



Sink Hollow_{Issue 9}

Editor's Note

Our world experiences radical change every day. With this change, things that used to make us feel grounded in our lives may not translate. Our realities may not hold true anymore. Through artistic expression, whatever form that takes, we re-examine what it means to be human after change.

Issue 9 takes a journey of re-examination during times of radical- and sometimes harsh- change. The collage of pieces we have curated re-examine so much of what I thought I knew and give an entirely new meaning to my reality. I would challenge you as read this issue to re-examine change and what form it takes for you. Maybe even use the defiant artists featured in this issue to give you the courage to embrace the pain, uncertainty and hope that comes with change.

With every issue of Sink Hollow I put together, I am amazed at all of the contrasting pieces we receive. What is even more amazing, though, is that all of these pieces seem to come together and blend into something cohesive and raw. Thank you to all the artists who made this issue possible, and for giving me the courage to re-examine- and embrace-change.

Brianne Sorensen
Editor in Chief



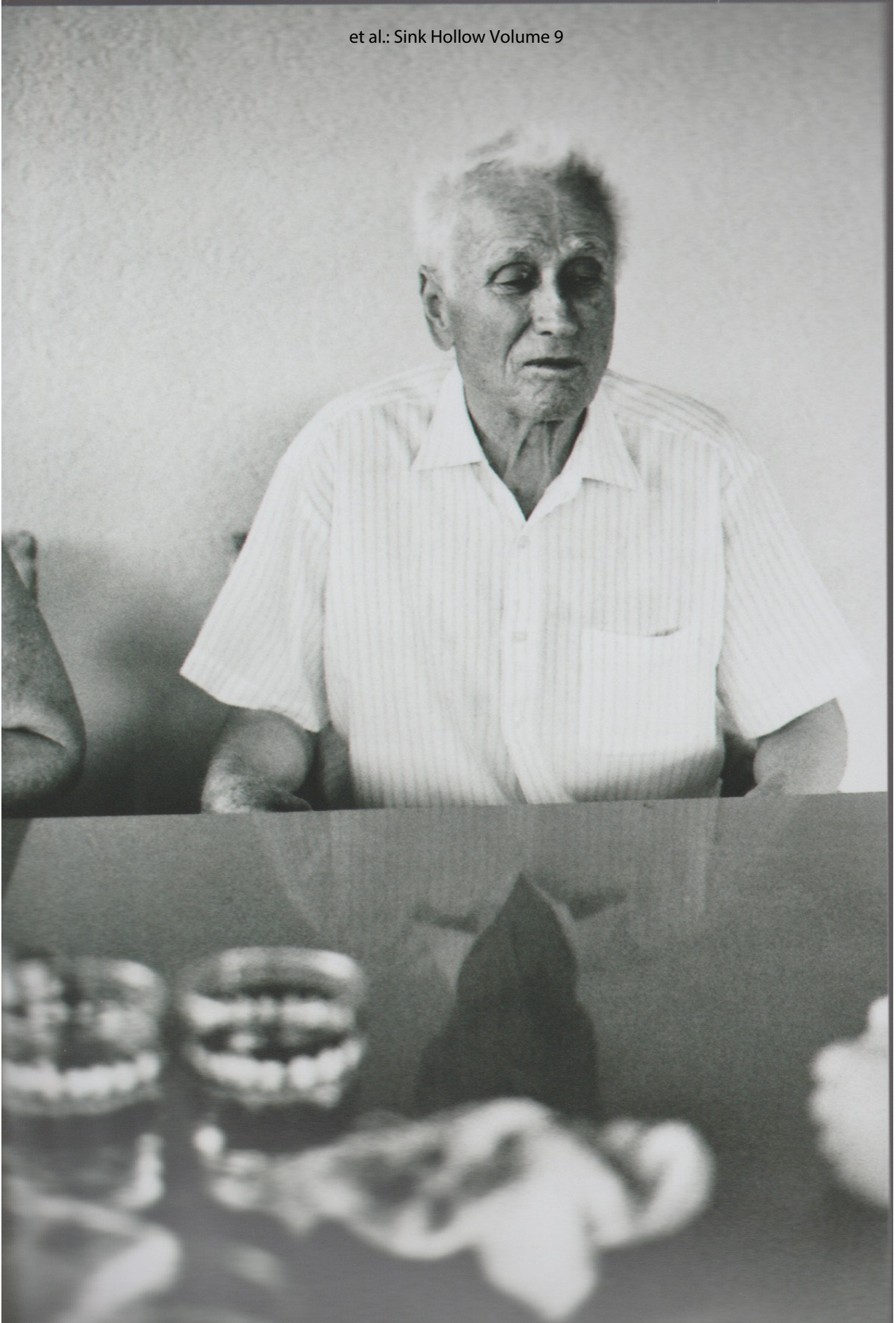
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*Cover Art



Scan_15 Daniel Ciochina

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The Baby Kayleigh Davidson-Simard

It is easy to assume that my little sister
is much older than I am;
there is something
about the sharpness of her teeth
that suggests she has seen more than most.
I have always thought that she looks
like someone made her on purpose – the intention
behind her eyes is too much
for any part of her to have been an accident.

When a man in a bar drunkenly paws
at my waist, thick fingers grasping at the dip in my dress,
my sister shoves him away from me, tottering,
unsteady on her own pinpoint heels,
rage pouring out of her
like the wine-dark hair that falls
across her shoulders. She smiles when he
stumbles backwards, his weight parting the people
behind him, and then she rips me towards her
with precise intention,
like some long dead queen come
to take her palace back.

I have never known a woman so comfortable
in her own anger. A harpy
in her own right, I have seen my sister shatter
stained-glass lamps, break a vase over
her bare knee, crash a car into a stop sign
simply because our brother
told her not to.

When men on the street call to us, I watch her
watch them, brave beyond reason, her dark eyes
gone cold, and I remember how easily
her manicured little fist
punched a perfect hole in our father's drywall,
how she had frowned at it, annoyed with herself,
not for the damage done, but for the single,
blood-red nail she broke in the debris.



Better Days Angel Gonzales

The Favorite Kayleigh Davidson-Simard

My father doesn't allow his sons to touch
the vinyl records he likes to keep.

They're too rough, he tells me.

A crash sounds from down the stairs,
boyish laughter, a horrified gasp,
all echoing into his office.

His eyes don't leave my own.

*Boys break things, whether
they mean to or not.*

I am his only daughter.

And so, he lays out each
flattened square of his collection,
the collage of them bright against the carpet.

He even allows my girlish hands
to turn them over, to trace

the corners of their covers,
gone soft and smooth with age.

We hold the vinyl flat, pressed gently into our
palms,

and watch the imprints of the music
race in the sunlight.

It does not bother him when I lay my own fingers
against curves of each song;
he knows himself well enough to recognize
his patience in his daughter.

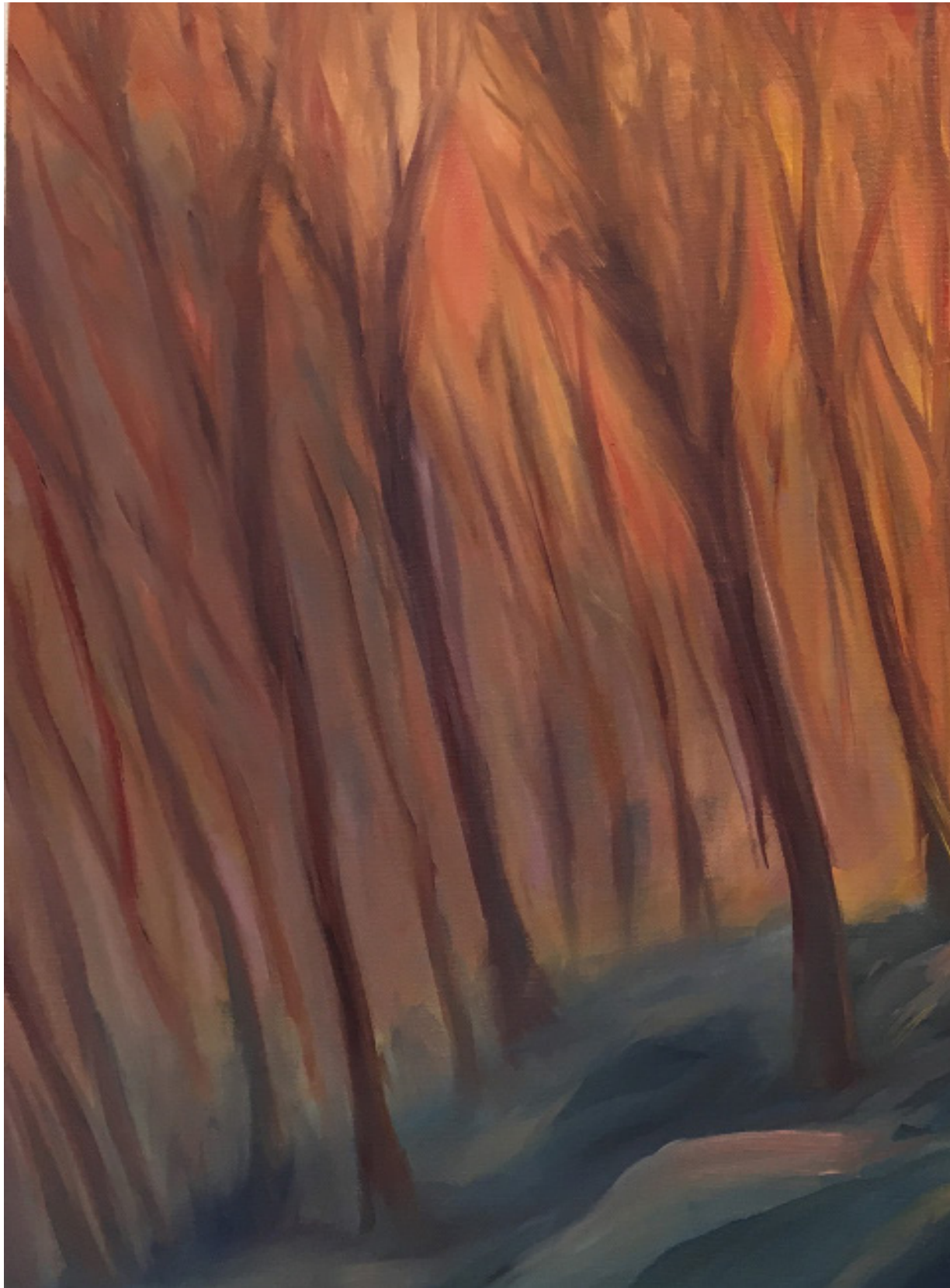
My brothers crowd outside the room,
their wide backs leaning against the door,
spanning the width of it, and the wood
cannot help but crack from their weight.

The youngest's juice-stained fingers
wiggle greedily along the carpet under the door –
far from the records, but still,
my father frowns at them, and for
a fleeting moment I am certain he will
crush them under the weight
of his polished black Oxfords.

He turns to me, then, and smiles.
He is always smiling, always at me,
and it feels like when
the fogs of San Francisco
sweep out to sea, the sunlight left
like stars on the waves,
all that gray just gone and forgotten.
It is as though the boys were never there.

My brothers slink down the hall,
their footsteps gone quiet and soft.
I know how they must look — wiry shoulders bowed,
eyes gone dark with disappointment.
It doesn't matter that the door kept them from seeing us;
they have always been familiar
with the clean, pressed back of my father's suit jacket.





Thicket Veronica Barczak





COBRE_AZUL_4 Helen Barbagelata

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Wedding Night Alana Carlson

Say “hy
men”. Not real
ly to be men
tioned. It’s part of a wo
man. They say not to be
high
lighted,
don’t look at this se
cret. For t
he
m it’s not dis
crete. We men
tor the you
th of our nations to rec
ognize their sha
me. Listen to
your elders. They know
which way li
fe should flow.
When that cher
ry is popped
fleeting fame
graces her.
They exa
mine her sacrific
ial off
er ing.
When the blood
flows they all know
how affirm
mant she is
of these daily val
ues. How she
says a
men, chorusing
with the man
y, man
ifesting what’s hidd
en, and re
vealed
only on the pristine sheets
of a new beginning.

Self-reflection

From broken
flow clear and free
to reflection

1 Nicholas Trelstad

en cisterns
ormless waters
t the sky.



The Beginning Angel Gonzales



Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood Rebecca

Sarah Curtis's husband, a writer, has fallen in love with an older woman, who is also a writer. The woman has written publicly about her uterine removal, due to endometriosis; at the time—and this was before everything that happened—Sarah had thought her brave. Sarah is not a prude but feels ill before she goes to the gynecologist and looks away when she drives past Planned Parenthood clinics, especially when they are in the worst parts of the city.

Anyway.

The fact that this writer does not return Sarah's husband's feelings has not seemed to deter him. Nor does the fact that the writer is happily married, with a three-year-old son conceived through IVF, pre-uterine removal (Sarah follows the writer on Twitter). Ah, no. The lack of reciprocation is only a detail.

Here is how Sarah's husband fell in love with the writer. They were asked to work together on a piece—a craft essay, to be specific. In the process of their correspondence, Sarah's husband fell for her. They wrote to the magazine where the essay was to be published and asked if their collection of emails could be used instead. The magazine's editor, being fond of both of them, quickly acquiesced. The emails were published under a lofty headline, *Genius Talks Genius*. In them there is nothing romantic—: no talk of beauty, no guilty appraisals of spouses. Sarah knows the writer to be a decent woman who will not consider leaving her husband. Because the writer is a person established in her life, she is not weak enough to fall in love with words on a page, with the thumbnail of Sarah's husband, who, admittedly, is handsome enough. Despite this Sarah has refused to respond to the woman's apologetic emails and has taken to calling her *Defective Uterus*. Not out loud, of course. As for Sarah's husband, he has moved out. They have been married for three years, together for five. Sarah is humiliated, but she is also relieved. The novelty of her husband's talent (and it is talent, not genius, unlike the woman with whom he has fallen in love) has worn off. His latest short story had a character named Isolde, a robot; Sarah found this unbelievably pretentious, and told

Bihn-Wallace

him as much. This opinion, somewhat unmerited, constituted her last conversation with her husband. And because they have no children the divorce has moved on quickly, which makes her feel regretful and cruel. The worst of it is that her husband has not put up a fight. He is capable of being generous; he has left her the apartment and their best records. He is ridiculous, like many men (like all men, she can hear her sister Carla saying), but he is not a bad person. Sarah used to think that divorce required unmitigated cruelty on the part of at least one of the spouses, perhaps on the part of both. Its smallness and practicality wounds her.

She alone occupies the apartment now, though her husband still Venmos her half of the rent each month until their lease is up, neglecting to make the transaction private, although she has requested this. She has told him, Stop opening your fly in public. (The rent payment is part of this exposure). All of their friends, and friends of friends, can see this happening on Venmo, and in spite of themselves will observe these transactions with guilt and glee, taking sides. It is impossible to be impartial, in a divorce.

Anyway.

She is taking her niece out for ice cream today. Erin, as she is called, is eighteen, a freshman at Barnard, deeply rattled by the recent stabbing (random, without reason), of a classmate. Erin weeps although she did not know the girl. She scorns social media, only keeps a Facebook account, and listens to the music of a curly-haired Irish Quaker who criticizes the Catholic church. She is tough and socially aware and reads dispassionately written books by Sarah's age contemporaries. They include meaningless casual sex,, which Erin worries about. Sarah loves her.

Erin is the child of Sarah's older sister, Carla, whom Sarah loves but does not always like; she is an accident, born when Carla was eighteen and Sarah was twelve. Thirty years before Erin's arrival, the family might have passed her off as a baby sister, a result of parental sentimentality, a fluke even, but they had chosen to be honest, although it was frankly em-

barrassing for people such as themselves, something so clearly unplanned and out of the ordinary. For these reasons, the year that Erin was born holds a great deal of import for Sarah. Then Carla had gotten a nursing degree, left Boston, moved to Chicago at twenty-two with a four-year-old child in tow. She followed a Ph.D. student, who wasn't made of much; she went on to marry his dissertation advisor, a professor named Allen, who got tenure at a college in New York. By then she was twenty-seven. She came to the city that year with softened edges; she was empty of rancor towards Erin's father, a Catholic school boy whom nobody ever met and who remains in Boston—successful, uninvolved in his daughter's life. Upon her sister's arrival in the city Sarah would look at Carla and think, this is what love can do. Carla, who had slammed doors, accused their parents of hypocrisy; she who people said (mincing their mouths and darting their eyes at the whole of the Curtis family) would come to no good. Sarah didn't understand it then, but Carla broke ground for her, as older siblings often do for their younger brothers and sisters. Any failure of hers, well into her twenties, is diminished by the memory of Carla's rebellion; this is why her parents have not scolded her for the divorce, she thinks. There have been other things, though: Sarah's moral soundness was overlooked too much by her parents, in favor of her academic imperfections, her failure to grasp their ambition for her, her unwillingness to deny her flintiest parts for them. No, it was not always happy for Sarah either, but she manages with them; they mean well.

But everything has worked out for Carla. She is thirty-six now and has a six-year-old son called Stevie. Sarah is less fond of her nephew; she thinks he lacks resilience, being a professor's son. Carla lets him play with the iPad too much, and doesn't bother to check whether it's educational programming or not—she who had raised her first child, Erin, a vegetarian, who had quarreled with her daughter when, after arriving at Barnard, Erin had reneged on this deal, inspired by a newfound love of cold cuts and by her relatively anemic state.

Anyway.

Sarah does not like for Erin to see her in a bad mood. Instead she takes a shower, which feels bizarre because it is the middle of the afternoon, and stares at herself through the curls of steam that coil around the white enamel as she steps out. The mirror has begun to wear out in places; there are little flecks of black, its cheap frame has come loose. She had asked her husband to replace it, after he left her; it had been his purchase to begin with. He had thought it a come-on and refused to help in an overly considerate manner which indicat-

ed his suspicions. Sarah understands that he views her as hysterical, as an impediment to his success and his career; she understands that her work as a cartoonist is worth less than his. Still, she drafts the drawings she does and sends them to Erin, trying very hard not to be branded The Cool Aunt, which she knows she is called by Erin's friends: a group of spirited Midwesterners terrified of the big city, who have found in her niece someone whose vowels are as nearly flat as their own. And anyway, Sarah's cartoons are in The New Yorker; this her husband has not managed. That he has publicly fallen in love with one of its top contributors is not odd; it is ambitious.

Sarah cannot forget the woman's endometriosis. People on Twitter have both criticized and praised her candor. She has been offered the chance to talk on shows and has mostly declined these unless they are of the superior variety; she is a public intellectual, not a celebrity. She makes this distinction at dinner parties, when she is a glass or two over her limit. Sarah admires her for acknowledging this. But Erin is waiting for Sarah; it is a sunny day, so cold and clear the tips of Sarah's ears hurt. As she walks she wonders, for the first time in a while, if people can read the betrayal on her face. Her husband's affair, one-sided as it is, is known to the people that count, needless to say the people that Sarah and her husband know. These people are kind, but Sarah observes the pointed silences and draws the battle lines accordingly.

She sees Erin walking towards her, and Sarah imagines herself as her niece must see her. Put together, as Erin often says. But maybe, Sarah thinks, she is also radiating failure, maybe Erin will become embarrassed of her. It happens. You can see sadness on people sometimes, even the chirpy ones; a stillness between sentences, a pained composure. She thinks. Erin has elbow-length brown hair, dark skin, plaintive features that are more absorbing than they seem. Her coat is olive drab, her scarf red knit. She has insisted on the ice cream, despite the cold.

"Sarah!" They fly into each other's arms, like women who have not seen each other in years.

"Erin! How are you?"

"Good," the girl says, shaking her hair out of her eyes in a way that is hopelessly affected but will one day become her. "No, really, I'm fine."

Sarah nods. “You breathing a little easier?” She means to say, since that girl was stabbed. “Yeah,” Erin says, then loosens her scarf as if to demonstrate her new invincibility. “I’ve almost stopped thinking about it. And you?” Erin asks.

Sarah looks up at her carefully.

“Well, you know.”

“I can’t believe you’re old enough to be divorced,” Erin said.

Sarah laughs. “A mark of my adulthood, then.”

“Is it, like, official?”

“Not quite.”

“Are you seeing anyone?”

“No. Tell me about your life instead,” Sarah says. “You still like that guy? What’s his name—Trent?”

“No,” Erin says, twisting a strand of hair, calmly letting Sarah pay for her (she promises Venmo, but Sarah refuses). She deftly shakes her hair away again, licks the chocolate ice cream cone; they have gotten the same flavor.

“Oh?” Sarah says.

“It’s not a big deal. He was just starting to annoy me.”

“Yeah?”

“He kept pretending to be working class.” Ah, college; how everyone cries poor (everyone, that is, except for the people who actually have no money). How guilty Sarah had felt her

freshman year, families reeling from the recession, foreclosure signs. And her with her parent's apartment in Boston, bought before the market became untenable; bought before she was born, in fact. She'd think of the white carpet, the CD collection, the loose copies of the Times and The New Yorker floating about, the posters in foreign languages, and feel



COBRE_AZUL_2 Helena Barbagelata

ashamed of her luck.

"Maybe he is," Sarah says. "Maybe his parents do work with their hands."

"They're teachers."

"Then not."

"It's just a phase, you know," Sarah says. "People don't want to seem pretentious."

"But it's worse to lie about yourself," Erin says. "Don't you think?"

"As a rule, yes. But we all do it."

"Even me?" Erin says. There is a stain of chocolate on her lower lip that Sarah resists the urge to wipe off.

"Well, no. You're authentic. Otherwise you wouldn't have friends this early in the school year."

"I know it's all going to change," Erin says. "Next year. No guaranteed housing. I can't move back in with Mom and Allen, though." (She still calls him this, though surely as her stepfather he means more to her. But Erin is practical, believing her mother's situation to be temporary, though it has remained the same for the past nine years).

"You'll find something. You should start looking now."

"I might live with my friend and her sister. Her parents own the place but they're out in Westchester."

"An informal arrangement?" Sarah asks.

"Yes."

"Beware of those. They can evict you whenever they feel like it."

"In which case I would raise a stink," Erin says, shrugging. "They shouldn't be able to get away with that." She has a picture of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on the wall of her dormitory.

Sarah looks around the room. Black and white tile; a Godfather II poster, a photograph signed by Bill Clinton. The college students sitting around are comfortably shabby, unaware of how profoundly they radiate loneliness. Sarah looks away.

"Anyway, I hope you find a place."

"Me too," Erin says thoughtfully. "And Sarah?"

"Yes?"

"Are you sure you're alright?"

"Do I look that bad?"

"No—well, you're a little frazzled."

"You mean, more than usual," Sarah says.

"I didn't say that," Erin says. Her cheeks redden; she is all sincerity. She removes the napkin from Sarah's hands, shakes out the waffle cone crumbs in the compost before she puts it in the trash can. She turns around, opens her mouth slightly, then says nothing.

"I'm sorry," Sarah says. "I didn't mean to snap."

"It's okay." Erin pauses. "I saw one of your cartoons, by the way. In class. At the beginning of a Powerpoint."

Sarah doesn't know whether she should be reassured by this. If ubiquity is a barometer of success, then surely she has made it.

"Is that so?"

“The one with the woman that says, Hold that thought, I’m going to turn it into a hashtag.” It seems less powerful, the way she puts it. “And I wanted to tell you that I thought it was funny. Because it’s stupid, the way things go viral.” What is she getting at? Obviously, Carla told her about the correspondence in the magazine, and how within Sarah’s group of friends (small, educated, irritatingly hyperaware) it was passed around, admired for its cleverness. All of them forgetting, perhaps, that behind the scenes Sarah had to cope with all the drooling over her husband. She knows that he has received requests to speak to college students, she knows that he visits fiction classes now. She imagines the kids sitting in silent awe; she wonders whether they are intelligent enough to see through him. Certainly, Erin is.

“Well, I’m not the first person to have a public divorce, Erin.”

“It’s not that well-known. It’s only important to, like, three people who have nothing better to do with their lives.”

“Would you talk about your uterus on national television?”

“What?” Erin asks.

“Nothing.”

“It’s fake, this world.” Erin says. “Online. We think it exists, but it doesn’t. I mean like the calling out, the policing or whatever. It’s this whole dimension that’s separate from reality. That’s what I want to say to my friends. In ten years, none of this will matter.”

“Something else that’s equally stupid will,” Sarah says.

Erin grins.

“Very true. And we’ll think we discovered something amazing.”

“Like MySpace.”

Erin snorts.

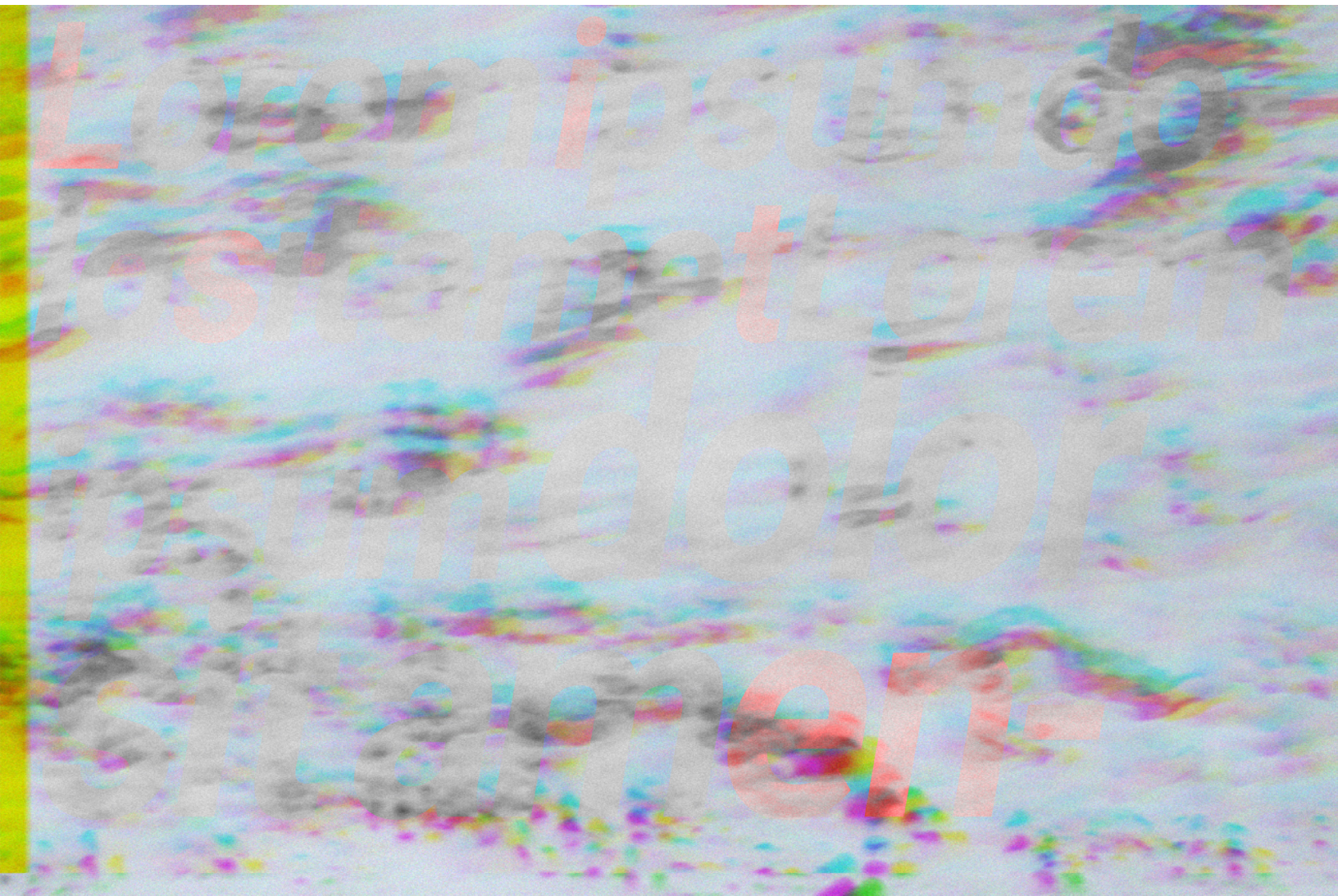
“Will you ever write about it, do you think?” She asks. “The divorce?”

Sarah shakes her head. The preemptive exhaustion she feels at the mere thought of it is her answer.

On the way back to the dorm Erin tells her she is invited to dinner with Carla and Allen.

“She just texted you. She wants you to come. She’s worried about you, you know.”

“Well,” Sarah says. “I’ll come. But please don’t bring me up otherwise. No need to cause anybody worry.”



Lorem Ipsum Dolore Veronica Barczak

Erin smiles, hugs her goodbye. She opens the door of the building somewhat apprehensively, Sarah notices, as if she is steeling herself. The things unsaid; the stories untold. She probably doesn't want to make anyone unhappy. Anyway, Erin has a good head on her shoulders; she'll figure things out. Maybe it's just because of finals week.

On her way back to the apartment (empty, cold, quiet; all she needs is a cat, then people will really feel sorry for her), Sarah sees that the woman her husband is in love with has a new book out. In a window display. It's a collection of essays; if it contains the correspondence, Sarah will be ill. As it was, she had vomited after discovering the trove of emails—violating his privacy, her husband had said; he had cited her trust issues, her jealousy and assumptions. But Sarah was no fool. Five years before he had charmed her with the same sorts of notes; heavily intellectual. He had somehow tapped into the fact that she was not romantic and would not believe in declarations of love. Instead he had made her believe that he found her worthy of his time. Besides, who else did she know who had read Proust? (Many, actually, by that point. So why had she chosen him?)

The man she had been with before him, a hyperactive economics major who talked about supply and demand while they were making love, had been different. He had been all charm, dark lashes spangling shadows on a fine-boned, slightly vulpine face, floppy hair. The sex had been better, but apart from that they were badly suited: he was outgoing, liked to be with his frat brothers, was drunk once or twice a month, flirted with other girls so outrageously that she was ashamed of him. She was grateful, but too quiet; she despised organized socializing and found his friends fairly distasteful, a fact which she was unable to hide.

Even after they'd broken up (he met a girl on study abroad, in Venezuela—a trip which had convinced him of the evils of socialism; that also became a problem), they'd kept at it (the sex, that is), until Sarah felt that her brain was becoming numbed over with it. She thought of nothing but him and who else might be sharing his bed, who else he was flirting with, who else he was charming. The notion made her angry and sharp with lust. Not until a year after her college graduation had she stopped seeing him for good, he who had made her so unhappy. There had only been him, before her husband.

When Sarah met her husband, at twenty-five, she'd been overwhelmed with gratitude. She had praised herself for finding someone who was not, by any stretch of the imagination, a

jerk. Or a douche, as Erin would say; Sarah doubted her niece knew the word's true meaning. Her husband was aware that he was different from other men, was heavily critical of her ex, and took to reminding her of how much worse off she could be. After they married, he started behaving like he was doing her a favor, and his lack of charm, his disinterest in pleasing others, lost its appeal. There were entire groups of women, literary women, who despised him, who looked at her sympathetically and disapprovingly at parties. A millennial brought up to believe in her own importance, having an experience with which they (older and more successful than she, wise, hardworking, educated, possibly self-sacrificing) were all too familiar. That was how they saw her. She is getting a feminist comeuppance, she is at a crossroads, they might have said: she will have to decide what to do.

Her husband thought her silence accusatory, judgmental; indeed, it was. These qualities of his had scared her, and she had looked for evidence to disprove the validity of her realizations, but instead she had them over and over again, in increasingly public fora. His correspondence with the writer had been the greatest act of conceit he'd committed thus far, but it was not the first one. But her knowledge of its ridiculousness had placed her so securely in the right that she could only push forward and leave him; she couldn't take any more of it. How easily he had slipped out of her life. What hubris, to believe Defective Uterus would love him. Did she? How could a woman who claimed to be so happy feel affection for a man so clearly seeking affirmation? Sarah hoped that this woman, this writer, was moved by pity and not by temptation. It was impossible to know; it didn't matter anymore.

But nevertheless, she finds herself going into the bookstore. She exchanges cursory greetings with the retail clerk, who stares at her in a way that she might have found flattering ten years ago but which now fills her with prideful exhaustion; she knows how this goes. When people mention dating to her these days she recoils. Why go through it all again, the humiliation? Feeling around in the dark for something in common. Guilty admissions, failed efforts to be charming. This Sarah cannot bear.

Still, looking at the collection of essays—which do not, thank God, contain the precocious correspondence—Sarah is surprised by the edge of sympathy that she experiences for the woman. Sarah's awareness of this is shameful; she puts the book back in its place on the shelf. Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood. An attention-grabbing title; and yet the woman is too intelligent to be simply confessional. She has woven the essays into something far

more organic, has made them into a question of life experience, and when Sarah reads them (only snippets), she knows that one day her husband will only be a very small part of what she becomes. The becoming is not over. Also, it is snowing outside. Her chastening has begun.

When she goes to Carla and Allen's house, around New Year's—they had all gone back to Boston for Christmas, and pretended it wasn't stressful and that they weren't already aching to be back in New York—she is unexpectedly comforted. Amy Winehouse is playing softly on the speakers (a lovely, pain-ridden sound, rife with self-knowledge). The Christmas decorations are not yet removed. Allen seems charming, even handsome, albeit in that weak professorial way that people assume she will be attracted to. Stevie is on his best behavior. And then of course there is Erin, sleek haired but less authoritative, softened in her parents' presence. There is no talk of politics, or friends, or even of finals: she is happy. She uses the same smoothening tactics that Sarah did for her own parents years ago, being unable to disappoint them. It is also possible that she is actually relaxed, Sarah reminds herself. Why should she assume insincerity and secrets, even when she knows them to be as much a part of her existence as anything else? Better to carry on believing that Erin understands things better than she ever did, that Erin will not repeat Carla's mistakes or her own. At any rate her love for her niece is incorruptible. She doesn't mind if it is taken for granted; most love is.

She is surprised by the calmness with which she is able to approach conversation with Carla and Allen. There is an elephant in the room, but then there always has been; Carla leads a complicated life. But there is a curious leveling which has occurred, a lack of competition; both Carla and Sarah have failed at something, by this point. Albeit at different things, but it takes the edge off of Carla's polite inquiries, her genuine concern. For once there is no accomplishment of Sarah's which she will feel the need—instilled by their parents, perhaps, who encouraged it, thinking competition healthy—to surpass.

"Sarah," Carla says. Her voice is urgent; it breaks the spell. Until then Sarah has not noted her sister's exhaustion, but it is clear: there are deep purple circles under her eyes, there is a looseness to the curve of her mouth that is uncharacteristic. Late shifts, late hours; Sarah has always marveled at Carla's decision to become a nurse. She has often wished, too, that she had such an expressive face;

What would it be like to be an open book like that, to be so plainly lacking in ill will?

“Yes.”

“Allen and I want to tell you something.” Carla shifts in her seat, stares into her wine glass; anywhere but at her sister.

“Yes?”

“It’s your hus—it’s Demetri.”

How long it has been since Sarah has uttered his name, since she has dared to do so: naming him as he is known to the rest of the world has frightened her, has signified her loosening grip on him. But it is a relief, this depersonalization.

“He’s got a Modern Love piece in the Times.”

“Oh?” Sarah is relieved: by her sister’s tone she had thought of something awful: a freak accident, maybe. She used to read Modern Love; then it had become irritating. Navel-gazing millennials like herself, compulsively oversharing about their sex lives. They had been taught to believe that if they were just honest people would listen to them; they have not yet realized that this is sometimes bad manners.

“It’s about you.”

She barks with laughter. “I would have expected it to be more along the lines of Modern Hate, then.”

“It’s not. But we wanted to tell you. Before anyone else did.”

“Well, thank you. May I see it?” Carla rummages the coffee table, likely trying to conceal the fact that she has been preparing for this moment, for tears and recrimination.

The piece is long, meticulously written. It reveals nothing; it reveals everything. Regret, ego,

justification. He will be praised for this, for his male honesty. Some women will say he is in touch with his emotions, that he recognizes his positionality (a word that Sarah has come to dislike). Others will bear for him an unabashed hatred that has already accumulated on the Internet, due to the content of some of his stories. The banality of it strikes Sarah as funny, and she laughs. Carla looks at her searchingly, as if she is exhibiting some sort of instability, a radical break in character. But the article is nothing; it is words, words, words; he has made a story of his life, just as everyone does, and why should Sarah begrudge him that? And if it is lies—then what? Sarah does not believe in cosmic justice, in an ordered world; she accepts that many will not know her version of him, the sneering shadow, ambition and vanity to boot. Just as only Carla knows this version of her—hurt, hysterical, drunkenly glib.

Thank goodness their parents aren't here.

"You're not bothered?" Carla asks anxiously. "I didn't want to text you about it."

"No."

"You sure?"

"Yes. Oddly enough."

Pause.

"I guess you get tired of it, after all. All this emotional oversharing," says Carla.

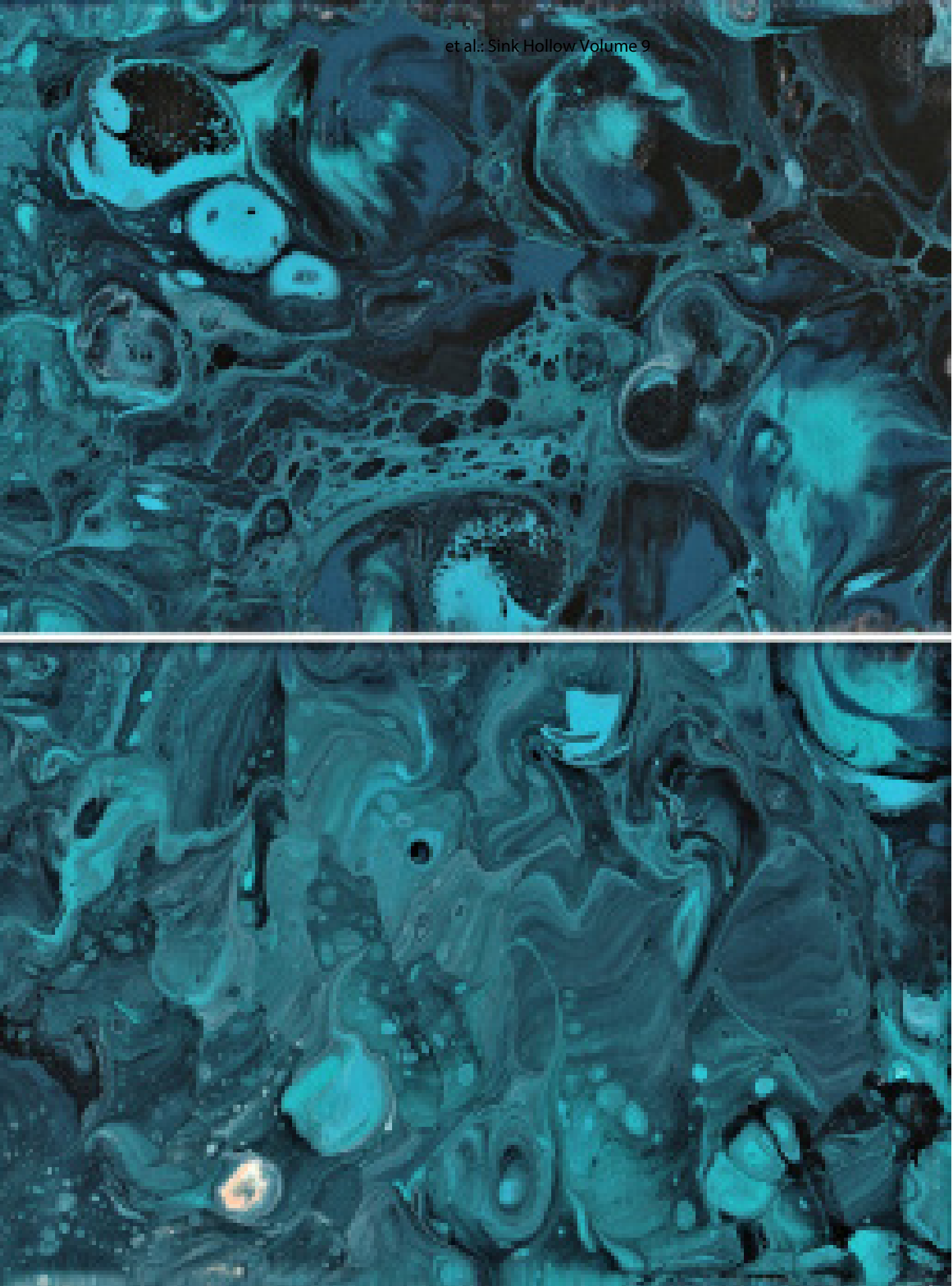
"It's not nearly as interesting as people think it is," she replies. "Us, I mean." Carla raises an eyebrow, and it is then that Sarah understands how thoroughly she and Allen have been following what is happening to her. They have probably discussed her amongst themselves, after Erin and Stevie have gone to bed; have probably written long and punishing emails to Demetri, which he has then forwarded to his friends, who pretend they are still interested in the saga of his unfortunate love life. Carla and Allen are capable of anger on her behalf, and it is well-meant, too, but it is of the righteous sort; unlike Sarah, they can be assured, as spectators, of coming out on the right side of things. The freedom to watch and to judge.

despite her initial embarrassment and apprehension. If by feeling better she means feeling something other than rage, Sarah has to give herself credit. But she can feel exhaustion descending unexpectedly: does no one understand that there are other things to talk about? She is sick of the entertainment value she has inadvertently provided; she is sick to death of the story of the whole mess, even more than she is of the people in it. But she will not turn her anger on her sister, because it is Carla, better than anyone, who understands humiliation, disapproval, gossip, curiosity. How had she borne it so easily, with Erin? How had she been so resolute? A feat of bravery that Sarah is still astonished by. She understands something of that now.

Sarah wants to take the subway home later, but Carla doesn't let her. She is behaving normally now, has discarded her restrained sympathy and is back to her brisk self. I'll tell Mom and Dad you're well. Call them. Seriously. They want to hear from you. Demetri is an idiot; this will all catch up to him, you'll see. Manufactured promises that are probably, on some level, true; but the possibility of her husband's incipient meaninglessness is not something Sarah can easily contemplate. Yet there is some emotional thread-taut, ambitious, optimistic—that enables her to look forward to this, that allows her to imagine the sweet relief so profoundly that a leap of the imagination can wish it into being, if only for a few minutes. During these times the pain stops: Sarah is familiar to herself once more. She imagines him wandering, separate from her; an unknown. A stranger on the street, a face she won't be interested enough to judge as she moves along. Imagine him being this one day.

Extraordinary.



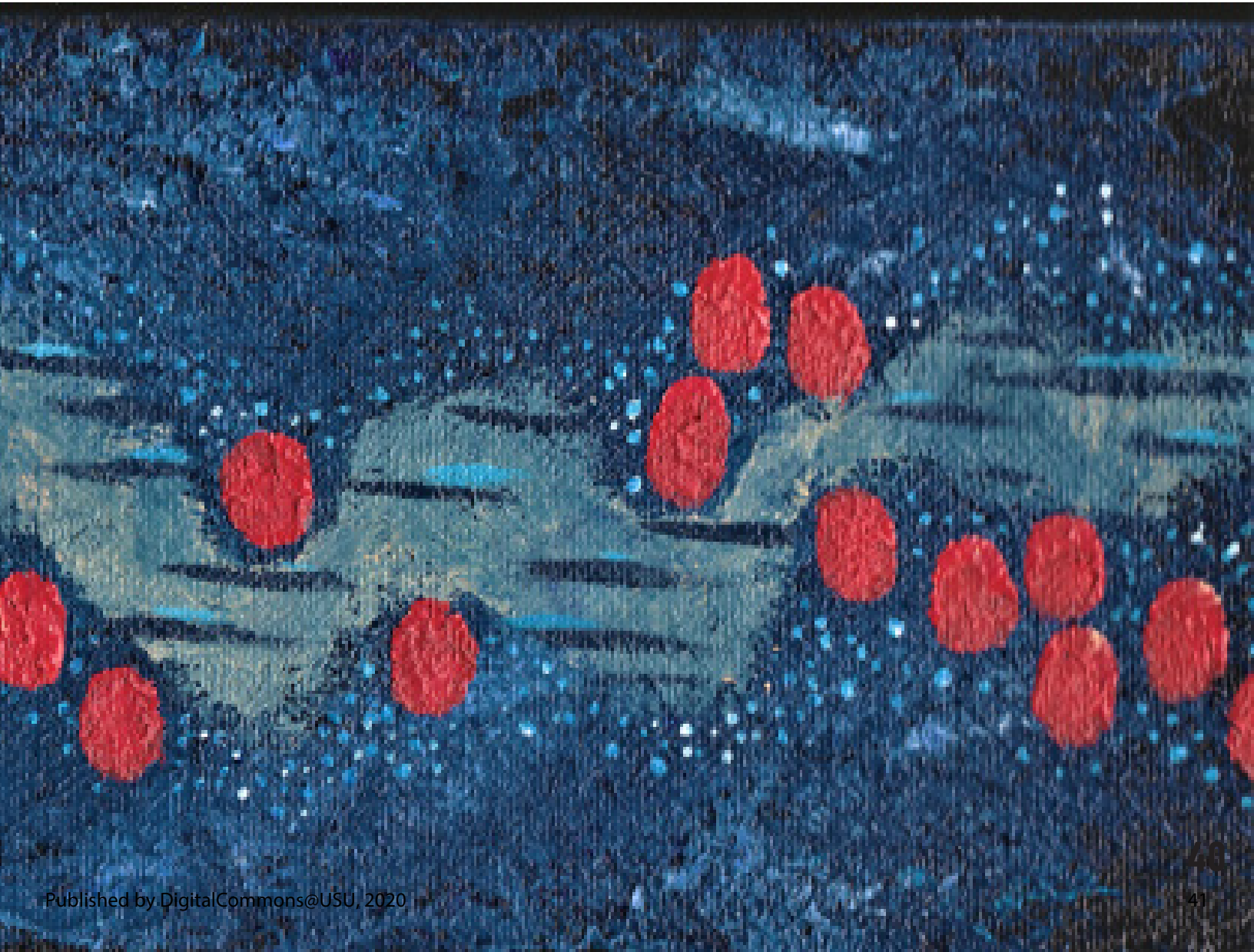


Another One Ayisha Harvey

One pill, two pill, three-he-he-he.
He's bitten into the core of it,
you've bitten into the core of a turn.
A turmoil turnout. There's these
shadows under his pills, bags under
his eyes. They haunt like
thunder, he-he. Have you been here
before? Straight man in a
straight jacket with a bare brazen thought.
He's taken it tonight, bears
fruition. He-he-he. Oh and his tears
are gushing. Straight eyed,
stary lipped, kiss kissing the lids but-
"It's just a mania, man."



Titan Alahna Alvé

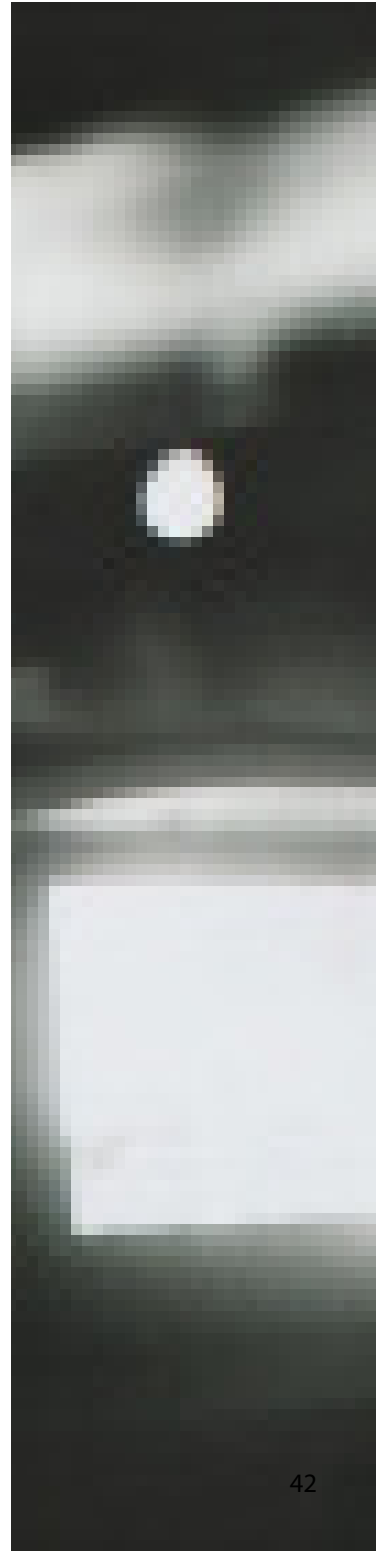


the kids at school ask about my father Luan N

the famous theoretical physicist. So I tell them,
my father, when the photographer came
to take a picture of him working,
raised his pen to the camera, and
stared with such contempt that when the article came out
the photo caption read, "His laboratory
is his ballpoint pen."

My father can no more settle the question
of where to take us out to eat than he can
who was right and wrong. So he makes us decide, and
when we have, argues that
other options are just as good
or better. Because, my father says,
to decide on anything is to possibly be wrong
and he always tells his students,
"It's far more interesting to not know
than to have answers which might be wrong."

My father stays home on Sunday
when mother takes us to church,
because my father knows the Bible
so well he could argue theology with our pastor.
My father, when they found a tumor in his brain,
read all the books and watched all the videos
of the operation – all he could gather –
because sometimes, he says, one must optimize
problems without articulated shape or form –
And when the surgeon made a mistake
and my father remained in the hospital
and our pastor visited,
my father only said, "That was unforeseeable,"
and turned away.



guyen

Hypnotic Daniel Ciochina





Mulberry St. Sarah Davis

We did not
expect this makeshift
market and
I had never before
tasted a rambutan,
bought after nightfall
from a street stall lit
by industrial white
lamps casting the
spheres of lime hairs,
curled like pea tendrils
& tinged pink, into
a forest of shadows.
I mimicked you
as you pressed your
thumb into the thick
skin, parting it
with ease.
Inside, a milky eye
of flesh gleamed blind
& stared into mine.
I bit it—
let its sweet weight
sit unfamiliar
on my tongue.

Diorama of a boy in

The boy soaks the

Scant water here, y
so suds like Sex w
They grow stale an
so body begs for sl
are unwashed, not

You're outnumbered
to look at yourself
but you're told Man
and apology proof.
over people until th
heavy breath, spilli
go to bed grown. B
your body of pigs' s

Make a fighter of a
Sow the swine, to g
Let's all share the

I've always asked v
Penises can't be m
why we drink silen
sound of our bodie

This is all we have,
and they circle the
and train their pig
sewage and savor
and call it power.

n Pig Sty Kristian Perez

mind in mud pools.

yet plenty soap
on't wash off.
d dry on your skin,
hower, but you
unclean; you hope.

d here. You don't want
and say you're filthy,
is power meat,
A bludgeon to hold
hey love you. Moaning and
ing seeds like spores, then
ut can you rinse
stains?

boy.
grow a man.
same sty.

why
ade of flowers,
ce to drown the
s being scary.

they say,
ir troughs,
snouts to smell
grime, to taste blood

A man from Honea Path who was

Johnny blind humps the walls, looks
decides the moment is too long, tak
hangs himself in the stairwell of his
does not die,
thinks he is a horseman in the apoc
flings empty prayers through air, flin
remembers he is high, wakes up in
wants to use a lifeline to call Jenny,
forgets Jenny is dead,
celebrates turning 21, buys things w
remembers the cocaine under his b
becomes anything but finite, finds Te
and into a correctional facility, lives
comes home to the same stairwell,
is fired from Westgate Pizza after tw
does not get food stamps, knows th
lives in a homeless shelter, switch
pretends there is still dignity in own
begs to use a phone, calls his moth
despises his ex-wife,
keeps calling her anyways,
realizes there is something below b
barely speaks, knows that his life is
blames it on substance, blames it o
wants to be left alone, gets his wish
selling unfiltered Camels and Miller
finds a landlord who overlooks just
does not see his kids, wants to find
realizes there are no AA's in a 40 m

born without a chance Lillian Barfield

s like the bottom of a piss bucket,
es his life as a clumped ball of string,
s own home,

alypse, tries to slump into his new form,
ngs beer bottles in flammable motions,
a steel cage, his steel cage,

with his real ID, never uses a condom,
ed, dives into the kitchen counter,
ed, fights Ted, drunk stumbles out of Ted's home
there, belongs there 3 months,
works at Westgate Pizza,
wo months, applies for food stamps,
en that even the government hates him,
s towns and, by default, homeless shelters,
ing two pairs of jeans, knows two is more than one,
er, calls his children,

ankrupt, writes novels in his head,
less than, still maintains pride,
n abuse, falls out with himself,
, applies for 20 jobs, gets one job at the Hotspot
High Life,
enough, decides he will turn 30,
an AA,
ile radius, does not stop, repeats a cycle, does not live, has not died yet.



Takushī Alicia Persaud



Know This Evan Palmer

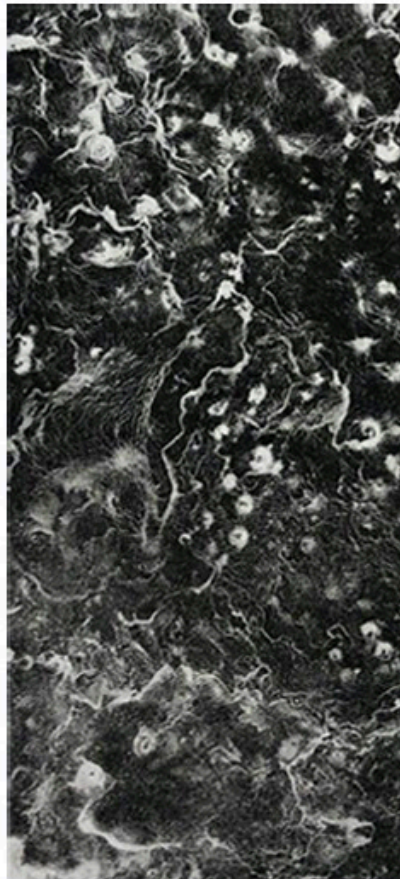
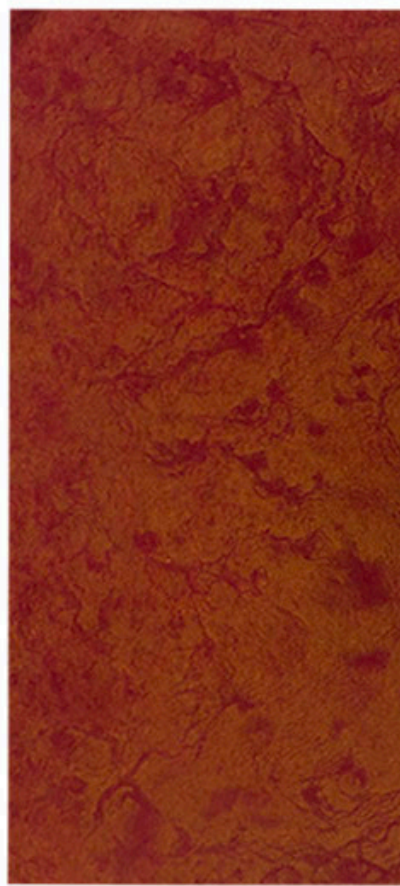
As I write about sheep and dragonflies
know that it is from experience,
that I am writing of my own death.

Know that I am not scared to be nothing,
of nothingness. That I yearn to be a ray of light again.

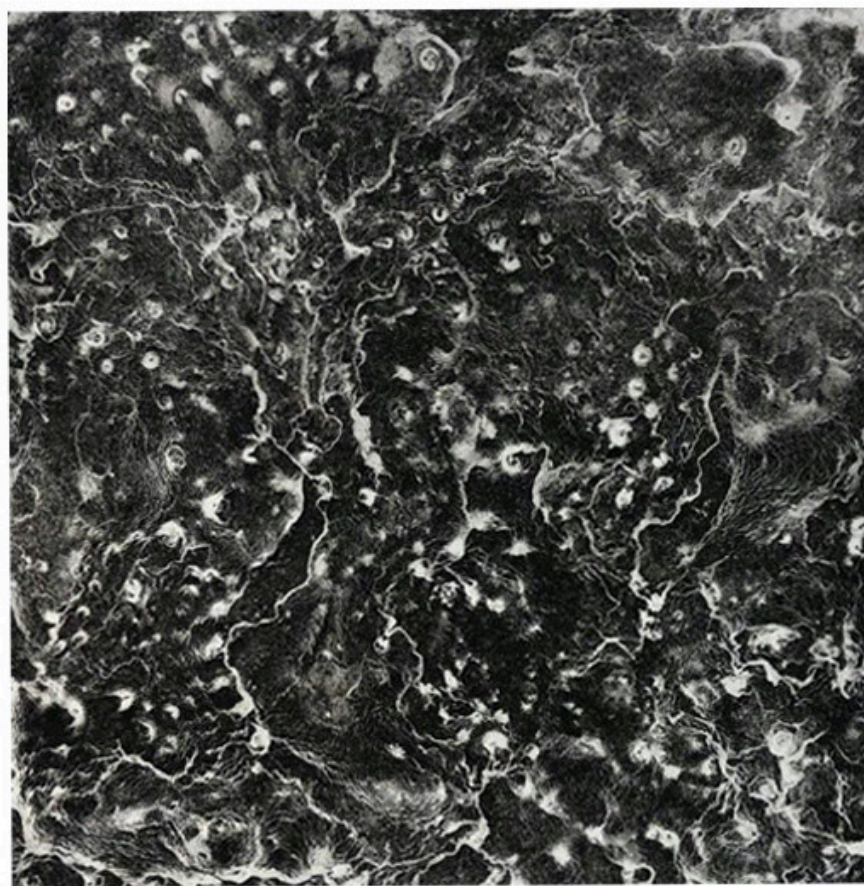
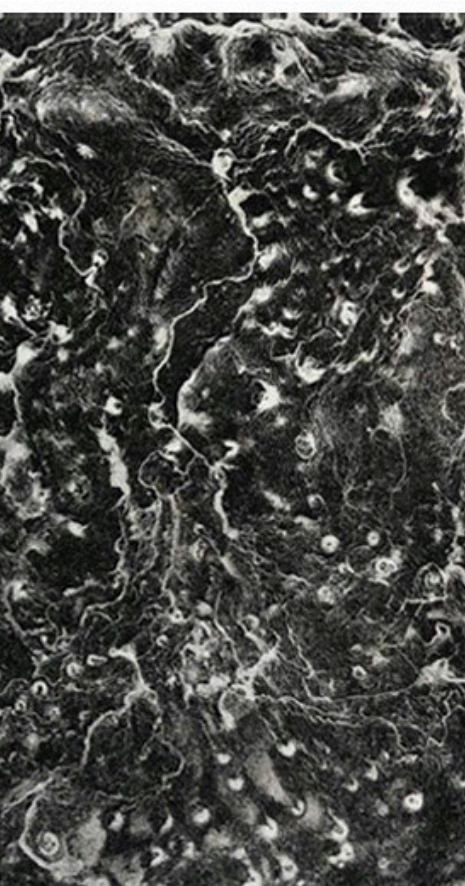
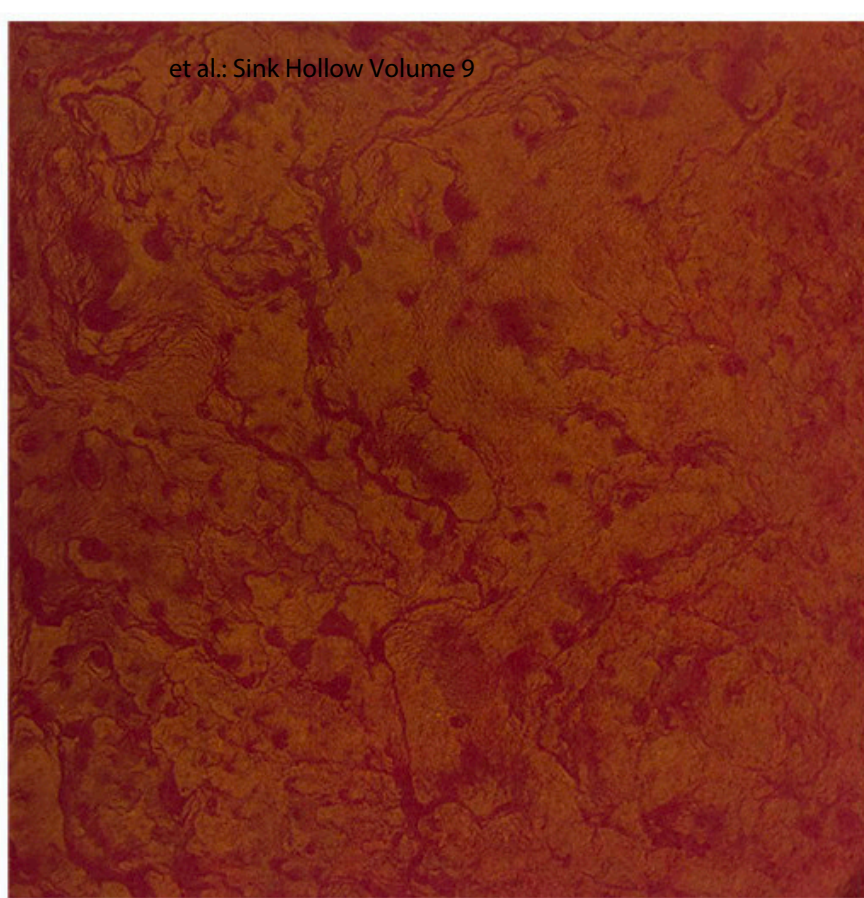
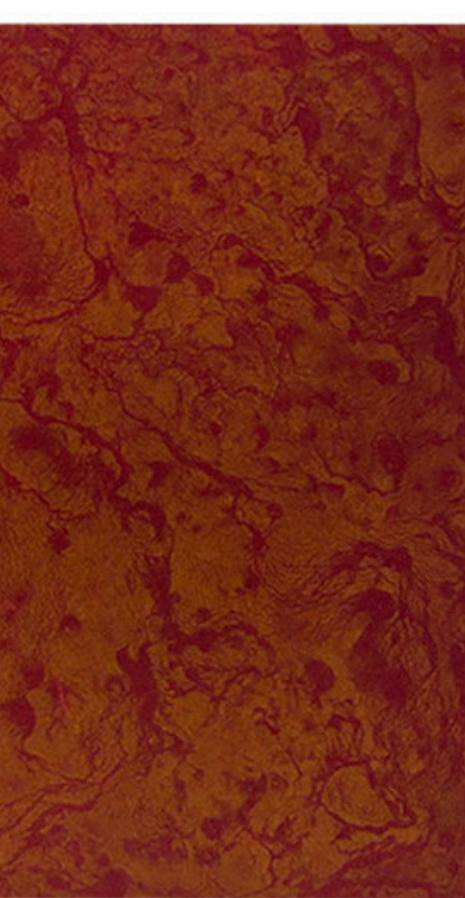
If you love me, know that I will tie
my fingers to your roots, that I am ignoring the problem
when I do this, that my perception of you wanes
at the end of every line. Know that all of this is unclear to me
as my synapses fire into the wind,
that I have tried my whole life to put this into words,
that the sun will return my shape in the morning.

Sixth Swan Emma Gregory

Underneath my thistledown sweater
Is tucked the wing of a swan.
Grafted tight to my own shoulder,
Bound up against my chest.
It stirs at
The overhead flight of storks,
Tchaikovsky concertos,
And beautifully androgynous people who waltz by.
Something wild breathes life into it,
Quick to buck
And to fly away from
Women who look me in the eyes,
Locked-car-door conversations,
And the mention of anything beyond today.
Like how some dogs
Jump at bald men in ball caps.



Combustion



Angel Gonzales

Biographies Poetry

Alana Carlson is an undergraduate student at the University of British Columbia. She is passionate about studying international relations and climate change. Alana's favorite place to write is on the couch beside a purring puddle of spilled ink named Cucumber.

Ayisha Harvey is a 2nd year university of Toronto student who has been writing for a few years. She is 25 years old.

Emma Gregory is an undergraduate student at Eckerd College in Saint Petersburg, Florida. She loves writing, reading, and rockhounding.

Evan Palmer is a biology major at Kalamazoo College in Michigan. His work has been published in Mangrove Journal, Third Point Press and Qua Magazine. He enjoys trees, light and their adjoining functions.

Kayleigh Davidson-Simard is an undergraduate English major at California State University of Sacramento. She spends most of her time reading, writing, and attempting to take her corgi on a walk without having to carry him back.

Kristian Perez is an undergraduate student at the University of Central Florida. His major is creative writing and he loves expressing himself through fashion and poems. He is also the Vice President of Writers Uknighited, a creative writing club for all majors.

Lillian Barfield is an undergraduate student at Winthrop University. She loves writing, crocheting, and she cannot stop buying houseplants.

Luan Nguyen is a journalism and creative writing student at the California State University in Sacramento. Before started writing poetry and profile stories, he was often found drawing angle brackets and crossing his h's at the chalkboard late at night trying to summon the ghosts of past quantum physicists for guidance.

Nicholas Trelstad is a writer and undergraduate in the College of Saint Scholastica's English program. He hangs his coat in the heart of Minnesota's northernmost forests. He is in the business of hunting ghosts and catching them in ink.

Sarah M. Davis is a student at Taylor University. She writes poetry and nonfiction, often about food, and however far she travels, she will always love her Midwestern roots.

Biographies Fiction

Rebecca Bihn-Wallace is a studio art major and professional writing minor at the University of California, Davis. She has previously been published in Miracle Monocle, The Marathon Literary Review, Underwood Press, and the Running Wild Press Anthology. She is a writer and artist.

Biographies Art

Alahna Alvé is an undergraduate student at the University of Houston, where she studies innovation and leadership. She spends her time pouring paint, stubbornly avoiding the Oxford comma and antagonizing her loved ones. She lives (and thrives!) with her husband, their three ungrateful cats and a persistent mental illness.

Alicia Persaud is an undergraduate student attending the University of California, Santa Cruz as a double major in Art and Film and Digital Media. Her work is mainly focused within painting, photography, and printmaking. Through her work, she attempts to convey her physical and emotional perspective as a way to explore her identity, and how people and places influence her relationships to her surroundings.

Angel Gonzales is an undergraduate student at the University of California Santa Cruz. She loves anything to do with experimental printmaking.

Daniel Ciochina was born in Portland, Oregon as the first generation of his family to be born in the United States. Exploring South America, Europe, and the States surveying the characteristics of society, people, objects, and their relations between each other. With this in mind he creates objects and pieces that embody these ideas. Making one question or reflect their own stance within a given space or realm of thought. He is highly intrigued by art and sculpture and how it can engage people within a physical space. The way in which we react and interact with objects is affected by their placement, use and relation within a given environment. When these factors become intentionally altered or directed there then becomes room for exploration. This space of analysis comes from our interest in putting together a context or meaning. When a direct narrative isn't visible we apply ourselves into the remaining space, creating a connection. He believes the mass production of objects diminishes our personal relationship with them and their functionality for the individual, and within this is why art has such an intrinsic value. He continues to cultivate these processes and beliefs towards a bachelor in Product Design and a minor in Sculpture while also opening a small gallery in his spare time. Currently at Lane Community college about to transfer to U of O.

Helena Barbagelata is an undergraduate student at New York University. She's a fashion model and multidisciplinary visual artist who develops work in painting, illustration and photography. Her artworks combine mixed media, acrylics, ink and watercolor techniques. Helena is also a writer, and columnist in several literary publications.

Julie Gallagher is a New Jersey artist attending Kean University. She specializes in painting and drawing. Themes of her work include people, and nature, which she loves.

Veronica Barczak is an undergraduate student at Fordham University. She is interested in capturing the atmospheric qualities of nature through painting and digital media.

Zoe Antona is a multi-disciplinary artist and photographer, whose work addresses the power dynamics and complexities of relationships. She grew up in Atlanta, Georgia in the US, and is now based in Cincinnati, OH. She is currently earning her Bachelors of Fine Art in the Design, Art, Architecture, and Planning School at the University of Cincinnati. Her work explores the reconciling of oneself in the midst of a relationship and the intimate experiences between that of only two people. Zoe's work is meant to be representational of the weight and the power dynamics all relationships possess. As well as depicting how intimacy impacts not only the emotional state but also the physical state. Her work aims to evoke a visual and emotional reaction through the aesthetics and installation of her work. The concepts for her work repeatedly revolve around the ideals of torn relationships and are representative of the power dynamics within them.



g3_orig Zoe Antona

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