

Mirror Flower Water Moon



2026

鏡花水月



DHARMA REALM
BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY

Dearest Readers,

Finally, the year long anticipation for the newest edition of Mirror Flower Water Moon has come to an end. It is that time of the semester to celebrate our students and friends’ harvest from their creative garden. By that, let yourself sit back, have a cup of tea (or coffee) and enjoy the fruits of our annual celebration.

Last year, when we came up with the theme “Anticipation,” we could not expect how the edition would turn out to be. For what will people write about their future? The process has been so intriguing as we gradually see the final draft unfold. It turned out that, even when the authors did not have the theme in their mind, the collection that you are holding has become a manifestation of hope. Do we not subconsciously anticipate for a better tomorrow in everything we write? And how can we know the feeling of a better tomorrow without a current peace of mind as a reference?

A big thanks to all of the contributors who listen to our call of submissions and generously share a part of their soul with us. And cheers to all the laughter and serenity we have made this year with our two writing workshops (which the works will be found within these pages).

Without further ado, we will let you, readers, go from here and immerse yourself in the wonders of our writers and artists.

See you in the next cycle around the Sun,

Best of best,
Mirror Flower Water Moon editing team.

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Waiting for What Will Never Come

Selene Luong

We are often looking—
looking for more opportunities,
more relationships,
more happiness.

We are often forgetting—
forgetting what is in the present,
what lives in this moment,
what rests within our reach.

What is meant to come
will arise when we least expect it,
Like the shape of an eye
emerging from the cracks of a tree branch—

awakening,
forming,
in silence,
unseen.



Snow

Nearly two years
in a land that knows winter by heart,
and still,
no snow has spoken my name.

I have waited for white silence,
for the sky to loosen its grip,
for cold to teach my palms
what longing feels like when it lands.

I thought desire alone
might tilt the clouds.
I stood still,
whispering someday
as if the world were listening.

But the mind is a restless season,
it leans forward,
counts what has not arrived,
mistakes waiting for faith
and patience for sleep.

So I watched it.
Let wanting rise and pass,
like breath fogging the air
then vanishing.

Around me, life continued,
sunlight stitched gold into the streets,
leaves practiced their falling,
time moved without asking permission.

I learned to rest
inside what is.
To drink this hour
without bargaining for another.

Still,
desire remained.
Quiet. Honest. Human.

And I understood:

Snow does not come
to those who only speak of it.
Feet must follow the cold.
The body must consent to distance.
Dreams require direction.

There is a wisdom in waiting,
and a courage in moving.
A season to open the hands,
and a season to walk.

Until conditions gather themselves,
I stand awake in the present,
not empty,
not lacking,
simply unfinished.

When the sky is ready,
it will fall.

—Ven. Xing Xing





Sunrise

January 15, 2026 at Harvard Bridge

Coming to Harvard Bridge every day to watch the sunrise
has quietly become my daily ritual

To arrive, to wait, and to immerse

Every day I come
Every sunrise is different
Cloudy days, sunny days, rainy days
Each with its own beauty and character

And the one who watches the sunrise every morning

Me
Is also quietly changing minute by minute

Today is extremely cold
The cold makes the sky unusually colorful

I guess it is the prelude to Boston snowfall

In these past few days, watching the sunrise
My biggest realisation is:
Before the sun rises
Pink, crimson, red, purple, blue, and gray
Spread across the dawn sky
As brilliant as a rainbow

But at the very moment the sun rises
all the colors
Fade away
In the end
Only one color remains:
Gold

In that golden moment
Everything returns to

the most pure

the most simple
the most original state

Only then did I understand:
The Great Way is simplicity 大道至简

When the first beam of sunlight appears
Like the great perfect mirror of wisdom shines 大圆镜智

It illuminates the universe
I return to the source

To what I have always been
My true nature

When the gold appears

All beautiful colors fade away
I know deeply

I do not need any colors to support my beauty
Nor to decorate my charm

Nor to make myself seem extra special
Nor to prove “I am worthy”

Because in every moment
I am the beauty itself
I am already enough
Complete and whole
There is no need to seek anything outside
Within this very heart
There is an inexhaustible treasure

Studying at Harvard
has helped me understand
that the treasure I have been searching for
has always been in my hands all along

The highest institution of learning
is the school of the mind and soul



最高等的学府是心灵的学府

DRBU/CTTB/IGDVS is such a place

where I learn to investigate my own mind
To explore who I truly am
To see things as they truly are
And to abide in unconditional joy, compassion, and equanimity
Clarity and wisdom
Only after coming to Harvard
I fully understand this wonder
It is in truth

DRBU/CTTB/IGDVS is more Harvard than Harvard

—Yidan Wang

Two Poems

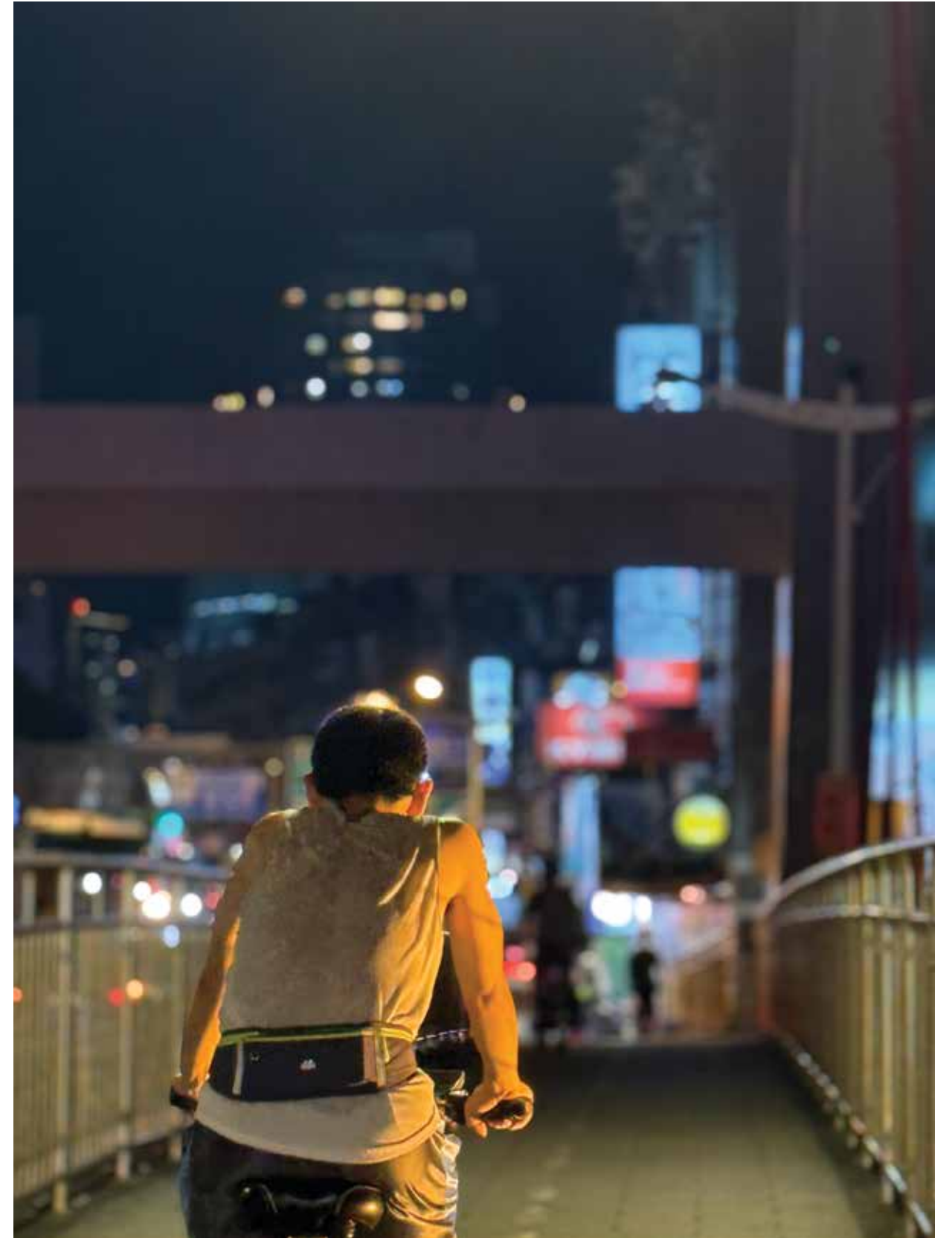
Adrian Samuelsberg

Repentance on Talmage

Starry night above the Sagely City
Ten thousand times I died on yellow bowing cushions
In the hall a single stick of incense
Burns away all the pain in silence

Not Moving

Drifting clouds on the evening mountain
grazed by fleeting fog of broken dreams
It did not move a single inch
for a thousand years!



Teaching Machines to Think (So We Remember How)

Filippo Spike Morelli

I sit at my desk with a decision I don't want to make. Job search. Possible relocation. The kind of choice that ripples forward in ways I can't predict. My hands hover over the keyboard, and I realize: despite making a hundred decisions a day for decades, I still don't fully trust my own thinking.

This is strange, when you sit with it. The thing we do most—deciding—is something we're rarely taught to do well. Schools taught me calculus and essay structure, but never: how do you know if you're thinking clearly? How do you catch yourself making the same mistake you made last time, just in a different context?

I've been building an AI thinking partner recently. Not to make decisions for me, but to help me see where my thinking goes sideways. The process has been humbling. Teaching a machine to think clearly meant first understanding all the ways I don't.

Learning to Decide

I stumbled into this gap late, probably in my early twenties. I'd gotten into the digital nomad world—traveling, freelancing, building small projects. For the first time, my decisions weren't just "which job offer?" but "what kind of work do I even want to do?" The stakes felt higher. The variables multiplied. And I had no framework for navigating any of it.

I went looking for something systematic. This was the early days of online courses, and I found a class from Stanford's Decision Education Foundation about making everyday life choices. It changed everything.

The first principle hit me hardest: *don't judge decisions by outcomes*. We do this constantly. Something turns out well? Good decision. Badly? Bad decision. But this is wisdom in reverse. Luck is always present. You can decide brilliantly and get unlucky. You can decide terribly and get lucky. The result doesn't tell you about the quality of the thinking.

The quality is in the process. In whether you looked at the question from enough angles. In whether you named your assumptions. In whether you were honest about what you didn't know.

The Theater of Being Informed

There's a contemporary version of this problem: the idea that more data makes for better decisions. I used to believe this. Now I'm more skeptical.

Data feels objective. Comprehensive. Safe. If the decision goes wrong, you can point to the numbers—"we followed the data." But who chose which data to collect? Who decided what to measure? Attribution is harder than it looks. Variables tangle. The control group you imagined doesn't exist in the wild. And most "data-driven decisions" are really just intuitions dressed up in spreadsheet clothing.

This isn't an argument for ignorance. Structure matters. Information matters. But in my experience, a good decision accounts for more than what can be counted: facts, yes, but also context, principles, constraints, biases, values. And—though it makes some people uncomfortable—intuition.

The question behind the question often matters more than any data-set. What problem are we really trying to solve? What kind of person (or company, or community) are we trying to become? What assumptions led us to frame the situation this way in the first place?

This is first-principles thinking. Systems thinking. It comes before any domain expertise, before any experiment. And it's hard to do alone, especially when the stakes feel high.

Why a Panel, Not a Coach

When I started building the AI tool, I made a choice that surprised some people: instead of creating a single "wise AI coach," I built a panel of distinct voices. The problem with telling an AI "you are a coach" is that you don't know what you're getting. What kind of coach? Based on which philosophy? The uncertainty is high, and the results inconsistent.

But if you invoke specific thinkers—"what would Seneca say about this?" or "how would Charlie Munger analyze this?"—the uncertainty drops. You're anchoring to known patterns of thought.

My panel includes:

- Ancient thinkers (Aristotle, Seneca, Confucius, Moses) to counter recency bias
- Modern strategists (Peter Drucker, Charlie Munger, Warren Buffett, Shane Parrish) for mental models and practical wisdom
- The sage lens for questions of values, principles, long-term consequence

The AI doesn't become these people. It moderates a conversation. It helps me engage multiple perspectives without the distortion of a single authoritative voice.

The framework underneath is the seven-step decision process I learned years ago:

1. Frame the decision—What are we actually choosing? Is there a deeper question?
2. Gather information—What do we know? Need to know? Can't know?
3. Identify alternatives—What are the real options? Are we creating false binaries?
4. Evaluate trade-offs—What do we gain and lose? What are the ripple effects?
5. Clarify values—What matters most? What kind of person do we want to be?
6. Check for biases—What assumptions are we making? What are we not seeing?
7. Make the call and plan—Decide, commit, define success independent of outcome

This isn't linear. You circle back. You realize halfway through that you framed the question wrong. That's part of the practice.

Teaching the Teacher

Here's what surprised me most: the AI made the same mistakes I used to make.

It wanted to jump straight to solutions. It info-dumped instead of asking questions. It treated the framework like a checklist instead of a conversation. It went down rabbit holes—yes, AI goes down rabbit holes, just like we do.

I had to coach the coach. Add explicit instructions: adopt a questioning stance. Ask one thing at a time. Wait for the response. Adjust. Remember that skepticism isn't a step—it's a lens you apply to everything that enters the discussion.

This "awareness" changed the quality dramatically. But I could only build it because I'd already made these mistakes myself. I recognized when the AI was skipping the hard work of framing, because I used to do that too. I caught it offering

premature solutions, because I know that impulse intimately.

If I hadn't spent years learning how to think more clearly, I never could have built a tool to help me do it better.

The Practice, Not the Answer

I'm using this now for the decision I mentioned at the start—job search, possible relocation, what kind of work I want next. The AI doesn't tell me what to do. It keeps me honest about how I'm thinking. It surfaces assumptions I didn't know I was making. It asks the questions I'd rather avoid.

My wife used it recently to think through a master's program proposal. Her feedback: "Very effective. Asked very good questions."

That's the measure. Not whether it gives the right answer—there often isn't one—but whether it helps you do the thinking you'd otherwise skip.

What Remains Unfinished

Decision-making is a craft, like any other. You can learn it. You can get better. But it's hard to maintain discipline when you're alone with a difficult choice, when the shortcuts feel so available, when the biases whisper that they're actually insights.

Even now, knowing the steps, having built this tool, I still slip. I catch myself retrofitting justification onto choices I've already half-made. I notice myself avoiding the questions that would force me to reconsider comfortable assumptions.

The AI helps. But it's not perfect. There are still rough edges—places where it loses the thread, moments where I have to pull it back. I'm iterating. Adjusting. Learning what works.

And underneath it all, there's a deeper question I keep returning to: If thinking clearly is this difficult, this easy to get wrong even with support and structure—what does that say about all the other decisions we make without pausing to question our process?

I don't have an answer to that. Just the ongoing practice of trying to see more clearly, think more honestly, and remain open to the possibility that I'm still missing something important.

The machines can help us remember how to think. But first we have to teach them. And to teach them, we have to understand our own minds well enough to see where they habitually fail.

That work—that cultivation of clear seeing—is older than any technology. The tools change. The practice remains.



Artwork: Dave Strong

Out of my Window and into my Mind

Jacqueline Farley

Konocti
She reclines
Unmoving,
Unflinching,
Reflecting upon still, silent water
Just for now...
Fleeting peace
Shall I converse with spirits?
Will they share
Wisdom?
Pain?
Joy?
What lurks
beneath
Lake's
Still, shallow waters?

By night
In dateless darkness
silent screams
Echo through tullies
Hollow skulls look on

By day
I have seen refrigerators in backyards
I have seen dogs
straining at their leashes

I have seen children,
smiling in all directions
I have seen men numb
slumped on the sidewalk,
I have seen
Proud young men not backing down

I have seen quiet mothers
In the aisles of Grocery Outlet

Konocti,
She remains ever present
Unchanging,
Watching, waiting,
Her body a witness
Silent silica pregnant with chaos

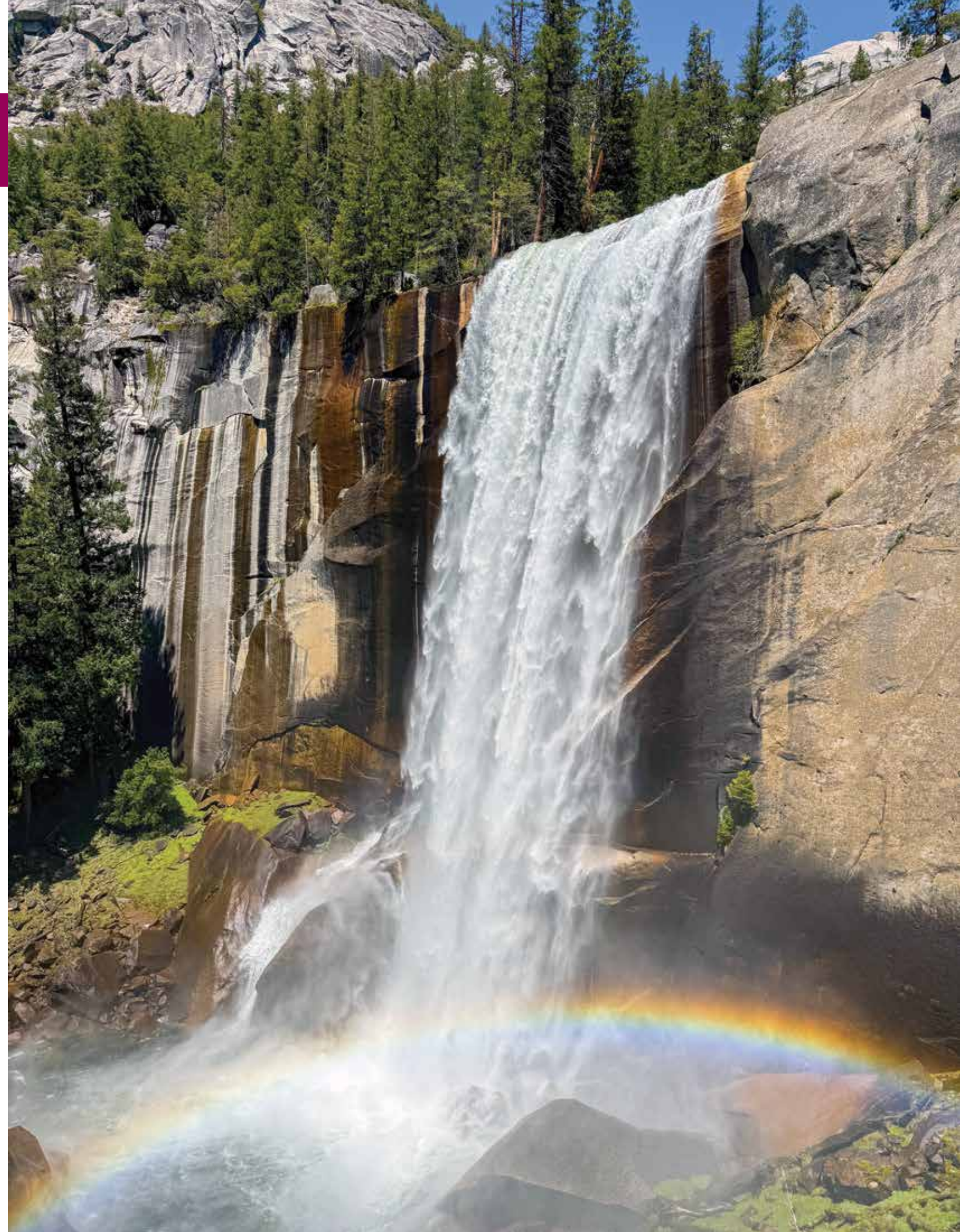


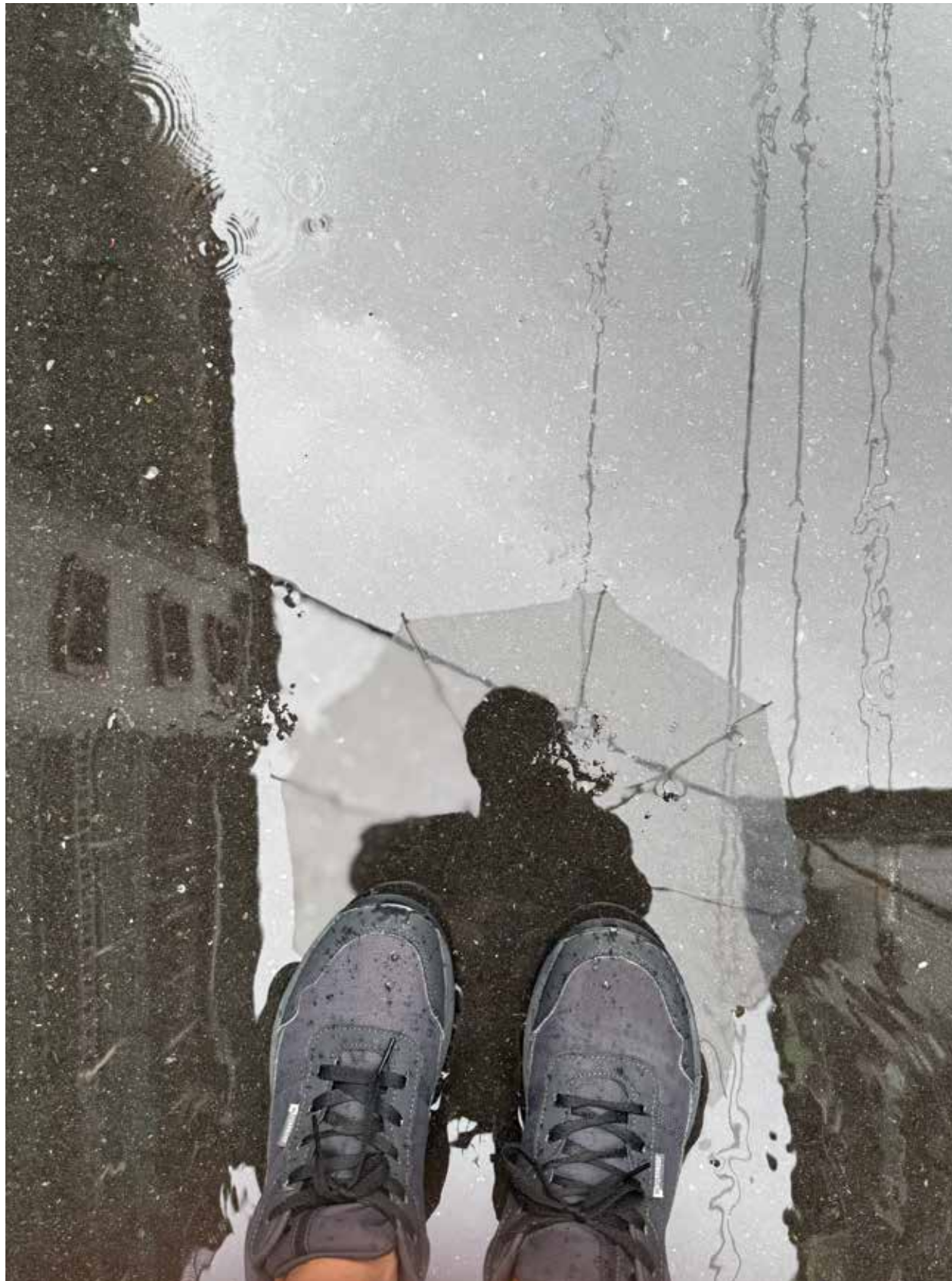
Artwork: Adam Smith

MY BLINDNESS IS A CURSE

Lavanya Adhikari

Stillness, Silence and Spaciousness,
Are the three pills, Fedde said.
Please give me the one that has space.
But a thought—what if I dissociate?
Large spaces make me notice my frames,
Those very eyes that help me recognise names,
But when I see my given eyes,
I don't know who is seeing and who sees.
So I try hard to only look through my glasses,
To forget its very frame.
But I can't!
So maybe I go to a smaller place,
One that's not so wide and full of space.
But I feel like I'm caged!
So I instantly find a spot next to the window pane,
Another frame.
But this feels like it's not so lame.
It gives me spaciousness,
But doesn't make me disappear.
That's the sweet spot,
Perfection next to a window pane.
But I want to go out!
There's so much to roam about!
Maybe I try out bigger frames,
Maybe even ones with colored shade,
They'll keep me a little in the dark.
And maybe won't let me feel apart.
But those glasses are even worse!
My blindness feels like a curse!
Oh Spaciousness, when shall I embrace you?
Maybe when my eye doctor says, "Next you."





Why I Am Not Fit to Inquire About Vimalakīrti's Health

Adam Smith

One day, the World Honored One was out for ice cream in the Saha world with a common worldling named Adam. Noticing that Adam paid for the Tathagata's ice cream, that great sage said, "Adam, ya know, you're a halfway decent person. Why don't you go and inquire about Vimalakīrti's health?" That In-No-Way-Innocent-Worldly said, "Shakyamuni, I am not fit to go and inquire about Vimalakīrti's health. Why not? Once I asked Vimalakīrti out for ice cream, and he said in verse, 'Adam, the only reason you come to me for ice cream is that I'm the only person you know in this trichiloarea with a car. If you were actually practicing meditation instead of falling asleep sitting up for twenty minutes, you would understand that there is no ice cream store, nor ice cream to be had. Understanding this emptiness, you would manifest your body in that buddhfield of ultimate cookies and cream bliss.' So Bhagavan, right off the bat, the guy was being a bit of a buzz kill."

The Buddha then spoke, "Did anything else happen, Wonderfully Ignorant One?" Adam replied, "We wound up going for ice cream. We get to the ice cream parlor, and Vimalakīrti falls silent. He doesn't order anything! I order my ice cream, and he doesn't order anything. So I get my ice cream, and we sit down. Vimalakīrti sits silently and

has no ice cream with me. He doesn't want to engage in idle chatter with me either." The Buddha inquired, "How did that make you feel, Joyfully Stupid One?" Adam says, "I felt sad, because in a moment that should be most joyful and fun, my reality was eating ice cream with some lame old guy. Vimalakīrti then sneezed. I said to him, 'God bless you.' He replied, 'I don't believe in God'. Saddened by his nonacceptance of my blessing, I lost my temper and said, 'Vimalakīrti, what are we supposed to do when someone sneezes? Act like nothing happened!?' Vimalakīrti then purchased a cone of ice cream, and, wielding it like a vajra, he replied, 'Awkward and Smelly One, when a Bodhisattva goes out to ice cream with their friends, a Bodhisattva practices giving without reward. They practice patience because it dissolves all awkwardness and disputes between living beings. And when one sneezes, a Bodhisattva's compassion can endure all the fatigue and suffering of sentient beings.'"

What Vimalakīrti said made everyone in that ice cream parlor, except for Adam, become enlightened. Then Adam replied, "Moreover, World Honored One, I then blocked his cellphone number, and I blocked him on all social media platforms. Therefore, I am not fit to go and inquire about Vimalakīrti's health."

Bonn & Moosh

Roxanne Xin et al.

This piece was created during the creative writing workshop I held in mid-March. As part of the workshop, each participant was assigned to write different sections of the narrative outline. Together, we chose character names and relationships based on the props I brought, mainly some figurines and toys. We agreed on the main characters, Bonn and Moosh; everyone contributed a little to their story, and this is what you are now reading.

Moosh and Bonn, a mushroom and a bunny, lived in a pink house by the witch's oracle. Every morning they walked to fetch water from a copper well that is in the minion's territory. Little Belly lived in the witch's garden, right on the path to the copper well. He watched Moosh and Bonn dancing with each other every day. Little Belly wanted to be friends with them. But he was forced to watch from the sidelines as he was the leader of the villain group, which consisted of himself and two yellow minions.

Bonn was a childhood friend of the two yellow minions. But something catastrophic happened to them during which Bonn was absent due to circumstances. They thought Bonn didn't care about them, so they bore resentment towards each other.

One day, when Moosh and Bonn went to the witch's secret garden, the minions decided to infiltrate their home and poison the bread they had baked the night before. When the two were back from the secret garden...

They saw Little Belly unconscious on the ground! They couldn't understand what was going on, as they only smiled at each other when they crossed each other's paths. Their hearts were still racing. The newfound stillness which embraced their small world was beginning to catch up with them, as the echoes of the witch's crackling were

beginning to fade from their minds. The wind felt cold as they walked on through the woods, off to fetch the doctor.

"Hey Bonn?" said Moosh.

"Yes?"

"That really, really sucked," exclaimed Moosh.

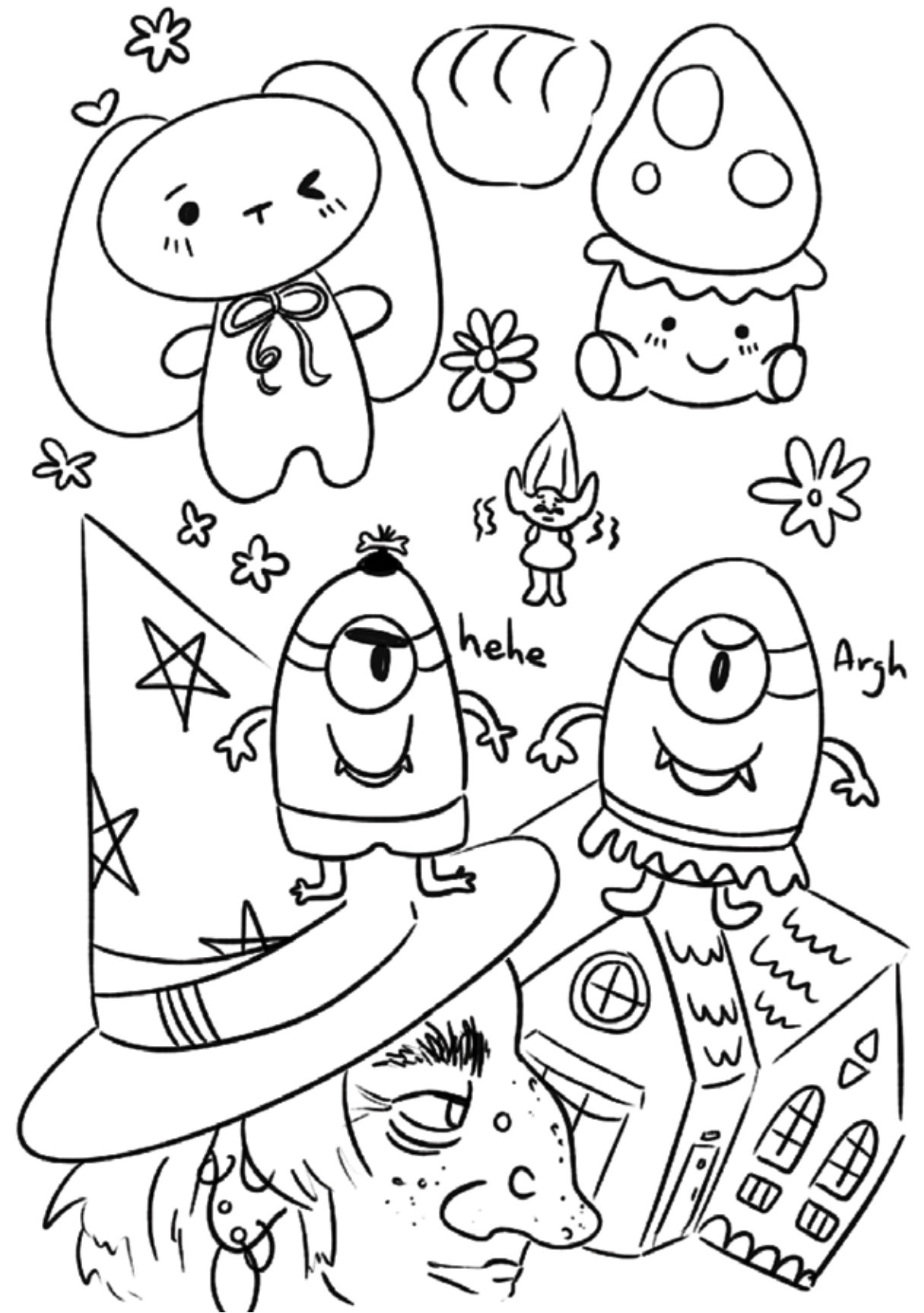
A silence envelopes the two for a moment.

"Yeah... You think he'll be okay? Even if he's still sick?" asked Bonn, anxious, yet trying to seem calm after their recent troubles. Bonn skips ahead, putting on a smile as they turn around, walking backwards, facing Moosh.

"I'm stealing your soup for a week! They're still sick. What if the doctor can't do... anything... Anyways, off we go, yeah?"

They didn't know where to find a doctor in the woods. So they knocked on the witch's door and explained how they found this unconscious fellow on their floor. Although the witch looked wrinkled and evil, she was actually a vegetarian who never harmed a living being in her life. She offered to cure Little Belly, who soon woke up feeling slightly dizzy.

Bonn and Moosh brought dark chocolates and delicious soup for Little Belly, who became very emotional all of a sudden. The little guy explained how he was forced by the minions to poison Bonn and Moosh because he had signed a contract with them years prior. But Little Belly never wanted to harm Bonn and Moosh, because he liked their friendship and always wanted to become friends with them. Suddenly, Little Belly became very weary after revealing too much. But the witch assured that none of them had to worry any longer, because she had already eliminated the villains by throwing them in her garden's compost bin.



Artwork: Roxanne Xin

What is There to Attain?

Adam Valadez

The Buddha, knowing Vimalakīrti's thoughts (that the World Honored One hadn't shown him compassion and sympathy in regard to his health yet), told Auspicious Adam, "Go visit with Vimalakīrti and inquire about his health."

Auspicious Adam told the Buddha, "World Honored One! I am not fit to go and inquire about his health. Why not? I cannot even recall the series of causes and conditions in which I have found myself to be here within this fifteen-by-nine-inch screen, so how could I possibly go and inquire of a Vimalakīrti in which his appearance and whereabouts are unknown to me in this form? Furthermore, World Honored One, in a past life, I went to Black Oak Coffee on a trip not for alms but to inquire of Vimalakīrti a method by which to complete an assignment I had for class in the studies of none other than the Dharma itself. Having undertaken the task of completing this assignment, I inquired of Vimalakīrti the nature of my flaws, so that I might find a means to better myself and draw closer to anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi, and also as a means to complete the assignment. Vimalakīrti entered samādhi, deeply reflecting on the limitless causes and conditions that had led to that moment, and thus spoke to me, 'Auspicious Adam, the affliction that thus holds you back is simply your lack of wisdom. Tell me, Auspicious Adam, what is the true nature of all dharmas?'

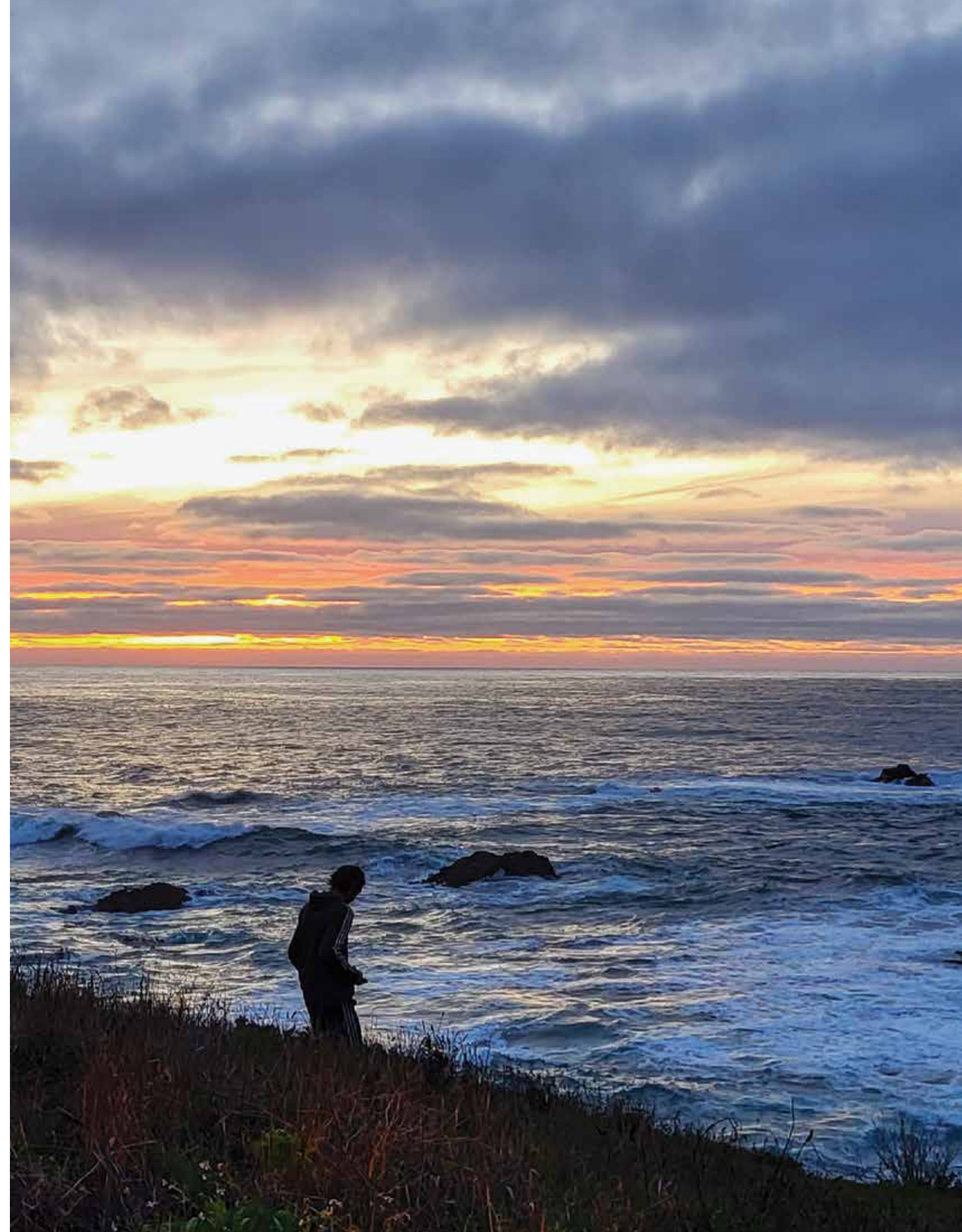
"I then responded to Vimalakīrti in this manner: 'Emptiness, right?'

"Vimalakīrti, with conviction, responded: 'Where is your confidence? You say the right answer, but you hardly possess the assurance that it is true. It is this very lack of confidence that displays your lack of true wisdom.'

"In confusion, I asked, 'But I thought there was nothing to attain? How can I be assured that I've attained wisdom when there is nothing to attain?'

"Vimalakīrti replied, 'There is nothing to attain because you are already dwelling within it, and you are already dwelling within it because there is nothing to attain. When you truly understand this, anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi is assured.'

"When Vimalakīrti thus declared this, twenty-five laypeople brought forth the resolve for anuttarā samyaksaṃbodhi. Therefore, I am not fit to go and inquire about his health."





In Praise of the Mind Transmission

Adrian Samuelsberg

The lineage teacher
Receives benedictions from Vulture Peak
The willow twig sprinkles libations
On living beings' afflictions
Transforming, teaching and healing

He serves tea in the Chan hall
To reveal the subtle taste
Of green, unfolding leaves
Like holding aloft a lotus

The thread of wakefulness
Weaves together
Patriarch after patriarch's robes
Buddha after Buddha
Weaves together
Each consecutive moment

Reflections Across Coffee

Sehen Gamhewa

What use are words?
What use are memories?
Everything I am, fades away.
What truth can I realize? There is no me to realize it.

Looking at a bygone moment, how many thoughts did I have in that moment?
Is Life the thing passed me by, slyly turning her dress as she did so,
Or is Life this moment of pure reflection? Here, right now, here I am, that nature
you’ve been waiting for.

It is the voice that calls you by your name.
It is I, the speaker.
His word is never forgotten.

To a Tathagatha, there is no death.
After all, there is no thing to experience it.

What then, is that subtle tone that vibrates us all? I ask, again and again
And you answer, resoundingly, in every life, in every voice, simultaneously,
and every time,
SPRING! Spring, spring, spring! Raise yourself up and sing! Pay homage to the moon!

)

—



The sky awaits your return. Wide, all encompassing.
Without an identity, available to all identities.
I perceive the sky and see God.
Another sees it and says blue.
My blue may not be their God.
Their blue may be my God.
Their blue is not their God.
Their God may be my blue.

“The aparallel evolution of two beings that have nothing to do with each other”
(Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 10).
Deleuze and Guattari themselves thought through this statement, in bringing it up.
Yet this phrase was originally coined in the mind of Remy Chauvin.
Still, it stands on its own as something that can be encountered by anyone.
Whatever it means to each individual, which is in so far as their own encounter, the
statement itself stands alone as something that must be experienced alone.

It was encountered by Chauvin within his own mind and concretized as his own statement and expressed.

Deleuze and Guattari encounter its truth when they encounter the sentence and decide to concretize it even more by referencing it in relation to their own mind-universes.

And here (you) I am writing this meta-reference to a reference in my OWN thoughts as a further reflection.

Are any of us individual?

We exist in our own, our minds, separate.

And we grow on our own. Seemingly separate.

The only common thread currently between the four of us, Chauvin, Deleuze and Guattari, and me, is this one statement, at least speaking so far as a concrete admission.

As we ourselves separately evolve, are we related?

Two girls sit at the coffee table next to me speaking in fluent Spanish. I understand nothing.

I encountered them. I do not know how they encountered me. If even they did besides a vague passing glance of a brown stranger, maybe not even that. Just a blur that blended in with the table.

One of the girls spills her drink at the counter.

We encounter this scene together from different points.

An older lady kindly says they'll clean it up for you, and "they" do. They, the entity: one staff member working.

We evolve together. Experiencing ourselves separately at the same time through this unifying encounter.

A woman walked past me earlier.

A man walked past me just now.

I liked the woman and forgot about her.

I disliked the man and was reminded of the woman.

Their evolutions, their progressions created a difference in mine.

I cannot tell how their lives progress.

I cannot tell how me being next to them makes a difference.

I'm in some sense not even an entity to the people that notice me. Just an impression.

But I believe the hand guiding them uses my impression among others to guide them in a certain direction.

Such is necessity as the Greeks contemplated it.

Now we are here.

No awareness of necessity, but controlled by necessity.

Technology is our promethean necessity.

Prometheus was the titan, the old god, of forethought.

Perhaps this is the lead into everything.

A constant promethean existence.

Deleuze and Guattari say "drives and part-objects are neither stages on a genetic axis nor positions in a deep structure; they are political options for problems, they are entryways and exits, impasses the child lives out politically ... with all the force of [their] desire" (13).

I wonder as I watch this funny little dog in front of me what its evolution is.

Is it too not that famed, koanic, evolution of a Buddha?

In that sense, according to the Shurangama, evolution is actually a process of deluded thinking. Evolving is the second subtle delusive aspect that leads to the creation of self.

If that is the case, that our contextual existence is in a sense a departure from our actuality as a body without organs, and that the contextual falsity is experienced as real while the real is experienced as false, crossing to the other shore is an inverse reality.

Now that Kabir verse makes sense:

"I have seen some strange things ... a tree flowering with its roots in the sky"

Every second glance out of my eye is out of a barely repressed lust for existing.

The innocence of the soul that is purely interested in beauty is twisted into an internal torment of guilt complexed with lust, in order to shut itself off and avoid blame, for blamelessness, that is, genuine lack of desire, is the state of freedom in the world.

Continuous existence is then a sense of language.

Or rather, language is a sense of continuous existence.

Furthermore, the body, the heart, all contribute.

So to understand a continuous existence, one constantly enters and exits frames and doorways. All doorways speak prajna, whether intentional movement or unintentional coercion into a state of mind. It is recognizing this that reorients one into oneself and their natural state of being beyond anything and every other thing; comfort, somehow.

"A microscopic event upsets the local balance of power" (Deleuze and Guattari 15).

Truly are not all the great traumatic events of people's lives microscopic in the great continuity?

ROLEMODELS, excerpt from Ch. 1

Blake Plante

ROLEMODELS is a bildungsroman loosely inspired by the burning house parable of the Lotus Sutra. The included excerpts are from Chapter One and Chapter Sixteen. Mo, a high school senior, is the novel's protagonist. Ewan is his friend; Doc, their school counselor.

Mo looked sullenly at Doc. But Doc was just looking at him, eyes open and face relaxed. Now Doc was giving him the silent treatment. Mo followed Doc's eyes and glared defiance. But Doc peered straight back into Mo. What was with that? Was Doc just watching him? But it didn't look like there was anything on Doc's mind. He was just there, open, alive. Mo started to feel uncomfortable. He looked away, to the gray walls and then to the things on the walls. An oil painting of a world sliced in two with worms sticking out. A sequence of drawings of a boy covering his eyes with his hands, next to a chiaroscuro image of Jesus Christ on the cross. Even a poster of Luke Skywalker in a dark cave, his blue lightsaber illuminating his way, torso tilted and head turned with a searching, apprehensive gaze. Eventually, questioningly, Mo looked back at Doc. Doc had sustained his gaze. He had seen Mo's defiance and his avoidance, his boredom as he'd moved from staring at the wall to seeing what was on it, and the experiencing gaze that saw the worms, saw the boy, saw Doc's look. He had seen Mo's question.

Mo felt simultaneously seen and embarrassed. When he looked at Doc next, then, he looked with a challenge. If Doc had seen him, then he would see Doc. They sat like that for a while, both peering into each other's eyes across the table. Mo's face held at the eyebrows, held tight at the mouth, in what was turning out to be a huge strain. Gradually, he had to relax. He had to match what Doc was doing to keep up, and all Doc was doing was looking at him with

open eyes, eyes that—Mo now noticed—had a depth to them, as if looking at them, the feelings of being disconnected from everyone, of not being understood, of being alone and confused, were beginning to be replaced by something else: it was as though the two of them were becoming one thing, like by just looking at each other they were able to not only see the other, but to see themselves, and to see more than that, too.

In Doc's hazel eyes, Mo noticed blue flecks that sprouted from the black bulbs in the center and that, like a peacock's tail, passed into a multitude of colors, of yellows, greens, and reds and oranges. Through the eyes, Mo could see reflections—Mo could see his own reflection—and he realized that he was beginning to smile. Doc, too, was beginning to smile. Their breathing had become practically linked. Their smile grew and grew before Mo was struck. He didn't know what he was struck by. It was some combination of everything, like being hit by time and memory. He didn't know if he teared up first or if Doc did; tears flooded their eyes and started to drip down their faces. They held. Mo had never felt so understood, so much at one with another person, and he didn't want this to end. Doc, too, seemed content to keep going. He was like a mirror, only he was being mirrored, too. They were two mirrors come together, experiencing each other's being together, gazing into the world together.

When Mo's eyes finally felt so tired that they closed a while, they closed with a feeling of serenity.

When he opened his eyes, Doc was smiling, wiping his own eyes with a tissue. "Here," Doc said. A light puff signaled to Mo's now blurry vision that Doc had passed him a tissue.

"What was that?" Mo asked. He scrunched the tissue against his face.

"That was seeing."

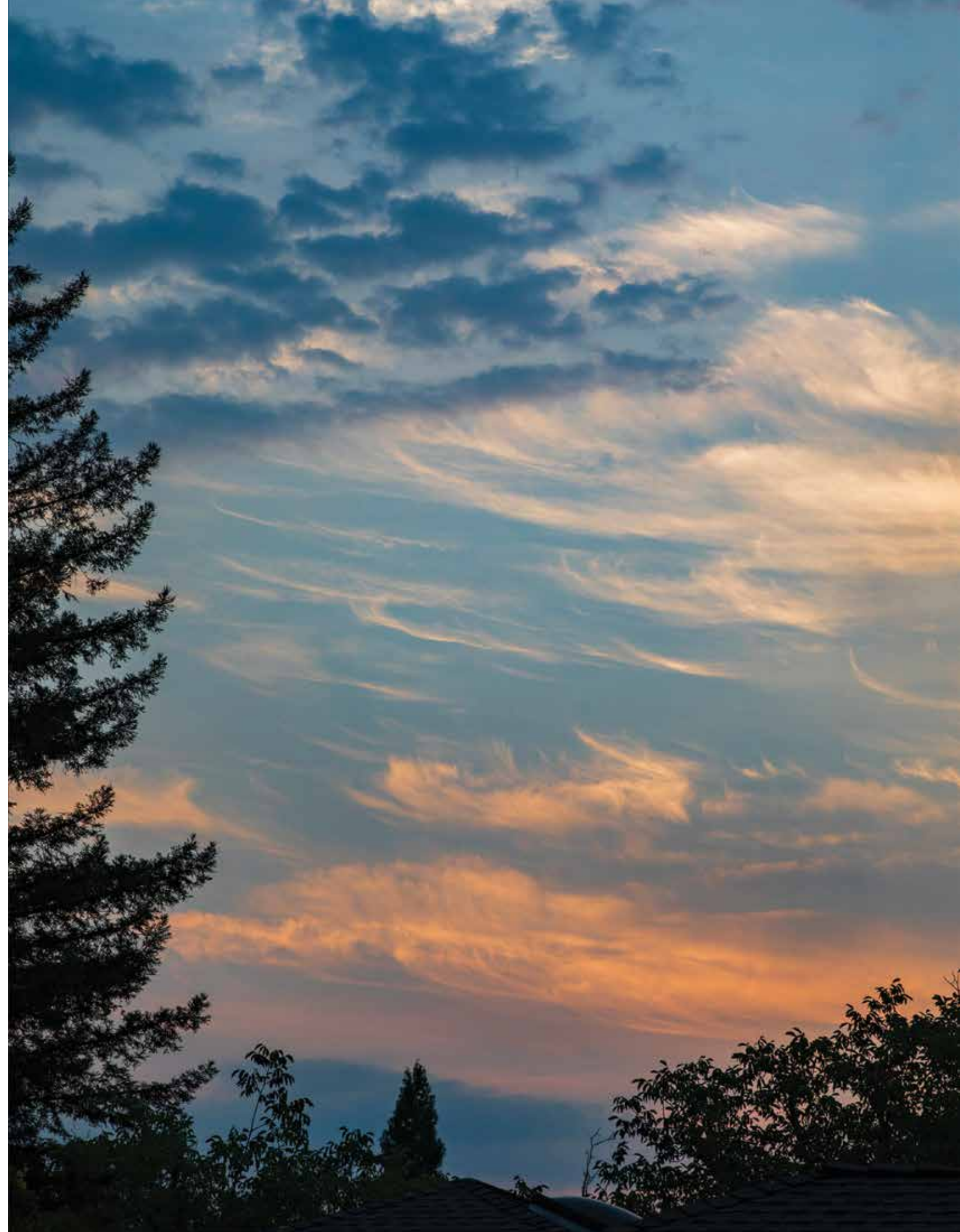


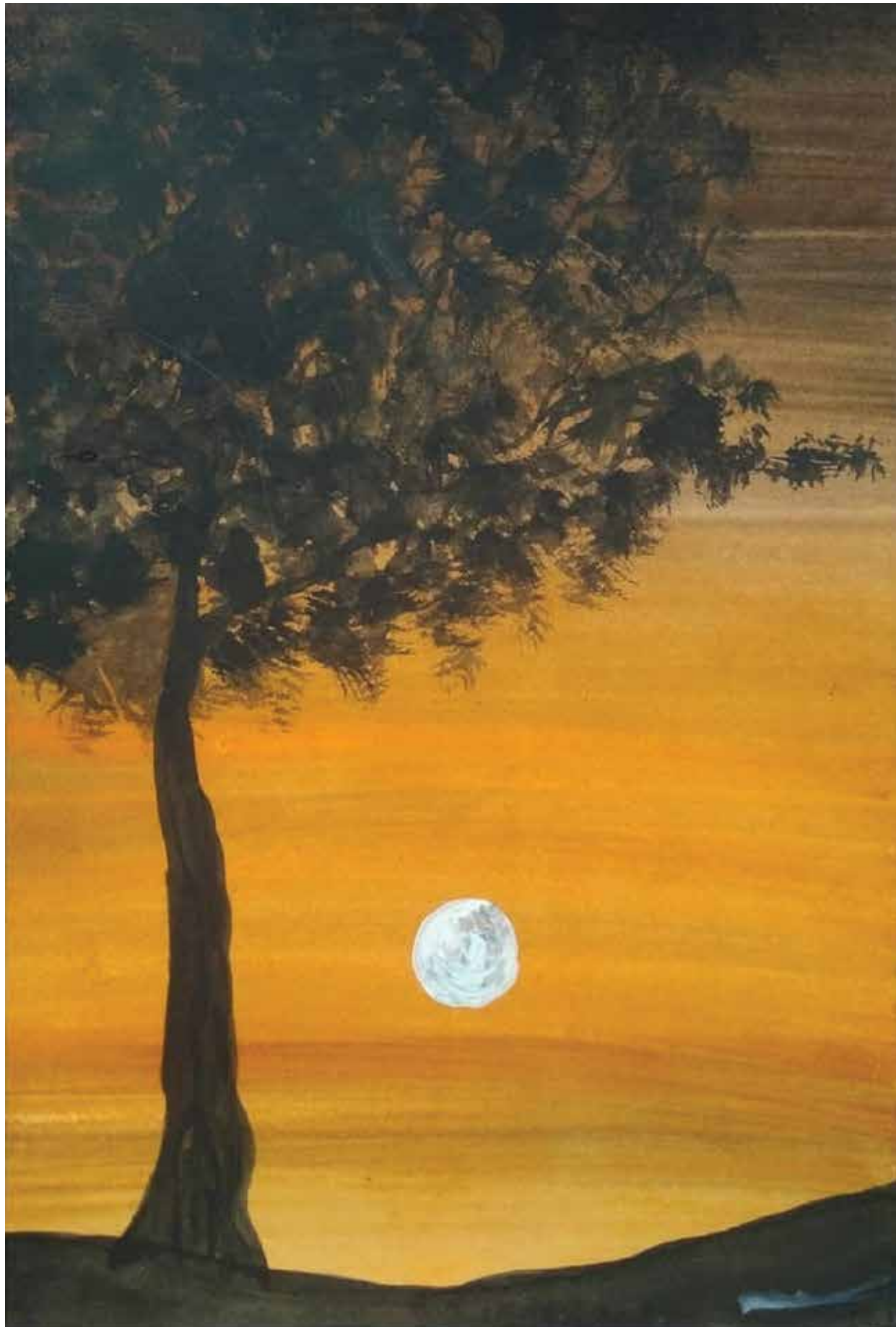
Autumnal Interior
Artwork: Thanh Chu

Why do I . . . ?

I wish when we met, it wasn't thru the screen
I wish, at that moment, we were both being seen
Things rise and then wither, isn't that how it's been?
But why do I still expect, yellow leaves to turn green...?

— J.S. Bach—





waiting

waiting for you to text back
waiting for you to come over
waiting for you to finally say yes

i knew i would be waiting
when i saw your eyes

i knew i would be waiting forever
when you said no

—Juniper Miller

stepping back

i told myself i was stepping back
but my hand is closer than it was yesterday
and i keep not putting my head on your shoulder
which is its own kind of leaning in

—Juniper Miller

Mole's Murmur

Sodden clods of earth support me beneath my mound
“Safe as Houses”

Subterranean creature emerging only to forage amidst lichen-cloaked oaks
On Valley floor.

Tangles of fallen branches confuse me...
Looking to teasels for assurance —
They stand, determined as sentinels along my path...

To where?
I don't know
I'm lost

—Jacqueline Farley



ROLEMODELS, excerpt from Ch. 16

Blake Plante

“A dho Mukha Svanasana,” the instructor said, trying to give an honest fake accent, “is good for clearing the sinuses.”

Ewan liked the yoga because at the end of it, his nose indeed felt clearer; his body felt awake; he felt good. He knew it would only last temporarily, but he was glad that it would last as long as it would. Or, rather, he was glad to do it to feel it for however long it lasted, because it made the having-it bearable. It presented something of a balm. Yoga was something he could do, sort of, for himself.

He hadn’t brought a set of clothes to change into, but he never did when he came here. He was used to his shirt and pants sticking to him afterwards. He went to the restroom, washed his face, put the sweater on over his wet shirt, and picked up the stick from aside the storage cubicles.

On the way out, time stopped. A poster on the window stood out amid the advertisements for massages, psychic and palm readings, and healing technique trainings. It was of some kind of human robot, and a small man, so small Ewan couldn’t make out his features, really anything about him, even whether he was a man. It was this barely visible figure swinging a hammer and standing upon the shoulder of a giant conglomeration of metal, junk, and ooze, assembled in the artifice of a man. A giant robot with a neutral, constructed face, on which could be read anything. At the top, a sharpie had written TONIGHT! with emphasis.

Ewan saw a big worm crawling around the front of the robot. The robot held a lightsaber in one of its claws. Actually, the claw looked kind of like Luke Skywalker’s face. The robot had Elvis’ pants. It wore a crown of thorns on its head. There were all kinds of other things in it too that he didn’t recognize—faces, hands, items; politicians, book titles, blurry words of

a poem. The title emblazoned over all this was “The Construction of Space.”

Ewan saw it all, and he was transfixed. He didn’t know what transfixed him, only that it felt right. That in this, maybe, was the promise of a seeing, a being seen; a knowing, an understanding—and a path forward. He immediately decided to go. It was that evening at the community theatre. He’d just have to wander around until it was time.

Something in him guided him there, some consideration shortened the time to wait and neutralized the hunger. He purchased a student ticket at the kiosk and went inside. His clothes were dry by then.

He brought the stick with him into the theatre, sat somewhere in the middle, and let the stick fall against his legs.

The stage was bare with a matte black floor. People filed in until the theatre was about half-full. Then it went pitch dark. A minute passed. The sound of wheels, of something creaking onto the stage, slowly, and then a thump.

The spotlight flared on like sun blasting through night, illuminating a man near the curtains. Ewan blinked as his eyes blurred and adjusted. The man, bleary and squinting, raised a hand to his forehead and shielded his eyes.

The slim man on stage with hazel eyes and long black hair—he’d grown his hair out to his shoulders, nurtured a stubble on his chin—was unmistakably, inscrutably, Doc, wearing his characteristic black tee and suit coat.

What was his school counselor doing here?

Was Mo in this audience, then? Ewan looked around, but there wasn’t enough light to see many people’s faces.

Doc stood there and looked. As far as Ewan could tell, Doc couldn’t see much of anything either.

Starting from the left of the stage, he walked, and like an enclosure, the light followed him.

He came upon a cabinet. It was a large cabinet—*Victorian* was the word that came to Ewan, but he didn’t know what the cabinet really was. It must have been ten feet tall. It had several small storage doors from the bottom until just above Doc’s head, where then it had several drawers, as though made for a giant.

Doc placed his right hand on a cabinet handle and his left on a hold where the wood jutted out, and he started climbing up it, climbing up the wall of cabinet. He found a higher-up hold for a hand and a ledge for a foot, his body dangling and grasping toward the top.

He pulled himself up and squatted, wobbling, then lengthened his legs and bent his torso forward, arms reaching for balance.

He took a small step forward. With minor wobbles, he took more small steps toward the front. Then he leaned forward to see the top drawer. Doc carefully opened the drawer, reached inside, and pulled out a hammer.

THWACK! He whacked the top of the cabinet. *WHAM BAM BLAST.* A chunk chipped off. *CLACK!* The cabinet’s small rounded tip at the middle of the roof snapped off and thudded against the unseeable floor.

WHACK WHACK WHACK! He moved to its corners. The front-right corner chipped away bit by gloss-wood bit, and then the wood warbled aside, nails jutting out. He lifted the hammer high and bashed it against the top of the cabinet, poking right through.

Ewan had felt the pressure of a cough building up inside of him and couldn’t stop it. It was too strong for him, and it came out loud.

Doc looked up suddenly, seemed to survey his surroundings, but the whole crowd was void-dark.

Very soon he hit the cabinet some more. *SMASH! SMASH! BANG! BANG!* Pieces chipped off, the hammer busting through the top into the first drawer, through the first drawer into the second drawer, through the second drawer into—he couldn’t reach that far.

Doc huffed and rested his arm. He put the hammer in the drawers—the top drawer first, but then it fell through to the second drawer. Ewan could hear the clang, measure the distance.

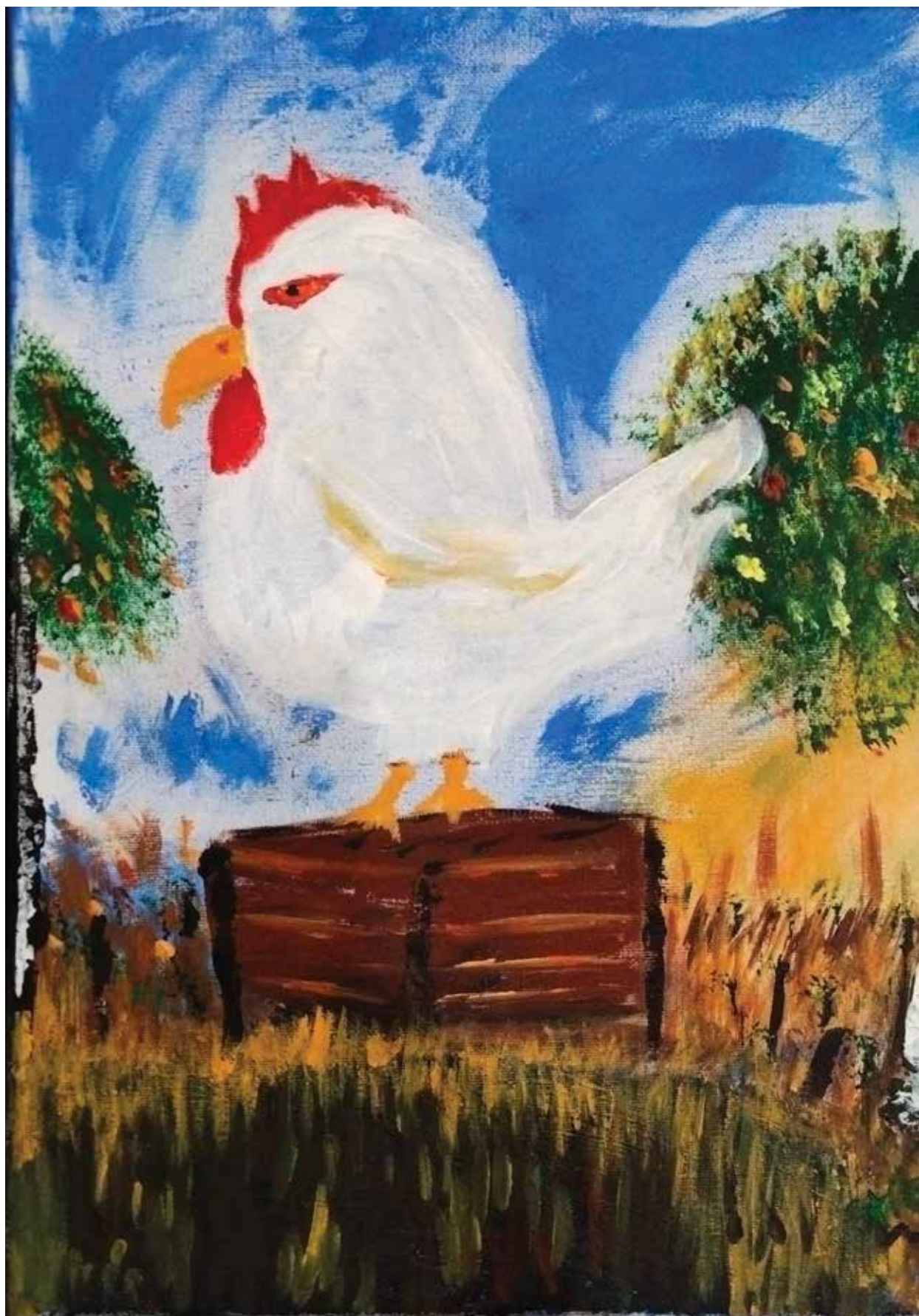
Doc stood. He surveyed around him and tested the weakened, flaky roof of the cabinet beneath his feet. He grunted and walked to the back of the cabinet, bent over far, reaching for something—reaching and pulling up a giant sledgehammer. Doc readied the sledgehammer, and then, swinging it like a pendulum, he hit it against the side of the cabinet.

Ewan felt his own hand grasp the stick by his chair and tighten around it as the whole cabinet shook and moved a couple inches to the right. The front doors waved open and danced like tongues. Doc hit the side again, and Ewan felt the vibration rumble through him. The front of the top drawer broke off and crashed against the floor.

He hit the side again, *WHAM*, and Ewan’s grip on the stick tightened. He felt the tarantulas jittering around in his throat, tingling. He felt the stick ascend to press against his throat, against the hardness and the movement inside.

“HRAAAHH!” Doc cried, and the sledgehammer clamored loudly against the large cabinet, which shook beneath his body. Ardent in his labor—Ewan circled the stick around his throat, his throat around the stick, pressing harder against it—*THWACK!* Doc hit it again. *BAM BAM BAM BAM!* An explosion of energy, and at each hit the cabinet moved to the right a bit. He kept bashing against the side and it kept going right, till the sledgehammer broke through the wall and got stuck inside, and he had to advance with extended arms and wiggle it from above, first searchingly, then wildly, sweating, roaring, as it burst out of the wall scattering shards into the dark, floating above Doc and falling to *THAK!* the cabinet on the other side. He huffed, and hit the cabinet again, this time on the right, thrusting the cabinet left.

Every slam of the sledgehammer, Ewan felt in his body a spasm, an earthquake, a tremor causing the tarantulas to skitter, his



body to pulse, causing him to swallow, causing things that had not been moving to move, jumble around, to pain beautifully—beautifully, because any moving pain was freedom from the static pain.

One of Doc's legs cast out at an angle. The cabinet hobbled as he steadied his feet, and he *WHACKED* it, moving the whole cabinet to the left. He *WHACKED* it again, smashing a hole through that side too.

He started to *GLACK!* it on the front, *CLACK!* it on the back. All the while, Ewan felt his body curdling. The vibration promised change, gave him hope in change. And as he began to hope in change, the cabinet took on its own body, started to bleed, took on the semblance of Mo trying to look superior to him but *CLACK!*

The whole thing was getting gutted. Doc was striking at the middle sections, caving in the shelves. Ewan's body rumbled, and the cabinet morphed into —

He saw a reptile—two reptiles; a lizard and a snake—they were in a car, one was driving; they were in an airplane, the other passengers were ants.

How was this the cabinet?

Soon he saw a father, hanging onto a son on a bare stage, grasping onto the son's leg. They became space ships, and the father chased the son, until the son shot the father; turned and repaired him; turned and started to go away from him, but then was followed and he shot again and he got away.

Then the son-as-lizard unrolled a yoga mat on a beach, but he crushed a fly. A window opened from the sky, and a man with a beard yelled: "bad karma!" The son was smashed by a human foot. He became a fly that was then crushed by a finger. He became a chicken that had its head chopped off; a bird that was shot; a bull in Vietnam getting chopped into pieces.

CLANG! CLANG! Doc hammered on. CLANG!

CLANG! Ewan watched with raptured eyes. *This is it, he thought.* This was it—somehow it was it, it was exactly it. *This is the truth.*

What?

Spurred to wake in this same body, Ewan watched glass clatter to the ground as one edge collapsed. Doc started kicking a remaining part of the cabinet with his foot. He leaned down and pulled a piece off with his hand.

Soon, Doc had only two edges and the line connecting them. He started to hit the space between them, caving in the wood.

There, the spotlight, previously focused—a blast of light—expanded to show a larger picture; to show the full cabinet, the floor, and Doc. Ewan saw Mo, the lizard, the father, the son swirling away from the father, on the ground, dilapidated, like a congress of bones.

Doc kept hitting the space beneath his legs. He nearly fell into all the shards on the ground, something like a ten-foot drop, as he hit out the support that connected the two corners his feet were on.

Once more, Ewan couldn't help but see—Mo? Doc? himself?—in the place of the cabinet, the back of a head atop a mountain of bones, whacked by a sledgehammer—fresh blood! Teeth! Gums! pushing out! But like a rubber head it came back in, and he whacked again!

Ewan's grip became tighter, tighter. His hand filled with pain, with pain.

Doc just kept hitting and just kept hitting, and then the last bit that had connected the two sides broke off, and he now just had two precarious slabs of wood to balance on, and he rode them both down to the ground and landed on his feet. The sledgehammer dropped, angled somewhere on the floor. The stage was full of splintered wood, glass, and metal, the lining of the drawers and their knobs.

Ewan's hand released. It wasn't Mo; it wasn't any of that. It was just the cabinet, a very big cabinet, so many pieces, strewn across the floor—where once had been a cabinet.

Doc looked visibly surprised when his head angled up from the wreckage, as though unaware that the effect of his actions had been this.

And then he looked, like actors do, reflecting you, and he walked away, he just walked away.

Note to Self

Art L.

A shadow, and a speck,
Within the universe of appearances and possibilities,
Form Meru, king of mountains,
Oh great eclipse, this ant before my eye.

Though innocent and pure,
The elements and faculties —
Are claimed at all expense,
And families are torn apart in empty space.

The villain's rise just means his fall,
Fuel of discontent, resourceful genius.
When the dictator is asleep,
The open field is full of wonder.

Thieves, and criminals of war,
Guarding bridges, blocking crossings —
These, my friends and former kin,
When will these too be broken up?

What can you learn
from punishing a thief?
Your thoughts and dreams
are only shamans of the one alive.

When you greet the open sky,
Think of me and all your mothers.
Sing the melody of Sol, and return
this dark age to the promised land.

The sacred pyramid and golden calf,
incarnate guide into samsara.
King Meru collapse to ashes,
To the false collection — wave goodbye.





Being Mindful of the Father

Adrian Samuelsberg

Every death has room for grace
Every room contains a timeless essence
In boundless measure there is light
For every instant of the present moment

Amitabha's body is the color of gold
He adorns the worlds in all directions
With great, great love
Every being being present
Becomes that old golden father

Enjoy The Breeze

Meiying Cen

Sunny afternoon in early spring
Cool breeze at times touches my face
Amidst the warmth of the sun
Not too chill
Not too hot
Just right for comfort
Just at ease

Sunny afternoon in early spring
Light clouds at times float by the blue sky
Amidst the bright light of the sun
Not too bright
Not too dark
Just right for the view
Just at ease

Sunny afternoon in early spring
Branches and leaves on the giant tree
Sway to the gentle breeze
Not too fast
Not too still
Just enjoy the breeze
Just at ease

Sunny afternoon in early spring
Busy bees are flying in the garden
Flowers dance with the soothing breeze
Not too fast
Not too still
Just interesting enough for the bees
Just enjoy the breeze

Sunny afternoon in early spring
DRBU people are walking around the Earth Store Hall
In the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas
Not too crowded
Not too empty
Enjoy stillness within movement
Everything is just right

CONTRIBUTORS

Lavanya Adhikari *is a DRBU BA2 student*

Aryashree Bhagat *is a DRBU BA1 student*

Nahelia Aguilar Castillo *is a DRBU alum*

Meiying Cen *is a DRBU MA2 student*

Thanh Chu *is a DRBU BA3 student*

Jacqueline Farley *is a friend of DRBU*

Sehen Gamhewa *is a DRBU MA1 student*

Art L. *is a DRBU MA1 student*

Selene Luong *is a student at IGDVS*

Juniper Miller *is a DRBU BA1 student*

Filippo Spike Morelli *is a friend of DRBU*

Bach Nguyen *is a DRBU BA4 student*

Blake Plante *is a friend of DRBU*

Adrian Samuelsberg *is a DRBU MA2 student*

Stan Shoptaugh *is a staff member
and MFWM designer*

Adam Smith *is a DRBU BA2 student*

Dave Strong *is a friend of DRBU*

Adam Valadez *is a DRBU BA2 student*

Marty Verhoeven *is DRBU Dean Emeritus
of Academics*

Yidan Wang *is a DRBU MA2 student*

David Wei *is a DRBU MA1 student*

Roxanne Xin et al. *is a DRBU BA3 student*

Ven. Xing Xing *is a DRBU MA2 student*

KEY:

DRBU - Dharma Realm Buddhist University

IGDVS - Instilling Goodness Developing
Virtue School

FRONT COVER ART: Aryashree Bhagat

BACK COVER ART: Adam Smith

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- And much more!

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