

You're leaving? No. No. Hang on, hang out. Light is cascading through the windows, and the *Nass* is staying around.

The Nassau Weekly

Volume 49, Number 7
April 17, 2025

In Print since 1979
Online at nassauweekly.com





WAIT FOR ME

- 4
- Homecoming 1970
By Ivy Chen
Art by Eden Reinfurt
- 5
- aubade for egg time-lapse
By Ziyi Yan
- 6
- Partly Cloudy
By Vivian Clayton
Art by Raven Reid
- 8
- transversion
By Callisto Lim
Art by Gina Cocuzzi
- 9
- Pantoum, (pantoum) pantoum.
By Ukyung (Heidi) Nam
Art by Mannix Beale-O'Brien
- 10
- The Trial
By Sofia Cipriano
Photography by Faith Ho
- 14
- Howling in this Moment
By Elena Eiss
Art by Matthew Picoult
- 15
- Teeth
By Sophie O'Connor
Art by Georgina Domingo Alsina
- 16
- Texts from Momo World
By Ted Myers
Art by Ted Myers
- 18
- Seven-Second Infinity
By Ollie Braden

Dear Reader,

At this time in the year, one starts to think about escape—a dreamy kind of escape, from stuffy rooms into warming air and budding trees; and a more wishful kind to cope with the sense of unravelling that mounts as things continue to fall apart.

Our writers have escape on their minds this issue. They explore what it means to get away from an older version of oneself, and whether escape relies on the act of forgetting or of overcoming. They meditate on whether leaving things behind is forced or desired. Writers examine how far one can escape from generational roots, and depart from our current moment to introduce us to speculative worlds. Reportage this week follows a Princeton student, charged with assault during the encampment, in his effort to walk free.

Ruminating about escape can seem frivolous when we confront the realities of student life today: deportations, funding cuts, and attacks on free speech threaten our spaces of learning, and the livelihoods of our peers and ourselves. In this context, what use is flight when defiance requires us to stay firmly grounded? While remaining in the current moment is necessary, our writers see the need to think beyond immediate responses. Acting on the impulse to escape, they imagine alternatives to the reality we face today. When that reality no longer suits us, why not search for how to break free from it? When forces on a national scale try to narrow our future, why not dream of escape?

So long,

Frankie Solinsky Duryea and Alex Norbrook,
EICs

Masthead

Editors-in-Chief Alex Norbrook Frankie Solinsky Duryea	Second Look Associate Editors Sofia Cipriano Aina Marzia Joshua Yang
Publisher Ellie Diamond	Business Managers Nora Choi Vivian Clayton
Managing Editors Jonathan Dolce Sasha Rotko	Communications Manager Naomi Segel
Design Editor Sophia Macklin	Director of Outreach and Alumni Affairs Margo Mattes
Art Director Chas Brown	Historian Oliver Berke
Head Copy Editors Charlie Milberg Danny Flaherty	Web Editors Leah Shefferman Sarah Park
Senior Editors Mia Mann-Shafir Aiko Offner Cecile McWilliams Ivy Chen	Audiovisual Editors Mannix Beale-O'Brien Juna Brothers
Junior Editors Claire Beeli Nell Marcus Livia Shneider Narges Anzali Annie Wang Laila Hartman Sigall Gavin Stroud	Staff Creator Director Harper Vance
	Events Editor Amy Başkurt
	Social Chair Wendy Wang
	Trustees Alexander Wolff 1979 Katie Duggan 2019 Leif Haase 1987 Marc Fisher 1980 Robert Faggen 1982 Sharon Lowe 1985

This Week:

By Amy Başkurt

Hi everyone! Wow, I can't believe we only have a little over a week left of classes. It's crazy how fast this semester flew by...I'll keep this week's events brief, because we all have *so* much work to do. But, be sure to take a break along with some deep breaths, and enjoy the last few events of the school year!!

Performances

Three cheers for the sensational Nassling Talia Czuchlewski, who will be soon completing her **junior vocal recital**, which features works by Clara Schumann, Canteloube, Donizetti, Handel, and more. **April, 19th, 1pm, McAlpin Rehearsal Room in Woolworth**—be there, or be square!

Next, **April 17th, 18th, and 19th**, seniors Clara Toujas and

Faith Wagnermann present **Mesh**, their respective **senior dance works**. Through Mesh, Toujas and Wagnermann wish to embody the struggle in finding what it means to belong. **8:30pm in Hearst Dance Theater**—all three nights—come watch two brilliant shows.

Looking for something more writing-focused? Show up to the **2025 senior readings in poetry and screenwriting**. Seniors from the Program in Creative Writing will read from their works of poetry or screenplay, **April 21st at 4:30pm, in Chancellor Green Library**.

Talks, Colloquia, and...a Podcast Taping?

Wait, y'all, I'm *thrilled* for this next one. Princeton's Program

in Law and Normative Thinking is going to be hosting a **live taping of an episode of the podcast "Main Justice," followed by an audience Q&A session**. Join speakers Andrew Weissmann (NYU Law School) and Mary McCord (Georgetown Law School), **April 21st at 4:30pm, in McCosh 10** for this very cool event.

This next one is incredibly personal for us students. Show up to the **lecture "Threats to Universities and What We Can Do."** Discussing our current political scope is speaker Brandice Canes-Wrone—Professor of Political Science and Political Economics at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business. It'll be hosted in **Robertson 001, April 23rd from 4:30 - 6pm**.

Finally, the **Princeton Palestinian Studies Colloquium** presents a talk by Rice University's Professor Abdel Razzaq Takriti (who specializes in anticolonialism, revolutions, and the formation of the modern Arab world). Join Professor Takriti and the Colloquium on **April 23th, from 3 - 6:15pm, in Robertson 016**.

Thank y'all for reading this week. Get out there—engage eventfully!

Email Amy Başkurt at ab7955@princeton.edu with your event!

For advertisements, contact Ellie Diamond at ed7627@princeton.edu

Verbatims:

Overheard in East Pyne, 3rd floor
Poetry professor: "There are homeless people in this song. It's a very physical eroticism."

Overheard in the group chat
Clumsy junior: "Through a series of Rube Goldberg-esque events, I have flushed my entire wallet down a toilet."

Overheard at Terrace
Jewish white woman: "It's not racist in a way that harms anyone."

Overheard in Sakrid
Blondest guy ever: "I like the Nass. It's like, in between a newspaper and a magazine."

Overheard in Frist
Guy asking me to invest \$600: "Cryptocurrency is the future!"
Me: "I just feel like money is made up."
Same guy: "Money is made up by the government!"

Overheard in Cottage courtyard
Crypto enthusiast: "So what if I voted for a recession?"

Overheard in Whitman
Student: "I think my dad is funny in the way that Bill Cosby is funny."

Overheard in East Pyne
SLA professor: "No, you need to understand the reason I hate Ivan so much is because he reminds me the most of me."

Overheard in Fine Hall
Math professor: "It's like you're gonna have to go super Saiyan to visualize this...like level 17000 Saiyan...deep neural networks Saiyan...I'm just Saiyan."

Overheard at Late Meal
Math major: "What's a constant to a friend?"

Overheard in Mathey
A mistaken student: "What is it called? A birthing shower?"

Overheard on Cannon Green
Guy in big pants: "This would be a great place to have an encampment."

Submit to Verbatims

Email thenassauweekly@gmail.com

The *Nassau Weekly* is Princeton University's weekly news magazine and features news, op-eds, reviews, fiction, poetry and art submitted by students. *There is no formal membership of the Nassau Weekly and all are encouraged to attend meetings and submit writing and art. To submit, email your work to thenassauweekly@gmail.com by 10 p.m. on Thursday. Include your name, netid, word count, and title. We hope to see you soon!*

Read us: nassauweekly.com

Contact thenassauweekly@gmail.com

us: Instagram: @nassauweekly Twitter: @nassau_weekly

Join us: We meet on Mondays and Thursdays at 5 p.m. in Bloomberg 044!

About us:

Homecoming 1970

Coming to America, your dad found God and mine found Bruce Springsteen.

By IVY CHEN

1. Thinking of home your dad remembers mostly anger. Light warping off the metal walls of the slaughterhouse, resentment rising from the land like steam off hot water. Turning twenty and a tender wound. Told you once about the violence he fantasized about all those long teenage years. You stopped believing in sublimation around when you left the suburbs. In '09 your dad joined this immigrant church, bought the Bible and asked to be made anew. Brought you on Sundays to drown under a plastic tarp and learn about Jonah in the stomach of the whale. When you said Dad I don't want to go anymore he said God will save us all, look: He already saved me.

2. Coming to America, your dad found God and mine found Bruce Springsteen. I like to imagine him in the grad-school days, driving a shitty Toyota around San Diego, eating at the cheap places off the highway, marveling at the canned-food aisles. The car radio barely worked, all static, but if you were patient, waited for noise to blur into music, you could hear Springsteen sing about how it feels to be on fire.

3. You stopped picking up your dad's calls so now they all go to voicemail. The words halting, heavy, listen to them the way we

used to X out mosquito bites, wait for the flash of pain. Heat, then relief. Same ending, every time. Okay Call soon Okay. You don't, instead breathe in your anger. I think of lungs bitter with tar, bloody like ink in water. Meanwhile your mom takes good care of the old dog, the mutt with the sad eyes, the one your dad can't bear to look at when she drags in a limp body, trailing saliva over the kitchen floor, pros- trates before it, waits to be loved.

4. Remembering childhood my dad tells me of summers playing in the forest, landscapes that were sparse, hostile. Watching the older boys toss rocks at passing trains, dare each other to lie across the tracks, press their cheeks to the rail and feel metal and light pass right through them. Ablation of the baby fat and the old fears. At eight, maybe nine, let loose with a neighbor's son. Turns out earth can hold its resentment just like you did. Did you know there are still landmines in rural parts of []? Nothing to stop [] from going right through a body, to stop little boys from []. Walked home in the rain knowing it could have been him.

5. When you say your dad still has nightmares, what you mean is that you don't know if you'll ever go back again. Picture sun-baked slaughterhouse, tender fruit, bitter rain. Mouth open. So many things I want to believe in. Level landmines into sidewalk, let all the old anger dissolve like steam, cough up blood and call home. Skin taut, my father at nine understood the boundary between body and explosion as impossible, permeable. Not much difference in the end, til he left so I could grow up on steadier ground. The night my dad returned alone he dreamed he was running through a forest, holding in his hands first a bomb, then the shuddering, tentative body of a baby. Beneath his feet the grass pushed up like something birthing itself. Like teeth forcing through pink gum. When I lost my first [] I spit it into his waiting palm and asked for nothing in return. All we wanted was faith.



aubade for egg time-lapse

after Alan Michael Parker

<i>it starts as a rash</i>	hungover past the yellow line	i blur into a stroller on the far platform	we threw out anything remotely half-used:	my bedsheets lay limp, like bedsheets
egg whites crease on themselves at every intersection	your basement smells rotten for a week	<i>this is how the world flattens:</i>	everything-turn ed conversation fodder. yeast.	my mother dreams of me as a dead woman
flies drown in an unending yolk	for my viewing pleasure	i watch us over and over	and then the trash gets taken out and then the trash gets taken out	because i was too hungry to stay awake
<i>come, i'm dying to tell someone how my double eyelids are cheating on me</i>	and i've been living on the edge too. only you know	how water drags the rust from our metal	and trips over the edge of the flat, flat earth	in a month there will never have been anything to say
come, water is rippling like a bedsheet over the hudson	the meat between thumb and forefinger is the best place to practice kissing	<i>no, i can say this better: the bedsheet rippled, water-like:</i>	like all the wasted suns before it	except there was never anything to say

By ZIYI YAN

Partly Cloudy

A Nass writer confronts a riddle of imagining and searches for its solution.

By VIVIAN CLAYTON

Every alarm I set includes either the digit 3 or 7, and I frequently knock on wood (or my head when I can't find any). Still, most of my thoughts are practical, founded on reason rather than a premise of fate. My recent rediscovery of a childhood riddle seemed, at first, to lack any practical origins. But then I did some thinking.

The exact wording of the riddle remains unclear, as it is based on hazy memories formed when I was five and could not be confirmed by my Google search attempt. It goes like this:

You're dreaming. There is a scary castle in the distance, but your curiosity outweighs your fears, so you race towards the ominous fortress. As you run, a storm begins brewing beyond the horizon. There is no turning back now. What started as a daunting exploration has become a search for refuge—especially because there is a dragon chasing you. Finally, you come upon the massive castle doors, and enter the small, dark foyer with nothing but a set of stone spiral stairs. You rush to ascend as fast as possible, but after hundreds of steps you start to falter. After one thousand steps, you stumble onto a landing with three doors. From behind the leftmost you hear snakes hissing, from behind the middle you hear a chain-saw, so you choose the ostensibly safe,



silent rightmost door. But once you enter, the door locks! There are no windows, no weapons, no way to open the door or penetrate the heavy stone walls surrounding you. How do you escape?

The plot would change slightly with every playground retelling, each storyteller free to embellish the story with a second dragon, a fourth door, or another 10,000 stairs. The riddler succeeded, there on the playground, only if the listener posed countless questions at the end—what were the odds of a lightning strike? Were the walls soundproof? Were the snakes in the other room willing to form an alliance?

The beauty lies in the simplicity of the answer: wake up. This is a dream, silly. From the very first line, which is often misheard or ignored, the storyteller reveals the ultimate escape—one that is not only completely within the listener's control, but also renders every barrier created by the collective imagination utterly illegitimate.

This simplicity is one of the traits of childhood I miss most. My nostalgia is less a yearning to return to childhood, than a wish to regain the uncomplicated agency of a child. Kids may not decide when dinner is put on the table, but they are rarely tasked with making the meal—instead they spend the extra hour choreographing a dance for after-dinner entertainment, or impressing friends with riddles. While their choices are limited, children are not held back by thorough consideration before making a decision, leaving room for spontaneous bravery. Young ones do not pause to take out an umbrella when they see a storm coming. They sprint towards the castle.

The riddle resurfaced in my consciousness late into the night in the midst of an intense midterms week. To combat my intensifying

drowsiness, I took yet another study break, absentmindedly scrolling through my camera roll. Some of the pressure in my chest released as I studied a photo of my brother at 3 years old, posing just the way I had taught him to—one hand resting on a popped hip, tongue sticking out. My smile widened as I examined an image of my sister and I dancing in our childhood home in matching princess-style gowns. As my fingers touched the glass to brighten the photo, I swore I felt our joy seeping through the screen, accompanied by an utter absence of hesitation.

At the sight of the next photo, my cheeks fell. In it, I stand alone, facing a tree with my head leaning on the trunk, sporting a precious pink dress. The image captures the beginnings of a round of hide-and-seek. My sister hides strategically beyond the frame as I finish counting to 30. I should be running any second now, but in the photo I stand frozen, my eyes squeezed shut, my mind filled with a stream of ascending numbers.

I shut off my phone, brushed my teeth, and went to sleep.

The next day, my friend and I set off for a stroll and coffee to break up the monotonous hours of studying. En route, the conversation turned to my childhood pastime of telling riddles. Expecting this to be a relatable experience, I started telling the first riddle that came to mind—You're dreaming. There is a scary castle in the distance—which once attracted crowds on the elementary school playground.

Her failure to recognize the pivotal first line showed me that I'd found a proper audience. So, I proceeded with the rest of the tale. The story felt strange on my tongue, prompting vivid memories—the distinct smell of wood chips, the subtle sassiness of my step as I raced to find new classmates to

bamboozle. I had an inkling this recollection had come to me for a reason.

"Do you give up?" I nagged, washing the strange feeling down with the final sip of my comparatively grown-up coffee. I revealed the easy answer, to her frustration, and we returned to our seats on the third floor reading room. I took out my planner and stared at my to-do list, waiting. For what exactly, I don't know.

I often struggle in this static state. Exasperation over my incapacitation only fuels further adrenaline pumping, muscle tensing, and head spinning, all untethered to specific tasks. The pressure to adequately complete assignments is hard enough without wasting additional energy worrying about why I have yet to start them.

I find myself entranced by my lengthy to-do list, quite like the younger version of myself continuously counting in a frozen frame, or the listener of the riddle searching for clues in lines that merely feign importance. I remain petrified in the face of the dark storm up ahead, convinced there is nothing to be done. The feeling is only ever momentarily debilitating, but in the moment it always feels so dramatic.

Luckily, this pressure subsides as quickly as it builds. A brief stroll through my camera roll inspires me to embody the spontaneous bravery of a child. Taking a walk with someone I love reminds me that what often feels oppressive is no more tangible than a dream—it is futile to panic over finding a way out.

No more counting. It's time to open my eyes.

The Nassau Weekly can never escape from the ascension of Vivian Clayton.

transversion

Building a whole body and filling it with love.

By CALLISTO LIM

I look at my hands and I think about / being told that they will begin to shrink while on hormones / and I worry that I am losing myself in this place. / I worry that I am losing the way that I love / and the way I hold the people around me. / I worry / that I am turning into someone I do not recognize / someone I do not know / —someone I could never hope to love.

Since starting hormone replacement therapy in August, I have wept and writhed and withered more than I knew possible. I have been rendered into the sensation of hot iron burning through my skin. I have clutched my arms against my chest and willed breath back into my lungs. I have sat on benches and rained tears onto handwritten letters, dabbing away the blotting ink with my wet sleeve. And yet I have laughed louder than I knew I had the ability to, tasted happiness more clear and sweet than any I have ever known. I have loved more ruinously than the sum of all the love I have ever given. I love my sisters, I love my parents, I love my friends, I love the purple string lights I have hung up over my bed and the long nights spent in the company of others and the nights cut short by one too many shots. I am overwhelmed at all of the new colors life has taken and I feel them all rush by me, sweeping through my hair and drying my eyes.

a non-exhaustive list of new experiences

- Created a new nighttime ritual: NyQuil, Benadryl, 150 milligrams of Spironolactone and 8 milligrams of Estradiol. Formulated the perfect warm honey-tea from the kettle I keep in my room and the jar of Playa Bowls honey and the dining hall Lipton; I take a mouthful and swallow it all.
- Looked in the mirror and touched newly-grown cheekbones, tugged at gathering cushions around my eyes; these eyebags don't look like they used to.
- Felt my stomach turn into iron filings, felt myself sway in another's arms as if a magnet was brought close. Closed my eyes and felt my organs rearranging to better accommodate this liquid love. Learned what butterflies are supposed to feel like.
- Braced for the silence of a needle, watched the nurse draw two vials of blood from the vein. Found that the veins in my left arm do not lend themselves to being bled. Filled six-and-counting clear capsules and learned to read blood test results.
- Understood the gravity of grief, felt the plane of my space-time warped by the thing dense and feathered, felt it snag and tear all the way down. Curled my mass into fetal form and sank into my mattress, a neutron star plunging through the floor.
- Discovered a heaving anxiety, one so viscous that I cannot breathe through it. Learned how it feels to have it lifted, to let it wash over me and remain standing.

- Am destroyed and choose to get up, choose to reconstitute myself in perpetuity.

At this moment, I have been on estrogen for over seven months. I have been creating myself, every second of every minute of every hour of every day, milligram by milligram, for seven months. And I am overjoyed by this fact, I am overjoyed that I know that I am responsible for the construction of my body, that every hair follicle and blemish is there by design. My friend once said that there is so much love in the body of someone who chose to put it there, and I find that through every nighttime ritual, through every pill swallowed, I am creating a version of myself whom I can love purely and unashamedly, and who can love—truly love—unbridled and infinitely. I find that I am changing into a version of myself which I cannot reconcile with who I was a year ago.

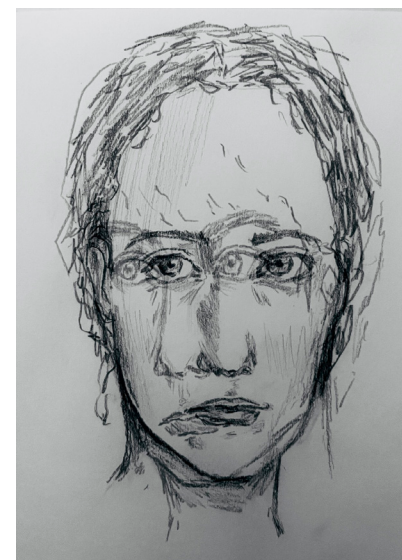
Love, then, came in teaspoons and syringes—measured, calculated, only under certain conditions. Now, love comes in shipments. It comes in casks, flows like pirate rum. My hands may shrink and my world may shatter, but every night I choose this transformation and all that comes with it.

I have come to realize that I was not whole before I began this process. I have always been someone who struggled with emotionality. I could never identify how I was feeling beyond recognizing moments in which I should be feeling good, should be feeling bad, should be laughing from my chest or crying on a shoulder. My life had become a series of stills. Portraits of

a distantly familiar figure sitting in my classes, driving to my home, sitting at my desk, sleeping in my bed; freeze frames of a mouth—my mouth?—open in what could be laughter or scorn or nothing at all. And I took this numbness, this indiscriminate flattening, to be normal.

But it's changed, now. I spend hours laughing until my stomach hurts, hours staring at the ceiling and feeling tears streak across my cheeks. I have learned what it is to be consumed fully by emotion, to be devoured by these jagged waves and taste the salt on my tongue. Simply put, I have started to feel so, so much more. And yes, this means that I am devastated by things and devastated by people in ways that I have never been before, but I have never felt love warmer than I do now, never smiled as wide as I have in these past few months.

I feel alive, like I am experiencing life the way that I was meant to. Like I am at once eroded and rebuilt by the sand and salt and sea that runs between my legs, every wave leaving a new shoreline. I am made anew and I am made whole. And this whole, I think, can be loved. Will be loved. Must be loved.





Pantoum, (pantoum) pantoum.

By UKYUNG (HEIDI) NAM

Yes to the catchup, I saw your text,
I'm just not sure about which day
I'm free yet, but I'll reply soon
No, of course. No worries. Looking forward!

But I'm just not sure about which day
My hands will not be cold when I touch
Warm palms of nice people who look past
The sudden press of snowy death, ghosts

Of my fingertips, they lost their way in the cold
That's internal to my love, my hug, my kiss,
The ghost neighbor holds my past news, she frowns,
With periodic concern that makes me feel commonly guilty

When I hug, or kiss, or love myself
For cradling too much pity, neighing,
I stymie, with concern over my bones, growing cold
On the shelf, but can I love another when you cry, inside,

All the time, I bracket you filly foal on this blue droop day
(The sun is film, flash, yellow but your horseheart wooden, dark, houses
A pickle, hiding limp tears you hold for everything external, womb, grasses,
That live and breathe to stink the next second, doubt, atoms)

The sky is film flash yellow with fungible floaters,
Undramatic splinters that make you tear up just a bit, again,
(About the blade that broke the next second as life split,
Breath into inhale and exhale, Xy and Flo) Ah-Em. Two complementaries don't leak. They

Share space as good neighbors. Undramatic, alive but cleft.
Unsure about the next opening. But. Looking forward. To the calendar's
Unentered, white space. So. Catch which day? Breathe, don't leak, I'll reply, of course,
When I catch up to where my cold tips flash fission yellow.

The Trial

In February, David Piegaro '25 stood trial for allegedly assaulting a police officer during last year's encampment. Can we know what truly happened?

By **SOFIA CIPRIANO**

DAVID PIEGARO himself recorded the video that played over a dozen times at his trial. Chants from a pro-Palestine protest on Princeton's Cannon Green echo in the background of the 27-second clip, timestamped April 29, 7:46 p.m. Just an hour before, several student protesters were arrested for occupying the Greek-revival style Clio Hall; protestors and Princeton Department of Public Safety (DPS) officers still swarmed the vicinity. In the video, Piegaro, a junior at Princeton, follows three men: Professor Zia Mian, in a button-down shirt with a backpack slung over one shoulder; Assistant Vice President for Public Safety Kenneth Strother, in a dark suit; and Professor Max Weiss, in a short-sleeved navy top, arms crossed. The group walks past Clio, and toward the identical Whig Hall. Piegaro, still recording, ascends the white marble steps along with the trio. At the top of the steps, Piegaro approaches Strother's right side, and asks, "What's your name, sir, and position here?" Without responding, Strother opens the door to Whig, letting Mian and Weiss inside, and blocks Piegaro from entering. Here, the camera angle tilts toward the ground. The video is shaky, but Piegaro's voice is clear: "Don't touch me, man, don't touch me." Strother's arm reaches out, and the video cuts.

A few seconds later, Piegaro lay on his stomach at the bottom of Whig. Police body cam footage records Piegaro telling an officer, "He threw me down the stairs." Later that day, Piegaro was charged with aggravated assault on a police officer, trespassing, obstruction of law, and resisting arrest. His charges were ultimately reduced; on February 3 and 4, nine months after the incident, Piegaro stood trial for simple assault and trespassing at the Princeton Municipal Court.

A year's worth of investigations and two days of trial proceedings struggled to answer the question: Did Piegaro fall down the stairs after trying to push past Strother, or was he thrown? The blurred videos became a sort of Rorschach test; both lawyers insisted on their respective witnesses' version of events as they walked through the same 27 seconds, over and over again.

PIEGARO, WHO HAS close-cropped dark hair and light-brown eyes, is older than the average Princeton student; he was born in 1997 in Trenton, New Jersey. After two semesters at Brandeis University, Piegaro dropped out to serve in the U.S. Army for three years, where he was an intelligence analyst with top-secret clearance. He spent another three years in the New Jersey National Guard. Piegaro

was accepted at Princeton, where he is a member of the class of 2025, as part of the University's veteran transfer student initiative. He will be working for the investment bank Citigroup post-graduation; when I met with him, he often wore a suit, darting between job interviews. He has written for The Daily Princetonian and participates in Jewish life on campus.

Princeton's pro-Palestine encampment was in full swing when Piegaro decided to document the protests as a "citizen journalist," as he texted in a group chat with several of his friends on April 29. While Piegaro describes himself as "pro-Israel," he maintains that he was neither a protestor nor a counter-protestor. (Piegaro's X account includes documentation of several demonstrations, one as far back as February 2019, which captures an anti-Trump rally.)

Piegaro was distraught and indignant following his arrest. Over the weeks and months that followed, he told and retold his story to friends, University administrators, and professors. When I met him for the first time, on a September afternoon at Frist Campus Center, he wore dark sunglasses and swiveled his head periodically. It struck me that he was both anxious about being overheard and anxious to share his story.

IF PIEGARO WERE TO summarize the events of April 29 in a sentence, the result would perhaps resemble the opening of Kafka's *The Trial*: Someone must have slandered P., for without having done anything wrong, he was arrested one fine afternoon.

Piegaro's confusion upon his arrest was compounded by his alignment with the University's protest policies. In the months prior, Piegaro "monitored communications" on a group chat operated by the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). He sent the University information about Princeton's pro-Palestine encampment, collaborating with prominent campus conservative Matthew Wilson '24. In a letter to several University officials condemning Piegaro's arrest sent on May 2, Wilson—who later testified at trial—wrote that Piegaro's information "played a large role in Public Safety officers being on hand for the beginning of the protest on April 25 and being able to quickly halt attempts to pitch tents in violation of University rules."

On the morning of April 29, Piegaro noticed pro-Palestinian protest signs as he was walking up campus. Intent on documenting the protests, he returned to the scene in the early evening.

Piegaro took his first photo of the event at 6:07 p.m. Shortly after, protestors took over Clio, hanging keffiyehs and a Palestinian flag outside the window of the building. Piegaro continued to shoot photos and video footage. As DPS tried to clear the protestors, Piegaro used his prox—a key card that allows students access to campus buildings—to enter Whig and walk up to the second floor.

Around 7:45 p.m., back outside among the protestors, Piegaro was filming when a conversation caught his eye. Piegaro recognized History Professor Max Weiss, founder of Princeton's Faculty for

Justice in Palestine, speaking to a man in a black suit who looked to him like a University administrator (but who he later learned was Chief Strother). Weiss and Professor Zia Mian served as “informal liaisons” between pro-Palestine student protestors and administrators on April 29, according to Weiss; Mian, who teaches in Princeton’s School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA), recalled acting in a “personal capacity” with a goal of supporting students’ free speech.

Piegaro began to record their conversation, which Strother informed him was private. Piegaro continued to film, following the group as they walked away from him. At the top of the Whig steps, Piegaro asked Strother for his name. He received no response.

Piegaro tried to enter the building after Mian and Weiss, but Strother blocked him. The moment that followed was, for him, a blur. According to Piegaro, Strother grabbed him and began to arrest him, and then, out of nowhere, threw him down the stairs.

“I remember being puzzled, and I was thinking, How could I be arrested? I’m not doing anything, he’s not a cop,” Piegaro stated in court testimony. “I remember this questioning moment, like I don’t get it, and then I’m going down the stairs.”

Seconds after his arrest, Piegaro was remarkably composed. He calmly told an officer, “I got thrown down the stairs. He touched me. I was trying to walk through the door.”

Piegaro went to the hospital after his arrest, where he was diagnosed with a concussion and bruised ribs. In the health center lobby the next day, police confiscated the keys to his apartment—as a nontraditional student, Piegaro lives in continuous housing at the Lawrence apartments with his girlfriend—and informed him that he was banned

from campus. Piegaro was not let back into his apartment for about two weeks; he stayed with friends off-campus, and then, briefly, in the off-campus Chabad house hosted by Rabbi Eitan Webb. He was not let back on campus for

months—much longer than the Clio Hall protestors arrested that day. As his friends took their exams and looked forward to the summer, Piegaro struggled to find housing, vindicate himself, and hold his life together.



David Piegaro stands at the entrance of Whig Hall, where his altercation with Assistant Vice President for Public Safety Kenneth Strother took place (photo by Faith Ho)

ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, the courtroom of Princeton’s Municipal Courthouse was divided into two. On the left side of the room sat the defense: Piegaro, his parents and girlfriend, several friends, and his lawyer, Gerald Krovatin. On the right sat the prosecution, including Strother, a line of DPS officers, and Prosecutor Christopher Koutsouris. Judge John McCarthy III ’69 presided over the trial. McCarthy is also currently trying the 13 student protestors who were arrested on April 29 at Clio Hall; the case is scheduled to go to trial on April 12, 2025.

Strother was called to testify first, wearing a black suit like the one he wore on April 29. In a monotone, matter-of-fact voice, he reconstructed the day’s events. After leaving an administrative meeting upon hearing that students had occupied Clio Hall and refused to leave, he spent around two hours on Cannon Green, communicating with protestors via amplifier. While Strother is a police officer, he also frequently attends to administrative duties; on April 29, he wore neither a uniform nor a body camera, which, he testified, was not unusual.

As the situation began to wind down, Strother entered a conversation with Weiss and Mian on Cannon Green. Around 7:45, he noticed that the group was being approached by a person with a cell phone. In the courtroom, when asked to identify the man in question, he gestured to his left, where Piegaro was seated.

Strother informed Piegaro that theirs was a private conversation; Piegaro asserted his right to be present, citing the public nature of the space. Strother then decided to relocate to Whig Hall to finish their conversation in private.

When the group reached the top of the stairs, Strother let Weiss and Mian into the building. He

remembers telling Piegaro that the building was closed. When Piegaro continued to push into Strother, he took hold of Piegaro and began to arrest him. As Strother was calling for backup, Piegaro pulled away and fell down the stairs. As Strother later testified in court: “I felt like I was about to lose my balance, and I really didn’t feel like falling down the stairs, I let go of my grasp, and the defendant fell down a couple steps.” Strother recalled feeling “uncomfortable and surprised,” but was not injured.

“I was scared of falling,” he said.

During cross-examination, Krovatin asked Strother if he ever held Piegaro horizontally, “like an open pair of scissors,” as one witness — who remained anonymous to Krovatin and Piegaro until December of last year — claimed. Strother responded: “Absolutely not.”

(When contacted for an interview, Strother redirected the Nass to the Princeton University Office of Communications, which declined to comment.)

Afterward, Koutsouris called a few more witnesses to the stand, including Mian, who testified that Piegaro “did push the chief” as he tried to enter Whig. But he clarified that “this was not an attempt to attack the chief.”

DPS Security Officer Delvy Frias, who saw the altercation from the foot of the Whig steps, described the encounter ambivalently, saying “they both dropped each other.” Strother, Mian, and Frias’s accounts were not entirely consistent. After the first day of the trial, the 27-second clip seemed more muddled.

AFTER STROTHER’S testimony, Judge McCarthy called for a short break. Those observing and participating in the trial, including several DPS officers and Princeton students, filtered in and

out of the courtroom. At one point, McCarthy began to banter with a group of male students in suits — Piegaro’s friends, seated behind him. McCarthy asked the group what they studied and which eating clubs they were a part of. A chorus of “Ivys” and “Cottages” followed. He smiled as he quizzed the group on eating club trivia and shared that he used to be in Ivy. Later, I thought of this encounter again when, after all testimonies were concluded, McCarthy asked both lawyers to brief him on a number of questions before he finalized his decision, including: “Does Princeton want its students to have criminal records?”

At these moments, the line between the University, the prosecution, and the Princeton Municipal Court seemed unclear. While Strother is a sworn police officer — making him accountable to the County Prosecutor’s office and State Attorney General — he is also a University administra-

tor for any kind of basic fact-finding or truth-finding.” Piegaro referred to the University’s failure to provide the court with prox records, which his lawyer repeatedly requested to try to vindicate Piegaro’s trespassing charge.

Princeton’s Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies (ODUS) and DPS conducted parallel investigations of the incident. Piegaro’s ODUS investigation, led by University Investigator Jamie Sandman, found Piegaro “responsible” for violating University policy on October 6; Piegaro was put on disciplinary probation. While the University does not comment on specific investigations, University spokesman Michael Hotchkiss said “discipline processes are entirely separate from criminal proceedings.” He clarified that “the University is not a party to — and does not intervene in — criminal proceedings,” suggesting that the ODUS investigation, and the

the fact that DPS waited months to get official statements from witnesses, and did not interview key witnesses at all. According to legal documents and a letter authored by Princeton Records Coordinator Linda DeShaw, the DPS’s evidence collection did not include statements from Weiss, Mian, or Piegaro, among others. (DPS Detective Martin Krzywicki did not respond to the Nass’s request for comment in time for publication.)

THROUGHOUT THE trial, Piegaro kept glancing toward the back of the courtroom as if he was looking for someone — the “scissors witness,” as Sarah Kwartler was exclusively known by Piegaro until last fall. Kwartler, who kept a cardigan pulled around her as she testified, is a grad student in molecular biology. She’s almost always in her lab, which is why she was late to the trial. (Kwartler did not respond to repeated requests for a direct interview.)

That day, Kwartler attended a class at Dillon Gym that ended at 7:30 p.m. Afterward, she walked up campus, circling behind Whig and Clio. Around 7:45, she was directly adjacent to Whig. She saw Piegaro following a group of men with his phone; she kept walking, but turned back when she heard shouts. Kwartler remembers seeing “a large man in a suit, who I now know is Chief Strother, holding David horizontally, kind of like a pair of scissors.” She saw Strother drop Piegaro, who then rolled down the steps. That night, Kwartler sent a video she managed to capture of the incident to a group chat. Rabbi Webb, who was on the group chat, reached out to her to ask her to type up a statement, which she did, shortly after midnight. At this point, Krovatin handed her a piece of paper with that statement for her to read aloud. As Kwartler read, Koutsouris emphatically shook his



Bodycam footage of David Piegaro’s arrest, shown at his trial (photo by Frankie Solinsky Duryea)

tor. Piegaro told me that it often seemed to him that the State and the University were on the same team. “It’s been really upsetting to see the University back Strother up every step of the way,” Piegaro said. He added that the administration has “refused to be helpful

University more broadly, had no bearing on the State’s case.

Meanwhile, DPS investigations, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office, provided the bedrock of the State’s case. Piegaro called DPS’s investigation into question, citing

head.

In cross-examination, Koutsouris interrogated Kwartler about her history with Piegaro. The pair met on Hinge in 2022 and went on two dates together. According to her, they had no substantial interactions past that point: the first time Kwartler saw Piegaro after 2022, he was being held like a pair of scissors by a large man in a black suit.

WHILE PROFESSOR Max Weiss's name was invoked several times throughout the trial, he himself was absent. Unlike most witnesses to Piegaro's arrest, Weiss, unencumbered by legal proceedings, spoke freely when I met with him in February.

At around 7:45 on April 29, Weiss noticed a man standing a few yards away from himself, Mian, and Strother. Weiss had never seen him before and wasn't sure if he was a student. Given his experience observing pro-Israel activists at Palestine solidarity events, Weiss assumed Piegaro was counterprotesting.

Weiss described Piegaro's interruption of their conversation as "particularly arrogant." As Weiss was entering Whig, he saw Piegaro trying to force his way into the building. A few seconds later, he saw Piegaro "wriggle himself out of Ken's arms as if to throw himself away," at which point Piegaro fell.

Weiss does not recall Strother picking Piegaro up off the floor and dropping him. "I have heard this narrative about Piegaro being held up and thrown down the steps. It's entirely ludicrous," he said.

Weiss himself said that his memory of the event is not perfect — nobody's memory is. (He at one point told me that Strother was wearing a polo shirt that identified him as a member of DPS. Video evidence shows that Strother was wearing a suit.)

Piegaro and Weiss, who disagree on Israel-Palestine issues, also hold opposing narratives regarding Piegaro's encounter with Strother. Piegaro told me the incident was one of "obvious police brutality."

Strother, he claimed, "used

he known for "challenging authority." The defense framed Piegaro as an upright student who helped the University uphold its protesting policies, only for the University to turn on him after he was victimized by a DPS officer.



David Piegaro and his lawyer, Gerald Krovatin, sitting before Judge John McCarthy III, in Princeton's Municipal Courthouse (photo by Frankie Solinsky Duryea)

excessive force and violated the Attorney General's guidelines for police conduct in New Jersey, and then lied about it all and overcharged me in a totally insane way."

Weiss suggested that Piegaro has a victim complex. Framing the event as an instance of police brutality is "offensive to me, as someone who is well aware of the brutality of police violence in this country," he said. It may seem ironic for a white, pro-Israel veteran to accuse a Black officer of police brutality after he himself initiated their encounter.

Weiss's characterization of Piegaro deviates from his friend's accounts. Mr. Krovatin called several character witnesses to the stand. Abhishek Kumar, Piegaro's friend from the army, testified that the latter did not have a reputation for aggressiveness. As William Nash '25 put it, "David does not have an aggressive bone in his body," nor is

exhibited "poor judgment in an intense moment" by walking into Strother's arm, McCarthy said that his actions did not amount to criminal recklessness.

Piegaro was relieved after the verdict — after months of legal turmoil, he has finally been cleared of criminal charges. Months ago, Piegaro filed an internal affairs complaint against Strother with the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office. Now that his criminal trial is over, the complaint can move forward. "I'm really hopeful that the Mercer County prosecutor's office will do a thorough investigation and there will be some accountability," he said.

On April 3, Strother was awarded the University's President's Achievement for demonstrating excellence and integrity on the job. The University and Koutsouris both declined to comment on the verdict.

"I want an apology," said Piegaro, for what he has described as the worst year of his life.

McCarthy, for his part, suggested that Piegaro apologize to Strother. "Sir, I hope you take this as a lesson — I think an apology would be appropriate," he said.

As he was delivering the decision, McCarthy mused on the strictures of the New Jersey legal code; in Scotland, judges may rule "not proven" — a middle ground between "guilty" and "not guilty." State v. Piegaro, he suggested, falls into this category.

Addressing Piegaro, McCarthy paused for a moment. "You're not guilty," he said. "But don't do it again."

This article was edited and fact-checked as part of the Nassau Weekly's journalism section, Second Look. Please submit corrections to thenassauweekly@gmail.com

"THIS CASE IS A GOOD example of the way that several different people can look at the same event, and come away, months later, with completely different recollections of what they saw — and more importantly, what they think they saw," said Krovatin in his final statement. Most witnesses' accounts, except Kwartler's, were first documented months after the incident. The backdrop of the pro-Palestine protests and the University's shadow hung over the proceedings, creating further ambiguity.

By the end of court proceedings, Piegaro was only being considered for simple assault. His trespassing charge was dropped; as video evidence shows, Piegaro never entered Whig.

On April 1, Judge McCarthy ruled Piegaro not guilty, saying that the state did not prove, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Piegaro intended to harm Strother. While Piegaro

Howling in This Moment after “Howl” (1956) by Allen Ginsburg

By ELENA EISS

I saw the best minds of my generation
locked-in scribbling syllables at desks
in the basement C floor of Firestone library
covered in a lifetime's layer of dust,
who skipped last month's Labyrinth poetry readings
by Komunyakaa & Hayes to puzzle over problem sets
& so missed the audience's awkward jawdropper
questions about race & poverty responded to but politely
unanswered,
who showed for the free Chick-fil-A at Clio convenings
to gorge on chicken strips soggy & cheese pasta
& paper plates when the rest ran out but left
before Kevin Roberts could tell us if we should burn it all or
not,
who stopped reading even the headlines off news sites
in favor of gleaning snatches of the rest
of the globe in phone calls with Mom & Pop
& in the 'gram's short-form drain rot & Barstool stories,
who whisper inner shouts to only closest confidants
when they begin to doubt whether three rabbis,
two flags, the contents of a haggadah, and Naftali Bennett
walk into a lecture hall is just a bad joke,
who swear all campus needs is for students to go out more,
loosen a little up, take Thursday Friday Saturday night

as a break and then maybe they'll be ready to think
outside themselves in a non-destructive non-disruptive kind
of way,
who choke on obligations as tacky as saltines
that they served themselves at a time when they had less
to worry about now set aside to fester
to address the paper soup & thesis salad on their plate,
who weep rivers and lakes in feral, transmorphic dreams
where they play Atlas, except Earth
has shattered and its shards slash mangle their sad hands
& so they live their lives on mute & Shrug,
who cannot dream anymore because they cannot sleep
anymore, so wrapped in worry that they shiver,
sharp obituary of the days' failures to rest beneath
their heads where there used to be pillows of wings,
who would stand at campus frontlines in defiance of their
schools setting fire
to values more flammable than endowments if not for the
warning
of Mahmoud & Rumeysa: this moment is not kind
to counterculture, to culture, to all who counter
the narrowing ideals of those who don't
have to decide what outweighs the ease of nothing.

Teeth

H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331
H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331
H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331
H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331
H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331

Maybe some things *do* hurt more than pulling teeth.

By SOPHIE O'CONNOR

Once in a moment of definite irrationality and maybe even mild terror, I scrawled in jagged and angry

letters that I wished to pull all my teeth out. Only a month later, I look back at that girl with a vague sense of confusion, as if a cloud had settled between me and her, and now her thoughts are all hazy to me.

I do recall, however, that this toothless fantasy was not some perverse dream of mine, nor was

it some unique method of counterculture in a defiant college-indie-girl way. In fact, looking back, it's almost unnerving how child-like this desire was; like a petulant kid throwing away a toy it wanted gone, the removal of teeth suggested the exodus of the unclean and distasteful aspects of myself.

The most plausible explanation for why it was specifically my teeth that had to go is that the life cycle of the teeth seemed inherently poetic, and I was romanced by the idea of a tangible manifestation of what I was going through at the time. The same was true of me in 2nd grade; I recall myself twisting my teeth and rocking them until they hung on by just a thread of my gums, and then with joy, I'd watch them fall out. There was pride in my gapped smile, and satisfaction in the physical proof of my growing-up. Pulling out my adult teeth was a slightly corrupt version of the same concept, and I reveled in the macabre of it all.

Lately, I find myself being drawn to these former daydreams—not with any particular feelings of empathy, but some liminal feeling wavering between pity and nostalgia. I watch these imaginings with the same fascination and revulsion as those videos of people getting their pimples popped, revering in their discomfort which so clearly morphs into relief. I see myself clinging to cold metal pliers, yanking each tooth with relentless focus, running my tongue over the craters left behind.

In retrospect, it seems as though I was struggling with the object permanence of it all; the unpleasant truth that I have passed this developmental marker, and I can't shove my thoughts where I can't see or hear them and thus pretend they don't exist. Did I think that

yanking my teeth out would allow for a second set of adult teeth to come in? Perhaps—this thought is not so irrational. I was begging for a return to a clean slate, an opportunity I had squandered at the ripe age of eight. I wanted to go back to the period in my life without this so-called “thought” permanence, where something could happen, and my brain would instantly dismiss it instead of latching on. My toothless daydreams were nothing but a means, or maybe an excuse, to whisper sweet nothings to myself. Rocking myself back and forth, I could take solace in the idea that the things I was so worried about didn't exist at all. I was settling in the dull pain of “certitudes” that were really nothing but the most mendacious propaganda.

It's not so easy to see where things start. I don't know when my mind began to fixate on my most human moments and use them as daggers in a relentless crusade against myself. I don't know when I began to think that avoiding topics meant that I could pretend they weren't there, that if I could pretend, I didn't see them, I could lie and say they never existed. I think of all the guys I never told I liked, the fights I never picked with my friends. All the things in life that I address with circumlocution, as if tiptoeing around the subject will stop its inevitable eruption.

It's also not so easy to see where things end. I confess I have no idea when the girl-who-wanted-to-pull-her-teeth-out became this separate persona of mine, so unfamiliar to me that I have begun to refer to her in third person. I wish I had an answer, maybe if only to hold it to myself like an amulet in times of distress. Even so, it's nice to feel the distance between us.

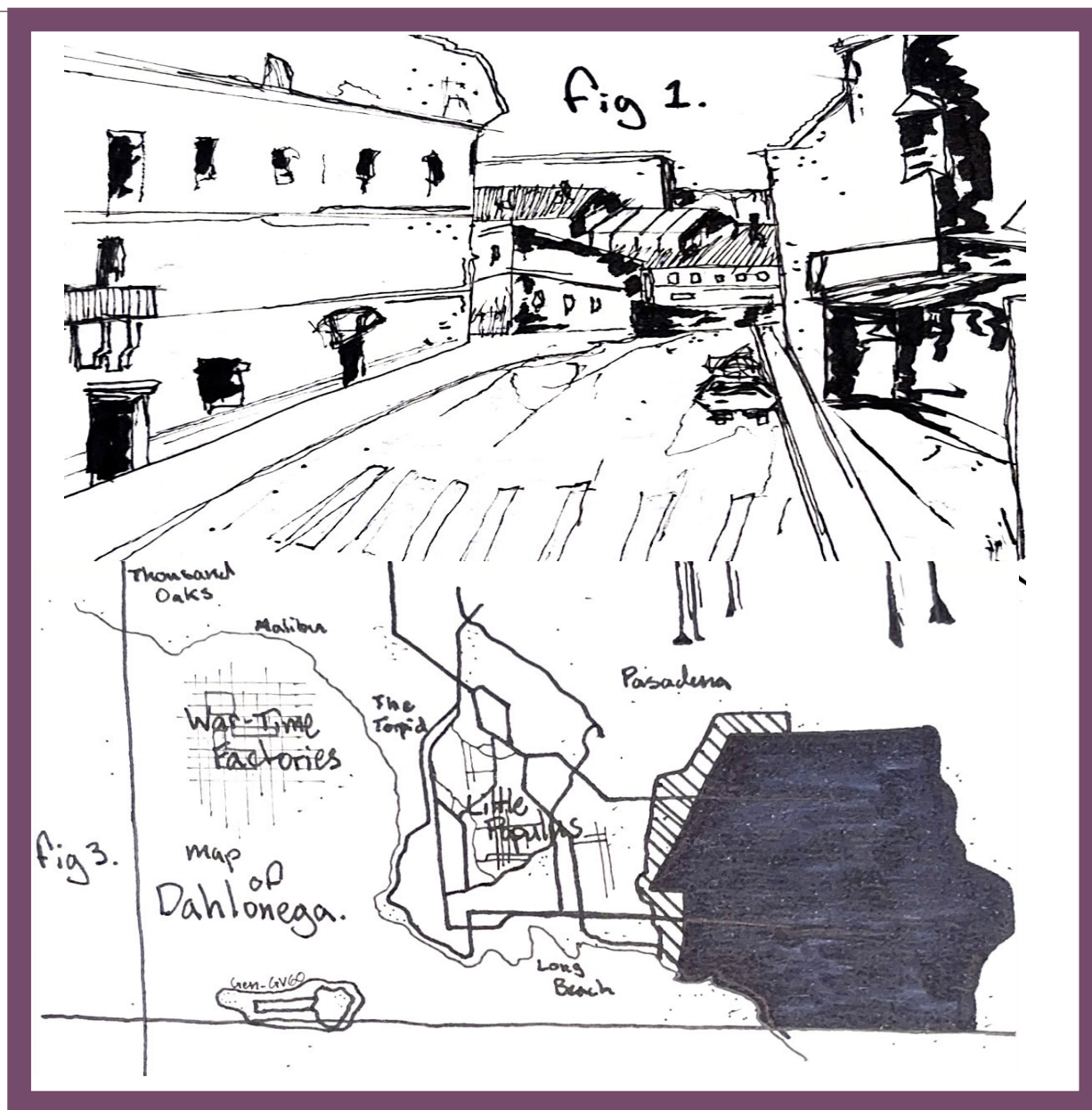


H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331
H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331
H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331
H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331
H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331 H1331

Texts from MOMOWORLD

Fragments from a future
that somehow survived.

By TED MYERS



Dear Reader,

Momo World is a series of snippets (news clippings, journal excerpts, first-hand accounts, radio broadcasts, etc.) from a dystopian society. In combination, they create a portrait of what our world may become. This is the first entry.

A Scenic and Numeric Description of Dahlonge in the Year 2130

Written by Locker Anson from Crotiff Tower on Monmouta Crest

Dahlonge, formerly Los Angeles, formerly El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles, lies beneath perpetual dark, dank clouds, now a constant part of the Dh weather system. You could no longer tell where the smog ended and those sad, sad clouds began. That distinction was fully lost in the year 2091, 19 years after the post-fallout emigration first began. The effects of the exodus were most impactful in places like Dahlonge — former population centers which today are not more than hollow collections of tinged rubble. In Dahlonge's case, 82% of the city lay empty and dead.

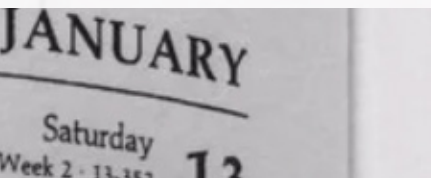
The Torpid

From Monmouta one can vaguely see the Torp (see fig. 3), the once-notably-affluent hub that had experienced the largest migration to Momo. Contrasting against the Pop, the northeastern quadrant that remained lively—relatively at least—the Torp remained stagnant (see fig. 1). Classified by padlocked gates, ivy-topped fences, and little movement perceptible to the human eye, the Torp is a vivid depiction of post-nuclear life on earth; a life classified by few human interactions and abundant. A defining statistic, or at least one that caught my eye about a year ago, is that the Torp lost 98.7569% of its residents to Momo in the span of 7 years, 2094-2101 (Streicker Mag.). There is little reason for one to venture into the dead streets, and many, such as Reb Stein, note that “only sadness remains.”

Little Populus

A poverty-stricken area in the pre-fallout era, some 96% of Pop residents could not afford the fees to emigrate off-world, and many still remained. The Pop is now the sole lasting mark of life in Dahlonge, and stood out as the only source of electric glow on this dark evening. Classified by pre-war space-efficient brutalist architecture and advertising towers (see fig. 2) that sprayed dirty orange LED light into the misty night, the Pop is a distinct piece of Dahlonge. A historically unsafe area, Little Populus had a peak of 13,127 robberies and 23,020 felony assaults in the year 2076. This level of crime, as with many other fixtures of life in the Pop, has decreased with falling population density. The Pop has recently (in the last 19 years, give or take) become an epicenter of the decent, non-violent human contact that motivates those on the ground. The tight knit nature of the depression-era housing provides the rare feeling of being in a populated area, providing inspiration for the nomenclature of the borough. The Pop is sure to provide all the noise that a modern man might require.

Do you copy? Ted Myers sends a dispatch from Momo World, and the Nassau Weekly urgently awaits his next briefing.



6pm I DO LIVE!!!!

JANUARY

Saturday
Week 2 - 13-352 13

Seven-Second Infinity

On Clive Wearing and eternity in oblivion.

By OLLIE BRADEN

Curled up in a brocade chair, thinking about a cappuccino, about how I need to eat something. Clicking a button on my airpods to make the world go quiet. How is that possible? I am watching a documentary; I've been doing a lot of that these days, in my spare time. Really I have too much of it, and nobody else here seems to have any—and when I graduate, totally directionless and useless with a degree, like the men in books; scorned without ever having felt real love—like the women in books... anyway that's not the point. The point is I have time.

What do you do when he gets confused and disorientated? a voice asks the woman on screen. *Well, he's disoriented all the time, says Deborah, but it doesn't matter because we don't need to be in time.* She smiles. Not teary at all. *We're on another plane, Clive and I.*

This is old documentary footage. No chance that Clive Wearing is still alive today. Was he really alive when they filmed this or did he die when the time loop started? His wife, Deborah I mean, insists he's happy. Outside of time, he

has become happier as it passes. When Deborah leaves after a visit he asks her cheerfully to come back at the speed of light, please. And of course she will. But in the beginning, he was screaming and crying and nauseous, fiercely scribbling in a notebook he's never seen before:

I am now perfectly awake. First time for... years... months.

He is met with about a thousand identical lines. It happens every couple of minutes, this sensation of gaining consciousness from total blackness, which he can now calmly describe as precisely like death. No difference in day and night. No thoughts. No dreams. Every couple of minutes he's astonished to be alive, awake; he crosses out the last time he wrote it because that must have been when he was a dead

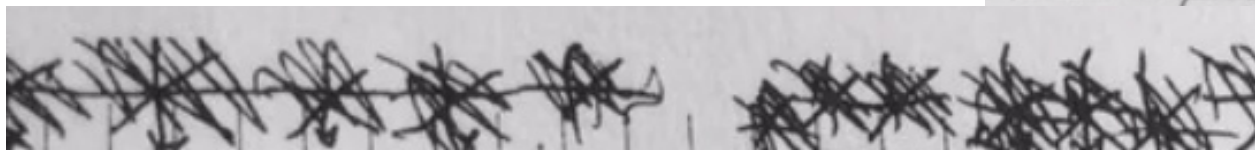
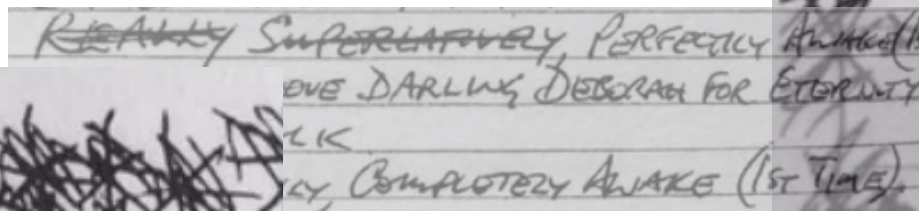
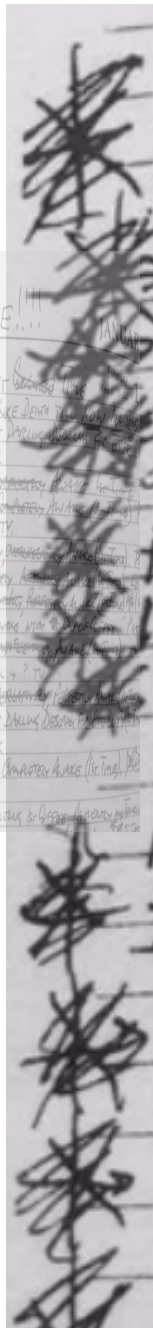
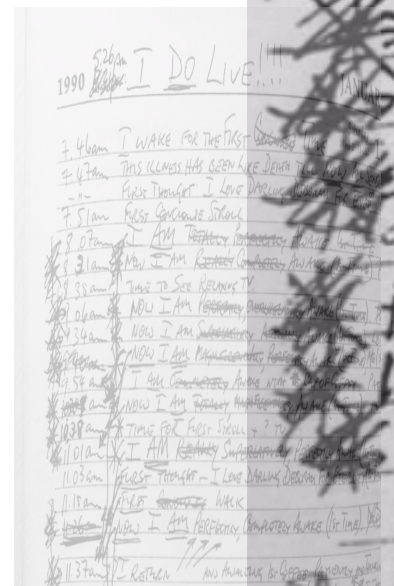
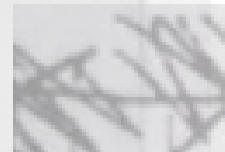
man walking. He adds a check mark to prove that this time, he means it, which of course will eventually be scribbled over like the rest of the check marks.

He used to be horrified and angry by the idea that it was him who'd been writing in this all along, telling Deborah that he'd never seen the notebook before, yelling at her for not believing him. Twenty years later, he'll let her tell him stories about the life he does

not remember. Still writing in the notebook, though. His ability to write seems to have devolved; the words get bigger, pencil smudged, everything but that last line faithfully crossed out. Sometimes I look in the mirror and it feels like making eye contact with someone else—startling, starting, sorry to impose. Sometimes I look at the clock and think it must be wrong.

When Deborah speaks I am distracted by her British accent, by the way one of her front teeth pokes out over the other as though she isn't living hell on earth; she's found the perfect shade of lipstick. I wonder if she's ever done a color analysis—she tells the camera, me, about how she had to leave him; they can't live together anymore even though she tried, tried repeating the same day over and over for nine years until she was crazy. It took nine years for her to find a brain injury unit that she could stand to think of Clive living in. Then divorce papers, then new relationships which could not and did not last because they weren't Clive. *I was looking for Clive, I guess.* She smiles. Not teary at all. Tells us about renewing her vows. The documentary crew reassures me that she visits whenever she can.

It's not enough. It's more than



anyone else on this planet could do but it's not enough, because every couple of minutes Clive thinks he's truly awake for the very first time and has never really seen her before. Total mystery, by the way, how he knows to miss her without remembering a single moment of their life together. The heart is just an organ, hollowed-out and busy pumping blood — it can't be possible that she was buried deep enough inside to escape viral encephalitis — there's a brain scan proving that Clive no longer has a hippocampus with which to learn, with which to hold memories. But he remembers to miss her anyway and he remembers how to play music. Deborah wants us all to know that he was a brilliant conductor once. She wants us all to know about the voicemails that pile up during the night: *hello, darling, it's Clive here. I don't care about anybody else in the world. Just you. Please come. I love you. Bye-bye, darling. Can you come see me, please? I have no clue what's happened. I just want to talk to you. I don't care how late it is. Come to me at midnight or one o'clock in the morning, I don't mind. I just love you and I want you to come as soon as you can, will you, darling? Bye-bye.* Somehow Deborah can live with this, the same way Clive lives whole seven-second lives in her absence. Writing in a

notebook he's never seen before, between endless assertions of new consciousness:

DEBORAH FOR ETERNITY.

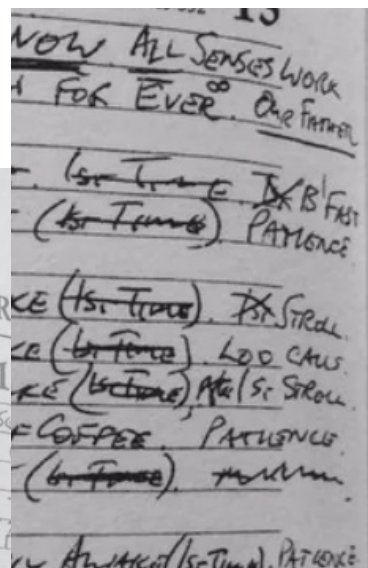
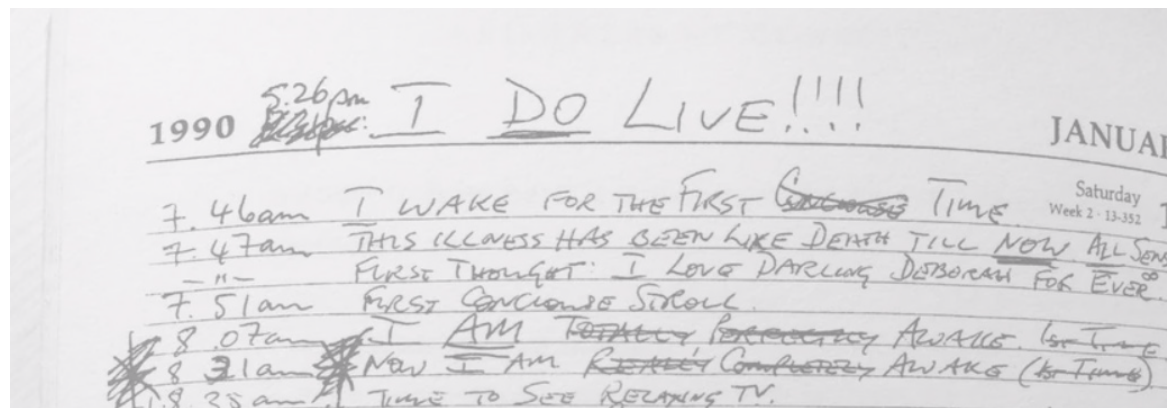
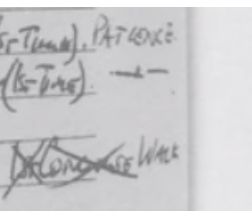
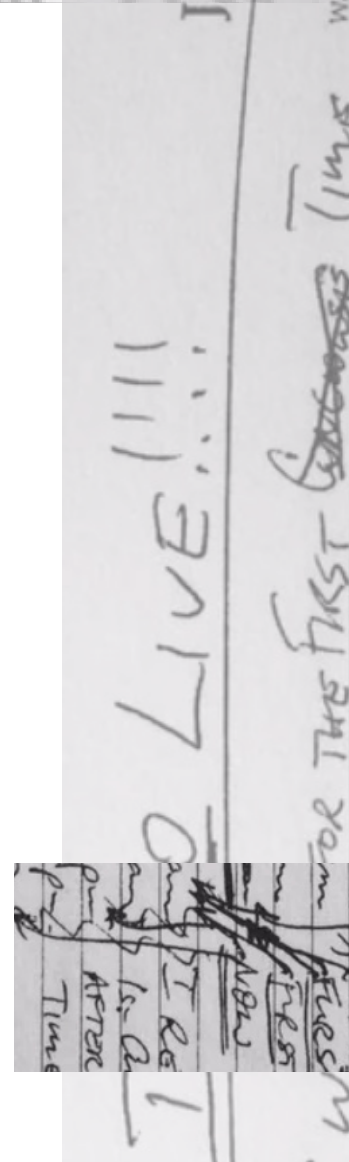
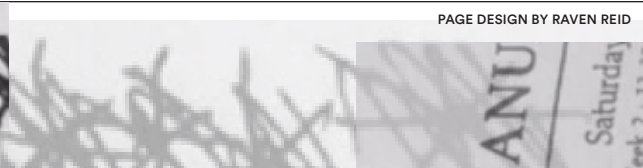
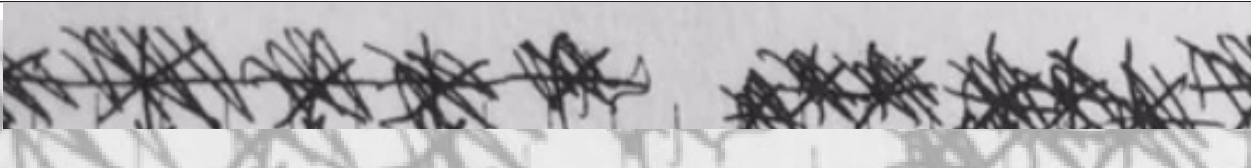
And I just don't understand how Clive ever stopped screaming. He does not have "aggressive outbursts" anymore—how? I am not an angry person, but sometimes, something gets so deeply under my skin that I have to take two or three breaths and clamp my teeth shut; hold, don't throw up, be kind again. How did Clive learn how to do it without anything to learn with? He is so calm, telling the documentary people that they are the first human beings he has ever seen. *Two men and one lady.* There's a poster by his sink, brightly colored with instructions on how to get ready for bed, clearly written by Deborah because it starts with "DARLING!" at the top. It's unclear to me how he gets through his day — we're left unclear on that, all for the best; wouldn't want the crew to be there the moment he wakes up, although of course they are, because every moment he is newly awake. *Feels just like death. No dreams, no thoughts. Nothing.* The interviewer asks him if he misses his old life. *Yes, although I've never been conscious to think that.* Apparently he's never been conscious to think anything at all

—he doesn't remember himself as truly alive even before he was ill—so she asks, what do you miss?

I'm on the edge of my seat and can't see anyone; the outside of my brain is all fogged up; the rest of the world doesn't matter. It has never been as poignant as the interviewer's next question: *if you could do anything, if you had free choice, what would you do?* Clive does not ask what she means — he knows that he is a prisoner of recurring consciousness, of seven-second infinity, of a brain injury unit that he wouldn't find his way back to if he wandered out the door. He's smiling and wistful, almost laughing when he answers, *Oh, a gin and tonic, I think. With a cigarette. Then, of course, waiting for time to elude and disappear, and her arrival.*

So here is the answer, the anchor; one woman; Deborah for eternity. Can get about one tear out of all of this before it ended a minute ago, before it's burying itself in time, time which for me is always eluding and disappearing; I who am always waiting, for, please, her arrival.

Deborah, Ollie Braden, and the Nassau Weekly are here for eternity.



minor in Journalism

Learn from the most distinguished journalists **in the world**.

Explore **nonfiction storytelling** through interdisciplinary courses.

For more information scan below:



Requirements:

- 5 journalism courses
- internship or independent project with fieldwork
- participation in the senior colloquium