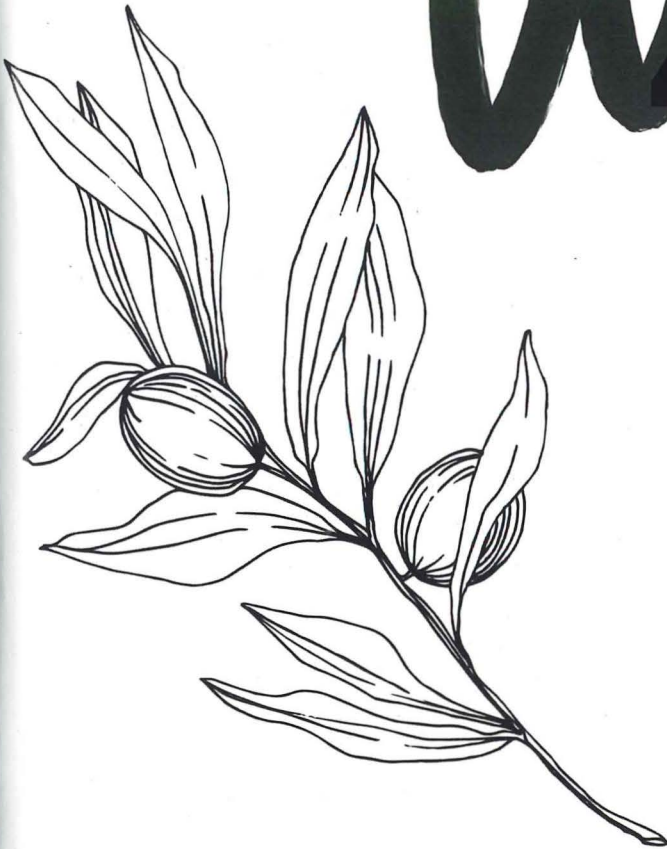


Vol 21 2019

W49



Philip Beattie
Will Dansereau
Yuko Kojima
Simon Lam
Kirra Little
Joshua Rae
Evelin Rodrigues da Silva
Brydon Saukarookoff
Megan Yeomans
Mary Zhu

W49

WRITING CONTEST WINNERS



2019

Design by Caroline Kim

editorial

Welcome to the 21st edition of W49, Langara College's magazine for award-winning poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction written by current and former Langara students. Much appreciation to all who have assisted in the creation of this year's edition, including Josue Menjivar of Langara's Department of Publishing, Darren Bernaerdt from Creative Arts, Langara librarian Allison Sullivan, Susan Smith for advertising assistance, Jessica Wong in Communications, Betty Ing in Facilities, Jonathan Howard in Print Services, and Langara English department's esteemed panel of judges: Peter Babiak, Deborah Blacklock, Sandra Friesen, Trevor Newland, Kathleen Oliver, Thor Polukoshko, Daniel Poirier, Erin Robb, Roger Semmens, and Jacqueline Weal. A special thanks to Caroline Kim for her dedication and excellent work in the design and layout of this year's edition.

Warm thanks to the authors of the published selections and to all contestants – we hope that you will continue to write and submit in the future. And thanks, finally, to all readers and supporters of W49!

Guy Wilkinson

Editor

Sept. 2019

table of contents

FICTION. 9

1st

Me... A Vancouver Special Story, Simon Lam 11

2nd

Amos' Roommates, Yuko Kojima 16

honourable mentions

For Mother, Brydon Saukarookoff 22

The Trip, Philip Beattie. 26

CREATIVE NON FICTION 31

1st

Singing the Body Electric, Will Dansereau 33

2nd

Why I Became a Mormon, Joshua Rae 39

honourable mentions

Hope Knows Better, Evelin Rodrigues da Silva 44

Ms. Dodgy, Usual(ly) Suspects, Yuko Kojima 48

POETRY. 55

1st

An Elegy to The Peach Tree, Mary Zhu 57

2nd

House Fire, Kirra Little. 59

honourable mentions

Gliding in Circles, Yuko Kojima 61

Coquihalla, Megan Yeoman. 63

Matryoshka, Mary Zhu. 64

Drowning, Kirra Little 66

THE LANGARA WRITING CONTEST. 69

fiction

ME, THE SOUL OF MY DEAD TURTLE WHO
PROBABLY REINCARNATED INTO A BETTA
FISH AND THEN FINALLY A GUPPY, AND ME
AGAIN—HOW, WHY AND WHERE RENTAL LIFE
LEADS TO HEALTHY LIVING, ESPECIALLY
WHEN WE ALREADY HAVE SUCH STATIC LIVES
TO BEGIN WITH. IN OTHER WORDS, HUMANS
ARE MARINE ANIMALS; THEREFORE, WE
SHOULD LIVE MARINE LIVES OR:

A VANCOUVER SPECIAL STORY

Simon Lam

This rotting cardboard sign tore into my vision as I got off the 99 bus at Commercial. I was hungry, I was tired, my physical space had been violated by the other passengers, I don't have change—but I could not get enough of what the red ink said on the back of his (some ancient vagrant) pineapple box. I took out my thin wallet—not to give any loose change but to pull out my debit card—but I stood there on the busy pavement by the CIBC, and I thought that sometimes, I forget that I'm looking at a person without a home. I don't talk to any of them. I don't acknowledge them. The feeling of them not existing for most people doesn't change. But sometimes, I like to think that they must have some kind of story. A Vancouver Special story, like this: Look, I am not a 7:30 person. I wake up to a 7:31 alarm—I add the extra minute to the alarm of my Casio watch to taste each fruity second of the sweet sixty. And just in case the first alarm fails to move me, I set an extra alarm on my Seiko watch to go off a minute later. The first alarm is something I can almost anticipate, like a four percent annual home rental increase, but the second alarm is an angry junkie barring the entrance to a Tim Hortons—with a bloody needle. The broken bed that I wake up to alarms me; the crusty ceiling that I look up to alarms me. I am alarmed by the Vancouver Special that I currently live in because

I've lived in seven different Vancouver Specials—because it is alarming to remember which of the shapeless Vancouver Specials were the ones that my former pets have died in. I am restless as I rise from my gravelly bed, yet my eyelids curtain themselves from the formless animals and thoughtless dreams. I am imprisoned by this Vancouver Special, but I'll have you know that I am not far gone; I will be going to where the rules of Newton bend for no man—nor creature—beyond the browning lawn of this dollhouse. My eyes are shut, but it is clear to me that I'll be going to the Tank Beyond. I awake to a one gallon nightmare of a turtle's man-made den. From lucid naps, instead of ignorant rest, my shell points towards the bottom of the bowl—in very much the same way that a human would probably sleep, with its pink backside on the bottom of its bed-bowl. The round prison that the I live in loops; coated on the wall, there is a persistent green film of microbes which peels off in strips and becomes entangled with my slimy webbed feet. If I were to swim clockwise from one end of the glass wall, I'm almost certain that I could meet my own decaying tail. There are no rocks, no gravel, no plastic reeds—only me, the glass, the microbes. If I were to flip myself up, I could not be able to see past five inches because the strips emulsify themselves into the hydrogen-oxygen concoction that I call the air. Seeing through this haze is like pressing your eyes against a dusty television—while wearing someone else's glasses. I'm a beggar and I need your spare change—or any other type of change. I think back to when my turtle was alive. I ignored it, like the bums that used to dot Kingsway. Every time that I fed my turtle, it would always find a way to right itself up. I could imagine it saying, “thanks buddy,” and not “can I have a dollar for a ride downtown?” A clenched human hand, the size of Science World, lurches above my home and opens its fingers to release edible pellets the size of Canadian Geese—or common loons—onto the golden surface of the water. For my turtle, I would feed my turtle once in the morning and once at night—if you lived here, you probably couldn't really tell the time of day, other than it was either dawn or dusk. The golden pellets descend slowly to the bottom, as if they were negotiating with a losing used car salesman from craigslist. Each pellet hitting the glass floor feeds and gives birth to billions of new microbes, creating the green haze of water that me and my turtle would choke on. The giant hand above retracts itself into the nothingness of the sky, only to reveal that from the same stagnant sky, a persistent light bulb beaming down forever. Not even

closed eyelids shield me or the turtle from this microscopic orgy. The Top Fin® 1 Gallon Liquidy Split Aquarium—my turtle’s Vancouver Special—isn’t any place for anyone to call home. I latch onto one of the pellets like a hungry stranger with a dull saw to a locked bike. But my claws shatter from a brittle grip. A warm net, the size of David Suzuki’s ego, swallows my drifting body. I’m being taken to the Tank Beyond—I think. The biOrb® CLASSIC 8 Gallon LED Aquarium certainly felt like the new world. Like an escalator to an empty skytrain platform, I dive into the welcoming water of the clear tank. When I right myself up, I notice something strange: the omission of a green lens and the addition of flickering white lights erupting from the base of the tank. Then I notice something stranger: I could see red fins—my red fins. They were pure ribbons that twist and curl like tracks of a skytrain that dip out of a ground tunnel. I propel myself forward and dart back, with my dancing fins wrapping around my own body. Back and forth, and back again. It is as if an indecisive Nordstrom clerk is dressing a store mannequin for a funeral—or for someone who swam close to green death. But this new world and me—its elegant inhabitant shakes me. I could see through the emptiness of the water, but I could also feel the water’s loneliness. In this world, there was only me—a betta—and the water—illuminated by white LEDs. Like a red can of Pepsi in a bouquet of Starbucks Frappuccinos. Like a single stalk of brown hay in a stack of silver needles. Like a townhouse painted in red, alone in a sea of pink Vancouver Specials. Is this world not the Tank Beyond? In this dance of questions, I see the unreal: another fish. Not wanting to alarm my newest friend, I wave my delicate dorsal—he waves back! I knew then that we would become brothers—or lovers? I draw myself closer to my newest friend, who seems to be fixed on his end of the tank. But his eyes reflected a desire of want—camaraderie, or destiny. During the approach, I go for a spin. And I stop—I see red fins. His thin eyes match up with mine and I think of the ultimate sin: there is room for only one Siamese fighting fish in the biOrb® CLASSIC 8 Gallon LED Aquarium. I fire up my new maroon gills in the same way that God fires down lightning and hail—sorry brother. With Cain-like moxie, I become a thunderbolt towards Abel. In the midst of this biblical passage, I sunder past him—THUMP—and gravity unites me and my mirror into one entity. I ascend to the surface of this faux Tank. My red fins fade into the water like a light bulb flickering out. Darkness—but from the sky above, the same hand from

the turtle's home cuts into the tank. The All-Knowing hand, with fingers of ribbons, giftwraps my red whole like it's Christmas and evolves me to a higher plane of existence—by dumping me into a toilet bowl—FLUSH. Maybe I'll be swimming into the right bible verse this time. And where I end up is where I always wanted to be in the first place—a nautical paradise. The ozonated water is sourced from the mighty rivers of Victoria, Australia. Egyptian gravel—pre-washed—rests on the floor of this 45 gallon Eden. Composed of the finest rocks and minerals, the silky gravel is gently groomed with an anti-static vacuum—bi-monthly—to ensure optimal comfort and limited waste levels. Prime placement of artificial fauna—direct from the Amazon—gifts its curious inhabitants the ample opportunities to explore the boundless space (without fear of injury). Centrally embedded within all the homely greens, crystalline blues, and craggy rocks, is the RMS Titanic (a miniature), which makes its own triumphant splash on the scene—this is real majesty. Rounding out aquatic bliss are the four walls of gas-tempered glass, complete with seven-stage filtration and luxury hood. The masters of this fish tank can always see in, while its inhabitants could sometimes see out. There simply is no tank beyond the Tank Beyond. Life in captivity might be fleeting but for its inhabitants, life is good—what more is there to live for? Because it's definitely better when you don't have to worry about your next meal. Because it's certainly better to live on the inside than it is to be flushed out. Because if you can't accept the Tank Beyond, you might as well be homeless. You could be waking up in an alley on a raining November morning. It's 7:32—the alarm on your Seiko watch goes off, which captures your escaping dreams. You are awake. You did not vomit last night, I think. You rise up from your cardboard bed—with some Georgia Straights padding out the sheets, it's not so bad. Your humble Vancouver Special is nested between two dumpsters belonging to the No Frills closest to Main Street. The joints flare up. The back hunches down. You're standing on your two sockless feet—your left foot goes into a size nine sandal while most of your right foot goes into a size seven-and-a-half tennis shoe. By 8:00, it's rush hour at Tim Hortons and you're holding the door for other people. You just need a dollar for a ride downtown—thanks, buddy. So with that story about Vancouver being said, I think I'm still going to hold onto my loose change. I mean, we use compass cards to ride transit, right? Everything's tap with credit cards, right? Does anyone ever give change? As I justified my perpetual apathy

on the pavement next to the vagrant, some woman walked by me and dumped her loose change into the vagrant's baseball cap. "Thanks, miss." She smiled, and then disappeared into the CIBC.

AMOS' ROOMMATES

Yuko Kojima

December 19, 2019

Upon entering the pub, I raise a V-sign to the bartender, who's half-hidden behind a huge array of knickknacks like Calaveras and old clocks. He nods and disappears. The radio plays cheesy Christmas music, which always reminds me of the world not caring for people who are alone and disgusted about Christmas. As I settle at my regular counter seat, the bartender stretches his arms out from the opening of the junk, banging two Stellas down on the counter in front of me.

"Your umbrella's still there," he adds, pointing with his chin to the black bin beside the entrance.

Damn it! I left my umbrella, again. I shove one of the glasses to K, who's been joining me at this pub for years.

"My prrrrofessor!!"

Jen, one of the regular drunks, who's already three sheets to the wind, spots me. She's ridiculing me, again, because I used to be a professor, indeed. She claims that her huge mop of hair, which reminds me of Arizona tumbleweed, protects her from aliens. I hate all those illogical airheads. My ex-wife would always reproach me for being arrogant, harsh, and judgmental. Well, that was kind of my job: to be important, strict, and judgmental. What's wrong with that?

"Tell me, tell me. What's the theory of relatives, again?" Jen rushes right over. "Come, Prof. Let's have a cheers before the spacemen attack us..."

Cutting in between Jen and me, K gestures for her to halt and utters, "Leave him alone," with smiling lips, yet a threatening glance. While Jen grumbles and staggers back to her seat, K adjusts his posture and

takes a sip. He's a quiet and reserved man. He doesn't have an academic background, but he's not like the other morons out there.

He broaches, "It happens, Amos. Even youth nowadays get into similar kinds of trouble sometimes."

Earlier in the day, I locked myself out, again. Since I'd already locked myself out three times since Mom died, I'd left the key with K, and he had to come over and unlock my front door, this afternoon, again. As I was shocked and embarrassed, K suggested that we should go out for a pint. K's the nicest man in the world.

I gulp down my beer. "I know. I may have lost my mind, though, just like my mom. I might speak to a chair at midnight someday..." I expect K to laugh it off with me.

"You're tired after caring for your mom for fifteen years. It's been seven weeks since she passed away. Your mind and body know it's finally okay for you to relax and unwind. That's all."

K doesn't laugh.

December 20, 2019

In the morning, still with my half-opened eyes, I hear birds chirping from the bald trees out of my bedroom window. The sweet scent like a plum flower wafts under my nose. Women are chatting somewhere nearby about the effectiveness of the latest Dyson vacuum cleaner: how powerful it is to vacuum scattered woodchips. Even spilt milk! Applause ... *Applause?* I haul myself out of bed and turn off the TV. I don't even remember turning it on.

I dump myself onto the sofa. My eyes meet my own reflection in the blank TV screen. Messy hair, craggy face. *Ugh...* I turn away. Seventy years old. I can't deny that I look old and tired. It's normal, though, to look a bit old and tired when you're seventy. Perhaps it's also normal to be a little forgetful.

On looking back at the screen, I see a reflection of something small in it. It runs out from behind the sofa and disappears in the direction of my bedroom. *A mouse?* I stand up, turn, and listen carefully. No sound. I hold Mom's carbon fiber cane and poke at the hem of my bedcover. I poke at Newton magazines scattered on the floor.

"All clear..."

It's unlikely a mouse since this place has never had mice. *Is it an illusion?* I conclude that it's a reflection of a car running in front of the

house. I negate the possibility of a hallucination.

At night, I hear something while I'm tossing about in the bed. I get up and patrol the house. The front door's locked, check. The patio doors, check. I also double-check the security camera installed at the front door, though it's a dummy and useless. The stove, turned off. The washroom light is off, check. Just in case, I place sticky mouse traps, which a health visitor left years ago, by my bed and underneath the sofa in the living room. Once I'm satisfied, I go back to bed and fall asleep.

December 21, 2019

Something is wrong. I'm undoubtedly hearing noises from the still dusky living room. I grab Mom's cane again, which I hid behind my bed last night. I tiptoe into the living room. The rustle comes from under the sofa. *Oh man, a mouse!* I'm annoyed with the thought that I have to kill it and discard it. At the same time, though, I'm relieved that the noise I heard last night wasn't a hallucination. I put the cane down on the carpet and the sofa.

What is that!? All my hair stands on end, and I fall back on my buttocks. What emerges underneath the sofa is a round, clear, green, gelatinous, *eh*, object or creature, trapped on the mouse sheet. The *thing*, the size of a baseball, keeps wobbling on the sheet. Still sitting on the carpet, I perceive that there are tons of the same green *things* wriggling around under the coffee table, stools, and shelves.

Being alert to the mob of unidentified *things*, I gaze at the one on the trap. It doesn't have an eye, but bizarrely enough, I can read its countenance; the *thing* is disconcerted. I don't want to sound like a psychic – because psychics are not logical – but to my eye, the *thing* is even sweating. So are all the others. The trapped one seems to be asking me for help. Holding the cane back in my right hand, I approach the *thing*, like Neanderthals would have done on a hunt. I gingerly poke the *thing* with the end of the stick. The attempt fails because the *thing* is too bouncy and slippery with no grip.

I brood and sweat gazing at it. The *thing* sweats and gazes back at me, apparently. Accepting my fate, I put the cane down and stretch out my arm towards it. It appears nervous, yet cooperative as I touch it to rescue it from the sheet. I feel the *thing* react: a kind of muscle spasm. *This thing is alive...phenomenal!* I'm not scared. My old inquisitiveness overcomes the fear of this unidentified creature.

As I manage to let the *thing* tumble off the sheet, its face – or surface – brightens. So do all the others' faces. Hundreds of small lights wriggling on the floor look like sea-fireflies. I slowly get up and walk backwards to the mantelpiece, groping for my phone. I am going to call K. Instead, I click the photo button to capture this spectacle. They then generate puffs from the top of their round head like room diffusers. Jouncing and bouncing even harder, they disappear altogether, leaving the scent of plum flower. I cannot do anything but see them off, standing open-mouthed, with the phone in my hand.

I'm alone again.

December 22, 2019

I had trouble sleeping last night. I wasn't scared, but I barricaded my bedroom door with my steel desk and a chair, just in case.

After the close encounter with the green *things* yesterday, I walked around, wondering if I should talk about the *things* to K or the police or anyone at all. I ended up not telling anyone. I didn't know what to say. *I found unidentified little creatures in my house?* No way. I wouldn't believe I did. People would think that I had completely lost my mind. I went to a cafe, and another. I killed two hours at the library before I had a hamburger at a diner. Fortunately, I fell asleep at night at some point. I had a dream, though, of the green *things* washing dishes. How ridiculous.

It's a fair sunny morning. I drag myself out of bed and cock an ear towards the living room. Once verified, I unbarricade and open the bedroom door. All clear. I walk into the living room.

"Holy sh..." I'm startled by what I see. "What the hell! It's so clean!" The jacket I threw down last night is hung on the coat rack. I've never seen the coffee table this clean. In the kitchen, all the dirty dishes have been washed and neatly piled on the island counter.

Suddenly, I realize that hundreds of the green wobbling *things* are watching me, again, at a safe distance. I freeze and soon understand that they're observing how I react to what they've done. I clear my throat and squeeze out, "Thank you..." They wobble, bouncing even more, steaming the scent of plum. I decide they produce the puff when they're happy.

Surveying them, I'm more curious about them. "Who are you guys? Where are you from? Aliens? Ghosts? What kingdom are you classified?" No answers. They don't even have mouths. I wonder what they eat. As

they are living organisms, they must receive nourishment, somehow. Do they photosynthesize?

I go get a glass of water and see K gazing and frowning at me from the patio. I remember that today is Sunday and he's come to take me to Twin Pines Mall for the weekly grocery shopping, as usual. He always parks his car at the rear of my house and taps on the patio doors. Today, he's not tapping. *Poor K, he's stunned with what he sees.* Anyone would be freaked out seeing such *things*.

I open the sliding door. "Hey. Did you see that?"

K looks straight into my eyes. "Yes...What's going on?"

"I know. I was screwed up at first. I don't know what they are, but they're harmless so far," I explain.

A long silence. His eyes widen even larger. "They...what?" He's having trouble finding words.

The green *things* have hidden somewhere. Maybe they're shy with a stranger. I grab my wallet and some reusable bags. K and I head for the mall. In the car, I tell him that I'm thinking of monitoring the unidentified creatures and presenting the result at a conference. I'm glad I have someone to share this experience with. I knew that K wouldn't regard me as a dotard. He's my best and only friend.

K is a quiet guy, but he's even quieter today.

January 6, 2020

Today, the *things* and I are very excited to have K as our first guest since they moved in. We've discussed what music to play and whether he likes tea or coffee. I still don't know much about them, but I've lost my interest in scientifically monitoring them. My life is not boring anymore. I don't need to live on my past glory. I've taken off the armour that has protected me with knowledge and pride. I've learnt from the green *things* that there's so much more to learn. *I don't even know K well enough, do I?* I feel thrilled to see him today. It'll feel as if I met him for the first time. I chuckle.

The doorbell rings. The *things* bounce and generate the puff of plum flower scent. I mischievously grin at them, putting my forefinger on my lips. I approach the door as quiet as a mouse.

Just before I reach the door, I hear K saying, "Are you sure the earlier the better if he has...dementia?" He's stammering. *Who's he talking to? Who's he referring to?* K continues, "He's a man of great pride."

"I understand how you feel," another voice replies. "Leave it to a professional."

I look in the peephole. I see K. Next to him is a woman seemingly in her fifties. I see a shining badge at her collar: the emblem of the social welfare office. *What's going on?*

She carries on, "Don't be confused with who he is now and who he used to be. He's supposed to be the last person who would decorate a room with Christmas lights. Correct?" She's talking about the photo I sent to K: the photo of the green *things* illuminating in the dark.

"Correct. And I know I saw him talking to himself . . ." K droops.

Half-heartedly hearing him, the woman is distracted. "Hey, can't you pick up the scent of plum flower around here? It's weird, it's too early for plum flowers, isn't it?"

I go back to the living room, leaving the front door locked. I don't think they'd believe me if I explained that the smell is from the unidentified creatures; instead, the pair would be more convinced that I had dementia. I remember that Mom would often talk to herself. I feel bad for her. *I'm sorry, I didn't listen to you.*

FOR MOTHER

Brydon Saukarookoff

Every thing I do is for my mother. I love her to death and beyond.

I blow on the soup spoon to cool it. I don't want it to scorch the inside of her mouth. When I hold it out in front of her, she laps it up as a child would when learning to eat. This time, I go for the second spoonful. The hearty broth fills my palate. I scoop another for her, but she waves at me telling me she is finished. Mother is fed in the same room she used to feed me. With all the years that have passed, this room has aged well. Mother lays in her bed with an IV drip, while I sit in the recliner next to her. All of the light, which is needed for the room, is refracted off the greenery sitting outside of the window. *Wheel of Fortune* is playing on the television. Beneath the din of contestants yelling letters, the broken ceiling fan makes a muffled beating as it rotates. The slow consistent pace is rather relaxing.

Mother's chest acts like the tide. Rising and lowering. It soothes me. To relieve any tension that lingers in my chest, I synchronize my breaths with hers. After a brief moment to calm myself, I put lunch aside and start her massage. Her legs must be stiff from being idle all day. I move her blankets aside and see her porcelain legs. As I start her massage, she makes eye contact with me. Her unblemished blue eyes are staring right at me.

"I look at you and I don't see my son," she tells me. "I don't even know you. Where is my son?"

She is having another one of her episodes. As she spits more nonsense, I take a deep breath and make my way over to the medicine cabinet. When I open it, the stench of alcohol stings the back of my nasal

cavity. I grab a needle and pierce a tranquilizer. I pull the plunger. After it is full, I make sure there are no air bubbles in the needle and turn to my mother. With every step I make, her hostility increases. I hold her with a firm grip, making sure I do not harm her more than I need to. I stab her shoulder and slowly insert the fluid.

"Please -"

In a calm tone, I shush her and tell her everything will be alright. I tell her that she will be put to sleep and everything will be okay. I've tried explaining before that it is her sickness that makes her see the world the way it is. Her sickness is too relentless to see the truth; however, my love for her is stronger than her sickness. Her agitation soon dies and she falls asleep.

I clean any mess I can find. It aches my heart to see my mother like this. Cleaning is a good way to ease my pain. The room is full of clutter. I scrub it clean, making sure that no germs could harm me or Mother. I wipe the soup up, tuck my mother's bed, scrub any dirt on the walls, and find anything else that needs to be cleaned.

Once I am satisfied, I lay down on the recliner and I wipe away any tears that may have formed. The recliner comforts my tense back. The softness of the room and television puts me in a peaceful state. The blue stillness of the walls and the somber letters being called caress me to sleep.

The room is colder and quieter than I remember. The cloudy sky makes the room feel eerie. The television is turned off, which allows the fan's beating to take over the silence. It's stronger and faster than before. I get up and slow the fan. The beating decreases and I turn on the television. Contestants continue to yell letters, making the room feel like its natural state. I walk over to Mother. She rests peacefully. However, her blankets are all tossed and turned; they are not neatly tucked like I had left them. I raise them to see her legs battered and bruised. There are impressions of a belt. I continue my massage from earlier and I undo her anklets. As I soothe her battered legs, saliva builds in my mouth every time one of my fingers brush against one of her bruises. Mother gives out a gentle moan in her sleep.

I hate Father. Him and Mother do not have a good relationship at all. Since he is just an entity of hatred, he takes all of his anger out on

Mother. He abuses her and I can't fathom why. I wish he would take out his anger on me instead. I try my hardest to protect Mother from him, but he must have snuck in when I was asleep.

While massaging, and having all the emotions invested, it feels as though it were my legs that were battered and bruised. What I would give to have my legs in this state instead of hers. I feel the tears coming again, but I keep them back because I need to be a man in front of Mother.

I look up and I see a worrisome set of eyes on me. She has tension all over her face. I tuck my fear back and I give Mother the present of a smile. She gives out a hearty sigh and relaxes when she realizes that I am not father. "I am sorry Father does this to you," I tell her.

"I don't even know what to say anymore. I've tried talking and reasoning. I'm scared that this monster could come out at any moment."

"Well, as long as I am around, I will protect you."

Mother looks away towards the window. After a pause, she says, "Sometimes when you love something so much you have to let it go."

I am confused as to what Mother is telling me. I get up to look out the window. The clouds shift and I feel the heat of the sunbeams. "How do I let it go?" I ask as I pace across the room. I increase the beating of the fan to cool the room.

"Faith," she replies. "Faith that they are strong enough to embrace the future, no matter how grim the future may be."

I walk over to Mother. I grab her hand and hold tightly. I tell her that I'm going to undo her bracelets to stretch her arms and massage them. I sit down. In a blur, her nails scratch the side of my face. Mother hoists up her fragile body and pushes all of her weight behind punches. She knocks me and my chair backwards.

I awake in the recliner. Father must have moved me. I stand and analyze what else he has altered. The television is cracked and the fan is still beating fast. With a crow's nest of a hair-do, Mother sports a black eye. She lays lifeless as though she had just been through a battle. Her breaths are deep and heavy. The tide rises and lowers at a distant pace. When I lower the dimmer switch for the fan, I notice that the medicine cabinet is flung open, with supplies thrown around. My soul breaks as I see the state of the room. I keep finding more and more impurities; Father was outraged and took a lot of anger out. I fall to my knees and cry.

I don't know how long I kneel there.

"Why are you crying?" Mother asks.

I look up and see her eyes behind purple clouds peering into my corrupt soul. I admire her strength to remain calm. "Because of you," I respond. "The pain you suffer. I'm going to install locks on the door. That will keep Father from coming in."

"You don't listen to me. If you can get in, Father can get in."

"But I have to try," I tell her, as I hold the side of her face. "I love you."

"I wish I could say the same."

I kiss her forehead and turn to the door. I don't leave often and the only time I do is when it is necessary. Before I leave, Mother puts on a smile for me. I head to the hardware store for a new lock.

Coming back from my trip with the supplies and lunch in hand, I notice something is amiss as soon as I slightly open the door. The fan no longer beats and my mother is no longer in bed. I forgot to check to see if her straps were fastened. When I push the door fully open and get a good look of the overall state of the room, I see my mother tied to the fan by her IV tubes. She swings like a pendulum.

I set down the lunch and bag of supplies. First, to make sure Father doesn't get in, I fasten the chain lock on the door. Once I am satisfied with the lock, I turn to Mother. I prop up the fallen chair that is underneath her; I climb on it to undo the tubes that are around the necks of the fan and Mother. Mother has always liked to play games. When I untie the first knot, she falls to the floor as heavy as a bag of laundry. After undoing the second knot, I pick Mother up and lay her back down in her bed. I fix her IV drip, fasten her bracelets and anklets to ensure that she can't do that again, and tuck the blankets back over Mother. I grab the soup off of the tray; cream of mushroom for today. I take a spoonful and blow on it.

Everything I do is for my mother. I love her to death and beyond.

THE TRIP

Philip Beattie

The 'Three-year itch,' that's what they called it. Constant arguments and futile attempts to gain some miniscule advantage in a war with no end, pointless. We'd had Grace a year into our marriage, what a blessing—at least that's what my Instagram stated, picture sent off to the engorged well of information encapsulated in cyberspace. Did you know that illnesses are socially constructed? Few parts of the world experience stress and depression to the staggering extent that the West does. I'm no stranger to the former and times like these call for action, the personification of the motivation poster in every stereotypical office in London, 'Take destiny into your own hands.' Today was perfect, no noticeable change in temperature as I stepped out of our postage stamp terrace, the slightest hint of a breeze descending from slate clouds. I strode to the car, 1..2 1..2 1..2 1 1 and slid into the driver's seat. Faux wooden interior and black leather glistened a greeting. Relief washed through me, emanating from my gentle grip on the steering wheel, shoulders relaxed, lower back admitting defeat and slouching into the seat. I took a breath; was this necessary? After all, every trip had its risks. My brief hesitation was met with violent vibrations from my thigh; grabbing my phone, I stared at the glowing message on the screen for several seconds, 'Melody MOB'. My upper lip rolled into a snarl as I jammed my thumb down and tossed the device on the passenger seat, where face up it lay mocking me, 'missed call Melody MOB'. I entered the address I had researched the day before and felt the car rumble underneath me as I pulled out into the quiet street.

It would take me eighty-three minutes sticking to the government-sanctioned speed limits and allowing eight minutes of delay for slight

traffic and unfavourable lights. Melody hated how I planned things. She always said I should relax and make more friends but that's hard to achieve when there are few opportunities for genuinely scintillating exchanges. The guys I worked with barely passed for conversation, let alone fervently hanging off my every sermon. Broaching subjects as complex as football and 'skirts,' all the depth of a puddle. I regularly found myself wishing I'd never joined them for a pint after work, staring the golden liquid down hoping that it would disappear on its own accord. *Shit, I sound depressed.* I have friends! The old days at Oxford, huddled over waning desk lamps fighting the inky darkness of the early morning with my classmates as the rain tapped against pane glass. Those were some of my fondest memories. Stimulating debates from ancient philosophy to modern politics, forging ahead with our eyes open and not shying away from any opportunity. That was living! We had all done well for ourselves, wearing our iron rings with pride as we strode out on the path of endless possibility whose true cruelty lay in the lack of options it actually provided. That left me here, Site Engineer according to the modest paychecks but realistically a plaything for the true construction puppeteers who gleefully yanked me across the British Isles from project to project. Not exactly glass skyscrapers in Abu Dhabi...

I started the radio up; being stuck in the past is a fool's game. The Queen's English washed over me with the usual rubbish. Some nutcase with a gun and a poorly thought out agenda attacking crowds outside Buckingham Palace, subdued and killed with little effort as they so often are. I could feel my jaw lock; how people can be so foolhardy. Terrorist ideology is one of the few subjects I could never wrap my head around. Sure, an injured animal backed into a corner will lash out, but the intelligence granted to us by millennia of evolution is crumpled and thrown out of the window, resulting in suicide bombers and martyr attacks on obvious targets. The indoctrination though! Now that truly fascinated me. To bend deep-rooted beliefs and values, to become a truth that you created. That took an immense amount of meticulous planning; wasn't that what Dad always said was impossible?

You can't make them see the world how you see it.

September 11th, now that was a genius I could respect, twisted of course but if one could step back and admire the ingenuity and organisation that it took to pull off...impressive to say the least. I often wondered if Al-Qaeda could have gotten away with it too, if they hadn't announced their responsibility of course. I suppose that was the whole point of doing

it in the first place, but still, to pull it off AND get away with it...

Tires screeched as I slammed the brakes; the idiot in front of me had darted across two lanes to catch his exit. My horn roared as my outstretched palm struck the steering wheel's centre, burnt rubber filling my nostrils. I could hear the blood rushing through my head as the car resumed its procession. My body was coiled like a spring.

I tried to relax, to return to my thoughts. Many would abhor the rhetoric running through my brain but isn't that the issue with society today? Safety is knowledge and in order to feel knowledgeable everything is black or white. Terrorists bad, West good. Anyone who has ever killed, raped, or stolen is automatically a twisted and sick individual with no family and probably a pervert as well, just for good measure. Unless, of course, they killed for their government or they killed someone deemed worth killing or, the greatest alibi, they were important. Of course, theft is fine if it is the dagger of the SS officer or the gold of the Taliban but not if you avoid paying your taxes. Violence is to be ostracized, it has no place in civilised society. Unless it is planned violence, in which case it is entertainment – how far we have come from the Colosseum and that barbaric civilisation. The hypocrisies that we build our everyday life around are enough to drive a man crazy. It is extremely upsetting for the downtrodden majority to think that we are all capable of extreme violence. Common sense and intelligence are endangered species and few of us free thinkers are left. Why, in ancient Greece I would have a cult following!

As so often happens on these trips I disappeared into my thoughts as my body simulated life. My phone brought me back to this world of grey; it was the fourth call I'd missed. I dismissed it from my mind; I was practically there. I glided around the final few corners and looked for a space to claim. My fingers sought blindly for the small box squirrelled away under my seat, an extra that had raised several mechanics' eyebrows, and located the small lever to release its contents. I could feel my body calm as I felt the familiar weight in my hand; one quick check and it disappeared in my jacket pocket. The street was near deserted as I exited the car, terrace houses crowded either side jockeying for dreary rays of sunlight. I allowed my gaze to linger on a mother and her daughter as they entered a house down the far end of the street, the little girl paraded in a bright yellow raincoat, looking for all the world like she was about to be pulled through a storm drain by a cannibalistic clown. She must have been several years older than Grace, although convincing

a two year old that she must wear a waterproof was a fruitless endeavour. Dragging my stare from the disappearing duo I pulled my gloves over calloused hands and clenched my fists, cracked and hardened skin replaced with smooth cowhide perfection.

Choosing the house was always the hardest. I allowed myself to saunter, 1..2 1..2 1..2 1. I looked up. Was this house any different from its brothers? Truly the only difference appeared to be the blood red door garishly adorned with a moose head knocker protruding gormlessly underneath the golden 2 and 7, but there was a sense of satisfaction emanating from some central part of me that signalled that this was the way it was supposed to be. I took a deep breath as rain droplets wet my mouth, providing scant moisture for cracked lips. I'd not eaten all day. There was no driveway; instead, five steps flanked by a knee-high, crumbling brick wall shepherded my way, 1..2, 1..2, 1... My hand felt the cool metal of the moose's eccentric nose piercing and let it fall down twice.

Surprised rustling could be heard from beyond the red guardian, someone likely making themselves presentable for an unexpected guest, smoothing hair in the hallway mirror, straightening clothes, checking teeth. The door swung open. There he was. He probably came up to my chin, 5' 8" maybe, bleary eyes peering through pristine glasses rammed on the bridge of a larger than average nose. He hadn't shaved in a few days; a dark shadow lay across his jaw and covered his lower cheekbones. Dull grey flecks broke the monotony, mirroring similar streaks through the mess of brown atop his head. He cocked his head to one side, a trait of the nervous in an unfamiliar situation, and slowly looked me up and down.

Finding no answers, he spoke his last words, "Oh... Hi there... Err.. Can I..."

Before his words died I pulled the sleek black object from my breast pocket and squeezed the trigger twice. Black wasps hissed out seeking their fleshy reward. The first bullet caught him between the eyes, just above the bridge of his glasses; his eyes rolled inward in a vain attempt to track what had just occurred. His body was already falling as the second burrowed into his stomach, carving its way to its resting place in his thoracic spine. He hit the ground with a resounding thud, arms falling by his side as his head lolled lazily, unseeing eyes staring dead ahead once more.

I didn't linger for long; the next few minutes were critical after

all. Enough to take a mental note of the scene before me and feel the tension drain from me, to be replaced with the clarity I desired. I spun around, no one was within sight, 1..2, I leapt down the stairs and back onto the street, leaving the house agape and vulnerable behind me. 1..2 1..2 1..2 1. The car was right where I left it, of course it was. I slid into my seat and closed the door. Tranquil peace covered me, my heartbeat slowed, breathing normalized as my body returned to homeostasis. This was the feeling I had so longed for, the world made complete sense and here I was in the middle of it, living in the grey. I returned my trusty to its hiding place and prepared to head home. A sudden pang of guilt flooded me, not for the man, never for the man, but for Melody and Grace. This should be the last one, it should. My phone sprang into life as if summoned and I hastily accepted the call.

“Hey, Honey... Listen, I’m sorry. I have a lot to work on and I’m going to get there, I promise. You two are the most important things in the world to me.”

*creative
non fiction*

SINGING THE BODY ELECTRIC

Will Dansereau

1

Flesh prison. Meat sack. Skin suit.

I have so many euphemisms for the word *body*. I don't want to even refer to my physicality. I am already too aware of the white flesh bulging from my chest and hips, my waist dipping into a curve, my back's subtle arch. Wron gness undulates through me, burning my insides with sea salt and dysmorphia. It scrapes against my insides like waves grating a ship's hull. My bones yearn to shudder through my skin, to break apart my fleshiness like tectonic plates jutting from the earth, to disrupt girl and body. There is no beauty, no sacredness, no poetry, in my form.

2

"You're such a pretty/smart/talented girl," people say. Relatives. Teachers. Family friends. Friends' parents. My landlord.

Those words unleash the cicadas caged in my belly. If a group of crows is called a murder, then this cluster of cicadas is a *repugnance*. It crawls up my esophagus in masses, fluttering against my uvula so my stomach rises, and no matter how much I swallow, I can still feel wings scratching my throat. The repugnance throbs inside me, quivering and ricocheting off the walls of my ribcage as I force it back down.

"Thank you," I say, over and over, and the cicadas' voices grow into a choir in my stomach that crescendos every time others call me *ma'am* or *miss*, *she* and *her*.

She is hollow surface: new paint on an old car concealing something

Other, faded and damaged, underneath. I use the word *non-binary*, but people push *girl* and *normal* at me as if forcing me to wear those terms will shape me to fit their expectations.

Instead, I bind my chest. I wear baggy clothing. I don't shave or use makeup. However, "gender dysphoria" never quite encompasses the breadth or cause of my feelings towards my body. There is always something deeper, something primal that tugs at the edge of my consciousness and then slips away when I turn to face it.

When men smile at me, the cicadas in my stomach start to scream.

3

Trauma lights a spark in the nervous system.

Further abuse kindles the spark. Over the years, I disconnect—*stop feeling, stop thinking*—so I do not feel the ravenous heat that starts to devour me from the inside out until it is too late.

The body goes haywire, lit up with chronic pain like a Christmas tree. I burn embers in darkness: these epicentres of my joints, my nerve-endings, my muscles, all alight like glowing cigarette tips. I sizzle with electricity, unable to shut off after so many years of having to keep out danger. I am always in danger, body built into a warning: a cortisol signal flash, a lighthouse arm sweeping through the dark to search for him (and *him*, and *him*) in every corner, cells reprogrammed with a purpose of flesh turned sheath for sharp fear.

And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul? Oh, but it is: body and soul intertwine; they corrupt one another. The body is a fleshy prison of decaying cellular memories and half-recalled monsters, a gasoline-drenched house, and I am a cradle full of kindling, waiting for him to come home and light me up.

(I do not know who he will be, only that I am waiting.)

4

We do not have sex so much as I give it to her, clumsy and turbulent, rough as my mouth brushes against skin and coarse hair. I move fast, groping hard, hoping that efficiency can still have the desired effect if I am fervent enough—as if my intensity now can make up for my unintentional distance in other moments.

Afterward, she asks me again if she can do anything for me. It's hard

to meet the disappointment in her eyes, the recognition that she will not find the reciprocity she wants in me. She wants to do something for me, too—but no.

Am I sure? Yes.

Am I okay? Yes.

I just need to shower. I feel sticky and smelly and too much here.

I turn my head so her lips land on my cheek when she tries to kiss me. When we walk together, I slip my hand out of hers when she tries to hold it, and I offer my elbow as if it can compensate for that moment of loss. In bed with her, I roll away to sleep on my own. I pry her arms open when they start closing around me too tightly. I shrink when her breath touches my neck.

She feels hurt when she hears me talk about bodies being dirty. I do not mean *she* is dirty. I mean that that *I* am, and anything that touches me becomes contaminated. The reaction between my skin and others is hazardous, like mixing vinegar with bleach.

5

I say that I am not a girl. I do not speak of the shame heavy in my body, lining every cell with lead, or the lingering ghost hands that finger-paint my flesh with hatred. My mind pulls apart the unspeakable and hides it in different corners of my brain like dirty laundry scattered over a bedroom floor, smelly and rank and crumpled. I do not speak of being unclean: the stains I feel emblazoned across my skin, the mud that oozes through my blood, tainting veins which taint every part of this tainted body.

I do not speak of my vagina, its muscles clenched tight for so long that relaxing them hurts. I do not speak of the constant burning and stiffness that beg me to press my hand against my vulva's cleft, as if to staunch a wound, as if to keep something essential inside—or keep someone out. When I try to loosen up, it feels like everything inside me will fall out, like my guts will slip through my opening in a sloppy, wet mess. I tense shut like an oyster's shell, pried open too soon.

6

If I close my eyes, I can still relive it: my mama, my baba—and my grandfather, all screaming in Russian, the women sobbing. My grandfather's belt buckle is a clanging cymbal crash. Years later, my baba tells

me how he raped her multiple times a night: how he could never get enough, how he beat her face while forcing himself inside her.

I don't know if my grandfather is the one who molested me as a child. It seems plausible. Even if he didn't touch me, he still touched others, and his blood runs through my veins. I will never *not* have violence in my body's makeup.

I don't have a problem with my body *image*. I have a problem with my *body*, which is different. I do not want to be thin; I want to be fleshless. I want every reminder of my physicality to disappear, leaving me untethered and free. I want to get rid of the crime scene and the criminal, both of which live inside me.

7

I don't have an "eating disorder." I have a survivor's disorder, or more accurately: a victim's order, taught through discipline.

My step-father throws a glass of water over my head when I say I don't like fish. I hide my fish sticks in his shoes. He finds them and puts them back on my plate. I throw them in the garbage, but he finds them and puts them back on my plate. He hits me with his fork when I say that my half-eaten bread is shaped like a boat. I am three years old, five years old, eleven years old. Seventeen years old. The kitchen is dark and empty except for him looming over me; my mother is a shadow in the background. My tears drip into my food, turning it mushy, but he does not care. "You will sit there until you eat it."

Whenever I got home from school, there was a blissful hour before my step-father returned from work during which I could eat freely, although he would later interrogate me about the missing granola bars from the pantry: "*Did you eat these? How dare you eat these and lie about it. These are for the family.*" When he accused me, cold fear and horror would rush over me in rivulets like that icy water when I was three years old. Subsequently, in his absences, I stuffed myself even more. I hid food in my room. I peeled open packages at night with my breath held, ears craning for the sound of his footsteps. I compulsively consumed in secret, like a parasite.

Even now, years after moving out, I remain stuck between extremes: restriction-brought starvation or binging. I still cannot eat without overwhelming guilt and dread. Like my grandfather, my step-father made me a product of brutality, shaping me into an acceptable silence—except

because I *don't* share his DNA. Shared or not shared: my blood makes me a violation. See how it hurts, in every ripple of my flesh. Every visible rib.

8

I am not a girl, I say, but I mean that I am a survivor of a girlhood that moulded me into a different shape, one that does not conform to people's assumptions. *I am not a girl. I'm a lesbian. No one can touch me. I am asexual. I am stone. I will give, but not to you.* Loving women and rejecting men makes me something Other, something non-binary. I am not for men's consumption. I am not for men in any way, shape, or form. My body betrays them: I am a rejection wrapped up in possibility, an amalgamation of false positives.

My body betrays me: it does not tell them that I am Unwoman.

I try to embrace butchness, but while its nonconformity feels right, it is uncomfortable. In a way, my disabled body is my most truthful form. On the days my masculinity falters, being disabled still removes me from the realm of binary womanhood, where women's bodies are supposed to be pretty and accessible. When men stare, it is not because they want me. They see my cane, and their body language stiffens with discomfort as they recognise me: I am not a whole woman. I am pain incarnate.

9

My therapists, like everyone else, tell me to try grounding exercises. They spout *mindfulness* without considering the dangers of being present in a body that is trying to kill me. They tell me to eat, but they do not share how to cope with the trauma behind food and nourishing a body that feels like a weapon pointed inwards.

Each time I try to ground myself, I slip automatically into dissociation: a sensation of floating just outside myself, a few inches off-kilter, my body distant, its pain and memories and dysphoria blocked by a pane of cool, hard glass. Its touch numbs me.

"Send your awareness into your centre, and let it spread to the rest of your body," my newest therapist says. "What do you feel?"

I feel joints aching, skin and nerves ablaze. I feel every fibre of my muscles like an elastic band stretched too tight, fraying, a tremble on the verge of snapping. My vagina spasms, a bull's-eye of quivering ar-

rows. Invisible hands track marks down my body. Panic swells, a nest of cicadas in my core that start to riot when I get too close. I feel *huge* and oozing, repulsive and uncontainable, taking up too much space and sullyng the air around me. I feel my blood boiling, yearning to burn away the slaughter in my blue veins. I want to spill rivers and end the drought; I want it to be over.

Instead, as I live, I burn. My body burns. It sings.

WHY I BECAME A MORMON

Joshua Rae

I'm in a bad emotional condition—my parents only recently displaced me from their home because I wasn't doing enough useful things with my life. It's true. I was a healthy young lad who sat around at home playing video games addictively, failing my college classes as a result and not working to support myself. "Son, you have to go out there and learn the hard way since you refuse to comply with us. If you end up homeless, then so be it," my dad told me, and then I was gone. I had been given many opportunities to sort myself out but I failed to spend fewer hours playing video games, and failed to perform decently at school or get a job. It was time to finally face the consequences of my laziness, like a drunkard kicked out of a bar to face the solemn streets.

I'm drinking alcohol quite a bit myself, and regularly—about three times a week. I won't be able to continue this habit much longer though since I have very little money left—1,000 dollars—and no job. Sure, my rent is impressively cheap for Vancouver—450 dollars a month—but I'm still headed rapidly towards homelessness if I don't get my act together fast.

One day, two girls approach me. The black badges on their shirts with the names "Sister Burke" and "Sister Pelosi" reveal that they are Mormon missionaries. Characteristically, they ask: "Would you like to come to our church?" Now, these girls appear fairly attractive to me, even though dressed conservatively in traditional Mormon skirts and unrevealing tops. Although it looks like they've put substantial effort into looking unappealing, I'm not fooled by it. *They'd look pretty sexy if they actually tried:* they are neither thin nor plump, but appear to be, as I see

it, concealing attractive young and curvy bodies under the religiously restrained outfits. As a 20-year-old straight male, I notice all this and reply warmly: "I'll come and check it out. I won't just believe everything that is said at your church, but I'll come and have a look." We part ways after exchanging numbers and arranging to meet up the next day.

The pleasant physical appearance of these girls isn't the sole reason for which I'm willing to visit their Mormon church. I'm feeling lonely; any caring or semblance of caring that I'm able to sense being extended from another human to myself will likely be accepted at this point. I live alone. I spend almost all my free time on video games or drinking, so I haven't many friends and the few that I do have I only see after dark at the bars.

As I head to the church where I've arranged to meet the Mormon missionaries, a sense of being cared for begins to swell inside of me. Two attractive young ladies await my arrival. They were enthusiastic the day we met and maintained extended smiles for the duration of that first conversation. Granted, they are probably trained to display exuberance since that is likely to result in more prospects for conversion into Mormonism, but I still like to think that they see me as a unique person who they find charming and handsome. I can't imagine them being any less enthusiastic today. They've set out to draw people to their church and I personify success in that endeavor.

Full of self-importance, I enter the church and immediately spot the two missionaries, both seated close to the door and awaiting my arrival. "Hey, Josh! How are you? Good to see you," Sister Pelosi utters delightfully. I try to respond calmly and composedly, to not reveal that I'd been looking forward to this moment: "Just fine, thanks. And you?" "Great! Thanks for asking! We're glad you've come," Sister Burke responds conventionally. "We've asked some male missionaries, Elders as we call them, to look over you as you get introduced to the church. It'll be better that way. You can connect with them more easily since you are all guys. We'll still see you around at different events and at Sunday services though." *I've been duped. What a sly move!* I had heard of the idea of "flirt to convert," but what on earth was this move all about? What kind of horrendous bait and switch is this? *Should I just walk out of here?* Then I realize how disgraceful that would look—how exposed the fact that I'm mainly there to spend time with the girls would become. *Not an option.* My next goal is to eliminate, or at least limit, the obviousness of my frustration. "That's fine by me." My face feels red, partly from

anger and partly from feeling exposed. *Faces tend to feel redder than they actually are in scenarios like these, so maybe I'm OK. Maybe I can go through the rest of the motions for today and then disappear from these people and this place for good.*

Sister Burke and Sister Pelosi lead me to another room where the two male missionaries lie in wait. The new acquaintances seem kind and charismatic. Then the Sisters say goodbye and leave. Maybe this won't be all that bad, I think to myself; maybe these fellows will reduce my loneliness. They may not look very good in comparison to the girls, but at least they still can constitute some sort of company.

They introduce me to some basics of Mormonism: that Thomas S. Monson is the modern day prophet of God on earth, that the Book of Mormon contains a message from God to man, and that it is morally wrong to consume caffeine and alcohol. Wow, no alcohol or caffeine whatsoever is a pretty strict diet. As we get to know each other better, I begin to develop some fascination toward these Mormon guys. They've left their homes to serve as missionaries—they've committed to two years of unpaid service. They are 19 and 20. They spend their time soliciting people on the streets in attempts to start conversations and ultimately get people to become Mormons. There is something admirable about what they are doing. Sure, I think they are mistaken and that God doesn't exist, but they must really believe what they are saying to commit this much time and energy to the type of work they do. I agree to meet them again another day as the meeting concludes.

I decide not to vanish completely out of sight from the Mormons. I'd like to know if what they believe is true. Though the girls did play a rather slimy trick on me, I'd like to know what motivates Mormon missionaries in general to sacrifice the time they do for their cause. Perhaps I can prove them wrong by learning about Mormonism and relieve their time for better uses. Perhaps they are actually right and they can somehow prove to me that Mormonism is true.

In the next weeks, my relationship with the male Mormon missionaries grew. I hadn't convinced them to leave Mormonism and they hadn't convinced me to join it. It's now three weeks since I'd first met them. We are in a private room together at the church, and one other girl is with us. The girl, Elaine, isn't a Mormon herself but was recruited to investigate Mormonism by missionaries. I'm sure her reasons for joining are more wholesome than mine. Why she gets to be with us guys in this meeting is beyond me. It seems unfair, but perhaps there is a shortage of female

missionaries on the premises at the moment. Elaine's speech disrupts my thoughts as she says: "If I become a Mormon, I don't think my dad will like that. I'll probably be shunned or ridiculed by him." I interject before the missionaries reply: "Well, what your dad thinks about it is trivial. You see, if Mormonism is true, if its claims are true, then your life would be bettered by believing it to be true and following its ways. If your life is bettered, then your dad will see that and perhaps he may become a Mormon too and his life may be bettered. If Mormonism is false, then you shouldn't follow it. So what really matters is whether or not it's true, not what your dad thinks." "I guess you're right," Elaine responds. The missionaries look surprised, and one of them says: "That was the Holy Spirit, Josh. He placed those thoughts in your mind that you've just expressed to us." I feel as though something in the atmosphere has changed—a lightening or brightening in the air and a sense of goodness flowing through the room. The others in the room have a look of pleasant surprise on their faces.

"Josh, I'd like to challenge you to go home and, when alone, ask God to answer these two questions: *"Is the Book of Mormon true?"* Then ask: *"Should I get baptized in the Mormon church?"* the missionary who was quiet so far tells me moments after I provide my advice to Elaine. It seems as if he wants to harness the sensation of goodness that we are experiencing and use it to propel me into becoming a Mormon. In keeping with the advice I just handed out to Elaine about pursuing truth, I agree to accept the challenge. All I would be doing is asking God, who may or may not exist, to answer two questions. *What could be the harm in that?*

That night, alone in my room, I lie on my bed and speak out loud: "God, if you are there, is the Book of Mormon true? Is the stuff in it true?" No reply. I wait. Still no reply. Five minutes go by and I sense that no answer has been given—I sense the absence of an answer. Nothing at all. I look over at my bedside table, for no particular reason, and spot a sticky-note with some scribbles on it. It had been given to me by the male missionaries a while back. On it is written "**Alma 32:21**". I look up the verse in a copy of the Book of Mormon that the missionaries had given me: "Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if you have faith you hope for things which are not seen, which are true." Shivers run through my body. I raise my eyebrows in surprise. *Wow, perhaps that is the answer.* God didn't give me a clear answer like "Yes, Josh, the book of Mormon is true," but perhaps He is answering

me through this verse. Perhaps I must take it on faith that the Book of Mormon is true. I mean it could simply be a coincidence, but what are the chances of such a coincidence taking place? In any case, I still have one more question to go.

“God, should I get baptized at the Mormon church?” Before, there was no answer. Now, I am sensing a “yes”. By sensing, I don’t mean that I’m audibly hearing anything—I’m not. I get the mental impression that the answer to the question is “Yes.”. A voice inside my head rather than one without is telling me “yes” in a manner that seems decidedly conclusive to me. This too could be some sort of coincidence. *The first and second answers were so different, though. I’m not going to believe that this is all a coincidence. I’m going to believe that God is real and that He is involved in this situation. I’m going to get baptized and change my life.*

Maybe I’ll even get to see the Mormon missionary ladies more often.

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HOPE KNOWS BETTER

Evelin Rodrigues da Silva

I did not speak to anyone about what it was like to have a best friend in the intensive care unit. This extensive phrase did not sound familiar to me. More than not knowing what it meant to me, I did not know the gravity of it. I could not yet feel the heaviness of that phrase, of that situation, because I could not carry it in my arms. She went to the hospital to go through a bariatric surgery. She needed to downsize her stomach. The surgery wasn't a complete success. This wasn't what I had seen in the movies. Everything collapsed, and I was not in Rio, by her side, at that moment. My stomach was downsized to a green pea: I couldn't eat, I couldn't digest that situation.

When I finally landed in Rio de Janeiro, I didn't spend time with my family; I hadn't missed them with that intensity up to the point that I moved to another country, another continent—I crossed lines too fast after cutting my umbilical cord. My legs didn't remember the way to my favourite places that I had daydreamed about visiting again. They couldn't help running to the hospital. When I arrived there, I opened my eyes to the green immensity. My eyes were disappointed: the green immensity was not forest, it was not ocean. The sad shade of green was in the walls of the hospital and in the sheets. Everyone—patients and visitors—had a little bit of green in their faces too. My nostrils burned: there was something chemical about the smell of that place. So citric, so acidic . . . I wanted to convince myself that that place was toxic and that I should run away. I didn't know whether I could handle that scene.

“Aren't you old enough?”

I hadn't considered aging as a process to stop suffering. I went to

the washroom to wash my hands and arms as it was requested to enter the ICU. I looked at myself in the mirror. The calm of that place had nothing to do with the turmoil in my head. I played mentally “What’s My Age Again?” by Blink 182, in my head. I put my hair in a ponytail, as I do before going into action. I stretched my spine, as if the balance of my body could influence the balance of my soul. Before I could update my real age (silly attempt!), the curtains weren’t there anymore. There wasn’t a part of her body that wasn’t covered by tubes, tapes, or needles. Of course, when I got there, I couldn’t hold myself: my tears weren’t shy to be in public.

Stefanie, my best friend, in her coma, cried too. How this was possible, I don’t know. But humans of all nations try to find water in other planets as a sign of life. I now understand them. I looked at her mom. I was embarrassed because I broke my promise: I swore I wouldn’t cry. Her mom was crying too. I think forgiveness has never been so quick.

When we left the room, her husband said, “I’ve been here every day and she cries only when *you* arrive?” We laughed for the first time in a week. My best friend’s mother told him he could go back to his job, his life, because she was getting better. He told her he had no life to go back to, that Stefanie was his life. An ocean of happiness wiped me out because she had him.

And when her “Hell no!” to Death was confirmed, her life was about to start over. However, I wanted her life to resume how it was before, after that scary scene. According to doctors and their complex combination of words, she said yes to life. Her body was still recovering: I could notice the bruises and marks from procedures I might never be able to pronounce.

My best friend, as I knew, didn’t come back right away. Her soul was recovering as well, and the marks of a life-threatening condition were invisible to me, to all of us. Life is never delicate when it threatens you: it’s a profound assault to your soul. It violates your wishes, desires, who you are, who you thought you were. The doctors, so very competent and committed to her cure, had not yet invented a machine-strategy-methodology-procedure to photograph the damages of being between life and death in a 28-year-old soul.

I would google in search of a diagnosis. I didn’t even know what to ask though. Any crazy-absurd-illogical diagnosis would sound better than feeling lost like I was. I would do whatever I could to help her. But the only thing I did was to judge her—maybe it’s easier with people we

love? Because we care so much, we judge so much.

I blamed her for not being the same with me as she was for all the years we have been friends. I blamed her for not inviting me to hang out with her, now that I was back home, now that she was back from hospital. I blamed her for acting so reckless about our friendship when I had been suffering for a long eight months, far from my family and from my friends. It is true: *I* was caring about my life. "*Stupid selfish bitch, you have your life to care about.*" On the other side of the bridge that I dare to call Friendship, I could see my best friend, still fighting for life.

Now I could feel all the guilt in my stomach. I didn't feel it in my heart, because in my heart I was missing her. I missed her insane-loud laughter; most of the time it was for no reason and with no intention to last less than five minutes. Wasn't it this way we became friends? Something completely silly happened in class, during 7th grade, and we both started laughing so loud that the teacher sent us to see the principal. We looked at each other, and we could feel on each other's face the despair of facing the principal, and later our parents. We were so young, but empathy was so much easier than Algebra.

I missed her sarcasm and how bewildered I felt about it, whether she was being rude or smart. Very often I wasn't intelligent enough to realize she was being both. I missed her confidence in being both, how she could afford it. I missed how assertive she was. I missed being able to borrow some sarcasm, some assertiveness from her. She had been always the perfect planner, a perfect Virgo. I had been always the perfect dreamer. When we were 21 years old, she got married. She thought about every detail and took care of it. I was the bridesmaid and I only flew back on the day of the wedding, after backpacking in the south of the country with people I had just met. The empathy that we learned many years before helped us not to judge each other for our different choices in life.

In front of the mirror, we looked so different from each other. Her hair has been always blonde and my hair, as dark as a Poe poem. She was always fighting battles against weighing scales and my body, as skinny as the new moon diet promised you would be. In front of each other, it was easy to see a mirror. We were both sassy girls, raised by parents that worked for the navy, tired of their speeches about discipline at 6am. Clandestinely, we admired our parents. We applied for the navy together. We both realized we wanted something else: smaller or bigger, different dreams from our parents' for sure. We wanted to write our own story, independent chapters from our parents. I live now in another country

but calling her is like calling myself. It's like hearing my own voice on the other side: so many of my thoughts were inside her mind too, and sometimes she was the one who could put them into words. It's like coming back from a long trip and finding the comfort of your room, of your bed. My best friend is the comfort zone that I had left, but like latex, I wanted to go back to the initial condition before stretching again.

Days passed by and I was packing to come back to Canada. While I was trying to make everything fit in my bags, I noticed I wouldn't have room for my frustration, not even in my heart. I had been so excited to go home for Christmas, to feel summer in the tropics again, to see her and spend time with her, even to get together "to do nothing *together*". Simple or fancy, our meetings were filled with intimacy—and that was my wish for last December. I wrote imaginary letters to Santa, begging, *please*, for the humidity in the air, on my skin, on my hair, pressing my lips against each other, wiping the sweat on my upper lip. Santa had to read my numerous requests for the smells of Rio: my parents' perfume, my brother's deodorant dancing in the air through the corridors of the house, stir fried rice with garlic, clothes and towels and sheets freshly ironed, the smell of the ocean and how it could stick to my skin. Poor Santa, my long letters were infinite lists of things I had to have for that Christmas: my aunts gossiping about the whole family, my cousins discussing politics interspersed with stories¹ about our grandparents², the photo albums each of our aunts had at home and how my cousins and I always loved to look at them to judge the fashion/hair styles from decades ago, our endless secret Santa and how my dad always forgets his. I also worked on my best handwriting to ask Santa for a secret Santa with my friends, in which my best friend and I always prayed to take each other's name.

At the moment, I am taking creative writing classes. I better write nicer letters to Santa this year. I promise there will be no resentment in my letters. I don't blame my best friend anymore. I don't even blame Santa, because I do know I didn't behave myself. As the air gets colder, now in September, I light up my hope of a better December. Flight tickets, in my hands; anxiety, in my heart. *Please*, Santa.

¹ My family can discuss several topics at the same time. It's a great ability and it definitely runs in our DNA.

² My grandparents died when I was very young. I count on my older cousins to create my memory of them. These sessions to reunite memories of our grandparents bring a huge sense of unity for us.

MS. DODGY, USUAL(LY) SUSPECTS

Yuko Kojima

I have a weird habit: I am skeptical about almost everything. Anything at all, but especially that which seems harmless at first glance, like organic foods. Maybe organic foods are better than non-organic foods because the word organic has a positive connotation. Everyone says organic is good. According to Wikipedia¹, organic food is “food produced by methods that comply with the standards of organic farming. Standards vary worldwide.” So, standards vary. Who institutes these standards? Maybe Ministers. Ministers probably ask scholars and scientists, who conspire with the Ministers and enjoy their own privileges, to survey and compile draft documents. Then the Ministers delegate the issuance of certifications to general incorporated foundations and public interest incorporated associations who, too, conspire with the Ministers and enjoy their own privileges. Maybe limited giant food producers are very close to those registered certification bodies and receive favorable treatment—Collusion! I have no evidence. I mean, I suspect everything like that. That’s my habit.

I don’t know if this habit is good or bad, but I sometimes feel I’m a bit paranoid. To my own credit, the habit has a brighter side, too. For example, because I ponder many possibilities, I won’t decide that a healthy-looking young lady sitting in a courtesy seat on a bus is a total idiot straight away, even if a doddering old man is standing right in front

¹ Here is the information about the resource for you who believe that Wikipedia is reliable enough: “Organic Foods.” Wikipedia, 30 July 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organic_food, Accessed 20 July 2018.

of her. I suspect that she might be suffering from endless dizziness, have an injured leg, or be in the third month of pregnancy and combating morning sickness. “Don’t judge by appearance,” eh? She might even be a victim of the other passengers’ cold stares.

Sometimes this cynical habit helps me to find some interesting facts. Monde Selection is a good example. Monde Selection is “an annual non-competitive award open to food, drinks, and cosmetics products ... [in] Brussels, Belgium.” This award has somehow gained quite a bit of credibility among consumers in Japan; people will buy sweets if the packages read, “A Medal Winner at Monde Selection!” or “The world’s most recognized sweet—Won A Medal at Monde Selection!” with an illustration of a medal. One day, I thought, “Wait. Haven’t I seen far too many Monde Selection Medals printed on the packages of sweets as cheap as three dollars everywhere? Is Monde Selection dodgy?” Then I googled and found some intriguing facts: according to the Monde Selection website, 2820 products were flown into Brussels in 2018—73 % of them were from China and Japan by the way—and a good 90 % of participating products received an award! If you break it down, more than 60 % of the award-winners received “Grand Quality Award (Supreme Gold Medal)” or “Gold Quality Award (Gold Medal).” That’s very generous, isn’t it? By the by, the entry fee is €1200 (about CA\$1800) for the first and second submitted products; for the 3rd submitted product, you get €150 OFF! Yay! This sounds to me like confectionaries all over the world *buy* an award. Doesn’t a confectioner send his product to Monde Selection not because he has made a masterpiece but because he wants to boost his sales by showing off a Gold Medal he *bought* on the packages? It would be surprising if he didn’t.

☞ *Money, eh?*

☞ Whether I’m skeptical or not, it’s obvious that people in Japan appreciate Monde Selection too highly and fallaciously. Those medals don’t guarantee the quality of the sweets; those medals guarantee the confectioner’s marketing skill and budget. Being skeptical is probably helpful to a conscientious consumer.

There is nothing to lose by being skeptical (except possibly a few friends). Sometimes, however, my mind persistently bugs me and stops me from doing something seemingly meaningful—something like volunteer activities.

☞ I am interested in volunteering because I want to be helpful. While

I've been supported by many people, I feel I am a bit useless. To be of help, joining a volunteer program sounds good to start with. But: *isn't volunteerism dodgy?* Something stops me from engaging in the activity... Firstly, what is the real purpose of volunteer groups? Do they establish a volunteer group to devote themselves to someone they don't know? Well, I've heard that a religious institute secretly backs a certain volunteer group; people join the group, not knowing that the group aims to brainwash people and add them in as new devotees. In other cases, corporations find volunteers convenient because they happily work for free as long as they believe they are helpful. Secondly, I've heard that some people offer their services to meet a prerequisite condition to graduate from college. Ah, that's why the volunteer staff for the kids' summer camp last year showed zero motivation! It was shocking to see about 30 kids at the gym not being entertained by the staff who were busy entertaining themselves, playing one on one basketball; the campers were sitting on the floor, leaning on the wall, and gazing into nothing when I went to pick up my daughter earlier than usual. The scene reminded me of jail! The volunteers don't care about the kids or child-care but the points they get for their own evaluation. Finally, I worry that I might do something unnecessary or even annoying while I believe I'm helping people. What if I'm leaning on the ones I help without even knowing that I'm doing it for my own satisfaction? If I organize a surprise party to cheer up a heartbroken friend, for instance, that can be meddling; the friend might want to be left alone while I feel good about caring for her. Needless to say, I mustn't get angry even if she doesn't appreciate my kindness (self-serving kindness is often unappreciated). I don't want to be like a diligent mother who devotes her whole life to her kids and cannot rejoice in letting her kids grow up and become independent. She would prepare everything for her kids for the next school day when the kids might want to do that by themselves. She grabs the kids' pleasure of preparation as well as an opportunity to grow their skill to organize things while she believes she is helping them. Sensible kids might let their mom do this so that their mom feels happy. Sometimes, who supports whom is not clear.

To put it plainly, I am skeptical about volunteerism because:

- #1: I do not want to be used, deceived, or pandered to by organizations that use the voluntary spirit for another purpose.
- #2: I do not want to intentionally use volunteer activities for my own benefit.

#3: I do not want to unconsciously use volunteer experience for my own complacency.

In the case of #1, what I hate is not the volunteerism itself, but the organizations that use people's conscience. I'm not sure about the people who are too naive and easily tricked, too. What I can do with these deceitful groups is try not to be credulous, which is probably easy for me because Skeptical is my name. With #2, it seems avoidable but probably not, because even if you do not want to use your unpaid labour experience for your own benefit, you have no choice but to participate in volunteer activities if they are a condition for graduating or getting qualifications. So, to some extent, this is also down to organizations rather than volunteer staff themselves. #3 is tricky and probably most relevant to me; while #1 and #2 are about the ill-use of volunteerism, #3 is directly about volunteering. What makes #3 tricky is that you *unconsciously* use volunteerism for your own good. I have clearly and *unconsciously* said earlier that *I want to be helpful*. I didn't say *I want to help people*. There is a subtle yet clear difference between the sayings. I guess the former connotes "I want to feel I'm valuable" or "I want to like myself". Umm, this nuance exposes my self-centred mindset. I am dodgy now! Ultimately, volunteering is not dodgy. The people who abuse volunteerism are the culprits. But how can I avoid *unconsciously* behaving like a do-gooder?



One day, maybe because I had been pondering volunteering, a sentence in Naoyuki Ogi's travel journal "Meeting with Forest Monks" caught my eye: "What can I do for you?" In the journal, Ogi writes about his one-month stay in Thailand and mentions a meeting with Phra Paisal, who is one of the most prominent engaged Buddhists in Thailand. Being a Buddhist himself, Ogi asks Phra Paisal for advice on how to become helpful. Phra Paisal simply answers, "it is dependent on the situation." Whether I follow Buddhism or not, I find this simple answer inspir-

² I'm not sure if parenting is a volunteer activity or not, but some mothers feel it is; they look after others for free all the time. Is cooking her responsibility? Well, isn't taking care of disabled people a community's responsibility, too? Both can be called voluntary labour.

ing. What I can do depends not on me but the situation in front of me; what I can do is look at the situation very carefully and react to it. Ogi continues: if you keep on seeking what you can do for others, the answer will naturally emerge in the process of seeking. According to Ogi, he used to believe that he had to do something very special to help people, but now he asks himself “what can I do for you?” and converts the answers to actions even if they are very small. The derived answers might be wrong, but you never know the right answers unless you try them out. In my favorite picture book “Monsieur Meunière and the Moon”, the author Maki Sasaki depicts two chemists in laboratory singing:

*♪ I wonder if we could find the answer we want to reach
through this experiment.*

*♪ No one knows if we are going to reach an answer or
something else unless we experiment.*

What this absurd song means is that, for example, through an experiment to find out if the mole prefers red or yellow, you might reach a conclusion that the mole doesn’t have visual function; through an experiment to find out how much a non-English speaking Japanese tourist improves his English skill if he is left with an English-speaking family for a week, you might find the fact that the family improves their Japanese skill.



On Sundays, I have been visiting a Japanese lady who is a resident at a care house. She used to speak both in English and Japanese, but her dementia has caused her to forget all of her English and most of her Japanese. Unfortunately, she cannot read anymore, and her family members hardly speak Japanese and don’t read the language at all. Because I speak and read Japanese, one of her family members asked me to visit her, talk to her, and read her the letters she had received that had been left unread since about 1997. When I read the letters, she nods.

But it’s hard to tell if she recognizes the senders or if she understands the contents. I don’t even know if she wants me to read her letters. Anyhow, a few weeks ago, when I told a friend of mine about what I do on Sundays, he said to me, “You’re volunteering, then.” *Am I volunteering?*

I was shocked by his words because I still believed that volunteer activities smelled fishy then. But now I think that maybe it's okay for me to keep on visiting the Japanese lady whether my visit is called volunteering or not, whether it's helpful or not for now. She doesn't speak; she doesn't have facial expressions, but she nods as I read. Unless I read her letters, nobody knows if she is annoyed by my reading and relieved if I stop reading. This is an experiment in process. I will watch her very carefully and react to her.

From this perspective, forcible unpaid labour—like working for your credits—might be relevant to some extent; I don't call this labour a volunteer activity, but the labour might spotlight a problem and the necessity of volunteering. This is also an experiment in process. But let's not be naive. Don't be easily used, deceived, or pandered to. I mean, suspect. If I have an opportunity to offer my service, I will take the chance and look at the situation very carefully and react to it: "What can I do for you?"

poetry

AN ELEGY TO THE PEACH TREE

Mary Zhu

You took a bite of the core
with resolute fate
swallowing that cratered
pit
like tipping back a white bottle
guaranteed to erase stains on
your dreams.

I pull out your
dead roots extended past your youth,
hoping the splinters pricking
my fingertips can be used
to recreate another you.
But no matter how much I rehearse the
past, your smile already faded away
like a lonely star at
daybreak.

You were a fist wrapped in blood,
the brave origin of warmth.
You promised to stand tall

despite your hunched back
bracing storms and escaping death
to watch your little girl
reach your hips

but your red rimmed eyes rolled back
into porcelain skies,
wrists flooded with hot scarlet and
heart caught in tangled stems -
never to grow again.

You left me
hanging,
waiting for the blooming of
new moons
at the stump that is your tomb
but if only i could have told you
before you sunk below the earth
that if flowers could survive the
rain then so could
you.

HOUSE FIRE

Kirra Little

Sure, he was ill
it runs in the family
takes root like a weed and digs deep
leaving scars on the mind,
and the heart.

Only after his son was born –
screaming against the light –
did it show, but
it was shredding his sanity,
an arsonist
Burning the house he tried to build
for his children
as though it were a pyre
for the man he used to be.

With time,
his daughter
stopped trying to rebuild
that matchstick house,
whose blackened frame stood
as a Warning:

She could be next
if she chose
to pour the gasoline.

GLIDING IN CIRCLES

Yuko Kojima

Gliding in circles above a fishing village
round and round

Far below in the west is the surface of the sea
glistening like fish scales
The wind is all I hear

Down there in the south is a coastal road
meandering like a dusty gray snake
contouring the foot
of the green hills
tracing the blue shore

Along the road a white dot of a truck cruises
like a tipsy satellite
vanishing behind the cliffs
appearing again
No hum reaches up here

An old man is fixing a fish-net on the pier
He maneuvers his hands
like a monkey picking a flea
hunching his back as still as the cat next to him
from my point of view in the air

The breeze eddies

The horizon is crimson

The surface of the ocean is a mandarin garnet

It's time to go back

to the aerie

COQUIHALLA

Megan Yeomans

driving at sunset
down the busy highway
we turn past Merritt in the valley below
to see the sky on fire
painted velvet clouds
beautiful coral hues
like multicolored hydrangeas
But there!
colossal and vaporous mashed potato clouds
slate, as the trucks beside us
overhead, beside the blossoms
of the flowering sunset
semis swarm us
in our small city car
like hornets around a bumblebee
as rain stings the windshield
Mum's fingers grip tight the smooth wheel
heart quivering like the wings of the bee
as I watch out the wet window
enchanted by the blooming ebony
and floral sky

MATRYOSHKA

Mary Zhu

Mama tells me
to keep my hair long and sleek
A silk black curtain with
stars like spilled sugar over marble
following me

Mama knows best:
Peter-pan blouses, frilly dresses,
polka-dot pantyhose
folded into paper kites
in my closet
waiting to take flight

Mama knows how to be a girl -
I do not.

Mama is angry
at the snip, snip
of my feminine tapestry,
threads of stippled stars
falling apart
no longer painting lips
red like the blushing skies

over an alabaster corpse

I offer velvet dresses,
fake gold necklaces,
gaudy anklets
to whatever resides above
loose cinder clouds
into the bonfire, burning bigger
brighter at my reprieve

Mama knows
how to love through designer handbags
and rhinestone nails
how to merit sympathy with jagged teeth
past a silicon mouth of brimstone kisses
But Mama does not know
her daughter is everything
but binary
always in the scheme of
being
in between

DROWNING

Kirra Little

Drowning

doesn't always call for water.

Some can drown themselves in fears,
regrets

leaving them to claw for a surface
they may not reach, may not exist,
as the thought of breathing
becomes a burden
far too heavy.

she has watched them give up,
fold from the world
like a bad hand of cards
crying until all they feel is numb
as their shallow breath
tells of the weight on their chest
that no one
will understand.

Drowning

doesn't always call for water
but sometimes,

a life preserver
is still required.

Even the strongest arms
Get tired.

The Langara Writing Contest

The contest is open to all Langara students, past and present. Students may submit entries in any or all of the following genres: poetry / short fiction / creative nonfiction / monologue or one-act play.

Two prizes (\$100 for 1st place and \$50 for 2nd place) will be awarded for each genre.

Submission Guidelines:

1. A single entry may include up to 5 poems or one short story, creative non-fiction, or dramatic work not longer than 3,000 words.
2. Entries must be type-written and double spaced (do not staple or put name on the pages of the manuscript—they are blindly vetted).
3. Entries must be accompanied by a cover sheet identifying your name, Langara student number, phone numbers, mailing address, email, and the genre of work you submitted
4. Each single entry must be accompanied by a \$5.00 entry fee (cash or cheque, made payable to "Langara College")
5. Deadline for submission is **April 20, 2020**.

Please direct all submissions and/or enquiries to:

Guy Wilkinson (Room A303b)

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