

Loophole

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STAFF ROLES

Editor-In-Chief | Alexis Jas

Assistant Editor | Violet Mitchell

Submissions Editors | Ferris Fynboh & Anne Carrica

Design / Layout | Violet Mitchell & Ferris Fynboh

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AFTER THE DROP

Theodora Zastrocky

I've dropped my brain

I suspect you picked it up

like a child chooses a dandelion

for her mother and now

I suspect it is somewhere in

your pocket crammed in intimacy

with a pencil a pocket knife

and your hands wandering

in and out letting in just enough

light that I do not starve.

Sometimes I wake up at night and

tear down the hands of clocks

because time is suffocating at

night I think that is why we

sleep in the dark why we
are greedy all of us whoring
with time and wondering why
she sluts with everyone else.

Time moves faster up here and
I guess that is why I amputate clocks
like an amateur surgeon I guess

we are all playing pretend here
like a child weaving a dandelion
crown like some people see rain
like others see sunshine and all

I know is that our sun burns
some things into others and if
that is not a miracle then let me
sleep off this storm or shrug
it off and sometimes I wish

After the Drop

we had stars that took us up
and burned away the chaff
doing the work of lifetime
in an afternoon and then I would
say take that Lady time! and
I know that your hands are not
mine to name but they are in your
pocket fumbling at my brain and—
(I dropped my brain and you picked it
up
I think I might suffocate without it)

END OF SUMMER

Laura Spiegle

14
∞



End of Summer

PERSEPHONE'S SISTER

Katey Funderburgh

You never practiced waiting, but I knew
That I should have taught you how to make
A home, how to erase the hollow blue
That breaks us apart. Goddess girl, you cannot take

Without giving. You grow chaos like a host in me
And you call it beauty. You are my unplanned tragedy.
You make yourself lost. You write your own glossary
For heartbreak. Goddess girl, make memory

Of something good. Your hand in mine, I wonder
If you see flowers and remember growing up together
When there was no disaster, no storms, no thunder.
No one to teach you that you are supposed to fear this weather.

Goddess girl, I promise to search the blue skies every day
Looking for your mess. I pray for it to glow itself away.

I AM A GARDEN

Violet Mitchell

16
8



STAKING CLAIM

Rowan Waller

you loved me when my belly was tight as an oil drum
full of pink wine and Bluebell ice cream I painted
my name on your bare chest covered your freckled
skin in black daisies and when you fell asleep turned
your toes turned red with polish you tried to look
mad but I knew you would submit yourself to my
childish antics every morning for the chance to wake
up in my small bed still tangled in my legs

WE FOLDED SHEETS

Rowan Waller

of tin foil into doves and convinced
the bartender our art deserved free
tequila you pulled me into stumbling swing
dance moves on the corner of 16th street and
when I kissed you on the sailboat bridge you
didn't push me away instead we laughed at how
horribly romantic our night seemed to be going
you didn't let go of my hand the entire way home

18
∞

A COZY PLACE

Emily Woods



FOR EMILY

Theodora Zastrocky

I wonder—where in
your body you loved
where you bubbled or
burned where you laid
down your words where
you went at night with
eyes closed.

I wonder if love ever
lived in your hands.

20
∞

I wonder—how love felt
as it sat with you
upstairs dressed in white
I wonder if when it
rained you looked together
at the mud—then turned
and went—

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

Violet Mitchell



AT WAR WITH OURSELVES

Rowan Waller

it was no surprise when our fragile peace
cracked the walls too small to hold the weight
of his anger our friends held us close and
wiped our tears still it would never be the
same refuge as before he knew the locks to
our home the latches of our windows were
loose we had nowhere to run when the mood
turned I always knew it was coming I watched
the dark clouds pouring over the horizon still
they turned their heads as if nothing had ever
happened as if screams had not torn down the
ceiling fan sent the cat running with the echo
of danger our howls crawled into deaf ears we
didn't want to see the outline of his red hand
painted on her face

22
∞

AUTHENTICITY

Anonymous

I want to be me but I
turned my skin into armor and now if I'm me
I have to expose all my nerves to the cold, cold air and everyone who might want
to hurt me.

I want to be me but there is a
chunk of ice that lodges where words should be when I try for authenticity—
reaching towards the sun but this is the arctic in winter and there is no sun here.

I came out of the closet, but I'm still wearing the armor.

I can say, "I'm too gay to let this go."

I can say, "Ultimate mood."

I can say, "Being bisexual..."

—I cannot say, "I was so afraid and I don't know how to stop being afraid."

—I cannot say, "I feel like I might die if I don't talk to someone I care about today."

—I cannot say, "Being bisexual has meant being overwhelmed by the internet and learning to be afraid of everyone I meet."

I want to be me but I
don't know how anymore.

THE EYES OF ASPEN

Laura Spiegle

24
∞



The Eyes of Aspen

TEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT HALA TARGOWA

Alexis Jas

After Wallace Stevens

I
How would anyone else know how to
get inside besides a local. You must learn
by observation. There's a bench outside for the tourists.

II
The air is busy with fruit and pierogi competing
for dominance. Pulling us to their stands.
Which one has plumper raspberries?

III
It took me two months to learn about the
outskirts. Where old ladies sell teapots that won't
fit in my luggage.

IV
On my last day in the city, my roommate
showed me a tea shop in the back, with a
hidden room. The waitress didn't speak English.

V
My first successful, real, actual Polish conversation
with a local woman was about the price of pierogi.
Textbooks are right sometimes, I decided.

VI

I used the ATM once before I learned it gave me a worse conversion rate than the ATM outside the grocery store five miles away.

VII

The man sitting behind the currency exchange counter looked more sullen the bigger the crowd and the bigger the backpacks full of teapots.

VIII

You have to expect not to talk to the people when you buy things from them. You have to project your “thank yous” in their general direction.

IX

The vendors outside talked to me in Polish, instead of switching to English immediately, when I bought something in exact change.

X

The smell of pierogi ruskie follows me past the customs officers and reappears when it rains or when I hear laughter.

A STILL LIFE OF ADVENTURE

Emily Woods



BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONY NO. 9

Alexis Jas

I am the first-chair violin and

I am the percussionist who attended Juilliard for the snare drum and

I am the woman wearing a gown in the third row and

I am the woman wearing jeans in the thirtieth row and

I am the man leaving one second after the final note to try to beat traffic and

I am the man leaving during intermission to really truly beat traffic and

I am the season ticket holder who drank too much and

I am the soloist enjoying a beer post-solo in the lobby before the intermission's final bell and

I am the student trying to sneak in non-students under a student discount and

I am the homeless man outside the door waiting for a stray note to wander through the air and

I am the youngest woman in the audience clapping louder than the people around me and

I am driving home drumming the fourth movement on my steering wheel—overjoyed.

CABBAGE AS A FLOWER

Laura Spigle



FROST-BITTEN ROSES

Allison Upchurch

Placed on a crisp day in February,
the roses honor the girl who left.
The twigs of the bare tree give
little shade but let the roses
pronounce their honor to the
plaque dug into the ground.
An unknown face grew those roses,
maybe even plucked them too.
Another trimmed off the thorns,
another tied them with blue trim
to finally place them there.
Did they cry, or just stand staring?
Later that night, the wind
picked up, and a soft layer
of frost descended from the sky.
Night enveloped nature as the
wind pushed on, dragging snow
with it. Its hollow eco
heard from the towering
building as luminous lights
heated a stark contrast to
the dark and cold outside.
Soon the sun turned off
the wind and snow.
Ice lines the stairs and sidewalks.
The metal trashcans sitting on
their sides, defeated on the ground.

But the roses are still there.
The name plaque now enveloped
in a layer of fresh, thin snow.
The roses did not move, showing
survival through the harsh weather.
Frost cracks through the red petals
that have fought through the cold
to stand guard over the memory
of a girl enveloped by nature.

ON YOUR MARK

Laura Spiegle

32
∞



MY FAVORITE COLOR

Laura Spiegle

My favorite color is where the greenness of the foothills meet the pale blues of the sky. The one where the clouds are thin yet plentiful, and the sun isn't afraid to shine. My favorite color is how the light gray medians contrast with the dark gray road, so worn it looks black. My favorite color is how the black bird moves right while the red car keeps moving forward. My favorite color is the silent beginnings of summer interrupted by a crack of movement and a smile as you and your best friend start to break out into your favorite song. My favorite color is moments like this.

DINGLE, IRELAND

Violet Mitchell

34
∞



Dingle, Ireland

UNTITLED # 1

Ferris Fynboh

So maybe sometimes I just want
a dark room and a Gaelic lullaby and
(crickets singing
love songs to the night)
a lover's quiet breath: sleep.
(Peace + safety are another kind of
love song—
the crickets might be more
demonstrative, but
our love would burn all the brighter for its
silence.)

So maybe sometimes I
ache for that
simple human little comfort of
another
heartbeat
next to
mine.

Maybe sometimes I feel like I'm drowning
under the weight of
alone + pain
(a tidal wave of Everything I
Can't Say),
and you're the only one who can
get me to shore but—
I don't even know who you are.

So maybe some days 83 years
feels too short even to breathe.

SKETCHES

Amalgam Effect

Lyrics by Calvin Merseal and Matt Spivack

Art by Jasmine Zion

Calvin Merseal: Drums, Keyboards

Matt Spivack: Vocals, Flute, Guitar

Kody Little: Guitar, Vocals

Chris Childress: Bass



*Scan the QR Code to listen to “Sketches”

URBANIZATION

Laura Spiegle

38
∞



Urbanization

STACCATO

Rowan Waller

I hear my parents shuffle
down the long wood hallway
they are given away by the sound
their aging ankles give off
each has a specific staccato of

p o p s

from worn tendons that rattle
towards my room warning
of the impending door opening
just a crack to let in the whisper
“lights out” for the last time

I know their silent ritual
the way they gently touch
in the hall at night the

r u s t l e

of satin pajamas against skin
leans over my bed to check
the cadence of my rising chest

it pulls me back from time
in my older years the image I
almost forgot listening too close
to cars whisk by my window
on a suburban street in Denver

SOBRIETY

Rowan Waller

little red one likes to pretend she knows a lot more
about history than she lets on she likes to French kiss
in public and streak with abandon she can be really
quite thoughtful when she leaves water near my bed
after a night of drinking or writes reminders in my
phone when there is something important to do the
following day she has a habit of wandering off at night
or getting weepy over something insignificant
but she makes a lot more friends than I do when my
tongue gets tied up in my own mouth from fear and
boys love how pretty and smart she is it's the best of
both worlds in a way except I only find her at the
bottom of a glass of wine or in the dying embers of a
roach she doesn't visit me on my good days it's on her
terms always in the late night hours when she's found
another conquest to bring to our bed or in the space
before dawn when she wakes up and realizes just how
alone she really is and how no number of nameless
bodies can warm the crevasses inside that remain in
shadow then she comes to me and we curl around each
other like sisters in a womb wiping off tears and lipstick
stains until the sun crawls further out and the darkness
isn't quite so deep

BURNT WOOD

Laura Spiegle



DUCT TAPE

Katey Funderburgh

In school we learned about
3 important rules.

Rule 1: Be very, very quiet.

Teacher points to her closet
And says that we gotta sit in there
For a long time. “Make up a story
In your heads” says Teacher.

I get a little scared because what if
I start crying and it’s too loud? What if
They hear me and make us all dead?
Teacher says that I gotta be brave.

Rule 2: Turn off all the lights.

Teacher says that we have to
Close all the blinds and all the doors
And make the room look empty.
“We have to pretend like we aren’t here.”

I try to practice being like a tiny
Ghost. I fold my legs up as small as I can
And squeeze my eyes shut really hard.
I think about being invisible.

Rule 3: No more light up shoes.

This rule makes me very sad because
Mom just got me brand new tennis shoes
That are black with lightning stripes on the side
And when you stomp the stripes light up.

I tell Teacher that I really wanna wear
My brand new shoes and she says that
We can put duct tape on the lightning parts
So that they won't give me away if I gotta run.

UNTITLED #4

Ferris Fynboh

I'm drowning in myself.

All isolation and no one to pull me out of this expansive emptiness.

—I just want to feel loved.

—(I just want to feel whole.)

And here I am reading all the ways

people hate people like me,

Just to feel like someone cares;

Just to feel that internet solidarity that is people like me saying,

“You are valid.”

44
∞

(I know I'm valid. I also know I am
deeply, woefully, cuttingly
alone.)

Left for dead off the whaleboat and I
drown

in the waters of my own mind.

(Pull me to shore, pull me to shore.)

It's 6:22 in the morning and I am a sinking prayer;

No coffin-lifebuoy for me.

“Are you awake?”

And silence

silence

silence.

BEFORE THE GREEN FLASH

Laura Spigle



45
∞

OF AIRS

Ketzal McCready

Rose-blushed caps to the sea below me
which roils in the haze of warmth expanded and cooled.

Clouds. Endlessly.

Above, below, I am of them, fed of gifts from above
for what?

I am lost, nothing, in spite of the mothers below and above me.

This moment, with all others, will be gone immediately.

Never kept on, lost to the continuum: Time

and my haried, imperfect memory will never convey this

place or moment. Forget sharing it, my self could never capture

this beauty, this

delight or melancholy.

46
∞

Descending below—apt as I am lower, baser than these
clouds, this immanent beauty which I never deserved
to see, but was gifted me
from above.

Darker below. I never left the cave, that's certain.

Others may have, but

what could they have seen to replace these shadows

formed by the crude lights which blush the bellies of the clouds

vilely, tinged with the grey of

belched out dreams born of tar,

not light. The blush of shame, not radiance. We

mimic that which falls from above, cleanse ourselves with what we

rip from the ground, feed on

our violence, and I cannot escape.

I could never fly, do not fly now,
am firmly on the ground, excepting this mediary, which carried me
above and beyond what was possible, a
sham of selfish exploration. Exploitation.

We conquer nature as our ancestors fought
over “best”, but to best nature would be
to rip it apart,

ourselves with it.

With God dead we’ve lost our
Awe, and we are the awful, flying down
the continuum, steering lost, brakes
failed, inheriting each moment,
powerless with all our power.

Constructs alone are
our world, our knowledges. Power, too,
will topple, perhaps before
the monuments it gilded for
its own glory. Disgusting
falsity obscures the light which defies my will
to lead me home. Should I ever
have been allowed to wander
so far that I would require such
a fateful guide to what is familiar? No.
And here misanthropy sidles up, curse of seers? Puh.
Who knows. Truth?

Who could see true when led by
false light and blue screens, the irony of
the entity through whom--whom? it is no life!--

I communicate this hatred.

Strained eyes and heart, ignore
my tirade, treat our demise as thrill ride.

Close your eyes and make it all out to be
the ride of a life. I'll join you, often
I can. Silly how beauty slips in
to disrupt that thrill and distraction. If
I could ignore it
as readily as the filth
I too would embrace the fall.

LIFFEY RIVER SUNSET

Violet Mitchell



DUTCH OVEN CHALICE

Rowan Waller

I used a finger to stir the beef stew
simmering on a bed of coals I had been
vegetarian for a few months but I
figured it would be easy to eat around the
chunks of meat I would only consume
what I felt morally capable of chewing
shouts from a nearby party of climbers
drew my eyes to the needle-like towers
above our fire they stood triumphantly on
top basking in the light of the sun as it
sank lower on the fall horizon sending
the valley into purple majesty

I wanted to remind them to kiss the dirt
under their feet to sidestep the delicate mossy
plants as none of it would be ours for much longer
I hoped they would stay awake through the night
to dance near their campfire drinking whiskey
out of tin cups and cutting cake with axes

our valley would soon be signed over
to private companies determined to gut
the pristine cracks and buttes of their
minerals they'd bulldoze over the native
burial grounds and faded trails until the
dirt roads melted down into asphalt lots
when the wind picked up I

opened the lid to the stew and let a light
dusting of velvety dirt join the root
vegetables inside I wanted to take this
wild land's Eucharist with me when I left

WAKE UP TO THIS

Laura Spiegle



FAMILY DINNERS

Rowan Waller

mom took her coffee after dinner
joining the other adults around the dining table
to discuss boring topics they shooed us away
closing the heavy oak doors behind us
we pressed our ears up to the glass panes
to catch their whispers sometimes daring to
crawl between our great uncles' feet to reach
the alcove under the table like we were invisible
they offered us chocolate milk out of grandma's fine
china tea cups and sent us back to her bedroom to
watch black and white cartoons on VHS atop her lace bedsheets
her king-sized, wooden bedframe was the source of many
adventures its great sweeping sides had just enough room
for us to scramble aloft when we imagined her home
filling with water and in the center curled the likeness
of a great carved lion whose perplexed face became
something we ran our small fingers over frequently
when we were not hiding in the laundry hamper we
would sneak into her jewelry boxes donning long
silver chains and rings that dangled past our short
bellies and our grandmother would only laugh when she
caught us mid-heist or found us fast asleep with hands still
stuck in the Altoid tins we fished from their bedside table

54
8

IT'S TIME FOR TEA

Emily Woods



JO DONNA

Rowan Waller

I sunk to my knees when I found the right alter pew
the one in the far left corner of the sanctuary made of
rough embroidery my grandmother stitched by hand
I thought of the many hours she spent caressing the linen
tracing her careful pencil marks as an offering to the church
that married her and baptized all of her descendants
I would never see her again or run into her arms to bury
my face in her faded pastel shirts this solemn place felt
like the only connection I had to the void in which she
resided now I let my legs rest against the familiar initials:

J. D. W.

56 marking the corner of her craftsmanship and I considered
∞ how all who knelt here after me would never know the name
of the woman who created the art they rested on at communion
parishioners could never know how many years we spent
sitting together in this spot during Christmas Eve or Easter
services they wouldn't see her initials and think of her
graying curls and trademark red lipstick or how she never
failed to burn the rolls before our family dinners and I
became afraid that in time I might forget her too

COMING OUT

Violet Mitchell



AFTER EROSION

Violet Mitchell

You squat on waving green, while I rest
on broccoli mountains. I wonder who
you addressed a letter to first. I wonder
who you bought souvenirs for first.
Was I the last or first or middle
of your associations.

do you remember my phone number
do you remember my molars or knees
do you remember buying groceries
do you remember English idioms
do you remember how to peel a Band-Aid

58
∞

What does a vowel mean
if the plane never lands.
We learn to stop daydreaming
while washing bowls when
our fingernails no longer peel.

do you remember how to open a book
do you remember Dr. Brown
the stick of tape on a tissue
whiskey in your cinnamon tea
do you remember cereal

You have no one to kiss on new year's,
or maybe you do, if the nuns let you out

of the five feet water. Will you kiss a girl
or a boy or someone who you can't tell.

do you remember
my bed
my poetry
a sweater on your bare, chapped nipples
how to count on your fingers

you are notes in a story
you are hope in a chest
a chest of hope
hope chest
hoping chess pieces fall

My father willed a hope chest from his thumbs.
I wonder if you have a chest filled with rainbow
towels. Will you ever kiss me again.

The last time, I think, we were in Rome.
Your sister and brother-in-law took us
to a hill for the best spirals, the best glow.
The second they turned around, I was at your cheek.
You giggled and weren't sure if they saw
a church through the keyhole of an orange.

remember you're my bridesmaid
remember my laugh
remember yours

READY TO BLOOM

Laura Spiegle

60
∞



FOR ELLA

Violet Mitchell

Somewhere in the Dominican Republic

I hope Catholicism cocoons you
as the fleece blanket in a car accident.

Whiskey sour, a sight for sweet eyes

Your stainless steel brain
untainted
but challenged
in this sudden epic you named.

Build bases for tunnels through Mount Rushmore

Last night, before you got on the plane,
did you remember the last time we spoke?

Tylenol, Extra Strength
Add slice of orange

We, on fire, sat on imported polyester,
reciting chemistry equations.

The sidewalk becomes glass,
a footprint smudges into a face,
screaming, tonsils peeking

I hope proofs on bottles are not the only masks you wear
when remembering the star charts of Denver.

*Your designated driver moved out,
an angel follows me when I drive,
our house is smoke*

I am getting married in two years.

Mulled wine and buttered burnt toast

If you tie yourself to the dirt of Santo Domingo,
the Continental Divide will not bring you back for my vows.

I haven't picked flowers in years

Your lavender dress will hang on a tree
stump with E M sculpted in bark.

Can we ever wear fishnets again

The scalloped purple edges will swing
in both the dark and light,

*In Congress we no longer say
"it's okay to be white" &
"pronouns are inconvenient"*

and I will think of you
before each alarm clock
pulls down branches.

For Ella

Crafting vegetable pot pie for Thanksgiving

You do not retreat from the dusty
kisses I left you during blizzards.

Tattoo skittles for the practice of art

We called each other *benefit*, not permanence.

I stole a flask that says Pickled Brains in Comic Sans

I am otherwise entangled, even in love, but did you know
I remember your flexed tongue and spine hairs?

*Two cows missing their spots shaped
like Australia shout
eat more chicken
while the chickens die just as fast*

Shoelaces facing sun's shadows

Now we make demands

HALFWAY UP TO SPACE

Violet Mitchell



ACOUSTIC ESCAPEMENT

Violet Mitchell

Learning to read music
is to measure the capacity of lungs—

Amnesia is the first lesson:
only look when necessary.

An alternating current
will steam through any stain.

Irrational measures
how far he must walk.

The space between ivory
& ebony is an entire color wheel

Red & blue
makes cloud color

blue strings tying ankles
flu shielded by teeth

Freddie Mercury
humming into a coffee cup

black
& white
makes hemiola

Introducing vibration: the wickedest,
quickest man of the west.

Violins stack petals and strings,
ascending to three oscillations.

jungles of wires
frequency of two-six-one-point-six

hurts enough to flinch

I HEARD

Rowan Waller

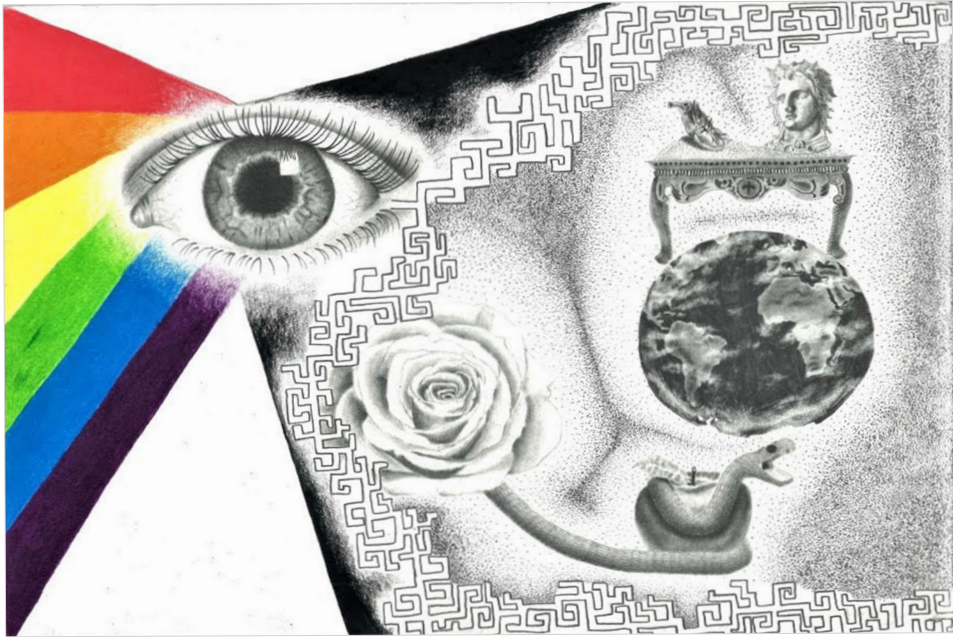
the scrapings on rock
were a poet's signature
remnants of a tragic girl
who tried for all her worth
to cling to the steepness
small soft claws of homesickness
gripping her back

I wonder if she cried for
the lost potential of her life
or if she climbed up
to claim herself
not just a name a memory alive

PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATIONS

Emily Woods

68



BEHIND THE HOUSE OF THE TRAGIC POET

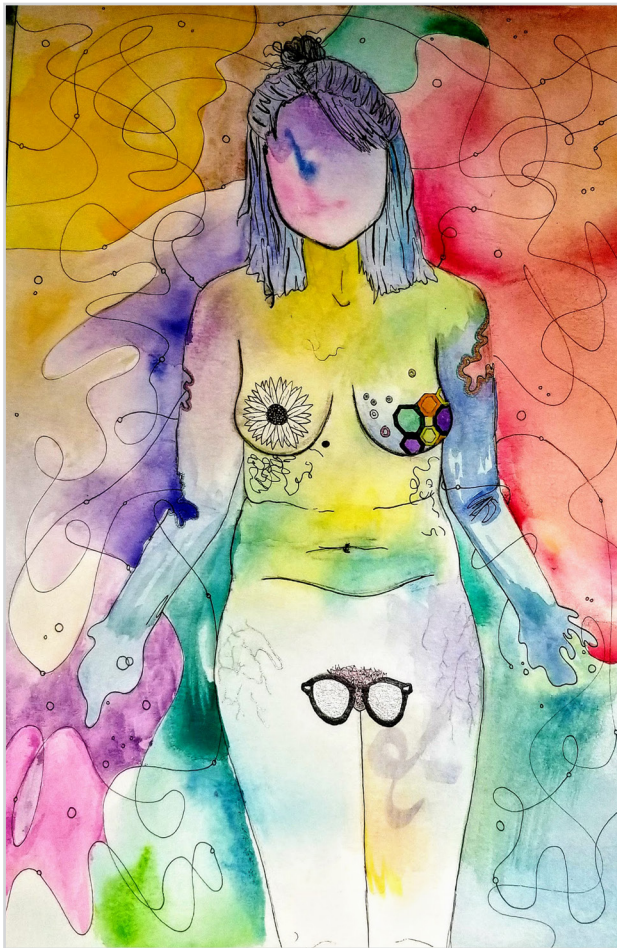
Violet Mitchell

Pompeii, Italy

I eat a PBJ and Cheezits & watch
the pigeons fight for the wrapper.

SELF-PORTRAIT

Violet Mitchell



MAYNOOTH'S CREATIVE WRITING CLASS

Violet Mitchell

We went to the blood room
to write poetry about its ghost
stories in pretentious depth.
They say priests standing
in front of a mirror
slit their own throats
with angled razor blades
when horned faces whispered
to them. I sat slow and careful,
not too close. But ghosts
don't wake up until evening, right?
Screams don't cusp at eight
in the morning.
Looking at Roman numerals
scratched around the screws,
my socks peek from
my combat boots.
I forgot about my witchy
outfit aesthetic & ouija board
socks. I shake worms
from my daydreams
and ignore the tickle in my toes.

WHEN DADS ARE RIGHT

Katey Funderburgh

This is what it feels like to throw sunflowers away
Rip from their pink glass vase and watch as dried petals
Break free, float down, stick to my bare feet

Dried petals that collected like fingernail clippings or
Ashes from your letters that I burned
I watered them for six days because on the seventh they just died

Apology in sunflower form
As if that fixed the 87600.1 minutes
I spent filling you with love that you poured into someone else

Only 87600.1 minutes of kisses and coffee dates, broken now
And you band-aid it all with apologies
Grown from empty hearts—but god, they are beautiful

Yesterday, it was warm.
Yesterday, sun touched my toes but I could see
Your fingers intertwined with somebody else already

He taught me not to love you.
He taught me to know the words *warning, liar, cheat*. “You’ll get hurt.”
“Idiot.” I grew up with brokenness. How

did I not see this coming?

Like when I was six and left my bike abandoned on asphalt

When Dads Are Right

To limp home on bloody knees
For Dad to glance over his shoulder, poke with a paper towel
Give a kiss, say, "Broken hearts hurt worse, baby girl"

For once, he is right.

BEE CAREFUL

Laura Spiegle

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Bee Careful

