This week, we're making night-hike, dark-rave, neo-Western pilgrimages, and we're thinking long and hard about the lines we cannot—or do not—cross.

The Nassau Weekly

50

orange is the new lime



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Dear friends,

Much of life is going from here to there, and much of it is going back to here. From the bed to the world and back to the bed. From the hometown to the college town to the Big City, back to the hometown maybe, to start the cycle anew. From the motherland to the new world and back to the motherland.

Many choices are merely the illusions of choices. We are trains on tracks, made to believe we are wild horses. But our wildness is a feeling, and not a trait. We are sheep in shepherd clothes. When we hike we hike on trails, but when we stray from them there are trails there, too. All ground has been previously trodden. Trust, trust. There are lines we cannot cross, and then there are the lines we do not see and do not cross.

Grazing in what I hope are green pastures,
Sasha Rotko, EIC

Masthead

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This Week (10/9-10/15)

Fri

10:15a-12:00p Dickinson Hall 211
Monarchical Entitlements: The Propertied and New Regimes in Haiti, Mexico, and Brazil

8:00p Wallace Theatre, Lewis Arts Complex
Quite Contrary

Sat

10:00a-1:00p Kathleen Compton Sherrerd Creativity Lab and Laporte Family Creativity Lab
Art for Families: Pop Art Portraits

12:00p The Garden Theatre
Faust

Sun

3:00-4:00p Princeton Art Museum Information Desk
Clay Has Memory: Creative Lineages from Africa

6:00p The Garden Theatre
Viridiana

Mon

10:00a-4:30p Kathleen Compton Sherrerd Creativity Lab and Laporte Family Creativity Lab
Open Studio Hours

3:00-4:20p Dickinson Hall 211
The Ecology of Land Disputes in the Colonial Mid Atlantic

Tues

12:00-1:20p Simpson 114
Big American Writer: The Bilingual Jack Kerouac

4:30-6:00p McCosh 40
On Being a Type

Wed

11:00a-3:00p Firestone Plaza
Princeton University Farmer's Market

4:30-6:00p Robertson Hall 001
Anti-Zionism: Critical Perspectives Speaker Series

Thurs

6:00-8:30p Richardson Auditorium
Princeton University Concerts: Sandeep Das Trio

8:00-9:30p Frist Vivian Cafe
Relaxing with Watercolor

Verbatims

Overheard at the *Nass* Party
Homebody: "DC is like Paris if you've never been to Paris."

Overheard at Robertson Hall
Speculator: "We would set up sites for BLM with my family... Not Black Lives Matter, the Bureau of Land Management."

Overheard in Firestone Lobby
Happy Camper: "We weren't allowed to have exclusive relationships."
Sober Realist: "So everyone had to be polyamorous?"

Overheard in Tacoria
Cultural Appropriator: "I didn't think I could have IBS because I only ever heard of Jewish people having it."

Overheard in Yeh
Freshman: "If I get into TCM I'm never talking to any of you again."

Overheard in Dodd
Escapist: "I had a dream that we had a friend group baby and I was the absent father."

Overheard in Sakrid
Normie: "Those people are so performative."
Sympathizer: "For drinking coffee and reading? Doesn't everyone do that here?"

Overheard in Coffee Club
Dreamer: "Do you think our professor identifies with Humbert Humbert?"
Cancel-cultured: "What? No. You can't say that."

Overheard near the SPIA fountain
Salinated Sage: "You know how some people have a really high spice tolerance? I have a really high salt tolerance."

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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!

Foregrounding Sudan

SOAP

BY MAZAH SHERIF

Dear Reader,

I've recently noticed a pattern. The world today has become remarkably comfortable making Sudanese suffering relative: relative to geography, relative to other conflicts, relative to who is responsible for them. We are cast aside as an unfortunate situation, our struggles treated as both instinctual and inevitable on the global scale. But when the lives of millions are on the line, no amount of ignorance will alter our reality.

Sudan has an unfortunate relationship with democracy, having spent far more time fighting for it than actually living under it. In 2019, the country's most recent president, Omar al-Bashir, was overthrown after nearly 30 years in power. Two years later, a military coup disrupted the country's transition toward civilian rule. In 2023, the country was again thrown into civil war, this time between the formally recognized state military, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary force that had grown alongside the army under Bashir. Once allies, the SAF and RSF have since turned their weapons on each other, transforming their struggle for power into a war consuming the country.

With Egypt backing the SAF and the UAE accused of supporting the RSF, both pursuing their own interests in Sudan's rich natural resources and strategic location along the Red Sea, the conflict seems to have no end in sight. For each new country that joins, I question how many more people need to suffer, how many more need to die, before the international community decides that the price of human life is greater than that of gold or power.

Every day, I open my phone to military generals posting videos and photos of bodies piled along the streets of Darfur. Women hang from trees by their limbs, and men incite death in the name of God, screaming *bismillah*! I counter by spitting out the phrase *astaghfirullah*. After seeing enough of these videos, I have learned how to keep scrolling, even when I know that I shouldn't. Not because I do not care, but because I know that tears will not change the reality of the situation before me. I want the world to understand that behind every body is a person, and that my people deserve the same urgency, grief, and attention afforded to suffering elsewhere.

It is this internal struggle that sent me 8,000 miles away from my home in the grassy fields of Illinois to the United Nations office in Nairobi, Kenya, this summer. I was determined to shift the discussion on my people from a game of numbers to a discussion of who those numbers truly represented.

Within the UN Refugee Agency, I forced my thoughts on this war into suggestions for action. I spent my days drafting proposals to the European Union and the African Development Bank, thinking about ways in which Sudanese youth, students, refugees, and women could have a voice in discussions about rebuilding Sudan for its remaining population while in the midst of war. On the weekends, I would meet displaced Sudanese artists and musicians across Nairobi, talking about the war in a way my parents had only ever discussed in hushed tones with each other.

I learned about the 13 million people who the current war has displaced. Some have crossed borders, and others have fled from one Sudanese city to another in search of safety. Some are even going *back*.

Back to cities like Khartoum, where many of the systems that once made it possible to live have been damaged or destroyed. For many, returning is not entirely a choice. Some have been deported from the countries where they sought refuge, returning to find essential documents stolen or destroyed. Others return because they no longer feel welcome or because they cannot afford to build a life outside Sudan. They will soon find that there is nothing waiting for them at home, either. Even the government has recently called on university students to return to in-person study, ignoring the fact that their classrooms sit in piles of rubble mirroring the debris-filled streets of the city.

The more I worked, the harder it became to separate the broader category of humanitarian response from these questions of development, governance, infrastructure, economic recovery, and, ultimately, self-determination. Returning home requires more than conflict subsiding. It requires political and economic stability, available food, safe passage, and the assurance that the lives people rebuild will not be taken away from them once more.

As I sat at my desk in Nairobi writing about these problems, my family was living with them only a couple of hours away. The distance felt so strange. I was, for the first time in a long time, close enough to Sudan to hear its stories and feel its beats and see its faces every weekend, but still far enough to retreat into my "real" life when the workday ended. Whenever I became too overwhelmed, I could close my laptop and walk away from my desk, away from the meetings,

PAGE DESIGN BY EDEN REINFURT

BOX

This Jane Doe

On sexual violence, the temporality of trauma, and seeing ourselves in Cornell.

BY NAOMI SEGEL

Dear Reader,

On the evening of October 19, 2024, Matthew Ingalls, Jonathan Newell, Winston Lee, Gillio Lopes, Diego Sarabia, Scott Norris, and Scott Kretzschmar assaulted and raped a 20-year-old student until six a.m. the next day. Two weeks ago, she filed a lawsuit against Cornell University, specific university leaders, the Chi Phi fraternity, the Tri Delta sorority, and the seven assaulters. Jane Doe is now 22: two years older, two years into a life as a survivor, two years fighting to be taken seriously.

This story has stopped us in our tracks. It has pierced the soul of our student body. Certainly, Princeton is not a campus that is particularly attuned to the news, nor is it a campus that is uniquely attentive to issues of sexual violence. But this could have happened to us, here.

Many of the facts and reactions to the facts are unsurprising. Cornell's Title IX office, administration, and police failed Jane Doe. Higher education institutions that preserve a culture of protecting students who have inflicted harm failed Doe. The media, which has sensationalized her assault to the point of naming the rapists as a football team might be named—the "Cornell 7"—is actively failing her. The government, which, on the nation's television, has time and time again performed witch hunts against survivors—think Christine Blasey Ford and Anita Hill—has failed us all. I have known this, and I am not surprised.

What's new about this case is that we, Princeton students, are seeing ourselves in this story. The rape played out across Snapchat groupchats, texts with frat boys about cigarettes, and invitations to Halloween functions. Language like "shop still open?" and "like you can walk in and whip it out" uses twists on phrases you could hear your friends say in everyday context, here used to carry out a gang rape. The familiarity of the events is haunting.

This familiarity, however, is a door to understanding. Slowly, students are beginning to conceptualize the impact of trauma on a survivor because of that familiarity. We are omniscient observers, who see the horror of the "free pussy" chat. We see that Doe has endured a terrible, life-altering assault after being forced to snort ketamine, and after her body was used as a table to snort it. We see that she has become a survivor. However, it took Doe two weeks to request a rape kit. Two weeks to begin to come to terms with what happened to her.

We, the omniscient observers, want to go back in time and scream through our phones. We want to tell Doe that it was not okay, that we believe her, that we want to hold her hand as she endures the pain and institutional failure that the next two years and counting will bring.

We cannot go back in time, and we cannot know her or hold her hand through this pain, for her anonymity is the only thing protecting her. Maybe, though, we can honor her through believing her shock, pain, and trauma. When, not if, this happens again, we can honor Doe by believing the next survivor's response to their own trauma. By believing the nuances of these truths. I want Jane Doe to know, like June Jordan told Anita Hill, that she "is somebody and something beautiful and precious and exquisitely compelling."

emails, and bureaucratic processes that made responding to a crisis feel painfully slow. For my grandparents and my aunts and my uncles and my cousins, there is no such separation.

As I write this piece, I keep returning to the question that has haunted me throughout this past summer: Why does Sudan have to become someone else's problem before anyone is willing to care?

I do not think it is because what is happening in Sudan is too complicated. In fact, we as a collective have become very good at making suffering sound complicated enough that we no longer have to feel responsible for it. We call it an African problem. An internal conflict. A resource war. A refugee crisis. We explain the factions and the foreign interests, the gold and the geography, turning a country and its people into something easily overlooked by society.

As people begin to return, they are finding that the end of fighting would not mean the end of the crisis. But, what is happening in my country is not a conflict waiting for the world to care. It is a cause for which my fellow Sudanese and I will continue to advocate and fight, so that one day we may speak of a free Sudan.

ART BY NINA OBIDAIRO DANIELSEN
PAGE DESIGN BY SIRI IAGNEMMA

Bogotá

BY LUNA RAMIREZ CASTELLANOS

Lloras como niña empedernida:
La lágrima rasga a ratos la cortina

Y me miras, afligida, como si la culpa fuera mía.

Me dices, a bocinazos,
Que los carros te atraviesan la cintura,
Y transitan tu pecho con su chafa montura
Para sentarse a cuchichear.

Si refundo tu voz entre el largo suspiro
de transeúnte que toma tus calles por blanca mar,
Lo encontraré buceando el cuenco de luna:
Perlado acuífero que palpa tu ombligo
Para hacer del estómago hendido humedal.

Has dado la piel por harapos,
Has dejado que el extranjero
Hurgue tus párpados
Y hurte del sol las luciérnagas
Que brillaban de ensueño el ocular.

A veces sollozas viendo al vendedor ambulante
Que en trajinar ha hecho del cerro su casa
Y que busca en latón la almohadilla de pino,
Con la que de joven perfumabas el ajuar.

Sé que empedrabas las ropas de anhelo,
Que rozabas con el seno desnudo
La estrella que titila en el cielo,
Que la sangre brotaba del cerro
Y rugía en la plaza como jaguar.

Hoy, remendando a pie de semáforo
Los retazos de un corazón estrujado,
Me pintas de cal la sonrisa
Y me adornas el armazón de ceniza.

Ahora te veo pintada en mis sueños:
Envuelta toda en tu gris velo,
Escondiendo la cara en la mugre del suelo.

Tú eres la dama en vilo
Que me despierta con su graznido de tingua,
Que maquilla el rostro de anciana a cincel—
Lo adorna con vitral y avenida cutánea:
Tapa su pena con brillantes de oropel.



ART AND PAGE DESIGN BY RAVEN REID

Fiction

Night Atlas



"If you took the highway and hiked the trail and camped out three days three times over very carefully it took a long time and finally it would be light, and then you could go to sleep, if you were in a place where you could sleep in the daylight."

BY CLAIRE BEELI

That night we lay on the cots in the temp room and I listened to the hail tapping on the windows. The hail scattered down in handfuls and all night you could hear it knocking and dropping into the gutters. I did not want to sleep because I knew that if I ever shut my eyes in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my body. I had been that way for a few months, ever since I was sucked up into the sea at night and felt it go out of me and off across the surface then come back. I tried never to think about it, but it had started to pull away since, in the nights, just at the moment of going off to sleep, and I could only stop it by a very great effort. So while now I am fairly sure that it would not really have gone out, that winter I was unwilling to chance anything at all.

I had different ways of occupying myself while I lay awake. I would think of a desert road I had gone down when I was a Boy Scout and do the whole trip very carefully in my mind; watching intently the 2-D rock faces along the highway, the gas station sour gummy worms, all the frightening loud desert birds and the very early hikes. I would stop hiking at nine to flip pancakes on the camp stove and watch the overlapped coronas of batter begin to bubble and toast; or sometimes it would be oatmeal with globby peanut butter; or sometimes eggs, and I always ate last. I hunched over in the green camp chair with my spork and watched the fire smoke into the thin dry air. I would feel good that the other boys ate before me because I'd made them the good hot food and I could watch them wash up after me. Often I could not identify the animals from the field atlas my stepmother had bought me because the troop tramped all over the open silent hills. I loved to look at it in the firelight and run my fingers over the watercolored portraits of the animals, their soft Latin names and the details of what they were meant to do, like nest at the bases of cacti or eat carrion. The atlas was too heavy to bring on the steep trails and without the book I couldn't identify the creatures. I had to zoom in tight around them with my burning hot cellphone and take photos for later. Sometimes it was very difficult hiking with stiff straight legs to get ahead of bends and swaths of dry brush before the loud troop and see the kit foxes and cactus mice before they fled the exposed path and often I could see none. Always though I found some kind of sign, a tuft of fur or piece of scat but one time in the oasis I could find no sign at all and had to sit at the campground in the green camp chair to stare at the rock face across the desert while the sun mashed itself red into the horizon and wait there for bighorn sheep.

Sometimes I would imagine how I would swat my skinny arms at the tiny bats that swarmed over the campground after dusk and watch them flap up in circles against the stars and neon nebulae. I knew they circled up and away but to me it looked like they stayed the same height and flew in flat spirals.

When I had finished too quickly and the time did not go, I would remember the hike over again, starting where it opened out into the oasis and the ancient basin and going back over the crag again, looking alone for animals the troop might have scared off. Some nights too I made up encounters with badgers or coyotes and some of them were very exciting, and it was like being awake and dreaming. Some of those animals I still remember and think that I have seen them, the bobcat's shocked round head and the coyote's mean low eyes, and they are confused with animals I really have seen. If you took the highway and hiked the trail and camped out three days three times over very carefully it took a long time and finally it would be light, and then you could go to sleep, if you were in a place where you could sleep in the daylight.

But on some nights I could not take the trip, and on those nights I was tacky in my sheets and tried to remember everything that had ever happened to me, starting from just before the flood and remembering back from one thing to another. I found I could only remember back to kindergarten on the steaming blacktop where we pushed Andrew down the slope in his wheelchair. Then I would start there and remember this way again, until I reached the flood.

I remember, after Andrew got his cast off we moved to Seal Beach to an apartment above a bakery. My friends would not be at the new school and I remember how sadly we kicked the kickball in a large white square before I had to go. I remember how their hair stuck in flat swirls to their sweating foreheads. But there were only muddled faces in the kickball games, no distinct noses or eyes like the coyote or the badger, and I could not remember their names even apart from Andrew, nor the kinds of things they said.

About the new apartment I remember





how my stepmother was always looking at the unblinking computer to check my grades on the school website. One time when my father was out snowboarding with his old judge friend she went through his computer and found some photos of naked men and other long chains of messages. When my father came home and knocked the morning's snow from his boots and put the gear away in the back closet she had been waiting on the couch with her hands on her knees. He handed me his car keys and looked down at her.

"I saw your messages, dear," she said and looked out the window. "The photos too. And Will saw." My father looked at the hulking monitor then down the hall that led to his closet office with the little computer. "Move the car to a spot, Will," he said to me. I went down the stairs to the street and turned on the car which rumbled nicely. The fields in Nebraska were empty and quiet. There my father taught me to drive when I was nine, when we visited his brothers. I was familiar now with the rules about parking and the street sweeping schedules and good at parallel parking, too. I looked up at the apartment window but couldn't see through the glare except for the row of California atlases in the windowsill. The California Deserts Field Atlas was there, then, and the general edition, and the forest one with my encyclopedias also. I wished I had them in the car.

People lined up out the door of the bakery. Some people outside had brown paper bags seeped with sugar grease. The car squeaked when I swung it out of the spot and around the block, braking so smoothly that a passenger would hardly know we were slowing down, then parallel parked on the next block where street sweeping wouldn't start until between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. tomorrow.

I locked the car but had forgot the house key in there with them so I knocked for a while but it was loud, he was shouting, so no one heard and I sat on the doormat that said Hello in dark cursive and waited for a while there and looked at the ceiling and remembered the fish I saw once in Hawaii when we snorkeled, the ones colored like sunsets and the pressed flat ones. Now I don't like so much to remember Hawaii but I remember the doormat well and how impressed everyone was with my parking and the way my father and stepmother looked before I went to park the car, she more white and he more red than usual.

Some nights, though, I would get to that part and could not stand to remember the looks of the fish in the clear water. Then I would have to recognize that I absolutely could not use the apartment to think of and had to try something else. So on those nights I would try to sing through every song I knew with the right timing to the words and sounds and then the three poems I knew and then the names of all the beaches and all the missions the Spanish had built and the names of the mountains, like Junipero Serra Peak which was named for the man who started all of the missions and put the native people into the reductions that spread disease and killed many people, and when I could not name any more missions or mountains or animals I would just listen. And I do not remember a night on which you could not hear things. If I could have a light I was not afraid to sleep, because I knew that my soul would only go out of me if it were dark. So, of course, many nights I was where I could have a light and then I slept because I was nearly always tired and often very sleepy. I fell asleep many times at my metal desk at the new school. And I am sure many times too that I slept without knowing it in the dark—but I never slept knowing it, and on this night I listened to the hail. You can hear the cars always streaming in a heavy way down PCH just outside the window but this night there was hail. This week was the first time I had ever seen hail and the first time Southern California had seen it in thirty years. I lay with my eyes open and listened.

There was only one other person in this room and she was awake too. I listened to her being awake for a long time. She could lie nearly as quietly as I could because she was used to laying beside my father who would wake even at tiny noises. She turned over and the spring of the cot squeaked. I moved too, so she would know I was awake. She had lived for two years away from us then came back to Seal Beach last year just before the flood and began again doing the things she did before like checking my grades and throwing out the cat litter. For a long time before and for the two years away she worked on adoption cases and visited the people who wanted a child to make sure the homes were safe. I heard her listening, so I moved again in the blankets.

"Can't you sleep, Will?" she asked.

"No."

"I can't sleep either."

"Why not?"

"I don't know, baby."

"Do you feel okay?"

"Yes. I feel okay. I just can't sleep."

"Should we talk?" I asked.

"Yes. What is there to talk about here."

"This place is okay," I said.

"Sure. It's all right."

"Tell me about the babies and the



ART AND PAGE DESIGN BY RAVEN REID



families."

"Oh, I've told you that before."

"Tell me about how you met my dad."

"You know."

"Was that him on the phone on Monday?"

"Yes, honey."

"I bet he's really good by now," I said.

"I would hope so. By now. He's been up there with your uncles and Judge Paterson a long time."

"Did you ever hear that the best athletes are actually dumb? Like Agassi. He has to be dumb so he doesn't think about being nervous and doesn't care that he spends all his time hitting a ball with a racket."

"Where did you hear that?"

"Don't you think we'll wake the neighbors up, talking?" I asked.

"No. They can't hear. Anyway the hail is so loud."

"You can hear it going into the gutter. The metal sound."

We were both quiet and listened to the hail.

"Will. Is there something we could talk about and help you sleep? I haven't heard you sleep ever since we've been here."

"I don't know," I said. "My ears still hurt from what happened with the water when I was under. At night they bother me."

"Just like me," she said. "I should've had us stay with Aunt Lindsey. This place isn't good for you."

"Maybe it will get better."

"Say, Will, what do you want to do when it's over and we move back?"

"I'll go on more trips. And I'll talk to the boys at the new school. We'll do kickball."

"Will you stay in the Boy Scouts?"

"Maybe."

"Do you want me to buy you new atlases? I can order them here for you to look at."

"Maybe. I still have the one about the coasts. It was with Connor's family still from the Catalina trip."

"I'm glad you've got it."

"I am too. I like it but I want the fires atlas and the Bay Area. Then I'll have more for going north."

The hail tapped for a while. Then she said, "Why don't you try and go to sleep?"

"No. I'm wide awake now. I hope you can sleep though."

"So young and you can't sleep. I wish I could give you my sleep."

"You get used to it. It just takes a while."

"Are you worried about anything, Will? Anything on your mind?"

"No, Jackie. I don't think so."

"You should try a sport. Why don't you join the soccer team? You could wear the big shin guards and eat clementines. You'd be so tired by the time you got home, there'd be nothing to think of except sleep."

"I can't run well enough."

"You run fine. Anyone can play on the middle school team."

"I'll think about it."

"You know some boys on the team, right?"

"Right."

"Well, ask one of them about it, have them bring you to a practice. You'll never regret it. Every young man should play a sport."

"I'll think about it."

"Do it."

"All right."

"You'll be glad for it."

"All right," I said. "Let's try and sleep a while."

"All right. But you remember what I said."

I rolled over on my cot and was very quiet and I listened to her breathing regularly. Then she started to snore. I listened to her snore for a long time and then I stopped listening to her snore and listened to the hail dropping. It fell steadily, making a rapping on the windows. I thought of the boys I knew who played soccer and what I would look like in the uniform and how good I would be, if I would be good enough for people to cheer for me and love me. It was a very interesting thing to think about and for a while it was better than camping and interfered with my remembering. Finally, though, I went back to the hiking and the desert because I found that I could remember all the animals and there was always something new about them, though I wished I had the atlases to remember for sure. The soccer boys, after I thought of them a few times, blurred and I could not call them into my mind and finally they all blurred and all became rather the same and I gave up thinking

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Does anyone have a new atlas for Claire Beeli*?*



Essays

Rave Inside the Machine

On the ironies of the corporate aesthetic embodied by DJ John Summit's *CTRL ESCAPE*, raving inside the machine.

BY SOA ANDRIAMANANJARA

On September 18th, hours after closing for the day, the New York Stock Exchange welcomed John Summit. Instead of its typical sterile white light, flashing green lasers filled the room. Summit, dressed in a double-breasted gray suit, stood at the front of the room; behind him, alongside the NYSE logo, a screen displayed a graph of Summit's imagined stock value rising. Summit pumped his fist to his remix of Daft Punk's "One More Time," while a crowd, half dressed in black and half donning khakis and button-ups, stretched their bodies towards Summit, craning their necks to see him. The stunt, a secret pop-up before his Experts Only festival, was sponsored by CashApp and Visa. Just 9 months before, Summit had tweeted "almost every dj at the top right now is boring as fuck / i swear money makes everyone complacent."

The New York Stock Exchange is the heart of the corporate world. It's famously been featured in *The Wolf of Wall Street* and *The Dark Knight Rises*, where white button-up-wearing men yell at everything on the trading floor. Despite being previously opened to the public, licensed stockbrokers and "Designated Market Makers" who have successfully applied for membership are now the only non-celebrities that can set foot inside. When a company goes public, a bell-ringing ceremony is held, often attended by celebrities and the ultra rich. The NYSE is the pinnacle of Wall Street—it is the physical embodiment of American capitalism. So why throw a party there?

John Schuster, known more commonly as the DJ John Summit, discovered DJing as a student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he was a member of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity. Growing up in the Chicago suburbs, Summit was vaguely familiar with the EDM music scene, having annually attended Lollapalooza starting when he was 16. Later in college, Summit would spend weekends at various music festivals, where he saw artists like Kaskade and deadmau5. He began DJing during his sophomore year: "I was a bartender at this bar, and I got fired," he told *Miami New Times*, "but I still wanted to work there. They said, 'We need a DJ.' So, I said, 'Well, good, because I can DJ.'" Soon after, Summit began to DJ at local bars and clubs on $200 equipment.

After graduating, Summit went on to get a master's and become a Certified Public Accountant at Ernst and Young—one of the largest privately owned companies in America. "Literally the most soul sucking job," Summit described, "It was one of those things where you become an accountant, you get an accounting job—unless for some reason you love it—because it's safe... health insurance, all that." He worked 12-hour days before going home to his apartment to produce music, often sending hundreds of demos to various record labels. As Summit's commitment to music increased, he began to show up late to work and leave early in order to produce music and play sets, later joking, "Apparently going on benders isn't a good excuse for missing work in the corporate world." In 2019, he was fired, so when the pandemic hit in 2020, Summit was able to spend a significant amount of time at home working on music. That year, Summit sent the single "Deep End" to Defected Records, who recognized the song's potential. They quickly signed Summit, and the song was an immediate hit. A snippet that goes "I've been tryin' not to go off the deep end / I don't think you wanna give me a reason" even went viral on TikTok. Despite his disdain for corporate work, Summit has expressed gratitude for his time as an accountant: "People don't realise how much business is involved in the music industry. Royalties, signing remixes, managers, agents; so much money moving around. It's good to know basic accounting."

Summit is perhaps a bit too aware of the business in the music industry. Though his latest album, *CTRL ESCAPE,* focuses on his supposed exit from the corporate world, Summit's tour is a strong return to it. His tour, like his NYSE outing, is sponsored by Visa and Cashapp. Even before his NYSE party, Summit threw a "corporate rave," co-hosted by LinkedIn and Spotify. This performance took place in an office building, where the walls showed a blue projection of the label "Summit CPA," and Summit, dressed in a white-button up and tie, mixed behind a literal office desk. Guests even received their invitations through LinkedIn messaging.

Instead of playing clubs and festivals like fellow DJs Peggy Gou, David Guetta, and Dom Dolla, Summit has embarked on an arena tour for this album, the kind usually reserved for pop stars like Harry Styles or Ariana Grande. Similarly, Summit's tickets cost no less than one hundred dollars. His shows are staged as performances rather than parties; Summit stands alone, on a platform high above the audience. Not accounting for elevation, there's probably a solid thirty feet between Summit and his audience. Moreover, Summit is not at the front of the room; he is in the center of it. His audience surrounds him, watching as orange lasers shoot out from under him. By placing himself at the center of the room, elevated above the common people's ground, Summit has made himself, rather than his music, the focal point of the night. There's something a bit feudal about this whole situation, where Summit is both the king and the court jester. The DJ booth is his altar, and his subjects, paying hundreds of dollars for a chance to see him, reach their phone-clad hands to him in worship. In return, Summit smiles and throws his arms in the air, forming a cross with his body. And lest you forget where you are, a projection of "Summit" adorns all four walls.

"I feel like I'm rooted in the underground," Summit once declared to the *Miami New Times*. Chicago, Summit's hometown, is the birthplace of house music, and Summit is certainly aware

ART BY RAVEN REID
PAGE DESIGN BY FLETCHER KANEBW

of the benefit of growing up around the area, explaining "Learning how to DJ in a place like Chicago also helped me really hone my proper house and techno DJ sets." The term "house" stems from the iconic Chicago club The Warehouse, where, in the eighties, DJs began to combine disco and electronic music. A four-beat kickdrum, loud bass, and limited lyrics—all of which mainstream audiences hated in disco—were all fundamental to house music. Chip E, the "architect of house," described house music as "made for the dance floor... It's not made to be listened to while you're sitting down." At Summit's arena tour, tickets are bought by the seat. Besides its unique sound, The Warehouse also had a distinct audience of Black and Latino gay men; the club acted as a haven for those facing exclusion from their religious communities. In fact, the club was a members-only group, so the house community was extremely protective over its spaces—so much so that Frankie Knuckles, the "Godfather of House Music," quit his residency at The Warehouse when the club's promoters abandoned formal membership and doubled the cover fee. He went on to open The Power Plant—a new members-only club—where much of The Warehouse's clientele migrated.

PLUR—an acronym standing for "Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect"—is the general code of conduct in rave culture. Raves started in the 80s as various geographic music scenes—Chicago house, Detroit techno, and New York garage, notably—arose. Raves were underground, often days-long parties fueled with alternative music and experimentation. The underground aspect of raving, which stemmed from the need to prevent the police from shutting them down, was key to their success; raves often took place in illegal locations, cost nothing (or if they had a cover, they were "pay what you're willing"), and embraced recreational drug use, which when all combined, created a sense of ecstasy and community. Today, however, raving, while still having underground aspects, can also refer to attending massive commercial EDM festivals. This version of raving often costs hundreds of dollars, creating a fundamental divide between underground raving and corporate raving. Corporate raves are massively advertised and documented; underground raves are more lowkey, often only being announced day-of and being discovered through word-of-mouth. The publicization of these corporate raves, importantly, requires performance: at a corporate rave, audiences have paid significant sums, leading to high expectations. This forces organizers, often music executives, to create large spectacles of flashy lights and big-name DJs. As a result, corporate raves focus on bravado, and the P in PLUR comes to stand for performance. The focus at a John Summit set, then, is John Summit—it is not on the music, it is not on the community, and it is certainly not on the dancing. *What is John Summit doing up there? Is this show worth it? Could I get behind the booth near him?* a corporate raver might wonder while looking up at Summit's altar.



When a rave is at its best, PLUR is high: strangers compliment each other like best friends, bodies face one another instead of the DJ, and the shared experience of movement creates a sacred space. Basement, one of New York's biggest techno clubs, writes on its website, "We hope you come for the music, to support the artists we present, and to enjoy a liberated environment for everyone." NYC Rave Girls, a promoter group, specifically instructs rave-goers to "say hi to someone new." And critically, the dance floor is not a concert: Shared experience and communal movement make the dancefloor sacred space. Bringing the dance floor to the NYSE trading floors is like wearing neon to a funeral. Traditional raves attract an intentionally alternative audience, whereas a John Summit rave literally invites stockbrokers. Is the corporate office really the space we want to take the dance floor to? When raves are hosted on Wall Street, the rebelliousness that defines rave culture disappears. Rage against the machine becomes rave inside the machine.

There's a photo on Summit's Instagram of him shirtless and shiny with sweat behind his DJ table at Breakaway Festival 2025. The photo's caption reads "after this past weekend i better hear no one talk trash about my crowds again." The last photo in this specific post is a screenshot of his tweets, in which he compliments his own crowd, saying, "seems like the real ones going for the music have stuck around and the ones who just came when it got popular have filtered out, or maybe it's because i've been choosing the right events lately... " As of late, Summit's events have only been his own: his own festival, his own tour, his own name everywhere. Before the NYSE set, Summit tweeted "another casual week in the office" accompanied with photos of himself in a white button up behind a deck. The music video of "LIGHTS GO OUT," the lead single from *CTRL ESCAPE*, depicts Summit and his supposed co-workers rebelling against the corporate world by throwing up their papers and dancing, all while chanting "Where do we go when the lights go out?" The answer? Apparently, nowhere.

Soa Anriamananjara, *Princeton's resident DJ, is busy raving. Or is she raging?*

Noble Motives

Characters
WATCHMAN
CHORUS of Naxian Elders
AGATHON, candidate for Keeper of Hearth
EURYKLES, Steward
CASSANDRA, scribe of the Naxian scroll
FURIES
ATHENA

BY ALPHA ZHANG

Scene: The island-city of Naxos, before the Hall of Naxos. The WATCHMAN is on the roof.

WATCHMAN

Deathless gods, with bloody tears I plead: grant respite from my plight,
from Naxos's roof, where dogwise I have crouched on ivies night by night,
to watch the fire that lights the Tower above the cloister's garth,
and tell the island who has won the keeping of the Hearth.
Let me keep my silence yet. There are things I shall not say:
for a huge ox stands upon my tongue and bars the words their way.
This house, had it a mouth to speak, would say what I have said:
all who craved the Hearth swore they wanted something else instead.

Exit the WATCHMAN. Enter the CHORUS of Elders from the side.

CHORUS

Four winters since, with guiltless hands and hearts, we reached the Gate,
our legs a-wiggle, smiles abrim, and blind as yet to fate.
Each carved his virtue, one by one, upon the Gate's grey stone:
I tended to the old and poor—I did it for love alone.
I gave the voiceless back their tongue. The Gate swung wide. Indeed,
some part of it was love; we'll not disown a single deed.
But set those tablets, if you will, on Zeus's honest scales:
a grain of gold lies hid in each, and sours the sweetest tales.

CHORUS LEADER 1

Now we are Elders, four years on; tonight the city waits
to learn whose hand will tend the Hearth that guards Naxos's gates.

CHORUS LEADER 2

The Keeper speaks for us before the high Assembly's seat,
holds the common purse, and rides in triumph down the street.

CHORUS LEADER 3

All citizens may drop a pebble in the Steward's urns;
he counts them in the dark, and no one checks what he returns.

CHORUS LEADER 4

Lest rich men buy the Hearth the way a farmer buys a mule,
no man may spend past fifty obols. That's the Naxians' rule.

Enter AGATHON in a clean white cloak.

AGATHON

O Elders! You are out so late! I know what brings you forth.
I seek the Hearth because the Hearth is where the city draws its worth:
the field that feeds the city's mouth, the spring that slakes its thirst;
and he who tends that sacred flame must serve the island first.
Through all the year I carried water, taught infants to read,
bound the sick with linen strips, and sat with those in need.
They say I toiled for power. Nonsense! The gods remade me just;
truly, I craved no crown but young ones' love and elders' trust.

CHORUS

A fine speech! Tell us about your opponent Archias.

AGATHON

The Steward struck his name.

CHORUS

What for?

AGATHON

He broke the rules. He spent past the limit.

CHORUS

By how much?

AGATHON

Thirty obols. He hired a chariot down the Road of One
to reach the Great Market by the wall, and home when he was done.
He bought electors flowers there, and a bucket of grain.
The Steward ruled the ride, thirty-two, made to serve the campaign.

CHORUS

A man must eat. How come the ride to market is campaign spending?

AGATHON

The Steward ruled. It is not my place to question him.

CHORUS

And did you want to question him?

AGATHON

A player who leans on the umpire is no better than a briber.

CHORUS

That's a good reason. Is it yours?

Enter EURYKLES, carrying a bronze ledger.

CHORUS

Steward, was it just, that you disqualified Archias?

EURYKLES

If one man may ride the road while one must walk its length,
then wealth, not worth, becomes the measure of a suitor's strength.
And soon the whole Assembly falls to him who owns the horse.
I did not write the law. I keep it so justice runs its course.

AGATHON

Well said, my good Steward!

CHORUS (to AGATHON)

Do you say this because it helps you, or on justice's ground?

Exit EURYKLES. Enter CASSANDRA with ink on her fingers.

CASSANDRA

Ototoi! Apollo! I have passed the Eikon Wall,
where mortals paint their passing days that none forget at all.
I saw, some fifteen breaths in length, Archias's little scene:
his flowers, and his sack of grain, and that same ride between.

CHORUS

What else did you see?

CASSANDRA

A thousand eyes slid past the frame; one pair looked on alone.
Eurykles watched at second watch, then filed it as his own.
Some feud, I guess, ran long between the two, though I cannot swear;
the man who botched the urns gave this one fault such loving care.

AGATHON

Pure speculation!

CHORUS

But the Steward botched the urns!

AGATHON

That part is true; they had to redo the election.

CHORUS

Cassandra, what comes after?

CASSANDRA

I see what comes: Archias, his good name struck from the slate,
pacing the colonnades alone, past the fourth watch and late;
telling whoe'er will hear: the chariot, the Wall, the Hall,
repeating each detail, as if one truth explained it all.
Unsleeping, he will write th'Assembly letters without end;
Eurykles will read each one and mark the madness of his friend.
Soon kind-faced physicians will lead him through Asclepius's door:
for your own safety, till a sober mind return once more.

AGATHON

But the rule is real! Archias's violation was real!

CASSANDRA

Of course they're real! That's the terror. Lies have seams which you can poke.
Lay a rule across reason, and truth becomes a perfect cloak.

AGATHON

Get out of here!

CHORUS

Out. We don't believe a single word you said.

Exit CASSANDRA in tears.

WATCHMAN (above)

The fire from the Tower! Agathon has won!

Cheers offstage. AGATHON raises his arms, then slowly lowers them.

CHORUS

The beacon leaps forth, Tower to Library, Library to Hall.
Joy outruns the feet of truth and outruns justice's call.
A field with one flower cut away—the finest—is a field still;
but something with no torch at all comes climbing up the hill.

The FURIES rise from the ground. EURYKLES stands among them, wearing a golden chain of office around his neck.

CHORUS

Steward, what's that at your throat?

EURYKLES

The Assembly voted to set me over every vote in all the Cyclades.

CHORUS

Even though you botched the urns?

EURYKLES

The citation read: *For vigilance.*

FURIES

We do not hunt for lies, deceit, or fraud. They are small game.
We hunt the crooked space between the reason you proclaim
before the crowded square, among good men, beneath the sun,
and that which pulled you from your bed to see the deed was done.

AGATHON

Daughter of Zeus! Athena! Hear the whole of it in brief,
and judge between us who speaks true, and who is but a thief!

Thunder. ATHENA appears with a gavel of olivewood.

ATHENA

Eurykles first. Did Archias ride to the Market?

EURYKLES

He did. He painted it himself on the Wall.

FURIES

Ask him how many other chariots reached the Market that month.

EURYKLES (after a silence)

Hundreds. Every one uncounted but his.

ATHENA

Why do you hate Archias so?

EURYKLES

Two winters back, in Clio's Hall, we were comrades-in-debate;
I built the case plank-wise and gave a speech I still call great.
He stood beside me, once so sure, and lost the argument outright;
I watched the crowd's faces, one by one, go polite, then white.
And while he searched, the judges never raised their eyes but wrote.
We lost. A seed took root that night; its vine now grips my throat.
But goddess, still his fault was real, and would be real the same had I loved him as my brother. Is the rule itself to blame?

ATHENA

Had noble motive moved you, you'd have let the picture by,
as did a hundred others; but it caught your single eye.
A frame of true timber is still a frame. I strike it from your hand.
What mortals vote by their own will, no god may countermand.

FURIES

What about Agathon now? The man who exploited Archias's disqualification?

ATHENA (to AGATHON)

Agathon, You didn't charge Archias. But did you doubt the ruling?

AGATHON

I held that judges must stand clear of those who seek to win;
I doubted him. I also felt my wanting stir within.
Perhaps my principle alone would not have held that night;
perhaps ambition on its own could not have made it right.
But yoked together, both prevailed, as oxen side by side
may drag a cart no mighty beast could move a single stride.
Which ox, then, bears the guilt? Which one first made the wheels to start?
And who, before he acts, can name what moved his hand and heart?

FURIES

Then say it in the square: I stayed silent out of selfishness, and on principle too.

AGATHON

I won't say it.

ATHENA (to the audience)

Citizens, you're the jury. White stone or black. Vote for love alone.

The jurors vote. ATHENA counts.

ATHENA

Equal. I shall cast no vote. I spare this man and indict the city that taught him what to hide, and fear, and whom to spend no pity.

You built a Gate whose hinges turn upon the gap between;
an Assembly that crowns the man who keeps his motive unseen;
a House that bolts the only man who named what lay below,
because he would not cease to speak what you in secret know.
At fifteen you teach your children: what you want and what you say
must never share a name, though both may pull the selfsame way.

FURIES

So we're cheated of our hunt.

ATHENA

No. I give you a house. You'll sit where candidates shall speak, then ask one question only: who is the most rightful Greek?

The FURIES turn their black robes
inside out to show crimson.

AGATHON (to the audience)

One always wins, one always loses. I shall tend the Hearth at least.

Let's not heed their yappings. Bring the house to order—and to feast!

AGATHON raises his arms again. EURYKLES steps near AGATHON's side and raises his arms too.

END

Alpha Zhang *dabbles with tragedy with the Furies by his side.*

Essays

Go Wonder at the Riders in Isatch Canyon

On a familiar battle between good and evil in Mark Z. Danielewski's *Tom's Crossing*, and its unfamiliar resistance to ambiguity and the moral greyspace.

BY SCARLETT HUNTINGTON

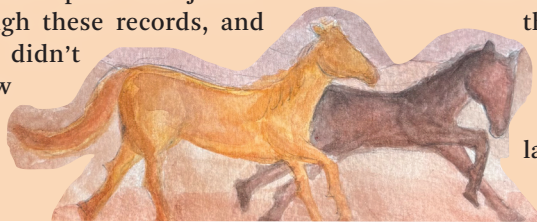
I find myself sitting on the floor of my dorm room, waving my arms about, as I relate to my friends the gravity of Kalin March and Landry Gatestone scaling the Upecksay Headwall—and on horseback! My fingers trace the air, trying to carve out the face of Katanogos, the faint pattern of ledges rising thousands of feet high, maybe the moon above, eclipsed by snowfall. *Do you understand, Alex Honnold is nothing compared to this. These are two children with three horses and a mule too! In a snowstorm at night! While being shot at!*

They are unimpressed. My arms fall limp beside me. It's no use.

To understand Kalin scaling the Upecksay Headwall, my friends must first understand how he scaled Aster Scree while the earth gave way beneath him, a scree that broke the legs of Egan Porch's horse, Cavalry. But then I must explain that Egan Porch is hunting Kalin and Landry to prove to his father Old Porch that he is "the real horseradish," then I must explain why it is Kalin and Landry he is hunting rather than Kalin and Tom, and then I must explain how Tom Gatestone died.

I am talking about *Tom's Crossing*, Mark Z. Danielewski's newest neo-Western novel, a gutsy 1,200-page endeavor with an ensemble of characters so prodigious it borders on absurd. It is a story one must talk about, a story about how people talk about stories—or rather, one story, whether it is called *Landry's Ride* or *Pillars Meadow* or *Old Porch* or *Tom's Crossing*. But talking about this story is like gathering water from Altar Lake in my hands: something always slips through.

As I was abandoning this essay before I'd even begun, a figure with long sandy hair and a turquoise bolo tie presented himself to me: Cal Carneros. Cal first appears on page 917 as the owner of the Time Gallery, whose exhibition opened on February 29, 2000, in Houston, Texas. The show features artworks related to the events that took place between October 27 and October 31, 1982 in Orvop, Utah. On opening night, Cal makes his way through the maze of pieces he hung himself, has seen dozens of times, and considers amateur at best. A mule drawn with white chalk on gray paper. Lemon cake painted on a paper plate. Lariats and reatas. A glass case containing a human nail caked with blood. Pencil sketches titled *Between Paddock A and Paddock B*. A child's pink rain jacket. He passes through these records, and "Cal Carneros didn't have a clue how any of this went together, but somehow in the name of a logic he couldn't track, it weren't particularly discordant either."



I trail Cal because, in many ways, he serves as a model for you, the reader. While I could tell you how Old Porch ripped off his fingernail before jabbing his soon-to-be infected thumb at a map and tracing the route of two teenagers through Isatch Canyon, you, like Cal, would feel lost. And if you were to press me for details, all I could give you is "*I rightly don't know how to give you the short of it.*" Nevertheless, as a bewildered Cal passes from Chamber to Chamber in the gallery, he feels a thrumming in the pieces, yoked by spectres: "Oh, Cal was in the cemetery now! Right there on the edge of the grave!" I too can offer only tatters of this epic, or gestures of its characters, but I hope they are enough for you to sense the weight of what haunts them.

Let us follow Cal as he approaches a sculpture titled *Old Porch* in the Rain: "Somehow the bronze, though, achieved the storm at war, outside of as well as within this Old Porch, one hand pressin a mug against his swole belly, the other hand reachin up as if searchin for a handhold in the heavens to keep hisself from topplin over. Or if not to hold then grab, like a rifle over a door that weren't there?" This is a fine place to start. Orwin Porch, "Old Porch," is the villain of this story.

ART BY ANELISE CHUN
PAGE DESIGN BY JENNA ABDELHAMID

The bronze depicts the moment when Old Porch is assaulted by a vision of his youngest son's death, and his conscience betrays him: "Old Porch's guts full-on revolted then, and up it come, provin hisself no better than Kelly's weak innards, the same innards, except Old Porch refused the comin, he weren't no weak sister, first catchin the molten divulgence in his throat, like the mean thing he was." We see here that Old Porch is human, he has a body like our own that can become sick and die. Still, he is incomprehensible. We don't understand how a father can be so cruel to his children, and yet all they want is for him to bring them a cold beer and say he is proud. We don't understand how the youngest Porch came to collapse in his brother's home, blood slipping through the floorboards. Russell Porch, who returned from Isatch Canyon that night, gladdened by the thought of having made two new friends to see in school the next morning. Returned to announce to his father that he bartered a deal with Landry Gatestone, getting twenty dollars for those two horses, more than they were worth. Even if he left the family Colt Peacemaker with Landry in the mountains.

Old Porch shoots people when their backs are turned. Old Porch butchers his favorite mule Effy, like his own Iphigenia. His appetite is for chewing tobacco and mountains. Old Porch makes *Tom's Crossing* more than an Odyssey. He makes this about the enduring conflict between Good and Evil.

Just as Old Porch is wholly evil, Kalin March is goodness. His journey is one of uncomplicated ambition. He will ride to the backside of Katanogos. He will set Mouse and Navidad free at the gateposts. He will do this because he swore it to Tom in the hospital room, and because he loves the horses. He cares for their hooves, rubs their legs, feeds them oats and apples, and urges them forward: "Instead of dismountin, Kalin patted Navidad's neck and whispered in her ear what needed whisperin. He didn't even dig his knees in none, nor tap his heels to her side; she knew what needed doin and did it." Kalin is remarkably selfless. He makes sure Landry and the horses have enough to eat, even if he starves. He believes that "*It ain't good enuf to wanna be free... Every dang livin thing wants to be free. It's elemental I reckon. But like my momma taught me, and it's how I see things too: to matter you gotta set free someone that ain't you.*"

What Danielewski has done with his novel is unleash forces of Good and Evil upon the Utah Valley. Old Porch and Kalin embody moral extremities—"it was hard to defend Old Porch as *an agathokakological creature*"—so they seem more like heroes of classical mythology than people we might encounter in real life. Indeed, characters often compare Kalin to Orpheus or Achilles; one can just imagine the hands of gods guiding Kalin up those screes, or guiding Old Porch's bullets. Yet there are no gods in this story—only ghosts, who care not for good or evil. The ghosts do not control the living; instead, they serve as evidence of the violence committed by the first Mormon settlers. Danielewski thus invokes superhuman forces only to locate their origins in the human, a tension that runs throughout the novel. Old Porch is pitiful, unable even to repair the cracks in his house's windows, and Kalin is awkward and clumsy, mocked at school for the shoes he wears.

Danielewski continues to borrow the familiar machinery of myth only to strip it of its sense. He toys with fate, placing a Chekhov's gun—the Colt Peacemaker—in Landry's saddlebag for the duration of the journey. Its presence confirms our expectation that when Good and Evil share a battlefield they are destined to clash and leave bodies in their wake; we have seen it time and time again in Milton, Tolkien, Steinbeck, McCarthy. But in *Tom's Crossing*, this battle is an unbalanced one. The Porch clan mount their ATVs and hunt Kalin and Landry like animals, while Kalin is focused solely on freeing Navidad and Mouse, and recoils from the sight of a gun. The image of grown men hunting fifteen-year-olds begins to unsettle us. It makes the fated showdown at Pillars Meadow, when Kalin finally wields the Colt and massacres the Porches, read more as a tragedy than as the deliverance of justice. We mourn that Kalin has become complicit in the violence he has tried so hard to resist. Kalin's deftness with guns, remarkable as it is in this scene, is a burden on his slight frame. He limps onto Pillars Meadow, remembering his mother's warning: "you but touch a gun and what you love most will forsake you for the rest of your life." When Kalin leaves the meadow, her curse is fulfilled and the horses shrink from his presence. What has been set up as the familiar triumph of Good over Evil instead becomes a senseless display of violence.

And what do we make of the fact that, in a novel where every death we witness is a murder, the death that began it all—Tom's—was caused by cancer? Senseless.

Stories of good versus evil are meant to offer us a safe framework for understanding conflict. They teach children to recognize justice; they invoke greater forces of fate and divinity and apply them to human actions. But *Tom's Crossing* refuses this comfort. It insists on senseless tragedy, on violence as a writhing, volatile thing that strikes down children. This depiction of good and evil could be dismissed as one of many that affirm "moral grayness," but what sets *Tom's Crossing* apart is that its ambiguity operates among unambiguous devices: Good, Evil, Fate, Power. In its simplest form, the story is cliché: the evil oligarch who wants to gobble up land and slaughter horses versus the kindhearted family who wants to protect horses. Danielewski refuses to sacrifice his archetypes, but neither does he allow them to organize his world into a stable moral order.

So how do we attach ourselves to this story? Why do the people of Orvop continue to speculate over it, reenact scenes from it, analogize it to Greek epics, and make artworks in its honor? For one, the story is resonant in its maximalist scale: the feats are staggering, the crimes shocking. We cannot help but wonder at Old Porch's deranged psyche or at Tom's ghost astride his horse. *Tom's Crossing* is an epic of its own, one that re-enchants our modern world, drawing upon the mythos of the American West. For all its maximalism, the novel still manages tenderness. Its characters embody larger-than-life devotions, but they are far from one-dimensional; each possesses a specific humanity, down to every last Porch boy. We care for these characters, and begin to see how amid all the senselessness, the novel still believes in something. It muses on loss, on how the dead may find relief, on the inheritance of violence, and on friendship. The people of Orvop parse the tale, each finding one's own meaning in it—whether in the solidarity of mothers, the greed of church leaders, or the memory of ghosts—even when *Tom's Crossing* insists that it was only ever about two horses being set free.

Scarlett Huntington *is good.*

Fiction

Angel Days

"We were never close while he was alive. That's why I'm putting in all this effort now, to make up for all my years of being a bad son."

BY ELENA EISS

I hope you don't mind me coming to you like this, Rabbi. See, I just can't keep something you said last week out of my head. I don't know if you even recognize me—this was on Yom Kippur? At... Kol Nidrei? Oh, you do! I guess there weren't too many people in the audience. I'll admit that was my first time coming to shul since, I don't know, fourth grade? I was never bar mitzvahed. Let me know if I'm telling you too much or anything... I guess my only context for stuff like this is Catholic confessionals from the movies.

See, it's been a year since my father died, and recently I've been trying to do more to connect with him now that I can't do that... face-to-face. Watching his favorite TV shows, reading the books he kept in his nightstand, visiting the locations of his childhood. Your congregation was his congregation when he was living with his father. Who he hated. That's why I never really got involved with religion. I just went to High Holiday services as a kid when his father was still alive and insisted on taking me. I know you said you only started on here a few months ago, but my father's name was Elliot Green and his father's was Jeremy. Maybe a few members of the congregation remember them.

We were never close while he was alive. That's why I'm putting in all this effort now, to make up for all my years of being a bad son. An absent son, really. I loved him, I'm sure, and he did so much for me, but I never really appreciated him as much as I should have. I guess I took him for granted. He was my father; everyone has a father, and he was just doing his job, you know? But he could have been a terrible father, and he wasn't, and now that he's gone, I feel this great emptiness in my life. A hole. I know he used to be more observant when he was young, so I asked my second cousin where the family used to go to synagogue; he gave me this address, and sure enough it was one year since he'd died and the night of Yom Kippur. There I was: staring up at you on the Bima, sitting in a squeaky pew in a suit that fit too tight and my first yarmulke in thirty years. I'd just picked it up from the box at the front door and clipped it to my hair—which only took half a minute longer than it should have. And, well, there I was. I didn't know the words or the tunes well enough to sing, so I read the English translations of the prayers and tried my best to follow along.

But the melodies and the words—they did resonate somewhere deep inside me, maybe in my reptilian brain or something, jogging memories buried so deep I didn't know they existed. Or maybe even more than memories, jogging the feelings of memories, as if this is what I'd been searching for since my father had died, like this was what would fill that vacant hole.

Before reciting the Shema, you said something I don't think I'll ever forget. About how, though the second line of the Shema is sung under your breath during the rest of the year, throughout Yom Kippur you sing it out loud? I liked that. How the reason you get to sing it out loud is because on Yom Kippur you live like an angel: not eating, not drinking, not working. Praying, thinking, repenting. Angel tasks. So on Yom Kippur you get to say that second, sacred line you're not worthy of saying the rest of the year. Even I recognized the Shema from my childhood when the congregation sang it, so I muttered along too. I got to be an angel, too. Something less than human, but something more. I left at the end of the service and walked all the way home that night weightless. Emptiness had never felt so good.

I couldn't go to morning services the next day because I had work. But it didn't feel right going to work on my day as an angel, so I slept in and woke to a world already bathed in noon sunlight. I felt ethereal. I went on a walk around the neighborhood still in my bathrobe and flannel pants and sweaty undershirt, but none of it felt real; I didn't feel real. My slippers touched the pavement, but I might have been walking on clouds. I watched passersby absorbed in their human tasks: walking twin poodles, fanning out the daily papers at a newsstand, bending down on one knee to tie a child's tennis shoe. As an angel, everything seemed that much more lovely, that much more human. I walked to my usual bagel spot but stopped before going in. I wasn't even hungry. I kept walking.

I walked and I walked until I found myself back in my apartment, lying on my couch just thinking about nothing at all and watching the light and shadows of the tree outside my window dance on the ceiling of my living room. I stayed there until sunset, until my angel day came to a close.

It was kind of sad, actually, the end. I went to work the next day, apologized to my boss, ate my bagel, drank coffee, and lost myself in the usual spreadsheets and rigamarole. I could have gone back to shul on Friday, for Shabbat services, but this really wasn't me and I knew it. I'd had my angel day. I didn't feel holy anymore. I apologized to my father in my head, but I'm sure he wouldn't have been too broken up about it anyway. Would he have even cared that I'd gone to synagogue for him? That I'd been

ART BY ELLEN KRAEMER
PAGE DESIGN BY TRITON OH

making any of these efforts?

I went to this play last night that got me thinking again. It was about a father who had failed to save his son in an accident, and the son was still around, just as a ghost only he could see. When we got to the moment toward the beginning where the audience was supposed to realize the son was dead, I heard someone sniffling behind me and turned to see this man at least a decade older than me crying, crying real tears. It struck me how affected he was. And then as the play went on, more and more audience members began to cry, each in reaction to these specific moments, and I couldn't help but imagine each one had some unique connection to them. Maybe the man behind me had lost a child or was thinking of his own father. The woman who covered her eyes with a hand, maybe she was thinking of an ex-partner consumed by his personal tragedies much like the protagonist.

And shouldn't I have been crying too, Rabbi? A play all about family and death, fatherhood ended, about humans and human emotion, all a year after the death of my own father? Did I really love my father? Or was I just as detached in my normal life as I was on Yom Kippur? What if all my days were angel days, and I was never human?

Is it okay to always feel like an angel, or is that sacrilegious? I don't feel normal, Rabbi, and I thought maybe you might understand and help me, but after saying this all out loud and watching your face I don't know if anyone can. So maybe I'll just try being an angel for a little longer, if you'll excuse me, and see where it takes me. Just a little longer, Rabbi, I'll try.

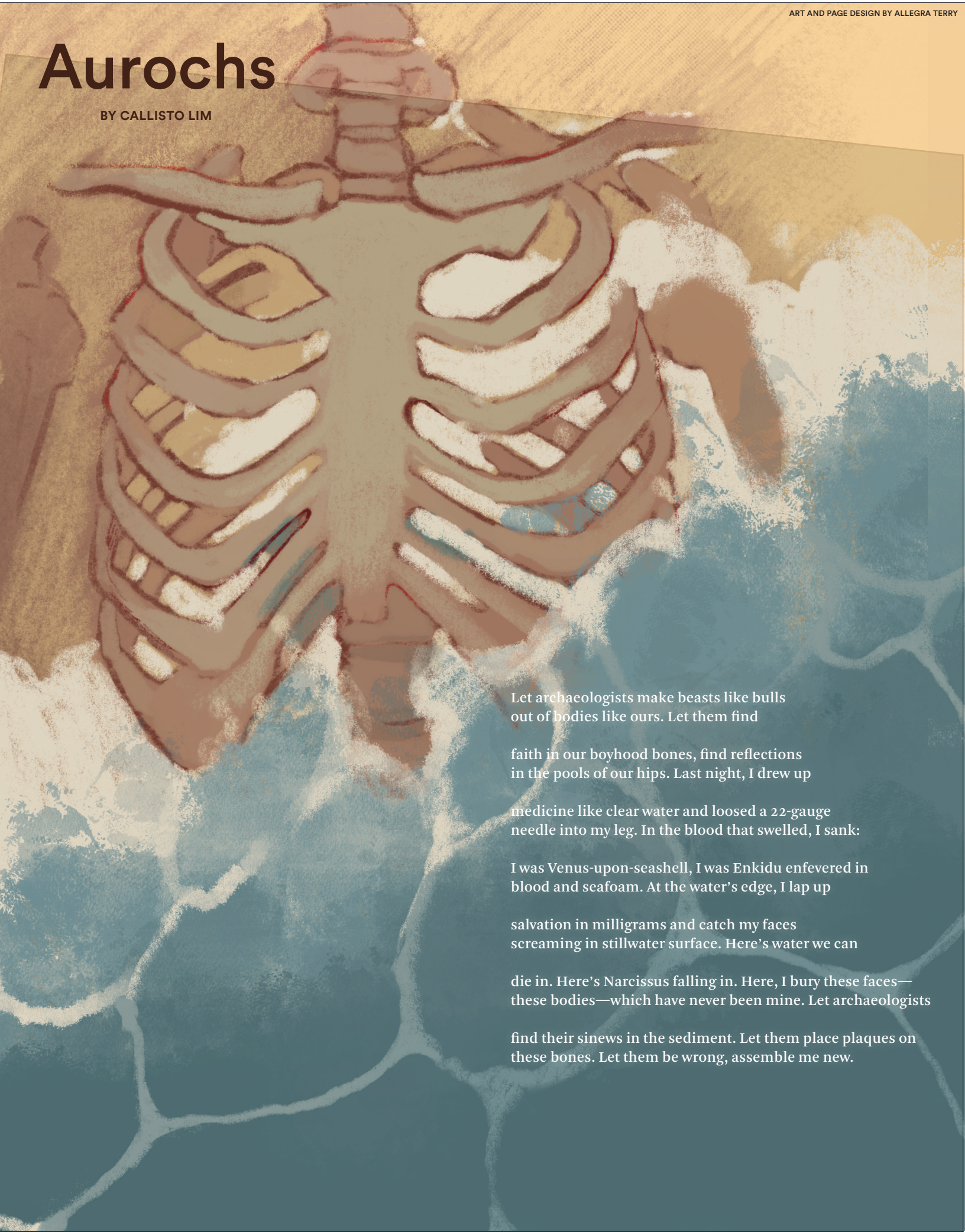


Elena Eiss *is singing, so perhaps every day is an angel day.*

ART AND PAGE DESIGN BY ALLEGRA TERRY

Aurochs

BY CALLISTO LIM



Let archaeologists make beasts like bulls
out of bodies like ours. Let them find

faith in our boyhood bones, find reflections
in the pools of our hips. Last night, I drew up

medicine like clear water and loosed a 22-gauge
needle into my leg. In the blood that swelled, I sank:

I was Venus-upon-seashell, I was Enkidu enfevered in
blood and seafoam. At the water's edge, I lap up

salvation in milligrams and catch my faces
screaming in stillwater surface. Here's water we can

die in. Here's Narcissus falling in. Here, I bury these faces—
these bodies—which have never been mine. Let archaeologists

find their sinews in the sediment. Let them place plaques on
these bones. Let them be wrong, assemble me new.

ART BY ALLEGRA TERRY
PAGE DESIGN BY TOBIAS SEABOLD

Called Olympic

BY LUCY THORPE

You created me
with that thrashing tongue
of garbled half-waves on
smooth sound stones,
aged by thousands of caressing
palms looking to skip on
Puget's icy surface.

You made my patronymic
the peninsula,
home to faces of fathers
upon fathers—
their hands in the murk which
I track over your face.

Baptized by campfire,
I sacrifice a pair of shorts to
the splintering side
of this landmass like
a libation.

You are called Olympic
because gods are born
from you:
Tumbling down a mountain
touching moonstung
fields of tawny straw,
a rusty dinner bell and
moss-loved bridge,
a service entrance,
a night owl's annex.

You sang me asleep
with the native rhythms
of your heartbeat:
Drumming thrums of
mismatched dice
clanging to a folding table
like Excalibur.
Squishy soft
crab apples
in the jaws of
three-legged deer.

You taught me flight
(over handlebars, that is)
on the main road home.
Catching blood in the map of my
palm creases,
I tip my chin
to the last legs of sunshine
through a bridal veil
of branches.



Lucy Thorpe *has learned to fly (off of her bike, that is).*

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