

The background of the entire page is an abstract, textured surface. It features a mix of soft pinks, blush, and pale yellows, with darker, more saturated pink and magenta tones interspersed throughout. The texture appears to be that of a thick paint application or a marbled paper, with visible brushstrokes and organic, swirling patterns. The overall effect is dreamy and artistic.

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**Brooklyn College's
Creative Magazine
Element | Fall 2021**

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*Storytelling is the essential
human activity. The harder
the situation, the more
essential it is.*

-Tim O'Brien

ELEMENT

PROMPT 1

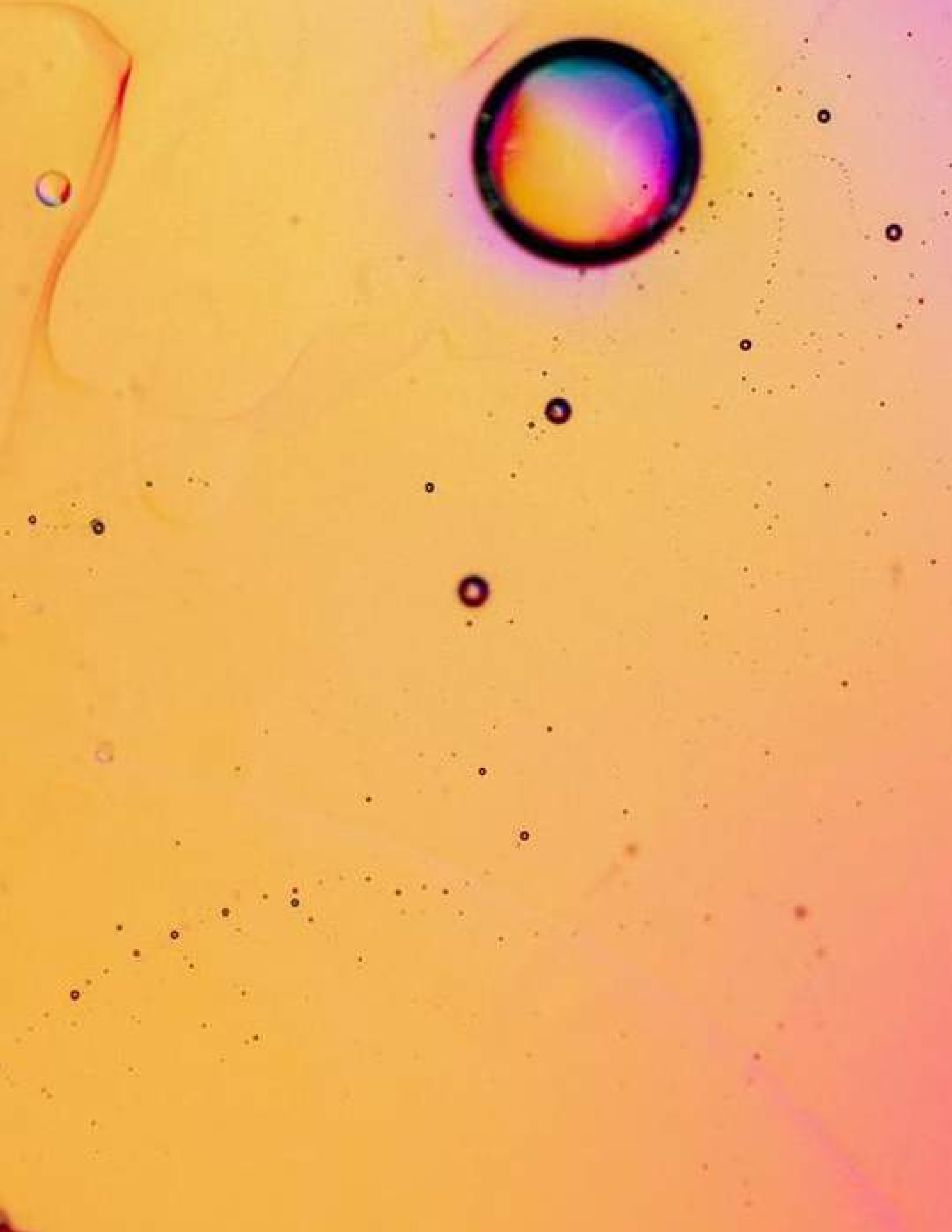
ESSENTIAL

PROMPT 2

NATURAL ELEMENTS

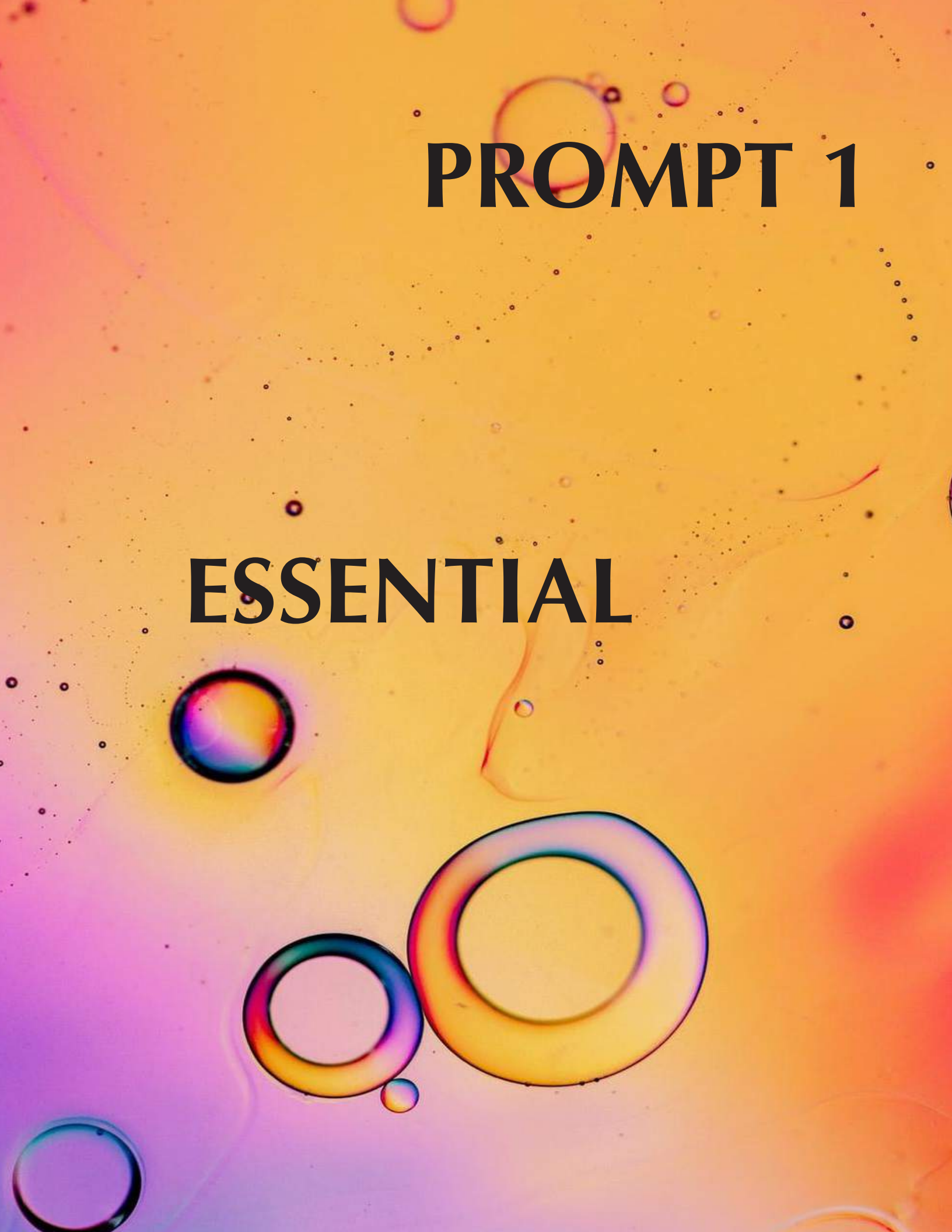
PROMPT 3

THE FIFTH ELEMENT



PROMPT 1

ESSENTIAL



MALI-KO

Bidane Sissoko

I am from the land of enormous mineral wealth,
From a united and rich culture
Where the glory of the sun provides warmth to the skin
Where blood doesn't mean you aren't family
From a sisterhood where the bond can never be riven
I am from the joy of my friend's laughter
With it, the mirth never ends and the smiles never fade
I am from the house of many who lift one another up
A home for all those who would like to be welcome
I am from the land of my happiness

to orient you i will give you the park
and manhattan
and you will wear black
and he will wear blonde
and you will obey because you want to be taught
to leave things different than they were

this is how to network in new york
where women wind up as bodies

and it's midnight on this rock where i am mired
and slathered and willing and thinking i could die
without having been ontologically extravagant
and this is as good a time as any

but i am not entitled to think
that i will make my way back

if these words had worked
i would be a woman
halfway through central park having learned my lesson
not a child on this beach in brooklyn
needing more nouns
drawn and quartered
and trailing the psychosomatic soldiers
that frequent this sunrise

but i cannot afford to guzzle this gasoline
so close to home

and this is the danger of being a bad quitter
dressed in his decadence and the difference of a decade
though i am just passing through this lassitude
and this park
and your eyes are wet when you wake up
it isn't easy
which you know
because you are well-adapted and willing to die
and this is as good a spot as any

but when i soften into something salient
you will have faith
and he will be pleased

LITTLE BUG

Reubena Kaidanian

The bite of dissatisfaction burns with a certain poison,
a toxin that seeps past the skull.
Slight body movements make eerie winds pass by,
and nerves begin to orchestrate pain.
The host exhibits opposite emotions.
Such pain must cease, be forgotten, even.
Forgetting will be the bandage,
healing will vanish it for good.
With promise, these two feelings
now function in pure sync.
For the body knows its capabilities can certainly
surpass the bite of a little bug.

WALLS

Natalie Mosseri

I've spent hours upon hours caught up in the ways
walls talk

The dark whispers they share while you press your
body in late at night

Shivering as you curl up against their cold surfaces
Hoping to sink in deep

To be embraced by their familiarity

Sometimes that familiarity is comforting

Other times it feels like a deep scar permanently
etched inside of you

Scratches and holes line walls

Some painted over and filled

Others too deep to cover

To be tattered and bruised is an essential part of being human

Resignation with walls is often what keeps your heart
beating

Layers upon layers of paint coat our walls

Each one once a

Fresh stage

Path almost taken

Friends you swore you would never fall out of touch
with

Books once cherished

Songs you were able to recite

Every day we layer on more and more paint

Letting memories fade for better or for worse

Creating and forgetting acting as the most natural element in aging

Some layers we pant and sweat over

Dragging our brushes in attempt to show off what is brand new

Others we chip away at

Romanticizing colors that we remember being more beautiful than the stains they were truly covered in

Each day we

Layer and creator

Fade and forget

Each wall holds a story

Every cell in our body made of memories

I run my hand along my walls

Listening to all of their whispers and cries and laughter

Taking a deep breath I brace myself for what my walls have to say today

DIRT

Jasmine Singh

A sacred dance between me and the Earth
There is something profound about my bare hands digging into the dirt
As children we shoved sticks into ant hills, and smudged mud onto our clothes
The dirt was a place of wonder, a realm we were forbidden to explore
We were connected to the dirt until we were indoctrinated into wearing shoes
How could you worship something you've been taught to step on, to kick, to scrape?
We're all making a terrible mistake
Trees anchor themselves so that we may breathe
Bodies crumble in between threads of dust
Crocus bulbs have to be buried to bloom
The dirt is ambrosia for the living, the dead, and everything in between
Dirt acts as a compass for our existence
Teaching us to sow our seeds into the ground so that we may reach fruition
To give and take from the soil is a spiritual experience
Sifting gold, drilling diamonds, extracting oil
You have no choice but to bury your hands into the kingdom that is the dirt



THIRD RAIL GUARDIAN ANGEL

Bren Tawil

some things look the same in retrospect.

once i was an exoskeleton, admiring
the bruises in pretty plum adorning his mouth,
his arm as an art gallery, an anonymous artist,

a ribcage isn't a prison; in retrospect

i realize it is akin to a garden.

what do you breathe out?

i breathe out suspicion. josella breathes out the sun.

in retrospect, i don't exhale very often.

in retrospect the backyard is room-temperature and
diaphanous in may.

a lesson in philosophizing can be him, can be
misc. fingerprints tattooed on my collarbone and his
wrists and i was in the gazebo when i noticed,
in retrospect, the way the frogs are silent and the
deer are silent and the trees are tall but are silent
and so i aspire to be silent. so he attaches stitches
strung from my teeth to the stables.

with me, watch the still life of a stranger in the field,
and when she turns her neck you are understandably
surprised to recognize yourself, honey of the anchorite,
an anonymous artist inquiring, do you know how lucky you are?
and more questions, like, where are you?

who are you?

what do you breathe out?

don't you ever want to know where you are?

CROP FIELDS

Carina Pierre-Louis

I remember you like a hot summer's dream
We said we would stay friends forever, a promise I meant to come true
‘Maybe we are just going through a rough patch’
Turned crop field knit into a quilt
Suffocated in a chunky knit crochet needle for fingertips
It was a long year under the impression that I could play rock, paper, scissors, and somehow cut
my way free
But my night terrors came back even with you, my blanket
Peeling me like the paint in our school's bathroom
Chipping at the ideal self I had created, you destroyed me
Washing my face in tears, learning that I had no purpose for self care
Our friendship burned with the chips of jealousy and neglect
Learning how to make a fire out of twigs and sticks
Only to be burned by the overgrown flame
Yet somehow I wonder if you still think of me
I even considered replacing you with a lover in hopes of my heart mending
Infatuated with how your sun rose without me and the crowds roared with you missing
it The love for you tart as a winter blueberry, overripe
Mosquito bites that grow tired of being scratched
Etching red indentations in my skin
Taking way too long to fade
I wear your hurt as a necklace
Forgetting to take it off in the shower
Letting the words turn green against me
Only to help remember that you were here
My writing grieves for you
Longing to be saturated in your scent
So I take the pen and rip the paper
So you can no longer hurt me

PAPA, DAD, FATHER
Xarena Pagan

You, a man with a dozen names
Papa, dad, father, daddy, pa
All these names I give you
But you accept none
You toss them all aside
Just as you have done to me

Papa, you never came home
You left home and found a new one
Dad, you left and found a new wife
Throwing away my mama
Father, you left and found a new son
Throwing away my brother too
Daddy, you left and created a new baby
Throwing me away just because you could
Pa, you left and didn't even bother to look back
For us
For me

You have a dozen names
And no matter what I call you
I get no response
Papa, dad, father
All names that fall on empty ears
Fall on a cold heart
Because even in my dreams
I call out your name
And even there they go unanswered
They go unheard

P U R G

Julia Andresakis

As it goes, Critic and Ego live in limbo,
at each other's throats and duking it out 'til one gives in
or backs down, or breathes in and out of a paper bag
for a bit to chill out. Tragic, 'cause they'd make one hell
of a team, two ends of a table, fruits of their labor in
a bowl on top. Some revelatory specter of a sort,
but—

See, Ego's got these showboat antlers, white like baby wipes,
tall like townhouses (and almost as expensive). Built-in
blinding light setting, a splurge on E's part but worth
the adoration, admiration, wondrous faces, so on—
her shows of stars and tetrahedrons are pretty awesome. But
seizure-inducing at the worst of times, a purg-wide mess,
Muscle twitches, pupils dilating and constricting,
playing badminton with red-green-blue birdie streaks.
In other words: catch Ego when she's up for it.

Crit's a roly-poly shy thing, opaque tea shades and curly mop head,
wears a turtleneck with the elastic worn thin so the top hangs
a little like loose turkey skin. Sour face with her
tongue flicking out, like a kid forced to share his
birthday party with sticky-mouthed Jake, who doesn't even
wash his hands after he uses the restroom, so why
would anyone want to partake in such a
sacred ritual – cake – with him?
Point being: C's particular about the way life ought to be.

Everyone knows they're both beasts that boil over,
knows E needs praise like C needs perfection,
work together only when they're prodding
in the same general direction at some
tortured bastard who can't decide who's less absurd.

There's a half-joke-riddle they tell down in the bardo—
more like a food-for-thought scenario—
says, An artist dies in ruin, ashamed of dreams unmet,
days before they'd've made their name and duly course correct.
Poses this question at the end: Who's to blame?
Team Critic says, Ego, of course—if they didn't get
too big-headed about the little things, they'd have made
a name for themselves ten years sooner. They just needed
their nose pressed to the grindstone, so to speak,
a little harder, 'til they needed to work to breathe.
Ego-fanatics go, That's bull. If they weren't so stifled—
so misled to believe that their talents amounted to little
more than slop and muck, well, who knows?

It's not a very funny joke. Doesn't even have a punchline.
Only comedic in that so rarely do the two forces
realize their tension is illusory, nothing more than
split parts of a singular entity,
wandering around two distinct caverns,
arguing with the air and its reverberations,
like a confused senior citizen
talking to a lamp post.

MISSED CONNECTIONS

Malenie Tapia

I live alone in a box apartment in Brooklyn. The paint on the ceiling tears on the sides and the elevator has been broken since I moved here. My room is poorly lit and has no windows; the only bit of color is my red bookshelf filled with the endless love stories I collect. My favorite time of day is when I ride the subway to and from school. On the trains I am in my element—I like making up stories in my head about the passengers riding with me. Everyone is going somewhere, everyone is living a different life, and I wonder who else finds comfort in these rusty carts with orange seats.

The subways are the city's jungle, and New Yorkers the animals. Here, we find early birds, mid-day crawlers, and creatures of the night; this is the city that never sleeps. I love being surrounded by all the strangers and their individuality. They come in different shapes and colors. I often wonder if they notice me as I notice them, but I am a worm in a jungle of beautiful creatures.

It was the end of summer, I was coming back home from Queens and there she was. The 7 train: always tightly packed, I got on at 74th and she was leaning on the doors. She wore those old-timey headphones too big for her small head, bopping to music blasting through her ears. 65th St.: her nose was small and round, features so delicate, like a porcelain doll: not a scratch, not a blemish in sight. Her eyes were small but her pupils were big and round, dark like coffee. Northern Blvd: she wore a small blue skirt and a white t-shirt with Japanese writing on it. Purple hair. That's what got me. A silky sea of dark-purple lightly-made curls. 46th: When she looked at me I flushed red. She made me anxious with her perfection. 36th: I have to act casual, I'll put on a song, I'll look away and stare at her reflection through the subway window instead. Queens Plaza: I hope she stays on this train and gets off the same stop as me. I pictured us on a date, in a museum, holding hands. I imagined our cozy loft with a cat sleeping on the sofa. Court Square: she gets up and walks to the door. She stared at me for the last time, a half grin: I think I'm in love. My heart raced as I debated getting off or not, but I have to cling onto that last memory. I wish I would have asked: "What hair dye do you use?" as if I cared, just for a lick of conversation, to hear the melody in her voice, but I never saw her again.

I pondered over this woman for the rest of the summer. The air got cooler, the leaves were falling, class was back in session. My university was smack in the middle of the city but I felt better knowing it was time to hit the books again. I was on my way to school when I saw him. He let his hair grow, brown with blue highlights—wore a black leather jacket and navy ripped jeans. We were on the R train heading towards Manhattan, he got on at Cortlandt St. City Hall: he was carrying a guitar case and it made me wonder if he was in a band. Prince St.: We only spoke once during a tutoring session but I could tell he was intelligent despite his rockstar appearance. 8th St.: This might be my only chance. I can't let him get away just like the beautiful stranger over the summer. He walked towards the door and I got up from my seat. I'm right behind him and I start to imagine our life together as I tap his shoulder. We would live in Manhattan near Central Park where it would be easy for me to get some peace and quiet while still being close to Brooklyn for all his shows. We would have a German shepherd named Toby. He would teach me how to write songs and I would show him all my books.

We go up the stairs and I extend my hand, but right before I could tap his shoulder, I see him walk up to a pretty blonde. She was petite and covered in tattoos, she looked at him the way I looked at the purple-haired stranger. They kiss, I back away. I sigh and go back to the library where I belong—where books call my name, characters befriend me, and pages become my home. NYC: a jungle full of animals but none are like me.

PULL AGAINST THE FLOW

Frieda Sutton

At first glance, I'm just like anyone here
Struggling as I start to find my way.
Every day I give my all in high gear—
Some doors open, while others lead astray.

I question when I don't know where to go.
Trying to figure out which direction—
The wind pushes me to go with the flow;
Yet their wave flow is not my perfection.

So I change course; turning, fighting the wind,
Going against the status quo, finding me.
No longer being held back or confined;
Finally soaring the sky of life, free...

To be myself without hesitation,
No need for anyone's affirmation.



S P L A S H

V Ritchie

i don't know how to love

a man that loves me back

unrequited is a cruel game

the only one i know how to play

hide-and-seek

until I'm face down in a puddle

i started to run

you don't like to play chase

anticipating the splash

i tripped over the foot in my mouth

INTERVIEW WITH ESSENTIAL WORKER

Mariyah Rajshahiwala

The following is an excerpt from an interview with an NYC essential worker. We thank her for her service.

It was incredibly dangerous to continue working, what kept you going?

Chuckles. These questions keep getting harder and harder. Umm, what kept me going? People like me don't think about things like that, about motivation. It's more like, we can't stop working. Most of us need the income more than we need to stay healthy. We got young, old, or disabled family members back home. We aren't working for us. It's for them.

What's one thing you'll never forget from the past year?

I don't think I'll be able to forget any of it, especially the emptiness. In all my 45 years here, I've never seen empty streets. I'd be lucky to see ten people throughout my day. Every day seemed longer than the last one. The mornings and nights were the worst. You kept hoping you would see another car or bus or bicycle, anything. Sometimes, it felt like the world had ended and I was the last one left. There was something so eerie about the quiet. I developed a nasty habit of breathing loudly

while I was working so it would feel like there were other people around me. I feel like if I lived in a small town, I would be used to the quiet. But, here, in NYC, the buzz of different noises is natural. Cars honking, people cursing, children laughing—it's not noise for me. It's my livelihood, my natural habitat.

Every person I met during those months, I cherished. Even if it was a 5-minute ride, I cherished their greeting, the sound of them shuffling in their seats, the sound of their bags rustling. Anything was better than empty silence.

Did you feel protected by the city? Were they doing enough for you?

I don't blame the city or get angry at them as some other people do. I get it. No one knew what was going on. The disease kept changing, new rules kept coming out. It takes a while for things to go from rules to policies to actions, I get it. So, I don't hold a grudge against the city. And, we were needed. I know people say it now, but in those moments, we were the ones running the city. We were needed. Everyone had gone

home. We were the only ones showing up to work. We had a duty to do. And I know it's just a job but people rely on us, no matter what happens. And I'm a woman of integrity. And this job has provided me with so much. Kept me employed for so many years. I couldn't leave it, despite the dangerous conditions.

We were so lost at first. It wasn't until the hospitals started filling up that we got scared. My busses started becoming emptier and emptier. My union provided us with gloves, masks, and sanitizers. But, it wasn't until much later that the safety protocols were put in place. I felt like I was in danger, but I had no choice. Things are much better now.

Do you agree with the city's decision to honor essential workers? Do you think it's enough?

Look, this city can honor whoever they want to. I appreciate the gesture, I'm thankful for it. It's just I've never thought of myself that way. I know I work and a lot of people rely on my work. But, essential? I've never been essential to anything. Now, that's my personal belief, I'm not saying everyone feels this way.

If the city wants to honor us and our essentialness, then I have no problem with it. I hope it's not a temporary thing. As things normalize, I hope people don't forget what we've done. The sacrifices we have made. The people we have lost. During the past year, every time someone came on, they thanked me for my service. Buddy, in the past, working in this city has gotten me more

curses than gratitude. As much as I want things to become safe and normal again, I'm afraid to become small again. I don't want to be overlooked again.

They called us essential workers during the pandemic. They justified us working through a pandemic by calling it essential work. Now, there is no bitterness there. I'm just stating the fact of the matter. But, honestly, in the past, we have always just been workers. Most of us are minimum-wage workers. Stuck in a system of living paycheck to paycheck. Many of us are without the right papers. Many of us are without the right degrees. Many of us are working for someone else's future.

So yeah, good for the city. Honor us. But don't forget us.

A FATHER'S SONG

Frieda Sutton

Tears roll down my eyes as I look at you—
Wondering how time has gone by so fast
The little girl in my arms, how you grew.

I remember the bows, oh how they flew
Lucky was I to play dad in your cast
Tears roll down my eyes as I look at you—

Came into my life, thinking it wasn't true
Holding you close forever unsurpassed
The little girl in my arms, how you grew.

Trading away ponies for a cold brew
Don't forget me with all the time that's past
Tears roll down my eyes as I look at you—

Brought a sweet boy home, not sure what to do
Daddy, he's the one, you whispered at last.
The little girl in my arms, how you grew.

The music plays and I am stuck like glue
Please walk me down the aisle, Daddy, she asked
Tears roll down my eyes as I look at you—
The little girl in my arms, how you grew.

FILTH

Noelle Salaun

I stand under the shower warm
I have no intention of getting clean, only of stealing the warmth
To give hydration to the dead skin
that surrounds me, my cocoon
My shield to the world.

I forgot my last shower

It's time to tie back these flyaways
You put it down just just to put it back up
But we let it get to knots
I don't want to comb it out
You don't want to comb it out

I fall onto my sheets matted
Like it ever mattered
New holes in my pants
Tattered
My soul my spirit completely battered
Your view on me
Shattered

I need to clean my room
Maybe my whole apartment while I'm at it
Maybe not clean
I'm clean
The house is clean
I just need to organize it
That's it
But I just picked up

Where they last fell apart

ALSO SIBLINGS

Reubena Kaidanian

It's Tuesday, another gloomy afternoon, but the gloss of fog is something spectacular.

The time is 3:57pm here. So, 9:57pm there.

Shaina sat on the couch quietly thinking how the days seemed to purposely skip having the sun come out. "Ugh, this has to end soon," she mumbled to herself.

The phone rang again, likely the 18th call of the day, and Shaina thought about how she would have to once again hear the same conversation take place, watch her mom's tears run down her red cheeks, and tell her to stop rubbing her face with the tissues because it made her face burn. The back rubs were not enough and telling her, "It's going to be okay, Mom" didn't seem to be the solution either.

Honestly, what would be enough to help?

"Mom, it's a WhatsApp incoming call," Shaina said from across the room.

The number was unknown, which was not surprising, but why was it a video call?

"A video call? I don't know who it is. Decline it, it's definitely a mistake," Her mom replied.

Shaina walked over to her mom and put the phone in her hand. "Maybe it's someone important, you've been getting calls since the beginning of the week. Just answer it in case," Shaina explained.

After a few seconds of eeny meeny miny moe over whether to answer the call or not, her mom, Malka, pressed accept...

A male's voice filled the room, "Malka! It's me, can you hear me? Can you see me? Malka?" His voice echoed into Malka's ears. After years of separation, her brother's warm cries pierced her heart, making Malka sob two decades worth of tears.

Shaina realized how their reactions were in complete sync.

"Kind of sounds like they rehearsed this before," Shaina said to herself while smiling.

Malka's hands shook; the love that breezed in through the window made her smile for the first time since she said goodbye to her other brother.

She exclaimed, "Matthew! Oh my goodness, Matthew!"

Matthew quickly answered, "My sister, it's me. I wanted to see you, to hear you. I know that this isn't the best way but, I really couldn't stand it anymore.

They both said together, "I miss you so much."

Shaina whispered, "Jinx, haha," and started walking to the kitchen to give her mom a few minutes alone.

She grabbed some water and looked over at the candles lit for her uncle.

She could not believe what just happened.

In just a few days her mom lost a brother but also got one back

In just a few days her mom lost a brother but also got one back.

"The call last Thursday was really unexpected," Malka said.

She went on to say, "We had to say goodbye without really getting a chance to, that's what will hurt forever, you know?"

Matthew's tone changed to a rather comforting one, and it felt as if he was with them in their living room. "It's always going to hurt and always going to be too confusing, but everything will be alright, and we both know that." Matthew picked up his tea to clear his throat.

The scar of losing a sibling so suddenly was a pain that only Malka and Matthew could feel and only they could heal.

Shaina looked over to the living room where her mom and uncle were trying to catch up on everything and anything in just a few minutes. It was clear that they were trying their hardest to make it feel like they weren't 5,664 miles apart, but, instead, to make it feel like *Holon and New York were **also siblings.***

CAMPFIRE THOUGHTS

Alexander Loukopoulos

Sunday, August 30, 2015

one of the most fun days of my life! Im so sad that the weekend is already over! me, henry, xavier, renault and tabitha won the scavenger hunt today. theyre so smart. and funny. they told me stories about how much fun they had here at my age. I think tabitha is my favorite. she tells me funny jokes that the guy cousins dont understand. right now we are sitting around a HUGE campfire and making smores.

Im gonna keep a journal about our trips here, just about the most important bits, to keep it short and sweet. I have a good memory, so I dont need to write EVERYTHING down. we're going to bed now. so excited for next year!

Sunday, August 26, 2018

a fun last day! henry brought his new girlfriend. she had the prettiest hands. so jealous! they didnt do the scavenger hunt with us, but we won again anyway.

theyre sitting with us by the fire, though. every time they kiss, me and tabitha make noises at them. they get so annoyed. but we all laugh in the end. even xavier and renault.

I didnt say anything to tabitha, but I was wondering how it felt to be in love, and if I would find out any time soon. maybe I would meet a boy here next year and we would kiss. but not in front of everyone. I would be too embarrassed. oh well. lets see what happens next august!

Sunday, August 25, 2019

lots of fun today, but we all missed henry. aunt mallory said him and his girlfriend were off somewhere and that he barely talked to her anymore. I didnt mind. he was in love after all, how could I be mad?

the rest of us are now sitting by the fire. we all agreed that it felt smaller without henry around.

they just started asking me about what I wanted to do for college. I was like... im barely even in high school. tabitha said that was true, and that I still had time to think about it. xavier and renault just munched on their smores.

oh, and we won the scavenger hunt again this year. we're unstoppable.

until next year.

Sunday, August 29, 2021

renault didn't show. he was still scared of the virus. he didnt miss much.

xavier brought some weed, and I figured I would try it for the first time. Its not like I was getting any younger. It made me cough like hell.

tabitha was mad at me. I knew she still had that image of eleven year old me in her head, but to be honest, I didn't even remember what it was like to be eleven, so while we sat by the fire, I reread what I wrote in 2015.

'I have a good memory, so I dont need to write EVERYTHING down.'

I started laughing. I couldnt remember *shit* these days.

all in all, not a bad weekend.

Sunday, August 28, 2022

I was never close with xavier but since it was only us two this year we smoked to our hearts content tabitha couldnt take off work and I knew that work was important but this is something that we had been doing for years and slowly but surely the cousins were dropping like flies and this fire beside me oh god this stupid fire was worthless because I felt so cold every time we came up to these godforsaken mountains whats gonna happen to us oh god oh

I asked xavier if he thought tabitha would disappear from our lives, just like henry and renault did. he said that nothing ever just disappears. I told him that was a dumb answer.

Sunday, August 25, 2024

the embers are barely illuminating the campground. I caught a glimpse of younger me playing in the shadows. I wanted to explode through the fabric of time, grab hold of her and ask *did you know? could you ever have imagined how youd be doing all these years later, how you'd feel about a random plot of dirt in the middle of nowhere?*

she would stare at me, wide-eyed, confused, just wanting to get back to whatever she was doing. I would let her go, let her have her fun, while I watched from my stump of a future, warmed by nothing except the sun of my past setting upon a distant horizon...

tabitha once said that she hoped the leaves never knew when it was their time to fall, because to know when it was your time to die was a curse she didnt wish upon her worst enemy.

when was our fire cursed, tabitha? when did it realize that it would eventually die out?



PROMPT 2

**NATURAL
ELEMENTS**

BENEFITS OF THE ELEMENTS

Clifford Time

I am the fire that warms you up
Gives you hope and gives you luck
I am the water that quenches your thirst
Gives you relief since your birth
I am the earth where you now walk
Where you run and where you talk
I am the air where you come alive
All together, we give you life

WAVERING

Hannah Lazerowitz

my mind permanently resides
in utter uncertainty
with thoughts
teetering between
my longing to drown
and my hatred of helplessness
i'm at a standstill
wanting to drench doubt
yet falling victim
to the currents
i may be water,
but i am an entire sea
uncontrollable,
continuously creating
crest upon the crashed

CURIOSITY

Mollie Grindberg

autumn-fallen leaves

Crunch

underneath the delicate crush of bare toes

wringed with muddy crevices

Squish

and smear nature together

curiously exploring the enigmatic

Chatter

between Earth and humans

WHISPERS OF AUTUMN

Melissa Morales

Cataclysmic roar gushing through the trees
Leaves falling down to kiss the cement
Rattling the floor beneath my feet
Lifting tendrils of my hair
Murmurs of witches and ghosts nearby
Smell of pumpkin wafting through the breeze
Closing my eyes as the wind hugs my body
Drifting up and floating towards the sky
As everything begins to unravel me

ALGIDITY

Mollie Grinberg

I don't know why
i've always loved the
 chill
 of the air
that swiftly blows towards me
on cold mornings

maybe because
it activates the
 fire
 in my blood
warming my cheeks

reminding me
that i am
 alive

2014

Carina Pierre-Louis

The ocean shields
My love for you
Over the horizon
The sun may set
And lay upon me

AS I WONDER

Bethany Friedmann

The soles of my feet know the earth better than I do.
Fragments hug every crevice as I walk on a blanket of searing heat,
Tripping on patches and wobbling over wrinkles as I approach the plane.

Cool, smooth, packed ground soothes my soles.
An ice blanket soothes my soul.
I fall to my knees, wrap myself in the glory
Of the cooling weight that drags me, weightless
Toward a land my feet do not know.

Fire kisses my half-closed eyelids.
I see colors that do not exist.
I am tossed aside, then drawn back in.
Is this what it means to feel
Alive?

Suddenly, home is an expanse:
The warmth around me and a far-off destination;
A jarful of innocence;
A spritz of contemplation.

I could kick at the unknown or dive into its mist,
Let my fears drag me back home, but this,
This is my home, this ravenous refreshment!
Here I am washed clean.
Here I am a new creation.

These silken robes enlace my shortcomings.
Silver and gold flash against towers of freedom.
I ride on, on! Into the endless emerald green
And weep as I wonder,
Does my Creator know how I love Him?



Bethany Friedmann

SHELTER

Janis Farrell

Funny, but I never cared for rain. I loved the sun, the feel of it, the warmth, the apricity, the promise. Now, I am naked in the sunlight. I crave the umbrella of rain. I look deep inside the people I used to know and examine the truths I once took for granted. The sun exposes the rot, but rain shields me from the pain.

I watch the world go by on a rainy day.

Crying my cares away

Drinking the hurt away

Grateful for a rainy day,

Craving the way things used to be,

When hearts were whole and pure

Before the day the world went mad,

Now that the whole world's gone mad.

Sheltering from the rain,

I watch the world go by from a hotel bar.

Washing the pain away,

Drinking my cares away,

Dreaming of the way things used to be,

Before the world went mad.

THE WIND, MY FRIEND

Alaina DiSalvo

The wind has always been my friend.
Amica mea aura est.

They call the soul “the breath of life,”
But I never understood that one.
Breath was vinegar-stained shouts
Or coffee-tinted smiles –
But words had been my life, forever,
Not breath.

My father loved to brush my hair.
It always hurt, every time.
I was such a pretty girl.
I wanted to get rid of my hair.

I didn’t trust the breath of the Earth.
As a child, I thought it hated me.
It blew my too-long hair
Slapping it into my face
Sticking it to my lip gloss.
At the time, I was annoyed
And felt a little scared
Because I knew, in my bones,
That it saw me
And it did not like what it saw.

I had misjudged the wind.
Unlike the man I knew,
The Earth was my friend,
And so was her sweetened breath.

The wind was giving me advice.
I cut off all my hair
Breathed a sigh of relief
And the wind tickled my legs
Gently, approvingly, in response.

It wanted me to be true
To rebel against the demon
That ruled my life,
And to be happy.

I listen for my friend
As I click down the concrete
Noting the birds and the butterflies
And the slow-moving roots.
I giggle as it blows in my face
I laugh as it pushes me from behind
As it tangles in between my calves
Places a hand on my shoulder.

The breath of the Earth is inspiration
The vital principle of life
It can torment, but only when it’s disturbed
Or tormented, or wrathful.
The wind has always been my friend.

Hello, it says,
Nudging me gently in the dusk
And I smile at my friend
That I always make sure to greet
And thank for its help.

I'M HERE

Shadae A. Brown

What if I disappeared?
Would you then understand why I'm here?
I am everywhere
When I'm nowhere
I'm near
Taken for granted
never acknowledged
I AM HERE
Move silently
Sometimes violently
You can feel me
You can't see me
Breathe deeply
When you need me
I'm air

PROMPT 3

THE

FIFTH

ELEMENT

THE UNKNOWN

Melissa Morales

Traversed through space and time
Psychedelic swirls of stars twinkling by
Into the mist something untraveled
Not even celestials can reach
Aglow with fire and light
Rain and darkness
Through tempest of chaos
In this place of the unknown

ASTRONAUT & GRAVEDIGGER

V Ritchie

a shovel stuck in dirt
my sword in stone

you pulled me toward the sun
i couldn't let the handle go

i released you for just a second
fell from the heavens into mud

you floated away
i finished my grave

you were born for stardust
my love
i was born for the worms



I let myself go tonight.
I freed myself of my burdens.
As the moon shone through my window
I danced away the pain.
All of what no longer serves me
the moon washed away with its rays.
Thank you, Moon, for your capacity for release.
Thank you for your unlimited power. Now I am
free.
This Leo shines through you in all of your glory.
When my Virgo sun rises I will be ready.



THE SEA WITCH

Kayla Ariana

Little miss fish baby,
For the last time
I can hear the sirens' cry.
There's not much time
To apologize for
Luring you in,
Capturing your heart,
Calling it mine,
To sacrifice your body
And having it sink at sea.
I hope you can understand
The consequences
Of leaving the reef,
Because isn't it lonely when no one can hear you
scream?
Since your daddy didn't pick me to be queen,
When you return
you'll belong to me.

WHISPERS

Brenna Gannon

It had been there for about a week before I heard the first whispers.

It was a strange color—could it even be called a color? It was grey, maybe black, and shiny. It looked like glass but felt sticky when touched. I only dared to touch it once—the pulling sensation I felt in my head and chest immediately sent warning signals through every part of my brain and body, and I knew the next time I might not be so lucky.

After that first morning, the day felt so long. All I could think about was that strange thing on the wall. I initially tried to reason it away. Maybe water damage, paint, some kind of chemical? I probably should have told someone about it, but... I didn't. It felt personal, like it was only meant for me and my eyes and no one else. I hid it by putting a poster up on the wall. Although, it didn't seem to want to be hidden. Every night the poster fell off, no matter how strong the tape, regardless of the amount I put on the edges.

After the first week, the whispers started. It was only at night, when I was in my bed. At first, it was soft enough that I could play it off as my cat moving about the house, or wind from outside. My bed was against the left wall of my room, tucked in the corner. The... thing—as I am unsure what else to call it—was a few feet away on the wall. The whispers were so soft, I thought I'd imagined them. But they got louder and louder, to the point where I couldn't pass them off as my imagination. There were real whispers coming out of that mark, calling to me. I felt the urge to put my ear on the wall to discern what was being sent to me. But at the same time, I was hesitant. I still had no idea what the spot was capable of and why it was here.

School began to suffer. All I could think about day in and day out was that mark. My teachers noticed me go from my usual concentrated and involved self to a person unable to pay attention for long periods of time, forgetful. I didn't care about things like I used to. I grew distant from my friends, as they knew I was hiding something, yet I wouldn't tell them what it was. I was so protective of the anomaly on my wall, when all it did was drive me crazy.

My father noticed as well. One night after school and when he got home from work, he sat me down.

"Listen," he said, "I understand if things have been hard for you. Senior year is stressful, and it can have an impact."

I looked at him.

"I'm fine." I said, and I meant it. I was just...distracted. Fascinated. Aching to know more.

The look on his face was one of skepticism, but he didn't push. All he did was sigh and say, "Okay. But I'm here for you, alright?"

I nodded.

“Can I go now?” I asked, “I have homework to do.” He gave me a smile and nodded back in response. I went upstairs to my room.

That night I sat and stared at the thing on my wall for hours until I fell asleep where I was sitting.

Things got worse after that. I didn’t do my homework, I spent my classes staring out the window, and I spent my free time staring at that wall. Any time my father tried to talk to me, I gave short, uninterested answers and eventually began to avoid speaking to him all together. I couldn’t figure out why I was so obsessed and why I couldn’t tell anybody else. It felt like it was only for me.

Now, sitting in my dark room in the middle of the night, it happens.

I finally can make out a voice. It’s soft and gentle, calling to me. It wants me to touch the spot on the wall. The voice is so welcoming, and it struck a chord in me that was impossible to ignore. I have been waiting for this. I have always been waiting and hoping since I first saw this thing appear. I reach out to it, just one more time. I need to. But this time, I wasn’t flooded with warning signs. I felt a warmth I hadn’t felt in a long time, spreading from my head to my fingers to my toes. I want more. I need to keep going, to see and hear more.

I had to go. My hand begins to disappear as I reach in.

I haven’t heard my late mother’s voice in over eight years.

3:07
A^M

V Ritchie

fiberglass stars

fluorescent sun

i'm reaching for the lines
between rectangle universes

playing snake between constellations

i follow the x-axis to the y
home isn't where I left it

i stare at the sun
the only face i recognize
retinas on fire

ceiling tiles and office lights

a girl on the edge

home isn't where I left it
home isn't where I left it

a cough cuts through
a glance at a watch
a look of concern

i'm back on solid ground

PENDULUM

Michael Anchor

Close your doors....

As it slips away....

Try to trap it....

As you count the hours....

Until you're safe....

But until then....

Time slips away....

Relish in time....

Slipping through your fingers....

But it always leaves....

As you count the days....

Until you're free....

Only until then....

Life carries on....

In the alley we saw a cat.

He was white and ragged from the rain
so Sid ran back the way we came
to get the crate we saw by the dump.
I stayed put; the cat backed further into the gate.
The thing was trembling and when Sid returned
we gave it the last of the fries we almost tossed,

the ones in the soiled bag.
The cat instead took delight in smacking with his paw
the grease stains on the paper, and we used the bag
as crate lining, waited for him to follow.
Sid carried him half the way to my house
and I called my brother to tell him
we had another one in tow.

At some point the body went limp.
We left the cat in the crate.
We left the cat in the crate next to the lake
and tried to push it in to give him
some sort of ceremony. But
it was raining and my brother was waiting
and neither Sid nor I could stomach how the crate
would sink, the cat to be forgotten
at the bottom like a crushed soda can.

Sid found an umbrella somewhere. Half-broken
and deserted and coated in mud.
Positioned it over us for the rest of the way.

Sometime during the night the two of us had
variations of the same dream:
The cat, silhouetted by our windows—
Us getting up to let him in—
The thing translucent and fat and eternal—
Looking deep into our eyes and
dropping in front of us
a soggy French fry.

GHOST CAT

Julia Andresakis

A LETTER TO NATALIE WOOD

Alexander Loukopoulos

my screen is enveloped
by your hands,
 fingernails borne of polished shell,
 skin of calloused sponge,
an imperfect union
 of the seafoam and the
stars,

like those in the hollywood hills,
spinning stories,
 acid green with jealousy,
as if the moon itself
wouldn't halt the tides if it meant
 the crater of your palms
 across its freckled face

so there's nobody who could convince me
 in the dew of your
 sadness,
you even wrote the words "I do
 not deserve love,"
with those hands that cried
 from happiness
at the thought of returning home
the same way they left it,
wrinkled,
 cold,
submerged in the dark
 waters,
 solitary,
 but never alone.

BE STEEL MY HEART

Hannah Bodek

Working on love
Is like penetrating steel
With garden shears
Knowing the only way to cut it open
Is to will it to change
To say a spell
And see the steel melt
I hold it sopping in my hands
It soaks my fingertips
Tickles the nodes between my fingers
The parts it's often too hard to reach
Flows through my man-made receptacle
That has flaws
It has fingernails that it clings to
And scars it can't cover up
Resin can't seep into cracks
Where pain has already marked its ground
Sat down on a highway
And protested
One man with a sign
Ineffective
Relying on a miracle

Cast a spell
And open an artery
No anesthetic
No nitrous
A crane's neck looking down
Down at a beating heart
Attached by arteries
You didn't know we're so small
So strong
No degree
No prior experience
A steak knife in an amateur's hand
Everyone encounter of the heart is different
We're never adequately prepared

Give me a stick
Simple birch
Or polished oak
A faint little thing
That I want to snap, but
Won't



Let it hold power hearts can't access
Our brains build walls against it
A spell to be vulnerable
A spell to be honest and true
A spell to grasp on to love given to me
A spell to give me a bowl

A big bowl
Sturdy but strangely light
The sun will reflect on it
It will confidently hold steel
Let mundane things be magical
Let me elevate what I couldn't conceive
Break barriers and build stronger ones
A spell to go to the future
Imbued with the knowledge
Of medicine ancient and new
Give me a spell so I can perform
Heart surgery on myself

Oliver Collet

The background is an abstract, textured surface with a mottled pattern of light pink, pale yellow, and off-white. The texture resembles a rough-painted wall or a piece of aged paper with visible brushstrokes and grain. The colors are blended together, creating a soft, organic feel.

**GET
STUCK.**