

PARALLAX

2026



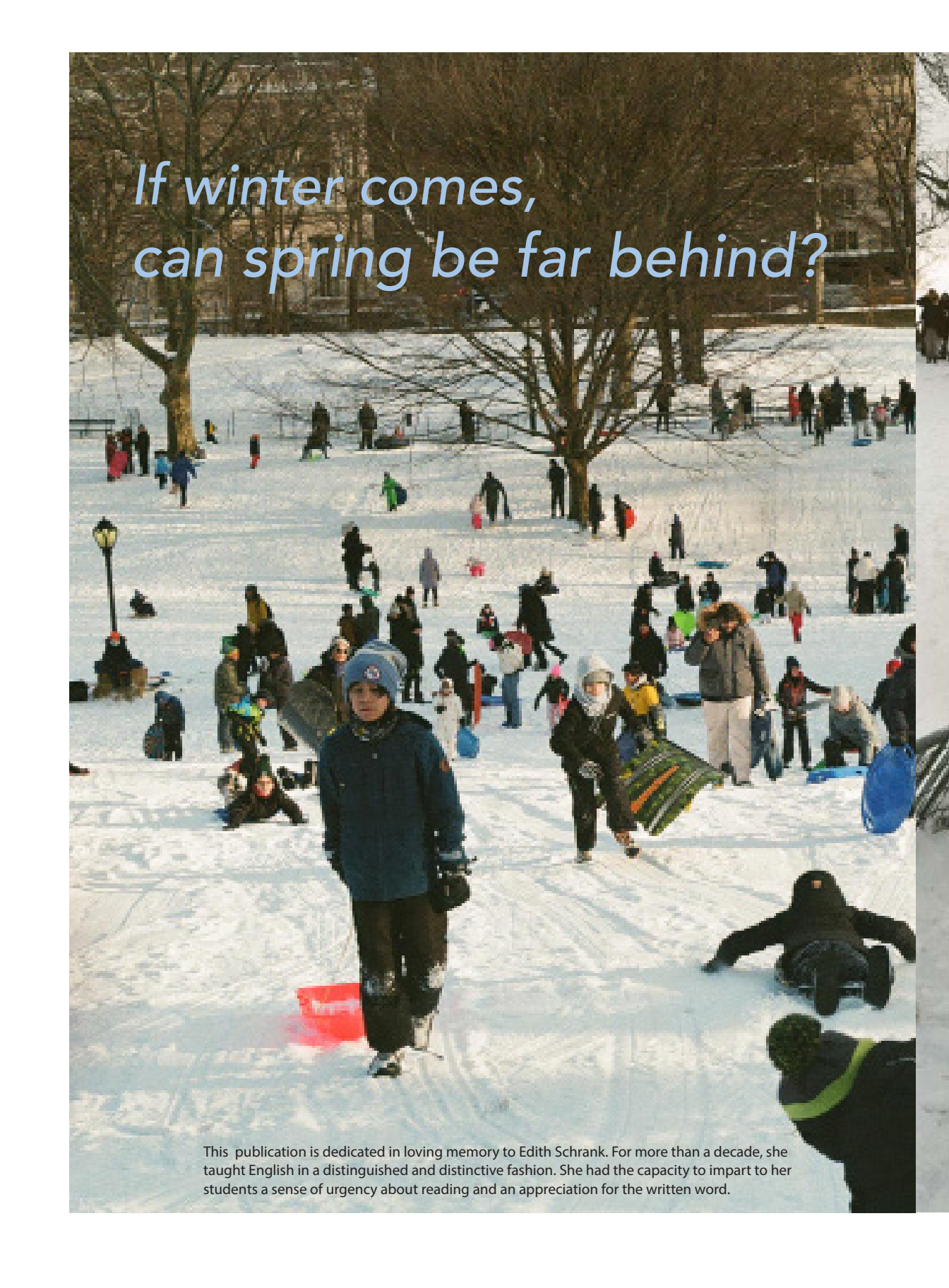
vol 29





PARALLAX

The Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Upper School of Ramaz
Parallax Literary & Art Magazine 2026 Vol 29
60 East 78th Street New York New York 10075



*If winter comes,
can spring be far behind?*

This publication is dedicated in loving memory to Edith Schrank. For more than a decade, she taught English in a distinguished and distinctive fashion. She had the capacity to impart to her students a sense of urgency about reading and an appreciation for the written word.



First the snow falls—pristine, beautiful piles of it, and we are happy. Then it snows again. It snows. It snows. It snows. A winter of unbelievable proportions leaves us yearning for the west wind that carries softer seasons with it. Our desires are echoed by the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in “Ode to the West Wind:” “If winter comes, can spring be far behind?” In this issue, we sink into the melancholy of “A Deep Autumnal Tone,” only to find ourselves in the harsh realities of lying in a “Dark Wintry Bed,” until spring comes, and we finally emerge to “Waken from Summer Dreams,” beholding in wonder the seasons in transition.



Editors

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Literary & Design

Haim Heilborn Nigri
Delilah Weiss

Junior Editors

Nathan Attias
Abigail Maksin

Design Editors

Eleanor Goldfarb
Ava Hutman

Faculty Advisors

Literary - Dr. Edith Lazaros Honig
Design - Ms. Barbara Abramson
Photography - Ms. Sari Goodfriend

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A Deep Autumnal





Tone

Looking for Virtue

Nathan Attias

The battle raging on down low;
Whatever progress feels so slow.

I'm that man in the street
Dragging his feet,
Always wondering what to choose.

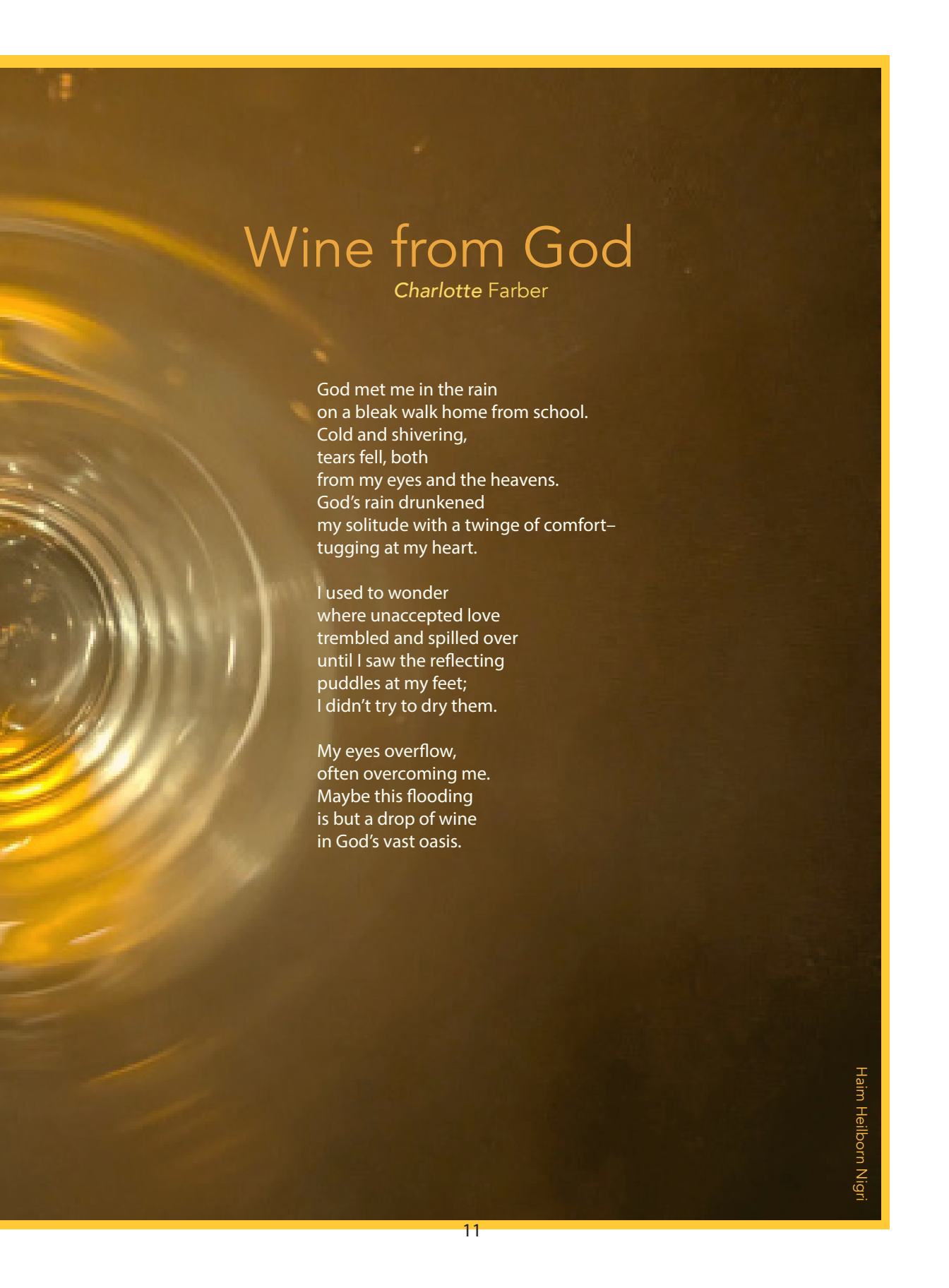
Should I let that addiction fight
Or take myself home and have a life?
And only a fool would say that.

Frustration taking over me,
Suffocating, I can't breathe.
Every day some new excuse—
Should I just give up and humor you?

You tell yourself you can feel no pain,
And you're stronger than you realize,
And I can't satisfy your appetite.
And only a fool would say that.

You walk up to me with murder in your eyes—
How will you tempt me tonight?
What part of me will you take in your grasp?
Whatever it is I won't hear it.

Oh, haven't you heard the bad news?
I'm breaking free of you today,
And I'm abandoning you today.
And only a fool would say that.



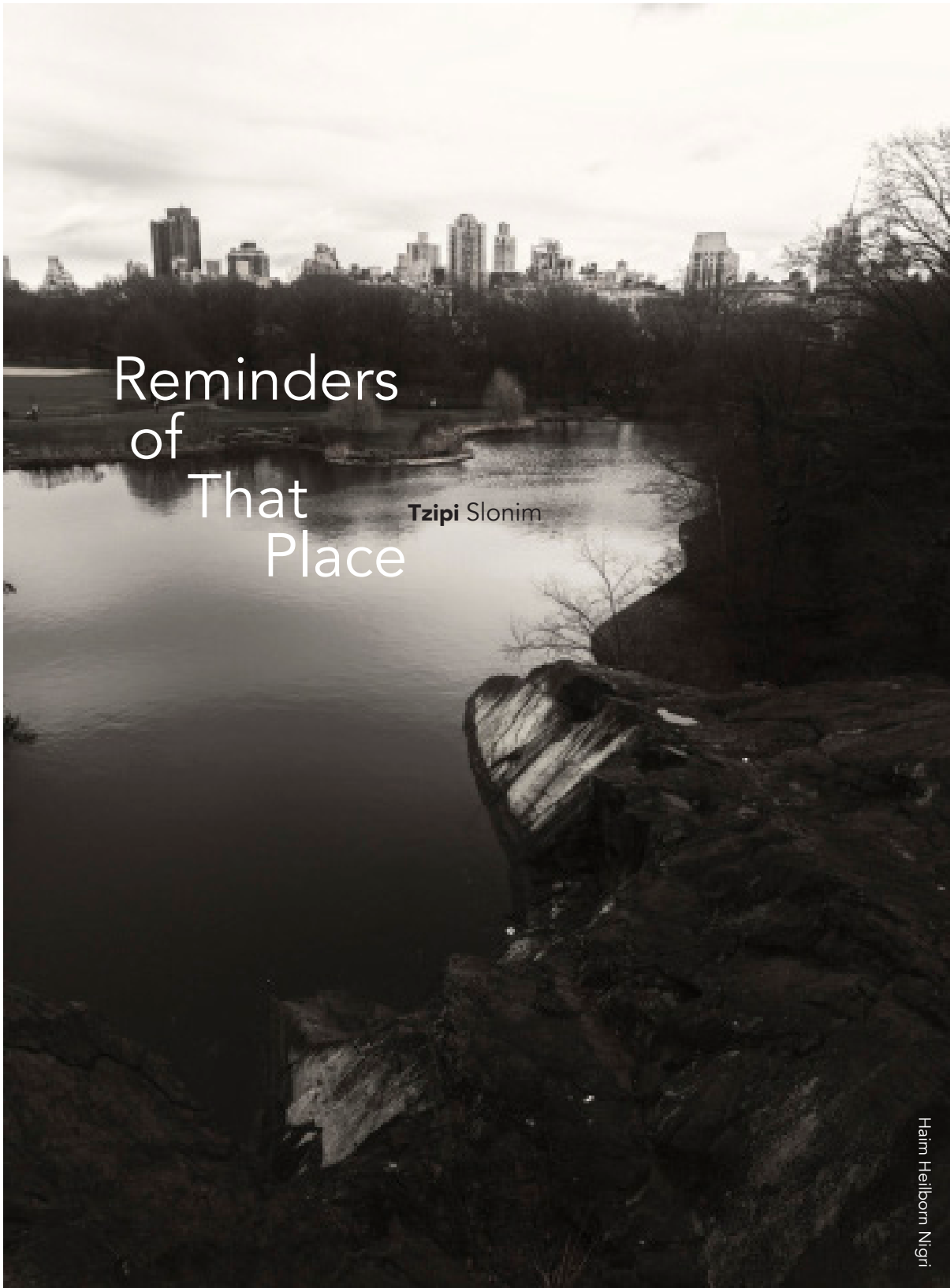
Wine from God

Charlotte Farber

God met me in the rain
on a bleak walk home from school.
Cold and shivering,
tears fell, both
from my eyes and the heavens.
God's rain drunkened
my solitude with a twinge of comfort—
tugging at my heart.

I used to wonder
where unaccepted love
trembled and spilled over
until I saw the reflecting
puddles at my feet;
I didn't try to dry them.

My eyes overflow,
often overcoming me.
Maybe this flooding
is but a drop of wine
in God's vast oasis.



Reminders of That Place

Tzipi Slonim

Haim Heilborn Nigri

Do you also think about that place
When that one song
Starts to play,
And everyone else
Has no idea,
But you know?

Does it also make your heart ache
Just like mine
To dodge the rain
Alone,
Trying to not recall when you danced
And allowed the water to soak all
Your clothes?

Does the smell
Of smoke and wood and mold
Bring you back to those days and nights spent
Inside, talking, laughing, when secrets were told?

Do you also think about
How much better it would be
When we dance and scream
Here,
Imagining what it would feel like to be
There?

Does that one word
Or phrase
Spark a memory for you, as well,
Almost making you laugh or cry,
But you pause,
For you realize
No one understands?

When you look at me,
Hear my name,
Do you also
Think about that place?

Autumn

Eleanor Goldfarb

For some reason, autumn always brings about my downfall. When the air grows dry and the days lose length, just as the sun seems to disappear, so too does my sense of self begin to diminish. As the leaves transform to brilliant red and orange, my cheeks fade in the harsh cold. It's as if the leaves have absorbed all my color, leaving me ghastly pale.

After the chagim, it is no longer fun and games, and the workload piles on. Yet time seems to shorten as the work builds up, forming a stack that is nearly impossible to tackle. Each morning I arise in darkness and go home in the dark. I am a vampire, not by choice.

I always envied the trees. They were so filled with beauty, while I seemed to lose all happiness. They stole the spotlight; everyone looked at them with such adoration. No one understood why, but I blamed them for my suffering. I believe it was jealousy that twisted. They stood firmly rooted in place while the winds of the season scattered me. I was already stretched thin, and one gust of wind shattered me. As the leaves fell from the trees, they seemed to fall on top of me, suffocating me. As I walked, I would crunch on dry leaves in rebellion, feeling a small sense of satisfaction each time.

But then, as winter began to come, my perception of the trees began to change. I started to see how the branches became bare, and the trees shook and shivered in the wind. They seemed to shrink away, just as I had in the fall. Their beauty was not effortless; they were losing everything that gave them glory. I felt terrible as I continued to watch them throughout the winter. I was surprised that as winter went on, they did not give up but stayed strong until spring. They persisted despite being encrusted by frost like candied fruit. They trusted that spring would come.

So I looked and saw that the trees and I were not so different, and I had mistaken them for my enemy.

Summer to Autumn

Caroline Ash

As the leaves change and the mornings grow darker, something inside me darkens too. My love for the heat and the warmth of sunlight on my face slowly fades. The air grows colder, and I find myself wishing for warmth even in my dreams.

The laughter that once filled my mind begins to fade. Something that was once so bright slowly turned dull. And once that cold feeling settled inside me, I began peeling away memories like the skin of a ripened banana.

But still, I kept waiting.

The day I wake up and see light in the morning, I will be happy.

The day I see flowers blossom again and memories spiral back into color, I will be happy.

The day I walk outside and take off a layer, I will be happy.

The day I feel warmth on my skin and my smile slowly returns, I will be happy.

Because somewhere beneath the cold and the darkness, I know the warmth is still waiting to come back.

Eleanor Goldfarb



I Saw Your Colorful Eyes

Abigail Maksin

I saw your colorful eyes,
You saw mine.

A stranger.

You don't know me?
At least that's all your expression implies.
But I hope that you will see a rainbow,
And it will remind you of me—
A storm of memories,
Rushing back.

A storm of memories,
Red to purple,
Start to end.

And still I remember you.
Every color you hide,
Except you showed them all to me.

Come Back from Mars

Abigail Maksin

A Sonnet

Here I stay still loving you after so long—
I don't understand why I can't let go.
And I stay wondering where we went wrong.
My lips tremble before I say "Hello."

When I see you now, I see a stranger,
Someone whose eyes I used to read, drawn blank.
When you pass, my heart still feels in danger,
Races and pulls me to you with a yank!

So I lie here, looking up at the stars;
I wait and long for you—come back from Mars.

Pumpkin Puree

Abigail Maksin

My legs hurt from the endless walking, aisle to aisle. My hands hurt from grabbing any can I could, my hope shrinking by the count of them. "Huh, what a funky inverse relationship, one between my hope and the cans," I thought to myself. My mind was tired. Tired from spending all day looking for what brought me the most joy—pumpkin puree. "Abby, this is ridiculous," Eliana finally said, Sabrina nodding in agreement. I dragged my poor best friends across what was now four stores in the hope that my pumpkin granola would come together. I spent that night staring blankly at the ceiling, unable to fall asleep while my mind couldn't go anywhere but to what could have been had I had my pumpkin puree.

It wasn't until that Friday that I came back from the United Nations after hearing Netanyahu speak, not realizing that that wasn't the star of my day, for the light still shone and the sun remained high. What really transformed my life is what happened afterwards. My friend Levi suggested going to Trader Joe's and I gladly accepted. I wasn't even aware of the possibilities that the future held for me at that moment. My first glimpse at the hope of a bright future was the pumpkin spice cookies under the pumpkin decorated shelves. "Okay, so we see a pumpkin theme," I thought. Next, the pumpkin spice vanilla candles caught my eye. "Do you think it could be?" I asked myself.

"Levi," I said dramatically, stopping our big shared cart filled with stacks of goodies we were planning on bringing home that evening, although of course it would have been foolish to check out the cart without one last item. "There is something I must do," I continued. And so we walked. We walked down aisle one, we walked down aisle two, we walked down aisle three and we didn't give up—no, not until I found my pumpkin puree.

"Abby, I think I found it," Levi called to me. He didn't know at the time how big a gesture that was to me. And so I bought two cans of pumpkin puree and a vanilla scented candle, and bonus, pumpkin spice seasoning. I left the store with a huge grin spreading between the ends of my ears. That day I made pumpkin granola, pumpkin chia pudding, and pumpkin cookies, all accompanied by the soft aroma of my pumpkin scented candle; it was, indeed, a night to remember.



Now/Then

Gabriel Flatto-Katz

I.

I told you that I was scared of time,
So you froze it. I told you that I was scared
Of things slipping out of my hands,
So you held your palms out and said
You would catch anything that fell.

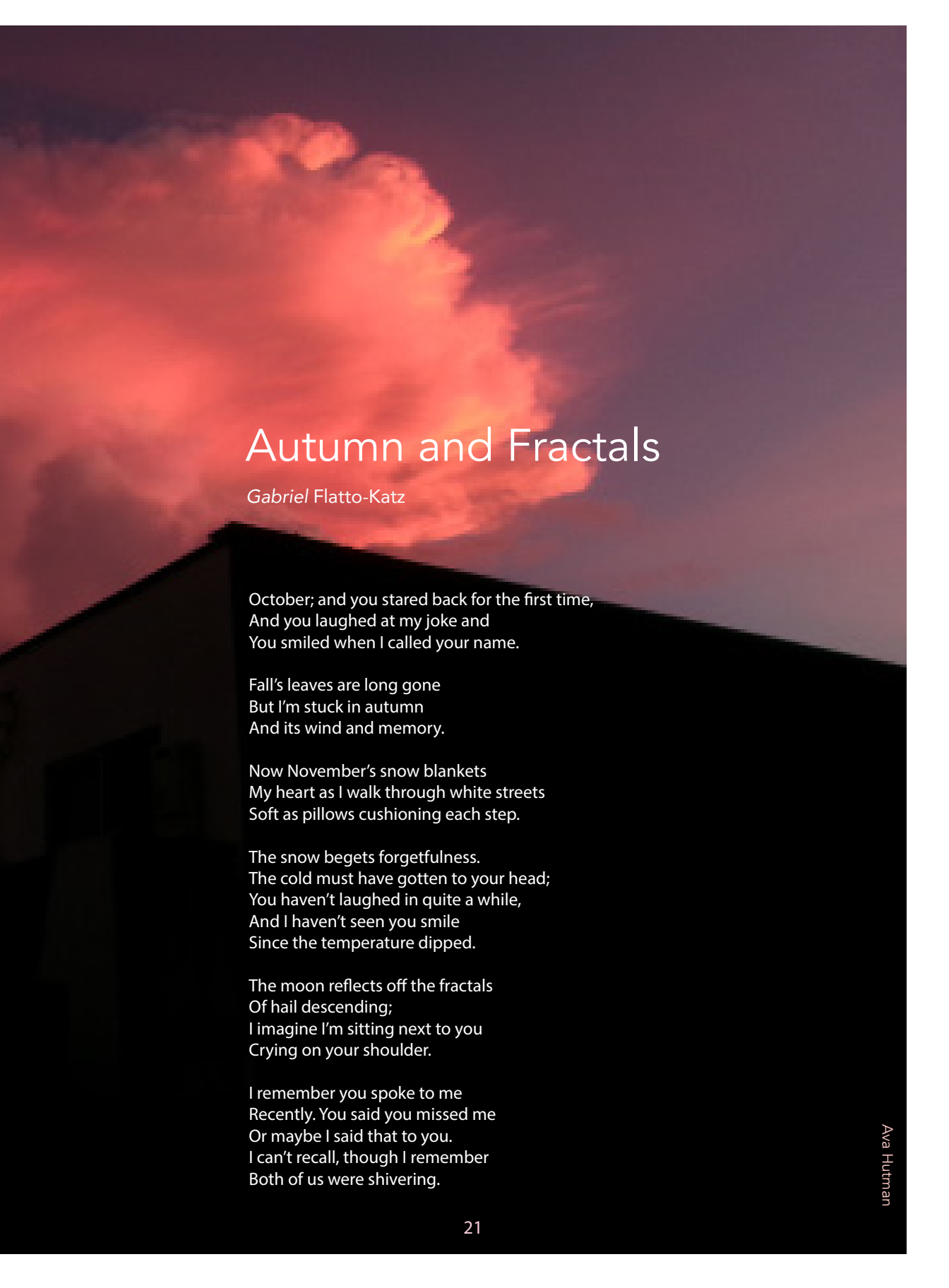
On the grass, the evening dew
Kissed our backs as we
Pointed out constellations,
And I cried when the sun rose
Because the stars were gone,
But you held me and showed me
That if I looked close enough,
A faded moon still hid in dawn's sky,
And you showed me your cupped hands and
Glistening, I saw
That you had caught the stars.

II.

I stared at my palms
And tried to find if yours
Had left an imprint
As the moon had
That morning.

That morning,
Somewhere between dusk and dawn,
I slipped out of your hands,
And you slipped out of mine.
And, surrounded by
Falling stars,

No one was there
To catch us.



Autumn and Fractals

Gabriel Flatto-Katz

October; and you stared back for the first time,
And you laughed at my joke and
You smiled when I called your name.

Fall's leaves are long gone
But I'm stuck in autumn
And its wind and memory.

Now November's snow blankets
My heart as I walk through white streets
Soft as pillows cushioning each step.

The snow begets forgetfulness.
The cold must have gotten to your head;
You haven't laughed in quite a while,
And I haven't seen you smile
Since the temperature dipped.

The moon reflects off the fractals
Of hail descending;
I imagine I'm sitting next to you
Crying on your shoulder.

I remember you spoke to me
Recently. You said you missed me
Or maybe I said that to you.
I can't recall, though I remember
Both of us were shivering.



Yonatan Alder

Home, You, Etc.

Gabriel Flatto-Katz

I.

I walk down the street,
Trying to match my pace to yours.
I ask you if you remember this street,
Remember how, in years gone by,
We would walk home from the library,
Every Tuesday, on this street.
I ask you if your weightless back
Still, somehow, feels like it's carrying
A backpack full of books.
You smile, silent.

I hear the concrete say,
"I remember that!"
I hear the concrete whisper,
"I still feel that weight!"

II.

I walk past the cafe, past the synagogue,
Past the restaurant where I had my birthday dinner,
Past the nursery, past the pizza shop.
It's 7:45 and I'm running now.

We don't walk to school together
Anymore. It stopped when you got to High School,
And by the time we were in the same building again,
Somewhere between you sleeping in and
Me preferring walking over the subway,
We never restarted.
But sometimes, like some sort of algebra problem
Comparing speeds, I leave and ten minutes later
You go to the subway,
And the subway's quick and I'm slow,
And I get to the bus stop and you're
There.

It used to be a yellow school bus,
And now it's a blue public one,
But for some reason, I still ask you
If you remember, hoping you'll understand.
You
Smile silently.

An abstract painting featuring a central tree with dark, elongated branches and reddish-brown foliage. The background is composed of large, textured blocks of color: a bright yellow-green on the left, a dark green on the right, and a warm orange-pink at the top. A small, pale, ethereal figure is visible in the upper center, appearing to emerge from or blend into the background. The overall style is expressive and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, layered color palette.

Perpetual Autumn

Haim Heilborn Nigri

Abby Kalantarov

Now's the time of year when long summer days turn to wispy fall dreams. To think that it could ever be any different—why, that would be impossible. To think that the leaves would not come back one day—that would be ridiculous. The autumn dream has lulled the landscape from that neon green of gentle grass to the murky orange of fallen leaves. Before long the misty winter will settle in and obscure all dead foliage in a cloud of snow. Yet, as misfortune would have it, it was a strange year. It began with the squirrels and the oaks. Usually those curious, flighty creatures could be seen stashing away their acorns. Instead, they took long naps and dozed off. The leaves were perpetually falling, yet they were perpetually growing back. A mix of green and orange confounded all beholders, even the humans. Actually, the humans were the most confounded of all the creatures, for they could not understand the pausing of the seasons. They measured with their instruments and interrogated the grasses and imprisoned the foliage in vials, but no evidence for the phenomenon could be found. The cycle of death and renewal seemed constant. Pandemonium was sure to set in.

At first the ordinary folk speculated: "You all really think it paused? Why, what on earth! It has only been a month! Anomalies don't make the future." They took it awfully well, and awfully better than the awfully difficult, curious people who argued: "Why! There are clear indications that the events that usually occur in the mid-fall are not occurring, and that those events occurring now are repeating!" Still, some people took it even worse; that is to say they didn't accept any compromise on opinion or policy: "Oh, my God! The world is ending! We must repent." The curious led the charge for the desperate, and the desperate in turn led the charge against the ordinary, and the ordinary in turn led the charge against the curious. All hell would break loose if something was not done soon.

The hell of arguing was, of course, not the worst part. Economic collapse was near, for the agricultural economy was doomed by the constant reaping of the harvest. World hunger would not be solved either—hoarding for the world's end was still the dominant coping strategy of the masses. As the months went by and the weather remained unchanged and the complexion of the leaves determined, the most fragile economies had already been taken out. Like dominoes, industries fell and jobs became scarce or nonexistent. Nature itself was disturbed, and clearly the laws of nature themselves were collapsing. Proven theorems became wrong and conjectures became right. No longer was the conundrum just about fall—the cycle of nature had been disrupted entirely.

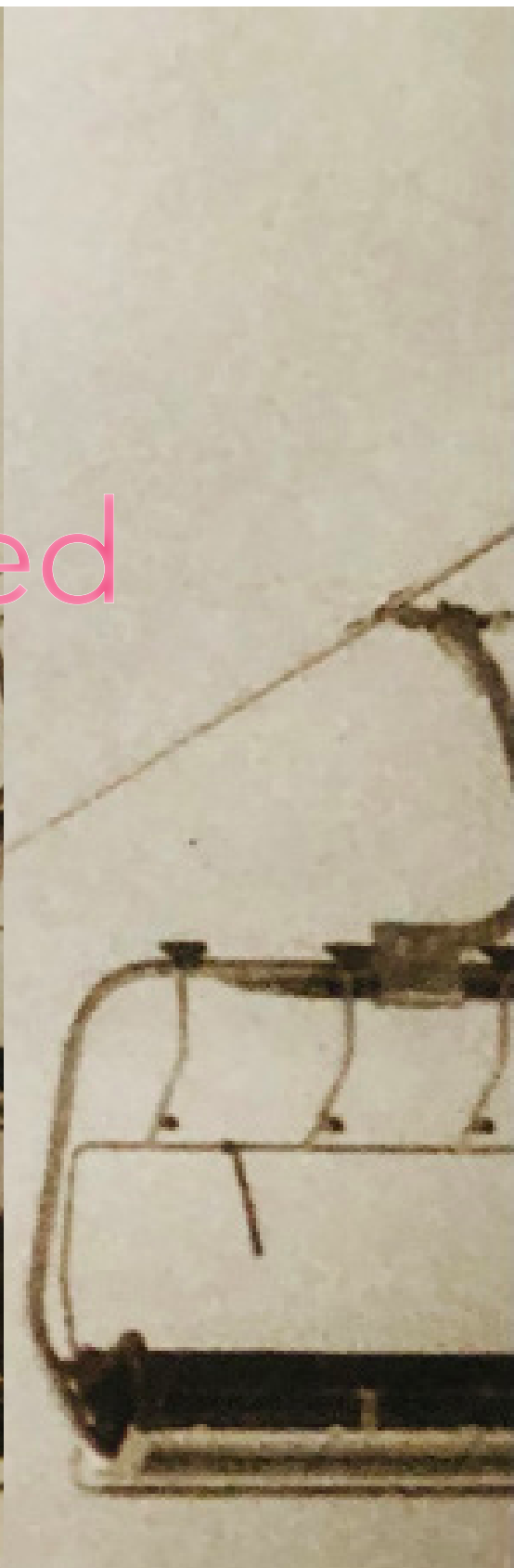
The people had to learn how to live in a new world, and yet, none of the three human groups changed. Yes, the ordinary, the curious, and the desperate all had their place in society. Soon memories of the old world had changed. "Grandpa, what is summer?" a little girl asked, tugging on her grandfather's coat. "Why, when I was your age I remember the ferocious, sunny days right here up north. It is too bad summer only exists in the tropics." The young forgot the order of nature entirely, and as the old died their knowledge died with them. Books preserved the previous state of nature, if only people could experience nature through words. Slowly the world adjusted.

Still the world longed for winter, for the cycle of life to begin once again. The falling of leaves is not to be taken lightly; it is the turning of summer into winter, of sun into snow, of awakening into sleep. The slow dream of fall was no longer a dream: it was reality. What is the difference between dream and reality, between truth and falsehood, when all is a liminal space? Even the falling of leaves, an event so simple, can change the world.

Their Dark



Wintry Bed

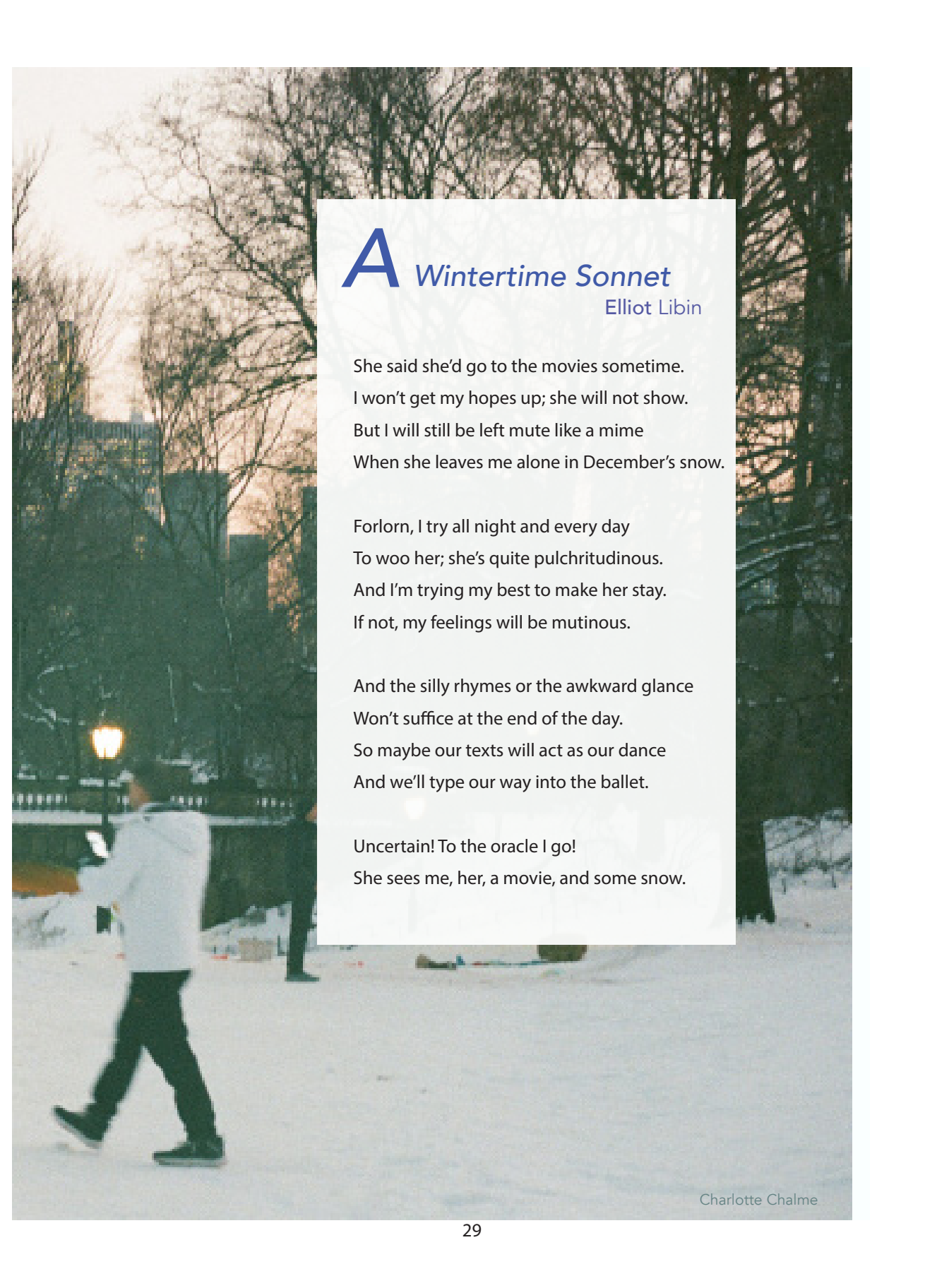




Snowflake

Delilah Weiss

I wish it would snow so the snow would bring me with it.
Each snowflake could grab onto me
Envelop my body and lift me higher until
I could no longer feel my fingers. The snowflakes would carry
me
Up and up to the place they are formed, and then I would
emerge as unique as the next snowflake.
The cold air would push me, pull me, flip me upside down,
transport me
Somewhere, anywhere, all at once.
I would land on a window, the ground, someone's nose.
Would you
Notice me by looking at your window, the ground at your
feet, or your nose?
Would I notice you if you were a tiny, floating speck of ice?
Maybe.



A *Wintertime Sonnet*

Elliot Libin

She said she'd go to the movies sometime.
I won't get my hopes up; she will not show.
But I will still be left mute like a mime
When she leaves me alone in December's snow.

Forlorn, I try all night and every day
To woo her; she's quite pulchritudinous.
And I'm trying my best to make her stay.
If not, my feelings will be mutinous.

And the silly rhymes or the awkward glance
Won't suffice at the end of the day.
So maybe our texts will act as our dance
And we'll type our way into the ballet.

Uncertain! To the oracle I go!
She sees me, her, a movie, and some snow.

Vitamin C

Charlotte Farber

Samantha Cohen

The magazines say vitamin c
is vital in the winter.
Maybe they've read me
awaiting your orange scent.

I bought black mittens
and a thick, white scarf
in place of you.
Inside my mind,
I've told myself I'm warm now,
and the still biting wind from outside
forms a single orange—
a taste of sweetness
and sustenance til next season.

My foggy citrus breath
hazes my view and I wonder:
how do the cold and warmth
ever muddle together?



Theresa Schachter

Wisp

Gabriel Flatto-Katz

I remember the piano, the keys,
Black and white, singing to me.
I remember how its soft melody
Blinded me,
Numbed me to sleep.

Tonight I can't see very well.
The night is shrouded
In memory and the fog.

We march on the cobblestone,
And with each step
I forget a little.
But you comfort me;
Your warmth hides
The chill.

Each memory wisps out of me,
Floats up and
Blocks some of the moon's light.

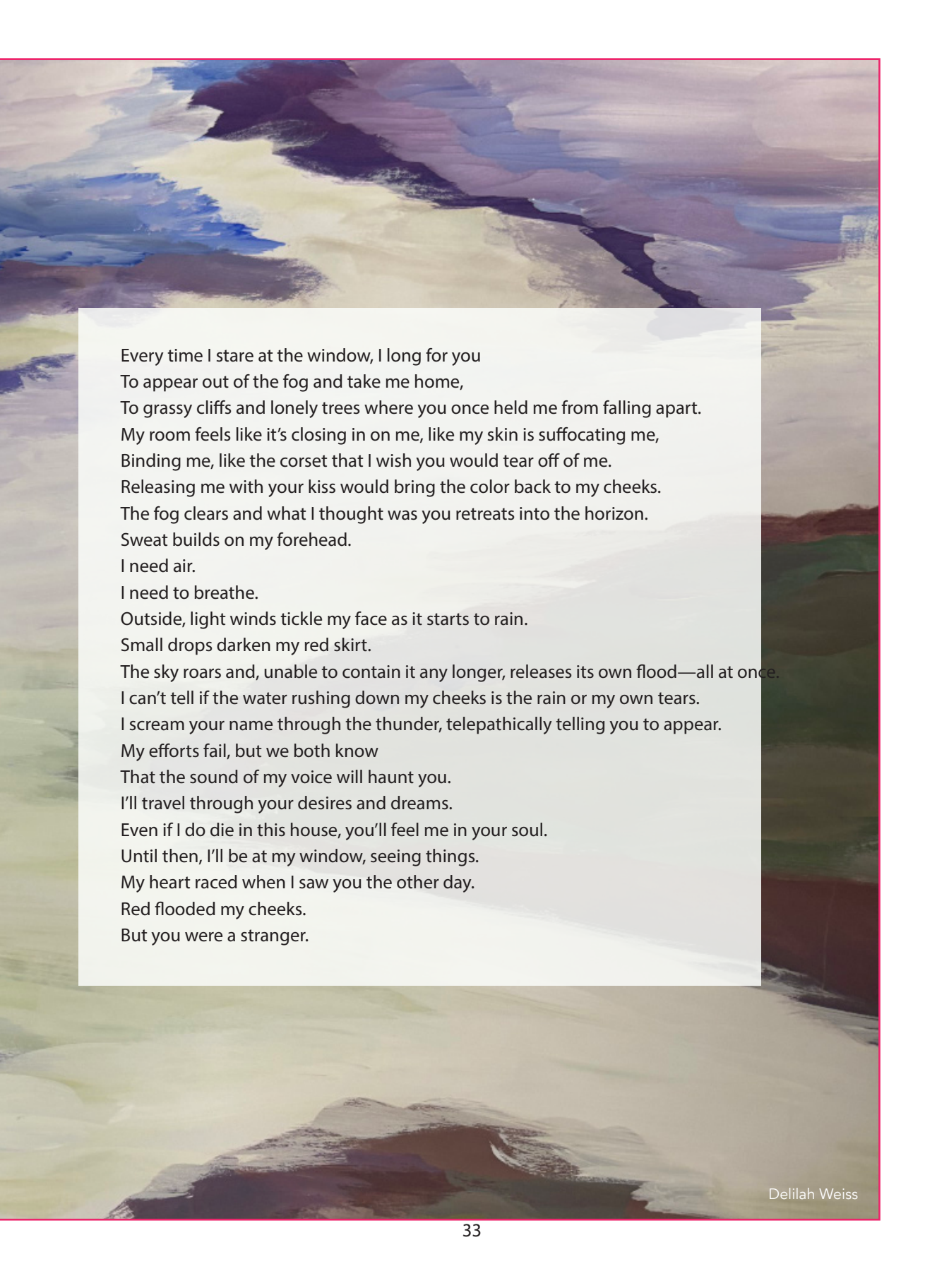
But you hold me,
And I don't notice
The dimming.

Noah Ellman

An impressionistic landscape painting with a palette of purples, blues, greens, and yellows. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive, creating a sense of movement and atmosphere. The scene appears to be a vast, open landscape with rolling hills or mountains in the distance. The colors are layered and blended, giving the impression of a dreamlike or ethereal scene.

Heathcliff

Delilah Weiss



Every time I stare at the window, I long for you
To appear out of the fog and take me home,
To grassy cliffs and lonely trees where you once held me from falling apart.
My room feels like it's closing in on me, like my skin is suffocating me,
Binding me, like the corset that I wish you would tear off of me.
Releasing me with your kiss would bring the color back to my cheeks.
The fog clears and what I thought was you retreats into the horizon.
Sweat builds on my forehead.
I need air.
I need to breathe.
Outside, light winds tickle my face as it starts to rain.
Small drops darken my red skirt.
The sky roars and, unable to contain it any longer, releases its own flood—all at once.
I can't tell if the water rushing down my cheeks is the rain or my own tears.
I scream your name through the thunder, telepathically telling you to appear.
My efforts fail, but we both know
That the sound of my voice will haunt you.
I'll travel through your desires and dreams.
Even if I do die in this house, you'll feel me in your soul.
Until then, I'll be at my window, seeing things.
My heart raced when I saw you the other day.
Red flooded my cheeks.
But you were a stranger.



The Mission

Flora Jakobishvili

(Inspired by Kim Demarco's "Special Delivery")

She rode the black bike through the snow, a red scarf wrapped tightly around her neck to keep her warm in the frigid weather. The snow was falling hard and beginning to pile up on the street, but she couldn't let this deter her—she was on a mission.

Still, never one to break the law, she stopped her bike at the crosswalk, careful to stop gently so as not to upset the cardboard box tied to the back. The mission could wait for a moment. But it was dark out and snow was falling, and when no brave pedestrian appeared to cross the street, she quickly began peddling again.

Despite the urgency of the mission, she couldn't help but peer into an apartment she passed. Light from the window shone out into the wintry night sky. A black cat stood on the windowsill, eyes wide and alert. Its ears looked perked up, too, but then again, didn't cats' ears always? Ears pointed upwards only really told you something when it came to dogs, she supposed. Not cats. The cats were always listening.

Her hands, though covered in thick red mittens, were beginning to get quite cold. She reached backward with one hand, placing it on the box from which hot steam rose.

Another crosswalk. She paused, and for a moment, the white walking man on the street sign looked like a polar bear standing upright. Then, as she placed her feet on the pedals once again, the white glow morphed back into a man. The snowflake had fallen.

She had reached her destination. She locked up her bike with a metal chain, grabbed the warm box from the back of the bike, and rushed indoors to enjoy her pizza.

**“a red scarf wrapped
tightly around her neck”**

Red Lipstick

In the Voice of **Myrtle Wilson** from *The Great Gatsby*

I woke up choking on the air again. Stale, thick, full of motor oil and the sour stink of gasoline that lingers in the back of your throat for moments too long. Every morning I tell myself that I'll get used to it, the same way you get used to breathing your own breath under a blanket. But that's a lie, because eventually, you just suffocate and die.

George is already up, his grease-stained sleeves rolled past his elbows, scrubbing at a tire like his pathetic life depends on it. I watch his back, the way his shoulders slope like a broken roof, and his spine curves over in a way that leaves me feeling uneasy. I used to think his quiet nature was the kind of quiet you could fill with yourself, the kind of quiet a vibrant woman like me could bounce off of. I try to make up for his lack of luster; I think of it as pouring water into an empty glass. But it turns out, some silences are just voids. They take and take and take, and when you try to put something in, it just disappears. Like the glass has a hole on the bottom—like it's incapable of holding any water.

"Morning," he says, not looking up.

I don't answer. I try not to clench my jaw or roll my eyes in annoyance. I'm already gone. Mentally I've been gone, but physically, not

yet—I'm about to be, though. I've got one foot out the door and one hand stretched towards something bigger and brighter. That "something" is waiting for me right across the bridge, in a high-ceilinged apartment with French doors and soft rugs, where I discard the embarrassing persona of Myrtle Wilson and become someone else. Someone Tom Buchanan goes out of his way to kiss passionately, not tenderly.

I get to the apartment before Tom does; I always get to the apartment first—that's how it always is. I'm always in that apartment—if not physically, then mentally—waiting. I check my lipstick in a cracked compact mirror, making sure the red is perfect. I need to make sure that my appearance screams look at me, remember me, want me.

When he finally storms in, he doesn't say sorry for being late. He's always late but I don't care. I'll wait all afternoon—as long as he comes. Tom doesn't even say "hello"—but his lips are already on mine before I can process his introductory words:

"How's Georgie?" he asks, smirking.

I want to claw that smirk straight off his face, but not because of the indecency and rude nature of his comment, but because he brought up George in the space I use to avoid

him. But I don't say or do anything to convey my repulsion at the mentioning of George—I would never do anything to make Tom mad. I just stretch out on the couch, and I make sure to position myself in a way that reminds him what he came here for.

The way Tom said "How's Georgie?" was as if my husband is some schoolboy who's made fun of for being an embarrassment. I realize, though, that Tom isn't laughing at George. Tom is laughing at me, and the worst part? I let him. I let him because although Tom thinks I'm pathetic for staying with George, I am flattered that he thinks I can do better than him. Tom's ridicule is flattering to me, and I don't care how messed up that sounds because at least I am honest with myself. I value Tom's opinion of me more than anyone else's. His words remain with me like fingerprints on glass—they're like smudged proof that I was noticed, even if only physically, by a man like Tom. A man so different from George.

Because Tom is rich, he smells like money, cigars, cologne, and old leather seats in a car I'll never drive. Tom smells like the kind of a car that George is paid to repair but will never own. Tom doesn't look at me like I'm something to fix. He looks at me like I already belong to him. And maybe I do. Maybe Tom looks at me like I belong to him because the cars belong to him, and George looks at me like something to fix because he only fixes what belongs to others. George will never be worthy of owning anything—owning me. Not like Tom owns things—owns me.

I don't remember the fight, but just the way George grabbed me. He shook me and

screamed, "You can't fool God, Myrtle." All I could do was laugh like a maniac because what does God have to do with any of this? God doesn't live in this garage. God doesn't smell like oil, sweat, and unpaid bills. God doesn't look at a woman, see her drowning, and look the other way. But above all, God doesn't care for girls like me. You know what they say: "Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere." I might not be going to heaven. I might be a bad girl who neither God nor George care for. I do know one thing, though: Tom cares for me and that's all that matters.

So when I see Tom's car, I run. I see the familiar headlight cutting through the dark, bright, like the future me and Tom will share. He sees me, I know he does. He'll stop, and he'll take me with him. I stretch out my arms, waiting to be lifted, to be saved, to be carried away from all this.

But the car doesn't stop. There's a second when I hear a scream—was it Tom's voice? Did Tom scream because he just killed the love of his life—because he killed me? I still don't know. The impact didn't feel like much at first, just a shock, like the air got punched out of my lungs. Then it was red—everything's red. Red like lipstick smeared across my teeth, the lipstick I wore only for Tom. I think, for a second, that maybe I finally got his attention. Then everything goes black. I'm not the first girl to die waiting for a man to stop for her, and I won't be the last.

Amidst a storm a man could be seen running in the rain. His visage was as teary as the downpour, streaming with bright eyes beaming out of his horrified face. Lightning continuously split the sky, so that the heavens were torn down along with the firmament, and the rains blew in the icy wind. The droplets themselves were brightened by the flashes of lightning, lighting the entire scene as if heaven's strobe light had commenced a rave. The man's shadow was sprinting on the bridge, his figure flashing against the metal fences, his face forward and his heart backward. He did not want to see his destination. He did not want to see her saddened face.

Upon arriving at the door, he shuddered, feeling frozen, and entered the halls. The towering, great house was in disrepair from years of neglect, and it had suffered much during the sickness of its owner. His boots slammed against the carpet and his body moved up the winding, spiraling staircase, up and up and up. The candles in the wall sconces blew out as he darted up, the trails of smoke first swinging behind him, then up alongside him towards the open window up ahead. Momentarily he stopped, exhausted, and beheld a full moon creeping against the blue clouds; the shimmering lake was a pale white and the bridge was but a line against the water. He turned his face away from that open window, the curtains slamming into his face. He felt discouraged, dismayed that he had stopped for just a moment now that he was on the final flight.

Swinging by the portal of a dark bedroom, he entered silently, afraid to wake the woman. He had grabbed a candle right outside the door, and with it he brought some warmth into the room. When he saw the woman's pale face, he felt enraged at God. He leaned over and caressed her cheek, afraid that her soul was begging to flee.

"You know, you can't stay here," she said with a tear. "The bell toll looms; you'd better leave."

"Why would I ever leave? You're bed-ridden and cold. Here," he covered her with the blanket. "You shouldn't be without warmth for a second."

"I have had the warmth of a lifetime here with you. The cold outside is but an ancient memory to me. I will soon be reunited with that cold. Love, step aside." He stepped back and she sat up, breathing heavily. "I know," she said, "that you need my permission to take your freedom."

"What are you talking about?" The man's heart was pumping fast. "I need no freedom. I need none. I find freedom with you!" He lunged for a kiss and she diverted her glance.

"No, sweetheart, no!" He froze.

"Why? O God, why!? I don't care. I don't care. You know what I want."

"No, love. I know you meant what you said, in life and death. And yes, in life and death we will be together, but not now. My lips are the kiss of death; you can't be getting sick from me."

"You won't die, anyway. And, if you do, so too should I die."

He shuddered unexpectedly and tears streamed down his face. "Don't leave me. I don't fear the Reaper."

Darling, Won't You Please Let the Reaper in? It's Cold Outside



Haim Heilborn Nigri
(Inspired by the song "Don't Fear the Reaper")

She turned to him, her eyes sparkling against her pale face. In death she felt more beautiful to him, and he couldn't bear it.

"Stay with me." He held her hand tightly, and she closed her eyes. "Darling? Wake up!"

The windows burst open and the rain came pouring in. The light went out and the shadows crept along with a subtle moonlight. She opened her eyes for a second; they reflected that heavenly light. In a moment the curtains pulled over the window. He could have sworn he saw a scythe, and he felt his heart writhe. Then, she stretched out, her eyes toward heaven, and they closed; she died.

He left that house weeping. For months she lay in bed. One October evening as he was dreaming of that moment; he fell into a deep, forever sleep. As he looked up he saw her hand. He took it and death took him.

In better days I held my head up high.
Without a thought I sealed my fate with tears.
Come nightfall I would look to God's design.
Come morning with lies I reinforced my fears.

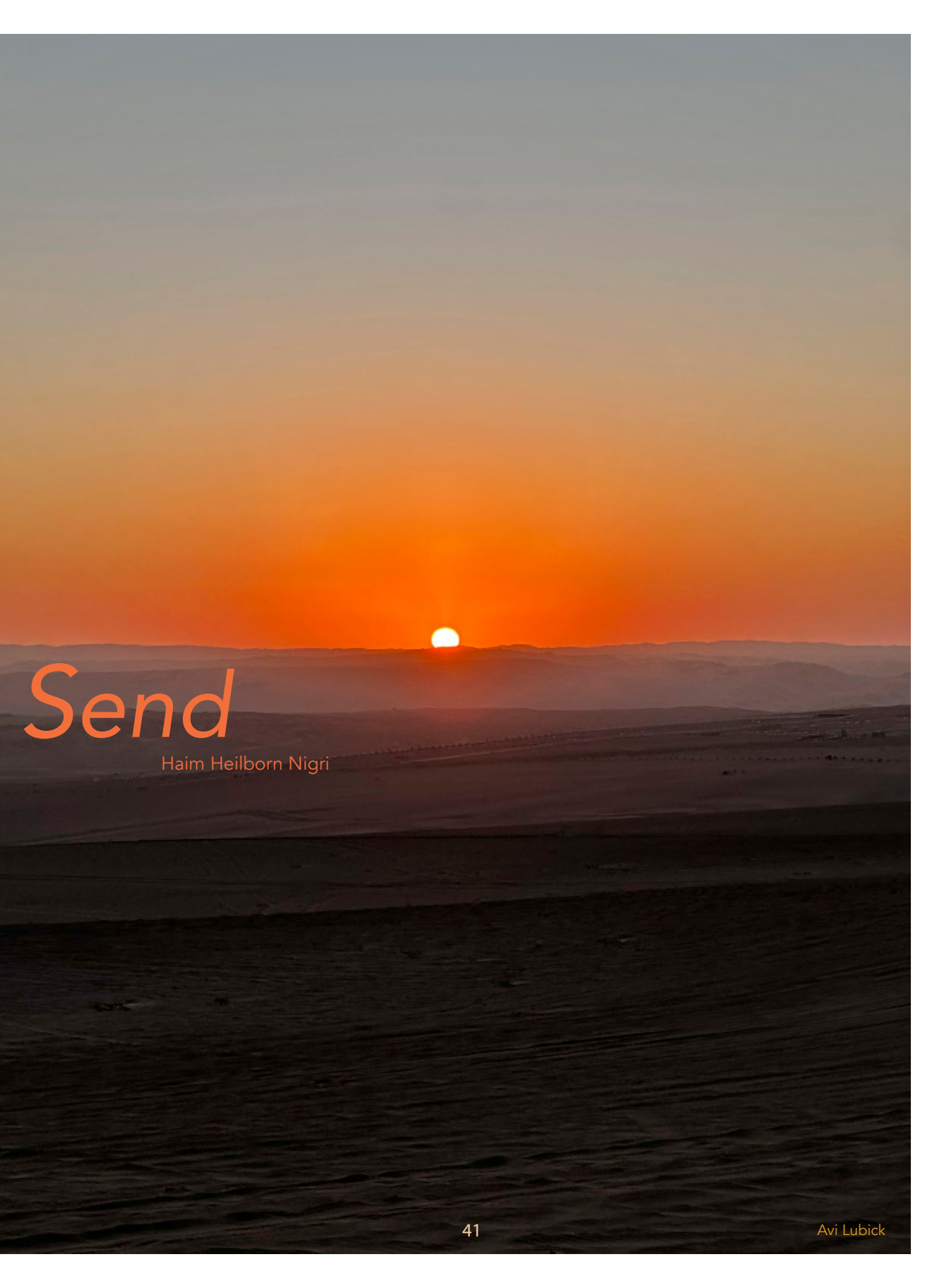
The screams in silence satisfied my heart.
No longer was I grounded; I rose up
Through clouds and fog all tearing me apart.
The sky's the limit but I had enough.

Now, what is heaven if there is no hell?
I left my briefcase on the bedroom floor.
What I was thinking not a soul could tell.
A second later I dashed beyond the door.

I lost my job, I lost my spinning head.
What is my calling if there is no regret?
"Your head is in the clouds" is what they said,
But my delusion I will not forget.

God, send for heaven, before the tolling bell.
God, send for fire and take me down to hell.

Heaven,



Send

Haim Heilborn Nigri

The Second Soul

Celan Rotenberg-Schwartz

Haim Heilborn Nigri

The snow fell gently on the war torn city. It was a cold night; it was a dark city—save for the gleaming lights of the manor. Tall pines surrounded the estate, where throngs of men and women streamed in. Carriages lined the street as far as the eye could see. Straining one's ears to the distance, you could almost hear the sounds of war: the bang of guns, the echo of tears and screams. Here, though, tucked safely behind the trenches, New Year's Eve had arrived.

Inside the ballroom, a young woman sat, playing a grand piano. A row of candelabras on each side of the room shone an orange hue on the marble floor. The wild abandon of youth lay thickly in the air: champagne stains on the floor, heads thrown back in laughter, pairs of dancers, and a haze of body heat. It was a night of love and war, music and death; it was a night for the ages.

Music played for hours while the guests danced. They ate and drank without a care, save for one man who stood watching that piano. Leaning forward, he was a portrait of longing.

When the line outside had disappeared, a smiling man came to the podium. Clink! Clink! The room came slowly to a hush, as the host began his speech.

"I am honored to host you all tonight, as we are gathered to celebrate the coming of the new year. We shall sing and dance, eat and drink, indulge one last time in the pleasure of now before today blurs into the past, the past to which we can never return. Our moments with one another—however painfully fleeting—they are all we have. As for that throbbing in your throat, that wistful tug at your heart at the end of each year—that is the grasp of your second soul. Never forget your second soul, the one that wishes to escape and lie, thoughtless, in days gone by. And never forget that the past is the only place you can never see twice." The man paused, breathless. "We may be living in the present—but we have left something of ourselves in the past. Like any other loss, that cuts us deeply. As they say, time heals all wounds. But perhaps it inflicts a few wounds of its own? May this year hold many blessings. May the side of good prevail in this awful war. And, to better times—Happy New Year!"

Applause rang around the room. A man began playing the violin, and the woman rose from her piano. She wove her way to the edge of the crowd, hoping to find a drink. A tap disturbed her mission.

"May I ask for a dance?" She turned to face the voice.

"Goodness! And hello to you, too!"

"Apologies, milady, really." He fidgeted with his jacket pocket.

"Oh, I was merely joking." She glanced over his green uniform, the brass buttons that reflected the candlelight. "What brings you out from the trenches tonight?"

"Have a death wish for me, do you?"

She blushed a furious red. "Goodness! What a stupid question—just my curiosity getting the better of me."

"Well, since you asked—an exception for New Year's."

She couldn't help but smile. "I do love this holiday."

"Bittersweet, isn't it? Like hearing the most beautiful song, one that you can never remember." Chills ran up her arms.

"I only wish..." She trailed off.

"Pardon?"

"Oh, forget it." She shook herself out of her stupor. "When do you return to the front lines?"

"Enough about the war, really. I must have a break on such a night, in the presence of such beautiful company." His deep brown eyes betrayed his feelings. "That piano playing of yours, I must say—just lovely."

"Why, thank you!"

The violin began a new piece. "So...that dance?"

She shook her head. "Oh, I really couldn't. No, no, I mustn't."

"Ma'am, it is a ball you've come to!"

"Well, I mean, that piano was quite tiring."

"Just one dance, on such a bittersweet night? For a poor old soldier who's soon off to die alone?"

"Er...when you put it like that..." She reluctantly took his arm. "Just one song!" The couple danced together, all around the ballroom. After three steps the man nicked her shoe, and the woman laughed. He couldn't help but laugh with her, as she rolled her eyes at his bashful grin—a strange pair they made. The promise of one dance was quickly forgotten. The man caught the scent of the flowers in her hair and sighed deeply. The woman leaned in a bit closer and brushed against the man's neck. Time blurred, until the woman suddenly broke free. "Ah! What a beautiful song!"

"Pardon?"

"Certainly you know it: Auld Lang Syne?"

"I've heard it, but never known the words too well."

"It's a Scottish tune, meaning—well, I guess it means 'old long since,' literally."

"'Old long since'? What rubbish! I could write better than that!"

"No, no! It means...er...'For old times sake,' more like it."

"And how does it go?"

"Can't you quiet down and listen?"

"Nothing's to be heard over this racket! Just sing along!"

Muttering, she yet again listened to this strange soldier's request.

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot

and never brought to mind?

Should auld acquaintance be forgot

and days of auld lang syne?"

Tears welled up in her eyes. The man, however, was enchanted.

"My, that was beautiful!" She remained in stoic silence. "Where'd you learn to sing it?"

"My mother. Always makes me a bit emotional, if I'm honest."

"It's like the speech from earlier, you could say?"

The woman nodded distantly, but her mind was racing with repeating memories. The final postcard and the dreaded letter. She felt trapped in the ground, forever trapped in those wretched trenches, like her beloved. What would he think of her, forgetting him so easily? Nausea rose quickly through her. Had all those tear-filled nights been for naught? Could she forget so easily those days gone by, that vanished paradise?

"I-I must surely be going now. Good night, and a good year, too." She gave a small curtsy and fled.

"Wait—one moment!" But she was gone already, running off to a future from which she would never return. The man's heart ached for her already, with a painful nostalgia. He delved into the crowds of the

ballroom, trying to run after her. But the room was too packed, and fate was not with him. He searched until he could no longer remember the sharp lines of her face. Oh! How his memory failed him, when he most needed it!

He returned slowly to the dance floor. Reluctantly, he found another partner, with whom he danced and laughed a bit too loudly. But he couldn't help a glance over his shoulder. Alas, for all his searching, the woman had escaped him. During one of these searching looks, he caught his reflection in a golden goblet. He saw in it his childhood home out in the country—the land of times gone by, to which he could never return. He sighed deeply. Her floral scent, her gorgeous playing, were already a relic of the past, and he loved her more for it.

As the ball ended, the man watched in disgust as drunken couples ahead of him spilled out the manor doors. Forgetfulness was not the remedy he sought—this man wanted memory. He wanted to lose himself in the past and never leave it. He tasted bile in the back of his throat, and then he bolted.

The biting wind whipped past his face as he sprinted away. The trees, the shadows, the people—they all blurred together. Eventually, gasping for air and out of breath, he kneeled over. That woman's face came to mind, and he ran once more, away from that ballroom. He knew, deep down, from what he was running.

As he continued his run from that terrible manor, he stumbled onto a decrepit courtyard. On the gateway was inscribed "but dust and shadows, but dust and shadows," the entrance to an endless line of graves. Oh! How it cut him then! The man ran, too, from that wretched place of death, that supposed shrine of memory.

Later, he found himself walking along the quay, as if emerging from a trance. On one pier was a statue of some forgotten god, lost to time. He turned away and found himself humming the tune of Auld Lang Syne, as the cold wind carried him past the statue and the graveyard, past the piano and the manor, to a young pianist walking lonely through the night. A tall wave crashed on the dock, spraying the man with seawater, like those tears of heaven, those tears of yearning, of all those second souls.

Excerpt from

A

Dragon's Loyalties

Haim Dabah & **Truman** Edell

From Chapter I: A Wintry Morning

It was yet another wintry morning in Wulsdén—cold rays of fearfully sunrise pierced through the shutters' slats. The once-beautiful barbarian village was paralyzed in an everlasting winter. The snowcapped mountains encircled three-fourths of Wulsdén, save for the dense Srilz forest, a warm, damp pine forest somehow spared from the frost. Sporadic avalanches occasionally flooded the Wulsdén's houses and made the terrain between them impassable. All of the town's barbarian inhabitants believed that this isolated winter was the doing of Dark Emperor Crux, who was using his Magic to trap them all in eternal cold. Of course, that was mere superstition... but anything was possible. Rumors of the terror wrought by the Emperor raised suspicion in the secluded village.

Uldird pushed himself off the side of his bed and yawned. After stretching, he stumbled toward his wardrobe, bare feet striking the creaking floorboards. He dressed himself in his bear-fur cloak. A thread of honor was woven into that cloak, earned by showing valor in battle. Uldird splashed frigid water from the basin onto his face to chill himself awake. He dried his face off with a rag, lifted his hammer from its hook on the wall and slid the oversized weapon into its holster on his hip.

Uldird's war hammer was a gift from his uncle Hyamn, the clan king himself. The hammer's head was a block of Tar Agaor—a sturdy stone mined and forged by the Halinds.

As he exited his small bedroom, Uldird lifted his yew bow and quiver of goose-fletched arrows—an other gift from his uncle—from their place on the wall. He slung both over his shoulder, checking the quiver's leather strap. Uldird looked over and saw Lassmeer sitting silently on a straight-backed wooden chair by the entrance to the hut.

At the age of four, after his own parents had died in battle—or so he'd been told—Uldird had been moved in with Lassmeer, his older cousin, and the two of them had been raised by Uldird's aunt.

Lassmeer was nine years senior to the eighteen-year-old. Although the laws of the clan would have permitted him to live on his own, familiarity led him to remain with Lassmeer. And Lassmeer treated Uldird like close family.

"Uldird, go outside and snatch some breakfast, would ya?" Lassmeer drawled. "I'm starvin'. Need our strength for the old Council, eh?"

Uldird nodded in agreement and made his way to the front door. As he opened it, a gust of frigid air blasted through, stinging his skin. Uldird squinted through the flurry and fixed his gaze on the village outside. The trees, draped with snow, swayed and trembled in the winter wind. Despite the early hour, men and women roamed the lushy dirt road that ran between the wooden huts and houses scattered unevenly across the snow-patched grass.

Uldird assumed that most of the townsfolk were heading toward the heart of Bearclan's village of Wulsdén, the Town Center. Uldird had visited there many times and knew its alleys and crannies like the lines on the palm of his hand: the market that sold herbs, milk, butter, fruit, bread, and slabs of meat. Shops and workhouses like the Smith Braendall's blacksmith's shop—for weapons, armor, and repairs of same. There was the carpenter, and Lorana the leather-smith, and the town tailor... the list went on.

And in the middle of it all stood Bulskon's Love Kill Inn, bustling with clansmen day and night who simply needed a day or an hour away from home... or whose homes had been destroyed. Very rarely did Wulsdén receive visitors from the outside.

Uldird merged onto a snowy lane, his boots squelching in the sludge. Trekking through the village streets were barbarian men with broad, muscular shoulders, clad in chainmail armor over leathertunics. Unevenly strapped to their backs rested battle axes, maces, warhammers. The barbarians of Bearclan were savage, ruthless, and known to show no mercy. Some described them as "berserk," not just for their rage in

battle but for their wild countenances as well. One stood out to Uldird: short-haired and gruff-looking, he bore a matching set of spearhead-tipped battle axes bound to his waist, one on either side. It took an especially skilled warrior to wield such unorthodox weapons, yet none was worthier than double-axed Thaldgar.

"Thaldgar!" Uldird shouted. He walked over to clap the man roughly on the shoulder.

Thaldgar gave a deep laugh and a wide, bright grin. "Out fer hunting, eh? Don' wannna be late for the Council now, do we?"

Uldird grinned, his longtime friend's brusque voice awakening him with its warm familiarity. Thaldgar and Rheurmend, another wide-shouldered barbarian, were Uldird's closest friends inside the clan. Excluding Lassmeer, of course. And Thaldgar was quite senior in the Council.

"Did ya hear what passed?" Thaldgar asked. Uldird shook his head, always eager for morning gossip and knowing that Thaldgar would be eager to spill it.

"Fadar is dead."

Uldird's grin faded to a bitter line.

Fadar had been the Bearclan's most powerful fighter. Indeed, he had been considered the most powerful fighter among all of the clans. He'd once faced off against three dozen armed Empire soldiers, himself barehanded and unarmored. At least, that was the tale. That, and this: by the end of the battle, the ground had been soaked with blood like a stew, while Fadar had walked off with nothing but a handful of scratches.

Uldird struggled to understand. His jaw dropped. "...Fadar? Dead? How!?"

"Slain. How else? Bested in battle by a Gronoby, I heard. Others say he ended himself—too strong t'lose, yeh know? Nonsense, really. It was an Empire raid. Eversniffing around, ever expanding, they are. The Council believes they ran into our patrol team, who reacted fiercely. No traces of anyone left. From either side."

Uldird tried to process this news. If the Empire's forces were strong enough to take down Fadar, of all people... what chance did the rest of them have? Fadar had always seemed powerful and undefeatable, catching all eyes when he walked into a room, causing even the most strong-willed of men to cower. Uldird shoved the beginnings of fear aside. No time for weakness.

Uldird grunted. "Good as anything he's gone, I suppose. You and I both know that Fadar's power was a threat to the rule of the King. I guess more's the glory for us, too, right? Still... this is the third raid this month. They keep this up, we might find ourselves in the middle of a war with the Empire. One we clearly can't win."

Thaldgar grimaced, and responded gruffly. "Yeah. Well, we're working on it."

"Who else was on the patrol?"

Thaldgar hesitated. "Ah... Vrahg, curse it, I suppose you'd hear it sooner or later. There were only three others. Dremr, Thropp, and, well..." Thaldgar locked eyes with Uldird and grasped his forearm. "I'm sorry. Sheya, too."

Uldird froze. Sheya, the second-mightiest warrior in the clan after Fadar, lost as well? His doubts resurfaced, laced with a deeper grief. Uldird had never known what to call his relationship with Sheya, especially since the time when Uldird dove off the roof of a building in her honor when they were small children—an act of foolish devotion that, to her credit, she hadn't quite reciprocated. But Sheya had always been different.

Thaldgar cut the uncomfortable silence. "With Fadar dead, we'll need to elect a new Council-Master. Today. Someone who knows what they're on about, mind you."

Uldird exhaled. He pushed his sorrow at Sheya's death down into his belly where the rage was and steadied himself. She'd clearly died an honorable warrior. Here he refused to taint her memory with his own weakness.

"Now we'll have to secure our northeast border from Clan Pardus by ourselves, I figure," Thaldgar added with a sigh.

"Aye," Uldird agreed, and forced a chuckle. It didn't take a Learner to understand that it was largely the threat of Fadar's power—the tales, as much as his might itself—that had ward off the fearsome Pardus clan for decades. After all, Fadar had been the Pardus Chief before he had been exiled and joined Bearclan. Lucky for Bearclan that he had.

"I'll have to discuss that privately with King Hyamn. Don't trust the Council to handle it right," Thaldgar added.

"Good luck, then."

Uldird turned off the road toward the tree line. He trod as quietly as possible into the edge of the giant Sriltz Forest, East of Wuldsden. Soon enough, he was surrounded by dense trees with tangled branches. He couldn't stray too far in, or he might reveal his presence to the unfriendly Danks who called the Sriltz home.

I guess I won't be visiting here quite as often anymore, Uldird thought. Sheya had frequently insisted on his joining her for her seemingly mindless amble through the woods. She was hard to say no to, particularly because Sheya spoke to almost no one other than Uldird.

Uldird silently berated himself for his own mental wandering. Focus.

He stayed alert not only for prey, but soldiers from Sarro, too—the large Imperial military camp deeper in the forest to the southeast. It made many barbarians uncomfortable, living so Vrahging close to the enemy. But far worse was Pashwa, the ruinous Empire city to the near north, which teemed with Gronobyls. Indeed, Pashwa was the only permanent Gronobyl home situated outside the Mirklands—the dreary swamp that the majority of those monstrous creatures called home.

It was too quiet. No Danks could even be heard rustling through the brush of their hidden kingdom. He cursed softly as leaves crunched under his feet, practically trumpeting his presence to his prey.

Uldird froze for a moment, cupping his ear, straining for the sound of a startled herd. Nothing. He continued to walk, watching his steps more carefully. There were always herds of deer and other game in the Sriltz, particularly along the forest edge, ideal for the animals to feed on. The lush, year-round greenery sustained many families of deer and there was plenty of water to be drunk from the Goeser Reservoir.

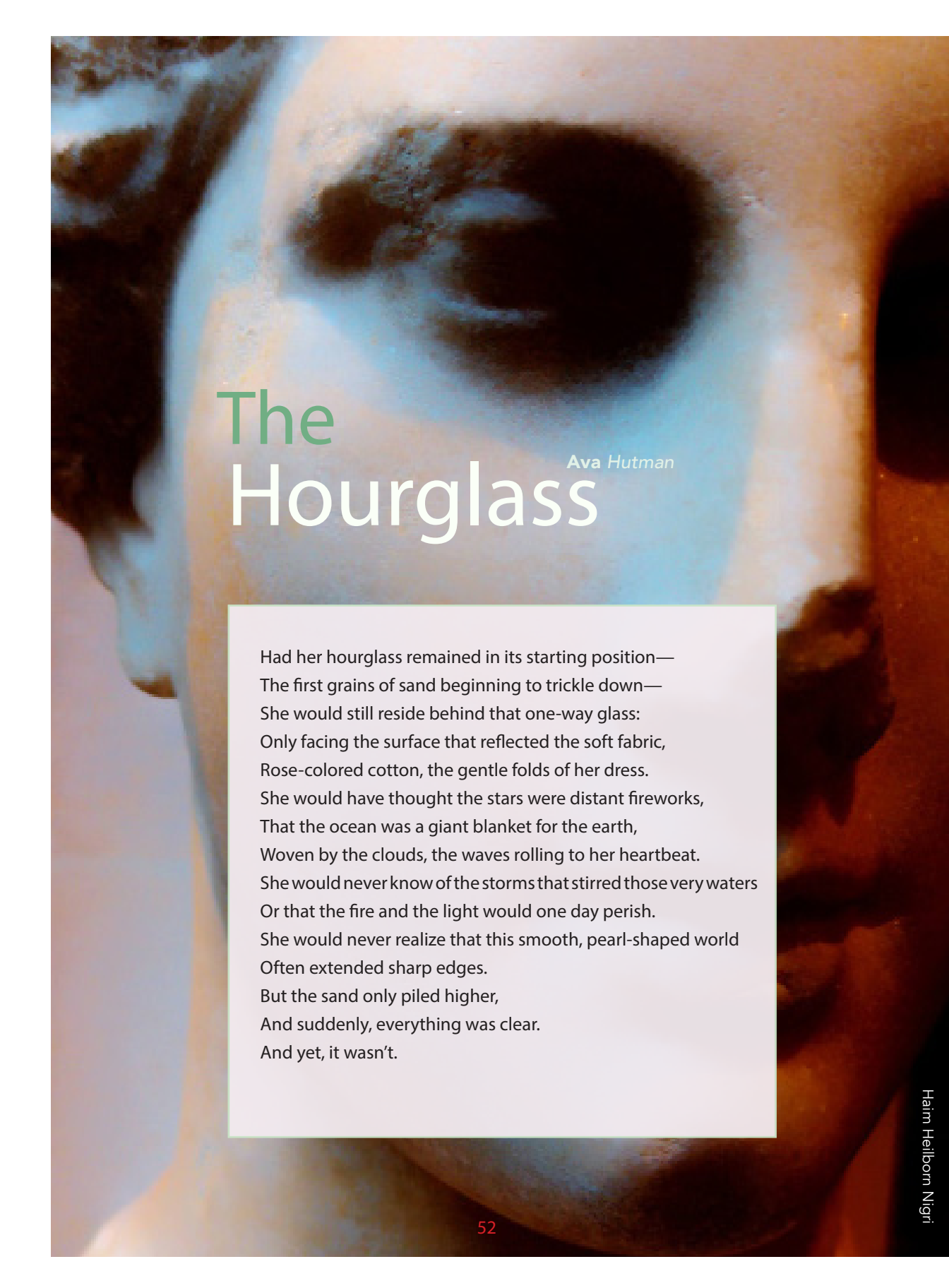
As he prowled, Uldird kept his eyes alert and focused, scanning for tracks. There! The two-toed print was easily identifiable in the claylike, impressionable Sriltz dirt. The tracks were moist and fresh. A smile curled Uldird's lips. The hunt was on, and it would go well indeed.

A photograph of a flowering tree, likely a cherry blossom, with dense clusters of pink flowers. The branches are dark and bare, contrasting with the vibrant pink blossoms. The background is a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text "Awaken from" is overlaid in a white, serif font, centered horizontally and slightly above the middle vertically.

*Awaken
from*



Summer *Dreams*



The Hourglass

Ava Hutman

Had her hourglass remained in its starting position—
The first grains of sand beginning to trickle down—
She would still reside behind that one-way glass:
Only facing the surface that reflected the soft fabric,
Rose-colored cotton, the gentle folds of her dress.
She would have thought the stars were distant fireworks,
That the ocean was a giant blanket for the earth,
Woven by the clouds, the waves rolling to her heartbeat.
She would never know of the storms that stirred those very waters
Or that the fire and the light would one day perish.
She would never realize that this smooth, pearl-shaped world
Often extended sharp edges.
But the sand only piled higher,
And suddenly, everything was clear.
And yet, it wasn't.

Lacy, oh Lacy, so perfect in all that you do.
No matter how hard I try, I'll never be enough like you.

I have teenage dreams of being slim, pretty, cool.
Instead, I'm trapped in jealous eyes that make me cruel.

Your soft smile, your perfect teeth, and your beautiful skin,
While all I see are acne marks and scars within.

You have it all with effortless grace.
How does it feel to live in my dream's place?
While my aspirations glow on giant screens.

When pretty isn't pretty enough, what do you do?
I reshape myself to fit a box never made for me.

They told us all bodies are the same,
But they only ever praised one shape, one frame.

So I stopped the late-night snacks,
Layered makeup like armor on my face.
When you can't see the real skin, it's just a mask,
And masks don't feel disgrace.

I judge reflections only I can see,
Measuring flaws no one else observes.

So Lacy, oh Lacy, teach me your ways.
How do you reach stars that bend toward you,
While mine drift further away?

Men have opinions, loud and unkind,
Yet none of them study the female mind.
Maybe if women led this land,
We'd understand our bodies better
And loosen beauty's cruel demand.

So I lie awake and wonder
Why I'll never be you.
I grow defensive, less expressive,
Heavy with a sadness that grew.

I wish I could finally begin
To believe that beauty lives within.

Pretty hurts.
Are you happy with yourself?

Lacy

Rachel Gurevich





Les Sables

Nathan Attias

Nathan Attias

"Bon, allezy." My mom reluctantly dropped the silver, sand-covered euros into my palm, the sound of coins clinking amid the chorus of seagulls swarming centripetally onto the nearest spare fry. Reading by the beach was exhausting, and I was feeling myself become a seagull.

I eased out of the chair, planting my sand-caked feet into the dunes. Grandpa offered to accompany me. My bare soles scratched against the cobblestone ramp, past the lockers, and up the creaking wooden stairs. The boardwalk was a parade of confectionery paradise. This particular town's favorite food was churros, a delight for the citizens but an opportunity for the seagulls.

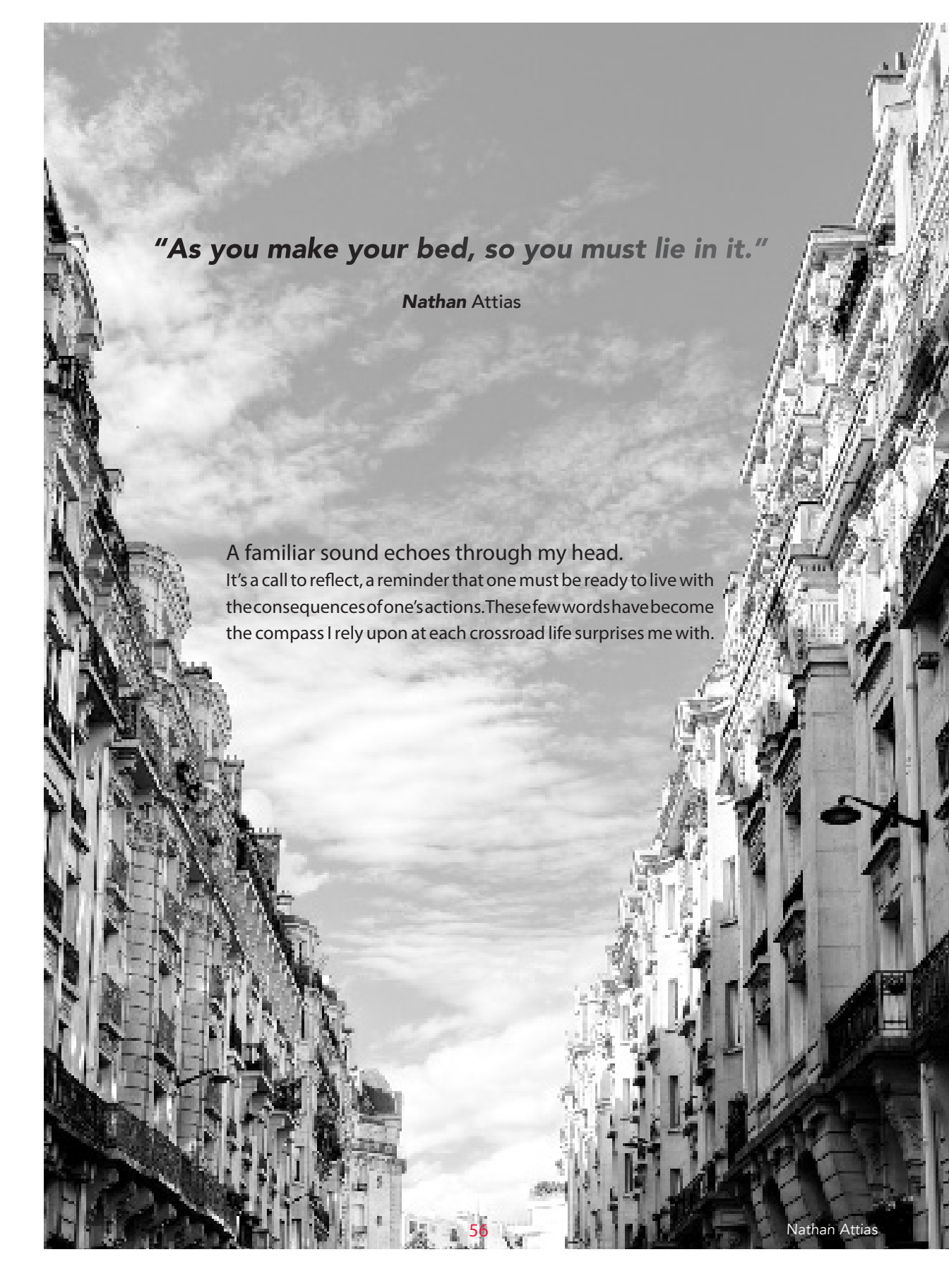
At the top of the stairs, I was greeted by the pests attacking a plucked churro. My grandpa laughed beside me and said I had better be quick when eating, or else that would happen to me. Right across the road dividing beach from town was the best ice cream store in France, but it wasn't just good because of the ice cream—it was great because of the crepes.

I told the cook what I wanted and he got to work, first drizzling the honey golden batter onto the stove top, then spreading it out thinly. This was the sweet scent that filled the streets. A pinch of sugar, and wrapped in a napkin, the ambrosia of my dreams. I eagerly munched on it while walking out of the shop, but I was ignorant of the diving seagull ready to intercept me.

Landing on my shoulder, it ripped the crepe from my mouth before flying away and being tackled by its comrades. I could only watch as the shreds of my delicacy got strewn out onto the streets. Tears welled up in my eyes, but my grandpa was cackling. "I can't wait for you to tell your mother what happened!"



Joyce Jemal



"As you make your bed, so you must lie in it."

Nathan Attias

A familiar sound echoes through my head.
It's a call to reflect, a reminder that one must be ready to live with
the consequences of one's actions. These few words have become
the compass I rely upon at each crossroad life surprises me with.

“Comme on fait son lit, on se couche.”

I smile like he would.

“Nathan, you are almost an adult now. You can decide by yourself what is best for you. But, think well, because as you make your bed, so you must lie in it.”

I have heard this idiom so many times that I can’t remember when he first said it to me. I am lucky, though, to have heard it so often.

My family is a patchwork of people that history has cast aside at every turn. I am the generation that has the luxury of being able to stay put. My grandfather never met his family. They all perished in the Holocaust. In his own words, becoming a grandfather was certainly the most joyful chapter of his long life. I can sense that spending time with me and passing on his wisdom is worth gold to him. Papi never met the rest of his family, but his father made sure to teach him very early on his family’s motto: “As you make your bed, so you must lie in it.”

Its origins are a mystery to me.

All I know is “As you make your bed, so you must lie in it.”

Nostalgia runs in my blood. How reassuring it is to let your mind revisit fond memories. Maybe because part of his past was erased, I know its value and cherish each and every detail that survived, passed down through branches of our family tree.

Every time I arrive in Paris, my grandfather welcomes me with a paper bag from the boulangerie. This is another family tradition, one I adopted right away! Le pain au chocolat is my papi’s “Madeleine de Proust.” I was seven years old when he took me strolling in Le Marais—where he at my age lived after the war, in search of my madeleine. I will always remember the narrow cobblestone streets and old buildings we passed; they seemed to stand proudly in adversity to the sprawling Napoleonic avenues. Paris at its finest. After examining my options, I settled for a bag of candy, 100 grams of jewels. When we left the store, I didn’t lose any time before unwrapping and tasting the bonbon I had my eyes on the moment the bell rang, the door opened, and we entered the colorful facade of the confiserie. My eyes closed, but I could still feel his ancient smile. After I finished it, I looked up to him and asked if I could take another one. Papi looked at me, raised his index, and said:

“Nathan, this belongs to you. You can do whatever you please with them. But, remember, comme on fait son lit, on se couche. If you eat all of them today, you won’t have any more tomorrow.”

I looked at the cobblestones for a few seconds as if they could help me decide. With the sound of my grandfather’s powerful refrain, I gently put the candy back in the pouch. I carried my treasure in one hand with his hand in the other. We continued our promenade in silence, just content to share this moment together. Ten years have passed. I now know the real treasure was the lesson he taught me that day.



A New Yorker

Elliot Libin

John gets breakfast from the bodega and jumps the turnstile for the M, heading to downtown Manhattan. When he gets to work he sees his friend, Steve.

"Babe Ruth was ridiculous last night, eh, Johnny?"

"You know it, Steveo."

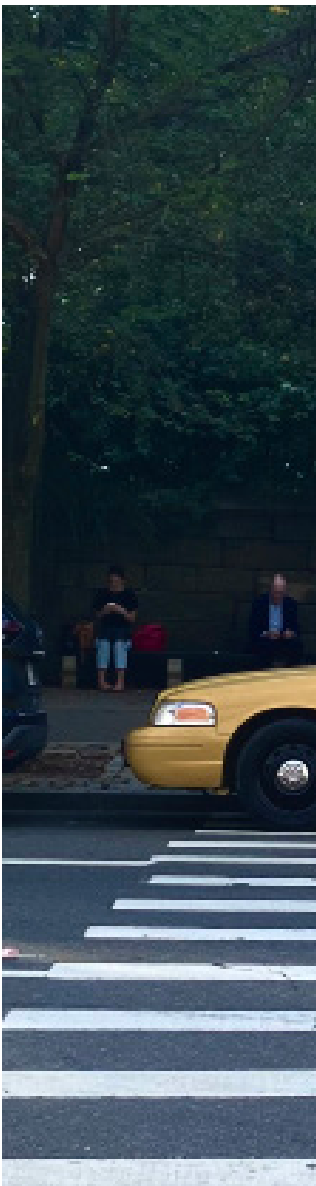
Usually, he's a bit more talkative but his mind is occupied by thoughts of the guy who slipped up and got the boot from the man in charge. John's boss would never fire anyone even if they're incapable of the job.

John takes in the sounds of New York City as he's raised to the 73rd floor of the soon-to-be Empire State Building.

Using a wrench in his left hand, and his right as a harness, John gets to bolting steel. He's told that he is a part of something great, but he doesn't see it that way. He sees the other buildings he's worked on in the distance but he feels no pride.

He looks up in agony after an hour of grueling labor in the punishing summer heat. In His mercy, God sends a cool zephyr, accompanied by a white butterfly. It is the most beautiful thing John has ever seen. Fighting gracefully against the wind, the fabled white monarch preserves its beauty. John wishes he could be like the butterfly. John wishes to be free. But John has promises to keep. And a while to work before he sleeps. And a while to work before he sleeps.

Elisha Horowitz

A photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, a yellow taxi is partially visible, stopped at a crosswalk. Two people are standing on the sidewalk in the background. The scene is set on a city street with trees and buildings in the distance.

"What took you so long to get here?" I asked.

"It's a long walk; what do you mean?"

"You live four blocks away from me."

"Whatever," she replied "What's the quickest route?"

"The bus a few streets away takes us directly north to where we want to go."

"So let's go."

The engine started up, wobbling us and sending vibrations out through our mouths.

"What have you been up to recently? Enjoying your time off?"

"Not really. Dad got sick so he decided we all had to be miserable with him."

"Real bummer; did you at least get to see some friends?"

"They're all gone, and the one that stayed gets MRI's every day."

"Wow, your life sucks."

"Tell that to myself everyday."

"Though I was able to have a driving lesson; I passed the mock test my instructor gave me."

"Look at you! But if you get your license before me, our friendship is over."

"And I would never want that to happen."

The bus stopped and the driver got out.

"Oh, haha."

I looked over my shoulder to see if this was our stop.

"We're close."

"But why have we stopped like this?"

I took a closer look at the front.

"And the driver's gone."

"I think he's taking a smoke break."

"This is what my tax dollars are going to?"

"You don't pay taxes."

"And you don't have a job."

"Walked right into that one."

The driver got back on and we got off at our stop.

Nathan Attias

DIALOGUE

Annie Malkin



The Youngest Daughter

Abby Silverstein

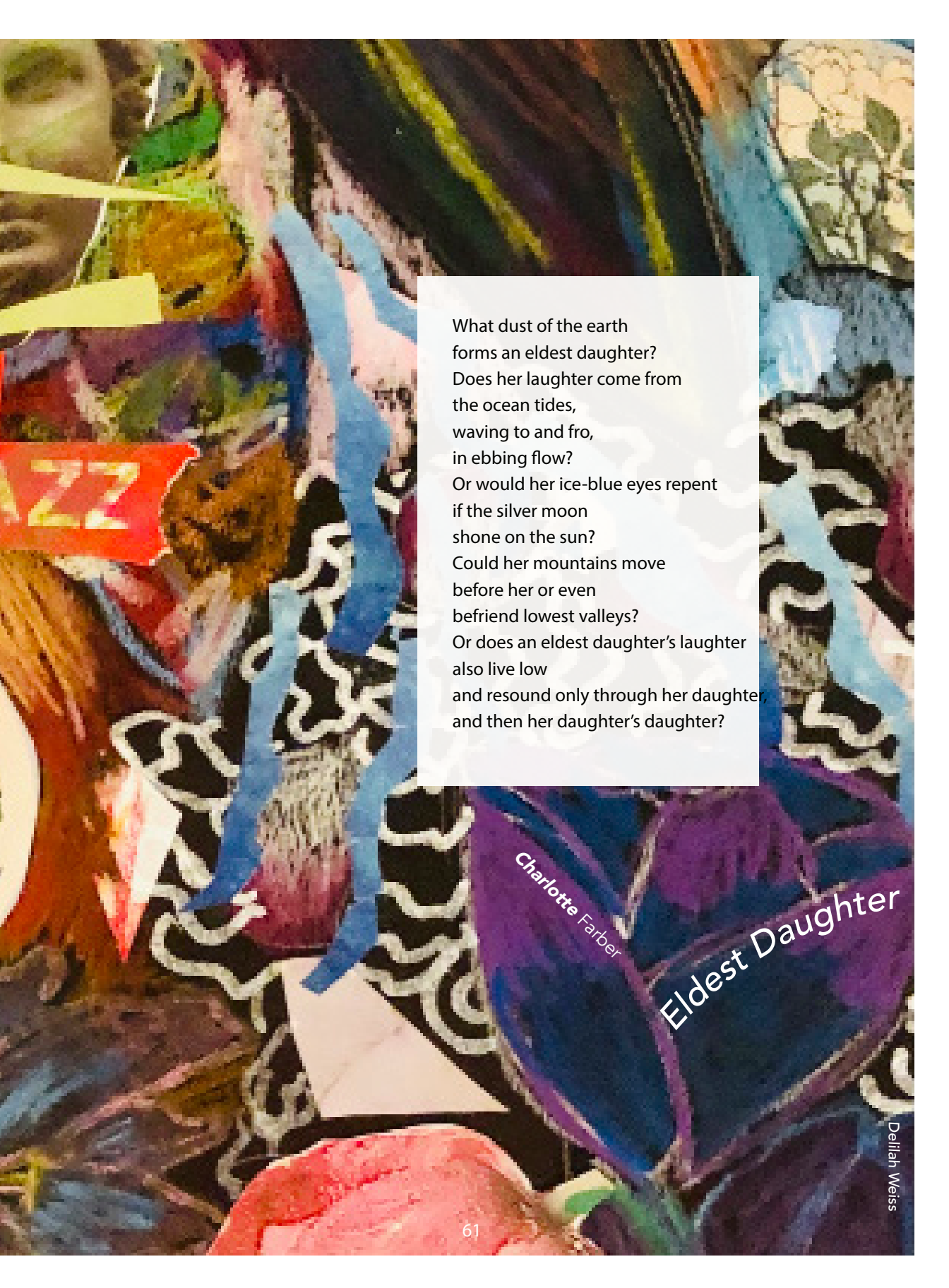
The youngest daughter stays overlooked. She's overshadowed and waits for her moment, but it never truly comes. She follows her older sister, waiting to gain her pride. Yet, she is always Just There. Never truly heard. Never really seen.

When the eldest is seen as accomplishing something, "why didn't she"? If the eldest gets different standards for her work, it's celebrated. Yet, the younger sister isn't praised for her consistent wins. Life doesn't work the way she wants. People don't truly care because everything has already been seen and done.

Though she is often ignored, she tries to do what's best for everyone. She stays thinking of others, putting them before herself. Because why would she need anything when she never really had anything? She smiles in the halls as people go by, friendly to all. She is friends with everyone but no one's first choice.

She gives gifts to everyone she meets, hoping that one person will show her some appreciation. She does everything, but is told she's done nothing, and should be more. The oldest is the third parent, the helping hand and the undervalued. But being described as undervalued just shows how much people value you. Unlike the youngest.

The youngest just wants to be her own person, but stays a shadow.



What dust of the earth
forms an eldest daughter?
Does her laughter come from
the ocean tides,
waving to and fro,
in ebbing flow?
Or would her ice-blue eyes repent
if the silver moon
shone on the sun?
Could her mountains move
before her or even
befriend lowest valleys?
Or does an eldest daughter's laughter
also live low
and resound only through her daughter,
and then her daughter's daughter?

Charlotte Farber

Eldest Daughter

Delilah Weiss

Everywhere

Covered in magic.
Our voices carry
Into the air

Of gold.
The sun in the sky,
The light on our skin,
The glow in my heart
All around and within

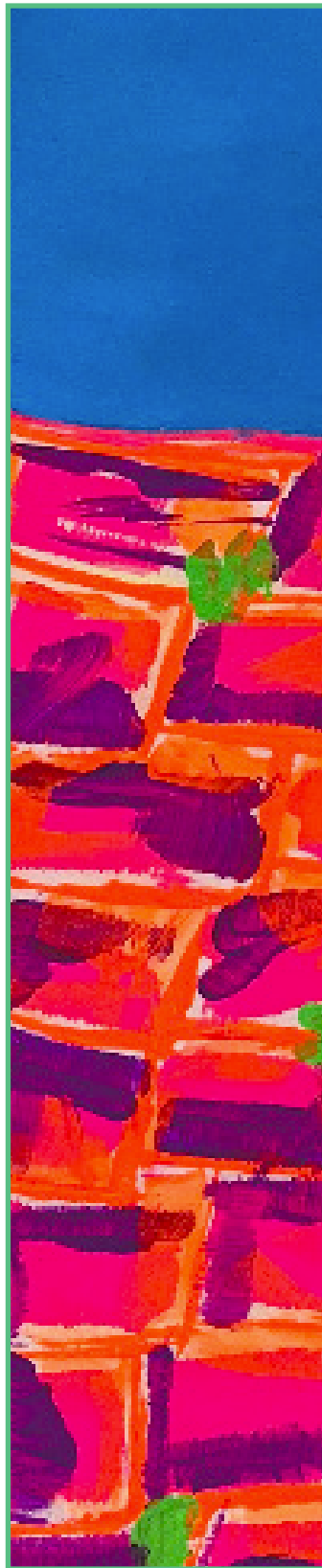
Of copper.
The smell of a warming fire,
My skin in a bronze flush,
The walks and talks,
The jumps and leaps,
As we take in the rush

Of light,
Drifting slowly from moment to moment,
Singing as the sky turns to gold.
The light is within each of us
Even as we grow old.

For all your songs,
I listen and sing,
Never forgetting the sweet memories attached,
The feeling of togetherness in the music.
The pieces fit, the ones I previously lacked.

I am your violin,
Spreading your beauty,
Carrying you with me
Wherever I go,
Never forgetting any lesson,
Getting me through my highs and lows.

Oh, how I long for my Jerusalem
Whenever I look at the stars in the sky,
Dreading those last moments,
Wishing I didn't have to say goodbye.





My Jerusalem

Tzipi Slonim

Sarah Cohen



Palimpsest

Eleanor Goldfarb

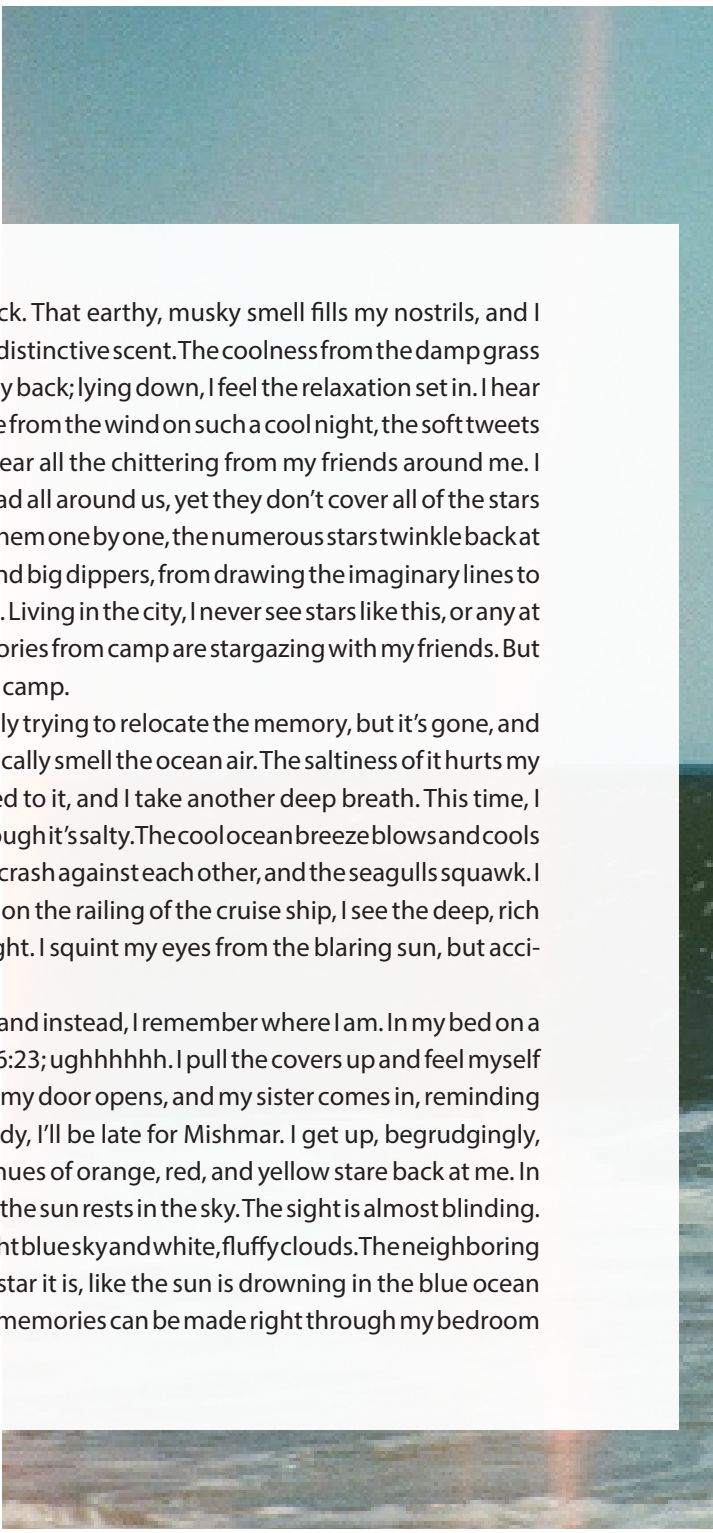
I've been told that I must leave a mark on this world,
Something final to be remembered by,
Like footprints on fresh concrete that harden firm.
But then I remember the road I'm on is simply covered in worn
pavement,
Concealing its past travels,
For in truth, this road is asphalt that has crumbled under the weight
of many actions.
After all, it was once cobblestone,
A place where horseshoes clinked and clanked,
A dusty path,
And before that a field where grasses were playful and wild.
And so I know my road will be walked on a million times.
The heavy clouds will release their long-held rain,
And it will go pitter-patter.
Potholes will form and fill
Until they sink into the mud and are swallowed up.
Then again, youthful grasses will spring up, and dandelions will
bloom.

Map Eleanor Goldfarb

I used to really love geography.
The jigsaw puzzles of the countries,
How they all clicked into place so perfectly.
I could pick one up, examine the border that made each
their own,
Run my hand over the bumps in admiration.
Then let it slide back in
With a slow whoosh like a perfect half-court shot.
I had one in sphere form, too, that I could watch turn
round and round for hours,
Run my finger over it, feeling the sharp line where the
halves come together.
Was it a fluke in creation?
I didn't know which was more real, the flat or the round
one,
Nor what truly went on in all these different places—
Not that I care, though.
I always wondered how small I would need to be to fit
inside,
For I could spread my hand out across half of Europe.
When I had tired after a long day of play, my eyes would
water,
And the bright, individual colors would melt into one.
A kaleidoscope would form as I drifted into a world that
didn't exist on the map.
Other times, I would take little army men and let them
run free and conquer the land.
But in my heart, I knew I was the queen over the earth.



Theresa Schreiner



I close my eyes, and I'm back. That earthy, musky smell fills my nostrils, and I inhale deeply, getting drunk on that distinctive scent. The coolness from the damp grass seeps through the towel and onto my back; lying down, I feel the relaxation set in. I hear all the wildlife around me, the whistle from the wind on such a cool night, the soft tweets from birds, and the loud crickets. I hear all the chattering from my friends around me. I look up at the trees hanging overhead all around us, yet they don't cover all of the stars and constellations. While I examine them one by one, the numerous stars twinkle back at me. Immediately, I locate the small and big dippers, from drawing the imaginary lines to connect the stars into constellations. Living in the city, I never see stars like this, or any at all, and I am in awe. My favorite memories from camp are stargazing with my friends. But then, I open my eyes and I'm not in camp.

I close them again, frantically trying to relocate the memory, but it's gone, and in its place is a vast ocean. I can practically smell the ocean air. The saltiness of it hurts my nose for a second, but then I get used to it, and I take another deep breath. This time, I taste the salt and embrace it, even though it's salty. The cool ocean breeze blows and cools down the sweltering sun. The waves crash against each other, and the seagulls squawk. I look at the sight before me. Leaning on the railing of the cruise ship, I see the deep, rich blue of the ocean, with no land in sight. I squint my eyes from the blaring sun, but accidentally open them.

I don't close my eyes again, and instead, I remember where I am. In my bed on a Monday morning. I look at the time: 6:23; ughhhhhh. I pull the covers up and feel myself getting pulled back into sleep. Then my door opens, and my sister comes in, reminding me that if I don't get up and get ready, I'll be late for Mishmar. I get up, begrudgingly, and look out the window. Different hues of orange, red, and yellow stare back at me. In the middle of all the beautiful chaos, the sun rests in the sky. The sight is almost blinding. The warm colors complement the light blue sky and white, fluffy clouds. The neighboring buildings surround the sun like the star it is, like the sun is drowning in the blue ocean of the sky. I realize all of my beautiful memories can be made right through my bedroom window.



Sea, Stars, Sky

Sylvie Weiss

Charlotte Chalme



Cookies or Cardboard?

Abigail Maksin

I once had a dream,
A vision of a masterful concoction—
Bananas, oats, eggs, yogurt.
Oh, where it went wrong,
I could never tell you.
I sat there.
Staring at the twisted mess
Of broken dreams laid out before me.
And while a naked eye could never tell,
Rest assured, my heart was there.

To my family I offered the poorly cut banana bread.
They accepted, no judgment in their eyes,
But just one bite
Said it wasn't right;
Their faces twitched in aversion.

To compare my work
To a piece of cardboard
Might make a little sense,
But the thought and effort
Will forever shine
Like glistening shades of gold.



In my mind, it's still 7:00pm.
I'm home from day camp
With freshly showered hair,
Blond from the sun,
That wets my itchy polyester Disney Princess nightgown,
Now soft from being washed so many times.

Tired, but content.
Disney Jr. on TV,
Barbies on the floor.

30 minutes until bed time.
Those 30 minutes are everything.

It's twilight outside.
A pink and orange glow fills the air.
The sky is almost dark,
But not quite.

I wish the sun would never set,
And I could exist
Between 7:00 and 7:30
Forever.

Forever Evening

Hannah Katz

Raquel Avitan

"I am not solitary whilst I read and write though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars." (Emerson, Nature) Lucian looks back into a dark alley, making sure he is alone. The air has a slight chill, causing him to feel anxious. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out his cash (a rarity these days when money is all virtual), and re-counts it, hoping to calm his nerves. A couple of minutes pass and the man Lucian came to see shows up. He didn't give a name, just the time and place to meet him.

The man whispers, "You have the money?" "Uh, yes, I do... here," Lucian says as he hands him the cash. The man grabs it rather aggressively and counts it. Once he is satisfied, he pockets the bills and pulls out the small tubes of paint: red, blue, and yellow, just enough to make all the other colors. Lucian takes the paint and before he can put the paints away, the man is gone. He looks around again just to make sure and then heads home. The lights of the skyscrapers around him are almost blinding, reminding him of the society where he lives. Ever since the world became fully virtual, society has lacked culture and individual expression.

Lucian turns the corner into his small brownstone, one of the few that remain. Soon it will probably get demolished and a tall skyscraper will be built in its place, forcing Lucian to move to one of the cookie-cutter apartments he saw on the way home. The minute he gets home he has the desire to paint. Lucian goes down to his basement where he creates his art. He walks down the rickety staircase to find his studio waiting for him. A makeshift easel is propped up in the corner with his past work hanging on the walls next to it. Bits and pieces of charcoal are here and there, paint brushes worn down, a bucket in the corner collecting rainwater. Although his "antique"

house is simple, it's perfect for Lucian's chosen lifestyle. He owns few possessions, only the bare necessities and his art supplies, of course. The world keeps evolving, and trends come and go, but Lucian focuses on his passions: painting and drawing.

Lucian remembers a time before technology ruled the world, when nature blossomed and people appreciated it. He dips his paintbrush into his new tube of yellow and mixes it with some blue to create the perfect color of grass. He thinks back to when he was a child going fishing with his father. The slight breeze rustled the blades of grass beneath his feet. Lucian varies the intensity of his brush strokes to display the grass's movement. He pictures the sun shining, creating little sparkles of light on the water. Using white and different shades of blue, Lucian captures the lake. Lucian remembers the pure happiness he felt when he caught his first fish. He projects that feeling into his painting.

Even though no one is with him, Lucian doesn't feel lonely. He feels the most fulfilled when he is painting. Nature is his greatest muse. Lucian often thinks that besides him, the whole world has forgotten about nature. It practically doesn't exist anymore; humans have drained the earth of its natural resources to build more machines. The gradual process happened in the blink of an eye. Lucian's farm (where he was born and raised) was seized for government projects. Lucian relocated to the city where there's not even a single leaf blowing anywhere. Humans are slaves to technology. It's only a matter of time until Artificial Intelligence assumes full control. As if it hasn't already, Lucian thinks. Art forms are nearly extinct because of AI capabilities, making it hard to come by art materials. Lucian finishes his painting and hangs it up to dry. He then eats a light dinner and goes to bed. He dreams about his childhood,

Stars

Delilah Weiss

suddenly missing his mother and father.

The next day, Lucian goes about his usual routine of waking up, going to work, and coming home. He does very monotonous work. Doing one thing after another, Lucian feels like a robot when he is in the office. His only solace is when he comes home greeted by the smell of paint. Today Lucian wants to paint the night sky, but he can't remember the last time he saw stars, let alone found the constellations. Lucian goes up to the roof, thinking it might jog his memory, but he knows it's useless. The prevalent air pollution makes it impossible to see the stars. Lucian looks up and sees a blank sky, although not dark. The electronic light from the buildings around his house replaces the once-visible starlight.

Lucian closes his eyes and visualizes the stars dotting the evening sky. "If you ever find yourself alone, let the stars be your company. Look for the north star. It will guide you and will never disappear." His mother's words echo in Lucian's mind. Ever since his mother died, Lucian has looked for the stars. That sense of being in awe of the natural things around him was very comforting. That is part of the reason why Lucian paints, to capture nature's essence and appreciate it, which is getting harder and harder to do these days. It is getting chilly so Lucian goes back downstairs to work. He paints the view from his roof: swirls of black and blue behind the bold landscape of the city around him. He flicks his paintbrush on the canvas, scattering stars in the night sky. When he finishes, he hangs it up to dry and goes to bed. He falls asleep, dreaming of stars.

Lucian's coworker Ronald came over to him the next day at work, holding a flier.

"Did you hear about this? There's going to be an art exhibition at the center. They are holding it for the first time in a decade. The last time they had

one was..."

Lucian stopped paying attention at this point and took the flier from his hand. True enough, on Wednesday the Center for Technological Improvement was having an art show. Lucian, feeling intrigued, decided that he would go. He wondered what kind of art would be there. Would it be like his own secret paintings? Lucian often wondered what it would be like to showcase his art. This was an opportunity to see a real exhibit. "I think I'm going to go," Lucian said to his coworker.

"I'll see you there," Ronald replied.

Wednesday came and after Lucian got ready, he headed over to the center. It was a very fancy event; countless reporters and critics were there. He was in awe of the prestige and was optimistic about the art on display. Lucian was guided to the showroom and looked at the art. Before him were ten copies of the same scene, depicting the night sky, similar to Lucian's painting. But the paintings were bland; there was no emotion or variety. There was the same distance between each star, against a dark navy background. The description below the paintings read "Reaching for the Stars, AI art." Lucian looked around and saw the admiration in the faces of the viewers. Whispers around the room said, "These are extraordinary... I've never seen anything like it... so creative." Lucian couldn't believe it. The paintings had no creativity; they didn't evoke emotion. He needed to get out of there. Lucian pushed past the crowd gathered around the "extraordinary" paintings.

When he got home he came to a depressing conclusion: "Human expression is dead. The machines are in control now, and all I have to guide me are my imaginary stars."

The sky feels
Bigger today,
Like I can't
Escape it.

Everyone has a star
That looks out for them,
You told me once,
Protects them
Like a godmother.

I once tried swimming in the ocean,
But I found that
It was
Far too wide,
And I couldn't really get anywhere.

We went to the beach
And you taught me that
The sand was just rocks
Taken apart,
And you told me that
We're all just sand
Put together.

You always had a
Psalm to
Quote.

I went hiking yesterday
And sat on a mountain-ledge
And tried to feel that sublime
That the greats had written of,
But I couldn't get myself to feel
Small;
Everything around me just felt
Awfully big.

Psalm

Gabriel Flatto-Katz

We went for a walk in the woods
Once. You taught me
Which plants were
Edible and which leaves had fallen
From which trees.
And we stared at the
Vast forest and you
Taught me a
Verse or two
That explained everything.







Parallaxn.fr.Gkparallaxis, the apparent displacement of an observed object due to a change in the position of the observer.