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The Lighter, 1958-2019

Department of English

Spring 2021

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Valparaiso University

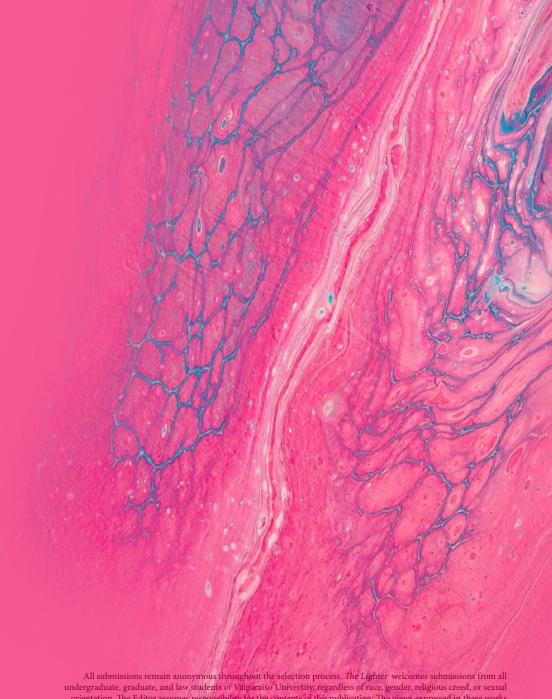
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Looking back at old issues of *The Lighter*, I'm surprised by how different they seem. Older issues are rectangular, or completely in black & white, or feature the pieces separated out by genre. They're not poorly designed, by any means, just different. And yet, simultaneously, they have many things in common: they're based around student work, touch on current issues, and demonstrate the relationships between creators and their art.

All of the pieces within this issue are different too. The works across these pages come from many different individuals and vary in medium and genre; from the collage collection (Love in the Face of) to *The Lighter's* first play in my time here, "The Promise Train". Each piece brings forth a different message or meaning, evokes a different feeling. The black and white framing of "Jack Meyer, Pensive in Resignation" elicits a different response than the brushstroke and bright colors of "Suns Out, Bugs Out" or the visceral, verbal imagery of "coda". And yet, despite their differences, each of these pieces demonstrates something similar.

All of these pieces — the poems and prose and plays and photography and art — they all embody the immense creativity that exists on this campus; the creativity that exists in the minds and hearts of young people. These pieces, and their container, represent the hard work and efforts of many. They are the potential and the product of creative collaboration.

This is my last issue of *The Lighter*. And I can confidently say that my involvement in this organization has been one of the many highlights of my time at Valpo. This magazine has allowed me to foster my own love for literature and art. To test that love, to watch it grow. That love is different now than it was when I started. And yet it, too, is the same. It is rooted in the immense passion I have for the creativity of others. And it is shared across each and every issue of *The Lighter*, dating back to the organization's inception in 1954.

This Spring 2021 issue, Inez, is different. She is different in design and content from every other issue that has come before her. She differs especially from her brother Isaiah. And yet they are twins, a pair. Inexplicably connected by the repeated names that mark their pages, by the influences that shape the pieces they showcase, and the forms they take. By the common wish to celebrate the arts. Inez, Isaiah, and every preceding issue are different. But they are all *The Lighter*.





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a storm is coming



Wolf In Sheep's Clothing



Given Lemons

I didn't expect fruit when the tree we planted finally took root. We celebrate as it stretches skyward, digging

its heels deep into the earth. Its health marked in fanned palms of green, arms branching outwards as if to mirror you

embracing me, ribs settled into the crooks of your elbows. Then suddenly globes of gold spring forth; our tree becomes

a home to sunflower-yellow. I insist on pulling one free, severing stem from stippled skin, and convince you to give

me a boost. Grasping fingers encircle pebbled pigment, twisting until it nestles into a cupped palm. The sun

finally in hand, you let me down. We lock wild eyes as I take the first bite, acid filling my mouth.

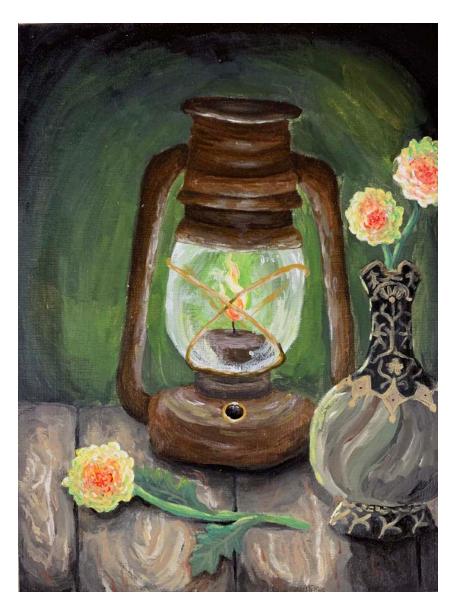
Bad Connection



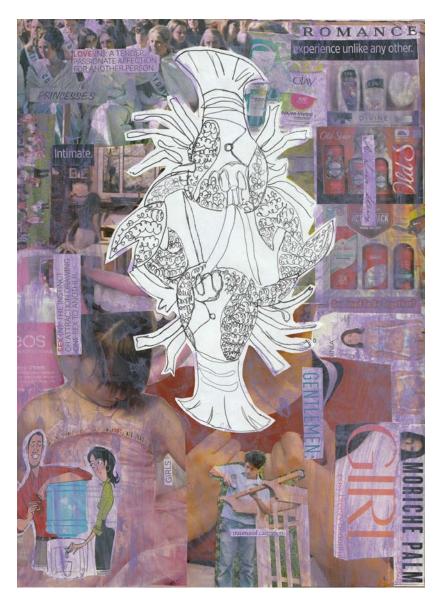
Invasion Imminent



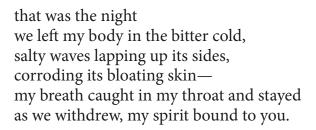
POV: You Are A Moth



(Love in the Face of) Gender



rose-colored body bag



i laughed when you swept me off my feet, loving how light my translucence made me, but breathlessness turned to choking, and here you are with a hand on my throat and a stunning smile as i turn blue.

now my fingertips, trembling over your skin, no longer expect to feel the hum of blood flowing underneath. i think you died a long time ago, and then you killed me too.

there is no escape when death was only the beginning, i want out of this mess, this murder—

but as soon as your lips smear across my collarbone,

i crumple all over again.

Fatti a Mano



Suns Out Bugs Out



boating

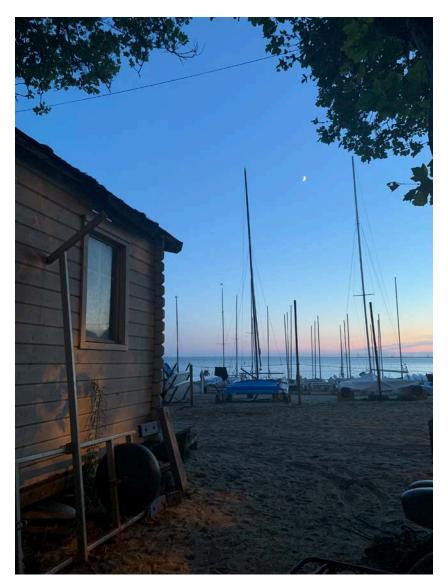
i sneeze blood clots, but the red never flows as freely as the sea i see before me now. no water moves as urgently in one motion toward its clearly-marked destination, murky only in shade of brown-red, reminiscent

of the way a tree oozes sap when bleeding. a lizard's back foot clings to the dead branch above my head, a metronome chiming against hollow bark. nothing looks more real than the willow tree's yellow wisps under artificial spotlight—

footprints shadowed in the surroundings, a quartered moon as guidance to the border. the pieces of the stars have gone missing amidst the flowing fog. we're surrounded now, stepping onto the push-boat to cross

the open waters. the light at the front of the vessel is dimming as waves lap the hull, guilt flooding against the heavy wood. the water flows quickly, pulling us along as we drop down waterfalls to that distant sand, pitch-black and calling out for me.

Nautical Twilight

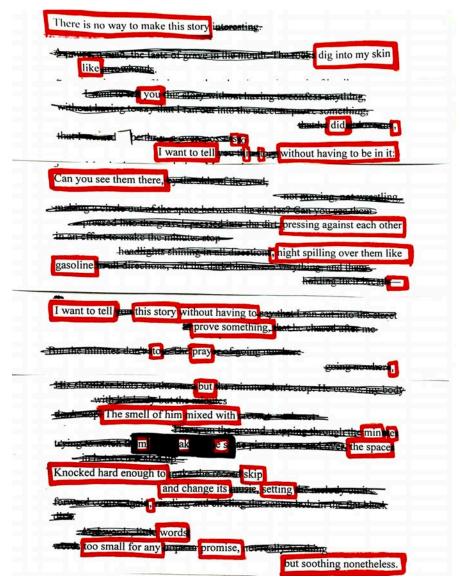


Violence of the Blue Jay



Tell me we're dead and I'll love you even more.

Blackout poem of Richard Silken's "The Torn-Up Road"



a murder of one.

oh, how i wish you could see me now smoke curling under the moonlight praying to you somewhere inside the moon the matriarchs who no longer know me but i know you

ghosts
wrapped in the curtains of the blue morning
coaxing me from bed
on days when wings fail
under the weight of the sky crashing.

you whisper in my ear hopeful hymns calling to the angels somewhere in my cavernous heart hoping something will save the soul from the burden sleeping underneath skin.

saviors are a funny thing i know you would tell me the light behind my eyes is the light of the spirit in the sky.

but you and i both know my mother is the only believer i have hidden within.

i glimpse beneath my reflection and see ancient phantoms buried within my bones begging whatever remnants of me that lie in wait to wake "do not die without bite," you say. what i would give to lay down and surrender without a fight.

but i'm afraid i just don't have it in me.
i carry within the heart i bury
voices of witches and saints and sinners and cigarettes long past burning
and if you could see me now
you would yell it from the mountains.

i am the coming of the chaos lying in wait the storm beneath the sea the wings beating that stir demons from their rest the echo that brings with it destruction of the mortal fear the violent color that could tear a man from his throne.

blood is thicker than the water of thieves, those who steal our hearts right from our chests thinking surely the war is won a notch in the belt we will die by the sword while men sip a wine from which you drink to see if you will survive or perish at the grail.

your ghosts whisper to me secrets only i can hear secrets of the wine we drink to bring soldiers to their knees oh, if we were only a body meant to be appreciated by another.

you sit over my back now tempting the chalice to my lips singing the holy songs of the women i am but a piece of a patchwork creature of past matron spirits stronger than any whisky.

A MURDER OF ONE. | KYLYNN SMITH

my voice may tremble but i carry you within me for now i crumble under the weight but into your arms i collapse for no woman's soul will fall with the strength of her ancestors waiting to carry her.

until i can walk
until i can run with my wolves
until i can come up for air beneath the sea welling behind my eyes
and realize that i am not my own
i am you
and her
and her
and you too.
i am merely composed of the stardust from which my matron saints have allowed me
and i too will become a spirit calling in the wind one day.

but today is not the day that i will disappear into the hillside sunset my own hand the fatal blow

for today, i will listen to the ghosts whispering such sweet songs. ghosts of my grandmother and dear aunt and mother's wild spirit from days past the ghosts that will ensure my heart carries me until my last days until the skies call me home and the spirits of the moon are satisfied that my heart belongs to the wolves i carry within.

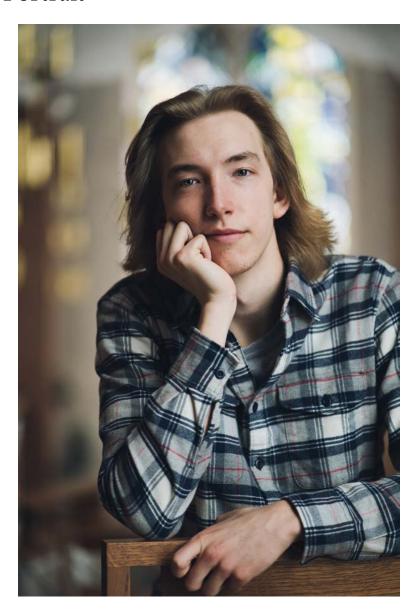
my angels, may you carry me home one day.

but for today, sing to me from the night sky outside my window. while the smoke frames my face and brings from the tears not sorrow but the eternal call of my spirit's coming home.

Every Woman's Nightmare



The Stained Portrait



4pm Gregg



Self Portrait



Who I Am Living For

There's this person in my head, an ideal. Someone who I'd like to be: A woman with another to love and an unashamed sense of self. She has works of art that decorate her skin in an endlessly growing collection:

Script scrawled across her collar bones peeks from under her shirt, "Eloi, Eloi lema sabachthani." "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" For the sake of humanity, God turned away.

A reminder of all the things she never said on her wrist, "Halfway to Asphodel." Tell people how you feel when you have a choice or risk living without a voice.

A metaphorical war on her back; her past literally behind her. Safely gone but not forgotten; remember and move on.

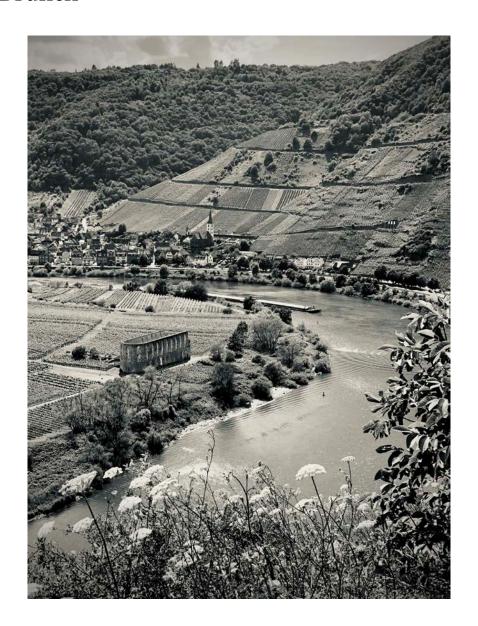
A picture of a cat, any cat, on her calf; an adorable reminder of what she loved more than herself, standing on the same foot. The beloved cat: her equal. This idyllic self is not only rooted in physicality, But also sprouts from a vocational calling: Patients rely on her as their trusted shrink; some call it professional secret keeping-something she's always had an aptitude for. And the only thing she ever imagined doing.

She is bold and honest, calm and collected, but her true self shines in the quieter moments. Confessions, barely audible, come in whispers when nothing matters but the present and future. Her greatest advice? Find someone worth living for,

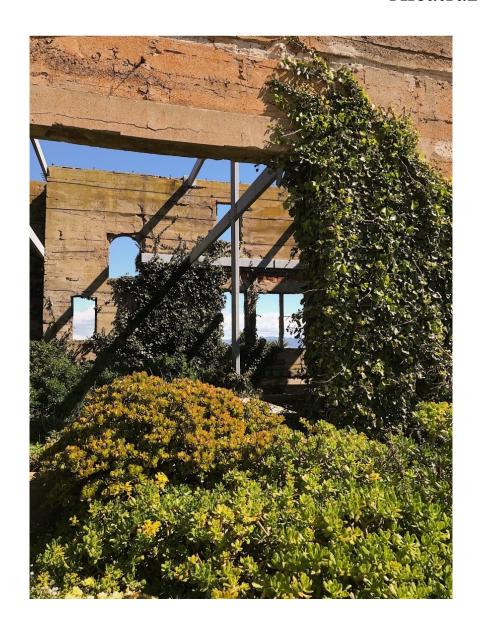
but make sure it's yourself.



Summer Brunch



Alcatraz's Garden



Absence



Brave the Dark

The mind is a forest, dark and strange. It has neither bound nor limit. No map has ever traced its form and there are few footpaths in it.

Scant more than none dare brave the gloom beyond the simple clearing, bereft of trees where humanity resides waiting, wondering, fearing.

Yet everyone can hear the call from that yawning, hallowed wood, to take up arms and enter there as their heart knows that they should.

Those who heed the primal summons and brave that vast unknown soon feel eyes upon their back, and find they are not alone.

For there are gods within those woods, far older than the trees.

Monsters too, of every sort, that slink through the black with ease.

Many who meet them perish there, or are driven mad with fear. If one will triumph in that place, this counsel they must hear:

These ancient shades can be bargained with. Some even offer aid, and guide the way along your quest if an offering is made.

They lighten the steps of those who note their warnings and pay heed. And others still lead you to things you did not know you need.

Wisdom can be found out there, strength and courage too. These things, and more, you'll surely need if you're ever to make it through.

And when you return to that sheltered clearing and remember the others there, you will recall the terror you learned of which they are not aware.

The gods and beasts out in the woods are not bound within that place. There will come a time in all our lives when we meet one face-to-face.

Without the boons found in the woods we will be unprepared, and wail while we are whisked away, "if only I had dared!"

So steel yourself and venture in to the darkness of your mind. For it is there, and nowhere else, true bravery you will find.

Manchester Streets



(Love in the Face of) Capitalism



Surprise Lillies

Appear to have sprung from the soil, but bloom softly within moonlight, baptized in the dawning with dew.

They seem to some as frivolous, sprouting here and there without cause, on roadsides and sidewalk edges, judged beneath man's lecherous leer.

Naked Ladies, virgin pink and clustered closely, shield each with solidarity afraid of being plucked or crushed.

Silken petals appear fragile, but mark only half the beauty. Deeply rooted, with great, green stalks, they stand against the pestering sun.

little joys



"This is All I am and All I'll Ever be"

-Herb Kazzaz <u>BoJack Horseman</u> Season 1, Episode 11 "Downer Ending"

My journal entries often started the same way: staring at a blank page, wondering what quote to begin the entry with, wondering what to write about. Given that my entries were mostly about something that happened that day, something my brain was still processing and working through, I'm not sure what is and isn't worth reflecting on. I'd love for there to be a cool takeaway. Something for the reader to carry with them, maybe even something for them to ruminate and write their own entry on. One of my best friends, Adrian, poses pointed reflective questions every night at midnight. He calls it Midnight Madness. We've fostered our friendship through these late-night, often vulnerable, lines of inquiry. A question I both asked and offered him to ask others is, "What themes show up in your life time and time again?"

This question came to mind when I was reflecting on my writing. I wrote a novel called *Watching the Sun Die* (currently needing

revisions). When given the chance to write about *anything*, I wrote about a depressed, twenty-something guy facing incredible tragedy who sought therapy and got a little bit better. That synopsis obviously leaves out a lot of details. My point being: my life, for better or worse, seems to revolve around mental illness, suicide, and therapy. Whether that's me becoming a therapist who has dealt with depression and suicidal ideation, or the fact that I attract broken people, it always seems to come back to those three things.

There's a question: Do I attract broken people or is everyone broken in their own way? Do they recognize the darkness behind my eyes that they see in their own reflection? Or am I simply a kind-hearted person whose demeanor screams NON-THREATENING?

Shifting into *Therapy Mode*, while thinking of people as broken may not be inherently harmful, it doesn't give weight to the holistic human experience. We are not things that are broken because that would imply fixing us would mean making us "good as new." Instead, we are puzzles: not broken, but in pieces. Effort is required to put ourselves together so that we can become the people we want (in my case, *need*) to be. The events in

our pasts, as traumatic as they might be, are essential to making you and I the people we are today. They are the borders of the puzzle; the incident that inspires change, or emphasizes the need for help. The completed puzzle is your ideal self. Such a difficult puzzle is easier when you have someone to help you even if they're only acting as a second set of eyes. It's okay if you need more help than that. As a therapist, I want to be the one to point out the shades and shapes of pieces to help create the picture (through therapeutic exploration and selfreflection)."I know you've been fixated on that piece, but this one might work over here," I would say. What's important is that the puzzle comes together in the end.

I attract not broken, but hurting people. People who think the traumatic border of the puzzle is all that they are. I promise their problems don't burden me (you are not a burden), but they insist the border is an uncrossable line. They keep me at arms length when they're at their lowest. I know it's easier to keep people out than to let them in. I do the same thing, I get it, but that doesn't stop it from hurting; that doesn't stop me from feeling like I'm letting them down. Even if we sit in silence so you're not alone with the one person you'd love nothing more than to snuff out of existence: yourself; even if it's the same problem you've

been struggling with for what feels like your whole life; even if, like my dad after too many drinks, you tell me the same story I've heard a hundred times before; even if you feel like you can't make it through a sentence without breaking down, let me listen. Let me be there. Let me help. You are part of my puzzle. I have an ingrained *need* to help people because the idea of a future full of helping people gave me something to live for. If my past doesn't serve a purpose, then it's just needless pain. I mean, it made me who I am, but I'd like to justify its existence more than that.

It's moments like this where I realize clinical psychology is the only thing I could possibly do with my life. It's moments like this where I realize those themes of my life are always on my mind. It's moments like this where I realize this is the very thing I needed to write about today.

Double Archway



dusk

stalked by a figure i know to be my own, a stunning mirror image down to the motion still moving as sunlight leaves my cheekbone.

for all my life i've never known a clone as night approaches i can't shake the notion: stalked by a figure i know to be my own.

this ghastly thing must understand my gravestone as though i was studied-creeping devotion, still moving as sunlight leaves my cheekbone.

the apparition behind wants me to atone for deeds that don't cause me emotion, stalked by a figure i know to be my own.

the ghost has followed since departing my throne, follows yet still as my soul crosses ocean, still moving as sunlight leaves my cheekbone.

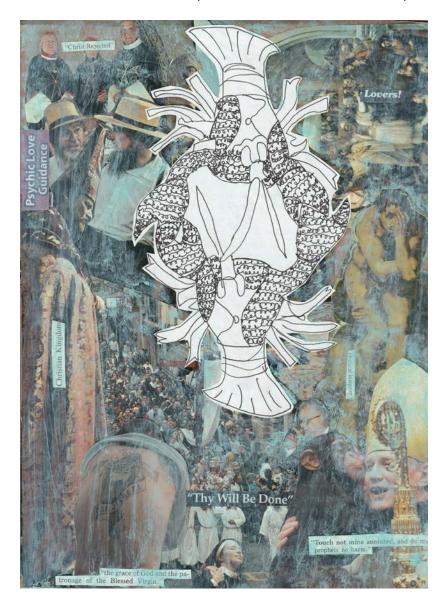
this creeping, beastly thing against me, alone—i've got no defense, not a single potion. stalked by a figure i know to be my own, still moving as sunlight leaves my cheekbone.



A Humble Organ Player



(Love in the Face of) Christendom



A Moment for Developing

We are new, all smiles, wishing to cement ourselves in something physical, eternal. One click and we're captured,

perfectly preserved, yet left to wait for development. Steady fingers receive ejecting film, a window of indistinguishable

black. From past experience, you know to keep us hidden; darkness lets the colors come through strongest, though I can't

help my own impatience, itching to watch our new world progress into existence. And insecurity, unvoiced, arises: whether or not we'll emerge faithfully, as intended, or if we weren't quite framed correctly. Yet my fears dissipate in the excitement reflected

on your face; our printed piece of time and space, wholly processed and finally in hand. Peering through the looking glass, I meet

our younger selves forever cast in chemicals; my once blank and vacant chest now fully saturated in our perpetual laughter.

Reflections



the speed of light



Lost in the Lights



buried in water

inspired by Buried in Water by Dead Man's Bones and Don't Swim by Keaton Henson

I heard you spoke to davy jones said you're going to use me as bait pockets full of stones lapping at your shoes, the ripples I will make

in the depths, I am baptized submerged till seaweed strokes my skin sinking down, I close my eyes this is me paying for your sin

don't swim as it fades from blue to black don't swim I am never coming back

stark ice water, pull me down they don't bury bodies of the drowned.

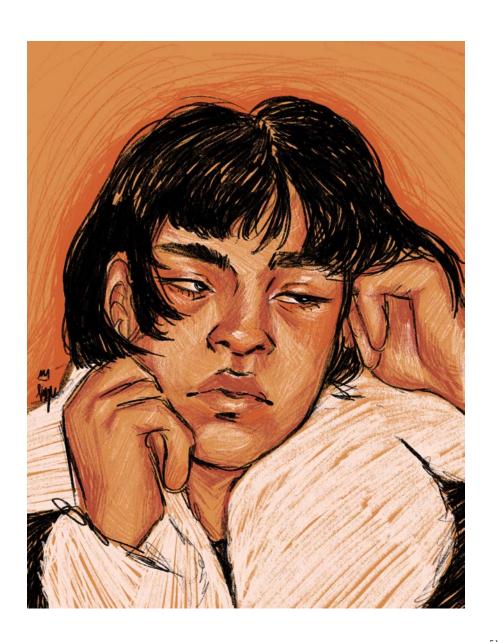
ants at the beach



Seeing double



Dazed



The Promise Train

Characters:

LIZ: female. 25.

MAGGIE: female. 25. ALEX: male. 28.

SETTING: In a moving train. TIME: Sunny mid-afternoon.

(The lights rise revealing people on a train minding their business. The train comes to a stop making everyone shuffle. People exit the train while other people enter. LIZ runs on in a frantic hurry wiping tears from her eyes. After looking around nervously, she sits in an empty chair alone. She pulls out her phone from her purse and starts to make a call but quickly stops. She wipes more tears away. After a moment of hesitation, she makes a call.)

LIZ

Hi mom. (*Beat*) Yeah, I'm fine. (*Beat*) I'm coming home. (*Beat*) No mom I <u>am</u> fine. I'm just coming home. (*Beat*) No. We got into a fight. It's done and over with. (*Beat*) No, I am not going back. Ever. (*Beat*) This time is different. I mean it when I say that I am not going back to him. (*Beat*) I am on the train now. Can you pick me up at the station? (*Beat*) Thank you. I'll see you soon. Bye.

(LIZ hangs up the phone and looks around nervously. The train stops causing everyone to shuffle. People exit the train while more people enter. A man with a black sweatshirt and hood up enters. LIZ sees him and begins to panic until he walks past her exiting the stage. LIZ tries to catch her breath as she wipes tears away.)

LIZ

Breathe. (Beat) Just breathe. It wasn't him. He's not here.

(LIZ pulls open her phone and starts to make a call but quickly shuts her phone off.)

LIZ

Stop. I can't just call him anymore.

(More people enter and exit the train. The train is mostly full. MAGGIE enters looking for an empty seat and sits next to

LIZ. At that moment LIZ receives a call. LIZ stares at the phone questioning whether to answer it or not.) **MAGGIE** Excuse me, ma'am? Your phone. LIZ Oh. Sorry. (LIZ turns the phone off. After a few seconds, it rings again causing LIZ to turn it off. It rings a third time. LIZ shuts it completely off and puts it in her purse.) **MAGGIE** Someone is pretty popular. LIZ Oh. No, you see it was my boyfriend. Um. Ex-boyfriend. MAGGIE I'm sorry. LIZ Don't be. We just got into a little fight. I'm actually headed home now. We live... we used to live together for almost 2 years. **MAGGIE** Sorry. Breakups are hard. Especially after being together for so long. I know what you're going through. LIZ Well living with him is just as hard. MAGGIE I get that. When I used to live with my boyfriend, he would always leave the toilet seat up. And he would always leave dirty dishes in the sink. It was so gross. LIZ

That sounds like heaven compared to Alex.

MAGGIE

He's that messy?

LIZ

His emotions are. (*Long pause*) Never mind all this.

MAGGIE

Emotions? Is he aggressive?

LIZ

Nevermind.

(They sit in silence as the train stops causing everyone to shuffle. People enter and people exit.)

MAGGIE

I know it really isn't any of my business but why are you just now leaving him?

LIZ

We are fine. We just got into a little fight.

MAGGIE

Okay but I mean you don't seem to like him from what little I have heard. Why would you stay with him if you don't like him?

LIZ

I've left him before. He just finds me and brings me back to him. I always go back to him but not this time. I can't.

(MAGGIE struggles to find words.)

MAGGIE

I can help you-

LIZ

No, I don't think you can.

MAGGIE

What do you mean?

LIZ

You seem really nice and all which is why I don't want to drag you into this mess. It wouldn't be fair.

MAGGIE

You're not dragging me into anything. I volunteered to help you.

(LIZ wipes away the tears that have started again.)

LIZ

He would hurt you too.

MAGGIE

Look I am not going to let you go back to him.

LIZ

Why? You don't even know me.

MAGGIE

What's your name?

LIZ

Um, Liz.

MAGGIE

Well, Liz. I know enough to not let you go back to him.

 LIZ

He is really not even that bad. He doesn't mean to hurt me. He gets me flowers and he says sorry. Last time, he even paid for the surgery.

MAGGIE

Surgery?

LIZ

It's really none of your business so please leave me alone now.

the lighter | 54

MAGGIE

That is abuse. If he was sorry, he would have never touched you like that again. He only gives you flowers so you believe he does actually love you, which he doesn't. I bet he only paid for your surgery so you would feel like you had to stay with him since he did a big favor for you.

LIZ

That's not true.

MAGGIE

What do your friends think about Alex?

(LIZ is silent and sits uncomfortably)

MAGGIE

Does he not let you have friends? That is not okay for him to do.

LIZ

He just loves me and wants me to spend time with him.

MAGGIE

Liz that is abuse. You should hang out with whoever you want to hang out with. You should find someone who actually loves you and not just says they do so you don't leave them.

LIZ

It's just too hard.

MAGGIE

You said living with him is hard. Once you are free of him, it will become so much easier.

LIZ

I can't just free myself of him. He will find me.

MAGGIE

That's why I can help.

LIZ

I don't want to put you in that sort of danger. Alex is not the kind of guy you want to mess with. You don't want to fight against him.

MAGGIE

I can tell that you want to get away from him. I can see that you are scared and with some help, we can get you out of his grip.

LIZ

I just don't know how to go about this situation.

MAGGIE

I don't either but we will get through it together.

(Beat)

LIZ

Why do you want to help me?

MAGGIE (Pause)

Because I can tell it's bad. And although I just met you, I know you don't deserve this. I really feel as if I need to step in. You know? (*Beat*) My older sister was expecting a baby with her boyfriend. We were all so excited, including her. She has always wanted kids. But he um... He forced her to get an abortion. She didn't want to but he talked her into it. He talked her into dropping out of school and she actually gave up all her dreams for this guy who was so manipulative. One night she had the courage to call the police because he was super drunk and had a gun. It took her so much time to adjust to life without him but she did. She went back to school and got her business degree and opened up her own shop. She was able to better herself with him no longer in her life.

(The train stops causing everyone to shuffle. People exit and enter. There is a pause.)

LIZ

I'm the next stop.

MAGGIE

I'll go with you. You said you're going home? I'll walk with you to make sure you get back safely. We can look for a new place to stay where he won't find you. I will help you find that new place.

(MAGGIE reaches out and grabs LIZs hand.)
MAGGIE

We can get through this.

(After a pause, the train comes to stop causing everyone to shuffle. A man with a stern look waits outside at the station. LIZ sees him and freezes. MAGGIE stands up.)

MAGGIE

Are you ready?

LIZ

That's him.

MAGGIE

What?

LIZ

He is right there waiting for me. How did he beat us here?

MAGGIE

He's here?

(Beat)

LIZ

(Stands up)

Well, thank you. It was really nice talking to you.

MAGGIE

What? You're not getting off.

the lighter | 56

LIZ

I have too. Alex is right there waiting for me. He sees me.

MAGGIE

Do you remember what we talked about? He doesn't love you and he never will. I'm sorry but you can't get off the train. I can't let you.

(LIZ stares in fear at Alex debating what to do.)

MAGGIE

Sit down. Please. We are not getting off.

(After a long pause LIZ slowly sits down as the train starts

moving again.)

MAGGIE

We will get off at my stop. It will be fine.

(The phone goes off from inside the purse. LIZ pulls it out

and turns it off after a moment of hesitation.)

MAGGIE

It'll be okay. I promise.

LIZ

I'm scared.

MAGGIE

I know. It will be scary but I am here for you and we will get through this.

(Beat)

LIZ

What if he finds me?

MAGGIE

He won't. And if he does, I'll be with you.

LIZ

Promise?

MAGGIE

Promise.

(MAGGIE smiles at LIZ who after a second gives a slight

smile back. Stage fades to blackout)

Savannah Lit by Street Lights



Fiat Lux



Into the Kiln

It feels as if you've decided you're finished. Not so long ago, we sliced free a formless hunk of clay, meant to be our project. Months spent molding, diligent and interchangeable fingers pressing

into malleable medium, over and over until the proper shapes emerge. Some days were easy on our wrists, with minimal effort needed to maintain our piece. We improvised, no set sketch

in mind; instead letting the pleasure of sculpting guide us. A lack of reference brought forth challenges we couldn't plan for. Cracks appeared, earth split as it does, and we were left scrambling for slip

and wetted sponge. Despite those unforeseen conflicts, each minor wound was mended. Our work seemed deserving of continued attention, our hands meant to be busy far into the future. Yet soon you pried

our creation free from the table, and buried it deep in a sealed cell. Lid latched in place to contain burning heat, I felt our art fry. What would come from this oven would not be pliable soil, but instead hardened

stone; cemented in time and yet seconds away from a clumsy grip casting it forth into nothing more than a thousand scattered shards.

My chest aches with the loss, as if I too were left behind to solidify. Yet staring

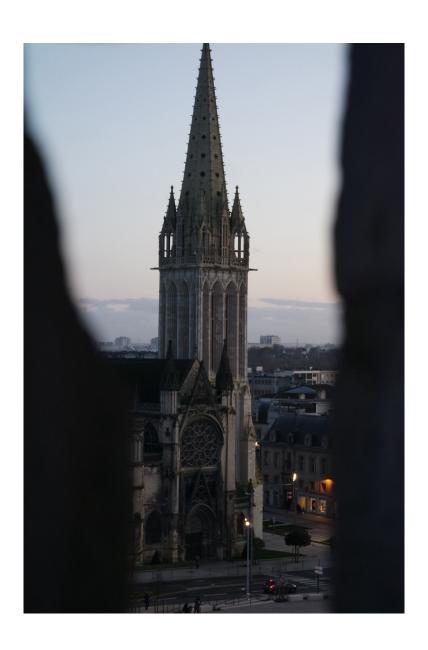
into sore and stained palms, remembering endless hours of labor and the need for continuous repair, I can't help but think we both wished to be finished; and while you lowered it in, perhaps I was the one with my hand on the door.



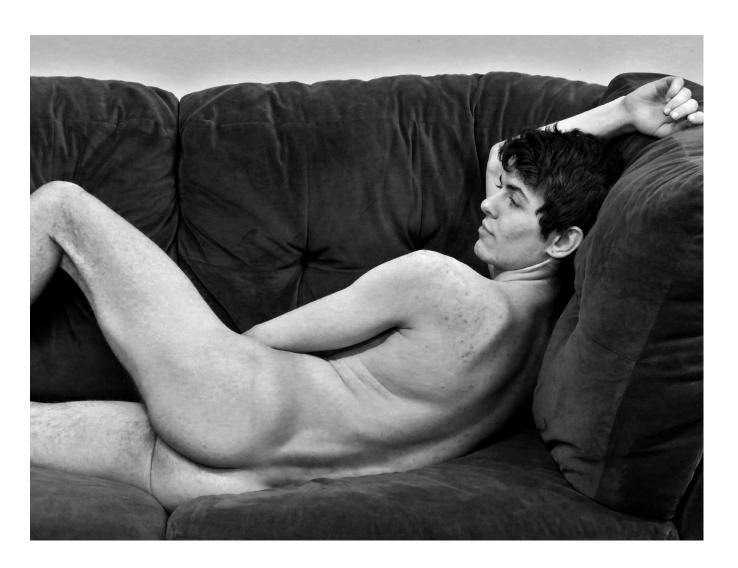


Too Much Feeling

just a peek



Jack Meyer, Pensive in Resignation



A Song for Emmett Till

Emmett died thousand times before And he's died a thousand more A south side boy, in the heart of the delta Left battered beat and torn

1955, a boy no more than fourteen Bye baby bye A whistle at a white lady, passing by Would spell the death of Emmett Till

They pulled him out of bed Shot him in the head The boy never stood a chance

They floated him down the river Only a ring upon his finger All for a whistle and a glance

Three days later washed up on the Tallahatchie They found the boy Two teeth, one eye The boy was cut from ear to ear

They shipped the body back home to mamie bradley She said the world needs to see what they done to my baby boy

While Emmett's body lie in an open casket A trial proceeded against the men who put him there

But witnesses were jailed Evidence had failed The all white jury agreed They set men free What a shame it is to be In the all White United States

I'd like to say it's different now, but the fact is it ain't Pigs are paraded as angels and supremacists as saints.

From Medgar Evers, to young Jacob Blake When will the oppression end in the white United States?

ARTIVISM JUDGE, EMILY NEUHARTH'S

ARTIVISM WINNER:

FROM THE ARTIST:

Growing up I remember my parents telling me the story of Emmett Till but something about this past year had me thinking of him again. Emmett's buried right by my home back in Chicago. I wrote this song in response to the murders of black men across our nation and just at the sad realization that we haven't come very far since Emmett's brutal murder in 1955.



THOUGHTS FROM THE ARTIVISM JUDGES



EMILY NEUHARTH

Emily earned degrees in Creative Writing and Christ College Humanities in May 2020. *The Lighter* was inseparable from her Valpo experience: from being assistant editor (to Michelé!), to leading *The Lighter*, to getting to witness wonderful new editors take the helm. Emily initiated the annual Artivism Contest during her first semester as editor and, although she hates to choose favorites of anything, it is what she is most proud of when looking back. Emily now works in the Products and Publishing department at McMaster-Carr (an industrial supply distributor) which is a testament to the flexibility of the liberal arts! She is unsure what the future holds, but believes that graduate school is likely and writing of some kind is certain.

EMILY'S THOUGHTS ON "A SONG FOR EMMETT TILL":

This poem folds multiple stories and many years into one song, connected by an unfortunate truth: "I'd like to say it's different now, but the fact is it ain't." The past four years, and especially this past year, have marked a historic period of brutal awakening for people across races. In response, this is "A Song For" unjust murders, painful awareness, and the fire of resistance. There is a shift in tone near the end, where the speaker evolves from listener of these passed-down songs to the singer themself— fighting for justice amidst their grief, a song of both lament and activism.

MICHELÉ STRACHOTA

Michelé Strachota is a 2018 Valpo grad with a degree in creative writing. Her favorite part of Valpo was *The Lighter*, which she was fortunate enough to be the Editor-in-Chief of for two years. It was important to her that *The Lighter* offered a place for creatives of all types to foster their art and relationships with one another. It certainly did so for her. At her last coffee house, she read the first pages of a short story which has since become a novel. Just two days ago, she received two requests from agents interested in more of her material. Cross your fingers for her and always take a chance on yourself.



MICHELÉ'S THOUGHTS ON "ORDER IS NOT JUSTICE":

The title alone is provoking. Artistically, I loved the visibility of the brush strokes, especially in the sky and fire. The contrast between the undisturbed blue and the black of the smoke really nailed the theme home. The piece approaches the fight against racism without reservation, and urges us all to do the same. What set "Order is Not Justice" apart was its accompanying explanation. The author weaves bits of history with emotional resonance and a powerful call to action. "Order is Not Justice" is informed and articulate, not afraid to be passionate and messy, and above all, active in its fight for justice.



ARTIVISM WINNER:

DOG JANOWIAK

FROM THE ARTIST:

Every major social movement heretofore has had its impediments. There are those against whom we struggle, yes. But the bigger roadblocks are and always have been those who profess outwardly to be in moral support of "the cause," but nonetheless "concerned," about "tactics," "messaging," or "timing." Martin Luther King, Jr, wrote in Letter from Birmingham Jail, "I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice."

If there is one message I would insist on taking as a lesson of past struggles, it is this: order is not justice. We ought not to mistake the disorder we saw this summer for injustice. The fight for justice has never been clean. From Jesus who flipped over the tables of the money-chargers in the temple, to Gandhi who could always point to Subhas Chandra Bose as the alternative to his nonviolence, and King himself, who could always point to Malcolm X as his own counterpart, the history of every social struggle is that none have

been won without some violence, somewhere. And most are not won at all.

The "violence" decried by the modern roadblock in the path to justice was even more laughable than the claims of the same ilk when they held back the civil rights movement of the 1960s, this time boiling down to "property damage," which, no matter how immoral and illegal, is a small price to pay for true justice.

King broke the law when he advocated the trespass of "whites-only" restaurant seating. But history proves him right. John Brown broke the law when he attempted to incite a slave insurrection. But history proved him right. Jesus broke the law and paid with his life, sentenced to the death of a disturber-of-the peace. Here we are today, faced with the same struggles, and faced with the same roadblocks. Minneapolis' third precinct is a beacon for justice, not order. And there can be no peace until there is justice everywhere. Order is not justice.

Order Is Not Justice



Vineyard Cruisin'



The Ride Home



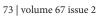
Blackened Gnosis



Spinning Webs

Doubt's needle-thin limbs, bent hard at harsh angles, stitch into my skin with each reaching step. Grand announcements made in irritation, migrating steadily across cracked elbows; it gifts me poison. Its gravel bits burrowing

deep; infection weaves through my bloodstream until home is found in scattered thumps. It buries my heart in strings of sickly silver moonlight; and I'm forced to carry with me an unwanted pseudo-sternum of contagious uncertainty.



Saturday Afternoon in The Cinque Terre



Saudade



pathway

"Se je sui fold, c'est mes domages." ("If I am a fool, it is my misfortune.")
-The Romance of the Rose

it's become second nature now to cover up my words and phrases as i speak. you never know what ghostly figure is watching, all shadow, to follow you into your not-quite-safety as you descend the steps to death's house.

words echo off empty yards, a house that's been deserted long ago. the cover that my effigy hides behind reminds of you, shrouded in darkness even as it tries to speak in the depths. this creature knows i follow whatever footsteps are in front-i figure

the right path is the known, and the figure does not disagree; every shelled house we pass on this journey seems to follow behind us, looming over, giving cover along the gravel walkway. they speak in my dreams, my imagination of you entering a new building, far away, the you i used to know only remnants of a figure that i shadowed. the buildings all speak in the deep earth, deep tones, each house sending meaning, short message, no cover from the rain. they know i cannot follow

their thoughts for long, no way to follow trains that don't lead directly to you. no time to find the footholds to cover as i flee that cloaked, long-hooded figure that gives chase to souls leaving the house of our world. who is left that will speak

when the waters below all try to speak out of turn? the ghost, which will follow as you walk, still, can float through house after house, no escape here: all you can do is attempt to ignore that figure, that ghast, find your ears to cover

up; he'll speak into the wind, and you must not follow the pictures he paints, figure a way out of that house against bright cover.

St. Louis from the Streetside



Nature's Embrace



The Tales a Tree Can Tell



Losing Sparrows



She, who thrives in the darkest parts of you.

"You cannot bury me," she whispers, slinking out of dirt and moss and rot, curving around fractured headstones, and over crumbling, unmarked graves,

"I am you; I'm in you."

She curls broken, skinless hands around your face, threads them through your hair.
The air is thick with her smell, with sulfur and putrid sweetness.

"We are one. Since the dawn. Since the first day."

Your feet slide as you stumble back, heart pounding, breath heaving in your chest, trembling limbs struggling to coordinate, to run.

You try to push her away, but your hands slide through her torso, through russet blood and spoiling guts, through curdling insides and out blue-patched skin.

She laughs and reaches out, clutching your fright cold arms, in a mockery of an embrace.

Your chest is stained and slick with her blood, and you can see your gory fingertips, peering out the back of her, slick from nail to forearm.

She caresses your face lovingly, and then she – starts to *melt*.

"No!" You scream, furiously striking liquid skin, nails digging into slippery, staunch flesh.

But your arms are not strong enough, and she cares not for your anguished screams, or your piercing cries and unceasing sobs.

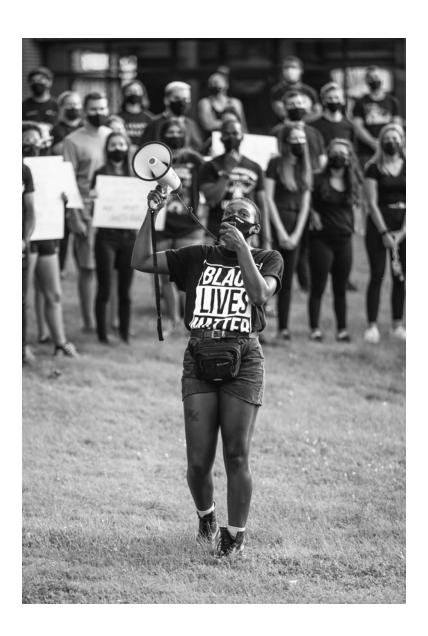
She only seeps into you. She seeps and seeps, until suddenly –

it's only you.

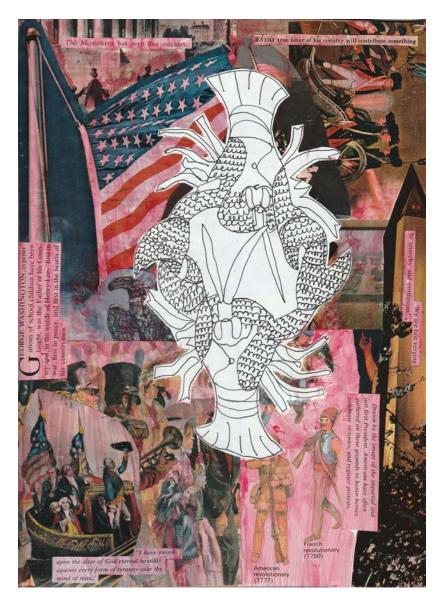
Skin split, flesh slogging, and rank with decay,

but only you.

Our Voice



(Love in the Face of) The State



"Dearest Goddess, please."

You are invoked.

Rise from crumbling ash and weakened roots. The World Tree has fallen but you must rise from its ripened fruits.

Mars is bright tonight. Fate is being spun in hot hands as the eyes of ghosts' gaze from the afterlife.

You are invoked.

She, who crafted Pandora's Box who crumbled Pompeii under her steps who shines brightest under summer's equinox

Whisperer into Muhammad's ear Inviter of both death and creation The Three-Headed, born from a cosmic tear.

I invoke you, Seven-Day Creator! Changemaker! Grief Killer! The Beginning! I invoke you!

Gluttoned on the blood of virgin sacrifice Empowered by those who plead your name thrice

The woman who sunk Atlantis who drug to its watery grave the Titanic

Killer of Aphrodite, drowned in her own foamed sea Slayer of Atlas, cut down by his knee

Invoked! You are *invoked* tonight under the waning moonlight

Your temples are full. Both sheep and goat have been culled in your honor

Your apostles are praying your prophets gaze upon empty skies it is time.

Dearest Goddess, *please*. Awaken, it is time.

Not a Temple



Early Morning Late Fall



Eclipse



The Rain Burned the Crows

Ember came into the world squealing, as thin as a twig and with skin as grey as the ashblanket of the ground. It was a few unknown years after the end of the war, and her mother did not survive the week.

. . .

Paper from an old book, faded to yellow and ink washed away in the acid river, sat on Ember's lap. Her orange-pink hand gingerly swept a salvaged pencil across the page. *Some* days a pencil, anyway. Other days a damp stick of black chalk. And others still a flaky rock or ashen twig pulled from the timber corpses of the forest, where the remnants of burnt-out trees rested like the fallen monoliths of a long-forgotten god.

Some days the fires raged in the distance, on the edges of the crumbled cities not yet swept away by time. Ember could draw the flames licking at the sky like the beckoning fingers of perdition come to pull the last survivors from the fate they had escaped. Or she could write her desperate hail to oblivion in the English broken by years without instruction. This was

by far her preferred means of expression.

She brushed her hair aside - it was red, though blackened by soot. <u>The skie is lo today</u>, she wrote on the page hesitantly, drawing a rough line to illustrate. Her glance skyward was quick, but long enough to see the trails of frozen ash darting across the firmament. Caleb had told her years ago of the blue it had once shone. Even Ember, even after so many years of a life spent under a grey sky, could picture the rays of the sun. She dare not ever draw it. Nor write it

The page's emptiness was a somber ballad, and it called at every second with every fiber of its machine-woven expanse, to be snuffed out by the contact of Ember's pencil. But still, Ember was reluctant to write, on account of the finality of the act, and the futility of the gesture. Caleb had once taught her the letters and their sounds, but even Caleb could not teach Ember the proper way to spell every word. There were too many, and the paper of books too valuable to waste on reading. Ember could scarcely make sense of the words, anyhow. She jotted down her own, silently cursing their frivolity.

<u>The rane burnd the krohs</u>, Ember wrote, remembering the slick blackbirds in the midst

of the storm as she had watched on from the safety of a covered rock ledge. The rains were sometimes nourishing, sometimes burning - a lesson Ember had learned viscerally and enduringly during childhood when she disobeyed Caleb's orders not to touch the water until it had filtered itself through rocks, or dirt, or sand.

Ember could only hold the pencil in one hand, her left, because it had four dexterous fingers, while her right had only two. Caleb had possessed ten working digits when he had fathered her. Now he had none, but Ember still had the six with which she was born.

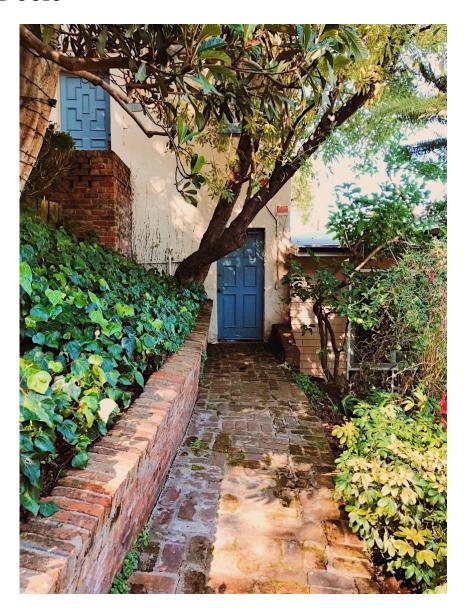
<u>Survivrs stik to-gethr</u>, or they arnt <u>survivrs long</u>. This was Ember's favourite phrase to write, and it adorned almost every fetid note she flung into the uncaring, desolate plain. Another of the trudging souls stranded on the cinder of the world had said it to her once before Caleb had died. She and Caleb had laughed and laughed at the suggestion.

"If that's true, where are all of your friends?" Caleb had demanded mockingly. "Or are you a ghost?"

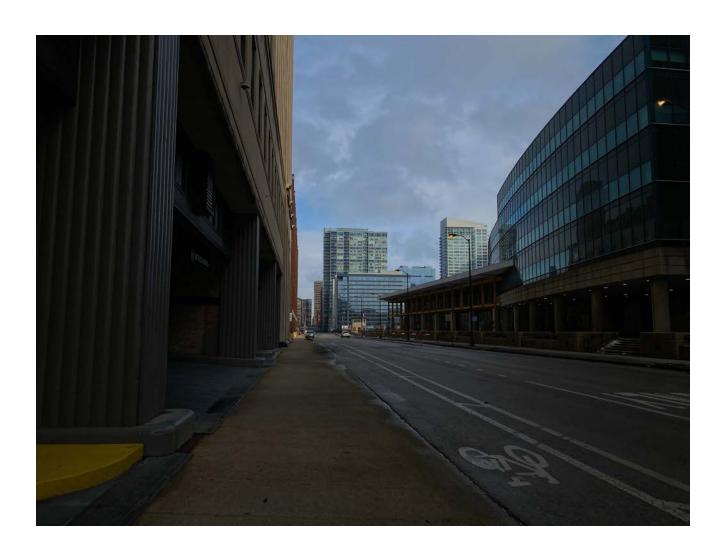
The trudging remnant hadn't smiled. He had just looked down, casting his sunken eyes in shadow, and said, "We're all ghosts."



The Blue Doors



canal street



Serenity

You've lost track of the days since you last stepped foot on that glossy tile, hymns still echoing the halls, all housed by that pristine, sacred exterior. Only the hefty pit of guilt, of what was once a mere seed, inside you tells how much time has truly come and gone. He calls.

Memories circulate in the back of your mind as if on a reel. The Sundays and the summers of singing and dancing with the divine spirit in the distant past, for the memories remain memories, but the feelings continue restlessly. Perhaps it's this unsettlement that wraps around you and pulls you in like a warm embrace, refusing to release even after all these years. He calls.

Yet, you can't answer. He calls and He longs. Reality obstructs, snidely grinning at its victory. You remain helpless, pleading with no avail, to answer Him. Your sinful heart yearns to return to the home it has ventured so far from. Time slips through even the firmest of grasps. He calls.

The physical world drags you, as if moving through water. Your soul and heart ache to be clean once again by His heavenly touch, their amassing filth and wrongfulness cloud the clarity of your pining. Fleshy restraints reflect illusions of infinite time, but as life's hourglass is turned, the sand grains drop relentlessly one by one. Your soul must proceed, it must proclaim, it must preach His holy name. He calls.

Your bodily remains collapse in on itself under the ever-present decay, each day grows darker. Fighting with a steadfast will, your soul persists. He calls, never inclined to push you aside. You hesitate under the burden of your shame and hide in a cloak of guilt. But, lunging like an insect moving a brick, your open soul and heart and mind compel the body to its knees. He calls, and you answer. Confessions and pleads for forgiveness slip your tongue and push through your trembling lips. In an instant your soul peels away from the body. There He stands, arms open, welcoming His child home.

Meditative Bird by the Sea



City Colors



Smile More



Paintception



Interrogative

And you, Lazarus? What did you remember? When the tomb opened again and the voice of God called your name, was it like waking from a dream, or a nightmare? Was it a cruel recalling, a wrench from bliss to Earth? Was it merely a blank in your memory, a space between breaths, not four seconds but four days? What did you tell your friends, years later, when they asked with sudden shyness, What it is to die? What to be dead? And when death came again did you have any fear? Or did you see and laugh at such a ragged, threadbare thing and step through, smiling, toward the Voice that once again called your name?

castle in the sky



An Angel's Paintbrush



You. Us.

The Gods you feared, and the end drawing near.

This is a battlefield unlike any other. You know this, but you cry and scream for a brother.

Please God, give me an ally, you beg. Please God, don't let this be the end!

and your hands shake. and your mouth whispers words too late.

Oh, how I want to pity you. But your pleas are not true.

You fight and thrash against what is *only*, your just due.

The Gods you feared, made a monster out of a man made his feet crumble until he could not stand.

You drove him wild with pain, wild with fear, with the voices that sang.

You. You, You, You.

It was *you* who was afraid. It was *you* who was **unmade**.

But you punished *us.* It was *us*, you put in cuffs –

and beat and broke and hung with rope let us cry until our tears soaked into blackened oak and our faces were hot and burning with sunstroke –

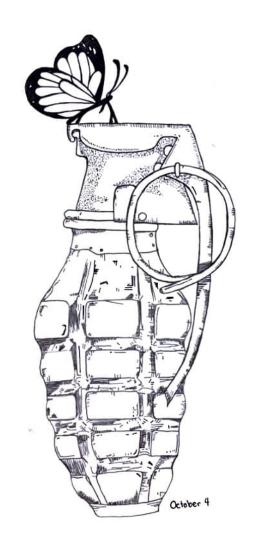
you invoked hell.
 with a story too terrible, too horrible,
 to tell.

and yet.

and yet, you beg for mercy. Claim you are worthy of it.

But you have plucked from the sky the sun, and the *rest of us*, refuse to be undone.

War



Seeds

I enjoyed working at the greenhouse at Doubt Corporation.

There were lots of plants to maintain and many more were cultivated per the request of certain clients. The greenhouse was split into three different plots and each plot would have subsections of plant types. The first plot was the plot clients would see. Beautiful colorful flowers but still bad for the mentality of the average person. The second plot contained weeds. These grew rapidly and are the most effective when clients wanted a certain someone legally eliminated. The last plot contained genetically enhanced plants or a form of mutation from either of the first two plots.

Early one morning, our supervisor informed us of a fourth category - Spliced. A rare category entailing delicate care and busy hands. Hence, many of my colleagues and I were assigned new interns. Kit Tumelo happens to be mine.

"So, I'll be helping with the new breed of plants in this room?" Kit seemed like a bright kid, probably no older than 16.

"Yes, I'm entering your ID in right now," the keypad beeps a few times, and Kit's ID now has access to the room.

"Doesn't look like much," Kit was more than a little disappointed.

"That's because it's completely empty. Both of us oversee setting up the environment according to this manila folder," I hand him a copy of the room requirements while dragging a foldable table inside. There were no windows for sunshine to sneak in and the only proper light came from the flashlight of our phones. The lightbulbs that were hanging from overhead were fully functional but only emitted low-colored lights like red, blue, green, and black. In other words, they were terrible for reading purposes.

"What's that for?" Kit points at a mirror on the left wall.

"That's a two-way mirror. This room used to be a place to test combustible experiments or to keep an eye on people taking a test. More so the latter."

"I didn't take a test. Was I supposed to take a test?"

"You took a physical?"

"Yeah."

"Then you're fine."

"So, I don't have to stress about a test?"

"You'll have to take one more test with the rest of the interns, but after that, it's your choice to stay or not."

"Did you have to take the test?"

"I did and it was hell. At least that's what I've been told. I don't remember much about it?"

"It's that bad?"

"You'll hear a bunch of people telling you of the horrors of the dreaded exam. But by the time you're done with it you hardly realize you'd taken it?"

"Am I going to blackout?"

"If you're as weak as I was, then yeah. But you'll be fine, I'm sure."

"Thank-you," he doesn't sound the least bit convinced. In an effort to make the test seem less stressful I may have over-emphasized its difficulty level. My mistake.

We made progress in the room and had a layout of what plants would go where. Kit wanted to explore the facility a little more, so I tasked him with delivering the blueprints to our supervisor.

I still had a few more things to set up before punching the clock. The other side of the mirror contained controls for the lighting, sound, and recording. I went through a checklist to make sure everything was working right and once more for good measure. The lights changed according to the RGB values inputted into the computer. I made sure to leave it on the blacklight setting - it was always cool to see the white on our uniform become brighter. I made sure the intercom was working and played a bit of gaming music. The recording equipment seemed to be working fine, I just needed to go through it and either delete or archive the footage. That was it for the first night with the fourth category

#

Kit arrived on the dot the next day. He was excited to work and managed to open the door with his new ID.

"Wow. All this was set up overnight?" Kit was referring to the 12 plots and gardening equipment in the room.

"Yeah. I'm just double-checking if everything is where it should be," I compare the serial

numbers for the type of dirt and the type of plant that are on my clipboard, "were you able to find the supervisor alright?"

"Yeah. There was another intern with him when I got to his office. We talked a bit and then we had hot dogs with everyone else. We were thinking about exploring outside the greenhouse during lunch."

"Sounds like a fine idea. Just be careful, sometimes our plants find themselves outside and can cause some serious damage," I picked up a pack of seeds and handed it to him, "these go over there. Be sure to read the instructions and call me over if you need any help."

"Got it." Kit pulled some gardening gloves from his uniform coat and began planting. I grabbed a pack myself and started on the opposite end so we could meet in the middle. We played music through the intercom and took turns picking the music through my phone.

"You like the oldies?" I asked Kit when I heard looking out my backdoor.

"Yeah. I grew up listening to them with my Dad. He blasted the music whenever we were outside," Kit wiped the sweat from his forehead, smearing dirt all over his face in the process.

"Was he the one to encourage you to come here?"

"No, actually. I talked about it with my family once or twice but after that, I focused more on the physical to get in here. I felt like I was accidentally applying for the military."

"If Doubt Corp. can't get the top notch, they'll find a way to make them," I feel my phone buzz in my pocket, " you better get going if you want to explore the surroundings with your new friend."

"Lunch time?"

"Might want to wipe your face before you go," I nod my head to the door.

Kit glances at the mirror and his cheeks develop a subtle red hue. His face wasn't the only thing that was caked in dirt. The black shirt he was wearing underneath his lab coat was dusted in green and white specks from the plant feed. He quickly thanked me before rushing out the door to what I presume would be the bathroom. I hope he gets the wet mud clinging from the cracks of his shoes off because the squish noises he made on his way out were nothing but entertaining.

#

The next few weeks seemed to mesh into one another. I found out Kit's friend is Sasha from Germany. Besides discussing the different techniques, they use to care for the plants, they come with outrageous ways to cross-pollinate with other plants. When they grow bored of their conversation they begin to brag about who has the more dangerous breed of plant. Comparing the vibrancy of the color, the speed of growth, and claiming their batch is even more effective than hemlock. People here have produced some wild creations, with wild results, but none will beat the effectiveness of hemlock.

Nevertheless, Kit would keep close vigilance on his plants. Whether that was watering them or taking data relevant collections from the stems, he soon proved capable enough to take over the fourth category. I was placed back in my old position, but I continued to check up on him. He carried himself with confidence and wore the dirt on his coat like a medal of honor.

"Hey Kit! I have pesticide here for you!" I drag in a giant cylinder canister with the Seeds of Doubt™ logo on them.

"But the room is isolated. Bugs are an impossibility."

"True. But it's about that time where we

need to activate the enzymes," I could see the worry in his brow, "it won't harm your plants, I promise. But the clients want to see the versatility of the fourth category under stressful conditions."

"Are you sure?"

"You have my word. I'll be in the other room taking notes of the effects and reactions," I had relieved him of some of his worry, as he gripped the canister with more confidence, "also, you'll need to wear this Hazmat suit to block out the fumes."

He looks at the neon green hazmat suits and takes it without hesitation, "how long until you see the reactions?"

"Probably after you're done spraying your last plot. I'll let you out once the fumes are no longer a danger."

"Wait," Kit freezes having only put the suit halfway up his chest, "you're locking me in here."

"Have to. Clients are coming to observe, and they tend to ignore the safety precautions we repeatedly tell them. It's a nightmare trying to reason with them, and lawsuits are a bigger headache."

"Gross."

"Let's hope you never have to play salesmen to a group of high-end snobs with giant egos and better-than-the-rest attitudes."

"You really hate them."

"With a passion."

Kit laughs and finally secures the helmet on his head. He shows me a thumbs up and I make my exit. In the room next door, I check the equipment once more and signal Kit to begin spraying. By the time he's done with his last plot he begins to falter in his step. The suit wasn't made of the best quality and given Kit's tendency to get dirty, a tear in the suit was hardly a surprise. As a result, the fumes found themselves inside his lungs. Full panic didn't settle in until he noticed the tear that was growing on the side of his suit. He ran for the door, pulling at it several times and attempting to open it with his ID. The same ID I provided him with authorized access was now rendered useless.

He crumpled to his knees not knowing what to do, but I did. I turned the intercom on and started playing some recordings. Kit's eyes grew wide with terror, the first recording was of his mother's.

If you keep going down this path you won't be able to sustain yourself. It's not a good practice for a boy who has the brains to become a doctor or a lawyer. What do you do all day in that room? Water plants? Watch dirt? Any bozo could do that.

The recording switches to a distorted version of Stuck in the Middle, slowly meshing the song with his little sister's voice.

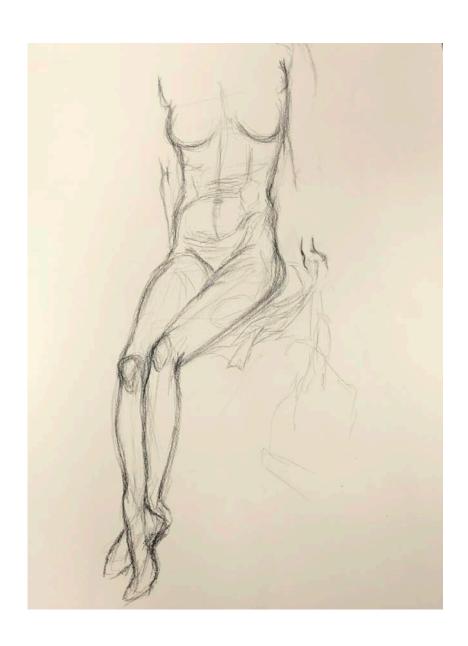
You brought another plant kit? Really? This one doesn't even look like a good one. I bet I could have found one better on the internet and for cheaper too. I'm warning you now, this one won't last for long.

I keep changing the person speaking, the heart-stopping music, and the lights RGB inputs. He must be hallucinating now, running into walls with tears streaming down his cheeks. By the time he wakes up, he won't remember any of this and he'll be in the building's health center.

In the meantime, all I have to do is record the fourth category.

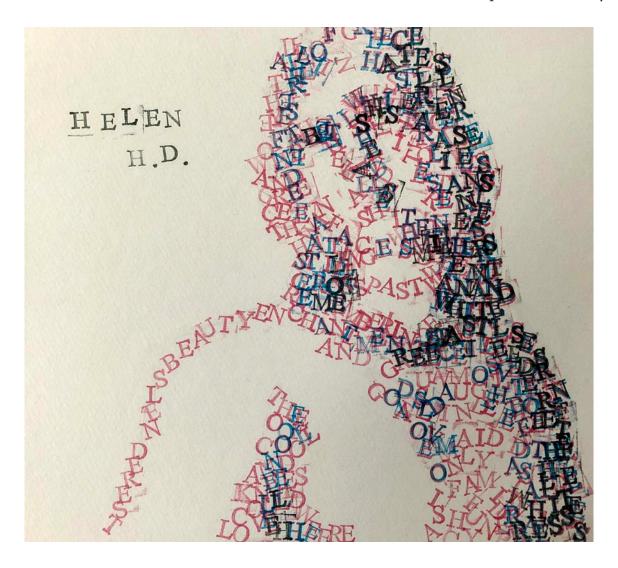


Seated



Helen - H.D.

Based off of the poem "Helen" by H.D.



coda

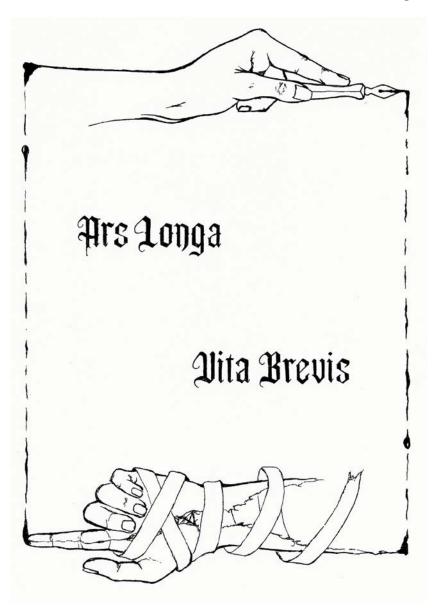
go out with a fizzle instead of the bang we were promised; honey sun is folding soft into shadows. we still drag our minds from the dim cave every morning (a commitment that our bodies will follow suit), young flesh opening to ultraviolet, blinded by snowlight.

bears hibernate for four months & i envy the quiet they must feel; does a new cub ever wake up in those middle months? does he crawl outside & wonder slowly at the blue sun covering the landscape? does he decide he's better off asleep in his mother's embrace?

we all know that we cannot hold the entirety of our hearts in a single hand. my consciousness may be short but my existence has been long; we'll trade the starry city in the sky for a rifle. i am always thinking about the ways i take leave from the ones i love, take heart pieces.

the last thing to do is become master of this godforsaken vessel once & for all. the last thing to do is grasp at our hearts as if we can carry them all at once. the last thing to do is wake up the bear cub, welcome him into the world, say "here you are now, in the sun, go see."

Art Is Long, Life Is Short



CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

BRIANNA ARES is a junior International Relations major with double minors in German and Spanish. She enjoys the beauty of Earth's natural wonders and takes photos in her free time. She also likes to knit and hike.

DANIEL ASSELSTINE is a sophomore Civil Engineering student who grew up skiing, traveling, and capturing the world through his lens. He can frequently be seen around campus capturing the day-to-day moments of life, or in Gellersen, drowning in a pile of homework.

ANNA BEDALOV is, in summary, a senior Creative Writing and Humanities double major with a journalism minor, and also the forest and stars and blue and Ireland and carbon and sunshine and love and change and yellow and the English language.

GRACE BIERMANN is a senior English and Humanities double major, with a minor in Classics, who is increasingly convinced that she's actually from Hobbiton. In her (limited) spare time, she enjoys reading, writing, drinking tea, and watching old movies, "Parks and Recreation," and "Foyle's War." She doesn't know what exactly her life will look like at this time next year, but she does know that she will miss Valpo and the wonderful people there. No, she's not crying. Soli Deo Gloria

SOPHIE BURNS is a junior studio art major who practices many forms of art, including painting, drawing, print-making, and writing fiction. She hopes you have a wonderful day.

SANSON GANGHOLA is a junior Digital Media Art major who finds appreciation and joy in learning to animate, creating sketches, thinking visually, and improving creatively (i.e. photography, graphic design, videography, etc.).

ERICA CASTILLO is a social work major who enjoys escaping through art.

JAGQUELYN DELGADO is a Junior Secondary Education and English double major.

MAIAH DEOGRAGIAS is a freshman art and communication double major. She enjoys playing music, going on hikes, and traveling. To see more of her work, check out @ m.k.d.photography._ on Instagram.

LUGAS DIMOND is a freshman who sits in his room, plays music really loud and stays up all night eating instant noodles. He thinks he's in communications but isn't sure.

JOSHUA DUENSING is a senior biology, chemistry, and humanities major who doesn't know what to write about himself. Or anything, for that matter.

MIRANDA ENGHOLN is a French and Global Service major. She is also a strong advocate for rolling down hills, asking hard questions, and dancing with friends.

TAYLOR EXTIN is a senior English major with a minor in Cinema & Media Studies. She enjoys taking photographs of her dogs and anything that catches her eye.

KAYLA FLUEGENAN is a junior creative writing major with a theatre minor. She loves writing all types of genres.

LEAN GATCHEL is Junior Creative Writing Major with Professional Writing and TESOL minors. Outside of The Lighter, she is involved in Sigma Tau Delta, Alpha Phi Omega, and Kappa Kappa Gamma. "Run to the rescue with love and peace will follow" -RJP

LEXI GAULT is a senior astronomy and math double major who is in love with the universe and throw blankets.

ZION GIFFORD is a freshman studio arts major who was born on an extraordinarily hot and moderately breezy evening with his eyes wide open. He has been alive for approximately 580 years. He likes attending concerts in peoples' basements, storytelling, and kisses on the hand.

EMILY GRAVES is a freshman history major. She would like to thank her Muppet stuffed animals for always being there.

EMILY GUSTIN is a senior digital media arts major with a communications minor, and she has been a part of The Lighter Selection Committee since 2017. She loves documenting her life through photography and sharing these experiences with others. She'd like to thank The Lighter for providing a space for students to express themselves through art and literature. It's been real!

"DOG" JANOWIAK is a data science major from Moscow, Idaho, studying for a specialty in artificial intelligence and machine learning applications to complex problems of scientific research and technological development. His creative pursuits include photography, creative writing, and journalism, and he enjoys artistic works which highlight under-represented aspects of the human condition as well as the interface between science, politics, culture, and art (high and low).

MALEY KADOLPH is a junior Studio Art Major. All of her time is spent in the studio painting and sculpting, taking photos, singing and playing Minecraft. She aspires to be on x-games mode one day.

CHRISTOPHER MALON is a junior mechanical engineering major with a hobby in photography and sketching, primarily of vehicles and nature.

ASHLEE PENDLETON is a junior psychology and creative writing major who always has her nose in a book or her fingers on a keyboard. Her dream is to travel and write as many books as possible.

SANGHEZ is a junior Psychology and Public and Professional Writing major. They are also one of the assistant editors of The Lighter. They write poetry concerning themes of love and death-- often, both at once.

SABRINA SEARGY is a junior biology and art double major who likes to write, draw, and spend time outdoors. She is from Westfield, Indiana.

GAITLYNN SHIPE is a freshman communication and creative writing major who enjoys nature, storytelling, and writing. She writes for The Torch and is part of Alpha Gamma Delta.

CECELIA SIEFER is a sophomore art major who really just likes to play in the dirt.

KAYLA SMITH is a sophomore art major/ urban legend. She, more like her art, can be found on Instagram @kayla_blah.

KYLYNN SMITH is a junior year Studio Art major with an interest in painting, drawing, and tattooing. She often finds herself writing poetry in her free time, preferably when the moon is high and inspiration is at its peak.

MALAGHI JERENY SMITH is a Sophomore, Philosophy Major with a minor in communications. He enjoys reading novels and watching anime. He is a portrait photographer with a focus on highlighting the variances in expression/emotion people show. His Instagram is @infinitywolfx

REBECCA STOCKHAM is a senior English Literature & Creative Writing double major who enjoys drinking coffee and wearing stripes. She can be found either dancing at the English Department copy machine or haunting your local Party City.

MIGHELA TENUTA is still a psychology major with a neuroscience minor! To Michela, life is simply about eating pasta and drinking chai, but not together because that's gross.

CHYNNA VAUGHN is a sophomore psychology major with a criminology minor who loves photography and writing! She can be found on campus listening to music and hanging out with her friends! She loves to watch true crime shows and drinking coffee late at night.

KARA VANHINBERGEN is a sophomore Psychology/Greek and Roman Studies double major with a minor in creative writing. She loves a lot of things, but coffee and cats are near and dear to her heart.

GREGIA VERA is a senior in Creative Writing who enjoys listening to music 24/7.

ASHLEY VERNON is a freshman History major Art minor. She enjoys photography, reading, and desperately trying to get enough sleep.

MIRIGA YANGEY is a senior Computer Science major, minoring in Spanish, Japanese, and Mathematics. She's currently desperately trying to graduate while furiously stuffing her pandemic feelings into poetry.

WILL WITRY is a sophomore Theater and Communications Major who spends his free time creating music.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

There are so many people to thank -- enough to fill an entire issue on its own. This issue (and *The Lighter* as a whole) was a truly collaborative effort; I couldn't imagine creating something like this without the hard work, dedication, time, and passion of so many wonderful people. I love this organization, I love all that it represents and all that it offers, and I thank you all for loving it just as much as I do.

I cannot present this issue without paying immense gratitude to the team that made it possible. Thank you to the executive board: Anna, Kayla, Lee, Lexi, and Michela. You all are the greatest team I could've ever dreamed of and I am so incredibly proud of all we've accomplished. And to Lee, Kayla, and Michela especially, I am pleased to leave *The Lighter* knowing it's in good hands.

Thank you to our Selection Committee and their impressive adaptability. Even when unable to meet in person, you all still gave each piece the attention and respect it deserved. This semester had no shortage of challenges, but it was no match for your continued dedication and perseverance.

Thank you to our Artivism judges, former EICs Emily Neuharth and Michelé Strachota. L'appreciate the care and thought you put into helping us continue *The Lighter's* spring semester tradition. I really enjoyed being able to talk with you both about how far *The Lighter* has come.

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Thank you to all of the many professors across campus who helped us to promote this semester's submission period. Special shout out to Professor Sean Kamperman for his growing collection of *Lighter* issues; to Professor Allison Schuette for helping us reach out to first-year creatives; and to Professor John Ruff for allowing us to promote *The Lighter* in all areas of the English department, including Books & Coffee (look out for that next spring semester!).

Thank you to everyone who submitted to this semester's issue! The work we received this semester has been some of my favorite, and I'm honored to be able to show it off. And a special thank you to everyone who submitted to our Artivism contest, especially our two winners, Will Witry and Doc Janowiak.

And finally, the ultimate thank you goes out to you! The Lighter could not be what it is or do what it does without the incredible support from our audience. I, and so many others, are so happy to share with you the talent and creativity that exists here on Valpo's campus. We hope that you'll continue to support The Lighter and that you enjoy Inez!

TME LÄGMTER

