

Vox

Winter 2020



SFUHS' Literary & Arts Magazine
Vol. V, No. 2

Vox

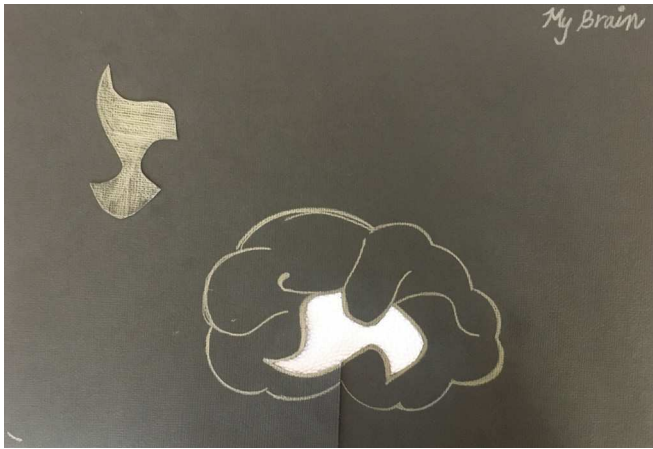
Volume V, Issue 2

Winter 2020

“11. If you hear birdsong, run.”

—Christina Howard, “Rules for Walking Home at Night. Alone”
Former Editor-in-Chief
Volume III, Issue 2

Editors' Note



Dear Reader,

We're pleased to welcome you to *Vox* Issue V.2 just in time for the final days of winter! While the onset of spring usually isn't marked by dramatic weather changes for us in the Bay Area, you can almost feel UHS taking a collective breath—or trying its best to turn a page—as the third quarter wraps up.

Perhaps what's most comforting about this winter's crop of submissions is its diversity. Despite what seemed like a particularly trying winter for the school, the writing and visual art in these pages defies categorization. Although art is always a product of its time, the ideas students are grappling with here are timeless. Amid the chaos of the world at large, it can be rejuvenating to step back and consider what we learn in 9th-grade Physics to be "the Long Now."

We hosted another successful workshop this trimester, this time in collaboration with Mental Health Coalition during the MLK Day Symposium. After looking at famous mental illness-related artworks by Van Gogh, Munch, and Gericault (*Portraits of the Insane*) as well as a selection of contemporary pieces, we discussed the following questions: How should viewers approach art about personal trauma? Is it ethical to exploit (or reclaim) personal trauma for monetary gain (and is it healthy)? Who should be allowed to make art about mental illness? Informed by our conversation, our twenty attendees began crafting original pieces addressing mental health struggles, some of which are displayed in this issue.

You'll find that imitation figures prominently this season, with at least eight pieces drawing direct inspiration from professional writers or visual artists. Look for French and Chinese in our featured poetry. This issue is the same length as our last, but we're proud to present a more even balance of writing and visual art this time. As always, stay tuned for more workshops and deadlines. Here's to more creating!

Best,
Lukas & Alexa

Above: Two works-in-progress from the workshop on Mental Health Activism (see also pages 40 and 48).

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Masthead

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Submissions

We're looking for original writing and visual art by students that is both intellectual and visceral, conventional and experimental, real and imaginative. If you have even the slightest itch to share your work, don't hesitate! We accept submissions year-round at sfuhsvox@gmail.com.

If you're interested in being part of our lovely staff, send your inquiry to lukas.bacho_20@sfuhs.org or alexa.fisher_20@sfuhs.org.

Social Media

Find us on Instagram @sfuhsvox.

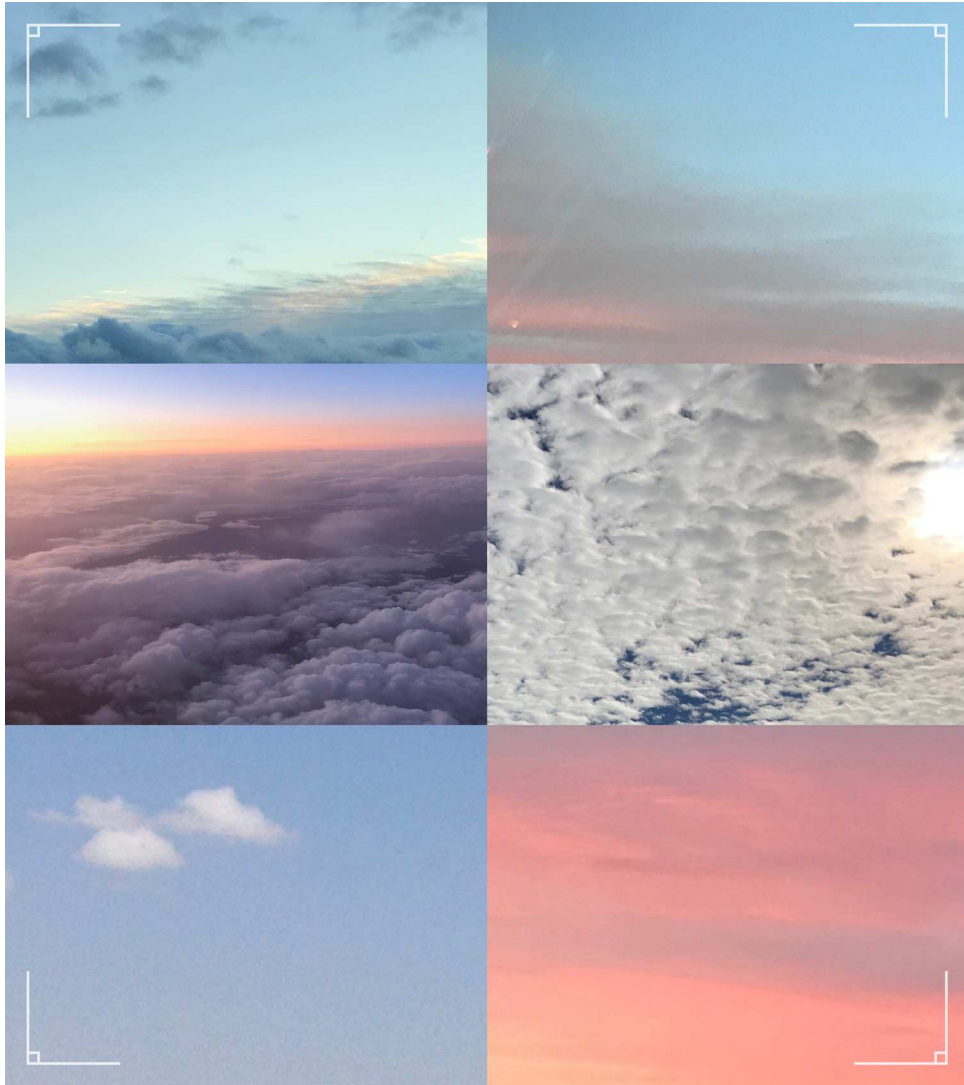
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Display text set in Mr. Eaves OT and STKaiti; body text set in Palatino. Designed with Adobe InDesign CC 2019. Front cover: "Migration" by Jiho Lee (appears on page 36). Back cover: From "From the Window" by Isabella Caro (appears on page 23).

Student Artwork



Sunflowers
Summer Sun



Clouds
Alexandra Wythes

The Tale for Atheists

Emmy Etlin

•
After Gabriel García Márquez
•

Asha opened up *The Tale for Atheists* for her nighttime prayer reading. She was proud to be an Atheist, a member of the first religion on Earth. She knew of the other religions, having learned about them in school, but always felt that Atheism was more real.

In the beginning, there was nothing besides God. For six million years, she existed alone in blissful isolation. She didn't need anyone else, nor did she desire the company of others. In her free time, which was all of her time, God worried about her duty of having to create humanity and she never felt almighty. She often overcomplicated imagined situations in her head and had around three panic attacks for every 284 years, which was very often, considering she was an eternal being.

One morning, after waking up, God stretched her arms wide and yawned the sleepiness away. She didn't get much sleep that night — only 36 days. She had been having nightmares about having to create her world. In her dream, after the creation of her first tree, the Tree of Life, a snake sank its teeth into the trunk and the tree wilted like a flower and died. When God fashioned her first animal, a raven, the same snake strangled it to death. However, that day she woke with an unusual sense of optimism. Now, she decided, would be the day that she began to have a purpose. She split the universe in two: Heaven and Earth. Next, she took the Earth in her tiny hands. Her fragile and petite figure staggered under its weight. God planted rivers in the grooves of her mountains, lakes within forests and angry

oceans on the surface of her planet. All over the land, God deposited fertile soil the color of her skin so that her humans would always see a piece of her in their Earth. Locks of sweetgrass, the first plant, emerged unexpectedly from the soil, gasping for breath.

She then cupped a handful of Dead Sea water in her hand, which thrashed around in desperate attempts to escape, and from it she sculpted three small fish, the first animals. For once, God was pleased with herself. Usually, she would have nitpicked at the details of her artwork, always looking for something that just wasn't quite right. Once, God, who considered herself a skilled ceramicist, spent 280 years crafting a small ceramic bowl. After finishing her project, the bowl's imperfections became more and more pronounced, so she smashed it in frustration and self-loathing. But this time, on Earth, it was different. Her sheep's fur was thick and luscious. The cliffs she made had jagged and dangerous edges that provoked an exhilarating sense of fear in God herself. The thunderous roars of her lions were sometimes so loud that even God needed to cover her ears.

Her most beautiful art piece, the only one that she was truly proud of, was a tea kettle she made 745,000 years ago. She planned to hide it among a family's belongings on Earth and track its journey avidly. Would it be treated with reverence, treasured as a family heirloom? It seemed more likely that it would be carelessly handed to a spunky two-year-old who would smash it within seconds. The idea of humans, her humans, fascinated her. Although God felt confident in her pottery skills, her next step in Creation, designing humans, made her insides squirm like a newborn snake suspended in the beak of a bird, about to be devoured. She decided to shape the humans out of clay, just like her tea kettle, and breathe life into them, playing to her strengths as an artist.

She scooped a handful of clay from the banks of the Dead Sea. While sculpting the first human, God felt all the tension release from her shoulders and neck. God started shaping the body's general form, looking to her own body for inspiration: one head, two arms, ten fragile fingers, one sturdy torso with wings sprouting out of the back, two legs and ten toes. Each body was different: some curvy and some straight, some dark and some lighter, some with big wings and others with tiny wings, but God did not see these differences as flaws. The humans' hands, so hardworking and capable of doing so much good and evil, were where God focused most of her attention. She blew life into her first human and God felt a piece of her leave with her breath. God thought to herself, *she has the face of someone called Azariah. How miraculous it is that this living, breathing being is mine!* She released the human and it took flight, heading down to Earth. Each breath of life that she put into the humans made God feel weaker and more lightheaded.

God spent many sleepless nights worrying over her humans. She did not feel motherly affection towards them, but was concerned about their futures and what would become of the human race. God knew that if she began to think of herself as her Creation's mother, then she would become too attached to the future of her Creation. Although the humans seemed to be thriving so far, God felt exhaustion and emptiness as she watched over them, as if she were near death. For days, she oscillated between uncontrollable heaving sobs, fearing that she had messed up, and a state of blank vacancy. She cried tears of snake venom, which stung when they rolled down her face and landed in her lap.

In one of her episodes of meditative emptiness, God realized that everything on Earth was too perfect, too right. She wanted the humans to have tortuous sleepless nights and to know what it felt like to be so hopelessly isolated. She wanted them to hurt and be hurt by each other; to experience the death of a loved one, and after feeling hollow for weeks, finally understand the weight of their own mortality. In her right hand she took

the venom of a snake and in her left hand she held extract from a lotus flower. She put both into her humans' mouths and saw that it was good.

Those six days felt like six million years to God. She was tired, really tired. Her hands were rubbed raw from the formation of 472,801 small clay humans. Despite the physical sacrifices God had made for Creation, she was finally content, and slowly she drifted into a sleep free of dreams and nightmares. Unaware of the relentless passage of time, God was still asleep when, after millennia of attention and careful adoration, her tea kettle was recklessly thrown to the ground by Asha in a moment of teenage defiance. Looking at the shards on the ground, Asha was reminded of the tea kettle in the Creation story, but it did not occur to her that her tea kettle could have possibly been created by God.



Untitled
Devan Paul

The Time is Passing Faster Every Day

Alex Perry

The time is passing faster every day.
Before I know it, we will go away.
I remember when we had time to play,
my bro and I, like the cowboys on our drapes.
We rode through crayon deserts, tipped our hats
And through our Lego town we clopped along,
Then dreamy, tired, we took ten-gallon naps
While humming birds in trees sang us a song.
The endless days will finally dwindle down,
The drumming, running, playing soon will stop.
My bro, its soon; we'll go to distant towns
I'll miss your smile, your love, our secret plots.
 The cowboys rode along with us all day
 But even cowboys age and ride away.



The Happy Years
Hayden Deffarges

Scrubba Dubba Dub in da Tub

Charlotte Read

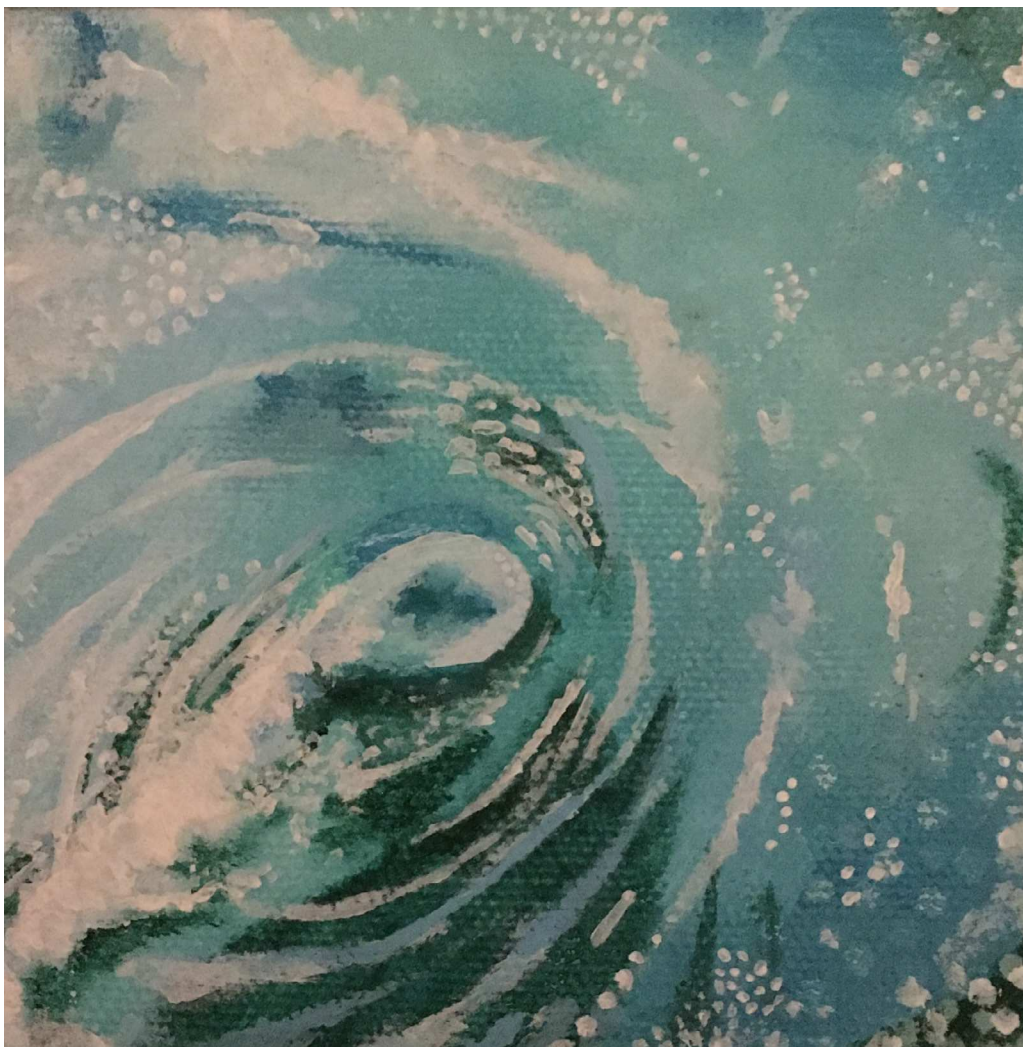
Point of view: I'm FaceTiming you from the tub. I like to take all my phone calls in the bath, respond to a day's worth of Snapchats, watch a couple YouTube videos, scroll through my Instagram feed, and tap through *Daily Mail* for the most unreliable news you've ever seen. It is fair to say that tub time for me is very productive—on a personal level, of course. For me personal hygiene is clearly not the main reason I get in the tub. Mind you, there is only one tub in my house, and it is in my parents' room, so before I decide to colonize their bathroom for an hour, I have to ask in the nicest way I know how as a moody, annoyed, and typically very stressed teenager if I can use their tub. Despite my best efforts, my parents claim I'm not very nice unless I want something—this is starting to reflect very well on me. Aside from the clear cleanliness benefits of the tub, it also provides a sort of sanctuary for me. When I am in the bathroom, no one can bother me; the door is locked, they can't come in. My brother can't come asking for me to read his history essays that are so wordy they make no sense, and my mom can't come ask me for the thousandth time how my day was, to which I respond, great, every time.

The tub is a sanctuary from my family and my workload. I call my friends in the tub while they are being productive, getting their work done, to complain about how much work I have after knowing I made a conscious decision to get in the tub to avoid doing my work in the first place. My friends hate when I call them in the tub because my voice echoes off the marble walls making it nearly impossible to hear. I also eat the weirdest things while in the tub, like bananas, popsicles, or peppers, and I get a lotta laughs for that. But I call them anyways. This year alone I would say I have probably taken a tub almost every single night on account of being stressed, and literally anyone who is close to me

could tell you this. They know by the countless videos of me acting like a three-year-old child blowing bubbles in the tub, videos of me horrendously singing in the tub practically mimicking the screeching sound of the water draining, and by the countless snapchats they get of me wearing facemasks. Tub time might be as fundamental to my day as a meal.

I wouldn't consider myself a bath bomb type or anything fancy like that. When I make my tub, I just turn on the water, usually too hot, and let it run for a couple minutes until I remember to come back to the bathroom and turn it off. If I'm feeling extra special, my tub might get some bubble action, but right now we have no bubbles 'cause I used them all. I have two types of tubs. One I've already told you about where I feel like being social, and the second where I dim the lights, light a candle, and act sad, listening to depressing break up music. This may sound less fun but is actually quite therapeutic. By the end of this, my mascara is running down my face, with the combination of my facemask mixed with tub water also dripping down my cheeks. Sometimes I combine the bubble tub with the depressing tub and FaceTime my friends when I look like this. It typically results in a bunch of screenshots of Char looking pretty dead. I don't find them embarrassing though; they are quite hilarious after the fact, and I love to come across them in my camera roll on nights when I can't fall asleep.

I say I take a tub to avoid my workload and my family berating me, but really I'm not avoiding things: I'm confronting my feelings. Taking a tub might not have the most immediate effect on my to-do list, but it grounds me.



Untitled
Gabriella Hord



Skate
Emma Chin-Hong

From the Window

Isabella Caro

•
After Sheila Heti
•

My window is thin and my attention span short. My thoughts are easily distracted by the sounds I hear each night, sounds that travel three levels up from the street. Without even looking, I know what is happening outside.

These sounds are my internal clock. Cars waiting at the long red light on the corner of my street with the radio blaring sometimes at two in the morning. Sometimes their tires screech when they turn the corner too fast heading right on Gough street. These people are impatient in contrast to the peaceful park goers I see during the day.

Sitting at my desk, my eyes stare directly at a patch of dirt with a stump to the left of it. Usually this stump is occupied by a homeless man trying to get some rest. To the left of my window, the steps of the park are trafficked by people trying to work out. Their faces after a couple laps are drenched in sweat and their fists clenching through the pain of the stairs. Sometimes when my mom goes to walk our dogs, I can see Edith rolling in the grass like the idiotic personality of a bulldog she is.

While I can peacefully sit and watch these people, they can also watch me. This is what my mom doesn't like about this window. But I like the entertainment; these people are part of my routine. I keep my shades open.



Plaza de San Francisco, Quito
Claire Espinosa

From the Window

Isabella Caro

•
After Sheila Heti
•

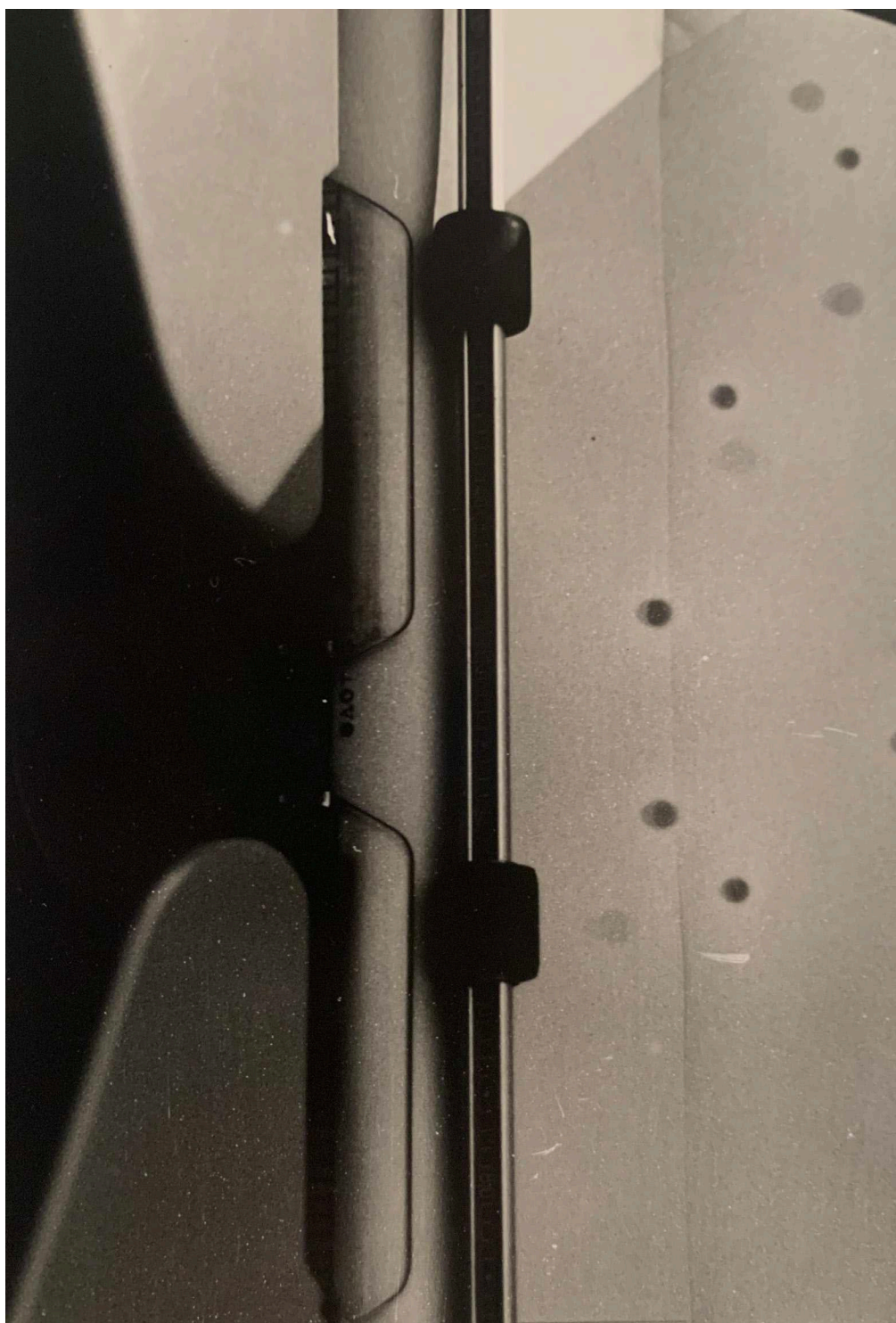
If you stand at the window, just in the right spot, near the wall but not quite touching it, you can see the edge of the Golden Gate Bridge rising up over the tops of the houses across the street. I can find the bridge in the morning, and at night, and in the afternoons while I'm doing my homework, except when the fog rolls over to cover it, and only when I'm standing at the spot where the bridge peeks over between the houses. It must have been a sunny day when we moved in, because otherwise I would not have been able to see the bridge. I chose this room for that view, for the bridge, even though it was the smaller room, and the room with a view of the next door neighbor's basketball court.

Our house is on the side of the street without the ocean views, the side where the houses are a little smaller and the cars slightly less flashy. Some of the houses still look like they haven't been touched since the 50s, although those houses are slowly disappearing, replaced by glaringly modern glass creations. Even here, with nice houses in a fancy neighborhood in an expensive city, one side of the street could envy the other.

I work in front of the window sometimes, cross-legged on the bed and staring out at the view. Across the street, I can see the family who lives directly across from us—the family whose house covers the bridge. I can see them moving around in their house when I look out my window. When it gets dark, the only light across the street comes from a computer screen, gleaming in the window across the street from mine. I imagine they can see me too, and sometimes this thought makes me uncomfortable,

but other times it seems almost fair.

Sometimes tourists walk by and take pictures of the house with the turret. They stand as close to the gate as they can, necks craned and phones raised in the air. I have never understood this. It should be enough to walk by a beautiful house, to see it and appreciate it. And taking photos of someone else's house feels invasive. Almost as invasive as staring at someone through your window.



Untitled
Michael Mooney



Peter Pan
Olivia Luk

Selected Life Haiku

Hayden Deffarges

Calc test

Holy shit, I can't
Believe what Ariel will
Think of me next week

Weekend plans

UHS party
Time to avoid eye contact
In someone's basement

Rehearsing my play

I'm a puppeteer
Feels wrong to make your two best
Friends be gay onstage

Untitled

This is so much worse
Than I anticipated
These are real people



Untitled
Olivia Luk

Girl

Mirabel Haskin Fernald

•
In the style of Jamaica Kincaid
•

When you see that kind of man walking behind you, speed up, but not too much so he doesn't know you're walking away from him; always know where you put your wallet; don't walk that quickly, it looks like you're escaping from something; don't wear leggings or else boys will look; if you wear shorts on the bus make sure to sit on the edge of your seat so your legs don't touch the butts of other people; shake their hand, because waving is impolite; help your sister put her hair up so she doesn't look like a complete mess; be careful how you put your hair you don't want it to get pulled by someone; choose one thing you want to focus on stop trying to do everything; smile, you have to make a good impression, but not to every stranger on the street; you have to look tough out there; this is how to be confident; this is how to be confident if you're not; this is how to show someone you know what you're doing; this is what you need to know to be a good student; make sure you never talk about your period; this is when you need to make eye contact and firmly shake their hand; you have to understand that if you want to be good at math you need to try harder and work more so people take you seriously; *but I love math*; even if that man looks at you like that keep your head up and just ignore him; everyone will get the wrong impression if you can see your bellybutton or your shirt is too tight; or too much of your legs; they'll even get the wrong idea if they can see too much of your arms; *but this isn't my fault*; remember, this isn't your fault this is society's; they'll think you're asking for it; don't tell the Lyft driver your name, you don't want them taking you;

this is how you look put together; this is how to not look exhausted if you feel exhausted; this is the habit of a Highly Effective Person; don't get in the car with a teenage driver; don't mumble; speak with precision and clear thoughts; put your napkin on your lap and say please and thank you; you'll make them uncomfortable if you talk about cramps; make sure you shave your armpits and legs so you don't look manly; you need to look strong but not too strong; you need to be assertive but not too assertive; you can be a leader but not the president; you're not being authoritative you're being "bossy"; this is how you look like you're trying but not too hard; make sure you fake it until you make it; don't let them take advantage of you; work harder; try harder; not too hard though; be successful, not too successful; *but why*; that's just how it is.



I Met You in a Night-
mare



Untitled
Ali Fishman

Rêves en Poésie

James Emerson

L'avenir, jouet brûlé

Le bourdon des avions retentissait au dessus des cris des sirènes
Le ciel était couvert d'un tapis de fumée et de brouillard
Le feu dévorait les sombres immeubles, exposant leur squelette de fer
Les plaidoyers des prisonniers des décombres s'entendaient de loin.

Dans ce véritable enfer, une jeune fille pleurait
Sa grande-mère était morte là, dans l'ombre et le fer
Ses parents essayaient de la consoler,
Dans ses mains reposait la carcasse de son jouet.

Par la fenêtre sale du train, elle regardait son enfance
Bercée par les craquements et les gémissements,
Elle s'endormait, craintive de son futur incertain
Le train hurlait vers l'inconnu.

L'inévitable

Les monstres hideux grognent vers l'horizon
Voilée par l'ombre et la cendre,
Ils avallent les sycomores moribonds
La vie s'évanouit dans leur ventre d'ambre

Le soleil cramoisi est accroché dans le ciel
La fumée se répand comme une grippe
La brise émane une odeur artificielle,
L'avidité entraînera un désastre d'Œdipe

Le cœur de ces lourds géants s'allume comme un phare
Un feu insatiable réduit la nature en gris
Le fer crisse, quel tintamarre!
La forêt n'est plus que débris!

Un jeune garçon plonge dans la mer, tête haute

Regarde comme il pousse contre la mer enragée

Les vagues hurlent contre sa proue

La force de l'océan s'écrase contre sa charpente ravagée

L'orage illumine son mât tordu.

Regarde comme il prend la lumière d'un nouveau jour

Seul sur l'immense étendue bleue

Il glisse sur l'eau accompagné d'un bruit sourd

Sa voile attrape la force de dieu

Regarde comme il repose sur le bord d'un nouveau monde

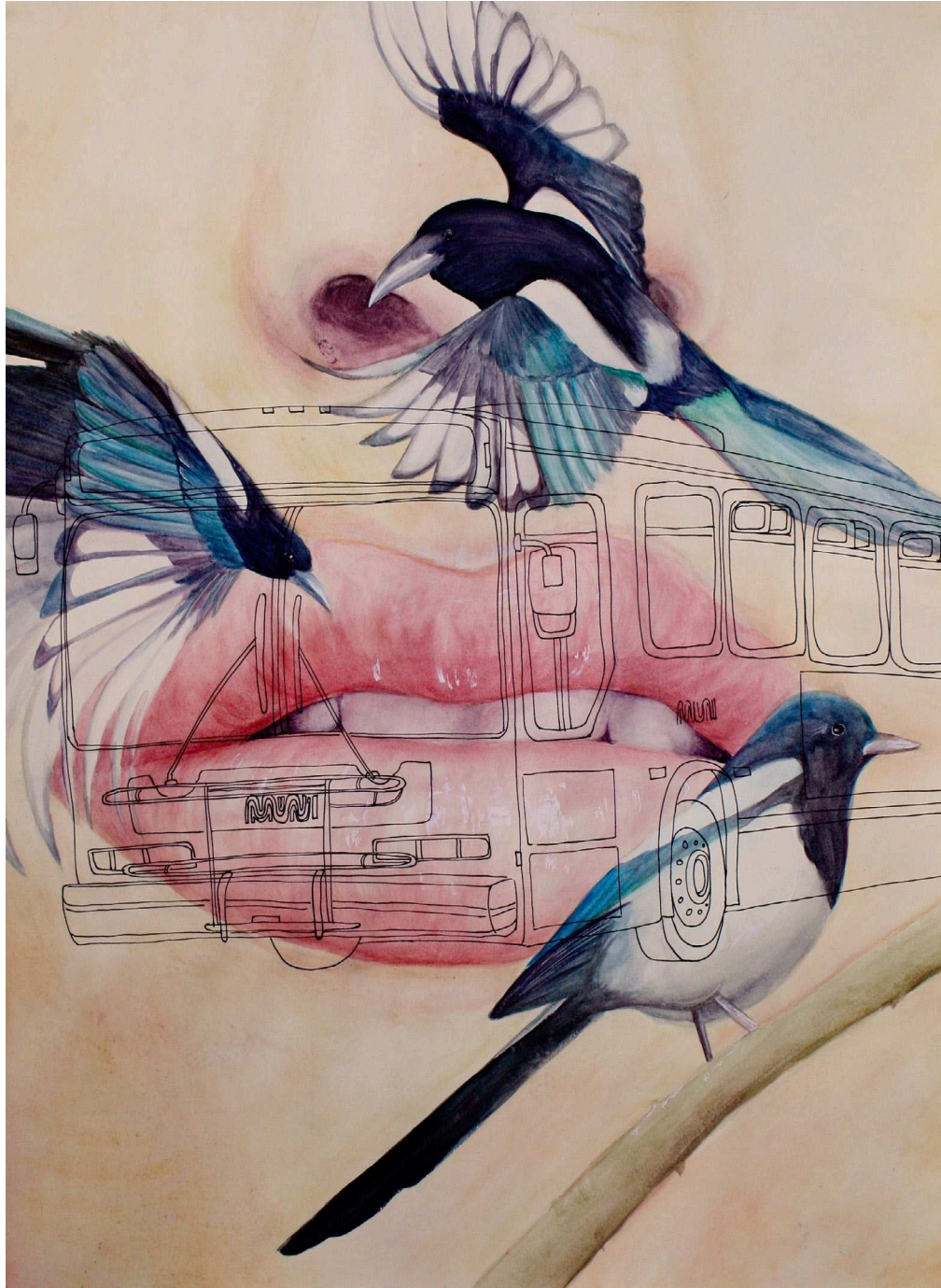
Naufragé et abandonné, il reste seul

Sa coque brisée a l'air immonde

L'océan sera son linceul



Untitled
Ali Fishman



Migration
Jiho Lee

The Flight of Stars

Jasmine Gonzalez

•
After Gabriel García Márquez
•

The scent coming from the green bottle of conditioner hung thick in the air when Lavender realized that the stars in her eyes were beginning to shine. At first she mistook the gleam for the glint of light off her necklace, but by Wednesday evening she knew that the stars were not going away. Lavender lay in her bed that night, the universe beneath her eyelids as the darkness of the room enveloped her. By the first week of August, only Lavender's brother could see her stars, though he did not have any of his own. They were faint, and she hid them under the thin film of her contact lenses, not ready to show them off after the world had already spent fourteen years fawning over the chocolate tears that she cried.

Lavender led a fairly normal life, largely unperturbed by the galaxies expanding within her irises. She attended school during the day, practiced piano in the evenings, and participated in athletic competitions on the weekends. Every night before bed, she would play a quiet tune on her guitar, filling her room with green to quell the chirping of the finches in her chest, and every morning she would bike out to the sea to wake them back up again for the day. Her world was small, enclosed by the ocean on two sides and dry, expansive mesas on the other two. Lavender largely kept to herself, only saying the occasional word to the bread man in the morning or the strawberry man after dinner. The warbles from the finches in her chest were getting louder with each passing day, so much so that on Wednesdays, she didn't have to do any of the speaking for herself. On the days that Lavender forgot to soothe

them with the gentle notes of her guitar strings, the finches would keep her up all night with their calls. When she woke up in the mornings, her stars would shine brighter than ever, tempting her to flaunt them to the other villagers rather than keeping them hidden beneath her contacts as she always ended up doing whilst her eyes welled with chocolate tears.

It was not that Lavender was ashamed of the celestial bodies trapped beneath her corneas, but rather that she had seen the way the villagers had treated the boy from the eastern plateau who had been born with green-tinted stars that glowed brighter than the sun itself. The townspeople always did their best to steer clear of him, afraid they might catch the boy's infectious disease and fall victim to God's wrath alongside him. One year, after a particularly dreadful harvest and a long season of fires, they ran the boy out of the town with all the other young men he had infected. They had threatened to tear the stars out of those helpless boys' eyes if they weren't gone by the solstice, but the boys had not listened and were forced to flee. Watching this sequence unfold reminded Lavender to make sure no one discovered her own stars before she was ready.

It was a Wednesday afternoon that Lavender found herself two hours and thirty six minutes from her village, walking through the pines as she searched for anything free of scorch marks and at least somewhat edible to bring back for her family's dinner that night. She had been spending less and less time at home ever since her stars had started burning bright enough to be seen. They were becoming nearly impossible to obscure, accelerating the timeline of the village's inevitable retaliation against her. The dappled autumn sunlight beat down through the faded green trees as Lavender walked, and the gentle lapping of waves on a shore could be heard nearby, augmented by the smell of rotting seaweed. Lavender turned to navigate towards the sound, hopeful it meant she would be to make it home with something to offer her family to eat that night. As she walked, her finches began to chirp, which had been happening with decreasing frequency since the boy from the eastern plateau had fled her town. She passed through a thickly clustered group of pines before the woods opened into a vast clearing; the scene was illuminated by the reflection of sunlight off the aqua green water of a lake. There Lavender found a girl sitting near the water, strumming the same tune that she always played to calm her finches. The girl seemed to be around the same age as Lavender, and she was crying tears of milk. Her shoes had no soles, but the soul of her voice filled the void left between her feet and the ground as she sat by the water. Her name was Astrid. *Astrid*. Lavender remembered somebody telling her that was a siren's name, but Lavender was not in a boat and there were no rocks nearby for her to crash into. Thus, she sat down next to Astrid, daring a glance at her eyes before looking out to the water instead. Neither girl said a word; they just sat there, watching the waves come into the shore in the warmth of the evening.

That night, when the sun had dipped below the horizon, Lavender noticed a gentle glow coming from Astrid. She realized that Astrid, too, had stars in her eyes. Maybe she was run from her own distant town much like the boy from the eastern plateau with the green tinted stars who had been discovered dry and still with his comrades by the other men of the village thirty seven days after his exile. Lavender withdrew the contacts that were covering her stars. Her movements were slow and tender, and the calls of her finches combined in a deafening cacophony as she revealed her eyes to Astrid. There was a pause where everything was still and silent, the universe at rest as the moon hung bright and full up above. Then, all eight hundred and three finches escaped at once, rushing out of Lavender's heart in a torrent of trills and feathers. They left behind a green aroma as they intermingled with Astrid's doves and flew off together into the night sky. The two girls were left crying in each

other's arms, their tears combining into a sweet sort of milk chocolate fluid. But they were not sad. Rather, they watched as their stars soared towards the heavens, now firmly in the grasp of their doves' and finches' talons, knowing they would each have to return to their respective villages in the morning.



Yellow Wallpaper
Sydney Duncan

男扮男装

Lukas Bacho

-
- After 《木兰辞》, first transcribed ca. 500 CE
-

translate: to carry from one state to another, as Enoch was *translated*, that is, carried to heaven without dying¹

translation: [PHYSICS] uniform motion of a body in a straight line²

He, he, yet he, he—
[s]he in window weaving.

No hear mechanic voice,
just hear bo[d]y sigh-breath.

Ask bo[d]y what [s]he thinks,
ask bo[d]y what [s]he's missing.

[S]he yet without thought,
[S]he yet without missing.

Last night saw the draft,
May-Sweat orders troops.

War-book has twelve rings,
rings rings with dads' names.

A father without big son,
a [s]he without grown brother.

Origin-heart buy saddle steed,
from here replace father's lead.

¹ *New Concise Webster's Dictionary: Composite Edition, Especially Compiled for Home, School, and Office Use*, 1974 CE

² Merriam-Webster English Dictionary Online, 2020 CE

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Daybreak dad-mom go,
[s]he live riverside.

No hear dad-mom calling sound,
yet hear water flow round round.

Daybreak river go,
twilight black mount-head.

No hear dad-mom calling sound,
yet hear horses cry found found.

•

Dad-mom hear [s]he comes,
leave walls stead each other.

Sister hears s[he] comes,
threshold she makes up.

Brother hears s[he] comes,
knife thrums thrums pig sheep.

*Pry my eastern door,
sit my western bed.*

*Leave my wartime clothes,
don my old-time threads.*

Window weaves cloud-hair,
to face grow made up.

Outdoors see fire men,
fire men shaken up:

*Same path for twelve years,
no know [s]he is not our youth.*

•

What characters hide
in the folds of crossdressing.

Pronouns and antinouns
laughing in the Strong Man's loom.

Strokes fabricating no escape
for Mulan, nor for any rabbit.

[S]he had no use for the letter-post:
characters are characters themselves.



San Francisco Dorodango
Braeden Wong

No Honor in Second Place

David Wignall

The old man glared at the statue and the statue glared back. One gray, the other gleaming gold—both relics of a long-passed age, left standing in a dwindling forest. Their eyes met for a silent moment, neither blinking, neither moving. Each waiting for the ringing klaxon of the referee's pistol to usher them on and break their quiet impasse.

The old man broke first and slumped back into his chair, legs leaden with the weight of decades past. His face cracked a half-smile, left side splitting into a grin while its mirror remained dormant. "You win again," he croaked. Breath rattled from deep within the bellows of his chest. "I've come for what's mine, my golden friend." He leaned in, neck craning at a crooked angle. "*Where's my statue?*"

The youth offered no response. He held his runner's stance, one leg thrust backward into the air as if about to launch him from his ivory pedestal, eyes determinedly set on a finish only visible in the realm of heroes. One palm pressed against the ground, gesturing downwards, offering in the golden silence the answer to the old man's question embossed in steel upon the ivory:

IN MEMORY OF THOMAS ALEXANDER, 1944-1977
WHO RAN THE ROSCO, VIRGINIA MARATHON IN 2 HOURS, 17 MINUTES, AND 8 SECONDS
BREAKING THE STATE RECORD BY MORE THAN 2 MINUTES
AN ATHLETE AND TOWN HERO
NONE HAVE EVER SURPASSED HIM, NONE MAY EVER DO SO.

"Where's my statue, golden boy? My second place pedestal," the old man whispered, words

that only he and Thomas could hear. His leathered knuckles bulged white and pink against the wheels of his chair. His chin pumped forward, lopsided and defiant in its wrinkles, forming an envious grimace. The old man spat, a thin ribbon of slime arcing through the midmorning air before attaching itself to the runner's nose. The statue still didn't flinch. "Eye on the prize as always, eh boy?" The old man whistled. "And what a prize it was."

The conversation lapsed into a halting silence, punctuated by the raucous birds and the beeping of cars just out of sight. The world turned, but here, in this circle of orange dust and fallen leaves, the two monuments remained still. After an aching moment or two, the old man cleared his bile-filled throat. "Your placard's wrong, too. Did you know what? They went to all the trouble of building you in gold-plated bronze, but they couldn't get your label right." He paused, gathering steam now. "You surpassed the record by 112 seconds. Not more than two minutes. And only *seconds* ahead of me."

A dog yapped in the middle distance. The old man rocked in his chair, pulling the contraption a pace forward, then a pace back. An agitated cloud of dust rose around him, ensconcing them in a haze that obscured his gnarled face. His voice rang true and clear, stronger by the moment. "Where's my statue, Tom? I ran a good race. The best race. Feet moving faster than anyone on that track, anyone in this whole cursed nation. The wind was in my hair, but it only pushed me farther. I *flew* Tom, flew like the old coach taught us to. Mind clean and empty, eyes like yours. The finish line, *victory*, just minutes away." The old man stared up at the statue, whose dew-drop laden forehead glistened as if it were still marbled in sweat. The boy with his pedestal stood head-and-shoulders above the old man's chair.

"I was running the best I'd ever done. *Anyone* had ever done. Yet who do I see coming up on my right? Knees pumping, eyes gleaming, chest puffing like a locomotive in heat?" He jabbed a wiry finger into the air, rocking the chair back. The gesture limped, unseen energy falling flat before it could follow the path of the old man's spit. "*You*. Always you. Thomas Alexander, who broke into the lead in the last two miles of the marathon and ran away with the whole show... the hearts of the audience—" His voice softened now, though an edge of silver remained underneath. "And a god-damned *statue*."

Tears boiled in the old man's eyes, set alight by the fire that flew from his mouth, from his useless legs, from the wooden chair. "I beat the record too, Tom. Two hours eighteen. Fastest ever on the track, unsurpassed in all the bleeding years I've spent in this damned chair. Just not fast enough, never fast enough, to beat *you*."

"What was it coach always said?" the old man asked. Even his breathing came bitterly now. "A runner that fast is one in ten million. Once in a generation, if that. Rosco must have used up all its luck to win the lottery twice." He laughed, short and sharp. "Explains the fortune we've had since then."

The statue didn't apologize. It did its gleaming, odious job: remember me for all time; remember my legacy, honor my gold. The man, for all his ire, was ever so small in its shadow. Tears dribbled freely from his jutting chin, landing upon his unmoving lap. "I won second prize, went home with a certificate and photo next to the record-smasher himself. Had a stroke next month, while you were on TV. Had a wife, a family. I made bread, fed my children. Watched them grow up good. I feed their children from this chair, now." He groaned, uncomfortably loud in the emptiness of the sculpted park. The pain welled up in his chest. "I've lived a good life, haven't I? Long and honest, proud and happy. But no statue for me, he who lived. He who didn't squander his winnings, waste his fame, leave a dozen infatuated darlings behind in the race to the top. Didn't die early in some drug-addled haze. I did well, didn't I?"

The man waited for a contemplative moment, then wheeled his chair backwards. The golden boy watched

him recede, pleased. Another victory. "No statues for second place... I got a good enough time for any other town, any other year. But not good enough to be remembered, nonetheless." His voice had become a grumbling mutter, barely audible from the pedestal. The old man pressed a stiff boot into the stand, rigid like a compass needle, and swiveled in his chair to draw a narrow arc. A smear approximating a line in the dust. The sounds of dogs barking and birds jeering grew louder as the man slowly tugged his chair forward again. Only half his body moved fluidly, silvery wisps of hair plastered against the wide, proud expanse of his forehead.

"I lived for longer than you," the man remarked as he closed the ten-yard distance to the ivory tower. "I did more things. Ran a good race. Ran a good family. My children, at least, remember that. Tell their kids that their grandpa broke a running record before he got his chair." The chair rolled to a stop, tapping the base of the statue. The man looked up, looked around—not a soul in the clearing where time stood still and the world remembered. Just two silhouettes in a midmorning conversation. He extended his good arm, grasping the golden shirt of Thomas Alexander. Flecks of gold leaf peeled away, sticking to the old man's hand as he launched himself upward, out of the prison of his chair. Two shaky feet stood in the dust next to the ivory, boots holding long-stiffened legs.

They stood face to face now, the chair a forgotten footnote. Eye to eye. "You got the glory. And look where you've ended up, old friend. What'd it get you, in the end?"

Thomas Alexander was as lifeless as ever. As lifeless as he had been for all the decades the man had spent naming children. The man wiped the golden flecks off his hands and looked at the line he'd etched in the dust. He smiled.

One leg disobedient, he assumed an approximation of a runner's stance, mirroring the statue's. "Ready, golden boy? A rematch?" He let the words hang in the air, unanswered, as the roaring of birds and dogs and wind reached a fevered pitch in his ears. A car backfired somewhere past the trees, loud as the starting pistol on that twice lottery-winning day mired three decades in the past. The grandfather took a heavy step forward, lame leg dragging a trail into the dust. Another step, balance only a faintly-recalled memory. Another step. Another. Another.

Thomas Alexander waited by the chair. The old man grinned fiercely, back to the statue, the wind in his hair only pushing him further. Feet lighter and lighter, strength building as he approached the mark in the sand.

Another step. Another. The man collapsed across the finish line, one side falling limp and useless in the dirt. Wind rustled through the leaves. "I win, golden boy. Finally. You can have your statue." The man sank back, smiling, eyes gazing through the leaves at the timeless sky. He clenched his fist and pounded it against his chest, howling like Thomas Alexander had howled when he'd won all that glory. "I win."



Untitled
Eva Krueger

Even here, one side of the street could envy
the other.

ISABELLA CARO

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