

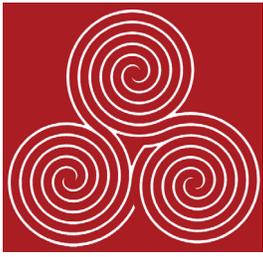


LABY RINTH

COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO • THE WRITERS' PROJECT

ISSUE 3

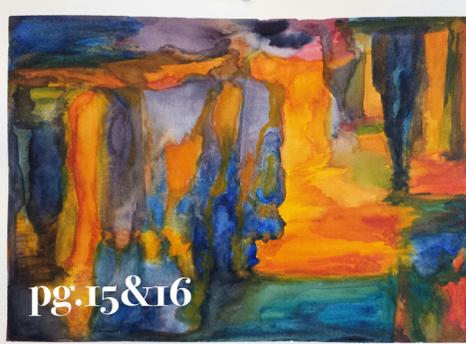
DECEMBER 2015



LABYRINTH



Waving by
Angela Kim
pg.11&12



pg.15&16



pg.20

The Writers' Project and Labyrinth staff would like to extend our sincere thanks to –

The CSM Honors Project faculty, staff, and students, with special thanks to David Laderman and Jennifer Taylor-Mendoza

for their continued support of our club and our vision,

our ever-knowledgable and gracious club advisor, Mitchell Smith,

champion of the arts, Rebecca Alex,

the ASCSM for helping to fund and make this journal possible,

and

the students who submitted their work to be considered for this publication.

Keep writing. Keep creating. Keep learning.

Labyrinth Issue 3

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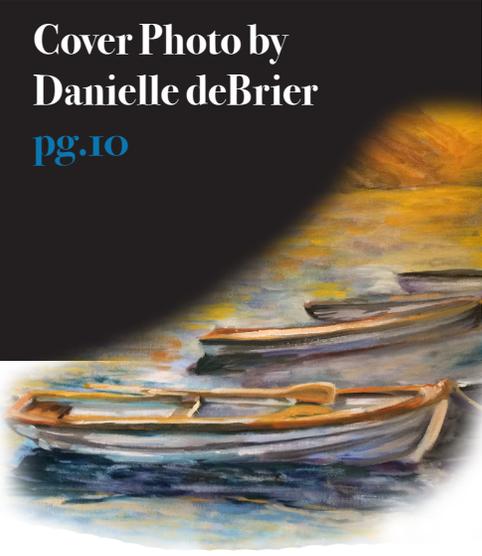
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Cover Photo by
Danielle deBrier
pg.10



Art Contest
Winner
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Letter from the Editor

As the fall semester draws to a close, I can't help but think about beginnings. By now the polish of the new academic year has given way to hard work, perseverance, and triumph. Students and teachers are more than ready to finish the chapter on this step of their adventure. Flipping through the pages of *Labyrinth*, I'm filled with awe and respect for the authors and artists who have chosen to share their stories. They remind me that every ending, no matter the difficulties that come before, is the start of something new.

This semester, our editorial staff, along with members of The Writers' Project, had the opportunity to attend the CSM Student Leadership Conference. Through all of the surprise challenges that weekend presented, the diverse group of attendees worked together to create an experience that not only enriched their own personal growth, but also reinforced a remarkable willingness to come together in the face of struggle. The conference may have ended, but I am left with the hope that the knowledge and the bonds that were forged are only the beginning of our separate journeys.

Labyrinth's staff is proud to share a collection of the creativity found in the SMCCD students, both academic and artistic. We are grateful that you, our reader, continues to support our efforts to present the talented work of these students. We hope that every ending means the turning of a new page.



Mondana Bathai
Editor in Chief

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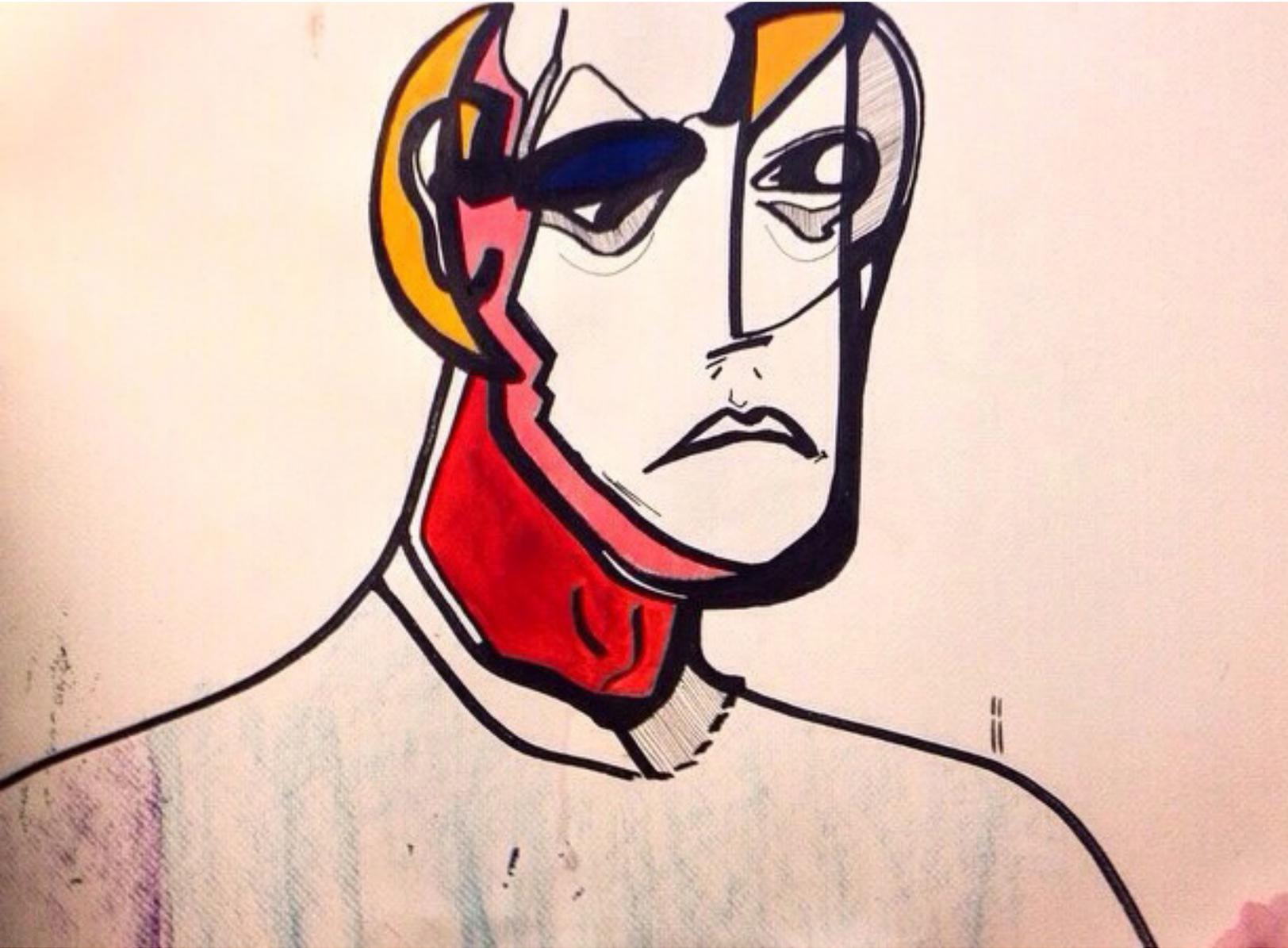
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CREATIVE



Father AVERII WAIBEL

Bottled Up

by KAREN ZAPATA

Bottle number one: Prozac.

A bottle of 20 milligrams was like a miracle for a month or two.

At my job, we had our audit and failed miserably. We also lost two employees. As the manager of the restaurant, all the weight was left for my ninety pound frame to bear. Under normal circumstances, my mind would have spun off and left me in a paralyzing mist of depression. Thanks to Prozac, the stress rolled off me as if I were the

best player in a football game.

And then I felt bad again.

"Raise the dose to 40 milligrams?" my doctor suggested.

I guess.

But my stomach would clench and twist. The side effects were not pleasant. Without the knowledge of my physician, I went off Prozac.

And I was ok, until I was not. I regressed badly; I wasn't even the player getting tackled, I was the player racing vvtoward the wrong goal post.

I have all these goals; I know how I want to feel, I know what I want to do, but I cannot bring myself to feel or

do any of it. There are days when I crash and I struggle to get out of bed. All I can do is sleep and eat.

On a really bad day, I can't get myself to go to work. I was at this point when I called my doctor, desperate just to feel normal.

What is normal? My definition of normal is to get out of bed in the morning and be able to function. Not to have misplaced sadness and insecurities lurking in the back of my mind. Not to feel as if I am going nowhere in life. That I am a bad mother, that my child will see me struggle to wake up and show up and smile, and try so hard but still feel like a failure and feel how I feel: hopeless.

Bottle number two: Zoloft.

Take half a 50 milligram tablet a day for a week, and if you respond well, start taking a full tablet.

I was too nervous to start Zoloft, and I put it off for as long as I could, but after a depressive episode that almost ended my relationship, I realized that I could not be okay on my own. My doctor changed my diagnosis to borderline personality disorder with depression, and I felt as if I was losing my identity.

What's borderline personality? Am I crazy?

Desperate for answers I watched *Girl, Interrupted*, but I didn't really identify with the protagonist who also had BPD.

By the second day of Zoloft, at 50 milligrams, I was sleeping two or three hours a night and gasping for breath.

Bottle number three: Remeron.

"Remeron causes weight gain and drowsiness. The weight gain would be awesome for you! Take 15 milligrams a night before bed." My doctor, still so optimistic.

It goes well for a week or two. Then it does not. And then it does again.

It actually proves to be the most effective bottle yet. I am halfway through my second bottle as I write this, eighteen pounds later.

Antidepressants are not wonder drugs. They cannot take away the pain, stress, and sadness all of the time. There is no cure all for BPD, just therapy that breaks the cycle of behavioral problems.

I wonder, what will the right bottle be?

I have a theory that there is never a right combination. That once a certain pill at a certain dose starts taking effect, you become accustomed to it and will have to raise it. And raise it. Again. And again. ■



In the Crater Vendelinus

by DANIELLE L. PULIZZANO

You know the place you get to, a ways away from a city, where no lights shine except the stars? When everything fades away because the sky is so bright? It's almost like all the headlights, neon signs and front porch lights traveled to the skies. Stars forever, that's all you'll see; and you'll lose yourself in the galaxies and light years and planets above. Yet your two feet are still planted on the ground, the winds of Earth whipping through your hair.

This is where I'm from: the place between this world and the universe.

(

"Let's name her Celestine," my mother said.

My birth went the way any earthly birth goes—I can't claim to be different in that way. My mother has told me, though, that I was born during the most brilliant falling star storm there ever was. She says there was not a place in the sky you could look where the heavens weren't jumping for joy. And good thing they were—I don't think anybody else was.

To everybody else, I was just another child without a father, fated to struggle in life. And while they were right that things would be hard, they were wrong too. I did have a father.

I knew he was with me. I could feel him in the breeze, his arms holding me tight. His voice was in the sound of the rain and the rustle of the leaves. With every twinkle of the stars, I knew he was looking down at me, his little girl.

100 days before my birth, my father died while dreaming through his telescope. My mother told me he was looking straight through the skies all the way to the moon. This was his favorite thing to do.

I guess it was all too much for him to take in—the wonder, the infinity; the doctors said his heart gave out, and there he went. The planets and stars and moons and galaxies were magnets to him, always pulling him closer. I wonder if that's why he died—because he couldn't bear to be away from the world above any longer.

Everyone who knew my father tells me we're similar. They say my eyes are made of the same stardust as his, that our bodies orbit in the same ways, and that our voices have the same tones. My mother says there is something inexplicable about us; that we are not like anyone else. Of course, all mothers would say that about their children and husband. Yet, she tells me it is meant in the most literal sense. That we are more than just beings of earthly descent.

After living 20 years on Earth, I don't feel different. I'm average in all senses of the word. I've felt apathetic towards life since childhood lost its luster and I came to realize all the implications of being a citizen of Earth.

The only time I feel something more is when I look into the constellations. I seem to float closer and closer to the stars with every minute of my gazing. I feel the same magnetic force as my father, pulling, pulling, pulling! Pulling until my mother's strong voice calls out to me for



Becky T. BEARDSLEY

dinner, or to let the dog out, or to just come back down to Earth. She's scared of losing me too.

That was the reason I've never looked through my father's telescope until my 20th year. I was scared the universe would swallow me up too. It felt like the above wanted me so much more than the Earth; and more often than not, I felt the same way about the above.

One day, it felt like my heart was being pulled through its cage and through my ribs and skin. I knew the day was here. As soon as the sun drew its curtains on the world, it would be time.

(

Father's telescope was still facing out the living room window, standing in the same place he left it upon his earthly departure. The old brass telescope had seen the stars pass over mother and me for thousands of nights. There was not a star, a comet, a planet, a full moon, or an eclipse that it missed. This is something that I envy. Many a night I battled between the dragging of slumber on my eyelids and the starlight shining on my soul, just so I wouldn't have to miss out on the comings and goings of the universe.

Tonight, however, there is no battle. My heart is

beating much too fast for sleep to come near me. The skies are about to win their fight tonight; the victory they'd been waiting for. From the other room, I hear mother's breathing change. It's time.

Under the Leo sky, I gently make my way to the telescope. I finger the cold metal for a moment, and then I take the plunge: pressing my eye to the chilly brass, it feels like I jumped into a cold lake—it takes a minute to get my bearings.

It appears the telescope, after all these years, is still on the moon. It's focused on the same crater my father was looking at when the earthly air inside him left for the last time. I am standing in his final footprints on this earth and I am looking where he last looked.

I shut my eyes, squeezing them tight. Everything inside me, my soul and emotions and memories and all my internal universes, feels like they're already out of my body. I feel like I could will them back but I'm not sure if I want to.

I slowly raise my eyelids, moon dust back in my pupils. And I see him. My father is in the crater of the moon, smiling at me.

My brain knows this cannot, will not be true, yet the galaxies inside me know it is truer than true. It feels like his presence in the breeze and in the rain and in the leaves all at once, and I feel him. I see him and the crater and I see the moon dust in his eyes. He is with me.

"I have always been with you," his soul says to mine. Suddenly, my six year old form appears in the crater. Father is swinging me with his arms. I can feel the breeze of the moonlit air and father's touch rolling off my skin, yet I can still feel the hardwood of our house pressing against my toes.

With every moment I stay pressed against the telescope, I can feel more and more of me leaving the ground; the constellation of me going skyward. ■



Reflections on Glass DANIELLE deBRIER

The Exchange

by JO GOFF

They sat across from each other at his favorite table in the corner of the old Chinese restaurant. She tried to hold his gaze, but courage failed her and she had to look away. It was as if he saw straight into her; as if seconds could make all the difference in how much he could find out.

They ate slowly, saying nothing.

She tried not to fidget. Oh God, when can we leave?

She was suddenly reminded of why she usually declined his invitations to grab a bite to eat following their work together. It's not that she didn't want to, but something kept stopping her. Deep down, she was terrified to sit that close to him, and look into his eyes.

The connection was too strong; too powerful. She couldn't keep staring down at her food as if he wasn't sitting right there. They knew each other too well for that.

She snuck another glance. He was staring at her now and thinking so loudly it was almost audible.

That look. My God, what is he thinking? What does

he know? How much can he see? Does he even know what he's looking at? One of us has to look away soon.

There is a knowing in his eyes. He tilts his head ever so slightly, and slowly nods it up and down at her a few times, his eyes locked on hers.

Transmission received.

In response, she returns the nod, a silent acknowledgment of something they both know but can never speak aloud. No vocabulary is required for this conversation, a dialogue between souls.

"In another lifetime..."

She is certain that neither of them uttered a single syllable. Maybe she only imagined it.

When they finally resume their meal, after what feels like an eternity, she sits there unable to focus, her mind still reeling from the exchange. What does this mean?

There is nothing to be done, of course. It is enough that they both know, whatever that knowing consists of. It is mutually agreed that they will not allow it to be fully illuminated. This is real-life, not a dream, and they are soldiers. Continue to operate.

End transmission. ■

Murphy's Dream

by NICOLLE VILLEAL

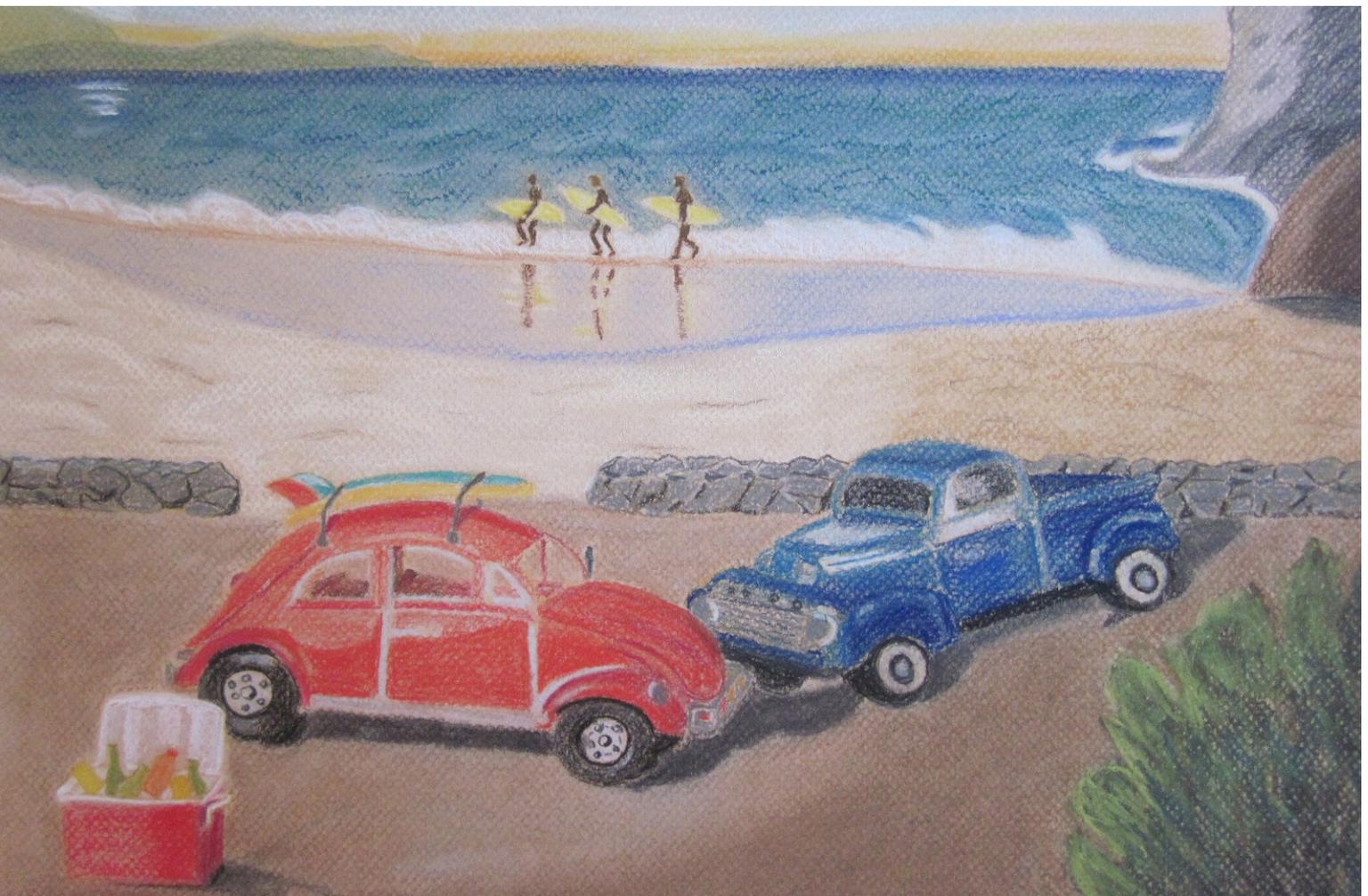
I turn over to my side and feel the soft, suede blanket brush the inner part of my nose and cheek. This small encounter has awoken me. As I look around, the scene before me is pixelated with infinite amounts of colors mushed together to create shapes that are unrecognizable. My first thought is *what time is it?* I know that it is nowhere near sunrise. If it were, my adjusted eyes would be able to make out the details of the Jesus tapestry that hangs above my headboard. If it were sunrise, my dad's Casio alarm clock would go off twice and he'd already be sitting upright. The spaces in between the living room blinds would cast in a spotlight from the rising sun onto my father and reveal all the colors of his brown wrinkled skin, his grey haired locks, and the old couch that remained his bed for as long as I could remember. This same sun would be the one that kisses him good morning and whispers him good night until the very last night. I imagine him tiptoeing on the squeaky wooden panels entering the hallway as he passes our bedroom door and into the bathroom. After he finishes his morning routine and is ready to begin his day, he would come into the bedroom and greet the Jesus that hangs above by rubbing his palms along each side of the tapestry, making sure to pause at each one of the four corners. His last step would

be to reach under one of the three pillows on the bed that contains a rosary inside a red, silk Chinese pouch. While holding the rosary, his right hand would reach up to his forehead, trace the air straight down to the middle of his chest, cross over to his right and left shoulders, then, my favorite part: two kisses into the pouch before he'd kiss the three of us goodbye. Quietly, he would tuck the red silk pouch under the pillow back in its place. It's how every morning started.

The bedsprings squeal as I shift in a more comfortable position on my back to see if I can make out Jesus above me. I can't. I make sure to move with caution so I don't disturb the space around me, but I fail. To my right the sound of brief moans and gasps for small bits of air fill my ears. I absolutely hate when she does this. The comforting silence is now disturbed and makes me anxious. My mother is not awake but asleep and dreaming. This happens quite a few times during the middle of the night when we go to bed. I turn over to the opposite side to escape the dreamer next to me, but a pair of uncovered feet rest adjacent to my head. The pair of feet belongs to my sister. I truly dislike her feet.

Finally my mother rolls over and that quiets her down. We three have slept this way for the past 10 years since getting a smaller house because of where all our money went; it has gotten to the point that you get used to your body being shoved here and there without waking up anymore. I adjust the end of my blanket so my last two toes are covered completely as I sink my head deeper into

Martin's Beach SHIRLEY INNES



my neck and shoulders like a turtle that withdraws his head from an unfamiliar world and into its shell. In fact, I wake up and find myself *unprotected* because of the empty space surrounding my head at the end of the bed. There is a lack of warmth from either of their bodies. Most times when I lay here it feels as if you're walking through a house and get this sense that someone has just entered the same room as you. Sometimes your intuition is right when you turn around and sometimes it's wrong and there's nobody there. Or like when you turn off an old television before going to bed and you can feel the frequencies traveling and bouncing off of one another and those frequencies almost feel like they're awake with you. There are people who push that feeling aside, and there are the other people who melt into that intuition wondering what it is that makes your muscles tense up inside and your domain feel unguarded. This is the feeling that I get when I lay awake in between two pairs of feet and what seems like my own heart snuggling right up against my ear. I can't help but wonder if it's you.

I stare forward into the nothingness for quite some time until what seems like a never-ending depth of the darkness is interrupted by the plastic glow in the dark stars taped on the ceiling. They stare back at me, and I wonder how long have they been here. I think he put them there. Their plastic glow is fading and almost nonexistent. It has been too long for the stars and me to be staring back at one another. And with that thought the dark waiting room pulls me into a deep sleep.

Fresh pure oxygen from a generator-like tank fills your nostrils. A stinging sensation fills your nostrils with its chill purity. You're walking through hallways and glancing through each door that is either open wide or cracked open a couple inches to keep the silence a bearable one. You look in with curiosity, seeing and feeling the pain and sadness of the dull painted rooms. There are some who are patiently waiting and some who are impatiently waiting. Who is next?

You push forth with two firm hands through the beige swinging doors and the sun blinds you with orbs of neon red, blue, and green. They linger for a second and then there you are. You saunter through the abandoned parking structure and onto a fractured sidewalk. You're wearing the paper robe they gave you when you first found out.

In that space I don't really remember your mannerisms, your smell, or even what some of your features look like anymore. But I felt your presence. It is a presence that I wanted to be consumed by, wanted by, and listened to by. But your presence wouldn't accept my calling. So I kept on stepping forward in case the sidewalk had an uneven paved square and I could stumble into your footprints. But, you kept stepping backwards and staring back at me not willing to let me fall into them. There were no words. Only mine. They wouldn't reach you. You were

just on a path you were determined to keep following. And the flower bushes that grew next to you followed you, and even they stuck with you, dancing with your same movements. They needed you too.

"Murphy! Murphy!" I wake to an abrupt jerking of my body, "Wake up!"

"What!? What's going on Sara?" I question with panic.

Her blanket falls onto my thighs. I see her sitting up and staring down at me. She looks frightened.

"I thought I heard him," she whispers.

A sudden noise from my mom dreaming once again makes us both look over to her.

I continue, "Who? ...Dad?"

"Yeah...I just...I just swear I heard him."

To comfort her I say, "It's probably just the house breathing. You know how old this house is." But really I

wish I heard something - anything that resembles his movements.

"Yeah, yeah I know," she says while laying back down, staring at Jesus above.

"Next time don't wake me up like that. You scared me to death. You know I don't like waking up like that."

"Mhm," she grunts back.

She pulls the blanket back over her. I shift around to find a comfortable position. She moves until her body doesn't touch mine. She's upset. She wants me to say more.

"I was dreaming of him," I pause for a response. Nothing. I continue, "He was outside of the hospital."

"How did he look?" she asks after a few heavy seconds.

"To be honest, I couldn't really tell. It was blurry. I could feel him though."

"Did he say anything?" she asks while turning over on her side.

"No...He never does."

"Maybe he came to say hi." She sounded calmer.

"Maybe." I said.

I decide not to tell her the part where he stepped away from me. She doesn't need to know.

6:15 am, 7:00 am, 7:15 am. Today is Friday. We get up at our normal time for school and mom for work. But this Friday is different. We don't have school or work but we need to be out of the house by 9:00 am sharp. Mom showers first, me second, and Sara third. We all put on outfits that were laid out the night before and take turns doing our hair and looking in the mirror of the one bathroom we share. Our looks are all similar. No indentation of my eyelids from Mom, Sara got her lips, but she gave us all the black straight hair. Dad gave Sara and me our flat noses. Our features aren't different but something has changed between the three of us. Maybe we are a little more tired now, or lost. Whatever it was, we couldn't find it in each other's eyes.

Sara and I head out to the car and wait for mom.

You were just on a path you
were determined
to keep following.

Of all days, we can't be late today. We sit in the car for a few moments while Mom warms up the engine. The windows are frosted and we all tuck our hands under our thighs until the heater begins to kick in. Some Fridays, Dad would start work later than usual, and he would come running out of the house with a plastic carton filled with water, pouring it over each window of the car. We'd all sit and watch as the chilly morning turned his cheeks red and the water wash away the ice in an instant. He'd smile and make silly faces to break the seriousness of our morning. He was the only one who could ease us out of our grumpiness. Sara would laugh the hardest and then I, thinking, *there he goes again trying to be funny*. Mom never laughed, but she appreciated him helping us leave the house faster. We haven't spoken to each other all morning, and we don't speak in the car ride. We all sit and watch until the windows defrost.

Thirty minutes later we arrive to a relative's house; it's my mother's sister. Her house is painted yellow and a black limousine car waits outside on the curb. We follow a cement pathway and there is Aunt Carol standing at the doorway.

She dresses similar to my mom and the first thing she says is, "I'm sorry for your loss honey. It's been so long since I've seen you."

I nod and give her a hug.

It's what today will consist of: seeing relatives and close family friends that you call aunty, uncle, or cousin. Each one has no idea of what's really going on but you have to act like you all feel for each other's pain because you're all here for the same thing. Each person that will walk up to the three of us will say, "I'm so sorry for your loss." And I will reply "Thank you" for good manners but in reality I'm feeling as out of place and uncomfortable as they are. This is what today, our unusual Friday, will be like.

We all pile into the black, newly polished limo and head toward the funeral home. Sara and I have not left each other's side. She stares blankly at the road not taking her eyes off it. Today she decided to curl her hair and pin back the left and right side of her hair with one bobby pin. The one on the right side of her head seems to be slipping off. I wonder if she has noticed yet. Aunt Carol, her husband, and my mom all sit in front of us. Our clothing matches the inner seats of the car. They all blend into the

Reflections on Water DANIELLE deBRIER



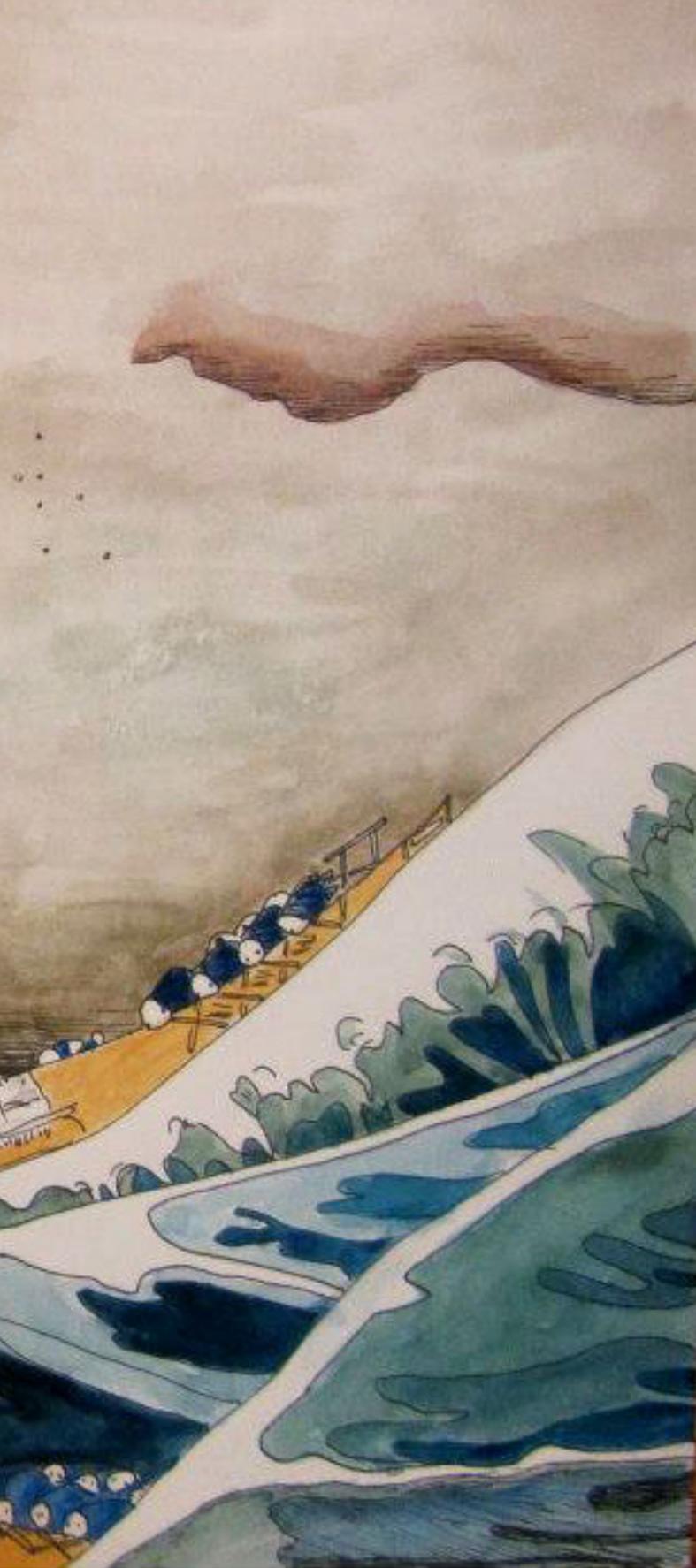


leather like the dark, black, colorless bedroom I sat in hours before this day had started.

Aunt Carol attempts to break the silence. She turns around and asks, “Murphy, Sara, how’s school going? It’s your last year, right Murphy? How does it feel to be a

senior? Aren’t you excited? And Sara, you’re going to be entering high school soon. Aren’t you excited as well?”

Sara’s eyes blink, and she seems to snap out of her train of thought. This seems to make Aunt Carol uncomfortable, so she turns around facing back towards



Waving ANGELA KIM

the driver.

Sara replies after a few moments, “Yeah, it’s okay. School until 3:00 everyday. It’ll be something new to look forward to.”

I guess it’s my turn to reply because Aunt Carol

doesn’t seem to respond.

“Yeah, sure. It’s exciting,” I say.

“Oh I see...well isn’t that nice Sara? You both should really try your hardest this last month of school. It will be worth it in the end.”

Neither Sara nor I reply.

We step out onto the street as the limo drops us off. He pulls away, parking around the corner. I look up and it seems like the sun forgot to come out today. We walk through large wooden double doors with gold handlebars. I stare down at my pathway walking down the red carpet and glance inside other viewing rooms. It is silent and cold. It smells like fake oxygen from a purifier; it’s like the smell I dreamt about this morning. In the first room we pass, five women stand over a casket. Two stand with arms intertwined while one of them cries into a handkerchief. I follow my mother to the end of the hall and reach a room labeled “*Ben Xian Chan, Loving Father, Husband, and Son*”.

I glance at a guest book resting on a podium by the door. It’s blank. It appears we are the first to arrive. I step inside the room and see a man standing there alone. I guess we’re the second guests to arrive. He turns his head and gives a faint smile. He makes sure to only smile halfway because if you smile too big you’re too happy. You’re not supposed to come off as too happy in here. My mother latches on to my aunt’s arm and my eyes stray to the scene further in front of her. I know why she needs to hold on. A beautiful casket made out of solid wood rests above ground. Flower arrangements of roses, hibiscuses, and daisies lay as a sacred blanket over the casket. Next to it sits a picture frame of a fine, groomed man with dark brown hair and a buttoned collared shirt. It is my father when he was younger, an age I’m not familiar with. He smiles wide and his eyes follow me as I approach. The black and white photograph makes the flower arrangements next to it stand out.

The man who arrived before us walks forward and smiles. He approaches my mother and hugs her. She returns the embrace by wrapping her hands around him. He repeats the action with my aunt. They exchange some words then he walks toward Sara and me.

He says, “Hi girls, I’m your Uncle Eddie, your mom’s cousin. I remember you both when you two were this tall,” he raises his palm out to just below his knees. We both smile.

“Yeah it’s been long I’m sure. Thanks for coming,” I reply as I go to hug him.

“He’s in a better place,” he adds. I feel his hands on my back.

“Yeah...thank you,” Sara repeats as she hugs him as well.

He walks past us and says hello to the people arriving. I ignore their steps and stare at the red carpet continuing onto the wall. I wonder if they vacuum the wall. My aunt whispers something to my mom and she heads back towards the hallway. Now it’s just my mother separating Sara and I from the casket. Like this morning, my mom is the first to view. But instead of me second, it’s Sara. I watch as they both approach with

their heads down and my mother's arm around Sara. My mother turns her head back at me then back down into the coffin. I see that she has already been crying. Her back starts to hunch over more, and then she falls to her knees. Sara tries to pick her up. Sara is young. She wants to cry too, to show something, but she's unable to for now, so she just looks to me. I give her nothing. My mom pulls herself together and Sara grabs a tissue from a Kleenex box that sits next to the casket waiting for its purpose.

My mother grabs it and walks towards the back of the room.

I start to think about how today is Friday and how I'd be in Chemistry class at this time. I'd rather be zoning out in class, watching the big hand make its journey around the numbers. Nobody would bother me because *I am the child of a dead father. A dead father who fought the hardest fight there is. He fought that wicked disease cancer, they say. Oh my you look like your father in so many ways. He would be so proud, they say. But it's funny because this is the first time I've ever heard that. I've always been told I look like my mother.*

I come back to reality when I hear murmuring

from the hallway. My legs feel like the Earth is rooting them down to the ground, unable to be released and plant themselves somewhere new, but it doesn't stop me, and now there are no more steps to take. He doesn't step back nor do the flowers follow with him. His weight loss cannot be hidden. He's significantly smaller here than in

the framed photo. He wears his favorite maroon colored tie and holds the rosary from the red pouch. This is not my father. This is not how he should be remembered. A knot in my throat builds and I try numerous times to swallow it back down. I repeat this is not my father. The floor squeals when I bend down to kneel on the personal kneeler placed in front of the casket. I look intently at the white padding inside and the cross that hangs on the lid for show. The pillow is so perfectly placed under his head that there is no indentation of the weight of his head. I

look down at the rosary in his hands remembering his morning goodbyes and routines. His hands. I cannot take my eyes off of his hands. It doesn't look like his hands. How can I not remember his hands? This body, this vessel is no longer his. It is not him. Everything here is almost too real. The details are calling for my attention to exist. Every fiber woven into his crisp white shirt, his skin that shines like plastic, the freckles that are painted on his lips that look of clay. All too real. And suddenly I realize *this is my father.* The man who fought the hardest fight there is. I stare at him for one last time and all the particles and vibrations of the world, of the funeral home, of this room, accompany me. I hear footsteps behind me and forget that there are other people here for him



Layers 3 AVERII WAIBEL

too. A loving father, husband, and son. I turn around and there is only the red-carpeted walls interrupting my view. Nobody is there. Only me...and the casket that contains my father. ■

Art Contest

Congratulations! Nicolette Cussins' art submission was selected by *Labyrinth* editorial staff in response to our prompt: "What is your interpretation of a labyrinth?"



Wandering Traveler NICOLETTE CUSSINS

Waltzing on Water

by RAIHAN "ANN" AMIR

Amalgamations of the simplest
atoms,
Hydrogen and Oxygen,
Creating such strong yet pure molecules,
Harmless,
waiting to be discovered more than just,
Liquid.

There is irony behind her love towards water,
Bathing in the morning is never something she looks forward to,
But once H₂O is in contact with her blemished skin,
The whole universe opens a brand new door.

Covering more than 70% of the
Earth,
"How can it not mean
something,
To every single thing that
breathes?"
Her heart whispers.

The vast
ocean life,
Makes her
smile,
And serves as a lifelong habitat,
To anemones, starfish, and blue whales.
It would make her smile even
broader,
When she witnesses these majestic creatures in
person,
Live happily where they belong,
Underwater.

Although a mammal at heart
with a pair of lungs,
She is forever in sync with water.

She remembers swimming for as long as she
could,
Without having to gasp for oxygen.

She remembers floating on water for as long as she would,
Without having to care about any worries that now seems so petty.

Where she too belongs,
Her frets blown away, her peace eternal

Let her buoyant soul drift away.
Let her weightless body waltz on water.

High Up in Your Sky

by JOSE XUJUR

You, the eagle, who fly high, up in the sky,
free with no limits in your horizon of life.

I, the little rodent who can't fly, but can perforate the most majestic of
the granite rocks with infinite
patience, consistent effort, and high level of perseverance.

You look down at me, and from your position, up in the sky, up in your
throne. Your acute sight tells you
that I am nothing, but an insignificant little rodent
who can never fly next to you to the horizon of life.

I, the little rodent, who is never going to see the world
from your perspective, with your acute sight
up from the sky, up in your world, from high altitude.

I look up at you, and from my keen sight of imagination
I admire your strong wings; I admire your liberty,
I admire your beauty and your astonishing multicolor strength and
power,
but I can only imagine you, I can only feel your shadow, I can only
feel your upward presence.

I hear your flight call melody in the wind.
I feel your presence in my memories; and my heart wanted to
escape, escape from your ghost, escape from your shadow,
escape from your perennial haunting presence
which keeps hunting me down,
which keeps hurting my fragile existence.

ACADEMIC



Intoxicated EUNHA KIM

Plants and Dormancy

by LILI FAN

Referring to the definition given in Stern's *Introductory Plant Biology*, dormancy is most accurately described as a period of growth inactivity among plants and animals, even when all the required environmental conditions of growth have been met (Stern, Bidlack, and Jansky 211). Dormancy is a period where organisms, both plants and animals, stop their cycle of growth and

development. Specifically within the plant kingdoms, the fragile flower buds will be covered with protective scales, while the rate of metabolism is visibly slowed down. With the minimization of metabolic activities, the amount of energy produced from a plant cell's mitochondria is significantly reserved.

The environmental condition can directly stimulate dormancy, as plants tend to stop all activities in between the end of fall and the start of winter to improve its state of survivability against the harsh nature. Some special plants have their own "biological clock," which controls when the plant begins to germinate and enters the

resting stage. A typical plant's state of dormancy may last anywhere between a few days to many months, depending on the current temperature and climate. For example, a stone fruit such as a peach goes into dormancy for several weeks, while the temperature stays less than 7°C.

It is often easy to distinguish a plant during its dormancy and active germination stages. When a plant performs no growth under rightful conditions, then the plant is most likely dormant. Dormancy can also be selective; sometimes only a certain part of the plant goes dormant, while the rest remains active. This characteristic is especially vivid in coffee, in which case the only part that actually remains dormant is the flower buds. Some specialized plants will undergo two cycles of dormancy before they fully start to grow new leaves and buds. For example, *Trillium sessile*, Wake-robin, begins its first dormancy when its radical starts to emerge and adapt to the cold weather. Then, as a second season of freezing temperature arrives, its epicotyls will start to emerge.

Gymnosperms, trees that do not produce flower buds or fruits, also go into dormancy, despite having a dormancy condition that differs from angiosperms. *Acer palmatum*, Japanese maple tree, for example, can grow non-stop for two years, even under unfavorable conditions such as dry seasons and extreme coldness. The Deciduous tree automatically goes through dormancy as its leaves begin to fall during autumn; all of the foliage fall out by winter and the tree then develops new leaves in the spring. Evergreen trees, on the other hand, will shut down their systems during winter dormancy. By doing so, the trees aim to prevent any damages caused by periodic freezing, all without the shedding of leaves. The Evergreen trees will continue to perform basic metabolic functions and minimal respiration while waiting for the arrival of spring.

The growth outline of a typical tree is divided into four sections, which are noted by the four seasons. During the first two seasons, spring and summer, a tree will grow rapidly due to longer hours of exposure to sunlight. However, its growth will start to slow down as summer ends as it starts to prepare for the winter season. Fall is a storage season for the plants, as most trees will need plenty of food and water to ensure their survival during the harsh conditions of winter and the long period of dormancy. The reason seedlings remain dormant during winter, and only germinate in the spring, is because if they germinate in the fall, they will not be able to survive winter, where their ability to perform photosynthesis is greatly reduced.

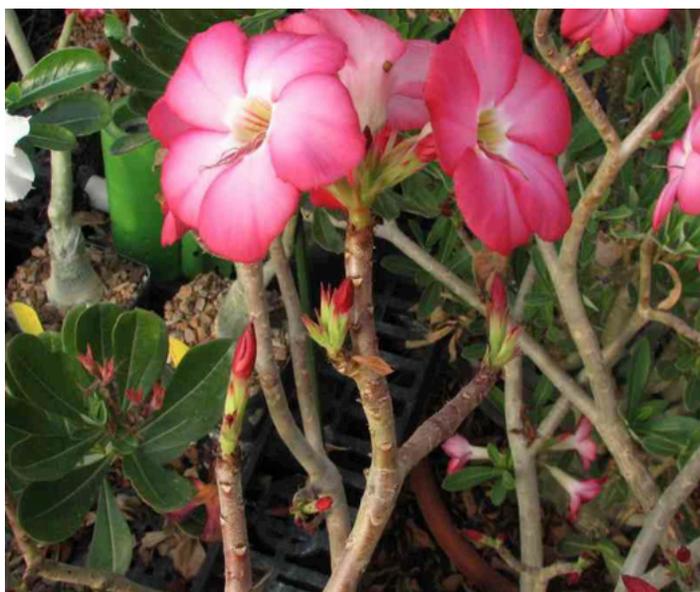
A plant will break through its dormancy state through after-ripening, one of the factors that stimulate germination. Plants will only actively reproduce due to several environmental stimulations, such as temperature extremity and long photoperiods. Some other plant species will require additional enzymes, along with specific conditions in order to break their dormancy. Contrary to common belief, most plants actually require long periods of absolute coldness, between 0°C to 10°C, to stop dormancy.

Scientists and plant researchers have gone through many experiments to prove that plant dormancy is a survival strategy for plants to prevent the loss of their productivity caused by the invasion and harmful effect of herbivores. In 1992, a study done by Paige shows that



“This *Adenium socotranum* is breaking dormancy. Water use is still low, but it needs some to stimulate waking up” (Dr. Dimmitt, Mark).

From Dr. Dimmitt, Mark and Williams, Andre, *Adenium: Sculptural Elegance, Floral Extravagance*.



“Dormant and deciduous, but flowering. Water use is still minimal. *Adenium 'arabicum' 'Hansoti Dwarf'*” (Dr. Dimmitt, Mark).

From Dr. Dimmitt, Mark and Williams, Andre, *Adenium: Sculptural Elegance, Floral Extravagance*.

dormant plants whose flowering stalks and fruits are eaten tend to produce significantly more buds and fruits during the next season. Most plant dormancies tend to last less than a year, and the population of plants that undergo dormancy lasting from one to two years is reduced by at least 70% in comparison. Three years in dormancy is almost non-existent (pg. 1429, *Ecology*).

Another piece of research done by Trabaud and Oustric shows that when a plant seedling is exposed to fire, its chance of dormancy breakage will greatly increase. A study conducted by Holmes and Moll shows that as seeds are planted deeper into the soil, their chance of survival will decrease and they will be less likely to germinate (pg. 601-610, *Botany*). A recent experiment done by M. J. Baeza and V. R. Vallejo shows that newly produced seeds have a higher dormancy level than some of the older ones (pg. 191-205, *Plant Ecology*).

Lastly, dormancy is essential as it vividly increases a plant's survivability. Dormancy is also one of the main reasons why plants exist, and why they are the producers at the bottom of the food chain. A plant has the ability to store sunlight energy, generating in a fast reproductive process to feed herbivores. Herbivores are then eaten by carnivores and converted into energy. Plants are the main source of light-harvesting, as they provide the most energy. Their existence have allowed humans and numerous species to be fed and oxygenated. Although plant dormancy is far different from an animal's process of hibernation, they both serve the same purpose: to increase survivability, even under unfavorable environmental conditions. ■



"Dormant and deciduous. Water consumption is nearly zero. Adenium 'arabicum'" (Dr. Dimmitt, Mark).

From Dr. Dimmitt, Mark and Williams, Andre, *Adenium: Sculptural Elegance, Floral Extravagance*.

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A Psychological Analysis of a Unique Friendship

by YOUCE XIANG

People are all familiar with friendship, a relationship based on mutual trust, understanding, and support. People may also have seen and experienced the breakdown of friendship, which is mostly caused by dishonesty and betrayal. Sandor Marai's 1942 novel, *Embers*, presents a unique friendship that both challenges and updates the interpretation of this connection. The fiction specifically depicts the reunion between the General, the protagonist, and his old friend, Konrad. This relationship forms in their childhood, and deepens as they grow up, yet is endangered as the conflicts between them become overwhelming. The fiction climaxes with the disclosure of Konrad's attempted murder of the General and the affair with the General's wife, Kristztina. The built-in and noble childhood love that this relationship yields partially explains the General's forgiveness of Konrad's betrayal. However, the friendship's overcompensation for the children's lack of parental love, along with Konrad's personality and life, all cause his betrayal.

The immediate and enormous love that remedies the General's insignificant parental love fundamentally explains his excusing Konrad's betrayal. Since the General receives inadequate love from his parents, the love from Konrad offers him the greatest comfort and trust that are essential to successfully help him survive his poor childhood. When he weeps sobbingly and falls into a coma, everybody knows the lack of parental love causes his intense health condition (Marai 2829). In fact, as a child, the General lives in a closed castle resembling a

granite mausoleum, and he feels hopeless when facing his servants and grandmother. The inharmonic marriage between his father and mother results in his insufficient love; also, he has precociously realized that he will inherit his father's profession, a soldier. These all initiate the General's confined, dejecting, and solitary life; under such circumstances, Konrad's love becomes a great component of the General's parents' love. This physically and mentally restores the General's health as, "From that day on, the boy coughed less. He was no longer alone" (Marai 39). The influence that this early set and deeply established relationship exerts has been embedded into the General's

consciousness; specifically, he has already perceived and treated Konrad as his brother who is fatally linked with him. Even if Konrad conducts certain actions deviating from loyalty, the General will endeavor to seek empathy towards Konrad instead of immediately blaming him and terminating his relationship.

Nonetheless, Konrad and the General's friendship almost substitutes for the parental relationship, the fact of which predicts the possible eruption of their contradiction. Even though the friendship's unconditionality, disinterestedness and purity resemble the parent-child relationship, this

Absentmindedness IV GIANFRANCO GASTELO





Seal Selfie T. BEARDSLEY

connection cannot replace the validity of a parent-child connection. Neither Konrad nor the General is capable of dealing with difficult situations. For instance, the General isolates himself from his wife after detecting her and Konrad's desertion of him and indulges in his solitude, instead of openly coping with Krisztina. Similarly, Konrad flees and acts as a coward, rather than frankly confronting the General. In fact, the malfunction of the parental connection gives rise to their irresponsible behaviors. According to developmental psychology:

Children's relationships with parents serve as an important foundation for emotional functioning in social situations. Thus, security of attachment pertains to children's emotional regulation in stressful situations" (Lerner, Easterbrooks, and Mistry 212).

These indispensable upbringings help children establish their abilities to modulate their emotions and foster proper strategies when in distress and during other

emotional dilemmas. The two children's weak emotional ties with their parents instead reinforce their intimacy. This peculiarity causes both the General and Konrad to underdevelop their abilities to appraise and evaluate their emotional reactions towards the outside world. Once their ambivalences appear, it is not hard to imagine how they settle them and how dreadful the outcome can be.

The vast discrepancy between Konrad and the General's life particularly exhibits itself in their wealth conditions. The difference plants the seed of his aversion of the General. Konrad admits, "[When] I am staying with you and I tip one of the servants, I am expending a portion of their [Konrad's parents'] lives. It is very hard to live in such a way" (Marai 46). He used to lead a thrifty life and never squandered his money, since this distressfully reminds him of his parents' difficult savings. However, for the sake of this friendship, he chooses to bear the uneasiness. This passive adjustment and the resultant endurance trigger his dislike towards the General. Moreover, this preliminary difference increases and accumulates as Konrad refuses to accept any portion of money from the General. He remembers "[you] were always

painfully intent on underlining the financial imbalances between us” (Marai 118). Apparently, Konrad never forgets the actuality of his dramatic wealth differences with the General; further, Konrad virtually feels inferior in front of the General, and this difference has always stabbed at Konrad’s ego and self-regard. Still, Konrad’s immoderate cognition and magnification of this distinction partially intensifies the ambivalence of their conversations. He mostly produces the unsatisfactory arrest of his conversation with the General; furthermore, he swallows all unsettled conflicts, which exerts far more damage to Konrad’s mental health than that of the General.

The accumulation of Konrad’s negative feelings ignites his profound hatred towards the General. There is a detail telling, “Henrik sometimes had the uneasy sensation that his friend was concealing a secret. Konrad was ‘another kind of man’ and his secret was not one that yielded to questioning” (Mari 53-54). It is safe to say that the General has sought to talk with Konrad to understand him, but Konrad never gives way to the General’s questioning. He may either disregard the General’s inquiry, or evade his questioning. In fact, Konrad’s natural inwardness occupies his character; he prefers reading books about history, English, and sociology (Marai 61). He pays little attention to people’s disputes and concerns. Though the stability between him and the General begins to crack, he responds to all the seeming tensions through evasion, indecision, and hesitation, which keep the problems unresolved. Inside his world, his hidden jealousies toward the General, his profound depressions, and his persistent resentments gradually permeate Konrad’s thoughts and devour his rationality. He becomes sentimental, eventually falling apart and committing an unintelligible and grave conspiracy - the attempted murder of the General.

In fact, Konrad’s timidity illustrates his inferiority complex, a term first coined by the outstanding

Somber CHARLIE HANLON

psychoanalyst Alfred Adler. The feeling of inferiority will normally incite people to pursue perfection and to overcome their inadequacies (Rattner 35). Sadly, Konrad cannot manage his inadequacies. The dearth of wealth and confidence, and all the abovementioned negative emotions fetter him. In this way, the mixture of his emotions finally evolves into a whole unit labeled as an inferiority complex. As Adler claims, “A feeling of inferiority becomes an impediment to development only if the child is fixated in it and finds no way out of his situation. Then his pessimism and his timidity consolidate into an inferiority complex” (Rattner 35). Comparably, Konrad retreats to his musical and philosophical world, castrates all social ties, and indulges in his sentimental and lonely inner-world. As a matter of fact, this inferiority complex has anchored his heart, and Konrad needs a vent to express his feelings to their fullest, regardless of the lawful and moral boundaries of his friendship.

The military education Konrad receives enlarges his inferiority complex. The repetitious and monotonous military life stifles Konrad from releasing his pessimistic energy and feelings, and compounds his eccentricity. Based on Adler’s theory, “The educational methods of [toughness] and strictness on the other are particularly to be blamed for failures in emotional development” (Rattner 37). Adler emphasizes the severity of the damage stemming from improper education on children’s mental development. The military education’s stress on obedience and discipline offers barren aid for Konrad’s emotional development. His unchanged pace of emotional progress is not in concert with the growing complexity of his environment. He cannot adopt proper ways to deal with his emotional obstacles. Thus, the cumulative effects of this negative environment not only internally aggravate his pessimism and inferiority complex, but also worsen his situation with the General.

Furthermore, the existence of the military education’s under-compensation and under-correction of Konrad’s mental imperfections externally breed Konrad’s hostility to other people. Adler subsequently makes a claim about the serious outcome of the failing education, “In both educational situations, the world is bound to appear hostile to him and stifle his creative energy” (Rattner 37). “Both” refers to coddling methods and strict educational methods. Hence, he harbors animosity towards his surroundings, especially the General. This partially explains why he attempts to murder the General.

Marai’s fictional friendship presents an insight that transcends people’s normal definition and perception of friendship. The psychological dissection of this relationship helps people recognize the possibility of its existence and discover some universal truths about human beings. ■

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