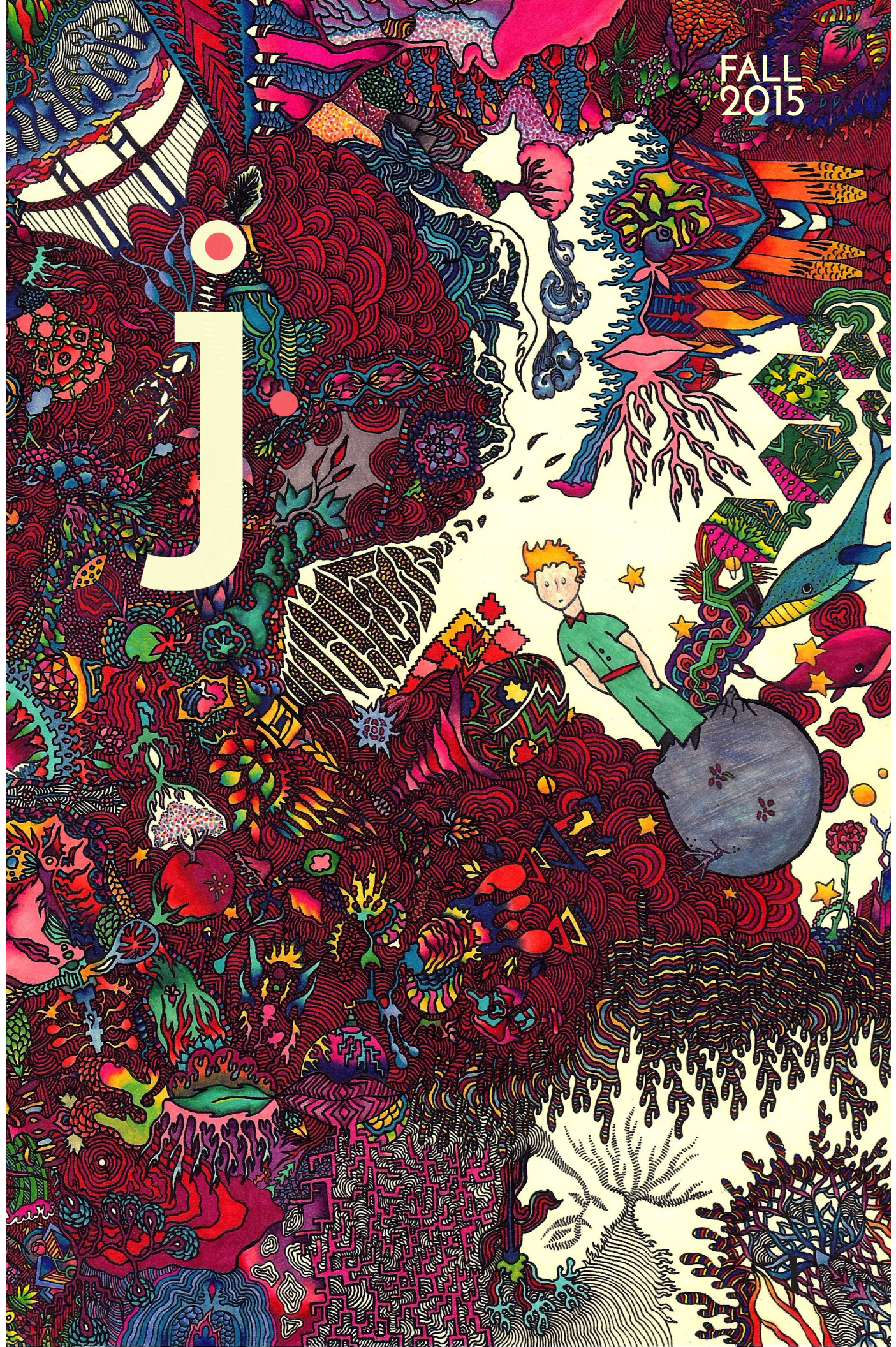


FALL
2015

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J. MAGAZINE FALL 2015

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STAINED GLASS Julia Wargo

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dearest J. Mag readers,

Welcome to our first issue of the 2015-2016 year. It's hard to believe another semester has passed our beloved little magazine by, but seeing the magazine thrive under new ideas and our talented staff and artists is always an immense pleasure.

This issue borrows its theme from its cover, Amicia Phillips' "Odyssey," leading our readers on a perilous journey through color and space. From the bright colors of our cover to the black and white of our final page, we'll take you to surreal lands with Julia Wargo's "Rain" and back to a firmer reality with Roderick Bowlby's "Arrival". Your quest will put you up against sea monsters, wraiths, and "miracle dances of bright colored dresses."

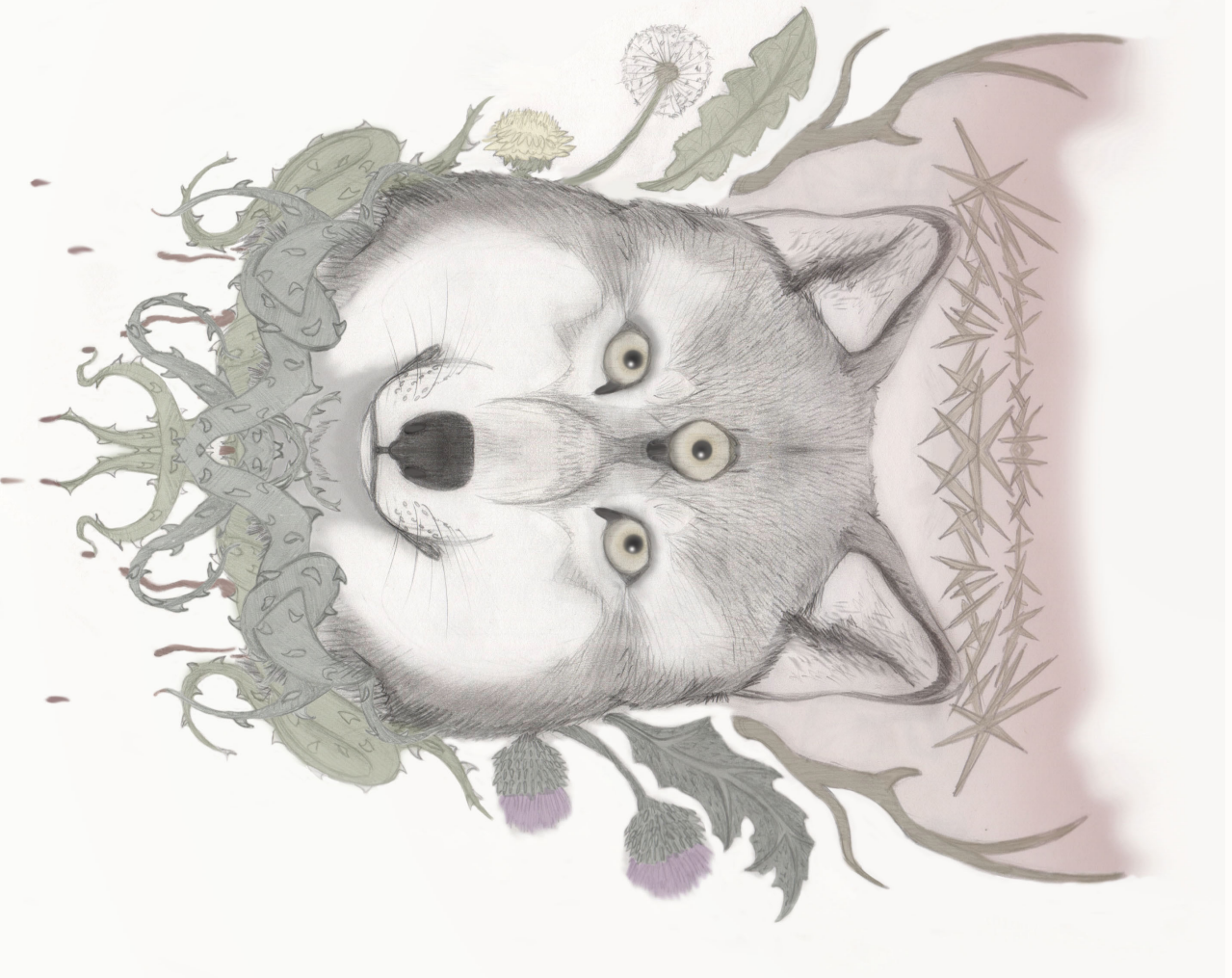
In many ways, your journey as a reader parallels our voyage through the semester. We continued to strengthen our presence on campus through several days of flying on the Breezeway and further marketing on our Facebook page— which now has 429 followers! Our biannual reading, featuring readers from our upcoming issue, made a welcome return to Bamboo Cafe. We are also very excited to introduce Editor's Choice, a new initiative in which we award a gift-card prize to three outstanding pieces. We're delighted to announce our first ever Editor's Choice winners: in fiction, Kat Lewis with "Magnum Opus"; in poetry, Julia Wargo with "Rain"; and in art, Liza Slutskaya with "The Three Graces".

Above all, none of this would have been possible without our wonderful staff. For the time and effort you committed, each of you are worth a whole pan of cupcakes. We are endlessly grateful for your dedication and look forward to seeing the new directions J. Magazine will take in your capable hands.

So join us, reader, on an odyssey. We hope you enjoy the journey as much as we enjoyed crafting it.

As ever, thank you for readings,

Olivia, Brandon, Alessandra and Marissa



KING OF THORNS *Carolyn Winston*

HAIR IN THE SHOWER DRAIN

Kat Lewis

He slides his hand along her thigh.

She shrugs away from his touch, smelling the lie on his breath. She wonders how relationships rust.

There was a time when he told her all the things he liked about her. Like the scarred tattoos on her side.

She even liked when he dragged his fingers to connect the two.

Their dog sits on the couch between the two of them. She watches it sleep, thankful for a barrier between their thighs.

He huffs, stands up and says to the dog, “Wanna go outside?”

She closes her eyes and listens to floors creak where their steps lie.

When he returns, she knows they’ll argue about things like hair in the shower drain, dirty dishes and why she can’t trust.

The argument begins and all she can think about is the rust on the shower drain and how he leaves parts of himself there too. He claims he misses the times when they said the same things and were so alike.

But she can’t hear him over her memory of slapping thighs and coming home early to surprise him. She wishes she’d forget the way the blonde woman lies

in her bed when she’s at work. It is time to tell him that she knows he’s pushed her aside.

Somehow, she can’t decide

how to tell him she’s seen the yellow hair in the shower drain’s rust. He’s worked hard to keep the lie

alive and the stolen moments with his number two.

“Tell me what’s wrong,” he says, not looking her in the eye but at his own thighs.

She replies, “Why don’t you tell me what she’s like?”



HOT GLUE DRESS CLOSE-UP *Lauren Padilla*

As the shock settles on his face, her words echo through his head like a clock tower's midnight toll. She sits next to him, a judge ready to preside over his fate alone because a jury of his peers, cheaters and double-dealers, she couldn't trust. Despite her fervent glare, the thought of jigglng thighs makes her weak and nauseous. Maybe this fight is happening too soon. But the image of legs twisted in sheets, the image of his life is burnt in her mind. It is a lie that crawls over her bed sheets and table cloths like a colony of ants. She stares at his shaking hands tattooed red by the fbs and the woman he keeps at his bedside. Nothing is clean and pure. Not her bathroom's rust or even her own thighs.

Tonight she won't lie in their bed at his side. She is tired of chores like pulling hair from drains, picking at their relationship's rust, and feeling his hands on her tattoos and thighs.



LUMINESCENCE *Arisa Morgan*



DOWNTOWN *Kat Lewis*

TOMPKINS SQUARE

PARK *Piper Sheren*

The ghosts of empty syringes and burnt spoons haunt this place. Where Basquiat lived in a cardboard box so he could feel closer to the earth. Where people who would clamor for his artwork spat on his homeless feet and Samo was declared DOA. This is where Daniel Rakowitz killed his girlfriend, and, in his infinite generosity, served her in a soup to the homeless. The butcher of Tompkins Square. He's still alive.

And if you close your eyes and plug your ears you can still smell the soup.

TINY DANCER

Maggie Gill

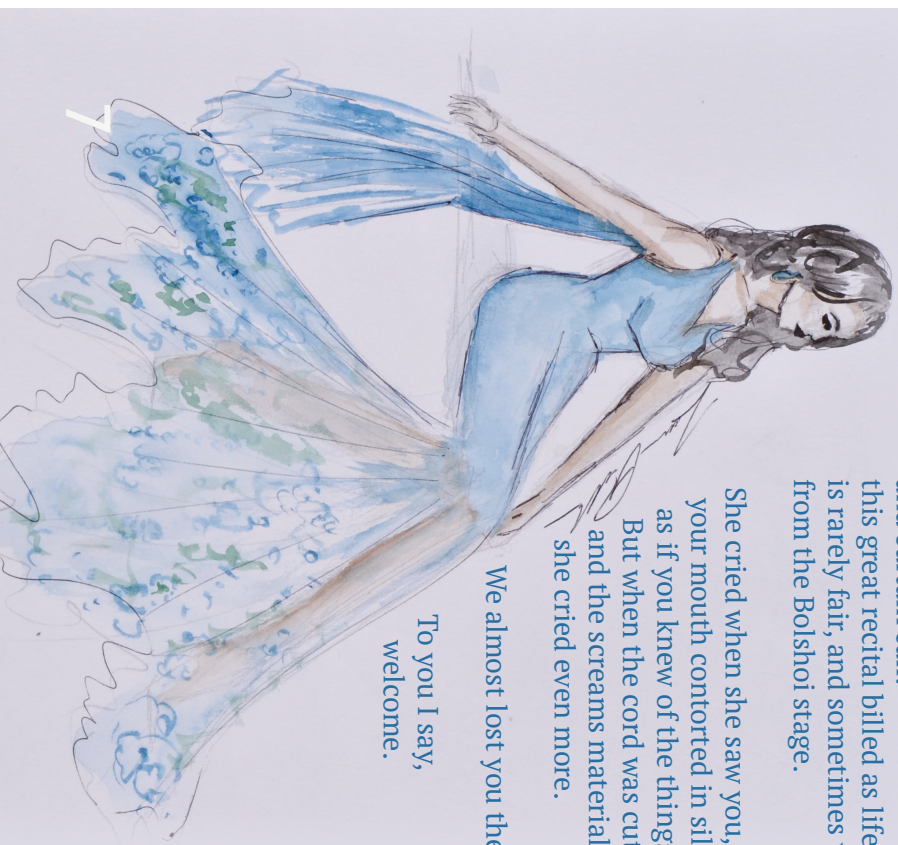
We almost lost you there,
life-cord wound around your neck
like Isadora Duncan's scarf
pulled taut by tire tread
in nineteen-twenty-seven;
all very sad.

We almost lost you there –
you, never failing to make
your mother's nerves pli e
and heart pirouette
inside her ex-dancer's ribcage.
Be kind to her.

You will discover, too,
between the opening dance
and curtain call:
this great recital billed as life
is rarely fair, and sometimes you fall
from the Bolshoi stage.

She cried when she saw you,
your mouth contorted in silent scream
as if you knew of the things to come.
But when the cord was cut
and the screams materialized,
she cried even more.

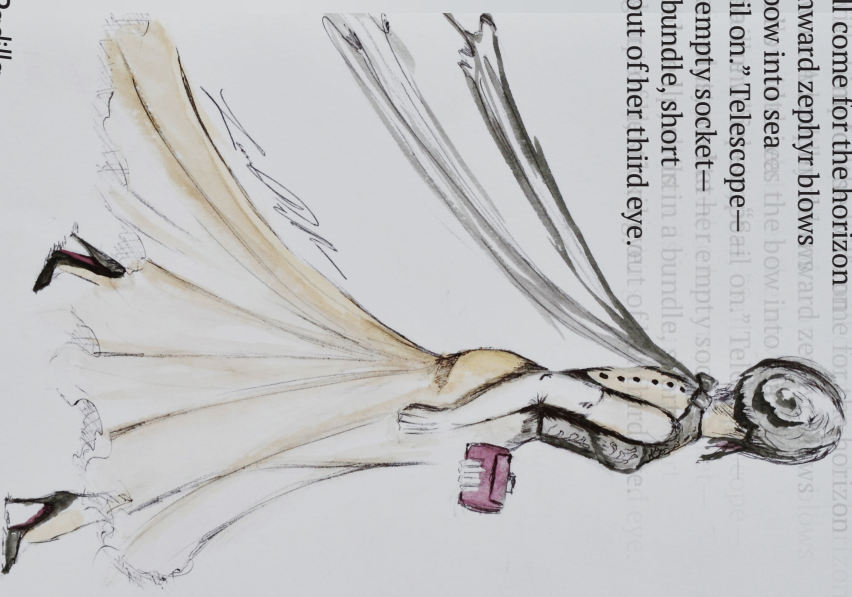
We almost lost you there but didn't.
To you I say,
welcome.



THE LOOKOUT

Casey Peta

Her shoulder blades, like vestiges of wings, are always twitching. Silver hair pours down her back. Atop the masthead, the crow's nest, the ship of seven frayed, beige sails, she looks out on the doldrums through a glass Coke bottle, the end of which she smashed against the mast to make a spyglass for her bottle-cap eye. See the choppy water and the day so hazy that it burns? She sets it down but picks it up in earnest. Jagged ring of crimson from the wrong end of the glass by accident. The end of time. The sky goes tangerine. That line—which comes across the screen, turned off, regresses to a white dwarf and implodes—will come for the horizon too soon. A sudden downward zephyr blows the sails and drives the bow into seas and so she whispers, "Sail on." Telescope forever-plastered to her empty socket like colored pencils in a bundle, but sharpened, sticking out of her third eye.



SKETCHES Lauren Padilla

WATER KADDISH

Michael Feder

when you are wearing the same shirt you were wearing
two hours ago, and singing under the table, pretending to
be more jewish than you are, and the bar is open for
patrons

waiting for the iceman
gum under the most desks
at some point opening doors the boy who stuck the most
who now carries a gun because the rest of his fucks he
gave to the court house

and, now, bent over the bridge, spitting, always
spitting that one, and under the clouds
his clouds are his clouds, looking like the undersides
of god's astroturph
and why can't this boy be every boy
unattainably lost

who knows the moon looks best from rock bottom
and the moon may be his mother
and some other kid passes a bag of something into his
open palm
singing,
see this

I am somewhere in this
you are falling asleep to the music of my bones ground
to powder

I am somewhere threshed, but too small to be
decapitated
it is enough to be stalks of wheat
motified into one gladiator's grief
stepped on brutality
enough times to snort it
he does a line right there on the bridge
and sprinkles some out for symbolic purpose
and back to the saloon
for a shot at wax-bound wings
for a shot of gin without water
for the train tracked arms

to the miracle dances of bright colored dresses
to the words in his hands that are just quiet enough
to be beautiful
to the wish for grace
to the saloon
where we've all been waiting
we, all of us, we
sleeping gods dreaming of ourselves
and the next boy goes

THE THREE GRACES Liza Slutskaya





DUSK

Kot Lewis

I AM HOUSTON, TEXAS

Emily Dorffer

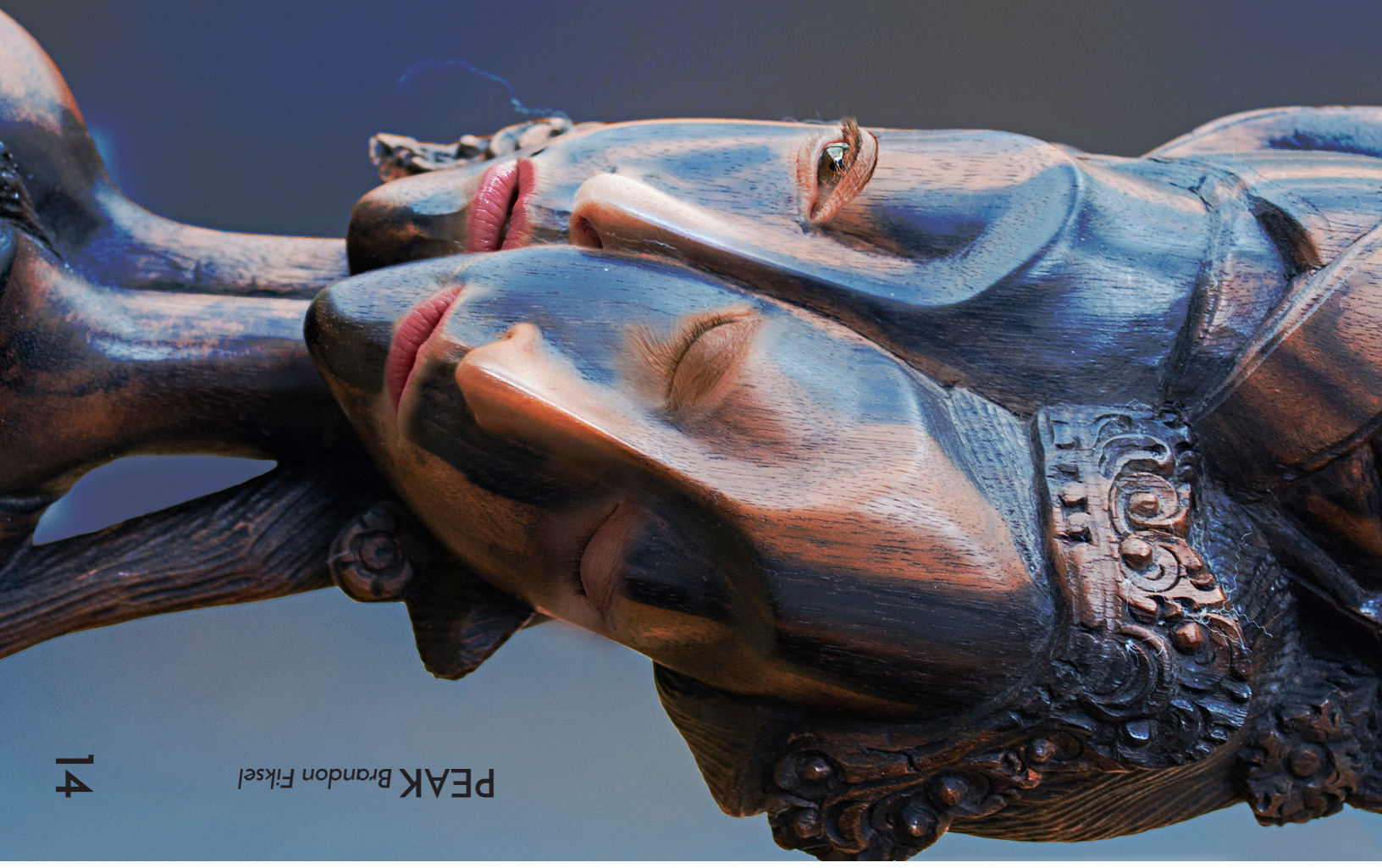
I am armadillo holes filled with mothballs, home made biscuits and gravy at Cracker Barrel, connect the dots mosquito bites. I am queso covered drive-thru fries, the squirrel stuck in the attic at midnight, the smirk at the aithorn mom below the pests. I am pretzels at Katy Mills Mall and gummy bears for dessert, chicken nuggets shaped like dinosaurs at Rainforest Cafe, and the same dust covered books at the Maud Marks Library book sale as last month. I am floods in May, a drought in July, and the chirping gecko in the tabby's line of sight. I am the raccoon with a tennis ball caught by the oak before impact and the water moccasin in the bayou. I am the baby cardinal eaten by a cat, the skunk—sprayed cocker spaniel, the pig shit on the floor at Reliant Stadium, and the burning croc on a hibachi grill at Atami. I am the saplings split in half next to the bayou, the wild boar churned mulch, and the squeal cut short.

THE BUDDHIST WAY

Brandon Fiksel

Here's Miss Reform- Universe (no marijuana
Since the '60s), prescribing meditation
To any other sages who found nirvana
But wound up in Toronto, cross-legged and bald.
No furrow—brows shaved too, that's dedication.
Her chocolate-lust would leave Buddha appalled.
Nuns ask for no desires, she asserts,
Relieved her disciples offer her desserts.

Here's to her agnostic brother's visit.
He takes her, in her robes, to Dick's ("oh!") Sporting,
Seeking a tent for her retreat. "Is it
Sound?" It's fair, but she ignores his query,
And thinks how brave he is to be supporting
Her journey back to her barn-turned-monastery.
She chants a grateful hymn and dreads the violent
Pitches, desiring (not asking) for two months silent.



MAGNUM OPUS

Kat Lewis



FRUIT PUNCH LIPS *Koyle Gharthous*

INT. VEGAS CASINO - NIGHT
Red-bottom heels saunter across an ornate carpet. Slot machines chime as the shoes weave through mobs of GAMBLERS. A cacophony of squeal and groans rise above the sound of pinging slot machines.

The owner of the heels, a young and sexy, WAITRESS, wields a tray of drinks in one hand and serves a COUPLE with the other.

This COUPLE, mid-30s, stands amongst FRIENDS at a craps table. The woman blows on her fiancé's dice.

He rolls.

The crowd falls silent as the red dice tumble across the green table. Their faces hang in suspense.

The dice painfully roll to a stop and hit the table with--

"No, no, no," Phil cried out, snatching the page from the typewriter. "This is not our movie. We've been over this. Our film is *Die Hard* meets *Dirty Dancing*. This is so *Rush Hour* meets *Ocean's Eleven*."

Greg leaned back in his desk chair and cracked his neck. "It's just the first draft, dude. Relax. Let's just write and we'll nitpick in revision."

Phil rolled his eyes. "Do you think Tarantino gets Oscars by just relaxing?" He pushed Greg's chair and Greg slid away without a fight. "Let's start like this," Phil said, loading in a fresh page and tacking away.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Grey sky.

The sea white caps, foaming like a dog at the mouth. The tide spits knots of seaweed across the sand. SOMETHING tumbles in the water towards the shore. The ocean churns and sprawls a DEAD BODY onto the sand.

The sea breeze ruffle the corpse's wet clothing and bats at the hem of a leather jacket. A pair of trashed, red Converse sink in the sand as they make their way towards the body.

They stand before the body, bold like a blood stain against the bleak backdrop of sand. Low hanging fog smothers the dead body and KYLE, 18--

"Woah, woah, woah," Greg interrupted the clack of the keyboard. "When did we decide his name was Kyle?"

Phil lifted his hands from the keys and glanced at Greg. "Calm down. It's just a placeholder."

"My brother's name is Kyle."

Turning back to the typewriter, Phil pushed up his glasses. "I'm sure he'll be happy to have a character named after him."

"He's a neo-Nazi, Phil." Greg sighed. "Gimme that," he said, taking over the typewriter.

BLACK SCREEN

Gunfire. Sirens.

Under the pop of pistols and the whine of ambulances, heavy, panicked breath wheezes. The sounds grow louder and louder until the breathing overtakes the symphony of violence.

SMASH TO:

INT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Clouded breath from the chapped lips of MARIA, 19. She leans against the damp brick wall with a pistol pressed to her chest. A police car races by pouring a quick burst of red and blue light across the alley's trash-littered ground.

17

Puddles squeelch under polished Oxfords. Maria gasps and aims her gun.

Backlight by a dim and distant street light, the figure of a MAN slinks towards her, laughing.

MAN

You're not gonna shoot me.

She pulls the trigger.
Click--

Phil grumbled unintelligibly. "What?" Greg asked over his shoulder. Phil shrugged and said nothing. "For fuck's sake, dude. What?"

"I dunno. Should we start with Maria's story?"

"Why not?"

"Her storyline is just secondary you know. The movie's more about Kyle." Greg opened his mouth to complain, but Phil corrected himself. "I mean whatever-his-name is." Greg let out an exaggerated sigh and pulled the page from the typewriter. "Oh, c'mon. Don't overreact." Greg crumpled the page in his hands and chucked it at the trash can across the room. The ball bounced on the trash can's rim and tumbled to a stop by the door.

"Please," Greg said, rolling away from the desk. "Start our movie with your precious Kyle."

FADE IN

INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

KYLE, 18, pushes through a wave of DRUNK GIRLS--

"Jesus, Phil! A party? Really?" Greg said, throwing his hands up. Phil stopped typing and looked at Greg, visibly feigning interest in whatever two cents he had to give. "What good movie starts with a party?"

"Uh, *The Godfather*," Phil said as if it were as obvious as the color of the sky.

"The first act is slow as shit."

"What?" The word left Phil's mouth incredulous. "I know you are not dissing *The Godfather* in my house."

"The. God. Father. Is. Slow. As. Shit." Greg punctuated his

18

sentence with short, affronting claps.

“You write a fucking masterpiece then.”

Greg turned the keyboard towards him and wiggled his fingers over the keys like a ritual dance that would make genius rain down onto the page. As his hands hovered there above the keys, he felt his future graze his fingertips. He felt the handshake of Spielberg and Scorsese. He felt the microphone in his hands at Sundance, at Cannes, as he answered questions about his writing process. He felt Charlie Rose’s cool table under his palms, the condensation of his glass of water, the excited sweat as he wiped it away. He felt the weight of an Academy Award in his hands. He felt it all close like the anticipation of a first kiss, but also distant, like a ship on a horizon, like the moan of a foghorn cutting through the gray, like a plane streaking through pink sky. He could reel it all in if he’d just type his masterpiece letter by letter. Just one clack, then another, then another.



BALANCE Liza Slutskaya



ORCHID *Julia Wargo*

WATERMELON

Giovanna Molina

If I had known,

I would have stayed to hear you whistle while
you sliced thick pieces of watermelon that dripped
down my white and blue polka-dot shirt,
making me look like the Fourth of July.

I would have listened to you tell me one last
knock knock joke, while I climbed up the stairs
of your blue house, hummed as you grilled, and laid
in the hammock as you made it sway.

I would have made you repeat "Get used to it!"
one last lonely time as we, on that cold
September day, dared to rush
into the ocean's icy waves.

But I didn't know.

I didn't know that watermelon would never
taste the same, that the words "Orange you glad
I didn't say banana?" would make me cry, hate to grill,
and see your hammock thrown away.

Or that every time that I would pass your house,
I'd think: the color they repainted the house with,
which they thought may match,
was slightly too gray.

And that I'd never be able to fully love
like I once had, without the fear of being left,
with the distaste of something so sweet,
as watermelon on a summer day.



CAROUSEL

Nicola Willoughby

“Come one, come all!
Come put your child on display.
Round and round and round they’ll go –
Merrily! Merrily!” *turntable*

A masterpiece of artifice;
A facade of grandiosity.
The tender crumb *cake*
Of the sweetest childhood memories
Sealed beneath a lavish exterior.

Twisted in elaborate swirls,
Imprisoned in garish colors,
A bastardized baroque fantasy
Trapped in a never-ending loop. *frosting*

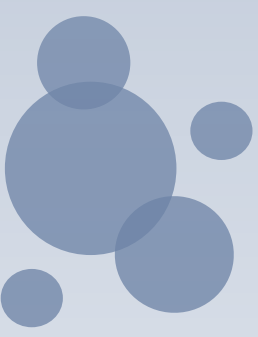
Oblivious to its captivity.
It rejoices in silver and gold.
Garnished like the court’s jester,
A twinkling spectacle of costume jewelry. *sprinkles*

But lest you grow too eager --
Enticed by the sinful masquerade --
Note the twisted velvet rope *pipéd border*
Spaced around the border,
Reminding hungry eyes
Rides are reserved for those who pay.

Oh, but who could resist its cheery airs
When gears begin to grind?
And multi-colored mounts swoop up and down *candles*
On twisted poles,
Driven by some internal flame?

Dancing and prancing, it spins round and
round, *cake dome*
Just beyond your reach.
Face pressed to the gates...
Dare you slip underneath?





RAIN

Julia Wargo

Your voice makes me feel like
The sound of rain crackling
Behind a panel of words
And watercolors.

It makes me feel like a ghost
And a forest and a flute,
Makes me trip into mirages of
Two faces pressed against glass.

It is this condensation and
These rivulets that gather
And speed to their death
On the shower floor.

I hear my sin falling down
The hourglass, multiplying
And swelling into threads
Instead of sand to blindfold me
And raze my retinas with
The seeds of loving you.



WHITE RIVER WRAITHS *Emily Dorffer*

ARRIVAL Roderick Bowlby



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