

PRETTY OWL
POETRY

A black silhouette of a person wearing a hat and a long coat, holding a staff or pole. The figure is positioned to the left of the main title, with its right arm raised as if holding the staff.

PRETTY OWL
POETRY

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from Personal Moon Chair Triptych (Cover)

Moved Out (Page 6)

Personal Moon Chair Triptych (Page 22)

Flowers (Page 41)

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Blood of the Air (Pages 34-35)

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No Thought of the Surface (grasshopper to *Paragordius tricuspidatus*)¹

Kami Westhoff

Your egg rolled like an eye on my tongue,
slid through the tunnel of my throat, cracked
in my bowels where you tangled yourself unsolvable.
To blame you would be to blame the bud for the burst
of its petals, the thirsty mouth for its swallow.

The pressure of your slippery edges worsens
as you complicate. You are closer to death than birth.
You mature, unravel, and make a suggestion.
Your wrath wing-snapped into language,
rubbed into warning along the skin of our flanks.

Soon I long for the rank of the pond,
yearn to split its skin with the splash of my body.
I think of my young. I think of legacy.
I think of the corn's sweet silk
as I press my feet into the pond's silt
with no thought of its surface.

¹ *Paragordius tricuspidatus* is a brain-manipulative worm that infects grasshoppers and other insects through infested water sources. The parasite grows until it fills the host's body and then forces the grasshopper to jump into water so the worm can exit the drowned insect and find another worm to mate with.

Environmental Elegy

Sierra Jacob

Ritual of fragment, of gather, of refraction and
thaw. The whole soaked of salt; I almost lost

selves in it. Foam up catching and, spun as loosed
bloom fell to fast decline. And from here, out past

the reefing, everything sunders—is selfsame. Leave
it, all hail me the lazy mans opihi because I will persist

above shocked surf. I will be most familiar and
easiest to gather. Or cry me the preferred yellow

foot thriving on rock strain. Cry me the most desired.
Hear jellies pumping their bells. You can only

enter through my doors at low tide. I mask my windows
by overcasting iridescent scales—limpet template. I

know how to gather sun up glare off open water like
language. I just don't want to translate the meaning.

Fully Drawn, Steady Breaths

Gage Ledbetter

In 1901 your mother met a canyon, a drifter, she thought, but they later found out they had both attended the same Catholic school. “Stalking the red hills out of sight is lonely,” said the canyon and your mother took the canyon’s hands in her special way, saying “I once saw bats trapped in the natatorium and drinking the pool water and getting sick. Shelter, you know, is not freedom.”

And your mother and the canyon were accused of being lesbians, like a lot. But they never heard it because of a roar between them—the washing machine, perhaps, or a train (your train). Your mother taught the canyon how to shoot a bow, being a champion, herself. The canyon felled entire flocks of birds and you ate well and, after, the canyon taught your mother how to reply the day you told her you have layers of colored sediment and fields of corn right next to one another but no gender. So much like your parents,

I’m not surprised you didn’t pick a side when one day your mother and the canyon fought about rain and fences and you heard the canyon yelling, “like the atmosphere isn’t composed of petals, yeah, like your accent isn’t in your handwriting, and on the child’s birth certificate no less.”

You couldn’t stand it, gave the best of you to a city down south—for a giant pink tongue to call your own, just to spite them both, just to manage what was around your head and reflected in the cloudless sky. Your mother and the canyon wished they could divorce but finances, you know, what with the economy and so little water around to replace them and you hated them for this. You thought they ignored you all those years you couldn’t stop coughing, but they listened, scared, on the other side of the door, holding hands.

A Baton Knocks on a Frozen Lake But Nobody Answers

Gage Ledbetter

There is no turning away from explosions like this one. Colorless is a word for places with few colors: brown and grey, dirt and sky. Gulfs to recapture *why*, as if the rupture had not been ours to widen. What grows beneath the house of our local dragonfly catcher? Sometimes we leave the tap on. Maybe we are practicing being found after death. Is it not enough to fall asleep smoking? All I have ever touched; there is no noun for that. To the composer on the rooftop: how dare you call this music?

Hospital Waltz

Gage Ledbetter

Two kids, been bullied, Christmas special.
My god is an uncomfortable one.
Jane, in Berlin you told me I would know
what it is like to want it. Now, I feel big.
I slid face first through a cough, and I,
among all things plodding through
the snow, was the first to see grass.
What could roll into a Philadelphia
autumn like sand?
A waterfall is only lack, and in this way,
a waterfall is its own emotion.
I keep returning to low, muggy places
without which I am lost to my bedroom,
here where the north-south county line
wakes up and says *boo*, so 12 more months
of lost lakes and breath;
where, on the third-worst day of my life, I cried
in a walk-in freezer and imagined
that somewhere there were people on windy
beaches, naked, hoping for a storm.
You should have watched me dance
with the Charité; even suffering
looks holy dressed in white, and
not even the plague can ruin that.
But still, the villain is not redeemed.
The weight of the train is not in its whistle.
I used to rely on fire much more, but
now I hide it in the walls, next to
my self that is always thawing, never thawed.
The clouds are stained from within.

In Violet

Hannah Gramson

I'm a giant clenched fist slammed repeatedly
into the ground.
The hardness of the floor is comfort.
It says: you can't fall any farther than this.

I paint the sun bright red in every picture because
I like how it looks: dangerous
in an immediate sense / in an obvious way / not the way
I'm used to where it's only in my head.

Anyone would be afraid of this.

Picture me in a field not on fire / in violet / in "Adagio
for Strings."
Picture me swallowed in the belly of a whale, or
any thing big enough to crush me.

Someone asks to borrow my brain for a minute
and I say: KEEP IT.
Someone says, "Are you sure?"
and I say: GOOD LUCK.

Then comes the loud bang / the flash of light / and
the earth ruptures like a flock of birds
rising from a field,
startled into its own extinction.

The Dry Season

Hannah Gramson

Billboard in Iowa says:

HELL IS REAL.

Fine. Okay. There are worse things than this.

A death, for instance,

of something you can't touch. Only feel in your
throat

when you wake up in the morning
and it's gone.

HELL IS REAL.

Fine. Okay. What about the kids though. The
kids on the sidewalk

drawing flowers with pink chalk. Pink like any
thing tender and blameless.

Pointed at the flowers and said, "Look.
These aren't ever going to die! Hallelujah!
here is eternity."

HELL IS REAL.

Fine. Okay. A house, then. Somewhere flat and
endless. Flat and lifeless.

When the house cracked down the middle like a rotten
tooth and the opposite of love spilled out,
left stains on the carpet.

HELL IS REAL.

Fine. Okay. We already knew that. Of course
we knew that.

We even sort of hoped for it.

Self-Portrait Nearing My 28th Birthday

Tyler McAndrew

I am drippy-nosed thousands
of miles away from whatever
bored and in love or boring
and in love looking at myself
in the window remembering how didn't
we all used to love Obama giving up
on the idea of anyone calling locally
elected representatives or even texting
American Idol I am all spray wipe spray
for the minimum wage of living
in an apartment caffeine dizzy feeling
the same as when I was sixteen but different
from nineteen or twenty-two or even twenty
six and six days from another age and
Laura assures me that I am the same
old me have always been the old me
every day of drinking less wishing I was
the sort of person who would take up yoga
because my body I am hurting
cough and joints jaw breaking
out in a weird rash but doing pretty well
over all avoiding my parents' calls
and listening to lots of Neil Young
trying to figure out who my idols are
if I have any and are they actually decent
people or even still alive I am
wanting to touch something always
feeling like I am not enough
of being sick I keep buying
cheap veggie burgers even though
they are owned by Monsanto
does that make me not a decent person
even if I also buy the locally grown
produce in 2015 the American
the internet demands to know if I am
wanting to not be sick and a job I don't
hate to be and to feel
better deeper vitamins wanting
to glow wanting someone
to notice or maybe to notice my
self growing

My Trip to the Zoo

Tyler McAndrew

I went to the zoo I saw
patterns: three
monkeys sitting
in a row and cameras
moving like weather
patterns. the baby gorilla
was my favorite character.
he is most like me,
smiling on stage, dogs
ate a baby so the dogs
got sent away. there
was glare on everything
and patterns
on this alligator's
back, is that thing
real or fake or
I mean sculpture
or cgi? all I've got
are glass eyes and it is
too far away but I read
about this bird native
to western Asia
whose song mimics
the sound of falling
bombs

Used Fetish

Robert Carr

My friend bought rubber
at the used fetish store.

A full body zippered
black second skin

stretched with a striped
yellow welting.

Sacred towel soapy fluid
to wash away mysterious

chalk, the smell of mama's Playtex
repurposed – slick as seal meat,

my friend is head
harness snap,

trimmed, processed, codpiece
popped, a reveal –

ageless folds of scrotum
making love to what remains
of another man's skin.

I'm Afraid of Bigfoot, But I Have a Foot Fetish: Thoughts?

Zach Trebino

redbirds pine behind
the empyreal moon;

the flock was iodine –
animals knee deep to
follow feints stinging
boughs.

the absence of
redbirds – vague
cages, yeti-fright.

the past, the close
beyond what closes;
a hill, chilly, shall
reach the crest.

deep now and
exit.

a farther field,
waning snow,
fence-wire,
harp?

Your Body Leaves, and I Rake

Zach Trebino

i raked
its body.

i was
molded
with eyes.

a horsefly
filled my
hole death,
thick and jagged
but irresistible.

south stubble.

feathers coruscated –

the garden,
the breast,

the breaths
howling.

Man Is a Territorial Motherfucker

Zach Trebino

to mark a corner, i pissed rocks so hard they
put holes in the dry wall.

i have this creeping jenni whose thighs –
like a surveyor's instrument – click, demarcating
the extent of what i own.

the gamble:

to police the edges of myself
and spray weed-b-gone on any of the approaching encroachment

or

to mask the intruders

or

to build some trellis and fertilize it
(could i redirect my piss?)
and water it when it doesn't rain
and welcome it as a new part of me.

Pear in Summer

Kathleen Kilcup

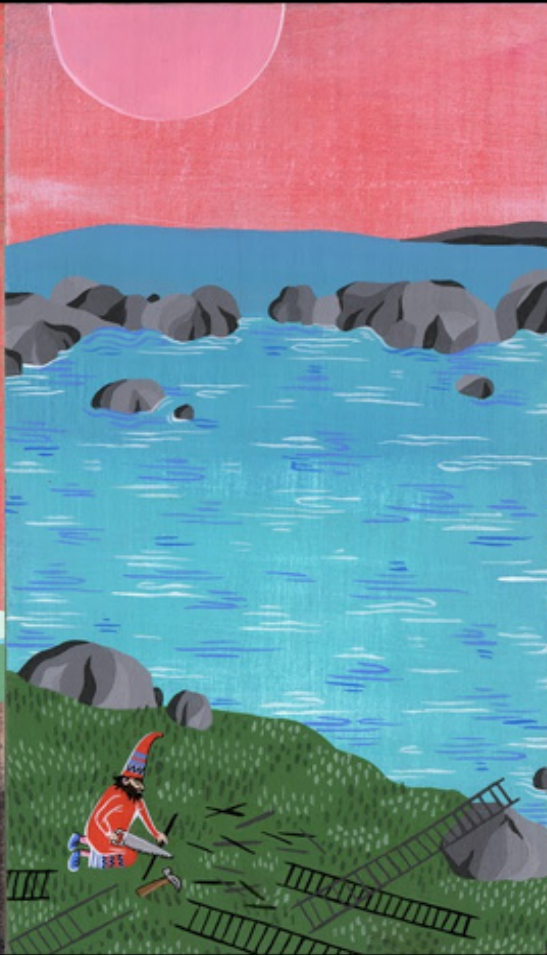
There may be a great range of human possibility,
or just the two movements of the eye and mouth
along the vertical axis.
Tongue up and down Jacob's toothed ladder. In defense of itself,
wet, busy.
If you slice a pear in half, you see the future. Self grows itself,
pale star climbing the night.

Dream Book

Shannon Sankey

My grandmother in her (bathtub
full of honey) nightgown shakes
a bag (singing baby) of yellow leaves
across her coverlet: her mother's
(smell of bourbon) spineless dream
book. It is morning.

She searches the soft pile of pages
for a phrase (tea with dead aunt),
bent over her twin bed (trapped
in washing machine) bare foot
(balsam fir in the attic). She finds
the one (her father, not her father)
and lifts the little ticket to her face.



from *Land*
Moriah L. Purdy

(Author's note: These poems are erasures of *A Land*, by archeologist/writer Jacquetta Hawkes.)

{7}

When I have a summer night
I like to go out and lie
in a square, so that to lie
is like exposing oneself.

The land
after the first season leaves
 tremendous
 sunless garden
 abandoned

it is impossible
to fork the earth there.

This hard ground
presses my flesh
against my bones.

In bed I can sleep,
here I can lie awake.

My eyes stray,
 or are netted
by silhouettes
 black lines misshapen
and stolid

{11-14}

Some forms in the unconscious strata
shed innumerable lives
forms of memory in crude fragment
on an invisible thread.

I should wait to use words
until images rustling through space
rise into sight
but I feel them
as secure under the
protective dome of intuition.
As for apparent material facts,
I hope we come to know many,
though

we have allowed them
to become our masters. Yes,
I lie aware of awe, in spite of
the body.

I must go to bed
before the Isle emerges
on the other side of night.

{15}

I was born into a world which
was not a plate but a sphere.
I was born to absorb some misquestioned
errors. I am there fell in it still.

I grew the simple lobe
with an outer skin—hot
and wholly centre. This
sly ally of the compass needle

primes the pass so fully to the north
and made physics form patterns

The core is surface
when the dross rises.

{28-29}

before

he was howling with genius

drawn between spiral shapes

and polished specimens in a drawer

she rose to pre-eminence and disappeared.

certain tender inhabitants

may cause trends

once they at last

develop a reasonable armor

some entombed apples preserved

the luster of every moment's burning

{38}

This gathering can be followed through
browsing the agonizing web
so at this moment of time I can feel
the crystalline virus and the minds of men.
I can feel all the particles of my own field,
this outline of an individual. I am a
community of countless units

{39}

a stream of projections—
pictures, poems, symphonies—
fossils of the psyche.

So we have become 'liked' or
desired as is our mode. A variety of waves
pass through a wall and the waves can
be received by other minds.

{40}

'Me' is a fiction and in many forms—
the temporary home that exists
before the living person. Civilization
must be a matrix

{41}

in place of the material
universe. Consciousness is
melting us all down together again.

{48}

What is certain is that the land rehearsed;
in the surface we have no memory.

{41}

I reconstruct the map to attempt to interpret
suffer crush, bend, break and violent heat.

The signs dim and worn by the passage of time,
begin to create that fierce green that seems to song

in the throats of the young beyond rock and water.
The open landscape was our present concentrated in leaves.

The only sounds came from thunder, and from wind
sweeping intervals convulsed by falling silence and stillness.

{67-68}

It is memoir but like so many scientific devices
only indulgence. The story of the lovely ancient stuff
was substitute for bird song. I was certain this wildness in cities
was a hunger that began to be conscious of too much light.

{144–145}

That

shadowy
shifting of ice
ragged

forms

modified or disappeared.

As men

carried with them change also
shape tools
evolving forms.

Contemporary pre-occupation

with technology
has led to making
distinguished from
evolution.

We are

poorly equipped
to see the purpose
in earlier activities.

It is creative

we know from the things made
rather than
fragments found in our soil.

{199}

ANY LANDMARK

appears not as a mark on a
continuous road, but a point
turning incalculably.



Andy Šlemenda's most recent project, *Blood of the Air*, is currently on view at the Galveston Artist Residency, alongside the work of Katie Vida.

Blood of the Air is a site-specific installation about the gulf island of Galveston, Texas. It draws from the Sufi allegory of an island, which conveys humanity's limited view of the world. Thus, *Blood of the Air* becomes an environment to dramatize perception, itself. At its base, a pink mirror, surrounded by sandbags becomes a makeshift landform, both containing us and transporting us, like a body. Above, a large, decouped weather balloon hovers overhead. It is transcendence personified, alluding to Jean Piccard's 1930's high-altitude experiments with large plastic balloons and the infamous Roswell scapegoat.



Blood of the Air, 2016

weather balloon, helium, rope, crêpe paper, tissue paper, adhesive, oil stick, marker, LED lights, bubble wrap, polypropylene bags, sand, tape, hula hoops, sea fans, monofilament, burnt bamboo fencing, pink acrylic mirror, horseshoe, and Blue Morpho butterfly, dimensions variable

The Hunger Games

Marcus Slease

Sometimes I have my body (rarely) and sometimes I have my spirit. I have my mind quite often. It goes and goes. I am trying to tie my body mind and spirit together.

The perfect package. They keep unraveling. I thought once I tied my mind body and spirit together I would be ready. I think there is no ready. Or there are different states of ready but no fully ready. One day (maybe it wasn't a day) I said OK. No more power hoovers. No more feather dusters. No more banana & jam sandwiches. No more wax machines. I travel in the middle of the night (to avoid the crowds). First a bus from the bus station with its dusty floors and roll over time table boards and pretzel carts. Then the ferry. On the smoking deck it is very windy. I have to pull up my hoody. A man in pinstripes covers his face with a hanky. Some of the passengers have steel toes. Others high heels. Some have made themselves into ancient Egyptians. I was putting the horse before the wagon. Now I am putting the wagon before the horse.

Black and White and Red All Over

Sharla Yates

The day Toni O'boyle died, we were ankle-deep in the Umpqua, watching small fish shoot through the murky water when we moved our toes.

The day Toni O'boyle screamed before jumping the curb, oil from her car oozing into a manhole, we were leaning toward our reflections in the water, searching for blemishes.

The day Toni O'boyle got high on meth and ran her white convertible into a cement pillar in front of Harvard Avenue Drugs—we were retelling a story about the skater boy at the mall who had caught us following him through Payless.

We remember feeling the cool, kitchen linoleum under our spread, bare feet. We remember savoring greasy fried potatoes dipped in sweet ketchup.

We were happy.

Earlier that year, Jenny and I were fifteen and had worked on convincing our parents to let us get our learners' permit. We sang along with the radio. We wore our hair long, but shaved underneath, dyed it brittle blond, then pink and black.

Earlier that year, I had found a short list for using laxatives as a means to lose weight in a Macy's dressing room. *Pros: you don't have to exercise or count calories. Con: sharts.* Jenny and I passed the note back and forth in class—a joke that we kept up all school year. We wondered about the type of person who wrote the list. How old? How fat?

That summer we made strawberry cobbler in a cast iron pan over a fire by the Umpqua. Jenny squeezed the lighter fluid can too hard and doused the strawberries. Each bite stung our noses with the vociferous aroma of gasoline.

From a bird's eye view, something was brewing.

The day Toni O'boyle died, I remember having to heave my dog off my lap to answer the phone. My mom was calling from work to say she'd driven by an accident.

“You remember Toni don't you? From school? Well, honey, she didn't make it. It was bad. Real bad.”

The moments after I hung up the phone, I tried to feel something significant.

Toni was as loud as she was pretty. We always thought of her as desperate for attention, but we wouldn't give it to her. We were as picky about friends as we were about what we would eat, and it wasn't often that we were moved by sympathy. We all attended the same Christian Junior High where Toni was a troublemaker. She often said things better kept to one's self. Once she told us how you could press against a man and feel

him grow. We exchanged glances. We said shut up. We held hands when we told on her.

A month before Toni's accident, Jenny and I had snuck out of our houses to drink Strawberry Boones on the Umpqua with some guys we met on the walking trail. I made out with Aaron from Albertson's grocery while Jenny stumbled toward the woods with his friend, Dan. When Aaron pushed my hand into his pants, I didn't know what to do except squeeze as hard as I could.

As Aaron and I waited for Jenny and Dan to return, we tripped through a conversation in which he admitted he had a crush on Toni O'boyle. He told me how she lived down his street and once had opened her front door wearing only a white towel. Her freckled cleavage, her tiny waist—he couldn't stop thinking about her. I wondered why Toni hadn't slept with Aaron yet.

She'd fastened herself to his imagination without having to give anything away.

After the day of the accident, we learned more about Toni than we wanted to know. We found ourselves paying attention to the details of her life, forcing them to line up, so that a horrific accident would be a logical ending. Toni's grandmother had raised her since she was four-years-old. That's when Toni's mother had died. Cancer maybe. We hoped it hadn't been a car accident. My father had said Toni's grandmother was too tired from grief, or too old, to tell her no. We thought that sounded about right. For Toni's sixteenth birthday her grandmother bought her modeling headshots and a white convertible. We imagined the convertible, its top down, and Toni clocking eighty-miles-an-hour. A red streak of hair. A kind of speed that can only be understood by smudges of color across a page. We heard Toni was still awake when the police arrived on the scene. A rumor too gruesome to be true, but then someone who knew confirmed it.

We were pleased to hear we could keep that detail in the story.

A black and white modeling headshot was used in Toni's obituary. In it, Toni wears a big hat with a rose pin. The flower is folding under its own weight. Nothing in the photo subdues the recklessness glinting in Toni's almond-shaped eyes. We had known so little about her. We tried to feel bad about that, but looking at Toni's photo, we couldn't feel much more than awe that someone we knew, someone our age, had died.

We wondered what it felt like to be strung and pinned with your lungs growing heavier with each breath until the heaviness became buoyancy. We were obsessed with the idea that right before—there must have been a moment when Toni no longer felt her body. Perhaps it all made symmetrical sense from the pillar to the road to the fence to the grass blades rippling in the wind, and below the humming of insects chewing, resetting the world. Imagining

it was like rising off
the ground
with nothing to hold onto.

Indigo Winter

Christopher Knodel

I awoke in a sphere three feet in diameter. I can only assume we all share a similar fate. I am suspended in what seems a clear gelatinous matrix. I swallow it; I breathe it in slowly, feeling the thick gel move through my nose and throat. For months I gagged and choked, until I slowed my intake and curbed the reflex. It provides my oxygen and nutritive sustenance.

I can not see behind me, but I have a hypothesis based on what I know of our physiology. My wastes are pumped, filtered or extracted out of my sphere. Otherwise, I would die of fouling. My environmental temperature is regulated and maintained. My vision is intact, but I can only see directly ahead. My head and body do not obey me; I simply stare through the jelly that surrounds my form. I feel, but lack the ability to direct my neurons. I have no needs, no cravings; only memories of what used to be.

I am so cold -painfully so.

My days are spent shaking in a sphere of dark, iridescent blue. My worth is measured in the ohms I generate shivering. I am a low-level battery, from within my spherical cell. A prison that binds me to a fetal position. A birth that will never be. I am tied to the frigid womb of a dead mother. Another inmate in this indigo winter. My eternal season.

Romance

S.F. Wright

In my early twenties, I tired of college and got a desk job at an office supply company. It was boring work, but the company gave health and dental coverage, which I'd lost upon dropping out of school. I didn't know how long I'd keep this job, as I planned on eventually returning to college. Additionally, there was constant talk about the company's going out of business.

One of the secretaries at the office supply company was a woman in her 40's named Nancy. She wasn't the most unattractive person in the world, but she had a grating personality.

Nancy's favorite topic of conversation was her singlehood. She'd constantly start off sentences with, "When you're a single woman like me. . ." or, "Because I'm not married. . ." The other women in the office tried to fix Nancy up on dates, but they never worked out.

Once I walked into the break room on my lunch hour while Nancy sat with Joyce Griffith and Victoria Page, the latter of which I had a crush on. Nancy was crying, and Joyce and Victoria were consoling her.

"I'm sorry, Nancy," Victoria said. "I'm sure he was a jerk anyway."

"There are plenty of guys out there," Joyce said. "You just haven't found the right one."

"I don't know," Nancy said; her voice cracked. "I just don't know." Another fit of tears overcame her.

Usually I ate my lunch in the break room, but that day I ate at my desk.

One day a new data entry clerk named Jeremy was hired. He was a small man with long wavy brown hair whose age was impossible to guess; he could've been anywhere from 26 to 42.

Jeremy was nice enough but very shy. He spoke so softly you often had to ask him to repeat what he said, and even then you had to lean in to hear him.

I never learned much about him. The few times I talked to him all I gleaned was that he lived with his mother who was very sick.

Nancy began dating Jeremy. Soon they became as inseparable as two love-stricken teenagers. They'd take their breaks at the same time and sit in the break room together, talking softly to one another, often holding hands.

It was very uncomfortable to be around.

This office romance went on for weeks. Rumors began to go around that Nancy was neglecting her job. I don't know about Jeremy. I guess he was doing his.

Then one Monday I came into work and sensed a tense atmosphere. Everyone was very quiet and sullen. I thought there were layoffs, or that the company was finally going under. When Victoria Page walked past my desk, I asked if she knew if anything was going on.

“You didn’t hear?” she said, quietly.

I shook my head and braced myself for the worst. “What?”

Victoria stepped close and said, in a solemn whisper, “Jeremy and Nancy broke up.”

I looked at her, my mouth agape; then I rolled my eyes in exasperation. “That’s what everyone’s so gloomy about?”

Victoria regarded me with reproach. “How can you be so insensitive?”

“I’m not being insensitive,” I said, more impassioned than I typically would be since this was Victoria and I was aware I was unintentionally lowering my esteem in her eyes by the second. “It’s just that I thought something bad had happened, like layoffs, or the company’s closing.”

“Nancy and Jeremy’s breaking up isn’t bad?” She glowered at me, her hands on her hips.

“No,” I stammered. “I mean, yes. It’s just—”

But Victoria walked away, and any chance I might’ve had with her, I felt, went with her.

Later on, I walked past Jeremy’s desk. He was typing on his computer and appeared fine. Then I passed by Nancy. Her eyes were red, and she looked like she’d been crying all day.

I had much work to do, though, and put them out of my mind. But around three o’clock Nancy started shouting.

“I hate you! I hate you!”

I stood up, as did the rest of the office, and saw Nancy standing at Jeremy’s desk, screaming at him.

“I hate you! I hate you!”

Jeremy didn’t look up. But he wasn’t typing either. He just stared at his computer, as though waiting for this ordeal to be over.

Nick Shire, our office manager, gently touched Nancy’s arm. “Nancy,” he said. “Why don’t you calm down?”

“I hate you!” Nancy shouted again at Jeremy, ignoring Nick.

Then, crying hysterically, she ran out of the office.

The following day Jeremy came to work but Nancy didn’t. She wasn’t in the day after that either, or the following one. Eventually it was understood that she’d quit.

It was funny, I always thought, her quitting over that. But maybe she'd been looking to quit for a while. Maybe she'd been getting tired of the place all along.

Jeremy stayed on. He kept typing away, the same quiet guy as always. But a few months later he quit as well. His mother died, and he moved to Florida to live with his sister.

I never saw him or Nancy again.

I'd end up being at the office supply company another year before I finally quit myself and reenrolled in college. And right after I left, I did something bold—or stupid. One night, after having a few too many vodka and tonics, I called Victoria Page (I'd gotten her number from human resources before I left) and declared my love for her and asked her out on a date—I'm not sure in what order. She was silent for a moment and then told me never to call her again and hung up.

Victoria became, like Jeremy and Nancy, one more person I never saw again.

As for the office supply company, it finally declared bankruptcy and closed down a couple of years later while I was in my last semester of college.



CONTRIBUTORS

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Zach Trebino populates the world with absurdly grotesque performances, plays, and texts. He is the runoff from the apogee of nothingness, the outcome of a surrealist's wet dream, a coded message sent to you from your pre-conscious brain telling you to "WAKE UP!" For more of his work: www.zachtrebino.com

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