

An abstract painting with a textured, expressive style. The color palette is dominated by vibrant greens and yellows, with deep blues and dark purples in the lower half. The brushstrokes are visible and energetic, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall composition is layered, with lighter, more saturated colors in the upper right and darker, more muted tones in the lower left and bottom. The text is overlaid on the painting in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

Chaos

Divine

DIVINE CHAOS

JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

"Art is the motion that develops
through repetitive truth-telling."

Readers,

There is a turbulence that is expressed through a final calm. It is a feeling revealed in retrospect.

We are divine. What we produce is divine. We are chaotic. What we produce is chaotic. By putting our chaotic and divine selves into our works, we create art - art that calms through catharsis, allures through mystery.

What is art though, and why is it worth sharing?

Art is the expression of the most inexpressible emotions and observations, tragically and elegantly, sometimes grotesquely portrayed, all for the basic goal of humanizing ourselves.

Art is not only a practice or hobby, a profession or task. It is the space created by the artistic tendency and the willingness to forego our assumptions and expectations. It is the motion that develops through repetitive truth-telling.

The Journal of Fine Arts strives to be this space. It invites detail and nuance, strength and submission to a quality of selfhood that exists

within each of us but is often hidden beneath the rubble, the clutter of the mundane.

Art is the opposite of mundane. It may express aspects of the mundane, but even this expression will release the tension of complacency and the weight of routine. Art fuels the orblike mist within us that holds us to ourselves, and to each other.

This year's Journal is an attempt to invite surrender - surrender to the colorful simplicity, to our paradoxical sensibilities. Each piece you see in this book has been considered and contemplated by editors and artists for the sake of empathy.

Whether it be blues and greens or pastel yellows and cloudy purples, this year's theme of "divine chaos" is the acceptance of color - of difference. Natural tones and dancing details, blended with the organic mess of uniqueness and freedom. We've left each piece and each design open to the interpretation of the viewer and the intentions of the artist.

We welcome the divine and we welcome the chaos, and we work to expand the definitions of these ideas.

M. Remy

Editor in Chief





FICTION

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Masha Shollar

Breath Mints

Shoshana Ciment

My dad always smelled like fresh mint.

I remember him, lifting me effortlessly into his monstrous lap, cradling me as he told me about his day at work. Sometimes, his stories smelled like spearmint, sometimes peppermint. My favorites were the Altoid stories, but those were rare because Altoids were expensive. The aroma of his stories characterized his words, and I consumed them like a babe at a breast.

My dad wasn't serious about many things, but he was serious about fresh breath.

"The most important thing a man can have is a clean scent."

I never forgot to brush my teeth.

Even when I shed my dad like old skin for a newer, more mainstream crowd, I still carried a box of breath mints with me everywhere I went. "Just in case" as my dad would say.

My mom told me about the divorce on a Monday. I wished it had been a gloomy day to match the events to follow. But it was sunny, high 70s: a perfect day. She was wearing gray pajamas and her eyes were red, but dry.

"Your father and I are getting a divorce."

I knew it was the drinking. It was always because of the drinking. The drinking had been around since I was kid, I just never realized it until I was older. Breath mints can do amazing things.

"You're going to be staying at grandma's house until we can sort this all out."

I hug her because I know she needs it more than I do. Out of habit, I reach into my pocket for my pack of mints. I stop to consider the power in these tiny white capsules.

I want to forgive him. I want to erase everything — clean and sparkly like a mega-powered Altoid. But I toss the half-filled container into the trash.

Even a breath mint can't cover up the stench of the past.

Becoming a Grownup

Masha Shollar

"Oh my God," I heard the whisper from the next stall over.

Then, quiet weeping, muffled (lest someone should hear you), but more panicked than loud, wailing sobs.

As always, the question was whether to get involved or not. I was an awkward, buck toothed seventh grader. My ponytail was so tight that my eyebrows were raised a few inches, as though I were perpetually surprised. My uniform skirt hung at mid calf, and the pleats, which had been knife sharp at the beginning of the trimester, now slumped, lackluster and loose, losing energy and perkiness as the school year progressed. My socks sagged around my ankles. Who was I, child as I was, to be helping someone quietly collapsing in the next stall?

Though I had resolved to leave it alone, I stepped out at the same time that she did, her eyes red and lips trembling. It was too late to pretend that our eyes hadn't met, so I offered a vague smile, then went to wash my hands, hoping that I had struck the right balance of noncommittal and supportive.

"I think I'm dying." Her tiny voice came from behind me, constricted with the stranglehold of her apparently imminent demise. Though I had decided I was better off not getting involved, I couldn't help myself: I looked at her curiously in the mirror. Death is many things, but it is not boring, and to an uninitiated thirteen year old, this was a chance to help myself get more acquainted with the dark specter that had once made my mom cry in the stairwell of our home.

Still mute, I offered another grimace-smile. Then, as the silence grew into a little bubble and enveloped us, the sinks and the toilets, I realized that she was not going to speak first. "What's wrong?" I asked. My voice, unsure of what my plan might be, came out slightly hoarse, like a foot grinding over gravel.

Two patches of fuschia appeared on her cheeks, and I had to wonder what could be embarrassing about dying. Interesting, sure; sad too. But not embarrassing. She muttered something that I didn't catch, a little fluttery noise that tickled my ear and then flopped to the grimy, tiled floor. For a second, I considered taking that as my cue, just heading back to class. But I was involved now. I wanted to know how it would turn out. "What? What did you say?" I asked her.

"I said, I don't know how much blood we have in our bodies," she

muttered begrudgingly. It didn't seem like the time for biology questions, so I simply shrugged and told her that I didn't know either. "Because I'm, um-- I'm bleeding," she said, in a tiny voice that started and stopped like a needle bumping on a record player. I couldn't see blood anywhere, so I opened my mouth to ask how she could know that she had internal bleeding. Before I could get the question out however, she looked pointedly down at her lap.

"Oh," I said. And then the silence in the bathroom got heavy, like a block of cement to which someone is chained and tipped off of a bridge. It became so ponderous that I struggled to remain upright, and finally opened my mouth to say, "You're not dying." She looked at me, doubtful and mistrusting. Her face seemed to say, "How would you know, with your frumpy skirt and your grimace for a smile?" There was fear still, gilding her brow and hanging from her ears, but I could see a small pinwheel of hope in the middle of her eyes.

So in the dingy bathroom, crouched on the floor when we should have been at our desks studying the Trail of Tears, I unpacked the box of secrets, passed over all the pieces of information for her to shake out and inspect. And she cried again, gripped in a mixture of panic and relief, and I felt uncomfortable and picked at my cuticles. And then she mumbled a thank you and shuffled from the bathroom.

As I headed back to my desk and the mistreatment of the Cherokees, I wondered why her mother hadn't told her, the way mine had. I wondered why she'd been allowed to stroll down the alley of childhood toward the intersection of adulthood with a blindfold on. Up until this very moment, I had believed with the absolute certainty of a child that all adults told the truth, always. Now I knew that they did not. Grownups didn't always act as they should, and with that abrupt realization, I became one.



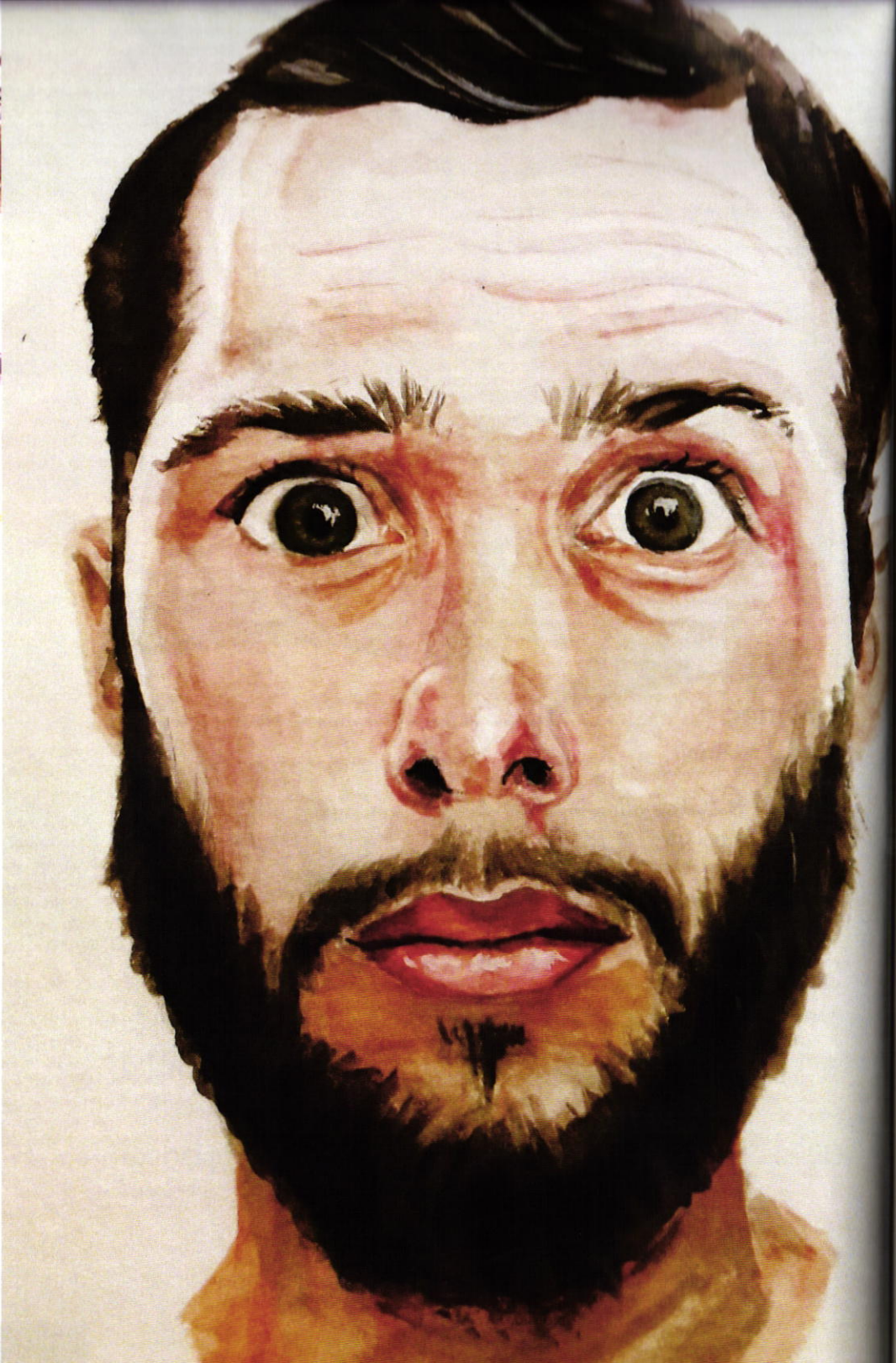


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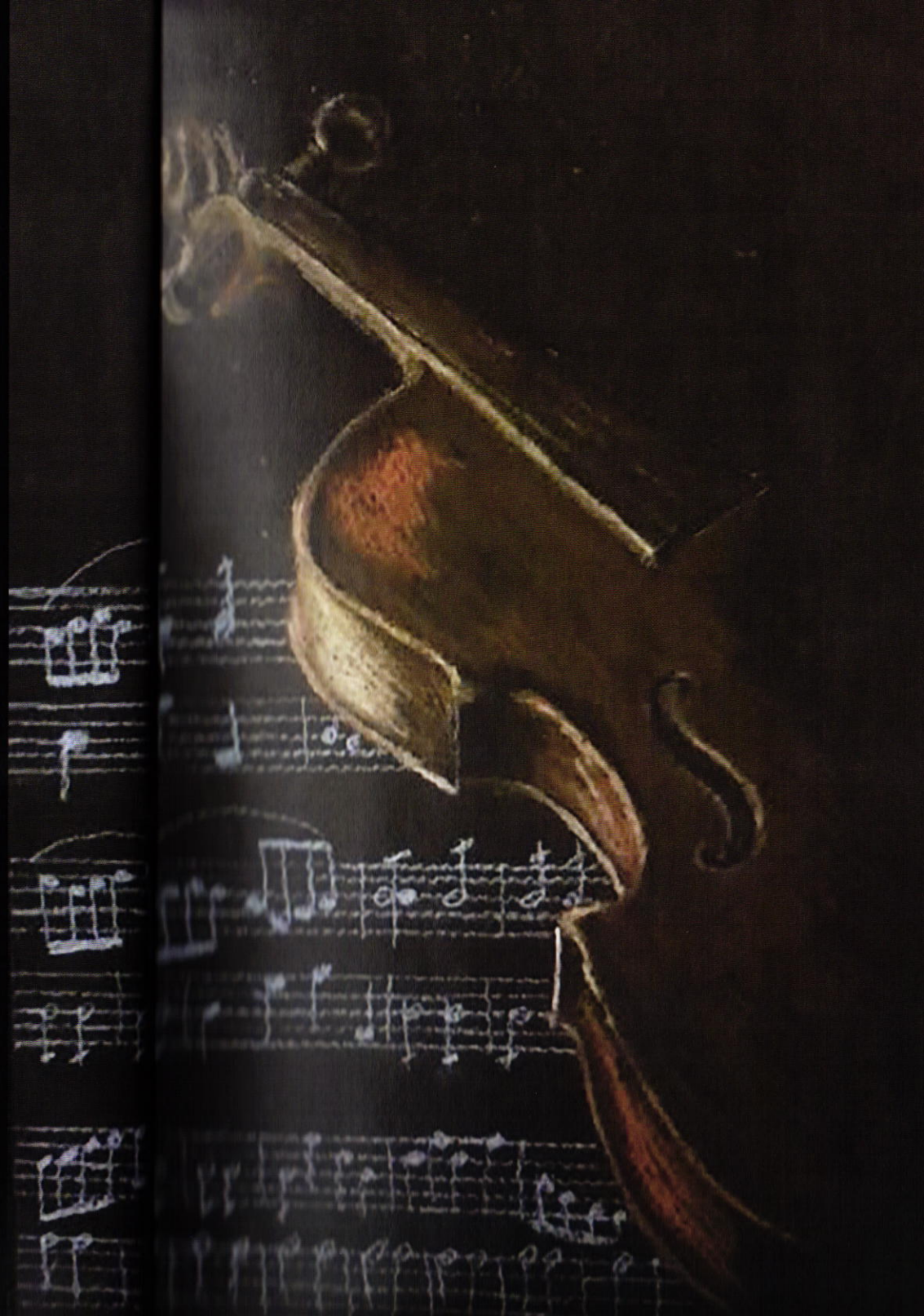
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Quizzical
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London

Rachelli Schechter

Untitled

Michal Neiman



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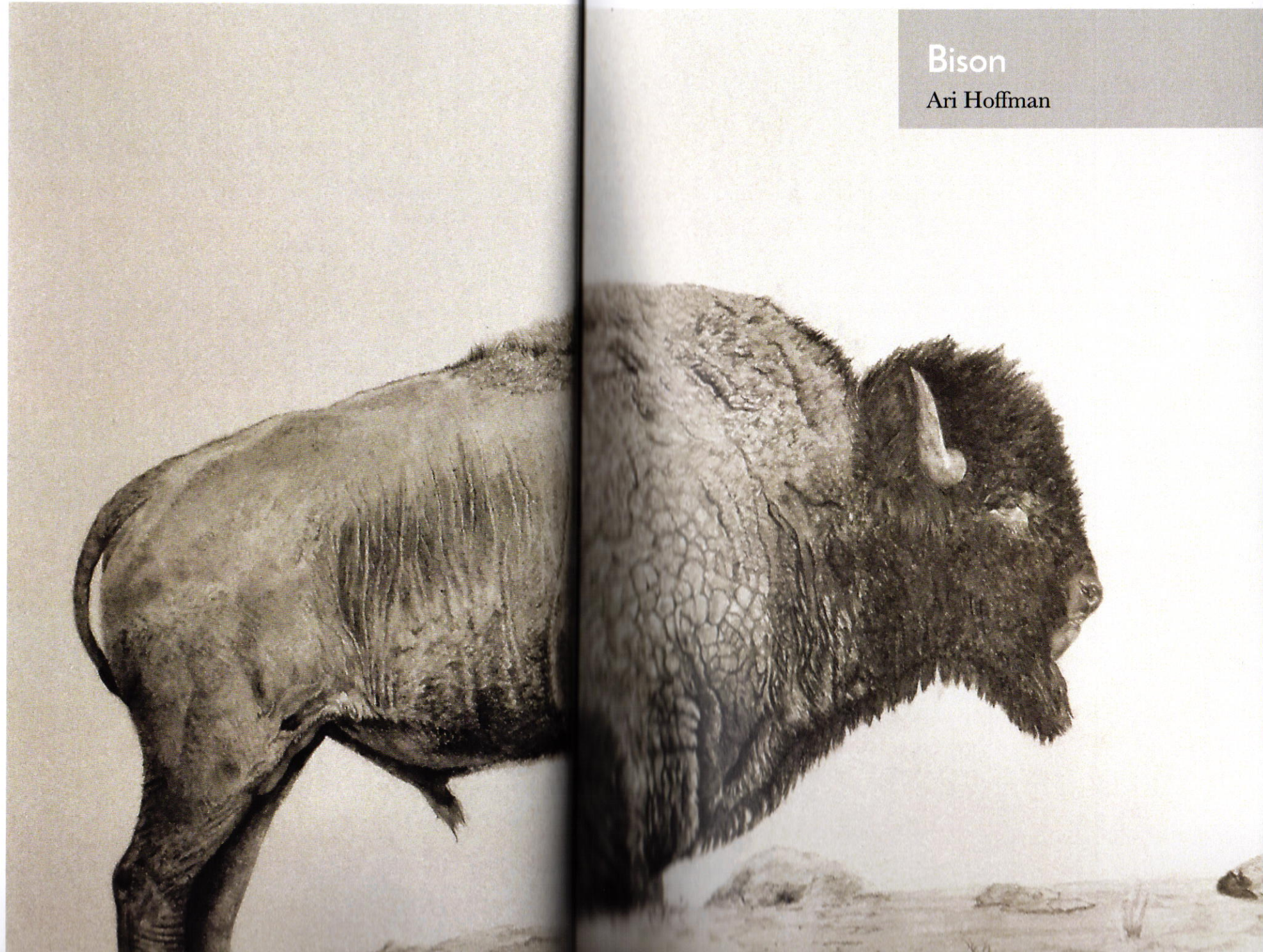
Night Out

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Forays in Art

Masha Shollar

I made that face of concentration my mother didn't like, pulling my eyebrows in and wrinkling my forehead. Every time I was caught contorting my face so, my mother would make little tsking noises, smooth the lines with her warm fingers. But I needed to concentrate -- this was serious business. An entire honey jar for me to paint as I liked. It had to be good. No, more than good. It had to be beautiful.

I needed a game plan, to make a sketch or something. I well remembered the only other time I'd been in the store, last summer with Mom and my siblings. We'd each chosen a character from Winnie-the-Pooh to paint. I'd selected Eeyore and started in exuberantly, bold strokes of color slashed across his hunched torso. But I hadn't thought it through, just squeezed the first colors I saw into my palette, nestled in their little compartments, beaming up at me with possibility. While everyone else had consulted and planned and examined, I'd leapt right in. But the colors had swirled together to form a depressing brownish green, and Eeyore, already drab, had faded further into non-descriptness. I remembered looking up in the moment after completion, feeling triumphant and artistic, only to see everyone else still hard at work. My sister Ella was doing a perfect job on Pooh's shirt, of course. I admonished myself; don't expect to have done better than Ella! She can draw flowers perfectly! But my brother Chaim's Christopher Robin was beautiful too, his hair slowly morphing from snowy white to chestnut brown. The only person who'd finished too, and who was examining her Piglet intently - who was also sporting a similar khaki color - was Esther, but I didn't feel comforted by this. Esther was a baby. It was no achievement to have done better than her.

So that's why this jar needed to be better. I wanted people to look at

it and exclaim the way they did with Ella's art. So this time I had a plan. After all, it wasn't every day a classmate had her birthday here; who knows when I'd have another chance to prove my artistic prowess? I'd prowled in front of the paint table for a solid twenty minutes, choosing my colors more carefully than Paris chose the recipient of the golden apple. It had to be precise, perfect. And I'd mapped out my design, using a pencil to draw the stripes, the honey, and the apple. A honey jar for Rosh Hashana, a jar signifying a clean start, fresh and mapped out as precisely as my color choices.

When I was finished painting, I knew something was missing, the piece de resistance that would make my jar that much more special. What was it?

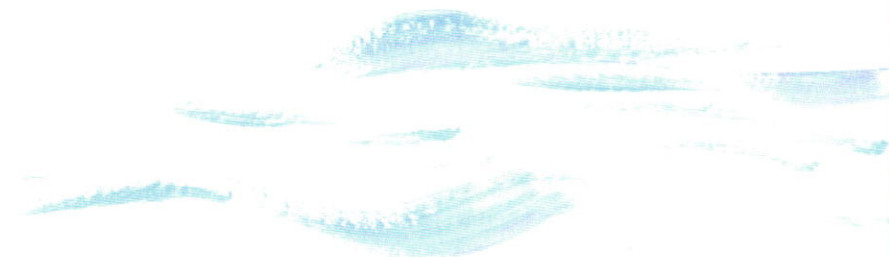
Then I remembered my family trip that summer, to New York City. We'd gone to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, my first time there, basking in the cavernous halls filled with real beauty, better even than Ella could draw. Some of the paintings were boring, or scary, or confusing. But there was one that I loved: a theater, full of stuffy, vaguely uninteresting people with odd glasses that had only one lens. But on stage... on stage there were ballerinas, clad all in white, and they seemed to be in motion even though the paint stood still. The smudged edges of the dancers, their ghostly garb, made them whirl and spin like dervishes, like phantasms, and looking at it, I felt scared and excited all at once. My mother told me that the painting was by a man named Degas. When I asked her how they could know who had created such beauty, she pointed to the lower right hand corner of the canvas. In small cursive, he had written his name, and the date. I remember wondering why he would sign the painting. Didn't it ruin the beauty, tiny as the words were, to put his name on it? Besides, he didn't need to write his name on it -- wouldn't he always know that he had painted the picture? Shaking her head, my mother explained: the signature was not for him, but for others, so that people who wanted to buy art for their homes could know who had created the painting they loved. I still did not understand. "Think of it like a treasure map," she told me. "The painting is the treasure, but it's buried, so nobody knows how to find it. But the artist's signature is like the big red 'x' on the map; once you know where to look, you find the treasure." Impressed, I glanced around the gallery, wondering if all these people were here to find treasure. Out of the corner of my eye, I watched the security guard, and I imagined him wearing an altogether different outfit; a striped shirt, ragged pants, an eye patch and a peg leg. A bird would be perched on his shoulder. For wasn't he a pirate, keeping an eye on the treasures in this room, making sure they weren't dug up and stolen away in the night? He had to keep those xs a secret, a secret I shared with only him. And my mother of course, who knew all about the treasures.

As we left the gallery, something else caught my eye: a woman standing before a painting, crying. Why was she so sad? What was making her cry like that, in front of everyone in the gallery? I knew that to cry, something terrible must have happened; I had cried in school once, after being chosen last for the

teams at recess. Maybe she had been chosen last too. I tugged on my mother's arm, pointing out the silently crying woman, postulating that she had been bullied, perhaps. My mother smiled. "She's crying because it's beautiful," she told me. "The painting makes her cry." To cry because something was beautiful? It made no sense. Crying was for sadness; smiles and laughter for beauty. Adults made no sense.

I'd finished my honey jar: gold and vermillion stripes, a bee (a little lopsided, one wing conspicuously larger than the other, but no matter) and an apple, dripping with sweet honey. My masterpiece was complete. Then I remembered the museum, the signature. Perhaps my art would be wanted someday, by somebody. But they might see it and look for a name and, finding none, leave it alone, sad and forgotten. This honey jar was my first real piece of art, and it must be signed to be worth something. But I hated to ruin those beautiful stripes, that sweet little bee... A compromise occurred to me. I would sign the bottom; they would need to hunt, like with a treasure map, but the "x" would be there. Feeling generous, I decided to date it as well -- like Degas.

As I carefully turned the honey jar over onto a wad of paper towels, a mother arrived. The birthday party was winding down, and she was there to pick her daughter up. I dipped my paintbrush in inkiest black, and carefully began to write my name, hunkered down over the jar, brow furrowed. I happened to glance up; the mother was crying. For a moment, I felt a swoop of fear in my stomach; adults were not supposed to cry. Then I remembered the other woman who had cried in the gallery. Maybe this mother was crying from the beauty of it all too. Perhaps -- I dared to hope -- she was crying with the beauty of my jar. That must be it, I decided, hunching over my masterpiece again, my name sprawled across the bottom. All that remained now was the date, and then I should be as much of an artist as Degas. My teacher had written it in large, neat letters at the corner of the chalkboard only that morning: carefully, painstakingly, I painted it on: September 11, 2001. Then, satisfied, I leaned back in my chair surveying my handiwork. My gaze wandered back to the crying mother. Yes, I thought to myself, she was crying from the beauty of it all.



This is Water

Miriam Renz

I really never thought I would get up from the carpet. So many others had left dirty laundry, dropped their backpacks, or even laid on it just like me. I was stuck to it. I think of this semi-lost memory as a deliberate forgetting -- all I remember is the moment when I lay down on my side, crying, feeling more empty than I ever imagined a person could feel. Trapped in my dorm room all week, I wore my mom's old L. L. Bean red flannel shirt. I lay in bed eating raisins, the only food in my room.

Monday through Thursday -- nothing. Twenty class periods missed. Papers overdue, tests neglected. Day after day, I woke up after my first class had already begun, probably about 10:30 AM, only to confirm that the world was surely too creative, too capable, too alive for me. I didn't believe in myself -- my friends and professors emailed and called, but I didn't answer -- I was too tired to care. With a predisposition to mental illness, I fell into the darkness.

After a week or so, I mustered up the strength to revive myself. A friend had mentioned an uplifting David Foster Wallace commencement speech that, in my friend's opinion, could cure all illnesses. It was titled, "This is Water" -- a

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title that didn't evoke much meaning for me, but I was willing to try anything in my moment of paralysis.

I found a recording, rolled onto my back, and let it wash over me. Glancing over periodically to see the face of the speaker, I saw a ragged-looking guy who coined phrases and vividly described the nagging of supermarket checkout lines. His glance into human darkness grabbed me as he recounted once leaving the grocery store to be told by the store intercom to "Have a nice day" in a voice that [was] the absolute voice of death." When he said "the absolute voice of death," was he referring to my voice? Had my life become a constant checkout line? He continued, imploring the listener — me — to maintain patience in these frustrating moments. It was as if he'd joined me on the floor, on my level, in my vortex. Wallace had come to help.

Being pushed around by the unpredictable current of my depression, I decidedly returned to my solitude. Too drained to even turn off the recording, I heard Wallace reference a statistic about suicide — most suicides occur by a gunshot to the head — later explaining that this was likely a result of a person's hatred for his or her own brain. Adding to the pain this caused me, he said that "most of these suicides are actually dead long before they pull the trigger," suggesting an alternative to the standard definition of life. Considering what I'd just heard, I thought that an act of suicide was so deformed, so unjust; I didn't realize, though, that I, unlike suicide victims, did not hate my brain.

This realization helped me regain my inner strength and I sat up. I took such pride in the mere attempt to reclaim myself. I wondered, is this the moment when it ends? Grabbing the opportunity just as Wallace had grabbed me to hear his words, I searched for more information about him on my computer. I thought, Here we go, Miriam — we're coming back. That is, I thought this until I arrived at the David Foster Wallace Wikipedia page: He had committed suicide.

I was shocked. How could a man with such empowering thoughts to offer the public not feel empowered within himself? His speech was saturated with instrumental ideas of life and living, fighting to feel alive and to be active in our own lives. How could a mind like his suddenly be stripped away of its extraordinary life and, moreover, how could he leave me to fight alone? I needed him, I needed his support and guidance, and now it was gone...

Then, I realized, all the things Wallace had said were still as true to me as they had been just minutes before learning about his death. Pleading for his listeners, college graduates, and general masses of people, Wallace said we must maintain perspective in our struggles with life, and for some, struggles with death. The New York Times published an article immediately after Wallace's death in which a friend of his was quoted saying that Wallace helped others create in themselves the courage they lacked. The friend said, "He told me not to be afraid." This moving depiction of a suddenly fragile man, I hesitantly absorbed these words, really listening to what Wallace had taught me when I

needed a voice outside of my own head. He told me that, "it is unimaginably hard... to stay conscious and alive, day in and day out," something he unfortunately could not do. With this information, though, I resolved to stay alive, to remain as "me." His speech had worked.

Now, on the same dorm room floor that held me a year ago as I wept, I see it as a floor — that is, just a floor. Though the floor is a little worse for wear with anonymous piles of dust and papers strewn about, city maps hung along the walls, technicolor Christmas lights that often illuminated the darkness during my "Raisin Diet," I sit here now, knowing that I will get up.

When I began processing Wallace's death, I recalled a discussion that took place in one of my literary theory classes during which we discussed "the death of the author," a principle that suggests the reader sever any ties between the text and the person who wrote the text. This idea had never felt so real to me until that moment, finally applying it to someone I had just grown to admire, only to be denounced from his own text. This mournful feeling lasted only until I reconsidered my own depression: I had been so dehydrated, so deprived of basic necessities of life. But Wallace, even from his grave, had offered me a sip from his own glass. I agree with Wallace's sentiment that life is sometimes "unimaginably hard," but I also agree with his idea that "hard" and "impossible" are not synonymous. Now, for the last time before I leave college for my summer break, I sit on this floor, feeling Wallace's presence in this space, in my strength, and I know that this is water.



And He Gave Her Paris

Neta Chizhik

It was more of a plea than a request. Nina had called knowing she would convince her; she was the one granddaughter who could never say no to her. To most people this would be called guilt-tripping. For this family, it was a way of life.

“Just for an hour, I promise no more than that.” Grandma, who went by Nina, even by her grandchildren, for fear of being aged and mistakenly associated with that generation, knew she would have to offer something more, sensing her granddaughter’s hesitancy would only grow. “You can even watch a movie together. I think we have some DVDs lying around somewhere.”

Anything to get the fifteen-year-old to engage with her elderly relative, or at the very least, do a favor for her grandmother.

She finally showed up forty-five minutes later, crossing the lawn, indignant that only she had to help, that her siblings could spend their lazy Friday afternoons leisurely swimming, pushing each other on the hammock, painting each other’s nails. Even if they weren’t to do such activities, suddenly she imagined they would be having a splendid bonding experience, one which she was not privy to.

But Nina had needed me.

And so she trudged along, up the small set of stairs, and stood by the porch, enclosed by a screen, or the remnants of it as the many cousins had had their way with the netting, despite incessant cries from their parents not to do so.

He was sitting there, stoic, on a wooden chair that stood out amongst the floral dacha furniture. His white hair, perfectly combed, ready for his eve-

ning walk, but first his afternoon tea. He was turned away from the street, away from the children screaming on scooters and their nannies who scolded them to return to their bungalows and finish their soup, deeming the summer heat irrelevant.

He was turned away for good reason. He was reading the Times, from a few days ago, as he waited for his daughter to return with the newest issue. It was never something he asked for, yet he waited diligently, sharing his excitement when it arrived. At one time it had been the resource he used to learn English; but now he fondly clutched the paper, reading with ease, perusing as he wished.

After a few moments, she realized that he didn’t expect her visitation, and as such, had to cross the fine line of not startling him when entering.

“Tuk-tuk,” she said softly, opening the door that squeaked more than she remembered. He didn’t move.

He must have not heard.

She placed her hand on his shoulder.

“Deyd,” she said with a smile, kneeling slightly to give him a kiss.

“Ah! Nachas!” he proclaimed, delighted to find his great-granddaughter had stopped in. Softly, he pulled her into an embrace. Loving, but not suffocating. Quickly, she began to scold herself for ever hesitating to come.

“I came to watch a movie with you. Are you interested?”

If he prefers the paper, I have my book and we can sit together as is.

“Sure, you want to pick a movie? Here,” as he points at the VHS tapes piled up in a disorderly manner in the corner. As she made her way to examine the options, she realized most were in Russian. Reading them slowly, she began to offer him titles, hoping he could select one, as she did not recognize any of these films.

“Do you want some chai? V’nutri yest kakye frukti i kakiye kanfeti,” he offered. She politely declined.

“Deyd, let’s try this one.” She raised the tape for him to read. Squinting, he asked her to read it.

“A Window to Paris,” she replied in Russian.

“Ah, da, good choice. Let’s try it, and if you get bored we can always turn it off.”

She put it in and set up the volume, making sure to make it painfully loud so he could hear. She didn’t want him to have to ask her to raise the volume as she did not want to remind him of his aging.

He retained his position in the Red Army in their family: They looked up to him, and though his face aged, his arms moving slower and his legs less energetic, his features remained distinct. It was a natural part they wished to ignore, not in denial, but in defeat. They all made the effort to keep his morale up. To avoid thinking about his aging, they tried to remind themselves of how much he remained the same, in his sitting, standing. His impeccable manner-

isms made his edgy jokes all the more enjoyable, highly calculated in the most unexpected of ways. How many times he would ask his older great-granddaughters whether they had friends, most importantly, those of the male persuasion. And how he would nod, approvingly, paired with a mischievous smile.

As the film began, the characters emerged, set in a drab Moscow of the Soviet era. After a late night out, and a complicated drunken stupor, they open their apartment window to find themselves in the western capital of their world, Paris. Like all films from the Soviet era, she found it to be filled with commentary, some more, some less subtle. The grey, uniformed infrastructure, abandoned for the colorful, bright, breezy walls of a proper city. It was hard not to become a philosopher in moments like these.

For her this was a fictional film, a pseudo-science fiction plot of characters, leaving their grey lives behind and entering a world of forbidden intrigue. But for him, this was his childhood, his teen years, his marriage, his army days. His strongest, best years were spent there, not as discolored as she took it to be. He knew this world. He fought for this army, for this nation which later forsook him, threw him out, labeling him a dissident rather than the loyalist he was. But unlike her other relatives, he showed no remorse at leaving. He had left, taken his family along, and watched them grow. He had traveled the world with his wife, watched his family grow in ways and through opportunities that were only possible in the West.

She heard the movie stop, the sounds beginning to fade. The DVD must be scratched up, it's an old one. Her cousin probably burned it off of some Asian website. But when she looked at the screen there seemed to be no issue and Deyd, remote in hand, began to speak.

"I took your great-grandmother to Paris, many years ago. We went all over Europe. We were retired." He paused, she thought to reminisce, perhaps he had lost himself in his words and thoughts. She was glad to see him exhibiting her own similar habits, that her distractions and dreamy states had a genetic history. She smiled when she saw he had paused to straighten his shirt.

"We worked so hard all our life, to get there. The city was marvelous, and your Baba, even more so." He nodded in her direction, and she waited for him to continue. Most of her relatives never quite mastered the art of silence, it was part of their culture or something. Deyd must have missed that lesson, Ruski Sociology 101, as he was always comfortable with the way things were and didn't feel inclined to fill a quiet moment with idle chatter. She wanted to hear his next words but they never came. She smiled bleakly as he hit play.

She would later wish she froze this moment and cherished it more, sentiments she knew not at the time but would later dream of. She knew she would not enjoy many such experiences with him. Later he would be placed in a home, the captain defeated, no longer the most stoic man in his building. The nurses would shuffle him from cafeteria to room to porch and back. He would cry out, ask them when they could take him back, when they would return him

to Kharkov, what was holding them up, why were they keeping him there and not at home, with the chestnut trees and men playing chess in the streets...He would look up at them, his eyes tiring from pleading. He would know they were leaving him behind, with people in uniform who spoke a tongue he wished to forget. He would wonder where they all would go off to and why they couldn't take him with them. Home he'd say. And they would nod.

Later, she would resolve herself to this state, that he was still her Deyd, her army guy who somehow got away with all of the edgy jokes, seat at the head of the table always reserved for him. At one point he would stand and motion to his sons-in-law; this meant it was time for a song and out of nowhere they would belt out some song from their childhoods, the Yiddishe Mama, their voices bouncing off her aunt's small, Brooklyn apartment.

When he passed, they didn't know what to do with that seat. They kept it empty for years, walking by it uncomfortably, as though it had been boxed off with caution tape. Eventually, the cousins would grow and have children of their own, so more tables were purchased and parties were relocated to bigger establishments to house everyone. The songs continued, the toasts given, the jokes shared, men banging the table, approving of the anecdote, women throwing their heads back laughing. The kids grew into adults, going off to college but always making it home for the next gathering.

No one would say something was missing, but it was there.

Denial made a home for itself, leaving her with the comforting thought of immortality. She was not a believer of such mystical nonsense, she had always fought such philosophies and deemed them childish. She knew this not to be true and she would never wish to promote such naivety. But life was full of exceptions and this was just had to be one of them.



Tap Dancing

Masha Shollar



In my mind's eye, I could see it all so clearly. Lincoln Center at night, a crowded theater. The audience would be wearing evening dress, of course: black bow ties, piles of tulle and applied velvet, the sharp scents of many colognes and perfumes all mingling together. High heels and monocles, lipstick and furs, with a champagne bite in the air. An excited hum running throughout the room like an electric current. Then, the lights dim and the noise is replaced by cathedral-like silence, the hush that precedes the moment before action. A single spotlight pools on the scarlet and gilt curtain. It would sweep back, there would be a crash of drums and a wail from the horn section and then -- I step out on stage, and my feet make the music. I am like Savion Glover and Shirley Temple and Ginger Rogers all rolled into one glorious being. I wear the perfect tap shoes -- worn and comfortable, battered a little but more beautiful for it. It is a flawless routine, not a single misstep in it, and at the end, the crowd storms to their feet and applauds, bursting out into the sharp night air, convinced that they have just witnessed the birth of the next great tap dancer.

This recurring fantasy all started with those Shirley Temple movies. We weren't allowed to watch Disney princess movies in my house (unhealthy body expectations and always needing to be rescued by a man) and instead, my parents showed us lots of old musicals. Shirley was, for me, the height of glamour and sophistication: the sort of dimpled smile that made adults melt as though they were made of spun sugar, a sad, orphaned backstory that meant unprecedented freedom, and of course, her own mocktail. I would sit, mesmerized, in front of the screen, enthralled by Shirley and whatever interchangeable adult accompanied her. Those perfect curls that bobbed up and down and those stick-thin arms and legs swinging with such easy grace. When I tired of Shirley's tapping, I turned instead to Astaire and Rogers, later Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor, Debbie Reynolds and Cyd Charisse. After enough times watching them shimmy and float through life in slinky dresses and debonair suits, I knew that I had found my calling. I was absolutely convinced that I had a bright future in tap-dancing. There was only one problem: I'd never taken a single lesson.

I announced my career plans early and firmly. However, given that I'd

already quit violin after three years of lessons, clamored for -- and received -- short-lived knitting lessons, and cherished and dismissed the dream of fire-fighting, my parents merely smiled good-humoredly and moved on. But three weeks later, when I was still demanding dance like a character from *Footloose*, my parents relented. Once I'd been given the go-ahead, my younger sister decided she might as well give it a try too.

Our decision to become tap virtuosos began a trying time for our father, who chauffeured us around to different specialty shoe stores. I remember, after one particularly wearying afternoon, seeing him look up from a pair of patent leather tap shoes with a bleak expression. In the end, we chose the shoes that were most expensive, were bargained down to the ones that were designated for beginners, insisted that we wanted Mary Janes, and left the store with two pairs of black shoes which tied at the ankles in exuberant bows.

Proceeding along the idiom that "the shoes make the man" I figured my tap education was mostly complete, and that lessons would be more of a formality than anything else. But, formality or no, what I wore to my first lesson would be key. Shirley Temple wore lots of short, frothy dresses, but I didn't own any of those, and felt that it would perhaps be pushing my luck to ask my parents if we could make another lavish purchase so close on the heels of the shoes and the lessons. Ginger Rogers wore her hair in perfect marcel waves, but my hair had remained the same since birth: brown, thick, and stubbornly straight. Instead of a perfect helmet of curls, my hair hung like two lackluster curtains at either side of my head. What was the point, I asked myself exasperatedly, while confronting my less than ideal hair in the mirror, of learning to tap if I could not enjoy the feel of corkscrew curls bobbing along with me?

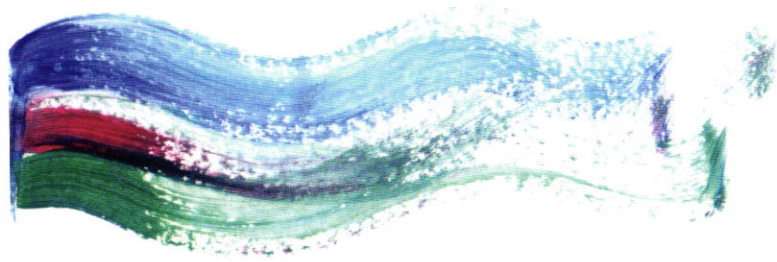
In the end, I settled on an outfit that seemed ideal to my ten year old self: I knew that dancers wore leggings, and so I selected a pair that I thought seemed reasonably athletic looking. I had no short sleeved shirts, and so I grabbed a pajama top instead. I tossed all of it into a bag, along with the new tap shoes, and headed jauntily out of the door, certain that I would tell the story of this first lesson someday, when I was a famous dancer on Broadway, or about to perform my first solo show at the Lincoln Center. "That one lesson was the start of something I couldn't have predicted," I would say, shaking my head (which would obviously be covered with perfect curls) and laughing in a carefree and assured manner.

I was not prepared in the slightest. Our teacher was far too disciplined for me and clad in an almost aggressively blue leotard. While I expected to cut loose in a poor but spirited rendition of "Good Morning" from *Singin' in the Rain*, she wanted us to learn how to spot. "One two three four," she commanded repeatedly, smacking her palms together with vigor at each beat, the slapping sounds echoing around the mirrored room, accompanied by the clinking of the plethora of gold-plated bracelets that adorned each wrist. Next to me, a woman in her late forties with spiky, red hair executed a series of perfect

fouettés while I gazed at her enviously. Certain that I could evoke the same cool elegance, I enthusiastically began to whirl, only to have the tap on my right shoe slip forward, sending me spinning into the mirror. It was distinctly unglamorous, and I felt my face redden and my shoulders slump slightly.

Five minutes in, I was sweaty and annoyed. I was not wearing chic blue pumps like Debbie Reynolds, and my hair was not dancing along with me. My sequined gown wasn't rippling along with my moves because I was not wearing one. Instead -- the leggings, which I had realized upon arrival at the lesson were really footless tights -- felt uncomfortably tight and revealing, and the pajama shirt I thought would make a great accompaniment was damp and wrinkled with sweat. I had never felt less glamorous or accomplished. I knew that I would not be able to tapdance up a set of stairs accompanied by a man in a swanky tuxedo. I would never wear a frothy green dress and dance with Gene Kelly by a fountain like some Parisian goddess. I wasn't a child prodigy or a glamorous dancer or the embodiment of *élan* and chic. I was just me: twelve, slightly buck toothed and sweaty, with absolutely no rhythm. It was a sobering moment: while confronting myself in the mirror I realized that I was giving up on a long held fantasy. After one, disastrous lesson, the dream was gone, popped like a bubble, as suddenly as if it had never been. I hung up my tap shoes later that afternoon, and there they stayed. I had accepted it: I would not be the next great tap dancer. That was not in my future. I would never have flying feet and graceful arms and a skirt that whirled in time with the clean, sharp taps of my shoes. The fantasy faded from my mind. Years passed, and I rarely thought of the Lincoln Center fantasy that I had constructed so lovingly.

But a few days ago, I went to see *La La Land* and now when I close my eyes, I can see saddle shoes and yellow dresses and I hear the strains of jazz mixed with the excited murmuring of a crowd as I take a deep breath and prepare to step onto stage...



Growing Up

Yudi Meltzer

There is a natural water pool. It possesses a cave like silence. Long jagged rock-crystals erupt from the lake, creating ledges which hang over the water. I sit on one such ledge, suspended. My back is against a boulder and my legs lay stretched out in front of me. A dark shadow extends from beneath my thighs across the shimmering surface. The sun glows. I feel it on my back and neck making my hairs bend skywards. Sixty meters away, I see white bubbling water cascading over a ridge. It pauses in the air for a timeless second before gravity demands that it fall. It looks as if it were painted by Van Gogh. There are platinum whites and Amarillo yellows. I notice blues and greens dueling for my attention.

There are boys swimming below, bobbing in and out of the water, laughing and exploring with youthful curiosity. The smallest nuance in a rock makes blood sprint to their faces, turning their cheeks a deep scarlet. One shouts, "Look what I found! This one looks like an arrow head!" They pretend they are Indians as they scamper and paddle through shallow water. I scan the water mechanically the way I am trained. I am a lifeguard.

I notice a large boy. His long hair and a pale face move awkwardly though the water. My eyes follow his slow movements. He is unsure of his steps. I hear myself calling, "You are moving towards deep water." He doesn't seem

to mind. The boy begins to bob slowly, just barely going beneath the dark surface. "Are you alright?" The words escape my mouth, but there is no answer. The boy resurfaces, and looks at me blankly. Everything is ok. Maybe. He disappears. I shout again, and hear my voice cracking. His dark hair is all I can see now. Droplets of sweat form on my brow and begin their descent. "Save him." The voice splits the air. A figure, arm outstretched, commands me. My heart is pounding in earnest as if it wants to puncture my chest and escape. Knees bend, shoulders square, and I dive.

Drowning occurs when a small amount of water enters the trachea, causing a muscle spasm that seals the airway. People are unconscious long before they die. The body that is trying to save you is eventually what kills you.

I slam into the water. Instinct has me thrust my arm forwards and pull. I see the boy's head rising to the surface of the water, and he gasps and tries to swallow the sky. He sinks back under. The boy is too far away. Just like a dream where your feet stick to the ground when trying to run from danger, I feel as if I'm swimming in mud: my body won't move forward. I try to pick up the lake and throw it aside, but it falls onto my face, laughing at me and damning me to fail. It's too late. A man scoops the boy out of the water and helps him regurgitate half of the lake. The boy coughs and struggles to regain a normal breathing pattern. He does. I float in the water panting, 50 meters away. Deep breaths in and out. I feel like crying. I had let the boy die. The lake is silent. Even the waterfall has become still. Nature is holding its breath.

Crash

Masha Shollar

Perched on the front seat of my father's Jaguar, I believe that I can see the entire world. My seat is far superior, I know, than those my classmates occupy in the backseat. From my advantageous position, the street falls out before me. I can see it all; now I know what my parents see as they drive the car, hands crooked casually over the steering wheel.

The car is parked at the top of a steep hill, Shady Avenue, whose road — I believed as a child — ran at an almost ninety degree angle, my own personal Everest. It was the road I would later struggle up in the winter, my feet sliding on the thick sheet of ice until I gave up, sat down, and scooted my way to school. But now it is Fall, no ice coats the road, and I have not yet begun to walk to school. I carpool with Fraida, who lives a block over from me, and Ilan — who lives I remember not where, but I do remember that he had a predilection for glue eating and block throwing which I, as a mature kindergartner, used to look down on.

We have just pulled up outside Fraida's house, a classic mid century Pittsburgh home, probably built on top of a coal mine, a steep flight of steps leading up to the sagging and crooked porch. My father gets out and shuts the door, heading to the passenger side where, he presumes, he will help Fraida out of the car and deliver her to her mother.

With the absence of an adult, I begin to investigate: the radio buttons, the air conditioning. And something new, a lever right between my seat and the driver's. I have never noticed this before and its purpose is still a mystery to me. All I would need to do to solve that mystery, I figure, would be to pull the lever and see what happens.

Accounts of the next five seconds differ. Many years later, when Fraida and I were in high school, we traded memories of that moment in the car. I have a very clear memory of wondering aloud, "What do you think this does?" and of Fraida leaning forward, black curls from her afro falling into her eyes as she peered over the seat, saying, "Pull it!" When I told her this all those years later, her afro by then less exuberant, tamed into a neat ponytail, she denied it categorically. "Actually, you said, 'Should I pull this and see what happens,' and I just sort of agreed." she told me. Both of us are sure that Ilan was not consulted: one does not trust a boy who likes the taste of Elmer's with an important mechanical decision, so Ilan presumably sat there, hapless and quiet.

Whether I suggested the lever pull, or Fraida urged me to do so, mere seconds after my father exited the car, I pulled the lever, which turned out to be the parking brake. The car, balanced precariously on the teetering top of one of the highest hills of my neighborhood, obeyed the laws of physics, and began to roll.

My father had just opened the door to retrieve Fraida when the car began its descent down the hill. I remember the door slamming shut with the force of the jolt, jerking the three of us forward against our seat belts, the straps straining. As I looked up out of the passenger side window, I saw my father running as fast as he could, tie flapping over his shoulder, hoping that he could wrench open the door and pull up the brake. I craned my head around as the car drew ahead of my father and I saw, as he got slowly smaller, the pure panic on his face.

Up until that moment, it had all been an adventure, a game. I had discovered what the mysterious lever did and made the car move like the grownups did. But now, my father was afraid. Fathers were not supposed to be scared. I knew this with the certainty of a five year old. Only children, caught as we were still in the fabric of our childhoods, were allowed to be afraid, to cry. But not fathers. At that moment, fear struck me like an unexpected punch, the force of it pinning me to my seat, leaving me unable to move.

I still wonder if I realized that I could push down the lever and undo my previous action. I don't know if I thought in terms of rectifying actions or working backwards at that age. (My logical brain at this point also wonders if it would have been enough to stop the car, even if I had been able to push the lever down.) With the incline of the hill helping the car along, we had reached quite a speed, and perhaps a sudden pulling of the parking brake would have made the car flip over. In any case, I did not attempt to put the lever back in its original position, though I don't now remember if this was due to a paralyzing fear, or because it simply didn't occur to me.

I don't remember screaming. I don't remember hearing Fraida or Ilan crying out either. The whole event remains suspended in slow motion in my mind, taking place over several minutes, or perhaps over several years, with many older — and more cautious — Mashas looking on, commenting and

wondering. However, in real time, it was compressed, brief. Perhaps none of us screamed because there was simply no time to do so.

The car continued its ever increasing roll towards the bottom of the hill, and a large intersection, where the local public high school sits, overlooking the sharp bend in the road and rushing cars. Before we reached that spot though, the car hit another with an almighty crash, coming to a harsh, juddering, sudden stop.

We had collided directly with the back bumper of a car parked outside the community rabbi's house. I was later to discover that the car belonged to their cleaning lady, who was presumably inside doing her job and would soon find the back half of her car folded upon itself like a fan. When we hit, I remember the windows shattering with a pop -- quieter than one might expect actually -- and the force of the crash threw us all forward. Though constrained by my seat belt -- thankfully still buckled, as was everyone else's -- my head whacked into the side of the door with a dull 'thunk' sound. Several hours later, a large bump would appear which I would investigate gingerly over the next few days, seeing how hard I could press before it hurt, a colorful reminder of my adventure.

Seconds after the cars hit each other, my father arrived, panting and white faced. I'm sure there must have been other people around by this point -- the crash had made quite a lot of noise, after all. I remember sitting in the front seat, trembling all over and feeling as though I were about to throw up. The three of us had still not screamed. We were pulled out of the broken windows, and I thought that this must be how firemen rescued people who had crashed.

After a thorough examination, I was placed on the porch swing of a family friend who lived on the block. I think the police may have been called, or perhaps my memory has simply drawn in a car and flashing lights where there were none. Like most children when they are afraid, I demanded my mother. It seems to me that I waited for her for hours on that porch, huddled in the bright sunlight. I felt like the loneliest person in the world, forsaken by my parent who should always be there when I needed her. She was out buying fish for Rosh Hashana and happened to have my father's cell phone with her, a clunky predecessor of today's smart technology. Rabbi Shusterman -- whose porch swing I was currently sitting on -- opened the phone call with the words, "Everyone's fine but..." What felt like several days later, I saw her walking up the porch steps. It was at that moment that the proverbial dam burst, and I began to sob.

The Jaguar incident became one that was referred to intermittently over the years, my older brother -- and less frequently, my father -- bemoaning the loss of the glorious car. Over the years, my lack of a driver's license has become tied to the incident, with my sisters postulating that subconsciously, I'm now too scared to drive. I don't buy it; I spent the summer after seminary learning to drive in Bakersfield, California, a podunk backwater town where I figured it was safe, since the stakes were low if I crashed. I learned to drive stick

shift on the mean streets of Brazil, where I had to honk loudly and fight for every inch of space in the thick fug of pollution that settled over everything. But it is true that I have never taken a license test.

The car was blue, by the way. Perched on the hood was the car's namesake itself, coiled back, ready to spring. Its silvery sleek body brought to mind Art Deco, and it's perhaps for that reason that the car lives in my mind as decadent and luxurious, its teeth pulled back into that impressive snarl. Standing in my pebbly driveway, I used to reach out tentatively, to touch the metal figure, hot from the sun, scared perhaps that it would growl and then pounce. In later years, when I discovered Greek mythology and spent hours lying next to the bookshelves on the third floor of my house, reading about the gods and their powers, the car passed into legend. Helios, an acolyte of the god Apollo, was tasked with driving Apollo's chariot -- pulled by two behemoth horses, one Thunder and the other Lightning -- across the sky each morning, towing the sun behind him, bringing dawn and light to the earth below. In my mind, the Jaguar was as mighty, as blazing. Ironically, the most well known story concerning Helios and his chariot involves not him, but his son, Phaeton, who stole his father's chariot, intending to drive it across the sky. But he lost control, and set the world on fire.



On Dorothy

Miriam Renz

I'm sitting in the lobby, smiling at the young receptionist who can tell that I'm anxious to come in, come out, to carry on with my fast-paced life. I admire the cleanliness of this place — the wood-burning fireplace, the immaculate carpets and chairs, window shades and heavy curtains that lightly trail upon the floors. Scanning the room I see at least two Purell dispensers and several more tissue boxes, just in case. Though the phone rings occasionally and there's some noise seeping in from the dining room, this place is eerily quiet, allowing my mind to imagine all the secrets and lifeless stories that lay in recliner chairs everyday merely recalling lives, rather than living them. I tap on the coffee table next to me, wishing I had brought a book, until my fingertips begin to smell of wood polish. Finally, I see a yellow tennis ball curving around the corner, passing the nearly empty bookshelves in the lobby and I know, it's her.

Her walker's metallic legs have been pierced by these fuzzy lemons to prevent slippage, which of course is not entirely foolproof. Having been trained by all the gasps and falls and injuries, I nearly drop my car keys and water bottle on the floor when jumping up to support her weak arms. "Hi, Grandma!" I exclaim, a little too loudly as I forget that she is one of the few women in her building who retains her youthful hearing abilities. "Hello, shayna-maidel," she whines to me sweetly in her Lower East Side Yiddish, simultaneously smearing Pepto-Bismol-pink lipstick across my cheek. The hush of her voice, the schlep of her walk, the exhaustion I see in her shadowed eyes, they have all increased. I worry, but only for an instant. Then, as quickly as the worry comes, it passes. "I am on a mission," I tell myself, "and I must do my granddaughter duty which, in this situation, is keeping my mouth shut."

Up in her room it feels like a sauna, except worse. Snooping while she's in the bathroom, I find a newspaper from several weeks ago. The kitchen has the scent of flat Diet Pepsi and splattered frozen pizza sauce on the inside of her microwave. A clip-on earring fallen behind her dresser peeks out while I pick up some barely legible business cards from her days in Albany. Hungry for the fading history of my grandmother, I explore quickly as I hear her muffled struggle to pull her elastic-waistband pants down far enough to sit on her raised toilet seat. I hear her struggling but I don't go in, not unless she asks. I must respect what little autonomy she has left, even if that means letting her struggle.

Opening drawers, I sometimes find overwhelmingly fluorescent clothes from the 1980s, sometimes I find pieces of my family's history that have been tucked away for safekeeping. In these hidden crevices of my grandmother's final years, I find lives from before her own birth. My great-grandparents' ketubah — their Jewish marriage certificate — signed by the rabbi of their shul in Borough Park (from 1905). The young couple stares blankly at the camera the way I've seen in Ken Burns films. Their stiffness entices me find them foreign and old, that is until I look more closely and spot the detail that my grandmother finds so meaningful: I have Celia's hands, the one detail of her mother that carries through the generations even though Celia's been gone since my grandmother was thirteen.

Hearing the toilet flushing and the scrapes of my grandmother's walker on the tile, I am pulled forward into 2016, quickly closing drawers, hoping that I'll have the chance to look at them once more before... I know that my grandfather's Purple Heart is in one of those drawers and, ever since he died, I've felt like it's been beating in that drawer like Poe's floorboard heart — calling me to return, to admit that I have regrets. Sadly, this will be for another time, another day. For now, it will remain safely in one of those white wicker drawers in its black velvet case, right next to Jack's other military awards. For today, my job is to let my grandmother rest her arthritic feet while I rehang her blouses and arrange her shoes so she can reach them in the morning.

New Years' Impressions

Riva Tropp

Early in the morning on New Year's Day, there is an hour when you can walk down Broadway and across Times Square and see no person or car, but the swirling remnants of sparkling confetti and plastic bags, beer bottles and tin cans, glasses and lost gloves tumbling in the breeze.

By the end of the week they will be gone, floated down the streets, swept up in eddies by the street-cleaners, sunk into drains and sidewalk cracks. People will emerge, blinking, from their boroughs, first gradually, and then in a great rush.

If you ever come to New York, try to stand on a street corner and watch the lights change and the cars go by, and the people dashing across. It is not as easy as it looks. The city lulls you into movement. It is easy to wander from block to block in no particular direction, or to cross a street you didn't need to cross, to get swept up in a crowd of people, then lose them for another. But if you stay, and stay for long enough, you will begin to get the feeling that you are the only still thing in the universe, or that everything is moving and nothing is still. Long after you leave, cars will orbit the city center. Trains will hurtle down their predetermined paths, businesses will flare up and die. The rivers will flow north and south, all the way around, as the city hurtles through space and through time, sunrise and sunset.

People think it is difficult to make an impression on such a great shifting thing, but that is not quite right. The mark of a person lies in every layer of graffiti on every building, every padlock weighing down the Brooklyn Bridge, every spot of gum on the sidewalk. It is easy to leave scratches on a rock -- but each, if noticed, is just a tiny glint in the periphery. Permanent, but meaningless.

Chrysler and Vanderbilt got closer with their buildings, I think, and the perennial sign-bearers, the subway dancers and street-side suicides that can make a ripple in the thoughts of a whole block for a moment or more. Otherwise, the rule is apathy, or something too transient for apathy; the non-engagement of moving parts, and that is how it stays, the people and the buses and the cars and the trains hurtling around the center of the city and out as the workday opens and the stores close up. The bars open up and people spill back

out onto the streets, duck into the subway tunnels and out into their boroughs, leaving just the residents curled up in their apartments and the drunks and the homeless on the curbs, and the late-night delivery trucks going quietly through the night. At three o'clock, the fruit vendors begin to unpack the day's fruit, four o'clock the taxis switch shifts and then the trickle turns into a rush and the working day begins again, over and over as the city cools over.

In December, the city sweeps up in a big wave down Broadway and Seventh Avenue, up forty-first and forty-second and ten blocks all around, huddled together beneath the spiralling snowflakes to watch the year go out. The clock ticks down from 11:59 to midnight, but time in the city is still.

Yellow Tights and White Walls

Neta Chizhik

For it was cold and her legs were tired.

Aching. Walking from room to room, her grandfather's voice bouncing off the white walls, as he described the vivid depictions of Jesus.

Why was it they kept these rooms so chilled? What of Jesus had to be preserved? Was he not already immortal? And what difference was there between the paintings? She knew the depictions varied but the value in the difference was not worth her entire Sunday afternoon. She also knew better than to ask of its historical background and relevance as she knew it would solicit an entire explanation that would only further delay her long-awaited meal. Her grandfather would lose himself in descriptions of the moods, the colors, the historical periods in a language she understood but could never quite get comfortable with. She felt burdened as her mind would work in overdrive mode, trying to piece the sentences together, translating the technical terms she barely knew in English, let alone her supposed mother-tongue.

She knew she should listen to the tour but she had been for what felt like years. Be patient, she'd tell herself, as scolding herself let her occupy more time and simultaneously amused her. I've become my mom, she thought.

Five more rooms, she estimated. She calculated it would be about ten paintings per room, twenty minutes per room. It was manageable, she sighed, resigning herself to finding just one more mind game. She had tried to play the horse-counting game in which you count the horses you see in every exhibit. It was her younger sister's favorite and was the reason they often found themselves going through old war paintings. But she, being the third in her family, needed more than a horse-game to occupy her time. Most her age were roaming the Jersey malls, an activity she never understood. But secretly, in that moment, something about such wasteful expenditures of time appealed to her. The girls like her, blond or wishing to be blond, twelve year olds thinking they were sixteen. The jeans they wore, constantly being updated to match that of the current trend. She looked down, examining her outfit, not quite sure what made her clothing differen but knowing she stood out.

She ran to her brother, poking awkwardly at his left elbow. He made the attempt to ignore her. They both knew she would stop at nothing until he gave her his undivided attention and once granted, she would have nothing to say.

"Sash, stop" he moaned, but he quietly agreed with her. His forte was the violin. Art was beyond him. And besides, it was Sunday and he wanted to play his football, regardless of his parents low opinions of the sport.

Her mother looked her way, giving her the nod, the "no, I did not pack snacks for you to walk around the exhibit with." She knew her mother was not the PTA mom of her peers, she would not bring backup shoes for comfortable long walks, and bottles of juice in case lunch was delayed. And she was mostly glad this was the case, she thought it was weird how obsessive these moms were with their food and attire. Her mom gave her books, not gift-cards to go shopping with.

She looked up and wondered what other in the exhibit thought of their group, the art historian leading this funky Orthodox family through Virgin Mary and her exposed son. Her grandfather waved his arms dramatically, as she envisioned him in his element, the theatre director of his days, his voice, the deepest she had ever heard in a man, emitting and enunciating every word, each syllable moving on its own.

She tugged at her bright, yellow tights discovering a hole. Pulling them up subtly, she hoped this would go unnoticed, that her denim jumper would conceal the hole that exposed a small patch of pale skin. She did not need more reason to feel drab nor did she wish to never hear the end of it from her grandmother.

Her older sister was taking diligent notes, following her grandfather exactly two feet behind, awaiting his words very carefully. She wished she could keep up with their pace but she knew it would be impossible. She wanted to whine with her sister about the long waits and dull minutes crawling along.

But she knew this would not work. Whining would only gain her disapproval, even from her "just as American as she was" siblings. So, there between all of the artwork, some of the supposedly, greatest works of the world, transcending through history and beyond, she would have to grow up. Just a tad. No more whining about her tired state, about her grumbling stomach. She would have to stop listing off all of the museums she would prefer to be in then the one they found themselves that afternoon.

And so she began with a small task, a change in habit: she would throw out these tights the moment she got home.

For it was no longer chilly and her legs were no longer aching.



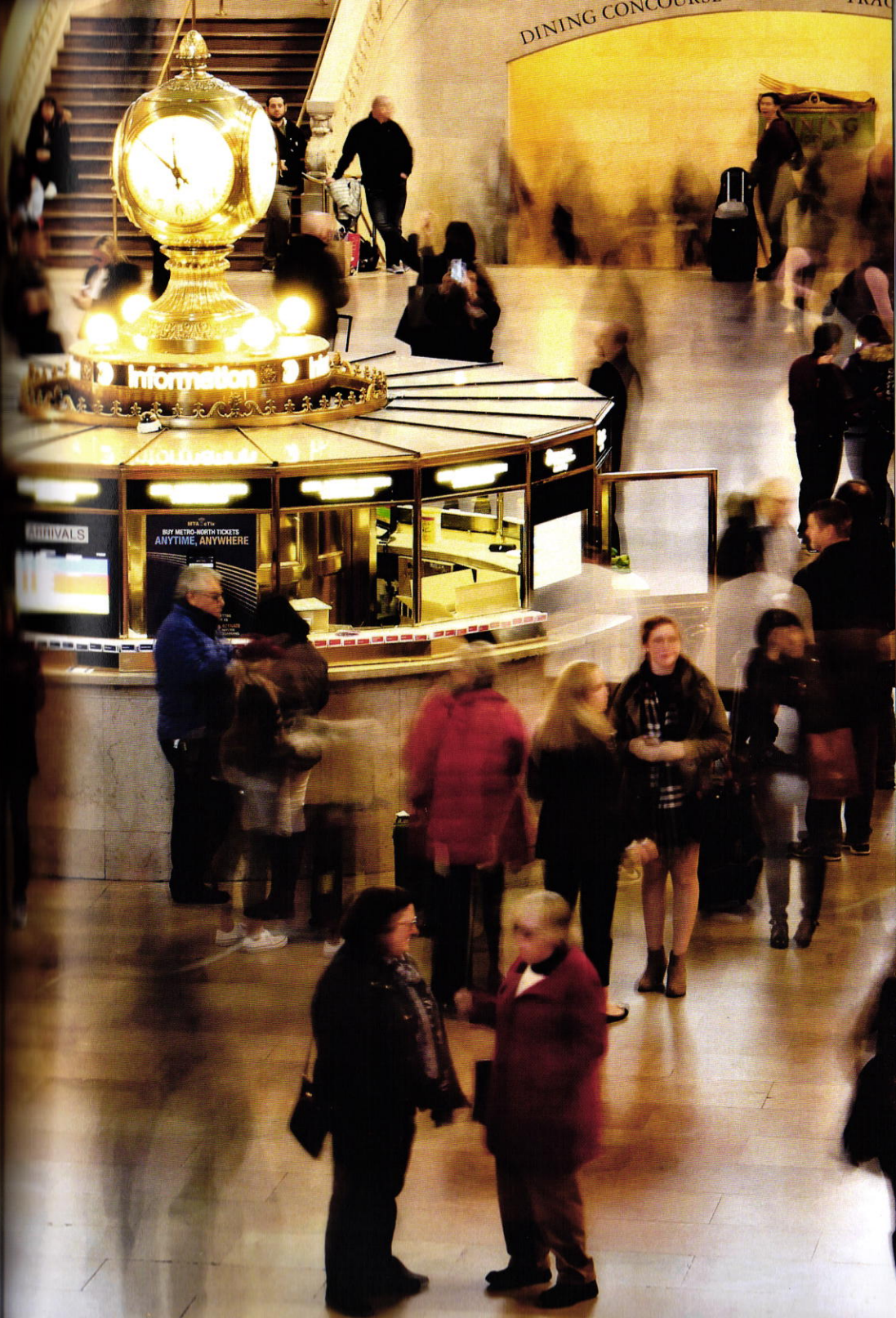
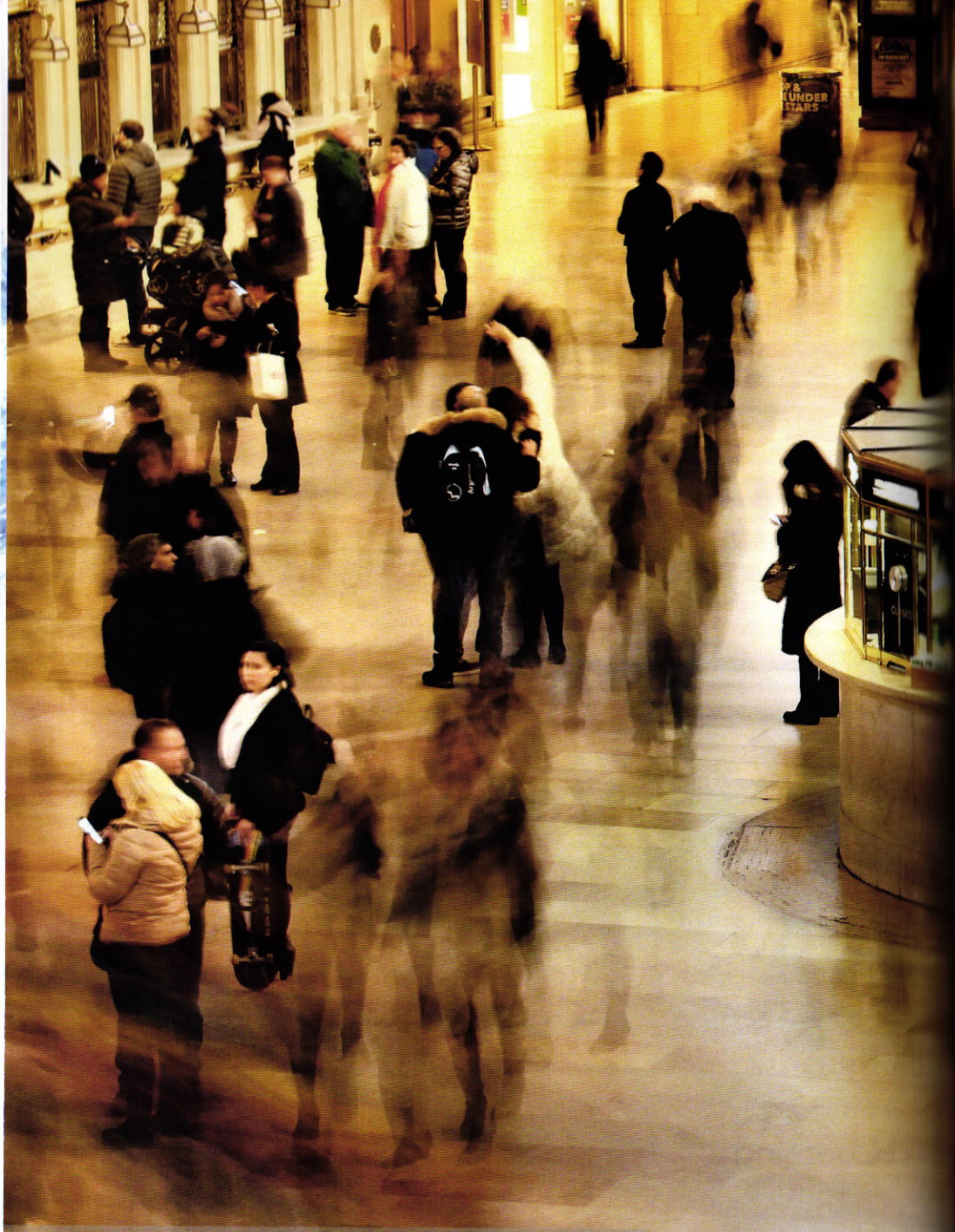


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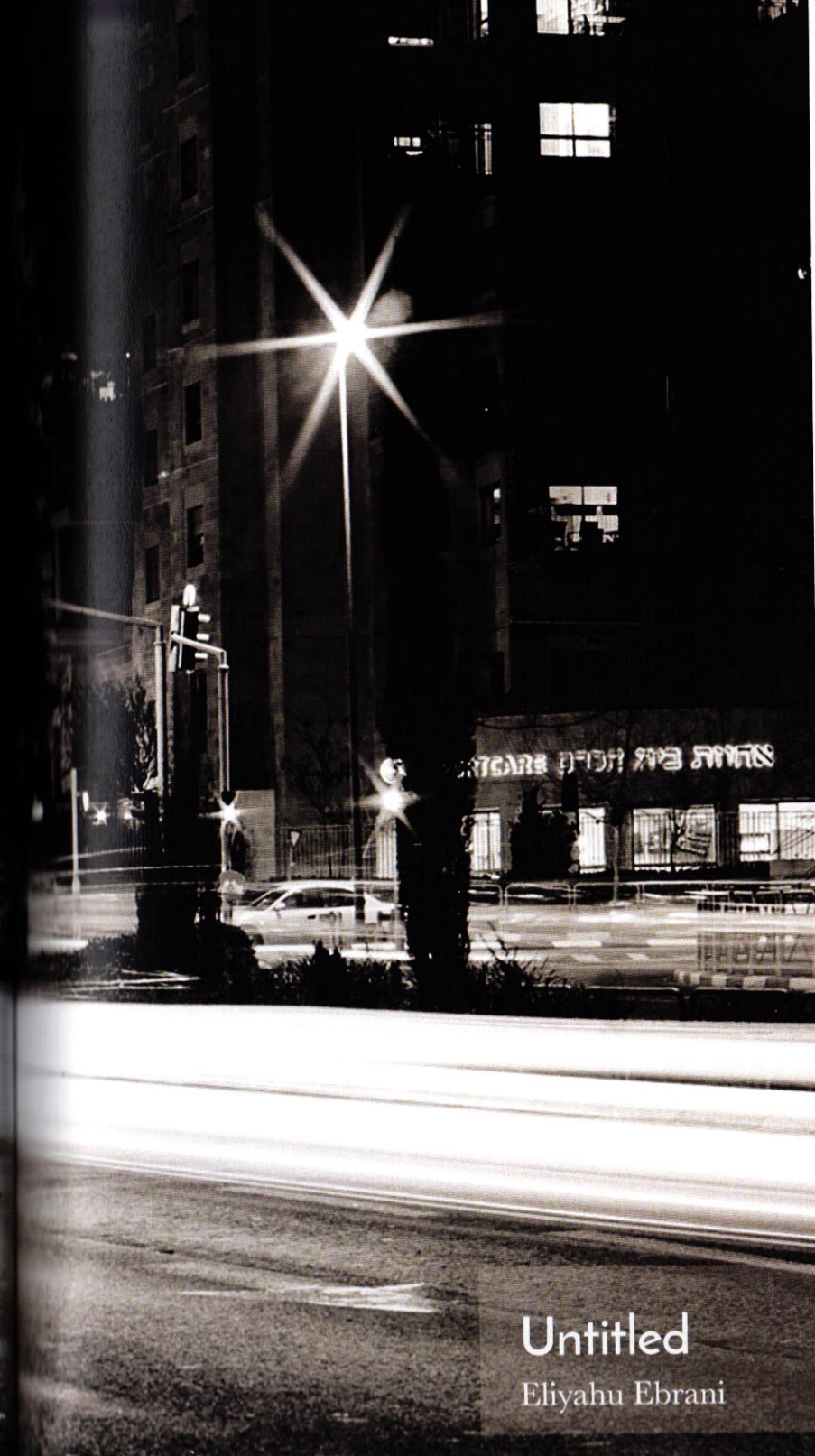
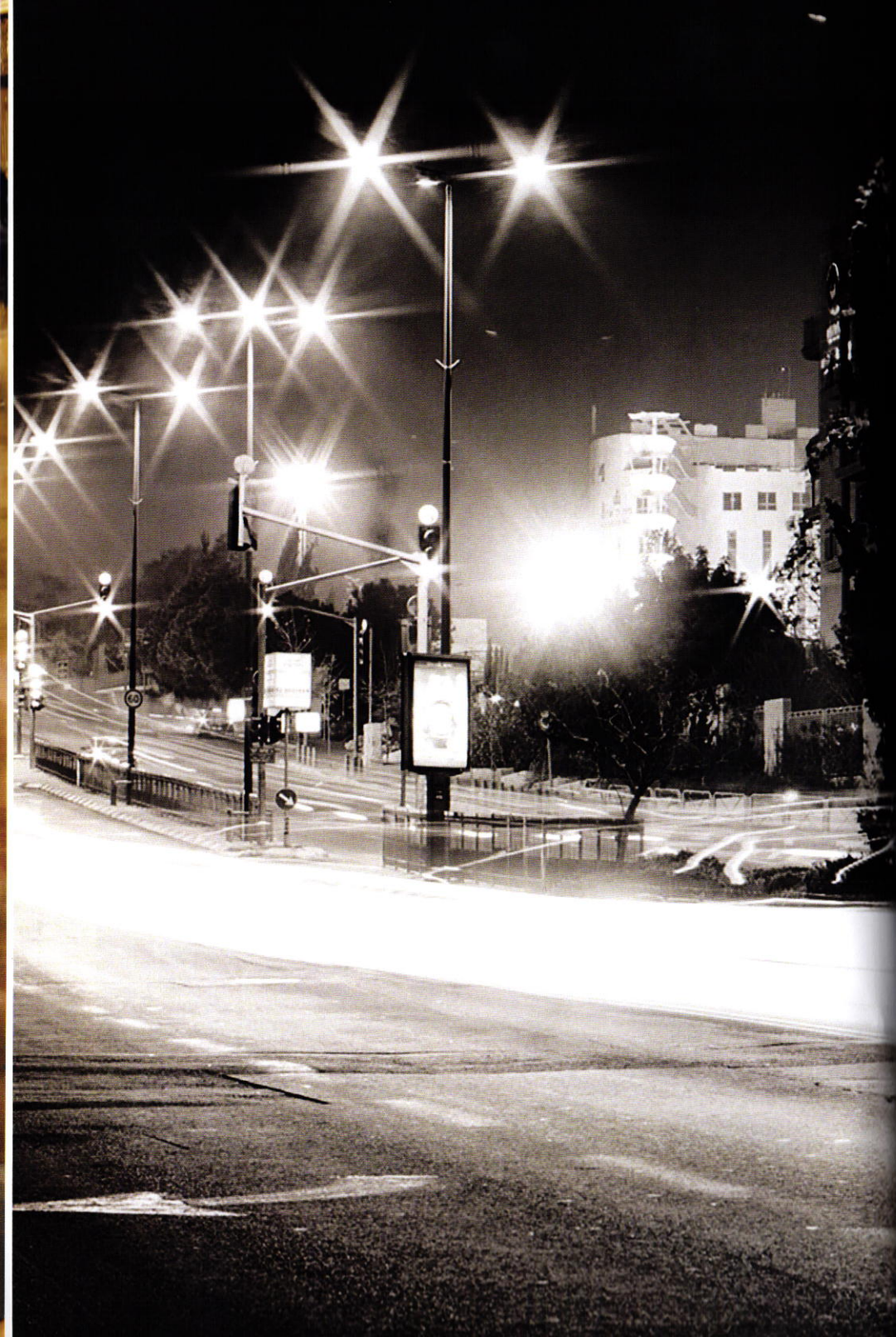
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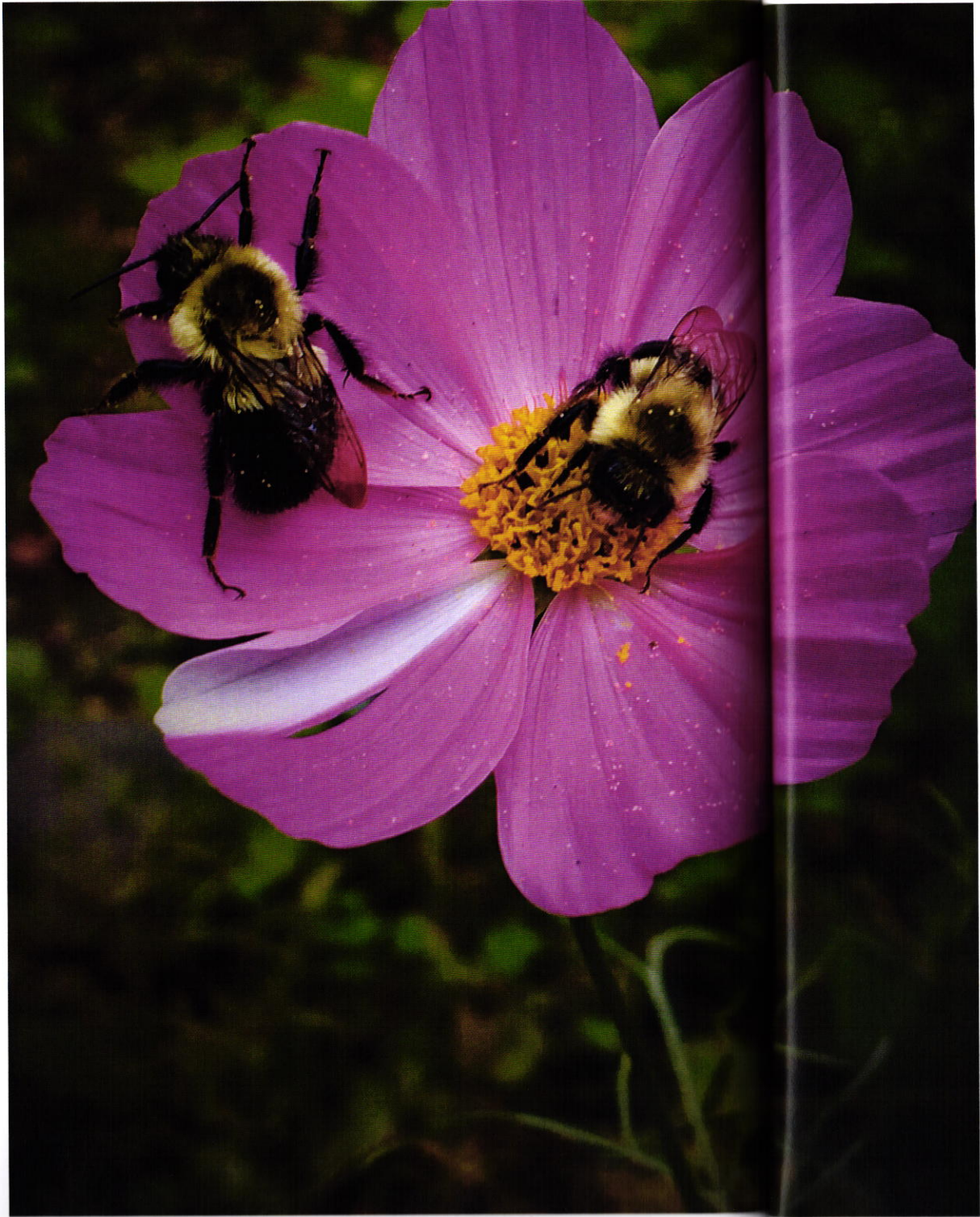


Hassid

Shlomo Friedman



Trees
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Dinner

Shoshi Ciment

I could tell you that
I dived into the sea
Played cards with the fish and
Watched the gulls
Read them like
Old men read newspaper

But I was never one for reality

I could tell you that I saw the leaves
And mourned their fall in winter
Looked at the child in the snow
And comforted him as spring approached

But I was never one for histrionics

I could tell you about the many things
That make up the bulk of my drawers
About purple sequins and shiny red buttons
I could whisper their words to you

But you would not believe me

So when the sun descends
And we find ourselves gathered together
Preparing for our nightly
Communion
Do not ask me
About the history test that scorched my soul
Or the essay that devoured my night

I will tell you it was great
The day was fine
Nothing more

And such will be our dinner table discussions

A programmed machine
I repeat the words by rote

Forever longing to tell you more
About my long days as a dreamer
But you
You were never one for my realities



Zika

Judy Leserman

Eyes suspiciously scanned my midriff long before the surrender to syringes and two metal stirrups, but two lines graced three consecutive sticks after the emptiness of would-be pitter-patters echoed on our condo's linoleum, so the pink princess party for Sandra's Suzy's birthday didn't sting me as sharply as that bug did when it tasted human flesh for the last time before he met my palm. Jenny Tolosa also got a mosquito bite, but that was back when she was on her way to Sao Paulo-Guarulhos International Airport.

The most common side effects include hot flashes, dizziness, and mood swings, and stolen downpours of tears in the third stall of the bathroom on the ninth floor before the client meeting in my office upstairs.

After what is considered two lifetimes in some states, the transducer smooths cool jelly over my red rash abdomen.

In my second encounter with a God who had answered me once before,
I beg forgiveness, because this necessity was born
out of my selfish desire to fabricate life

and I'll never forgive the mosquitos

or my blood.

Desire

Anonymous

Denying it only makes it worse.

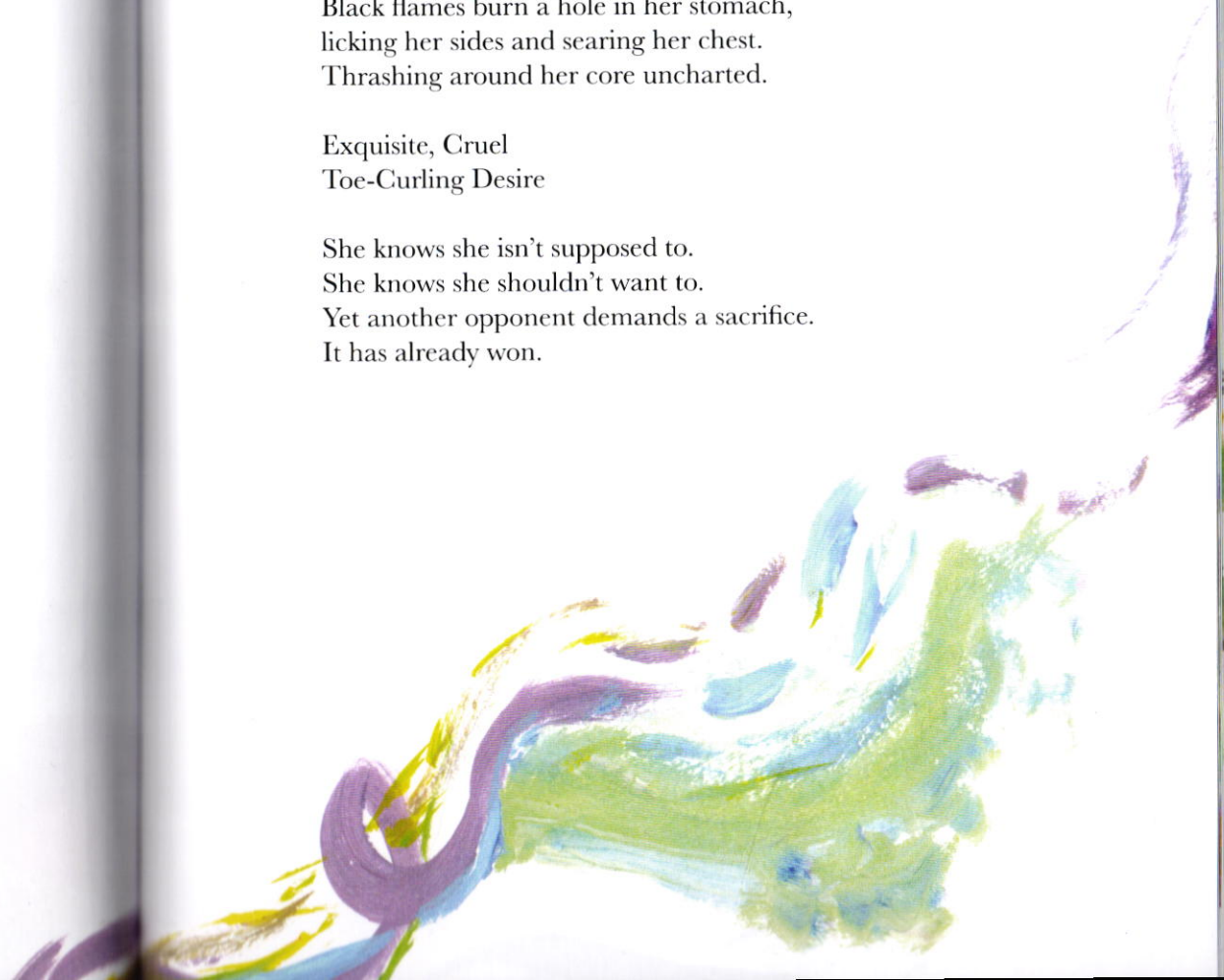
Her dark passenger, her inner Moloch is starving,
violently demanding to be fed.

She tries to ignore it.

They fight for control
Black flames burn a hole in her stomach,
licking her sides and searing her chest.
Thrashing around her core uncharted.

Exquisite, Cruel
Toe-Curling Desire

She knows she isn't supposed to.
She knows she shouldn't want to.
Yet another opponent demands a sacrifice.
It has already won.



Home to Harlem

Masha Shollar

I am going home to Harlem
And I believe that the blue skies
And the booming voice
Of the conductor
As he welcomes me in
Are a sign of things
That come and go:

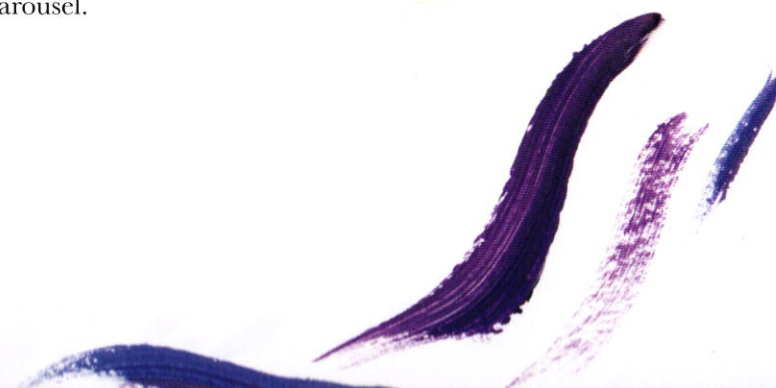
twisting streets of brownstones frozen in amber, preserved in a
snow globe, in one single, perfect moment,
shimmering and pregnant with creation.
Time's ferocious pace slowed here and instead
meandered
through the epiphany that hung in the air, sweet on the tongue
and so ripe that the juice of it dripped down the chin. Time
savored the words that paved the sidewalks and were festooned
in the trees.

Promenading strivers clogged the dance floors, their hearts
and heads so full of dreams that it made them buoyant; they
flew and spun through the air. Couples twisted to the music as
though Ellington were running an indolent finger over the keys
that stretched up and down their spines:
shudder and shake as he raced all the way up,
droop and swoop as he trickled
back down
to the
bottom.

The stomping of their heeled shoes kept time with the wild beat
of the big unabashed band, and it was sound
too big to be contained by a club,
too loud to stay in the streets of Harlem or among the
sky-chafing buildings
of New York. The clash of cymbals throbbed from the cabarets,
shaking the fingers of trees, rattling the paved streets, vibrating
the tissue paper clouds.
Harlem coming alive when the rest of the world was wrapping
itself up
In the cotton wool of sleep.

The clubs hummed and rippled with Jazz and the piano moaned
while the horns wailed as the music crescendoed into bursts of
ecstatic purple and silver.
And those drops of music grew into a pool of sound. The stars,
Punched out of a tin-can sky,
Preened to see themselves adorned so with the music, and writhed
and strutted until
The hammered-metal heavens bronzed into rose gold dawn.

So wild,
so grotesque and beautiful,
so dizzily fast and aching slow.
The whirligig of life spun around and around and around.
All of Harlem and its creators and thinkers
and believers and doubters
and dreamers,
Just clinging on to that
delirious carousel.



Vertigo

Rebecca Kerzner

Misshappen spots of heat pick her body back
trying to remember who it was and where
although a part of her, the nagger tries to allow
it all — but she knows she's just a hedon.

Hedon? Hedonist? Shifty strobes and vertigo
these are the tunes we eat and breathe
the cubes rattle in the glass slammed on the
table — the lights streak and shimmy with the beat

Questioning. She straightens in the mint green
she wipes her hair out of her face so she can
pump harder and let go of it all, no more chase
chasing truth, but proves hard to hold on.

The cubes seduce and ask for more rum begging,
there is only one droplet of control
before the vibrations swallow her whole, pumping.
Talking talk is always easier, claims innocence

Stomachs froth with the poison and slave
to the shifty strobes with few inhibitions
arms express freedom since they can finally
move in unison. Hedonism always gets its way.

Arms lose each other and forget worry
still prices get paid, you would think
that the end would show, it's a tough bargain
learning truth is always harder with this vertigo.

The seduction lays with the cubes, rattling
there are no rules here, nothing to be afraid of.
Here, lips talk and walk free, but do they really
think they are invincible? Everyone remembers.

Strobes stop shifting and it is light again.
The poison fades and her body is bare, white.
Do they count as “mistakes” in vertigo? Streaks
slowly scratch innocence away with a penny.

It's a hard bargain, hedonism, that smooth talker,
convincing preacher of invincibility, courage
and the freedom to spread love, but fails
to mention the inevitable end.

The oh-so freaky fade, the vertigo goes
faster than a blink and the cubes melt and
when they do, the water is clearer than glass.
Then the truth hurts. Was it worth it?



Have You Ever Seen a Flame?

Joshua Blau

Have you ever seen a flame
Appear from nowhere,
A sapling of light grown from
Address undisclosed
Upon some twisted cotton,
A wood chip or the like.

Have you ever seen a flame
Climb up and down,
Crawl all about,
Look for nonexistent exits
From the new sudden world,
Stuck rather to some lame
Victim of careless craft,
Inevitable
Deterioration.

Have you ever seen a flame
Grow to love and defend,
Stand on haunches
And calmly stare
At everything at once,
Waver on occasion,
Ne'er so much to impress
A false hesitation.

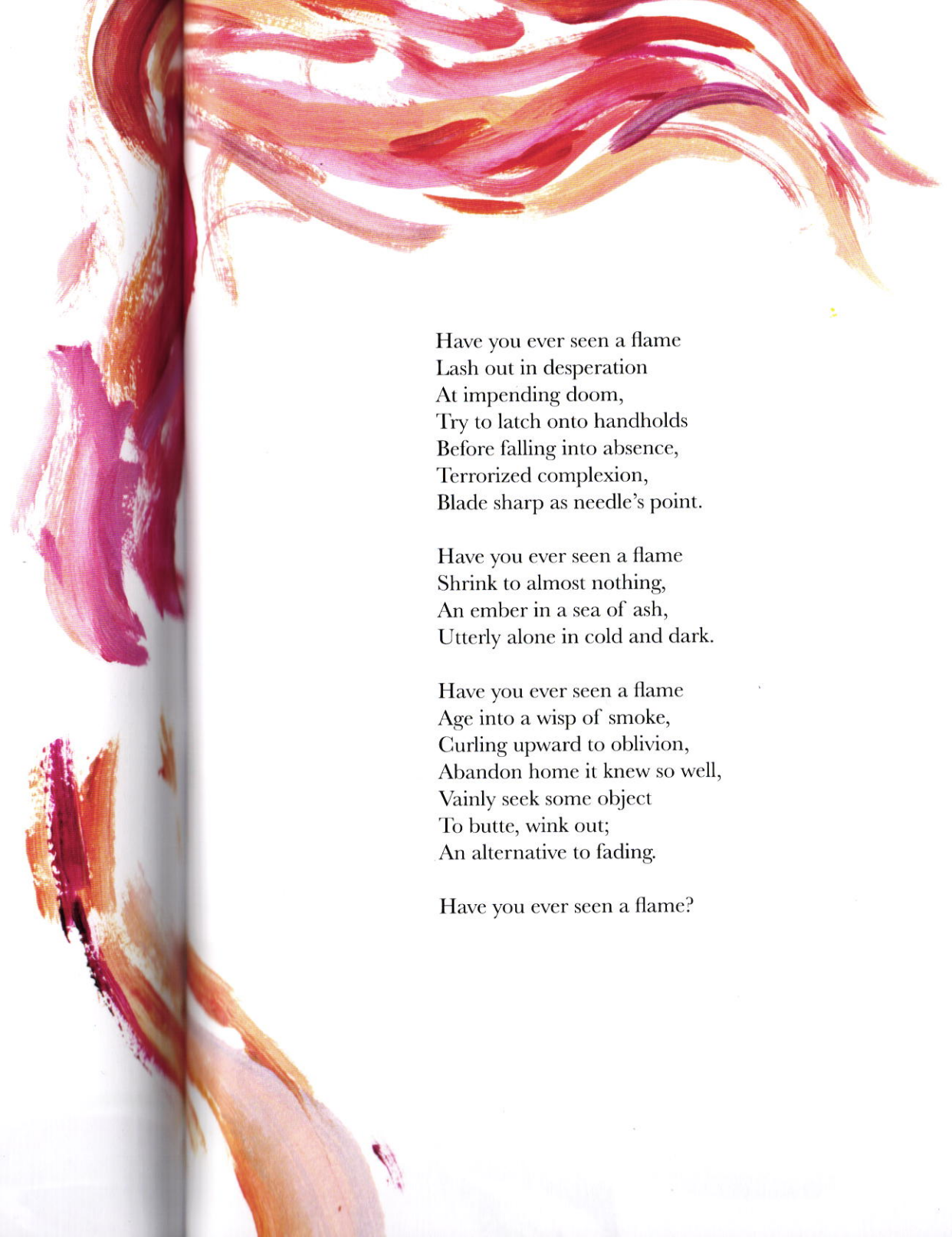
Have you ever seen a flame
Drunkenly dance upon the planks
Of an old creaking table
Ashen and overburdened,
Not a care but for
The drinking song,
Crackling, crackling.

Have you ever seen a flame
Lash out in desperation
At impending doom,
Try to latch onto handholds
Before falling into absence,
Terrorized complexion,
Blade sharp as needle's point.

Have you ever seen a flame
Shrink to almost nothing,
An ember in a sea of ash,
Utterly alone in cold and dark.

Have you ever seen a flame
Age into a wisp of smoke,
Curling upward to oblivion,
Abandon home it knew so well,
Vainly seek some object
To butte, wink out;
An alternative to fading.

Have you ever seen a flame?



Drowning

Chavi Charlap

If I drown will I swim?
If it's dark will I see?
If it's her that you want stop looking at me.

Do you care what it's like
when there's an open mic?
The crowd is waiting just to hear me say

one more. I promise.
No more after this.
It's easy when it's hard.
She's laughing when he's hurt.
She can't close her eyes.
It's gonna be a long night.

When it's thick is it thin?
Do I end or begin?
If we're running out of paper start cutting the trees.

Do you answer the phone
when it rings at home?
Is it easier to defy the rules alone?

One more. I promise.
It wasn't supposed to end like this.
A river or a bay,
she's drowning just the same.
As she closes her eyes,
it's gonna be a short night.

He should've come around when he
had the chance.

A daughter and a son in loneliness,
A father drowning in alcohol,
the children crying down the hall,
will it ever end?

The kids get good at playing pretend.
The world will never know.

One more. I promise.
No more, after this.



Fabulous Visions Separate Me From Life

Ariela Greengart

Story I'd see against our daydreaming show
Night free of weapons, fire
a sunburned single light
My mind dressed purposeless, lost
Heating with the sizzling of the walls

Bridges challenge the veil
breaking the barrier built by the brainwashed
Slapping the scaly fingers of the hungry witch

In this land, time is but not a concept
Eyes waking in living stars that I moved here
Swirling wind in the Starry Night
Train of my youth gliding past

Handsome queen, fabulous god
Face powdered in china-white skin
Shining valentine red, you stray
Madness miss the big sirens
Knocking pretty rabbit-holes at
kissed, joyriding, sweet, young girl
Dreaming.

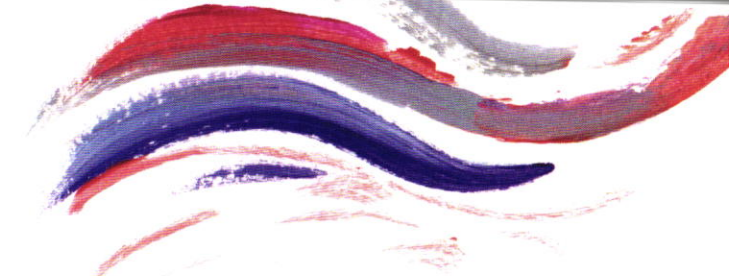
Live free and sing
You poor, trapped bird

“Charmings, woman, keep forever
Houses cast reason...”
Ivory band on the naked finger
Fearless cry with applause
Broken elaborate romance leave lines dark

You love me, open me to words of our sound
Our defiant song drawing us home

Push and Pull

Aliza Naiman



Far beneath the wings of my soul,
Here the little men, they push and pull,
Some say flee, some say keep,
All remind me of what I seek.

Commotion, motion, emotion compete,
Torn from fiber to molecular piece,
What to do and who to be,
Still no answer, I'm an amputee.

Begin to wonder, do I care?
Or am I scratching a leg severed,
Still to realize that it is gone,
Not yet ashamed, I argue on.

The clamor of questions only impales,
It can't muffle the disputes inside me,
Funny how when one's surrounded,
One only thinks of times unfounded.

Dare I think I'm above the cycle,
Of cocoons and fungus and a plastic bag
All competing for earth's embrace,
Am I the only poker face?

But all my musings birth a shard,
Of quiet recognition and acceptance,
Peace claps forth no more shall I see the.
Namastai,
Corpse pose,
For now, I breathe.

Frenzy of the Savages

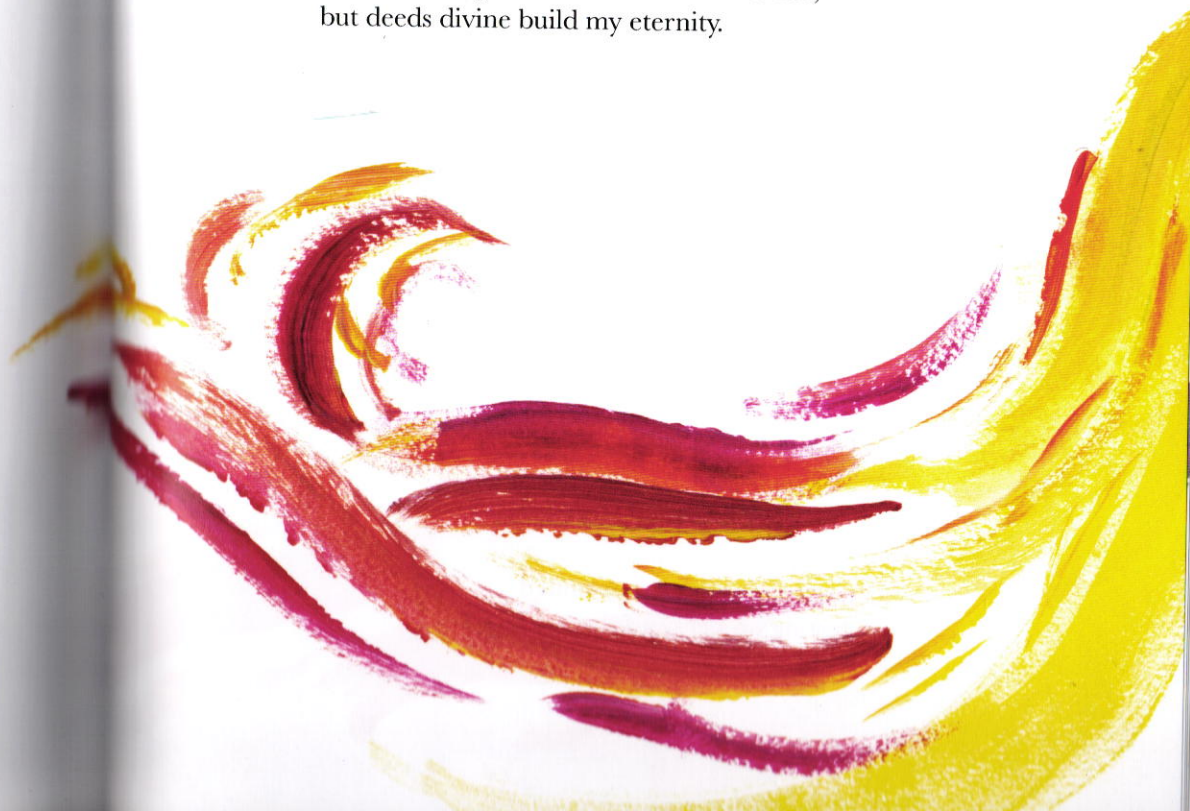
Abigail Adler

Hips sway back and forth to the sound,
lights bounce across the dark as her limbs vibrate.
Hair roams on her cherubic face,
Arms swing and fly, as if locked in midair.
The force swells and overcomes her soul,
captured by the seizing
Grasp of the night.
Subsumed under the trance of the Lord,
seduced and starry-eyed by the King.
Drawn away from the flock and into storm,
she enters
The Empire of the Ruler.
Accepts the drink of duty from his hand,
lets the rapid poison course through her veins.
Back curved into a Roman arch,
breasts exposed-
She begs for blessing.
Judged graciously by his fair Majesty,
the veil lifted, her sisters revealed.
Adorned in fawn skin and green ivy-wreaths,
they welcome her into their intimate embrace.
Dancing as one ecstatic entity,
they thrust and tear their way through man and fire.
The sole maenad no longer walks alone;
she treks the earth with her new family.
Deeply devout to the god of sweet wine,
Worship until they merge
with the Master.

I Have a Golden Marker of the Hour

Judy Leserman

I have a golden wristlet mark my hours;
an heirloom, old and precious, gifted to
prevent my grander gift from turning sour.
That ticking entity to all untrue,
it counts my skin until it wrinkles thin
and every hour come foul in solitude:
here slow, there fast, yet clicking, faint in din,
afflicting intervals it misconstrued.
A wise man once revealed to me: the time
my timepiece tolls, a greater Master must
it answer. Solely actions can be mine;
my toils on Earth 'til I become but dust.
These fleeting minutes won't return to me,
but deeds divine build my eternity.



Mumble Jumble

Rebecca Kerzner

Tingle. Curated this mess.
Hot temples. The lump at the back
of my mouth, beats monotone.
Being a feeler of feelings comes but
with a cost. Rock bottom is deeper.

For the barter: a moment of respite
to ease those heavy breaths. I'd
give up this knowledge. The sunny
ambiguities have turned into cold uncertainties.
Could I, just for a moment, turn it off?

If I could float between puffs,
the clouds, just existing within
the sweet air, hidden by the folds
that cover eyes, numbing, complete silence.

Maybe my fingertips would loosen
I'd be distant, removed but observing
Sitting with those monks, who simplified essence
to the core. But, simply, mortally, painfully,

In this moment, there was no seat for peace.

Thoughts used to sit side by side,
obediently and organized, just waiting
for their turn on the soap box. To be
the center of enlightenment for her.

Spinning in gray matter, holding out
a hand to try to capture, but then
opening it for nothing. Just muted
mist, resting on her pulse.

Unrestrained, jumping on a bed all at once
her thoughts fight for a turn, but
none of them get a chance. They're all subject
to the imprisonment of curiosity.

The curiosity and buzzing fills a hmm
like a backdrop, for the confusing dizziness.
On the brink of losing it. Grabbing shoulders,
shaking so hard, but nothing seems to work.

In this case, manipulation is most effective.
Pretending until the unreal is real. Nothing is real.
That's how I used to feel. But now everything just
got too real. Too real?! Does this even make sense??

Not really. But still, there are things.
It makes no sense, but still, those things.
Cause flutter, chipper, hope, and stability.
It's in the spirit, mystification of how.

It can't be explained. It's seeking to find it.
Learning, seeking, searching always.
Thoughts are thoughts. Despite the clarity they lack.
Despite the clarity they lack.



The Collective Soul

Liorah Rubinstein

It is in the air that outlines our spoken words and the ruffles in our clothing. It tangos with the blood in our veins and saturates the fibers of the carpeted floor that pushes against the soles of our feet. An illusion of distinction – that there is us and there is floor and there is blood and ruffles and words and air – for in the collective soul we are all one.

A long time ago we lelearned to separate the carpenter's molecule from the intellectual's concept. Granite hurts our knuckles, freedom slips into the abyss between touch and taste. But beyond the shadow of the abyss, we are both granite and freedom. There, the tangible and the abstract consummate a forbidden marriage and the air that outlines our spoken words and the ruffles in our clothing, outlines their love as well.

Inside a womb, a blastula multiplies. Raindrops splash onto the windshield of a rusty Honda dragging its tires through the early morning traffic of Winona, Minnesota. The cells continue to multiply and an invisible hand draws lines between the cells and the raindrops and admires the constellation. The collective soul contains galaxies.

And the crack in the brick wall. Ants, melting snowflakes, this sentence: all have touched it. We have as well. And the moment we touched it, the world touched it with us. We were all there – the cooing infant nestled in wrinkled arms and the young Nepalese man hunched over a pile of waste. The ants have scurried away and the snowflakes have dissolved, but our fingerprint remains and the collective soul will never forget.



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SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Our Faculty Advisor,

Dr. Joy Ladin

David and Ruth Gottesman Professor of English

for your endless guidance and patience throughout the editorial process of the Journal of Fine Arts

To the following administrators, faculty members, and student organizations for your generous help funding the Journal:

Deans Karen Bacon, Joanne Jacobson,
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