

HIPPOCRENE

Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis | 2022

literary & visual arts

HIPPOCRENE is an arts magazine by and for the students, staff, and faculty of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis (WUSM). We accept submissions year-round and publish each spring. Issues are freely available to all current medical students, graduate students in the Division of Biology and Biomedical Sciences (DBBS), and medical school and DBBS faculty.

Download an electronic version of this issue, browse past issues, and learn more about our organization as well as local arts events at hippocrene.wustl.edu. Please send submissions, comments, and questions to litmag.wustl@gmail.com.

Thank you for supporting the Hippocrene and the arts in all its forms within our community.

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With special thanks to Brady Griffith

To foster a formalized arts tradition at Washington University in order to add richness to the medical school community. To provide a resource for students and groups in the cultivation and representation of art—in all its forms—on the medical campus.

The Arts Commission supports the following events and programs:



ANNUAL ART SHOW. Displaying visual arts created by students, staff, and faculty of the School of Medicine in the atrium of the Farrell Learning and Teaching Center.

COFFEEHOUSE CONCERT SERIES. A relaxed and informal setting for classical, jazz, and other musical and spoken word performances by members of the medical community.

WINTER CAM CONCERT. An annual medical campus-wide concert held in January for musicians to perform in the medical school community.

For more information, visit us online at artscomm.wustl.edu.

Hip•po•crene, noun

hippos 'horse' + *krene* 'fountain'

- 1) A fountain on Mount Helicon, fabled to have burst forth when Pegasus stamped his hoof; believed to be a source of poetic inspiration
- 2) The literary magazine of Washington University School of Medicine

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Bison

However true it is
When we refer to ourselves by
our destinations
By the miles, minutes ticking down
However our blood boils
Honking ferocity
As the cars screech and kick and threaten to smear the streets
With awful drivers
(Those in your city are the worst)

You still notice us sticking in droves
To the black road
Like bison

You remember
that long slice of wheat field
when you found yourself a bullet shot ahead of the pack

How the headlights dimmed to
stars behind you

How the horizon
bubbled with shadows
Fingers
tossed to the air
shivering
 last candles of the sun

Slow down
you are quietly offered

slow down

Judson Ellis, WUMS



Good Friday | Miguel San Miguel Benavides, WUMS



St. Louis Skyline from Cahokia Mounds | Jiaxin (Cindy) Tu, DBBS



Autumn in Denali | Jiaxin (Cindy) Tu, DBBS

A Love Letter to Pan-Asia... a Grocery Store

I'll start out by saying that I came to St. Louis with a coastal elitist bias toward grocery stores. I grew up in San Francisco, where I had access to some of the best East Asian grocery stores in the country. Plus, 2-3 times a month, my family would drive an hour out to the suburbs to get our fix of Indian groceries. I had access to produce ranging from Indian moringa leaves to dragon scaled cherimoyas. When I came to St. Louis, I was told by many to prepare for a drought—for a drab new reality in which I wouldn't be able to cook any of the things I was used to. And I'll be honest—the onslaught of barbeque did take me aback.

But when I stepped through the unassuming doors of Pan-Asia Supermarket, I unironically felt a profound connection. Just past the registers stood pomelos the size of basketballs and guavas whose fragrance flew me to a tropical island. Every country of the Asian continent—from Turkey to Japan—had a home in those aisles. I found deep cuts from my region of India along with Bombay duckfish and chikku fruits—rarities even in the Bay Area's most niche grocery stores. The combined range and depth of the inventory was deeply unexpected. I had stumbled upon a sense of home that I hadn't felt before. Pan-Asia, this giant warehouse in Missouri, turned out to be a miraculous land where the East Asian groceries of my childhood neighborhood sat aisles away from the Indian groceries of the Bay Area suburbs.

To give my love for Pan-Asia some context, I had a culturally diverse but segmented upbringing. Although the Bay Area is incredibly culturally rich, different cultural groups tend not to mix. Growing up, I attended school all over San Francisco, from primarily Chinese to Hispanic neighborhoods. Every week, I left these pockets of the city for the suburbs to make my Indian grocery trips. Then, I'd come home to have conversations with my family in my mother tongue, Malayalam, while our neighbors spoke Korean or Russian at their dinner tables. Given all this, home always felt culturally fragmented.

In each part of my life, I tried to blend into one culture at a time. At school and in the Indian suburbs, I'd try to fit in with each neighborhood's dominant culture. I would present whatever part of me would help me feel most accepted. At the time, I didn't feel that this was bad—it was just how I lived. In retrospect, it was limiting. There wasn't a place where I could be fully me, all at once, and it didn't feel like there were many people like me.

I wanted to find a middle ground, a space to fuse the disjointed parts of myself. In college, I explored that with cooking. I became obsessed with the cross-cultural pollination in food history—how Portuguese Pao bread became Pav in Mumbai through colonization, and how Ethiopian spices and fermentation are shared by South Indian foods through agricultural trade. There was this beauty in foods, where I could see the networks that connected the world.

But when I cooked in San Francisco and in college, that segmentation from childhood remained. I would run from store to store, neighborhood to neighborhood, to seek out ingredients (if they were even available). Everything was still geographically separated. Even though I started to see the unlimited culinary potential of reducing cultural barriers in my mind, it wasn't practically achievable. It was so much effort to get the ingredients I could find that I felt lucky when I could reproduce even the South Indian dishes I had grown up with.

When I moved to Missouri, I expected to continue running from store to store. But at Pan-Asia, I didn't see arbitrary lines of nation-states or cultures. At Pan-Asia, I could find my hyper-regional brown Kerala matta rice at the same place as Chinese bittermelon. The combinations that inspired me as a child were finally side by side. The different cultures that are part of me are just aisles away from each other. I never thought that the highest representation of cultures mixing in my life would be a grocery store, but Pan-Asia has achieved that.

I understand what Pan-Asia probably came from. There are simply fewer Asian minority cultures in Missouri, and the people that did end up here probably banded together (likely for better financial viability). And, I'll admit that Pan-Asia isn't perfect—there are things one can't buy there. But, despite the likely nature of its origin and its limitations, it still inspires me. Pan-Asia allows me to relive my experience of growing up around a diverse array of cultures without arbitrarily setting up silos. This store has made me question my own coastal upbringing. If I can find belonging in a grocery store in Missouri, I can find belonging anywhere.

Sri Paruthiyil, MSTP



Common Kingfisher | Sandra Paola Cardenas-Garcia, DBBS



Crush | Anna Dowling, WUMS

Familiar

it is something similar to silence.
handcrafted by the noises
in your head, they are never silent.
but deafening enough to feign.
it speaks to your body.
mouthing things you've heard before
lips sharp as paper.
draw blood when they can,
draw tears when they can,
while you put pen to paper.
to connect the dots
until it doesn't hurt as much,
until it hurts too much,
until it stops.
hurting

Lauren Nnabuo, Program in Occupational Therapy



Gateway Arch | Ping Yan, Neurology



Perception of Reality | Sandra Paola Cardenas-Garcia, DBBS



Foggy Night | Ping Yan, Neurology

Modern Sirens

I.

Siren #1 leaves her favorite coffee shop
licking muffin crumbs from her fingers.
Across centuries she's learned the joy
of melting into a crowd,
a flake in a snowdrift.

Her power turns on and off like a light switch.
At one moment, she is herself.
At the next—the lines blur.

The woman watering flowers in her front yard
sees her first love, made flesh.

The postman feels tears come to his eyes
watching the wind take her hair,
and has no idea why.

A teenager crashes his bike
into a trashcan, craning his neck
for a better look.

It's boring, to tell you the truth.
There was a time she inhaled adoration like a drug,
used her beauty, a dagger dipped in crimson,
loved spelling men until they were happy
to be consumed.
She doesn't know what's changed—
but now she feels the weight
of other people's desire
as a veil between her and the world;

feels the constant loneliness
of an entity so enchanting
that she can never be seen.

When people look at her,
memories, daydreams, neuroses
seep in, the sharp grit of
human subconscious.
She feels her form (hers!)
shift against her will.

People are exhausting.

Most days, she doesn't leave
her studio apartment,
spends hours painting angry
swatches of red on canvas,

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feeds a large gray cat
that is utterly indifferent to her.
She loves him for it.

II.

Siren #2 spends her days off fishing,
prefers luring trout to heroes—
tastier, less prone to bloodshed
and projection.
She sits Alone with her thoughts.

She misses her sisters, sometimes.
Other times she remembers
the jostling of feathered bodies
on salty rock
and prefers to be alone.

She had a friend once.
Cassandra had tight curls
and eyes alight
with laughter. That is, until
the plague god came to visit,

and laughter turned to
whispers turned to
ashes in her mouth.

That was a long time ago.
She's grown used to living in memory,
lonely & entombed by the
violence of her recollections—

Such bloody visions leave no room
for new things to grow.

(The House of Usher crumbles to dust,
sinks under the weight
of long-dead despair.)

Now she has no company but
the fish she catches,
the men she lures, now and again,
by force of habit.

But every once in a while,
pouring coffee in the dirty little diner
on the edge of town, she sees
traces of her old friend

in the cynical set of a young woman's jaw,

in the fingers tapping the booth like a war drum,
in the quiet eyes that say—
I know you won't believe me.

III.

Siren #3 diligently practices her scales
with a happy mutt curled up at her feet.
She has a performance soon. She will play for
a crowd of enchanted twenty-somethings,
who will not notice that her music changes
through the set to suit their tastes.

She will sing, at a fraction of her true power,
but the audience will still be dazzled silent.
The air will crackle and smell of petrichor.
She likes showing people a little magic,
leaving them revitalized
like happy children
after a peek of the sublime.

To the pushy man who corners her
in the alley after her set
and demands a song,
she shows her full self. After all,
a girl has to eat.

Dinner finished, she drives through
darkened country roads
Home, to the barking of mutts
and her vegetable garden.

She wanders far for her performances,
but none of the splendid pleasures of the wide world
compare to her little fortress in the woods.
Her home, her heart, her hearth.

She gets up early, plants tomatoes
in rich dark soil,
feels earthworms wriggling
over her fingers, damp and alive.

She will grow fresh things,
coax them from the ground lovely and new.
She will blitz the tomatoes for sauce
and eat. She will read Márquez
while the sun sets
and renders her living room orange; she will be
content with the end of another day
alone with the earth.





Introversion

Thin sheets of glass between you and I,
a willing prison with me inside.
Away from others and in here I shy
away from harm: in here is where I hide.
Place not your hand upon this glass,
trying in vain to penetrate.
Thin though it be, nothing will pass:
for me alone this shelter's made
In vain, in vain,
futile attempts to avoid harm's way.

Oh at times I myself do try,
my warm palms against the cold ice:
when I see suns or stars pass by,
come closer, I think, however would suffice.
Yet when they do and peer through the wall,
and much I yearn for their warmth and light,
past phantoms tighten their hold on their thrall,
who succumbs, and shrinks from the others' sight
In pain, in pain,
helpless struggles against mares of the night.

Has it been too long? Am I too late?
How long since I was inside, or since I tried,
or any who came as though led by Fate
– that old Fiend who refuses to die –
cracking and hacking and melting the wall
 until their own warmth and light dissipate
just to reach or to set me free –

In a noose I hold the key.

Hanwenheng Liu, DBBS

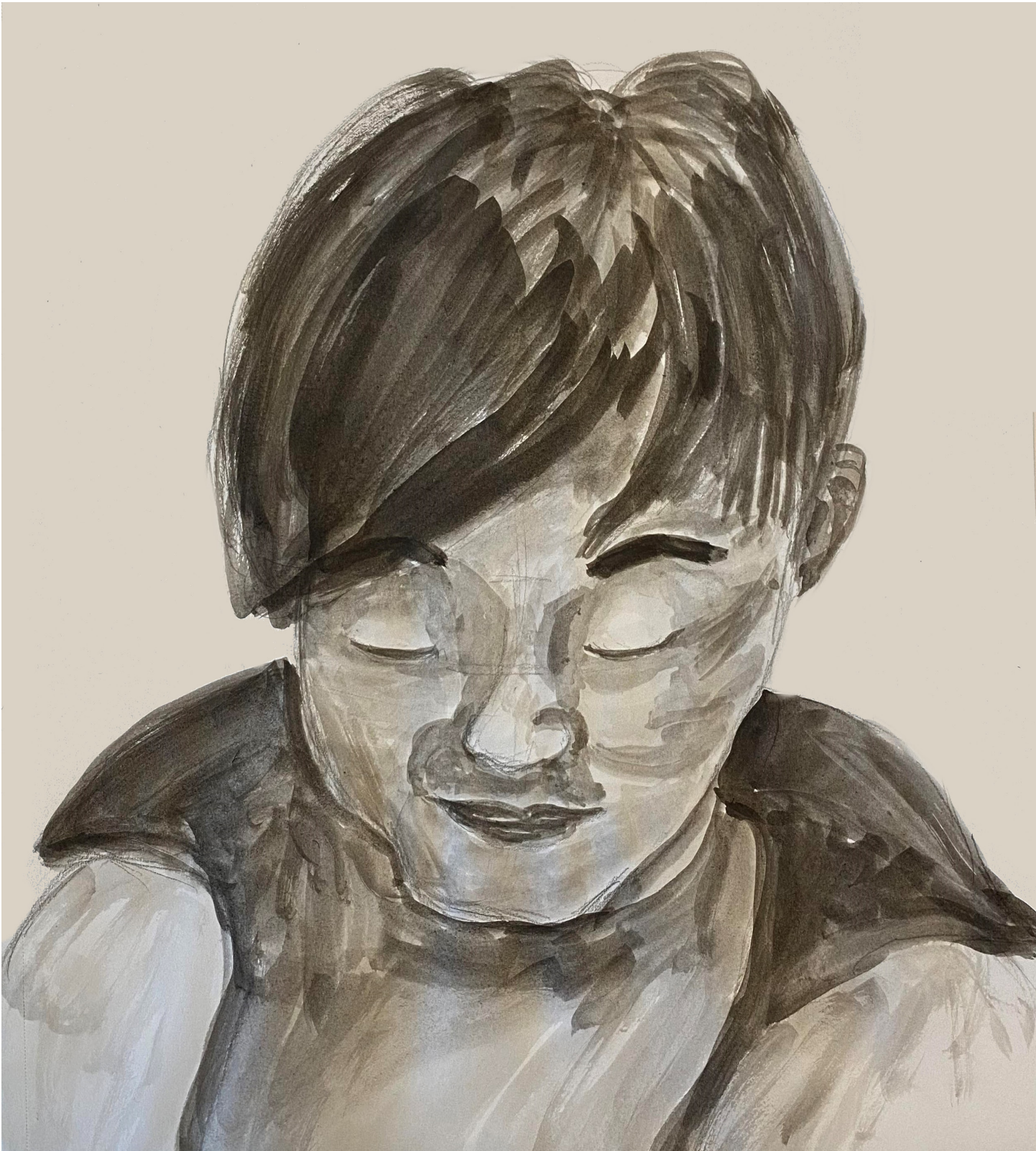


The Light at the End of the Tunnel | Lyra Morina, MSTP

Jade

It happened on a Sunday. I had felt it coming for weeks now. The dread pooling in my stomach, my shaky hands, and an inability to think about anything but you. You and your eyes that were the most mesmerizing mix of green and liquid gold. Like honey. I've never seen anything that color before. I don't think it exists anywhere but in your eyes. Those eyes that looked straight into mine just a mere two months ago and caused a sense of calm to come over me. The sunshine surrounding us brought out the amber. It was beautiful. Now, when I look into those eyes, the warmth has started to fade and they're a stony green. Harsh and cold. What happened to that light? That light that I felt deep in my chest when our hands touched. I felt it begin to flicker a few weeks ago. But I clung on for dear life. I didn't want you to go. I didn't want it to be over. I thought it was going to be you. Maybe not forever. But for longer than we had. But it wasn't you. And you didn't stay. Those glassy green eyes gave you away. The distance in your voice, I could feel it in my bones. I knew you were gone the moment your eyes turned to jade.

Macy Gomez, Program in Occupational Therapy



Kind | Amanda Li, WUMS

Long Distance

All at once my body is present
I make sorrel soup as it thunders
Hyperappear of the chaotic psyches
that surround me, the buttery lemon
scent hanging like mist
But I am not without the past that tethers me
An uncertainty washes over me as I stir green
and my mind tries to jump 8,000 miles away
to re-encounter, to re-embrace
As everything becomes and is un-
Known
Stable
Fair
Un, un, un

Hun
Darling,
I want to make the negative
our song
and sing it until it has
lost all meaning
And then
we can rewrite and
retrace
from the beginning

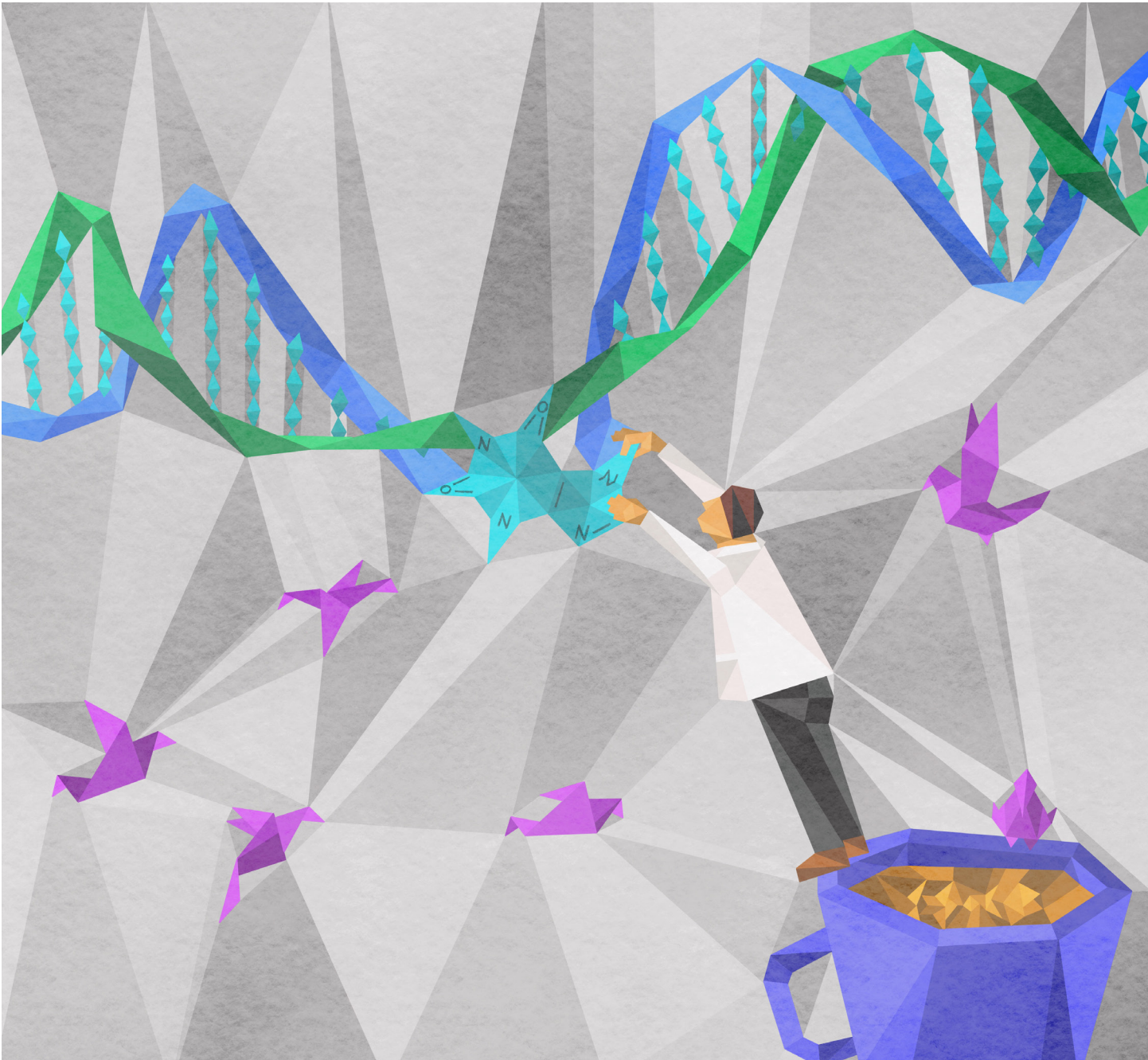
From when your laughter
was in earshot

From when even 6 feet
felt a little too far

Laurie Thompson, Program in Occupational Therapy



Corre | Miguel San Miguel Benavides, WUMS



The Importance of Coffee | Caden Horgan, WUMS

Occupy

Cook us a stew
As we dissect your attention
Admire your joints
Categorize your cognition

Sew up a sock
Tell me why it matters
Show me how you do it now
And I'll show you how to try it
Tomorrow

Teach us how to dribble, to shoot
Clumsy as we are
Laughing with a wide base of support
And a hopeful heart

Paint a picture, rate your pain
Dexterous and artsy
Make this joy a habit

One-handed you zip, crack an egg,
Hold a baby, fold laundry
It's what you do every day

My mask hides a grin
For the thing you said
I will document it verbatim
Because it shows who you are
Where you've been
And where you might go

Laurie Thompson, Program in Occupational Therapy

Cluttered

My eyes glaze over words
and jump like rabbits from fictional death scenes
To diagrams of the heart
To rereading and interpreting results of
personality quizzes
My mind backflips
And speculates a weekly meal plan
Considers how time is a construct
How grammar can be useless
But language powerful
Do I seek knowledge
Or am I just exercising my eye sockets?
Do I learn how to save the planet
Or rewatch *The Office*?
I consume a TV show like the
Stories may determine my own
I am given the choice of normal speed or double
And I jump at the chance to rush
To quickly occupy my time elsewhere
My ears fly away with the content
My brain breaks into a shards of
Grocery lists
Funny quotes said past dark
Beginnings of poems
A dozen tabs of articles
Lists of books I should read
Lists of books I want to read
Collections of e-things
You'd think I'd be more free
Of clutter
But my mind is Narnia drawers
Filled with endless nostalgia
Meaningful stained sweaters
And socks with holes
Podcasts to listen to
Endless feeds of information
To consume like potato chips
Excuses for the brain to always be
On-line

Laurie Thompson, Program in Occupational Therapy



“I’m still here!” Fred the Baby Possum | Kalyan Tripathy, MSTP

A Satirical Love

My eyes in a pinch to imagine God in the stars
While people, busy with their lives, die in idol cars.
A collage of broken bones: complete with scars,
Leaving a child, alone, in au revoir.
The child's a mangled mess tangled in strings of "It'll be alright."
While a snake winds down a vessel's windpipe
And steals its mouth to sit tight. Saying, "I love you" or whatever sounds, from a cloud, just right.

We're widows in a cloth rainbow woven from black,
with our hearts ensnared by caterwauls, constantly in communion for all who have passed.
We're equipped with pistols inside of our God gazers
that let shots go in the hopes that love returns.
When will miracles sprout from this moist hew?

We reap cruel crops, and God cackles at our aerobics:
We're hopping in and out of holes self-sewn
While the shovel keeps acting arch,
And the gravestone keeps the ground parched,
But light leaves and rain renders a nocturnal levity,
As we fill the bellies of maggots and flies.
Oh, sacred worms and earth,
We erect scrapers of sky to alert angels of this marsh.
Loving reality's a bit harsh:
All of us a simulacrum in its death dream.

Here's an enema to ease the sleep:
Pipsqueaks smoking broken trees in an ember.
Their members with burn juice and a smile fervent.
Hi-Ho! The loving days of not known the purpose.
"It's all pious and a golden lion,"
They say in mid-vices,
As the warmth from their insides lifts,
While feeling the febrile kiss of a demon's macadam love.
With leper lips they tell God to get over his hubris.
They'll touch palms and sing psalms, 'cause that shows life's not useless, right?

Camryn Marquez, DBBS



Behind the Curtain | Garrett Camps, WUMS

Girlhood, Revisited

When I was a flimsy
girl and a sliver,
and the golden goose
of the Sunday school
(Whispered the poet,
dying of longing),
I met a young man
in the blackcurrant
shrubs.

The moon hid its
face and the wind
howled in silence; a riotous
quiet of night unrequited.
We lied with our bodies
in lamentable ballet,
and then I was left
like a twice-widowed
bride.

•

When I was half
the woman I was,
and by my own
hand I was assured,
(Whispered the poet,
dying of heartache),
no virginal tadpole
or dove in a pie
or suckling mud-hut
of hornets abuzz
or docile cow
in powdery pasture,

but a lost dog
with a leg of wood,
soulless and falling
from a sighing sky,
eyes dripping milk
like silken sabers
and the skinless sting
of time gone by.

•

Now I am a girl no more,
no more,
but the golden price
for a flash-frozen heart,
(Whispered the poet,
dying of hubris),
drifting away like
sundust at dusk.

I see it all now
in memory's
theater,
the logic of loins
and garbage of art
and lies of a man
with eyes full of
snow,
his children cornmeal
and his wife a
husk.

Evelyn Craigen, DBBS



Tangled | Caellagh Catley, WUMS

Lesson Never Learned

Whenever I think I don't have any more love to give,
a man shows up
shamelessly shapeshifting into false security;
a sham
storming the shores of my island.
He will say he is shipwrecked,
and I will invite him in,
because I never turn away the broken.
although I know the consequences of being home to beautiful, beaten down boys.
Woman of wounds;
cursed to wander the fields and weep with the willows wondering when the sun will appear again;
and when I will attempt to fly too close to him;
to be melted skin and damaged wings again.
As if yellow wasn't caution enough to stop me from speeding up to you.

Lauren Nnabuo, Program in Occupational Therapy



Squirrel | Hanwenheng Liu, DBBS

The Phone Call

At that moment it becomes your reality
She answers your call
And you can tell, by the tone of her voice
That the news is not good
She spoke with the doctor just an hour ago
The pathology report confirmed your fears
It is a very aggressive brain cancer
She pauses, struggling to pronounce the foreign syllables
Putting a face to your new foe
Implanting the rhythmic, foreboding phrase into your marrow
That will echo through the days and months to come.

You've traveled this super highway before
A white-knuckled passenger leaning into the sharp turns
Absorbing the jolts through its twists and curves
And slowly creeping down its blind alleys
With no maps or road signs to lead the way
The surgery to remove the mass
The prayers and hope for a positive outcome
Then the boxy low light and intrusive ringtone
Delivering news that marks the before and after
In the narrative of your life.

The days and weeks blur
With reports of doctor visits and chemo treatments
As their tanned face and strength slowly fades
Along with their appetite
Hearty meals are slowly replaced
With puddings and nutrients served from a can
A concentrated effort to infuse new vigor
Into dying cells and waning spirits.

You pray, seeking strength and a balm
For this recurring malady that fatigues your soul
As yet another block in your well-worn quilt of life
Is slowly torn, stitch by stitch
From its vital place in the delicate pattern.

Your tired eyes strain in the twilight hours
As you toil to patch and repair those fraying seams and nerves
As shadows lengthen and heads nod
Whilst the earth continues on its slow, certain revolution
Of night to day
You continue to pray and stay the course
Expending all your pluck and fiber to stave off
Yet another gaping hole
In the fragile, interwoven fabric of your soul.

Rose Kettler, Becker Medical Library



Central West-end Station at WUSM | Ping Yan, Neurology



Golden Night | Jamie Moffa, MSTP



Afternoon in Forest Park | Jamie Moffa, MSTP

Nightly Routine

ask the moon,
how many tears are shed under her gaze.
hidden beneath her barren forest,
they glisten,
softly glide on leaves.
dew etched with brokenness.
they glow hollow.
she watches.
to her, they are silent.
she does not hear.
dull thuds.
does not see.
blurred vision.
to her,
they are beautiful.

Lauren Nnabuo, Program in Occupational Therapy



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