

In The Ords

Literary Arts Journal at CSUMB



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In The Ords

Literary Arts Journal
at CSUMB

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Credits

Editors-in-Chief: Alanah Hunsdorfer, Ryan Anderson, Eric Ramos, Parker Jones

Team: Sierra Fishman, Zitlalli Macias, Sophia Moreno, Denisse Emeterio, Elijah Ramos, Jose Lopez, Kyra Heath, Jenises Gonzalez

Cover Design: “Lavender Valley” - Liberty Sordia

For more information regarding *In The Ords*, please visit our website at: intheords.weebly.com

California State University, Monterey Bay
100 Campus Center
Seaside, CA 93955

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IN THE ORDS PRESENTS...

The Music of You

What makes your **soul dance**?
What sounds make your ears **perk up**?
What makes the **past** feel like a **friend**?

You told us the **ordinary** occurrences
in your life that make **time stop**.

Together, we found the beauty in the mundane.

if life is a song

ELIZABETH WILES

Life is a song.

Some songs are more upbeat than others.

*As much I have hurt, as I look around the world
and through this life,*

I am lucky...

the expression of bittersweetness
that I can hear in these notes
evident of a bleakness
and hardships I haven't known

we are all trapped in prisons
and we drag our chains on the ground
but not all ankles clang in crimson
adding bloody hues to the sound

that echoes in my head
though my chains are not as long
so restricting, this metal thread
that's been sewn into this song.

Inside

SIERRA FISHMAN

His bedroom sits quietly in the back corner of the house. It waits for Him while he learns algebra and runs around the track, trying to beat his best time for the Monday mile. It looks devoid of life, no child screaming and playing on its padded floors, but the room breathes and sighs, content to protect the treasures within its belly while it waits.

His crayons lie on the floor, artfully arranged in little groups, forming alien symbols in a language of his own. The crayons speak amongst themselves in a way foreign to every other item in the room, secluded in their own world of an ever-evolving alien tongue as they are laid out over and over again in new patterns. His toy soldiers stand guard, organized from shortest to tallest, analyzed carefully over several days to ensure they are lined up perfectly. The little toys do not falter in their duty to protect the room from invaders; their eyes do not blink as they stare ahead, resolute and steadfast.

He has a small horde of fidget toys piled up in one corner and a few more peeking out from under piles of dirty laundry and stacks of half-finished homework. A solitary fidget peeks out from the pocket of a discarded jacket, a deep purple with swirls of blue and iridescent glitter that looks like a magic spell being cast when it hits the light exactly right. It's composed of a single row of bubbles connected to form a circle around a little wrist. It's his favorite one, but he hasn't been able to find it in weeks, hidden as it is in plain sight in the middle of the room. The bracelet, so used to popping up and down each day, feels like it has gone deaf, rendered mute with no bubbles to issue loud snapping sounds-*pp-prrrrrp-pp*.

Shoes hide behind the cracked closet door, peeking out at the chaos that lies beyond the sliver of light. Behind the mismatched shoes there are snack wrappers. All the best snacks see their final moments in the back of that closet. Gansito, Goldfish, Teddy Grahams, fruit snacks. The back of the closet is a shrine to their splendor, a strip of carpet paved in their remains and pieces of torn wrappers scattered about like flower petals guiding a bride down the aisle. Their graveyard grows bigger each day as new snacks sacrifice themselves for the benefit of their boy. His socks (the ones he can never find) are folded lovingly and tucked away in the sock bin by the closet door. Many of them have forgotten what the sun feels like in their fibers, sequestered away until they are thrown out for being too small for a growing foot.

Beaten up stuffed animals and handmade robots adorn cubbies on a shelf. An old Scout doll sits at the top, staring down at the world inside the room, but no longer able to interact with it, his batteries long-dead, his green fur faded and spotted with marker stains and cheese dust that has never really come out, despite washing. The toy is Scout the Second, because when the first one ran out of steam and could barely talk anymore, he had cried and become inconsolable, insisting Scout was going to die like his grandpa had.

Scout's voice comes out in a shallow rasp, a little electric squeal accompanies its singing. It talks slower and no longer sings throughout the night. He cries. Scout is his best friend—his. best. friend. Scout can't die. It can't die. Grandpa gave Scout to Him as a present when he was just a baby. He insists he can remember it—the moment Grandpa met Him and gave Him the musical green dog—but mama thinks it's impossible. Mom takes Scout away to the doctor for a good scrubbing “and to replace the batteries,” mama tells Him, “It will come back looking brand new.” And it does. The doll comes back cleaner than he's ever seen it. The voice

box is crisp and clear, but the doctor seems to have given Scout amnesia, because the toy is asking Him for his name, as if they haven't played together every day for forever.

Scout the Second knows it is a great honor to serve as friend and mentor to Him. The doll would still be talking to Him even now if only it could let Him know that the batteries needed changing.

His carpet has a perfect circle worn into the fibers. A result of hours upon hours of pacing around the rug that was supposed to be his calm-down area. It really works much better as a guideline for setting up the curtain walls for his Lego castle. The castle started as a little square, with just six mismatched Legos making up the bailey. Now it threatens to spill over the edge of the rug, the inner curtain moving ever closer to the outer walls. The newest drum tower had taken two days to plan out and fit into the existing outer curtain. The next big project is adding battlements to the watchtowers. The poor plastic archers sit woefully unprotected at their posts, constantly fearful of the enemy battalions they spot across the field of cream-colored carpet, beyond the copse of cardboard toilet paper roll trees and the towers of empty pringles cans.

The far wall of his room is pristine. No trash or toys can be spotted on the floor, no loose papers or discarded craft supplies. The wall has only a small keyboard on a metal stand with an accompanying piano bench and a pair of blue studio headphones hanging from a bracket on the wall. A rickety music stand is built into the keyboard, not much more than a few strips of flat metal attached to thin rods spaced barely far enough apart to accommodate a music sheet, let alone a full music book or script. One of the bars is bent, the result of his trombone crashing down onto the stand after a particularly difficult day of school. Despite that, a music book is perched on the stand, carefully balanced and the edges clipped back to keep the page displayed. The opening lines of Bopeebo from Friday Night Funkin' are carefully transposed in green colored pencil onto the page on display. The last line is unfinished, with remnants of erased notes lingering behind. The piano stand displays it proudly, glistening with a joy that can usually only be found under the wrapping of a gift, or within a baby's smile. Under the piano lies a trombone in its protective case with the name of his school imprinted on the handle.

Piano notes float through the air, almost tangible and scented like lilacs. The discarded piano box sits discarded in the corner of the otherwise tidy room, a jumbled mess of cut packing tape, stripped banding, and torn cardboard. The keyboard is sitting on the floor, his little hands too impatient to wait for the piano stand to be assembled. His hands fly across the keys, playing a cacophony of half-remembered chords and mismatched note progressions. He hasn't had access to a piano for two years, not since his grandpa died and his grandma sold the piano that used to boast ivory keys dancing to Sinatra and Baby Shark, but left behind ghost notes that only whisper Sweet Baby James. He is eager to send his joy loudly through the neighborhood, flitting through the wind. He plays Sweet Baby James—as much as he can remember—and plays Grandpa James his last bittersweet farewell letter.

The door slams open, a flurry of dust motes escaping from the stagnant room, and a backpack hits the ground with a soft squelch—probably from the apple softening in the bottom. Two dirt-encrusted shoes hit the carpet and scatter bits of dust and playground chalk into the recesses of its fibers. They issue a muffled grunt of exhaustion as they drop to the soft ground below, the activity of the day fading into tomorrow's memories. Laughter awakens the room, and it explodes into sound and light, and the room welcomes Him home.

When the earth breathes

PARKER JONES

There are moments when the earth seems to breathe.

Wind through leaves, the rustling song that starts as if silence never existed and stops as if it was just a dream.

Waves on the shore, a crash and then a pull, dragging sand and shells and seaweed back, a blink and it takes away the image from your eyes. Countless times I saw the perfect stone, only for it to be lost in the sparkle of upturned pyrite.

A geyser is a gasp, an elephant's spray. My first time in Wyoming I watched and watched to see the water spout. I was told it was so hot it could burn my skin off and yet I still wanted to run to it, to be lifted up like a kid in a cartoon.

A waterfall is a scream, or maybe a yell. Loud and constant. Demanding. Telling. Not scared. Commanding: to be heard. My grandmother lived to see the fire falls when they'd push a flaming redwood off the side. The earth wasn't always on fire, I guess.

A storm is gulping for air, red faced tear-strewn, swollen waterline. Tornado inhale, hurricane gasp, eye of the storm. I'd never seen anything like it, except maybe my face in the floor length mirror, ripping my clothes off (they push the air out of my lungs) and becoming a writhing banshee with blotchy cheeks.

I can almost feel the rise and fall on a spring day. Nothing as dramatic as an earthquake. A tutorial on calm, docile clouds and green hills and the smell of the daffodils. Never a river, always a stream with not-too-smooth pebbles that won't bruise the soles of your feet.

The build up to downpour is the rapids in winter, sweep you off your feet and drag you under if you're not careful. I've always been a strong swimmer but I start to falter. Am I about to die? A river in winter is constant, loud, anger. Maybe a touch of fear. In summer, she'll go to your calves and be too warm for 100 degrees, even in the canyon in the evening when the sun is only an orange glow on the tops of the mountains.

I'll call the mist descending and a midnight sprinkle the earth at rest, deep sleep, dreaming of morning dew. Dreaming of birds chirping and ladybugs crawling. Dreaming of daylight and deep breaths. Not the eye of the storm, not a promise of perpetual quiet. A moment of peace.

June

ZITLALLI MACIAS

I have nothing to barter—
A well with no water.

Only my empty hands,
dripping with crimson,
grasping at roses that fade to dust
at my touch
with no love to help them grow.

Only the stubborn stone
I'm inching up the hill.
I'd blister my feet to reach
the peak where you stand—
blinded by your sunlit face.

Before the stone rolls down for the last time,
I close my eyes and leap through time to watch
frames of refracted light and rose colored lenses,
preserving your bitter sweetness.

I'll turn around and let the stone go—
I'll hold my own scarred hand
through the warmth of June.

Red Dress

SOPHIA MORENO

I'm nine, and have a new dress.
A deep burgundy red, soft velvet top
With roses embroidered on the skirt
Tulle underneath that made it poof out like a princess's.
I felt like a princess,
Wearing it for the Christmas Eve service,
Everyone in their nice clothes-
And me in my beautiful red dress,
With sparkly gold tights and shiny gold flats.

I'm ten, and wearing my red dress for my first piano recital.
I still have that picture framed at home.
I played Beethoven and had
Gold and red ribbons in my hair.
I was so nervous about that recital,
I thought I'd play better if I felt like a princess,
So I wore that beautiful red dress.

I'm eleven, and it's Christmas Eve again,
Time to wear my beautiful red dress,
It's been hanging in my closet all year,
Waiting for me to twirl around the Christmas tree,
Decorated with gold ornaments and cinnamon pine cones,
I'd have danced more if I knew it'd be the last time.

I'm twelve, and I'm too big for my beautiful red dress,
It's too tight around the arms and the zipper won't zip.
But I begged my mom to let me keep it anyways.
I store it in the back of my closet,
Safe with my baby dresses and winter coats,
It's too pretty to give away.
And I don't want to let it go.

I'm fifteen, and my dress moves homes when I do,
From childhood closet, to apartment, to our new home,
Each time I pack my beautiful red dress carefully in its bag,
It smells like cinnamon and Christmas lights,
There's still some gold glitter stuck to the tulle.
It feels like a promise that the little girl is still
With me somehow, keeping the memories alive.

I'm eighteen, looking through my old pictures,
Reminiscing about the childhood I'm leaving behind
Winters spent posing in front of Christmas trees
And pianos in a beautiful red dress,
With that happy go lucky smile.
I might have lost the smile somewhere along the way,
But I still hold onto that little red dress,
Safe with the rest of my childhood hopes and dreams.

I'm twenty, and opening Christmas cards with my Mom.
One card shows my little cousin in a familiar red dress,
My mom tells me, oh how pretty she looks!
I gave it to her last summer while you were away.
It stings to let go of my beautiful red dress,
It helps knowing it'll have a new life,
New Christmas memories with a little girl,
Who twirls in the picture like a princess.

To my beautiful red dress,
Thank you for making me feel brave,
Thank you for moving with me from house to house,
Keeping Christmas and my childhood alive.
I'll always hold onto these memories,
While my cousin wears her new red dress.

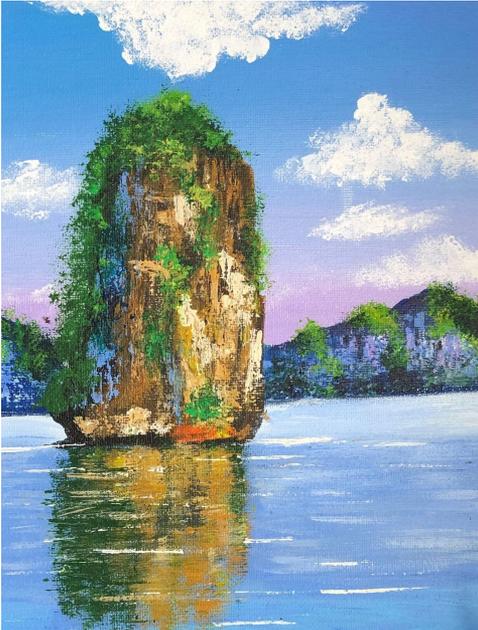
Sunflower Field

LIBERTY SORDIA



Thailand

LIBERTY SORDIA



Somber

SAM CHEVEZ MOSCOSO

Lights of the night shine above me,

tranquil and quiet

Projecting shadows that I could count on my fingers,

recognizable yet unidentifiable

They linger and dance in bliss,

knowing they are forgotten

Moving with the rhythm of my despair,

seeking to teach

But I am too stubborn to learn,

submitting myself to a paradigm of delusions

Dreaming for better while asking for failure,

yearning for an excuse to cease

Lilac

GRAY ANDERSON

I am not a morning person. I need a solid two hours to comfortably get out of bed on weekends, and I love nothing more than the witching hour, being awake and alive when the world is at rest. The stars are a canvas, the darkness is a comfort, and the moon is my friend. I rarely give myself the opportunity to watch the sunrise and I am firm in my opinion that any sunset is not only equal, but better to any given dawn. That being said.

It is morning. The sky is light, but soft with the sun lying still behind the horizon. Lilac. That is the word that comes to mind as I drive down the open road, up and down the hills I've known all my life. I have seen the same view every day for years but today it is a color I have never seen before. Lilac, framed by dark green trees. Years later, I can see that sky. The moment is frozen in my mind like a single preserved snowflake.

Beautiful,
sacred,
irreplaceable.

I am twenty-one years old, and I have lived more in the last few years than I ever thought I could. But I pick up an old pocket-sized notebook labeled 'good memories' and I see lilac sky, dark green trees, written in a quick, shaky hand, as if the words will mean less if I wait until the feeling passes, and I am sixteen again, driving down an oh-so-familiar road, half-awake but in a good way, and I am filled with simple awe because I am rediscovering what it means to be happy. To see the world as something beautiful.

The Wisdom of the Redwoods

HEATHER WIESHLOW

Ancient guardians of the forest stand with me
Great keepers of all nature's wrath and history
Reaching toward the sky with welcome dignity
Rings of truth beholden with intricate mystery

The silence of their wisdom sounds strong and clear
Walking among these gentle giants, worries cease
Their strength and majesty greet one without fear
Sharing the comfort of solitude and inner peace

Warm sunshine rays dance off tangled branches
Gnarled roots burrow deep into the mossy floor
Years of memories offer insight to circumstances
Remembering wind's whispers naught to ignore

Resisting the fires that scorch black the native land
Death caused only by the ignorance of man's hand



out of reach

ALANAH HUNSDORFER

I can't help but see you in summer
hidden in the sunshine
peeking through leaves of trees
In the taste of the apricots
hanging in my backyard
the ones hidden at the top
the ones waiting to be picked

Or in the smell of the sunscreen on my skin
I remember putting it on last week
and wondering why I found you there
What a silly place to hide

and yet I keep searching
Looking for you in the flowers outside of my house
pretty in a way that's overlooked
pretty in a way that's almost unexpected
taking you by surprise each time

I see you in old photographs
a glimpse of you in a smile
a hint of you in a pair of eyes

I can't escape you even in my dreams
You'd think that's where I'd truly get to have you
but still I'm on the outside looking in
watching the show but never being in it

Sometimes I think that's exactly where I want you

Close enough to touch
but just out of reach

Marmalade

PARKER JONES

We made marmalade on a summer day.
Orange zest under my nails
I'll never get the smell out of my nose;

Tangy sharpness of citrus.

The jam is hot
Burns your tongue when you sneak a taste from the old wooden spoon.
You salivate from the sour bite,
grin at the subtle sweetness.

"Here. Have some."
I laugh as you try to bring it to my lips.
Citrus kisses
Open mouths
Sugar on my tongue.

We put the jam in mason jars. We're sloppy and it smears on the rims. A mess as we
seal the jars
in a rolling boil.
Kiss me sticky kiss me until we can
stuff our faces with fresh baked bread and
marmalade.

This poem is only ten lines

STONE MCDONALD

10 lines ten lines.

One line

two line.

They eventually add up

to ten lines. *You're already halfway there.*

Short lines

long lines (this indicates that this line is long ... like *really* long)

find themselves adding up

ten times

into ten lines.

Actually, here's one more line (pretend you didn't see this

oops

too late).

mis lágrimas se secan solos

SAM CHEVEZ MOSCOSO

“mis lágrimas se secan solos”

Empty words laced with deceit,

you lied and said **you** appreciated me,

Warm touches gone cold,

your embrace fueled purely by sexual drive,

Lust that left bruises,

pain **you** claimed *I* desired,

I was **your** thing to use,

then became **your** disappointment

I was disposed of,

**But *I'm* a moth
I will soar and glide,**

looking to the moon for protection

(cry my dear, your tears are quartz but keep thine gems in thy possession)

And the stars for guidance,

(weakness is temporary, shine is eternal)

Elegance is my own

Strutting on concrete, serving on a catwalk,

And you play no significant role in it.

I care not for **your** frivolous presence

Because *I* will always be **m o r e**

If you must, aim for the brain

ALANAH HUNSDORFER

I remember the day we met
how it felt when I reached for your hand

Do people shake hands anymore?
Was it weird that I reached for yours?
Is it weird that I remember it feeling warm?

Like those mornings I wake up before dawn
from a night of tossing and turning
and bed sheets tangling
and nightmares strangling

Horrible nights leading to peaceful mornings
where I watch as the light slowly touches the corners of my room

Is it weird that's how I remember our first greeting?
the light touching the corners I keep hidden

I wonder what you thought of me
in that moment
I wonder if you thought my smile was too bright
my laugh too loud
my voice too shrill

Will you hate me like my brain does?

Your eyes seemed to indicate that you wouldn't
Maybe it would be easier if you would

Keep me at arms length
like I will inevitably do to you

Will you be annoyed if I don't respond?
Can we ignore each other together?

The guilt eats me alive sometimes
Pecks at my insides until I'm sick

But I still want so badly to fit into your picture
a piece of your puzzle
I'd settle for one tucked away on the side
only if you'll have me

Is it weird that I hope you say no?
Is it weird that I'll be sad if you do?

Did I overthink your smile that day?

how it felt when our hands touched
Like a song you don't like but listen to anyway
Because the bridge brings back memories
the ghosts of what could have been
haunting the hair on the back of your neck

I wonder if you felt it too
I wonder if you remember it like I do

stage 4

ELIZABETH WILES

I'll take it slowly
write by hand
because I can't let
myself forget you.

As far back as I
can *remember*
presents you made for me
wooden gold

cornice on the window
dinosaur bank
rolling cars
whistles
ligers
trains
a desk with plastic
so I could slip pictures in...

I try to stop *remembering*
because I don't have those things
I have half
and nothing left where I came from.

I am only grief
because I love you
as I always have—
I still see you in your garage.

I'll *remember* you there
because I've already lost you
and I couldn't bear to do it
again.

The End is Here

IRENE CRUZ

evermore.

The willow tree is surrounded by budding poppies and persevering weeds. It embodies the name weeping willow, with the naked branches and cracked bark signaling its decaying condition. Nene lays on the trunk while tugging on the few withering leaves that remain.

Nene watched as the tips of Felix and Slefonaaur's tails wavered in the uncut grass, how they waited patiently to pounce on their next unassuming victim. It would have been George had he not been preoccupied with the woolly bear caterpillars that began invading the tool shed in May. She stared a bit longer until she spotted Mark working on his compost pile. Mark: father, avid hiker, green thumb, honest.

"I want long nails."

"You won't have them if you keep biting them."

"I don't like long nails because they feel weird. Still want them."

It had been an ongoing discussion for the past two months. Nene saw a woman with french tip nails and was fascinated by how clean they looked. If someone with long nails got an itch they had something to scratch themselves with *and* they could paint them. This logic was more than enough for the six-year-old to become fixated on having long nails. But nail growth and sensory issues were incompatible, and no one wanted to witness tantrums that were avoidable to begin with.

Nene plopped herself off of the tree and headed straight to Mark. "I want long nails."

"You keep biting them. They will only grow if you stop." Mark stuck his shovel into the dirt. "You want to know how you'll get them to grow faster?" He crossed his arms to form an X on his chest and clenched his fists. "You say Wolverine when you do this pose."

George had recently become a fan of the X-Men and of course, being the youngest, Nene felt the need to copy everything her older brother liked. *WWE*. Her favorite wrestler was Triple H. The *Legend of Zelda*. Forget the storyline, her version of playing Wind Waker was gathering rupees and chasing the pigs that resided on the island. Mark eventually caught on to this pattern, and he noticed that recently Nene had fallen head over heels for Hugh Jackman's Wolverine.

"Wolverine."

Wolverine. Wolverine. They're growing, I think.

life review.

There is this theory—for lack of a better word—that when you die your life flashes before your eyes. Every memory plays out before you in some sort of cinematic compilation and then it's over, you're dead.

If it turns out to be true, I hope my life review is entertaining. I am not afraid of what I will see, but there are a few things that haunt me because of how embarrassing they are and I hope they don't make the cut (*I believe that doing things that make you wince in hindsight is just part of being thirteen*). I am looking forward to reliving the time my father taught me to do the Wolverine pose to get me to stop biting my nails; the time my mother walked through a storm with me because I begged for thumbprint cookies from a local bakery when I was 6; the time my brother scraped dog shit off of the bottom of my brand new Uggs with a twig because he knew I was absolutely devastated that I stepped in it twice (*of course I cried and he laughed, but*

without a second thought he sat me down at this bench and started cleaning them); and the time my best friend and I watched a movie and I threw up from laughing too hard, and only laughed harder after that (*I'm not proud of it, but it sure makes her hysterical when she brings it up and that's enough for me to not want to erase it completely*). There are also other memories I want to see one last time. The boring, routine stuff. Like how my parents and I would dance to *Twist And Shout* by The Beatles (*trust me, this was an everyday occurrence*), how my father would let me ride on the orange Costco cart every Saturday when we would go, and the way my mother and I would bicker when she woke me up for school, from preschool up until high school on the days my alarm failed me.

These are all moments that make the past worth reminiscing for me. Moments that made me feel loved and happy. That's what makes the past so comforting too, that it is filled with ridiculous, repetitive, and mortifying moments that I would not give up for anything. Memories like these that make me look forward to waking up another day just to make more.

Ode to Dizzy Miss Lizzy

RYAN ANDERSON

in Strawberry Fields
nothing is real,
but Yesterday
love was such an easy
game to play.
love was all around
but I never heard it singing
no, I never heard it at all
Till There Was You.

we all live
in a Yellow Submarine,
in an Octopus's Garden
under the sea,
but of all these friends
and lovers
there is no one
who compares with you.
didn't anybody tell her
didn't anybody see,
Something in the way she moves,
Eight Days a Week.
I Want To Hold Your Hand,
I'll always be true,
so Please Please Me,
and Love Me Do.

Here Comes the Sun,
the sky is blue
it's beautiful
and so are you.
You're gonna be a star
baby you can Drive My Car,
Here, There, and Everywhere,
even Back in the USSR.

Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da
life goes on
evermore,
but I'll still need you
and I'll still feed you
now that you're
twenty-four.

love you forever and forever
love you with all my heart

love you whenever we're together
love you when we're apart,
I love you I love you I love you
that's all I want to say.

Another Silly Poem

STONE MCDONALD

To write a silly poem is to say,
“How goofy! How absurd.
Thank god no one will see this but me!”

Said as the common scholar
and everyday critic
read carefully
that which is
the work of a lazy...

Guess they'll just have to whisper to themselves,
Meh.
It ain't even close
to the works
of Fyodor Dostoyevsky.
And that's fine by me
I bet you had trouble pronouncing those words
correctly
I know I did
(!).

Where the cheese can be turned up by two notches.
Ending on rhymes that can be read like watches.
Never strict on meters and what their cause is.
Just to be caught staring at people's toes.

Not in the way you think
'cause if you stare for too long
they'll start to stink.

Just like this poem.
Hotcha! (Don't read this part out loud)

People watching on the beach

PARKER JONES

A French couple with a young husky digging in the sand.

Two women on their lunch break,
An old man and his grandkids,

4th through 6th grade campers; they love the beach and their parents love the quiet.
The boys next to me have little lisps from their missing teeth.

A man running with his pit bull, tells him to stop every once and a while so his
daughters can catch up.

A kid with blue hair and a bucket bringing water to the shore.

A man throws a ball in the water for his lab. The water is cold, but she runs so fast.

Designer dogs and mutts and rescues.

The campers wear blue swim shirts.

My sister looks for sea glass.

A family and an umbrella.

A boy tells his grandad, « Look! That dog looks like Charlie! » His little brother walks
with his grandma.

I saw a sea lion a yard away. It winked, then disappeared before I could shake my
mother awake on the sand beside me.

The fog rolls in but the sun's still bright and warm.
Powdered sugar sand.
Rocks and shells.

The Beauty of the Game

RYAN ANDERSON

When tip-off arrives, descry more than ninety-four feet of hardwood floor reflecting the bright lights above. Pay attention or you'll miss it. Curtail screeches coming from the picking up and stomping down of squeaking sneakers saturated with a multitude of neon colors. Aimless chatter on and off the court is heavy in the air. Players form a circle at center court, eyes high as their muse is thrown to the sky. When I say basketball, you might see never ending running up and down a court. North to south, then vice versa, for four quarters. You might see, what looks like the seemingly random throwing of an orange ball with black seams into a netted hoop. But that's not what I see.

What I see, is a live-action rendition of the greatest strategy game of all time. I see chess infused with physicality, athleticism, vertical giftedness, and hustle. Two sets of specialized pieces, each in the game for their functional purpose. I see the checkered floor, with ranks and files, and countless combinations to attack a target of focus. This king resides ten feet high. There are games within the game. Picking a defensive scheme. Suppressing the stars of the show: the queen of dribbling, the sharpshooting rook. Or controlling specific sections of the board. Forcing the opponent to play your style of game. And it all starts in the opening.

As the game gets underway, the first step of strategy is to man the middle of the board, 'the paint'. Placing your 'big man' piece in the center is most effective for this. Wide as a fridge, rigid, and rooted in place with legs like tree trunks. The big man threatens the neighboring squares around them, in all directions. Anywhere a hop, skip, and a jump away. You're likely to meet resistance, as a worthy opponent won't give up such crucial ground without a fight. Lay some groundwork with a pawn, setting a screen for the big man to get in good post position. Once the big man is ready to operate he has many moves at his disposal. The big man can move forward with a drop step, left or right for a jump hook, or even attack while moving backwards courtesy of the fadeaway. Past moves remain with your opponent, casting a shadow for the perfect bait. When they're left to wonder, go to the up-and-under. Opportunities are endless when you keep the defense restless. With the big man successfully occupying the paint, space opens up for the long distant threats, the wings, to take their position. Picture roadrunner, legs spinning like a turbine across the desert landscape. Your wings are your thoroughbreds who gallop and soar to score. Whether they slide into place on the wing or in the corner, they are primed to control along the borders. If the big man attracts attention in the paint, the wings lie in wait, open and ready for the kickout to sink the long ball. While the big man controls its personal reservoir, speed and range compose the wings' repertoire. Their threat comes from clear across the floor, or they can attack a closeout and slash diagonally in one fell swoop. With all this in mind, one must not forget the grind of defense. Although your obvious goal is at one end of the floor, there's no sense in sending all your players at once. This mistake prevents any ability to brake movement going the other way. An adversary's fastbreak down the field is the easiest way to yield a direct attack to your own hoop. Keep track by assigning a valuable piece or two to hang back, to round out your opening moves. Now that your pieces are developed, the time has arrived for the bouncing back and forth. The rhythm of the game.

As the middlegame approaches, all becomes a battle of assessments and adjustments. Zone coverage? Man-to-man? Drive and kick? Pick-n-rolls? Did they

really just run the elevator play? Pin downs, flare screens, back picks, even cherry picks must be noted. Look to see what sides of the floor, and which pieces, have the biggest advantage. Who's out front? Who lies behind, ready to be subbed in? Are your wings stinging the competition with great range and accuracy? Are they using their speed to fly through the crevices of the defense and threaten the cup? Or have your big men formed a stone wall that is droning in on your opponent's hoop, suffocating them with consistent close-range pressure? Whatever it is, go to your strengths. Or could you fake going there to open up something new? The middlegame has infinite questions. Some games host quick, equal exchanges of scoring, while other times it is a game of runs. One side may put together a slew of successful plays, and take a commanding lead; only to get complacent and allow their opponent to capitalize and get back in the game. Regardless of how you've gotten there, when crunch time comes, you've got to pull all your remaining pieces together for the endgame.

As the game comes to a close, strategies are seemingly tossed out. The game rests in the hands of your strongest pieces who must deliver against a weathered defense that may only still be standing in fragments. An iso can be effective if enough spacing is secured for a mismatch in your favor. Although your attention should remain on the most capable remaining pieces, a deathly blow can be delivered by anyone in the right position. Beware of pawn promotion. Munchkins from the land of Oz, small in stature and overlooked; until their actions propel them to new heights taking size and shape of whatever their heart's desire. These unsung heroes can sneak their way into striking distance if left unchecked. The game can be decided by the most unlikely source sneaking back door, coming up with a loose ball, or banking in a game winning three. Whether action is taking place on one side of the floor or the other, attention to detail is crucial as the endgame is the most unpredictable time.

With everything on the line, you employ a double attack—once they detect, your opponent is forced to choose what to protect. Your wing seizes a newfound opening and races down the sideline, confining focus to the point of attack along the baseline. A straight shot to the hoop is open. The defense realigns, zeroing in on the forthright threat, leaving the perfect opportunity for your big man to slip into the paint right by the king. You pass a high-arcing lob of the ball over a scrambling defense, perfect for the big man to slam down through the hoop. An ALLEY-OOP for the game winning basket! Or should I say checkmate. And that, is the beauty of the game.

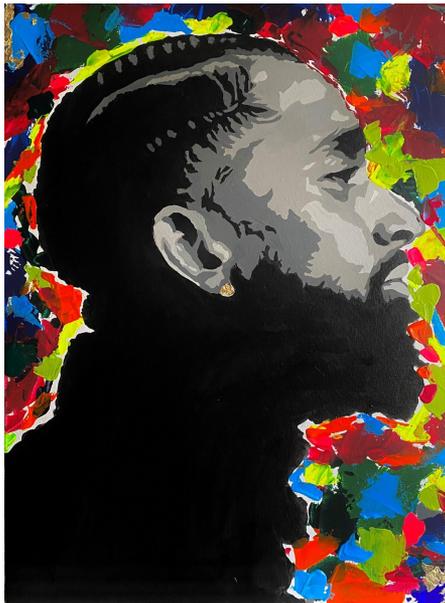
After Hours

LIBERTY SORDIA



The Marathon Continues

LIBERTY SORDIA



cars with cassette players

ELIZABETH WILES

Beneath a blue summer sky, there was a man trekking down a deserted sidewalk. He was rather plain-looking with light skin, white hair, and eyes the same shade as the sky above. He walked as quickly as his legs allowed on a very specific mission.

Music. The man's endgame was music, but it was not just any music. He did not care about the genre, the bass, the existence or persistence of guitar riffs, or even the song. None of that mattered to him. All he cared about was *how* the music would be played. It needed to be real. He needed to feel it bounce off vehicle walls and come alive.

The man had to slow his trek. Being around as long as he had made walking more difficult than it used to be. After the war, when the man's airways were slick with orange poison, he returned to his small southern town. As the years went by, he felt his limbs grow anxious and his muscles tighten. His arms and legs were still attached but he could no longer control their actions. His right hand had stopped listening to him. It tremored and shook. He often watched as it moved, trying to will it stationary with his gaze. It never worked. The only thing that ever softened the man's shaking was music. It was such a little thing to desire, and the man had little time left to desire anything else.

In his left hand, the man held a cassette tape. It was an old one, just like all cassette tapes. It was dusty on the outside but rewound to his favorite track. The man had been looking for his vehicle for some time, but he was not discouraged. He kept walking until he reached his fourth used car dealership of the day.

He stepped inside the office and saw an attractive receptionist at the front desk. She had kind features, sharp yet understanding. She was several decades younger than him, eyes green to accompany her blonde hair. Behind her was a wall covered in keys.

"Afternoon, sir!" called the receptionist, her voice chipper and even, "How's today been treating you?"

"I can't complain," he said, returning her kind smile.

"What can I help you find?"

He walked stiffly up to the front desk and asked a bit hoarsely, "You got any cars with cassette players?"

The receptionist looked at him oddly for a moment, then her gaze fell to the man's side. His right hand hung, tremoring and hitting against his overcoat with a soft scrape. She quickly averted her gaze, looking back up at the man kindly.

"Now *that* is an unusual request..." she smiled, "but you're in luck! We have one." She stood immediately and grabbed a key from the wall behind her, "Marv!" she called toward a nearby salesman, "I'm gonna show this man the station wagon!"

The man looked back at Marv. He stared at his tremoring right hand, gave an odd expression, and then snickered, "Not sure what for... but go on ahead, sis."

"Come on, sir," the receptionist walked out from behind the front desk, "Follow me."

They exited the office and she led him into the lot. There were dozens of cars with their colored rims and their flashy Bluetooth stickers. But the man passed them all without a single glance. He knew what he was looking for. The receptionist

walked right in front of him, careful so as not to get too far ahead. He could tell this was intentional but found that he did not mind. He was too close.

“Here she is!” announced the receptionist.

They approached a 1960 Country Squire, tan along the top, and paneled with wood on the sides. She was rusty, but she was beautiful. The man could almost hear the music. He reached out, his right hand trembling as it grazed the hood. He glanced in the driver’s window, seeing nothing other than a cassette player built into the dash.

“What do you think?” asked the receptionist.

“Sh-She’s perfect,” the man finally said.

The receptionist smiled, but it faded quickly. She shifted her weight, “Now, sir, I hate to pry but... well, my uncle is right where you are.” The man looked up at her, expecting to see a familiar mocking gleam. Instead, he watched her eyes glisten sadly, “Well, he *was*.”

The old man swallowed a lump in his throat. He knew why he was here. He knew it would not change anything. He knew this was the last thing he would ever desire.

“I’m sorry to hear that, miss.”

“Thank you,” she nodded. After a short pause, she continued, “Pardon my snooping but no one who’s got what you have can still drive so... what do you want with a car?”

The old man smiled, lifting his left hand to show her the cassette tape, “This,” he said. “You’re a sharp young lady, you know I ain’t here to buy nothing. All I ask is a few minutes of your time. Or rather... *hers*,” he pointed at the station wagon.

The receptionist’s eyes were damp, glistening with her smile. She held out the keys to the man, “Take as long as you need, sir.”

He took the keys gently and nodded his thanks. She walked a short distance away, and the man inserted the key into the driver’s door. Once he turned the stiff lock, he hoisted himself into the front seat. He shut the door behind him, feeling the car shake a bit before it roared to life. It was not very comfortable inside, but none of that mattered to him. After adjusting enough to reach the player, the man inserted the cassette tape. At the press of a button, an upbeat guitar began to strum.

*If I had a hammer
I'd hammer in the morning
I'd hammer in the evening
All over this land*

The man sat back and heard his tremoring hand scrape against the leather seat. He turned the volume up and let the music drown out the rest of the world.

*I'd hammer out danger
I'd hammer out a warning
I'd hammer about the love between my brothers and my sisters
All over this land*

The man could no longer hear snickers. He could no longer hear the scrape of his tremor against his clothes. He felt still. He felt alive. The man closed his eyes and tears slid down his wrinkled cheeks. It seemed like such a little thing to desire, but it wasn’t. Because when nothing matters, every little thing does.

The Drive

AUBREY AMILA

Music is a sad man taking over my wheel
and I let him be.

He drove alone with a volume high enough
to make it seem
like the words of the world, or rather myself,
does not matter at all.

I cry and yell the lyrics
as if I'm in the verge of exploding
like a bottle of coke
reacting and exploding,
and unbottling everything up
for the first time in a long time.

Then I serenaded myself
with the words unsaid:
Oh, I'd like to be in motion forever,
speeding up and slowing down,
perhaps chasing the moon's craters
a space to build a home maybe
hoping that in doing so,
I won't have
to park
to see the sunrise again
to start a day that looked like yesterday.

AUTHORS

AUBREY AMILA

Aubrey Amila is a second year Humanities and Communication major at CSUMB. She likes to read books, star-gaze, write poems, listen to Taylor Swift, Frank Ocean, The Beatles, Mac DeMarco, and many more.

GRAY ANDERSON

Gray is a fourth year Humanities and Communication major at CSUMB. They like to write and make art in their free time, and enjoy contemplating the nature of existence.

RYAN ANDERSON

Ryan is a fourth year HCOM major with a concentration in Creative Writing and Social Action. He also minors in Music. Ryan likes to read and write, listen to and play music, and stay active anyway he can. Usually by playing basketball.

SAM CHEVEZ MOSCOSO

Sam is a third year Humanities and Communication major with a minor in Creative Writing and Social Action at CSUMB. They are gender fluid and go by all pronouns such as she, he, and/or they. In their free time, they like to watch a variety of shows and films. They also like to go to the MakerSpace on campus to sew or make pins. It is also possible that they have an unfortunate obsession with clothing. Furthermore, if you own a cat, they will want to pet it.

IRENE CRUZ

Irene is a fourth year Humanities and Communication major with a concentration in Legal Studies. She enjoys playing chess, making playlists on Spotify, and watching Chucky. During her second year at CSUMB, Irene declared her concentration in Legal Studies when she took SBS 112: Women and Social Change in the United States. She was inspired by the resilience Black, Indigenous, and women of color demonstrated when fighting for social justice, and decided that she wanted to make a difference in the world by advocating for the rights of others. After graduating in May 2023, she hopes to attend law school.

ALANAH HUNSDORFER

Alanah Hunsdorfer is a fourth year student at CSUMB and is majoring in Humanities and Communication with a concentration in both English Studies and Creative Writing and Social Action. She loves reading and writing, primarily with a focus on poetry and fiction pieces, but she also enjoys the behind-the-scenes processes of editing and publishing. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her dogs and drinking hot apple cider.

SIERRA FISHMAN

Sierra Fishman is a senior in the Humanities and Communication major at CSUMB with a concentration in Journalism and Media Studies and a minor in Statistics. In her spare time she likes to crochet, read, and play with her two dogs, Stitch and Washburne. She has just applied to Gallaudet University for a M.A. in Interpretation.

PARKER JONES

Parker Jones is a senior at CSUMB. They are majoring in Humanities and Communication with a concentration in English Studies. They mainly write about their experience as a non-binary person, as well as their struggles with family and mental illness. The ocean is also often featured and is their favorite part of Monterey.

ZITLALLI MACIAS

Zitlalli Macias is a fourth year first generation student majoring in Humanities and Communications with a concentration in Creative Writing and Social Action at CSUMB. Zitlalli likes to crochet, write, make art, read, and listen to music in her free time.

STONE MCDONALD

Stone McDonald is a fourth year Humanities and Communication major at CSUMB. He's a big fan of The Shaggs, and loves to take long walks on the beach. He enjoys not taking himself seriously, which makes it much easier for him to write. When he isn't writing, he likes to publish album reviews, practice the blues scale on his guitar, and go clubbing in Santa Cruz and San Jose.

SOPHIA MORENO

Sophia Moreno is a fourth year Humanities and Communication major at CSUMB. She loves to read mystery novels, write poetry, and travel the world.

LIBERTY SORDIA

Liberty Sordia is a fourth year Psychology major at CSUMB. She likes to paint and play with her dog Luna in her free time.

HEATHER WIESHLOW

Heather Wieshlow is a third year Humanities and Communication major at CSUMB with dual specialties in Communication Studies and Journalism and Media. She is a creative soul who is traversing expectantly through the journey of life. She lives in Southern CA and is an avid adventurer, and enjoys a multitude of interests including photography, writing, traveling, the great outdoors and the weird and wonderful.

ELIZABETH WILES

Elizabeth Wiles (she/her/hers) is a lifelong poet. Writing has always been her avenue for contemplation, solace, and growth.

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