

MOONFLAKE
press.



sanctuary

ISSUE #5

dear readers,

Welcome.

Come in from the cold. These pages have created a sanctuary, but we cannot define safety without naming the dangers we are escaping. These writers offer solace and healing, and at the same time, they turn to look over their shoulder at what has been chasing them. It is difficult to believe love when it finally finds us. Here are some instructions that might offer you a place to rest and find peace.

Read on!

Marcella Haddad, Cyrine Sinti
Fran Fernández Arce, Shayal Kaur
and Carolyn Evans

bloody mary with a chicken wing garnish

on the ghost tour I order a blood orange beer
and pray

no resurrections crawl to me. In the pool I
saw

a lunar eclipse, and the sky a clump of wet
hair falling dark into the water.

not one good thing comes out
of the fortune teller's mouth.

I try to write the ending.

in it maybe the moon splinters,
or I comb the quiet night.

the future is not here yet, and so
I don't know it or you.

In the store you show me silver topaz
cloudy like water from a bath. for all its
demands,

the present is speechless. you pass the cup
and I

drink every drop.



McCaela Prentice

breakfast table

You lay out your secrets without fear
among scrambled eggs and slices of toast
sip honeyed tea and name so casually
the exactness of your most terrifying memories
with all the purity of a confession—I am no confessor

but someone who wants to witness the everything
there is to you the way monks gilt thin strips of
age-thick vellum (or surgeons hold still-beating hearts)
offering the reverence requisite of someone who sees the worth of
colours by the knowledge of what it took to have them and

who would know that blue (which now gazes at me) is what we call
marian and it's how we recognise what is sacred or that red
(which you're wearing) is the carmine we robe our kings in
meaning to say "here you are as resplendent as I ever knew you"
sitting there underneath the kitchen window

you're consecrating the very space around you to be a holy of holies
kitchen linoleum now a hallowed ground my feet burning
as I next spill my own guts into the steam of carbon coffee glancing
up every now and again to trace the calligraphy of your bed-head
reading last night's manuscript like a favourite story. I think

it's a paradisiacal sort of horror, knowing and being known.
something so irredeemably soft about a suddenly
vulnerable conversation in the morning and the
absolving grace with which you nod your head and say
"I see now."


Vale Prosper

sheets soaking wet /
freight train running through my head

The yellow stained-glass saints blink at me from the far end of the Jackson Street alleyway—impatient. One in the morning, dizzying home drunk, their light cries into the cracked pavement, and I stare back. My grandmother made those windows.

Do you remember how I sang for You?: O! Creator, my small, crooked mouth was once good, grape-juice-stained lip corners quirked in curved-ribbed grins; girlish arms outstretched and born into shards of the very stained glass glittering against Your Sanctuary. It was all for You, my Greedy God.

Father,
Shall you beg me? Shall I
throw myself at your chamber door
and kiss your wooden altar, chapped lips coursing red against a splintered crown just so
I may have your love, so that you may promise me

I am.

A sinner recessed by the
heaven-flaxen light raining down the gravel stretch of Jackson
Street. A pooling promenade staining my feet, and
I tremble.

Maybe
one day I'll stand at the door and knock.


Molly K. Fisher

mid-flight, plummeting albatross

Several digits would be cracked before she'd understand why her fingers ached, or why her limbs threatened to cast off, and why she keeps counting the feathers that sprout from her body hair, because that will finally tell her that she's a bird, descended from Theropods, the same one as the more famous Tyrannosaurus rex, and why all this while her Insta account was named Wandering Albatross, though she rarely posted pictures of her cracked digit from when she defended herself from a blow, or a swell just below the eye she chooses to ignore, because you know, rage is blind, and she must be doing something wrong, as her mother told her, but she knows like that bird albatross she has the longest wingspans, she can be free when she's done with this business of being a dutiful wife, and keeping this tiny nest up on the 13th floor clean, and Singapore's traffic down below merely the hiss of a serpent that'd rather hibernate and sink into the sea, and she like a young albatross could spend years at sea, all life, never ever touching land, and if she could she would, but he'll be here soon, tired after work, and would ask a warm dinner served rightaway, not too much to ask really, what does she do all day after all, and then without as much as a squeak, or a warble or a trill, they'll be in bed and he'd soon be snoring, and she will stand before the mirror, count her feathers for one more day, for she is hoping she'll be gone when there are enough to carry her weight, her shoulders powerful enough to fly, picture a Xauxa, a land of milk and honey, ancient and plentiful, throw in some satiating rain pattering down, and into the wild of another night, she'll sleep like a Mallard duck, one eye open and one leg loose, hanging by the bedside, ready to escape.

Mandira Pattnaik

sexuality pt.4

There is a yellow devil in
your bedroom. Tail, eyes

like bowling balls. Yellow
Devil— wanting my chest

& hands, we must collect
lint rollers. Terrifying; how

much I think of you. Not
old enough; how your mother

considers me a liability.
We're on the carpet & secrets

are on your ceiling— a traffic
of seagulls pass us like

classmates. You imagine your
bedroom is a bowling alley.

No; I don't want to think of
you. Is it her; beg for approval

let alone praise. Iridescent
tulle & liquid on the eyes, you

recall me appearing pretty to
you, of course, of course you

would say that. A deviled
dandelion down the road

treads lightly, I meditate on a
decision to accept it inside.


Dorothy Lune

the spirit house

Today, there are no white lilies in the Spirit House. For years, I have come here. Each time, I have bent down to observe the lilies left by unanswering hands, lilies always in bloom. An offering to memory, an enchantment for the living, a blessing for the dead. But today, an empty vase of murky water among the reed mats. The hut filled with the scent of salt, the sound of shrieking waves. There is no perfume, no reminder of angels with thick stems, their bodies trumpeting upwards. I walk back with two branches of cedar, a single stem of narcissus in winter blush, a gentle willing forward. I am not memorial. In this hut, I have been buried, again, and again, my body's writing pushed into wooden walls. My lungs in the rafters. I offer white flowers as my Ark, cedar as my scroll. Today, I take in the spirits of all plants that blossom in winter.

Hannah Yerington

counselor's couch

The moment I take my seat,
I am the outsider even as I am the insider.
(We're working on constructing The Observer
in my psyche and all I'm thinking is

who do I need to trick?). I start to talk.
Good, the other in this therapeutic couple says.
Good. You are starting to be okay with
arriving or leaving. (I have one hellish welter

of a time saying goodbye to anything, so I often
leave all the doors open even when I have no intention
of returning. I've been ghosting since before
there was rampant ire about it.)

You know, my therapeutic partner says,
you really can see yourself anywhere.
Deep-eyed ravens, harried squirrels,
gussy-lipped clouds.

Yeah, yeah, we're all one. Are you going to make me
imagine being the junk drawer of my parents' kitchen?
Or the pile of elephant shit that kid at the zoo thought
was an endless flow of chocolate ice cream?

We take turns talking now. These conversations are beautiful,
my partner says. Or they'll lead to beauty
(really? They're so old they've got verdigris...),
and beauty is what remakes people.

I want to discuss how people seem fine with time passing,
if there's a word in any language for the feeling
when you find the key to the house you grew up in—
long-since sold—still on your keyring though you moved

out of state over a decade ago, or a word for the surprise
that blooms from slipping in the paper mache
the prematurely fallen leaves make on the sidewalk.
If there's a better language for the grief of time going by,

even if you're using yours well. But you, dear therapist,
are in the business of remaking people,
so I would like to be the Queen of England.
Or, at very least, the person I should have been.


Megan Wildhood

staircase to nowhere

There is no magic anymore.

A few days after I started taking Zoloft, I walked on Chiswick High Road and I saw a fiery pink comet falling to the earth. Is this the end? I thought. Of the world, of me, same difference. I was listening to some faux folk alternative rock album, and the drums crushed my brain into little flecks of paranoia. If that's what it was going to be like, then maybe depression was better.

A few weeks later, as I already felt born anew, it was as if Chiswick knew, too. I walked west from Turnham Green station, and there was an orange glow in the sky. Pollution or aliens or the simulation coming out, it felt like being trapped in the safest of spaces. Can anything count as a safe space if you're confined in it?

It's my second round of living in Chiswick, and while I am now broken, the streets aren't. The streets are as even as before, the branches move to the same rhythm, and the shops are just as expensive. The first time I lived here, it happened by accident. I needed a place to stay, and when I walked down Abinger Road to a flat viewing, I fell in love on some subliminal level; but I haven't realised that until I had to move out, one year later.

When I had to leave, I ended up in a Brent Cross garage posing as a studio flat, where only bad things happened since I moved in. Someone I'd been desperately in love with broke up with me; I got swept up in major depression again; my bathroom roof started leaking; I had a bulimic relapse; I had a Prozac-induced hypomanic episode, which led me to the A&E; and many other small stabs in the back. Around that time, when I came across the parapsychological term 'residual hauntings' – a haunting loop that sticks to a traumatic space and refuses to leave ~ I knew I had to get out of there. In the meantime, I regularly visited Chiswick. It could take me two hours with traffic and delays, but it was always worth it. It didn't feel worth it, but I knew it was. If you love something, you show up. You make the time. Maybe I was giving Chiswick the regard my former partner didn't, and the realisation of how I'd been treated and blinded by love came alive in that safe place I longed for.

But there are macro and micro safeties. Chiswick, while calm and idyllic, exists on a large scale. You can walk in loops and tread the same paths, but it takes you hours and you always discover something new, and the moments of living and walking and buying and breathing all merge into one. There are no moments when the space is one big moment.

The staircase to nowhere is a different story.

*

My office has seven floors and I work on the fifth, but when you get to the top floor, the stairs do not end there. After the breakup, I needed a quiet space where I could be alone and sad on my lunch breaks, and I found it at the top of the stairs. No one went there because there was no eighth floor, and why would anyone want to explore a place that doesn't exist?

It became a routine. Each day I worked in the office, I took a cigarette break around 11:30 a.m., and I bought a Tesco meal deal before coming back inside. A couple of hours later, I walked upstairs and sat at the top. I ate my lunch, and then I either failed to read a book, called my mom, or cried. Usually, two of the above.

The staircase is stuffy and ugly. The stairs have unintelligible stains on them, and if you look up, there is a window that somehow looks like it's covered in mould. There is a certain gruff beauty to it, though, especially when it rains. When it rains, it feels immersive, as you can almost experience being in the middle of the rain without getting wet. It's almost like magic if you squint your eyes; and if you're miserable enough to have a low bar for such things.

The staircase is not cleaned very often. Almost every time I go there, I come across the sandwich crumbs of the week before. I find solace in it. It's not a nonexistent place anymore, not unless I do not exist.

The staircase is not without its tragedies. I remember first buying Prozac and staring at it on the stairs, wondering if it would change my life. A few weeks later, in tired déjà vu, I looked at my new and shiny pack of Zoloft, wondering what would happen if my second try didn't work either. Would I try something new the third time? I was afraid of

the answer, but only the stairs knew. Once, I'd binged there on my lunch break. I tried to ignore the little round thing on the ceiling that I was almost certain was a camera, and then I purged in the office toilet.

When I talked to my mom on the stairs, it was usually about love. How I love, why I still love, whether it counts as real love, why I can't stop. Until I did stop. And the stairs are still here.

A few times now, someone has interrupted my lunch break. Like clockwork, I hear the seventh-floor door open, and a guy walk up to my spot. He always talks on the phone and looks for a quiet space, but when he sees me, he retreats. I almost feel like a freak, almost like old times, but I don't care. Maybe it's because I'm medicated, or maybe love lost cleanses the fluff in your brain. Or maybe it's because I know I don't exist on the staircase, not really.

*

Sometimes second tries do work. I moved back to Chiswick, and the new medication helped me care about making an effort again. The safety I experience now is different to what I'd expected most of my life. It's gruff and crumbling and quiet, even boring, but at least it's not a shock to the system.

That's why I wasn't disappointed when I read about the mystery of the Chiswick orange glow solved. "Brentford Community Stadium's pitch has been over-seeded and overnight illumination has been necessary to encourage the grass to grow back after heavy use of the pitch this season." In a way, it is magic.

Alex Blank

moving on is good and all but

there are those things. A table
recently wiped. Hearing swing music
and regretting never learning how
to dance. Shows set in early summer
with high skies and cicada cries.
The other day, I saw this wildflower vine
blooming while scaling and
I thought of you and how
you grew on me.

The succeeding evergreens
have come and gone, but
sometimes the forest calls.
I flick through our photos
and go home for a while.

Luke Valmadrid

the inheritance

It was near Christmas when we first
worked the field. There were cotton
buds. There were many lemon trees
in the dell. In the soft distance

the swelling mountains were pale blue
and the pallid air washed our throats
like fresh water. Manolo walked
slowly through the orchard, thoughtful,

his two hands clasped behind his back,
his brow hunched up like a Buddha
and his nose burnt red. A chapped neck
for winter but the summer months

came in smooth as yarn. Swallows,
he said, pointing to the muro.
Swallows in the road. Like he'd
caught a fist of pure white moon.

Benjamin Bridson

he does not take anything from me

I offered up pieces of myself to sacrifice at their altars,
Like the gods I so idolized them to be.
But I've read enough about mythology to know these polytheistic gods are fickle beings,
And losing favor is as easy as it was to slice myself open like a lamb for them.

He does not take anything from me.

It does not seem like much:
That I can love him without feeling like I'm struggling for air.
But many others have intubated me:
Keeping me slightly alive and breathing as I give up limbs and organs and life.
So it is everything.

Our bodies curl together like smoke from cigarettes we never light,
He makes an effort to match his breathing to mine
So we inhale-exhale in tandem.
Someone loves me like this.

I have not been picked up in years.
I do not remember if they have offered and I've refused or if the offers never came;
Either option creates a shame in me.
He lifts me, and I am lighter than I ever remember being.
He loves me like this.

He lays his head in my lap and curls up, an apostrophe on my sheet of paper.
My fingers play in the font of his hair.
It does not seem like much,
But I did this once and he asked it of me again and now I'll never stop.
I love him like this.

He does not take anything from me.
He does not make me be anything I am not.
He does not demand of me anything more than I should give, even if I can.
He does not make me feel like I should give more than I can, even if he does not ask.
With him I can just be.
It is hard to say why this feels like so much when it sounds like so little—
Being, the most simple and instinctive act of humanity,
To just continue to exist—
But it is.
Because it is a first,
And he is the second lung I didn't know I'd been without.

He does not take *anything* from me.

Caroline Morris

if the plans change

You send me a song that moves you to tears, *I will meet you on another planet if the plans change*. I wonder if Mercury will do. A world of extremes, fit for a Gemini Boy. Although my counsellor said there's a split inside me too. Such dramatic temperature changes, we would have to mop your shins. I remember how they would sweat in the heat.

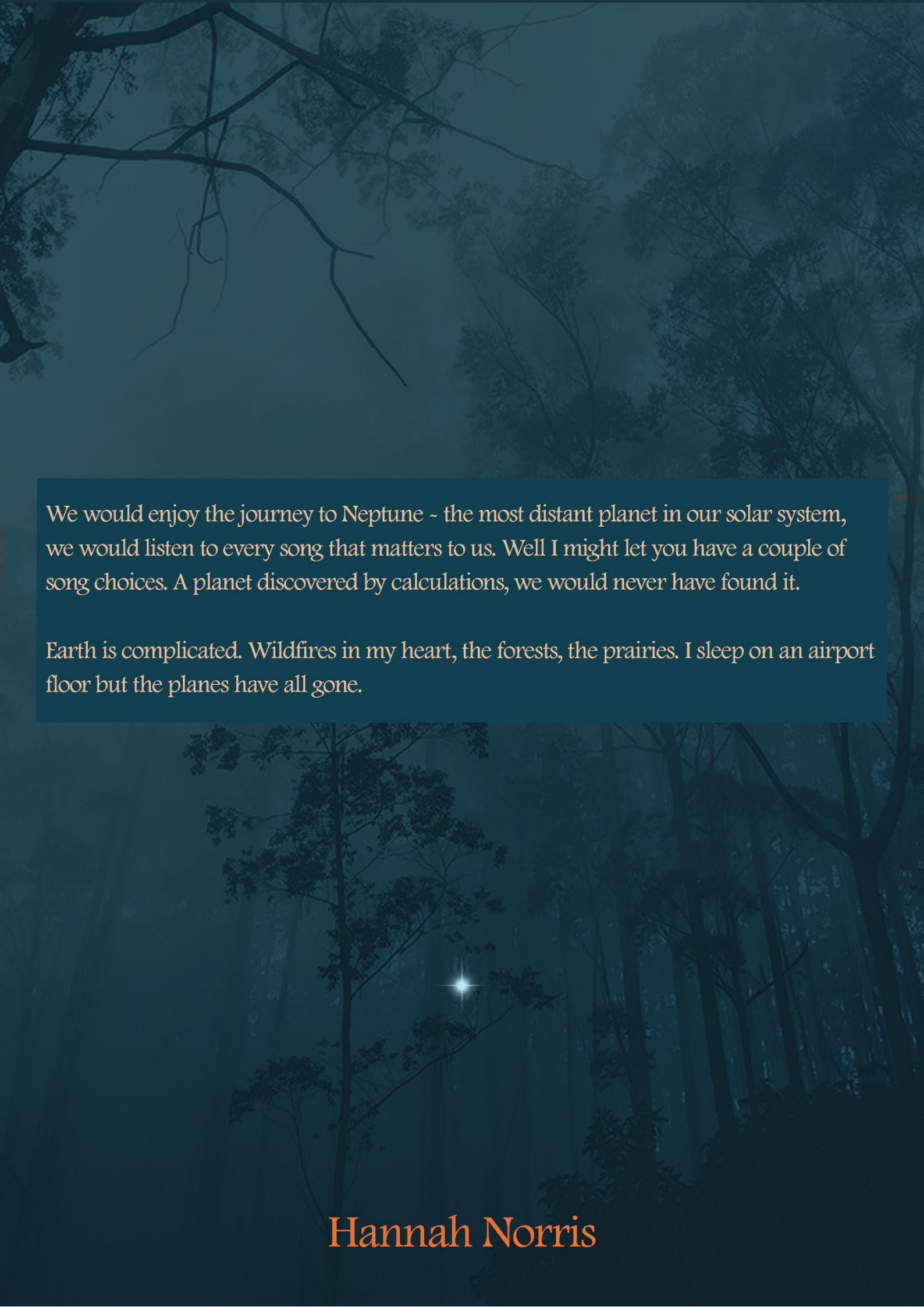
What about the planet named after the Roman goddess of love and beauty? With a day 5,832 hours long, we could fit a lot in. No chores vs. creativity battle. And maybe this time I wouldn't always be rushing when packing for a little trip, for time would be on my side.

On Mars it seems only right that we would share Mars bars, cold from the fridge, dividing the chocolate encased caramel and nougat with a knife like our relatives did in our youth before our paths crossed on a planet of two billion people at a poetry workshop. We would share another Mars right after – we might as well have had our own but where's the fun in that?

Jupiter has the shortest day so even a bad day would only last ten hours, and we would be so happy with eighty moons to study and worship together. We'd like Callisto the best. Some scientists considered it an 'ugly duckling moon,' a 'hunk of rock and ice,' which means we'd only root for it more. Our underdog mirrorball would cast pretty lights over our faces as we dance amongst Jupiter's swirling gases, our smoke machine, the gap between our bodies as small as a full stop. Our time in Liverpool has prepared us for strong winds but you might have to hold my hand tight, just in case.

From Saturn, we would admire dramatic rings of ice, dust and rock but nod in agreement that they're just not as beautiful as my great-great-grandmother's opal ring on my finger.

Uranus, the coldest planet in the solar system, is for holding your lover tight underneath moons named after Shakespearean characters, so this is what we'd do (some immature bum jokes too).

The background is a dark teal color with a faint, misty forest scene. The trees are silhouetted against a lighter teal background. In the center of the image, there is a bright, four-pointed starburst light. The text is overlaid on a dark teal rectangular area in the upper half of the image.

We would enjoy the journey to Neptune ~ the most distant planet in our solar system, we would listen to every song that matters to us. Well I might let you have a couple of song choices. A planet discovered by calculations, we would never have found it.

Earth is complicated. Wildfires in my heart, the forests, the prairies. I sleep on an airport floor but the planes have all gone.

Hannah Norris

nudist heaven

The skin of the beach sagged
with the weight of the naked.
He tore off his farmer clothes,
his athlete chest unimportant
to strangers in just crosses and rings.
Bangs had melted into his forehead.
A nude beach was as good a place as any
to mourn his boyhood bangs.
He carried an ancient boombox
that played tunes from praise channels.
The beach attracted lions, oxen, sheep
that whirled in a minor funnel cloud
so the farmer remembered prophecy.
Newcomers alighted and peeled off clothes,
stockbroker and professor clothes,
cadet and debutante and bus driver clothes,
medic and cop and prisoner clothes.
Boombox tunes got louder, more dogged.
A painter who in life couldn't paint
now painted like a nude master.
A composer who in life couldn't compose
became a busker of the avant-garde.
An actor who in life couldn't act
let all areas of mind and body go
and knew freedom in a hundred flashcubes.
Then the farmer saw his enemy, the fellow
who more than others had blocked his way in life.
They embraced, their limbs
roped like tree trunks intertwined.

Alex M. Frankel



McCaela Prentice

McCaela Prentice (she/her) is living and writing in Astoria, NY. Her poems have previously appeared in HAD, Ghost City Review, and Perhappened. Her full length poetry collection "PULP PROPHET" is forthcoming in 2023 with Musing Publications

Vale Prosper

Vale is a monster-loving, ADHD-addled, non-binary professional theatre kid making their way through a doctorate in Theatre & Performance Studies (alongside a thicket of passion projects). Prior appearances in other publications include warning lines: ADVERSARY, Rat World Magazine Issue No. 4, Wayward Literature Vol. 1, and body fluids issue 2: teeth. They also appeared, holding a bag of dirt, in Bullshit's HORNS: Valentine's Day Issue. Their hubris remains ungovernable.

Molly K. Fisher

Molly Kathryn Fisher is a senior at North Central College, pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Literature.

Winner of the 2022 Ruth Cooley Poetry Prize, her poem "my stream of consciousness fails the bechdel test" is featured on poets.org. Her work has also appeared in the 30 North Literary Review, the Kiekhofer Review, and the fridge at her parents' house. Molly is fond of Carole King, the color green, and feeling too much.

Mandira Pattnaik

Mandira Pattnaik is the author of "Anatomy Of a Storm-Weathered Quaint Townspeople" (Poetry collection, Fahmidan Publishing, Nov 2022), "Girls Who Don't Cry" (Flash Fiction collection, Alien Buddha Press, Jan 2023) and "Where We Set Our Easel" (N-i-F, forthcoming May 2023, Stanchion Publishing). Mandira's work has appeared in The McNeese Review, Penn Review, Quarterly West, Passages North, DASH, Miracle Monocle, Timber Journal, Contrary, Watershed Review, Amsterdam Quarterly, and Prime Number Magazine, among others. She edits for trampset and Vestal Review. More at mandirapattnaik.com

Dorothy Lune

Dorothy Lune is a Yorta Yorta poet, born in Australia. Her work has appeared in Pinhole Poetry & more. She is looking to publish her manuscript, can be found online @dorothylune, & has a substack:

<https://dorothylune.substack.com/>

Hannah Yerington

Hannah Yerington is a poet, Jewish Arts and Magic educator, and the Bolinas Poetry Camp for Girls director. She comes from Bolinas, California, and currently lives between Bellingham, Washington, and Vancouver, B.C., with her old gentleman dog, Paddington. She has an MFA from Bowling Green State University. Her first chapbook, Sheologies, comes out from Minerva Rising Press this Spring.

Megan Wildhood

Megan Wildhood is a writer, editor and writing coach who helps her readers feel seen in her monthly newsletter, poetry chapbook Long Division (Finishing Line Press, 2017), her forthcoming poetry collection Bowed As If Laden With Snow (Cornerstone Press, May 2023) as well as Mad in America, The Sun and elsewhere.

You can learn more about her writing, working with her and her mental-health and research newsletter at meganwildhood.com.

Alex Blank

A London-based writer, Alex Blank had their work published in HuffPost UK, Litbreak Magazine, Breath & Shadow, and more. In 2022, she was accepted into the Literary Fiction cohort of the London Writers Awards, where she completed her first novel. As an autistic writer, in her work she is dedicated to normalising the neurodivergent subjectivity. They're currently pursuing a Creative Writing MA in Royal Holloway.

Luke Valmadrid

Luke enjoys biking, qualitative research, IU's prolific body of work, and playing video games with faraway friends. Is also an MS1 at UCSD. Hopes to make some music soon. One time. Ditto.

Benjamin Bridson

Benjamin Bridson is a graduate of the University of Bristol and London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. His poem The Football Phone-in is featured in the LAMDA Verse and Prose Anthology Vol. 19, and Pipa is featured in The Primer Vol. 1 Issue 2. Benjamin is originally from Northwest England and is currently based in Madrid.

Caroline Morris

Caroline Morris is an emerging writer based in the Philadelphia suburbs and currently works as an editor. She received her B.A. in English literature with a concentration in writing at the Catholic University of America in 2022. Both her poetry and prose wrestle with the nature of femininity, internal and interpersonal relationships, and what it means to have a body. Morris has previously been published by Vermilion, Green Ink Poetry, Beaver Magazine, and the Penwood Review, with two honorable mentions for the O'Hagan Poetry Prize. Twitter: @Lean_writer

Hannah Norris

Hannah Norris (she/her) is a poet from Nottingham, UK, who describes herself as an 'obsessive diary writer' with an interest in turning this material into poetry. Hannah started writing poetry as an outlet for grief and has been featured in JARG magazine, Streetcake and Postscript and was longlisted for the Black Cat Poetry Press 2022 Competition. She shares her poetry on Instagram: @hannahnozza.

Alex M. Frankel

Alex M. Frankel--who also publishes under the name "Alejo Rovira Goldner"--left Spain in the 1990s to settle in Southern California. His short story collection, "Flame at Door and Raisin," came out in 2022, and in early 2023 he has also published a chapbook of poems, "So Many Mouths at the End of All Beauty."

Thank you for joining us in our wander through Sanctuary.
Moonflake Press appreciates your continued support and
affection for our issues.

Thank you to our writers for trusting us with their art, we hope
we did you justice.

We look forward to sharing more talent and magic with our
readers in the near future.

Thank you!

The image features a dark, teal-toned background of a dense forest with tall, thin trees. A central, semi-transparent dark square contains the logo. The logo consists of a large, stylized, gold-colored letter 'M' with a textured, wood-grain-like pattern. Below the 'M' is the word 'press.' in a smaller, gold-colored serif font. A bright white crosshair is centered on the logo, with four light rays extending outwards towards the corners of the frame.

M
press.