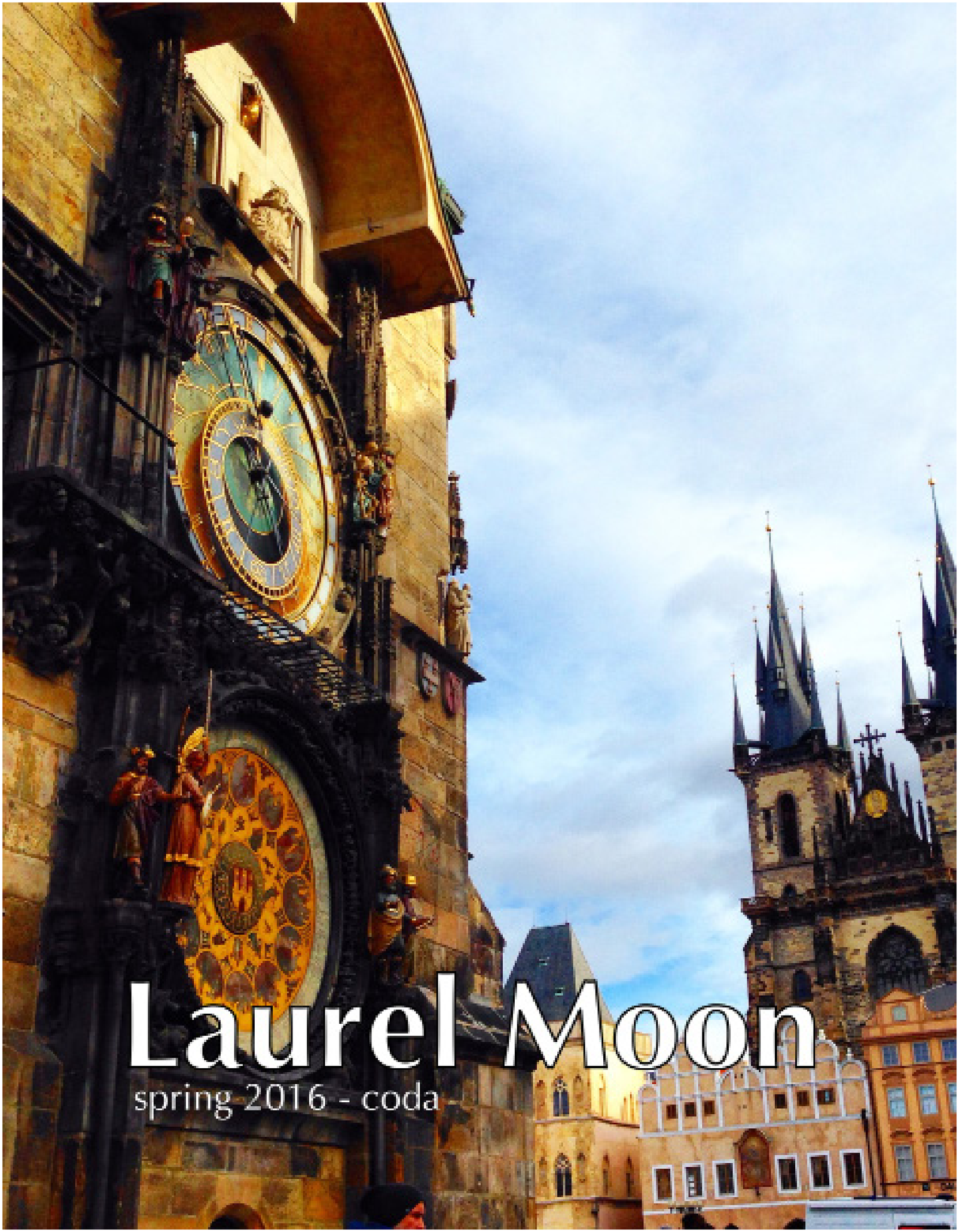


Laurel Moon

spring 2016 - coda

Laurel Moon
-coda-

Spring 2016

Dear you,

Thank you for picking up the Spring 2016 edition of Laurel Moon. *This issue of the magazine is of particular sentimental value to us, as the three of us are graduating this semester. When the previous* Laurel Moon *staff let the club go dormant, it was the three of us who came up with a system to run a club and make a publication. We (and our series of tireless editorial staff cohorts) made this magazine thrive, growing in submission numbers every semester we ran it.*

Every semester when we hold the printed version of the magazine, we feel proud of this little thing we've created together. It has been such a pleasure to feature the best, most moving creative writing that Brandeis has to offer.

So thank you again, for picking up this issue of Laurel Moon. *We are so glad you're joining us for this ride as the sun sets on our time here, and that you'll stick around to see when it rises with next year's new executive board and editor-in-chief. We are excited to pass on this torch we've lit. Thanks for a wonderful 3 years, all.*

~ Sam + Angela + Greg, the 2016 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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-coda-

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Bloodletting

Clayre Benzadon

It's in my blood:
to be twenty
  and still bleed
through my jeans;
pomegranate amaretto
leaking between my legs.

Today I'm clay
  re(d), molded into
a period, bloodline,
bloodletting Barbara Jane
Reyes' words, a galleon prayer
not strong enough to flow out
of the sea, out of my mouth,
out of the synapses of my brain,

escalators that awaken
 my consciousness—
heavy metal reverberating
under cords transporting me

to the second floor of tension,
the compact confines
of claustrophobia closing
in on me as I count down
     the seconds
    before I start
    suffocating—
At other altitudes she
*remembers to breath*e.

An inhale. I am grounded
again, as *a monument scraping*
cloud with the plasmatic-tinted
dirt, an earthdiver, a symbolic
virgin of mineral depletion,

a virgin of scars blossomed
from open veins of fire,
streaming through the ineffable
ocean in my stomach, my lips,
through the burn of regeneration.

confessional 1

Anne Kat Alexander

once I wrote about a friend in a nice place, cold
(it was November)
(but there were also too many thoughts in this place)
but warm at the same time;
she'd been admitted
following a suicide attempt
and writing I realised
the etymology—ad+mittere,
sent to
(attempt—ad+temptare,
try to, touch to)

Virgil calls the dead missa,
the sent ones
(id est,
with elisions like a poet,
illa sub umbra missast,
that one was sent under the shadow,
as in context of,
Dido sobs into a tear-stained couch
I will die let me die this this will help me ire sub umbra)
but you can be sent
other places than sub umbra
you can send yourself elsewhere, better wheres

look at all these lonely solid people

don't you have somewhere to be, though

Jay is throwing a party but you too
you too could make our own little party
with pretty green lights
and even trapped on a little hamster wheel,
if Sisyphus must be happy well goddammit
so could you.

Roots

Lauren Puglisi

You denied your roots,
but clogged arteries,
heavy hearts,
strife,
and spite,
they all run deep.

I was bombarded
by wires
and white uniforms
under fluorescent lights
when I visited,
like when you visited
your father
a decade before.

I wonder if he too
watched reality shows
on the small TV
across from his bed,
using other people's problems
to distract him
from his own.

I wonder if he too
used anything
to forget everything,
tried to deny his roots.

Sting

Anonymous

The scorpion grows so mad
from the liquor licking at its tail
it has no choice
but to sting itself to death,
a sick ecstasy of venom
penetrating its chitin armor

So, when my father is told of his cancer,
his only escape
is a sweet heroin suicide

Alphabet Adventures

Raphael Stigliano

Everything happens for a reason in that the only reason anything happens is that something caused it to happen. Obviously. A pencil falls off of a table because the table is slanted or because it was pushed, or really basically above all else because of gravity. Which is to say that the way things have gone is the only way they could have gone; the people around a table who decided to drop the bomb on Japan wouldn't have if two hundred years before a different group of people around a table had not decided to say *fuck you* to one of the strongest forces in the world, and become their own country. Trace it all the way back to the first living cell, trace that all the way back to the first particle of matter that ever existed, and then trace it all the way forward to the present and you'll see that everything in history is the mandatory necessary series of events to lead up to Kate giving me a blowjob in Sweetface's dressing room.

Why Sweetface's dressing room? Because his is biggest and honestly it's the only one that can fit two people. Suddenly above us there's a crashing sound and a roar of laughter through the intercom and we hear Bridget saying, "*O*, no! Now we'll have to rebuild the stage *again*!" Dejected music plays.

Kate pushes me away. "That's the cue," she gasps. "Come on, that's it! Get your fucking costume on!"

I'm swearing under my breath as I scramble back, pulling up my pants. On the intercom, Sweetface's voice. "I'm sorry! We'll never learn how to spell *stage* now…"

Bridget's voice again: "We can, but we'll need the others! Go get them while I fix your mess!"

The *E* costume is leaning against the mirror and I sling it up over my shoulders, shove my face through the little window. Kate never took off her costume because the legs of the *A* make good kneepads, but she glances in the mirror at her makeup. "You're fine," I say and tug her away, even though I know her yellow lipstick is smudged in a streak across her jaw. I'm still forcing my right arm through the hole over the *E* costume's crossbar as we're leaving the dressing room and suddenly I'm nose to nose with Sweetface.

His skin is sweaty from the lights on set, giving his double chin a pale shine. "What are you doing in my dressing room?" he asks, deadly serious, spit flying at me. He has his *O* costume partially unbuttoned around his stomach, and I can see the triangle of sweat down his shirt.

"Decorating," I say, pushing past him and dragging Kate with me.

On the stairs she yanks her hand out of mine. "Manse," she hisses. "If he tells Jeff again…" We reach the top of the stairs. Up ahead a few of the extras, an *S*, *T* and a *G*, are waiting for us to go on.

"So what if he does? Is he gonna kick us off the show? He's already one vowel short. He needs us." Ahead, I can see Bridget on stage in front of a silent studio audience, reassembling exaggeratedly heavy pieces of a cardboard stage.

The extra in the *G* leans over to me, "You're cutting it close, don't you think?" he whispers.

"Fuck off," I elbow him out of the way, and follow Kate onto the stage.

After the show, I'm barely off the set when Jeff's muttering in my ear that he wants me to meet someone. There are always mothers sitting around after the show with their ugly little toddlers, waiting to catch a glimpse or a word with the stars and tell them what a hero you are to their kid. I've stopped going out after shows. I used to do it, back in the early days of the show, but six months in

it stopped seeming worth it. The others still do it, especially Kate, because that's all part of the image. You smile, you wave, you see your fans, and everyone remembers you so maybe that helps you get famous when you finally make it to Hollywood. As if she, or anyone else in this shithole, is ever going to make it anywhere.

Me, I'd be happy just to leave for the day. A bunch of wasps have decided to live in the bricks next to my front door and, believe it or not, I'd rather be dealing with a bunch of fucking wasps than seeing a few babies and whoever Jeff wants to introduce me to.

I find him in the green room next to the vending machines. He's standing there with Bridget, still in her *I* costume, next to this fucker in an ugly orange suit. Jeff motions me over. "This is Tyler Louis," he says.

"Such an honor," says the fucker, offering his hand, "such an honor. You're one of the originals, right? You and Ms. Monroe."

I already hate him. It's the way he says *Ms. Monroe*, like Kate's some kind of a class act. But I ignore it. "Yeah," I say, and take his hand. "I've been stuck here for two years now." It's a joke that hits a little too close to home and I wonder if the new fucker can hear it in my voice. I glance at the other two. Jeff gives me this expectant look. Bridget's holding her puffy blue wig in a tight fist and looking bored about the whole deal.

"Tyler's going to be replacing Shelby," Jeff says. "He's our new *U*."

Right. Shelby walked off two weeks ago so we haven't been able to spell any *U* words for the last couple of episodes. It's no surprise that they brought in a new guy, I was just hoping he wouldn't be an enormous prick. Anyway now the suit makes sense. The *U* costume is orange, this hideous burnt carrot kind of color, and I guess the fucker is trying to get into character or ingratiate himself into the show. "Did he…audition, or something?"

Bridget rolls her eyes. "I read with him. He was fine. He's playing a vowel. What are you hoping for, Olivier?"

Before I can reply, Tyler laughs. "I'm just excited to be here. Believe it or not, I'm a big fan of the show."

Whatever that means. "Welcome to *Alphabet Adventures*, Tyler," I say, and slap him on the back. I'm hoping to make him stumble, uncomfortable, but he just keeps smiling.

"Thanks," he says. "I think we're going to have a lot of fun."

On my way out the door, Jeff calls after me. "Hey Mansel," he says. "Roland told me something a little disturbing earlier. Why don't you find Kate and come into my office for a little talk about private space, all right?"

Fucking Sweetface.

* * *

It's got to be jarring, right? When one day you tune in and your favorite character acts the same, wears the same big ugly orange costume, does the same things, but he has a different face and a different voice? It's not like the kids can tell it's a new actor. They probably won't even recognize that a change has taken place, but somehow they experience this subconscious crisis of identity. They feel betrayed that a face can change, so they start to fear that theirs will too. Then someday when they go out and shoot up a drug store or something they have the *Alphabet Adventures* theme song stuck in their head and they'll never realize why.

I'm happy to count myself one of the few people in world who still give a shit about loyalty. This is what I'm thinking when I'm sitting in the greenroom with Kate, and I see Sweetface and Bridget go into his dressing room and shut the door. "How long has that been going on?" I ask.

She shrugs and doesn't answer. She's the only one of us in costume already, sitting on the couch and flipping absentminded-

ly through a magazine. Her skinny legs are sticking out of the *A* and I notice that they're shaved.

"What do you think of Tyler?" I ask.

She shrugs again, flips another page.

"He's good," I admit. "His first show might have been the first time I've seen an audience actually laugh in ages." It's true. *U* is usually everyone's favorite character. He's the wild card, the funny one, and Tyler is perfect for the part. If I cared more, I would be jealous. Fortunately I don't give a shit.

It's pretty clear Kate isn't in the mood to talk, so I just sit back on the couch and study her. She can't sit comfortably in costume, and I'm wondering why she put it on so early. Whoever designed the costumes was a sadist. I can barely move my arms in mine, and the *O* just makes Sweetface look more obese than he already is.

So obviously it's not Kate's costume that's inherently sexy. Because what's sexy about the letter *A*? For me it's all about the moment of emerging, finding her body within and beneath the thick block shapes. Discovering there's tender, soft, human contours underneath a hard exterior. There's something about that, even if it's just sex.

"You want to go over to the props closet?" I ask suddenly.

She doesn't even look up from the magazine. "Suck your own dick, Mansel."

It surprises me, so I don't answer at first. I start to say *If I could I wouldn't need you* but then I realize it's probably rude, so I just shut up and sink further into the couch. The schedule for the day is stapled to the wall behind her, and I'm hoping to lighten the mood, get her to talk to me right now about anything, so finally I say, "You shaved your legs."

It's supposed to sound like a conversation starter but it comes out as an accusation. Which is probably how I meant it. She's about to answer when Tyler comes in, already in his big ugly orange *U*, and she looks up at him and smiles.

"Hey," she says. "You all ready?"

He nods, grins. Looks at me. "Hey, Mansel."

Kate tosses the magazine aside and stands up, and for an awful moment I think he's going to offer her his arm or something. Act all chivalrous and gentlemanly in his clunky cardboard costume. Like he's not about to take her into the props closet and drop his pants.

I stare at her, challenging, but she doesn't meet my eyes. "Where are you guys going?"

"Tyler's introducing me to someone," Kate says. She still won't look at me.

"A friend of mine is coming to the show today," Tyler says. "A casting director at KCAL. I promised Kate she could meet her before we started."

"A casting director," I repeat, thinking *why are you working on this shit-show if you have connections at a half-decent studio?* I nod, unblinking, then force a laugh. "Only on our show two weeks and you're already looking for a new gig?"

Tyler chuckles. "I'm not looking for anything. But she's got something Kate might be perfect for."

I realize my hands are in fists. "Good for you," I say to Kate, then turn back to Tyler. "So tell me. You've got this friend of yours. Why aren't you working at KCAL?"

On their way out of the room, he answers, "I like it here!"

I hear them laughing and talking all the way up the stairs.

* * *

We're almost done filming after a day with a really rough audience, the kind that doesn't want to laugh at the dumb kid jokes and has more than the usual number of crying babies. But all the seats are filled for what's got to be the first time in years. It's Tyler, and we all know it. I tell myself that

it's because of his handsome goddamn face, that the lonely housewives and mothers are flocking out to fantasize over him while their kids drool at his antics, but I know that it's more than that. He's talented. Tyler's the best thing to happen to this show in ages.

Like I said, if I cared, I'd be jealous.

Earlier today he went around having everyone sign the card he got for Kate, congratulating her on the new job. She got the call from KCAL last week. I didn't know what to write when Tyler handed the card to me. I almost wrote something about how hard it will be to replace her, but that was a lie. So I just signed my name.

It's me and Bridget on stage tonight, doing what's got to be the thirtieth take of spelling *FIRE* with two dumb extras who probably couldn't spell it themselves.

And then it comes: yelling like the building's going to explode. I can't make out the words, but apparently Jeff can because he gets up and screams, "Cut! Cut cut *cut!!* Who the *fuck* is swearing on my set?"

That sure wakes the audience up. Instantly, dozens of mothers' hands over their kids ears, even though it's too late. But whoever is swearing is clearly unconcerned with Jeff's set. The yelling's coming from the dressing rooms downstairs and for a moment everyone just stands around staring at each other in silence. I'm trying not to meet Bridget's eyes, glancing past her, over her shoulder, into the audience, anything.

"That's Sweetface," she says, and I think, *fuck*.

She takes off running like I've never seen her run, and I follow her because it seems like it's what I'm supposed to do. That's enough to break the moment, and now Jeff is up and pushing his way past the cameramen and following us.

Just as we round the corner at the bottom of the stairs, Sweetface bursts out of Tyler's dressing room. He's swatting at himself, flailing and swinging his arms against his body and clearly this is as fast as he runs. At first you can't tell why he's running because you can't hear the buzz under his yells, but then it's like all at once we see them, all around him. Wasps, trailing him in a mad swarm from Tyler's dressing room. He gets to the doorway of the green room and collapses onto the floor, rolling and screaming.

Bridget rushes to him, swatting at the swarm around him. The rest of us just stand back as far as we can, watch, try to decide whether we're supposed to help or maybe just get the hell out ourselves.

It's total pandemonium.

And what it all leads to is Kate standing next to this fucker Tyler Louis on the other side of the hospital bed, in which is the mountain of flesh that is Sweetface, with his sweet fat face puckered and red-spotted and swollen with stings. Bridget's sitting next to him, holding his hand, murmuring in his ear, all the while as Jeff describes to us all what they found in Tyler's dressing room: a plastic bag, looking like it must have been stapled shut at one point, with the remnants of a wasp hive inside and a few of the angry things still buzzing around the room. Someone must have left it there. Sweetface went in to sign Kate's card, apparently. Otherwise, it would have been Tyler running out of the room screaming.

Across the room, I can see the card in Kate's hand. *Congratulations*, it says, and *we'll miss you*, in big block letters, because who among us hasn't had enough of those. She's standing there with it, knowing that she's on to better things and soon she'll be leaving all this shit behind. The crying children, the yellow lipstick, the props closet.

So now I'm the only one of the original cast left. Kate got her chance, just like the rest, and is getting the hell out of here. And watching from just inside the doorway all I'm thinking is I've been fucked over from the start.

The City Needs Her Space

Lauren Puglisi

One night
I saw the city
trying to breathe.
She bears a burden heavier than Atlas'
and feels a traffic jam of thoughts.

In a polite way she asked me
if I could please keep my distance.
For she cannot handle the clashing chatter
and she feels the strain of suffocating syncopation.
The subway system she's carved into herself
leaves scars which she can't seam to heal.

She stopped sleeping
and she's starting to break.
Cracking concrete
and peeling paint.

Lacunae in Miami Duende

Clayre Benzadon

Beach skylight traffic shadows orange-
blossomed mango sunrise under your face
near the Deering Bay No Parking dock sign
and you're taking off my pants—

I miss pain, I whisper in hiccup-split sniffles
and you misunderstand me: *you want me to*
hurt you? Miami gringo. *No, yo no extraño*
el dolor. Extraño can also mean strange,
a foreignness embedded in a Cuban
moonstone-divided language.

Miss Spain, I accent the pause this time.
Un dolor extraño. A strange pain. The loss
of a culture of lisping castellano broken in
Spanglish dialetic of Calle Ocho's tensén

stores, places where creamy guava-filled
pastelito dialect used to make sense,
where I used to dig up sand with pails
of Café Bustelo until the wide cans filled
with comforting boosts hints of a strong-
toned copper lexicon.

Under the lamplight of your Homestead
apartment, drowning below the *resol* of
Matheson Hammock's sunset, your face
hollows out into an untranslatable coastline.

Sad Side Clowns

Noah Harper

Birthdays were always a sad affair for Edie. As she neared middle-age, they'd ceased being times of celebration and were instead grotesque annual reminders of her own mortality.

Usually, she'd spend her birthday prostrate on the couch, breathing shallowly into one of the cushions. It was slow and laborious, a fitting way to commemorate the passage of time and the incrementally-approaching proximity of her own demise. Then she'd make margaritas and pass out.

But this year it was going to be different. As she told her therapist, "I'm gonna turn it all around. This year there's going to be a magic show, and I'm inviting clowns."

But the clowns wouldn't be there for entertainment. No, their purpose would be to watch the proceedings and look despondent for Edie, so she didn't have to. In that way, they'd be the physical embodiments of her pain. Not disregarded, not hidden from plain sight, they would be visible, acknowledged reminders of how she felt. Guests, too, would be encouraged to project their negative emotions at the clowns. They would be receptacles for everyone's sadness.

"Everyone look," She planned on saying, "Focus your negative energy towards the clowns. I want you to put your sadness inside them. That's what they're here for."

Instead of confronting the pain, or forgetting it, she would let it be. The sadness would be present, in a very real way, but this time she wouldn't let it ruin her birthday.

Friends were invited, but children were discouraged. Childless herself, Edie wouldn't let Armin and Susan's five-year-old Stephen ruin her party by bothering the clowns and the magician with pesky questions. It was, after all, her birthday.

The party was scheduled to begin that evening at 6:30. The two clowns (solicited from Craigslist) appeared half an hour early. Edie told them to stand in the corner, and directed her birthday sadness at them. Then she reiterated that they were not to say a word. Both clowns appeared committed to their role.

Armin and Susan arrived fashionably late, without little Stephen. Small talk ensued, and they too, at Edie's suggestion, focused their sadness on the two silent clowns in the corner.

A few other guests trickled in at a quarter to seven. Some of Edie's coworkers and acquaintances, her friend Nikki, her partner Clarisse, and then, of course, Linguini the Magician.

At first Linguini seemed a little bewildered by the lack of children in the room, and, possibly, the two dour, expressionless clowns standing in the back. Edie had forgotten to inform him that he'd be performing for adults, and so it took a little coaxing before he began to do the same act she'd seen him perform at little Stephen's fourth birthday.

Linguini's performed enthusiastically. While some of the jokes and tricks didn't land as well as others, the crowd was clearly enjoying the show. At the very front of the room, just behind the old piece of rope Linguini used to keep the preschoolers away from his props, sat an exuberant Edie, flanked on either side by a clown. They were her sad side clowns, silent and unresponsive to the very entertaining magic show.

Halfway through the performance, Edie's right clown stood up. "Look lady, this is too fuckin' weird for me. I don't care about getting the money, I just gotta get out of here." He quickly walked out of the living room and ran out of the house, leaving the front door ajar behind him.

Edie turned to the the remaining clown, a bloated woman in her early sixties. The clown remained catatonic. Edie took this as an indication that she would stay, and turned her attention back to the magic show. A few seconds later, Linguini resumed his act.

The magic show finished, and it was time for cake, but, one by one, the party guests began to excuse themselves.

"I've got to get up at 4 tomorrow." Said Edie's podiatrist.

"My hypoglycemic cat's due for his injection." Said her dog walker.

"I don't really like to be up this late." Nikki told Edie.

Linguini, too, (after getting paid) quickly left, and Edie was left alone, save for the remaining clown.

She decided to make margaritas for the two of them. Then they sat there, on the carpet, sipping their drinks.

After about fifteen minutes of an oddly-comforting mutual silence, Edie got out her wallet and gave the clown the $200, and then walked her to the door.

Just before leaving, the clown, after lighting a cigarette and slowly taking a drag from it, turned back and asked in a hoarse voice, "Next year?"

Edie nodded. The clown would be back next year.

Nature Song

Ayelet Schrek

A world is born from a womb
Trees erupting through earthen pores
Grant shade to my swollen stomach
Water collects in my eye sockets
Tributaries to an absent ocean stream past the hills of my cheeks

I nourish myself only to nurture you
Nature takes its course
An ancient path from septum to naval
Red clay and orange dust coat our bodies
As we relinquish ourselves to the ocean foam
That coated our lips when we breathed in galaxies
And breathed out again

Tender spring buds trail from my nipples
Their existence a request
Rivulets of flesh are not enough to live on
But wriggling fingers pry moisture from my folds
I say enough, the ground
The ground is bare

There is a sweetness to the rock beneath my skin
And a hardness to the forming at my core

makes my tongue unnecessary

Blessed

Linda Maleh

Her breath steamed white before her. She clutched the warm bundle closer to her chest. Through her frozen eyelashes she could discern the lights of a town in the distance. She could no longer feel her feet, but they continued to carry her forward, shuffling on mile after mile, hour after hour. The wind whipped the snow sideways, making walls of white. Sarah squinted to keep the flakes out of her eyes, and peering upwards, could now vaguely see a church spire rising against the sky. Sounds of whimpering drifted up from her chest.

"Shh, shh, shh," Sarah whispered. "We're almost there."

A couple of hours later they had finally arrived at the town. Sarah stumbled up the icy church steps and banged frantically on the wooden doors. She knocked until her knuckles bled, but there was no answer. She tugged at the handle to see if by some miracle, the doors had been left unlocked. They hadn't. Too tired to cry or scream, Sarah sank down onto the church steps. Something inside her told her to get up and keep moving, but her body would not respond. Still clutching the bundle in her arms, she leaned back against the doors and no longer tried to stop her eyes from closing.

* * *

Sarah could hear voices, muffled at first, but then clear.

"…found her on the steps covered in snow," a woman's voice was saying. "And look, she was carrying this."

Opening her eyes, Sarah could see a group of people bending over something. There were what looked like two nuns and a priest. Sarah got up from the chair someone must have put her in, and walked closer to see what they were all staring at. There was a figure in a bed. No one looked up as she came to stand beside them. The figure was a women, but with blue lips and purple eyelids. Her lips were cracked and bleeding and her skin lacked all color, as did her hair, which was brittle and still half frozen. She looked familiar, but Sarah couldn't place why. Looking up, Sarah noticed that one of the nuns was cradling a baby.

"Rachel," Sarah breathed, but no one seemed to hear her. "Give her to me," Sarah told the nun, but the nun made no move in response. No one did, actually.

"Poor thing never had a chance," the nun said. "She was no longer breathing by the time we found her. The child is still alive though."

"But where did she come from?" asked the priest.

"I found this hidden in the lining of her coat," the nun not holding Rachel said, and produced a gold necklace with a Jewish star pendant. "She must've been running from the Nazis." At that, everyone was silent. Sarah wished she could take Rachel in her arms and run. Instead she closed her eyes and prayed to G-d, though she was no longer sure that He could hear her. Rachel's cries broke the silence. Sarah opened her eyes. For a moment nobody moved, but then the priest came forward, and took Rachel in his arms.

"We will raise this baby as a daughter of the church," he said. "Her name will be Mary, and we will never talk about her being Jewish ever again. At least, not while Nazis still occupy France."

"Should I destroy the necklace?" said the nun holding it.

"No," answered the priest. "We will hide it. She may want something of her mother's one day. Here, take Mary while I go get the undertaker so we can bury the body." He handed her off to one of the nuns and left the room. Sarah felt tears of joy and relief slide down her cheeks. The edges of her vision started to blur, and she could feel herself start to fade away. She walked over to where Rachel rested in the nun's arms. Rachel smiled as if she could see her mother approach. Sarah bent over and kissed Rachel gently on the forehead, her last goodbye.

Between the Tower and the Capitol

Anne Kat Alexander

The grass is so comfortable.
The bell tower rings the quarter;
there's time yet. Beside me
up the hill a student lies with his
eyes closed, his head
sideways on a calculus book.
I stretch my fingers into the tightly
packed dirt and breathe in this morning's
drizzling rain. The tower sings the half
and here is someplace I could rest
without worry of waking, few birds
still up and singing this evening, the grass
so comfortable, and I am so tired.
I dream simple derivatives,
rules unbroken in physics, stars
not fixed but slowly, slowly retreating.
Gradually they slide away.
Time moves more slowly at higher
altitudes, or more aptly,
further from bindingly massive bodies—
if I could just untie the
fine threads fixing me down, peel
off the Earth's gravitational fingers,
I could float away to somewhere
time has abandoned, where ringing
clock towers cannot sing past the first note,
silenced as that note rings eternal,
suspended as ages pass here.
Or instead I could sleep here,
keep falling closer and closer to the
ticking center, and melt into the core,
live years like seconds spinning
all the way to the end of the road.
Bells at the hour—the calculus student has left
and I catch the last bus of the night home,
and watch the seconds tick into minutes
with the ringing bell still sounding in memory,
and the spinning of the Earth nearly palpable,
all too fast and all too slow
to stay and watch the sunrise,
and be awakened by the sound of bells.

loves his bath

Rachel Dillon

In *May '59*, the baby stares out
from the black-white depths
of a perfect square framed by rippled edges
in a Williamsburg junk store.

The photo is more grey and white,
no black shadows, like the charcoal sketches
I drew with my mother—she would say
I wasn't using enough value,

"you need the dark darks
and the light lights,
don't be afraid of the darkest dark."

The baby is calm in 1959 with his papered stare.
Behind him, blue ink tells me *JMG—loves his bath*.
I hold little JMG in my palms

and smooth his wrinkled edges,
ask him what he grew up to be
and what he wanted to be
and if he had ever been afraid of the dark.

(3)

Taylor Mckinnon

I am afraid that I am lost.
Maybe in rolls
of obligations
and opportunities
of my expanding midsection.
maybe in my head.

I remember when I awoke to
a dream of a teetering reality
to hope
or faith?
I recall sunlight.
Today, I spotted a dim horizon
in a recollection of blue eyes

I recognized myself
in a pair of ripped jeans
and cold coffee.

Though I sought myself at length,
I realized I was lost in depth
and I fear,
after this,
that I wanted love,
or truth,
or purpose

But I was left with solid emotion and a
rescinding, tired fire,
a flicker,
a spark,

a warm piece of coal.

I was left with myself

My, it's cold.

Thoughts & Contemplations

Ashley Simmons

Vine aquí por mi arte y vine aquí para mi.

Pero, in the process I stumble,
feet cut on
sharp seashells of the shore,
Corazón recently swollen,
upon a mind much like my own.

It speaks in soft whispers.

In touches,
gazes,
sighs.

Have you ever thought about this thing?
This idea: Can you
get high off of
someone's mind?

I'm contemplating with
piano playing hands
shoved deep inside of warm
sweatpant pockets
something about the ocean.

I look over and you are there, wondering the same thing.
Beer kisses your lips;
your eyes frown at the taste.
I offer a different flavor:

I can't believe we're here. I can't believe we're seeing this.

you're closer now. warmer.
salty air licks my cheeks
dances in the cool wind

you respond, staring off into the infinite horizon,
painted so often *beautiful*.

Do you know the first time I saw the ocean?

No. Tell me about it.

Did I ever tell you

Nate Shaffer

'…that I am a member
of the National Button Society?

I just received a distressed email.

Apparently someone stole a ton
of buttons and is selling them
on ebay

This is a serious button problem'

arts & crafts

Sam Daniels

I am a paper doll, perforated around the edges.

It is so easy for him to cut me out of his life, he doesn't even need scissors.

I am a watercolor heart,
[bright broad strokes,
blending bleeding hues,
yellows and blues,
warping the paper.]

He said we can't keep doing this, because we are not a good match.

He said you saturated me.

Watercolors are washable.

It is so easy for him to cleanse his color-stained hands.

He is not sorry for leaving before the paper dried.

I am not sorry for thinking we could paint a sunrise over darkness.

crater

Charlotte Lang

once, i stepped onto the moon
but i fell into a crater
and it held me down
until my breath was no longer my own

i looked up from where i lay
and the stars were like the glitter
of pixies and fairies and fantasy

and here i was in space
where i thought i wanted to be
not stuck in fiction
but in physics

he was just as textured complex
as the stories i have always loved
his feelings for me made me float
into outer space

but this atmosphere was not
meant for me

i belong with sparkle with peter pan with youth
not cold
vulnerable
not with more dark than light

Untitled

Nate Shaffer

I am glad to have noticed
That deep sound—sort of
like a hormonal adult male
grouse beating its wings against its chest.
Something I feel or hear when you say
H, but after the breath of it,
as the vowel begins on the bottom
tip of your throat

Its very unexpected from such a gentle
and intentional, soft voice. Not delicate. Doesn't fit in you as neatly as your chin or nose do on your face, almost the color of that one crayon that matched my body color

You deeply wanted me
to hear the sound and tell you when
you're making it, but after you were aware
of it, you stopped making the sound you must have made
by accident.

You deeply wanted it
to happen. But it didn't and I left
the room with you (the space)
as you went to brush your teeth.

The dress you wore swirled around your
left shoulder, and revealed so much
about how you wanted
to see yourself

I heard that too

Salty

Jason Lipow

Every summer we stayed with Aunt Laura and Uncle John and Lily, who was my age, in a house we rented down the shore for a week in July.

Aunt Laura wasn't really my aunt, but my mom made me call her that and write it on the thank you cards for her birthday presents, because she said that is what you did for people you were close with like family.

Uncle John wasn't with Aunt Laura this year, and I heard my mom whisper his name to Laura when they spoke in low voices by the door, and then Aunt Laura looked all shut up and turned to stare at her feet, and my mom didn't say much else more to her.

Lily looked different, and I thought at first it was because I hadn't seen her for a year, and people always look a little bit different after a year – they get tanner or skinnier or get the color of their hair dye slightly off. But then I saw her earlobe was swollen, and I asked her if she'd gotten another piercing. She nodded.

"But didn't it hurt?" I asked.

Her mouth curved into a smirk, "*No*." She paused, I guess to gauge my reaction. "I heated the needle up so it just burned right through." She rolled her tongue around under the lips of her open mouth and watched my face. "It actually felt *good*," she added.

I glanced to Aunt Laura, who'd walked to the kitchen. "But what did your mom say?" I whispered.

Lily laughed, "What you think she'd care?"

"Well…didn't she see them?"

"She doesn't care about this sort of thing," she said, and shrugged her shoulders like that was the end of it.

We went to the beach together the next day, and my mom and Aunt Laura spread a blanket out on the sand and put up an umbrella and made Lily and I put sunscreen on each other's backs before we could leave them.

We walked down to the area between the lifeguard stands where there were less people, and sat on the sand to watch the big herring gulls pecking around the sand. Lily kept on watching me, whenever I'd look at a guy walking past us. And she'd sort of smirk, like she knew something that I didn't. When she kept on doing it I turned to her and asked her what her problem was and she said nothing and smiled even more like I'd confirmed something for her.

One of the lifeguards came by to check our beach badges, and he had huge muscles and shiny orange skin and gauges in his ears, and I thought it looked pretty cool.

Lily started to laugh at me when I couldn't find my beach badge even though it was pinned to my swim trunks, and when the lifeguard walked away she said she bet I'd look good with earrings like that, that she could do them for me if I wanted.

The house was one story, and at night I slept in one of the two bedrooms with Lily, and we could hear the chatter of the TV in the other room.

I didn't like sleeping in the bed with her. She would take all the sheets, and when I'd gotten comfortable she rubbed her leg up against mine and laughed at me like it was something funny.

My mom usually showed us one of the books she'd gotten from the shore library before we went to sleep, but Laura volunteered to do it this time. She showed us paintings by Gwen John – all the nuns in muddy habits. There were paintings of women without shirts too, and Lily thought that they were so pretty, but I felt like it was something I wasn't supposed to see, that maybe Aunt Laura was just Laura.

Then next day, once we'd left our moms to sweat and read their tabloids, I followed Lily down under the boardwalk, where the sand was wetter and darker and more packed-down with footprints from other kids who'd been

there.

A little kid in swim trunks ran over to us and stared, but when we just stared back at him until he ran off and there wasn't anybody watching us.

Lily fished a sewing needle and a purple plastic BIC lighter from her nylon purse, and held the needle over the flame. She had me lay down, with my head on the sand, and I could feel the wet sand getting stuck into my hair. She leaned over me, and her elbow jammed into my chest as she held my head steady, and I could smell the burning skin when the needle went in.

It stung more than I thought it would, and I bit my lip when she put the needle through my other ear, so my mouth tasted sweet with warm bloody spit.

Lily put her own fake diamond studs in just for the day, but she said we'd go biking on the boardwalk the next morning and she'd buy me something better. Maybe one of the fluorescent plastic things.

When it was done she still sat over me with her head turned to the sea and her eyes all unfocused, and before I could get up she put her hand to my chest to keep me from leaving and asked me if I wanted to kiss her. I didn't know what to say, and I thought that maybe she could feel my heart beating with her hand on my chest, so I told her my mouth was all full of blood. I smiled to show her my teeth, because I thought they tasted so salty they must be stained red.

Her smile dropped, and then she got off me and took her purse with her and ran from the shaded hideaway back to my mom and Aunt Laura. I saw her throw out the needle in one of the rusted-out barrel garbage cans before she got to them, and when they turned their sunglasses up at her from their magazines she waved her arms and pointed to the sea away from me.

Lily ran back to me a bit later, when I was looking for shells along the edge of the water, and said that Aunt Laura would take us out early on the boardwalk the next morning, when you were allowed to ride your bikes in the lanes they'd painted along the wooden strips.

I tried to cover my ears over with my hair, I but hadn't thought it through, and when we got back to the car my mom stood staring at me for a long time like something was wrong. She took my arm, and led me across the parking lot to the public bathrooms. She pulled me into the woman's room where two old ladies in swimsuits looked at me skeptically from behind her.

"Andrew, your ears are pierced."

I didn't say anything, and the old ladies tried to get a better look at me.

"Did Lily do this?"

At first I just nodded, but then I told her that it really wasn't Lily's fault. My mom asked whether I'd wanted them pierced for a while.

I shrugged and she let out a heavy sigh. "I'll put Neosporin on your ears when we get home," she said. "You'll let me know if you want to keep them."

After we'd gone to bed, I heard my mom yelling at Aunt Laura through the door, but I couldn't tell what they were saying because they'd kept the TV on, and somebody was screaming on a crime show I wasn't allowed to watch.

Lily got up and pressed her ear against the door, but I stayed in the bed, and tried to cover my head with my pillow. My ears stung when I did it, and I had to take it off, and they left red spots on the linen.

My mom woke me early, and she said that I couldn't go biking with Lily and Laura this morning, that we were going to drive home.

I told her that if this was because of the earrings, I really did like them, and Lily was going to buy me better earrings – probably the neon plastic ones. She looked at me uncertainly and then she turned and left the room.

When we got past the first rest stop on the drive home, my mom said she could get me the neon earrings if I wanted, but Aunt Laura wasn't my aunt anymore.

The Sun is Setting

William Price

The sun is setting.
The fading light shines over
the chill, blue water.

The clear harbor stirs.
Tiny waves dance among the
many golden lights.

The lanterns are lit.
Their soft golden light shines up
among wooden frames.

The sails are at rest.
Not a single ripple mars
the curtains above.

The clouds are silent.
Blue and grey and white paint the
canvas overhead.

Thunder growls above.
From the horizon comes a
storm of rain and wind.

The sun is setting.
but the night will bring us a
storm of rain and wind.

Understanding Fragility

Rachel Dillon

he bounced barefoot on maroon carpet
while mom peeled tape from cardboard and
separated the squeaking styrofoam,
packing peanuts falling over edges.
she unwrapped the bubble wrap,
its clear globes offering rainbows of sunlight--

        the frog in its tank was unveiled,
breathing.

discomfort of plastic became soft, chubby palm
and the frog was placed lovingly
in the faded blue kiddie pool out back.
it propelled its legs in joyful bursts.

naptime arrived, and the frog was left
to wade in the sun.

shadows across the lawn grew deeper and
as the sun set, frog-thoughts were pushed behind nap-dreams
and peas and carrots and softcover books
        until
it was morning

and all that remained
was the heat-warped kiddie pool
        and the salt of his tears.

Starlight Dancehall

Gregory Bonacci

Our song begins in 1999,
Before the infernal devices took hold.
You and I wildly tap our feet;
Our leaden heels replaced by gold.

My thoughts were clumsy in 2000.
I covered my ears and continued to dance.
My old movements still contained something,
But the soul of their new machine permeated.

The gold turned blue in 2001,
When the infinite cave collapsed on itself.
I forgot how to dance,
And tripped over the stalagmites.

It all turned to red iron in 2004.
We were rigid as a cardinal gate of wrought gold.
The freezing atmosphere alone pierced the limbo.
Frostbite and gangrene spread.

Sirius lit up the sky in 2008.
The anthem borne from Kailua's sun
And the heart of a sylvan empress
Ill-advised, forced our dance to continue

The color returned to me in 2009,
Though not as blue gold, red iron, or yellow winter.
We linked; we stopped;
We spun platinum and violet like we used to.

Dance with me, DeLorean,
Somewhere beyond the borrowed tides,
Sometime after our minds have turned,
And become substream.

Holiday Inn

Rachel Goldstein

Silence has a noise
On sleepless nights
Humming dreams
And breathless souls
Counting down hours
Until morning

Red numbers
Buzzing fluorescence
And wrinkled floral sheets
Close the shades
Like shunning the moon
But leaving the bathroom light on
Just in case

But fear has a feeling
Some burning
Boiling pain
One arm under mom
One arm under dad
Protected
Safe

Because bugs are the only ones awake
Symphonies made up of
Wings and exoskeletons
Clicking
Smacking
Going through the night
Just to say
“You are the youngest,
And oldest,
You’ll ever be.
So go to sleep”

Laurel Moon Executive Board

Angela Acevedo - Editor-in-Chief (Treasurer)

Angela is so pumped to finally be leaving this godforsaken place. She will graduate with degrees in Neuroscience and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and a teeny minor in English, as well as a small mountain of student debt and an exceedingly unsure plan of what to do for the Rest of Her Life. Maybe she'll do advocacy work, who knows. She has spent a significant portion of her time at Brandeis fighting the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, and will hold the love and fire of her feminist upbringing in her heart forever. Additionally, she is very glad that even at this point, the innocence, purity, and goodness of dogs can bring her back to life. She will steal as many bagels as she can fit into this box, and she is the Leslie "Do you wanna get super drunk?" Knope to Sam's Ann "I really do" Perkins.

Sam Yoo - Editor-in-Chief (Internal Affairs)

Sam Yoo is looking forward to officially receiving full credit for the degrees in English, Creative Writing, and Film/Television/Media Studies that they have shed actual blood and tears over. (Even though they are aware that none of these degrees will be helpful in any way, career-wise). Their immediate plans for the future following graduation mostly just involve them lying on a choice patch of floor somewhere and crying. Perhaps one day they will eventually realize their dreams of writing the cisheterosexuals out of mainstream culture and of burning the imperialist-white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy to the ground. All they know for certain is that if they keep their body moving, and their mind occupied at all times, they will avoid falling into a bottomless pit of despair. They are the Matt "We should be studying" Murdock to Ang's Foggy "You can take a night off, you *nerd*" Nelson.

Gregory Bonacci - Layout Editor

Gregory Bonacci is a graduating senior that has somehow floundered his way through a double major in Biology and Chemistry with a specialization in Chemical Biology. Working on Laurel Moon has always filled him with DETERMINATION, even more so now that the layout for this last issue draws to a close. He is also the editor-in-chief of Wander: Brandeis Abroad and one of the founding members of Olio. If he wishes to continue forward in layout editing after graduation, he will have to stop telling dirty, dirty lies all the time. For example, he will not be able to claim that he, as an actual Mamoswine, is still totally in OU, or that, as 10,000 bees given human form, does not communicate exclusively through interpretive dance. He has clogged the toilet twice during first dates, and believes that this kind of performance under pressure should be allowed in the "special skills" section of his resume. After graduating, he wants to continue doing layout and enroll in a genetic counseling program specializing in maternal-fetal medicine, mainly so that he can unironically state that he is the lifeguard to the gene pool.

Laurel Moon Editorial Staff

Anne Kat Alexander

Anne Kat is a double major in English and Classical Studies, which means she writes on her resume that she has a working proficiency in Latin, Ancient Greek, and French, but spends most of her time desperately hoping that nobody will ask her to prove that. She left beautiful Austin, Texas to live here in Massachusetts, and remembers that this was a choice she made freely among several alternatives when she steps outside into frozen precipitation. Next year she will be abroad at Oxford University, but she'll be back for senior year. (They won't let her claim political asylum no matter who becomes president.) Remember: You can vote from overseas if you're abroad, but you need to register ASAP. The State Department's website will tell you how. There is a possibility that this is all untrue and Anne Kat is a swarm of bees in a person-shaped formation, but this is unlikely, because the State Department's website definitely has a page on voting while overseas. That, at least, is a fact.

Clayre Benzadon

The Laurel Moon staff challenged me to write
a sonnet, a bio of my life in
form when realtiy, chaos, a fright
possesses my obsession with words, thin,

subtle hints of chocolate and coffee bliss,
voices of feminist heroes, punk pulse
in my blood, indie-electro notes kiss
the Miami foodie in me, when dulse

sounds good to a food-deprived college soul.
Ideally, I'll live in Spain and ski
every day in the future, rock and roll
blending fully with my poetry, free

to sing, read, and write a life full of truth
and to stay in imaginative youth.

Fun fact: On Kabalarianphilosophy.com, probably the only website where they have the meaning of my name (actually spelled correctly), pretty much every single description of my character is true. Especially the description "you have a tendency to worry." To save myself from this constant anxiety (which unfortunately can never be fully relieved), I follow Adrienne Rich's regime: "You must write, and read, as if your life depended on it." Because writing is "a sin worth hurting for" (line stolen from Natalie Diaz). The social psych lab is my other life when I'm not writing, but sleep is cool too (what is sleep anyway?) and food is another thing that fuels me (I don't have a favorite, but if I had to choose, it would probably have to be my mom's chicken pot pie and desserts, which I really can't decide between.)

Laurel Moon Editorial Staff

Danielle Davidoff

I'm Danielle, but I go by Dani (pronounced dawwwn eee). I'm a first-year from another Boston suburb. I plan to double major in English and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, but who knows, that may change? In past lives, I had terrible grammar, so I decided to make up for it in this one. I will constantly remind you that you forgot that apostrophe. Yes, I know that it's late at night and you have midterms and you're just typing to a group chat and you can't care less. The apostrophe will come back to haunt you later, in its mini, floating glory. I sympathize with the apostrophe because I am the apostrophe. I float above the rest of your sentence with only the dots above lowercase i's for company. When quotation marks come to visit, it's the highlight of my week. You can find me on the far side of the keyboard, tucked away with all the punctuation marks. That's where I hide from people between classes. Yet the life of the apostrophe can be fun too. It's like wearing the cloak of invisitility. I always know what letters are gossiping about, because they chat about it in front of me without noticing that I'm there. That's what happened in middle school, at least. I may be almost too small to see, but I promise, I know more than you think.

Emily Glovin

Emily Glovin is a first-year from New York City who constantly belittles Boston for not being a real city because it does not have real pizza and often talks about how she lives two blocks away from Taylor Swift no big deal. She has close to no idea what she's majoring in and adamantly states "that's what college is for" when her relatives give her confused looks, but is probably doing something with American Studies because we should all love our country even though maybe we shouldn't. She also might minor in education studies but does not want to be a teacher because she strongly believes that if a child could not read she would try to yell at them until they could and would then promply be fired and then spiral out of control because she does not like being bad at things. As a lover of nostalgia and Netflix, she proudly watched and did not hate the entire season of Fuller House and wants a second season, but maybe the box discs of all 8 original Full House seasons sitting in her living room at home will be enough to hold her over until then. She was greatly surprised at the mention of Tequila shots in the show and thought that Michelle was way cuter than that new kid Tommy.

Laurel Moon Editorial Staff

Linda Maleh

Linda Maleh has been a part of Laurel Moon since her sophomore year and, as a graduating senior, cannot believe it's her last issue with the magazine. She will miss Laurel Moon immensely and is so proud of all the work that everyone's put into it over the past few years. In related news, Linda is a zomie. It happened during the last full moon. She was walking home when a zombie jumped out and bit her. Now, she has a great desire for human brains. She has been trying to deny her zombie nature and not murder people and eat their brains, but she has been enlightened recently. She has come to realize that she should embrace her full zombie self and all the quirks that come with it. She hopes her friends will accept her for her new self. She may even bite some of them so that they can be zombies with her. Zombie Linda likes eating chocolate with her brains while watching shows about superheroes. She is an English and history major (and can't wait until the day that history books have a chapter about the triumphant zombie apocalypse). She is impatiently waiting for Winds of Winter to come out, and is really rooting for those white walkers, who she feels a certain kin with. Obviously she loves the show iZombie on the CW, though she feels The Walking Dead is a misrepresentation of zombies and is offensive to brain-eaters everywhere. Her dream is for everyone to walk dow the aisle at graduation to Michael Jackson's "Thriller". But seriously this needs to happen. I'm not kidding. She hopes that you enjoy this issue of Laurel Moon, and hopes the next one has more dead things in it.

Michael Perlow

Michael Perlow is a sophomore majoring in Biological Physics. If things turn out well, maybe even Biochemistry too. Despite his geeky science background, he also enjoys writing. This is the impetus which brought him to Laurel Moon, at which he partook in an infinite journey of the imagination through works of poetry and short stories. Although it has been questioned, he is mostly absolutely fairly sure he is not a collective mass of bees. If it were the case, then he would have to compete with other members also comprised of bees, which is deemed preferably avoidable. He also enjoys video games, drawing, and anything with space. As a word of advice to writers everywhere, "If you're not writing, you're wrong."

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 2015-2016, Arielle Gordon's "Food Chain" was chosen; her work can be read in the Fall 2015 issue of Laurel Moon.
One runner-up for this award was chosen. You can read Rachel Dillon's "loves his bath" in the Spring 2016 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 2015-2016, Gwenyth Fraser's "How to Kill a Cat" was chosen; her work can be read in the Fall 2015 issue of Laurel Moon.
One runner-up for this award was chosen. You can read Jason Lipow's "Salty" in the Spring 2016 edition of Laurel Moon.

The front cover photo for this edition of Laurel Moon was taken by Monique Menezes, and the back cover photo was taken by Amanda Nguyen.

