

# VOYAGER

2021 2021 2021

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St. Thomas Aquinas College Literary and Arts Journal  
Poetry, Prose, Journalism, Illustration, Photography





# VOYAGER 2020-2021



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To My Loved Ones

# Is a Plant Based Diet More Beneficial Than an Animal-based One In Competitive Sports?

Hanna Jung

We all know this saying: “From lettuce shrinks the biceps,” but is this statement really true? In the movie “The Game Changers” by Louie Psihoyos, in the article “How a Plant-Based Diet Can Benefit Endurance Athletes’ Heart Health, Performance, and Recovery” by Karen Asp, and in the article “How Plant-Based Diets Can Benefit the Earth” by Sophie Hirsh there is more than one proof that humans should rather not neglect the vegetables on their plate. The consequences are brutal, athletes perform seemingly inhumanly, and the environment benefits from the boring food. But as it will turn out, a plant-based diet is anything but boring.

It all starts with the fact that the strongest men of the roman times, the gladiators were actually vegetarians. Archaeologists have studied the bones of human machines and found that they were predominantly vegetarians. The pure energy and strength came from carbohydrates ingested through plant food sources. Another question is why the gladiators did not eat meat. It is too simple. They had no tools to cut the cattle and no good knife to cut the meat. As Dr. Nathaniel Dominy researched when analyzing the dentition, the human body, rather the jaw and especially the teeth are not designed to eat meat at all. “Right there in your mouth is the best evidence we have for a diet that could not have been meat.” The shape of the teeth is shaped for plants and leaves and not for meaty consistencies. Also Dr. Christina Warinner said that “Humans do not have any specialized genetic, anatomical, or physiological adaptations to meat consumption.” Studies have also proven that it is not the cow’s meat that contains the proteins, for example, but the cow also absorbs its proteins through plants. This means that the cow is only the middleman.

So why should humans not leave the cow alone and get the proteins directly from the plants? We have the meat industry to thank for this, because through great marketing, which has been proven not to be true, we have been taught that a big, grilled steak makes us stronger and more efficient than vegetables. Marketing-slogans like “Steak is for men” have supported the thesis that the more meat a man eats in this case, the more masculine, stronger, tougher he becomes. But this has actually achieved the complete opposite, as Dr. Aaron Spitz makes clear. He has three football players eat a meat burrito and a vegetarian burrito. The fat content in the blood after the animal burrito is high, the deposited fat is cloudy and the erections are below average and not strong. And at that, a cloudy lipid picture in the blood means an increased risk of heart attack. The turbidity shows that the fat is not supple and fluid, but rather lumpy, in the perfect shape to clog something such as the arteries. After the vegetable burrito you can clearly see that the fat is clear and transparent, a low cholesterol content and stronger and longer erections at night. So much for “steak is for men.” After this experiment, it is rather the salad on the plate that shows the right manhood.

The meat industry’s marketing strategy is definitely demographic, plus there is also market penetration. A demographic market strategy prevails in boxing competitions, for example, mostly of men. The thought behind this is “The strong men in the ring feed exclusively on meat and burgers, so come to Burger King, McDonalds [...] then you will also become so strong”. This strategy targets gender, age and income. The other point is market penetration. This belongs to the product strategies. Advertisements are of great importance here, which are downright raped by the meat industry in order to better spread their products. In addition to evidence from studies, there are also facts that prove that a vegetarian diet is better than an animal-based diet. For example, plants have all the essential amino acids. Moreover, meat’s ability to operate at its best is always impaired. The antioxidant content of meat is 18, while in a plant-based diet it is 1157.

That massive difference is also evident in the risk of developing prostate cancer. Meat eaters have a 40% higher risk of prostate cancer than vegetarians. Saturated fats in particular increase the risk of health issues. And these fatty acids are mostly found in meat. Back to sports, it is not impossible to have more energy from a plant-based diet than from animal products, so also reports Morgan Michel (400m-runner). Dr. Robert Vogel also makes clear that “Eating meat before an athletic endeavor, it really can have a major impact on how you perform.” In addition, many athletes have reported that the implementation was felt directly. Faster recovery and more energy could be felt after a short time. And recovery is the most important element in sports: having the gift to damage and recover, damage and recover the body. It is a single period and the goal is to recover from fatigue as quickly as possible, so that in the shortest possible time you can repeat this cycle, which means you can handle more training. This is what a plant-based diet can offer you.

Karen Asp also lists a few important aspects in her article that might interest endurance athletes. The main question the author asks is whether an animal-based diet is necessary at all to succeed in sports and stay healthy. She proves the thesis with her quote that “However, a plant-based diet can offset these risk factors.”. That means that studies have proven this and it is one of the biggest flagships that is important for high-risk patients or athletes. Athletes burn a lot of carbohydrates when they exercise, which means they absolutely need them to put the sessions away. A plant-based diet is richer in carbohydrates than an animal-based diet. So why then resort to animal products when vegetables make you perform better? The author supports the thesis with the quote “And because carbohydrates are the main source of fuel during aerobic exercise, a plant-based diet, which is carbohydrate-rich, gives athletes the fuel they need.” Another aspect is in the “study authors note that eating plants increases blood flow and tissue oxygenation while reducing oxidative stress and inflammation, all of which can aid athletes’ performance and recovery.” (Asp) As

already mentioned, you damage your body, you recover, you damage it again and recover. That is the process. It is a gift to have a fast recovery time to be able to train again as soon as possible. A plant-based diet supports this process by adding vegetables and increases oxygenation and blood flow. In addition, such a diet increases immunity to inflammation and stress. What Asp is trying to say is that it's also worth noting that not only athletes can benefit from the plant-based diet. Non-athletes can also reduce their risk of heart attacks, as well as cholesterol levels or general fitness, by switching to a vegetarian diet. Reduction of fatigue and better concentration are among the changes that have been observed.

What is also related to a plant-based diet is perhaps somewhat surprising, but important to know, is the environment. More than 70 billion animals are consumed globally each year. The reason why livestock farming requires so much land is that the animals consume on average six times more protein than they produce. This means, simply explained, that the humans eat meat to take in protein. However, the amount of protein is only a tiny fraction to what humans would actually need and what would be possible. And to all this, the cattle is only the middlemen, not even essential for protein intake. People put obstacles in their own way and, to put it bluntly, produce too much garbage in the process of producing garbage. I do not mean that meat is garbage, but that it makes you sick. There is too much evidence for that, which should be a big stop sign for all meat industries. In addition, animal feed requires huge areas of land and large amounts of water. The farm industry produces nearly 50 times more waste per year than an entire human population.

Regarding the emission of gases, an important aspect is that the livestock industry is responsible for 15 percent of global man-made emissions. As Damien Mander says, "The actual biggest threat we have is the meat industry and the land it continually takes away from what we have left of these natural wilderness areas." This means that all the meat consumption is not only harmful

to humans and their health, but also to the habitats of natural wilderness. The article, written by Sophie Hirsh, is also about the impact of vegetarian diets on the environment. The author says with the statement "If you've ever asked a vegan why they are vegan, you may be familiar with the three central reasons [...] the animals, personal health, and the Earth." that there the three main factors for a change in diet are one's own health, the environment and the animals. And that is all that counts, that is all it takes to survive. The human-caused livestock industry produces some of the most potent greenhouse gases, which have been shown to be harmful to the environment. This can also be seen as a contradiction. People think that the proteins from the meat they eat make them healthy and strong. At the same time, the production makes harmful gases that float in the air so they actually only make themselves sick. This is supported by the quote "The report added that livestock accounts for 35 to 40 percent of global human-caused methane emissions and 65 percent of global human-caused nitrous oxide emissions, which are two of the most potent greenhouse gases on Earth." The author also says, that "As explained by NASA, greenhouse gases in the atmosphere prevent heat from escaping the planet, which contributes to climate change." what is an addition to the fact, that not only the greenhouse gases are being exposed, but the livestock industry is also promoting climate change. People look for the problems everywhere, but do not grab their own nose and change their own eating habits. The effects of a plant-based diet enormous and probably many not even aware. Slowing to stopping climate change, stopping greenhouse gas emission and stopping world hunger, what is supported by the author's quote "In fact, some experts predict that if we stopped eating animal products and fed all their grain to humans, we could virtually solve world hunger, according to One Green Planet." Hirsh underlines that "Last year, a group of researchers at the University of Oxford studied the environmental footprint of livestock and determined that reducing our consumption of meat and dairy would have a



massive impact on the environment.”, what means that even studies have proven this, which should actually set off an alarm in everyone to think about their own diet. To round off her article and make the reader think, she says “[...] you hold the power to make a difference,” which is just as much an appeal to society to become more solidary.

I have been running triathlons for nine years now, one of the toughest endurance sports in the world. As my training got harder, I did not get better, I got more and more tired, more and more sluggish, I lost my motivation. My coaches and I looked for the causes, my workload was cut down and I got worse. At some point I got to the topic of nutrition through the currently best triathlete in the world, Jan Frodeno. I found out that Frodeno eats an exclusively vegetarian diet, especially during his competition season. I started to research more about this topic, which also led me to the movie “The Game Changers”. I quickly understood that this could be my chance to get out of this slump and the result was amazing. I felt, as the athletes describe it in the movie, like I pull out trees, almost immortal. It did not take long for my successes to pile up. I became an absolute fan of plant-based nutrition. There are many different variations, it tastes good to me personally, I can make huge profits from it, and I am leaving an ecological footprint that is something to behold. You can kill so many flies with one stone. I would like to see more people become aware of vegetarian/vegan nutrition and get involved with it. As Terminator legend Arnold Schwarzenegger has said, you cannot just go up to someone and say “stop eating meat,” you have to market and explain it just as well as the meat industry does. Honestly I was an avid meat eater before too, but as I got more involved with the issue the urge was too great to give it a chance. Now I am so fascinated by the ideas that I do not need meat anymore.

What do I want to achieve with the essay? What does it all mean now? Meat has been proven to make you sick! People who eat meat have elevated blood fat data, which also means elevated cholesterol. The risk of suffering a heart attack is therefore higher. Meat is

not good for the teeth and jaw, in other words, the human body is not designed to eat animal products. For endurance athletes, switching to a plant-based diet can be a real game changer, recovery time is shorter, concentration levels are higher, blood levels are better, cholesterol levels are lower, resting heart rate is lower, you become tougher and you are not sluggish or get tired after eating. Besides all these factors, with a plant-based diet you do something against climate change and leave a clean ecological footprint. And for that sense of accomplishment, it is worth it to have a vegetarian burger with sweet potato fries instead of a beef steak.

# Egelloc

Anabel Garcia

Dreams are miles away as we starve our lonely minds to fight and keep hold of them.

The need to feel starts to disappear as our bodies numb  
down to our parents' expectations.

The confusion entangled with the misconceptions of the future that must be faced.  
Gripping on my hair as the page count plays like a lyrical composition inside my head.

The clock is ticking, my adrenaline is pumping as I sip on my second energy drink.  
My eyes start to burn from the tiny words glaring back as I look at  
the reflection on the screen.

Do I even want to continue this anymore? The question that plays on repeat.  
Is it worth it? The intense nights and the doubts that lead to identity loss.  
One mishap and your world starts to tumble down like the  
crumpled paper in the trash bin.

The countdown begins as soon as you step foot into the building.  
The giggles and excitement all leave your body as the workload starts to increase.  
Hold on to the ride because 'we are in this together'.  
As I finished the paper due in 10 minutes my eyes finally saw the grammar mistake.

I wrote egelloc instead of college amidst the thousands of jumbled  
words inside my head.



# We are One

Michael King

Harness all of your Energy and  
plant your feet as roots.  
Indulge yourself in the rich soil,  
allowing all of the love that resides within  
you  
to course through your vessel.  
No more control.  
No more judgment.  
Surrendering to what is.  
Allowing these roots to grow freely  
throughout Mother Earth.

Free flowing, intertwining  
with all Souls  
who have before Us,  
and still residing on this  
physical plane.  
A silent, yet true  
remembrance  
that we are all One.  
No amount of division  
can  
take that away from Us.

A deep despair lays  
dormant inside many of  
us.



# Always Love

Michael King

Jumping from one activity to the next.  
Hoping to find the key that unlocks us  
from the cage that we've  
unconsciously built around ourselves.  
Searching endlessly to no avail, we are  
left in stillness.  
As fatigue sets in, We come to the  
realization that an  
external change isn't  
what we've been longing for.  
In the stillness, the cloudy fog  
dissipates after each breath is drawn.  
At first, moments of dis-ease linger.  
The darkness we've outrun for ages is  
finally confronted.  
Our soles having the opportunity  
to rest after mindlessly trekking,  
Our Souls are deserving of Peace and  
comfort.  
The thinking mind is no longer in  
control.  
For the Spirit has always known Truth  
lies  
in stillness, and graciously takes back It's  
power.  
The shadow of darkness no longer  
symbolizes  
the enemy whom we need to escape,

But the part of ourselves that we must  
offer our light.  
The Divine Light that encapsulates each  
and every  
one of our Souls  
is the Home that we've searched  
elsewhere for.  
As the Purified Christ Consciousness  
gleams  
through the cracks of our unstable  
shadow,  
Unconditional Love makes  
its way through the energy field,  
Sending Us the reminder,  
We have Always been Whole.  
We have Always been Love.  
We have Always been One.  
Thank you!

# WARRIOR

Sidney Reeves

## Warrior

I can still feel it inside me:  
the first stab in a long duel.  
I look down, my stomach is swelling.  
My blood is clotting, I won't let it.  
A tear rolls off my face landing  
on the hard steel you penetrate me with.

I pull you closer, so I can smell the violence.  
The pain is my pleasure.  
My breath goes silent as I fall  
Never let go. This murderous intent  
keeps us close.

# ASS ASS IN

Sidney Reeves

I am a murderer.  
I watch you like an owl that never sleeps at night,  
I watch you through the glass cylinder...

You are oblivious,  
you are cold.  
I pull the trigger.  
You hit the ground!

Sorry for hunting you down.  
Sorry for expressing my love.  
Sorry for being your first,  
Sorry for starting your curse.

It was you online last Valentine's Day  
It was you the boy who tried straight, but prone to Gay

# IN DARKNESS, I AM THE LIGHT

Sidney Reeves

Can you feel it?  
my serrated knife rusted,  
Pressed against your smooth skin.  
My knife draws across your chest,  
Tearing, pulling, and shredding.

Ruptured, naked, explosive  
like a volcano the blood rushes down your  
warm flesh.  
Your breath is ice, the touch of death, as  
my knife swims into you.  
Your blood satisfies me  
the warmth as it leaves your body  
the flow as it passes through my fingers  
the smell as I lick it clean.

You cry out as my knife  
grabs your heart  
I muffle you with my free hand.  
You struggle, forgetting you were tied  
down by my will, I am not apologetic,  
this is what you deserve. When your  
knife attacked my heart, you just  
watched like the moon on  
a starry night.  
like the rising sun  
like a blackhole erasing reality  
like a supernova fulfilling release  
I will be the asteroid, taking revenge.



# DEATH SENTENCE

Sidney Reeves

Black

Is the soul that harbors this curse,  
life or not to life, spent. Not to be reimbursed.

Death enters, in its blackness  
sword drawn, dancing as you writhe in pain.

Slash, the sword crosses your neck  
the blood, kisses the floor.

You die, happy.

Never to feel this pain anymore. . .

# PILLS AND POTIONS

Fiona Donohue

My grandmother is a witch. I don't care what Mommy and Daddy say I know I'm right. I saw her cast a spell with my own two eyes. Please listen to me with an open mind. I can't bear to hear another person say, "Oh Heather Finn, you and your wild imagination." I know I'm only 7 but I promise I'm not making this up. Now pay attention, I don't want to repeat myself.

It all started on a Friday night. As per usual I was staying over at my grandmother's house. It's a new tradition we started. Mommy and Daddy told me it's so they get to have a "date night" and grandmother doesn't feel so lonely. Mommy told me that grandfather had to go away because he wasn't feeling so well and that grandmother misses him a lot. I'm sure he'll be back soon though; he just needs some medicine and he will feel good as new.

My sister, Delilah, was upset because my parents didn't trust her to stay home and babysit me while they were out anymore. She always complains that she's a teenager and she should be able to stay home alone if she wants too. I always thought she had a point but, Mommy and Daddy don't agree. Whenever she starts to argue about this they just exchange this look and say a big, fat no.

Grandmother welcomed us into her home with a hug and a kiss on the forehead. I smiled when she did this to me but my sister grimaced and wiped her skin like there was something yucky or slimy on it. She's been in a mood for the past couple of weeks. Always frowning and sneering at anything anyone says. Before we left the house earlier I saw her cleaning her room and when I asked her why she just slammed the door in my face. Rude, if you ask me.

Grandmother called us to the dinner table and made us take our seats while she finished boiling the pasta. Delilah chose the seat across from me and took out her cell phone. I wish I could have a cell phone but Mommy and Daddy say I have to wait until middle school. I swung

my feet back and forth under the table and watched my sister text. Her chipped nail coated fingers stabbed at the screen with so much strength I wondered if her thumbs would go straight through her phone.

She had been on her phone a lot lately. More than usual. I think it's because of the new friends she's been hanging out with. Mommy says they are bad influences. Daddy says they are trouble. Delilah says they are cool. I think they must be cool if my sister dropped her old friends for them. Grandmother brought out the food and sat down into her seat at the head of the table. She started asking us a lot of questions. At first she just asked us about school and hobbies but then she started asking Delilah some personal stuff. "How have you been feeling?"

"Does anyone outside of the family know?"

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"You don't feel that way anymore, right?"

My sister answered with her usual responses.

"Fine."

"No."

"No."

"Right."

I didn't know what they were talking about but my sister seemed uncomfortable. I reached out to shake grandmother's arm to get her attention. I wanted to tell her about how Sandra Adams had lost Sammy, the class turtle, when it was her turn to bring him home but I stopped when she smiled sadly at Delilah. It just didn't feel right to bring up something that seemed kinda silly.

We were silent for a couple of minutes, our forks clinking against our plates making the lack of chatter awkward. My sister sighed and stood up from the table. She quickly put her half eaten plate in the kitchen sink. I didn't get why she was in such a hurry but she claimed that she was tired and wanted to go to bed early. Grandmother looked reluctant but let her go.

I headed up the stairs to tell my sister good night a couple minutes later. Mommy says I have to give my sister space when she gets in one of her “moods.” I think she just needs a hug.

I knocked on her door and waited to be invited in. Daddy says I can’t just “barge” in anymore. When she didn’t open the door I knew she was ignoring me. Like usual. I yelled her name and banged my fist against the door repeatedly. I don’t appreciate being ignored. I huffed and slammed my foot on the ground in anger. I hate going against my parents rules. I try to be good like Mommy and Daddy want but I broke Daddies rule. I barged into the room.

My sister was asleep on her bed. The lamp on her night table was still on and she laid perfectly still. I started backing out of the room to let her rest but couldn’t help but let out a sharp cry when something banged into my back. I twisted around to find Grandmother standing inside the threshold of the doorway with a pile of blankets at her feet. I looked back at my sister and was surprised to see Delilah in the same position. She is usually a light sleeper but I thought she must be really tired. Grandmother moved by me, mumbling about her clumsiness, and walked toward my sister. She put the extra blankets next to the bed and started towards me when she stopped with a jerk. She twirled back around and pulled something out of my sister’s slack hand. It looked like the pill bottle that mommy carries around in her purse in case anyone gets headaches. I didn’t get the big deal until Grandmother grabbed the phone and started yelling at someone to hurry because her granddaughter was dying.

That’s when Grandmother cast her spell. She started mumbling under her breath and pushed harshly on my sister’s chest. My sister’s body was jerking underneath the force. I could do nothing but stand by and watch as she tilted my sister’s head back and sealed the spell with a kiss.

Before I could see what happened several people in uniform came rushing through the bedroom door. One of them quickly lifted me up and carried me downstairs into the living room.

“It’s okay sweetheart. Don’t cry, everything’s going to be fine. Don’t you worry,” The man said. I didn’t realize I was crying until he mentioned it. I quickly rubbed the tears away and kept a stiff lip. After all, I’m a big girl and only babies cry.

I sat on the couch for what felt like forever. I swung my legs back and forth while watching different strangers in uniform run up and down my grandmother’s staircase. I heard grandmother’s voice from the top of the stairs and I ran towards her. I stopped short when I saw that she was talking to a man wearing a shirt with EMT written on it. I wondered if those were his initials.

“What did she use to do it?” My grandmother asked. I noticed how her fists were holding onto the ends of her shirt tightly. She always yelled at me for doing that because she said it would stretch out the material. “Oxycodone,”

The man said holding up the pill bottle that Delilah was holding earlier. My grandmother brought the back of her hand to her mouth and her body was shaking.

“Her grandfather had lung cancer. I haven’t had the chance to get rid of his medicine or anything yet so that’s probably how she got them,” My grandmother explained.

“From what I understand, ma’am. Your granddaughter stopped breathing for approximately 2 minutes. She was technically dead. I’m not telling you this to make you upset. I just want you to know that you saved her life back there. You brought her back,” The man said putting his hand on her shoulder. She nodded and bit her bottom lip. When I saw them turn to walk down the stairs I ran down the hallway so they didn’t know I was spying.

I fell back against the wall and slowly sunk to my knees. I didn’t notice my hands were shaking until I tried to wipe the tears running down my face. I stayed in that position until a man wearing a police uniform tried asking me questions about what I saw but he didn’t believe me when I told him what actually happened.

My Grandmother had brought my sister back from the dead. Do you believe me now? My Grandmother is a witch and I will prove it to everyone. I

just need to find a way to make her show her witch talents in front of others. Maybe I can get my hands on the key to Mommy’s medicine cabinet.

# CITIZEN 4217

Michael Malin

The large white courtroom was much quieter than usual, so quiet that you could hear the boots of Citizen 4217 as he walked the hundred-yard distance from the doorway, all the way to the judge's stand. Thump thump thump. As he walked, the crowd turned to him, staring with faces paler than the snow-white jumpsuits that hung over their stiff bodies. Thump thump thump. He continued his long walk, stretching his thin legs in a more hurried pace, trying to avoid the glare of the crowd's seemingly dead eyes. Thump thump th—

"You may stop right there, 4217," said the judge, looking down at the wreck of a man who stood before him. Citizen 4217 wore the usual white jumpsuit, as is required in this district, but it was torn, tattered, and caked in dry mud. Pieces of the garment seemed to be hanging off of his thin body, which had clearly been deprived of suitable nutrition for several days. His face was sunken, he wore a beard (a violation of Statute 321 of the Penal Law Act of 2043), and his usually short-cut brown hair was now falling onto his forehead (a violation of the same act, Statute 319). "Citizen 4217. You are charged with disturbing the peace, as well as manifesting individualistic thoughts. These are felonious charges, as I'm sure you are aware. However, they pale in comparison to the following," said the judge as he fixed his round glasses tighter upon his clean-shaven head, almost as if bracing to be knocked off of his feet. "You are also charged with showing emotions unrepresentative of the state, which, I would like to remind the court, is a capital offense."

That last syllable, that s, was the only thing that seemed to echo in all of the large, white courtroom. The crowd was obviously disgusted, however they couldn't show it. To do so would be in direct violation of PL-241, which forbade public outbursts that were not state-sanctioned (which was, of course, passed as part of Congress' war on

unsavory opinions in 2035). After a moment's further silence, the judge began again. "So, 4217, how do you wish to plead?"

I.

My name is Citizen 4217, and I was a model cog in the machine that is America. I woke up every morning with the same intentions as every other citizen of this wondrous machine—to keep it running. And what exactly did that entail, you may ask? Well, first of all, don't ask questions. Questions are a violation of PL-210, and are punishable by indentured servitude to offended "elected" officials. But, the answer to that crime is an easy one: the citizen's main purpose is to work. It is our job to work for the benefit of the state, which was exactly what I did. I worked, completely ignorant to the notion of a better life, until February 15th, 2079—the day I was arrested.

That morning was just like any other. I woke up promptly at 7 O'clock, had consumed my state-mandated breakfast, and then walked to the garment factory where I worked (producing the mandatory white jumpsuits, which all citizens wear). I lived in an urban sect of District 4111 (formerly New York State), and walked four blocks to my job every single day. On my walk, I'd occasionally say hello to fellow passerby, which went a little something like this:

"Hello, Citizen, lovely day we are having," I'd say, indicating the sun that shone above us, making our jumpsuits glare an unbearable shade of white. "So it seems it is," the other citizen would say, checking his portable to ensure that my statement was in line with the state's official word on the quality of the weather.

And that's how conversations went. No opinions. No thoughts. Nothing. Just facts. Facts that were fabricated to keep us from thinking. And, worst of

all, I was completely fine with this.

I even preferred it.

This particular walk to work was unique not for the “conversations” that were to be had, nor the quality of the weather, but because it brought about the first of many unfortunate events that I’d take part in that day. As I walked along the sidewalk, an automobile kicked up some mud from the street in my direction, darkening my snow-white jumpsuit. Why that’s certainly unfortunate, I remembered thinking to myself, for which I was immediately surprised. How could I know it was unfortunate? How could I have made this judgement without guidance from the State? How dare I make such a remark, which has no benefit to the state, or really anybody for that matter! After reprimanding myself for having that odd thought, I walked along the gray sidewalk, looking at the buildings, made of their pure white bricks, which seemed to expand far past the cloud coverage. Oh, how I stuck out with my mud-caked jumpsuit, next to the bright bricks that made up these cloud-breakers. If I were allowed to feel ashamed at the way I looked, I’m sure I would have.

To spare you the mundane details of walking into my job and spending several hours on the 270th floor of some white monstrosity, I’ll just fast forward to the next important detail in this story. I was manning the sewing machine that all garment workers are assigned to, when I started pondering over that uncharacteristic thought I had earlier in the day. Dozing off, wondering how the government would perceive such a terrible thing, I ran the needle clean over my hand, opening a wound that had started to bleed a considerable amount.

“Ow! Fuck, that hurts! Shi—”

My god. I had really done it now. Officers were called immediately, of course, and I was escorted out of the building and into a police cruiser. What on Earth has gotten into me?, I thought, as they drove me far outside the city limits. I had broken so many laws, all in such a short period of time. Swearing had been banned half a century ago, and I had disturbed the sanctity of a federal workplace. Worst of all, though, I expressed emotions that were not state-sanctioned. All my life I was a perfect little cog, but now I am rusted.’

II.

I knew crying, being an expression of emotion, was made illegal through PL-27 over half a century ago, however I couldn’t help it. When the police had thrown me into my dark cell, and I landed upon the gray stone floor, the tears started rushing out as rapidly as the blood emanating from my still untreated hand. I was a failure. I was a detriment to the state. How many jumpsuits could have been made in the time that I had decided to shout obscenities? How many workers were distracted by my outburst? I felt so selfish. My cell was dark, made of stone, and had a rusty barred door installed at the front. There were two beds, a bucket, and very little water to be seen. On top of this, there was so little light that I hadn’t even realized I had a cellmate, until he finally made his presence known.

“So, waddaya in fer?” said a ragged man, sitting upon one of the decrepit beds. He was dressed in a jumpsuit that was torn to resemble shorts and a T-shirt, and, if it ever were white, it certainly didn’t show any sign of the color anymore.

“Questions are a direct violation of PL-210, and are punish—”

“Oh, are we gonna have some fun with’ you,” said the ragged man, cutting me off with a smile on his face.

“YOU HEAR THAT BOYS? We got us a slave, right here! Still set to his factory settin’ too! What we gon’ havta do abou’ that?”

“FIX EM!, FIX EM!, FIX EM!” shouted the other prisoners. “What on Earth do you mean ‘fix me’?” I asked, a look of utter horror on my face. “Woah, woah, what happened to questions being a violation of PL-whateverthefuck, huh?” said my cellmate.

I was offended. “How dare you speak of a public ordinance in such a manner! It’s PL-210 for your information, and it was put in place to ensure the productiveness of citizens for the benefit of all of us,” I said, greatly annoyed at this disgusting man’s answer.

“No it wasn’t. It was put in place for the benefit of people like ‘em,” he said as he pointed to three men who appeared to be walking towards our cell. At this sight, the shouting stopped immediately. Two of the men were officers, donning white riot gear, while the man in the middle was clean-shaven and draped in pale robes. He spoke first.

“Good evening, 4217, my name is Citizen 2134, and

judge responded. I was still frozen in time.

“He allowed an emotional outburst to escape his lips in the presence of an entire garment factory, wasting the time of an otherwise productive group of individuals,” said the judge. “Now what is your name if I may ask?” “Well well, bloody-hand over there, you may not ask,” said my cellmate, shooting me a sideways glance and a wink. “But I’ll tell ya anyways. Name’s Rex.” To this, the other inmates started cheering and screaming the name.

“REX, REX, REX!”

“Mm. I see,” said the judge, looking at Rex with pure indignation. “It seems as if the monsters have taken to naming themselves now. Most unfortunate. He could have likely been an effective enough cog, if not for the clear corruption. Open the cell.” The officers nodded and did as they were instructed.

“What the Hell is this?” said Rex as all three men approached him. “This,” said the judge, taking a pistol from the officer to his right, “is for believing that your violation of the very same laws that 4217 is facing death for will go unpunished, simply because you have already been confined to this putrid little cage.” BOOM. He shot Rex in the head, and the inmates’ cheering ceased.

### III.

In the week preceding my trial, I had a lot of time to think. I spent most of this time pondering over my dead cellmate, whose rotting body still laid upon the cold cell floor. I had never heard of anybody with a name actually composed of letters, and had never seen anybody smile the way Rex did when he defied the judge (Hell, I’d never seen anyone truly smile at all). In Rex’s final moments I saw him joke and laugh, and just generally seem more alive than anybody I’ve ever known. Funny, isn’t it? Even as a dead man, laying in front of me, he seemed more alive than I’d ever been...

### Epilogue:

“Well, Citizen 4217, we are waiting,” said the judge, looking down upon the accused with contempt. “How do you wish to plead?”

Citizen 4217 looked up at him, starting to laugh. He then shot a confident smile at the rest of the courtroom, which was followed by a small wink to the judge.

“Guilty as fuck.”



# Perspective

Sarah Scerbak

It was hot,  
not the easy  
relaxing  
crisp air  
you breathe  
in the beginning days  
of May.

No,  
it was musty, humid.  
You breathe  
but nothing fills your lungs  
in your own bubble  
shrinking  
shrinking  
shrinking  
with every breath.

That was just the air.  
I looked around.  
Chaos.  
All of them  
running from  
something  
or someone  
now,  
or a memory  
that they desperately wish  
would  
go away.



It was hot;  
flames encompassed them all;  
an inescapable burn  
from the world.

Their faces  
marked,  
scarred,  
broken,  
tired,  
exhausted.

It was hell,  
all except for one.  
It was hell,  
sure.

But she wasn't running.  
She had music  
flowing through her ears,  
the lyrics  
and melodies  
pulsing through her veins,  
like an electric current  
igniting her soul.  
Her body seemed  
to match the rhythm  
of the music.  
Every beat  
kept her moving  
graciously

as if her world  
wasn't as it appeared.  
She was  
dancing  
throughout  
the fiery chaos  
that is life.

Everyone's running from something, right?  
The question is:

Do you want to run from it,  
or dance with it?

# Komboloi

Kathryn Cambrea

I could never tie Papouli's shoes.  
Little laces of leather  
I could never quite grip.

But he always had something for me to hold.  
String adorned with beads  
like the sky and like the sun.  
Singing of Greece, these beads took him home.  
"Is it a necklace, Papouli?" I ask.  
"Ella Katarina," he says, "It's *komboloi*."

It is not jewelry.  
Watch the beads dance  
hopping up and down to the strum of the  
bouzouki.  
The beads listen,  
they answer your prayers.

His fingers twirl the tassel,  
the beads jingle-jingle.  
Your grandfather's eyes become the beads.  
He feeds you with his stories,  
laughs,  
and entrusts every last bit of his *komboloi*  
collection  
to you.

Only now he is dead.

I can no longer find every *komboloi*.  
But the jingle-jingle reverberates in the realms  
of my mind, matured and miserable.  
After Thia's last embrace.  
After leaving Ελλάδα and her island arms.

Every night, my brother's eyes  
become the beads.  
Every night, he expects music.  
"Sing the song, Kathryn," he seems to say. "You  
have the voice of the beads."  
The boy cannot speak.  
The old man is dead.  
The aunt is over the Atlantic in Ελλάδα.  
But the *komboloi* will always sing.

# How do they do it?

Devin Holt

The ones who make love without love?  
I am writing melodies to his moans,  
creating songs to sing when he is gone  
and I am alone.

How does he grab my wrists  
like a snake coiling around its prey  
squeezing tight,

tight,

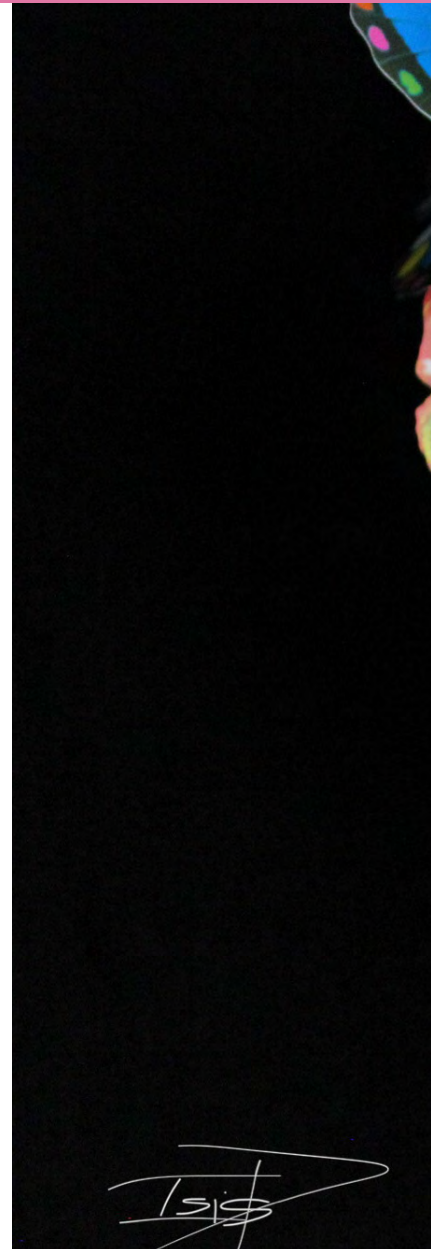
tight-

until release.

How does he hold my face in his hands just to  
push away

while I am lost in his eyes?

And how would I know better,  
thinking making love includes love.





# Welcome the Cougars

Colleen Stevens

Cougars are powerful predators that roam the Western United States and Southern Canada. They once roamed the Eastern hemisphere as well, but they were chased out and hunted to extinction. Now there is a petition to bring the cougars back, and reintroduce them into their Eastern territory once again. Some people claim bringing cougars back would just create predator versus human conflicts. However, cougars would, in fact, improve the state of our ecosystem while simultaneously affecting ecological factors that could save humans' lives.

The biggest cause for concern in reintroducing cougars is the potential that they will attack hikers or pedestrians. People worry about having an apex predator prowling the forests near their homes and families. They also fear for their pets' lives; cougars are known to occasionally prey on our domestic companions if the opportunity arises. Furthermore, cougars out West have wreaked havoc on livestock, costing many farmers valuable revenue. Although these are possible repercussions of bringing a top predator to our area, they are easily outweighed by the positive aspects which accompany the presence of cougars.

Due to the rise in deer population, much of the Eastern U.S ecosystem has become unbalanced. Deer are known as "keystone" herbivores. A keystone species is a species that significantly alters the habitat around them, thus affecting large numbers of other organisms. One impact increased deer populations have on humans is that it puts them at a higher risk of contracting Lyme disease. Lyme disease is carried by deer ticks, which pass the disease on to humans through their bite. Lyme disease has become the "single

greatest vector-borne disease in the United States," according to Danielle Buttke, an epidemiologist with the National Park Service. Although deer don't carry the Lyme-causing bacterium, they encourage its transmission. Reintroducing cougars would significantly lower the deer population. Lowering the deer population would effectively reduce the number of ticks because they would have less to feed on. Even though deer are not the only food source for ticks, cougars could indirectly influence the populations of other tick carrying species as well.

In theory, cougars could create a domino effect, causing a decrease in species such as chipmunks and rats that also transport infected ticks. Much like the trickle down economics theory, the predator theory posits that adding an apex predator would help balance out the ecosystem by stimulating a period of growth in certain areas of the food web, thereby restabilizing the ecological community. The massive population of deer in the East has depleted the ground cover, limiting the recovery of some small predators from the weasel family. These small predators hunt rodents, which would further decrease the population of Lyme disease bearing ticks. Cougars would lower the deer population which would allow the regrowth of the understory. This would promote an increase of the small predators effectively lowering the number of rodents. Lyme disease is just one of the many illnesses that animals can transfer to people. Predation effects on animal-borne illnesses have already been proven to work. One example of this is on California's Channel Islands. Scientists found that "the islands with the greatest number of predator species had the lowest prevalence of



hantavirus, a nasty rodent-borne disease that kills 36 percent of the people it infects” (Velasquez-Manoff). Overall, cougars would help our ecosystem rebalance itself and protect humans from some nasty diseases in the process. Besides causing a general disarray of the finely balanced ecosystem, deer also have many direct conflicts with humans. One major conflict deer have with humans are deer-vehicle crashes or DVC for short. A case study from 2017, based on “deer population models and sociology economic evaluations, revealed that cougars could reduce deer densities and DVCs by 22% in the Eastern United States, preventing 21,400 human injuries, 155 fatalities, and \$2.13 billion in avoided costs within 30 years of establishment.” Since the 1900s, there have only been twenty-five fatal cougar attacks in the United States (Drake). In comparison, if cougars were to be reestablished in the East, within thirty years they would save an estimated 84% more lives than they took in over a century. In a study done by the University of Washington, scientists found that cougars prevent \$1.1 million of collision damages annually in Black Hills, South Dakota, a popular National Forest that is home to Mount Rushmore (Velasquez-Manoff). Black Hills is only a small portion of South Dakota and cougars have proven to make it a safer area by controlling the deer population. In 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acknowledged the potential value of puma [another name for a cougar] recolonization associated with reducing vehicle-deer collisions in the East, but at that time they were unable to pursue the reestablishment of pumas due to a lack of authority under the act they were

reviewing.

The apprehension to the recolonization of cougars is understandable; however, the reasons for concern are largely unwarranted. Cougars would have a huge food source in the East, which would avert the likelihood of them attacking children and pets. Furthermore, it was found that cougars are dominant predators, rising above coyotes, black bears, lynx, bobcats and any smaller predators. That means that they have no reason to seek out children or pets because they would have a higher rate of success in hunting an already abundant food source. This also gives reason to believe that there would be infrequent cougar attacks on livestock in the East because there are fewer top predators to compete with and more food to sustain them. In addition, a second study found that cougars are afraid of human contact. They purposefully adjust their habits to avoid human interaction. During the experiment a group of cougars were tested to see if human voices would cause them to abandon their fresh kill. After determining the kill sites of seventeen separate cougars, the researchers set up motion-activated speakers that would play radio talk shows when the cougars set them off. A control group was tested with the same experiment, except the sounds of native frogs would play when the motion detector was tripped. The researchers found that hearing human voices “reduced cougar feeding time by more than half, caused them to flee more frequently, and resulted in them taking longer to return to a kill site,” whereas only one of the cougars in the control group fled after setting off the motion detector. This proves that the majority of cougars would rather flee than encounter a human, even when fresh food is involved.

# The Thanksgiving Symphony

Reagan Prior

I remember the fall of two-thousand-twelve  
My aunt made a maze out of leaves  
in the front yard  
that we all traced through  
on Thanksgiving.  
My grandparent's kitchen  
was filled with  
aromas of drying bread  
and melting butter.  
and the clinks of fork  
and knives cleaning plates.  
We children, impatient for dessert  
ran out into the dark  
to play Manhunt.  
The beams of flashlights,  
the sounds of twigs  
and leaves cracking,  
and our giggles  
were the 8:00 symphony.  
We rushed inside for dessert,  
the taste of apple pie,  
the snap of chocolate pretzels,  
and cookies crumbling.  
At the end,  
leftovers were swept  
into tupperware;  
doors opened and  
closed like applause.



# Stop

Reagan Prior

I have an allegro heart beat and staccato reflexes. My stomach weaves itself into a knot, over and over again. Please stop. 1:00 A.M. I need to go back to sleep. I remember the paper due on thursday. It hangs over my mind like an icicle. Everything is too loud and too quiet at the same time. A pin drop is an earthquake. The 4:30 A.M. nausea strikes again. I wish I hadn't done that. I haven't spoken to my friends in weeks. 6:30 A.M. Let's ruin my day by checking Instagram. Lets watch everyone else pretend they're enjoying their life. Why can't I be like that? I wish I was an extrovert. 10:00 A.M. I can't focus on the screen. Another hour will surely kill me.

What if I get cancer?

**STOP.**

Remember to breathe.

# The World, Mirrored in a Dark Pool

Merriam-Webster Dictionary has 9 different definitions for nature. The first definition defines it as “the incoherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing.” Another definition for nature according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary is “humankind’s original or natural condition; a simplified mode of life resembling this condition.” When I was younger, I always thought of nature as the outside. Now when I think of the word nature, I think of many different things. The first thing that comes to my mind is a means or a way we are affected by life.

When I was a little girl, my parents would always take me to the parks in our area. I remember I loved it so much they decided to get my brothers and I a playset for our backyard. We would spend hours on the playset, swinging and playing make believe. One particular time I remember was when I was in the fourth grade. My brother and I returned from piano practice and went outside to play while my mom cooked dinner. As it started to get dark, my mom called us inside, but her voice was a different tone than normal. We went to go get our plates when she suddenly told us to stop, she needed to talk to us first. We looked at each other puzzled, having no idea what unfathomable things she was about to tell us. My mom began to tell us about how people get sick, and how germs can be everywhere, school, outside, especially on the playset. Finally, after what felt like forever, she proceeded to tell us that our dad was sick, not cold sick. Cancer sick. My dad had been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia and had to spend a week in isolation to try immunotherapy. I remember in that moment I promised myself I would never go on that stupid playset again, I didn’t want germs and yes it was hard for my tiny little nine year old brain to understand what cancer was but all I knew was that it was bad and something would never be the same.

That moment changed the way I saw nature. Instead of seeing pretty parks and play sets, I saw sickness and death and fear, and it only got worse from there. Everything started changing—my brothers and I moved into my grandparents’ house across the street. Mom was at the hospital to take care of Dad. We would go days without seeing them because he could not have germs anywhere near him. That was until the whole summer of my fifth-grade year when I was about 10 years old; my mom, my two brothers and my nonna (grandma in Italian) had moved to the city into a tiny hotel room next to New York Presbyterian hospital. The five of us crammed into the tiny room. It included two queen beds, one bathroom and a makeshift kitchen. Living in the city was a shocking experience. Nonna and I would walk to the store every 3 days to pick up our groceries, I had never walked to the store until then. I had also never seen so many cars before, let alone almost be hit by one. I would

so mom would have to walk with dad to our hotel room when he wanted to take a shower. I was always so afraid when they would walk alone in the dark. What if something were to happen to them?

After two and half long months, we returned back to our suburban town after my father was released from the hospital. School was starting back up. I wondered how everyone would treat me--when I was in fourth grade, everyone avoided the topic of my dad being sick. Looking back now, they probably didn't even know what to say, best of them not to say anything at all. We all just went about our normal school days. What if fifth grade was different? I had no idea the can of worms that question would open. On the first day of fifth grade, my brothers and I got on the bus like we usually did but were greeted with a somber, sad smile and a very low good morning from our bus driver. That was just the start. My fifth-grade teacher did the same thing when she saw me and called my name on the attendance sheet. It came time for us to share what we did over the summer, the moment I dreaded the most. What was I going to say? I could always make up a lie and tell them I went on the best vacation ever with my not-sick dad and we had the most amazing time. No, that wouldn't work, my mom was friendly with all their parents; they would know I was lying. Then I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was my turn. I stood up in front of the whole class and said, "My name is Juliana, and this summer I lived in the city so I could be close to my dad who has cancer."

I looked around the room, everyone was just staring at me with this sad look on their faces. The look I would soon realize is the look I would get for the next four-plus years, the look

of sympathy. I grew to hate that look. The "I feel sorry for you" look that everyone always gave my family and me, everywhere we went. I guess it was just human nature, if something sad is happening to someone show them you care. This wasn't a caring look to me though. The way I saw it, it was a "your different" look, especially from kids in my class.

Soon enough, everyone was talking about how my summer must have been awful. How my summer must have been so hard or so boring. I found myself sitting at the end of the lunch table, close to all alone. I didn't know it then, but kids do this when they know someone is different, and they don't know why or how, but they know. I was all alone. Sure, I had friends to play with on the playground, but I was never invited to the play dates or the parties. Everyone figured my family had too much to do anyway. I always thought everyone was so nice before now. That these were my classmates since kindergarten; they wouldn't treat me differently. I guess it was human nature to be that naïve. I was always taught if someone has something bad going on, you should go out of your way and be extra nice to them, not single them out and treat them like they are different. After a while, and a phone call to my teacher, I was being invited to things again. The kids slowly started to be nice to me, they started telling me how sorry they were about my dad and how their mom told them it was getting bad. I figure they matured a little bit and didn't really see me as different anymore, which was what I was going to tell myself no matter what. This was more the human nature I remembered. Being nice to someone who was going through something bad, distracting them from what they were going home to.

I was going home to a sick dad and a stressed mom, a four-year-old who couldn't

people started coming around to help. People we knew from church or school would send us meal trains. People offered to pick us up from school to hang out at their house for as long as my mom needed. They were going out of their way to be nice and helpful. My brother and I enjoyed it, we got to spend time with our friends outside of school, sometimes we even got to sleep over. When we would leave, the look would pop up again, I saw them give it to my mom as she walked through the door to pick us up. I saw it as they would reach for a hug goodbye. The “I am sorry” look. By the time eighth grade came around, I knew the look all too well, but I just learned to smile and nod. The help didn’t stop for all those years. People would always reach out to my mom and say things like “I am thinking about you and your family, if you need anything let us know.” Mom always said some people were just saying it to say it. They didn’t really mean it. They just wanted to feel good about themselves. We would only go with the same few people outside of family. They were usually my mom’s closest friends.

After Dad died in October of my eighth-grade year, people still offered to help. My brother’s second grade class collectively made us a basket of gift cards and certificates to go out to eat. That slowly changed after everyone found out about my brothers and my mental health issues. Whispers about us began to spread like

wildfire all around the county. Everyone from Stony Point to Pearl River knew who we were and what our “story” was (or their version of it anyway). Human nature is to distract from their own problems by talking about other people’s problems, and unfortunately it was our problems they decided to gossip about. Cancer they want to help with, but mental illness, not so much. Everyone thinks they will know what they will do in the situation until it actually happens to them. I am nineteen years old with a severe anxiety disorder, depression, ADHD, and OCD and that is an effect of the environment I grew up in.

People treated me like I was different and as if I didn’t belong. Then they “warmed” up to my family and I and would offer help and to do anything they could to make our lives easier, but the minute they hear mentally ill, they run for the hills. That’s the way people see mental illness and mental health. If the situation I was in were to happen today, things would be significantly different. I would not be treated as an outsider. My peers would have empathy for me, and they would not want to make me feel worse than I already do. When people hear mental illness today, they offer help, advice, and the name of a psychologist or a therapist. They understand mental illness today more than they did when I was merely an eighth grader. My mom was constantly judged and put under fire for the way she handled the situations that were given to her, and no matter how hard she tried, people judged her. Why? Because it’s human nature to judge one another in the way they handle a situation, the way they look, what they wear, what

kind of house they live in, or what kind of car they drive. This is the new human nature. To care to your face but to judge behind your back.

When I hear nature, I think of many different things, the outdoors, the way people act, the way people grow up, the playset in my backyard. I think of the way it affects us and the way it betrays us. Nature makes us sick with all kinds of things, the most horrible being cancer. Nature takes things away from us. Nature took my dad away from me. And nature is the reason why I am the way I am. The nature in which I grew up and the nature of the situations I have faced all made me who I am. That is the way I see nature.

# UNREQUITED

Fiona Donohue

I thought you liked me.  
But then you looked at her.  
You liked her more.

# LONG BRANCH

Kristen Chiarella

Walking along the warm sand,  
I notice all the seashells that  
have washed up on the shore.  
The shimmering ocean and rough waves,  
Dolphin watching and jet skies.  
Sunset kisses feeling like home,  
Reminiscing about the way we used to be.  
Laughing, smiling, hugging,  
Showing the love that you have for me.

# Breaking and Entering

by Katherine Cording

## Cast of Characters

Jodi Wilde, late 20

Liza Prattchet, late 20s

Claire Evans, mid 20sw

Guard 1, early 40s

## SCENE ONE

Scene opens up “outside”; the only prop is a van on stage right, whose back doors are thrown open. The backdrop is of an alleyway. The stage is dimly lit; it’s night. Two women linger near the back of the truck. LIZA PRATTCHET, a young woman with dark hair tied back, stares across the stage. CLAIRE EVANS, a young woman with hair dyed a bright color, is focused on a device in her hands. Claire seems more agitated than Liza.

CLAIRE: She should’ve been here ten minutes ago.

LIZA: (flippantly) She’ll be here. Don’t worry.

*A door on the backdrop shudders on its hinges before swinging open. Behind the door is JODI WILDE, a young woman with brown hair. She leans out, looking both ways before her eyes land on LIZA and CLAIRE. She’s carrying a bag that looks rather full and wearing a guard’s uniform. She leaves the door open and walks over to the pair of women hurriedly, looking nervous.*

JODI: How’s it going out here?

CLAIRE: I’m ready to go. We were just waiting on you.

*JODI buffs out a breath and throws the bag at LIZA’s feet.*

JODI: Got a bit caught up, but I’m ready now. No one seems to suspect anything.

LIZA: I’d be surprised if they did. We’re too good to be caught before we’ve even begun.

LIZA bends down and rummages through the bag. JODI eyes her, not looking convinced.

JODI: All we have to do is grab the jewelry and get out. As long as we don’t get distracted, we should be fine.



LIZA: Why did you look at me when you said that?

CLAIRE: She's right, you know.

LIZA: Whose side are you on?

JODI: Liza. Just get ready. This museum only has the jewelry on loan from Spain; it's due to go back this week. We can't waste time.

LIZA: I'm just trying to lighten the mood, you seem a little tense.

*JODI's expression darkens, and her hands clench at her sides.*

JODI: I'm waiting inside. If you're not there in five minutes, I'm doing this job by myself.

*JODI turns on her heel and disappears through the door she opened in the beginning of the scene, leaving the door open behind her. LIZA and CLAIRE exchange a look. Scene ends.*

## SCENE TWO

Scene opens up on a half-empty stage. Several works of art, ranging from paintings to sculptures to precious artifacts are scattered about. We are in a museum, and it has been closed for the evening. On stage left, there is a small closed off space; the inside is visible to the audience, and the contents (a mop, some boxes) indicate that it is a closet. JODI and LIZA creep out from stage right. They are both in guard outfits, which don't fit exactly right.

JODI: This way.

LIZA: How are we looking, Claire?

*From offstage, we hear CLAIRE's voice. It is implied that CLAIRE is talking over an earpiece to both JODI and LIZA.*

CLAIRE: No activity so far; you're good to go.

LIZA: And you're sure this is the right way?

*JODI stops and turns to look at LIZA.*

JODI: Do you want to take the lead?

LIZA: No, no. I just want to make sure you know where we're going.

JODI: I didn't spend hours pouring over maps for you to doubt me at the last minute.

LIZA: (holding up her hands defensively) Sorry. I didn't mean to imply anything.

JODI: Just -- focus on your job, and I'll do mine.

LIZA: Sounds like a plan, boss.

JODI: Don't call me that.

CLAIRE: There's a guard in the next room over, so you may want to keep your voices down. Save the bickering for after we're done here.

*From stage left, a shadow passes over the floor; the shadow belongs to GUARD 1. At the movement, LIZA and JODI fall silent, watching it disappear as GUARD 1 moves on.*

JODI: (quieter) Thanks, Claire.

CLAIRE: My pleasure. Now can we try and actually complete the mission before you get yourself thrown out, ladies?

*JODI and LIZA walk towards the far wall. There are two doors. The first leads to the closet. The second leads off stage. The doors are right next to a large painting that takes up half of the wall. LIZA stops in front of the second door which is closer to the painting and begins to tug on the handle.*

LIZA: It's locked.

JODI: Brilliant deduction, as usual. (She brandishes a key) Now, if you don't mind --

LIZA: Go for it.

*LIZA steps back, gesturing to the door. As she does this, her arm accidentally brushes back into the painting, jostling it. For a moment, LIZA and JODI freeze. Then, alarms begin to go off.*

JODI: Liza!

LIZA: Shit, I'm sorry!

*Footsteps can be heard coming from offstage, heading towards LIZA and JODI, who are clearly panicked. JODI leans forwards and grabs LIZA's arm, hauling her into the closet. The audience can still see them in the small cramped space. GUARD 1 enters through the door on stage left and begins to search the stage.*

JODI: (stage whisper) All you had to do is watch where you were going. That's all you had to do.

LIZA: How many people are working tonight?

JODI: (shrugs) There's always a handful of guards and janitors at night during the week. If we're lucky? This is the only guard that came to investigate.

CLAIRE: Today must be your lucky day. There's only one guard in the room; everyone else I can see is pretty far away. He must've been pretty confident to be by himself.

LIZA: (cracking her knuckles) This'll be easy.

CLAIRE: Well, I hope you're right. Looks like he just heard you.

*LIZA and JODI tense just as the door is pulled open by GUARD 1. As soon as it does, LIZA jumps forward at GUARD 1. They fight. LIZA succeeds in throwing GUARD 1 to the ground, knocking him out. She stands over him.*

LIZA: (turing to JODI, triumphant) And you thought I was going to derail this job.

*JODI emerges from the closet.*

JODI: I distinctly remember you setting off the alarm that brought him here.

LIZA: The details don't matter. Let's just get him out of the way.

*LIZA drags GUARD 1 over to the closet; she manages to get him in about halfway, but when she's done, his feet are still visible to the audience. She tries and fails to close the door several times. Fed up with LIZA, JODI walks over and kicks GUARD 1 fully into the closet, slamming the door shut with perhaps more force than is necessary, locking it.*

JODI: There. We still clear?

CLAIRE: No one seemed to have noticed your little (beat) struggle. You're clear.

*JODI pushes open the second door, and together JODI and LIZA walk through it. Quick scene change.*

### SCENE THREE

The museum set up is gone. Now, the lights are much brighter and there is nothing on display anymore. An elevated platform is on stage right, with stairs leading down to the main stage. There's a few doors up on the platform; on the stage floor left, there's a large vault. JODI and LIZA enter on the platform from stage right. We are underneath the museum, in the artifact storage area.

*LIZA starts towards the stairs leading down to the main stage, but JODI grabs her shoulder and jerks her back*

JODI:(voice low) We can't just go charging blindly ahead. I never got the chance to properly look around, so we have to be careful.

LIZA: And we're sure the jewels are down there?

JODI: Yeah, last time I checked.

LIZA: Alright. Well, breaking into things is my specialty.

*LIZA's voice is light; she's going for levity. JODI is far more tense; she keeps glancing around, as if waiting for someone to jump out from the corner and catch them.*

LIZA: Alright. Well, breaking into things is my specialty.

*LIZA's voice is light; she's going for levity. JODI is far more tense; she keeps glancing around, as if waiting for someone to jump out from the corner and catch them.*

JODI: We just have to go down this hall, and we'll reach the vault.

LIZA: (glancing over at the doors behind them) And where do these lead to?

JODI: Offices, mostly. They should be empty, but --

LIZA: Don't assume they are. Got it.

*Together, LIZA and JODI begin to move across the platform, heading towards the stairs that lead down to the main stage. They stand in front of the vault, staring up at it.*

JODI: So how do we get this open?

LIZA: We went over this. It's a two step opening system. There's a code that needs to be entered, and then two keys have to be inserted and turned at the same time. Do you still have those keys I told you to get?

JODI: Oh, yeah. Here.

*She fishes them out of her pocket and tosses one over to LIZA.*

JODI: What's first, code or key?

LIZA: Code. It's 3-5-1-7.

JODI: And you know that how? I've been here two weeks and I still haven't been told the codes.

LIZA: Claire told me.

JODI: Oh, okay, that makes sense.

*As one, JODI and LIZA both step up to the keypads and punch in the code.*

LIZA: Okay, we'll put the key in on the count of three. One --

JODI: Two --

LIZA: Three.

*They put the keys in and turn them counterclockwise. The vault shakes, and the door slowly slides open with the sound of metal being dragged across concrete. JODI and LIZA spare a glance at one another before walking through the door.*



# Venice

Kristen Chiarella

Walking down the street, water all around.  
A beautiful city with white marble everywhere,  
Standing in my sundress without a care in the world.  
Spotting my famiglia's villa on top of the mountain,  
With the sunset gleaming throughout the sky.  
I see people dancing in the street,  
violins playing in the background,  
This is how I see Venice,  
the Venice my famiglia has adapted to.  
The Venice when you see canals  
and crystal clear water,  
The happiness Venice will bring to you.  
The city that's made from air and stone.

# We Were Forgotten

Reagan Prior

To the wall-  
why do your paint shavings  
scatter on me  
and no one bothers  
to sweep them away  
no one has been here  
in so long.  
you are faded away, showing the  
lime green wallpaper  
someone tried to cover  
my drawers, left open  
collect your shavings  
in piles  
and hide what  
was left behind  
a pen; dry  
a journal; empty  
a watch; handles stuck at 9:01  
a CD player; silent  
a pair of earbuds; knotted  
on your other side  
lays a kitchen table  
under a bowl of rotting pears  
which were meant for a pie  
they didn't forget the recipe.  
-From the desk





# Hanger-On

Fiona Donohue

Friend,  
were you ever?  
or were you using me like  
a parasite that  
latches onto a host and  
won't let go until it's full.



# The Jacket

Angelica Cortez


## *Boxes*

My mother was sound asleep in her bedroom, the apartment dark and silent. I wandered into the living room and saw the silhouettes of unopened boxes. I turned on the light and sat cross-legged on the floor. Contemplating if I should, I grabbed a box and slowly opened its flaps. It seemed my mother had opened them before without my knowledge. I pulled my grandfather's faux leather jacket out of the box. A numb feeling enveloped my body. I brought it up to my nose and inhaled deeply. It had a musky, manly smell, somewhat indescribable. It smelled of the times he hugged me. The times I would walk into his small, untidy studio apartment in Brooklyn. The times when I would sit on the stairs of his fire escape and watch him pull a cigarette out of his pocket to smoke, the

wind brushing itself into his short, black thinning hair as he blew the smoke into the midmorning air. It brought up images that I would never see again. I inhaled slightly the second time, scared that the smell would be gone forever if I inhaled too deeply.

## *Smoke*

I stood in the shadows outside the tall glass building which housed my college. The chill weaved its way through my jacket. Between my numbing fingers, I toyed with a cigarette. It was a long cigarette, freshly lit. I lifted the cigarette to my lips and inhaled deeply. I was supposed to be in class. I knew our break was long over but I didn't care. All I could think about was the uneasiness in the pit of my stomach, the longing to walk away from this Christian school and never come back.



I slowly exhaled, smoke clouding before me. The anger boiling in my chest began to slightly fade as the nicotine coursed through me. The homophobic comments from the ignorant young woman came to mind. In my ears, I could still hear her words echo, “Those gays aren’t natural and they won’t get into heaven with that lifestyle.”

### *Comfort*

I cleared my throat and put down the jacket in my hand. I reached into the box and pulled out a vest. The vest was gray with black and white stripes. There was a gothic cross stitched into the top left part of the vest. I had always seen my grandfather as a bit edgy. He was wearing this vest when I took the risk of telling him the truth after the third time he asked about a potential boyfriend. The vest had the same smell as the faux leather jacket. I closed my eyes and held the vest in my arms. I saw him hug me after I came out to him, years after I came out to myself. My mother was my translator. I remembered the unconditional love in his eyes as he reassured me, “Te amaré por siempre mi pequeña niña. No te preocupes.” I placed the vest on the floor and sat in the living room quietly. The numbness faded and the hurt and heaviness I tried to mask flooded through the guarded gates of my heart. Hot tears fogged my glasses.

### *Regret*

I could see the crinkle around his eyes as he laughed, sitting on his black, leather sofa. He spoke rapidly in Spanish to my mother at his glass, round table. His voice pierced through the air, hoarse and raspy. In my ears, his harsh vocals were dulcet tones, surprisingly soothing. I was never able to understand him. I never had the knack for the language. He gave me my first acoustic guitar in an attempt to connect with me. He strummed the out of tune guitar and laughed as he said I should



learn how to tune it. The sound of knocking on our front door when I was just a preteen echoed in my ears. When I looked through the peephole, there he was. Like a gift that was lost and presents itself to you at an unexpected, but needed moment. My mother's shock turned to excitement as she hugged the father who disappeared after the tragic death of his wife ten years ago. He looked at me, surprised at how much I have grown. At that moment, I remembered the anger I felt during the years he was gone. He shouldn't have been so surprised at how much I had grown. I wasn't going to be five years old forever. I never made a real effort to learn Spanish because of an underlying anger I didn't realize was inhabiting my heart. We'd never had a real, deep conversation. At least I can say he tried.

### ***Boxes***

Wiping tears off my face, I picked up the faux leather jacket. I stood up and slowly put my arms through the sleeves. I remembered the last time I've seen him happy in that jacket. It was a summer afternoon and my mother suggested I accompany my grandfather to pick up our dinner. We walked a couple of blocks down from his apartment building on Bedford Avenue in silence. There was an awkward tension. I didn't know what to say to him. We entered a Spanish restaurant to pick up our order and there was an attractive young woman at the counter. He seemed flustered and spoke to the young woman in his rapid Spanish. When she stepped away from the counter, he looked at me and pointed at her as he nodded his head approvingly. I giggled in amusement as he casually asked me in his broken English, "Very beautiful, yeah?" I nodded my head in response as she walked back to the counter with our bags of food. He adjusted his leather jacket, pulling up its collar in a suave manner before we left with our food. The tension between us slowly diminished as we walked away from the restaurant. I laughed through my tears at the memory of my grandfather as I adjusted the jacket onto my body.

# The Ones You Love

by DeAndre Smith

On January 31, at 3:23 a.m. to be precise, I awoke.

From my perspective, the understanding of one's feelings and emotions have been on a consistent downward slope.

I Love You, is what I thought I heard, but those were just the words that deceived my perception of the reality of what I was feeling.

These words bend the soul and leave you with no choice but to allow that warm comforting feeling.

It's like a cup of hot chocolate on a chilly winter night or like a cup of coffee on a Monday morning before a seemingly long week ahead of you.

You use these words often on the ones you love, so I stand here asking myself and others, do the ones you love, love you?

# To My Loved Ones

by Valerie Lopez

Thank you for all the experiences and memories.

The universe placed us in each other's path for a reason.

We've touched each other's lives and I'll remember you always.

We all have a time to go, and mine came much sooner.

There's nothing you could've done, so please don't blame yourself.

When the angels call, you have to answer.

People say, "You can have it all," and I did.

Because I got to experience you in my life, I'll know that happiness for eternity.

My call from the angels came early, but it's okay because my life was full due to you.

I'm at peace, no longer at the mercy of the world, no longer subjected to the pain here on Earth.

I'm always around, watching and protecting you,

look for omens, and you'll know when I'm there.

Although I had to go, I have all the beautiful memories of us together.

It's okay to cry, it's okay to laugh.

The vessel is temporary, but my soul is everlasting.

You've only lost me in the physical, but gained a Guardian Angel.

To all those I love and have loved me in return: Thank you for all the experiences.

Thank you for all the memories.

# SPARTANS

# STAC

MAGUIRE

Pride

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

FAMILY

GOLD

Maroon

Costello

BE YOUR BEST SPARTAN

spellman

# STAC

MAGUIRE

Pride

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

FAMILY

GOLD

FRIENDS

spellman

BE YOUR

