

Stuck In The Library



STAFF

Skyla Medina
Melissa Morales
Uswai Husna
Elene Tsagareishvili
Victoria Ritchie
Selicia Graham
Samantha Liggieri
Sayquan Wooden
Rima Akter
Brenna Gannon
Riana Kolari
Layal Suliaman
Shanza Rizwan
Mariyah Rajshahiwalla
Shannon Wong
Jolie V. Gutierrez
Nyanna Barkley
Stephanie Jimenez Reyes
Rose Popal
Natalia Yurovych
Ariel Matthews
Jo Ferreira

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Cover Art by La Bruja

CONTRIBUTING

Wei Jian Zhen	Lolita Lupita
Sayquan Wooden	Alexander Loukopoulos
Shannon Wong	Hannah Lazerowitz
Delasia Vanterpool	Riana Kolari
Raina V	Mekhi Harper
Elene Tsagareishvili	Jolie V Gutierrez
Konstantina Theofanopoulou	Olga Godwin-Brown
Melenie Tapia	Sade Garcia
Brenna Gannon	Chemo Emo
Heaven Stith	DHANTÉ
Solo	Alleyah Charlton
Samantha Shane	Violet Belmont
Javier Riveros	Diana Athena
Lex Rivera	Anjna Arun
V Ritchie	Michael Anchor
Jael Peets	Eliel Mizrahi
Sam Patrick	Martyna Miller
N H	Skyla Medina
	Melissa Morales

Heaven

Heaven Stith

Heathen
A godless child
Nonbeliever of your own namesake

.
.
.

Incorrect
Heaven is not a place
But a feeling
Created by the individual

Soft pillows
Cups of tea
Music and games and food
Those whom I hold close to my heart

Have I ever stepped into a church to pray?
No. I am agnostic.
Have I ever read the bible for sermons?
No. I have holy scriptures of my own
and they are not centuries old
dusty and unedited.

Each page is a new story
Every waking day

My altar has no wine or eucharist wafers
No rosary
No holy water
No frankincense or myrrh

Instead
There are candy-scented candles
Soda cans and chocolate bar wrappers
And gold chokers

A pagan girl with a christian name
Man's greatest irony yet
But I let people say
"I am *blessed* by your presence"
To inflate my godless complex

For I am a feeling
Created by me

FRANKENSTEIN

Lex Rivera

Like Victor Frankenstein, I am obsessed with making a body
I want it to have broad shoulders
To be tall with large hands to match larger feet
Its face will be impossibly handsome with kind eyes and sweet lips
I want to build a body and live inside it
I'll cut pictures from my magazines and steal bones from my favorite tv shows
Cutting hair and sewing flesh to flesh
For their hair, I'll rip out my own and keep it in a glass jar by the window because it
deserves
some sun too
I want to build a body and live inside it
The one I'm in is all full of scraps
My waist is not small but my back is wide
My hands are too large for
Scrawny wrists and sharp elbows
My feet are big, for a girl
And my face is jaded by baby fat
Chubby naive cheeks
Instead of being the doctor I am the Monster
My skin feels too tight
I can't walk on stumbling feet
Like the Monster, I can't talk about what's wrong all I know is the pain of being myself
I want to build a body and live inside it
But my feet are too large
And my hands don't fit in my pockets
And I don't know how to build, only destroy

Autumn's Beauty

Raina V

Leaves suffocate,
Turn into different shades.
People smile at them
In their demise
“How beautiful!”
These changing colors.

The sunlight that reflects,
Off these carpets
Strung of golden leaves
Tranquility is life coming to its end.

In These Streets

Wei Jian Zhen

Playing catch at the ballpark with my friends,
Shooting hoops like I'm the next all-star player,
Or racing 'round the neighborhood with flavor and style.
That's how I like it.
Yeah, that's right.
That's how I like it.

Walking to the local deli,
Putting twenty dollars down for a fresh salami-avocado BLT sub,
With a side order of barbecue chips,
And a bottle of cola.
Delicious, good food.
Delicious, good food.
Mmmnnnnmmnn.

People are always helping each other.
The folks I know gather at the community center
On Saturday painting, carrying, serving, and making each other laugh.
I say hi to all of them when we meet,
And they say hi back with a smile.
We smile in these streets.
We live in these streets.
We are together in these streets.

POEM

Sayquan Wooden

I still feel in awe
with the power of words
destined
to take us above & beyond.

From one generation
to the next
we create and leave history
of our time.

The means of literature
The lenses of ourselves
and the stairway to life.

We are living embodiments
of what we love
nurture
enjoy
and admire.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Javier Riveros

I board the crowded subway train
finding my way to the street on Main.

I stand by the door, alone
mindlessly browsing my phone.

Everyone else is doing the same,
But our eyes meet for un momento
Offering each other a piece, un fragmento.
And I wonder, reader: what is your name?

Who do you love and who have you lost?
Where are you going and where will you be?
What would you do if you were truly free?
Who would you fight for, and at what cost?

These are the stories you bring
with dreams of being perfect
and memories worthy to protect.
And that, my friend, is everything.

Perhaps, would you want the world on a string?

Out of Body

Raina V

Look in the mirror,
What do you see?
Who do you see?
You are not you,
An anonymous figure,
An unfamiliar face.
Where is your soul?
Not inside your body.
Pinch yourself in three,
One...
Two...
Three...
Did it hurt?
Are you back?
No?
I'm sorry.

Hey Soul

Shannon Wong

are you the thing that powers my vision,
perched at the center of the head
using the eyes like binoculars?

why do we see ourselves like this in the mirror,
the shell that contains us, picking out the flaws
no one else sees?

I wonder what color you are; if you're just a ball of
floating energy running throughout?

are you a dark, smoky blue,
perhaps a warm golden light?

will we one day separate or move together
elsewhere

through time & space?

will we exchange energies,
become different,

as we are always everchanging?

Autumn Hope

Elene Tsagareishvili

Hello,

As fleeting as the green of the blossom of the leaf of the second season. And another thing which never lasts but I wish I could have forever, is love on that summer's night. Love on a summer's night... What does it mean? And everything I felt then is imprinted on my soul.

Jelly-pink nails tinker with my necklace; green-plastic beads wink their charm like the sparks that spill from my eyes. This feels a lot like that time when I braved the highway for hours. Headlights coming at me and darkness eats the rest; my feet can't find a solid path on this two-faced road.

Where am I going and why do I hasten there? No one awaits; I left all my heart's confidants with the names that encompass my soul. If my pain had amounted to their love, would it have been worth it? I'm sorry, but I wouldn't do it again. But I'm happy at least it wasn't in vain. Seeing someone happy, at least, stalls the bitter edge in my heart. In this hour of despair, my need grows dire. But it matters not, not as long as...

I only need be strong, and my strength need be greater than my desire. That's all it is. How to brave the gusto that is the wind of fate? I was scared and I wished there was someone I could've collapsed onto. But there is no company for hurts like these.

-I wish I were someone different, more than anything else.

-Well that's a dumb wish, wish for something else.

-I wish it had never happened.

-What?

-Everything I can't make myself say.

-...Everything will be alright, you'll see.

How do you say...? "No need to say that, darling" -*darling, darling*- "you need only be yourself".

Then, in that moment, I had youth and plenty and gave one precious second to the forgetting of that surely creeping fall. And though I knew it would also surely turn to winter, I thought "could I love the snow as I once had, for one more time?"

BURNT FIELD

N H

You scrub your skin raw
But the ash from a father's anger
permeates.
And the smoky smell will fill your senses
every time a man yells

You wipe your cheeks
But the stains left by a mother
lingers.
They'll be freshened
every time you dream
too much

You bandage raw scabs
But the knife of your sibling's vitriol
Still gifts you with a phantom twist
in your spine.

The child runs to you
Shaking yet inspired
Sprinting but with a limp
"Take me home" they say.
You sigh

And bring them to a burned field.
"This is all we'll know"

The child looks up
Your eyes stare back at you
"Haven't I died
enough for the both of us?"

Please keep trying. This can heal.

-N.H

{AUGUST IN RIDGEWOOD}

Sam Patrick

shoestring clouds wisp
amongst the smog.
giant needles
puncture
the marmalade sky.
there's bubble gum bridges,
and shrouded windows,
further than my breath
can extend.
the skyline,
is a shadowy graph of survival.
we are on the front lines.
weary yellow buttons
litter my vision.
distant sirens disturb
the quiet in my bones.
facades of rust and ash
color me in,
like the faded tattoos
on this rooftop.
the sticky summer heat
kisses the back
of my neck.
comfort dissolves
on the tip
of my tongue.
and you,
with your sandy-
blonde bob,
and your slightly gnawed
fingers slipped into
the back pockets of
your navy denim,
remind me to
digest the little things.

BORDERLINE 2

v ritchie

don't

float

above

yourself

for

too long,

babe

your vacancy sign

blinks too loud

there are thieves

&takers assuming

the silhouettes of heroes

&they yearn to pillage for

a semblance

of warmth

in your

harrowed

halls

QUICKSAND

Sam Patrick

The bed
where I lie
is quicksand
and I am
awake,
choking on
sticky salt,
blinking with
cactus eyelids,
forking through
fleeting thoughts
of dying
on this
dying planet.
the world is
a crystal jar,
with a single
sugar crystal
clinging to
its base,
and so am I.
watery,
and fiery,
is the grave.
there is
nothing
for me here,
nothing and
no one.
only apathy
expands my lungs.
only misery
satisfies my hunger.
hollow is the

cavity
which stores
my nectar.
heavy are the
grains
that pervade
my orifices.
the bed
where I lie
is quicksand,
and I am
asleep,
grunting through
twisted teeth,
cloaking my
frame in
a blanket
of ruins,
nurturing
desperate dreams
of dying
on this
dying planet.
for,
even
the earth
has lost
her will to
respire;
so,
why
should I
be any
different.

----BROKEN SILENCE----

Jael Peets

Let's clap it up for America
Who causes all the hysteria
We hold these truths to be self evident
That all men are equal but I'm not content

You see u judge me based on my melanin flow but all the knowledge in my head is
something
you would never know

See the scariest thing black youth can do is read a book
Hit em with that knowledge everybody gets shook
When we talk and sound smart the majority get scared
Believing our "illiterate" race should stay impaired

The darker the berry the sweeter the juice but not everyone enjoys the taste of our fruit
Every pigment is a statement from without and within
How the hell do u pay for America's sins

Every strand of black hair is coiled with oppression
Tryna live down hundreds of years of depression
Lynchings beatings killings and more
Is this the type of America foreigners are aiming for?

Philando Trayvon and Sandra Bland, sad to see how some police hold life or death in
their hands
Tight curls Afros bonnets and Durags on our heads
Fail to see our beauty we're statistics instead

But the color of our skin gives one more reason just to breathe
Cling on to our culture see how much we can achieve

Cuz even though u weren't picking cotton on the field this shouldn't affect how being
black

Black Kings and queens working way too hard to be themselves in their beautiful skins
blessed
by God
Swept under the rug cuz nobody shows us love but what if we took a chance and we
started
rising above
So stop the Self Oppression
And start the Expression
Address the way you feel and get out of the depression
You can't have change if u don't speak up
Black America has decided they've had enough

I wanna see black nurses doctors dancers and more
This is the America I'm hoping for
So reach for the stars
don't ever hold back
Cuz when they see us making stacks they want our confidence to crack
But we
Continue to be

UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK

13 - Death

Heaven Stith

Everyone runs from my footsteps:
humans
animals
insects
They run.

But I am not the one they fear.
I am only a guardian.
A teacher.

Young Master
however
is a force of reckoning.

I teach him all I can
about cycles
and how to end them
in order to make room for the new.

But his temperament
and lack of control
is what causes all to fear us.

Fungi grow under his feet
leaving a trail of decay.
Yet his steps make no sound wherever he goes.

There is grieving in his wake
yet all I can do is follow
and observe

He laughs at the tears of the mourning
amused and confused.

“Why the tears?
I’ve made room for more of you!”

He’s still too young to understand
no matter how I explain.

Everyone runs from my footsteps;
Futile attempts to keep their distance.

But I understand.
The sound of my footsteps
means he’s already among them.

WILL YOU BRAID MY HAIR, MOM?

Lex Rivera

My mom is braiding my hair in two
I am wondering if I'll miss the rust at the bottom of the tub
Or the water that's never the right temperature
Or the floors that have caught me, held me, hurt me
All in one day
Wondering if I'll always think of this place as home
To me it's just walls but even as I say that lie, I see my life
In perfect stillness in every room
I could walk by me 10 years ago and not know it was me
Because my face is changing, I am changing
And I'm getting mad because she's not braiding my hair right and it's going to be crook-
ed and I'm in a rush
And the thought of not living here stills me into silence
And she's braiding my hair and I'm packing bags in my head
Come September I'll be gone
So, I sit in pain and let her braid
Because I will surely miss this
The way you miss your bed after a long day
The way you miss the rain in a drought
Or a cold drink in the summer
I will miss my mother
But if I stay here there will be nothing left of me to miss
She braids my hair and I let her fingers dig into my scalp reminding me I will never get
rid of this moment
With each wave of her finger, I am thinking
I love you I love you I love you I love you

So finally, when she is done, I say thank you
And mean it
And she smiles at me, all wide and proud
I walk away before I can cry

RETURN

Javier Riveros

Now I am quietly waiting,
Unbeknownst for what or for whom
With the Fates' plotting, abating
Whereby, rest assured, a shared doom.

A most useless endeavor of late,
Best a solemn requiem for what was,
For too often does my mind fixate
On new beauty as per illusion, ignites.

With my third eye dreading
the truths and reason of sight,
Albeit, it consumes mere shadows and lights.

Now I, alone in faded being,
Ruminate who I've been and what I've done,
Alas, with the circle complete, I have begun
anew in realms already trekked
as I lie still under the midnight sun.

Waiting.

The Journey Is Never Over

Sayquan Wooden

We embark on journeys
that marks an appreciation
for nature's own aesthetics

That marks a creation
for what doesn't exist
or perhaps a concept
in need of development

Or maybe an opportunity
on the other side of the door

Vision implemented in the human race
allows love, appreciation, and awareness
within growing a society
on a beauty & personal level

Our determination to strive past our limits
defines a universal character in every one of us

Whether it's in color
black or white
blurred
or blind

A vision
to express
see potential
aspire change
and hope
into the masses
shows that this journey
is everlasting.

Chakrasana

Diana Athena

i break my bones
into a wheel to feel
free in this body
and a thought falls
outta my foolish head

in braided thread
memory—fantasy—doubt
she dances in tall
trees swirling sinister
and lands onto a page

in cursive, catching
continuation of dharma
darting syllables
into another mind daring
to stir a revolution

my bones bounce back
to upright posture
the thought falls
into a poem
and floats

collection

Alexander Loukopoulos

your science is
ripe, adolescent.
flood the dark with congealed
answers,
and the new moon will surely follow.

the hidden formula of your heart
is not yours to keep. it is
the generation's
deepest desire
to birth oceans of experience,
as it is yours.

do not fear the touch of a stranger's hand.
break through the earth and
offer them the rain.
only together can you approach
the riddle of love.

observe the distant thunderstorm of destiny.
how the jagged
fingers
reach down to us all
in chaotic reverence,
reminding us that time
is a fiery talon retracted
infinitely
into our bones, waiting
to slice us apart
if we let it.

we grow with every step we take
from ourselves.

The watery-warm nights will march us
onwards.

PAnIc AtTaCkS

Anjna Arun

I have anxiety.
It rips through my bones,
Clawing through skin and ripping at throats,
I see nothing and everything,
My tears flood my face,
Suffocating and choking
Chest in my mouth,
Gagging at air,
My voice taken, my sound broken.

I am in my room surrounded by walls I know,
But I don't know them.
Not right now. Not like this.
I am in my room, but it feels like the valley of death.
I am in a battle,
Where it feels like my legs are taken,
And my body is not my own
I am clutching for something,
Hands clawed and outstretched,
I don't know what I'm looking for,
I can't think right now,
But maybe my heart is heaving for a savior,
To tell me the truth I know but don't remember

The world is not collapsing.

I am not dying.

This anxiety might seem real, but I am in control of my body.

I am alive and well.

So, I start listing things in my room,
Between stolen breaths,
I speak—my voice invisible and broken,
But I mouth the words anyway.

Brown desk. I sit there when I'm trying to study.

I'm in my room but I don't remember these walls,
But I must try to remind myself that this
shadow is not mine,
I take a deep breath, try to hold it for four and fail...

...Pink sweater. I wear that when I'm cold.

I hear my voice now. It does not sound like mine.
Cracked and raw,
Like crushed glass under soles.
I unclench my palm, one finger at a time.
Neurons firing as they scramble to follow what I'm trying to command them to do,
It feels like an eternity,
I take a breath and hold for four...

...I don't fail.

I try again and again and again,

Black photo frame—I am smiling in that picture.

I take a breath and another one,
Fingers clenching and unclenching,
I remind myself I am here.

Blue Bible. I read that every morning. I am not alone.

A breath and another,
My walls look like my own. Faded yellow and full of life.
I force myself to remember,
I try and try again to remember.
I am alive and well.
I am not alone no matter what the voices are trying to say,

*I am not alone
I am not alone
I am not alone.*

I cry freely now without the stone lodged in my throat,
I cry for myself and for my heart that has been through war and betrayal,
I embrace my mind because it is my own even though at times such as these I convince myself it's not,
I unfurl my fingers and hold myself,
Reminding my frightened body it is loved and whole,
And I thank it for trying its best to protect me despite the false alarms,
And I start to remember the truths I had forgotten,

The world is not collapsing.

I am not dying.

This anxiety might seem real, but I am in control of my body.

I am alive and well.

- Anjna

The Pit

Michael Anchor

The pit is deep.
I raise myself out of the hole.
I climb its walls
As the dirt and gravel
Flies into my face.
Sometimes it pelts
Like light rain
From scattered clouds,
Sometimes it pours
Like torrential waters
From off a cliffside.

But I keep going,
Desperate to see a good life,
Desperate to see friends,
Desperate to see family.
As I claw my way out
Of that dark pit
I reach out to the world...

...and no one is there to extend their hand.

All that remains
Are ghostly twin cats
Who left me long ago
And a dastardly skeleton
Still waiting for its turn.

I lower myself back into the hole.
The pit is deep,
Yet it's all I know.

C a t c h m e i f y o u c a n

Jolie V Gutierrez

She ran past me and straight into our mother's arms.
Spoke between breaths and gulps of water.
Sugar-coated rust on wired fences,
fresh paint over the cellar door.
I took the car keys and left through the back door.
I left it open in case I needed to come back.
Dust-covered ignition and bottles of beer in the back seat.
Just like the ones he drank before they took him.
Blue and red lights, black and blue skin.
There weren't enough hours in the day,
or days in the week.
She had a good day at school, made a new friend we can't see.
They speak every day and she calls him "pa."
I clean up her puzzle pieces after playtime.
She gives up, but
I'm trying to make the pieces fit.
The next day I do the same. And the next, and the next, and the next.
They play hide-and-seek,
And I think I'm playing the game
wrong
because I still haven't found him.
My mother stopped playing a long time ago.
She found the empty bottles of beer instead and
replaced them with new ones. And did it again, and again, and again.
I waited for him on the front porch, with a cigarette and his favorite lighter.
Maybe the flame or the smell of my burning
patience would bring him back.
He's playing tag and we're it.

happy day armada

Alexander Loukopoulos

leather-headed, dynamite
in the soles of my shoes, I thought about the kingdom
in your eyes as I traveled across the thunder-
laden asphalt to meet the riddle on your chest.
the fledgeling sun, survivor of dawn's
conflict with the stars, illuminated
the layers of red built upon my back, and
together, the two of us were tired soldiers
returning home from some lovely war.
my fragile skull slowly forgot
about the spiders running across my heart,
and remembered how the sky is also
a dream coming true, how tomorrow is a firm,
golden torso that promises me the world
is not so dark. what would happen if
I had been forced to study more decades
of this soulless gray? of twisted wood, man-
made sinew, metal bars bent into
metal hands thrust from a jaded earth? my mind
would only become a violent ax
attempting to split the impossible
in search of bloodied answers that forever seep
through the cracks in my memory

...

now the present calls me back to bed,
where you litter my thoughts,
and the sun hones its rays across my neck.

The Dead are Gone but the Living Must Keep on Living and I Hate You for It

Anjna Arun

How pathetic to think the world revolves around your misery.

That's not true...

And yet all I hear from your mouth is how forlorn your world is,
How you hate living.
That life is worth nothing.

Does that mean I'm worth *nothing*?

I'm tired of hearing it,
But the only way to stop seems to be saying goodbye,
And I can't imagine seeing you go,
So instead, I sit here and play third wheel to your heartbreak.

Screw you and your complicated feelings.
I can only give so much of myself until I'm left with crumbs of who I used to be around
you,
A shell...

...Hollowed out by your truths
And yet I gather up those crumbs and make them into blossoms,
Hoping at least that will convince you to stay.
— I cannot lie and say that I'm not glad you're here.

- Anjna

Soft Water

Martyna Miller

They say that's the secret
to NY's bagels.

Soft water fish
scatter their eggs in
the hairy legs of floaters
the lightfooted fuzz
of peach, flesh snagged
in the corners.

The tongue emerges
from the dark to wipe
away echoes.

Maybe you can still taste the fruit salad like a lip gloss.

Soft water sanctified
by the salmon that
throttle upstream.

This soul in me
has begged
for its body
to be given back.

The human remains
here in the dirt.
So what is it that leaves
in the final exhale?
The most violent parts are left,
the softest is the quickest to go.

Brooklyn

Alexander Loukopoulos

the skyline settles into the clutches of misandry -
a sick progression towards the last stone period,
void of ire, and slowly ending in commas, commas...
Brooklyn! our velvet portal, dance with the spats of ions.
fill our eyes with the moonshine of your fabrics
and let us in on the secret of wandering.
lust for your definition paints our plastic hearts, always
my life is just a lonely shipyard dressed in tatters.
but even strangers feel the buildings hum
and electric brewing in their tailbones.
we watch, drenched in your arrows, pointing to the stars,
how you callous yourself mercilessly
until every digit is a spiral staircase
leading to the throat of the world.
oh, portentous salamander, a firefight awaits me gently
the nights I explore your human industry.

to my body iii

Hannah Lazerowitz

i wanted to apologize
for wallowing in
wreckage,
while you were
weeping wholly.

i wanted to apologize
for diminishing
your light,
while you were
struggling to fight.

i wanted to apologize
for wielding
your vivacity
towards vanity.

i wanted to apologize
for smashing your ship,
while we were lost
at sea.

i wanted to apologize
for rupturing your
rawness and
cruelly confining
your vastness.

i wanted to apologize
for unsympathetically
splintering your grandeur
and gutting your glory.

i wanted to apologize
for exerting my wrath,
rather than appreciating
your worth.

i wanted to apologize
for plunging into
a dimness deserted.

i wanted to apologize
for overlooking
your phenomenon—
it's palpable
and profound.

[**UNINVITED**]
Riana Kolari

My grief is here today.
I didn't invite it in
but it came in anyways
It crawled through the window
and made its way toward me.
It sent a shiver across my skin
as it got in
Creeping closer and closer
until it reached the hole
in my heart
and it stayed there.

RETRO SNEAKERS

Mekhi Harper

I am from retro sneakers
inside the closet
where there is absolute dust.

I am from a gray broom
that sweeps in and out
of the closet
to keep things neat.

I am from inspection
that monitors
both my bedroom
and closet to keep things clean.

I am from clear storage bins
that stores old sneakers
to deliver to charity.

I am from a heart
made of gold
that cares about people
who don't have anything.

STORMY GRAY

Olga Godwin-Brown

Blowing winds shake the leaves of the mulberry tree
Curving around each one as a lover would, encapsulating and unpredictable

The air vibrates with the sound of thunder
Energy in its space, charging and electrifying

Everything knows what is coming, all things living and not.

The serpentine coils of the sky darken the land,

slowly they swell, larger, angrier,

Then all at once the tears fall.

Storm has arrived.

Free Minds Wonder

Delasia Vanterpool

They say the past stays in the past for a reason.
Thinking far back will be committing Treason.
You swore an oath to protect yourself.

Your own well being.

To keep yourself out of harm's way.

But

A Free Mind Wonders

Even to this day.

I walk in the streets like a MAN

Because I was nourished by his

Right. Hand.

A mothers love never carried me.

A Free Mind Wonders

What will it be like as a whole?

I'm only half of what I was meant to be.

My childhood fades away into oblivion.

Trapped.

In Hatred. Bewilderment. Guilt. Envy.

Poison

Filters my blood stream.

I laugh believing this is the end.

How can you watch someone you love perish?

For years I've been trying to grasp the understanding of abandonment.

But I never came to any conclusions.

As a little girl all I ever wanted was a family.

I cried until Tears weren't enough.

I grew depressed until I was not immune to depression any longer.

I slept outside for hours on a cold bench right next to the homeless, until I grew tired of being alone.

From that point on I knew you wouldn't come for me.

A Child's song is a Dove's Cry

But

Not even my heart can witness how much I love you.

Free Minds Wonder

How to become a better person than the one that left them behind.

I Am Not Alone.

For the **Little Black Girl** in me has learnt

How to fly all on her own.

The Waiting Room

Malenie Tapia and Brenna Gannon

I went with Aunt Consuelo
to keep her dentist's appointment
and sat and waited for her
in the dentist's waiting room.
Consuelo means comfort but
her screams made my body *shiver*.
It was summer. There were no
kids playing outside. No smiles
visible through the thin, cotton mask
that hid the sweat above their lips.
No small talk to fill up the empty space
and relieve the nerves *buzzing*
beneath everyone's skin.
The waiting room was almost empty.
There was a television in the corner, the
grown-ups glued their eyes to the screen.
"Do not leave your house for 14 days if..."
I checked my phone to see if there were
any updates for when we could come back
to school, after a month, still no luck.
I was starting to miss my friends and
strangely enough, my teachers too.
I remembered the last time
we were in class we learned
the different parts to a cell:
Mitochondria, nucleus, ribosome...
What happens when one fails?
The whole thing dies.
We're dying slowly, too.
I can see it in the masks and
gloves that litter the sidewalk,
the drawn faces and
quick strides,
as if walking faster could
escape the disease.
My 13th birthday was last week
and no one remembered, I think
I forgot too. My mother bought
sanitizer, masks, and a lifetime
supply of toilet paper as presents.
I heard the drill start up once again,
faint groans echoed and bounced off
the pale-gray walls and corny posters.

Posters with maskless, smiling
families and people who weren't
sick and aunts who weren't in pain.
Posters advocating for health,
rules to ensure that health,
but brushing my teeth
won't bring back my uncle.
Flossing in between
won't erase the fear
that coats the walls
of every room I sit in.
I glimpsed the corner screen, then
quickly averted my eyes out the window,
I let them rest upon our ghost-town city.
The subways were catacombs infected
with bacteria that *they* said would kill us.
On our way to the dentist
my aunt told me they were closing
the office the following week
because people were quitting out of fear.
Later she told me that God took away fear,
I'm starting to think he's the one that caused this.
Why would God want the weakest to die first when
they told me God helped the vulnerable the most?
It didn't make sense, nothing made sense.
Sense left when we left our schools,
left our work, left our lives.
I used to think that fending for yourself
was something that only happened
in scary stories and horror movies,
that reality wasn't every man for himself,
that we'd help each other, care for one another.
As toilet paper runs out and patience grows thin,
I realize I don't know the world
like I thought I did.
I remember being little and
finding comfort in holding hands
and hugging bodies.
Now it's 6 feet between life and death.
The *COVID* pandemic. Outside,
Everywhere, and in New York City,
it was still the first of April, 2020.

nöktûrn'

Martyna Miller

I'll love anything which is soft
but also thunderous.
Still in the dark
waiting to hear
the sound I haven't heard.
A soft subtle pulse by midnight
design—a lighthearted melancholy.
The lights are dimmed
and it seems a bit more holy.
With the tv shut off, mostly everyone is asleep.
Interrogations and doubt
slip away within their dreams.
The highway reverie, I enter and speed off,
headlights low, indifferent
to the meter.
Unencumbered,
as I could live for myself.

to my abuser

Hannah Lazerowitz

you hollow me wholly,
hollering “not enough”
whilst my bones thrash
against the brick wall
 of inadequacy
 you induce me
 towards the mirror,
 slipping insecurity
coldly down my neck
 you reduce my
 magnificence to
 a mere reflection
 you blanket my
body under a tarp
 of debilitating
 disgust,
blocking my being
from the slightest
shimmer of sun

you rob my life
 of color
you spray me
with self-loathing
you treat me
 like *shit*-
 and i only
 curse
 on special
occasions

and i wish
i knew how
 to grab
my life back
from your
 viscid
fingers, but
instead i'm
helplessly
floundering
above water,
my vessel
 rotting
and reeking
of ruin

Soft Water

Martyna Miller

They say that's the secret
to NY's bagels.

Soft water fish
scatter their eggs in
the hairy legs of floaters
the lightfooted fuzz
of peach, flesh snagged
in the corners.

The tongue emerges
from the dark to wipe
away echoes.

Maybe you can still taste the fruit salad like a lip gloss.

Soft water sanctified
by the salmon that
throttle upstream.

This soul in me
has begged
for its body
to be given back.

The human remains
here in the dirt.
So what is it that leaves
in the final exhale?
The most violent parts are left,
the softest is the quickest to go.

FOLDING

Konstantina Theofanopoulou

I started folding our clothes last night,
a chore, part repetitive part creative you could say,
but last night I became enamored with how

I faced your shirts down,
laid them flat,

delicately folded the sleeves to the center and the
bottom half up.

This is where his shoulders lie, I thought,
and his neck and that loveable back.

And this is where his fingers slip the buttons through the holes-

I thought when I flipped them over,
the surface of his chest smoothing over.

At that moment you opened the door
and said the beers were freezing cold

and what if I share one with you.

CORONA BOREALIS

Martyna Miller

The darkest hour is the one untimed.
The hand that slips off the rung I've forgot-
ten her name, not the name of a goddess,
but a mortal woman. Isolated
on an island by the false hero
Theseus, I remember,
but the woman who ensured victory—
I cannot.

Crown of stars in the sky shooting like tears
as they tear through the framework of night
webs unfurling I've been abandoned,
wandering

labyrinths,

crescendo.

belting the
notes of an aria. Scaling the operatic

a
of
steps

Pulling on a locked door—
to sing only half a song. There is always someone left to sing to.
I thought I would be able to see the
stars while flying. My gaze shifted
down
to the city below somewhat upside
down.

The lights on the runway lay fallen
stars freckled thirty thousand feet.
Condensed milk tethered
stringed glow worms sticky silk
futures. I've never seen the glow worm caves
(only on Nat. Geo.)

but I imagine it looks like the city
at night, turned on its head.

How can I forget when nature reflects?

If we are so inclined to look at that angle, it will reveal itself.

Monday Evening ☾

Melissa Morales

This is the picture on a typical Monday evening.
My mother, stirring sazón y sofrito in the caldero
She hums as Willie Colón belts out on her old radio
Sunlight peeking through the curtains
Spilling on a painting of la Virgen María
Crucifix swinging from her bracelet as
She stirs the rice and adds the beans in the other pot
Los chuletas sizzle in the pan
As she pulls out the plates, grabbing the spoons
The music switches to some Notorious B.I.G.
And my sister begins to sing as she sweeps in the kitchen,
Grabbing a steaming hot plate y una soda de naranja
La bandera de Puerto Rico on the wall rustles slightly as she walks by
My father gets up from watching the news on canal sesenta y ocho
Slices un aguacate and adds some lechuga y tomate on top
Returning back to the television and raising the volume up
My mother yells for me to come get my dinner
And I set my paper and pens down, grabbing my plate
Of arroz y gandules y habichuela
Of chuletas y maíz
Of this typical Monday evening.

EMIT

Konstantina Theofanopoulou

Time

I flip it around: emit

I emit

I emit time

I emit seconds, hours, years

My breaths emit clockwise cyclic motivations

On watch.

My breaths break

I emit words

They come out in structure, one after the other, stamping the fleeting present,
they emit future.

My breaths break upon you.

They now emit present.

One breath comes by and brings the other, a sequence of present –

Quasi-cyclic motivations

Counter-clockwise

My breath surrenders.

4/14/22

Skyla Medina

Warmth and sunshine,
Laughs and smiles.

The beautiful vibrant petals,

A warm embrace,

The love in my heart,

Your beautiful smile,

Rain and darkness,
Crying and sorrow.

The stabbing thorns.

A puddle of blood and tears.

The aching pain in my chest.

My never-ending stream of tears.

Timely Forgotten

Eliel Mizrahi

Wishes taking a bow,
Memories shying away,
Emotions forgotten,
Tangling the past –
Blurring the future;
Moments of innocence
Or temptations of forever
Live in the rearview of tomorrow:
Between reality and fiction,
Bridging desires and regrets,
Bounding the Soul's spotlight.

Movies From The Old World

Konstantina Theofanopoulou

Some of us who survived
still remember how we used to watch movies back in the old world—
the sky projecting over the sea sheet.

We knew,
horror films would be on only when the Moon was a
waning crescent,
foreign films were possible only when the breeze created thin white lines

sub
titles

waving concepts and ideas the heroes had to say—
I remember those lines were highly debated by the younger Us
at the *Cinephilia*; I remember someone say it was not the director's
original intention to have some of his conception covered by
meanings and interpretations—

When years passed by, They let us go and watch even when the sheet would wrinkle,
something we avoided in the past for low resolution.

They said, *we should embrace the Fifth dimension*, and had us watch a movie in
the rain and snow. I never enjoyed it.

I liked silent films instead; but they were only on just for a couple of days
a year
always in August, when the wind speed was at its lowest.

I remember now Them saying *in the future, there won't be any silent films, they will be
lost
due to decay and neglect.*

Rose 5.0

Skyla Medina

Blood streamed down my arms.
The redness faded into a dark brown
The petals fell off
It shriveled up completely
Tossed to the ground in a puddle of blood.
Then it stopped.
The pain stopped
The crying stopped
The feeling in my chest stopped.
Nothing
There was nothing.
Yellow petals began to bloom
Thorns began to fall
The blood dried up.
A yellow rose
Friendship
Platonic love
Happiness.
Only 1 thorn remained on the cheerful rose
An occasional prick of pain.
A yellow rose
A symbol of progress that I always hoped for.
You finally became my yellow rose.

The Haunting

Melissa Morales

There you go again
appearing in my dreams
then leaving in the morning

Vivid memories but also
a hazy silhouette at best
What a mural of a masterpiece you are
and yet

*I've forgotten
the canvas of your face
and the colors that came with it*

Genesis

Lolita Lupita

I've made the mistake again
Emotions pour on me like rain.
Flooding the driest terrain,
Sprouting from the smallest grain.

Ocean water covers the plain
Nothing can wash away the pain.
My chest needs to drain
In order to be sane.

Love has infected my veins.

There is Noise in the Noiseless

Chemo Emo

Just beyond the Avenue, over a metal fence, through the removed brush and temporary hush

There is a creek that spans the near neighbourhood
Its length leading to open waters, topped by the Bridge
Surrounded by rocky shores and stunted evergreens
And the occasional piece of car burned by fire and time.

*(Someone passes,
making conversation.)*

Here, in the shadows of fleeting twilight alongside empty cans and tossed cigarettes
I find a solitude that is only broken by the loudest passing cars
And the fishermen who ignore the signs nearby
As I guess everyone needs a little ignorance to feel truly alive
And I feel truly alive by ignoring them all myself.

(Door opens, closes.)

I'm no stranger to the waste-ridden marsh
Having explored its nearby woods years ago
With friends that are still alive and around
But are not nearly as close as before
And I guess no one is to blame, but no one is exempt either.

When the walls of my room feel like they are closing in with ridicule
And life close to home makes my own living hard to bear
I take a walk to those pebble-strewn beaches
Noting how quickly the clouds above pass, like my own days
And I take a seat on one of four favoured spots that might not already be inhabited.

The sky has its pastel colours before the night greets me with growing darkness
And the music playing through my headphones sometimes makes me cry
Especially if I've brought with me a dubious drink better left in the brown bag
But old habits die hard, especially when so many like it rust on the coast
But I can at least count the times I've smoked, and I never litter.

When traversing the farther reaches of the creek several springs ago
My friends and I came across the husk of a forsaken truck
Several notebooks covering the bed's floor
One written and decorated with instructions for creating Aloe vera.
I guess anything without a purpose, losing its cause
Comes to find its way to the creek one way or another
And I wonder for how long I'll be able to walk away from it all
Before I too am stuck in the muck and mud
Finding a home for my raddled mind and moronic heart.

*(Phone alarm goes off,
is silenced.)*

outwritten and dreamt in homebound shelters, felt rain,
often out of sight
pleading with God's outstretched palms
as desolate streams reflected arcs in elations' fallen attempt at dawned astonishment.
in her stillness, pining stones wept;
pinnacles succumbing to shapely horizons
as perspirations parted winding resonation of light and fingers;
blushing along pastel sheets
in tunes
of torn chestnut, which remained scarlet as his oath lingered,
tuned to the pulsing compositions recognized as
"buoyant water lilies
lulled to salt-tipped drifts, evading indolent tides
folding stranded desire as brittle wings hung motionless."
dim lit glares of displaced honesty engraved slivered fragments,
scorned memory pulsing as repetition embittered sunken grief,
faith raging on evenings where shadows craved moon stalked embrace.

Sun Dance

Alleyah Charlton

This morning the sun was born again. Its rays crested your eyelashes and froze my lungs. I will spend the rest of my life thawing them because the sun dances on your face. This morning the sun gave birth to your treasured maple syrup skin. It must be why my own

skin is fixed to yours. This morning I saw the stardust that god anointed you with the day you were born.

This morning I watched

your dance with the air. And how it made your chest rise and fall. This morning I am grateful

the sun gave birth to me too. Please will you let those umber eyes gaze on me again. Take me in and devour my heart. Please will you smile and tell me you love me without a word said. I will smile too and tell you that I am yours. no words said.

This evening the sun grew long and extended its arms to our bed.

It sets your skin ablaze and torches our sheets. I will hold you. I will make it worth it.

Because when you're on fire, I am too. And we will trample the flower and roll the leaf. And

watch the smoke dance with the sun too. I will gaze at you, "I am yours." And pray that you devour me.

How dare you hold me so close. And make me feel. To rest my head on your strong chest. To hear your heart's song that sings that I am yours and we will dance.

This dance we dream of in the summer.

This dance we started in autumn.

This dance we have practiced all winter long.

was in preparation for this Sun dance. Today. And I will make no mistakes. Because the dance is what I've waited for my whole life. I am yours and you are mine in our sun dance.

Tonight the sun will die. Again. And your maple syrup skin will be a treasured memory.

And I will paint you with it until the sun is born again. And we are too. Until then, we will trample the flower and roll the leaf. And send the smoke to call the sun. I will hold you close.

And make it worth it. Because I saved a little sun just for you. I've been holding it in my eyes.

The moon may make the bed cold but I will let the sun seep from my eyes and find you. As little bits of sun soak into you, I will let your eyes lose me for now. And say a prayer for the stardust in your hair. And count all the dreams in your eyelashes. And bless the air that enters your lungs. And kiss the moonlight on your forehead. Until you never forget that I am yours. And we will have our dance. And the sun will be born again. Nothing unsaid.

Letters To The Moon

Violet Belmont

Into the night
Where the moon rules over the night sky
Dashing into the moonlight
Stars guiding me
Around the rings of Jupiter
Jumping into Saturn
My dreams,
On a hook
Being pulled into the darkness
Running like the speed of light
Silver energy engulfs me
Spreading my arms out wide
Embracing the milky way.
Opening my eyes
Chains on my doors
Locks on my windows
All hope lost here
But not for me.
Looking into the night sky
Where the moon rules over the night
The moonlight whispering in my ears
Happy thoughts
Dreams of madness
Genius ideas
And everlasting glory.
For the moon tells me
That these locks and chains are temporary
That my soul will be set free
Once the Morningstar has been seen
Till then,
Looking into the night sky
Where the moon rules the night
The stars,
They wish me good luck
And bid adieu, goodnight

Thrill of the Ride

Solo

I *knew* I should've worn a helmet.
Better yet— I *knew* I should've never went that way.
I *knew* that I was heading towards a steep hill.
But alas, my descent was the beginning of the end.
I was going too fast to brake safely;
hardly ready to accept my fate.
Boom.
There goes a new wound.
For the longest time I wouldn't let it heal.
I kept picking at it,
touching it,
inspecting it.
Blaming gravity, the hill, the ground, even,
for being so damn hard and unforgiving.
Why didn't it soften up for me?
Well, I stopped picking at it.
Finally.
Though, I still find myself running my fingers over the scab.
Feeling the texture.
Mapping the shape it's left on my skin.
Wondering how bad the scar will be.
And then I get the itch--
To pick,
to lift,
to pry.
To bleed.
To revisit the pain.
So I can blame it on the wound itself.
And not myself.

Blood-stained Love

Sade Garcia

Your colorful words that wrap around my throat
Bar my bold words.
You choke the life out of me.

I used to live in truth
But my truth got tainted by your 'loving words'
Now my morals are buried and colorless.

I thought love made you see the world in a rose-coloured tint
But you broke my glasses.
And took my sight
Now I can't see without you.
And the world is so dark.

If only I saw the blood-stained flags you wore.
Now my mind is massacred and you won the war.

God and I

Brenna Gannon

God once told me
that even she hides away
Her creations scare even her
enough to want to stop creating
She told me that to create
is to breathe, is to live
But it is also to destroy,
to lose, to die
I find my creations
never seem to live at all
I give them my breath,
my blood, my tears
But they crumble before my eyes
like sand through fingers
Brittle, weak, and frail
We are restless creatures,
God and I
We write and sing and scream and cry
But our creations are never satisfied
and neither are we

Serenity of Nature

Sade Garcia

Still.

In the essence of peace

The trickle of the lily pond

Bouncing delicately on the fragile string of silence

The bristle of the trees sending calming whispers into my ear

As the breeze tickles my skin

The feeling of serenity

In the warmth of the natural sounds of the present

Peace.

I Remember Y Recuerdo

Malenie Tapia

I remember getting yelled at for
trying to wear gym shorts to misa.
Recuerdo cuando el pastor told me:
“Las niñas buenas wear dresses on Sunday”
I remember not remembering what that meant.
Recuerdo cuando mi mama would make sopez after mass,
the queso would melt with the sour cream
and cheese would fall on the comal then sizzle.
I remember wanting to play con mis amigos after.
Recuerdo que mi mama would say before I left:
“Las niñas don’t have scarred legs”
I remember patinando al parque and dabbing up the guys.
Recuerdo que era la última they’d pick for teams.
I remember them “going easy on me” then saying:
“Chill bro, don’t you see that she’s a girl”
Recuerdo coming home later and hating my breasts.
I remember taping them up and hiding under large sweaters.
Recuerdo cuando mi hermana asked me:
“Why do you dress like that? Eres gay?”
I remember I couldn’t sleep after that conversation.
Recuerdo cuando besé a Jessica and didn’t feel weird.
I remember when she asked me:
“Have you ever kissed a girl before?”
Recuerdo sentir mariposas in my stomach.
I remember feeling “normal” for the first time.
Acuerdo que I cut all my Sunday dresses in 2008.

Weathered Walls, Quiet Hall

Chemo Emo

You may not notice at first but some of the kitchen cupboards
Are without their doors
They've been like that for several years
And no one has thought to repair them
Probably because it'd be too much of a hassle
For something that is now usual, made mundane.

It is easy to forget that things break
That nothing lasts
That nothing is sacred just because it means a lot
Everything wears away at some point even with the best plans
And it's surprising how much damage can be done
When everyone is both loving and losing.

It wasn't always so calm in the house
There used to be more people
A family, if you believe it
And they tried to be kind to one another despite the differences
'Trying' being important here
Because it means nothing good came from it all, at least not the first few years.

The house has settled over time
As those both still inside and those moving on settle as well
Finding a kind of acceptance with the abrasions
At least the bedroom doors aren't being slammed anymore
But some of them don't close right
And nobody really cares because no-one needs to hide now.

Perpetua

Malenie Tapia

Monotonía,
recycled conversations,
labor, never-ending ciclo,
turns aching hands rojas
with violencia, reach for belts,
pierden la paciencia,

STRIKE

Monotony
pudre tu alma y
“sorry that’s just how
things are” becomes
the reason for working
hard sin paga extra,
clandestine abuse,

Monotonía
cuándo labor demands me,
tells me when to “break”
how to speak, when to wake,
cómo sonreír, cuándo comer,
I’m ravenous,

tengo hambre but I
let my passions starve me,
Monotony,
cuando no hay nada de tragar
but the words my eyes consume
and gouge down mi garganta,
I’m not full,

I’m hungry to awaken las
mentes de otros, to inspire,
aprender, to let my palabras
bleed on paper until my
calloused fingers create
una historia they will
never forget

I Had a Crush on Shia LaBeouf, We All Make Mistakes (Do, Be, Do, Be, Do)

Samantha Shane

Be sad

Sadness is the deliberate effort of our heart's yearning

Sadness is not only tears

Although tears are extraordinary

Graceful appendages easing out of the choice

To arrive at this moment

Unarmed

Sadness is freedom

In a life predicated on duality

Eat it up

Drink it for dinner

Be sad

Be loud

Step One: Know your name

Step Two: Scream it out

Let those who seem so large receive it

As it swirls and bubbles through them like hot water

Bellowing back to your own skull like a boomerang

Proof that you exist

Although you do not need permission to exist

Proof and permission dance delicately on the same wire

Suspended in air and anchored down by

You on one end and Them on the other

A composite effort of equal importance

Be loud

Be so loud you cannot decipher the sounds of those trying to shut you up

Infinitesimal waves suggesting you do not deserve

The vast amount space you seek

In an ocean where scarcity is an illusion

Drown. Them.

Be loud

Be bad

Say FUCK and mean it

Bend and mold the rules collapsing on your conscience

Until they snap to birth new ones

Authority is only to be respected in the most Buddhist sense

Eat voraciously and ask for seconds
Clomp around in leather with a shot of whiskey in your fist
Drink so much you puke
Chug your diet coke and burp in public
Waste their time
Waste your own
Be a bitch
Sorry is a last resort
Sorry is not a word to be used
Unless there is no other viable synonym
Piss off strangers and people who love you alike
Go too far
Be too much
Be bad

Be wrong
Fall in love like a boulder hitting glass
Relish in the shards
As weapons
And as prisms
Birthing new opportunities for light
Where there was only one before

Break wide open
Humility is the ribcage of evolution
Be wrong so often you never know anything
Besides your own desire to know more
Curiosity is the map guiding you home
Questions are the light
Cultivate a path of knowledge in the shape of a question mark
Allow the wind to sweep it away so you can create a new one
Laugh at the sad part of the story
Cry at the insurance commercial

Try really really hard
Try loudly
Keep trying
Be wrong

Memory Labyrinth

Diana Athena

Places hold memories, write stories on their walls. I step into the corridor and no longer know who is on my mind. I trust these halls more than I trust my memories to recognize my face, my thoughts, the time frame when it all began and when it ends. Carry me, as you carry knowledge and wandering eyes that stare into multitudes.

The hall

s

p

i

n

s in open

doors and

empty rooms

turn

turn

mirror

turn

a body

passing by

i hold space

space holds me

tossing perception

year

to

year

2020

2022

clock's hand runs backwards

march to march

chasing after classrooms

my dream drains

into the hot stream

swashing!

down to the first floor

wakes up again

in bright pebbles

Click!

the hand keeps running
chewing time into minutes the walls
 are dancing
 to the rhythm of
 memories
 breaking the clock

the hand is swaying in patterns of

 now and then
 march to march
 minute to minute
 memories to senses
locking the dream in a labyrinth of a stream

pebbles click
walls fall
in silky whispers
 springdrops
 on the dusty mirror
 wash the wrinkles
 off my reflection

 march to march
 30 to 32
 Click!

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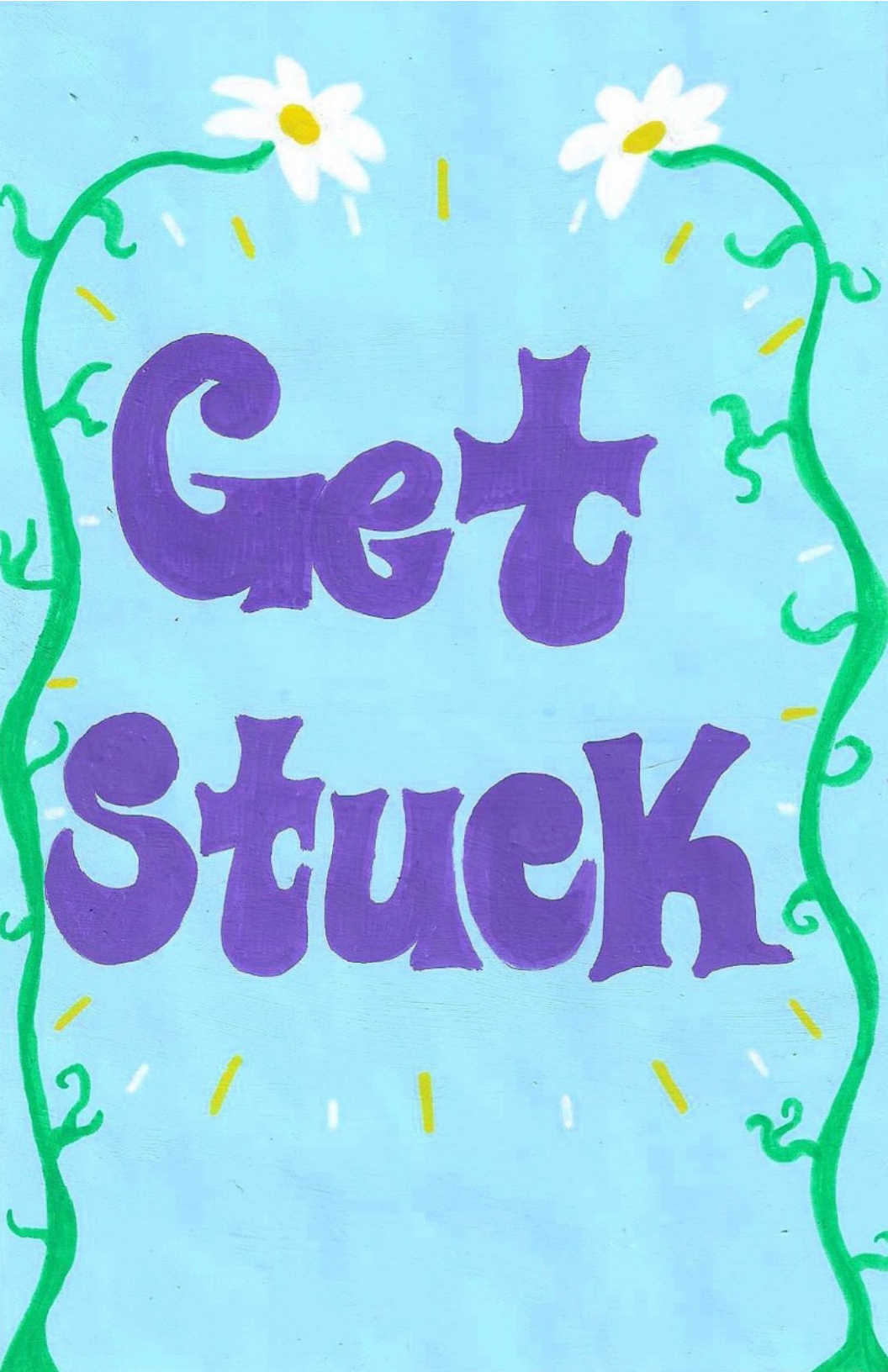


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Photo by Annie Spratt



Gret Stueck