



RESILIENCE

Promethia 2021 - 2022

EDITOR’S NOTE

Dear Promethia readers and staff,

I’ve been spearheading Promethia for two years now, and the time has come to pass the baton. Being president has been a true blessing and an impactful learning experience. I am very thankful for the team of editors (listed below this note) who had my back, especially as we rebounded out of the pandemic in a mad scramble to catch up on lost time. I am also thankful for you, dear readers and writers. Without you, Promethia would simply cease to exist, drifting away into a chasm of forgotten endeavors. After seeing this year’s turnout of eager young writers, this isn’t going to happen any time soon. Finally, I’d like to thank Professor Gogan, without whom I would not be where I am today. He has been incredibly supportive of all our crazy ideas, and I couldn’t be more grateful. Thank you, staff, readers, writers, and faculty for making Promethia possible. Keep writing, keep loving.

Rachel Dupree
Editor-in-Chief

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Rattlesnake Mountain

Dr. Jim V. Myers

My daddy grew up about a mile from
Rattlesnake Mountain.
He played all over that danged old hill
when he was a kid.
There's no telling what all he did,
But he said he never saw a Rattlesnake.
He said he killed him a Copperhead or
two,
But what else was there for a poor Okie
farm boy to do:
During the Depression to fight off
depression.
My daddy often said he never knew
why they called it Rattlesnake
Mountain.
He said he never saw a rattlesnake up
there.
Said he also never knew why it was
called a mountain.
Seemed to him it couldn't have been
more than just a big hill.
It's interesting what time does to our
perspective,
Especially of family remembrances
some 100 years since.
Perhaps it's not so much a matter of our
perspective

As it is a matter of our introspective,
Or even our retrospective.
In my mind I can still look up and see
Rattlesnake Mountain.
Looking out, I see that hill just as my
dad described it to me so many years
ago.
But now, when looking back, time has
dimmed my sight, tarnished my view,
And I wonder if I ever really knew
Rattlesnake Mountain.
The older I get the less clearly I see
what my daddy showed to me.
The older I get the less clearly I see
what that hill, that mountain, meant to
my daddy and me.
It's too late now for another trip with
him around old Rattlesnake Mountain.
It's almost too late for another trip for
me around that old hill.
It's almost too late for me to see
Rattlesnake Mountain.



Illustration by Cora Hurst

But When We Saw You

Cora Hurst

We watched the galaxies explode across
our universe when we commanded.
We rolled the earth in our hands and
danced her around the sun.
We spoke to the sea
and called it apart.
We fed the sparrow in our hands,
and gave it the sky as domain.
We watched the world we made,
the animals, the trees, and the sky.
But when we saw you, formed from clay,
our breath to yours,
We loved you more than our galaxies and
worlds and birds.
We loved your first step, when you smiled
in our eyes, when you laughed and
nurtured the garden we gave.
We loved you even still when you turned
your back and broke our hearts.
We loved you enough to let our own be
sacrificed in your place.
We weep when you weep.
We laugh when you laugh.
We hurt when you hurt.
And We will wait, with arms open,
because we love you more than all the
universe combined.

Gentle Sunlight

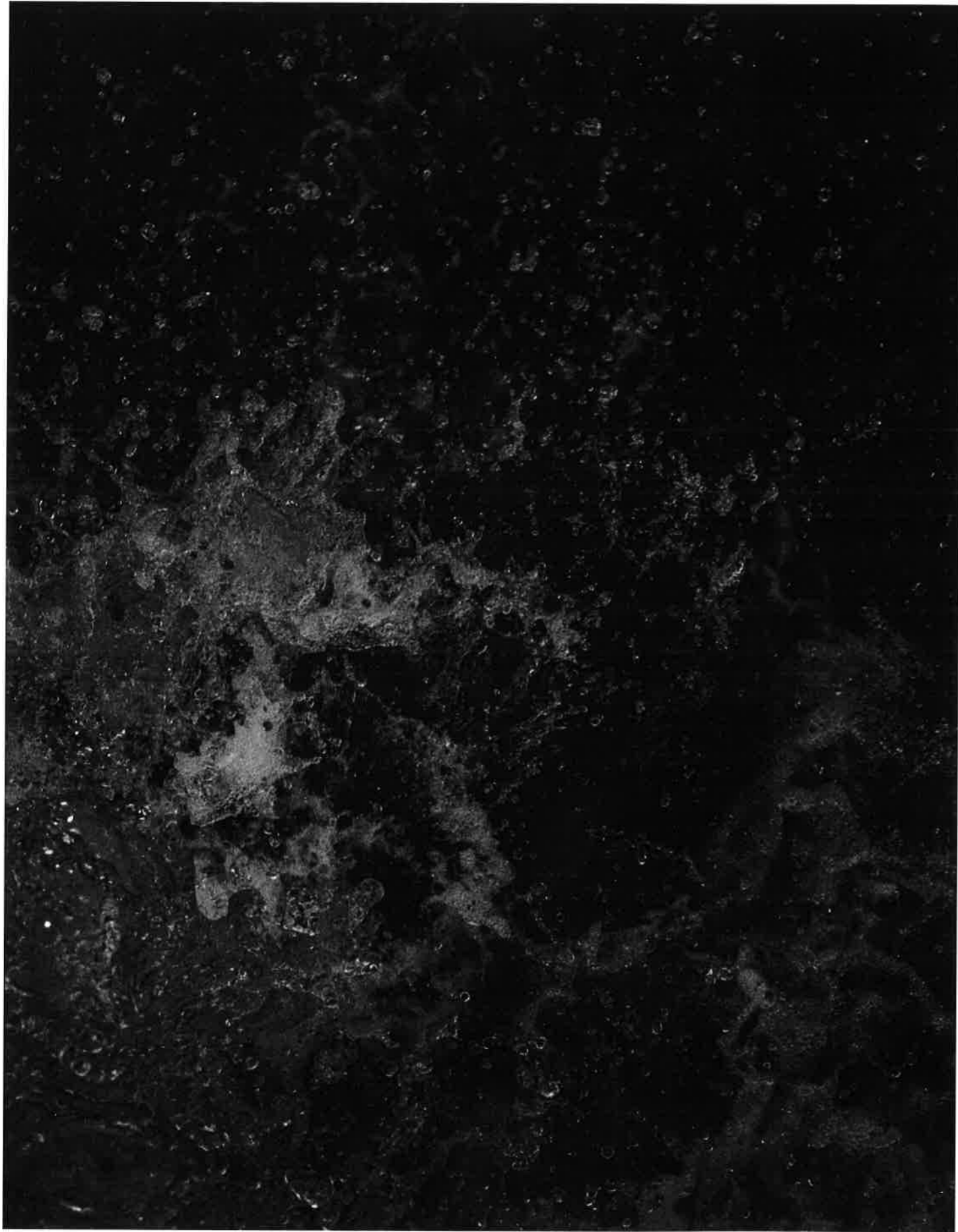
Aziza Best

It's nice to walk in the sunlight
For a while; the gentle sunlight
Of the slow-to-begin morning

In spite of all my layers
The cold still finds its way in
On this slow-but-resolute morning.

So I enjoy my times in the
sunlight
I do not wonder when it will
be dark again
I do not wish the sunlight
were stronger

But I accept that it is gentle
I accept that it is scarce
On this soon-to-unfold morning.



Photography by May Gao

A Little Rain

Ariana Weberg

A little rain won't hurt me.
Pounding drums on the roof
handfuls of pebbles against the windows.
Throw open the drapes
roll up the blinds.
Smoky light shines through glass
Wind presses against walls
reaching for the warmth inside.
Charcoal clouds heavy as
the weight on my shoulders
pour down unstoppable floods of water,
and swirl in shapes of pillars
circular shields
dust behind charging horses.

Why fear?
It's just the emotions of the sky.
I leave the umbrella.
My smiling face turns upwards
to the storm that understands me.
"A little rain won't hurt me."

Our Love

Zishu May Gao

Untangle your hand
From mine
I breathe the free air
Without your chokehold

Drops

Ariana Weberg

One drop
Pear shaped prism
Focusing the light

A thousand drops
Coming down hard in
Sheets
Streams
Tears.
The wind wails its lament
And no one listens
Or cares for its cry

Did we forget the beauty
In a single drop?
The light that shines from
Deep within
Reflection of a bright future

Every storm is made from drops
Each its own hope
Hidden within the tears
Until the hysteria ends
The wind cries itself to sleep
And closes

With a rainbow

Old Man Johnson Had a Tree

Dr. Jim V. Myers

Oh, yes, Old man Johnson had a tree, but no more.
It's gone and so is he.
Old man Johnson's old oak tree came down about a
week ago.
It could not survive the lighting strike that took it
down and took out old Henry too.

Oh yes, Henry Johnson and that tree
were one, at least we thought so.
I don't remember how many times
I've seen him setting under that old tree:
Sitting, in that same old shirt,
Scratching in that same old dirt.

The old tree is completely gone now.
They even ground the stump today,
left that street corner pretty bare.
It's been about a week since the old man passed away
And it's funny in an odd way, that after all these years
so much changed so quickly:

Just as quickly as the tears came and went in
recognition of lives well spent.

Oh yes, we all knew you could not really outlast death,
that it will always chase you down and take your last
breath, but that tree had survived so many storms and
old Henry had too, we just sort of thought they would
always be there.

I'll miss that old tree and I'll miss that old man as well.
Oh yes, I'll miss Henry Johnson and his old oak tree.

A Morning Inside

Mary Meddaugh

A static sliver of light
sitting quietly under the board-and-batten
doors sliced
Pure sharp sunshine
it lies on my carpet, climbs on cherry wood
watch it
watch it
walk
flat until every inch of my room
glows



Illustration by Faith Brown

Sea Father

Heather Usher

Will you dance with me
across the Sea?

The waves our beat
on the beach.

The lighthouse a spotlight
for every step.

The wind calling
the rhythm of our dance.

The stars our only
Audience.

Will you dance with me
across the Sea?

My hand is the puzzle,

Yours is the last piece

One step till we're complete

Cast down the black box and gaze at me
Sea Dream

The planets and stars are aligning

Soon a new ship will sail for me

And a new captain will steer me to my
dreams

Venture across the Sea

Find a new dance—that's how we used
to be—tales together,

Each rock a diamond and each day full
of the unseen

Abandon the black box while the sun is
a sticker in the sky

Before I'm lost to a pirate's plank

Take my hand

lead me across The Sea

Show me the world

that you make

as beautiful as a Dream

The called-out canvas

is waiting to be seen.

So take me across the sea

to see The Unseen



Illustration by Angelina D'Orazi

Worth My Feathers

Heather Usher

The stars,
my wings could not touch.

The north winds,
my friends, betray me
laughing at my dream
scattering feathers the
trophies of my Skyfall.

Northern lights, my
skypath and night
compass leading to my dream,
guide me.

Even if the price is my feathers
I'll Climb the skies reach the stars
Burning wings, falling
Feathers my dream holds
Together
In the Northern Lights

Waves in the Sky

Gabrielle Hirschy

Waves in the sky
Your unrest tame
Your movements mesmerizing

A slow and smooth sea
that no man may sail
nor can he destroy

Untouchable
Uncontrollable
Uncontainable

Lakes join together
and come apart
Nothing permanent

The peace of the white waves
The slow shifts and movements
These oceans with no border

Fascinating to the eyes
Calming to the mind
Waves in the sky

Open Resilience

Noah Lovell

Oh Morning, how lovely is your covering.
Shaken and stretched out wide for all to see.
Every creature comes under the grace of
Your heavenly wings.

Evergreen trees, the soft amber hue,
Sweet laughter that rises
Like effervescent bubbles across
The tulip drenched sky.

Honeysuckles and cranberry blooms
Adorn the crown of your choosing.
Dew drops on a thousand leaves
Ever caressing melody that still sings
Of hope and compassion.

Resilience, the brother of compassion
That rides on the wings of grace
And laughs at the face of anger.
A steady pace that continues onward
And never lets go of the hope in You.

We soar on the double-edged wings
Of compassion and resilience knowing
Within our own resolve: we will hope,
We will sing, we will keep a constant tune
In our heart of hearts beyond the lock and
gate.

The gate ahead is barred shut.
Blackened with Ash and filled with the soot
of sorrow. A small
Flame still rings through the noise of sorrow
And weeping. A still small flame whispering
Hope, peace, love, faith, and resilience.

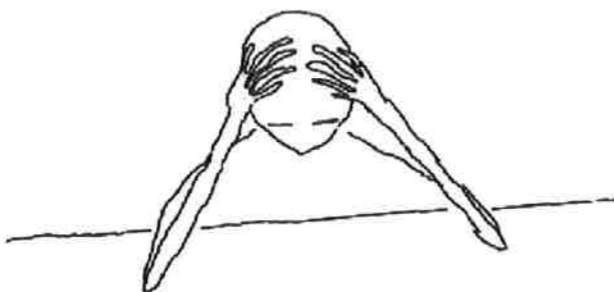


Illustration by Angelina D'Orazi

2020

Gabrielle Carpenter

Year of misery
Year of change
Year of chaos

You are my year of joy
With whispers of guns and bombs
Over seas, nipping our ears
I heard whispers of melting chains
Freedom, and Frightful, flowing change

People all fearfully hidden in
Cozy cages
But, I have forged a key
My heart full of love
Friends
Adventure

"One last time," we sing, and the clock
counts down: One more trip
One more exploration
The minute hand ticks, resonant
Until Midnight

Now piano-key people rebel
Again eyes distracted by difference
Ears plugged to the beautiful music
Possible
Change came
Foreign walls, scents, streets
Bring penetrating peace
Memories of tears and smiles wrapped
in my heart
Forever

Oh year of misery
You are my gift
My blossom in the desert
And I see your seeds spreading a
replenishing life.

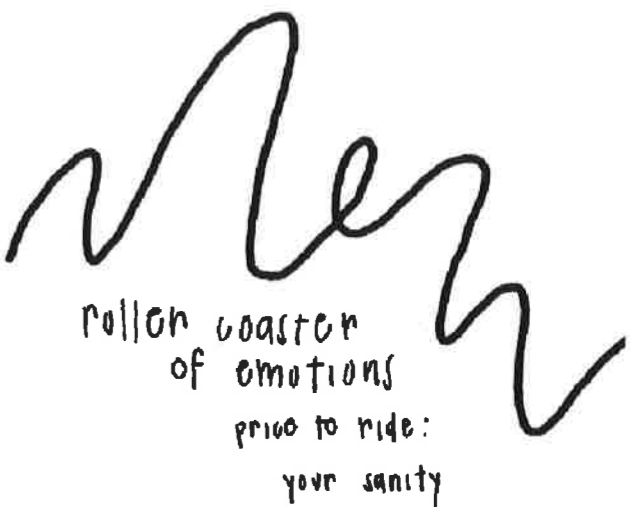


Illustration by Angelina D'Orazi

Doesn't Mean You're Not Brave

Eliana McCracken

Her car slams to a halt as the car in front of her makes a last-minute decision to turn.

“Seriously?”

The coffee might as well be lava as it splashes over the sides of the cup like a geyser and burns through her red pencil skirt. Apparently trying to drive and do her makeup and drink coffee all at the same time is a bit too lofty.

“Great, just great.”

Sam opens the middle console of her Nissan Altima in pursuit of napkins or tissues or something. After several minutes of digging and driving, she stumbles upon an old plastic silverware set with one tiny, paper-thin napkin tucked inside.

A lot of good that will do.

Just as she whips her car into the closest parking spot she can find, her phone sings an irritatingly happy tune—a blatant attack on her ever-growing bad mood.

“Yes?” Sam snaps.

“Wow, someone’s friendly today,” her friend Meg replies with a laugh.

“Sorry. It’s just been a rough morning, and I’m already late.”

“Well, I called to wish you luck on your first day. Are you excited? What happened this morning?” Meg asks.

Sam summarizes the morning’s excitement, which included burnt toast, her car stalling, and the tragic decision to multitask as she drove.

“You’re just a little nervous. Everything will be fine.

It’s a new start. You need that,” Meg says.

“So everyone keeps telling me. I’ve gotta go, but thanks for calling.”

Sam hops out of the car and assesses the damage through her reflection in the side of her car. The coffee covers most of her right thigh, and not even the world’s worst liar could convince her that it isn’t noticeable. She had put her blonde hair in a bun, but the frizzy pieces that had bothered her her whole life couldn’t behave today of all days, of course.

Her spotty makeup job betrays her pitiful efforts at multitasking. At least her outfit is professional... back when it was all one color.

She angrily hauls her last-minute decorations into the side door and steps into her classroom down the hall. Far too many dollars worth of brightly-colored posters, children’s books, and toys stare back at her.

She throws her stuff on the ground and rushes to the bathroom to salvage what she can of her appearance before finishing any last-minute touch-ups to the room. At least it looks cheerful. To help the kindergarteners, of course.

The highly anticipated munchkins start arriving about a half an hour later, around 8:00.

Here comes the hard part. She takes a deep breath. Filing in one by one, the vast majority of the littles sport their moms on one hand. A few dads are present; most children bring both parents if they can.

The morning starts off as Sam had expected—full of crying children whose first day of remote



Photography by Faith Brown

independence might as well be a journey to the center of the earth.

Their volcanic emotions erupt in ear-splitting shrieks the minute their parents force them through the door.

One boy, though, is quite the anomaly; he walks through the door as if the classroom is his own.

Sam has to stifle a laugh as he swaggers in like Danny Zuko, his confidence expelling any dependency on his mother. This fearless fellow is about three and a half feet tall with blond, spiky hair gelled to perfection, and he's wearing a royal blue button down with khakis.

Not even holding his mother's hand, he makes a beeline for Miss Bingham.

"Good morning, welcome to kindergarten! What's your name?"

"My name is Sam. Thank you very much," he replies. "You want to know a secret? My parents and friends call me Sam, too. Is that short for Samuel?" she asks.

"Yes ma'am it is," he says as he looks back at his mom, who offers him a reassuring smile. His posture straightens a little as her assurance fuels his poise.

"Well, my name is short for Samantha. We have something in common already," Miss Bingham says as she directs him to his seat.

"Bye Samuel! You're gonna do great!" his mom says as she makes her way out of the door.

Miss Bingham watches the transformation unfold. The silent scream inside of him begs for an escape as his confident facade melts away in favor of utter sorrow. His face turns cherry red as the waterfall of tears begins to stream down his face.

His mom glances back at Miss Bingham as if to say it will only get worse if she stays.

Miss Bingham nods in understanding and makes her way over to little Sam.

"She'll be back later, but we are going to have a lot of fun together until then. Look at all the great toys in here!"

"I don't want to have fun without her. I want her to stay," he says through the tears. "I know, sweetheart, trust me I know."

After a very long first day of school, Samantha sits on the bench outside the park. It was their bench, providing the perfect people-watching spot underneath a vibrant green oak tree. She had gone almost every day in the past six months, watching the people at the park go about their lives and the tree shift with each season.

"Thought I might find you here."

Sam looks up and sees her dad looking down at her. He's much taller than she is, especially when she's sitting down, yet his presence never seems domineering.

His eyebrows narrow as his bright blue eyes scan her face for some indication of how she is really doing.

"Am I that predictable?" she asks.

"I am, too," he says, taking a seat next to her. "No, you aren't. I hardly ever see you here."

"This was your spot with her. I come on occasion, but I go to the grave and replace the flowers every Wednesday."

"Her favorite day of the week," Sam says.

"Yeah," he replies with a soft smile.

"She was always one to appreciate progress," Sam replies, remembering how her mom always

said Wednesdays are a good day to remember how far you've come and get excited for where you're going.

Her dad chuckles, indicating his recollection of the same memory. He has the biggest grin and the loudest laugh of anyone she knows, but she hasn't seen much of them in the past few months.

"How was your first day?" he asks.

"Chaotic."

He glances down at her coffee stain and chuckles. "I see that. The kids though? How were they?"

"I'm just not ready for this. I'm angry. I'm not ready to be thrown into life again, especially not with a bunch of little kids who deserve a happy teacher. I just want to scream."

"You're finally accepting what happened, Sam, and when people do that, they get angry. That's normal. What happened wasn't fair. I look around every day and wonder how people can go on living life when the brightest angel in this world isn't here anymore."

"I wonder that all the time," Sam says as she looks up at the tree. Its leaves were bright green today, but the park had been a dead wilderness the first time she'd gone alone, all those months ago. "I hate cancer. I just hate it."

"So do I. Give it time; things will get better. We have each other."

The next morning was more of the same. Lots of tears but a few less. A little more curiosity here and there.

A few new friendships to help lessen the blow of departing parents.

Little Samuel, though, may have started strong, but he seemed to struggle every day with little progress. He was stuck in the mud, not moving forwards or backward.

"Hey buddy, how are you feeling today?" Sam asks him on the first day of the second week.

"Bad."

"Do you want to come play over here with some of the other kids?"

"No. Mommy isn't over there," he replies.

"I understand that. But you know, I remember on my first day of kindergarten, I thought I would never be able to have fun with my friends if my mom wasn't there. She told me that the more friends I made, the faster the day would go.

When she saw me again, she could meet all my new friends and would be so proud of me for being brave. You know what? I bet your mommy is so proud of you, and when she comes, you can show her all of the amazing things you did today," Sam says.

"I'm not very brave."

"Yes you are. Missing your mom doesn't mean you aren't brave. It means you have a big heart. That's a good thing. Do you want to try to go over there together?"

His red eyes hesitantly look up into hers. Tears threaten to escape, but the silent scream seems slightly less powerful today than it had been. His brown eyes hesitantly peer over at the other kids playing, and his sniffles subside.

His posture shifts slightly as his defensive walls begin to come down. She offers him her hand, and he takes it. They walk over together.

On the Sidewalks of Paris

Eliana McCracken

Monsieur Toussaint sits on a small stool on the sidewalk one cloudy April afternoon.

His bright blue eyes peer out from behind his canvas stand, and round spectacles rest on the tip of a long nose. He blows a tuft of straight brown hair out of his face, brushing the powdery remains of dried paint off of his black button-down shirt.

The year is 1963, and he watches the passers-by on the sidewalk. A young girl of about seventeen years old, he estimates, stops in front of the bakery on his right. Her dark green dress reaches her knees, perfectly matching the headband that rests amid her blonde mass of curls. She fidgets with the handkerchief in her hand and stares at a young couple walking out of the bakeshop.

“Madame?”

She glances towards Monsieur Toussaint after a few seconds. She opens her mouth to answer, but no words come out. Her eyes are red and a brighter shade of green than he suspects is normal. The couple laughs from several feet away, stealing her attention. The girl quickly looks at the ground, blinks sharply, and pulls her black cardigan tightly around her body. She hurries away, handkerchief falling from her hand and landing on the well-worn cement.

Monsieur Toussaint frowns at her abrupt departure. He picks up his medium-sized round brush, dipping it ever-so-softly into red and dark green paints.

He places several globs of red onto different positions on his palette, mixing various amounts of white and black into each one until the palette is a chorus of crimson. He has only been painting for a few years, but young artists are the most creative kind.

He loves watching people, wondering at their sorrows and their joys. He begins to paint.

Monsieur Toussaint sits on a small stool on the sidewalk one sunny July afternoon in Paris. His bright blue eyes still peer out from behind his canvas stand, and round spectacles rest on the tip of a long, slightly wrinkly nose.

He runs a hand through his graying hair and rolls up the sleeves of his black button-down shirt. The year is 1983, and he watches the passers-by on the sidewalk. A young boy holds his mother’s hand as the two of them walk by.

She wears a bright blue pants suit with an ascot tied around her neck.

Her son, dressed in a pristine white polo shirt complementing his bright blond hair, walks on his tiptoes to appear taller than his mere three feet. She looks down at him and smiles, pointing to a dog walker approaching them on the sidewalk, two curly-haired poodles in tow.

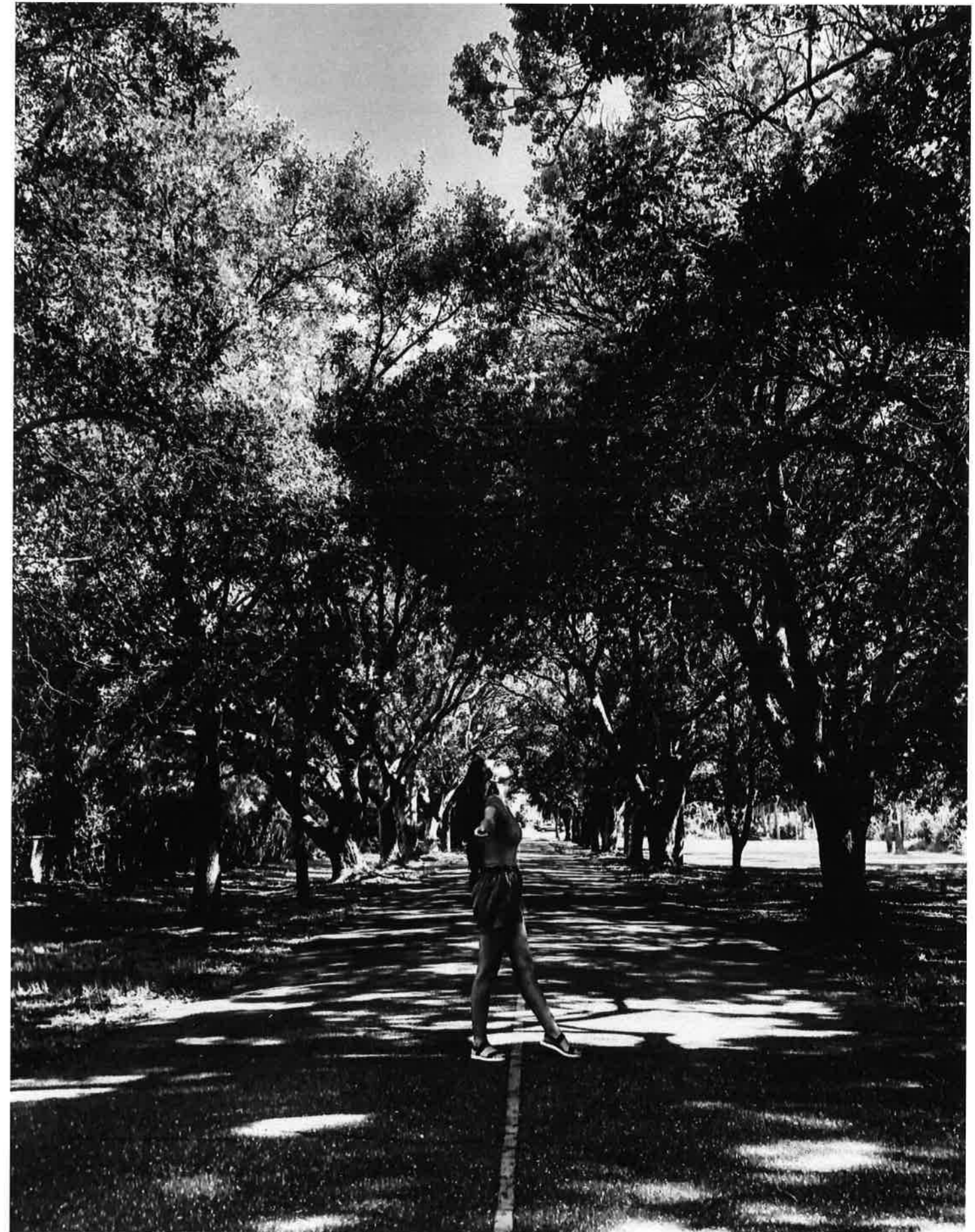
“Doggie!” the boy cries, trying to pull his mother towards the creatures.

“Hold on, sweetheart. We have to ask the man before we pet them,” his mother replies, walking over to the gentleman holding the leash.

Nodding in consent, the man squats down to the boy and instructs him to reach his hand out. The poodles, equally thrilled by the encounter, lick the boy’s hands gleefully.

The mother smiles at her son’s contentment. She places a gentle hand on her stomach and reaches into her purse for a container of vitamins. Just as Monsieur Toussaint opens his mouth to ask the little boy his name, the woman ushers her child away, eager to cross the road while the light is red.

Monsieur Toussaint smiles to himself at the boy’s



Photography by Faith Brown

childlike wonder, wishing the pair would have seen him and talked for a while. He picks up his brush and acquires a glob of bright yellow paint, liberally heaping it onto the palette. He places an assortment of light blue hues on the other side, displaying bright green tints where the colors meet in a cheerful union. He is a better painter than he once was, for mature artists are the most observant kind.

He wonders if people ever wonder at him the way he does them. He begins to paint.

Monsieur Toussaint sits on a small stool on the sidewalk underneath an overhang one rainy afternoon in Paris. His bright blue eyes peer out from behind his canvas stand, and round spectacles rest on the tip of a wrinkled, aged nose. He itches his head, feeling the presence of the few white hairs that still form a crown upon his noggin. His black button-down shirt is too big for him, but he wears it anyway.

The year is 2003, and he watches the passers-by on the sidewalk. An older woman with a black umbrella stands at the edge of the sidewalk, waiting to cross the street. Her downcast stare meets the ground, where black high heels leave blisters on tired feet. She wears a straight black dress and a black hat with a small veil covering her face. Monsieur watches her carefully. She begins to take a step onto the street and then retreats, turning around at the sound of a young man's voice.

"Wait!" the man yells down the sidewalk, soliciting the attention of several strangers and the Monsieur. The young man, wearing a black suit and tie, runs towards her, the bottom few inches of his pant legs soaked through by the puddles. His blond hair is soaked through in the rain, making it nearly brown. He gives her a hug and she sinks into him, her face resting

on his shoulder as the rain pours harder. She pulls away and looks into his eyes. He hands her a pocket watch with the picture of a young girl on the inside.

"I found this in dad's dresser. He'd want you to have it."

The woman begins to cry harder. Her son wipes her face with his hand, offering his elbow as they cross the street together. Monsieur's eyes glaze over as salty tears threaten to escape. He knows her pain. He would say something to them, but over the years he has learned that people are too busy to notice the artist on the corner. It never stops him, though. He keeps going. Monsieur picks up his brush and fills his palette with black paint, adding small hints of white here and there. He can't see his canvas as well as he once could, but highly seasoned artists are the best kind. He begins to paint.

Monsieur Lavigne walks with his brother along the Paris sidewalk one brisk October afternoon. His deep brown eyes scan the horizon, taking in the strangers' day-to-day activities. He has walked this sidewalk countless times on his way to and from the bakery. He checks his watch to ensure that they aren't late for their visit and tightens the ribbon around the bouquet of roses in his hand. He smooths his dark blond hair and watches his brother take a step to cross the street.

"Wait, André," he calls.

André stops. "What is it, Henri?"

Both of the monsieurs stop. The year is 2013, and Henri Lavigne notices that there is no one sitting at the street corner. He takes a white rose from the bouquet in his hands and leaves it on the sidewalk where the painter once sat.

Intermissions

Olivia Pribbanow

It is when the sun breaks—
its rays draping your
shoulders
with a thick yellow blanket
after years of
shivering in rain.

It is the breeze
running its hand
through your hair
twirling stray locks
between delicate fingers,
the first gentle touch
after life defined by
boxing gloves.

It is not minding the
little pearls of sweat
hovering just
beneath your shirt
as you meander half-
drunk in marvel
at light catching
glitter in the asphalt,
at thin branches

twisted and spindly
as spider legs
and smiling because
even spider legs
are alive.
It is catching God's eye
with deflated water wings
and soggy lungs
so down He reaches
to fish you from
the watery depths,
tenderly holding your hand
and smoothing back your hair
He says,
"Breathe."

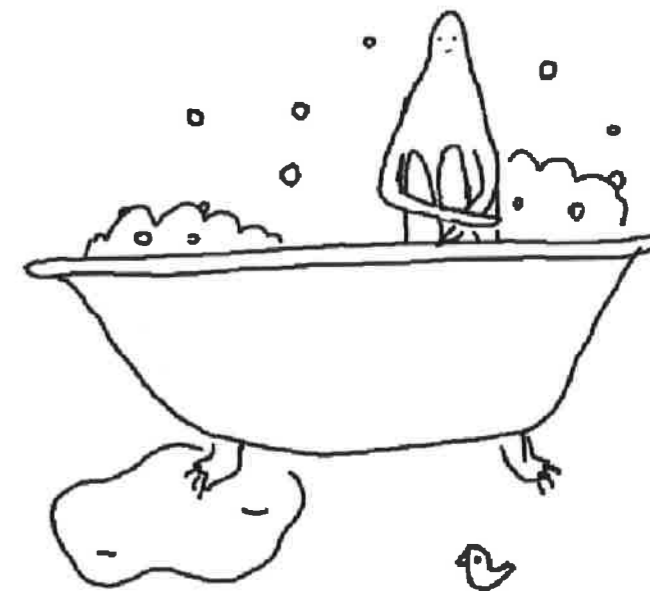


Illustration by Angelina D'Orazi

Snow Cleansing

Aziza Best

Breakfast tasted like nothing in particular on this non-particular day, and when

Andrew woke up that morning, he wasn't expecting that anything special was about to happen. His parents were downstairs already, watching TV while they ate their eggs and spicy breakfast potatoes. Andrew slid into his usual spot at the breakfast table that sat by the big window looking out onto the back porch and, beyond it, the vast Arizona desert. The clouds were white and heavy that day, but Andrew didn't notice as he picked over his eggs and un-spicy potatoes that his mom had made special for him. He hadn't had much sleep, so it took him a while to realize that his dad was calling his name. He lifted his head blearily.

"Hmm?"

"Hear that, Andrew? Weather report says it's gonna snow."

He sounded like he only half-believed it but was clicking the remote through the various news and weather channels, muttering, "Snow. Snow. Snow."

Andrew nodded and went back to playing with his food. His mom brought him a glass of milk and greeted him cheerily. He managed a smile back to her. As he looked up at her, he couldn't help but notice her weather-worn face; the healthy color that she had always had now reminded him of old leather, the outer edges of her light blue eyes beset with wrinkles, and her cheeks sort of loose and hanging on her jaws so that she looked much older than she was. Her feathery silver-white hair fell lightly to her narrow shoulders, her breasts sagged in her thin, flowery robe, and even her smile seemed dim. Andrew wanted to reach out, to reach for her hand and touch her somehow, reassure her that he was okay, that he wasn't going anywhere, but instead slumped further in his chair, gripping his sweatshirt sleeves with his bony fingers.

He looked listlessly at the milk, feeling helpless as usual. The TV was still playing in the background, and his dad was still talking to it.

"I have lived in Yuma, Arizona for more than 15 years and I have never ever seen it snow."

This time Andrew listened. He turned to look out the window and noticed the heavy white clouds and the quiet, waiting desert, sitting in a sunless shadow, like in the gray hour before sunrise—only it was already past ten o'clock. Andrew got up and took his plate to the kitchen, then headed back upstairs to his room. The room was large and mostly empty. It was a strange place to sleep in because it was cool and open instead of close and cozy. It was also dark. The walls had been painted a very dark green, so even on sunny days, the room gave Andrew the feeling that it was nighttime. He climbed into his bed and played a game on his phone. His fingers were playing, but his mind was elsewhere. An hour passed, and Andrew felt himself dissolving into a world of nothingness and boredom in the dark and quiet room, his blinds pulled down, his lights too dim to brighten the dark green walls, his mind too tired to feel the anticipation of what was coming.

Ding. Andrew was half asleep when he heard his phone chime. It was his mother. "It's snowing," the text read. Andrew sat up from bed, shaking off the last dregs of sleep as he let his feet touch the cool wooden floor. He started to leave and then reconsidered, went back into his room, and pulled on a pair of running shoes before heading downstairs. He found his parents standing at the big window, standing close to each other, but not touching, each in their own private world of silent awe. Then Andrew looked above their heads and saw—it was snowing. Andrew blinked. Yes, it was

snowing in the desert. Andrew hadn't seen snow since before his family left Kansas, since he was only eight years old. He was now twenty-three. It had been fifteen years.

He stood, unmoving for a moment, his eyes fixed on the snow outside the window. The world around him became soft and silent, the floor seemed to disappear beneath his feet, and he felt as if he were levitating slightly. He moved, like a figure in a dream, toward the back door and opened it. He glided across the porch and at last stepped out from under the covering and into the snowfall. Andrew gazed silently at the desert, at the snow, a small smile leaking across his face. There was no wind, so the flakes floated down, like ashes after a wildfire, only white, pure white and small and gentle. They were lighter than air. As they landed, they melted away before Andrew's eyes like shimmering illusions, angelic apparitions that dance before the eyes of the dying. The world had never seemed so silent.

Andrew tilted back his head. All was white, and all was light. The snowflakes lodged in his eyelashes and melted on his forehead. He stuck out his tongue. Nothing had ever tasted sweeter to him than those tiny white flakes. He laughed a child-like laugh, a sound foreign to his ears, but one he liked hearing. He laughed again and raised his arms, the sleeves of his sweatshirt receding and exposing his wrists to the snow.

He felt the flakes as they alighted on his arms and melted into his fresh lacerations. Last night's ordeal was briefly remembered and then washed away by the innocent whiteness of the snow. Then it was as if last night no longer existed. There was only here and now, and in the snow, he felt new and perfect.

He indulged the feeling. He reveled in it. Andrew opened his eyes; he hadn't even realized he'd closed them. The smile had widened across his face, and he could feel it stretching his cold cheeks, crinkling the skin around his small, dark eyes. He laughed again and began to turn, round and round, relishing the sheer impossibility of the moment, the absurdity of snow in the desert. The snow was falling faster now, and how strange it was to see his mother's cactus, his father's wheelbarrow full of tools veiled in a lacy curtain of snow! Andrew stopped turning and faced the white stucco house with its red-tiled roof. His parents materialized in the doorway; their arms crossed against the cold. They were watching him. He could feel that they were pleased to see him so enraptured in snow-covered exuberance. Andrew wasn't close enough to see, but he knew his mother's eyes were shining. He beamed at them, and his dad raised his hand in greeting. His dad was smiling too, beneath the gruff, black mustache.

Andrew turned back to the desert. The snow was barely sticking to the arid ground or the withered shrubs, but it didn't matter to him. Snow was falling. And it was falling on him. For the first time that day, Andrew began to feel the cold. It filled him simultaneously with a rush of excitement and a flood of calm. He could feel the blood pulsing through his veins, reaching his hands and feet. He could feel his lungs expanding, filling with moist, cool air. He breathed, deep. The frigid air rushed up his nose, revitalized his brain, and invigorated his body. He suddenly felt as if he could run, run as far as the desert would take him, and never grow tired or heavy or bored again. And the snow would cover his lashes and stick in his hair and flow in his blood, cleansing his wounds and healing his soul.

Un Compte Rendu

Emily Blevins

She found herself intoxicated by the ubiquitous eminence of the mundane. The mundane enveloped her in numbness. She felt sick with an undiscoverable and incurable disease. In those rare moments of emotion, her head felt like it would part with the war raging within her, and she would sink into eternal torture. *Maybe anything would be better than life*, she thought. She finally arrived at the place where she would spend the next four years of her life.

You're doing it for the money, she told herself. *You've been pretending to be a Christian for 13 years. What are a few more years?* She got out of the car. She decided to give God an inch. Just an inch to prove to her that He was worthy of her serving Him. It was He who did not want to let her die.

She didn't want to spend another minute in this hell called earth. He certainly wouldn't do anything. He would just continue to torture her by keeping her in this place where she didn't belong and had no purpose.

He would keep making promises to her that He neither wanted to nor could not keep. Or maybe that was how He would finish His so-called good and perfect works in her life. She knew deep down that she deserved this. She deserved every hope that she had in God crushed, and she deserved to suffer the perpetual misery that awaited her in life.

After unpacking, she went to required worship. Struggling to join in and yearning for some sort of sign, she heard a tender whisper. Through the whisper, she knew that the God she knew in her mind and the God who had just touched her heart were entirely different and that it was the God of her heart who would change her life.



Photography by May Gao

The Falls

Angelina D'Orazi

She mushed the warm sand under her toes, a feeling almost exceeding the bubbly sensation that coursed through her body.

Feeling the sand underfoot complemented the chocolate-box of emotion she felt. It was sunset at Cabo beach, and the pink and orange hues painted the sky. Her hands were firmly clutched by his as they stood parallel, and his clueless eyes locked with her adoring stare. He bent down to a kneeling position, letting her hands fall.

His arm extended, and his pointer finger engraved a heart in the sand as he looked up at her with a child-like smile. This was the moment, everything was following her fantasy—a beach in Mexico, sunset, and down on one knee.

She was having difficulty containing the excitement accumulated by anticipation.

She heard a loud creak and was disturbed by a dank smell. Her dream was interrupted by the main character to her dismay when he had rolled over in his sleep. Brenna wasn't too upset by her awakening; it was a reality check, and she already knew how the dream ended. It wasn't a dream, it was a memory, and it didn't end with a diamond ring.

Brenna turned and put her back to his, letting out a large sigh. She grabbed her dog tightly and pulled her close to her chest.

Her dog's company was more comforting than the man's who lay next to her every night. Nuzzling her face into her dog's back, Brenna closed her eyes and attempted to go back to sleep, but her mind had other plans. She began to list off all the times he had the chance and all the times she thought he would pop the question. However, each instance ended with her

hand bare, so she lay there with her empty title of girlfriend. She wished this nonchalant label would turn to a fancy French word that now sounded foreign to her—fiancée.

She laughed at all his missed opportunities and knew that this was a promise out of her control.

Brenna released the tension she was creating and forced herself to sleep.

She woke up to the sound of a shower running and knew that it was her cue to begin her duties. Brenna made her way to the back door and cracked it open for her dog to make its escape and relieve itself. Then she walked a couple feet to their humble kitchen, where she began making coffee because she knew that was what he wanted. Specifically, with french vanilla creamer.

She heard the clacking of her dog's nails against the hardwood and looked down to see her best friend making her way back inside.

Brenna fed her dog and decided she might as well feed Josh, too. She grabbed a few eggs and the package of bacon out of the fridge, laid them on the faux marble countertop and reached for a pan underneath. As the ticking of the gas stove top indicated the flame, the halt of the shower water indicated he was almost done getting ready. Right on schedule, the eggs were done as he made his way out of the bathroom.

The two lost lovers sat down for breakfast and talked of their plans for the day. Josh had work, but it was her day off. Brenna was thankful she had days to herself; it was a break from everyone. She told him she'd probably go on a hike and waited for him to say,

“That'll be fun, eh?”

She always went hiking on her days off, and he always commented on how it would be fun but never went on a single adventure with her.

“I'll see you later—what's for dinner?” Josh said, pausing before he disappeared.

“I don't know yet.”

“Hmm. Okay, well, have fun.” He slammed the door behind him.

Brenna put on khaki pants and slipped on a t-shirt with an image that belongs in a field guide of mushrooms on it.

She pushed her feet into her worn pair of hiking boots and grabbed her backpack already prepared for her frequent quests. She kneeled to kiss her dog goodbye and skipped out the door, eager for where today would take her. Sitting in her Subaru, she unlocked her phone, navigating to a bucket list of hikes to do in Washington, most already checked off. She decided on a trail that she had hiked years ago but hadn't revisited. It was an easy hike—for her—five miles up to a waterfall with a slightly tricky incline.

She raced her Subaru up the mountain pass and zoomed through the twist and turns. She began in Naches, a desert of a mountain town; then she went through a pass that mimicked Narnia.

Brenna knew she was getting closer to her destination when the snow-covered pines turned to lush greenery and moss. Within a few hours, she had gone through a few different worlds, all home to one state. She parked close to the trailhead and started for the forest.

Once she was surrounded by the trees, she knew

that any issue in her life was trivial. The trees pierced through the sky and hid all life below. The ground was decorated with ferns and hidden by moss. If one was lucky, they'd see a mushroom growing near the almost indistinguishable trail, a hidden gem among the forest floor. Brenna continued down the path marked by other helpful hikers with strips of cloth tied around branches to inform you that you were on the right path. A fork in the road wasn't too stressful, but one way led to her destination, and the other only provided her with a pleasant hike.

An hour passed, and Brenna still hadn't lost her stamina; her eagerness to see the waterfall kept her moving fast. She appreciated the beauty she saw along the way but mostly saw this hike as a miniature quest, and she just wanted to get to the treasure.

Brenna crossed over streams and climbed up narrow pathways, zigzagging between rocks and logs. She had not lost her footing and stood firm for most of the hike. But then rain started to fall.

First slowly creating a mist, then mother nature picked up speed. Brenna reached for her rain jacket in her backpack. She should have checked the weather, a rookie mistake, but she always came prepared.

The rain came down like bullets, creating rivulets down her rain jacket that traveled and made her socks soggy. Brenna's vision was compromised, but she moved forward. She had only one goal for the day, and it wasn't deciding what they should eat for dinner.

Though the rain was loud, the waterfall was louder, making its presence known. Brenna knew she was close. It must have been up and around this last incline. Brenna was not going to let the rain get the best of her; she cautiously marched up the side of the cliff. Looking



Artwork by Rachel Thompson

down, she realized just how high she was, and the trees that surrounded her were only the top halves.

The ground beneath her was slick, so she kept a constant reminder in her head—hiking boots can't save you from everything. She had reached the summit of this particular incline where there was a small area of land just wider than the edge she had been teetering on. Brenna took another step. A rock. Covered in moss, she didn't see it, and covered in moss, it had grown slimy. She slipped and felt herself fall back in slow motion. She looked for a branch to reach out for and save herself.

But Nature had defeated her.

Her head smacked into the edge of a sharp rock, and she faded out of consciousness. The rain continued and soaked her body as if it were a part of the forest floor, except it didn't bring her life like it does for the rest of its creatures. Brenna was beginning to wake up; she was freezing and couldn't understand why she had decided to nap in the middle of a trail.

She reached for the back of her head where it was pulsing with pain, her dreads swampy with blood and rainwater. She remembered. Brenna's head was empty, and there was no energy left in her body; the rain had washed it all away. She lifted herself off the ground she had momentarily become entangled with.

Her body left an impression on the ground, and moss clung to her clothing even after her departure.

The sun started to set, and she decided that she

would not be seeing any waterfalls today. She found herself getting in her Subaru before she even had time to realize that she had hiked all the way back.

Nothing was processing in her head.

She had just followed the trail, and now she would follow the road back home.

Perhaps it was the weather that made her feel this way, her body frozen and damp, or perhaps it was something else. Either way, Brenna felt numb. She walked into her house exhausted and hungry, hoping that maybe he would have made dinner. She saw him slouched on the couch.

"Hey babe, good day?" Josh said.

"Yeah," She sighed.

"Soo, what's for dinner?"

"Are you ever going to ask me to marry you?"

"Er, what?"

He had a stupid look on his face, as if marriage were not in his vocabulary, just a scary myth of what life was like in the 50s. Tears welled up in Brenna's eyes as she stood there and stared.

Stared at a man scared of commitment, a man scared of adventure, a man scared of love.

A few moments passed as a million possibilities about what she would do next ran through her brain. Brenna looked at him with anger hot enough to start a forest fire. She picked up her dog.

"Goodbye."

Catching COVID Before Feelings: A Guide on Love

Angelina D'Orazi

We have all heard it before: “This is going to be my year.” Some of us were actually convinced, but then a pandemic fell on us, and it wasn't lovesickness. COVID-19 came straight for cupid and declared that it is NOT your year for finding a soulmate. It is hard to fall in love with someone with half a face, and social distancing is the enemy of date night. You could be six feet away from the man of your dreams, but then he takes his mask off....

The sample size of datable people is reduced to the few you have the privilege of seeing without a mask. Even harder than loving a masked man is finding a masked man to love, but it can be done.

Six feet apart is the standard, six feet is an ample distance to where one can still hold a conversation. Six feet may not be ideal, but it's doable. You won't be able to go on a dinner date, but you can enjoy a socially distanced game of air hockey. During the COVID 19 pandemic, workplaces, businesses, and social gathering places were shut down. Suddenly, the only people in proximity were those you live with. According to Social Psychology, proximity leads to relationships, and people find love with someone who lives in the same area or attends the same places. No one can find love in isolation, though there may be someone who has found love on a Zoom meeting.

Proximity can breed liking, but it's not enough to merely live in the same neighborhood or work at the same company. Interaction needs to occur to set the

heart in motion. Interaction enables liking because it presents more opportunities for people to learn about each other. The mere-exposure effect leads to liking, says Social Psychology. The chances of falling in love increase when two paths cross.

The pandemic stole both proximity and interaction, decreasing the chances to find love.

Between limited interaction, social distancing, and masks, there is still hope in finding that special someone. A mask covers only half a face; there are still eyes to get lost in.

A study done in 1989 by Kellerman, Lewis, and Laird suggested that eye contact can increase feelings of passionate love or liking. In the experiment, the subjects who gazed into their partner's eyes reported more affection toward their partner. The most crucial step toward making this work is catching the gaze of the girl with big brown eyes.

Once you lock eyes, attempt to hold eye contact for as long as possible—a staring contest if you will. Six feet is enough distance to bloom a relationship. But what do you do when your newfound lover takes off their mask, and you can no longer bear to look at their face? All it takes is .13 seconds to determine a face's attractiveness, according to Social Psychology.

From the moment of unmasking, your brain makes the quick judgment of swipe right or swipe left. Maybe, for everyone's convenience, love would be simpler if everyone kept their masks on, but that's

optimistic. The truth is, when it comes to romance, a mask does more harm than good.

Looks are a predictor of how much one dates. Masks either enable people to go on more dates or hinder people from going on more dates; both probabilities are an effect of the mystery of one's potential attractiveness.

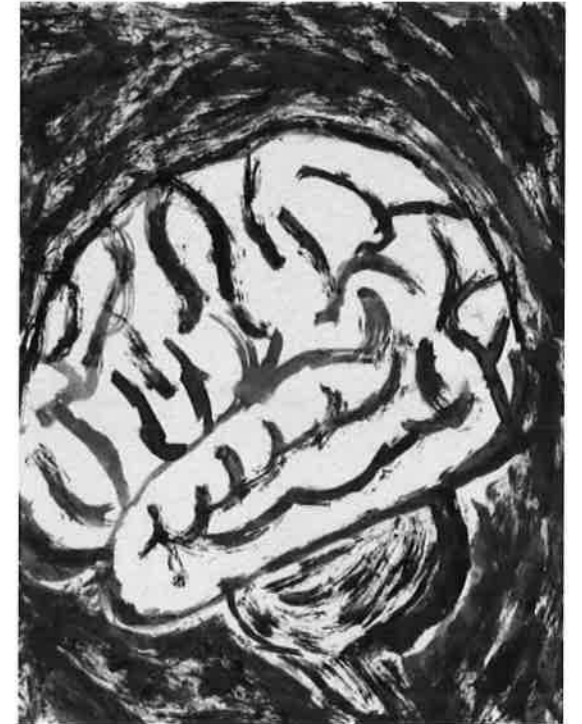
Typically, more attractive people date more often, but masks could be flattening the curve and leveling the playing field.

According to social psychologists, the “matching phenomenon” explains that people will choose partners of somewhat similar attractiveness.

Similar attractiveness can no longer be gauged by facial features. One must base their judgments on body type, style, and choice of mask pattern.

The matching phenomenon is now redefined: people will choose partners of similar mask wearing styles. If he wears the same mask for a month and doesn't put it over his nose, it is safe to say he is not the one. It has been a year since the COVID-19 pandemic started; if you still haven't found love, don't worry. There is not much you're missing out on—possibly a couple socially distanced dates and a couple of kisses (masks on, of course). It has been a difficult year for love.

Next year will be YOUR year—assuming the world doesn't catch fire.



Artwork by Bridgette Kent



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