1001 Nights: The Stories That Need to be Told



Pacifica Graduate Institute Literary Journal 2019

BETWEEN 1001 Nights: The Stories That Need to be Told VOLUME 22, 2019

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FRONT AND BACK COVER ART: *"Breaking Through"* By Pamela D. Hancock

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Between is a student- run, student-produced literary review made possible by a grant from Pacifica Graduate Institute. All students in any program who are currently enrolled are encouraged to submit.

Pacifica Graduate Institute

249 Lambert Road

Carpinteria, CA 93013



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Letter from the Editor

Kiese Hill

As an artist and writer from a young age, I have always been interested in the *in-between*. That dance between what you imagine and what you create, between what you want to say and what you have the courage to say, between your self and the Self. As I have gotten older, it has been more and more important to hold that space for others in the in-between. As a teacher and a doctoral student. witnessing the power of storytelling as a transformative event for author or reader or both has continually renewed my ideas about the sacredness of this act. This seemingly simple act, of languaging meaning through image and story, is truly the creation of worlds. In One Thousand and One Nights, Scheherazade seems to play such a small role but she is the one who risks her life on the idea that storytelling has power. Through her weaving of a thousand stories, she transforms a king and saves a kingdom. As the book ends, it is really a beginning of thousands of individual lives and their stories.

Here are some of the stories that still

need to be told.



Heather McCloskey Beck

From what hidden wellspring are sacred lives born? Secret sighs kissing dreaming eyes open, Deep into the dark of a blue Mother Night. What numinous vision, What wild, impassioned yearning Drives the caress of psyche and soul? What is this scattering of blue roses falling ... Who is it that calls to us, beckoning us home?

Honored yet fallen, a cycle of longing
For what has gone missing, for that which feels whole.
We gather our pieces, collecting the shrapnel
Of spirit and light, of embers gone cold.
Fanning the flames, kindling the fire
Heating the roots of soulful desire.
What is this scattering of blue roses falling ...
Who is it that calls to us, beckoning us home?

Oh, the cocooning, the patience required! The fire, the vessel of this primal brew Kindling the flames of alchemical wildness, Yielding the gold, held by tensions of two. From the depths of psyche and dark night dreams, The pupa morphs into papillon wings. What is this scattering of blue roses falling ... Who is it that calls to us, beckoning us home?

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Myrtle

Kamee Abrahamian



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• H Mother's Mind

Kamee Abrahamian

a mother's mind is full of poetry unpublished

Kamee was born into an Armenian family displaced from the SWANA (southwest asian, north african) region, and grew up in an immigrant suburb of Toronto. They arrive in the world today as a queer and feminist mother, interdisciplinary creative, scholar, writer, producer, and facilitator. They have a BFA/BA in film and political science (Concordia University), an MA in expressive art therapy (European Graduate Institute), and soon to be MA/PhD in community, liberation, indigenous and eco psychologies (Pacifica Graduate Institute). Their work is steeped with relational, generative, visionary and liberatory practices oriented towards ancestral reclamation, diasporic futurism, and radical imaginaries. They have published both literary and academic work, facilitated workshops, and exhibited and curated art, films and staged performances internationally. Most recently, Kamee has been working freelance under Saboteur Productions (founder) and collaboratively through Kalik Arts (cofounder).



Maryam Tahmasebi

The intention: liberating my voice I blocked my heart I sealed it with cement I closed the doors behind me I locked them all I covered the windows with the thickest curtains I could find Then I ran away to the deepest, farthest place in my heart that I could find. But even there. My voice was lost. I wanted to scream but no sound came out of my throat. My voice was broken with fear. I wanted my voice back but a painful sob like a big rock blocked the way Then I heard a voice It must have been an angel who said: Open the doors! Open the windows! Fly outside! Sit down on that branch on maple tree, sing your song The storm is over, and the spring is you! Your voice is inside you, Put your hand onto your chest and pull your voice out.

Your voice is inside you....

The invitation

In dream, I was standing beside a pool; a deep pool I noticed a girl standing on my right side Wearing a yellow rain coat She was about 5 years old Our eyes locked for a glimpse and she suddenly jumped into the pool I hold my breath, nothing scares me more than deep water She transformed into a giant yellow snake Surfaced and called me: Jump! She said, down here is not as scary as you think! I stayed there and looked at the beautiful yellow snake She didn't scare me, but I wasn't ready for deep waters I just stayed and stared into deep waters

Let the journey begin:

find your voice with a roar In dream, I was walking down a long street I was walking but not on the ground My feet were above the ground like walking in the air and I was humming happily because I expected to meet the ocean at the end of this long street Then I noticed that the street is changing It was getting dark and scary I stopped in horror of seeing what was ahead: There was a railroad in front of me, but the railways were built upon layers of naked corps Human bodies, naked and dead, were layers, used as a foundation for that horror railway Before I can turn around and scape this hideous scene, An old eerie woman jumped on me She was the one who put the bodies on the railroad, I suddenly realized I had to fight back No way to avoid this Midst of struggling with her, for the first time in any dream I found my animal voice A deep roar hurdled out of my throat I body slammed her to the ground with a roar and immediately woke up.



I wrote the first part, **The intention**: liberating my voice, when I was sitting in a coffee shop and I had a very hard day. I was hiding behind tick walls that were choking me and my throat was hurting from holding a painful sob for so long. This was 3 months before I applied in Pacifica. The second one is a dream that I had the night before I got accepted in Pacifica and I called it **The invitation**. The last piece is a dream I had night before I decided to say yes to my Pacifica journey and I named it Let the journey begin: find your voice with a roar. I felt that combing the two dream will give more meaning to the initial piece and although the reader has no context of my life, the dreams are complimentary to the need of liberating voice.

I was born in July 1982 in Tehran. I moved to the United States in the beginning of 2015. I have a MSc of Agricultural and Natural Resources Economics from University of Tehran and a MA of Depth Psychology with specialization of Community Psychology, Liberation Psychology and Ecopsychology (CLE) from Pacifica Graduate Institute. I am currently a PhD candidate of Depth Psychology (CLE) at Pacifica Graduate Institute. In Iran, I co-founded and managed an educational department named Inner Peace as part of an NGO named Center for Peace and Environment. I was teaching archetypal psychology, Jungian psychology, and feminine psychology. Currently, I am a content producer for my Telegram Channel (Zananenegari) in Farsi that its name can be translated to Feminine Perspective where I write about my perspectives as a woman and a scholar in depth psychology for Iranian audience. -- Marvam Tahmasebi

Hello My Name Is

Cacky Mellor



Times Square, NYC

"Hello my name is" is a photograph from the first of a series of performance art pieces that I did. I was in the introductory art therapy course and the class was assigned a midterm project where we were to "explore a relationship." I chose to explore my relationship with labels, stereotypes, and biases. I started this process by writing on "Hello My Name Is" name tags every label that I could remember being called, by society, other people, and myself, ranging from positive to negative to neutral. I wrote about five hundred different labels. Doing this felt therapeutic, but I still wanted to take it to the next level.



North Attleboro High School, North Attleboro, MA

I was visiting my aunt in New York City, so I decided what better place to explore my relationships with labels than in the label factory of the world, Time Square. To do this, I recruited my mom, aunt, and sister for help and covered my body, from my noes to my toes, in the name tags and stood in Time Square to see how people would react to me interacting with my labels. The medium was incredibly metaphoric as wearing the labels highly restricted my ability to move without causing the labels to rip (and I later discovered that I am allergic to the glue of the name tags).

It was incredibly empowering to wear all of these labels as tangible badges of honor across my body and take back the perceived power the words had over me and my identity. I had an overwhelmingly diverse response from people coming up and discussing how labels have impacted their lives, to crossing the street to be as far away from me as possible, to people wanting to pose and take pictures.



Paris, France

The reaction I received after presenting the work in class took on a life of its own, even grabbing the attention of renowned art therapist, Shaun McNiff, who was a Dean at Lesley University at the time. I have done over sixteen performances around the world, including; New York City, NY, Boston, MA, The Ohio State Fair, Ohio, The International Expressive Art Therapy Conference, MA,

Provincetown, MA, San Diego, CA, Hanoi, Vietnam, Paris, France, London, England, Brisbane, Australia, and high school settings.

My goal for this piece is to inspire others to explore their own relationship with words and labels and begin to come into relationship with them.



State House steps, Boston, MA



Jennifer Maile Kaku

In her was a pool of unfathomable sadness a cipher inside of her arcane, spectral, undetectable presence or absence a black hole in the inner lining of an unknown universe

deep down beneath a tranquil surface its bed was soft and muddy sediment settling perhaps for centuries

At times a droplet might ripple the stillness of the slowly filling pool while the writing leaked out in quicksilver jets that quivered, shimmering, at the top of the page until they ran off in liquid ribbons that spilled over the edge and spoiled the tabletop.

She ran to get a sponge. A dark stain remained, a tiny obscene blemish, which she covered with white lace and an empty vase.

(The sun was coming up. A pale finger of light crept over the sill as she wound a scarf around her neck and went out to buy a hot roll and coffee with the last of the silver coins. On the way back, turning a corner, she threw her pen into the river.)



There is no word for art in the Hawaiian language, as in many other indigenous languages. Art was not a separate category of reality that one could point at and name. A wood carving, a tattoo, a dance, a chant was not an act of personal expression. It was a transpersonal event, an interconnection with the sacred—with the Muses, so to speak. Art in the Western sense has preserved, I believe, a certain relation to otherness. It gives us other eyes, other ears, other ways of seeing, of listening, of knowing, of engaging with the outside, the inside, the transpersonal. It enables us to see differently, to listen differently. And that difference is a portal that, to me, is vital.

The underground is a place of difference. It is between us and inside of us in the interstices that we ourselves open up and then endeavor to bury, in the wounds whose lips we stitch or ignore. The voices of the underground are the voices of dissonance, of dissidence. Their songs are not songs of harmony and consensus. They are the voices of the goddesses buried by the God, the voices of color buried and whitewashed, the voices of nature buried, domesticated, mauled (or malled) into cement. Those voices of dissonance, those songs of difference are the ones we need to listen to and express. It is a chorus and a chaos we must enter into together It all began on a beach in Hawai'i when my best friend and I were nine. We created a miniature otherworld in the sand and began to write stories about it. If our sand creations were ephemeral, our written stories preserved and prolonged them through the magical web of words. I went on to study English in California and Études Littéraires in Paris, then settled down in France to translate documentaries and teach hula, Hawaiian dance. In 2018, a new path led me to the Mythological Studies Program at Pacifica Graduate Institute. --Jennifer Maile Kaku

Hou Are Enough

Heather Taylor

When I went to Montana for a retreat in Sept. 2011, the guides created a ritual for the participants by invoking the magnificent land through a Native American tradition. They were able to create space for experiences to be brought forward through the senses and imagination instead of through thought and logic. I did not know any of the women attending the retreat, nor any of the horses roaming free in the nearby pastures. The primitive landscape was unfamiliar. It seemed the surrounding mountains had secrets and the horses were the keeper of the stories. However, I soon felt a part of the natural cycle of life and all the women attending the retreat formed a bond that was part of that continuum. We quickly learned the personalities and eccentricities of the horses, and each other, forming a connection of trust, support, and friendship.

Toward the end of the week, we were informed that we would be riding to a nearby cave for a guided meditation. When the day arrived, the sun was shining bright and everyone was in good spirits. In the crisp breeze of the afternoon, we talked to our horses, tied ribbons in their manes and, with their permission, painted symbols on their bodies while whispering secrets in their ears. We asked if they would carry us to the caves. I rode as one of the uninitiated, following the others along the ridge of the ancient land, imagining the fossilized dinosaurs that once roamed the landscape while keeping an eye out for bears that still did.

We rode in single file toward the unknown, laughing and talking to those within earshot. You could feel the ancient vibration of the land. We were just another chapter of the earth's story. In reverence to the Native American tradition, our guides gave each of us a tied bundle of tobacco to offer to the gods during the ride. When we walked through some overgrowth hiding a trail, I threw my offering to the wind and watched as the trees and bushes caught it while I was simultaneously being carried forward.

After arriving at the cave, we tied our horses to a post and descended through the concrete labyrinth following a wire with a row of hanging bulbs lighting the way. The musty smell mixed with the sound of dripping water and the anxiety of the unknown. Once we were at the predetermined spot, we formed a circle, each woman nestling into a piece of nature by claiming a seat on the ragged rocks. When the instructors turned off the lights, I was aware of the dampness penetrating my body as darkness took my sight.

We were led on a guided meditation and then, we sat in silence. When one of the women began singing, I secretly rolled my eyes until I let my pretention go and just listened. Others joined in, creating a mythical chorus, lulling me into an altered state and sparking dream like visions. My painfully cold feet were the only thing preventing me from getting completely lost in the underworld. That is when an apparition appeared from a dark recess of the cave. In my mind's eye I saw Aslan, the magnificent lion from the *Chronicles of Narnia*, an influential book from my childhood. My affection for Aslan opened my eyes to the possibility of real love for a Christ like figure in a way that church never could.

I was self-conscious, feeling unworthy when the shadowy image of Aslan approached. The great lion slightly bowed his head and breathed warm air on my feet, reminding me of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. The familiar urge to retreat into the background was ever present, when Aslan, his breath still covering me in baptism, said, "My child. You are enough." Tears streamed down my face and a warmth enveloped my body.

I stayed with the image until the spell was broken by the sound of others stirring around me. In a few minutes, the light bulb was turned on and the group emerged from the cave into the upper world in silence. The sun was shining as if nothing had changed and the horses were there, waiting to carry us back to the cabins.

I had forgotten that we were to remain quiet so was looking to connect and make idle chitchat. However, everyone was in a deep reflective state, forcing me to sit with my own silence. I listened to the horses breathing, the rhythm of their feet hitting the ground, and the jingle of the buckles on the saddlebags moving in tandem with our stride. I let go of the need to interact and settled into just being. When we got to the camp, we dismounted, kissed our horses, and each went off to reflect on the experience.

For the first and only time, I felt a part of the landscape and nature. The western pressure of time was lifted. I didn't feel the intense need to prove myself, follow a timeline, and achieve. Instead, I belonged. The ritual allowed for the message to enter viscerally, and experience life in a different, more profound way.



Heather Taylor is a first year

myth student at Pacifica Graduate Institute. Additionally, she has a Masters in Producing Film and Video. Her award winning documentary Breaking Through the Clouds: The First Women's National Air Derby

(BreakingThroughTheClouds.com) can be seen on PBS stations across America.

Art has to power to touch the sacred through memories and moments, offering new pathways to ourselves and to others. It can also touch on the profane and dark side, bringing to the surface that which must be seen in order to confront. By making the intangible viewable in a story, visual art form, and other manifestations, we can create a more authentic and diverse community.

In today's busy world, we are stuck in the rational, logos mindset as we struggle to survive our every day world. As a result of the narrow parameters that one must follow to achieve financial stability, voices that stray from the collective mindset are often lost, smothered, or dismissed. Myth brings story to the forefront from a more subjective, feeling point of view. By expressing our voices, we learn our similarities and celebrate our differences. We learn the value of life outside consumerism and access parts of the mythos that has frequently been left behind and forgotten. In essence, it is the sacred that artists tap into. For many of us, animals and nature help us reconnect to that side of ourself or tap into a part of ourselves we have forgotten how to access." –Heather Taylor

emories of Buni's

Mădălina Borteș

the dirt is too quenched for thirst it has given up hope of mercy from the sky, of water from the flood. it awaits in a hiss

until your bees-waxed skin envelops my dewy skin, drenched in the perfume of wildflowers & dog piss on a humid summer's day—a delicate combination only found at this preserve and

in my memories of home. 'long wildflower lined paths my six-year-old feet eagerly designed but left behind 'til they'd find me again and they did outstretched upon the dirt, tracing edges of chalice-formed hips perfectly shaped for a drop of sweat to find itself forming from the sun's fated heat.

life formed as simply as forgotten life shared in a drop of honey-dipped sweat, beaded from my body, it fed the earth: communion.

grandma goes to Rio

Mădălina Borteș

i am drifting / in and out of sleep / soft bellied / face down / dolloped / on an extra firm mattress / in an airless room / in Rio.

heat localizes / behind my heart / a holding penetrates / my body's layers / *no one's hand is there* / but you / you are and *I know*.

out of this dream-state i awake / the radio announces: December 19th / the votes declared. doom.

my diaphragm lugs me to the wooden squares / crushed / the sturdy muscles in my legs / atrophy / nausea / climbs over me like parasites encircling spoiled meat

my lungs float on the ceiling / they're holding the air hostage / merciless / like finality.



Mădălina Borteș is a writer and Ph.D. student in the Somatics concentration.

I write because I love to read. I write because I cannot stop. I write across genres and forms because the act of creative expression is inherently wild and elegant, loud and soft, disturbing and stunning; and I try to allow these qualities to stand (or dance) as best I can.

Art is hope, art is expression, art is madness, art is a mood and a perspective, art is a craving that is never finished. Because of this, art is endlessly important. To be literate in art is to have access to language; it is a tongue I never wish to let dry...for myself or others. – Mădălina Borteş

, Se Ne Sais Quoi

Angela Meer

I am man-made Not a product of test tubes Or catty conversation But love

I gamble with the ineffable Rejecting tombs and their corresponding ghosts Ghosts that neither eat nor speak Or send Valentine's

I develop and process Not like film, drip-dried Frozen and bitter squares of yesterday Reminders that they cared

These things haunt. Rather

I like warm things Mom's spicy chili Fresh copies of blueprints Friction energized by our healing wounds

⊱⊰ JE NE SAIS QUOI

Angela Meer

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Angela Meer, MFA, MA, is a writer, poet, speaker, and pastor. Her work centers on spirituality as a journey, and the vulnerability before God and others that is necessary for authentic growth. She has studied poetry in Greece under the Athenian stars, and prose in Oxford under the rising spires of the University. She is pursuing her Ph.D. while serving the spiritual needs of a community in southern Oregon.

The artist must cultivate their inner soul, and let the contents spill onto the page. Its achingly vulnerable work, brutal in its demands and execution, but chiseled gold set in the finest crowns if achieved.

-Angela Meer

Between 31



Pamela D. Hancock



/ ednesday Morning

Pamela D. Hancock

Water is gushing from the hole in the street Like a slashed artery Men with machines strike at the concrete as if it must be punished In room 3114 a confused Russian woman thrashes against Her perceived captor—a fretful intern She secretes fear in her voice that forces my feet Propelling me down the hall Far away Around the corner And out of earshot Outside the colliding sounds again And suddenly I am witness to something I've never seen: A ghost of a moth Being chased too-and-fro by a hungry sparrow I stop Watching Diving, turning, swirling around I don't know who I'm rooting for The moth dashes for the recesses of a bush The defeated sparrow lands on a post near the parking lot I look for something poignant in all of this Wednesday morning

Between 33



Pamela D. Hancock





I was born and raised in the Southern California Mountains where I currently reside with my husband and my baby boy! As a child I found the Sacred at the lake near my parents' cabin. The big pine trees surrounding it were my sacred space—my church. It was there that I began to understand that we are all part of the Divine Web of All Creation. At the age of twelve I sought comprehension of that Web by starting my study of the World's Religions. While obtaining my B.A. from the University of Redlands, Johnston Center, I delved into Feminist Spirituality, Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism. I moved in and out of different spiritual practices after College, weaving together the energies of all of the Archetypal-Forces with whom I entwine. In 2011 in ritual with the group I led, I heard the call: Nourish others' understanding of their connection to the Sacred in all things! So off I went to Starr King School for the Ministry (a Unitarian Universalist Seminary) where I received my Master of Divinity, and the Chaplaincy Institute for Ordination as an Interfaith Minister. Having battled a long-time kidney illness, I almost died of an infection after completing Seminary--but found solace in finding my true path of Alchemy and Depth Psychology during this difficult ordeal. After a full recovery, I began the adventure to obtain my PhD. in Depth Psychology with a specialization in Jungian & Archetypal Studies, from Pacifica Graduate Institute—where I am now dedicating my work towards designing a program for Trauma Survivors to embark on a quest to heal both the body and the mind. I am dedicated to helping women embody all parts of their true selves. –Pamela D. Hancock

Hve Maria

to Grandma

Mary Kiese Hill

This is harder than I thought it would be. Sitting here at your table in the silence after everyone has left.

In my memory,

the sounds of eating and laughter surround me. I watch you roll your eyes and tease us for all of our ridiculous jokes and equally ridiculous table manners, even as you feed the dog perched on a pillow on the chair next to you bite-sized pieces of food from your plate.

Over the years, "Don't scrape the bowl! I'll give you more ice cream!" became less of an admonishment and more of a clear delight. There were homemade cookies in the jar and slices of chocolate cake saved in the freezer for grandchildren and great-grandchildren that long ago gave up "stand up straight" and came tumbling through your door.

You were always a force. A storm both intimidating and loving. One that I could never quite predict or understand. One I could never quite measure up to. As difficult as your last years were,

I am so grateful. Grateful that you held my hand, that you let me serve the dinner, that you let me cut your food and chastise you for not cleaning your plate, that you held my children in your arms in a way that I don't recall.

Forgive me. Bless me. Watch over my children. Thank you, thank you, thank you for showing me the gentle side of your care, for letting me wrap you in warm blankets, for permitting me to journey to your bedside, for allowing me to whisper you to sleep, for granting me the right to lay my head beside yours and shelter you, for empowering me to nurse you in the still of the night, and for giving me the strength to hold your husband in the quaking of your loss. That morning's light warmed a room drowned in prayers and tears.

Now this table is silent.

The room is empty.

In the quiet I didn't realize would be this hard, I wrap myself in the smell of your perfume, search through your closet and, like a little girl playing dress up, I try on all your clothes hoping something will fit and that I will somehow be transformed. That I too can be the storm. That I can find in myself something that resembles your power.

Your shoes miraculously fit, and I will try to walk in them. I will carry your name like a prayer. I will try to pick up where you left off. I will try to stand up straight. I will fill my fridge with far too much ice cream. I will temper my admonishments with love and kisses. I will leave tissues in all my
pockets and hints of perfume on all my clothes just in case my daughter or granddaughter needs them too. "I miss you" isn't near enough for the weight of my tears.

Please hear me. Please hear me. Please hear me. Now and for the rest of my life. Ave Maria. Amen.



Kiese Hill has a B.A. in Folklore and

Creative Writing from Johnston College, University of Redlands and studied a year at University College Cork, Ireland. Currently, she is a Doctoral Candidate in the Mythological Studies Program at Pacifica. To balance out both her love of creative writing and mythology, she is an editor of both the *Between Literary Journal* and of the *Mythological Studies Journal*, and is also co-director of the *Salon*, a creative and academic workshop. She feels grateful to share this these passions as a full-time high school English teacher in Southern California. Kiese is also grateful to her wonderful husband and two super cool nerd kids— all of whom she could not do without.

Art isn't just something you do. It is something you live: a way of seeing the world. The flipside is also true: everyone becomes an artist and a writer when they are courageous enough to share their vision of the world, their soul, with another. –Kiese Hill The Stories that Need to Be Told 38

My Oasis of the Mind

Gary Wack





Gary Wack

Her body swayed against the soft lips of time, as I whispered the words "I miss you," one last time. She must have heard me, somewhere inside the drift of timeless time.

Somewhere out there, I knew she had somehow longed to hear it,

My voice from beyond, or was it my touch that arose inside the light, for she must have felt the brush of my lily against her once warm cheeks that blew like the mists of fog against the bow of her final ship to shore, the one that would carry her into the afterlife.

How her memory, the purple haze of her jutting vibrant floral waves of scented isle breeze drew me inside her, those glossy opening wreaths for eyes in the night skies, so tender their glow against my rosy cheeks and nose.

Once upon my knees, I prayed for her return, one last kiss, and one more day.

I wandered inside the light of her dream for just one more night, one more brush of the painter's sigh, one more breath beneath the soft lace and ruffles of her kisses against mine, from lip to lip within one more passionate glow,

I could swear I saw her once more, once more before the morning arose.

~ Dedicated to a love who passed too young.

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My Sunset

Gary Wack



he Magic of Words

Katherine Kerns Sulzer

To tell the truth, I am not sure if I can accurately capture what it feels like to live in a state of denial.

Because the thing is, once you are in it, once you have been fully consumed by the loom—weaving together the gloom of living as if you don't know how to show what you know, you have gone to a time and space where the grace of reflection ceases to exist.

Denial. Is it a conscious act, or is it the accumulation of speculation that keeps me separate from you?

Denial. A warm blanket. A cup of tea. A smile.

Denial. That twinkle in his eye when he smirks, knowing exactly what he took from you without a word to exchange.

Denial. The door that closes in your face. The armor you wear. The lies you tell. Any trick you play on yourself that enables you to forget to remember your own truth.

We all know it. We all do it.

What I am most interested in is what wakes us up? What takes us out of the haste of our own distaste and makes you want to know how to grow?

To tell the truth, there is no telling the truth when you refuse to diffuse the tension of the unknown.



Katherine Kerns Sulzer

You visited me last night before I fell asleep.

Maybe I had already fallen asleep. Maybe it was just a dream. Maybe I was just making it up. Maybe I just imagined you. Maybe I was remembering the man I knew and somehow, in some way, I caught a glimpse of you before you crossed the line of the horizon where you will now stay.

But I never knew you the way I saw you last night.

You were young, without a trace of the markings from a life well-lived.

There was a depth to your eyes—a reservoir of truth, a reserve and a sense of reckoning—that I may only come to know when it is my own time to vanish from the light of day.

You stood tall. You stood on top of a hill. Your left shoulder leaned against a tree. Your arms interlaced across your broad chest. You stared into the horizon.

Your eyes smiled at me one last time before you turned and walked away.

You left the hill.

It is still there. So is the tree. So is the sky that bent in hues of a homecoming. You are everywhere and you are everything.

You visited me last night before I fell asleep.

I now know where you are. I plan to visit you, too.

Meditation on Memory

Katherine Kerns Sulzer

Forgetting, in my eyes, is synonymous with forgiveness—mercy, sacrifice, ritual, freedom.

It all leads to Source—or is that what is leading us?

In this dance between the conscious awareness of the past and the space of a future image we so desperately long to embody, how does the heart, mind, and body arrive—to participate—in the creation and destruction of all of the versions of ourselves that have existed in multiple times and spaces?

Perhaps it is through the very question itself. Perhaps it is how and when we make meaning out of life's experiences that we, too, play God.

That we believe we must forget in order to move on—when really, the present moment awaits, for us to unite, to step outside of the monotony—to grow into ourselves and out of the channels that carry the past through our veins.

Perhaps and maybe, because remembering and forgetting are related—are baked in the same oven—yet, somehow are still perceived as opposites, that we think that we must do anything at all. Maybe it is the conditioning and the present conditions of our minds that generates a need to fly away from what is right in front of our eyes. Maybe it is suppression, regression and transmission maybe that is the true question—of learning how we have chosen to block the flow of energy and time so that the psyche expands or contracts accordingly.

Perhaps it is a matter of us figuring out how to, in each moment, arrive in a space filled by presence through the conscious awareness and acknowledgement of multiple dimensions.

We all see through a narrow lens.

Even less of us may practice methods, or integrate daily rituals, that may offer a sense of agency to engage in the act of forgetting and remembering that History emerges from within.

What I do know is that if we are so fortunate, as to stumble upon the opportunity to claim our lives and submit ourselves to the mystery of the past and the grace of the future—we may, if only for a moment, live to forget that we must remember anything at all.

And in that ever-steadfast stance of truth, we may put one foot in front of the other, with our hearts and minds open, to receive yet another moment of inspiration—another opportunity to reconcile all of time and space.



"Sometimes, when I will allow myself to look back over what I have gone through, and am still here, I think I sure am made of iron or some strong kind of metal, to stand everything and can still go where I want to go." – Sarah A. Johns (August 29, 1917)

Sarah A. Johns is my great grandmother's grandmother—her journal inspired me to commit to a daily writing practice. Writing is how the image of the imprint of my soul can find a language to speak. There is time and space to digest the matter of whatever it is that witness has gone on to see, feel, touch, hear and smell—and how to turn those senses back on, when they shut down so long ago—in ancient times of cold wars. Through the act of writing, I can hear the voice of generations who have walked before me, but somehow—at the point of space between when a word is formed and when it manages to show up on a page—I can see, feel, talk to, hold, and visit the lives of those who no longer live—at least to the wakeful eye.

Writing generates an intimate relationship—one that is sacred and molded by a presence existing in multiple dimensions. A relationship that when placed in the context of a modern society and its projected, prefixed images, expectations and demands, has been conditioned to not be considered valid or valuable, enough, to speak for itself. Or, maybe it is that this relationship expresses itself through the transmission of cycles in the seasons of our lives, and we must digest and transform its language according to the metabolization of symbols, guides and thought. And if we are so fortunate, we may be here to witness it alchemize with elements we are yet to know. The crossing of the imaginal threshold links our conscious awareness to a field of depth in which we step into the darkness that resides right behind the light that is omitted from our eyes. It is an embodied labor of love to submit and submerge one's ego consciousness to the depths of the emergent vantage point that brings forth wisdom from the unconscious. The very production process itself produces the competence to actualize a relationship to the psyche that reflects the evocative and transformative nature of its activities. The veracity of this work vivifies the integration of polarizing forces native to the landscape of the psyche. The depth, and breadth, of writing is then contingent upon the cultivation of one's presence in a process that moves towards an embodiment of the wisdom of the psyche. –Katherine Kerns Sulzer

Between 49



Jacqueline Moore



Oil on Canvas 28" x 42" The Stories that Need to Be Told 50



Jacqueline Moore



Oil on Canvas 28" x 42"

Between 51



Jacqueline Moore



Oil on Canvas 28" x 42"

P orgiven: A Midrash

Hannah Irish

You blamed me, I think, for their deaths. First one, and then the next. Your first two sons died after marrying me. I can imagine your heartache. Don't you see? I felt it, too. I lost my husband, not once, but twice. And while many women are widowed, I was also left childless. Er died so quickly, we had hardly a chance for children. And Onan, I know not why, Spilled his seed outside of me time and time again. So when he died, I was left alone, once again. I know it was hard, to lose two sons after they married me. Maybe you thought me cursed, the reason for their deaths. Maybe that's why, after promising Shelah to me, When he finally came of age, you did not send for me. So, you left me, a widow, with no children, To grow old in my father's house. It's hard to blame you.

I suppose, if I were a mother, I may have wanted to do the same. But you owed me. In the law's eyes and in the Lord's eyes, You owed me. And I could not—I would not Meekly wait for you to do right by me.

So when I heard that you were coming here,
I vowed to redeem myself, if you would not.
With my face veiled, and without my widow's dress,
You didn't look closely enough to recognize me,
Your own daughter-in-law.
You took me for a harlot and had what comfort I offered.
It was well that you could not pay me;
A pledge—your seal, and cord, and staff—
Were worth far more to me than coin.
Your pledge, and your child, growing in my womb,
These were my recompense.

So, when you sent for me, publicly, Having heard that I was with child by harlotry, And knowing that the price for my adultery would be death, I had no choice but to reveal your pledge, publicly. Your cord and staff perhaps you could have denied, But you could not deny your seal. Your seal claimed me as yours, As well as the child within me.

I only wish you had done right by me before,

Of your own accord.

I wish you had married me to Shelah when he came of age,

So that I could have spared you this shame.

Even so, Judah, son of Jacob,

I forgive you.

Jam not afraid

Hannah Irish

All in. Not 100% in. Not 110%. Not 200. Not a thousand. All in. It's unquantifiable. All in. It's a state of being. It's an attitude. A perspective. It says that whatever, whenever, however I can, I will. Whatever is possible within reason, I will. I am not afraid.

Yes, it will be hard. No doubt about it. But I can do it. Yes, I may get hurt. I will probably get hurt. I know I will most definitely get hurt, in some way, at some time. But I can do it. I **will** do it. I am not afraid.

It's a risk. There will be sacrifices. It will cost something. Time. Money. Relationships. Energy. Sleep. Good grades. Peace of mind. But nothing is free. Nothing is without risk. I am not afraid.

And when it asks too much. When the cost is too high. When it requires everything from you and gives nothing back. When it is more than you can bear, and you are doing it all alone. I can get what I need. I will find it. I can bare it. I will bare it alone. I am **not** afraid. *What if it's not enough?* It will be. I can do it. I **will** do it. I will make it enough. I am not afraid.

What if you're not enough? ... I am not afraid.

And when it shatters? When it crashes and burns? When it all comes tumbling down around you? When it breaks your heart? ... I am not afraid.

I have been heartbroken. I have found my way out of the rubble. I have been burned. I have picked up the tiniest pieces and put them back together in a shape resembling wholeness. **I** am **not** afraid.

Why does this feel so familiar? Have I been here before? It didn't look like this at the beginning. It was all so different. It was supposed to be different. I didn't choose this. I didn't want this. I've done this before. I didn't want to do it again. I **don't** want to do it again. How did I get here? **When** did I get here? Why didn't I see the cracks? Why didn't I smell the smoke? Why didn't I notice the tremble? Why didn't I feel my heart start to bend?

You have been here before. You just took a different route. And it could have been different. But you chose to follow that bend, instead of staying straight. If you had stayed on the straight trail in the light you would have found your way out without getting lost. Without getting hurt. But you turned.

You wound your way deeper in, down the steep, crooked trail in the shadows. Deeper and deeper, darker and darker, slipping and sliding farther and farther down. Until there was no more trail to follow. Just rocky ground through dense brush. Still you pressed on. Pushing branches out of your way. Legs and arms scratched. Slipping and tripping on unseen obstacles. Then it ended.

Then there was nothing. Nothing but a cliff dropping to a dry ravine. Too steep to climb down. Too far to jump and live. No water to catch you. No tree branches to break your fall. Nothing to do but turn back. Find your way back through the shadows. Slowly, rounding every curve slowly, as though danger lurked around it. Climbing up, legs burning, lungs dry, stomach heaving, vision blurred by tears, accepting another end.

An ending you didn't choose. An ending you didn't want. An ending that shouldn't have happened. It shouldn't be. You don't want it. But there it is. Here it is. So you walk away. Putting your heart back together, piece by tiny piece, step by shaky step, breath by shallow breath, willing your stomach to calm, brushing the tears away. And you find your way back to the straight trail under the sunlight. And your tears have dried. And your stomach is calm. And your breath is normal. And your legs are stable. And the pieces of your heart are back together in a shape resembling wholeness. And you say you did it. You are okay. Maybe a little worse for the wear. But you are wiser than you were before. You are stronger for it. Better for it.

And this is the narrative you tell yourself every time you make that choice. It will be hard, but you're all in. You can do it. You've done it before. And no matter what, no matter how hard, or dark, or steep, or how much it hurts, you'll be wiser, stronger, better in the end. A little worse for the wear ain't that bad.

But on the edge of the cliff, a death drop in front of me, a dark, steep, scary path behind me, I can't do it. I can't move. I can't see. I can't breathe. I've lost everything. All of my plans, hopes, dreams, shattered down in the ravine, where I cannot pick them up again. I will have to start over. Because I was all in. I know you didn't believe me when I said it. But I had no contingency plan. Nothing to fall back on. This was it. You were it. Because I was all in. And I was not afraid. But on the edge of the cliff, a death drop in front of me, a dark, steep, scary path behind me, I can't do it. I can't move. I can't see. I can't breathe. Who in me will turn around and start the trek back to the straight path under the sunlight? It's not me. I want to fall to the ground and cry until there is nothing left. So who is it in me that will get me home? And who is it in me that must go all in, every time, without holding back? Who is it that never backs down from a challenge? Who is it that chants that even if it all goes to hell it will still all be okay? Who is it that insists nothing is gained without risk? Who is it that says nothing is ever free? Who is she? Because right now, I'd like to knock her out for a while. Let her sleep while I float for a bit on a cloud not caring that it's the path of least resistance and requires no effort from me. I'd like to only take the easy way for a bit. Just go in at maybe 50%. I'd like to rest. I'd like a break from the risk and the cost and the sacrifice. But I suspect that she will not sleep. I suspect that when I have recovered enough, she will appear and tell me that I can do it. That I can do this hard thing and go all in. And that when something inevitably breaks, that when I get hurt, I will survive, because I always have. Because I am unafraid. But still, who is she? And why does she persist?

Is she Freedom? Freedom to choose my path, regardless of anyone else's choice or preference.

Freedom to live the life I choose. The Freedom to make my bed, and the Freedom to lie in it. The Freedom to be wiser, stronger, better than before. Freedom to put the pieces back together in a shape resembling wholeness, and then the Freedom to move on. Freedom that is not afraid.

Is she Truth? Truth found only through suffering. Truth found only by entering in deeply with another. Truth about myself, Truth about you, Truth about us, about all of us. The Truth that I can bear it. The Truth than I can risk and lose and fall and get back up and do it all again. The Truth that so much that is worthwhile is hard won. Truth that is not afraid.

Is she Love? Love that throws caution to the wind. Love that persists against all odds. Love that goes to the ends of the earth for the beloved. Love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. The Love that would lay down her own life for another. The Love that is boundless. Love that is not afraid.

Freedom? Truth? Love? One, two, or all three? Who is she in me? And what about me? What about me who can get hurt and break into a million small pieces, scattered all over my bed, in the shower, on the kitchen floor? What about me? Don't you see me? Because I am afraid.



Hannah Irish, M.A., a doctoral candidate

in the Mythological Studies program at Pacifica Graduate Institute, holds a BA in both English literature and theater, and an MA in Mythological Studies with an emphasis in Depth Psychology. She is passionate about storytelling, bringing the Great Goddess back from her Enlightenment exile, and re-mythologizing Christianity to better serve the twenty-first-century American Psyche. A Pacific Northwesterner born and raised, she loves hiking, strong coffee, the Oregon coast, and Oregon and Washington wines. In her downtime, she can be found reading, attending plays and concerts, sharing good food and stories with friends and family, and traveling whenever possible.

Since I was a little girl, I have always loved stories! Thanks to my mom, I got involved with theater in third grade, and was always encouraged not only to tell other people's stories, through theater, but also to express my own stories, through poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and playwriting. I know, first-hand, the power of story to heal pain, and to educate, empower, and challenge people to become better humans. Science tells us that reading fiction increases empathy; experience shows me that this is true. Story keeps us human; it keeps us grounded in relationship. In this everchanging, fast-moving world of science and technology, it is, always has been, and always will be, the storytellers who keep us human. –Hannah Irish



Andrew Winegarner



he First Jubilee.

a Modern Midrash

Andrew Winegarner

- There were seven in the council of gods known as the Elohim ["Gods"]: Yahweh, El, Samael, Saklas, and the three goddesses Sophia, Shekinah, and Ruah.
- 2. Yahweh spoke to the other Elohim. "Let us make humanity in our image."
- 3. They created twin beings of fiery light: Adam ["Man"] and Eve ["Life-Giver"].
- 4. *Ein Sof*, the One-Who-Dreamed-It-All, witnessed.
- 5. Adam and Eve lived in Eden, an idyllic realm of spirit and light in the vault above a newly-made earth. They knew no pain; only joy.
- 6. One day Shekinah ["Dwelling"] walked through Eden. "Where are you?"
- 7. Adam and Eve replied, "Here we are."
- 8. Shekinah said, "You may do anything in this realm of spirit, yet if you eat of the Tree of Knowledge, you shall surely die."
- 9. Later, another fiery being came to them; a multi-colored, serpentine spirit that danced brilliantly. It asked, "Did I hear the gods admonish you?"
- 10. Eve responded, "Shekinah said that if we eat of the Tree of Knowledge we shall die."

- 11. The serpentine spirit said, "Do you see any trees here? No, the Tree of Knowledge is within you. The gods know that once you eat of it you will know the difference between good and evil and will become as they are. To avert this, they have warned you to not eat of it. Is that good of the gods... or is it evil?"
- 12. Adam reasoned, "It is not good of them, so it must be evil."
- 13. Thinking during this intercourse, Adam and Eve became pregnant with an idea, a knowledge of good and evil. They became secondary creators themselves, having unintentionally eaten from the Tree of Knowledge that was within them.
- 14. Suddenly, they heard Sophia's voice."Where are you?" They replied, "Here we are."
- 15. Sophia ["Wisdom"] knew that something was different about them.
- 16. She called on the rest of the Elohim, who condemned them.
- 17. Adam and Eve cried out, asking to be forgiven their trespass, but the Elohim were resolute. The pair were cast down into the material world.
- 18. They began to change. The tongues of flame that comprised their bodies began to crystallize into skeletons which were threaded by red veins. They felt the weight of mass and hearts beating thunderously in their breast.

- 19. Yahweh took a beast of the field, skinned it, and attached its flesh to Adam and Eve's bones.
- 20. They had new knowledge: fear and anguish.
- 21. The pair were horrified. Their joints and muscles ached. Their backs hurt. Their skin stank. Their fingers and toes were cold and numb. They shivered in the dark night.
- 22. For warmth, they held each other close and realized their bodies were subtly different. They discovered a new sensation: ecstasy, and Eve was pregnant with a new creation.
- 23. And the One-Who-Dreamed-It-All witnessed.
- 24. In the morning, they felt another new sensation, hollow and empty: hunger.
- 25. Adam struck a beast of the field until it no longer moved. He ripped it open and ate its flesh. He gave it to Eve and she partook. They were disgusted to see one another covered in blood.
- 26. Later, Eve's body was rent and torn in childbirth. She cried aloud, "Why have the Elohim caused us to feel pain? All this because we dared to know? Truly, They are vindictive!"
- 27. Eve had a son: Cain ["Metalsmith"], followed by another son: Abel ["Herdsman"] and a daughter: Awan ["Iniquity"].
- 28. Adam and Eve forbade their children from worshipping the Elohim, who had forced them down into this harsh existence.
- 29. Yet Cain and Abel thought that perhaps if they did worship the Elohim they might be

allowed to return to the realm of light, so they fashioned altars.

- 30. The Elohim Samael ["Blind god"] chose Abel's altar as pleasing. Incensed, Cain slew his brother; decapitated him, castrated him, and severed his limbs, throwing them to disparate lands.
- 31. Abel's blood cried out to Samael. "Where is your brother?" He asked Cain, who replied, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But Samael knew what occurred and banished Cain to wander a land of ash and stone.
- 32. Cain took his sister Awan against her will. They begat nations, instilling in them Cain's violent ways. Awan, always hating Cain, instilled hatred in her children.
- 33. And so murder and hatred were sewn into the world.
- 34. Meanwhile, Adam and Eve had more children: Seth ["Appointed"] and another daughter: Azura ["Restraint"].
- 35. Seth and Azura, having never experienced the paradisiacal Eden, accepted the world they lived in *as it was*; the good *and* the bad, the light *and* the dark. They looked to the animals and felt kinship with them; an interconnectedness.
- 36. With this new spark of knowledge they went off into the world to make their way.
- 37. Together they begat nations, instilling in the children their own virtues.
- 38. And so love, kindness, and wisdom were sewn into the world.
- 39. And the One-Who-Dreamed-It-All witnessed.

Between 67

Hibedo

Andrew Winegarner





Andrew Winegarner is an artist and art teacher. He has published two graphic novels: *Gilgamesh* and *Peaceful Warrior*. He has also published artwork, poems, short stories, and essays in various journals such as *Cosmos and Logos*, *Immanence*, and *Between*. He has had artwork exhibited in California and Alaska. He lives and works in California with his wife and daughters.

erpsichore

Kleomichele Leeds

Salome am I And Solomon – Lebanon and Egypt Palestine and Yemen

I am Fatima Priestess of the East Morocco am I Ethiopia and Crete

I am Goddess – Serpent-handed Serpent-haired I am Alhambra Athens – Turkey

The Levant I am the Oriental Dance Algeria am I Tunis and Baghdad The Emirates And Israel

I am the wine-dark Sea – The Mediterranean Gulfs of Aqaba and Persia Petra and Peninsula I am Jordan Libya – Sudan The Stories that Need to Be Told 70

Macedonia Armenia and Oman

I am la Grèque ancienne I am She – Terpsichore

Terpsichore is the ancient Greek Muse, Goddess of Music and Dance.

lute and Drum

Kleomichele Leeds

Into the Light she moves From Darkness - from Chaos Carried on a Flute and Drum Her Fire transforms Water Into Earth and Air

Music builds the Waves Upon a Sea of Sound – Dancer in the Mist – Cymbals sing - Sequins flash On quivering Feathers and Flesh

Joy floats upon her Smile She lifts the Rhythm From Hip to Hands So full of Grace the Heart aches In its serpentine Race to Soul. The Stories that Need to Be Told 72

Mirrored

Wendilyn Emrys

She looks at her image, In the polished obsidian glass, Deep into her brilliant eyes, Seeing her other Self, Looking back at her.

That Self, Denied.

That Self, Submerged.

That Self, The people fear.

That Self, Obscured.

The shielding snakes, Clasping her, Become a part of her, Become her hair and flesh, Within the dark glass, Her flashing eyes, Find Recognition. She who is Life, Nurturance, and Wisdom, Becomes the Petrifier, Dealer of Death, And Destruction.
Mortals, Do not comprehend, That the Immortal Lady, Is both.

Two yet one, Both sides of the mirrored image, Are expressions, Of herself.

She is the protective regenerative Snake, Who both cures and kills.

She is the wise Owl, On deadly silent wings.

She is the Sea Eagle, Who pierces the waves.

She is the fierce Mountain Cat, Who guards the heights, the palaces and the people.

She is the Tree, Who gives sustenance, light, and shelter.

She has myriad forms, Yet mortals try to limit her to one.

She is Athena.

The Stories that Need to Be Told 74

The Deep Within

Wendilyn Emrys

A hidden place, Ancestral knowledge, A deep shaft, Hewn by Nature, Undulating rock, Water and stone mixed, Mountain metamorphosized.

Slippery steps, Kyklopean work, Leading down, Down, Into the darkness, Into the great unknown.

A faint flickering light given off, By the sacred oil of the olive, Lamp held in a wavering hand, Creating numinous patterns that astound.

> Do not slip! Do not fall! Concentrate! Do not fail!

A whisper of wings, Silent death, Deep wisdom, Glides down from above. Slithering sound, Scraping, Hissing, Rises up from below.

Hear the dripping Of the sweet waters, Lifegiving Liquid, From the Mother's core.

> Life, Death, Repeat, Replete.

Gentle, Inexorable, Within the Within, Imprisoned by Fear, Freed by Force, Wedded to Craft, Triumphant by Nature, Transforming and Transformed, Athena, Deathless Mistress, This is your Akropolian Source.



Wendilyn Emrys has been a mythophile since early childhood. In early adolescence she discovered Joseph Campbell's Masks of God and while doing her undergraduate work at UCLA she was blessed to be able to study under Marija Gimbutas, Kees Bolle, and Miriam Robbins Dexter. Wendilyn graduated from UCLA with a B.A. in History. After graduation, she was invited to continue her association with Marija Gimbutas' Graduate Seminar. Wendilyn is the first person to be credited as an Archaeomythologist on a feature film, Hideaway (1995). She was first accepted to the Mythological Studies program at Pacifica Graduate Institute in the mid-1990's but was unable to attend due to a series of inauspicious events. Wendilyn was again accepted into the Mythological Studies program when she reapplied in 2015, where she was awarded her M.A. in Mythological Studies by Pacifica in 2018. She is currently in the dissertation process.

Expression in a void, is just that, a void. Expression needs to be both given and received in some manner. Even if it is only given to the Universe as an offering. Yet, it is better to share it with others, if just for the connections that arise. At a minimum, it is an offering. At best is moves the audience in some manner that is, hopefully, positive in some way. — Wendilyn Emrys

Between 77



Randall Victoria Ulyate



Ahu Tongariki, Easter Island

The Stories that Need to Be Told 78

Midday at the Quarry

Randall Victoria Ulyate



Rano Raraku, Easter Island



Randall Victoria Ulyate



Ahu Tahai, Easter Island

This photo series was shot on Easter Island, or Rapa Nui. Rapa Nui is home to nearly 1,000 monolithic Moai sculptures. All of the Moai were carved in the quarry and then transported to their platforms, or ahu. Many Moai fell and broke during transportation, so there are hundreds of broken Moai fallen and abandoned between the quarry and the shore. If a Moai survived its journey to its destination, they would then be awaked by adding bright eyes made from white coral. There are 397 Moai just in the quarry, but likely more are still hidden underground. Almost all of the Moai were toppled over from their original locations, and the ones pictured at Ahu Tongariki and Ahu Tahai have been re-erected by archaeologists.



Randall Victoria Ulyate is a doctoral student in Mythological Studies at Pacifica Graduate Institute. With a background combining archaeology, anthropology, literature, and religious studies, she is passionate about looking at the common threads woven throughout the mythology of different cultures. This passion has inspired Randall to travel across all seven continents and share these experiences through her photography. Randall is committed to sharing the joy of ethically-responsible travel with others, and this desire led her to found the Fernweh Collective, a non-profit foundation dedicated to providing affordable cultural education, short-term international experiences, and scholarship opportunities.



Elizabeth Chamberlain

My mom had the moving van packed and we were loading the last several cardboard boxes into my black four-door sedan. It was hot for an early winter day and the air was sticky and uncomfortable. We were carrying the last load of boxes out my front door and down a narrow concrete stairway to the street where our cars were parked when my nextdoor neighbor stepped out of her house to ask, "Are you moving out?"

I looked at her and searched for any clues in her body language and eye-contact with me that she had heard anything from last night. It would have been surprising if she hadn't. I glanced away feeling embarrassed and ashamed. "No, just going north to visit with my mom for a little bit" I replied. A lie.

Moving boxes paraded past her. We stuffed the last box in my car, and I told my mom I would follow her out to the highway. She got into the van she rented for this trip, shut her door, and turned the engine. My 6'4" 220 lbs. boyfriend came up to me and asked when I was coming back home. "I'll see you in a couple weeks. I'll be back before you know it" I told him. He told me he was going to miss me, that he loved me, and that he didn't want me to go.

"I'll be back soon. I love you too. I'll talk to you later – I've got to go." I got in my packed vehicle, closed the door, and started the car. I put on my blinker to indicate to my mom that I was ready to go. As I waited for her to pull out onto the street, I glanced into my rear-view mirror and saw my boyfriend standing largely on the sidewalk, watching me drive away.

On my face in the mirror I saw the blue of a fresh bruise bleeding from my right eye down my cheek to the corner of my mouth. I lifted my head up and watched the bruising trail down and around my neck. I knew it would look so much worse tomorrow.

I don't remember much about our drive north, back to my mother's house. I don't remember if I cried a lot or not at all, or how I felt about leaving him. I do have one memory from that drive, though.

We were driving into the dusk and were about halfway home. The sun was low on the horizon and there was still a good chunk of blue sky left. Low dark grey clouds were gathering as we drove, slowly taking over the bright sunset and replacing it with a dull, dark grey evening. Driving into the cloudy darkness, there was suddenly a small break in the clouds and this sliver of brilliantly blue sky came shinning out of the darkness. It was so beautiful. I was captivated by it. I ached to be a part of it. I remember thinking, "if only I could get there and dissolve into that blue." I wanted so badly to be one with that moment, to be lost in that light, color, and space. Then the wind moved, my car sped on, and it was gone. The Stories that Need to Be Told 84

*H*ching for Blue

Elizabeth Chamberlain





I am in the third year of my master's program in counseling psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute and will be graduating in 2020. Outside of my studies, I work with children and their families across different settings and have been doing this work for over five years. I also volunteer with the organization Court Appointed Special Advocates and am a Certified Hypnotherapist in the Spiritual Counseling Practice of Depth Hypnosis. At the end of the day I go home to some goats, cows, and a beautiful garden where I daydream, write, and paint. And on a good day get visited by coyotes or a bobcat!

Art is important because it is one of the few forms of pure expression we have. There is no need to conform to consensual reality or interact with it in any way. In our imaginations and inner experiences there is no need for a persona. This is one reason why sharing art can be such a vulnerable experience: an artist's work is a raw chunk of their unfiltered inner life. With so many faces and filters interacting with each other all the time—the importance of these moments of pure expressions of self cannot be overstated. Art is an invitation to catch a glimpse of a person's true self and it is always an honor to be a participant in that exchange. – Elizabeth Chamberlain

 $\mathcal{O}\mathcal{D}_{ay\,26}$

Trigger Warnings: Addiction and Suicide attempt

Romona Thomas

PROLOGUE

It is Day 26, 9 p.m., February 2. Not yet a month. My conscious rationalizations obsess with the machines. What game would I be playing? Would it be spin poker or hundred play? Would I just put in a \$100 in and win big? Of course, I would. I was definitely due. Then reality. It is day 26. I hadn't gambled for almost 26 days. (*Woo hoo.*) My longest stretch was 45 days. I wonder if I can make it that long. Incoherent ramblings flit through my mind as I wriggle to find a comfortable position in bed. Finally, utter exhaustion waylays my body and I fall into a troubled sleep. . .

I.

I have not been in this casino before. Good. No one knows me or cares. I will play all night and not run into anybody that matters. My lapse, my indiscretion will remain hidden, a secret, as long as I do not tell a soul.

I find the hundred play machine, sit down and eagerly feed my hundred-dollar bill into the machine praying for a royal. Fifteen minutes later, down \$80 and sweating bullets—I could fudge my way through spending \$100, but more would be difficult to rationalize to Ernie or Katie or even me, I hit a royal. \$4000. (*Wow! I should stop.*) Pause. It wouldn't hurt to go home with more. They definitely owe me. Move machines. Put another bill in. Might as well up the ante. Why not play fully loaded at a quarter per hand? Down. Up. Down. Down. Last hand. Jackpot. Another royal. \$20,000. Fantastic! Definitely owed to me. (*Damn. I need to stop. Right now.*) Take the money and run. Especially since I have to pay taxes on it. But. . . I haven't played spin poker yet.

Mesmerized, watching those wheels spin, I put in one bill after another, guzzling wine like Kool-Aid. My brain and body, without sleep and nourishment, a zombie. I switch machines. More money. I went back to the hundred play machine. It's six AM and I am down to \$50. How did that happen? Surely, I put some in my pockets or something. I find myself searching for the money. I couldn't have gone through 25,000 just sitting here tonight. Of course, I didn't. It's here somewhere. Reality dawns slow, like a West Texas sunrise. This is my last fifty and I have to pay taxes on the money that I won—and *lost*.

I shuffle painfully out to the lone car and drive home. The air conditioner on high and the windows opened wide do not dispel the acrid smoke. That patina of toxic waste shellacs my tongue and mouth with its noxious fumes. I will call in sick and come up with a plan. I park the car sideways and roll myself out of it. I stumble up the stairs, still in a drunken stupor.

Stripping out of the smoke-laden clothes, I dump them into the washer, almost puking as the warm water touches the clothing. The swirling strands of those noxious fumes rise up through the air and form the words, "slut," and "sin," and "shame".

I stagger to the bathroom and start the shower. I slump under the cleansing stream scrubbing my skin until the water runs pink. As I step out of the bath, hopeless despair strangles me; my leaden heart races with panic-stricken leaps. I am beyond tainted. I have been tattooed with the Devil's ink. No longer is my will my own. I have paid the penultimate price and sold my soul to evil incarnate. I cannot fathom life as it is and will become.

This time, I start filling the bathtub. Find the razor, then the requisite bottle of wine and the pills, both sleeping and Vicodin. Briefly I am consumed with the possibility of not ending my life, as I haven't managed to get anything else right. What will happen if this goes awry? Will I be a vegetable and a burden? I reassure myself that with both sleeping pills and overdosing on Vicodin, I MUST die. Plus, the razor blade will allow me to cut one wrist straight down, not across as portrayed incorrectly in the movies. I guess that they don't want you to get any bright ideas. The warm water will dull the pain along with the sleeping pills and Vicodin. Now to time it so that it is an act of completion, not contrition. But. . .



Tattooed with the Devil's Ink by Amanda Barton

II.

Slowly, with excruciating agony, my eyes force themselves open, just a tiny slit. With solemn faces, surrounding the bed are my best friend, Ernie, my friend, Katie, and my son Austin. My peripheral vision identifies Eve, my art therapist. (*Damn.*) The best laid plans of mice and men. I'm even a failure at suicide.

Awareness limps in, one shuffling step at a time, through the dense fog of hopeless anguish. Simultaneously, stark reality kicks the cane away and I land hard. As usual, a royal screw- up. Death forsook me. Hooked up to machines, monitors everywhere, but the inescapable truth remains—I am alive.

My son, Austin, leans over me, hugging me tighter than ever before; his dam of tears spilling over. "Mom, I love you. You didn't have to do this. You are loved." As Austin chokes out those words, he throws out his arm to encompass everyone in the room.

Sobbing and moaning, I bury my head in the sodden pillow. How can one feel so ashamed of Death's rejection and Life's embrace? I was reluctant to face my living, breathing child. One of the few people that actually understood me. Lifting my head an inch, I observe the others that gathered around the bed-- Katie, Ernie, and Eve. Their solemn silence stopping me dead in the water. Eve, mustering her courage to state with matter-of-fact quietness, "With an attempted suicide, they have to admit you to the psych ward for observation and protection from yourself."

I groan, squeezing shut my eyes. And. . .

III.

The world shifts and tilts. A tunnel of incredulous anomalies drags and tows me through a swirling eddy of emotional uncertainties and space ripe with the possibilities of the unknown. Disoriented and disconnected, I crash-land into an abyss of Stygian darkness.

Immediately, the intense, hellish heat envelopes me with the promised eternal damnation of my soul. Out of the ebony, black hole of nothingness bellows a maniacal voice laced with sarcasm. "Welcome to Hell." the spokesman of blasphemy invites with insouciant insincerity.

My eyes unfurl; a force-field of intense emotional pain freezing them open. The demonic figure of flickering, erratic flame pitches back his horned head, and roars with unholy laughter.

Shivering with subzero cold, standing and swaying unsteadily on the permafrost tundra in the ninth circle of Hell, my eyes lock dead-on to Satan's enslaving scrutiny.

"I don't believe in Hell or the Devil!" I state emphatically. Our gazes clash, two light sabers of intense electricity. I reiterate my mantra, time and time again. Like Salvador's clock, his otherworldly being melts, then vaporizes, color and form consumed by an amorphous entity darker than shrouds of eternity. Then...

IV.

The world tilts and shifts again, a kaleidoscope of darkness and light. Careening inside another swirling tunnel of nothingness with hopeless despair crushing my soul, I black out.

As though recovering from a bad LSD trip, I regain consciousness, paranoid and seeking more adversity. Instead, I encounter a verdant carpet of grass, soft and pillowy. Stretching, I sit up with reluctance. As I gaze upon the meadow, redolent with the sweet, healing fragrance of wildflowers, lavender, and roses, I witness a figure of shimmering construct. My mortal eyes cannot focus directly on the radiating white of her angelic form without risking blindness. A woman draped in ethereal light; a vision of undefinable beauty consumes my peripheral vision.

"My child," a melody from heaven or Haunt dances inside my head. A symphony unheard by man. "You have defied the natural order of the Universe. Go, and be free. But harness your freedom wisely. For many will beg, but few are bestowed a second chance." Her voice, a harmony of Nature cascading through the brook and dancing upon the lush meadow, promises to liberate me with its innate purity.

I chance a glance at the elusive figure. A trail of pulsating light floating away over the meadow was all that I could attest to. With her departure, I collapse onto the grass. My inexplicable exploits of the past twenty-four hours have left me exhausted. I curl up on the sweet carpet of wildflowers and sleep the deep sleep of the innocent. . .

V.

I am sitting at the hundred play machine, with a hundred-dollar bill in my hand. I check my phone for the date and time. It was once again 9 pm. on Feb. 2. Like Scrooge, I had been given another chance. I slide the bill in my wallet, find the nearest exit and leave on winged feet. Unlike Lot's wife, I won't look back.

EPILOGUE

With remnants of the dream crowding over into my waking world, I reached for my journal and pen on the bedside table and write: "I have not been in this casino before. Good. No one will know me or care. I can play all night and not run into anybody that matters. My lapse, my indiscretion will remain hidden, a secret, as long as I do not tell a soul."



I have worked for 33 years within the public education systems in Nevada, Texas, Arizona, and California. I have worked with children from infants to age 21 in special education, general education and as a school counselor. Most recently, I have facilitated drug counseling groups within the male prison system in California. Three generations of writers compose my family tree: my mother, my son, and myself.

Creativity and art are necessary to express humankind's being, soul. The gestalt of humans is beyond scientific data, beyond the quantifiable. In fact, many times, mere words struggle to elucidate the nuances of the creative spirit. In my writing, the muse not only emerges but overtakes and my body is the vessel, through which the Muse speaks. May the Muses continue to manifest themselves within our creative endeavors. –Romona Thomas

pirit of the Ocean

Melanie Horton

"...And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time"-T. S. Elliot

The worst part was the asking. When prying people remembered and ask me how the pregnancy was going. "It's not," I'd say. They'd laugh awkwardly, assuming I was kidding. Once they'd register the deathly still look on my face, they'd realize. "Oh, Penelope," they'd say, "I'm so sorry. How are you and Michael taking this?" "We're not."

I didn't even want to be pregnant. I know I'm not supposed to say that, but I didn't. The constant nausea, swollen and itchy armpits, everyday smells becoming unbearable. Then, the responsibility of it all. There was a person in there, in me, who was going to need me more than anyone else ever had. Could I handle that? Would I still have the time to work?

I found out I was pregnant in the middle of my research assistantship. I was just beginning to make a name for myself, when one blue plus sign threw all my plans in the air. I remember sobbing, pants down on the toilet seat. I had no clue how I'd figure this one out and the thought of having to pull all the details together to bring a baby into this world felt like an impossible task that I didn't ask for. Michael had just come home from shopping for his tuxedo for our wedding. Before he could even put his things down, I told him I was pregnant. He dropped everything he had in his hands by the door and rushed over to me. My heart sank, assuming he was upset and finding it easier to bow my head and rest my gaze on my hands in my lap rather than see his face wishing away the life I had within. I prepared to talk to him about abortion options, when I suddenly felt his arms around me. "Baby, we're going to be parents!" he screamed with childish glee as he grooved around the living room in father-to-be reverie.

Each day, he'd talk to my belly, even before the baby developed ears to hear his father's voice. Eventually, I joined these conversations with my little one within. I was surprised to find I suddenly enjoyed his constant pressure as presence inside of me. No matter where I went, I was never alone because I was standing for the two of us. Even though it took me a bit, after a while I couldn't wait to hold him.

Who would've known that a few months later, I'd be living in the house Michael and I used to share alone. We had renovated the house to accommodate three people, but now I'm the only person who fills these halls.

When Michael found out I miscarried, I watched hope leave him like a balloon losing air. His sorrow was a pool he got lost in, not realizing he wasn't the only one drowning. He came to see the sight of me as a painful reminder of the family we could've had, so in time he couldn't stand to see me anymore.

One morning, I woke up alone. His things were gone. He didn't even bother to leave a note. I tried to

cry, but the tears wouldn't come. I took off my engagement ring and put it back in the case and into a box under the bed. This box of could-have-beens, now full to the brim, featuring a well-read copy of *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, an ultrasound photo of Kyle, a blanket I had quilted for him, a journal I had been writing to him, a maternity back brace, and a calendar marked with X's to count down the days, but was filled with empty spaces before the circled due date.

Miscarrying my son deadened my senses. Every time a strong feeling threatened the dullness that I tried to pretend was steadiness, I pushed it down so far, never to be recovered again. I threw myself even deeper into my work, hoping that focusing on means and standard deviations would help keep this deep reservoir of grief contained, but today as I sat at my desk, I couldn't hold it back anymore.

I felt the tears beginning to rise. If I began to cry, I was afraid I wouldn't be able to stop. So, I quickly packed my bag and made a beeline for the door. "Penelope, where are you going?" my coworker said, but her voice registered as a faint echo in the background of the emotional storm I had found myself in.

I held my breath as I drove. One breath too deep and the dam I've spent so long building could burst open. I couldn't even decide where I was trying to drive to. I didn't want to go home. I was tired of staring at those walls. I decided to return to the place where the nightmare began, where I haven't been since that day.

As I sat on the beach in my black and white office clothes, the crashing of waves that used to evoke a deep sense of calm now uprooted the little bit of sanity I had left. I was shaking from the strength of the sobbing that had built up within. Looking at the rocks that line the shore, I saw shadows of my childhood self running and playing, screaming with pleasure. But as my eyes moved towards the sea, my vision is overwhelmed by pools of blood.

I came here all that time ago to introduce my unborn baby to the calming ocean, to show him the family legacy of joy by the sea. Instead, it's now a place of deep-seated loss. The ocean was now a cruel reminder of all I had lost. I was building a family, had a beautiful baby boy on the way and a loving fiancé, and lost it all in a day. I covered my eyes as I sobbed, not able to take in any more visual reminders of my loss, but not strong enough to stand up and walk away either.

Who would've thought that I'd miss the vomiting. The feeling of being full, full of life and full of promise. Swelling with the pride of what was to come after finally catching onto the excitement of bringing a soul into this world to begin his own journey. After the bleeding, the pregnancy symptoms continued for a month. I had gone from not wanting the pregnancy to loving the baby to losing the baby. The fatigue, swollen breasts, nausea, and sensitive sense of smell continued as a cruel reminder of all that I had lost. These symptoms lost the promise of life and served to remind me of just how empty my womb was, how empty my life was.

Then, I heard a baby's cry that sent chills down my spine. This cry felt inexplicably familiar. Out of the waves, a baby's spirit began to rise. My baby's spirit. I covered my mouth in awe, the shock of it all drawing me backward. "Mother," the baby began. I was engulfed by another wave of tears. "I know you think that I am lost, but I am not. I am always beside you. It's through no fault of your own that I wasn't born into the physical realm. I'm not ready to join you there yet and knew that I needed to return to the sea for now. I want you to know that the love that we have for each other is eternal, and that when I'm ready to come into the physical world once more, I'll return to you. Ride the wave of your sorrow and you'll find an even deeper sense of connection on the other side of it. I love you forever and always." Then, the baby's spirit faded away in light.

I rushed towards the ocean, propelled by pure emotion. When I reached the ocean, I screamed "Kyle!" as I tried to part the waves and find him again. To hold him, to thank him, to scream at him for just visiting me now, but not staying with me, to tell him how much I loved him, still love him.

My wet business clothes clung to me as I resurfaced from the ocean, baptized with a new sense of awareness of what I needed to do. So much feeling was coursing through my veins that I felt like I was pulsing with it. I rushed into my car and drove straight home. Once there, I dove into the box of buried feelings and uncovered them all. Laying them all in a circle in the living room. I went to my closet and pulled out the storage bin of maternity clothes I had hidden away and added those to my circle. I laid in the fetal position in the middle of my circle of grief and redemption, clinging to the blanket I had quilted for him. I cried for all the promises I had lost, while also feeling a deep sense of hope and trust in the promise of Kyle's return.



Melanie Horton is a LEDA Scholar and Ron Brown Scholar that recently graduated magna cum laude from Tufts University with a B.A. in Psychology. While originally from Upper Darby, PA, she now lives in California as a freshman in Pacifica Graduate Institute's M.A. in Counseling Program. She aspires to become a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. In addition to her Psychology background, she is a professional intuitive that offers akashic record, tarot, and astrology readings to clients. Her goal is to establish a private practice that offers both psychotherapy and intuitive readings to support individuals, couples, and families in achieving and maintaining psychospiritual health and wellbeing.

Mother's Grief

Holly Tamsen-Trent

It's well past midnight and the woman sits, alone and exhausted, in a darkened hospital waiting room. Her vacant, red rimmed eyes and disheveled clothes betray her anguish, despite a fervent desire for privacy. The hallways overflow with people desperately searching for loved ones. As the buzz of cell phones swirl around her, she sits motionless, her hands gripping each other in her lap. If she lets go, she will crumble to dust where she sits. She has no need of cell phone nor searching, she knows where her son is. He is gone.

Her mind calls up the day of his birth, in the same hospital. The paint colors have changed and the furniture was worn and chipped then. Her joy at holding him for the first time holds her now in its bittersweet embrace. She reflects on his first steps in the cropped grass of their tiny ranch style house. The bright Christmas morning she and her husband gave him a bike, even though they really couldn't afford it, seems like yesterday. She purses her lips unconsciously and she sees herself kissing the knees skinned during his wobbly first attempts to ride that bike. The smell of sweet, little-boy sweat mingled with baking assaults her. She hears his footsteps racing into the kitchen; the door slamming behind him as he brushes past her reaching for a fresh cookie.

She recalls his look of dismay and embarrassment the day he failed his driver's license

exam, and the flushed grin of triumph a week later when he succeeded.

Each memory feels like a fist. She winces as the blows hammer her. She can hardly bear it, yet the assault continues.

His first girlfriend; a lively, pretty blonde from church; she hears their whispers and laughter as they poignantly tend the fresh bloom of first love. They beam at her, shyly possessive of one another, as they hold hands and pose for the parents snapping Prom photos.

His youthful, manly face shone with pride the day he became a Marine and she inhales sharply, remembering the mixture of her fear and pride in his accomplishment. She closes her eyes and terror strikes her again. She relives holding the phone to her ear, his voice tinny and far away, as he broke the news that he was being deployed to a war zone in a faraway dry country. She held her breath every time the phone rang in those days.

Then he returned.

He didn't talk much about those years in the desert, halfway around the world, but he came home changed; more volatile. The quick, self-confident smile was gone, his easy laughter buried somewhere in a pile of sand on the other side of the globe. His pride in being a Marine was tainted with bitterness, accompanied by a temper she couldn't predict. He raged mostly against himself, and she determined to love him through it.

Until now, she had always retained a modicum of hope. Now, all hope is lost; and so is she.

She relives the last movie they watched together. A summer blockbuster, watched on the big

screen TV at home because the sound system in the local theater overwhelmed him. They shared a bowl of popcorn, lightly buttered, as the dog snored softly on the sofa beside him. His face in the flickering light took on the softened look she remembers from better times. She treasures that memory now, even as it slices her heart open.

A pair of black shoes appears on the floor in front of her; "M'am?" She looks no further than the buttons on the officer's chest; she is dying a thousand deaths inside as she raises her head. "M'am?" he repeats, "Do you have any information that would help us determine how your son obtained the gun?"

hat If...

Holly Tamsen-Trent

This "What if..." the quintessential gift of possibilities, unexplored; a grand, exhilarating unknown. I think I shall carry a "What if" around in my pocket to remind me of my limitless potential when I am feeling small and finite. "What if..." is impartial, it does not judge, neither does it promise; but It holds hope by the handful; contained in an ellipse. What if... the dreams I dream are real; and waking life is but a dream? And the Escher staircase, which goes neither up, nor down; eternally shaping another today, indistinguishable from all the yesterdays before this moment; Only requires stepping off into a new beginning, in order to refute the sameness

of the perpetual Up/Down stair?

What if...

a new sight imagined eyes that perceive subtle changes in each lap 'round the stair; engaging the uneasy, peeling paint to replace it with shimmering dimples of sunlight?

What if... I skip over a step, presuming to peek up meeting the glance of a stranger treading the same staircase as I and we both envision yellow and blue stairs instead of this dull, oppressing, windowless grey?

What if...

I were to fetch paints and conjure a window. Not just for me, but for all who tread those endless grey stairs?

Would they even notice?What if... There is already a window and it is I who has failed to notice someone else's precious gift?



Holly Tamsen-Trent is graduate student in the Engaged Humanities and the Creative Life MA program at Pacifica Graduate Institute. Through visual art and writing Holly applies her knowledge of creative practice to facilitate growth on a personal, communal, and global scale. She is currently working on a novel in the genre of magical realism and developing workshops to encourage and support individuals in expanding their personal creative potential. A native Californian, she resides with her family in Thousand Oaks, CA.

he Origin of Ophelia

Deborah Maroulis

The car is barely stopped before I'm out of my seatbelt and fumbling with the door. I'm so excited, I forget about the child lock my dad has on, and I do my best to sit patiently while he comes around to let me out safely onto the curb. I'm wearing the outfit he let me pick out on our annual birthday shopping trip: Faded jeans with purple butterfly patches on the thighs, a striped shirt with a matching sweater over it. My shoes, so new they don't have any creases and plenty of room for my toes, are brown leather with a side buckle—good for dress up or every day. Don't tell my dad, but I really wanted the shiny red pair with the tiny heel, but I've learned not to ask for extravagant things like that. His face smears into a grimace and he stutters on his answer every time I do. It's easier to pretend to want the ones he likes me to want.

He makes me hold his hand all the way to the door. Pink and Silver balloons line the walkway to the house and a glittery sign that reads "Happy Birthday Princess" hangs over the door. I want to point out the sign, but Dad's grimace is already spreading across his face, and a light sheen of sweat covers his newly-shaved upper lip. I knock instead.

Traci opens the door wearing a pink and silver tutu that cascades all the way to the floor and a birthday princess crown over her intricately woven blonde hair. She's all smiles and cherry lip gloss as she hugs me. I give her the gift we brought, a new set of pencils and a pretty notepad. I picked it myself. She throws it on the large pile of gifts spilling off the couch and ushers me to the back of the house to a large room filled with toys and mirrors—where the rest of the party is happening.

The entire room is draped in tiny pink Christmas lights and see-through white material covers the mirrors, giving a soft glow to the entire room. My friends gather in clumps under the lights, all wearing similar foofy dresses and slightly smaller crowns than Traci's birthday one. I look at my butterfly pants and brown shoes, suddenly ashamed at what I'd picked. I glance over my shoulder at my dad who's standing back by the door. The cool sheen on his upper lip's spread to his forehead, which he wipes occasionally with his pocket handkerchief and glances at his watch. All the moms are huddled around the cake taking pictures with their phones and sipping from cups that read Shirley Temple Black in shiny black letters.

Traci jumps up and down in front of me holding a crown.

"Is that for me?" I ask. She nods and stops moving long enough to set it on my head, but it slips on my fine hair hanging straight around my face.

"Here, Honey, let me help you with that." Traci's mom speeds toward us from across the room, her hands already reaching for my hair. She stands behind me and runs her fingers like a comb through my hair. Her nails lightly graze my scalp sending a trickle of electricity down my neck and through my spine. I can't help but close my eyes and melt into the feeling. When Dad bunches my hair into a ponytail, he's all clenching fists and finger pads plodding on the bumps. But hers are more like butterfly kisses and little I love yous wrapped in a caress.

Her fingers weave my hair into a long braid in less than a minute and she secures it painlessly with a soft hair tie. As she places the crown on my head, she leans down and whispers "there you go" into my ear. Her feathery voice and vanilla perfume shatters my heart into a million tiny shards of glass. For the first time in my known life, I miss my mom.

Looking at Dad watch Traci's mom braid my hair, I know he does, too. His face is pale and changes from a grimace to plain tired. With a small wave, he practically sprints out the front door. When he doesn't come back to pick me up after all the presents are opened and the cake is eaten, Traci's mom piles us into her minivan, puts on a princess movie and drives me home. Loren, my older brother by five years, lets me in and tells Traci's mom Dad must've fallen asleep and will call to thank her in the morning. He thanks her in Dad's place and brings me inside, crown and all.

Later on, my shiny crown carefully packed away but braids still intact, I crawl into Loren's bed as he's killing vampires or something in his video game.

"What was Mom like?" I tuck my toes under his leg but he scoots over, sliding one side of his headphones behind his ear, crushing his brown curls.

> "Stop. You're gonna make me mess up." "Tell me."

"I don't know. She was soft. And she smelled like a cornflower looks. I don't remember
much." His eyes never leave the small screen balancing on the plastic crates and plywood masquerading as a desk. Closing my own eyes, I think of cornflowers, soft and blue like a deep summer sky. The same feeling I had when Traci's mom combed through my hair.

"Why did she leave?" I scoot close to him, but he doesn't move away this time, although he raises his elbow over my head to keep pushing the buttons on his controller.

"She didn't leave, Dummy. She died. That's different."

"I know she died, Dummy." I fling the insult back at him. "I just want to know why."

He shrugs. "Kinda your fault," He looks sideways at me. "I mean, it happened when you were born." He keeps pressing buttons on his console, his mouth crooked now with concentration.

Without another word, I slide off his bed and stand at its side, unsure where to go next. He inches back to his original spot and leans toward the screen, forgetting I was ever there. Closing his door behind me, I walk the hall, stopping in front of my dad's room. His body is sprayed over the bed like vomit, mouth open and clothes a wrinkled mess. I've watched Loren and Dad fight over homework while forgetting I needed help with mine. Or the last piece of pie, not asking if I wanted it. But in all the times they've forgotten about me, I've never been more invisible than this moment.

I close the bathroom door behind me and stare at the beautiful braids cascading from the top of my head all the way down my back. My hands memorize the smooth bumps as they run over them. Then I'm yanking out the shiny pink hair ties and ripping my fingers through the braids, tearing at every tangle they find.

When I'm done, my hair flies in ragged waves over my face and back, wild with freedom. I stare into the mirror and, for the first time, a motherless girl stares back.



Born and raised in a

small town in Northern California, Deborah Maroulis is lucky enough to surround herself with the things and people she loves. She teaches English and mythology at her local community college, studies myth and depth psychology in her Ph.D. program, and writes contemporary Young Adult novels. She lives in a slightly bigger town than the one she grew up in with her husband, newly-adult children, and her daughter's very spoiled, semi-retired service dog.



Marissa Aro

The hospital room is uncomfortably cold but Carolyn's attention is solely focused on monitor attached to her baby girl. Hearing her own heartbeat come beeping from a monitor feels like such an ordinary thing. Hearing her child's, Carolyn realized, is an extraordinary thing.

"Is there anyone you want to call to wait with you?" the nurse asks distantly. She is gentle in helping the doctor with the baby, but less so with her.

"There's no one to call," Carolyn answers, trancelike, as she watches the doctor carry her newborn baby to a scale.

"Six pounds, two ounces." The doctor wraps the child, Cassandra, in a blanket before resting her in the square shaped bin atop the gurney marked for the smallest of infants. The nurse jots down the numbers on her paperwork, continuing to look at Carolyn while she does so. Either waiting for her to faint or scream as the doctor carts her baby down the hall, she isn't sure. Carolyn does neither.

"We'll do everything we can." The nurse rests a hand on Carolyn's shoulder for a moment then follows the doctor down the hall and through the swinging double doors, leaving her alone. That doesn't bother her. Carolyn is accustomed to doing things on her own. Going through a pregnancy by oneself does that. Eight months of morning sickness, going to her own OB GYN appointments, dealing with the constant food cravings. Alone. Most people have someone to share it all with. Someone to hold their hand through the pains of delivery and someone to hug when the doctors cart away their baby. *Jaundice*, he had said. *Should clear up on its own*. That was three weeks ago. Then the doctor began throwing around phrases like *retinal dystrophies* and *potential blindness*. Now her baby is in surgery and Carolyn can do nothing but sit in the hallway and wait. Alone.

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The seven years following the surgery of Carolyn's baby girl are long but for the father, they pass in an unknowledgeable blur. For him life is a predetermined schedule; Work, eat, sleep. Repeat.

Patrick has never believed in having a sixth sense - it's just superstitious nonsense, really. For some reason though, as the cool air nips at his neck an uncomfortable feeling begins to seep into his very bones and he decides to take the long way home from the studio. Spring cannot come fast enough for this Chicagoan native, but when a chill runs down his spine, he realizes it's not from the cold weather. Something is terribly wrong. Yet, he doesn't know what. It buzzes in the back of his mind as he mechanically crosses streets and turns corners. He is so deep in thought as he walks across the threshold of his front door that when the phone rang, he jumps and drops his messenger bag. Patrick crosses his small two-bedroom apartment in five short strides, snatching the phone from the receiver.

"Hello?" he answers anxiously.

"Learn to answer your cell, ya moron." Slumping against the kitchen counter, Patrick pinches the bridge of his nose. He usually finds the familiar Philadelphian fury endearing, but at the moment it's just irritating.

"Daniel, what could you possibly need at eleven at night?" The time difference is only an hour ahead, but that's still way past the old coot's bedtime.

"I'm calling to congratulate you, ya dumbass." he chuckles "You can leave that ridiculous children's channel."

"What?" Patrick asks, standing fully at attention.

"Pay attention. You got the part!" Daniel yells louder.

"How do you know?"

"I called around. You're not supposed to know till tomorrow, of course, but I just had to tell ya," Daniel chuckles.

"You never cease to amaze me," Patrick sighs, then let's his curiosity get the better of him. "What else do you know?" he asks and the old friends talk for over an hour about when the talent agent is planning on coming in tomorrow and how he should greet this new employer. Then they discuss the exact sarcastic phrasing of what Patrick should say to his future ex-boss in the morning. He hangs up the phone with a laugh and heads to bed in a great mood, his previous worries all but forgotten.

Patrick is out of bed two minutes before his alarm clock blares but still manages to be ten minutes late leaving his apartment. He can see his breath in the air as he hurries down the sidewalk. The sun is barely visible through the city's skyscrapers but the streets are already overflowing with people who are trying to get to work on time. Patrick passes men in suits and women in pencil skirts scurrying into corporate offices as he turns the last block and enters an older cement building with silver block letters reading: Golden Future Productions. He glances at his watch and curses as the glass doors automatically open. Someone clears their throat and he looks up to see a stout old woman frowning at him rather severely. Behind her his boss, Frank, looks like he might vomit.

"You must be Mr. Craigson," she sighs, looking him up and down, clearly dissatisfied. Patrick swallows hard, horrified by his first impression to his future boss.

"Yes. Patrick Craigson." He smiles and sticks out his hand. "Pleasure to meet you," he says, trying to compensate for his previous lapse in manners. She takes it, firmly returning the handshake.

"I am Margaret Keller." She takes a deep breath and her posture changes from strict business woman into something gentler. Feeling like he has passed some kind of test Patrick relaxes too, ready to hear what he already knows. Margaret gestures to the chairs at the back wall of the lobby. "Maybe we should sit," she says and as he follows her through the lobby, he notices his coworkers. Some look at him with sad expressions while others just stare, but some refuse to make eye contact all together. Patrick sits next to the women and finds himself holding his breath. "Is something wrong?" he asks hesitantly, all excitement extinguished. She pulls a small leather wallet from the pocket of her gray suit jacket and opens it. Inside there is an emblem and the letters CPS.

"I'm from The Department of Child Protection Services. I am here to bring you to your daughter." she informs him slowly, letting Patrick absorb each word as she tucks her ID away. He looks at her then around the room in disbelief before a low laugh starts in his throat.

"I don't have a child," he says finally, shaking his head with certainty. Margaret pulls out and unfolds three photos from another pocket, placing them in his hands. The shaky smile vanishes from his face as he looks at the first photo; him and a thin ginger woman with green eyes holding each other. She still has the most vibrant smile that he's ever seen.

"Carolyn Hathaway was a girlfriend of yours?" Margaret asks softly.

"Fiancé, actually. A long time ago," he nods. "Where is she?" He looks at her with false hope. "Is she alright?"

"She died two days ago in a hit-and-run accident outside Three Points," she answers and shifts the photos around in his hand for him, revealing the second picture; Carolyn holds the camera above her head, photographing herself and a newborn sleeping in her arms. This picture is blurry and more wrinkled than the others. He flips it over to see *February 2006* written on the back. "This is Cassandra, your daughter," Margaret says.

"She was pregnant? When I left..." he whispers, trying to process the information. "I didn't know," he says louder, looking at her and becoming suddenly frantic. "If I had known-"

"It doesn't matter now," she says slowly, stopping his downward spiral as she flips to the last photo; a toddler with frizzy red hair and freckles, smiling so hard at the camera her eyes are squeezed shut. Her smile is wide and full of bread and she holds what remains of her sandwich with two hands. "What matters is this little girl."

Time slows down as Patrick is lead out of the building without a word to his boss or anyone else. Margaret hails a cab and has to guide him into it. His body feels heavy and he has to focus on his breathing as she gives the driver the address. His mind tries to comprehend the thought. Not only is Carolyn is dead. As if that wasn't overwhelming information alone. He has a daughter. Their daughter. His daughter. Patrick's ears begin to ring and he feels himself unravelling inside.

"Now Mr. Craigson, Carolyn left you with full custody and according to our records there is no other next of kin. There are options for Cassandra, however, if you choose to give her up. The State of Illinois' Foster System is one of the best in the country-" Margaret explains going on for several minutes and Patrick latches on to every word. By the time they pull up to the brick one-story building with *Chicago House for Girls*, written above it he has made the decision to give up the child he has never met. He knows that he cannot take care of a kid. He exhales as he gets out of the taxi, sure of himself. Accepting the fact she is probably better off without him in her life. He inhales the fresh air. "Right this way Mr. Craigson." Margaret leads the way through the doors. He looks around the old but well-kept building reassuring himself as he takes in the environment. At the front desk he signs a viewing affidavit and shows his driver's license to the clerk. Patrick hears the echoes of laughter and little shoes on the wood floors as he follows the CPS agent through a long hallway, passing door after door. Girls walk to and fro, of various ages and ethnicities, giving him even more confidence about his decision. When Margaret finally reaches for a doorknob a glossy label catches his eye - Special Care, is painted in white letters on the wooden door.

"Special Care?" he asks.

"Yes, Mr. Craigson. Cassandra is blind," she answers with a sympathetic smile.

"Blind?" he snaps. Patrick feels his heart slam into his stomach.

"She was a sickly baby, but Cassandra is at full strength now and healthy otherwise. She sure gives her handler a run for her money," Margaret laughs as she finds the key and promptly opens the door, but as it swings open, he can't make himself walk in. "Don't worry, she can't see you yet. This is the viewing room," she says matter-of-factly. The room is small and has a table and four chairs stored in the back. It is uncomfortably silent inside compared to the hallway. Half the room is dark but the other half is lit softly by the lights in the room next door. "One-way glass." she says as she presses a finger to it. The glass acts as a window, framing the scene in the other room. Patrick can't hear anything but can see clearly inside. Toys are neatly placed in purposely specific places. A young

African American woman passes by and squats down next to a small table with a paper in hand. She waits patiently and speaks to someone out of Patrick's sight. Then he sees her. Walking slowly with a small white and red stick bobbing in front of her is the most beautiful child Patrick has ever seen. Her little dress is blue and simple with no shapes or design. Her eyes are brown and unfocused on the path ahead of her but her red frizzy curls bounce with every step. As she finds her way to the desk, all on her own, Margaret pushes a button on the far wall beside him. The voices from the other side come through the intercom with a buzz.

"Now, what does this one say?" the young women guides the little girl's hand over what looks like a blank page. *Braille*, he realizes.

"T-H-E, the. W-H-I-T-E, white. R-A-B-B-I-T, rabbit," the answering voice chimes. Patrick leans against the clear barrier and his breath fogs up the glass as he watches in awe. Hours ago he didn't know he had a daughter. Minutes ago, he was ready to give her up entirely. Now he can't imagine leaving her side. Emotions he didn't know he could feel burn in his chest, but somehow his mind is crystal clear as the thought of that seven-year-old girl being his concretes.

"She is a smart one, isn't she, Mr. Craigson," Margaret smiles proudly at his daughter.

"Yes, she is," he answers as a knock comes from the door. A wry old man pokes his head in.

"If you would like to go over Ms. Carolyn Hathaway's will, Mr. Craigson, it would be much appreciated. There's a bit for you in it specifically." The man waves a folder at him. Patrick peals away from the glass to shake the lawyer's hand.

"Of course," he swallows hard. The three sit down at the small round table in the back of the room and the gentleman goes over the paperwork; the house in Three Points, what little of her assets that even exist and what kind of service Carolyn wanted. Patrick finds himself looking up to check on Cassandra every few minutes. She continues reading with her handler, presumably happy.

"And this is the last document," the old man sighs as he hands him what feels like the thousandth sheet of paper. Patrick freezes in place as he reads the typed letter is addressed to him:

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To: Patrick Craigson
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June 2006

I never really thought about writing a will. It always seemed like a tedious assignment. But as I hold Cassie in my arms, I realize that it is necessary.

You left to follow your dreams and I stayed because I was afraid of mine. Regardless, I never stopped loving you. That is why I didn't call you the second I found out I was pregnant. I knew if I had, you would have come back and one day grown to resent me. I want you to have the chance at the life we always talked about when we were teenagers. That being said, I promised Cassie that she would never be alone. If I have my way, this will be an easy task, but if this letter has made its way to you, I have broken my promise and I need you to mend it. I leave Cassie, our daughter, in your hands to love her and protect her for the both of us. From: Carolyn Hathaway

Patrick realizes as he places the paper back in the folder that if he had any doubts before reading the letter, they were now distant memories.

"I would like to meet her now." He stands with shaky knees but looks at the lawyer and Margaret with confidence.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" Margaret asks, still firmly planted in her chair. "There really is no turning back after this." Her arms are crossed but her eyes are gentle.

Patrick steps back to the glass, watching Cassandra read to her handler. "There's no shame in admitting you can't handle a child in your life," she adds.

"I am sure that she needs me." He answers and the lawyer stands to place a hand on his shoulder.

"Does she need you or do you need her?" he asks, already knowing the answer. The smallest of smiles crosses Patrick's face as he turns to look at the old man.

"You speak from experience?" Patrick asks.

"I do. I know what a man looks like when he sees his daughter for the first time." the lawyer nods. "And I know when a man feels happiness and fear in equal part. That is rightly called parenthood," he chuckles as he turns and lifts his chin towards Margaret. She rises to her feet.

"Life doesn't give a lot of second chances." The old man smiles at him. "Does she need you or do you need her?" He asks him.

Patrick manages a nod for an answer.

"In we go then." She leads the trio into the room next door. Patrick follows and though his heart feels as though it might beat out of his chest at any moment, he doesn't hesitate at the threshold but walks in with all the confidence he can muster.

The handler looks up at their entry and Cassandra tilts her head in their direction. "I have brought someone to meet you Cassandra," Margaret says softly.

Cassandra sits back in her chair, takes a deep breath and smiles."Mr. Albert!" she announces, proud of herself.

"Hello there little one. How'd you guess?" The old man chuckles.

"Your pipe. I can smell it," she confesses as he pats her on the head.

"You are sharp as a tack! But I'm not your special guest." He steps back and lifts his eyebrow at the still silent Patrick. Cassandra's brow wrinkles in confusion and the moment of awkward silence lasts a second more before the shell-shocked man remembers how to make his body work.

"Hello Cassandra," Patrick smiles. "I'm Patrick...your father," he adds, almost choking on the word. He doesn't know what to expect from the sevenyear-old. Unease in meeting her new caretaker, anger that she had another parent, or resentment for not being here sooner. He never predicted nor expected that she would smile from ear to ear. Cassandra moves to face where his voice is coming from and reaches out her hands.

"Hello Patrick," she grins. Patrick squats down next to her and takes her hands in his. Her little fingers rub up his arms, over his shoulders and finds his face. He stays motionless as she inspects his features. "You have a beard!" she squeals with a giggle and Patrick finds himself breathing easier at her approval.

"Cassandra I-" he starts.

"Mommy calls me Cassie. She only says Cassandra when I break her china," she corrects him with another giggle. The sound is suddenly his favorite in the world.

"Cassie," he starts again as he tucks a stray ginger curl behind her ear. "Would you like to come home with me?" he asks softly. Cassie frowns in deep thought and turns in the general direction she remembered hearing the door open.

"Ms. Margaret, can I go home with Patrick?" she asks. Margaret holds back a laugh.

"Of course, dear," she says maternally. "We'll just pack your bag for you and you'll free to go," she adds and signals the handler to do so.

"Ms. Margaret says I can go, Patrick," she reports innocently, her hands still resting on his cheeks. He stands and lifts her with ease into his arms, her walking cane dangles from a strap on her wrist. "You smell like an old taxi," she complains wrinkling her nose, but continuing to rub it in the crook of his neck.

"You will too by the time we get home," Patrick laughs as he leads the way out of the room.

The small procession makes their way to the front desk. The handler meets them there with Cassie's single suitcase and wishes the child all the best before going back to her other duties. Patrick signs various sheets of paper, each looking more complicated than the last, in order to take his daughter home. The lawyer and Margaret sign the same paperwork as witnesses and just as the last sheets are copied, stapled and filed, a taxi pulls up outside. The rest of the good wishes and farewells are spoken from the windows of the car, then finally they head down the road.

Cassie requests the windows be opened and the air filters through the car as she rests her head on Patrick's arm. A million thoughts go through his mind as he watches her drift off to sleep but the one at the forefront is his utter amazement. How is she so comfortable with me? he ponders. We've only just meet but she sleeps beside me with complete trust. Memories flood his mind as he pulls her closer. He has been fighting them back since the second Margaret placed that first photograph in his hands, but now alone with his thoughts he can't hold them back any longer.

The evening had started like any other in Three Points. Patrick walked into the modest house in deep thought, burdened by the day, but the second the door creaked open he was bombarded by a white blur of a dog.

"Get down, Max," Carolyn orders the harmless canine, but only to make way for her own devious intentions. Her dazzling smile lights up her simple features, her bone straight ginger hair sashaying behind her as she greets him. Carolyn kisses Patrick thoroughly before taking his suit jacket off his shoulders.

"You look beautiful," he smiles at her and she beams in return, then looks down at the uniform covering her petite frame.

"I look like I just spent eight hours cleaning houses," she corrects as she pulls his hand, leading him to the couch. "Let's order in. I cannot bear the thought of cleaning another dish or mopping another floor for the weekend." They plop onto the cushions simultaneously.

"Chinese or pizza?" he asks and she wrinkles her nose.

"How about Thai?" she counters.

"I have them on speed dial," he chuckles, nuzzling her ear. She curls her legs over his and runs her hands through his hair. He kisses her softly.

"Have I ever told you that you smell like cloves and pine trees?" she asks, rubbing her nose along his collarbone. "I smell like Christmas?" he smiles with disbelief. "Very manly," he laughs.

"It is to me," she grins before pulling him closer. Time slows down for moment as they get lost in each other but her stomach growls audibly and Patrick reluctantly pulls away.

"You shower and dinner will be here before you are back," he says, trying to sound practical.

"Are you telling me I smell, dear?" She brings her hand to her heart in mock anger.

"I would never," he mocks back and is rewarded a kiss before she scurries off to the bathroom. He places the order before he hears the water start. He is just about to figure out what to watch on tv when his cell rings. He answers without checking the caller ID.

"Is this Mr. Craigson?" asks an unfamiliar but professional sounding voice. Patrick mutes the tv and sits up.

"Speaking," he answers.

"Mr. Craigson, this is Tiffany Bram from Golden Futures Production. I'm calling about your video audition for our upcoming tv show here in Chicago."

The phone call changed everything. His shot, his most likely only shot at becoming a voice actor had finally landed in his lap. Thirty minutes later he had dinner spread out on the ottoman and Carolyn's favorite reality tv show queued to play for when she returned. She emerges from the bedroom in her favorite shirt, or more accurately his favorite shirt on her. She appreciates his approving look as she sits next to him. "I got a role," he blurts out before she even takes a bite.

"What? Congratulations!" she tosses her chopsticks aside to hug him. "I knew you could do it," she smiles at him just as her eyes light up with a thought. She leans over him to shuffle through the side table. "This is cause for a memorable." she declares, rooting through the drawer until she finds her old camera. She rests it on top the counter and snuggles into him. Laughing Patrick takes the photo with the ancient kodak. It flashes as he hits the button and emits a small blank square. "See, now we will always remember the day you got your first role." Carolyn shakes the blank page with a smile.

"It's unbelievable." he kisses her on the cheek. "I actually got the part," he sighs as she rests her head on his chest. "This is my big break. I'll be able to buy you whatever you want. We'll go wherever we want. We'll leave this town, move to the city and-"

"Move?" Carolyn suddenly sits up. "To where?"

"To Chicago, where the show is recorded," Patrick explains, confused by her reaction. "I certainly can't commute ten hours a day."

"Well, what about me?" she pulls farther away, meeting his eyes. "My job, my friends, my home?"

"You can get a new job." He takes her hands in his lap. "A better job. You'll make new friends and we will build a new home, a new life, in Chicago," he smiles, hopeful that she understands.

"This is my home. I grew up here, Patrick. I can't just up and leave," she pulls her hands away and crosses her arms.

"This opportunity is what we've dreamed about for years-"

"What you dreamed about for years," she snaps before getting up from the couch and disappearing into the bedroom. Patrick sits back in shock as he runs a hand through his hair. He looks about the room for some kind of answer to her grief. His eyes find the camera and beside it is the white square that now it holds an image. He picks it up and studies the contents as he questions how such a happy moment could spoil and turn sour so quickly.

That day was the beginning of the end. Within that month he was in Chicago. Within that month he had left her. Within that month he had left their unborn child.

The memory fades and Patrick is brought back to reality as the taxi brakes slowly in front of his apartment complex. He looks down to see Cassie curled up at his side just like her mother had done during many a nap. His attempts to move her without waking her fail.

"Are we here?" she asks shooting up like a firecracker.

"Yes Cassie, we have arrived at your new home," he says as he pays the cab driver. He leads her to the front door and grabs her suitcase. As he opens the door, he realizes that when he left that morning he wasn't planning on guests, let alone bringing home his blind daughter. "Oh dear," he breaths aloud as he takes in the disarray of his living situation. Cassie steps gingerly inside, her walking cane bobbing in front of her as her hand slides against the wall. Patrick takes off at a sprint, picking up week old coffee mugs, plates, scattered newspapers that had never been unfolded from their packaging and his endless mess of laundry.

"Patrick, what are you doing? It sounds like you're running," Cassie giggles and distracts him just long enough for her foot to land in a crumb filled plate with a deafening clattering sound. "Oops. Sorry, Patrick." She retracts her foot and risks walking straight through the living room instead.

"Not a problem. You are doing just fine." Patrick hovers beside her, pushing in chairs and steering her around the contours of the building, feeling like a father taking his kid out on a bike without training wheels for the first time.

"You worry a lot like Mommy," she says offhandedly as she walks. The comment comforts him more than he thinks it should, despite the pangs of guilt that strike him every time Cassie refers to Carolyn in the present tense. Like she could walk in the door at any moment. Walk in and make the family whole.

Cassie takes her time familiarizing herself with her new surroundings as best she can with Patrick on her heels, just in case she may walk into something. However, minus the plate, she makes it around the apartment and to the couch in the living room without incident. She sits next to him as he flips through the channels on tv. Cassie smiles gently as she takes a deep breath. "You smell just like a Christmas tree," she sighs.

"I thought you said I smelled like old taxi," he chuckles, trying to mask the raw wound his daughter had inadvertently just poured lemon juice on. "Mommy says I have a very good nose. The whole house smells like Christmas, even the couch," she answers. "She always says that if a house smells like Christmas, it smells like home." Patrick swallows hard as memories threaten to overtake him. Suddenly the phone rings, startling the pair of them. He unattaches himself from the couch and his daughter as he stands.

"Here is the remote. Flick through until you find something you like," he says as he hurries to the phone. It's only after he walks away that he realizes with his tv programming package, he's just given his daughter the equivalent of a loaded gun. He will need to childproof the house tomorrow. "Hello?" he sounds a hundred years older to himself than he did an hour ago.

"Where the hell were you today!" Daniel curses.

"You won't believe me when I tell you what-"

"I put my neck out for you on this job and you aren't even there when the man shows up to give you the part!"

"You don't understand-" Patrick tries again.

"Damn straight, I don't understand."

"I was there today, all ready to meet the guy, when a woman meets me at the door-"

"You left the job of a lifetime to screw a woman!" the old coot screamed so loud Patrick pulled the phone from his ear.

"Daniel! Let me finish," he snaps. He takes a deep breath and decides to cut to the end. "I have a daughter."

"Don't shit with me. I know you don't have kids. Hell, before today, I don't remember you ever mentioning a woman in your life - forget a kid too."

"Daniel, I'm serious..." Patrick goes over his day in detail. Forty minutes later the two hang up, astonished by the day's turn of events. The sound of zombies eating people rings through the house and Patrick runs his hand over his face, suddenly exhausted. He returns to the living room to find the tv on a horror film and Cassie terrified, holding a pillow to either side of her head, shaking. He curses to himself as he changes the channel and sits next to her. "I don't think the pillows are helping," he says gently as he takes the cushions away. Cassie immediately seeks shelter in his chest.

"Daddy!" she shrieks burrowing deeper into his arms.

"You're okay, Cassie." He rubs the back of head. "You're okay, daddy has you," he says and she calms slowly. "Why didn't you change the channel?" he asks the seven-year-old.

"I dropped the remote. I couldn't find it again," she says as she uses the skirt of her dress to wipe her nose and cheeks. Patrick bites back laughter. She truly is her mother's daughter.

"Let's find something more pleasant to..." he finds the word watch to be too uncomfortable but after a while listen seemed too obvious. "Entertain us," he says finally, placing the remote back in her hands. Cassie nods as she finds the right button and flicks through the channels, pausing occasionally to listen for a show she might like. Patrick holds her as she rests contently on his lap and he finds himself comfortable enough to nap. He closes his eyes as Cassie keeps channel surfing. "This is my favorite show," she announces seconds before Patrick hears his own voice come from the television. "How are you doing today boys and girls?" the voice has a forced accent but it's his, the one Carolyn herself helped him perfect years ago. Sure enough, when Patrick looks up, the beginning credits of his show glow on screen.

"Mommy and I watch it every day." Cassie yawns unaware of the tears rolling down her father's cheeks.



As a doctoral student working on a Ph.D. in Mythology and a first generation American with ties from the Caribbean and Africa, Marissa Aro is a young adult fantasy writer that pulls from a layered background. Regardless if she is talking about mermaids, oracles, or fairies, her writing dances through cultural nuances and marries fantasy with reality in refreshing ways. Her mythical elements educate audiences while subtly reminding readers what it is to be human. Some people are athletes, some are mathematical geniuses and others are scientists. Some people are physicians, some are educators and others are entertainers. Then there are the people who are tucked away in their studios, garages, and basements doing what they love; art. We sit at desks and easels for hours at a time in the hopes of making something not for others but for ourselves. To find a release for our mental energy. Images, words, and shapes all float in our heads, threatening to explode and it is only after the hours are spent and the release is found that we step back from our creations to see what they have become. Only the most interesting, the accidental masterpieces or our proudest works, are ever given the slightest of chances to see the outside world. Even then we tend to hide, embarrassed, worried that they are still not worthy.

For me, storytelling is my art. Throughout my life I have sought out many avenues for release. First drawing, then photography, followed by film which lead me to screenplays, but each process while enjoyable holds too many hidden restraints. It wasn't until I simply sat down in front of an empty Word document, letting my fingers fly over the keys of a laptop, unencumbered by formatting and over constricting rules, did I find my niche. What makes me feel powerful, happy and unquestionably free is writing. Writing stories of every nature and genre is my version of a good workout. My academic career lead me to writing and has guided me on this journey to find my place in the world through the lens of storytelling. –Marissa Aro

he Space Between Us

Olivia Do

Perhaps one day, we can have tea, you and I, sitting among the wreckage of our lives my boxed-up pain set aside, along with the "you said" and "I did" and who hurt who.

Perhaps I will take your hand into both of mine, and hold you gently where tea has warmed your touch, feeling again the space between lines and bones. meeting for the first time, skin that has been folded and molded by sun and wind and time.

Perhaps I will gaze into your eyes, as you might settle into mine. Near the edge, a small brown bird perches over a pool of deep sea and moss. A whole lifetime will have flown by.

Perhaps I will open my hand across yours, so that all I have ever touched and all you have touched can find a way to meet in the space between us.

"I do not want art for a few any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few." William Morris

