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The Blotter

magazine

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"We Get By With a Little Help"

Sometimes, not always, it is satisfactory to just muddle through. To want more — to ask for it — is both fruitless and unnecessary. What we have is enough. Or there is no more to be had. Or there is more, but not for us, and this is understood and if we're not happy or comfortable with that, at least we get it.

At least, I find this to be so.

And just muddling through, when it comes right down to it, is fun, in a solipsistic, perverse rather dense way. On your own, a lone wolf in a big world, there is no one else to thank, blame, ask permission of, apologize to, reflect with, and be angry at when you don't want to look in the mirror. That works sometimes. Not well, of course, but think of all the rewards I just mentioned.

Despite my snarky logic, many is the time when we try to hold the wood still while also wielding the saw. And any success we have with accomplishing a two-person feat alone we attribute to our superior intellect, rather than blind luck. We muddle through and are amazed with how successful we are at the great life game of solitaire. How magnificent! Did you see that we didn't even cheat once? Did you?

We go muddling on, believing a correlation between any previous apparent self-sufficiency and each situation that comes up as we go forward. I did it before, I can do it again. I work best alone.

But, and of course there is always a "but," occasionally more is required. And by this, I mean more, even though you can ask for it and not get it, because there is no more to be had — yes there is, but not for you. *You have enough* - the ubiquitous voice of authority has spoken.

Still, something else, something additional is needed. Not a magical X factor. Just a little something. An extra hand to hold the wood. A bit of knowledge you don't have time or inclination to acquire. So how to get it?

I'm no expert. Not in anything. Maybe I know a little bit more about... say, the history of the fall of Rome than the person sitting next to you, unless that person is Mary Beard, Oxford Don and professor of classics. (If it is, though, tell her that I'm now exploring her recent volume about the emperors. Excellent read, by the way.) But of how much use is something like that? Not even in polite conversations. So I rely on the brilliance of others to help light my way. And by rely, I mean very little in my life works without my friends.

My friends put up with a lot, being my friends. I'm annoying, in all the ways that word can be defined. I ask for favors. I request assistance. I call them on the phone and regale them with arduous diatribes about etymology, or arcane history, or some obscure technical problem I'm experiencing.

And for reasons I am unable to fathom, they help me. They come over and fix the sticky front doorjamb. They get past my problems with instructions and assemble a bookcase. Come over with a pick-up truck to help clear yard waste I've stored out in the garage, or weed through too much storage on my hard drive.

Do they laugh at my jokes? No. That would be asking too much. Do they correct my grammar? Thank goodness, yes, because it is often flawed.

What do my friends get in return? Well, it feels like not enough. Like I said, I'm not very good at much. Truth be told, I have little that I can offer in return. I can make a pretty good cup of coffee and there's a comfortable seat on the front porch. I listen. I smile. I say please and thank you. I'm there.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

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in the Great State of Georgia!



The Blotter Magazine, Inc. (again, a 501(c)3 non-profit) is an education concern. Our primary interest is the furthering of creative writing and fine arts, with the magazine being a means to that end. We publish in the first half of each month and enjoy a free circulation throughout the Southeast and some other places, too. Submissions are always welcome, as are ad inquiries.

Subscriptions are offered as a premium for a donation of \$25 or more. Send check or money order, name and address to The Blotter Magazine Subscriptions, 1010 Hale Street, Durham, NC 27705. Back issues are also available, 5 for \$5. Inquire re. same by e-mail: chief@blotterrag.com.



CAUTION

call you on the telephone, my voice

"I Foster My Regrets"

I have barely lived long enough
to recall a past whose:
world was unrecognizable – perhaps for the better.
I have barely lived long enough
to grow Organic Agony, which:
thrives in dark, tepid spaces, much like mold
– may be fertilized with fermented tears.
I have barely lived long enough
to nurture meaning where:
memories dangle from others' tongues like stars at night
– these words of mouth drip into mine.
I don't recoil. It's still warm.
Though I've never said "goodbye,"
this must be how it feels.

two by by Sigrid Kim

"Lemons"

They're like lemons—
piercing words that slice the air.
Sharp eyed seeds bore through all lies.
Don't press too hard
or the acrid truth hidden behind
brilliant yellow rind
will spray your unsuspecting eyes.
Bright exterior
fanning floral fragrance
a crossing sectioning sun.
White pith like radiant rays
dividing luminescent pulp
—but bite in
and you'll release acerbic citrus
that's saccharine on my tongue.
Because these words
are just a part of me.
So tell me,
don't some of us enjoy
the taste of lemon?

"Leave Them Alone"

by Seungmin Kim

This air that you let me taste
Next to the yew tree with
The dreams they wrote in the wood
As I watched from afar
The work outside our room
And how you stood watching us
Your fear of what might happen
Lingers in my mind
Take my life and my soul
Take the words I once spoke
But the songs they sing today
Leave them alone
Take my pride and my bearing
I'll take your beatings too
But my memories alone
Leave them alone
Defile my body with your money
Crush me with your desperation
But the lights of these children
Leave them alone
Hurl those stones at my walls
They will not fall for eternity
My city is safe as long as I
Leave them alone





Esther Yeh-Rynn Chae

"Half Empty"

by Seungmin Kim

Some say it's a cup half empty
While others see a cup half-full
Or maybe it's a cup half-poured
Or a bowl half broken into pieces
What about a stick half splintered
Or a window half-opened
A song started but only half sung
A letter started but only half written
A book flipped to half started
Maybe a pair of laces half-tied
How I hate dishes half half-finished
And paint strokes half-swept
My life is not yet half-empty
Neither am I half on my way to my grave
I refuse to be half-finished with
All these things I have left half-started
Instead I am halfway to half
Of what half may entail for this half
Of my small half of the pie
On this half of the Earth
Half of what you may think about me
May really be, halfway to the truth
Though half of you have never met half of me
Because really most truths are a half lie

"A Fractured Reflection"

by Alex Lee

As the youngest-born, I remember chasing wide-eyed
After my brother and dad. I remember
Lying down on the bum-freezing swing. I remember
Him twisting the stubborn rope of the swing. I remember
Naively giggling as I spun, pretending to be an unstoppable hurricane.
I remember.

Lying on the ground, soft winter kisses
Dropping onto my red cheeks from the sky.
Angrily turning my back as you tentatively walked out.
I rubbed my eyes with an angry snuffle. And you said
"Sometimes, when we're angry we say things, do things
We don't mean."

But, looking back, the signs were already there.
I remember locking myself into my room,
Futilely trying to block out you and mom's angry shouts.
Hearing the door bang shut and the muted sobbing that followed.
When my mom came to ask me how I was doing,
Trying to ignore the angry welts on mom's neck
And her saddened but mostly tired eyes.
Maybe this was a mistake.

And then the tensions boiled over like untamed fire.
I remember arguing over the money
Storming out the living room with a huff
Fuming inside my room as I listened to the persisting argument
Rushing out the door upon hearing fists collide
Pulling you away and tackling you to the ground
And you said, "I'm done with all of you,"

As if you were in the right
As if you hadn't landed the first punch
As if you weren't why my mom sometimes cried at night
Now, three months in,
You're all but gone from my memories
There's this peaceful silence
For the first time in my life
But, when you dispatch a formal writ
Demanding to freeze our accounts.

I can't help but scoff.
So, we're family, and blood's thicker than water,
But, for you, it's certainly not thicker than wine.



Jahin Claire Oh

"A Typical Story"

I fastened my seatbelt,
Opened my bag of corn chips,
Stretched my legs,
Screeching poses;
My all.
The blind camera on me.
Away without fake;
From the glancing smiles;
Tired immediately,
A day.
Annoying the flashes.
All I knew;
The thirty-two opened eyes that were giving;
And all I was away,
Inside.

two by Yukyung Katie Kim

"Cuffed"

A pair of silver hoops encircling my soul
Every sound I make,
Every gesture I fake,
Every day I wake,
My body fully controlled
I was always a girl with high hopes and dreams
But, what am I now?
With my response to him a bow,
All his orders exploiting my sacred vow,
And all the while, my concealed tears in streams.
I am his wife—well, supposed to be.
I sold my life as a free, young girl,
Just to be his coveted, showy pearl
At home, though, an object to hurl
I will be free!
I must remain still,
Or be the victim, the kill.

Tk Tekkyu Lee



Yoonji Huh



Sean Kyung



Sean Kang

two by David Kim

"Ship has Sailed"

The ship crackles in the torrid waves of night
The sails flutter in the pitch-gray sky
The foam of the waves lick the edges of the hull
While I steer, blinded by the seeping, aching water
I follow the star
The star that seems most vibrant to me
Even if it wanes in the cloudy, rainy night
The rudder is set to its light
Never knowing the depth of the seas
Or the whispers of the wind
I ignore all and follow my hopeful star of the night
All my life
Getting closer to its smile
I wonder where my crooked boat will sink upon
The bow shoots upwards with the waves
As the boat slides to its starboard side
The waters drag on the boat
As it slowly jerks to a slow death
I stare at the night's star
Flickering with every passing cloud
Listening to the wind cackle in my pain
With every smashing of the wave,
The ship crumbles into the grey sea
I let go and fall
Into the cold waters
I accept my life, following my guides
Becoming my best illusion
After all, it was my destiny to sink with the star

"Meaning of Duty"

As for all in this world,
I was born, oblivious to the journey ahead
The early days are congested with faded memories
With few shining moments, resonating within
My now solemn mind
Seeing myself in the peak of dawn
My drool stamping the textbook, slowly bleeding aside
My notes blurred by the fog of the eye
I yield myself to my mind
Recollecting the path of my life,
Which left me desecrated on the ice-cold surface of gloom
My past, tinted with the rosy lens of nostalgia
Seemed like a paradise lost
I yearn for this childhood innocence, yet consolidate
With my mature self
What happened in this journey of life?
For me to end in this perpetual haze
Years of paper and pencil, with seeds of joy
Plucked from within
I watch the horizon shimmer
And hear the day-to-wake
Just to realize that moments like these
Even under the most macabre of storms
That I, in the future
Will yearn
For the past
As Nostalgia always perseveres

"ode to the painting of a mother"

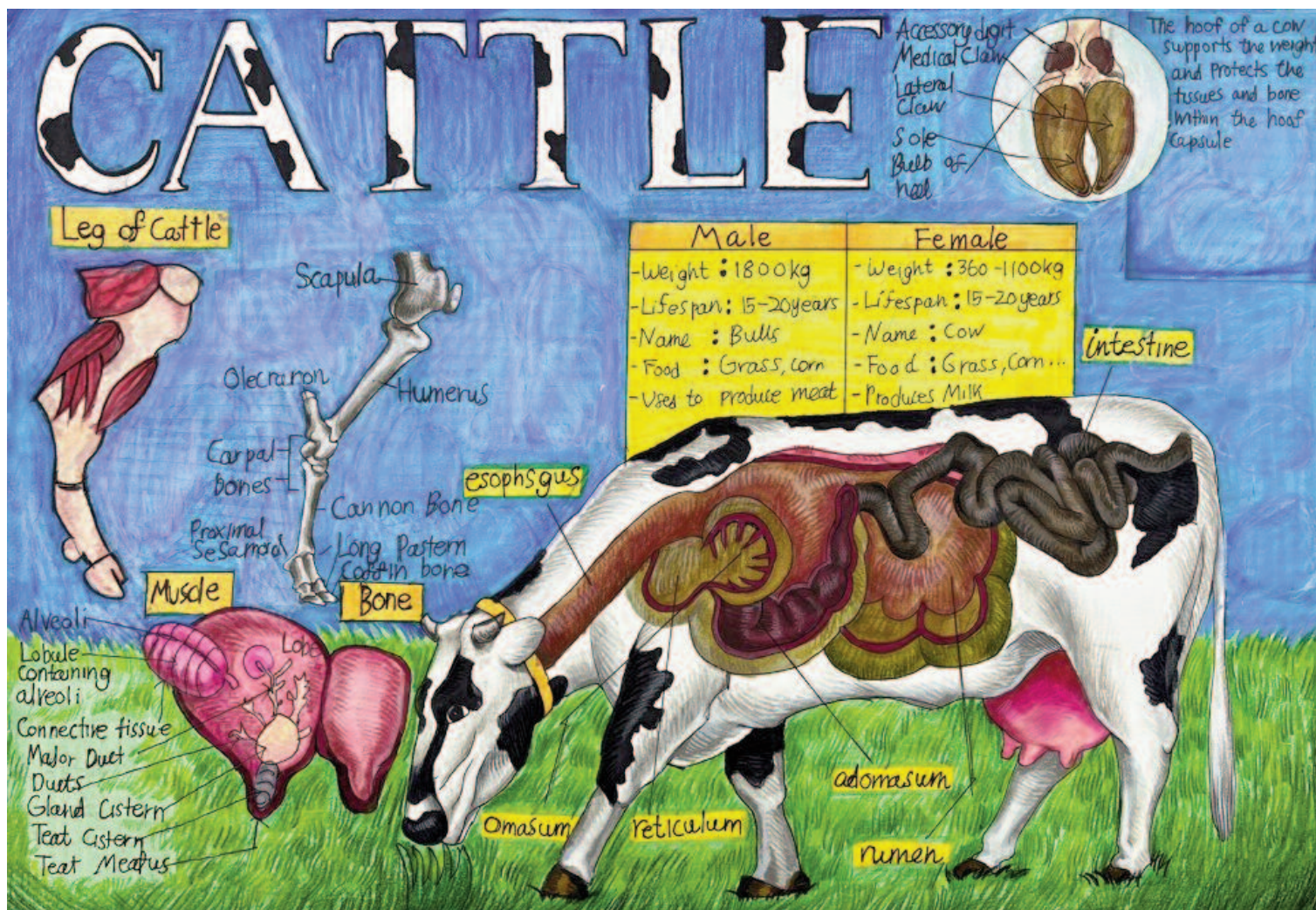
by Isabella Dunsby

a basin of persimmon balancing
on her head; a ribbon tying
her hair back; patterned with cherry
blossoms. a silk white jeogori
exposing her swollen lower
breasts; red cloth strapping
a baby to her back; one hand
twisted behind her, holding
him. the strain
in her cheeks as she holds
her face together. this painting is
in storage, at my mother's house.
i wonder what she saw in it.

“we are all just stars that have people names”

by Yoon Park

I'd steal the stars to hang them in your room.
I'd pluck Orion's arrow out of the sky
And paint you across miles of constellations.
You'd say mind the tip and I'd dull my edges for you.
You'd ask draw me the sky and I'd map your face
Because your upper lip is Aries' golden fleece
And your freckles are Neptune's 14 moons.
If nobody wrote stories about your stars I'd make them
Beautiful over Andromeda's name. You'd say you make me
Sound like I was a hero; I'd say but you were mine—
I'd weave your constellation onto strings
Made from the taste of peaches tenderly plucked
From moonlight lips only
If you'd let me.
They say the dead shine brightest
When they are remembered;
How I'd hang the stars for people to remember
Your name.



Tk Tekkyu Lee



Gavin Kim

"Whomever"

by Yoon Park

Dear whomever it may concern
I left my wedding ring and pinkie finger length of my dignity
and my Hawaiian-shirt penguin bobble head with my sense of direction
along with three lottery tickets and a list of my previous and future failures
in the plane seat I threw myself out of without regard:
I just wanted you to know. Only
okay, it's not just that I wanted you to know
I just wanted you to find them for me but it's just an offer after all
no really, you don't have to but it would be nice
if you did. You know what's funny
whomever it may concern is that if I
got a nickel for every time that I decided to just jump a way
out of my own problems I'd have two nickels
which you know, isn't much but it would be weird
that it happened twice. Only the first time
wasn't me leaving all my stuff behind in the cupholder
like how I leave my car keys and an ounce of a small abrasion over
what would no doubt develop into an impressive but inconsequential
knot anyways. That first time I left all my scars and chances in a bucket
and drowned it in a river in Williamsburg County where everyone could see
but that's not important, because it's always the second attempts that last longer
in history books or the newsletter and what everyone wants
is to be remembered for the grander
even stupider things
whomever it may concern

"Nostalgia"

By Austin Chung

Leaves sway with the beat of silence.
Flowers bloom with complete innocence—
petals stretched out towards the sky,
feeling the brilliance and warmth of sunlight.
All this beauty is just a fantasy—
a piece of film stuck in the past.
The skin of water from the shallows,
brightened picture of shadows.
I'm not there, in the photo.
I wasn't beautiful as a fleeing butterfly
stuck in a maelstrom of eminent flies—
instead, painting my future with pastel lies.
There once was a time
when I could've been there—
embracing and enjoying the brightest lights
now stone cold, without a tomb.
Diminishing fireflies make my home.

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

June Dream

I am running across campus and they've placed a flight of tables, like those in an old fashioned cafeteria, across my path. Chairs on the far side of the tables, with people sitting. Papers – no, booklets – on the tables. I think about jumping over the table in front of me. Not going around, that would be logical and simple. Instead, I dive under the table and slide along the grass until I'm far enough to climb up to my feet again.

She is out of her chair, standing there in front of me: pretty (to me) blonde ponytail, smiling.

Question, am I alright? Yes.

Question back to her – what is she doing? She explains about the brochures and booklets, helping someone, something. It's a good reason to be there, a good cause. I like her immediately. I like someone who is generous with their time no matter what the reason. The world is a selfish place and it is not tilting at windmills to be useful for reasons other than personal regard and reward.

Liar.

I like her because she is pretty. That's on me - shallow and single-minded.

A rumble and shadows – oh, yes. It is because I have been in a cross-country race and here come the rest of them. They jump over the tables, knocking things everywhere. I put my arms around her and pull her down to safety under the table.

Still a selfish thing. I'll never learn.

AP - cyberspace

Contributors:

Sigrid Kim is a student at McLean High School in Virginia, where she actively engages in writing, drawing, and caring for her two beloved dogs, Oliver and Cooper. In preparation for her future academic endeavors, she is currently assembling her portfolio and has recently secured admission to Juniper's Young Writers Camp and Sewanee.

Seungmin Kim is a diligent scholar enrolled at the Hong Kong International School. Presently, he is meticulously curating his compilation of written works with the aim of fortifying his candidacy for admission to esteemed academic institutions.

Uee Jung is a student attending a school in Seoul, S. Korea. Her current artwork involves experimenting with color and figures.

Esther Yeh-Rynn Chae is a talented student who attends The Elisabeth Morrow School. Born with a passion for the arts, she enjoys spending her free time reading, drawing, and writing. Music is also a big part of Esther's life, and she plays both the piano and flute with great skill. When she's not immersed in her artistic pursuits, Esther enjoys exploring her athletic side including fencing. She is also an avid Kpop dancer, and her love of music and movement is evident in the energy and enthusiasm she brings to her performances. Despite her many talents, Esther remains humble and focused on her studies. She is determined to achieve academic excellence and pursue her dreams of a career in the arts. With her boundless creativity, passion for learning, and unwavering dedication, Esther is sure to make a name for herself in whatever path she chooses to follow.

Alex Lee is a diligent high school student attending Chadwick International School in South Korea. His passion for creative writing has led him to experiment with the art of poetry, with a recent focus on exploring the intricacies of rhythm and rhyme. Through his work, Alex strives to evoke deep emotions and meaningful connections within his readers. As he continues to refine his skills, he looks forward to building a diverse and compelling writing portfolio.

Jahin Claire Oh is a tenth grader at Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose, California. She likes to code and takes an interest in media art for fun. She prefers warm tones over cool tones and generally likes calming imagery with naturalistic depictions. In her free time, she likes to spend time with her friends and occasionally goes to local art exhibits.

Yukyung Katie Kim is a ninth-grader attending Deerfield Academy in Deerfield, Massachusetts. As a writer, she is particularly interested in realistic and historical fiction. As well as creative writing, Yukyung enjoys visual art and playing the oboe in her free time.

Tk Tekkyu Lee, an art student at Eaglebrook School, is meticulously assembling his art portfolio. His work showcases a fusion of traditional and contemporary techniques. Each piece in his portfolio tells a captivating story, drawing viewers into his imaginative world. Tk is a student in the world of emerging young artists, and his portfolio is a testament to his dedication and creative prowess.

Yoonji Huh is a dedicated student enrolled at a school in Seoul, South Korea. With a strong passion for the arts, Yoonji is diligently curating her art portfolio in preparation for university.

Sean Kyung is currently attending Seoul International School in the vibrant city of Seoul, South Korea. His ardent pursuit lies in creating an impressive art portfolio for university admissions. **Austin Chung** is a student attending Seoul International School in Seoul, South Korea. He is currently putting together his portfolio.

Sean Kang, a sophomore at the renowned Korean International School in Seoul, South Korea, channels his passion for creativity and the arts into a multitude of immersive pursuits. At the age of sixteen, he diligently curates a comprehensive portfolio as part of his preparations for higher education.

David Kim is a high school student at Seoul International School in South Korea who has a passion for writing. He is currently working hard to build his portfolio for university applications. When he is not writing, David can be found listening to music, playing video games, or exploring new places in the city. He is excited to see where his writing journey takes him and hopes to share his work with others through your publication.

Isabella (Jia) Dunsby is a student at Seoul Foreign School in South Korea and will graduate in 2024. She enjoys creative writing, economics, photography, and jazz music on rainy nights. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Polyphony Lit*, *Apprentice Writer*, *Blue Marble Review*, and *Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine*.

Yoon Park is a dynamic high school student enrolled at Seoul Academy in Seoul, South Korea. She channels her creative energy into writing and visual art and finds joy in expressing herself through these mediums. Additionally, she has a passion for music and spends her spare time playing the piano. Her dedication to her craft has earned her recognition and admission into the prestigious Sewanee Young Writers Conference.

Gavin Kim writes, "Thank you for taking the time to review my submission. I would be honored to be featured in your publication and to share my art with your readers. I am confident that my work will resonate with your audience and contribute to the richness of your content."

Austin Chung is a student attending Seoul International School in Seoul, South Korea. He is currently putting together his portfolio.

Alexis Choi is a student living in Seoul, South Korea. She is excited to submit her artwork to a larger audience and welcomes feedback.

"Who gave these idiots
microphones?"

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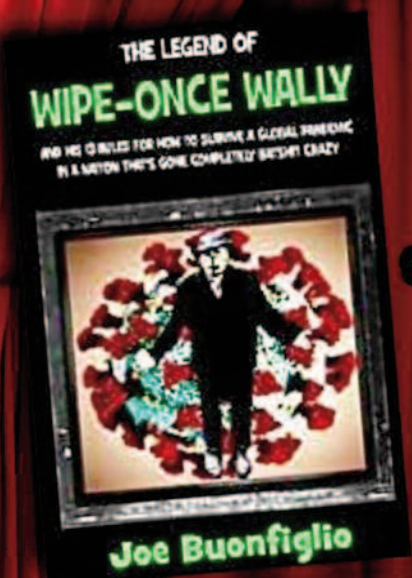


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