

# ROBBERS

BLUE LITERARY MAGAZINE



issue vi • robbers



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National Suicide Prevention Helpline: 1-800-273-TALK (8245)

The Trevor Project: 866-488-7386

Crisis Call Center: 1-800-273-8255

Depression Hotline: 1-630-482-9696

National Adolescent Suicide Helpline: 1-800-621-4000

Covenant House Crisis Line (Youth): 1-800-999-9915

National Domestic Violence Hotline (TDD): 1-800-787-3224

Gay & Lesbian National Support: 1-888-THE-GLNH (843-4564)

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) Youth Support Line: 1-800-850-8078

National Hotline for Gay, Lesbian, Bi and Transgendered Youth: 1-800-347-8336

PRIDE Institute for Lesbian and Gay Mental Health: 1-800-547-7433)

LGBT Hate Crime Hotline: 1-800-616-HATE (4283)

## vi • robbers playlist:

- ♪ buzzcut season by lorde
- ♪ 505 by arctic monkeys
- ♪ affection by between friends
- ♪ heathens by twenty øne piløts
- ♪ guns for hands by twenty øne piløts
- ♪ shoot and run by maude latour
- ♪ perfect places by lorde
- ♪ homemade dynamite by lorde
- ♪ sgl by now, now
- ♪ female robbery by the neighborhood
- ♪ robbers by the 1975
- ♪ the ballad of mona lisa by panic! at the disco
- ♪ america's suitehearts by fall out boy
- ♪ teenagers by my chemical romance
- ♪ all these things that I've done by the killers
- ♪ this ain't a scene, it's an arms race by fall out boy
- ♪ 20 dollar nose bleed by fall out boy
- ♪ machine gun by sara bareilles
- ♪ the great escape by boys like girls
- ♪ rock bottom by hailee steinfeld
- ♪ worst in me by julia michaelis
- ♪ outlaws by david lambert
- ♪ partners in crime by finneas
- ♪ miss missing you by fall out boy
- ♪ getaway car by taylor swift

**letter from the editor:**

I think the most honest kind of love waltzes in without you even registering the shift, like one day you look up & realize your heart has wandered off and is 860 miles away & you just think *oh*.

the last girl who held those aforementioned chambers took them through forceful entry like scarlet could metamorphosize – a weapon in the right hands. I remember watching bojack horseman & hearing the line, “when you look at someone through rose-colored glasses, all the red flags just look like flags,” & freezing as if the shade had found home in my hands. I blamed myself for her shortcomings, and sometimes we forgot who was even holding the gun in the first place. it felt like she wanted me to be a bad person in an effort to justify her shitty, borderline abusive behavior. or maybe she didn’t want to be alone; misery loves company, and what about violence? I wrote a chapbook centered around the relationship between villanelle and eve, paralleling it to our constant shortcomings and shootouts. I hate how I missed all of the flags – even the ones we waived in one hand as the other pulled the trigger.

but love cannot coexist with fear. love is not romanticizing the worst version of yourself. love is not a machine gun. love is not red. love is not creating frankenstein only to fall in love with her.

love is checking your zodiac before my own. love is tangled up in joint pinterest boards and spotify playlists. love transcends stateliness and logic and all of the reasons why it shouldn’t work.

love is not a robbery.

baby, you never stole my heart;

it ran to you all on its own.

I held the barrel of a gun in my mouth + not because I wanted to die + but because it tasted like kissing her + maybe they were the same thing + our tongues played as + kids on slip and slide + teeth edging mine like bullets clinging to ammunition belt + we'd gotten good at this + could kiss with eyes closed + in the dark + under fire + bags over our heads + in any universe + I binged killing eve + villanelle ends everyone she loves + her mother + a teenage boy + any person brave enough to offer a crumb of affection + I see myself + 10 months ago + stumbling over the trolley problem + how the entire world could have been on + the opposite track + and I still would have saved her + fall back to **summer** + and my mouth + now wrapped around the cavernous hole she left + under my right shoulder + we fought about everything + but mostly on how I loved her + and how that was unforgivable + and how she wanted me to stop + and I couldn't + if a tree doesn't crash unless it makes a sound + does that mean we flatlined harder + because we ended in fireworks + loud like gun shots + or a staccato warning + or how *fuck* becomes meaningless when you type it 62 times + july bled into august + and I brushed my teeth in an effort to follow suit + [ **intermission** ] + **autumn** was softer + I became enamored with dancing + smitten for a plot twist + doe stumbling over brown eyes + I was so goddamn sloppy + hiding behind subtweets + flirting through private playlists + waiting in that endless fishbowl + we fell in love in october + or at least I did + leaves crumbling to november + and then december + and **winter** was much of the same + I cut out coffee + and playing it safe + almost bought myself handcuffs + so I wouldn't accidentally ruin us + **spring** hibernates in my throat + before we open the blinds + and paint the walls of our future apartment yellow + the birds are chirping because + we are no longer afraid + I tell you I love you + and it does no harm + I think about what song we would dance to + if we had a wedding + your arms feel like coming home + and buying too many strawberries + we stand in the sun + and I want to kiss you as daylight pours in

4 a.m. by Jade Palmer

edited by Jade Homa

we should spend the night at 4 a.m.'s house

*is that cool?*

call me on a beer pong cup-and-string phone and I'll always answer with

*hello*

*I love you*

glass tabletops distort reflections

we are swans swooping in with \$50 bills in our noses

because we've forgotten how to

fly

somewhere between the nest,

alarm clocks,

and the brutal honesty of answering machines ,,,

there's static in my heart, but if we powder our tongues enough

it'll sound like the 1975, and we'll dance again: you in

nothing but your peacoat,

my stilettos catching in the button holes

stumbling & —

& \ \

— still worth the fall

show your hand by Ada Donnelly

edited by Jade Homa

yesterday, my tarot cards insisted I like you  
today, I smiled because my book said libra  
and gemini were a good match

in the raw pounding wind of new york city,  
I seek succor in your arms – we hide out  
in the fulton street station, talking about  
how both of our fathers cried

yesterday, you told me yours had two months  
left to live; I told you my bipolar II had come  
back, and we held hands and arms and chambers

while solving physics problems in  
the back corner of the classroom

we get more compliments together than we  
do apart, a pair adored by the masses  
asked constantly why we are not together  
and I believe we are running out of answers

once, when we were both high and  
surrounded by cold and flirting and kisses,  
we cuddled together, and I told you the  
color I thought each country was

but never the shade that came with them almost  
touching

mariana trench by Jenna Koch

last night I wished that I could be a pretty boy in italy,  
or an astronaut, or a pothole filled with rainwater  
couldn't get it out of my head— rubble, relativity, red wine  
couldn't handle the aftertaste of a day wasted  
tell me that I don't have to pick leaves off my willow tree & crush  
them up. a remedy for regret  
that I taught myself years ago. when I was still perfect. when I was not ruined  
in the eyes of my mother.  
when I'd never tried caffeine, or cannabis,  
when I'd never wondered what it would feel like to be an ocean floor.  
never thought about water pressure until today— never considered I'd have to  
settle for Rome, for a stolen street sign, for realizing all my options  
are just okay. never thought I'd have to write poetry  
about something other than my love. never thought I wouldn't find  
a way to sneak her in. because I've never had to settle  
with her. because she always feels like boys kissing each other  
hard. like stepping on fresh mars dust. like wet pavement, glistening on the way home.  
because in one way or another, each feeling laces, loops itself around a  
major line. maybe it's love, or maybe it's what makes me a writer,  
an obsession with observance, of looking at myself from afar,  
to remember I'm stalks of corn, I'm an aloe plant reaching towards an open window, I'm  
everything but present.



1968  
水晶  
THE COSTUME



after the season one finale of killing eve by Jade Homa

*“and she lay down with me in my bed, and she stuck a knife in me.”*

your name sounds like a prayer before someone dies &

I fall to my knees, sweet death

but not in death,

hungry

but never hurting;

the only time you'll ever

hear me say *god & fuck* in the same sentence is

with those five letters strung out between them

you know that dramatic scene in a movie

where two people are at a standoff and at least

one of them has a gun

pointed at the other?

and then the first person drops

their weapon

and is really cocky and says something like,

*“I know you can't shoot me; you just can't do it.”*

I want to buy you a gun & watch  
as you point it at my chest

I want to give you every opportunity  
to have the upper hand,  
the last word,

the power to obliterate anything left in this body

I want to tempt you as satan tempted jesus  
and jesus tempted sinners  
and those hips tempt my resolve

I want you to become intimately familiar with the  
killing thing clutched in your hands  
and drop it still – darling,

I think you would do anything

if my voice broke the right way

cannibal by Nat Raum

the colors,  
they always come  
back to me  
like the room is as it  
should be;

dim, seductive,  
all done up in orange,  
warm lights strung up on  
the walls, dancing;  
a sanctuary.

I remember cinnamon  
whiskey and holding a  
bag of wine up for  
the camera,  
cat ears and eyeliner on  
my face, the feeling of  
my stockings  
under the sheets.

I am wrapped up in an  
autumn fleece blanket,  
relishing the overpowering  
warmth,  
my legs splayed across  
the floor, slurring into  
the phone.

it never ceases to amaze  
me what we choose  
to remember and what  
sticks around no matter  
how many times we've  
banished it (or  
tried,  
anyway);

your voice, your belt  
clinks on the floor,  
the lock on the door  
and the infinite terror.

the darkness, that's it;  
all I remember is the darkness



HAVE A NICE DAY

THANK YOU  
THANK YOU  
THANK YOU

PARTICIPATING STORE  
YOUR NUMBER OF SUPPORTERS

drive-in by Anne Cooperstone

edited by Jade Homa

and here we are again: in *no, on*

the trunk of the

Chevy,

looking at the stars

*no*, the movie stars, I mean

— necking and that's

why

you drove me here; we both know to

neck and

look at the —

*who is that again?*

gravel

sleeps with my teeth like

swarms of flies

but that's

just the way it goes

you can't complain

we're in a car [ the top is down ]

my mouth, open in a

gasp

*no, song*



dog leash by Sarah Cavar

a line  
pack a room as  
tightly as you want.  
fills your ear with light  
poetry incantation  
letting girlhood -  
puberty  
collective dying  
unique ways at getting out of room  
exit strategy  
how to get out of room at party  
i feel like leaving  
someone's waiting  
lefthand spine  
statement of energy  
]]] destiny  
language as inventory  
just a fucking lot  
converting  
&divination / prophecy  
rivers as endless form of communication  
marks on papyrus  
print gets smaller  
pictures disappear  
text from east to west  
of page  
notebook is magic.  
poems ahead of you.  
poems, tarot, etc.  
fire-  
time, reality, etc. start to  
warning,  
prance when watched  
poetry like  
mark, symbol,  
where you are.  
system of sonnets to  
rep. things to  
title as statement of power  
> names (named dog  
leash  
title of poem)  
protect yourself  
what does this mean  
we're all in life  
writing bad poetry  
captivity whole world for [looking for the  
on for trauma

34 lines

— unedited record of eileen myles workshop (attended dec 2018)

(transcribed from notes on printed excerpt of “the mother’s story” by gloria vanderbilt)

####



to go peacefully in the dark by Nat Raum

*after bayside*

we are in the back  
alley of the Tavern and you  
say your brother wasn't  
serious about me.  
you light your menthol  
cigarette, then you light  
mine. you grasp me in the  
dark like that day the  
power went out.

I am flat broke and  
too wasted to walk and crying  
silently in the Lyft that  
overdrafted my bank account as  
I watch your taillights turn  
down Howard Street to MLK.

three months to the  
day later I am sobbing on  
the bar top, on everyone's  
shoulders before I  
land on yours;

you say "we'll  
get through this",

and then  
I tell you what  
actually happened.

you carry a  
case of Two Hearted  
Ale to your car.

(actually, I  
might have; I don't  
remember.)

on the car ride  
home that night you move  
my hands downward for me,  
“for old times’ sake.”

it's so fucking funny how  
you were all you came to  
me fearing

cadence by Amanda Pendley

blue china cracks like a slap to the face

I always bruise too easily

when you press a finger to your arm

and watch as the whiteness lingers underneath,

I half expect to see purple sunspots

I will only survive if I stay intact

no swinging from chandeliers and

no dancing amongst the flames

disaster loves disaster loves

falling loves pulling down the curtains

to cover fainted bodies loves

egg whites in the morning loves

starting over loves

being put back

together

I am still standing in the cupboard,

figurine unfractured

and skin as clear as cerulean waters

before the sharks bite

and food coloring is dropped

and all that is left is the frenzy

and no memory of what came before



cartographies by Gaia Metelli

in the dreams, I hold a gun  
to my lips. the gun has a name: *America*, for

the bold. for the unflinching. for my mother's  
first house – under-the-table rental;

she scraped moths off the lantern, burned  
water for her baths. the woman in the workshop

says, *don't you people have your own  
country?* and *why do you write so much*

*about heritage? I have nothing  
to write about.* my mother's mother and her mother

and her mother were waitresses, bank tellers, nurses –  
and they wished they could be poets, but dreams

are for white girls, not brown daughters; their tongues  
cleave a different cartography. my friend's car gets keyed –

*Paki* – and she considers security  
systems, installs an alarm that fires arrows

through her shadow, slashes it a skipping tape. every time  
a girl says I'm *cultural*, I bleed my skin whiter. I fall in love

with moths in a different way than my mother. when  
I kiss a girl, I say my flesh is made from something else, American

metal, tongue, and trigger. I tell my mother about the girl,  
and she calls me *American*, a curse. to write a poem

about maps, you need to take a bullet  
in your fist. in the old country, every cartographer leaves edges

torn and filmy. they scrawl their initials  
in the crevices of oceans. they punch tiny holes

into the corners of every map – a portal to the new world,  
a promise: we'd be safe, wouldn't we?

don't be angry by Christina Aguilar

all I said was that

I am what I am

god said the same thing,  
and you say you love god,  
so why can't you love me?

is it really because I am over here,

and not over here,  
where you can take my mugshot?  
now you accuse me of having purple skin  
and eye sockets with no eyes

and all that 'where's my daughter?' shit

I suppose it's easier for you to  
turn your back on a stranger  
well maybe I've lost you,  
but in losing you and your hopes,

I've gained myself  
I am my own god,  
unified and indivisible,

not angry

(even if you want me to be;

I can see it in your eyes)

but free

forelsket by Kyli Brown  
edited by Rebecca Collins

you said                    *picture it,*

& I saw  
our fingers tied into knots  
and the neck of bottle  
in our free hand & finally my lips  
curled                    like the hair in your eyes  
as we danced around my living room  
without rhythm                    or ability,  
socks up to our ankles  
& our night shirts                    to our thighs —  
saturday night fun on an off-wednesday  
afternoon                    swaying hips,  
the pushing and pulling of our frames,  
badly lip-synced songs,  
my cat                    yelling at our rowdiness  
& we stopped  
asking why.

*we pictured different things,*

I said.



black widow by Nat Raum

bells and whistles,

where's        the        fire?

storm's churning  
(vibrations intensify);  
cheap organza curtains float  
in a hurried gale

civil twilight descends (ascends?),  
your face, your lips aglow

(we left the windows open again)

restless night by Aubree Tillett

crumpled sheets dress the queen  
bed that cradled our consociation;  
[abandoned for duty] away to war  
in the restless night I lay awake,  
for half my heart battles comfort  
on half a mattress that's cold.

chocolate milk by Lia Green

edited by Jade Homa

we played monopoly like we were really building an empire / like we were building the first time / we  
said *I love you* without being afraid / and I was always going bankrupt / and you were always taking too  
many trains / and I guess if you rolled the dice / across your lips / like you did your tongue / I would  
have thought less about the way / you threw them / and I can't remember / if I ever actually won / it's  
just another smoke bomb / clouding my vision as you build up / townscapes while I / watch families  
move in and / it was never us together / always me on your front porch / always you behind smogged  
windows / I never thought monopoly would spin out / into real life / but I feel like I'm trapped along /  
the boardwalk — always too anxious / too scared to pass go / and it smells like chocolate milk and /  
cigarettes in your mother's kitchen and / I'm sorry I could never be / your get-out-of-jail-free girl / or  
card / or — *what was the question again?*



it's not the romance you wanted, but by Julia DaSilva

and Jade Homa

I.

raccoons don't wash their food;  
they baptize it in water because  
their paws become sensitive when

wet – scientists say it helps gather  
information about what they're  
eating the day you decide you

never loved me, I try to play sherlock,  
try to feel it right, try to refract the ripples  
until the ball is smooth enough to leave

II.

I bathe myself in the permanent slot  
of my heart, careful not to ricochet –  
a gallery; present masquerading as past

raccoons – humanlike – remember solutions  
for up to three years call us a problem  
we no longer have words for

do they supercut the night I rolled each  
of your texts in the ocean; do the nerves  
in their paws still ache three years later?

### III.

racoons don't wash their hands — they  
use the water to feel and no one holds  
something for years just because it sits nice

that's the story we tell when we can't admit  
that 60% of our bodies are just a tsunami of  
synonyms for the ways I drown in your absence

when I fell for you, I lost all of my solutions  
the racoons stopped playing in the yard; I'm  
only trying to feel this right

smoky sketch 1 by Ishani Synghal

edited by Jade Homa

into the darkness

[ we smoke ]

out of the musty drawing-room

french windows

splash soft fingers upon

the wispy piano keys

tumble further for that

electric light switch

feel around

innumerable feet of dark wall

push the draped curtains aside

hunt through the great

cigarette rooms

I am this

parisian house tonight

so enormous

heavy with dejection

half-sick of grotesque reality

fingers clutched against      frightening dreams



june 8th, mission by Penel Alden  
*for r.e.*

3:23pm, gazos creek año nuevo

we swore never again to be sober  
to have the summer's blanket  
lay heavy on our limbs  
my index finger is pressing  
flower and paper against thumb  
and you tell me  
that the fresh face of the mountain  
is the wound left from the 89 earthquake  
that highway one is the dance  
at the edge of the world

5:42pm, mission and 22nd

mission poet's "pinche colonizer"  
appears thought bubble  
as four tech bros  
flip flops tank tops  
pose for selfies  
behind  
around  
the street corner elote lady  
poets assure us that this is the heart  
of the city's last living breath  
and I turn my face  
towards the hot afternoon sun

6:25pm, south of mission

atm  
cannabis club  
cashless everything  
"photo id required for restrooms"

11:30pm, mission and 24th

driving past el farolito  
I am fretting about the politics  
of enjoying tlc's red light special  
as it leaks from open car windows  
the metal still warm  
and men stand like dethroned gods  
grills gold laurels around teeth

2:14am, pigeon point

she is telling me that highway one  
is a dance at the end of the world  
we look forward to the lighthouse  
and are remembering the storms  
which rode floods over the roads  
we lament and celebrate the crumbling infrastructure  
fear and excitement hugging the apocalypse  
but to the west and east there is only void  
with the stars as distant witness to the dark

portrait of town as chokehold by Gaia Metelli

most of us had just come out. we wore all black and  
blasted radio in our heads, walked to classes,

and ignored the old men who glowered from Corvettes,  
licking their lips. all the girls of churches and closets —

we hated this small town. we were girls mothers wouldn't let over.  
sometimes we kissed. sometimes on the street, we held hands

apart, watching the shadows around us melt into monsters. that  
was the year two of us died in a bar brawl,

the year four of us fell in love. we survived our  
mothers, chem tests, and loneliness.

we learned how to disarm drunk men, how to hide on  
every street, how to find earth-shaking love:

how to starve it. we made each other whole. we  
lied in postcards home.

river (the water that runs through the brook) by Kate Bound

I don't remember why I was bleeding.

you had me sit on the bathroom counter;  
you gently bandaged me up,  
and your nose nearly touched mine.

you had me sit on the bathroom counter.  
we talked about why I left the party  
and how your nose nearly touched mine  
and the way I finally breathed you in.

we forgot about why I left the party;  
your brown curls stuck to my neck –  
and the way I finally breathed you in,  
your waist small in my legs.

your brown curls rested on my shoulders;  
nothing but body heat separates us,  
your waist small in my legs –  
and you didn't let go.

nothing but body heat separates us.  
when you told me you loved me  
and I chose to let go,  
I never wrote about how much I loved you.

you told me you loved me,  
and I can't find any proof that your lips ever touched mine.  
I never wrote about how much I loved you  
or taking you to bed,

and I can't find any proof that your lips ever touched mine.  
three years ago,  
I took you to bed,  
and I don't think I'll ever forget how –

three years ago,  
you gently bandaged me up,  
and I don't think I'll ever  
remember why I was bleeding.





heist by Jade Homa

I spend my days trying to find the lines  
and how not to cross them; bending around  
every red laser in our hallway

I hold myself back, yell at my heart,  
and send it to its room when I think  
about your lips and going to dinner shows

what a sight we must have been, back when  
your hands were still gentle hands and not choking  
hands; when my arms held you with a sense  
of vulnerability

I spray painted security cameras,  
erased all signs pointing to a crime,  
gave you the blue prints on how to  
steal my heart

and break it

when you should have set off every trip  
alarm in that place – maybe  
you did

maybe I just wasn't paying attention  
maybe I just stopped

listening

the universe by Zamiya Akber

I have this theory  
that some people just aren't made for this life.  
Maybe God isn't an eternal being  
with no beginning and no end - maybe  
He's just like the rest of us, a faceless ghost  
with no place to call home.

Maybe God wrote a poem with my name on it one night  
and watched as my mother's womb trembled  
with the weight of my body.

I like to believe that the universe  
is infinite and endless. I like to believe  
that somewhere in the dark, there is a world  
where my past is an exit wound  
rather than a bullet permanently lodged  
inside my chest.

I find comfort in the hope  
that none of this will matter eventually -  
not the night I swallowed too many pills,  
not the way I turned razor blades into white lies,  
not the last time I watched the sea  
break against the wind.

I don't know if I believe in fate,  
but I believe in a universe that continues to sing  
even with its tongue on fire. I believe  
in a universe that continues to exist as it always has  
long after I am gone.

If God exists,  
then this must be His gift to me, the promise that my mistakes  
will not cause the world to fall apart as if it is  
a bruised sky swollen with rain.

I can see it -  
I am standing on the edge of weightlessness as the universe  
continues to pulse with light, as if it is the moon  
sinking into the sky, as if it is a tree  
waiting for the wind  
to ripple through its empty spaces  
and set it free.



