

The Nest Review

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Fear of the Unknown

Anticipation fills me with angst.
Doubt swarms around my mind
like mosquitos ready to pierce my calm.

The possibility of acceptance,
a temporary repellent,
kills off any signs of negativity.
Fading, projections of failure play
over and over in my head.

My future is a clean pair of spectacles
free of smudges or scratches,
but my fear fogs its lenses.

If I fail will I ever be able to get up off the ground?
Continuous questioning of the unknown
consumes every part of me.

All positivity is trapped in waves of ambiguity.
Confidence swims to the top,
only to be forced back under,
and hidden from the rest of the world.

Two Hundred in Harmony

One who stopped believing an hour before the email was sent,
one who traveled from New York to Nashville performing for large crowds,
one who was forced by his mother to audition,
one bound for Yale, singing for her resume,
one pair of friends who screamed *Can you believe it?*
one group from Rutherford who gave up their lunches for this,
one who said *I am proud of myself* for this first time,
one who walked at a fast pace, wore a bowtie, and wouldn't dare miss a rehearsal,
one whose father said *Music will never get you anywhere in life*,
one who has been to Italy, Germany, France, Spain, and Turkey playing eight different instruments,
one whose mother said *Perfection is the only path to success*,
one who will never sing again after high school,
one whose mother always sits in the front row, crying at every concert,
one who always shows up late, never forgetting to leave his music scattered on his bedroom floor,
one who is classically trained, who spent her summers in and out of practice rooms,
one from a small town in North Jersey who always sings off pitch,
one who has been to New York City thirty-seven times, seeing a different Broadway show every
time,
one who said *I am good enough* and was.

Undocumented

The one that said goodbye to his crying parents at sixteen in hopes of a better life
The one that had to run and jump onto the arms of his brothers to get over the wall
The one that was tackled to the ground and told his rights
The one that crawled through a small hole under the wall and then hid it with dirt
The one that ran when he heard *la migra*
The one that was slapped by a branch in the face as he tried to run away
The one that broomed a paper after every light step to cover his footprints
The one that loved seeing the full moon blow the police's cover
The one that spent multiple months carrying a jug of water and garlic through the desert
The one that thought he was blind but it was just night time
The one that decided to swim back so he wouldn't be arrested
The one that surrendered as he looked up at the "mosquito" and down at his scurrying *compadres*
The one that became an anchovy with 15 other strangers in the back of a truck when not even 10 minutes on the road, the sirens went off
The one that bleeds each time he shares his story with his children who are free

In My Mind

Trapped by my thoughts
I am stuck in this prison
I finally escape barefoot but then step on a Lego.
The looks of disgust,
the judgmental whisperings
sound like nails scratching a chalkboard
I prance through my grandmother's home
but then bang my toe against the corner of a table.

Tornado

On the open path in front of you,
a whirling storms of clouds of dark, grey,
dead green pools border the road ahead.
In the sky a grey chunky rope swings down,
surrounded by dust storming above
swirling, it whiplashes the ground beneath it,
tearing apart the floor that is the lane,
the ripped up slabs of brown come hurling at you,
white light peeking through the darkness.

Broken

 beautiful
that is what she is to me
when she looks down to write something
her lashes flutter
and it takes your breath away
 night air
dark and cold
that is also what she is
dark cold
 shatters your heart
 she will break it into a thousand pieces
 lies she tells with her eyes
will slowly be the death of you if you fall
fall for her games that she calls a lifestyle

Untitled

Her grin brown as garbage
from her bitter coffee
going down the river of her gullet

Leaving her office
is like exiting the hell where her attitude came from

The pearl that opened from its oyster
approaching my lover with a huge smile
he makes me feel like apple pie
after her oven of hate

Untitled

Burnt,
dry crumbling dead
force-fed into the fire
slathered with crusted butter
via an impaling sharp silvery object

I feel like a piece of toast
cast into the black hole
along with other grotesque items

no one wants
this toast is no one

Honeyed Words

She was fourteen
Sweet as fresh clementines
Straight A's and Honor Roll
She had too much faith
In people she barely knew

He whispered honeyed words in her ear
She now choked on menthol smoke clouds
Strawberry Smirnoff rushed through her veins
The backseat of his white Pontiac
Became a sudden safe haven
He gave her absolutely everything
That she didn't need

Her body became an instrument she let others play
In hopes of forgetting he left her
The closest feeling to the taste of him
Was when she kissed the lips of a red solo cup
Longing for the terrible sting of his cheap cologne
She once hated

She tried to forget him
But at fourteen he left her hopeless
With nothing else to remember

City Rain

Dancing like crystal ballerinas
Raindrops pirouetting into each other
Forming an iridescent glow
On their dusty concrete dance floor
Now performing solo acts
Each drop does a kick and then executes a grand jeté
Creating an individual ripple
In the silver gloss they have become
On the once dull surface



The Fire

Living in a matchstick forest
I'm unable to put out the fire you set
to my life. I stared holes into your
picture, the curling edges ran
into everything that stood beside me.

My heart is ash.

You could still be my four walls
but the smoke pours out of your heart
while you stoke the fires, blur my vision,
as I watch our memories fade,
becoming lost within the flames.

Frozen

She lays in bed crying until tears can't fall anymore.
Every night, she lays paralyzed while
terror and anxiety attacks her
from the inside
while she fakes the smile
that hides the pain from
the broken world
she lives in
causing her to stay frozen in time,
while the carousal of time continues to spin.

The Life of an Apple

The apple, eager on the counter
ready for its ruby red skin
and glossy freshness to be bit into.

Carefully picked off the tree
for it's beauty.

The perfect time of the year
for an apple to be baked into a pie,
to be enjoyed around the dinner table.

The apple, lax on the counter
dull, the mushy insides leaking,
ridden with fruit flies.

From weeks of waiting
patiently on the cold counter.

The perfect time of the year
for an apple to be disposed of,
to get rid of the rotting smell of its flesh.

Summers

Every summer solstice
led my family down to the
Florida coast.

The beach was our home
letting the sun scorch our skin,
as we became as red as an apple

swimming the hours away,
pieces of driftwood in the foamy blue saltwater.
like fish in the vast expanse of the ocean,

until our eyes burned and our fingers pruned.
The smell of the ocean followed us around,
a helpless pet, whispering in our ear to come back

We wasted no time answering
the calling blue ocean
as we came back to the Florida coast

Civilization

Dawn breaks in the distance
A rosy, buttery haze
Reflecting on the blue gray expanse

The morning sun will continue
to stretch its radiance further toward the shore
Reaching the homes
painted primary colors
sporadically scattered atop the icy mass.

These dwellings lie serenely
despite the bright buzz of their hues.
An unnatural intensity burning the pale snow
The stains of humanity marking its territory

An iceberg drifts beyond the civilization
From its corners and slopes,
the form of four walls and a roof emerge
like a white bedsheet draped over a house.
Waiting for humanity to see its potential
as a place they can claim as their own,
too.

My Fatal Flaw

Am I trying too hard?
Clenching onto your hands
Until they combust in my grip
Ashes sifting through my fingers

Am I trying too little?
Giving you space
Until your glowing smile fades away
Into the grey of my surroundings
Like imprints in the sand dulling with every crash of a wave

There's an I.V. tube
From your heart
Pumping into mine
Continuously, but not infinitely

There's no end to how much I need
But there's an end to how much you can give
You are a flower I always forget to water
Yet am disappointed you won't grow

Ruff Love

Whenever the sun rose, Doughy would be waiting.
They took strolls around town and conversed with the locals
he bought Doughy treats to enjoy under a shady tree.
At night, he left the door open in case Doughy got cold
But this night was different.
The neighbors awoke to a desperate cry that pierced their ears
they soon crowded the door to see the scene.
Doughy sat behind the crowd of people, confused
he got up on his four paws and ran off
darting across the village, leaving behind a dust cloud
until he found himself panting in front of an empty field.
Doughy's gaze softened as he remembered the first time they met
his long dishevelled body collapsed onto the dirt ground
his thoughts dozed off to peaceful times
by the time the morning sun rises
he hoped to be greeted by his owner

Squirrel in the Snow

The squirrel bends its long tail over its head
wishing it was a soft pillow it could cuddle with
in this field covered by a white carpet
frozen crystals fall straight to the ground
the squirrel waits alone
with its tiny paws joined together
listening to the soft thump of snow sticking to its grey overcoat

Dying Light

Bloodshot eyes squint at twilight
creeping through cracks in the dust-mangled blinds.
He shoves his hand through to bring in
the last of the light resting uneasily
on crimson droplets rushing toward
his elbow from an open wrist.
The remains of the glass bottle
send the light back, shards tucked
into the cracks in the floor. He lays
his head on the floorboards, watching the crack
in the window stop glowing, moonlight long
from rising.

Just Write

Enough with the constant pacing and tapping of your fingers,
the late nights spent in the company of blank screens and bloodshot eyes,
the endless futile formulations,
enough shouting at me with reeking breath,
love, just write.

I'm tired of being your maid,
cleaning up as you doze on your desk,
filing away the same scribbled pages each day
only to hear about how tough you have it,
please, just write.

Another bottle down,
this time left to rot in whatever pile of success you've got,
left along with all your letters addressed to me,
written in red and left at the bottom of every bottle,
just write.

I wish I could feel sorry for you,
as you light a match and drop it in the trash,
incinerating every promising idea you once had,
but I've long since abandoned my keys on your bed,
why won't you just write?

Isolation

Standing all by itself,
In a green, open field.
Arms shaking with fear,
Of the nearing dark clouds.
Lights flick,
On and off.
The wind works against it.
As my sister works against me.
My parents see her as a flash.
Bright, with electric energy
Waiting to be tear me down.
There I stand as the tree, alone.
An open target,
The lightning's brightness beating on my roots.
Battling against my family's storm.



What Love Is

Love is a long car drive
holding someone's hand
Until he stops the car.
Smiling so hard,
It hurts.

Splitting the last piece
of your favorite candy
Between his teeth.

A song that keeps playing,
even in the silence
Between you.

Love is being together
and never feeling a
part.

Orange and red clouded with black
Trees that were once sprouted and full of life
Now vanished and turned to ashes
The angry earth scorches all around it
Destroying everything in its path
All cars skirt off the road
Smoke and pollution fill the air
All that is left is dirt and despair

Poetree

The weather was nippy
Trail was slippery
Racing down the mountain
My board strapped to my feet
The bindings holding tight to my boots
Riding over slush and ice
The wind in my ears getting louder
The turn approaching hastily

[...]

Men in red above my head
Riding down the mountain
Restrained in a sled
Flashing lights appear
We enter
We disappear

Steel Staircase

Two bony legs and hazel eyes;
he wakes up each morning to the sun
beating down on his matted hair.

He created a makeshift bed
at the foot of rusty fire escape stairs
under the window of the place he calls home
to avoid the slamming doors that echo inside.

Litter, scattered on the cracking concrete below.
Swirling when the wind picks up
and settling in a new location.

No matter how far the waste travels
or how noisily it rustles
in an attempt to grab the attention of passersby,
it will continue to be ignored.

Growing Old Alone

I watch our daughter sleep every night
clutching the stuffed lion you gave her before our fight
one month now, without the smell of your cologne
I'd be lying if I said I can do this alone.

But you have your own problems, between illness and work
the cancer is spreading, and your boss is a jerk
I try to be brave and muster a smile
but at times when I can't, I cry for a while

Our daughter looks at me, puzzled, with her soft brown eyes
and asks, "Mommy, why did daddy tell so many lies?"

Sudden Screeches

On the night of April 14, 1912,
a man sat in a silk stitched chair
staring at the suspended ice in his glass of scotch,
waiting for business to come out of a colleague's mouth.
While men talk about money,
women stare into the dark, icy waters
laughing at their drunken friends
kicking the block of ice on the deck.
In the cabins below the thick layers of metal,
warm mothers tuck their kids into rented sheets
calming the children of their fears of drowning in the dark.
Immigrants sit in the ballroom dreaming of New York,
dreaming of a new and better life!
The perfect evening, just as the one prior!
The speaker in every room let out sudden screeches,
stopping every laugh,
waking every body,
Injecting icy fear into every heart.

The World's End

Children will play.
The "partied out" teenager
Will sleep on the front lawn.
The newspaper boy
will follow his normal route.
The love struck teenagers
carve their names into the oak tree behind the school.
It will be like this when the end of the world happens
And no one will even know that it would have happened.

Pulled

One eyelash pulled for tomorrow's history test
for every notebook shoved in her disintegrating backpack
for every pencil snapped between her twitching fingers

for yesterday's silence-battle with mom
for father's gale of sighs
for the bedroom door she shuts only to have it ripped open

for the spot on her forehead refusing to settle
into her foundation
for the chewed crack rippling down the center of her lip
that she's convinced everyone can detect
for the depths her eyes recede into her skull with each hour of lost sleep

for the way her eyes blur - textbook pages run together
for the demand peering through teachers' lashes
for the scarlet, wiry veins seizing her irises

for the way her mouth quivers with disuse when she pulls her lips into a smile
for each patch of dry skin scraped up under her fingernails
for each strand of hair abandoning her head in favor of her hairbrush

for the globular mass of mascara smudged onto her eyelid
darkening bare, frail skin

where eyelashes should be.

Uncle Peter

My grandmother hunches over the edge of her chair
holding a picture from 1953
of her older brother

Peter, standing stoically beside her 15 year-old self
a graduation gown draped
across his marble shoulders

My grandmother smiles like a bird
Looking down at the monument on which it sits

his chiseled cheeks and engraved smirk

He overwhelmed my grandmother
Towered over her, cast shadows across her cheek
solid in his stance, so tall he couldn't fit

in the picture's frame, his cap and part of his forehead
cut off by the top, like his mother's poor shot
taken in earnest to capture this moment.

My grandmother strokes the sides of Peter's pictured hands,
calloused by baseball, not yet by war
unfamiliar with the leaden, frigid metal handle of a gun

Vietnam had not yet swallowed him up
the draft hadn't replaced his graduation cap with an army helmet
here in this picture he is still swaddled in youth

In this picture he is still a pillar of a person
his legs and arms like columns and his mind
still fully sculpted, unchipped

Those images of death and ruination chiseled away
Uncle Peter's innocence
and the pillar began to crumble

His foundations weathered away
so slowly, no one could see the damage being done
to this once sturdy obelisk

The stone eventually collapsed
when Peter took a shot meant to end a moment,
one that meant only suffering
Now, my grandmother sits 64 years later
holding a picture of her older brother
still grieving over something that was sculpted by love

and demolished by pain.

Poison

The waiting game drags on
burning down of each day
closer to cutting the snake out
ridding myself of Sunday sacrifices,
wasting my time
 while he tries to make up
for the time he spent elsewhere
 without me
the small talk that carries
on for hours. He chose the
drink over a relationship and I can not forget it.
 we sit
in a Chinese buffet, him drinking water, all I smell
is the vodka that ruined him
his mouth pours out drunken thoughts
while my thoughts want to go elsewhere
 without him
just a man I am forced to see.

Melting

Outside

White flakes fall from the above

A child waits

for the perfect flakes to make a friend

With sticks for arms and hands

with coal for a nose

Time goes on and the white outside turns back to patches of green

The child's friend slips away

the days go on till he is gone

Constellations

The ground pressing into her back
was frozen, browned grass husks
pricking her exposed wrists. Cold air
blanketed her body, clinging like the leaves
enmeshed in her hair.

The dark sky was broken
by the blinding stars.

She stood, her feet barely on the ground,
her white dress stained from the earth.

She desperately reached for the stars,
tracing the patterns
with her slender white finger.

She cried for the constellations
wept for the moon.

The sun overtook the sky,
but the night was forever
with her.

Crash

A thick sheet of darkness lay over the road
broken only by the occasional street light.
The highway before him was empty, the speed limit far behind him.
His throat still burned from the last round of shots.
He'd promised her tonight would be the last time,
that he could stop whenever he wanted;
he promised he'd never hurt her again.
The steering wheel spun in his hands like a merry-go-round
the road beneath him blurred along with his vision,
the asphalt violently embraced him, glass slicing his skin.
Sirens cut through the quiet.
Red and blue lights slashed
through the dark.
Unconsciousness crashed over him,
tempting him.
The world around him slowly faded,
unable to hold on
for a moment more.

Untitled

A bitter scent fills the air;
a man in a fitted suit and grasping a briefcase
drags himself to the back of the line
eyes still struggling to stay awake

and a woman with three screaming toddlers
pushing her way through while hushing
and consoling,
await their fix

The barista shouts for movement
one by one
they demand drinks.

The tip cup swallows coin after coin
but this magic in a mug
swallows paycheck after paycheck
is what gets them through
another day

Sleep Paralysis

They whisper my name twice
into my right ear
waking me into terror
two presences at the foot of my bed
watch me, paralyze me,
my neck strains to turn
my throat strains to scream
through the paralysis
but nothing comes.

Released, my heart beats
like the pounding of my footsteps
I've stopped looking for them
throughout my house, intruders
of my mind, the house empty
except for my searching.

With each mention to a friend,
explanation to a parent,
the presences arrive more often,
seizing my body, cementing the questions
in my mouth. My heart beats harder
every time and I am almost convinced
that we will explode.

The Bell

I sit at my desk
 slumped
a soldier
buried deep in a trench
waiting out his final days on the front line.

I am a patient
lingering faintly in his bed
surrounded by sickly peers
deathly sounds
ready to move on to a distant place.

Doodles occupy my book page after page
an obituary burdened with murdered thoughts.

The clock beats echo
inside my skull
like water droplets
hammering down on my forehead

 the torture is ended finally
one last, deafening hammer liberates me.

Home, Sweet Home

The car horn sounds
from my father's 1967 Chevrolet,
dragging me outside towards it.

I wheeze one last breath,
grasp one last look around my house.

I traipse down my dark foyer
onto my rickety black porch,

go to close the door
on all my memories, all my friends, all my life;
close the door on my house –
just a house.

I hoist up the suitcase,
the coffin, onto my back
and lug it to the car to leave,
the crumbling house growing further from my back.

He said I reeked of death

and it wasn't my fault, everyone croaked
at the same time. I talked of good times,
meant to be happy, actually miserable.
When I talked about his heart stopping,
Suddenly, turning him blue, like
the moment between dusk and dark.
How I missed her, him, him and her.
In her sleep, starting the car, in his sleep,
her trip to the bathroom.
All dead.

Twistah

Perpendicular to the sky,
brown drill bit twisting
hauling dirt remnants up,
blending the earth and houses
together.

Under the cyclone
the houses are miniscule.
Waiting at the brink,
soon to be swept off their foundations
engulfed in the cloud of flying debris.

Before the houses sits a field.
Among it lays untouched
green grass, appearing vibrant
against the darkening sky.

Like the looming cloud
over a high school junior's head.
Bombarded with work,
and college prep,
debating dropping out.

Thrown around,
torn off their foundations.
They are the houses,
only few are left unscathed.

Dragons

I grew up without the sounds of a mother cooking
the smells of bacon, or even burning toast;
I matured with my nostrils burning
from cigarette smoke.

Peering downstairs, I never witnessed
a family at the table; no,
I saw dragons
exhaling toxic fumes

while playing Jenga
with empty beer cans.
The game never ended

well: I'd hide from their roaring
and the slamming of doors

but no matter how hard I tried
to drown out the noise
it was only me drowning.

Liquid Fire

Snakes of liquid fire
slither off the black jagged rocks
to the ocean,
the water's color blending into the dark gray horizon.

The ocean becomes angry
at the magma seeping into it
and comes up in waves trying to intimidate the land.

When the snakes slink into the turbulent sea
a cloud of steam rises after them
hiding the rocks as it advances
trying to escape the chaos.

Contributors

CASEY ACKERMAN is a senior at PLHS who will be furthering her education at The College of New Jersey as a vocal music education major this fall. Casey participates in the PLHS music department as a member of the choir, women's ensemble, and the spring musical.

DEISY ALMAZAN is a 17 year-old student at PLHS. She likes to volunteer for Z-Club. She plays tennis, volleyball, and fences.

ANTONIA BELLAVIA is a junior at PLHS. She enjoys playing track and field, basketball, and soccer with her teammates. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends in her free time.

LARA BOSS is a senior attending PLHS. She enjoys playing soccer for her school and also in her free time. She loves animals and playing with her dogs. She will enroll at Montclair State University for the fall of 2017.

EVANA CHRISTOPHER is a senior at Pompton Lakes High School. She has always taken an interest in poetry and is happy to finally share her own work.

KASEY COX is a junior at PLHS. She enjoys being with her friends and family and she plans to be a teacher and inspire others one day.

SYDNEY COX is a senior at PLHS and will continue her education at Flagler College in Florida. She is an aspiring poet and is excited to share her work with her peers.

EMILY DEYO is a junior in Mrs. Light's creative writing class. She is excited to share her poetry.

MAYRA GALINDO is 18 years old and a senior at PLHS.

MICHAEL GOSSES is an aspiring writer and actor currently enrolled as a senior at PLHS. He hopes to have a successful screenwriting career in the future.

JESSICA KELLENBACH is a senior at PLHS. She is extremely excited to graduate and leave behind high school drama. She is continuing her education at Caldwell University.

ERIC KNAPP is a senior at PLHS. He will be going to Bloomsburg University and will major in exercise science. His words of advice: wear a helmet when snowboarding and stay away from the trees.

JESSICA MARA is an 18 year-old senior. She will be attending Ramapo College for accounting in the fall.

JAKE NEWTON is a senior at PLHS and wishes to pursue a career in musical education at Montclair State University.

JOSEPHINE RUSSO is a junior at PLHS and spends her time writing, reading, and

worrying far too much about things. She hopes to be able to incorporate writing into her career when she becomes an adult.

AMANDA SANCHEZ is a senior at Pompton Lakes High School. She will be attending Bloomsburg University to study elementary education and special education.

ERIN SCHWARZ is a senior at PLHS and plans to attend Ramapo College in the fall as a literature major. Erin is involved in the PLHS music department participating in the spring musical, choir, and women's ensemble.

DANIELLE SHAFER attends Pompton Lakes High School and will attend Fairleigh Dickinson University in the fall majoring in psychology. She has much hope in her future and is proud of her accomplishments.

KYLE SHAFER is a junior at PLHS. He enjoys playing sports and hanging out with his friends in his free time.

HEATHER TITUS is a single senior who's just looking for a good time. She is a firm believer that her parents' taxes are wasted on very particular amenities. See her for more details.

TEYA TORRES is 17 and attends PLHS. When she graduates, she plans on furthering her education at West Virginia University. She is already a #1 New York Times best-selling author, but after college she would like to discontinue her writing career and open up her own crepe café called "Holy Crepe!"