

INT. BASEMENT - EVENING

A NAKED LIGHTBULB SPARKS TO LIFE. It dangles from the ceiling of a basement.

LIGHT, QUICK FOOTSTEPS AS ANNA CROWE moves down the stairs.

Anna is the rare combination of beauty and innocence. She stands in the chilly basement in an elegant s
nes
her slen
eyes move

MALCOLM

That's one fine frame. A fine frame it is.

Malcolm points to the HUGE FRAMED CERTIFICATE propped up on a dining room chair. It's printed on aged parchment-type paper. The frame is a polished mahogany.

He slips on the sweatshirt.

SCRIBE

over

Three? We should hock it. ay a C.D. rack for the bedroom.

ANNA

Do you know how important this s?

This is big time.

(beat)

I'm going to read it for you, doctor.

MALCOLM

Do I really sound like Dr. euss?

Anna ignores Malcolm and clears er throat. She leans forward her seat and reads the certificate out loud as Malcolm tries to tickle her.

ANNA

In recognition for his outstanding achievement in the field of

WOULDST THOU LIKE TO LIVE DELICIOUSLY

to

efforts to improve the quality of life for countless children and their families, the City of Philadelphia proudly bestows upon its son Dr. Malcolm Crowe... That's

WE HEAR HER HIT THE LIGHT SWITCH.

TH
BLA

Two place settings are arranged on the living room coffee table. Take-out Chinese food sits half eaten on good china. An empty bottle of red wine sits between boxes of Chinese food.

Anna arrives with the backup

MYSTERY
MYSTERY
MYSTERY
MYSTERY
MYSTERY
MYSTERY



HALLOWEEN
NIGHTMARE
HALLOWEEN
NIGHTMARE
HALLOWEEN
NIGHTMARE



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In honoring this month's themes, I'd like to share a brief poem:

Reflection

Refraction

Tomato

Tomoto

A Russian accent drones in the background
"The incident ray is refracted at the boundary"

My eyes float towards the back

Eyebrows raised were met with eyes rolled

Few seconds later, a message appears: "You think it'll be today?"

"She's talking way too much," I reply

"You're right, let's play skribbl.io"

A snowflake, pumpkin, and volcano later

A yard stick taps on the lab bench

And a paper is slipped under my nose

"No laptops for ze pop quiz, da?"

The mystery of the physics lab pop quizzes is no less than any Halloween nightmare — at least for me. Read this month's issue for a good night's fright!

Mystery awaits...

Sincerely,

Rida Ahmed

Chief Editor



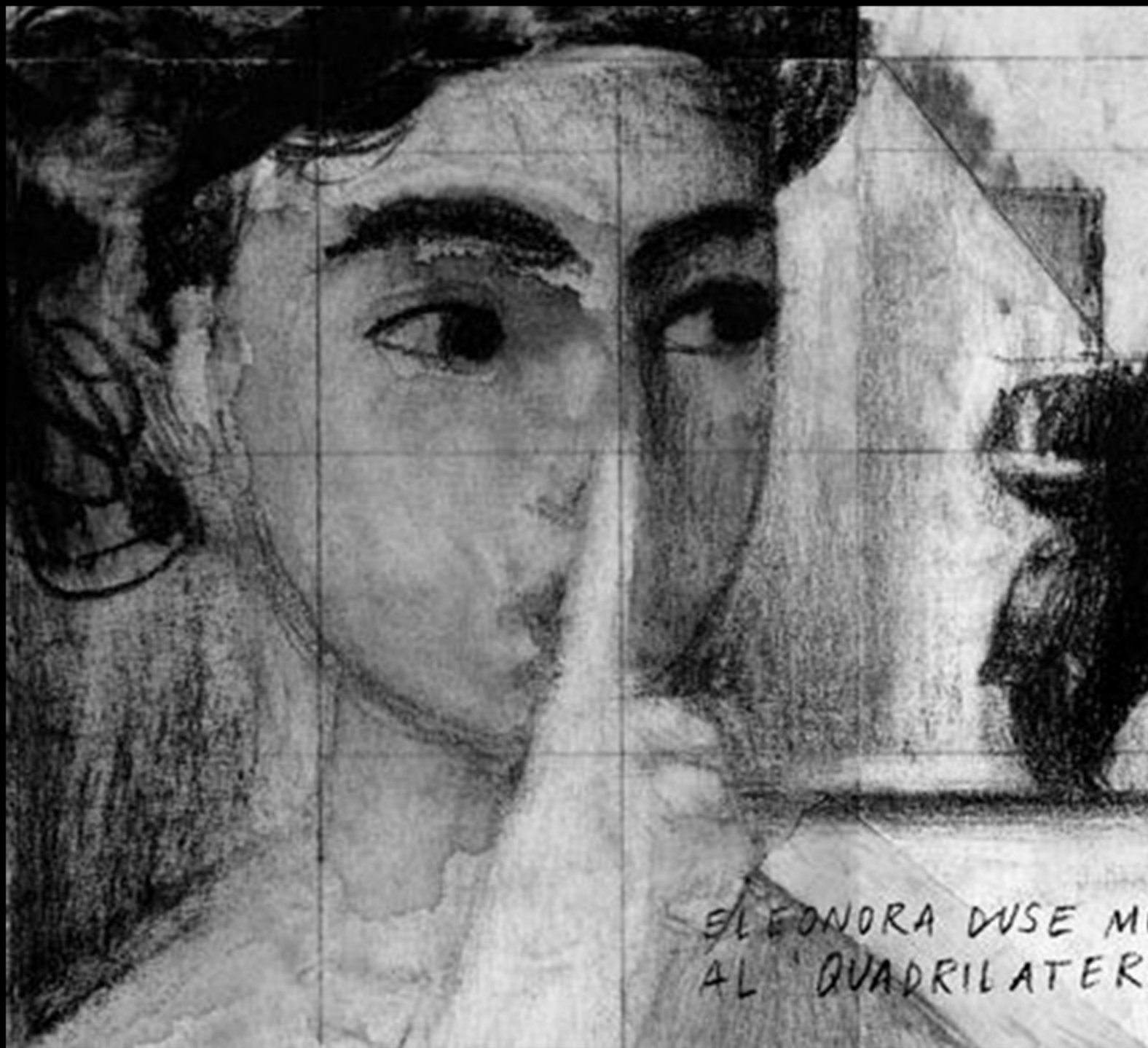
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WARS OF MYSTERY

ANGELINA
LAMBROS



Friday ^{the} 13th

a poem written by:

12 year old

J a n e t

This day is full of fun and wonder,
paranoia, fright, and thunder.
Superstitions come to mind,
be careful, but don't try to hide.

Repeat after me:

"Ghouls and Ghosts come out, come out.
Haunt the playground, haunt the town.
Feel free to fly and fly around.
Haunt the buildings, haunt the ground."

I have to say I like this day



I ACCOMPAGNA FINO
O DEL SILENZIO"

outside my house
was built on a graveyard,
turned inside out.

During reconstruction
when the concrete was broken,
the trapped souls were released
and now they do haunt it.

Whether this is true or not,
I'd find one interesting to spot
Maybe ghost or maybe ghoul,
maybe witches on a broom.

Repeat after me:

"Ghouls and Ghosts come out, come out.
Haunt the playground, haunt the town.
Feel free to fly and fly around.
Haunt the buildings haunt the ground."

The day 13 is really great
with truths, and lies, and many fakes
But when it's real, let's jump up high

And throw our arms into the sky.

despite what other people say.
It's not back luck,
from that I claim to be free,
because I'm friends with something,
something that's watching me.

I wish I could see it
whether ghost, ghoul, or not.
I know it can see me,
and it watches me a lot.

Now i'll tell you a story:

I heard the playground

MY NIGHTMARE

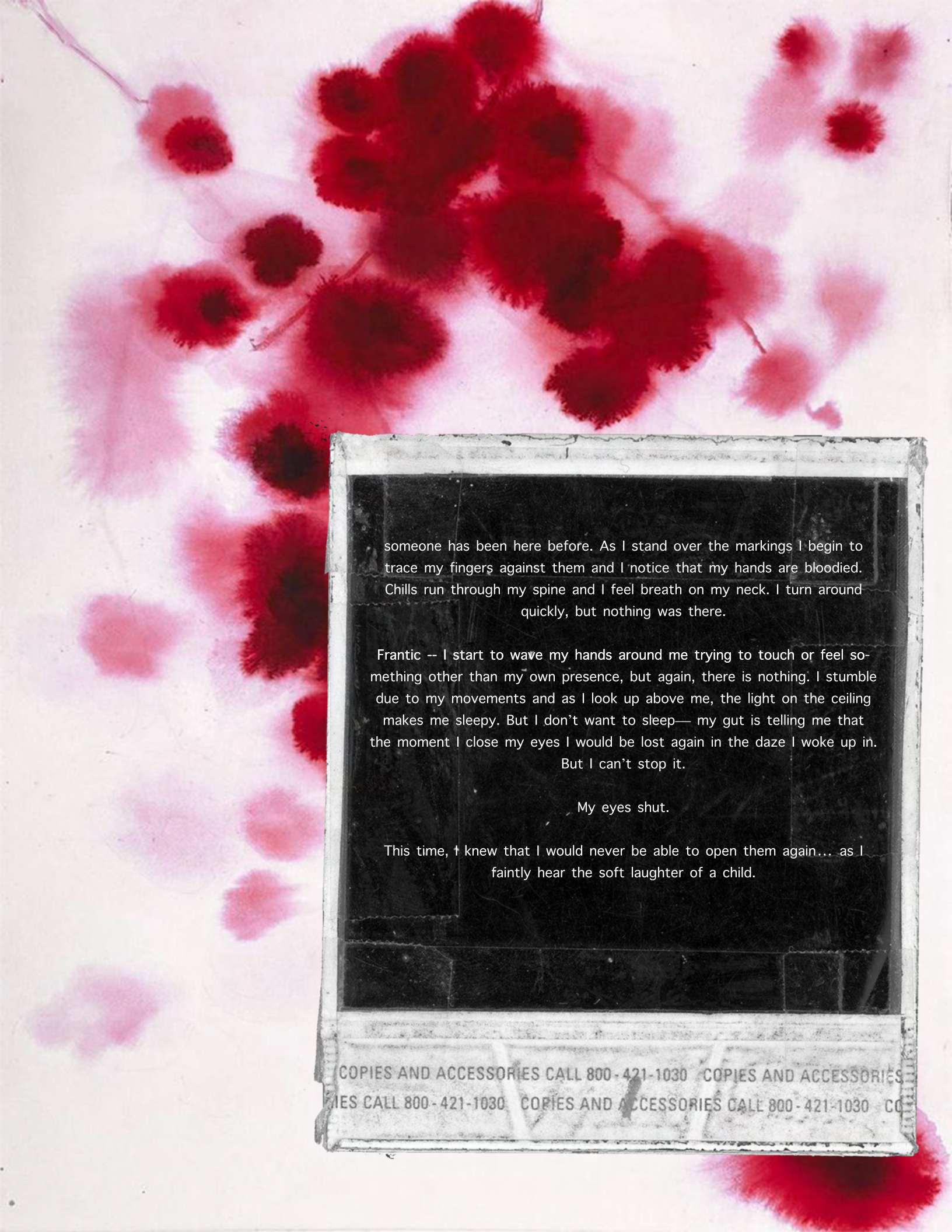
GAHDARV KAUR

I try to open my eyes, little by little. My body feels sore and heavy as though there is an invisible weight pressing down on me. I try to move my hands and feet but I feel stuck. But there is nothing binding me—at least nothing that I see. I try to use my senses to get a feel as to where I am.

The blinding light suddenly becomes a little bearable. I realize that I'm laying on some sort of metal table as if I was in surgery, but this doesn't look like a hospital room. I can't figure out what this place is where I am? Why am I here? Wait...who am I? These questions relentlessly rush through my head — agh! My head starts stinging as if someone is piercing my head with a rod. Tears start to form but they don't escape. I try to breathe in and out — but the pain makes me whimper. And soon, my eyes begin to close again.

I hear some noise, some faint mumbling that causes me to open my eyes, but there is no one there. I'm scared, I'm hungry, I want to leave, and most of all I want to know, who am I? These thoughts yet again are flooding my mind. I manage to turn my head and see some dark red scratches from the wall; it looks as if someone scratched their nails to the walls until they bled— until they couldn't take it anymore or until someone made them stop. Yet again, I try to get up and this time I'm going to pull through the pain, I think to myself. I manage to get on my feet, almost falling the moment my feet touch the cold floor. My hair blocks my sight as I try to walk. Slowly I approach the markings -- I don't know why I wanted to look at them but I just did. Maybe because these were the only signs that

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someone has been here before. As I stand over the markings I begin to trace my fingers against them and I notice that my hands are bloodied. Chills run through my spine and I feel breath on my neck. I turn around quickly, but nothing was there.

Frantic -- I start to wave my hands around me trying to touch or feel something other than my own presence, but again, there is nothing. I stumble due to my movements and as I look up above me, the light on the ceiling makes me sleepy. But I don't want to sleep— my gut is telling me that the moment I close my eyes I would be lost again in the daze I woke up in. But I can't stop it.

My eyes shut.

This time, I knew that I would never be able to open them again... as I faintly hear the soft laughter of a child.

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The air is unseasonably warm. It sits heavy in the train car, pressing tight around me. Summer's officially gone, so there is no air conditioning turned on to banish the heat.

I'm in the same car I'm always in, third from the front. I'm in the same seat I was in last time, second row from dead center.

There are other people in the car too, not so many that we're crammed shoulder to shoulder but enough that most rows have at least one person sitting in them, though there's no one in the row across the aisle from me.

The recorded voice announces the stops over the speakers: Lakeside, Hedgebrook, Home.

I stop listening but I know there are ten stops after mine.

I slide closer to the window and cross my ankles. There's a stickiness trailing over my skin and when I touch the tips of my fingers to my hairline they come away damp with perspiration. The warmth is making me twitchy, itchy all over, so I pull my book out of my bag. I've dogeared the page I was reading- a bad habit that's horrified every English professor I've ever had- and try to ground myself in the inky words.

The train doors slide shut and we roll out of the station.

This train is late enough that my strides walking up the street home are always brisk. By the time we emerge from the tunnel the sun is only indirectly visible, throwing a blanket of copper over the lowermost clouds in the sky. I know in minutes it will be fully dark.

I look out the window at the world whooshing past. Something aside from the heat is making me uncomfortable, but I'm not sure what. The neighborhoods look the same as always and so does everything in the train car itself. For some reason the familiarity isn't its usual comforting.

I close my eyes and just breathe for a second, listening for the meditative rumble of the train.

It's not there.

I sit up and look around the car again with fresh eyes and newly attuned ears. I drink in the silence, probing for some rattling against the tracks or whir of the train's mechanisms. There is nothing, not even the gentle lilt of conversation or the taps of another passenger typing out a text. It is as still as the unbroken dawn.

I wonder if this is a new train, designed for smoother rides and equipped with the latest technological advances. I've never ridden in a train like that, but I decide it would be cool.

Nothing else in the train looks different though. The seats are

the same blue and green fabric and the window is still streaked with a layer of grime. If anything, I think, the lights look older. They're dimmer than normal and a tawny color that reminds me of old sepia photographs.

Suddenly the train picks up speed and the trees outside the window start to blur together. I sit up fully and turn around to look for the other passengers, seeking out eyes filled with equal amounts of confusion, but everyone I can glimpse is looking down.

The train jolts and the lights flicker once, twice, and then go out. I startle back into my seat and tug my book to my chest.

The lights come on mere moments later, but they're even dimmer than before and crackle in and out. I force myself to relax against the seat and reopen my book. I reread the same sentence three times before I admit that I just can't focus on Moby Dick.

The lights go out again. This time it takes longer for them to come back on and when they do it's only the one in the very center of the car.

The silence is even more disquieting in the dark.

I look at the back of the seat in front of me and tell myself I'm just overtired and I'll be home soon.

Click-click.

The lights flicker and I jump at the clicking sound. I'm so on edge that it takes me a second to realize that it must be the conductor coming around to collect everyone's tickets.

Click-click.

The lights flicker again. I can't tell if he's coming from behind or in front of me. I swivel around to peer down the aisle but the shadows slip into darkness. I can't see past the rows closest to me or tell where the car ends.

Click-click.. click-click. There's a pause. Click-click.. click-click.. click-click.

The lights go out. I squint and I think I can make out the outline of a passenger in the aisle seat a few rows behind me and the shape of the conductor's hat.

The light comes back on but there's no one in the aisle seat.

We roll to a stop and when I hear the doors open I can't tell if anyone leaves. We're moving for a while before I can hear the conductor again.

Click-click.. click-click.. click-click.. click-click.

The lights won't stop flickering. I realize I'm holding my breath.

Click-click.. click-click..click-click.

I'm fairly certain the conductor is coming from behind me now. I can hear him getting closer but I still can't see him.

Click-click.. click-click.

I look behind me through a slot in the seats and can finally see the conductor, though his back is to me. I can see what I think is a woman's shoulder in the row in front of him.

Click-click. The lights flicker for a moment and when they come back on I don't see the woman. The conductor is two rows ahead.

I must have imagined her, I'm just being stupid. I turn around and rest my head against the window. It'll be good to see the conductor, I tell myself. He's always friendly and a familiar face will make me feel more at ease.

I let out a sigh of relief when the train stops at Hedgebrook. I'm the next stop.

Scanning the train car, I listen to the conductor punching tickets. It sounds like he's coming from the other direction now, but that can't be right because he didn't walk past me.

Click-click.. click-click.. click-click.

He's definitely coming from the other side of the train.

I know I'm being ridiculous, but I can't stop my knee from shaking. I promise myself that when I'm safely home I'm figuring out what I watched or read that made me so anxious.

I'm not home yet though, and sitting here waiting is freaking me out. I straighten up and look out over the seats in front of me. I can clearly see two women and three men. There's a man in a blue jacket sitting in the center seats. I decide I'll stop looking around and just watch him, he won't vanish and it'll prove everything is fine.

Click-click..click-click.. click-click.

I don't take my eyes off the man even when the lights flicker.

Click-click.

The man is gone.

I know he was there, I saw him. I'm blinking rapidly as if it'll either bring the man back or snap me out of whatever psychotic break

I'm having. I squeeze my book tighter, and try to look out the window but it's too dark to see anything.

The lights go out again.

When they turn on I'm still staring at the window but now I can see the reflection of the conductor, standing at my seat.

"My ticket.." I stammer, rushing to get it out of my bag. I go to hand it to him, but startle.

He's not the conductor. At least, not the usual conductor.



His eyes are pale and glossy, not unfocused, just seeing beyond me. He's smiling but it's too broad, detached from the rest of his face.

He plucks the ticket from my hand and punches it. He hands it back and smiles even wider.

"I'll be seeing you," he says. The lights flicker and he's gone. Click-click.. click-click.

Although the sounds get further and further away each minute, I can't stop trembling.

The car is plunged into darkness again. Suddenly there are hands on my shoulders, my chest; cold fingers edging across my collarbone. Someone's screaming.

I'm screaming.

I'm on the train, the lights are on. The conductor is shaking me.

"I came to collect your ticket but you were asleep," he says.

"This is your stop."

It was just a dream, I realize. The train is stopped and I can see home through the window.

I grab my bag and go to thank the conductor but then I freeze. It's the same conductor: the same unsettling eyes and predatory grin.

"I'll be seeing you," he smiles.

I hurry down the aisle and past row after row of empty seats. All the people are gone.

I feel ill.

Even after the train pulls away I don't look back, don't stop rushing into the darkness. I can still see his face staring at me, still hear the click of the ticket puncher.



THE EVERYDAY FEARS OF A COLLEGE STUDENT

TZIPPORA APPELBAUM

No, no, no, Serena silently begged in her head. Please don't call on me, not today. Serena stared at the floor, averting her teacher's gaze, hoping he wouldn't call on her.

"Serena," he said, "can you tell me what the answer to question four is?"

Serena looked down at her English textbook and read question four. According to Stuart's theory, how can one justify the use of fire in the Amenti case?

She had no idea. She hadn't done the reading last night, and had certainly not looked at the homework questions.

"I don't know, professor," she replied meekly.

The professor moved on to the next student while Serena sunk into her seat, averting her teacher's disappointed gaze.

Serena's next class was Psychology of Child Development; she loved to learn about how children grow and how their personalities develop over time. She sat down in her seat waiting for the teacher to begin class, but to her surprise, there was a picture of her as a child on the smartboard. How did that get up there?

"Today, we will discuss how personalities develop based on past experiences and genetics," her teacher began.

"We will study this topic by using a case analysis of Serena Cortez." Her professor began to flip through the slides showing photos of Serena throughout her childhood. Photos of her as a baby, a toddler, when she was six, nine, fourteen, seventeen- her whole life was displayed before the class. Serena gaped at the screen. What? How? How could her teacher have all this information? Serena had never told the teacher about her life, nor had ever given consent to this.

The professor continued to speak. "Starting at birth, Serena had always been a difficult child. She would cry and beg more than other babies, screaming and yelling and throwing things. This nature only continued into her childhood and adolescence, as Serena had difficulty making friends; almost an outcast, to say the least. At home, Serena did not improve in the slightest, as she continued to aggravate and disappoint her parents by skipping school and demanding that they buy her expensive clothes and items that she certainly did not deserve."

By now, everyone was staring at Serena- some with mocking eyes and others with questioning looks. Avoiding their piercing stares, Serena put her head down. What was happening to her? None of this was true: she had always tried to be a good child to her parents- worked hard for her grades and had even received a partial scholarship to her college. She was also working at a job now to pay off her loans and support herself through college. How did her professor have all the photos, and where did she get all this false information from? Could it be a prank? It couldn't be- so

real! What teacher would pull a prank like that on a student?

Serena kept her head down for the rest of class. She tried to review the material for her biology test that was coming up later that day in her mind-anything to avoid listening to the teacher's voice and hearing the mocking snickers. She kept glancing at her watch, but time barely seemed to move. Finally, the bell rang. Without looking up, Serena rushed out of the room, dragging her half-open knapsack with her. She ran into the nearest building on campus, pushed open a bathroom door, and the tears began to fall. What had just happened? She stood there, tears falling into her hands and leaving streaks on her face. This had been the worst day she had ever had. Nothing was right, nothing made sense.

After about a half hour of crying and trying to pull herself together, Serena left the bathroom. It was lunch hour, and she wanted to review the material for her biology test. She decided she would speak to her psychology teacher about the incident later; she was too upset to talk or think about it now anyways.

In the library, Serena reviewed and reviewed her biology notes, making sure she knew them well. She was determined to make the rest of the day a success. Still, it was strange, she thought, how her best friend, Rosalia, had not shown up to eat lunch with her today like they did every Wednesday. Maybe she was sick, Serena thought, and packed up her backpack, threw out her lunch, and headed out of the building.

Outside, she saw a large group of students running very quickly and very wildly in her direction. Judging by their uniforms, it looked like they were part of the soccer team.

"Watch out!" a boy with dark brown hair yelled at her. Serena tried to move quickly to the side, but it was too late as the boy crashed into her and both of them fell to the ground. The iced tea she was carrying spilled all over her clothes and the boy's uniform.

"Why can't you watch where you're going?!" He yelled at her, standing up. "Look what you did to my clothes!" His clothes were soaking wet and his white uniform shirt was stained a light brown color.

"I'm so sorry," Serena said, "I didn't mean to spill it, why were you all running like that anyways?"

"We're part of the soccer team," the boy said. "We're in training."

By now, all of the soccer team members were staring at her and the boy with dark brown hair was glaring at her. She was so embarrassed; she wished the ground would open up so she could disappear.

"Just stay out of our way," the boy said with contempt. He tried to squeeze out some of the liquid from his shirt. Then they

all moved on, running again.

Serena walked away, trying to ignore all the stares from the rest of the students who had seen what had happened. Her clothes were wet and stained and her hair was sticky with iced tea too. Serena arrived in her Economics class and sat down in her seat, trying to avoid everyone looking at her wet and stained clothes. The class began as the professor discussed different theories of economics, and even though nothing embarrassing happened to her, Serena was too upset to focus on what the teacher was saying and could not take any notes.

Finally, she headed to her last class, Biology. After studying for a week, Serena felt prepared for the test. At least one thing can go right today, she thought. The professor handed out the test papers, and Serena looked at the first question, which was a question about muscles in the body. Muscles? She had been studying cells, blood vessels, and veins for the past week. She chose the best answer that she could guess and moved on to the next question. Again, another question about muscles. Serena looked through the rest of the test: there were questions about muscles, joints, and diseases and illnesses relating to muscles, but nothing about the material she had studied. She walked up to the teacher's desk and told him that there must have been some mistake. They had not learned the muscles chapter in class yet.

He looked at her sharply with a confused expression on his face.

"What do you mean? We've been learning this material for the past month. Everyone else is taking the same exam about muscles, not cells," he emphasized.

"I know," she replied, trying to stay calm, "but I attended every class so far this semester and we learned about cells, not muscles."

"Maybe you have not been in class and are just trying to make excuses since you did not study and did not attend class." He replied bitterly. "I've had students like you before, I know what you're trying to do. There will be no make-up exam. Take the test now and next time, show up to class."

Serena could feel tears welling up in her eyes. She headed back to her seat, trying to ignore the snickers from the other students. Too upset and too embarrassed, she filled out the test as best as she could, an occasional tear landing on her hands and the paper. At the end of class, when everyone else had left, she silently handed in the paper, looking down at the floor to avoid the teacher's glare, and walked out of campus towards her car. Tears were streaming down her face and she didn't bother swiping them away. Her clothes were stained and damp. She reviewed the events of the day in her mind; it really had been the worst day

ever. She had been embarrassed in her English class, had fallen behind in the material in her Economics class, failed her Biology test, and to top it all off, she didn't think she could ever show her face in her Psychology class again.

Her phone pinged and her breath hitched when she read the message. It was from her best friend, Rosalia.

How dare you! How dare you! You told everyone everything about me. All my secrets and everything private. To think I could have ever trusted you. What's wrong with you, you don't you care about anyone else but yourself. Don't ever contact me again!

Serena didn't understand, What had she done? Why was Rosalia so mad? She hadn't told anyone any secrets.

What do you mean? She texted back. I didn't tell anyone anything.

Stop lying, leave me alone. I don't want to be in contact with you ever again. Rosalia responded.

Serena sent more messages and called Rosalia, but there was no answer. She wrote I'm sorry, I'm sorry so many times even though she didn't know what she had done and didn't know why Rosalia was so mad. She couldn't remember doing anything wrong. Please, she texted, just answer me, please.

Rosalia texted, I'm blocking you.

Serena texted a few more messages but there was no answer. The next thing she knew, a slew of email notifications popped up on her phone. One was from her Biology teacher telling her she had not only failed the test, but had cheated on the exam and he would be contacting the department heads to notify them of her behavior. Another was from her English professor assigning her extra homework to make up for what he called her "dismal performance" in class today. The soccer coach even emailed her stating she would have to clean up the trash in the soccer field to make up for interrupting practice today. The last email was from her psychology professor telling her that she may no longer be allowed into class as the class was nervous about having someone like her attending school with them.

Serena's head felt like it would explode. Her mouth was dry and more and more tears fell from her eyes, blurring her vision. Her hands were shaking and she stumbled into a tree where she found herself caught in a large, sticky spider's web. She pushed herself away from it, trying to untangle herself, but it only made it worse. Her clothes were stuck to it and her hair, which was already sticky from the iced tea, was sticking up, caught in the web. Although her tears clouded her vision, she could see it coming. A large spider, bigger than the size of her hand, was crawling towards her, its pincers extended. She screamed, she cried, she pulled away, but nothing helped. It came closer and

closer, it was about to bite her...

Serena woke up with a start, breathing heavily. There was a spider's web in front of her face and a large spider on it. She swatted at it wildly, but it felt like...paper?

Serena glanced around, she was in her room. She was sitting on her bed, on her purple sheets. Her Halloween costume draped on the chair by her desk and all her homework notebooks, folders, and textbooks were in neat piles on the desk. Serena was shaking, she took deep breaths to steady herself and looked around her room. There was her calendar marking down the dates of her biology test and the date of her presentation about child development in her psychology class. Her economics homework was lying on the desk with the answers filled in. She looked down at the floor and saw that her English textbook with the page turned open to this week's reading had fallen onto the floor from her bed where she had been reading it.

Everything was in order and organized as she had left it. The paper spider was swinging back and forth, still moving from the force of her swatting it. It was one of the decorations she had put up in her room for Halloween. There were other paper spiders, paper pumpkins, and webs all hung up across the ceiling. Her phone pinged- it was Rosalia asking her if she was ready to go to their soccer team's Halloween party that night. Serena let out a deep sigh of relief. It had all been a dream. No, not a dream, more like a nightmare.

A Halloween nightmare.

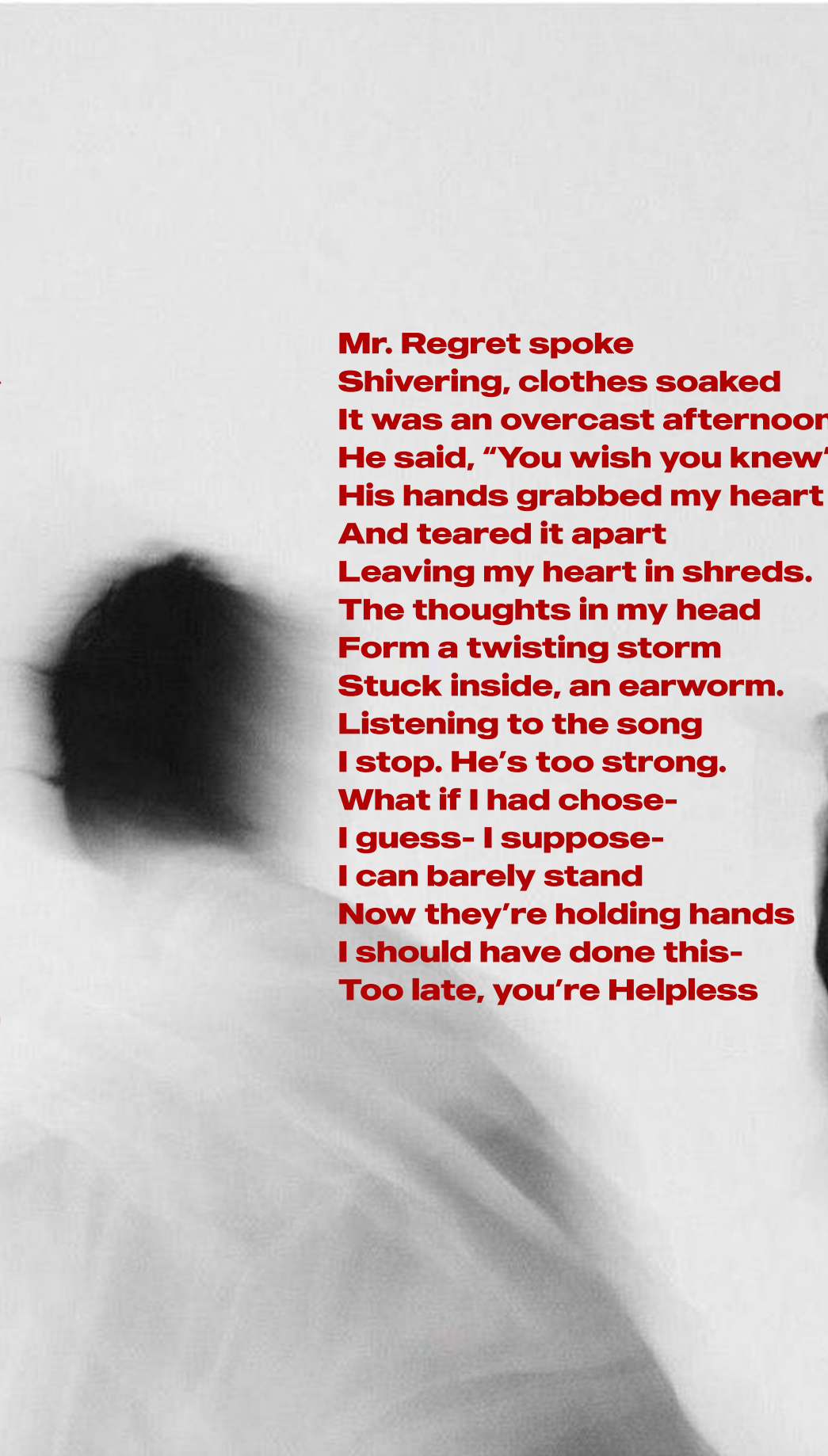
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PARTY TONE



**Mr. Regret spoke
Shivering, clothes soaked
It was an overcast afternoon
He said, "You wish you knew"
His hands grabbed my heart
And teared it apart
Leaving my heart in shreds.
The thoughts in my head
Form a twisting storm
Stuck inside, an earworm.
Listening to the song
I stop. He's too strong.
What if I had chose-
I guess- I suppose-
I can barely stand
Now they're holding hands
I should have done this-
Too late, you're Helpless**

**I spoke to Mr. Regret
Shivering, clothes soaked, still wet
It was a splash in the puddles afternoon
I told him "I wish I knew"
My heart, once covered in cuts
Was beginning to close up.
My thoughts, once cloudy skies
Clear, letting the sun shine.
Listening to the song
I smile and sing along.
What if I had chose-
I guess- I suppose-
But even if I knew
I can't escape Issues.
No choice is perfect
I looked at the gap and leapt
It might be wrong, it might be right
I raise up my sword, ready to fight
He's strong, but I'm stronger
I'll fight along with her
The lady who at last
Stopped dwelling on her past
Now unchained
She steps forward, unafraid
Now a new shade of green
Emerges and overcomes Envy
Oh Mr. Regrets
No longer has power over me**

**P
A
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NOT END SALE

his mouth
stranger

MAL

Bed Freidken?

STRANGER

Some people call me freak.

...R

Tears fa
face.

STRANG

I am a freak.

Malcolm looks
those words. S
in his head.

At the top of this new page
reads, "Cole Sear, age 8, Refe-
rred September 1993."

throu-
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out

NOT FOR SALE

NOT FOR SALE

NOT FOR SALE

Malcolm lets out a

R SALE NOT FOR SALE

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VINCENT

You forgot

VINCENT is ful

seem

NOT FOR SALE

NOT FOR SALE



2 112345 678900

ENT
me.

Anxiously.

The eight-year-old

NOT

NOT FOR SALE