

**Work from “Rebel Rebel”
Creative Writing, Fall 2014**

Untitled, by Molly Bond

My grandmother made a point of walking along the beach every day, at two o'clock precisely, to search for shells. She stored the shells – conches and angel wings and baby ears and scallops – in big straw baskets in her apartment. Whenever I visited she would let me take one home with me – but never more than one.

Her story begins like this: *I had overslept, overslept terribly, never overslept so terribly in all my life! It was already four o'clock!*

I got to the shore by four-thirty. It was winter. It was cold! And the beach, which I'd only ever seen chock-full of people, was empty. But I, as you know, am not to be put off by foreboding scenery! I am not to be put off by anything at all, for that matter, having raised three girls on my own, living off the paltry wages of a woman realtor in the 1960s, thank you very much! But your mother, I'm sure, has told you all about that... Or maybe not, knowing your mother.

So, there I am, walking real careful, keeping my new white sneakers clean of sand. I realized as the sun died down for the night that I hadn't needed to wear my visor, but I kept it there on my head anyways. I'm looking around at the empty beach, and then BAM! There it is! A sea lion! Coming up on me from behind!

And what did I do in the face of this horrible beast? Well, I ran. At age five, my older brother held me underwater, and I beat at his legs! At forty, my husband held me motionless against the wall, and you know what I did about that – I packed my three young girls in the car and drove across the US of A, checking the rearview mirror every few minutes, just to make sure he wasn't on my tail. Now, at seventy, here I am again, finding myself running. Again beating my enemy. The sea lion was no match for my speed! Defeated, it turned back to the tide. I tell you, though – I've never run so fast in my life!

I love my grandmother's ridiculous story. I don't believe in symbolism outside of literature, and I don't believe in Ahab's white whale. Yet there is just something about this sea lion, this inexplicably furious sea lion, that seems so perfect in the context of my grandmother, sprinting down the California beachside, her craggy expression unchanged.

It soon became a family legend. At every holiday dinner, we asked her to tell it again. Sparing no details, she humored us every time, always concluding with *“I've never run so fast in my life!”* While telling the story, she would never look any of us directly in the eye, as if acknowledging our presence would somehow whisk her out of her memories. This may have been sensible. By the end of her life, my grandmother seemed to have a limited amount of storage space for her memories. Even a few family members, mostly cousins, were forgotten.

But the story of the sea lion was one of the memories that my grandmother somehow held on to. And of the memories she retained (the time she visited New York City and there was an earthquake, the time she visited Alaska and there was a heat wave, the great escape from her husband, and the hypnotherapist who severed her cigarette habit and who turned out to be a serial killer) – the sea lion memory was the most vivid. It even surpassed the births of her three daughters.

*The Thing With Feathers
by Amina Aineb*

One Friday afternoon, I was asked to recite Emily Dickinson's poem, “Hope is the Thing with Feathers.” Failing to mimic the talented readers who had gone before me, I stood onstage with a deflated confidence, my arms limp and tired at my sides.

My voice said the words:

*Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune—without the words,
And never stops at all.
And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.
I've heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.*

My tone needed more inflection, apparently. More passion would be more accurate. I was told, “You chose this poem for a reason. We need to hear it.”

I mindlessly thanked my performance teacher and sat down, thinking of hope. How stupid could I have been to pick this poem? I had first read it in the eighth grade, when hope of escape led me through my final days at an awful school. Now I scoffed at hope—this thing with feathers that always seemed to be flying away from me. I was in the center of my own storm, and everyone else was safe or on a different coast. There was no song. There was no bird to come pluck me from the ground.

I had been going through my days like any ordinary person who breathes or blinks, but there was an internal horror at everything I faced. Nightly, I would repeat to myself the seemingly dawning truth, “You are an evil person.” By day, I pressed on, with small-talk conversations with acquaintances, with watching TV late into the night, and following routine.

This comes in waves of hate and instinctual self-defense. I loathe and love myself.”

After meeting with one of my friends that same evening, I stepped into a bus shelter, mentally mapping out the steps as I usually did.

Number One: Take the bus.

Number Two: Get off at 12th and California and walk home as quickly as you can.

Number Three: Do your homework.

Number Four: Maybe eat dinner.

Number Five: Go to bed.

I automatically pulled my headphones out of my bag before I realized there was already music around me. A song rose in the air from the buskers set up just behind me, and they sang of Georgia and lovers' smiles. For the first time in a very long time, I found myself utterly enchanted by the flash and sway of Irving Street. People walked in and out of restaurants, laughing, embracing, smiling, *absorbed*. Buses and trains sluggishly drew towards me and passed, lucid, into the night. Everything was moving. Light and echoes surrounded me. I stood in the eye of this brilliance with a newfound hope:

I am a part of this, though I may only be a spectator today.

*Kerouac to Cassedy
By Emma Eisler*

I'm thinking about stolen cars and sunsets
The sound of your voice when I stop listening to the words
I hear death and death and dying
Like a mantra; like a map

We drive midnight miles
Pretend the end is only behind us

When it's always been in front
Just two states away, maybe even one?
Like a lurking thing, like something fast
Faster than you sound on too much speed
While I am drunk, drunk, drunk and thinking too much

"Yes!" You yell when I say something true
An octave too loud, a sound impossible to ignore
"Yes, yes," you call
And I want more and more
Then less and less

I'm thinking about holiness and golden, golden you
The heavenly human, the divine fool
The one who will burn up first and most
Like lightning, like something that hits you

They'll think they can find you in my books
On desolate highways of America
Where people are moving and going nowhere
In the streetlights, streetlights, red and green and gold
Or in the pool hall you claimed as your own
Maybe on the sidewalks of Larimer Street
The Denver of bums and begging for booze
But who really knows
All the road is your road
Your voice is an ownership
Your laugh seeps in strangers' ears
A language of leaving and love letters
A language new and old

You say, "We know time"
Then you know it will all end

Keep moving, keep moving
Maybe if you die soon enough
Then all they'll remember is this:
The lover of stars and 4am bars
The glorified, the almost truth
The holy, holy, holiest goof
The one they really want to know

Swimming Lessons
By Sophie Mazoschek

The Thursday before he leaves for college, Josh throws one last party. He invites the entire swim team and Stacy Mantooth, even though you begged him not to, because that's the kind of older brother he is. The kind that makes you stay upstairs in your room with the door closed.

"No hard feelings." He says. That's one of his favorite things to say when he's being an asshole. "It's just so you don't embarrass me trying to hit on Stacy."

"I would never hit on Stacy," you say.
"You would too. I know you're into her."

He's right, you've loved Stacy Mantooth since, like, eighth grade, but you would never hit on her because you've learned through years of experience that people like you should lay low and avoid taking unnecessary risks.

"Look" Josh says, handing you a bottle of cheap fruit wine, "Just take this and watch some porn or something and stay out of our way." He even winks at you on his way out, as if he'd doing you some big favor.

You try to watch some porn like he suggested, but you can't really get into it with the music thumping away downstairs, so you swig some of the lukewarm wine and lie down on your bed when your head starts to get buzzy. The wall and ceiling and everything are decorated with all these pictures of you and Josh when you were little. Sometimes Josh comes and tells you to take them down, but you figure if he really wanted them gone he'd do it himself. There's this one in particular that stands out. You and Josh are standing by the edge of a pool, beaming. That was right before your first swim test, which you flunked because the moment you hit the water, panic scissored through your chest and you had to grasp the rim of the pool and try not to pass out.

There's a knock at the door, breaking you out of your thoughts. You don't say anything but the door opens anyway. It's Stacy Mantooth, looking wasted but amazing, one dress strap hanging from her shoulder.

"Can I come in?" she asks, and comes in without waiting for an answer. You pluck your glasses off before she can see you in them and shove them under the bunched-up duvet. She sits on your bed, so close that you can smell her floral perfume and beer breath.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," She waves her hand. "Just need a break, y'know."

"I get it. That's what I'm doing up here, taking a break."

She squints like she isn't sure if she believes you. "Hey, you're Josh's brother."

"Yep."

"That's cute." She's looking at the pictures now, and you wish you'd had some warning so you could've taken them down. "Is he a good brother?"

Instead of answering you offer her some of the shitty wine. When she passes it back to you, you press your lips to the cool rim of the bottle: an indirect kiss.

Suddenly you realize that Stacy Mantooth has been talking to you, voluntarily, for more than two minutes. Maybe, you think, she's sick of guys like Josh and Trev and Calvin and everyone else in the senior class. Maybe, just maybe, she's been waiting her whole life for someone like you. Without your glasses, Stacy's face is a pale blur. You lean toward her. Despite your poor vision you hit your mark perfectly. Her lips are warm and sticky-sweet with wine. You kiss her for maybe two or three seconds before she pushes you away gently.

"I'm sorry." There's pity in her eyes, but at the same time she has to hold her hand over her mouth to keep from laughing. You wish she would get angry and yell at you or something, but she just *stands there*, her shoulders shaking.

"Get out."

"I'm *sorry*."

“GET OUT.” And she’s gone.

Later, Josh comes in without knocking. You’re lying face-down on your bed. You feel his hand on your back and you realize that Stacy must’ve told him what happened.

“Go away.”

“Look,” he says, “It’s okay.”

But it’s really not okay, nothing is, and the up-and-down motion of his hand on your back is making you want to scream.

“We’re going to the beach.” He says. “Want to come?”

“You never invite me places.”

“Well, I am now. Everyone’s going. C’mon, we’ll have fun.”

“Fuck off.” You say.

When everyone is gone and the house is quiet, you squeeze your eyes shut and try to sleep so you can forget things for a while. When you finally manage to drift off, you have this bizarre dream that you’re at the beach with Josh and his friends. You’re not wearing your glasses, but everything is clear and bright. The waves are foamy and crazy-high. Stacy Mantooth is bobbing in the water in a white bikini. She waves to you, mouthing something. You strain to hear her but the waves keep drowning out her voice. Then the moonlight falls on her, and you realize what she’s saying. *Max*. Your name. The water roils and froths around her, and everyone, even Josh with all his swim-team-captain bravado, hangs back. But not you. For once, you are unafraid. You take a deep breath, feeling your chest expand, and plunge into the water, through the cold and the current, into her arms.

We Set Clocks

By Isaac Schott-Rosenfield

The smile is what is left when
Eyes are gone; are faded
Into coarse sheen with old ink
And we all claim it,
Without stains,
Set in absential white

The mantel is just another graveyard
We set clocks above them,
Act casually in their vicinity
Pointing at gravestones, territorial

Charlie Brown

By Kayne Belul

Good grief
 Maybe I need a real psychiatrist.
Someone who charges more than 5 cents would probably be for the best.
Lucy’s psychiatry skills have been slipping over the years.
She is starting to say I have anxiety disorder.
Then she asks for my money and tells me to snap out of it.

I've been told by too many people that I'm unhappy.
What is happiness?
Maybe it's a problem that I don't know.
And Lucy has called me wishy-washy even more lately.
I'm not wishy-washy, am I?
I might be. No, I'm not. Fine.

I'm not good at confronting things.
That's another one of Lucy's new theories.
She says if I don't gain some confidence I'm not going far in life.
How does she learn these things?

Sometimes I wish I had a blanket.
Something to hold onto when I don't know who to be or what to do.
Or when we fail a baseball game.
Or when Lucy plays some trick on me.
Maybe I need a psychiatrist who doesn't play tricks on me.

Everygirl
By Noa Mendoza

and then comes the first time
your mother tells you
don't wear that skirt,
respect your mind and your eyes, not your thighs
the truth is he'll follow the length of the hem like a
map, all the way through your heart

at recess, running inside after Bobby
pushed you on the playground,
tears speckling your cheeks,
they hand you a tissue, tell you
boys will be boys

and then men will be
men,
one day you'll watch one in an orange hard hat
whistle at the twelve year old on the corner of Sutter and Sansome
and think— that could be your daughter

don't you know? That girl who with the frail, fawn's legs
could be the same baby you bundled in bed at night
what gives you the right to make her look down—
her face flushed red?
she is more than a flame, flickering in your peripheral vision

and the man will go home
ruffle his son's hair,
say, "*boys will be boys*"

and you will glance up one morning,
sooner than you expected,
take a long look at your daughter, tell her
“*don’t wear that skirt*”

CODEPENDENT

By Rose Olson

there was a time when you could stretch
out your tree roots and i wouldn’t hear
a snarling wolf
i can’t remember how it felt to be awake like that.

i start up to the whispers of “you don’t know what he’s doing”
the thoughts strangle me – i do not inhale, i do not exhale
without your guidance.
it’s always been you that murders the beasts.

the wolf moved in with me because you had to be away.
i’m too abashed to tell you i’ve become that savage thing:
crude as hell and unaware of the concept of honor.

you are easily an angel, a hero, a god
there it is, there it is,
the diaphanous halo, spider-web thin,
making your skin glow

the wolf leaves with the horizon
i coerce you out like the pit of a fruit
finally ripened!

in the morning
the idea of you, first thing,
warm under the rising sun

The Last Great Gate

By Clare Sabri

I had this fever dream once. The where and when have long since faded but the dream itself I will never forget. I dreamt of a wall made of bones.

There are certain times and places in the world, that on a timeline would be blotted with a black stain. The islands of Japan, still in their self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world and wracked with famine, would be as such. The once great gates of Kanazawa city had fallen into disrepair. People who had nowhere else to turn threw bodies in them, to hold off scavenging animals and attackers, and soon the city’s defenses began to crumble and fall in.

I dreamt of a gray-haired woman walking into the ruins of the greatest city gate in midwinter. Her family had thrown her out as she had become too sick and old to be of use. Her lungs heaved weakly, and knowing they would soon give in, she knelt before her gods and died. The next night, two street

urchins curled up next to her, looking towards where the sun would rise. They had frozen by morning. Their bodies stayed locked in prayer until the flesh had fallen away.

A monk, while walking the streets, saw them and at once was struck by revelation. The dead themselves could protect the city. The thought, fueled by hunger and a certain kind of psychosis, spread among the people like a disease and soon the whole city was infected.

The sick, elderly, rotting away, made shuffling pilgrimages to the wall. Piling themselves on top of the bodies, fresh and aged, almost dead or filled with maggots, they died with divine purpose.

After a handful of weeks, the smell was unbearable. Worshippers and families of the deceased burned bundles of their small mint leaves and sandalwood at a stone marker set one *ri* apart.

Sometimes people would kill themselves on the wall, if their death would be too slow and too painful, or if their life would be too slow and too painful. The metal of blades glinted in the sun.

The wall took ten years to build, five feet thick, fifty feet in height. The bones, interlocked and filled with mud and something like reverent magic, were tougher than brick, but as the town had the occasional visitor, they encased the wall in stone.

The priest died. A bonfire of incense was lit and people cast their anguished cries into the sky along with the scented smoke. The sounds and smells worked their way through my mind and I felt as though I was one of them as well.

A man from Kyoto, the capitol, replaced the priest. He floated along with the rest of them, talking little, and wandering along the wall, for it was the one completely clean and beautiful part of his world.

He came across what looked like a pale white branch sticking out of the rock. He touched it, pulled on it, for some reason profoundly bothered. He wrestled with the thing until the stones around it fell away, exposing half a skeleton.

Everything became clear as he awoke, crying for it to be burned, torn down, while still pushing away the stone and revealing more bones. Some people snapped free of their stupor, screaming and running to destroy it with torches. Others begged for them to stop, for they feared to anger the dead. An old man, his torch knocked from his hand, lashed out and drew blood.

From then on, my dream became blurred. I watched as half of the city died, slaughtered or trampled or burned to death. The wall was almost completely destroyed.

The remaining citizens moved away as far as they could, keeping to themselves and offering no explanations to askers. Some of them still mourned for the wall, took pieces of it with them whether in hand or in mind, and eventually went completely mad.

The few who traveled there and back said there was nothing left of the city. The buildings, the walls, had been toppled by fire and time. I knew they were wrong. I could still see the three skeletons that lay in the ruins of the last great gate, untouched and bent in prayer towards the midwinter sun.

Untitled, by Justus Honda

It is a goal of his to one day run faster than thought;
to outpace the flow of ideas.
To move at a speed where the mind
becomes all instinct and blankness.

Picture:
A figure streaks by in the rain,
panting and gritted teeth,
transcends the cloud of the mind, the anchors of memory.
Seconds later, the flood of fragmented ideas,
outpaced by their creator:

I am here I am running I am here I am moving I am I am I am I am I am I am...

Where there is rain, there is coldness.
yet more motivation, more incentive combined with
the blindness the Runner seeks
(blindness of the eye already achieved by
bulletlike water to the retinas,
the blindness of consciousness always on the horizon).

Great heaving gasps rock his body,
the sprinter's high like a lover,
picked up,
carried over the threshold of pain
into a room without furniture or sound
to live until the end of days.

Visiting the Anne Frank House
By Maya Litauer

I listen to music and wait in line for forty five minutes
while my mom and my brother
search for a quick, on-the-go meal.
They come back with pre-packaged salad covered in
plastic

the front of the building has been
modernized museum-ized covered in
glass

the cashier has a misunderstanding with my mother
yes, we take cards, not that kind of card
calling her *ma'am*
there are rules for how to collect money to let tourists into an old house
there are metal detectors
we receive pamphlets: this was life
these pictures, furniture recreations, photo captions, room descriptions

it is warm I take off
my gray sweatshirt
I try to look engaged
bored of waiting in lines from room to room

a man in front of me lets out his breath
this is heavy

I am in her room, now – Anne's
some of her posters are still on the wall
I remember:
this is heavy

she is like me
an ordinary girl
I hold onto this too much
if she is too much like me, like every other girl
she is too much a symbol
in remembering her, we forget so many others

this throng of people is too public for something so intimate
I want to feel this tangibility
I can see bored kids on iPhones and iPads and couples holding hands and so many languages and
everything smells like sunscreen
and afterwards all the families are going to eat at a fancy restaurant go back to their hotel watch tv put the
kids to bed think about what a stimulating day they had how they just witnessed history go to sleep fly
back home in a few days tell everyone what a great, life-changing trip they had fall asleep at 6pm from jet
lag wake up at 4am go to work go home sleep again

I want to deny that this looks similar to my life
I don't want to be a tourist
here I am
on a tour

I do not know Anne Frank.
But I do know she lived during World War Two
like my grandparents did
like so many other grandparent did
or didn't

Pit Stop In Goleta
By Josie Weidner

left on the concrete:
A pack of six Marlboros, a lighter,
a note written in sharpie,
"From Midwest to LA"
I am "From Somewhere to Here"

The parking lot is filled with locked bikes;
Stripped.
rusty bike seats in the bathroom,
Skeletons, pieces of bike
Abandoned rot on the linoleum

I abandoned:
A northwest costal town,
Cold, salty,
mom and pop grocery store
closed at five

In front of me:
train tracks running south to

the congested highways of
LA
Los Angeles where life seems to crumble
in southern California sun
seems to rot and rust,
and is left reckless until
a ticket bought in diner tips
train is boarded, next station
new place

In Goleta:
the concrete melts in the Searing sun,
my fingers smell like asphalt
I consider the next train,
I consider the Midwest,
for a moment, I consider the
Pack of Marlboros, open, waiting

Onward
By Emma Bernstein

I fell in love with another girl today,
this one a real sweet brunette,
two rows up on the greyhound.
she kept glancing out the window,
out at yellowing America,
heavy midday heat holding all of us in.
book tucked between her knees,
fingers laced together like prayer,
Like waiting for change, for movement.
I'd like to talk to her,
see if we're headed in the same direction.
she's got these eyes,
like she's waiting for something to see,
and I've seen it all,
I've seen this whole damn country.
I'd like to ask her what it's like to feel new,
but she's already gotten off,
and I am still here.

Party
By Avi Hoen

I hate parties. I mean I hate hosting parties. It just seems like a heck of a lot of vacuuming and furniture moving for a few hours of hosting guests who just go and trash the place so that I can have the privilege of doing more vacuuming. Nevertheless, it's my 25th birthday and my fiancée says I have to do something.

She designed an invitation and sent it out to friends, mostly her friends, and she bought some beers and decorations. It's kind of like she's throwing a baby shower—I'm the baby—everyone knows the party isn't for me, it so that all her friends can get together and drink.

I hate how even though the invitation state 1:00 pm, no will start arriving until 1:30 or 2:00, but you have to be done cleaning by 1:00 because if you aren't some jerk is going to show up on time.

The gravel drive crackles as Bonnie's white truck rolls up. Bonnie is one my fiancée's friends. According to Deb, "no party is complete without Bonnie," and if I argue with that I get my personal favorite line: "happy wife, happy life." I figure it's best not to mention that we aren't married, and that I might not even plan on marrying her.

Anyways, with one guest, it's not really a party; It's Bonnie and Deb sitting in two fold up chairs talking about pink lemonade and whiskey, as well as Bonnie's latest "man-project."

She says she's hoping on finding another one today. Of course, I was not the one who invited her.

The rest of the party shows up by 2:00 and by 2:30 the cooler is nearing empty.

So Deb tells me "Why don't you go to the Save-Mart and pick up another 24 pack."

"And while you're there get some ice, and we're out of milk. Oh and some OJ. Bonnie needs to sober up, she's driving."

I know better than to argue with her-- but sometimes, it's hard to not want to point out her idiosyncrasies. Also, I don't really want Bonnie sleeping over. So I get in the car and drive to town.

Back at the party, there isn't much going on. Deb sits with her legs crossed, sipping on something pink in a clear plastic cup.

"Oh, you're back," she welcomes, in that super welcoming tone.

"Isn't this one heck of a party? If do say so myself. Looks like Bonnie found some guy. Isn't he your step-brother? What's his name again? Rob? Or is it Bob? What's his name?"

"Bonnie's with Darryl?"

"Darryl. That's it! That's his name. Just look at them, cuddled in the hammock."

"What's going on, Deb? Tell Bonnie she needs to leave."

"What? No party is complete without Bonnie. Excuse me for wanting to have a friend help celebrate your birthday."

"She's not helping."

Deb looks over at Bonnie, who is drunk beyond belief with hammock rope lines across her face.

"I think it's time for cake. Dan, get the cake from the fridge and some candles."

"Can't you do that?"

"Hey, don't argue with me. You know the rule: happy wife, happy life."

After
By Harmony Wicker

i had a friend.
she was something else.
all the men's eyes followed the swish of her hips.
she had what no one possessed,
and she knew it.
as her curves began to develop, much faster than mine, she only grew smarter.
she knew how to work them.
the men.
how to get what she wanted.
but you know.
without me even having to say.
she got something real nasty in return.
she fell in love.
when she told me i laughed, i laughed.
i had heard. "i love him," and "ohh, i know it's going to last," so many times.
but no.
this was real.
and soon
the signature swish of her hips disappeared,
and she stopped smiling at guys,
and we began to talk less.
the whole town could hear the screams that rang at night.
everyone knew.
i tried to save her.
again and again i tried.
i love him. she would repeat. i love him.
and so she screamed,
the bruises on her face turning from black to blue.
and soon, i got a swish in my hips and men began to look.
then i fell in love.
i fell in love

Key Lime Lips
By Anna Geiger

We sit in a silence so awkward that I've lost count of how many minutes we've gone without talking. I think it's seventeen. Or maybe eighteen. Possibly even nineteen, but that seems like a lot. I'm not sure why one have us hasn't just gotten up and left yet. I would, but I'm still hoping that maybe she'll look at me again, breaking the record of four glances in one day with a fifth. It would be a big deal, but after seventeen or eighteen or however many minutes we've been sitting here, even my patience is running a little low. So I decide to begin dropping subtle hints that I feel confident she'll notice, because I've heard girls have great noticing skills. First, I clear my throat. She stares straight ahead. I try coughing, but then I realize she'll probably think I'm unsanitary, because I've also heard that girls are afraid of germs, so I stop. I begin to move around in my chair. I scoot it forward, then back. She doesn't even

twitch. I try to think of something manly I could do that would impress her, but I can't think of anything, so I jump in my seat a couple times. Nothing. I decide to go to my last resort.

"Julia-

In a split second, ninja speed, no joke, she's pressed her lips against mine and is moving her mouth around my mouth. And if I wasn't so shocked, I might pass out, but all I can do is sit there. It kinda feels like she's trying to eat my face, but I attempt to do what she's doing anyway in case she likes it. But moving my lips in random directions feels like I'm trying to eat her too, and this is really uncomfortable. Especially since her lips taste like the key lime pie flavored yogurt that I've seen her eat every day during lunch for years. I always wondered what it would taste like, but I definitely didn't think it would taste like... Cheese. This almost triggers my gag reflex, and then she starts moving her tongue around in my mouth. She moves it in weird circles on the roof of my mouth and when her tongue gets near mine, I am feeling a severe lack of personal space. I almost pull back, but don't, because none of my friends have ever kissed a girl before, and I want to be able to brag about it. For a moment, it almost seems worth it that I have to smell her cheese breath. But suddenly, I realize how much saliva has just passed between us and what if she has a cold? Or some weird foreign flu that there's no cure for? Or oh god, what if she has an STD! What if I get herpes! I pull away as fast as I can.

"Is something wrong?" She asks.

"Oh...no, no..."

"Was that good?" She says, grinning.

"Um...yeah. I was just wondering... You don't have herpes, right?"

Dolorange

By Liam Miyar-Mullan

Inside the clockworks of Dolores' head, she contemplated the idea of stealing the orange. Like all important decisions, there were clear pros and cons:

It could put her in jail, and she could have a very tough cellmate. This cellmate would skin her alive and wear her tinted, freckled husk as a sports bra. However, it would quench her thirst, and her family had a record of fainting due to dehydration. According to family lore, her great, great, great, uncle once shriveled up because he had forgotten to drink water. They found him lying on the porch, barely the size of a mango. On the other hand, having been exposed to only Caribbean fruits, Dolores had never had an orange, and maybe this was a good thing. She could have a rare form of orange disease where, upon consumption, she would turn orange, and would forever be an outcast. At dominos, she would be called "Dolorange".

She had just arrived in Florida, along with many others who were not especially satisfied with the politics in Cuba, and even Dolores knew that when you visit Florida you should always eat an orange. And what better way is there to eat an orange than right off the branch? Many people died every year from dehydration. According to the Daily Mail, your urine could potentially turn solid. In the same article, they accused a man in Mexico of selling his solid urine as lemon cream popsicles. If there was something Dolores was strongly opposed to—among Fidel, homosexuality, and John F. Kennedy—it was the selling of solid urine to *children*. Furtively looking around, Dolores plucked a ripe orange from a lower branch.

Before long, a police officer emerged from the bushes and asked Dolores for a piece of the orange. He too was thirsty.

The Carefree
By Angelica LaMarca

They tell you: stand in the gravel by the side of the highway,
in the casualties of a waxing moon, naked,
reach out your fingertips and stroke the cars as they rush by,
all blurry shades of panther-black and firework.
They tell you: pull out your chalks, kids,
and draw that piano on the dilapidated cement,
dance upon it, and music will come out if you do it right.
They tell you: if you braid your hair with kelp the waves will bow to you;
cram yourself between train track slats and you won't die;
you can slip pennies into the cracks of your fish tank and it will all be fine.
Go on. But don't pretend that the vehicles won't hit you first.
Don't pretend that curtsies are a thing of the Earth,
or that your fish tank won't implode one day like the belly of a once pregnant mother,
water cascading the walls, glass fragments ricocheting off your chandelier,
so you're left trembling, gasping, knees pressed into a doused carpet,
the guppies sucking in desperation on your wet skin.

His Ghost
By Colin Yap

His ghost was perpetually wet.
His body had died in the water
Fluid had filled his lungs and snuffed him out:
And so his ghost emerged from the ocean,
With the salt water clinging to him.

Discovering loneliness,
His ghost walked across America.
He trekked from ocean to ocean, and the rain followed him.

The first thing his ghost found was an empty city,
A few skyscrapers and a hundred zip lines.
And as he walked through, he heard the voices
Childish and excited,
Giggling, whispering.
From one building to another, the handles of the zip lines moved,
Whistled through the air—
And everywhere the pitter patter of sneakers running up stairwells.

And when the rain caught up to his ghost, he heard laughter,
But only for an hour or so—
Then the voices sounded unamused, spiteful
And so his ghost left the city.

His ghost walked until he came across the tornado village
Everywhere around him the winds danced in bliss,

Tip-toeing on the ground, calling to each other.
He picked up a layer of debris on his wet skin,
And as the tornadoes calmed,
The dirt people emerged from their holes.
The community welcomed back their long estranged brother,
Dancing in circles around him, celebrating his arrival,
Preparing a feast, while his ghost said nothing.

And the rain came, and they danced to this too,
Welcomed its coming.
Until they saw the dirt and dust run off of his ghost,
And reveal the pale skin and soft eyes, and then they
All again escaped into their holes,
Screaming, "Beware the imposter!"
And so his ghost kept walking.

His ghost came to a canyon
Deep in the canyon, was a herd of grey men and grey women
Led by a grey horseman to dig a mass grave.
His ghost looked from the top of the gorge as the grey people
Breathed hot air on the canyon walls.
Their business was erosion,
Wearing away and widening the canyon with time and breath,
So that they could all lie there eventually.

Again, the rain came,
And with the coming of rain the canyon widened—
The water created a river that cut through the stone.
The grey people laid down to rest, and never woke up again
And the canyon was still.
And his ghost moved on again.

His ghost continued on for a long time, looking for the new ocean.
He caught a lift with Buffalo James and the Microphone Man,
Two more spirits,
Touring America in their trans-am.
Buffalo James had a herd of bison who knew circus tricks,
And the Microphone Man could scat and sing love songs.
They were old souls looking for home.
They let him off at a pier full of baying sea lions,
Said farewell, gave him gifts, and took off to their next venue.

The rain came again and hit the waves of the ocean.
The ripples and waves fought and created an anarchic pattern.
Slowly his ghost walked into the water.
The water filled his ghost's lungs
As he welcomed himself home, and started dissolving.
His ghost disappeared beneath the waves.