

Zeitgeist.

VOLUME II NO. 2

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Zeitgeist /'tsīt-gīst' zīt-/

The general intellectual, moral, and cultural climate of an era.

A student-based enterprise that seeks to entertain, motivate, and inspire through short stories, arts, columns, and a variety of other media.

Provides a platform for aspiring writers and artists to express their identity.

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Theme: a fish out of water.

Prodigal Children

By Sara Pratt

Layout by Sophia Xin

rushing away,
the Son had dreams to be the
sun and ocean and wind;
to be floating and flying and falling
free.
with the road stretched ahead
the morning air fresh,
he missed the eyes watching, watering
from the porch. outstretched
hands waiting

he ran and ravaged the world
as he saw fit.
the damage was not his,
no, it was unclaimed. but when had
the sun gone down?
the air – dry. the oceans – still.
and we,
we sunk into shining lights that rewrote our storylines,
lights that turned mirrored reflections into memories.
and because?
as moths to a flame,
it was the amber glow of dreams that pushed our backs into the city that we thought was outstretched.

so when the glow starts to burn
and those dreams collect dust,
hands press to our aching chests

we remember.

and hollows that seemed too deep,
too broken,
they are crossed.
the boy, i, we, together, watch the porch come back
into view and i see the lights, i see them!
lights that once locked time
now give me breath and i can fall safely. again.

he saw who was waiting with arms out stretched.
returned, the dreams had time to rest.



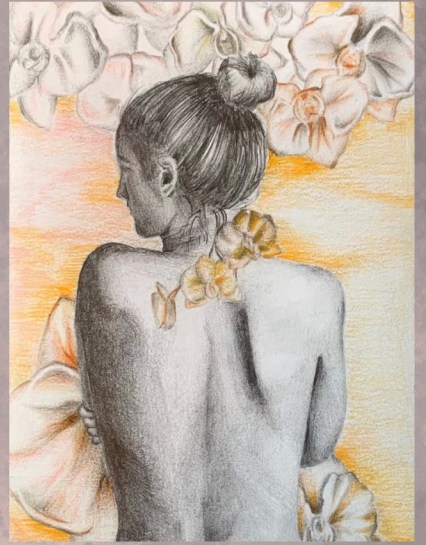
Lost

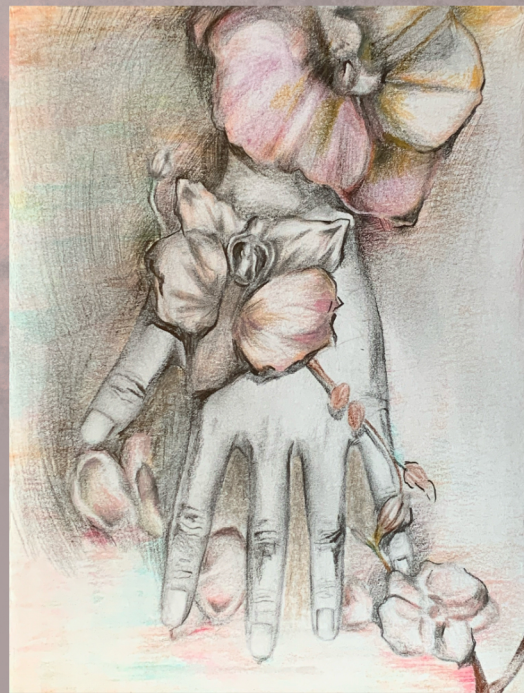
Artist: Elaine Gu

Materials: Digital Art

Artist Statement: "Memories of childhood were the dreams that stayed with you after you woke."

-Julian Barnes





BLOOM LIKE ORCHIDS

Artist: Grace Wu

Materials: Graphite & Colored pencils

Artist Statement: Inspired by the emotional turmoil and subsequent sense of self-discovery during adolescence, this composition reflects my path towards building self-love and finding self-purpose. This ephemeral—and seemingly miniscule—stage of life is a puzzle piece of what shapes the personality, knowledge, and worldview of an individual.

Hyacinthus

By Amber Lueth
Layout by Grace Wu

I watch her as she walks by each day,
Her Hyacinthine hair whipping in the cold breeze.
Deep blue eyes sparkling with mirth,
Eyes only for her Sun, so eager to please.

I stamp down the revulsion at myself and
at their locked hands.
Hers and her blonde Sun,
So unnatural I can barely understand.

I stare at their uncaring backs,
Bile and bitterness inside.
I hate her. I love her.
How can she take her love in stride?

Why can she love her but not me?
Am I not the same, not worthy, not enough?

I follow them to the purple field where
Waving Hyacinths whisper their secrets and lies.
The Sun picks up the discus and
dusts off my half-buried prize.

Her Sun throws it, but
I am the wind besides her.
She laughs and flies after her fate as the
wind mournfully murmurs what will occur.

Then she stumbles and
I know it is over the rock I planted
My prize strikes her temple and
She falls as the flowers watch, enchanted.

Her dark blood pours out and stains
the bright Hyacinths a deep maroon.
Her Sun screams in anguish
As the flowers hum a hollow toon.

She holds her dying body,
but I know it is already too late.
I turn away from them,
Love and anguish ne'er so great.

The Hyacinths cry out behind me:
Alas, alas, it was fate!

Thoughts by the Lake

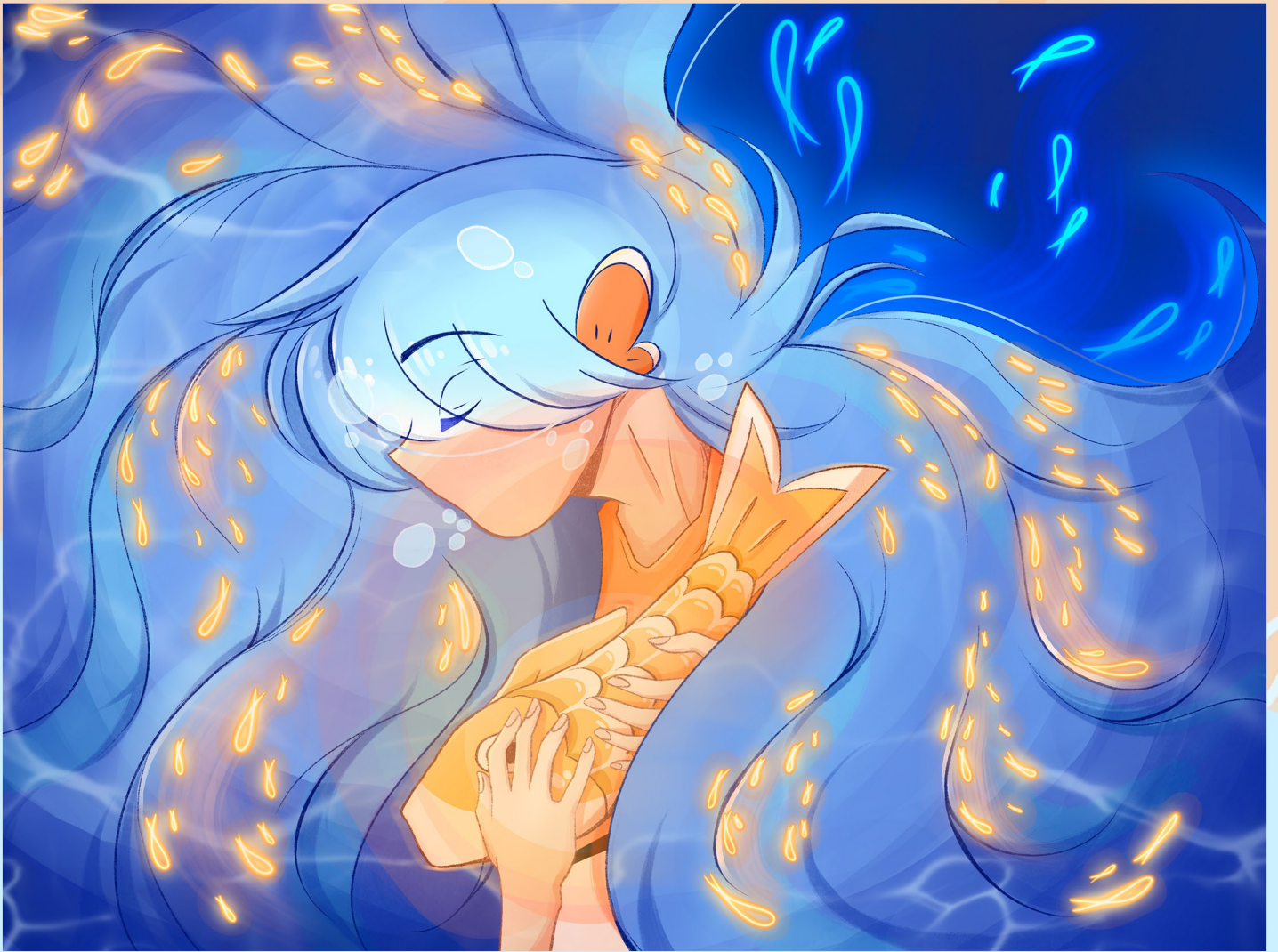
By Julia Mei

Layout by Joyce Wang

I was sitting by the lake, observing
The lingering golden shrine in the west;
Bright, mellow, burning, falling,
Subjected tirelessly to
Never-ending reincarnation, demise.

Smooth ripples take off
Under winter's chilly pulse: A mirror
bent infinitely, though tension undisrupted.
Lighter than silk, more perpetual than time,
Almost—
Resembling rare perfection
Had the flowing golden hills not ruthlessly
Engulfed their predecessors, then approaching the shore,
Be engulfed, of which were then
Engulfed, shoved, overlapped, buried, then
Engulfed, replaced.

Soft, brief perfection comes and goes
In a quiver—everywhere.
Nowhere
to pinpoint, evading
My desperate grasps—mere delusions of an
Impractical traveler.
The hand that mocked, the heart that fed,
The Mighty, the despair,
All trumped, boundless and bare;
A hivefull of golden beetles
Swarming and humming and coercing and hustling
In eternal frenzy.



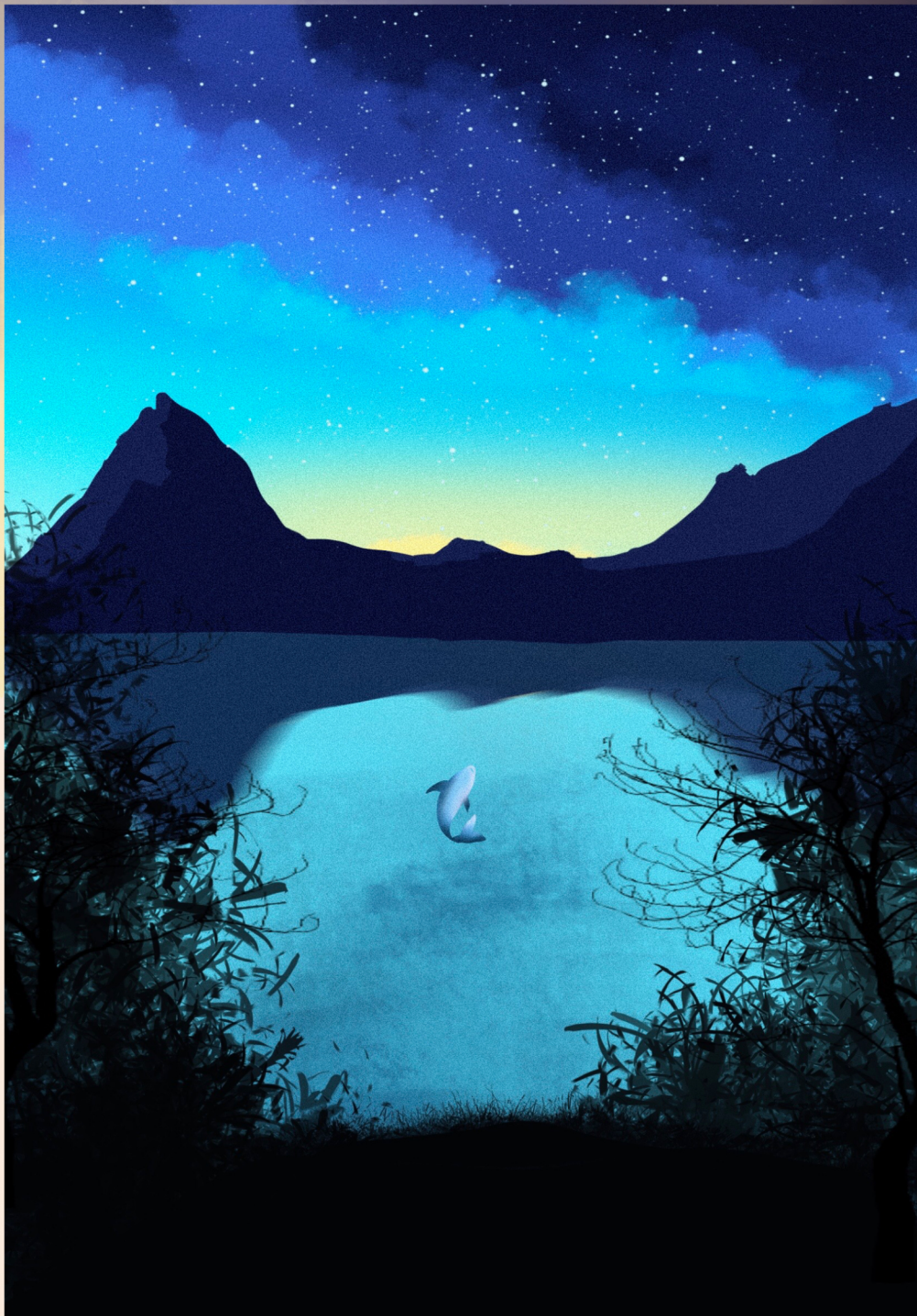
Peppi Golden Fish

Artist: Emma Feng

Layout by Joe Liang

Material: Digital Art

Artist Statement: This is an 8 hour piece inspired by the theme -fish out of water- and the movie Ponyo by Studio Ghibli. The girl's hair is in the ocean, and she is keeping all the fish safe. I used procreate to make this piece.



Look On

Artist: Camille Fan

Layout by Joyce Wang

Materials: Digital Art

Artist Statement: They quietly watch the scenery of the lake. A strange-looking fish jumps out, disrupting the stillness.

Drowning

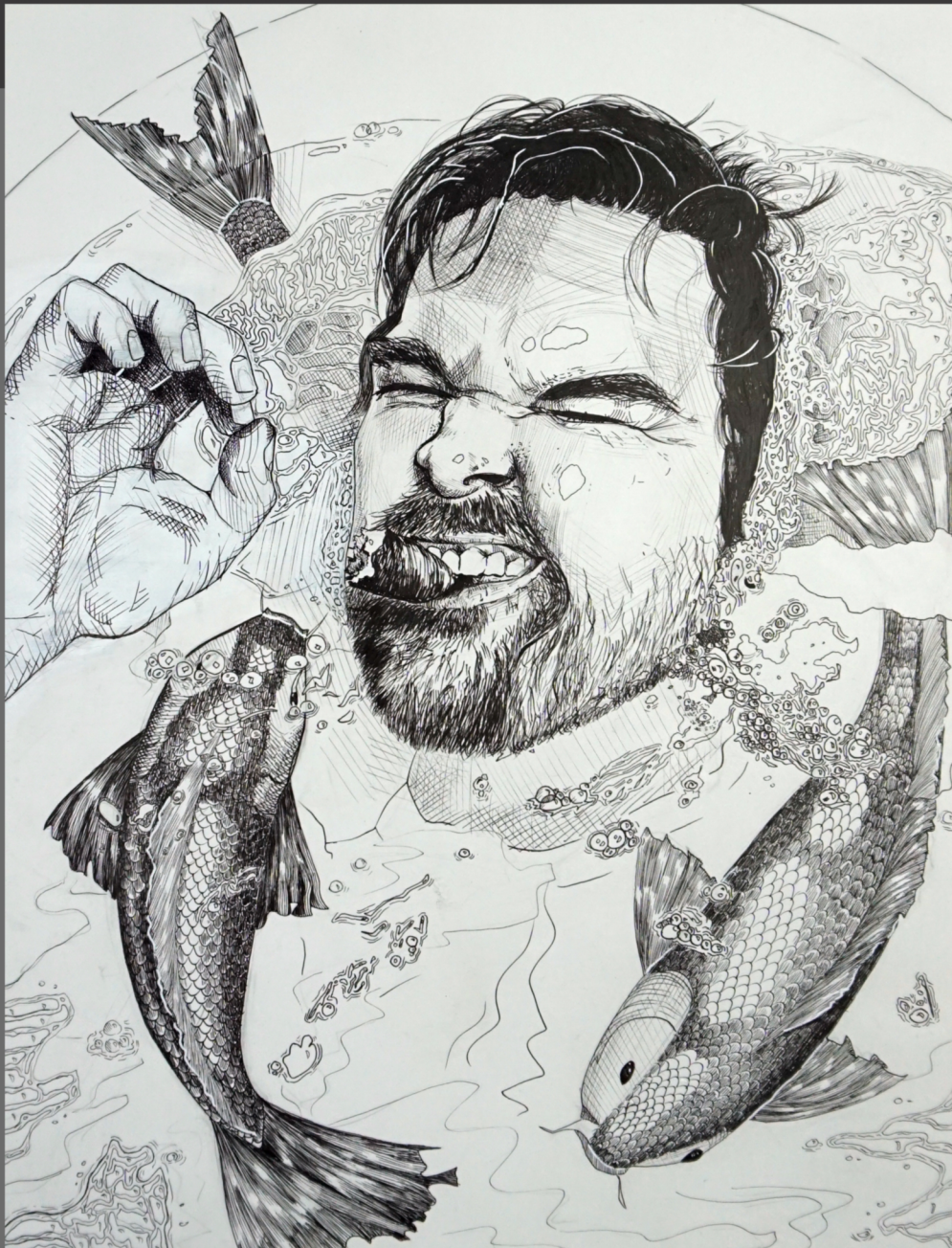
By Selena Morse

Layout by Joyce Wang

The cushion sank with each breath I took.
My body rocking gently against the back of the couch like the morning tide
lapping at sand.
The room around me blurred slowly as tears began trickling from my eyes,
beside me, she told me I wasn't alone.
I wanted to ask then why does it all feel so far away.
So far detached from my life that I felt I was watching it through a closed window.
But shards of glass sliced through my throat, and not the glass smoothed by the
waves of the sea when churned through the sand, but raw, crushed, stinging glass.
And she held my hand,
the tight squeeze of her fingers around mine anchored me present and
told me she knew how I felt.

But the turbulent grief pulled me out outward
into the reality of death.
With watery eyes she said he's in a better place now, swimming in the sea.
I choked on my tears, suffocating from the damp salt that stung my cheeks.
She knew how I felt, the waves crashing relentlessly and the undertow stealing life
still, too much went unsaid.
I sat there, listening to my heartbeat, the indication that I was still
alive. But he was not.
Syllable after syllable I spat out the words that
tasted so rotten in my mouth.
Why him? Why now? What did he do to the ocean that was so bad for it to
steal his life?

But the unpredictability and power surging from the deep gives no answers.
She told me that eventually the ocean takes us all
and the beauty of that cycle is the only constant on which we can depend.
I swallowed my salty tears and squeezed her hand.
He was no longer alive, I needed to learn to live with that to stay afloat.
A deep breath escaped my chest,
one day, the ocean would take me too...
Then I'd be with him again.



Sleep with the Fishes

Artist: Allison Dai

Layout by Lizzie Shi

Materials: Micron Pens and White Gel Pen on Bristol Paper

Artist Statement: When I began working on my art portfolio in 2019, I used basic materials like felt tip pens and ink. The chosen reference of this artwork was a photoshoot of actor David Harbour, who plays the lead in the TV show *Stranger Things*. In the photo, he is portrayed as having the time of his life, a half smoked cigar dangling from his lips. By detaching his head from the rest of his body and putting it in the water with fish, I question the harmfulness of his act of bliss. The name, "Sleep with the Fishes" comes from *The Godfather*. From a technical perspective, I experimented with cross hatching and stippling to add depth without having to rely on color. This gives the piece a look similar to a vintage photo.



A Fishy Scale

Artist: Allison Dai

Layout by Lizzie Shi

Materials: Water-based ink print from Carved Linoleum

Artist Statement: Fish scales are viewed as minuscule and insignificant, and usually discarded without a second thought, yet pausing to take a deeper look can be intriguing. Before making this piece, I had never viewed a fish scale under a microscope, which gave me the freedom to imagine: What if each fish scale were a miniature fish? Would other sea creatures be on there too? I illustrate all my hypotheses through this carving, hoping to remind others to notice the seemingly insignificant things, because they can be not only a source of inspiration, but also a source of beauty.



From This to That

Artist: Joe Liang

Materials: Graphite pencils, photography, and digital art

Artist Statement: A tree is living, and it is manufactured into a chair. The chair and photo are three-dimensional. Meanwhile, the surrounding in the picture is flat, creating an interesting contrast between the drastically different layers. The black and white coloring asserts the chair as the subject of the artwork, leading the audience to reflect upon the importance of the chair. It faces the window, where its past form is revealed: a lively and colorful organism. After the artificial transformation, it became a monotonous and dead item, like a fish out of the water.



[ORIENTAL] POINT OF VIEW

By Emily Pan

Layout by Lizzie Shi

—
pray tell, if i ever become
your frame of reference one day—

a hyperfocus devoid of rose-tinted glasses— i think i can predict what it is you'd see.

you'd see a gangly teen with unkempt ebony hair and alabaster skin peppered with adolescence's gift.

i guess you'd also see an intellectual boasting the almond-eyed effect you get by snagging your eyelids back, back, back.

you'd note that my pronunciation of everyday words from pursed lips is masked by an awful, phonetic accent.

[cue exasperation: it's "muh-naw-poe-lee", not "mon-no-play"]

maybe you'd also notice me donating the lactose contents in my stomach to the plastic bin outside the auditorium.

and let's not forget the scrawny limbs i was gifted from birth that hijack all my non-karate movements.

or the rumors of my scope of consumption; your beloved dogs and cats aren't safe from me.

yet, whatever you'd notice
i have already been stamped with.

so, nice try.

—



WRITTEN AND LAYOUT

BY VIVIEN YEUNG

2PM SESSION

1:59pm on a Saturday afternoon,
I walk into a beige room with two couches facing each other.
Like clockwork on a grandfather's corner,
I sit on the black leathery chair,
"How was your day?"
And you break me.

You shatter my glass body,
My paper masquerade sliding along the plaster ground.
The pieces thrown over the fabric table,
That held a glass vase of its own.
My heart, now nothing but mere blades,
Still pumps in its divided fragments.
The filthy bile inside my frail body,
The rot, the rage, the agony and anguish.
It spills across the ground and bleeds like the Nile,
You break me so I have nothing left to hold.

But then you commence your delicate handiwork,
Like a marionette on strings,
With the wire lines curled around.
Each piece pulled the opposite direction,
Back together.
They twist like gears, clicking in place,
Missing puzzle pieces united.
And you glue them together with golden honey.

The glass statue of my body,
Now a vase with cracks mended.
The gold shining through each break, moving, sifting. The
liquid creasing a new, meaningful, and more profound pattern.
Scars, not stitched together, but
Healed. And I will come back.
"I'll see you next week."
To be broken again.



My Feet Are Purple

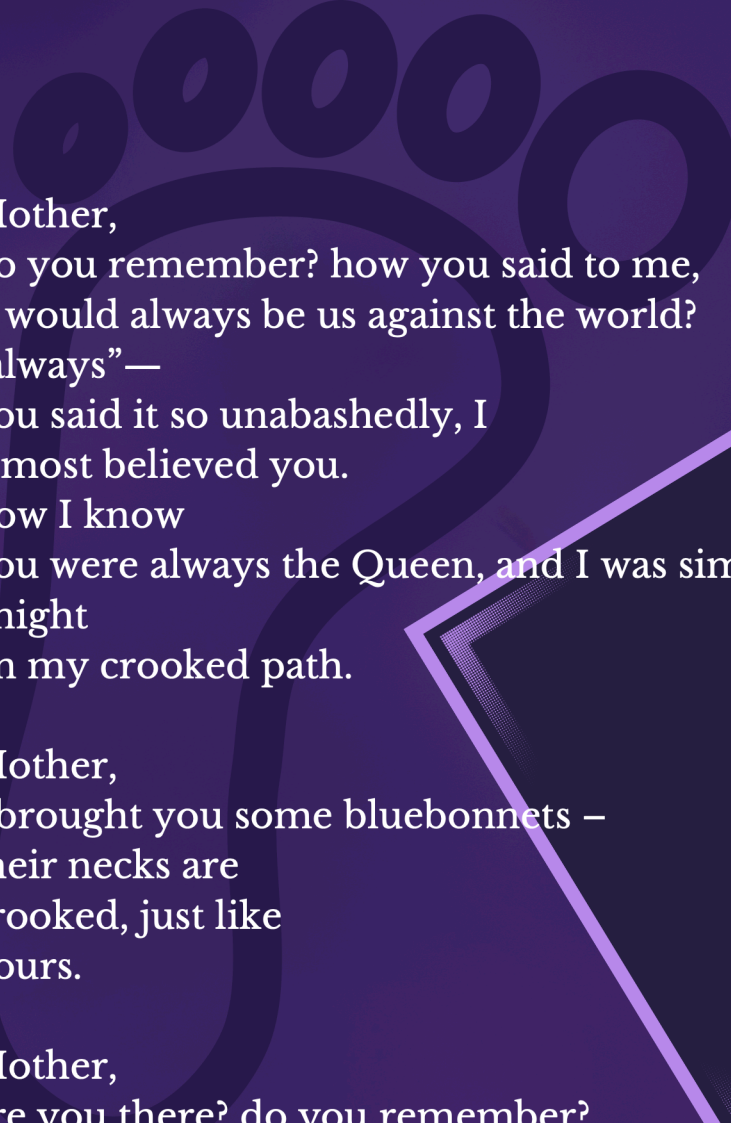
BY ELIE WANG
LAYOUT BY VIVIEN YEUNG

Mother,
my feet are purple,
like that time we trampled
barefoot
through the bluebonnet field.

do you remember?
how the sun's scorching smolder slithered
beneath our tank tops
like summertime vipers.
how the people in the checkered hot-air balloon hissed at us
like vultures from above.

were they angry? or were they
cheering?
jeering?
no—
diving
like a flaming
meteor—
like pawns surrounding—
checkmate.

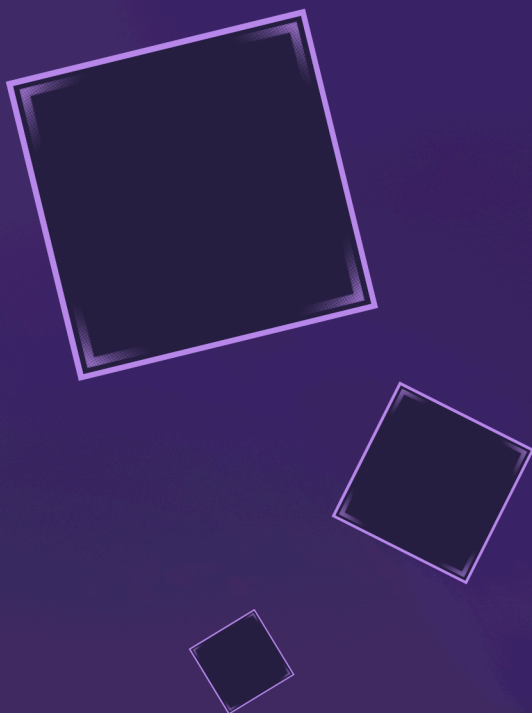
do you remember?
your crooked
glasses and your crooked
smile?
your crooked
arm
and toes
matched my
crooked nose.



Mother,
do you remember? how you said to me,
it would always be us against the world?
“always”—
you said it so unabashedly, I
almost believed you.
now I know
you were always the Queen, and I was simply your
knight
on my crooked path.

Mother,
I brought you some bluebonnets —
their necks are
crooked, just like
yours.

Mother,
are you there? do you remember?
our feet were purple.
If only you could see me now.





Matchmaking (Book Cover)

Artist: Vivien Yeung

Materials: Digital Art

Artist Statement: A small fox lights a match to get ready to go on his merry way to find a shoe for his owner. Cover made for Children's Book Matchmaking.



Girl in the Moon

By Elie Wang

Layout by Joe Liang

Speak to me: tell me with puckered lips
of your heavenly residence. Meet me at the

cusps, halfway on the marble bridge of your wide nose, your
cupid's bow deep like the trenches in your hometown

where the snow rabbits lie. Cry me a jade river with crumbs
of golden egg yolk. Peach fuzz and white fur lined on soft cratered skin;

lotus seed paste poised on the tip of your metallic tongue.
Your luminous hips weave and spin me

into your eternal orbit – eons away, we both
undulate against time in celestial earnest.

I am the enemy of nine suns and keeper
of one; arrows pierce my fiery heart as they soar

against the smolder that scorched the skies. Forever betrothed, we are drunk
on bygone passion and the elixir of immortality.

inspired by the legend of Chang'e, Chinese goddess of the moon

blink and you'll miss it

By Mamie Yang
Layout by Elaine Gu

too soon,
i crept out the play pen.
my eyes swept every corner of the universe,
and the timer ticked.

it was song, it was dance,
it was fields, it was flowers.
it was christmas eve,
apprised to all
but me.

too soon,
time struck me in the cheek.
his secrets unveiled
his pleasure prevailed
i stuffed a dandelion in my mouth,
and learnt to shut up.

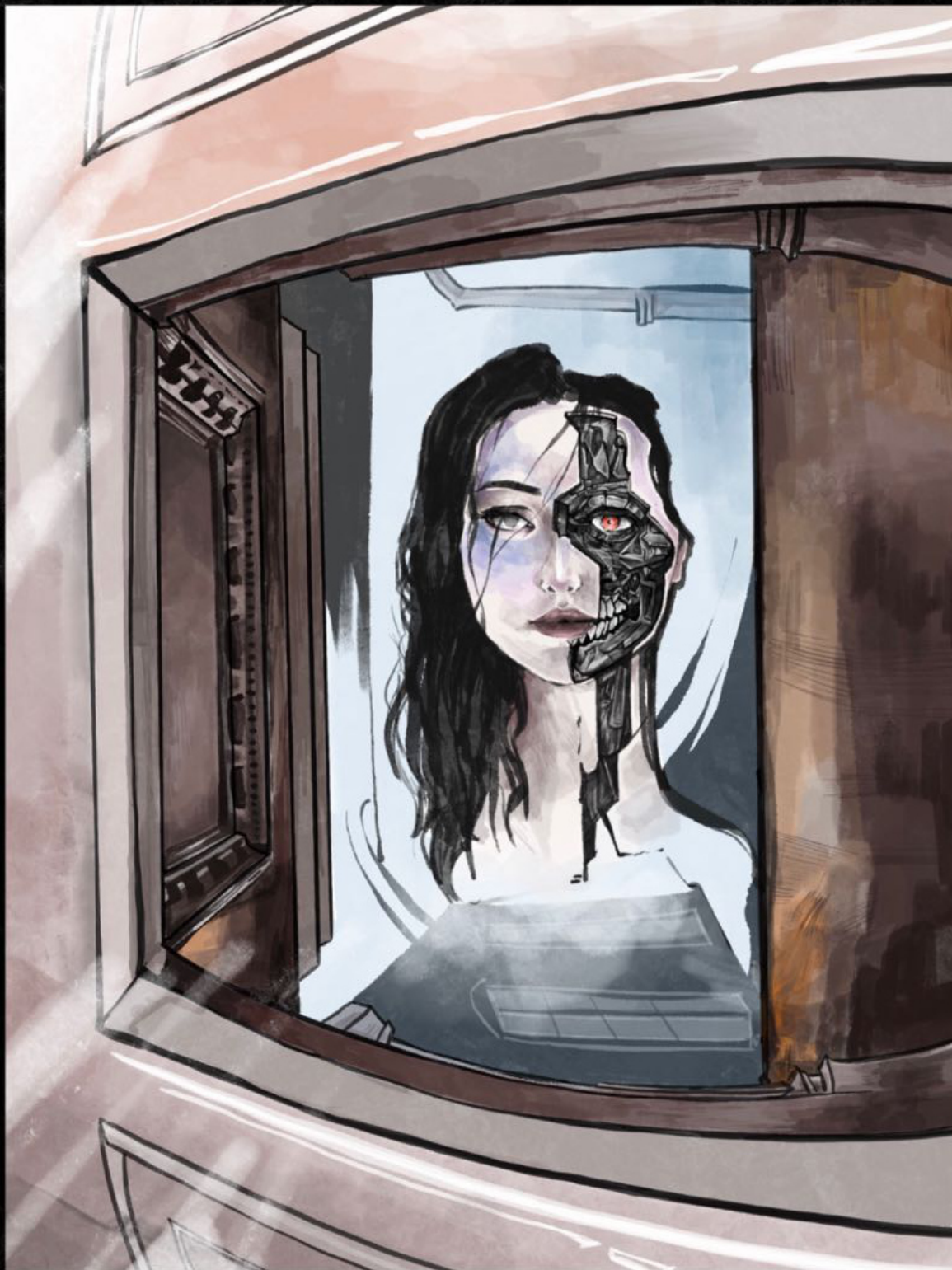
the light was dulling in the distance,
flickering like a bygone memory;
a wedding ring, nestled in the soil.
i lunged and caught nothing.

past the tinted glass that separated us,
i locked eyes
with the elephant in the room.
she watched and mimicked my every move,
it seemed
she was suffering too.
i screamed, 'HELP,'
silence greeted me.

i pace and think and fear
sweat splatters the hardwood floor,
mixing with stray puddles of beer,
awaking the brief layer of dust
collected on the ground.
i grasp at what's left
what's left?
skin drags behind me,
sagging with debris.
this is all i know.

it's panic, it's angst,
it's bruised, it's indifferent.
there's one minute till midnight.

i don't want to go.



Experimental Tank

Artist: Joyce Wang

Materials: Digital Art

Artist Statement: A human-like robot is drowning in water. Turn the paper 90 degrees clockwise and she will be floating in midair at your doorway.



Artist Statement: This piece depicts a painful rebirth—the central figure dressed in a traditional Mantua dress experiences a voluntary assimilation into the society (puppets) through killing her previous self. The puppets have an urge to exile those that do not conform to societal norms. The snake and eagles in the back represent the ruthless part of human nature that developed into social Darwinism. The eagle, shackled by the puppets, at the bottom right corner reflects how humans repress their animal-like nature to form society. The face mask contrasts the puppets, who are faceless, and its smiling expression parallels how we tend to avoid expressing negative emotions. The fishbowl in the back symbolizes how we are constrained by our perspectives. However, the conflicted human nature also leads the "puppets" to continue fighting against the constraints of fate and identity, which is why they attempt to cut the mask and destroy the fishbowl.

“Not cruel, only
truthful”

Artist: Sophia Xin
Materials: Color pencils

Closing Hours

By Julia Fang

Layout by Sophia Xin

Clothed in a blue vest,
wearing a white name tag,
she reaches for the keys in her pocket,
tinkling like wind-chimes in the solemn night.
Sitting at the counter overlooking rows of sodas and snacks,
she imagines the aisles fading to nothing
as the strings of sleep draw her further and further away.

A ghostly face
appears,
obscured by the blurry glass,
sliced in half by the windowpane,
a stray note in a silent concert hall.
It rests atop a lanky, masculine body
with limbs planted in solitude amidst the vast emptiness—
fragile branches swaying in the breeze.

She walks to the door,
footsteps silent against the numb night.
He peers down at her with dark eyes like pools of ink,
but there is a plea within the gaze,
so she opens the door.

Cicadas sing a wretched tune at the stars.
He points at her. He is not so fragile
anymore.

Click.

A sheet of silence settles.
Serene skies loom over swaying sycamores.

Crash.
The shelves
flip upside down, spilling
their contents gruesomely,
in a chaotic cacophony,
across the shining floor. Lights
flicker like dying fireflies. And
the register—
the insides fly out like captive birds, escaping.
It is one minute before closing time.



Concordia

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