

# HOWLER DAILY / FOUR FRESH STORIES FOR YOUR WEEK



*Ners Neonlumberjack* | ART + FRONT COVER ART  
Whose Bones Are These?

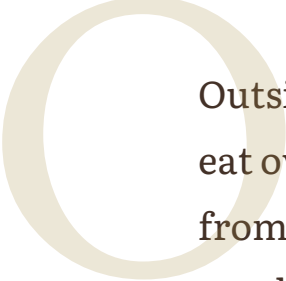
*Zoe Antoine-Paul* | POETRY  
Ode to Boy in Nightclub

*Eliza Hayse* | NONFICTION  
To Know Everything (On the Camino de Santiago): A Story of Connection

*Kathy Bruce* | COLLAGE + BACK COVER ART  
Were They Painted and Veiled?

# to know every- thing (on the camino de santiago): a story of connection

eliza hayse



Outside the chapel of lost souls, we eat overripe nectarines, bruised from our bags. Two days prior you mocked me for buying them, telling me they would go bad quickly, that I should opt for a sturdier fruit. I'd ignored you, and now we hold the bruised fruit in our hands as we sit on exposed stone, the sun pounding on our shoulders. I peel away some of the skin with my teeth and the juice, which had been longing to burst, collects on my lips, dribbling down my chin. You use your fingers to split the fruit open at the suture, nectar spilling from your fingers.

“See? They’re nearly rotten.” You take a bite, and I watch your jaw move.

“They’re sweeter this way.” You look at me and grin, and I don’t meet your eyes but I can feel them. We sit quietly, the stone wall cool, the chapel shadow leaning left in front of us. We eat around the dark bruises in the white flesh. You take the pit out of your nectarine and place it between us, like an offering to the God we mock.

“What makes a soul ‘lost?’” I break the silence, and the words sink in the humidity. I can feel them settle on the lobes of my ears, on my hairline, on my shoulder blades.

You laugh, but it catches in your chest. “A soul that is here.” This time, I look at you. Your nose and cheeks are burnt, and your curls are flattened from sweat. I pick up the pit you placed on the stone. It is cracked, so I split it open with my thumbnail and reveal the seed inside.

“You know the seeds of stone fruit like this contain cyanide?”

“Why do you know that?”

“I know everything, remember?” I place the open pit down, the seed revealed. Next to me, you tear off a piece of bread and hand it to me.

“Then you tell me, what makes a soul lost?” You gaze ahead and tear another piece of bread off, this time for yourself. The way you speak is stilted, not because you are

uncomfortable but because English is still unfamiliar, and so your tongue is too heavy in your mouth and on the back of your teeth. I want you to meet my gaze, but when you glance at me, my eyes find the sky and I squint. I take a few minutes to respond, my jaw feels stiff and marionette-like.

“I don’t think anyone can know that until they are being prayed for.” This response seems to be satisfactory to you, and the smile on your face is almost too soft to see, but I know it well.

“I think maybe we are lost souls.”

“Yeah, that part is obvious.” I rest my hand on the bench next to me, centimeters from yours, calculating the space like I am considering a math problem. My brow is furrowed. Both of us gaze straight ahead at the long grass; the chapel doors closed, the steel gates rusted. I wonder what it is like inside, and I wonder if you wonder that too.

When we met, I liked the way your

shoulders moved when you walked. You seemed so at ease like the air was cradling you. You smiled like you had a secret, and I liked that too. The first thing you told me was that I seemed scared. I don't think you knew how much that was true. You were rolling a cigarette so gently, looking at me sideways. Your t-shirt was dirty and hung on your frame like ivy on wet stone. I was leaning against the wall, looking past you, through you, not even remembering your name. My hands were shaking, I think. They always do.

Outside the chapel, I was thinking about how much cooler it had been then. Now my body is damp, sweat and sunscreen making me sticky. My hand, still so close to yours. If I was to move it just a little bit, would you notice? You reach for the pit, peeling the almond-like seed away and holding it up to the sky. We both look up, noticing the way the sun's rays make it almost translucent.

Earlier that day, I'd spun in circles

in the middle of the road, the early morning light catching on my eyelashes, my freckled arms outstretched. You stood there, unmoving, a portrait that would flash before my eyes with every turn. At one turn, I let myself catch a glimpse of your face. I think your expression was too much to bear. I squeezed my eyes shut as I turned faster, thinking that if I scrambled the fluid in my ears enough maybe I could learn how to make my bones hollow like a bird's. When I finally stopped, I thought that I would stumble. Instead, I walked straight ahead, focusing on the way my boots struck the asphalt.

"How many seeds would it take to kill a man?" You ask me, setting the seed down, placing your left hand back on the stone, even closer to mine.

"I think, like, 12, maybe?" I respond.

"Perfect. Maybe that's how I'll join the 27 club." You reference the conversation we've been having

about the artists who created beautifully only to die young. We both idolized them, their inability to weave any peace into their pain; their deaths, so tragic and complete. I swallow and my throat feels tight.

“It would be quite a romantic way to go, I think.” You look at me, and I close my eyes so I can picture the smile on your face without looking at you. When I open them, I meet your eyes and try not to smile back. The effort makes my cheeks hurt. “It only gives you two years to make something beautiful, though.” I am joking, mostly.

“I only need one.”

The day we bought the nectarines, you told me that my eyes unsettled you. “They’re too clear.” I laughed and told you how many people had said the same. I liked making you feel like you weren’t special. You asked me if I thought they skewed the image of the world: “Maybe they make everything too bright to bear.” Nobody had mentioned that

before, and I didn’t say so, but I knew you were probably right.

We’d finished our bread and our fruit and so we sit, quietly, watching the birds perched on the roof of the chapel. The sun makes the tall grass smell saccharine. I can feel the part of my scalp exposed by the part in my hair burning but I don’t mind. The heat coming off of our bodies mixes in the little space there is between us, and the slight breeze blows it away. The air feels so heavy, but maybe it’s just me. Maybe I am feeling things that aren’t there.

A few days later I would walk away from you. It would be easy, my feet carrying me quickly and softly. In my head, I would turn over these moments again and again as the space between us increased. Your arms that always moved with intention, the lines around your eyes that made me feel so much younger than you, the life-is-easy-for-me smile that I knew had gotten you through so many awkward moments. The ocean, the sand

stuck beneath my fingernails,  
brutal truths almost as bitter as the  
coffee we drank together. But most  
of all, the moment I am in now:  
outside of the chapel of lost souls,  
where I said a quick prayer, hoping  
we would meet there again  
someday. And two pinkie fingers,  
finally pressed against one another,  
a tiny declaration of something we  
both knew but could not  
understand.

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- ▶ **Eliza Hayse** is a 22-year-old studying her master's in botany. She likes strong coffee and her dog, Sage.

**Twitter:** @elizahayse

# were they painted and veiled?

kathy bruce

- ▶ **Kathy Bruce** is a visual artist based in Argyll & Bute Scotland whose collages explore archetypal female and mythological forms within the context of poetry, literature and the natural environment.





# ode to boy in nightclub

zoe antoine-paul

► **Zoe Antoine-Paul** writes about the city, the beauty in the mundane, and everyday internal turmoil.

**IG:** @space.junkie13

A All I want is to keep you,  
but you are still on the dance floor  
and New York City feels like coming down.

An ephemeral march between

pitch black

and too much morning.

You are also there:

blotting memory;  
your persistent luster,

strobe lights laced through your skin

flickering

red  
green  
bright white.

You blur

into Broadway traffic and

I am alone  
in Brooklyn again.

[the last call]

3-train sparking past  
as the clock strikes 12.

# whose bones are these?

ners neonlumberjack

We have made great attempts to separate ourselves from the natural world. Only venturing into more wild areas when we choose. Of course, nature is still all-encompassing all the while. Dead things often frighten or disturb us. Removing our language in ways to limit our insecurities with what dead animals we eat, what dead trees we live under, and what animals we displaced or eradicated to call places home. Working on bone is one mere layer of paint away from the source. Taking our guard down to enjoy the beauty of the forms, and hopefully to start a reconnection of thought about what and why the work came to be... Whose bones ARE these?

- ▶ **Ners Neonlumberjack** was born in a tiny town in central Indiana in 1986, graduating from Herron School of Art and Design with degrees in Painting, Sculpture, and Art History in 2009.

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# HOWL[er]



the howler project is a CREATIVE COLLECTIVE and outreach organization, making space for human connection through STORYTELLING.

THEHOWLERPROJECT.ORG