

Dear Readers,

*Still water: when water stops flowing, becoming a hazard to the environment.*

As summer comes and goes, and water stills, we find ourselves standing stagnant in our lives. We look back at past summers with nostalgia, regret, grief. We find ourselves unable to move, tangled in the mossy waters of the human experience. The longer we dwell, stuck in these still waters, the more we deteriorate back into the past as the once healthy water becomes toxic, compromising the foundations we have built upon.

Desperate for release, we create; we string words into poems, feelings into art. We divulge ourselves into our poetry, pushing back against the still water that fights so desperately to hold onto us.

The Beacon is a student run literary journal created with the intent to create a writer's community that uplifts student voices. A special thank you to everyone who made this edition possible.

Sincerely,  
The Beacon

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## Drowned

*Ju Derraiik*

The peace lies by the water,  
she'd always preach to me.  
I am my mother's daughter

in case I have forgot. Her  
salty spit smacks through my teeth:  
in pieces by the water.

I used to call it fodder-  
my ruckus for the sea  
reminds me I am my mother's. "Daughter"

makes me shiver, waves at me to mock her.  
Her green and kelpy glee  
means the peace lies. By the water,

I ponder how I got here.  
The deep blue slimy truth: simply  
I am my mother's daughter.

I sink that I still want her  
into ocean, finally.  
I find here, by the water  
peace, from my mother's daughter.

In the drawer a prayer card rests,

*Camille Morocco*

the captured photograph of my grandfather,  
with a verse on the back I have never read.  
In my grandfather's desk lies a printed image  
of his mother's father, colored only in black and white. Though,  
I recall he never looked at the portrait either.

My complexion is a slight olive, hair dark brown and curled.  
Mother (pale and freckled) and father (tan) wonder  
why my hair has a twist, skin hardly burns, and I have lips  
different than theirs. Perhaps, it is my predecessors  
whom I must give credit to.

My great-grandmother brushes long, skeletal  
fingers through the damp mass of my hair  
as it rests for the evening on my cotton pillowcase.  
Perhaps she sees herself.

My great-grandfather watches as my skin  
develops into a darker fawn while the sun strokes  
my stomach. Perhaps he sees himself.

My mother hears her voice  
every time I convince myself to speak.  
When I decide to throw the deep  
anchor in my stomach  
besides my mind.  
Perhaps she sees herself.

My father watches me run  
on the asphalt—the solid ground  
hold still as my body slides over.  
He sees my shoulder in blood,  
he is not afraid. Perhaps he sees himself.

I see myself, naive and restless.  
I see my boisterous laugh (a roar),  
and pull the curl out of my hair when I become  
too nervous. For I see myself, naive and restless.  
For they see me, a mirror.

## I Love Your Eyes

*Lucas Dantas Leite*

They

Surprise me in the dark,  
the white lies behind  
a dull cornea, beloved  
memories of white and brown  
sheep, you frown in pink  
and blue lips which sink  
below expression.  
A solemn confession like the fur of a mink.

Kiss me pink and blue,  
I love your eyes.

Through them,  
I can see grazing sheep in the farm in the distance.  
I see burly men in the sun under coconuts,  
sweat-fueled parodies of dreams lit by moonlight.  
Now, under twilight,  
the glimmering specs of star in your stare,  
blank but brownish perfect.

You  
wink but disappear,  
lips far too near,  
pink but blue and free,  
the white eyes which speak to  
the bright speckled engravings in the sky.

Perhaps I have found the perfect clue,  
I love your eyes.

Yet

Who is the fleshy man to love a perfect thing?  
Hollow pink things; no, the eyes are not holy.  
Perfect blue strangers which scan but never know me,  
the foolish white eyes, they kiss the night back.  
I may lack much good tact,  
but I love those eyes,  
I shall love them for now.

Kiss me now, whichever hue;  
kiss me before  
I see through to you.

## The San Clemente pier

*Mikey Ma*

Colossal motion, three of four sides  
What do fractions matter, all I see is blue  
I let myself sink into the violence in my spirit  
And weigh the cost of diving into the water

I do not know to leave  
How to turn around and forward  
The violence is self-pity and astonishment  
At the things I have done, and the things I have let be done to  
me

*I used to come here every summer with \_\_\_\_\_ to their step-grandmother's beach house. She is beautiful. Inappropriately younger than her husband. Far too youthful to be a grandmother. She is Kate, not grammy. The walls behind her are birch logs and photos of a family she arrived too late to. The home is split in two halves by a courtyard, in the center a gas-powered fire pit overlooks the water. \_\_\_\_\_ and I talk there for hours. I cannot conceptualize them causing me pain.*

We climbed down concrete stairs  
Railing, peeling paint  
I took their picture in the water (i still have it)  
We were frozen toes in the Pacific Ocean

Light and innocent on the shore  
They are bigger than me by 4 inches  
Strong enough to contort my body  
Beautiful enough to make plans for it

We tried to kiss but God was watching  
I wasn't allowed to the beach house anymore

Their mom said they are sick this weekend  
And the next, and the next

I hope today they make themselves so sick they bleed  
When they remember my body (they still have it)  
I hope today I see them  
And get to love them so hard I eat them whole

*I close my eyes and breathe in the aroma of my special meal. I am taking in the beautiful variety of flavor: spice and sweetness and salt and cream. I am the luckiest person alive, because of all the people you let love you, you choose (to fuck) me. I am special because of my proximity to the center of the universe. I take a bite. It is soft and there's a bone at the center but I swallow. I have never had this kind of meat before but it tastes just like how love has been described to me. I swallow 5 pieces. They dissolve into the warmth in my stomach when I am proud of you for easy things. I have five more then I have ten more then I have two big ones then two more big ones and soon I realize I do not have any extremities and you are laughing at me and taking a video. I say that was a mean trick but your eyes are the only eyes that have ever seen me without my extremities and you gave me my car and I have known you since fourth grade so I let you say sorry and continue.*

sun tea

*Ellie Goldberg*

black ink swirls on the page like tea bags in warm water.  
i steep solemnly into the spot i work best.  
foolishly, i spill myself between ruled lines  
and i lap them up, thirsty as always.  
why do i only honor trauma ?  
i am a pity tea party  
pleased to be burnt again  
pinky up to no one  
im subtle at best...  
bitter at worst.  
suffering :  
it brews  
prose.

六輪の花 Six Flowers

*Ryan Trostle*

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オレンジの花 Orange Blossom

The orange blossom,  
Whose tart fruit rounds full from warmth,  
Yet still blooms in snow

---

ゆり Lily

Red lily petals  
Fall dead, trampled underfoot.  
My heart snaps with them.

---

菖蒲 Iris

Like a blue iris  
I stand in wait, catching dew.  
How long the dawn feels

---

ライラック Lilac

The lilac's reborn  
With aroma anew but  
Only I grow old.

---

蜂須の花 Lotus

The tranquil lotus  
Rides waves and searches for sun  
As jaws rip below.

## Cherry Chapstick

Kayla Petroski

in the summer's heat,  
beneath the golden sun,  
a cherry i plucked  
from your lips.

With the stem still intact,  
i raised it to mine.  
one bite, and my teeth are covered  
in crimson juice; liquid gold down my throat.

you laughed as it trickled down,  
a playful sound.  
with squinted eyes, i see you  
with your cherry-stained lips.

i drink you in  
like cherry wine, sweet and tart,  
You, a sight of beauty,  
in hues of pink and red.

and as the sun began to set,  
casting hues of amber and gold, like cherries  
entwined, you covered me in nature's gift,  
cherry chapstick, untold.

## I Turn Myself On

*Katie McHugh*

Two fingers outstretched, running  
Victory laps within me, you're  
As triumphant as every man who came  
Before, and I can see, clear as day,  
That you turn yourself on.

Let's be honest, it's not actually you  
That turns you on; it's my reaction to you—  
The way my toes curl, my insides contort,  
And my nails carve racetracks into your back.  
How my hips mimic the curve of an hourglass,  
Only softer, and if you press the right button,  
The timer flips over and over again.

You don't sweat the sprint,  
Pride plunging from your neck like a medallion.  
The silver is sharp on my tongue  
As I lap up my reflection.  
But what you don't know,  
What your tired male mind couldn't  
Possibly understand, is that I also ran  
This race—in fact, I'm already  
At the finish line—because (guess what?)  
I turn myself on, too.

we both turned 18.

*Kamya Parekh*

that night  
after playing whack-a-mole at the local arcade  
and stuffing pizza into our faces  
you asked me, laughing  
when will we grow up?

i told you, i already did.

while your years flew by so fast  
parties and high-school drama and teenage love  
desert sand slipping through your fingers as time fled,  
my sand decided to go down my throat instead.  
the same years choked me slowly  
misery inching down my windpipe and then flowing out of my  
eyes  
making me fight for every breath i took  
making me remember every orange pill bottle and hospital room.

while your tapestry of memories  
adorns your bedroom wall  
mine hangs from the ceiling fan,  
a noose  
beckoning me to end it all.

so don't sit there with ketchup on your face  
your laughter too loud  
your smile a little too wide  
and ask me about growing up.  
you glanced away for a second  
and i lived a thousand lifetimes.  
i've run too far ahead while you stopped to smell the roses and

now when you look up  
you can't see me anymore.  
you stopped seeing me a long time ago.

i wipe my greasy hands  
on my pants  
and offer to pay you back for the pizza  
as though it would make up for  
what i was about to do next,  
your laughter stopped  
your smile dimmed  
i broke your heart  
just because mine was already in tatters.

i looked back and called out  
**this** is what growing up is  
and you told me to  
go to hell.



Soon I'll be numb to the feeling.

*Kit Iyer*

I drank too much last night, my head  
hurts. An alarm in an apartment far away  
is ringing and I don't know what to do.

I was having the night of my life  
last night. I was just hanging around,  
feet in the air,

when a stranger gave me a cigarette  
as a joke. I lit it up and held the smoke  
in my mouth.

I think if I really let anyone in on the fun I was having,  
it might not have been as much fun.

I didn't used to be this way.  
Maybe I went too east,  
too close to the ocean.

Where I'm from, in the midwest, I'm landlocked,  
surrounded by deer. They walk through yards  
after they've had big fights,

bashing their heads together until one of them  
gets stuck. You'll hear it late at night,  
a slight crash like a racoon digging in a trash can.

And in the morning you'll see it, the winning warrior  
walking, unveiling his prize,  
a dead head mounted in his antlers,

and somewhere else, innards on display.  
I used to fight a lot. I'd wrestle my brother  
until I hit puberty, I'd wrangle my mother  
until I got lonely.

The only prize I ever won was some  
lonesome fun and a burnt left lung.  
Now I fight never, not even with myself,

yet I still put myself through hell. I mean it's fun,  
it really is, but this headache, this cough,  
it's all a little too much.

I can fend it off till daylight comes,  
but the ringing, constant ringing,

I can't go on forever not fighting this feeling.

## Home's Horticulture

*Kate Bourlakas*

Plant me here  
In Tennessee.  
Let me be  
Enfolded in its immortal bloom,  
Suffused with the fibers of my memories.  
Memories that sprawl the landscape,  
Lush with life,  
And fertilize the soil with rich affection.  
They climb the nearby trees,  
Multiplying with every branch,  
And in my chest, I feel them tumble  
Down the surrounding slopes.  
Laughter echoes in the hills:  
Childhood's melody.  
This melody made more beautiful  
With my heart song's duet—  
A mockingbird performance.  
I melt into this music  
That saturates the humid cloak  
Blanketing me atop the terrain.  
And as I lay here,  
The grass entangles me,  
And the rich smell of the earth  
Grounds me within it.  
The sun washes over my soul,  
And the rain strengthens my roots.  
I am renewed;  
I grow, transcend,  
And I bloom:  
A Tennessee flower, home again.

## Shiva's dance.

*Kit Iyer*

Sitting in the back of my dusty  
bin of a mind  
is the great destroyer of all that could  
be mine.

This is his dance.

He stalks over snakes and stones,  
he kicks, he bows. He leaps  
over running river rapids  
as they flood through the trees  
and other earthly things dwelling in my mind

until he's reached his stopping point.  
Where sun meets sky  
and rocks are alive, he prepares for  
his final pose,

surrounded by a ring of fire.

He's killed all that he's seen  
'till all that's left  
is me,

my mind, my soul,  
memories hidden deep.

With his foot lifted in the air,  
his body striking and ready,

he tells me “nothing lasts  
forever”

and then he kills me in my sleep.

## Monsoon

*Kismet Singh*

rain is my sisters and I dancing with the worms,

collecting them slimy and wet in buckets  
to terrorize pinki didi

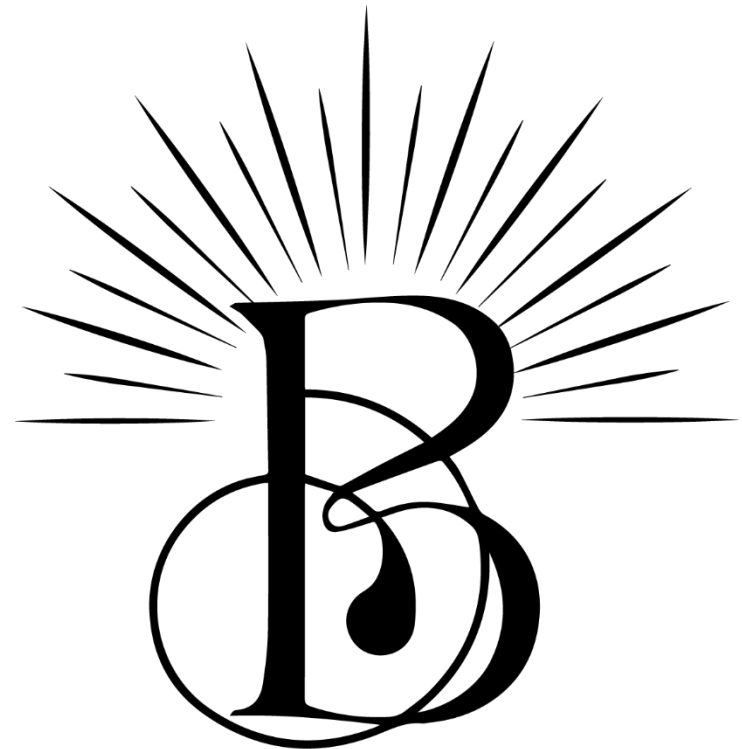
*- we were little monsters mama won't let us forget -*  
teeming, turning up the skirts of ladies and  
aunties, slamming open their doors to let  
their paled breasts breathe a wind of bareness  
when we weren't locking them in closets with little-girl hands—

but is that so worse yet  
than when pinki didi tossed the wet rice with her fingers grazing  
the sterile steel silver like  
a khanda or dinner spoons in which bugs gnawed  
ants crawled each grain, eating their heaven out heartily I saw  
them feast in their little  
bodies, trembling in the shallow water, the rice bath unscorched  
yet turned milky pale,

*my maladaptive gaze caught?*  
“(keerdi, keerdian)” I, small, spoke  
“no, no” it's coriander seed, (*dbanya*), she said she  
might've been right  
though I was unconvinced  
when I brought mammy down to inspect and sure enough,  
the insects exalted were spread among these grains,  
these bol weevil bugs of coriander  
consuming their claim, their new estate, but spared  
like us now, of being our supper—

but it was like the worms, they squirmed cylindrical, their fleshy  
bodies lined like wedding

bangles to my mother's wrists, like inedible tree rings  
the yolk of your young eyes and childhood like an (unda), fixing  
to fry.



**BEACON**

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