

A desert landscape at twilight. A dirt path winds through the scene, leading to a large puddle that reflects the vibrant, colorful sky. The sky is filled with dramatic, orange and yellow clouds, with a hint of blue at the top. In the foreground and middle ground, there are various desert plants, including saguaros, cholla, and cholla cholla. In the background, there are mountains and a utility pole. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

# borrowed solace

a journal of literary ramblings.

issue 5.2  
twilight zone



# BORROWED SOLACE

# borrowed solace

**borrowed solace issue #5.2 includes works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and photography. For our fictional works: names, characters, places, and events are products of the authors' imagination and creativity and thus are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, places, or events is purely coincidental. For our nonfictional works: some names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals. These are the authors' original works, any of the works not to be found original are purely the authors' legal responsibility. borrowed solace is published by borrowed solace. All rights reserved. No part of the journal may be used or reproduced without our permission. borrowed solace has First North American Serial Rights. In three months, all rights revert back to the author. We do request archival rights.**

**borrowed solace issue #5.2 Fall 2023**

**cover artwork || Nicole McConnell**

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# about page

## why borrowed solace?

As a group of college friends sitting around a round table every Friday for two years, we toyed around with the idea of creating a blog, a collective book of stories, a website, a journal or a magazine, and so many more things. The last semester, when most of us were graduating, our dreams finally became a reality. We created a website. We created a blog and social media pages. We launched the submissions and began our journey.

But before all of that happened, we first took two words we liked and smashed them together to create borrowed solace, but the meaning goes even deeper than that. If you notice the initials are a part of a literary rambling we wanted to gather and then release into the world one word at a time. To borrow the works of others for others' solace. To comfort, to soothe, to put people in a better mood. We pledge to you this is a bunch of bs, but we love our name and who we are because of the words we choose to live by and these are two of them.

## how is the journal published?

We intend to publish an online journal once or twice a year. Our journals coming out in September and May. Submissions come through our website at [borrowedsolace.com](http://borrowedsolace.com). We collect four genres: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and art. We pick selections based on the magic they create, the way they engage us as readers and as writers, making us crave more, and that allows us to walk alongside the authors while reading.

## continued

Our dream goal is to publish two online journals a year, and a printed version of the best stories from that year. A teaser for free, and a small fee for all of the stories, plus the bonus content of interviews from the authors, poets, and artists, and craft essays. **The journals are sold online at our website [borrowedsolace.com](http://borrowedsolace.com).**

### **who are we and what we are about?**

We come from all different backgrounds and we each have our own stories, but our passions and interests drive us to the same conclusion. We love writing. We love reading. We love the power and magic of words. We are based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, because that is where we all met. One of us was born in California, one in Iowa, and two in different parts of Colorado. But we all converged in one state, in one city, at one college, with one dream.

Our dream is to build up the world with words others have said, written, forced out, given to us, lent us. So we can share them with the rest of the publishing world of oceans. The vast blue waters filled with hundreds of stories and poems, with thousands of words, and millions of alphabet letters, and our journal is one ship among the many. A ship to tread the waters, scooping the finer stories out from the new and old authors. Foolish and wise creators and composers of the trade. We are the sailors, the dreamers underneath the stars, and this journal is our borrowed solace. This is what we are about.



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credits



# editors

**nonfiction editor**

Nicole McConnell (left)

**poetry editor**

Adley Vaters (middle)

**fiction editor**

Amber Porter (right)







*A story can be told from anywhere.*





# POETRY



*Poetry can take you to places unknown. It can also feel all-knowing--like a simple line or stanza can know exactly what you're feeling and thinking. Poetry can be complicated, or simple. Beautiful, or tragic. Magical, or mundane.*

*I'm proud of the poetry selections we've published over the years at borrowed solace. We've served up a little bit of everything in this miraculous little journal. While this may be the end of the journal as we know it, these poems live on.*

*I hope the poems enclosed in this final edition of borrowed solace speak to you, whether in a way that seems surreal, or a way that feels all-too-real.*

*Thanks to all of the incredible poets who trusted us with their words.*

addey  
poetry editor





spelunking // sherri levine



when we hug goodbye,  
i bury my face into the warmth  
of my grandmother's polka-dotted dress.  
something inside her chest  
feels missing—a dug out cavern of flesh  
and bones, so deep my head sinks—  
a blind descent into narrow  
chambers, rocks and limestone.

want to read more? purchase the journal!

see biography on page 86



**eclipse of the pen // bruce robinson**



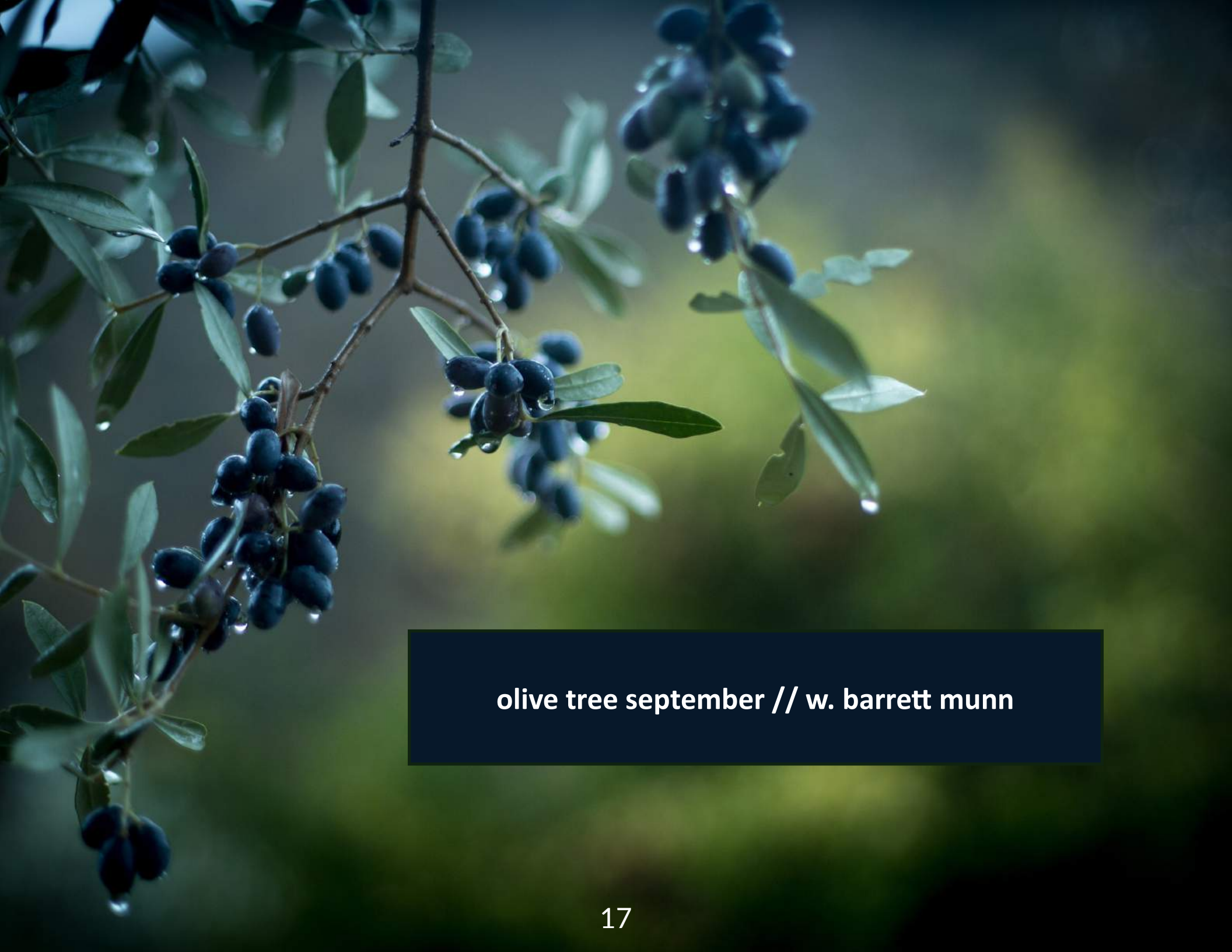
shuwei's poem // lily gebs





summer lullaby // david hoffman





**olive tree september // w. barrett munn**



A photograph of a blue butterfly perched on a flower, set against a warm, golden sunset background. The butterfly is positioned in the lower right quadrant, facing left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient of orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted flower buds and stems on the left side. A dark blue rectangular box with an orange border is centered in the upper half of the image, containing white text.

lepidoptera // hayley barnes



all of a sudden a hundred-thousand butterflies alight on the fire escape  
powdery vermilion obscuring twisted black wrought iron.  
wings in intricate patterns designed by a master painter:  
sky mommy portraitist creating flora and fauna  
whose whispers stir up new gouache colors  
that the local art supply store is dying to stock

one has swum into the wine bottle-cum-ashtray  
filled with fetid rainwater from last night's storm,  
and appears to be drowning—  
long, thin fingers reach into the ash bottle to rescue  
but he swims up on his own, soggy cigarette butt clenched in teeth  
and says to the fingers, hey, watch where you're going

a handful of monarchs shoot withering glances

want to read more? purchase the journal!



absence of love // j. tarwood



A photograph of a dark, abandoned room. The walls are a mottled brown and blue, showing signs of decay. A doorway in the center leads to a brighter room. To the right, a window with white shutters is open, letting in bright light. On the floor, there is a wooden frame leaning against a wall and some debris.

ars magna // j. tarwood





true magic // nolo segundo



the purring of eternity  
as the waves roll onto  
the shore, endlessly licking  
the waiting sands—  
true magic....

the leaves dying in multi-  
colored hues, giving a bit  
of joy to a heart fearing  
the death-like cold of winter--  
true magic....

want to read more? purchase the journal!

see biography on page 98





a shell // melinda giordano





**i regret almost all of it // richard magahiz**





past this world // richard magahiz





late afternoon // ryan f. love




and the world moves on // arvilla fee





grade five, the dancer // john grey





pirouettes do not a memory make  
and yet the wind is waving its baton  
and the wobbly grass, the flags,  
give their best effort.  
and so many eyes,  
a hundred thousand  
have looked in mine by this,  
but hers still sparkle  
while the supermarket checkout girl's do not.  
then with a capital T...

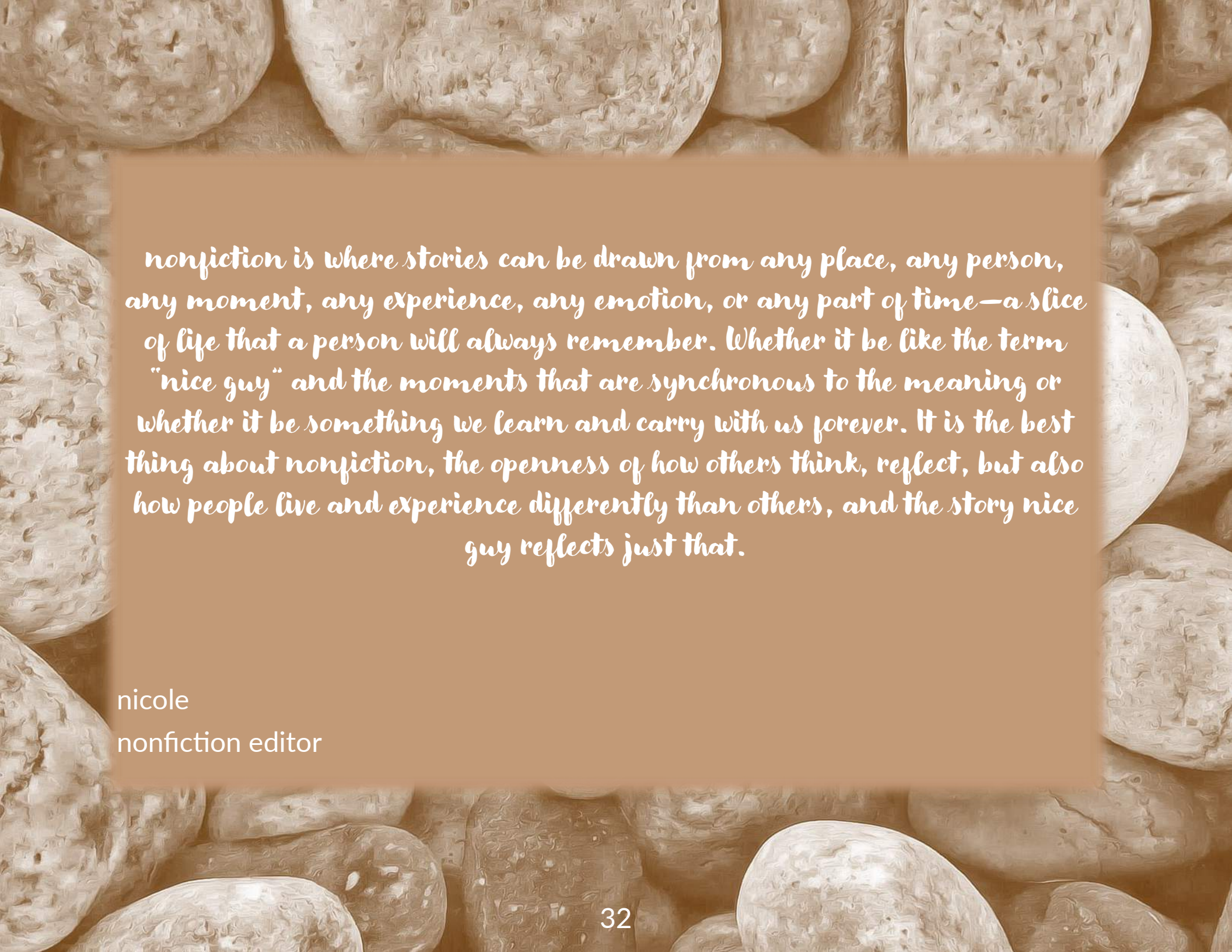
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# NONFICTION

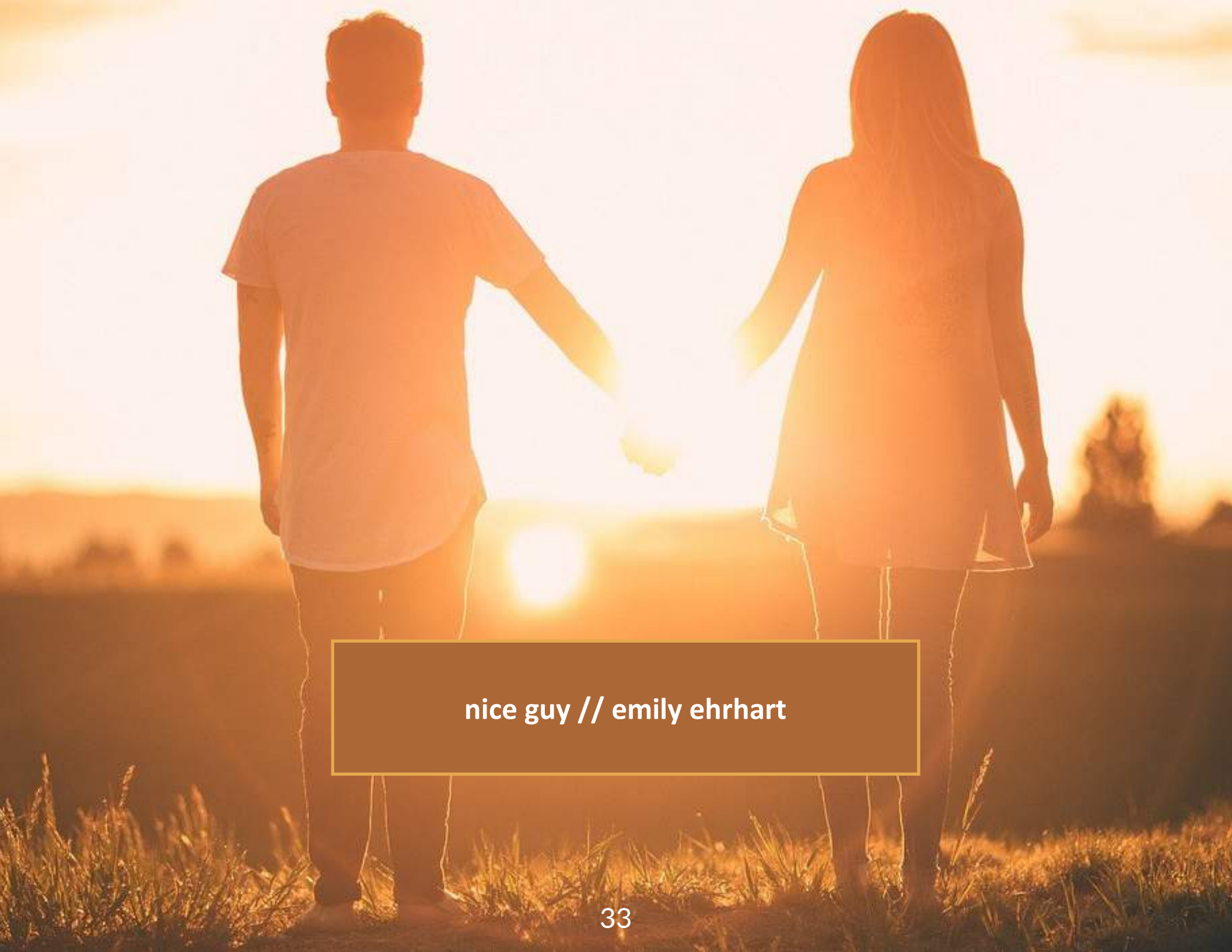




*nonfiction is where stories can be drawn from any place, any person, any moment, any experience, any emotion, or any part of time—a slice of life that a person will always remember. Whether it be like the term “nice guy” and the moments that are synchronous to the meaning or whether it be something we learn and carry with us forever. It is the best thing about nonfiction, the openness of how others think, reflect, but also how people live and experience differently than others, and the story nice guy reflects just that.*

nicole  
nonfiction editor





**nice guy // emily ehrhart**



their forced smiles reveal weak, questionable sincerity as they insist, he's a nice guy. they rattle off their evidence — a litany of kind acts and anecdotes of consideration — promising, he's so sweet. my husband and i, the distant relatives exposed to him only a couple times per year at family functions, don't know him quite like these cousins and siblings who insist his love of family warrants a pass for all his shortcomings. we sit with tight jaws, uncertain if we should point out the counter-evidence that we see when confronted with his values.

their assurances ask us to overlook how he parades his girlfriend around like a prize to show off, a symbol of success. she clings to his arm, her insecurity wrapped around his bicep, reinforcing his belief that she is his. her skin, a fake tan, looks orange in certain lights, and her face is heavy with liners and glosses that desperately hide her imperfections and realities. this pretty appearance is the epitome of unrealistic beauty standards that feminism has sought to defy for decades — petite with long blond hair, artificial eyelashes, and pouty lips.

when we sit around the dinner table crowded with casserole fare and full plates, she eats more than what is demure, her hunger and cravings getting the best of her. she takes a second serving, and he pokes her belly with his index finger and oinks. his father and brothers awkwardly laugh, while we look away, embarrassed for the girl and her

choice in partners. the girlfriend laughs out loud and turns pink, pushing her food away and wiping her face with the cloth napkin that leaves her mouth free of lipstick, more natural, if only briefly.

she doesn't argue or resist; there are never strong opinions that burst out of her, putting him in his place, announcing to the world that she has a right to hunger and devour. her pretty face will only dare to offer him compliance and conformity.

when he and his buddies break away from the rest of us, gathering in the garage or on the back-deck, he points out how hot his girlfriend's ass looks in her white jeans. are we meant to overhear this comment, is she meant to hear it? she smiles when he winks at her, and she tells us how one day they will marry and make babies that are the perfect replication of the two of them. she talks about having a big house, likely hoping that a four-bedroom, three-bathroom abode will justify the deprecating moments she suffers with him.

in addition to bragging about his girlfriend's appearance, he loves to boast about his truck — the real mark of his masculinity. he makes sure the truck is washed regularly and waxed so that its white paint shines in the sunlight. the truck is mounted on massive tires that leave him sitting taller than any sedan, suv or pick-up that drives beside him in city traffic. the truck revs with a force that makes people stare and children cover their ears with cupped hands.



italian leather seats, he points out as he shows off the interior, letting us all know that the vehicle is customized, superior to the other big trucks that rev and tote around pretty blonds with fake eyelashes. watch the Italian leather, he'll command when others drop their belongings carelessly onto the truck's seats, or god forbid if his mother brings her little yappy dog along for a ride.

the italian leather was once the skin of an animal — has he ever once made this connection? perhaps he struggles to imagine the agonizing pain and tormenting fear this animal experienced when she was bludgeoned to death so that her skin could be taken from her body and turned into the interior of his monstrous truck. there was a life, maybe several, abused, shortened and sacrificed for the customization of his vehicle. but, none of these realities are worth him considering, just please do not scratch or tear the goddamn Italian leather.

the truck carries an absurd six-figure price tag, and to sustain its flawless appearance is an expense in and of itself. never does the truck look dirty, even in the winter when the streets' grime and muck dare to mute or dull the paint. twice a week, more if necessary, he takes the truck to the local detailer where it is washed and waxed, washed and waxed. the truck requires premium diesel, the most expensive fuel one can purchase at the neighborhood gas station. at least twice a week he fills his beast of a vehicle, and afterwards he makes

sure to rev the truck again, louder and louder so that everybody around him notices.

the diesel fuel is extracted from land that grows depleted with wounds, repeatedly exploited for resources that will benefit people who desire convenience and wealth over the future of our earth and its wildlife. he doesn't think about the clearing of forests, the destruction of natural habitats, and the nitrous oxide polluting the air we breathe. ignoring the way we heat the earth into oblivion, he pumps and fills his gas tank with this delicious, wonderful diesel that most people can't afford.

on weekends he likes to hunt. his bedroom wall displays a buck's head, its dead eyes watch him as he dresses for work, scrolls on his phone, and fucks his pretty blond girlfriend.

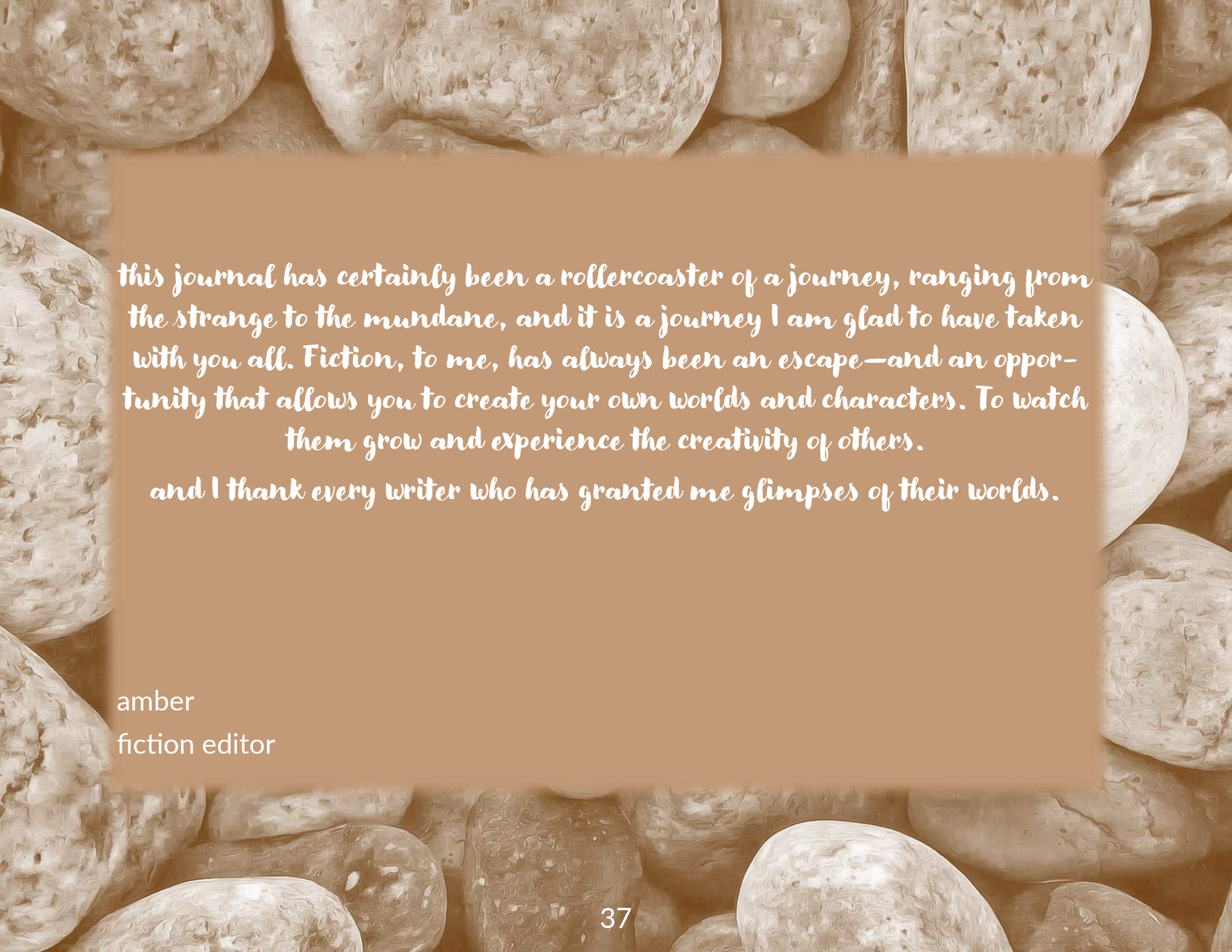
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# FICTION





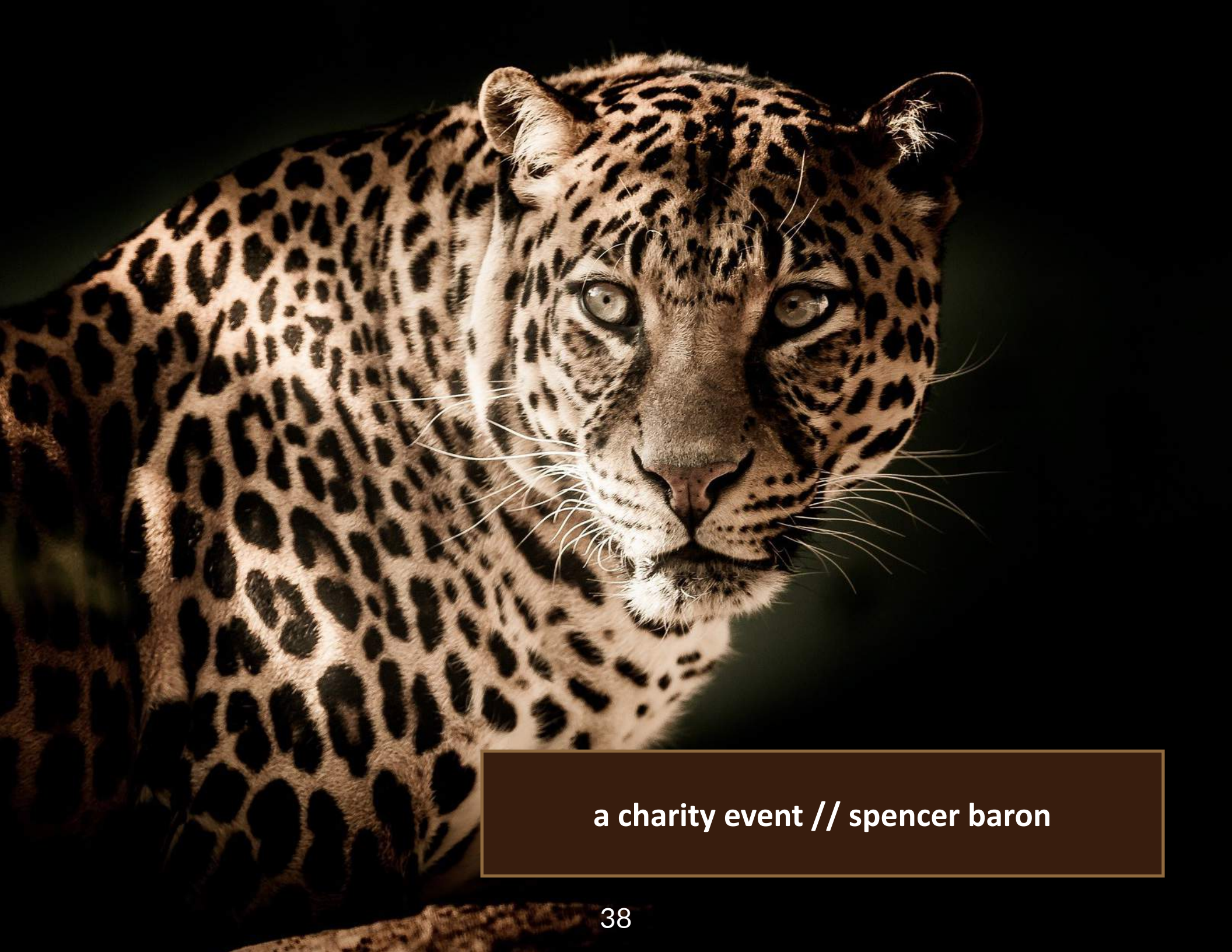


*this journal has certainly been a rollercoaster of a journey, ranging from the strange to the mundane, and it is a journey I am glad to have taken with you all. Fiction, to me, has always been an escape—and an opportunity that allows you to create your own worlds and characters. To watch them grow and experience the creativity of others.*

*and I thank every writer who has granted me glimpses of their worlds.*

amber  
fiction editor





a charity event // spencer baron



“it’s going to be great!” the sweaty man said to tad, spitting in his own hand and wiping the schmutz off tad’s cheek. “this will turn it all around.”

with a measure of struggle, tad smiled. “you really think so?”

“i hope so.” the offwhite of his teeth half revealed themselves from the bottom of his mustache. “but look alive, we’re starting in ten seconds. i’ll be watching next to the cameraman. sure will.”

the pas swarmed the room to find their stations, checking their headsets and checking them again. the lights dimmed, just a bit, all the more illuminating the red light that read on air. tad took a breath, and began.

“the golden leopard is one of the world’s most majestic creatures.” tad said in his buttery mellifluous tone. “leaps of them have roamed desert regions across central asia down to the indian subcontinent for millenia.” footage of the beast skulking forward to pounce on a small monkey backlit him, defining his round bellied silhouette expanding with a labored breath. tad’s perfect teeth reflected off the cool light that bounced back from the camera lens.

“but the apex predator of the taklamakan, as it was once called, is now in more danger than ever before.” the montage of carnage to lesser creatures cut to photos of a hunter sitting proudly atop a pile of four leopard carcasses, brandishing his rifle like a king’s scepter. then to a clip of a pile of golden leopard rugs being sold at a bazaar; a fast talking auctioneer’s

bright voice cutting through chatter below him, crackling what tad assumed to be higher and higher prices in a language he didn’t understand. “their fur has been a symbol of wealth around the globe.” a black and white clip of a jimmy stewart film with a time-appropriate risque kiss scene on a golden leopard rug before a fireplace. “and consuming their gallbladder is said to bring longevity according to certain medicinal philosophies.” a clip of a group of well-dressed elderly gentlemen spinning a glass lazy-susan stacked with plates to serve one another. “because of this reputation, black market big-game hunters have, in just the past forty years, dwindled the golden leopard population down so much that there are only three known in captivity.”

tad’s skin seized up, as though his nose were trying to gather his entire face like a blanket, just too small, to sleep. he turned away from the camera and gathered a tear in his fingers. after a short pause, he continued with a smile. “i’m actor tad baldak. i played the voice of nyan, the golden leopard on the educational show: nyan’s journey.” a blocky cgi golden leopard wandered on the screen behind tad, speaking in tad’s voice to his companion, the carrion vulture. the clip ran for five seconds behind him. “and tonight, in conjunction with the ilpf: the international leopard preservation foundation is asking something from all of you.” his smile disappeared, replaced with a solemn glassy-eyed grimace. “there are four selfless and anonymous donors who will match anything four



times.” his smile peeked through the gloom. “that’s right. we have callers on the line waiting for you to call the number below.” numbers flashed on the screen. “and these mysterious donors will multiply everything you donate by four.”

tad wiped the thinning hair down the top of his skull, seeing his reflection in the camera lens. “please find it in your hearts to give today. if we can raise the full amount tonight, we will be one giant step closer to saving this wonderful animal from extinction.” he waved to the row of telephone operators behind him, who were already taking calls. “we will select random donors to speak with me live throughout the telethon. i can’t wait to thank you!”

his heart, thumping under his fitted black button-down, ebbed to a slow beat as he found his flow. after nodding to a sweaty man standing beside the camera, tad turned to a phone operator behind him. “let’s start taking some calls live!” tad faced the prompter and read. “first we have matthew who has generously donated twenty-five dollars. matthew, how are you this evening?”

the distant metallic sound of someone on the phone filled the studio, an incorporeal voice on the air. “oh my gosh, i can’t believe i’m talking to you right now. i didn’t think i’d get through.”

“not just that, but you’re the first live caller! it’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“oh my gosh.” matthew spoke at a speed almost too fast for tad to process. “i loved you in eating alice.

it was such a formative movie for me when i was in college. and the scene where you were practicing telling your mom in the mirror and then when you actually broke the news to her. oh my gosh, i have the car you drove in the film tattooed on my arm. oh my gosh. and the scene with-”

“thank you so much! i can’t believe people are still watching my older work. that was done in one take, you know.”

“seriously?” matthew definitely had his mouth gaping open on the other end.

“yes, when that happened, we-” tad saw the man beside the camera motioning a wheel with his chubby index finger. “i’m sorry matthew, it looks like we only have so much time for each caller. but thank you, and thank you for your donation. it means the world to us.” the line cut. “let’s hear from another caller. it looks like agnes has just contributed one hundred dollars! how are you tonight, agnes?”

“i’m great tad. i just really believe in this cause. the golden leopard has been my favorite animal since i was a child.”

**want to read more? purchase the journal!**



temporal // sophia mclain





kin to the stars // c.a. demi



the marked path looped through the lowland woods. people walked it all the time. there was a parking lot at the trailhead, but many of the town's people—families, lone slightly past middle-aged men recovering from heart attacks, teens, anybody really—might just as well walk from their homes to stroll the mile loop. the offshoot that led up to the top of the bluff had never been sanctioned. however, where it split off could be easily spotted and no one had ever done anything to obstruct the way other than lay a few dead branches across its beginning. once the little side trail started climbing the side of the bluff, things got more tricky. leaf litter washed down the steep slope in the rain. in other places there was bare earth, often muddy and slick. near the top, a shelf of exposed ledge required a difficult, but far from impossible scramble.

nova knew the way. wearing miniskirt and a fishnet top over a torn-up sleeveless t-shirt, she looked in no way attired for scaling muddy banks and climbing lichen covered boulders, save for her patent black doc martens. she moved with adeptness over the terrain. first behind nova followed ethan. he wore oversized jeans, cinched around his waist and frayed at the hem and a small white t-shirt that did not quite cover his midriff, though it did sit perfectly on his shoulders. ethan struggled to make the ascent due to his converse one stars and a preoccupation with keeping his clothes clean. he was also noticeably distracted by looking up to see nova's bare legs. next,

and last, there was jonas. like nova, he wore doc martens on his feet. however, his were red, matching both his zipper festooned pants and his hoodie. the impression his outfit gave was of some sort of flight suit.

they had been mostly silent since entering the woods. and, in climbing the side of the hill, their collective attitude seemed to have settled on something that accommodated being both determined and resigned. perhaps second thoughts crept in, doubts about coming to the woods to do what they were going to do, about each other, about doing it at all. self-doubt can be elusive, slithering through one's thoughts, yet there are moments when it grips hard. then, upon reaching the top of the bluff, jonas let out a robust laugh.

nova turned to him, uncertain. "well, i guess you're ready to have fun after all."

"ja, meget krævende," jonas replied, his mirth genuine and wholly his own. he then turned to ethan and said, "life is too happy to waste it being sad. let's go to see the sunset."

ethan looked toward nova seeking reassurance.

"dude, you're a riot," she said, not clearly indicating to which of the two she was referring. she then led them further along the top of the bluff to a place where they had to scamper back down over the exposed ledge. from there they walked a bit further and ended up at a more or less flat shelf of exposed rock that looked out over the valley toward the



the adirondack mountains in the west.

nova went right to the edge of the rock and sat so her feet dangled over the precipice. the drop wasn't completely sheer, yet it would have been difficult to stop herself from rolling a good way down the steep slope before knocking against a tree. ethan stayed as far from the edge as he could. rather than sit he squatted in way as to avoid letting his bottom touch the ground.

"how do you know about this place?" ethan asked.

"peter wallace took me here last spring."

"him? isn't he, like," ethan took a moment to find the word, "normal?"

"he's a genius. and, he likes hiking."

"i'm surprised. i didn't know you hung out." ethan could not hide the jealousy in his voice.

"things are different when you're a freshman. there are so many expectations when you're in high school, then you come to a new place and it's just like a chance..."

"wasn't he older?" ethan couldn't let it go.

"he was a sophomore. he transferred to nyu." for the first time during their exchange, nova turned to look at ethan hunkered near the base of the rock. "but he did act older."

the whole time during their exchange jonas had remained on his feet. he produced a joint and a lighter from one of the zippered pockets of his pants. the puffs of marijuana smoke he blew drifted out and

sank down the bluff's slope. it had been warm throughout the day. under the trees during the trio's ascent the air had been redolent of a flush of fresh mushrooms. exposed to the sky on the bluff's ledge, the coming chill pricked at their senses. brittle pine needles. far off fireplaces.

they took turns smoking the joint. they talked about their first few weeks of classes. they talked about how things would be different from freshman year. about what it was like to go back to live with their families during the summer. they talked about how most people seemed so normal, so out of it, so willing to stay the course that others, their parents, their cliques, society at large, had set out for them.

the light of the golden hour enveloped them. jonas flicked the spent joint over the edge. they looked out at the valley beneath the bluff. ethan returned to crouch at base of the rocky shelf, and nova sat again with her legs dangle over its edge.

**want to read more? purchase the journal!**





**orbital // andy flaherty**



# BONUS CONTENT



NOT INCLUDED IN FREE VERISON



## editor's letter

hi everyone, we editors will be signing off for now on the journal and we will be disembarking. we are docking the ship and anchoring the vessel.

borrowed solace has been our dream in the making. but as our individual lives shift and refocus, we noticed the waters we once found calming, were getting choppier and more unpredictable.

as they say, all good things must come to an end, so a new chapter can begin, a new story can be written, and the series can be finished into a collection.

we will be maintaining borrowed solace, but will no longer be accepting submissions after this journal. however, as life awaits, we may one day pick the anchor up and resume our sailing.

we are blessed to have journeyed with so many great talents, and we wish from the bottom of our hearts, your talents keep getting discovered!






The background of the page is a close-up photograph of a wooden surface, showing vertical planks with a rich, dark brown grain. A semi-transparent green gradient is overlaid on the center of the image, creating a soft, glowing effect behind the text.

## credits

pixabay for stock images  
unsplash for stock images  
addey and nicole for photos  
everyone who made this journal  
possible



A photograph of three young women standing together outdoors in a desert environment. They are positioned in front of a large, prominent red rock formation. The woman on the left is wearing a wide-brimmed hat, a patterned t-shirt, and dark pants. The woman in the middle is wearing a maroon long-sleeved shirt and grey pants. The woman on the right is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, blue pants, a cap, and glasses, and is waving. The background is filled with green desert shrubs and trees under bright sunlight.

thank you for sticking  
with us!

from left: nicole,  
addey, amber