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Blue Literary Magazine

issue iv. • cellophane



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letter from the editor:

I thought being graced with a cruel summer would be the end of it; I thought July bit as lions do, but fall would drop like a period on this 6-year sentence. Give an end to this cold war. Instead, I created a pocket of unforgiveness in what could have been a metamorphosis.

Fall is my favorite season & when people ask why, I say caramel frappuccino's & hayrides & apple picking & Halloween & my favorite Taylor Swift album & how nobody can tell how sad you are when you're wearing a costume. Fall is my favorite season, but I resent it today. I'm angry because fall is New England's bitch. Fall is the golden child of the Upper East Coast. Fall cannot be loved until she is experienced in a state cold enough to deserve her. I'm angry because autumn reminds me of you. It flips to October & I cannot stop thinking of chai lattes & your breath on chapped skin & maple syrup & that one Twitter conversation about how we both sleep.

A few weeks ago, I tried tearing several layers of cellophane out of the container all at once & I couldn't & it made me think; it doesn't matter how trivial a memory or an object or an 'almost' is. It matters how many things that shouldn't matter but do ,, & cling to each other & become the worst kind of wall – one that's so see-through, you're forced to look into each other's eyes the exact second you give up on breaking it down.

It might seem silly for me to be cross at September, but 6 years of wrapping plastic around my shoulders & I don't think I'll ever be able to escape this cocoon.

it's autumn, but Georgia makes a con man of fall. it's the start of a new month, but these feelings are old. it's halfway to Christmas and halfway from sun. and among all the half things, there's a girl I still love.

FRAGILITY + spider webs of a relationship that used to be tangible + distance ft. timing + emotional transparency + it being thrown in my face + october weight + letting conversations fade + being see through but it doesn't matter anymore because + she's moved on + nightly crying sessions + feeling like a gold fish ,, trapped trapped trapped + i'm getting older + the multifaceted levels the two of us text within + punctuation + capital letters & lack thereof + i need to stop playing sherlock holmes + you aren't here & it doesn't matter why + julien baker + fairy lights + thinking about christmas already + cellophane trapping state lines + us never crossing them even when it's just a thin layer of plastic + lying + distractions + two dumbasses who can't figure out how to be together or how to be apart + halloween + 101 metaphors for ghosts of said dumbasses + i spend hours of my day wondering if your hands are always hot or always cold + i think they're cold + i want to go home + i tried to get drunk during that democratic debate just to have an excuse to spill my guts to you over telephone wires are you happy + grey + bathroom sinks + what if we just tried + forget it + i draw a blue line all the way down my arm because i need it to come out + the sadness + i keep eating tomatoes + the red doesn't wash out the blue + can't see your name without breaking down for a minute + thank you for letting me go + i still wish you hadn't + i feel less lonely at work + that's somehow worse + the password on my phone used to be the amount of miles between us + i can't do this anymore + cellophane is now only 99 cents at the kroger across the street + i buy fourteen boxes + i don't do anything with them + i keep a pile in my room next to my air mattress + if i wrap it around myself over & over & over & over + for every time we've done this + done each other + tried this casualty on + will the layers be enough + if i can still see you through them

worst thing you ever heard by Jade Homa

after cellophane by fka twigs

& cruel summer by taylor swift

you've got a thing for hockey players / i feel all dizzy around messy creatives / you get off to
jocks, and i to femmes, flickering like butterflies / we both want what we are, not what the other /
is / but i still want you / is that stupid? / i just need to be touched / might as well be a goldfish /
both know we'll just circle back / here [again] / [& again] / & / a few months ago, you / told me i
couldn't keep / swimming away from my / problems / i should have kissed you in person / at
least once / we both deserve a going away present / reassurance that this actually / happened and
the last six years weren't just a / fever dream that never broke / i forget if you've watched
pushing daisies / but your physical hand should have been / in my physical hand [at least one
goddamn time] / this body should have folded around yours / rented out vulnerability for an 8
hour shift / i still think about how you sleep / until 2 am / easier to believe in predestination than
accept / that we could have been something beautiful / if i had just rearranged some actions / &
we were both cheated out of an ending that meant something / & it surely doesn't matter now / i
wrote a poem last year that / jokingly said you make me so / see through, i might as well be /
plastic wrap & why don't we just tear all of this cellophane down / [because you want something
easy / & i'm not saying i can't be that in your bed / got me so pressed / i'm like a dying flower
against your sheets / but in all other senses of the word / i never am] / love playing emotional tag
/ until someone collapses / hate that i'm like this, but i live for the challenge / there aren't enough
hours in the day to be this sad / it's silly how i still remember your middle name / i need to stop
reaching out to you through every times new roman / & baby (i know i'm not supposed to call
you that, but) baby, i love you / please don't be angry

breakfast by Becca Erwin

New York is laying me off
and putting me back on again
I beg thee godgodgod of St. Mark's Church
please don't let me spill my coffee

I am stuck in the requisite healing time that you didn't take.

I try to send passive transmissions.
transmit! transmit transmit
knowledge of yourself
and what you've done
imagining an effective vengeance might be
just knowing yourself

egg yolk splits
splitssplits over everything.

there is an old hospital near my apartment that's being torn down by Dawn-Hunter Strobel

For Max

I took a photo a day before the first incision began-
I thought of a series I could create:
take a picture every day as the insides are slowly laid bare
a series about how things fall apart.

But every day since,
confronted with my own crumbling nature
my own first incisions, insides laid bare
I have failed to follow through.

My own building inspector came (the one with the scythe)
and as it turns out, the room I made of you has been empty for some time now.
Something about that thing where our bodies know before our minds do,
some explanation as to why missing you felt like an old ache from day one.

I have written poem after poem
built world after world
hospital after hospital
to save you
but each crumbles
uninhabited and inadequate.

I cannot bear to look at that hospital anymore
cannot bear to think of you being rushed to one just like it
cannot bear to think of the doctor who had to proclaim you dead
cannot bear to think that something so immediate can be torn down so easily
cannot bear to think of nuns or the afterlife or whether or not I believe in a version where we'll
meet again cannot bear to think of tearing you down cannot bear to think of how many times I

have had to tear you down already how many people have had to tear you down already cannot bear to think that it was you who chose to tear the building of your own body down cannot bear to think that humanity is always building things and tearing them down

I wanted to take those photos to create permanence from impermanence

but after losing you

and the spire of Notre Dame

and that painter I met once at age 14

after losing the thousands of people every day who I never got to meet never will meet never

chose to meet

I know now there was never such a thing as permanence in the first place.

So instead I walk past the decay every day,

stop,

and watch as they hose down the rubble to keep the dust from rising.

introspection into oblivion by Bekah F.

somewhere i learn about defense mechanisms // although my school doesn't offer psychology // i
spend my afternoons enthralled with // the // displacement // what happens when you fall into a
bath // wanting your skin to fall off like springtime scales // of a molting snake // and the water is
// scented like // rose and blood // projection // the sound of words fighting // in mid-air //
everybody's at fault // but nobody's to blame // rationalization // my dad admitting that he has an
alcohol problem // but so does everybody else // even his brother // and i don't want to drink //
but i'm still a burgeoning alcoholic // whether i swallow tequila or not // intellectualization // on
average // 1 in 10 kids are LGBT // and // 1 in 5 struggle with mental health // so i guess i'm
swollen // with providence // because i won both lotteries // denial // the first of the five stages of
grief // and the one that i haven't moved on from // even though my grandfather has been cold for
almost two years // and in that time // all i've become // is a victim of nightmares // about women
// suppression // what i've done for the past five years // choking down pictures of boys // and
pretending i'm not in love with my // goddamn best friend // withdrawal // laying on my bed //
the sheets scented like // milk teeth // and // womanhood // (the smell of sex) // counting the days
until i kiss // my goddamn best friend // and pretending // my grandfather wouldn't cry // at the
sight of it

“texts i’ll never send: calling you out on the inexplicable and charismatic hold you have on everyone you’ve ever met”; or, “how everyone is willing to shout out to the world that they love you, but you would never even whisper it back”

by Rebecca Collins

& i mean, yes, ofc i’ll take pics w u
but i’m not posting them and
becoming just another contributor
in the art gallery that is your
instagram tagged photos



mixed signals by Rebecca Collins

i hear static on the radio...—

my headlights flashing on the exit signs, your name flashing through my mind as it struggles to keep up with my heart (which has been hurtled down the highway at breakneck speeds). we are caught in a traffic jam; one way, two lanes, three words that mean something just a little different to each of us—

...it crinkles like the viscose wrapper on a caramel,
a forgettable thing—

that served a purpose at one point, i'm sure,

but what was it again?—

to be tossed aside when no longer convenient...

...

...

... i turn the radio off.

but my head doesn't stop.

the loss of language as: your lips on someone else by Nadine Klassen

I wrap my head around it like / cellophane around day-old cake just / stick / stick / sticky-lipped
probably glossed / glittered / disco-ball-mouth / I cough up memory-lumps on Sundays and / the
pharmacy is closed / sweat it all out with hot raspberry juice / grandma's recipe / never have you
ever / kissed another / chug / or I do at least / my mouth has always been for / swallowing things
whole like / hearts or wine / or people like / Jonah except I don't do much saving / or listening to
god / and / I have no more metaphors for / her mouth / I lose you and my language drops / out of
my back pocket / your heart becomes a colony / of lovers / tents spread from rib to sternum / see
which ones stick / past the beating of it / fool me twice / and I'll still be a bed-bound wreck / for
days / write poems about you / with autocorrect because / I cannot be bothered to come up with /
any more synonyms for your / name like / beat-around-the-bush-boy like / liar liar pants on fire /
Pinocchio the long-nosed-boy / I am unlearning all the hands you have held me with / in ivy-
choke-hold / since when is hunger a word of love / since when is your face / carved out of the
floods / I swear I drowned in the blue / of it

on the thinnest part of the membrane by Fabiola Madrigal

on the thinnest part of the membrane

i wrote the last dregs of my love for you—(still in love with you) —

i see less of you now, but still i catch myself watching your favorite shows and movies

(distance)

keep falling

keep failing

keep falling

(distance)

i keep watching pushing daisies

kissing through

|barrier|after|barrier|

i watch in the mirror of self projected entertainment

and wonder if i could bring us back to life

having you here would be better than falling

slipping on the glass of your smile

a ghost of touch (((never touching)))

across the aisle—kiss me|kiss me|kiss me|

through every piece of saran wrap in your kitchen,

if we touch we die, if we touch we die, if we

touch

we

die

this is how a church becomes a graveyard by Jay Audrey

Even in my imaginings I do not recognize her—
girl dancing
between ribcage pews of crushing velvet,
church the home where
she finds comfort in the shadow of a Father's,
her father's
Goliath pulpit where she is David, a home that no
longer welcomes queer me—
and my mind's eye is forced
shut by the dusty pale sun through stained glass.

Saint Peter watches me still. As if he is not human, too,
as if he would not leave this church my father built
with hands that strangled the Sappho out of me.

This is how a church becomes a graveyard.

My father killed each of his children. Sister
hanging in the attic and
Alan drowned outside.

I guess that makes me buried
in the basement, by the choir room and furnace,
where I can hear the sermons through the floorboards
and know that
my father's religion, one day, will eat him alive.

sun + distance (2) = me / feet (fall)en by Jade Homa

fall is caused by the earth's tilt, not our distance from the sun

when i first fell in love with you, i thought the wax would hold
i began counting pockets of yellow: candlesticks, envelopes,
egg yolks, taxi cabs, kitchen sponges, canaries
i hate heights but plagiarize icarus
science says autumn isn't an aftershock of light rays, but
i still think the space between us [hydrogen & bird girl]
created 20 excuses for fall

“I wish I could adopt a new shade” I told myself by Jude Ehmka

And you laughed. We have that
vermillion habit of believing
horoscopes purely for profit. The day after
you left, I colour theoried every ring
to smashed, shattered
to yellow and built into a heap
of metal. Let me try that again:

I was blue
appetite, watching you
through the funny pages painted
from noir to nostalgia. My mother
failed to tell me what it means to have cancer as
a rising sign. My mother
waited to tell me when my dog died, expecting
procrastination to ease sun dried pain.
I called you first; told you: I'm going
to buy up the seashore with
buckets of pennies, and how the world
was my pendulum filled
with lukewarm acceptance. You called me
unordinarily disturbed. And similarly,

I'm neglecting hints of myself in
green lies— the good kind of lie, the
I shunned femininity with my tongue
mid-family barbecue, tasting
savory in the clink of conflicting teeth.
Monthly payments to silver

gives me memoriam, a bench in which
I can't help but remember how small
flowers smell, how small
your waist was compared to mine
and when we kissed
it felt juvenile, jubilant
like girls spouting metaphors, but you
thought muddled paint water, tasted
too much like magnolian burning.

It must've been the asphyxiation
of responsibilities. When I realized
it was pronounced sin-uh s-**thee**-zhuh
and not *good morning*. I have been juggling mortality
between plates and plates of
music. There is no heat, there
are one thousand three hundred and thirty three reasons
to deny mortality; I have decided
to become my own hue, my own. I am
outwards searching for the craving
of conformity. I'm prescribed high blood pressure
and a seat on a bench. There is nothing
all that important here. My arms are bumped
with tombstones. Grey is the colour
of the roundhouse kick of maybe it's me
and not everyone tastes cherry tree
type of bad. This is turning

me to pay off pastels left grass
soaked in humid weather. I'm going
dress shopping and looking for yellow

because colour theory states
yellow is for happy, for
first kiss being like horseradish
even though he wasn't Polish. Yellow
doesn't remind me of happy it reminds
me of boys with last names like salad
and never mind and even
on special occasions, girls with
boy names who I tell my family are boys

because maybe
time will change me and all the hers
but probably not. Seems unlikely when
my fingers are plastic letters
plastered to church boards, my
heart flutters in such a way that
yellow is overwhelmingly strong
candle wax. I am burning this needle
with the intent of creating on myself,
for myself, but for now it is just
pain. Eventually, numb becomes post-
-mortem, how does skin balloon itself
into art? I tell my mother
absolutely nothing. She once told me
the sun is above her to prove
life itself is blooming. No she didn't—

I wish she did.

sex & bird baths & my god, your laugh by Jade Homa

i make myself uncomfortable by / trying to create new colors in / my head, knowing it's /
physically impossible / still makes me / less dizzy than thinking / of your fingers clasped / white
like bone over my hips / i let you drag your hands over my hands over / blood stained graveyard /
i almost drown myself in white porcelain / keep stacking distractions higher / than the water / if i
stay occupied long enough i simply won't have the time to kill myself / mentally flipping
through useless facts like i make enough money to afford cable & my shampoo keeps circling the
drain & fuck i forgot to brush my teeth / empty pleasantries bleed into casual conversations bleed
into shit i just nicked myself shaving bleed into i still love you, i'm sorry / but that's not
important— hey! did you know / my tongue never fits / comfortably in your mouth / or my mouth
like scientifically speaking / & now we're both thinking about it / how our tongues sit on the
edge of our teeth / almost spilling over, almost puncturing myself like water balloon / just need
to let it all out; so exhausting, lying to you and— / no, yeah of course we can talk later / trying so
hard to prove there aren't any feelings here / can't tell if it's you or me i'm trying to convince /
god, it's not like this is a marriage proposal / just back on my bullshit / & yeah, i wanna kiss you
senseless in a bird bath, but i mean / who doesn't?

coming out of a coma by Jasmine Ledesma

The sun wants to be included
but this psychopathic heat
makes no sense. My mother is
distilled magic, sipping at her
wrist. Night shadows clean
the lawn. A low budget horror
movie in our swimming pool.
The blood stale as teenage
conversation, a monster from
the dollar store. Nobody eats
the fruit until it's been
neglected into rot. An email
surprises me. You won't ever
know what I'm thinking
again. I'm laughing so it's
funny. I'm twenty and the
anger has a name.

to the gnat who flew into my mouth by Crystal Stone

I opened it to yawn didn't mean to engulf you my therapist
asks the difference between always and never I tell her
they both measure something infinite like water our house
the ocean mom's grandparents crossed *can you clarify*
she asks *you're my dancing girl* mom sang every night
I didn't dance they are adverbs I say we are all
adverbs she takes notes she doesn't know me
yet doesn't know one day it was always winter Mom
didn't let the fire exhale drunk didn't open the flue talked
about new wooden logs that smolder emerald seafoam
every other decoration only blue or brown wallpaper ship
anchors hanging frames her smiling face wearing white
on a dock she never stopped missing the boat the sun's
fever the nautical life she no longer lived now
landlocked with two children in her first
home I won't go back my therapist goes on
vacation there's no medicine that makes mom's house
a sail docked no bars of her guitar birds
sing in her grave she is still in her murderer's
basement I am the attic
—where did you think you were going? there's no way out.

for somedays¹ by Naomi Carpenter

i scrape constellations off your teeth
you of weeping follicles, you of no & foreign touch
i stencil² your somedays into my poetry

somedays we make clouds drip nicotine tears
we of clay, we of freshly sown tar
& i am enamored unto your adumbration
i of false of prayer, i of eye & shopping bags
you sheathe me beneath dew damp sheet³

i am yes woman⁴
i of yes & yes, i of yes
alive in the catafalque you have built betwixt my eyes & your own
no more guesses⁵
grotto of mosquito bites freckling our apollyon thighs
you of nose & secret nos & you of yeses
unerring in my knowledge that you are my magdalene

¹our museum

² cut yourself into my body

³ gravel masticates rubber & the big dipper never raised us to baphomet's lips

⁴ she asks me what you never do

⁵ you of solving november, you of samara & pilgrimage, you of conjecture

i have never doused thy hands in wax⁶
you of biting both our tongues, you of sleight⁷ embrace
or coaxed thy soft hips into this amber sarcophagus of sunlight
you of INCANDESCENT POLLUTION,⁸ of almost kiss & silver fleshed reconaissance⁹
you of somedays¹⁰ &
i revere¹¹
you¹²

⁶ clefts of my bellybutton dream of your fingernails colonizing their antediluvian notches

⁷ we are pelican wingspans, tidepools littered with crab shells & kelp

⁸ I DON'T WANT YOU TO TOUCH MY BODY whose (eyes ((moon)s)hine) otherwise (!)(?)(?)

⁹ you of green powder, you of easy, you of thumbs, & every supposed to beesting

¹⁰ i strike "him" because you of knowing

¹¹ i prefer

¹² baby.