

the SLIGGO
Journal
of Arts & Letters

Montgomery College
7600 Takoma Ave.
Takoma Park, MD 20912

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Cover artwork:

“I fall to pieces and I cry” by Mark Behme

ISBN: 9781940724188

Fall 2017 / Spring 2018

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Acknowledgments

The Staff is especially appreciative of the generous support received from Dr. Brad Stewart, Kim McGettigan, Takoma Park faculty and staff, and our student interns. Thank you also to Robert Giron and Gival Press for donating time and resources to ensure this journal comes out in hard copy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

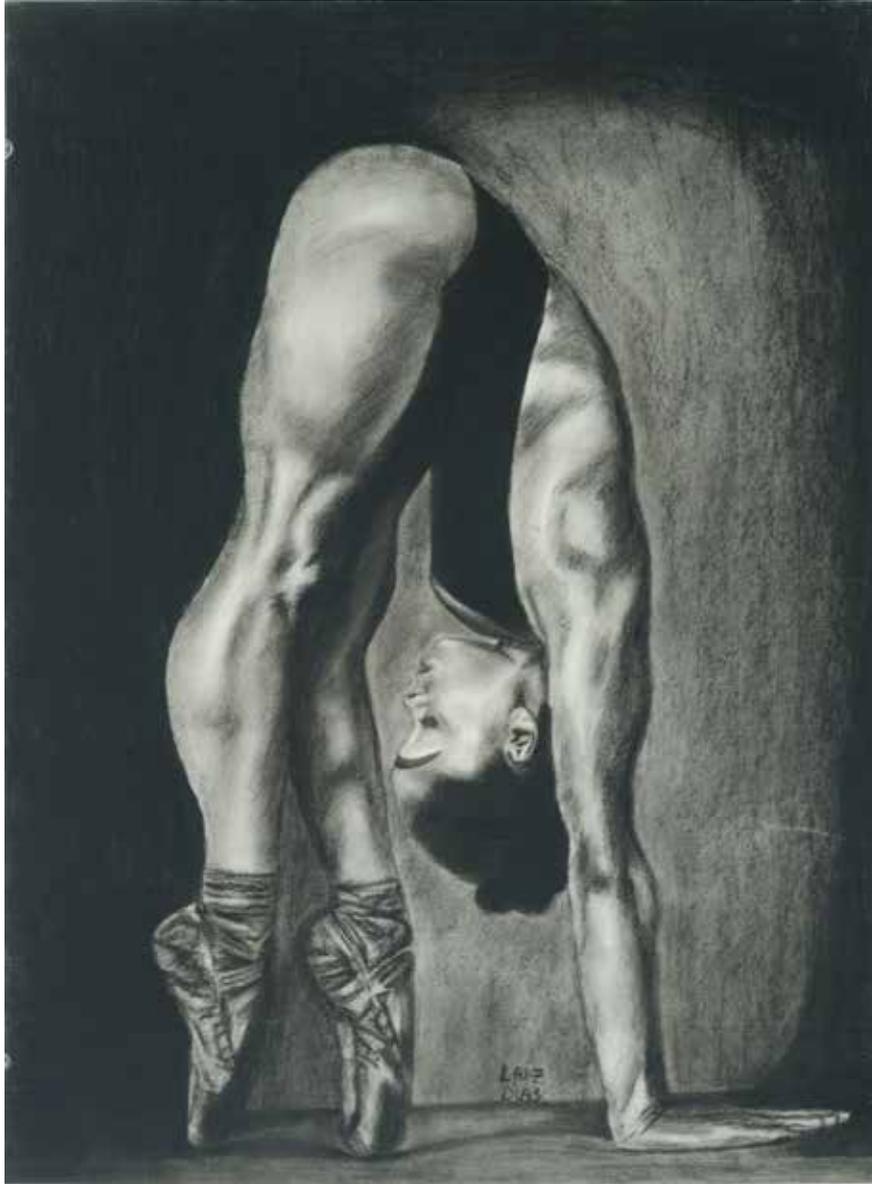
- 10 *Misty Copeland*, by LAIZ NASCIMENTO DIAS
- 11 *Coward Declaration*, by KAREN VANESSA NAJARRO CÁCERES
- 12 *Declaración Cobarde*, by KAREN VANESSA NAJARRO CÁCERES
- 13 *A Naked Experience*, by NICOLAS GARCIA
- 14 *Backcountry*, by STEPHEN KATZ
- 15 *Appearing*, by BIANCA BAH
- 16 *Which Girl am I?* by MARK BEHME and JOANNE GROWNEY
- 17 *Every Morning, Maddie*, by HENRY CRAWFORD
- 19 *Mano Sinistra*, by CAROL JENNINGS
- 21 *Jimmy Kimmel and the Elephants*, by ELIJAH HILL
- 22 *Words like Scraps of Steel*, by RICHARD LORR
- 23 *Slow*, by YVETTE NEISSER
- 25 *Teaching English in a Time of Fear*, by MAGGIE ROSEN

- 26 *Untitled*, by JOANN EVERLY TELL
- 27 *Gîte*, by KATHLEEN O'TOOLE
- 29 *Razed*, by ESTHER SCHWARTZ-MCKINZIE
- 31 *Fantasy Flower*, by MICHELLE BULATOVIC
- 32 *The Artist*, by CHENELLE WILLIAMS
- 33 *Then and Now*, by ANAÏS TANA
- 34 *Catullus 85*, by KEYNE CHESHIRE
- 35 *Zeus*, by JAHID EDMONDS
- 36 *A Feast of Light*, by INDRAN AMIRTHANAYAGAM
- 40 *Careful, Addie*, by WEST GIPSON
- 41 *Doña*, by JASMIN CORNEJO
- 46 *Supreme Chick*, by CELIBEL CORTES
- 47 *A Dilemma*, by BEERSHEEVA HODGE
- 52 *Self Portrait*, by ORIANA DELGADO GOMEZ
- 53 *Buenos Noches Don David*, by PAOLA MANTILLA
- 59 *Elie Wiesel*, by ROBERT CHANIN
- 60 Contributors

the **SLIGO**
Journal

Poetry

Misty Copeland
Laiz Nascimento Dias



Coward Declaration

Karen Vanessa Najarro Cáceres
Co-Winner of 2017-2018 Sligo Journal Student Poetry Contest

How many times did I hug you so hard
and still you did not feel it?
I wanted to disintegrate and merge you into my molecules.
That you would come so deep...
where the fear of losing you would never be present.
How many times did you look at my eyes?
I told you between looks and even then you did not glimpse it.
As in polished mirrors the reflection was shown
of my restless and most brilliant thoughts.
I thought so,
I tried it.
I wanted to do it and shout it.
And when I thought I had enough courage,
Saying it became as painful as feeling it.
You, my little, restless, and vibrant muse
Do not perceive it, do not even imagine it.
You will never know, I will not say it anymore.
Meanwhile, I continue and will continue here...
writing sad verses in your name.

Declaración Cobarde

Karen Vanessa Najarro Cáceres

Co-Winner of 2017-2018 Sligo Journal Student Poetry Contest

¿Cuántas veces te abrace tan fuerte
Y aun así no lo sentiste?
Quise desintegrarte y fundirte con mis moléculas.
Que llegaras tan profundo...
Donde el miedo de perderte jamás se hiciera presente.
¿Cuántas veces me viste a los ojos?
Te lo dije entre miradas y aun así no lo vislumbraste.
Como en pulidos espejos se mostro el reflejo
De mis inquietos y más brillantes pensamientos.
Lo pensé,
Lo ensayé.
Quise hacerlo y gritarlo.
Y cuando creí que tenía el valor suficiente,
Decirlo se volvió tan doloroso como sentirlo.
Tu mi pequeña, inquieta y vibrante musa.
No lo percibe, ni siquiera lo imagina.
Jamás lo sabrás, ya no lo diré.
Mientras tanto, yo sigo y seguiré aquí...
Escribiendo tristes versos en tu nombre.

A Naked Experience

Nicolas Garcia

Co-Winner of 2017-2018 Sligo Journal Student Poetry Contest

Our great modern secret
Is revealed, flesh shines in the light
Of the sun and in our eyes
Now privy to each private fold
Of fat, rolls of supple shame.

Yet with this casting off
Of clothing which conceals ourselves
Do we not step forth in full worth,
Adorned in nothing more than life
And hair, which so benevolently accepts?

With an extraneous layer over
Our bodies stripped away, will we
Not be less concealing in our hearts
And gain back some freedoms
In our minds set on living?

Even desire, once pushed into our deepest
Recesses is now rigidly articulated
And with understanding denied
Or accepted, but no longer buried—
Sprouting buds too ashamed to blossom.

And when the silver moon shines
Upon the flowerbed we rediscover
The beauty of concealment, soft
Shadows fill our spaces and the only
Complete knowledge is assurance of touch.

Backcountry

Stephen Katz

Second Place Winner of 2017-2018 Sligo Journal Student Poetry Contest

There's a secret track you can follow
past a brook and a poison oak hollow
If the gods of dream are willing, you may find
If you somehow manage to hold onto your mind
You'll find yourself standing before an old stone circle
instead of the usual trail

I wonder who built it and why
There isn't a quarry for miles around
In fact, if I'm right, this far west of the mountains,
This type of stone can't be found

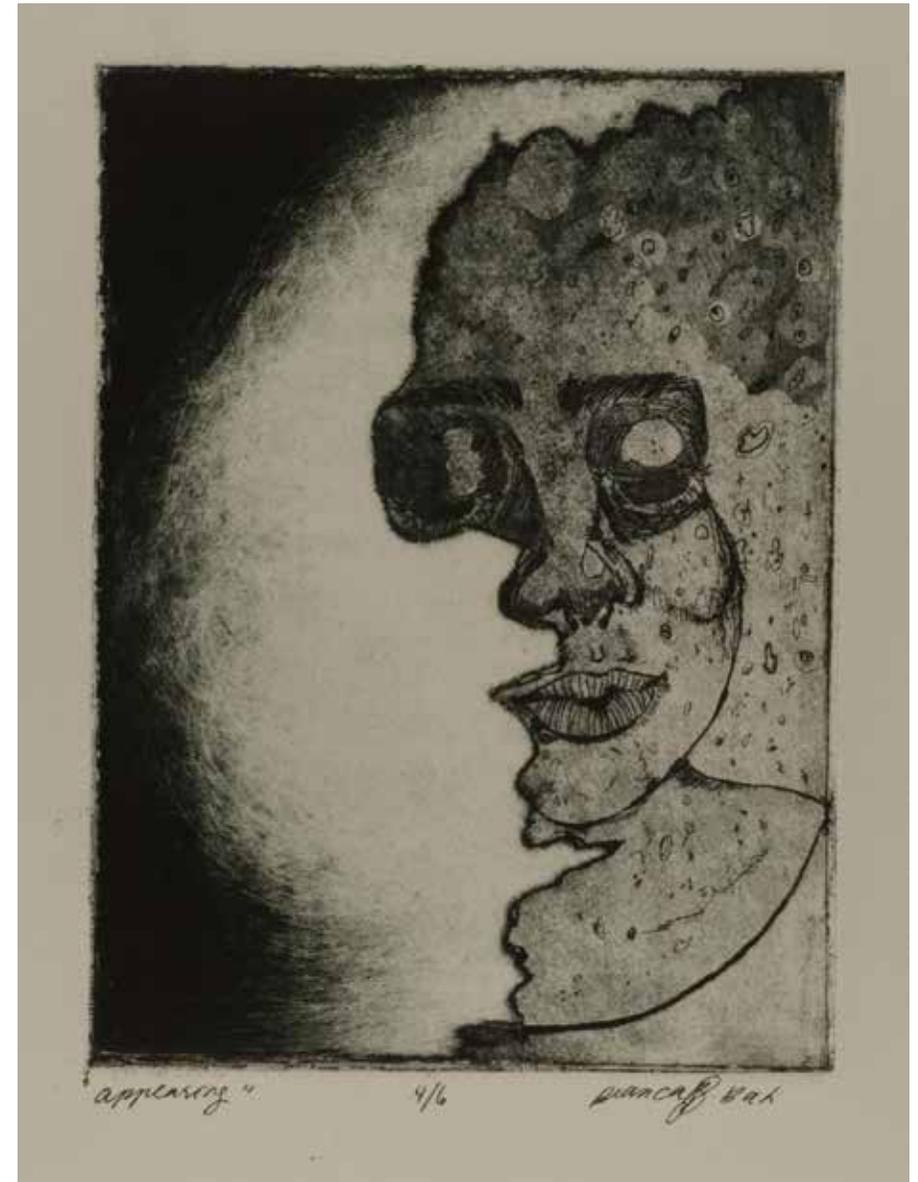
Within the circle if you spy it just right
there's an aperture in the side of the rock
And if you can stand the cool dank air
wafting up from the depths
Then you'll notice the moss covered steps
that lead down to realms beyond sight

From this point on it'd be best to turn back
Lest you have some trust in those senses you'll need
Most people don't usually like to acknowledge those forces
they can't hear, smell, taste, touch or see

But you know sometimes after nightfall
and even sometimes after dawn
You feel something stir deep inside you
and know which way to go on

Appearing

Bianca Bah



Which Girl Am I? A collaborative work
Poem by JoAnne Growney & Sculpture by Mark Behme

Which Girl Am I?

The girl who's not made to divide
into the good girl and the real one
is a lucky one. I was eleven
when I felt a crack begin.
In time I fully split — two minds
took on two heads, two faces,
two cuts of hair. *Mock feelings
serve as well as true ones,*
I told myself — but buried parts
still surface like cicadas in their year.

Long division is difficult
and plagued with remainders.

A girl with two heads
is like a bird with one wing.



Every Morning, Maddie
Henry Crawford

we meet for coffee
diner windows flush with dawn
she comes in from the street
we share a plate of bacon strips
my once vegetarian child
never this old

I'm driving her to the methadone clinic
these rain damp streets a maze
of traffic cones and sideways signs
we go right at the railroad crossing
I don't ask where she's living
anymore

nowadays its NPR in the car
neither of us listening
I'd like to know her favorite song
as if she could hand me a burned CD
as if we could just waltz it all back
she has no phone

almost 90 mornings clean
her shiny black hair unwinding
all tight skin and darting eyes
her thin knees clutching the seat
somewhere between urgency
and nonchalance

I've come to know this place
people milling around the clinic
there's a Chinese take-out
a burned out doughnut shop
a storefront church

and then a space comes free
and I let her out

Mano Sinistra

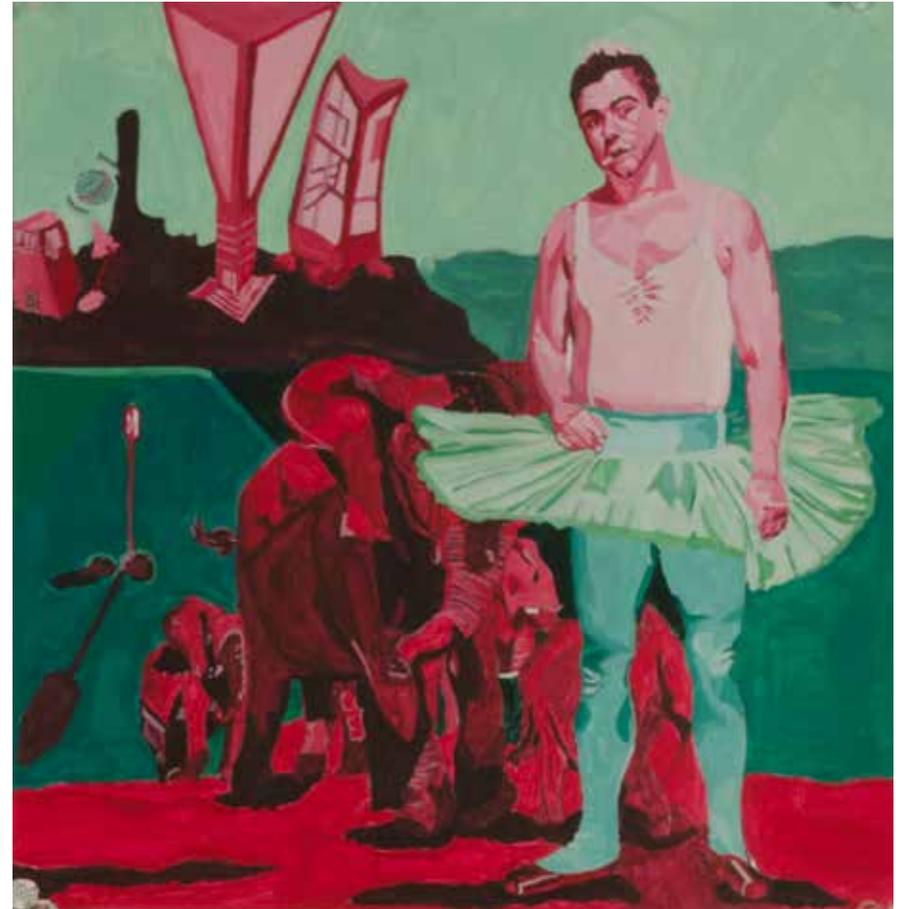
Carol Jennings

I have carried mother's tattered
Schubert sonatas, impromptus,
fantasias back and forth
to piano lessons. Bought
before I was born, binding
held by tape, its cover
and pages leave paper crumbs
on walkways, in cars, on pianos.
For months, I have struggled
with the B flat major Sonata,
composed two months before
his young death; its broad
reaches exceed mine, as I recall
how mother's long fingers
handled them with ease.
Here, my teacher says, skip
to the Andante movement –
it's astounding, and you can do it.
He shows me how it is played:
the left hand, mano sinistra,
crossing over the right to touch
the upper octave ever so lightly,
a sound you can barely hear
but feel that you have heard it.
As he plays, I hear mother
fifty years ago at her piano,
while in the next room,
I read, solved math problems,
daydreamed my future;
mother giving voice
to Schubert's sense of death,
me absorbing both of them,
but barely so, not knowing it.
I rush home to her piano, now mine,

so we can play Schubert,
mourn him a little,
the two of us, together.

Jimmy Kimmel and the Elephants

Elijah Hill



Words Like Scraps of Steel

Richard Lorr

Cutting steel plates into odd shapes with a torch. Hot yellow
Embers arc in the air like so many tortured ions seeking places
To burn. Like fireworks and tracer bullets, they threaten the
Eyes and the skin when you ready the steel for the forge.

And in the roaring, deafening forge, flames lick your gloved hands.
Heat, thick and hot, enfolds those hands, your face and breath. Fire
Engulfs then suffuses the steel, orange to red, until at last screaming
Yellow solids exude drops of molten metal, like drops of milk from a breast.

You cannot embrace hot metals. Unlike words that may be turned
Over in the cool saliva of your mouth, you must coax steel at a safe
Distance, with tongs and tools. Yet words are also melded molten, like
Scraps of steel still hot from the fire, burning with danger and hope.

Slow

Yvette Neisser

I like grandfather clocks and church bells
rung every hour with a rope
lighthouses staffed by a keeper
the sundial and its shadows

the grade of earth at each step
or landscape shifting through a window

the pace of the stars and the seasons
how the sun sets just a touch later each day
until it arrives at spring
I know I will reach spring

I like things made by hand
the stitching the weaving
mosaics glued piece by piece

fields plowed by horses
and conversations that go deep

the linger
the pause

music played on a single instrument
the pluck of strings
the human voice

the long bath
the slow cleanse of pores
fingers through each strand of hair

the pace of a heron
each reedy step finding balance in mud

how rice absorbs water

and lotion seeps into skin

the mulling of cider
the hoisting of sails

the meander through wildflowers
the pull of oars up a quiet river
the ripples

the complete breath
filling the belly
the lungs and then

holding the pose
pressing each finger down
the slow lift of hips
rotation of shoulders
the stretch of muscle
fiber by fiber

the stillness
the inhale
the closing of eyelids

the slow burn
from match strike to flame
to smoking cinders

Teaching English in a Time of Fear

Maggie Rosen

Please don't tell me where you're from.
Don't share your trauma, loss:
cry only legal tears.
I can teach you how to ask for more.
I can warn you of the strength of nouns,
capriciousness of prepositions.
Beware the helping verb, the closet praise.
Mark how we hate questions, love commands.
A passive voice calls everyone to prayer.
I wish you all that words can keep within.

Untitled
JoAnn Everly Tell



Gîte
Kathleen O'Toole

— shelter, lodging, as for the pilgrims following the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. Welcome, gratuitous as the fresh-picked fruit and vegetables, rounds of cheese in baskets set out by neighbors here on Rue Peyrin, Auvillar, this morning... and for centuries, before the Garonne River slowed to the new tune of nuclear plants upstream. I wonder about today's pilgrims, overtaking me on the steep hill with their walking sticks and coquilles, flushed and sweating beneath their backpacks. What remorse or penance are they carrying; what resolve launched them toward Finisterre? Perhaps they are wearing away some grief, or seeking peace in these vexing days of earthquake, floods and random violence, now find themselves welcomed by strangers, entire villages along the Chemin. So

unlike the scenes of barricades at nearly every border in Europe, calls for walls on our own frontiers. Enough tear-streaked faces of Muslim women behind barriers on Lesbos, children holding scrawled pleas for mercy when the Pope and Patriarch arrive with cameras that capture the scene, these faces. Images blown like old newspapers against the chain link fence of indifference. Those same mothers and children still wait for welcome. Tent cities pile up at Pireaus, on Macedonian and Turkish soil, where families who fled the rubble of Aleppo wait, and children traumatized by ISIS in Iraqi towns are held in pens where cattle would be more welcome.

What if
we found it in our hearts to empty our bulging pantries
and deploy an army of welcome to greet these pilgrims?
Then perhaps young Adam, who escaped the mud bricks

of Darfur cotton fields to cross Egypt, cast his lot
in a flimsy boat that washed up on Italy's boot heel,
would not be huddled with Ethiopian migrants,
Gambians and Somalis in a makeshift campground
beside Lake Como's glitter. No gîte, or asylum here,
no baskets of fresh fruit and cheese. Instead,
we arm the Swiss border with night goggles
and drones to hunt them down, rather than offering
to oil their foreheads and feet, like welcoming
honored guests. Or like pilgrims climbing the next
stage of the Way — their own steep ascent.

Razed

Esther Schwartz-McKinzie

It was not enough
That I set your heels,
(tired from the work of dying)
upon soft pillows
or that I held your hand,
and watched you breathe, or spoke words
that perhaps you heard.

They said, "She is beautiful."
But you were not—and your face did not speak of gentle passage.
It was a story we told,
to begin to heal.

Not believing, I did not know how
And placed my faith in time,
That took your breath from you.

Asphalt has become sand
beneath my feet
here, where the mailbox with the red cardinal stood.

I shoveled wet snow
And saw you in the doorway, a small wave

I understood. The sun glistening on white,
resplendent; cold air awake in my chest...

It was not enough to cook the food you turned away
beyond sustenance,
or to refill the glass.

But you beckoned me that day,
into the house that does not stand.

I cannot remember if we drank red wine,

or what we said, but I think we laughed.

I feel the warmth and glow you called me to,
and see the footprints in the snow,
Yours and mine.

Would you tell me now
(being you),
This is what we have and so, make do?
Spread white salt on blackened ice,
dissolve.

Fantasy Flower Michelle Bulatovic



The Artist

Chenelle Williams

The voice that speaks the language of my bones.
It tunes the strings of the orchestra my words
And so it plays a ballad so sweet, of my past memories and paths I have yet to foresee
In the paint of tears, of joy and despair, it paints pictures that I must bear
No facades and veiled lies can scrub or mask the truth of this gallery of my own

This soul of mine an artist and a thief
To steal what I hold dear, what I so tediously have hidden
It unravels the string of shrugs, eye rolls and sarcasm
And publicizes my diary of things I swore never to reveal

Then and now

Anaïs Tana

Born in between division
Away from one parent
Became a subject of argument and perceptions
Was exposed in a different environment

Learned to defend myself
Got into fights very often
'Cause my life was just a blend
Of the modern and traditional

Came to the U.S. for a brand new start
Got into less trouble than before
Trying to create a new life
With ambition and style

Have lost some caring people
Never became less humble
Wondered if I could continue life
With a shattered heart in despair

Pursuing a great opportunity
Still trying to balance school and destiny
No matter how hard life gets
I am ready for any curve balls
That will head in my direction

As long as I keep believing
My life will be momentum
With no one objecting
When I will finally get my freedom

Catullus 85

Translated from Latin by Keyne Cheshire

*Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.*

I hate and I love, and you might ask why I do both.
I don't know; feel it done, though, blow after blow after blow.

Zeus

Jahid Edmonds



A Feast of Light

Indran Amirthanayagam

The Muse is not amused, will not accept a minor role,
a walk-on part. Sundays come and go but the offering

must always be placed at the altar of experience, candles
lit, sweet meats selected and an assortment of flags

and chocolates spread before the god. If tired, she
understands verses will be written in English, and

if bold still by evening light, essayed in French,
tangoed in Spanish. As I tell my imaginary reporter

from the daily, I may choose from different languages
but the basic rule of engagement is sacred and cannot

be excused for illness, or a calamity in the old country,
a final nail in the coffin of serial love: write even

minutes before midnight. Do not go to sleep without
feeding the Muse, bathing her mind and heart with light.

the **SLIGO**
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Fiction

Careful, Addie

West Gipson

The cold did not suit Addie well.

Bundled up under a bridge with two thin blankets, she shivered through the evening, unable to fall asleep, although her plan had been to sleep before work as much as possible. When the time came, at midnight, to leave her spot and get on the bus, she was thankful, having not fallen asleep at all. It was to be her first day of work at the hardware store ten miles down the road, just outside the city. She had taken the bus down to the shopping center the previous week and asked which stores were hiring. Lenny's Hardware, a big box store the size of a Walmart, was hiring night shift workers to unload the trucks, for \$11.50/hour. Addie did not have experience, as she claimed, but she was a hard worker. She had been many months without a job by now (and, by extension, without food or a place to sleep), and would take whatever she could get.

Putting her belongings in the corner under the bridge where she always left them, she took the change jar and poured the change into her hand. She would need it to get onto the bus. She walked half a mile, still shaking against the cold, until she reached the bus stop. The bus came fairly quickly, and the trip to Lenny's was a short one.

Hopping off the bus, Addie lit a cigarette and walked towards Lenny's. It was dead silent, save for the occasional bird, and Addie hopped she wouldn't be outside for too long. She worried about her foot going numb or losing a finger. But, all that being said, this was her first job in a while. She wasn't going to risk losing it.

She noticed that another person had gotten off at the same bus stop as her. She turned around. He was a young-looking guy, also smoking. He smiled at Addie. She smiled nervously back. They walked together in silence as they crossed the parking lot and walked around the side of the building, until the silence became overwhelming. The man was the one to break it.

"You know Lenny's is closed now, right?" he asked.

"I do. I'm actually starting work there tonight," Addie said.

"Oh. Well, welcome to the family!" the young man exclaimed. "I'm Ken. I also work the night shift."

"Hi Ken. I'm Addie."

They arrived at the back of the store, where a group of about five

Doña

Jasmin Cornejo



people were sitting, chain-smoking, waiting for the trucks to arrive. Four of the five were wearing casual clothes – long jeans or khakis with t-shirts – but one woman stuck out. She was wearing all purple, except for the gaudy gold jewelry covering her ears, neck, fingers and wrists.

“That’s Claudia,” Ken said. “Head Honcho around here.”

Claudia must have heard her name, because she turned around to see Ken and Addie and smiled. Claudia stamped out her cigarette and approached Addie.

“You must be Adelaide,” she said.

“Just Addie, ma’am.”

“And I’m Claudia. I’m your boss, but you probably won’t see me much. I don’t work the night shift. I’m on my way out right now.” Claudia held her hand out for Addie to shake, which she did. “Are you a night owl?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Addie said.

“I suppose you wouldn’t have applied otherwise,” Claudia said with a laugh. Addie just smiled in response. She would have applied either way. A job is a job. “Alright then. Time for me to head home.”

Addie moved to get out of the way, and tripped over Ken’s shoe.

“Whoa there,” Claudia said. “Careful, Addie.”

The rest of the night went uneventfully. Addie met the other night workers and was given a tour of the store. Many of the people who worked there were somehow related to Claudia—in fact, it seemed everyone but Ken was a cousin or niece or nephew. Nothing struck Addie as strange about the store, until the tour of the store was finished and it was time for Addie to start unloading.

Most boxes were labelled with the item they contained—various tools for the most part—except for a few, all the way in the back of the truck. As Addie went to lift up one of the boxes in the back, she noticed it had no label on it, and instead was adorned with a large, black “X.” She was staring at it curiously when she heard Ken behind her.

“Those things go straight to the manager’s office,” he said.

“To Claudia’s?”

“Yes.”

“But... what’s in them?”

Now Addie had turned around and was looking at Ken. He scratched his head. “Papers, I think,” he said. After a moment’s silence—this box does not sound like it has papers in it, Addie thought to herself, it sounds like something sifting—Ken said, “here, I’ll show you,” and grabbed another “X” box. They took the boxes and went through the store to Claudia’s office. There were quite a few “X” boxes, but Addie got the feeling she was not supposed to ask about them, so she didn’t.

Addie worked for a few more hours, until the truck was fully unload-

ed, and the shift was up. Ken offered to walk Addie to the bus station. They shared a cigarette and continued to talk through the bus ride. She didn’t mention that she was homeless, that she had nowhere to go. Instead she said she was meeting friends. They bade each other goodbye as Addie arrived downtown.

Addie arrived at her spot and slept for some hours, before spending the day as she usually did, with fellow homeless people, most of whom were panhandling for money for beer or weed. Addie didn’t often partake herself, but it was simply the lifestyle of the homeless in this city. When midnight came, Addie got back on the bus, and returned to Lenny’s.

Addie followed orders, first bringing the boxes to the back rooms, and then unloading them throughout the store. She felt she was starting to get the hang of the job, though she was still only carrying the small and medium-sized boxes. Although she had said on her application that she could lift 100 pounds, apparently a requirement for the truck crew, she in all likelihood knew that she could not. Unfortunately, one of the other workers noticed and, teasingly, said, “Hey, Addie - why don’t you grab that box of rope in the back?”

Not wanting to seem like a wimp, Addie smiled and went into the truck to grab the box. It was extremely heavy, and she could barely lift it, but she decided to try anyway. Slowly, she walked to the end of the truck. As she reached the end, she tripped slightly and the box fell off the side. Ken, apparently, had seen, because he cried out, “careful, Addie!” and ran to take the box from her. Embarrassed, Addie immediately turned back to the truck and went to grab another box. This was one of the “X” boxes, and Addie faithfully took it to Claudia’s office.

Under the fluorescent lights in Claudia’s room, after setting the box on the floor, Addie noticed a small tear in the top of the box. She ran her finger along it and inadvertently worsened the tear. Panicking, Addie looked around the room for some tape to cover the hole. She didn’t know what was in the box, but she had the feeling she wasn’t supposed to know—or ask. The whole thing was rather strange. Thankfully, there was a roll of painter’s tape on Claudia’s desk. Addie grabbed it and went to work covering the hole.

She didn’t mean to look. She really didn’t. But she couldn’t help it. The lights were bright, and shone all the way through the box to what appeared to be bags of white powder. Realizing this, Addie set the tape down. She opened the tear a small bit more, gasping as she saw that she was, indeed, correct. There were dozens of clear bags of white powder, all relatively the same size. Addie’s heart began to race. So that’s why she wasn’t supposed to see it... were all the boxes full of drugs? She could probably look, if she wanted to. But if she was found out—

“Addie, you alright in there?”

Addie turned to find Ken in the doorway. He saw what she was doing

and his face fell.

“There was a tear in the cardboard,” Addie said quickly, heart still pounding. Did Ken know about his? “I was just fixing it with some tape, that’s all.” As Addie said this, she did the deed. Soon she could not see the white bags anymore.

“Next time,” Ken said in an odd voice, the kind of voice that made Addie wonder just how much Ken knew, “just leave it.”

Addie avoided the “X” boxes for the rest of her shift. This wasn’t hard to do, as there weren’t many of them. Mid-way through the shift, Ken approached Addie and offered her a cigarette. With the eight-hour shift, Addie was allowed one 15 and one 30-minute break, although she noticed most of the truck workers took frequent smoke breaks. This appeared to be acceptable, as no one was reprimanded for doing so. Ken asked Addie to walk with him. “Addie,” Ken said quietly. “Did you see something today you shouldn’t have?”

The panicking feeling had left Addie, but now it returned. The lump in her throat was so bad she couldn’t say anything. Instead, she nodded.

“It happens sometimes,” Ken said.

“So you mean that you’ve seen things you shouldn’t have?”

Ken took a long drag of his cigarette. “I may have,” he said. “It happens, you know? The important thing here, Addie... the very important thing... is that we not tell anyone. You know, pal?”

Addie was confused by what seemed to be a mixture of threats and friendly words. “Okay,” she said.

“After all,” Ken said, “we don’t really know what it is we saw. It could be anything, really. Sometimes things look a certain way, but are actually something else. It happens all the time.”

Was he in on whatever was going on with Claudia and the cocaine (or heroin—could it be heroin?)? Or was he simply aware of it but not involved?

But Addie’s train of thought was interrupted as she heard from behind her, “Good early morning, you two!” It was Claudia, emerging from her very expensive-looking sports car, once again covered in jewels. “Ken,” she said, “I need you to meet me in my office in thirty minutes. In the meantime – Addie, can you make sure all the boxes marked ‘X’ make it to my office?”

Addie nodded. She had time left on her break, but felt awkward around Ken after their conversation, so she decided to get back to work. After what she had seen in the box mere minutes before, she couldn’t help but wonder with each box she moved what its contents were. She worried that she could be implicated in this crime – an accomplice to a drug gang, or a mafia maybe? But she was not prepared for what would come next.

The last box was somewhat heavier than the rest, and made a strange sound as she moved it to and fro. The rest of the crew was nowhere to be found. Had they been dismissed? Surely the shift wasn’t over. Instead of fo-

cusing on that, Addie put all her effort into carrying this last, strange “X” box.

She was walking with it through the store when she heard a drip. She looked down and gasped. It was a drop of red liquid on the white tile floor.

Blood. It was blood.

In her shock, Addie dropped the box to the floor, and with the bottom of the box drenched with blood, the box exploded and out fell, to Addie’s greatest surprise, two bare, severed legs, onto the floor, into the pile of blood. As Addie contemplated what to do she heard footsteps behind her.

“Careful, Addie.”

Addie put her hands up and turned around. Claudia was in the hallway with a gun cocked, pointed at Addie’s head. She had her finger on the trigger. The last thing Addie heard, before it went black, was Claudia repeating, very slowly –

“...careful, Addie.”

Supreme Chick

Celibel Cortes



A Dilemma (Handled with Dexterity)

Beersheva Hodge

Noelle loved going on dates, although she was terrible at them—so it was no wonder that she said yes when she was asked by her best friend to go on a double-date. It was scheduled for the approaching Saturday, but Noelle approached her parents about the matter Friday night. Kenneth Taylor and Nia Taylor were the strictest parents on Earth, but somehow Noelle managed to frequently get around their rules.

“We’re only going to the movies,” Noelle declared with a casual throw of her hands. “Kayla is so responsible, as if I’d get into any trouble with her around.” She figured with two more casual hand throws she’d be free to go.

Her parents shared a look, one that they had mastered to mask their decision—whatever it would be. In the meantime, Noelle busied herself with the fraying edges of a pastel blue pillow. It wasn’t supposed to be on the couch and it clashed with the sticky burgundy leather but no one in the family could be bothered to place it anywhere else.

“You’ll be home before 12?” her mother asked but mostly dictated.

Noelle resisted the urge to remind her parents that she was 18, but she already knew they would reply with a list of their ‘house rules & regulations’. Her parents mostly worried about her because of her lack of observance, something she couldn’t really help. The room remained still for a few more moments, well as still as it could be with Noelle in the room. Her eyes bounced from the cream-colored walls of the living room to the plush carpet her feet were mashing themselves into. Without further ado, her father clasped his hands together tightly as if he was trying to squash any inkling of air that tried to infiltrate.

“You can go, but handle yourself like an adult, Noelle.” His face was set in stone, but the gist of a smile played on his lips.

Noelle couldn’t resist releasing an excited squeal; throwing caution to the wind (and the pillow), she jumped up, clear off the floor. Both of her parents smiled now although the lines around their mouths were creased with worry. Noelle found that her parents’ expressions were like Siamese cats’, it was clear that their emotions were interconnected, which could be a challenge as well as a blessing. If one agreed the other agreed, if one disagreed so did the other. Now the time had come for Noelle to go to sleep in preparation for the next day but she was bubbling over with so much excitement that she

could hardly lie down and be still, let alone sleep. She lay awake in bed staring at the home screen of her phone; every now and then the screen would turn black and a reflection of herself could be seen. She was used to the sight of her bright eyes that were sleep-deprived yet more awake than ever; her lips pouted with little indication as to why—when she wasn't talking or 'prattling on' as her parents called it—she was pouting. Noelle's hair was naturally brown but as soon as she turned 18 she purchased hair dye from the local Sally's and coated the bathroom sink with a graphic red layer. What was an appropriate time to call someone? Noelle wondered with wide unblinking eyes that sparkled with hazel. She pressed the home button for the fiftieth time in the past four hours.

It was now three in the morning. Noelle tossed and turned, waking up every now and then to look at the time. When the clock finally chimed at 5 A.M., Noelle woke up with a start and immediately clutched the rubbery case of her iPhone. She speedily scrolled through her contacts, unable to settle her beating heart in the pleasant heat of her room. It was the kind of heat that fueled excitement, it made her palms sweaty and her body tingle. Finally, she reached the desired contact name. Her best friend was already expecting her call, so she answered the phone on the second ring with a tired yet amused greeting, "Hey El."

Noelle giggled and rolled over in her bed so that she was facing the side she usually got out on. "Amber, are you ready for today?"

Amber sighed loudly into the phone and put aside her tiredness for the time being. She knew that once Noelle was excited about something it was almost impossible for her to contain it unless she could gush about it.

"Yes Noelle, why wouldn't I be? I'm going with my boyfriend, you're the one who's meeting Alan for the first time."

Just like that, Noelle was on a new roll, "Oh my God, I know. I'm kind of nervous but it's going to be fun either way. From the picture you sent me he's cute too, possibly too cute for me but he'll be nice to look at for the duration of the date at least. Damn, the time is going by so slow..." For an hour or two the girls talked about their dates and Noelle discussed in great detail what she was going to wear while her parents in the next room pushed in noise-cancelling earplugs that they kept in the drawer of their bedside table. Eventually, Noelle began to yawn and her sentences became shorter. She told herself that if she went to sleep now, when she woke up it would be time for the date, so she got off the phone with Amber and finally allowed her head to drop onto the pillow.

The next day began with haste, "I've got to go you guys, Amber just texted me and she's already outside." It was true, Amber was outside waiting in the shade of her Nissan Altima. Noelle practically skipped into the car and hopped in with a giddy yelp, one that was caused by both the sight of her best

friend and the sudden blast of cold air from the A/C.

"You look good, girl," Amber complimented. She too had dressed in a skirt, it was a bit shorter and tighter than Noelle's, but the color happened to be the same.

"To the boys?" Noelle proposed with an excited shake of her hips even as she struggled to put her seatbelt on.

"To the boys, but first uh—you and Alan are sitting in the backseat in case you forgot..." With a roll of her eyes, Noelle neglected to finish buckling her seatbelt and climbed into the backseat either unaware or not caring about the flash of panties she gave way to with her actions.

They first went to Amber's boyfriend's house. He was tall and kind of unattractive in Noelle's opinion, but she found his personality to be likable so she often commended Amber for her choice. He hopped into the front seat and kissed Amber with a lengthiness that caused Noelle to yell out a rather childish, "Ew! you guys." They pulled away from each other, both laughing at Noelle's expected antics. Finally, they picked up Alan and suddenly the car was a lot fuller than before. What Noelle most liked about Alan was his hair. It was naturally red and along with the spraying of freckles along his nose and cheeks he couldn't have been cuter. He wasn't as tall as Amber's boyfriend but he made up for it in the broadness of his shoulders. Amber had mentioned that he played for the school's football team, which was probably why Noelle never got the chance to see him. Her parents had often specified that things like football games had a lot going on and she was bound to get way too sucked into it—so for most of her years in high school, she stayed away from sports. She listened to him talk about his position on the field for the rest of the time spent in the car and found herself interrupting more often than she meant to but luckily they arrived at the movie theater momentarily, which ceased the talking of them both.

The boys went ahead to buy the movie tickets and Amber's boyfriend gave the girls money for snacks. Noelle nearly tore the \$20 bill in her haste to hand it to the cashier. Already she could imagine the taste of buttery popcorn drizzled with just a hint of caramel. The price for a large popcorn was higher than it should've been, which caused Noelle to make snarky comments such as 'Is it from the Himalayas?' and 'Was it made by the Aztecs themselves?' but eventually she accepted her change back and scurried over to the drink dispenser. Soon, the boys found the girls at their station and accentuated by giggles and excited chattering the four of them entered the designated theater. As soon as they managed to find their seats in the theater, cross over four or more people, and finally settle in... Noelle realized she had an incessant need to use the bathroom.

Amber groaned as Noelle got up, dropped her popcorn in Alan's lap and loudly announced, "I need to use the bathroom," but despite her jittery

cross-over to the exit once more, the other occupants of the theater weren't perturbed by her behavior.

Once in the stall with her skirt dropped around her ankles, she was met with the bright red of none other than her monthly cycle. "How dare you," she whispered to the culprit itself. Really, she just didn't know who to be irritated with, herself for forgetting her purse at home or the bathroom for not having a tampon dispenser. As if she had 25 cents anyway.

I'm pretty sure Amber has something, she assured herself after substituting a wad of toilet paper in the meantime.

Now as she brushed past the same people on the way in as out the first time, Noelle was a bit more nervous than before. Once she sat down, she took out her phone and sent a text message to Amber. As soon as she sent it, she was anxiously waiting for Amber to look away from her boyfriend and towards her own device. When Amber finally noticed the message, she looked to Noelle with a horrified expression painted onto her dainty features and shook her head. Noelle nodded, accepting fate as it was. Well, she certainly couldn't make it through a two-and-a-half-hour movie with nothing but unsustainable toilet paper. Any woman would be sympathetic to her dilemma if she could just ask one in the theater. She was sure to find a respondent. Boosting herself up for the task ahead, Noelle looked to the osculating couple on the right side of her and tapped the arm of the guy.

"Hey, excuse me, I need to talk to your girl." He arched an eyebrow at her but nevertheless notified his girlfriend with a nudge.

She looked in Noelle's direction with aggravation, "What?"

The guy gestured to Noelle, "She wanted your attention for something."

Noelle took the initiative to lean forward at least before saying, "Look, my period just came on and I'm out of the merchandise. You got any on you?" Somehow, she thought it'd be more entertaining if she referred to it as merchandise, like it was something cooler than just a sanitary napkin.

Just like she knew he would, the guy who was previously leaning in with curiosity recoiled like a snake before striking, "Okay, I did not need to know that."

The female, as if embarrassed to be asked about the topic, shook her head sullenly, "Um, no, I don't have any of those with me." Noelle nodded her head slowly and moved onto the next with a swiftness that left the couple in contemplation. This time, she left the row she was on, ignoring the subtle way the guy clenched his body in on her way by.

The movie wasn't starting for another 20 minutes but the previews were steadily playing. She needed to find someone who looked well-prepared before that time was up, so after glancing around the movie theater at all of the faces in front of her—Noelle plopped in a seat next to a woman with curled hair

and flawless winged eyeliner.

"Hey," Noelle said cheerily. The woman looked at her strangely as if talking at the movie theater was forbidden. "Do you have any pads or tampons on you by chance?" The woman's cold expression didn't waver as she responded with a shake of the head. Noelle went from person to person and by the time she had worked her way up to asking three other people, the opening credits of the movie were playing and the crowd was beginning to grow tension-filled. Amber and Alan kept taking concerned glances back towards wherever Noelle was as she bounced around the theater, but Noelle barely took notice of the atmosphere around her. She was at the back of the theater now, and she just so happened to walk in front of a man wielding a camera on her way to the next person.

"Move! You're in my shot," the man growled lowly.

It only took Noelle a second to look at the man with his camera before whisper-yelling, "You're not even supposed to be recording in here anyway." She purposely did a little dance in complete view of his camera before sitting down next to a few fellow teenagers, "Any of you ladies have a pad or tampon?"

As expected, they stared at Noelle like she was a threat before laughing, "Who asks stuff like that? Weirdo." They laughed and laughed to a point where Noelle started to laugh along with them.

When they took notice she abruptly stopped and said, "Do any of you even have a period yet?" Just as she intended, the majority of their faces bloomed red like roses. *Stupid little shi—*

Suddenly, Noelle saw someone gesturing towards her, and she frantically and quite blindly (now that the theater had darkened) shimmied her way through the row to get to the girl.

"Here's a tampon," the woman offered.

Despite the realization that the word of her period had spread to the entire movie theater, Noelle graciously accepted the tampon. As if her receiving the tampon activated some kind of security system, a woman clad in a uniform including a flashlight shined the light down row after row.

"She's around here somewhere," a man's voice persisted in his spot next to the security officer. "Can't even hear the movie over her talking..." Realizing that they were talking about her and the flashlight was nearing the row that she was on, Noelle ducked underneath a seat and rolled underneath it to the row ahead of her, which was miraculously the row she was originally from. Once the flashlight passed over that row, Noelle came up from underneath the seat and sat down.

"I got it," she announced with a triumphant raise of her tampon in the air at the same time as a close-up of the Statue of Liberty played on the big screen.

Self Portrait

Oriana Delgado Gomez



Buenas Noches Don David

Paola Mantilla

She turned up the volume of the television, the static filled the room. She stared blankly at the screen, searching for something familiar in the consistent black and white. The air was dry in the office room.

This was not something out of sorts for Micha. She was twelve years old and always waited for the cable to resurface. Her patience never seemed to dull. She pulled the blanket around herself as she sat on the crates in the office.

“Mom loaded the car, let’s go!” The voice was shrill and distant but Micha knew it was Ruby. She slid on her tattered sneakers and grabbed her oversized maroon hoodie. The air was cold with the push of the fierce wind. She couldn’t make out a stream of sunlight as the clouds passed overhead. The sweater would have to be enough.

Ruby was already inside the blue minivan by the time Micha reached her door. The tail light had been broken for a week or two now. Ruby had five days left to fix it. Micha watched her sister furiously turn the key in the ignition; her face carried exhaustion with it wherever she went. Her eyes were dewy and Micha decided that her sister was destined to always be in pain.

“Headache?” One word. Micha counted two syllables. She watched as her sister’s face contorted in pain at the mere mention of the word.

“The worst one,” Ruby said exasperated, clenching the steering wheel. The gravel crunched under the tires as she pulled out of the parking space. Micha rummaged through the disks jammed by the side of the seat.

“Don’t we have something else besides The Beatles?” Micha sighed, deciding on the collection album. “Can’t Eli get you another band?” Her usual patient demeanor melting right into the upholstery. “Why doesn’t he spend his money on baby clothes or something?”

“Hey! Why don’t you ask him next time you see him, alright?” Ruby responded, fed up with the same questions and the same answers. “He’s trying his best.”

“You’re too close to the wheel, Ruby!” Micha panicked. How could she have missed that? She should have reminded her as soon as she got into the vehicle.

“Chill out, I’ll pull it back when there’s a red light,” Ruby stared down, her belly only mere inches from wheel. She placed a hand underneath the bump, with a face of discomfort, “Shit, we’re almost out of gas.” Ruby didn’t

radiate a pregnancy glow. Her face was discontent and her voice was spent. She tied her brunette hair back with elastic rubber bands that she found around the warehouse. Strangers saw her purple checkered sweater before they saw her stomach. Her bell bottom jeans had an elastic band that you could see through her bargain maternity shirts.

“We’re always almost out of gas. Just let papá fill it up.” Micha threw her suggestion in the air, hoping her sister would catch it before it was swept away by the wind. She knew her sister wouldn’t test their papá. He hadn’t talked to Ruby for the majority of the pregnancy. He kept conversations strictly on subject matters that involved the family business. Refusing to fill up the tank anytime he emptied it. This was simply one of his tactics of expressing his passive aggressiveness.

They pulled up to a gasoline station closest to the bakery near Langley. Micha’s stomach knotted at the sight of the cars. They filled up the station. Ruby waited behind a red Pontiac and refused to leave because the gas here was the cheapest on the block. Once they reached pump four, Micha had the cash in her hand and shoved it towards her sister.

“Do you want anything?” Ruby asked, trying to undress her smirk through her headache. Micha never liked to give her the satisfaction, but she was always a kid for gas station snacks. It was the only time she could indulge guiltlessly in chips, ice cream, and candy that their mamá couldn’t afford.

“Yeah, can you get me wa-”

“You know the rules! You have to come in with me.” Ruby gave her that knowing smile as she hastily opened the door.

Vanilla Wafers. Two words. Five syllables.

She handed Ruby the package of sweet cookies. It didn’t take Micha long to notice her sister grow hyper-aware of the people around her. Her eyes lit up with caution and filtered the store swiftly. Her nervousness was unambiguous as she furrowed her brows, her headache getting noticeably worse.

“More people than I thought,” Ruby muttered erratically. Micha restrained from telling her that this was an obvious fact from the moment they pulled up to the gas station.

They stood in the queue of the outdated mart. The store had a sour smell, like an unwashed mop that had been used one too many times. She watched needlessly as the man at the counter scanned items and handed over receipts feebly. The woman in front of them in line kept stealing glances at Ruby, and Micha tried desperately not to notice. However, Micha always did, usually before anyone else. Micha began to throw pleas out into the universe.

Don’t say anything. Three words. 5 syllables.

She felt the panic inside of her stomach rise as the middle aged

woman opened her mouth to speak, to say something, anything, to make herself feel like she was important. The wrinkles around the woman’s eyes kept scrunching as she peered at the two girls. The woman wore a thick coat that reached the knees of her white crisp pants. Her baby blue crossbody hung on a shoulder as she held bags of chips and a can of pepsi.

“I’m sorry... I could not help but wonder how old you must be.” The woman’s voice was stark, laced with an upturned attitude that cut through the air. Ruby’s cheeks began to flare as Micha questioned the reality in front of her. Micha had moments of dissociation, where everything seemed too bright, too dimensional, too real. Her brain became static as she felt like she was seeing through someone else’s eyes. She became a bystander in her body. Ruby clutched the wafers in her hand, and an unmistakable crunch erupted from her fist. The woman’s look was unwavering, “How old are you?” Micha watched as her older sister struggled for words.

“It’s none of your business.” Micha muttered with utter resentment.

“Excuse me? I meant no offence, only that she looks incredibly young—” the woman said. The air felt stale, the situation made Micha feel like she took a bite of something she didn’t want.

“It’s none of your business.” Five words. Six Syllables.

She wanted to add a “please” to validate that they weren’t malicious people, they were only drained.

“Next in line!” The man at the register called out, obviously frustrated that the woman was not promptly ready.

The woman scoffed with a look of disdain that made Ruby’s tomato face worse.

“I’m going to go get more wafers!” Micha exclaimed overly cheerfully as her sister stood in the growing line.

They waited in the car as the gas filled the tank. They sat in cold silence as Micha wondered how to phrase her questions but Ruby beat her to it.

“Could I have gotten away with saying 25?” she asked, quietly rubbing a hand softly on her belly.

“No.” Micha responded simply, not tearing her gaze away from the car in front of her.

“21?” she asked, her voice rising.

“No.”

“Why not?” she asked desperately, running her other hand through her hair. Her fingers getting caught where the rubber band began to loosen.

“You’re a bad liar.” Micha retorted, reading the stickers that littered the bumper of the car at pump five.

“No, I’m not.”

“Yes, you are.” Micha watched as her sister began to open the door, “I’ll get it.” Micha hopped out of the car door before her sister could respond. She shook the nozzle around the rim of the filler before mounting it back on the dispenser.

They arrived at the bakery only a few minutes later with new pastries they weren’t getting paid enough to make. Papá always said this is how a business starts; they have to build it from the ground up. So, that is what they will continue to do. Then, they’ll get a real house, with a real bed, and a real room for the baby. Instead of their sleeping in the office room, sleeping on crates, showering in a community bathroom, using cable TV that is only partially functional, and eating Chef Boyardee for lunch and dinner.

The drive back to the warehouse was treacherous, a beltway accident made for traffic. Ruby complained about her swollen feet and Micha suggested that Eli should massage them. To which Ruby responded by punching her arm and Micha wasn’t going to punch a pregnant seventeen year old. Instead, she complained about their lack of CDs again.

“Ya llegamos!” Micha shouted as they walked through the warehouse. She did not expect an answer; her parents and the employees worked in the walk-in refrigerator that was sealed by a metallic door.

“I’m gonna sleep for a bit. It’s not going away.” Ruby’s voice was laced with pain as she referred to her headache. They made their way to the office, Micha not bothering to turn on the lights. The static on the TV greeted them as they walked in. “We pay for electricity, you know...”

“Sorry, I forgot to turn it off.” Micha said genuinely.

“Just use the computer to watch something,” Ruby said. “The internet should work now, paid it yesterday. Mamá is probably going to want you later though, new boxes came in this morning.”

Micha only cared for the first part. She could catch up on a bunch of videos and episodes she missed out on for the last two months.

She rearranged the crates with Ruby. They laid blankets over the crates until there was a thick layer she felt comfortable with. Micha pulled out the pillows she had washed and placed them on their bed. Her sister gripped her arm as she settled down. “Can you play that song before you start watching your videos?” Ruby chuckled lightly, she was already half asleep. Micha nodded and pulled out a grey folding chair to sit by the archaic computer.

Micha passed the time with tasteless comedy sketches on Youtube. She was only waiting for mamá to call her to fold the boxes, but she wasn’t necessarily looking for work either. She began to play music videos and she

promised herself she wouldn’t play a single Beatles song. She began to sing along to a song she heard on the radio when she noticed a shuffle behind her. She quickly fell silent. The last thing she wanted to do was wake Ruby. Instead, she noticed her sister’s legs shaking.

Micha rushed to the light switch. Ruby’s face was distorted, like someone was twisting it with fishing line. Her eyes rolled back, only exposing white through the slits. Her head violently jerked around with her body, forcing her jaw tight but her lips slightly parted.

“Papá!” She screamed pushing the door open. The thought of calling for help enveloped her. She yanked the metallic door of the refrigerator open and was met with bewildered expressions and an icy chill. Papá was the furthest away, whipping cream for the cakes. Her mamá was putting a thin coating of strawberry glaze on a moist sponge cake. Ricardo was new, but he knew enough to decorate pastries. Her shrill voice was enough to grasp all their attention.

“Papá, la Ruby!” Her voice cut through her throat. She was making any noise she could. She placed her hands over her ears as they ran past her.

“Micha!” Ricardo yanked her hands away from her ears, “¿Necesito llamar a una ambulancia?”

“Sí.”

The wait for the ambulance was long. She couldn’t bring herself to enter the room. Instead, she planted herself next to the door. She was rooted to the ground like a stubborn weed. She heard her mamá’s wails on the opposite side of the door. She could feel her papá’s voice as vibrations hitting every wall of that room.

Preeclampsia. 1 Word. 5 syllables.

A pregnancy complication.

The symptoms are often disguised as pregnancy symptoms and can go undetected by doctors.

That’s what papá told her. They were parked outside a McDonald’s. The sky was dark. There wasn’t a star in sight. Only clouds that came in waves with the wind whistling through the trees. They waited in the car silently; they had been parked outside the hospital for hours. Micha wasn’t allowed inside because she was twelve and a risk. So, papá thought they could buy something to eat, but neither of them had an appetite.

His phone rang and filled any crevice the silence reached in the car. He answered it before it got to its second ring.

“Es tu mamá...” He stepped out into the dimly lit parking lot, shutting the car door softly. Micha watched him. She tried to catch his eye but he refused to meet her gaze. She watched his mouth move but couldn’t make

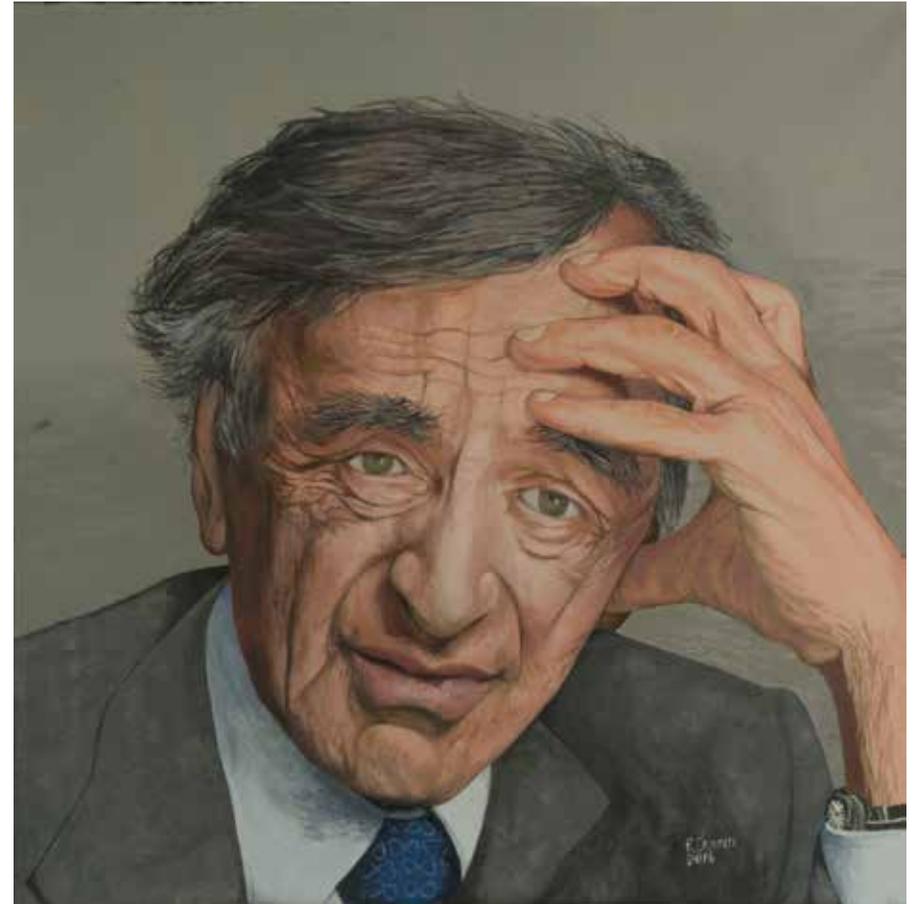
out a single word. He suddenly seemed too real, too dimensional, and she welcomed this feeling. She wanted to be a bystander. She wanted to be disconnected as she watched papá pace in front of the car. His hand gripping his phone, never letting it fall. His body grew rigid, and Micha swore she was no longer present. She was in the wind, weaving through the trees.

He faced Micha with an unmistakable grin beginning to flourish. Warm tears of relief stained his face. In that moment, Micha wanted to reach out for anything, for something to ground her. She couldn't hear papá but she could see his mouth move.

“Todo estará bien.”

Everything will be okay. Four words. Seven syllables.

Elie Wiesel Robert Chanin



Contributors

Indran Amirthanayagam (<http://indranamirthanayagam.blogspot.com>) writes poetry in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole. His latest books include *Il n'est de solitude que l'île lointaine*, *Pwezji a Kat Men*, *Ventana Azul* and *Uncivil War*.

Bianca Bah is studying art at Montgomery College, TP/SS campus.

Mark Behme is a Washington, DC-based artist. Carved in wood, Behme's sculptural pieces are well known for their surrealist qualities and his tendency to use word play as a guide to his metaphors. Behme has been active in the DC art scene since the late 1970's and has shown in other local galleries and NYC. In the early 80's Behme won the Grand Prize at the Corcoran Masquerade Ball juried by Andy Warhol. Behme's past and current work can be seen at his web site, www.markbehme.com.

Michelle Bulatovic is studying art at Montgomery College, TP/SS campus.

Jasmine Cornejo is studying art at Montgomery College, TP/SS campus.

Henry Crawford is a poet living and writing in the Washington, DC area. Other poems have appeared in several journals, both in print and online, including *In Stereo Press*, *BlazeVox13* and *Borderline Press*. The poem which appears here, "Every Morning, Maddie," was previously published in *Mothers Always Write* (2016) and *The LummoX Poetry Anthology*.

Karen Vanessa Najarro Cáceres was born on November 18, 1992 in San Miguel, El Salvador. She studied dentistry at the University of El Salvador, and currently studies Exercise Science at Montgomery College. She is a lover of roller skating, exercise, animals, nature, and poems.

Robert Chanin took art classes during high school and college, but essentially abandoned that interest in 1956 when he entered Yale Law School. For over fifty years he practiced law in New York City and Washington, DC, and finally retired in 2010. After retirement, he returned to art, and since 2011 has been taking art classes—primarily in painting—at Montgomery College, TP/SS campus.

Keyne Cheshire teaches ancient Greek, Latin, classical literature and literary translation at Davidson College in North Carolina. His recent work in translation—always with a view to performance—includes *Sophocles' Women of Trachis* (Murder at Jagged Rock, The Word Works, 2015), *Aristophanes' Birds* (A Cock and Gull Story), and selections from Homer's *Iliad* (in progress).

Celibel Cortes is studying art at Montgomery College, TP/SS campus.

Laiz Nascimento Dias is studying art at Montgomery College, TP/SS campus.

Jahid (Kane) Edmonds is an aspiring artist who is currently going to Montgomery College with plans to transfer soon. Originally born in Philadelphia PA, he and his family moved to Silver Spring in 2016. His preferred mediums are painting and sculpture. He also likes to experiment with paper cut art.

Nicolas Garcia is a first-year student at Montgomery College. He currently writes poetry and composes music from his bedroom.

West Gipson is a student, writer, and activist from Silver Spring. Currently, they attend Montgomery College. They are hoping to transfer this coming fall, and to double-major in political science and creative writing, with the eventual goal of being a labor attorney who writes on the side. Gipson has previously been published in *Potluck Mag*, *Mobius Journal*, and *Work! Magazine*. "Careful, Addie" is West's first piece in the thriller genre, and they are very excited to be published in *The Sligo Journal*.

Oriana Delgado Gomez was born in Mexico, but moved to the United States when she was around two years old. She spent most of her childhood in California and then moved to Maryland at around the age of 8. The childhood she had in California consisted of watching a lot of cartoons, doodling, and reading fiction books while at home alone.

For lots of years, poet JoAnne Grownney taught mathematics in a Pennsylvania university where the mathematics and art department offices were adjacent – and she thereby came to love art and to use it to inspire her writing. After moving to Maryland, she met Silver Spring artist Mark Behme and the poetry-inspired-by-art process delightfully continued. Learn more at <https://joan-negr.dot5hosting.com> and at <https://poetrywithmathematics.blogspot.com>.

Bird up! Elijah Hill enjoys drawing a lot on buses. Fan of water. Legalizing ranch is his mission. Thanks for viewing.

Creative Writing began as an emotional outlet for Beersheva Hodge before it transformed into a passion. She has been writing since she was thirteen with a focus on poetry and romantic-comedy.

Carol Jennings grew up in the rolling hills of western New York, attended The College of Wooster, graduated from NYU, lived for more than a decade in New York City, and now resides in Washington DC. Her poems have appeared in a number of journals, including *The New York Quarterly*, *The Broadkill Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *Oberon*, *Potomac Review*, and *Medical Literary Messenger*, as well as three anthologies. She is now retired and devotes her time to poetry and the piano. The poem which appears here, “Mano Sinistra,” was previously published in *Chautauqua*, Issue 11 (2014) and *The Dead Spirits at the Piano* (Cherry Grove Collections 2016).

Stephen Katz submitted his poem “Backcountry” to The Sligo Journal Student Poetry Contest, for which he won second prize and publication in this issue.

Richard Lorr was an attorney for the Federal government for 31 years. Since retirement, he has engaged in writing poetry, sculpting, painting, singing and studying foreign languages. He is married with two grown children.

Paola Mantilla is currently a 19-year-old enrolled at Montgomery College. Her main focus is studying art, whether it be film, writing, or graphic design.

Yvette Neisser is the author of *Grip*, winner of the 2011 Gival Press Poetry Award, and the translator of two volumes of poetry from Spanish. She is a founding Board Member of the DC-Area Literary Translators Network (DC-ALT).

Kathleen O’Toole has combined an active professional life in community organizing with teaching and writing. Her poems have appeared widely in magazines and journals including *America*, *Northern Virginia Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Potomac Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and others. A chapbook *Practice* was published in 2005, and her first full-length collection, *Meanwhile*, in 2011. *In the Margins*, a collection she co-authored with three other women poets, was released in 2017. She lives in Takoma Park, MD with her husband John Ruthrauff.

Maggie Rosen lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her poems have been published in *Little Patuxent Review*, *Waccaman*, *Cider Press Review*, *RiverLit*, *Blood Lotus*, *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *Barely South*, and *Conclave*, among other publications. Her chapbook, *The Deliberate Speed of Ghosts*, was published in 2016 by Red

Bird Chapbooks. See more at maggierosen.com

Esther Schwartz-McKinzie earned her Ph.D. in British and American literature at Temple University, and her scholarly work focuses on the voices of under-acknowledged women writers. This poem is about her aunt, a powerful woman-mentor-artist who had a huge impact on her life. She has been thinking about what endures as the reinforcement of human contact fades and working on the slow process of coming to terms with loss. She teaches English, literature and Women’s Studies at Montgomery College.

Born in the Cameroon, Anaïs Tana was not always great with poetry rhymes and struggles to write stories and poetry. When she moved to the United States, she decided to give writing another try; it wasn’t until the end of her sophomore year in high school that she found the passion in writing stories and, especially, poetry. Now, she feels more free to write about her emotions, her fantasies, her life, and things that may seem appealing to her.

Joann Everly Tell has been taking art classes at MC since 2014 after many years of being inactive in art. She holds a BA in history from the University of Pennsylvania and resides in Silver Spring with her family.

Chenelle Williams was born on January 5, 1999. She is a young Jamaican immigrant who balances her love for STEM and the literary arts. She has been writing poems from the age of 15 and hopes to eventually write her own book and blog one day.

