

# CREATIVE RELEASE

ISSUE 3

#migrantfiction

SPRING QUARTER: POETRY SHORT STORIES PHOTOGRAPHY



# Editor's Note

Hello Reader!

We are excited to present to you the third issue of The Creative Release Magazine. This is our biggest and most diverse issue yet! In the times of uneasiness and uncertainty, continuing with our goal to share student artworks felt most important. This issue speaks on many different layers, from childhood reflections to existential contemplations and socioeconomic challenges. Our sincere hope is that you will find the works relatable and have a chance to connect with the artists. This issue will mark a special occasion for Creative Release, as the club opened a year ago and now we find ourselves a year later, having published three issues. Throughout the year we have had over forty works by different authors ranging from poems and short stories to photographs and illustrations. We owe all of this to the community and are extremely grateful to those who submit their pieces and read the magazine. We are very much looking forward for what's to come and hope that you will follow us along the way!

## #migrantfiction

Looking at the stigma surrounding immigrants under the coronavirus crisis, we wanted to pay special attention to the works written by them. Every Creative Release issue serves as proof that immigrants are a vital and essential part of our community. You can find the #migrantfiction tag next to their works.

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Alexander Savgira, Elisa Palma, Sangeetha  
Damiano, Saba Ghauomi & Robian Ho

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# Poetry

For the Spring Issue of 2020, the poems come in a variety of themes: death, immigration, self-growth, and acceptance. The poems display it with unique yet enticing composition, and style. My personal favorite being, "The Wreck," because the writing style immediately caught my eye. The capitalization as well as the words written in bold spread across specific parts of the poem help effectively emphasize certain actions and characters in the poem; it simply made it more fun to read and it invests you in. The further I read into it, the more the style becomes unpredictable leaving you wondering what will happen next?

- Elisa Palma

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# Two Brown Kids

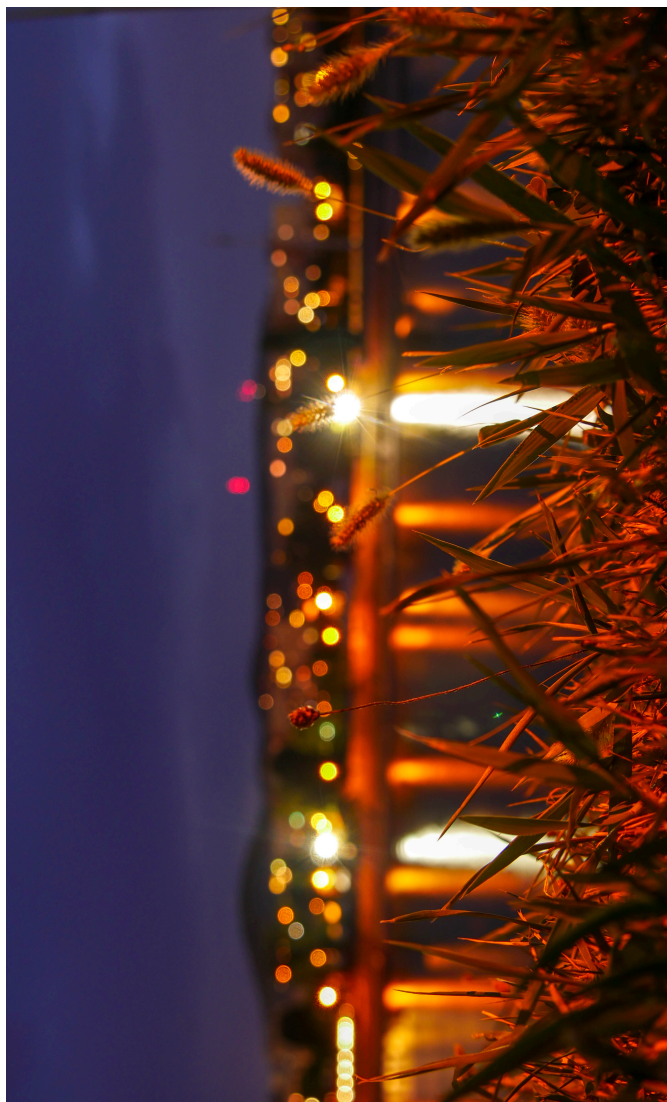
*by Saba Ghauomi*

#migrantfiction

I hope you never  
forget me  
and the way we  
sat by each other  
swaying like two palm trees  
In the burning desert sand.

I know I will never  
forget you  
because you're the one who  
roamed with me  
as we wandered like two camels, loose,  
under the Middle Eastern sun.

I long to suffer its heat,  
to let it scald my skin,  
the fever is never the same here,  
it always seems so cold  
compared to home.  
so I set my soul on fire  
to keep warm  
with the memories of us being  
two brown kids.



Photograph by Pavel Savgira

Poetry: Grass

# Grass

*by Sophia Hartenbaum*

It stretches out from my ribcage—  
A spreading warmth like Manischewitz  
sweet and bitter, burns my lungs.  
The deep grass arches above me  
as I listen to your voice.

I taste memories, clean and haloed  
by all the electricity of summer in the Japanese countryside.  
I see the shoots in the rice-paddies, radiating green,  
think of soft-serve ice cream,  
feel the heat of the onsen.  
I want you to see it, too.

All I see is the grass that curves around my body,  
arches over my head  
and I imagine sinking down, down into the earth,  
swallowed like a stone by green grass.  
All I hear is your voice,  
a universe away.  
What do you see?

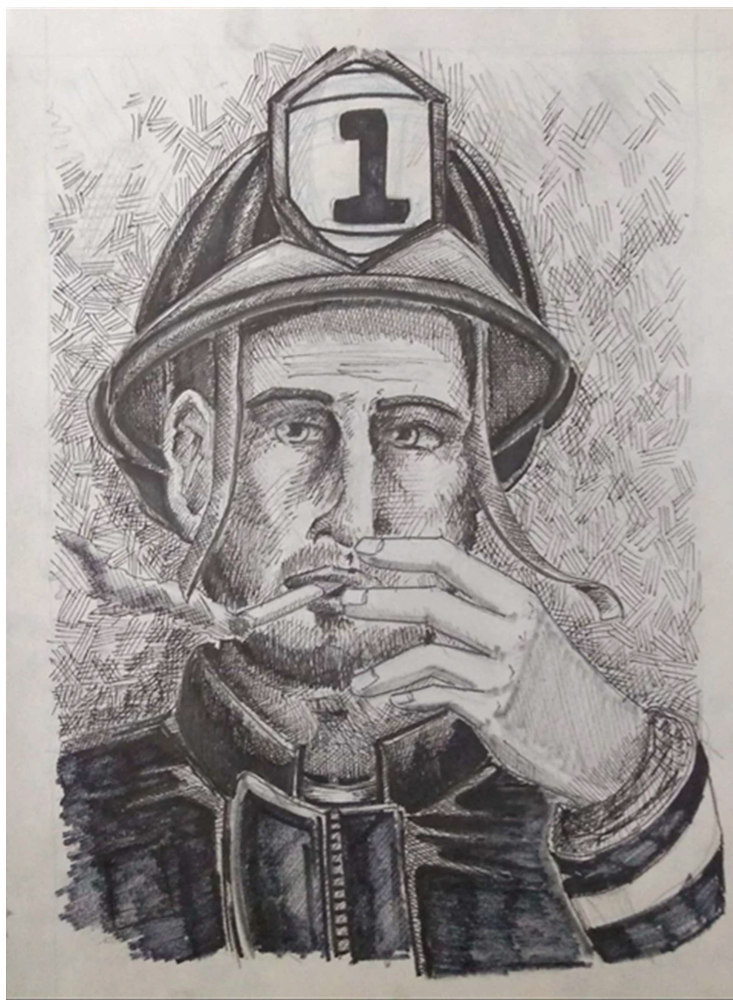


Illustration by Kaimar Liivamägi

# Reflection

*by Maurice Slade*

Tired of fighting for what's naturally mine  
The type that makes one lose their mind  
The main reason humans are far less refined than the age of  
time Outdated like nine to five  
Self enslaved, damn what we do to shine  
America the brave, self proclaimed off what our ancestors gave  
Some just live for the rave of the day  
Most just ride the wave, forgetting the crash at the break  
So most forget to stay in the wake  
Oops I mean woke  
So they stay blind to the real words spoke and can't see God's  
sign in every note  
So on this journey you better pack a coat  
Cause if you ain't the goat  
Ironically the sheep, the world gets cold  
And freezes where water usually flows  
Unnaturally weathered and weltered where death grows  
Where it's up to you to pull yourself out of the hole  
And be educated to know more than what you're told  
A higher standard of yourself you should hold  
Yes, it's called being bold, but it's time to let go  
And say goodbye to yourself of old.

# Nothing

*by Hoo La*

In an hourglass she sits  
Sifting through time,  
Paralyzed out of her wits.

A sculpture she builds,  
No one knows why,  
A staircase of sand  
Erected up to the sky.

She floats up the flight  
Leaving nothing but dust.  
With all of her being  
She knows that she must.

Defying the rainfall  
Of sand from above,  
She enters the heavens  
Dreaming of love.

Faster, faster!  
She swims in the light.  
Nothing was real,  
Not even the fight.

A vortex beneath her  
Returns her below,

Nothing (contd.)

Teaching one thing,  
“I know what I know.”

## Liberation

*by Hoo La*

Nothing is good,  
is bad.

All is,  
is being.

To write without  
Desire to be read,

is freedom.

# Instructions On Growing Apart

*by Madeline Curtis*

You will not return here for a long time.  
You can't hide amongst the sumacs  
until you crumble  
into dust. Even if that is what you  
were promised. Even if that  
is what you want.

You cannot bring the forest  
into the yellow truck.  
Not the stone  
you plucked from the bottom of the river.  
Not the weathervane.  
Not even the porcelain cup.  
If you try to bring it with you,  
it will crumble into dust.

You cannot even bring each other.  
You will be alone  
when you get into the yellow truck.  
For this I am sorry.

In the rearview mirror  
the sumacs blur  
into a flaming river  
sweeping forever out of view.  
If it is any comfort, you may think:  
maybe life turns back on itself



like a rope into a double knot.

Maybe one day

you will find yourself

back in the forest.

More likely, you will not.

Still, you may wait

for the sumac woods,

for the weathervane,

for the porcelain cup.

You may wait

for the forest to open

and swallow you up.



Illustration by Robian Ho

# The Wreck

*by Cole Thretheway*

Tumbled on the choppy shore  
planks and nails, wood and board  
wash aboard a lonely isle  
in the middle of the sea.

“Ahoy!” I say, forward tipping,  
pointing to the awful ripping,  
gulls and rats a graveyard-picking  
in the middle of the sea.

Looming on that wicked beach  
staggering sight and all belief—  
a dead man staring, staring me  
in the middle of the sea!

Through telescope, his cold eyes smolder,  
coal-black bones the size of boulders  
bending and rolling as joints turn over  
in the middle of the sea.

Closer still and closer yet,  
the horror which my mind begets  
shambles to my shadowed ship  
in the middle of that sea.  
Bony limbs grasp groaning planks,

## The Wreck (contd.)

tugging ship on shallow banks  
toward bony doom and hellish ranks  
in the middle of the sea.

Before I can with cunning plead  
a parley for my boarded steed  
that grinning skull soft speaks to me  
in the middle of the sea.

**“Fear not,”** it stumbles, soon recovers,  
“I have a safer route discovered  
for your sanguine ship that shudders  
in the middle of my sea.”

**Splish!** Splashes ship upon the graves  
**crashing, smashing** flat the waves,  
falling, standing, shortly landing  
in the middle of his sea.

Wonder, if ghostly crew  
drowned, as all good sailors do?  
Upright, were they, by dint of day,  
in the middle of their sea?

Perhaps they grasped the light of moon:  
trapping life in lasting doom,  
cursed to crash the lost marooned  
in the middle of the sea.

# For Mom: Middle of the Beginning and the End

*by Samantha Mackenzie*

—middle of the  
poem, a strange place to begin  
when, in this stanza, “the” should  
begin what the period

Ends.

middle, though, secures a space  
for continuity; like  
flipping through middle school album  
memories--cyclically  
begin retrieved--so never  
end

for me; but my mother was  
gone before sixty-three,  
I was not there for  
the in-between; Dad called  
in the morning and said  
“She’s dying” and I, crying,  
came home in the middle  
of the end of the quarter  
but I didn’t stay for her end; to  
watch the machine stop breathing for her  
would be too

For Mom: Middle of the Beginning and the End (contd.)

Finite  
instead at home I made coffee and  
at four in the morning my dad  
came back and said “that’s the  
end”

which brings me back  
(or forward maybe)  
to a memory: middle school me  
standing in the hallway after  
having had a bad dream,  
like a sixth sense she knew and  
came to me, tucked me in, and  
said to me “I love you” before  
she turned to close the door and  
I said, “I love you too”--  
which is where  
this poem Ends. and

Begins

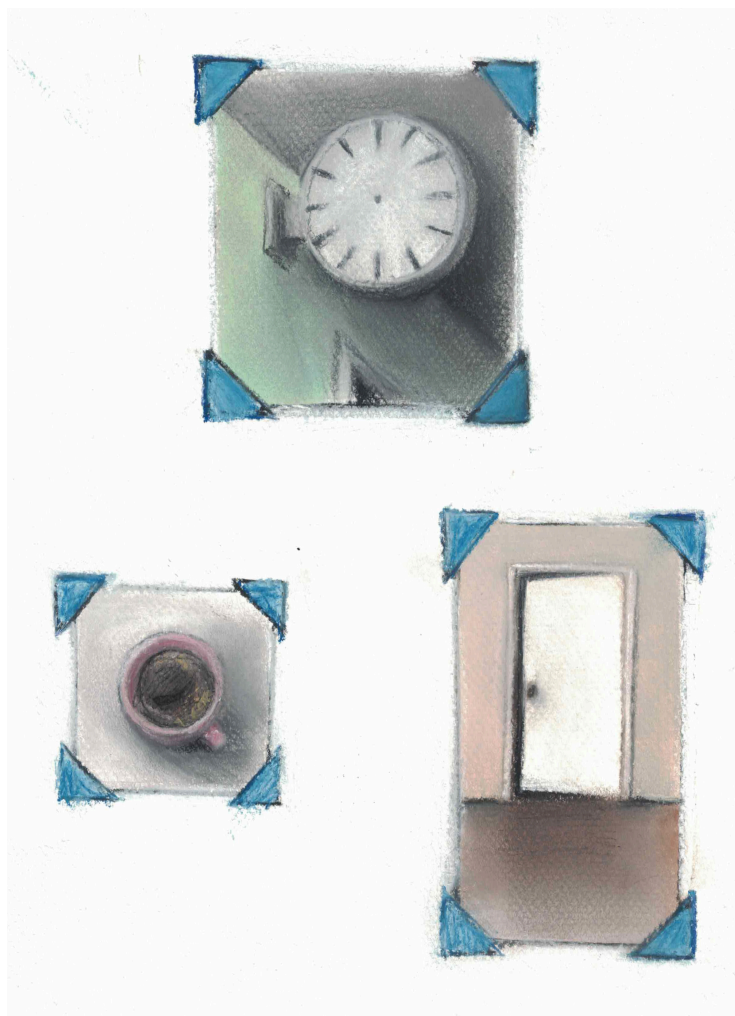


Illustration by Robian Ho

# Short Stories

In this third issue we have two short stories that delve into fiction and non-fiction. With an arab woman saving a Viking from near death to a satirical reality of two young ladies making their place in society, both short stories are able to establish a wide audience that is captured through their imagery. The picturesque environment in *A Wake on the Horizon*, details a primitive fictional setting of large oceans and different terrain that is centered by the fateful encounter between two different cultures. On the other hand in, *Living in Between*, the dichotomy between Alice and Rachel is represented by their choices and opens a window into the reality of young society in capitalist America. Rachel's dark humor amplifies her contrast with her confident and upbeat friend Alice. An ordeal of life circumstances and choices that are all so relatable in our society today.

- Beto Macedo

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1. *Living in Between* by Pavel Savgira
2. *A Wake on the Horizon* by Sahar Assifi



# Living in Between

*by Pavel Savgira*

#migrantfiction

Downtown Palo Alto was getting dark when Rachel got out of bus 22. She walked off the station and went down to University Avenue. The street looked over Palm Drive and Rachel stopped. She hadn't been to Palo Alto in a long time and during her hour-long bus ride along El Camino, she started recalling the early childhood memories of biking from the crowded sidewalks of downtown to the narrow campus streets. When her friends rode their bikes home from school Rachel would always come along, saying goodbye to everyone and later riding forty minutes to her apartment in East Palo Alto. As Rachel got older, her friends bought cars and much preferred gelato to biking so she had to go home right away. She got a job to keep up with her friends but her salary would slip away after two days while others never had to worry. At a single sight of Palm Drive, she recalled each day she spent daydreaming with a stack of books describing distant places, where people chose to pack things up and get away. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath before walking.

Her steps felt heavy under the bright lights of the shops by her sides. She walked through the summer heat wishing she was wearing her favorite oversized hoodie, and sweatpants instead of a stupid tiny t-shirt that stuck to her body. She silently hated all the people going about their business and carrying large shopping bags from one store door to another. She looked down at her feet, stepping over the carefully laid out pavement covered with a river of expensive shoes. She thought about the bus she was in just ten minutes ago where her only companions were a few sleeping homeless folks who were eventually kicked out by the operator at the final stop. Rachel pictured them standing alongside engineers waiting for their ubers and her fist clenched. She made an effort to pass through the blocks full of restaurants and soon reached Starbucks. It was crowded and

dirty.

Rachel came to meet Alice, who was the last person on the biking trail home from school. They used to spend their days together anytime Alice didn't feel like going home. They would sit and talk about anything, from the funny pictures of their dogs, to school and even their first relationships. Rachel remembered when she invited Alice to her one-bedroom apartment. Alice was the only person she ever invited into her home. Rachel's mother worked double-shifts, so they had the place to themselves. Rachel took the birthday cake and paper plates that her mother left the night before. They had sat down at the tiny table between the kitchen and living room. Before they ate the cake, Alice took out a shiny bag and smiled. Rachel held her breath and unwrapped a somewhat heavy object. It was a perfume bottle. She took the bottle, stared at it for a second, and not knowing what to do, put the box on the shelf next to her family pictures.

Years later, the only thing Rachel had left of her was an unopened perfume bottle and her Instagram, where she either stood in her bikini on the beach or among groups of people wearing tech internship t-shirts, with captions narrating particularly meaningful experiences she had. Alice recently posted that she was now volunteering to help future college students write their applications. A few years ago, Rachel wouldn't even take notice of the post. Time was relentless and what was once a proud rejection of the application process now became a struggle. Scrolling her social media feed, she felt a twinge of shame while observing her now grown-up friends as if life was slipping away for good.

Rachel saw Alice in the back end of the hall, occupying a table barely fit for herself alone, nevermind Rachel. She was hiding her eyes in her phone, shrugging away from the homeless man who placed his possessions on the floor close to her. He took a dirty old Starbucks cup out of the garbage can and went across to the barista who pretended to ignore him at first but later turned to ask him what he needed. He pointed his finger at the nametag and asked for the 50 cent refill that the chain promised its loyal customers. When

the barista asked him to scan his rewards app for points he made an effort to search his pockets and soon confessed to forgetting his phone. The barista sighed, took his cup, and told the man he would call his name. Rachel sat next to Alice, and the homeless man soon sat down at a table next to them.

“Hey, girl! You finally made it!” Alice greeted.

“You got it. So happy to see you, thanks again for showing up.”

“Any time! So what’s up? You finally applying?” Alice asked with a soft smile.

Rachel stared at Alice for some time. Alice wore a ton of makeup, making her face look flawless, and wore a red hoodie with a tree and a giant S on it, with a trademark on the upper right corner.

“Haha, sure...” Rachels lips formed a quirky smile.

*Alice! “Girl!” I didn’t know skin could look so perfect... No wonder you get so many internships.*

“Yeah? You still live in the same place?”

“No... Not really...” Rachel stumbled, her eyes were looking for something to hold on to.

*Same place... That place no longer exists. But... You wouldn’t know that...*

Moments later, her face finally regained clarity. “Do they give the hoodies for free?”

“Ha, girl, no way anyone gives anything for free! I bought it way before I ever went there but, hey, I am there now!” she smiled proudly, showing her sparkling white teeth. “You should get one too! At the end of the day, you’re almost out of that place now. It might not be the school you will go to but, hey, maybe it will!” Alice smiled again. Her eyes were looking straight into Rachel’s, her voice was soft and pleasing. “After all, isn’t that what you want to do?”

*Okay, not so quick. I am not sure I am ready to resign my life to a logo, classes, and a few motivational quotes... Don't you have a single doubt?*

"I don't know what I want, it's a little hard. You know, before we start on the applications and all, what's up with you? I haven't seen you in a while now and I didn't expect you to agree to help me right away," asked Rachel, "I don't think any of your old friends went to the same school."

"No, they didn't. None of them got in really!" said Alice, "We used to go buy these hoodies together and eat ice cream near Philz a couple of steps away, but now they are all somewhere else. I still usually sit there, it's a little cleaner," she circled her eyes around the room and continued, "It's funny, I thought I would be alone but my school is quite great! I work at a startup with two other friends of mine."

Rachel looked over at the homeless man, who was still resting next to their table. He was counting his coins and momentarily looked back at Rachel.

*Hey! Did you hear what she said? She wants a place a little cleaner! After a lifetime in Palo Alto, she wants something cleaner... You sit there and count your coins, she sits there fixing her make up and searches for her face in the front camera of her laptop. And you know what? She must be right doing so. Why are you still here? How could you even exist next to each other? And yet, you are sitting side by side!*

Rachel sighed and looked back at Alice,

"You do? That's exciting! What do you do out there?"

"Eh, you know, junior position stuff. I write a little code, help my coworkers and try to network as much as possible."

"Are you going to work at the same startup after you graduate?"

"Not sure, I think they pay a little less than the big ones but I met one dude who worked there for the last seventeen years

and he is making it in terms of cash.”

“Seventeen years? That’s quite a while!”

*Seventeen years!* Rachel thought, *that’s like eighty percent of my life.*

“Isn’t it? He even took the same computer science professor back in the day!”

*Jesus, really? All of them go through an incubator of education where the only thing they get is a chance to spend seventeen years in the same place? Well, I suppose they made it! Success! I work at Trader Joe’s for minimum wage, while she works as an intern making twice my monthly salary in a week.*

“How cool! How’s personal life going?”

“I always wonder how I get so many matches nowadays. I swipe the app back left and right, picking only those I really like and all of them like me back. A few years ago, I used to get nothing and now... I guess I’ve changed! You know Rachel, others always quit but I work hard in the gym and it makes me feel like I live the dream now. I can walk confidently, look straight and know my body is alright.”

*Even her bag feels like praise for hard work. Jesus! Look at that, ‘you are enough’ or ‘if you dream it, go get it,’ printed so vividly.* Rachel glanced over at the homeless man. *Hey man, you think you can do that?* She surged through her thoughts while looking at Alice from the side. Alice wore tight fitness clothes along with running shoes. *Yeah, she isn’t bad looking but what makes her so confident? We look about the same, she is a little taller, slightly slimmer and her cheeks are covered in makeup to hide every pimple.*

“Oh, I am so happy for you! Did you get to go on a date with any of them?”

“Yeah, I went out with a few! They were soooo hot! One of them kept hitting on me but I didn’t give in because he sure was hot

nothing special, I saw better. What about you? You got anybody? I remember you running around with that guy, what's his name?"

"That was Alex, but we don't see each other anymore. I decided to give up on all of that, I just walk around by myself now. It's quite lonely but also really nice. Did you know West Valley College has a park? I never took classes there but occasionally I just go for a walk."

"No, how funny! I have never been there! We have it all, a park, a study, all the talks. I couldn't be happier! Do you know the best part? I can still live on campus during the summer, so I don't have to go and rent something else while I intern! But hey, don't hide it, you can't just sit there and do nothing, have you gone out with anyone else since?"

*God... Rachel... Why can't you do that? Look at Alice! She is there to take her chances! And what do you do? You simply sit in the park and count stars. Just look! Use this opportunity to talk to a person smarter than you are and preferably try not to say anything that could offend her. She is a connection! Okay, talk, say something.*

"Well... I did once. It was a terrible date in San Francisco, the guy showed up all hungover and we didn't even get to know each other until he started going on all about his plans and future businesses."

"At least he is ambitious?"

"I guess so, but I've got this idea about a relationship that I don't want to give up. I want to meet that special someone, you know, someone I can just go to another star with. Someone to escape this reality and not just a dude who is 'ambitious,'" sighed Rachel, she couldn't sustain eye-contact any longer and now looked down. Her energy boost from interrogating Alice now disappeared into a self-anguish that she could barely handle. She looked around the shop, the homeless man was now asking for another refill. Rachel stared at his face for some time, feeling as if she saw him every day.

“Hey, it’s alright. You’re enough, I think you’re beautiful and you will find someone to date. It’s not that big of a deal anyway,” said Alice, her voice now sounded pitiful.

“Thanks, Alice, I wish I could believe that myself but it’s getting difficult lately. All the applications ask me who I am and what I think the problem is that I just don’t know.”

“Well, that’s what I am here for, to help you! Imagine that I am taking your hand and walking you through the door. We will surely make something up!” exclaimed Alice, she patted Rachel on the back, “Just remember that nobody becomes somebody right away, it takes a little time to figure yourself out.”

“You think so, Alice? You really think so?”

“I do! I believe every person can go and make somebody of themselves if they try hard enough.”

Rachel looked at Alice, who had the same face on as she did in the beginning of their conversation; that same, forward-looking, and all confident smile.

Rachel looked at Alice and saw the same face she was in the beginning, that same, forward-looking and all confident face. It’s as if life stays still for her, nothing changes. The river floats in one direction and she seems in control. Alice put her laptop away in her backpack, stood up and asked:

“You want something to drink? I recommend getting a couple of shots into your coffee before we start!”

“Whatever you take, I’ll be fine, thanks!”

“Can I please have a latte?” Alice asked the barista, who put on his daily smile with ease, “Oh and how many shots of espresso does it come with?”

“Right away. It comes with two for small and medium, three for large.”

“Can I have two medium ones, four shots in each?”

“Sure, would you like to scan the rewards app?”

“Oh right, here we go,” Alice scanned her phone and the machine went ‘beep’.

“Congratulations! you earned enough points to get yourself a free order,” said Barista. “I will call your name when it’s out.”

“Alright, so where are you applying to?” Alice came back to the table.

Rachel looked at Alice once again, feeling the distance between them and looked over at the homeless man, who still sat there drinking his coffee. He looked back and smiled, his face covered in dirt and his jacket torn apart at the shoulder.

I bet your coffee tastes the same...

Rachel closed her eyes and said, louder than she probably should’ve:  
“Stanford?”



# A Wake on the Horizon

*by Sahar Assifi*

#migrantfiction

From the edge of the cliff, wrapped in her red cloak, Nour looked out onto the vast blue ocean sprawled out in front of her. Her midnight black hair whipping the warm desert air behind her. The whole world was here to bid her farewell, she thought. The water, earth, sun, and the air had greeted her onto this plane thirty-seven years ago, it was only fitting for them to be present at her departure. She reached into the folds of her cloak to clutch at the amber necklace against her chest one last time. She took one last deep and resolved breath, closing and opening her kohl-rimmed hazel eyes. She imagined her final thoughts turned into whispers and grazing the top of the ocean on its way to the horizon and then imagined herself catching up to them there.

This was her work of art, like the patterns on a rug, she studied every rock, every ripple, every cloud. On the edge of her scope of sight, she saw a small blot of something dark down below on the water's edge which was not there the previous three days she had come to the cliff. If she questioned it now, then she wouldn't be done with this. She bid herself to pay no mind to the new shape in her periphery. Another last deep breath would clear her mind and her attention would return to the task at hand. She clutched her amber necklace again, but like a moth to a flame, Nour's gaze became transfixed on the dark shape by the water and soon found her feet running down the side of the cliff to the beach.

The ocean waves were crashing against the side of a long wooden boat with tall curled masts on the front and back. As Nour approached the boat she noticed the sails had broken and decided it had crashed here in the middle of the night. She quickly scaled the side of the boat and hurled herself in. In the belly of the boat lay two bodies: a man and a woman. She had never seen their kind before and wondered what lands they came from. First she checked

the woman for signs of life. The woman's body was cold and limp. Upon further inspection, Nour saw the deep gash on the back of her head, and then the blood on the inner edge of the boat. She then checked on the man. He was unconscious but alive. She climbed off of them and sat back against the inner side of the boat, panting, clutching her necklace.

An hour later, Nour returned to the boat with four men from her camp to help her carry the man in the boat. The four men pulled him out and placed him on a wooden cart which they pulled into Nour's healing tent, further in the desert. They returned to bury the woman by the ocean and pull the boat further onto the surf.

There were five tents in the Bedouin camp: three dedicated to each of the families, one in which food was prepared and everyone gathered in the evenings, and one as the healing tent where Nour slept. Nour had joined this camp alone and was welcomed with her knowledge of healing herbs, tonics and the strength of her prayer. There were not many women healers in Morocco and she had no knowledge of the rest of the world, though she thought she may have been unique because of this. Nour only practiced what her mother had taught her as a young girl in order to help people and also earn her next meal and bed. Inside her tent she kept herbs hanging and drying upside down from the top of the tent, small clay pots with ointments and powders intended for various ailments, and leather canteens of water. Across the sand under the shelter of the fabric tent, she laid her father's rugs where she slept, feeling closest to their souls.

The man from the boat was carried in and placed on the soft bed made of sheep's fur. His head lay at the top of the bed on the pillow and his legs stretched well past the bottom edge of the bed. His broad shoulders spanned from one side to the other of the small rectangle underneath him. His skin was paler than the sand and yet burned red by days or even weeks in the harsh Sun. His head was shaved on the sides with a wide strip of light yellow hair stretched down the middle of his head and into a long pleat down

his back and tied with a thin strip of leather wrapped around the end. As Nour slowly removed his black leather armor to assess his wounds she saw an intricate web of black tattoos across his chest, back and arms. She studied the lines with her fingertips, tracing the familiar geometric shapes. She turned slightly to take hold of her mortar and pestle to mix an ointment for the wounds on his arms and legs, never removing her eyes from his bearded sleeping face. The others in her camp were speaking outside of her tent, telling each other to be wary of such a man when he wakes, that he could be violent. They saw his ax among other weapons and shields and their battle-hardened faces. Even the woman they buried seemed formidable, they said. Nour waited to judge him when he woke and until then looked upon him curiously.

The next morning as the Sun rose, the man awoke to find himself underneath drying herbs and colorful strips of fabric. At once he used his sheer force to rouse himself up off the bed and yelling loudly he stormed out of the tent only to fall directly outside with his legs still inside the tent, his face covered in hot sand. Nour had been fetching him some water when she saw the large brute man tumble ungracefully like a camel. She walked up to him with water, her hazel eyes met his blue. When she pulled him up to stand, and he realized he was not in immediate danger, he resigned to the help he was clearly in need of. She sat beside him and offered him water which he took with appreciation.

“Thank you,” he said in his native tongue. When he saw that she did not understand, he raised the canteen in his right hand and patted his chest with his left in a kind of gesture to convey his appreciation. At that motion, Nour smiled and nodded and moved away to prepare a meal for him. “My wife, my wife..” he said desperately, motioning to his heart. Nour thought it best to pretend she didn’t know what he was asking. She would find a way to tell him when he had more strength.

Nour returned to the healing tent a few moments later with a tray of sustenance for her patient: a small tagine with cooked couscous

“This will give you strength,” Nour said in her native Arabic. The man looked at her with a blank stare while unceremoniously sucking the marrow out of the lamb bone in bliss. She allowed him some time to fill his starving belly before she started again, “Nour” she said with her hand across her chest, touching her amber necklace. She then reached over and touched the man’s chest with a questioning look on her face.

“Torsten,” he replied, touching his hand to hers on his chest. “Na-oor” he attempted her name.

“Toarrstan?” Nour attempted his name.

After his meal, Nour had given Torsten a sleeping tonic to help his wounds heal. When he awoke again in the late afternoon, he carefully limped out of the tent just as the sun was beginning to make its descent back into the horizon. Nour walked up to him and took note of his large size, the largest man she had ever laid her eyes upon. She nestled herself under his arm to help him walk and guided him up one of the sand dunes. From the top of the dune and into the distance, Torsten and Nour could see the ocean with the base of the mountain ridge just to the right of them. Nour’s mind wandered to the cliffside she was standing on yesterday and wondered when she would go back. Torsten was thinking of his wife. He motioned his hands towards Nour to show a boat, with a questioning look on his face and then held his hand to his heart to mean his wife. “My boat, my wife.. Where are they?” he said in his native tongue again.

“Your boat is safe,” she said in Arabic, mimicking his hand motions for ‘boat’ with a nod which turned grave when she held her hand to her heart and pointed towards the boat and shook her head in sorrow. Torsten fell to his knees, eyes fixed onto the ocean, filling with salty tears. Nour allowed him space to grieve and sat a distance away from him atop the dunes.

When they walked back down the dune, they felt the warmth of a bonfire newly lit. Torsten sat on a bundle of fabric

made into a small stool near the fire. Looking into the fire, he started softly in his native Norse, "We were six ships set out from Varberg on the Kattegat strait. We heard stories of new lands called the Mediterranean with vastly different people and cultures and riches beyond our imagination ripe for the taking. We wanted to raid Rome. My brothers, my sweet Sif, they followed my word here, I lead them. There was a storm and we were blown off our course, the other ships were lost to the sea. I could only save my wife, my sweet Sif," he began crying, "My brothers fell out of the boat, I could only save my Sif. They believed me when I told them we would return home with riches and stories for a lifetime." Torsten's voice broke as he spoke louder in his grief, "why have the gods forsaken me?! Odin! Why do you forget me?!" He yelled, looking up at the night sky.

Nour walked over to him and put a hand to his shoulder as he sat defeated. She did not understand his words, but she felt his pain. She felt it from both sides, as one who has lost and as one who would cause loss. She quietly grieved for her own pain, her husband and two sons.

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By the next few days, Torsten had regained his strength. He walked around the camp and tried to communicate with all its dwellers. He had learned how to say 'Shukran', or thank you, in Arabic. He smiled when the slender desert men attempted to wield his ax when they could scarcely hold it over their heads for very long. He drew lines in the sand for the children to depict a map and describe where he had sailed from. He had sailed in search of new land to plunder but he now found himself in the middle of a new world and taking anything from it had never occurred to him.

After three days his ship's sail was repaired. Nour wrapped loaves of bread, meat, and fresh cheese into a basket and walked it out to the ship but found him sitting near his wife's gravesite. He sat with his knees up and arms wrapped around them. He saw flowers had already been placed there. Nour watched from afar as Torsten said goodbye to his wife. When he saw Nour, he rose to meet her.

"Sho-kran," he said, taking the basket of food and placing

it on the ground.

“Shukran,” she said, though she knew he wouldn’t know what she was thanking him for. Torsten gazed back to his wife’s grave.

“I will not leave her alone,” she assured him, gesturing in the same direction.

Torsten found himself hesitating to get on the ship. He paused with his head down and body half turned away, as if his body and mind were quarreling about which direction life was meant to go. Nour stopped him for a moment and Torsten looked up. She took off her amber necklace and placed it around his neck. Torsten held the amber pendant in his hands and looked at Nour, confused.

“A piece of you has remained here, let a piece of here remain with you,” she said.

Torsten tucked the necklace into his leather breast shield and kissed Nour deeply. It was not a kiss of love, but a kiss of emotion shared. They were closer than lovers. He returned to his boat and cast the sails down. He sat rowing with his back towards the ocean and watched Nour on the surf until she disappeared from his sight. Nour stood there until the boat met the horizon of her past thoughts.

# Art

Poetry and stories require the reader to have a grasp of the language it is written in, art requires no such prerequisites. It strikes emotion into the beholder without uttering a single syllable. In this issue we are featuring three talented artists and photographers. Watercolor artist Eli Agger-Pilon depicts contorted figures in her collection, Donggun Youn's painted eyes all peer in different directions, and photography by Pavel Savgira highlights the landscape of San Francisco during the covid-19 crisis. In these times of uncertainty, the world that was once familiar and safe has become untranslatable to us; with these changes unfolding, it is important to recognize the artistry around us since beauty is always for certain.

- Saba Ghauomi

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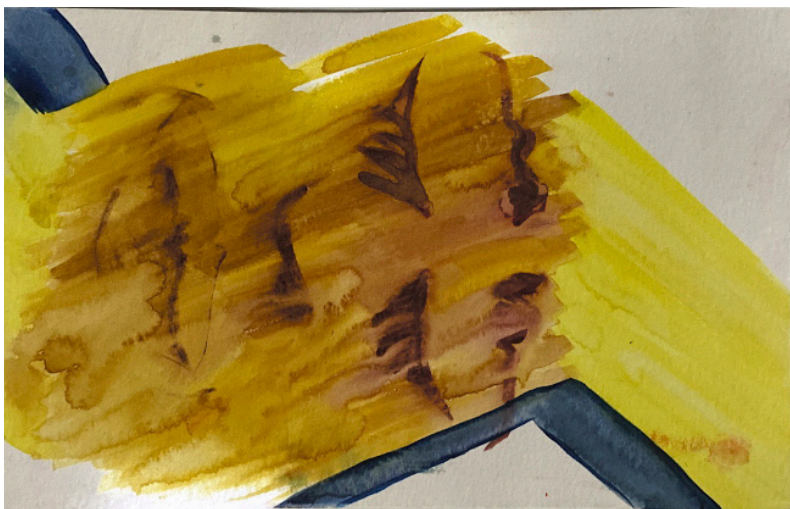
1. Faces *by Donggun Youn*
2. Untitled *by Eli Agger-Pillon*
3. San Francisco Stills *by Pavel Savgira*



Artwork by Donggun Youn

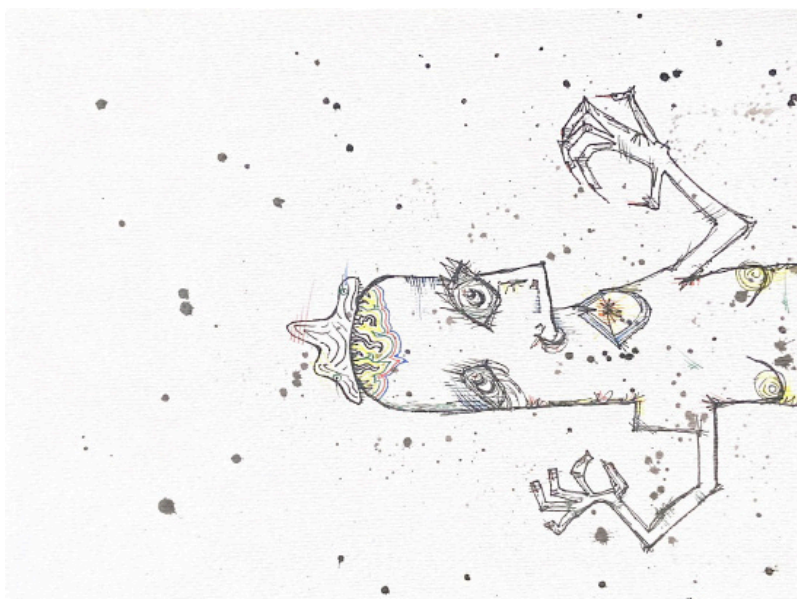
#migrantart



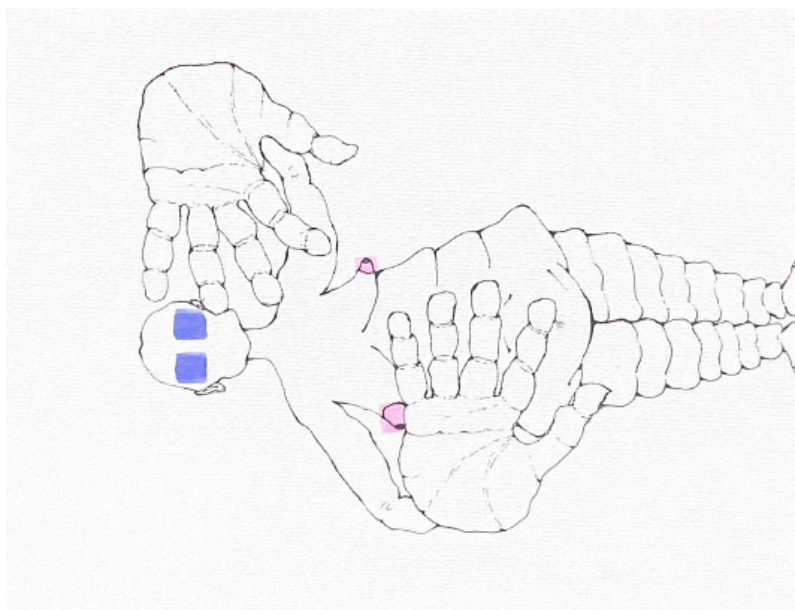


Top & Bottom: Eli Agger-Pillon





Top & Bottom: Eli Agger-Pillon





Top & Bottom: Pavel Savgira  
#migrantart



# Want to be a part of Creative Release?

Please join us in our weekly online conferences on Tuesday from 2 to 3 pm. You can find the link to these and other CR events on our website. If you are not on Foothill campus you can still take part by opening a creative arts club on your own campus and reach out to us for future collaboration. We are excited to get to know you and help you in any way we can.

If you wish to get in contact with us or submit your creative pieces to the upcoming issue, please reach out to:

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Creative release is a quarterly magazine that is designed for everybody to have the opportunity to share their own story. By reading our magazine you discover the young voices of our generation and an uncensored view of the way they see life.

“It’s hard to get lost if you don’t know where you’re going.”

- *Jim Jarmusch*