Laurel Moon

skyscape - spring 2015

Laurel Moon
-skyscape-

Spring 2015

Dear you,

Thank you for picking up the Spring 2015 edition of Laurel Moon.

This semester, we received submissions from even more Brandeis student authors. We want to use this space to thank both the readers and every writer that submitted their work to us.

We're happy that so many people want to be a part of Laurel Moon. Your writing is what makes this magazine what it is; you are also important members of our creative team. We wish that we could have included work from every single one of you.

We are honored to present to you the culmination of all of our efforts.

~ sam + angela + greg, the 2014 Laurel Moon E-Board

Laurel Moon is Brandeis' oldest student-run publication. Every piece you are about to read is written by a Brandeis undergraduate student and was selected with care by the editorial staff.

Laurel Moon also holds weekly meetings. We invite you to stop by whenever you can. We'd love to have you! Meetings are held in the BMC on a weekly basis.

If you are interested in receiving information about any upcoming workshops, meetings, or events, please sign up for the listserv or look us up on Facebook (facebook.com/moonlaurels/) or Wordpress (laurelmoonbrandeis.wordpress.com).

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Rachel Dillon	Two Postcards in a Shoebox, Brooklyn, NY	6
Elena Rose Unschuld	Sailor	7
Rachael Hershon	Tetrad	8
Elena Rose Unschuld	Before Daybreak	9
Sam Yoo	Set Yourself on Fire	10
Angela Acevedo	Repulsion	13
G. Cadder	Braids	14
Ilana Kruger	Choosing Sides	14
Linda Maleh	Summer Storm	15
Sarah Rush	Static	16
Nikk Wasserman	Desert Salt	17
Miriam Sokolow	Hannah	18
Anonymous	Late Nights	21
Isabel Ballan	Sappho Sings to her Kithara	22
Rachel Dillon	Childhood	23
Isabel Ballan	i had a little dream, once	24
G. Cadder	Casually, over the Armrest	25
Sam Yoo	Dandelion Chains	26
Sarah Rush	Primal Kingdom	30
Tatianna Banci	Terms of Agreement	30
Ilana Kruger	testing	31
Rachel Goldstein	Begin	33
Tova Gerber	Insomnia	33
Abbey Schultz	Objects in Motion	34
Clayre Benzadon	Fair Game	39
Editorial Staff	Editorial Staff Bios	40
	Grossbardt and Dafna Awards	42

Two Postcards in a Shoebox, Brooklyn, NY

Rachel Dillon

I.

stamped 22 Jun 1965, a Tuesday—
This side for Address only
black ink E's looped in reverential script
for Mrs. E Edward Mclelum in Kingston, NY

the image: Armory, Whitehall,
telephone poles and dead grass,
brick turrets and granite arches
shelter for national guard and newlyweds

the message, scrawled and heavy:
Hope we will visit here
together

II.

a view from the sky in greys and whites
with beautiful Lounges, Ocean Decks, Squash Courts,
Health Baths, Ocean Bathing, Bridge Parties, Cabana Colony

this is Chalfonte-Haddon Hall on the Boardwalk,
in the very center of things

the street stretches taut
between white concrete & white sand
some windows face the sea
but most face other buildings,
windows to crane your neck from
in search of New York City

alone in the very center of things
Place One-Cent Stamp Here
unstamped

Sailor

Elena Rose Unschuld

Still friend, your longing flourished full
When in autumn the stevedores made room
In the gold of the fine ship's stern, where you sang
Your last notes. That was in the gathering dusk

Where the tern's cry from the empty wharf
Goes out to all the wanderers but one.
What is the secret you lent to the bitter winds

That swarm around the quarterdeck,
That rip the billowing sails?
Soon it will find its way through waking dreams
And into prayers not yet begun,

But only when the unleashed waters
Twist over bleached coral
Rationed to the wildest currents.

Tetrad

Rachael Hershon

I.
Heat shake
Chilled sky
Cracked star
Fades
Forgotten by
Bleeding moon

II.
Only thing that stayed
Tear-stained sweater
Stuck in
Perpetual grip
A reminder
Keep me warm
On empty nights

III.
Blood heat
Cold white sink's
Belly like sun
Ignites moon
If only I
Felt as beautiful

IV.
When the
World ends
Give my body
To the sky
Let the galaxies
Devour me
Engulf my skin
In diamond

A tetrad is a rare series of four total lunar eclipses in a row. During these eclipses, the moon is covered by the earth's shadow, giving the moon a red hue. Some people refer to these eclipses as "blood moons."

Before Daybreak

Elena Rose Unschuld

Out walking before daybreak,
Before the wind shakes awake the slumbering trees
And the morning stars pull their indigo dresses
Over their bright bodies,
Only the steam rises from storm drains,
Like phantoms, and the headlights of cars
Serve as small pools of frantic light
Like the lanterns of a search party
Out looking for someone
Who wandered off in her sleep.
She said she was seeking something
She could never quite remember.

Set Yourself on Fire

Sam Yoo

She's leaning over the railing of the stairwell. Her long dark hair spills over her shoulders like a silk curtain that obscures her face from view. She has a lighter in her hand, a tissue box tucked under her arm.

She pulls a tissue out, lights it at the corner. She holds it as the fire nibbles at the edges of the feather-soft paper. Eventually she lets it go and watches it drift down through the empty space of the stairwell's center. The tissue never makes it very far, disintegrating midair, devoured by glowing orange tongues. Then she pulls out another tissue and repeats the process. She does this over and over with a kind of mechanical serenity.

You think it's a waste of tissues, but maybe she doesn't need them anyway. Maybe she's like you. Maybe she never cries.

She turns to look at you before you can pretend you weren't staring.

She has a split lip and purple bruises spreading across her left temple and cheekbone. The swelling reduces her left eye to a narrowed slit. But her right one is clear and defiant and so blue it almost looks fake, like an unwavering unblinking glass replica of an eye. She stares with a tireless intensity. And then she says,

"If it's the fire or the shiner, either way, fuck off."

Her voice is smoky, but every word is biting.

You catch a glimpse of her 'love bite' mottled throat as she turns away from you and goes back to floating the burning paper down the stairwell.

For some reason you think 'finally, someone like me'.

Even if it's completely different.

The thing is, there's no one left to hurt you. Everyone's gone. (Maybe that means you should be fine now. But that's not how it works.) Your skin isn't marred by swollen shadows under the skin from blunt force trauma anymore. Your family dissipated like noxious vapor and now you're safe.

Your father has done a decent job of making sure you don't die. That's what he has to his credit. You haven't starved to death. You're still breathing. You haven't seen him in two years, but he calls to check in, to make sure you're still doing all of these things. He sends you money every month. It's your salary for not being dead. It's supposed to pay for food, rent, and utilities. You don't really use it for food. You save a lot of it. You think maybe if you save enough, you can buy something. Something that'll fix everything.

The elevator is out of order and you live on the eighth floor.

You make it to floor seven and then you black out.

You wake up, still on the floor, but she's sitting next to you, leaning against the wall and smoking. She looks over at you.

"You know, for a second there I thought you'd just keeled over and died from like, a stroke or something." A flick of her wrist knocks the cigarette ash onto the floor.

"Sorry." You've no idea how long you've been out, how long she's been sitting here with you.

She takes a drag from the cigarette, and then exhales. "So what's your deal?"

You're not sure what she means. It shows on your face because she takes one look at you and snorts.

"Well you're obviously starving to death on purpose. If you were that strapped for money you wouldn't live here."

That makes sense. You think about it. It doesn't feel like it was anything in particular. Some things might just be inevitable.

Your brother took off and never looked back. He ran away from home at sweet sixteen when you were twelve and no one ever found him. You remember thinking to yourself 'I hope he's dead' but not with any anger or hatred. You were only thinking it with love. And you're not quite sure you understand it, but it registers as logical to you.

"So that's your answer? To whatever it is," she says. You sit back up slowly, still lightheaded. "You're just going to shrivel up and die."

"Everyone's doing that," you say. You glance at her bruises, on her face and her neck. She catches you looking.

"Yeah, but I won't let him get away with it. I'm going to kill him." She says it in such an even and calm tone, you actually believe her. Without any doubt. You know she isn't lying.

You think about your mom. You wonder if you should be as angry. You wonder if she shouldn't get away with this. And then you laugh aloud, shaking your head. Because she already has gotten away with it. And maybe you wish that you could choose to kill your mother rather than yourself.

There's a knock on your door, just one sharp rap like a precision strike. You open it and a hand shoves a pair of scissors into your face.

"You owe me for yesterday. I want you to cut off my hair," she says. And you see there are more 'love bites' and also scratches from fingernails and her face is a mask of anger, eyes glinting, but her cheeks are wet, tear tracks only half dried. She does cry after all. You step aside and let her come in without any questions.

You try to be careful. But she says, "Make it ugly". The scissors are unwieldy and the results are choppy and jagged. Glossy locks of her hair slither down to the linoleum floor of your kitchen with every decisive snip. She doesn't even glance at the hand mirror you give her.

After you're finished, she runs her fingers through it. Then she weaves her fingers through her hair and clenches them into a fist, trying to get a grip on it and pull. Her hair is too short for that now; it slides through her fingers without getting caught. She makes a triumphant noise and smiles at you and you never want her to leave.

"Either you kill them, or they kill you," she says. You stop to think about it.

"What if you ran away?"

She laughs, "Where would I go?"

And you realize that you misspoke. You meant to say 'what if we ran away', because while you know you'll never kill your mother, you also think you might not want to die anymore. But before you can say anything, she says:

"Go buy some groceries or I swear I'll snap your little ballerina neck."

You come back weighed down by the bags, the plastic handles digging into the palms of your hands. You wonder idly whether she really has the arm strength to snap your neck.

Once you step inside the apartment building though, you see scraps of flaming tissue paper gliding down to the floor around you. You look up to see her on the second story of the stairwell, sending down a shower of burning tissue paper.

"It's confetti," she says from above. "Congratulations on buying some fucking food."

You have to laugh. Your hair is singed and it smells terrible and you smile until your face hurts.

The building screams you awake, fire alarms going off on every floor. It's 4AM. You hear footsteps pounding down the hall. People are evacuating. You don't.

She's sitting on the roof's ledge, her feet dangling over the side.

You go over to her.

Her hair, clothes, and skin are all burnt. She smells like gasoline.

You sit down next to her.

You hear sirens. Fire trucks and ambulances and police.

"I don't know if I want to go to prison," she says. "We don't have the death penalty here." She leans forward. Her balance is precarious, feet swinging carelessly through the empty air.

You follow her gaze and look over the edge as well, down at the sidewalk below and far away. Residents of the apartment are still pouring out through the doors while the firemen organize their attack on the blaze inside.

"A nine story fall might not kill you very well," you say. "Also you could land on someone."

She laughs. It's barely audible, more like a huffing sound as she rocks back and forth.

"But if we hit the ground headfirst, it should be fine," you say.

She stops, and then looks at you. "We?"

You said that without thinking about what it meant, but it sounds right this time so you don't take it back. You just keep looking at her. Then you reach over and gently touch her hand, coaxing her fingers to interlace with yours until you're connected. She looks down at your clasped hands, and then back at your face. She smiles.

"Nah," she says. "If I take you with me, I'd be a murderer."

You agree that she isn't a murderer yet; he wasn't human so he doesn't count.

She doesn't let go of you.

"What do you think my chances are if I make a run for it?" she asks.

"Not great."

"Okay." She squeezes your hand.

"If we both live to be thirty, let's get married," she says.

Repulsion

Angela Acevedo

We never touched—not really.
Our electron clouds brushed
but
the nuclei of the atoms of my skin
repelled yours always—
always you never touched me.

Hands never felt my body, never
dug through my insides,
never grabbed my lungs and squeezed them
so I couldn't breathe.

Fingers left phantom pain in my
spine and when my body remembers some love left
like urban legend LSD in my CSF, I trip.

When I come down, I don't think I'll ever let anyone
not-touch me again.

Braids
G. Cadder

No ordinary tributary pulses—
maybe one pushed uphill by a pump
built like a house, my heart.
A stone ripples the river.

With skilled use of her middle
finger, one girl
braids another's hair, hooks
my middle.
Each hook, one twist more.

Choosing Sides
Ilana Kruger

On a rainy Friday the 13th
On a bus from Belfast to Derry
Up in the North
Not quite the same as Dublin
Scars remain
Divisions
Peace walls
Built to keep out the rocks and petrol bombs
Common combat
Hatred of schoolchildren
Generations past
Separate religion class politics
Murals and memorials
Remind of the Troubled time
Martyrs, prisoners
Hunger strikers
Unionist, loyalist
Which side were you on?
Which side are you on now?

Summer Storm
Linda Maleh

The last rays of sun are disappearing over the horizon. It's a hot summer evening, muggy. Beads of sweat roll down my arms and the back of my neck is sticky with perspiration. I lie down in the tall grass. The stalks rise up around me, I have created my own little alcove. The grass isn't soft. It's dry and brown from the lack of rain this summer. It's brittle and the edges cut into my back, arms and legs. Above me fly the creatures of the summer. Dragonflies fly across my eye line, gnats buzz in their huddles, the fruit flies look for something sweet and finding only my sweat in the large dry field they orbit around me and I have to swat them away. The sky above is clear and beautiful. It is periwinkle blue and has wisps of fluffy pink clouds to accent it. Only the horizon shows the truth. There gather great grey monsters armed with weapons of thunder and lightning. They herald a great army and it won't be long before they are upon us.

I should probably go inside. I should probably go inside. Fuck.

It's lovely and lonely out here. It's easy to believe that this field represents the whole world. And there's no one but myself to occupy the dry grass and the great wide-open sky. *I'm the only one. I'm the only one. Fuck. There's no one waiting for me.*

I'm not sure how long I've been lying here. It could be twenty minutes. It could be fifty. All I know is those clouds are a lot closer now, almost directly overhead. Thunder sounds, heralding the storm. There is nothing but the sounds of the crickets to keep me company. They too wait for the storm.

Finally the heavens open up and all the water in the world falls through. Every inch of grass gets wet and so do I. My tank top is soaked and has turned see through. My hair plasters itself to my forehead and neck. I receive the raindrops as if I was receiving a great bounty from a great king. My arms wide open to receive it, and my face tilted toward the heavens in gratitude. The rain feels so good against my skin. It cools the bruises on my face like a healing agent.

The rain will protect me. The rain will protect me. It's just me and the rain. Fuck.

Lightning flashes followed by its faithful servant the thunder. It's all quite picturesque. The great and terrible clouds, darkening the sky and the world, throwing down lighting bolts like a divine being, striking the grass, punishing it for standing so tall in the face of the sky's supremacy, refusing to bow. Now it's being forced to. The rain is too much, too heavy, and it weighs the grass down, forcing it to bend. But it does not break.

I have never broken. I have bent as far as it is possible for a person to bend. I have let my forehead kiss the floor I've bowed so low. I've allowed myself to be hit countless times – in the gut, across my face. I've been knocked into walls and punished when I get back up again. I've been told I'm nothing. I'm nothing. I'm nothing.

This morning I got in my truck and drove away. I'm following the sky as far as it will take me. I just keep on driving. I stopped for the storm though. I figured I should pay it homage.

The rain has lightened up now; there isn't much of it left, though lightning continues to flash. One bolt strikes the field. Too close. The grass is dead and it catches fire easily. I stand up and watch as the flames leap towards the sky. I watch it spread, along the edges of the field and creep its way in. It's absolutely beautiful to watch.

The rain stops completely now. It's a summer storm, and those never last long. Even the bad ones. The rain has stopped but the fire keeps on going. The storm's last revenge.

I turn my back on it and walk towards my truck. I get in, put my foot on the break, start the engine, and put it into gear. I look back towards the field before I begin to drive away. It's a sea of flames that just continues to spread. I put my foot on the gas and leave the whole mess behind. It's not my fucking tragedy.

Static

Sarah Rush

I ask the faded blue wallpaper if it knows where I left my
hope—could it have fallen out of my ears
when I made room for the silence?—
and it sputters in a thin voice taut with
memories some story of a torn photograph
below a gray sky.

> I'd forgotten that stormy Autumn night:
> the one where the leaves whispered
> as they scurried about my feet—
> *Nothing is better than Everything*—
> and I tossed our torn photograph
> into the murky, still waters of a puddle.

I don't need those memories, I say,
I am strong now, but the wallpaper
knows best—it reminds me of the hole I dug,
shadowed and deep, to make room for myself
under the storm clouds that Autumn night
as rain dribbled across a photograph.

> I'd forgotten how my hands had blistered
> as I dug, carving a tomb made of silence and
> security—while his radiant expression jumped out
> of a torn photograph and tried to burrow
> through the mud under my fingertips, dirty
> and callused, but the mud was too thick.

I ask the fraying blue wallpaper if it has seen my hope
lately, since I no longer remember what dreams
taste like, and it mutters something about a photograph
bleeding into a still puddle under a gray sky—
but I have dug too deep a grave, I reply,
climbing out is impossible now, this far down.

> *Easier to stay here.*
> *No—easier to keep digging.*

Desert Salt

Nikk Wasserman

Dear Friend, we have been
tracing the outer circles

of each other awhile. Before
I found you steep yourself in salt

in the ocean next to your home, before
I saw your knees as broken ladders.

I guess the military owns a profit
on poetry too, but I remember the summer

you came back from West Point
and told your first rape joke

imagine: a baby book
private's first dehumanization

I see the fourth grade boy with a soft face
and then there's you, in training

hair buzzed short, life suspended seven
years—I know that my father did,

a military man who came back with nothing
but pride for country

nothing left.
Are you still in there?

Can you still feel your skin and bones
cup an M16 as a cradle, the rattle

and starry revolver above

cups an M16 as the rattle, a cradle:
can you feel your own skin and bones?

Are you still in there?
Nothing left

but pride for country
—a military man: you come back with nothing.

I know my father did
hair buzzed short, life suspended twenty-seven

years, and then you, in training
fourth grade boy with soft face

private's first dehumanization
imagine: a baby book

you told your first rape joke
and came back from west point

on poetry too, I remember the summer
the military owns a profit of,

your knees as broken ladders
in the ocean next to your home, before

I find you steeped in the salt
of another for a while, before

tracing the outer circles
we had been. Dear—

Hannah

Miriam Sokolow

Hannah is a total bitch. This is what everyone thinks, but no one says. Nevertheless, we all gather like dutiful ducklings around her bedside and murmur sweet nothings and pleasantries. Hannah is dying of cancer. But she is still a bitch.

One of the many benefits of this situation is that Hannah is, finally, queen. She says, "Oh, I'm so thirsty," and we go scramble to find her water or orange juice or whatever else tickles her fancy. Hannah says, "Oh, I'm so hot," and off go the blankets. "Oh, I'm so cold," and they're back on. I can tell Hannah's loving this. She's got that pursed little smile on, the one that just oozes contentment and smugness.

When Hannah dies, the whole class will have to go to the funeral. We will have to listen to endless eulogies delivered by endless relatives about how Hannah was such a special girl, how she was such a gift but God wanted her back early. How Hannah taught us all to love life or some other bullshit.

Hannah's mom asked me to write a eulogy. Just a short one, doesn't need to be long. I told her I didn't think I could, I'd be too choked up to say anything. And Hannah's mom smiled in this drippy way and said, "Of course, dear," and patted me on my arm like I was a dog.

If I had to give a eulogy, I'd say I was glad Hannah was dead. I'd say I couldn't wait to forget about her and all the hell she put me through. I'd say that I'm giving a eulogy because Hannah doesn't have any friends to give it for her. No one liked Hannah. All those kids crying in the third row? Crocodile tears. No one will miss Hannah. Me least of all.

Hannah has a zillion hats because all the hair fell out in chemo. She's skinny too, which is weird because my whole life Hannah was big. She was the fat kid in the class, and she knew how to throw her weight around. Usually on my head. But now Hannah is finally model-thin. When you get skinny your eyes are supposed to get bigger but hers have gotten smaller. They glare out at us from her bed as she orders us around.

Hannah has a bucket list. She portions out the list solemnly to us all, says that we need to fulfill it for her in her 'absence.' Yeah, she said that. Like she had to miss class because she got sick or something. I got 'Go skydiving.' Not only is this cliché beyond words, but Hannah knows full well that I have been terrified of heights since she pushed me off the top of the play structure in pre-kindergarten.

Hannah is going to die a virgin.

Hannah has a younger sister who I don't think likes Hannah any more than the rest of this. I've never spoken to her, but I can tell. Hannah is extremely dislikable in that way. She was the kindergartener that never mastered the art of sharing, which is practically the only thing they teach you in kindergarten besides the alphabet. She was the kid who sat alone at lunch because if anyone tried to sit with her she'd flick peas at them the whole hour. When a poor sap named Jerry gave her a Valentine last year, she set it on fire.

In class, we all have to write letters to Hannah, like we're in second grade instead of high school. Because it's not enough that the school makes us visit her on a weekly basis, now we have to pour our hearts out to her on paper too. The teachers know just how much we all hate Hannah, so these letters are getting proofread.

"Don't write, 'Feel better,' or anything like that," Mr. Lucas says. Which leaves me with zilch to say.

Dear Hannah,

How are things at the hospital? We all miss you.

It's short and sweet, and there's only one lie in the whole thing.

Hannah hangs up all the letters. She can't get out of bed anymore, so she makes her poor nurses tape them to the walls. "To remind me of all my friends," she says. She's too skinny for her smug smile to work. Smug smiles go best with chubby faces. When Hannah tries it now, the smile just looks pathetic. Like Hannah.

Hannah's mom seems like a decent sort of person. Certainly not the kind of person who deserves a daughter like that. She does that weepy drippy thing again and goes on about how beautiful it is to see real, tangible proof of how much we love Hannah. We all smile awkwardly and do this shuffle. Hannah's hospital room was not meant to hold this many people.

The hospital has a crapsack garden and pond where all the dying people can contemplate their last days amongst dying hydrangeas. I find Hannah's younger sister there. She's in middle school, not sure what grade. I give her a joint and tell her it's a cigarette.

Our weekly visits to Hannah's Court of Joy have been indefinitely postponed. Hannah spends most of her time asleep, and according to Mr. Lucas, when she is awake she's not in the mood to talk. He says some other stuff about powerful drugs and morphine and "managing the pain." To which I say, "What pain? Hannah's never been happier in her entire life."

This gets me detention. But Mr. Lucas must feel kind of bad, because he just makes me alphabetize his bookshelf and then says I can go.

Hannah's mom calls. I have no idea how she got my number. She asks me to come to the hospital. Says Hannah's been asking for me.

"Why?" I ask.

"It's getting pretty close to the end," Hannah's mom says, and then I have to wait a few minutes as she breaks down and starts sobbing. "I think she just… wants to say goodbye. Properly."

"Uh."

"Please." And then she starts crying again. Over *Hannah*.

Hannah's asleep when I come. She's got dark bruises around her eyes, and without the hats her head looks like a skull. There's a green stain in the corner of her mouth that I think is vomit. At least seven majorly complicated flashing machines are plugged into her through various tubes and wires. With all the weight gone, if she had hair, if she wasn't such a horrible human being, she could almost be sort of pretty. She looks both incredibly old and weirdly young at the same time. Like a geriatric toddler, or one of those starving AIDS orphans.

A couple of class letters have fallen off the wall. I stick them back on. All the letters are very short, mostly variations on my letter. *You're very smart. I'm so glad I knew you.* Shit like that.

Out in the hall, Hannah's extended family waits like birds on a power line. The grandmother knits, and everyone under thirty is on their phone. We are all waiting to be released, waiting for the Grim Reaper to come at last and free us all from this farce.

It gets later and later, but every time I try to leave Hannah's mom asks me to wait just a little bit longer, Hannah will wake up any second now. Which I'd rather avoid, but Hannah's mom's eyes keep filling up with tears like a leaky faucet and it's awfully hard to say no to that.

At 8 pm I call my mom and explain the situation. She tells me to suck it up and get food from the hospital cafeteria. At 10 pm I finish all my homework not just for tomorrow, but for the next two weeks too. At 11 pm Hannah's mom resigns herself to the fact

that Hannah just isn't waking up tonight, or probably in this life period. I pat her on the shoulder in a vaguely comforting manner while she cries yet again. I hold Hannah's hand for a minute or so. It's very cold and sweaty. Hannah's mom says that Hannah's circulation isn't so good right now. Hannah doesn't look like she could take on a fruit fly right now. This is the girl who terrorized me all through elementary school. The one who stabbed a sharpened pencil into my hand and then told the teacher it was an accident. The one who called me her beanbag chair every time she sat on me, which was a lot. When I let go of her hand, I can feel Hannah's sweat glued on.

Hannah dies two days later without having woken up. At the funeral, the whole class sits in the third row and attempts to look sad while Hannah's uncle tells a lengthy yarn about the time Hannah stapled the dog's tail to the kitchen cabinet. After, Hannah's younger sister asks me for some more cigarettes.

"That wasn't a cigarette."

"I know." It's scary how much she looks like Hannah.

"You mind skipping the burial?"

"Please."

We light up in the traditional place, the parking lot. It's very hot out but we sit in the shadow of a shiny hearse, our black skirts sticking to the asphalt.

"No offence," I tell her, "But your sister was a total bitch."

She takes a drag and coughs most of it up. "I know." She leans back against the door of the hearse. "It's funny, but it's so quiet now without her. I hated her so much, all the time. I was *happy* when she got sick. Because maybe there was a way out now. Maybe I wouldn't have to put up with her forever. But it's too quiet now. I don't know what to say or do anymore."

"We're free," I say. "That's what we are. No more evil Hannah, no more hell on earth."

She shakes her head. "Maybe you're free, but I'm not." She closes her eyes. "I can't be."

We don't say much after that.

They take away Hannah's desk at school. At first they tried to make us leave flowers and cards, but what's the point? Even Mr. Lucas has given up. The Hannah parade is over. No one mentions Hannah anymore. We used to talk nonstop about how much we hated her, about her latest crime against the innocent. Hannah provided an endless stream of fodder. Without Hannah to complain about I have nothing left to say. I drift, at first clinging to the peripheries of conversations, then give up and move away. Everyone is, to some extent. What held our class together was universal loathing of Hannah. Now we are coming apart.

I try to remind myself of everything Hannah did to me, try to tally the hurts and tears like I used to. But memory is a funny thing. I remember it all so vividly: the push off the playground structure, the stomped toes, the dismembered Barbie doll, the defaced notebooks. But I don't feel angry anymore, just sad.

I wonder about our letters, the ones Hannah hung on the wall of her hospital room. Some other dying kid, presumably nicer, will take over Hannah's room. Probably Hannah's mother will take down the letters and put them in a box. Years from now she'll show them to guests and say, "See? See how much everyone loved Hannah?"

Late Nights

Anonymous

The cumbia plays on
A cheerful air for a cold night
The jaunty rhythms of a warmer climate
A fading polaroid of a cheery fiesta

Then the pounding beats of a remix
The steady pulse of a bass drum
Crescendos from a rhythm into a state of mind
As self assured as it is relentless

Words of love and affection
Call out from every singer's lips
Pleas for the return of a loved one
Bend any ears that will take notice

The band marches on
The snare drum and the fife
Beating out one unified command
"Keep moving! The best is yet to come"

Lanterns light the road to oblivion
And sleep advances along the path
Always just one step in front of me
And one step behind tomorrow

Sappho Sings to her Kithara

Isabel Ballan

O you drowning divine notes
made in secret from the backs of moons

pour
in slow libation
from a starless somewhere else
into the pit of me.

my lips feel the tingle.

the dark shapes
lured within the cave of the ear
are swallowed.
not to be seen.

but their outlines
plucked pure trembling and crying out
suspend themselves
in Sky's dark face
like stretched and empty eyelids.

music
you have no light to fill you
only wind and dark places

but it is enough
to get drunk on

Childhood

Rachel Dillon

i.
nervous chubby feet skated across
the velvety oriental rug, tripped on wrinkles,
stumbled in the shadows
to my parents' bedroom
i still cannot fall asleep
in complete darkness

ii.
hands around michael's brown arms,
his baby curls tickling my elbows
as i pulled him through the grass
to the kiddy pool, bossy-loving older sister,
sibling rivalry caught between my chiclet teeth

iii.
the bitter smell of the milk
flowers in the yard,
mother bald at my 9th birthday party;
the friend who screamed when she saw the hairless face and
cancer-smooth scalp, i told her to stop:
my mother's sickness was not
on purpose

iv.
we eat dinners scattered
throughout the house, we eat
eggs 'with a hat on,' yolk running onto pumpernickel,
purple boxes of white cheddar mac n cheese, family size
and the candy-stripe couch has more stains now
i sit cross-legged, pillow in lap
bowl of raviolis
balancing

i had a little dream, once

Isabel Ballan

i was sitting by an open window
and my grandpa came through it,
like a visiting bird.
as easy as that.

he was alive,
i know because he had his jacket on,
and he wanted to talk to me.
so we did.

i took his hand
and all the veins in the vise of his grip
licked like fire.

i pulled his veins over me like a membrane
and crawled in,
and there was room for me

i stood in the center of him
glowing like a galaxy
and his big laugh shook in me like a heart.

Casually, over the Armrest

G. Cadder

It's not quite ice that stops
plants from flowering
though they still grow

for years.
Ice preserves roadkill
on yellow two-way lines

lampless, lit by moonlight.

Nothing will thaw
the ice by spring—unless a body
will ignite, release

the blooming bones.

Dandelion chains

Sam Yoo

That day, they snuck up on me and dumped a bucket of sand over my head.

Maybe it was something I did, or didn't do. Maybe it was because I went off on my own, picked dandelions, and traced out drawings in the sand during recess instead of running around with everyone else. They said I was 'weird', but I never understood what that meant.

I was crouched over, tracing a dragon in the dirt with my head bent down, so most of it spilled off through my hair, not into my eyes. I heard giggling from behind me but didn't turn around; that's how it worked. I just sat and waited for them to go away like they always did, waited until I couldn't hear them laughing. No sand got into my eyes, but they stung all the same.

"They're stupid."

I looked up, grains of sand clinging to my eyelashes. There was a girl standing in front of me. She knelt, reaching out to brush some sand off my head.

"But bullies don't matter anyway," she said, and smiled at me. "Hi, Cate. I'm Marigold."

"How do you know my name?"

She laughed, "Because I'm your best friend, silly."

She helped me get the rest of the sand off. Then we went to where all the dandelions were and picked them by the dozen. I showed her how to twist the stems to link them together. She closed a chain, made it into a loop, and draped it over my head like a drooping crown. I did the same for her.

I didn't want Mr. Steinberg to come get us; I wanted to stay there forever. But eventually he came jogging over, winded and frazzled.

"Cate," he stopped to just breathe for a moment, relief overtaking exasperation. "You didn't come in with everyone else. What are you doing here all by yourself?"

And just like that, I felt cold. I looked back to where Marigold sat. She was there, in plain view, the crown of dandelions in her hair. She scowled at him before she grabbed my hand, squeezing it just as Mr. Steinberg grabbed my other hand and led me back inside.

"He can't see you," I whispered, feeling lost.

She scoffed. "Of course not. I'm not his best friend am I?" She nudged me in the shoulder. It made me smile again.

Our hands stayed clasped together throughout the rest of the day, even while I waited with Mr. Steinberg when my mom's meeting ran late.

When my mom finally came to pick me up, Marigold climbed into the backseat of the car with me.

"I'm telling you, it's not normal," my mom paces across the kitchen, back and forth like something mechanical. "She's fifteen. I thought she'd be done with all this by now-." A pause, she scowls. "I told you. Even if she had a cellphone, I don't think she has anyone to call." Another pause. "I can schedule something with a therapist next week but I just don't have the time to-." And then she sees me.

"Cate, when did you…" she trails off, looking uncomfortably at the phone clenched in her hand. Then she says, "I'll call you back, Shelly," and hangs up.

I stay very still. "What is it?"

My mom sets the phone down on the counter and clears her throat. "So, sweetie, I think we need to talk about Marigold."

I'm about to say 'what about her' when I notice Marigold gesturing for my attention from behind my mom. I watch her without turning my head, from the corner of my eye. She presses a finger to her lips and mouths 'I'm not here'. I look back at my mom.

"What're you talking about?" I barely have time to think. The words sound bland even to me. "Marigold was imaginary, right?"

Instant relief eases some of the lines in my mom's face. "Yes. You're exactly right."

I can see that Marigold was right to have me lie.

"Yeah," I say. "It was fun. But I'm kind of tired of it now."

"Oh. Well," my mom says. The tension drains from her as she leans back. "I'm glad you finally grew out of it." She pauses. "Are you getting along with your classmates now?"

I nod, "Yeah, school's way more fun now." Marigold is snickering.

"I'm so glad to hear it. You know, now that you're socializing more, don't you think you need a phone so you can keep in touch more easily?" my mom asks.

"Well actually-," I don't want one. It's a waste of money.

"Of course you need one," and my mom is already pulling up different phone models on her laptop. "Would you like an unlimited plan for texting?"

She practically drags me to the store to buy one.

I think it's stupid, but Marigold tells me to make it into a game so we can get better at pretending I'm 'normal'. We keep the phone charged and with us at all times, even though the contact list is empty. I make sure to mention a classmate now and again. I make a show of talking into the phone, pretending to have conversations with imaginary people within earshot of my mom, laughing about it with Marigold in secret all the while.

I sit on the floor, leaning against my bed. The contents of my ruined sketchbook are sprawled out across my carpet. The paper has dried, but it's still warped and muddy from being tossed into the puddle at the bus stop. Some of the sketches were in pen, nothing but blotches and blurred ink lines now, but some of them are salvageable. I redraw them as best I can in a new book, biting my lip because it's stupid to cry over this. It's not my homework for art class; they're just my private drawings, absentminded doodles. It's nothing important.

Her fingers entwine in my hair, gently combing through it.

"They don't matter. None of them do."

I feel her place a circle on the top of my head, the soft petals tickling my forehead. I turn around to look at her. She's wearing a matching crown of dandelions, sprawling across my bed and smiling.

"We're the rulers of the world and no one can touch us."

There is a girl with fire-colored hair that sits in the back of art class.

That day, Ms. Morin divides the class up into pairs, telling us to do portraits of each other using any medium we want and I end up with her because her last name is 'Hadlock' and mine is 'Hadley'.

Her hair changes a lot. I remember seeing her with blond highlights, and then one day she came to school with her whole head of hair looking like a fire hydrant. Since then it's faded to more orange than apple.

Without really thinking, I paint her head like the head of a matchstick, engulfed in flame from the neck up. A faint aura of blue around the base, orange flame fading into yellow. I get so absorbed I stop looking at her and focus only on the painting. It's barely a portrait of her anymore; the only similarities are the ragged gray t-shirt and hoodie. The flames conceal the features of her face.

"Huh," she says over my shoulder. My

spine stiffens but my arm stays still by force of habit, too much experience of ruining paintings by being skittish. I peer at her, cautious and nervous. I realize too late that my painting is weird as usual and maybe that's not okay. Then she grins. "Cool. Looks just like me."

The anxiety relaxes and uncoils in my chest. My ears burn all of a sudden.

Her picture of me is a smeared mess. She laughs sheepishly and offers to buy me ice cream as an apology.

"I'm Liz," she says. "What's your name again?"

It feels like I haven't been asked this question in a long time. "I'm Cate."

Liz gets lemon custard ice cream in a waffle cone and insists I do the same. It's actually really good. While we're walking back to the bus stop, Marigold calls me. I pull my phone out of my pocket and press it to my ear.

"What are you doing?"

"Where were you?" Marigold's voice is calm and perfect. She sits on my bed, as always. Waiting for me. I wince.

"I was just," my voice fades in my throat and I wonder why I feel like I've done something so terribly wrong. "I was hanging out with-."

"Liz," Marigold says at the same time as me.

"How did you-." I wonder why she asked if she already knew the answer, but she interrupts me again.

"I thought we were going to watch a movie today?"

"We still can," I feel helpless. "I just hung out with her a bit after-."

"You never did that before, what's so special about her?" Her voice is sharp like rose thorns. I don't know what to do.

"How about you come with me and-."

"No, I don't want to meet her," she snaps. "Don't you get it?"

For the first time, I don't. So I back out of my bedroom and shut the door.

Ms. Morin has a headache so she tells us to 'do whatever we want'. I decide to do a charcoal portrait of Marigold and give it to her as an apology. I'm halfway done when Liz leans over, curious. There's a smear of blue paint across her nose.

"Cool self-portrait," she says.

I stop.

"What?"

She tilts his head, confused.

"You mean it's not? But it looks just like you."

When I come back home, my old sketches have been thrown all over the place. The loose paper covers the floor and strings of dandelions are scattered everywhere. I don't care. I try to look at her and really look; I've always seen her face and known it as 'Marigold's face', or maybe I've never thought about it before.

"Who are you?"

Marigold's face – a perfect mirror of mine – gives nothing away. Nothing but a beautiful smile. "Your best friend of course," she says with my voice, my lips, and my tongue. "Who else would I be?"

I don't say anything. I don't move. Neither does she.

"Right?" she says.

"Right?" she says again.

She lurches forward and snatches my shoulder bag. She yanks out my sketchbook and starts ripping it apart. The torn out pages scatter, drifting to the floor. I see that they are all of her, of me, drawings of my face, over and over again. Then she makes a noise like a laugh and a scream.

"Then why is she in here?"

She rips out the newest pages and throws them in my face. I know without looking at them that they're of Liz.

I turn my back on her and run.

She's calling me. I hold my phone up to my ear.

"You're killing me."

I snap it shut with trembling, sweaty fingers.

After school ends, I don't walk home. I just sit down on the bench outside the entrance and don't move for a while.

"Hey, what's up?" Liz is standing in front of me. Everyone else has already left. The passage of time must be strange today; I thought I'd only been here a minute or two. I stare up at her and don't know what to say, don't know what to do.

So she tells me to scoot over and plops down, just sits there and doesn't ask any questions. She doesn't look bothered at all, as if sitting here in silence with me is exactly what she rolled out of bed this morning to do. So I decide that it's okay to ask her.

"Have you ever realized you've been wrong about something your whole life?" My voice refuses to get any louder than a whisper. "Something really important."

Liz looks at me and doesn't laugh.

"No," she says. "But can I still help?"

"I don't want to go home."

"Okay." She leans closer to me so our shoulders are touching. "Then let's just sit here for a bit."

"You'll miss the bus."

She laughs, "Already missed it. I can walk home later."

Marigold calls me.

I pull my phone out of my pocket and just stare at it for a while. Liz peers at it, confused.

"Calling home?" she asks.

I nod because I don't know what to say. I press the phone to my ear and it occurs to me that I should've pretended to actually dial a number into the phone before doing that. Now Liz will just think I'm strange but it's too late now-.

Of course she thinks you're strange. She's no different from any of the others. She'll tell all her friends you're a psychotic wreck and laugh. And I'll be there when you're crying alone in your room again because I told you so. I've always told you-.

"I don't know that for sure," I interrupt.

She doesn't say anything.

"I gave up and stopped trying. But not everyone is the same."

Silence.

"It's time to grow up."

I pull the phone away from my ear. The screen is blank.

Liz asks, "Are you okay?"

It's hard to breathe and there is a pressure like a headache building behind my eyes.

But I do not cry.

I turn to Liz and hold out my phone.

"Can I have your phone number?"

Primal Kingdom

Sarah Rush

The august king rests serenely on his throne
Of matted tawny and green pillows,
An olive canopy of shade ruffling leisurely
Overhead. Through golden eyes, he
Surveys his kingdom: a lawless empire
Governed by uncivilized instinct,
Where the currency is sweetened with blood
And only the dead are unemployed.
His subjects thirst not for vengeance when
Death is served, no sugary imitation of
Honorable justice. Only a taste for life.
There are no mirrors or manacles here,
And gore runs through the cities like
Crimson rivers in which the people fill their goblets.
Basking lazily before his nation, the great king
Stretches his paws and yawns carelessly,
Fangs gleaming in the warm sun.

Terms of Agreement

Tatianna Banci

Somewhere, you are in a box
Your room, your friends, your life
Studied and used
Blissfully, you continue living
Ignoring the facts that are hidden in text not read

And when confronted,
The stiff shirts with perfectly pressed collars will smirk and say
“You agreed”

Twelfth Night-Acteon Approaching Artemis

Clayre Benzadon

A thin animal of air grasped in time
held in her breath as she felt eyes gaping
in naked wonder. Bathed in moon’s milky brine,

the fluid kept dripping down her spine
quickly as darts molding the shadow into
a thin animal of air grasped in time:

a hart left with no heart, feeble as twine.
The darts stuck inside its body reflect its panic
in naked wonder. Bathed in moon’s milky brine,

the deer glows—either from fear or the whistling pines
— and gasps vigorously like thumping legs
a thin animal of air grasped in time.

Pulsations start beating heavier, bind
heaves together: a pack of wolves tear into
naked wonder. Bathed in moon’s milky brine,

the deer’s body soaks in the dusk’s decline.
The goddess gives the corpse a satisfied grin
in naked wonder as she bathes in moon’s milky brine.

testing
Ilana Kruger

days when you come back
from a visit to the emergency room
and no one knows what to do with you
so you crawl into bed
and sleep off the hospitaldrowse

and the next day you feel normal
drink the water, vitamins, painkillers
but ignore the background worries
rip off the gauze and Band-Aid
from yesterday's IV

and now it's time to take a test
not the kind where they stick needles in your skin
or snap radioactive pictures of your insides
I'm ready, you say
I can compartmentalize, you insist

even though you want to be anywhere else
maybe a river, away from the fluorescent world

Begin
Rachel Goldstein

On the last day of September
We scuffed our shoes up with mud
In the middle of the night
Listening to music we've never heard before
We were shiny and new
You told me you could see it in my eyes
Because it was the first time
We felt our age

Insomnia
Tova Gerber

Before the birds awake, but not that far away,
Sandwiched in the middle of everything – is Nothing.
It's beautiful,
its lonely powers keep me smiling to my dark reflection
in the empty pool so silent and sweet,
but no one knows what we lose with sleep.

If I could live in this in-between,
never face the dawn only stay in this dream,
in the silence of the night I can hear my thoughts
I can feel my living-beat and I feel alive.
I know my strength will wane,
but here my soul grows strong again…

Objects in Motion

Abbey Schultz

Dusk settled with purple-stained clouds over the highway, and Allie scanned the road for signs of the rest stop she knew was coming soon. Julia slept tipped back in the passenger's seat, her head lolling to one side, her legs stretched up onto the dashboard. The last rays of the sunset glowed through the window, and even the sweatshirts on the floor and the fast food wrappers littering the center console felt cozy, like a nest. Behind them, it was mostly Julia's boxes that crowded the backseat. Allie had shipped most of the contents of her dorm room home weeks ago, making room for Julia to fill in her empty spaces for another summer.

The neon signs of the rest stop reared up around the bend, and Allie guided her car onto the exit ramp. She loved the smooth, involuntary feeling of highway driving, the way she could just relax into the flow of traffic and breathe easily for hours. Once, she had read that highways were designed to trick the human mind, to lull it into complacency even as it traveled at superhuman speeds. Each segment of the white dotted lines could be up to twenty feet long, but at a mile a minute they were nothing more than blips. The lanes were wider, the signs were more massive--everything happened on a huge scale, and speed alone shrunk it down to a manageable size. Allie didn't mind being tricked. She liked that she could travel across the country, and still find a familiar world every time she got into her car.

Julia stirred as they slowed to a stop. She stretched out further, smudging the windshield with the rubber soles of her sneakers, and yawned. "Where are we?"

"About five hours from home, I think." Allie shut off the engine. "I just need the bathroom. Do you want anything from inside?"

"I'll go with you." It took her a moment to shake the softness of sleep from her limbs, to pull her sweatshirt over her bare arms, to inspect her face in the visor mirror. Julia wore a lot of eye makeup, strong black lines rimming her lashes, but she never worried about it once it was on--she let it smudge out around her eyelids, and by the end of the day she usually had dirty streaks reaching the edges of her temples. Her lipstick, though, she was always careful to reapply, and she would never go out in public without doing so.

Allie wore no makeup that day. Her face was soft and round, and ordinarily, she hated the way her features blended together and faded into the background. But with Julia, everything was sharp and exaggerated enough for the both of them.

Julia gave her a smile, and in the fading light, her eyes looked like the black sockets of a Halloween mask. "You ready?"

They walked inside together. Julia was a little shorter than Allie, but she threw an arm around her shoulders anyway. "I think that was the best sleep I've had in months. God, I'm so glad this semester is over."

"Me, too." Allie shrugged just slightly, shrinking herself to fit next to her best friend, and slipped her own arm around her waist. The air was cool in the absence of sun, and Julia radiated warmth. At the door, Allie almost pulled away, but Julia kept her grip steady as if the heavy metal frame would move aside for them on its own; and at the last second, a group of teenagers streamed through from the other side, and the two of them squeezed through without parting.

Julia's fingertips twitched on Allie's shoulder. "I think I need caffeine. Meet me in line in a few?"

Allie nodded, and Julia slid away. This time, Allie made an aborted move to pull her closer before she let her go. Her first step toward the bathroom was a stumble.

Breaking contact with Julia, even briefly, was like breaking a spell. Allie never knew how to touch her. She had trouble gauging how much affection was too much, or not enough--she could never predict when she would pull away. But on nights like these, when Julia was content to be smudged at the edges and blend herself into Allie's space, pulling away was even harder. Allie could feel the hard echo of emptiness in every corner of the crowded plaza.

In the bathroom, she didn't even bother to use the hand dryer.

When she rushed back to the coffee line, Julia was still a few spots away from the front. She gestured for Allie to step in front of her, but didn't move to touch her again. "You know what? Today's the day. I'm going to try an actual cup of coffee."

"What?" Allie pressed a hand to her chest in mock-horror. "No more six dollar cups of sugar? But how will Starbucks stay in business without you?"

Julia grinned and rocked back on her heels. "Oh, don't worry. I'm sure I can only choke down a few cups of hot dirt before I have to revert back to my old ways."

"The economy thanks you." Allie turned to give the barista her order (venti hot coffee, medium roast, room for milk but no sugar).

She was waiting for her change when she felt Julia behind her, moving forward and wrapping her arms around Allie's waist in a slow, deliberate slide. Her chin jutted up and rested on her shoulder. Allie could feel her settle into place, feel the width of her hips and the curve of her breasts against her back, and she swallowed against the shiver that raised every hair on her body. She wanted to move away, but she was pinned against the counter, and all she could do was accept her receipt and wait, frozen in place, while Julia replicated her coffee order for herself. The very edge of her breath scraped past the very edge of Allie's neck.

Julia settled into Allie's side when they went to wait for their coffees, and this felt more natural, but now there was a man watching them from a few yards away. He was young, only about their age, and he had a short beard that followed an imaginary line about an inch above his actual jaw. The range of motion in his eyebrows made him look cartoonish in his appraisal of them. Allie tensed, which pulled Julia even closer into her side involuntarily.

It was Julia who made it look deliberate. Her face drew close to Allie's neck again, and she pushed hard against the line of her torso--but it was solid now, a performance, not the comfortable blending from before. The embrace suffocated her, dry and consuming like a car heater left on high for too long. Out of the corner of her eye, Allie could see Julia's smirk, watching the man just as openly as he watched them. Her shoulder pushed too hard into Allie's ribcage as she stood on her toes, and when her lips met Allie's cheek, they left a heavy, sticky lipstick print.

Allie's skin was too tight. "I think I'm going to go wait in the car." She wrenched away from Julia's arms, fumbled with her purse, and ran, tripping on the scuffed tiles under her feet. Travel-ragged families dodged to let her pass.

The parking lot was mercifully cool, full of shadows between the harsh beams of headlights. Allie pressed a hand against her racing heart as she let momentum carry her the rest of the way to her car.

The backseat, full of Julia's things, now looked heavy and overstuffed. Allie cooled her palms on the window glass and imagined herself yanking open the door, letting everything spill in an avalanche of pillows and books and clothing, each box exploding on impact with the asphalt. She imagined the tracks her tires would leave through the

mess when she drove out alone, windows down to let the air scream through her new empty spaces. She would race home at a million miles an hour--or maybe she wouldn't go home at all. Maybe she would just keep barreling down the highway with nothing to drag her back, going and going and going until she hit the ocean. Maybe she wouldn't even stop then. Maybe, with nothing left to drag her down, she could learn how to float.

Allie let out a heavy stream of air, a dense cloud fogging on the window, then turned around. Julia emerged from the doors of the building with a coffee cup in each hand. She looked small under the street lamps--Allie's heart thudded again, just once, but the guy from inside didn't follow. Her eyes met Julia's across the lot, spanning the distance from door to door, and Allie forgot not to stare as Julia closed that distance with every careless, swaggering step.

"Got your coffee," Julia said when she got closer. "That guy was such a creep, good call bailing."

The I'm fine Allie had prepared didn't even have a chance to come out. "I...thanks."

Julia put the travel cup in her hand and side-stepped her to reach the door handle. "So. Let's get going."

"Okay." Allie walked around to the other side of the car before she realized that she hadn't unlocked the doors yet. "Oh."

"Are you still okay to drive?" Julia rose up on her toes to lean over the low roof of the car.

The plastic key in her hand felt solid between her fingers. This was still her car. "I'm fine." She pressed the unlock button once, twice, and they both slid inside.

~

Allie's tongue sat heavy in her mouth, numbed and bitter from drinking her coffee too quickly. The highway was a heavy press of darkness all around, and it was all Allie could do to keep driving forward into the little pool of light past the nose of her car. The caffeine had seeped into her veins, but uneasily, mixing with the adrenaline surge from earlier and leaving a tremor in her hands every time she loosened her grip on the steering wheel. This didn't keep exhaustion from pulling at her eyelids.

Julia hadn't spoken in nearly an hour, holding her coffee under her nose and wincing with every tiny sip. Allie wanted to tease her about it, but she couldn't stop thinking about the harshness in the kiss Julia had left on her cheek--she couldn't even remember if she had wiped the lipstick mark away, but she didn't want to check. If she relaxed for a moment, she knew her resolve would break down. She didn't want to forget about the ocean, about what it could feel like to let her empty spaces expand freely and hold her above the surface. She thumbed the radio volume up a tick, just this side of uncomfortably loud against the hum of the engine.

Four more hours, she told herself, just a few more state lines to cross, but every passing glare of headlights made it feel like an eternity. The idea formed in her mind, and the words formed in her throat, and she pressed that much harder on the gas pedal as she waited for the courage to speak.

It took a throbbing flash of high beams in her rearview mirror for her to break. "Fuck. I think I need to stop."

Julia rolled her shoulders back, sharp in her performance of relaxation. "You're tired? It's still early."

Allie pinched at the skin of her thigh through her jeans. "Yeah, I'm pretty sure I'm going to crash if we don't pull over soon."

Julia set her coffee down and stretched her legs up and back onto the dashboard. "Wouldn't that be exciting?"

It was two more exits before Allie recognized a sign for food, one that promised big strip malls and parking lots with plenty of lights. She had her teeth digging into her lower lip by the time she pulled off the highway, and didn't let up until she safely coasted into a spot under the glowing red sign of a Target.

"So you're going to sleep?" Julia said.

"Yep." Allie slumped against her seat and tilted it back as far as it could go, until the boxes stacked behind her refused to give. Her eyelids relented.

"Huh." Julia stayed still for all of two seconds before she grabbed at the door handle. "I'm going to poke around inside for a while."

"Fine." Allie opened her eyes just slightly, watching Julia sideways through the veil of her lashes, letting her blur through the window and fade out across the parking lot, before she pushed the lock button and let herself drift off.

~

Tap tap, tap tap and Allie's pulse raced, like the morning of a final exam, like the seventh time you hit the snooze button and you realize you're late, and the dizzyingly tall street lamps angled above blinded her when her eyes shot open, but then it was Julia's face moving in front of the glare and her fist rapping on the window, and Allie remembered how to breathe again. She rolled her stiff neck and unlocked the car doors.

"You have to see what I just got," Julia said, yanking open the driver's door and perching on the unused edge of the seat. She pulled out a CD jewel case and started scratching at the packaging. "You're going to love this."

Allie struggled to sit up. "You seriously just bought a physical CD? You realize we could download that in, like, two seconds, right?"

Julia fumbled with the plastic disc and reached across her to angle it at the CD drive. "This is the deluxe edition, Allison," she said, drawing out the three syllables of her name. "It's necessary."

The acrid taste of interrupted sleep clung to Allie's mouth, and her eyelids still felt like sandpaper, but Julia was warm and soft through the layer of her sweatshirt. "Oh, well, if it's necessary," she said, and let her head drop to Julia's shoulder.

The first notes floated from the stereo, synthetic and smooth, and Allie found that she did like it--it was a wall of sound, a bright voice like smudged eyeliner and perfect smirking pink lips. It sounded like the girl pressed up against her, with her feet hanging out of the car and her shoes tapping out a rhythm on the asphalt. It filled the car, but gently, like it was supposed to be there all along.

"I think I kind of like this," Allie said, her eyes drifting closed again.

"Of course you do." Julia rested her head on top of Allie's. "Are you still tired?"

"Mm."

"Okay." It didn't seem like Julia should be comfortable where she was. Allie's body settled at awkward angles, but she didn't want to move. "You should have seen the guy at the register, though. I wish it had been him back at the Starbucks."

Allie opened her eyes. "That still would have been...really creepy."

"Eh." Julia shrugged, jostling Allie's head and forcing her to sit up. "You wouldn't have bolted from this guy though, oh my god. His hair alone. We should go back in and find something else to buy."

Allie wrapped her arms around her middle. "I don't need anything."

"You're not going to get all weird again, are you?" Julia turned away and started ruffling through the CD's packaging.

"I--" Allie's head swam, too exhausted to think. "Julia, I didn't get weird, I just--"

"Hey, it's no big deal. I forgot how shy you get around guys."

"You're the one who dangled me in front of him!"

Julia's hands stilled.

Allie let out a slow breath. The contact between them felt strange again, and she wanted to grasp at Julia to keep her close, and she wanted to push her out onto the pavement. “I just,” she tried again, “I’m not comfortable with that kind of--he was so gross, Julia, I don’t get why you would even want him to look at you.”

“Lots of people look at me,” she said. She turned, backlit by the parking lot, her eyes shadowed into two black sockets. “You look at me.”

“That’s...different.” Every muscle in Allie’s body screamed at her to flee, but she sat frozen, one leg quietly falling asleep, a lock of hair threatening to fall in front of her eyes.

Julia leaned in hard and deliberate, her breath on Allie’s skin, one arm braced on the console to trap Allie where she sat. “Is it different? Really?” She ducked and let her lips brush against Allie’s neck. “Is this what you’ve been trying to tell me, Allison?” She ran a hand down Allie’s arm. “Is this what you want?”

Distantly, the song on the CD changed. Allie could feel Julia on every inch of her skin, and--she had imagined this happening, in this very seat even, but it had never felt so claustrophobic. She had imagined the contact between them turning sweet and slow, wondered what it would be like, tried every permutation in her mind of how they could fit together and how it might feel. For the first time, if Allie just kept doing nothing, she would have everything she had imagined.

“No,” she whispered, and she wrestled one arm free, and she pushed at Julia’s cage of arms and lips until she slipped off the edge of the seat.

Julia caught herself on the frame of the car. Her breath came in short bursts. She let the silence hang between them, and then--“I just remembered. I wanted to buy something else.”

The tremors returned to Allie’s hands, and she pressed them against her legs. “Okay.”

She couldn’t move until Julia was out of sight again, until the distance between them was big enough that she couldn’t hear the slap of her shoes on the ground. She slammed her door shut, and the music swelled, and she jabbed at the power knob to silence it.

Even with the darkness and the lights, even with the burning in her eyes, Allie had to move. She twisted the ignition and brought the car back to life, but she didn’t have a plan. Maybe she could take a lap around the parking lot, pick a different spot, sit in the dark and watch Julia emerge all small and lost under the glowing red lights. She wondered what Julia would do if she was just...gone.

Allie drove slowly, weaving through the aisles of cars, barely avoiding pedestrians, wondering what would happen if she didn’t stop moving again at all.

Fair Game

Clayre Benzadon

Left out is how I learned the practice of getting played:
through boys’ angelic charms, always speaking to me
with tongues wanting to lay some lip, they call me enticing.
With egos too big for their heads, their haloes fall down,
ask me to go down on them to repossess their glory.

Instead, I dissect their hearts, cut off their heartstrings
until they get stiff and have no way to tie themselves onto
me while chasing (my) tail.
I’m prudent, prude, tantalizing
and most definitely not a fucking free-for-all.

Laurel Moon Executive Board

Angela Acevedo - Editor-in-Chief (Treasurer)
Angela accomplishes a great deal of her goals fueled only by hatred for the white supremacist homophobic cis-sexist capitalist patriarchy. She loves every dog, herself, and wine. She is an organizational princess majoring in Neuroscience and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and minoring in English and Creative Writing. She is proud to say she has finally learned how much uncooked pasta makes one human-sized serving of cooked pasta.

Gregory Bonacci - Editor-in-Chief (Layout Editor)
Gregory is an astral projection of men, women, and children who have long since passed from this world. His corporeal form consists of a Chopped basket-like melange of bees, sound waves, iron (II) coordination complexes, and eggs. He has dreams, legs, and a head with which he attempts a double Biology and Chemistry major. He also probably has two arms and his life coach is Bowser from the Super Mario series.

Sam Yoo - Editor-in-Chief (Internal Affairs)
Sam is a human shaped piece of void that is triple majoring in English, Creative Writing, and Film. Their pronouns are they/their/them and their goal in life is to write and publish the queerest novels that have ever queered. They enjoy looking at the color blue and daydreaming about setting annoying people on fire. One day they will return home to the vacuum of space.

Laurel Moon Editorial Staff

Anne Kat Alexander
Anne Kat is a first year from Austin, Texas. Nine feet of snow later, winter continues to terrify her. She's majoring in English and Classical Studies with a smattering of accidental minors.

Tatianna Banci
Tatianna is a sophomore destined for Japan next Spring. Her love of sleep trumps other desires, but do dare underestimate her.

Clayre Benzadon
Indie/alternative feminist nerd studying Psychology, English and Creative Writing and Psychology. Loves skiing, drinking coffee and writing poems that point out the oppression of cultural/ethnic/gender minorities that still take place in modern society.

Linda Maleh
Linda Maleh loves Laurel Moon and everyone in it. This is her third semester with them. She is an English and history major. She loves TV more than life and asks that you not judge her for it. She hates all her friends who went abroad and thinks they should come back right now. She wishes she never had to graduate from Brandeis.

Monique J Menezes
With coffee running strong through her veins, Monique tackles everything with strength not even rivaled by Superman. Sleep she needs not, for the power of caffeine fuels her lab work and boxing prowess. Fret not though, she only uses her mighty powers for the good…or does she?

Sarah Rush
With each step she takes, lightening caresses the earth. Firebender and aspiring Vampire Queen, Rush is a creature of the night who crawls out of the coffin only to enchant her next victim. Or to play Nintendo 64. You can find her in the darkest corner of every room scribbling down poetry into a blood-stained notebook. And watching you.

Laurel Moon has two yearly awards for undergraduate writers, both awarded at the end of the spring semester.

The Grossbardt Memorial Poetry Prize is awarded annually to one poem published in Laurel Moon over the course of the school year. Andrew Grossbardt was a poet who passed in the fall of 1979. He studied at Brandeis University and received his Ph.D. posthumously from the University of Utah. His poetry has been published in the New Yorker and in a chapbook entitled The Travellers.

In 2014-2015, Rachel Dillon's "Two Postcards in a Shoebox, Brooklyn, NY" was chosen; her work can be read in this issue of Laurel Moon.
Two runners-up for this award were chosen. You can read Emily Scharf's "A Murder of" and Zuri Gordon's "Ms. Lopez and the Chocolate Shakes" in the Fall 2014 edition of Laurel Moon.

The Dafna Zamarripa-Gesundheit Fiction Prize is awarded to a work of fiction published in Laurel Moon over the course of the academic year. Dafna Zamarripa-Gesundheit was a student at Brandeis University, a past editor of Laurel Moon and a member of the Creative Writing track who died prematurely at the end of her junior year. The prize honors her spirit and memory, and is awarded to a piece of extraordinary fiction published in Laurel Moon.

In 2014-2015, Sam Yoo's "Dandelion Chains" was chosen; their work can be read in this issue of Laurel Moon.
One runner-up for this award was chosen. You can read Abbey Schultz's "Lipstick" in the Fall 2014 edition of Laurel Moon.

The front cover photo for this edition of Laurel Moon was taken by Amelie de Cirfontaine.

The back cover photo for this edition of Laurel Moon was taken by Angela Acevedo.

