



LABY RINTH

COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO • THE WRITERS' PROJECT

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Sunset Water Yueying Wu

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

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champion of the arts, Rebecca Alex,

the always encouraging ASCSM,

and

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

Keep writing. Keep creating. Keep learning.



Labyrinth Issue 5
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Letter From the Editor

Someone asked me the other day to describe our publication in one word. I told them it was cruel to ask a writer to give a one worded description, but I settled on the word “stories.” This is not an adjective, but I felt it summed up what we do at Labyrinth nicely. We help shine a light on the stories told by the student artists and authors in the San Mateo Community College District.

I thought about that word as I attended the 10th Annual Honors Research Symposium at Stanford University. Over the course of eight hours, I saw the culmination of research and curiosity sharpened into pinpoint presentations. One presenter did an entire research project on the way stories are presented. She said, “How we chose to tell a story can mean the difference between one tale and another.” I carried her words with me to other presentations that day, and collected more as honors students from all over the Bay Area added pieces of their perspective to my haul.

In working on this special issue, we, the makers of Labyrinth, have found our own narratives. From the camera lens, to a paintbrush, and the specific words chosen by my peers, I hope the stories you find here inspire you to tell your own.

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Editor in Chief



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Malignant

by Annabelle Lynn Tada

You always said I looked good in blue.

You gave me a locket to wear around my neck,
chains made of gold, with your picture on the end.

I wear you like a trophy,
hanging around my throat,
fingers on my collar bones-
swinging back and forth.

I keep you by my heart,
blood pumping through my veins.
Arteries blue, green, and purple-
we learn to love our chains.

Heavy locket hanging- pendulum on my neck.

Weigh me down.

Watch me choke.

You always said I looked good in blue.



Shadow in the Canopy Yueying Wu

Finding the Right Words

by Jessica Aitken

It's Sunday morning. 11 AM is still the morning. But you still feel tired. Was there a party last night? Yeah, that sounds right; it's coming back now. You were celebrating a friend's birthday, and she'd turned her apartment into a karaoke bar. And that fuzzy dizzy throbbing? Yup, that's definitely a hangover. Ugh, if only you were still asleep.

Your girlfriend has been up for a few hours. Well, you say girlfriend, that's your term, and one you only use in your thoughts. The exact label of your relationship hasn't quite been agreed upon yet. She told you once that she'd referred to you as "this girl I've been sort of dating" to her coworkers. It's funny but definitely far too long to use as a regular phrase. You've been meaning to talk about it, but keep putting it off. There never seems to be a natural moment to bring it up, and you don't want to be awkward; even though you always are. Somehow she hasn't noticed, and it's best just to avoid that altogether, lest you break the spell.

You're so tired.

She sees you with your eyes open and smiles. You close them and fall back to sleep.

Last night. You've left the party and are taking a ride back to her place. Making out with your – whatever – girlfriend. A little drunk. Back at her apartment, you both take off your clothes. Taking off each other's clothes is too difficult; one of the big lies of movies. She tells you that you're pretty and, somehow, you believe it. Maybe it's the alcohol.

You feel the need to tell her she's pretty, to share, to return some small portion of the shower of compliments she rains upon you. Thoughts flash past in their innumerable, lightning fast, unstoppable swarm. Spiraling inwards, like an ontological whirlpool. You try to grasp them, even just one, to find the words and share them. But there are too many. You can't. It's impossible.

Lying in bed together, she stares into your eyes, but you can only hold it for a few seconds before blushing and looking away.

It's said that a person's eyes are the window to their soul. Is that why it's so hard to stare into them? Why you can't share her gaze as you lie there together? There's just too much sitting behind that thin lens, countless stars, entire galaxies, the endless expanse of the universe, and to look into it is an invitation to a special kind of madness. It blinds you, dissolves all cogni-



tive thought, burns like staring to long into the sun.

It's 3 PM before you wake again properly. And still you feel tired. You eat some of the extra food she made for lunch, as you sit leaning against each other in bed. You start getting dressed because you have to leave. Your *girlfriend* lives in the city, and it takes at least an hour to get there – or back – from where you live.

As you kiss each other goodbye, she tells you again "you're pretty." But this time, you don't believe her. She tells you you're pretty, but you know she's lying. Because it can't be true. How could anyone find you pretty? With last night's eyeliner smeared into dark bags underneath. Hair a mess, sticking in all directions and showing off your big forehead. And bristles of hair already starting to poke back through the skin of your face. No, she must be lying.

And again, the need to say it back, to tell her she's beautiful. But the words never come. You can't.

There's a small, uncomfortable moment. Not her expecting anything. It comes from you. The not actually a lie, and your inability to return it. You kiss her again, trying to fill that moment, and leave. Unhappy.

Eyes burning as you walk along the street to the subway. What is wrong with you? Why do you always feel this way about yourself, ugly and ill fitting? And why can't you just say, "you're pretty," "you're cute," or "I like your butt, your boobs, your whatever?"

But the only thing you can think of is her laugh and the way her eyes shine when she smiles, with countless stars glowing behind them. But you will never say those words.

Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been

by Gianna Olkowski

It was a party, a big party. My friends and I were all fresh in high school so we HAD to go. We had to experience the fun and alcohol everyone talked about.

I wish I could say I remember all of those “fun” nights. The truth is, I barely remembered them. Most times I ended up waking up on an unfamiliar couch, with my stomach twisting and turning like a knife. Other nights I woke up on my own couch, with my mom staring at me, sarcastically asking “had a fun time last night?” There are things that I vividly remember: the aching of my kidneys, the depression of being fucked up, the regret, the constant thoughts “what the hell happened last night?” “did he touch me?” I remember constantly checking my underwear. and I remember the hangovers at school that caused me to do so poorly and miss days on end. The fact that I even passed classes like health, is a mystery to me.

Having fun with my friends and people I barely knew, not missing out on anything fun ever, and making sure I was always out on the weekends. That’s what high school meant to me. Who needed perfect grades? I would do just fine with passing grades, no problem! I’ll just do better next time. This was my mentality from the starting point of freshman year all the way to the beginning of Junior year.

I never met anyone that lied to and disobeyed their mother as much as I had. If I couldn’t go out, best believe I was sneaking out or calling someone much older than to pick me up. I strongly believed my house to be a boring, painful hell rather than a safe haven. My mom wasn’t the only person I lied to. I lied to everyone I met. “So, how old are you?” “17, 18 in a few months though.” Ha, more like barely 15 and still unaware of what an alcohol BAC reading was.

My peers were everything. I wanted to impress them, to be a part of their lives, and fill the empty void inside of me with their intoxicating presence. Their opinions of me were more important than those of any teacher or family member. Not a single bone in my body felt sorrow when my grandparents said “we just want you to be better. We want you to happy and do everything we know you are capable of.” Not even when they would visit me in the hospital after one of my loaded episodes. The one thing I did make sure to

do, however, was posting a witty facebook status and pictures of the previous nights, so everyone knew that I was still here. I was ready to party as soon as I got over that sudden, uncomfortable moment of insight that I always swallowed and refused to acknowledge for my own peace of mind. Being ignorant, meant being blissful; and that’s all I ever wanted.

A good time.

That moment I realized, these people don’t deserve any part of me.

I may have been out of control, but one thing I was for sure, was a great friend. I would stay up for hours in the middle of the night to make sure my friends were ok, whatever it was that they were going through, I was there. I would take hour long train rides just to be at their rescue. I even gave them living necessities such as a bed and food (my mother was so generous to allow that). And I always gave them the benefit of the doubt and forgave with open arms no matter how bad whatever they did was. Because, I was convinced they would do the same for me. They would always have my back, why wouldn’t they?

But mama was right, and I was wrong. Just like always.

In the beginning of my Junior year, my eyes opened and I became so selfish, closed off, and an exclusive human being entirely, the complete opposite of what I was before. I did this for all the right reasons, it was for my own good after all. I never knew how cruel and ugly people could be until it all went down.

It was a boy in my English class that started it off. Every day was a new ignorant question about how girls have sex with each other and why some of them wish they had a dick so bad.

One day, I couldn’t take it anymore, and the conversation between me and him got so heated we were both standing up and at each other’s throats. The words that came out of his mouth were so hateful and threatening that his friends had to tell him to “chill”.

Quickly after, I passed by him in the hallway. He was tying up his sweatpants. I was angry and in tears when I approached Sabrina, my girlfriend. She was confused and became angry when she figured out what was coming out of my mouth. Sabrina approached him, and before she could ask him why he

Nightwatch Andrew Emad Behbahani



did what he did to me, he was spewing spit balls of insults in her face.

And then he hit her. But it wasn't just a hit, he was swinging fast. He picked her tiny body up off the ground and slammed her into the lockers. She got a few hits in but it wasn't enough to stop him. He was a 6 foot varsity quarterback after all.

Everything felt hazy in that moment. I looked around and everything slowed down, and no one was even trying to help. It's like they were all apart of it and knew what he was going to do, like they wanted it to happen. I tried prying him off of her but that didn't work.

"Go for the balls!" I yelled. I jumped on his back, dug my nails into his face, ripped the hair from his beard, and he finally let go of her.

We sat in the office writing a report of the incident for a good 20 minutes before they said she needed to go to the ER immediately.

We sat in that emergency room and talked with the officers for hours.

They asked stupid questions like, "What did she do to egg him on?" As if she was responsible for this sociopath's actions. I picked his skin out of my fingernails and laughed to myself. I couldn't believe what had just happened and I had the biggest gut feeling that everything was going to change. This was just the beginning.

The beat down wasn't even what did it for me. It was the backlash on twitter from people we believed to be our good friends. Tweets like "Well that's what you get for thinking you're a boy," "She deserved it, they both did," "Dykes want to be boys so

bad until they get their ass beat by one, LOL."

Not only this, but going to school the next week for mediation with the boy and our families, along with one of the officers. Of course, the blame was to be pinned on us. They knew it would be the easiest route to sweep it under the rug and shut us up. They printed out old tweets of mine, song lyrics even, and made them out to be as if I were attacking him and as if I was the reason he "had a temper tantrum" (the officer). His mother had the nerve to ask for an apology from me for spreading the story and making it go viral. I laughed in her face and explained how she should apologize for raising such a big heaping pile of shit for a son.

Not one person they interviewed or I reached out to confessed to what they witnessed him do. They chose to protect him instead. I walked out of school that day for the last time. Everyone hyping each other up to say a few things to me and get a reaction out of me. I just smiled and walked away. I knew I would have my time to show them.

I thought a lot after this. I told myself I would never back down, even if it meant an entire school hating me. So, I didn't. I went on to spread his name everywhere. I'm even guilty of hurting a few people physically who just didn't know to keep their mouths shut. As much as this was against my morals, I couldn't help it. I was like a soda can who was shook too much that eventually just exploded.

Eventually, it all stopped and died down. I am still alive .

I went on to finish Junior year online and then moved to Idaho to experience even more of people and their bullshit. A small town full of hicks. But this just pushed me to becoming a strong-minded person who doesn't let anyone or any group, walk all over. I didn't talk much unless it was to stand up for something I believed in. In result of that, my academic standing was excellent. I didn't let just anyone be my friend, therefore, I barely ever went out.

I cultivated a principled conscious for which I am extremely grateful for. If it wasn't for these moments of growth through hardships, I wouldn't be at the College of San Mateo right now. I would

o how all of my friends from the past are still to this day. Opening your eyes can be painful, but I sure as hell am grateful it turned out the way it did.



Your World As It Seems

By Patrick Fisher

For every light, there is darkness

And for every loss, there is a gain.

From this, things can be repaired, whether it's a loss of hope
of a broken heart.

Just like the phoenix who begins life anew in the ashes of its
past, we too can reclaim who we once were and begin again.

But some, have lived in darkness too long and made it their
life, believing that it is the only way to make sense of the
world around them. No matter how dark their soul, there is
always a light deep within waiting to be rekindled.

Sometimes we are that light.

So let love guide you, for kindness will sprout along your
path. Allow light to illumintate you, for darkness will pster
you.

Exchanging Glances

by Vero Jardeleza

As the warm air
welcomes me on that cold, winter morning
I spotted only *you*

We exchanged glances across
the crowded room,
Your beautiful smile
enticing me as our eyes met.

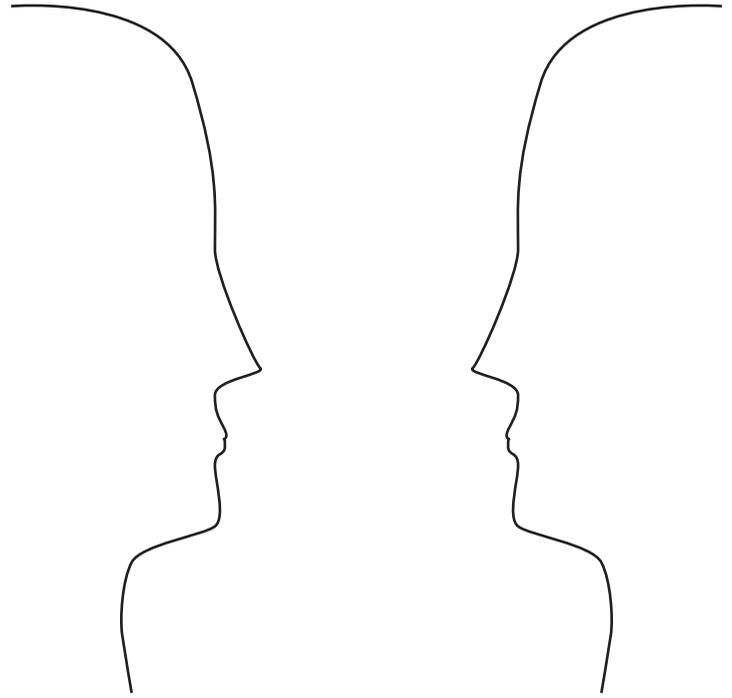
Dark curled hair,
blue eyes like the color of the ocean
heart gleaming of gold,
surely it was a trap, was it?
O, it can't be!

Like a Captain lost at sea,
I held on strongly to resist,
luring me with your striking features.
You were like the Siren, trying to sing
Her songs to encapsulate me.
How I've crashed hard!

A man with so much dimension,
I was surely on cloud 9

From there we met again and again
And I was surely in love,
We laughed until we cried
But was the love ever returned?

If you do not love me back
I think about the words of Walt Whitman.
I loved you ardently but I do not become enraged,
Life goes on, as the love songs will continue to play.



A Red Corded Thread

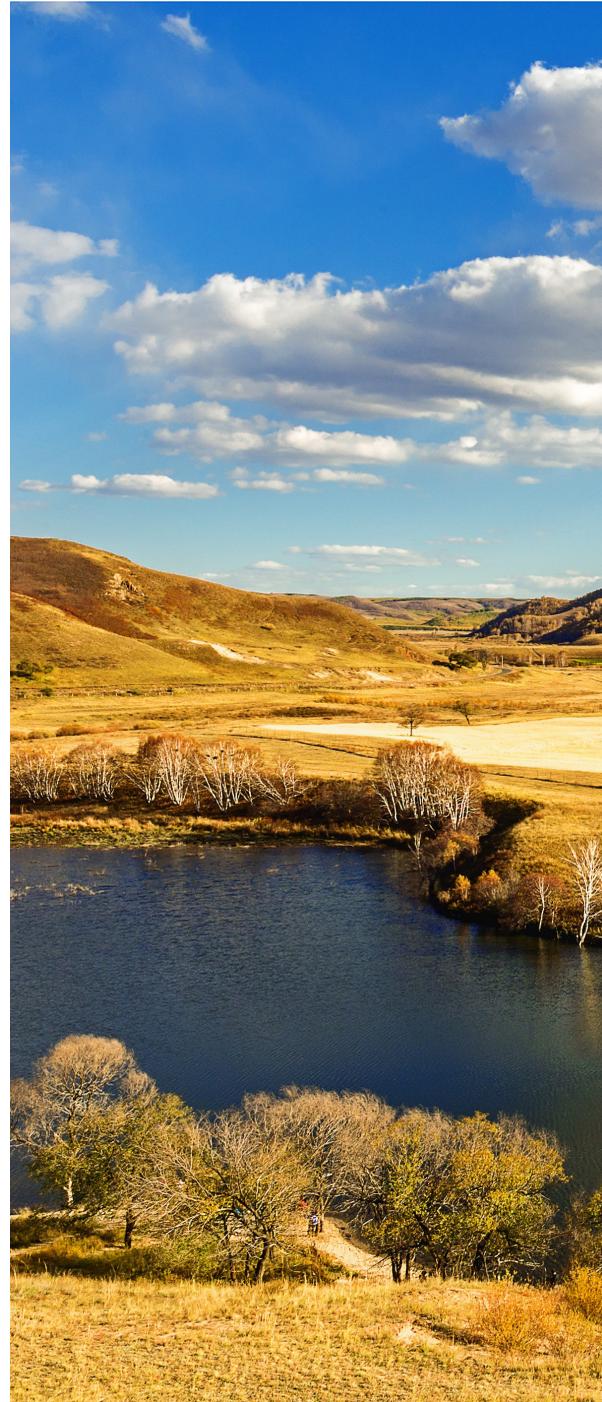
by Lillian Morgenthaler

Friends and foes,
whom we meet everyday,
are connected to us
by a red corded string.
Tied nimbly about the ankle of each,
the thread tightens slowly until we all meet.
Some ties are lasting,
while others are not.
Some fray at the end,
while others grow strong.

A red corded thread entwines us all,
for together
We stand strong.



Untitled Lihao Wang



World Gala 2017 Photography Contest Judge's Choice Winner

Deserted Xiaowen (Silvia) Luo



“The photo was taken in mid-September 2015. It gives us a good view of how well nature merges the yellow trees and blue lake.”

Keeper of My Heart

by Veronica Eghdami

I look into his eyes and there are just so many things I want to say, I have so many thoughts running through my mind as I'm looking into his. I open my mouth and he leans in to kiss me, there's more to this than physical attraction, there has to be, my heart tells me so. My mind is screaming, begging me to stop. It's looking out for me, but love is stupidity, it is blindness. I fall without saying a word, but he will never know. We're "friends with benefits" or whatever the people of our generation call it. My friends tell me to get used to it, that we are merely objects in the game, but I can't help but see the better in men- hell, I was raised by a saint, the perfect human. I continue to kiss him, I close my eyes to find that it's not dark, it's bright. When he kisses me, I light up. Any darkness I could have ever imagined is gone. He's like the Sun. So powerful, hot, bright. I can feel my heart racing, I am giving myself to him with every kiss. It's so worth it, everything I do for him is so damn worth it, I think. It's like my body melts when he's close to me, my thoughts are going so fast that when he speaks to me, I'm not sure what to say- I give in to everything he tells me to do. I go with the motions and suddenly, he is inside me. I feel like it's love, I feel like we are intertwined, I wonder if this is more than human nature to him.

Little do I know that in a few months, I won't receive that spark. My heart will not race; it won't even feel like it's beating. I won't feel a thing after I have given all of myself to him. I will

sit and question what the Earth would be without the Sun, non-existent. Just as I will feel. Love is such a foolish thing. I will fight with myself for months trying to mend my heart, wondering why he did not love me back. Was I not enough for him? Was I not as beautiful as the other women in his life? Was it because I didn't voice my feelings enough? Why was I so hesitant to express myself, so shy? I'll hate myself for trying so damn hard to be everything he wanted and end up as a failure. I'll check his social media pages to see what he's doing, just to find that he is in a relationship. She is beautiful, I think; her body is amazing, she looks so outgoing, so perfect. I'll spend so much time trying to compare her to myself, trying to change myself to be more like girls like her. I will have little hope for any future relationships because of my fear of being abandoned or hurt.

But within these months of pain, sadness, and envy, I will grow. I will hurt, and I will cry, I will feel loneliness- but throughout it all, I will find myself. I will learn to get up when I fall down, all on my own. I won't let this one experience change my perception of humans; I will remember to uphold my ability to show compassion and empathy. Most of all, I will love myself. I will realize that no matter what features another person has, there is only one me. I'll realize that I'm not missing a piece to the puzzle, that I am all I need. My Papa once told me that sometimes, people won't always treat you with the utmost respect, love, or kindness- people won't always see the beauty in you, but so long as you know your worth, you see your beauty, you can conquer

anything. After this, my worth will be engraved in my mind and heart, something that no one will ever be able to take away from me.



Parking Spaces

by Love Maia

The Dead of Spring
Allyn Pharo



With dreams in my eyes and hope in my heart, I want to wrap happiness around me and hold on forever. But it's not that kind of happiness. It's fleeting. All I can do is breathe it in and choke on it .

I rush past Go out into the night, laughing, my eyes bright, exhilaration swirling everywhere. *Holy crap!* "That just happened, right?"

"Oh it definitely happened."

I let out a crazed scream in the empty parking lot because I just met Unstable, my favorite band in the whole world. *That* just happened.

I gaze at Go, grinning so wide, so completely. He grins back at me, both of us wide-eyed and out of breath like over-excited kids.

I take in his sweet brown eyes, his dark, cropped hair, his olive skin, his dimples... This guy is way out of my league. Too perfect looking and way too cool. But I'm so glad we met tonight and I couldn't be happier to still be hanging out with him. "Thank you for this, Go. You are the best friend I've ever made at a concert."

Go's face spreads into a quiet smile. "You're welcome, Ryan," he replies. "It was worth it."

The air around us has cooled. The night is clear and for once so am I. I've got twenty tornadoes of feel-good spinning around my head and I can't stop smiling.

"So what's your story anyway?" Go asks. "Who named you Ryan?"

"My dad. He wanted a boy. What about you? Who named you Go?"

"It's short for Santiago."

"How'd you end up working concert security, Santiago?"

Go shoots me a sideways glance like he's about to make a joke, but instead, drops a bomb. "I ran away from home when I was seventeen. My father was using me for a punching bag. Did it for years. One night I couldn't take it anymore, so I fought back. Knocked him out cold and took off. This job is the best one I could get while I work on my GED. The free concerts and backstage access are a nice perk."

I stare at him. I don't know what to say. The way he threw it out there like that about his father. He just stated the facts, plain and simple. I could never do that.

"You alright?"

I don't answer. I don't know how. Obviously I should tell him about me. This is my chance to talk with someone who knows. I could tell Go everything and he'd understand. But I can't do it. Maybe because this night has been so unbelievably good and I don't want to let go of that. Maybe because the shame is so bad for me. Even thinking about Carla Marie fills me with it. I'm not like Go. Even though I know about his abuse now, I don't want him to know about mine.

"Ryan?" he asks again. "Look, I didn't mean to freak you out

or anything telling you all that. It's just my truth, you know?"

"No," I say. "No, you didn't freak me out. I was just wondering if it was hard for you. The running away at seventeen part, I mean."

Go shrugs. "It's still hard sometimes, but it's a whole lot easier than living with my dad ever was. I've been on my own a year and a half now. I have a steady job, rent a decent room, and I have friends here. I'm happy, you know?"

I definitely don't know. What would it be like to be free of it all?

I stay quiet thinking about it the rest of the way to the car. When we get there, we take a seat together on one of those concrete parking space barriers nearby, neither of us ready to say goodbye yet.

Go smiles at me. He is beautiful on the outside in a very obvious way, but he's beautiful on the inside in an obvious way too. I try to think of someone wanting to hurt him, but I can't imagine it.

Instead I think of how we're so much alike. It's crazy really how we could have so much in common and end up finding each other like this out of twenty thousand people. I want to tell him about me, but that's where we're different. I can only wish to one day be as brave as he is.

The things that happened back home? I never even told my friends about any of it. They just knew; they saw the aftermath each time like a road map, my secrets written on my body for all to see. Carla Marie made sure I had reasons to hang my head low, not just in surrender, but to hide the cuts, the bruises, the black eye she gave me.

I don't want Go to know how weak I really am. Even if it would help to tell him. Even if it's a gift meeting him like this and having this shared night, this bond.

Go reaches out and takes my hand. I look down at our fingers in surprise, liking the way they look together, his olive skin and my coffee skin intertwined. We sit still and hold on.

He rubs his thumb across my palm and it feels so good, like little shock waves of electricity flowing into my hand and spreading through my body.

I close my eyes and something in me shifts. Something gives and time ticks down. Words brew up and boil over and spill out of me. Words I don't even know are coming.

I put my head back as the truth breaks through.
I watch the stars and I tell Go everything.

My story pours out of me like rain, like a thunderstorm of pummeling hail, like lightning scorching the earth. I have never done this before and I will never do it again, not like this. Not the truth. It really does feel like a storm; everything, cracked and broken and desolate.

Whenever I hear Unstable's music, it's like something reaches inside me and squeezes and instead of suffocating the way that I should, I break free.

That's how this feels, spilling my truth, letting it leak onto the pavement and soak up the sky and spin around me, getting thicker and hotter as it goes on. The thickness of the air and the sweltering heat should both suffocate me, but Go is on the other side, waiting to catch my words, and when he does, I break free. I reach the other side.

I reach for him and he takes me, flaws and all. He is the best friend I've ever made at a concert, but he is also a boy I couldn't admit I really liked until now because I couldn't see how he could possibly like me.

Now I realize it doesn't matter how he feels because it's what I feel. *I like him. I want him.* That's part of *my* truth.

When I look up into his eyes now, I see something that was maybe there all along.

I see my own reflection and that I look beautiful in it.

Then he says the words. Speaks them out loud.

"You're beautiful, Ryan."

Everything disappears.

The past, the storm, and the pain...

There is only us now.

Go moves closer, his free hand rising to my cheek and pulling me in.

He kisses me.

And everything is okay in his kiss.

I can see clearly.

I can see the other side.

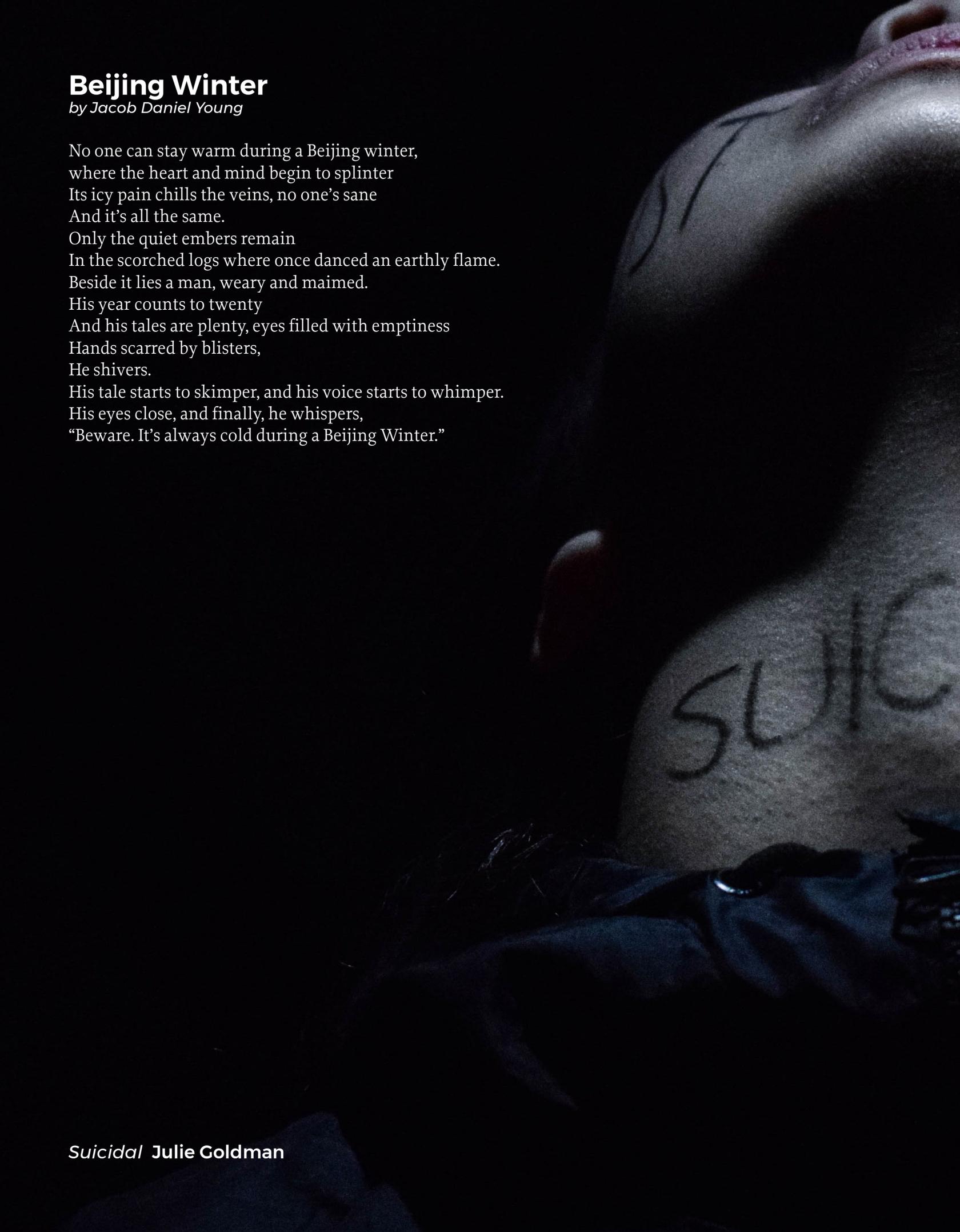
Hello World Huan Du

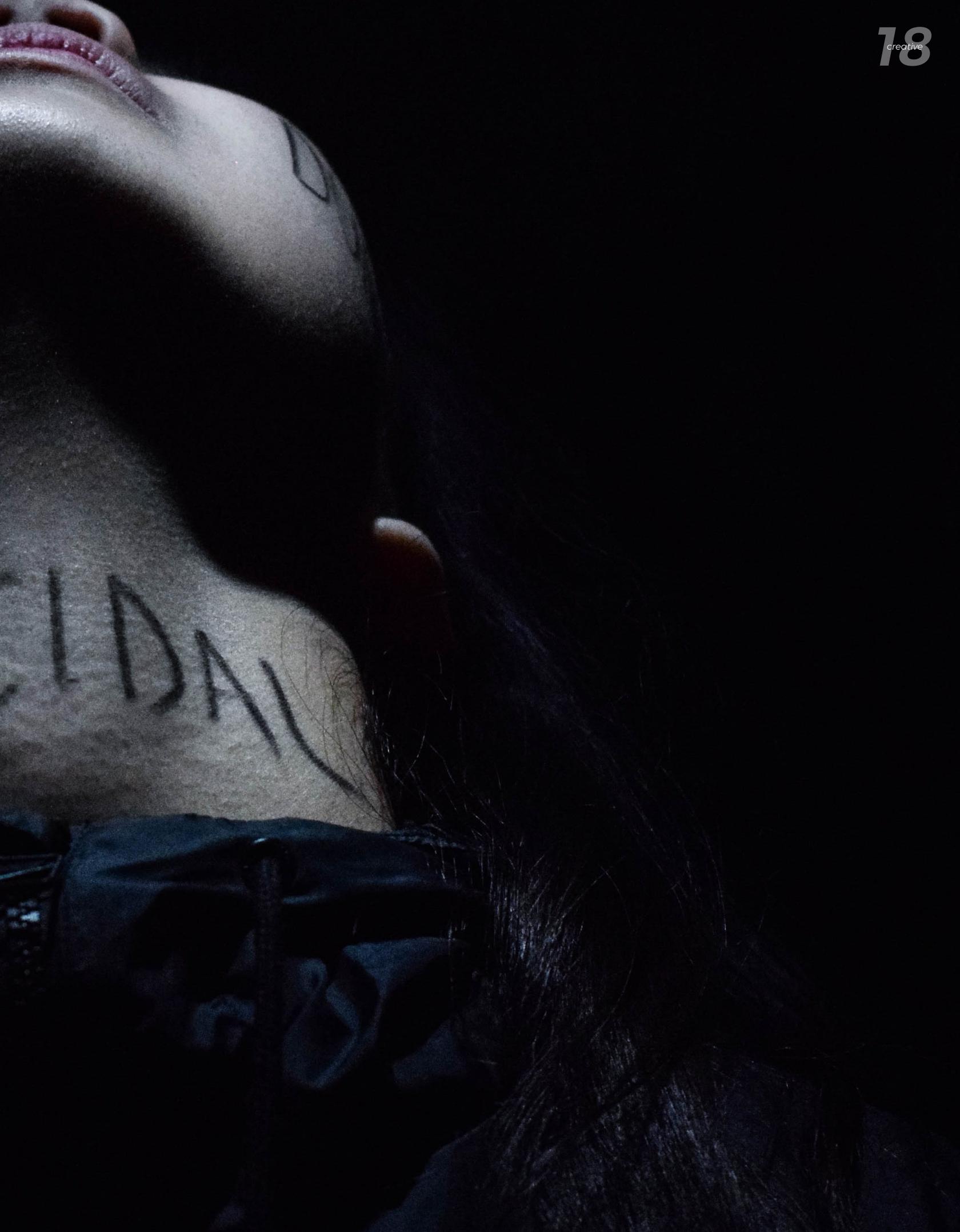


Beijing Winter

by Jacob Daniel Young

No one can stay warm during a Beijing winter,
where the heart and mind begin to splinter
Its icy pain chills the veins, no one's sane
And it's all the same.
Only the quiet embers remain
In the scorched logs where once danced an earthly flame.
Beside it lies a man, weary and maimed.
His year counts to twenty
And his tales are plenty, eyes filled with emptiness
Hands scarred by blisters,
He shivers.
His tale starts to skimper, and his voice starts to whimper.
His eyes close, and finally, he whispers,
"Beware. It's always cold during a Beijing Winter."





How to be an Adult

by Lauren Marks

Get up, and snap out of your dream. Throw on clothes and put on a friendly face to make people think you're doing okay. Prepare to confront the harsh cold reality you know awaits outside. Nothing school taught can prepare you for what lays beyond your front door.

Walking to work, you get glares from all around. "Look at her outfit! How can she go out like that?" one pair of eyes might say. "She is so fat!" the voices continue, "Oh my god, look at her arms!" All sharp looks feeling so accusatory, knowing your deepest darkest secrets. Those secrets haunt you but being an adult, you learn to push them aside, take a breath, and press on.

Next is to enter work. You think you might be safe from your past, but you aren't. You will soon learn the past follows you. Something happens at work and you are blinded, like a deer looking into headlights. Everything seems fine, but all of a sudden something comes back to you: you remember that one friend who hurt you, that one stupid incident that happened, and you drop your smile for a second. Your coworker notices and may ask what's wrong. You will want to scream about all the people who bullied you, you will want to cry and magically forget your mistakes, but instead you say, "Nothing, I'm fine." It is well learned that "nothing" is the correct answer when it comes to your feelings. Time to go back to working in silence. Make sure you turn away from the world, and pull down your sleeves. You may feel vulnerable so you want to hide those imperfections you always

seem to find. Try your best to hide the past because however hard you try, people do not understand. And don't forget put on that beautiful forced smile; you can't draw more attention than you have already.

It is time to take a lunch break. For some people it is the highlight of the day, but maybe it isn't for you. A quick glance down at your stomach and your mind goes crazy: "Fat ass, better not eat. People will look at you, you disgusting pig! You have already had enough food today." You put down the sandwich and grab your stomach. You aren't overweight so how can you have an eating disorder? No one notices you skipping a meal or two, you have done this since you were a kid, so you think nothing of it. Time to get out of the break room and go back to work.

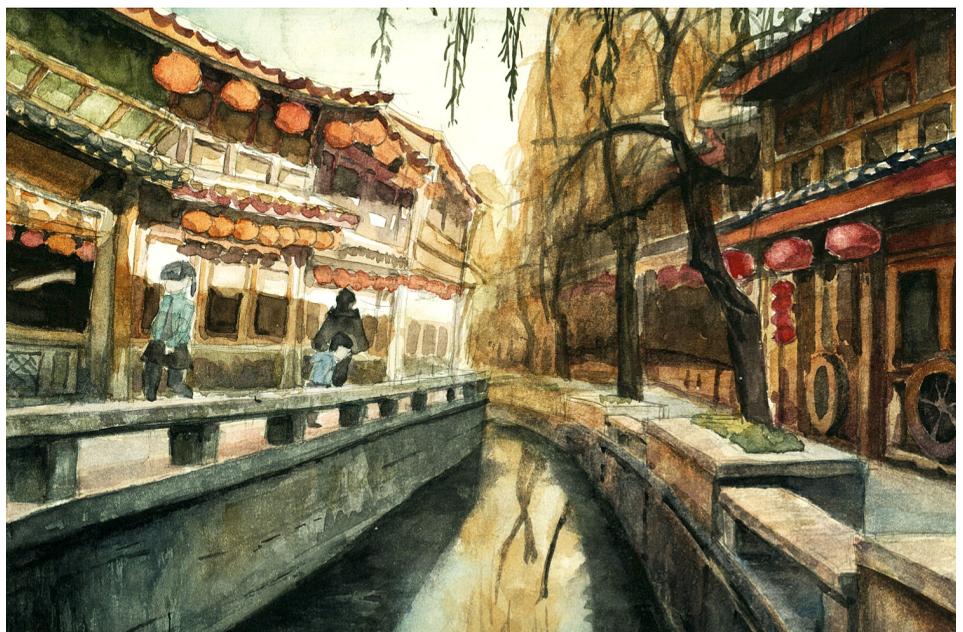
It is almost the end of your work day. You take a deep breath and tell yourself "I can do this." Stare at the clock and you will find

it starts to tick slower and slower, so it is best just to keep busy.

Finally, you are off work! Somehow time flew by. You get into your car and pick up your phone. Check to see if someone messaged you. Nope, just another sad notification telling you you're alone and your crops on farmville are now ready to be harvested.

Time to start the car and drive. Where are you going? Are you going to drive by your ex's house to see if they are okay? Are you going to a party you know you probably shouldn't go to? Are you going to sit at home, alone and depressed? The possibilities are endless.

Hey, you got a text! Oh, it just a stupid guy that you hung out with once. He is asking if you have any weed. Pick up your phone. Even though you haven't smoked pot in your life, put on a fake voice and respond. It is the only message you've gotten today, and you want



The Old Town of Lijiang Peijiang Xie (Terrence)

to talk to somebody. Make sure you sound cool so they still like you, but don't sound like you're trying too hard. "Nah, sorry bro, just ran out! We can go to a dispensary later if ya want."
No response.

Now time to lie to yourself. "Oh he probably just forgot about his phone, or it died or something. He will hit me up later." At least you try to keep your head up, right? Although you are smarter than those lies. You know that he is just using you. All you feel like is a goddamn tool! Only good thing people can say about you is "Oh I appreciate you giving me this, it was a really cool thing!" No! That isn't okay! I am more than just a freaking object I gave you but thanks for trying.
Now let's pretend it is okay and continue with our drive.

Home at last, you kick off your shoes, throw your bag to the right, plop on your bed, and look at your phone hopelessly. Maybe something will happen. Maybe there will be some answer, some truth, just something to keep you going.

When your phone finally vibrates and it is just another notification from a stupid game trying to get you to pay more of your hard earned money, throw your phone across the room. Let all the frustration breathe through your veins. Your feelings are here and there and for all you know you might smash your phone to smithereens. Let yourself feel those emotions, then let yourself release them.

Forget what they teach you in school, and just listen to your body. By taking care of the storm that swirls inside, you are able to defuse it. Time to get off the bed,

start the water, and get into the bath. You soak away the hard day's work, you soak away the pain and fear you felt; you become numb.

When the storm finally comes to rest, you get out, put on your favorite pajamas, and curl up in bed. As you are resting your

head on your pillow, you are hoping sleep will grant you peace. Somehow, someday something will go right for you. Although today might not have worked as blissfully as you hoped, there is always tomorrow. Time to rest your eyes and try again.



Warmth Cherie Chen

Climb Every Mountain

by Jo Goff

Climb every mountain;
Not merely for the awe and wonder elicited by their inherent beauty,
Which inevitably you will encounter;
But rather to remind the definitively insignificant egoic “self,”
Of the infinitesimally tiny speck it truly is,
Despite its ceaseless efforts at manufacturing theatric distractions,
As it seeks so desperately to hold on to space for itself in the world;
Embracing the grand illusion of some special relevance or meaning,
While in the course of an existence so contextually temporal relative to time.
Climb the mountains to be humbled.



Untitled Lihao Wang

Strawberry Summer

by Katie J. Welka

Rumbling, grumbling down
That old gravel road.
The long expanse
Between my favorite holidays.

The blooming grey plumes
Swallow the trees alight;
We were embers, once.

You live in my rearview mirror—
A raging summer fire
Obscured by dust and dirt.

I pull into
That lonely strawberry stand,
Ripened and red,
For sale again.

Behind the Hair
Marisa Guillermo



After The War
by Vasilis Dimitrios Tabakis

Past the fires
Into the black fog
Boys tumble and stumble
Far beyond winter's sun.

Molten metal drips blood
Moonstruck gaze frozen, done.
Tides turn thickened mud.
Warriors abundant, but none.

Fangs and claws
Through steel hearts to the meal
Fumbles and mumbles
Thieving bones, souls, and burials.

Earth swallows this weak history,
Time extinguishes these cold fire fairies.
Green is built on war's drums
As mothers live, grieving for fallen sons.

Pssst
by Terra Shelton

They told me
I would never not have flashbacks
They told me
PTSD would be lifelong
Well,
Take a good look at me
Right now
I didn't need bottles of Xanax
What I needed
Was to retrain the way
my body receives and lets go of oxygen
To tell my nerve plexuses
that it's okay to FEEL again
Remind them what it feels like
to have sensation in a body
Safety, comfort, relaxation
added to my sense vocabulary
Stress, panic, tension?
Not my way of processing
Re-wiring the hardware of my brain
into something we're admiring



CSM After the Storm - Storm **Peter Jew**



Balance Angela Kim

How to Manage Your Stress

by Christina Navarro

Get up and turn off your alarm. Do some light breathing exercises and make a cup of hot water with lemon. Drink 2 glasses. Make your bed, apparently making your bed increases productivity, then open your window for some fresh air. Set a timer for 8 minutes and practice some basic yoga, always end in the child pose. Lie out your outfit for the day and start the shower. Avoid the mirrors. Once cleansed and clothed, put on your deodorant and perfume. Apply makeup liberally but try not to look too overdone. Take extra time to cover your imperfections and the bruise. If your mom knocks stay quiet. Wait for her to be on the driveway leaving to work; then open the window to say 'you love her'. Make sure you smile. Check your texts: four from your boyfriend. Don't respond.

Go to class. Try not to fidget. Try not to sweat. Make sure you raise your hand. If you get too nervous pinch the inside of your arm discreetly. When walking down the hall try to avoid eye contact. Look busy. Make an effort to not think about him, thinking about him gives you resting bitch face and wrinkles. If you happen to make eye contact with someone always smile. Always hold the door open for someone behind you. If someone's blocking your way smile and be patient. If they don't notice you a simple polite 'excuse me' works well. Try to keep your face down. Don't think about him.

Once you've got back to your car, rest a moment. It'll be warm inside your car from the sun. Breathe deeply and let the warmth seep into your skin. Feel your muscles relax...let the phone buzz till it stops. Listen to the fist voicemail, "Good morning princess..." Shut off the phone.

Check the mirror. Avoid looking at yourself in the eyes. Everything's fine.

Arrive at home. Wave to your neighbors walking their dog: smile. Inside your house you'll either find your sister mumbling happily or screaming about something. If she's excited ignore her; if she's yelling spend up to ten minutes trying to calm her down, her OCD is acting up again. Put some tea in the microwave. If she's still not calm get a Zoloft from where your parents hide the emergency pills in their closet. Force her to take it. Set a timer for 30 minutes and drink your tea by your window. Choose a good book to escape into. Change for work and go.

Be courteous and smiley at work. Try to talk up the customers, always throw in a compliment because it makes for better sales. On break do not check your phone. Set a timer for 15 minutes and escape into your book. If your co-workers notice the bruise make up something light. Playing soccer I got hit; playing basketball I was elbowed. Make sure to breathe and try to look relaxed. Remember to smile.

Leaving work he might be waiting for you. Don't try to push past him, don't make a scene, be calm and smile slightly. Ask him to get into the car. He reaches for your hand. Don't flinch. Be calm. He'll apologize a few times. "It'll never happen again." Cry if you really can't help it. He'll try to comfort you. Let him. Don't forget to breathe.

Make some tea for yourself before bed. Try not to think about what you need to do, or what you should have done. For now it is okay. Don't cry too long or tomorrow you'll look puffy.

Relax. Breathe. Silent prayers. Escape into sleep.

Chloe's Breeze

by Klayton Barden

Turning Carrie Govan Skelly



The last thing Al felt every night before he slept was the chilling breeze of Chloe's feet intertwined with his, draining the warmth from his body and into her own.

Al turned over to freckles frozen in freefall over two rosy red cheeks. Although he was sure he was soon to contract frostbite, he stayed still to ensure that the last smile on Chloe's face was made by him. He brushed her golden-brown bangs to the side as he kissed her forehead, savoring this moment of peace as he tried to forget about her feet.

As he pulled away, he glanced down at the necklace she wore with a single puzzle piece dangling from the chain.

On their first anniversary, Al had finally agreed to Chloe's persistent proposition to wear matching jewelry. Chloe's eyes darted across the store, examining every symbol that could represent their relationship. "The final piece of my puzzle is you, Alexander." Al remembered when she revealed this as her secret, but the conversation was a broken, unfinished record in his head, replaying over and over again. He could never put together every piece.

"Alexander sounds so much more proper and... regal." She was the only one to use his full name, but to him, it was a name all the same. He reached for his own puzzle piece, the only one in the world to fit Chloe's, but it wasn't there, not even the chain.

Since their purchase they had both sworn never to take the necklace off, no matter what would happen to their relationship.

Al sat up, and checked the nightstand on his side of the bed. The moonlight taunted him, showing everything that was there, but not what he was searching for. The chirping of crickets hastened with the beating of his heart as he pulled each drawer open for the moonlight to pour in. A familiar breeze gently swept across the room, and he noticed that the window had been open. And he noticed that he could hear the crickets. And he noticed his feet poking out of the covers. And as he turned back towards his bed, he realized the bed was not the only thing that was empty.



Morning Session Dylan Roberts



Crashing Waves Dylan Roberts

Typhoon Coming

by Samantha Shkan

madness,
creeping up
no, not creeping--
swelling, crashing!
frothing and spilling forth from the soul.

shaky hope,
desperation,
acceptance...loss.

abandon the ship and your cargo, ye slavers...
Typhoon Coming.

Female Poem

by Christina Navarro

Sovereignty settles in dewed warmth
Herds of adams genuflect
their wild visage gaping wide eyed.
Reaching into horizons
Gripping round your goose flesh
Unsheltered by fear
Throbbing with panting anticipation
Coiled silk fall back
Catching moonlight sighs
Happy noises roll
Like a tumbling crick
Mounted high and bright
Crescendos replicating
the seas green rays
ephemeral streams drip
rivulets into finished joints
caught breathe is etched into the stars
Her crown flowing round
Pressing against their cheek
“softly now...”
whispers eternity



Sunset in Grand Canyon Huan Du



Shanghai Summer Yueying Wu

Trompe l'oeil

by Bindhu Prasad

Reality can be randomly sensuous
 The ghost in my head is unceasingly delicious.
 Reality can be cruel and crass,
 The ghost in my head always cares.
 Reality gets my blood to surge,
 The ghost in my head caters to the urge.
 Reality can be cool and distant,
 The ghost in my head is forever my best friend.
 Reality hinges on safety, stability, conformity,
 The ghost in my head chases reckless vulnerability.
 Reality knows that somethings will never be,
 The ghost in my head writes poignant poetry.
 How effing awesome would it be
 If the two could become one – ghost and reality



Days in Seoul Qianhui Gao



Hello

by Laura Atkinson

One of the oldest questions:
is the world old, or is it new?
Of course it's new
We haven't met yet.
4,543,000,000 years of rock
200,000 years of being neighbors
and we're finally here.
It's awkward.
How are you?

Double-Edged Sword

by Samantha Shkan

My vessel of possibility
overflows and
drowns my opportunity.



Yellow Cotton

by Morganne Ardwan

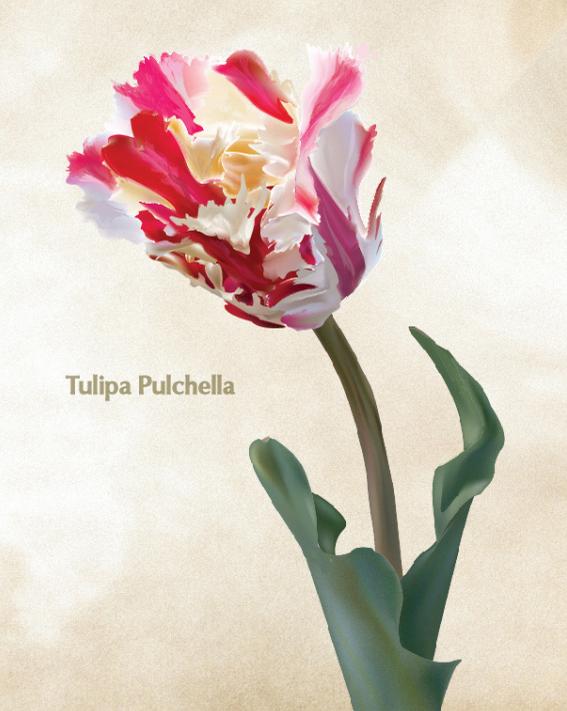
laughing, at our own mess,
we lay there upon yellow cotton.

how soon tragedy became comedy,
as if Shakespeare had edited life's script.

with a golden retriever upon my toes, as a weight,
my thoughts remain tied to the ground.

mom and grandma share a look, and laugh,
amidst the tears and heavy hearts.

us three lay there, on yellow cotton,
laughing at our own mess.



Tulipa Pulchella

Growing Strong Juliana Lopez

academic

I Only Wish that the Truth Had a Tongue

by Nariman Ahmad Yousef Ayeshe

Where are you from? is a question that everyone should be proud and happy to answer. Ever since I was 15, I blamed my father for leaving Palestine in 1948 and giving birth to me in another country. I told my father I would be more proud if I were born in Bethlehem just as you were. He said, “If you were born in Palestine, you would miss the future. My daughter, just as you do, I want to die in Palestine in front of my mother’s and father’s graves, but I left for the future of my children.” I couldn’t understand what my dad was looking for. Since I have grown and had dreams, I know what the future is, and why my father left our land. The Palestinian children don’t have a future or even a present. They don’t have the ability to draw their future in their minds. They don’t have a chance to hope for the future. They don’t have aspirations. Their dreams are full of fear from the present and the future. Their fear is that at midnight the soldiers will come and take them from their beds, from their parents, their homes, dragging them away as criminals because of having thrown a stone. Their future has been held behind bars. The future mustn’t see the ray of the sun anymore.

More than any other identity, being human evokes my desire to write about the freedom of the Palestinian children in the prisons and to share how the Palestinian children artistically and poetically respond to the life. We don’t have any other choice but to wish, and we don’t have the power to free the Palestinian children who are in prisons. Wishing doesn’t mean being powerless; it means to ask God with faith that He will not ignore those children or us. Even though the response might not be quick or easy, we believe, and we wait for the response. Thus, the theme of wishing runs throughout many of the poetry and other artistic creations by Palestinians.

Even though Palestinian children don’t have the opportunity to go to school legally, they are creative and love to learn, which is portrayed to us through pieces of art such as poetry. In these two videos, “Color of the Intifada - Abstract Palestinian Art and Poetry” (Youtube) and “Orphan: Emotional Story of a Gaza Child – Speed Painting and Poem” (Youtube), Lina Abojaradeh, a Palestinian artist, who was born in Yafa, Palestine, couldn’t make her dream a reality by becoming an artist. Thus, she moved to Jordan, where she studies art. In this piece of art, she is expressing her life and Palestine and painting with the colors, black, red, and blue. Also, each color

represents a period of life in Palestine. For example, the blue represents water and hope for a better future while waiting for the day when we will be able to return to our homes.

The inability to travel out of Palestine has encouraged the Palestinian children to express the difficulty through rap music, activities, and sports. Living in Palestine means living in an open-air prison. People cannot move comfortably between different cities. They don't have the right to travel out of Palestine. The prison is unlimited, and it blocks everything around them. For example, one Palestinian student who has the dream to be a journalist but can't travel out of Gaza and make his dream real, has decided not to dream. These thoughts are expressed in the collection *The Children of Gaza Speak about the Nakba (Arabic for "Catastrophe"): The Child Poets of Gaza*, edited by Michael R. Burch.

In one piece from the collection, "Through the Eyes of a Teenager," the author writes:

I want to write about the suffering of the people in these days of siege...We can't get necessary things...I think that there is no future for us...I mean for Gaza's people. There is no safe place we can go there, even we can't communicate with our friends because networks are down. Our life is centered around those who have been killed.

There is horror every minute, and it's clear, especially in the lives of children...

I just want to ask the people who are living outside of Gaza...Imagine your life with no electricity or basic things? Destroyed home, a lot of children who don't have parents, the sounds just like the roll of thunder...BOOM...all the time. Imagine your children tell you through their eyes and cries, 'We are afraid, we can't take it anymore, and we can't even sleep!'

Imagine yourself with no one beside you, to take care of you or even to look after you...and the people around you are strangers...How long could you stand it?

If the world stood with us we will not stand it any longer or anymore. But unfortunately, there is no "doings" just other people who are trying to help us by saying words, not more. They don't do for us any good things.

We are now better than before, at least we can go to school every day instead of seeing others dying.

I hope Gaza will change and be like the other countries...we just have to pray all the time!

We just want PEACE.

And in another, "My Hope for the Future," a different child author writes:

Future – it's a big word for me, and I have a lot of dreams. One of my dreams for the future is that I want to be a journalist. Two years ago, I decided to be a journalist because I saw that my friend was so happy with that work and I like to write and take photos and things like that. These days, I started to think about that idea.

My friend is Egyptian, and she traveled to China, India, Iraq – all those places, so I thought of being a journalist just like that; traveling, shopping, taking some photos and writing essays but I forgot that I live in Gaza, and those things are impossible for us.

I can't travel at any time or write anything here. No one writes anything except about war and enemies (Israel), so my dream started to vanish.

Now I don't know what I want to be and have no dream.

Palestinian children wish to have a better life, future, and a moment of peace. Wishing draws upon the power of words in the attempt to link the desires of the powerless with the most powerful of the Earth. Even if all the people ignore or forget Palestinian children, God will not forget them.

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One's Fantasy is Another's Inverted Reality

by Mei Mei Chun-Moy

The novel *The Great Gatsby*, written by F. Scott Fitzgerald, depicts life in the 1920s. All of the characters live very different lifestyles; some are very wealthy while others live life on the poorer side. Everyone is brought together in one way or another by Jay Gatsby. Gatsby is the epitome of inverting one's reality, and almost everyone around him wishes they had a different life. One by one the characters attempt to change their way of life. The novel celebrates the inversion of realities as long as it's realistic, and, if it is not realistic, then the novel demystifies the wishful impulse. It is possible to reinvent one's reality, but the possibility of doing so will be determined by how long the charade will last.

Myrtle Wilson, Tom Buchanan's mistress, struggles with her reality because she wishes to be part of a higher social class, but she is unable to attain a higher class standing. She lives in the "Valley of Ashes" with her husband George, but as the name suggests it is not the best area to live in (27). She doesn't have the greatest living conditions as she lives above her husband's business, a car garage: "The interior was unprosperous and bare; the only car visible was the dust-covered wreck of a Ford which crouched in a dim corner" (28). The description of the garage represents the hardships Myrtle and George face financially and probably mentally. It doesn't seem like George gets very good business, or any business at all, which puts a strain on their relationship. Myrtle wants someone who will care for her and give her the attention she so desperately craves. Whenever she goes to meet Tom, it creates a great escape for her because she is able to live a different reality for short amounts of time. But it is impossible to use Tom as a long-term escape.

Myrtle's wishful impulse is absurd; she is powerless in *completely* adjusting her reality. When Myrtle goes into town with Tom, she acts, dresses, and speaks in a completely contrasting way than she does when she is with her husband. She reinvents herself based on who she is spending time with. When Nick first observes her, she is very short with her husband and has "no facet or gleam of beauty" (28). Yet when she and Tom are in the subway and streets of New York, Myrtle buys countless, unnecessary items with Tom's money. On a whim, she even asks Tom to buy her a dog; it seems absolutely insane to act the way she does, when less than two hours prior she was in her

husband's soiled garage. This senselessness continues once the three companions get to the secret apartment, such as when Myrtle invites some friends over and changes outfits: "With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive hauteur" (34). It's almost as if Myrtle is channeling Daisy; she acts as if she's better than everyone else and has no care in the world. As she metamorphoses into another person, she revamps her identity, acting like the person she wishes to become rather than who she really is. Though Myrtle is originally from a lower class, she is able to camouflage herself into different social situations. She has the ability to change her personality as well as her outside appearance. As much as she wants to be a part of a higher class, the novel implies that she cannot. Her real life is just too incompatible with the life she believes she deserves. For one, she makes rash emotional decisions like running at Gatsby's car when she is convinced that it's Tom's car, leading to her death. Myrtle frivolously thinks she can truly alter her reality; she, however, can never achieve the life she wants because it's too incongruent with the life she has already set up for herself.

Because Jay Gatsby lives a life full of anonymity, he was able to change his reality. He was once a poor boy, but now he is now the quintessence of being a wealthy person and he has achieved almost everything he desired in life. He has succeeded in inverting his reality. His wish to do so may seem strange, yet he does it for the reason of what he believes will make his life better. There are several rumors about Gatsby



King Neptune's Restaurant Andrea Nicole De Guzman

from how he garnered such wealth to his shady past: “Well, they say he’s a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm’s. That’s where all his money comes from” (36). Others believe that, “he killed a man once” (48). Whatever others regard as true, his main goal in life at this time is to be reunited with the love of his life, Daisy Buchanan. Even before he ever meets Daisy he tries to invert his reality. When he is 17, he meets Dan Cody who becomes his life mentor, and Gatsby changes his name from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby (104-105). That first meeting changes everything for him, and it propels the direction of the rest of his life. In the present day, Gatsby is doing everything he can to invert his reality, hold on to the past, and get back Daisy’s attention. We can see that he is truly convinced he can when Nick and Gatsby are talking: “You can’t repeat the past.’ ‘Can’t repeat the past?’[Gatsby] cried incredulously. ‘Why of course you can!’” (118). Gatsby will hold onto the past for as long as he can, for he is genuinely convinced that things will go back to the way they were five years ago. The parties he throws are all attempt to repeat the past. He hopes that Daisy will hear about the parties and come to one. Furthermore, he buys and inhabits the house directly across from Daisy’s house, believing that it represents that what he wants is within reach and can see it (19/85). This belief that he can attain anything he wants, including Daisy, could have been true if he hadn’t pushed people too much or if he would have been content enough with what he had already accomplished.

Gatsby may have succeeded in inverting his reality and the novel celebrates it; however, at times he tries too hard to get what he wants and that is his downfall. When Gatsby, Tom, Daisy, Nick, and Jordan are together at a hotel in town, tensions begin to boil and feelings are brought to the surface. Tom keeps questioning and almost taunting Gatsby, and soon it becomes too much. Gatsby lashes out and forces Daisy to say things she doesn’t want to: “‘Daisy, that’s all over now,’ he said earnestly. ‘It doesn’t matter anymore. Just tell him the truth—that you never loved him’... ‘I never loved him,’ she said, with perceptible reluctance” (141). Gatsby’s inverted life could have continued to work, but he took it too far. He loved Daisy so much that it led to his demise, literally. Their love story together could have played out better and perhaps even longer if Gatsby haven’t yelled at the hotel and made Daisy say she didn’t love Tom, which caused the story to climax and ultimately end. Later on, after Gatsby dies, Nick and Gatsby’s father are speaking and Mr. Gatz shows Nick a book. When

Gatsby was young he had written out a detailed schedule and reminders to himself on the do’s and don’ts of life:

Rise from bed 6.00 A.M.
Dumbbell exercise and wall-scaling 6.15-6.30 A.M.
Study electricity, etc 7.15-8.15 A.M.
Work 8.30-4.30 P.M.
Baseball and sports 4.30-5.00 P.M.
Practice elocution, poise and how to attain it 5.00-6.00 P.M.
Study needed inventions 7.00-9.00 P.M (185).

This not only demonstrates that he makes the conscious decision to set himself up for success, but also the explicit ways to transform his reality. It seems odd since families who come from old money would never do such a thing. They are the way they are just because that is the way they were taught growing up. Even though it is clear Gatsby is actively turning his life around, the novel celebrates his inversion of reality because he has worked so hard and is able to fit in with the wealthy crowd, unlike Myrtle. The novel sees the schedule as something that should be looked up to and something everyone should do. It is idealized seeing that Gatsby has for the most part succeeded in changing the life he was given when he was growing up for the life he wanted. In the end, Gatsby does die, but he was able to completely reinvent his reality for a little while and become of a different social class which assists with his ultimate goal of reuniting with Daisy. After acquiring such wealth, Gatsby befriends Nick, his new neighbor. Nick who is Daisy’s cousin is a crucial part of Gatsby and Daisy reuniting after all these years.

Nick Carraway sees himself as a friend to everybody, which causes him to be both celebrated and demystified by the novel. Because he sees himself as a friend to everyone, Nick is celebrated when he inserts himself into other people’s lives, yet he is also demystified because he does not take it upon himself to make new friends beyond who he first meets. Nick begins by introducing himself, then he goes and visits his cousin Daisy. He tells the reader, “my family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this middle-western city for three generations...I never saw this great-uncle but I’m supposed to look like him...so I decided to go east and learn the bond business” (4-5). Immediately it is shown that Nick wants to get away and create a new life for himself apart from his family. He makes friends with various, interesting individu-

als, which opens him up to new opportunities, and is what he wanted when he moved to New York. Nick soon becomes part of the in-crowd when he meets the Buchanan's, Wilson's, Jordan, and Gatsby. They all introduce him into their lives and he gets sucked into their secrets. He can create a new life for himself without his family's name interfering by becoming entangled in other people's lives. On the other hand, the novel demystifies the idea of Nick reshaping his reality because of who he first meets when he is in New York. His first friends are his cousin, her husband, and his cousin's friend. Daisy, however far removed, is still his cousin. He can never truly get away from his family's namesake. In the end, Nick goes back home to Minnesota: "So when the blue smoke of brittle leaves was in the air and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line I decided to come back home" (188-189). He feels defeated because he wasn't able to reinvent his life even though he moved out East. Since Nick sees himself as a friend to everyone, he can only change his reality so much. The people he befriends are mostly of an upper class, like him. They are subjective to the same privileges he had growing up. However, he moved East to get away from that and try to live a more simple life. Nick can't change his reality because he has too many familial ties and didn't branch out as much as he should have, given that he wanted a life completely different than what he had grown up with.

It is possible to reinvent one's reality as long as the desire is actually plausible, and even if one attains their inverted reality, it may not last. There were three ways the novel handled people changing their reality: celebrating, demystifying, or a combination of both. None of the three options are necessarily inherently bad on their own; however, the way the story plays out for said character will determine whether or not the new reality will last and for how long it will last. On the other hand, the novel can be seen as very realistic in relation to real life. When one isn't happy with their current situation, they can choose to make a change, yet that change may or may not last. Their friends and family represent the novel; they will either support their new life, think it's silly and they can never truly change, or a mixture of both. The novel leaves it up to the reader to make their own assumptions and come to a conclusion on what they should think of people who change their reality.

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Social (Dis)Networking Platforms

by Ibraheem Chaudry

From tools made of stone and wood, we have now reached a point where, pressing an icon on our smartphones, which are made of advanced materials, we can broadcast a message to people all over the world. At first blush, it might sound like this modern age social networking miracle is building abstract bridges to bring mankind together. However, modern day communication is a broad field that has opened the gates to countless possibilities of psychological impacts. We should not view technology in such simplistic terms. There certainly are advantages of this long-distance communication pathway, but talking about advantages is like praising the lusciousness of a poisonous fruit. Social networking platforms are causing psychological unrest, leading to extremes of extroversion and introversion and have been proven by research as being a contributor to the rising narcissistic culture and grandiose self-concepts.

Social media websites are causing psychological issues in individuals—depression, anxiety, shyness, isolation, and aggression, that ultimately are leading to a discord in society, especially in important relationships. Access to thousands of different potential social opportunities available at the touch of our fingers has led people to use social networking platforms as a coping skill to temporarily escape from feelings like anger and abandonment, that should be processed. Hatice Odaci and Cigdem Celik refer to such a condition as 'problematic internet use(PIU)'. They write in a scientific journal, published in 2013, about the relation between PIU and psychological problems:

PIU is defined as individual experiencing problems in psychological, social, school or working life as a result of insufficient control of internet use (Davis, 2001). Young (1998), on the other hand, described PIU as a type of disorder involving symptoms such as restlessness or irritability when not online or feeling the need to spend more time online. Mittal, Tessner, and Walker (2007) evaluate excessive internet use as a non-functional way of avoiding social relations in the real world. Caplan (2005) considered PIU as a multi-dimensional syndrome with cognitive and behavioral symptoms leading to negative academic/professional outcomes (Odaci and

Çelik).

This dependence on a materialistic social platform for emotional support is taking away the desire for human connection and intimacy, driving us to a point where we are never comfortable with our own thoughts, and alone time becomes a nightmare we are always trying to avoid. Imagine our brains as being an empty room that we are filling with junk boxes full of information we plan to sort out later and separate into piles we want to keep and those we want to throw away. Our feelings, emotions and important chemical stimulants are contained within those boxes. If we ignore the boxes for too long we will end up with a room devoid of space and remember we have only one room. Of course, the brain is much more complicated than a room, but like every other muscle of our body it does require exercise to stay in good shape. Here is what psychiatrist Abigail Brenner writes in her article *The Importance of Being Alone*, published in 2014, about the importance of alone time and its significance in building good relationships:

More specifically, learning how to be alone may serve you well when it comes to knowing what you need and want in a relationship. Some individuals allow their partner to tell them what to feel, what to want and do, largely because that is what their partner wants and needs. Certain relationships even require this. So, if you're too afraid to be alone and function on your own you'll be selling yourself out, settling for a relationship (often not the healthiest, and sometimes, downright bad) that insures that you're NEVER alone. The bottom line is that you cannot possibly have a healthy relationship with others if you haven't learned to have a healthy relationship with yourself (Abigail Brenner).

The human psychology is a vast complex domain made up of complicated neural wiring and hormonal

reactions, making the outcomes of chemical imbalance innumerable. What Abigail Brenner talks about is one of the many ways problematic internet use is causing a discord in society and a growing weakness in social bonds.

A screen based form of socialization, further enhanced by the creation of applications that serve as a broadcast forum, has been linked to inducing extremes of extroversion and introversion. Di Wang, in his article *Computers in Human Behavior* published in 2017, uses the term 'rich get richer' to describe the effects of social media, with the extroverts getting more out of computer-mediated communication and introverts being shoved to the bottom of the food chain yet again.

Chances are that the popular guy in college is most probably going to be the sensation of Facebook, and that quiet kid who sits in the corner will find an equivalent water boy spot on social media. This unjust division of attention is leading to a much deeper polarization of society, and labels being thrown around. Humans, by nature, are social beings, and this constant battering of an introvert's self-esteem is not mentally healthy. David Janowsky did a study, in 2011, on the correlation between depression and introversion, and in his journal article *Introversion and extroversion: implications for depression and suicidality*, he writes:

As with depression in general, there is evidence that sui-

cidality is also associated with introversion. Roy [17], studying suicidal patients, found the latter groups to have increased introversion. Similarly, Irfani [39] studying Iranian and Turkish students and Cole [40] studying American students, found these groups to have increased introversion, as well. Lacy [41] used the MBTI to profile the personalities in severe suicidal depressives, and concluded that introversion was the best predictor of severe depression and suicide (David S. Janowsky).



Keeper of the City Clockworks
Galina Gates

To judge an introvert based on their silence is unjust; it is wrong to assume what might be going on in their heads. However, increase in sociability seems to be inversely proportional to the conformed definition of ‘humanity’, which implies love and compassion, and is making humans more critical of each other, which is in direct contradiction to the claim of ‘rising liberalism’.

Fast-paced electronic communal portals are leading to a rise in narcissistic culture, releasing an emotional virus that is passing hurt from person to person in a chain reaction. A social media profile is like a mirror, the difference being that we can see into ourselves with more depth than just the physical features; it is a mirror of our identities, our likes and dislikes, our personalities, basically just a high quality graphic diary. We upload a picture, post a video, share a meme, and then refresh our browsers every 15 minutes to check for likes so we can achieve gratification. A simple button now controls the conveyance of a message that may very well go beyond a pictorial thumbs-up, showing another person that their post was ‘liked.’ A new ‘Generation Me’ is on the rise, which has grandiose self-concepts and no desire for meaningful emotional attachments. In his article, *Narcissism and Social Networking Sites: The Act of Taking Selfies* published in 2015, Taylor Wickel links the act of taking selfies with the growing superiority complex among individuals, he says:

Millennials, aged from 18 to 33, are hyper-connected, but typically exhibit little awareness of or concern for others except as an audience. A study by San Diego State University professor Twenge shows that narcissism levels have risen steadily during the past few decades, making the Millennial Generation, also known as “Generation Me,” more selfish and self-absorbed than any other previous generation (Firestone, 2012). Narcissism is typically illustrated as a tendency to believe one’s self to be superior to others’, to persistently pursue admiration from others, and to participate in egotistic thinking and behavior (Panek, Nardis & Konrath, 2013). Taking selfies and sharing photos on popular social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are considered to be one of the biggest contributors to the rise in narcissistic behavior among Millennials (Taylor Wickel).

There is a limit to the number of people who can compete to be the center of attention, and with rising narcissism and feelings of entitlement, socialization is be-

coming a dramatically entangled mess of ego battles. As we delve deeper into the situation, we realize that this pathogen is going to have long lasting effects on the next generation. As a person who spent a good period of his life trying to feed his father’s ego, I can personally relate to how having a narcissistic parent can lead to psychological issues and self-destructive habits. Psychiatrist Seth Meyers, in his article published in 2014 about the effect narcissistic parents have on their children, says:

Young children of narcissists learn early in life that everything they do is a reflection on the parent to the point that the child must fit into the personality and behavioral mold intended for them. These children bear tremendous anxiety from a young age as they must continually push aside their own personality in order to please the parent and provide the mirror image the parent so desperately needs. If these children fail to comply with the narcissist’s wishes or try to set their own goals for their life – God, forbid – the children will be overtly punished, frozen out or avoided for a period of time – hours, days or even weeks depending on the perceived transgression in the eyes of the narcissistic parent (Seth Meyers).

Narcissism is a parasite, eating at the root of what makes us “human”, and the spread of this darkness is picking up the pace with the continuous increase in population of social media users and the growing subjectivity of these platforms.

It is not uncommon to hear fluffy ideologies as to how modern age communication applications are helping to bridge gaps and bring humans together, and to be honest there may be some truth in that. However, I believe in spreading awareness about a serious issue rather than brushing it aside with ‘positivity’. Social media platforms are very much like a virtual-reality role-playing videogame, taking away the essential ingredients of human interaction and intimacy, and providing temporary gratification through fabricated verisimilitude. Viewing the glass as half empty when human lives are at stake is not pessimism, it is humanistic realism.

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Flow in the Field of Athletic Development

by Omar Alsabbah

Abstract:

This paper explores the flow state in athletes who are in the developmental stage. Unlike most of the studies on flow, this study does not examine flow in elite athletes. A sample of 24 soccer players under the age of 16 were asked several questions based on the Flow State Scale, and Physical Activity Enjoyment Scale, to determine if there are significant differences in flow and enjoyment between the following types of samples: athletes, non-athletes, non-participating athletes, practicing athletes, competing athletes, winning athletes, and losing athletes. The results displayed significant statistical differences in all relations except for the one between practicing and competing athletes.

Theory and Framework:

In the last quarter of the previous century, through thousands of personal interviews, Csikszentmihalyi (1997) discovered a common and unique experience that is both cognitive and emotional that flows in the individual, which he called the flow state. It represents an emotional and sensory sequence for the individual, starting as a balance between skill and challenge, then continuing when there is a focus that leads to a period of self-control, ending with the individual reaching a period of enjoyment and a high level of performance.

According to Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2005), most theories of human motivation refer to different explanations inspired by different sciences and areas of knowledge. Some of these explanations refer to our biology and how it guides our behavior because of our need to fulfill our basic needs for survival, while other theories refer to more personal and subjective goals as motivators, such as the desire for power and control, or simply following a society's norms and succumbing to its pressures. Csikszentmihalyi, on the other hand, added another explanation for behavior through a phenomenological lens. His phenomenological analysis tries to accurately test the perceptions of individuals during a period of complete focus on an activity that requires independent behavior. This kind of analysis is mainly concerned with a certain type of activity in an individual's consciousness, the flow state, which became a topic of interest of many research projects attempting to understand individu-

als performing difficult and dangerous activities for the sole purpose of enjoyment.

Through their analysis of the different theories of motivation, Sansone and Haraciewicz (1996) claimed that they lack the component describing an individual's phenomenology and inner perspective. This component is necessary because it explains certain occurrences more logically than any other approach. The reason for this is because it puts into consideration the values and other results, as opposed to a complete focus on the process. Flow refers to a strong motivational force that occurs when an athlete becomes fully focused and involved, almost like a machine. During the activity, a high level of self-appreciation leads to enjoyment. The original source of motivation ceases to motivate if there is no enjoyment. Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (1999) view flow as a phenomenological force that is strengthened or weakened depending on its relationship with the goal of the athlete, his degree of interest, focus, and skills. According to Tellegen et al. (1999), the experience of flow can be defined and described in fairly specific terms: it represents a state of positive excitation that greatly contradicts and cannot be found in an activity associated with a state of relaxation and boredom.

In Csikszentmihalyi et al.'s (2005) study of boredom and anxiety, they described what happens during flow on a phenomenological level as a period of awareness of skills and requirements, and the awareness of a balance between skill and challenge. If a challenge is far greater than an athlete's level of skill, it is highly likely that she or he will reach a state of anxiety. On the other hand, if the skills are far greater than the challenges, the athlete falls into a state of relaxation that is very likely to lead to boredom. Vlachopoulos et al. (2000) refer to the studies that analyze the reasons why an athlete becomes motivated to continue during an athletic activity, or do the opposite and reach a state withdrawal from them. Other experimental studies assert that the state of flow plays a major role as a leading cause for the enjoyment of an athlete and the desire to continue in training and competition. For that, flow yields positive and influential reactions within an athlete's brain. Because of this, there needs to be interest from trainers in psychologically studying flow, a state that often leads to an optimal level of performance during competition

and training. This interest will help promote enjoyment and effectiveness of an athlete's performance.

Jackson and Marsh (1996) developed the Flow State Scale to serve as a psychological report designed to evaluate this state in physical and athletic settings. Through the studies of Jackson et al. (2001), Ryan Quinn (2002), Susan Jackson (2005), Robert Eklund (2006), and Kristian Kiili (2006), the scale has been modified and developed further. Kiili's scale contains the 9 dimensions of the scale that all previous studies agreed on, but she shortened all the phrases into 22 words.

The phenomenology of the flow state in athletic settings is crucial to understand. Its components need deep analysis. Also, it needs to be put into simple terms for trainers and athletes to easily understand it.

Preparation and Development of the Flow State Scale:

Studies have explored the nature of flow and the relation of this state of consciousness to optimal performance. In 1975, Csikszentmihalyi published an article in a journal about human behavior, referring to this state. He followed this with another article in 1977 titled "Beyond Boredom and Anxiety", which provided a clear and specific definition for the nature of flow. Starting in 1990 with his book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, he sequentially added the components that represent this state. In Jackson's (1992), (1995), and (1996) studies, flow states were measured in elite athletes. The results asserted that flow and optimal performance are commonly connected to the components set by Csikszentmihalyi. The results also showed that athletes can reach flow if there is a balance in challenge and skill. Thus, the results were based on the formula set forth by Csikszentmihalyi regarding the occurrence of flow. After the positive research results in the sports field, Jackson and Marsh developed the Flow State Scale in the sports field. Jackson et al. (2001) improved the scale in their study titled "Relationships between Flow, Self-Concept, Psychological Skills, and Performance."

Discussion of Results:

The positive correlation evident by the significant difference in the components of the Flow State Scale in favor of skilled athletes that are participating in training or competitive matches, and if they are winning, can be attributed and related to the technical level of the athletes. This technical level is only achievable after good preparation, which the pres-

ence of a balance in skill and challenge is necessary for. Also, positive communication and guidance techniques can be of great assistance when it comes to setting goals that are suitable for each stage. Timely and clear feedback is also extremely important as it promotes a state of positivity and satisfaction in an athlete, leading to enjoyment for the athlete during the physical activity. This level of enjoyment is very similar in both practice and competition, which is why there were no significant statistical differences between them.

Even more important than recognizing the correlational relationship between flow and the performance of an athlete, is understanding the psychological outlook that strengthens such a relationship. When an athlete completes a challenge, this motivates her or him to continue in a state of flow. In turn, this state motivates him or her to gradually increase the level of challenge until the balance between skill and challenge becomes a motivator for the athlete to improve his or her performance and technical ability.

There are precedential components of flow that need to be developed by the outside environment (the coaching staff). These components are the challenge-skill balance, setting clear goals, and receiving unambiguous feedback. There are other components that serve as an entrance to this state, and are developed by personal skill. These components are Loss of self-consciousness, a feeling of transformation of time, and finally an autotelic experience. These components are a result of the athletes' competence and the abilities of the coaching staff.

It is important for trainers to be able to separate the components of flow as independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are challenge-skill balance, setting of clear goals, and clear unambiguous feedback. The rest of the components on the scale are dependent variables that are secondary in order.

It becomes evident that a knowledgeable coach can modify the training techniques that promote flow according to their abilities and the requirements of a competition. This can happen through the understanding of the cognitive and behavioral strategies that promote the intensity and frequency of the flow state in an athlete.

The flow state occurs when the mind of the athlete is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and enjoyable. While this state is more likely to occur in highly skilled ath-

letes, nonetheless, it can occur in lower level athletes who are in the developmental stage. The knowledge of all the possible positive outcomes is something that needs to be instilled in an athlete, so they can overcome a challenge and reach a state of enjoyment. The ability to convey this to an athlete is something that is needed in trainers of all levels of athletics, especially ones working in the developmental levels.

It is important to note that translating this into an effective application is very difficult. More than one study needs to be conducted to help aid the development of the skills that enable one to control the challenges, and identify the requirements to direct goals and develop positive communication and guidance techniques to reach a situation where there is clear unambiguous feedback

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