



THE SCRIVENER

DALAT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
2020-2021

Foreword

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of *The Scrivener*, put together by Dalat International School's High School Creative Writing Club! This school year defied all expectations, to say the least. We thought we were done with online school when we came back on campus in August, only to be sent back to panels of Zoom screens and Teams messages in November. We never imagined that we'd be meeting teachers and new students online, or that sports would be canceled all year long. But ultimately, we made it through, and that's what counts.

We would like to thank everyone who submitted to our magazine this year—it's always a leap of faith to entrust your work to someone else, much less a team of peers. We are so grateful to have been given the chance to read so many thoughtfully written pieces of work. Even if your work was not selected for this year's collection, please know that we were genuinely impressed with the quality of your writing and the courage it took to submit. In this year's issue, we are proud to present a variety of work, ranging from excerpts from longer stories to a paper analyzing film soundtracks.

Finally, thank you to the editors and members of the Creative Writing Club for putting in the effort, even during online school, to make this issue happen. Last but not least, a huge thanks to Mr. Hieber for offering up his time, energy, and classroom (especially the fish tank) throughout this crazy year to make this magazine happen.

We hope that you enjoy this year's issue, and we invite you all to submit next year!

Best,

The Editors

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Expectations

by Jens Hieber

Expectations are a form of time travel. Almost inherently, to have expectations requires thinking about the future, to imagine ourselves in a time not yet present. And so, each day we travel forward, hoping, dreading, planning, worrying, and evaluating all the potential futures. And we bring back from these travels our expectations.

How often we assume the future is more fixed than it is. The structure, stability, and stationary bastions of our organized world stand as pillars to ethereal castles in the sky. We plan out our hopes, sift our dreams for reality, measure out the scope of our futures and congratulate ourselves on a tomorrow well ordered.

As fledgling humans, we inhabit a world of settled normalcy. We know our present and acknowledge little concept of past or future. Our parents' childhood may as well have been as far back as Rome, Songhay, or Tang. Pictures of their cars and hairstyles depict the passage of time and the outdated eras they have come from, while stories from our grandparents can seem to hold little relevance.

One day we wake up and realize that the world has changed since we came into it. But the change is often slow and subtle, sneaking past us like a slinking cat. We remember a time before everyone had a phone in their pocket and the burgeoning novelty of the internet. The fanciness of a car was measured by whether it had automatic windows and no one took off their shoes in an airport. A sport might introduce a minor rule change, and a few years later we can barely remember what it was like before the offsides rule or VAR.

Every generation must have gone through this, growing up in what may appear to be a world of fixed normals and unchanging givens. What did the grandparents in ancient Egypt shake their heads over? What new-fangled contraptions were vehemently denounced by the staid thinkers of the renaissance? Who thought that the printing press was the next incarnation of evil?

Eventually we realize that the world is ever changing. Sometimes it changes gradually and at other moments it happens all of a sudden. Two planes

fly into the World Trade Center. A tsunami takes thousands of lives. A world war devastates continents. A pandemic sweeps the globe with masks, protests, and misinformation. And afterwards, it's not quite the same world it was in our childhood.

Thus our expectations change with the world. Our past, our experiences, our changing perceptions of the present inform how we travel into the future. There is almost nothing sadder than someone trying to recreate a past that is long gone. No, it is the future where our expectations are realized and we hold the capabilities of directing those expectations, like a skilled painter imaging upon a canvas.

How loosely we must hold those expectations dawns upon us only with the falling sands. We must travel forward, but instead of forcing what is to come into our tiny, inconsequent, and often limited perceptions, we should instead embrace the future and allow our expectations to change with the world around us. So let us travel into our futures with expectant hope, because we are not the first to do so.

Even Here

Joyce Wan

even marathons will end,
even oceans reach the land,
even miles of brick will lead
to a door or maybe just
a ladder leaned against the wall.
nothing lasts forever:
not the heads bent in terror
for sick stomachs will get better,
not the moments of the past,
or the ones you're missing now
because your face is downcast.
there's so much still to see
in your discarded backyard tree,
through the window by the sea,
or in the clouds peeking out,
peeling back the glowing dawn,
if you'd just look up and about.

Letter to a Yogurt Company

by Sara Vossler

After Lydia Davis

Dear Yogurt Company,

I am writing to you about a particular product of yours, the Peachy Keen flavored fruit-on-the-bottom yogurt. I have been a fan of yours ever since I was quite young. I have too many yogurt-flavored memories to recount them all, but I will say that my mom used your yogurt as positive reinforcement in middle school when I finished my homework before dinner. I will also tell you that frozen yogurt was my very first solid food and that nothing has ever cheered me up quite like creamy fruit yogurt. I am proud to say that I have taken your yogurt in my school lunch every day since preschool. After a stressful morning, it is quite a relief to open my purple lunch bag and find a yogurt cup delightfully sitting inside, waiting to be devoured.

Last week, I was heading to lunch after a particularly stressful morning. I had just finished taking a math test on the derivatives of the various trigonometry functions. The only thing that was keeping my nerves calm when I could not remember that the derivative of $\cos(x)$ is $-\sin(x)$ was the knowledge that waiting for me in my purple lunch bag was a cup of Peachy Keen fruit-on-the-bottom yogurt.

I sat down on my usual bench, unzipped my purple lunch bag, took a sip from my water bottle, and pulled out my container of Peachy Keen fruit-on-the-bottom yogurt. As I picked it up, I could not help but notice that it seemed lighter than usual. After years of eating yogurt as if it were nectar of the gods, I have found myself accustomed to the exact weight of a full yogurt container. Curious, I peeled back the silvery lid and looked down with horror at what I saw. The container was only partially full. Instead of the yogurt reaching just below the top of the container, it barely reached three-fourths of the way up the side.

I gasped. Could my beloved yogurt company be jumping on the bandwagon of giving their customers less than what is promised? I dismissed this thought at once. You are too focused on quality and customer satisfaction to be

concerned with cheating your loyal customers who have poured out dollar after dollar to receive the same creamy yogurt they have been waiting all morning for.

No. This must be my imagination, I thought to myself. There's no way a yogurt cup could possibly escape from its factory and leave some of its yogurt behind. Of course I was just imagining it, I figured. Post-traumatic stress after that math test.

Anyway, I figured that whatever the problem was, it would be all sorted out once I ate. I started to stir the contents of my yogurt cup and was astonished that it did not change to the expected peach color. In fact, there were no peaches to be found at all. The peaches had been forgotten. All that was in my cup was plain, fruitless yogurt.

I tried to make the best of the unfortunate situation. I do love your vanilla yogurt, so I tried pretending that what I held was just a cup of vanilla yogurt, not peach-less Peachy Keen fruit-on-the-bottom yogurt. But as I took a taste, I discovered that it was not possible to even pretend that this was vanilla yogurt. It was plain yogurt. Unsweetened, tasteless plain yogurt. I could not eat it. My yogurt obsession does not extend to plain yogurt.

I regretfully confess that I threw away that container of yogurt. It was simply not up to your usual quality.

Since that experience, I have ceased to eat your yogurt. Every time I reach into the fridge, ready to break my yogurt fast, I remember that trauma I went through when I tasted the plain peach-less yogurt.

I do want to eat your yogurt again. But I need to know that this error will not be repeated. Please find a way to better ensure the quality of the yogurt leaving your factory. Once you do find a solution, write back to me straightaway, and I will sprint to the store to buy every yogurt cup lining the shelves. And then, I will keep eating until I fall into a yogurt-induced coma.

As It Should Be

Run Nguyen

I see the world in waves of blue
As I look out over the sea

I see the world as it should be
When life is made anew

I long for the perfection
Of God's creation

In human affection
To the moon's reflection

It once was right
Everything in its place

From the cool starlight
To the rivers race

And then us

We shook the world
And broke his heart

We ended the glory
And stole a part

We fought his might
And ran from the light

But then he rose

He shook our sin
And broke our chains

He ended the devil
And stole his reign

He fought to us
And ran after our hearts

We tried our hardest

But he tried harder

And now, It is as it should be

Fire's Love

Anonymous

She loves like fire
With a passion that burns
Come too close and risk getting hurt
Stay away but be ever drawn in

The warmth of a hearth,
She attracts and entices
Seemingly harmless,
Brightly dances

“Ignore the warnings,”
She seems to say
A beacon in the night
And a siren's song to guide you

Fall ever deeper,
Come ever closer
Give your heart to this spark that dances
Only to receive it back in ruins

Burnt and blackened,
This heart of mine
That siren's song lied,
My love the price

But, oh, how pretty
That roaring bonfire
But also how fickle
This wheel of fire

The Importance of Music as a Story-teller

by Aaron Smith

The following playlist is meant to accompany this piece:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqE_TIL8zU0&list=PL7Hvq5aYIDgmNc2Hx-XRoFvp6joeOjme8

“My personal hobbies are reading, listening to music, and silence.” These words, spoken by Edith Sitwell, seem at first glance to be simple. However, some people look at those words and see the power behind them. Not because of how incredibly profound they might be (although they are surprisingly deep), but because of how remarkably interconnected each of the things she lists are. Another, more famous quote, this one by Mozart himself, states that “The music is not in the notes, but in the silence between,” showing the subtle relationship music has with its opposite, silence, which just about anyone that has listened to music ever can understand even slightly. However, never has anyone (outside of musicians and learned composers) spoken about the relationship between music and storytelling. Music is wholly underappreciated as a storyteller, but films have learned how to utilise themes best in how they develop, which creates an immersive experience for the viewer, whether or not people know how the music contributes to the story, such as in John Powell’s score for the 2010 film, *How to Train Your Dragon*.

Now just about anyone that has seen *Star Wars* knows what a theme is. A theme is a musical concept that represents a person, place, or things. The *Harry Potter* theme, for example, has become legendary at this point, and if you play it, everyone knows precisely what you are referencing. In *Harry Potter*, that central theme, being “Hedwig’s Theme”, comes to represent wizards and magic as a whole, so whenever the characters return to Hogwarts, that theme plays (it plays in other places of course), showing the characters’ return to magic. In *Star Wars*, the “Force Theme” comes to represent the force (usually the ‘light side’ of the force), so when a Jedi does anything especially

powerful, such as when Rey heals that snake monster in *The Rise of Skywalker*. However, in *How to Train our Dragon*, Powell didn't focus on a few strong, repeated, rigid themes but instead focused on *developing* and *changing* individual themes for each of the main characters as the characters themselves change and grow. There is an incredible YouTube video by Sideways, titled "Why How To Train Your Dragon Has The Best Opening Ever" (which this essay is heavily inspired by). In that video, the main focus is on the first five minutes of the very first film. In those first five minutes, John Powell (composer for the score) introduced every theme in the entire franchise in a compact, precise, and sensical way. In Sideways words, when talking about the film's opening, he states that "But because this film establishes the story so well, Powell was able to hijack that opening and establish all the thematic *musical* material that he'd use throughout the film". When looking through the youtube playlist put together of all the main themes, notice that almost half of the themes are present in the song 'This is Berk' (the opening track of the film), and most of the other tracks in the playlist are just those same themes restated in other tracks.

Take, for example, the Viking Theme that is stated twice in the first track. One of the first themes we hear in the film starts soft and lilting because all the Vikings are asleep. Later in the track, though, it picks up in tempo with a new drive because at that time in the film, the Vikings are starting to fight with the dragons (**Watch now "Viking/Berk Theme ('This is Berk')". please mind the watermark, and don't worry if you can't read sheet music, it's just there for visual reference**). This theme comes to represent, of course, the Vikings themselves, but also the island Berk, as well as the Viking way of life that Hiccup strives after for most of the film. Simple right? Well, that theme doesn't change much throughout the film.

Astrid's theme is one that changes slightly as Hiccup's relationship changes with her. When we are first introduced to her theme, she is walking away from an explosion in slow-motion because cool guys don't look at explosions (**See "Astrid Theme ('This is Berk')"**). It is large, epic, and that is all because of how Hiccup sees Astrid. He sees her as this amazing, fighting Viking, and the glory in the music shows that. Later in the film, though, Astrid is shown to have some much softer and more personal feelings, where her theme comes back in all its glory in 'Romantic Flight' (**See "Astrid Theme**

(**‘Romantic Flight’**)). Some parts of that track still have that sense of awe, but it starts with a single solo violin, showing Astrid’s growing closeness with Hiccup, allowing him (and the audience) to see her as more than just an awesome Viking that doesn’t even need to look at explosions.

“As a film composer, you are not really a composer at all. You are a filmmaker who specialises in music. It’s important to keep this in mind as you are, in fact taking your cues not from your imagination (freely expressing yourself as an artist), but rather responding to what is already there – the story as told by the film” (“Music in Film”). These words, spoken by Adrian Ellis, are apparent in how Powell showcased and developed Toothless’ theme above all the other themes in the film. Toothless’ theme is the only one that doesn’t show up in the intro sequence of the film, but it is regarded as part of the “main theme” of the *How to Train Your Dragon* franchise. It first shows up when Hiccup finds him in the woods after his crash and injury. When Hiccup eventually doesn’t find the heart to kill Toothless and frees him, Toothless pins him down, and we get his theme in a very particular instrument: bagpipes. Despite the story being about Vikings, we don’t get that many bagpipes, which tells us that Powell uses them to show that something is part of this ‘unknown world’ that Hiccup, and, by extension, the audience (**Listen to “Toothless Theme (‘The Downed Dragon’)**)). It is put in those unique bagpipes, showing he is unknown, but also it is set in a minor key, which is a particular way of writing music so that it sounds either sad or, in this case, hostile and menacing, which also shows us Toothless’ hostility towards Hiccup and humanity.

As Hiccup slowly befriends Toothless, though, we start to get more and more familiar with Toothless’ theme along with the character, and it starts showing up in a major, or happy, key signature, showing Toothless’ growing friendship with Hiccup, and it isn’t composed in bagpipes, also demonstrating that Hiccup and the audience are slowly learning about Toothless and realising that he isn’t what the Vikings thought he (and the dragons) were (**See “Toothless Theme (‘Forbidden Friendship’)**, and **“Toothless Theme (‘See You Tomorrow’)**)).

That single theme, the Toothless Theme, creates half of the general ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ theme. The other half comes in the form of Hiccup’s theme. It is actually the very first theme we hear in the entirety of the

film, even before the Viking theme (**Listen to “Hiccup Theme (‘This is Berk’)**”). This theme represents, obviously, Hiccup and his journey. Surprisingly enough, his theme doesn’t change very much in how it is written, but, in a form of genius storytelling, Powell changes its usage throughout the film instead of changing the theme itself. If that does not make sense, then it will soon enough. Slowly and slowly, as Toothless and Hiccup grow closer together, Powell slowly pushes the themes closer and closer together. Finally, Powell lays the themes on top of one another in a track titled ‘Test Drive’ as the two characters demonstrate what a team they are when they fly together symbiotically (**See “Hiccup/Toothless Theme (‘Test Drive’)**”). That singular track, ‘Test Drive’, is the true ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ theme song.

People outside of knowledgeable composers and musicians don’t realise how much work that film composers place into their themes. Ordinary people only talk about how good a soundtrack sounds to their ears, but that is only half of what composers strive to do in every major film. However, when people really start to pay attention to the soundtrack and what it *represents*, that is where the music’s genius shines through.

Elegy for Future Self

by Yong-Yu Huang

Tonight, I am ignoring the crippled wings
in the marsh. All eyes on you. I do not have
enough to offer as repentance. I'm told that
we could have been transcendent, running past
washed-out funerals, the river & all its aching limbs —
things that have not yet come to pass.

Sometimes there is only the crowing of light
before dawn or the beckoning of a mother,
Her child crying for a self still pearling
between teeth. That is to say, I miss you
like a becoming or a language I tore from my throat.
Something I am forever seeking,
slipping from my fingers & scattering in the wind.
I am sorry that I will never know you,
that I will know the taste of river silt in my mouth
before I understand how I exhaled you. Every breath
blinding white against the horizon, colder than
the things we left behind. Consider this:
a girl ankle-deep in still water,
waiting for the land to flood in memory.

Sonnet for 3a5t3r

by DJ Yost

Fatigued hands clench into fists
No. Hold back. Don't you remember?
As the bitter nails sink into your wrists
Icier than the coldest December
The light is omnipresent, though the darkness is near
And the prince of the world may think he has won
Why doest thou fear?
The Lord is thy God, He is One
Blood in the garden, blood in the blows, blood from the crown
In ignorance they laugh and jeer without a frown
Amidst the chaos, in tears you drown
As the sacrificial lamb is laid down
They know not what they do
You have died, for them, in lieu

Excerpt from *The Kindreds*

by Keiryn I. Sandahl

The following is an excerpt from two different chapters of my novel, both from the initial fantasy portion. Prince Archeval of Ebenhold is leading a quest for a legendary sword, attempting to make fame for himself within his kingdom, which is failing. With him is his betrothed, Lady Jaespera of Eyrus, Sir Dunwold, his nearest friend and advisor, and his sister, Princess Elusidel. Also with them are two servants: Nannet, Jaespera's maid, and Maccab, Archeval's squire, who narrates.

Prince Archeval and his lady were speaking again when Maccab woke the following morning. Lady Jaespera spoke more sharply to Nannet than she had formerly, but otherwise, the loss seemed forgotten. The prince consulted his knight, and Maccab looked over their shoulders at the map so he could better picture the journey ahead of them.

"Havver the Dragon would not have gone to Ossary," said Sir Dunwold, gesturing to the city on the western side of the mountains. "It belonged to Ebenhold then, and his presence would have been remembered. No; we must search the wilder places for traces of him."

"I thought you knew where to begin, Dunwold," said Archeval.

"No, your Highness, I never claimed such a thing. But I do believe our best chance is to keep going north until we come upon people who may have heard of him, or perhaps some signs of his death -- perhaps a tomb. I do not think he would have gone alone, whatever the story says. He would have had knights with him, and if those knights did not return, they might have descendants living in these mountains still."

They could no longer ride due north; the mountains became too high for the horses to scale. Sir Dunwold turned them westward, meaning to pass the high peaks and continue north on the other side of these giants. Havver the Dragon, he reasoned, would not have gone to undue effort in looking for a place to die. But Maccab wondered how any man could be certain of the decisions of a madman.

Two days later, the prince's party came to a halt by the shores of a turbulent mountain river, swollen with summer's snowmelt. Sir Dunwold frowned at the sight of it.

"This wasn't on my maps," he protested when the prince demanded to know the reason for the delay. He looked up at the sun as though wondering if it had led him falsely. "If I had known a river such as this lay in our way, I would have veered to the east rather than the west."

Prince Archeval climbed down from the carriage to inspect it. He laughed.

"This is a little brook, a trickle!" he said, slapping Sir Dunwold on the back. "We can ford it easily, never fear."

"Your Highness," said the knight, but Archeval would not listen. He mounted his carriage again and cracked the whip to get the horses walking. Lady Jaespera, wrapped in furs, clung to his arm and trembled with excitement. The horses stepped out to the bank of the river. More cautious than their master, the horses shied away from it. The rushing, rumbling noise of the water spooked them, and they understood the danger that it held. The prince laid his whip into their backs until, at last, they stepped into the current. Maccab feared then that catastrophe would strike, but the horses kept their balance. Archeval gestured impatiently for him to lead his horses across. Sir Dunwold rode beside the carriage, watchful, waiting to steady it if need be.

Maccab's pack horses did not like the looks of the river either, but they were docile beasts, and they obeyed him. The water foamed around his ankles, frigid and mocking. The carriage was almost halfway across, and his hopes rose. The prince may have been right, after all. But all at once, the river knocked one of the horses off its feet, and the other followed. They went down in a tangle of flailing legs, churning the water with their sharp hooves. The river ran deeper there. Maccab's grip faltered on the reigns of his horses, and they galloped into the fray, blindly rushing into danger, panicked by the desperate neighs of their comrades. Sir Dunwold's stallion alone kept its balance. Instead of rescuing the other three from the carriage, he loosed his sword. Just then, Maccab stumbled on a rock he did not see, and the river rushed into his nose and open mouth. He flailed wildly at the swift-moving water, but he had never

learned to swim. The current caught him as if he were a drifting leaf and carried him. He had given himself up for the lost when the river drove him hard against something solid. Maccab's hands, searching in vain for a hold, now seized upon a rope. One of the pack horses.

He gripped his newfound handhold, and with all his strength, he hauled his head from the current. The horse, trapped by the rope which secured it to the others, was swimming. The lead pack horse proved a canny animal, and it was leading the others to safety. Maccab glanced back at the prince's carriage. Dunwold was hacking at the reigns with his sword, meaning to free the carriage of the drowning horses. A scream sounded, sharply cut short. His arms ached, but he knew that he would die if he let go. The carriage floated down the river, and its horses, each caught in the legs of the other, were drowning. Sir Dunwold rode alongside the carriage and deftly tied a piece of the reigns to it. His stallion strained, and they dragged the carriage from the dangerous part of the current. The pack horses reached the shore, and Maccab's arms gave out. He dropped to the earth and lay inert, listening to the sounds of the chaos.

The carriage came safely to shore, Lady Jaespera still screaming even once the danger had passed. When she at last understood it was over, she swooned in Prince Archeval's arms. Her screams, however, were different from the one Maccab remembered. During those brief moments of surging white water and burning lungs, her screams had blended in his ears with the rest of the chaos. He did not even notice them until the sound of the water had gone.

Elusiadel, helped from the carriage by Sir Dunwold, only sat on the ground, huddled in her cloak. The carriage had been ruined by the passage. Its two front wheels had come loose, and the cushions were waterlogged. When Maccab thought himself strong enough to stand, he inspected the pack horses. None of them were injured, but nearly half of their supplies were lost. He patted their flanks, trying to show that he was grateful they had saved his life.

A sudden fear hit him. He glanced over at the others, and his heart sank when he saw Nannet was not among them. Nor was she with the pack horses. He knew now whose scream he had heard.

The river took more than provisions. The tents were gone, as were the bowls. Sir Dunwold went into the woods to hack firewood with his sword, but when he had it ready to light, Maccab could not find the flints. Lady Jaespera's

remaining gowns had survived the crossing. Still, Maccab thought even she might come to wish they had food rather than fine clothes. Many of the knight's arrows had spilled into the stream, by now borne far out of reach, and his bowstring was all but ruined.

It was a dismal gathering that spread their damp cloaks on the ground that night. Lady Jaespera had not come out of her faint, so they were spared her weeping for the time being. Sir Dunwold's maps were wet, and the ink had run all over the parchment. He threw them away, grumbling all the while. Then the chill came, and Maccab's sopping cloak did little to warm him. The morning felt as though it had happened a hundred years ago, and he kept hearing Nannet's scream in his head. He heard it in his dreams when at last he fell asleep.

"What is to become of me?"

Maccab woke to a wailing such as he had never heard before.

"I am ruined, Archeval. Ruined! I want to return to Ebenhold. Sir Dunwold, I bid you, take us back!" She clutched at the knight's arms, tears smearing the dirt which had gathered on her face during the night. Prince Archeval, meanwhile, took Dunwold by the arm and pried him away.

"But by your counsel, we would still have our carriage and our tents," he barked at his friend.

"Peace, my prince," said Sir Dunwold in alarm, but the prince had drawn his sword. "It was you who wanted to ford the stream, not I." As soon as he had said the words, Maccab saw him frown. The knight knew he had made a mistake.

"How dare you!" The prince struck out clumsily at the knight, who stepped back. "You have done nothing but lead us awry since we began this venture. You mean to ruin me! You mean to kill me!" With every vehement sentence, Prince Archeval whipped his sword at the knight. But the older warrior was clever, and he backed away from the onslaught until the prince's anger abated.

"Now," said Dunwold smoothly, "you must know it was not my fault. How could I have contrived such misfortune? Nay, there was some other malice behind it. You saw how the river deepened suddenly in the middle, my prince. I thought when I saw it that there was magic behind it."

"Magic?" The prince said, confused. "Impossible. Men killed the last of

the Mountain Children before my father's time."

"Not all of them." Sir Dunwold took his hand from the hilt of his own sword. "Many of them crawled into their holes, never to be seen again. But those who remain might be watchful of strangers on their mountains. They may be spying upon us even as we speak, plotting mischief upon you, Sire."

Prince Archeval sheathed his weapon. "If I catch one of the beasts, I will kill it," he vowed. "They will pay dearly for nearly costing me my life -- and that of my lady as well."

His lady had not ceased bemoaning their losses. It was as though she had not noticed the prince come to blows with his friend. "We shall have to walk. A daughter of Penhaim does not walk! My slippers will be ruined, and I will not be fit to be seen when we reach the city. If my father could see me now! What use is a sword? You carry it about to hack off people's heads. Why chase a sword? You could have a hundred swords when you become king. Perhaps you could even have them now. Oh, my gowns! Oh, my poor, aching feet!"

Maccab wondered how her feet could be aching when she had not stirred from the spot where she had slept. The prince paced the camp, divided between the choices.

"How could I bear the shame, to return home to my father without having succeeded?" He kicked a rock, and it flew into Maccab's leg, bruising him. He clutched the sore spot and retreated to a better vantage point. "Yet we will surely not survive without the tents and the carriage. A prince, walk? It would mean my death. Dunwold!"

The knight bowed.

"We will return to Ebenhold."

"My lord," said Sir Dunwold, "we cannot return the way we came." He gestured to the river. "I must lead you around the river or else to a place where it might be forded. But without my maps, it will be difficult."

"Do it, Dunwold, if you wish to restore my favor."

"But not until tomorrow," the Lady Jaespera interjected. "I cannot go on in this state. I may faint again, Archeval, you know how delicate I am."

"Of course," said the prince, but his tone seemed strained.

"Nannet," Jaespera called, "You must come with me into the woods and help me to change my gown. Nannet? Come quickly, girl. I will not have you

be idle."

Maccab left the horses and walked over to her. The lady needed to be told, and the sooner, the better. "Nannet is dead. She was washed away in the river." His voice held no sympathy -- it couldn't -- her death was still too near and not quite real.

"Oh," said Jaespera, and a brief expression of childish bewilderment flickered across her face. Then her lip thrust out, and it vanished to her pouting. "Must it deprive me of my servant, as well? Archeval can spare you," she said, eyeing him. "You will take up those of her duties as I wish you to take. Leave me."

Maccab wandered away, and he found himself drifting towards the wreck of the carriage. It presented an opportune distraction, and he crouched beside it, examining it. He found the place where the wheels had broken off from the axle, and he fingered it curiously. The bottom half of the breakage looked rough, as though it had been torn free in the river. Perhaps the carriage had twisted the wheel in a rock or some such misfortune. But the top half of the breakage was smooth, and this puzzled him. Wood never snapped so cleanly, so smoothly. It almost looked as though a sword had cut it. He knelt by the other side of the carriage. Again, the smooth break turning rough at the center. As though the two front wheels had been weakened. He shuddered. Perhaps the Mountain Children's eyes were on him as he looked at the work of their magic. He turned his back on the carriage and on the mountainside. He would busy himself elsewhere.

Untitled

by Abigail Leigh

we fight to make progress, to improve,
to escape the nicknames and the kid's menus.
running past milestones, chasing a blur
leaving our childhood scattered across the floor

tossing out crumpled roadmaps
sending them headlong out of the windows of the cars we can
finally drive
determined to run fastest,
outpacing the rest however we can

stumbling to a halt—no one reminded us to stop for gas—at a bench surround-
ed by hills
nothing but you for miles and miles
the fullness undiluted
brewing a silence that's aching for words

suddenly the frantic desire to check that the piano is still untuned comes crash-
ing down
start to wonder if the fridge hinge still squeaks too loud at 2am
trying to dig out the playlists filled with the songs we loved
humming along, unable to grab hold of the words
but still glad to be brought back home

Particles of Light

Carin Roylance

What if we were really light.

In every sense.

What if we refused to repeat

that nagging lump of negativity that begs to be repeated

just so we can get it off our proverbial chest?

What if we met brewing drama

with calm

and a refusal to feed it's already full belly?

Hugged Discontent with reminders of sufficient love?

Smiled at Fear.

And gave it our last piece of perfect pumpkin pie.

What if a debonair reason danced with an elegant mystery?

And neither complained about their toes being stepped on?

What if we stopped fighting fire with fire?

Instead, stopped feeding it the oxygen we need to breathe,

and simply watch it disappear?

What if we have misunderstood what fight really means?

What if we have misunderstood our weapons?

Mistook blade and bow for courage and confidence?

What if a word. A peace. A promise to be light.

Could scatter all that shatters a simple day into fragments?

What if by refusing to give voice or ear to the ghost in the darkness,

it simply ceased?

What if, says the sarcastic skeptic,

subatomic particles simply stopped all motion in the light of our presence?

What if, said I.

We have just discovered.

They do.

Inspired by a 2015 Cornell study done by quantum physicists.

The Noises that Lie

by Ziyu Moey

Excerpt from *Transcendence*

Not knowing what to do, I sat quietly in the cold winter snow. With no place to take shelter, I let the snowflakes land on my hair, making them a bit wet in the process. It's not like I mind the snow or anything; there was nowhere else to go, so I just sat on the bench quietly— not making a sound. I thought that if I even huffed a breath I would disturb the neighboring houses on my left. To my right, there was a pedestrian walkway leading up towards the houses. What I was doing on the bench, I had no idea. All I could remember was my parents being angry at me for a mistake that I had made, which caused them some trouble. They couldn't handle it anymore, so they kicked me out. It was their last straw, so I couldn't blame them. Kicking a child out of the house, though, was a bit too extreme.

I continued to sit there, deciding what to do next. There was no other place for me to call home, and it was getting pretty late. I checked my watch: Five fifty-five. *Traffic should be busy during this time, right? I thought to myself.*

As I continued to think about what I was going to do, a small voice suddenly called out to me without any warning.

"Hey," the voice spoke.

I didn't know how to respond. I looked at the stranger, and the first thing that I saw was her long, brown hair. The next thing was her eyes, which were staring directly at me. Not knowing how to respond, I just gave her the most obvious reply—

"Me?"

"Yes, you. Who else would I be talking to?"

I looked around to see nothing but darkness surrounding us. I put on an expression of uneasiness as I slowly realized that there was no shooing away this person. I looked her in the eye, finally accepting her presence. I nervously

laughed, saying, “Oh, of course.”

The girl didn’t seem impressed. She just huffed out a sigh of annoyance at me (I thought she was going to punch me in the face).

After turning around, she looked at the bench that I was sitting on and told me to scoot over. I did as she asked and she sat down beside me. As she drew nearer, I began to notice the blue in her eyes and quickly turned around once I knew of the situation.

What am I doing?!

What’s with this situation?!

I glanced back to see that the girl wasn’t annoyed because of me. She was just gazing off to the other side of the road. On the other side of the road stood a bakery named Shizo’s (They are famous for their cakes, especially their fruity ones).

“We should go there sometime,” she finally said. Startled, I stumbled on my next words by saying that we should definitely go there. Then, she turned around, faced me, and said, “then remember my name. It’s-”

I woke up in a soft chair, not remembering what happened the night before. All I could remember was sitting in a dark place while talking to a stranger. Then, the smell of caffeine awoke my eyes with a voice that followed, asking for my condition.

“You slept well?”

My eyes widened. I was sitting on a chair with some sort of computer monitor in front of me. The voice that spoke came from a girl—the same girl from my dream—that was standing beside the huge console table.

“Wait—you are—”

“You’ve forgotten everything, haven’t you?” The girl placed her tray on the table and proceeded to lean on it. She was carrying a mixed expression. Her face was neither disappointed nor sad, but was instead filled with relief—a relief that I wouldn’t understand for a long time.

“Everything?” the only word that I managed to sputter out.

“The ‘transportation’ must’ve fried your brain. Don’t worry. It happens to all of us. You just need to get used to it.” She sat down beside me, her name

tag on her clothes now visible. I read it, and I saw the name of Kasumi Hana. It rang some bells.

“Kasumi?” I decided to make sure that my eyes weren’t deceiving me. The girl named Kasumi smiled.

“Yes.”

After she told me about what I was doing here, she said that we would have to go back there to the area of the bench again. All I knew now was that I was part of a big project for a large company- we were in their headquarters now. Hana Kasumi called the organization... Steren? She said that we were test subjects for time travel. If we managed to perfect it, then we would become heads of the next big project.

“Got your memories back yet?” Kasumi asked nonchalantly. I nodded in response. “Good. We’re hoping to be transported back there in about five minutes,” she patted my leg, “get ready.” She headed for the base of the ‘transportation’.

I nodded again just to assure her that I was feeling fine, though I had some doubts—the biggest one being my fear of losing my memories again. Kasumi said that she had to be transported seventeen times just to get the hang of it. She was the first test subject, and now they were trying to see if they could transport multiple people, starting by having me accompany her.

As she got ready to be transported back to that place, I did the same. This time, I brought something with me: a star-shaped object with holes implanted in it on all five sides that we hoped would help me recover my memories instantly when we arrived. This object is to hopefully help me to regain my memories instantly while still being in that place. It was star-shaped with holes implanted in it on all five sides. Around one was a connectable string- Kasumi wore hers around her neck. Kasumi said that when I see it my memories will come back because it’ll be the only object from the present day.

Hana Kasumi called for me to stand beside her while we were being transported back in time. As a Steren soldier pulled the lever, I tried to catch a glimpse of his name, thinking that remembering more things from the present day could help me out with my memories. Then, we slowly disappeared, leaving a trace of blue mist behind us.

November 17th, 2020

May 14th, 2014

The sound of the piano filled my ears as I came to. I didn't know what happened before I woke up. All I got was a feeling of an object in my hand and the sounds of music for my ears.

After a slight touch of the object in my hand, I started to remember. The night when my parents had disowned me, the night when a stranger had befriended me, and the night when I realized that everything before had happened in my past. Everything came to light as I let go of the object.

I started to wonder what or who was making those sounds. I quickly glanced around the room, but nothing. There were no signs of a tape recorder nor someone playing the piano.

The piano music continued on with me still trying to find its origin. I searched the room, wondering if it was an outsider playing the music—however, nothing. There were no signs of such a predicament. Furthermore, the sounds were still playing on as I stood there, not knowing what to do. The scenery around me started to dance along as the music continued. Then, the music suddenly stopped as the player played the final note.

After a while, a girl came into the room. I thought she must have been the person who was playing the piano. After all, she came in perfectly as the music ended. She was wearing brown clothes and was holding something in her hands. I took a quick look, and she was wearing the same object as me. After examining the object, I took a closer look at the girl. I was confused at first, but I realized that she was the same girl who befriended me that night.

It had been a week since our first encounter on the bench happened. Many other things had happened since then, but I don't think that those events were on her mind. She took a look at me, like what I did with her, and smiled.

"Are you back yet?" She asked me.

Then, I felt the object in my hand again. It glowed yellow for a couple of seconds before it calmed down.

“I guess,” I replied, just replying to not let her wait.

“Then can you tell me what happened before this?”

“The piano sounds from earlier?”

Then the girl tilted her head as if she was wondering about it herself. She finally replied to me after a long time contemplating it... with a question.

“Piano sounds?”

I widened my eyes in surprise that she didn't know what I was talking about.

“What piano sounds?”

Dolphin

by Elizabeth Silverstein

The dolphin swam blissfully
Through the deep, peaceful sea.
He listened intently for a sound.
And when he finally heard
The tiny tails swishing
Out in the royal blue abyss
He squeaked a high, clear note
So his friends could find
The millions and millions
Of small minnows that sparkled
Like a quenching, silver oasis.

The Lonely Tuba

by Benjamin Hollon

The rain fell slowly, lazily, forming a misty haze of precipitation that transformed the sky and earth into a grayness that blurred together at the horizon.

An occasional patch of nutrient-starved grass spotted the murky brown soil. The monotony was broken only by a dirt road, muddy in the rain and devoid of traffic.

By the side of the road, rain dripping down its sides, a lonely, forsaken tuba sat in a puddle. It rang faintly as raindrops pattered against it, washing away the grime until it glowed faintly in the dim light.

Countless dents covered the tuba. Each told the story of a past owner who had cared for it with love and affection and, as time passed, forgotten it.

On the edge of the bell was a dent that caught a few drops of rain. It had been made by an owner who fell asleep with it on her lap.

Another dent kept sacred the memory of the time its owner had been told that her sister had cancer. Careless in her grief and concern, the owner had knocked the tuba over.

Yet another time, the tuba had watched sadly as its owner caught pneumonia and waited patiently, only to be sold to someone else.

But through it all, the tuba never complained, never resented its fate, never mourned its harsh treatment. It had merely waited, full of understanding. It was always there for its owners, trying to be a comfort in the few ways it could.

And now it sat there, by the side of the road, neglected and forgotten by all its past owners. Amidst the busy and uncaring world, it seemed caught in a bubble of time, nothing around it changing. The rain kept falling, and the tuba kept waiting, the pattering of the rain striking its side continually asking, “Waiting for what? Waiting for what?”

Then the bubble burst and time resumed. In the distance, walking down the dirt road, came a young boy, his feet bare. He held a tattered, red umbrella over his head and was whistling “Yankee Doodle.”

When he came to the tuba, he stopped. He stared at it for a moment, his eyes growing wide. The boy walked around the tuba slowly, appraising it like a potter examining his pupil's work. His mouth moved as he counted the dents. A smile gradually spread across his face and brought the hazy world around him into sharp clarity.

He set his umbrella down, heedless of the raindrops that now fell on his uncovered head, and picked up the tuba reverently. It was heavy, but not too heavy. He held his breath as he shifted its weight.

Carrying the tuba and listening to the music of the rain caressing its metal sides, the boy began his long walk home. He began to whistle again, keeping time to the falling of the rain.

Finally, the boy reached his home, a small shack with a light shining in the window. He set the tuba down carefully and opened the door. Then, turning the tuba sideways so it could pass through, he carried it into the house.

Outside, all that could be heard was the rain. The earth and sky were colorless and calm. Then, quietly at first but growing stronger, the tuba's mellow and rich tones came floating out into the evening air, a splash of bright yellow paint on the gray canvas.

Credits

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Cover art by GBae:

“After experiencing anxieties from judgement, I realized life is short and it shouldn't be wasted on worrying about other's opinions. I'm going to march through life, listening to my music, and do what my heart wants me to do. ”

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Thus ends *The Scrivener*.

Thanks for reading!