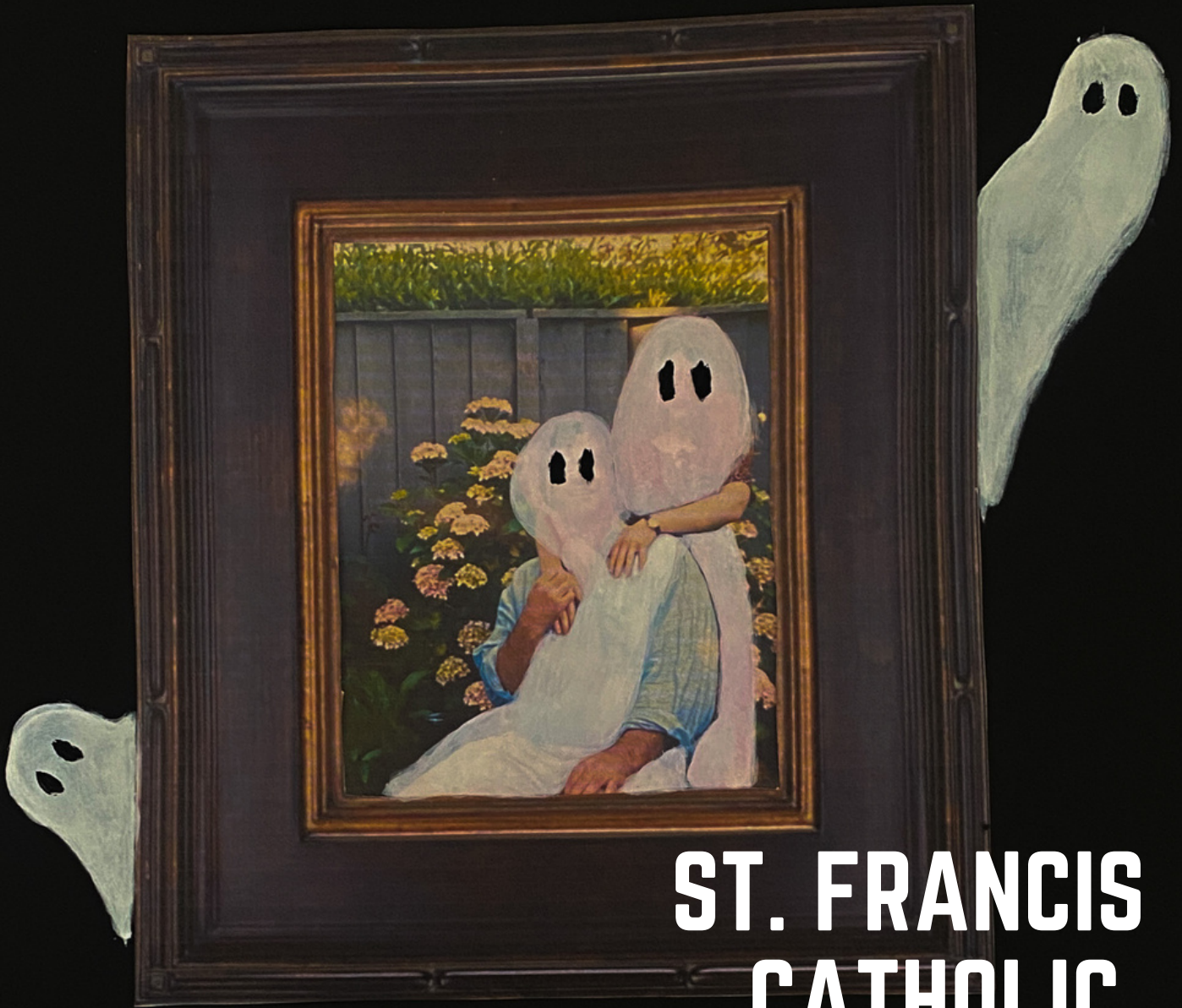


THE MIRROR

TWENTY-SECOND
EDITION | FALL 2022



THEME: CHILDHOOD

**ST. FRANCIS
CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL**

FOREWORD FROM THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

“A place belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he remakes it in his own image.” - Joan Didion

Childhood, a season of life in its own right, is profoundly formative to the development of self. While some may reflect on their years of youth with incredible fondness, possibly yearning for the return of such innocence, others may celebrate the exit of a period of life tainted by trauma. Affecting the approach we may adopt upon navigating adulthood and its complexities, childhood remains a potent reminder of the architecture of our morality and, consequently, our perception of the world. Despite the vastly different ways in which individuals might regard childhood, the inner child, which is generally considered the truest form of the psyche, is often lost upon the advent of adulthood. However, it is important to recognize that our inner child has not necessarily been eradicated in totality. Rather, it has become hidden away in the depths of our psychology, begging to be reacquainted with and imploring for an end to its repression. By lighting the lamp of mindfulness within us, not only will the darkness that shrouds our innermost self begin to dissipate but the reluctance with which we act as historians of our pasts will cease to exist. We must embrace the spectrum of emotions that constitute our beings, both ones that are fervently welcomed because of their simplicity, and ones that are deemed unwelcome inhabitants of our psyche. In this way, we can initiate the process of befriending and reclaiming our inner child in order to reframe it of our own accord. For the twenty-second edition of *The Mirror*, we will delve into the varying perspectives of students regarding childhood, something that we hope you will sincerely enjoy and appreciate.

~Mia Sullivan

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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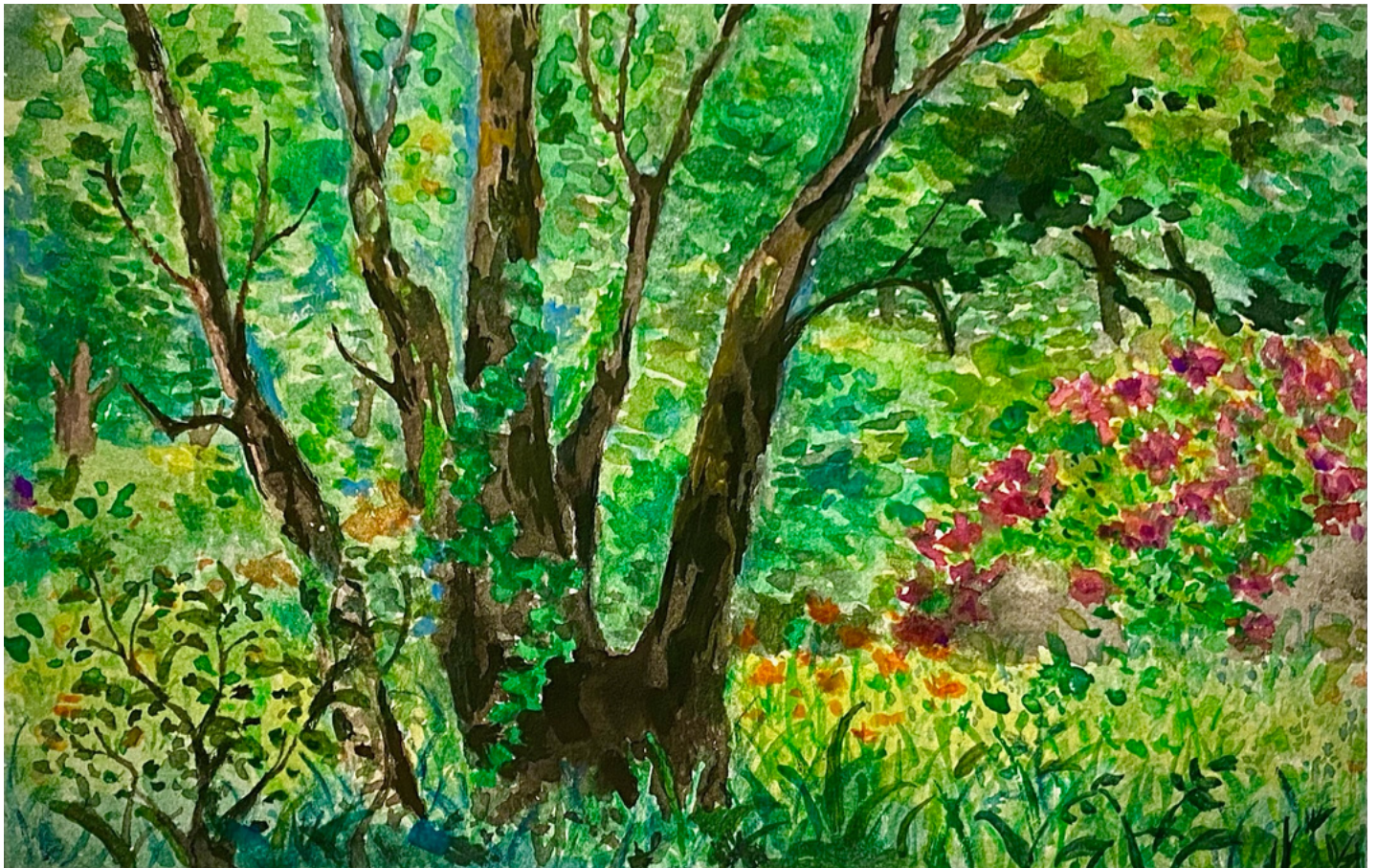
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A Scene From ***The Secret World of Arrietty***

By Alex Ocon



To Find God in a Soccer Field

By Charlie Gay

I round the corner, dragging my feet in the still heat of June. I would have gone straight if I wanted to get home a few minutes earlier. But my head turns, and my heart follows, and my feet come tumbling after. I flick my eyes to the top of the bell tower in front of the school. The old cross at the top is a piece of rotting wood covered in cracked brown paint. Still, it looks so immense in my eyes. I've looked at that cross too many times, but today I need to see it just once more. My chest floods with nostalgia so thick I'm coughing it up. Just then, a car rolls to a stop in front of me, and the driver yells something. I can't hear exactly what he says through my headphones, but I know. I see the smirk slide cruelly onto his face, see the way he looks at me, more object than human—and I know. The ghost of my girlhood begins to pound at my ribcage, begging to be seen. My feet take me very, very slowly past the familiar old buildings, and I let my childhood come home to my heart.

I keep my eyes trained on the church, that little brick building that holds so much. I see the concrete steps that I climbed twice a week to go to mass. I see the heavy wooden doors with saints carved into the grain. I was once so little that I couldn't even open those doors. Now I refuse to. Every Friday morning the entire student body would gather for the sermon. I picture the rows of shiny, wooden pews and their punishing kneelers. I used to kneel in the dim light for hours, eyes turned heavenward, begging God to love me. As I got older, the boys in my class would look down at me and snicker, making some joke about me being on my knees. I pretended not to understand, which, I suppose, is its own kind of begging to be loved. The stained glass windows paint the sidewalk blue, illuminating the innocent girl I used to be. The girl who knelt and prayed and tried to forget that she was just that. Here I walk in the light, almost a woman.

As I wander further, up Hackberry Lane, I can see the tiny soccer field. I remember how it used to grow neon green in the spring, the color of lime candy. I remember the way each blade of grass would shine almost iridescently with dew in the moonlight. At the edge of the field sits a single row of bleachers. Only a few of us could ever fit at a time, but we shifted and squeezed until we were all together. This is where my friends and I would sneak off to after school events. After masses and dances and fairs, we would run off, giggling, to sit on the bleachers. Inevitably, a boy would polish off his Coke and spin the bottle on the ground. All of us girls would blush at the thought of kissing anyone, but the stars in the sky or the glowing grass were just romantic enough to convince us to play. I can still feel the cold glass bottle on my fingertips and the shock on my face when it landed on my best friend. One boy piped up, "You're both girls! Spin again!" But I couldn't see what the problem was. So I kissed her. Before I pulled away, I heard another boy laughing, telling his friend how hot it was. His gaze was sharp and penetrating. I can see the exact place he was sitting on the bleachers, the place my naivety shattered in the wet grass and I never picked up the pieces. That night, the metal bleachers left red patches of cold on my thighs and tears on my cheeks. I knew then what I would always be to men: the owner of their fantasies, something to be desired.

I drop my head, glue my eyes to my feet, and walk past the edge of the property. Past the treeline that marks the end of that little school. For ten years I ran through the hallways, scraped my knees on the blacktop, held sticky hands on the bleachers. I see now how small this place is. There was only ever room for me and God. So I told Him about the boys, about the jokes and the staring. When the jokes stopped being enough and the boys started in with their hands, I couldn't find God anywhere. It wasn't fair. That's why I left this place, why I won't open those wooden doors again. I turn back once more, eyes darting immediately to the bell tower cross. It whispers to me as I walk. It tells me I'll make up with God someday. That's why I come back—to find God in a soccer field.

Windmill

By Yixin Huang



String of Life

By Ella Rose

From young to middle, and from middle to old,
our life is a story that can't be foretold.
It moves like a river, or rain in a storm,
that takes us down a new long road.

No matter how hard we struggle and fight,
we can't hold on tight to that string of life.
We can pull and tug on that long bright string,
but only the hand at the end can know where it leads.

Our life is a puzzle, waiting to be solved,
or a spinning wheel and a thread waiting to unfold.
Life is a mystery, a journey, and a ride,
one where we hold on to that string of life.

Curséd Waters

By Anonymous

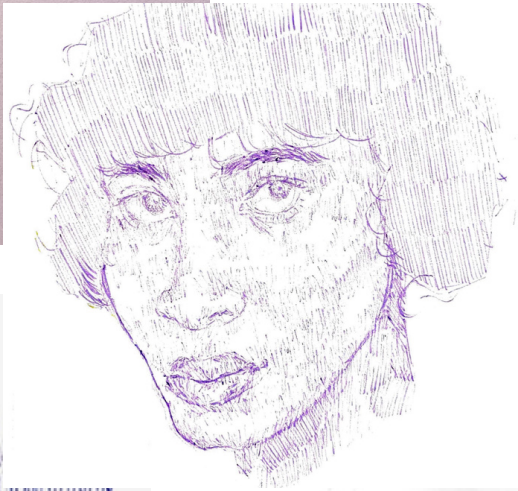
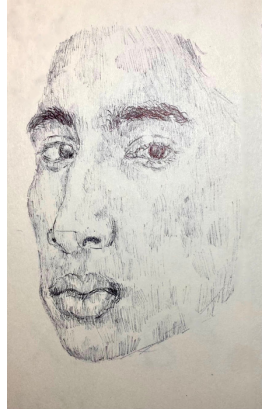
A rosebud of midwife dew drops splinter
her into the world and traveled along
in rivulets complexion likén swan
Her eyes heady storm clouds which the rivers
inside rusted-stripped bare by the frock clung
to milky skin a baptism complete
a liquid oath a rabbit to deceit
The fountain was poisoned do you not see
she poisoned Cee and B and me fester
in the cavity of the cavalier
Did my end mean naught alone in debris
the blesséd bloated and you the jester
the bitter end's forever lost my dear.



Glimpses

By Alex Ocon





Untitled

By Anonymous

i used to look in the mirror and know everything about myself. i had every ringlet curl memorized and i knew the story behind each scar. i knew how my ponytail was always a little too far to the left and how my baby hairs would fall across my face casting a microscopic shadow by my ears. i counted all my freckles and knew by heart how my face looked when i smiled. it was all there, encrypted in my brain like second nature.

i always thought it was funny that there was small sticker on my mirror that lined up perfectly with the center of my forehead, making it look like
i had a small black heart imprinted.

now, i catch my reflection in the same shiny mirror of the house i'm still growing up in. my ringlet curls have flattened into subtle waves and the stories are long forgotten, those thoughts being replaced by more productive ones. my ponytail is neatly aligned in the center of my head and my baby hairs are pulled tight against my scalp leaving no room for the shadows they once casted. my freckles are fading and it's been a long time since i've smiled for real.

the little black heart is long gone, leaving only the smallest white dot of paper, that now lines up with my stomach. a shadow of what was once there.

i'm a stranger in my own body.

If I Could Have Just One More Moment

By Mea Muricken

It was the last few days of my third-grade year before I would head out into summer.

As everyone went around the class sharing their plans for the summer, I sat there wishing I could go to cool places like them. My heart started to beat faster, sweat started to drip down my forehead and back. I didn't want to share where I was going. I still remember a few nights before that moment, when my parents got a spontaneous call from back home. The call carried the good news of my cousin getting married, and the immediate order of my grandparents eagerly asking us to visit. Kavya...Kavya, I broke out of my daze as the teacher persistently called me. I got up from my seat, as my heart thumped in my ears. I was too embarrassed to tell them I was going to India and wanted to fit in with my classmates, so I told them I was going to Disneyland. After the deceitful words spilled out of my mouth, all my friends looked at me with a mediocre look. I didn't understand, I thought it was a cool place to go for vacation.

Sooner than I knew it, we were off on a plane ride to India. We landed in Coimbatore, and as soon as I put my foot out of the airport, the humid heat rushed through my body. My eyes sought for my family, while I clinged to my mother's hand. Then out of nowhere, I was swept up with a huge hug from my uncles and aunts. My parent's eyes all teared up quickly, as they hugged and greeted each other. We all entered the huge tempo van, everyone talked, sang songs, and caught up on life. At dawn, we reached my grandparent's house. It was huge and mainly made out of timber, something that I had never seen before. Decorations were all up for my cousin's wedding. Beautiful yellow and orange marigolds were

hung all over the frames of the house. My grandparents came running, kissing me everywhere, not letting me go until I pulled away. Inside there was a huge open space in the middle of the room to let the rain drain, and the rooftops were flat so that chilies and other spices could be dried in the blazing sun. After we settled in, and unpacked our clothes, dinner was served. We sat around, and I saw unique dishes all native to my culture. However, they all ate with their hands, something that was very difficult for me. Seeing me struggle, my patti (maternal grandmother) came over and offered to feed me. Slightly embarrassed, I refused, but my other cousins came running to ask for a bite. I sat there dumbfounded, and forcefully gave in. Looking back at it, it felt very special, as if I could feel all the love, protection, and adoration from her, but I never understood it then. Later as we got ready for bed, we set up mats around the floor to lie on during the night. One side was all the women, and the other side was all the men. I slept in the middle of my mom and patti, and for once I found this comfort that I didn't feel when I had arrived.

The next day, our preparations started for my cousin's wedding. We all first went to the gold shop to get gifts and jewelry for the bride. She tried and took off numerous necklaces and earrings, eventually, I gave up counting. We also went through countless decoration shops and sweet shops looking for the precise and perfect items for her wedding. I came back home exhausted, and to make it worse it was raining heavily with a cool breeze that sent shivers down my back. Anyhow, like always, my thatha (maternal grandfather) and patti knew how to make any situation better. They came close to me with a warm steaming cup of some type of brown liquid. The aroma of the drink was too convincing, so I took a sip. In an instant, a soothing spice kicked in the back of my throat and warmed my body. I looked up at her and asked, "Patti what is this?" She told me that it was her special masala chai, made with black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, and other spices. Again, I didn't think much of it then, neither did I acknowledge it, but undeniably I felt something special.

As usual, my family sat around after dinner to talk about politics and comedic childhood stories of my aunts and uncles. That day out of the blue, my thatha called me over. He smiled and motioned for me to come sit on his lap. I sat, and with an earnest look he said, "I want to tell you a few folklores that my parents and grandparents told me." I felt his eager anticipation as he waited for my response, so I agreed quickly. The stories were elaborate with hidden morals and interesting characters. I couldn't help myself but to be intrigued. Slowly, without knowing it, I fell asleep in his arms.

It was two days before the wedding, and it was the traditional custom of putting mehndi on the bride and female cousins. All the aunts and close female family friends sang songs of the bride and groom, both happy and sad. It was my turn to have the mehndi applied. I stretched out my hand towards the applier. In a few seconds, she quickly created an intricate design. I was astonished and nodded happily to her in approval.

The day of the wedding came sooner than I expected, and all the women prepped the bride for the day. Initially, it was boring, so I occupied myself with something else to do. However, when they started applying the haldi (turmeric paste) to the bride, it caught my attention. I slowly crept beside my mom and asked her why we were applying haldi to her face and body. She laughed and said, "Kavya, it's so that the bride is radiant and beautiful on her wedding day." I took all the information in but still pondered. Later the bride was bathed and dressed in traditional South-Indian bridal wear. She wore all the jewelry we picked out together as a family and looked prettier than any bride I had ever seen. Eventually, everyone left the room to prepare for the wedding departure. It was just me and my cousin. As I sat there quietly, I heard unexpectedly, sniffles and quiet sobbing coming across the room. I went close to my cousin and offered her a tissue. Instead, she pulled me close and hugged me for a long time. With huge sighs and sobs, she said, "I'm going to miss you all deeply." Surprisingly, my eyes teared up as well. At that moment, I realized how much I took for granted the time I had with

my family. We hugged for as long as we needed too. Eventually before anyone could see us, we wiped our tears, smiled at each other, and set forth for the wedding. The wedding was beautiful and I let myself enjoy and embrace every moment of it.

It was the following day and we planned to head back home. I didn't want to leave! I had finally started to appreciate the smallest and greatest things I had experienced on this trip. As I was dragged to the airport, I deeply desired if I could have just one more moment to drink my patti's special masala chai and sit on my thatha's lap to hear his extravagant folklore stories. I thought to myself, how I should have treasured those moments with greater meaning. We arrived home, and I longed to go back next summer.

Inside Out

By Luna Romo



Twirl

By Luna Romo



Mrs. Marshall

By Nysa Sarkari

Trigger Warning: Mentions of Sexual Assault

You waltz into my starry eyes, I fall.
Your soothing charm is too much to deny.
Your black-white leather brogues, they catch my eye.
The Lion, Lamb befriends, naive and small.
“To be or not to be,” to me, you call.
Euphoniously to my heart’s young sigh.
The saccharinity, the cloying high!
I’d rather that I hadn’t been at all.
My life’s adorned with lavish lies of fear,
Of promises that “comfort reconciles.”
What right had *you* to simply disappear
While *I* fell victim to your hellish wiles?
Our rings, reminders of that night, so clear,
Of you, the king, and I, the one defiled.

Rot

By Jessica Sami

Echoes of music notes swarm through my brain like flies, submerging themselves in crevices and multiplying by the dozens to transpose through my infested body. My vision fades in and out of focus as I stare at the cracked layers of peeling wallpaper etching shadows across the ragged floor. Hypnotized, my drunken mind whispers as I close my eyes, sinking into the soft, swaying river of the vibration humming in my ears. I stay there, lulled by the dramatic frequencies, the change in pitch, and the eventual absence as the song finishes and I'm left with an unbearable silence.

My eyes spring open. The startling silence jolts my hazy mind into motion. I blink drowsily, coherent thoughts starting to form. I need to feed the cat. But the next song starts to play its intoxicating, mesmerizing melody and my brain goes quiet, melting into mush-

“And it stretches out again...”

My throat swallows.

“And it seems I didn't win...”

My heart leaps a beat.

“I think I'll rest a while...”

My pace jumps, then slows to a deathlike rhythm.

“So nice here on the tiles...”

I collapse.

I rub my eyes open. I have no knowledge of what time it is, and I don't care. I live in an endless stream of time, ever-flowing and drowning. My stomach grumbles. A song reaches its climax and then abruptly dies in my ears. The next starts to play. An endless loop.

I withdraw my comatose legs from their confines of my web of blankets. I tip over the edge of a half-empty soda can laying at the foot of my bed, spilling the amber liquid across the crusted gray carpet. I know the ants will come. They always do.

I stumble to my feet, suddenly hit with a wave of dizziness that leaves me staggering back. My thighs hit the bed and I'm back down. Again. Again.

“Oh, but I don't know what's real...”

Exhaustion weighs me down, a stone settling in my stomach and dragging me down to the earth.

“Once in a while... you make me laugh...”

I feel a sudden rush of anguish, drowning me in an excruciating flash of misery.

“And I'll sleep tomorrow... when you walk away...”

I groan, my trembling hands gripping my face, tearing my eyes out of their hollow coffins. Blurry images appear in the blacks of my eyes as I writhe, movies passing in mere moments, finite films finishing in the passing of a second. A scratched voice demanding a drink. A raised hand descending into my vision. Angry shouts increasing in volume and melting together in a symphony of splenetic screams. A glimpse of a smile from what once was. And that's all I need. It sustains me. The image of her, plastered in my head like a missing poster to a pole, always

in the back of my mind. My eyes fly open.

The cracked-open blinds of my dusty window betray a glimpse of light amidst the pitch darkness. The crescent moon. I take this as a sign. I take a deep breath. I draw my worn feet out of the tangled mess of blankets. I swing my feet over my bed. I wobble on my unsteady feet. The dizziness consumes me but I stand my ground. I take a firm step forward. A new song plays in my aching ears.

“All of this turbulence wasn’t forecasted, apologies from the intercom...”

SONG LIST:

“Casualty” by Snake River Conspiracy

“When You Sleep” by my bloody valentine

“Last Words of A Shooting Star” by Mitski

Seeing the World Through a Child's Eyes

By Natalie Lesnau



Girlhood

By Anonymous

Trigger Warning: Mentions of Sexual Assault

Under the guise of kindness did you hide.
Lurking, stalking, biding your depraved time.
Blessed form spoiled by sordid crime, was
A premature consummation implied?
Once a sacred shrine was my flesh, 'till you
Stole the Girlhood from 'tween my "nubile" thighs.
Fervently wishing to bid you adieu,
The seeds you sowed will fore'er leave me blue.
Knowing full well the depth of my despair,
You crafted a means meant to disparage,
Asking a hopeless soul, beyond repair,
"Miss, may I have your hand in this marriage?"
Trapped, I remain. It is your deed I bear.
This life of mine, you wonder? A nightmare.

You Did Not Say

By Anonymous

How dare you.
How dare you saunter your glittering effervescence across the green-
stained cupula
Not yet narrow with suspicion
Light peaking through the borealis
And the silt of trust still to float atop the bay

How dare you pour honeyed appellations into my ears
Trickling their unassuming warmth in a wave of sweet suffocation
Only to crystallize still coating every ridge and train track.

I will sit alone, pick in hand
moments. seconds. minutes. hours. days. weeks.
chipping away the syrup that drizzled past ur resin-covered lips
without leaving a single pearl for you to press between the scrapbook
pages

You did not say.
You did not say that your well of sentiment was no more than the
shallow puddle of fleeting rain
in the winter cold.
that my permafrost coated complexion would drink so deeply.
The water expired.
the memory has not.

You in a pinstripe suit
the spotlight elucidating your countenance chiseled in the most
convincing beam
the crowd of fools weeps for you
our leading man

and I at the front throw the greatest number of roses

the thorns kiss the inside of my thumbs
the fish hook ensnares your gilded grin
and I use the whisper of reciprocity along the string
to pull you to me
cutting my hands to bloody ribbons with the effort

Woof

By Charlie Holt



An Elegy

By Anonymous

he wore green to His own funeral.

brackish suspended
in its anguished conquest
to slice across the lines of smile crafted
with peacocking precision

The shift from water to ice and back again
mirrored

The pattering feet of seductress Future
Or her Sadist lover
Make but a difference

when the reigns are fisted firmly in another's hand

the skin of lilted birds
a Voice of creamy violets
her lover's embrace released the mustachioed mediocrity
of culprit

she smiled Daisily down from the pedestal
erect from his own flesh
as he sat expectantly in the chalk outline beside it
and waited for her to start cutting

his weeping affection stained green to red

I Hate That Question

By Anonymous

Where did my happy girl go?

I hate that question

Did she burn out with every candle on the cake?

Was she forced out by her ever expanding surroundings??

Was she pushed down so low that she doesn't show up anymore?

I hate that question

She's here, she's tired, she's trying