

FOREVERMORE

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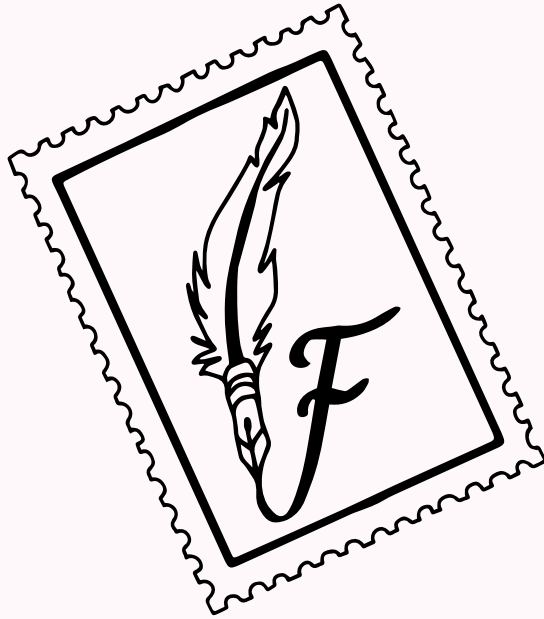
You've got all my love



In devotion of love notes and poetry

Love lies at the very core of our being. In many ways, we are a product of love. Not just romantically, but also platonically; love is at the heart of how we live. The Greek had multiple words to describe the millions way we can love: *eros, philia, agape, storge, ludus, philautia*... While we only have one word to refer to love in English, we experience it in countless ways. This is what our third issue is about: love in all its form, all your love.

WITH WORDS FROM MARY ECKERT, RUBY VIDOR AND KASSIDY ADAMS



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Editor's letter

Dear readers,

I have the pleasure of welcoming you for our third edition of *Forevermore*, inspired by one of my favorite songs by Noah Kahan "All My Love". As you may have noticed, this issue took more time to come to life as it was planned to be released in Spring 2025, in order to mimic the change of the season. Unfortunately, a lot happened in our life and we didn't want to rush anything. Rushing means deteriorate in some ways the quality of the magazine and that is absolutely not what we want to do, in any ways. Hence why we've decided to take our time to provide you with the best quality we could do.

I am so delighted to see that our community keeps growing bigger, it is truly heartwarming and I wouldn't hope for more. Seeing all your enthusiasm when we open our submission portal is incredible and we truly hope it will never end. For this issue, we've had the amazing opportunity of interviewing to emerging artists : Mary Eckert, Ruby Vidor and Cassidy Adam. Conversing with artists is always a delight and we truly hope you will love to discover them as much as we did.

Once again, I would like to thank all the writers who put their trust in *Forevermore* to be the place to welcome their work. I would also like to thank all the amazing artists who agreed to create and feature exclusive artworks for *Forevermore*. Seeing literature and art intertwine is such a delight for us.

While we are aiming to create a tangible object, it is complex to provide you with paper copies. We are really grateful to see that so many of you keep supporting us, even though we are only able to provide online copies.. Thank you so much for looking into smaller media such as *Forevermore* and giving us the support we need to grow.

We truly hope you will like this issue as much as we did.

Poetically yours,

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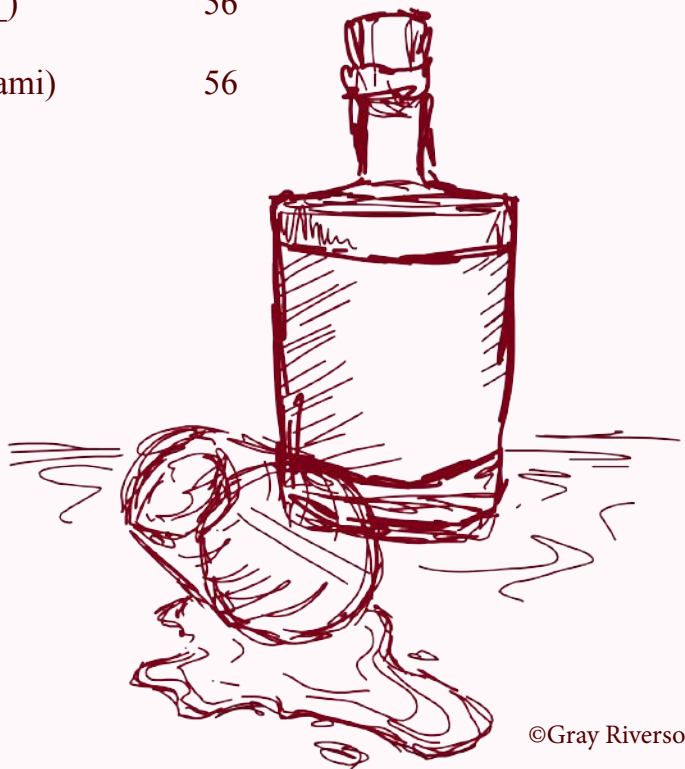
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After A Lifetime Of Wandering

Home was a lie we all wanted to believe in.

The word evoked a picture I could see clearly; a fresh green lawn, adorned with clusters of flowers—morning glories, or perhaps rhododendrons. A wicker doormat at its entrance, displaying a truism like “home sweet home!”, frayed and faded with podalic grime.

The family—four to six humans and a dog named Buddy—would gather around the table each evening for one of the mother’s specialties: homemade shepherd’s pie, cranberry meatloaf, or tater tot casserole. Regardless of what had been cooked, the air was always redolent of just-baked bread. Later, the parents would tuck the little ones into bed and retire to the living room for their nightly dose of sitcom laughter.

All my life, home existed in books and in movies; otherwise, it seemed to represent an ideal that families struggled to grasp and grew to resent. I watched friends marry and divorce, only to remarry and divorce—then proceeded through it myself—all the while imagining that perfectly-tended lawn and cheery wicker doormat. I have lived in many places, each somewhere to rest my head after a long day.

One morning, yanking at the zipper of my fly, cursing at my stomach for jutting over the old jeans, I understood why we had all become cynical. More salt was sprouting from our scalps than pepper, more imperfections than a syringe of Botox could fix, and scant motivation to care.

Hunched over in the mildewy one-bedroom, I thought, how could we care? Hadn’t we all been measuring our lives against **home**, and weren’t we now wondering what had gone wrong? It wasn’t until I met you that I understood—perhaps too late, but better late than never—that home does exist; I simply had the wrong definition of the word. It’s in all the little things that comprise you, my dear.

Your laugh—it sounds more like a scream than a laugh, really—and when you tilt your head in that way, I am afforded a wonderful view of your back molars. In the middle of telling you a story, I’ll often pause and remind you to close your mouth, because you’ve forgotten we’re dining at a white-cloth restaurant. Not to mention the way you eat chicken—never just tearing off the meat, but dissecting the bones for marrow, siphoning it out with that coy smile—as if you haven’t just devoured your entire meal and half of mine!

You cannot touch **home** but it is real. It’s in all the little things that comprise you, my dear, that have given me a place after a lifetime of wandering.

Katerina Sutton



Cabriole



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He who knew not of death sat at the top of a hill
alone, gazing up at the moon and its army of stars
he met an angel once and asked him where the dead go
and the angel told him, "To Heaven, the home of God."

He imagined the one he loved most floating, bathing
in pale starlight amid a thin wisp of clouds
reaching out to one another like hands in greeting
holding and shielding him from all misery in creation.

When he saw **the angel he knew again**, the angel of
healing
he asked him if he knew how to mend a broken heart
the angel told him, "Wait for me, I'm still learning"
so he waited, unmoving against the curse of immortality.

IF GOD DOESN'T *love you,* LET ME

a poem by Rosaria Rial

Perdition—eternal blaze—he tried to fix it himself
to tear his chest open and prod at parts he did not know
red and pulsing with vitality: a surplus of life left behind
as a cruel gift by all those he loved but one.

One who reached out to him with a gentle hand and said,
“I told you to wait for me,” with a frown the immortal one saw
before on the face of his mother, the harbinger of Hell
he seethed through gritted teeth and said, “I hate waiting.”

“I hate you.” It left his mouth as easy as breathing
and the angel, without a word, reassembled him
nested his bones and stitched his heart back together
so this man he loved could keep living forever.

Blood smeared from the man’s chest to the angel’s hands
the familiar color rousing memories from within the man of ages ago
when his hand raised in a fit of rage and struck down a stone
onto the one he loved the most and met, for the first and last time, death.

Did the demons know, he wondered, about falling before they fell?
or were they clueless, filled with the same terror as he was
when he brought onto the world the very first murder
the death of the one he loved most, all over God’s favor.

“Does God love my little brother?” the man asked the angel
who put on his best smile as he told a lie. “Yes. Like a prince.”
He tried not to think about Eve and her husband and son
In the depths of Hell—the prince of a fruit and its sweet nectar.

Eras passed and the immortal one lived in wait
losing faith that his angel could fix the aged thing in his ribs
until one day he came, with answers that took forever to find
because they were nowhere in Heaven, they were made of sin.

“I know now,” said the angel as he reached for the
man drew him in by the neck until they were close, collided
entwined in a kiss, not of healing, but saccharine amnesia
they stayed that way: sinners, forever, who would never know Hell.

THE RISK OF *Loving* IS *Loss*

The day it happened, I treated it as a joke. I'm not sure if I didn't truly believe it or I just chose not to. As if the news needed 48 hours to travel from where you were to get to me, it took two days for me to finally realize what had actually happened to you. Everyone around me patted me on the back, hugged me tightly and whispered in my ear that it's okay to grieve but what I'd tell them was that I don't want to grieve you at all. I only wish for a button I can press to rewind time and make it all untrue.

It felt like the world had ended, and I couldn't imagine waking up to another day. But, somehow, the sun rose again, just as it always had. The world kept moving, but I didn't know how to move with it. Sometimes, out of habit, I checked social media. I couldn't believe what I saw and that was just people living their lives as if nothing had happened. I became frustrated at friends, family, even strangers. How dare they eat, sleep and breathe? Do they not know the world is in absolute shambles? Are they not aware you are not here anymore?

I was so mad at everyone. I felt a rage towards you, too, like you had stolen something from me. And maybe you have, but no more than what you took away from yourself. For a while I even blamed "friends". It's all funny now. As wicked as they might be, at the end of the day they're not responsible for your actions and that just might be arguably the worst part of addiction.

Till this day I find myself wondering if it was all worth it. Whenever I'm cross with you, I ask myself if I'd rather have the miserable yet still alive version of you in my life or if I should be glad that you're finally out of the misery that was your life. "It wasn't all bad, was it?" and wish the answer was "No, it wasn't", but you won't ever answer me.

It's strange how time works. The phrase 'time heals' has been used so often it's definitely a cliché, but I can't deny that, somehow, time does heal. The problem is, I'm angry it didn't heal you. Somewhere in my heart, I know it could've, if you had more of it.

Being able to write about you in the past tense does not mean I've come to the terms with the fact that you're not breathing the same air as I am. I always think of you but it's the nighttime that I fear the most. When the pitch black darkness and the dead silence of winter breeze hold me hostage, that's when I feel it the most.

The pillow bears the weight of my tears, and the ceiling watches on, silent. The walls are exhausted of standing around, so I feel them caving in sometimes. I've always struggled with the idea of believing in a higher power, especially when I saw people praying to a God who seemed to never respond. Now I pray to him, that there is a heaven and a hell. Hopefully there is and chances are you're safe and sound now in heaven.

I can't stop wishing you hear me when I talk to you which happens almost all the time. The other day I was doing the laundry and I found myself talking to you. It wasn't until I was done that I realized I was doing it. It feels like I'm speaking to a shadow, just trying to hold on to whatever part of you is left in my heart. I know this might sound crazy, but I'm not. Maybe it's just the grief, making me say things I don't fully understand. I can almost hear you laughing in my head— "That's what a crazy person would say." The truth remains, I'm not crazy, just young, in love and unfortunate. I know you were too.



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In the past couple of weeks, I've realized from now on, I can only guess what you might have said about things. There's a past and present but never a future with you in it. The present will eventually turn into past as well.

I keep telling myself that out of sight does not mean out of mind. The other day I was on my way to a coffee date with friends and I saw a shop with the same name as yours. It made me smile. Then when my friend said your name, my heart dropped a beat. It took me a few seconds to remind myself, her cousin has your name too.

Your name now spells out a synonym next to "pain" and I hear it come up in daily conversations more than I expected to. Often I wonder if everyone talked this much about you before, then it hits me the conversation is not about you and the person talking is not talking about you either. It is all my mind and its tricks, making everything about you just to have an excuse to remember you again, maybe more than the day before because I'm still here

trying to prove to myself that I haven't forgotten about you, or that I spend less time thinking about you now that you're gone, that I've kept my promise to not let this pain grow old.

You didn't get a chance to grow old, I can't help but to think your memory deserves to not grow old either. All in the hope that you're somewhere seeing all this effort, smiling at me with pride.

It bothers me to think that we didn't get to say goodbyes. I comfort myself by thinking how there would have never been enough time for us in this lifetime.

No matter the time, I could have never prepared for a reality without you and it makes me laugh a bit thinking how there was a time when you weren't in my life but now that I had the chance of meeting you, I can't live like that ever again. "The risk of loving, is loss," I once read somewhere. I find comfort in thinking we'll meet again somewhere soon. For now, that keeps me going.

From being the sun in my life, you've turned into a shadow cast by the light of our memories. Every once in a while I see the signs you send me. Strangers that I point out to my sister and say, "doesn't he look like him? The resemblance is insane." The truth is, most of the time they don't have the merest similarity to you yet I somehow manage to see you in everything and everyone.

After you left, everything seemed just the same as before, as if you were never there except that you were. You did exist or did you? Did I dream you? The only proof I have are the memories in my head and without you here they just seem like works of fiction. Then I try to get on with my day when I see a shirt you used to wear hanging around the closet and it all comes back to me. I hold on to that piece of clothing as if it is the only evidence that you were real and you did live.

Waking up, brewing coffee, getting to work, doing all the things I'm supposed to and overanalyzing your every move, choice and how the world and its people treated you. In the quiet moments of reflection, I often think back to that night, wondering if you should have had one less glass.

There are times when I let myself enjoy life. I see a pretty sunset, and for a moment, I feel excited—mesmerized by how something so familiar can still move me. Like you, in the way I used to be able to find something new in every memory of you, even though they've all become repetitive. The sunsets never get old, but I wonder: will I ever stop missing you with every passing day? And all it takes is 0.01 seconds of thought to turn all that enjoyment into grief again. I can never hope we're looking at the same sky ever again and everything loses its spark and color for the hundredth time after you left. Even the word "hope" looks gray. It's lost its color, like everything does without you. But even as time wears on, my love for you doesn't fade. And even though hope may look colorless, it will always remain and I still hold onto it. Because somewhere in the distance, I still wait for the world to bring you back, even if it's in some small way for only a moment. I'll think of you and smile. For as long as love lives, you're alive.

Mahshad Fereidooni.

Ars Poetica

A LITANY FOR THE BELOVED

a poem by Aditi Kumari

I no longer tremble
when I speak my hunger.
I, too, merit a love
the poets carve into parchment.

*Your laughter is the sudden
sword of light* (Neruda)
*...more first than sun and more last
than stars* (Cummings)

Tell me, do I eclipse
thy eternal summer (Shakespeare)?
When Emily's *thorn of red* unfurls to roses,
do my hands
 dwell in that Possibility (Dickinson),
the way Ada Limón cups a face and whispers,
Stay? (Limón)

I once dreamed in borrowed verses,
But now I wake to you—
a rebuttal to Sylvia's ghost whispering
in my girlhood attic: *I think I made you up
inside my head* (Plath).

No. I did not conjure you.
Yet *I invent it for you* (Woolf)—
this love, this poem, this proof:
your pulse hums beneath my ribs,
e.e knew this ache:
i carry your heart
(i carry it in my heart) (Cummings)
and Vuong too prays to the same ache:
*sometimes I ask for your face to fall
into my hands like a hymn* (Vuong).

Let us be the fable future poets dissect,
a fever-dream fresco
alive in morning's gold-leaf ache.

I edit us out like a draft I've worked at,
almost ready for the world.
Walt croons, a morning rooster:
*We were together—
all else has been forgotten.* (Whitman)

And I remember
—*you are whatever*
a moon has always meant (Cummings),
"*Shall I read more Cummings to you?*"
You ask, as we lie unbuttoned in quiet,
two sonnets pressed to the same page,

Yes, I demand:
love me mad and moonly (Cummings),
love me like *we are*
each other's business. (Brooks)
A star remains a star even while dying. (Gay)
Let our love just be love,
when all has been said, and felt.

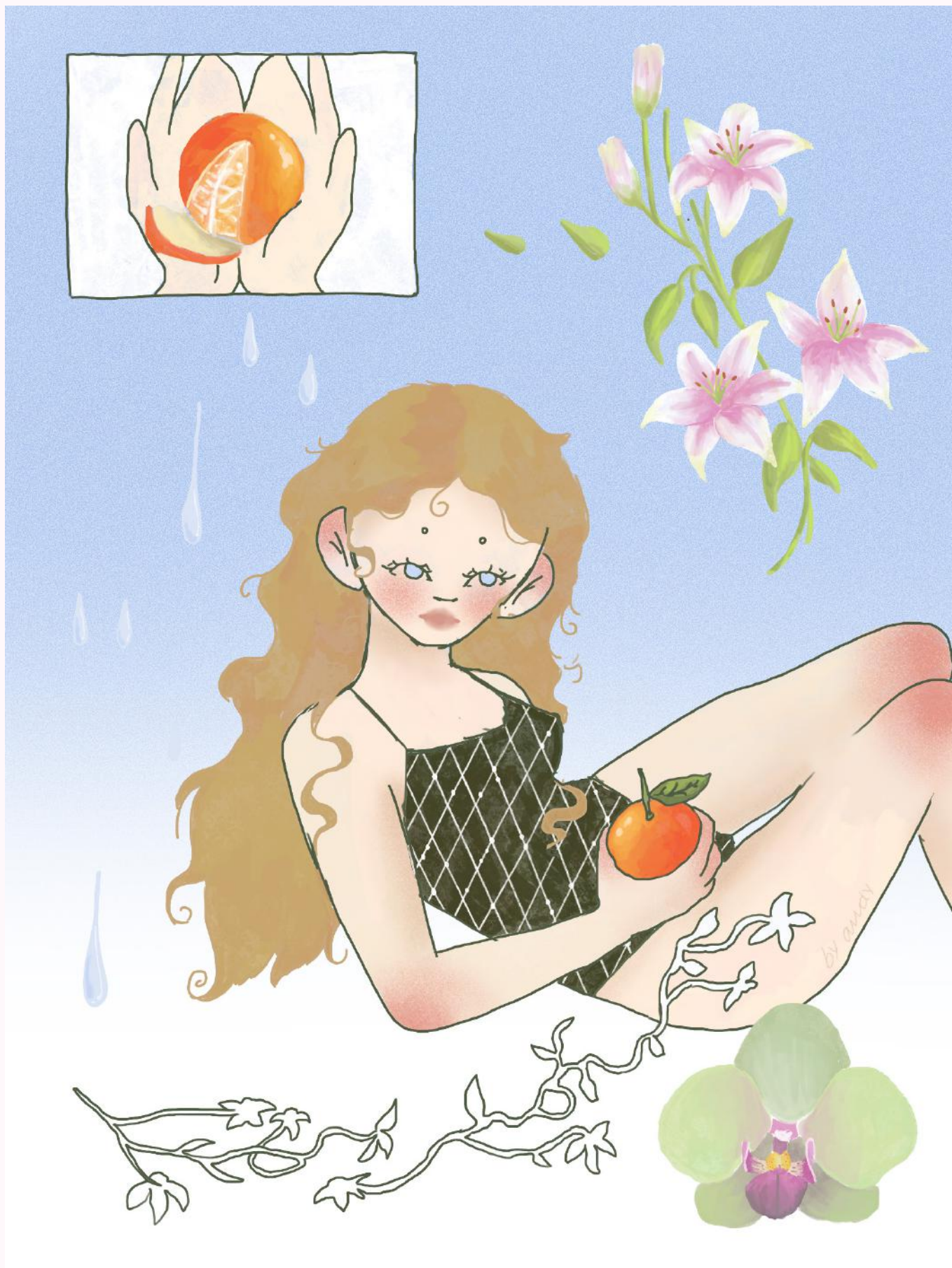
For I have learned.
Hope is the thing with feathers (Dickinson)
and mine floats in the skies
of your favourite shade as
Mary whispers:
You do not have to be good (Oliver).

So I rise, unrepentant,
my daring quantum uncertain
until observed by you (Heisenberg).

I am fluent now in your tongue.



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Sophia

Alistair Gaunt

I peel my heart like a freshly picked tangerine, scent spreading like pollen in the summer wind. Your laughter echoes in the air, head thrown back, hair dancing with the sway of the wildflowers by the sidewalk. The sunlight catches on the glasses before your eyes, and her skin flashes beneath mine. I shake my head, and try to memorise the curve of your lips, the freckle on your chin and the softness of your hands instead. Tell me, my dearest Sophia, did you find what you were looking for in her, in me? Or have I mistaken your kindness as mindful cruelty?

I face the cliffside where you stood, on my knees and with my palms open, begging a god that does not exist for a prayer that will go unheard. The mud clings onto my clothes, petrichor drenches my hair, alcohol stains my tongue. Your house remained quiet, the doors of your closet locked, skeleton hidden in the places you thought I could not find. Tell me, my dearest Sophia, have I gone too far, flown too close to the storm?

Your silhouette's footsteps echoes in the hallway, hands of gentleness and dusk searching for a reason to stay. I stand in the darkest corner of the room, back pressed against the rough walls. Fire flickers onto my cigarette as I watch your vain crumble into agony. Tell me, my dearest Sophia, did you ever get tired seeing me cross the places where she left off?

The worst of my broken parts hangs in the air like the promises you have written on the back of my mind. The rest of your days are spent longing for a love only I could ever give, and yet, you have searched for it in somebody else's room.

The love letters addressed to you were written with the ink from her blood, did you know? You once asked me if I really loved her; if I wanted to break your heart I would have told you I loved her more than you (I did, I did, I did).

Tell me, my dearest Sophia, did I reverb harder than her slingshot, or must I pull back further?



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EMBRACING YOUR POETIC SELF

AN INTERVIEW WITH *Mary Eckert*

"Love has a very high stakes: high rewards, high stakes kind of situation, but it's always worth telling people."

The concept of being the poet and not the muse started gaining traction on social media a few years ago. While it lies at the core of Mary Eckert's artistic identity, she doesn't view it as a rejection of softness or femininity. On the contrary, Mary embraces her poetic self, and in this interview with Forevermore, she shares her thoughts with honesty, insight, and warmth.

Selma Tabti (interviewer): You told me you were considering yourself as a poet and a bard, do you mind telling me more about it ?

Mary Eckert: Lyrics have always really been important to me. They are the most important, even when I am listening to other people's music. I can't listen to something I don't like the words of. I've always been drawn to lyrics : I love English, I love reading and I always loved creative writing at school. I wrote a song called *Always too high* and I guess the whole point of it is that I wrote a love poem. I've ended up writing the lyrics "You're a sicko with words and I'm just a bard". I think it unlocked something in my writing: I wanted to delve deeper into having more imagery and double meanings. I ended up being okay with telling everyone that I am a poet, a bard and a lyricist and I truly love the imagery of it.

S.T: I genuinely love the fact that you consider yourself a poet and a bard, there's something very poetic about it. You are confident in your work and it is so beautiful to see someone embracing their art. Do you have any inspiration? How would you describe your universe?

M.E: I'd say very metaphorical, at some point maybe a little bit cheeky. I love basing a song around a concept and I love having fun with that concept. for example, at the end of *Fortune Teller*, which is one of my favorite lyrical songs that I have, I do this thing when I throw loads of images all at once. I guess that's kind of my universe. A really big inspiration, but it's more sonically, even though I love his songwriting, is Ryan Beatty. He is literally insane. I discovered him last year and I just fell in love with his album *Calico*. I just think sonically it's amazing, I just love him. His writing is incredible and it really inspired what I've done now. He's a really big one. I really like Laura Marling. I love Lizzy McAlpine as well: I love her newest album so much.

S.T: What about literature, do you have any influence, maybe in your writing style?

M.E: That's a really good question. I don't really like to think about it, if that makes sense. I don't like to think about things too much, I like things because I feel compelled to do them. If I try to designate myself a style or a way of writing, it can end up really hard to do... I feel like the inspiration is within me. In terms of literature, because I am a big fan of imagery, I absolutely love Daphné du

Maurier. A couple summers ago, I went camping with my friends and we literally didn't have anything to do but reading. I read one of her books and it was so beautiful. We just read her books. She writes really beautifully. But also, I love shit books. When I say I love reading, I'm not always reading amazing books, sometimes I just read the worst books ever but sometimes I don't want to think, I just want stupid books!

S.T: Are there any favorite lyrics that you've ever written ?

M.E: Oh gosh, that's such a hard question. It's hard because I feel in every song, I have a favorite. At the moment, my favorite one, because it changes all the time, is the chorus of *Fortune Teller*. I end up saying "and I dropped the ball". Currently, that's my favorite.

S.T: I suppose you're more of a lyric person, do you have particular process for writing a song?

M.E: Yeah, I'm a terrible musician, I am literally so bad. However, I do play piano and guitar, but to a very low standards. I play to a point that I can write a songs...I can play live, but I make mistakes and it's terrible for the other people playing with me. I have written all these songs on guitar, but i actually don't really know chords, they're all open tunes and I just put my fingers where I want to. Lyrically, a lot of the time, I have a concept. That's what happened with *Cowboy Blue*, I had the first couple of lines and all this imagery. At the time, I was really inspired by cowboy and western imagery, but now, I am more into whimsical and mystical imagery. Lyricwise, sometimes I do research, I listen to songs I love, I read... Sometimes, if I'm doing a specific topic, I search words that are related to that topic and write them down. I probably change the lyrics a few times until I'm happy with it or get what I want.

S.T: Are you writing them down on a notebook, a phone ?

M.E: It will be on a notebook or I just record it. That's wild because when I sent you everything, I had to write all my lyrics down! I can't do this again, it is so lame! I don't like typing them, I don't like being next to a screen when I'm doing something creative, so it's normally on a notepad, very terrible handwriting, or I just don't write it down at all. Sometimes I do it on the tube but I am

really scared that other people would look at me typing my feelings down. I was sitting next to this really cool lady —I always make a point to really look open because you know when you want to sit down on the train, people look like they don't want you to sit next to them. She looked like one of my favorite singing teachers I've ever had and I was like "you're identical to her"...I don't know, I felt really inspired at that moment. It's weird when a feeling catches you, right? I just started writing them down and I definitely needed some sort of privacy screen. I was writing random lyrics...But then you know you lose things, you lose things if you don't write them down immediately.

S.T: So do you have your notebook on you at all times?

M.E: Yeah, I always have it in my purse. I actually have the perfect size at the moment. I also use post it notes, so now I have a notebook, post it notes and sometimes lyrics on my phone. Don't use post-it notes if you don't want to lose them!

S.T: Yeah, don't use any type of sticky notes if you don't want them to end up in the trash or be lost forever.

M.E: Yes exactly. They're everywhere and people can easily find them.



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"Babylon's so distant, an ancient wonder, now you're nowhere to be found"

S.T: As you may know, this issue's theme is based on the song *All my love* by Noah Kahan. Do you think writing a song for someone is the highest form of love?

M.E: I would say so. I think to write someone something is very personal. It is a compliment. If someone writes something about you, they're thinking about you. They put a lot of time in it. I think it is a very beautiful thing to do for someone. People used to write poems all the times, or write each others letters and that sort of things are not a thing anymore. I think that's so sad, I don't like that. Bring back handwritten notes!

S.T: I am such an advocate for handwritten notes. I do that all the times. Bring back love poems, love notes and everything love related!

M.E: I do the same to be fair, I write some poems for my partner. If I go to a different place, I write a poem about my holiday and I send it to myself on a postcard: they're always really silly!

S.T: It is actually so cute, this is such a nice idea! I actually do the same, everytime I go to a new place, I buy a postcard and I write the best memory I had there.

M.E: The hardest part is to find a postbox in a country where you not from. Well...actually that's not that hard...I always have to do it at the airport. There's always a box at the airport.

S.T: Going back to the concept of love, I've heard one of the preview you've posted on Tiktok and one of the lyrics were "If I love you, I'll tell you I love you 'cause I can". It is very simple, yet I find it absolutely beautiful because sometimes, we forget how simple love can be. Over social medias, you can see that people are trying to make rules about love. It becomes really hard to let yourself say these three little words, but genuinely, who's stopping you from saying them if you feel like it?

M.E: Yes, absolutely. I don't believe in following those rules. If I fell in love with someone, I would just say it. Actually, the lyrics are from a very sad songs...it's all about a relationship that didn't work out with someone that I loved. Love has a very high stakes: high rewards, high stakes kind of situation, but it's always worth telling people.

S.T: There's no point of saying the word like when your heart truly loves someone.

M.E: Yes, I really don't like the word "like". For some reasons, loving becomes embarrassing. I think some humans really struggle emotionally, saying how they feel or not knowing how. It is a shame that people are worrying about if someone or something is seen as cool... I think people worry too much about things and it impacts on how people connect.

S.T: How people connect, but also how people create as well. So many people are so afraid of putting their art out there.

S.T: Coming back to your career, are you working on any project at the moment?

M.E: Well, let me tell you about the things I'm currently working on right now because they're not out yet. I am so excited. It's been a lot of work for the longest time, it's been two years. It's going to be pop but folk, lots of very pretty things. Obviously, very lyrically dense. I have three EPs worth of songs... I'm not gonna have to write for so long, obviously I am going to write. I'm going to release the first four, hopefully starting in may with a single. It's hard to pick which one to do first. It's very motivated by love and I wrote all those songs in a weird time, when I finished a long term relationship. It was not great. I was struggling and those songs really helped me get my feelings out and I ended up liking them. I actually need to get it all together. As an artist, I had such a long time of creating, just making stuff for the sake of making stuff. I need to get pictures done, I need to create the project...but yeah it's all going to be about love, bard, lyricist... I don't want to release too many songs at the same time because I am a small artist.

S.T: When I was listening to the songs you've sent me, I really felt like you put all your love into it. Any type of love, at some point you're talking about how much you love London. It is about multiple types of love, friendships included. In *Fortune Teller*, you say "I'll sing riddles forever". Do you feel like you communicate more freely when you write a song?

M.E: I don't really know. I think it makes me ruminate. I am such a dweller, I will never get over anything ever unfortunately but that's okay. I kinda write songs about dwell, it's not good. I wish I could get some forms of closure, but with songwriting, you romanticise and you paint a picture. Now I am singing songs about situations that hurt my feelings, but I love it.

S.T: Is it a never ending chapter ?

M.E: It's ongoing, I struggle to talk about things. It's to write and reflect. It's like poems. When you're sad, and you want to feel sad – same with listening to sad songs.



S.T: Going back to the songs you've sent me, let's talk about *Something With Your Name On It*. It's all about being the poet and not the muse. It's all about someone, but there's no mention of any name in the song. It is clearly not something with someone's name on it. It is a way of taking your power back, because at the end, what remains is your words and love. At the end, it's all about being your own muse as you are writing about yourself.

M.E: Yes, it's true. I know it is very ironic because it is about dedicating something to someone. The end is a lot more empowering because I am reclaiming my love a little bit back. "It must be nice to have something with your name on it". It is about reclaiming my power, but to be honest, it was a bit pathetic when I wrote it because it wasn't about empowerment at all. It was very sad.

S.T: As you said, having a song being written about you is very beautiful, even though the song is not really happy, the act of writing someone a song is really beautiful. Do you think they will know it's about them ?

M : I actually have no idea. It is an issue that you need to worry about. I don't know if I am going to send them anything, but I guess there's a lot of clues in them. Maybe I was crazy and I put a lot of things in my head that never happened.

S.T: Are you a little bit scared of pouring out your feelings out by releasing a song to the public?

M.E: A little bit, because I think it's a bit crazy. I am artist, I am a creative, I can't help it and as we said earlier, we don't need to be embarrassed about anything. It is a concern when you are writing things. I am always writing songs about people.

S.T: You did write a song about London though.

M.E: I did. I need to finish it, I can't think about a second verse. It's because my favorite line—or one of my fav—is “I laugh at friends until we stain tables”. I really want to find something with a similar vibe for the end of my second verse but I can't grasp it.

S.T: Do you feel that when you write a song, it needs to be better than the previous song? Are you struggling with that?

M.E: Yes, I would say so. I do struggle with it. I wouldn't say I'm a perfectionist because there's a lot of stuff I don't care about but lyrical content I do get a bit..yeah.

S.T: So do you think you have a song that you could not top?

M.E: Oh no...never. This is the problem though... Basically when you first write a song, you love it and it's your favorite new song. *Fortune Teller* is my favorite at the moment but it's only because it's the newest one. My least favorite was once my favorite. As you get a better writer, you write your best thing, that's a problem because you set a bar, new standards. I had the feeling but I know that is something that will pass. But maybe someday I'll write a song and nothing will ever top it.



S.T: Are you writing on a daily basis?

M.E: Oh my god, no. I do the morning pages, but they're rubbish. I try to sit down and write every week. There's a debate on whether you should wait for inspiration or if you should be able to write whether you are inspired or not...I think because I had such an intense writing period...I've written twelve songs in a very relatively lose time and I think I need to take a break. I know for some people it works to write daily, but for me personally, in order to make something different and to move on and come up with new ideas, **I need to experience life.**

Are you falling in love with Mary too? You can find her work on Spotify and follow her daily life through Instagram and Tiktok at @mmaryeckert. Always Too High and Something With Your Name On It are out everywhere!



Chthonic love letters

a poem by Anne Alsworth,
first published in *Luxury Literary Magazine*

I.O, enthralling Psychopomp, lead me down

to the river's edge, and dip my impure crown
beneath your mercurial waters. Scrub out
my conscience from my bloodied hair.

Steal me away and use your silver tongue
to make me forget whoever else I have seen.
Anoint me as yours with cataclysmic abandon.
Make me your lover, your alibi, your accessory.

Offer me Lethe, and I'll gift you my arm.
Claim it, cling to it, consume its sinew.
Make a carrion of me, your rabid lapdog,
and carve out a home between my ribs.

II. O, dear Oread Girl, forsake your hometown. Run

far away into the tender maw of the waiting cavern.
Heed the thrumming heartbeat in your reverent ear;
listen for the sanguine call of our secret passage.

Embark with me on our momentous rejoining,
a metamorphosis of souls cleaved apart eons ago.
Allow its divinity to ripen your sweet marrow.
Vanish into the embrace of our unending ecstasy.

Cast aside your girlhood, and I shall provide you
with solace, with unknowing, with deathless fidelity.
Consecrate me, Oread, as your promised lover,
and be reborn beneath the hallowed riverbed.

A memorable concert

a poem by O.P Jha

passion hugged intensity
and I furrowed a field of delicacy
for sowing the seeds of possibility,
the susurrations of friction interlocked
with the rustling of motion,
between the chirping of crickets
and the twittering of early rising birds
an epic melted
and desires glittered in the epilogue
two souls sank
into a blissful abyss
and the night inscribed
an inscription on the brows of the morning
humming was heard all the day
but the details remained locked
in two sweet treasures
for giving firmness to steps
on slippery paths
whenever I swim in my heart
I find some albums of symphonies
and some sparks from the stage
a musical night was unwrapped
into the palm of flowing decades.

To String a A DEAD MAN'S BOW

by Laila Papas



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Flinging her fists,
Fleeing his grasp,
But she couldn't run forever

He would catch Ithaca's queen,
Hold her close,
Until she belonged to him,
Broke her crown,
And shared its pieces,
Forgetting about her husband,
Lost to the Trojan sea.

Twelve axes,
Tens of suitors,
Kissing her palm,
With lips wet and hungry,
Stood between him and his crown.

Weave the arrows,
Of the old king's bow,
One clean shot,
Through each hole.

She called it a challenge,
He called it impossible,
As she awaited the return,
Of a man withered to bones.

Antinous strung his bow,
And struck.
She wasn't enough,
To tame his hunger,
Starving for gold,
Salivating for land,
Legacy,
To own every inch of the island,
And drop of the sea.

He deserved the world,
Because he was a man,
Chosen by the Gods,
To live, breathe, ponder,
Deeper than any animal ever could.

His laughter sliced through the air,
Like the tip of his arrow,
Only to choke,
Metal against metal,
Scraping his soul.

Day darkened to night,
And Antinous was there,
Bow in hand,
Arrows bouncing across axes,
Blood along his fingers,
Bruised by the friction,
Of string against flesh.

The power shouldn't be hers,
For she never used it,
Spending her days dreaming,
Of a love lost to war.

Until a man came up behind him,
Took the bow in his hand,
Rags soiled with salt,
Reeking of the sea.
He smiled, as if he knew,
Antinous wouldn't wake to see tomorrow.

The Queen's eyes filled with the ocean,
As his arrow wove between the axes,
Sinking into the target,
Like teeth into flesh.

Odysseus strung his bow,
And struck.

Antinous couldn't scream,
With an arrow lodged in his throat.
He couldn't speak,
Last words to last a legacy,
As blood filled his mouth,
Dripping down his sweat-slicked skin.



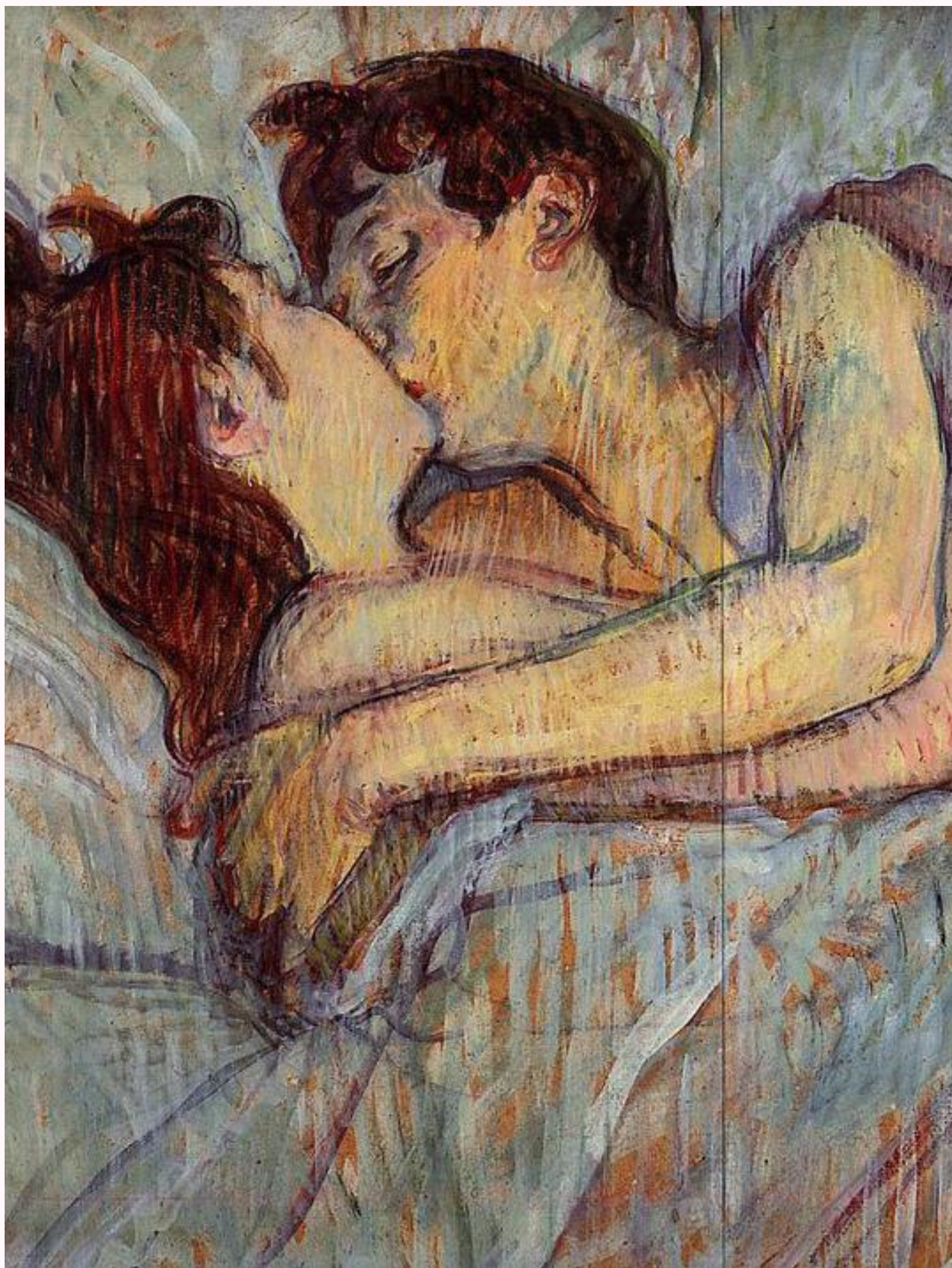
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He wondered,
How the Gods really made him,
If his life ended here,
With a head so bare,
And cold without a crown,

If he could die,
With a heart empty of gold,
And filled with regret.

The King of Ithaca,
Left no man alive.
He knelt with the dead,
Took his Queen's hand,
And kissed her palm with bloodied lips.

He looked at her, with eyes as wealthy,
As the richest man,
To ever walk the earth.



©The kiss by Toulouse Lautrec

Dissolved

a poem by Johanna Lunn

It catches you by surprise, this feeling that's more like a remembering
that we chose to be here, that we elected earth to carry our bodies,
the ones that give shape to our souls

It happened yesterday, this remembering,
like knowing a word only once you've seen it written
in your own handwriting

I used to collect shells and place them on what I now realize was an altar,
giving them order, having them dance around each other
As I stepped out of childhood, I stopped doing this, until yesterday

I caught myself, first judging my choices then looking deeper,
like I was outside my body reassuring the girl on the shore,
hey it's ok whatever you pick up, you're collecting shells; it's not consequential!

Search for hours to curate a collection
or close your eyes, reach down, and find fate in your palm —
both approaches an art, an inner-child dreamscape

The ocean dissolves everything including certainty
I let dissolution sweep me up like it's my first time here,
like it's my thousandth time here

CREATING WITHOUT WORDS

AN INTERVIEW WITH *Kassidy Adams*

"I think it's the biggest lesson that I've learnt. Nobody is going to know when you are making a mistake, especially when it's your own piece. If anything, they're just going to think you're playing a different variation of it."

While we often interview singer, we've decided to change a little bit by interviewing Kassidy Adams, a self-taught composer. Talking with her has providing us so much insights, especially concerning her own experience. As readers, you might like to read with music, well Kassidy Adams is your new favorite composer.

Kassidy Adams: Hi, I'm Kassidy. If I had to introduce myself, I would say that piano is a big part of my life. I've been playing since I was about 14 years-old. I did take lessons when I was 5 years-old, but it was only for a month...I've started teaching myself after that, hence why I am classifying myself as a self-taught artist. I feel like piano has been the number one thing that I have been the most consistent with. I really love making music, composing and just conveying emotions through my music.

Selma Tabti (interviewer): Hi Kassidy, nice to meet you. So let's start with the first question : what first drew you to composing and playing music in general?

K.A: Every fourth grader, I don't know if they still do it, but they have to play the recorder. When I first played it, I was so excited. We had a little recital, and I really just kind of stuck with it. In the summer entering fifth grade, I started wanting to play another instrument, and since the clarinet was the closest to the recorder, I gave it a try. Essentially, I've been playing clarinet for years. I went to an art school for clarinet, and this is where I've learnt about Bach. I was immediately drawn to his *Inventions*. At that time, I was living with my aunt who had a piano. I was wondering if I could learn his *Inventions on the piano*, which I did. This is what started it.

S.T: Usually, people are drawn to music quite early on. I wish it was me, but unfortunately it wasn't. Did you grow up in a household where there was a lot of music? Maybe your parents played music?

K.A: My dad used to play guitar and piano. He would always play the *Winnie the Pooh* theme song. My mum was in the church choir. I kind of grew up in a household that had music incorporated in it somehow.

S.T: You've mentionned Bach earlier. I suppose that, as a composer, you are inspired by other musicians, but I was wondering if you were also inspired by other piece of media such as literature or films?

K.A: That's a really good question. I feel like yes, kind of, but I feel it's a little bit backward. I would compose something and I would think "Oh that would make a great background music for that type of scene". For example, one of my pieces is titled *Bittersweet*. For me, it reminds me of saying goodbye to a loved one. *Nostalgia*, one of my other pieces, sounds very nostalgic. It reminds me of a childhood flashback scene. I think, a lot of time I may envision a story as I am composing but not necessarily see or read something and compose something out of it.

S.T: That's very interesting. Do you envision composing for a film?

K.A: It's funny because it's actually one of my dreams to have my piece placed in a movie, TV show or documentary. I came to a realisation that I don't necessarily like the composing aspect of things. In terms of being a composer for a film, you have to work with some ideas that someone gives you. I find it to be very challenging. There have been a couple of times when somebody asked me to compose for them, it's basically a commission as they give me an idea of what they wanted and I create something for them. It was a lot of back and forth with the person. I prefer creating music and sharing it with people as opposed to people telling me what they want. I understand it's part of the job of composing, but I am coming to the realisation that I don't like that part.

S.T: I suppose if you want to go into creating music for an industry as big as the film industry, you have to put some limit to your own creativity. It's like journalism as you have to write on a specific topic for the media you are working for. You mentioned taking a commission, how does it work?

K.A: I've done two commissions and two collaborations. I am realising that I don't necessarily like collaborations either. For the first commission, it was more of a concept album. I was working with a playwright and I did five pieces for that one. It was very interesting. A lot of the pieces were already pieces that were unreleased, but they matched the concept she was describing. I wasn't composing anything from scratch. She was describing what she wanted and I would think about the pieces I already had. That was a little bit easier because I wasn't starting from scratch. The second one...I really really liked this one because it was something I was completely aligned with. It wasn't just a matter of what the person wanted, it was something I was also very interested in. When there's a mass shooting, they put the comment that people would put in a comment section in condolences cards. The person that I was working with wanted a very dark and melancholic version of the national anthem. As sad as it was, the purpose of the project was something that I agreed with. It was easier to compose something for that because I had a starting point, which was the national anthem, and then I had to make it dark and melancholic. She sent me a script of what to envision when I was composing. It gave me a visual because I think they were going to do a short film to this very melancholic version of the national anthem. It was a little bit easier to imagine.

S.T: That's very interesting. About collaborations, you've mentioned you didn't particularly liked it. Is it because you struggle sharing your ideas with someone? I suppose it is quite hard to compromise when it comes to art.

K.A: Yeah. I think it was that, and also a lot of inconsistency. For me, if I'm being 100% honest, when I am being paid for something, my work is going to be a lot better. The problem is, if we don't set clear deadlines at the beginning, that's when I realise that this person might not be as serious as I am going to be. The two collaborations that I was supposed to do...one of them was for a play and I was starting from scratch. We would keep missing each other in terms of communications, it was just very difficult to move the work forwards. They never really got back to me, so I moved away from it. The second one...I dropped the ball. I had a lot going on last year. I apologised for it, but I've realised that at that point, collaboration is too much work for free work. I am starting to realise what to ask for. It is helping me to realise what I like and what I don't like.



S.T: Boundaries are really important in that type of situation. So despite of not really liking commissions and collaboration, you did compose for a play twice. Would you like to do that in the future?

K.A: Hm...I want to say yes but not at this moment. One thing I've realised with composing is I feel like there's a lot more that is involved than just piano. Right now, I'm really focused on the piano aspect of it. However, the first piece that I ever composed had another instrument in it. It was composed in memory of my dad. This one has strings in the back. I'm trying to look at what other people are looking for when it comes to composing for a film, and I noticed that a lot of them have other instruments in them. I'm not there yet, I would be able to if I really had to, but I am not at the level other people are at. I don't want to compare myself to other people, but I am also trying to be practical.

S.T: It is fair enough. I'm very curious about it: do you ever think about composing with another musician. It might help you create a piece with different instruments in it?

K.A: I envision a lot of my pieces with other instruments in it. I think they would sound really good. It would be nice if somebody else could come in and actually play it. I think right now, it would be difficult because if we all collaborate on something, we have to take everybody's ideas. I'm not trying to be possessive over my music, but if the piano is going to be the main part I'd like to have full autonomy. If we're all coming together and trying to collaborate, I think that's a different story.

S.T: I completely understand what you mean. Let's talk about your inspiration. As you may know, our third issue is based on the concept of love, does it help you create music?

K.A: Yeah, definitely. Whenever I am composing, I try to think of something. There's often a story involved. I've started with Bach's *Inventions*, which is very mythological. When I was playing it, I would add a little pedal in here or make it more flowy and in the back of my head, I would envision a story of two swans reuniting. When it comes to my composition, there is a joke that everybody in my inner circle is going to have a piece named after them. I have one for my dad, one for my mum, one for my sister and one for my fiancé but I've changed the name. It is secretly his song. I think friendships and love definitely take a huge part when it comes to composing. Usually, I try to use the name of the person as a tool. I would use the letters of their name as notes that I want to include in my piece. I also have a list of concepts in my notes, such as Sunday morning, and I would just think about what Sunday mornings feels like to me. It is how I think about things when I am composing. Friendships and love play a huge role in my art.

S.T: As part of this issue, we've discussed with other artists about the idea that songs can be seen as an act of devotion in the sense that if I write a song about someone, it must be because they have a huge impact on the person that I am. What do you think about that?

K.A: It almost feels like a sense of love lost a little bit in nowadays music. It is a little sad to think about, but my favorite thing ever is when people hear a piece of mine and people don't know the title but they can definitely name it from how they feel. It happens with my piece about my mum and someone told me that it literally feels like a hug from their mum who passed away. I love it when it happens, especially with my music because there are no words. There is no word referencing my mum.

S.T: Oh my god, absolutely. I just had a conversation with someone about that. If you meet an artist, you are going to say how you feel about their work in your own words, making it your part of your own and by telling them about how you feel about this very specific media, you are giving the piece back with a part of yourself added to it.



K.A: I love that. That's one of my favorite things. On Tiktok, there's a lot of time when my videos blow up, I can't answer every single comment but best believe I read every single one of them. My favorite thing to read is how people describe my music. This is my all time favorite. Like you've said, I have an idea in my head when I was composing it and then people come back with other ideas. I've had people say that my music healed them in ways that they didn't know that they needed, that they had a bad relationship with their parents and my music helped heal them. It is so beautiful to read, because I never think the piece that I make could be therapy for somebody or help them overcome their anxiety attack. I had no idea that it could ever happen and that's such a beautiful feeling.

S.T : That's genuinely so beautiful. If we go back to your creative process, do you have any piece that was challenging to write or create?

K.A: It's funny because I am currently working on two pieces. One of them is pretty much finished, I just need to edit it. The other one...I might have to re-record it. That one is really challenging only because it can sound very mechanical very quickly. I need to make it sound very flowy. I've been procrastinating because it is so difficult to record. I would say that one is more challenging than others. Each one has its own degree of challenges. It is challenging because they are my pieces and I am the only one who knows how they go. I am also trying to present the best when I am releasing a piece. I think a lot of that comes from wanting to be absolutely perfect. Being self-taught and being a perfectionist does not go well together at all. The one that I am working on right now is the one that is giving me the most trouble so far.

S.T: That makes a lot of sense. I suppose that if it is challenging to record, it must be very challenging to perform in general.

K.A: Yeah. It is funny because I hate playing in front of people. I don't aspire to be a performer. I am realising that I don't like performing and I do not need to perform. Nobody is holding me hostage. I do take steps to try to get past that discomfort. When it comes to performing, I've started doing Tiktok live because I was trying to get comfortable with the idea of people watching me perform. I went a step further by playing in public. They started putting these pianos out in public for people to play around my city and one of my goals was to play on those every summer. Those are my steps to get past the fear of playing in front of people and it really helped me. In terms of performing my music, I think that if I had an orchestra or something, it would be really nice. That would be absolutely beautiful. I still have a long way to go before it happens. Everybody who plays is saying that the nerves will always be there, but some people are able to lock in in their music. I was thinking of doing a virtual concert. I think it would be a nice way to get more ears on my music and also be more professional than a Tiktok live. On my Tiktok live, I am talking and chatting with people. If I were to do a virtual concert, it would help me get to the idea of performing a little bit better.

S.T: That's amazing. I think a lot of people forget that being an artist doesn't equal being a performer. I was also thinking about it in a writer way. Writing something is scary and a lot of time, you procrastinate it. How do you overcome that as a composer?



K.A: Yeah...I'm kind of in it right now. There's a time when I wake up super motivated and there's another time, like right now. I always want to do my best at things and when I feel like it's not my best, I get frustrated. I'm experiencing that now. The thing that I'm struggling with the most is with the software I am editing my music with. There's a satisfaction when I say I did everything myself, but at the same time it's really complicated too. There's a lot of frustration with my music clipping or the dynamic that is not coming out the way I am playing it on my piano. I think that's where the lack of motivation comes in the most. I am a very impatient person and that might be the reason why I compose so much. I don't really want to learn some pieces sometimes, I just want to play. With each release, I try to learn something new. With my first release, it was super quiet and I was like "what the heck". If you were going to listen to my music on shuffle, you would have to turn the volume all the way up and the next song would be blasting in your ears. The next two, I turned up the volume but they still sounded a little bit mechanical. So I

moved to a digital instrument, which is a better quality. However, the dynamics were not how I wanted them to be. I try to learn from each release. It is very frustrating.

S.T: It's not really lack of motivation, but more "I cannot do what I want" and it is frustrating I do feel like it's the same in every creative industry when you have the vision, but cannot create it. I supposed you made some mistake in the ten years of composing, what's one mistake that ended up teaching you a lesson ?

K.A: The thing that immediately comes to mind is a literal mistake when I am playing my music and I make mistakes. I would stop and start over. It was brought to my attention that people don't know that you are making a mistake, especially when it comes from your own music. Once I really thought about that and fully registered that, I ended up being a lot better at playing through mistakes. It got to a point where I started playing through the mistakes but my face would tell you when I made a mistake. I would literally say "Oops, that's not how it goes." I think it's the biggest lesson that I've learnt. Nobody is going to know when you are making a mistake, especially when it's your own piece. If anything, they're just going to think you're playing a different variation of it.

S.T: With all the software, do you have to play your song in one go?

K.A: Within a piece, I do it all in one. I am not good with the software enough to make it sounds like I haven't clipped all the bits together. My sister worked for Disney and I've done this composition for her with all the Disney songs. It was 13 minutes of music and I did separate clips. You could tell it was separate clips. It was hard to stop. For my album, I did separate clips from songs, but not within the song.

S.T: That's very interesting to hear about that. Recording in one go must be so exhausting at some point. It's nearly the end of this interview so let me ask you two more question: was there a specific moment or project when you thought you were a full artist?

K.A: Yeah, absolutely. I just had this moment the other day where I thought about the fact that I have a whole album out. It is crazy. I have ten pieces that are streaming and people are actually listening to them. I like looking at my own analytics. It's crazy to think that the piece that I made with my brain was streamed a hundred thousands times. 11 000 people are following my account, so I might not be able to play in front of these people at the same time, but they are following my music account. I never thought my music could be on the same platform as Kendrick or Beyoncé. It is not the same level, but my music is on the same exact platform as their music. My fiancé pointed that out. It is a confidence booster in itself. There's people that told me they put my music into a playlist that features my favorite composer. Little did they know they are my inspiration. It is an unreal feeling. I always wanted to compose and share my music. It is crazy to me.

S.T: You are so right about it. It is absolutely insane when you think about it. Social media kind of destroyed our perceptions of numbers when it comes to followers, even a hundred if a lot if you have to play in front of them. That's absolutely amazing. And, if you do not mind me asking: what are you dreaming about when it comes to your career?

K.A: I'm going to do my very specific dream. *Grey's Anatomy* is my very favorite show ever. I love Shonda Rhimes' work. I would love my pieces to be featured in one of the episodes of *Grey's Anatomy*. Just a snippet is fine. But in general, I would love my music to be in a TV show, a movie, a documentary... That would be my "I made it moment".

Thank you so much for taking the time to read Cassidy's interview, it was a real pleasure speaking with her. If you'd like to support her work, you can stream her music on any platform and follow her on social media at @trappsical.

The love affair THAT STARTED IT ALL

The first time I remember seeing Mount Rainier, I was driving north on I-5 and there she was. Towering in the distance, her snow-covered peak glowed in the fading light. She was massive, commanding, and beautiful. My heart caught in my throat. It was love at first sight.

At first, I thought it was just going to be an infatuation. I would find myself gazing at Rainier from different spots around the city, mesmerized by her ever-changing moods. Sometimes, she would wake up happy, radiating a soft, pink light. Sometimes, she wouldn't wake up at all, her peak hidden in mist and clouds.

I'd plan hikes and weekend getaways to get even more views of Rainier. The mountains I had grown up with were gentler with forest covered peaks. Rainier was something else entirely. She made me feel small in a way that wasn't diminishing, but freeing.

It wasn't long before I needed to see her up close. I started hiking her trails, walking through her old-growth forests and her high-altitude flower meadows. It quickly became clear: I would spend the rest of my life loving mountains.

Rainier was my gateway drug. She set the standard for beauty, for challenge, for reverence. And so I sought others like her. I looked in awe at the Grand Tetons in Wyoming, their stark edges seemingly appearing out of no where. I wandered through the Himalayas, where mountain tops rose high around us and prayer flags fluttered in the wind. I hiked through the jagged peaks surrounding Cusco, where the ancient paths lead me up higher and higher. And then, there's Mount Cook. New Zealand's highest peak, a giant made of ice and granite, rising defiantly from the Southern Alps. I fell for her too. Each mountain, a new love.



But like all great loves, my romance with mountains comes with heartbreak. Climate change is altering these places faster than we can comprehend. I've seen Rainier's glaciers retreat year by year, watched as snowfall becomes less predictable, as summer wildfires cast a haze over once-pristine views. The same is true for Mount Cook, where vast sections of ice have melted, leaving behind bare rock where glaciers once thrived. The mountains endure, but they are changing. And I wonder: will my son's generation see them as I have?

It's my love for the mountains that drives me—to advocate, to 'leave no trace', to lobby for policies that protect our wild spaces. To teach my son not just to cherish the mountains, but to stand up for them. Because when you love something deeply, you don't stand by as it disappears. You fight with everything you have to keep it alive.

Sometimes, I wonder what life would have been like had I not moved to Seattle, and stared at Mt. Rainier every morning from my window. Would I still feel this love for the mountains? This need to lace up my boots and go? It's impossible to say.

But I do know this: the mountains have shaped me. They have been my greatest teachers and my most patient guides. And though Rainier was my first mountain love, she is not last. Because once you fall for the mountains, you keep coming back for more.

Helena 'Ellie' Huizenga

Love OUR WORTHY MUSE

Let it be known:
I, who have reveled in the splendor of true artists,
Resting asunder, bursting forth from love forlorn—
Their despair caught,
Migrating to the spill of ink.

Yet dare I,
In waggish rebellion,
Unveil the tale of our ardor,
My dearest darling?

Shall I, with boldness,
Compose the splendor of our rapture—
In elation, in zeal—
While Shame and Fear, swift steeds they are,
Give chase to break through my gates,
To send forth Satiety,
His coach to whisk you away
Into the folds of atrophy?

Will they bargain for me,
Cast into the depths of hell,
For scribing the real divine—
Our worthy muse?

Talespinners, tempestuous in breeding despair—
And despair alone,
Their sacramentum branded.
"The blasphemer!" they'll call me,
I, who have wrought upon them
The most joyous, fervent victim of love.

Let them try to wash the ink from my palms—
They shall find your name, stained upon it.

Cia Queyquep

Fluffy

by **Hannah Dilday**

Foxtrot, Lima, Uniform, Foxtrot, Foxtrot, Yankee.

I overheard you on the phone with the internet provider
sharing your password of choice, fifteen years ago.
Quickly followed by the ever clarifying he's my daughter's dog
but he was your dog too.

Always beside you, scurrying at your feet
the bell you fastened to his collar jingling faintly
so, you'd never step on those tiny paws that chased after you.
When you slept, he slept beside you
and when you sang, he did his best to sing along.

When you came home, mom would look down at him
and in the most cheerful of voices say *Daddy's home!*
He'd leap off your chair
as if he sprouted wings just for this occasion
eager to greet his favorite human, eyes bright with love.

But one day you didn't come home
then one day became two, and two became three.
He waited patiently for your arrival,
ears perking with enthusiasm at even the faintest sound outside
curious, where you had been.

For days, weeks, and months
he overheard the shouting, the sobbing, the silence—
the unmistakable sounds of grief.
Eventually, his ears no longer perked-up when footsteps neared.
Eventually, he understood

Daddy wasn't coming home.

All My Love **All My Time**

I think there is no greater act of love than patience. To give someone all your love is to surrender the most precious of human commodities – time. It is both man’s greatest enemy and our most cherished treasure. Yet a mother’s love is incapable of this confinement – neither duration nor death can diminish her.

From the beginning she relinquishes all of her love, life, and blood. Before her eyes have met your new wrinkly face, even before the promise of your first breath. On the knowledge of having her love you may live a century with ease. At the end, it matters not that the eclipse of your lives was always destined to be ephemeral. The pact is sealed at once ... You have stolen all of her love as she will continue to steal all your time, long after hers is spent.

There is no one quite like a mother to occupy your mind as easily as drawing a breath - yet now I choke. You are callously sprinkled in the lingering scent of a hot Earl Grey or a spritz of Santal 33, hurriedly snatched away by the enduring breeze. I’m told you were born on a beautiful spring day. But the world wouldn’t heed my selfish wish to stop time, she allows your season to come again though you aren’t here to welcome it. You could have stayed a thousand splendorous springs, and it would still never be enough time.

That despicable lapse of shadow, there will always exist a cold chasm between the love we have, and the time we labour to fit it into.

She, whose heart has been plagiarised to give me form. She, who has nourished me on her sacrifice, her time. But what of your own love and legacy? The light you always saw in me is merely a reflection of you, eternally beating - I am, after all, made from all your love and all your time.

Neha Wahiwal

ALL my Love, ALL my Time

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That despicable lapse of shadow, there will always exist a cold char
we have, and the time we labour to fit it into.

DAWN

Acai was a warrior of the desert. Her bow never missed any enemy no matter how strong they may be. She was friend to the majestic Rain Birds of the Sky and Protector of the Venomous Tipped Mombas of the Sand. While she loved her desert realm she never felt quite at home. It was as if something was missing. She had heard stories of a place called the Sea in the Dawn. A realm in between the land and sky that could only be found at dawn. Many warriors had tried to find this realm, but many never returned. It was rumored that a colossal creature known as Leviathan roamed the sea, protecting the realm from those unworthy of entering. Leviathan feared nothing and was rumored to listen to one person only. The Queen of the Dawn. She had yet to return to her realm after leaving for a meeting with the King of Shadows. Ever since, Leviathan allowed no one to enter.

One day, Acai was taking a walk among the shoreline. The desert behind her stretched out endlessly for miles with nothing but hills of hot, golden sand and red banded rocks. Ahead of her lay the Ocean of Reflection. The dark blue waters remained still as glass. Further away from the shore, tendrils of smoke billowed from the water. Acai's hair fell in tight curls and her ochre toned skin seemed to glow in the setting sun. Her emerald green eyes scanned the calm sea. She did not hesitate to step into the waters with her bow or sword. Nobody entered this ocean with a weapon unless they wished for death. Yet, here she stood with no fear. She knew if she ventured any further the waters would boil her alive. This was the path to the Sea in the Dawn, but only Leviathan could traverse it. A human could only go waist deep to call the creature.

The still waters suddenly began to move. Roiling waves rose from the depths spraying salt and foam around her. A small whirlpool formed, gradually growing larger with each passing second. Turquoise scales quickly flickered in the sun before settling just beneath the surface. A jet of water shot towards the sky as a colossal, turquoise and midnight blue, scaly head appeared behind the falling droplets. Dark, violet eyes watched the girl beneath him. The entire ocean seemed to roil with Leviathan's flaring fins. His dangerously sharp teeth seemed to be set in a sneer as he took in the girl that was now trapped by his enormous body.

Acai stared at the creature unflinching. As terrifying as Leviathan was, there was something beautiful to him as well. She did not reach for her bow or sword.

You dare bring weapons into my waters?

She shivered as her head tingled slightly. Leviathan had just spoken in her mind. The voice was strong and deep like thunder that shakes the earth.

"Rarely do I go anywhere without them," Acai bravely answered.

You are foolish if you believe I will take you to the Sea in the Dawn. Your weapons are a challenge to me.

A few of Leviathan's scales brushed over her arm. Surprisingly, it came as a comforting sensation—as if someone were caressing her.



“You cannot speak outside of my mind?”

Do not try to distract me, girl!

“I am not. But for one so strong, I find it hard to believe you cannot speak outside of your enemies’ minds.”

Leviathan lowered his head closer, his teeth unnervingly close. *I am unable to speak like you in this form.*

“This form? You have another?”

Sadness seemed to ripple through him, but it was soon covered by defiance. Yes, I do. Acai boldly reached out and brushed her fingers gently over his turquoise scales that were covered in black glowing dots. She needed to understand the sadness that had taken this great creature, even if it was only for a second. Unintelligible whispers seemed to dance in her mind, creating a strange pull within her. Was that...longing? Leviathan’s body seemed to ripple beneath her fingers.

What do you think you’re doing? His voice remained firm, but the rage had subdued.

“You know who I am,” Acai whispered. Her eyes suddenly widened. “What is your real name?”

You already know my name.

A loud screech echoed above them. A large Rain Bird soared past them, its white and gold speckled wings cutting through the air smoothly. It turned its large, feathered head towards Acai for just a moment before disappearing into the clouds.

“No. I know the name everyone fears. Since you have another form you must have a real name. What is it?”

Leviathan eyed her warily. Not only was she fearless, unlike many before her, but she was being watched by the Rain Birds. It was rare for them to protect anyone.

Suddenly, Acai pressed her hands to the sides of his snout. His skin, although scaly, felt slippery as if he had been lying in oil. He was surprisingly warm like the air surrounding a fire. Both gave a sharp intake of breath. Image after image flashed through Acai’s mind like lightning. An image of a place where the sky beneath her feet was a pool of orange juice with streaks of purple and pink running through it; a turquoise blue ocean above her head filled with creatures of all sizes swimming gracefully; gold and white speckled birds flying in between the streaks of the morning sun; a golden crown with a serpentine figure in the middle surrounded by sapphires, amethysts, and citrines; and a man with dark skin and long black hair whose muscular arms were wrapped around a woman’s waist. Dark, violet eyes watch her with admiration.

“Kiom,” she murmured.

Leviathan’s scales began to shed and his body convulsed. It was only a few seconds before the large creature had disappeared, replaced by a tall man with long black hair and symbols shaped like serpents covering his back.

“Y-you’re her. My queen. The Queen of the Dawn.”

Acai looked at him, mouth slightly agape. “These memories...they’re mine?”

“From a life long ago. When you met the King of Shadows something must’ve happened to make you lose your memories. You were gone for years, but you’ve been in this desert all along.”

“I always felt as if something was missing.”

Kiom cupped her face gently. “You came back to me.”

Acai smiled. “I never left. You merely knew me by another name, just like I knew you by another.”

“Come home, Dawn.” His voice sent pleasant shivers cascading down her spine.

“Later.”

Without another word, Dawn pulled Kiom against her, fitting her lips perfectly against his. Kiom held her tightly, grateful to have the one he had been yearning for for so long back in his arms. A crown made entirely of turquoise and midnight blue scales formed above Kiom’s head. Warmth blossomed within Dawn. Finally, she understood what the missing part of her had been. She pressed herself closer to him, inhaling his scent of cool saltwater.

Above the Sea of Reflection, a path made of all the colors of dawn began to form. It undulated like gentle waves and glittered as if diamonds had been dropped inside. It rose into the sky, disappearing into a sea of blue. The air became full of gold and white speckled Rain Birds screeching in triumph. Beautiful, long feathers rained down from the sky, covering the sand as well as the newly formed path. In the talons of one of the majestic birds was a golden crown covered in jewels, waiting to be placed on its rightful owner once more.

No longer was the Sea in the Dawn without a ruler. No longer was Kiom stuck in one form. No longer was she called Acai. No longer were the two forever separated.

The Queen of Dawn and her beloved, at last reunited, had finally returned.

Brittney Graves

GARDEN *Haven* LIGHT

I spent endless days and years, futile as a child
pouring water onto fruitless soil expecting crops to grow.
Then one evening the gates opened to an unfamiliar garden,
already full of flowers that grew wild, bright, and free.
I gave to them my everything, every ounce of my devotion
flowing back into the flowers that brought new meaning to my life.
For the birds of paradise are in full bloom,
red chrysanthemums and roses opening up to beams of daylight.

How I am inspired by the garden I have found,
an oasis in the midst of drought of everlasting years,
the clearest blue I'd seen in all my life.

In my beloved garden, I planned to fill unfinished plots
with blossoms from my own home to match every vibrant shade.
I worked hard to build it up with the love of my own hands,
so that the future of the beds could belong to more than one.
In the arrangements I had made, every detail had dual meaning,
like the tulips sown in autumn that began to bloom in spring.
White hyacinths sowed between the rows already grown,
and promises of bluebells for every years to come.

How I cherish the haven I have found,
somewhere safe from beasts that hunt and feast on my despair,
and now find their tables empty evermore.

I became a better keeper, through my days tending the garden,
fulfilling its necessities and unearthing ways to thrive.
Every day spent on the ground, my hands working the soil,
they grow beholden to the roots that made them soft.
I uncovered vines alive in me, pink flowers that I'd buried
with my childhood slowly poking up from ground of melted ice.
I'd not have found them without following the path into the garden,
the garden in the sun where I plan to make my home.

How I love to live for the light I have found,
for as a sunflower looks to its kind as it would the morning star,
so I turn to you at break of dawn.

Mary Stella



©prismiya

BARELY *Unloved*

I never imagined myself saying this—but I'm glad I moved into that old room above that Chinese restaurant when I came here. I met Ryo there.

As a young Indian, I didn't fathom moving to America to be so... lonely. Oh, I missed my family's warmth, the soil of my land, and the sound of my language on the tongues of those I dearly loved. I thought, "I worked hard to get here, so I am going to work hard to be here!"

With two suitcases and a backpack, I searched Arlington through and through, hoping to find somewhere to live for a while. But everywhere I searched, I either had to sell a kidney to rent a small room or collect rent from cockroaches to live in an almost-decent one. Luckily, I found one room above a Chinese restaurant; the owner—an old man—let me live there without rent, but I had to work at his restaurant for at least an hour after I got back from my full-time job. It didn't sound bad, for the room had cracks in its walls and was dusty from not being opened in a year. All I had to do was earn enough money so I could save up for a well-off place.

The night I settled there, I went down to the Chinese restaurant to order a meal. The old man told me to sit down, and a while later, he brought me some noodles to eat. As I munched on the noodles—I hadn't eaten anything in the past three days—I asked the man, retiring from his work for the night, "How much is this?"

"Free," he said. I smiled. Most of my experience in America with money hadn't been predictable, so this was a pleasant surprise.

As I munched on, the old man took a glance at me and asked if I wanted more. I was ashamed; I didn't want to seem like an absolute glutton, but he looked at me with such eyes—the eyes of a father who would willingly give his own chicken for you so that you could have one more. I hesitated, then I nodded a bit. He rose from his chair and put some more noodles in my bowl. "Eat well," he said. "Thank you..."

I continued slurping and gobbling those noodles—if anyone saw me that time, they would pity me thinking of how hungry I must've been—my worst fear. My worst fear came true. A group of boys, most likely my age, entered the restaurant. I had two choices with their own consequences: swallow everything and choke, or spit it all out, looking disgustful. Either way, I looked repulsive with all that in my mouth. So I just bit down and covered my mouth as they walked in. Two of them just eyed me and made their way to the owner—but this one—he kept his gaze on me. We stared at each other till I couldn't handle the noodles in my mouth almost making me choke. Still covering my mouth, I slowly swallowed them, looking down. I looked up again only to see him looking at me. He then smirked at me, walking towards the old man.

I wiped my face and dashed to join their conversation. The old man introduced me to the boys. They lived here and worked at the restaurant as well. "She's living in that room?" the boy who smirked at me earlier asked. "Isn't it old...? It isn't suitable for a woman," He frowned. On further

discussion, they decided that I would be living in his room, while he would move into the other old one. Then, the old man and the two other boys started conversing in Chinese. I realised it was time for me to leave. "I don't understand them either..." The boy spoke, "I'm Japanese, you see." I smiled. We walked away from them. He told me his name—*Ryo*.

I was glad I had made a friend.

But Ryo didn't seem like a friend more so in the next few months. I found myself getting a crush on him—so fatal, that I had to confess to him one day because he looked so damnably handsome in that suit.

The way he looked at me as I told him I liked him—he frowned, hinting at confusion, but his eyes softened. "Really?" he asked. I slowly nodded, now worrying if he didn't like me that way. "Same," he said.

"I like you too," he said. Then he shook his head and said, "No. I have found myself so foolishly, irrevocably, unfathomably in love with you that I do stupid things like dress up in this suit for no reason but to see if you would notice. I don't like you at all; I love you."

He loves like a little girl.

Over the days, we ate together and slept together; we did everything together that the old man himself asked us as we sat for dinner after our work at the Chinese restaurant, "So, you and Ryo are lovers now?"

I nearly stopped breathing. Ryo chuckled and whispered, "Tell him. Tell him that you love me."

That's how the other three people at the residence got to know about us as well. I realised that I told no one else about us, not even my parents. But it was alright—I'll tell everyone about us when we both save up enough to move to a better place.

That time never came.

Someone threatened the old man with reporting the 45-year-old restaurant that fed almost all of Arlington to the police as it was 'illegal'. It wasn't. A week went by, and the police came over to arrest him. We all were so frustrated—he didn't even do anything wrong.

When the old man was being cuffed and pushed into that car, the townspeople riled up. Men, women, white people, black people, Asian people, disabled people, people of different religions—everyone was out there blocking the car from moving. Those people joined hands and chanted for the old man to be released. That's when I realised—love is in everything—or at least, it is there.

The next day, we heard that the court had declared the man an illegal immigrant and that he would be deported back to where he came from—somewhere he had not set a foot in for 50 years. The crowd in Arlington protested. I heard a man at a protest preach, "Every person who has been served Chinese food in Arlington has been served by none other than him. This man has housed many people. His restaurant has provided hundreds of Americans with daily meals throughout its existence. It is dreadful to deport such an honourable man."

I guess what love you give, you get back.

Ryo's friends warned us to pack our bags and accommodate ourselves somewhere else—the police may start suspecting us of being illegal immigrants as well. I looked at Ryo, my stomach churning as I feared being sent back to India and losing him. He held my hands, caressing them; slowly and softly, he assured me that everything would be fine, and asked me to help him find a place for us to live for the next few months. I quickly pulled out my phone to see how much I had in my account—enough to buy a van or a run-down house somewhere or the other. With this and the money Ryo had with him, we would at least be able to find a decent place.

It was raining heavily that night; we hopped on the truck his friend brought for us. We would be moving into a house on the outskirts, which we bought with our money.

We decided to rest and catch up on our sleep near a gas station.

I was suddenly awakened by the police sirens around me; I rushed to wake Ryo and the two boys up. We realised we couldn't drive the truck away to escape from them anymore. The most we could do was run. And yes, they were clearly after us.

As the cars approached, we jumped out and ran away. Looking back, I saw the cars following us. After almost two hours of running, I told Ryo, panting, «I can't take it anymore.» Red, then blue light shone on his face.

Ryo took a deep breath, looking at the police car. He then called his friends, and they ran towards us frantically, though they would potentially be in danger as well. That's brotherhood. He told them I was tired. Though they were saddened to leave him behind, they quickly helped me run away with them.

I looked at him for the last time; he was surrendering to the police. What I saw after that told me that I lost him forever.

He loved me, didn't he?

He loved me.

I now knew what love was, and that it is there, everywhere; now I'll be damned by his soul if I don't believe that I am loved and I am capable of loving.

Nuri.



©Nighthawks - Edward Hopper

BUILDING A COMMUNITY AS AN EMERGING ARTIST

AN INTERVIEW WITH *Ruby Vidor*

"Those sparks of inspiration feel really spiritual, it didn't come from me but from something or someone else."

Talking with artists have been one of our favorite additions to Forevermore, and we are more than delighted to be able to feature an interview with Ruby Vidor. Forevermore is deeply intertwined with music and being able to discuss with artists that we love is a great honour. We truly hope you will fall in love with Ruby as much as we did.



Ruby Vidor : My name is Ruby Vidor. I'm a singer-songwriter-producer based in London. I make...I don't even know how to describe my music. I think I'm on a journey of discovering what kind of music I make but it's really a pop love child of soul and folk with a love of storytelling, ethereal music to make you feel like you're in a different world. An ethereal place but you're also grounded at the same time.

Selma Tabti (interviewer) : Should we start with the show you gave last week in London?

R.V : Yes, for sure! Last week was honestly so unexpected. I haven't played a show in six months and performing live is my favorite thing to do. Writing and creating music is amazing but performing is so special to me. I've always been a performer and I just feel so comfortable there. This is this very crazy feeling that I get when I'm performing...I have everyone's attention in the room. This is the closest thing that feels like meditation. This is this very amazing feeling to be one with everyone. I don't think in life, I've ever found that same feeling. It's so special to me and I love it. I was so excited to do it. I had no expectations, other than the fact that for my previous gig, I sold around 30 tickets. It was really great, so I was like "I'd love to sell more". I ended up doubling my ticket sales, so I was very happy about it. I went on stage knowing that there would be 60 people. I didn't have this stress about the fact that no one would show up. When I got on, the room was just full of people and friends, but

also for the first time and in my career so far, all these new fans, and people who discovered my music. I've never had actual fans coming to my show before so it was really cool. At the end of my show, I sang *Steamy*, the song that I've released a week before and when the chorus came, everyone started singing it! I literally forgot the words of my own song because I've never had people singing my songs with me before. It was such an amazing feeling, I've dreamed about it and it is literally on my vision board. I have a few things on my vision board that I wrote at the start of the year... I was looking at it the other night and I realised that a lot happened at my show. Having 60 people there was mental, it meant the world to me. It felt really rewarding that after three years of moving to London and a lot of work, people find my music and actually came to my show. It was amazing.

S.T : It sounds amazing. I am so sad I've missed that! When you think about it, 60 people in a room is a lot. You sound so happy when you talk about it. What's your favorite thing about being on stage?

R.V : Oh, it actually changed now. I did my first gig at sixteen, so I've been performing for ten years now and I used to love the feeling of meditation, everyone connects to everyone is the room. This is my favorite feeling, being all present in this song right here. This is such a spiritual feeling to me. But also recently I've played so many gigs and so many gigs to empty rooms,

strangers and loud bars when no one could hear me or know my music. I am so used to performing to impress people and performing to prove myself to people. I am so confident in my music that I can get on a stage and win people over, but I really need to get them. That's why I really loved performing. It was always this feeling of trying and impress new people. But on Tuesday, at my last show, it kind of shifted. I didn't have to prove myself and impress everyone because they were all here for me. This is this weird feeling when I can perform without trying to impress the people who listen to me. It felt so communal, and it felt like a group activity. This was my favorite thing about performing that night.

S.T : That is incredible. It is definitely a new step into your music career.

R.V : Absolutely. It is a new feeling and I've never thought I would feel different things from performing. I just love singing. I used to play guitar and sing all of my songs; I used to be quite a folky songwriter but now that I've moved away from that and that I am able to bring my produced track on stage, I feel like at every gig I sing, I take one instrument off every song. When I just sing, I feel so present. It's great to sing and play at the same time but I love to put the instrument down and perform by dancing and using my hands. One of my favorite parts is just singing to people.



S.T : Let's go back to your childhood, how was the music scene where you grew up?

R.V : Oh, I was really lucky to grow up in Melbourne, Australia. A fun fact: Melbourne has the most live music venues per square capita in the world. It was packed with live music venues and I was really lucky to grow up there. I played my first gig at sixteen and then kept doing it all around Melbourne. It was like East London grungy venues, that was the vibes. I was so lucky to grow up in that city for that. My friends were also in a band, so I would jump on stage with them. It was a fun night for everyone, all my friends would come see us and it was so much fun. But I got to a point where I was, is this it? I want to level up, where's the industry? And that's when I've decided to move to London. I am really glad I did.

S.T : Did it open more opportunities for you?

R.V : I think so. All my influence back home were British artists like Holly Humberstones, and I've just realised that everything that is influencing my music is coming from the UK. I was like "London feels a good place to be" and I am so glad I did because I feel that now is the first time I have all these people connecting with my music. I also got more connection to the industry since moving here, it was definitely the right move. It took me six months to fully appreciate the city. It was such a culture shock from Australia. I am finally in a state where I am settled and I just love it.

S.T : Did music play an important part of your childhood?

R.V : Oh, yes. It all started with the guitar when I was eight-years-old. My mum side is all very musical, like at the end of dinner, all the guitars will come out and my uncle would start playing and singing. Every Christmas we still do that, we all had a few drinks, the guitar comes out and we're all singing. My uncle was the first person to buy me my first guitar and he taught me. As soon as I got the guitar, I said that I wanted to sing. It was very natural. I remember he told me it was very difficult to sing and play at the same time, and remember thinking I would prove him wrong. I was

"I go back to the river where we first met when my heart beat out of my chest, and I never wanted it to end"

completely dedicated to singing and playing. From that, I've started singing songs I liked and it led to writing my first song around eleven or twelve. I was just writing songs about my friends, and how some were mean to me.

S.T : Would you say that getting your first guitar was the moment you really connected with music?

R.V : Yeah. It was a little red guitar, it was so cute. I got it during a family day, and you could not take it away from me. As soon as I got it, I was glued to it.

S.T : Were there artists that you loved very early on, or an artist that really introduced you to music ?

R.V : I used to love Australian music growing up. I had this very clear memory of having this Missy Higgins' CD. Me and my dad would put it in the car when we were driving to my grandparents' farm. We would drive just the two of us in the front seat, put the CD in and just sing the whole way. When I started to get older, I got one of The Veronicas and that was the time when I got into bands. But at eight-years-old, I was introduced to Beyoncé's first album and it seriously changed my life. I was so obsessed. I went at her concert and my mind just totally exploded. The whole performance aspect and being able to perform music... Listening to a lot of folk, it was all singing and beautiful instruments but Beyoncé was performing. It was my first introduction to performing music. As I got older, I've still listened to a lot of Australian artists. My Dad used to sing a lot of James Taylor when I was younger, so he brought this folky element which I love, but then my mum got the best music taste ever. She is the disco queen, she loves a bit of housy disco stuff, and a lot of 70s disco. It kind of brought a little bit of soul into my life as well. I was listening to a lot

of Sister Sledge. My mum would be dancing in the kitchen, it was a lot of disco and soul so I really think when growing up I got a lot of Australian folk influences, but also all of these soul disco. It was a rich mix between vocal performers and amazing storytellers. That's where I want my music to go.

S.T : And now, do you have artists that truly influence the music you create?

R.V : Olivia Dean is definitely up there. Her songwriting, performance and production... everything she does, I just love it. Maggie Rogers is also one of my biggest inspirations. I am such a fan of hers. Every interview that comes out, I find her whole outlook on music so aligned in how I feel and I find it very relatable. Her music is incredible as well. So yeah, they're probably my two number one.

S.T : Do they influence your creative process in any way?

R.V : Definitely Maggie does. *Heard It In A Past Life* altered the way that I think about melody and how I think about instruments. She completely expanded my whole world about how melody and instruments could sound like. I took a lot of influence from her. Olivia Dean really inspires me performance wise. Especially bringing her world to stage, and her styling and outfit really makes me kind of rethink what performance should look like.

S.T : And now, what does your songwriting process look like?

R.V : It's very different. It changes all the time. I go through a very dry spell of creativity but when I'm like flowing – I am not that much of a hippie but I'm a little bit – but I really do think that when a good song is coming out of me, I feel like it comes from a deeper space, it comes from this boxes of inspiration. I really get these impulses of ideas and they're always the best ideas so I always make sure to write them down. I have them in my phone so I go about my day but I still have a voice memo of a melody that just comes to me. I really think they're the most special things. Those moments are really important to me so I always make sure to write them down or record them. The first thing I do when I sit down at my studio setup is bringing out all those notes and memos, and I start to flesh them out. If I were to sit down and start writing without any of those, I would be able to write a song but it never comes out as special. Those sparks of inspiration feel really spiritual, it didn't come from me but from something or someone else. It's like it's being passed to me like "you need to create something around that" and it doesn't happen a lot, that is just for my good songs. For *River*, I think I was literally on the toilets and I was doing my things and the chorus just came to me. *Nectar* came to me in the shower. I knew they were really special songs. I got a lot of songs but I don't think they're good because I didn't get this spark. It's a really hard thing because I can't wait for it to happen. Right now, I haven't written a song in six months. I need to find a different process because I can't wait and sit around for something to happen. My favorite way of creating is definitely feeling this spark, but I still write songs without it.

S.T : Can you be inspired by other forms of media such as literature or cinema?

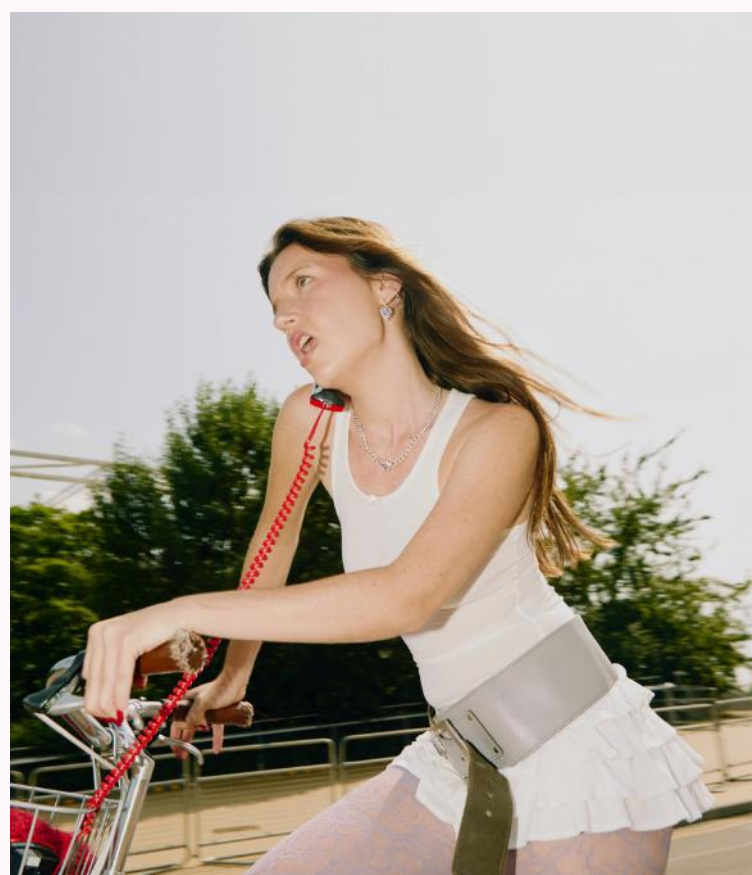
R.V : This is going to be such a hot take but I don't lack inspiration. I don't usually get inspired by other things. Yes, visually when I am building worlds around my songs. I can listen to songs and think I could create something like that but I don't usually turn to other media for inspiration. I really try to keep my songs in my own world, I want them to come from such an authentic place, and I don't usually feel inspired by other music or films. I feel like it kind of limits me and I'd rather go internal and find inspiration within myself. I find a lot of inspiration from meditating, clearing my mind, because I feel like I open my channels up to receive inspiration that comes from a deeper place. I try to not bring the outside in my writings, I want it to come from me.

S.T : I really like your take. Everything is original and comes within you.

R.V : When I go into a session with other producers, I usually bring some tracks to listen to in order to set the vibe and give some kind of direction. I do bring music that I am listening to or that I like the sounds of, but when I write on my own, I try to block out the rest of the world.

S.T : In terms of creativity and inspiration, how much of your songwriting is inspired by love?

R.V : Yeah, absolutely. When I don't have anything interesting going on in my life...well, I was known in high school for writing about everyone else. I was inspired by my friends' situations. They would break up with their boyfriend and I would just write a song about it. That definitely shaped how I write music. I would write about everything that happened. I remember being sixteenth or seventeenth and me and my boyfriend just broke up. I was heartbroken. I was at a party a week later and a girl from school kissed him. I was absolutely devastated. It happened on a Saturday night and by Sunday I had a whole song written about her, calling her out, not in a mean way but..yeah. I got asked to sing at a school assembly on Monday and I performed that song, completely outing her. All the teachers were like...okay, fair, that was a great song. So yeah, I was always inspired by what was happening around me.



As I get older, I think it is changing because I try so hard to live a content life, surround myself with good people. I want my life to be really peaceful and amazing, so I kind of lost that feeling of heartbreak...I recently discovered the power of writing stories about things, like a universal concept. I am starting to see music as a fun way of storytelling. When I come back to write about myself, and what's happening in my life and my friendships, they're usually the most special.

S.T : Do you think it's easier for you to communicate your feelings through songs?

R.V : Yeah, definitely. I wrote a song to my little sister, and I've probably had to say a lot more in this song than I could probably say in person.

S.T : Going back to your music and streaming, you put some demos on Soundcloud. What makes you decide that a song can come out on Spotify?

R.V : That's such a good question. It's so ruled by social media now, the whole culture around teasing music and it has been such a massive thing recently. I used to know after writing a song if it was good enough to be released on Spotify. That has been thrown away by the whole culture of teasing music. *Steamy* is my last release and I only released it because it did really well when I started teasing it on Tiktok. I was really surprised and I thought I might just embrace the system instead of fighting it. I tease a bunch of songs and whatever works, I just release. That's what I did with *Steamy*, it was great to do it that way. Why not give people what they want if they like that? I am so in my own world when I am writing music, I don't really know what's going to connect and resonate with other people so it's a really interesting approach when it comes to releasing music. The song I am working on now, which is called *On The Run*, I haven't teased it, I'm just going to release it because I love it so much.

S.T : You should do both of them. Don't stop yourself from releasing music!

R.V : I know, but it's such a risk to flop...I think teasing it's such a safe way to make sure people like the song. But it also stripped a lot of the creativity and artistic integrity behind the release, and that element of surprise, but also what's the point of releasing a music that doesn't resonate with people? I am still working that out.

S.T : You've mentioned that *Steamy* was not intended to be released. You said it was more like a writing challenge for you. What changed your mind ?

R.V : It was literally the people. I had so much fun writing it because there was no pressure. When I finished it, I didn't know if it was a good song but I had so much fun writing it. It was a challenge for me to be more loose with my writing. I posted it on Tiktok and people commented saying that they loved it. I only released it because people liked it. I don't know if I would have chosen that song to be honest. That's cool, sometimes it's not about me. If I just wanted to be about me, I wouldn't release music at all. As soon as I want to release something and put it into the world, it's because I want other people to hear it. I want to share my music with them and it's better if it resonates with them.

S.T: How does presaves work for you in terms, is it a big deal as an indie artist?

R.V : Yeah, it really is. What it does is that it gives Spotify data, and helps with the algorithm. If you have zero or fifty, it just gives a little bit of data to Spotify to push it out algorithmically when the release comes out. Currently, 63% of *Steamy* streams comes from the algorithm, so radio play and algorithmic playlist. In order to get the algorithm to pick up a song that people would want to listen to, presaves are so important. 68% of my streams come from algorithmic playlists. I think it only happened because presaves give that data to Spotify. I do think it is really important.

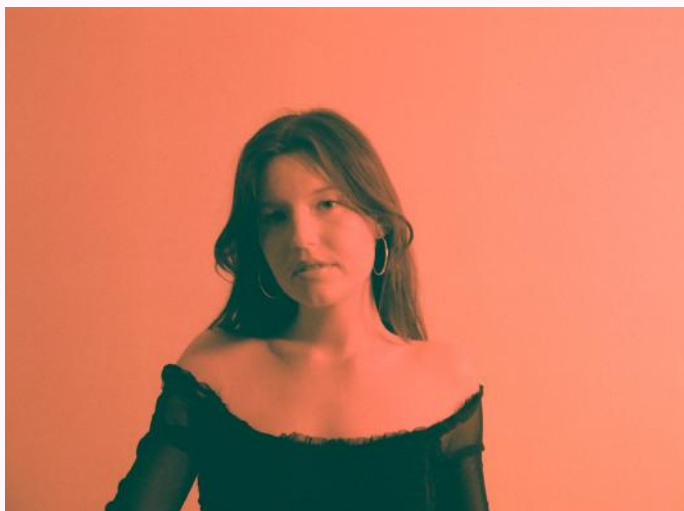
S.T : Do liking and putting the song in your own playlist also boost your music?

R.V : Yeah, totally. Doing that only makes up 15% of my streams. While it is important, it is not the biggest drive for my streams, it is the algorithm. .

S.T : Do you think most of your listeners come from Tiktok or from Spotify's algorithm?

R.V : Hm...When I was playing at my last gig, I asked people when they found me and a lot said Tiktok. I was really surprised because I don't have a lot of followers.

S.T: I feel like people are most leaning towards listening to indie artists in the way that they want this sense of community. It is probably because of the price of concert tickets now. Yes, I feel like more people want to lean into this indie music community.



R.V : That is so interesting. I am so wrapped up in my own artist perspective that I haven't thought about it.

S.T : Yeah, I feel people start to want to go back to small gigs. It is what happened with Erin Lecount a couple months ago. She started with "Silver Spoon" and now she is playing shows, and maybe touring as a headliner.

R.V : That makes so much sense. People are totally craving that, being part of a small fandom. I try to create that with my Patreon because people want that intimacy with group chats. I've been trying to put a lot of effort into creating this sense of community. It is so important. It is crazy to see that I would just put a Tiktok of me dancing in my garden to the sound of my songs and the same day my streams spiked. Another girl posted my songs to one of her Tiktok and that same day, my stream spiked so it really helps. I've seen amazing results on Tiktok.

S.T : Discovering artists on Tik Tok also gives the chance to small artists to find their community without being a nepobaby. I really like Sam Fender's take on that. He said "The music industry is 80% who are privately educated. A kid from where I'm from can't afford to tour, so there are probably thousands writing songs that are better than mine, poignant lyrics about the country, but they will not be seen because it's rigged." (The Sunday Times).

R.V : Oh my god absolutely, I couldn't agree more. At the moment, there's a big lack from the industry of wanting to invest or take a gamble on new artists. If I was a nepo baby, I could probably get a lot of advice and tips from my circle. As someone who doesn't have any family members in the industry, it is quite hard. You need people to give you a chance, help you and develop you, but you have to do it on your own. There's a lack of wanting to invest in talents that need help to develop.

S.T : Absolutely, that is why fanbase/fangirls really do help you when you are not supported by the industry.

R.V : Oh my god absolutely. When I was at my gig, all the girls that came were so devoted. They knew every word and this is what it is all about. Fuck everything else. The community I am creating is all that matters. I am not interested in chasing the industry now, like chasing managers or labels. I am just interested to know how I could get more people to come to my show. I would love to do music full time, but there's so many steps to go big. Where do I put my attention? Is it chasing down labels, getting a manager involved? I have been trying so hard, but on Tuesday I just realised I just foster these people that come to my show and slowly grow that group hoping that someday we could be a thousand.

S.T : Going back to your music, I saw that River has reached more than 80 000 streams. Do you think River changed your music career, whether it is in a small or big way?

R.V : Absolutely. Whenever I put a song out, I don't know how people are going to connect with it. I put out a lot of music before River but it was the first song that people felt all connected to. I was getting messages from people saying that River helped them in their breakup. That changed a lot because it brought so many new people. It is crazy because I never knew it was going to happen. I could write a million songs and you don't know which one is going to hit people's heart. **River** did that and it was amazing. It really helps expose me to other people. I didn't think **River** was the best. I also thought **Nectar** and **Drive** would do better than **River**. I did not think it would pop off like it did. It was a real lesson because I just don't know. I am really excited. If it hits 100 000 streams, it would be crazy. It is on my vision board. **River** also gave me a lot of confidence because I didn't release music for a while before **River**. I was holding them for a while, I wrote them four years prior to their release and I was really scared to release them. It was also the first track I've produced on my own. I was really going through all these thoughts, like I can't be a producer, I am just a singer. So much head noise came before releasing **River**. Seeing that it resonates so much with people gave me so much confidence to go ahead with my career. It was the confidence boost that I needed. It came at the right time.

MEET OUR *Authors*

We are so honored to feature amazing and talented writers in Forevermore. Nothing could ever happen without the trust our every single writer that submit and accept to pursue this journey with us. Behind every great piece, there is an author that is following their dream. The portraits were realised by Kuki - @bykuki_ (black and white) and Maëva - @lafleurmurakami (colors). We are so grateful for their amazing talents.



Katerina Sutton

Katerina Sutton enjoys spending evenings with her laptop and a steaming mug of Earl Grey. Her work can be found in literary journals such as *Free Verse Revolution*, *Bristol Noir*, *Word for Word*, and *Prosetrics*. She is also a prose reader for *The Adroit Journal* and *Fiction on the Web*, and a judge for *NYC Midnight*. When she's not writing, you can find her immersed in a book or watching sci-fi.

Rosaria Rial

Rosaria Rial is a writer in her early 20s from the Philippines. She writes about angels, catholic guilt, and love, and is currently pursuing the *Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards* for literature. Her work can be found on Substack on *The Angel of the Garden of Sin* publication.



Mahshad Fereidooni

Mahshad Fereidooni earned a bachelor's degree in English literature in 2024. She's worked as an editor in *Ellipsis* literary and scholarly journal during her years as a BA student. She's currently teaching English as a second language and spends her free time writing poems and essays. She aims to connect with readers on an emotional level, using her pen to convey her personal experiences and struggles as a young Iranian woman.

Aditi Kumari

Aditi Kumari is a poet from India who has been writing for over a decade, often in the quiet hours between clinical rounds and restless thoughts. Her work drifts between tenderness and precision, always reaching for language that feels true. Most days, she's found by a window, listening and waiting for the right words to arrive from whatever the world is offering. The featured piece comes from *Anatomy of Softness*, her first collection in progress, which gathers the pieces of life that don't quite fit neatly but still insist on being held. - @WaddyCompus





Alistair Gaunt

Alistair Gaunt (they/he/she) is a Filipino queer non-binary poet born in Southern Philippines. Their writing contemplates the queer experience, violent desires, peculiar dreams, death, grief, and catharsis. When not writing poetry, she spends the rest of her free time painting, reading, making coffee, traveling, and watching sunsets collapse into dawn. They may be contacted through *hauntedbythestars* on Instagram & *alistairgauntwriting@gmail.com*.

Anne Alsworth

Anne Alsworth is a born and raised Californian poet attending university in San Diego. She graduates in June with a degree in History and a minor in English Literature. She recently completed her Honors Thesis studying ascetic discipline in the Late Antique Mediterranean. Her poetry explores girlhood and womanhood, the natural and unnatural world, and places where the past meets the present.



Laila Papas

Laila Papas is a fiction writer based in Canada, where she attends university for psychology. Her work has previously been featured with *Livina Press*. When she isn't writing, she can be found taking long walks and reading too many books at once.

O.P. Jha

O.P. Jha (He/Him) writes on love, peace, environment and social issues. His works appeared in more than one hundred journals including *Rigorous*, *Mantis*, *You Might Need To Hear This*, *Punt Volat*, *Discretionary Love*, *In Parentheses*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *The Cry Lounge*, *The Odessa Collective Magazine*, *Backchannels Journal*, *Homer's Odyssey*, *The Indian Literature*, *The Broken Teacup*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Five Fleas-Itchy Poetry*, *By the Beach*, *miniMag*, *Iceblink Literary Magazine*, *Infinite Scroll*, *The Rome Review*, *Tiger Leaping Review*, *Aloka*, *Wildscape Literary*, *Ghudsavar*, *Pineberry Literary Journal*, *Valiant Scribe*, *Kelp Journal*, *pulplit Mag*, *Gabby & Min's Review*, *Panorama*, *Quibble Quarterly*, *Stone of Madness Press*, *Midwest Zen*, *Hoot*, *Balestra* and others. His poems appeared in anthologies *We were Seeds* (from *Querencia Press*) and *We are Resilient* (from *Valiant Scribe*). He holds Ph.D. in Translation Studies. X: @OPJha17



Johanna Lunn

Johanna Lunn lives in Maine, surrounded by the state's natural beauty and the creativity it inspires. In her free time she enjoys hiking, sipping tea at the local apothecary, and hanging out with her dog. Her work has been published by *Moonstone Press* and featured at an event hosted by the *Maine Women Writers Collection*. She can be found on Substack @jupiterianjo and on Instagram @johannalunn



Helena Ellie Huizenga

Helena “Ellie” Huizenga is a writer who is happiest with a book or on a mountain trail. Stay updated on her writing and sustainable parenting journey by subscribing to her newsletter, *The Green Pen*.

Cia Queyquep

Cia is a writer from the Philippines who is drawn to stories that feel grand, strange, and full of wonder. She writes to grow, to imagine, and to make sense of the world—often through poetry and fantasy. She spends her quiet moments reading and loving her dogs.



Hannah Dilday

Hannah Dilday is an emerging American writer currently residing in Utrecht, The Netherlands. Prior to relocating abroad in 2020, she earned her BS in Philosophy from The University of Oregon and studied abroad at The University of Cambridge. Hannah's poetry has appeared in *ONE ART*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, and *Book of Matches*, among others. When she is not writing, Hannah enjoys photography, traveling, and learning Dutch.



Brittney Graves

Brittney is a blossoming writer from Reynoldsburg Ohio. She can usually be found reading fantasy, sci-fi, or dystopian at her favorite Barnes & Noble store. She has always loved writing stories and is currently working on a fantasy novel. When her nose isn't deep into a book you can find her swimming, putting together puzzles, or watching Avatar. She is a current graduate student at Emerson College working on her Master's. She is shy at heart, but if you want a glimpse at some of her work or just want to see the puzzles she's put together, her instagram is @brittgtheauthor.

Neha Wahiwala

Neha Wahiwala is currently a second year Law Student, but has maintained a deep need to consume and create prose and poetry. Writing in particular has become even more important for Neha as an outlet for grief, with the handwritten version of her submission included here. Her piece touches on the bittersweet knowledge that the love forged between mother and daughter will surpass time and even life.



Mary Stella

Mary Stella is a speculative fiction author, playwright, and poet from East Tennessee. She is currently querying literary agents to represent her debut modern-day urban fantasy novel, *The Reaper*. She has written four full-length comedy stageplays, which she also plans to publish. Because of her extensive work in the world of theater, her writing style is defined by a theatrical tone, whether or not it is made for the stage. In her words, readers will find exposition of the universal truths of human nature, exploring the depths of the failings and virtues that define humanity. When she isn't writing, Mary will likely be found at a local record store, or at home with a Dr. Pepper and a book.



Nuri

Nuri weaves tales of love, justice, and ordinary lives that change, blending cinematographic visions with deeply felt literature. At the moment, you'll find her working on her academics and the countless stories she starts writing in her Google Docs, hoping to finish them before she begins adulthood, or simply trying to live out her teenage dream. When not writing, she's educating herself about world events, watching enhyphen's content, or hoping for deep, true love to find her.



MEET OUR *Artists*

More than a literary magazine, Forevermore is also a place for artists to express their talents. Since our debut issue, we are collaborating with amazing artists to provide you with exclusive contents that illustrate the written pieces we carefully picked. We are so honored to collaborate with artists from all around the world and we truly hope you'll like them as much as we do.



Gabriole - @ca_briole

My name is Claire, but I go by Gabriole. I'm a beginner illustrator from France. My dream is to illustrate children's books and create my own comics. This year, I published my first webcomic on Webtoon: Hocus, Pocus, Sacré Marius!—a story full of bad jokes, magic, and delicious pastries. I love drawing people, and my characters are sometimes cute, sometimes quirky, and sometimes both. My inspiration comes from books, animated movies, and the work of other artists. In the future, I hope to be the one who inspires other artists. But for now, I just want to keep improving my art to help people escape reality.

@m.art.cabre

Based in France, m.art.cabre is a 24 years-old self-proclaimed misunderstood artist who uses multiple techniques to create their art: graphic design, drawing, writing, photography and more. They are particularly interested in gothic arts and horror, with a mix of queer culture. In the future, they would love to work as an artistic director for a publishing company as they would like to share with the world their very own aesthetic and values.



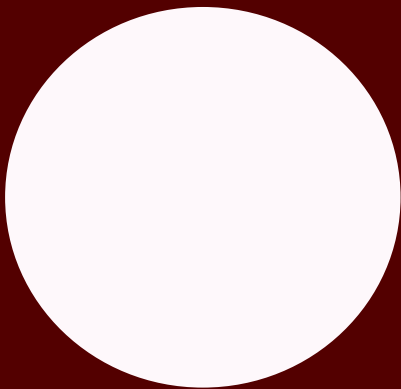
Maria - @muriassgarden

Maria is a French artist who specializes in watercolor, and occasionally experiments with digital art. Holding a Master's degree in Philosophy, she's currently working as a librarian and loves to create dark fantasy art with a whimsical twist in her free time. Inspired by wild animals, forests and ancient ruins, her work is often full of mysteries and wonder. She secretly dreams of creating pieces that touch the heart of those who see them, helping them feel a little less alone in this world.

Elspeth - @ellswahr

Elspeth is a self-taught oil painter from Ukraine and a huge fan of fantasy books, which are mostly her biggest inspiration. She believes that bringing secret and magical universes to the canvas is her calling. When she paints, she always puts a piece of her soul into her work, because she wants to show others these worlds through her eyes. She will never trade this feeling when you listen to beautiful music, read a book, and a new idea for a painting arises in your head, at first you see it only in particles, and spots of colors, but then taking a brush in your hands, you start working on the whole, changing everything hundreds of times until you see the same picture in front of you that you once saw in your dreams. It's like chasing something elusive. It's a very painstaking process, you may think that everything looks great at last, but some small detail keeps bothering you, slowing down the whole process, and driving you into a dead end. Therefore, she wholeheartedly wishes that people would respect artists for their hard work, whether it is a book, a painting, a poem, or a song.

Tiktok : @ellswahr



Audrey - @byaudy

Audrey is a freelance illustrator with a sensitive, colorful, and slightly childlike style. I create images that blend softness and poetry. I personally make each of my products — stickers, prints, notebooks, and more — with special attention to detail and packaging. Based in Lille, I balance my time between custom commissions, managing my online shop, exhibitions, and publishing projects. I'm always curious to explore new techniques and collaborate on different kinds of creative projects!

Holly May - @hollymayspaints

I am a third year Classical Studies student from Norwich! I am currently studying at Royal Holloway and am hoping to do my masters in Archaeology at Oxford University. Growing up, I was always painting and drawing and doing anything creative really! I have always been someone who loves being creative, and am currently working on paintings for my book that I am writing. My dream is to become an archaeologist, but along with this is to keep my creativity and for it to grow and blossom along with my academic life. I primarily work with acrylic paints, however I am hoping to expand into both gouache and oil painting in the near future. I adore painting landscapes and anything to do with nature, and i tend to lean away from people when painting. Despite this, I am hoping to delve into the silhouettes of people in my future paintings. Painting has primarily been a hobby i kept to myself and close friends, but as of recent, I have started posting pictures of paintings that I have done, both personal ideas and replicating other paintings I have seen. It is something I hold very dear to me, and I hope the passion only grows in time.



Eve Forrest - @eve_4est_art

Eve is a self-taught digital artist who started her craft in the traditional art world. At a young age, she used graphite and colored pencils to create realistic portraits. However, her love for character design and storytelling inspired her to turn to her true passion in digital art. Eve went to school at Arapahoe Community College in Colorado where she received her Associate's Degree in Art History and started another degree in Digital Design and Illustration. Throughout college, she worked at a cultural arts center, assisting with art programs and youth art classes. She uses the accumulation of knowledge through these experiences to create whimsical and dark illustrations full of texture and details and combine elements of art history with traditional techniques such as collage and layering. She currently works as a freelance Digital Designer and Illustration Artist for various social media influencers and authors.



Prismiya - @prismiya

Prismiya is a self-taught illustrator who fell in love with drawing at a young age. Inspired by manga, she began by creating her own comics with just pencils and paper. After a difficult work experience, she chose to fully pursue her passion for art. Her soft, comforting style is influenced by artists like Nini Wanted and Tiffany Tan. With a background in digital design, she now focuses on illustration, working towards growing her shop, connecting with clients, and sharing her work at art markets.



Kuki - @bykuki_

Known as Kuki on social media, she is a 24-year-old Spanish digital illustrator. A registered nurse and licensed high school teacher her biggest passion has always been art, which ultimately led her to live abroad for a year and pursue her dream of studying arts. Although art isn't her full-time profession, it remains an essential part of her life. Currently a hobby artist, her work combines her love for character design, storytelling and emotionally driven illustrations. Inspired by everything and everyone she loves, drawing is not only her way of navigating the world, but also holds her dream of connecting with others, creating a safe space through her art where vulnerability and being yourself is welcome.





Maëva - @lafleurmurakami

My name is Maëva, and I'm a graphic designer and illustrator with a vibrant and playful universe. My work is full of bold colors, expressive characters, and joyful composition that spark curiosity and imagination.

I began my journey with a diploma in Applied Arts (STD2A) in high school, then I pursued a three-year DNMADE degree in Interactive Narration in Marseille, France, where I explored visual storytelling through various media. After graduating, I chose to continue my studies in a Master's degree in Illustration and Publishing, which I'll begin this September.

I enjoy combining digital tools with handcraft techniques, creating unique visual experiences across illustration, scenography, and creative objects. I'm always seeking new ways to bring my colorful world to life and connect with people through joyful and meaningful creations.

Gray Riverson - @gray.riverson

Gray is a 24 year old artist and writer from Germany. They love expressing themselves through images and words, trying to capture complicated feelings and fleeting moments. They're a dreamer and believe that life without obsessions would be boring. @between.st4rs and @gray.riverson on Instagram



Thank you

If you're reading this last page, you've made it to the end of our third issue. What a lovely adventure it has been! We started working on this issue in January, and here we are. I couldn't be more grateful for every single writer and artist who poured their art – and heart – into it.

As you may (or may not) know, I am the sole member of the Forevermore team. While the first years were quite manageable, it has become more of a challenge to juggle my master's degree, my job, and Forevermore. While the original goal was to release two issues per year, it seems difficult to maintain that pace for the rest of 2025 – after all, it's already the end of July. But don't worry, this isn't the end of Forevermore. We're simply going to take our time and adjust the rhythm of our publications. Maybe it's time to grow the Forevermore team. Nevermore, our spooky issue, will be the next one, but it's tricky to say exactly when submissions will open.

Thank you for keeping Forevermore alive. I couldn't be more grateful: you are the best readers one could ever dream of.

With all my love,

Selma, founder of Forevermore

FREE PALESTINE

We need to free Palestine, as soon as possible.

How easily do we scroll through social media and choose to ignore what's happening in the world? Social media is a powerful tool, but it has clearly desensitized many of us. While we're doomscrolling on TikTok, thousands of Palestinians are dying in front of the world's eyes.

We said "never again" after World War II and yet, here we are. Perhaps "never again" was only meant for Europe. And while this may not be happening in your neighborhood, far-right parties are clearly on the rise. It seems easy to ignore, as long as our own lives aren't affected. But that kind of egocentrism must end.

Everyone needs to acknowledge what is happening. A genocide is unfolding before our eyes. Israel is committing numerous crimes against humanity and our governments are letting it happen. In fact, many are supplying the weapons being used to murder civilians who have committed no crime.

What's happening in Palestine is not a sad movie we're watching on our phones, it's real. It's a genocide. The same type of genocide we vowed never to allow again. And yet, the world stays mostly silent.

Forevermore will always stand with Palestine, and with every other nation suffering under Israel's tyranny.