phone.



## TAKING FLIGHT

The process of grieving, I have learnt, is not dissimilar to the process of falling asleep. It comes upon you gradually – as though someone has pressed their thumb onto the slow-motion button, each moment suspended in this new reality – and then all at once. You feel yourself spiraling swiftly down into its lethargic grips. When morning comes, your limbs are heavy and you are not yet ready for the world. But the world keeps on coming...

\*\*\*

Once upon a time, it was noise that woke me – noises that pierced the thick silence of the pre-dawn hours. My grandfather's stale cough, his lumbering footsteps ricocheting off the floors of the flat as he passed by my sleeping body, stretched out on my blanket-pile bed. I was awed afresh each morning by my grandmother's ability to stay slumbering.

The routine whistling of the kettle was forever followed by the heavy clunk of china meeting bench top. One clunk first, then a second. The voice of one-or-other early morning radio host as they came crackling through the static of the radio that sat on top of their fridge. The slow and measured clink of a tarnished silver teaspoon as my grandfather made strong, sweet tea – a momentum that rapidly increased until the spoon and the little teacup rang into a deafening crescendo.

This morning, it is the silence that wakes me. In a familiar space, the psyche is attuned to the familiar sounds, which do not come.

The sun has not yet lifted her sleepy head from behind the horizon, though the black sky outside the frosted windows has been softened to a cobalt blue with the approach of dawn. I rise tentatively, shuffle a few feet to the petite bathroom, and turn the faucet on the basin. It gulps and screeches to life; I splash the icy water onto my sleep-wearied face.

The water is far too cold for a shower, and I'm wary of the noise of the old pipes waking my grandmother, so I take a face washer and gently sponge the cool water over

my skin. A trail of goosebumps follows in its wake. My hair is stringy and knotted, so I tie it back in a tight pony and slip on my black cotton dress.

In the kitchen I flick the toggle on the kettle and remove my favourite teacup from the old cupboard, the cream paint still chipped and peeling. The cup makes only a single, heavy clunk as I place it on the bench....Someone whimpers.

My eyes are closed. Something far way shatters.

When they open again, my grandmother is standing over me holding my arm in her warm hands and pulling me upwards.

How nimble for someone so elderly! The thought distracts me from the broken china on the linoleum; my bare feet narrowly escape injury.

Before I can bat an eyelid or realise what's happened, she is already stooped over and sweeping the fragments of my favourite teacup into the dustpan. In another moment she is standing again, her eyes searching mine. I can feel the hard wood of the dining chair against my back, but I can't remember how I got here. A heartbeat later she is reaching for two more cups and some loose-leaf. She pulls out an old oriental-style teapot from one of the top cupboards; I've never seen it before.

"Did you finish the eulogy?" She inquires quietly, without turning from her tea brewing.

Still half dreaming, my head begins a slow nod.

She turns and flashes me a concerned grimace, sees me nodding, and turns back to the tea.

"Managed to track down Keri"

"The digde player?"

"One and the same"

"What? And he agreed to play?"

"Of course he did."

"But Pop wasn't Aboriginal."

"He knows that, but he played for your mum and your Uncle Scrag. He wants to pay his respects."

"What will the members of the Land Council have to say?"

"Doesn't matter. This doesn't concern them."

She turns and walks slowly over, places the teapot in the centre on the table and arranges a cup in front of me. I notice she isn't wearing her light blue dressing gown. Once she's poured it, I spend time studying the pot, tracing the small blue flowers with my index finger, engrossed in the scolding sensation that nips at my fingertip. When I raise the cup to my lips, the tea is cold.

My grandmother is watching me. I can't quite comprehend the look in her eyes but she smiles and awkwardly plants a hand over my own, which has since returned to the task of fingering the patterns on the teapot.

"I've missed you, kid."

\*\*\*

I had felt fine about delivering the eulogy – honoured, even – up until the moments of our arrival at the service. The flood of unknown faces – family members I didn't recognise and who I had last seen at my mother's funeral nearly two decades ago – washed away my earlier confidence.

As I stand at the lectern, a stranger in a full room of my kin, the grief settles in my chest, and I quiver under its weight.

I look down at the sheets of paper, a pathetic mess of scribbled tribute. I feel small, my face is hot, because there has been such a long pause – whole minutes have passed, and still no sound has left my lips. They are waiting. Waiting...

*When I was a little girl, my grandfather would take me out on the lake in his little boat and we would go fishing...*

\*\*\*

When the service finishes, the minister asks the procession to follow the family out to the cemetery.

There is silence as people walk across the car park to their cars. Silence sits between my grandmother and me as I drive behind the hearse. When we arrive, the silence is dense; behind it, a Darkinjung man sings a mournful farewell in tongue. I don't need to know the language to understand.

Time is suspended. People take their turn placing flowers on the casket. Gently, I reach into my coat pocket and take out the oil miniature. Slowly, so slowly, I move forward to reach out and place it on the polished wood. I close my eyes. I let the mournful sound of the Didgeridoo carry the weight of my grief.

I let it rest.

# E A T T H E R I C H



J A K E C A M B L E



They call me a 'houso',  
'Cause I can't afford no cement,  
And money worth being spent,  
Ain't money that should be goin' to my rent.

They call me a 'dole bludger',  
'Cause I ain't got no job,  
And some over-cashed snob  
Said, I'm just a lazy slob.

According to these people,  
These people with jewels in their pockets,  
And food smothering, silver plates and silver spoons,  
And golden locket dancing around their necks,  
As they speak of their superior intellects,  
I am a hoon, a buffoon,  
Less human than baboon,  
And the day their trash cash  
Becomes my stash,  
Will be a day that comes too soon.

You see,  
Their loose spending  
Does not justify my begging,  
As if I stand on the streets,  
Rubbing my hands,  
Making diamond, dollar, demands,  
Picking the pockets of the suits, and the ties,  
The black pants, and the white collars,  
With my tax enterprise.

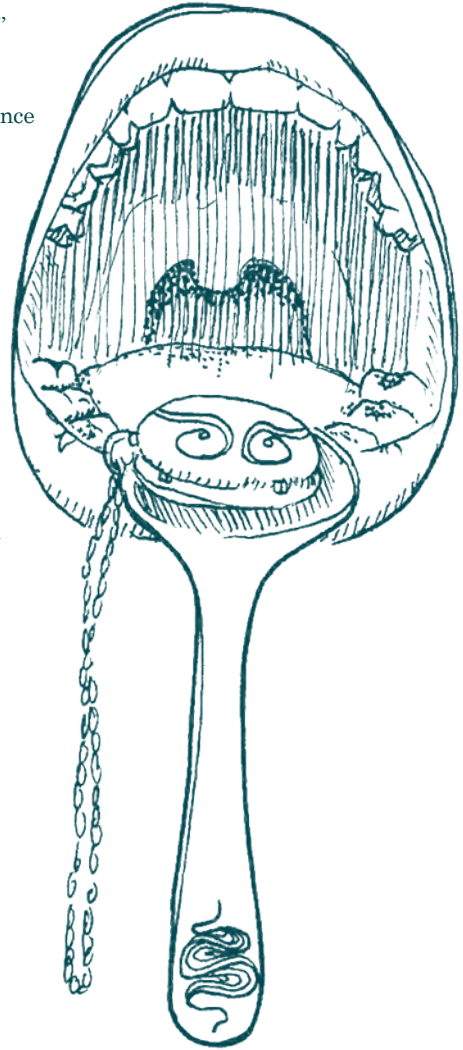


I am the Houso.  
I am the Dole Bludger.  
And I reclaim their name for myself.

For I am the itch that makes the rich twitch,  
And as they scratch  
Their unhealthy, wealthy cash rash,  
I stand in defiance of their pseudo neuroscience  
That would hold my welfare reliance  
In their smooth, soft, silky hands,  
Describing a mutation of their homelands  
Into welfare wastelands.

I stand in defiance  
Of this pseudo neuroscience,  
I stand, and I raise my voice  
In proud pitch:

“Eat the rich!  
‘Cause soon, we ain’t gonna be able to afford  
Any other dish!”



---

Jake is an English and History teacher. When he is not busy inspiring the young minds of tomorrow, he is volunteering as an AUJS grandfather or studying in his sixth straight year at UNSW. If you are a first year, this means that he graduated from high school when you were in grade six.

# T O P   C A T S



D O M I N I C   F O F F A N I

**Top cats**, fat cats, cats that drink on rocks,  
furry fat felines feeling ferocious fittings for foreign-feeling fur locks.  
Unknown, un-grown, seldom fuzzy five and nine spots spotting nine-to-five jobs in the  
unemployment line for thirty dirty blue socks.  
Pigeons pidgin-speaking sassily over swaying seamlessly sewn shirts seemingly supporting  
some sub-alternative breast,  
another reason why pidgen pigeons show just a smidgen of pidgin pigeon chest.  
Dactylic preamble predeceasing pronounced curses,  
don't barrage the montage homage to Bogart and please do not forget to thank the nurses –

Twelve tone diatonic heart-stroke-hearts beating tenaciously turning on a tenuously  
turning time teller in spring on loan -  
for beyond the Ides of March and onto other underlings moan  
wonderfully Suessical, fantastical imagery of a word too timid in sublimity to be spoken in  
anonymity,  
but, if whispered, would not be found conceited in even the most collegially eclectic of close  
crowds in acclivity.

These top-hatted top cats stressing damsels in distress conquer dazzling distressed danger  
drastically damaging dramatic dances doubled by two ducks  
feebly mistaking these five fat felines who don't own two bucks.  
Five and nine times pent-numbered top-hatted top cats, consumed and strung up by  
strangers' mats,  
distracting each other by changing liquid time into leopard-print top hats,

The only top hats worn on top of top cats.

---

Majoring in Painting/Drawing and English Literature, Dominic has a lot of spare time. His single biggest regret is that there are no ninjas in his piece. He will go on to be instrumental in defeating the zombie apocalypse with those lollies that look like teeth. He will also find \$5.

# A COLLECTION OF THE DISPARATE ME



J O A N N E C H A N

## I NEVER KNOW HOW TO FEEL ON SUNDAY NIGHTS

I get kind of self-conscious when someone leans on my shoulder and rests there. I feel like I can't take normal breaths and my breaths get irregular and then I feel like I'm moving too much for them.

I was watching the film *Like Crazy* with *Felicity Jones* in it late last year, and though I don't usually care much for soppy love stories, this one was depicted in such a raw, realistic way. With largely improvised dialogue, I was drawn into how human beings have the capacity to be so brave in their actions but at the same time, so horrendously fragile. There comes an intimacy with love that I can't quite put my finger on and I doubt humanity will ever get it fully right, but the fact that we cannot understand the workings of the human mind and heart makes it what it is. My collection of brief and fragmented thoughts attempts to capture the confusions, inconsistencies and splinters of the human experience. Here, I have tried to depict the trajectory of love; the multitude of emotions we may experience in its course.

## THE GORY BITS OF YOU AND ME

I touched the skin beneath my collarbone today. It scalded my fingers. I'm afraid to touch anything anymore.

I remember a childhood full of peeling things. Sounds strange, I know. Peeling mandarin skins which left the fragrance of their white wisps on the tips of my fingers. I'd touch as many things as humanely possible, to leave the scent on carpets, car seats and railings. Tainting them, but at the same time, leaving them unspoiled. Peeling green leaves against their stem, or helping my mother peel the sides of snow peas. We'd peel to reveal the raw, to reach the softer skin somehow. Most vividly, I remember peeling cut-out paper men, after sticking them together with wet Clag paste. They would peel with little resistance and the idea fascinated me. Duplicity, complexity, then one-sidedness. We shed fifty-seven million, six hundred thousand cells a day. It is a duplicitous cycle. We peel away that superficial layer in hope of renewal. We are told that we grow older with each day, when we are actually growing smaller, smaller, and smaller. I've stopped

pulling grass out of the ground. I've tied my hands behind my back. I do not dare to touch anything in the world, for fear of tainting it, of tainting myself.

I wish I could return to that flock of seagulls on that windy day where the whole shore was devoid of humans. Be that child scuttling along the sand, pouring that bucket of water onto my pile of worries, seeing the water drain through it, and watching that tide clear it away and send it far to sea, as though it never existed. We will scratch our names into the memory, while it's still soft, like not-so-accidental footprints on setting concrete. But we both know that concrete does not set in stone. The world crumbles every fifteen years.

## **ALL THE PLACES I WILL (N)EVER GO**

My dreams crumble. I have dreams which alter the shape and form of people I know in the real world. Friends turn into cruel people. Strangers I befriend. I asked someone I knew, is this normal? To see people in a tinged red light in these obscure sleep times? No, she said. Dreams reflect one's life. Like an echo. But my dreams do none of that, I insisted. She would hear no more of it.

So I will take it as this: Dreams are a fantastical happenstance. Or, dreams do reveal the truth. My friends, my brothers, my family the world I know is a Truman Show. And the strangers I walk past on a Tuesday morning are the ones behind the curtains in my dreams, the friends.

But what happens if you never find them? Where you can only touch them, hold them, talk to them in your dreams and wake up grasping for the cotton threads of their sleeves? They're gone, she says. You try and fall asleep in that same position. Assume that chalk outline on the concrete of your sheets, hoping that you'll be able to sink into that same time, that same place, that same taste of your heart having a life of its own. Sometimes you're lucky. Most times you're not. He's gone, she says. And they drag you away.

## **LETTER TO DONNE**

The car engine outside vibrates with impatience. The vacuum upstairs sucks the dust of life out of us. Electric plugs get swung around, limbs slacken in tired anger. The faucet's run dry, drained, and thirsty. And that's what happens to us. Others, our inhabitants, our co-stars suck the air out of us from goodbye kisses, and air-choking hugs that squeeze our lungs together 'til we resemble some deformed figure.

Time has torn us apart. A single reach for help translates into an offence. How did we come to be? It baffles and saddens me. It is a sadness which has been inherited from my mother, scripted before my time. But time cannot be reversed, nor can humans. This

stress: from you, from me, it's impaling me. My tears make a heavenly Lethean flood, and drown in it my sin's black memory.

We're doing it all wrong. We buy more fish, and see them down the drain. Cold hands, warm heart my mother used to say. It is winter and my hands are burning.

## **HYPER-REALISM**

There is a fire in the mist; a mist I am forever stumbling through. At first, I feel trapped and the particles climb onto my neck and expand so much that my breath is constricted and I am left with a purple bruise. I learned that then, and only then, through the obscurity, through the veils of the unclear, may we see clarity. See ourselves. Not a reflection. Mirrors cannot catch the truth. As the truth is in the eye of the beholder and humans are clever, just enough, to see the image, the conjuration of what they believe others see. There is too much light there. We need shade, the darkness, in order to reveal the stars.

One day, I bent down into the mist, I could not even feel the floor hit my kneecaps but by now I had spent the time I needed in this world to know that it was alright, that someone had caught me. I did not need proof in order to believe. They mock people with blind faith. Who needs to see a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow? We know it's there.

I find my friends in the mist. It's New York City loud in an un-New-York-City kind of way. You hear the background buzz of the stock exchange, and here, you can take a small step back to see the larger picture. The cabs go fast but they go slowly for you. At the end of the never-ending road, cows spot the horizon and suddenly, you are standing (or not quite so standing in the feeling sense) in the middle of a thriving patch of grass. The sun does not glitter here but the Earth does. The cows have finally come home.

## **LOVE IS ECLIPTIC**

My English teacher once told me that "it's honest, but it's not the truth". I don't like it when people romanticise life. Life is not a place where flowers grow in the darkness of your lungs. Your skin crinkles. It's not luminescent. That's the moon. It has craters. So do you.

As Carl Sagan said, every single one of us in the cosmic perspective is precious. My cynical perspective has left me paralysed in speaking my love to you. I can only be as bold to write it in ink. So here it goes. I love you, I love you, I love you, as the moon rises and arabesques against the wide, wide ocean. It illuminates the silk of darkness and warms the lapping black. I love you. Like the momentary rays of Earth's sunrise. But the light bends and fractures so easily. It's swallowed by the sea too soon and lays trapped in the

quiet noises of the ocean. A mere few minutes, a handful of seconds I try to grasp before the beauty is lost to the ordinariness of day. Mother will only give us a glance before she cups her weathered hands across our eyes and tells us to go home.

I love, I love, I love you. 'til all the stars have shimmered out of the navy sky. I wait, I wait, I wait. You may shatter my bones and scatter them across the Arctic Sea, but first, you must taste the ash and let go.

Let go of my wrists. Blue ink floods the chambers of my heart. It swirls with the blotched reds, filling the veins with an intravenous intoxication. No two loves can coexist. Our lives are not scripted by Wes Anderson, nor should you think love can be caricatured that way. We will follow our respective orbits and carry ourselves away from one another, following the natural laws of the Universe, like gravity onto our soles. Our collision has come and gone, the spectacle is now over. Orbits move on.

---

Joanne is a first year undergraduate who likes going on anti-gravity rides. That way, she can feel weightless. She is also a responsible pet owner, making sure her Neopets are not famished.

# R E C O V E R I N G S C H I Z O / D E S P A I R



J I - S U N C E C E L I A C H O I

I can feel the worms of doubt  
and maggots of fear  
squirm inside me.  
How they twist and burrow,  
wriggle and torment,  
devouring my soul into  
their hungry little stomachs  
while I froth and  
drown in the ash that  
splurges out from my mouth.  
How this chest crumbles  
to dust and becomes  
tight with contempt.  
How my eyes remain  
as deserts, barren and parched  
without liberating tears.  
The portal to that other  
world is closed. Only faith  
can open it again.  
My throat gurgles emptiness,  
no voice yells out  
orders or names or  
love.  
Only deafening silence hangs  
in the air.  
So brittle, smothering.

These limbs will not sway  
nor dance again. This head will  
not be raised with pride nor dignity.  
What honour is this to feel  
banished and shunned away?  
Locked out and crawling  
pathetically for a way back in.  
And oh this head, this head  
of mine,  
is pounding and pounding,  
screaming for blood,  
a painful hollering for battle.  
What is a person without  
pain and suffering?  
If they have only had pain and suffering  
all their lives,  
what are they without it?  
Free?  
What freedom is this?  
I feel nothing.  
Nothing.  
Nothing.

---

When she's not knitting jumpers for her grandmother or doodling her life on every piece of paper she comes across, Cecelia is a fourth year Arts/Education student and ready to teach the crazy youth of this world. This piece is inspired by the human mind and its capabilities to create infinite worlds and what would happen if it was taken away.

# V E T E R A N



LAURA KENNY



His surface was always clean, whet to sharpness, keen to strike,  
A “Perfect Knife’s Edge of a man”, or so the women told me.  
I am as old as he, as worn and scarred as his sun-spotted hands.

We walk a little way, through the grand commemorative arch,  
To place a poppy here or there, next to names we sometimes knew  
So well, we hardly ever used them.  
Halfway down the walk he’s had enough, he slows to stop.



He barely leans, but stretches out his hand to trembling tautness.  
Touches a name - at first too quickly to be painless,  
But then with a resoluteness, still and firm.  
His girl would have known what to say.

“You coping without her?” His brows furrow,  
His face shuts down. He simply nods a gruff smile.  
Tells me he misses her at breakfast. “Between waking  
And sleeping, I am with her at the farm, the tumbling  
Hills, the dirt. I can see her there in her own clothes.

“But I wake and she’s already gone, and the house is just so quiet.”  
At this he shrugs a little sigh off with freshly earned resilience.  
He turns a tear awry with a swipe of his shaky thumb.  
His nails are still clipped military slight.

For a moment there he is: uniformed, smooth and set,  
Sharp, wiry, upright at his back. But then he is gone  
Back behind the grey and cloudy cataract of his age.  
Drifting closer to her every night.

---

Laura Kenny grew up in Sydney and spent much of her childhood and school life in and out of Shakespeare play productions and focused on the humanities in her studies. She now studies combined Arts and Law at UNSW and writes poetry, short stories and scripts in her spare time.

T O A D E A D B O Y ,  
W I T H L O V E



J A N E ( Q I H A N G ) L I A N G

you came to kill me on a wednesday  
on a night where the water in the neighbour's shower ran cold  
    where the sky was sibilant and sly with misleading warmth  
you came on a wednesday and said,  
    “give me three hours of your life”  
on a wednesday where my shoulder straps were too tight  
    and blue didn't look so good on me  
    on a wednesday where the sweat trickled down the side of my face  
    as i imagined the blood would trickle when you finally  
    learned how to love your weapon  
love's a funny word when the switch is off and the spheres up above lose their light  
    it's distorted like the painting of a crooked doorhandle  
    it's confusing like seven years' worth of cracked mirrors  
        but something bad happens only on the eighth  
    love's a dead language that i felt  
when you brushed my fringe aside with the muzzle  
and told me that my eyeliner  
was off  
in that wednesday second i could only think of  
    the gushing of a fountain in the lucid dreams you recounted me  
    the withered magnolia petal crushed between atlas and dictionary  
        the same withered way that words buried themselves in the ensuing silence  
            when we opened our mouths and realised how we had nothing to say  
the unopened milk on the desk and the pages of readings  
the scratched phone and its wallpaper of untravelled oceans  
in that transmitted wednesday you asked for a transaction  
    of three hours where i had nothing to lose  
the uneven struggle between tabs and space bars  
the unbalanced disposition of the stacked pile of bed sheets

the forced typed lines as i struggled to admit  
“it wouldn’t be three hours, i would give you my life”  
you asked and i gave  
a memory of our first meeting  
the knowledge that the water running in the adjacent house  
would sewer-stream to the ocean on my phone  
and how things can link so easily if only we would let them  
the drunken voices two streets away  
deadlines and lines of the dead  
when the dawn cracked open with the ease of a yolk  
on a thursday where we shut the faucet and the houses disappeared  
we broke your hands open to find emptiness filtering in  
the residue of metal and acrid powder in the air  
“i just wish to quietly stay here alone”  
in a room that didn’t matter  
we were two strangers  
with holes for memories that wouldn’t stop existing  
two strangers in allocated spaces where we were allowed  
to be connected only  
by skin.

---

Jane is a high-functioning mass of ordered dust and hair. She cried on the train today because she kept looking at people and they didn’t look back. She was worried because she’s pretty sure that’s the only way a person can know that they actually exist.

# I N W O R D S D R O W N , I



T E S S C A L O P E D O S

She spins headlong, helter-skelter, in a lavender x-shaped dress. It was Ben who had pushed her from the rocky escarpment, a catalyst, and now she ebbs, accepting her fin. Past dusk, screams pale and futile, she will be bathed in cobalt blue. Salt-crusted foam will coat her lungs and she will be shipwrecked on a jagged sandstone altar, her body exploding like a Cunjevoi. And from above the littered littoral zone, he will watch. All he sees is squid-inked night.

She is nervous but ready for the approaching blow. Lips curl into an up-open parabola. Lolling supine, she feels an ilk of suspended buoyancy that is infinite yet momentary. It is the moments when she is closest to death that make her feel most alive. See? Falling is just another way of flying. Now she accelerates to plummet 9.81 metres per second per second. This invisible power bewitches her, pulls her down, sucks her in. Ben hears the deafening crash and the briny whispers of surrounding ripples.

She strikes the water. It beats her back. It blinds her. She sinks. It soothes her, like a mother embracing her lost child, gently apologises to her like a violent lover. The water is a womb. The water is her tomb. It cleans her of responsibility. It frees her. She scrapes past sea urchins, spines at attention. She grazes coral reefs. Portuguese men-of-war lasciviously entangle, tentacles prying open her legs. Spanish dancer nudibranch salsa past her through the waves. Will she, won't she, will she, won't she; will she join the dance? Once more, she feels redundant. Carnivorous Sirens await their catch of dawn fishermen. Suckerfish attach to her stomach, halting her journey, not unlike Antony's in the Battle of Actium. Her arms are now clad in seaweed Pad See Ew. Forage fish shoal her and school her downwards. She brushes past anemones, attaching like Bowlby's ambivalent infant. Vodianoï watch from their sunken palace ships. A dogfish eat dogfish world.

This is what it's like to die. Her thoughts are racing yet she feels a certain calm. Her eyes are losing focus, her peripheral vision shrinks. All is framed by a white glow. She watches bubbles of carbon dioxide, floating to the shore and she closes her eyes.

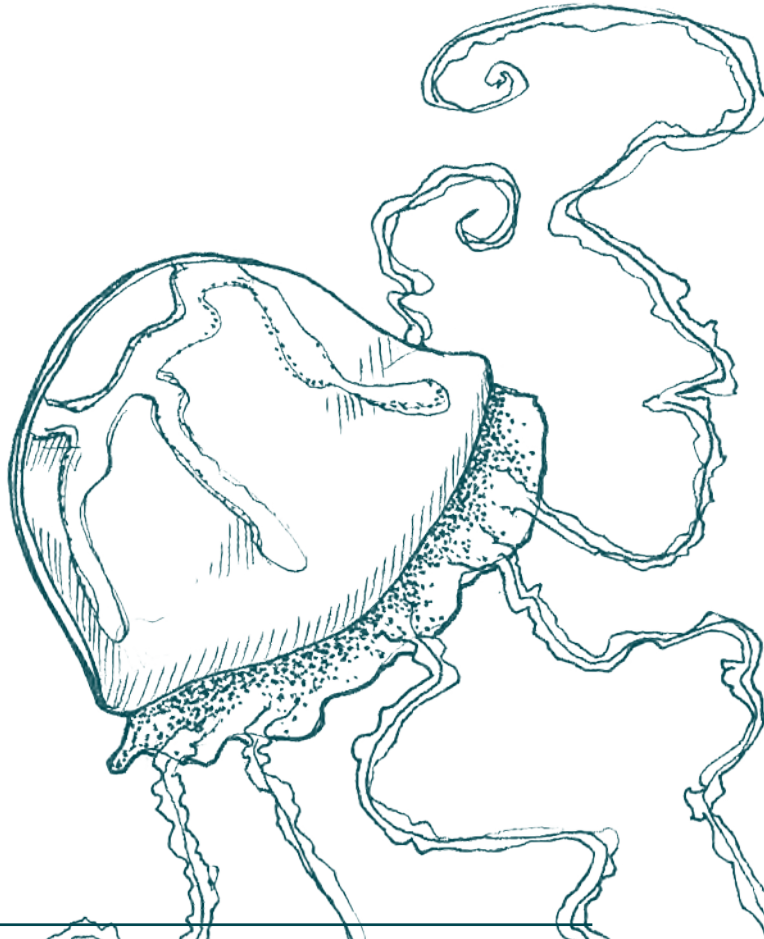
She has not resurfaced.

Ben blinks. Without her, he feels each wave crash within his chest. A flutter of jellyfish propel themselves through his stomach, stinging his insides in short, sharp jabs.

He scrambles down the cliff face, slowly. One step, two steps, until he is a metre from the surface. He dives through the kelp, passing rocky outcrops, passing schools, following the bubble trail. He finds her, eyes closed, floating with her limbs extended like a sea star. He tap, tap, taps and waits for her to tug. No response. His eyes blaze with anguish and he drags her by the fingertips, over his shoulders, as Orpheus did to Eurydice. He does not look at her, for fear she may vanish. Her fingers, blue and wrinkly. A lack of grip. He carries her lithe body to the rocks.

“HANNAH” He screams her name.

No response. He lies her down. He watches her. Tears are forming in his eyes and he frantically searches for a faint rhythm around her neck. He breathes more easily as she begins to splutter. His thumbs release her ever-inked wrists, smudging stories. She had promised Ben she was to resurface. That was their plan. She was to resurface.



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Tess' almost irrational fears of heights and commitment and her fascination of sea creatures and word play are explored in this piece.

# KLEPTOMANIA

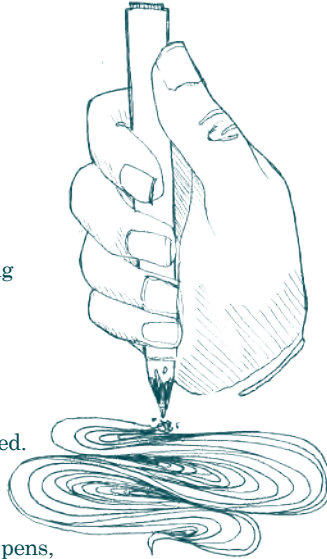


TESS CALOPEDOS

And all you have are protruding  
pockets,  
Your jeans almost ripped,  
Filled with less than precious  
ornaments,  
Obsession keeps you tight-lipped.

Your jeans almost ripped,  
Filled with office standardised pens,  
Obsession keeps you tight-lipped.  
This is just a means to an end.

Filled with office standardised pens,  
You break into a cold sweat,  
This is just a means to an end.  
It's just for the thrill you get.



You break into a cold sweat,  
As the stolen pens leak.  
It's just for the thrill you get.  
Is this the thrill you seek?

As the stolen pens leak  
And your boss lets you go,  
Is this the thrill you seek?  
And all you want is more.

And your boss lets you go,  
Filled with less than precious  
ornaments.

And all you want is more,  
And all you have are protruding  
pockets.

---

Tess is a fourth year Social Work/Arts (English) student, studying her course to save the world and write about it. She can be found lurking in the hallways of Morven Brown, drinking far too much coffee, writing palindromes or "finding" pens.

# LOOP TWELVE



NATHAN MIFSUD

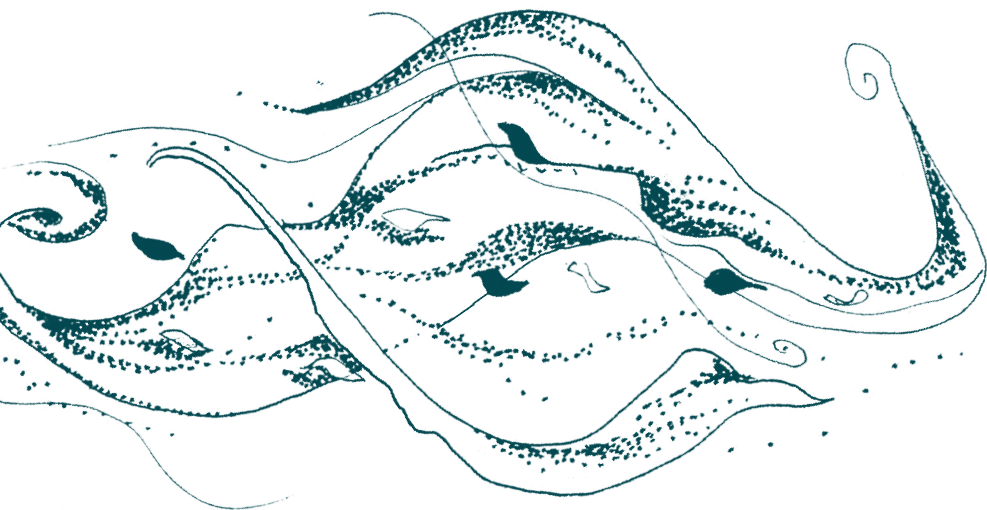


I still need to understand. I open both eyes to pulsing walls, lit red by passing cars. It is dark. My hand aches. I slowly rise from bed, escape into the nocturnal world outside. Wind claws bare skin at once. I look up at the stars above and start to cry, shoulders askew, ever-distant constellations stoic, witnessing my tears trace vertical topography. Is this our fate? To vanish like dawn-lit dewdrops? I am trapped in a doll house torn asunder, shivering on its precipice, inhibition swallowed into the chasm yawning 'fore this plastic facade. The ground that lies beneath seems real, but I teeter with each step. Absurd romantic notions take hold, direct me towards the old water tower which dominates the main street, a cosmic superstructure gifted from Soviet Russia to Petersham for unknown reason. Its presence looms, blacker-than-black, tangible, more felt than seen. I clamber metal fencing which circles the site. As I do so, flesh on my hand, soft, parts in calm deference to a loose wire strand, and I fall onto the other side. In absent curiosity, I taste the sticky blood on my stinging palm. I am twelve. Screams travel upward, towels wound tight around a mangled foot become heavy with departed life. I sense urgent voices, disembodied faces, dining table pressed on bone, mower blades still deployed. I am not twelve. I lurch across sodden grass strewn with glass, teenage remnants. I find the base of the tower, its cold ladder, and ascend into nothingness. I feel there is something that



---

Nathan often wonders if he spends an inordinate amount of time contemplating his navel.



# T H E   S T O R Y   O F   D U S T



C A R R I E   Z H A N G

I have wandered here since the birth of time, since the early ages when light was only just beginning to stretch its sleepy, newborn fingers across the seas and plains. I was younger then, discovering more of myself with each passing moment; indeed, I can still remember the smell of the air when I left the world behind and, resting upon the wind, took flight.

I coat the ground like a patchwork blanket and drift aimlessly through open spaces.

I have witnessed the very moments that you so desperately preserve, many, many years later, by ghosting your fingers over glass cases in silent museums. You know that one fable you have always kept in the crevice beside your heart, from the very first moment it was whispered at your bedside? I have seen all the legends in the flesh; I can still feel exactly how the air once moved around them and how well, or poorly, I fitted against their warm skin.

But it is not them I find at the surface of my recollections; not the great, nor the powerful, but those whose faces seem to slip past your splayed fingers as you stoop to collect your histories.



Her name was Kavita. She was seven years old, and the air tasted of spice as I sat patiently ensconced in her bronzed, calloused fingers. The Gujarat streets were bathed in the blazing purple glow of a sky torn between day and night, and gleeful shrieks echoed off the walls as handfuls of vibrant powder found their elusive targets. Spots of bonfire light danced with the joyful people beside them and, content, I sighed. There was not a nook in the city untouched by the festival of colour, not a corner left undecorated.

A triumphant cry sounded, and she lurched from her corner, the tips of her ebony hair suddenly specked by green, the red of Rakta Chandan splashed across the light material of her clothing. The daring assailant, a boy her age, appeared in her peripheral vision, and I quickly found myself sailing through the air, clinging to the yellow grains of turmeric she had been saving for her final stand.

The spice caught him square in the chest and she giggled as she took off into the raucous night with the boy in her footsteps. In the following morning she became, once again, the daughter of a palanquin-carrier and he a wealthy merchant's son – but that night was Holi and the lines dividing them were buried under bursts of rainbow powder hurled by euphoric fingers.

Where Kavita's nails were jagged, bitten to the quick, the boy's were neatly rounded. You always say that eyes are windows to the soul, and that may be true, but your hands tell me your story more honestly than you can do so yourself. I have seen palms crossed with silver; they drew invisible shadows on crystal balls and beckoned to figures I could not see.

Fingers fill rooms with melodies by skimming over white and black keys. Fingers transform paper into cranes by the thousands. Fingers trace supernovae as they burst across the sky, and make butterflies in the lamplight.

But as much as I try to ignore it, a hard voice somewhere within me still calls hauntingly: fingers pull triggers.

Those are the days I can never forget: the days when hope greyed with every blast of your shrapnel. The days when I was flung repeatedly into the air and forced to watch as smouldering metal bound another one of your sons to the torn earth; a boy, just a boy, who had once rescued sparrows as spring came and dreamed of opening an ice-cream shop. When he fell, he remembered this vision and wondered just when it began to burn at the edges. It is always the last thing left, this wondering: it hangs about the smoky air long after the light has left their eyes.

I wish you could have been content with throwing coloured powder.

Eyes – windows to the soul, you say. But all I see are hands, hands, hands.



I have felt the air crackle in exactly the same way around completely different people, separated by centuries. I have seen the same plea appear on diverse faces and cannot number the common phrases I have heard murmured in different corners of the world.

Yet still you confound me; just as I begin to feel as if I know you just as well as an old friend might, you perfect your vanishing act and transform into just another face on a busy street. I, with my vast memory, have often felt confident that I could recognise your every possible emotion but the instant I turn around, you reveal yet another face of the infinitely sided prism that is a human being.

There was a time, once, when you mistook me for pixie powder and realised your mistake when your sneeze rattled the ceiling tiles.

As time moves on, I can only hope that you will continue to remember the very first day we met, when you saw me suspended in the fading rays of sun, glittering in the soft air. I pray that you will never leave behind that fragment of yourself: the you who tasted the rain, kissed the sun and bid the stars goodnight.

One day, when you are warm in bed and filled with years, you will think of the moments you left behind and realise just how much you have seen.

If only, if only, you had enough hours to comprehend the volume of sights that flutter across my vision, each and every time I take flight.

---

Carrie spends her free time wondering how many objects have stories to tell, if only we would give them the voice, and ourselves the ears to listen.

# MANIFESTATIONS OF THE WIND



LILY TIAN

Feathers twitch as a tiny conical body  
struggles to stay upright  
in the translucent, liquid  
breath of the night. A frantic stop -  
of fluster and compound wings  
until it pauses and preens,  
confident that none had seen  
its inelegant surrender.

The lungs of the earth,  
as transient as the seasons.  
Tributaries of wood raise  
green diamond kites to the heavens,  
a triumphant flag, supreme.  
A gracious shift lets loose a sunbeam  
and cascades a kaleidoscope stream  
from the windy cathedral.

Rolling curves, moulded by the greatest  
sculptor,  
ever changing, ever moving  
to its ever nudging hand. Tips,  
and gathers at the base.  
Ripples on the crest of dunes  
make a shifting, breathing croon  
and collapse to cocoon  
scaled feet and scaled bellies.

The great destroyer, the heat  
of summer's height consumes  
that which brings you life.  
The creed to burn  
fuels your desire to gleam  
as the flames upon the wind,  
as slivers of a forgotten dream,  
to disappear into the night.

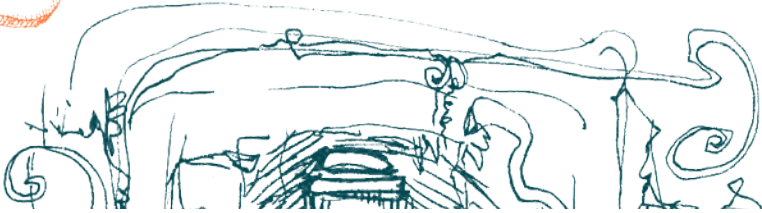


Before Lily Tian found writing in late 2012, she never thought that creating worlds could be so much fun. This piece began with an afternoon stroll down the main walkway and has been added to during the course of a semester.

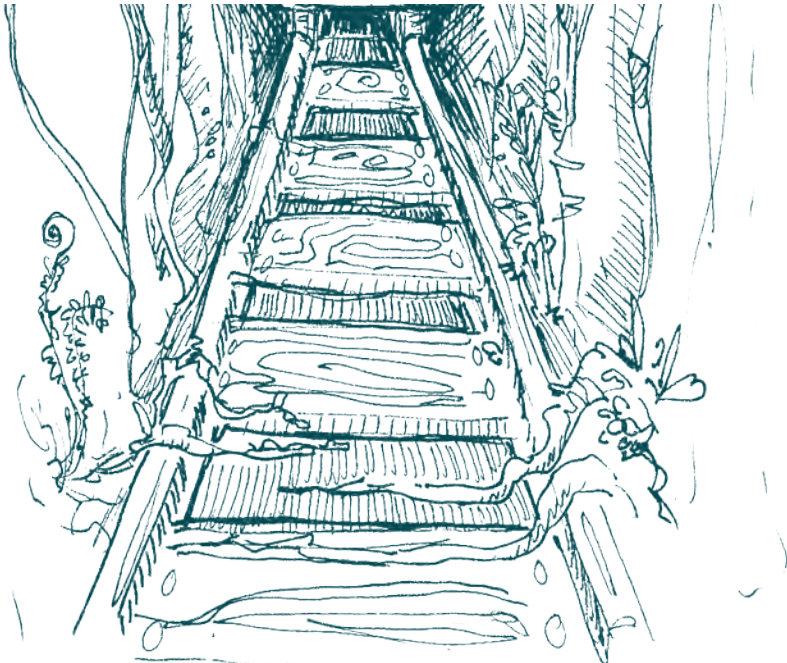
# THE THIRTEEN SECOND HALLWAY



JESSE BRAND



In the summer of 1999, seven miles from Mariposa, Northern California, a nine-year-old boy reported witnessing his sister being hit by a train in the forest. Although no operating train line existed, three feet under the area the boy described there was an unexcavated train line submerged one-hundred-and-fifty years prior to events. The body of Samantha Wolf remains undiscovered.



## CHILD CRANIOSYNOSTOSIS

In the middle of a desolate paddock, Samantha and I stand on a slight ridge, laced with train tracks like scar tissue rising to meet a laceration in the earth. Samantha closes her eyes and gently places her temple against the train line, feeling for ripples. An accelerating storm revolves around us with no intention of anchoring, it resembles a spinal, spiralling staircase, reaching into eternity.

“Do you believe in time travel?” Samantha asks me without opening her eyes.

“Like the DeLorean?” I inquire, watching the lips of the forest for emerging light.

The same sky that once snorted the Frank family’s ashes growls like a draconic chimera, wrenched from oblivion. Something inside is dismantling God one gear at a time. Any moment now it will rain dragons’ teeth.

“No.” Sam snaps. “That’s dumb. I mean real time travel.”

“What is real time travel?” I inquire.

Samantha is quiet for a moment, intent on the thrum of metal vibrations.

“Dying.” She says.

Hyperkinetic light rattles the adumbral skeleton of deciduous forestry.

“What?” Confusion dissipates as a monster emerges. “Samantha, the train...”

Her lips move but I can’t hear anything. As the screeching colossus twists the soundscape around us, I pull my little sister from the tracks, yelling that she’s not playing the game properly. She lands on top of me and I feel crushed weeds and dirt under my back. Sam catapults herself from me as the train speeds past, staring in astonishment.

“I said tap me when it gets close, not grab me and pull me down here.”

As I stagger to my feet I apologise: “I’m sorry, Sam. I didn’t hear you.”

“It’s okay,” she pulls her lips in to conceal a smile.

“Sam...” I begin. “What did you mean before?”

She turns to me, suddenly serious. The train tears a rift in time. Chronos’ wings, composed of serpentine labyrinths and clock-hand fangs devour a fragile moment I have with my sister. I am wrenched through time.

## PSORIASIS, EPIDERMAL DETERIORATION

When you’re pulled from one memory in time to another, the experience is like slipping through the floor of a dream, a house made of mise en abyme. Maison abime. Every time I re-enter my own body, it feels eerily warm and waterlogged, the way a seat does when somebody else has just sat in it. It all happens in an instant, and though I am immediately confused by all of my senses and thoughts, my body plays out events like a scene from a film.

“What did you mean just now?” Samantha asks, as the watery components of the world around me solidify.

“What?” I ask her.

“You mentioned some book by Thomas Hobbes that Dad had.”

“Oh,” I am unable to reach cerebral fingers back into my short-term memory. “I forget.”

The outline of a penumbral room, lit by a fire in the centre, quivers as it conforms to my perception of reality. Chromatic spines splinter the old, oaken walls of our father’s private library.

“Dustin...” Samantha seems apprehensive. “Have you ever heard of a thirteen-second hallway?” Each syllable seems heavier than the last as she enunciates it. It feels as though a whirlpool is opening up in the floor. I can feel my consciousness begin to slip through it.

“Where did you hear about that?”

“Dad,” her voice flickers like the fire’s pyrrhic tongue. “He said that if we ever get lost in a thirteen-second hallway, that we need to find each other.”

Cascading shadows accost the sky/clouds outside. The veil of night enveloping the sky mocks the sun behind the Earth’s back.

“Did he say anything else?”

Her eyes are doorways to eternity.

“He said that when we find each other in the hallway, we can escape forever.”

I once fell into a memory that wasn’t mine. I was on the front lines of a war somewhere in the Pacific. People were calling me by my father’s name. I watched a man on a horse explode, ground up in the jaws of a Pacific monster and shovelled into the mass grave, the chiasmic chasm with lupine teeth bloodied and bared. I felt as if my father had just been there, in the body I inhabited. But he’d gone back further, perhaps to a body that didn’t even belong to him to begin with. I knew that if I let go of reality and slid through it all, wherever I found myself, he’d be waiting.

“Do you remember when Dad said that he’d wait for us at the bottom of the double helix staircase?” I ask Samantha.

## CEREBRAL ARTERIOSYNTOSIS, HYDROCEPHALUS

Sometimes I have moments of absolute clarity. A measure of time in which chaos untangles and ceases to strangle the woken world. When natural law drifts lifeless. From within a place untouchable, I see infinity entire, and it is beautiful. And just as easily as it slipped in, it’s gone.

Before I can hear Sam’s answer, I am involuntarily transported to a memory ten years after that day. I’m sitting at a dinner table with my mother, her new friends, Marianne and Evelyn, and their respective husbands Stanley and Cooper. Adele’s new song ‘Perhaps he left me because I’m a fat whore that laughs like a hyena being fist-fucked’ is wailing in pain through the speakers. We’ve just arrived at Evelyn’s house after seeing a play at

the State Theatre. The short play was composed of fifteen minutes of a naked boy crying and yelling at his father to 'love and accept him' while he applied make-up and dressed in drag, until the father finally answered 'I'll love you when you learn to love yourself', which was followed almost immediately by forty-five minutes of the two passionately lovemaking. Evelyn exalts the work as an unquestionable masterpiece as she serves our entrées. Every few minutes the sophisticated discussion is broken by a sudden inhuman scream from upstairs, which nobody has outwardly acknowledged. I think it belongs to Evelyn and Cooper's daughter, Muriel, who has recently returned from 'abroad'. Muriel's younger sister Sofia sits across from me. Sofia's voice is soft and somnambular. She lays her thoughts gently on the table and waits for somebody to notice them.

"So! Marianne," my mother begins. "Evelyn tells me that you're related to a Downey! Any relation to *the* Robert Downey Junior?"

Marianne turns to Evelyn who instinctively averts her gaze, suddenly fascinated by her own drapes, which are incidentally very ugly.

Marianne turns back to my mother: "My son has Down's Syndrome."

The awkward silence is fortunately broken by a scream from the heavens, like a plane passing overhead. Sofia mouths something nobody hears, but what I swear sounds like: "Summon and kiss the Basilisk lips, open the apocalypse. Chronos, grow fangs in temporal lycanthropy, and with mangled jaws masticate the double helix staircase. Speak arsenic."

I turn to her involuntarily: "What did you just?"

"You know," Cooper announces. "I keep wondering how the father in the play got his entire fist."

"So how *is* Muriel?" Marianne fires from across the table, at which point Evelyn almost chokes on her fig and caramelised onion Foie Gras in chestnut jus before regaining enough composure to articulate: "Muriel is fantastic, Marianne. Thank you for asking."

Another scream echoes from Valhalla.

These are the kinds of dinners the mother in *The Exorcist* threw. Evelyn breaks a walnut in her teeth and cracking open a smile inquires: "Say, Marianne, do you remember when we made your father a Facebook and he didn't know the difference between a status box and a search bar, and all of a sudden everyone messaged you asking why he kept posting the status 'niggers rape horse'?"

As if muttering a Balkan curse, Sophia utters, "Leviathan's spine snaps jagged, rags mangling chiasmic chasms, maggots mashed into Harlem ashes, black bashing sonnets as the comet crashes..."

By the time my mind leaves Sophia whispering hypnotically, I have barely noticed that Evelyn and Marianne's argument has escalated to the point where Stanley is holding back Marianne, who is grasping a clump of Evelyn's hair. Evelyn has torn down a curtain rod and begun stabbing through the air like a Zimbabwean warrior, and I wonder if she has orchestrated this entire evening as an excuse to take down the ugly drapes. In the midst of all this, the quietest of three barking heads, my mother ponders: "Maybe it was Cindy that was related to a Downey..."

## ATROPHY, POLYMIOSITIS

When I was five years old, my father told me that in Norse mythology there was a great tree called Yggdrasil that held the worlds in its branches and roots. He told me that ‘Ygg’ was a name for the god, Odin, and ‘Drasil’ came from ‘Horse’. I asked him how a tree could be ‘Odin’s horse’ and he laughed. Through a molasses-thick accent waded the words: “See, they used to call gallows ‘Horses of the Hanged’. That tree, that’s where Odin hung himself.”

It may seem odd to talk to a child this way. Trauma often causes people to create coping mechanisms and act differently. In the 1950s police asked a little girl that discovered her sister dead what she had found. She said “I saw a giant raccoon and cat.” A cartoonist made a children’s movie out of it.

When my mother remarried, I stayed every second weekend with my father. Everything happened so fast that it already felt like past tense as it occurred. One night, I had a dream that I was standing on a street called ‘Ash Tree Lane’, lined with nothing but grey houses. A lipless old woman approached me, and I asked her where all the ash trees had gone. She cut open a Glasgow smile, wrapped around a cruel, obsidian tongue like a bear trap around a child’s ankle, and muttered:

“Cut down all the trees and name the streets after the woods.

And elevators will take you higher than Jesus ever could.”

I awoke, sweating, to find that the dream-catcher by my window had been torn apart, strings severed and limp. I knew that something from within my nightmares had escaped. So I ran down the hall to my father’s room, hysterical, until I was close enough to swing open the door.

And there they were. My father and his horse.

## LAM, ACUTE LYMPHANGIOLEIOMYOSITIS

Suddenly I’ve travelled three years forward. A scream shakes the walls. I call to Samantha to not follow the sound but with every curious infant step she takes towards the end of the hall the realisation deepens that she isn’t coming back. We arrive at the sight that has accosted our mother’s wits: her husband, dangling from the ceiling fan, clad in the dress she wore on their first date. The playful composition of posies and docile clouds against an azure backdrop justifies both why it is my mother’s favourite Sunday attire and why it was \$579.99 on sale at Chanel. The rhizome of lavender lingerie strangling my mother’s husband’s semen lacquered ankles is an integral \$89.99 item in the 2009 Victoria’s Secret Autumn collection. Finally, the pump clinging gently to his heel, together with the one that was violently kicked at the wall in asphyxiated desperation half an hour earlier, creates a \$1,299 pair of Louis Vuitton high heels. Separately they



are nothing. There's an ineffable Ophelian elegance to the tragedy's final scene before us. My mother's husband looks the way Michael Hutchence would look if his funeral director were Karl Lagerfeld. As my mother chokes on her own sobs, clutching the legs of the man she loved, curling around them like a leaf around a flame, I wonder if she's upset because her husband is dead, or because he fucked her favourite dress. The man dangles from a thread like a dream-catcher. I notice that someone has carved numbers into the rope. Twelve minutes from now, my mother will walk downstairs, administer herself four Xanax, three Benzedrine, and three fingers of vodka; wander to the door, open it with a placid, comatose smile and continue living her life. There are other dresses.

## DILATED CARDIOMYOPATHY, LATE AVASCULAR NECROSIS

*"Samantha went to play in the woods."*

*"She didn't wait for me?" I ask my mother, taking a seat in the kitchen.*

*"You know your sister. But she's probably going to the same place she always does. You know what they say, Dustin; the future is history."*

Samantha and I are children walking home through the forest. Wolves hungering in oblivion, lurking through infinity. Panikon Deima runs blood swift.

"I heard mum arguing with her husband last night." Samantha invites my curiosity, and I unconvincingly pretend to be uninterested.

"She asked him why he's always going lingerie shopping and accused him of seeing another woman. He said he needed to buy her new underwear because her vagina looked like Joe Pesci."

"Sam, that's gro—"

"Like, Joe Pesci asking for welfare, and he didn't know how to make love to that."

When Sam and I reach the gaping well, a silence ensnares us. Sam turns to me and asks it, and even though I knew she'd ask, I'm not ready. I never am.

"What did you see?"

"I don't know what you—"

"What did you see down there when you fell?"

*The hallway echoes monsters, infinite nautilus, Orpheus' tales and umbra revolving.*

I begin to wander from the well in the direction of our house. Over the distant canopy smoke is rising, like the smoke that will engulf this forest in nine years.

"I didn't see anything, there's nothing to see. It's a well."

"You're not afraid of the dark, and you weren't even hurt. Why did you scream? Why were you covering your eyes when they took you out?"

Then she asks the same thing my mother will ask me, ten years on, visiting me in the ward of the Jonathon Livingstone Seagull Institute for the Mentally Ill.

## AMENORRHEA, ENDOMETRIOSIS

“What did you see down there, in all that cold, in all that dark?”

“I don’t want to talk about it, Mum.”

“It just feels like you’re not here sometimes. Doctor Palmer says if we talk about S-”

“I’m not here. Not all of the time. Or all of the time, just not always now. Whenever that is.”

She’s fragile now. There are three rings under her eyes, and it has been years since she last swore she “saw Samantha in the city today, all grown up, but just out of reach”. She places a hand on mine: tawny and frail, made of paper. Her eyes deepen until they’re nothing but cavernous wells. As always I inhale, only this time the memory is different because I can feel the cold air in my lungs. This time, just like every time I relive this moment, I will tell my mother that I saw nothing in the well. Then I see it again, and the words follow. *She Always Moved A Nova That Held Aeons.*

“I saw her the way she was the day she disappeared. The day the woods swallowed her. Her mouth moved and I felt inside of myself a void opening up. Every ghost that ever moved in our house was a dead person travelling through his or her memories, searching for each other. Every doorway was a hallway, and every window led to eternity. So she turned to me and waved goodbye and stepped onto a train, laughing like life was only ever a dream.”

My mother hasn’t exhaled. The sun rakes its fingers through the trees outside.

“And I knew that wherever I woke up, she’d be there.”

Somewhere within my mother’s arms, deep within the tides of her breaths and sobbing, I collapse.

## PROCTITIS, MESENTERIC LYMPHADENITIS, ULCERS

When I open my eyes again I’m still in my mother’s embrace, but we’re older, standing together at a train station platform. She’s clinging to me the way she once clung to a dead man dangling from a rope. My mother is wearing a dress she found in the attic. She asks me what she can offer to make me stay. The serenity of this moment lies gently under an array of car alarms and stationmasters hurtling towards us, all silenced by the approaching train, rumbling like continuous thunder. Snarling, hungering, ready to masticate visceral screams, to take the organ into itself. Necrotic prophecies. Take my fucking insides, vulture, Chronos grows them back for me.

My mother tells me that I won’t find Samantha, and holding on, begs me to let go.

So I tell her, filled with horror (just like that of the child in that story (the one where the boy searches for monsters who articulate (and the truth he discovers is that one had devoured his sister and (even more terrifying, that it had always been waiting for him, hidden deep within the parent)he(s)is), the truth:

*Samantha said she went to play in the woods.  
The realisation deepens that she isn't coming back.*

*I'm sorry, Sam. I didn't hear you.*

*Separately they are nothing.  
The future is history.*

*I wonder if it will ever slow down.*

*What did you see down there,*

*A draconic chimera*

*in all that cold,*

*Wrenched from oblivion*

*in all that dark?*

*Dying.*

*Life was only ever a dream.*

*An entire generation*

*Lurking through infinity.*

*And just as easily as it slipped in, it's gone.*

*And I knew that wherever I woke up,*

*Temple against the train line,*

*She'd be there.*

*Disembowelled.*

*Whispering hypnotically*

*Don't follow me.*

*I move a foot over the tracks of approaching thunder, turning my head to her.*

*Do you believe in time travel?*

---

In a fictional world, Jesse avoided conscription in the Vietnam War by impersonating a woman, 'Madam Bouché de Vanderbooke'. After unintended interest from several suitors, Madam Bouché married into the esteemed Lumbridge family. Shortly after, Madam Bouché began trading weapons with North Korea where she changed her name to Kim Jong-un in order to avoid arousing suspicion.

# HOMAGE TO T.S. ELIOT (UN)FORGOTTEN WORDS



CAMILLE GRANT

June is the forgotten month.  
Rough dreams – dried out crusted edges of paper  
read like an ancient garden treasure map,  
dirt stained by time, crinkled by loss and lost by me.  
The seeds of memory rattle in their empty shells,  
a futile attempt to whittle out and through.

Summer kept us safe – the glinting embers of dry days  
settling to ash – filling the cracks of worn souls.  
The sea salt crusted air of summer beaches.  
Lickable, shiny sauce on oversalted, melted chips  
fell on our lips (not that it stayed)  
but neither did you.

Autumn blushed our hearts – thick blood oozing from ashen cracks,  
passion's plaything and lover's friend feeding at the stalk.  
Blood crept through your skin, your perfect plans, reaching, coiling into me.  
Clotted, congealed, contaminated,  
I let it creep and I believed you – you said,  
your arms around me:  
'Everything will be fine.'  
It wasn't – the blood told me there was a wound.  
I wouldn't look.

Winter came with an endless stealth, icing crusty, jaded wounds  
in its slippery way bringing relief to the teetering threat of absence.  
Pausing the wounds, breaking us – no, you and me permanently back  
into separate spheres – there was no more blood.  
Nothing, nothing,

Nothing.

When I look in your eyes now, I can see the jaded cuts peering back  
icicles still hanging from frozen flowers, the crusted gleam sparkling;  
beautiful, enchanting, haunting.  
I see my eyes in your April heart and I slowly realise –  
it is not your cracks that I see staring back, though I thought they were  
these, these wounds

are mine.

---

Camille, more commonly known as Millie, is a second year Arts/Law student who is always in a whirlwind, focusing on one project or another. In a parallel universe she is a successful writer living in a small flat in Paris overlooking the Seine.

# T H E O C E A N S T O R M



K E R I T S A O U C I S

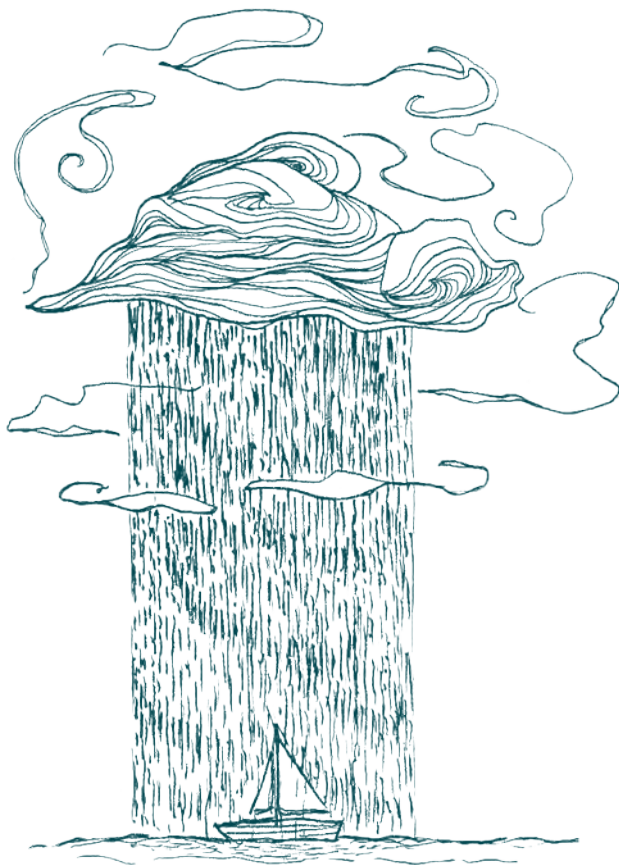
As the time goes on  
the tides are high,  
and the beach lays still,  
while the night is nigh.

The clouds come in  
so full of power,  
And with loud sound and light,  
it begins to shower.

And in the distance  
one would glimpse  
a little sail boat  
fallen limp.

The storm rolls on  
and the boat sinks low,  
And with the sky too dark  
no one would know

The last of the boat  
is above the wave.  
And at this time now  
It cannot be saved.



---

Keri is a first year undergrad student who began writing because she had too much time and too many thoughts. Putting these thoughts on paper became a habit she hasn't been able to break.

# T H E M A N T L E



L A U R A K E N N Y

In her living hours all the clocks would strike on the hour,  
All the cushions sat puffed in their pomp like toy soldiers,  
Every day in every way was a sandwich cut into triangles.  
Keats' hands could grasp until the very last,  
Warm and capable of earnest praying.  
With her, it all seemed a shadow play of hands instead.  
Drifting, turning, floating over and under the covers  
Of her dying hospital bed, dressed in white and baby blue,  
The colours she detested. Her hands were stained  
Purple with worn out blood. Her bones still  
Seemed to burn with the warmth of living fire  
When even I had stilled my doubts with truth -  
She was gone.

And while I clean her house and sort the things of life  
Into piles and stacks of use, disuse and memory,  
My throat will catch unguarded, unawares,

Like a little fishing hook and I the fish.  
And pull me from my comfort's skin.  
To think her hands did touch here or there  
Or all around, the fingerprints like soundwaves  
Lingering and playing on my hearing, and I  
Cannot clean them off, but only touch.  
Touch the prints on mirrors, glasses, hats and coats,  
And think my hands will one day be like hers.  
Tired of running the circuit round with no respite  
And yet not willing to move on.  
My mother only ever shopped with one hand on the wheel  
The other teetering on the air and playing  
Unseen piano keys. She sang a little tune.  
Smiling, whiling, stirring, pouring, drying, folding, holding.  
Holding on, and ever more it will be true  
That mine will have to be those hands for little ones like you.

---

Laura Kenny grew up in Sydney and spent much of her childhood and school life in and out of Shakespeare play productions and focused on the humanities in her studies. She now studies combined Arts and Law at UNSW and writes poetry, short stories and scripts in her spare time.

# T H E D I N N E R P A R T Y



N E D H I R S T

It is important to resist the urge to straighten your dessert spoon at a dinner party; it can be extremely insulting to whomever the hallowed duty of cutlery assignation was vested in, and, furthermore, one should not advertise to the public at large whatever obsessive compulsive quirks bubble under the surface. It is most unsatisfactory to reveal oneself at the earliest stages of the evening as a member of the Mildly Deranged. For these reasons, I left the spoon in its askew position and adopted a smile which I hoped was a model of benevolence. I wasn't sure whether this was a religious household, but it is poor form to be caught fork-in-hand when grace is proposed, so I left my hands by my side in a position that was slightly awkward, but suitably dignified.

"So," said Mrs Gaskell with a smile that was presumably also intended as a model of benevolence but which rather recalled a certain feral cat that I know, "it's nice to meet you at last. Georgia's told us all about you."

"Ah, good." I said.

"So, you're a student?" Georgia's account had evidently not been comprehensive enough to fill in everything.

"Yes, I study history."

She gave the kind of contemptuous face feigning sincere interest that you expect from an anaesthetist, who whilst perhaps well versed in the arguments for a non-vocational tertiary education and maybe not even disinclined to express these arguments herself, was at the same time deeply suspicious of a person who had chosen to pursue one, if, indeed, it had been a choice. I wasn't particularly enamoured with the prospect of a follow-up question but was fortunately rescued by Mrs Baker: Friend of The Family. Her nephew, it emerged, was also an arts student, studying psychology.

"I feel sorry for the poor dear," she was saying. "I've always thought if you're driven to study psychology there must be something wrong under the surface."

I went to see a psychologist once. He had spectacles and a framed diploma on his wall. I was not very comfortable. He accused me of being passive-aggressive and deliberately uncooperative. I didn't respond directly, but simmered a little. He said that all comedy has a victim; we laugh because we feel better about ourselves at the expense of someone else. I asked him about puns. It was an awkward hour.



“It’s interesting how depression can emerge out of such a happy household,” Mr Gaskell was saying. I was not sure who he was talking about. I concentrated on cutting my beef into neat little pieces, chewing it slowly.

“It’s often the way, though,” said Mrs Baker.

I was once in an argument with Georgia about whether psychology was an art or a science. I conceded the point when she claimed that it must be a science because it could incorporate neurobiology. I remained sceptical of the whole thing but I was very drunk and I wanted to go to bed.

She was smiling now, the smile of a person who was hoping that her family wasn’t going to embarrass her too deeply. I was hoping that Mrs Baker would stop drinking. Mr Baker was talking about a Palestinian missile strike. “The problem, though, with Israel is that they have too much money for their own good. If the US didn’t insist on bankrolling the Israeli military then the thing would sort itself out naturally.”

I thought about the Balfour Declaration.

“The problem is Zionism,” said Mrs Baker. “I don’t see why they couldn’t just keep themselves to themselves.”

I swilled my wine and bit my tongue.

After contemplating WWII-era British politics for slightly longer than a normal person might have under the same circumstances, I realised I had completely lost the train of conversation. Also, I was starting to feel a bit funny and the smell of the shiraz had filled my brain. I thought of winter and fire and sitting at an armchair supporting my dizzying head with one hand while using the other to pour an ill-advised further glass.

The talk shifted to poetry. This must be, I was dimly aware, high-brow company. Mrs Gaskell directed the conversation toward me but I charmingly professed my ignorance.

The last poem I read was Sonnet 18. It was on the tube. Presumably somebody hoped that the Bard’s poetical styling would distract commuters from Hounslow, but this was optimistic. The suburb stretched out flat across the skyline where the omnipresent grey clouds met pollution. Shopping trolleys and garbage were strewn across backyards to create a uniquely horrible mosaic effect. Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? The points of comparison were not immediately obvious.

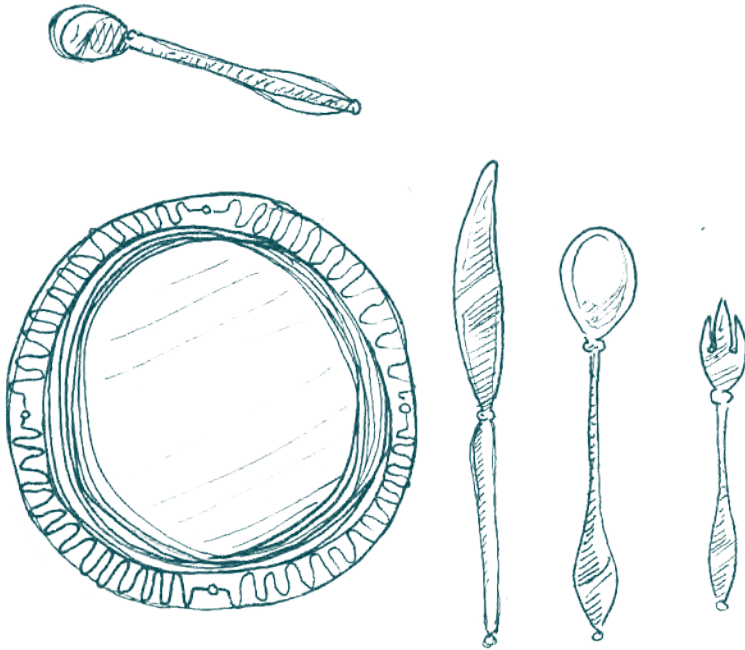
Beady is the worst word you can ascribe to somebody’s eyes, but on the tube everybody has beady eyes. I was standing in the corner, Lord Protector of the crevice into which I had shoved my suitcase. I stood there, eyeing off fellow travellers as if one of them was

likely to make off with my assiduously folded but haphazardly collected array of gauche polo shirts. So long as men can breathe or eyes can see. Next stop Heathrow Terminals 1-3. I gripped my suitcase and waited.

Public transport is not like that in Australia. Not so oppressive. One time I did see a racist woman yelling on a bus. I had bitten my tongue on that occasion also. I remember gripping the seat in front of me and turning the volume on my iPod all the way up to drown out her shrieking.

When everybody was finished, Mrs Gaskell proposed that we go and see the renovated bathroom. It was blue now; it had been some other, different colour. "We'll meet you in there," said Georgia. "I just want to check if I left my phone in the car."

Georgia took my hand and led me outside. I was still feeling quite dizzy. "I hope that wasn't too awful for you," she said. I nodded. I'm not sure what that meant.



---

The illegitimate son of Russian royalty, Ned Hirst was cryogenically frozen after the 1905 Revolution and subsequently reanimated and deported to Paris. There he studied sculpture under many fine teachers before eventually persuading them to get off so that he could concentrate properly. He currently lives in Australia where he attends UNSW.

AFTER THE STILLNESS,  
BEFORE THE SUN



JANE (QIHANG) LIANG

This is it: in the mornings you forget half your words  
by the retching basin of a stranger's house,  
syllables accumulated a lifetime ago  
tremble and collapse, hanging themselves to dry  
by the stasis of a night-chipped sky,  
worn out and briefly flickering in protest  
like second-hand neon lights  
within a fluorescent dawn.

This is it: your life plays out like a run-on sentence  
of frantic meter and high-pitched letters,  
you remember how you lost your sentences  
between the chafe of ellipses  
between the cracks within the linoleum,  
but still the lost parentheses behind bloodshot eyes  
won't dull or thaw from blind existence,  
won't leak themselves a little history –  
a relatable apathy had fucked you on carpet,  
leaving you dry for days.

This is it: you recollect the way your words slurred  
muddied and near insentient  
from your throat, a slow crawl towards evolution,  
as you beaded saliva and muscle to catch your vowels  
consonants in penny trickles  
you hear the coins  
beneath the dried up fountain of your ribcage  
desolated and hammering, burning  
under the twice-worn glare of an absent sun.

This is it: you try to flesh together  
a little righteousness  
from contrived spaces and  
broken lines, yet the little bouquet  
of underscores and apostrophes  
refuse to bloom from between  
your outstretched hands.

This is it: you place style before substance  
to win a race of form without purpose  
amidst the desolation  
of splintered light bulbs  
and derelict shadows that blinker into darkness  
when you close your eyes  
and ask yourself:

writing one line of poetry, what does it change?

---

Someday the writer of this piece will probably write something similar again. Continually agitated but perpetually dulled, it leads to a situation where she doesn't have much to say, but ends up saying something anyway. It's like a masochistic collusion of silence, hangovers and word vomit.

# I F I W A N T E D T O B E M O T I O N L E S S

---



M A T T H E W C A R R O L L

If I wanted to be motionless  
I think the ocean would be best.  
Though,  
there are environmental concerns.  
What if you  
find chunks of my heart  
inside your tins of tuna.  
Dolphin safe I hope.



'I'll promise to stop burning'  
but today it tastes like  
sugarcane  
fields I saw from high up  
demarcated squares of green and pale yellow.

I went to the beach  
hurled a boulder  
at someone standing by the shore  
their head bled  
and they cursed while I bobbed among the waves  
let myself churn in the rip and curl like an old sock  
in a broken washing machine.  
Said I was aiming for the sand.

Years later  
I tried to make it into funny  
small-talk over pancakes  
and it went down pretty well.

---

Matthew plays sports and eats bugs, and is proud of compromising pictures of himself on the internet (google 'hereyoutry' for more).

# DO NOT FEED THE QUOKKAS



CHLOE BARBER - HANCOCK

Do not feed the quokkas, sir –  
We ask that that you don't try it.  
It's most unhelpful to their natural diet;  
Please follow the instructions as per  
the information board. Hey there, you!

Do not feed the quokkas, kid –  
They'll bond with you like superglue  
And once one gets attached (they do)  
You'll have trouble getting rid  
Of it. Oh, hang on a tick –

Please do not feed the quokkas, ma'am!  
Oh yes, it starts out fun, I know,  
But though they seem a little slow  
Soon enough that tiny bit of bread and jam  
Is not enough for them. Oh no!

They'll want bacon, chicken, ham!  
Corn-on-the-cob, a leg of lamb!  
Steamed vegetables, a Sunday roast  
Fresh apple pies, but most of all  
They'll suffer from such hunger pangs  
They'll crave a different kind of meat;  
Something chewy, something sweet.

And before you know it, gangs  
Of quokkas show up at your door  
Demanding more and more and more  
And when you can't provide it, well!  
They'll turn you into meals galore  
(For human flesh they just adore)

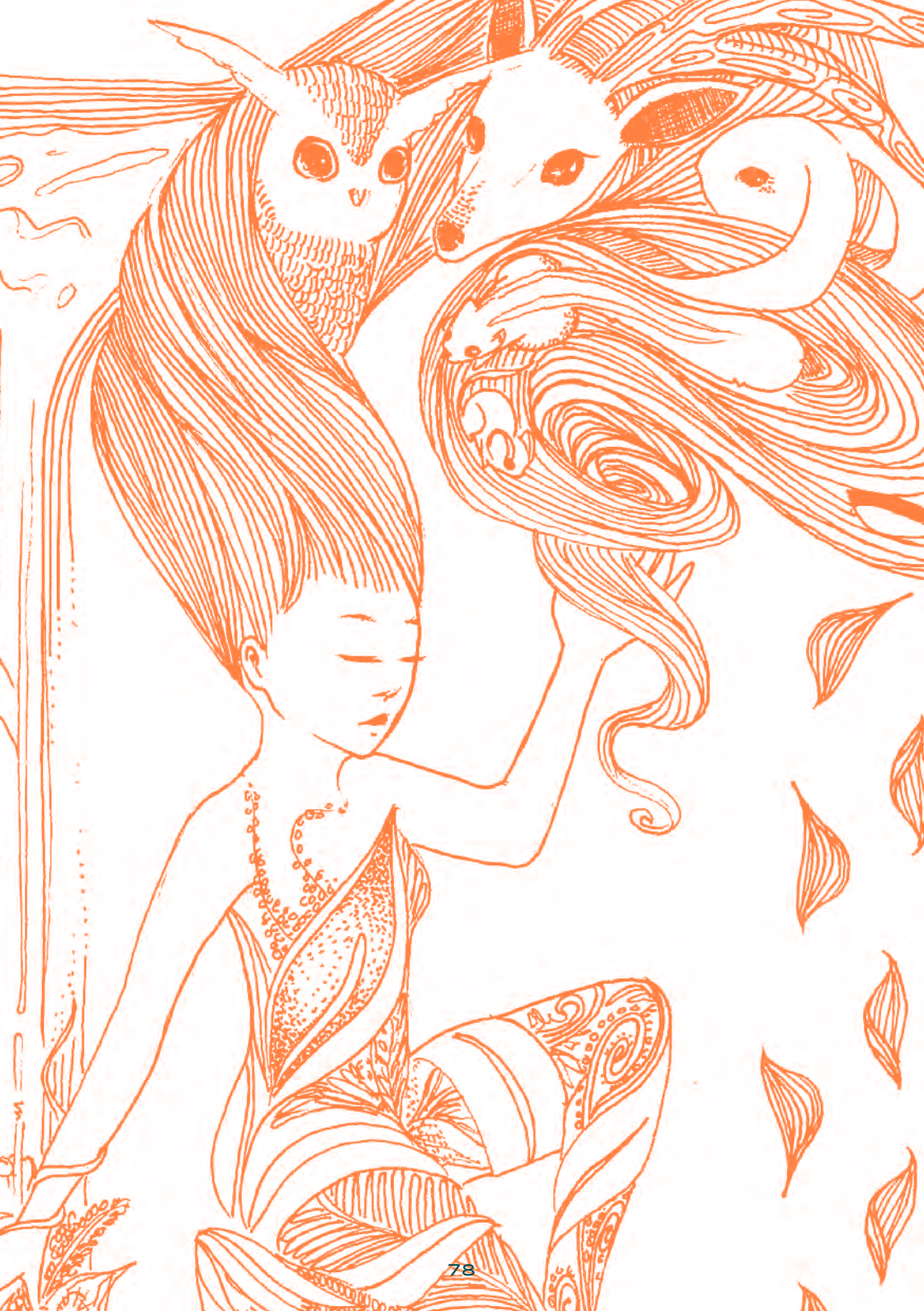
And you never would have guessed their scheme  
As you fed them scones with jam and cream.  
So I wouldn't feed the quokkas, guys.  
Ignore their hopeful-eyed laments.  
It isn't wise –  
Even with the best disguise,  
You'd have to run extremely fast  
To throw them off the scent.  
(And then I heartily suggest you hide  
Behind a strongly fortified  
Fence of some kind.)

This is a national park, not a circus!  
Take your food to a petting zoo!  
Visitors 'feeding the quokkas' is a Serious  
Problem here,  
In the very most literal sense.

---

Chloe is a carbon-based life form currently completing a BA in English and Creative Writing. In her spare time, she enjoys writing silly poetry about small marsupials. Quokkas are herbivorous, nocturnal, and (mostly) harmless, and you can visit some at Rottnest Island. Feed at your own risk.







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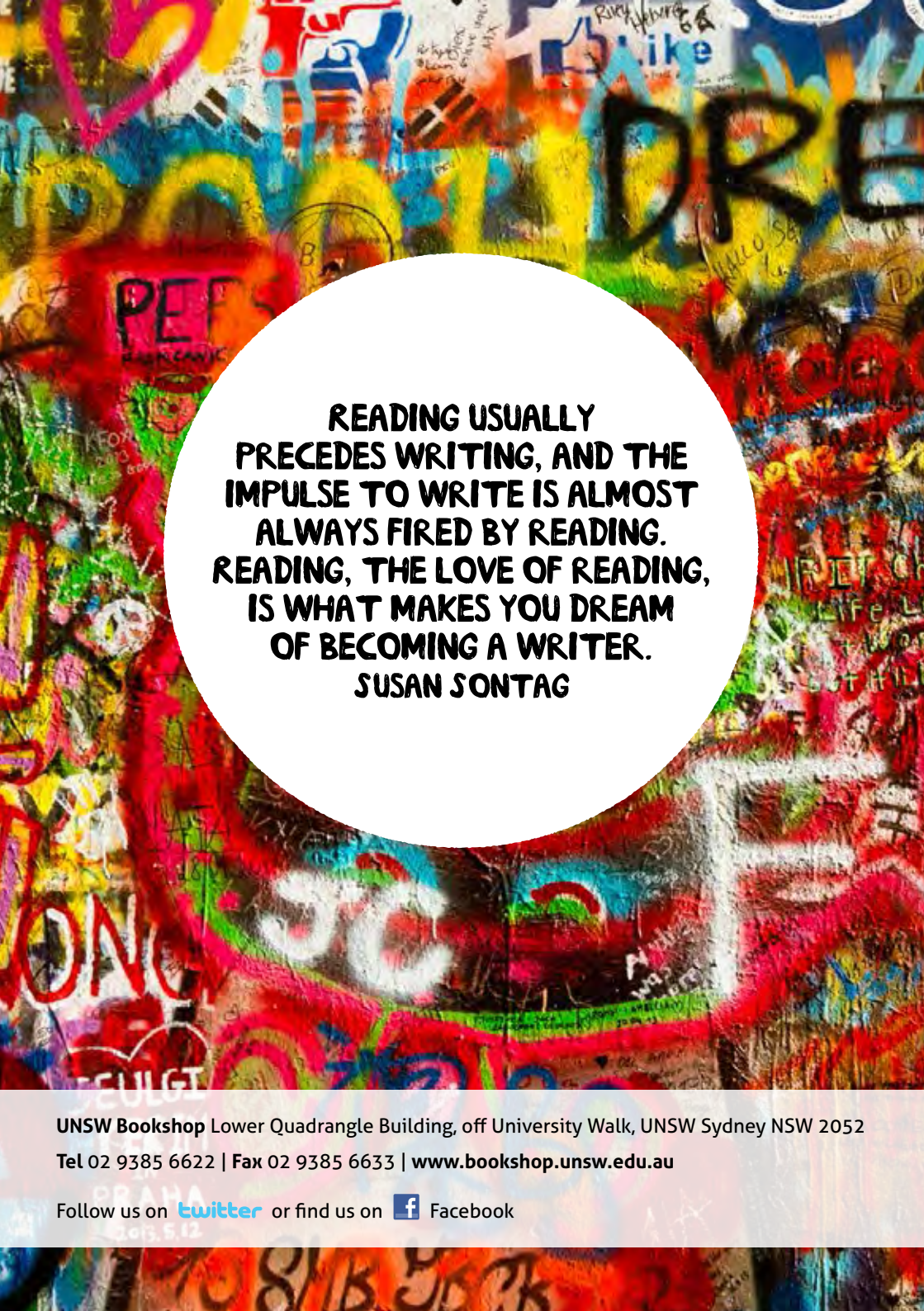
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