

This week, the *Nass* shines a spotlight on everything you've hidden from. Oh horror, oh gloom!

# The Nassau Weekly

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# DENIAL

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Dear reader,

For the sake of self-preservation we often seek ways to evade burdensome truths. We paint over prickly facts and banish their stubborn consequences from view. What more effective place to encourage denial than a university, where to advance is to externalize variables with chilling calculation and optimize messy life into a few ordered, controllable elements. Of course this incentive structure narrows our horizons, encouraging us to withdraw from what lies beyond our immediate concerns. But what's the alternative?

This issue, the *Nass's* writers try to answer that question, sizing up the external and then shaking it down. They arrive at myriad conclusions. Deep discomfort accompanies oceans of plastic and dimly lit starship interrogation chambers. Slopes of scree yield wonder. Thistle-ridden fields prompt care and then heartwrench. What to do with these data is unclear and conflicting, but what unites them is a shared attentional process of collection and study that refuses withdrawal.

The rhetoric of denial is an effective political mechanism for concealing our responsibilities to the broader social and ecological web of relations that we inhabit. This issue asks whether a mode of external record-keeping could counteract political denialism, enabling us to fully understand and fulfill those responsibilities.

Cheers,  
**Alex Norbrook and Frankie Solinsky Duryea, EICs**

## Masthead

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## This Week:

By Amy Başkurt

Hello Princeton! Midterms are upon us, but you've got this! Be sure to take breaks, and have some fun with the campus's newest events.

**The Princeton University Orchestra** storms back into Richardson Auditorium (Alexander Hall) with an electric concert program. Performing Berlioz and Roy Harris means a mix of big sounds and emotions (Oct. 4, 7:30 p.m. and Oct. 5, 3:00 p.m.).

The James Stewart Film Theater (185 Nassau) is hosting **an evening of 16mm films** *literally* developed with plants. It seems that the garden has gone cinematic! Think cinema studies meets botany lab (Oct. 6, 7:30 p.m.).

**Victoria Lomasko**—graphic journalist, activist, and self-styled “last Soviet artist”—will be hosting a discussion at Princeton in East Pyne 245. Expect sharp observations, biting humor, and visuals that cut straight through the noise. Hosted by PIIRS,

free with RSVP (Oct. 9, 4:30 p.m.). **Benjamin Benne's play** surfaces in the Wallace Theater (Lewis Arts Complex) Oct. 3–5. It's part grief meditation, part fish shop drama, part unexpected tenderness. The event is free, but make sure to snag tickets (Oct. 3 and 4, 8:00 p.m., Oct. 5 at 2:00 p.m.)!

Don't let the stress of exams and papers get to you! Be sure to stay eventful, Princeton.

Email Amy Başkurt at [ab7955@princeton.edu](mailto:ab7955@princeton.edu) with your event!

For advertisements, contact Ellie Diamond at [ed7627@princeton.edu](mailto:ed7627@princeton.edu)

## Verbatims:

### Overheard at Small World

*Stereotypical SPIA major:* “I interned at McKinley this summer.”

*Her coffee date:* “Oh, does one of your parents work there.”

*SPIA major:* “No, my dad's a client.”

*Coffee date:* “A big client?”

*SPIA major:* “Yeah, like a really big client.”

### Overheard after a philosophy precept

*Tech bro:* “Well, uh, my moral compass is ChatGPT, so I'm not sure I'm on board with that.”

### Overheard in Addy Hall

*Crazed chick:* “I'm literally going to convert to Judaism.”

*Enabler:* “You called down rains from Adonai.”

### Overheard at a 2D dinner

*Student telling a story:* “... so I never ate anything bad in my childhood”

*Another student interrupting:* “Like paint?”

### Overheard in the middle of nowhere

*Bored 20-something:* “Wanna cop a ludicrous felony and attack the electrical grid?”

### Overheard on Firestone B-Floor

*Frazzled student:* “Sorry for being late, I just had the most wonderful conversation with a Kazakh woman.”

### Overheard in Coffee Club

*Barista:* “Large false dichotomy on the bar.”

### Overheard at Terrace

*Member of the LGBTQ+ community:* “I think a gay man and a straight woman can have sex and be in a normal marriage.”

### Overheard on Nassau Street

*Guy on coffee date:* “I think SOC is really easy.”

*Girl on coffee date:* \*nods\*

*Guy on coffee date:* “I don't even know what SOC is.”

### 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!



# Juicy Stuff

## Tales from the Princeton University Farmer's Market

BY ALEXANDER MARGULIS

The Princeton University Farmers' Market is unique in that its theme is juice. I came to understand this just the other Wednesday, when I made my way up to Firestone Plaza and found that, save one particularly delicious empanada joint, lines had formed only for stalls that offered some sort of juice. This enviable camp included Tico's Eatery & Juice Bar, of course, but also Ooika (matcha is basically juice), Ice Dreamz (water ice is basically juice), and Terhune Orchards (apple cider is about as close to juice as you can get). Other stalls were juice-themed, too: thirsty Princetonians could buy a glass of RiceWich's "signature Yuzuade," or a briny jar of Pickle Licious' fare.

According to Jarad Roper, the stout and ebullient proprietor of Roper's Way Farm—they do jams, jellies, and lemonades—it wasn't always this way. A few years back, he says, the market was missing something: when it came to drinks, "there was only coffee." Given that the market runs on Wednesday mornings, Roper reasoned, an average customer was more likely to grab a lemonade on the way to their next lecture than they were to tote a bag of organic produce—or a jar of jam—back to their dorm. If Roper's Way was to turn a profit, the farm would have to develop some juice.

Thankfully, Roper was game. He got right to work: "I'm a flavorologist," he tells me, "so I love taking, you know, a challenge." He came up with three lemonades, flavored to match his jams: a "berry jubilee," a "strawberry pineapple," and a classic "sunshine." During

my three hours at the market, Roper sold out of each variant. In the same time period, he sold two ounces of jelly.

Roper wears a huge, angular pair of performance sunglasses. Dreadlocks spill from his orange banana, which is folded expertly around his head. He speaks with conviction and with ample gesticulation. He mans his stand with his dad, Tommie Roper, a thin and handsome man who, when the market dies down at 1:00 p.m. or so, lies back in his folding chair and has an unbelievably long conversation with a guy in a black quilted vest. "History!" this strange interlocutor remarks at one point, throwing a hand in the air. "History," agrees Tommie Roper, somewhat glumly. They go on like this until the market closes.

Before he ran a farm, Roper was a competitive fisher. He did that with his dad too—their two-man team was sponsored by Yamaha. "We went after a species called the Crappie [pronounced kraw-pee]," he explains. "We were travelling around the United States, competing in tournaments for 20 years." Saint Johns River, Kentucky Lake, the Harris Chain: you name it, they've fished it. Their company, Roper Outdoors, kept the caper afloat. "I've always been a manufacturer of things," Roper says. "It used to be jig heads, apparel... now we're manufacturing jams, jelly, and lemonade."

There's another throughline, too: conservation. Roper Outdoors was about "keeping the great outdoors great," and with Roper's Way, the father-son duo devote themselves to sustainable agriculture—food grown "the way God intended." "People used to know exactly where their food came from," says Roper, "and I think we need to go back to that." To this end, Roper plans to expand into livestock farming. He spent several minutes describing the Kunekune, a species of pig from New Zealand known for keeping small pastures healthy. Unfortunately, small pastures are hard to come by: in New Jersey, says Roper, it's very, very expensive to lease land if you want to use it for traditional animal husbandry. Even so, Roper believes that something will eventually pan

out—the logo for his farm features a large silhouetted pig.

For a farmer (or flavorologist) with a plan like Roper's, the Princeton market might start to look like a stepping stone. It's a weird place, after all. If you can't appeal to the plebian tastes of a harried undergrad—if you can't provide the quick thrill of an empanada, or the sweet kick of an apple cider donut—you shouldn't expect to turn much of a profit. It's hard to imagine anyone under the age of 40 buying pasture-raised Kunekune sausage on a whim.

But there's a factor beyond the money that pulls vendors back each year: the people. Roper is about as gregarious as it gets, and he seems to know all of his peers—"we talk," he says, "and we, you know, we become a family." Roper goes out to breakfast with the owner of Nutty Novelties. His cousin runs Ice Dreamz. When the market dies down he joins a handful of business owners at the empanadas stand, and they chat for half an hour. He talks to the students, too. Once, Roper became such good friends with one of his customers that he ended up officiating the guy's wedding. "He came up, pulled up a chair, and I'm like, 'okay yeah, make yourself comfortable,'" recalled Roper. The two became fast friends. One day, the kid, then a Princeton senior, let slip that he couldn't go back home for Thanksgiving. Roper didn't miss a beat: "I said, 'bro, our table's open. You've met like, half the family already.'"

Roper's grandparents worked as sharecroppers in rural Arkansas—Roper himself was an Arkansan until 2020, when he moved up north. His passion for livestock reflects these roots: "I would love to revisit the kind of things that my grandfather—we call him Big Daddy—did," he tells me. For now, though, juice and jams aren't so bad. At the market's zenith, I watched a girl in a voguish cardigan order a lemonade. "How sweet do you want it?" asked Roper, already reaching for a plastic cup. "I mean," she said, "I don't really like sugar... Can you do it *not* sweet?" Roper cracked a smile, wide and warm. "Look, it's lemonade. It's gonna be sweet."

*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).*





# LOST DOG



"She imagined the dalmatian loved humans more than he loved dogs. She imagined him to be obsessed with fetch, to be the sort of dog who'd pause dinnertime to pick up a tennis ball. She imagined him to be sweet, to love scratches behind the ear, and to snore when he slept."

BY SASHA ROTKO

The dog park lay on a bed of sandy dirt. *Loam*, it was called. There were shoots of green at the top of the park, near the reservoir, but it was the green of a weed called *thistle* and it wasn't supposed to be there. The park had a general absence of color, and this, in tandem with how it sprawled, invoked a certain feeling in Kate when she came here, a feeling she did not use to feel when she came with Samuel. When she came here with Samuel, she was focused on him. She made sure he didn't bite any other dogs. She made sure he was drinking enough water on the hot days. She also made sure he wasn't humping any other dogs because the look in the eye of the owner of the dog Samuel was humping reminded her of the look in her brother's eye whenever he came to check on her.

But she wasn't here with Samuel, and so she wasn't focused on anything in particular. The bench was warm, even in February. The sun was oppressive and her eyelids ached as she looked around at today's crowd. This was the big dog park, but she watched a toy poodle scamper around with its standard brother, having made its way out of the more desolate small dog park below. She watched the women leaning, backs against the fence, headphones in and sunglasses on, their pitbulls and shepherds coming over incrementally for validation, for "love", for that thing which is like love, but isn't, because not only do we have things for dogs called collars and leashes but we use

them. And she watched the dalmatian, sunbathing by the gate, as if waiting to leave. Dogs would come over and try to get a rise out of him, but he didn't move. He was morbidly still. He wasn't wearing a collar, but instead a blue bandana that made him look like he'd come from the groomers. But he hadn't, obviously. His white patches were browning and his black patches were browning, too. Kate often watched him. Sometimes he sunbathed. Sometimes he played. But he was always here.

Kate first noticed the dalmatian because of his blue bandana. Samuel wore a blue bandana. After Samuel, she would come to the dog park to feel normal, again. The blue bandana was normal. Focusing on a dog at the dog park—instead of the *loam* or *thistle*—was normal. So she paid attention to the dalmatian, but never encroached upon him. She imagined the dalmatian loved humans more than he loved dogs. She imagined him to be obsessed with fetch, to be the sort of dog who'd pause dinnertime to pick up a tennis ball. She imagined him to be sweet, to love scratches behind the ear, and to snore when he slept.

Today, a woman was with the dalmatian. She sat on a bench right next to where he sunbathed, with some sort of ball-throwing apparatus across her lap. She did not have her headphones in or her sunglasses on. She looked down at the dalmatian and sometimes scratched behind his ears; he would twitch when she did this, which gave Kate a terrible feeling.

This must be his owner. This must be who didn't groom him, who brought him here to the park and ignored him every day (except today). She didn't look like someone who would choose a dalmatian. She looked like one of the fence-leaning women with the pitbulls and the shepherds.

Kate wanted to talk to this woman. She wanted to know if this woman deserved the dalmatian, if this woman had earned his company, or if the fact

that the dog sat at the gate by his lonesome every day was an indication of her capacity as an owner. She decided to assess the situation. It didn't occur to Kate that it might be obtrusive to approach a stranger sitting near a dog one had never so much as pet to insinuate that their caretaking abilities were subpar. Of course not. She felt she had some bystander responsibility to inquire, and so she did. She stood, crossed the loam, and crouched by the dalmatian. He sniffed her hand.

"Isn't he cute?" said the woman. Kate looked up. She evaluated the woman from here, from below. Her skin was pale, but warm. Her nails were long and blue and fake. She was very pretty, but only half-way, like she could take off her prettiness like she could take off her leggings, which were baby-pink and very, very tight. She said, "I'm Lauren."

"Kate," Kate said. She scratched the dalmatian behind the ear. "Very cute. He's here all the time, isn't he?"

"He seems to like it," Lauren said, and then, in a higher voice, "Don't you?" She looked back to Kate. "Do you come here often?"

"I do."

"Which one is yours?"

Kate hadn't expected this question. She looked around again at today's crowd. She looked inward, at herself. She pointed, randomly, to a group of dogs. "The German shepherd over there. Cookie." There were two German shepherds.

"Adorable," Lauren said. One of the shepherds ran over to a fence-woman on the fringes. The other continued to tail a mutt. Kate sent it a telepathic message. *Cookie. Play along.* "I have a shepherd, too. Charlie. Hard to manage, but too damn cute."

"Oh," Kate hummed, "two dogs is hard."

"I can't imagine that," Lauren said.

"Sorry?"

Lauren laughed. "When my ex and I were together, I'd walk his dog with mine and it was totally too much. But

you do you, you know? Like, I couldn't handle that. But whatever floats your boat."

Kate pointed to the dalmatian. "He isn't yours?"

"No, no. He just seemed lonely over here. Charlie is probably busy eating the grass."

*Thistle.* Not grass. Kate didn't say that. She said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize. I just have never seen anyone with him."

"Neither have I, but I'm not here often." Lauren shrugged. She didn't seem to care as much as Kate did. "I knew a

Kate waited. She waited for a really long time. She waited until the sun went down, and then some. And she refused to be one of those women with the sunglasses on and the headphones in—the dalmatian deserved better than that—and in turn she had to find something to fill her time.

So she named the dalmatian. She named him Whale. The naming ceremony went like this: When the park was nearing empty, Kate said aloud, "Your new name is Whale." And he picked his head up a little at the phrase, and he wagged his tail once, almost like he

She pulled the seatbelt around Whale in the front seat and cracked the window for him. She drove home. He looked green—at least his white patches did—driving up and down the Silver Lake hills.

A car was waiting for them in the driveway. It wasn't a car Kate saw often, but it was one she recognized. It was boxy and orange. It was her mother's car. But her mother was dead so it couldn't have been her mother in it. That meant it was her brother.

Okay. Monty would like Whale.

She nursed Whale down from the



girl who brought her dog to the park when she went to work because the dog would shit all over the house when it was alone. Maybe it's like that."

Kate didn't like that idea. She would never do that to the dalmatian.

"Anyway," Lauren said. "I should go."

"Of course." Kate gave her a tight-lipped smile, and took her place on the bench. When Lauren was out of earshot, she made a promise. "I'll stay until someone comes for you." She said it to the dalmatian, as if he cared, as if he even understood. Maybe he did.

\*\*

was smacking the ground, and from then on his ear twitched when she said it, "Whale." And when no one came for him by seven fourteen in the evening, by the time it was Los-Angeles-cold outside, she decided to take him home. She retrieved Samuel's old leash and she brought him to the car.

When they left the park, Whale resisted. Kate thought this was sad. The poor dog must have been here so long, to think he wanted to stay, to be content with roadkill for dinner, a communal water bowl, and *loam* to sleep on. All fine things, but no housed dog would like that kind of life.

passenger seat and through the front door. He slid around on the shiny hardwood floors too loudly. Monty came running from the kitchen.

"Kate," he said, "You got another dog?"

Whale slipped and fell. He stayed lying down, looking up with sorry brown eyes to Monty. "This is Whale," Kate said.

Monty pulled his neck back, like the name had given him whiplash. He squatted and inched his tiny, frail hand toward Whale's muzzle. "Since when?"

"Since an hour ago, actually. He was abandoned in the park." Kate dropped



Whale's leash and went to the kitchen. Monty stood and followed, but Whale stayed put.

"That sucks for Whale," Monty said. "Did someone call you?"

Kate took Samuel's bowl from the cabinet and turned on the tap. "What do you mean?"

"Like, how did you find out about him?"

Oh. "I've just been going to the dog park lately. To read, when it's nice out. He was always there and I just assumed his owners loved the dog park or something but I waited with him today until the sun set and no one came. So I brought him home."

Monty stopped doing whatever he was doing. Kate knew he'd stopped because everything was very silent when she turned off the tap. "Kate, you can't just take home a dog like that."

Kate frowned. Monty was short and unimposing. For him to be scolding her like this felt inappropriate. It felt like something to laugh about, but Monty wasn't laughing, he was very serious. "But he was all alone there. And he's very dirty. I want to give him a bath." She walked back to the foyer, where Whale remained on the floor, and set down the water bowl for him.

Monty caught up to her. "Clearly, someone has been feeding this dog, or taking care of him somehow. He's probably microchipped—you know, I bet someone is looking for him."

Kate walked back to the kitchen. She took a can of pureed pumpkin and a can of Alaskan salmon and dumped them in another bowl while Monty followed her in. She let the silence live and grow a little bit. Perhaps Monty would realize how stupid he sounded if he only listened to himself. She broke the silence, eventually, and said, "Whale has been in the dog park alone, for weeks."

Monty blocked her way through the kitchen archway. "No, Kate. You've been in the dog park, alone, for weeks." Monty took the bowl

from Kate. "I'll take this to the dog. Go run a bath for him."

This was very silly of Monty. Why did he care so much? While running the bath, she did not think about what he said. A little time passed, and then Monty came into the bathroom with Whale, who was wagging his tail and licking pumpkin puree from his lips. He stepped right into the lukewarm water and sat, looking at the two of them expectantly, like he'd done this before, like it was routine. *Okay. Scrub*, Whale said with his eyes. *What are you waiting for?*

So Kate untied his blue bandana and scrubbed, and she watched the dirt leave his fur and his white patches become white again. It all happened very fast, like there hadn't been much dirt caked on after all.

"Someone is looking for him," Monty said.

Kate frowned. She frowned both externally and internally. When the corners of her lips tugged downwards it felt like her heart sank with them. Down, down, down she went. Away from whatever Monty was insinuating. She said, "He is not a lost dog. And if he is, no one is looking very hard for him. He's been in the same spot all month and no one's ever come."

Monty sighed heavily, humidly. "Do you really get to judge a dog owner, after Samuel?"

Kate held her breath. "Samuel was not my fault."

"Samuel might say otherwise."

"I tried to fix the fence."

"Not hard enough. It was Mom who was always catching the dog and bringing him back in and putting chairs in front of the hole in the fence. *Not you.*"

"I watched Samuel die."

"And that sucks, Kate. But I bet you someone is looking for this dog. You don't just get to take it because you—" Monty paused. He shook his head.

"Because I what?"

"You don't just get to take him without asking."

Kate started to feel the cotton of

her shirt writhing against her skin, as if the fabric did not want to touch her, as if it recoiled. Everything felt hot, or maybe she felt cold. "Who am I supposed to ask?"

"I'm not saying you're supposed to ask."

"Then what are you saying?"

Monty unplugged the drain. Whale was clean now. "I'm not saying anything, Katie. Do what you want." He stood. "I'll order us some food." And then he left.

Kate dried Whale off with a towel. He was still too damp to be running around the house like this, so she took him outside for a little walk. Good, she thought, he'll get a chance to know the neighborhood. It didn't occur to her that maybe he already did. It didn't occur to her until Whale peed on a lamppost, that is, and Kate saw it.

LOST DOG. ANSWERS TO SPOT.  
LAST SEEN ON ROWENA. WEARING  
A BLUE BANDANA.

Whale whined below her. "Sad," she said, "isn't it?"

*Doggone it, Sasha Rotko has done it again for us at the Nassau Weekly.*

# Pecan Pie Latte

Students review Sakrid Coffee Roaster's curious Pecan Pie Latte: Delectable or disgusting?

BY SOA ANDRIAMANANJARA AND BELLA CAPEZIO

Three weeks ago, when I came to Princeton, I lost something: my pecan-pie-latte-ginity. If apple is pumpkin spice's forgotten little sister, pecan pie is the family fish that died when the family went on vacation. I was intrigued when I saw the pecan pie latte on Sakrid's fall menu. Nuts in coffee are always a curious flavor combination. In the last three weeks, I've returned to Sakrid multiple times to reorder the pecan pie latte, each time with a different person. "Get the pecan pie latte," I insist, "it's like nothing you've ever tried before." Two out of four times, my Sakrid companion has thrown away their drink before finishing it.

The pecan pie latte looks like any other latte; it has a color code of F2BA6F, a shade of light brown. In D.C., a local coffee shop I frequented would offer a cherry blossom latte throughout the spring. The latte was bright pink—it looked like Pepto-Bismol. It wasn't something you'd want to drink. The pecan pie latte is unassuming. And yet, it divides the Princeton population.

Bella and I go to Sakrid at 2 p.m. on Friday. There's no line when we order our two small pecan pie lattes. We claim a high-top table as we wait for our divisive brew. It's not either of our

first times trying it; a week earlier, on a Thursday morning when neither of us had class, Bella and I came to Sakrid, and I insisted that she try the pecan pie latte. The first time we tried it, Bella shrugged at the first sip, merely saying that it was good. This time, Bella is more descriptive. "It's like I ate burnt sugar and then backwashed it into my coffee, let it decompose for an hour, and then took a sip," she says, "it's not bad." Bella rates the drink three pecans out of five. Doesn't look like she'll order it again.

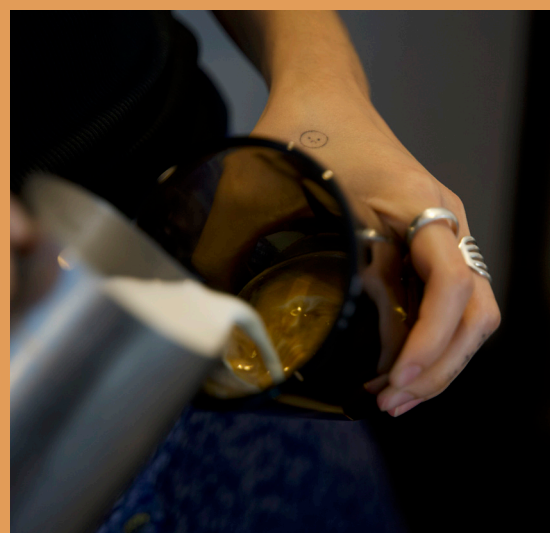
The espresso is strong in the initial sip; it's bitter and coats the front of your tongue. Then it's like a mouthful of soy sauce. The syrup takes over your mouth, and there's an umami to this latte that pairs with the espresso to create an earthy harmony. Then, it's like a mouthful of soy sauce and sugar. This milky soy sauce flavor coats the back of your tongue. Suddenly, you understand what you think you're drinking: espresso mixed with milk, soy sauce, and simple syrup. But that's not what you're drinking—you're drinking Sakrid's pecan pie latte. While reviewing the latte, pecan-pie-latte-gin Michael Grasso walked into Sakrid. He did not buy a drink; instead, I offered him to dip a straw into my cup and try the pecan pie latte. Grasso reacted, "I'm not into that...there's like a weird sweetness at the end. Kind of tastes like mucus, that sweet mucousy flavor." He walked away after that and remarked that he was happy he did not buy his own drink. Michael did not get a chance to rate the drink out of five pecans.

I can't stop drinking it, though, I do wonder, however—**where is the pecan?** Bottles labeled "PECAN" sit on Sakrid's

shelves. Are these bottles filled with soy sauce? Is the pecan pie latte some sort of cruel experiment about consumerism? The buttery, nutty nut is not present in this latte. Where is the pie? I'm halfway through the drink now, and there's this smokiness hitting the back of my throat. Like a fine wine, this pecan pie latte has tasting notes. I'm getting honey, cedarwood, espresso, and dirt. I find it delectable. He did not enjoy the soy sauce note as much as I did. I give the pecan pie latte five pecans out of five.

Out of four pecan pie latte tasters, I was the only taster to enjoy the latte. I wonder what that says about my taste palate. Perhaps I am the only fan of the pecan pie latte. Maybe the pecan pie latte is not nearly as divisive as I thought. Am I the outlier?

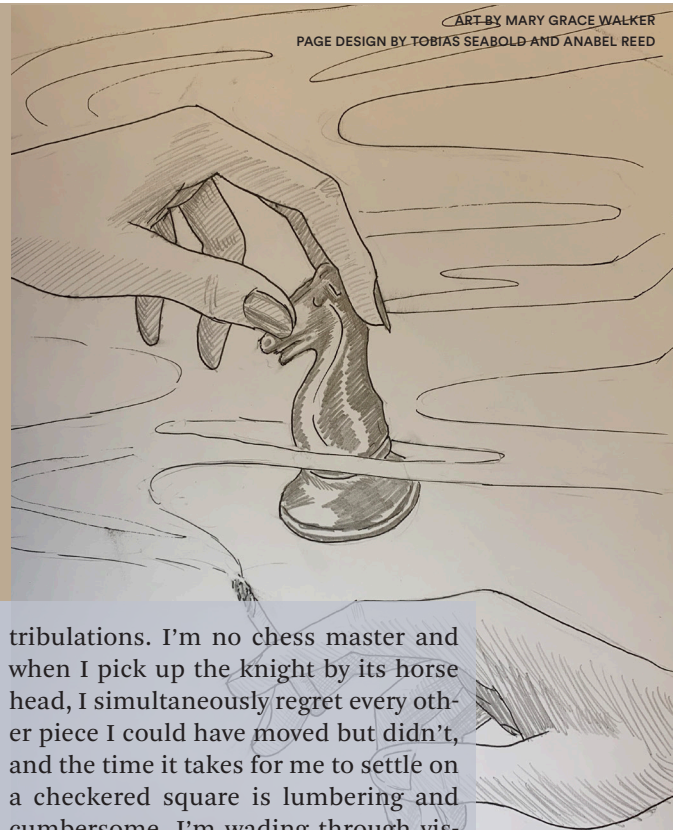
*Wow, who else feels FOMO? This leads the Nassau Weekly to wonder how many pecans out of five Soa Andriamananjara and Bella Capezio would rate us...be honest.*





# Threefold Repetition Doesn't Hold, Not Even A Stalemate

ART BY MARY GRACE WALKER  
PAGE DESIGN BY TOBIAS SEABOLD AND ANABEL REED



"The longest recorded chess match was two hundred and sixty-nine moves, over twenty hours. Mine has drawn on for three fraught years now, and it still persists."

By LOLA HOROWITZ

I've reached the age where I'm like a woman engrossed in a chess match. This woman appears astute and alluringly contemplative. She's bent and folded in her chair—legs angled inward at the knees, elbows propped on the table, crescent hands holding up her head. A body unnaturally posed in pleasing geometrics for the onlooker.

The woman rubs her temple with two poised fingers, a supercilious and deliberate gesture meant to be photographed for the newspaper.

To perceive in black and white would be simple and self-evident. Advance one pawn to take another. Move either forwards or diagonally. Will you marry me: yes or no? A near prophetic clarity ought to descend upon her senses as she studies the chessboard. Instead, she feels like the table is tilting and all her pieces are scrambling out of place.

Nothing is so dichotomous as a two-faced coin to be flipped in the air and land on a firm decision, just as nothing is certain to the woman. The game is too convoluted for her to grasp. These immeasurable possibilities and life-altering alternatives foist a gruesome headache upon her.

The woman is too paranoid of hollow promises and flawed gambits to be decisive. Everything ripe in her just-beginning life has been spoiled by her distrust. It's her most unattractive,

ineligible quality. She's been worn thin by all her doubts, deliberately hides them beneath a cashmere turtleneck. Messiness dressed up in layers and lipstick will at least seem charming, she hopes.

The analog clock at the table's edge counts down her move, and in this dank, oppressive gymnasium, she feels damp and pressed and monitored. Her mother is nowhere near. The woman is encircled by the note-taking press, the pensive arbiter, gentlemen reaching as far back as the walls. Dark English suits and educated stares. She spares no moment to consider what they might be keeping strangled beneath their neckties and button-ups.

The woman is a portrait of exhaustion disguised as focus. She's no stranger to this heaviness and fatigue, even slight boredom at life's interchangeable wooden pieces. The unbearable predictability feels like a quotidian commute to work; all that changes on the train is which congested car you ride, which stranger you face, whether you sit or stand. Occasionally the macabre thought slips in that if the powerlines cut or someone jumps onto the railway tracks, this perpetual state of vibrating dread would be disrupted. Quite rarely now is the woman disturbed, surprised. She desperately wants a player, a spectator, anyone to wail, to discharge a pistol, so that the guttural sound may reverberate around this hushed room and strike her soul.

One of the tournament volunteers outstretches her hand, offering a lit cigarette to make the experience more tolerable, but the woman doesn't smoke—instead she suffers sober and a bit starved.

I use this woman to dress up my

tribulations. I'm no chess master and when I pick up the knight by its horse head, I simultaneously regret every other piece I could have moved but didn't, and the time it takes for me to settle on a checkered square is lumbering and cumbersome. I'm wading through viscous mud. I'm condemned to ennui. And my opponent, like life's opponent, is some unplaceable man. There will always be a man. Brighter, better, more pompous and self-righteous, entitled to your career, your shopping cart, your taxicab at the airport terminal.

The longest recorded chess match was two hundred and sixty-nine moves, over twenty hours. Mine has drawn on for three fraught years now, and it still persists.

My mother used to play these matches, in this boys' club, as did our foremothers, until I finally claimed the seat. The onlookers, the arbiter, the press—each of them passed down their tickets too, ensuring the gymnasium teemed with posterity. It will be the same batch of us, huddled and judgmental, until we grow old and our faces become as unsightly as what we've thereto kept hidden within.

When I finish one game, my prize is to be ushered to another table, and then another, enclosed in a simultaneous exhibition; a gasp and an applause; I gallop round and round plastic folding chairs and cigarette smoke and camera flashes—someone spins, dips, and kisses me—and I'm back at the chessboard.

*The Nassau Weekly is enraptured by Lola Horowitz...and then she puts us in checkmate. Shoot! Another match?*

# Sitting in Awkwardness: Translating Olga Ravn's *De Ansatte*

"Aboard the Six Thousand Ship, employee testimonies put the question of humanity on the forefront, disguising this philosophical inquiry within the mundane bureaucracy of workplace testimonials."

By JONATHAN DOLCE

Last semester, I took my first translation class. When it came time to select the text I would be working with, I, on a late-night whim and eager to head right to bed, entered "best books Danish sci-fi" into the search engine. Out came a list until my eyes landed on *De Ansatte* (The Employees) by Olga Ravn. Over the course of a few months reading the book in the original Danish, the English translation, and then meticulously translating part of the book myself, I struggled (and still do) to conceptualize the world Ravn likely envisioned.

Ravn offers no traditional narrative comforts. Most of her characters have no names and may not even be fully human. But what is revealed is that these employees exist aboard the Six Thousand Ship, an intergalactic vessel that has been studying strange objects collected from the planet New Discovery. Those on the ship begin to experience peculiar attachments, often manifesting in the form of dreams or physiological distress, to the collected objects. The employee's accounts put the question of humanity on the forefront, all while simultaneously disguising this philosophical inquiry within the mundane bureaucracy of workplace testimonials that are ultimately concerned with the ship's productivity.

It's the text's structure, not its futuristic narrative, that makes it challenging

to translate. The entire book is a reservoir of data, pages of testimonies collected by some unknown interview committee over a period of 18 months. These testimonies, which are out of order, document the word-for-word responses of the employees during their interview with the committee. Unlike any other book where there are several non-verbal elements which further propel a story: varying punctuation, dialogue & narrative, the indentation of a new paragraph, *De Ansatte* extracts all those literary privileges and the reader is forced to confront the words of each testimony in their most basic form. You then become a sort of researcher who pieces these verbatim testimonies together so as to construct a coherent story. The story that you decide to build from the testimonial data comes down to which employees you believe, and which you refuse to trust.

This fragmentation became particularly challenging when I began my own translation. For those who have not practiced serious translation before, take a moment to consider what makes a translator "faithful." If you were like me, you likely responded with a knee-jerk reaction that, obviously, a good translator is one who sticks closest to the original. The problem here is that we must define what "sticking" to an original means. Do we maintain the syntax, word choice, structure? Or in doing this are we forgoing the spirit of the work and thus undermining the author? To this age-old question of translational fidelity I offer nothing but my failed drafts. These are questions that all translators must confront and decide how to proceed, developing their own framework for translating.

My translation professor frequently stressed that we ought to "focus on the English." For a text like Ravn's which offers so little other than its words at

face value, it felt like a violation of some translation contract between Ravn and me to embellish the English. Not only that, I also struggled translating from a language in which I was not formally educated. Danish has always been the language of my household, of family, of time spent in Denmark. So despite speaking it fluently, I often resisted more creative interpretations of the text when operating in Danish's written form.

I read somewhere that translating from a heritage language can often make the translator emotional. For me, that emotion was frustration. While of course no two languages are one-to-one overlaps, two Germanic languages like Danish and English get pretty close. So when translating, I was compelled to select the closest word match, but what was produced felt dull and lifeless when compared to the original.

So, I heeded my professor's advice of focusing on the English and began to evaluate each testimony as its rightfully singular voice. Despite my loyal nature, I let my subjective decisions begin to take root in my translation. For testimonies that felt mechanical or alien to me in the Danish, I emphasized that inhuman texture in the English. For those who struck me with their humanity, I preserved their emotional resonance. I had to accept that I was not a neutral party to the text's transformation.

There is a quote by Sean Cotter, a translator of Romanian, where he says: "The process of translation feels like playing chess with a more talented opponent, who makes a seemingly mysterious move with the rook. Maybe a piece is left unguarded as a result, maybe the position seems more awkward, and I stare and stare at the board, trying to guess the point." If there is one thing I took away from trying to translate Olga Ravn's *De Ansatte*, it would be that the

translator is cursed with permanent awkwardness. You are bound to the awkwardness of manipulating something that isn't yours, and through that manipulation you are inevitably fashioning the text to be your own. Ravn's literary moves left me bewildered, and I rarely felt I had the upper hand in metamorphosing them into English. And yet, my translation grew more natural as I overcame my fear of linguistic overstepping—and let myself sit in that awkwardness between intention and interpretation.

The Employees  
By Olga Ravn  
Translated by Jonathan Dolce

*These testimonies were collected over a period of 18 months in order to gain insight into the relationships between our employees and the objects in the rooms. The committee asked them questions about the relationships they had formed with the space and its objects through an unbiased documentation of the subjects' statements. Through these measures we hoped to gain insight into the workplace's efficiency and investigate what possible influences the employees have been exposed to, and how such influences, or possibly relationships, resulted in permanent changes in the employees. We wished to learn whether this could be said to lead to a decrease or increase of their performance, understanding of tasks, acquisition of new knowledge, and thus what consequences it has had for production.*

was the egg mass and the stitching was still attached. I was able to fully discard it. This is the first time I've said anything about it. Maybe I shouldn't have. The next day there was a humming sound again. It was louder than before, like an electric buzz. And the day after, she went silent. She hasn't said anything since. Is she sad? I always use both hands. I don't know if the others have heard anything. I usually go there when everyone is asleep. It's not a problem to keep it clean, really. I've made it my own little world. I talk to her while she rests. It might not look like much here. There are only two rooms. You might think it's a small world, but not if you have to clean it.

TESTIMONY 012

I can't stand going in there. The three on the floor in particular seem to have an inherent evil, or maybe it's just an indifference. And in their deep indifference, I get the feeling they want to hurt me. I don't understand why it's my job to touch them. Two of them are always cold, and then there's the one that's warm. They change which one is the warm one. It's as if they charge each other or take turns transferring their energy to one of the others. I am beginning to doubt whether there are three of them at all or if there is just one, a collective. I've seen an intimacy among them. It frightens me. In fact, I detest it. I've observed it many times. It's as if each one of them can always be one of the others, as if they don't really exist in themselves, but as the idea of each other. They can multiply whenever, in clusters or alone. On the mountainsides, they sometimes look like a type of eczema. But as I have said before, I can't stand being in there. They always make me touch them, even though I don't want to. They have a way of communicating that irks me when I

TESTIMONY 004

Keeping them clean is not too difficult. The large one, I think, emits some form of humming sound, or maybe it's my imagination. Or maybe that's not what you are looking for? I don't know the intention of the investigation, but isn't it female? The ropes are long and bound together with blue and silver thread. They hold her up with a calf-colored leather that is distinct with white stitching. What color is a calf anyway? I've never seen one. From her belly hangs a long, pink, well, how do you call it, plant-like stem? I take longer to clean her than the others. I tend to use just a small brush. One day she laid an egg, and if I may suggest, I don't think you should hang her all the time, because her egg cracked in the fall. Laying beneath her





go in there. Their language says that they are many, that they are not one, that one of them is the repetition of all of them.

#### TESTIMONY 006

When did the dream begin? It must have been after the first couple of weeks. In the dream, all the pores in my skin are open, and I see that in each pore lies a small stone. I'm not able to recognize myself. I claw and claw at my skin until it bleeds.

#### TESTIMONY 002

It was day seven. We put on the green uniforms. I drank milk and lied to the captain so as to avoid being the first to enter. I felt strange that day, strange enough to kiss the engineer on the cheek. I often think about when we first met in the exhaust corridor, and when we went out into the land for the first time, in the valley where the captain lost a case of green grapes, and how after work we bathed in a stream that was so cold it turned our hands and feet red. Looking back, doesn't it seem like our fate was already decided? In the morning, as I was carrying buckets while sunlight shone through the wet, glittering trees, like the ones in the catalog you gave us, I was green and translucent, like a grape in the sun. The engineer would comfort me. His book still sits open next to his bunk, and I keep it that way as though our story hasn't ended. At night when the lights go out, I hear the

humming sound. It all began in his absence. It was day seven and, even though we'd closed for the day, I led the engineer out through the exit corridor to the hill that night. We chewed gum from the pack that was in his pocket. That's when I dug two of them out of the soil. They're probably gone now. My hands chafed and became raw because I wasn't used to this sort of work. It was when the earth softened again with the change of temperature. You see, I was supposed to work in the office, but they needed me to lend a hand this time. I've heard that [redacted] is dead, and they had to put everyone in quarantine. Do you remember the strange chain we found at the foot of the hill on the first day? I don't think he will forget me, the engineer. Are you going to see him? I don't know where he is now or if you'll get to see him, but if you see him, could you please not let him remember me as helpless. I want him to remember me as the one who kissed him that night and pulled him over the hill, and how the dew came right between day and night, and the strange humming from the ground too. There's so much I would like to show him, but I won't show it until I have made sense of everything, and now I might never. I'd rather not be somewhere I can be. No, it has nothing to do with the rooms. I don't think so. I hope you've made good progress with the work. I hope you do all that you need to. I hope he doesn't die, although I know it's likely.

#### TESTIMONY 014

The scent in the room is somewhat light, and it has an obvious smell, like some citrus fruit or a peach. Tell me, I wonder if you guys across the table see me as a criminal? I like coming into the room. I find it very erotic. That hanging object, I recognize my gender in it. Or at least the gender I have on the Six

Thousand Ship. Every time I look at the object, I can feel it between my legs and between my lips. I become moist, regardless of whether I have anything there or not. Among the hunters on my team, we call it *the reversed strap-on*. It might seem crude, but I have said that I don't share your view of things here. That might well be the reason why you think of me as a criminal. Half human, made of flesh and technology. *Too alive*.

#### TESTIMONY 015

I am very satisfied with my upgrade. I think you should let more of us get upgrades. It's me, and yet it's not me. I had to change myself completely to integrate the new part, that which you say is also me. Which is flesh but also not flesh. When I woke up after the operation, I was afraid, but it passed quickly. Now I can do more than anyone else here. I am a very useful tool to the crew. It gives me a certain advantage. The only thing I haven't been able to get used to yet are the dreams. I dream that there is nothing there, where the upgrade is; that the upgrade has torn itself loose or perhaps never was a part of me at all; that it harbors a deep contempt toward me; that it hangs freely floating in the air before me and attacks me. When I wake from one of these dreams, there's a slight buzzing where the upgrade is, and it feels as if I have two: one upgrade where it should be and one floating right above it that can't be seen with the naked eye, and which has taken shape in the darkness where I sleep, out of my dreams.

## TESTIMONY 011

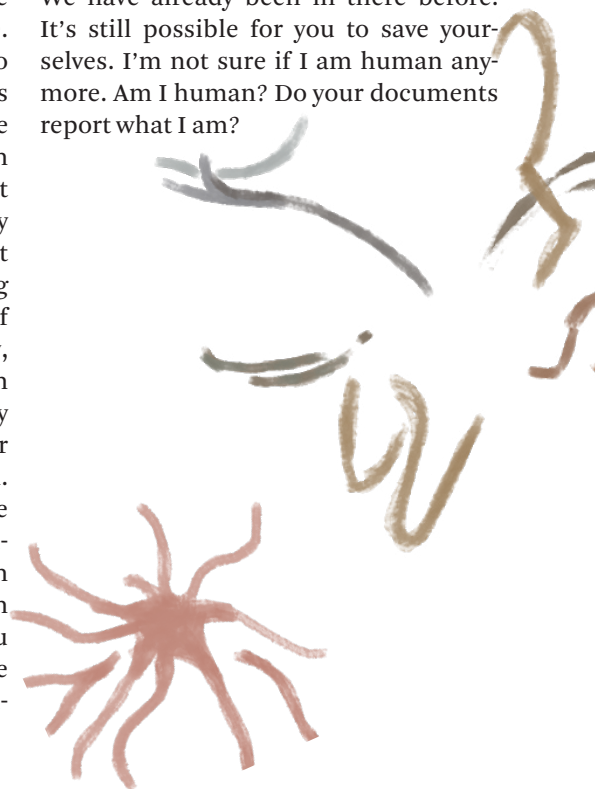
The scent in the room has four hearts. None of these hearts are human, and that's why I feel drawn to them. The scent in the room is like an earth and oak moss incense, like the smell of an insect caught in amber. A brown scent. Heavy, and it lasts a long time. It can stick to your skin, even up in the nose, for up to a whole week. I am familiar with the smell of oak moss because I have planted this scent in myself, just as I have planted the idea in myself that I must love one man and be loyal to only one man. All of us here are condemned to dream of romantic love, even though no one I know loves that way or lives that life. And yet this is the dream they have given us. I know how oak moss smells, but I don't know how it feels with my own hands, and yet in my hand, there is this faint sensation where I caress the moss on an oak's trunk and I imagine I'm standing at the forest's edge looking out at the sea. Tell me, is it you who has planted this image in me; is it part of the program? Or has the image arisen on its own, out of me.

## TESTIMONY 013

I have sat waiting in this room many times before. There aren't any windows but there is a door to the left and a hallway to the right, making an L-shape. The walls are white and the floor is orange. There are hooks on the wall for you to hang your suit while you wait. Here is the best place to sit, and you can come alone if you'd like. The ceiling opens in the middle to let in light. I like to first stick my hands in the light, then my bare feet, and finally my whole head; it feels incredible, almost like I am being cleansed. But then there is a sense of anticipation that runs through my body, like an electric shock. Or maybe it is an electric shock? Do you know? Are they actually electric shocks, is that it? After that, you are cleared to enter the room. But if you aren't human enough, or are in poor standing, for example by not fulfilling your duties, then — well, if I can be so frank — if you for whatever reason inconvenienced the workplace, then you can wait indefinitely. The light from the ceiling won't appear. You won't be allowed into the room. You aren't clean.

## TESTIMONY 010

Don't try going into the second room. It's not nice in there. You have the choice to not go in. Instead, let us do it for you. We have already been in there before. It's still possible for you to save yourselves. I'm not sure if I am human anymore. Am I human? Do your documents report what I am?



# She is such a sad girl I don't know what to do with her

BY WENDY WANG

In my dream I was making you pasta & nothing bad had happened to us  
yet you smiled and told me you would take these multivitamins & forget me.

In my dream I booked a flight to wherever you were & my visa expired as I  
stepped out the door so I unplugged the Earth & now we should both be afloat.

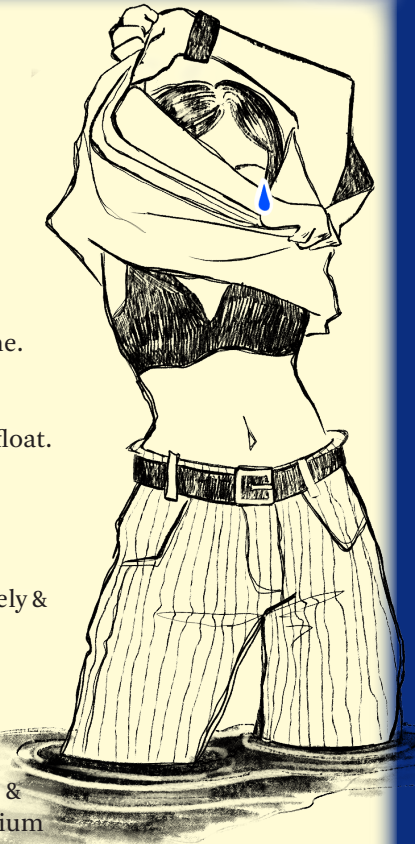
In my dream I stopped using be verbs but you didn't notice because I  
was the one studying English & you just walked to the fridge for yogurt.

In my dream I dreamed about asking you what groceries you were into lately &  
you didn't ask me back so I woke up & wrote down what I could have said:

Pearls & ginger ale & Gauloises bleues & red cabbage & blackberries &  
cheap earrings & burgundy 1971 Mustang 351 & boxed tiramisu & gum &

frozen dumplings & whatever wine they have & period pads & eternal hope &  
knives & Emma Cline's *Daddy* & shaving cream & swimming goggles & valium

In my dream you weren't even there & I said stop hiding underwater & regardless you offered  
your last bubbles & so I stared a little longer & plugged the Earth back in & took my shirt off.





# True Vision

"With intent, the crew scattered around the Island and explored the kind of plastics, trash, and objects that had landed here. What they found was a bit of waste from every corner of the globe."

BY DEVONNE PICCAVER

At 24°22'30" south latitude and 128°19'30" west longitude lies their latest discovery. It took some time for Alaysia to gather her notes from this expedition—having been delayed not by scurvy, as an old sailor might claim, but from a relentless bout of seasickness. Their next destination, they believe, will uncover something staggering: a single place where the tides have converged the bulk of humanity's discarded waste. They are determined to expose the truth.

Tomorrow, they'll set sail at 4:40 a.m., just as the sun meets the horizon line at dawn. For now, she sits at the dock enjoying a bottle of Stella, watching over the port as workers heave barrels and move cranes. *All in a day's work*, they'll say, before using the last clean cloth in their back pockets to wipe their dust-covered faces and head home. The port becomes empty and tranquil. Alaysia breathed in the fresh scent of sea air, and felt optimistic about changing the rules of this game.

For a while, she enjoyed the peace. But all too quickly, the shipyard was animated with headlights. The night shift was beginning. Noise filled the dockyard once again and the workers prepared themselves to experience the loss of a sunlit day, traded for a measly wage. It was both beautiful and frustrating to watch what appeared to be a perfect system. What hurt was knowing its imperfections, the dystopia within the utopia. The exploitation of both people by people and the world by people. She took a deep breath and reminded herself that she, too, had a role to play in

eliminating the injustices.

Just as she was enthralled in watching this performance, Henderson, her crewmate, gave her a nudge.

"It's time to get going, we've got an important day tomorrow," he said.

He knew that tomorrow's escapade would be physically and mentally draining. Alaysia tossed her empty bottle into the bin and nodded farewell to the scenes unfolding before her. They headed back to their ship, anchored tightly to the dock. Henderson double then triple-checked the security of the rope before boarding the ship behind Alaysia.

Despite not having had a quality night's sleep since this whole operation began, Alaysia couldn't help but pull out her notebook. Everything needed to be documented. Even if their plan didn't work, the thought of a young curious mind reading about this in the years to come gave Alaysia hope.

Two years had passed since she had left her work as a teacher of Geography at a high school local to her, along with her partner, whom she never talked about anymore. She was hoping he'd be supportive of her endeavours, but the nautical distance between them had become too taxing.

Having taught climate change to a bunch of ignorant teenagers for five years, Alaysia had realised that the globe wasn't getting any cooler. It was time to do something. After all, the kids did not seem to care. Though there was always one student who showed an interest in what she was teaching, keeping her pushing on. The notion that if there was one student among the hundreds she taught who listened, matched her passion for the planet—that was enough. But, in her final year, the students came and went. Out of sheer boredom, Alaysia had created an online blog, hoping that it would bring her the academic fulfilment she craved. The blog had thrived: by posting her opinions on recent catastrophes or questionable governmental decisions on sustainability, she opened forums

for discussion where users from all over would contribute their opinions—the kind of engagement she never got from the classroom. After a while, she realised that a particular user had revisited her page many times. It wasn't until she exposed a local seaside town for reselling illegally sought fish that the user revealed that they were a member of Greenpeace. She was offered a position to work as part of a new initiative to eradicate the buildup of plastics in the ocean. Through her blog, she had, without realising, opened up a door of opportunity. Without a second thought, that same day, she left her resignation note on her office desk and flew swiftly from the school grounds without regret.

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Now aboard *Vision of the Seas*, she writes yet another entry in her notebook, reporting in as much detail as her memory and the naked eye would permit. She wanted to comment on what she had seen at the port that day. Having seen that their work would ultimately result in current products becoming owned, discarded, and ending up back in the ocean—the same body of water that they had once been transported on. She frantically scribbled that they might as well have just emptied entire containers into the sea, it would have resulted in the same outcome.

The group that initiated the project decided on 'Vision' as a name with an intentional twofold. On one hand, to show that the group acted as the ocean's eyes, looking for pollution on behalf of the sea. In another sense it was to scare, to provoke fear in those who were wrongdoers and make them feel watched—'Vision' sees all. Flicking back through her blog to the start of the mission, Alaysia marvelled at how remarkable it was that so much good could be done in such a short space of time. She landed upon an entry in October 2011 when the group had gathered for the first time. When they met, the connection of devotion was undeniable. At this time, there was a

unanimous uncertainty about what the project would entail. Dr. Lambert, leader of the project, had prepared a presentation; she explained that the group would follow the pathway of product waste through the ocean—quite literally following by boat. There had been much speculation about where the majority of the ocean's unwelcome waste had come from; conspiracies had circulated that a respected and renowned company had been discarding old fishing nets, baskets, broken appliances and anything else they wanted into the ocean. The group's mission was to find out what was really happening, prove it, and prevent it.

After a few weeks of planning, the crew set sail, starting their journey in South Africa, from where they would travel 3,150 nautical miles northward. It was Alaysia's first time being a deckhand, and there were some essential skills to learn about sailing. Luckily, she was only one of two inexperienced sailors—the rest had the knowledge autonomously ingrained within them; it had become a natural instinct. In the first week of their travels, she would learn the terminology, and by the second week she would put the terminology into practice.

"Start tacking the boat to starboard using the East windward, Alaysia," Yousef called out.

Yousef was a professional deckhand, having sailed since the age of thirteen. Many times on their journey, Alaysia would wander up to the deck and find Yousef sitting at the stern looking out over the ocean. He would be there for hours just watching the waves tenderly fold over one another. Alaysia had always wondered what he was thinking about, but deep down she knew. When one is out in the ocean, travelling through a body of water with no end in sight, the sea becomes limitless. It has a consciousness of its own, it has the power to create and destroy, and this is both beautiful and absolutely terrifying. Yousef found this out at a young

age and had been inseparable from the ocean ever since—he would go out every day, fine-tuning his sailing skills and learning new ways of allowing the boat to become a part of the ocean instead of a force that fights against it.

At first, learning the sailing terms was like a foreign language, and Alaysia would often have to determine her left and right using the 'L' shape of her up-lifted hand. In this instance, Alaysia had done quite the opposite and tacked the boat to port, to which Yousef called out:

"Yeahhh that's not it. But nice try," followed by a lapse of wind muffled laughter.

This is when she learned the difference between port and starboard and felt the truth in 'we learn from our mistakes.' After a few months, she found herself becoming quite the hand on deck, and even reached the point of being able to tack the boat or shift the rudder without being asked.

All the while, the crew would latch onto the trail of trash that had pummeled out of various estuaries in South Africa. It was a mix of used packages, cigarette butts, plastic bags and discarded fishing gear, which swirled around in the waves. Sometimes Alaysia liked to think that it was the ocean's anger, a violent rejection.

While eating lunch one afternoon, Dr. Lambert was staring intensely into the unknown abyss.

"There could be Pirates out there," Dr. Lambert said.

"What do you mean by that?" Henderson asked.

"Well, of course I don't mean Captain Hook, I just mean that anyone who ventures out to sea and perishes is a Pirate in their own right," explained Dr. Lambert.

The crew considered this comment while finishing their lunch, then they unleashed the sails once again and launched forward, hoping to cover at least another 75 nautical miles before it became dark.

Through it all, they focused on the

task at hand. There had been word of mouth from Greenpeace Africa that a fishing boat called *The Symmetry* had been throwing unused gillnets overboard. Upon learning that a group of young adults on a speedboat joyride had spotted and reported *The Symmetry* polluting, Alaysia smiled to herself, feeling hopeful that there were still sea life lovers out there. Using the coordinates given by the speed-boaters, they had deduced that *The Symmetry* was two days ahead of them.

Finally, after a sluggish two days of sailing parallel to the west coast of Africa, the crew landed on the coordinates, noting that *The Symmetry* could be close as long as they hadn't drifted too far. They tacked the boat to starboard and allowed the heavy winds to carry them to the right; the whole crew was on deck with Yousef manning the cockpit. All eyes on the sea. Where was *The Symmetry*?

"There!" shouted Henderson, who pointed to the left of the bow.

Without hesitation, Yousef shifted the rudder slightly. It still wasn't clear if this was the boat they were looking for, but they charged towards it anyway. Alaysia whipped out her binoculars, looking for any sight of the printed name. Then—she saw it. Written in italics on the starboard side of the boat was *The Symmetry*.

"That's not symmetrical at all," she laughed.

It appeared that *The Symmetry* had taken a hit to one side, resulting in an obvious indent. Knowing this gave them the upper hand, as *The Symmetry* would have lost speed. Using a megaphone, Alaysia called out:

"Stop your vessel immediately, you have violated the MARPOL Convention and Clean Water Act!"

*The Symmetry* tried to make a break for it, but just as the crew had anticipated, the boat was slow. It did not take long for them to be caught, and likely realising that they weren't going to win this chase, they stopped their boat. *Vision*



pulled up parallel to *The Symmetry*, and the crew began questioning the opposing crew. One man walked up to the edge of the boat.

"We're just trying to make a living," he mumbled.

"You have violated the Clean Water Act, leaving you liable for boat license suspension," Dr. Lambert pronounced.

"Fine. You caught us, but that will be hard, seeing as we don't have a license to suspend," replied the man smugly, thinking that he had outsmarted the Vision crew.

"Perfect, we will just report you to law enforcement," said Dr. Lambert.

The man frowned, searching for a reasonable response that wouldn't land them further in the pit they had created for themselves.

"What law?" he said. "The ocean is a free-for-all, we can do what we want with it."

Alaysia shivered at his response, noting that this was the kind of narrow-minded thinking that allowed pollution Pirates to be so relentless and unforgiving. It reminded her of a time when she had given her class of students ten minutes to complete an activity in silence. Likely feeling restless, one student asked why it mattered if the earth was dying since they wouldn't live to see it. Alaysia had told him simply: *For us. We inherit the fight, just as others once fought for us.* Knowing that she could only do so much inside the classroom to alter the thinking of students like these, she left it at that. Having this man stand across from her now, vessel against vessel, she felt the same urge to school him the same way she had her students.

"You are welcome to venture into the Ocean, *Symmetry*, but only if it is with respect. We will report you to law enforcement and it is up to them what they decide to do, but you don't have to fish illegally and pollute the ocean to earn your way," Alaysia added.

Then, she whipped out her camera and took some snaps of the boat and the people within it for documentation.

As activists, they weren't legally allowed to enforce anything upon the other boat, but they could attempt to educate, persuade and capture all the information they needed to report them to law enforcement. The whole group felt frustrated with their lack of authoritative power as activists; if they could have, they would have arrested *The Symmetry* crew on the anchored spot. Upon parting from *The Symmetry*, Alaysia pondered in her thoughts for a while, considering the informative exchange, and guessed that this was what Dr. Lambert meant when she mentioned Pirates. The type of people, stealing from the ocean, the very ocean that would go full circle and steal from the people their land. A robbery within a robbery, a loot within a loot.

Coming across boats like *The Symmetry* was only just the beginning of what would be a long two years. The search for waste and illegal fishermen would be a wild goose chase, sending them from ocean to ocean. Atlantic, Indian, North Pacific, South Pacific, but never the Arctic; that wouldn't have been productive—especially as Vision wasn't built for such cold waters.

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Alaysia closed her notebook. There was something magical to her about seeing a facet of each ocean, the body of water that could itself engulf the land from which their ship was built, where the laws preventing them from touching base at most countries' harbours were created. One starts to think about society differently, people differently—shifting their loyalty to the ocean whilst never losing sight of the fact that their loyalty to the ocean comes from a will to save the future of humanity.

At promptly 4:40 a.m., just as the sun was rising, Henderson unravelled *Vision's* anchor and directed a thumbs up to Yousef, giving him the all clear to set the boat in motion. That morning, they left the port in Chile where Alaysia had been overseeing the shipyard workers just the night before. They would

travel 2,500 nautical miles through the South Pacific Ocean to the uninhabited, unnamed Island, which would hopefully be the most staggering of all their discoveries.

"Have you got the coordinates Dr. Lambert?" asked Yousef.

"Yes, we're headed 24°22'30" south latitude and 128°19'30" west longitude," replied Dr. Lambert.

It would take them approximately thirty-six days to arrive. In the meantime, the group would pass the time with made-up games, writing, reading and the occasional scuba dive. Most of all, they would spend a significant amount of their time just staring out into the ocean seeing nothing and no one. The closer they got towards their destination, the further away they were from any form of civilization. Alaysia thought it ironic how they were fighting for humanity, all while being nowhere near it. Spending such a large amount of time on a floating vessel hovering within an endless space with only the company of each other was the perfect recipe for an implosion. They maintained professionalism, and had in the two years learned a great deal about one another, becoming in sync and in tune. Although, there had been moments where they'd want to throw each other overboard.

Regardless, they found inevitable trust in one another, sharing an undying passion for the cause that they were sacrificing everything for. They became one with each other, with *Vision* and with the sea, becoming adaptable to blend in with the environment that surrounded them.

"Everyone get up on deck right now, we're twenty minutes out, I can see the Island in the distance," Eric called out.

The crew hammered up the stairs, dropping in an instant whatever they had been doing, desperate to see a sign of life, an alternative to their own. It was there, proud and outstanding, lodged between the bow end railings: the Island. They gathered their equipment:



cameras, notebooks, small containers for sample extraction, gloves and glasses. Getting ready to start as soon as they docked. They had waited thirty-six days for this. Pulling into the Island, the crew stood at the railings and took in the sight. It was magnificently devastating. What they saw before them was a small landmass with an insurmountable build-up of anthropogenic debris. As soon as they docked, the crew filtered out of the boat, taking a few moments to regain their balance after having not touched land since the port in Chile.

"Let's not waste any time," pronounced Dr. Lambert.

With intent, the crew scattered around the Island and explored the kind of plastics, trash, and objects that had landed here. What they found was a bit of waste from every corner of the globe. Not one country was guilt-free—every part of the world had a role to play in the destruction of such an innocent piece of land. Henderson had found at least three plastic dolls in the space of twenty minutes, and one of them had the body of a crab. There was enough plastic here to build an army. What once was a tropical paradise had become indistinguishable from a wasteland. The trees had receded and the multicolored plastics had proceeded.

They remained on the Island for two months and started to put together a story. They examined the various different items and their supposed place of origin and drew what they thought the pathway of the object through the ocean looked like. The figures were almost triple what they had expected. On a 37.3 square kilometre Island lay 18 tonnes of plastic containing 99.7% of the world's pollution plastic and 68% of this wasn't even visible having been buried below the surface.<sup>1</sup> In their time, they saw 13,000 new items wash up on a daily basis. It was uncontrollable, unmanageable—unimaginable. In their

entire two years out at sea, they had never seen a piece of land so catastrophically engulfed by the remains of human activity. It was heartbreaking, but they were proud of themselves for being the ones to discover this, because now they could finally do something about it.

Seeing the ruination of this isolated Island brought Alaysia to a confrontation with the world. Day by day, she asked the essential questions and wrote them in her notebook. Who do we hold accountable for such a mess? Who is responsible for clearing it up? How has the world allowed such calamitous damage to occur? These were the questions she would pose to the world in her blog and in her book. The truth behind what they had discovered hurt the entire crew; at times they felt helpless and resentment towards humanity's existence. It made Alaysia angry and disappointed that she was made from the same biology as the people who had allowed this to happen. But no, they weren't the same as her, they were monstrous, they stole life, they were—Pirates. The Pirates of Pollution. This is what she would go on to call them in her book, seeing this Island and being a part of it for months, had allowed her to undergo an enlightenment.

When the crew was comfortable and satisfied with the evidence they had collected, they boarded *Vision* once again.

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In the coming months, they would travel 2280 nautical miles towards South Africa, docking at the port of Cape Town. The group would say farewell to *Vision*, not forever but for a while. Then they would work intensely at the Greenpeace office in Africa, compiling research profiles and releasing periodic articles on their findings, blaming the countries that were the biggest perpetrators. They would point fingers at the most persistent wrongdoers and attempt to hold people accountable. This blew open

an astronomical public and worldwide discussion that brought their discoveries to the brunt of the news. It would aggravate government officials who viewed their attempt to shed light on these issues as a mutiny. Thus, in their own right, the *Vision of the Seas* crew was labelled as mutineers. With this, they became known and the supposed mutineers would rewrite the traditional understanding of piracy and change the global view—looking deep into the true meaning of the stereotype and retyping it. People were finally responding, noticing and making changes to their lifestyle. With fewer people purchasing plastic-centric products, companies had to rewrite their logistics as the production process slowed. The shipyard, like the one Alaysia had watched that one evening before they set sail towards Pollution Island, had eased up. The workers were relieved—the work was finally manageable.

Three years after the expedition, Alaysia published her book, entitled 'True Vision.' Within the first two weeks, she had sold 3 million copies and had been named as a *New York Times* bestseller. Schools like the one she worked at in 2011 added the book to their curriculum and students were inspired. Alaysia was immensely proud, and reveled in the fact that she could indirectly make a change to these kids' ways of thinking without directly having to stand in a classroom.

The group had maintained their bond and knew that whilst they'd made an impact, there was always more to be done. In the following years, they jumped aboard *Vision of the Seas* once again, and allowed it to take them to every corner of the world, finding Pollution Pirates and fighting for ocean justice.

1. *Guardian News and Media*. (2017, May 15). 38 million pieces of plastic waste found on uninhabited South Pacific Island. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/15/38-million-pieces-of-plastic-waste-found-on-uninhabited-south-pacific-island>.



# Yellow Bikes

BY SOPHIA McNAMARA

Going everywhere on that little yellow bike. To the base of mountains and looking up at the boundary where snow becomes rain. Retreat just below treeline on account of distant thunder. On the downhill a pebble could mean disaster, but make s-turns: wide and coltish. The chain whines and grates and spits out flecks of mud. Pedal down-up down-up down-up. Choke on the wind in your face.

Notice a talus field in the distance and make it a mission. Leave the bike tipped over – sweetgrass poking through the spokes.

Will yourself lighter while traversing a warmed snowbank. Scrape your legs wading through fens. Go waist-high in streams buzzing with electric cold. It's really all very American.





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