

# THE INDICATOR



## OUR POLITICAL EXISTENCE

NOVEMBER 2020

VOLUME XLVIII, ISSUE 1

# Letter from the Editor

Writing on the precipice of the 2020 election is an overwhelmingly difficult endeavor. To ask others, a community of creative artists, to write about their political existence during such a time is likewise fraught with difficulties. How do we both delve deeply into ourselves while giving ourselves care? How is creation, from a deeply human place, a form of activism?

In this issue, every single member of *The Indicator* reveals the ways in which this work is an act of resistance and an act of resilience. It is political work to put into expression all that we feel, both collectively and individually, in this moment. To edit during the election and days after the election shapes the way we see our own work, the way we experience again our anxieties, our tragedies, our joys, and our hopes for the future.

As I write this, the Black Lives Matter movement continues to make waves in the minds of millions of Americans, as it shakes many out of complacency. A very statement of fact, that *Black lives matter*, has cracked this country open and will continue to bleed its resounding truth. This movement does not end with a moment.

As I write this, the female body is under attack through legislation and Supreme Court appointees. Environmental protection lies in a wasteland at our feet, decimated by years and years of neglect. Climate change accelerates and continues to place a disproportionate burden on BIPOC communities.

Writing within the COVID-19 pandemic, where death is alive around us, is also an overwhelmingly difficult endeavor. In the wake of this all, how do we begin to build again? What must be destroyed in order for all to pursue liberation and equality? How do we put into reality all that we are feeling? To solidify this moment through our words, art, and expression is essential.

While the uncertainty feels crushing at times, I believe that we, as humans, as artists, are learning to live in this uncertainty. We have learned to breathe, heal, break, grow in this uncertainty. Our community is dispersed—both on campus and all over the world—but we are together in the omnipotence of the unknown. With our words, our artwork, we begin to see and use our reality to dream of a future brighter than the one we are living.

Being political is just being. The politics of being is being at all. To choose to say you are apolitical is to make a choice (a choice not given to every suppressed voice in this country). Come into conflict. Argue with and agree with the self. To move is to change all that we think we know.

We are both political beings and made political. As I write this, the snow falls down in October. As I edit this, it is November, the sun is shining, and the world is warm. The snow is political, the heat is political, my body is political, your body is political. We must ensure that we are not made weapons, made collateral damage in this warfare of ideology.

We must take care and give ourselves care in these troubling times. We must take solace in the knowledge that these moments are urging us towards the time when our voices will be heard. The voices on these pages are valuable, individual, shaking, and revolutionary. These are the voices that will effectuate future change.

Kiera Alventosa Class of '21 Editor-in-Chief



# The Indicator

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Subscriptions are \$20/hour, \$35/minute.  
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# Dark: A Satire

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I genuinely see myself as a very unserious person. No, seriously: I love puns, watch British cooking shows, and occasionally make an appearance in my friends' Tiktoks. These are unequivocally the traits of a very chill person. But I get how people might miss that; I'll admit, I don't smile a ton. And when I'm listening to someone, like really actually listening, my eyebrows do seem to rest in a furrowed way that says, "The fuck is this person saying?" Generally speaking, though, I know I'm a very pleasant person, and I've never been moved to question that.

Except for that one fateful semester. I was minding my own business in Frost Café, taking a brief study break and scrolling through Instagram, when I saw him, just sitting there, fine as hell, tagged in the back of some other dude's post. The jawline? Strong. The fit? Lowkey dripped. The melanin? Very much present. Much like the cast of *Grown-ish*, he looked so attractive and put together for a college student my age that it was almost unconvincing, and between 6' and 6'3 no doubt, which is the optimal height for my 5'7 self. After another forty minutes of reconnaissance, which involved a look through both his grid and tagged in photos, as well as a quick yet thorough perusal of his roster profile and stats, I was officially invested.

(For the sake of anonymity—and my own personal embarrassment, in case I've wildly misjudged the reach and audience of this publication—I'll be referring to this Black king by the names of equally fine Black men from my favorite romantic dramedies. Please, do keep up.)

As I was saying, Omar Epps was the whole package with extra postage. An athlete, a scholar. He was the type of guy who majors in Econ, not for the consulting gig but because he really cares about the labor markets and unemployment and stuff. Much like Nola Darling in the classic Spike Lee joint, I simply had to have it. I hit up a friend of mine, another guy on the same team, and asked what the vibes were. As fate would have it, they happened to have a formal coming up and Michael Ealy was still looking for a date. That night, I waited to hear back as my friend put in a good word for me. Sitting by the phone, my mind wondered

as I fantasized about my burgeoning Black love story and how, in the coming winter break, I'd be explaining to my parents and gloating to my hatin' ass cousins that I did, in fact, finally have a boyfriend. I had just entered the "Going Out + Party Dresses" section of the Urban Outfitters website, getting an early start on dress searching for this impending formal, when my friend texted me back. It was a screenshot of his and Morris Chestnut's conversation. My friend had basically thrown out some names of people that would make a good date for him. I don't remember exactly how the conversation went on my friend's side, but upon being offered my name, I remember Idris Elba's response very clearly: "Nah she too dark ;P"

Now, this was a bummer to here, because as I said before, I don't really see myself as a serious or "dark" person. Super casual, very chill and fun, not dark at all! It's just my face, you know? I refused to let our Black love story end on what seemed like an unfortunate misunderstanding about my truly unserious demeanor. I was adamant that once Lakeith Stanfield understood how pleasant and friendly I was, he would change his mind and be totally 100% into me.

For the next two weeks, whenever I "happened" to find myself around Boris Kodjoe, I was my lightest and friendliest self. I wore more yellow to give myself a "brighter disposition". I smiled incessantly, at all times. This was especially more difficult in times when I didn't feel like smiling, often the consequence of some unattractively serious thoughts, but I found that if I just completely emptied my mind of any major critical thinking—the prevalence of imposter syndrome among high-achieving young Black women, the hyper-awareness of one's body in predominantly white spaces, the ever-present understanding of Black women's dual oppression in America—it became much easier to smile for Mahershala Ali without focusing on those things. I laughed at everything and basically anything, including unfunny jokes and a few non-joking statements (in case they were just incredibly unfunny jokes). I even pitched up my laugh and general speaking voice a few octaves, to seem particularly inviting, unin-

timidating and absolutely not dark. Despite these well-thought-out steps and perfect execution, I couldn't seem to get Michael B. Jordan to look at me any differently. In fact, he hardly looked at all. Even worse, I'd washed and re-worn my bright yellows so much that they'd faded, visibly duller and more muted. The constant laughing and forcing my voice to sound like someone else had given me a sore throat and left me sounding all hoarse and raspy. My jaw felt stiff from all the added smiling, and I'd rendered my head devoid of any grounding thoughts for so long, I was honestly starting to feel light-headed. I couldn't make myself any less dark to him, and I wasn't sure it was worth the effort.

A few days later, I was in Frost Café (again) scrolling through Instagram (again) when I came upon Will Smith's new post. He ended up going to formal with one of the women on the golf/softball/cross country team (just pick one...you get it). I scrolled through the photos, more curious than bitter. In one, she was sitting on his lap at Panda East, smiling brightly and laughing at something out of frame while he grinned at the camera. There was another with the two of them posing under a tastefully decorated sign made of balloon letters; she flipped her long hair over her shoulder as she looked up at him warmly, and he smirked straight ahead, one hand around her waist and a bottle of André in the other. She was beautiful, that was a given, but it was also something more than that. She looked so effortlessly nonchalant and easygoing, as if she had nothing at all to be too concerned about, no parts of herself to internalize or doubt, no place in the world where she couldn't be at ease. I finally started to get it. No one could ever call her dark. She was utterly untroubled, so carefree, so... light.

It wasn't meant to be for Taye Diggs and I, which I probably should've known from the start. In those couple of weeks, trying to get him to like me, I changed how I acted, how I looked, all to try and hide who I actually was, to do away with the parts of me that, it seemed, wouldn't be accepted or couldn't be loved. I realized that I didn't need to change how I am or feel badly about it, especially for some random dude like Nick Cannon. Plus, in the end, I only listened to "Take A Bow" maybe

twice before I started to feel better, so it's possible that I was never that invested to begin with and that my attraction to him was mainly driven by both a pressure (and admittedly a slight desire) to participate in hook up culture, as well as a yearning for the reciprocity and validation of being seen as sexually or romantically desirable not only by another Black person, but one who looks similar to me, who shares my skin and my features and as a result can maybe know and understand how I move through the world in a way others can't, since ultimately the whole point of hook up culture is using sex and physical intimacy to compensate for the dearth of emotional intimacy and connection that so often exists in the starved and uneasy landscape of early young adulthood. But who really knows lmao. Sometimes it just be like that. It's not really that serious. ~



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# On Learning to Love Myself Again

Cecelia Amory

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Somewhere along the way, I made the mistake of centering a large part of my identity around being Small. And once my identity as The Small One was established, I started to worry about what would happen if I lost it.

I began to dread taking up space. And once that fear set in, I was screwed because my brain started whispering to me that the only way to avoid taking up more space was to ensure that I was actively decreasing the amount of space required for my body to navigate the world. I came to realize that the comfort I felt in my own skin was tenuous; it hinged on the one condition that I stay Small or, even better, Get Smaller. After that, it was only a matter of time before I started to mistake the feeling of Getting Smaller for the feeling of Control.

And meanwhile, the people around me and the media I consumed were also chasing Smallness and profiting from fear and talking calories and steps and diets and weight loss and, and, and,

and it's easy to get lost in it.

A few months back, I found within my numbed out body and mind a tiny ember not yet stomped out: beneath my all-consuming quest for Smallness, under the brain fog and the safety blanket of emptiness, I remembered what it felt like to be hungry for life. At my core, I knew that if I wanted to be Alive again, I'd have to surrender the coping mechanism that made me feel In Control. It was a terrifying gamble, but I felt the small ember burning in my stomach and I knew what choice to make. So, I latched onto that spark and I ate my way back to the Land of the Living while every fiber of my being screamed at me to stop.

When my brain had finally clunked back into a functional state, I found myself at a loss. Now that I could no longer cope through starvation, I needed a new way to communicate with myself, to express the turmoil I'd tried so hard to Control by suppressing my body.

So, I did what I knew how to do. I made art.

When I drew the first portrait in this series, I was perpetually feeling awful. I wanted to climb out of my skin and up a tree. I was very much over the whole "having a physical form" thing.

It was exhausting, feeling like this day in and day out. It felt like I'd tried everything: positive self talk, pretending my reflection didn't exist, flooding my social media feeds with eating disorder recovery accounts. Sometimes they would help, but never permanently. Nothing seemed to have the ability to repair my sick self perception. I was desperate to reconnect with myself, so finally I pulled out my sketchbook, looked myself in the eye, and turned myself into art.

I immediately tossed the rules of facial proportions out of the window. I'd already spent months thirsting after some impossible standard of physical beauty. It was exactly what I was trying to escape, so I kindly told perfection to fuck off.

Drawing myself was like a reintroduction to an estranged friend. I sat there with my pencil and I did my best to forgive the one who had forsaken me for a dream of Control. I drew to find reconciliation with myself, to apologize, to remind myself that I have the privilege of spending an entire lifetime with this body.

The first few portraits look wrong somehow, like I was drawing a stranger, like I was looking at a face that hadn't stared back at me in the mirror every morning for my entire life. Despite my defiance against proportionality, I wasn't brave enough to draw my face from any angle I thought was unflattering. I hesitated to identify my flaws and insecurities. I was too uncomfortable to look closely at the truth of my face, so I had no hope in hell at capturing any semblance of my individuality. No wonder the first portraits look so foreign.

Mon Aug 31  
2020

A time when I felt  
beautiful





But as I continued to draw, continued to get to know myself again, I started to delight in the intrigue of my face. Drawing *The Ideal* gets boring after a while; the effort it takes to carve out beauty from perceived imperfection is far more rewarding. With every new portrait, I opened myself a little more to the thrill of self exploration. I gave in to the realities of my face from every angle. I learned that the most beautiful portraits were the ones in which I let go of Control and drew exactly what was in front of me. In sitting with my discomfort, I discovered that my face, the one I'd shunned and mistreated for so long, was well worth artistic honesty.

Now, whenever I feel any flavor of overwhelming emotion, I sit down with my sketchbook and I confront myself. My self portraits are

the most cathartic emotional release I've found. They're not about capturing a perfect likeness, they're about seeing myself and not running away. No two portraits look alike because each one is a different version of me in all of my many lovelorn, pained, joyous, found-again faces.

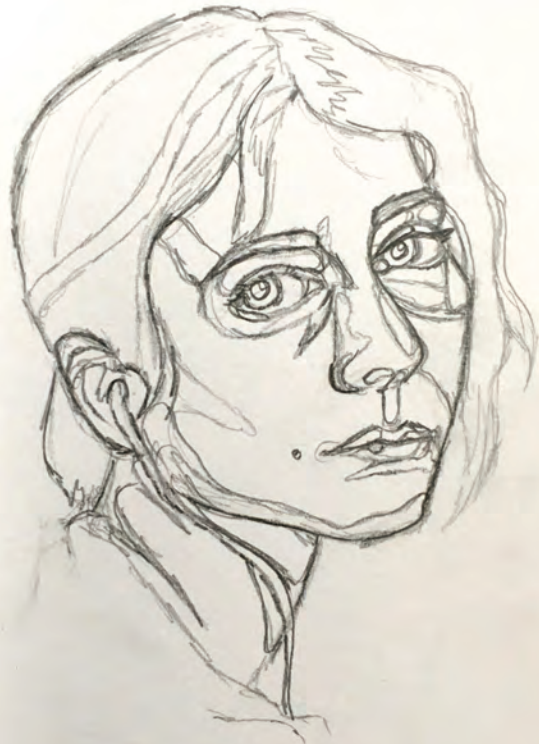
Someday I'm going to be 80 years old and wrinkly and saggy and concave. If I waste my life chasing Smallness now, how will I find an identity when my body can no longer provide one? I intend to live my life in such a way that when I gaze back through a tunnel of years, I'll think, "I am so, so proud of you for taking up space when the whole world told you not to."

I am more than just the worldly body I inhabit.





9/21/20



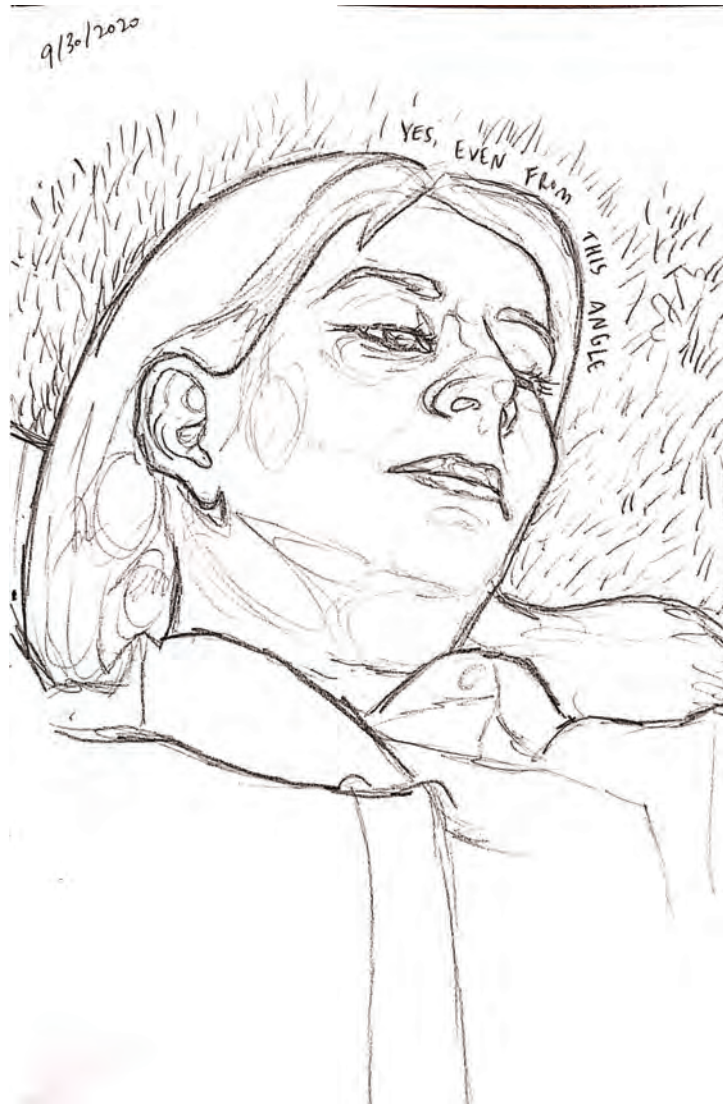
9/26/2020



Princess of Rome

9/26/2020









10/19/20



11-120

Cecelia Amory '24 is a Staff Writer  
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# Recognition

Desmond Shea

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Today, or perhaps another day,  
I do not feel like the same version of myself  
    that could play the violin, or write a thousand words a day,  
instead left to be a shadow, a stranger,  
outlined by cold light through the window.

A single moment is enough for me to dream.  
There is a call in the distance, but I am not ready to respond,  
Not when my love and lack thereof are both cause for denial.  
I was taught, after all, that tempered light was the most beautiful.

But here, where I stand, I want nothing more than to hold and be held,  
count down from nineteen as I breathe in smoke and salty air from other worlds.  
The image of him stands beside me as a flock of starlings swirls out from the trees,  
    forming a shroud that covers the sun.

Watching him, I feel the same quiet devastation,  
like remembering that yes, I had wanted to become an astronomer,  
before I looked too long at the night sky  
and became invisible by the sight of it all.

There is no such thing as perfect harmony;  
And there are no real endings, not anymore,  
just days when I wake up and realize that my old name and face no longer belong to me.  
Sometimes, I am free from the other self that kept me bound.  
Sometimes, I am left drifting without an anchor.

I searched, and I saw fragments of him, in letters I wrote but never shared.  
Slowly, I began to piece him together.

I imagine we first met, standing at the edge of a field of long grass.  
It was late afternoon,  
creeping towards dusk,  
the sky shaded with hues of amber and rose.  
A second, a minute,  
    a heart of gold and glass.

I looked out to where the light was gathering, and so did he.  
And it seemed, for a moment, that we could allow ourselves to remain this way,  
    In regret,  
    In transience,  
    In recognition.





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# Constantly Becoming

## Carolina Cordon

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No box can contain me  
For I am expansive  
I straddle borders  
Smoothing lines drawn in the sand  
Unifying

Yet never merging

*"Ni de aqui, ni de alla"*

Not from here, not from there

Too much of one thing, not enough of another

Stuck in a murky state of in-between

Code-switching to become fluent in different languages

Languages of conflicting identities

cultures

experiences

all lost in translation

I stand transfixed between two colliding worlds  
Caught at a point of intersection  
With walls closing in and eyes leering from all directions  
I am torn  
Legs dragging  
Crooked arms wave above my head  
I am spread out wide for all to see  
Forced yet craving exposure  
They watch  
          examine  
                assess  
label and store me

But how can they store me when I am constantly becoming?  
Even I don't know where I fit within these shrinking boxes  
Which melt into the ground, expanding out, narrowing as they lose  
height  
You won't find me inside that box  
Just a paling, naked carcass with their jaw hanging open  
Not from yelling  
And there is no expression of fear  
But as if begging to be fed  
Expecting and never receiving

Longing to belong - but belong to what?  
 I guess I belong to all who are in a transient state  
 Not just to the *gringos*  
 Or the *locos* I call family  
 Not just to the whitewashing to fit in  
 And the code-switching required to jump from Spanish  
 Spanglish  
 English  
 but to a community of those who are also becoming



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# in my next life i want (worms die dragons)

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## I.

In my next life, I want to be a worm.

(Somewhere up There, the anonymous ‘They’ puts a tick next to my name. ‘They’ scribbles a note — “*this one has low ambition.*”)

But, truly — I promise, in my heart of hearts, that I’ll work hard and be a good citizen (whatever that means), and I’ll sludge through this first life. I’ll be as ambitious as you want. And, in return, give me just this one wish.

***A judgmental whisper from above: Why a worm?***

*(I want to burrow into the warmth of sun-tilled soil, feel the hug of rocks and wind. Lazily passing the world through my heart and lungs, slumbering in the pockets between blades of grass, waking in beds of moss-down among dewdrops. Crawling under the paws of squirrels, under deer and tree roots.*

*I want to live among giants.)*

## II.

What does a worm remind you of?

***Things they connote:***

- *sliminess,*
- *incompetence,*
- *cowardice—*

but connotations are only one half of a larger truth that is only true in the sense that this truth is a feeling and feelings are real they’re real, I’m sure, are you sure—?

Well, who cares? When was the last time any of us saw a worm? They live their lives away from humans, minding their own business. They’re small. (They’re insignificant.)

I don’t want to be a tiger (too much blood) or a flower (stationary for life? no thanks) or even a rich, confident, white man (privilege is a difficult flavor to forget). I don’t want to be a window or a book or a diamond on a queen’s white glove.

I want absence of purpose.

(I *want* insignificance. Because being human is hard. Being sentient is pain and endurance and a combobulation of so many thoughts the thoughts fill your head and pile and flow and overflow, sloshing sloshing dripping pouring through the cracks between your fingers and in your careful composure, masks made of fear that clash and leak substance onto the floor you mop it. And you slink away and will forth forgetfulness.)

Being a worm means being small; I'll take up fewer atoms in the world. I don't have to risk bumping into others or flush and stammer apologies; I don't have to walk through empty hallways and feel like They're watching me from everywhere. Argus lives in the walls the floors the air my mind. I don't have to feel the weight of existence. I don't have to be seen, be heard, be noticed, which sounds like a very lonely, desolate, pathetic life but worms don't need to be noticed and they're unaware of their own sentience and physicality they don't *have* physicality.

***A (languid) masculine voice echoes:*** *Looking good.*

***A (trapped) feminine voice echoes:*** *He'd like you more if you smiled.*

I don't have to think.

I don't have to think about competition, humiliation, or any of the million identities that make up my existence. Worms don't feel injustice at the idea that they'll never be understood, that they'll always be worth less than another living being, that there's nothing they can do to change what makes them feel that way except to change the way they feel, and sometimes there's nothing they would hate more than to forget the way the world has made you drown in fire and choke on your own fury—

### III.

My greatest conscious threat is the bird on that tree over there.

Worms (I) don't feel any negative emotions.  
They're (I'm) small. They crawl and breathe and sleep in soft beds of soil and they don't think at all. They don't absorb the words of others and turn against themselves. But

imagine if worms could think.

Our cognition is hailed as the one thing that makes us superior to "animals,"  
as if we aren't animals ourselves  
(the only difference is we fight with money not bananas),  
but all it's done is create

hierarchy.

Worms with minds would think about dirt  
but they wouldn't think about dirt they think about amounts

*How much dirt have you dug today?*

Longer worms fatter worms softer worms harder worms. In some way, one worm would become superior to another. Worms would find a way to fight; maybe longer worms are better at strangling and  
harder worms are better at crushing or  
softer worms are better at wriggling into eensy spots to hide from the Elimination.





(Maybe *C. elegans* will become the laughingstock of worm society for being used as tools for science, writhing and twisting across microscope slides under the influence of human drugs, the way humans have used other humans and added more and more to history the ledger of sapien crimes, and maybe

***One C. elegans will say to the other:*** *if you weren't so good at responding to stimuli then maybe you wouldn't have gotten picked for the next experiment, and you think you're the victim—?)*

But worms can't think, so, we're fine. We have the superior brains; worms aren't going to be competing for existential domination anytime soon. Even if they did have brains, who would want to be us?

#### IV.

***My voice raises with the red slip of anger that seeps out after a lifetime of suppressing and obliging:*** *does this still bother you? still think I'm crazy? extreme? avoidant? are you laughing at my foolishness?*

The only reason you're uncomfortable with worms is that they're pink and wet and raw, the color of flesh turned inside out, sparking and sticking like a live wire dipped in gasoline. They're exposed in a way you never will be, because your insides are called insides for a reason—they're not meant to be seen. *You're* not meant to be seen. You're locked away. You'll never be understood. Death and war and anger persist the way a worm's blissful ignorance persists—an immutable state of being, a fact of life. *You're* trapped in these categories that we've imposed on ourselves.

And for what? For love? For ego? To satiate your inborn darkness and need to be great the need to be known and the drive to exist and to breathe. Humans are not satisfied *I'm not satisfied* with just existing because to think is to know is to want is to crave is to *act*.

Someday there comes a moment when all ceases to matter, and maybe ***there is a god to ask you:*** *What would you like to be?*

I think and know and want and crave, and my act is this.

#### V.

(Some may say human sentience is meaning, but what does meaning matter when sentience ceases to exist? None of it matters. Because humans die as dry bones underground.

but worms die dragons on the pavement.)

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Artist: Natalie Tianyi Yang '23

# My Favorite Qualifier

Ari Dengler

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Welcome to the female body  
She has a tumultuous history  
She has been trained to shrink and reduce, has grown weary looking at models whose skinny legs and flat stomachs careen the pages of magazines  
She has been silenced, her tongue slashed from her mouth and hung next to the head of the grizzly and the boars raging teeth  
Her voice has been treated as a toy, a silly, ridiculous thing  
Her sexuality has been ripped from her; when she tries to reclaim it she is called grotesque names of “slut,” “cunt,” “whore,” words that stick to skin where she is told clothes should be  
She is fed up  
She is angry  
She is tired

When females are faced with this infuriating and depleting history, how do they properly respond?

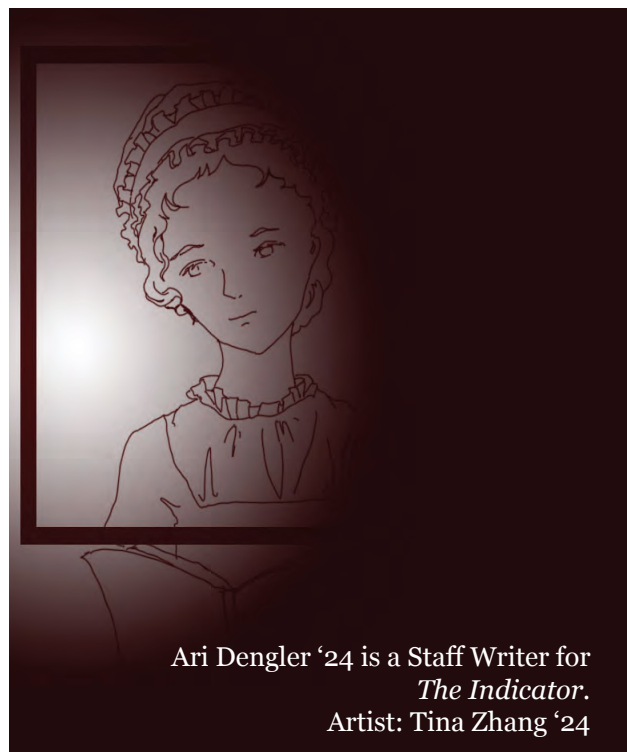
I sometimes worry about my own answer. I am not simplistic in being wholly feminine or wholly masculine; rather, I am a paradox of beings, identities smashing against each other like unruly puzzle pieces. Certain aspects of me scream femininity; I like wearing dresses and skirts, I enjoy cooking, I am empathetic and caring. Despite all of these traits being impressive, I often feel the need to qualify this feminine side of me with the more masculine part of myself; I like weightlifting, I enjoy speaking powerfully and persuasively, I am brave and assertive.

It is exhausting to seesaw between these two identities, and it can be disheartening to see the unequal power each identity holds. Oftentimes, my feminine side gets trampled, left in the dust of my mind, while my masculine side is boasted about in front of audiences, placed on a pedestal, and granted a shiny medal. One is scum, the other, a hero.

Qualifying shouldn't be essential for women to be successful and powerful, yet I often feel that it is. I am petrified of being perceived as weak or lesser, so I have allowed my masculine side to grow and dominate while my feminine side has shrunk, whittled itself down to an apologetic corner of my mind that's ignored at all costs.

I am fed up  
I am angry  
I am tired

Welcome to internalized misogyny  
All us girls have our fair douse,  
Spoonfuls shoveled down our throats like Mary Poppins sugar  
Maybe we could reject it from our system  
But then we remember  
82 cents to your dollar  
So call us crazy and call us silly  
Tell us we're on our period  
(we love being told that)  
But we want 100 not 82  
So we try to act like you and speak like you and soon  
we're caricatures of you  
Our limbs in limbo  
As we watch our audition tapes for the role of  
“One of the bros”  
And revel in our ability to qualify.



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# Libations to my grandmother

Natalie Tianyi Yang

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I am on a train, chugging towards Tianjin, the city where my father grew up. I am going back for the funeral for my grandmother, and my relatives await me. It's already 1:30pm, and they've delayed eating lunch until my father and I arrive.

The plan for the weekend is uncertain. First, we'd stay for a night in Tianjin, collect my grandmother's ashes, kept safe in an urn. Then, we will go into the village, where we will be met with anywhere from one-hundred to four-hundred faces. The funeral is an open invitation, my father says. Anyone who has known my grandmother can attend. They add to honouring her passing.

The idea of having total strangers slink into an otherwise private event was strange to me. I told my father, quite honestly, you don't think anyone will come just to feast at the ceremony? He said, it was fine. The most important thing was, again, that anybody who knew my grandmother had the chance to attend. And since the bereft children my grandmother left behind had no way of knowing every one of her relationships, the open-invite.

At a deeply personal event, to be one among strangers would be an unsettling thing. At a deeply personal event, to be one among strangers, and yourself feel a stranger, should be an even more unsettling thing.

This is what I mean. As one of five grandchildren and the daughter to my grandmother's youngest and notoriously most filial child, inevitably I hold a special place in the ceremony of grief, earmarked for me. Yet, I experience an estrangement from the events of mourning.

In Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, there is a passage where Electra, daughter of Agamemnon, leads a funeral procession of handmaidens to honour her dead father. She says to the group of women several fold strangers to her dad than herself: help.

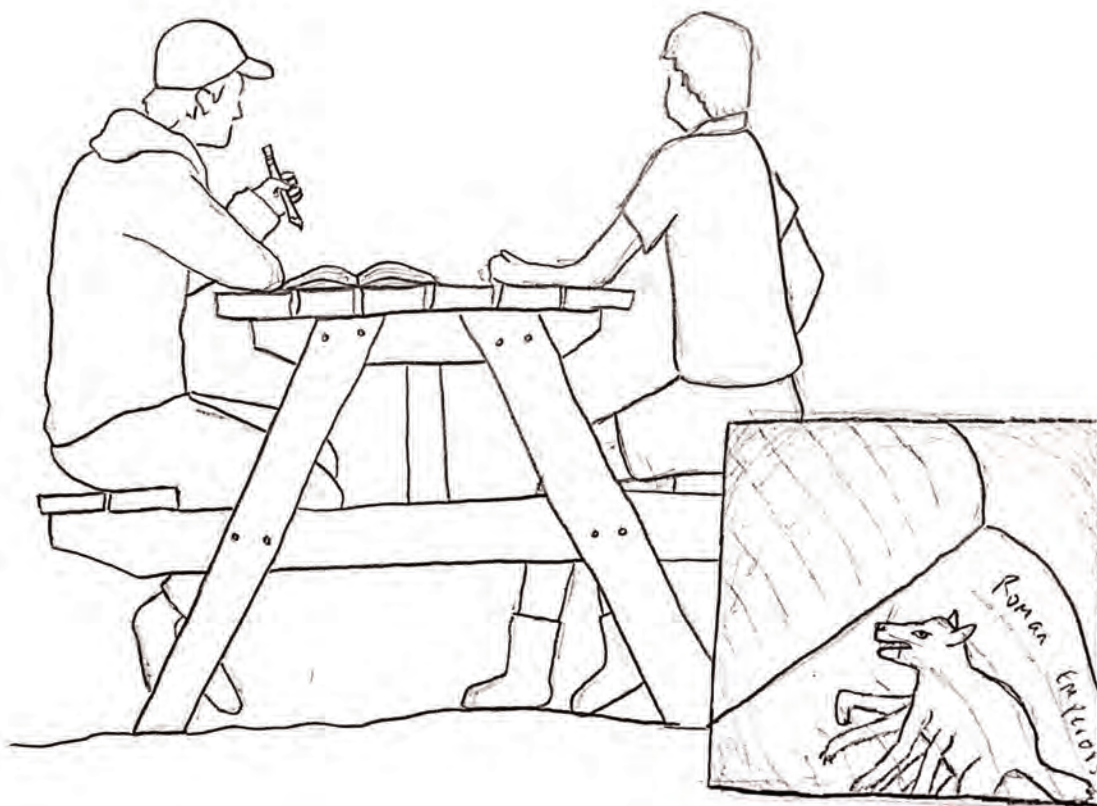
What shall I say? As I pour out these outpourings of sorrow?

How say the good word? How make my prayer to my

Grandmother?



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"You know, I think this is peak college," Dean said, lifting his pen from his notebook paper and chewing thoughtfully on the tip. On the page before him lay the completed image of a dragon, breathing fire laced with invented arcane-looking runes, smack in the middle of his notes from a history lecture on the emperors of Rome from three hours before. The dragon had taken up residence there when Professor Meryn diverged into a particularly boring tangent, the notes returning at the point where she herself returned, finally, to the topic of the lecture.

"...Mmm-hmm?" mumbled Owen distractedly. His head was bent low over his own notebook as he dreamily scratched out a painfully cheesy poem to his boyfriend back home.

"Yeah," Dean continued, "I mean, here we are, three miles into the wilderness, out in the dead of night, and we just spent the last hour discussing Philosophy."

"Philosophy is interesting," Owen replied mildly, lifting his head and tapping his pencil absently on his knee.

"There! Exactly! That's what makes it peak college," Dean exclaimed, pointing

triumphantly with his pen. Seeing the skeptical look on Owen's face, he continued. "It is! All the drinking stuff is just peak...this-age. What makes it peak college is when you pair the whiskey with an argument about whether Hegel was a genius ahead of his time or an incomprehensible know-it-all."

## I think this is peak college

Owen seemed to consider this a moment, then snorted. "Elitist intellectual."

"Like you aren't," Dean said with a wry smile. "Using words like 'intellectual.'"

Owen smiled back and closed his notebook. "Either way, it's time to head back, I think. What is it, 2 a.m.?" He glanced at his phone. "Yep, 1:50. I want to be asleep before the sunrise, if I can manage it."

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"We could just sleep out here."

"Yeah...no thanks."

"What, you scared, dude? Think this place is *haunted*?" Dean had a shit-eating grin on his face. Owen was scared, and they both knew it. Their RA was a little bit *too* good at telling ghost stories, and while they were a welcome diversion when surrounded by the bright lights and comfortable chairs of the common room, out here Owen could too easily imagine her giant spider or her thousand-toothed horror creeping through the grass.

*A hundred undulating toes, their noise hidden by the cacophony out here until it's too late and then, BAM! That's it for you, chief.*

"No," he said acidly, "I just don't feel like waking up in the morning with bugs crawling all over me and leaves in my hair. We're going back." After a moment, he added, "We've been out too long already."

Dean started to launch into a cackling speech about Owen's obvious fear, but



he was cut off by a strange, ululating call sounding in the distance, and for a second, all the chirping, hooting and rustling around the boys ceased.

The hairs on Dean's neck sprang to attention.

"Yeah, okay," he said.

The two friends began the trek back through the woods toward campus, relying on their phone flashlights to guide the way. After a half-hour, Dean stopped and held out a hand across Owen's chest.

"I don't recognize these woods," he said.

"Dude, we came through here when it was still light. Obviously they'd look different coming back."

"I don't think that's what's going on." Dean's voice was trembling despite himself. "There's something different about these trees. They're taller, or thicker. Can't you tell? There's almost no moonlight coming through."

Owen looked around for a moment, a puzzled expression on his face. "You know, that is o—" the same ululating sound from before washed over them then, closer than before, freezing them in place. For the second time that night, the insects were silent, and for a moment, Owen thought he caught an odd, rapid chittering, right before they began again.

*It must be my imagination, he thought. It must be my imagination.*

"A wolf?" Dean offered, shaking Owen back to reality.

"Doesn't sound like any wolf I've ever heard."

"Yeah...well, either way, it was behind us, so we go forward. Even if this is the wrong way back to campus, it has to lead out of the forest at some point, right?" Dean looked for an answer in Owen's face. The other boy nodded reassuringly. Neither of them was reassured. Wordlessly, they grasped hands and walked faster into the deepening gloom.

The call came again three more times, each time sounding a little closer, each time silencing the night for a moment, and each time, to Owen's ears, followed by that strange

chittering. By the third call, both boys were half-running along the winding path.

"I think it's beginning to lighten again!" Dean said after a minute where the quiet was broken only by the boys' rapid breathing. And indeed, shafts of moonlight had begun to break through the canopy up ahead. As they ran on, minutes crawling by, the light continued to grow around them and the trees visibly thinned, but something tickled at the back of Owen's mind.

*Wait, why is our breathing the only sound I can hear?*

As that thought crossed Owen's mind, he looked up from his feet and several things happened at once.

First, Owen's eyes traced the outline of an indistinct shape blocking the path ahead of them, sort of like a wolf, but all...wrong, somehow. Too many legs. Second, Owen felt Dean tackle him from the side just as something flew over his head, smelling like rotting fruit and burned soil.

Just as quickly as they went down, Dean pulled Owen up. He had seen the projectile just in time: brown and green muck laced with fine strands of a beautiful, almost mesmerizing silvery substance.

"Run!" he shouted, grabbing Owen's hand and taking off into the trees. Owen needed no encouragement. The split-second glimpse of that abominable, offensive shape was enough motivation to send him running all the way to the moon if he could be sure it wouldn't follow him there.

The calls and chittering of the monster assured the boys of its pursuit as they ran on, crashing through brambles and leaping over fallen branches, until, shining like a beacon under the growing moonlight, the soccer field that marked the edge of campus appeared through the thinning trees.

*If I could just make it there I'll be safe. It wouldn't dare follow me onto campus!* And although Owen knew the thought was insane, he was certain he was right.

Then, he tripped over a tree root and fell hard, taking Dean down with him. Owen heard a crunch and a scream of pain as Dean landed, and looked around to see his leg bent at a sickening angle.

**If I could  
just make  
it there  
I'll be safe.  
It wouldn't  
dare  
follow  
me onto  
campus!**

"Oh no. Oh no no no NO!" he yelled, his voice echoed by a cry of triumph from the monster that sounded barely a stone's throw away.

He was about to collapse back down in despair when Dean reached up and grabbed him by the shirt collar.

"It's not your fault!" he said, right into Owen's eyes, looking more intense than he ever had in the short time the two had known each other. "Bad roll of the dice. Nothing more. Go!" When Owen didn't move, he shoved his shoulder. "GO!"

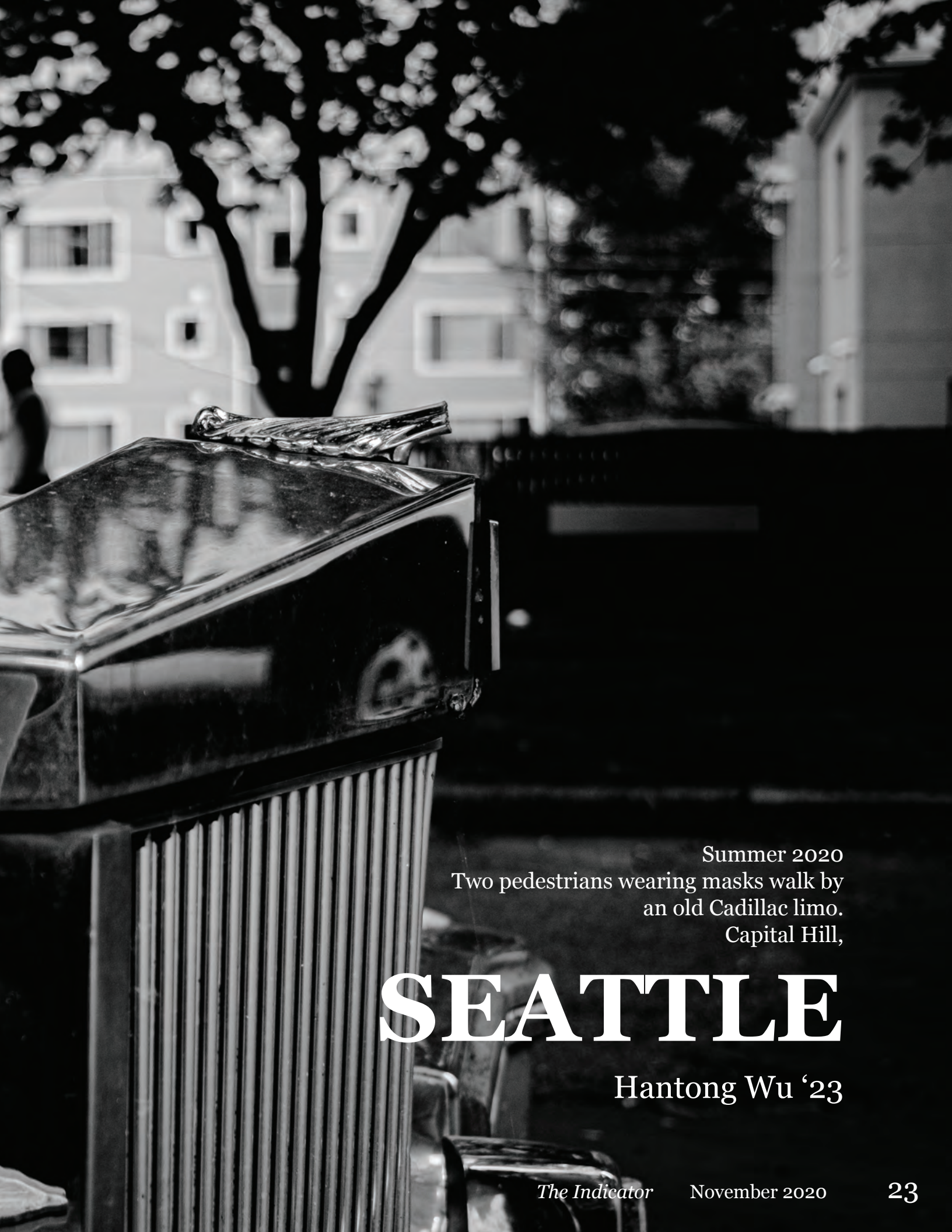
Owen went, tears threatening in his eyes. He heard another call of triumph and the accompanying scream of his friend but kept running, one soul-tearing thought circling his mind over and over.

The moment Owen felt an open breeze ruffle his hair, his eyes nearly blind with tears, he collapsed, and the night was silent.

And a few minutes later, the night became noisy again, as if nothing had ever disturbed it.







Summer 2020  
Two pedestrians wearing masks walk by  
an old Cadillac limo.  
Capital Hill,

# SEATTLE

Hantong Wu '23





## WINTER

In Pike Place Market, a vender puts away smoothies as the famous market closes for the day.

A person tries to catch Route 10 bus going up to Capitol Hill, where the protestors set up CHOP (Capitol Hill Occupied Protest), or CHAZ (Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone), in June.



**Downtown Seattle in January. Months later, after the death of George Floyd, conflicts between protestors and police erupted in this neighborhood.**



# SUMMER

In an alley of the post-covid downtown Seattle, a person searches in the trash next to a mural.



Two people wearing masks walk by a mural in post-covid downtown Seattle. Mural artists painted over most of the plywood that covered the shop's windows, as some protestors smashed them to express their dissents to corporations like Amazon and Starbucks.



**A person wearing a mask walking by an art installation behind the Pike Place Market.**





The entrance of Seattle Police Department East Precinct in protester-occupied CHOP.

A bus stop in CHOP next to Bobby Morris Field.







A sign protesting the death of Breonna Taylor on the fence of Bobby Morris Field in CHOP.

As Seattle Police Department prepares to take back its East Precinct, road workers standby to remove blockades in CHOP.



# Silent Song

Ankit Sayed

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I hear you scream:  
Go back to your country.

But your spit, raining  
on my mask,  
sprouts a smile because  
I know a truth  
you cannot understand.

I surpass you in silence.  
You are deaf. You  
do not hear when I  
take your job,  
buy your house,  
fuck your daughter.

Until one day, you  
blink, and you realize  
your neighbors have  
names that you  
cannot pronounce.

So you, struck dumb,  
deaf-mute, replace  
my incomprehensible  
name with screams  
of incoherence.



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Artist: Cecelia Amory '24



# On Harold Bloom

(and sorry so late)

Ross Kilpatrick

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A graying Harold Bloom  
morbid and obese  
Yet, I've heard, delightful  
in more than simple form  
We never met  
Nor will we now  
but I like to pretend  
I've read his books  
He probably would have liked that  
Instead assigning  
Shakespeare, or Woolf,  
Or Milton  
    (beside him his students  
    would walk across the green  
    and any line of *Paradise Lost* they started  
    he would finish  
    and continue!  
    until they met the other end)  
Or maybe Pessoa, that mercurial master.  
Did Bloom understand, better than us  
what Pessoa meant  
when he wrote  
we are a bottomless pit



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# los árboles arden con fuego

Kiera Alventosa

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I.  
my body protests at  
the spittle flinging  
itself from your mouth.  
it too, would like nothing  
to do with your words.  
I look on from behind  
my mask.

Can't you see, hear,  
feel, know the  
white supremacist  
violence,  
the classist, racist,  
homophobic  
violence  
that you  
spew?

please do not misunderstand me  
my anger is not like your hatred.

I will not suppress  
my body as it protests  
your hatred. I will  
be angry enough  
to say *I am worthy*.

II.  
the sky collides with the earth.  
the crushing weight of each difference  
solidifying, separating each part  
from itself.

delving into the circumstances, deep breath,  
ground myself in the context.  
the rain falls from the sky, bridging the distance,  
so that life may still bloom here.  
change is held in the leaves that were red all along,  
only now have the courage to show themselves.

III.  
my body protests,  
shudders, rejects  
the sight of  
your violence.  
your counterculture is still a cult  
-ure.

there are warnings  
that you may  
be armed with more  
than your hatred,  
and the police are  
always armed.  
we protest from behind  
our masks.

I am shaking  
as usual.  
what does it mean to say  
I voted today.  
the world is shaking  
as usual.

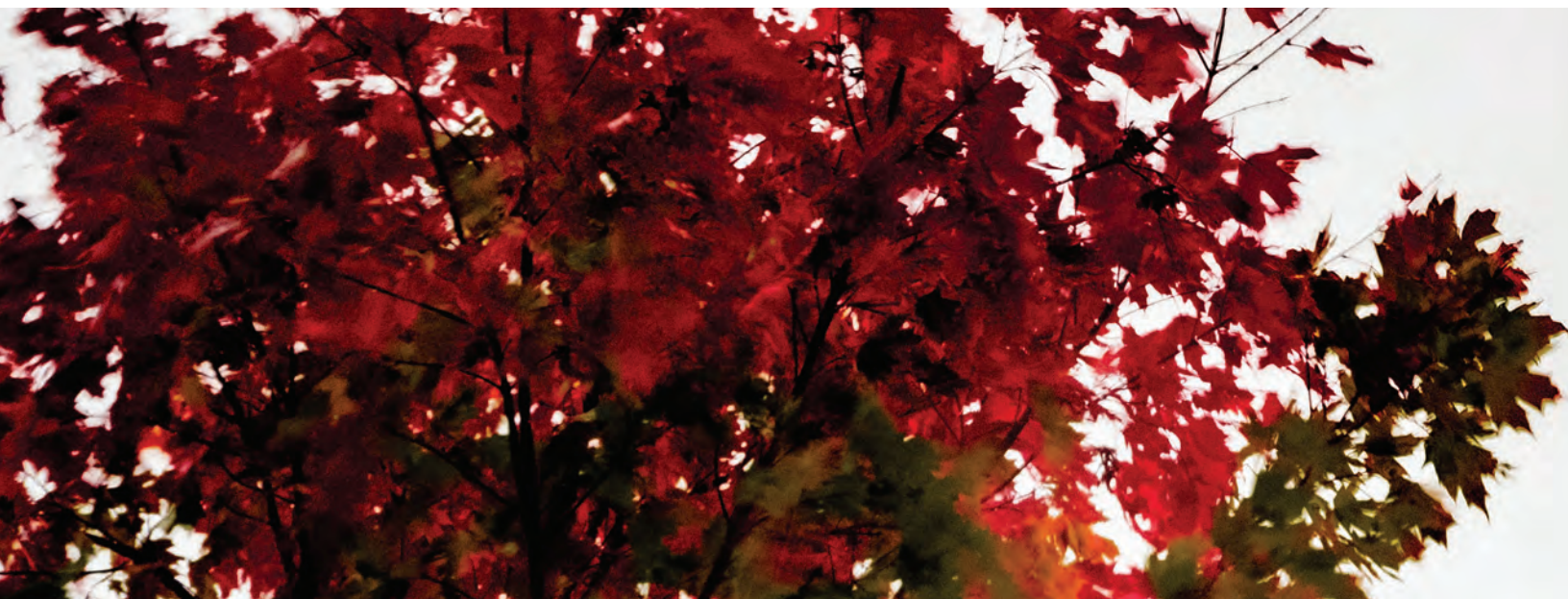
I am exhausted of this fight,  
my body protests, *I am worthy*.  
my power to be hurt  
is so much greater than  
your power to hurt.  
the fire is fed, and the smoke still lingers.  
the trees blaze red even as  
they fall to the ground.

IV.  
the sky collides with the earth.  
the crushing weight of each difference  
solidifying, separating each part  
from itself.

hatred lines the wet sidewalks,  
positioned hatred on a day of observance,  
picketed hatred, divisive movements  
against the grain are so terribly with the grain.

a tree insists on life from the fissure,  
body tense from years spent fighting.  
in the fall it glows red,  
pulsing with all that is held underneath,  
the unknown ripples through its leaves.

when we move, we change the surface  
of the things that we think we know.





V.  
my body protests  
holding onto my anger,  
for it has learned  
compassion, knows  
it, as I break down  
your work of splitting  
me open—  
the trees blaze red.

and when the anger fades,  
I am left with sadness.  
and all is still  
changing and I can feel  
the wake of my movement.

my body protests  
at the thought that  
you may not even know  
your own suppression.  
be moved by compassion.  
grow become more than  
what you sow now.  
To deal with the repercussions of hope  
is to do the work of our lives.  
my eyes rain down  
from my sky to my ground.

VI.  
the sky collides with the earth.  
and meets at the horizon.  
the aftermath  
is care. it must be,  
hold hope for the future,  
the trees will bloom once more.  
the world will remember  
what it is like on the first day of spring,  
there is no other way.

these moments have led me  
to say  
have hope  
fight for it.  
there is no choice but change. let the leaves  
of the past decay deeply into the soils of our future.  
because we know precisely how to be hurt,  
do we know how to love.

I will not suppress  
my body as it protests  
your hatred, I will  
be angry,  
sad,  
hopeful enough  
to say *I am worthy*

*of love. I will love.  
I will love. I will love.*

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Editor-in-Chief and Staff Writer for  
*The Indicator*.

Artist: Hantong Wu '23









I am not a violent person. I promise. It was an accident but at the same time I didn't have a choice. I had to kill him. I think his death was a byproduct of a cumulation of events that started the Thursday before Halloween when I went on a date with Braxton. I went on many Tinder dates during college. I rarely got past the second date. Dating was always hard for me.

I did not normally go on dates with the guys from around town. I liked sticking to the Brown University boys. But Braxton "super" liked me on Tinder and I could not resist. His Tinder profile picture looked genuine enough. We messaged about our favorite pop star icons. I told him my parents named me after Diana Ross because they wanted to name me after a true Black queen. He said Diana Ross inspired his music. He said Diana is a beautiful name that fits me, a beautiful girl. I liked his response. Most of the time when I brought up the inspiration behind my name guys ran away. That's okay. I wouldn't want my Blackness to be too much for them. I really wanted Braxton to work out though. It was Thursday afternoon and the Halloween formal was coming up on Friday night. Every year I went to the party alone. But I wanted an actual date for my last year of college.

## I wouldn't want my Blackness to be too much for them.

Before I met him at the coffee shop, I put on my favorite Anne Taylor shoes, pink dress and a full face of makeup. I always dress to impress. I really went all out for Braxton, and he had the nerve to show up thirty minutes late. After twenty minutes, I pulled my laptop out and started working on my organic chemistry homework. Just as I was about to leave, Braxton walked inside. He wore a white polo shirt, khaki pants, and Sperry duck shoes. A frat boy. I smelled his axe deodorant as he inched closer.

"Hey Diana" he said "Sorry for being late. I swear free parking is hard to find around here."

"Don't worry about it. I'm glad you are here." I said.

"I like your hair. How did you get it into that big poof look?" He asked.

"You mean an afro? My hair is just naturally like this. I can't really explain it." I said.

"Well, it looks nice." He complimented.

I don't know how to react to "compliments" about my afro. My hair just exists. I know he would never ask a white girl what she does to get long straight brunette locks. I have the classic 4C tight coily hair. I will never forget when I was four years, old the kids at preschool told me they could not hang out with curly haired girls. I remember begging my mom to go to the grocery store and buy me straight hair. She couldn't of course, and it was at that moment I realized I was different. I realized I was Black.

Braxton requested one of those sugary coffee drinks. I will never understand people who drink coffee this way.

"So, do you attend Rhode Island State or Providence Community College?"

"I'm a senior at Brown" I chuckled. I was perplexed that he did not know or remember this from my Tinder profile.

"Oh" he gasped with a surprised look on his face. "Well then. What are your plans for after college?" He asked.

"I'm actually applying to medical school right now. I've always wanted to be a doctor."

"Doctor? Wow that's so intimidating."

"Not really. This coffee shop is full of Brown students and located a block away from campus. I swear everyone wants to be a doctor at Brown."

We talked about our favorite TV shows, where we grew up, and our love for music. The



time was nearing seven pm.

"I have a boatload of homework tonight. Can we continue our conversation over a second date?"

"Honestly, this is my first date with a Black girl. I am not sure if I really want to date right now, though I'm curious how it would feel like to sleep with a dark skinned girl. Are you sure you're busy tonight?"

The date was going so well until then. He wasn't the first one to date me to "test the waters". I knew how to handle guys like him.

"So am I like a conquest or experiment for you?"

"More like testing the waters."

"That's ridiculous! No actually disgusting. Did you ever think it might be dehumanizing to date a girl for experimentation? I am not going to be your experiment and please don't ask anyone else."

"I think this is why I stay away from Black girls. I swear you are all super angry for no reason". He yelled.

Little pieces of spit made their way onto my face. He smashed his fist down on the table. I was starting to get nervous when he stormed out the coffee shop. Leaving me to pay for his overpriced coffee. Somehow, I am always the angry one.

---

The walk back to the dorm was beautiful. The autumn leaves sprinkled the ground. Every tree was illuminated in beautiful vibrant color. However, the beauty

outside failed to mask the truth hammering inside my mind. The only guy that I really wanted to take me to the Halloween formal was Andre. We met during freshman orientation. He was one of the few Black people on my floor.

We were both some of the few Black kids to graduate from our high schools. I grew up in Lexington, Kentucky. He grew up in Bowling Green, Kentucky. We used to stay up super late talking about Angela Davis. We thought her writings were inspiring. But, as the years passed, I became more of his therapist than his friend.

I should have let him go the minute he started abusing my kindness, but I did not have the strength. The previous weekend he was elected student body president. I threw him the biggest congratulatory party. I knew he really needed the "win" since his girlfriend Madison broke things off a few weeks earlier.

I always envied the white girls he dated. I was always by his side. I used to wonder what I was doing wrong.

The memories kept coming back. The party was over. It was just me and him cleaning up. He leaned over and kissed me. We made out for what felt like thirty minutes, but it was really two hours. He walked me back to his room. We did not have sex. I woke up right beside him. I thought this was the moment he would finally admit he liked me. But no. He told me he made a mistake and any actions that lead to me in his bed meant nothing. Our kiss meant nothing. I was nothing to him. Sadly, I was too dumb to realize it at the time. He still made me feel special. He always gave just enough affection to keep me close. I was blind to his toxicity and it took almost dying for my eyes to finally open.



I clutched my nose as I opened the dorm room to find my roommate Violet laying on the bed as she smoked her second bong for the day. Her light blond-ish-blue hair circled her face like a halo. I only let her smoke in our room on Thursdays.

"How was your fifth Tinder date of the week? I know you only wear the Anne Taylor's when you are meeting a guy." Violet said.

"Absolute disaster. He only wanted a hookup. I was basically an experiment for him." I said.

"Why do you always think hookups are so bad? You are a twenty-two-year-old virgin. Trust me, you want to lose your virginity to a someone you are not emotionally attached to. Andre barely kissed you and you are still moping about it. Trust me. I have dating experience."

"Do you have experience dating as a Black woman because trust me it's different. Trust me. I have experience." Violet shut up and we kept to ourselves the rest of that night.

If I had the choice Violet would never be my roommate. However, during my senior year, Brown remodeled two dormitories and reserved all singles for students with accommodations. I decided to do the random match. At first, I thought we clicked. She grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles and wanted to attend art school, but her Legacy parents would only pay for a real education. We both loved listening to NPR. She slept under a President Obama portrait and had a yellow, Black Lives Matter water bottle. She was a five-year vegan and complained if I forgot to

compost. However, after about two weeks of being roommates I realized Violet had an inability to acknowledge her privilege as a white person and refused to acknowledge my struggles as a Black person. Everything was my fault to her. Normally, I was not bothered since most people are like this but living with her ignorance was driving me insane.

---

I woke up at seven am Friday morning to finish my physics homework. I decided to sit on the quad. The sun was shining super brightly. The air was my favorite temperature. Not too cold or hot. I was losing hope on actually securing a date to the Halloween formal. I was okay with it though. I attended the last three years alone. I could do one more. To my surprise, I looked up from my laptop screen and saw Isaac Jackson walking towards me. He was captain of the basketball team and loved political science. I always admired him from a distance. He knew Violet from a sculpture class. We didn't really talk much outside of a few basic conversations. I was really confused to see him, since most students did not wake up till later. He wore ripped jeans, a white button-down shirt, and square glasses. His facial freckles contrasted against his white skin. We made eye contact and he smiled. Then he walked over to me and sat on my picnic blanket.

"Hey, Diana! How is mid-term season treating you?" He asked.

"Not well. You?"

"Same. I wish this week

would stop. I am so tired."

A five-second-long silence started. He looked into my eyes like he was looking into my heart.

"You are stunning. Do you have a boyfriend?" He asked.

"No."

"How is that possible."

"You'd be surprised."

"Do you at least have a date to the Halloween Formal?"

"Nope." I said chuckling.

"Well. May I be your date to Halloween formal? I know this is last minute."

"Yeah. Pick me up at nine."

We exchanged phone numbers. I told him where my dorm was located. We both agreed to go as vampires. He left because he had to run to Political Science class. I did not know it yet, but agreeing to go on a date with him started one of the absolute worst nights of my life

---

After my classes ended, I walked straight to Andre's dorm. As usual, I helped him edit his philosophy essay for the third time that week. Then we started talking about other topics and somehow, we started talking about Madison.

"Guess what! I have the most amazing news. Madison thinks she wants to start fresh again. She said Halloween formal can be our first date in our effort to try dating again. I miss her so much. She is so pretty. You have no idea how lucky I am to have her in my life. She makes me a better person. She



is literally the most beautiful girl my eyes have ever had the privilege to glance on. She is way out of my league. I don't think I'm good enough for her. Am I good enough?" He asks.

"Yeah. Andre, any girl would be lucky to have you in their life." I said.

Andre ran his fingers through his hair and sighed. I thought my happy news would cheer him up.

"Now my turn! This morning Isaac Jackson approached me on the quad. You know him because you had data-science together last semester. He told me I was super beautiful and asked me to Halloween Formal. Looks like we will both have dates this year."

"Why aren't you going alone? Isn't going alone your thing. I thought *strong black women* don't need men."

"I don't think a date makes me any less strong as a person. I want companionship like you and Madison."

**I don't  
think  
a date  
makes me  
any less  
strong as a  
person.**

"Madison and I are differ-

ent. Tonight, doesn't really mean anything. I doubt he even likes you. You overestimate every reaction you get from guys. Like our kiss."

I picked up my backpack and walked back to my dorm room in tears. Before, opening the dorm door, I made sure all the evidence of my tears was gone. Violet stood at the mirror perfecting her eyeliner for her cat costume. Her date, Ben, was due to pick her up at nine; the same time Isaac was due to get me.

---

Isaac arrived five minutes early. He brought me flowers and held my hand as we walked to the school gymnasium. When we walked inside the place was almost full. The room smelled like alcohol and sweat. Everyone was packed super close together. The density reminded me of when I went Black Friday shopping. Ripped white bed sheets with painted fake blood stains covered the walls to mimic a haunted house. The gym floor was covered in a small layer of different alcohols. After each step, my Doc Martens made a squeaking noise. I normally avoided parties with sticky floors because I hated ruining my shoes but this time, I had a date. Isaac pulled me in close and we danced. I think we danced for maybe fifteen minutes then we started making out. We felt uncomfortable since we were around so many sweaty people.

"Can we leave? I low-key hate being around people." I yelled as hard as I could so my voice would be audible over the loud bass music.

"Sure."

We left and went to a nearby house party. There were lots of empty bedrooms. We entered one and laid on the bed. We started talking about life and our goals. Everything about him seemed amazing. We started making out.

"We must go on more dates. This night has been amazing. You are one of the most beautiful and smart girls at Brown."

"Shut up. I'm not that beautiful."

"Stop it! You have the most amazing cheekbones. The rest of you I cannot even describe. I am horny for you. Can we have sex? I brought condoms."

I could feel my face redden. I was still a virgin. I always planned for my first time to be with someone that loved and appreciated me. It seemed like Isaac did. I thought if I kept waiting the perfect moment would never come. I was about to say yes, but then he leaned into my ear and whispered.

"I can only imagine how pretty our babies will be. Black girls have the best asses and tits. I swear your race is the hottest on this earth. I only date Black girls exclusively."

I pushed his face away from mine and ran back to the gymnasium. I found Violet dancing with Ben and I pulled her aside. I needed to talk to another girl.

"I feel really unsafe right now. Isaac doesn't like me for me. I am just satisfying a Black girl fetish for him! I hate dating! Can you believe we almost had sex?"

“Girl, why didn’t you e. You don’t understand how dehumanizing it is to just be a fetish to someone. To him I am just a hot body, not a person. I am just sexy features to him, not a Black woman with a soul!”

Violet stared blankly into my eyes. I waited five seconds. No apology. I did not have time for her bullshit, so I left the party and started my walk back to my dorm. I was halfway back to my dorm room when I got a text from Andre. He said he really needed me and that it was important. I almost decided to ignore his text. If only I did. We decided to meet each other at the bridge overlooking Swan Lake. His faced looked puffy and I could tell he had been drinking. He started sobbing. He blurted out the night’s events.

“I picked up Madison early. We ate dinner Maria’s Pizzeria. She looked so beautiful. I don’t know when things went wrong. After the party I was walking her back to my place and she told me that she didn’t think she could continue. I think we are over for real this time.” Andre said.

Then Andre leaned in and kissed me. I pushed him away. I was done with his abuse. After three horrible encounters with men within forty-eight hours I was done.

“What is this? Is this another kiss that will mean nothing tomorrow? I feel like you keep me on reserve and only use me when you are hurting. You are hurting me.

Am I more body than person to you? I think we need to take a break.”

Andre was dependent on me for so many things and I was cutting him off. I wish I cut him off sooner. I wish I recognized he was a parasite. He used me for his own personal benefit and made my life a living hell. He needed me to lift him up. He needed to tear me down so he could feel stronger. I think knowing his control over my life was over scared him. Honestly, I don’t really know what got into him. He started kissing me again. I told him to stop but he refused to listen. Maybe he thought he could force his respect back into me. Andre was scaring me. I thought his mouth would suffocate me. I somehow managed to push him and break away. I heard a splash. My maneuver pushed Andre over the bridge railing into the lake. The water was fifteen feet deep. Andre never learned how to swim and neither did I. I called 911 but it was too late. Divers pulled his body from the water an hour earlier. The police questioned me. Thankfully, a nearby camera cleared my name. Everyone agreed it was an accident. No one thought that if I didn’t act it could have been my body in the lake instead of his. The memory still haunts me.

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Brown went into a week of mourning. Some students set up a garland of flowers outside

his dorm room. I did not attend the funeral or burial. Everyone looked at me with hard eyes. People blamed me. People saw the bruises on my neck and still blamed me. Violet who barely knew him was suddenly acting like she was best friends with him. On the next Tuesday, Violet returned to our dorm after the student led memorial service in tears.

“Why aren’t you crying more. You were his best friend. Don’t you feel guilty. You are the reason why he is dead. You should have been kinder that night. You knew he was hurting.”

I did not respond to Violet. If I explained myself, she would never understand. A week later her rich parents got her an apartment in town, so she didn’t have to live with me anymore. Thank goodness. I am happy but Andre is still on my mind. I sometimes wonder if Andre would still be her if I did not cut him loose that night. I wonder if I was too harsh. What if I didn’t respond to his text? Yeah, it was an accident, but I pushed him over the railing. I killed him. Not on purpose. I never wanted to kill anyone. My heart hurts for him, but he was suffocating me. I feared for my life. I make no apologies. I did what I did to survive.

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# Dig Those Sunrises. With Only a Glimpse They'll be Missed

Kalidas Shanti

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Days of us passed, and I could see the dust settling  
though it was a hot summer evening, the sky  
melting away. My skin, underneath the blanket,  
sticking to the ruts of the truck, pressed  
by the weight of her body on my hips,  
hers defined in sharp contrast to black  
asphalt, her shoulders back, basking in rivers  
of gold specks filtering through the canopy hanging  
over our bodies as if folding us into her silhouette. Was she  
always that faint? Skin flattened into paste? Still emerging  
our bodies did not settle underneath our humidity. Still she lifted  
my neck up into the background. It twisted over her shoulder;  
she giggled. With each bite into her, I ran out of myself, as if entering  
into her spaces could afford me my own, as if her shade wasn't priceless,  
as if investing in a person could be marketed, as if this wasn't subordination  
to a holy beauty, distributed across America, fueled by burning my back-  
yard I only ever envisioned. Such rapture in the gasping of palpable sin  
(choked under the waves of education): burning to have the lost their needs met,  
learning to want, refusing to forget how it sings the eyes though I no longer see it.  
But I do (forget) with each of her words: come inside me. How do I sustain this  
for longer than just these minutes. How do I know this heat? This body on my body:  
I can't sell its significance, can't lessen it into lesson or noble practice? Only I am  
here, and am there still, relieving how it feels to give in to someone  
while still in debt with more to give. And she licks up pleasure for no end,  
yet what charity writeoff does she get for loving the touch of my skin?  
Subordination to something other than; denial of education; how could I  
not ask the question? How could we both keep forfeiting? Fainting  
underneath the heat of each other, washed in a sun that's hoping to forget us both.  
It does. Or at least we'd like it to lose us between the parking lots and trees,  
at least enough that we could lose track of how our positions spill out of this truck,  
enough that we could be no one, enough I can shiver with exigency but not  
for the fifth time as I hear *the rumble of metal and engine* and think, despite myself,  
I am *too young to fear* sirens: the country's church bells, even in their silence  
they sound in the screech of cars parking too close, always too close to see me  
and too far to know the touch of my tears she wipes away, as I rest on her and pull  
us beneath the rim of metal. I wonder if she shudders for the same reasons: I am  
a trace of having happened; she has me; we do not separate our lips, tongue  
takes up our mind and we forget us, even if the sun flashes back; lost  
before our death finds us, before I am made into the subject  
of textbooks, the thing that disowned itself to take whiteness  
with it, as she was no longer anything but the wounds  
on onlookers' identities. As the car door opens next  
to our prone flesh. I am subject and she is free  
of the heavenly gaze. We are both given dreams  
free of terror under the sun. The dust has settled  
upon us. We will never meet here again, will we  
ever leave?

dust settling the blanket pressed  
in rivers  
Was she Still emerging  
lifted as if entering fueled by  
palpable needs sustain this  
body  
Fainting out of  
exigency but not  
despite the sun  
flashes lost as dreams settled



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