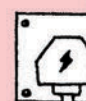




CICADA®





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Ahoy, *Cicada* Readers!

Back to school can hit like a brick. Our gift to you: a spot of mutiny. (9/19 is Talk Like a Pirate Day. Mateys.) Mutiny is an inflection point, the pivot from submission to rebellion. School, family, and social norms; the rules of publishing or the arts: anywhere there's an order of things, that order can chafe. And it can crack.

Yours from the deck of our pirate ship,

Team *Cicada*

WHO MADE THIS?

Marianne "Keelhaul Mary" Carus: Founder and Editor-in-Chief from 1998–2013 • Anna "Barnacle Bait" Neher: Associate Editor
Jestine "Jetsom Jes" Ware: Assistant Editor • Jacqui "Jolly Roger" Ronan Whitehouse: Designer • Kristen "Scalliwag" Scribner: Digital Art Director
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Adrienne "Ironhook" Matzen: Permissions Specialist



CICADA®

SEPT/OCT 2015

VOL. 18, NO. 1

\$7.95 • AGES 14 & UP

COVER ART & INSIDE FRONT COVER

"Prior Engagement"
by Laura Callaghan

Laura is an Irish illustrator living and working in South East London. Her work depicts fearless women in colorful, fun environments—images that seem bright and beautiful at first but that create a sense of mystery or unease. She has worked for clients such as Urban Outfitters, *Riposte* magazine, *NYLON*, and *The Lifted Brow*. Learn more at lauracallaghanillustration.com.

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CICADA CENSUS

Voice of the Cicadaverse

OUR LATEST POLL ARE YOU A PIRATE?

Do you have the steely will (and/or iron hook) to sail the seas a'pirating? Take this test to find out!

You once got detention for . . .

- A** Passing notes in class.
- B** Selling black market silks to the theater department.
- C** Addressing the superintendent as a "pox-faced kraken."

You're sitting down to take the SAT when your calculator's batteries die. You . . .

- A** Panic for a second, then remember the spares in your backpack.
- B** Fill in the Scantron bubbles to make a skull and crossbones. That'll strike terror among those College Board wretches!
- C** Head to the harbor, commandeer an 8-gun brigantine, and raid Energizer galleons from Boston to Jamaica.

In home ec, you . . .

- A** Burn your spaghetti sauce.
- B** Insist that grog belongs at the base of the food pyramid.
- C** Add lime rinds to the peanut butter cookie dough to combat scurvy.

The lunchroom is out of ketchup! You . . .

- A** Get the pizza.
- B** Gnaw at your hardtack and jerky as best you can. Weevils are a condiment, right?
- C** Steal a dory, row to port, and bring back Heinz by the barrel. Use it to win the crew's trust and get yourself voted captain.

The pencil sharpener in pre-calc is jammed again! You . . .

- A** Borrow a mechanical pencil.
- B** Always carry a dagger just in case you have to whittle a pencil (or pry open a chest, or carve a scrimshaw, or gut a sea turtle).
- C** Raise the black, ready the canons, and seize the pencil sharpener across the hall as your prize! Then offer the entire French II class freedom, a musket, and an equal share of plunder if they'll swear loyalty to you.

Take the census online to log yer results and see how yer fellow *Cicada* readers measure up!

cicadamag.com/cicadacensus

TALLY YER RESULTS LIKE SO, SAVVY?

For each A), ye earn 1 Spanish doubloon. For each B), 2. For each C), 3.

5 – 8 DOUBLOONS

Barnacle Bait: Ye're a pox-faced, grog-snarfing, jelly-boned maggot with no more brains than a sea turtle. Steer clear of pirate ships, unless ye wish to feed the fish!

9 – 12 DOUBLOONS

Salty Sailor: Ye're a mangy, scar-faced, mutinous bilge-rat headed straight for a short life of treachery and crime and then, like as not, a swift trip to Davey Jones' Locker. Congrats (?): ye're a pirate.

13 – 15 DOUBLOONS

Cunning Cap'n: Ye're the blackest-hearted sea dog ever to take a prize on the high seas. Yer breath could kill a kraken, yer gizzard's tough as iron, and yer hold is loaded with Spanish gold. Look out, merchant sailors!

THE RESULTS ARE IN,

and while 35% of *Cicada* readers rocked their summer 2015 ZATs (congrats!), a woeful 65% of you have a ways to go before you can make the cut among the living dead. Folks: it's time to buckle down.

In our last issue, you all took the ZAT (Zombie Aptitude Test), the only standardized test to assess your readiness to face a postapocalyptic job market where the #1 growth industry is being undead.

Planning to retake the ZAT? You can do so anytime at cicadamag.com/zat. For those who aced the ZAT: Get a partially decomposed leg up on the competition! Intern with a zombie horde. Take AP classes like Intro to Urban Dereliction and Ravaging 101. Follow publications like *The EconoMoanist*, *The Harvard Brains Review*, *Corpse-Forbes*, and our cousin mag for zombie teens, *CicaDecay*. Armageddon is coming, and you want to be ready to shamble with the pros.

ZAT CHAMPS – 35%

FOOL HUMANS – 65%



SUMMER 2015 ZAT RESULTS

BRAIN CRUSH CONTEST WINNER

Congrats to small.sparrow, winner of our Brain Crush Contest!

We asked y'all to write a letter to someone who inspires you and post it at our online writing forum The Slam (cicadamac.com/theslam). This passionate missive is aimed at a host of slam poets small.sparrow claims as creative ancestors and, in the end, at slam itself.

On the next page, runners-up Haibby and Fantasist crush out on pop star Romeo Santos and feminist folk tale writer Ethel Johnston Phelps. (The juxtaposition delights us, too.) Check it out!

XOXO, The Slam Admins

A SLAM POEM ABOUT SLAM POETRY BY SMALL.SPARRROW

I don't need a survey to tell it,
Not one of us would sell it,
"poetry is dusty, a dying art unmessy,
no one wants your musty books, we got
hip hop
to listen to instead."
But please do remember the selected few who
Might travel tribe by tribe to spill their stories wide,

These slammers of poetry were the first true pop stars.
'cause M. L. K. *Junior* was a slam poet, and so was Jesus Christ,
as they offered their words with gentle hands
and homeless heart took hold.
And Anis Mojgani turned dirty empty ceilings into human beings,
Necessary, keeping our heads dry in the storm, ordinary and forgotten treasure.
Tyler Joseph lived through Tuesday, Wednesday and on Thursday remembered online
words said.

And 'cause of it, a kid was dead.
And when Levi the Poet spoke and red candles splattered,
As Joseph handed me a song,
I heard my heart start beating in another man's voice.
This is not flat. This is not street art. In Joseph's words, "this is not rap, this is
not hip-hop." This is just another "attempt to make the voices stop."

What we lack in courage, we grow strong in silence,
But friend, what happens when our brains turn in and we become our own prey?
See, words make our redemption real,
As our redemption reserves our right to feel.
As a librarian arranges books on a shelf and
A lawyer fights for rights
So we wait to hear
A song that writes out stories clear,
Lying down our hidden truths,
We want to fling our words to the sky ...
And hear our stories finally ring true.

Poetry is not dusty. It is kicking back,
Listen close and you'll hear it.

Roméo Santos,

Wherefore art thou in search of your biggest fan?

Stop! I'm right here.

I'm in a bathtub and my little brother is knocking on the door, but no chance I'm getting out of this porcelain paradise until "Propuesta Indecente" concludes with the crying guitar. My heart also needs time to toilet bowl back into my chest.

I'm in my bedroom and "Eres Mía" is on the radio. I can't get my skinny jeans on. Not because they don't fit, but because I don't want to. I refuse to be restricted while I sway and twirl with a ghost partner as we avoid dirty clothes and textbooks on the floor.

I'm jogging (struggling) on the sidewalk and "You" come on shuffle and suddenly I'm *the girl*. There's a bounce to my step, to my hair. My magnetism and glowing skin nearly cause a few car accidents.

Your music makes my dorky life feel romantic and like I'm the lead actress in one of your sexy music videos. Sidewalks are runways. My bedroom a ballroom. And in the bathtub I just feel bubbly when I hear your music.

You call yourself "the king" and I agree. You reign over my iPod—and my imagination.

XOXO HAIBBY

DEAR ETHEL JOHNSTON PHELPS,

I don't remember when I first became familiar with your feminist folk tale collection *Tatterhood* and its companion volume, *The Maid of the North*. I do remember that by the time I was old enough to read them for myself, they were already old friends. The women who inhabit them: clever farmer Kamala, wise Lady Ragnell, the spunky laird's lass, fun-loving Maru-me, brave Janet, brilliant Scheherazade, and especially *Tatterhood* herself, were the most frequent leading ladies of my childhood fantasies. I outsmarted my imaginary enemies like Kamala, carried out schemes in disguise like the laird's lass, and fought off invisible trolls with my wooden spoon like *Tatterhood*. I learned from Janet that tenacity is the mark of real love, from Maru-me that people may be stronger than they look, from Lady Ragnell that choosing one's own destiny is one's greatest privilege, and from *Tatterhood* that a girl doesn't have to be "beautiful" to be worthy of love.

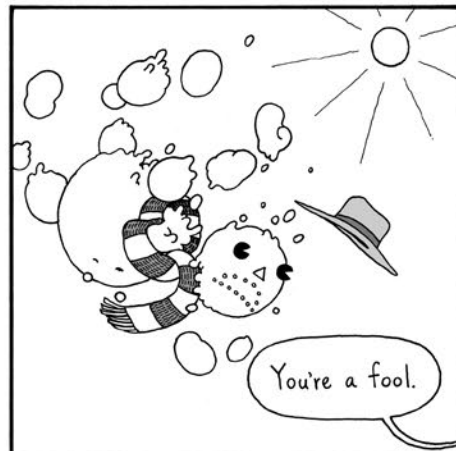
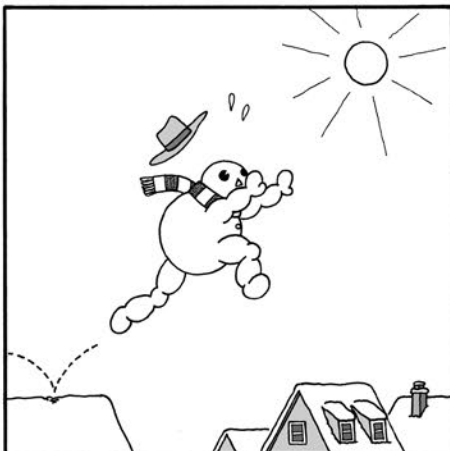
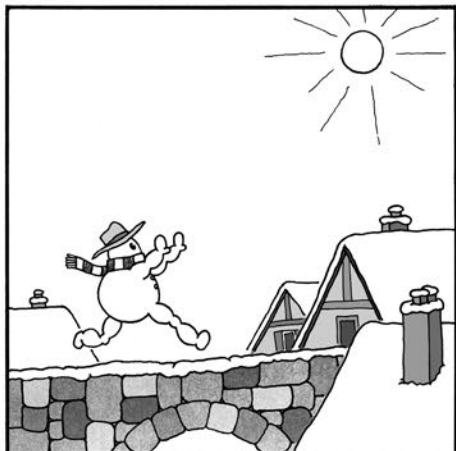
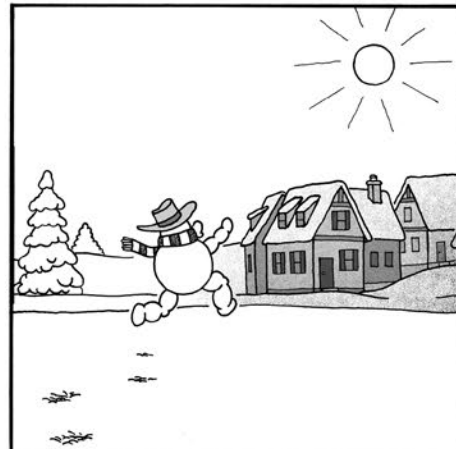
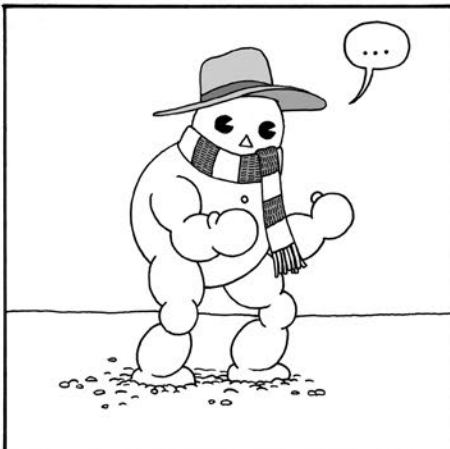
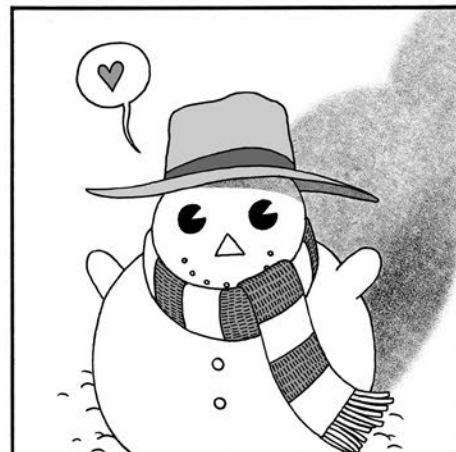
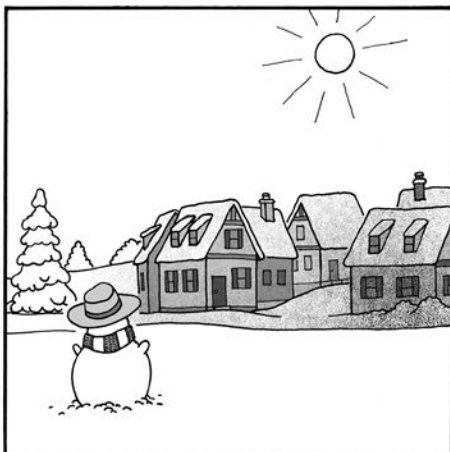
I was always too busy fighting trolls and climbing mountains to ever smudge my face with dirt and sit in the corner like Cinderella or lie asleep on a canopy bed for a hundred years like Sleeping Beauty. I never learned to expect true love's kiss to solve my problems. I never wished for a fairy godmother to appear and magic away my troubles. Thanks to your work, I didn't grow up believing I needed a prince to rescue me. I've always known I have the power to rescue myself.

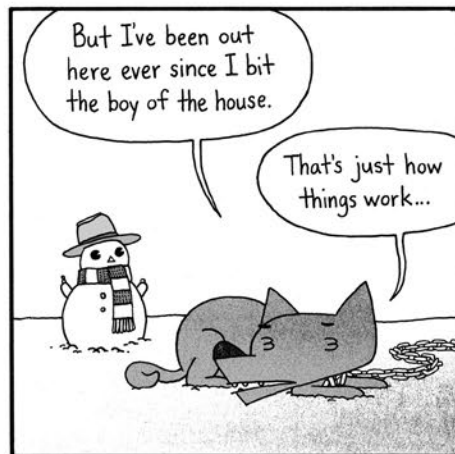
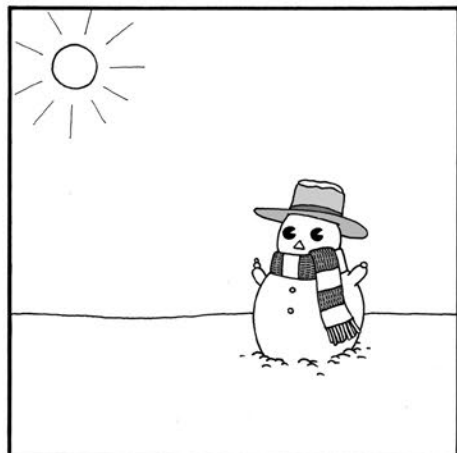
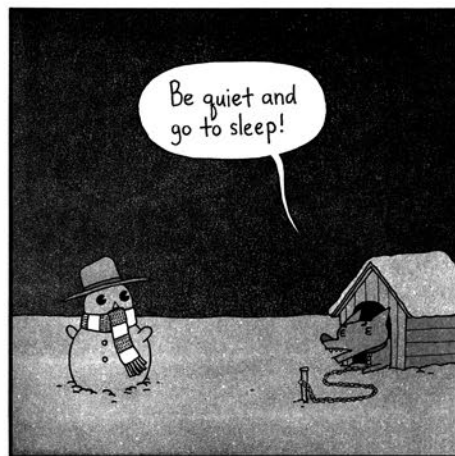
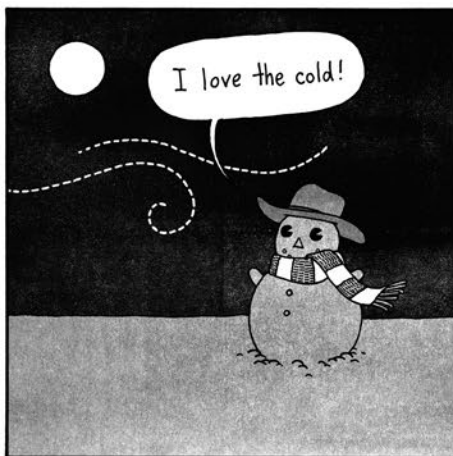
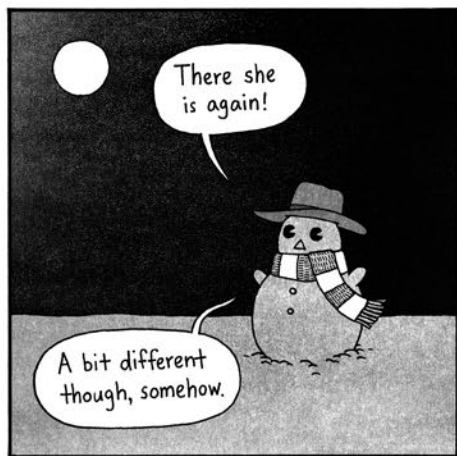
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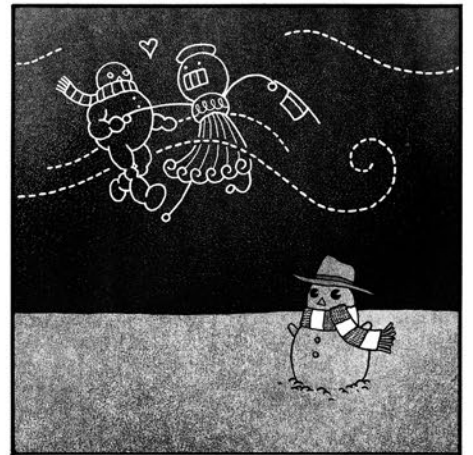
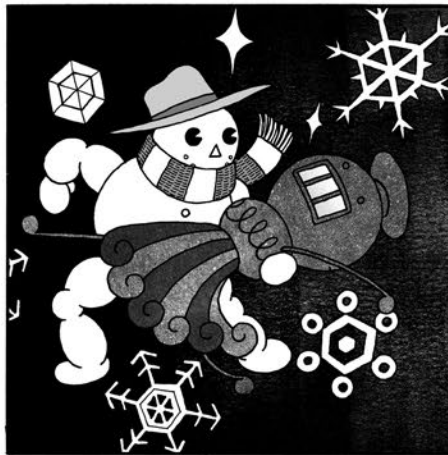
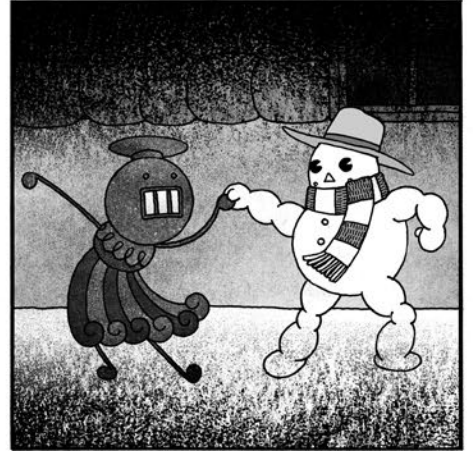
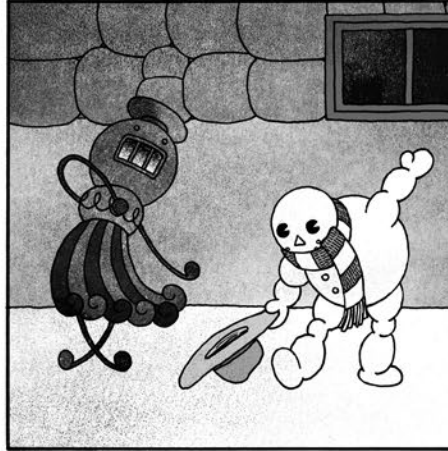
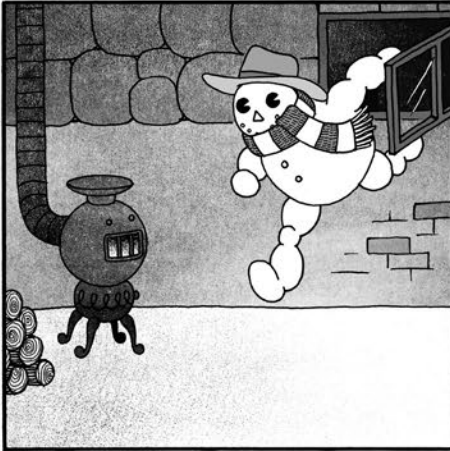
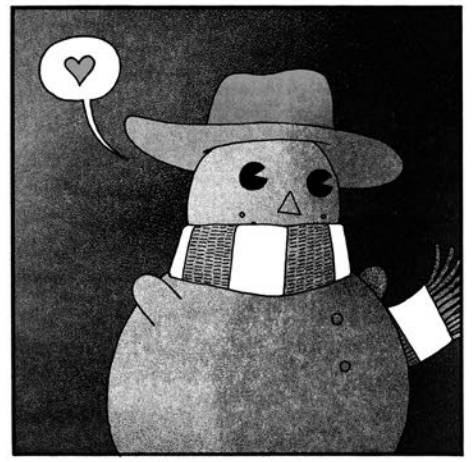
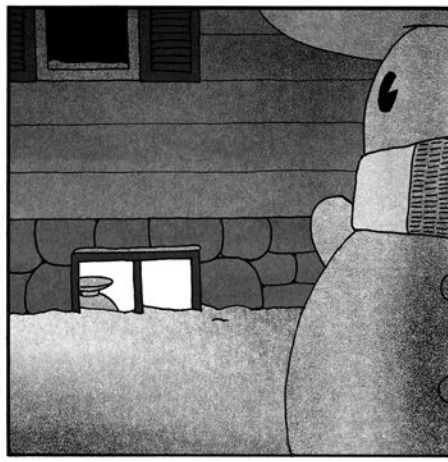
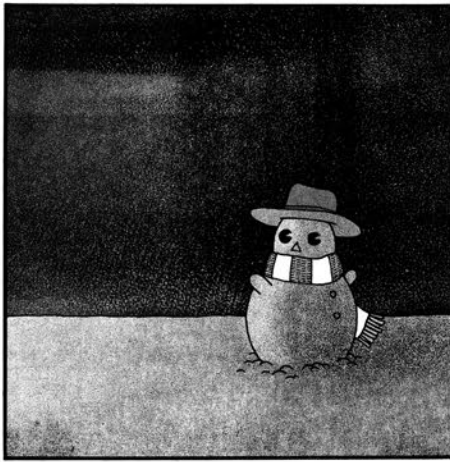
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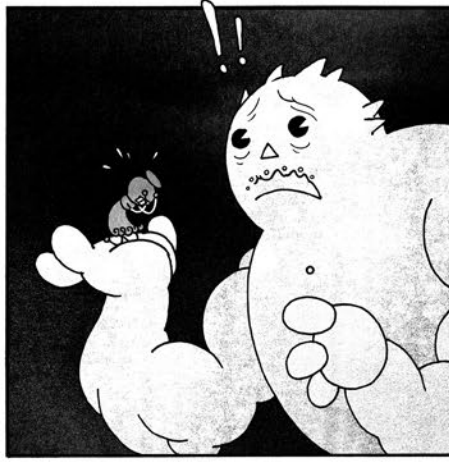
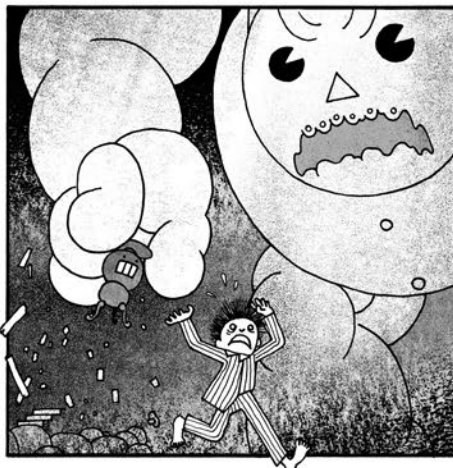
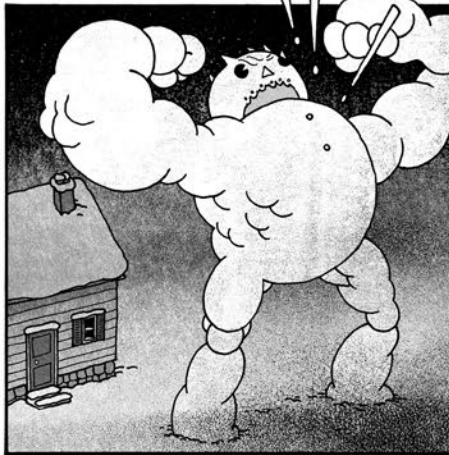
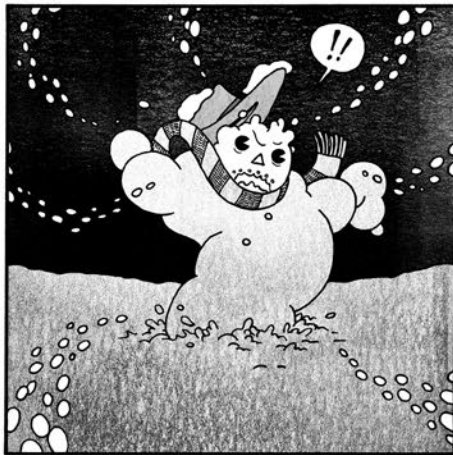
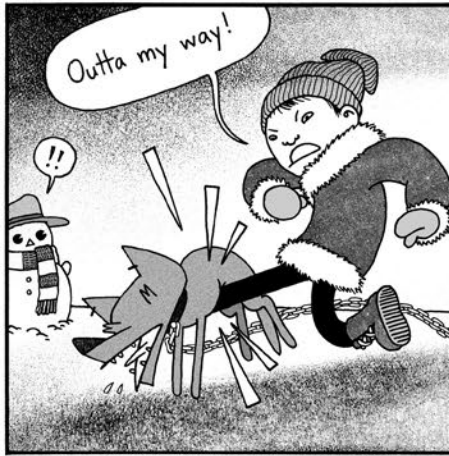
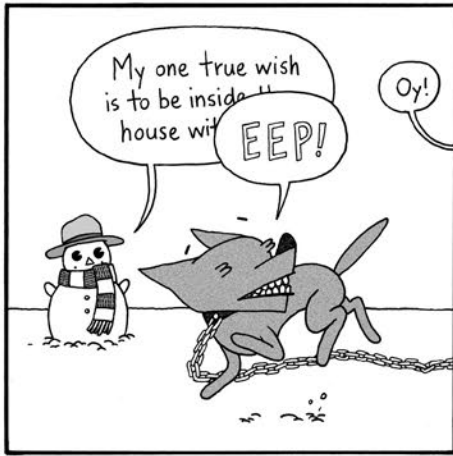


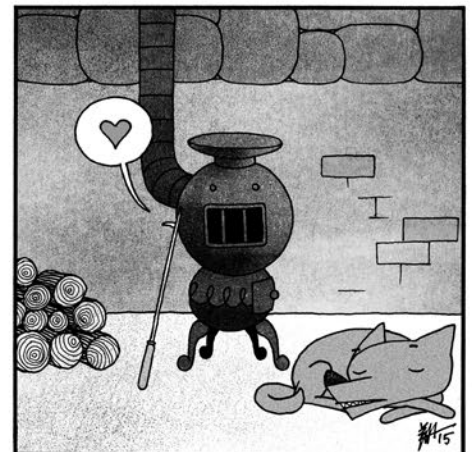
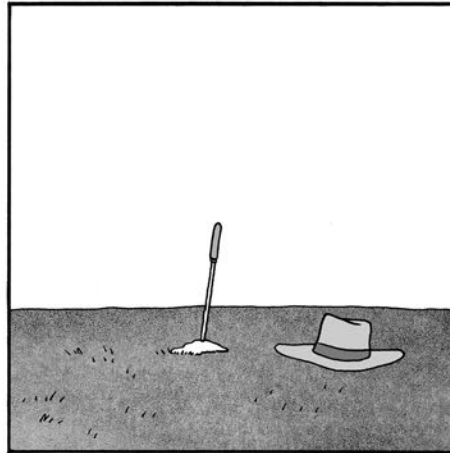
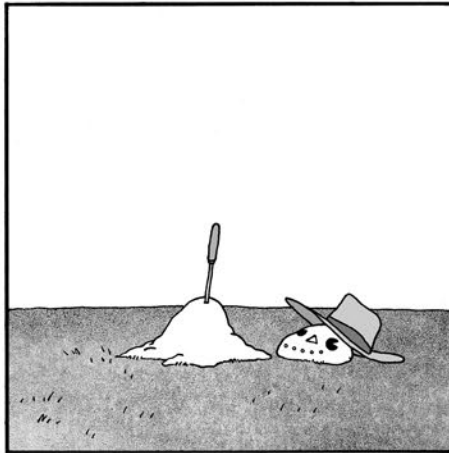
by Shawn Cheng













HOW NOT TO WRITE A COLLEGE ESSAY

10 TIPS GUARANTEED TO GET YOU A SKINNY ENVELOPE THIS SPRING

BY ELIZABETH PRESTON

1 Be general. Instead of using anecdotes to get a point across, speak in broad generalizations. Pepper your essay with proclamations rather than personal detail. The sentence “When I was 16 I helped my uncle dig his bakery out of the rubble left by Hurricane Arthur,” for example, is no good. Try “Hardships teach life lessons.” Or simply “Colleges should admit students.”

2 Don’t mention goals or the future. Focus on the past. Dwell on your regrets, especially trivial ones, such as that scooter you never got for your ninth birthday.

3 Don’t be concise. Why should you shorten your writing for the sake of a reader’s time? The more your essay resembles a multivolume fantasy saga, the better.

4 Avoid coherence. Put ideas on the page in the order they occur to you. Forgo segues.

5 Test out your stand-up material. A college essay is an ideal venue for jokes. Classic humor genres that rely on group stereotypes, such as “How many ____ does it take to screw in a light bulb?” or “Three ____ walk into a bar,” are best.

6 Lie. Instead of writing about Hurricane Arthur and those eight days spent sweating over a

shovel, wouldn’t it be more fun to write about that time you invented a vaccine for chikungunya?

7 Ignore instructions. Different colleges may have different sets of guidelines about what to write and how to submit your application materials. These are annoying and you should disregard them.

8 Ignore conventions of grammar and spelling. You’re a creative thinker; why be bound by the “rules” of traditional English? If your Word document has so many red and green squiggles that it resembles a novelty Christmas sweater, you’re on the right track.

9 Don’t be yourself. Let’s face it—you’re not very interesting. Try writing as someone quirky but mysterious. Be the reluctant heir to the throne of Denmark. Be a non-carbon-based life form.

10 Don’t write a college essay. How about sending the admissions officers something they *don’t* see every day? We recommend a potted plant, preferably unattractive and/or carnivorous. 🐌

Elizabeth Preston lives in Massachusetts and writes about science and other sundries. Her blog, Inkfish, is published by Discover. Ruling Denmark is really going to cut into her time for tropical disease research. Follow her on Twitter @Inkfish.



CYNICAL SAINT CONSIDERS REINCARNATION

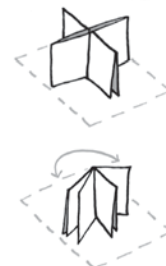
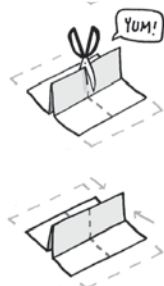
BY LIZ MELEY

Think of the trees! Stillness: the single recourse
when you've no feet, no arms, no eyes.
No tongue. No wonder, then, if I could choose,
of course I'd be the hailstone. Or better yet,
the roils of electricity folded in the sky.
More than one way to thread a needle,
to spread your black family of fractals.
I would blanch the face of God,
then split it down the middle.

*Liz Meley grew up in Pennsylvania, where
she was an avid Cicada reader. Now, in Southern
California, she pursues a Master of Fine Arts in
poetry at the University of California, Irvine.*



HOW TO START A ZINE



by Sonja Katanic and Emma Cohen • Art by Kevin White

Starting your own publication can be a wholly daunting experience. There is already so much out there, especially in our current internet existence, that digging out your own space can seem impossible. However, it can be done! Here's how to start.

1 Decide what the mission of your publication will be. Find publications and topics that you are passionate about. The topics can range from feminism to your favorite movie, and can be as general interest or as niche as you want. While being inspired is essential to the creative process, keep in mind that your goal is not to create a version of an already existing publication, no matter how much you love it. Make sure that your zine brings something new to the conversation.

2 It's time to collect inspiration. Create mood-boards of photography and art. Read articles, fiction, and interviews with people you admire. Listen to music and watch films that move you. Essentially you are cultivating a vibe for your zine.

3 You now must find contributors. This can seem especially daunting, but it really only relies on a bit of publicity. So it's time to create a social media

presence. Keeping people constantly aware of and interested in your publication is crucial. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Tumblr are all great ways to get your publication out there. Set up an account and follow accounts relevant to your vision. Comment on big magazines' posts to make people aware of your own account. This begins to create a base of aspiring contributors as well as a readership. Your social media profile should link to a set of clear and simple submission guidelines to kick-start the contribution process.

4 It's time to decide how you're going to usher this publication into the world. There are many ways to publish work. Print publication works well for smaller zines, and lends itself particularly well to the handmade riot grrrl/collage vibe. The downfall with print is that, especially if you're on a tight budget, you may not get the exact look you want.

Online publications can spread quickly and widely without the baggage of having to be sent via mail, though they don't have that for-real-in-your-hands quality. If you are going the online route, there are two options to consider: you can use another company's platform or you can own, code, and design the entire website yourself. Many people use issuu,

WordPress, Tumblr, Blogger, and similar platforms to publish their zines. This provides an easy-to-use format, but gives you less creativity and flexibility in terms of navigation. You use standard layouts that the company offers you.

The second option is to make your own website. This can be a lot more difficult to manage, especially for smaller publications, since coding and designing a website is a serious job. However, in the long run, it does give you a wonderful feeling of true ownership. And it lends a sense of legitimacy to the publication.

5 Now it is time to start actually *running* your publication. Create a timeline for your issue: when contributions will be due, when your editing period will start and finish, when you will publish. Don't forget that you can contribute to the zine yourself!

6 Next comes a very important part of zine upkeep: editing. You want this zine to be something you're proud of. You can be inclusive and have lots of variety, but it's also important to identify pieces that could do with improvement or just don't quite fit the theme or the publication. Don't be afraid to turn down some submissions, because the zine will be stronger if it's smaller but filled with killer content!

7 Next, create the issue's design. If you're publishing multiple issues, then you will want to think about having a few key components that repeat. For example, you may want to start each issue with an editor's letter. You may want to create sections for recurring kinds of content (poetry, fiction, comics) or use the same design for your title. Though these elements are more the framework of the zine than the meat and potatoes of core content, they set the tone for the zine, and therefore are very important.

8 Make sure everyone knows when you are releasing your issue! Start publicizing the release date by posting little sneak previews on all

your social media sites, putting up posters in your hometown, and telling your friends and family. Contributors are also really good about helping with promotions: they want their work to be seen, too.

Again, social media is key. It really has been social media that has led our magazine *Plasma Dolphin* to take off. Without it, our contributors would be limited to the people that we know in real life, and all the incredibly talented and interested people in other parts of our town, the country, and the world wouldn't be able to be a part of it. Social media is the core of *Plasma Dolphin's* readership and continuing relevance, and for many online publications, it is the best way to advertise and keep readers aware and interested.

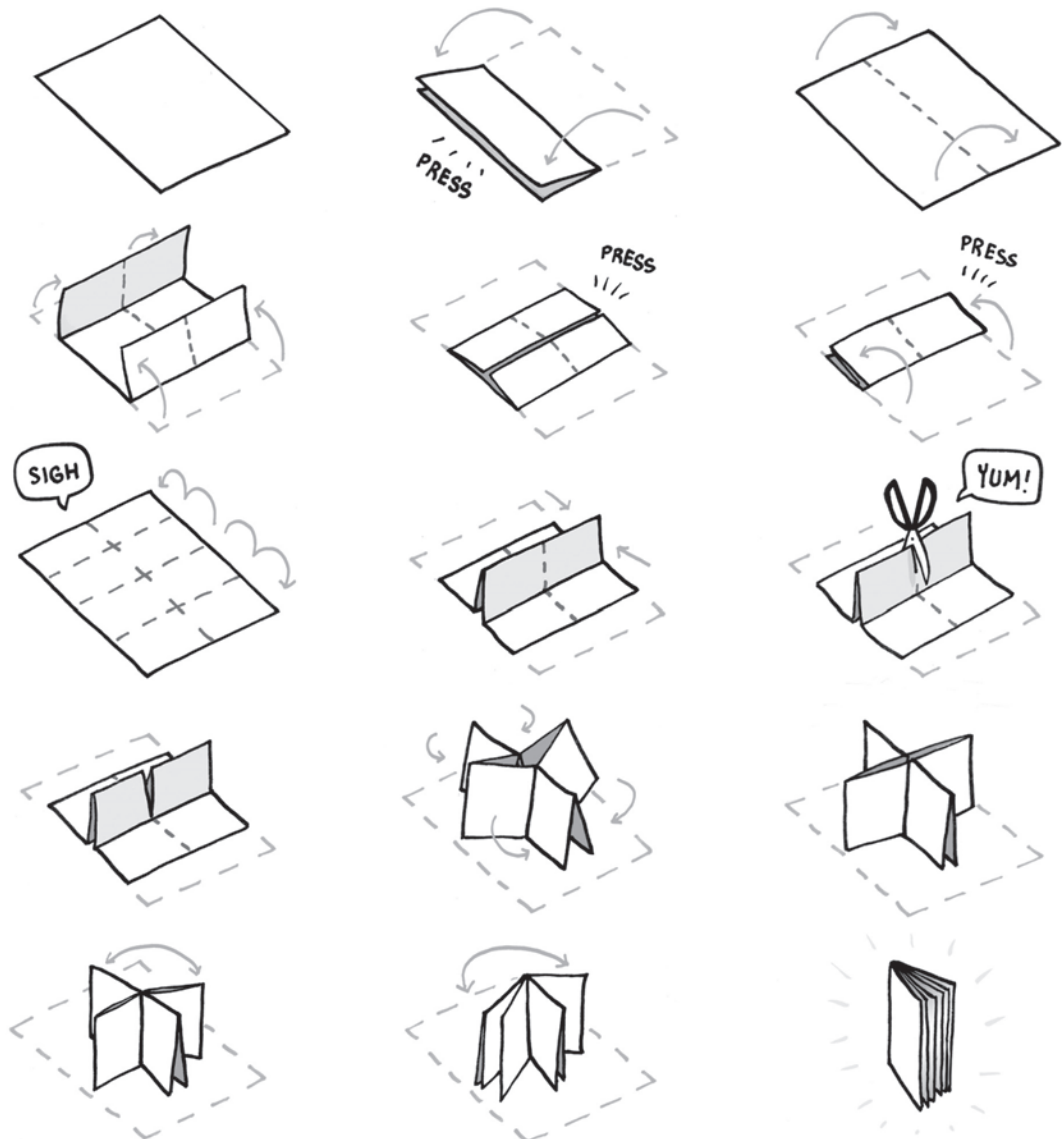
9 You're done! You have carved out a space for yourself in the world of publishing—and you created a spectacular thing that exists! Enjoy that. Sit back and see what the reaction is! But also be looking forward. Decide if you're going to release another issue, and if so, strike while the iron's hot. Send out an invitation via social media or a "Contribute" page on your website. Provide details about the upcoming issue, and get people excited about being a part of this super cool publication that just came into being.

10 Repeat. 



Sonja Katanic and Emma Cohen are eighteen-year-old Canadians gal heading off to university. They are cofounders and coeditors of Plasma Dolphin mag (plasmadolphin.com). Sonja likes to spend every waking minute watching films, drawing (mainly unfortunately narcissistic self-portraits), and feeling emotionally attached to David Bowie remixes. When Emma is not curating Plasma Dolphin, she chronicles her life via journal, continuously searches for new reading material, and makes driving playlists.

HOW TO FOLD A SHEET-O-PAPER INTO AN 8-PAGE ZINE



WRITER'S MANIFESTO

*Renegade word- and image-smiths, UNITE!
Cicada's recruiting unruly lit and comics pals to
share their creative manifestos.*

WHAT'S A ZINE? AN INTERVIEW WITH MIMI THI NGUYEN

Mimi Thi Nguyen is Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Nguyen has made zines since 1991, including Slander (formerly known by other titles) and the compilation zine Race Riot. She is a former Punk Planet columnist and Maximumrocknroll volunteer. Learn more at mimithinguyen.com.

CICADA: First, for the uninitiated: what's a zine? Can you talk about the significance of zines and self-publishing as a form of taking control of the project of self-expression?

MIMI THI NGUYEN: Loosely defined, a zine is a not-for-profit publication that requires no particular institutional support (like a publisher with whom one has a contract, or a series of editors who shape the work) to create. It can be one sheet of paper (sometimes folded, sometimes not) or more (sometimes folded, sometimes not); it can be hand-written or hand-drawn, or laid out on a computer, or perhaps printed from a Word document but laid out by hand using scissors and glue. Because it has a material

component, it is not a blog (which also does require some institutional support, however invisible or unacknowledged, via the publishing platform and internet access), although these days, zines often have a digital life too. I know that some zinesters like Osa Atoe from *Shotgun Seamstress* (a zine by, for, and about black punks) and Suzy X. from *Malcriada* and *The Mallgoth Chronicles* (who also writes for more mainstream publications like *Rookie*) publish pieces from their zines on blogs, or make them available as PDF downloads.

Zines (punk zines in particular) were a door through which I discovered feminist theory and radical politics, but the content of zines can vary widely. Some zine writers use zines to chronicle their personal experiences, ranging from the serious to the silly; to document a scene, a band, or artist (there are great zines about Prince's musical career, about Black Flag's first record, and about the historical presence of black punks); or even to share skills and information that might be more difficult to find from "mainstream" sources (such as herbal healthcare or vegan recipes). Still others use zines to discuss concerns about, say, sexual assault or mixed-race identity, and to create a community or a dialogue around those concerns.

CIC: You've written about the marginalization of people of color within zine, riot grrrl, and punk spaces. The People of Color Zine Project is one organization working to promote zines by people of color. Are there others on your radar?

MTN: There are so many amazing projects and resources that promote zines by people of color! Brown Recluse Zine Distro (based in Seattle, and run by brilliant bruja zinester Nyky Gomez) and No Shame Distro (based in Philadelphia, and run by a rad collective) are both mail-order distributors of zines by people of color; you can see Brown Recluse's catalog online (brownreclusezinedistro.com), while No Shame sells the zines they carry at shows or zine fests across the country. There are numerous POC collectives that create compilation zines, including Brown and Proud Press based in Chicago, which publishes *On Struggling* (onstruggling.tumblr.com); Moonroot Collective (with members all over the United States), which publishes a zine by the same name; and Native American Feminist Musings (etsy.com/shop/nativezinestress). You can also find calls for contributors to compilation zines online in zine communities and groups such as POC Zine Writers Unite and Zines A-Go-Go on Facebook.

CIC: You teach at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. How do you think about your identities as zinester and activist and academic? Do you take on different kinds of projects as an academic? Or approach similar projects in different ways?

MTN: I try to keep my zinester self separate from my academic self. I haven't been totally successful, because I always wrote my zines using my real

name. Sometimes I regret not writing zines with a pseudonym—or what we called a punk name!—in order to escape notice, especially as zines become a topic of academic study. It is too disconcerting to read scholarship about those things that are so dear to me—punk, zines—and about those specific zines I made. That said, I do carry my punk self into the classroom with me. I wouldn't be able to leave her behind! Punk gave me a language to address the intimate levels of consciousness at which identification against authority could be lived and felt, and I still believe it saved my life.

So all my writing, zinely or scholarly, is fueled by my encounters with objects or events that make me say, "What the ____ is going on?" (More curse words are involved.) From there, I want to figure out what makes those encounters possible, or makes them seem "normal" or unremarkable. I am interested in how some things are supposed to be good for us, good for others—but how kinds of discipline or even violence are a part of accepting those things as "good." For example, we can consider how war-makers claim to bring peace and freedom through the bomb, or how the promise of beauty can be cruel to those perceived as ugly.

CIC: How can our readers think critically about the publishing institutions and arts communities they might choose to engage with—from posting a story on Wattpad to submitting to Random House to making a zine to pass around to their friends?

MTN: Zines helped me to consider carefully questions about control—including control over words and access, including rights and distribution but also *profit*. This concern might be obvious when submitting to Random House or a tradi-

tional publisher—we all know that the industry is a business!—but we are less informed about how to consider questions about control on digital platforms such as Twitter or Tumblr. As it is, we voluntarily donate and circulate as “user-generated” content for multibillion-dollar corporations, which are meanwhile accumulating and privatizing massive political and financial capital (based on the sheer number of users, whose usage then grants to advertisers something of a captive audience). Do we own the content we generate, if we do not control the means of its production, circulation, or profit accumulation? These platforms claim to facilitate a public sphere based on inclusion and participation—but how do we factor in the fact that Twitter (with its corporate headquarters in San Francisco) has had a hand in the accelerating displacement of populations of color, of the working poor, as a direct consequence of its influence? (Twitter received tens of millions of dollars in local tax breaks, even while home evictions and rent prices shot way up, making housing unaffordable for families with roots in the city, as well as artists, weirdos, and punks. Meanwhile, to accommodate the new spending power of tech workers, million-dollar condo complexes and Whole Foods are moving into spaces formerly occupied by local businesses and institutions that served former residents.)

And for those who are considering writing for online magazines, please be aware that you should be paid for your writing—not in something as ephemeral as “exposure” or “experience,” but in dollars. Too many online venues expect that working writers will provide content for nothing, but you should absolutely be compensated for your words and your labor if some other entity aims to profit from them.

I am not saying, “Do not publish on social media!” But I am saying that we need to consider carefully the platforms we use to communicate with others, and on whose backs these platforms might be balanced, whether in the physical communities these corporations are based, or even in the communities of users and “content generators” upon which these platforms depend for their profit.

Zines do not necessarily escape this entirely; after all, zine distros often list their catalogs online, and you can follow them on FB or Twitter as well. But there’s something to be said I believe for creating a material object that can pass from hand to hand, and that doesn’t disappear or fade with a platform (for instance, who has kept and copied all their old entries on LiveJournal?) or become the property of a corporation. You have far more control over the content and the consumption of your words when published in a zine, I think, and sometimes that is just the right platform to test out ideas, or communicate with others.

CIC: What advice would you give to your teen self?

MTN: I’ve given this advice before, but it bears repeating. My punk rock teen self did not always stop to reflect before speaking, or acting; I was impetuous, self-righteous, and I definitely did not pick my battles wisely (or at all). Instead I fought all comers, and I blamed myself for any failures to change minds, to make change. I felt all my feelings so intensely, but without patience, or contemplation. I would tell my younger self to breathe, and be kind and compassionate to myself. 🐝



REVOLUTION SHUFFLE

BY BAO PHI ★

She got to the top of the high hill first. She sat in the grass, dropping her pack down beside her, and drummed her fingers on the machine pistol holstered at her hip. As he caught up and stood beside her, she looked up, cocking her head, and flashed a crooked grin. The moon was out, lighting wispy bare clouds in the sky. “Old man hair clouds,” she quipped.

After a moment of silence, she asked him, “What do you miss right now?”

This game again. “A messy plate of nachos,” he said with a sigh. “You?”

“Phở,” she replied, pronouncing it the way only a Vietnamese American whose best language skills revolved around a menu could. He heard it the way a Vietnamese American who understood Vietnamese best when it was coming from his parents would. He smiled. Phở was always her answer.

“How about that lady with the shack out by that camp,” he asked softly, craning his neck, peering up at stars. “You remember, that camp just outside the remains of Kansas City?”

She let out a dismissive puff of air through her lips. “Dingy beef water and spaghetti noodles do not a Phở make, buddy,” she laughed. “You of all people should feel me on that one.”

“Certainly wasn’t as good as my mom’s, that’s for sure,” he deadpanned.

She laughed loud and sudden, her smile cornering deep into her cheeks. They were about the same height and roughly the same age, so most assumed that they were brother and sister, though they could not look any more different. While both had black hair, hers cascaded down her back, a river in the dark. His

was ragged and short like a burnt field. Her small long eyes slanted, like two dark swans, beaks dipping in to kiss above her nose. His eyes were deep, difficult. She was beautiful, magnetic, even if she did not want to be. His appearance was forgettable at best; for better or worse, he was always in the background.

In the distance, the rough silhouettes of nine giant metal pistons rose into the night sky, temporarily blotting out their view of the moon and stars. The hydraulic arms lifting the pistons repetitively jackknifed and then stretched with a low bellowing groan. The drums of steel hung suspended in the air for a moment like the hammers of gods poised to strike, then dropped dully to the earth, thumping the ground, the noise and impact felt and heard for miles. Though they were used to tremors from the machinery, the two companions started slightly and looked down the hill at the prison camp surrounding the gigantic ground-shaking devices.

The dim light emanating from the interior complexes barely illuminated the pacing guards and nesting snipers on top of the tall walls. The guards' heads constantly turned on their necks as the guards vigilantly watched the two populations, one on either side of the barbed wire and thick concrete. On one side were the throngs of shuffling zombies attracted to the sound of the giant pistons, groaning listlessly against the slanting thick concrete base of the wall. And inside the work camp were the Asian Americans and Arabs forcibly interned there.

Officially, the incarcerated were doing a service for their country by maintaining the rhythmic dance of the giant pistons, keeping them fueled, repairing them, as the sound and impact of the giant tamping devices lured the shambling hungry masses. Less officially, the smell of the inmates' flesh, tantalizingly out of reach of the zombies on the other side of the wall, kept the undead there, fresh meat outside of the lion's cage.

Zombies. Brown people. On any given day, the armed guards were prepared to shoot either.

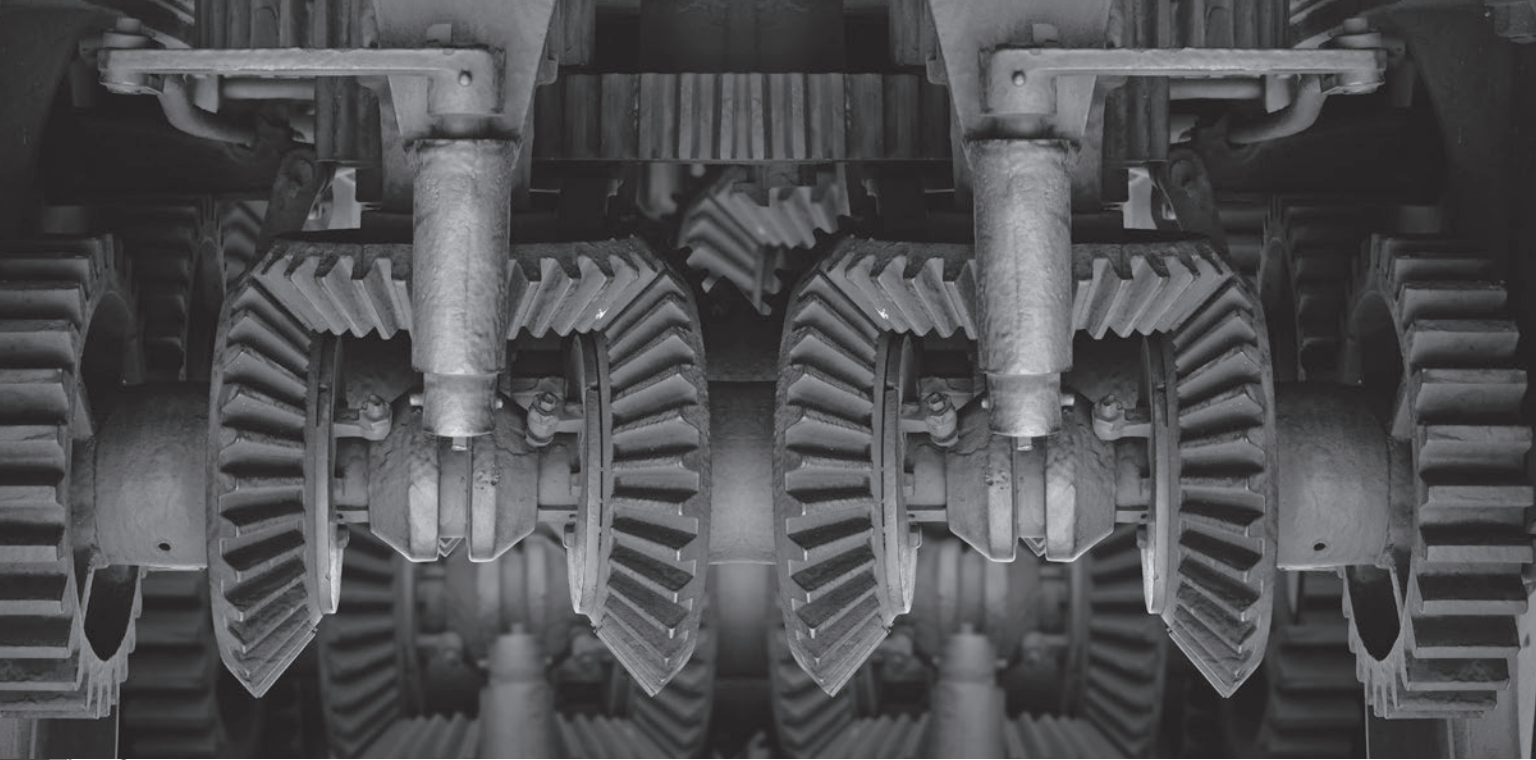
ON ANY GIVEN DAY, THE ARMED GUARDS WERE PREPARED TO SHOOT . . .

He looked over and saw that she had closed her eyes and leaned her head slightly back. She smiled softly, every breath full and deep. She felt the night air on her, pretending she was somewhere else, in some other time. She often did this before she did something reckless. Her hope was that, if she died, her soul would travel to the last beautiful place she imagined.

He never asked her what her soul's place looked like; it was none of his business.

She opened her eyes and sighed, then smiled at him. She pulled off her boots, took a moment to curl her toes in the grass.

"I see you chose red," he remarked, looking at her toenails. It was one of the small things she did to feel normal. Her



tiny way to hang on to what used to be, before the world around her went to shit.

She nodded, smiling. "I did them myself this time," she said, looking down at the grass between her toes.

"You didn't let me do it?" he asked dryly. "You took a job away from a fellow Vietnamese person."

She smirked and reached into her bag. She sat, cross-legged in the grass, and began to load bullets into spare magazines for her AK-47. He noticed one or two zombies at the bottom of the hill, slowly shambling in their direction, lured away from the thumping pistons of the tamping machines and smell of mass-incarcerated human flesh. Without taking his eyes from them he rolled his G36 carbine off his shoulder and twirled the silencer onto the muzzle, silently berating himself for not having done that earlier.

"Bad television," she said suddenly with a nod, biting her lip slightly. "I miss bad television."

He readied his rifle and looked through its scope for the wandering zombies. "I miss reading trashy magazines at the dentist's office," he said.

The zombie that was ambling closest to them was wearing a dirty trucker's cap. He put Trucker Cap Zombie in his crosshairs.

"Think they caught a whiff of us?" she asked not looking up, still clacking bullets into a mag.

"Shouldn't have," he answered. "We're downwind."

She nodded. Her eyes darted up and tracked Trucker Cap, watching it shamble. Her fingers didn't miss a beat, still loading bullets.

The zombies did not seem to head deliberately toward the two of them, but he kept his scope on them, just in case. She looked over at him and contemplated him quietly. Her best friend. They had only known each other five months.

Five months in this new America seemed like an eternity.

"You sure you want to go down there with me?" she asked quietly.

He did not take his sights from the walking dead, nor did he reply.

She gave a resigned smile in his general direction, shrugged her shoulders, and reached for another empty magazine. She watched her own fingers as they plucked the long pointy 7.62mm cartridges from her pack and methodically stabbed them down into the clip.

"One of these days, I'm going to get both of us killed," she quipped.

"Better than being locked up in a prison camp like a fucking sardine," he answered softly.

When the epidemic hit America, everyone had a theory about who started it. Seventy percent of the American population eventually turned zombie, and those that didn't had to blame someone. Because many of the people who were taken by the wasting disease happened to be white, God was not a viable culprit. The field was wide open for the survivors in America to pick a suspect, a villain, an origin for this nameless evil. And so the government classified it as a terrorist act, without evidence, without even an idea of what caused it. And the American people duly picked the enemy to be vilified—China, North Korea, and the nebulous ever-shifting region known as the Middle East.

After what was left of the U.S. government and civilization regrouped on the East Coast, they started to construct the

giant devices that shook the earth. They built fortified complexes in the middle of America to house the machinery. The noise and the force of the giant pistons drew the throngs of zombies to the isolated machines away from the coasts, giving the majority of survivors precious time to regroup. However, the complexes needed humans to operate and maintain the giant machines, a job no one wanted. It was like living under house arrest in a log cabin continuously surrounded by rabid wolves.

Eventually some enterprising politician suggested that surviving Americans of Asian and Arab descent be interned

FIVE MONTHS IN THIS NEW AMERICA SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY.

as laborers in these camps, an idea that caught on as quickly as the plague itself. *For their own protection*, the politicians insisted. Hordes of survivors had formed lynch mobs after the disease was classified as a terrorist act, attacking and brutalizing yellow and brown people. There were not enough police to protect them, not enough infrastructure left to respond to this racialized violence—or so the politicians said. Instead they argued that it would be in the best interest of the "targeted communities" to be guarded in these work camps away from the other survivors. No one explained how herding up Asian and Arab Americans based on the color of their skin, seizing their property, and then forcibly

incarcerating them without trial in work camps could be in their best interest. But then again, history had shown conclusively that the American public didn't need a complicated explanation as much as they needed a clear enemy to blame.

Tragic times do not beg for complexity. After the emergency legislation was passed, police and military, deputized armed civilians, and new private military contractors began rounding up and transporting Asian Americans, Arab Americans, and any person in that particular color spectrum into their new work camps. It didn't matter if a person actually had ancestry from

listening to the pistons groan as they began their upward arc into the night sky.

She remembered those early days. One man and his battered, dirty driver's license. He had struggled against the officers at first, desperate and terrified. One of his wild swings hit a police officer on the side of the head, making the cop's cap fall off his sweaty blond hair. Seeing the cop enraged, the man wept, dropped to his knees, pulled out his wallet. He held up his ID like a shield. He apologized, crying, saying he was scared, he had a family. He swore he was Indian, not Arab. She was sure they believed

HE HELD UP HIS ID LIKE A SHIELD.

North Korea, China, or the Middle East. It became all too apparent that was not the point. There were Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, Chicanos, and Black people thrown into the camps for protesting, for daring to raise their voices in opposition, for choosing the wrong side. Close enough. And thus people learned not to speak out against the camps. In the wake of disaster, America became even less subtle.

Less than two years ago, the camps like the one below them were not even finished. Now this one sat thumping and belching smoke, crawling with the undead outside and the living entombed within.

She finished loading her last spare clip and dropped her hands down to the grass, looking down at the internment complex,

him. They shot him anyway. His driver's license flipped facedown into the dirt next to his body.

"You know, even if we succeed, some of them aren't going to want to come with us," he murmured, finally letting his rifle rest against his shoulder as Trucker Cap shambled off in another random direction away from them.

"I know," she replied, pulling on her boots and standing up slowly.

"You're getting three square meals a day and you're living in a camp protected from zombies by the U.S. military," he sighed.

"Armed private militarized contractors," she corrected him, cocking an eyebrow at him. They both knew how dismal life was in the camps. The cramped, stifled quarters. The lousy food. Sixteen-hour shifts. How everything smelled like oil and hot metal. The flat screen mounted on the wall in the cafeteria would sometimes broadcast a message from out east,

declaring how important their work maintaining the pistons was. As if they had a choice—the shadows of men with guns, always, long on the floor. How hard it was to sleep with the constant drone of zombies hungry for you, how you could almost feel the tips of their rotting fingers digging into your flesh at all times. How turning down the sexual advances of a guard could get you thrown off the wall. How easy they made it to betray one another even in there.

Try as she might, she couldn't blame the prisoners. She had met a couple of activists who could not understand why the incarcerated were so, to their eyes, submissive. Obedient. But she knew that the truth was complicated. If not the camps, where could they go?

A week ago, many miles from where they stood, they had sat at a campfire splitting

a cup of instant ramen with some strips of beef jerky thrown in. White trash Phở, they called it. This was when she told him her plan. The light of the fire flickered high in the canopy of trees above as she watched him to see his reaction.

"For the ones that follow us, where do we take them?" he asked quietly. "Alaska?"

She laughed at the mention of the largest American territory completely free of the epidemic, because it had had the good fortune of being far enough away when the epidemic hit to shore up its defenses before it got to them.

"We'd have better odds of creating a time machine and going back to try to prevent all this from happening."

"Hawai'i?" he asked.

"No way they'd let us in. We're like dogs with rabies to them."



He paused. Before he could continue, she shook her head, looking into the distance with a slight smile as if she was trying to visualize a place for them in the world. “East Coast, no way. They might be the most racially mixed region left, but a group of Asians and Arabs walking out of the middle? They’d shoot us before we’d get within sight of that ridiculous wall of theirs—or ship us back to one of these prison camps. I don’t want to get into that fight between Mexico and the new nation-state of Texas in the South. Southwest is New Aztlan and the other united Native folks, they’ve got their hands full shoring up against raiders and zombies.” She paused for a moment. “Maybe they’d let in one or two of us. But an entire group of Asian and Arab refugees recently busted out of a federal labor camp? They’d probably get threatened with drone bombing for agreeing to help any of us.”

She chuckled and shook her head sadly, biting her lip, her eyes distant as she continued. “And the North, where all the white hunters and survivalists have dug in? Deer have got a better chance of going into those woods and surviving than we do.”

“Don’t mess with Wisconsin,” he quipped.

He waited for a moment, then asked, “How about back to the homeland? Somewhere in Asia?”

She laughed, long and hard.

He turned his head back to see she had been watching him silently, contemplating him. She often did not have to hear words to know what a person was thinking—intuition was her gift.

“No, buddy,” she winked. “It’s right in the middle of the box for our people, or nothing.”

The middle of America, infested with zombies. Ruled by small warlords and thug fiefdoms, many of them made up of the remains of the Minutemen and other

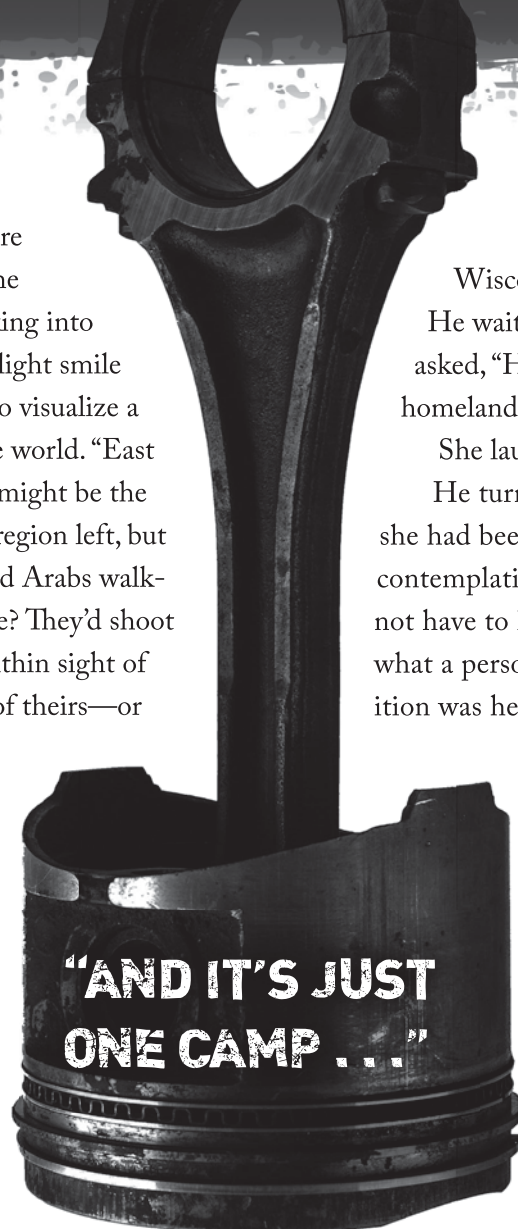
batshit-crazy racist militias. The most dangerous place in the world. The place no one wanted to be.

“And it’s just one camp,” he said.

“The first one,” she corrected with a slight nod and a smile.

He looked over at her, shaking his head slowly in bemused disbelief. As the days got more grim, she somehow grew stronger, as if she lived to be the opposite of the dim future that seemed all but certain.

He turned to look back down at the camp, pondering their chances. “How



many more camps are there just like that one? We can't save everyone."

"Doesn't mean we can't try," she countered. She waited a moment, crossing her arms in front of her in the slightly chill night air, before reminding him, "You don't have to go with me."

"You wouldn't be much of a leader if you didn't have at least one follower," he smirked, and she laughed her unbreakable laugh, shaking her head. Her smile broke clear across her face—her smile had become his horizon. But he did not say this out loud.

He turned and looked her solemnly in the eyes. "Is it too much to ask for a happy ending?"

She smiled sadly. "I don't think there are any happy endings left."

After a moment, she said, "I miss hotel rooms. I used to love to travel, you know? Before all of this. Sure, hotel rooms were never yours. But I loved that you came back to a place that wasn't yours, and someone made the bed for you." She shook her head, then smiled her radiant, breathtakingly beautiful smile for him. It got even wider when she saw his rare, small smile finally break across his face, a hairline fracture on an egg.

She put a hand on his shoulder, and they stood in silence for a moment, the giant pistons' blocky silhouettes swallowing them from the moon's light, their bodies becoming one with shadow before thumping down to the earth once again.

Then they strode down the hill together, rifles in hand, straight for the prison camp. Toward a war that just might turn into something like a revolution. 🐝

*Bao Phi has been a performance poet since 1991. A two-time Minnesota Grand Slam Champion and a National Poetry Slam finalist, Bao Phi has appeared on HBO's Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry, and a poem of his appeared in the 2006 Best American Poetry anthology. His first collection of poems, *Sông | Sing*, was published by Coffee House Press in 2011 to critical acclaim. Learn more at baophi.com.*



OCTAVIA'S BROOD: SCIENCE FICTION STORIES FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

Edited by adrienne
maree brown
and Walidah Imarisha
AK Press, March 2015

For years, writers I love have named Octavia Butler as an influence. Butler's novels offer everything we ask of socially engaged sci-fi/fantasy: complex dystopias, fascinating protagonists of color, alien biologies that upend gender binaries. Her novels are FOOD. *Octavia's Brood* is a stunning tribute to Butler, packed with tales that stretch the imagination. You'll find fallen angels, burned-out superheroes, rebellious colonists, a haunted Detroit river, and yep, the crackling "Revolution Shuffle."

—Anna

GOLD

BY KAREN RIGBY

Watchmaker.
Alchemist. Pick-ax
striking the vein—

we die for color
of leopard and flax,
cover our eyes

that we might spy
arbors loaded
with vines,

but paradise climbs
out of gun runner
tunnels. We die

for chalice. Flint-
speck. Drumbeat
of empire. Stone

fashioned to gold.
In the clairvoyant's palm.
Sea-farer's night song.

We sift the sunken
chest: bullion, doubloon,
ingot, bar. Moonlight

rakes the island—
forked tongues
kissing their tails.

*Karen Rigby is the author of
Chinoiserie (Absakta Press, 2012),
which won the 2011 Sawtooth Poetry
Prize. Learn more at karenrigby.com.*

BY CELIA WHITE


COPERNICUS' FAULT

Allow me to stand
open-mouthed at your
garden gate.

Jonathon the postman
didn't wash the plates last night.

Ivanov the landlord
forgot to cut his
hair but remembered his
toenails—see them
scattered on the floor?

*Celia White was born in rural
Massachusetts. She now lives in Tahoe,
California. She writes historical fiction,
flash fiction, novels, and poetry.*



Straying from the Path

by Charity Tahmaseb

It was a wolf, rather than an ailing grandmother, that tempted Red into the woods. All day his cries echoed, small, plaintive-sounding things that filled the forest. By the time she found him, night had fallen and the blood on the snow looked black.

By moonlight, she pried his paw from the rusted jaws of the trap. He ran from her. And why wouldn't he? It was her kind that set the trap to begin with. The wolf limped through the underbrush, tail between his legs. Later, if you asked her at what point she fell in love, she would've said that night. At the time, all she knew was how his injured gait made her heart lurch.

Later that night, Red spied his yellow eyes from well beyond the woodpile at the edge of the forest. The next evening, she left a meat pie on the lowest stack of wood. By morning, the tin had been licked clean.

And so went the winter. As the days grew colder and her supplies dwindled, she cut back on her own portion of meat. She could go without, but the wolf was still healing. Now when she walked in the forest, she never feared brigands or the overly friendly woodcutters. When men called on her, they found the howl of a single male wolf so unnerving, they left their teacups half full, crumb cake uneaten.

When at last the snow melted, and the sun heated the earth, Red took to bathing in the stream behind the house. No one dared disturb her. Every night, she set out a meat pie. Every morning, she collected the empty tin.

Except for the morning she didn't. Flies buzzed around the soggy crust, the filling chewed and pilfered by tiny mouths and claws. She threw on her cape and ventured into the forest—alone.

The trail was easy enough to follow. Drops of blood, tufts of gray fur. The farther into the forest she walked, the slower her steps. What was done was done. All she could do was delay her own knowledge of it, spend a few more minutes free of a world where, every time she closed her eyes, all she saw was matted fur and severed paws—far too many to count.

That night, for the first time in months, she did not bake a meat pie.

The scratching came when the coals in the fireplace were mere embers. There, at the door, sat her wolf, bloodied but no weaker for his fight. He cocked his head as if to say: *Where's my meat pie?*

She threw her arms around him, buried her face against his neck, and cried until the dirt in his fur became streams of mud.

When the townsfolk came, bearing axes and ropes, she threw open the door for them.

Why *no*, she hadn't seen any wolves at all lately. In fact, she'd stopped her treks through the forest for fear of them. Instead, she now cared for her grandmother here, in her very own cottage.

The men tiptoed from the room, not wishing to wake the old lady. The women rubbed their chins, hoping old age would not bring such a crop of whiskers.

She threw on her cape and
ventured into the forest—
alone.

After that, suitors stopped visiting. Although Red always sent them on their way with a meat pie, they found her grandmother's beady eyes unsettling.

People forgot about Red, and her grandmother who, while always ailing, never departed this world for the next. But on moonlit nights, townsfolk stumbling from the tavern swore they heard a woman's laughter mixed in with the howls echoing in the night air. 🦋

Charity Tahmaseb has slung corn on the cob for Green Giant and jumped out of airplanes (but not at the same time). She's worn both Girl Scout and Army green. These days, she writes fiction (short and long) and works as a technical writer. Her novel, The Geek Girl's Guide to Cheerleading (written with coauthor Darcy Vance), was a YALSA 2012 Popular Paperback pick in the Get Your Geek On category.

Unruly Stories

Angela Carter's Fairy Tales

by Kelly Link

"Unruly Stories" is excerpted from the introduction to the 75th Anniversary Edition of Angela Carter's collection of fairy tale retellings, The Bloody Chamber, out this year from Penguin Classics.

Many of the elements of Angela Carter's stories are now commonplace in fiction and in popular culture. Sexy vampires? Sure. The exploration of female desire? Yep. Fairy tales reworked in contemporary settings? An embarrassment of riches. What we don't have, of course, is any more Angela Carter stories: Carter died in 1992; this year, more than twenty years later, she would have turned seventy-five. How I yearn for more of her. What would she make of the stories we tell now? What new thing would she make?

It is impossible, as it turns out, to put my finger on the place and time when I first read her. I can tell you exactly where I was when I found out that she had died. I was in the second year of an MFA program, living in Greensboro, North Carolina. I was working part-time in a children's bookstore. I was trying to figure out how stories worked. The main

business of the MFA workshop was, in the nineties, the business of figuring out how to write domestic realism. I couldn't figure out how I was supposed to do this. If I had figured it out, I suppose I would be a different kind of writer. Mostly I wasn't writing. Instead I was reading.

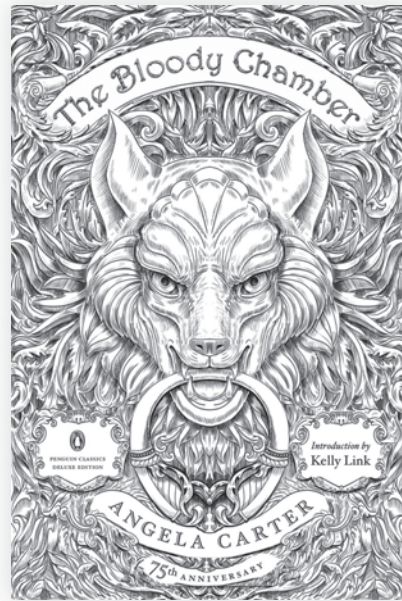
I read anthologies of ghost stories, heaps of science fiction and fantasy, romance novels, and children's books. I read Carter's *Wise Children*, *Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings*, *Sadeian Woman*, and, over and over again, *The Bloody Chamber*. Reading Carter, each time, was electrifying. It lit up the readerly brain and all the writerly nerves. What she was doing, of course, was rewiring some very old stories. But it felt as if it were me, the reader/writer me, who was being reconfigured in some necessary way. Carter's versions of these fairy tales, the way she approached them—with joy, with intelligence, with irreverence, with love, with fearlessness—made me look again at the ghost stories and children's books that I read for pleasure. It made me see how necessary that joy in reading was to how I wanted to proceed as a writer. Carter took the

stories that she loved and with that love she made new stories out of them. I wanted to do the same.

I was struck, too, by the conversational tone of her narrators, the knowing, conspiratorial effect of her prose. I see you, Carter always seems to be saying, even as the story itself continues to move forward. Do you see me?

The things that I needed, when I was beginning to think about writing short stories, were the things that I found in *The Bloody Chamber*. I needed to see how stories could be in conversation with other stories. I needed to see how playfulness and generosity and friction—of ideas, in language, in the admixture of high and low, the mythic and the psychologically realistic—were engines for story and structure and point of view. It didn't hurt that I was working in a children's bookstore. Every week we got new boxes of picture books, new picture book versions of "Cinderella" and "Little Red Riding Hood" and "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." Such multiplicity! Such mutableness! The stories remained themselves, and yet they could be reworked over and over and over again. You just had to pick the patterns, the archetypes, the bits of fairy tale business to which you felt most drawn. Or, perhaps, the ones where you saw something that you wanted to quarrel about. What a relief to see how much stretch there was to stories. What a relief to see that you, too, as a writer, could be serious about the things that mattered to you, no matter whether they seemed significant to anyone else.

In the 1970s I was reading Andrew Lang and the Grimm brothers and Perrault and d'Aulaire for the first time. I was a child. I read like a child, for pleasure, and



in order to figure out what the rules were, and what price you paid when you broke those rules. And again, as an adult, it seemed to me that I was breaking the rules by continuing to read and reread the things that pleased me best.

When I teach now, I ask the writers in my workshop what their guilty pleasure read is. (A better way of phrasing it, no doubt, is to ask what they read that seems most removed from the kind of writing that they do.)

Pleasure—the things that give us pleasure—is subversive, Angela Carter says in the introduction to *Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book*. We are thrown off balance (out of bounds, outside the normal rules) by delight, by terror, by beauty, by humor. And sometimes we dismiss the kind of work that evokes these responses in us, because it seems undignified, out of our control, unserious, unadult. Unruly. The rules upon the stairs in Mr. Fox's house tell the trespasser, "Be bold, be bold, but not too bold, lest that thy heart's blood run cold." But the girl goes up the stairs anyway. Boldness is the point of the story. The girls and women in *The Bloody Chamber* remake the rules of the stories they find themselves in with their boldness. And Angela Carter, too, was bold. I tried to learn that lesson from her. 🐝

Kelly Link is the author of the collections Stranger Things Happen, Magic for Beginners, Pretty Monsters, and Get in Trouble. She has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. She is the cofounder of Small Beer Press and coedits the occasional zine Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet.

BY ANNA NEHER • ART BY ISABELLA ROTMAN

PIRATE QUEENS

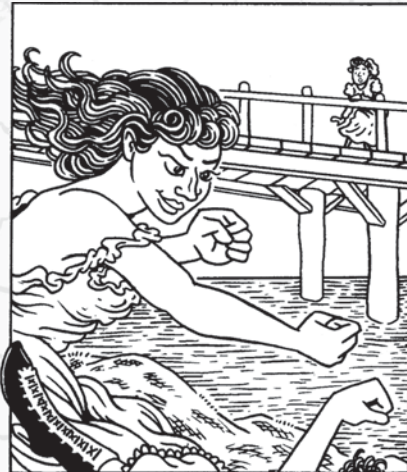
AND OTHER LADIES OF THE HIGH SEAS

[IT IS PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO MAKE A MUTINY ISSUE WITHOUT PUTTING PIRATES IN IT. YOU'RE WELCOME.]

—TEAM *CICADA*]

SADIE FARRELL

NYC thief Sadie Farrell split town after losing a brawl (and an ear) to her rival Gallus Mag. She spent half of 1869 plundering the Hudson and Harlem Rivers before patching things up with Mag.



SAYYIDA AL-HURRA



Hailed as “The Last Islamic Queen,” Sayyida ruled the Moroccan city of Tétouan. She allied with the Barbarossa pirates, built a fleet, and raided Portuguese and Spanish ships across the Western Mediterranean.

JEANNE DE CLISSON



When the King of France executed her husband for treason, Jeanne de Clisson bought three warships, painted them black, and spent the next 13 years wreaking havoc on the French fleet.



CHING SHIH

Ching Shih's enormous Red Flag Fleet was the terror of the South China Sea. A keen strategist, Ching Shih defeated the Chinese navy at every turn while imposing a strict code of conduct on her pirate crews.

WANT MORE LADY PIRATES?
DOWNLOAD, PRINT, CUT, AND
FOLD OUR PIRATE QUEENS ZINE!
CICADAMAG.COM/CICADAZINE



YOU WILL NEVER BE THAT CREATURE AGAIN

tongue is a concept with sting
heavy has teeth that snag
and split

i swallow and see the bone of myself
i shudder and yield to a raw litter of parts

BY FELIX PALMER

HYMN

i worship a languid goddess
language heaving beneath
bitter moans, saying
ugly is wet and purple
saying
your mother only recalls the weak in you, saying
repulsive is not yours to ache for
(i will sleep here licking shadows)
(i will sleep here mostly separate)
(this is too much knife to part with)

Salem Felix is a senior in high school. She says, "I have been writing on and off for a couple of years but only in the past few months have really found a deeper love for practicing it. Writing poetry is really empowering for me, and I want to share the product of that with others."



SELKIE STORIES ARE FOR LOSERS

BY SOFIA SAMATAR • ART BY YUMI SAKUGAWA

I hate selkie stories. They're always about how you went up to the attic to look for a book, and you found a disgusting old coat and brought it downstairs between finger and thumb and said "What's this?", and you never saw your mom again.



I work at a restaurant called Le Pacha. I got the job after my mom left, to help with the bills. On my first night at work I got yelled at twice by the head server, burnt my fingers on a hot dish, spilled lentil-parsley soup all over my apron, and left my keys in the kitchen.



I didn't realize at first I'd forgotten my keys. I stood in the parking lot, breathing slowly and letting the oil-smell lift away from my hair, and when all the other cars had started up and driven away I put my hand in my jacket pocket. Then I knew.

I ran back to the restaurant and banged on the door. Of course no one came. I smelled cigarette smoke an instant before I heard the voice.

"Hey."

I turned, and Mona was standing there, smoke rising white from between her fingers.

"I left my keys inside," I said.



Mona is the only other server at Le Pacha who's a girl. She's related to everybody at the restaurant except me. The owner, who goes by "Uncle Tad," is really her uncle, her mom's brother. "Don't talk to him unless you have to," Mona advised me. "He's a creeper." That was after she'd sighed and dropped her cigarette and crushed it out with her shoe and stepped into my clasped hands so

I could boost her up to the window, after she'd wriggled through into the kitchen and opened the door for me. She said, "Madame," in a dry voice, and bowed. At least, I think she said "Madame." She might have said "My lady." I don't remember that night too well, because we drank a lot of wine. Mona said that as long as we were breaking and entering we might as well steal something, and she lined up all the bottles of red wine that had already been opened. I shone the light from my phone on her while she took out the special rubber corks and poured some of each bottle into a plastic pitcher. She called it "The House Wine." I was surprised she was being so nice to me, since she'd hardly spoken to me while we were working. Later she told me she hates everybody the first time she meets them. I called home, but Dad didn't pick up; he was probably in the basement. I left him a message and turned off my phone. "Do you know what this guy said to me tonight?" Mona asked. "He wanted beef couscous and he said, 'I'll have the beef conscious.'"



Mona's mom doesn't work at Le Pacha, but sometimes she comes in around three o'clock and sits in Mona's section and cries. Then Mona jams on her orange baseball cap and goes out through the back and smokes a cigarette, and I take over her section. Mona's mom won't order anything from me. She's got Mona's eyes, or Mona's got hers: huge, angry eyes with lashes that curl up at the ends. She shakes her head and says: "Nothing! Nothing!" Finally

Uncle Tad comes over, and Mona's mom hugs and kisses him, sobbing in Arabic.



After work Mona says, "Got the keys?"

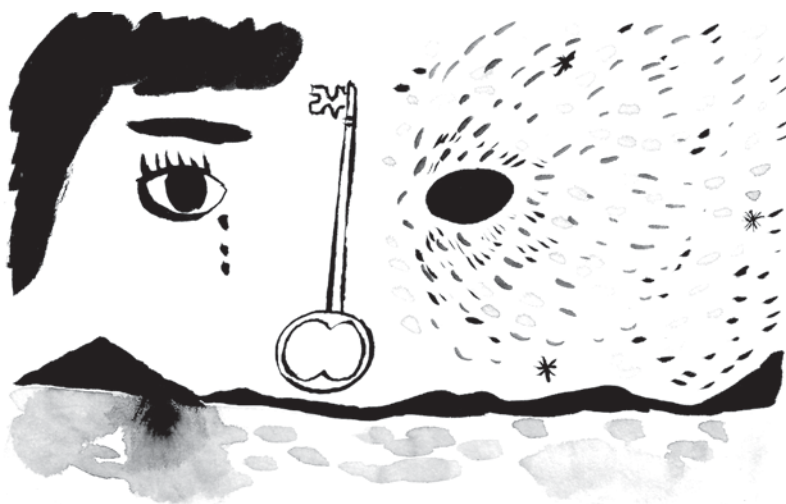
We get in my car and I drive us through town to the Bone Zone, a giant cemetery on a hill. I pull into the empty parking lot and Mona rolls a joint. There's only one lamp, burning high and cold in the middle of the lot. Mona pushes her shoes off and puts her feet up on the dashboard and cries. She warned me about that the night we met: I said something stupid to her like "You're so funny" and she said, "Actually I cry a lot. That's something you should know." I was so happy she thought I should know things about her, I didn't care. I still don't care, but it's true that Mona cries a lot. She cries because she's scared her mom will take her away to Egypt, where the family used to live, and where Mona has never been. "What would I do there? I don't even speak Arabic." She wipes her mascara on her sleeve, and I tell her to look at the lamp outside and

pretend that its glassy brightness is a bonfire, and that she and I are personally throwing every selkie story ever written onto it and watching them burn up.

"You and your selkie stories," she says. I tell her they're not my selkie stories, not ever, and I'll never tell one, which is true, I never will, and I don't tell her how I went up to the attic that day or that what I was looking for was a book I used to read when I was little, *Beauty and the Beast*, which is a really decent story about an animal who gets turned into a human and stays that way, the way it's supposed to be. I don't tell Mona that Beauty's black hair coiled to the edge of the page, or that the Beast had yellow horns and a smoking jacket, or that instead of finding the book I found the coat, and my mom put it on and went out the kitchen door and started up her car.



One selkie story tells about a man from Mýrdalur. He was on the cliffs one day and heard people singing and dancing inside a cave, and he noticed a bunch of skins piled on the rocks. He took one of the skins home and locked it in a chest, and when he went back a girl was sitting there alone, crying. She was naked, and he gave her some clothes and took her home. They got married and had kids. You know how this goes. One day the man changed his clothes and forgot to take the key



to the chest out of his pocket, and when his wife washed the clothes, she found it.



“You’re not going to Egypt,” I tell Mona. “We’re going to Colorado. Remember?”

That’s our big dream, to go to Colorado. It’s where Mona was born. She lived there until she was four. She still remembers the rocks and the pines and the cold, cold air. She says the clouds of Colorado are bright, like pieces of mirror. In Colorado, Mona’s parents got divorced, and Mona’s mom tried to kill herself for the first time. She tried it once here, too. She put her head in the oven, resting on a pillow. Mona was in seventh grade.



Selkies go back to the sea in a flash, like they’ve never been away. That’s one of the ways they’re different from human beings. Once, my dad tried to go back somewhere: he was in the army, stationed in Germany, and he went to Norway to look up the town my great-grandmother came from. He actually found the place, and even an old farm with the same name as us. In the town, he went into a restaurant and ordered lutefisk, a disgusting fish thing my grandmother makes. The cook came out of the kitchen and looked at him like he was nuts. She said they only eat lutefisk at Christmas.

There went Dad’s plan of bringing back



the original flavor of lutefisk. Now all he’s got from Norway is my great-grandmother’s Bible. There’s also the diary she wrote on the farm up north, but we can’t read it. There’s only four English words in the whole book: *My God awful day.*



You might suspect my dad picked my mom up in Norway, where they have seals. He didn’t, though. He met her at the pool.



As for Mom, she never talked about her relatives. I asked her once if she had any, and she said they were “no kind of people.” At the time I thought she meant they were druggies or murderers, maybe in prison somewhere. Now I wish that was true.



One of the stories I don’t tell Mona comes from *A Dictionary of British Folklore in the English Language*. In that story, it’s the



He still waits up for me, so just before midnight I pull out of the parking lot. I'm hoping to get home early enough that he doesn't grumble, but late enough that he doesn't want to come up from the basement, where he takes apart old TVs, and talk to me about college. I've told him

selkie's little girl who points out where the skin is hidden. She doesn't know what's going to happen, of course, she just knows her mother is looking for a skin, and she remembers her dad taking one out from under the bed and stroking it. The little girl's mother drags out the skin and says: "Fareweel, peerie buddo!" She doesn't think about how the little girl is going to miss her, or how if she's been breathing air all this time she can surely keep it up a little longer. She just throws on the skin and jumps into the sea.

I'm not going to college. I'm going to Colorado, a landlocked state. Only twenty out of fifty states are completely landlocked, which means they don't touch the Great Lakes or the sea. Mona turns on the light and tries to put on eyeliner in the mirror, and I swerve to make her mess up. She turns out the light and hits me. All the windows are down to air out the car, and Mona's hair blows wild around her face. Peerie buddo, the book says, is "a term of endearment." "Peerie buddo," I say to Mona. She's got the hiccups. She can't stop laughing.



After Mom left, I waited for my dad to get home from work. He didn't say anything when I told him about the coat. He stood in the light of the clock on the stove and rubbed his fingers together softly, almost like he was snapping but with no sound. Then he sat down at the kitchen table and lit a cigarette. I'd never seen him smoke in the house before. *Mom's gonna lose it*, I thought, and then I realized that no, my mom wasn't going to lose anything. We were the losers. Me and Dad.



I've never kissed Mona. I've thought about it a lot, but I keep deciding it's not time. It's not that I think she'd freak out or anything. It's not even that I'm afraid she wouldn't kiss me back. It's worse: I'm afraid she'd kiss me back, but not mean it.



Probably one of the biggest losers to fall in love with a selkie was the man who carried

her skin around in his knapsack. He was so scared she'd find it that he took the skin with him everywhere, when he went fishing, when he went drinking in the town. Then one day he had a wonderful catch of fish. There were so many that he couldn't drag them all home in his net. He emptied his knapsack and filled it with fish, and he put the skin over his shoulder, and on his way up the road to his house, he dropped it.

"Gray in front and gray in back, 'tis the very thing I lack." That's what the man's wife said, when she found the skin. The man ran to catch her, he even kissed her even though she was already a seal, but she squirmed off down the road and flopped into the water. The man stood knee-deep in the chilly waves, stinking of fish, and cried. In selkie stories, kissing never solves anything. No transformation happens because of a kiss. No one loves you just because you love them. What kind of fairy tale is that?



"She wouldn't wake up," Mona says. "I pulled her out of the oven onto the floor, and I turned off the gas and opened the windows. It's not that I was smart, I wasn't thinking at all. I called Uncle Tad and the police and I still wasn't thinking."

I don't believe she wasn't smart. She even tried to give her mom CPR, but her mom didn't wake up until later, in the hospital. They had to reach in and drag her out of death, she was so closed up in

it. Death is skin-tight, Mona says. Gray in front and gray in back.



Dear Mona: When I look at you, my skin hurts.



I pull into her driveway to drop her off. The house is dark, the darkest house on her street, because Mona's mom doesn't like the porch light on. She says it shines in around the blinds and keeps her awake. Mona's mom has a beautiful bedroom upstairs, with lots of old photographs in gilt frames, but she sleeps on the living room couch beside the aquarium. Looking at the fish helps her to sleep, although she also says this country has no real fish. That's what Mona calls one of her mom's "refrains."

Mona gets out, yanking the little piece of my heart that stays with her wherever she goes. She stands outside the car and leans in through the open door. I can



hardly see her, but I can smell the lemon-scented stuff she puts on her hair, mixed up with the smells of sweat and weed. Mona smells like a forest, not the sea. “Oh my God,” she says, “I forgot to tell you, tonight, you know table six? That big horde of Uncle Tad’s friends?”

“Yeah.”

“So they wanted the soup with the food, and I forgot, and you know what the old guy says to me? The little guy at the head of the table?”

“What?”

“He goes, *Vous êtes bête, mademoiselle!*”

She says it in a rough, growly voice, and laughs. I can tell it’s French, but that’s all.

“What does it mean?”

“*You’re an idiot, miss!*”

She ducks her head, stifling giggles.

“He called you an idiot?”

“Yeah, *bête*, it’s like *beast*.”

She lifts her head, then shakes it. A light from someone else’s porch bounces off her nose. She puts on a fake Norwegian accent and says: “*My God awful day.*”

I nod. “Awful day.” And because we say

it all the time, because it’s the kind of silly, ordinary thing you could call one of our “refrains,” or maybe because of the weed I’ve smoked, a whole bunch of days seem pressed together inside this moment, more than you could count. There’s the time we all went out for New Year’s Eve, and Uncle Tad drove me, and when he stopped and I opened the door he told me to close it, and I said “I will when I’m on the other side,” and when I told Mona we laughed so hard we had to run away and hide in the bathroom. There’s the day some people we know from school came in and we served them wine even though they were underage and Mona got nervous and spilled it all over the tablecloth, and the day her nice cousin came to visit and made us cheese-and-mint sandwiches in the microwave and got yelled at for wasting food. And the day of the party for Mona’s mom’s birthday, when Uncle Tad played music and made us all dance, and Mona’s mom’s eyes went jewelily with tears, and afterward Mona told me: “I should just run away. I’m the only thing keeping her here.” My God, awful days. All the best days of my life.



“Bye,” Mona whispers. I watch her until she disappears into the house.



My mom used to swim every morning at the YWCA. When I was little she took me along. I didn’t like swimming. I’d sit in a chair with a book

while she went up and down, up and down, a dim streak in the water. When I read *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, it seemed like Mom was a lab rat doing tasks, the way she kept touching one side of the pool and then the other. At last she climbed out and pulled off her bathing cap. In the locker room she hung up her suit, a thin gray rag dripping on the floor. Most people put the hook of their padlock through the straps of their suit, so the suits could hang outside the lockers without getting stolen, but my mom never did that. She just tied her suit loosely onto the lock. “No one’s going to steal that stretchy old thing,” she said. And no one did.



That should have been the end of the story, but it wasn’t. My dad says Mom was an elemental, a sort of stranger, not of our kind. It wasn’t my fault she left, it was because she couldn’t learn to breathe on land. That’s the worst story I’ve ever heard. I’ll never tell Mona, not ever, not even when we’re leaving for Colorado with everything we need in the back of my car, and I meet her at the grocery store the way we’ve already planned, and she runs out smiling under her orange baseball cap. I won’t tell her how dangerous attics are, or how some people can’t start over, or how I still see my mom in shop windows with her long hair the same silver-gray as her coat, or how once when my little cousins



came to visit we went to the zoo and the seals recognized me, they both stood up in the water and talked in a foreign language. I won’t tell her. I’m too scared. I won’t even tell her what she needs to know: that we’ve got to be tougher than our moms, that we’ve got to have different stories, that she’d better not change her mind and drop me in Colorado because I won’t understand, I’ll hate her forever and burn her stuff and stay up all night screaming at the woods, because it’s stupid not to be able to breathe, who ever heard of somebody breathing in one place but not another, and we’re not like that, Mona and me, and selkie stories are only for losers stuck on the wrong side of magic—people who drop things, who tell all, who leave keys around, who let go. 🐝

Sofia Samatar is a fantasy writer, poet, and critic. She edits poetry and nonfiction for Interfictions Online: A Journal of Interstitial Arts. Her novel A Stranger in Olondria was published by Small Beer Press. Learn more at sofiasamatar.com and @sofiasamatar.

ARTIST ALLIES YEWON KWON

Dispatches from the trenches

Yewon Kwon studies print media and narrative at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. When not making zines or writing comics, Yewon spends her time watching Chopped, listening to tunes, and whispering secrets into the folds of dogs' necks.

CIC: There's an explosion of innovation in comics right now. I know sequential graphic works are sometimes excluded from the company of "fine arts" like painting or sculpture. Are comics artists starting to change our notion of what art can look like?

YK: I think comics artists are definitely changing the public's conceptions of what art can be. Particularly in the indie comics scene, artists are constantly challenging the definition of fine art and combining different methods of making to create new forms, and even creating new ways to make and look at comics and narrative art. I've noticed a big increase in comics combined with digital media, like Chris Reineman's *Feel Afraid* comics, which work in a lot of glitchy gifs. I'm totally down with comics that cross over with different types of media!

CIC: You're at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Do institutions like SAIC support comics?

YK: Unfortunately, comics don't play a very big part at SAIC and at many art institutions overall, but I think there is still a very large community surrounding comics. My friends and I run a collective comics publication called *Xerox Candy Bar* at SAIC, so students can have an outlet for their comics and also

collaborate with other students who enjoy comics. In addition, there's such a huge comics community in Chicago, with fantastic events like Zine Fest and Chicago Alternative Comics Expo. Regardless of the lack of comics in institutions, there are still so many options for people to explore comics and get to know other people. It's such a rad thing!

CIC: Speaking of rules: what role does formal training in the basics of craft play in an artist's development?

YK: I don't think formal training is necessary to engage with art. While it could be important at times, I think the most meaningful thing about art is that anyone can do it if they really want to.

CIC: Has there ever been a time when you had to shake off the influence of a creative role model in order to pursue your own vision?

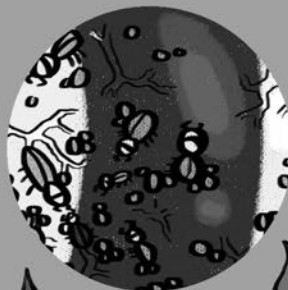
YK: I've always been a huge, huge fan of Yayoi Kusama and Michael DeForge, and there have definitely been moments where I had to step back from my work and think about whether I was being inspired by these artists or if they were taking over what I was looking for in my own art.

CICADA: What do you think about the notion that art is about taking risks, breaking the rules?

YEWON KWON: Artists are constantly pushed to take more risks and break boundaries with their art and let their voices be heard, regardless of any social implications that may be in place. I think it's important for artists to say something with their work. 🐛

Visit cicadamag.com/artistallies for interviews with other comics artists.

SYMBIOTIC



-YEWON KWON-

CREATIVE ENDEAVORS: RISK

Feats of creative derring-do by *Cicada* readers like you

Cornflower Blue

by Hannah Miao

The summer the creek overflowed, we watched as
raw-skinned boys shied and shoved each other with

silt-blown hands into the crack of nature that had
beguiled
the unsullied earth. We grappled with the beer
bottles,

cigar stubs, the hazy days when we had dampened
our hands in the thirsty mud to create a child-
connoisseur's pies,

uncertain of the tangled weeds beneath. My mother
warns us
about the journey through the stream, confirms her
fears

with yellow gazette clippings of the last time the
river spilled over, its brim a briny ten-gallon hat

pouring the excess into the fluted swell of children's
lungs. I wonder if she knows about the green boys, the

fearless explorers, the Columbuses and Vespuccis
whose scrappy legs sink ever deeper still.

A Coin Toss

by Joanna Cleary

Of course, you can always refuse to look.
Turn away and picture heads (hopeful as a breath).
Decide that home is this way, this lottery ticket will win,
she will kiss you back.

Do not think of tails (heavy as the known).
You will hardly glance at it before walking away,
whispering that you are lost, you will lose,
she will brush you away like a cobweb.

And the metallic absence in your hand, heart,
something to do with regret. You cannot help but look.



Giro Hanging from the Ceiling

by AmaSepia Jones



Leap of Faith

by Ella Staats



Uncertainty

by Chessi Maria



We're celebrating **Talk Like a Pirate Day (9/19)** in style at CicadaHQ. Check out our pirate fashion on Instagram @cicadamagazine. And post your own piratical pix! **#cicadacrew**

CALL FOR CREATIVE ENDEAVORS: PIRATES

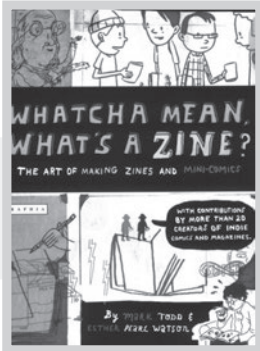


Ahoy ye salty sea dogs, ye pox-faced bilgerats, ye mutinous rogues! Ambush our inbox with poems, art, and photography on pirates by September 30, 2015, or ye'll be feeding the fishes. Cast yer scurvy eyes on the details over at cicadamag.com/submitwork.

ZINE CRUSH

BY EMMA FERNHOUT

From web comics and photocopied zines to indie presses and NYC publishers, there's an explosion of startling work in text and image. Each issue, Cicada asks one of our indie comics pals to point out some favorite new comics and zines.



1 WHATCHA MEAN, WHAT'S A ZINE?

by Esther Pearl Watson and Mark Todd

HMH Books for Young Readers

Full of rad, zine-like eye candy, *Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine?* is a fantastic guide to planning, writing, assembling, and distributing zines and comics.

2 STOLEN SHARPIE REVOLUTION: A DIY RESOURCE FOR ZINES AND ZINE CULTURE

by Alex Wrekk

Lunchroom Publishing

Covering simple zine-making techniques, distribution strategies, navigating zine culture, and much more, *Stolen Sharpie Revolution* is an in-depth guide to entering the DIY publishing world.

3 THE RIOT GRRRL COLLECTION

by Lisa Darms, editor

The Feminist Press

The inspiring *Riot Grrrl Collection* compiles works from the Riot Grrrl movement in the 1980s and 90s, a time when feminist bands and activists fought for recognition and created a DIY culture full of zines.

4 THE BOOK BOOK: A JOURNEY INTO BOOKMAKING

by Sophie Benini Pietromarchi

Tara Books

The Book Book explores the uses of color, texture, and found objects in the adventure of bookmaking. This visual treat gives you a chance to see how book artists render intangible emotion in concrete visible objects.

Emma Fernhout, jokingly dubbed “the zine queen” by coworkers and readers, has delved into the world of zines, writing the zines Little Freshie and The Sprout Club and curating a zine collection for her local library. She hopes to continue to take on the world of zines. She also writes slam poetry and fiction.



Who can grasp my
literary genius?

We Can

cicadamag.com/theslam

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Printed in the United States of America.

1st printing Quad/Graphics Midland, Michigan August 2015

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