

Issue
0.5

APRIL 2024
MINI-ISSUE



*what's the dissonance
ringing in your ears?*

CHROMATIC SCARS REVIEW PRESENTS

DISSONANCE



Dedicated to all those who made CSR possible,
whether it be through continuous support, sharing
their work with us, or tirelessly editing and helping this
issue come to fruition

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Issue 0.5: Dissonance was our April Mini-Issue. In honor of April being Stress Awareness Month, we at the Chromatic Scars Review decided to create a collection of works that reflect the turmoil in our lives, be it through poetry, fiction, drawings, or photography.

We received an overwhelming amount of submissions, and unfortunately, not all of them made it into this final issue.

However, what you are about to dive into is a hodgepodge of perspectives from creatives of all ages around. What is the dissonance in your life that rings in your ears? What experiences are just “dissonant” to you?

We hope that in reading this issue, you come to recognize that you are not alone in any struggle you may have --- we at the Chromatic Scars Review and our contributors would like to extend our support and share our stories, and encourage you to embrace your lived experiences.

So, thanks for choosing to give *Dissonance* and the human condition a chance, and happy reading!

Yours truly,

Katherine Zhao
可

Se Videt in Speculo

by A. Deshmane

previously featured in the White Rose Muses

TW: Dysphoria, self-harm

Sometimes she thought that maybe she was not like Lucy. That she was different. They were the same in the eyes of Mama, most of the time. Wrapped in Mama's arms that smelled of soap and talcum, nothing mattered. And they were the same in the mirror in the upstairs bathroom. It surprised her to see herself staring back, eyes wide, palms pressed up against the glass. Sometimes she thought that the mirror was broken, but there were no cracks in it, and Mama looked at her strange when she said that the face looking back couldn't be hers.

Her face always puzzled her, too. Sometimes when she was feeling bad she even whispered that she hated it, and her hair, and the dresses Mama swore she looked so pretty in, too. She only said things like that at night, when Lucy was asleep and no one else could hear her. That made her feel good, and evil too. But then she would realize that no one was listening, and she would feel bad all over again. Being evil, she found out, was only fun when you had someone to do it with.

And it was Lucy's face, too. That was the only thing that stopped her totally hating it. Lucy was the one they all bent down to nod at when she and Lucy and Mama went out. Maybe Mama'd told them things, or maybe it was the scowl on her face when they looked at Lucy and didn't hear her say 'nice to meet you' right when Lucy did. She didn't care, really, if Lucy felt good. She wasn't even scowling at them. It was the powder and the ribbons and the dress she'd have on that made her feel so, so wrong.

Sometimes she wanted to scratch at her skin until she didn't even look like a girl anymore. But she thought that that would probably hurt, so she never tried to see if it would work or not.

Once she tried telling Mama about her face and the ribbons that were all so wrong, but Mama scowled right back at her, confused, not angry, really, until she felt so, so bad and cried. Mama didn't look up over dinner that night, and neither did she. They ate their chicken in silence.

The next time she and Lucy and Mama went out, she tried not to scowl when her dress bunched up or the powder got sticky on her hands. She didn't say 'nice to meet you' anymore, because if they pinched her cheeks and said 'what a nice young lady' like they did sometimes to Lucy, she thought she would die. She knew that something inside her would shrivel up and she would melt in a puddle of whatever it was that she was and just die. She knew that Lucy was a girl, and she hated that Lucy was so sure and didn't have to wonder sometimes. Because when she was wondering and whispering when no one was listening about her not-right face and wanting to rip at her hair like Mama ripped open envelopes, that was what scared her the most. That she was different from Lucy, because if she wasn't Lucy's twin sister, one and the same, then who even was she anymore?

‘I’m not a girl, Mama,’ she said, smiling sleepily. Her nose found the soft hem of Mama’s coat and nuzzled, and she felt so, so right. The walk home after that was quiet again, and when she was lying next to Lucy in the bed upstairs at home, she thought she maybe shouldn’t have said that, even though Mama made her feel good just then.

She walked to the bathroom, eyes down so she wouldn’t see her face in the mirror. Mama was sitting on the toilet with the lid down, shaving off leg hair she couldn’t even see. Mama called shaving ‘womanly maintenance’, which were words that she pretended to not know once, just to make Lucy laugh. She always felt really good when Lucy laughed at something she said. Mama told her to go back to bed in a voice that made her feel bad in a different way, so she did. But she tried her hardest not to go to sleep until she heard the click of the bathroom light and the sounds of Mama going down the stairs.

With a click, she turned the light in the bathroom back on. She opened up the cupboard under the vanity. She sifted past the ribbons that she and Lucy had worn earlier that night, and Mama’s earrings that were too big for her or Lucy’s ears, and even the cotton balls and extra boxes of powder that Mama had, for when the box that was open right now ran out.

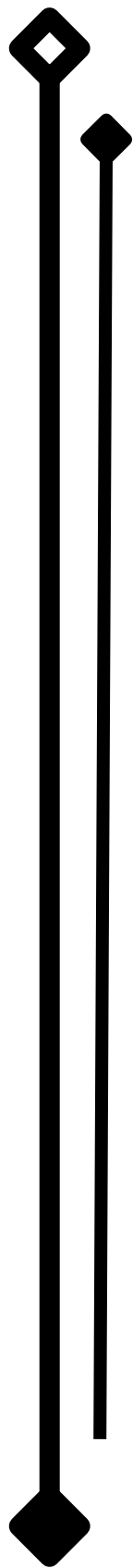
She held Mama’s razor up in the dim light of the bathroom. The glint of the slanting blades made her feel good, and evil in a new way. In the mirror, she saw her face that was just the same as Lucy’s, and the smudge of powder that was still on the edge of her cheek. She pressed her hands up against the mirror that wasn’t broken, and took a long hard look at the face that never wore the fact that she was a girl very well. Like the shoes that Mama had returned to the shop, it simply didn’t fit.

She looked at the face that never felt right and the razor that might make it better. She sliced.



Split End(s)

by Shun Go



Epilogue

Jezabel Castillo

If hymns exist
why won't it caress
the autopsy in my
swollen chest?

I have been drunk
on an avalanche
that has rescinded
my dreams prescription.

My burgundy
hands kiss my
palms begging
for prophecies
gone vacant.

How can one
bandage a prayer?

All I muse on
is the debt of
my epitaph.

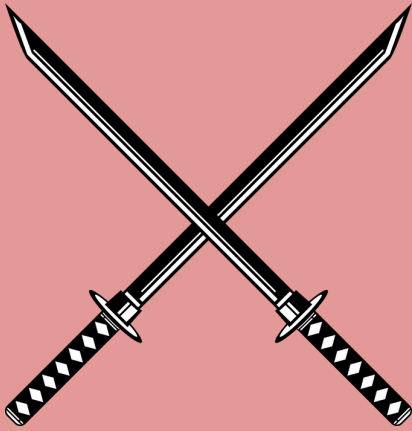
The only poem
my ink stained
hands choke on
is the rains epilogue.



DIE WITH HONOR

Elizabeth M.M.L. Ku

TW: Death, honor killings



She was fourteen, he was thirty-five
when her parents demanded matrimony
Honor through death; she gasped for breath
as her honor shattered like her heart
She fled, but the men in black returned her
ignoring her cries and her father's red eyes
It was the last color she saw in her sleep: red
as her honorable father sliced off her head

He was madly in love: they were mad in faith
They diagnosed his love as a mental illness
Dishonorable discharge; he left the army unscathed
though tainted his family's name with his sickness
Deserting your brothers in arms is shameful
Deserting your brothers in blood is dishonorable
He escaped with his disorder; an asylum across the borders
never welcomed him as he never turned the corner

A monster (her brother) marked her virginity
Her father's name marked her as his property
A slave held hostage under family honor, but
a pixelated screen was her ticket to freedom
The chains of customs fell off her feet when she
showed her life on digital displays for fans to see
Strangers became her family, more than her own
She lost her battle for life but didn't die alone

Stop these ceremonial marriages in the womb
between sons and daughters and fathers
His honor weighs on their shoulders
like his name weighing on their tombs
They were tethered since birth
Until death do they part
They exist on this Earth
without a beat in their heart
as their lives are not their own; it's his
Their hearts don't beat for themselves
It beats for him until he beats them
until no heartbeat is left

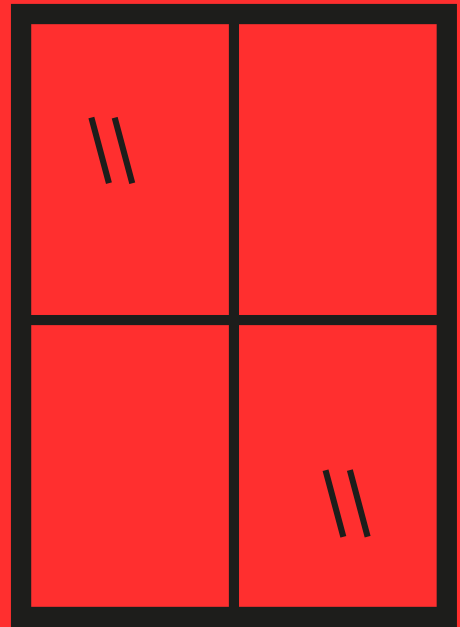
windows not doors

by E.P. Hughes

it snaps like a tendon popping out of place
this is a full tear.
aided by a blade gleaming and sharp
academic weapon, polished into silver lead mirrors-
the fogged glass worth battleships
tarnished
reflections brushed clear only in a spray of glass shards.
that is
no mirror
but a window.

window frame, really, no self is left reflected
not even in nostalgic whispers.
hand outstretched, wind crawls between your fingers, delicately thrust beyond the window's empty cage
the room spins, a barrel full of snakes and oil,
you are tumbling around and around the room- the prison not made for your sloping edges,
poignant pointed corners brutalising soft skin -
Which blooms fantastically - in distant dis-harmonies -
into a riot of colour, like soft bruised flower petals.
the room finally stops, leaving you in an angular once-corner,
now the floor.
cracked ribs seize in their grasping for air, which seeps out of you,
and into the stoic new grounds.

on the ceiling - you see, like god's own light,
the window.
the view pastoral, and the colours vivid and smooth, cloudless summer skies.
but you cannot rise
phantom slithering wind on your fingertips tempts, with soft whispering harmonies,
yet you are paralysed.
your throat is sealed, and your damp mouth,
can only produce a low,
discordant,
croak.



Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Who's the Fairest of Them All?

Misha Gujja



previously published in the Mosaic Lit Journal

bullied out of femininity

nyx salasina

“Kikay”, is a word they use to describe a girl or woman interested in beauty products and fashion. I was very much a kikay when I was younger, it was a label that I wore proudly. Charm bracelets, colorful necklaces, heart glasses, and sparkly dresses. Don’t forget my favorite Barbie boots to complete my ensemble with flair.

I remember being told to brush my hair every day because it was “buhaghag” or frizzy, but in reality, it was just curly and nobody in my family knew how to care for it. In a family adorned with sleek, straight locks, my natural curls stood out, often misunderstood and mishandled.

Despite that, I still loved my hair. I reveled in experimenting with braids and pigtails, snapped into place by two hairbands with pretty flower or heart charms. After that, I put on a playful headband for good measure.

But as I grew, so did the challenges. It wasn’t until I was in— perhaps second grade? Well, that was when a few people started to pull on my pigtails, literally. People always laughed at my style for being childish or always overdressed, too many accessories, too colorful. The innocent teasing escalated into a barrage of mockery, condemning my youthful exuberance as childish and excessive. I never got complimented, just laughed at.

Of course, those experiences eroded my confidence and self-esteem, leading me to suppress my femininity in a bid to conform. So I removed my accessories and started to put my hair in a nice and clean bun (which doesn’t really compliment my face shape mind you).

Pink became a symbol of disdain, and my own identity became tangled in a web of internalized misogyny. In a desperate attempt to belong, I distanced myself from my gender, seeking solace in the realm of masculinity, only to find myself alienated and adrift.

It was a short but impactful period in my life that remained clear in my memories. Disgusted with femininity but still wanting to fit in, I tried masculinity as my “in” to get along with other people. Girls or boys, doesn’t matter if I’m alone, I just wanted friends. I cannot relate to girls my age because I sneer at their likes and aesthetics. I cannot relate to boys because I don’t really like what they like.

What a quagmire, what a messed up situation for a kid to experience.

Oh and my hair, underappreciated, ignored, neglected, and damaged. Silly young Nicole, thinking that if she brushed it enough it would become straight like her cousins. Silly me, being envious of other people with beautifully cared-for curls. Envious because they know how to take care of it, using cream curls and gels while I was just there staring with my fucking collection of hairbrushes and combs.

Lonely and disillusioned, I languished in self-hatred, neglecting not only my appearance but also my sense of self. My curls, once a source of pride, became a burden, overlooked and unloved amidst a sea of envy and ignorance.

I never learned to embrace anything. I was always inside my chrysalis molded from insecurities, disappointment, and shame. I did not have the courage to break free. I don't even like thinking of my hair to the point that I hardly get it cut. I can count the times that I went for a haircut with my hands.

Then the pandemic hit.

What a horrible time, we're living through history. Numerous deaths, numerous changes. It was no doubt a frightening time for all.

But for little Nicole sitting inside her room? It was a good time to utilize opportunities and for liberation to take place. It was a great time to break free because no one was watching. And if no one's watching, no one will make fun of her.

Sequestered in solitude, free from the judgment of others, I went on a journey of rediscovery. With each brushstroke of makeup and twist of a curl, I reclaimed my confidence, shedding the shackles of misogyny and embracing the kaleidoscope of my existence.

Rediscovering identity and discarding misogyny. This is what my girlhood is.

In this newfound freedom, I found harmony in the convergence of my masculine and feminine energies. It does not dictate my womanhood. No longer confined by societal expectations, I stand tall as a testament to the fluidity of womanhood, empowered by the realization that my worth transcends gender norms.

his transformation was not instantaneous; it was a gradual unfolding, marked by moments of introspection and self-acceptance. Through the labyrinth of my past struggles, I emerged as a beacon of resilience, challenging the rigid constructs of gender and beauty.

Today, as I reflect upon my journey, I recognize the beauty in diversity, both within myself and the world around me. My curls, once scorned, are now celebrated as a testament to my uniqueness. And while I still cherish the memories of my kikay days, I embrace them with a newfound sense of confidence and authenticity.

So, here's to the girl who dared to defy expectations, to the woman who reclaimed her power, and to the journey that continues to unfold with each passing day. This is a testament to the power of self-love and acceptance.



pearl

for the savior who was really the demon

sweet angel,
she's so delicate,
so perfect, so angelic

not like a diamond
or an ounce of gold
or even the finest silver
that money can buy.
she's more like
a pearl.

she's valuable.
she costs a pretty penny, a price most don't want to
bother paying.
i try to purchase her with my heart
but she says my soul will suffice.

so that's what she does
she takes my soul, singing away,
singing, THE PRICE HAS BEEN PAID!

the sweet angel,
pearl,
has taken me away
to another place

with the promise of,
a new life.

M.S. Blues

TW: Mentions of drug addiction

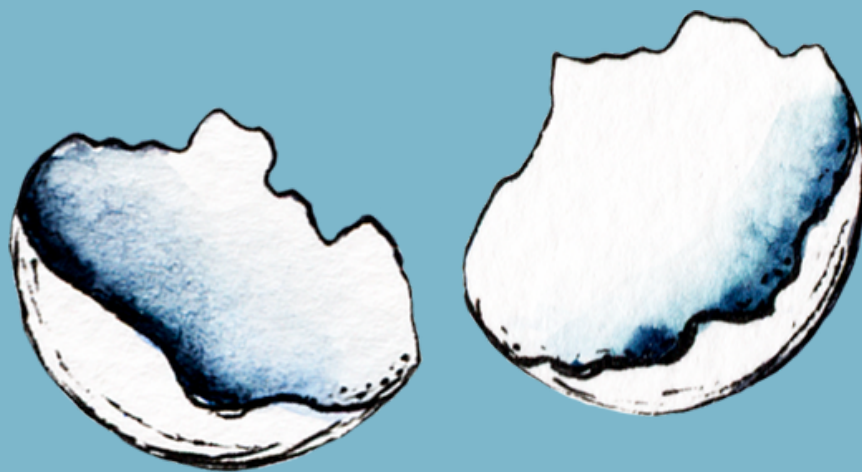


Eggshells

TW: Implications of eating disorders

by Aliya Rensch

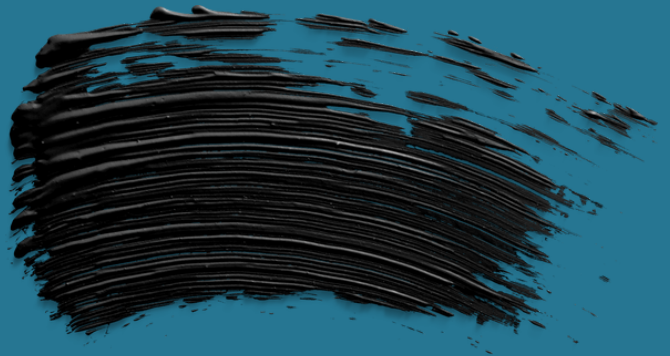
Your mom will look down at you,
With a straight face or a frown,
And tell you, “I need to lose some weight.”
Or tell you, “I look fat today.”
She won’t eat until your father forces her to.
When she does she complains it’s unhealthy –
“Too much,” she’ll say,
“Too little.” he’ll say.
You constantly walk on eggshells,
Tread over the kitchen carefully,
And choose your words wisely,
Or else the eggs will fall,
And that’s not useful.
You want to be useful,
Don’t you?



Linoleum Sadness

Voxie Foxglove

I've always hated school bathrooms.
Filthy stalls with sharpie smeared down the walls.
The marker looks the same as the makeup running down my face.
The clouds of flavored cancer wafting through the stalls just make me sicker.
Still not sick enough though.
It isn't really bad enough to warrant going to the counselor right?
I don't care.
I don't want to rise from my tiled grave to talk about my problems.
I just sit.
As the tears soak into my face and my sorrow seeps into white walls.
Do I see myself in that linoleum?
In the scribbled insults that litter the tiles?
No.. not yet.
So I sit in my blue lit prison.
I hug myself tight and remember all the times I've been here before.
The stall in the back corner where the lights don't work.
Sitting on the floor sobbing quietly while people gossip just outside the door.
Wishing to go home and still not wanting to leave.
I don't want to leave.
I don't deserve to.
My friends don't care enough to notice no matter how much worse I make myself.
I did this to myself and they never even tried to stop me.
If this is love then I don't want it.
I'd rather waste away on dirty floors.
I've always hated school bathrooms.



TWO POEMS BY KATE ABRIELLE MCCORMICK

Their Twisted Feminism

self-published in "To Suffer Softly"

Twist the ring around your finger
Diamonds shining in the spotlight of the sun
As you smile to your neighbors
But laugh to yourself
Why did he love you
When all he wanted to do
was screw

Twist the veil around your head
White shining in the spotlight of the sun
As you smile to your fiancé
But laugh to yourself
Why did you love him

As he made your bigger dreams dim

Twist the child around your body
Eyes shining innocently in the spotlight of the sun
As you smile to your child
But laugh to yourself
Why did you let this happen
As your happiness began to blacken

Marry me
With a ring so sweet
Take my poor virginity
Never frown and never grumble
Don't forget not to mumble
Whisper gently, whisper sweet
And remember when we did meet
Pop out kids
One, two, three
Do not worry, just agree
The woe of women doesn't matter
Cut the talk, cut the chatter
Diamonds buy the beauty mine
But when we wish for more, no time
Waste my life, waste my body
Whip me until I'm melancholy
Test me, cheat me, sometimes beat me

Because I am nothing without you



TW: Anxiety attack, suggestion of sex,
postpartum depression, virginity,
referenced abuse

On The Inside

self-published in "Daydream"

Golden eyes stare at the mass of people
Surrounding my frozen body
Hands wrapping my heart tightly with chains
Soaked in black ice
Poison soaking into my skin as I force a smile
Turning my lips as I bite back through the pain
My mind was torn
Ripped by hands innocent to the death of the world
Yet, all they saw was pristine skin
Healthy as words tumbled forth from quiet lips
Every laugh was a gunshot
Aimed at my stomach
Every screamed word, a knife
Entering my ears
A pool of invisible crimson filling their cups
As they drank blindly
I couldn't scream
I couldn't move
Social Anxiety

A craving to bleed my fiery regrets masters me

by *Kate Langlade*

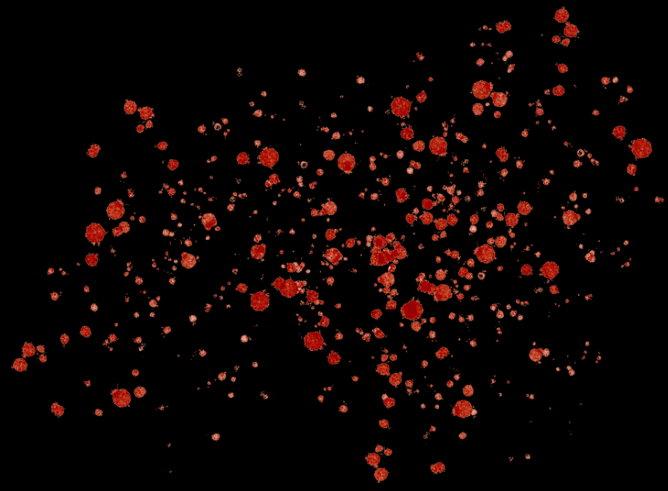
TW: Self-harm, cutting, blood

A craving to bleed my fiery regrets masters me
An urge acute, and sincere; it triumphs
Do the depths of my mind sanction it?
Oh, how tricky and thorny of an act
From the triggers inflaming my skeleton's
Autonomy; made temple, inside of which we worship
Crimson blood, as this temple's God

The urge crippling my cerebrum, lingers
In repetitiveness comes a honed tool
Grasping it in my fist, my skeleton or I
Whilst my hand had yet to be a fist; was unlatched
Aren't we one? my illness says yes
My regrets; bedevilling; chorus: yes yes yes!
Cut deep dearest; they are trying to bewitch

As I see the worshiped crimson blood
Enchanted I undeniably am; a regret
And a shame stored visibly, however
Tardy, the enchantment has to last
Already begun, might as well be done
A sharp tool cuts into my flesh; by and by
Thoughts of remorse turn to shame, once again, since
When are moments in which sanguine emotions
Are being fostered, and cultivated; convincing ones;
Spent with oneself, in solitude; not praised?

Such is one mind's trouble to rationalize
To be logical in bearing all its lonely black & white
Ushering one to choose the red; mine's crimson.



FOUR PHOTOS BY JINNAH MAHMOOD



“Intrusive Thoughts Personified”

“ —
|



“Alone in a Crowd”



“Portrait of Heartbreak”



“Walls of Solitude”

— “ ”

A forgotten prayer from the mouth of a misremembered God.

– *by Avi*

(TW: Family Trauma, blood)

The sky is on fire
And I am still afraid of my dreams,
How the labyrinths of my demented mind,
conjured a universe where my being doesn't stiffen at the mere spelling of your name,
and the bed isn't empty,
where the sky is painted in pastels,
And I can still wake up with things to tell you.

Reality slips through my façade,
renders me incapable of moving as my lungs cease to breathe,
unaware of expectations around my throat disguised as slender hands.
I can still hear the voices
that echo,
this harmony in uproar.

Her blue lips seem to lift at the corners,
the wind stills,
“What is life, the purpose of it,
If it doesn't haunt you a little?”

I couldn't tell you much about being haunted,
But this wrecked being still echoes of the sacrifices
that spelt of a broken ribcage,
of bruised knees, repent that tasted like home,

of fingers that ached
from praying too much.

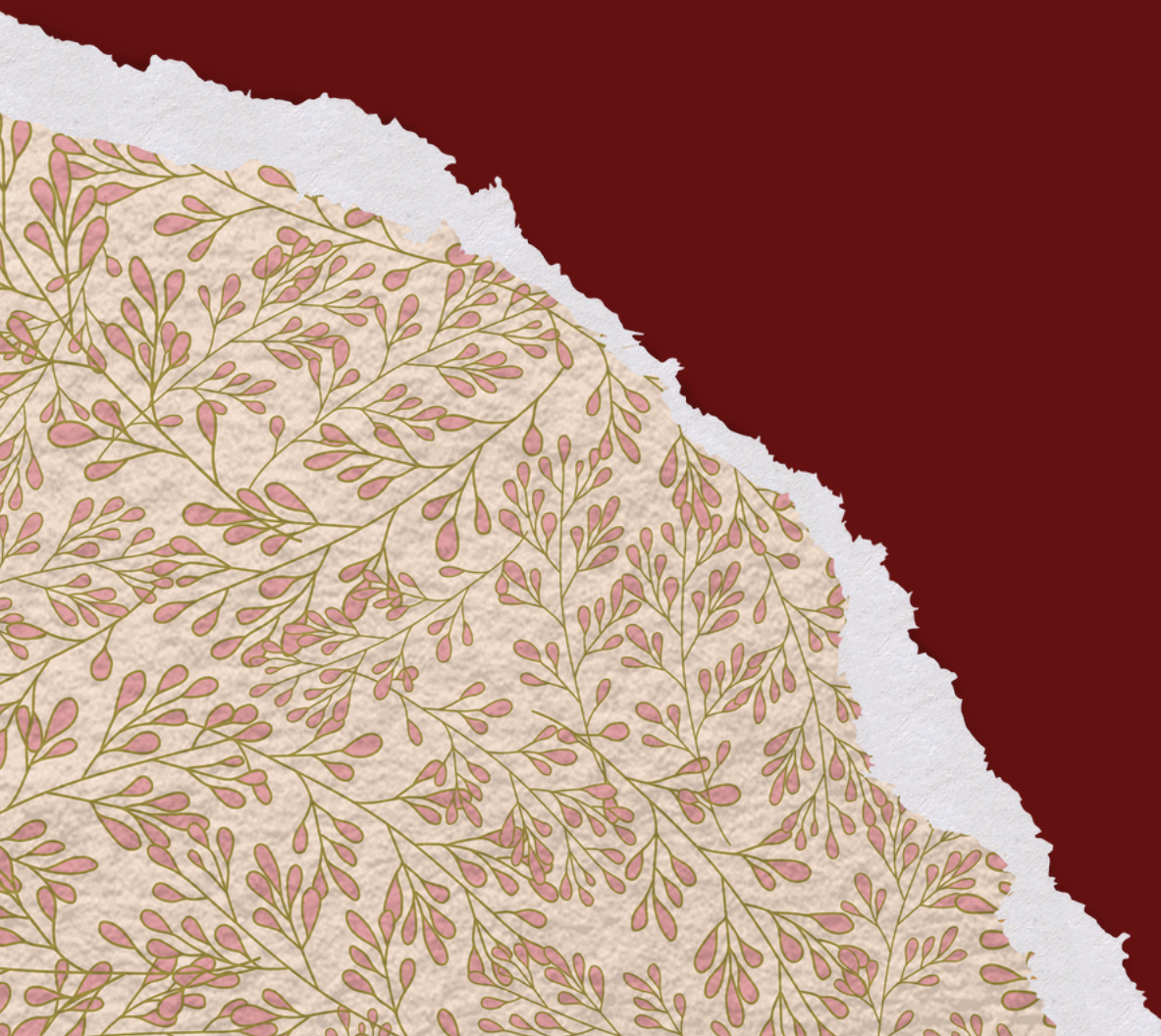
Yet my god refuses to love me,
Roars in laughter as I lie on the cold ground, says;
“A starving dog used to the taste of blood on his teeth,
doesn't know how tell apart kindness from hatred.”

Spilled stardust is woven into my veins, tied to constellations that are falling dead from the sky,
Of bonds that no longer thrive in shades of humane, but ashes of what we used to be.

Mother, you have always,
detested the blood I spilled,
flinching at how the wound would overflow with it,
uncaring of the fire that died out within me at the winter on your lips.

You sacrificed your innocence at the cracked alter,
The gods do not care about your tears, only the blood you could spill,
No wonder you are your father's favourite daughter,
a menace ready to spill blood,
a devotee unknowing that it'll be never enough.

Is it my fault—
How the burnt of love turned me into a God,
And my lover forgot the verses to my own prayer,
rendering me one of those of the forgotten?



gluttonous

by Agnes McCallum



TW: Eating Disorders

There is a lady on the train and she is watching me. She has red hair that curls towards her neck just before her shoulders. She is older. Her skin looks thick and leathery, but still soft to touch. Her nose points down and so does her mouth.

Her eyes are dark, but I can still see the light reflected in them.

This lady is watching me now. I shrug it off, yet even when she is looking out the window I sense her eye is searching for me in the reflection. I only feel this way because I know I am scared of being watched.

My breakfast trembles in my hand. Or is my hand trembling? It is hard to tell these days. I inspect the muffin and break it into two pieces, picking out some of the nuts to avoid eating them. I do not like peanuts, and yet my mum keeps putting them into the muffins she bakes.

I wonder if someone will ever confront me about eating. I hate eating. I hate doing it in public. I feel their eyes. I feel that I am taking up too much space and I wish I could press myself into the wall or the back of the chair or the floor or any solid object really and let myself be swallowed up.

Being eaten to death would probably be a bad way to go, but perhaps living in a whale's stomach would provide some space to contemplate. As if I don't do enough of that already.

I hate this lady. I hate this lady in red, with red hair and brown eyes and a judging face. I hate her because she is not judging me and I hate her because I am projecting onto her, based on her physical appearance, as an attempt to justify the sensation of my own judgement against myself.

I need to eat this muffin. I do and I feel all of these men, all of these women, and everyone else, glance at me, one by one, as the minutes go along. I take my headphones out of my ears one at a time, so as not to interrupt the music, or let them fall into my lap, to see if my chewing is too loud. I look into the dark of my phone screen, not the camera, to see if I have food on my face, or if I am chewing weirdly. I check my lower half, and my scarf to see and subsequently brush the crumbs that have gathered towards the train floor. I cringe at the sight of every single one.

When the muffin is finished, I fold the brown paper bag as neatly as possible, feeling the chunks of nut I have discarded disturb the flatness I am trying to install on the object. I sit there frozen for a few seconds, back hunched over more than usual, arms heavy at my sides. I begin to feel fear at the prospect of having to open my mouth again. Of what will come out, of what else may go in.

Instead of dwelling on these thoughts I shift them to the side, acknowledging them without paying them the slightest concern as to disturb my movements in an unhelpful way. Method to the madness, isn't that what they say?

Then, I open my backpack, glancing back at the lady in red who is still not looking in my direction, yet every part of her seems to urge me to continue as intended. I place the folded up paper bag inside my lunchbox, and pull out my book and shut my bag. I place the book in my lap carefully examining for any remaining traces of food. When none appear to me, I drink from my water bottle, taking care to not let any backwash make its way into the contents and instead swirl the water around in my mouth: enough to make sure there is nothing noticeable stuck in my teeth but not enough to become disgusting and disturbing.

When this is all done, I sit back and allow myself to relax. My body does not cooperate. The woman gets off the train, but the devil does not. He sees the sin like I do, and smiles.

When I get off the train, and get on the tram, ride it for a while, then get off and walk to the school, I go directly to the bathroom on the top floor near the science rooms. It is early, and the automatic lights are off when I enter. They take their time to turn on. When I am sure no-one else is coming, I take off my bag and my blazer and my scarf in the third to the right stall, tie my hair, check that the door is locked, and get down on my knees.

The devil and God hear my prayer, and the lady in red steps on my feet to help me in my task.

When I have finished, I pick up my objects, get a piece of cucumber out of my bag, and leave the bathroom stall.

The devil/lady in red follows. God remains.

“Health and Safety”

by Claudia Wysocky

There have been plenty of times when I had to fight for my life.
Sometimes it was for my "health and safety",
sometimes for happiness.

I fought for what I could not bear to lose,
but I lost all the same. I can still recall the taste of all
those defeats, as bitter as unripe plums.

I remember the time that I thought I would die of thirst.

I wasn't even sure what dying meant, but I was so, so thirsty.
I remember the blood that ran down my wrist,
like the blood that runs down the wrist
of a girl who has cut herself with a razor blade
and stares at her own reflection in the mirror.

Perhaps that is why I am as I am:

I have seen my death; I have seen it, and it was nothing.



Observing by Tia Esheraba Harford

I stand in the same place, still
As the earth turns under my feet
Past me goes a grassy hill
And then a busy street
There's people laughing, smiling, being
All I can do is stare
It looks so nice, and maybe, freeing
To feel, caress, to care

I phase through the walls of a home
That could never be my own
Though through here many people roam
I remain, still, alone
To my staunch displeasure
I leave no damage, nor a wake
No mark, no dent, no signature
No difference I could make

The sun and moon repaint the sky
With elegance and ease
Each time another day goes by
Still, I whisper the same pleas
I'll never create those lovely hues
That dream I have surrendered
The only thing I ask of you
Is that I am remembered

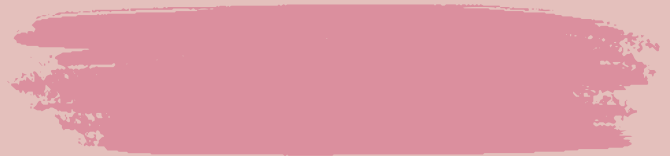
Yet I'll still claw my nails into the ground
I've bitten them too far
It'll barely disrupt the dirt around
I'm much too weak to scar it, but still
I'll scream, I'll shriek, I'll weep, I'll wail
please take me with you
i'm still here
please don't let me disappear
if the earth will spin please let me too, i want to stay with the rest of you,

i'm tired of observing

i want to live

and paint a picture like the sky
and scratch my name into a door
and sleep in a house or maybe a home
and get lost on a busy street
and smile and laugh and be anyway
and feel the grass on the hill
but

I stand here in the same place, still



My Sanctuary

by Elizabeth Maxwell

How strange it is to flip between your emotions and state of mind so irrationally. Only this morning did I wake to the thundering of my heart, pounding so violently it seemed to forget what it beats for. Yet now, with the breeze through my hair and the sun warming my skin through the misshapen gaps in the trees leaves, I feel entirely at peace. It is as though this little sanctuary, right on the edge of the city I've long despised, envelops me from the pits of my own mind. Here, my jaw no longer clenches, and my eyebrows are released from a constant furrow. It is as if the air itself carries the antidote to the stockpile of cortisol my body refuses to stop producing.

But being here, amongst the picturesque trees and soothing bird songs, is bittersweet. For I know I must leave. I must return to my troubles, because there is no antidote for me. No solution to the speed in which time moves on. But perhaps one day, when all my battles are won, I will plant my roots into a ground where no worries are to be found. Where I can sway as effortlessly as these trees do. But until that day comes, I must leave. I will visit. Visit when I need time to stop. To experience a taste of the peace I long to devour.



Lapdog



Ray Oliver

Thank you to our contributors!

Prose

Agnes McCallum - Agnes McCallum is a young writer from Melbourne, whose work has been included in school publications. She is the founder of her school's newspaper. When she's not writing, you can find her screaming Taylor Swift songs or at the library.

A. Deshmane - A. Deshmane (they/them) is a queer poet from scorching Arizona. Their other work has been published by or is forthcoming in Stone of Madness Press, en*gendered lit, Catheartic Magazine, and Corporeal lit. In their spare time, they can be found wandering the desert on local hikes or wishing they owned a cat. Find them @aar.deshm on Instagram

Elizabeth Maxwell - Elizabeth Maxwell is a student from Australia. Having recently discovering her love for writing, she uses it as a way to cope with the pressures of life. When she isn't daydreaming about the future, Elizabeth will have her nose buried deep inside a book and the writing of those who came before her.

Nyx Salasina - Nyx Salasina is a seventeen-year-old student from the Philippines. She mostly writes as a hobby and uses it as a creative outlet. She does not have any published works because she is too insecure to try. Until today when she thought, why not? She adores every form of art so she dabbles in traditional arts, photography, jewelry making, etc.

Poetry

Tia Esheraba Harford - Tia Esheraba Harford is a poet based in London. This is her first foray into publishing her poetry, so keep an eye out for their work in the future. As well as writing, they also have a passion for musical theatre and dance, as well as some pretty sick tetris skills.

Voxie Foxglove - Voxie Foxglove is a multi-media artist from Utah. They are highly introspective and have been writing poetry for nearly four years. When they're not making something they can often be found pouring over lyrics to a new song they've discovered or obsessively checking forums for new Monster High leaks.

Aliya Rensch - Aliya Rensch is currently attending to an arts high school for writing called Perpich. They are constantly listening to Eliza McLamb, and they hope to major in creative writing.

Ella (E.P.) Hughes - Ella Hughes is a Greek, Chinese-Malay, and American poet and student from the SF bay area. Her work has been published repeatedly on Matcha House Writers, and recently won a Gold Key Award from Scholastic and a Create Youth Poetry Award. When she's not working on school, poetry, or DEI work, you can find them reading James Baldwin's compiled works on loop, visiting the SF MoMA, or catching up on sleep.

Kate Langlade - Kate Langlade is a teen writer who is currently working on her first literary fiction novel. She also writes poetry on the side, and her dream is to be published and be able to live off of her art. When she's not writing, you can find her discovering new music or drawing.

Avi - Avilasha, who rather goes by Avi, is a teen writer from India. Housing an urge to read works filled with agony and find meaning in the unloved, you'd find her mostly listening to sensual rnb music, or smiling at Kafka's dry humour and reading Dostoevsky at 5am.

Elizabeth M.M.L. Ku - Elizabeth M.M.L. Ku is a songwriter, poet, and creative fiction author working on obtaining a Bachelor's in Mechanical Engineering and a Minor in Creative Writing. The Nevada native has earned accolades from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, L. Ron Hubbard's WOTF, Little Infinite, the Letters to Home Collection, Sonderful Writings, and more. Currently, she is the Head of Marketing for Peiskos Literary Magazine, a Poetry Judge for TLHC, and a member of her university's off-road racing team.

Jezabel Castillo - Jezabel Castillo is a Poet from New York who's been writing poetry for years. Her work explores emotional poetic themes to help readers find a sense of belonging. Her poetry has appeared in EWR Every Day Poems, Mosaic Lit Journal, AuVert Magazine, Apothecary Journal, The Imperfect Zine Magazine, Tiny Wren Lit, Bottled Dreams Literary Magazine, the Zinnia Anthology, Turtle Way Journal, Dusk Magazine, Same Faces Collective and Evanescent Magazine. You can find her work on Instagram @jezxpoe

Kate Abrielle McCormick - Kate Abrielle McCormick is a Bachelor's student at Queen Mary University of London, studying English with Creative Writing. She will be continuing there following the Summer where she will be going for a Master's in Creative Writing. Some of her other works can be found on Amazon or select stores within PA.

M.S. Blues - M.S. Blues is an 18 year old multiracial, queer, and versatile writer who has been writing since the age of seven. Her work revolves around the darker pieces of humanity society tends to neglect. She has been abundantly published by many literary magazines and currently serves as an editor to The Amazine, Adolescence Magazine, The Elysian Chronicles, and Hyacinthus Zine. Her Instagram handle is @m.s.blues_

Claudia Wysocky - Claudia Wysocky, a Polish writer and poet based in New York, is known for her diverse literary creations, including fiction and poetry. Her poems, such as "Stargazing Love" and "Heaven and Hell," reflect her ability to capture the beauty of life through rich descriptions. Besides poetry, she authored "All Up in Smoke," published by "Anxiety Press." With over five years of writing experience, Claudia's work has been featured in local newspapers, magazines, and even literary journals like WordCityLit and Lothlorien Poetry Journal. Her writing is powered by her belief in art's potential to inspire positive change. Claudia also shares her personal journey and love for writing on her own blog, and she expresses her literary talent as an immigrant raised in post-communism Poland.

Art/Photography

Ray Oliver - Ray Oliver is a rising artist from Florida. His art is recognizable through its bold warm colors, emotional appeal, and recurring dog themes.

Shun Go - Shun Go is a small traditional artist from Baguio City, Philippines. She uses multiple mediums in her artworks such as oil pastels, markers, paper, and glitter, but experts in black colored linework and inking. In those lines she likes them sharp and heavy, while in colors she enjoys them bright and messy. ☹(ò_ó')☹

Misha Gujja - Misha is a high school junior from Jericho, New York. She is passionate about science, especially genetics and astronomy, photography and fencing. Her photography has been featured on the cover of the Columbia Scientist Magazine and has won awards in the Scholastic Art and Writing Contest. In her free time, she loves listening to music (favorites are Måneskin and Fall Out Boy), reading and spending time with friends and family.

Jinnah Mahmood - Jinnah Mahmood, the ever-entertaining campus photographer of his school, can often be seen gracing the campus without his camera gear, probably chasing cats. His small frame hides quite a temper as he tirelessly searches for anything to satisfy his sweet tooth, but rest assured, if you ever need someone to boss you around for the sake of the perfect picture, he's your guy.

*Chromatic Scars Review Staff that made this
issue possible.....*

Katherine Zhao - Editor in Chief

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Mia Soto - Poetry Editor

Zeidan Naqeeb - Poetry & Photography Editor

Julia Alvarez - Art Editor

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Thanks for reading!

Chromatic Scars Review



2024