inside this gorge is on fire
OREGON WILDFIRES
Kate combines tales of her personal experiences with forest fires and evidence about the ways in which wildfires shape the American West.

ON THE ROAD
DRIVING WITH BEN
A short story from Ben detailing one driver's encounter with an eccentric hitchhiker.

REEDIE IN ARmenIA
REMOTE REPORT
Lyla Boyajian sends us a brief report on her time so far spent abroad in Armenia and what it means to smile like an American.
FROM THE EDITORS

Dear readers,

Welcome to Reed (or welcome back)! We’re so excited for another great year. To begin our first issue of the season, Kate Ehrenberg gives us the lowdown on wildfires (1). Dan Schultz doles out some wisdom for handling Reed life (3). A poem (4) by a first time contributor, Sky Ford, hangs out across the page from artwork by one of our editors, Kelsey Loar (5). Another first time contributor, Ben Read, writes a story for us about driving lessons (6). Our first Cultural Column of the year comes from Alex Morgan (8). This week our Remote Report was sent in from Lyla Boyajian in Armenia (9). And finally, Miss Lonely Hearts provides her first advice of the year on our last page (10). If you’re interested in writing for us, we meet every Monday at 9 p.m. in the PAB Atrium.

Love,
Claire S., Claire P., Guananí, and Kelsey

CONTRIBUTORS

Alexia Angulo
Anthony Bencivengo
Indra Boving
Bellamy Brownwood
Max Carpenter
Vikram Chan-Herur
Ema Chomsky
Thanh Chu
Martha Cohn
Lauren Cooper
Josh Cox
James Curry-Castillo
Ruben de la Huerga
Jilly de la Torre
Kate Ehrenberg
Sky Ford
Mike Frazel
Leilani R. Ganser

Guananí Gómez
Evan Gordon
Ruth Hale
Alexa Harris
Moira Hicks
Amelise Hill
Dylan Holmes
Suki Hyman
Oliver Jackson
Annie Larkin
Hazel Light
Kelsey Loar
Alex Morgan
Charles Nunziato
Aysha Pettigrew
Claire Pask
Leila Pyle
Sam Ramirez

Ben Read
Clara Rice
Sarah Richmond
Zoe Rosenfeld
Noah Samel
Dan Schultz
Kevin Snyder
Brendan Sorrell
Claire Stevens
Blake Stewart
Tiffany Thio
Rubi Vergara-Grindell
Charlie C. Wilcox
Benjamin Williams
Jessie Wilcoxon
August Wissmath
Lia Zallar
Anton Zaytsev

The Grail is hoping to start a comic strip column for every issue. If you would like to submit comics to us, share your comic with stevensc@reed.edu!

Front cover: Indra Boving admires a friendly banana slug. Photo by Jonathan Zisk

Fire Suppression in the West

By KATE EHRENBERG

Forest fires have always been a familiar part of my life. As a kid growing up in Northwestern Montana, I had a comic book about Smokey the Bear detailing his entire (tragic) life story and ending with the familiar maxim, “Only you can prevent forest fires.” Later, sports seasons were interrupted by air quality concerns, and the end of August always marked a time of blazing red sunsets due to smoke. I got a bit closer to fire than I would have liked two weekends ago, when a canoeing trip to Lost Lake was abruptly cut short by an evacuation due to concerns about the Eagle Creek Fire.

In the past weeks, the persistent haze from the fire raging through the Columbia River Gorge struck up a dialogue in Portland that resembles many occurring all over the West. For example, the first thing everyone noticed about the Eagle Creek Fire was the smoke, to the point that when air quality in Portland improved, people assumed the fires were over, even though they were not yet put out. On one hand, smoke is such a potent reminder of fire because it poses an immediate health concern. However, it also affects people on a psychological level, perhaps in an even more permeating way. The red sun and moon, the ash raining from the sky, the inability to run and play outside—these lead to a very oppressive, apocalyptic atmosphere (pun intended). The same focus on air quality can be seen in areas across the West, from California to Washington to Montana.

However, when it comes to fire management, air quality isn’t really the main safety concern to consider. Most of the focus ends up being on homes and structures in the Wildland Urban Interface—the area at the edge of suburbs and cities in which homes are surrounded by significant quantities of vegetation. This prioritization of man-made infrastructure can be seen in the reporting surrounding fires. NBC Montana, in their “fire roundup,” provided information about the progression of significant Montana fires. Their parameters focused on location, size, and containment levels, but the truly motivating statistics came with the numbers of structures threatened and roads closed. This was seen in Portland too, as, the close of I-84 and the threat to the lodge near Multnomah Falls led to public outcry. There were also many articles about trail closures in the Columbia River Gorge, and the possible threat to the Bull Run Watershed.

There is a pattern uniting these fire-related fears. The media tends to frame the forest fire narrative through its ability to destroy man-made things. Fire is clearly the enemy in this story, one which must be stopped at any cost. Senators from Montana and Oregon echo the alarm: Senator Merkley of Oregon said on Twitter “Heroes. Huge thanks to brave firefighters who worked on front lines all night to protect historic Multnomah Falls Lodge from #EagleCreekFire,” and Senator Tester said, “We’ve tragically lost two brave firefighters and seen homes, farms,
ranches, and businesses crumble before our eyes.” Senators are incentivized to cast fire as the enemy because of one simple fact: fighting fire is expensive. According to an article in the Missoulian, “Montana has spent more than $50 million on fire suppression since early July.” To assist with this hefty bill, fire suppression amendments need to be added to disaster aid packages, and pushing emergency funding through Congress in times of need can be difficult with our stagnant Congress. Nonetheless, just last Thursday, a new disaster aid funding package made it through the Senate. Essentially, in order to receive disaster aid through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a case must be made that fire should be treated as a disastrous occurrence.

There are drawbacks to viewing fires as disasters. Fire is a necessary part of an ecosystem. Smaller burns can increase species diversity and add increased nutrients to the soil. Without semi-regular fires, underbrush and dead plant matter build to a point where future fires have the potential to completely devastate an area. But throughout the West, a doctrine of fire suppression carries on in our news rhetoric and our policy. Especially in cases of “natural disaster,” the media tends to stray toward hysteria, sometimes in cases when this hysteria isn’t warranted. However, it remains difficult to talk about fires in a way that doesn’t highlight their disastrous tendencies, especially because fires pose immediate threats to homes and human health. It becomes a problem with the nature of journalism: immediate dangers make the news, and thus the immediate dangers associated with wildfires receive the most credit.

That being said, it is important to note that data trends show fires experiencing a significant increase in magnitude and frequency. According to a report published in 2015 by the U.S. Forest Service, “In 1995, fire made up 16 percent of the Forest Service’s annual appropriated budget—this year, for the first time, more than 50 percent of the Forest Service’s annual budget will be dedicated to wildfire.” The report adds that “Climate change has led to fire seasons that are now on average 78 days longer than in 1970. The U.S. burns twice as many acres as three decades ago and Forest Service scientists believe the acreage burned may double again by mid-century.” The increase in burns can be partially attributed to hotter and drier summers which extend the season in which forests are vulnerable to flame, as well as a history of strict fire suppression from the Forest Service, which leads to a build-up of underbrush and prime fire conditions. These factors are complicated and politically controversial, but this does not reduce the dire need to mitigate them. Not only will the uptake in fire frequency be costly from a budgetary sense, but it will also pose a risk to many homes, watersheds, and valuable areas. In addition, when forests aren’t given adequate time to recover, or the temperatures they burn at grow too hot, the beneficial aspects of fire are outweighed by the losses.

Forest fires are not a problem in themselves, but they have become a problem because they occur at an unsustainable rate due to human influence.

The question of human impact on the environment becomes very poignant here. Portlanders were eager to blame the teenagers setting off fireworks in the Gorge for the Eagle Creek Fire. But in this case, the Smokey the Bear mentality can only take you so far. Fires are often ignited by humans, and certainly everyone should do their part to be safe when they recreate in forested areas, but fires are also a natural and somewhat inevitable process. Considering the biological timescale, there are certain areas that are simply bound to burn at some point, either this summer because of a firework, or next summer, or in ten or twenty years because of a lightning strike. That isn’t to say that humans don’t have any impact on forest fires: we’ve been managing large enough swaths of forest land and contributing to changes in climate enough to have drastically altered the way these ecosystems function. Ultimately, blaming the teenagers for Eagle Creek is a little bit like blaming the kid who knocks over a teetering stack of dirty dishes in the sink. Yes, he made it fall, but who put those dishes there, and what the devil were they thinking?

In mitigating the number of forest fires in future summers and their intensity, we may be well served to think less about who is starting the fire than the circumstances by which fires occur. Perhaps instead of following a strict model of fire suppression, it would be better (and safer) to follow a doctrine of fire moderation, freeing up part of the Forest Service budget to work at removing underbrush and therefore mitigating the intensity of future fires. But until we can completely revamp the way we manage forest ecosystems and reverse the drying effects of climate change—please, no fireworks after the Fourth of July.

We all follow a routine, whether we realize it or not. Perhaps your daily routine arose from the environment you were immersed in. Maybe you get up at 9 a.m. because that allows you just enough time to prepare for class. Maybe you do homework at night because you put it off and class is fast approaching. Maybe you hang with friends when you run into them, and you eat sporadically, because you remember to eat when you are hungry. A routine of “no routine” is itself a routine. Perhaps you’ve noticed that we (humans) seem to run in loops; we do the same things, we think about the same things, we make the same mistakes, over and over. Who we are is made up of what we do consistently; we are created by routines.

Humans have a tendency to focus on events that are non-representative of the norm. We generally enjoy reading the news. The news, by definition, is made up of things that do not happen everyday—yet, from the news, we form generalizations about the world around us. Are a few jihadist attacks representative of an entire religion? Are the actions of a few idiots representative of entire groups of people? This kind of thinking creates division within communities. The same kind of thinking leads us to believe that certain, specific events were the most transformative in our lives. We like to imagine that doing something once, and very intensely, will have a big effect. So, right after New Year’s Day, thousands of Americans enter the gym and begin what they believe will be a life-changing action by working out, as hard as they can, for an hour (maybe half). Within three weeks, the overwhelming majority of them cease training, and end up right back where they were before. How do people become experts at something? By doing it every day. Over time, hours of cumulative actions add up to expertise. True masters even continue to practice the fundamentals. Basketball stars in the NBA don’t spend most of their time working on new dunks; they shoot thousands of lay-ups, jump shots, and free throws. If you want to master something, you must do it every day.

What can be mastered? You may be thinking that I am simply addressing things like study or exercise. No—more importantly, I am addressing you, as a person. Do you want to be happy? How about focused? Do you want to be kind? Maybe calm? Maybe you want to quit procrastinating? If you want these things, then you need to practice these things, daily. You already have a routine, but if it is not the one you have decided on, then you will not become the person you want to be. Create a plan for yourself that includes clear goals. Write it down and post it where you will see it every day—maybe right on your door, where you will pass it on your way out in the morning. If you do not plan, you plan to fail. That being said, do not be dismayed by failure—expect it, embrace it, it is part of the process. No one sees results in a few days. Results come from the summation of daily actions over long periods of time. Continue taking action, follow your routine, and you will become who you want to be.
Hikers

By SKY FORD

I
absorb the pain
from the feet that tread
on me. I'm not sure why they do it—
move their silly little ligaments until they break,
and suck in wind through paper-thin lung tissue until it
shreds. I guess they like the view, which is strange, because
they're only looking out at more of what they just climbed. Once, one of
them scuffed up their feet so badly they bled streams, but they kept walking,
and whooped as they inhaled dust, and swirled into the blood
cascading down my slope were
tears of joy.
They're Back

Kelsey Loar
Driving Lessons

By BEN READ

The highway fired like a neuron down the Oregon coast, and I was an electrical impulse. Off to the right side of the road, the waves surrendered over and over again against the shore. I imagined that at night, each individual house, cars in the driveway, shone as its own lighthouse, for whatever that house had lost to sea. Each one had lost something, something taken, something discarded.

"I remember," I said, "the first time I learned to drive." She glanced at me, right foot up on the dashboard, knee bent casually. Her window was cracked to let the searching wind in, and she had given up on her hair miles ago. It hung loose, dancing off her shoulders.

"My uncle took me driving when he was visiting from California. He grew up where I live. We went out to the old football stadium where the high schools still play. I could picture the stone bleachers, never more than a quarter full. I could smell the salted pretzels and popcorn. Or maybe that was saltwater. "It was the kind of place where the parking lot is all gravel and weeds. He let me push the speed up to sixty just so I could feel how it felt to slam on the brakes," I laughed.

She smiled in response and moved her hand to the lip of the roof, holding on. Her name was Maurine, but she went by Mauri. "It’s funny how the road can be anywhere," she said, "even as it constantly reminds itself of its location." She gestured to a mile marker as they passed.

“What do you mean?”

“You talk about that parking lot as if we were there now, you know? Even though we are miles away and moving further away. I think it’s something transitory, memory.”
“You sound like you’ve thought about this a lot,” I remarked as I watched a dog lope out of the driveway to the left, looking at the car inquisitively, then turning to pee on the hydrangeas I could tell his owners were proud of. We came upon a line of cars heading north then, and each one sped by, one after the other, air and tires passing with the sound of a rifle.

“My family moved a lot when I was little. My parents were always looking for work.” Crows wheeled overhead. “I have a lot of stories, only some of them my own. I remember one small town, like this, actually, only further inland, where I befriended the older woman a few houses down from ours. I say older, though really she wasn’t much older than my mom was then. I was five, you know?”

“Yeah,” I smiled. I knew. I had been insolent in my curiosity as a child.

“She had one of those signs that read ‘Hippies use side door.’”

“Oh, one of those,” I joked, knowingly.

“Every morning she would go out into her yard and lay on the grass with her eyes closed and her arms folded in front of her. I would sneak up and say, ‘boo!’ I never did manage to surprise her. I asked her what she was doing. She said she was thinking, and when I asked her about what, she said ‘anything.’ Now I know she was meditating, but I couldn’t comprehend it then.”

“I still have a hard time with that.”

“It takes practice, and she had it. One morning, when she finally sat up, after what felt like forever, I brought her a dandelion, and she gave me a story in exchange. She was like that, liked the idea of trading what you had.” We passed a sign that read: I5 Jct 24 miles. The trees opened up then, and the fragments of the coast between pines pieced themselves together into a vista. A few kites flew.

She went on, “She told me a story about living in France for a year during college, for a study abroad program she applied to. The place where she stayed was close to the Seine, so each night, she went for a walk that took her across a bridge over the river. On days it had rained, she carried her umbrella with her, and the handle of the umbrella was shaped like the head of a duck. She said she considered that duck a friend, but every night she walked across the bridge and looked out over the water, she felt the urge to throw the duck umbrella into the river.”

“The call of the void.”

“Yeah, just like that. She told me the French word for it, but I can’t remember now. Anyway, one night, she was walking, and she went and did it. She actually threw her umbrella into the Seine. She was the kind of woman who just did those sort of things.” Mauri was quiet for a moment. “I like to imagine the umbrella sending ripples through the reflections of the lights from the buildings there. I like to think she was trading that umbrella for something the river had given her.”

“My uncle died when I was a teenager. He was hit by a car, I thought you should know.” I felt like this was the right thing to say.

“I know,” she replied, “and I’m sorry.”

“Wait, what? How did you know?” I pulled the car away from the ridged shoulder.

“You told me about him teaching you to drive. That was the story you chose to give me.” She looked at me, then. I breathed. Her eyes were hazel and understanding.

We spoke amiably for a time after that, several more miles or so, of small things that seemed to drift out the still-open window. The road had since wound away from the shoreline, and the trees around us were rich and sluggish from drinking in the ocean for years. I could still see the waves between the trunks, the legs of giants.

“You can drop me off here,” she said, pulling her foot down from the dash and collecting her things from around her feet.

“Are you sure?” I asked, reluctant. “I don’t mind going out of my way.”

“Yes.”

I began to slow. I pulled off to the side of the road and turned on my hazard lights. She rolled up her window, and opened the door, stepping out and swinging her brown messenger bag over her shoulder.

“Thank you so much,” she said. “I really appreciate it.”

“You’re welcome.”

In the rear view mirror, she waved and turned to face the other way, toward the traffic. She stuck her arm out, thumb up, and waited for someone going where she needed to go.
In July, I moved to Gyumri, Armenia, and began teaching English and Spanish at a language school. My first class was one where I helped an English teacher with her class of six-year-olds. When I finished introducing myself the students, one of them, a little girl, told me I had an American smile. Afterward, I devised the following definitions of American Smile.

**American Smile:** Good teeth. Apparently Americans have an obsession with having perfectly straight, white teeth. We spend tens of thousands of dollars on braces, some for baby teeth that will later fall out. We go to the dentist to get our teeth whitened, drink soda through straws so it won’t stain them. People who live everywhere else in the world do not worry about this. I didn’t spend any money on my teeth. I have naturally “good” teeth, but there’s a slight gap between the bottom two in the front of my mouth. I trained myself to smile so it doesn’t show. It would reveal that I am imperfect.

**American Smile:** Americans are known for smiling all the time. Maybe this perpetuates the myth that we’re all happy because everything is perfect in America. They say that you can find an American in a photo because they will be the only one smiling. When I was taking photos with my host family, they didn’t smile at all. As soon as I realized this, I stopped smiling, too. But then I worried they would think that I wasn’t enjoying myself. So I became the smiling American again.

**American Smile:** The music man had one. American con. Gilded dream. The “I’m selling you something” smile. We are selling something. Many people here wear shirts with American flags on them. Half the young people I met in Yerevan said they wanted to move to America. Gohar, my supervisor, wants to visit America. And I sit there and listen and nod and smile whenever they say something nice about America. That goddamn smile. I’m selling something, even me, even here. Even in my homeland. In America it is better. In America we have opportunities. My host mother asks me if everyone in America has their own car, and I try to explain that they don’t. But my family has three cars for three drivers. Even though two of them we got used. Even in telling the truth, I sell America as something it is not. Still, compared to people in Gyumri, people in America have everything. In America everyone has a car. In America we all have our own house with a white picket fence. All shiny and orderly, just like my teeth. And what I can’t show them is the evicted family, the spiralling debt, the people denied healthcare, the racism, bigotry, hatred, xenophobia.

**American Smile:** Crooked. Fast-talking Yankee. When I was in middle school I wanted a crooked smile because all the interesting book characters had them. The thieves and tricksters. I practiced smiling in the mirror again and again until the left side went further up my face than the right. Now that’s just how I smile. I only ever told one person I did that on purpose. Perhaps self-conscious is the word. We know we are selling something. I know I’m selling something. We’re all used car salesmen. Yes, everybody in America has a car. Would you like to come to America and buy one? I have a car you can buy, I smile. But my smile says not to trust me. We reveal ourselves. We appear too sure of ourselves to really be sure of anything.

**American Smile:** A little girl in an English class I was in today told me that I have an American smile. The irony is that I smile because I’m happy. I love it here. I am content here in a way I haven’t been in a long time. And that little girl, she makes me happy. She makes me smile. Despite all its flaws, Armenia makes me smile.
Do “Raptor Jesus” Memes Have an Aura?
Reading Walter Benjamin in the Digital Age

By ALEX MORGAN

In 1824, if you wanted to disseminate an image of innocents senselessly killed in the Mediterranean during a brutal conflict, you had to paint one yourself. If you were talented enough, your painting would be exhibited, analyzed, studied, and eventually hung in the Louvre, but above all it would remain your painting, forever connected with your name. In 2015, if you wanted to disseminate an image of innocents senselessly killed in the Mediterranean during a brutal conflict, all you needed was a Twitter account. Just over two years after the body of a refugee child washed up on the shores of Southern Europe, the iconic photo of him—face down, red-shirted—has appeared atop the pages of nearly every major newspaper, on numerous humanitarian websites, and in countless social media feeds. Very few of the people who posted this image knew the name of its photographer, or that she was a twenty-nine-year-old reporter who’s worked for Dogan News Agency (DHA) since her teenage years, or that she’s spoken in interviews about the pain of seeing the dead child. I myself knew nothing about her until I started researching this article. I found myself thinking of the contrast between Eugene Delacroix’s painting The Massacre at Chios and Nilüfer Demir’s photo of Alan Kurdi a lot last week as I read Walter Benjamin’s The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. For such a short essay, Art in the Age makes a multi-faceted argument. In this column, I’ll talk about some particularly relevant aspects of Benjamin’s premise: that organically-made images have an aura, that mechanical reproduction of an image destroys its aura, and that images without aura are ripe for politicization.

To summarize, Benjamin’s point is that before photography, every image painted had an aura. In other words, each painting had its particular chronological and cultural context. It would be very hard to make an exact copy of such a painting without altering some details, but even if you did, there would still clearly be an original canvas from which the replicas were copied, so the replicas would become their own works of art with their own contextual auras. Photography, however, introduces the potential for “mechanical reproduction”, or the rapid-fire reprinting and mass distribution of images, which strips them of their time and place, their aura, by making them omnipresent. In contrast to painting, there’s no “original print” of a photo; every reproduction is as valid as the last.

Benjamin uses this premise to make a series of conclusions about art and politics in his day, but as a casual modern reader, I’m most interested in how this is relevant to me. The answer is that the process Benjamin describes has accelerated tremendously since the 1920s, when this book was published. Forget about mechanical reproduction; we’re in the age of digital reproduction now, when everything from news footage to your cousin’s Instagram photos to the latest gifs can be shared thousands of times an hour and move across the globe on a variety of platforms. Take, for example, the Raptor Jesus meme that we’ve all seen at some point—does anyone have any idea when that originated, or who first made it, or how you came upon it? I certainly don’t, and it used to be my screensaver.

If you don’t see why this is important, consider the politicization aspect and replace Raptor Jesus with the gif shared by President Donald Trump advocating violence against journalists (or the image that linked Jews with political corruption, or the one about so-called “black-on-black” crime, etc.) By the time anyone was able to track down that gif’s creator and his unsavory ties to white supremacy—in other words, what remained of the image’s aura—it had been presented throughout the news and continued to reverberate through a dark network of neo-Nazi websites, far-right “thinktanks”, and 4chan trolls, while simultaneously spawning more, equally repellant images. Or, consider the aforementioned photo of Alan Kurdi; many who shared that photo did so to emphasize the West’s moral obligation to take in refugees, while many who opposed it or falsely claimed that it was staged did so because of anti-immigration beliefs. It’s not a coincidence that social media images have become increasingly important to the political process as technology allows us to copy and spread them more and more efficiently.

In conclusion, the takeaway from this is to read Benjamin’s Art in the Age, even if you’re not generally interested in art or politics—I think you’ll still find it fascinating and, above all, relevant.
Dear Miss Lonely Hearts,

My boyfriend and I have been in a relationship for almost two years now. We started dating in our senior year of high school after an extended period of awkward flirting, and flash forward a few months, ended up deciding to go to the same college. We’re very happy together, and I am very, very much in love with him. But here’s the thing: I really like somebody else, too. And I think he might as well.

This other person is a friend of ours from high school, and despite the fact that he doesn’t actually go to the same college as us, we manage to hang out surprisingly frequently. Like, just the three of us. Without the rest of our friends. The way those two look at each other is nearly identical to the way my boyfriend looks at me, and the way I look at both of them. We’ve gone to movies together, gotten ice cream together, gone to a restaurant on a suspiciously date-like dinner together...and sometimes, when we’re walking, my boyfriend will sling one arm around my shoulders and the other around his and it just feels right, somehow. Like that’s the way it should be. This same feeling applies to essentially any time the three of us are together. The number of casual references to polyamory that have been dropped into our conversations is fairly astounding, but I can’t tell if it’s because we’re all rationally liberal, or if something is actually being implied.

I don’t even know how to bring this up with my boyfriend, and I’m terrified that I might be misreading the situation. I don’t even know for sure if either of them are actually into guys as well as girls (Is it love? Is it just a really touchy-feely bromance? Who knows, man). I don’t want lose what I already have, but I also don’t want to miss the chance at something that could be really great. This is completely uncharted territory for me. What should I do?

Sincerely,

Maybe it’s Polyamory, Maybe it’s Maybelline

Dear Maybe it’s Polyamory, Maybe it’s Maybelline

Let’s hark back to the opening line of the catchy slogan you quoted: ”Maybe she’s born with it.” Yes, taking advice from the gods of drugstore beauty campaigns may sound risky, but I think this invocation of the Great Lash” muse. Mother Maybelline, can provide us with an essential nugget of wisdom in this scenario, which I, your humble bard, Miss Lonely Hearts, will translate for you: trust your instinct. From what you’ve described, it sounds like you already know what you want to do, but you’re hesitant to take the risk, and, as we all know, you gotta risk it for the biscuit.

I know how appealing it might be to stay silent and not broach this subject with your boyfriend, but my spidey senses tell me he might be having the same dilemma. Next time a casual reference to polyamory is made in one of your conversations, maybe ask him if he would ever consider entering into a polyamorous relationship, or if he’s interested in other men. This is a good way to test the waters with your partner without showing your cards right away. If he seems amenable to the idea, tell him that you’ve been considering the idea of making your twosome a trio (maybe bring some gummy worms with you to allow him an excuse to mull over his thoughts on the matter in silence). Most importantly, make sure your boyfriend knows that your feelings for this other person don’t lessen your love for him.

I know the prospect of broaching this subject with your boyfriend is probably terrifying, because, unfortunately, we cannot turn back the hands of time—cannot stuff our words back in our mouths, no matter how appealing the taste may be (this is another reason the gummy worms may come in handy). We can only hope that we do right by ourselves and the people we love, and we can do this by speaking our truths, by putting our whole selves out there. Relationships are both a wonderful and terrifying thing, and, after all, what’s life without a little risk? What’s love without a stumble and a fall?

As for me, I’ve found that the more people I love wholeheartedly, the happier I am. I hope the case will be the same for you and your significant other. Maybe it is polyamory. If not, you can always jet down to the Safeway on Woodstock to stock up on your Great Lash”.

Love,

Miss Lonely Hearts