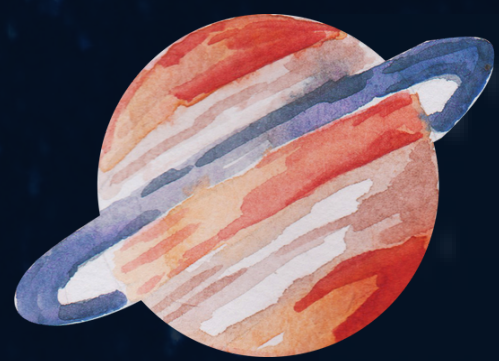


Love Letters

- Teen Creative Magazine -



- Issue #07: Wanderlust -



- Editor's Note -

In the 7th issue of Love Letters Magazine, we wanted to change it up; instead of asking you to stay put and dive deep into what it means for something to be "bittersweet" or "fresh", we wanted to transport you to a new location altogether.

In **Issue 07: Wanderlust**, we are done with travel restrictions and mandates -- we are traveling on our own, through the various incredible poems and prose pieces our extremely talented poets and authors have submitted to us.

Put on your seatbelt and get ready for take off!

Shira Zur, Founder of Love Letters Magazine



- Welcome New Team Members!-



Anita Lasek (she/her)

Art Director

hi, my name is anita and i am currently living and studying in toronto, canada. i study drawing and painting at OCAD University. i am interested in all forms of expression and i'm always so fascinated in ways people can communicate their thoughts with art. i work in all sorts of creative outlets from painting to performance art. i'm very excited to be a part of the team!



Ameera Suib (she/her)

Op-ed Editor

hi, my name is ameera suib and i'm from singapore. i am currently based in melbourne, pursuing journalism in a university. i have been writing since i was 10 and i always hope that i can transform people with my written work. aside from writing, i enjoy baking and cooking for the people in my life.



Khushi Jain (she/her)

Poetry Editor

hey, my name is khushi and i am a masters student at trinity college dublin. i use more verbs than nouns and end all text messages with a full stop. here to cut, paste and scrapbook words into poems.



- Table of Contents -

One With The Universe - Halle Preneta.....1

We Orbit Like Planets... - Halle Preneta.....3

Ask The Editors - The Love Letters Team.....5

Italian Wildfire - Maria Jakobsen.....6

My Father And The Last Train - John Chinaka Onyeche.....8

Sunflower... - John Chinaka Onyeche.....9

The Summer of Mozart & Francis Drake - Khristina Cabrera...10

Books We Love - The Love Letters Team.....12

Restless Hunting - Gabriella Officer-Narvasa.....13





- *One With The Universe* - 1

Halle Preneta

I watch as the city rolls past us.

The huge water tower that looms above just gliding by,
gliding away from my view.

When the plane lifts, I
breathe in slowly with its
movement.

Pushes and pulls I can feel
deep within my chest
like walking on a tightrope,
balancing,
always moving with the motions
of gravity

pushing and pulling me around.

When the clouds embrace me
like an old friend,

I feel one with the sky.

I feel the sun's yellow bursting from within the blue inside my chest.

The stars' white dots speckled on black and blue nights
like a splatter painting

or like the polka dots on my dog's
black and white fur,

its softness I haven't
touched in what feels like years.

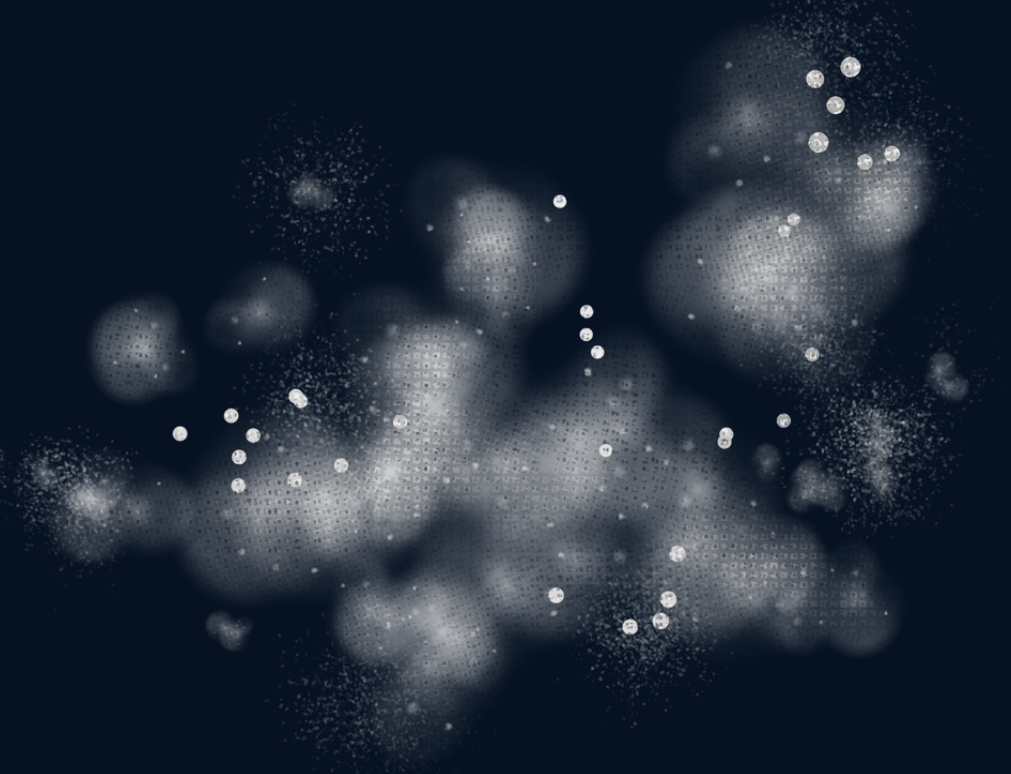
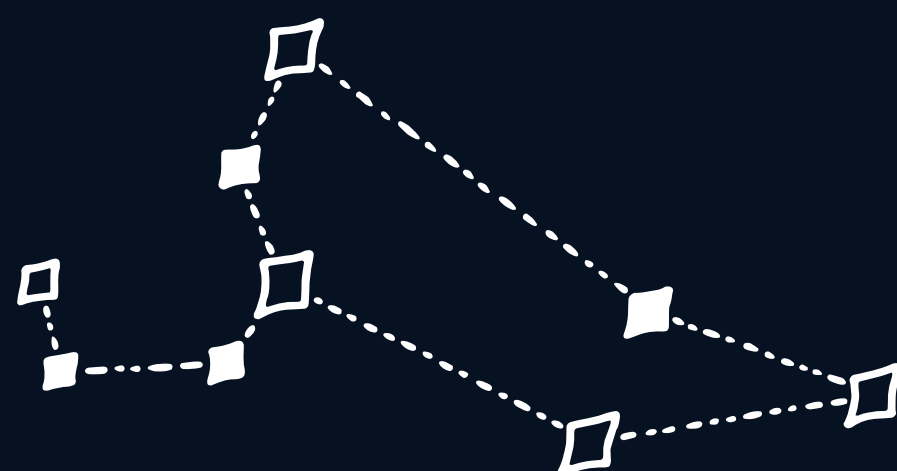
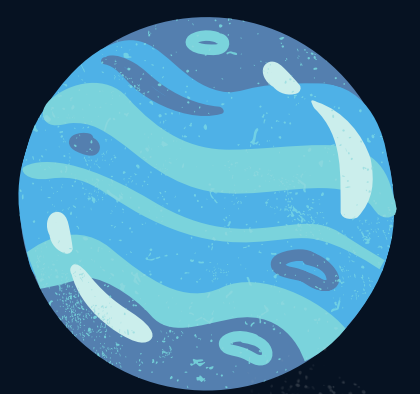
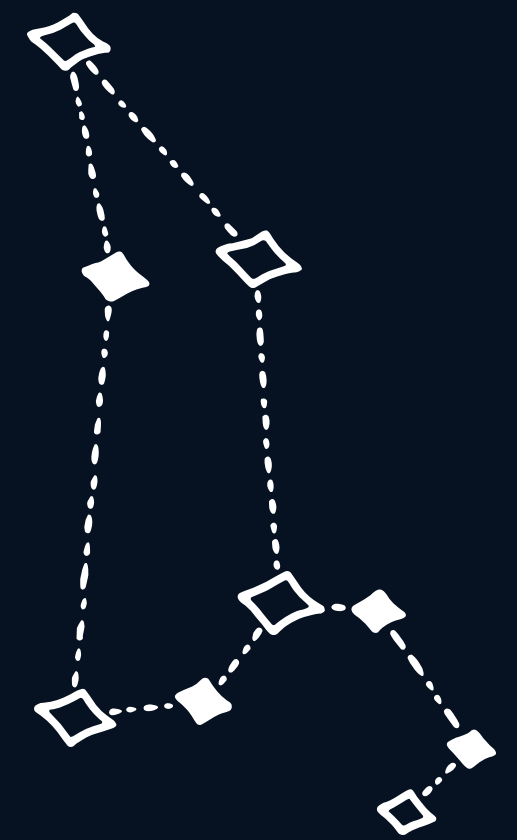
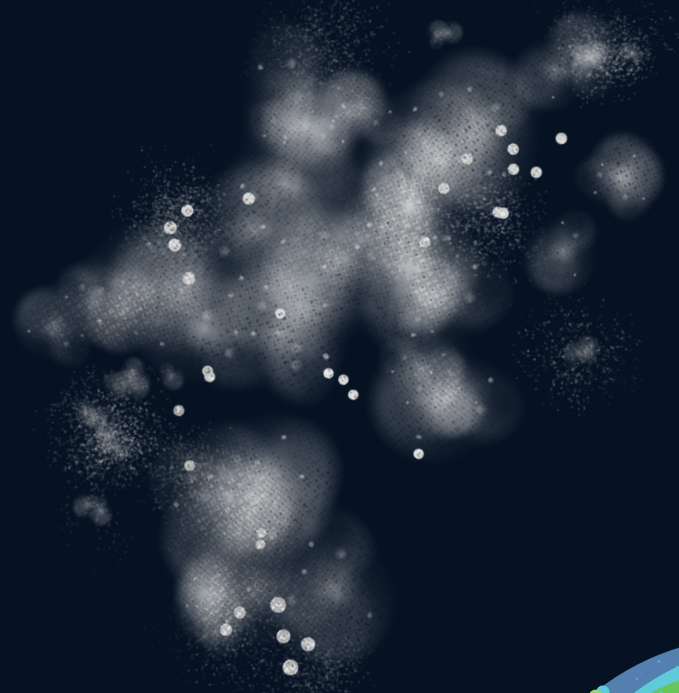
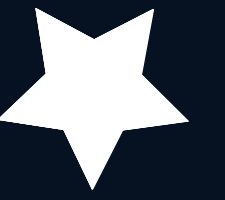
I feel like the oxygen molecules
hovering within the air.

Like this plane could crumble

and I would still be able

to survive as I join my

sibling molecules.





– One With The Universe – 2

Halle Preneta

Everyone else surviving
off our energetic motion.
Our little party
sustaining whole species,
whole life forms
we haven't even discovered yet.

Whole planets we
haven't even found yet,
each of them
having their own little
molecule parties.

The laughs so hard
we lose our breath.

The eyes glowing in wonder
like the stars in the sky.

The dancing like planets
orbiting around axes.

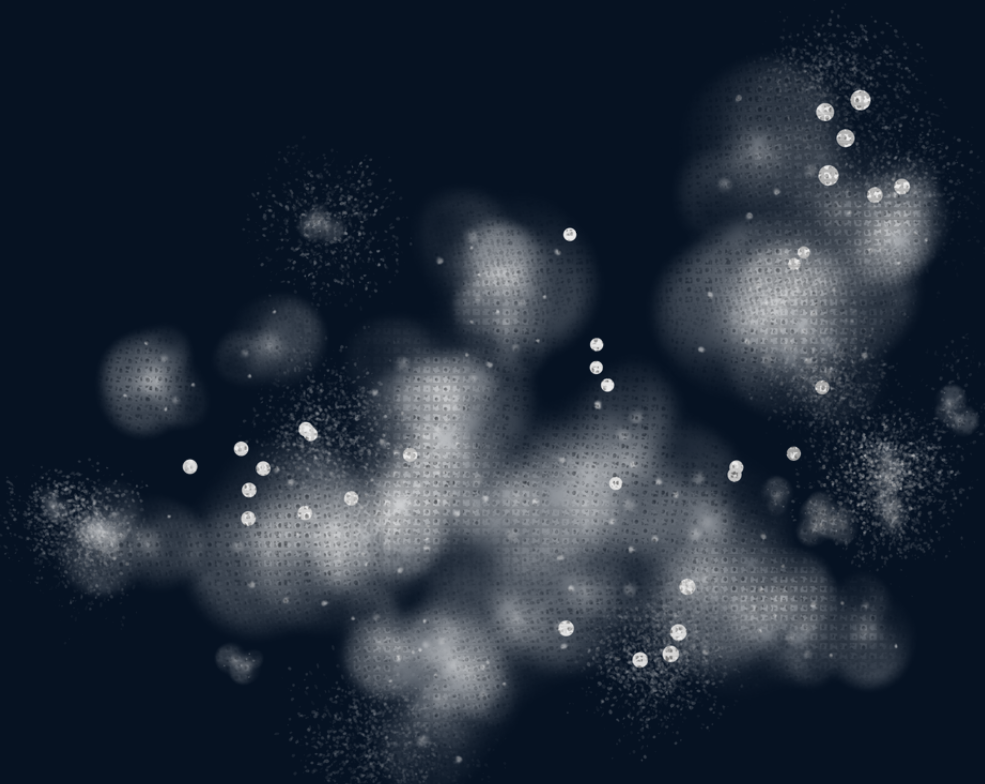
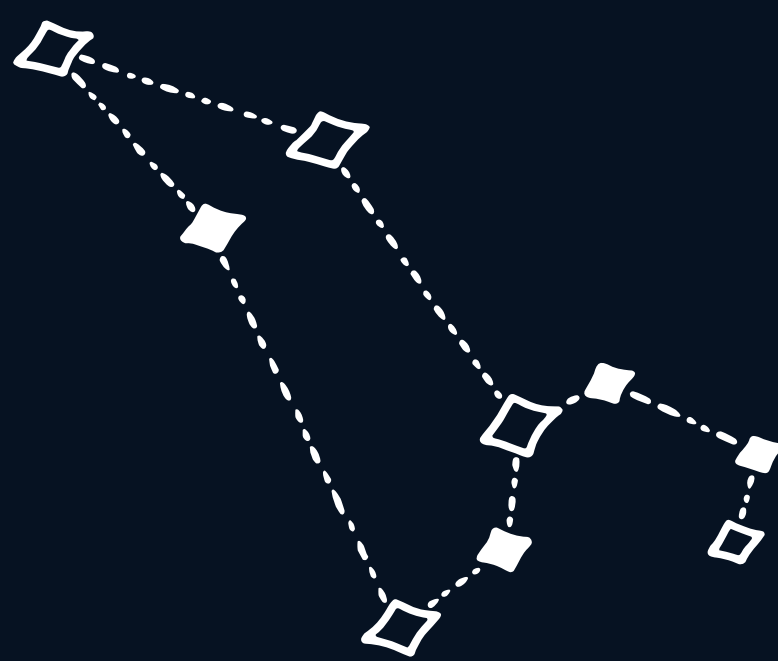
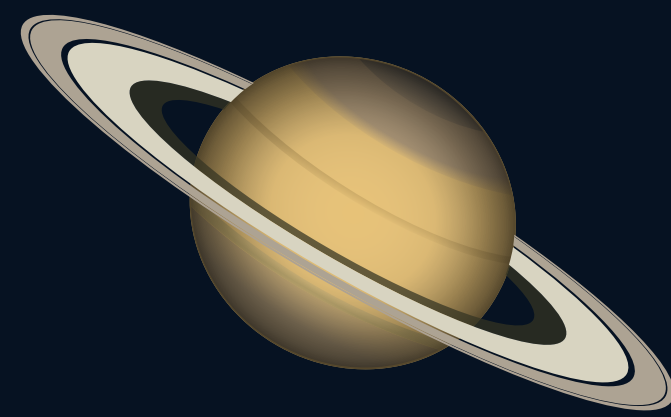
These are the parties
that sustain our lives.

That keep our souls glowing.

Our feet moving, one in front of the
other. That keep us living.

I watch as the clouds roll past us as
the plane guides me home
and breathe.

I am one with the sky,
finally ready for
the party,
the event of the century,
my life
to begin.



About the Poet:

Halle (she/her) enjoys writing short romance, sci-fi, and horror stories along with poetry and gets her ideas from random life experiences and fanfiction. When she's not writing, she's either watching YouTube or playing Animal Crossing. Her Twitter handle is @YaTheatreNerd and you can check out more of her work here:

<https://sites.google.com/view/halle-preneta/home>

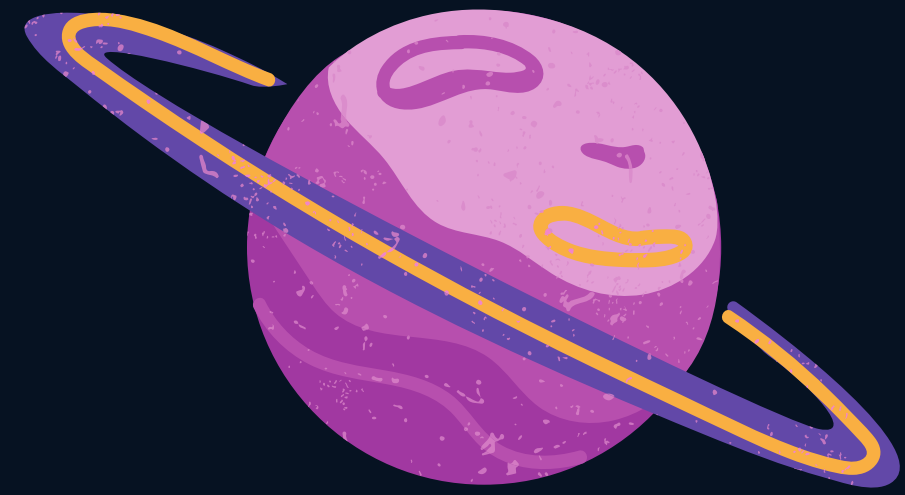


_ We Orbit Like Planets Around Each Other _ 3

Always Destined To Miss Our Mark

Halle Preneta

She is halfway across the world
in another man's arms
and you are lying alone
in your bed,
staring at the stars
that sparkle in the window,
wondering if she knows
you are awake.
Sometimes, you wonder
how the two of you are so fortunate enough
to co-exist in the same world together.
Orbiting in the same soundless, nonsense space
yet never to cross paths
like misaligned magnets,
always wanting to meet
but never being able to.
Sometimes, you wonder if she
is too good enough for this world.
Sometimes, you wonder if
things could have been different.
Sometimes, you ask yourself
how and why you always end up
in this situation.
Or at least feel
like you always end up in this situation,
always longing for the people
you can never have.





_ We Orbit Like Planets Around Each Other _ 4 *Always Destined To Miss Our Mark*

Halle Preneta

Always reaching for things
way out of your grasp.

Always lurking in the forbidden section
of the library,

searching for stories you want to tell
but don't know how to yet.

Sometimes, you wonder how you ended up here,
awake at 2am,

staring up at your ceiling

willing your brain to shut up,

wondering if she is awake too.



Artist's Statement:

"[Both] of my pieces fit in with the theme wanderlust as they all take you into different moments in time in my life. "One With The Universe" takes you into this spiritual experience I had on the plane ride home from my first semester abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark. "We Orbit Like Planets" takes you in a moment where I really longed to be with someone"

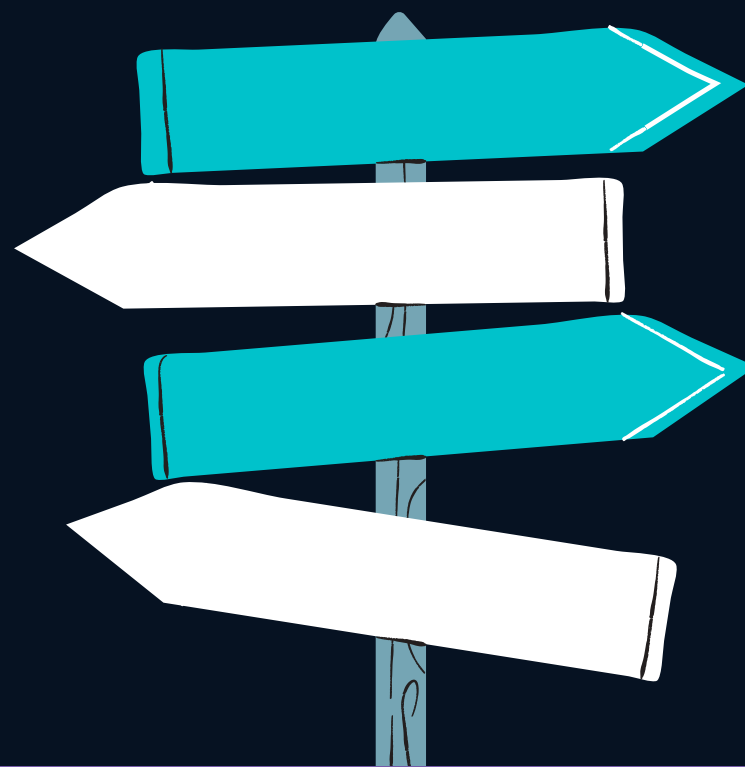
-Halle Preneta



What is your dream vacation spot?



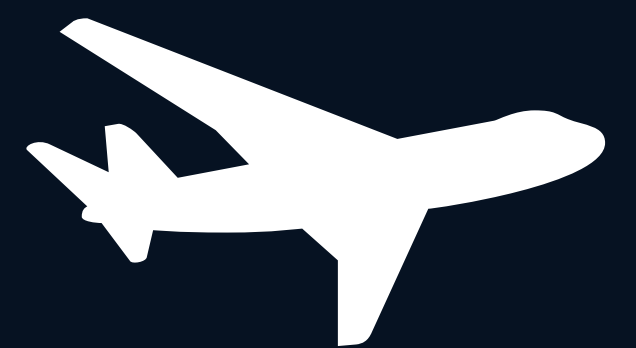
Prague,
Czech Republic



Edinburgh,
Scotland



Cappadocia,
Turkey



Amsterdam,
Netherlands



Singapore,
Singapore



Madrid,
Spain





– Italian Wildfire –

6

Maria Jakobsen

*She sat on my lap on the train
between Syracuse and Ragusa and
my naked thighs stuck to the leather
seats...*

We didn't speak a word, for it wasn't the time or place to do so. Instead we sat engulfed in silence, watching the empty, dry planes pass by. The bushes had burnt to ash in the big fires, leaving nothing but a quilting of pale orange and dusty greys to look at. It was an old train, the only cool air was provided by windows that wouldn't open fully. Every time the conductors moved through the train, they would close them, and every time they left, one of the elderly ladies stood up and opened them all again. A smoothly running system. Yet, it wasn't enough. My thighs were still sticking to the leather seats, and Mel was still using an old museum flyer as a fan. I lightly traced my fingertips along her hand, barely touching it at all. My nails were painted bright yellow, she kept hers natural. Her hand twitched underneath mine. Bending away like a cat refusing to be pet.

"What are you doing?" She turned to face me, smiling, and in that moment, her face and her voice were those of two different people.

"Nothing," I said. I let my arm fall to my side like a dead limb. She bent down and kissed my cheek quickly. She smelled weird, different. The usual smell of sunscreen was mixed with something new.

"Is that a new perfume?"

"What do you mean?" She asked, but didn't look at me, she had turned back around to watch the miles of ashy remains.

"You smell different. Not in a bad way or anything, I mean, I like it. It's just new." I said, but she seemed captivated by the death surrounding us. We were like the last breath, keeping the world alive.

"Mel?"

"Hm?" She turned to me again, "Oh, I'm glad you think so, I don't really remember, maybe it's just not one I use often." I nodded. The once lush green trees outside were now leafless, empty, and the quilting had become a boring sight. I heard the old ladies on the train whisper, though it was all in Italian, so I didn't understand. Mel could, but she didn't translate for me anymore. It was rarely nice things. I kissed her shoulder, exposed to me underneath the white tank top. No response. In a way, it looked like she was grieving. I wanted to reassure her the plants would return, once summer ended and the rain came, they would be reborn by the next spring. The flowers would sprout, and the bushes would grow as lush and green as ever. I didn't because I couldn't be sure that they would.

For just one second, I allowed myself to think about the time before her. The time before I met her last May, on the corner of a street in Rome.





– Italian Wildfire –

7

Maria Jakobsen

The time before I bought a one-way ticket to Italy. Before I boarded a train full of people I could not understand, with heat gluing my thighs together. I allowed myself to feel the cold breeze of Stowe. The feeling of snow on the tip of my nose. Making a snowman outside my parents' house, like we did every year when the first snow fell. I closed my eyes to imagine the snow in my hair, but I couldn't help but think of the melting. In Italy I melted. All the solid ice from Stowe turned to running water of the rivers down the Alps, the crashing waves along the Amalfi coast. She turned to look at me, away from the dying planes and their misery.

"You're afraid I will leave you." It was unexpected, to hear what was meant to be left unspoken. I waited for her to continue, to comfort me, assure me she wouldn't. Feel her warmth again.

"You know ti amo," she said instead. It was supposed to help, but it didn't. I knew she loved me.

She knew I loved her. What I didn't know was; would that be enough?

About the Author:

Maria Jakobsen (she/her) is born and raised in Norway, but currently studies towards a BA in Film and Creative Writing at Lancaster University. She has been published in Flash Literary Journal, and had poetry longlisted and published in The Phare. She also works as a journalist for Localfolk magazine.

You can find her on twitter

@mariasjakobsen.

Artist's Statement:

"Italian Wildfire is about two queer characters, both of whom are searching for a place they belong. The narrator has left home, while Italy is Mel's home country. Neither feel a sense of belonging, with the judgements of strangers on the train.

The scorched landscape that they travel through represents this feeling of strangeness and chaos. Not only do they struggle with the question of if they belong in Italy, but also if they belong with each other."

–Maria Jakobsen





- *My Father and the Last Train* - 8

John Chinaka Onyeche

When the last caravan left the terminal last night, it echoed miseries as I was awoken from my many slumbers of that which I had once called family life. And in this poem, my father was a hunter and he hunted down good games. And my mother, a farmer who gave birth to a Daughter who mends fabrics and never tried to mend anyone's, broken heart. A Son who writes poetry and plants trees from where he writes on dead trees. And a nephew, one who kneels before the Sacrament, an image of a man with a cross and recites the prayer beads around his neck every morning whispering; amen and amen as a ritual for the family. No doubt, this was the setting of our home in the middle of the train station where every travelling traveller travels through; dead or alive the station, the hands that bear the legs on which the gruelling wheels kneels to say their last prayers on never-ending, going to bed as it cries all night and day alike. For last night, my father's hands had hovered around the last train at the station which was heading to the new wood-world where only the dead trees live to retell(s) of life's last memories in this world. I mean, where only in the body of dead woods are memories written by a poet and his Son one amongst them who writes poetry on dead trees of times and memories of men on this world writes about his father and the last train heading to the new wood-world of no returns.





– *Sunflower* –

9

John Chinaka Onyeche

A Sunflower had sprouted out in my father's garden in the morning, I showed it to him in the evening while we had walked through the garden. And my father told me that, it was a way of our ancestors returning, those who had died in the years past without a trace of them with humans. They return as flowers from their long time journey into the spirit land that we should now care for them. And when I showed it to my mother, she said that "it is a gift from nature" and admonished that I should care for the little sunflower in our garden. But when I came back to look at it again to know where it was coming from, I was bemused how it faded away from the spot where it stood like the Sun in the firmament. Then when I returned home from the garden, the news was broken to me that my father had walked away from home to where no trace of him is possible and that my mother had wailed rivers as tears and that she had paddled through it as her wooden canoe into the world of oblivion and each day of my remembrance them, I walk through the garden searching for a sunflower, maybe my father might have returned through it or my mother will become like nature in the garden and my father as the sunflower and now as my ancestor.



About the Artist:

John Chinaka Onyeche "Rememberajc" (he/his) is the author of; (Echoes Across The Atlantic), a husband, father and poet from Nigeria. He writes from the city of Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria. He is currently a student of History and Diplomatic Studies at Ignatius Ajuru University Of Education Port Harcourt Rivers State. John Chinaka can be reached through the following means: Rememberajc.wordpress.com | [Facebook.com/jehovahisgood](https://www.facebook.com/jehovahisgood) | [Twitter.com/apostlejohnchin](https://twitter.com/apostlejohnchin) | Apostlejohnchinaka@gmail.com | <https://linktr.ee/Rememberajc>



Khristina Cabrera

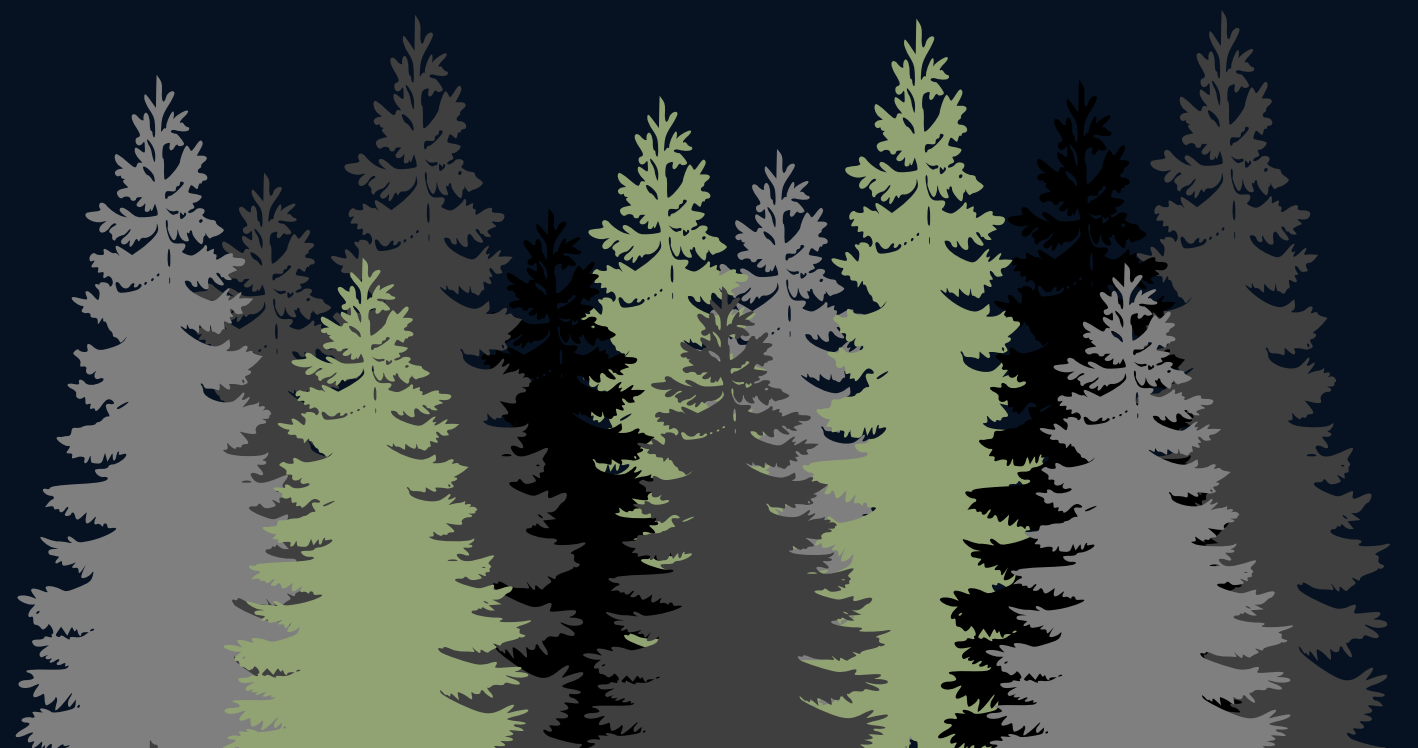
There was hardly a time when the four of us weren't together...

We were explorers of a brand new planet, mapping out trails in the damp dirt, laying on our backs on the blossoming earth to see the sky through the eyes of people like Francis Drake and Merriweather Lewis and Marco Polo. Upon hearing about the invitation my mother had shrugged and said, "It would be nice to get away from the world for a while," though I neglected to tell her that she was wrong. Surrounding oneself in nature just invites the world in more, forcing people to slow down and time to waver in and out of existence, setting the world back to decades when people didn't have the technology and devices we have now. Being in nature was the only way to remain eternally young, the only way to access the golden Fountain of Youth that people bleed themselves dry for. It was in the sparkling summer and it was behind our school and it was in my backyard of my childhood home, in all the simple places that all those famous explorers would never think to look, in all the places that concealed the most magic.

Our first big adventure was to the glimmering creek hidden deep in the forest, a lost treasure forgotten by all except Mother Nature, which had tended to it through storm and toil. Ruby had mentioned stumbling across it once when he was a kid but never being able to find it again. We found it one breathless afternoon when the sun was in our eyes, the birchwood and pine air filling our lungs with the broad expanses of life. The thick tree branches overhead were perfect for tying a rope to, and we took turns swinging into the creek, the refreshing blast of cold water waking us up to something new and thrilling. "The Jordan River," said Andrew absently, drying his hair off with a towel, "or the Red Sea." When asked why he was always giving names to random things, he just smiled. "Names give things power," was all he said.

Mikey and I played soccer one-on-one by the water while Ruby sprawled out on our checkered picnic blanket and napped in the shade of the trees, his aviators perched low on his nose. He had no interest in participating whereas Andrew simply chose not to, claiming that he'd rather not embarrass himself. That was one of his worst fears, making a mockery of himself, even in front of people he was comfortable with, even in front of people he considered his friends. I'd heard a saying once, that only the most arrogant of fools couldn't laugh at himself, but it is strange to look back on this easy time and think of Andrew as arrogant. That summer we were all one, melting with the liquid heat and becoming a single unit, breathing at once, moving at once. If he was arrogant, we were all arrogant, but if we never gave it a name, it wouldn't hold any power over us. Such was the simple life of teenagers who had neither the time nor patience to think so hard.

There was one time when we finally persuaded Ruby and Andrew to join us, but somehow—I forget who kicked it, or how it happened—our ball ended up floating far out in the lake, a black-and-white blemish in the middle of a translucent mirror to the sky. Mikey rolled his shoulders and dove after it while the three of us stood by the water's edge, watching the back of his head grow smaller and smaller. "Soccer really isn't my thing," Ruby said after a beat. His eyes were fixed on the lake, taking in the ripples that lapped across his bare feet before receding again. He didn't mean much by it, only the truth, but Andrew shook his head.





Khristina Cabrera

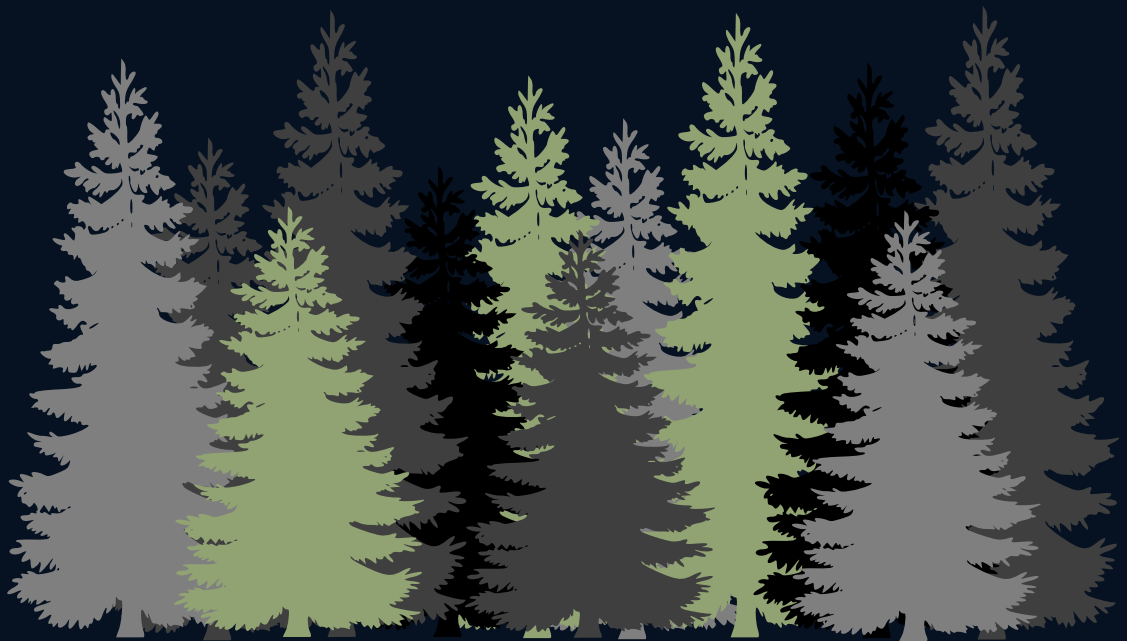
"You could be good, if you wanted to be," he said.

"I couldn't."

"Oh, but there's lots of people who become famous for one good play, even if the rest of their careers are nothing but mediocre. That's just the way the world works." Andrew seemed to know an awful lot about how the world worked. "You don't need to be playing all the time. Think of music. Actually, think of it this way: some people were born to play the piano, and that's just the way it is. But if someone who wasn't a prodigy wanted to play Mozart and dedicated all their time to only learning that one composition by Mozart, no other song, both them and the prodigy could play it fine."

Ruby made a small sound of acknowledgment, somewhere in the back of his throat. He was still looking out to the water, his eyes distant and clouded over like tinted windows to the soul. A short while later Mikey returned to the shore, holding up the dripping soccer ball with a triumphant grin. "I got it," he said, so we resumed our game without a hitch. For some reason we never talked about what Andrew had said, as though abiding by some unspoken pact, but back then it was always enough just to be near each other, breathing in the same air, living the same lives, the way that people with the same souls always do. We were still young then; we had an excuse for being naïve, one that only slips away the older a person gets. In fact, sometimes I am envious of how simple things used to be, that youth had once flooded through my veins, that the four of us could even stand to be in the same room at once. I have nothing more to say about this without becoming too sentimental, no flowery words to turn me into any less haggard a narrator, except for some advice that I must still encourage myself to take:

In times of trouble, it is perfectly adequate to call for the ball and play on.



About the Author:

Khristina Cabrera (she/her) is an American high school student who enjoys driving, playing guitar, and traveling. Her work has been longlisted in the 2021 National Flash Fiction Day Youth Competition and is slated to appear in the *Agapanthus Review*, among others. She lives by the coast with her parents and hopes to publish a book one day.

Artist's Statement:

"This work pertains to an ephemeral summer in which the narrator spends time with his best friends, the lingering uncertainty of the next school year hanging in the back of his mind. During this summer he devotes his time to being out in nature and exploring what the world has to offer him, caught up in adolescence and the promises of youth. "Wanderlust" refers both to how he is physically wandering the forests and creeks, yet it also refers to how he is exploring boyhood with his friends before he becomes an adult."

-Khristina Cabrera

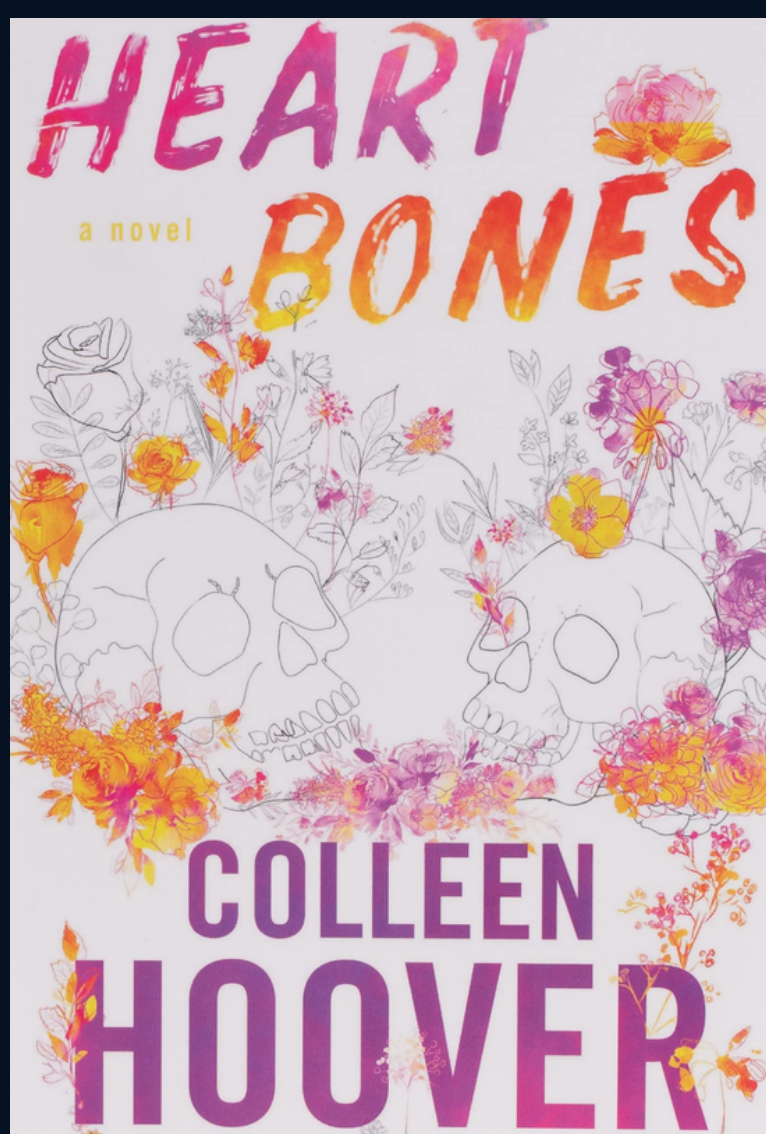


- Books We Love -

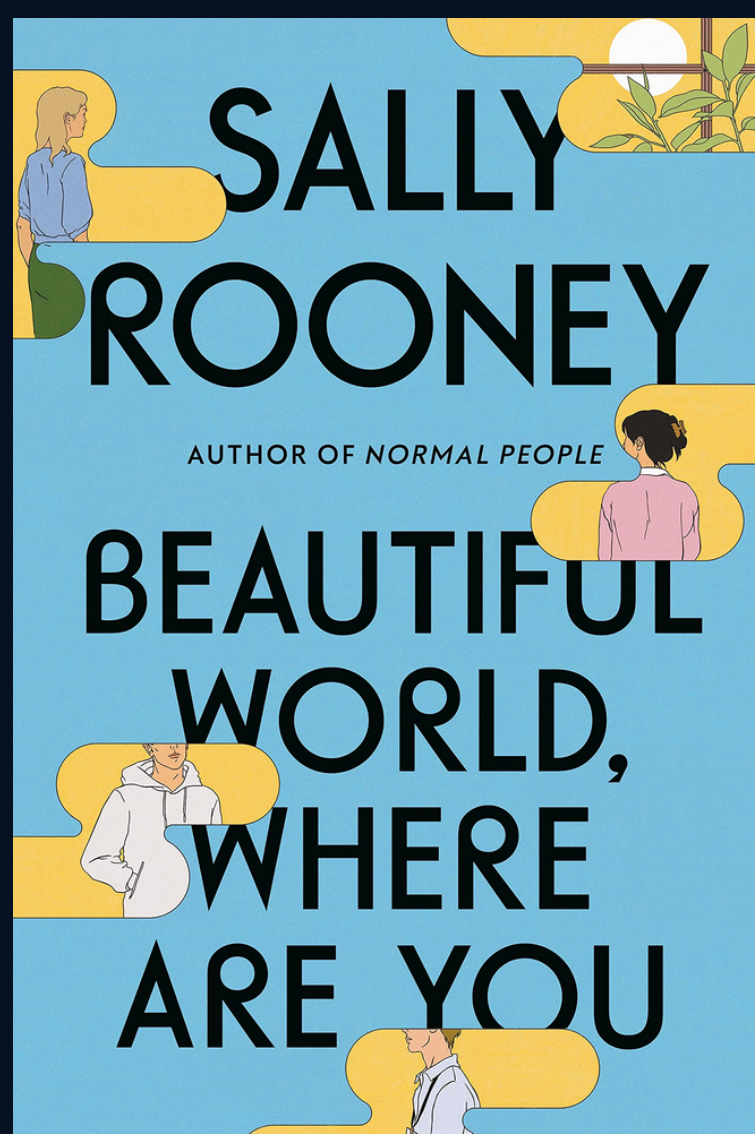
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The Love Letters Team

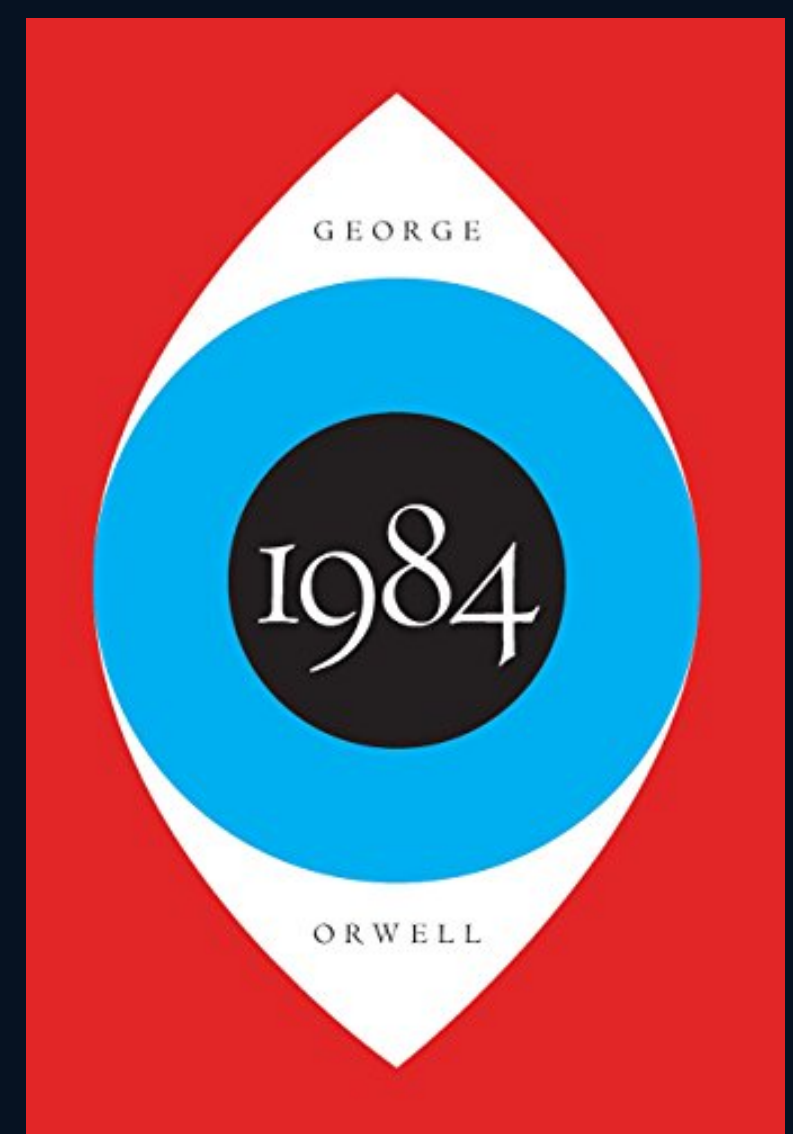
Here are some of the stories our team has been reading this month!



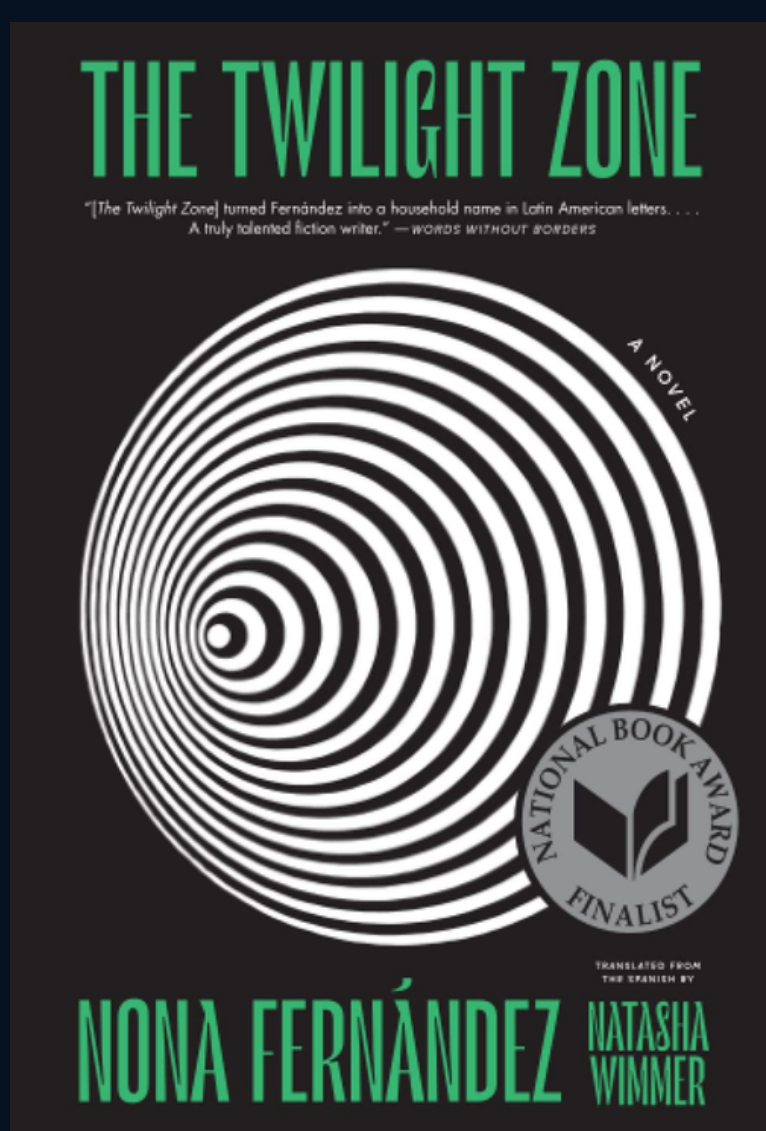
Heart Bones (2020)
Colleen Hoover



Beautiful World, Where Are You (2021)
Sally Rooney



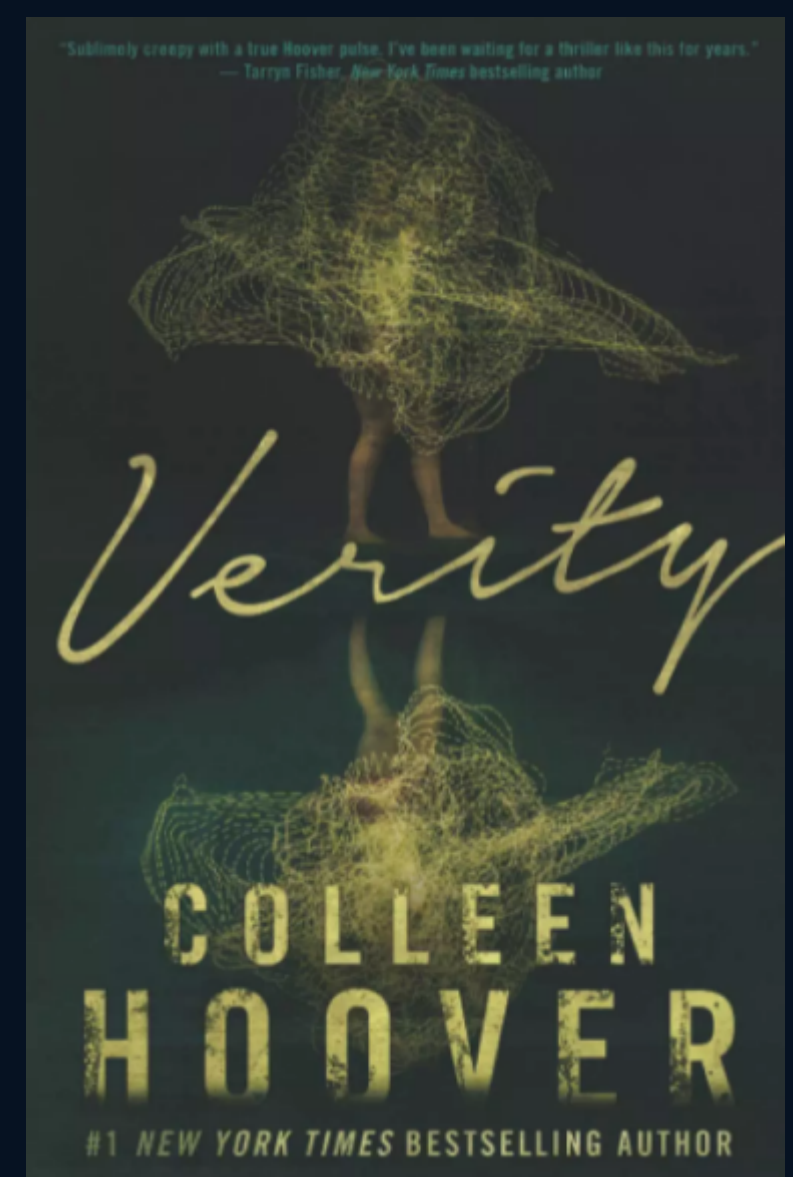
1984 (1949)
George Orwell



The Twilight Zone (2016)
Nona Fernández



Boy Parts (2020)
Eliza Clark



Verity (2018)
Colleen Hoover



– *Restless Hunting* –

13

Gabriella Officer

*She was possessed of a restless soul,
that woman of mine...*

I watched her hands a lot, pretty brown hands, strong brown hands. She plucked the mangoes from the trees and enjoyed their sweetness, every bit of it. When our riverbed rose and they said the spirits loved us not, she helped us men build a dam, stacking logs and filling crevices with stones. Babies cried and she soothed them, bouncing them on her hips, strong hands pinching their little cheeks. She built her own weaving loom and her fingers thrummed over the warp threads as if she were playing a lute with a melody only she could hear.

That woman of mine did all that, but when the seasons changed, she'd take up her father's crossbow and leave our village. I asked her why, and she never gave me any answer but a kiss. I'd sit on the low stone wall and watch her walk down the dirt path, barefooted and bare-headed, with that long curly hair down to her waist. In the fall, when leaves grew pigmented with their autumnal blush, she'd return with a brace of quails and a pocketful of berries.

"Where were you?" I'd ask her upon her return, holding her close to me as we drifted off towards slumber.

"Over the hills," she'd mutter, "Down through the forests and out to the sea."

In the spring, she returned with geese slung over her shoulder, and their white feathers dropped in the dirt until it looked as if she were walking on a bed of hoarfrost and snow. On the cusp of summer, she returned with a small pronghorn antelope, and she told me that she had walked until she saw nothing but sand, sheets of sand blowing up from a desert and stinging her face.

"The desert is far from here," I told her, "Too far for you to go and be back with a fresh mule deer."

"But I went anyway," she replied, a rare look of irritation crossing her face as she saw my disbelief, "It isn't as far as you think it is."

I offered to go hunting with her, and she came with the men of the village when we all went to stalk the red deer that grazed on our land. She felled one herself, and she shot her crossbow straight and true, but when she returned, she cried.

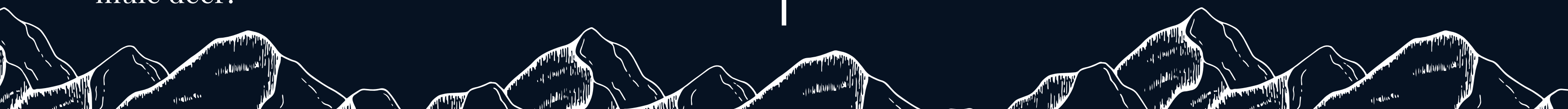
"They were practically tame," she said, "I want to go far, where it's wild. Where the animals don't bend their necks and wait for the swing of the ax. Where the people haven't cut away the trees to make space for their crops."

"What are you saying?" I sighed, "We need crops to feed ourselves. We need a steady supply of animals. Why do you keep going away? I can't understand it."

The next morning she left, and we didn't see her until winter was upon our doorstep, and she came back to the village dragging the carcass of a black bear behind her. I skinned it for her and the beast's fur made several warm cloaks for the oldest and the youngest of us.

"I went up to the high forests," she murmured that night, "They have evergreen trees there, so thick you can barely walk between them. I had to chase that bear into his cave, far up into the mountains."

"Do you have to go away again?" I asked her, and she answered me not. I couldn't understand her enigmatic nature. I couldn't understand why she needed more than the neat houses of our village. Our council of elders said that we had enough money for paved pathways and a new well, and our people were slowly growing prosperous off of their labors. Soon we might be a township, yet this restless love of mine did nothing but seek out the wildness of the world, however she managed to get there.





– *Restless Hunting* –

14

Gabriella Officer

One spring, she came back with a bristled wild boar and a little dog trotting along beside her. He was a red-haired spaniel, and he had the look of those noble hunting dogs gone feral when the monarchy fell and the noble estates fell into ruin. She loved him instantly, feeding him from her plate and letting him sleep at the foot of our bed at night. As she went about the village, lending her strong, generous hands to all kinds of efforts, the dog followed at her heels.

“I might take the dog and go out to the grasslands,” she confessed to me, giving me a rare insight into her plans. I had grown accustomed to hearing of her journeying along with the rest of the village. And I had grown accustomed not to worrying about her.

“What’ll you hunt out there?” I queried.

“Impalas,” she said, and there was an eager lilt in her voice, “Or wildebeests. Hyenas, even, but they’re not much use for meat. And I only bring back what we can eat or use.”

So she went, and I didn’t worry, and she returned with two young impalas slung over her strong shoulders. The village ate greedily of her bounty, as they always did. But whispers were starting to grow, and I could do nothing to quell them. Her strong hands and her sparkling eyes were no longer so readily received in village homes, and she brooded over this newfound coldness.

“You shouldn’t go away so much,” I told her when she asked me.

“It’s nicer out there,” she sighed, “I want to see it all.”

I couldn’t stop her, so off she went. Her journeys began to increase. Once, she sent the little red dog ahead of her, and he barked so much that I worried I’d find her gravely injured along the path. But she was standing there, weary, with a huge alligator at her feet and long scratches along her arms.

No one smiled that night when they ate her gator meat and listened to her story of wading through swamp water and standing in peat gullies waiting for the beast. I had heard the whispers of witchcraft. They all said how unnatural it was for a woman to go off like that and hunt these beasts all by herself. They cast dark looks at me and wondered why I didn’t control her. Why we hadn’t married and started having children yet. And the wonderings of a suspicious, discontented village are nothing to trifle with. I said nothing to these people, though. I didn’t condemn their wagging tongues or their vicious whispers. And I regret it, because one day, I was the one who had to leave and go do some work in a neighboring town. She kissed me, sweetly and pensively.

I returned, and she was gone. No one said a word to me, except for a kindhearted old woman who told me. They had poisoned her little red dog. They had driven her away with nothing but her father’s crossbow. That restless soul I had loved so well would never be seen in our village again. I hope she saw it all.

She always liked it better out where it was wild.





- *Restless Hunting* -

15

Gabriella Officer

About the Author:

Gabriella Officer-Narvasa is a homeschooled 17 year old high schooler from Brooklyn, NY. She's a dancer, writer, and performer. She's also a chronic book hoarder, and the parent of a very temperamental succulent. Her prior publications include pieces in Shameless Magazine and Concord Theatrical's 'Breaking Character' blog. One day, Gabriella hopes to publish her fantasy novel and bring greater diversity to the science fiction and fantasy genres as a woman of color. She draws inspiration for her fantasy work from the mythology of the Philippines and Jamaica, the countries of her parents.

Artist's Statement:

'Restless Hunting' is an exploration of one woman's wanderlust, and the inscrutability of her desire to see the world outside her small village. It also demonstrates how wanderlust might seem illogical and how restlessness is often condemned, especially in women who simply want more.



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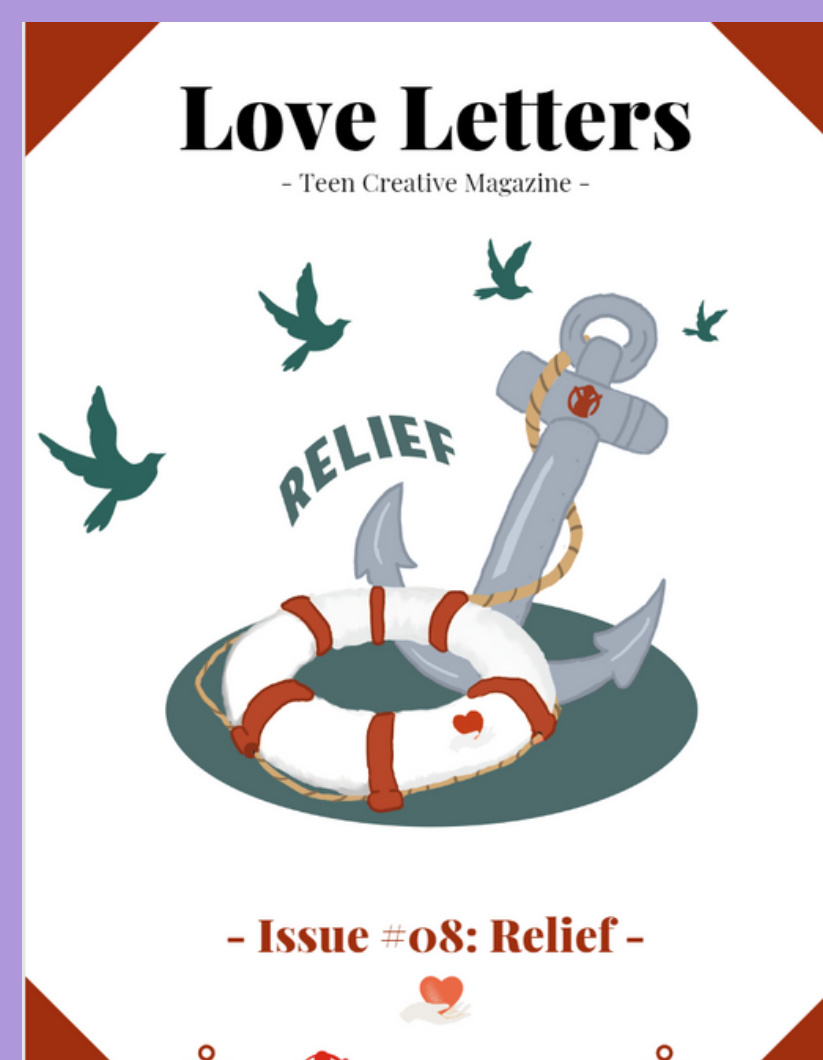
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