The Veil FALL 2 * 2



THE OZ MAGAZINE

Fall 2024: The Veil

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Editors' Note:

Art earns its power when it is felt. There's a great illusion in the solitary nighttime hours of artistic creation. In this picture the artist is all alone, toiling desperatley away at the dream bouncing around in their head. While this endeavor is often necessary to create challenging, engaging, and meaningful work like the pieces featured in this issue, there's a crucial step that lifts the illusion of artistic solitude; when art is felt. The tears the artist sheds late at night become the tears of a community. We want this magazine to be an opportunity to shed those tears together, to laugh the artist's laugh, to feel the same glint in our own eye that the artist felt as they landed on the perfect final sentence to their piece.

As Editors of *The Oz*, we've come to realize that literature cannot exist alone. Literature unmakes the world, and hands the reader the broken pieces with the steadfast promise of making something new, something more beautiful. As you read it, write it, organize it, and get its phrases stuck in your head, you feel it. You feel that new world come into being. Many hours went into the thoughtful work featured in this issue, and in putting the magazine together. This issue couldn't exist without the work of all the people on our masthead, and all our wonderful writers and artists. Now it is your turn... Go read.

Go feel.

- Eran and Joseph

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A Crumbled Canvas

Jane Brinkley

Blank pieces of paper
are more worthy than written ones
As I child, I was told to write my own story
But why must I falter to one's completed life?
What is life hiding from me for which I cannot see?

I want to grasp the dangling lights
that pierce through the indigo painted above my eyes
I want to falter towards my own story,
and embrace it's imperfectness
I'm tired of being the open canvas
for a being to write upon
I want to be a the blank piece of paper
worthy of my own truth
and no one else

Forgive Me Father For I Have Sinned Sophia Celi

After Fred Moten's 'There is Religious Tattooing' confession shook my spine like a bell that said sit and repent and buy back the secrets. far back mother's wallet bent

every time the service bell rang. bills slipped between fingertips bare from palms pressed into palm-pressed baskets.

mother's dues don't suffice for the sins father charges me for. repentance is a poor man's chore that robs my name to buy back the book he swore

I couldn't break. my breaking open starts with a spine, bone to page. the seat branded into my back: confess. another sinner sat

waiting for the bloody bell to rejoice to the sound of repentance tramp stamped onto my back. spine split

the page. sit still and secrets spill

out the book like blood: confess. buy a seat and break spines like bread: confess

with the tongue he castrates before I can break what he forbids: confess. sit on the bell: confess. break open

palms on spines that he tattoos: confess. empty pockets and palm the secrets he bought back: confess. someday

I'll confess standing up and bargain for a bell mother can afford and a back father cannot break. buy back: confess.

Stars, a consolation prize Mary Ellen Coaty

Tart cherry juice from the bottle & a soundscape called Borealis Dance. Boyshorts from the hamper & sheets washed this morning. Two braids from nape to navel & an alarm set for 5:55.

I lie next to a boy named Celestine.

His side of the bed faces the door & I face the window, watching the light show directed by Astraeus through heavy eyelids and sheer curtains. Betelgeuse & Rigel star in the story of our Celestial Warrior & my eyelids take their final bow before the show's curtains close.

Awake I'm in bed with Celestine & Orion Asleep I sleep next to you.

Hierophant

Averylin Huang Cummins

For every lock there is

a key and a

Crowbar.

Every time you hand me an answer

to a question I'm not ready to ask

I push it

like a plum, past too-round lips;

I am always hungry.

I have learned to pull the heart aside

to make room to fill my stomach.

As I ravage the kitchen

I leave all the cupboards

Open.

This tongue has turned a gray color

like lead like silver.

I think I am sick.

I think I am starving.

I think I am answering my own questions.

I think some locks

can stay

just that.



Falling Into the Liminal Mia Fasick

Trip Report #001432

Liz Darahdgian

My air-conditioned skin prickles beneath the steady stream of air from the air-conditioning vent. Everyone in this café has horrific posture, myself included. I am hunched over my notebook. The person to my left leans deep into her tablet screen. The person to my right stares deep into his computer screen. He is not very interesting to watch so I shift to my left. She has brought out a sketchpad. The pages are warped and bending, thick with all sorts of added papers and scribble-covered napkins. I strain my eyes to see the scribbles in her margins. There are a couple hearts with what seem like funky patterns on them sketched here and there. Upon closer examination, I realize they are faces! They furrow their brows and roll their eyes and wiggle their tongues. What strange creatures.

I do not notice myself staring until she looks up at me. It takes me a few seconds to register the look of discomfort on her face. Ashamed, I look away.

Somewhere behind me, a group of baristas swap stories to pass the time on this slow-motion September morning. I wonder which of them put on the trashy playlist that blares over the music in my headphones. There is no justifiable reason why I, or anyone for that matter, should be listening to Maroon 5 now, or ever for that matter. I had another sentence to write here, you know, but my train of thought was destroyed in a fatal wreck as Adam Levine howled like a dog over the sound system. Ridiculous. That sentence had so much potential too.

Fuck you, Adam Levine.

I sit back, frustrated. Well—now what? A few moments of unsuccessful drafting later, I decide there is no point in searching for lost words. Haphazardly packing my overstuffed lavender notebook and half-dry violet ink pen into my worn tote bag, I make for the door. It opens into my bedroom. Now, I am not entirely sure why the door to the café opens into my bedroom, but I choose not to question this minor detail.

The room itself is between a frothy cream and a smooth butter-fat, like a lukewarm cup of slightly off-white milk left outside, forgotten in the sun for a moment too long. Wiry strands of generic Christmas lights hang all around me. The surfaces are all cluttered "just-so." A stack of cards has been strewn about the room by a spinning fan. Piles of books teeter on edges and pile up against walls. The pile of laundry moans for help from the corner, but the pile of unwashed Tupperware plastics above it has collectively accepted their fate. I flop onto my bed, ignoring their wails. For a fleeting moment, I lie atop the piles of clothes left strewn about the bed during my morning rush to get dressed. The sink faucet's steady plink-plink-plinking drowns out any final thoughts I might have had. Then the mattress swallows me whole.

I sit up, dazed. Somewhere beneath the twisted sheets and crumpled shirts, my phone is buzzing against my leg. I ignore it. The sink is still leaking. I try to rub the headache out of my temples. Upstairs, my neighbors are doing as they always do. Next door, my neighbor is doing as she always does. Ignoring both, I yawn, reaching for the bottle of lukewarm water that fell somewhere on the floor at some point. It does not taste like water.

I glance over. There is a mouse. The mouse peers out from the shadow of my closet door. I raise an eyebrow.

"That's not water, you know."

Of course I know that. Tell me something the burn in my throat has not already told me.

The mouse snickers at me. I glare at him. If he cares this much about what I am drinking, he can start by bringing me water.

"I'm a mouse."

Yes, you are a mouse and I must be losing my mind. I shake the thought out of my head, readjusting myself in my crumpled position on this tired couch. The living room is almost empty at this point. The person to my left is passed out asleep on a folding chair. The person to my right is my friend, slouched on the couch beside me. He passes me the last of the cigarette he has pinched between his fingers. I gladly oblige, inhaling for about sixty seconds too long. A fit of coughs overtakes me.

"You good, man?"

I choke out a "yes." He laughs at me, passing me a bottle and through the tears collected in my eyes, I can tell that this is not the water I was searching for earlier. When he asks if I want to move outside for fresh air, I do not say no and we soon find ourselves stumbling out of someone's apartment, somewhere.

The first thing I notice is the cold air. For October, this is normal. For LA, it is not, but I try to enjoy the cool while it lasts.

Not many people are sound tonight. I think I recognize the figures of fellow partygoers further down the block, but I cannot be too sure. Before I can make out their approaching faces, my eye is drawn

away by the familiar glare of the local gas station lights. The fluorescence leaks out over the curb, beckoning us forward. Enthralled by the lights, I do not catch myself as I begin to sway off to the edge of the sidewalk. My arm is suddenly warm in the grasp of a tightly clasped hand. I realize it is my friend, half-pulling and half-dragging me close to him. Made stable once again, he does not let go, but moves to grab hold of my hand. I am reminded of my kindergarten days and of being led here and there by my teachers, but I do not mind it. I glance over at him for what is more than a socially acceptable period of time. Without shifting to meet my gaze, he makes a passing comment.

"Like what you see here?"

I roll my eyes and we walk down the rest of the partially-lit block in silence.

As I look beyond the intersection, toward the gas station mini-mart, I ask if we can stop in for some water. The crosswalk man lights up as we approach him. My parched throat tightens. A minute later, we are at the door. My friend opens it for me. I step in. My air-conditioned skin prickles beneath the steady stream of air from the air-conditioning vent.

Mariposa nervosa

Jackson Fawcett

Spawned in the stomach from a wedding of wanting eyes and wanting thoughts

Fed by a fecund tension between what is and what could be

Torqued intestines twisted into a cocoon

Laid in wait, listening for its parents

Wanton wings unfurl

Ebullition erupts up through the esophagus

Plants pollinated in the mind bear poisonous fruit

Some spills out the mouth, some slides down the throat and feeds the brood

Nyasha Griffin

With this veil, I cannot see who I have come to be.

Who put this on me?

"Some great power," they say,

Knew I'd become this one day.

Because everyone does.

"Don't fight, don't make a fuss,

For this veil was made just for you.

It has wonderful tricks—

It creates these boxes that you must tick."

But mine does not fit.

It wrinkles when I pull,

Gapes as I breathe,

And snags at the seams.

The power can fix it.

Just don't pull,

Or breathe,

And disregard those silly seams.

Can I sacrifice my breath so this power can see

Which veil is best to categorize me?

Rosie

Hannah Lieberman

Rosie the Riveter is counting down the minutes until she can scrape off the makeup hastily applied by some government intern,

one hand smearing lead-filled blush, and the other adjusting dials

on the radio, crying out mortality counts and advancing enemy lines

the second world war bites into the country's side, and as the oceans team with young boys' bodies we turn to the women.

our military machines floating on fumes,

Rosie the Riveter is born out of desperation

women receive a battlefield promotion to respectable citizen

don't mind the stains around the honorary patches they say you are valued just as much as the bodies we pulled these off of.

it's hard to say something original to the male gaze

this amalgous roach on the shoulder and it is not for a lack of assaults to report but rather so many women have raised their voices that the perpetuation of silence becomes heavy and Rosie 17

violently i am pushed into a prerecorded list of complaints taken at midnight every fifth sunday of the month to be tossed in the filing drawer of our discontents

i cannot keep repeating the words my grandmother spoke and pretend that it doesn't make me feel small make me feel like i am a weight on our progress forward as if i step on the toes of our evolution with my gluttonously oversized requests for the space to breathe.

there are moments between places
between 5pm and 5:20
on the bus, or in front of the grocery store
or unpleasantly stretched over an afternoon
when i stand before a radio cryer — a blush rubber with a stone smile
off of which hangs his contempt for the woman who
went to war and left children behind or
stayed and didn't have any.

when i find myself here, wanting company and not caring much for the lopsided conversation i speak to the little one in my chest

the one who would have wiped mud down the front of his trousers or

hidden behind her mother's legs i speak to her to teach her that it is ok to be angry and tell her why i am.

the thing is,

i say

it is easy for you to chant from your wide-legged slouch,

"don't fix what ain't broke,"

feet firmly planted outside of our monasteries of straw that

have yet to be blown down by your wolf tongues

the flag outside changing on the season of your need

women have always given everything of themselves.

when is it our time to take?

and is it fair to assume

you will you change the rules of the game

when we, at last, are up to bat? will the uniforms be freshly discarded,

and

when their rightful owners come back from the next war,

shall we retreat to the kitchen, anthem in our throats?

the little one smiles but

it is only because she likes to see me sing

and it is a song

of rebellion and a ravenous taste for justice.

at night my small companion

asks me how we got here

for anyone else i would shrug in agreement

with their rhetorical dismay

but i know she means it.

so i tell her

it began in hiding.

it began in monstrous caves, where we were banished

Rosie 19

by beautiful boys and their armies it began in hunger, and thirst, and a dozen biting heads that had to be slashed and burned by the hateful hero

it began in shame ours, and others'

and now it continues because we are none of these.

we reject this history as a future

we are not ashamed

and we eat when we are hungry

from our own hands

a sandwich easily held in one hand

it continues because we were always here, even camouflaged in shades of peach and pin curls.

and rouge her cheeks,
bend the curves in her arms to make for
quieter statements and prettier lines
the original Rosie lifted arms like grecian columns,
and stacked them over her proud posture

newspapers did not always tuck Rosie's hair neat beneath a bandana,

her appetite, her build, the empty space where her smile is not open for viewing

it's no wonder that she was not desirable enough to be fed to the masses

passes underfoot

"come join the workforce!" they call in whispered doubt mothers stay with their children, there are already job shortages in the departments of bedtime tuckings in and story reading.

"come join the workforce!" they holler, as half of the population is already working a dozen in unpaid emotional labor.

hair tightly coiffed, the american housewife sighs and asks herself what kind of creature they have created that carries the skin of a woman; her stoic world-bearing shoulders, and would be sent to join her sons ossifying in foreign ground if it appealed more than the war waged against them at home.

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Family Recess

Sabastian Luyen

I dressed up my hamster in a dress and bow

We sat inside the doll house

around the dinner table

The screams in the kitchen were still audible

The tiniest chair you've ever seen

Is surprisingly comfortable

Everyone was there

The ghosts clamor around the table

A portrait of a king

Man with shiny hat, who are you to sit on the throne?

I save a seat for my mother and one for my father

Hamster tries to leave

"I'm going to listen to the Smiths" he said

But we all need to sit together

I plead

My friend Effie is on her way and she promised to bring crackers

Heaven knows I'm miserable now

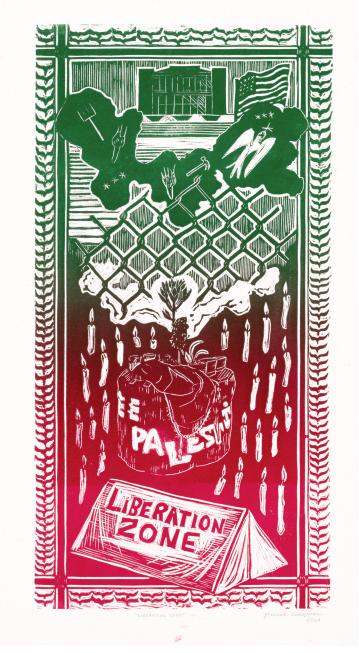
And Morrissey sings over the yelling in the kitchen

But Time is collapsing and the oven timer is about to go off

Hamster is trying to escape again

I don't stop him because my hands cover my ears
And I squeeze my eyes shut
Fleshy bodies can only hold so much

If only you knew I had saved two seats for you



Liberation Zone

Hannah Lieberman

i planted the seed/i watered the plant /i stomped it out

Jojo McCabe

I am the deer I am the highway I am the toyota corolla careening into soft flesh.

I first met god in a women's bathroom

Glitter rained down like

I remember the air

Thick like mud

Sweet and sticky as June.

Like rain it did

I'll tell you that Sophie could always dance Since she could walk her parents would say Her first day of first grade she wore tap shoes to school

Like hail maybe

Hair clogged the drain

I remember the sink filling with water as i washed my hands

I remember just standing and watching it

I know what's best

I know what's best or second best maybe

And I'd like to think I try my best

Or at least as close as i can get to it covered in body glitter

Sophie had a mole on her right hip

And another on her shoulder

And her hair

It was mesmerizing

It was like

Body

And volume

Sleek and shiny

Lightning or maybe something

Gentler like a wave

Like a soft hug

Watching her dance was

Like nothing else

Her hair would sway

Illuminated by the low lights

I remember.

I think I remember

A manicured hand turning the **the** silver knob

A flash of red hair

Like blood

Like my blood

That's it

The glitter rained down like blood **on a** battlefield

Our armor glinting in strobe lights

A shield on a keychain

An ally in a **stranger**

Sophie asked me if I was okay

If I needed to sit for a minute

If i wanted a cigarette

What my **name** was

Where my friends were

I never asked

How she smelled so good

Like sunshine

How she got her hair to sparkle like that

God that fucking hair

'Yes' I told her

'Yes',

'Yes'

(*****)

'Home'

I still don't know what I lied for

She asked if I wanted to be her friend

If I liked to dance

If i wanted to with her

I would've done anything with her

I remember a

Time when I loved nothing like being alone

And the Heat of the summer was my only company

When I would sit and

Listen

To the ocean or the wind

Blowing dust through the window

Like the calm before a storm

Nothing brought calm

Like the wind

She looked at me

Into my eyes

Like no one else had

Like Sophie.

I remember overwhelming calm

Her hair brushing my cheek

I still live in that city

I still sit on that stoop

Right Here

right?



as many hours as can fit in a day
Sam Willard-Van Sistine

The Whipping Post

Adam Zahavi Pildal content warning: violence, blood

The first blow was the worst by far, more so because of the shock than the physical pain itself. The following nine hurt worse than anything I had experienced before, the pain searing through my back in sharp clean waves. Only my sheer confusion at what was happening to me prevented me from fully feeling the crack of the whip on my shoulder blades. For a brief moment I thought I was dying, that some creeping illness or curse was taking root in my heart or spine, and that the angel of death was now coming to reap what was rightly his. But then, as quickly as it had begun, it was over. Where I was expecting to feel the pulsing ache of a newly inflicted wound there was nothing, and when I reached up to feel my shoulders my tracing fingers only met smooth and unbroken skin.

The man standing in front of the crowd, haggard and middle aged, was dragged away from the whipping post by two officers. Despite his age and tough exterior, his weathered face betrayed the fact that he was fighting to hold back tears of pain. Whereas my back revealed no signs of the agonising pain I had felt only moments before, the shirt of the man in front of me bore the unmistakable marks of a lashing. Ten streaks of blood ran down his back, staining his grey wool shirt a scarlet red.

The man was a fugitive, a thief convicted of stealing a sack of grain and attempting to flee beyond the city walls. The thief's advanced age and the weight of the grain meant that he was easily apprehended

by city guards, and after a short trial he was brought to the square to be made an example of. I am not a violent man, and I take no pleasure in the suffering of others. But whether it was morbid curiosity or fateful coincidence, I ended up standing in the crowd at the time of the flagellation.

As I watched the thief be dragged off by the guards, the bizarre nature of what had just happened to me began to set in. For a brief moment, I had viscerally felt the pain being inflicted on the condemned individual. My mind raced as I desperately searched for a rational explanation of this occurrence, but I was at a loss. Something like this could only occur through a miracle, an act of God or the Devil. I raced to the cathedral, in the hope that perhaps the bishop might be able to understand the nature of what I experienced. However, when I arrived at the house of God I did not find a soul inside. The cathedral was immense, and the intricate designs hewn in the stone walls and painted on the ceiling dome usually imbued me with a sense of national and religious pride. Yet, as I wandered up the nave I found that the depictions of the disciples and the Son did not have their usual splendour about them. Their painted faces seemed dull and almost lifeless in the dim light of the filtered sun. I was starting to get hungry, and as the sun was nearing the horizon I resolved to return to my estate before nightfall.

I rode home unsettled, with the gnawing feeling that what happened at the executioner's square could not possibly be a one time occurrence. Thankfully, my horse's gait did not falter and I was home before the light of the moon had touched the fields. The rays of the setting sun framed the old manor at the centre of the estate in a crimson and golden light, so beautiful that it helped me to forget the shock of

my earlier experience. The surrounding fields lay quiet and undisturbed, and I noticed no noise or activity coming from the cottages of my serfs and labourers.

When I arrived at the estate I was greeted by my gatekeeper Poul, who faithfully opened the gates for my horse as he had done so many times before. However, this time something was different. When I looked at Poul to greet him, I was struck by an intense aching pain in my hip. This pain was not sharp and excruciating like the whip against the back of the thief, rather it was dull and insistent, like an old injury struggling to heal. I asked Poul if something was troubling him, and although he seemed surprised by my sudden interest in him, he explained to me that he had sprained his hip a few weeks ago while helping some inexperienced farmhands deliver a foal. I thanked him, he limped back into the guardhouse, and I rode on. To my momentary relief I found that the ache in my hip disappeared as soon as Poul left my immediate line of sight. This relief was short lived, as the immediate stress of the pain gave way to thoughts about the monumental nature of what was happening to me.

As I dismounted my horse and entered my estate, I could feel a suffocating knot of dread forming in my chest and threatening to force its way up into my throat. Whatever had happened at the whipping post was not an isolated occurrence. I suddenly found that the prodigious appetite I had built up over the course of the day had vanished.

I hurried through the halls of the manor directly to my bedchamber. I did not wish to encounter any of my house servants for fear that one of them might have an injury or sickness even worse than what Poul was dealing with. I reached my bed without incident and shut the door behind me without looking back. To be safe I bolted the door to ensure that I would not be surprised by a servant trying to change my chamberpot in the early hours of the morning. From now on I would have to do more things by myself. I laid down in bed, exhausted from the disturbing events of the day and ready to shut my mind off, but as I did so I found that my eiderdown duvet and pillows felt almost suffocatingly hot. I removed the blanket from my body, but even laying without protection I was sweating profusely. In the end I had to get up from my bed and open the window to the cold October air. Even then, I laid awake for hours and pondered my strange condition before I was finally able to calm myself down and fall asleep.

I awoke around noon to the sound of screams and an excruciating pain in my crotch. I jolted awake and got up immediately, but in my confusion I could not determine where the source of the pain was coming from. As far as I could see there was no one else in the room and the door remained bolted shut. I turned my attention to the open window as the only remaining explanation, and I pushed my head outside to look down into the courtyard. When I saw the man on the wooden horse, the pain in my crotch jolted to an almost unbearable sensation of agony. The man was a young land tiller of about 20 years, and was being forced to straddle the sharp wooden device while one of my servants stood by, axe in hand. I gathered that the man had been disobedient in some manner, perhaps by refusing to pay his rightful due to the manor. However, in that moment my pain by far outweighed my capacity to take any satisfaction in the efficient management of my estate.

I threw myself away from the window and closed it shut, but the screams of the disobedient serf continued to penetrate through I averted my gaze from the scene in the courtyard, but every time the man screamed, the noise caused the pain to return in piercing jolts. Desperately, I fixed my gaze on the centre of my chamber, plugged my ears with my fingers and yelled out to my servant in the courtyard that it was enough. The screaming continued. No matter how much I tore my lungs commanding my servant to end the punishment, the animalistic screeches of the tortured serf drowned out any of my attempts to put an end to his suffering.

I realized that I was stuck there. I could not go outside with my eyes closed and ears plugged, looking like a blind madman while demanding that the punishment stop. I would have to wait until the punishment carried out its natural course. I began frantically stacking anything I could find against the windowpane, hoping to block out the infernal noise of the peasant. However, neither pillows, blankets, or furniture could completely block out the sounds of suffering, and I continued to share in the man's agony until the chastisement finally stopped. Two hours, thirty-eight minutes and twelve seconds after it had violently forced me awake. The pain stopped as suddenly as it had come as soon as the man was pushed off the horse and dragged out of the courtyard. I sighed with relief, nearly delirious with the pain I had just experienced, and for twenty-five blessed minutes I almost felt normal again. Then one of the servant women downstairs was slapped in the face for overcooking the broth, her scream ringing out just loud enough for me to hear through the wooden panes of my door.

It has been a month and twenty-eight days since the man at the whipping post, and I am at my limit. I have done everything I can to

alleviate the suffering, but every day it becomes increasingly unbearable. After the incident in the courtyard, I mandated that any punishments must be conducted in the forest at the edge of my estate, far away from my earshot and line of sight. This has lightened the worst of my suffering, but every day the physical range within which I experience the misfortune of others is expanding. I may soon have to abolish physical discipline for my labourers entirely. Still, more than my immediate fear of pain, the sensation that plagues me most of all is my incessant hunger. As my senses extend to more and more people, their hunger is the most ubiquitous sensation that I experience on a constant basis. It is not limited to one person, but is multiplied for every starving mouth until it reaches an unbearable crescendo of anguish that compels me to consume until I physically cannot continue. I eat and eat until my stomach is bloated and distended and I feel ready to vomit, but no matter how much I consume, the void inside me digging away at my insides will not let up. I barely sleep; the hunger and the continuous sensations of a hundred different minor ailments keep me awake for days on end, until I collapse from exhaustion into a dreamless slumber.

I have reached out to priests and exorcists from across the country, but none have been able to explain what is happening to me, or to conjure out whatever demon is causing this infernal agony. They only ever tell me that I must repent for my sins and turn my path towards the Lord. Still worse, my coffers are running low as I try to find an explanation for my curse, and my insatiable eating habits cannot continue indefinitely either. I feel that my servants are starting to look at me differently. I have gained weight, and I rarely leave my chambers except to eat or consult with religious advisors. I understand their suspicions

of course. From their perspective only a madman could behave the way that I am, but it is imperative that they do not discover the true cause of this change. My greatest fear is that my irrational behaviour will reveal my weakness to them, allowing them to threaten everything my family has built over generations. I cannot fight back against an uprising. Any harm inflicted on my potential assassins would be reflected back on me, and I dread the idea of consciously experiencing another person's death more than anything else. As things are now, it seems only a matter of time before someone within my servant staff discovers my secret, or I completely lose my mind.

There is one solution which may allow me to save the honour of my family and preserve the tradition of our estate. I myself never had children, but I do have a prospective heir. A nephew in Aalborg who never took much interest in the duties of his class, but who could nonetheless be called to take my place in the event of my untimely death.

The feeling of the improvised rope around my neck is a relief, a soft caress in comparison to the hunger eating away at my insides. Finally, for a single blessed moment I do not feel anything as gravity does its work. The phantom pain of labourers who have had their fingers cut off for stealing, the pain of a peasant woman in childbirth, the hunger of her many children; all of it is gone. For a while there is nothing, no sensation. And then I open my eyes.

I am standing in a crowd of people, and in front of me is a man tied to a post. I try to get away from the crowd, to escape what I know is about to happen. Yet the crowd seems to bend and constrict around me like a single organism, fixing me in place. I try to turn away from the man at the post, but someone behind me seizes me and forces my head

to look. I shut my eyes to avoid the sight, but a woman next to me forces them open, her long fingernails digging into my cheeks. I cease struggling, relax my muscles, and brace myself as the first blow makes contact with the condemned.

Gabi Pinto

I went on my first diet when I was 7 years old. I'd just had a surgery to remove my tonsils and the doctor told my mother "You might want to put a lock on the fridge because she'll be wanting to eat a lot more." A few months later, the doctor's premonition came true and my mom took me to my first nutritionist appointment. I don't remember much, maybe a few food charts on the walls and sitting in one of those uncomfortable bed chairs. I remember the word diet had been thrown around by my mom and a few of her friends before but I never knew what it meant. That day, I got my first diet. It had a list of all the things I could eat and all the things I couldn't. White rice, bread, cake, chocolate, sugar, all my favorite things suddenly out of my grasp. Then, at 9 years old, another doctor told my mom that I was overweight for my age. I didn't understand. I had always played sports and I ate fruits and vegetables unlike so many of my friends. But over the last few years I'd come to learn that too much weight was a bad thing, something shameful. My body had to change, but I couldn't be on a diet anymore. I loved cake and ice cream and eating a full meal. I lived for starbucks cookie frappuccinos. But soon, all of these were banned from the house. No white sugar (only brown). No white bread (only whole wheat). Eventually I learned that these items weren't banned from the house, only banned for me. My brother could eat his cake and pasta and avoid the salad. My parents would hide all their bad stuff in cupboards or closets. But I would always find it. I would stay up late, reading my book or going on my ipad and at midnight, I would sneak down on my tippy toes, knowing what spots

38 Gabi Pinto

to avoid on the creaky wooden floor, and look in all the corners of the kitchen for the hidden treasure. It became my very own detective game, I looked for clues in the ways the cereals were stacked and the way the fruits were piled in the fridge. I soon knew all the hiding places and when they figured it out and changed them, it just became easier and easier to find the new ones. At some point it stopped being about the food and started being about the hunt. I was chasing after something rare and the hunt made it exciting. They would get angry and then, it became a rebellion, if they yelled at me, then at midnight I could go down to the kitchen and eat something sweet or oily or fried and that would be my revenge, my way of upsetting them like they had upset me. It only made things worse, there would be more yelling and more anger and it would just keep building and building every time. Eventually, they got rid of all the good stuff, but it was too late to stop going down to the kitchen, it was too ingrained, too much of a habit. It was no longer something I could stop.

Fall 2024: The Veil



Machine Made
Camden Foster

1944 • Siempre Hacia el Norte/ Forever Towards the North

Isa Ramos

"But I love your feet only because they walked upon the earth and upon the wind and upon the waters, until they found me."

- Pablo Neruda

Jesús stood in the middle of his room, emptied of all life it seemed now that he'd decided to leave. He wasn't taking much with him. But for how alone and how out of place he felt, the room may as well have been empty. It was strange how a place he had called home for so long could look so unfamiliar so quickly. Perhaps it was because he had made his decision and come to terms with it long ago. There was a knock at the door. He looked up to see his brother, Teodoro standing in the doorway.

"Where will you go?" Teodoro's voice was measured.

"I'm not sure." Jesús replied as he finished packing his belongings, placing them neatly in his case.

"He could be anywhere." He wrung his hands, looking anywhere but Jesús's direction.

"Then I'll search everywhere." There was a sort of stubbornness in Jesús's voice that he didn't usually use with his brother.

Teodoro had always been an agreeable man, but in recent months there had been an undeniable unfamiliarity between them.

"I still don't understand why you want to go. He abandoned you."

"It's not a question of what I want." Jesús exhaled sharply, holding his head in his hands for a moment before turning to face Teodoro again.

"Then why do it? What part of you needs him in your life?" He asked, his eyes pleading.

Jesús focused on steadying his breathing. How could he help Teodoro understand his reasons when he himself could not make sense of them? He looked his brother in the eye, his face a pale shadow in the soft early morning light.

"He had no choice."

"Is that what you really believe?" Teodoro challenged.

"It's what I've chosen to believe. You never knew him." Jesús said jaggedly, grabbing his belongings from the bed.

"And neither did you." He stepped into his path.

Jesús did not respond. He could not deny his brother's words, but it was too late to give in to them. He had made his decision and though he did not want to leave him, it wasn't enough to make him stay. He hoped Teodoro wouldn't resent him too much.

"Are you not happy here?" His brother asked, trying to find some explanation, "Are we not-are we not family enough?"

"This isn't about that." He felt his chest tighten. The last thing he wanted was for Teodoro to think he did not love them.

He did. He loved his parents, his family, but as long as he was alive he would never be free of the incessant tugging at the back of his mind. Like something pulling him away, and towards a life he wasn't sure was his to have. If he followed his father, would it be worth

42 Isa Ramos

everything he was leaving behind?

Teodoro's voice pulled him from his thoughts.

"Then what is it?" Teodoro asked, his voice unsteady.

Jesús looked away, finding it hard to focus with Teodoro's pained expression staring back at him. He wanted to promise him he would visit someday soon, but he couldn't get the words out. Every lie he had told himself since the day he decided to leave piled in the back of his throat, every lie since the tugging in his mind became too much too strong. He could lie to himself, but he wouldn't lie to Teodoro.

He felt a single tear rush down his cheek, and he hoped Teodoro could not see it in the dimly lit bedroom. He wiped his eyes, and swallowed the knot that had been building in his throat.

"If I knew, I would tell you. I wish I did because part of me can't handle not knowing either. I know he left me. I have no idea where I'm going or what I'm going to do if I can't find him, but if I stay here I'll have to live with never having tried. You have to trust me."

"What if he isn't worth you trying so hard?" There were tears in Teodoro's eyes now, tears Jesús would have to ignore.

"Then trust me. Trust that I'm not doing this for my father, I'm doing this for me. For the life I might have."

Teodoro looked away, and Jesús knew he was deep in thought from the way the muscles in his face moved, a habit he'd had since childhood. Whenever they'd fought growing up, Teodoro would clench his jaw, resisting the temptation to disagree with his brother. It had not gone unnoticed by Jesús, and it pained him to think there were words Teodoro would never say to him. Words he held back for his sake.

After several minutes, Jesús accepted his brother's silence. He

threw his coat on, stepping around Teodoro's large frame, and left the room.

...

On the platform, Jesús stood alone. He had hoped Teodoro would not see him to the station, and he was relieved when he didn't. There was nothing more either could say to one another that wouldn't leave both of them with regret. He felt guilty, there was no denying it. His tía and tío had taken him in as their own. They had given him love and a home, an envious life. But everyone was meant to leave home at one point or another. They could forgive him.

Aside from his case, the only other item he brought with him was a book of poetry, *Residence on Earth*, by Pablo Neruda. He clutched it tightly as the train came into the station. He felt a faint humming sensation fill the air, enveloping the platform as the train slowed to a stop.

•••

Jesús looked up from his book unsure of how much time had passed, only that the sun now shone high in the sky. He felt its heat through the window and moved closer, catching his reflection in the glass. He sat staring into his own pale brown eyes, as if in silent confrontation with himself. His thoughts drifted to the woman he had been seeing before he left, and whether she would move North with him if it ever came to it. Would it be fair to ask her to leave her family, her whole life, behind? He'd hoped these questions would answer themselves with time, at least. They couldn't be answered now, not when there were so many more awaiting him at the end of the line.

The train slowed as it pulled into a station. He watched as passengers flooded in, weaving through the aisles, luggage in hand.

44 Isa Ramos

Among them were the Departed, wandering spirits devoid of all color and sound. He watched them intently as they found their seats, going about their lives alongside the living. Seeing them for himself, for the first time, he wondered why they chose this. Why they had chosen to remain in a world not meant for them. What was it that kept them here? He watched them with a heaviness in his heart, an aching feeling as if he would one day share their fate, cursed to wander for eternity with nowhere to call home.

It was not until the sun had set and the skies darkened that they finally crossed the border. Jesús was alone, save for one Departed seated on the other end of the car. He looked to be an older man from the way his back slouched against the seat. His eyes traveled to the man's face only to see that he was staring back at him intently. He met his eyes, and though they were gray like the rest of him, they carried an intense life to them.

A voice filled his head.

Do you think you are alone?

It took a moment for him to realize the voice in his head was the older man's.

"I'm not the first to look for a new life in the North." He replied.

Then why do you despair? This life isn't so bad.

There was something so comforting about the man's voice, so comforting that he didn't question how the man seemed to know of his internal deliberation.

"I'm afraid what I'm leaving behind is far better than what is ahead of me."

Then why leave at all? The man's eyes softened. To Jesús he looked just as alive as anyone else.

"I'm not sure. A feeling I suppose. My father left to go North, ever since then I felt I had no choice but to one day follow."

Because you miss him?

"I don't think so. It's just a feeling." As he spoke, Jesús heard the uncertainty in his own words. As if he still needed convincing.

The man didn't respond, but his eyes never left Jesús's gaze.

"May I ask you a question?" Jesús asked.

The man nodded lightly.

"Why do you stay?"

You mean...amongst the living?

"Yes. Why not continue to the afterlife?"

The afterlife is just another place, much like life is. To remain in the space between life and the afterlife is precisely what you are doing, is it not?

"I don't see how." Jesús shifted in his seat, itching to move towards the man, as if bringing himself any closer would help him understand what he was.

You and I are the same, wandering aimlessly between two places. And just like you, I chose this. Everything that happens now will happen because you chose it. That is what it means to leave home.

He paused for a moment before continuing.

Home will never be what you have known it to be again. You believe home is where your family is, but family changes, as do circumstances.

46 Isa Ramos

"What if I can't do it? What if I get there and I can't make a home?"

Then you keep moving. You keep heading North. That is our privilege, and our curse. To keep moving, siempre hacia el Norte.

Fall 2024: The Veil 47

bystander

Alex Romanov

if it were 4 a.m.
when the *man* died
what would it mean

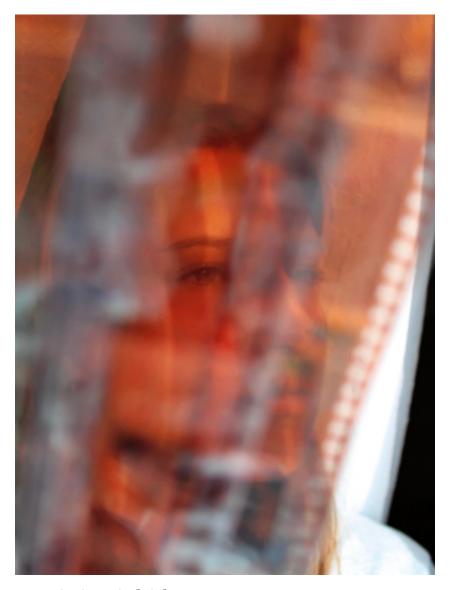
would the world feel relief if no one was there to watch the expiration of a life

is it natural to fear this much

if I press my hand against this arm if I don't feel a pulse

do we have time if the train has to go

am I almost there too how late can I be



Lizzie Friedrich

INTHESTREAM

Kelly Shen

In the way stones divide water

Going among the quiet streams

They will never break the space we made

My glances were singing with yours

Like a mountain in the fog where The sun stacks itself upon a lake Wind - like a silver flute wakening Plays chords on sunlight's wing

Yet distance is like an old scissor Like a string cut and frayed Where curves are clean and lost Like flowers gently exfoliate

In that house we broke last night
With the magnitude of a whale
In the rushing intensity of its eye
We drank the melting metal of moons

Could we become more boundless

Just as vines commend their roots

Or as water lifts its schools of fish Or a moment requires a photo –

We would not wake for centuries Even though our gasolined minds Ran to fields where sleep-walkers Closed the seams among feathers

My organs like many water bottles

Were empty but filled with moonlight

Even in thundering waterfalls

They will never break the form we took

In an Age of Reason

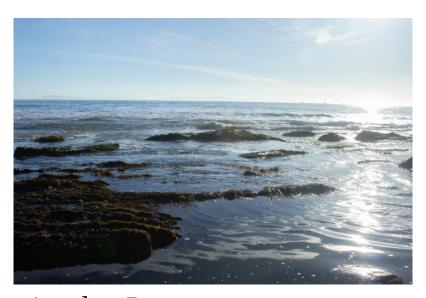
Quinn Sidor

The doctors don't know what to think. The formulas have failed to make us. Now we are lying on our backs in a little boat with chipped paint end to end like strangers. The chocolate mississippi is three thousand miles long and lined with birds eating cicadas and cicadas singing all the time. In seventeen years they will be back. The bird banders will have news by then. The doctors are oologists and placed me in a jar in Indiana last spring. It's easy sleeping next to you, even in a little boat. I try to take a picture of the moon with the camera on my phone. My camera doesn't take the moon. I put my phone away and drift to sleep, my

fingers folded in your fingers rocking in our little boat. The doctors wonder why we want a flower in our hair. We wonder too. I am not the prophet Ezekiel; I have not been shown the wheel within a wheel or cherubs with four faces lifting me toward the truth divine. I have seen the stars without trying to count and smelled the river I can't spell and made appointments with the doctors without doubting. I am a doctor too, a fact I hate about myself. My textbook is a poster of a missing dog and the classified section in newspapers. The doctors in their offices do not believe me when I tell them this. Juliet once called the moon inconstant. She is not a doctor so I trust her. The

doctor asks me why I'm nervous.

I know why but I can't tell you.



Another Day Marty Valdez



Maisy Ella Gonchar

A Story About a Seagull

Adam Sunderman

In the beginning, I was the smallest
I could fit between mother's feathered shoulder blade and father's
graying head

Sometimes mama would droop in my direction
I tried to be strong so she wouldn't hit the hard plastic of the armrest
and she would always twitch to life again like Frankenstein's monster
There was never a time where everyone I loved couldn't fit into one row

of seats on a passenger plane to Barcelona

These days, papa doesn't take up any room
We don't have to buy him a ticket because his body is underground
He is pressed between his mother and father, too
and I have no choice but to imagine he is happy

But I am not quite the littlest anymore
It is my turn, now, to be as strong as I can

Mama tells a story to keep the newer, littler one from squirming
She likes to fill silence with kicking
and mama evidently cares very much about how we are perceived
Specifically by the young couple from Germany
sitting in front of us

talking very loud

Mama's story begins like all good stories do:

Once upon a time there was a seagull

Where? The little one asks

As if this seagull couldn't have been any seagull

The seagull wasn't from anywhere

The little one doesn't understand how that could be true

To be honest, neither do I

But mama continues

She wasn't from England, or Scotland, or Spain, or California, or anywhere

Of course she was born somewhere, because it's pretty hard to give birth in the air

The little one chimes in that she bets she could

She's a very confident kid

I tell her she should stop asking so many questions and listen to the story

She sticks out her tongue at me

still stained popsicle blue and more alive than I've been in a long time

But ever since she learned how to fly, she hasn't touched the ground

Mama takes a moment to decide how her heroine could possibly achieve this feat

Her eyes drift to the small window
She looks out over the shivering metal wing
It's almost like she's looking for her little seagull out there
waiting to see what she'll do next

All day every day, she flies over the ocean
she beats her wings up and down as hard as she can
It's so exhausting that sometimes
in the afternoon
when the sun beats down on her little seagull head
she starts to feel like she won't be able to keep going
But she never flies over land
so if she stops flapping
she won't have anywhere to rest

Poor seagull

Don't worry about her She's alright and I'll tell you why

Why?

Darling, I just said I'll tell you

Ok

She's alright because all that flapping all day long gets her miles and miles up above the ocean

Higher than an airplane?

So high that she can touch the blue part of the sky

Wow. That's pretty high

As soon as the sun goes down She just lets her wings relax

Mama stretches out her arms as much as she can in our cramped little row

mimicking her seagull's evening routine Sometimes I forget how beautiful she is

She stretches out her wings as wide as she can and she starts to glide down really slow

She's so high she doesn't have to flap anymore so she just closes her eyes and falls asleep

She sleeps deep every night for eight hours like her seagull doctor says and she has the most wonderful dreams

I don't know how I didn't realize until this point that this is more than just a story about a seagull I stop what I'm doing and pay attention

Every morning

she wakes up with the rising sun just before her body hits the water

She's not sure how she does it

but somehow she always seems to wake up just in time

Of course

to keep herself from hitting the ocean

she has to start flapping again

So she does

and every day is just the same as the one before

It has to be

because if she doesn't flap as hard as she can all day

she won't have climbed high enough to glide and sleep and dream

about whatever it is seagulls

dream about—

Fish, probably

Does she live happily ever after?

It's probably the little one's best question of the evening so far

Not ever after

Not all the time

Spending your whole life fighting gravity isn't exactly paradise

But she is very, very happy once every day:

Right at the moment when she feels the top of her head graze the blue ceiling at the top of the sky

When she knows she's done enough for the day and she gets to stop

flapping

And rest

In that moment

She's the happiest seagull in the whole world

Mommy, that was a sad story

It wasn't supposed to be

I bet she's a pretty seagull.

She is, I say, because I know the seagull

I've seen her

She's sitting next to me, looking out the window at God knows what Sometimes I think I know her better than I know myself

An announcement from the pilot comes in muffled from a hundred tiny speakers

The lights above us dim in an instant Everyone shuts their windows at once

The little one leans her head on me
As expected, I'm profoundly uncomfortable right away
Before I know it she's drooling all over my new shirt
God, she's such a disgusting little thing
She's going to keep me up all night, I just know it

I hold her hand
I don't think I could live without her.

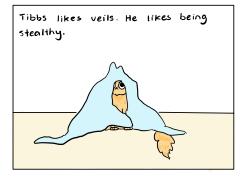
The Veilo

A TIBBS COMIC





Veils still hold that purpose today, but they're also used more casually.





Ruby Vogel

For James:

Sadie Spletzer

You, you have

become nature; after your death, your love fell into the beddings of the earth. I think about you being cyclical, I can give reassurance to my hope that our nature is natural, never meant to be man-made, never meant to come by with fear. Watch as each leaf falls with a souvenir of your love, reassurance that your passing was not entirely man-made. Every thought I have for you feels carved from the same man that killed you, I only want the earth to love you, have the sky embrace you, the ground beneath you, the clouds console you. Still, why do I love to watch death when it comes from the trees?

Think of

the fallen fruit, and imagine the sweetness when taking a bite. Pick the fruit: death comes just as ripe, when it's easier to enjoy with beauty. Think of the way autumn can just as easily ripen its old age into fear: death before death comes to it. Watch with me; look at how the leaves take their last strides with the wind, merely only coming to say goodbye. Have they died or merely fallen from one beauty to another? What if man was to pick those leaves, admiring their beauty?

Think of

our way of living as a season of stillness, a pain that feels like a gift over and over again. But you can say goodbye to the pain when it leaves you bare, and you're still left. Think of this as the trees and the wind scolding you by words not said, yet left on your skin. Still, even if you can say goodbye, I can't help

but be scared of the stark contrast that the bare bones of the tree branches leave against the sky that's too open. It looks too open without you. The leaves used to provide a lullaby from the ground to the sky, a warm blanket leaning one world against another. The branches are going to shake like a rib cage, too hollow to hold any warmth. Your warmth comes out through the trees, reds like love giving you to nature once again. I wanted to say goodbye to you. I was still focusing on the beauty in your leaves' different colors that you fell, and I was still looking at the tree. Still, if bye means forever, what you're supposed to say, see you later, then my man-made words became almost natural. But even if I said see you later, then that means that goodbye is still a farewell. Whatever words I said were the same as hope. Think of my force, my will forgotten, my forced thinking.

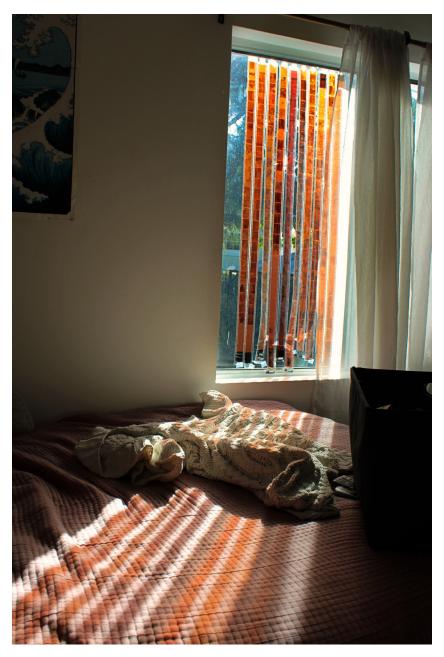
Lcan

give you my love through and through, words saying how much they loved you. I can. I watched the nature of fate; fruits on trees, and leaves falling, beauty coming and going. To see, to watch, to say goodbye. Farewell, my friend. You've become nature; I'm still man.

I can

say the grief on my tongue, at least I try for you. I can translate your love from earth to word. I will listen to every howl of the wind and extend my arms to give you a hug. I will watch every leaf flutter with grace and I promise to say goodbye, I will observe how far the tree roots have made it into the sidewalk, and I promise to take nature's side. I will for you, for James, I will love you still. I can, on my will, I can.

I can think of you. I can think of your love, still.



Lizzie Friedrich

