

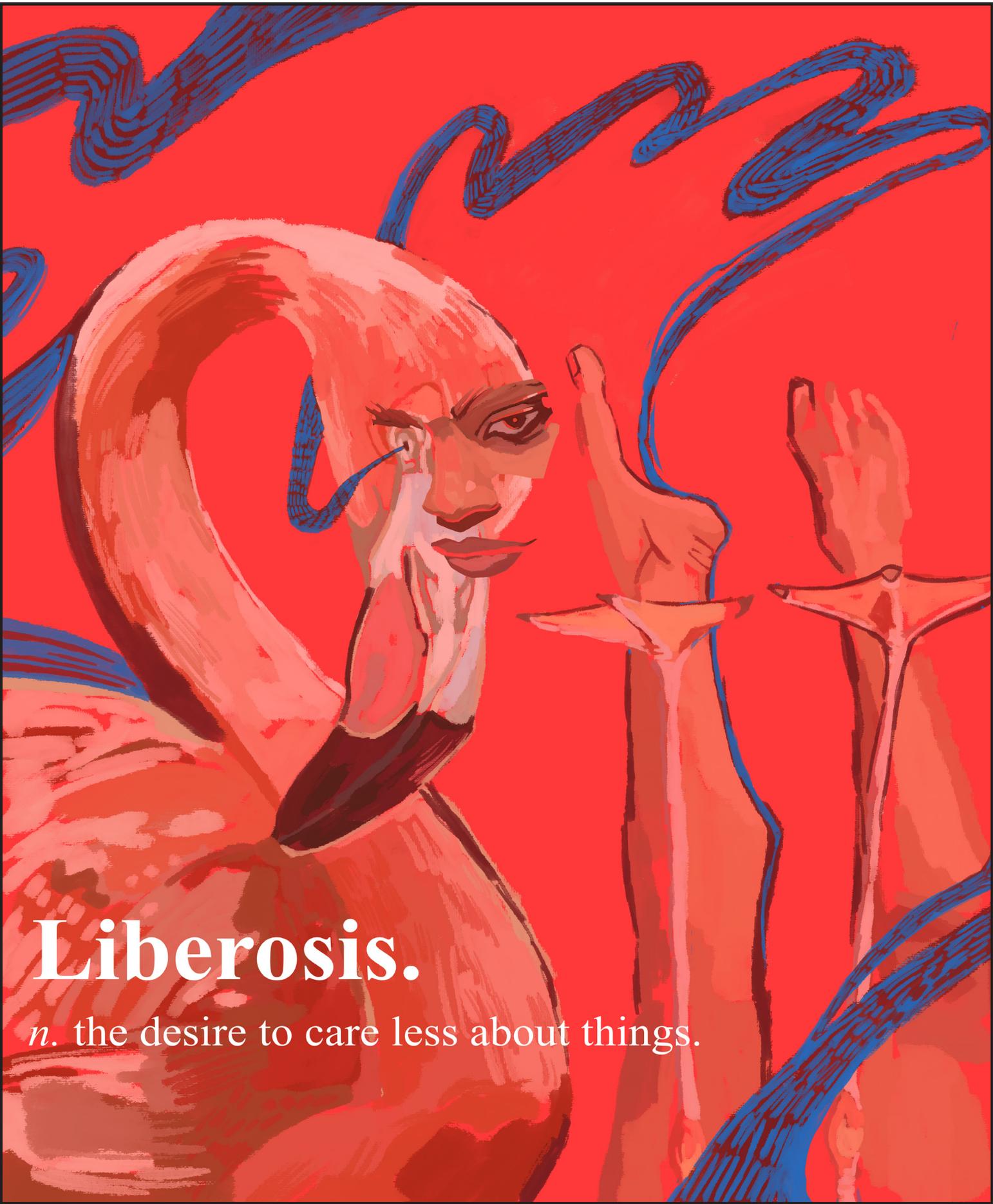
This week, the *Nass* cares a whole lot—maybe too much.

The Nassau Weekly⁵⁰

March 5, 2026

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Volume 50, Number 3



Liberosis.

n. the desire to care less about things.



LIBEROSIS

4

Le départe

By Michael Grasso
Art by Raven Reid

5

One Must Imagine Lindsey Vonn Happy

By Sophie O'Connor
Art by Gwendolyn
Lawrence

8

Nokia

By Eden Reinfurt

10

Hamnet and Sentimental Value

By Scarlett Huntington

13

The Journey of a Ghost

By Vihaan Jetley
Art by Anelise Chun

14

On Brainrot

By Soa Andriamananjara
Art by Raven Reid

16

Unwanted Houseguest

By Nazareth Napper
Art by Anelise Chun

18

On Jackets

By Momo Sonoda
Art by Eden Reinfurt

20

Babysitting

By Sophia McNamara
Art by Nina Obidairo-
Danielsen

Trustees

Isabelle Clayton 2025
Katie Duggan 2019
Leif Haase 1987
Robert Faggen 1982
Marc Fisher 1980
Sharon Lowe 1985
Todd Purdum 1982
Alexander Wolff 1979

Dear friends,

I've been listening to this song over and over again called "Stay Home" by American Football. There are only a few lyrics, but they go:

*Don't leave home again
If empathy takes energy*

Funny, though, because where else to empathize but home? If I could, I'd take off and fly away and hopefully find a nice plot of land somewhere that needed no tending and was too plain for me to treasure, where I could care about nothing and no one could care about me. Doesn't all the caring cancel out, anyway? To be loved, one must love in turn. Oh, to leave it all behind. If only I didn't love what I love so much.

But that's life, it's so social

Tenderly,
Sasha Rotko, EIC

Masthead

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This Week:

Due to Spring Break, this week's events calendar begins Monday, 3/16.

Mon	4:30p 104 Morrison Hall Reasons and Feelings: Writing for the Humanities Now	4:45p-6:15 Godfrey Kerr Theater Studio, Lewis Arts Complex Music Theater Co-Curricular Workshops	Thu	5:30p Community Room, Princeton Public Library Stitch Club Princeton Drop-in meeting	5:00-6:30 Room 10, McCosh Edward W. Said '57 Memorial Lecture: Zionism is Still Racism
Tue	3:00p Community Room, Princeton Public Library Screening of <i>Waking Ned Divine</i>	7:00-8:30p Link on the English Department website The Next Chapter: Career Conversations with Princeton English Alumni Virtual Planner	Fri	4:30p James Stuart Film Theater 2026 Robert Fagles Memorial Lecture: "For and Against a United Ireland" (Free tickets required)	9:00a 219 Aaron Burr Hall Rights of Nature: Why Now?
Wed	6:30p James Stuart Film Theater 2026 Thomas Edison Film Festival Screening: Award-Winning Student Films	7:00-8:30p Princeton Garden Theater Film screening: <i>Porcelain War</i>	Sat	2:00p-4:00p Laporte Family Creativity Lab, Princeton Art Museum Expressive Potential of Everyday Materials: Shoelaces	7:30p Music Mountain Theater Shrek the Musical
			Sun	12:30p, 1:45p, and 3:15p Technology Center, Princeton Public Library Digital Oral History Workshop	7:30 Donald G. Drapkin Studio, Lewis Arts complex Theater &... Flamenco, Love and Lies by Zach Lee '26

Verbatims:

Overheard in Terrace

TI Boy #1: "You know Marc Anthony bro?"
TI Boy #2: "Yeah. The boy?"

Overheard in Coffee Club

Insightful Soul: "We should let the Ukrainians Cook."

Overheard in Richardson Auditorium

Violinist: "One of the opera singers looks like a small Dean Withers."

Overheard in RoMa

Ivy League Hopper: "Harvard dining hall food is so bad. My heart longed for RoMa."
Cynic: "Beggars versus choosers."

Overheard in Whitman

Wasian: "Thank God your parents are a little racist."

Overheard in JRR

DragonVale Enthusiast: "Is it eugenics if I'm trying to collect all the ethnicities?"
DragonVale Enthusiast #2: "No, that's multiculturalism."

Overheard in Tacoria

Guilty Catholic: "I'm giving up masturbation and weed for Lent."
Skeptic: "I give it two weeks."

Overheard on Nassau

Concerned Founder: "How did he even survive?"
Sage Founder: "VC funding."

Overheard at Dillon

Gym Bro 1: "Are you going out on Saturday?"
Gym Bro 2: "No, I'm actually going to Mexico City to see Kanye."

Overheard in Green Hall

Girl Who Definitely Didn't Do the Reading: "You know the AIDS crisis in the...the 19...the late 19s..."

Submit Verbatims

Email 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 by 10 p.m. on Monday. 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!

Fiction

L e d é p a r t e

“The sun is thrashing against the windows now. Your departure has me fixing myself a tomb.”

By MICHAEL GRASSO

Dear Thierry,

I left my shoes by the bed. You know how the floors in our house feel with their stone engravings. I can slip my heels along them. All cold. An offering for you, I imagine. Since I won't be back anytime soon, now that you've moved on. I made the bed too. Pulled the covers over the mattress that we cleaned. I liked the way you used to scrub the sheets outside, moving your hands up and down the washboard. We used to do the laundry together—our shirts, pants, pillow covers, and suits. We'd expose ourselves to the garden and let the grass soak up our forms. Then, in letting them dry, we strung up our vetements for the sun. Afterward, I would follow your shadow

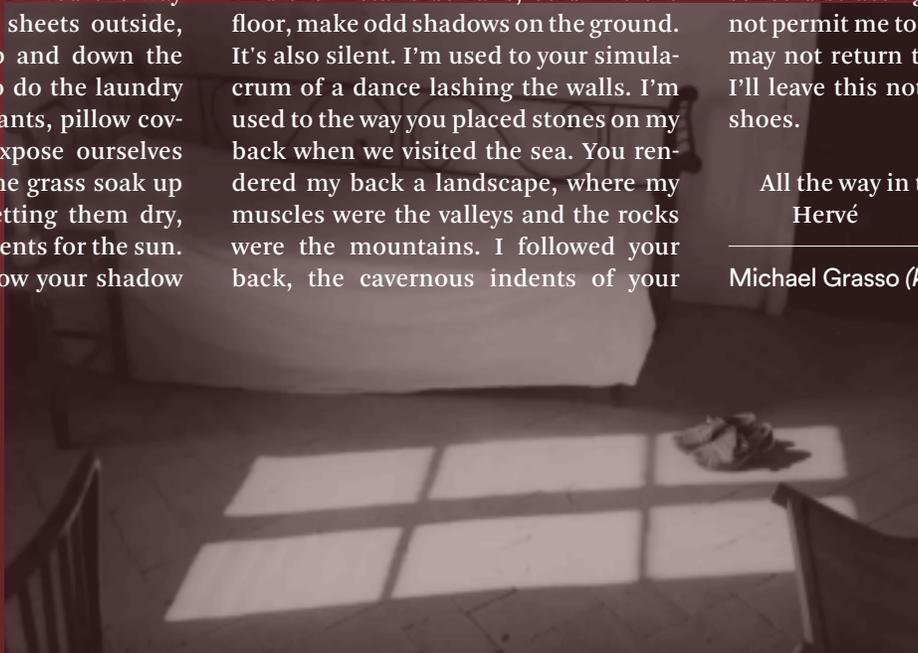
to the door. No respite in the summertime, especially not on Elba. What, with your way of saying, “The hot days slow us down,” I wish it could have gone slower. I brought my camera out again and finally developed the photos from our last trip out there. Half are of your whims at Santa Caterina. I always urged you to defile it with me, but I agreed to keeping our church in reverence only. I'm sitting in that chair by the window. The brown and sturdy one by the bed. I'm realizing there's a lot less in the room than I thought. The sheets are pulled all the way past the pillows—like someone could be lying underneath. And the metal side rails, cold like the floor, make odd shadows on the ground. It's also silent. I'm used to your simulacrum of a dance lashing the walls. I'm used to the way you placed stones on my back when we visited the sea. You rendered my back a landscape, where my muscles were the valleys and the rocks were the mountains. I followed your back, the cavernous indents of your

spine—I could place a lot more there. You took it for yourself.

The sun is thrashing against the windows now. Your departure has me fixing myself a tomb. I cannot see this paper underneath the blanket of rays. Reminds me of voyance—remember how you taught me that word? Seeking other dimensions was possible. My view was always clouded. I never got a perfect sense. Blurryvisions, like some dried-up sunflower compass that points towards the sun, but, losing its way, shrivels and falls. I won't be back either; there is unfinished business in Rome, and this book won't get done with your absence distracting me here. Anger does not permit me to miss you so much. You may not return to our room again, but I'll leave this note here, along with my shoes.

All the way in the Villa Médicis,
Hervé

Michael Grasso (*kind of*) speaks French.



One Must Imagine Lindsey Vonn Happy

On Lindsey Vonn's Sisyphean attempt at Olympic gold.

BY SOPHIE O'CONNOR

"As all the specialists in passion teach us, there is no eternal love but what is thwarted. There is scarcely any passion without struggle."

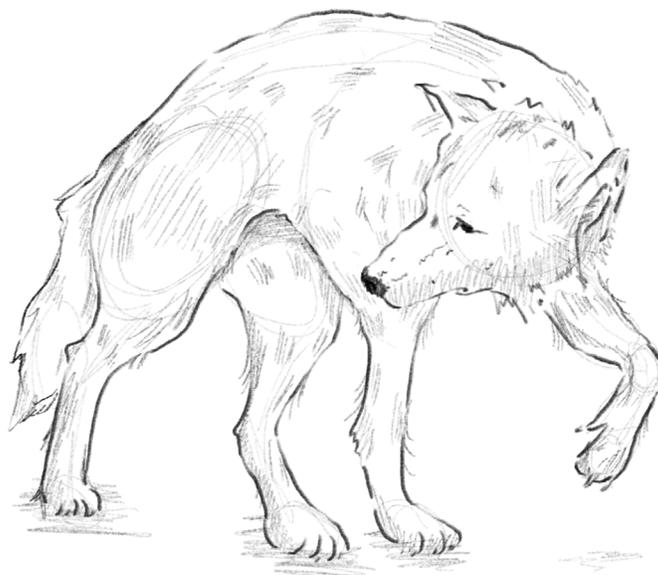
- Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

...

On a Sunday in Cortina, Italy, Lindsey Vonn, age 41, is at the start of the Olympic downhill course. She possesses one titanium right knee and one fully-torn left ACL. Twelve racers have gone before her, she is the thirteenth. American Breezy Johnson is currently in first. Vonn taps her poles in a good luck ritual, three neat bangs, before putting them over the timing wand. Her breathing is loud enough to be heard over the din of her coaches' yells. She is hissing the air in, her mouth forming a perfect O-shape as she exhales. She is looking down at the possibly impossible: gold with a ruptured ACL. At the sound of the starting beeps, Vonn launches out of the gate, throwing herself forward and down the icy slope. After just thirteen seconds, before reaching the first marker of the course, Vonn is flung into the air. Her shoulder clips the gate. Her right arm gets caught in the panel and twists her off kilter. She disappears into a mushroom cloud of snow and reemerges

as a tumbling mass down the hill. She skids to a stop, her legs splayed out, the tails of her skis tangled and stuck under her. Her body resigns, her head drops back into the snow, her perfect-O mouth now crying out in pain.

...



For 34 years, there was but one God in the ski racing world. The Swedish Ingemar Stenmark's 86 World Cup victories were the stuff of mythology. His record stood untouched through changing equipment, evolving techniques, and the new legends of the sport. Any athlete chasing history had to chase Stenmark and his 86 wins first.

2013: 59 World Cup Wins

In February of 2013, Vonn suffered a complete tear of her right ACL and MCL

along with a tibial plateau fracture at the super-G World Championships. The damage was catastrophic and required reconstructive surgery and months of rehabilitation. She initially attempted a comeback later that year, but upon reinjuring the same knee, Vonn was forced to miss the entire 2013-2014 season. Most significantly, she missed the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, where she had been a leading favorite to defend her 2010 downhill gold medal.

2016: 76 World Cup Wins

In February of 2016, Vonn crashed in a super-G in Soldeu, Andorra, fracturing her left tibial plateau. At the time, she was leading the overall World Cup standings and was a strong contender for another overall title. The injury ended her season immediately, costing her the chance to secure what could have been a fifth overall World Cup crown and additional discipline titles. By November of the same year, Vonn was back on the slopes. But in a training crash at Copper Mountain, Colorado, she fractured her right humerus. The damage was extensive: her arm was surgically screwed and plated back together, but the nerve damage left her hand essentially unusable. After trouble holding on to her ski pole as she raced, Vonn duct-taped it to her hand.

2018: 82 World Cup Wins

In November 2018, she suffered a torn LCL in her left knee along with additional bone bruising during training.

Already battling chronic knee damage, she attempted to compete through the pain during the 2018–19 season but was visibly limited. She could not pull down into her tuck, a low aerodynamic position skiers use for speed, the way she used to.

Vonn announced she was leaving after the season; the deterioration of her knees had advanced beyond what her body could endure. Vonn—then the second-most decorated skier of all time—was done. So, in 2019, Vonn took her final bow and said goodbye to ski racing, limping away from the sport and her dreams.

But retirement was unfamiliar to Vonn, who spent the better part of her career as the injured underdog afflicted with and addicted to making comebacks. In a statement on Instagram, she wrote, “Retiring isn’t what upsets me. Retiring without reaching my goal is what will stay with me forever.” She was hungry still, stinging from her body betraying her before she was ready. Though her knees appeared to be done, Vonn felt there was more left in her. A partial titanium knee replacement in 2024 removed her pain. She could train again. She was chasing the ultimate comeback on the world’s largest sports stage: the 2026 Winter Olympics.

In December of 2025, it looked like her comeback might be successful. She won the first downhill of the World Cup circuit in St. Moritz, Switzerland. She won another in Zauchensee, Austria, and finished on the podium in five consecutive races. Was the ski god back? As the Games approached, Vonn, the five-year retiree, was a strong favorite.

While the rest of the world was preparing for the Olympics, ski racers were still competing on the World Cup circuit. Just one week prior to official Olympic

training runs beginning, Vonn was in the Swiss town of Crans-Montana. With the clouds low in the sky, the mountain was shrouded in a hazy flat light, leaving skiers to race in low visibility. Early in the course, Vonn was thrown off-balance by a jump, landed poorly, and crashed into the protective netting on the side of the trail. She was airlifted out by helicopter. Afterwards, Vonn announced that she had ruptured her ACL. She also announced that she still had every intention of competing, and winning, in the Olympic Games.

But the ending is known: on a mountain in Cortina, Italy, on the precipice of one final Olympic medal, Vonn fell, maybe for the last time, and fractured her tibia. For followers of Vonn, this seemed perhaps inevitable: Could she end any other way but a loud, painful finish, an injury, her famous resilience souring, once again, into masochistic extremism?

It is hard not to wonder if she saw it coming, too. And if she did, what restless, unyielding drive, made retreat impossible even when the ending felt written in advance?

...

Alaskans revere the Iditarod, understood by the devout as “The Last Great Race on Earth.” It is the ultimate test of will: one thousand miles in the sub-zero Alaskan wilderness. This race does strange things to people, with reports of mushers hallucinating voices or waving people, or in delirious hazes known as “Iditarod madness,” shedding necessary layers in subzero conditions.

Lance Mackey, an Alaskan mushing icon, along with his wonderdog, Zorro, changed the Iditarod forever when he introduced the “marathon-style” method of racing, breeding sled dogs

for endurance and drive rather than sprinting abilities. Even the fastest of elite-bred sled dogs occasionally slack off on long races. But Zorro, home-bred by Mackey, wasn’t like that—he would pull right on through and past the finish. Zorro had something few other sled dogs at the time possessed: an innate desire to run and to pull.

There are stories of sled dogs choosing to lie down in the snow, refusing to take one more step. To these sorts of sled dogs, Zorro’s desire to run borders on masochism; such a hunger entailed a voluntary submission to the cold and the exhaustion. This extremism of passion, despite the personal pain, was, it seems, the driving force behind Zorro’s greatness.

When Zorro was injured in a race by a drunk snowmobile driver, a veterinarian declared his racing days over. And yet, Zorro would tug at his chain when Mackey chose other dogs for a run, whining and unwilling to accept that the run was no longer his. Some are not born for stillness; it is a cruel demand to ask them to live with it.

...

In his essay “The Myth of Sisyphus,” Camus writes of the Don Juan figure as an archetypal response to the absurd, based on the legendary Spanish libertine of the same name. The Don Juan figure, as Camus writes it, does not seek eternal love; instead, he seeks intensity. In his seduction, he multiplies experience rather than trying to secure permanence, loving fully, repeatedly, and without any appeal to forever. Don Juan has completely accepted the meaninglessness of life and chooses to live in the richness of the present. He values quantity over permanence of experience.

Skiing thrives on this absurdist

masochism. The slopes are injected with water to be icier. Racers don't know where they rank against their competitors as they ski; they have to commit fully, at risk of an unaggressive, slow run. The discipline is hyper-engineered to punish hesitation.

...

Transcript from 2013 super-G World Championships

COMMENTATOR 1: And the hands of Lindsey Vonn, trying to find the perfect grip and trying to chase down Tina Maze redefine the season that Maze is having by saying: "I wasn't there when you took over the overall race."

COMMENTATOR 2: What a rivalry they have. She's going to know Tina Maze is in the lead, but this is the woman here with the most super-G wins of any woman in history and 59 World Cup wins total. When she wants something, look out.

COMMENTATOR 1: So many traps in this course with the conditions. Vonn, right now, four hundredths to work with.

COMMENTATOR 2: Beautiful set of turns there. Were they too perfect? Again, in super-G—just getting bounced a little bit low there, but back in her tuck so well.

COMMENTATOR 1: And now has dropped back—

Cries of shock from both.

COMMENTATOR 1: And Vonn over the top, and she is down heavily. Lindsey Vonn.

LINDSEY VONN (agonized screams): Help. Help.

COMMENTATOR 1: And look at that crash, Coop. Ugh, and the landing is absolutely awful to watch. That is absolutely awful to hear. Lindsey Vonn has been injured in every championship event, Olympics and World Championships, dating back to 2007.

...

Vonn could not have possibly believed in the eternity of her body. To race downhill is to accept fragility, in a sense, as a condition of the passion. Camus' Don Juan, like Vonn, does not lament that love ends; he affirms it precisely because it does. There is a fascinating lucidity in the actions of Don Juan and Vonn. Camus' Don Juan knows that love is transient and continues anyway. In a statement on Instagram after her Olympic crash, Vonn writes: "Standing in the starting gate yesterday was an incredible feeling that I will never forget. Knowing I stood there having a chance to win was a victory in and of itself. I also knew that racing was a risk. It always was and always will be an incredibly dangerous sport."

Camus asserts that "melancholy people have two reasons for being so: they don't know or they hope. Don Juan knows and does not hope." Though she has, over the course of her career, perhaps recognized the futility of believing in an invincibility of her body, Vonn hoped—wanted—deeply. She had a blunt ambition to both break Stenmark's record and to win another Olympic gold medal.

But would Lindsey Vonn have been the same skier had she fallen less? Perhaps at the soft underbelly of the legend, beyond the spectacle of injury and return, lingered a desperate fear of unfinished ambition. Nonetheless, it is unwise to speculate, because there exist some certainties: a Lindsey Vonn who

had fallen less indicates an unaggressive, safer skier, antithetical to her very being. It is doubtful that 87 World Cup wins, or another Olympic gold, would have changed the way Vonn skis. Part of her success was a hunger, a primal desire for speed. One does not become a winning downhill racer if they do not enjoy the thrill of flirting with speeds verging on a lethal finish.

Pain sanctifies nothing. It is, though, a symptom of the pursuit for greatness. For Camus, the goal is simply like Sisyphus' boulder: the value lies in the act of pushing, not in reaching the top. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. One must imagine Lindsey Vonn feels the same.

Sophie O'Connor wants you to know she is also really good at skiing.

NOKIA

Postcards from Venice.

BY EDEN REINFURT

I found the Nokia 216 in the apartment my family was renting in Venice at the bottom of a wooden bureau. Matte white case, clicky buttons, mini camera: a simple white frame to cut out a piece of the world.

I walked around a lot in Venice. My parents were working and I was on break. I took photos and then I'd draw them, flattening the world into layers of simplification.

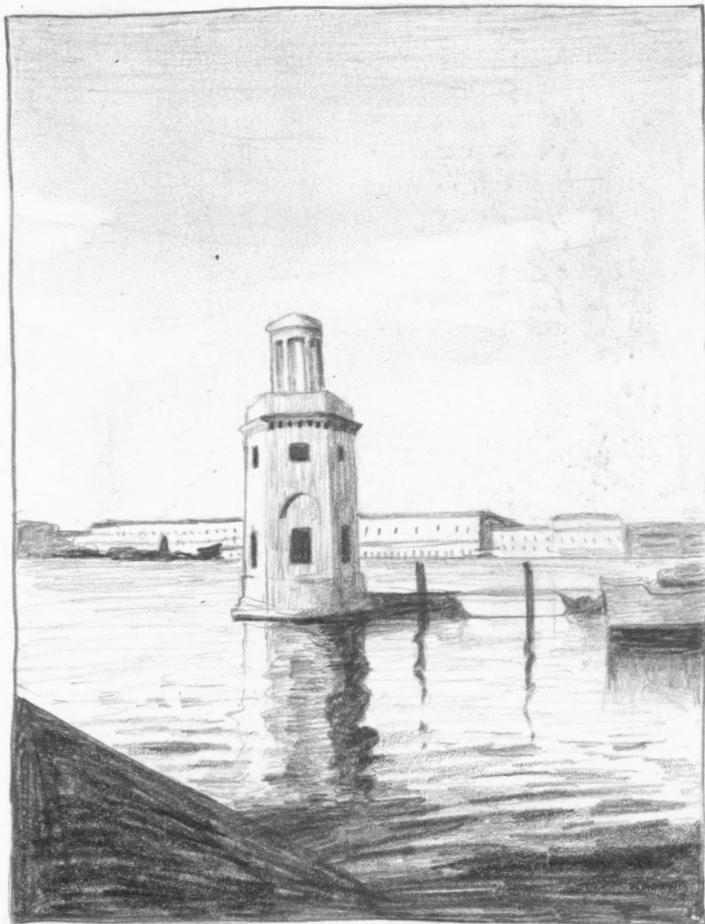
These simplifications let me see more clearly, like the way shadows fall as towers of blocks toward tourists sitting in the sun. Simple trapezoids form a lantern. Shiny shapes rest on the surface of water. I captured moments that I could never draw instantaneously.

These were postcards to myself. I drew one every day I was there. Postcards turn a simple image into a symbol of time and travel, of new experiences and wonder. I was seeing so much. So I compressed it all into my 6x8 black notebook in gray graphite, framed by Nokia.



NOKIA

11.01.2026



NOKIA

12.01.2026



NOKIA

15.01.2026

For Eden Reinfurt, a Nokia would make everyone's life a little more simple.

Hamnet and Sentimental Value

A *Nass* writer explores grieving through cathartic performance, and the porous boundary between life and art.

BY SCARLETT HUNTINGTON

A little boy with blond hair finds himself alone on a grand stage. There are trees on the stage, but when he looks closely, he sees the twigs are tied on with twine. This is not a real forest. The boy feels afraid. Tears creep into his eyes. He calls out for his Mama. He cannot find her.

A woman with hair wrapped into a tight bun waits backstage. Her face catches the glow of blue and red stage lights. When the music begins, she walks to the front of the stage, confronting a packed audience. Then, she finds herself at the after-party, where people gather to praise her performance. She searches for her father. She cannot find him.

The two films, *Hamnet* and *Sentimental Value*, bleed into one another to the point that, in my mind, it is impossible to think of one without thinking of the other. The parallels between the films abound, but to start, both films center on insular family units. In *Hamnet*, the family consists of Agnes, Will, and their three children: Susanna and the twins, Hamnet and Judith. In *Sentimental Value*, the family consists of Gustav and his two daughters, Nora and Agnes. Over the course of both films, we see how grief comes to permeate these households. It manifests as absence, as the darkness found in

crevices. In *Hamnet*, it resides deep in the forest, in the hollow of a tree. Then, it descends upon the family when the plague infects Hamnet, and ultimately claims his life. In *Sentimental Value*, grief settles into the cracks of the family home's walls. The house is marked by intergenerational trauma: it is where Gustav's great-grandfather died, where his mother killed herself after being tortured in a concentration camp, and where Nora and Agnes, still children, clung to each other as their father drove away, abandoning them.

If the essence of these films is grief, then performance becomes a way of fashioning that grief into a form the characters can understand. After Hamnet's death, Will flees to London and immerses himself in playwriting, leaving his wife to mourn alone. In his absence, Agnes learns that her husband's new play is titled *The Tragedie of Hamlet*. She feels betrayed that he used their child's name for entertainment, so she travels to London and, pushing her way to the front of the Globe Theatre, she seeks answers in his play.

The Tragedie of Hamlet begins, and Agnes is faced with a young actor whose hair is painted blonde and whose character bears her son's name. She watches as Hamlet is struck by Laertes's poisoned dagger. She watches him sink to his knees at the front of the stage, choking and trembling as death nears. This staged death scene offers Agnes an alternate goodbye. When Agnes first watched her son die, it was a violent, painful affair. She pinned down Hamnet's writhing body and tried to

force-feed him medicine. In one moment he was crying and in the next, he was dead. By contrast, Hamlet's death is not violent. On stage, as Hamlet nears death, he stretches his arms out to the living, to those bearing witness.



HAMNET - COURTESY OF IMDB



HAMNET - COURTESY OF IMDB

Then, a faint smile crosses his face, he looks at Agnes, and softly declares, “The rest is silence,” before collapsing to the ground. There is a gentle quietude in this scene—a suspended moment in which the mutual gaze between the living and the dying fills the theater, and Hamnet can say his farewell.

Furthermore, Hamlet’s performance of death transforms Agnes’s solitary mourning into a communal one. As Hamlet dies, Agnes reaches out her hand to him. Soon after, the audience members mirror her gesture and extend their own hands toward the dying boy. The camera shoots this moment from above, capturing the swarm of arms overlapping and yearning to reach Hamlet. It is a cathartic embrace of grief, where all those witnessing Hamlet’s death can confront it together.

In *Sentimental Value*, Gustav’s film gives Nora an outlet through which she can begin to understand her depression. In the present day, Gustav, an acclaimed film director, approaches his daughter Nora, now a theater actress, with a part he has written for her. Nora refuses to work with her father, so Gustav gives the part to an American actress named Rachel Kemp. Rachel, though, struggles to inhabit the character’s mind, and turns to Nora for advice. Seated among the plush red chairs of Oslo’s National Theater, Rachel attempts to articulate the character: “It’s like her sadness is such an overwhelming part of her. It’s a beautiful thing, but I can’t

tell if that’s just the cause of everything or is it...a symptom of something deeper.” As Nora listens to Rachel, she realizes that Rachel is not describing a mere fictional character, but Nora herself.

The connection feels all the more unsettling when we learn that, at the end of Gustav’s script, the character commits suicide. Later, in the film’s most emotive scene, Nora breaks down before her sister and it is revealed that she, too, attempted suicide. Gustav never knew this. Yet somehow, what he has managed to capture in his script is his daughter’s grief, the very grief born of his abandonment. *Sentimental Value* ends with a long take showing that Nora has accepted the part in her father’s film. On a reconstructed set of her childhood home, she sends her child off to school, steps behind a closed door, and enacts the character’s suicide. By assuming this role, Nora lays her depression bare on camera, and in practicing empathy for the



SENTIMENTAL VALUE - COURTESY OF IMDB

fictional character (as all actors must do) Nora turns that empathy inward. She begins to unearth the depression she has harbored, while also bridging her estrangement with her father.

Both *Hamnet* and *Sentimental Value* show how performance helps characters process their grief. But they also raise questions about the nature

of interpretation, particularly how porous the boundary is between reality in fiction. In both films, fathers write their children into their scripts. Their interpretations do not replicate reality exactly; instead of truth being “lost in translation,” something is gained. It is in the spaces where lived experience has been distorted that their children emerge.

The plot of *The Tragedie of Hamlet*, with a prince navigating the political affairs of a Danish kingdom, initially seems disconnected from the reality of Agnes’s deceased son. But as the play unfolds, Agnes recognizes Hamnet’s presence in different figures: the ghost king, the young actor, and Hamlet himself. Agnes first sees Hamnet in the ghost king, played by Will, who emerges onto the stage caked in dried clay. The king reflects on his death and describes the poison running through his veins, before uttering, “Adieu. Adieu. Adieu. Remember Me.” In the king’s poisoned body, Agnes can recognize her son’s illness. She understands that, through performance, “He [Will] has swapped places with our son.”

Then, Agnes recognizes Hamnet in the young actor (who, in a genius stroke of casting, is played by Noah Jupe, the real-life brother of Jacobi Jupe, who plays Hamnet). In an earlier scene, Agnes asked her son, “What do you wish to do?” and Hamnet responded, “I shall be one of the players with a sword. And I shall clash it against the sword of the other player.” So on stage, when Hamlet duels Laertes, it recalls the image of little Hamnet play-fighting with his wooden sword. As Agnes watches this duel, a smile creeps onto her face because, in this actor, she sees who Hamnet would have grown up to be: a player on his father’s stage.

Finally, Agnes recognizes Hamnet in

The



SENTIMENTAL VALUE - COURTESY OF IMDB

unintentional, Gustav's script links his mother's depression to that of his daughter. Through performance, their lives are stitched together—Nora is at once herself, her grandmother, and the fiction.

In the performances of *Hamnet* and *Sentimental Value*, the lives of characters and actors bleed into one another. This kind of layered performance is what allows the two films to overlap so profoundly: individual experience is not confined to a single person, but roams freely, possessing others like a ghost. Nora is present in Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech. Will is present in Gustav's estrangement from his family. Hamlet is present in the childish innocence of Nora's nephew. As the boundaries between bodies blur, the grief that characters once harbored alone, also moves beyond the self. Performance provides a structure through which characters can encounter their pain at a distance, outside their embodied experience. We see Agnes share her grief with the theatre audience and Nora share her grief with the fictional character. This phenomenon extends to us as viewers; as we relate to the protagonists and inhabit their minds, our own sadnesses are easier to understand.

Scarlett Huntington is looking for a new friend to go to the movies with.

the fictional character of Hamlet. When Hamlet dies in the play, the film cuts to Hamnet, alone on the stage, giving his mother a knowing nod before retreating into the darkness. Agnes watches him go and laughs softly, having been granted another goodbye.

The marvel of the play is that all three figures—the ghost, the actor, and the prince—truly become Hamnet for a moment.

In *Sentimental Value*, Gustav insists that his script is not a reflection of reality. This tension first arises when Gustav reveals to Rachel that his mother committed suicide. Rachel presses Gustav to admit that the protagonist is based on his mother, but he maintains that she is purely fictional. Gustav plays on this tension when he tells Rachel that the stool she sits on is the same one his mother used to hang herself—though it is revealed to be an insignificant IKEA stool—making us question what is real and what is made up. And yet, if the script is so removed from Gustav's own life, why does he insist that his daughter play the protagonist? Why, when she refuses, does he make Rachel Kemp dye her hair to look like Nora? Why does he cast his grandson (Nora's nephew) as the young boy destined to lose his mother? Even if the narrative is fictional, it is still very real to Nora, who has attempted suicide. Even if it was

I. Out of Darkness

Here in the realm of shadow,
in the deep darkness of a wretched
chasm
that never lightens, lives a ghost.
Living lonely, it craves to spread this
darkness,
but it knows nothing of the bright world
above.

One day, it stumbles across a traveller
exploring.
It has seen men stumble into shadow
before;
those foolish men feared it, and they
solved fear with violence...so this ghost
hides.

But in his hands the traveller holds no
sword,
and the flame of the traveller's lantern
blazes a foreign grey glow onto his face.
It illuminates his eyes, which dart
around the darkness—
beneath the fear, these eyes betray a cu-
rious wonder.

One day, he will leave. And the ghost de-
sires most of all to join him.

But the man must see it, must discover
it—
so it chases him.

The traveller feels fear incarnate lurk-
ing in his wake,
the cave's wind, breath, its echo,
footsteps.
But he does not run to the light. Instead,
he turns his head,
extinguishing his lantern to embrace
the darkness.
He senses the very beauty he sought.

So the man wrestles this ghost, to un-
derstand its secrets,
translating them into a language all
could learn.

Alongside each other, they exit the
chasm, heading for the city nearby.
Fly, you fools, fly!
Beauty has escaped the shadows.

Journey of a Ghost

BY VIHAAN JETLEY

II. Two Towers

The fools see the traveller, bruised and battered,
approaching the two towers which
frame the city's gates.

What is that which walks beside him,
glowing with eerie monstrosity?

The gates will never open for this ghost.
The fools see difference and label it
barbarity—
they see it as a knife pressed against
their throats, so they respond with fire
and blood.

Fly, you ghost, fly!
These fools will kill the traveller—
they are blinded by your beauty!

As the ghost flees into the forest,
the two towers glimmer brightly with
the warm sunrise.

III. Fools Fly

The glare from enlightenment erases
imperfection.

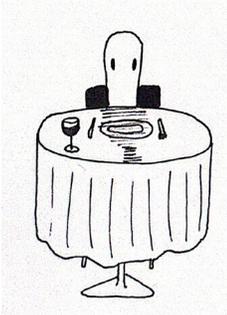
For now the city prospers,
flying in fear masquerading as beauty.
Radiant lights luminesce ever fiercer at
every corner,
expelling the darkness beyond the
walls.

It is a bastion of enlightenment,
but nobody sees that light obliterates
color.

The ghost scavenges the verdant oak
forest,
longing a friend like the one he once
had:

One who loves beauty, one who longs to
free fools from fear.

But for now it fades
into the greenery
while fools fly
higher.



IV. The Beginning

The hands of time
erode falsehood,
the fools have flown too
high,
and the rising darkness
illuminates the cracks
for all to see.

One man remembers
the eerie ghost which
once threatened his
city.

But without it, the rubble of crumbled
falsehood smolders mockingly.

So he flees into the forest, to search for
the very beauty he exiled
begging it to join him, to save his city.

Together, they sneak beyond the two
towers;
From these ashes a fire has woken,
igniting with a vibrant blaze of darkness
and mystery.

As it fuels, the fools begin to recognize
their reflection.
With fools no longer enlightened, this
ghost's journey is now complete.

It withdraws back to the shadows, and
they fly higher than ever—
for now.

But wait, what is that at the gates?

It is another traveller, bruised and
battered.
What is that which walks beside him,
glowing in its eerie beauty?

V. Autopsy

A ghost lays in my morgue... not that it's
dead, for the ethereal are immortal.
But it is expired, or that is why it was
sent to me—
for condoning defunct ideas from a
world long ago.

Let us examine this monstrous creature
and determine its true nature.



The ghost glows with an aura that I
can only describe as
horrific, animated, and utterly
seductive...

It causes the hairs on my arm to
stand alert,
and instills within me a fervent
urge to run away.

In terms of form, the ghost lacks so-
lidity and structure.

I cannot construct any word to de-
scribe it.

Despite a supernatural appearance,
I am almost certain
this creature is natural, and not of an-
other reality.

This form is constant, albeit deeply
varied.

In fact, I suspect that every human per-
ceives this form differently.

This ghost, however, appears to be
incomplete—
a fragment, a shard of some coherent
"Truth."

As a ghost, it exists as a whisper of some-
thing... perfect?

As to what exactly this thing is, I won't
ever know.

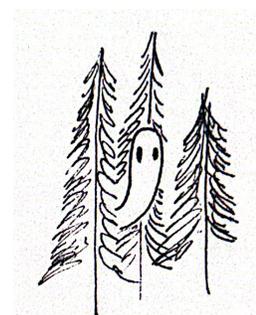
But I think I have got something...

This ghost is not dead nor defunct,
it had the misfortune to be filtered
through a cracked and warped mind.

"This ghost that runs after you, my
brother, is more beautiful than you; why
do you not give him your flesh and your
bones?"

—Friedrich Nietzsche

Vihaan Jetley *believes in ghosts.*



On Brainrot

Notes on shallow laughter and shortcuts to thinking.

BY SOA ANDRIAMANANJARA

These days, I do a lot more thinking than I used to. I've always had thoughts, but like most people, I wasn't really thinking. Thoughts were clouds in the sky that passed over me—I was aware of their presence, but I didn't really consider them. Thinking is the process of looking up at these clouds and identifying their shapes as something other than a blob. Recently, I've been thinking a lot about these clouds and what they mean to me.

I started thinking in December. December was when I started meditating. I had been off all forms of social media for about a month at that point because I wanted to be a more present person. I started meditating because I wanted to become a calmer person, and I had decided that “You are what you eat” would become my mantra for the end of the year. “You are what you eat” did not simply refer to eating, but rather the fact that you are your consumption, and therefore, you are what you choose. By meditating daily, I thought I'd become a more relaxed, reflective person. So, I would finish each day by looking up “10-minute meditation” on Spotify. “Take a deep breath,” some soft soothing voice murmured through my headphones, “Make sure you're sitting in a comfortable position.” I would become hyper-aware of my position. *Am I comfortable? Am I sitting up straight? Do I have scoliosis because I slouch? Wow, that's crazy that I have scoliosis. Stop thinking about this. Focus on the meditation. Focus*

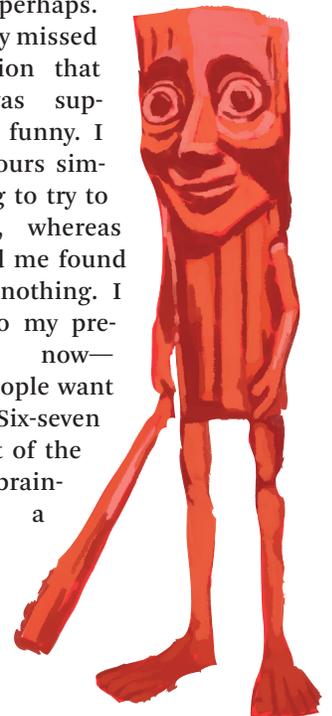
on the meditation. Focus. What should I wear tomorrow? Focus. Do I have the attention span of a goldfish? What if goldfish have a really good attention span? What if when I open my eyes a stranger is standing in my bedroom? Don't open your eyes! I'm going to open my eyes. I open my eyes. No one is there. Great, now the meditation is ruined.

In meditation, breathwork is key. Take a deep breath and hold it and let it out and whatnot. The point of breathwork is to focus on one specific thing you're doing in order to become more in touch with yourself. Breathing, like many of our thoughts, is automatic, so we don't think twice about it. During breathwork, all I was supposed to think about was breathing. “Hold for five,” the meditation would say. I wondered if I was going to pass out. Noted that I should take a deeper breath next time. Remarked that I was breathing right then. Also, wasn't it crazy I was alive? This whole thing was crazy.

Like my breathing, most of my thinking was done without thought or regard. For example, a good meal was not acknowledged as good but rather experienced as pleasant. A nice perfume inspired a resmelling of the bottle without analysis. But laughter—once a chipper, automatic reaction—paused. On an icy day, I watched out the window as a girl slipped and fell. My friend next to me laughed. I stared, plain-faced. A year ago, I probably would've laughed. I remember crying tears of laughter as I watched a kid get knocked out by a sled last winter. I didn't have any remorse over that, but still, I didn't laugh this time. I noticed after that I hadn't been laughing as much. I particularly noticed

the discrepancy between my laughter and others' when I looked at the six-seven phenomenon. In class, the phrase six-seven was laughed at again and again, whether it was referenced as a data point, a time, a year—anytime it was there, it was laughed at. Six-seven came out of nowhere to me—I first heard about it in my writing seminar, and when everyone laughed as the professor listed his office hours I, like he, was confused about what was so funny about this number.

Six-seven appeared over and over again, and again and again, everyone laughed. My senses felt not as attuned to my classmates; though I could recognize fire at the smell of smoke like any of my classmates, I could not recognize the humor of six-seven. Now, I see, six-seven is funny because it is a joke, and it is a joke because it is funny. It's “brainrot,” which means it's funny for its lack of meaning. I was pissed—I thought I'd missed out on a piece of cultural news, an awards show snafu perhaps. But I had only missed the instruction that six-seven was supposed to be funny. I had spent hours simply breathing to try to find myself, whereas those around me found pleasure in nothing. I will admit to my pretentiousness now—why don't people want substance? Six-seven and the shift of the zeitgeist to brainrot signals a



substantive change in our society; we want speed. We want immediate laughter triggers—Chicken Jockey, Hawk Tuah, Skibidi Toilet—things that require little background are simply funny because they are. Whatever happened to jokes that start with “A guy walks into a bar”? Where did the puns go? As someone who envisions a potential career in screenwriting for comedy, six-seven casts doubt on my future endeavours. Six-seven might effortlessly make you chuckle, but shows like *Veep*, *30 Rock*, *How I Met Your Mother*—to name a few—will have you slapping your knee while simultaneously questioning your place in society. Humor at its best reveals intricate, amusing societal truths. Is six-seven the standard now? Will the work I want to produce become pretentious or too inaccessible for a brain-rotted generation? That’s why six-seven disappoints me; the truth that it represents is the erasure of complexity.

Six-seven parallels the rise of OpenAI. As six-seven came to prominence, so did ChatGPT. As we started to laugh at six-seven, we started to turn to ChatGPT to do our homework, write our emails, analyze social situations—really, just do anything we did not feel like. Six-seven and ChatGPT’s simultaneity reveal the rise of laziness in society. It’s not a crime to not want to do your homework. What interests me, though, is the number of college students who regularly use “Chat” to read their assigned readings—isn’t the point of college to



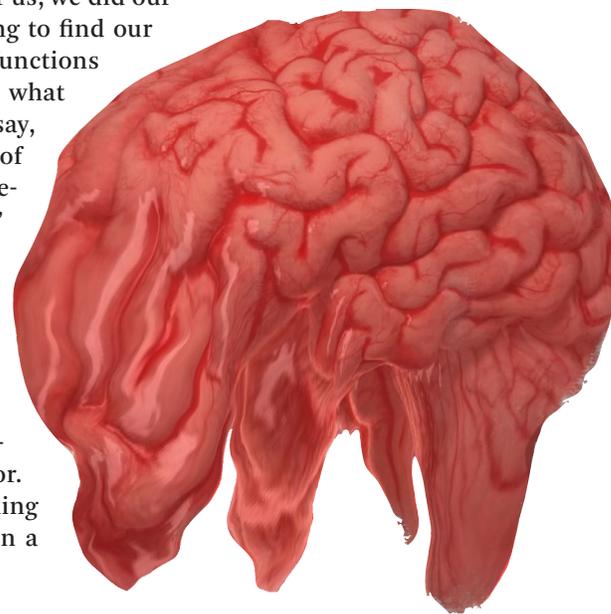
learn? This too, I’ve realized is not the case—for many, college is simply the stepping stone into making six figures as

a consultant. Six-seven and ChatGPT are the diluents of society, normalizing a world where finding depth is a luxury. In the worst world, humor devolves solely into brainrot. We stop thinking critically—more six-sevens pop up, and laughter becomes automatic and robotic. AI takes over all of our jobs—coding first, then the media, then doctors. Politicians will stay employed, of course. Then, we become subordinate to the robots, the corporations, and the government, assuming the corporations did not attempt to take total control. We would’ve been able to stop it, of course, if instead of asking AI to write our essays for us, we did our own research and writing to find our own conclusions. AI functions on its ability to predict what we are most likely to say, but we have the power of thought: AI cannot predict what “different” idea we might have. It can only conceive of the common.

There are benefits to brainrot. I can immediately recognize that it has provided a universal humor. Six-seven was something that a football player, an a

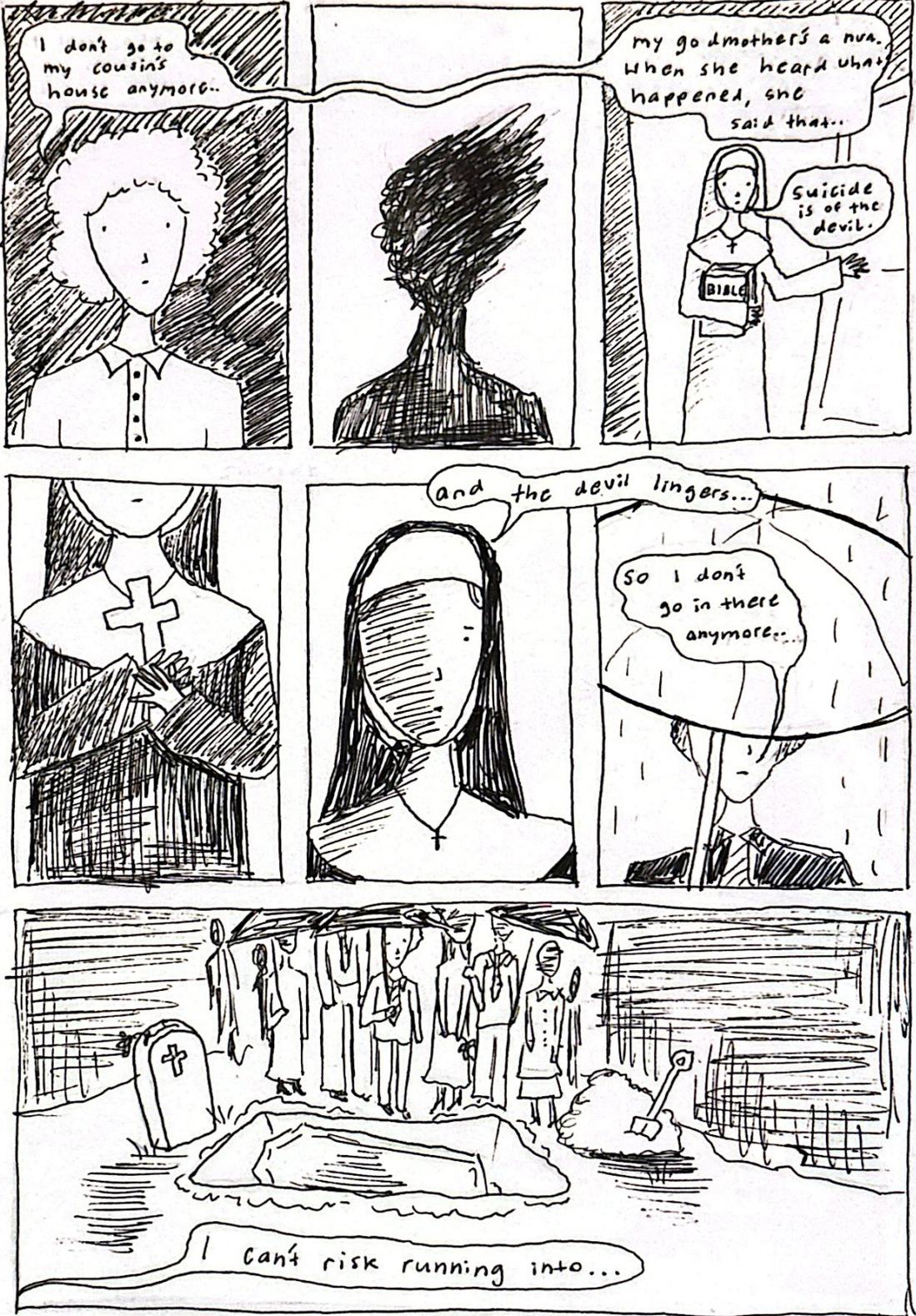
cappella singer, and a physicist could all laugh at in my writing seminar. But brainrot also forces a lack of thinking. We don’t question the humor of these jokes—we don’t question why a word or image is funny, and often we don’t need to look up at these clouds and analyze their shapes and effects and whatnot. We do not need to think all the time, but when we lose the ability to think, we lose ourselves completely. My meditation once asked me who I was—was I my body, my voice, my thoughts, or the observer of my thoughts? If we cannot recognize our thoughts, we will not be able to recognize anything else. And if we don’t look at the clouds, we won’t notice them darkening.

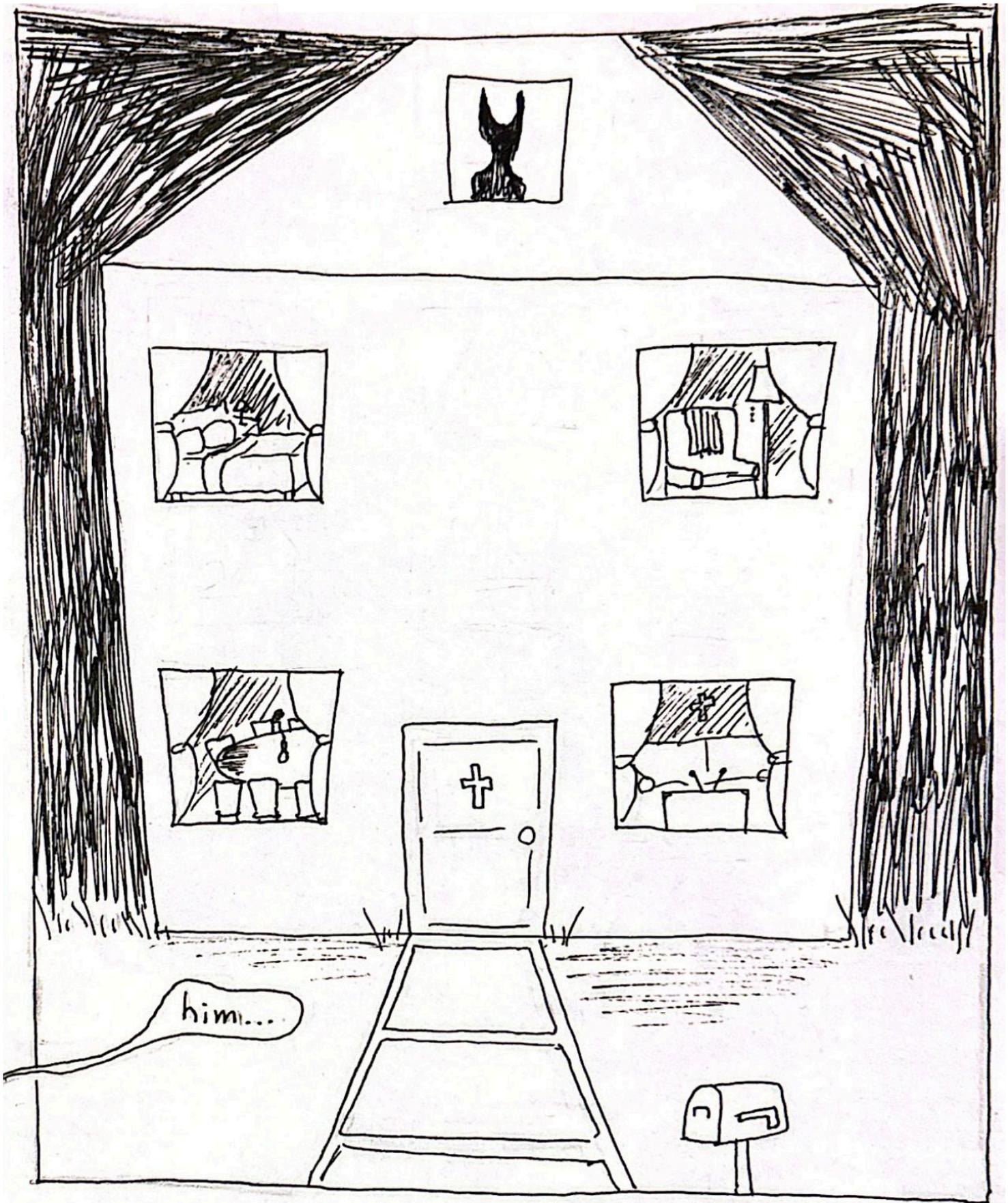
Unc status has no age limit for Soa Andriamananjara.



Unwanted House Guest

BY NAZARETH NAPPER
ART BY ANELISE CHUN





On Jackets

On the necessity of jackets and the enduring original chill.

BY MOMO SONODA

There's a moment—brief and invisible—each year when the air turns against us, a departure of warmth that arrives without warning. Shadows lengthen, metal railings bite, and summer, once obedient, exhales its last breath. The days remain long enough to deceive us into believing that summer has lasted a day longer, but its mercy has already thinned. So one evening, without much ceremony, a shiver passes through my bedroom, and I reach for a jacket. There's a ritual to it all. The zip, the tug, the little shoulder roll to settle the fabric. Routine but never meaningless, I perform each motion in quiet submission to the cooling weather.

It's such a human thing to acknowledge that the world can be harsh and to prepare for it anyway. Sometimes I think about how extraordinary it is that humans evolved with cloth instead of scales or feathers or fur. I once read that humans invented clothing around 170,000 years ago, the same time our ancestors began to wander out of Africa and into colder lands. Anthropologists say the evidence is microscopic: head lice evolving into body lice as we started to clothe ourselves. Choosing to make warmth portable yet temporary was a human act of faith. When the cold fought against us, we trusted our jackets to bring us out of winter. It's strange, isn't it? Parasite becomes a clock. Discomfort becomes invention. Our ancestors made fabric, and bugs clung to what we wove. A biological fact, yes, but also a parable (even parasites adapted to our belief).

At Princeton, the weather has redrawn the world into a liturgy, and the wind is testing the devout. On slow days, I like to people-watch from classroom windows. Students walking quickly with their heads down and shoulders

hunched; a woman's red scarf unfurling to reveal redder cheeks (air bruises everything it touches); Canada Goose-clad seniors on street corners with arms folded across their chests, leaning into themselves, carrying the same soft confession that the world can touch us. A visiting family's child skips through a muddy puddle and delights at the simple evidence of existence. On my walk home, I try to hop over the puddle, but splash my white Converse. The water is cold. The long season of heat has made me careless, lazy and half-dreaming. Now, I feel completely awake.

My mom always told me that warmth starts at your feet. Now my feet are wet and shivering. My footsteps squelch, and I feel ashamed. The human body can be humbled so easily.

Were the first humans undone by the apple, or the shiver that followed?

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loin cloths for themselves. / They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. / But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" / He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." / He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" / The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." (Genesis 3:7-12)

And to the man he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; / thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the

plants of the field. / By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return." / The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. / And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them. / Then the LORD God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—/ therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. (Genesis 3:17-23)

Something tells me the first prayer was not spoken but breathed between Adam's chattering teeth. Exiled from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve do not merely know that they are naked; they feel the cold press of God's verdict against their skin. Knowledge wounds only when it becomes sensation. The mind falls, but it is the body that hits the ground. Now on earth, God's act of mercy—"garments of skins for the man and for his wife"—settles into double meaning. Scripture calls the gift "*kuttonet ore*," meaning "tunics of skin" when spelled with *ayin* (א) and "tunics of light" when spelled with *aleph* (א). Many theologians prefer the former approach to biblical interpretation, insisting that Adam and Eve were clothed with tunics of light before they sinned and were subsequently stripped of these in exchange for ones of skin. Clothes of skin, they say, symbolize the first sacrificial death, an animal's life taken in exchange for human lives preserved. In actuality, though, the first death is Adam and Eve's own. By eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve sign their death warrant; they are expelled from Eden to a world in which they can experience pain, illness, and, for the first time, cold. The wages of sin are death, so death only enters the world as a consequence of sin. In the *Zohar*, when

God created the world, each Hebrew letter came forth to demonstrate why it should be the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. *Ayin*, implying *avon* (iniquity) lies; “I imply *anavah* (humility),” and God responds, “I shall not create the world by you” (Zohar, Introduction 6:27). *Ayin* represents man—sinful, lying, and painfully insignificant. *You are dust and to dust you shall return*. Raised hairs and goosebumps tell us that the body remembers what the mind has forgotten: we inhabit a world uncalibrated to us.

If cold entered human experience only after the fall of Adam and Eve, every jacket is a technological response to that divine problem; when we put on our coats, we are continuing to chase the tunics of light we lost in the Garden of Eden. The zipper rises, metal against metal, confession against confession. Faith, too, is a fastening. The gesture is small, but it belongs to the oldest human instinct—to reach for what burns. Maybe that’s why jackets seem to glow faintly under streetlamps; humans wrapped in their own contained flames. Or maybe, our jackets are just one gesture of survival, emptied of their original fire. But perhaps, in our jackets, there are still two things to be sought: the warmth that we once had, and the meaning for why we must stand exposed. Maybe that is all ritual really is: an attempt to recreate the warmth that used to just be there.

In fact, I always forget about jackets until the first shiver arrives. For half of the year, they live in suspended condition in the back of my closet, sleeves folded in prayer. They’re like umbrellas or dollar bills to slip into hotel Bibles, the kind of thing you forget you own until the minute you need them. We attempt, with coats and fires and ordinary

rituals of winter, to correct towards the warmth we once had. Therein lies the human condition: we are porous and profoundly foolish. Our jackets are testament to mornings spent choosing the right amount of layers, of the effort to survive each day’s weather. But beneath the gestures, conversations, and false composure, we still negotiate with the same invisible elements: the chill that slips through seams, the wind that tests the edges of our will. No matter how well we prepare—fleece, wool, down,



cashmere—the cold, the damp, the unpredictable will all seep in (it always does). But we choose to believe, believe that jackets are our dignified reply. Each one prays, *let me stay warm, let me stay alive*. We wear vestments of a secular church dedicated to chasing warmth, and our coats are benedictions from one body to another. Sometimes I pass a stranger wearing the same coat as mine, and there’s a brief moment of recognition. I see it and think, *Ah, you too are surviving this day*. We are of the same

denomination.

In the evenings, when the light withdraws early and the windows turn black before dinner, I hang up my jacket. It slumps, empty of purpose. The season has begun its long procession.

In Greek mythology, Prometheus was punished for bringing fire to humans; Zeus chained him naked to a rock, his liver to be eaten and remade each day. We are his disciples, and alongside him, we continue to zip up, knowing the cold will return tomorrow. Our ancestors

founded our human faith when they chose to cover themselves with tunics. As such, warmth became ritualized into a temporary solution repeated over and over again. So, I keep the jacket close. I baptise myself in its heat and step outside anyway, rejoining the stubborn ritual of man: all of us wrapped in what we have and facing the wind that began in Eden. Simple, repetitive, and slightly holy, we declare our wish to stay alive for another year. But perhaps it isn’t faith at all, only habit—one more daily gesture to keep panic at bay.

It is the same cold as yesterday, and yet it feels new. I shiver and tighten my jacket around me. It smells of smoke, and I think of Prometheus and of the tailor’s cigarette (both burning to keep something alive).

I, too, am fragile.

I, too, am enduring this.

I, too, reach for what burns.

Momo Sonoda is in desperate need of a warmer jacket.

Babysitting

BY SOPHIA MCNAMARA

You sleep fretfully, stirring up the buttermilk air. It's been through your lungs and mine.

You're grasping and grasping, with hands plump and rosy. For hours you'd screamed, straining and messing my hair until exhausted.

I notice us in the windowpane and let my neck slacken and chin fall forward.

A mahogany plaque the size of a picture book hangs above us: Our Lady and her tender smile and the sweet weight in the crook of her arm. My whole life I have wondered at the graceful slope of her neck—how a living warmth radiates from the wood's luster.

You're warm also. Heat and dampness emanate from the pastel cotton of your clothing. Sweat from your writhing against the hesitancy in my embrace.

I notice I'm not yet able to hold my own head weight, how I totter and stare at strangers.



Please hire Sophia McNamara to look after your children. Interested parties should contact thenassauweekly@gmail.com.