

Spring 2018

Pathos, Spring 2018

Portland State University. Student Publications Board

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pathos

literary magazine

spring 2018 edition



pathos

Sadie Jordan

Editors Note

The spring issue of Pathos Literary Magazine comes to you amidst a stressful and exciting time for our university community. As we stay up late studying for finals, say goodbye to those who are graduating, and look ahead to our summer plans the words of our peers become even more impactful. I am proud to be able to share in the trials and triumphs of Portland State's student body through the creative writing and art presented to you in this issue.

I have had the honor this year of being the Editor-in-Chief of Pathos, a publication that means more than I can capture in words, and cannot wait to continue this journey with you next year. I am grateful every day for

the amazing women that work with me and who bring this beautiful magazine to life. Thank you Juliana, Shea, and Sloane for your hard work and positivity. Thank you to the students who have submitted their work and to our readers, who make all of this possible. I hope you enjoy this edition of Pathos Literary Magazine- we will see you this fall!



Pathos Staff

Sadie Jordan — Editor-in-Chief

Juliana Tattoli — Copy Editor

Sloane Ackerman — Graphic Designer

Shea Satterlee — Social Media Manager



COVER ART: Garden — Chloe Friedlein

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Michelle Marie Belden

THE HUNTER

sometimes i wish that orion himself
would pluck me from earth
string me along his belt loops
and carry me with him across the night sky
so that i could fly with cygnet
converse with cassiopeia
battle with perseus
for there,
among the stars
i could bathe in the big dipper
and
maybe then i will understand what it means
to be made of stardust

Madison Richmond

JUTLAND

Lonely in the woods, the thistles and
honeysuckle and fern fingers fight for
a lick of skin,

Lonely in the woods, coralroot pedals
fidget towards sunlight, miner's lilac
laces thick ivy,

Lonely in the woods, chimes tickle
like birdsong, beating hearts,
broken china, and the poet,

Lonely in the woods, shakes her coat
of fog and frost like a goddess,
wicked and silly, whole and holy,

Her voice low and lonely, dimpled like
leather, airborne like a pack of
scarlet foxes nosing their catch



ART: Wearing White Before Labor Day — Harrison Gerard

Eleanor Johnston-Carter

i am covered in bruised you cannot see

how long i stood in that dark place how long i sat on the rocks
before anyone else was awake dreaming of finding the edge not
to jump just to be there just to see what's waiting below

the water splashing the shore a warning every gut feeling i've
ignored and every street i've jaywalked across since moving here

it feels early still a smooth stone pressed into my pocket cold
against burnt fingertips twin canadian geese crossing the sky
one behind the other

arms wrapped around knees collar and wrist bones visible the
layers of my vision onion skin or transparencies

"im stuck" written in green marker on the streetlight on
broadway "im here" written in ink pen on the rock that sort of
permanent or that sort of desperate

stumbling over the earth pressing my palm against the trunk of
the tree the cold warm feeling as the streetlights click on

wanting to go but not wanting to get there dead end streets and
cul-de-sacs things turning around

Savanna Ford

july 19th, 2017, 9:52 a.m.

I'm trying to dictate it
but
it is all here, crawling from the base of my skull to the
front line of my eyes.

Someone is playing the cello and screaming at the same
time and I am calling it music I am calling it music
because she's the one who is providing the entertainment
and I am calling it music because what else would I call
music if it were not as wild?

His hands felt about ready to fall apart in mine. I swal-
lowed, vindictively, around the swollen spots in my throat
from far too many cigarettes a week ago. He falls asleep
again. I want to put blanket upon blanket overtop of him
and then I'll know he's never running away, he's never
escaping, he's warm here.

(It's California. Give me better news.)

I wake her up with whispers and I was scratching my
wrists my neck my face my scalp my hands my hands
my hands my hands my hands I keep thinking about
hands today and last night and how much he uses his to
light up or take pills or to cut and I'm trying to assemble
which parts of him are the mess and why, and why. Why
are you a mess?

I'm asking myself. I'm talking to myself. I'm talking to
him, but I'm talking to myself, and he doesn't understand
it but I'm doing it. I look at myself in the mirror when I
say "son of a bitch" each time he gives me his shit-eating
grin. I'm telling myself that I'm being an asshole. The

euphoria crawls behind my eyes again and he is all I see
under a burnt haze.
She's masturbating in the front room, some egoistic ver-
sion of myself, screeching obscenities like

"you fucking rot when you touch yourself, you fucking
rot when you touch yourself"

and I don't know why but she likes the idea of sexual
decomposition. I couldn't think of anything better than
turning away from her as she does. My best friend is
talking to me and my ego is finger-fucking herself to the
idea that I'm never going to grow old. I'm looking off the
balcony and thinking I could fly. He told me I was melo-
dramatic yesterday. He told me I was pathetic the night
before.

I told my best friend that I don't have so much desire to
have sex anymore, not as much as I did a month ago or
two months ago. I feel like that part of me is dying and I
do not want to revive her. The last person who touched
her there was my husband and he is orbiting between a
memory and a living nightmare and

I'm forgetting something when I look at this new, alleged
love of my life, this mess. I'm constantly forgetting some-
thing. It feels like clockwork and I am rewound every
time he glances at me. It's not long enough. I'm shaking
and kicking Father Time in my own head but he'll never
see it. He told me I was unstable two weeks ago. I remem-
ber being angry that he saw that.

Nickolas Daniel Jones

Remembering You

I followed you, past the stone park, to the nickel arcade
Where nostalgias are made with beeps, whistles, and 1000 points
And I discovered that only quarters are accepted there now

The sight of that flickering, half-lighted entrance sign
Sparked benign half-memories of your nimble, toothy smiles—
Or it used to, when all the bulbs were bright and new

Inside I exchanged green linen for hero's-journey metal
And settled on prizes I'd buy with my paper-ticket winnings—
Oh, how we pleased in those plastic-cheap treasure

But our favorite game was broken, about to be replaced,
So I paced the rows of pixel caskets, searching for another
And chose the one we onetime beat on only twenty nickels

The quarter chunked and rattled downward in the slot
And in a spark of thought, I decided to play as your character
So you'd be there in a kind-of way...

Alone, I couldn't get the bonus points and soon I lost
But tossed another quarter down the orange-lighted grave
And noticed the high-score with your initials was erased.

Oscar White

Solar Quarrel

I stared up into the dark for quite some time. Streaks of light from beyond the door frame stretched along the walls and ceiling like a fluorescent eclipse, disrupting the black. The light shifted as my parents walked back and forth on the other side.

Solar flares, I thought.

This one bedroom one bath apartment didn't hold much back, so I put my headphones in and turned it full. Some distant sonata. I could still hear my father, his voice rapid and raised.

On the other side of the door, he stood how he always did; his hip leaned against the counter, a hand on his forehead, the other pressing cold aluminum. My mother paced in the kitchen silently, listening. The light flickered each time she passed, causing more solar flares around the strange eclipse. My music seemed to rise and fall with her anxiousness.

I traced the door with my finger. I found the music moved my hands. Only to have them clinch when my father's words found their way through the high notes of violin. I couldn't help but think I was a conductor, directing the tragic symphony of the apartment.

I closed my eyes for a long time, until the music stopped, or it had somehow been lost in the space between me and the moon. When I finally opened my eyes, the silence seemed overwhelming. I was drifting, weightless. The eclipse, as if true to its nature, did not paint me with warmth. I knew it was a cold thing. But I saw it in those flares. The heat and the anger. I felt it. I heard it. The harsh words and soft whimpers came, distant at first, but they reached me nonetheless.

I drifted there amidst the cold universe of the room; the light dancing at my feet until I finally felt a warmth. A slow warmth that grew along the lines of my skin, and pulsed down to my fingertips. Perspiration and perspective.

They're just solar flares. That is all. I would much rather be lost in the flickering light of the flames, than be burning in the fire of the sun.



ART: Imitation & Tethered — Chloe Friedlein

Nickolas Daniel Jones

The Shoulder of Orion (A Biomythography)

It is human nature to find shapes in what is shapeless. Whether we prefer the beasts that watch from tree branches under moonless nights, or the fat dragons and cherubim who drift among the afternoon clouds, we humans look for familiarity, order, and purpose in what surrounds us. With science, fable, and myth, we attempt to find connection. My personal connection is with the stars. My childhood summers were full of camping trips with nights spent hunting for constellations, and using special charts to pronounce the names of their pieces. Hearing the name of the ninth brightest star in the sky, Betelgeuse, always made me laugh. I relished the thought of something so massive having a name that sounded so ridiculous to my raised-on-English ears. Those camping trips are many years past. I now go on night walks so I can watch the goldenrod spark of Betelgeuse's light; the optical illusion created by light-years makes it seem as though my friend walks beside me.

But the stars are easy to connect with. Though they hold mysteries, they do not mind the curiosity, questions, and desire to know that is inherent in humankind; they are patient and reliable because even when disconnected by clouds and day-sky, they are always there. They are knowable. Connection, however, often fails with other entities. The possibility of disconnect, in light of all our efforts to find meaning and connection, is a jarring discovery. This is true even when the discovery happens slowly, as it often does. It happened slowly for me. The obviousness came in hindsight, yet still I wonder how I didn't see it from the very beginning.

It began during my freshman year in high school, a year and nine months after the declassification of Pluto as a planet. I was sitting in the circular choir room as it

echoed with conversation, interrupted occasionally by the cadence of a laugh. As always, the conversations created an anxiety in me. I remember becoming frustrated at the clock for ticking so slowly, and at the three inexhaustible minutes before class would start.

"You always look so prepared for class, David." My choir teacher made this comment whenever he noticed me sitting patiently in my assigned seat before the bell rang.

"I always am. I always look forward to choir." This was not a lie, yet I still attempted to hide the comment with a smile. That day, I thought my teacher saw my disingenuousness. My teacher smiled at me, said "good", and moved on.

Two and one half minutes remained.

I killed time by searching through my backpack for something I knew wasn't there. I owned a backpack with many pockets and I would check for that something twice in each one. I felt stupid doing this. Other students sometimes approached me to say hello; I would always say hello back, but then always intensify my search, being careful to look both focused, and as though nothing was wrong. I dreaded the possibility that someone would ask what I was doing, or what I was searching for, but the illusion always seemed to work in driving others away. No one ever commented about this behavior, at least, not to me directly. I don't know exactly what it was I feared, only that I did fear. At the time, I was sure the fear was something that didn't exist in the minds of others. Two minutes remaining, and I wondered, as I often did, if I was even supposed to feel anxiousness—

But this is not why that day is vivid in my mind. I remember it, mostly, because of Johnathan. He spoke

“In the grand scheme of space, it was just beyond our finger tips.”

to me that day in the choir room, as though the act of doing so was something familiar and practiced. I did not evade his hello, as I had with the others. Johnathan was my same age, laughed at jokes he told to himself (just as I did), and had a last name that rhymed with the sea mammal “manatee.” Johnathan wrote a song about this rhyme once, so ridiculous and fun that all I remember is the song; his real last name escapes me now.

A lot of it escapes me now. Though I recall many specifics, like the clock and the white noise of conversation, I struggle with more meaningful details. I remember my conversation with Johnathan only in defined shapes. I sat, angular and bent. Johnathan was rectangular, stood perpendicular, and contrasted with the spherical choir room. His top row of teeth was square. His smile spoke in the sturdy symbols of a universal language, but a smile, though it carries meaning, remains only a generalization without the minute details of an honest word. What were his actual words? I do remember his eyes being pushed into half-moons when he laughed at a joke I risked. I don't remember the joke.

I shouldn't be misleading. It isn't that Johnathan and I didn't know each other. We had several classes together throughout high school, and had interacted numerous times. We had the same lunch period, and both sang tenor in the school choir. But that day, there was a seriousness in Johnathan that I'd never seen. The years since have tempered the memory and I realize now that Johnathan was trying to be my friend. Unusual because Johnathan only made friends with groups of people, never individuals. It was effortless for him to cause a group of people to implode with wild laughter, but I never saw him perform this spectacle with only one or two. He was

never with only one or two. It was the crowd, or no one.

I speculate as to why Johnathan chose to talk to me that day. Like I said, we had known of each other for a while; that day didn't present a better opportunity for friendship than any days previous. Plus, Johnathan had no motivation that I could see for making an effort to get to know me. Johnathan was known by many and participated in many extracurriculars; he did not seem in want for comradery.

I wish I could remember that joke.

The conversation we had that day did not really come to much, but around that same time we were both in our school's production of a play, the name of which I have stored in boxes in the attic. During the curtain call of the final performance, there was a town wide power outage. Save for a quick flicker, the theater became blackness, like a night void of moon or city light. The cast of the play followed glow tape to the backstage exit, while awkward laughter reverberated through the auditorium as people tried to adjust themselves to the dark. It was night outside in the square parking lot. The clarity of late spring allowed for the light of the farthest celestial objects to appear as though they were just above our heads. The moon, content to not play lead role in the night sky for this one evening, had veiled herself—though she still peered through a small open seam in the night.

“A shooting star!” I don't know who said it, but we all turned our eyes upward in response. The sky was like a mirror, with unblemished reflection, shattered. When we all looked up, the glint in each fragment brightened with the pleasure of having an audience.

“It's amazing how many stars you can see when there are no other lights.” I didn't realize Johnathan was

standing beside me until he said this. The blackness made it difficult to identify a person unless they spoke.

“I know.” I said. Unsure what else to say, I simply said what the mirror shards reflected back to me. “My family used to go camping when I was younger. Right before bed each night, we would put the campfire out and stargaze, trying to find all the constellations we could. I used to have charts that showed where the constellations were during any time of the year.”

“Do you remember all the constellations?”

“I've forgotten how to find some, but I remember a few. Orion and the Big Dipper are always easy to find.”

“Where's Orion?”

“Right there.” I pointed to the Huntsman chasing after the seven sisters.

“I think I see it.”

I focused my finger. “If you look right there, you can see the star Alpha Orionis. It's a red giant so it looks orange compared to the other stars. That's the left shoulder of Orion.”

Johnathan studied the sky. His eyes widened with surprise and a “whoa” sprang from his lips. “I see it.” When he looked at me to share in his amazement, I recognized the unique sensation of discovering something that fascinates you. In mutual wonder, the two of us looked to the orange glimmer—an object of incomprehensible size resting only a few hundred light-years from our familiar Sol. In the grand scheme of space, it was just beyond our finger tips.

Johnathan stretched his hand-tw to the sky, and traced the Huntsman's arrow. “The Pleiades! Those must be the Pleiades.”

“How many can you see?”

“Seven.”

“You're lying.”

“I'm lying.”

We laughed.

As the last member of the audience stumbled their way out of the auditorium, the lamp posts in the parking lot came back on. The street lights followed. In order to compensate for the brief darkness, the occupants in surrounding houses flipped many unnecessary lights on, as did the larger city beyond the houses. Little by little the light moved from horizon to horizon, pushing the stars from Earth's presence, until only the eight brightest remained in the sky.

Looking back on it, I struggle for a reason as to why I don't know Johnathan. I should know him. At times, I am overwhelmed by this puzzle. There are nights—when the moon watches from behind Earth's shadow—that I wander down the sidewalk and think about where Johnathan is now. I am embarrassed by the question, but I occasionally ask myself if he too sometimes thinks about me. The wonder in his eyes that night of the power outage, exactly the same as mine, makes me think that he does. But the question is without answer for me.

That's why I take the night walks. The question and its reality feel easier walking alongside somebody who knows. He's still there, chasing after those seven women. He does not offer me answers. Still, I can forget the question for a moment or two, or at least let it rest by my feet, when I look up into the arms of the Milky Way, and lean on the orange tinted shoulder of Orion.

Michelle Marie Belden

green

i carefully put pieces of you away in a tiny green bag
with rosemary and granite,
your green toothbrush and earrings,
and a polaroid of a time sometime ago.
and before i said
farewell,
as i zipped the bag closed,
i crossed my fingers at the hope
that one day
i would open it
and that farewell
would be hello again

addendum:
and if the bag reopens
and i hear your soprano hello
it will be like luck
was on my side
as if
a patch of four leaf clovers
awoke in the spring, and
sprung from the dying field
we had once left behind

Savanna Ford

july 20th, 2017, 6:33 p.m.

There is something
inside of me that is making me itch.
You are
not the cause, but my God,
how much longer can you look at me that way without
telling me the truth?

My hands –
I was thinking about them yesterday like holy water
could be poured over them and I could pore myself into
the idea that they would save anyone, myself –
my hands are skinned. Don't touch them. It's almost as if
I knew if I ruined them, you would stop skimming them
with your brittle, well-kept fingernails.

I was on the upswing for two hours today.
She couldn't bother me if she tried,
and as much as I've grown to seethe at the sight of long,
blond hair hung by threads of her scalp in grease,
it's, more than anything else, a novelty that you believe
you are in love with her.
I wished you good luck with your shit-eating grin infect-
ing my own face:

you don't love her. You sprawled out beside me in the
early morning, your hand splayed across my shoulder
blade. You whispered your laugh in my ear. You think
you could love another human being

with that much rose gold, soft-aching magnetism floating
in the room?
You think you could love another human being

when your burnt, swollen eyes traced the curve of my lips
before I looked down and

you think you could love another human being

while contesting whatever we are?

You can tell me over and over again how much of a curse,
how much of a blessing you have, that you can spread
open someone so easily,

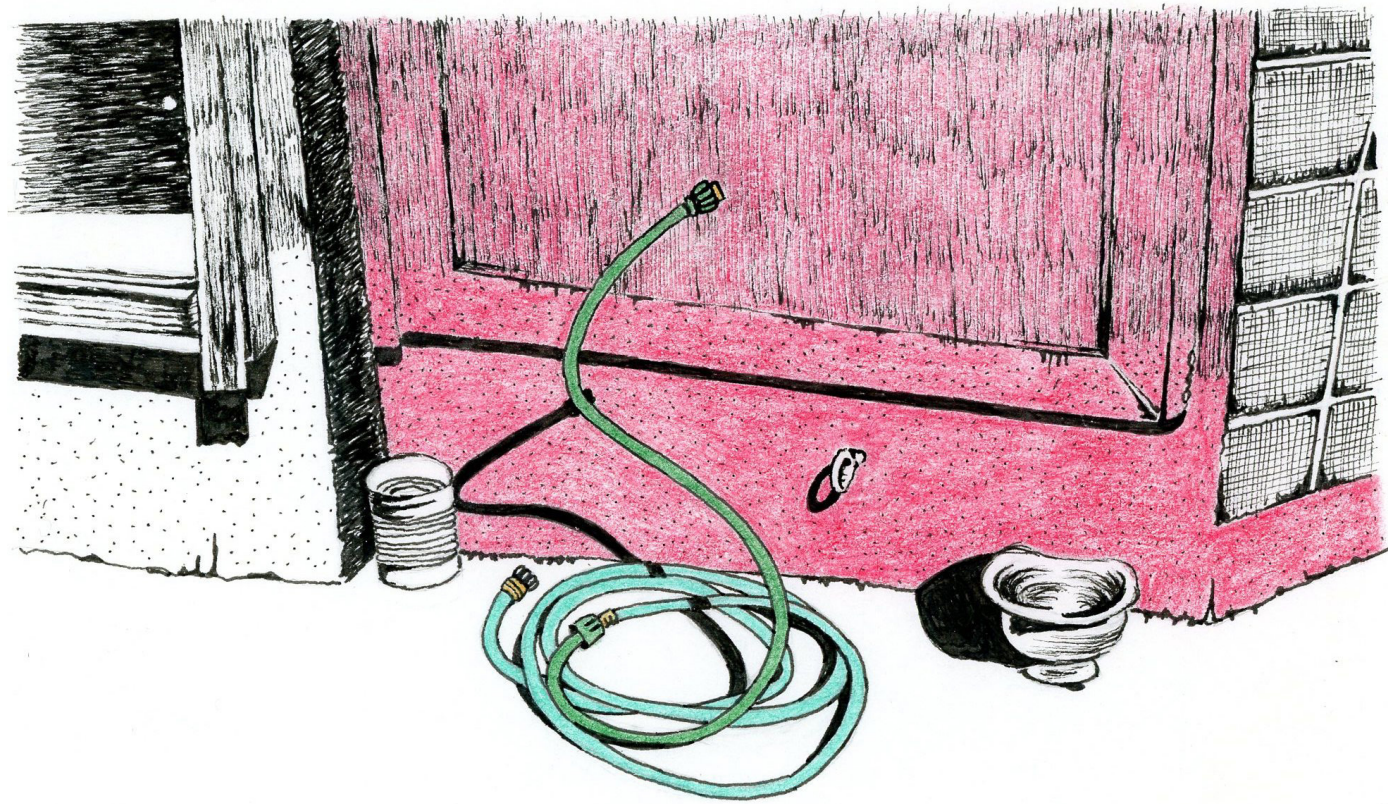
take the lid off and examine the contents but

baby, I did it with you before I knew what it was and
while you may be smarter than me,

I know better than to believe that this thing hanging
between us two is unremarkable.
It's laughable that you think what you think.

And I don't mind now,

but I have ruined my hands. I have ruined my hands;
there is no skin you have touched.



ART: NW 21st Ave— Nicholas Koza

Piper Glbson

letter to christmas 2015

how unfair that certain things
become poisoned if you hold them
at the wrong time, wrong place.

alive and hurting are synonymous and
how messy is that, how real, how horrifying.

i want to trust but i don't want to hurt.

Julien-Pierre Campbell

I Should Stop Mimicking Percy Shelley

Can I go mad for lack of love?
Can I yet die for want of touch?
Is life at all worth living without her divine lust?

Starved for her adoration, her lips from which I take my
supplication
Yearning wildly for her violet eyes, the gilded ribs
The holy land between her thighs

A tempestuous ocean, raging, bleak, bars me from my
beloved
The driving rain and merciless sleet, howling winds,
furious maelstroms

A day may come, her vicious smile will grace mine eyes
again
Until that day, I shall never speak her sacred name

Piper Gibson

prayer to the ending

tear off pieces of me and scatter them to the wind
like ash

i don't want them anymore

flake off like sunburn

i've sat in the sun too long and i am too warm to touch

leave me to the forest

i am at the whim of the roots and the wolves

let me lie still until i become earth

to rot would be sublime; to rot would be enough

i would like to be useful to something

if that something cannot be me

Emryse Geye

ELENA MARIA ALVAREZ RIERA CALDERÓN LEYTEVIDAL INCLAN COMES OUT TO HER MOTHER ON NETFLIX'S ONE DAY AT A TIME

& it goes pitch-perfect the way only heartfelt, laugh-track
sitcoms can, but when Penelope Riera Alvarez tells her daughter

you should never be afraid to tell me anything about yourself
i am still ready for the unlikely (yet, i insist, not impossible)
moment when this warn women suddenly goes cold. & after,

even though i know that there's no crisis; that there are daughters
who have clement conversations with mothers that would never
love
them lesser, that this crucible climaxed without catastrophe—

i just can't shake the smallness in myself. the held breath of
my adolescence burrows into this mother's of course. i love you.
& i want you to be happy before ministering it across my years.

b.

for a minute i wasn't thinking about anything
these nights of barely sleeping bodies curled like quotation marks
slow inhales of breath turning to snores
i've seen you in a dream in the corners of my vision
before we even met
this feels like a reflex
my sternum bruised compressed by your body grey light
beautiful even when i feel ugly
staring at your closed eyes afraid of what they'll see
the hypnic jerks of your muscles like they're my own
the desire to trace every edge to see every corner tears
forming at the sound of your voice whispering in my ear
i can't tell which parts are yours and which are mine
inosculation two trees growing into one body
my face reflected in your pupils my heart and guts and
bones kept warm in your hands

Lover #10

2:29 A.M.

Toss and turn into
tides being rained down
from puddle wide pores dripping acidic
droplets burning into
fuchsia sheets. Breathe in your
scent full of sweat and liquor,
darling, when did you become your
own distillery?
Shake you to respond,
but you are already too far gone.
There is a beep at the end of your breath, "The person
you are trying to reach is currently not available."
Hang up.
(Hang on instead.)
Look up to the patchy ceiling and
find your reflection among the blobs,
If you look at them long enough you can start to see art.
If we look at ourselves long enough we can start to see...

2:51 A.M.

She wonders if there will be a #11.
(We already know there will be.)

2:52 A.M.

Your breath submerges further into your
chest as you watch her cleaning
the skeletons from her closet.
She can feel your vibrations of, "Let it go."
But we really do believe they are gonna come

back into style so we put them back where they
belong and we hope they fit us a little better next Spring.
2:54 A.M.

She constantly tells me that I'm so fucking "lovely".
But all I feel is the urge to replace the v with an n.

2:58 A.M.

We think of all the men we have ever loved,
She thinks of her mother spreading
her legs for a man who doesn't
even know her name
and we don't know why we
are so surprised
he doesn't want to know hers (ours).

2:42 A.M.

You turn to our side
refreshing you into our arms
we hold you tighter and tighter
hoping to disintegrate into you
hoping to dissipate into you
hoping to finally—

2:45 A.M.

We don't.

Emryse Geye

Unspoken

They say, come on, not all white people are racist.

They look pointedly at my partner as if a decade of loving this particular black man has anything to do with the way the world has always been.

They say, but I didn't have a choice in whether I benefit from a culture that systematically disadvantages people of color; it's not my fault, as if fault has anything to do with the way the world is now.

As if pointing fingers wasn't the second quickest way I know to bloody up your hands.

They say, what do you mean you'll be racist your whole life?

As if learning and unlearning were the same thing, happened in the same timescale.

As if pretending anything else could possibly change the way the world might become.

My family think these arguments are martyrdom, holi-
er-than-thou, I am the true and infallible white savior.

I want to tell them, I know I am the villain in my own story.

I want to tell them, a week into the war on Ferguson, my partner is watching live feed of the protests, is giving me a play-by-play, wants me to witness.

I say, please don't; it hurts too much.

It makes me so uncomfortable I can't bear it.

He doesn't say, lucky you. He doesn't bring it up again.

I want to say to them, I will never absolve myself of that moment, no matter how many times I apologize

no matter how many times I collect my own people

no matter how much I listen, and listen, and never stop listening.

I want to say, there is no woke that can endure closing your eyes; there is no greater privilege than to be able to look away— it is the fastest way I know to end up with bloodied hands.



ART: Kingsford Original — Jake Johnson

Attention Portland State writers, artists, and thinkers!

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Instagram. We'll be posting work from the most recent submission period, interesting literary events you can check out around Portland, and you can keep up to date with what Pathos is up to.

@PathosLitMag

Thanks again and we look forward to reading your submissions this Spring! Read more work online at: pathoslitmag.com/blog

Cheers,

PATHOS LITERARY MAGAZINE