

Harvest International Cal Poly Pomona Student-Edited Literary Journal

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Table of Contents

Short Stories, 1

- A Delightful Decadence, 2
- Mi relación con las redes sociales, 4
- Love and Pestilence, 5
- Basada en hechos reales, 17

Poetry, 18

- how do you use a comma, 19
- Memories Within Trees, 20
- Untitled, 21
- Where's Father?, 23
- Primero muerta antes de que me vuelas a tocar, 25
- Euphoric, 26
- California Sunflower, 27
- My Monologue for Death, 28
- Inferno, 29
- The Lover's Clock, 30
- Permanent Stain, 31
- HAVE YOU EVER REALLY FALLEN IN LOVE WITH YOURSELF?, 32
- The Girl With the Spirit, 33
- Those Few Seconds, 38
- When They Grab a Light Beer, 40
- Memory , 42
- Confluence (or, A Story of Two Rivers), 43
- Mirrors, 44
- 10.16, 45
- Epigrams, 46
- So It Goes, 47
- Antithesis, 48
- Self Edited, 49
- Mamá, 50
- Sister, 51
- Finding Felicity, 53

Editor's Note, 54

Editor's Note (Español), 55

The background is a dark green, textured surface, possibly leather or a similar material, with several embossed white flowers and leaves. The flowers have yellow centers and are scattered across the page. The texture is visible throughout the entire image.

Short Stories

A Delightful Decadence

By Devin Rangel

“As temperatures reach an all-time low, we’ve seen an increase in acrocyanosis among young adults. Families are so worried and helpless, that they’ve been resorting to old-timey remedies! Even partaking in the controversial cure-all: colloidal...”

On the counter sat a clear bottle, inside, a liquid opaque in color; she recalled times where her mother felt sick and would drink a spoonful. Oh, how the spoon glistened in the sunlight. Especially now, as the sun peered through the windows landing innocently on it. She was told it was her great-grandmother’s. “Since 1897” her mom would say. That was so long ago that any real meaning the spoon had was now lost. A faint jingling emanated from the kitchen; she got up and found her mother there, hunched over the sink. She had just taken her routine dose of that ocher liquid. She looked rather expended. For you see, Ariel tended to work nights and being up this early in the day was rather taxing for her. But even her mother, who worked as a phlebotomist during the day, had not radiated her usual divine hue for over a few weeks now. Her mother hoped that this clear bottle held the answers, which was unlike her. She was usually rather resilient to any strain of flu going around. She thought a liberated bouquet of flowers would lift her mother’s spirits; conveniently, there was a flower shop not far from the house.

As the door to the flower shop closed, chimes flickered, and a strangely welcoming air wisped about the room. She began to ferment in that mist of pollen; it was terribly strange, as she was marred with being unable to withstand it. A slender, masculine figure presented itself; he was wrapped in an apron, but in his hands, he carried a flamboyant, yet modest, bouquet. His face remained occulted, and she gave out a sneeze. A courteous blessing was given, and an innocent enough conversation began. She knew very little about flowers and, therefore, held his opinion in high regard. Thankfully, he tenderly attended her and, in so, showed her a vast selection of belligerent flowers, that at times, gained commendations in forms of loving sighs, while others a groan of monotony. Until, a vibrant and fervid cadre of crimson petals amidst a sea of autochthonous and mundane greens coerced her eyes. He proceeded to take one and held it out to her awaiting to garner that same amorous gaze. Timidly, she took the flower and inhaled its scent; she looked up at him and sneezed. She noticed his hand; almost a lifetime of cutting roses, left slight incisions curving into those crevices in his hands that, ultimately, led into his own flesh. Their hands touched and slowly bloomed, and as they sensed subtle distinctions among their palms, her heart that had ran tepid and dry, now reverberated ardor and flowed with crimson. He saw her veins and felt their palpitations, but he never rejected them. They were wrongfully raw and gelid, but she felt warmth in him, like she had finally found a home. A perverse sense of sanctitude and vulnerability ensconced them both, the air of infatuation, regrettably, was lynched by a piercing ring. Apologizing, he went to silence its harrowing cries. Thankfully, the sale was in its final stages. Having bought the flowers and now on her way out, she noticed the rain. She turned around to see the man standing with a welcoming smile, as if offering her assistance without saying anything. She confided in him and he, gallantly and nobly, proved to be a gentleman. At the bottom of her driveway they sat, unsure of what to say to each other. Again, the resonating peals of bells rang, but now, a blue hue revealed a name highlighted in crimson: Melissa. Whether it was his girlfriend or a relative mattered not, the entirety of the situation made her feel perverse. He answered, and she saw this as her opportunity. She shyly thanked him, grabbed her flowers as she exited the car, and went inside. Over the course of a few days, there was a fresh, anonymous bouquet consistently left on the doorstep. Until, at one moment in time, there was a note that invited her to watch the sunset. He had sent flowers fertile and warm, others prude and frigid. There was no clear sign of intention, yet the ambiguity turned the gears of the relationship forward. Interaction was given a purpose: to explore the unknown. She kindly obliged him, and in one evening, she had been coerced into something she had not paid attention to in over a lifetime.

At present, the sun began to lose its benignant allure, but as most things do before they die, it divaricated the most beguiling version of itself. She had always been a little sensitive to the sun, but now it felt as if her skin boiled, as if blisters formed and flesh melted before hardening into a corrosive spot. The moon now reigned, and that discomfort was no more. A few more decadent moments were shared, before a final farewell was exchanged.

In the heavy morning, on the grass, dew began to condensate and a golden glow emanated from almost nothing. Inside, a faint floral miasma manifested; the clear bottle cradled whatever paltry amount of amber was left. There had been droplets left on that silver spoon that had long stagnated, and now left coagulated and deformed pools of that oxidized substance. A silence loomed and was broken by a minute moaning and clicking of a door. She now stood amid an offensive mist—blue ran her hands. As moments passed, the sun rose, and the mist dispersed. She saw a crimson hue; oh, how she adored it, both the beginning and the end. The rays glistened, yet unperceivable was the sanctity of light. In all senses she was numb, but still, she felt warmth. She bathed in its radiance, and in so, ceased her melodic palpitations.

Mi relación con las redes sociales

By Angeles Barba

Por el teléfono fue como lo conocí porque con simple dos palabras él empezó la conversación. Al principio para mi era un poco raro pero, con el tiempo, empezamos a tener una amistad sincera. Él es muy alto, ni cuando estoy de puntas lo puedo alcanzar. Su pelo negro es grueso pero rizado. Siempre tiene algo que decir sobre su pelo porque no le gusta. Sus labios grandes son cuidados por él, siempre poniéndose vaselina para que no se les sequen.

Cuando gira su cabeza hacia un lado, como un perrito, y tiene sus ojos entrecerrados; se quiere burlar de uno. Es como si no creyó lo que escuchó. Por esa razón es muy atento a lo que uno dice, especialmente cuando es algo importante. Siempre cuando sucede un problema, él de inmediato lo quiere solucionar. Es muy alerta en eso porque siempre quiere ver a otros felices. Él es muy curioso, casi chismoso, pero los detalles son necesarios para el. Estando emocionado para contar una historia, hasta por el teléfono se escucha feliz, con una sonrisa grande. Él es muy humilde; no descansa hasta que todos estén satisfechos. Muy amable, siempre saludando a los padres primero usando el “usted”, y es respetuoso. Él es una de las personas que en el mismo día puede ir a preparar una maleta para irse de viaje. Es muy aventurero y si no hay nadie con quien ir, eso no lo para. Siempre hace reír a uno por los tonterías que hace; es muy gracioso. Eso sí, cuando uno no está haciendo las cosas bien o si no le parece bien lo que uno hizo, él es cortante. Él directamente dice lo que siente, siempre con respeto, pero sí dice las verdades de uno sin dejar nada atrás.

Él siempre ha tenido sus metas en la mente y eso emocionante cuando habla sobre eso. Es ambicioso pero de manera alegre porque quiere mucho para su vida. Él nunca cuelga el teléfono si uno está triste o enojado porque como él dice, “no es bueno para el alma.” él es muy religioso pero nunca trate de hablar sobre eso mucho por respeto a los demás. Lo que más admiro es cuando antes de colgar el teléfono dice “cuidate por favor”, enseñando su cariño por uno. Él es un hombre de familia y es emocionante ver que en el futuro el tenga suya propia.

Love and Pestilence

By Leo Tavormina

As a young man, I always aspired to attend university and study hard enough to get a degree which would allow me to dedicate my life to pursuing science. I've known for quite a while that I love science, but couldn't quite pinpoint exactly which field I wanted to specialize in. During my formative years in high school, I gave it some thought but didn't force myself to make a final decision until what felt like much later. For now, I told myself that I'd major in biology and sort out the rest of the details further down the line. I felt like the entire world was my oyster, and later on in life I realized that fate had other plans.

When the time to submit university applications drew nearer, I worked tirelessly to write essays and fill out forms in the hopes of impressing a variety of institutions. I did all of my work with confidence, believing that I was practically assured admission to at least three of my selected schools. It wasn't until the letters came back that I learned that I may have misjudged my odds. Only a single school that I had deemed to be a "safety school" decided to accept me as a student that upcoming year.

While a feeling of disappointment seemed to crawl up my back, it was quickly diluted by a rushing sense of relief. Although it hadn't been my first choice, I still had the opportunity to attend university. I assured myself that it would be the best time of my life, that this college would be the place where I can hone my skills and acquire the experience needed to make my scientific dreams come true.

Leaving home and settling into my new life at university was quite a daunting task. It took me at least a month to adapt to living in a dormitory and accommodating to more challenging and demanding courses than I had in the past. After that short period of adjustment, I grew to love university life. The friends I met were delightful, kind, and extraordinarily intelligent. There were opportunities wherever I looked and all my surroundings were new and fresh. My professors covered more engaging topics within my major and I quickly grew to genuinely love biology.

One topic I began to take interest in was the process of infection. It fascinated me how one organism can serve as a parasite to another. That process by which a sickness must evolve to do so and the adaptations it must possess to survive in the body of a host filled with cells who seek to eliminate it. I believed that it was quite a relevant topic, considering that everyone I knew had grown ill due to a pathogen at some point in their lives. By the second semester of college, I found myself gladly signing up for more classes that could further enhance my knowledge of these tiny, dangerous organisms.

When I wasn't dreaming about science or hearing lectures about cells, I made sure to see and hang out with the good friends I had met shortly after entering university. They were a nice bunch of fellows with good hearts and strong minds. After class we'd all meet up around a big dinner table at the cafeteria several times a week and eat together, this was a tradition that went on for many months. It helped relieve some stress after my more intellectually stimulating classes, and cemented our friendship group.

Something quite unexpected happened when I went to see my new friends for dinner on one particular Thursday evening. Much to my surprise, a pretty girl was sitting among them. When I sat down, my friends made sure to introduce me to her and one even joked that we'd get along "really well". I was delighted to meet her and I believe the feeling was mutual. I'm sure she felt glad to have made a new friend, but I found myself quickly pondering the idea of having a more intimate relationship with her.

I concede that in the first month or two of knowing her, that my attraction was based almost entirely on pure infatuation. Yet, I know that she was unique in the most delightful ways. To this day, I cannot put my finger on what it was. Something about her presence seemed to light up any room she entered. She possessed a calming aura and a sharp wit. Being around her made me feel in awe and at ease. I'm aware that I may be glorifying her, as would every man writing about his first love, but I say with absolute certainty that her presence was whimsical, mystifying. I knew right away that she was destined to do something great.

I eventually mustered up the courage to ask her on a dinner date which would take place shortly after my microbiology course ended. When I made that request, she eagerly agreed and I found myself anxiously waiting for time to pass so I could impress her on my date.

Microbiology, a class I normally enjoy quite a lot, seemed to drag on with no end in sight. It wasn't until the professor brought up a bit of world news that I found myself interested again. He mentioned there have been reported cases of a new virus rapidly spreading and infecting many people in Beijing, China. This dangerous "Crowned Virus" thrived in the densely packed concrete jungle of one of the world's most populated cities. Thankfully, this virus only existed in China and the government was doing work to quarantine those who were affected and slow its spread. Although this was fascinating to me, I disregarded the information at the moment as I was far more concerned with my date than a virus that seemed so distant.

The date couldn't have gone better. Her wit not only made me laugh but kept me on my toes amid our playful banter. I can't help but cling to this lovely memory. I remember her dark eyes affectionately blinking at me as she described her favorite television show and the way her head tilted whenever she listened to me talk. The only thing I wanted to do after dinner ended was to find a way for me to see her again.

Thankfully, my opportunity came that next week during a phone call with her. I remember scrolling through the news on my computer when my phone rang. She told me in a flirty voice that she wanted to see me again that week after my microbiology class and have dinner. Delighted, I quickly agreed while simultaneously scrolling my mouse through the news headlines. As I was gleefully conversing with her, I stumbled upon a news headline talking about the mysterious Crowned Virus.

According to the article, an elderly gentleman who had contracted the virus died in the hospital a week later. Instead of intently listening to my crush, I let my morbid curiosity get the better of me and I began tuning out the poor girl on the other end of the phone to keep reading. This old man had developed a massive, crushing headache accompanied by a gruesome fever. It was followed by a violent cough and insomnia until the suffering patient was put out of his misery by the awful disease.

I continued to read until my concentration was broken by her soft voice, "are you still there? Am I disturbing something?"

Apologizing profusely, I assured her that she had done nothing wrong and that I simply needed to go. Disappointed, she agreed to let me go and we hung up after a brief goodbye. I probably should have felt guilty, but I couldn't help but keep reading. Once again, the government insisted that everything was under control despite the virus finding its way out of the country. Several cases had been reported in the city of Manila all the way over in the Philippines.

Interesting, I thought. This thing could travel. It wasn't just going to exclusively play around in China. It wanted to scoot itself to another densely populated area with plenty of tightly packed hosts. Now it wants the world to take it a bit more seriously rather than just seeing it as a foreign problem.

I recall in my youth I had a very unfortunate habit of personifying viruses and other pathogens as if they had human aspirations. I found it to be quite entertaining, despite it being completely scientifically inaccurate and misleading. I made sure to drop the habit later on, but during the spread of the Crowned Virus it played out like an underdog story in my head. It wasn't long before everyone on campus began making jokes about the virus. Individuals jested as if it were some kind of pandemic and that the entire world was going to perish from this little virus. Personally, I found some of these remarks humorous initially but they quickly grew old. As time passed, the jokes became more and more frequent to the point of each one sounding like a broken record. I was far more concerned with preparing myself for my date than engaging in ironic panic.

On the night of my date, I put on my fanciest clothes and sprayed on my favorite cologne. After making sure I didn't forget anything, I ran my trusty yellow comb through my hair and headed out the door. Upon arriving at the Italian restaurant where we agreed to meet, I took some time to reflect on my life up to that point. *My academic pursuits and social endeavors have been more fruitful than ever. I'm starting a new life, and most importantly I've got the attention of a very wonderful la-*

Before I could finish the thought, I heard her heels clack against the ground as she hurried towards me; tightly clenching her purse close to her chest. She began to pant, profusely apologizing for being late. I assured her that she did not need to worry and gently grasped her hands. They felt soft to the touch. The worry drained from her face as she smiled and dashed to hold the door open for me. I chuckled to myself as I thanked her and headed inside.

My heart began to race as I pulled the chair out for her and she sat down. Before I knew it, I was sitting across from this lovely young woman who insisted that I tell her about my day. Without hesitation, I began to joyfully converse with her as I stared into her dark eyes. The time seemed to slip away from my grasp as our conversation progressed. It all went exactly how I expected it would until she began to look at the ground nervously.

She began to twirl her finger and rapidly blink her eyes. "You know, I've wanted to ask about this for a while and I don't think the other guys would be of any help. As you know, we all major in physics. As the smartest bio person I know, tell me what you know about the Crowned Virus that's popping up on the news. *Damn it,* I thought to myself. *I can't go for one moment without mention of that stupid virus.*

Although I didn't want to discuss or think about the virus that evening, I couldn't bring myself to become frustrated with her. The concern was genuine. It wasn't a repeat of all those world ending and pandemic jokes that I've heard to nausea. I strummed my fingers against the table and tried to remember everything I've read up to this point.

"It's... It's like a virus that came from Beijing. Kinda like the flu, but ya know. Different. People aren't resistant to it so it's deadlier than the normal flu. Pretty contained I'm assuming. It's only been seen in China and the Philippines so far. Everyone is joking about it 'cause that's how people are. They exaggerate everything. Don't worry about a thing. It's not even close to the United States and especially nowhere near us.

My microbiology instructor actually discussed the virus briefly. He compared it to the measles virus in his description. Compared to something like measles, it's far less contagious. That horrible virus can last in air space for around two hours or so. That pitiful Crowned Virus can only spread via close human contact and it really isn't present outside of Southeast Asia. So, really, this little scare is nothing that should concern us."

“Thank goodness. I got really worried, considering that everyone is making it out to be a huge deal. When I hear that from you, I feel relieved. Something about the way you assured me made it seem like everything is going to be alright.”

I was taken aback. “I’m... I’m glad I can make you feel that way. That genuinely comforts me. I want you to know that you’ll be okay. If you’re ever scared, know that I’ll be there to help and inform you if you need it.”

It is something impossible for me, even to this day all these years later, to describe in words the sound I heard come from her mouth. A giggle that I can only describe as being full of love, hope, and delight. I couldn’t help but smile widely knowing I had brought another human being so much satisfaction. She held my hand tightly and sincerely thanked me for being with her.

Once we finished dinner and paid, we both exited the restaurant and stood outside the main entrance. We said our goodbyes and I got ready to hug her before departing. Before I could approach her, she enthusiastically ran into my arms and buried her face into my torso.

“Wait. Before you go, I need to tell you something,” she muttered into my chest. “I... I. I really...”

She momentarily stopped talking and I gave her a look of concern as she began to hold me more tightly and mumble.

“Are you okay? I asked. What did you need to tell me?”

Looking up at me with her eyes widened, she emphatically declared, “I like you! I like you a lot!”

I stopped for a moment and awkwardly chuckled. *Finally. My moment of truth. I’ve won the affection of my crush. I... I can’t believe this is happening. This has to be one of the greatest moments of my life. I have to respond somehow...*

I blurted, “I like you a lot, too. You’re really great.”

“Good. I’m glad we’re on the same page.”

“Indeed. I hope we can schedule another date sometime soon. I’d like that very much.

Next week, perhaps?”

Upon hearing those words, a look of excitement formed on her face as she giddily tried to nod her head. “Yes. Yes. Yes!”

As the next week passed by, very serious headlines discussing the Crowned Virus continued to pop up on the news every day. On Monday, it had merely spread across all of China and the Philippines. By Tuesday, the virus had infiltrated Europe and several Germans had contracted it. At the time, I was intrigued by how the virus managed to find a way to spread so quickly. Ignorantly, I joked about it as if it were some underdog rising to the challenge of infecting the entire world.

Look at it go. This little guy found its way out of Asia. Trying to be some kind of hotshot and knock out the entire European continent. That continent is a good idea, considering how dense it is and

how many travelers are flying back and forth from all those tiny countries.

While I continued to look into the virus with interest, my confidence that humanity would quickly contain it before serious harm could occur began to waiver. I was assured that there would be no issue, but the virus proceeded faster than I would have liked. It seemed like it entered a new continent every other day. Australia. Africa. South America. I didn't feel real concern until I saw the news on Thursday.

The virus made it to Portland, Oregon. A confirmed case in Oregon. Only one state away. Practically in my backyard. It seemed to be approaching me, slowly but menacingly. The scientific community gave it an official name, CROWN-20, which signified to me that this illness was something to be taken seriously. My humorous metaphor began to lose its appeal as I realized that this situation might become more dire than I had originally thought. I wanted to joke that the little guy finally made its name for itself, but I began to sweat nervously at the thought that it could be coming closer. I chose to discard the fear and reassure myself that it had only been one case in the United States so far.

We scheduled our next date to be that Saturday. She and I agreed to watch a romantic movie in my dormitory room in the afternoon. My outfit had been selected the night before, a button-up shirt and black jeans. I excitedly cleaned my room and loaded the movie onto my computer to prepare. My excitement was partially dampened by the news of the virus, but I refused to let that ruin my precious third date. *She admitted she likes me, this is my time to shine! Don't think about science or that virus. Focus on your goal.*

To make sure that no anxiety about Crown-20 ruined my precious weekend, I had promised myself on Friday that I would not look at any news or read any online articles until the weekend was over. With that promise in mind, I felt a rush of relief and found myself only able to think about her and nothing else.

As I finished combing my hair back, I heard a loud knock on my door. Upon opening it, I saw my embarrassed crush scratching the back of her head and looking at the ground.

"Hey... I... I'm sorry I look like a slob today. I thought this would be a more... Ya know... Casual date. Didn't expect you to dress up and all that."

I gave her a concerned look. "I'm more concerned that you're a little bit wet."

"Yeah. It's gloomy and pouring rain out there. I fumbled with my umbrella a little while I was going down the stairs."

"Interesting attire considering there is heavy rainfall outside."

"Hey! Don't judge me. It's cozy and the walk to your dorm is super short. Hmph!" "I'm sorry. I think your outfit is quite cute, I'm just worried you'll catch a little cold." She giggled and ran up to hug me, all while telling me that I'm incredibly sweet.

The shift in her attire was evident, no longer did she wear the accoutrements required of a date, rather this was something of a different nature. Something of the "I'll get to know your entire life in one sitting" nature. Her long flowery dress was the hook, her nonchalant yoga shorts my line, her hair plated carefully on each breast, my sinker.

After holding her close to me for a few moments, I insisted that we start watching the movie. She dashed from the doorway to the other side of the room and pulled a chair close to my computer monitor. I closed the door and proceeded to grab a chair closer to the entrance and moved it next to hers. Ready to start the date, I pressed “enter” on my keyboard and sat back into my chair. Her hand gravitated towards mine and she tightly clenched it as if she were afraid I would be pulled away from her at any moment.

For two hours, I experienced nothing but bliss. The heartwarming film about a couple who find a way to be together despite impossible odds only added to the romance of being next to this spunky and loving young woman. While my hand hurt a bit from her clenching it the entire time, I had no intention of asking her to let go. I genuinely believe that a moment like that is worth sustaining a bit of discomfort. I found myself wanting her affection to be more than a moment. I had a rush of emotions that I had never experienced up to that point. As the movie’s credits began to roll, I attempted to analyze my feelings and eventually concluded that I should kiss her.

Before I could put my plan into motion, I suddenly felt a pair of lips caressing my own as she began to affectionately kiss me. A rush of pleasure and joy suddenly overcame me. It was as if I were experiencing an otherworldly sensation. For the first time in my life, I found myself experiencing a phenomenon that I truly believed not even science could explain.

After we finished, I spent a few moments sitting in awe. I could not believe what had just happened. She giggled and blew me a kiss. At that moment, I firmly knew what I had to do. My decision was instantaneous. No analysis, planning, or foresight. I just did it. Without any hesitation in my voice, I asked her to be my girlfriend.

She immediately began kissing me again and I returned to that feeling of indescribable euphoria once more. Once she separated her lips from mine, she placed her hand on my thigh and said, “I’d love to.”

To this day, those three words still echo in my head. Sometimes I hear them in my sleep, even all these years later. I knew that those words meant the start of something truly special. My first real relationship had just begun.

She stayed for far longer than we had initially planned for. After the movie, we laughed and talked about life. We cuddled the entire day and enjoyed each other’s company for what felt like a few minutes but lasted deep into the evening. All I wanted to do was hold and hug her. I wanted to continue hearing the sound of her voice. I wanted to find a way to preserve these moments and live it perpetually.

Much to my dismay, the time did pass and she told me that she needed to return to her dormitory room and sleep to prepare for the morning. I hugged and kissed her good night as she prepared to leave. As she opened the door, I saw her suddenly close it and run back to me. She held me tight and insisted that she didn’t want to leave. I told her she could stay as long as she liked.

Due to my ill-timed self promise, I wouldn’t learn that the first confirmed case in California had been reported on Saturday until Monday.

That next week went by at a snail’s pace. News of the virus entering our state seemed to lower the morale of every student on campus. No longer did students joke about the Crowned Virus ending the world. Now they prayed that Crown-20 didn’t have them or their families in its crosshair. My professors discussed that if the virus continued to spread at this rate, there would be a very strong possibility that in-person classes would be forced to shut down.

I didn't feel the impact until my microbiology instructor said that classes could be canceled. The irony of a class where much of the content is about studying diseases shutting down due to the spread of a powerful virus seemed quite morbid to me. Upon hearing his words, I began to deeply worry for the first time since this outbreak started. I feared that I may have had false confidence and mistakenly given someone I cared about serious misinformation. I had no choice but to make things right.

After my last class of the day, I picked up the phone and began to dial. It rang for a moment, then she picked up.

"Hey, babe, I need to talk to you about something important."

"Oh no. Hopefully, it's nothing bad."

"It's serious, but not super urgent. We can meet up whenever you're free."

"I'm sorry, but I'm not free until tomorrow. Can you come to my dorm when you're done with your last class?"

"Yes, I can manage that. Thank you, dear."

"I love you," she said right before hanging up the phone.

As my last class ended on Tuesday, I noticed that I had several missed calls on my phone from my girlfriend. I called her back to immediately be greeted by hoarse coughs.

"Oh, dear. Are you okay," I worriedly asked.

"I... I... I'm just feeling a bit sick." She stopped talking and sneezed loudly. "I think I'm going to need to cancel. I haven't even been able to get out of bed to go to my classes."

A rush of anxiety overwhelmed me. "I will come and take care of you. I hate the thought of you feeling ill and alone."

"No... Don't come. I'll be fine. It's just a cough and sore throat. I don't want to make you sick, baby."

"I'm coming to help you and I really don't want you to try and stop me."

"You're so sweet, baby. Thank you. Thank you for everything."

I dashed to her dormitory room and knocked on the door. I heard a muffled voice in the room tell me that it's unlocked. I opened the door and headed inside to be greeted by a messy room full of plush toys and music posters. I looked to my right and saw a figure wrapped in many blankets coughing excessively.

"Hi baby," I called to her. "Are you feeling okay?"

"Hi there, handsome. I'm okay. Please come see me."

I walked over to her bed and she began to squeal in delight. She held her hand out and I began to rub her fingers. She giggled.

I started tearing up. I didn't want to tell her the bad news. I didn't want to tell her that I was wrong about the virus. So I didn't. I just smiled.

That entire night, I was at her beck and call. I got food and water and whatever else she desired. I had no intention of letting her strain herself even further while ill. She tried to insist that she could take care of herself, but I told her that I got it. While she acted annoyed that I "babied her", I could see her visibly hiding a smile when I left and came back with dinner for her. She'd giggle when I gave her saltwater to gargle and look at me affectionately when I held her hand. It wasn't until she fell asleep in the middle of the night that I decided to leave after kissing her hand and whispering "goodbye."

For the next three days, I spent all of my time either attending classes or looking after my girlfriend in her dormitory room. She insisted that I not spend so much time caring for her, but I continuously refused. She quickly learned that I made it my mission to make sure she got better and nothing could be said or done to deter me.

The reality of serious cancellation loomed closer and closer as the week continued. The school announced on Wednesday that Friday would be our last day of in-person classes. According to the university's president, a drastic shift to online learning would need to take place to limit the potential spread of the virus on campus since the number of reported cases in California has been growing exponentially. I knew it would make taking care of my girlfriend much easier, but I seriously hoped that she hadn't contracted the Crown-20 virus. I assured myself that such a scenario is improbable considering that there had been no confirmed cases in our county yet.

After my final class finished on Friday, I went to go buy two sandwiches so that I could share lunch with my closest companion. Upon purchasing them at a campus restaurant, the cashier informed me that the store would be closing starting Monday along with most of the other restaurants on campus. I thanked her and walked out of the building shuttering at the thought of my campus closing down.

I returned to the dormitory of my beloved and knocked on the door. When she said I could enter, I saw her spitting into a big plastic bag.

"Hey there, baby. I am actually coughing up phlegm. Which means the sickness is going away. You're such a good nurse."

"Good. I had a feeling you didn't have Crown-20, but hearing this makes me know for sure it's just a cold or something."

"Yeah, I saw that all the classes are shutting down and stuff. I'm like..Woah. Okay. Guess it's all closing while I'm sitting here being boring in bed."

"I'm sorry I couldn't be here for you more."

"No, baby. You should go to your classes. I understand. But since you're back, why don't you come sit by me."

I pulled a chair next to her bed and sat down. Almost immediately, she reached for my hand and I put mine in hers. She smiled at me and thanked me for taking care of her this entire week.

"I couldn't see myself doing anything else besides being by your side until you're better. It's just who I am."

"And that's why I love you."

I received an email saying that all classes would be officially paused in light of the concerns surrounding Crown-20. In essence, we were granted a weeklong vacation. Considering that she had gotten over her illness, my girlfriend wanted to spend a lot of that time with me. I happily agreed and she proposed that we “hang out all week, watch lots of movies, and have sleepovers at your dorm!” I knew that this would be an incredibly enjoyable experience that would take our minds off the grim reality of Crown-20 interfering with our personal lives.

This time around, I made sure to actively check up on the news daily to be exactly sure of how quickly the virus was progressing. I wanted to watch it like a hawk, especially considering it felt far too close for comfort. It would only be a matter of time before it found its way onto campus.

Miraculously, the virus did not seem to have made it on campus that entire week. Thankful for my good fortune, I put my worry aside and experienced the best week of my entire life by her side. We did all she promised and more. Laughing at her favorite comedies and crying on each other’s shoulders at the end of romantic dramas. We went on walks as the sun was setting and enjoyed dinner at the cafeteria right after. There were some nights where we’d do nothing but cuddle and compliment each other until eventually falling asleep in each other’s arms. I started to realize that I had fallen in love with this incredible young woman.

Everything went perfectly until that fateful Friday. She grew ill once more and it seemed far worse than last time. I checked her temperature and found it had skyrocketed well above one-hundred degrees Fahrenheit. Her cough was utterly violent and she complained of extreme pain in the lungs. For three days, these symptoms only appeared to worsen. I began to have serious anxiety that I could no longer push aside. I legitimately thought she had the virus.

On Monday, that possibility seemed incredibly real. The virus had infiltrated campus and several students have been reported as having it. Campus police have been assigned the emergency position of escorting incredibly ill students to the hospital as complications from Crown-20 have been proven to be potentially fatal if left untreated. By the time noon struck, I knew I couldn’t deny the very strong possibility that the young woman whom I loved had been infected by the virus.

I made the most difficult phone call of my entire life and dialed the number of campus police. The experience was incredibly excruciating, so painful that I find myself unable to recall the exact words said without physically shaking or crying. After the call, I held her hand and said that she needed to be escorted to the hospital because she could be in danger. Part of me expected a retort and for her to insist that she was fine, but I heard nothing. She just nodded her head in silent agreement.

A group of individuals came with a gurney and paramedics to escort her out of the dorm. I watched in shock, fear, and utter misery as they lifted her onto the gurney. I begged them to let me go with her to the hospital as the paramedics were analyzing her condition. One officer initially disapproved of the idea but changed her mind after coming to the conclusion that I might need medical care too after being exposed to the virus for a prolonged amount of time with no protection.

One of the paramedics had called the ambulance as they unanimously agreed that her condition was dire. That ambulance ride felt like pure hell. I experienced nothing but dread and hatred. I began to loathe that virus. Not just for threatening mankind, but also for attempting to take away my whole world.

Upon reaching the hospital, the paramedics and hospital staff forced me to separate from her. They wheeled her to a hospital room while I remained alone in the hospital lobby. A nurse came to console me and tell me that the doctors were working their hardest to make sure that she could recover from this virus. I thanked her and begged to be allowed to stay the night in the hospital. She told me she would go ask her superiors to see if that could be arranged.

The hospital agreed to let me sleep in a hospital bed for one night after confirming my insurance information and receiving my consent to administer a test for Crown-20. I walked into my designated room and immediately collapsed onto the bed after sliding out of my shoes. I apologized and insisted to the nurse that I was exhausted and needed to rest. She assured me that she understood my plight. Before leaving me to rest, she told me to press the nurse call button attached to the bed if there was a serious emergency. She also said that the Crown-20 test would be administered to me the next morning. I thanked her for her kindness and proceeded to fall asleep within minutes.

That morning I woke up feeling vile. My entire body felt incredibly heavy and it became burdensome to even sit up. My head ached as if it had a heavy golden crown perpetually stuck on top of it. Now I understood why they called it Crown-20. I could barely breathe and I found myself coughing so much that I could not speak. The nurse came in and I tried to beg for help but my words came out as violent coughs. She told me to relax and that care would be brought to me immediately.

My memory of what happened next is vague. I grew so ill that I could no longer think or comprehend what was going on around me. Every moment felt like a bitter struggle to stay alive. It took an enormous amount of effort to breathe. I can recall a male nurse informing me with a heavy heart that I had tested positive for Crown-20 and would have to remain in the hospital until I had recovered from the illness. I knew that it would be a painful road.

I spent a lot of the time sleeping and having constant nightmares. I could never recall those dreams as a violent coughing fit seemed to always interrupt them and my slumber. I lost track of how much time I had spent there when two of the nurses told me that I would need to be put on a ventilator to help my body fight off the infection. I did my best to nod but found that moving my head only ached it more.

They proceeded to sedate me and all the pain went away.

Upon awakening, I found that I could breathe naturally again. My head no longer ached and I felt no pain, but I lacked the energy to do much more than look around and move my hands.

The two nurses standing in front of my bed asked me about my symptoms..

“I feel... Okay. Everything doesn’t hurt. Thank you. Wait, why do you all look so distressed.”

“Well, we have some sad news to deliver to you today. The doctor, a grizzled, tired older man, adjusted his glasses and walked to the front of the bed. The nurses stepped aside as he began to speak.

“Sir, I’m sorry to inform you that the young woman you arrived here with has passed away. Although her records indicated that she was healthy and had no preexisting conditions, her body could not handle the virus and we were unable to stop it from taking her life. We are incredibly sorry for your loss. Although I sincerely wish that I could console you personally, I must attend to other patients at this moment.”

A voice called for him from across the hall and he hurried over to them.

My euphoria was gone. I felt the pain of losing my love, my life burst from the deepest part of my soul and emerge violently from my eyes, my nose, my mouth. I let out a scream too painful to be heard and yet I felt it shake the room. I spouted curses and eventually just collapsed onto the bed and kept crying. The nurses didn’t even try to stop me or calm me down. I’m sure I wasn’t the first person to experience such grief since this pandemic started. I cried and cried for what seemed like forever. I prayed that I was having a nightmare that would be interrupted by a coughing fit. Those coughs never came.

Eventually, I “fully” recovered from the virus and the staff agreed to release me from the hospital after I filled out some paperwork. While the papers and the doctor would tell you I’m completely fine, I don’t find that to be the case. I have no medical proof of it, but I swear my lungs aren’t the same as they were before that damn virus infected me. I used to be able to dash across campus without a problem if I were late for class. Now, if I so much as paced too quickly, I find myself gasping for air. That infernal virus has left a permanent scar on me.

I hate that it left with me a permanent reminder of that cycle of misery. Every time I gasp for air when I wear myself out I remember that damn hospital. I remember the misery of having to call for help when her condition grew dire. The pain of that traumatizing time has never left me, no matter how many years pass.

Once I left that hospital, I knew what I needed to do with my life. It became crystal clear to me what I needed to pursue. I can’t say for sure if I made that choice out of passion, loss, spite, hatred, or a combination of the three. All I am certain of is that I knew I needed to become a virologist. I needed to know more about viruses. I wanted to study them. I desired to figure out exactly how they function and how they infect. My goal in life became to wage war upon the entities that took my love away from me. It became my mission to work tirelessly until humanity had eradicated every last virus that plagues us.

Months later, new cases of Crown-20 began to decrease. Fewer people were dying and groundbreaking research for a new vaccine was underway. The entire world was placed under quarantine as national governments ordered citizens to stay inside their homes and avoid contact with others to limit the spread of this incredibly dangerous virus.

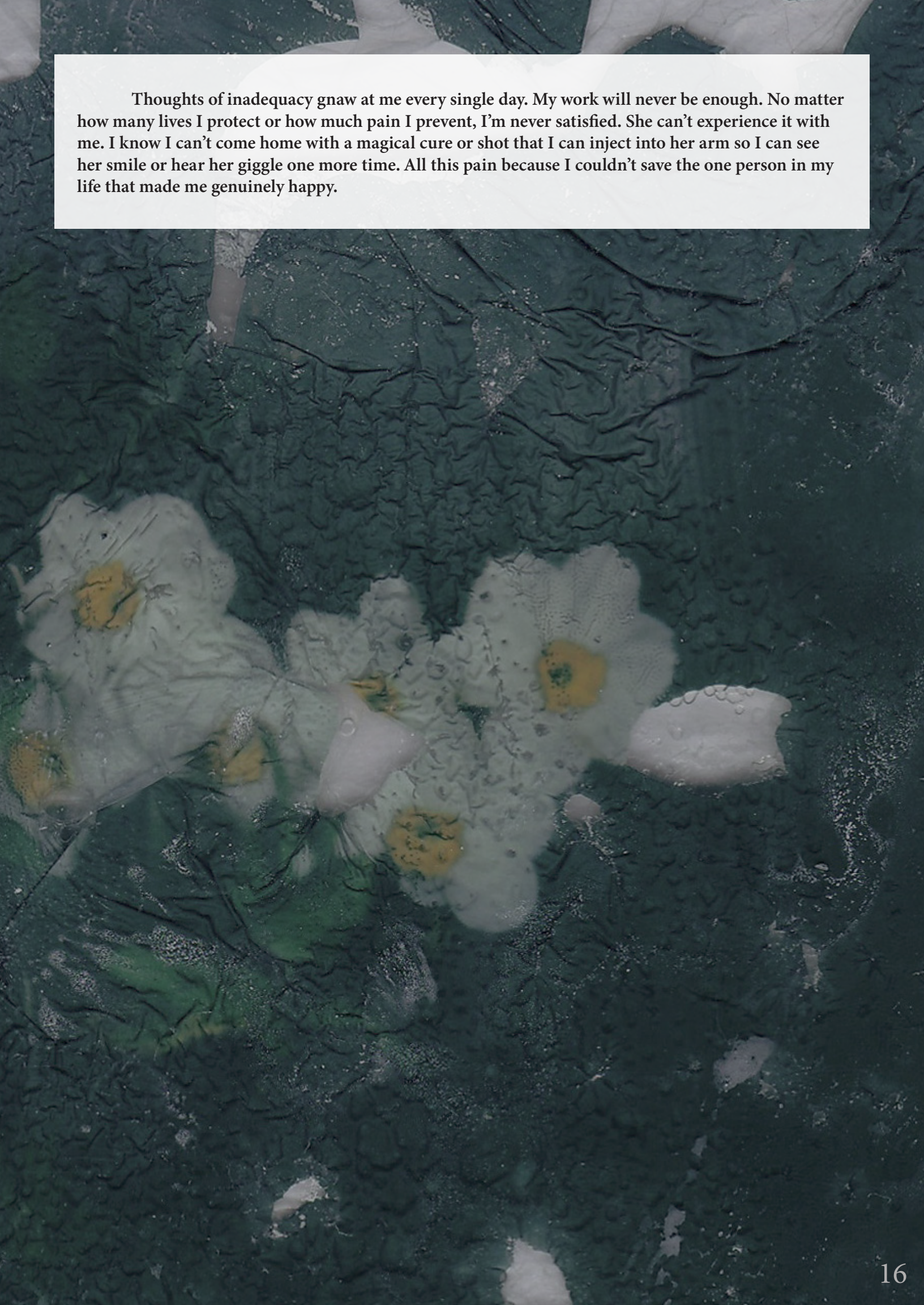
Eventually, the quarantine ended as the number of new cases per day dropped below one-thousand. They released a new vaccine that governments offered to citizens for free. Slowly, the world recovered from Crown-20. Most of the population became vaccinated and hospitals cleared up. I wish my love could have been there to see life go back to normal. I’m sure she would have liked that.

Schools and businesses reopened and life proceeded as usual. I entered academia with a new sense of purpose and determination. I spent every free hour I had studying and researching. My social life declined and I stopped pursuing love altogether. My grades soared upwards as my constant studying allowed me to master any material that I was presented with. I am certainly no genius because I’m sure anyone who studied for countless hours as I did could excel in any science course.

I graduated with perfect grades from university and enrolled in a Ph.D. program. The hours were demanding and I developed a reputation in the laboratory. I would hear my colleagues gossip to one another and speculate how I could work for so many hours without needing to sleep or go home. They talked about how they thought they were workaholics, but I was at an entirely different level. Perhaps they gossiped about me because I didn’t speak to them. After the incident, I became very invested in any work I did. Part of that work ethic is to not distract yourself with idle chatter while you are researching unless collaboration is mandatory for the completion of the task.

It’s been thirty years since I’ve graduated with a PhD and started working at the National Institute of Health as a virologist. People know me as a quiet, studious man. A man of few friends and even fewer words. I never married and have lived alone for the entirety of my adult life. I spend my free time reading articles and keeping myself up to date on the newest breakthroughs and research in medical microbiology. Grant sponsors, friends, family, and even prominent politicians have told me that my work on viral replication and my discovery of preventative measures to reduce future pandemics was groundbreaking and has saved countless lives. I didn’t care what they thought and do not care now. No matter how much praise I am given, I never feel like I’ve done what I set out to do all those years ago.

Thoughts of inadequacy gnaw at me every single day. My work will never be enough. No matter how many lives I protect or how much pain I prevent, I'm never satisfied. She can't experience it with me. I know I can't come home with a magical cure or shot that I can inject into her arm so I can see her smile or hear her giggle one more time. All this pain because I couldn't save the one person in my life that made me genuinely happy.



Basada en hechos reales

By Esther Holzmeister

Lina era hija de padres inmigrantes quienes también fueron hijos de europeos con nativos del siglo XX. La ciudad donde nació era muy famosa por su desarrollo industrial producto de la mano de obra de inmigrantes como sus abuelos que vinieron en los gigantescos barcos de los profundos océanos de aquel siglo y sus padres que viajaron a diferentes lugares hasta establecerse en donde había trabajo. Sus raíces se veían un poco oscuras, al no estar bien en claro su origen, pues su sangre fue el producto de una fusión de encuentros y de amores entre culturas y razas de colores que quebrantaron las normas raciales establecidas por grupos. Para Lina, no había nada peor que le preguntaran de dónde era, pues ella no tenía una respuesta exacta, porque ni en la tierra donde nació era aceptada por el origen de sus padres. En este mundo, hay personas que nacen sin pertenecer y esto son hijos del destino como el de ella. Lina se podría haber llamado Yulina, pero el gobierno de dictadura no le permitió ese nombre extranjero, y desde entonces se llamó Lina que en griego era un nombre reservado para mujeres de gran importancia. Lina tuvo momentos de malas experiencias, pero todo sirvió para algo bueno pues ella estaba siendo preparada para un destino.

La niña se transformó en una mujer tenaz y observadora de cambios para emprenderlos cuando fuera necesario, así como lo hicieron sus ancestros. Un día Lina se encontró en medio de una imponente ciudad, saturada de violencia producto de la sobrevivencia de sus habitantes. La ciudad estaba tan aglomerada que sin opción tuvo que ir en busca de otras tierras para volver a empezar como una vez lo hicieron sus ancestros. Lina salió a contribuir con su trabajo a otra ciudad extraña por su idioma y costumbres. La lucha no era problema para ella pues estaba acostumbrada al duro trabajo de su niñez que heredó de sus ancestros. Ella llevaba rasgos en su cuerpo por los pesados trabajos en su niñez que le dieron habilidades. Lina se casó con un buen hombre a quien ella le enseñaría sobre las experiencias de un inmigrante. Ellos formaron una familia, y con el paso del tiempo, ella notó que sus hijos tenían la misma mirada de cuando era niña. Sus hijos crecían sin abuelos, tíos y primos como sucedió con ella, y sin haberlo planeado, sus hijos estaban teniendo el mismo destino que ella. Lina por fin entendió que las vidas de los viajeros son como las olas de un océano que van a lugares dependiendo del viento, y lleva sus tesoros a lugares inciertos. Lo más probable es que algún día sus hijos serían inmigrantes, y ella debía prepararlos. Es que los inmigrantes son como las olas, y el tesoro es el trabajo que contribuye al desarrollo de una ciudad. Cuando la ciudad crece, estos van a nuevos pagos. Estos viajeros están en las manos de Dios y en su misericordia.

The background is a dark green, textured surface with embossed white flowers and leaves. The flowers have yellow centers and are scattered across the page. The texture is reminiscent of a book cover or a decorative paper.

Poetry

how do you use a comma

By Amanda Kirschner

how do you use a comma no one seems to really know how but we need it right can you tell what im writing what about what im asking you can you tell what or if im asking probably not its confusing right where does it stop where does it end actually it doesnt end at all you cant stop for a pause you cant take a breath it makes you want to speak in rhymes you dont know where to emphasize your words or raise your pitch when the question goes up a smitch well actually the sentence ends where the words stop on your behalf because without punctuation this is no paragraph but merely a sentence a run on one at that with no pause no flow no sense in its tense its barely coherent words youre reading right now i bet if you read this out loud youd be gasping for air and begging for a comma to appear is that fair now i think we all can realize the comma is a necessary thing in order to make this long string of thoughts finally sing



Memories Within Trees
By Leticia Chavez Gonzalez

Trees are eternity; always rooted in place.

Diverse people walk among them, each in their own world. Wandering among the trees, twirling and swirling, the time goes. Now these trees hold many memories and secrets.

The good and the bad, still standing tall.

Within its embrace, it's just me, standing in its glory.

No more innocence, no more twinkle in my eyes.

Dull and dimmed, life vanishing,

Wishing to go back in time.

To be with loved ones and be loved.

To fully embrace the life I once had.

Untitled

By Art Ikehara

1.
Get in my car after work, late,
with no music, the windows down
and slump into my seat and sigh
and roll another joint in dark.
Because I can.

~
Nothing extraneous,
Nothing within.
Wires on finger skin.


~
That twist the wheel and turn the car.
I hurtle through street lights and fog.
Nothing on the street and no light,
no light in my car or in body,
my mind within my body.

~
My mind comes back to the car
and the work, and whenever I about them
I pluck the invisible wires on my scars
and wonder who pulls them taut,
what lets them loose.

~
The car is just a placeholder
for make-believe hardship less real
than the rust that scorches the car
that is, again, a placeholder.
And my work just gets me pocket change,

~
So what is the car
if not nothing and what am I
if I drive nothing? How can I befriend
the cook who works sixty hours
when I work thirty for pocket change?

~



As I drive I feel nothing and
as I work I feel nothing. The door's ajar –

~

Maybe only wires and rust
are left behind from us, shadows
that perform substance to space –

~

Filled with lights and shapes and rainbows

~

Even in the dark

~

Nothing extraneous,
Nothing within.

Wires on fingerskin.

Where's Father? By Robert Salcido

**Church bells ring,
Small birds sing,
The bride has her ring,
But where is her father?**

**A boy has his mitt,
And a bat so he can hit;
He wants to play ball for a bit,
But where is his father?**

**A young adult has a child,
Well aware of the documents needed to be filed;
Regardless his life will now be happy and wild,
But where is his father?**

**The toddler plays,
Running in its careless ways,
With energy to last for days,
But where is its father?**

**The soldier returns,
Home on a break well earned;
Her family waits, the hearth burns,
But where is her father?**

**Twins celebrate,
Jumping on their graduation date;
Sharing joy can no longer wait,
But where is their father?**

**These fathers' unknown locations
Are ironically the same destination,
Where "exit" is never a topic of argumentation.
So where are these fathers?**

Like books on a shelf,
They provide a lesson worth more than wealth:
Never allow oneself to neglect one's health.
That's why the fathers are missing.

They are not missing, but gone,
Dead due to problems brought on
By their own choice to prolong
Their suffering; that's why they're gone.

They chose not to listen
To doctors and ate food that glistened
With grease, while we're all wishin'
They are with us, but they're gone.

All we have now are pictures,
And remnants of the broken fixtures
They repaired and took apart just to be sure.
We wish they were still here, but they're gone.

Primero muerta antes de que me vuelas a tocar
By Catherine Vazquez

maggots stuck in my web like marmalade
murder squished on my back
shavings of skin scattered

immigrated skin coals in ember pits
shattered glass licking my body
nails engraved in grass hits
calloused wounds spotty

beauteous cloud
notice I'm only ever jealous of nature
because she wraps herself in her cocoon,
shelters those who have hurt her,
and dissolves into honeydew

I palpitate, exasperate, concentrate
on her
while blood deep as cacao cosmos squirms down my neck
galloping drumbeats sing on my skin
your inability to stop
mourn scars that become nova interludes
hiding in plasters of pigment

denude
for you?
but why?
when I don't even do it for me

flesh you stole
comes with agony
only I know how to shut it up
the beloved aloe vera cucumber era
and a lifetime of bruised rain

Euphoric
By Gabrielle Niko

I couldn't stop thinking about you.
I touched myself the way you used to.
The way your hands cupped my face,
 Your lips kissing every place possible,
 Your eyes locked on mine
 As we moved together in perfect rhythm.
I came and water clouded my vision.
Tears dripped down my face
 Leaving a single mark on my pillow
 Where your head used to lay.
The pleasure was still there,
 But the intimacy was gone.
I still can't stop thinking about you.



California Sunflower

By Karla Amaya

**I am a California Sunflower
My roots are deep
No one knows how deep I am
Or how deep my mind is
My stem is tall
I may look small but I'm really tall on the inside
My leaves are like my arms
For I am as strong as a man and woman
My crown is full of yellow petals
Each are my hopes, thoughts, and dreams
My spiral face turns to the Sun
And the Moon as well
For they are the King and Queen of the Sky
And they nourish me with Life and Love
For I know that
Every minute of every hour
Of the day and night
I am a California Sunflower.**



My Monologue for Death By Danise Kuang

People constantly walk through my life as if I'm a crosswalk, confined to the commands of the primary lights.

Death can rescue me whenever I want.

They will never be affected by self-interest, or the demands of others. In fact, once I am placed under their spell, suffering is expelled from my vessel.

Death has stayed with me unlike anyone else.



Inferno

By Stephanie Weiner

Hands shaking

Breath quickening

Tears pricking at the corners of your hard eyes. You feel the sharp pain in your chest

Like a knife that was lodged and forgotten

Left to hang perpendicular to your quaking body. Blood drips down your front

Seeping into dirty clothes.

Blood set loose by the

Inferno in you.

The Lover's Clock by Gabrielle Niko

March 6, 2020 11:43am

I've known you for 112 days and 22 hours.
We've been friends for 105 days and 14 hours.
I've been yours for 88 days and 15 hours.

Every second that ticks by,
It is eons without you.
When I'm with you, time can fly.
And to know we found such love
So quick, in such a short time,
That man is so deprived of,
As if it was Fate's design.

The concept of time is strange:
Because time is relative,
Yet it's how we measure age
And it surrounds how we live.
We've been friends for 105 days and 14 hours
I've known you for 112 days and 22 hours...

But what is too quick? Too slow?
And how long is forever?
To me, it doesn't matter.
We have all the time to grow
And make moments together.

We are so lucky to be young
To find such a timeless love,
That makes my heart skip and run.
You're my gift from God above.

And so I present this gift,
As a token of my love,
As a reminder to you,
That with every moment missed,
My heart still soars like a dove
At the very thought of you.
That with every passing second,
I love you more than the second before.
With my whole soul, I love you.

I've been yours for 88 days and 15 hours

& the rest of our story will consist of numerous
seconds, countless minutes, and endless hours.

Permanent Stain

By Danise Kuang

Before I knew it,
I was your palette and you made an automatism of me.
Your favorite scenes were my shrieks and screams. Shocking hues erupted out of your lips,
surrounding me—how could I possibly escape?
Your artifice would callously illustrate
purples and reds all over my exterior.
I questioned if you intended to make a corpse of me.

Those once gentle bristles brushing against my cheek
transformed into a belligerent, coarse assault.
You muddled up my inner prismatic, altering it into a nauseating and indistinguishable tint.
No matter how much I ran you under the tap,
you were a permanent stain.

HAVE YOU EVER REALLY FALLEN IN LOVE WITH YOURSELF?

By Destiny Alvarez

Have you ever really fallen in love with yourself?

I have.

I love the person I am becoming and all the things I'm learning.

Never in my life did I ever think I would be so excited to learn

the ins and outs of so many topics

I love everything and all the people who have taught me new things

My mind is the greatest gift I have been given

I love myself

In many ways I'm naive but I still love growing

I can do so many things and talk to so many people

I love the stories I have to share

I love myself

My creations and my thoughts memorize me

The facts I know surprise me

I may not be artistic but I love all the things I still try to do

I love myself

Never did think I would know all the people I know

Never did I think I would be think happy

Never did I think I would have so many talents

Never did I think that I wasn't good enough

I love myself because I am the person I wanted to be when I was young

I love myself

I love myself

I love myself

The Girl With the Spirit

By Laura Zhang

**There's a girl
That everyone knows
But who is this girl
You think you know**

**She's the girl with the spirit
She's the girl with the joy
You see her happy self
You think you know why**

**She laughs all day
She laughs all night
But is she really
Laughing inside**

**Her life seems happy
Her life seems perfect
What you don't know is
She's breaking inside**

**With so many dreams
And so many goals
She always seems like
She's happier than life**

**She's not always sad
She's not always happy
But she is still strong
Even with the devil**

**What is the devil?
Depression
What does she deal with?
Depression
What is she overcoming?
Depression**

Not all her days are bad
Not all her days are good
But she always manages to be
The girl with the spirit

I guess you can say
She's being fake
But it's her only way
To stay alive

But what does she fake?
Showing no pain
She's crushing herself
Slowly inside

She makes mistakes
The ones you learn from
She forgives the ones involved
Except herself

The hardest thing to do
Is to forgive others
But for her
It's to forgive herself

She's always thinking
About how to forgive
But she still manages
To blame herself

The blame is bad
Because it contributes
To the terrible thing
Called the devil

What is the devil?
Depression
What does she deal with?
Depression
What is she overcoming?
Depression

Most people think that
Meds are for crazies
But let me tell you
They're a person's savior

She doesn't depend on them
But she needs them
They give her a boost
To be the girl with the spirit

They remove her thoughts
The ones that control her
But they can only do so much
The rest is on her

Every day is
A big, big challenge
She wakes up trying
To be as bright as the sky

She makes her life perfect
Without a flaw
But when she shows her true self
She begins to fall

She tries to see
Her happy future
But sometimes it disappears
Leaving her in negativity

She's tired of hearing
"People have it worse"
Because she understands
It's not just her

There are so many people
Who live with depression
They're working towards a goal
To diminish the devil

What is the devil?

Depression

What does she deal with?

Depression

What is she overcoming?

Depression

Every day is different

Every week is different

Every month is different

Every year is different

It's her senior year

She's about to leave

It's a fresh start

A road to independence

Unlike many

She actually liked school

The many people she met

That inspired people

8th grade

It was her favorite year

The year she reached out

The year she found her passion

11th grade

It is her favorite year

She met two amazing people

The ones that saved her life

The ones she would die for

The ones she is living for

She loves them so much

More than life itself

She would like to thank them

For saving her life

They take a big part

In her staying alive

**She is growing stronger
With depression growing weaker
With the right people
She finds a way to make it**

**She wants to stay alive
To see the world's adventures
She is no longer afraid
To live with the devil**

**What is the devil?
Depression
What does she deal with?
Depression
What is she overcoming?
Depression**

**Who is this girl?
You probably know
It's me
The girl with the spirit**

Those Few Seconds

By Angeles Barba

The morning sun comes out
Flinching my eyes, I say with a pout
Another day this early
Those few seconds
I'm disoriented
Off the bed I fall nearly
That's when I think about you
You see the thing is
What we had I reckoned
What we had I dented
Today four things happened
I wish I can tell you
But I know seeing me will make you blue

Those few seconds
Where my life isn't a mess
Where I don't think myself as less
Where I don't hate myself
I hear the click of the clock on top of my shelf
That's when I think about you
You see the thing is
I miss your jokes
And talking about your folks
I miss your sarcastic tone
And when we talked on the phone

The morning sun burns my eyes
Those few seconds I don't regret my byes
That's when I think about you
How I left with no reason
While my heart is freeze in
How I told you a lie

But you still loved me
By the way my favorite tea is green tea
Which of course you knew that
You read me like a book
And grabbed me with your hook

But you still loved me
Those few seconds I remembered that
That I love you too



When They Grab a Light Beer

By Jesse Tovar

together again,/they will sit together./they won't share fries./they will talk,/and they won't poke/
each other's arms./they will laugh,/and they'll try/ their best not to/ touch their faces./they will eat
/cashew cheese pizza/ together again./before they go/ their separate ways,/ they will say "later"/
instead of /side hugging or/ bumping fists.



Memory
By Danise Kuang

**My best friend hypothesized that you'd slip out of my mind in 9 months' time;
but your memory is here.**

It is in the shoe aisles at every store.

**It is at the diner where you picked me up after my grandma's funeral;
I remember.**

Confluence
(or, A Story of Two Rivers)

By Colleen Cochran

The approach is not soft

Instead, a careening

brakes off Deadman's Curve here comes the cliff Butch!

nothing and no one to slow her down

like climbing up a slide in the rain

or,

Sisyphus and the damned rock

He said: No choice no choice no choice

All you get is the knowing it's coming

She thought: Yes, you may be right: The rolling down of the Boulder
is inevitable

But not the crushing

The meeting is more clash than coming together

as ineluctable as greed or hurt feelings

Her protest choked in wind

He said: The ability to endure pain is not a skill

She thought: Next time I will slow down.

Fernweh
By Jasmine Lainfiesta

Look up at the stars

How they align for you

For me

For us.

Now look at the moon

How it shines for you

For me

For us.

Wanderlust dawns upon

You

Me

Us.



Mirrors

By Sam Anderholt

**My head's topped off with foam
Straight out the tap I flow off the dome
Never found a house I could call a home
Always questioning my reflection in chrome
Surfaces what's worse than this...**

**A languid wish a rainbow fish with no scales left
A blindfolded women whose scales have tipped
Her clothes are ripped her tooth is chipped
You'll find no corpse within her crypt but
Under her wings the air has lifted feathers
Light weather's right the wind has shifted
If you find yourself gifted it's only the sands
Of time have sifted in your favor**

10.16
By Sam Anderholt

I don't fit in I stand out
Seeking connections
Not a hand-out
In the most round-about ways
Restless legs
Can't expect me to stay still or in one spot for too long
Itchy feet got me jumping out of my long johns
Wontons sticky olive oil tall & skinny
Equipped with tricks see...
Crisping agent making decisions risky so is speaking with a lispy
Voice Every word and oral movement a deliberate choice
Coz no reflection toward direction left me with a quivering voice
My thoughts are sporadic
Seeds sprout & bloom
We got flowers in the attic I'm addicted to sadness
See others with gladness & think,
Damn, I'll never have this

Epigrams By Robert Rois

I

La pintura de Guido Llinás

París, 1981

Pintor cubano, exilado sin novedad,
Apenas trazando su abstracto dibujo,
Palpitantes siluetas en la oscuridad,
Llinás retrata salteados signos de brujo,
Delatando una misteriosa identidad:
Enlutado pincel con fondo azul de lujo.

II

José:

1. At Edward's Air-Force Base

Shuttle Landing, 1982

Our friends have lost their way to famous Zion.
A bee weighs down the garden dandelion.

2. At an Irish Pub on St Patrick's Day

San Francisco, 1976

There are no names, nor Hellos, here:
No Good-Byes either. Drink to health!
An Irish friend who died last year
Has drawn me in. He stalks with stealth.

Pastor:

3. At Church


Brethren, pray for grace.
We have to ask, and must believe;
Forgiven, ready to forgive,
First knock to enter, then receive.

So It Goes
By Jessica Catajoy

**feelings i once felt
no longer haunt me though
sometimes my mind does**

**how do i forget?
a moment filled with regret
like an endless loop**

**can only move on
no use in going back
to what is already gone**



Antithesis
By Jasmine Lainfiesta

**Endless struggles;
all of them true.
But I'm a flower. . .
meant to Bloom.**

Self Edited

By Michelle G.

Self —an edited poem from 2015

Compare me to the version I was of myself six years ago [redacted] see [redacted]

[redacted] defining characteristics within me.

[redacted] see [redacted] [redacted]

[redacted] [redacted] my heart [redacted].

[redacted] [redacted]

[redacted] begging for peace.

Thankfully [redacted]

[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

[redacted]

I am driven [redacted]

I carry [redacted] myself [redacted], I lift myself [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] I never give up.

[redacted] I show [redacted] scars to [redacted]

[redacted] my mother, [redacted] and I [redacted]

[redacted] rush [redacted] to the [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] window, sunlight makes its way to my [redacted] skin. The warmth is ethereal [redacted].

Mamá

By Michelle G.

El dolor ha termina ya. Generación a generación, el dolor que nunca fue para nosotros: el ciclo atrapado en nuestra sangre--termina ya.

El dolor puede silenciarte ante el mundo
Con tus lágrimas encerradas en tu casa, en tu cama

Pero me niego a mantener la boca cerrada.

Aprenderé y aprenderé y llevare estas nuevas palabras a casa.
Las envolveré en una cinta, las llevare a tu puerta y diré, “mira lo que he hecho por nosotros”

Luchadora, no solo me diste esta cara. He visto tu fuerza toda mi vida, la fuerza que vive dentro de mí.

Cuando discuto-tan tercamente-cuando me niego a aceptar la que un hombre me dice, lo hago contigo

Cuando yo me pinta la cara, vestir y decorar mi piel como quiero, porque quiero, lo hago contigo

Cuando te digo que te amo, estoy diciendo-mírate como te veo, como me ves a mí. Si estas orgulloso, siéntete orgulloso de ti mismo.

Soy quien soy porque me hiciste. Soy la hija de me madre.

Sister

By Michelle G.

We prepare for a photograph.

The youngest next to the eldest

She is the eldest by minutes. I am the youngest by years.

A distance that has never kept us from closeness.

A distance that has always been clear.

As if on cue, we beg her to smile. “They paid so much for those teeth,” we say.

Our mother has paid too much for you to never bare those teeth.

I lean into her, taller with these shoes.

I have found these ways of making myself taller. louder. Smarter.

She has found these ways of making herself small.

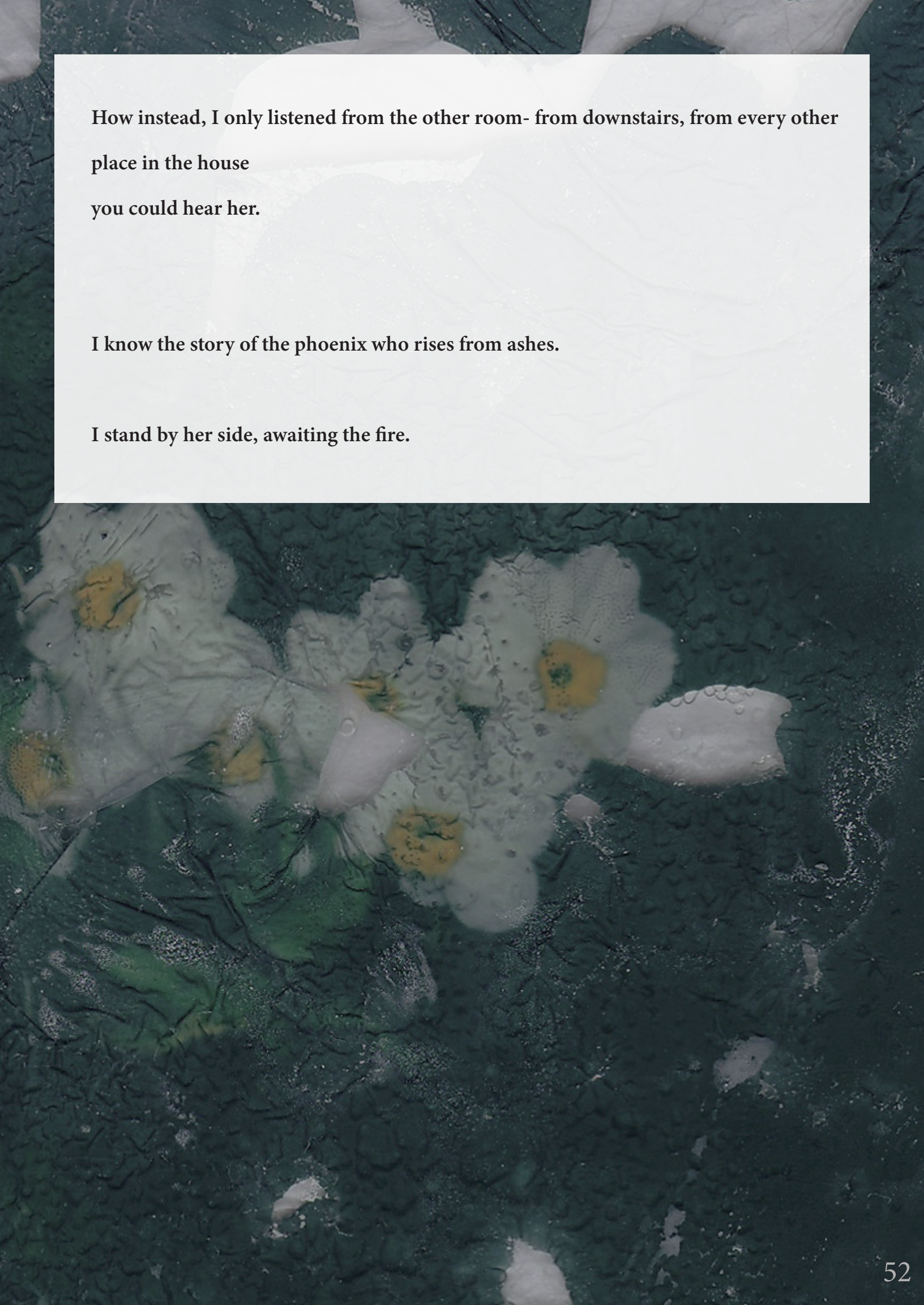
There are questions I have kept in the space

between needing to protect her and needing a big sister

Between knowing the story

of how her spirit was torn down like a sacred church. Grievous.

How I should have protested. Chained myself to the building.



How instead, I only listened from the other room- from downstairs, from every other
place in the house
you could hear her.

I know the story of the phoenix who rises from ashes.

I stand by her side, awaiting the fire.

Finding Felicity
By Gabrielle Niko

**In the black of night,
Treading for miles,
Shoes worn and now too tight.
Lost in the dark,
Alone for awhile,
Lips dry and rough like bark.**

**Far off the trail,
Stumbling on weeds,
Olive skin turning pale.
Growing hopeless,
“God save me” I plead,
Drained and losing focus.**

**Darkness consumes me,
A lonely husk,
Tears salty as the sea.
The silence rings.
Eons past dusk,
She fears no one’s coming.**

**Light shines through the trees,
Chirps fill the air,
The winter unfreezes.
I don’t look far.
God heard my prayer,
And, my love, there you are.**

Dear Harvest Readers,

Over the course of this past Spring semester we have been collecting your work for the Spring 2020 PDF. To say the least we have been amazed by all your pieces. We are so thankful that you all let us display your works of art and would like to invite you to keep on creating and keep on sharing. Harvest thrives on this type of creativity and we hope to create a community that celebrates that. Once again, thank you all for your contributions. You are the talent. You are the audience. You are Harvest.

Sincerely,

*Simrah Khan and the Harvest
International Team*

Estimados lectores de Harvest:

En el transcurso del semestre de la pasada primavera hemos estado recopilando su trabajo para el PDF de primavera 2020. Para decir lo menos, nos han sorprendido todas sus piezas. Estamos muy agradecidos de que todos nos hayan dejado exhibir sus obras de arte y nos gustaría invitarlos a seguir creando y compartiendo. Harvest prospera con este tipo de creatividad y esperamos crear una comunidad que lo celebre. Una vez más, gracias a todos por sus contribuciones. Tú eres el talento. Tú eres la audiencia. Tú eres Harvest.

Sinceramente,

***Bertha Romero y el equipo de
Harvest International***