

# The Noisy Water Review

*Whatcom Community College*



**2023**

# *The Noisy Water Review*



A WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE SHOWCASE OF  
STUDENT WORKS, INCLUDING NONFICTION, POETRY,  
FICTION, AND VISUAL ARTWORK OF ALL KINDS.

BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON  
JUNE 2023

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Published by Whatcom Community College  
Bellingham, Washington.

Produced in Adobe InDesign; typset in Libre Baskeville.  
Printed by WCC's Copy, Print & Mail Services  
*Whatcom Horizon* funding provided by ASWCC

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# Introduction



Welcome to the *Noisy Water Review*, Whatcom Community College's anthology of student work including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and various forms of artwork. This is our revival edition, as it is the first edition we've produced since 2015.

These works represent some of the creative talents WCC students have to offer, and we're so excited to share them with you. Every day at our college, students demonstrate their passion, skill, and growth as they dedicate themselves to the practice of learning. And while individual instructors have the opportunity to revel in their creations, we don't often have time to come together as a community and appreciate what we have achieved.

I use the term "we" here purposefully. Many of the works in this anthology were produced under the guidance of an enthusiastic instructor who has nurtured students' talents and encouraged them to share their voice with the world. College administration and staff also work to create a space with accessible resources and support. Our hope is that students feel they have a space to continue growing into the people they see glimpses of in their futures; we hope they are happy and healthy, and that they see a pathway inclusive of space for their spirit; and we hope that they find opportunities to participate in community here.

In truth, we are still a fractured community. The past few years have brought many challenges, but have also revealed existing ones that were already there but hidden under the everyday operations of our society. Students are worried about these challenges and their futures; they are worried about systemic injustices; they are worried about global climate change; they are worried about poverty and mental well-being and housing and rising schism. I can see many of their worries here in the works we are highlighting in this journal.

So let us celebrate their voices! Let us celebrate the idea of healing, and of rising up to create a healthier, more mutually supportive and joyful community. I hope you enjoy these pieces as much as I have, and if you are interested in joining us in the future, please reach out. We can certainly use further support as we work together to create this space for celebration. We hope to see you next year!

Joanna Kenyon  
Contingent Faculty  
English Department



### *The Bait of Iris*

Tyson Higel

My eyes won't avert,  
can't avert,  
from the eyes of you  
that hooked me like bait in the deluge  
of us all, a trench of hurt feelings  
and tissue in motion.

Your current is rushing past mine,  
and between  
the passing faces,  
we share a silent harmony  
while onward-tracing the lines,  
moving with feet and purpose.

Our fixed eyes only flounder  
as we pass one another,  
swept away in the surge.  
And as we converge,  
intersecting at the shoulder,  
a profound urge swells in me  
to say something.

But I don't.  
There are plenty of fish in the sea.

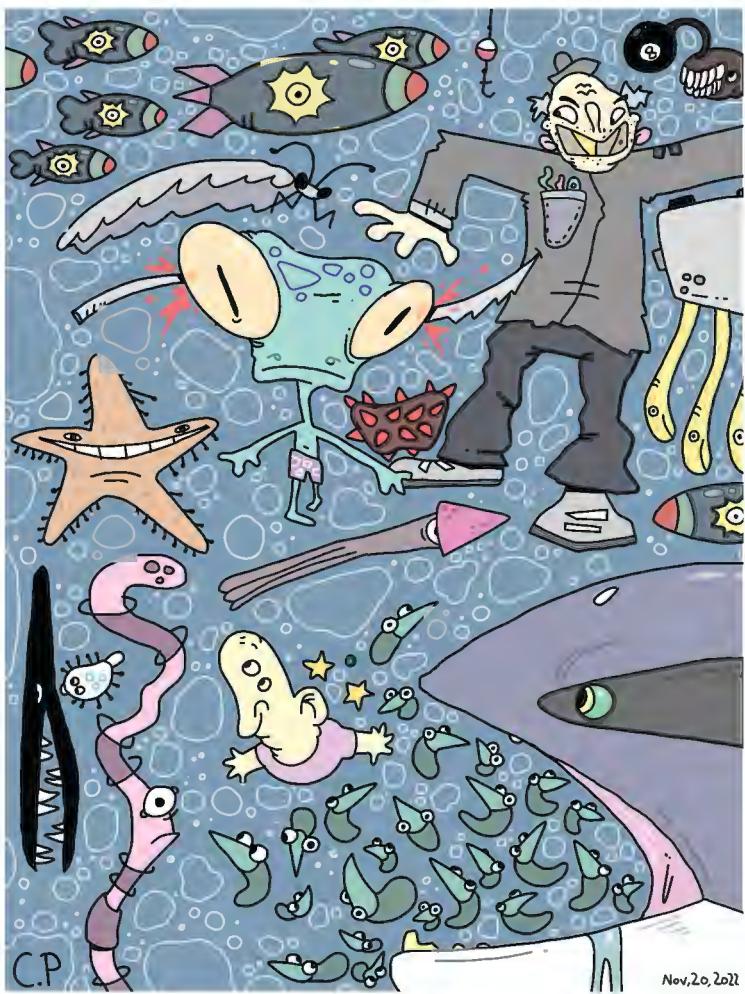




*In Exchange for Everything*

Theo Neville

Linocut Print



*Gone Fishing*  
Carter Pratt  
Illustration

Nov. 20, 2022

## *It's Time to Remove the Dalles Dam*

Rylan Samuelsen

Sixty-six years ago, on March 10, Celilo Falls which made even the mighty Niagara seem weak, were silenced by the newly opened Dalles Dam. For the Army Corps of Engineers, March 10, 1957, was a day to be celebrated. Dalles Dam, one of the most powerful dams in the United States, would become operational creating a substantial increase in the Columbia River's capacity to produce electricity and move goods. For the Plateau tribes who used to inhabit the Falls, it was a day of indescribable loss.

Also referred to as Wy-am, Celilo Falls had been continuously inhabited by numerous tribes for well over 9,000 years. The Falls served as a place of gathering for thousands of Native Americans from a countless number of tribes. Every year goods from all over western North America would be traded at the Falls. Salmon was abundant, and for the tribes who used to inhabit the Falls, salmon was and still is more than a food to sustain life. To them, salmon is a vital part of their religion as well as the center of one of the year's most important ceremonies. Archaeological evidence has shown that the salmon's importance dates back to when the Plateau tribes first inhabited the area. But, when the government-built dams such as the Dalles, Celilo Falls and the abundant salmon which served the Plateau tribes for millennia would be no more. Although salmon are still found in the river their populations have been decimated and they no longer swarm the river like they once did. To the Plateau tribes, the loss of the Falls represents a degradation of both their physical and spiritual way of life.

Yet even though the Falls have been buried under the Columbia's water for decades, members of the Plateau tribes have not forgotten the importance of Celilo

*continued →*

Falls. Speaking to the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Olney Patt Jr. a member of the Warm Springs tribe said, “It’s very sad that there are fewer and fewer people who actually experienced Celilo.” To him and many others each year that passes without the Falls represents an ever-increasing opportunity for his tribe to lose touch with its cultural roots.

But through all this, Olney and many others refuse to lose hope. Despite being submerged for decades sonar scans in 2008 have shown that the Falls remain remarkably intact. They were not destroyed by the Army Corps of Engineers as rumors had suggested, nor was there even a large silt deposit from decades of being submerged. Put simply, if the Dam was removed today the Falls would return to their pre-1957 state. In addition, removing established hydroelectric dams is not a new concept. As recently as December of 2022 Oregon and California announced a plan to remove four dams along the Klamath River.

Of course, a potential proposal to remove the Dalles Dam would not be without opposition. Opponents point out that the Dam is one of the largest hydroelectric dams in the United States and every year upwards of ten million tons of cargo pass through its lock. They argue that removing the ability to transport goods through Dalles Dam would greatly increase transportation costs for goods produced in the region. And while these are legitimate concerns, the need for barges to transport products farmed and produced in eastern Washington and Oregon can easily be replaced with an increased rail network. Additionally, the loss of green hydroelectric energy can be replaced with an ever-increasing variety of new renewable technology. Technological advancements in areas such as geothermal power or even safer nuclear plants could replace the energy production capabilities lost by removing the Dalles Dam. While the problems presented by removing the Dalles Dam may be major there is no shortage of cost-effective time-proven solutions.

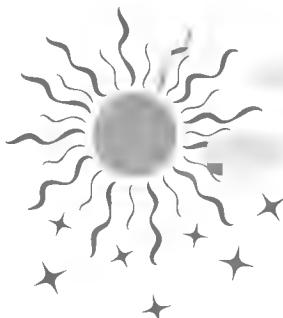
At the end of the day, the loss of trade and power production that comes with removing the Dalles Dam can be remedied with money. The cultural and historical

losses created by the Dam's continued existence, however, cannot be. March 10 marked the sixty-sixth year since the Falls were buried beneath the Colombia and rendered uninhabitable. Before then the Falls had been a renowned and abundant fishing ground for thousands of years. To the members of the Plateau tribes who continuously occupied the area, the Falls were and will continue to be an important piece of their cultural heritage.

The question is not should we remove Dalles Dam and restore a waterfall? Rather the question is should we allow one of the Plateau tribes' most important cultural and historical sites to remain underwater? Should we allow a site that is as important to its former inhabitants as Jerusalem and was inhabited longer than any ancient Egyptian city to remain buried?

In light of our technological capability to remove and replace the Dam, it is clear that the answer must be no, we cannot allow Celilo Falls to remain underwater. The Falls were such an integral part of the Plateau tribes' way of life and every year that passes without the Falls further erases that way of life. Dalles Dam must be removed not to restore a waterfall but rather to restore a way of life that is quickly and involuntarily fading. While the Dam is important to the region its loss can be easily replaced with other pieces of infrastructure. On the other hand, once the way of life created by the Falls is gone it cannot be replaced. It is not too late to restore the Falls, but every generation of Native Americans that grow up without the Falls is one generation that is closer to losing the way of life found only at Celilo Falls.





*Autumnal Cliche*

Tyson Higel

Cliché, I know,  
but I'm writing it anyway.

There I am, sitting in the classroom,  
looking out the window.  
It's autumn in full fledge,  
and you know what I see:  
Maroon and golden leaves  
on tall-standing trees, blowing in the  
wind.  
And you know how it goes:  
It's hard to reconvene your mind  
to the classroom inside.  
But I try, and do,  
and learn about DIC  
and coronary artery disease.  
And then, after class,  
I forget it all,  
remembering only the cliché scene  
outside the window,  
and write this poem.

## *Winter Solstice*

Sydney A. Durst

At this time of night, I-5 looks the closest it ever will to I-45 and that thought makes you realize how you've compartmentalized the places you've been into highways, exit signs, and roadside directions. The trees are what prevent you from fully indulging your imagination. So, in the dead of winter, you find other ways to get lost in your head. You roll the windows down even though it's forty degrees and you play music loud enough to no longer hear the rattle in your car.

You're sure that Olympia could hear you coming well before exit 104 was even a thought in your mind. The distance between there and Centralia is long enough to justify driving 75 mph even as you think about your Mother's flinch as you take the curbs even faster. A thirty-minute drive can be reduced to fifteen when you work the night shift and always come home at two in the morning.

It's still the two o'clock hour when you slowly pull into the parking lot of the extended inn. By this time, you've had to stop at a red light, so your music has been turned down to the point where you know the inhabitants won't complain. Still, when you park and turn the music off, the silence seems deafening. It's the first time in almost twelve hours you've had to experience a moment of silence and you find yourself immediately playing music on your phone as you let your seat back.

The windows haven't had the chance to frost at the pace you were driving, but parked and windows closed, you watch as they begin to turn opaque. And you watch your breath leave you as you exhale and mouth the words to the song that fills the car.

Winters, you discovered over the years, have always been hard. But in the Pacific Northwest where darkness creeps into the day earlier and earlier throughout the fall, only for you to realize that by December you've forgotten what the sun looked like – you discover that it can be devastating. It's a slow realization though. It was tucked away in extended

*continued →*

naps and skipping meals. Hidden underneath rubber bands you started wearing again so you could snap them against your wrist. Your brain had been slowly cracking in between the tensions of a global phenomenon and your faulty brain chemistry.

The question of whether it's possible to die of hypothermia in thirty-degree weather pushing to the forefront of your brain is what causes you to unlock the car doors. The surrounding area is completely obscured from view at this point. You stay though, continuing to lie there, wondering. Hoping. Then your phone rings and you see Mom flash across the screen and you hit decline out of a desperate sense of shame.

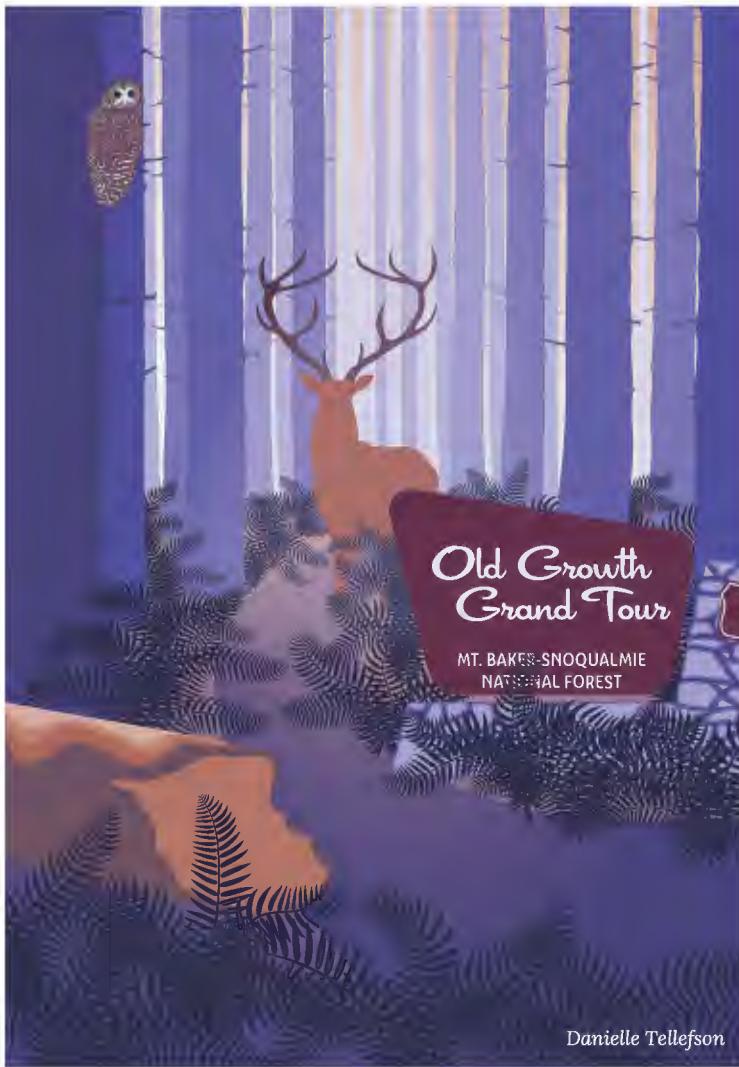
Then you get out of the car.



*Harbor*

Mathieu Soroka

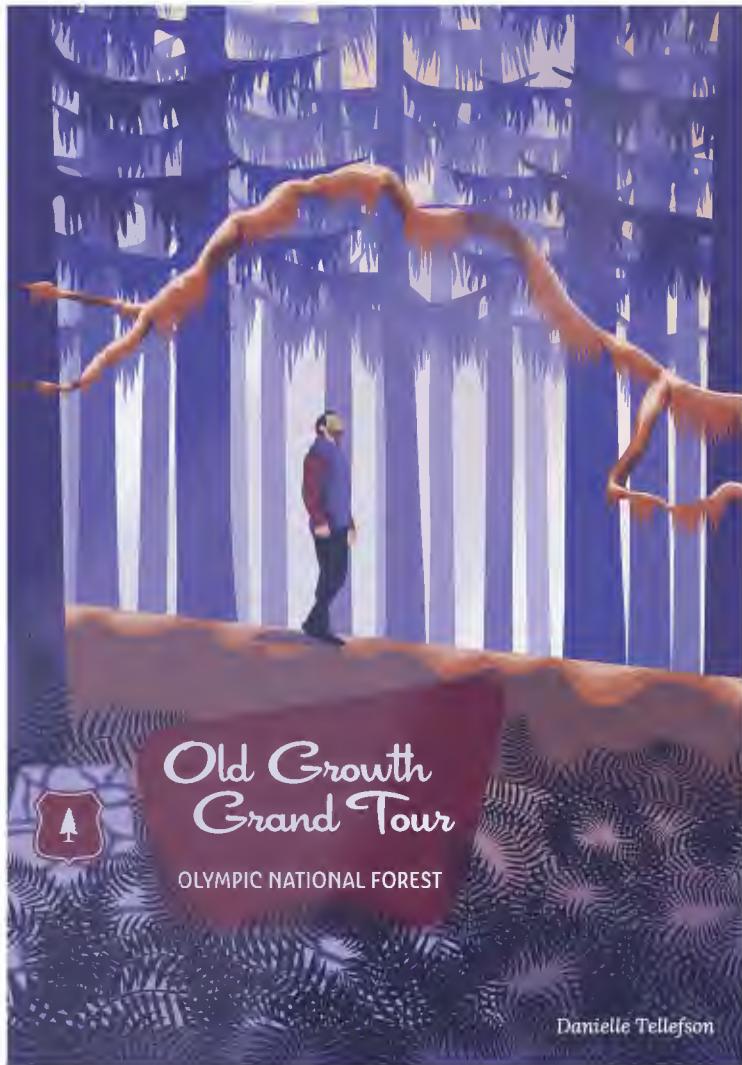
Drone Photograph



*Old Growth*

Danielle Tellefson

Poster Set - Created for Jeanne Broussard's Vector Illustration





*Rock Pool*  
Krystan Andreason  
Photograph

*The Fine Art of Being with Streams*

Katherine Thompson

The spring stream rushes and skitters over my feet. It's a deep cut in the Earth, stretching forward as far as the eager water is willing to scramble. The water is restless and it wants to move, wants to grow bigger and bigger, like all spring things. It's just cold enough to make me feel alive as I walk through it. I feel the ridges and bones of my feet on the ground, strange pale fish, and the river stones nestle into their arches, and suddenly I truly notice the feet that are attached to my legs. What a joy, for the stream to make me fully realize something so far down from my heart and my head.

Here, the strange wandering fish carry me further down with each step they take. I'm convinced I will find the heart of the Earth if I keep walking. A few more turns in the stream and I'm there. Here is the heart of the Earth, surely it must be, in this sunlight-drenched forest clearing. The air smells sweet, that old antique perfume that starts to poke itself out of all the forest crevices the moment spring starts. In summer the scent will be in full bloom, a heady scent that I can taste because it flavors the sky like tea leaves in water. It fills my head and makes my mind sweet. Me and my sweet head go walking through the heart of the world.

Here in the stream, the boy sets the leaf free. A green little canoe. He watches it travel through the water. He likes to watch it travel because he likes to imagine himself atop its light surface. The water grabs the leaf and carries it excitedly downstream, and the boy realizes that the water is excited because it has met the leaf, and the leaf is thrilled because it has met the water. There is too much frenzied running of the leaf on the water for it to be bogged down by any stones or branches. He sees it twist and tumble and barrel in and out of the water, a proper dancer. Droplets fall off its oiled back, and he wishes to become the leaf. He'd like to be free and inanimate, and not have to go back home as his mother calls him for dinner. She's gone into the forest to look for him because he's stayed out too long. As an

*continued →*

adult, he will remember that sunny summer evening as he walks through the bustling city street to his next meeting, and ponder how such an evening could have existed. How could the man who pushes and prods through the masses of people ever have had such a quiet evening, where all the quiet world had been laid out before him like a banquet?

A pioneer once slipped and fell into this same stream, a treacherous and deathly fall. He never woke up, and nature slowly ate him. The flies and the animals and the heat took their time, and by the third day he looked like a ripe berry there in the stream, red and shining in the rays of sun. Here he was soon fully devoured by the wild. All that's left of him became tattooed to the ground. A man who devoured life while living now becomes devoured in death. The devourer gives back to the devoured. His bones became rocks. I find one of them in the stream, and I wonder how alive one must have been to have such a bone-crushing death. What a brilliant death! I'd like to devour life, and if not die early, then lick my fingers on my death bed.

In the fall I walk alongside the stream and it leads me to its many secret places. There it is, a broken-one story house, come undone by autumn's spell. Will the Earth pocket my bones as well? The leaves rot and give themselves back to the Earth that made them. A rare thing to see, a mother who lives longer than her child. To be a child of the Earth, I think to myself. Does it care who you are? Is it partial to anyone? Does the stream bother to worry about the people that walk beside it and in it and all throughout it? I value inanimateness. I value calm and warm indifference, for in indifference no one points a finger at me, and on this November day, I feel free.

In the past, the stream wasn't always full of water. It became what it is today through swooping masses of rain. The stream drowned itself in rain and came alive again to become what it is today. The deer drank from the stream and the deer after it drinks from the same stream. The man walked in the stream, and his grandchild will too someday. My parents moved into their house near this stream, and before they moved in, years ago, the home was made. A wooden monument, veins, and bones of wood. A

neighborhood was created and the stream fed them all. The stream doesn't care who it feeds, and its beauty is rich.

Here lies the stream, and through it I walk. I want to follow its bends, and I don't want to fear. Who am I to fear something so beautiful? What a fool is the person who fears the beautiful. Behind brambles and under bridges and around trees I traverse, and the rocks become smoother and then again sharper underfoot. I have long since left the heart of the Earth, and I wonder, on my walk today, will the stream lead me back to the heart? The things the stream will choose to show me, I don't know. I trust where it leads. I can't think any more about where it will lead, because the stream shows me its present wonders. I must keep walking, and eventually I will reach the end of the stream. I wonder what it will look like once I get there. For now, the perfumes of the forest are rich today and I'm following the vein of the Earth.





## Kite Flying

Lia Tonella

I string my hope out on paper wings  
Held by a cross spine of wood  
Broken off of someone else's tree  
Their life bringing an inspiration  
To hold my own wants  
To the wind  
And see if they too  
Will fly  
A breeze wills my heart to soar  
Above clouds that rain doubt  
To drench my head in sorrowed thoughts  
So my desires fly higher  
too far to see  
But the string tells me they still are up there  
That the breeze has not given up on me yet  
The string of fraying rope connects  
Me to  
Me  
As I grip tightly  
To the yearning that festered so deep in my heart  
If it were to fly away  
I would have nothing to carry with me  
Nothing to show the sky  
That I do indeed dream of stars  
Even when clouds hide their light  
I let the wind caress my wish  
Hastily put together  
Paper and sticks  
For what else could hope be made out of  
But the most common and breakable of things  
I string my hope on paper wings  
And let the wind tell me  
If I still need to dream



### *Hostile Garden*

Sydney A. Durst

I've grown poisonous fruit in my womb  
sowed with cracked rotted seed  
that broke drought dried dirt  
some dared to call soil.

It took root despite my neglect  
watered from sweat and fear and se-  
no more can I say that I lack a green thumb  
could kill, a cactus—

Is what sprouts out of me  
sharp stiff thorns carving out my insides  
trail of blood that rings hollow  
imitating what soaks my hands.

I still carry that poisonous fruit inside me.  
its sickly-sweet smell permeating  
drought dried dirt  
no longer called soil.

*Shhhh*

Alina Zollfrank

You want silence so thick it  
forms a mist around your quiet self.  
Silence that caresses – that,  
with wispy breath, coos into  
your weary crown and robust root:  
settle, rest, it's alright.

You want silence so peaceful  
all songs words poems life  
are penned with ease and your  
wayward branches can sway into the evening  
while the spent sun kisses your angsty bark.

You want silence so forgiving it  
clears away the debris  
sweeps falling remnants of seasons past.  
Silence that covers up faded stories -  
also the twigs of fiercely blooming what-ifs.

You want silence so loving it  
cuts through the noise  
diffuses the cloud of self-doubt  
and, wordlessly, turns worry  
into growth and possibility.

You want spacious silence  
a luscious quiet that lulls you,  
wraps itself around you,  
the whole you, completely.

*Procrastination*

Matthew Waschke

The water of a river goes onward to the ocean  
Faster at points  
slower at others  
Full of life and full of vigor  
Rapids of white foam forming on top  
The current pushes toward its final destination  
But there are asides upon the way  
Flows of creaks and offshoots that divert  
Some of these creaks rejoin the main flow  
But some continue on their own, never to be met  
by the main flow  
Some through peaceful fields full of flowers covered  
in pollinating bees  
some through polluted muck, where even the stray  
sound of a frog's croak is rare

But all at the end connect to the ocean abroad  
to the full world, polluted or not  
its target is the same  
the world is full of oceans  
not all are clean



## *Waking Up (Depressed)*

Matthew Waschke



Every day I wake up in a bed

I lay and wait for the buildup of pressure in my head  
to subside

Pressure that is as subtle and gentle as the wind  
off a fruit fly's wings

Yet as stubbornly consistent as the spin of a computer fan  
Sometimes it takes a nudge or a push  
from the world around me

but the inner voice within my head screams like someone  
on a roller-coaster  
till I speak it aloud and give it my power

I resist

I look at my phone, see the time is 11 o'clock  
I mutter, "I'm terrible"

Finally giving into its power and turn back in my bed  
Laying up towards the sky, towards the heavens  
withheld by the manmade ceiling above me  
made of drywall and blue paint, above me lies proof  
of home  
yet in my mind I feel far away  
my eyes reclose for an instant sinking back into  
my mind

in the burst of a second  
my brain tells me all I could be  
and all I never will be  
a surge of motion, rushing like a car down I-5  
I remember my past  
The hell of my own creation  
Bitter like a pill with its coating removed  
And weighs down upon me  
Like a weighted blanket keeps the cold out  
on a January night

*continued →*

Finally I re-open my eyes once the second is up  
Time moves on  
it ebbs and flows like the current of a stream

with a pull on the air  
I yank myself up to face the rest of the day  
First battle completed  
No achievement unlocked  
Simply a large step in a small movement  
I'm awake.



*Insomnia*

Lia Tonella

The tick tock upon the wall  
Greets my waking thoughts  
With bemused melodies

Streets glitter silver  
Lamps illuminate falling stars  
Crashing upon my windowsill  
Liquid light cascading  
From unseen rivers above

Like widows upon their steel terraces  
I too wait for the dawn's arrival  
To bring home something out of my reach

Weight beckons for my eyes to close  
Yet I stand wide eyed at the window  
Watching the stars fall flat  
Against my open palm  
Beams of pink and  
yellow and  
blue  
Splash against pale fingers  
Cupping cold fire and burning ice

Numbing skin tingles lightly  
Red and blotchy  
Eyes streaming  
Like the clouds above  
I wait for dawn to come home



*Baggage*

Oliver G.

Ink Drawing



*Mother*

Oliver G.

Ink Drawing

*The Fine Art of Single Parenting*

Olivia Espinoza

Being a mother is one thing but taking on the role of being a mother and a father to two toddler girls who are three and four is one of the toughest jobs I have ever had to face. Did I mention I do it all ALONE and by myself? Truly it is one of the most emotional rollercoasters you could ever be on. From one minute having to be an authoritative figure and assume the dad role to the next being the fun comforting mother role. I get stuck in one mode or the other or sometimes both modes and must balance it out. It amazes me the strength I have within myself to do this.

My girls are like candy, more like sour patch kids to be exact. One minute they're so sour and the next minute they're the sweetest little girls you would ever encounter. They say that a mother is a daughter's best friend and it's true without a doubt. They light my soul from within and make me strive to be the best version of myself every single day. Who knew the love between a mother and daughter could be so strong and I am so blessed to experience it with my little humans.

My oldest survived the most. She has so much empathy and strength and emotion but also the funniest sassiest girl you'll ever meet. Some might say spicy. You saved me from things and people I didn't know I needed to be saved from. If it weren't for your love and pureness, I wouldn't be here being the best damn single mother I could be. I would be stuck in the narcissistic abusive ways of your biological father. You give me strength to see there is more to life than to stay put. You keep me on my toes and save me every day. You and your sister.

I know that being a single parent is most common these days, but a lot of people stay in their abusive situation still. I heal every day; I self-help and I grow. I reflect that every day is a new day, and you must let go of the past to

*continued →*

reach your goals and strive to becoming your best self and highest self. I no longer allow myself to be belittled and manipulated and abused because if I allow myself to go through it with my daughters seeing it then they will think it is okay to deal with and I am breaking generational curses every day.

The past is the past and the way I see it is you can either run from it or you can learn from it. Learning from it always gets you to where you need to be. The strength it must remember what has happened and to forgive it but never forget it. When you run from it your past tends to haunt you especially when you are raising strong independent little girls in this world we live in today. You have the courage to learn and move forward so you don't dwell in the past and mess up your own future.

I must say that being a single parent has been and will be one of the most challenging things that I have ever encountered and will be dealing with every day, but it is one of the most liberating feelings to be able to say I escaped, and I didn't wind up dead or my daughters. I saved us, better yet my daughters helped save me so I could for sure protect and save them. They are pure bliss and I think that it is one of the best decisions you can make for yourself because it is better for your children to live in separate homes than a broken-down home and family.

Parenting and life are a lot like a garden, because with the proper care and love you can cultivate a beautiful garden. You just must make sure you keep weeding out the negativity from your garden you're growing as well as watch for predators that are trying to destroy your garden. If you don't let anyone or anything, come in and destroy what you have cultivated then you will have nothing to worry about because you are in control of your own life and surroundings.



*Untitled*

Leah Rossell

Painting - Created for Andrea Romero's English 101



# Stars Over Baker

An evening of community star gazing from the top of Mt. Baker

*Stars Over Baker*

Kylee Mortenson

Poster Set - Created for Jeanne Broussard's Vector Illustration

# Stars Over Baker

An evening of community star gazing from the top of Mt. Baker





*Moss Hugs*  
Oliver G.  
Photograph

Oliver

## *Coming to Terms with Myself*

Keona J. Mendoza

### **Myself**

Coming to terms with my sexuality and gender was difficult. Growing up it was always very uncomfortable being around people who just knew who they stuck to, the people they could relate to. My problem was being shy and not feeling relatable or being able to relate to others. I never really knew the names or much about the LGBTQ community because I haven't been very exposed whether it was on television shows, with family, or in public. Heading into middle school, I have learned about the community and what that means; how it works. I remember the amount of internalized homophobia I had and would try so hard to convince myself I liked boys that I found myself in situation-ships with. I remember being very sad with them and it was making me even more confused. By the time I was in 7th grade, I had grown a liking for my best friend and my curiosity would go away so I have accepted it. I would open up to people about liking both girls and boys and most people seemed okay with it, some not so much. Going into high school, I have accepted the fact I am a lesbian. It was confusing whether I actually liked men or wanted to be them. So I was stuck in that confusion if I was a trans man, nonbinary, etc.

### **Friends**

Coming out is always something that is going to be hard, and something you will almost constantly be doing. The people who you surround yourself with are important; it affects you and them and frankly, I believe some friendships can genuinely change your life. Being friends with people who have been socialized with positivity around the LGBTQ community or, alternatively, negative thinking around the community can definitely change a person's view. I believe that negative impact can sometimes

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come from the parents. I know sometimes people say homosexuality is a ‘bad’ thing because of religion but I know people who are more independent who don’t let that affect them. After coming out to some friends I definitely had a few that were either also a part of the community or have left because they saw that as a disappointment.

### **Others**

Seeing in the media where community members either being trans, in same-sex relationships, or gender-nonconforming being assaulted either verbally or physically genuinely hurts me. Nobody should have to be hurt because of that. In 2022, I am glad to say that kids are definitely more aware of these problems and more exposed to the community and know it is a normal thing. I had a funny conversation with one of my younger cousins, 12.

Playing a game, she goes, “Hey Keona?”

“Yes, what’s up?”

“Do you know Max from Stranger Things?”

“Yes, what about her?”

“She’s hot.”

Although I agreed with her this caught me off guard, not in a bad way but more of a cute wholesome way. I have always wanted to be able to talk to family comfortably about this kind of stuff so I decided to treat her more as if she was a friend instead so she knows she’s able to talk to me about this kind of stuff.

I responded with, “Haha yeah, she is.”

She then asks if I would be in a relationship with a girl, and I proceeded to say yes of course. A few minutes pass by and she asks if I’m gay. I look at her kind of funny because being in the community outside in general you will have both subtle or grand queues on whether someone is queer or not. So, having short hair and being very masculine I respond with, “Yes, I’m actually a lesbian”. And she was so surprised and I thought it was very cute and wholesome for a more

specific reason; she didn't judge or make any assumptions because of how I looked. People who are homophobic are so quick to assume and move to make sure you know that you make them uncomfortable. They'll roll their eyes and scoff at you, make comments under their breath, or if they're snarky enough they will say it to your face. As we get by day to day, people are learning more about the community in school and from others and I think it's a beautiful thing; normalizing something that is normal.

### **Family**

As said before, coming out never stops. I personally came out to my family at different times. The first person I came out to in my immediate family was my brother. We have a very healthy relationship, and I knew he was supportive, but it was still scary. I wrote him a letter and I walk six steps across the hallway and knock on his door. I was already crying and holding a steady frown in fear of not being accepted, he reads it and starts crying too. We hug and cry for a few minutes and he tells me it's okay that he still loves me and that he's proud of me. Now coming out to my sister was much more underwhelming; I have written her a letter as well as she was leaving for work and I felt fine about it, a few hours later, she sends me a long paragraph saying the same thing and that she will always support me. Growing up in a Catholic-Filipino household, it was scary coming to terms with myself. I remember crying myself to sleep imagining how they would disown me and kick me out of the house, how our relationship would change. Thinking about coming out to my parents, I remember taking into consideration that my parents were both raised in the Philippines and their parents are homophobic and have expressed that so I wasn't confident. I would be camping with extended family and hang around my dad being shy, I saw he would laugh with the other dads and talk about my older cousin who is more on the feminine-gay side, and it was utterly one of the most confusing things I have experienced. Given the other times when my dad would be encouraging and supportive of the community, it was confusing about how insensitive he could be at times. He has taken my brother and me to the Pride Parade in 2018 and we weren't there for long but it was infatuating. The music, floats, so many supportive people, and just fun and it was going so well until my thoughts crept in. Being there

felt so freeing but felt like being entrapped, not being able to be me; it was like a restriction.

With my mom sleeping throughout the day and having work from night until early morning, we never had time to really talk to each other, but we had an okay relationship. Deciding I was ready to come out to my parents, I just knew I wanted it so badly and was so tired of hiding in this shell of another person. I asked friends/family if I could stay with them if things got rocky, and my siblings if they could help. I decided if I did it on a big day, it wouldn't be as scary being all together and all the focus wouldn't be on me, it could be moved to something else... so I decided to come out on Christmas day. On Christmas Eve I remember crying all night, wondering if I would be sleeping somewhere else the next night. The next morning I didn't get up and wake everybody early as usual; I waited. I remember being so scared and shaking the entire time opening presents. During my last presents from my siblings, I open the box real slow. I pull out a rainbow and lesbian flag and give one each to my parents. I start crying and give a very long note to my dad. I can't move, my face is red and hot anticipating their reactions. My dad finishes reading and passes it to my mom. He hugs me and tells me it's okay and that nothing will change and he accepts me and it made me so relieved he was okay with it. After my mom finishes reading it, my mood changes. The silence is deafening. She has a straight face and it took her a second to even look at me. She gives me a side hug and still doesn't say anything. I try not to think of it but I remember all the times she would try to have me play with dolls and wear dresses and it made me go "oh" internally. I have talked to my dad about it and she is okay and accepting of it but she was just a little bit surprised and took her a bit to come to terms.

### **Conclusion**

Although it was a little rocky, everybody in my family has accepted me for who I am and there are still some things that feel uncomfortable but then there are some things that are genuinely so euphoric to me. Like helping my dad build things or working on my car and my dad calling me "bud" like he does with my brother.

*The Parent I'd Be*

Oliver G.

Jade petal, sprouting succulent  
I insist my soil sprout, your stems  
oh, young emerald, potted angel  
Wherever you're growin', you're rooted                      firm

We're home now, windowed for the world  
Your laugh molds this desert, clay green  
We're cut from the same unison  
Balanced ecosystem  
My goodluck fortune  
Jade petal, and me

Created for Joanna Kenyon's Creative Writing



## *The Mountains Give Me Life*

Olivia Pinkham

The waters keep me going.

They are like a melody for my restless soul, a break  
for my weary bones.

The mountains encompass me, their strong hold like a hug,  
the clouds, a blanket like no other.

Some days you can see them for miles, see the warm blues  
and stark whites of the snow.

Others you see only gray clouds obscuring their beauty.

This is life.

Some days you will know your plan and where you  
are going.

Others you are just floating on the breeze, unable to see  
what the future has in store.

But you are never afraid to show your true colors.

You know that the mountains will always be there for you.  
Always have a hold over you.

On days you feel like giving up, the mountains feel  
your fear.

They reflect it in the dark clouds and the rainy days.

On days you feel like you are on top of the world, the  
mountains are rejoicing, for you are finally happy.

From the mountains comes an unshakeable feeling  
of peace.

Nothing on earth can come close to beating this feeling.

This peace that will never leave.

A companion you can always count on to be by your side,  
through the thick and the thin.

Created for Brian Cope's Honors Humanities 295:  
Wisdom of the Mountains





*Winter Spit*

Mathieu Soroka  
Drone Photograph



*Drift Con*  
Krystan Andreason  
Photograph

## *The Fine Art of Building Legos*

Jimmy Rust

Some might think that Legos are for kids, but the “18+” label on larger sets begs to differ. Even in adulthood, a few of us loyally stick to the brand, like an animated movie from your childhood that, against all reasoning, you continue to adore as an adult. There’s an element of nostalgia, yes, but even without that there’s a level of satisfaction felt when building a Lego set. Clicking pieces together just right, finishing the puzzle. Applying stickers precisely, creating art. And once that final Lego piece is attached, a wave of dopamine flows through your system, a glorious sense of completion. You’ve taken part in the creation of a masterpiece.

My little brother places the pieces just as the instructions direct him, and when they call for a sticker to be placed, he asks me or my mom to do it for him. Once the set is completed, he rotates it, looking from every angle. He utilizes every flexible piece, every joint in the model, an inspector scrutinizing every detail, every crack and crevice of a product that must be of the highest quality. Once he has run out of features to mess with, a joyous grin still on his face, my brother dives into the world in his head, taking his newest toy with him on the wildest and most perilous of adventures. Though only in elementary school, he understands that Legos are not simply toys, but art as well.

On the other side of the spectrum, my mom would never pick up a set with the intention of gliding it through the air or rolling it along the floor. When she does occasionally get a Lego set, for her birthday or a holiday, she doesn’t rip open the packaging and begin building as soon as she can. My mom waits until the opportune moment, sometimes minutes, sometimes days after she’s gifted the set. When all is right, she finally opens the box, and first begins to organize the pieces by color, size or shape, whichever makes the most sense for the specific set. Much to the horror of my brothers and I, she often stops in the middle of a building session, and goes off to make dinner or perform another necessary chore. It may be days before

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she gets back to it. But once the Lego set is finally finished, my mom isn't playing with it, no. She's putting it on display and letting the rest of the family know that her journey was completed, all her chunks of free time had come together to create a beautiful thing, a assortment of time and effort just as well as Lego pieces.

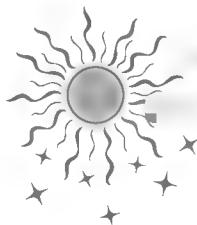
I can see myself in both my youngest brother and my mom, as a mix of both. Although I am well aware that I was once like my brother, playing with my Legos nonstop, that time is over. But I can't just leave a set unopened or stop halfway through; once I start a Lego set, I can't stop until it's done. I snap every piece on precisely where it needs to be, occasionally pausing and looking at the model, half built, in all its rough and vulnerable glory. And when it's done I send a photo to any of my friends that I think would be interested, a number that has become frighteningly small over the last few years. But it's not for them that I build, it's for the pleasure, the joy of creating something sophisticated and beautiful out of hundreds of seemingly random and unrelated pieces of plastic.

Without the nostalgia, however, Legos wouldn't have drained my wallet quite so much. Focusing on the Legos, ignoring outside distractions, brings me back to a simpler time, before I had reached the dreaded teen years or even the double digits. Back when I knew so little of the outside world, but was content with what I knew. It was clear to me that nothing would satisfy like Legos and Minecraft. And sitting on the carpet, warmed by the sunlight pouring through the windows, building a Lego car, I had every right to think that way. Nothing else felt as satisfying and yet reusable, fun but educational. Doubtless, generations of kids before and after me have had the same revelation: it can't get much better than this.

Indeed, how could it? Building Legos since I was four has inspired in me a drive to create, to build, to invent. Under the guise of fun and playtime, Legos have motivated thousands upon thousands of children to change to world. Mechanical engineers, architects, rocket scientists, all with a common history: that first Lego set, wonder and excitement.

Funnily enough, Legos have influenced us for much longer than just our childhood. Whether you still collect sets and build them eagerly, or can point back to Lego creations in your childhood as the drive to your career, we can acknowledge one thing for certain: Like that strangely relatable movie from your childhood, Legos are unexpectedly enjoyable for both children and adults. Because they can be so much more than just toys.





### *Pylon*

Oliver G.

In mountain cavities nestle the grassland prairie  
Where sheets of parched straw stick to the ground  
Where God's sick cough wheezes, whimpers  
A bitter flurry carried through brush and bristle  
Stopped only by the arching metal towers  
Buried high in night obsidian, oh metal towers  
With croaks and creeks, a trombone moan  
A congestion, a cyclops, meet their bulb eyes  
Wink! Metal towers, wink! With cranberry glow  
Warn the winged vessels melded in titanium  
Warn the ever-sick God of humanity's poison

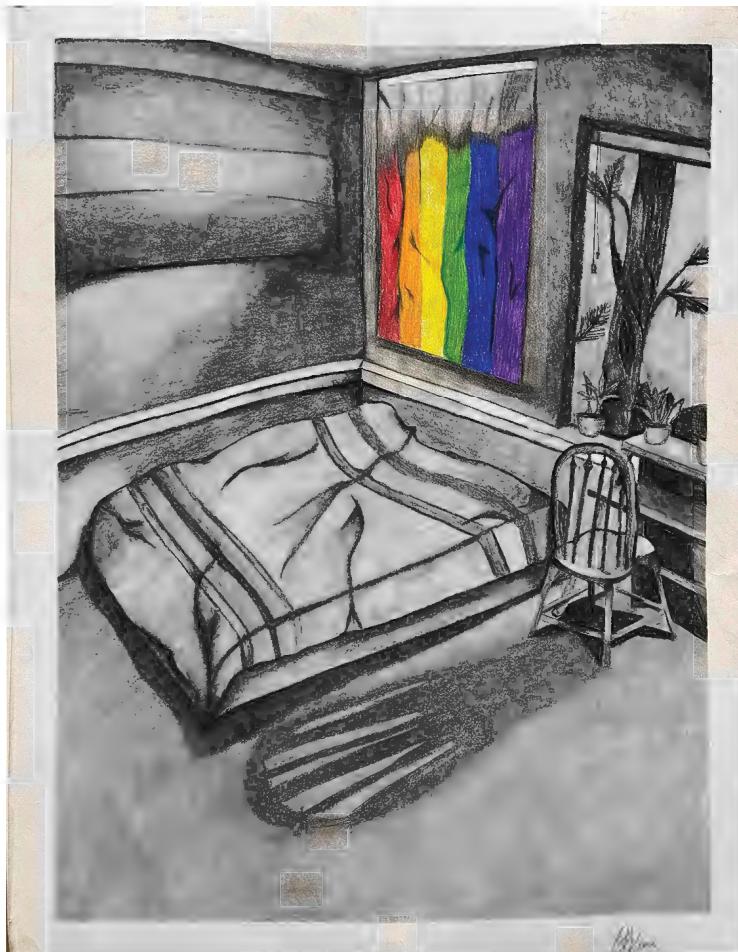


*Life and Death*

Atlas Hamilton

Mixed Media Triptych

Created for Andrea Romero English 101



### *True Colors*

Blayne Kiefer-VanderYachtDrawing  
Created for Justin Martin's Drawing I



## *Exploits of Blindness*

Deby Thomas

It's always interesting to me how people act with pity around me. I mean, I kind of get it - the world is not made for blind people. I'm sure everything is absolutely gorgeous to look at in your sighted world... You know, except that dumpster over there that's overflowing with rancid garbage or the shit-streaked toilet in the grease-covered gas station bathroom. Who wants to see those views?!? That's when I get to pity you! Since it all naturally disappears from my view, I don't have to look at the nastiness of the world. Sometimes being blind is an advantage.

There are also other fringe benefits to blindness as well. If you ever find yourself in a theme park - let's say Disney World - with me, you'll find yourself thankful. Walking down Main Street has never been easier! "Why?" you may find yourself wondering. People flee from the path of my white cane. They cower in fear, holding their children behind them in terror. You would think I was swinging an axe around from all the commotion I caused. Occasionally, on the off-chance that they don't move at the sight of me and my giant stick of death, a tap to the ankle from my cane will do the trick to get them moving out of my way. Those sheepdogs on Grandpa's farm really knew what they were doing when they would nip the back of the sheep's leg to herd them. Don't knock my fun - it works! I part the crowds like Moses, which is an asset in Disney - or wherever we are going.

Those poor random, unsuspecting strangers often don't only get nipped in the ankle by my plundering white cane, but then they often feel obligated afterward to ask me if I require assistance. Since I enjoy being as devious and

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inconvenient as possible; it turns out that, indeed, I do require assistance. I need help finding the loaf of Seattle sourdough bread on sale for \$4.79. I will then require my accomplice to hold up each bag of bread to my nose. You, my underling, look startled at first by this request; until I explain that I will be smelling each bag until I find the correct one. You are eyeing me suspiciously, but you still do as I request. One simple truth remains: I do not - and will not - trust that you are actually giving me the loaf of Seattle sourdough bread I desire. My nose knows your deception. Besides, how else was I going to find this delicious loaf of bread before you offered yourself at my service?

The thing about being blind is no one stops me to ask for directions, or to talk to me for any reason really. That's really put a damper on my human contact, to the point of my reporting that I think one of my best conversations recently was with a mannequin in the clothing store. It all started out by my bumping into her - I'm not really sure if she identifies as female, but it's hard to tell these things when you are blind and, obviously, I couldn't just ASK her! I apologized for bumping into her and complimented her outfit. I swore I heard her respond, "Thanks" and so, I proceeded to ask her where she bought her dress and a million other random questions - making friends is difficult when you're blind, and obviously she liked me; she hadn't left awkwardly yet. It wasn't until I lost my balance that I started to realize I had been talking to a mannequin for the past 30 minutes. You are probably curious as to what gave her away... Well, as I started to stand, I grabbed the arm she had so graciously outstretched to me - and it fell off. Needless to say, I find myself traumatized from the whole experience, but I also wonder why no one in the entire store thought to point this out to me during my thirty-minute-long conversation. In conclusion, "no one talks to me" has been illustrated in full color. I guess people assume I hear with my eyes or some shit like that.

While I don't get to drive (for - hopefully - obvious reasons), I do have fun with my modes of transportation nonetheless. Have you ever wanted to have a "Magical Mary Poppins" moment? If so, you may find yourself legitimately jealous of my charmed blind life then! Every day when I ride the

bus, I fold my 5-foot-long cane up after I board and stick it into my handbag. (Folded up my white cane is only approximately 9 inches long.) It's only when I get close to my stop that I take my cane out of my bag, unhook the wrist strap that is securing it folded up, and hear the "click, click, click" of my cane reforming - as my 58-inch cane marvelously reappears! Frequently, I have been asked, "Where the hell did that come from?!" in shocked horror and utter disbelief by other passengers on the bus. I point to my purse and whisper, "It's magic." I shan't upset the mysterious powers at work by raising my voice to the levels of decent conversation - it adds to the intrigue and mystery.

There are also bonuses of blindness when crossing intersections. Unbeknownst to moving vehicles - I ALWAYS have the right-of-way if I'm in a crosswalk with my white cane. ALWAYS. But because this little tidbit is unbeknownst to motor vehicle operators who apparently are blinder than I am, I have to play it relatively safe and at least TRY to cross at the designated green light. Which can be pretty challenging at times. Thankfully, there is no shortage of well-proportioned, chivalrous males who are willing to gallantly walk me across the four lanes of stopped traffic. Since a vast majority of pedestrian versus vehicle accidents in urban settings happen in crosswalks with sighted people, I'm left scratching my head at what these men think they can do to prevent my untimely and bloody demise by automobile. When I presented this question to one of my frequent companions, he replied that he intended to stare the car down. All I can say is...THAT'LL STOP IT. At least I won't die alone today. I take comfort in that fact.

While it is likely superfluous to mention, I am also a fairly crummy roommate. I have developed a mantra in life, "If I can't see it, it doesn't exist." This has served me well in the past ten years and I'm too set in my ways to change it now, so you'll just have to deal with it. Perhaps if I wanted to learn to find all those items that disappeared into the void - I would - but, you see, I don't desire such things. I enjoy the simple pleasures of my blind life - especially ones that don't involve a broom. If you're curious how that makes me a crummy roommate, allow me to illustrate my point - if I drop popcorn on the beige tile in my kitchen, I cannot see

it and therefore it doesn't exist. This means I may go about my day without bothering to touch a broom. See? Crumb-y roommate.

What I'm saying is this - I have far more fun with my world than you may have initially anticipated by a quick gander at me. Perhaps you and your monotonous life might learn a thing or two from this essay - or perhaps not. Either way is okay. I am secure in my perception that my idyllic blind world is obviously superior and I will not waver in my beliefs - no matter how persuasive you may be.



*An Apple a Day*

Blayze Kiefer-VanderYacht

Painting - Created for Lloyd Blakley's Painting I



## *The Ports Our Ferries Cannot Reach*

Marie Depalma

The air had just started to smell like spring and was alluding to some sort of purpose when, by some stroke of luck, Sevket found himself a job. A drink at the bar with a classmate he couldn't remember, and a phone call to an uncle he never met, the office was his, as though it were always supposed to have happened that way. Sevket supposed most people always imagined things eventually going right for themselves but translating (even if it was at some broken down publishing house) was a hard job to get, especially for an adult of only twenty-three. He could be realistic in this way.

But Sevket was a dreamer, and for this reason he was enthralled that it was spring. He dreamed of misty mornings, of watching new buds spring out of the ground, of desks in front of windows bathed in sunlight. He saw himself studiously hunched over his desk, working tirelessly, all in the name of literature. He thought of the ferry that he would take every morning across the Golden Horn and how it would vibrate from the sound of the horn as it rolled out to meet the water. It all seemed perfect; the budding pink flowers were a mirror to his future life unfolding.

Languages had always been something of a gift to Sevket. This was to his own credit only—even when his dad was around, and his mother was happy, they never talked much. He was fluent in Arabic, French, Armenian, Russian, English, and Hebrew. He could get by in Spanish, he knew a little Romanian from the old lady who worked in the school library. But Sevket loved Turkish the most: he loved the lilting tone, how it flowed methodically from each person's tongue. In whispers he could hear hisses, and in the screams when the words flew through the air at hurtling speeds, he noticed how it sailed straight, the melody cut off by the emotion. He marveled at how it simple it was—archaic, really. Sounds and sighs and fumbling tongues doing their

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best to describe the world, to connect each brain to the next. His language limited him and enabled him. It was the back of his hand, his mother tongue.

This new job was in Istanbul and required a final trip home to collect anything he might need. He wasn't sure when he would be back over the Bosphorus again. His childhood room was strung up with tacky posters of sorts of rock bands and motorcycles, the sorts of things he'd never bothered to take down. The curtains in his room had never been closed since he had moved out five years ago, and all the furniture was bleached, and perhaps a little wobblier than it used to be. The bed and dresser were pushed to the corner haphazardly, seemingly the least important things in the room. His desk was cluttered with all sorts of knick-knacks, bits of broken pencils, sticky notes with random phrases piled around, and a succulent or two. His whole room had a sort of dreary feel to it, punctuated only by the light coming in through the large windows.

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The first ferry ride across the Golden Horn—which in the years to come would be long forgotten—passed without much importance. He had been full of nerves that day, his shirt was buttoned to the top, causing drops of sweat to pool at the crook of his throat. Despite the early hour of the day, the hot sun, usually a comforting presence to him, beat upon his shoulders and head, and he stood over the railing, slightly hunched. His black hair, which only half-an-hour ago he had combed to perfection, was beginning to shift slightly, the cowlick he had only just beaten down was beginning to form a resistance. His watch seemed to be ticking much too fast, or maybe too slow, he couldn't tell. The briefcase felt heavier than it had in the morning, while skipping down the main street to the pier. Hunched over as he was, he stared at the water, focusing on the rotating hues of blue and green, the ripples from the engine.

*Dalgacik, ripple, ondulation.* He didn't know the word in Romanian. It was an old habit; one he wasn't sure where he picked up. In the moments when his breaths were too quick and too shallow, when he was staring without seeing, he

would find a word and translate it.

Sevket didn't get anxious often, it was only moments like these, when the world seemed a little too large and nothing else could bridge the gap. The others on the early morning ferry were inside, sipping on coffee, and hiding from the heat. A woman sat on the bench under an awning, earbuds plugged into a CD player. A squeaky announcement from the intercom, a creak from the boat, and Sevket could feel the ground start to move beneath him, as the slow-moving water bobbed up and down.

He'd been in water his whole life. His father, while he was still around, had worked on the boats in Izmir, and he remembered walking down there after school, always eager to do whatever his father asked of him. Eventually he would grow bored of tying knots or whatever else his father gave him, and he would make a break for it, running to the shore, shrieking as his father shook his fist and started thundering after him. His father could never catch him, and laughing, he would splash into the sea, feeling the cool sand collapsing under his feet. And even the caws of the gulls and the crashing of the water wouldn't be enough to mask the deep boom of his father's voice, in a shout both of them knew wasn't real. Those had been the good days; they were a very long time ago. Even after those months when his mother stopped going to work, and he couldn't understand why his dad wasn't coming home, he stayed by the water. After school he would join the other boys at the beach, and as they got older, it was there Sevket learned how to be a man.

A minute before the ferry left the dock, a boy boarded, walking fast enough to make sure he didn't miss it, but still walking, as though it didn't matter that much to him. Unlike Sevket, the boy seemed to be doing fine in the boiling sun, or rather, he didn't seem to notice it. He was followed by a massive dog and Sevket was inclined to think the dog weighed more than the boy. It loped behind him as the boy walked up the length of boy, slowly approaching Sevket, and he occasionally reached behind himself to pat the dog, who grinned, its tongue hanging lazily from his mouth.

The odd pair came to a stop not far from Sevket, who remained at the railing, although now standing up straight. Where the dog was large and cheerful, the boy was thin and sullen, his dark eyes sunken in, and the white shirt he wore hung off him, sleeves flowing past his hands, and the collar sticking up one side. He must have about thirteen, or maybe fourteen, and the way his already-too-big clothes billowed in the wind only added to his youth. He looked a world apart from Sevket, in his slacks and pressed shirt.

Sevket wondered where this boy might be going, why he was taking a ferry so early. It must be school, he supposed. His own school days had been vastly different, no one would have ever bothered so much to take a ferry just to get there. And what a journey for a kid to be making! These sorts of things, kids travelling by themselves and all, were more likely to have happened when he was young; now, he thought, parents would never let their children take such trips by themselves. *A lot can change in ten years*, he mused. And then—ten years! It suddenly seemed liked the widest ravine he had ever come across, and the smallest creek. But it was true, he was only ten years older than the boy. In fact, Sevket could see the boots the boy was wearing were the same he might've worn ten years ago, and his hair was parted down the middle how Sevket's had always been. This boy was his past, and he, Sevket supposed, was this boy's future.

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The office Sevket had been promised turned out to be a basement, locked away from the levity of the publishing house above. The air smelled slightly of mildew—and slightly of something else. The editor had gone halfway down the stairs before pausing, adding a word of sympathy, and that it was simply not feasible to add another desk upstairs, before offering a quick wave and turning back, taking the stairs two at a time.

Sevket resolutely continued down, and turning to the first door on his left, plunged in the key. The office itself was not as dreary as the stairwell had made it out to be. The lighting was soft, a haphazard collection of lamps scattered across

the long desk and various shelves. There were no windows, a fact Sevket tried not to focus on, but the typewriter was gleaming, and he felt the magnetism swirling in the air, beckoning him, forward and forward and forward. The words spiraled out of him, unwinding themselves from his fingers, dancing on the page. This was how it felt to be good at something; he was a master of words, he could see the world with eight different pairs of eyes.

And so each week became the same, but Sevket didn't mind. Was this the dreaded monotony everyone had so feared? He woke with the sun every morning, made a cup of coffee every morning, adding milk until it achieved the same glowing umber every morning. Was a life of routine really so bad? Sevket didn't think so.

There was change going on all around him. The ferry left a minute later than it had the day before. The grocery store was out of the coffee beans he saw his neighbor buy every week. The bird that flitted around his balcony every morning lost a tail-feather. He had a cough one morning and read the newspaper a little longer, and finally decided to try the crossword. Now he did it most mornings. And after he swallowed the last dred of coffee, and put down his pencil, he would grab his briefcase, packed the night before, and walk a lot faster than his usual stride, because he nearly always wound-up staring at the sunrise too long, and throughout the whole day he would be trying to make those minutes back up. Work was easy and seemed to go faster each day. The hardest part was refilling the paper in the janky typewriter. When he left work in the afternoon, he would stop at some street vendor, picking up something to tide him over until he got back home.

Spring ebbed into summer, and by then Sevket had realized that same boy was on every ferry with him, every morning. Never in the afternoon, but the boy returned to Istanbul every night somehow, as each morning was the same, Sevket having arrived early at the dock, and the boy, hurrying on as the horn blew.

Sevket had arrived in a new stage of life by the end of the summer, neither happy nor unhappy, but content, and

most importantly, alone. At work, while his co-workers sat in their cubicles upstairs, and someone was always coming or going, he remained separate from it all. It was peaceful, anyhow, and he got all he needed to do done, and when he finished, he would walk through the streets alone, stopping to peer through windows, or run his hands over old, crumbling bricks.

Istanbul was a huge, grappling city, stretching across the estuary. Izmir, of course, had been a large city, but Istanbul towered above. Sevket loved the mornings the most, when the mist still hung at eye-level, and Sevket could feel the city rolling its shoulders, getting ready for the day. The lights weren't as bright yet, and he had a little more space on the sidewalk. All the street food was the first batch, and cars were growing in their frenzy. He kept his head down as people bumped into each other, coffees going from hand to hand, the city waking but the people waking too. He was always surrounded by a sea of people, hugging and laughing and shouting. Voices in Turkish, and Arabic, and Armenian swirled in his ears.

All this noise and commotion—and none of it was directed to him. He could speak with almost anyone, and yet, there was no one to speak to. Even on the ferry, when all the other businessmen stayed inside, and it was only him and the boy and his dog, each pressed up to the railing, they did not speak. The boy stared resolutely at the water, his head never moving, even when his dog barked, or the ferry horn sounded.

Sevket watched the boy every morning, although there was not much to watch, the boy never moved or talked. Still, he was the only person that Sevket was ever alone with throughout the day, and so he felt a sense of solidarity. But while Sevket enjoyed the ferry and was always looking forward to getting where he was going, the boy was all but apathetic. His brows were always furrowed, and Sevket felt embarrassed at times for even thinking about him, or imagining any kind of connection, as the boy never acknowledged him, let alone notice him. It was all in his head, either way.

Sevket realized once, in November, that he could go days without speaking. Thank God he was translating in his head every day, or the languages might have begun to slip. When he arrived back home in the evenings, he would play music as he made dinner, dancing around softly. It was the closest form of connection he could find, but there was a dignity to his solitude. It wasn't exactly self-imposed, although he was doing nothing to change it, but he went about his days quietly, with a single mind, and it felt like a relief from his college days, where some new thing was expected of him every day.

His mother called occasionally, and he would talk with her as he sipped his tea and stretched the cord to the couch, but there was never much to say. His mother didn't have much to inform him of either, she spent her days sewing and making bread, but it felt like the right thing to do, to have those calls. Eventually one of them would make some excuse, and the other would accept it, relieved, and Sevket would go back to his quiet night, only interrupted again by the whistle of the kettle.

Sevket imagined what he would do if he ever saw anyone he knew, because surely at some point he would. Perhaps they would invite him to lunch—how could he say no? Should he say no? He knew, from studying all sorts of psychology, humans were meant for contact, for relationships, and he wasn't sure why all of the sudden he had forgone all but one. His world had diminished to the width of his shoulders, and he wasn't sure how to open it back up. His friends from home called occasionally, and he picked up on the days that were especially lonely, but it was all easy to avoid, as his mother only called on Wednesdays.

Eventually the calls dwindled, his friends got the message, but he wanted to say *Wait! Wait for me! Soon, soon, soon.*

He didn't want to lose his friends, not these people he had spent his whole life getting to know! But it seemed it was happening anyway, and he was frozen, unable to draw them back or push them away. He was a puppet on a string, living life in the motions, not the words. When he left work sometimes his boss would check in with him, but

these meetings were very brief; Sevket was a professional, perfectly qualified for his job. His dreams of moving up in the translation-publication world were not in the forefront of his mind anymore, maybe for the first time in his life there was nothing at the forefront of his mind anymore. He knew that to everyone who saw him he was just another pair of eyes, or jacket flapping in the breeze, present for an instant and never lingering.

He was loathe to admit, it felt sort of creepy, but the boy from the ferry was slowly entangling himself in Sevket's mind. He saw no other children of the boy's age take the ferry, especially not every day. And if he was going to school, why was he always bringing that dog? And then he would remember the boy had come all through summer, so it couldn't have been school. And why did he always look so unwilling to being alive? In the evenings the boy was gone from his mind, but when he woke up again the boy was there, leaning out, in search of some far-off land.

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Sevket had been commended by his boss the previous evening for his one-year anniversary with the company, a date he hadn't realized. It shook him a little, a year in Istanbul, and the only reoccurring characters were pompous coworkers and a teenage boy. The hum of the fog and breeze clouded his senses and dimmed the city around him. Still, he made it to the ferry when the sun began to poke through the blanket of gray. He made his way to his usual spot by the railing, next to the large orange lifebuoy.

He liked that word in English, there weren't many other sounds like it. He whispered the word, *buoy, buoy, buoy*. He was still mouthing the word when he felt a shift in the air and turned to see the boy take his usual place. It felt like they were both actors in play, taking their staged spots, yet each waiting for the other to break.

The boy looked the same, dark hair slightly matted on his head, a loose uniform shirt and an untied tie. He was gripping the railing with one hand and patting his dog's head with the other (the dog was so tall he didn't even

have to straighten his arm). He had never dared make conversation with the boy before, the idea had floated around in his head but never been taken seriously.

He took a step, and then—*Hi, how are you?* He cringed immediately, no, no, no. It was all stilted and wrong. How stupid was he! Why had he ever thought it was a good to converse with this boy?

He turned his head instantly back to the water, cheeks glowing. The boy hadn't responded, of course he hadn't responded! Sevket risked another glance over, still no movement from the boy. But there was no indication the boy had heard him. It was sort of loud after all, the wind, and the engine started to turn. It seemed luck was on his side, the boy hadn't heard him, he was saved.

Clearly this was a sign—the whole thing had been a mistake. It had been a mistake to think his life could prove to be any different than the way it always had been. He spent the rest of the ride with his head down, unable to look at anything besides the rusted, peeling metal of the top bar of the railing, a quietness in his head.

By the time the boat had landed on the opposite dock, Sevket was ready by the gate, stepping off into the city at first chance. The dark clouds hadn't dissipated, they were hanging low, sectioning Sevket from everyone around him. The quietness in his head spread down his throat, and out to his fingertips, and when the first drop of rain hit him and jolted him, spurring loose a torrent of thoughts.

Maybe moving to the city hadn't been the right choice, but had there ever been a right choice? He had gotten a job doing something he loved and even that hadn't proved to be enough. But his feet were loyal servants to his brain, not his traitorous heart, so he continued in the direction of work. He walked faster and faster, trying to outrun himself. The urge to do something was palpable in his veins, he couldn't keep living the same day over and over again.

He didn't see the man until it was too late, and his shoulder had banged into something soft. He clasped his hands, *sorry*,

*sir, sorry, a thousand apologies.* The man stared back at him, until his face spilt into a jovial smile, and a hand reached out to clasp his back.

*My fault sir, my fault! Hey, this is my bodega, you want anything, man?*

Sevket noticed they were standing in front of little corner store, with a faded poster for sandwiches and cigarettes taped on three corners to a window. *Hey man, I'll take a pack of cigarettes.*

The man ushered him in, *sure, sure.*

Sevket grabbed the first red box he saw and slid the money over, before hurrying out with a final wave. It was a brief respite in his isolation, but it had worked, nevertheless. His head already felt a little calmer, a little louder. He wasn't much of a smoker; cigarettes were nothing but a remnant from his past. But he sucked on the orange filter anyway. Inhale. Exhale. It was something to do. He realized this was unstable behavior, minute-long conversation and lack thereof could both bring him and down and back up. Best to keep smoking and keep walking.

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Technically, Sevket wasn't supposed to smoke indoors, but no one came down to the basement anyway. He set his cigarette down on the ashtray and picked up the next poem in his stack of papers. It had been written a few years prior, by a Russian woman:

*Evidently,  
it's worth surviving  
so as to experience something other than writing.<sup>1</sup>*

The paper fluttered out from under his fingers as his eyes roved the last line. It was normal for him to get sentimental over words, but he felt swaddled by this poem, as if he was the very ink of the words, inextricable from the poem itself. It was the greatest curse of the translator, always dealing in somebody else's words. The conduit, and never the creator.

<sup>1</sup> Kulishova, Inna. "Till Now". Translated by Daniel Weissbort. 1991.

*I will make them my own,* Sevket vowed.

The next morning Sevket decided to do something he had never done before; he would not be early. As hard as this would be, it was a necessary evil. He would board the ferry after the boy, and since his place was on the boy's left, he would have to come up on the boy's right and pass him, giving him a perfectly reasonable excuse to acknowledge the boy.

The weather too, already, was different. The bleakness from yesterday had cooled into a misty morning. Sevket breathed it in, savoring the oncoming winter. He thought of the poem again, the words drifting in and out of his mind, like rain in a storm, hitting his head, then his fingers, then coming up to meet his toes.

He left his apartment early as usual (this couldn't be helped) but meandered around the city streets, perusing new bookstores and cafes he hadn't seen before. The nagging feeling that he would be late stayed tensed around his shoulders, but he tried to shrug it out—it was all part of the plan. By the time he approached the port, it was three minutes till. *If he isn't here by now, then it can't be helped.*

He was trying to be nonchalant, to hide the hope burning in his chest. He slid his ticket through the scanner, pushed through the bars, and made his way up to the ferry. The one he took was a smaller one, just passengers no cars. Thoughts raced through his head, what would he do at work today? What should he have for dinner? Should he call his mom? When would—and there!

There was the boy, nothing but a dark figure, standing out from the dark morning, looking slightly more solid than the foggy air around him, but he was real, surely. The dog stood attentively by his side. Perhaps he would employ the tactic of bumping into him, surely the boy couldn't ignore that. Or maybe he would just call out? He was walking without a plan, and Sevket realized he wouldn't come up with a plan in time and would have to trust himself to act on instinct.

*Funny I am here first and not you,* the boy called out. Sevket did a double-take, and it would have been comical if it wasn't so amazing. Here he was, building this moment up, and the boy had spoken to him first.

He realized he hadn't responded yet and said the first thing that spilled out of his mouth, *yes, I got a coffee, I don't usually.*

The boy shrugged, *you know they have coffee here too.*

Sevket grimaced, he had tried it before, and had to stop himself from making a face in front of the worker.

The boy understood, *not very good?*

Sevket laughed, *no, not very.* He thought for a moment, and then, *I'm Sevket.*

The boy nodded but didn't share his own name. Although he had initiated the conversation, his eyes were focused on Sevket's chin, and never his eyes.

Sevket tried again. *Well, does your dog have one at least?*

This time he was met with an answer: *Ruska.* And then the ferry landed.

*Good to finally meet you, boy.* The boy was bent down petting Ruska and didn't look back up. Sevket comforted himself with the thought that he was a teenager, and all teenagers were rude. And after all, Sevket would see him tomorrow.

For the rest of the winter, Sevket would wait every morning for the boy to show up, and they would stand at the railing, rain, or shine, sometimes talking, sometimes just admiring the gray waves. Their conversations were never particularly loud, or full of laughter, but they passed the time, and in the almost two years he had been in Istanbul, Sevket had finally made a friend.

Half of the time, it seemed as though the boy missed what Sevket had been saying, too busy daydreaming instead of listening. In that, Sevket supposed they were similar.

*Did I ever tell you about my friends when I was your age?* The boy shook his head, as expected.

Sevket wondered why people started their sentences like that, when of course they knew they had never spoken about it. He liked telling stories like this, when the wind was so loud, no one else could hear, if even the boy could.

*When my father left, I joined that group of boys. I don't remember how, this is just the way these things happen.*

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Sevket had moved to Istanbul when he was twenty-three, in 1991. The boy had been thirteen when Sevket arrived; now they were sixteen and twenty-six.

Sevket thought back to those early days, when the job he had gotten at the publishing house translating all sorts of things had seemed like an easy-stepping stone to the life he really wanted. He wondered about time, about the concept of a year.

This boy was a comfort to him, a mirror to his past life retribution. They didn't talk much, but Sevket could tell their presence was a comfort to each other. On the ferry mornings as they stood next to each other, always traveling, always moving forwards, he felt at times the boy knew him better than anybody. Sometimes, it felt the boy was him.

The boy's dog, Ruska, hadn't grown into the past three years the way they boy had, and although Sevket would never say anything to the boy, every morning he was surprised, and then relieved, and then guilty, to see the dog still standing beside the boy.

It finally happened that winter. Sevket, early as ever, waiting by the railing of the ferry, and the boy came aboard, earlier than usual, for him. And no dog. Although Sevket had been expecting this for a while, he was surprised when his mind jumped to all the other possibilities: maybe a relative took him, maybe the dog was just left at home. He realized

there weren't many other possibilities. As the boy made his way toward Sevket, he seemed to know what Sevket was thinking.

The boy nodded. *Ruska is gone.* He didn't see the boy for three months.

It was startling at first; the boy's presence every morning was so familiar, at first Sevket didn't know what to do without it.

So, he tried to notice other things. There was a new secretary in the office who kept smiling at him. The bodega where he had run into that man had closed. There was a woman who always walked down the same street as him, heading south to catch the afternoon ferry. He did these things, he did his work, he called his mother. He tried to not worry about the boy. After all, Sevket didn't even know his name. He very well couldn't ask after a sixteen-year-old with dark hair and pale skin.

It was March—spring again, when the boy returned. Sevket almost wondered if it really was him, but who else it would it be? He called out, *hey!* The boy didn't turn.

Sevket got closer, right behind the boy, *hey, hey kid.* Still, the boy didn't turn until Sevket put his hand on the boy's shoulder. The boy jumped around at once, a slightly fearful look in his green eyes. And it suddenly dawned on Sevket.

*You can't hear me, can you?* He said it slowly, giving the boy the time to deny. But the boy just stared at him, at his lips.

*I never wanted you to find out,* his voice a broken whisper.

Sevket could feel the blood rushing to his cheeks, had to make a conscious effort to keep his voice down, *how did you think you could hide this? Why did you hide?*

All of these languages, all these ways of communication he knew, and none of them mattered. He had been rambling on for years, like an idiot, talking to a boy who would never understand him. So many questions were fighting in his

mouth—*can you even understand me?*

The boy rolled his eyes. *I can read lips, just sometimes. When you're looking at me. When I'm looking at you.*

It all made sense, all the times when Sevket had felt they were part of two separate conversations, when he had to touch the boy to get his attention. *But why didn't you ever tell me?*

Perhaps the boy never cared about Sevket the way Sevket cared about the boy, but he couldn't help feeling betrayed. *I mean, you know I'm into all these sorts of languages.*

The boy snorted, *I can't expect you to learn a whole language for me.*

Sevket was affronted, *you know it would never be that a big of a deal for me. So, what, you use sign language? I'll learn it.*

Sevket realized the boy's eyelids were blinking rapidly. *No one ever has before. No one's ever taught me either.*

Sevket clasped the boy's hands, gently, but firm. *I'll teach us both.*

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Learning a language, and subsequently teaching it to someone else, was challenging. But Sevket had long been waiting for a challenge, and if he had two years until the boy turned eighteen and left, he was determined to teach him.

It felt good to be focused on something other than himself. Learning the twists of a hand was different than learning the twists of a tongue, but Sevket had always had a gift for languages. They met as usual every morning, and Sevket would begin with the alphabet and then they progressed to basic sentences, and foods, and adjectives. He no longer had time to worry about the boy's name, or why he got on the ferry even during summer. He was enthralled with teaching and thought about how much better it would be to teach the languages he already knew. But then he would focus

himself, focus on his dream of translating novels.

When the boy finally came to tell Sevket he was leaving, Sevket wanted more time to prepare, time to sift through the memories, to make the goodbye cumulative of every moment he'd had with the boy. A goodbye worthy of what they were saying goodbye too.

He should have realized the boy was deaf from the beginning. He should've done more, been more. Hell, he had never even gotten the boy to tell him his name. But then he had always been a sad, strange sort of kid, one who had grown up too fast. *I'm happy for you. Really.*

He smiled to show it was true and the boy curled his lips back. *We understand each other*, the boy said, almost a whisper.

Sevket touched his thumb and pointer finger to make a circle, then opened his hand: *Yes*.

They spent the rest of the ferry ride in silence, until it occurred to Sevket for the first time that while for him it was silence, for the boy it was normalcy. It felt right, anyhow.

They watched the dim sun slip behind a pair of gray clouds, and they braced themselves for rain until the sun managed to slip back out, its luminosity growing in strength. It was a strange journey, only because it never felt like a journey at all. The shouts and bells and whistles from Istanbul pressed in from behind them, and skyline to the east presented them with all sorts of noises too. It was comforting to Sevket, that communication never ceased. Even here from here, life was all around, crying and consoling and welcoming and shaking. They sat close to each other, and their knees would occasionally collide, due to the wind or the water.

They were faced away from each other now—Sevket to his office, the boy to, well, Sevket never was exactly sure where he went. But this is not it, this cannot be it, he will not let it be. So, he turns back around, and it takes a moment to

decipher the boy's back from all the others.

Everyone is wearing their light jackets again, the winter chill is fading slowly, and spring is in the air. Spring. He wants to laugh, of course it is spring. Their story is squared away nicely, and Sevket should love this—part of him does.

He has twisted his life to fit the shape of nostalgia; he has worshiped the sentimental as a god, he has made his memories into a perfect play no one will ever see. He treasured the old, ridiculed the new. So of course, they have just stepped off the ferry, of course it is spring, of course he is still heading to his same job. Of course, his dreams never came true. And now he can't understand why he never dreamed new ones.

*Hey!* He calls, but the wind takes ahold of his voice, pushing it down. Besides, it is foolish; the boy wouldn't have heard even if they were the last two people left on earth. But for some reason, the boy turns, slowly, and yet his eyes find Sevket's right away.

Sevket jogs up to him, a divide of only a few meters, and yet the familiar hollowness in his lungs begins to form. *This won't be it, right? We'll see each other again? You're my buddy, man.*

The words linger in the air for a moment, and Sevket's lips are still parted slightly, drawing in oxygen. He wonders if the boy had time to read his lips, and he draws in a big breath, ready to repeat himself, when the boy holds up his hand: *I'm not sure.*

It is a simple statement, and not one Sevket wanted to hear. The embarrassment creeps down his throat. He realizes this is how it will always go, he will always care more, care too much. And this is even worse, because why is he so attached to someone a decade younger than him, why is he always so attached to the past? Because in every relationship he will look at the pictures longer, he will savor the memories harder, everything will always mean more to him than it will for anyone else. And when this part comes, when it's time to say goodbye, it will always be harder for him, and

in these moments, he will vow to not care as much the next time, but somehow even when he cares less, he cares too much, because he has spent his whole life remembering, and not quite enough of it living.

He takes another step backwards, prepared to turn. This moment was perfect, crafted for him even, it was a goodbye that was actually good, and now he has taken it too far, and ruined it.

But the boy surprises him, putting his hand down. *But I hope so.*

Sevket mind quiets instantly, all his worries flatline. Perhaps hope will be enough. *You know, I once thought something, that you were my past and I was your future.* It sounds sort of stupid now, the whimsical musings of his much younger self.

The boy laughs, but not mockingly as Sevket would've thought. *Perhaps you are not so wrong, my friend. I have a goodbye present for you. And I'm sorry I never told you sooner, but it never felt like something that was mine to share. My name is Sevket.*

Sevket's heart folds in two. He gave up asking the boy's name long ago, it had become a barrier he did not cross. *But I'm afraid you might have waited too long, Sevket. In my mind you're always The Boy.*

The boy shrugs, *well in my head you were never Sevket either.*

Sevket is interested: *Oh? What was I?*

The boy speaks now switching seamlessly from sign, *I'll tell you in another five years.*

*I always thought we would meet in the middle.*

The boy smiles; it is a soft smile, but one that lights up his whole face. *You cannot change time.*

## Contributor Bios

**Alina Zollfrank**, from (former) East Germany, loathes wildfire smoke and loves to write to get out of her whirring mind. She is inspired by the lightness and the heaviness of this world. Her essays and poetry have been published in Bella Grace and in Last Leaves Magazine.

**Matthew Waschke** is a poet and writer who has lived in Bellingham his entire life. When not taking inspiration from the world and nature around him to use in his writing, he is often found planning his next D&D adventure set in his own homebrew world. He also proudly takes part in areas of nerd culture such as video gaming.

**Lia Tonella** is a comic writer and artist who spends most of their time drawing their characters instead of writing their stories. They are in their second year at WCC and upon getting a transfer degree, wish to go to Digipen Institute of Technology to further their career in animation.

**Katherine Thompson** just graduated high school. She likes being in nature, music, drawing, skiing in the mountains, math/science, playing tennis, and anything related to horror. She's played the tuba in school for a while and is currently learning guitar. Her fun summer project is to continue writing her book and making short stop-motion films.

**Deby Thomas** (she/her) is a DeafBlind student at WCC, majoring in English. During the summer quarter of 2022, Deby wrote this nostalgic memoir about her own blindness under the guidance of J.R. Lara in Creative Writing II. When she is not writing, you can almost certainly find her listening to Taylor Swift.

**Rylan Samuelsen** has lived in Bellingham his whole life and is in his first year at WCC. With a passion for reading and history, he is continuously looking for new topics to dive into. His inspiration is found in the world around him, and he can often be found traveling across the state to visit a museum or historical attraction.

**Jimmy Rust** is a full-time running start student at WCC who can't stop creating things, whether building Legos, writing about Legos, or even designing a card game. Jimmy has just started a business making card games and is hoping it'll turn into a full-blown career.

**Kylee Mortenson** is in the visual communications program at WCC. She will be graduating in August and hopes to pursue a career in graphic design. In her free time she loves paddle boarding and going on hikes with her dog.

**Tyson Higel** is a nursing student at WCC. When he's not with patients or studying his coursework, he is, almost certainly, writing. His poems have appeared in The Kings River Review, redrosethorns, and Corridor, a publication local to Bellingham, WA where he lives. His chapbook Confessions of a Stutterer (Finishing Line Press) is forthcoming in 2024.

**Olivia J. Espinoza** is 26 years young and a mother to two daughters, 3 & 4, in the beautiful Arlington, Washington. She is currently attending WCC to get her Arts and Science degree. She has always aspired in her writing and gets her inspiration directly from her own life experiences.

**Sydney Durst** is a recent WCC graduate and is now studying history at Western Washington University. When she is not writing, she spends most of her time knitting, exploring the PNW, and attempting to keep her cactus alive.

**Marie DePalma** is a Running Start student, studying to receive her transfer degree next year when she graduates high school. Upon completing that, she hopes to study archaeology at the University of Amsterdam. She enjoys reading, writing, hiking, and listening to music. Her biggest desire is to explore as much of the world as she can.

**Krystan Andreason** is a business student at WCC, currently pursuing her bachelor's degree. She enjoys participating in and appreciating all kinds of creative outlets such as painting, music, and photography, and takes inspiration from anywhere she can get it. This is the first time she has shared her photos for publication. After college, Krystan plans to open a business for fostering creativity and allowing it to shine.

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