
COMMENTARIUS

M A G A Z I N E

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Blind
by Aidan Griffin

It's 7:30 in the afternoon on a Wednesday. A young man in his early 20's walks with restless eyes along the path to his apartment. The man is wearing a typical outfit for a college student, with a blue sweatshirt from his local college and blue jeans. His hair blows fluently through the warm air, and the sky is starting to emit a fierce orange. He approaches a bridge, and eventually comes to a stop near a railing. The man peers over the edge of the railing to see the rippling water 364 feet below him. He glances at the sky and pauses for a moment, his breathing uneasy and his body shaking. He climbs over the railing and lets his legs dangle over the edge, like a helpless child in a swing hundreds of feet too big for him. The man silently but aggressively murmured something to himself.

"Hello?" A voice suddenly says with a questioning tone from behind him.

The man jolted, and caught himself on the rail. He turns around to see a man around his mid 60's, sitting up against a barrier along the walking path. The old man is a few feet away, and his face slightly blocked by a bridge beam. He is alone, has large tinted glasses on, and a cane resting beside him.

"Sorry- I didn't know anyone was here," the young man says.

"No problem at all," the old man says with a small chuckle.

The old man kept his head straight, not looking at the young man.

"Beautiful day, isn't it?"

The young man looks at his surroundings again, from the sky to the water.

"Yeah," he replied with a monotone pitch.

"Well, you don't make it sound that nice. It feels like it is, but I can't see a thing."

The young man asked with hesitancy, "Oh are you umm- visually impaired?"

"Yeah, I'm blind," the old man says with a laugh at his attempt to be inoffensive. "Ever since I was born."

"Oh- uh, I'm sorry."

"Don't be," the old man says with another laugh. "Is it a nice day?"

"I mean, the sun is coming out, it's kinda overcast but it's a nice day I guess, yeah."

The old man smiles and nods, and doesn't say anything for a moment.

"I'm Frank by the way," the old man says.

"Nice to meet you, Frank. I'm Ian."

Ian turned back to the immensely deep blue water and stared intensely again.

After a couple of moments, Frank interrupts saying, "If it's a nice day do you think you could describe it to me?"

"Um, s-sure," Ian responds reluctantly. "What do you want me to describe?"

"Just whatever you see- the sky, water, anything."

Ian pauses for a moment, then climbs over the bridge's railing and sits next to Frank.

He leans back to look at the sky, "Uh- well the sky is mostly light blue right now, there's a bunch of clouds scattered across it that are lightish gray with an orange edge on them. They're fluffy



Fall by Kyle Smith

looking, like cotton balls- oh and the sun is behind one big one right now, so it's kinda glowing through and adding rays of orange glow to the bottom of the sky. It all pretty much blends together, with no hard lines, just seamless colors, and textures mixed perfectly above us. It looks really nice right now, actually."

Frank clenched his face as if he was imagining what it looked like in his head. "What do the orange and blue and gray look like, though. And the glow and fluffiness and niceness- can you explain those to me too?"

Ian thought for a moment. "Think about that one ice cream place, what's it called? Ah yeah- Rain or Shine Ice Cream. There are like 31 flavors of ice cream, most with the same texture but tasting vastly different. That's basically how colors are but for the eyes- different colored shirts might all feel the same yet they have very different colors in the same way ice cream has different flavors."

Frank thinks for a moment, and replies, "But what exactly does it look like?"

"I guess if I had to try to explain a color itself I guess orange looks kinda warm, like heat," Ian thinks and tries to think about where to go from there.

"What does it mean for something to look warm? I never really understood that" Frank interrupts.

"It's kinda like- pure, bright, and intense- for the orange at least."

"And the blue?"

"The blue is light like it's been washed or faded or something. It's also hitting the water under the bridge right now and almost like a reflection of what's around it."

"What does the water look like," Frank asked.

"Right now, it's kinda like melted glass that- I don't know; it's pulsing like it's alive. Past the water are a bunch of rocks scattered around the shore, they kinda look like jagged headstones-"

"Are there any rocks around us right now?" Frank asks

Ian gazes across the ground. "There are some small pebble-sized ones, yeah."

"What do they look like, close up? All the details?"

Ian bends over to grab the small rocks surrounding them, and brings them up to his face. "Um, they just sort of look like rocks, I guess, I don't really know how to explain it.

"No, but what makes them look like rocks-"

"They're kinda round, but also not, it's like they are circular but every smooth edge spikes outward to create an imperfect sphere, and the color is kinda like- earth. Actually, this rock is kind of cool."

"Why is it cool?" Frank asks.

"I don't know, I kinda like the shape, it's also pretty transparent- like you can just about see through it."

"How would you describe seeing through something? I guess I never really understood that either."

Ian, trying his best to elaborate, tries to explain many other colors and sensations, using items and textures for comparison. This goes on and on with each minute having to describe the obscure depths

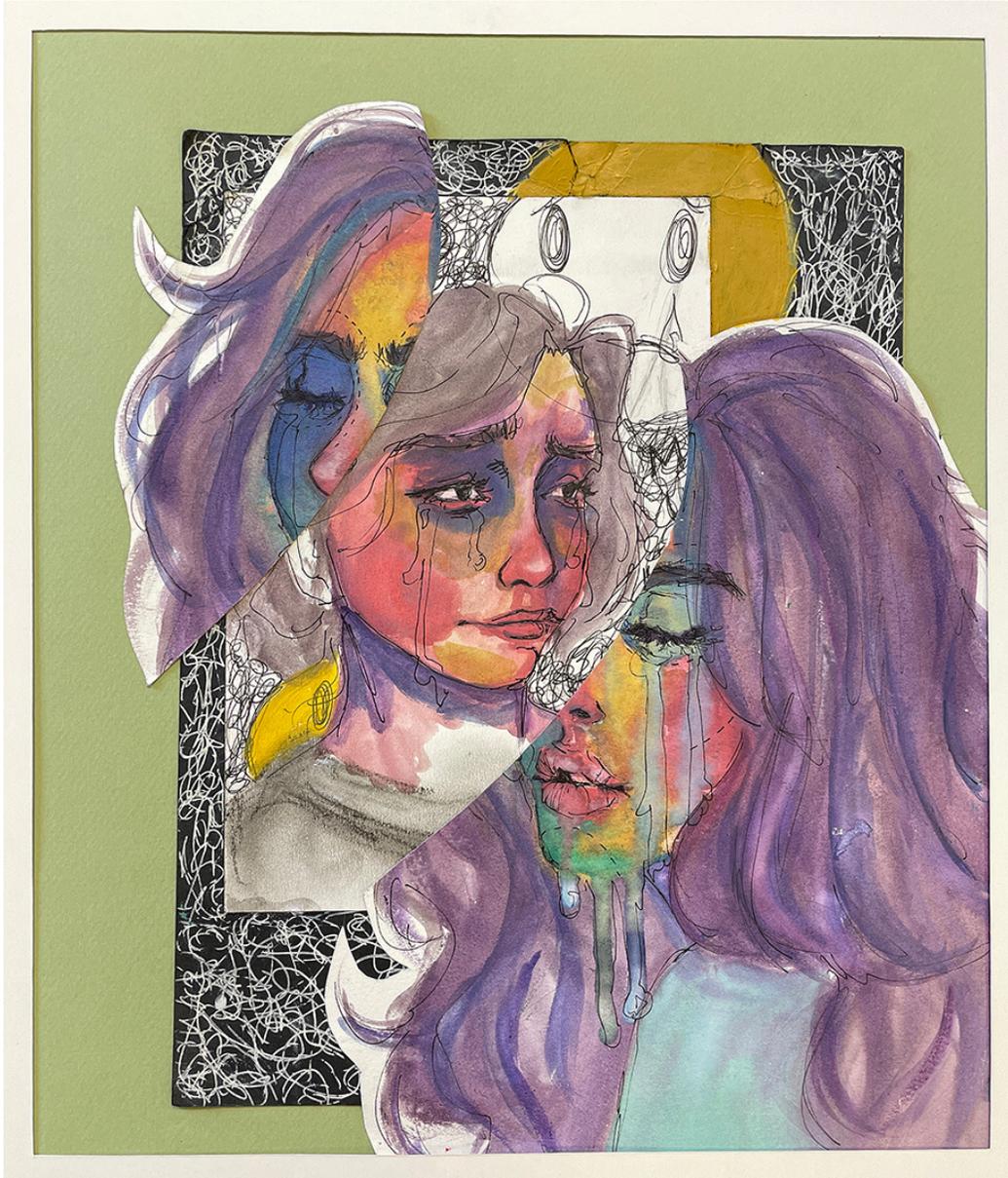
of visual reality. Eventually, Ian reaches a point where he can't think of any more words to explain any further. Each of these times, Ian finds himself experiencing a strange feeling, realizing how absurd and beautiful everything truly is, how complex it is to describe anything fully and to see and hear anything fully. He repeatedly gets lost in these thoughts, and almost loses track of what he's thinking of before Frank would pick up on this and move on to something else. The two spend roughly an hour and a half doing this together.

Somewhat suddenly, Frank says, "Well, I should let you get back to your walk. That was very kind of you. Thanks for doing that."

Ian suddenly snapped back, dazed and detached from his regular self. "Yeah- uh no problem. I hope that helped a bit." Ian paused for a moment before getting up. "So, were you able to just form pictures of all that in your head?"

"Yeah, you could say that," Frank said with a smile.

The two exchange more friendly words back and forth for a couple of minutes, then the two say a sincere, grateful goodbye with mutual appreciation. Ian goes his separate way and makes it home.



Beauty Is Pain by Justice Moore

Dahlia
by Jaelyn Ousley

17 Nov

Dear diary,

I saw her again today.

I was sitting criss-cross on my cold kitchen floor, surrounded by various sizes of cardboard boxes. Each one had a different label written over its packing tape—silverware, bowls, plates, decorations. There was one out of place, labeled “photos.” I could have sworn that I had sent it to the storage unit, but instead it sat next to the other overstuffed boxes.

I really don’t know what possessed me to open it. Desperation, sadness, nostalgia. But there it was, that hauntingly beautiful photo, sitting perfectly on top of the other frames.

Her sun-kissed body faced the ocean, feet buried in the sand, head angled to smile at the camera. She wore her favorite outfit—a pearl white, sunflower-patterned dress that came just above her knees. It was during one of our many visits to Rehoboth Beach, a city maybe fifty minutes out from our neighborhood. We spent hours walking down its boardwalk, bantering over which restaurant or shop we thought was better. During the summer we’d attend its free concerts.

Beautiful as the photo was, I trembled as I held it. Seeing her eyes, her lips, and her face, made the room spin.

I’m not looking at that picture again.

-h

19 Nov

Dear diary,

Yesterday I threw the box into the back of my truck and drove over to the storage unit. But I still saw her. Just not in the photo.

Sobbing, her shrill cries echoed in my empty apartment. She looked exactly like she had in the picture, just not smiling. She wore the same sunflower dress, her dark, wind tasseled hair touching her shoulders.

I couldn’t help but sprint towards her, hoping I could hold her. But just before I could touch her, she’s gone.

My hands still haven’t stopped shaking and I can’t wrap my head around what happened. She had followed me. But how? And because of her, I can’t find the energy—or courage to unpack anything else. Not a single room is unpacked. I’m starting to think that I’ll be trapped in these boxes forever.

-h

20 Nov

Dear diary,

It's nearly two in the morning and she won't let me sleep. Now she speaks in between her sobs, repeating my name. "Hollie," I hear her cry, "Why did you let me go?" "Why weren't you there?" Those are the questions that keep me awake tonight. Questions that I don't have answers to, because that car accident was never my fault. Apparently to her, it was.

Listening to her wailing for hours almost makes me believe her. Maybe I could have stayed an extra few days, hours even. Maybe this is how it's meant to be.

Dahlia, do you forgive me?

Lullaby for Genevieve

By Morgan Kruse

You and I lie underneath the bedroom lights
The yellow light softly bringing
A youthful glow to such a soft soul
To everyone else, you are Genevieve
But to me, you are my shooting star.

You dream of unicorns and tea parties
But I dream of you, in a cap in gown
Before you leave the nest
On your own expeditions and future.

Oh Genevieve,
How little I wish you would stay.
Perhaps it's out of love
Or of selfishness
But while you'll insist you're independent
You'll always be my baby.

I'll always be the loud mother in the field stands
And I'll always be there to bandage your wounds
But one day you'll learn how to cook my own meals
And to drive yourself to school and work
Then what will I do?

For now, however,
You are still a blossoming flower,
A bird yet to fly
And I Genevieve,
Wish you goodnight.



Sea by Sherry Griffith

Potential is a Race
by Taylor Schang

I started racing as a child.
Though never physically gifted,
I breezed past peers in success.
My mother showed relatives the trophies:
impressive report cards, charming projects,
and I ran harder.
I looked peers in the eyes as I passed them
and turned my head away.
Ashamed of, but thankful for,
the refreshing drink that was pride.

My schedule opened up
and class selection had more variety.
Mentors solicited harder academics,
so I started swimming as a teen.
I had so much promise!
The foot race trained endurance.
And though the running conditioned my lungs,
I was not prepared for drowning.
The water encased me,
it filled my nose, burned my throat,
but with their eyes on me it tasted sweet.
I kicked off.
Eventually learned to struggle
once they weren't looking.

After time the mentors lost interest,
I stopped being impressive.
Instead of water
they threw me into hurdles.
I laced my shoes.
Barely got the salty sting out of my eyes
before hitting the ground running.
The closer i got, the taller they were,
I realized my speed wasn't adequate enough.

I fell flat on my face.
Enchanted by the sneakers passing me,
I forgot to get back up.
For a little I just stared,
Wondered how many leaps those shoes had taken.
How many more they had left before being retired.
Finally earning the right
to just casually walk.



Pick Your Brain by Sherry Griffith

For the Dearly Departed
Brook Day

Will we still be friends?

After the summer is over and after you moved
Away to the beat uptown in Illinois
After our mothers finished their daily chats
And there's no more reason for me to be at your house
After our fathers drift apart deployed and disconnected
After I told you that I wanted to keep in contact
After I tried, I swear that I did try, to reach out to you
With no response

Will we still be friends?

After that one thing, I said got spread around and twisted
Until my own words were unrecognizable
After our mutual friend went up and left
And there was no more glue for us to bond
After you tell me I can't help you anymore and
I sound like a broken record trying
After I beg everyone I knew you knew to get your contact information
Just to say sorry
Just for no response

Will we still be friends?

After you got invited to that college in town and I didn't
After you got that new partner and they said I was no good for you
After that fight leaving bruised and broken-hearted
After the long strings of apologies I sent for something I never caused
Just because I wanted to hold onto something that wasn't there
After I promise to go out and see you again
To make up for lost time
Only to never show up and leave you waiting

Will we still be friends?

After I ask you what you wanted in life
After I told you to follow me out and leave this all behind
After I said I don't know how to feel
After I tell you my history



Assimilating by Victoria Sprencel

After I make a mess and embarrass you
After I blow up and explode at you
After I want you to stay, but you just can't do it anymore

Will we still be friends?



Seen by Kaydence Gonzales

Do You Remember Me?

By Morgan Kruse

The curtains on the window floated along with the warm summer night air that blew through the window. Next to the window rested a frail and skeletal woman and a man in his late 30s. After going over to shut the window, he walked over to a chair that was placed next to the bed that the elderly lady was laying on, along with a wheelchair that stayed by the bedside, and settled down into the cushioned seat. Reaching for the woman's palm, he gently took hold of her bony hands.

"Were you the one who left the window open?" The man asked as he held the woman's hand

"I don't remember. Was the window even open?"

"Yes. I just shut the window. The room felt pretty warm so it must have been open for a while."

"Well, it must have been me then. I think Sadie was getting pretty hot so I told her I guess I opened the window." The elder chuckled for a bit before quietly settling down.

The man let out an exhausted sigh and turned towards the woman, "Sadie's dead." A look of horror and shock swept across the frail woman's face, and used whatever strength she had to cover her hand over her mouth, "What do you mean she's dead? She was right there on that bed next to you!"

"She's been dead for over twenty years. She died in a car accident in 1998." The man replied. He paused for a moment before speaking again. "Are you sure that one of the nurses didn't open the window?"

"What nurses?" She asked, confused.

The man brushed off her confusion, "Nevermind, I'll figure it out later. It's not that important." The man shuffled in his seat and reached for something in his pocket. Pulling out a small photograph. "Lily wanted to show you what her and Paw-Paw did a few days ago."

"Lily?"

"Yes." The man reached over to show the photograph to the elderly woman. It pictured a little girl, aged around seven holding a stuffed dolphin with a grandfatherly man hugging her and smiling. Behind them were fish that swam around in tanks built-in around the aquarium walls. "Paw-Paw took Lily to that one aquarium in San Francisco. The Steinhart Aquarium I think?"

The lady stared at the photograph for a bit and turned her head towards the man, "That little girl is adorable with her little dolphin."

"That's your granddaughter. The man on the left is your husband." He mumbled.

"Really? I didn't know I had a husband! What was his name again?"

"Bennie. His name is Bennie. And the girl on the right is Lily."

"Well, I never see them visit me. Makes me awfully sad if I say so myself." The elderly woman said disappointedly.

"They came to visit you right before they left this Monday."

"Oh."



Drown by Jasmine Rodriguez

The man placed the photograph onto the desk close by him and turned back towards the elderly lady. “Don’t you remember when you, me, and Paw-Paw used to go out and look at all the animals at the zoo back in when we lived in Denver? The elephants were my favorite. You used to tell me about how when I turned ten years old you would go get me an elephant to keep as a pet.” The man smiled and looked into the woman's eyes and grasped her hand again.

“I’m sorry. I don’t remember at all.” She paused for a moment again.

“What are you here for?” She asked.

“For you, mama. I came to visit with you.” He said softly.

“I’m your mama?”

The man stared at his mother and took a sharp breath. He held his mother’s hands tight and nodded, “You are. Don’t you remember me?”

She stared at the man’s eyes for a moment and after a moment of contemplation let out a few raspy breaths, and spoke, “What’s your name again?”

“It’s-”

Suddenly, a young woman, dressed in purple scrubs entered the small room.

“I’m sorry Mr. Smith, but I’m afraid we’re going to have to ask you to leave. The nursing home’s visiting hours ended over ten minutes ago.”

“Can’t I have just five more minutes?” He replied defeatedly.

“I’m sorry but it’s policy Mr. Smith.” said the nurse.

Mr. Smith looked toward his mother and reluctantly stood up. After standing up, he gently laid the woman’s hand back down onto the bed and began to walk out the door.”

“Bye-bye, Mama, see you tomorrow.” He quietly spoke.

He walked out the door, hoping for a response, but nothing came.



Derealization by Kayden Portillo

Death and After Thoughts

By. Chasady Dodson

I wasn't close to my Great Grandfather.
Being too young I didn't have many memories of him.
I recall going over to his house so my mother could clean,
and eating honey buns while playing with a 3 in 1 checker set.
Or watching a show on his ancient box television,
with the little knobs and sorts to change the channel.

Me and my mother would go with him to his late wife's grave.
A woman who was dead before I was born.
We picked up fake flowers at a sketchy Dollar General once,
I can still hear his voice saying "She'll like these."
In his old, quiet, worn-out voice.
Now, he lays to the right of her,
and there he shall stay.

I remember the day he died,
we rushed to his nursing home.
I was too scared to see his body,
so me and a few family members waited on the porch.
I didn't have any feelings,
no tears were shed by me.
However, I did see his lifeless body covered by a crisp white sheet.
He was then lifted up into a hearse.

This was only my first or second time having death so close to me.
I had only ever been to funerals of people I didn't know.
I was certainly shaken,
but not with grief.
But with the fact that a lifeless body lay so close to me.
The chilling fear and overwhelming surroundings took over me.
I wasn't feeling my emotions,
I was feeling everyone else's around me.

They don't teach death in school.
We learn dates of important people who died,
but that's about it.

We are not taught how to cope,
how to feel,
and certainly not how to move on.



Hide by Aliyah Mendoza