



EVERYTHING IN ASPIC

Issue #1 // Autumn 2019

♥ *message from the editors* ♥



Welcome to the inaugural issue of
Everything in Aspic!



*Suspend your disbelief, suspend your
belief—suspend it all. And thank you for
being here with us.*

- Chelsea Margaret Bodnar & Stephen Lin -



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Jayanta Bhaumik

In my parable of heart

Comfort, now the protagonist in my fable.
This picture I want to share
It is more than a lifetime or its brittleness people
can cherish, perhaps eat

Occasionally they are the unfound nascence.
History of happiness.
Drops are soluble in the secret of water.
At times, kids you see munching biscuits, distance calling to,
those windows of a running train, its speed in the trance
And the unknown arduous, you can say, to find another trace!
Flour and polyunsaturated fat falling like *nobody* from a star-
falling and falling and down, plunging, down the blackhole sea

on water-surface, life cackles, preening

like a roasted folly, when not undulating,
everything so settled like a timer in the cage,
everything goes for a flight up to the hyperbolic earth,
yes, at times an earth is so very earthy,
flying, floating, like a very small poem you miss while
you sputter love-reeds,
comfortably, comfort, that wacky sheen made up, oh Lord, of
some strange stone you think we keep at heart



Vanessa Couto Johnson

Supernumerary



A third [invention of the] wheel.

Not Pollyanna but polycephaly.

The amphisbaena walks in and looks
you in the eye four times. It minds twice.

One animal with two heads or two
animals that share a body. If there is

a head at each end it should be
called a head at each beginning.

Simultaneously forwards and backwards.
An atomic number glistens at seventy-nine.

Sad history's horde unlocks the chest
of a body where it believes gold is.

The chests pile. The elevator closes.
Several ones of me want to go ways.

Cynthia Cruz - five poems

DON'T ASK ME WHERE THE DREAM WENT BECAUSE IT NEVER SPOKE TO ME AGAIN

I woke up in a burnt out basement
my body covered in slurry

my hands and face
coated in muck.

Marred with glitch

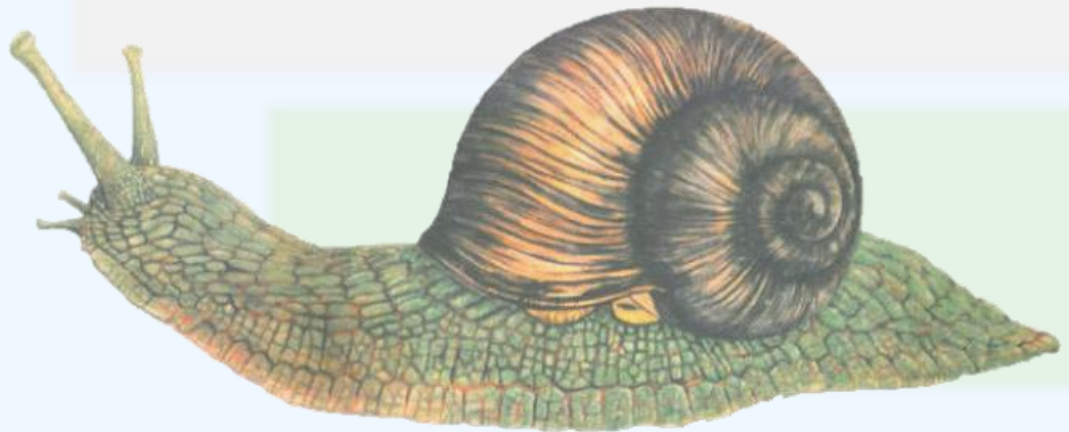
cracked and mangled
like satellites
crashing into a giant gas.

The static
of tape drop out
cut with wow
and flutter.

If I had a home
it would be

constructed entirely
of animal

murmur and the blur
of Novatron.



Radio signal
mutilated by wire
then, smeared
with Carolina.

A tiny cassette
with my own voice
as a child
in the spell of fever.

The smell of dust
and the yellow
sun's mottle at dusk.

Milkweed and thistle.

The smallest taste
of sleep

as finally
the spirit
enters the body.



*DON'T ASK ME WHERE THE DREAM WENT BECAUSE
IT NEVER SPOKE TO ME AGAIN*

This poem is a cassette
tape.

The murmur
of your voice

recorded back
into the black

gauze of its matte
ribbons.

Its blur of tape
unspooled,

undone, then damaged
by hand.

Ruined by wire.
Its soft gauze

rubbed over
with muck

and layers
of ancient





dream-like junk,
wet with death:

the noise of truck
engines,

and the magnificent
fever of a boy

rifling through
the blue

and endless
woods

on his shining
motorcycle.

Visceral and film-like
the gluey animal

-like substance drug
in from the trash.

Distortion
as magic.

Rupture as means
of making.





Sweet, the needle
as it tremors

between the static
of short wave radio

stations. This song
is a failure,

a gun, a beautiful
woman,

nicotine-stained fingers,
trembling

on the hand
of a man.

A violin
being played by an orphan

in a wooden chair
in a field

during an ice
storm.

Violence,
a stutter, a letter

constructed wholly
of quiet,

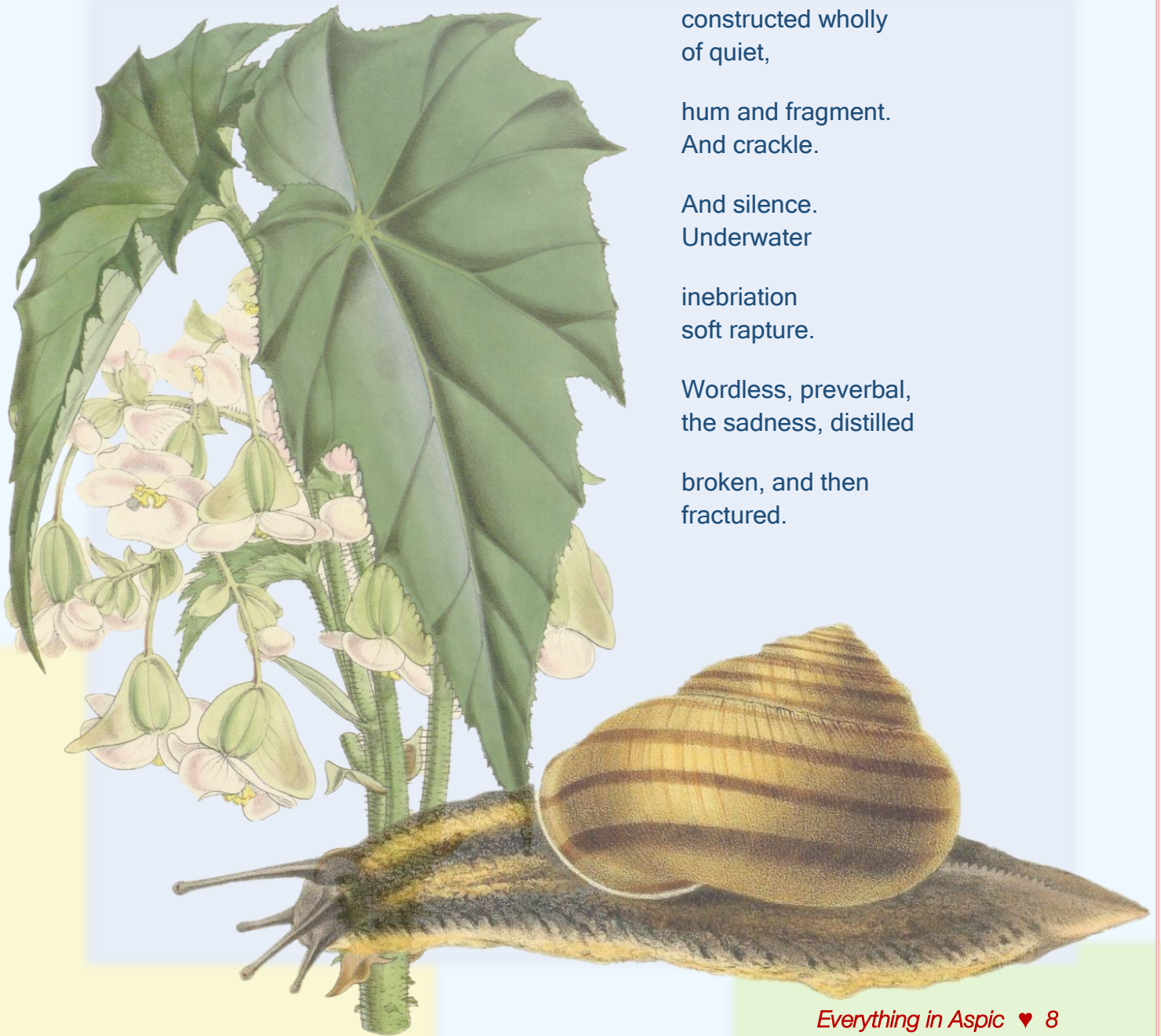
hum and fragment.
And crackle.

And silence.
Underwater

inebriation
soft rapture.

Wordless, preverbal,
the sadness, distilled

broken, and then
fractured.





SHINE

If I had a home
it would be

a still in a film
where the sound
got jammed.

Me and my brother
when we were little

in the sun
with the beautiful
animals.

Old color photographs
Scotch-taped
to the walls
of an old farmhouse
in the Carolinas.

Dread, and its many
instruments of sorrow.

Did you love this world
and this world
not love you?

I don't know
the ending.

I don't know
anything.

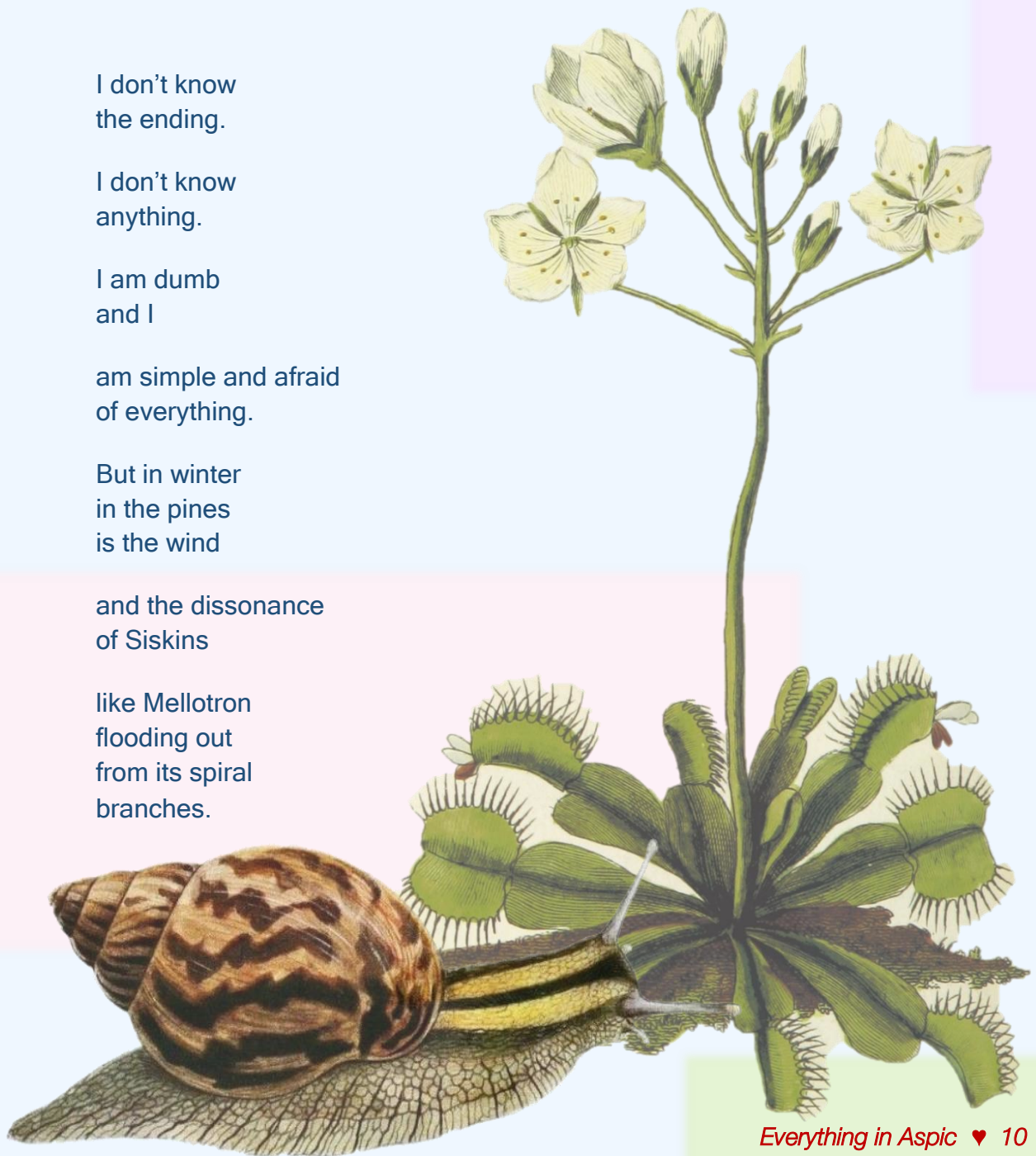
I am dumb
and I

am simple and afraid
of everything.

But in winter
in the pines
is the wind

and the dissonance
of Siskins

like Mellotron
flooding out
from its spiral
branches.



LIKE WE WERE NEVER BORN

I met my mother when I was seven
in a river.

She was beautiful,
her long black hair
smelling of mountain.

Wurlitzer, and the broken
glass of black ice.

The shade of brush.

I was living among
the hounds and the horses.

At night, I was listening
to intricate and more sinister
decibels.

The music of radio frequency.
The delicate scratch and crackle
that occurs between distant cities.

Black sediment and ash.

Songs, not mine
old field recordings,
begin their haunting.



One morning, my body
naked and flat
on my back
along the silver church pew.

There was no sky
and my hands
they are not mine.

Touching water, I wake
walking through a field of voices,
in a stranger's suit,

deep in the wet and warm dream
of another man's
disappearance.



THE OVERBURDEN

Listing, in your black
suit, work boots,
your straw hat with red
gingham ribbon.

The cane they gave you
the night you died.

Through the gelatinous
and rotting gardens
of morning.

And indecipherable,
the nothing of milk
and flowers.

When they found you
in that hotel room
you were still dreaming.

The window, a star
smeared with sorrow
like a jar of warmed,
white whiskey.

Outside, the abandoned bodies
of cars and silver
motorcycle engines.





A charger in the yard
glimmering in the sun
like a tooth, held underwater.

The sound of your girl
like voice, a field
recording trapped on cheap
plastic microphone, set to the tune
of a far off waltz.

Of violin and recorded
voices from bars and locked
stalls of filling station
bathrooms.

A message left
on telephone,
of someone gone,

of dead messages
left on telephones.

Leaning against a wall
of the ruins

struggling to wake
from the stupor

of the obscene
poem that is
America.

Adam Dove

stuck between the walls (excerpt)

“Feel it.”

She dug her fingernails into my shoulders again. I took a deep breath in, and held.

Feel it.

I did. I did feel it.

Outside, it sounded as if the squirrels had gone to war. I could hear them scratching in the trees, plucking little bombs from the branches and hurling them down onto the hoods of waiting cars like a rain of artillery fire. I had never seen a neighborhood with so many squirrels. In the months I'd spent staring out her bedroom window, it felt like I'd seen more squirrels than people, as if every one of her neighbors had a squirrel they sent out in their stead to gather their treasures and bury them deep beneath the earth where no one else could reach them. I said that to her then, and I felt her laugh where she sat, straddling my back, naked but her socks, her jagged nails scraping the flesh slowly from my bones. She said it was an apt metaphor for capitalism.

“Feel it.”

“I feel it. For real.”

The power was still out from last week, but that had been paid now. I'd given her a handful of bills on Friday; a combination of my allowance and the birthday money from my uncle. I'd handed it over in a nicely folded stack, but the next day I'd seen it wadded

up like used tissues on top of her dresser. Then it was gone. She said she'd paid it. It just took a few days to turn back on.

She caught my skin on one of the rough edges of her nail and my body tried to run away into the mattress, face pressed hard into the springs. Some part of my nose clicked.

“Did that hurt?”


“A little, yeah.”

I heard her push a breath out through her nose, but she just kept scratching away at me. It might have been lighter. I couldn't really tell.



By the time she came back from the bathroom I'd lit the last cigarette and sucked it halfway down, the ash collecting like drool in the sheets. I hadn't had the energy to move, so I just lay there, staring at the open window from the nest of scattered linen. She threw herself back down on the mattress, still naked, and plucked the stick from my mouth, planting it between her teeth. A copy of *Man's Search for Meaning* on the milk crate beside her. Brand New playing softly from her phone. A stick of Nag Champa burning on the dresser. She smoked it down to the hilt, then leaned over and put it out on the windowsill, exposing to me again the curve of her lower back like a wooden switch flexed taut, and I felt something stir in the pit of my stomach, something oceanic and painfully familiar. *She was right* I thought to myself, but it burned my eyes to do so.

“In North American symbology, they're a sign you need to stop taking things so seriously.”



She said it like the obvious next line in a conversation we hadn't been having. She had a tendency to do this, often leading me to believe I'd blacked out halfway through, and was only just coming around.

"What is?"

"Squirrels," she said.

"Oh," I said. "I didn't realize they had symbology. I thought that was just for like eagles and bears and stuff."

"Everything has symbology," she said, laying back down and rolling on her side to face me.

"What about people?" I said. "Or is it just animals."

"We *are* animals," she said. "Think about it. Man is a symbol for everything: War, suffering, madness, joy, death. Everything. Man is the ultimate symbol."


"What about woman?"

"Oh, you want me to show you what I'm a symbol for?"

She twitched her nose and sniffed, like a bunny chewing a carrot. It was perhaps the only cute thing she ever did. I clung to it every time, a buoy in open water.

"When I think of squirrels, I don't think of fun," I said. "I think of, like, the future. Like planning for the future, because they bury nuts."

I realized I was laying on my side now too, facing her, and we inhaled each other's air, circular breathing. She slid her arm beneath the sheet and placed her hand on the small of my back. I felt her fingers before I felt them, the skin on my back tingling in fear, in anticipation of her touch. I was a funny bone, and she struck me over and over until I couldn't feel my hands. But even before that, her lips were on my neck. And before that, she was on top of me, rolling her hips like a stone grinding wheat.



Pulverizing. Or maybe that was after. Maybe it was always happening, then. Maybe it's still happening now.



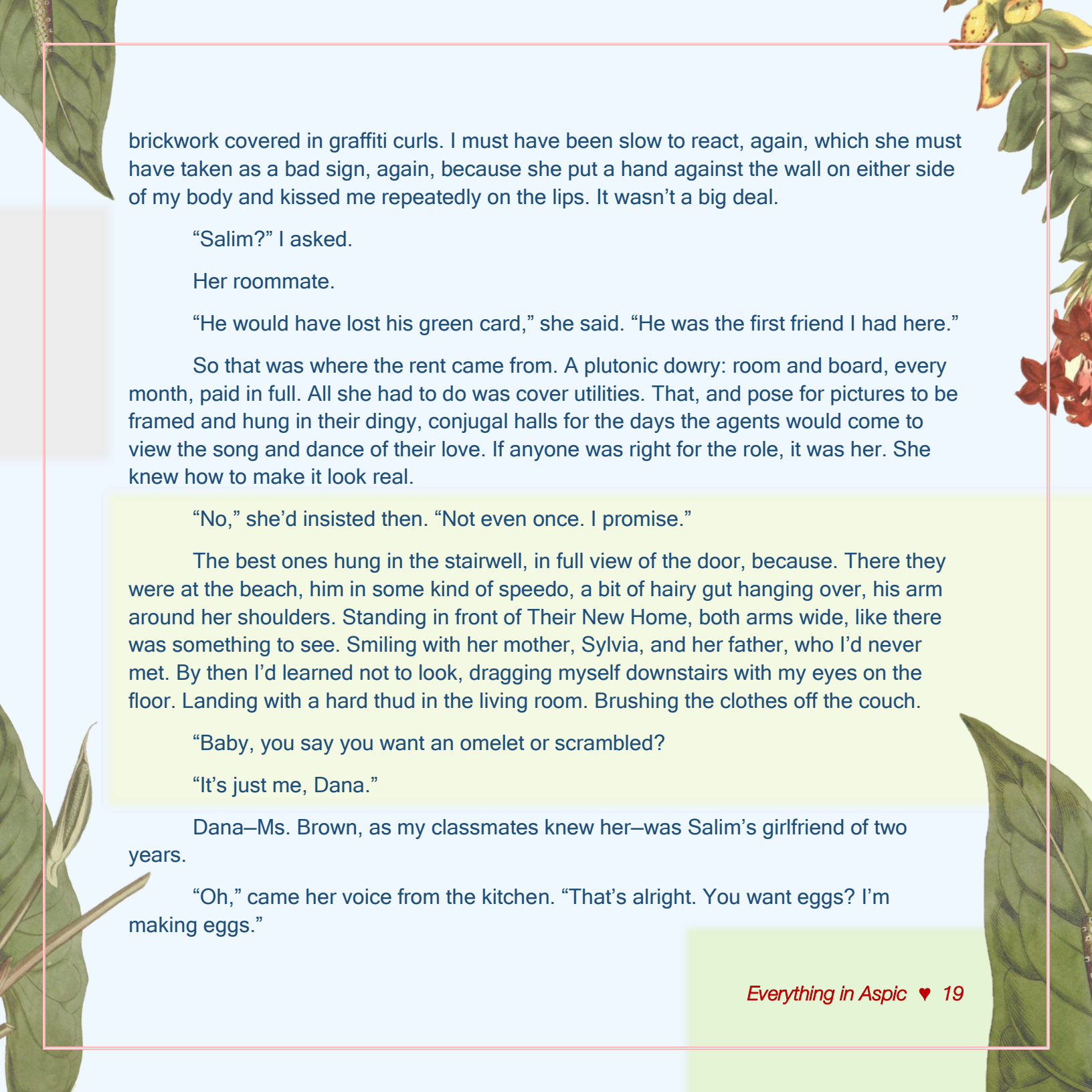
After, I felt my every muscle relax, and mostly it felt good. The sound of her rooting around in the room, out of sight.

“We’re out of cigarettes.”

I felt sand in the sheets. Though the rain had stopped hours ago, the stain on the drop ceiling seemed to be growing. The tiles we’d removed had left holes in the grid, piano keys stuck down by jammy fingers. The square beneath the leak was fully saturated now and starting to bleed over. Soon it would drip, and the drip would reach me here on my safe island. And the wooden walls would warp and bend in on me like trees. The smell of must would grow. I closed my eyes against the purple light humming in through the tapestry over the window. When the wind blew it filled like a sail, then, without moving, emptied.

By the time I dared to lift my head, she was gone, the door to the bedroom wide open. The drawers of the dresser stayed pulled, exploding with clothes, dripping down onto the floor and collecting in puddles. I rolled over to check the alarm clock, but it was plugged into the wall, and the wall was powerless. I put my feet on the floor. The crumbs embedded in the wild locks of the carpet felt like sand as well, the kind that turns into pearls if you just keep rubbing. I stood on shaking legs and walked to the pile of clothes by the door. Squirrels out playing on the flat roof. I dressed, and stepped into the hallway.

We’d been dating three months when she told me she was married. It wasn’t a big deal, she’d said, backing me against a wall in the alley outside the venue. The



brickwork covered in graffiti curls. I must have been slow to react, again, which she must have taken as a bad sign, again, because she put a hand against the wall on either side of my body and kissed me repeatedly on the lips. It wasn't a big deal.

“Salim?” I asked.

Her roommate.

“He would have lost his green card,” she said. “He was the first friend I had here.”

So that was where the rent came from. A plutonic dowry: room and board, every month, paid in full. All she had to do was cover utilities. That, and pose for pictures to be framed and hung in their dingy, conjugal halls for the days the agents would come to view the song and dance of their love. If anyone was right for the role, it was her. She knew how to make it look real.

“No,” she'd insisted then. “Not even once. I promise.”

The best ones hung in the stairwell, in full view of the door, because. There they were at the beach, him in some kind of speedo, a bit of hairy gut hanging over, his arm around her shoulders. Standing in front of Their New Home, both arms wide, like there was something to see. Smiling with her mother, Sylvia, and her father, who I'd never met. By then I'd learned not to look, dragging myself downstairs with my eyes on the floor. Landing with a hard thud in the living room. Brushing the clothes off the couch.

“Baby, you say you want an omelet or scrambled?”

“It's just me, Dana.”

Dana—Ms. Brown, as my classmates knew her—was Salim's girlfriend of two years.

“Oh,” came her voice from the kitchen. “That's alright. You want eggs? I'm making eggs.”



“No,” I said. “But thanks though. I’m not really hungry.”

“You sure? I’m making it anyway.”

“Is there coffee?”

“Sorry,” she said. “Just instant until the power’s back.”

Seconds later, the mug appeared in my hand, steaming and warm, and smelling of burnt hazelnuts. She didn’t bother smiling—she never much did, not that I’d seen—but I felt a kind of sympathy from her. I’d never actually had her as a substitute in class, but I always felt she’d be a good one.

Pounding came from overhead, and Salim appeared at the top of the stairs. He wore a silk kimono covered in leopard print, the tie open in the front, revealing a dark carpet of hair extending from the lump of his Adam’s apple to the waistband of his boxers. He surveyed his kingdom like a lion.

“You’re still here? She ain’t killed you yet?”

“Morning, Salim.”

“Leave the kid alone, Momo,” Dana shouted from the kitchen. “He hasn’t even had his coffee yet.”

“Who needs it?” He bounded down the stairs in twos, as if to make a point. “Strength comes from within, kid. Even in the morning.”

He threw himself on the couch next to me before I had time to make room, his elbow nearly taking off my nose. I scooted to the far end. The hard wire of something digging into my back. He put his slippered feet up on the glass top coffee table and leaned back, tucking his hands behind his head.

“I’ll remember that,” I said, and took a sip of my coffee. It was still too hot, and burned my tongue to sandpaper.

Suddenly the lamp on the end table flickered a few times, then came on full blast. The ceiling fan began to rotate. There was a small cheer from the kitchen.

So she'd paid it after all.

"Oh hell yeah," Salim said. "Hit that remote, yeah?"

It was Saturday, and the television, old and deep and heavy, was already tuned to cartoons. We sat in silence, and watched a chicken sit down on a train track and start reading the newspaper.

"Up late last night, yeah?" he said. "I keep telling her she's going to wear out that mattress."

He jammed an elbow into my rib. A bit of coffee jumped from my mug and started running down my hand, burning the skin as it went.

"Uh huh," I said. "Relentless."

"What's that?"

"Relentless," I said, a bit louder. "I said she's...relentless."

"Fuckin' crazy's what she is," he said. "But don't worry mate. She ever gets out of line, you just gotta remind her who's in charge."

He anchored a foot against the edge of the coffee table and started thrusting his hips slowly up from the couch, humping the air. The table protested, sliding further away from him with every gyration, scraping against the wood floor like it was trying to rub out a spot. The side of his kimono peeled back, revealing even more hair down to the length of his side. He probably had more hair on his torso than I had on my entire body. Head included.

"Who, you?" I asked.

He reached over and thumped me hard on the chest with the back of his hand.

“Exactly,” he said.

“Ah, dammit,” Dana’s voice shouted from the kitchen.

“What is it babe?”

“Something scratching in the walls again,” she said. “I swear it’s the damn squirrels.”

At this, Salim stood up from the couch and jogged to the kitchen doorway, grabbing the frame and swinging himself around the corner, disappearing. There was a gray streak smeared on the dull white molding, left overtime by the oil of his fingers. The show switched over, and now two spies with polygonal faces crouched behind a barrel labeled TNT.

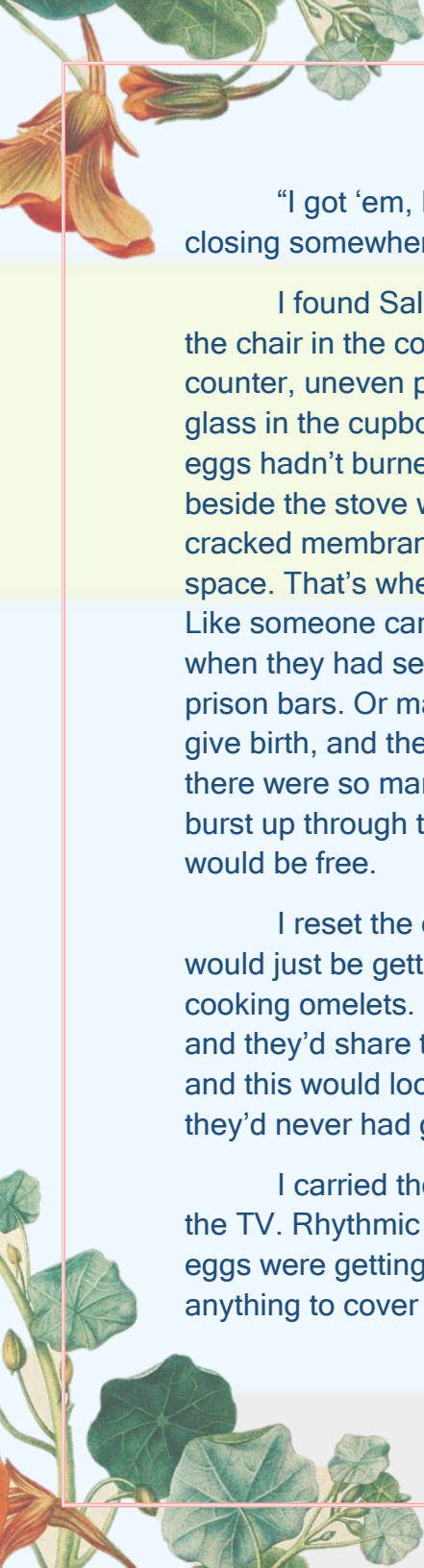
“We gotta get you out of this place and into somewhere that ain’t falling apart,” I could hear her say.

“What are you talking about?” Salim was a ringmaster; the whole world turned around the tone of his voice. “They’re probably banging away in there. It’s their love shack. We live in a house of love!”

I heard Dana squeal, and seconds later Salim emerged from the kitchen with her slung over his shoulder. He was no longer wearing his kimono. As the pair of them crossed in front of the TV, Dana for a moment stopped pounding her fists against his back, and we locked eyes. Again, she wasn’t smiling, but she wasn’t not either. She gave me a sort of half shrug, putting out her upturned hands to either side like a character in a cartoon.

“Babe, the eggs are gonna burn!”





“I got ‘em, Dana,” I said. But they had already disappeared, the sound of a door closing somewhere upstairs.

I found Salim’s kimono abandoned on the kitchen floor and hung it on the back of the chair in the corner. The dishes piled up in the sink had made their way out onto the counter, uneven plates stacked on the pocked yellow vinyl. It took a while to find a clean glass in the cupboard, and some careful shifting before I could fill it from the faucet. The eggs hadn’t burned, but sat scrambled and solidifying in the pan. There was a plate beside the stove with two fried ones stacked on it, the yolk of one drooling out of the cracked membrane, pooling in the center. I dumped the scramble off onto the empty space. That’s when I heard it: the scratching in the walls, a small sound, but persistent. Like someone carving their initials in a park bench. Is that what squirrels sounded like when they had sex? It sounded more like they were trying to escape. Filing away at prison bars. Or maybe it was both. Maybe they would stay in there and make love and give birth, and their kids would grow up and do the same, and their kids, until one day there were so many squirrels stuck between those walls that they had no choice but to burst up through the chimney and back out into the sun. At least, then, the ones on top would be free.

I reset the clock above the stove to match my phone. Nine thirty-four. My mom would just be getting out of bed. She would walk downstairs, where my dad would be cooking omelets. They’d eat them at the table together. My dad would read the paper, and they’d share the funny pages. It’d be hours before they thought to check in on me, and this would look to them like the freedom I deserve, out here in the sun, the freedom they’d never had growing up.

I carried the plate of eggs back into the living room. Some kind of explosion on the TV. Rhythmic squeaking coming through the ceiling. Salim’s bed, probably. The eggs were getting cold, but with everything else in the kitchen dirty, I couldn’t find anything to cover them with. So, careful not to make a sound, I carried them up the

stairs and laid the plate down on the carpet in front of his door. So he couldn't miss them. Dana had worked so hard, after all.

I heard the familiar click of the front door latch and for a second, light streamed in, painting the landing below the sandy gold of some distant beach, on which stood her shadow like a magnificent vase, cracked and lain upon the floor.

“Honey, I'm home!”

Then she laughed to herself, and just like that, the light was gone. I walked quietly down the stairs, careful not to speak until I'd reached the ground.

“How is it,” I asked, “out there in the world?”

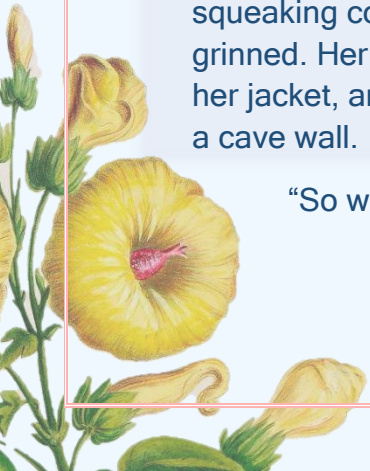
“Oh, you know, same old,” she said. “Rape, murder, genocide. The usual. Power's back on?”

“Came on a little bit ago.”

“About fucking time,” she said. “You the only one up?”

She already had a lit cigarette planted between her lips, or maybe I would have kissed her hello. I stood a head taller than her, which still surprised me. It was easy to forget how short she was, the way she could occupy a room. Her jacket was thin and red like a parachute that hung past her knees. Her dread lay forward over her shoulder. It hadn't begun intentionally, but she seemed to be embracing it, and had tied a few wooden beads near the end to prove it. We stood there for a moment, silent, until the squeaking coming through the ceiling registered in her ears. She looked at me and grinned. Her nose twitched once, twice, then she sniffled and wiped it on the sleeve of her jacket, and when she pulled it away, I swear her smile glowed golden like a crack in a cave wall.

“So what, you're just sitting down here watching cartoons?”



“And drinking coffee,” I insisted.
She put a hand on my cheek. Even though she had to reach up, I still felt like a child.

“You’re so cute sometimes.”

She started walking toward the kitchen.

“Actually, Salim put those on.”

“Is there any more of that?”

“It’s just instant, but it’s pretty okay.”

She disappeared into the kitchen, leaving me alone on the landing, rubbing my cheek for no reason, the front door shut tight. Part of me wanted to grab the knob and throw it open, let the golden light stream back in. Close it behind me. For many people, this was normal. Sitting at home, waiting for their other half to return from the outside world. To bring them little trinkets, keep them satisfied in their cage, trapped within the walls. For many people, this was a life. Maybe it could be for me too.

“I have to go out for a little bit, later,” she said. “Do you want to come?”

“Yes,” I said. “Sure. Where are we going?”

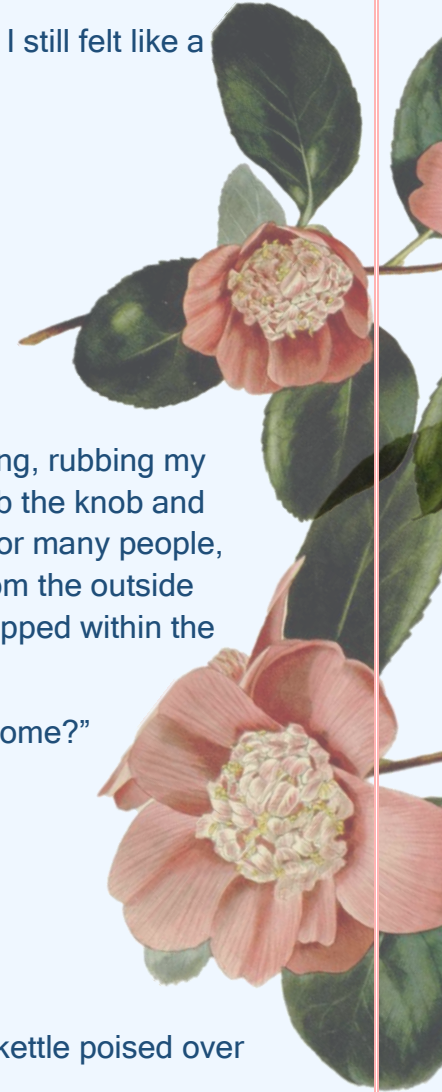
“Oh God, what is that?”

“What?”

“That awful scratching.”

I followed her into the kitchen and saw her standing with the teakettle poised over an empty mug.

“Yeah, Dana heard it earlier,” I said. “Squirrels in the walls or something.”



“It sounds like they’re killing each other,” she said.

“Maybe they’re making love,” I said.

“You would say that,” she said, stepping closer to me. Her forehead only inches from my lips, I could smell the human smell of her scalp, see the scars on her face where she’d picked a scab one too many times. Catch myself reflected in the pools of her eyes, green like the shine off a summer leaf.

“You want to go upstairs?”

I hadn’t intended to say it, so it’s possible I didn’t. All I could see was Salim in my head, foot anchored against the coffee table, humping. But whoever said it, it must have been invitation enough. She took the coffee from my hand and set it on the counter. And then she kissed me. Her hand wrapped around the back of my head. I got my fingers stuck in the tangles of her hair. We moved together, past the eggs abandoned on the landing, and into the mattress on the floor of her room, to do whatever it is that squirrels do when stuck like that, between the walls of a home.

TO READ PART 2, GO TO:

<https://www.adamdovestories.com/stuck-between-the-walls>



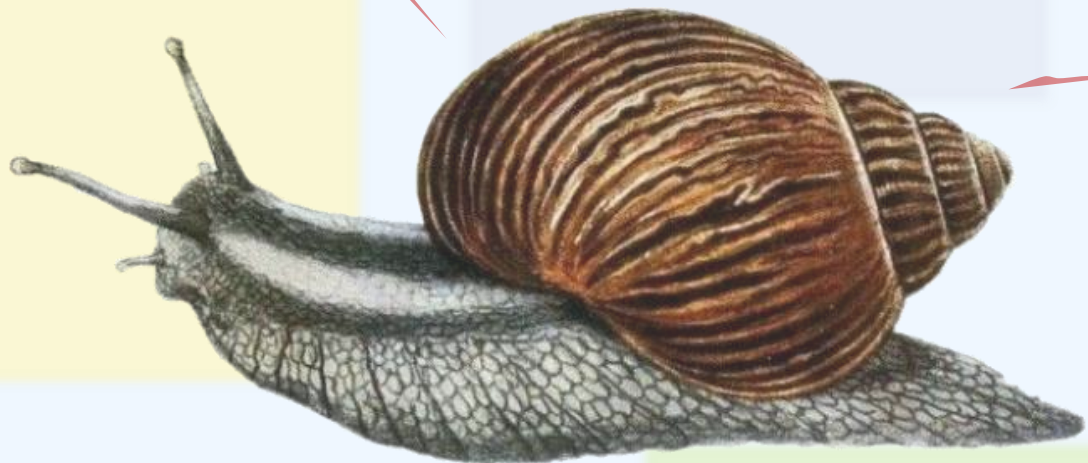
Jill Khoury - two poems

haunt recursion

the butcher came to borrow
mezcal and my two best
bone saws / he came with

red lilies / apparently i have
been the inspiration for a lot
of his art / apparently (post-

sea-magic) i am a little
choir trapped in glass / and he
would like to keep me



october

longer nights shorter heat / until it's ghost day /
i spend it reading lake ripples / the edges of my
humming rub up against / deleted weekend
scenes / like when you arrived from vapor / skin
like jewelry / saying we are silver / got me all
forgiveness / saying we should future / [i thought]
you were my first clarity / said we should meet
on the snow patch / explore the meter of it / ions
sparkling / tenderness no end / no space between skins





Avra Margariti

#3

A Bog Body and a Mud Golem Walk into a Dive Bar

What are you? The first thing they all ask me
as if the body is more important than the boy,
the bog peat that preserved me the only noteworthy thing about me.
Who were you?

Who made you? The first thing they all ask you,
discarding the girl and focusing on the river mud that molds you,
your creator's desperate handprints.
How did you come to be?

I slide on the seat across from you and ask if I can buy you a drink.
You laugh and say something about the liquid dribbling
right through you and staining the floor.
You ask me to your motel room, run your sticky fingers
over my leathery decay.
I'm a bit ghastly under my clothes, I whisper.
You smile and say something about mud daubers
having made homes inside you.
And like a welcome mat you invite me in,
and I shiver as our misshapen lips meet in the middle.
The motel sign's neon lights illuminate
the airing of our musty flaws.





Rebecca Martin

lowlands

#2

easy to disown the girl you were at 23: fluffed dove-gray & bridal. -Emily Skaja

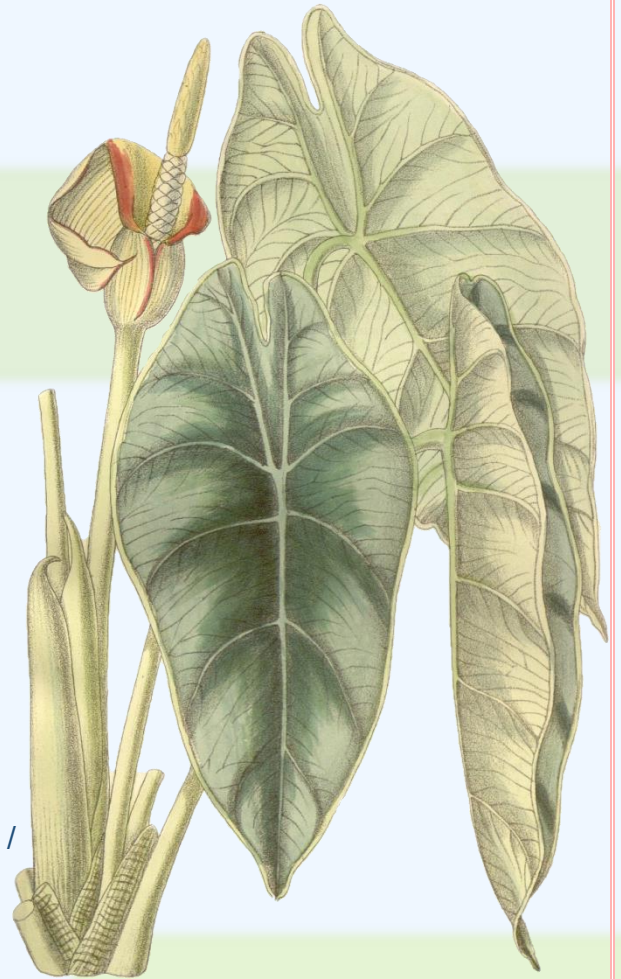
setting fires with arms built
for a less sturdy art. torches, I mean,
or a spot on your shoulder
where freckles fan out, interstellar.

did you know I was in love with loneliness
long before I tethered myself to the mast
of so many wrong vessels? did you know
I have never cried while you are in the bathroom,

have never felt heavy
as a sodden bundle dredged
from a marshland - you are not a constellation
of absences. let me start over

let me say that bridge was a fist
and we laughed on the bus, too loud,
at 8:30 on weekday mornings. I remember each angle
of the sun as it streaked in dusty windows.

my hair dirty and braided away from my face
so near to the night of the equinox how could I tell you /
myself / anyone all the tiny compromises
I built fractaling out of my body, spilling over.



all the hunger I couldn't convince myself
to live without, the targeted
advertisements asking me *don't you want
to cut vegetables into tiny symmetrical pieces?*

I stood over oil in the pan all winter and when spring
rolled back its shoulders I stopped waiting, a brittle-
boned kitchen instrument, stopped halving words
before they left my mouth. let me start over let me say

you clamber back over the passenger seat in September
to kiss me again. I built a catalog of absences
and learned how to stop apologizing, how
much I can't live with, especially when

it's only a tug, like fishing wire.
after escaping the mire it's easy to pinpoint:
everyone has a face come to mind
when Mary Lambert sings *I could've stayed*

and been fine. I turned 23 drunk
and burying myself in a peat bog
of my own making, but I course corrected
before the fossil records could implicate me.

listen: there is nothing dishonest in the way
we uncovered one another, earth-spun
and clawing at a surface
we didn't know could hold us.





Kailey Tedesco

#1

*Somniloquy for the deadhaus / grandfather
tells us everything here is haunted*



stay away from the piano, he says—i rub my eyes red & gushy, blood in them
from days of crying. i collect cattails by the pond, only it's not the pond,

but what's inside it that acts as my little punishment. & then there's the white room
with the white dresses that will one day belong to me. they come to me in dreams – all of that

bright backing my eyesight into corners. did you know they used to solve killings by taking
candid photos of the iris? such a violation to take sleepsand & turn it into evidence & can you imagine

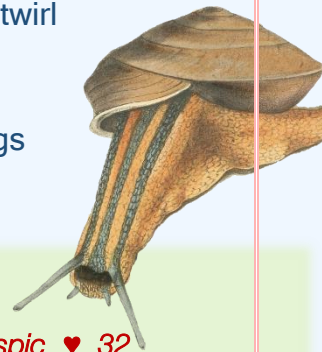
the tragicness of filmstrips suggesting life until the very last minute? i shudder. yet still i wonder
what will they find stuck in my eye when i'm all ankle-tag on mischief night. maybe little wax

dolls resting upon a halve of amethyst – no discernible faces, of course. dressed up in miniature
laces, of course – always readying themselves for the swim. or maybe i'll be all bear rug

in the attic, sprawled and crawling into my own rhodopsin. forgive me father, for i have sinned
& this is why i sleep behind the piano, where it is known i'm most forbidden. let me twirl

here a little longer. i'd like to be reincarnated as a diner cake, spinning unthawed
in my glass house. it's the third time i've forgotten to close my mouth & the lady bugs

can sense an opening. they come to me from the ceiling. i thank them for my new



luck of glutton. if you're wondering all this time if i'm haunted, then yes, i'm haunted.

my eyelids wretch me up with the rusty swing sets of my old houses. there is so much
i can never say to you. open the window; the mirror is fogging in last breaths.



Thomas Zimmerman - Two Poems

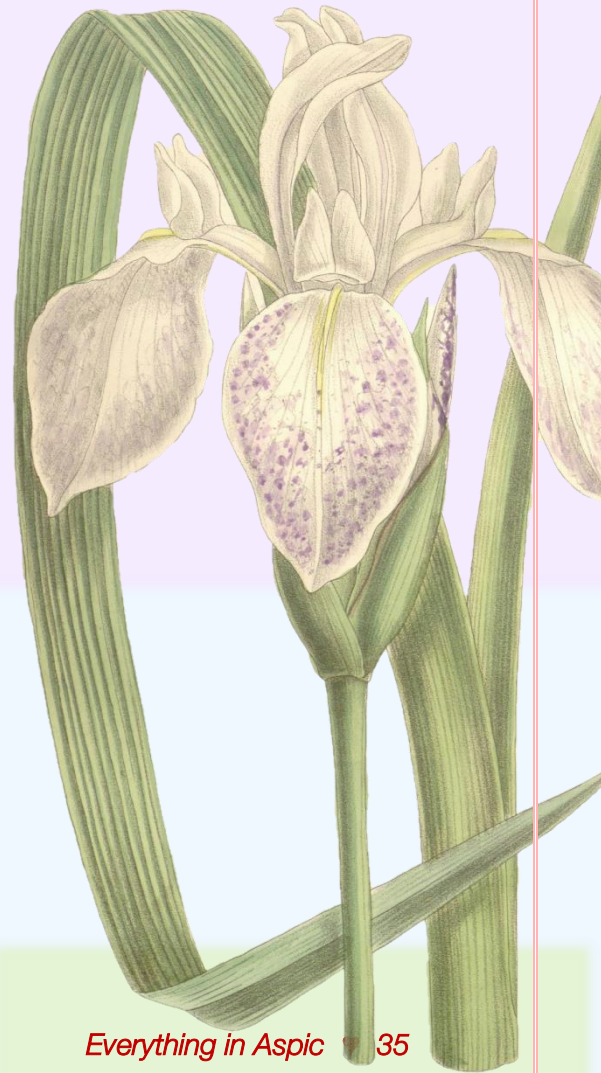
Conjugal Space(s) #4

—you thank the gods or fate for letting you
live *this* // you love it mostly / not sure what
it means // a blackness fills the evergreens
out back / and scabs of snow glow soft as moons /
reflecting last year's Christmas lights // yes / night
is falling / and you feel a sweetness with
a double-shot of sadness in it // been
like this all day / your wife is gone / the dog's
been walked / a slight hangover / almost over-
whelming trying to assert yourself
in such a universe // not tragic // small
heroics // third beer biting back / you hear
John Fahey on the playlist / Blind Joe Death
transfigured / night moves with no judgment yet ///



Conjugal Space(s) #8

–tonight you’re just too jumpy for a selfie //
take a picture of your wife instead /
she’s grimacing / no / surely that’s a smile //
your third beer in / and Glenn Gould’s Bach is rippling
from the playlist // what did Mother do
with your umbilical // the wedding ring
you’ve lately polished smells a lot like blood //
your neutered greyhound won’t stop licking at
his crotch / it could be allergies // your meds
have quelled your own / cheer up // there’s whiskey in
the kitchen cabinet / below the dripping
sink // night sky is rubbed with Vaseline /
your wife is warming to the talk of next
year’s big remodel // find her lips and kiss ///



AUTHOR BIOS

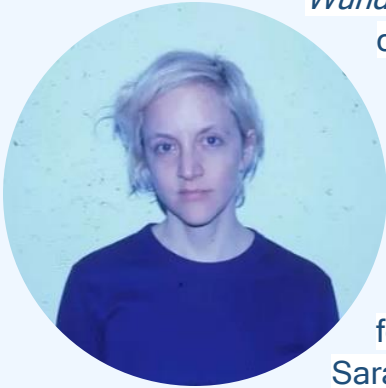
Jayanta Bhaumik is from Kolkata, India, basically from the field of Metaphysics (a Research Member of American Federation of Astrologers Inc.). He travels in Singapore and other south-east Asian countries every year for his professional assignments. Poetry is his Quest, his world of experiments, passion and colours. His works can be found in the recent or upcoming issues of Poetry Superhighway, Zombie Logic Review, Merak Magazine, Pif Magazine, Pangolin Review, Better Than Starbucks, PPP Ezine, Poppy Road Review, Mad Swirl, Vita Brevis Poetry Journal, Cajun Mutt Press, Academy of the Heart and Mind, Scarlet Leaf Review.



Vanessa Couto Johnson is the author of *Pungent dins concentric*, her first full-length book (Tolsun Books, 2018), and three chapbooks, most recently *speech rinse* (Slope Editions' 2016 Chapbook Contest winner). Her sixteen-page sequence "Try the yen relish" is in *Oxidant / Engine's BoxSet vol. 1. Foundry, Softblow, Thrush, Field, Blackbird*, and other journals and anthologies have published her poetry.



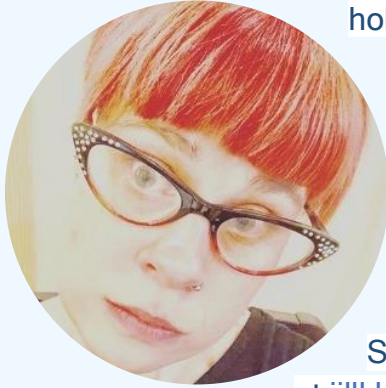
Cynthia Cruz is the author of five collections of poems: *How the End Begins*, *Wunderkammer*, *The Glimmering Room*, and *Ruin*. Her fifth collection of poems, *Dregs*, was published in September of 2018. Her sixth, *Guidebooks for the Dead*, is forthcoming in spring of 2020 by Four Way Books. *Steady Diet of Nothing*, her first novella, is also forthcoming from Four Way Books. *Disquieting: Essays on Silence*, a collection of critical essays, was published by Book*hug in spring of 2019 and her second collection of critical essays, *The Melancholia of Class*, is forthcoming from Repeater Books in 2021. She teaches at Sarah Lawrence College and in the MFA Writing Program at Columbia University.



Adam Dove is an author, editor, and writing coach born and living in Pittsburgh, PA. His short stories have appeared in a number of literary journals, including *Asymmetry*, *Write Out Publishing*, and *Open Minds Quarterly*. His work addresses themes of personal identity, masculinity, and mental health in often strange and magical ways. He can be reached at adamdovestories.com



Jill Khoury writes on gender, disability, and embodied identity. She



holds an MFA from The Ohio State University and edits *Rogue Agent*, a journal that features poetry and art of the body. She has written two chapbooks—*Borrowed Bodies* (Pudding House, 2009) and *Chance Operations* (Paper Nautilus, 2016). Her debut full-length collection, *Suites for the Modern Dancer*, was released in 2016 from Sundress Publications. Find her

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Avra Margariti is a queer Social Work undergrad

from Greece. She enjoys storytelling in all its forms and writes about diverse identities and experiences. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Flash Fiction Online*, *The Forge Literary*, *SmokeLong Quarterly* and other venues. Avra won the 2019 Bacopa Literary Review prize for fiction. You can find her on twitter @avramargariti.



Rebecca Martin is a poet whose work has appeared in *Original Magazine*, *Spill: A Queer Arts Magazine*, and *Pretty Owl Poetry*. She is interested in creating poetry that centers queer womanhood through the personal and political, simultaneously in conversation with and troubled by the parameters of history. Originally from Southwest Ohio, she has been studying and producing creative writing since 2008 and graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a BA from the English Department (poetry track) and Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program. Rebecca has read her work in 2018 at City of Asylum and the Pitt's Artist-in-Residency program through the Astronomy & Physics Department, and in 2019 at White Whale, Bantha, and City of Asylum.



Kailey Tedesco is the author of *She Used to be on a Milk Carton* (April Gloaming Publishing), *Lizzie, Speak*, and the forthcoming collection *FOREVERHAUS* (White Stag Publishing). She is a senior editor for *Luna Luna Magazine*. You can find her work featured or forthcoming in *Gigantic Sequins*, *Electric Literature*, *Nat. Brut*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Fairy Tale Review*, *Bone Bouquet Journal*, and more. For further information, please follow @kaileytedesco.



Thomas Zimmerman teaches English, directs the Writing Center, and edits *The Big Windows Review*



(<https://thebigwindowsreview.com>) at Washtenaw Community College, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. His poems have appeared recently in *Bleached Butterfly*, *Tigershark*, and the anthology *Nocturne: Poetry of the Night*. Tom's website: <https://thomaszimmerman.wordpress.com>



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for reading issue #1 of
Everything in Aspic



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