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PULP MAG aims to be a safe, inclusive space for emerging artists of all types. We want to give a platform to unique voices with important stories to tell, no matter the medium. We believe in the importance of artist recognition, exposure, paying our creative talent, and in building a strong community to hold the work. At pulp MAG, we especially appreciate the avant-garde; we are ready to push the boundaries of art with you.

VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS MAGAZINE ARE NOT NECESSARILY SHARED BY THE EDITORS

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SHEILA VAN DELFT

Sickbed Ramblings

I catch the bug on Tuesday, but it takes me two days to feel it. The pills do nothing and I can't stand up straight. When my mother comes to get me, I think I am hallucinating. I am seven years old again and staying home from school.

She brings me Gatorade and saltine crackers while I sprawl out on the couch like a freshly dug-up corpse. My phone flickers with the time. 11:04. 14:33. 16:47. The days move forward.

I am twenty-three, and I want to be spoon-fed cough syrup. I miss the awful taste on my tongue. The cherry flavour was as good as morphine to a kid like me. You don't know pain until your father tells you that you're too old to do things like roller skate down the street with your phone blaring early 2000s hits.

My mother makes me soup but doesn't feed it to me anymore. I have my own hands, but I can't lift them. How do I tell them that inside I'm still the little girl who always needed velcro because she couldn't tie her shoes? To this day, I don't know how to make that final knot. Where does the bunny go once it's down the hole? I'm beginning to think it never comes back up.

It's nearly midnight, and my stomach hurts and I want my mom, but she doesn't exist, hasn't existed since I was four feet tall. At least not in the way I need her to.

I think I will eat banana bread even though I can't digest solid food just because I can -because it's something a little kid would do. I am trying to prove something to my parents. I am trying to prove something to myself.

When the Conversation Changes

“I’m a werewolf,” she says. It rolls off her tongue like a shiny but dull secret, the cheap silverware of bar disclosures. The hotel barroom is lively in the background, clinking glasses and noisy clandestine affairs, but our seats on the bar are secluded and undisturbed by patrons and bartenders alike. She tilts her head back and grins, sharp, toothy fangs peeking out under rounded lips. It is our secret: she dyes her hair blonde, but she’s a natural brunette; she has a boyfriend, but craves the dopamine rush of adultery; she’s an average twenty-something girl, but hunts to feed a salacious appetite for men every full moon.

I don’t believe her. Maybe it’s her silver eyeshadow or her perfectly trimmed nails. Maybe it’s the full moon that beckons us from the skylight, that showers her in an almost forgiving beam. Maybe it’s the way she looks at me, like she wants me to reassure her that the only monsters that exist are far outside this barroom, far outside the souls of people like her and me.

“Give yourself some credit,” I say, “your teeth are far too short to rip flesh off of bone.” Secretly, I’ve always been one for metaphors. Anyways, it’s all true: her fangs are pointed but short, incapable of inflicting more damage than a superficial mark. I can imagine her attempting to rip off a woodsman’s neck, but resigning to puncture his throat like a different sort of monster. I stifle a laugh, and feel her do the same. “They can’t possibly do much damage at all.”

She ponders it. “I never said I was a particularly good werewolf.” There’s a cheekiness to her tone. “They bleed out from all the bite marks. I never quite

accomplished the art of the mercy kill.” She says the last words quietly, and subtly shifts her eyes from side to side, never turning her jewelled neck, and relaxes as she misinterprets the wide berth around us. “I’ve tried to use my nails, but they aren’t long enough.”

I sip my drink and eye the soundless television screen that plays in the corner with all the men in their jerseys. Perhaps I would be better off sitting with them. “Why don’t you try growing them out?” I ask, and pause as I catch a scent of the men’s cologne she wears. Uniquely hers. I could only name a handful of men who could pull it off, none of them quite as enticing. If I were a fragrance connoisseur, I would name her scent after the dew that collects on the midnight grass, that swirls when the moon’s light hits it at the best angle. I have to take another sip of my drink to trick my brain into thinking sober again. “Your nails, I mean. Why not grow them out?”

She looks down at her nails, inspects the red underneath the white tips, and I look at her hair. She wears her bright locks in two high buns, and I smile at the absurdity. It’s like she’s the star of one of those award-winning indie films, where the women exist just to flicker in and out of men’s lives, leaving nothing but spare glitter and a scarf behind on a bus stop bench.

“I could grow them out,” she says, “but that would be besides the point.”

I frown. “I’m afraid I don’t know what your point is.”

“I don’t want to be a werewolf, not anymore.”

Here I thought this was a game. The whole evening, she had led up to some great reveal - a werewolf was one thing, exciting, provocative, sensual, but a werewolf in spite of itself was a whole other headache: one to address when the moon was much farther away. I sigh. “Why not?” This is decidedly less fun.

“I think you’re different.” She tilts her head back to bathe in the dim

light coming from the sky, flecks of silver glittering down her cheek. If she's trying to distract me, it's working, but not quite in the way she intended. I might be in over my head. "I think you aren't like my victims."

I need another drink. I motion for the bartender, but the bar's empty. The racks of clear tall bottles and short brown ones form a pattern that threatens to distract me; I blink and turn back to her. She stares at the bar curiously but doesn't say anything. "Victims," I fill the silence, as monotonously as possible, "yours or the werewolf's?"

Her expression sours: wide lips thinning, eyes squinting and rolling at the same time. "Maybe I was wrong."

It's getting late. The skylight darkens; outside, the moon floats farther and farther away. Her face is not so illuminated anymore - the sparkles look like makeup. The connection between us wavers. Perhaps a better person would stay for longer: maybe only a worse one would. Still.

I want to empathize. I want to kiss her cheek and learn how the moon tastes. But I know the moon tastes bitter. If the skylight were to shatter, would she run for cover? Or would she accept the wolf as an inevitability, and revel in monstrosity, embrace it?

Instead, I say aloud: "I don't know what to say anymore. I'm out of metaphors."

She frowns. My mouth tastes metallic. I feel like I am missing something.

When I step off the barstool, my feet are anchors deep under the ocean, secured in sand; my legs, the chains that waver in ice cool water. I consider saying goodbye - when I meet her eyes, they are dry and squinting, dilated and reddening. I turn, slowly, towards the door.

Somehow, I don't think this will be the last I see of her.

Dying

“Hmm. Always thought dying would be much faster than this. Not this slow agony...”

He wiggled his toes. “Ah, still can feel my feet.”

Shuddering, he pulled his collar up; every small movement reminded him of the gnawing in his stomach.

“So weak. So weak.” That was all he could think. His stomach grumbled in response.

Slowly, his mind descended into a dark vacant corner in a vain attempt to distance himself from his fatal disposition.

He could no longer feel his feet. His arms felt like lead.

His mind started drifting: things he should have said, but never did; people he should have kept in touch, but he let slip by. His dreams, unfinished and unaccomplished.

Soon there weren't even any coherent thoughts left, just bits and pieces. Like waking up from a dream and remembering feelings and faces, just barely. Only, instead of waking up, he was falling asleep. Forever.

“Hey! Hellooo!!”

Her voice broke through his trance, like shards of ice.

“Dying. I'm dying. So cold...” Had she not been staring intently at his face, she would not have been able to make out his faint whispers.

Out of nowhere, his silent-since-long stomach grumbled.

“Oh my goodness! Hunger ain't gonna kill you so fast, mate.”

“And of course, you feel cold when you leave the damned windows

open,” she complained as she stomped towards them and pulled them shut.

He always had this irrational fear that she might fall out the window every time she did that.

“We have food?” His voice wasn’t so faint now.

“Yes, we do, mi amor. Made by yours truly!” She proudly pointed at herself.

“I thought I was dying.” He managed to drag his body to sit up.

“We all are, darling. Just not as fast as your dramatic self imagines.”

God! This girl could lead revolutions, with her hand on her hip and an eyebrow raised.

“Well, come downstairs if you want to nourish that dying mortal shell and delay the inevitable.”

“With what?” He could now feel his entire body again, though his stomach still complained.

Turning around to face him, she said before disappearing, “The only thing I know to make, French toast.”

He was pretty darn glad that he didn’t die.

Lost in Space

Trillions of stars splattered around the galaxies
Millions of people scattered around the globe
Why can't I find you love
Lost in a hole dark as a lunar eclipse
Looking for the brightest star to guide me to you
Are you close to the Milky Way
Or far away in Virgo A

Oh how I wish I could get to you
And get that floating feeling
Every time I search for your secret clouded rings
In your Jupiter eyes
Maybe we are a couple of light-years away
From meeting face to face and we'll
Take our time to orbit around each other

One day your strong arms
Will wrap around my waist
Your heat will engulf me
Making me feel like the sun
So bright and warm
Your luminous moons will blind me
To anyone else who comes close

My soft pale hands will touch your stubbly cheeks
Slowly like magnets our faces will inch forward
Our bodies will spiral
Fusing us together

Making my tummy feel fuzzy and explosive
Plump pink lips will touch mine
In a searing kiss dusting us in joy
Creating a meteor shower for the universe to see
Oh how good does it feel to be in our own galaxy

i hope my mom (wherever she is) never reads my poetry

but if she cares to Google my name,

i hope this poem shows up first.

did you know i never learned the order of the planets?

i think in the mnemonic mother stood for mars, which makes sense

because where else would you be?

my girlhood is rotting inside me, mom.

when i was fourteen, my classmate's parents divorced, and she complained about being unlucky enough to get her first period at her dad's house.

where were you, when i was cursed with the ability to become you?

you weren't picking me up at Swartz Bay for your weekend, that's for sure.

i only call you mom in poetry, you know.

i can't stand the dawn with its mottled pinks and mandarin skies.

when my dead friend's mom, who shares your name,

says she's down a kid, i can't even bring myself to meet her for coffee,

because what if, when i get to Tim Hortons,

you are sitting at the table across from me?

i lean out on tiptoes over the edge of the earth

and all i see are stars.

no planets, just a little dipper and the void where you would be.

my hands drip star-stuff like blood and i choke on the word: *mom*.
i don't think the scrapes on my knees will ever stitch themselves together.

i'm falling apart again tonight, mom.
the moon is a matriarch and i resent her.

My Very Estranged Mother Jumped Ship; Unfortunate, No?

Mambo Mania

My mother, brother, his partner, and I are standing in the hallway outside my dad's apartment looking at a plaque saying, "No Dancing in Shared Spaces." It seems like something out of *Footloose*, but there's a good reason for it. My dad has a Latin dancing problem. He does it non-stop, and it's freaking people out. We're here for an intervention—my idea after six months of this shit—but now I'm not so sure it's a good idea.

I use my spare key to let us in. It's Wednesday evening, so he's currently out at his sixth samba class of the week. We set up the picnic chairs we've brought with us in the middle of what used to be a normal studio apartment. He's converted it into a dance studio: dark wood floors, mirrors on all the walls, balance bars, huge speakers, and virtually no furniture. He has a Murphy bed, but it's folded up into one of the mirrored panels right now.

My family chit chat. They don't see my dad much and aren't too fussed about the situation; they only came because I asked. But my dad and I are closer. He's my best friend, and he's done everything for me: indulged me in my hobbies, hung out with me when I had no friends, paid for my school, paid for my rehab, and let me live with him until I was 30. I don't feel like I have the right to disagree with him after all that.

It's just, it's not only a little bit of dancing. It's all the time, and it's everywhere. He lost his new dream job as a creative director at a big ad agency because he insisted on doing the salsa with clients. People stare at him on the streets because he'll only get around by marching the paso

doble. His tennis-obsessed girlfriend broke up with him because he tried to get her to do the bachata between points when they played doubles. But still, what right do I have to tell him to stop?

Eventually, we hear him marching in the hallway, disobeying the plaque. Seconds later, he slams violently into his front door (I should mention that despite the amount my father dances, he's not actually very good at it). I'm nervous, but then the door swings open, and my dad—British, Oxford-educated, bald, and as white as Prince Phillip (dead or alive)—is wearing Al Capone-style shoes, skintight pin-striped trousers, and a ruffled red satin shirt unbuttoned down to his belly button. Fuck it. We're doing this.

He comes into the room, nursing his bruised shoulder but still swivelling his hips to whatever's blasting through his earbuds. He spots us and takes out the buds.

“Oh, I'm glad you're here! Everybody get up; move the chairs. Nicola [my mother], come to me; Charlie [my brother], switch the stereo to Bumba rumba; Sally [Charlie's partner], accompany on the maracas; Henry, take note.” My dad starts spinning his way into the centre of the room, sweeping one leg out in typical tango fashion. “Actually, Henry, do a cha-cha-cha while you're watching—maybe a solo salsa if you prefer, but your Nikes are screaming cha-cha-cha to me.”

“Dad, stop,” I say sheepishly as he steps back and forth, churning his arms around like a locomotive. “We're here for an intervention.”

“For what? For who?” he says, continuing to dance. “Come on everyone, get moving. You know the rule: if you're not part of the dance you have to leave.”

“For your dancing. You have a problem,” I say—again, sheepishly.

“If by ‘problem’ you mean I haven’t figured out how to dance while sleeping, then you have a point. Otherwise, I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Dad, please stop dancing.” He’s now dancing in a solo conga line. “You do nothing but dance. You have a serious problem. I’m worried.”

“I don’t have a problem with dancing. Sounds like *you* might have a dancing problem. May I suggest dancing to solve it? Helps me figure things out.”

“Dad! There’s no fucking music playing! Stop dancing!” I say, breaking sooner than I’d expected.

“The drums never stop in here,” he says, rhythmically pointing to his head and slowly spinning around.

I look at my family for support but then realize they haven’t actually seen my dad in a couple of months and aren’t familiar with just how bad this has gotten. They stare in amazement/disbelief.

“How are you going to keep living like this? You lost your job,” I continue.

“People lose their jobs all the time,” he says, clapping his hands by the right side of his head while stomping his left foot—his downstairs neighbours complain frequently.

“Not for dancing!”

“It probably happens more than you think,” he says.

He starts seductively shuffling towards my mother—from whom he has been divorced for seven years. “Come on, Nicola, you look like you could use a dollop of salsa!” He holds one hand out in place for my mother to take—which she doesn’t— while the rest of him continues to slide from side to side. “You used to complain I didn’t dance enough when we

were married.”

“At weddings, dear,” says my mother. “Not at home or the grocery store.”

“Seems like an arbitrary distinction to me,” he says, keeping his hand outstretched to her.

After a minute of my mother rejecting him, he starts gliding around the room for the next ten minutes trying, in turn, to get the rest of us to dance. He doesn't slow down for one second or seem to be bothered by us all turning him down. If I'm being honest, his stamina is impressive if not concerning. He's lost a lot of weight since this all began. Sometimes I think he burns more calories than he takes in while eating because he insists on continuing to dance. He sort of jiggles his ass up and down in rhythm to his chewing.

It takes a while, but I seem to get him to admit that what he's doing isn't normal. But he quite rightly argues back that because something isn't normal doesn't make it wrong and that society only moves forward when visionaries start behaving unusually. My dad is extremely intelligent, very good at debating, and very pig headed. Trying to convince him to change his mind when he's acting normal is hard enough.

But there used to be stability in his stubbornness. It's tough when someone is crazy and stubborn. But until this (episode?), he was very stubborn and very sane. My brother and I as kids thought it would be funny to pretend our dad was insanely obsessed with pigs and would buy him pig toys every birthday. My dad played along, but that was as close to crazy as he ever got. He was also kind of emotionless, which bothered my mother and brother, but was perfect for me because I have enough emo-

tions for two people. My father had room to help me with all the problems that come from a surplus of emotions. But dancing has closed him off from me.

For a second, he seems to notice the helplessness on my face. He sweeps towards me in two wide ballroom spins.

“Henry, I am not the first person who has succumbed to the rhythm. It comes for us all someday.” He pauses. “One day, it will come for you too,” he says sincerely, earnestly, and almost as though he was saying something terribly meaningful. But the fact he’s shimmying his bare, hairy 63-year-old chest at me while he’s saying it belies the fact that he really is just talking about some sort of dancing mania.

“Edwin, can you tell us why you feel the need to keep dancing?” asks my mother. I had wondered about this briefly myself. What makes a fairly and solidly stable person start Latin dancing every second he’s awake? I don’t know, and I’m pretty sure nobody has ever had to ask that before, so I didn’t bother Googling it.

“Why did Picasso paint?” he replies.

“When my uncle got let go from his job he got super into golf,” says Sally. “Not quite as into it as this though.” Nothing ostensibly bad had happened to my dad that would explain him snapping like this (he’s now snapping his fingers in a flurry while gliding around). My dad’s life was going really well: dream job, five years with his girlfriend—those things ended *because* of his dancing.

“Are you worried about getting old, dad?” asks my brother. My mother, six years older than my dad, looks affronted by the question. But aging being something that bothers my dad really doesn’t suit his style.

“Not at all. Dancing keeps me young,” he says, now doing some-

thing that looks like erotic fencing: lots of jabbing and thrusting. The room looks like a beginner's fencing class with his many reflections.

"Was the new job too hard?" asks my mother. My father ignores the question and continues jabbing. After a pause, I repeat the question.

"Of course not," he says, more tersely than I think he meant to. "There's just not enough dancing in advertising these days—if you know what I mean." Literally. He means literally, I think, as he begins rhythmically fighting an imaginary bull. I don't really think it's the job. My dad does well under pressure. I don't know what I think the reason behind this is, and to be honest, I gave up thinking about it pretty quickly. I'm a believer in cognitive behavioural therapy: focus on the solution, not the cause. I've never thought about why I have so much anxiety. The reasons people come up with for illnesses are bullshit and don't help half the time anyway.

"Was it not as good as you thought it would be?" asks Sally.

"Forget the job," he says. "I was born to be a dancer!"

"How were things going with Kuniko?" asks my brother.

"Things were great until I realized she couldn't handle the passion!" He thrusts particularly hard as he says "passion!" I talk a lot about my relationships—all failed—with my dad, but he never brings up his.

"How's your health?" asks my mother.

"Fine. How's yours?" He begins a cha-cha-cha, which, if you don't know, is the stereotypical Latin dance you see where people step back and forth and side to side while shifting their hips from left and right. I remember when my dad had a hernia. He didn't let me know about it until the day before his operation because he needed me to pick him up afterwards, which makes me think if there is something wrong with his health,

he's not going to say it in front of me.

His cha-cha-cha is gradually getting faster, and he's starting to breathe more heavily. Like I said, his stamina has been impressive—unbelievable, really—throughout this. This is the first time I've seen him show signs of fatigue.

“Dad, is there something wrong with your health?” I ask. But he just keeps getting faster and faster—and breathing deeper and deeper. “Dad! What's wrong?” We all realize this is the reason. We keep asking him, but he just gets faster and faster and acts like he doesn't even see us anymore. I try to restrain him, but he spins on a dime and knocks me back before recommencing his cha-cha-cha. The intensity radiating off of him makes us realize talking isn't going to help anymore. We just watch him increase his speed until eventually he collapses.

—

We take him to the emergency room where a doctor diagnoses him with Rhythmic Avoidance Disorder—an extremely rare anxiety disorder—which we're told Dick Cheney is supposed to have. Apparently when Cheney isn't in the public eye he's constantly doing the Macarena.

Anyway, they keep my dad in the psych ward for a couple of weeks. On my visits, he seems to dance a little less each time. He lets me know he's slowly losing his sight and he was panicking that his career was over and Kuniko would leave him when he couldn't play tennis anymore. Dancing made him forget about those things, and when they eventually happened, he was so deep into the mania he just danced progressively harder to escape it all. I get that—I'm constantly jumping from one thing to the next to avoid my anxiety: obsessive-compulsions, then perfectionism, then alcoholism, then workaholism. But my dad is sharper than I am; I see him

fixing the crazy instead of just transforming it.

—

I go down to Seattle for a couple of weeks after he's released from the psych ward to just forget about this shit. When I come back to Vancouver, I go to his apartment to check on him. As I get off the elevator on his floor, there's a strong smell of feces throughout the hallway. And there's a new plaque on the wall saying, "Pigs Must Be Leashed In Public Spaces."

Haunting Memories

I watch the salty water drifting away and back. The remaining heat of the sun keeps burning my skin to a bright red. A gust of warm wind rustles my curly hair—making it messier than it already is from spending the day in the ocean. Now, the sun is dancing on his way down, playing hide and seek with the clouds. The moon—barely visible in the sky—shimmies and pushes the sun as if trying to get him out of there so she could finally shine.

I can sense you coming near me. The faint woody smell of your cologne travels through my nose clouding my mind with images of you. When I turn around, will you still have your brown hair in a shaggy look, messy like you just got out of bed? Will your brown eyes have their glint back? Will your lean body have more muscles, even if you no longer play soccer? Will you still wear your signature grey sweat-shorts and red Adidas shirt? It's been a year since I last saw you. And I can still tell whenever you are near. The sound of your flip-flops because you don't like walking on dry and hot sand. You say it is criminal to touch this type of sand barefoot, that the only way to actually enjoy the sand is when it's wet and soft on your skin. I disagree, I like the roughness of the sand: burying my feet and letting the rocky parts tangle with my toes while I wiggle them.

The last time I saw you, we were drinking beer here on the beach—trying to drown our sorrows. As if the alcohol could actually numb our entire brain from reminding us of the many times we failed each other and ourselves. Your deep brown eyes, lost in the night sky, no longer glim-

mered that bright spark that remind me of the constellations you taught me in grade four. Your strong shoulders dropped just like the rest of your body as if you were ready to melt right there on the sand. At the time, I couldn't understand your pain, the loss of the future and the purpose in life you thought you were going to have. I was so lost in myself and my insecurities which clouded my mind like dark clouds about to burst into rain, not letting me see beyond my worries and pain.

Your leg, broken in three places, and my brittle heart were the ingredients to a recipe for disaster. A black hole was sucking all of our happy memories, every touch, every slow and delicate kiss, every hike around Vancouver, every swim in the ocean or lake, every laugh. Just gone. *Poof!* Out of nowhere, we could only remember what we didn't like about each other. You hated my complaining of wanting to be slim, but not doing the work and just sitting on the couch eating brownies. But—let's be honest—who could resist such a delicacy that melts in your mouth and warms your body from the inside? I despised how much you preferred playing soccer with your mates over walking around the Seawall with me. I guess this is why it was hard for me to understand your pain of losing the only thing you felt you excelled at. Even though I saw you as so much more.

The fierceness in your eyes, like fire, lit the entire field. The yelling of encouragement to your teammates, "You got it, dude! Keep running!" never failed to send a buzz to their limbs, because suddenly it didn't look like they had been playing for eighty minutes. Then it all happened so fast. You were close to the net, running like a cheetah. But the rival captain couldn't let you score the winning goal. He ran just as fast, and with all his might kicked you on the shin. The force and speed made the hit pretty bad. I remember seeing you tumble down to the prickly grass and later

your teammates would tell me of the small echo the bone-cracking made. Oh, Nate, you shouldn't have tried to get up. That only made it worse, and the fragile bone broke once more. I wanted to run to you so bad, but I felt the arms of my friend holding me back. Tears made a slow descent down my cheeks. I felt useless, not knowing what to do but wanting desperately to turn back time, so you didn't get hurt.

The visit to the ER was quick and your face was scrunched up like a raisin from the excruciating pain. It didn't matter that our golden hands were intertwined, and you were holding on for dear life. Knuckles white like milk. The doctor said the recovery would be long: three to six months. The probability of your leg after that time being brand new was slim. Here, you received the worst news. You might not be able to play professionally again because your original sports level would be gone. The overwhelming sense of hopelessness consumed the room. The following weeks felt like a nuclear explosion destroyed us. I didn't know how to make you feel like your world wasn't crumbling down like cake. While also trying to feel worthy of you and of me.

But the good times always had a way of sneaking into my mind. I loved the way your calloused hand from playing guitar would shyly try to grab mine. Always in slow motion as if scared that I would slap your hand away. That could never happen because your touch sent a spark from my fingertips to my head, chest, belly, legs and toes.

The last time we sang together was before the accident ruined us. We were at the beach, like any other time the sun was shining, during the last of spring. You got out your acoustic guitar and started playing the chords to "Seeing Blind" by Niall Horan featuring Maren Morris. I loved that song, the lyrics made me feel a rush of euphoric love towards you.

We sang the chorus together over and over. 'Oh, my, my, you just took me by surprise/ And I can't believe my eyes/ Oh, I must be seeing blind. / No, no, ah, you're too good to be all mine/ Now I'm looking in your eyes/ Oh, I must be seeing blind.' Now, I look back and think how ironic that we sang these lyrics and how we actually were blind to each other's struggles and pain.

I liked how you used to hold me so close that I could hear the rhythmic beat of your heart. Your hand tangling in my curly hair, even when I told you how much I hate it because you destroy the curl pattern. We could be spiralled together for hours, talking about a future where your soccer scholarship didn't vanish in the wind. Where we went to the same university, where we would keep exploring the wonders of B.C. and later the rest of Canada. Where we could party till the next day, or just stay up watching Marvel movies and when you let me a few romcoms. Where we would still sing our favourite songs.

None of it came true. You hated your life and me for not understanding how hurt you were not only physically, but mentally too. I couldn't even see beyond the mirror. It showed me an image of myself that I found disgusting. Huge thighs and arms, and a belly too round for a woman. A burnt red curtain descended between us, and instead of trying to pull it away, I let you drift away in an angry cloud. While I stayed put staring at my reflection, not caring if you were okay.

I went to SFU to major in psychology. I moved to campus, and I'm sharing a room with a girl from Toronto. We clash a lot since she likes wearing black clothing, silver chains attached to her ripped black jeans, and everything dark like thrillers and mysteries. Me, not so much. I prefer romcoms, romance novels and singing pop songs. My favourite now is

“Still” by Niall Horan, it just reminds me of you. How quickly we seemed to fall for each other and burn like wood in an instant. I never thought of myself as self-absorbed, but when you called me that on that last day, it echoed in my mind for months. The word still lingers, especially when I get anxious when I have to present in class or meet new people. I’ve really tried to forget you, erase you from my mind. But I wonder if you were right in calling me selfish. I guess there is some truth to it because now a year later I see it all clear. Like a crystal ball, I see us both that night standing outside my house. Walking around the front lawn, tomato-red faces from all the yelling. Only if I look close enough, I can see your hands white from gripping the crutches and the pain in your eyes. I could tell you were about done with me. I didn’t want it to be over, but if it was the end I wanted it to be on my terms. So, I ended it. You left shaking your head, frustrated and maybe a little shock passed through your face. But it happened so fast that I wasn’t sure if I really saw it. My heart raged inside me yelling, “How can you be so stupid to let him go? Don’t you know how much you need him?” But I was numb, my brain was blank and dried like a cranberry. I couldn’t think if this was the solution, or if I was making things worse, or even if this was what I wanted.

In Order of Appearance

Sheila Van Delft

Visual artist Sheila Van Delft received a Diploma in Graphic and Visual Design from Kwantlen Polytechnic University in 1987 and has just received Kwantlen's Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Visual Arts. Her art practice includes murals, portraits, illustrations, and commissioned artwork. Sheila works primarily with acrylics on canvas and has recently been creating environmental work and work to express her feelings of home.

Thérèse Naccarato

Thérèse Naccarato is a writer currently living in Ontario, Canada. When she isn't writing in the notes app, she can be found reading, walking through the woods, or dreaming up new recipes in the kitchen.

Samantha Krilow

Samantha Krilow is a Creative Writing and Indigenous community Justice student in her third year at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Her Cree-Métis and Croatian heritage are important influences in her creative work; her journey of reconnection to her roots runs parallel to her writing and storytelling development. When she's not writing, she's been known to meticulously organize and reorganize her beauty vanity, buy repeat copies of the same book with different covers, and mix up the spices when baking otherwise perfect desserts (taco seasoning brownies, anyone?). She currently lives in Surrey, British Columbia on unceded Coast Salish Territory. You can find her on Twitter @samanthakrilow.

Usha Gunatilake

Usha Gunatilake is a freelance writer, copyeditor, and fanatic word-lover. She is a novel copyeditor, proofreader, content creator, YouTube script writer, movie and book reviewer and ghostwriter. She is currently a first-year KPU student majoring in English and minoring in Creative Writing. Usha writes short stories and novels in her spare time. She writes about mystic creatures, endings, and disability, and aspires to be an auto memories doll. Usha is happiest when she is curled up in her Hobbit-hole reading or watching something or when she is daydreaming elaborate stories in her head while walking in the rain.

Jessica Rodriguez

I'm Jessica Rodriguez, an international student at KPU. I'm in my last year at KPU, majoring in Creative Writing and minoring in English. I write short stories and poetry, and I love thinking of new ways to tell stories. I love baking during my spare time. I spend most of my time writing and reading since both consume me and take me to a private world.

Kassidy Kaszonyi

Kassidy Kaszonyi is a fourth-year KPU student with a major in English and a double minor in Indigenous Community Justice and History. She draws inspiration for her writing from her experiences and much of her poetry is confessional in nature. As such, topics of depression, trauma, healing, and finding love in funky places are reoccurring in her works. When she isn't writing, she can be found luring cats to their cuddly doom, playing D&D, or wandering the West Coast.

Henry Allan

Henry Allan is a former copywriter and journalist who currently works as a technical writer in Vancouver, BC. He was raised in Brighton, England before moving to Canada at age 16. Aside from technical writing, Henry writes short comedic fiction, which has appeared in Slackjaw. He is currently in his first year at KPU intending to major in Creative Writing.



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