

Issue No. 5

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TURN PIKE



DEVIATIONS | CHANGES | SHIFTS

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Mission Statement

Turnpike is a literary and art magazine that aims to provide positive content, to create a space for all voices, and to hopefully brighten a few days.

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HOW DO YOU SAY "SOUL" IN YOUR LANGUAGE?, *Jaz Papadopoulos*

ψυχή as in "soul,"
but I prefer πνεύμα
as in "breath of life"
έκανα πνεύμα as in
I made a joke,
I gave you the breath
of life, as in

the hilarity of re-learning your tongue's birthright
as an adult with your diasporic friends and frankly
you're all terrible.

as in
my dad looks at me
sideways,
and I say snarkily,
έκανα πνεύμα
and my grandmother shrieks
with the joy of knowing
that I,
"canada" born,
have learned and used these words
poetic and elegant
to chide her eldest son.

T/HERE, *Jaz Papadopoulos*

the sunshine that hit
your bare chest throws itself towards me
still. firm beams, a distinct shape
my eyes are closed
no one, no one else can see

saccharine air engulfs
my breath, my hands, empty,
say:
oh! the fated loss
that comes with knowing love

today, i avoid the river
yesterday, my foot went through the ice
the day before that,
you walked on it
and the day before
and the day before
and the day before
but today,
it is raining where you are

i lay in my bed, watching
dust dance in a fresh beam

some of this dust –
tiny petals of fallen skin –
parts of you that persist

FLUSHCRUSH, *Jaz Papadopoulos*

zer cheeks are flushed
and mine are wetwetwet
weareflushedandwe twet twet

yesterday, someone told me
flowers are sex organs

i'm a flower ; ze's a tree
s a tree
sa tree
saltree
saltry
sultry sultrysultrysultreetree twet twet

the light is clear [a i r i s f r e e r]
in the sun

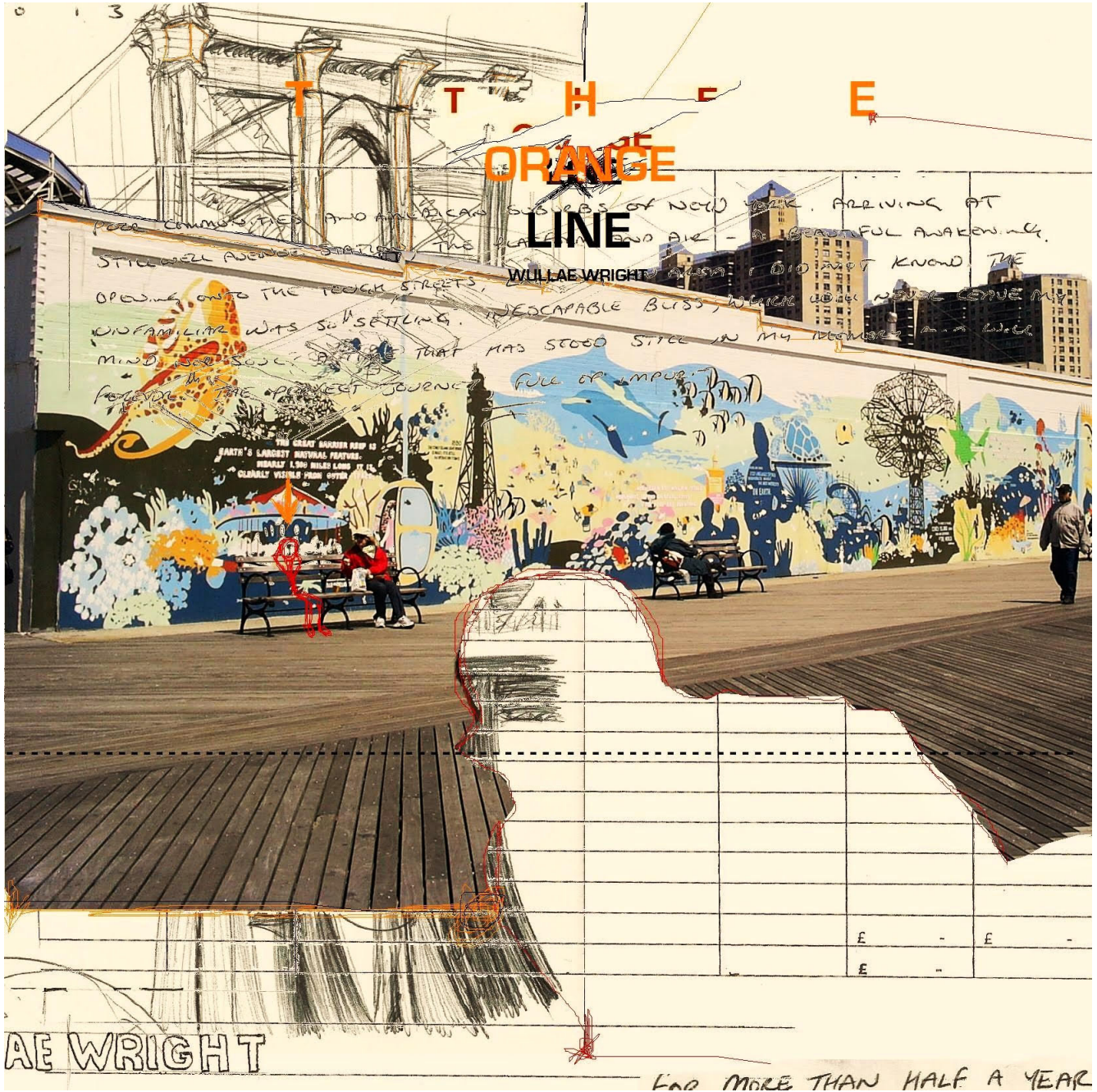
i love looking at zer in the cleanclearlight
it's quite a sight
that flush

shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh twet twet

YOU FORGAVE ME, *Linda M. Crate*

in the rose garden
we were reconciled,
and even though
it wasn't real
this is what i'll choose to
remember;
this is the ending that made my
heart happy
as if were in some film
together—
all the roses were white,
your favorite,
and your hair was blonde
mine was red;
your kimono was purple and mine
was red that made my hair look brighter
and darker all at once—
there was so much love and understanding
in your eyes,
and so i didn't feel guilty any longer
for loving you;
or even driving you away because
you forgave me
with a mercy softer than the petals
dancing in the wild summer air.

GRAFFITI, Wulae Wright



Materials: Digital Collage

PLATFORM, Wulfae Wright



Materials: Digital Collage

MANGO, *Ariane Cyusa*

Is there anything as erotic as eating a mango by candlelight?
I don't just mean consuming a delicious fruit in a relaxing environment,
I mean, EATING, a mango, by the light of a single scented candle,
Shadows and fire thrown up on the wall,
The rain overhead gentle, far and echoing.
Birds and drums. Thunder and wings.
Flesh so succulent you can almost taste it with just your fingers.
Tantalizing.
The flirt of your tongue on slippery sweetness, the citrus scent invading you,
The first bite is a RUSH, sweet chunks and thick juices running
Past your lips and down your throat, racing to meet moans
RISING to be known.
The candle flickers.
Fire dancing merrily from behind your closed eyelids as you move,
Not letting a single free space not meet your teeth
Your tongue
You slurp it all up and you let the skin fall back on the plate, spent.
And on and on it goes
Discovering every facet. Ingesting.
Last, but definitely not least, you pick up the core.
The seed, the nut.
Hard inside shell, covered in dripping softness.
It barely fits in your mouth but you don't want to bite it down just yet.
You allow it to push itself in as far as it can go,
Stretching your cheeks and straining your breath.
"Relax," you tell yourself, "you have all the time you need."
It is sweeter and wetter on its way out.
Back in, a blur of flesh.
Back out, hot air filling in its space. You bite in.
Getting all the meat, the sweet, leaving wet strings behind.

Sitting back,
Hands sticking to your naked thighs, mouth slick with fruit that you
Slowly lick off, you think,
"Damn. Damn. Now THAT was a good mango."

INSOMNIA, Rose Shrader

The house is still and mostly dark. The pale blue light from the digital clock on the satellite receiver glows out, reminding me I've been awake for over an hour and there are only a few hours until daylight. Then, the quiet is subtly interrupted by my pint-sized, brown and black Yorkshire Terrier, Daisy. The *tip-tap, tip-tap* of her nails against the hardwood floors travels down the hallway, through the living room, and across the linoleum floor in the kitchen as she makes her nightly rendezvous to her water dish. The metal tag on her necklace *clink, clink, clinks* against her stainless steel water bowl. I imagine her mustache and beard saturated in water, which reminds me that it's about time to take her back to the groomer. I can't hear it, but I know her habitual next stop is the food dish. She totters back down the hallway with a mouthful of kibble and dumps it just outside the bedroom door. She carefully chooses the nuggets she wants, leaving the flavors she doesn't like there on the floor. I sometimes speculate it is not the fact that she doesn't want to eat those chosen few pieces, but rather gets a kick out of her humans unexpectedly stepping on them in an early morning rush to get ready for the day. And as I lie there thinking about her nightly routine, I realize that not only do dogs get the midnight munchies, but they also incessantly crave companionship – she made the decision to take her food to the other end of the house instead of eating at her bowl in the kitchen alone.

Living out in the country, there are few obtrusive noises to penetrate the night, making for quiet time alone. I love the reemergence of warm spring nights because, with my window open, I can hear the late-night orchestra of spring peepers calling out from the pond down the road. Soft breezes encourage my curtains to dance open and some dim beams stroll in from the backyard security light. It intrudes my usual dark room, but I enjoy the cool air that brings the smell of campfire in from the stove out-back. Even though I know I won't be able to keep my eyes open during the day, nights like these are still beautiful.

I normally go to bed around eleven. Several times a week, for no apparent reason, I'll wake up around one or two, maybe three o'clock. Sometimes I'm awake for a couple hours, but other nights I'm up until morning. I lie awake doing nothing at all for hours. My thoughts have already come and gone and my brain feels like a black blob sitting vacant in my head. This night, I notice the *tick-tick-tick-tick* of the second hand moving on the wall clock just outside my bedroom. Knowing there are more clocks, I try to identify another one in a bored attempt to waste time and test my hearing. After several minutes, I have identified three different clocks ticking my seconds away. Then, the tables are turned and it is just me and the clocks, the ticking as loud as sirens during a grade school fire drill. I regret ever trying to focus on those stupid ticks because now

INSOMNIA, *cont.*

it's all I hear. *Think of something else, think of something else.* Nothing comes to mind. *Tick. Tick. Tick.* Eight times six is forty-eight. Eight times seven is fifty-six. Eight times eight is sixty-four... Instead of counting sheep, I often run a more useful routine through my mind to help wind down. It works like a charm, distracting my mind from the awful ticks. I go through a couple sets of numbers, but then realize that the more attention I gave to the problem, the louder and more noticeable it became. Then my mind wanders on...

With nothing else to think about, I rehash the drama of the past week. I think about how this is the third night in a row I have not slept much at all, how aggravating my sister is for withholding her kids from me because I didn't take her side in an argument with our parents, or how Trista just lost her eleven-month-old son – and I let my emotions and tears flow, dampening my pillow. I'm not much of an emotional person, but in my mid-twenties, I developed a habit of bottling up my emotions until I was alone in bed at night. I know I do it because I don't want friends and family to see me cry. I don't want them to be concerned about me. I do it because it feels good to drain all those emotions. Thinking I was alone was a mistake though. The dark figure of my eighteen pound, gray and white cat, Trouble, slowly creeps up the side of my bed. His usual sleeping preference is the foot end of my bed, but this night he decided to come closer. Curious of his intentions, I calmed my breathing and stayed flat on my back to focus on what exactly my feline wanted. He was careful to not step on my body until he got to the top of my right shoulder. There, he turned around a couple times, putting his large rear and back legs near my ear and his head on my shoulder facing me; his warm, furry body was cozy and soothing. He then reached out his top paw and placed it on my cheek. My first thought was to push him away, knowing where those soft pads trod, but then I decide to accept his compassionate reaction. Once I let my guard down just a little, I found comfort even through this strange, yet loving gesture of a docile cat.

My soft bed and feather pillow are generally cozy, and after being awake for over three hours, my room has turned from completely black into a lesser darkness with highlights on my picture frame glass and television screen. As I am surrounded by the quiet of the night, my mind will turn into a miniature radio station of songs I heard that day or the randomness of songs that just somehow appear. I was amused by the lyrics of a song I'd never heard earlier when flipping through the stations, "Older women, they make good looveers. Older women, they understaaand," which played in my head over and over again. I'd never heard the song before, but assumed it was an old country song. Truth be told, I couldn't remember if the women were older or lonely and I make a mental note to Google the lyrics, knowing I'll never get around to it. Then the stations

INSOMNIA, *cont.*

change somehow and the mysterious country tune is replaced by “Soft kitty, warm kitty, little ball of fuuur. Happy kitty; sleepy kitty; purr, purr, purr” over and over. Finally, like a lullaby soothing my mind, an old hymn allows me to drift off with a subtle calmness... “amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now I’m found... was blind, but now... I...”

Why don’t I sleep? I really don’t know. I never felt like it was stress or anxiety induced, and I’ve tried the teas, herbs, over-the-counter PMs, and even prescriptions throughout the years that still didn’t help or left me groggy the next day. The only thing worse than not sleeping at night is having the lingering drug further complicate the exhausting days I’m used to. The occasional downtime of riding shotgun in the car or watching some evening TV might allow a few minutes of napping, but the moment someone starts talking or even looks at me, I’m awakened. Despite the lack of sleep, most days I keep busy and attempt to maintain the usual upbeat, encouraging attitude, even though it’s not always easy.

And as the hours I lie awake accumulate like miles traveled down a worn, too familiar highway, I find that I’m given the time to think and reflect. I’m able to process all the frustrations and annoyances, calming my thoughts and subsiding them into mere incidences – instead of screaming at my sister like I wanted to, I decided to write a sincere letter. In the hours I spent with nothing on my mind, I’ve created beautifully articulated ideas that have emerged into published essays and poetry – “His big, dark brown eyes touch /my soul. When he is happy, the light dances /in his eyes like a twinkle, showing the innocence /of his seven years...” It is the combination of a dark, tranquil place and an individual mind that has grown into a sort of wisdom I do not mind enduring any more.

After several nights of insomnia, my mind and body are entirely depleted; I can finally sleep so deep that I don’t even know I’m alive.

COLORS OF THE SKY, *Logan D. Roberts*

Barefoot in the wind
I give names to the clouds.

You're washed in cerulean blue,
my favorite color.

Sounds of tangerine pink,
from the warmth in your chest.

In orchids we sleep:
settling into vulnerable spaces.

Fire strung about the sky,
a weeping willow cracks

my heart back into
my chest, caught by

a color, for which I cannot
fathom a name,

rushes from the willow's flesh
to touch the light—

PLEASE, DON'T FLURRY

SO FAST, FIREFLY, Marie Ostendorf-LeClair

we contain an ability to bud

from detachment, can someone tell me how?

I beg my body so hard

to come up here with me

away, away, away

in sunsets and mists

that consume touch and ears

I know it can, but she likes the feeling

of baby hairs on the nape of a neck

and the embarrassment after

a high-pitched sneeze, sniffles into wool sweaters

except I want to feel that, too

warmth of sunlight stirring on nerve endings

two blankets wrapped around two bodies, skin on skin

tickle of a cattail on thumbs

softness of worry stones

decorative icing caught on nose

she hears tenderness in voices with richness

a cake of love and edible roses

but mine are hushed and sleepy

a stratosphere away

needing repetition, still can't taste them

I am lost in the clouds

my body gets to feel the wetness

of showerfall and I sit to watch her

I see soap cover my nipples and elbows

steam soak familiar waves of hair

wrap a towel around shoulders and sit,

wait. wait. wait.

my mouth swallows antipsychotics to steady us

but I still blow in the wind, a dandelion with no method or shape

I implore scraped elbows and knees: *can't you just plug me back in? I'm right here.*

my body puts itself in harm's way

she pursues lightning with an open umbrella

we look for methods – anything

PLEASE, DON'T FLURRY
SO FAST, FIREFLY, *cont.*

color tabs on tongue

weeps at stars that burn blushes, connect in snowfall

watch her chilled skin goosebump over

rough sex and masochism

choked neck swaddled in hands

bruises on pale, sunless skin

little tastes turn into more

burn alcohol in guts and vomit

bury cigarette smoke in coats

find a bigger high

be high.

reach - me.

my body will catch agony just to find me

sometimes the universe of hallucinogens

runs me into lightpoles to get me back

the earth slips from my connected conscious

the current in the air is unbalanced with me here

I see color arcs twist in the sky, they do not see me

bloodflow verse on those budded trees stare at me in fogs

I miss you, cognizance.

I listen.

my body tells me about the firefly

its fingertips held last night, the light and brevity

in such small wingspans

for a moment, I'm there with her, then dissipate

IFS AND BUTTERS, *Michael Toews*

An energetic boy rides his tricycle along the sidewalk in the little red-knuckled town. The village is ringed by farm fields, combed in neat rows, as if by God's giant hand. The boy travels daily in the summer along the main street of the little darp, seeing what he can see. He is allowed, by his mother, to cross the street and then carry on for two more blocks. That boundary gives him a passing view of several businesses and their activity and commerce. His daily route includes The Economy Grocery and Dry Goods, The Youngstown Jewellery Store, several small shops selling a variety of goods, a gas station and best of all, the Hartplatz Credit Union.

The credit union is a new building with large windows trimmed in aluminum. Low, shining, and modern, it features polished stone of different colours, and newly poured and finished concrete steps. The sidewalk fronting the structure has been top-dressed with a broom in a wavy pattern and when the boy pedals his trike at top speed, the hard rubber tires make a pulsing sound across the striated brush marks. The boy also enjoys studying the detail in the sidewalk rectangles. Each one is bordered with a unique geometric pattern. His grandmother, who has done research at the town's brand new and still nearly empty library, tells him this is called a meander. "It's a design that may have originated in far away Greece, long ago," Oma tells him, making him feel important as she tucks him in for a drowsy afternoon nap.

Early one morning, as he does every day, the boy turns on a boxy television set in the living room of the little square house where he lives. A motionless black and white test pattern fills the screen, silent but for an electric hum. Outside in the crabapple tree, mourning doves announce the coming of day with their fluted song.

Next door, the boy's father is already well beyond the ein and the zwei of his workday. His shirt is wet with sweat from his toil near the oven. The baker works less than a hundred yards from where the television mesmerizes his young son.

An hour later, Barkman Avenue comes more fully to life with the bright chirping of a children's program on the TV and the bustling return of the baker, Hans Bütensieder. "I'm late!" he shouts, rushing into the house. In full stride, he peels off the wet t-shirt, balls it up and—like a wrap-around hockey goal—tucks it into the corner of the laundry hamper. He tousles the boy's hair as he hurries by, declaring, "I'm gonna see a man about a horse!" before closing the bathroom door with a click.

Minutes later he emerges clean shaven and clad in a crisp, collared white shirt and white baker's pants. A black belt encircles his waist like the equator line on a classroom globe.

"Off to the credit union, I see," a pert woman says, her red head coming up from a kitchen table beneath a blizzard of baker's aprons. She sorts and folds, mid-laundry.

IFS AND BUTTERS, *cont.*

Mugging for her husband, she wraps an apron around her neck, a faux Hepburn scarf of coarse cotton.

"Today's the big day. I'll be back with the money, honey!" he grins and accepts her quick peck, "For luck!" on his Aqua Velva cheek. She accents this affection with another—a whack on his fast departing backside.

The world lays out before them, these three and soon to be four, beneath the prairie sky. Their small bakeshop is booming. A loan from the local brethren will allow for modernization and expansion.

#

The quiet boardroom is another box, rectilinear and oppressively neat from its long wooden table, to its wall of cabinets, to its new tiled floor. It smells of plaster and Sherwin-Williams paint. More than that, the place smells like money. A framed dollar bill looks down from the wall like a coat-of-arms, Elizabeth Regina overseeing all. On the bill's obverse, a heartland horizon—complete with grain elevator extant—graces the greenback.

A young man in a muted grey pinstripe suit begins the conversation. He cocks his thumb and points a Luger finger. "At which church are you a member, Mr. Bütensieder?" The baker fusses with the loan application page in front of him as he composes his answer. He tries to align the page at a right angle to the table edge. "I do not attend, I'm not a member."

"It's traditional to have a pastor's recommendation on the application," says a second pinstriper from across the smooth expanse of cherrywood. "Not a formal requirement, mind you."

A farm truck, manure spackled, backs away from the curb outside. It is rusted and the muffler has been missing for a while, Hans muses as he listens to its kettle drum exit. Things to do, places to be.

The third man across from Hans Bütensieder clears his throat. A large ledger book is open on the table before him. He pauses and gavels a loose fist on the tabletop lightly before he speaks. This is not a hand that has seen much sun, or gripped a shovel handle recently, or cinched tight a leather belt around a horse's girth. The man's skin is thin, so pale it appears bluish. "It's not just a matter of collateral, Hans. Character, community standing, faith," he pauses, hitches his shoulders and then continues after glancing at the two grey suits on his side of the table. "And of course, industry ratios, that type of thing—that's what we look for," he adds. The man, who is the Manager, the ultimate decision-maker, closes Bütensieder's ledger. As he does so, the neat rows of blue numbers seem to protest—the zeros calling out in open-mouthed desperation.

IFS AND BUTTERS, *cont.*

#

The meeting ends. Bütensieder pauses in the sunshine outside of the building. The sidewalk's chalky white concrete dazzles his eyes. He sets out, ledger in hand, leaving the meanders and their indirect windings behind him.

Plan B. Just have to see what old Heid will say. He seems like a straight shooter, for a Toronto banker. They call it the Royal Bank, but maybe they'll take a real look at the numbers. Maybe they'll see it my way, commoner or not.

Crossing the paved street, Bütensieder's footfalls echo from the macadam to the masonry façade of the bank storefront. Manager Heid waves hello through the plate-glass as the baker approaches. Heid is a stout man with smile lines at the corners of his brown eyes. His suit jacket is off and his shirt cuffs are rolled in anticipation of the coming warmth of the day.

#

"So, the Royal Bank gave you the loan?" Peter Vogel says, looking down through his spectacles. "I bank there too, you know."

"No, I didn't know that. I thought... well, it just seemed more likely..." Bütensieder replies awkwardly, then stops talking.

The two men blow on their coffee, then sip. Vogel, the taller and the older of the two and in whose kitchen they sit, motions at brown buns and a bowl of raspberry jelly across the table. He arches an eyebrow.

"Spoa enn Not; Wann Dü waut hast, dann frat goot," he says. "You know it? What that means?"

Bütensieder shrugs.

"Spare when in need; in good times, good feed."

They sup coffee conversationally.

"You wait, Hans. You'll do fine and then they'll all line up for your business. You'll get a better deal than too. Remember that and be kind, but still firm, when they show up."

"Wäa aunhelt, dee jewennt," Hans says. "Dad taught me that one."

"That's a good one. 'You'll win if you persist.'" Vogel nods and smiles at his wife who clinks at the sink in the brilliant kitchen, porcelain gleaming, chrome blintering. "Your dad, he wanted to start a new church. Way back. Didn't go over so good. His vater, your Opa, he got kicked out! But that was some dirty business. They said his team's bridles were too fancy. Now the grandsons of the guys what shunned him, they drive Cadillacs. That's a real show pony!"

IFS AND BUTTERS, *cont.*

“A horse of a different colour,” Hans agrees.

“Ya, sure,” Vogel says with a wink. He taps his wedding band on the table. “But you know, maybe it don’t matter so much, where you have your loan. Maybe it’s the passage that counts, not just the destination. How we treat each other, how we relate—how we *vetjeare*, eh? If only we could all live in our village the way we used to—a shared pasture, shared water, shared labour. They forget that, those credit union guys. In fact, we all forget that, with everything so new and shiny these days. It’s distracting!” He stops speaking and peers at the refrigerator. “Annie, do we have any butter left?” Mrs. Vogel pauses and clicks her tongue. She dries her hands on her apron and pulls down on the silver handle to unlatch the fridge door. Hans feels a puff of cool air on his arm.

With the blue butter dish now within reach on the kitchen table, Mr. Vogel regains his focus and goes on. “You think you were nervous about that meeting? Those guys were too, believe you me. Except maybe the boss. But him, you know—he cheats at crokinole, so...”

Mrs. Vogel giggles. The smell of fresh baking and perked coffee, the angled sun through the open window and the easy back-and-forth—partly English, partly Low German—makes the room a pleasant sanctuary.

“Here,” Mrs. Vogel says, pushing the buns closer to the two men. “If this and if that... Too many things to ponder for you men. Too many ifs. Like when I was a girl, and it was time to get up and go the barn, us kids would complain, “If only we didn’t have to milk the cows...” Then Opa would always say, “Wenn “wenn” nicht wäre, wäre Kuh-scheiße Buttah!”

Mr. Vogel translates, “If not for if, cow shit would be butter!” and sets the blue dish on the table in front of Hans with the faint ringing sound of glass-on-wood.

WORLD AKWAKE, Egle Makar



Materials: Digital Illustration

THE THIRTEENTH STRIKE, *J. B. Toner*

The stick, and the hilltop. The stick brings the stick-bearer back to the hill. Renny, like the others, came and comes and will come, and she always bears her stick. Her best friend Amador bears his own, and tonight is their bonfire. They start the dance, the battle-dance, swinging their sticks with every spark of power and speed in their bodies, cracking their sticks together as the warm stars kindle overhead. The others clap in time, and dance around them, and the hard rattan wood rings and clatters till the friction makes visible smoke. Then Master Cresas calls, "Break!"

When she touched her first Escrima stick, she knew. The folk of the Philippine Isles were long accustomed to wielding machetes for clearing jungle and harvesting bamboo; when the strange-eyed Spaniards came sailing in their ships of war, the natives lost no time in adapting their techniques to the harvesting of limbs. The old grim art of Escrima was in Renny's blood, and the only life-path she cared for was that of a warrior. She worked at the inn, enough to feed herself, and she slept on a battered mattress with the ants. Her life was only this: training with Master Cresas.

"Renny!" shouts the master, and she snaps to attention. "Amador!" Her burly friend does likewise. "For three years you've trained with us." The Escrimadors and student Escrimadors form a circle around them. Behind Cresas, the bonfire strains exultantly toward the windy skies. "Tonight, you become Escrimadors. Tonight, you become members of the body of our people."

Renny will bear a child one day, long hence. She'll come to this hilltop with her precious love, her Miriel. They will plant their feet beneath the same majestic moon and raise their Escrima sticks. Master Cresas will be fast asleep in the bosom of the earth, but remembered with honor whenever two Escrimadors bow to one another—just as his master will be remembered, and all masters, back to the beginning.

"Renny, why do you fight?"

She bows. "Sir, I fight for my homeland."

"Burn your stick."

She steps toward the fire. It's as tall as a man, a million flickering shades of orange. For three years, in dreams or awake, she has never not held a stick in her hand, for that is how the Escrimador learns the blade. But the stick itself is nothing, she's broken a hundred sticks. Her hand makes the stick an Escrima stick.

"Amador, why do you fight?"

"Sir, I fight for my homeland!"

"Burn your stick."

She met Amador and Manes in her first week with Master Cresas. The broad-shouldered farmboy and the whip-quick twist of sinew from the North. There

THE THIRTEENTH STRIKE, *cont.*

were twelve strikes in Escrima, and the three of them used to practice those strikes over and over, for hours, marching up and down the cobbled courtyard side by side, forever slashing at the airy target of the almost-attainable.

"We—will—be—masters!" said Renny, panting.

They hit twelve with the last word, and all three paused for breath. "You know," Amador said, stretching his arms out wide, "my old dad was an Escrimador. Now we raise beef cows. There's not much money in bein' a master."

Manes grinned. "Plenty of women and power, though."

Renny jostled him. "None of that's the point. We'll all have to work when we get out of here, but we'll go through the day being Escrimadors. Even if we're just shoveling manure for a living. It'll make everything—I don't know. Different. Better." Luminous, she wanted to say.

"Yeah, I guess," Amador said. "Be nice to know I could protect my family if a raiding party came around."

Manes shook his head, and sweat drops sleeted from his hair. "You're both crazy. You can't learn something like this and then go back to being ordinary."

"It's not like that," she insisted. "We can take this place with us. Life won't be ordinary, because we won't be. It doesn't matter if we go out and conquer the world or stay home and raise kids."

"The world, hell. A good punch doesn't stop till it's beyond the target. I'm gonna conquer the cosmos."

In the dewy grass, Amador and Renny take a knee. One of the others comes forward and hands Master Cresas a long thin bamboo box. He paces toward his students, grave and slow. In the firelight, in the corner of his eye, Renny can almost discern the crinkle of a tiny smile. The old master pulls two machetes from the box.

One of those machetes will return. On this hill they will make a fire of their own, Miriel and her mother. They will dance the battle-dance. And after, when the sun is gone, the child will ask, "Is this where you fought him, Mama?"

And Renny will slowly nod. She'll reach into the pack and draw forth her old machete. The burning logs will glimmer on the steel. The memory will come flowing like the summer wind, redolent of woodsmoke, redolent of subtlety and strength. She'll rub her left shoulder thoughtfully. The fight will be complete when it's looked back on. And as Renny rises to accept the hilt of her machete, the weapon of an Escrimador, she feels a familiar presence drawing near with the inevitability of sundown. A stir in the ranks: the circle parts. Amador exclaims, "Manes! I thought—"

"When? When did you ever think, Amador?"

THE THIRTEENTH STRIKE, *cont.*

Suddenly weary, suddenly old, Master Cresas lifts a hand for silence. "What do you seek here, Manes?"

"Only to say that I was right. There is a thirteenth strike."

He seemed obsessed. For months he tinkered with the angles of attack. "Listen," Renny said one day, "you're already faster than me and stronger than Amador. Why is it so important to out-fight Escrima itself?"

"Because there's no other way to be the best. If I don't go beyond what I'm given, then I'm nothing."

"Well. . ."

"And Cresas knows it, Renny. He's hiding it from us, all the masters are. It's their trump card in case their students should ever betray them."

"Manes," she said.

"Manes," she says.

"I told you, Renny. He wasn't teaching us. He was holding us back."

The leatherbound hilt of the master's machete creaks in his grip. "You must not challenge me, boy. Do not do this."

"It's done, old man. What, frightened of facing someone who knows your secret?"

"He's trying to spare your life, you idiot!" Amador shouts. "If you challenge him, he won't have—"

The rasp of a scabbard: Manes has brought a machete of his own. Master Cresas sighs.

"No," says Renny. "No! You can't fight him, sir, I. . . I challenge him!" She turns.

"Manes, I challenge you."

She will turn the blade, tenderly, and offer the hilt to her beautiful daughter. Miriel, somber in the starlight, will raise her small hands and take the Escrimador's weapon from her mother. The same glade, the same blade. Same wind, same earth. Same fire.

Crickets and flame. Silence. The ring of fighters widens to give them space. Cresas' face is somber, Amador's rent between anger and anguish. Renny raises her brand-new machete, and the keenness of its edge is nearly audible. When Manes bows, when he swings at her neck, the crash of metal is the crashing-together of all the times of battle and of dance. All that she is, all she has chosen to be, connects in the sweet spot two fingers down from the tip of the blade. In the healing art of Bone-touch, the students learn that every nerve point in the body reacts uniquely to pressure on any other point; and so it is with the body of their people. All the fathers and mothers of Renny and Manes have come careening to this moment of impact, and all their descendants will feel the shock when one of them ceases to be. The resonating clang

THE THIRTEENTH STRIKE, *cont.*

ripples out through every Escrimador, every Filipino—through every woman, every man, through time and space and all the burning stars.

“I will find the hidden strike!” Manes roared at Cresas. “The old ones cannot keep it to themselves forever.”

“No one wise enough to find it would be fool enough to share it with you!” the master bellowed back. It was terrible to see him lose control.

“Then I’ll find someone who will. I’ll walk among the people of Spain. They’ve made a study of our ways for generations, and I’m sure they’ve spied out your little trick by now.”

He’s faster than Renny, and stronger. And if he’s telling the truth, he’s got the thirteenth strike. She has no time for thought: she acts directly from will, from the uttermost profundity of self, forged in a lifetime of choices. Diving, rolling, parrying, she eludes him through the grass, around and around the bonfire, and their weapons sing and smash together, breaking patterns, making patterns, influencing the movements of the galaxies. Her breath is rasping in her throat. Her body is supremely conditioned, but she can’t keep this up much longer.

“I give you my strength, Mama,” Miriel will say. “I send my strength to you, back then, when you needed it.”

Renny will smile and touch her little face. “Thank you, my love. Thank you.”

She stumbles, and her enemy hacks. A ragged chunk of muscle and flesh goes spinning into the darkness; her shoulder sprays. All things merge and fade. She sees his coming victory as if already present. He has earned it: he was right. Not content with what he was given, he has pushed beyond. She’ll never learn the thirteenth strike.

The blade of Manes is rising, rising. Floating in the universe, poised above her spine. All of eternity is focused into now. And here at last, in this place of all-time-no-time, she understands. The secret is a movement, not of body, but of soul. The strike aims beyond the enemy, into a cosmos free of space and time. The thirteenth strike is death.

As the machete descends, she accepts it and offers her own. She will not dodge, nor block. She will thrust into Manes and he into her, and they will die together. The circle is closed.

When she touched her first Escrima stick, she knew. It brought her to the hill-top, and Cresas taught her the dance. *This is who I am, she thought. I choose the stick, and the stick chooses me. And our choice shines backward to my mother’s womb and shapes me there. It will shine forward to my daughter, and through her to all who come after us.* The stick in her hand was the World-Tree; every warrior held it with her.

THE THIRTEENTH STRIKE, *cont.*

Through the stick, and the hilltop, her story became one with all.

The machetes stop. Both warriors freeze, their glittering bladepoints half a millimeter from each other's throats. The wind stops to listen. Even the crickets fall quiet. And finally, slowly, Manes begins to smile. And through the dawning pain in her arm, Renny smiles as well, and then she laughs, and laughs, and weeps for joy.

My training is complete. I am a warrior, then and now and evermore. I am an Escrimador.

WILL YOU LISTEN TO US?, *Tabassum Tahmina Shagufta Hussein*

We are the unheard and unsolicited voices.
Oh! No, sometimes to you we sound like always nagging beggars.
We come from the land of green grass,
With faces of colors, dark, brown and black,
Uncivilized, ill-mannered poor creatures!
Sometimes you listen with pretense and laugh later.
We promise, we would be gentle.
Please! Listen,
If you don't, who is going to lend the ear to our misery?
You show compassion and you forget when TV camera lights are gone.
Sometimes you give us a look as we are unwanted burden.
To you we only beg and beg, to you we have big mouths to fill, your eyes only see naked beggars.
Have you ever heard of our silent cry?
We lament and lament on our misery only in vein.
Have your hearts ever heard our clamoring?
Alas you only see naked beggars driven away from home.
You talk about humanity when countless are slaughtered in the genocide.
Driven away from home, raped, slaughtered, torched, dismembered and mutilated,
You speak in the podium with such passion,
But to our cries and appeal for justice, your ears become deaf.
Queens, celebrities, Nobel laureates come, hug and go, all in vein.
Our loved ones are missing, never to be returned again.
But they have left their cries and screams in the air, to be echoed again and again.
Their cries with our cries, all in one living in the shelter of another land.
Sometimes we cry without civility, sometimes we fight, we fight for donations like dogs fighting over
bones sometimes we do illegal things, but only to survive.
We live in the camp surrounded by fences, we want to go out, just to breathe as we are tired of waiting
To go back to our land.

Note: This poem is written on the 10 million Rohingya (From Myanmar) refugees living in Bangladesh.

THE YELLOW HOUSE, *Suzie Nagy*

stands unsure, abandoned, & overgrown.
Tall willows sway back & forth & back to you—

*catching bullfrogs with bare hands, knotted knees,
& long, matted hair. You, with tawny freckles,
wide eyes, youthful courage,*

& unflinching laughter.

*You, jumping into algae-filled ponds, gulping
lungfuls of hot Indiana air, climbing*

*to the roofs of sturdy barns, to the tops
of Cottonwoods. You, chasing dragonflies
through cattails, hunting crawdads
and crinoids in shallow creek beds,
lifting slabs of sandstone & limestone
in search of lizards.*

*You, chasing rabbits through Kentucky Bluegrass &
plucking cicada skins from the underbellies
of tree branches.*

*You, running barefoot through fields of wildflowers;
You, watching cumulus clouds turn into daytime thunderstorms;
& you, catching raindrops on your tongue before
mom yells for you to come home.*

BEARDTONGUE, *Suzie Nagy*

A freckled girl sits on a corner stool cradling a Gretsch;
wrapping her left hand into two, maybe three, note chords.
A brunette girl pushes through the macramé wooden bead
curtain into an eclectic Victorian rug room and unpacks
an Alvarez covered in illegible sharpied verses.

The girls introduce themselves, awkwardly, then play songs.

The freckled girl invites the brunette to her house;
when they arrive, the brunette girl recognizes the foxglove
beardtongue field that wraps itself snugly behind the house
to be the same field that runs beside her own home nearby.

The girls giggle, write songs, eat veggie burgers, swap books,
share mixtapes, ride tandem bikes, try vodka, tequila,
homemade beer, pose for pictures, sleep in each other's beds,
take off each other's shirts, kiss.

The freckled girl steals a bottle of scotch and meets
the brunette by the foxglove field at sunset
on a Tuesday and they both sip slowly in the hazy heat.

The freckled girl pulls a foxglove from the ground,
hesitates, passes it to the brunette. They breathe evenly,
listening to bug static, watching the last semblances
of light slip beneath darkness.

Two months go by and the brunette girl stops coming.
The freckled girl sees the foxglove beardtongues
from her bedroom window and watches them bend
beneath the wind.

TREMULOUS DROPS OF SILVER, *Prem Sylvester*

My love smiles at the wanderers her eyes graze;
a supple gesture, uncreasing the space between.
Her radiance is easy to behold, bright-lipped. Yet,

she falters at times, unsure of entrusting strangers
with the joy she's fought so hard to keep. Kindness
is radical expression, antipathy a tired violence.

Moonglow takes a shine to my love. Her canthi
clasp the skies, folding away the blue in their lines.
We are not promised happiness, but persist in the flicker.

LANDSCAPING FOR POETS, *Prem Sylvester*

i built a town for all the people who live in my poems.
they inhabited bungalows with sinking foundations.

the shape of memory is humanoid. these dramatis personae dot
the windows to my pumice soul; i dreamed them with my own hands.
my parents chose the colour of our walls - i'm learning to repaint them.
i laid out unbending roads. no unplanned intersections.
but these fresh alleys that join branches are not of my design.
laughter circles that litter the parks ripple out of a mossy hollow.
free of kudzu, dancers rejoice in spaces that were stoney performance.
my paper houses, dwellings of solitude. bricked us all in.
why did i put up fences where words are currency?
now i bid these cages of concrete keel over, surrender to floral dust.
artists. architects. lovers. brothers-in-locked-arms. sisters-of-salvation
built us homes whose doors will remain unlocked.

bright. ebullient. open-hearted. organic. open-skied. personal. communal.
we stir awake to shake off my cobwebs. poetry is spring cleaning.

LIFE ON WATER, *Bukunmi Oyewole*



Materials: Digital Photo

THE DUPLEX, *Robert Boucheron*

To relieve a housing shortage after World War II, cities in the United States allowed landlords to build two houses on a lot meant for one, two two-story units jammed together with a block wall down the middle, a side-by-side arrangement called the duplex. They were mirror images, as likely as not. Their street doors shared a front porch and a paved walk flanked by sickly junipers and sparse grass. Both sides were painted the same dust gray or mud-puddle brown. To mask the monotony, a flimsy rail loitered on the porch, a prefab plastic doodad in the eaves.

The duplex nettled the purist. Was the structure a whole, the sum of two halves, an awkward pair? The inhabitants closed their eyes to the problem. The public saw right through it. The party wall rode astride the roof like a dorsal fin. It was justified as needful in case of fire. One dwelling of the duplex might burn to the ground, while the other would stand unscathed, intact, and able to generate rental income.

In the social climate of the 1950s, nobody wanted to live in an apartment, where strangers walked over your head at all hours or lurked underfoot. To live under your own roof, with both feet planted firmly on the ground, was essential. Along with the bungalow, the prefabricated or mobile home, and the "little boxes made of ticky-tacky," the duplex proliferated.

A generation passed. By the 1980s, sociologists noted unforeseen problems. Among duplex dwellers, life expectancy dropped, the divorce rate jumped, and overall satisfaction with things in general slipped. Cheap construction was to blame, it was thought, along with polluted air and water, domestic crime, and illicit drugs. Surveys piled up in government offices, stories appeared in newspapers, and footage aired on local television. An image rose from the negative data like a ghost from the grave. Dr. Todd Rickshaw in the *Journal of Formal Analysis* observed: "A complete and meaningful existence cannot be led in a duplex. The balance of work and leisure is thrown off. With only half a house in which to flex elbows and envision the future, a person lives a tenuous half-life. Marriage is strained to the breaking point. The single-parent household becomes the norm. Only the lonely remain."

Effects on childhood development were worse. The one-sided nature of duplex life inhibited well-roundedness. Those raised in left-hand units favored social change, fair wages, organized labor, and progressive candidates. Children of right-hand units skewed to patriotic slogans, law-and-order politics, and the strong-man theory. Personality types correlated with the number of years at an A or B address. A-types were prone to aggression and stress, while B-types tended to be slow and lethargic. A similar pattern was observed in houses chopped into Up and Down apartments.

Building codes adapted, and zoning fashions shifted. The duplex lost ground. Urban

THE DUPLEX, *cont.*

planners and real estate moguls came to see its double nature no longer as a quirk of design, but as an unbearable ambiguity. The garden apartment, the townhouse, and the artist studio over the garage—these were the new affordable way to live.

Existing duplexes were allowed to decay, while new construction was no longer permitted. Some owners combined two units to make a normal house by breaking through the party wall. They removed one staircase and one kitchen and gussied up what was left. Where the in-town location had become desirable, other owners demolished duplexes to make way for upscale condos, luxury apartments, and mixed-use multi-story megaplexes.

In the rush to redevelop, no one spared a thought for the humble duplex as a historical relic. It survives here and there, sadly neglected and severely depreciated on the owner's income tax returns. Tenants use feng shui to evade bad karma, as one might call in an exorcist. Immigrants do not know the duplex was once considered a menace to public health. The landscape of crooked appraisals and backroom deals on loans secured by real property is terra incognita to renters who in other respects are smart shoppers.

Will the wheel of fortune turn? The two-for-one special is a deal too good to banish forever. The duplex may rise again. It won't look like a sharecropper shack, a tenant farm house, or a millworker cottage. Less dull and dreary, the new duplex will be offset and irregular. One half will present a gable to the street, while the other will have its own front porch. One door will be shifted to the side, and windows will vary. The party wall will be cunningly concealed, and the roofline will be picturesque. Life will be gay, if still on a budget. The duplex will welcome all colors and creeds, even those who have no agenda and simply want to be left alone.

TROUBLESHOOTING, *Will Long*

There are days I am overheating.

I learned to turn myself off and back on again
Blow out the dust clouding my headspace

Try unplugging myself.

And plugging back in a headphone jack
I have a playlist for certain days and a song for each feeling

I like music that brings the heat down to a simmer
To let my heart cook well done

I replaced my batteries or even sometimes just switching their places works too

I keep a soft cloth for these times
Sometimes it helps to caress the dirt off the lenses I use to look upon this world

FATHER'S HATS, *Laurie Kolp*

For giggles, you once wore what you called
a *yellow-bellied sap-sucker* tux with a captain's hat
to the symphony formal ball,

and for a New Year's Eve picture, you wore
pink fuzzy slippers on your head, a silly look
on your face with eyes crossed, tongue stuck out

before it was cool to wag like that. After
a broken relationship, you drove the U-Haul
100 miles, helped me sneak all my stuff out

while my ex was at work, made sure I had a safe
place to stay. That was when you wore a baseball cap.
And when I came down with acute pancreatitis

you were sitting beside my hospital bed
when I opened my eyes, telling me everything
would be alright, your halo invisible until now.

AT THE EMOTIONAL BORDER, *Tares Oburumu*

Between the getting down
& the taking off,

The Grand Station blows people
in & out of its lungs like a child
playing with balloons.

Finally, the society of émigrés,
finally, a school of sardines
swims into the mouth of a shark
open to the net at the end
of its bursting ocean.

At the seeming end, I recognize Danny
the boy, who is from the creek of John;
a place they say is farther away from
Heaven because it's in the South.

I call Tam by memory. There's an abyss
to cross. Pressed tautly against
the country in us
we push forth to die from Exodus.

Someone steps on my identity.
Elsewhere, a man is screaming at Jesus.

MEETING HALF OF MY SHADOW, *Tares Oburumu*

I have something dark.
& the darkness is not dark
unless there's light.
It loves the light so much
it follows the day
like a guardian angel,
& the night like a ghost.

Appearances & disappearances.
Incomplete until I decided
I should be a narcissist
of my own umbrage. Or illumination.
The sun throws
a sheet of rectangular
pellicle between the blinds
into the darkness of
my mind absorbing a room
divided in shades & furniture,
books & spider- webs,
scattered concepts & concerns
for Christian Science,
Idols for every country,
offering me a chair
& a vision of myself
transfigured by extension.

Quickly, it floats on the light,
the stranger I have been waiting for,
the spirit I have been trying to body;
the shape of everything I have become
through time, debris & examen.

Nothing here is discovery.
Except the voice that says "You are my light"
& I do not understand.

what's light?

JELLYFISH, *Katie Hébert*

My brother got stung by a jellyfish once.
And I, being the bratty little sister, only worsened the pain,
I mean... I literally threw a doll at the wound
I mean he stopped trusting me.
Stopped seeing me as companion,
Started seeing sibling redacted,
Pushed me back into the lagoon as payback.
 Got mad because I cried,
 Got mad because he could not.

I am terrified of men's anger.
I watch my brother and dad talk in fists,
 already using violence to teach each other the language of masculinity,
 while my mother and I are in the next room sharing tears.
I watch my brother throw a punch,
 making this playroom a battleground, a competition to assert his dominance.
 And he wins, of course.

I hear a crash and his voice echoes down to Amsterdam Avenue.
I am trying to hide but it is too late.
How many curse words has he thrown at me in place of "sister"?
How many plates has he broken in an attempt to get the last word?

Gray is growing in,
I can't recall seeing him cry when our mother died.
Look how pain becomes our parents' ashtrays, stubbed out on his skeleton,
How burnt out and infectious this disease dries up into.

My heart, a dead jellyfish.
I brought it on myself I suppose,
I stung him, right?
Taught him how he can hurt but cannot show it,
Isn't that what boys are supposed to know?
Aren't I just helping him?

JELLYFISH, *cont.*

Am I as carnivorous as he makes me out to be?
How deeply have I hurt him where he started stinging before any threat is presented?
Or, am I the threat?
Was he told from my birth that I was this parasitic monster,
Ready to strangle him with the umbilical cord that was ready to strangle me?

Our relationship hinges on the odds of regeneration.
We have our good days; days where we can swim freely.
Saturday morning, you can catch us skipping underneath clouds like flowers,
Waving nets, chasing jellyfish.
A compromise that can drown us in a second,
But, here, no one is stinging.
Here, no one is getting hurt.

He must see me as this Medusa descendant,
Avoids spending time with me to not turn into stone,
again.

How I am all preparation for the unknown dangers of the sea - -
If his little sister is like this, who knows what lurks beneath the depths?
Of course he puts a guard up, of course he keeps stinging.
I can't blame him for doing so, I scared him.
Showed him emotion and denied him of it
Rubbed my valid vulnerability in his face
Presented him danger,
And he reacted accordingly
Like boys
are supposed to.

He pulls the boneless creature from the water,
Takes joy in watching it lose its breath.

WHEN A BOY TELLS YOU HE WANTS TO FUCK YOU, *Katie Hébert*

When a boy tells you he wants to fuck you
but only after you lose weight.

My body has never failed me,
But I have failed her from the start.
I have told her that this life is not something she will succeed in,
That her marrow is acidic,
and letting her melt is a hell of a lot easier than trying to mold her
because I know she will not fit.

When my brother is flipping through his high school yearbook,
I listen as he mocks girls' bodies,
And talks about how fat this girl's arms are,
How bad she looks in her prom dress
And I picture myself carved out to fit into my mother's wedding gown.

And when a boy on Tinder wants to see me,
I wonder what his motive is.
What kind of game my body is to him.
What kind of trap he is hiding for me under his covers.

I am a museum
And people either want to steal the archives,
want to vandalize the artifacts,
or don't stay around long enough to check out all the exhibits.
I am a ghost town of art that is quickly collecting dust.

And when I get rejected by a different boy for the millionth time,
I wonder if it is because of my body.
Because he works out everyday
and my stomach is ripping through every pair of leggings.
He just benched 225 and that's exactly how much I weigh.
And he talks about the other girls he's hooked up with
and I do not look like a single one of them.

Tom tells me he wants to fuck me

WHEN A BOY TELLS YOU HE WANTS TO FUCK YOU, *cont.*

but I need to lose weight first;
I am only valued when I am skinny, when I am smaller--
Tom cannot dominate over something bigger than him.

I don't care what comes out of this because I don't care what I put in,
I have cut and scratched and picked and peeled away at this skin,
Wanting to rip through this prison of a body,
find home in the people who only want to hurt me.
I am waiting for her to fall apart at any moment,
Because that's the only thing I know how to do.

But she has not failed me.
She is stronger than I think.
My stretch marks are signs that I am ever growing,
so loud that my skin cannot contain the volume of my soul.
I might cry every day, but at least I can feel something worth crying about
That my heart's still pumping enough to add emotions to its to-do list.

I am allowed to take up space.
And Tom's greasy hair and floral button ups and memes--
which are attempts to compensate for the fact that he can't play drums--
Is not going to tell me to shrink to his bed size.
A Queen deserves a fortress, so get me a bigger mattress,
And I will take up all the space
until I can find someone who is willing to accommodate my curves,
To take the hike up my mountains,
And not try to alter the topography of the only home I've ever known.

And body, I now understand how you feel.
you have always been the one who loved me most
And I have always rejected you.
I have always tried to move away
But you never tried to evict me.

And I promise--
I'll come home.

In the wet, early summer, while traveling to see family in Southern India, Mahesh Rao made a side trip to a temple and monastery complex to buy a book written by a previous Acharya of the monastery. He had learned it was available at the little book-stall just inside the temple's assembly hall. The tin roof and exposed iron struts of the hall gave it a makeshift feel, even though it had been built in the Twenties and had firmly withstood the burning sun and heavy seasonal rains. Its shoddy appearance seemed almost an affront to the stout temple that stood nearby, every inch of its fine-grained stone carved and painted, an edifice that belonged to a loftier age, the home of gilded and bejeweled and garlanded deities and saints, solid as the granite hills from which its stones had been cut on the orders of some long-departed, pious king. He had not intended to see the present Jagadguru during his visit, but Mahaswami was holding an audience in the assembly hall, and Mahesh, having no other pressing engagement that day, found himself impulsively joining the large crowd of pilgrims seated on the concrete floor. The Jagadguru was extremely thin, almost skeletal, and wore a simple, bright saffron robe. A rudraksha garland hung around his neck, and his forehead, arms and chest bore three even lines of sacred ash. His speech was mostly in Telugu, a language that Mahesh did not know well, with an occasional English sentence thrown in now and then. The holy man seemed bothered and distracted. Mahesh could only guess that he was having an off day.

After the Acharya's address, Mahesh stayed on a bit, along with many of the other pilgrims, for a free meal offered in a makeshift dining area consisting of wooden tables and metal folding chairs hurriedly set up in two of the damp, poorly lit outer hallways of the monastery building. They were serving rice and spiced sour lentil porridge on banana leaves, coconut chutney and milk pudding sweetened with jaggery, along with rounded moons of warm sorghum flatbread folded like napkins, and bottles of Coca-Cola. He sat next to a well-dressed family from Sirsi: mother, father and two sons, who appeared more delighted with the meal than by their darśana of the Jagadguru. The two dark-haired little boys kept asking the three elderly women who were serving for more rice, and bread, and sour lentils, until the women sharply upbraided them, calling them a pair of greedy monkeys.

After finishing the savory and satisfying noontime meal, Mahesh decided to take a stroll in one of the monastery gardens before heading back to town. As he wandered between the banana and tamarind trees, the lanes of colossal shrubs whose names were unfamiliar to him, through scorching, sultry, fragrant air; amid red, and pink, and yellow flowers, the stingless bees, and aging, leaky water taps, he found himself face to face with the Jagadguru himself, who was peacefully alone, sweating profusely as

DARSHAN, *cont.*

he walked, slowly and thoughtfully, with his head slightly bent, up and down an uneven clay and flagstone path. Their gaze met for only a moment, and he halted in that instant to say to Mahesh, in perfect English, "We are always looking over other people's shoulders like an inquisitive guest. We must, instead, look directly out of our own eyes, the eyes of the ātman."

Before going on his way, Mahesh bought a copy of the little volume that he had been hoping to find at the monastery. A gentle, intellectual-looking young monk wearing large horn-rimmed glasses was tending the bookstall where he made his purchase. He asked Mahesh if he would return again to visit the temple.

"I will certainly return here, but not for the sake of the temple. I'll only revisit the matha to hear the Master's words."

THE RED CAPE, Sandra PARIS



Materials: Pen and Colored Pencil on Paper

SHE'S WAITING, Sandra PARIS



Materials: Pen and Colored Pencil on Paper

UNTITLED, Sandra PARIS



Materials: Pen and Colored Pencil on Paper

MOON FLOWERS, *Mitsuko Takayasu*

A dull sky
warns us of an approaching typhoon.
A wet wind blows
and slowly wraps an unpleasant color around my fragile body
as if singing "Wind the Bobbin Up."

Even though the shrill of cicadas in August
annoys me,
I still identify with them,
perhaps because the end of summer tastes bitter.

In the middle of the night,
moon flowers come into bloom in quiet,
dressed in pure white.

As a painting descends from the night sky,
the moon flowers in bloom in the darkness
make my heart throb with excitement.

Ants go marching
from the stamens to the pistils
inside the numerous petals
in search of life.

After a long stroll with my husband,
the fragrant aroma of the moon flowers
places our hearts into a cradle of twilight
and rocks us gently.

The typhoon may bring a lot of rain
to keep us from taking a rest.

Note: Translated by Toshiya Kamei.

SO I DID, *Paul Robert Mullen*

i left my heart in your
city in a paper bag
so be sure
to keep it warm until
i return

don't leave it near the windowsill
because my time is on
loan and a cold heart won't fit
within these bones

massage it to the beat of your
dancing feet
 lightly press it
caress it
stoke the embers
 lay it down and let it sleep

yours is mine
all in good time
and mine is yours
to keep

THE TANNING SITUATION, *Juanita Rey*

A tan?
What do I want with a tan?
I was born with one.

But I tag along the beach
with friends.
It's summer.
If I want to be with them,
I have no other choice.

So we sprawl on the sand,
rub ourselves with cream
because skin cancer's like God—
it sees all races as equal.

And we feel the sun
on our flesh.
To them it's a novelty.
To me, a reminder.

But they are not jealous of me
because I'm nutmeg brown.
We laugh about it
but they really do want to
attain that color
without having to speak Spanish
along the way.

So, for all their tan-worship,
I am the odd one out here.
That's not my goal,
merely my inspiration.

[AN UNREMARKABLE AFTERNOON], *Justine Aubrie*

Picking pennies from broken glass
seemed an innocuous afternoon;
nothing struck me as odd about the children
bending over twisted metal
to find these small treasures.
We never saw the engine smoking;
the hood was only warmed by the sun.
Dad assured us the driver was fine
and I, who did not know what happens
when a life is flipped on a corner like that,
believed him. He told us she had given permission
for us to take even the quarters.
When I drive now and hear the coins rattling
in the cupholder, I have so little memory
of their merry jangle in heavy pockets
on an unremarkable afternoon.

[A WALKING FUNERAL], *Justine Aubrie*

I am a walking funeral
for the ungraceful femininity
I used to be.

This funeral has never seen a house of god
this funeral has no mourners;
it has only celebration.

Only stories about a life well lived.

Do you remember?

Wasn't she beautiful?

Wasn't she brilliant?

I wear these mourning colors
because they make my body look exactly like I want it to,
let me love my body exactly like I want me to.

I am the ghost and the good time,
the feast and the feasters
full on my own soft curves
and unashamed of the life left here.

[FADE TO FABLE], *Justine Aubrie*

I think, perhaps, if I stopped trying
to turn childhood trauma into poetry
I might be less inclined to relive it,
might start the slow, arduous forgetting,
might forgive by default
when I no longer rinse and swallow neglect
or sprinkle shame over my eggs,
let it be less morning routine,
more once upon a time
maybe then it would fade into fable.

BOWL OF CHERRIES, *Bethanie Melcher*

Bones stitched up with sap
Let me tap the tree a bit longer
Make your lungs sweeter

I wish your hair was made of dandelions
So when it would turn white I'd pick a couple strands
And let the wind scatter the seeds

You'd be everywhere

I like robins because they take worms out of their caves
And introduce them to the sky
I like the way the space glitters
When you stand next to me

Give me a bowl of cherries
Stain my lips red
Open the apple
Kiss me on the mouth

Redness rich and you beside me

ODE TO PMS, *Bethanie Melcher*

There is a swiftness to your presence. You rip into my ribcage fast enough for my heart to see stars land on every emotional universe. This week, I will cry when my pen writes her name. I will let the music find its way into my marrow. I will have dreams of running away before bullets. I will decorate my room with the words that have hurt and wake up the next day without them stuck to my lungs. I will draw a garden of everything unhealed. I will pick the flowers next month, and hope I am a fern in another life.

I feel like that patch of snow on the grass, like the untied shoelaces of a child, like the last breath of a mouse. No, I feel like the photographs of my ancestors, like an art museum, like a well-received letter. I feel like the earth. Humans are knives. I will find the new world waiting under wine and blankets and words. Let me be.

Thank you for your hands, softening and gripping and softening again. I taste the salt of the white waves crashing against my insides. Thank you for allowing me to feel the way my womanhood moves. Until the blood I am both left in the pocket of someone else's coat and a monument of me. Thank you for making everything so hard, and so holy.

MORE INFORMATION ON TURNPIKE

What is Turnpike?

Turnpike is a literary and art magazine that focuses on fulfilling themes and underrepresented voices.

What does Turnpike do?

Turnpike focuses on the changes and shifts that confuse and bewilder us; moments of decisive passion, breaths of fresh air, and all the tiny and gigantic things that facilitate our growth find their place here.

We publish new issues every other month, featuring visual art, poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and anything else you've deemed worthy of sharing. Anything that's especially difficult to describe, explain, or contain in one genre is also more than welcome.

Why "Turnpike?"

We chose the name "Turnpike" to indicate a deviation, or turn from what is expected. So often in the creative community do we focus on one type of voice and one type of theme. In our personal experience with literary journals, we noticed a consistent focus on trauma and misfortune that, while important, can become kind of damper on mental health. Additionally, we noticed that other publications may not highlight LGBTQ+ folk, persons of color, and other marginalized identities.

Our turn from the norm is to provide content based on more positive themes and to provide a space for voices that may be underrepresented in other media. While other publications that explore aforementioned voices and themes are helpful and important, we strive to deviate, to be refreshing and vulnerable in a new way.

Let us know what you think of our latest issue!

– the turnpike team

*Questions? Visit: www.turnpikemagazine.com
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