



| *collision* literary magazine
| spring 2024

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collision *staff*

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Dear Reader,

This year, like most, has led to a lot of change. Assuming the position of *Collision's* Editor in Chief for the first time, I had a lot of learning to do, and despite troubles faced, I am immensely proud of what *Collision's* staff and contributors have accomplished this year. A few major themes from this year come to mind, but the overarching theme that has prevailed is collaboration. No one person could have put this magazine together, and the process has required a significant amount of effort from all of our staff. This year, we made the executive decision to designate our genre editors as co-editors rather than primary editors and assistant editors. This decision was made because all of our editors were putting in equal effort into engaging our staff in conversations and in working behind the scenes on putting this magazine together.

Another theme that comes to mind in this year's iteration of *Collision* is refinement. As a staff, we have discussed in depth what it means for a piece to be "Collision." Although we were unable to come up with a conclusive definition of this idea, we have been able to engage in long conversations about the quality and content of work that we strive to publish as a magazine. As a result, this year's magazine is rather short. Our values as a magazine have not changed—we still place as much value on experimentation and innovation as we have in previous years—but, in my opinion, we have refined these values to craft a specific and meaningful voice for *Collision's* 2024 issue. This is thanks to our staff's engagement in the pieces that we reviewed, and to all of our incredibly talented contributors this year.

from the *editor*

I now want to acknowledge all of our wonderful staff members this year. I want to first acknowledge our genre editors: Margaret Balich, Tafarah Cherilus, Lia Sheahan, Tov Elia, Gracie Dallas, Chloe Woodruff, Jane Schrand, and Patrick Ryan. Your dedication and passion has not only inspired me, but has also kept me sane throughout this rather difficult process. Next, I would like to thank our Business Manager Ava Mirisola, our Secretarial Manager Mariah Marrero, our Social Media Manager Sophia Viggiano, and our Assistant Editor Tess Madonna. This magazine would not function without the multi-faceted skills that you all bring to *Collision*, and I am immensely appreciative of your help and support in creating this year's magazine. I would also like to thank the rest of our staff members, whose voices truly mean everything to the creation of this magazine. Finally, I would like to give a special thanks to our faculty advisor J.C. Lee for always being supportive of our staff's big ideas, and to Geeta Kothari for judging our prize contest this year. Our ability to publish such impactful art and writing is because of all of you, and for that, I am immensely grateful.

Speaking of the impactful art and writing that we have published, I would like to give a special thanks to all of our contributors in this year's magazine. Our contributors span across North America, but their voices shine beyond the region. I am truly in awe of the variety of perspectives and voices that we have been graced with this year. I commend all of our contributors for their willingness to share their stories, whether visual or literary, and for allowing *Collision* to house their prized work.

from the *editor*

I have always found *Collision's* strengths in our ability to capture the individual and simultaneously universal experiences of the current world we find ourselves in— so, with all of that being said, I invite you to peer into the experiences of today, as I present the 2024 edition of *Collision Literary Magazine*.

All the best,

Sarah Pine

Editor in Chief | Collision Literary Magazine

acknowledgments

Collision Literary Magazine owes many thanks to:

The University of Pittsburgh for their continued support and their promotion of the arts.

J.C. Lee, for their extensive knowledge and their endless enthusiasm for our experimental endeavors.

Geeta Kothari, for her expertise in judging our annual competition.

Geeta Kothari is a senior editor at the Kenyon Review. Her essay “If You Are What You Eat, Then What Am I?” is widely taught in universities and has been reprinted in several anthologies, including in Best American Essays. She is the editor of ‘Did My Mama Like to Dance?’ and Other Stories about Mothers and Daughters, and the author of I Brake for Moose and Other Stories. Her most recent essay, “To the Man who Poisoned My Mother,” was named a Notable Essay in Best American Essays 2022. She teaches at the University of Pittsburgh and at Carlow University.

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Cover Art

The Wiccan

Donald Patten
University of Maine at Augusta

First Prize in Writing

**I know I am gay because I am building a shelf in
the back-of-house at work one day... (an extended
sonnet)**

Joel Lee
University of Tampa
Nonfiction

and then I think to myself “God, I’ve got to read through Ruhl again” and then i think to myself “that’s how I know I am gay”, that I think about reading Sarah Ruhl and not about building a shelf in the back-of-house at work. I have been in writer’s block since January, and Ruhl’s *100 Essays* made me want to write. Ruhl’s *100 Essays* brought me joy. I miss reading her sometimes, as one misses a friend. This, apparently, makes me homosexual, to hate building shelves and to love reading. I do not know who told me it was gay to love reading and hate building shelves. No one and everyone, I suppose.

I am riding in the car with my sister and we are talking about coming out. I tell her that a friend thinks another friend knows about me. Said friend told me— he asked: “when is Joel going to get a partner,” *a partner*, he said, not when is Joel going to get a girlfriend, when is he going to get *a partner*. I say I am baffled by how few have guessed it. I do not think I act as masculine as I am expected to, yet I have never been clocked. My sister says she doesn’t know, there are other cues people should catch on to. My hobbies, she says. My interests. i go to writing school and i

don't get sports and i don't understand dudes who are into cars. This, apparently, makes me homosexual, to not get cars and love writing. I say I don't know about that, there are plenty of straight people in my program at school. But i don't know about that. When boys in class talk about their girlfriends and wives I am surprised. I forget we are not all queens here. I forget they let straight men through the classroom doors. Heterosexuality? This is the arts! I do not know who told me it was gay to go to writing school. No one and everyone, I suppose.

I am at dinner one night with friends who do not know I am gay. We have just come from church. Caleb is complaining about working at Starbucks, saying he wishes he had more male friends there. All his coworkers are either women or gays. Felicity pipes up in response, and states what Caleb is smart enough to not say out loud: "So the same thing!" The table chuckles at this. i chuckle at this. Then i speak little for the rest of the night, vaguely sick in my stomach. i am used to this feeling; i fall silent, continuing to eat. A few months later, at a thanksgiving dinner, I am the first to grab food. I am always the first to grab food at a potluck, crowded among the women, moving quickly under an unspoken "Ladies first!" I know better than to go first, but in that moment, I justify myself, thinking "It's okay for me to eat under 'ladies first' because i am gay." I remember Felicity's comment. And then I think, maybe we aren't so different in our homophobia, she and i. I do not know who told me it was womanly to be gay. No one and everyone, I suppose.

What is it to be gay, really? It is not only gay to be a man who loves men. To be gay is to be told stories about yourself for your entire life. i am gay because I can't drive—i am gay because I sit with my legs over the arms of a recliner—i am gay because I like to talk about feelings—i am gay because of what I don't understand,

and what I do—i am gay because I laugh loud, because I am chatty, because I am Joel, because Joel is gay and therefore everything gay is joel, apparently, because when I discuss my sexuality I become i in the eyes of whoever I'm standing in front of. i am not merely a man who loves men. I may be Joel, but i am the limp wrist, the perfume and not the cologne, the nail-painter, the purse-wearer, the fashionista, and i am not allowed to ask if there is anything wrong with these because i am also the top or the bottom, i am also the dom or the sub, i am also the slut, the whore, the fag, the creampie, the free-use, the wet, sticky, insatiable, the secret midnight wink, the glory hole, the glory-hole website, the dick pic sent on the glory-hole website, the groomer, the Dahmer or the Dahmer victim, the perverse, the delusioned, the disillusioned, the disgusting, the damned. I do not know who told me these things. No one and everyone.

A friend tells me once that the Lord said unto Moses I AM because it means we cannot refer to ourselves without invoking divinity. We are made in the image of God; to self-deprecate, then, is blasphemy. I am and I AM. I am the center of a Venn diagram between “i am” and “I AM.” i may be the slut but I am the soft and awkward kisses, the fingers skating along thighs, the breathless plea, the warmth of a face pressed against a chest. i am the “queer writer” and I am the writer of queerness. I AM the writer of the world and I am the writer of the written word, and i am the written shame. Do you understand yet? I can only be I. i am constructed from stories spun about people like me, i am not me, i am not anyone. i am the word and I am the person.

Who am i? No one and everyone, I suppose.



Second Prize in Art

Prom Night
Samantha Williams
New York University

Second Prize in Writing

LETHE / OSMANTHUS / DAYSPRING

Alina Yisi Liu
University of Toronto
Poetry

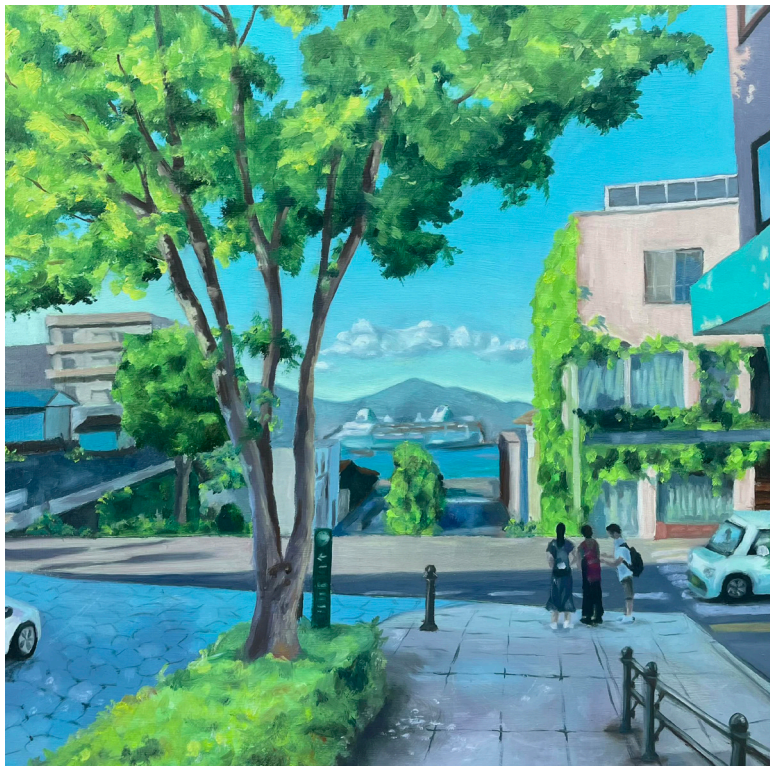
i'm peeling off pieces of pomegranate skin
and flicking them onto the ground. sun-warm tile
baked in midsummer lethargy, rolled in dream-white
cookie crumbs & cracks open beneath my feet.

last night you came to me in my head. you smiled, mouth full
of elastic bands & steel, and drummed an evening cicada melody
into my knees. you smelled of oregano,
laughed like symphony.

tell me, who decides where you've been? the magnifying glass
in your marinade mind or the lady selling jewelry on the sidewalk?
who decides where you go? your father's seesaw hand on
your shoulder or the itch between your burn-shy toes?

i'm silver thread and barnyard owl and slip-soft
past midnight; i'm origami, intertwined; i've run from heaven
or woodland shore and never caught a glimpse. & you are

pale-moon minnow, veil of persephone. still
for touch of dew-bitten breath. footsteps soundless in the morning.



Third Prize in Art

Motomachi
Michelle Bechtel
Colby College

Third Prize in Writing

Not Much Alive Out Here

Avery Bauer
University of Pittsburgh
Fiction

The road was dark and long. Fields of harvested corn and wheat lined either side, dry dirt and dead crops the only things left behind. It was a cool night, just at the cusp of winter, the wind blowing intermittently. The sky was black, the moon and stars shrouded by clouds. Everything was still.

Out of the shadows roared a car, headlights slicing through darkness. Across the fields, the faint drone of music could be heard, and the car doors vibrated as the bass rocked through the sedan. Nadia tapped her fingers against the steering wheel and hummed along.

It was later than she'd intended to be out. She planned on an early night in with her weighted blanket and a cup of peppermint tea, but instead found herself discussing market reports with her colleagues over Jack and Coke. At her repeated refusals to join the rest of her department to go out for drinks, there'd been whispers around the office accusing her of not being a "team player." Hearing them herself, she caved, desperate to repair her image through buying a round or two.

It had been some time since she'd stayed out past eleven, always desperate for the solitude she only felt in the darkness of night, no matter what day it was. The emptiness that enveloped her senses allowed her to pretend the world didn't exist, and with the world

went her problems.

She'd been more stressed than usual. There was the friction at work due to her lack of socializing, but also the pressure of leading her team in a marketing pitch for a new client. Then there were the arguments she'd had with her friend earlier in the week, and her mother's anxious tendencies, and her sister's roommate problems, the fact that she hadn't heard from her father in over two weeks, and her own lack of—

Click.

The music stopped. For the first time, the silence had caught Nadia off guard. She sighed as she reached blindly for her phone in the cup holder, then cursed to herself as she heard it plop down to the passenger side floor. She twisted and bent herself sideways, peering over the dash as she plunged her arm into the darkness. As the road straightened out, Nadia let her eyes travel down to the floor, hoping to make out the shape of her phone. Her fingertips finally brushed against the edge of her phone case and she —

HONK!

Nadia shot up in her seat and hit the brake. She was almost blinded by the pair of headlights just a few feet ahead of her turning on from a side road. She hid behind her hand, to protect her eyes and conceal her embarrassment. The car, an older teal pickup, sat for a few more seconds as the driver threw muffled curses at her before turning down the road. Nadia watched as their taillights disappeared into the night before she pulled over partly into the empty field next to her and put the car in park.

She sat back and stared up with a huge sigh, feeling tears attempting to form. She closed her eyes, hiding inside herself, avoiding her anger and guilt. She realized she was still gripping her phone in her hand and pressed the power button a few times. It was dead.

After collecting herself, Nadia started back down the road. The hum of the car lulled her into a meditative state as the fields rolled along beside her, almost rhythmically. She'd just begun to put the anxiety of her near collision behind her when,

BANG!

She felt her seat tremble and knew instantly one her tires had been punctured. After brushing over the first twinge of shock, she could've laughed at the absurdity. Her initial impulse to pull over was thwarted by the recollection that her phone was dead. Up the road, though, a streetlamp shone through the darkness and illuminated the roof of a nearby house. Nadia drove a couple dozen more yards before she pulled in front of the house.

The driveway was nothing more than a gravel path, leading down a hill towards the garage. The house itself was small and could be more accurately described as a cottage. Even in the low light, Nadia noticed that each side of the house was painted a slightly different shade of blue. The front of the house was a cool robin's egg that contrasted with the soft, yellow light that filled the front windows.

Nadia got out of the car and was bathed in the stark orange light of the solitary streetlamp. On her approach to the house, she could make out the sound of a laugh track coming from inside. She stepped up onto the porch and tapped her knuckles against the frame of the screen door. After some shuffling, the door crept open.

A dark, hulking figure stood in the doorway. The man filled the frame, his shoulders touching the side jambs and his head sat just a few inches below the top beam. Only backlit by a hallway light, Nadia could barely make out any discerning features. The one thing she did notice was his hands. Even in the dim light, she could see that just one of his hands was almost the size of the entire square door panel it rested next to. Even though the screen door separated

them, Nadia felt fixed in place in his presence. In a most unsettling fashion, the first word that came to her mind to describe him was beastly.

“Can I help you?” His voice was deep, almost alluring, and the vibrations from it bounced around inside Nadia’s chest.

“Hey,” Nadia said, “sorry to bother you. I’ve got a flat, but my phone died, so I can’t call Triple A. I was wondering if I could use your phone?”

The man looked past Nadia towards her car.

“Well, there’s no need for all that. I could change it for you.”

“Oh no,” Nadia said, “no that’s alright. I’m bothering you enough already.”

“It’s no problem, really,” the man said. “Shouldn’t take more than ten minutes or so. Save you some time waiting for the mechanic.”

“That’s nice of you, but —”

“I’ll go ‘round back and get my stuff.” The man backed out of the doorway. “You just stay there. I’ll be right back.”

The man closed the door before Nadia could squeeze out another word. She stepped off the porch and looked around; there was a run-down barn that stood looming about a couple hundred yards up the road, but no other buildings around, maybe for another mile or so. She was surrounded on all sides by fields of leftover dead wheat stalks that encroached upon the house, almost forcing her back against it. She couldn’t remember the last time she’d really noticed the nature of these fields. She pulled her coat tighter around her body.

“Here we go.”

Nadia jumped as the man appeared to her right, carrying a car jack and a lug wrench.

“Sorry,” the man said, seemingly fighting back laughter.

“Thought you would’ve heard me coming up the drive.”

Nadia forced out an awkward laugh. “No, you’re fine.”

“Shall we?”

Nadia walked the man over to her car. Under the light of the streetlamp, she was able to make out his facial features, though she found nothing of note. He looked just like any other man you’d meet on the street, with dark eyes and a scruffy beard. The man went straight for the rear right tire, placing his tools down and running his fingers along the grooves. He took out a small flashlight and Nadia watched as he seemed to inspect the puncture.

“D’you know what could’ve done it?” Nadia asked.

“Looks like it would’ve been something real small,” the man said. “Maybe a nail? There’s all kinds of crap laying around out here. People dump trash, furniture, chemicals, you name it.” The man stood and brushed his hands against his jeans. “Won’t do any good to speculate, though. Can you hand me your keys?”

Nadia stared at the man’s outstretched hand, one that could easily crack a walnut, and felt sick. “S—sorry?” she asked.

“Your keys? For the trunk? That’s where the spare’ll be.”

“Oh,” Nadia said, shaking herself out of her suspicion. “Yeah, sure.” She pulled the keys from her coat pocket and dropped them into the man’s waiting hand.

The man popped the trunk and pulled out the spare as if he’d just picked up a sheet of paper. He came back around and knelt next to the flat, swiftly removing the hubcap then beginning to loosen the lug nuts. Nadia was mesmerized by the precision with which he moved, a complex dance of seemingly unnatural speed and strength.

“Y’know, you’re probably lucky this sucker popped where it did,” the man called over his shoulder.

“Why’s that?”

“There ain’t another farmhouse for a few miles either direction. You woulda had a heck of a time trudging up the road. Besides,” he pulled the lug wrench off and gripped it in his hand as turned to look at her, “these farm roads can prove pretty dangerous at night.”

Nadia felt a shiver work its way from the nap of her neck down her spine. She averted her gaze from his face, “Yeah. I bet they are.”

The man turned back towards the tire, grabbing the car jack and slipping it underneath the frame. He began to crank. Nadia watched as the man’s broad shoulders worked in circular movements, almost as if he were rowing a boat. When he finished, he tossed the jack handle aside and picked up the wrench.

“Even so, the nearest one’s the old Harris place. Been abandoned for years.” The man worked the lug nuts one by one, a bit slower than he’d been moving before. “You won’t even find the rats living there, even with winter coming.”

“Oh really?” Nadia said, unsure of what he was getting at.

The man unscrewed the final lug nut and pulled the tire off. “Yeah, there’s not much alive out here.”

The comment slammed straight into Nadia. She slowly backed away from the man as he continued to work. She placed herself in front of the hood of her car, trying to put any sort of physical barrier between them. Out of the corner of her eye, she picked up a new light source. She turned and found the light in the man’s garage turned on, and the garage door opened. Although the inside of the building was shrouded in shadow, the light on the side wall illuminated the entrance, just enough for Nadia to make out the car inside, an old teal pickup truck.

Almost instantly Nadia felt her soul leave her body and plunge into the earth. Soon, she felt her heartbeat in her clenched teeth and her throat began to tighten. Every nerve in her body lit up at once and compelled her to run. She looked over at the man and saw

he was still screwing the new tire in place.

She thought about running into his house to look for a phone, but there was no telling how long it would take her to find one, let alone if the front door was still unlocked. She thought about running all those miles to the nearest occupied farm. If she could manage to get a good punch in with her keys locked between her knuckles, she might get a good head start. She just needed to pick a direction, pray, and commit. She reached into her pocket –

He took my keys.

Her breath came quicker. There was nothing left to do. She thought of running and hoping she could get away quiet enough, but she knew. She knew no matter how fast she ran, he could run faster. No matter how far she could run, he could run farther. No matter how hard she fought, he could fight harder. She imagined escaping into the fields just for him to catch her, wrapping his hands—his *paws*—around her throat as she tried to scream, looking up into the black of the night sky until the darkness itself flooded her vision and consumed her.

“All done!”

Nadia snapped her head towards the man, who now stood by the front right tire. He took one last look at his work before turning back to her,

“The spare’s more of a temporary fix, so you’ll wanna get it to the shop in the next few days.”

Nadia nodded, keeping her balled, sweaty hands in her coat pockets. “Could I get my keys then?”

“Oh, ‘course.” The man reached into the front pocket of his jeans and pulled out her car keys. He held them aloft, his hand raised just above his shoulder. It was like he was toying with her,

Or coaxing me closer, she thought.

Nadia stared the man down as she approached him, resolving

herself to show no fear. She didn't want to give him the satisfaction. Standing mere inches apart, Nadia took her shaking hand from her pocket and grabbed the keys. The man stared down at her right back, waiting.

“Thank you,” she whispered, shakily.

“My pleasure,” he replied as his mouth morphed into a wide, cloying smile.

Nadia stepped back and, keeping her eyes on the man, walked to the driver's side door. Once inside, she put the key in the ignition and held her breath, half expecting the car not to start. Turning the key, the engine roared to life.

Nadia's breath came heavy as she gripped the steering wheel. Grudgingly, she looked into her rearview mirror and, seeing the man still standing behind her car, lifted her hand in thanks once more. In turn, the man lifted his as Nadia pulled back onto the road, his form illuminated by the taillights. Nadia continued down the road, and within seconds, the man was out of view.



Regreso a Mictlan

Sofia Aguilar

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Love When the Lights Go Out

Sydney Greiner
Susquehanna University
Poetry

Worms, worms in my brain!
Those parasitic masterminds.
I cannot think of anything but,
I cannot write anything but.
Oh and when I cry,
it is all for them.
I cry of pain and joy,
for they are earworms!
And every night they sing a lovely hymn,
of which I will never forget the rhythm
or the tune.



Studio

Michelle Bechtel
Colby College



Cold Turkey
Michelle Bechtel
Colby College

MT. PLEASANT

Rayni Wekluk
University of Nebraska - Omaha
Poetry

Empty billboard,
odd design
Wine headache
but the cattle are out
and the clouds are
cottage cheese
We zoom down county road
after county road
Swerve around grazing horses
loose from their pen
Pretend speed can make up
for lateness
Realize we rush to feast
and reduce speed
Gluttons can't exist
within a hum of ease
A ceasefire drunk
A night to come where
4 citronella candles
are not enough

THE COMPUTER, LIKE MOST LIVING THINGS, IS OVERWEIGHT WITH ERROR

Ella Ferrero
Pratt Institute
Poetry

The computer, like most living things, is overweight with error.
In high school, I learned chess to join a mens-only club instead of eating.

On a date, I couldn't tell the queen and king piece apart because they looked the same online.

I felt powerless, and I couldn't do anything about it because they closed the patio.

I leaned into hoarding documents on my computer to have evidence that I was a child.

I can't remember what I did yesterday.

An algorithm is a problem-solving technique for a computer.

Mine is: 1) wake and bake, 2) fembot, 3) use inhaler, 4) grieve wish-fulfillment dream, 5) consent dialogue.

If impossible, I solve a 200 piece puzzle online.

Writing is hoarding because I am attempting to remember.
The computer is tired when I turn it on, like most living men. Unlike most living men, the computer is done when I am.

My computer and I are both full of garbage.
I tried to put my insides in folders to get rid of them—
I ended up the same size. I had a woman's body
when I was twelve and learned how to fold inward
when in public, ended up inward at all times.

Now all of my anxiety dreams make me feel
pregnant—
but I am just inside myself again.

I don't know how to swim, so naturally—
desire is my body drowning.
Not an anchor, more a magnet.
When I am nervous, or pregnant
with myself, I google things that I already know.

I started researching Catholicism again.
Around his neck was the patron saint of:
bachelors, transportation, traveling, storms,
epilepsy, gardeners, holy death, and toothaches.
You couldn't be described more poetically than that.
I traced spells on his sleeping back to keep a part of me
on top of him forever. Pregnant or overweight
with error, I had a fever until he left.
The computer, like most living things,
is searching for a meaningful connection.



Xochipilli, Dios de Danza y Música

Sofia Aguilar

University of North Carolina at Greensboro



Danza de los Viejitos

Sofia Aguilar

University of North Carolina at Greensboro



Lination

Eric Chen

Rice University

LUCKY, DICKMATIZED, SAD, NOSTALGIC

Ella Ferrero
Pratt Institute
Poetry

Most nights become:

“Reunited” by Peaches & Herb

in my bed (a minute after 11:11).

Desire is me at my worst and most disgusting.

I almost thought a song said:

“I’m just the bus that you take.”

After 6:30 AM I kissed him for the last time, went to bed, and

ate a big sandwich full of meat. I don’t really eat meat.

All I could write was:

Lucky, Dickmatized, Sad, Nostalgic, Secretive, Not
secretive, very open.

(I think that every good date includes
oinking at the police and
playing a sexy, mediocre game of chess.)

Over the summer my mom asked me if

she raised me right. We had a bland breakfast

in the worst part of Oregon. She went on to say:

my love language is all of them, isn’t that fucked up?

I didn’t know I liked touch until

Ben and I were waiting for the bus—

a drunk guy said *y’all look beautiful together*

and he held me like water.

My desire is self-sustaining, every day
there is a screening of it, followed by a loud laugh.
Reading divorced women's literature with my mom
didn't help the feeling of imposed maturity
I felt during puberty. It made me want
something serious, instead I was a victim
of a thirteen year old boy and I wore my mom's
clothes to school to feel better.

I keep desire in me like my grandma kept twenty dogs in her
kitchen,
We both tend to hold onto things even if they bite us.



Happiness is around

Zhenqi Huang
University of Toronto

The Killing of the Cobra on Our Porch

Ada Weber
University of Pittsburgh
Poetry

I remember in Mbale, Uganda
Where my father worked
As a missionary deacon

Where Lobster-claw vines and mango trees
Shaded the six-foot tall termite mounds With the
red dirt of Wanaale towering over us all.

One day we went to the porch
Utilitarian concrete
Stained brown by dust

And a gutter for catching the rain,
Of the monsoon months
May to August

On the porch it reared
Staring at me
Like a prideful prince

Black and yellow banded
Each scale glistening like onyx
Forest Cobra

It saw us and ran into the gutter
And the guard and the gardener
Chased it with sticks,

I remember they beat it until it lay still
Clear fluid leaking
From a hole in its head

I remember staring
In stunned silence
At the loss of such majesty.

The serpent hadn't lied
about the taste of passionfruit
or the rot of man all around me.



Guts

Michelle Bechtel
Colby College

The body carves its shapes

Madison Bigelow
University of Connecticut
Poetry

As if the snags in my sweatshirt differ from the runs in anyone else's; that thread doesn't unknit itself into sistered dime-size holes. There sits a heavy taste for pickled months; deadripe peaches ambling through a simple-syruped amniotic fluid that paralyzes flesh in glass jars.

Anthony Bourdain must've felt it when he visited Iceland (the first time) & was served a bowl of fermented shark fins, violently curious for December's calla lily blackness. I slip on his skin like socks while balancing a bowl of chicken noodle atop a bony knee. It snows. Stare as he bourdains himself a paper cupful of unpasteurized blood. Climb through his bright mouthful for truth.

In the empty moments between mental repetitions of "i am a good person" that pivot

my bones into a miniature diorama. Detail the many ways I've become a heinous mutt of a body. I cradle it flush to my chest, thrashing in the t-shirt sling I've folded like loose radishes.

The other day, Barbie came up in conversation, as she often does. More important is the first disabled barbie, named Becky, & Becky has a wheelchair & stringy plastic hair. She sat across my cold lap while I spun her shoulder joint in all three hundred & sixty degrees.

Of monstrous steel & sweet vinegar, her wheelchair resembled that of a hospital in-patient. Too big to fit through the doorframe of the dreamhouse. She can't enter; not alone. Maybe if you took the roof off & shoved a mangled fist holding Becky & her wheelchair like a crane, but that's beside the point: that I hope to be lifted to my death in the same shellacked hot-pink glory Becky was ordained.

The windows are fogged. Anthony must be inside, salting the pasta water. We all smell hot butter in the cream sauce. I hate to say I laughed under its weight.



Huehuecoyotl

Sofia Aguilar

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