

This week, the *Nass* is digging into the center of the earth. Soon, we'll find what we're looking for.

# The Nassau Weekly



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# JUST A LITTLE DEEPER

Dear reader,

They say that to be radical is to grasp things by the root. But we're digging deep, and all we see down here is dinosaur bones, rusty sewage pipes, and clumps of microplastics. We haven't reached the bottom of things yet, but there's still time to keep going.

We often analogize our efforts to find new knowledge or success with the metaphor of digging. The term gives us a convenient moral frame to our activities: through just a little more hard work, we can strike material success that will yield economic security, excavate buried truths to share with the world, or uncover new understandings of ourselves. The goals are attainable, we imagine, and the pathway clear; the effort required to dig allows us to feel deserving of the treasures we hope to find.

By rationalizing our labors as harbingers of and prerequisites to some future reward, we tie ourselves to our image of what that reward will look like. But when our images of future success are derived from a culture of unsatisfiable need, will they ever allow us to put down the shovel? What happens when we dig deeper into a hole with no plan for how to get out?

That's all for now,  
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# This Week:

<b>Fri</b>	<b>5:00p-5:00p (Sat)</b> <b>Princeton Art Museum</b> 24-hour Open House	<b>6:00p-8:00p Tuttle Lecture Hall</b> Movie Screening: <i>The Nightmare Before Christmas</i>	<b>Tues</b>	<b>12:15p-1:15p</b> <b>Robertson Hall 001</b> Contemporary Issues in Philanthropy with Stephen Heintz	<b>4:30p-6:00p McCosh</b> 50 Fagles Lecture   Anne Carson, Beware the man whose handwriting sways like a reed in the wind
<b>Sat</b>	<b>1:00a-2:00p Grand Hall</b> The Art of a Song: <i>A Broadway Cabaret</i> feat. Kate Baldwin and Georgia Stitt	<b>3:30a - 4:30p Grand Hall</b> The Art of the Moth: A Storytelling Salon	<b>Wed</b>	<b>11:00a-3:00p</b> <b>Firestone Library Plaza</b> Princeton University Farmers' Market	<b>7:00p-8:00p Hinds Library, McCosh B14</b> Creative Writing Evenings with Melange
<b>Sun</b>	<b>10:00a -12:00p NCW Ceramics Studio</b> Wheel Throwing with Riley	<b>5:00p-8:00p Lakeside Commons B</b> Princeton Slavic Society Board Game Night	<b>Thurs</b>	<b>12:15p-1:15p Louis A. Simpson 144</b> Fung Book Talk Masako Hattori, The Age of Youth: American Society and the Two World Wars	<b>4:30p-6:00p Louis A. Simpson A71</b> Policy Lessons from the War in Ukraine
<b>Mon</b>	<b>4:30p-6:00p A71 Simpson International Building</b> Admiring Authoritarians:	Political Dissatisfaction and Views Toward China in the United States and Germany			

# Verbatims:

**Overheard at Coffee Club**  
*Neo-Yuppie (?)*: "I do the poetry section for the Princeton Tory under the pen name D.V Likely."

**Overheard at Small World**  
*Guy in quarter-zip*: "No, but I think being unemployed might be, like, really really good."

**Overheard in Terrace kitchen**  
*Anal musician, about a girl coming to talk to him*: "She comes around and my anus recoils."

**Overheard at Sakrid**  
*Male barista, being sarcastic*: "Thank god there are no gay baristas on shift."

**Overheard on Nassau Street**  
*Guy friend*: \*shrugs\* "Hey, you said small in all dimensions."  
*Girl talking about her new boy toy*: "Yeah, well I'm not talking about that one."

**Overheard on the sidewalk**  
*Guy holding the hand of a girl (who is clearly leaning away from him)*: "If you were more flexible than you are, that would be, like, weird to me. Your amount of flexibility – totally fine."

**Overheard at meal-check**  
*Meal-checker*: "What's your name?"  
*Lena*: "Lena Le Labo La Mama La Boem Labubu Bellini Molyneux."

**Overheard in Forbes**  
*Post-break Princeton dad*: "Looking at this news report and seeing adults get so worked up about 6-7 makes me so sad. If I unironically sound this corny, you know what to do."  
*Confused Princetonian*: "What? No, I don't."  
*Dad*: "A rock to the back of my head."

**Submit to Verbatims**  
Email [thenassauweekly@gmail.com](mailto:thenassauweekly@gmail.com)

# About us:

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](mailto:thenassauweekly@gmail.com) by 10 p.m. on Thursday. Include your name, netid, word count, and title. We hope to see you soon!

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

# What I Heard About Gaza

## After Elion Weinberg's "What I Heard About Iraq."

By NARGES ANZALI

I heard Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu say, after the attacks on October 7th, 2023, " Hamas wants to murder us all. This is an enemy that murders children and mothers in their homes, in their beds, an enemy that abducts the elderly, children and young women, that slaughters and massacres our citizens, including children, who simply went out to enjoy the holiday."

On October 9th of 2023, I heard Defense Minister Yoav Gallant say, "[We] are fighting human animals and we will act accordingly."

I heard the U.S. President Joe Biden, on October 10th of 2023, say, "I just got off the phone—the third call with Prime Minister Netanyahu. And I told him if the United States experienced what Israel is experiencing, our response would be swift, decisive and overwhelming."

I heard Joe Biden was one of 77 senators who, in 2002, authorized George Bush to use military force in Iraq—almost 20 years later, he claimed he had been against the war from the outset.

I heard Senator Tom Cotton say, "As far as I'm concerned, Israel can bounce the rubble in Gaza."

I heard that by the end of October 8th, more than 400 Palestinians had been killed in Gaza.

On October 13th, 2023, I heard Ezra Yachin, Israel's oldest reservist, encourage the troops by saying, "Erase the memory of them. Erase them, their families, mothers and children. These animals can no longer live....Every Jew with a weapon should go out and kill them. If you have an Arab neighbor, don't wait, go to his home and shoot him."

I heard that he was implicated in the 1948 Deir Yassine Massacre, in which Israeli forces murdered at least 107 civilians despite the village having agreed to a non-aggression pact.

I heard that almost 70% of Gaza's population are refugees from the Nakba of 1948, during which almost 800,000 people were violently expelled by Israeli troops.

On October 18th, 2023, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said, "We are on the ground doing the hard work of diplomacy. We believe we need to let that diplomacy play out," after the U.S. vetoed a UN call for a humanitarian pause in the fighting.

I heard on October 23rd, 2023, Israeli President Isaac Herzog said, "It is not true this rhetoric about civilians not being aware, not involved. It's absolutely not true. They could have risen up. They could have fought against that evil regime which took over Gaza in a coup d'état."

I watched Wael-Al Dahdouh, Al-Jazeera's Gaza Bureau Chief, receive news of the death of his entire family on the air. The Middle East Eye reported: "The veteran journalist was seen in footage published online tearfully saying his goodbyes to his son, Mahmoud, after his body arrived at the hospital. 'You wanted to be a journalist,' Dahdouh said while kneeling on the floor next to Mahmoud's dead body."

I heard Yasmin El-Rifae, organizer of the Palestine Festival of Literature, say, "Israel has bent this world into one in which it can wage a war on children because they represent the future and contain the past, and those are two elements it denies Palestinians. For Israel, Palestinians can only exist in the present, the tense and temporality of domination."

On the same day, I heard U.S. President Joe Biden say, "I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed. I'm sure innocents have been killed, and it's the price of waging a war."

I heard Benjamin Netanyahu say, "Whoever dares to accuse our soldiers of war crimes are hypocritical liars who lack so much as one drop of morality. The IDF is the most moral army in the world. The IDF does everything to avoid harming

non-combatants. I again call on the civilian population to evacuate to a safe area in the southern Gaza Strip."

On the same day, I heard a man in Gaza break into screams after realizing all three of his children had been killed in the bombing of the Jabalia Refugee Camp in the north of Gaza.

I heard that by the 25th of October, around 7,000 Gazans had been killed by Israeli bombardment.

On November 5th of 2023, I heard that 100 Israeli doctors signed a letter approving the bombing of hospitals in Gaza, saying, "The residents of Gaza saw fit to turn hospitals into terrorist nests to take advantage of western morality; they are the ones who brought destruction upon themselves; terrorism must be eliminated everywhere. Attacking terrorist headquarters is the right and the duty of the Israeli army."

I heard Senior Israeli Officials admit, after holding the Al-Shifa Hospital under siege, that they knew there were no hostages in there. They only raided it as a "symbol that there is no place we will not reach."

I heard Khalil Skeik, a medical student who was taken prisoner outside Al-Shifa Hospital, say of his treatment at a detention facility: "After the surgery I stayed in the hospital for about five days. The entire time I was completely naked, in a diaper, with my hands cuffed and my eyes covered."

I heard that the *New York Times* released a style guide to its own journalists in November 2023 that said, "Words like 'slaughter,' 'massacre' and 'carnage' often convey more emotion than information. Think hard before using them in our own voice."

I heard Rana Issa, Professor at the American University of Beirut, say, "Genocides are not events. Rather, they are state policies, implemented daily through atrocious violence until the desired reduction of a certain population is achieved."

I heard that during the first negotiated ceasefire, Hamas released 69 hostages,

while Israel released 150 Palestinians held without trial.

I heard that on the same day, Israel arrested 133 Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

I heard that on December 1st, Israel declined to receive a group of seven hostages and three bodies, resuming attacks on Gaza and refusing to extend the ceasefire.

I heard that on December 8th of 2023, the U.S. vetoed a UN Security Council resolution which would have called for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

I heard that on December 22nd of 2023, three Israeli hostages were shot by the IDF while trying to escape because they were mistaken for Palestinians.

I heard IDF Spokesperson Jonathan Conricus say, "Of course this doesn't justify this mistake. According to the rules of engagement, soldiers are not supposed to fire when someone has a white flag."

I heard that a month earlier, the people of Gaza City's Al-Rimal neighborhood were told to evacuate. As they walked out of their buildings holding white flags, IDF soldiers opened fire on the crowd, killing at least three civilians. The IDF refused to comment.

I heard emergency worker Mohammad al-Hajar say that he was among a group of men who were trying to pull people out of collapsing buildings. Five of them were shot by Israeli snipers as they tried to approach the buildings. I heard him say, "In the light of morning, I found the pack of dogs. I was startled to see that one of them had the foot of a small child in his mouth. I chased after him, removed the little boy's foot and buried it deep in the ground."

I heard Ahmed Ahmed, correspondent for +972, say, "Palestinians today understand that what is presented to us as 'temporary' displacement almost always becomes permanent. That is why so many of us refuse to leave, even as our homes come under fire."

I heard that former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir once said, "We can forgive the Arabs for killing our children. We cannot forgive them for forcing us to kill their children."

I heard that by January of 2024, an estimated 20,000 Palestinians had been killed since October 7th.

In February of 2024 I heard Hind Rajab, a five-year-old Palestinian girl who was trapped in a car with her 15-year-old cousin, say, "I'm alive, but Layan was martyred. Mum, I'm afraid, they are all dead. Come and get me." While on the phone with the Palestinian Relief Services, 15-year-old Layan was shot 64 times. Hind called her mother again—"I'm scared of the dark, come get me," she said. "Don't leave me, I'm cold, hungry, and afraid."

I heard that two paramedics were dispatched to the site. They were killed in an explosion, along with Hind. Their bodies were recovered four days later.

I heard White House spokesperson Olivia Dalton say of Israel, "They are a close ally that will remain a close ally. They are in the throes of an existential battle—an existential threat to their existence from Hamas—and we're going to continue to support them in that process."

I heard that on that same day Israeli troops opened fire on 112 Palestinian people as they tried to approach aid trucks.

On March 31st, 2024, I heard Congressman Tim Walberg say in a town hall, "We shouldn't be spending a dime on humanitarian aid. It [Gaza] should be like Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Get it over quick."

I heard that a research group linked to the Hebrew University said that 76 percent of the Israeli public partially or fully agree with the statement that "there are no innocents in Gaza."

I heard that on July 13th, 2024, Israel dropped 200-pound bombs on the refugee tent camp near el-Mawasi, which had been designated as a 'safe zone' by the IDF. 100 Palestinians were killed.

The next day, the NYT came out with an article: "Israel Launches Major Attack on a Senior Hamas Commander." In it, Benjamin Netanyahu is quoted as saying he did not have "absolute clarity" as to whether Muhammad Deif, the target of the airstrike, was killed.

I heard Israeli President Isaac Herzog say in October of 2024 that "We have to do whatever we can by all ways and means possible to bring back our hostages who are there in the tunnels and dungeons of Gaza. And the world has to realize and understand that in order to change the course of history and bring peace, a better future to the region, it must support Israel in its battle against its enemies. We are fighting the battle of the free world. We are fighting for a better future for the region. We are fighting for a future of peace."

I heard Edward Said, perhaps the most famous Palestinian historian and philosopher, say, "My general impression is that for most Israelis, their country is invisible. Being in it means a certain blindness or inability to see what it is and what has been happening to it and, just as remarkably, an unwillingness to understand what it has meant for others in the world and especially in the Middle East."

I heard that by December of 2024, at least 34 hostages were confirmed dead. At least 10 of these hostages were killed by Israeli bombardment.

I heard that by December 2024, a total of 45,000 Palestinians had been killed in Gaza.

I heard that during the first stage of the preliminary ceasefire in February of 2025, 6 hostages were released. Israel delayed the return of 620 Palestinian prisoners.

I heard that on March 18th of 2025, Israel resumed artillery attacks in Gaza, breaking the ceasefire.

I heard that the Palestinian prisoners released back into the Gaza Strip were subjected to torture before their release, "including burning detainees with boiling water and urinating on them." One prisoner said, "When we asked for treatment, they told us that we are terrorists and must die."

I heard the International Court of Justice decide in July 2025 that "Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is unlawful and that it must therefore withdraw without any guarantees regarding its right to its security, which is one of the crucial elements necessary to achieve a lasting peace based on a per-

manent status settlement.”

I heard that in 2025, there were approximately 450,000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank.

I heard that there have been almost 3,000 instances of settler violence in the West Bank since the beginning of the war, with almost 1,000 of these instances taking place in 2025. Since October 7th, almost 1,000 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank.

I heard that Donald Trump, President of the United States, was working on a plan to move more than one million Palestinians from Gaza to Libya.

Basem Naim, former Minister of Health of Gaza and Hamas official, stated, “Palestinians are very rooted in their homeland, very strongly committed to the homeland and they are ready to fight up to the end and to sacrifice anything to defend their land, their homeland, their families, and the future of their children...[Palestinians] are exclusively the only party who have the right to decide for the Palestinians, including Gaza and Gazans, what to do and what not to do.”

I heard the U.S.-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation proposed camps called ‘Humanitarian Transit Areas’ in the Gaza Strip as places where Palestinians can “temporarily reside, deradicalize, re-integrate and prepare to relocate if they wish to do so.”

I heard Mark Brauner, an American volunteering at Nasser Hospital in Gaza, say that as soon as the aid sites opened, civilians came in with gunshot wounds to their heads, necks, and chests. He said, “It’s really more execution-style than the typical blast injuries that we see.”

In August 2025, I heard an American stationed at one of the GHF’s ‘aid sites’ say: “This young boy, Amir [Abdulrahim], walked up to me, barefoot and wearing tattered clothes that hung off his emaciated body... He walked 12km to get there, and when he got there, he thanked us for the remnants and the small crumbs that he got...He set them down on the ground, because I was kneeling at this point, and he sets his food down, and he places his hands on my face, on the side of my face, on my cheeks. Then he was shot at with pepper spray, tear gas, stun grenades and bullets shot at his feet

[and then] in the air.”

I heard Amir Abdulrahim was later confirmed dead.

—  
In the same month, Israeli forces bombed the tent of Al-Jazeera correspondent Anas al-Sharif.

His will read: “I never hesitated to convey the truth as it is, without distortion or misrepresentation, hoping that God would witness those who remained silent, those who accepted our killing, and those who suffocated our very breaths... Not even the mangled bodies of our children and women moved their hearts or stopped the massacre that our people have been subjected to for over a year and a half.”

I heard the Israeli military say that he “served as the head of a terrorist cell in the Hamas terrorist organisation.”

I heard that by August of 2025, at least 248 journalists were killed by the IDF in Gaza.

Twenty days later, I heard that Israeli forces killed five more journalists in a double-tap attack on Nasser Hospital. Their names were Mohamed Salama, Ahmed Abu Aziz, Mariam Dagga, Husam al-Masri, and Moaz Abu Taha.

—  
I heard the IPC declare a stage five famine in Gaza.

I heard the World Health Organization say, “approximately 98 percent of cropland in the territory is damaged or inaccessible – decimating the agriculture sector and local food production – and nine of ten people have been serially displaced from homes.”

I heard UNICEF director Catherine Russell say, “As we have repeatedly warned, the signs were unmistakable: children with wasted bodies, too weak to cry or eat; babies dying from hunger and preventable disease; parents arriving at clinics with nothing left to feed their children.”

I heard Rida Hijeh say of her five-year-old child, Lamia: “She cannot walk. I went to many clinics, doctors, and hospitals. They all told me my daughter is suffering from malnutrition. But none of them gave me anything, not treatment, not any support.”

I heard Oren Marmorstein, Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, say, “Israel rejects the false accusations of ‘starvation’ propaganda initiated by Hamas which manipulates pictures of children suffering from terminal diseases. It is shameful.”

—  
I heard that a ceasefire was declared on October 10th of 2025.

I heard Amjad Shawa, head of the Palestinian NGO Network, say that Palestinians making their way back up to the North of Gaza were exercising their right to return, illustrating “the failure of Israel in its efforts to deport the Palestinians from their land.”

I heard that the 20 surviving hostages were released, as well as the remains of twelve who died in the conflict.

I heard that 250 Palestinian prisoners and 1,178 detainees, held without trial or charges from Gaza, were released.

I heard that 250 dead bodies of unidentified Palestinians were released with them, many of them burned beyond recognition.

I heard that 85 of the hostages taken by Hamas were killed.

I heard that 68,000 Palestinians have been killed.

I heard that 170,000 Palestinians have been wounded.

I heard that Israel has already broken the terms of the ceasefire, killing at least 100 Palestinians since October 10th.

I heard Mohammad el-Kurd, a Palestinian activist and political philosopher, say, “Our massacres are only interrupted by commercial breaks. Judges legalize them. Correspondents kill us with passive voice. If we are lucky, diplomats say that our death concerns them, but they never mention the culprit, let alone condemn the culprit. Politicians, inert, inept, or complicit, fund our demise, then feign sympathy, if any. Academics stand idle. That is, until the dust settles, then they will write books about what should have been.”

# If this is paradise / I wish I had a lawnmower

"If I don't write soon, I will become an "Ex-Writer", and where will I be then?"

By NORA GLASS

My friend Chuck does this thing that I find incredibly cool. She chooses an album every month, she listens to it non-stop, and she writes a personal essay on it. I wish that were me. I wish I wrote consistently.

An athlete is someone who (to transliterate from German) makes sport. A pianist plays piano. A mother is someone with a child. But a writer? I can claim the title without lifting my pen. Writers, famously, complain. They procrastinate. They really don't seem to do much writing. To not write is the writer's way.

My mother and I both identify as writers. Both of us haven't written anything real in a very long time, if ever. When does one stop being a Writer? When did I start counting myself as one? I can count on one hand the number of "real" things I've written, things that anyone other than my mother and closest of friends would like. Things that stick in people's hearts. Things that stick in our own. I need to start. If I don't write soon, I will become an "Ex-Writer," and where will I be then?

I can't listen to one album per month. But I have a ritual of my own. Every month, starting at 12:00 AM on the first, I create a playlist that holds exactly twenty-one songs, with a max of one song per artist. One song per month is given to me by my mother. The playlist's cover must be an image taken by me. The playlist is preferably completed by the sixth of the month, though the eighth is acceptable in extenuating circumstances. These are the lines I've drawn for myself, and staying within their boundaries brings me joy.

Generally speaking, my mother's

song is the low point of each month's playlist. It's usually just not my style. My wonderful array of indie and alternative bands, disrupted by a stray Dixie Chicks song. I find this deeply unsatisfying. It's strange because when unforced, my music taste comes from my mom. The Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, Rufus Wainwright, Belle and Sebastian. Hell, she even got me into Lucy Dacus. Straight mothers introducing their queer daughters to lesbian indie singer-songwriters isn't how the world is supposed to work, in my opinion.

My mother seems to be poking through this "essay." She's practically begging to be discussed. My Mama.



She's an ex-writer like me, angsty teenage poetry and high school literary magazines and the works. I've read some of it and found it mediocre and sad, in an endearing way. She could've been good if she kept going. Could've made something real. My mom was born in August like me, but younger than the rest of her grade rather than older. She never wanted to put me through that. She didn't like being the youngest. She got her comeuppance, though; she went back to get her degree and now she's more than double the age of all her peers. Her goal is to graduate before I do.

These are all facts, but I don't want to even try to give you a sense of what she's like to know. That'd be lying, and plus I really don't know, and plus plus I'm

afraid of failure. When I was 14 it truly dawned on me that she could be disappointed in me, causing me total panic. I told her that and she got pissed at me cause how is she supposed to respond to that, which, fair. I began to apologize for any little thing and she'd tell me to stop, but not in a nice way like some people do. Just pissed off. My mother's an awful liar so she'll tell me she hates my haircut and will take an awfully defensive position about it: "I'm not a liar. You want me to lie?" She's able to lie to her friends and coworkers and strangers just fine, it's just the family who she can't lie to. Just something I've noticed. It's not bad, though. I respect her a lot. We're close, and I'm not lying. She's the one who first called me a writer, when I was seven or eight. Weirdly, it was a lie; I don't remember writing anything outside of school before that point. I kept the title, though. I liked it.

The Writer commands respect. If I call it an essay, this weird diary entry-esque thing is transformed into art and reading it makes you a better person. You're interacting with the local artists' scene, supporting a queer creator, that kind of thing. You can feel good about yourself for having read this. And I feel good about myself for having written it. It's a win-win. If I keep doing this shit, maybe I'll make something actually good one day, instead of something that just makes people feel good.

This October, I want to write. I want to feel good. I want to call my mother more and listen to her less. I want to have begun something. Do me a favor and listen to (Nothing But) Flowers by the Talking Heads this month. It's about a world overgrown into a strange and beautiful garden. I walked through Poe Field this morning and wished I were there instead. I'll be listening to the song, and my mother will be too. It'll be stuck in my heart before I know it.

*The Nassau Weekly confirms that Nora Glass truly is a writer...and you, a grateful reader.*

“The curling ends of cursive letters reach toward something that is impossible to grasp. The problem is evident on the page: there is always a space between one thing and another.”

BY NELL MARCUS

The only truth is longing, which cannot be exaggerated.  
— F. Kafka, *Letters to Milena*

Outside the cafe, the rain is falling sideways and the wind is turning umbrellas inside out. It's late on a Sunday, the end of early October. On the sidewalk, thick sweaters and scarves sway on bodies rushing past. The city breathes in short, sharp shocks, as if trying to expel us from its lungs. Periodically I hear it roar and shudder.

Inside, everything is angled inward toward an imaginary hearth, negotiating for space that doesn't exist. The wall is densely decorated with vintage posters and paintings—Caravaggio and his disciples spar endlessly for centrality. Chipped metal chairs and tiny circular tables crowd each other like objects in an unstable orbit.

It is the end of our Indian summer, and everything is in perpetual, violent motion toward the impending Fall.

In this space between one thing and another, you can see where reality has stretched too far and stick your fingers through the holes in its fabric. Rain is going sideways. Umbrellas are inside out. Paris is alive in the West Village.

On my table is Kafka, cracked open at the spine. With every word he claws for her: Dear Frau Milena, I am thinking of you always. It is impossible to write of anything else. Dear Frau Milena, I want to hear your voice. Dear Frau Milena, Czech, please.

*I want to read you in Czech because, after all, you do belong to that language, because only there can Milena be found in her entirety.*

My boyfriend is sitting across from me, staring at his laptop, head in hands—searching for words that sputter in too slowly toward the midnight deadline. I bought the Kafka at the end of September, as a gift for him. Weeks have gone by, and I've found the process of personalized annotation to be unexpectedly sluggish. Between September and now—only 100 odd pages, a few hours in Vienna, and some soft pencil marks, sometimes lethargic and sometimes ecstatic.

His rapid typing is shaking the table, the cross of my t stretches frenetically across the page. I erase it and begin again.

Aren't we always translating each other?

I am trying to focus, but the moment is too loud to tune out. A teacup topples off the waiter's tray. Shards of porcelain fly in disparate directions.

To our right, a girl waits with her hands tucked under her legs and her eyes glued to the door. When her friend arrives, the tears are quick and plentiful. The tension disappears from her shoulders like yarn unraveling. *Did you break up?* The answer is hard to discern, but certainly falls somewhere in between *I don't know* and *Yes, definitely*. I follow the thread. Eventually, a clearer picture emerges: Oliver, her boyfriend, has been feeling off lately. He has been having doubts. They took some space, a week's worth. Finally, they talked it out, or tried to. They'll circle back to it on Thursday. **Everyone rotates on their own axis.** For now, she is spinning.

They were lying on his bed. Don't worry, they didn't have sex—but they kissed a couple of times. The whole conversation happened with his arm wrapped around her shoulders, her head resting on his chest.

— Was he crying?

— Yes.

— That's good.

They order two cups of black tea. Her friend is blunt and at times pessimistic. *You probably will break up. He's going to fuck other girls before Thursday. You think they won't do it, but they will. Men are just different.* Occasionally, she supplements with evidence from her last long-term relationship. *I just went through exactly the same shit*, she keeps repeating. She thought David was her soulmate. Sometimes—most of the time—she still does. She never thought he would do anything to hurt her. *Be more suspicious*, she intones. The floor can always fall out from under you.

In front of them is a couple. The woman, who is facing me, is crying quietly. I see only the man's back, sloped as he leans forward to dab the tears off her face with a napkin, reaching over an elaborate chocolate dessert.

Feeling somewhat like an intruder, I turn toward the window. But the sound of sobs coming from the right remains inescapable.

**Is she embarrassed by herself? Is he embarrassed by her? Is it possible to be embarrassed while in love, when one sees nothing but the other's face?**

Why cry in a public place?

— *I know he'll never find anyone he loves more than me.*

— *Women won't leave someone they love. Men will.*

At the same time, the friend adds, they'll probably get back together. It isn't clear if she's talking about her friend and Oliver or herself and David. Probably, it's both. As if they can't help but play this eternal game of cat and mouse—because that is love, and how could they give that up? I look down at the page. It is precisely as Kafka writes:

*You are the knife I turn inside myself, this is love.*

— *I have never in my life met anyone like Oliver.*

— *I still feel like David and I will get married.*

At last, he closes his computer, finished. He gestures toward the book and smiles knowingly. It occurs to me that this moment, of him catching me in the act, is a better gift than the book ever will be. The words, the stars, the hearts are not the point. The point is my hand holding the pencil, graphite hovering over paper in perpetuity. I could spend forever re-reading, re-writing. It would be enough.

**There is no perfect union, only the endless approach.**

On our left is a man—late twenties, I'd imagine—with a formidable leather portfolio filled with beautiful penmanship. He has a red flannel and a red mustache to match. He wields, incredibly, a quill, from which pours an uninterrupted stream of notes. We find the whole thing stunningly analog. When he gets up to use the bathroom, I take a closer look at the stack of books he's storing on the windowsill. *Fancy's Knell, Ill Wind, Violent Saturday, The Good Old Boys, The Earthquake Man*. They all sport the attribution "W.L. Hearth." Neither of us has heard of him. There's a two-line Wikipedia entry, each point like a pebble swallowed by the sea—American writer, Arkansas, Southern noir, China-Burma-India theater.

I am curious about the notes in the legal pad, about what one could possibly have to say about W.L. Hearth and his buried body of work. We joke that that's what happens when you go to grad school. You go down the rabbit hole, and before you know it, you're six feet under, communing with the spirit of an author of importance to no one for the rest of your life. On late nights spent looking for him, espresso stains accumulate on yellow paper.

Inside, I'm wondering if that might be what's happening to all of us. If we aren't constantly taking pencils to each other's temples, revisiting scenes, underlining dialogue, circling the point

but never reaching it. Again and again, we return to our tables and ready our quills. The curling ends of cursive letters reach toward something that is impossible to grasp. The problem is evident on the page: there is always a space between one thing and another.

**How much of another person can you hold in your hands?**

I close-read Kafka close-reading her.

Dear Frau Milena, awake and asleep, dead and alive, you are here somewhere. Dear Frau Milena, it is impossible to miss you, you are here.



Dear Frau Milena,  
you are the sun.

An astronomy professor of mine once described orbital motion as a perpetual fall. Spacetime bends into a bottomless rabbit hole, from which there is no escape. Gravitationally bound to the center, an object will move forever in the periphery unless acted upon by an outside force.

It is Autumn in New York and we are all falling toward the center. The couple gets up to leave, his hand on the small of her back. The girl orders a glass of red wine and buries her head in her hands. The student purses his lips and shakes his head, flipping through the pages. I search for Kafka and I search

for him. The rain is growing heavier, but I hear only the constant buzz of cosmic noise, unknowingly hummed under our breath.

*I have been singing one single song for you, incessantly; it's always different and always the same, as rich as a dreamless sleep, boring and exhausting.*

We circle in and spin out, imagining the collision. Somewhere on the endless horizon, we see twisted limbs and entangled souls. It is sometimes a dream and sometimes a nightmare. It is heaven; it is a black hole. I feel some eternal truth in the words of the girls next to me—he is evil; he is everything.

Dear Frau Milena, I am coming to Vienna. Dear Frau Milena, I am so afraid. Dear Frau Milena, you are all I have. Dear Frau Milena, I can never come to Vienna.

**Is wanting better than having?**

*That's why I'm*

*not coming—instead of being certain for just 2 days that I have the constant possibility. But please do not describe these 2 days, Milena; that would practically torture me. It's not necessity yet, only infinite desire.*

Dripping umbrellas drying off and flushed faces warming up, everyone and everything in orbit; in love with one another and with evil men and dead authors and chocolate cake.

**Is wanting all there is?**

The girls, the couple, the grad student, and us.

David, Oliver, W.L. Hearth, and Kafka.

Milena, forever.

With red pen, I underline the words *infinite desire*.

*This week, the delightful Nell Marcus guides the Nassau Weekly deep into the cavernous expanse of the margins—and there's no end in sight.*

# Two Days and Two Nights

"Not long after that we realized there was little else to do where we were, so we stood up and headed out, us two boys stumbling through the cold night behind Mary."

By GAVIN STROUD

Mary called me in the fall, six weeks after she left America.

"Come to Paris," she said.

"I don't have the money."

"You can sleep in my room."

"For the flight, Mary."

"Oh."

There was a pause.

"I've got miles."

"I'm not letting you pay for me."

"I'm not letting you stay in America."

"I can't come."

"You must. Think about it."

"I'll think about it."

"Do that."

"Besides, what would I do about John?"

"Do you have to hang out with him?"

"I'm supposed to. I told him I would go to New York. His uncle's old place, you know, in Nantucket."

"The dead one?"

"Yeah, the dead one. They still haven't sold the house, apparently."

"My question stands."

"No, I don't *have* to hang out with him, but it would be awkward if I didn't."

"I forgot you live in the same dorm."

"Well, it's not a dorm. He owns an apartment."

"Right, right, I forgot. Jesus. You pay rent?"

"Yes, to his dad, technically. But it's cheaper than anywhere else. Really, he's been very good to me, and I can't just leave him hanging."

She mumbled. I didn't ask her to repeat herself.

"Fine, bring him. I don't care. Get a hotel."

"Not a bad idea. I don't know how he'll take it."

"Something tells me he can swing it. Just promise him French bread and

French circuses and French booze."

"And French girls."

"And French girls."

"I can try. How're you doing, by the way?"

"Good. The work here's easy. I'm terribly bored. I guess that's why I'm calling."

"Oh, that makes me feel all warm inside."

"That's not what I meant. What about you? How's that boyfriend of yours, with the eyes?"

"It's called heterochromia, and he was never my boyfriend. We don't talk anymore."

"Pity. He was cute."

"I know he was. How's yours?"

"He's good. Busy, apparently. You ever see him around?"

"No, not really."

"Talk to John."

"I will."

"Bye, Jake."

"Bye."

That night I was sitting on the bed in the apartment writing an essay while John sat on the windowsill and cut his fingernails, smoking a joint and talking idly about the people that came and went on the street two stories below. I wasn't really listening to him. A breeze sighed into the stale room which smelled of beer and cigarette smoke.

"Look. Here's a specimen. Here's one," John said, leaning over and pointing down to the street.

"Sure," I said, though I couldn't see anything outside from where I was seated.

"Damn." He went quiet but his eyes were still fixed on the street. I was reminded then of the odd way he looked at people, not by tracking them with his eyes, but by planting his gaze right where he knew they would be in a few moments.

"How set are you about Nantucket?" I asked.

He turned toward me, his harsh brow coming down, "Rather set. Why?"

"I don't know if I am."

"Why? Have you finally gone Mormon?"

"No, I talked to Mary today."

"Mary."

I looked at him incredulously, "From high school."

"Your high school."

"Yes. You've met several times."

"Does she go here?"

"Yes."

"Are you *sure* I've met her? Let me see a picture."

"Here." I showed him a picture on my phone.

He studied it for a few moments longer than he needed to jog his memory.

"Huh, I doubt I'd forget *that*."

"Get your head out of the gutter. She's got a boyfriend. You might know him."

"In Paris?"

"No. He goes here. Pete Lewski, the rower. I'm sure you know him."

"Yeah, that's right. Lewski's girl. I think I remember her."

"Anyway, she's studying in Paris and she wants us to go see her."

He sat back against the window and sighed, "That's an idea. A pretty good one, now that I think of it." He winked at me.

"Don't get any more ideas."

He put up his hands, "But I respect boundaries. I go only where the soul allows."

"Shut up. I'm serious."

"As am I." He held the joint out to me and asked if I wanted any.

I told him (as he knew) that I didn't smoke on weekdays.

"Makes my head all cloudy."

"You say that like it's a bad thing."

"Ha." I rolled my eyes. My essay was due in forty-eight hours.

Three weeks later we were in Paris.

John booked the two of us a spacious studio at a place called the Oberkampf Grand, a gaudy ten-floor boutique a ten-minute Metro ride from Mary's apartment. Our first day we arrived at one in the morning local time, so jet-lagged that we passed out the moment we arrived and slept in through the afternoon. Then we met Mary for lunch at a bistro not far from the hotel. John was excited to learn that it was already

Friday. Tonight we would go out to the bars. John tried to impress us with his boarding-school French, but the severe middle-aged waiter did not play along with it.

"In English?" the man asked.

John frowned and glanced toward me, "Two beers."

Mary smiled and ordered in good French, which pleased the waiter.

The first night Mary took us to a bar thirty minutes away by Metro. Mary said she knew it well: it was popular, drinks were cheap, and the music was alright. We sat at a table in the back corner and John ordered four vodkas with limes—in English.

"You much of a vodka girl, Mary?" John asked, "I forgot to ask."

"I drink what's available," she answered with a small laugh.

"I would've asked what you wanted if I was more of a gentleman."

"Really, it's fine," she said, her voice going stern, "vodka's alright."

"Alright."

Mary took her shots without a faint flinch, one after the other as John ordered. I tapped out at four, but by seven she was still sitting tall. John, a former rugby hooker of some two hundred and twenty pounds, was beginning to slur his words.

"I could do another," Mary said.

"Christ, when are you gonna call it a night?" I asked.

"I was," John started, "going to ask something similar."

"Okay. I'm happy." I was relieved when Mary said that.

As we went on talking John entered brief but intense silences, his eyes fixed unyielding on static objects.

"I'm—I've gotta piss," he eventually said.

"You good?" I asked.

"Oh, sure. Right, fine." He rose to his feet like the feeling had only just come to them and nearly swiped a glass off the table with the hand he used to support himself. Then he went off.

"He'll be alright, right?" Mary asked.

"Sure. I've seen him worse," I said, though I couldn't recall when.

I studied Mary wordlessly.

"What?" she asked.

"You said you barely went out at all."

"I don't."

"That man weighs as much as the both of us combined."

Mary raised her hands, "it's my Polish side."

"I'm serious."

"So am I."

"You blacked out from *half* that, what, two years ago?"

Mary rolled her eyes, "when are you talking about?"

"New Year's Eve, two years ago."

"In 2023."

"Yeah."

"That's three years ago. It's November."

"Mary."

"Just saying. If we're being *technical*."

We went quiet for a very long time. John returned, still shaky, and we ignored anything that had been said.



Eventually we began talking about Pete.

"Has Pete ever come to Paris?" John asked.

"Oh," Mary's expression went harsh, "no, no. He's busy with his rowing. Can't get the time off."

"Figures. It's how they all are. Trying to see them on campus is hard enough. Could only imagine *your* situation."

"Yep."

"I mean, though, you are his *girl*friend."

She nodded as though along to a familiar song.

"You know, I like him, though. I see him pretty often. Of all those guys, he's the real life of the party."

"Really."

"Mhm. I mean, he drinks too much,

goes kinda off the rails. It's honestly a little scary sometimes."

"Says you," I muttered.

I turned to John, trying to meet his eyes with the gravity in mine, but he dodged me.

"But I'm sure you're already aware of his... habits."

Mary had a blank look on her face. "No, I'm not," she said.

"Well it's probably not the sort of thing you talk to your girlfriend about."

"What are you trying to say?"

"I'm just saying," John sat back in his chair, "sometimes he acts like he's a single man. It'd bother me a little bit if I were you."

"You're drunk. You don't know what you're talking about."

"Maybe not," John conceded, "but I do know him pretty well. Maybe I see a side of him you don't."

Mary was silent. Her face was stone and I couldn't see through it.

"I'm not trying to—" John began.

"Enough. Okay? I hear you. Can we just change the subject?"

"Sure, sure," John said, withdrawing his voice until it was almost a whisper. Then he returned my eye contact. He looked pleased with himself.

Not long after that we realized there was little else to do where we were, so we stood up and headed out, us two boys stumbling through the cold night behind Mary.

We split up at the Metro, John and I taking a silent ride back toward the hotel.

"Jake," John asked.

"What."

He leaned all the way back in the seat so his head hung over the headrest, his face pale yellow in the fluorescent overheads of the traincar.

"Does she really love him? Ol' Pete. Lewski. Lewskies, Lewskies..." John trailed off, giggling. His eyes were closed and he was going to sleep.

"Yes," I said. "She loves him, and him only," I said. I said it quietly, after I knew he was out.

I thought about the last time I'd seen John and Mary's boyfriend in the same place. It was by the engineering building, down a long paved pathway. John and I were walking together and he came down the opposite way and closely passed us. I saw their eye contact, the registration of two passing people, strangers, empty and passive. Nothing more. I remember smiling and nodding, because I remembered his face.

If I could have accomplished anything speaking to John then, I like to imagine I would have woken him. When we got back to the hotel we didn't speak and went immediately to sleep. We slept in through the early afternoon.

Mary was busy until the evening. John and I played tourist until dinner-time. Then we three went out again that night after drinking two bottles of cheap white wine in the hotel room.

"Some wine should just be for cooking," Mary had whispered, nudging me on the shoulder and sticking out her tongue in disgust.

"Quit drinking it, then, if you're such a snob," I replied.

She shrugged with a hop of her eyebrows. "I didn't expect the boy to have taste, but this..."

I laughed.

"What's so funny?" John asked.

"Nothing," Mary and I replied in unison.

We went at Mary's suggestion to a more vibrant bar which was playing louder music and was more full of life. We went in and joined everyone else that was dancing in the dark room swept over by bruise-colored strobe lights, full of smoke and the smell of sweat. Eventually and on account of all the wine, we grew tired of dancing and went to the back of the place where the music was quieter and there were some empty tables.

John ordered mixed drinks and we took some care to drink them more slowly. It seemed that Mary had forgotten about anything that had been said last night, at least judging by how she spoke to John and laughed at his jokes. I was hoping he might apologize, but then I thought he might not remember. Both of these dreams would be short-lived.

Some time later we went outside and smoked cigarettes beside a group of French students. I held out my lighter to John's cigarette hanging out of his mouth, but he backed away and said sternly, "Hey. I'm not a pretty girl."

"You're not a pretty anything," I said. "Fine," and I handed the lighter over.

He lit his and turned to Mary, wordlessly offering the lighter out to her. She inhaled without comment, lowering the hand she'd halfway raised back to rest by her waist. If she blushed it was too dark to tell. The French students burst into a bout of raucous laughter which, though they weren't looking in our direction and didn't seem to speak English, seemed to be somehow at our expense.

We went in, energized, and began to dance again.

John and Mary danced close and I stood on the outside, trying to meet eyes with a young man by the bar, to no avail. I felt a vague, unpleasant rising in my stomach.

Shortly after that I went to the restroom. I passed by the man I had seen earlier at the bar, but I did not look at him. The restroom was as crowded as the rest of the place with a long queue for the stalls, a few clusters of people handling tiny plastic bags, red-eyed and breathing with their mouths. I had to lean over with my hand on the wall when I got to the urinal, or I would have passed out. The world started to spin out of my vision, and I was so nauseous that it was hard to breathe.

When I eventually went out back to find John and Mary they were sitting back down, now on the same side of the table. I couldn't see their hands. Mary's lipstick was smudged and she seemed bothered by my presence.

"I'm sick," I mumbled and leaned over the table.

Mary turned to me, backed slightly away from John. "I've got medicine in my apartment."

"Ok."

She fished her keys out of her pocket. "303. Turn the key twice. Go behind the bathroom mirror."

"Aren't you coming with me?" I asked, sounding more pathetic than I hoped.

"Do you *need* me to?"

I looked at her and bit my lip. I said,

"No, I guess not," and walked off and out the door.

Moving in the night among the lights and with the crisp air in my lungs, I found it suddenly easy to believe the city had dreams, that the afterimages crossing crookedly across my vision were all part of some grand carousel.

The apartment was dark and I couldn't find the light switch, so I fumbled around with my phone's flashlight. The room was very messy, the floor matted with clumps of clothing and a few books and many clear plastic bottles. I thought they must have been mineral water. I found the Dramamine pills in the bathroom and took three of the little pink pills with a handful of water from the sink. I sat on the counter for a moment. The whole room smelled like antiseptic. Then I went out into the room and found a lamp, which I was able to switch on, flooding the space with warm orange light. The mess was only clearer. I saw that the bottles on the floor were not mineral water. Looking at the room I was seized with remorse and I went quickly out the door and ran down the street back to the bar.

When I reached the entrance I heard an unfamiliar voice call out to me. I turned to my right toward a group of young men drinking halfway out in the street.

"Looking for your friends?" asked one of them, a British tourist in a black puffer vest with a half-empty red glass in his hand.

"Well, yes, I'm—"

"The tall bloke and the brunette?"

"That's them," I replied, a little surprised.

He raised his hand with the drink and pointed down the street toward John's hotel and said, "They went down the way a few minutes ago." The glass banked in his hand and one of the cherry ice cubes rolled out and broke on the sidewalk. "I should warn you, though."

"What."

"Didn't seem like they wanted any company." He grinned and the rest of his group snickered.

"Thanks a lot," I said and went walking down the street in the opposite direction. The wind was rising and I buried my hands deep into my jacket, pushing the shivers down. I imagined

myself recorded on an infrared camera, the bright red amoeba inside my chest melting to orange, yellow, and eventually settling to blue if I didn't get warm. I didn't know where I was going. I took out a cigarette and turned right around to light it against the headwind. Far down the way I could see a grand old façade with cubes of light, warm and scattered. One of them went dark.

After a while walking I decided to return to Mary's room. I didn't bother to turn on the light and I collapsed onto the unmade bed. I was still drunk, the blood dully rocking back-and-forth in my ears and the thoughtless contents of my skull reeling on steep invisible coaster tracks. It was all moving too

"Espresso. Want any?"

"Sure. Some sugar, too, please."

I sat back down on the foot of the bed, feeling the world reeling, blinking lightly since the darkness spun faster. I felt very sick, but I was confident I wouldn't vomit. Coffee would help.

Mary came in a few minutes later with a Carrefour sugar shaker and the espressos in small white cups. Her hair was wet and black and she wasn't wearing any makeup; there were grayish bags like dark sand beaches for her watery blue eyes which betrayed tears shed along her return. We sat in silence and drank our coffees, both wearing the same clothes we had on the night before, while I thought of something I

"Don't lie to me. Is John full of shit?"

I said with a sigh, "I don't know. I don't know Pete. I hardly ever see him."

"Does John *really* know him? Could it be true?"

"I don't know. It's possible."

"Okay."

I walked over to the door and opened it.

"Jake?"

"Yeah."

"Are we bad people?"

"Who?"

"Forget it. Please, just go."

"Ok," I said and shut the door behind me. My footsteps sounded massive in the tight empty hallway.



fast for coherent thoughts to share the space.

When I awoke sunlight was tilting in through the thin linen curtains. I judged from the color of the hanging dust gleam in the room that it was late morning. One of the windows was slightly ajar, and from the street below I heard bright birdsong and the silvery crackle of coasting bicycles. My head throbbed and my vision was blurry. As I was rubbing my eyes I heard a sharp, sudden *hiss* from the kitchen. It startled me and I rose fast to my feet.

"Mary?"

"Yeah?" her voice answered. She must have just come in.

"Oh, sorry. Shit. You scared me. What're you doing in there?"

could say that I wouldn't regret.

"Are you alright?" was what I decided to say.

Mary sniffled and her bottom lip quivered. "What do you think?"

"I think not."

"There you go."

"Should I leave?"

"Yes, I think that would be good. Maybe I can meet you for dinner."

"Sure, why not."

I stood and put on my shirt and began to lace my shoes. I turned back to look at Mary. She was looking at me just below my eyes and her whole body had begun to rock quietly; I knew that when I closed the door she would shatter.

"Jake?"

"Yeah?"

I walked from there to the hotel, through the lobby and to the elevator, but I hesitated before the door. My heart began to race and my mind went blank. I hadn't thought of what I would say to John. Suddenly the whole idea of even seeing him made me sick to my stomach. I turned around and went back out into the street, walked three blocks and stopped at a park, sat down on the bench and looked around at the strangers around me. Suddenly they were all just like newborns, and I knew only their unblemished faces and soft brows, and I couldn't fathom their debts to one another.

# varanasi and her worn heart

“Every city has a heart. Unheard but never voiceless. Unpolished but never dirty. A thief you can call by her name.”

By SRINA BOSE

Every city has a heart. A heart beating for the streets we didn't want to walk through.

For the goats dressed better than men. For the dogs who never bite and never get a bite of our *chum chums*, yet are teased senseless by their sweet, sugary scent. For the explorer. The skeptic. The gullible. The forgetful. For you. For you. For you. Every city has a heart.

Here it beats in the *rikshawala* pulling three fat ladies on an *ubar-khabar* road. An *ubar-khabar* city: unpaved streets, open gutters, frequent falls. An *ubar-khabar* heart: cracks and crevices, holes and gaps, no complaints, no complaints. He bumps into a scooter. No one yells. No lathis. I am surprised—I assumed the partisan saffron taints everything. Instead, it dodges the city's heart, not interrupting its perpetual golden. Instead, the scooter-wala pats the unfortunate victim's head.

Amidst the traffic—the Brahmins, their *puja* fee more morbid than the dead they bid goodbye to; the *sham-shan ghats*, their overlooked hands and stolen shoes before stolen gods—there are *gallis* to walk through. Supposedly dirty lanes. Strangely brown alleys. Unfairly overlooked homes. No car can take you through. There is a river to melt into. There is no caste to stop you through. The hands of a few torch the dead—touching carcasses, flesh, and bone. The hands of others knead dough, read scriptures, and *un-touch*. Our skin, the same. Our palm lines bearing different destinies. Our wrinkles, the same. Our birth, pure chance. Who is an untouched god? Who is the better Hindu? Where does the saffron fade? Can the heart tell color? Can the heart learn touch? Can the city *un-touch*? Can you tell the heart's last name? Can you place it within a bracket—a strata, a vedic text, a Yadav, a Mishra, an occupation, a *jati*, a limit, the sewage, the body, the ash? Can you? There is a film that does not look away: dalit directors,

Indian cities, international platforms. It is the familiar poverty. The brown disdain. Sympathy instead of empathy. Shoes are stolen at the temple, hunted for through the crowd, and the thieves chased down. An expensive pair of Nikes gone. The police are called. The monkeys convene. The Gods discuss. Bare feet, bruises, stone, and gravel—the sacrifices one makes for God. And that too, for such a distant God—such a finicky one. The shoes are found again. The heart does not forget them.

There are *pan* shops to explore, there are temples next to death. There are lovers leaning against each other on the ghats, and roomless brothers sleeping on hotel lobby sofas. There are students with guitars. There are boats that take you places you never asked to go to. There are mosques next to temples and temples next to churches. There is a god alongside the mob. There are birds from places we will never visit, and a desert in the water. Not water in a desert. There is history in the water and a future on this ghat. It is the city of *moksha*, of salvation, of a mother's blue saree, a grandmother's grey death, of afterlife, of holiness and the lack thereof, of a majority, a minority, of kings and peasants, of journeys, and their endings.

Every city has a heart. It beats and beats and longs and longs for the fleeting explorer, the unfaithful skeptic, the gullible victim, the forgetful tourist, for you, for you, for you, to call it a home.

In a five-star hotel, with chocos and cold coffee, bacon and sausages, posh marriages and complaining customers—you don't hear the heart. You only see fancy murals and paintings. A heart of bills. Of conversations. Of sneaky references. Of Facebook posts. Of a polished, well built ground. A well maintained, groomed heart. An unbroken heart. Not *ubar-khabar*. Not even the slightest bit. Who would want this one?

Every city has a heart: a heart common to all. Common but never worn out. Affordable but never cheap. Dismissed but never forgotten. Dismissed in pursuit of taller buildings. Grey concrete nothingness. Highways instead of *gallis*. The corporate instead of the community. The individual before the society. The head instead of the heart.

Landlocked. Confined. Where is the water? The boat? How have we gone from creating to producing?

Every city has a heart. Unheard but never voiceless. Unpolished but never dirty. A thief you can call by her name. Orphaned but never unloved. A homeless heart, but never without its own warmth. A night without light. A boy without a room. A boat without a motor, but hands, hands and hands: praying, paving and painting. They hand light candles under the moonlight; hand blankets and love; hands that paint walls before they build walls; hands that never forget to wipe tears; hands that bear destiny and names and razors and nails; hands that love love, love, love; hands that feed *Bhujjiya* to birds and *Gol Gappa* to visitors; hands that make *chaat*, *malaiyo* and *lassi*; hands that hold other hands as they walk over the boat. Over to the ghat. Over to the next day.

Every city has a heart, and a heart needs no God. A heart beats and beats. And its hands hand love and love. Every city has a heart. A heart, a heart, a heart. For you, for you and for you. Here, I have seen it. Held it in my palms. Seen its blood.

Its death. Its God. Its rebirth

Every city has a heart. It beats today. For you. For you. For you.



A heart is all too easy to ignore, to conceal, but Srina Bose makes it vivid and irresistible for the Nassau Weekly.

# the life and loves of a hopelessly unromantic artist

"i bit your fingertip. you tasted like cigarettes and irish whiskey and sweat—discordant, utterly unamerican, addictive."

BY MARVEL JEM ROTH

"No matter how far you travel, you can never get away from yourself. It's like your shadow. It follows you everywhere" - Haruki Murakami

*Light only becomes visible, becomes real, once it collides and rebounds. while light travels, it's as if it doesn't exist. then, to be seen, for perpetuity, one must impact another. otherwise, you become a figment, liminal, only realized through the havoc left behind.*

*as i paint the landscapes of my travels, i recall some of my collisions, the only moments in my life i knew i meant something to someone. the only moments i became real:*

*i. malibu, january, oil on wood, 'three dolphins leap from the waves into a pink sun':*

we were walking along the coast, barefoot, the pacific's blisteringly cold waves running over our feet. we were near tower eight when a bee, nestled in the grainy sand, stung the smallest toe on my right foot. it reminded me of when you ran through the broken glass bottles in the alleyway outside your apartment in only your socks, nostalgic of a child in a flowery meadow. the waves continued to swarm and ebb as we watched my blood wash into the ocean. he ran to the lifeguard for sting-kill to sedate the pain as you sat with me in the sand, unbothered by the chill of the salty wind, and we noticed how the seafoam coated the Point Dume cliff-side. i preferred my lips sealed, i didn't want to say a word. i didn't want to break the comfortable silence, the semblance of peace, but you did:

*'your eyes look like the ocean'*

i didn't reply, but i thought your lipstick matched the sunset. in that moment, the dying bee still lodged in my foot, we understood eternity...when he returned, my skin discolored from the

cold, my back burning from the support of your hand, my eyes unmoved as he kissed me, i wished he brought sting-kill for my heart as my bloody feet ran away from you, from home.

*ii. new york, february, watercolors on canvas, 'a sliced peach, dripping in honey on pink silk':* you told me as we went back to your place on St. Marks that you despised New York in february, that the city was thrown in a dreary black and white film. but not to paraphrase your eloquence, you more accurately shared: *'winter in new york? yeah, she's a bitch of a motherfucker.'*

you always did have a way with words. yet, your apartment was an oven, warm and glowing, tarot cards strewn over pink bedsheets, one turned face up, beaconing.

*'what does that one mean?'*

*'it means my boyfriend is shitty, it means act impulsively, it means you should...' when you stopped letting the cards read you, you looked near-shattering. 'it means i have no fucking clue, just, oh fuck—'*

hours later, my back stinging with scratches, my eyes stone, gazing into nothingness, unable to see, i dreamed of fleeing down your fire escape, away from the city, from your too-warm silk bedsheets, from superstitious sex. towards an ether of salt waves crashing down, bellowing into a sea of infinity. tranquil alpine forest cathedrals — silent, at rest, stone. my arm around you stiffened, forming not the breadth of cloud blanket from the Rockies' summits but the stained glass mosaic you wanted of me.

staring through the pitch black at the dutch-angle to your fire escape ladder, desperate to understand materiality, sleepless, i wanted to scream, cry, dream, misdefined.

you couldn't understand. you sighed through a smile:

*'god, i love tarot.'*

*new york is so depressing.*

*iii. berlin, march, charcoal on wood, 'a moth flies into the sun':*

there was a jazz combo at the bar playing Miles and Chick. you took the

drink from my hand, your lips closing around the bottle rim, eyes boring a hole through me.

*'can't they learn how to play a damn rhythm, the g doesn't place on three, it—'*

*'shhh'* you put a finger to my lips.

i am a real pain in the ass. typical starving artist. beyond frustrated at the europeans' terrible rhythm, haze on my senses, i caught the confident smugness of your lips — you knew you were effortlessly more important than the cacophony of the shitty broken samba in the background. more drunk than i would like to admit to, unacclimated to the twelve-percent abv beer you didn't think twice of, in defiance, i bit your fingertip. you tasted like cigarettes and irish whiskey and sweat—discordant, utterly unamerican, addictive.

*i was used to being a particle of light. some apparition, trapped traveling invisibly towards earth's undefined corners. to feeling opaque control, manifesting some hue of light i sought to become. but you were the sun, and morphed from a light into an icarian moth. a finger too close to the embers of a cigarette, burning yet intoxicated from each masochistic second in its presence, lungs ablaze. you should have burned through, no longer pleasing, like dozens of marlboros before you. but i could never travel far enough away. for you are always there, for there is always a sun. i resort to the world of shadows, shaped from silhouettes formed of your reflection on the moon, refracting gossamer clarity. understanding. definition. radiantly, luminously dull.*

*a return to what was, is, and always will be.*

*rebounding off-of, on-to. incandescently in-between.*

*yours. mine. nothing and no one. always. light.*



# Piece by piece, Korea Comes Back Through Jeanie Chang's Clothes

From *East Meets West* (2021) & *Metanoilepsis* (2025) to *Hôtel Tassel* (2025).

BY HEIDI UKYUNG NAM

I TRAVELED LIKE A nomad through the crowd at Jeanie Chang's fashion collection preview, *Hôtel Tassel*. Jeanie stood near the drinks table, decked out in a bold yellow-and-black peacock print dress at once floral and scaly that unforgivingly wrapped around her figure. But somehow, she seemed to me more regally Korean than ever. The dress's silhouette could not have been more different from the dress of the Chosun Dynasty's royal women, tending to spread out voluminously like ships' sails, but its images of a peacock feathers and wings carried a reminiscent formality. Young-chin Wangbi, the wife of Chosun's last prince, was depicted wearing a royal blue wedding robe embroidered with 138 pheasant pairs, and its edges adorned with yellow clouds and phoenixes in an abstracted display of heavenliness. The shared symbolism of flamboyant birds representing regality—pheasants and phoenixes of Korean royalty and Hera's peacock—instilled a strange sense of recognition within me. This methodology of abstraction—which I recognized as functioning here as a visual alignment that allowed traditionally antithetical cultures to meet—also inhered in Jeanie's previous collections, which I had seen. She asked, "You remember how we first met?"

Jeanie and I first grabbed coffee in May of this year, the day after her debut show in Chancellor Green: *Metanoilepsis*, a title combining *Metalepsis* ("a literary or rhetorical leap, often connecting distant ideas") and *Metanoia* ("a profound shift in perception"). Jeanie had sewn 20 pieces over her senior year and showcased them on her friends, who walked as models around the cleared-out Chancellor Green library. On a usual day, the space is pensively quiet, covered in reddened wood and stained glass. Sunlight romantically cascades onto dusty books and velvet spines, revealing their patient

beauty. But on the day of the show, the space was unrecognizable. It was mostly dark, but lit up purple, blue, and red by spotlights in the octagonal corners of the second floor, so looking up felt like a cosmos from the lowest point in the earth. Yet, other lights pointed to the center, the colors converging as shocking white light. The new Chancellor Green promised transformation, mystery, and renewal, which thrummed in a soundtrack featuring our friend Ina Aram's voice, calmly narrating poetry throughout the heady synth mix.

Watching the show felt like sitting in on Jeanie's fantasy dream. Models dressed in black leather passed those in white organza, blue satin, and desert-colored lace. A triangular collar hung over a rectangular silhouette, and fur hugged chocolate leather. Many disparate looks seemed to come together in *Metalepsis*. Though all were beautiful, I was most impressed by the final white gown that ended the show, the piece that, for me, brought *Metanoia*. The piece was a floor-length high-neck gown with a subversive triangular cut-out back unexpectedly showing the model's shoulder blades. Regardless of the avant-garde cut and the gown's Hollywood aesthetic, its whole expression felt unquestionably, essentially Korean. Jeanie clarified my sense of the dress. The fabric, Korean hanbok *dan* from Seoul's Dongdaemun market, a nationally famous large commercial district housing traditional markets, made the dress redolent of Korean traditional dress.

"I wanted to reinterpret where my own design work started [through *Metanoilepsis*]. The last dress is a Hollywood-esque gown, but the back deep V cutout is lined (also with a different sheer *dan*) like the front of many hanbok designs with the cross-over V-neck," Jeanie commented. "It's kind of a 'reversal' of the direct reference [to hanbok]." In the few moments when the model, a Korean American friend of Jeanie's, walked through the aisle, I felt that I was watching the essence of Korean culture—composed and timelessly elegant—move alive with each shift of the *dan*, and that my heart was

thawing a little, in a strange way, at recognizing its familiarity.

At their highest level, Korean artists use the elegance of abstract brushstrokes to display the essence of things. Two paintings, both national cornerstones, show this well. *Portrait of a Beauty* (1858) by Shin Yunbok depicts a woman who hides her eagerness about her own beauty under a mask of ambivalence. Every strand of hair, which is not depicted as by minute, thin lines, but a continuous, thick brushstroke, presents an abstract desire through its sinuous movement, rather than trying to explicate it through an accumulation of small details. *A Bull* (1953), by Lee Jung Seob, also conveys the idea of a bull in motion with a few broad, rustic lines. Both present a subject's truth through abstraction, not explanation through an ultra-realistic description. The thicker, fewer brushstrokes create an effect of matter-of-fact restraint, which alludes to a specific atmosphere or emotion.

Jeanie's white dress and other works also reflect a similar methodology. By selectively incorporating Korean culture into Western pieces using traditional fabrics or silhouettes, she also evokes—this time not an essence of emotionality—but a tradition of Korean art. Not beholden to a too on-the-nose homage of Korean traditional dress via accurate mimicry, Jeanie still effectively cultivates a sense that she is working in the metrics of Korean culture. Her goal is "not to make a modern hanbok," but to explore how the form and materials of the hanbok can naturally live within her design language. Her work has carried Korean artistry since her first attempt at fashion, *East Meet West* (2021), a set of looks she created during COVID-19 for a YoungArts Competition. She took elements of the *hanbok* and *jeogori*, traditional Korean garments, and *tal*, traditional Korean masks, and fused them with Western pieces like the corset and denim to create "I Am Both Detachable Denim," a piece that presents as rebellious, teen-spirited and Gen Z-coded, but carries a dignity that typifies Korean craftsmanship.

Staring at photos of the pieces, I

can't help but recognize them as *hanbok*, although the upcycled jeans and cloth should have screamed the opposite. Each detachable piece of differentially shaded denim resembled *saekdong* ("vividly colored stripes of fabric"), which are sewn together to form *jeogori* sleeves. Jeanie's *jeogori* has the same dignified yet relaxed silhouette of a ship's sail, and the A-line mini-skirt, though short, is layered with different denim textures, carrying the feel of a multilayered *chima* (skirt) that flows out long and voluminously to the ground. Without being over-realistic or replicating every single detail of traditional *hanbok*, Jeanie was reflecting an

unchanged despite its experiences. Like the Hollywood-esque white dress made of *dan*, the subversion of "I Am Both Detachable Denim" reflects Jeanie's own unique position of a Korean-American artist who preserves her heritage through the Korean practice within Western culture.

Jeanie moved to NYC full-time in the summer to work on her fashion brand, Genie Couture. Heading to her second collection's preview on September 20 with Ina, something warmed my belly from the inside out. Ina, who was half Korean, and I being brought together again by a Korean-American designer felt like a reconnection with my roots.

But it wasn't just that; I was also excited to find a piece of Korea in unfamiliar settings again, to feel that shock of seeing something familiar in a neckline, a cut-out back, or the shiftings of a skirt. As an effect of being displaced from my home culture for extended periods of time while studying in the U.S., I often feel numbingly distant, only instinctively Korean in some distant sense that I must recover, piece by piece. Reflecting my distanced connection in its production, Jeanie's white dress returned a chunk of my sense of Korean self back to me, cutting it loose from the dangerous suspension.

Amid a low-lit Art Nouveau soirée breathlessly filled with ostrich feathers, new collection pieces were hanging from the racks and walls. Slinkily dressed Princetonians and fashion PR persons laughed, talked loudly, and sipped dark red Asian-inspired cocktails. Jeanie started talking as if she were confiding a trade secret. All the displayed pieces were from her newest collection, and the pieces on the wall, specifically, were pieces still in "translation" between her and the manufacturers. "So that's their interpretation of my designs." Jeanie would go back and forth between manufacturers, sending over her designs to see, quite literally, what they made of it. She might receive perfect products in one go, but it was much more likely that she was returning the item in its garment bag with pins at the hip, or arrows in the designs, including enlarged illustrations of how a particular fold in the sleeve should angle. The piece would continue in a limbo of mutation until made perfect. Shifting, hemmed, disposed.

Re-interpreted with each clarification. Born again of the same scraps. Jeanie was going through the iterative process with the hope of making it meaningful. This way, her heritage could truly be "something that always finds its way back" through a creative process.

Jeanie asked me which piece I found most noticeable. I pointed straight to the green silk top, reminiscent of *dan*, diamond-shaped and backless but for a reddish tassel tie falling vertically down. She said it was thematically tied to Victor Horta's *Hôtel Tassel*, but also to Korean culture, particularly *hanbok*, which starred many intricate tassels in their designs. I loved it not only because it was objectively, undeniably beautiful—but also because it subtly evoked the traditional garment, neither appropriating nor attempting to "scream KOREAN."

Because of the fabric and form Jeanie chose to create this new backless *hanbok* top, it didn't come across as culturally entrepreneurial as K-town sweet shops or America's commercialized tourist traps around Squid Game do: loud and cartoonish. On the contrary, it felt naturally derived from Korean culture, the product of a designer who works outside the "singularity placed on Asian dress or Korean dress." Jeanie's work does not evoke her heritage in the gaudy, often mainstream way. She walks the middle road of creatives who allow the Korean culture in their hearts to come forth in whatever regal forms, subverted cuts, traditional materials or shades within their work.

After leaving Jeanie, I lingered in front of the green tassel top. It brought the same heart-thawing sensation as the white dress did, and I knew that the top was a piece that even my ancestors from dynasties past could also easily appreciate with recognition and pride, if they could ever get over the scandalousness of the wearer's exposed skin.

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*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](mailto:thenassauweekly@gmail.com).*



essence of Korean art through abstraction, like our ancestors.

The upcycled materials reflect the idea of heritage as "something that always finds its way back," Jeanie told me. Even though "I Am Both Detachable Denim" shows skin along the wearer's midriff and legs in a way unlike *hanbok*, which hides all skin except for the wearer's face, neck, and hands, its exposure effectively subverts the direct reference to the reservedness of Korean culture. Implicit in the collection title "East Meets West," Jeanie's version of *hanbok* is steadfastly elegant as it "meet[s]" the West, and candidly carries the marks of the transformation resulting from this intercultural encounter. It does not feign a Koreanness that is

**Voodoo reaches into a rich past to forge an even richer future. It's a record that enacts the contradictions at the heart of its genre: neo-soul.**

By SIMON MAROTTE

After the release of his acclaimed debut album *Brown Sugar* in 1995, D'Angelo wanted to trim the fat. The album, he later said, was too "buttery" for his taste. Yet its demos, recorded in his Richmond bedroom and refined with producer Bob Power, had felt right. Something was getting lost between the bedroom and the studio. Something that retained the grit, the dirt of a first take. Something that, in D'Angelo's words, came "straight from the cow to the glass."

Enter *Voodoo*. Released on January 25th, 2000, D'Angelo's sophomore album is a set of stripped-down, airtight grooves. It is both retrospective and innovative: it's a dedicated study of the "masters"—Prince, Jimi Hendrix, and Marvin Gaye, among other greats—wielded with fresh rhythms and production techniques. *Voodoo* reaches into a rich past to forge an even richer future. It's a record that enacts the contradictions at the heart of its genre: neo-soul.

In terms of the *soul* of *neo-soul*, *Voodoo* wears its influences on its album sleeve. Saul Williams' liner notes read, "The distilled ambiance of an Al Green song, the ambiguous sexual majesty of a Prince song, the creative genius of Stevie Wonder ... D'Angelo has made his choices..." D'Angelo assembled his cast of musicians with a vision in mind. Producer and drummer Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, bassist Pino Palladino, and jazz virtuosos like trumpeter Roy Hargrove and guitarist Charlie Hunter helped him capture a classic sound at Hendrix's famed Electric Lady Studios. No doubt, D'Angelo was aiming to conjure the spirits of soul, jazz, p-funk, and R&B with the right people at the right time.

The sounds of the album echo such alchemy. Jazz flares suffuse the record in its instrumentation: Roy Hargrove curates close harmonies with his horn arrangements on "Playa Playa," "Spanish Joint," and "Feel Like Makin' Love," and Charlie Hunter takes us to a smoky New Orleans club about two and a half minutes into "Spanish Joint."

Beyond strict jazz, the chord progressions of tracks like "Untitled (How Does it Feel)" and "Send It On" evoke gospel, while the rhythm section, anchored by Questlove's sparse drums and Pino Palladino's syncopated basslines, is drenched in funk.

It is not wholly surprising, then, to discover the composition process behind these tracks. D'Angelo asked his band to study the work of the masters and participate in live jams. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* upon the album's release, D'Angelo remarked, "It was definitely school, man ... I ain't never went to college, so this was my equivalent." Poring over old albums, books, and videotapes of live shows, D'Angelo and Questlove submerged themselves in the sounds of those who came before them, encouraging the band to play through entire albums and catalogs of the masters. On one occasion, they played Prince's *Parade* until they happened upon a groove that would become *Voodoo*'s final track: "Africa."

Despite its adherence to his musical heritage, the album is remarkable in its ability to conjure the *neo* of *neo-soul*, particularly through its hip-hop stylings. Along with DJ Premier, Method Man, and Redman, D'Angelo employed record scratches and sly sampling on tracks like "Devil's Pie" and "Left And Right." *Voodoo* similarly showcases the hip-hop tradition of reversed samples: Hunter's guitar peels back midway through "The Root," and a flurry of reversed tape sweeps through the intro and outro of "Africa."

What is most striking about these production choices is the way they blend so seamlessly with *Voodoo*'s analog feel. Using the technique of vocal overdubbing, D'Angelo's voice expands into duplicated harmonies and collapses into one line within nearly every song. On "Feel Like Makin' Love," the layered vocals resemble Hargrove's horn arrangements in their lilts and bends. On "One Mo'Gin," they resemble the call-and-response of the background vocals of old soul tracks. And, on "The Root," as musicologist Loren Kajikawa observes in his essay on *Voodoo*, they work to "simulate and enact a version of spiritual ecstasy," as the final chorus loops with such a dense antiphony that it evokes transcendence.

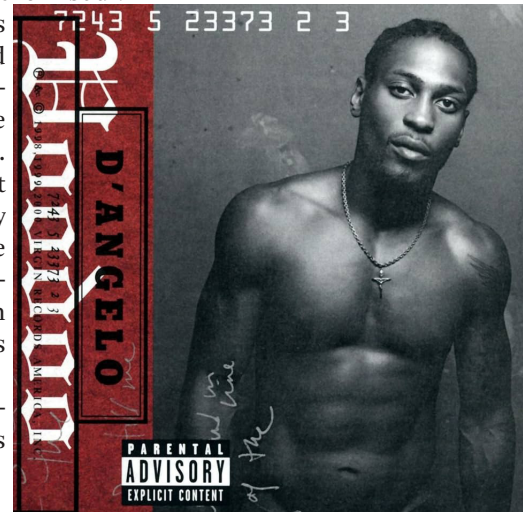
These tensions between the analog and digital extend to the record's

rhythms. The rhythmic patron saint of the studio band of *Voodoo* was the legendary hip-hop producer J Dilla. Dilla was known for a particular rhythmic invention in his work: the juxtaposition of the uneven long-short pulses of swing against the steady, even beats of straight time. Dilla used "quantization"—the digital correction of rhythm—to displace notes just before or after the beat's primary pulses. The rhythms that resulted were wobbly, swampy, and strangely human.

D'Angelo and Questlove set out to see how Dilla's "sloppy" drum-machine sound could be replicated on a live kit, by a human drummer. Prior to the recording of *Voodoo*, Questlove was intent on achieving machine-like precision—to be "as meticulous and as quantized and as straight as 12 o'clock." However, upon hearing Dilla's style, with its scattered kicks and swung snares, he realized the possibilities of stretching his rhythms. He laid them even deeper in "the pocket"—that ineffable lock-step of drum and bass that makes your nose wrinkle and your brows furrow.

In recreating "Dilla time" on a live kit, D'Angelo and Questlove complete the loop; they use a human to achieve the technologically-mediated "humanity" forged by Dilla. It is no surprise that these beats are notoriously difficult to play. They require drummers to deprogram from standard straight or swung timefeels; they demand mentally separating the kit into independent elements, each at different paces. But the result is an infectious beat that is perfectly imperfect.

*Voodoo*, then, is a well of paradoxes. The instruments are analog; the instruments are hyper-produced. Rhythm is precise; rhythm is sloppy. The classics are respected; the classics are subverted. The album is *neo*; the album is *soul*.



# Purgatory is in a West Village Walkup

"It was one of those topsy-turvy Wednesday evenings in New York when one feels like they've fallen through a manhole and landed in New Amsterdam: when everything feels offputting and unusual in occurrence."

By LOLA HOROWITZ

Malina's body hadn't turned up, she wasn't dead, the radio never mentioned her name, but she preoccupied Philip's every waking thought.

On the night of their first engagement, a ritzy dinner, there was a deluge of rainfall upon Manhattan, and Philip had arrived late, drenched, and squelching in his ruined suede shoes. He found Malina by her smoldering cigarette embers beneath the restaurant awning.

"I know, I smoke. I'm a disgusting woman," she admitted, continuing to smoke. "It's a gross thing to look at. I'm disgusted. I won't suit you. We should end this whole grotesque happening before you sicken yourself for good."

Malina was cast in a disfiguring shadow so that, abstractly, her disembodied voice seemed to belong to the restaurant bricks.

Precisely when she chose to blow out her smoke in his direction, he chose to admit, "Tomorrow I'll be four years clean."

Malina turned as pale and as unmoving as a sheet on a clothesline when the wind is still. "Dear lord. You resilient soul." And then, casually, as if wanting him to hold her purse, she said, "Kiss me."

They forsook their dinner reservation for the Manhattan Bridge—a scene plucked from a musical. Malina was music in the fullest sense of the word. It was composed in her soul. A grand piano was staged centermost in her apartment while the furniture was shoved against the walls. Her CD collection and music library were outrageous, overtaking medicine cabinets and dresser drawers, covering countertops and windowsills. She fortified herself within sound.

Malina preferred the pianos of manic, populated restaurants to those of the quiet and classy. She preferred rooms with heartbeats where dishes flew to clothed tables and glamorous patrons

babbled and her music threw the whole restaurant into a whirling commotion—but the hysteria was momentary. Malina retired prematurely when her hands were crushed in a Macy's elevator on Christmas Eve, maiming every phalanx bone at an irregular angle. When she attempted a simple etude, the piece sounded clumsy and unpleasant, like she hadn't spent her entire life sitting on a piano bench.

Philip had been most attracted to Malina's root-like fingers. Gnarled as they were, he had never felt more held, more entangled, than when his joints assumed unnatural contortions to fit his hand with hers.

On their fourth date, Philip trekked up to Malina's sixth-floor West Village apartment with a bouquet of lilies and two Carnegie Hall tickets. Her front door was ajar. When he pushed it further open, it jammed and, peaking inside, Philip beheld CDs. Everywhere. Toppled, scattered, snapped. Her apartment was a bomb site, but Philip had a premonition that this upending was Malina's own doing. She was a dissociative woman, always gazing too intently at a stain on the wallpaper, a lump in the carpet, behaving as though on a precipice. Malina's apartment was a corner unit. The fire escape overlooked the graveyard and the bathroom window overlooked the garden.

Malina's unannounced departure stranded Philip. Only then, in her absence, did he regret not knowing her more intimately. Malina didn't own a phonebook, so he didn't know who to call aside from her landlord. He had never met her friends or seen her photo albums. She didn't hang pictures of herself, not even mirrors. Philip only knew of Malina's cat, so, to prevent its starved carcass from stenching the apartment, he came routinely after work to replenish its feeding bowl.

Malina's cat was a rescue and surely conceived in a sewer. It was an unsightly creature, grotesque, and with puckered pink skin like that of a malnourished burn victim. It preferred a carnivorous diet and tore murderously into its dinners of mashed turkey and beef. The cat stank of unbathed feline-ness, sinisterly rubbed its fishy odor over Philip's ironed pant leg, and bore a striking resemblance to Malina when she cried. Both their faces were blotchy

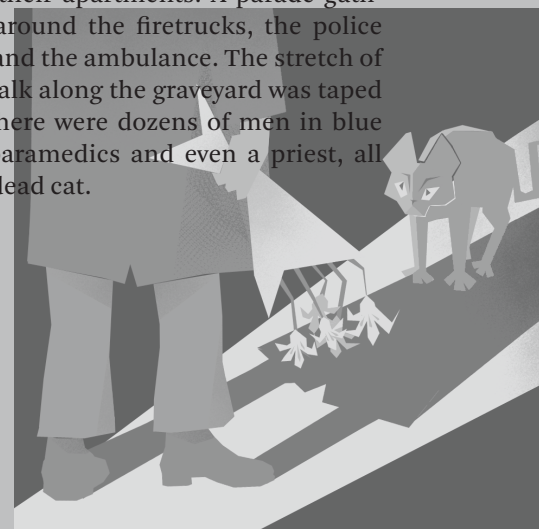
and flushed like a disease, and it discomforted Philip that this was the only reminder he had left of her.

Philip tolerated cat-sitting because Malina had been the only delight in his mundane life, stuck behind a bank teller window. She was introspective and tortured, yet curious and inviting. Straddling a Manhattan Bridge beam, Malina wanted to know everything about Philip, all at once, from his foulest deed to first love. Usually, Philip found prying women unattractive because they provoked his ugly speech impediment. He rarely used his voice. But Malina was patient, she wanted to hear what he sounded like, and Philip felt compelled to divulge his entire person to her.

It was one of those topsy-turvy Wednesday evenings in New York when one feels like they've fallen through a manhole and landed in New Amsterdam: when everything feels offputting and unusual in occurrence; when all the traffic lights are green and the subway cars are empty; when there's a mob of pigeons and the denizens are polite; when the avenue lanes are walkable and there's nobody around; when Philip came home to feed the cat and the apartment had a draft.

She had pounced off the fire escape handrail, spread her limbs as if to be lifted by the wind, and plummeted to the graveyard below. She had split her skull on a tombstone, rolled through the dewy grass, and caught her head between two pickets in the wrought iron fencing.

A class of preschoolers witnessed the fall. Apocalyptic screams ensued. The nosey residents poured in an exodus from their apartments. A parade gathered around the firetrucks, the police cars, and the ambulance. The stretch of sidewalk along the graveyard was taped off. There were dozens of men in blue and paramedics and even a priest, all for a dead cat.



# We're All Born Naked

Riddle me this, riddle me that.  
Watch out, girls—this list is back.

By **ELLIE DIAMOND AND HARRY GORMAN**

Presented here is a list of 100 drag names we've kept since our sophomore year. Names have been added impromptu when any phrase shows even the most meager resemblance to a woman's (or man's) name. You are welcome to use any of these for your next drag performance, though we cannot promise they will help you secure a \$5000 cash tip courtesy of Fierce Drag Jewels. Now let the music play!

## List of All Time

1. Kelly Leproblème
2. Miss Tree
3. Ella Emma Ayo
4. Vicky Cristina Barcelona
5. Mrs. Show
6. Simone Vile
7. Simone Bile
8. Guillotina
9. Brazil Gisèle Diamond
10. Romantica Nicole von Andrews
11. Amandela
12. Miss Carriage
13. Veronica Electronica
14. WeHo Wendy
15. Ashley Kenazi
16. Laura Afikomen
17. Agnes Day
18. Chevy Chase
19. Torrisi
20. Lottie Bothered
21. Pashmina Platinum
22. Ginny Tonic
23. Izzy Pink
24. Arielle
25. Phillipa Waterbottle
26. Ally Mo
27. Nora Meme
28. Jackie Herschschwag
29. Mackenzie Scale
30. Gal Fagot
31. Virginia Cuntingham
32. Justin Time
33. Willy Nilly
34. Nick Nac
35. Brian Rot
36. Rita Lowd
37. Wanda Pizzacoming
38. Debbie T'Gooff

39. Lori Lightfoot
40. Wendy Gethere
41. Wendy Beatdrop
42. Bermuda Triangle
43. Ginormica
44. Cris Martini
45. Justin Dewitt
46. Joey Hotdog
47. John Fancyrestaurants
48. Ol' Hickory Ham Mike
49. Sherry A. Law
50. Ally VanWell
51. Yvonne Online
52. Manny Cure
53. Perry Bull
54. Gabe Rother
55. Gayle Overs
56. Charlene Anna Chocolatefactory
57. Donna Time
58. Donna Gree
59. Sprakenzie Deutsch
60. Jennifer B. Boobs (the b stands for asshole)
61. Nina Levin
62. Geneva Convention
63. Olivia T. Namwar
64. Pearl Harbor
65. Gloria Hole
66. Mary Poppers
67. Nunu Goonone
68. Patti LuPorn
69. Cris Gender
70. Ky El-Yusef
71. Rachel Siri
72. Fromita Yu
73. Stillanda Fence
74. Miss Undressed
75. Yanny Fae Laurel
76. Missy Wittat Bullshit
77. Stan Corrected
78. Klarna Doordash
79. Wendy McDonald
80. Beth Anne Bodywerks
81. Molly Percocet
82. Gaye Guye
83. Lora Spasm
84. Inna Zenzat
85. Uta Nøt
86. Missy Ristorante
87. Lara Mi Project
88. Qwerty Keyboard
89. Ann L. Fisher
90. Ally P. Shah
91. Marissa Waves
92. Pumpernickel Experience
93. Momo Horror
94. Orthorexia

95. Rosacea
96. Amnesia
97. Trolley Problem
98. Luteal Phase
99. *Italicized Lady*
100. Rumi Boxi

Harry Gorman and Ellie Diamond have inspired the Nassau Weekly to start its own drag career... we are henceforth known as Narcissa W. Eakly. Wait, scratch that. We'll workshop it.

