

The Accent



**NO JUSTICE
NO PEACE**

2021 STUDENT ARTS AND LITERATURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND ARTS OF OKLAHOMA

THE ACCENT



2021 Publication

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It has been such an honor to be the Editor-in-Chief of such an amazing magazine! This is my second year running The Accent Arts and Literature Magazine here at USAO and I have been so unbelievably lucky to have such an amazing team at my back! When I first joined The Accent my freshman year of college, I would have never imagined that one day I would be taking over the magazine! For anyone who does not know, next year The Accent is coming up on its 10 anniversary! This publication was initially launched in 2012 by the former professor Dr. Meagan Rodgers and a group of amazing and brilliant students! It was meant as a way to showcase the literary and artistic talents of USAO Drovers. From the very beginning until now we have worked to bring you, our students, an inclusive space to get the chance to show your work in print magazine. In the last few years we have grown to not only print a few hundred copies of the magazine, but to also be available online for all friends and family to view! I am sad to say that this will be my last year on The Accent team, but I am hopeful for the future! As a former Editor-in-Chief told me, "With each new Chief, we breathe new life into the magazine, we bring something new to the table and help the magazine grow into something even bigger than ourselves." I think the same is said for our students as well. Without you we have no magazine. You give this magazine life every single year when you submit your work to this publication. I am so unbelievably excited to see what not only the next Editor-in-Chief will do for this magazine, but also what all of you will do as well!

This magazine would not be here if it wasn't for the dedicated team of layout editors, copy editors, and general editors that I have by my side. This magazine would not be here if it hadn't been for you amazing people! Without you, we would not be able to amplify the talents of our fellow students the way we do. So, I would like to thank you all for all of your hard work in putting this magazine together!

I hope you all have an absolutely amazing rest of your semester, and congratulations on making it through another year of college!

Gabriella Burk

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE ACCENT ARTS AND LITERATURE MAGAZINE

Selection Process

After receiving all submissions, the Editor-in-Chief removed all names and gathered pieces by genre.

The Editorial Board members individually reviewed and rated each item. The ratings were averaged and the top items in each genre were automatically accepted. In order to present work from a wide variety of submitters, we also limited the number of selections per person in each genre.

Editors were allowed to submit. Their work was reviewed in the same anonymous process. They did not rate their own submissions.

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Zora Weyrick

Ring Master



The Man in the Weird Store

In a strange land and in a weird store
There were lots of fun things to buy
and look for

There were submarines with wheels
that could fly
And chairs that could run and a sing-
ing tie

If you walk to the other side of the
place
There are blueberry pies that will fly to
your face
The most interesting thing that you
might find
Is a little old man stocking shelves
though he's blind

This little old man was probably
around fifty
His smile was bright and his clothes
thrifty
He had a green bow tie and a big top
hat
And down beside him was a small gin-
ger cat

He is a joker as you are sure to soon
find out

As you walk over to meet him he'll say
with a shout

Hello and welcome to my little place
of wonder!

But the cat will trip him and he'll make
a small blunder

A bag of flour is knocked with a flail to
the tile

And You'll go to grab it with a sheep-
ish smile

But the man will grab your hand as he
laughs and gloats

No need it's self rising flour he says as
it floats

Becky Blanton

The Blue Beryl Bandits

Megan Hay

"You are such a bastard!" Iva snaps as she tries to move her arms. The cuffs around her wrists, with the short-chain between each, prevent her from doing this. "I told you to keep your hands off things, but you ignored me. Again."

Cassian makes an 'mhm' sound as if he's listening; he's not, but as they've gotten into scrapes like this before, this isn't the first time he's heard this particular rant. Iva, despite her sweet appearance, has the sharpest tongue he's ever encountered. He swears he's learned more curses from her in the five years they've been friends than in the seventeen years before she waltzed into his life and never left.

Iva huffs, shifts slightly. The stone floor beneath her is cool and digs through the flimsy fabric of her dark blue dress. It had cost a whole three dollars, so Cassian has better pray it stays in good condition during this little endeavor of his. "So, any brilliant ideas?" she asks finally, wrinkling her nose as a strand of red hair, tickles her skin. Staticky conversation catches her attention and she looks between metal bars of their cell.

"-sident Roosevelt has appointed Joseph P. Kennedy to the newly formed commission of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Thi-

Realizing that it is simply political news, drifting down the hallway from the radio in the front room, Iva turns away, staring down at the cuffs around her wrists.

"No," Cassian admits, glad he's on the opposite side of their small cell. He knows just how fierce her kicks can be. "But I'm sure we can get free." They always manage to escape, so he refuses to think that this time will be any different/

"I don't have anything to pick the locks," Iva bursts out, "I wasn't thinking you were going to try and steal something—"

"I wasn't going to steal anything," Cassian cuts in, offended at the very thought that he would try anything so reckless even though in an odd twist, he had done exactly that. What she doesn't know won't hurt her...or him for that matter. "I was just looking."

"You weren't just looking," Iva snaps then sits back. "Don't give me that shit, genius."

Cassian instantly grimaces, pretending to one of the cuffs around his wrists. Her blue eyes always make him squirm. "Maybe," he admits, then hurriedly goes on as he pushes away lingering thoughts of the jewel. "But

I didn't even know about the blue beryl until we got there.

If you're wondering,
I didn't get us

invited to this party for anything other than to have a good time."

Iva narrows her eyes, studying him. He is staring at her with wide green eyes, a picture of boyish innocence. For a moment, she falters, then she remembers that from the moment they met, when they both were attempting to pickpocket from the same official in a small town out east. He's never been innocent a day in his life. Feeling the heat of anger wash over her, she grits her teeth. She turns her head away, keeping silent as she tries to figure out their best option.

She's mad at him but Cassian doesn't mind. He can count on both hands—at least ten separate times — how often he's faced her wrath. She'll get over it, just as she always does. Deciding it's in his best interest to let her sulk, he wiggles his fingers, testing his restraints. Of course, nothing gives. He sighs. How annoying. He gives up after a minute, racking his brain for an idea. He has to get them out; this is on him, even though he will never admit it to anyone but himself. His fault, his solution; though that blue beryl... his fingers twitch at the thought of it. Something so rare has the ability to carry them well into the next few years, especially if this economic depression continues to sweep the country.

"You know," he says finally as he stands, not sure how long the silence had gone on. "It could be worse."

"How can it be worse?" Iva asks, wondering how he ever came to this kind of conclusion. He is brilliant, but he can be so undeniably stupid. "I don't think we've ever been in

a worse situation." She's sure of it now that she starts thinking about it. Usually at least one of them has something to pick locks with, but it had just been a party Cassian had managed to talk his way into and why would they need anything but the fancy dress? Narrowing her eyes, she opens her mouth as she finally turns her gaze back to him. However, his smirk, which is easily seen despite the dark hair flipped across his face, gives her pause, but only for a moment. "They're going to send us to prison." Her voice becomes increasingly higher with each syllable. "You never think anything through, never consider the consequences of any of the actions you take. Fuck it, I never should have—"

"What's going on here?" A man, dressed in the dark uniform of the jail's guards, appears before their cell. Cassian takes one look at him, decides he is roughly his father's age, and almost feels bad for what he's going to do. Almost.

"Get me out of here," Iva says, her gaze furious as she turns it to the guard. "Or at the very least gag him. Something." She huffs a sigh as if she's terribly annoyed, and that's not an act. She is annoyed. "Please, just do something." She adds desperation to her voice, which isn't hard to do either.

The guard rubs his forehead. Cassian barely breathes as he watches. Is he going to get his keys? His hand never strays to them, which makes him fight back a sigh. Time for the next part of this flimsy plan.

"Why don't you two just be quiet? It's midnight. I'm not interested

in any of your squabbling," the man says as he turns.

Not about to let this chance slip away Cassian takes a deep breath, then squeezes his eyes shut. Not a moment later, he's wheezing desperately. He's always been good at convincing people with his words, so now it was time to see if he can do it with his actions too.

Iva gasps sharply, eyes widening. "What the hell?" She begins struggling uselessly. "Help him!"

The guard frowns, then sighs. "What's wrong with him?" He opens the door with a quick twist of keys in the lock. "If this is some sort of stupid ploy..." he grumbles to himself, stepping inside. It's clear from his expression, one of both annoyance and resigned acceptance, that he doesn't want to deal with a corpse.

At this point, Cassian's performance is turning into somewhat of a reality—the irony and karma don't escape his notice—so as soon as the guard steps close enough, Cassian reacts. He kicks one of his legs up, catching the guard in the stomach then follows with a knee to the face. Bone crunches and blood spills. The man staggers, trying to get his bearings as he clutches his nose. This is his first mistake. Really, his second. He should have never trusted a conman.

As soon as he gets close, Iva jumps to her feet and then slams a foot into his back. The cuffs around her wrists prevent her arms from

moving well, but not her legs, and she repeats this action until the man falls. As soon as he does, she kicks him in the temple. He goes limp and she sighs, relaxing for a moment, glad she always makes sure to wear loose-fitting dresses. He'll wake with a killer headache and some bruises, but he'll survive.

She kicks off her boot and begins reaching for the keys with her toes. It's a small jail, for a small backwards town with even smaller crime rates, so they're the only prisoners and he's the only guard for the moment. But she knows there's a shift change happening soon, and that knowledge makes her hurry.

"Wasn't that brilliant?" Cassian asks brightly. She can make fun of him all the time for things—rightfully so—but she has to acknowledge just how good he is at thinking on his feet. "It was, wasn't it?"

Iva sighs, pulling the keys along the floor with her toes. "It was brilliant," she agrees; he is always looking for validation. "But do you know what else is brilliant? Me not wringing your neck when I get free."

Cassian laughs, never worried. "You have way too much fun with me," he counters, making her roll her eyes.

"You're such an idiot," Iva grumbles, working the keyring as high as she can, then tossing

The Blue Beryl Bandits Megan Hay

it up into the air. She manages to catch it with one of her hands and sets about freeing herself. "But you're my idiot, so there's that, I guess."

His laugh turning into a cackle, Cassian waits patiently for her to get out of her cuffs and come to him.

"Such an honor," he says, his eyes sparkling with amusement as she takes a moment to tug her boot back on before setting to work on getting him free.

"Of course it is," Iva mutters, her hands quick as she frees him. He might be quick with his words, but he has nothing her fingers, which, with her picks, can get through any lock. "Come on you utter twit. Let's get out of here. I don't want to be in this place any longer than I already have."

As they step from the cell, Cassian glances back inside as he absently adjusts one of his spenders. "Maybe this will be a good learning experience for them. They really need more than one guard in a jail, even with crime so low and all that."

Walking again, Iva nods, letting her hair down from its bun. "At least it was just us." Really, that escape had been so easy, now that the stress of the situation has already begun to fade to memories. She sighs, brushing back her hair then running her fingers through it. This town isn't bad, for

being in the middle of nowhere, and when they had first come, she had thought that they might stay for a while. It seems not. In the morning, they would leave and go somewhere new, pick new names, new identities just as they have been doing for the last several years. She wonders who she'll be when they leave this town-Iva, close to her real name of Ivana, will no longer be able to be used. She always liked Olivia.

Cassian nods as they make their way down the hallway, heading for the heavy wooden door. He doesn't say anything, not until they step through and into the cool night air. "So," he says conversationally as he slips a hand down into his boot. "Would this be a bad time to tell you that I have the beryl?"

Iva instantly stops, spinning to face him. "You what?" How had he gotten it? It had been back at the house when they had gotten arrested.

Grinning, Cassian pulls the small gem out from his boot. "When I went to have a snipe," he says, "I made a fake. Wasn't my best work, not by a long shot, but it'll do for the time being." He had used some of his materials to make a copy in the time he took his imagined smoke break. Despite everything, he thought this scheme of his went splendidly well, despite the fact that he had forgotten his lock picks at the house and they had ended up spending far too much time in jail because of that silly mistake.

Iva stares at him for several long

moments, then she begins to laugh. "You bastard," she says, this time fondly. "You utter bastard."

Despite everything, he thought this scheme of his went splendidly well, despite the fact that he had forgotten his lock picks at the house and they had ended up spending far too much time in jail because of that silly mistake.

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Lacey Dutton

Bee Winged



Skye Hazel
I Pretend Not to See



she.

she is a breath of fresh air
that you can't get enough of
the tune of a beloved song
dancing around your mind
she is a place where you can be happy
free to say all that is on your mind
with no set rhyme, but with endless reasons
from pen to paper to the mind of another
a lover and a fighter, a mother and a
daughter
she is everything and she is nothing
she is poetry

Melina Smith

Nostalgic Storm

as the rain beats against the windows
of my stranded car
the noise accompanying my own banging
headache
i feel I'm about to let everything overcome
me
then i think of you

your name comes up the way it always
does
unexpectedly but clear
maybe its because the storm died down
no more thunder or crack of lightning
as though your name evokes the calmness

Adrienne Koscho

Running Away

Gabriella Burk

"Come now and follow me down."

She sang the words to the children sitting in front of her, flowing her skirt around as she danced around them. "Down to the lights of Shroudway where there's faeries walking the town, waiting to take the babes away," she said in a hushed tone, giving each child a mischievous look.

The children stared up at the woman wide eyed. Delia was just a laundress in their small village, Whitemount, but every evening she came out to the town square and told the children stories of the fae. Of course, they were only stories, nothing more than that. Or, at least, that is what Delia told their parents when confronted by their worried faces.

"Watch now, they'll soon be along," she said, letting her voice fall into a whisper as she picked a flower from a nearby bush and twisted it around her fingers. "They're tricksters unlike any other so, come now pick your flowers," she ordered, tossing a flower to a small child, lifting her eyes as she did. Delia scanned the amassing crowd. It had once been just the children who listened to her tales of the fae,

but as time went by her songs grew in popularity. "They're waiting to take you away from here," she sang softly, her eyes falling on a man to the side of the crowd. He was tall and fine as he leaned against a large tree, from this distance, Delia could just barely see the tips of his pointed ears coming from under his long black hair.

Without tearing her eyes from the male, she sang softly. "Here today, you're gone tomorrow, going off to Shroudway. Jiggin' around and off to play, you won't be coming back again," she finished, finally tearing her eyes away from the male and looked back at the children in front of her. "So stay a while and we'll dance together as the light is falling down. We'll reel away till the break of day and dance together till morning," she finished, bowing low to the ground as the crowd clapped loudly.

"Absolutely beautiful Miss Icethorn," a man said, coming up to Delia once the crowd dispersed. "I don't know where all of your stories come from but they're just wonderful. I listen every single evening."

Delia flashed the man a tentative smile, showing her pearly white teeth just slightly. "Why thank you, Mr. Pritchard. I am proud to say that the stories just come from my imagination," she told him, tucking a strand of light blonde hair behind her ear.

"Well, as

interesting as your stories are, Miss Icethorn, every young lady needs to realize that their imagination will never get them anywhere," he told her, slipping his hands in his pockets. Mr. Griffin Pritchard was a rich man, a low level noble, but a noble nonetheless. His wife had passed mysteriously only a few months ago and had already started his search for a new, younger wife. His eyes had been on Delia since she had started telling her tales in the town square. "And being a laundress must not be a very easy job for a young maiden like yourself, Miss Icethorn."

"I am very glad to know that you are worried about my wellbeing, Mr. Pritchard. As of right now, though, I think I am doing just fine," Delia told the man, standing slightly straighter as she slipped the flower that was still wrapped around her fingers into the folds of her dress. "And I think my imagination is the best part about me. Now, I must be on my way."

With that, Delia started towards the male still leaned against the tree, his eyes never leaving her face. Pritchard's hand shot out, wrapping around Delia's arm. "A young maid like yourself needs to find a husband soon, Delia, have you thought more on my offer?"

Delia gave the older man a forced smile. "No," she said simply and wrenched her arm from Pritchard's grip and continued to the male.

"I should kill him," he said just as Delia approached.

"And to what do I owe the pleasure, Jarrah?" She asked him, not bothering to acknowledge his statement.

"You know what I'm here for," he said. "Your highness, it has been three years, you need to come home. Your mother is worried sick."

Delia gave the male a simple smile. "Jarrah, I don't want to come home. I don't plan on ever going back. Besides, I love it here."

"You love being grabbed by peasants such as that one?" He demanded, snarling slightly. Delia placed her hand on his shoulder and sighed.

"That, not so much. But the children here, the people, it is lovely," she stated, looking into his grass green eyes. "It is simple here, something I've wanted my entire life."

"You are meant to take the crown soon, Delianna," he said, taking her hand off of his chest and holding it tight. "You're not meant for the life of a laundress, you are meant to be Queen."

"Queen of a court that does nothing but lie and twist everyone's words around? That steals innocent children for their amusement?" She asked, scrunching her nose. "I want nothing of the Underground Court. This life is peaceful."

"Faeries cannot lie, Delianna, you know this as well as I," Jarrah snarled. The male had once been Delia's

guard, their relationship had been... complicated. Jarrah was Delia's sworn protector, promised to her the moment she was born. Delia did not need his protection, though. She never did. The only thing she had ever needed from Jarrah had been his friendship, and she never got it. Not even once in the three hundred years Delia had known Jarrah.

"You know what I mean, Jarrah. I don't want that life, I have never wanted that life," she told him, pulling her hand away. "Will you please just leave me alone."

"Elliot misses you, you know. So does Evening," he told her softly.

"Eve made her decision. She made it a very long time," Delia said smoothly. "And Elliot told me that they wanted what was best for me when I told them that I was leaving. They have always supported my decisions, even if they disagree."

"I miss you," Jarrah offered and Delia let out a laugh.

"You are not going to sway me, Jarrah. I love this life, it is simple and it is beautiful," she stated, bundling her long blonde hair back, braiding it swiftly. "Now, if you do not mind, I have work that I need to get back to."

"What are you going to do when they realize that you do not age, Delianna?"

He demanded, glaring at the young woman.

"I will just move on to the next town, no one will ever have to know," Delia said, shrugging her shoulders easily as she finished her braid and tied it off with the stem of the flower she still had in her dress.

"It is not that easy, people will notice eventually."

"Go home, Jarrah, that is an order," Delia said steadily as she turned around and headed back to her cottage.

"Queen Marianna ordered me to stay," he said, falling into step with her.

"Well I told you to leave," she said harshly, elbowing the male in the ribs roughly.

He shrugged. "I do not care, Delianna." "It is Delia!" She snapped. "If you insist on following me to my home then put a glamour on. I do not need these people thinking that I am with an actual faerie," she told him. Jarrah glared, he stood a little straighter.

"I am not changing my looks," he all but snarled.

Running Away Gabriella Burk

Delia returned his glare with a frightening one of her own. "You will hide your ears and your teeth now or else I will ensure that you look like nothing more than a flower. Now change," she ordered, forcing the power of a queen's command to slip into her voice, forcing Jarrah to have no choice other than to make himself look human. Delia watched as his ears rounded out and his canines shortened. "I'll have you know by having you come with me to my home everyone in town will talk, you know."

Jarrah raised an eyebrow at the snooty tone in his Princesses voice. "And that bothers you why?" He questioned and Delia rolled her eyes.

"It bothers me because I am attempting to seem like a normal maiden. I'm already dealing with the town trying to figure out why I won't take Griffin Pritchard's hand in marriage—" Delia stopped herself and gave her former guard a sly look. "How long are you going to be pestering me, Jarrah?" She asked, pressing a hand to the male's chest.

"Queen Marianna ordered me to stay for however long it takes to convince you to come home," he told her stiffly,

pushing her hand off of his chest.

"Well, I guess that means you shall be with me for all of eternity," she said with a sad, dramatic sigh. "I guess this must only mean one thing," she stated as the two walked back to her small cottage at the edge of town. Many people had wondered about Delia. How did a young, poor, laundress afford her own cottage? She didn't make much coin, had no husband who helped provide for her and from what it seemed like, she lived alone. Delia didn't know this, of course, but she was the talk of the village. Everyone wanted to know more about the mysterious laundress who told stories of faeries stealing children away.

"What are you talking about, Delianna?" Jarrah demanded, giving his princess a suspicious look.

"If you're going to insist on following me everywhere I go, then you must either make yourself invisible so no one suspects, or you must act like my suitor so that no one in this village gets suspicious of you. Understand?" She stated, giving her guard a small smile.

"Absolutely not!" Jarrah spluttered as he stared at the female. "I will do no such thing, it's improper."

"If you don't, I'm turning you into a leaf," she threatened. Jarrah glared.

"No."

"I'll scream for help right this minute and have the town think you're trying to kill me. I can only imagine that dear Mr. Pritchard would come right to my rescue if it meant saving me from such a fearsome, handsome man such as yourself."

"Delianna, it is my sworn duty to protect you not—"

"You will be protecting me, if you do this, it will keep people from asking questions of any kind." She gave him an innocent smile. "Don't you want to protect me while I'm in this vile human village, Jarrah?"

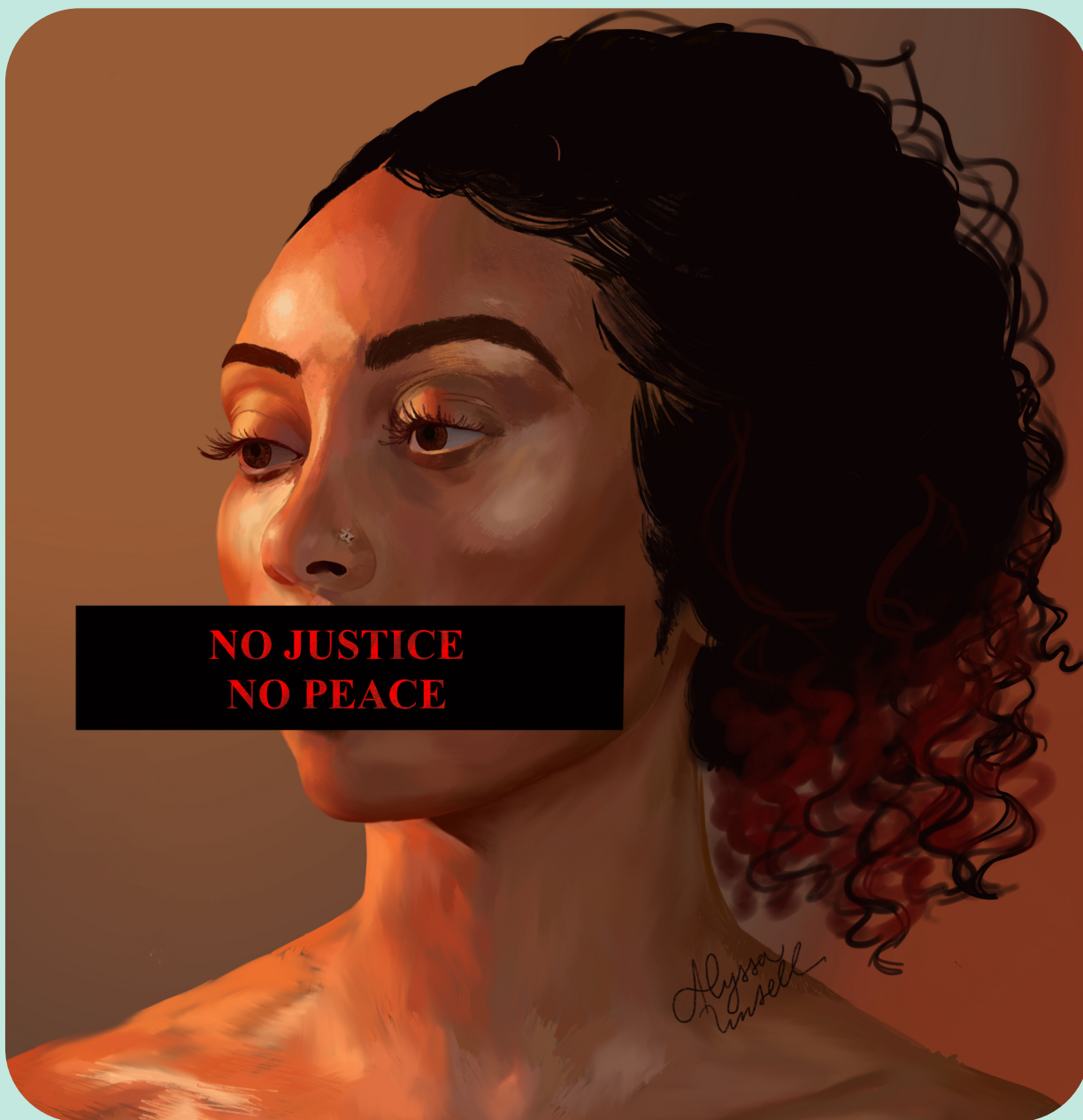
Jarrah's nose crinkled as his eyes landed on Delia's small cottage. "If I am to be courting you, you are going to need better living arrangements."

Delia clasped her hands together and let out an excited squeal. Now, Griffin Pritchard would leave her alone. Hopefully. And hopefully, Jarrah would see that Delia was much happier here than she ever was in the Underground.

Lena Blanton
Hopeful



Alyssa Unsell
BLM 2020



Skeptical Optimism (Villanelle)

I don't know what to do
about the world being so unsteady.
So I'll keep going until I do.

We all watched the chaos brew.
And now the future isn't so steady.
I don't know what to do.

Everyone around me is starting lives anew.
With dream jobs, houses, and families already.
So I'll keep going until I do.

But looking ahead just makes me blue.
I'm so nervous and unready
I don't know what to do.

Even with all I've been through
I'm not sure I'll ever feel ready.
So I'll keep going until I do.

No matter what, I will stay true,
even though I remain unsteady.
I don't know what to do.
So I'll keep going until I do.

Shawn McDaniel II

Stellar Exodus

Shawn McDaniel II

"Grandpa tell us a story!" Lexi asked, bouncing up and down.

"Yeah, a story." her brother Jae echoed.

Hal chuckled. "Alright. One story, but then bedtime. Deal?" They both nodded.

Hal sat in his recliner and beckoned the kids over. He stifled a groan as Jae jumped in his lap a little too enthusiastically and came down on his right hip a little too hard. Damn thing had been sore since he took some shrapnel during the Europa Conflict.

Biting through the pain, Hal embraced both grandchildren and thought about what story to tell them before grinning as one came to mind.

"How about I tell you about the birth of our planet?"

Their faces lit up with excitement. Both nodded with

such enthusiasm that he thought they were going to rock themselves off the chair.

Hal smiled.

"Once, there was a planet called Earth. It was the birthplace of us humans. We lived there for millions of years. It's where I was born."

He took a moment and enjoyed the look of wonder on their faces.

"I wasn't there for long. You see, Earth was dying. Countless wars, both global and civil, along with endless pollution had caused permanent damage."

"Why didn't they stop? Pollution is bad. We learned all about it in science class!" Lexi interrupted.

"Few back then actually listened to the warnings. The ones in charge didn't care that the Earth was dying, so long as they were rich. And most people went along with it because to do something would mean changing their

lives in some way and they didn't want to do that,"

"Those people are stupid," Jae said matter-of-factly.

"You aren't supposed to use that word. But yes, they were. Eventually, the earth reached a point where it was beyond saving. So, the leaders of Earth's surviving countries banded together and created the Bifrost engines and those engines were able to take us to new planets."

He enjoyed their wonder again before hitting them with the bad news.

"Problem was some people didn't like that idea. They thought that their way of thinking was the only one that should be allowed. So, they set up a home on Earth's neighboring planet, Mars, and wouldn't let anyone they didn't like land their spaceships on it."

"Meanies" Jae said.

Hal chuckled. "Yeah, they were. But you know what the best thing about space is?"

Jae shook his head, but Lexi responded. "All the pretty stars?"

Hal smiled. "That is one of

the best things. But what I was talking about was the vastness of it. Since they didn't want us on their new planet, we went somewhere else. Here on Callisto."

"So are there still bad guys on Mars?" Jae asked fearfully.

"No. There's no more bad guys on Mars. See, when we picked Callisto, we were thinking about the future, unlike them. We knew Callisto would work as a base world. But not just that, we knew we needed water. And Europa is right next door. A whole planetoid full of water. So, we set up settlement cities. Like Ginsburg City." Hal said, motioning out the window.

"They, however, wanted things to go back to their version of normal as soon as they could. So, they picked Mars because it was close to Earth and they could rebuild instantly. And to their credit, there were plenty of things going for Mars. It even had water at the poles. At least for a bit."

"What happened?" Jae asked.

"They lived together for about ten years before new prejudices arose.

People like this, they'll fight their own family for disagreeing with them. They had a civil war again. And the winners left Mars. They came after us here on Callisto."

At this, Jae hugged himself closer to Hal. Lexi's eyes were wide and full of fear.

Hal chuckled again. "Relax. We fought them off. See, they thought that just because we valued peace and tolerance, it meant that we would be weak. They thought that they could fly over here, blow up a few settlements and that we would surrender. We didn't. We fought them back and after three years, we won. The ones that were left had no choice but to head back to Mars."

"But by that point, the people who had stayed on Mars had grown stronger. And smarter. They locked up the survivors and made a deal with us. They would leave us alone, so long as they could have some of the water from Europa. We agreed.

And now they send ships every now and then to get water."

"Wow. Did you fight the bad guys grandpa?"

"Yeah, I did. And I got hurt. I thought I was going to lose my leg."

Hal patted his right leg for emphasis.

"But that was actually the best thing to happen to me."

Both kids looked at him, shocked. "Why?" Lexi asked.

"Because your grandma was the nurse that patched me up. And after the war, we started dating and..."

"EW." both kids said at once as they jumped out of his lap and ran towards their bedrooms.

Hal chuckled one more time and shook his head before getting up and heading to bed.

Skye Hazel

54 Teeth are Better than 1



Give Me a Smile

Ariana Dowdican

"Hey, babe. Can you give me a smile?"

She turns to me, smiling warmly, albeit a little confused. I love her smile, so much. I love everything about when she smiles, from the crinkling around her eyes, whether she closes them or keeps them open through small slits, and the little crookedness of her teeth and rough edges. She's always so insecure about her teeth and sometimes smiles close-lipped, which is another reason I love her smile. She feels so calm with me that she can show me her biggest insecurity, without hesitation, and know that I will still find her absolutely beautiful.

After letting me soak in the sunshine that she's blessed me with for a couple of moments, she questions me, "Not that I don't love smiling for you, I just want to know, why?"

"No reason, I just wanted to see you smile." I chuckle.

"Whatever, weirdo." She laughs back.

I close the door a little too harsh and wince. Today has been a pretty rough day. I tried to cool down on the walk home, not wanting to worry her, but I guess I didn't cool down enough. From her spot on the couch, she turns around. She looks as if she was going to welcome me home, but the words die on her tongue as soon as her eyes settle on my downtrodden expression.

I raise my hand to keep her from standing up from the couch, silently setting down my belongings and making my way to her. The moment my body touches the couch, her hands are immediately in my hair, raking my

bangs backward and massaging my scalp with her nails. No words are spoken, and I'm grateful for that.

Sighing, I look up from my lap after an immeasurable amount of time. We could have been there for five seconds or five minutes, I wouldn't know. But finally, I raise my gaze towards her face. "Can you smile for me?"

Again, confusion sinks into those beautiful brown eyes of hers, but like always, she doesn't deny me my request. This smile, still as beautiful as before, somehow makes me more emotional and breaks the gates holding back my emotions. Maybe it's the concern laced in her features, along with her not even knowing why I feel this way, or the way she drops what she's doing to just sit with me and make me feel better, but I start to cry.

It's not like a dam breaking, just a couple tears escaping a few at a time, but the more drops that escape down my cheeks, the more fond her smile becomes.

I can feel her cheeks rise as she smiles under my hands, which are covering her eyes. She's been trying to get me to reveal where we are going but the more she guesses, and the more I shoot down, the more outlandish her guesses become. This, in turn, starts making both of us laugh, and hearing the other makes us start laughing even more.

She takes a deep breath, trying to settle just

enough to manage to get out a couple of words, but what comes out sounds more like stuttering than actual talking. "Is-is it," she pauses as a couple more giggles escape, "is it a strip club?" Her voice raises a bit like she's confident in this guess.

That sets us off once again, my hands nearly slipping from her face in my attempt not to keel over in laughter. She seemed way too excited, whether about the guess or my slip-up, I don't know, but I quickly corrected myself so she didn't get a hint of where we were headed.

"Oh, come on," she whines. Her impatience is starting to get the best of her, which can be entertaining on its own, but I know that I need to hurry to our destination before she just gives up and tears my hands away from her face.

Speeding along, I see the woods approaching faster, probably because now we're not stopping every few seconds to bust a gut laughing. I lead us towards the little bit of light visible from the outline of the trees—you probably wouldn't even see it unless you knew what to look for, and, luckily, I do.

We stop in the middle of the lights. "We're here!" She rips my hands from her face, though not as rough as I was imagining considering how much I was

Give Me a Smile Ariana Dowdican

testing her patience. The moment those dark chocolate eyes are released, she gasps.

I spent a couple of hours, with the help of a few friends, setting up this little patch in the woods. To our left, there's a little pond, shining in the reflection of all the Christmas lights we strung up. Everything glows with a magical vibe. There's a small space a couple of feet in front of us that's just blankets and pillows and orbs a little smaller than volleyballs that light up near the blanket area, perfect for reading a light novel.

Slowly, she turns to me, eyes wide and hands covering her mouth. I smile because this is just a precursor to the next surprise I have planned for her.

I pull her hands down from her face, smiling at her shock-filled face. I intertwine our fingers and speak to her in a low tone. "I know this already seems like a big enough surprise to you, but I have one more thing. First, can I see that beautiful smile of yours?"

She lets out a small gasp, obviously even more shocked by the news of more to come, but the ends of her lips lift up, her whole face abandoning her previously surprised expression. "That's more like it." She laughs slightly, copying my tone.

I take in one deep breath, closing my eyes, psyching myself up.

"Okay," I say to myself, "you can do this." Steadily, I lower myself, getting about face-level with her stomach. The big tell is how I stay up on only one knee. Tears prickle in the corners of my eyes already and I haven't even said anything yet.

"Brielle Ann Strat," I start, working the both of us up to tears, reaching into my jacket pocket for the box I've been hiding for a couple of months, "I've already said this more than a million times and it never seems to be enough for me—I love you, I love expressing my love to you. Nothing I've done has ever gotten close to telling you, for real, just how much I love you. But I think I've finally found the perfect way. I've been planning this night for longer than I care to admit. But I do want you to know that I've loved you for far longer than the first time I've said it. Every day you make me love you more and more, making me struggle to catch up to express all the love I have for you—what I'm about to say is the closest thing. I love you more than you can ever know and I plan to show you this every day for the rest of our lives, which brings me to this—Brielle Ann Strat, I love you more than words can imagine. Will you do me the honor of marrying me and allowing me to show you just how much I truly love you for the rest of our days?"

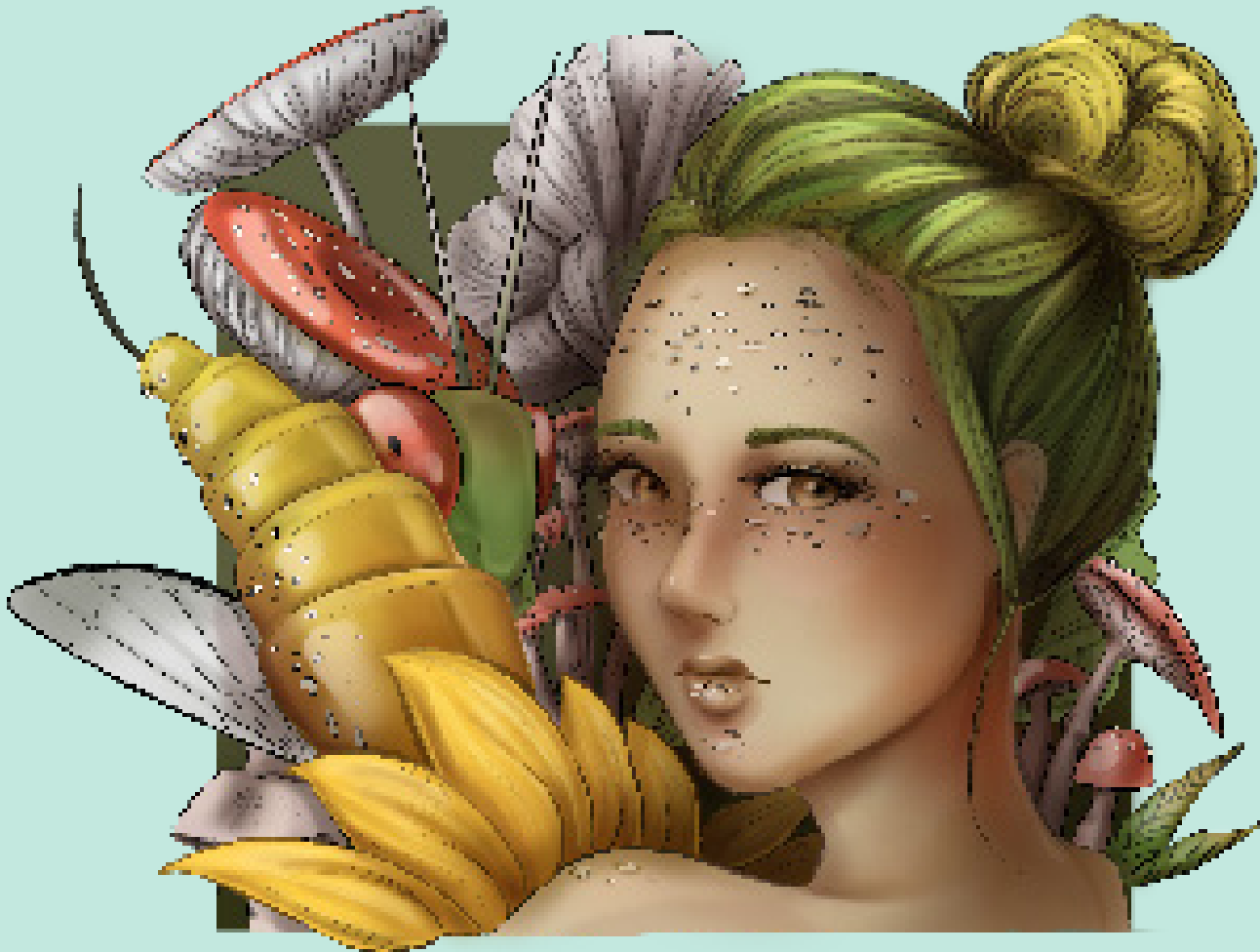
Opening up the little black box that seemingly appears in my hand

seems to have broken the dam of her tear ducts as she immediately starts bawling, making her beautiful dark brown eyes become shiny and increasingly more adoring. Her gorgeous bright smile makes a return and makes its home upon her lips. Speechless, she only nods, starting out slowly, but gradually picking up speed. I jump to my feet and wrap her in a hug, holding her head into the junction where my neck and shoulder meets and letting her catch her breath. "I love you, too," she whispers. She pulls back only for a moment to let me place the ring on her finger. As soon as it takes its rightful place, she sticks back to me like glue.

We could be here for five minutes, or five hours, all I know is that here she is, in my arms, with a ring on her finger and warmth in the both of our hearts, and we know that we are the happiest we have ever been and are ready to be the happiest we'll ever be. No matter what comes by, we'll know that we will be by each other's sides and take on the world together.

Just before the final "I do's," I look the love of my life in her eyes and whisper to her "Give me a smile?" And, as per usual, she smiles without hesitation, showing every bit of that happiness that I love. Finally, after what seemed like years, the priest says we can kiss, and we both seize forward for our first kiss as a married couple. It's different from any other kiss we've shared—the most mesmerizing.

Lacey Dutton
Lavished Saprophyte



God Complex

Megan Hay

"Icarus," your father says and your name holds a strange sort of heaviness as it travels across the air to where you sit, playing idly with a knife as you most certainly avoid work that is just a little too mundane.

"What?" you ask, shifting in the chair that creaks with the action. It takes a moment for you to focus enough to answer. You're just so Gods damn bored.

"You need to be more careful," he says, his tone still the same and it takes only a fraction for you to know what he means, to understand. He knows he knows he knows he knows-

"I'm always careful Father," you say easily, the words coming natural, calm, as if your heart isn't racing and your head isn't spinning. He doesn't know. The denial comes to you instantly. You've been too careful. He can't know. It's fine. It's still a secret. It's fine. Why wouldn't it be? You've done everything you can. He doesn't know.

But the thing is, you've never been the best of liars, especially to yourself. So you know. He knows. This secret, eighteen months in the making, is no longer a secret and if it gets out, you will either be ruined or embraced because having a male lover is wrong, but being in a god's favor...your thoughts are all over the place. You don't know. It hurts to breathe. Why does it hurt to breathe?

"Of course," is all he says, before turning back to his project. His words are impossibly loud.

There is nothing more said but that silence...that silence says a lot. It is also unbelievably suffocating, makes you want to claw at your chest because there's something against, something that is pressing down, pressing down further and further -

You take a deep breath.

Then another.

The worry, the disbelief, the fear, it all begins to slowly diminish.

You just have to remember that you're Apollo's. You're untouchable.

"You're beautiful," you breathe, unable to get enough. You will never be able to get enough of his body, which is more beautiful than any of Phidias' sculptures. When you worship, it's never in a temple but here, in bed with him.

He laughs, a sound that rumbles deep in his chest. "I know," he agrees, shifting slightly. Glancing up, you study his eyes, memoized by the gold flecks that were notable in a sea of blue. He makes your head spin.

"Like what you see?" he teases, and heat floods your cheeks. He laughs again, that sound that is so absolutely beautiful. He reaches down, running his knuckles along the side of your face.

"Of course I do," you murmur, unable to deny it. You don't want to. Let him know the power he wields over you.

Smiling, he shifts, wraps his arms around your waist and digs his fingers into your hips. It is an action full of tenderness yet you know that there will be bruises on your pale skin come morning. He forgets his own strength

and somehow, that's alright. Everything is alright when you're with him. "Let me," he purrs, digging his fingers even deeper into your tender skin. "Show you things you'll like much more than this face of mine."

"Alright," you breathe, breathless again for the second time in a day but not for the same reasons. Never for the same reasons. How bright he makes the world seem.

Months pass before you're reminded of the conversation, of the warning, between you and your father. You have lulled yourself into a belief. of security or your lover, to be exact, has done so. The divinity you can taste on his lips makes you lose all kinds of sense.

"Here," your father says as he comes in one afternoon. He's working on something for the King, something he shares very little about. You don't mind. His work holds very little interest to you. Though he holds hope that one day you will take over for him, you know that you will never. Crete will never offer you what you want. You are too great for this little city.

Glancing up, you find he's offering a leather bound book. You take it, brows furrowing as you flip through pages of words that hold no interest to you. You wonder carelessly through it, not entirely sure what you're looking for until you are.

Hubris.

It's underlined, empathising its perceived importance and the more you read, the more you want to laugh. He worries far too much.

Doesn't your father realize that when a god loves you, nothing matters anymore but that?

He is reading to you, but you can't focus on the words he speaks. His voice is musical, magical, more than you can

define. Sprawled across the bed, your dusty blond hair tangled beneath you, you watch him, fixated on his brilliance, his beauty, his long fingers. He is perfection, if that exists.

"You're not listening," he says, teasing, and his words snap you back to reality.

Laughing, you pull at the sheets, a pathetic attempt at modesty. "Your beauty amazes me," you admit, glancing at him through your lashes. You are rewarded with one of those smiles that he gives to no one but you and warmth spreads throughout your chest.

"I know," he agrees, coming to the bed to join you. He wraps himself around you, fingers touching, reaching, touching your skin as if he has never felt you before. He has, more times than you can count. "Let me try something."

"What?" you ask, breathless as his fingers ran across your ribs. You bit your lip, wondering if you remembered how to breathe or not. You're not sure.

"Let me read the poetry of your skin instead," he says, looking up, meeting your eyes and quickly consuming your world.

Gods always do what they want.

"What are these?" you ask, seeing something on the table when you come on. You don't often take note of what your father does for work, invents for fun, but it's not every day you see a pair of large wings such as these.

"Just a project," your father dismisses, but you don't pay much attention to what exactly he is saying. The way the feathers feel against your fingertips...what would it be like to reach the skies, touch the sun? What would it be like to see the heavens?

"I see," you murmured, fingernails scraping against dried wax. You do see, better than

ever before.

"It's too dangerous," he says, for at least the third time, but just as before, you shake your head, teeth clenched together. This isn't fair, what he's asking, and he knows it.

"You can't leave me here," you say, because you haven't been apart for twenty-four months, spending every day, every waking hour that you can possibly, with him. Besides, you don't need to be protected. You're not some damsel and you're not in distress.

He sighs, presses his forehead against yours. His eyes, impossibly beautiful, try to make you give in. "Despite everything, you're not one of us," he says softly. "And this is business among us Gods."

You take a deep breath, another. "I'll stay," you murmured finally.

You've gotten to be a better liar.

The wings are heavier than you thought they would be but you pay this to mind as your pull their harness over your shoulders. They will get you to your destination and that's all that matters. You will show them all that the sky is yours and Apollo is as well.

They will never underestimate you, or mortals, again.

You don't realize it, not at first, because the skies are endless and the feel of flying is more breathtaking than just about anything else, but the sun...sweat is gathering along the back of your neck, running down your spine. It's hot, far hotter than it was a few moments ago.

The thought crosses your mind but doesn't linger. You're too captivated with these feelings to

think about much else. Is this how a god feels? Perhaps. You've always been more than the life you were born in.

Something catches your eye, something gray falls towards the sea and it takes a moment for you to understand. By the time you do, it's too late. It's much too late because the sweat you felt was wax and more and more feathers are falling, disappearing into the depths of the water below you.-

"Apollo," you gasp, a prayer, a promise...an apology...because it's over. It's over-

"Bring him back," Apollo screams, slamming his hands against the ground. Over and over, he slams his hands, uncaring when the skin tears and blood runs freely. "Damn you Poseidon, bring him back!" He is shaking, collapsed to the sand, more man than god.

Poseidon laughs, looking down at him. He almost pities this fallen, pathetic excuse of what he used to be. "He could never understand that he was not on our level." He turns, walking towards the sea once more.

Apollo sinks completely to the ground. It is over, it is over and Icarus is gone, never to be seen again. He doesn't know how to go on from here.

Zora Weyrick
Dancing after Death



Live in the Moment

Gabriella Burk

Melanie heaved a breath and kicked her feet up on the dashboard, the sun beating down on her from the sunroof of her boyfriend's Rover as some indie song played quietly on the radio. It seemed fitting, almost, as her summer had been something straight out of a Lana Del Ray album. She let loose a soft sigh, her breath going into the glass bottle of Coca Cola that sat at her bright pink painted lips.

"Babe," her boyfriend, Seth, called from outside where he was pumping gasoline. Melanie hummed in response. "Can you get me a Twinkie from the snack bag?" he asked. Melanie rolled her eyes and got out of her comfortable position to twist around behind her seat to grab the snack bag. The couple had decided to do what they had been dreaming of doing for a while; they were going out on an adventure, just driving and driving until they called it quits and went back home. They had crossed state lines just an hour before and were far enough away that they could feel the stress start to leave their bodies, even if it was only temporary.

They would have to go home eventually; their parents had only given them a week and a half to get

the wanderlust out of their systems. But it was enough, and there had been debate between the couple about if they should even return at all. Maybe they wouldn't, maybe this would be their new life, just some hippies who wanted nothing more than to explore the broad canvas that was the United States and sleep under the stars. Sadly, that was just a dream. After their week of driving, Melanie was going to college in Colorado, and Seth, well, Seth was staying in Oklahoma.

"Here," Melanie said, sticking the packaged Twinkie out the window to her boyfriend, who wiped the sweat from his brow. "You know, I feel like this would be a good storyline for a movie," she said looking out the window. "You, me, the open road. If we were criminals, we could be just like Bonnie and Clyde."

Seth laughed and shook his head. "Don't they die at the end?"

Melanie crinkled her nose. "I mean, we could do it differently. I just like the idea; romance, running from the law and being madly in love," she said, her voice lilting slightly higher at the dream of being in love like that.

"What if they weren't in love at all?"

Live in the Moment Gabriella Burk

Seth asked her, finishing up with gassing the car up and hanging the nozzle back into the gas pump. Melanie didn't say anything to her boyfriend until he came back around and got in the driver's seat.

"What do you mean if they weren't in love? Everyone knows that Bonnie and Clyde loved one another." Melanie argued, her shoulders tensing up. Why would he even bring that up? Everyone knew that Bonnie and Clyde were crazy in love. Seth shrugged his shoulders. "They weren't buried together, and on top of that, Bonnie was married to another guy," he said. "I think she even had a tattoo of their names on her somewhere."

"It doesn't matter, they loved each other. And the only reason they aren't buried together is because Bonnie's mom hated Clyde and didn't want her daughter buried next to him," she said with a sniff and got her feet off of the dash as Seth started driving once again down that old dirt road. She wasn't entirely sure where they were, from what the signs said they were somewhere in New Mexico and so far, Melanie was not impressed. It was just as boring as Oklahoma; the only thing that had her slightly

astounded were the mountains that towered in the horizon, but for right now, things were still flat and barren, and those mountains were miles away. But then again, they had just gone through the Oklahoma Panhandle.

"Why do you know so much about this?" Seth asked, amusement lacing his every word. Melanie just shrugged her shoulders and stared out the window; she just wanted something, anything to happen to her so that she could at least have a story to tell her kids one day. But that was probably never going to happen. She turned around in her seat and grabbed an oatmeal cream pie from the bag of goodies and took a small nibble from it. The sun shone in the car, beating on her already sunburnt skin as she stared out the window, her sock covered feet tucked firmly beneath her.

"Do you ever wish for more?" she asked wistfully, watching the mountains start to creep closer to her.

"I mean, not really. I have everything I really need. I have my family, you, a pretty great opportunity waiting for me when I get back, what more could I ask for?" he asked, lacing their fingers together. Melanie refrained from pursing her lips.

Seth's "great" opportunity was that he was going to work on a weed farm. It

wasn't that great of an opportunity if you asked Melanie.

"I guess," she mumbled, biting her bottom lip back and chewing on it slightly. "Where are we going?" she asked, changing the subject, not really wanting to talk about their future any more than she had to. This trip was all about living in the moment.

"I was thinking we could go to Albuquerque and check out some of the stuff around there," he said, shrugging his shoulders. Melanie smiled and leaned back in her seat, staring through the sunroof at the clouds above. Albuquerque couldn't be too bad. There had to be something interesting there, something to explore or talk about to people when she came back from this trek.

"I think I can handle something like that. Although, I really want to see some mountains and potentially go hiking. And maybe find some kind of abandoned, spooky place that we could check out and see if it's haunted or something. That could be cool." The couple fell silent, just letting the music fill the car for a few hours, but every so often they would spark conversation.

Before Melanie knew it, Seth was pulling in front of a small motel and shutting off the car. "Wanna stay here for the night and tomorrow we can keep going?" he asked, looking around at the ramshackle building. "It's the only hotel for the next few

miles and I'm tired."

Melanie crinkled her nose at the place. "I can drive a little if you want me to," she offered softly, knowing full well that Seth wouldn't let her. This stupid Rover was like his baby, he didn't let anyone drive it, no matter what.

"No, no, we can stay here for the night, it's fine," Seth said, shutting off the car. Melanie bit her lip; the entire motel just looked a little shady, and while she wanted adventure and romance, she really didn't think that bed bugs were a part of that. The entire place was just gross, and Melanie already knew just looking at it that she was not going to be getting any sleep while they were here. Seth quickly went into the building to secure the couple a room, leaving Melanie standing in the middle of the empty parking lot. She let out a soft sigh and just tugged her long, green dyed hair into a bun at the top of her head before she started grabbing the things that they would need for the night. Maybe she would take a shower, depending on how disgusting the bathroom here was. She shouldered the duffle bag that held all of their belongings combined.

Seth stepped outside and smiled at his girlfriend before he pointed to one of the doors on the second floor of the motel. He quickly locked the Rover and headed upstairs, once again leaving Melanie alone in the parking lot. She shook her head

and just followed him up the stairs, trying her best to not be annoyed with her stupid boyfriend.

Sometimes, she didn't fully understand how she wound up with him, much less being friends with him in the first place. Seth and Melanie were just so different in so many ways. Yet, all of their combined friends thought that they were the perfect match so they figured they would give it a shot and date. To Melanie's surprise, the date hadn't been that bad. Seth had made her laugh, he listened to her ramble about her crazy interests and as time went by, the two fell together easily. Sometimes, Melanie wondered if Seth really was the one for her. It was one of the biggest reasons why she couldn't seem to push herself into sleeping with him.

He was expecting her to soon, which was understandable. They've been together for two years now and the most action Seth ever got was a heavy make out session. Melanie just didn't feel that zing that she thought she should feel with someone before she gave that part of herself over. She shook her head. She wasn't going to think about that, no, she was just going to try her best to be happy and live in the moment. With that, she headed up to the room and set the things down on the dingy bed as the shower turned on in the bathroom.

Melanie pushed a smile onto her face and carefully sat on the bed when Seth's phone started to buzz. Shrugging her shoulders, she just grabbed the phone. It was probably just Seth's mother checking in on them, as she had been blowing up Seth's phone the entire time they had been gone.

Sure enough, it was Seth's mother. Without another thought, she unlocked Seth's phone to text the woman back.

I miss you baby, the text read and a picture of a pair of boobs were underneath and well... they were not Seth's mother's, that was for damn sure.

Melanie's vision went red, her face burned with anger as she slammed the phone down on the table and marched into the bathroom without another thought.

"Seth McCoy!" she shouted, slamming the door wide open. "I miss you baby?" she snarled, pushing the shower curtain back to glare at her naked boyfriend.

"What the fuck Mel?" Seth shouted, trying to cover himself up.

"What the fuck?" Melanie shouted right back. "You're cheating on me?" Seth's face slackened for

Live in the Moment Gabriella Burk

a hint of a moment before it hardened completely and he glared at the green haired girl. "I mean if I'm not going to get shit from you, I'm going to have to get it from someone else or else I'll get fucking blue balls."

Melanie stared at her boyfriend in disbelief, her jaw slackened slightly. "So, you're saying that, since I'm not willing to put out, you're going to fuck other people? Do you think that is going to make me want to have sex with you? That's not how this works, Seth."

"You wouldn't have found out if you hadn't been snooping in my phone," he argued and shut the water off. Melanie glared at him.

"I'm ready to go home, now." she ground out slowly, trying her best to not just punch Seth in the jaw.

"We're leaving in the morning," he told her, giving her a look. "I'm tired."

"I don't care, I want to go home right fucking now."

"No," Seth said smugly. "We're leaving tomorrow unless you want to just walk home."

Melanie glared at him. "Just finish your goddamn shower," she hissed, shutting the shower curtain and headed

out of the bathroom. Melanie was fuming. Never in her life she had felt so betrayed. It was humiliating to say the least and now she was stuck here with Seth and had no way to go home without relying on that piece of shit. Before Melanie could give it another thought, she took the bags she had set on the bed, grabbed Seth's wallet from where it set it on the nightstand and that stupid phone, she pocketed them both before she looked around and smiled when she found them. Those stupid keys for that stupid Rover that he loved more than he ever loved her. With her arms full of their things, she marched out of the motel room and down to the pristine black 2017 Land Range Rover.

Melanie smirked as she loaded it back up and got in the front seat. She ran her hands over the fine leather steering wheel, pushed the key into the ignition and before she could change her mind, sped off, throwing Seth's phone out the window once she hit the highway and relishing in the way that it shattered against the pavement.

For the first time on this trip,

Melanie was finally just going to live in the moment.



Alyssa Unsell

Love is Love

Agnostic Introspection

it's not as though I feel an absence
of God.
everyday and every moment I feel a
presence,
one that pulsates through the air
and stretches through the trees
something that guides me silently.

there is no book
or teachings that have been able
to accurately describe this presence,
and while my belief hasn't been defined
i'd never go as far to say
that it doesn't exist.

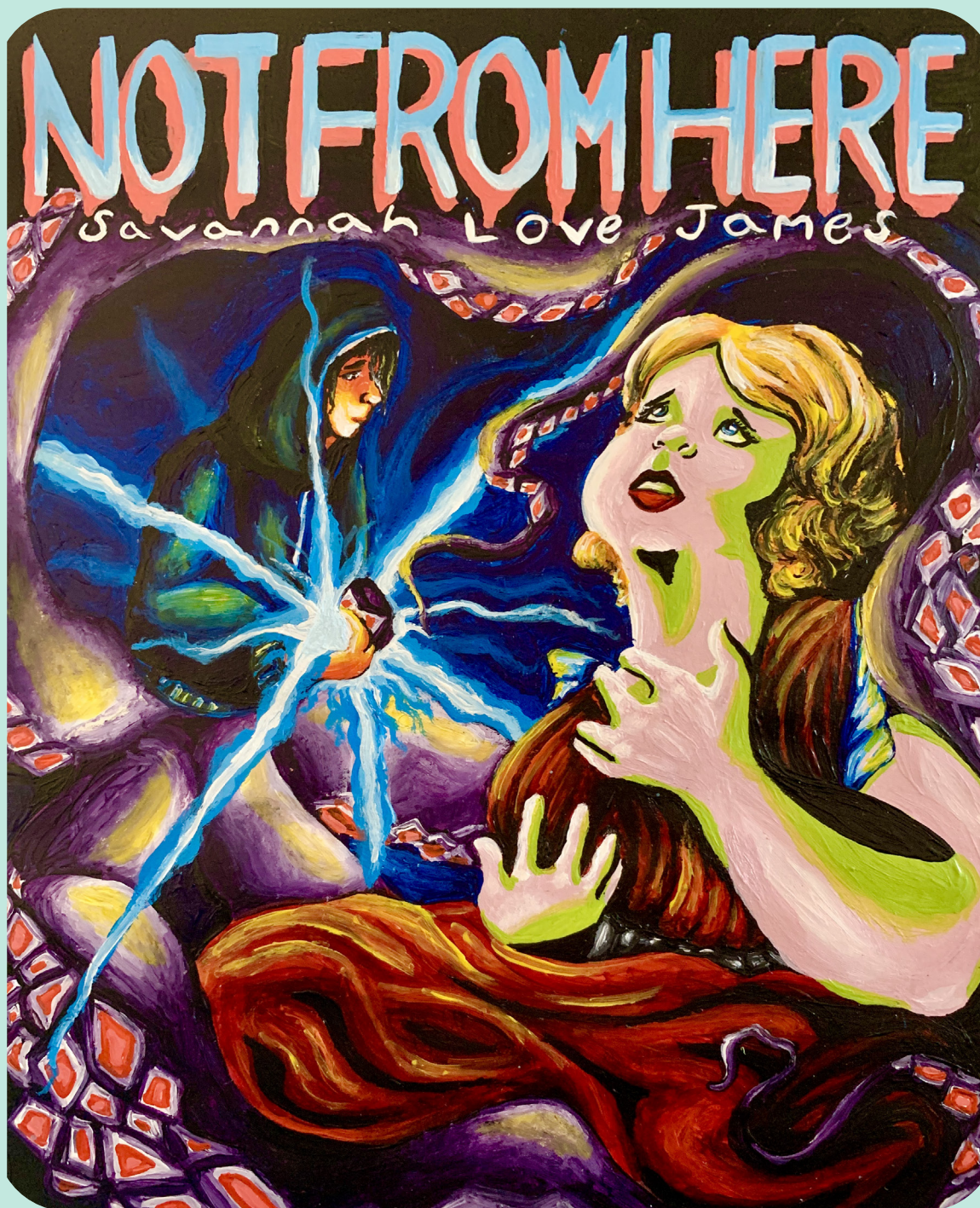
Adrienne Koscho



I am not a flower

Do not compare me to a flower
For I am not a flower
And do not compare me to a tool
For I am not my usefulness
I do not remind you of a spring morning
For I am not the morning
Angels are not singing when I walk in
For I am not heavenly
It was not love at first sight when you
saw me
For I am not my appearance
If you must compare me to something
Then you never knew me
If you must say I am something I am
not
Then you never loved me
For I am not anything else in this
world
For I am enough

Becky Blanton





Panel 1: "Solstead High"
Panel 3: "Detention"



Panel 2: "Why are they always after me? It's not like I did much this time."
Panel 4: "Guess that's what you get when you're a monster."





Panel 6: "A human!"
"How can you see all this?!"



Panel 4: "Hey..."
Panel 5: "It's okay"
Panel 6: "What are you?"
Panel 7: "There are some things humans don't want to know about."

Panel 8: "I have a mission I must complete. Try to keep safe, and don't stay after school so late next time."



Panel 1: "Stella?"

Panel 2: "Stella Nova, why are you still here? You can go home now."

Panel 5: "Yeah..."

"I think I need to go to bed..."



Menma

where did she come from?

the sunlight kissed her soft red cheeks
as she danced around the front yard
her snow white dress grazed the dirt
as it moved effortlessly about her frail body

why is she back?

she looks just as i had always remembered her
yet somehow older, perhaps as old as me
as if her spirit continued to grow and mature
though she was but a girl when she left us

Melina Smith

Chad Eggar
Hey!

USAO Staff and Faculty



Dudelsack

Fat little body tight with heat, round and swollen as a goose tucked beneath my arm, dressed in your black velvet gown, highland green fringe at your knees, your three tail feathers rest against my shoulder. They lay straight, proud, dragging our train of harmony through the air behind us. Your bill dangles below, and my fingers dance along your neck. From the parade crowds that line the street, my cuckhold, a man quiet enough for my nerves, cheers in mime, support drowned out by our love making. Wed through the lungs, our union more intimate than any church could boast to bless. With no voice of your own, you demand an attentive touch, humiliating me if my focus drifts to anything but you. In return, you clean out my soul, run a wind tunnel through my pipes to tear away thorns and infection, stilling my mind to metered silence. Nothing can be created nor destroyed, only changed in form -- even you can't wholly uproot wrongs -- and yet still, my beloved little animal, you breathe my screams into song.

Coleman

Kristi Hendricks
Turkey Vulture, Tillman County, OK



Chad Eggar

Spider Web



Glad of War in Spring

Coleman

A cock perched between the eyes of
an eagle
crows as the Sky Traveler buries his
speech

between Freya's thighs. He grips her
hips.
She grips his wrists as forked red hair

moves like wildfire, devouring that
amber
patch of Folkvang between a pair of
pale cliffs.

Behind her, hair spreads across the
bed
in tangled honey veins of sap that rise

with the spring up through the long
trunk
of Yggdrasil. In its wood hides the
shape

of First Man, back strong and arms
lifted
in branches that reach for the sun's
blazing

wheel while sweat-stained leaves
tremble
in the winds of heavy breathing.

Woodland sunflowers bud and bloom
at the base in a merry frenzy of dew
damp

yellowes while beneath them Earth wraps
around the World Tree's thighs as it
plunges

three roots deep into Creation, Wisdom
and Hel. Grey-hooded Norns dance

with albescent arms bare as they shuttle
the diaphanous weft of each man's wyrd

ever forward, ever deeper, unstopping
into that still masked darkness beyond

all objection, fear, and bargain, ruthlessly
following the weighted warp of what
may yet be.

Kristi Hendricks
Black Mesa, OK



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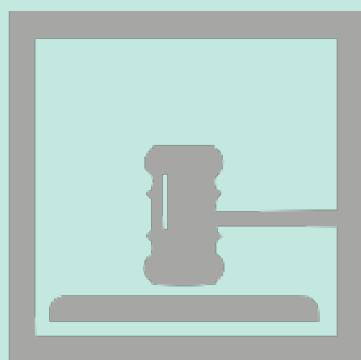
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THE ACCENT



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