ACROSS THE POND
Tiya Mahalanobis

On the floor lay two empty, old suitcases. It is early evening in Kampala, Uganda, and the sun begins to swell and sink below the sky. My bedroom walls turn white and then orange when the sunlight, red and balmy, blankers them.

I notice particles of dust drift on a column of light coming through my window, and I think about tomorrow. I will leave on a plane to go to America. I'll go to school there, and the weather won't be the same almost every day of the year like it is here. There will be snow, and before the snow leaves, that mimics the shades of African sunsets. This change is good, but I find myself denying its goodness because I spend the next fifteen minutes sitting on my bed, watching the light. Suddenly, eleven years seem too short to stay anywhere.

I hear my brother's footsteps down the hallway. They get louder, and I know he's walking to my room. From the corner of my eye, I see the handle turn, and the door swings open, and as it hits the wall, he mutters an apology because he knows I hate it when he doesn't knock.

I glance over at him, and he is leaning against the doorframe with his hands tucked in his pockets. His dark, dense hair is disheveled and in need of a trim. His face is wistful, and his lips are pressed together as if he needs to tell me something, but nothing audible escapes his mouth because his lips never part. At 16, he is only two years younger than me, but we aren't close when I think of other sibling relationships.

"Hi," I say.

His eyes move from the tiled floor and meet my gaze. Now his hair isn't the only disheveled element in his appearance.

"Are you excited," he says. He keeps his voice low, as if we are here in secret.

The sunlight shifts to the opposite side of the wall...
"I think so."

"Are you going to miss it here?"

"Mhmm."

These are the only words we exchange, but the conversation feels full because for the first time in so long, we aren’t arguing and our voices aren’t raised. It’s just the lingering silence and us.

Before he leaves, he sees the empty suitcases and cracks a broken smile and looks up at me.

"Well," he says. "You should probably start packing."

I sigh and nod slowly in agreement. My toes graze the floor as I gently push myself off the edge of my bed.

Before I can say anything to him, he disappears from the doorstep, and I listen to his footsteps as they dwindle in the distance.

PATCHWORK GIRL
HIDES UNDER
HOSPITAL COVERS
Kimberly Winters

The shadows dog my footsteps, grabbing thin, fragile ankles, yank me down.

You call me clumsy. Mirrors hold smooth smiles. Reflections wink, play tricks like hiding bloodshot eyes, wild hair, inside-out clothes. I never touch that skull, my mother’s favorite skull, whose eyes, old marbles, languish roll ‘round the room; I sleep and find her tucked beneath my arm. You think I yank my hair out? Scratch red lines in my scared skin or bite with child-sized teeth? You useless doctors, blind, still asking, "Why are you afraid?"
GOOD MORNING
Kimberly Winters

Children are born
red with fury,
weeping for the cocooned
darkness of the womb.
First Formula,
now aging.

The boy’s sapling legs,
spring higher with each step
and bend with the wind,
yet wood weakens with age
and cracks with thunder claps.
His third leg is a borrowed branch.

The wisecracker, who
shouts and sings while stern
teachers shush him,
will yell to be heard
by his own ravaged ears
and laugh in hearing silence.
The little girl’s watchful eyes
hide behind dark fingers of hair.
Chamois years spill milk
across her staring pupils,
and locks wither whitely
to match.

And what of the after
whose summer times pass
outwitting witches and
tearing sneakers from quicksand?
Grains tug him deeper underground
with each word.

Little ones tumbling
over flapjack feet
will giggle at his wild tales.
When he rasps,
“I was a child, once."
who would believe him?

EGGS
Bryce Johle

Dirty, cheeks are whipped
with diamonds
When neurons reverse
around the sidewalk cracks.

Only every other step all the
way down the stairs.

With twist-tie fingers that hope for an
even number.

Rib cages of webbed glass at
the count of thirty-three,
So soften the stride and bite
the skin off your lips.

Ulcers spread and burn where,
You eat the apple anyway.
Fingers leak an obsessive
ectoplasm,

A gale swirls in a drummy chill. Swinging
at the air and putting thighs for heat
That cuddles sinister eggs
which crack and plunder.

Curtis Wieroth | Woah!, Acrylic on Wood, 16 x 35 x 5 inches

Phil Vera | A Chameleon’s Paradise, Porcelain, Spray Paint, Enamel Paints, 15 x 6 x 5 inches
EVERYTHING IN SIGHT
Bryce Johle

Tell me how to talk
So I can break out of the fisherman’s net
Hand me those binoculars,
To meet your eyes as you stand on your pedestal.

Then run away with the other cattle.
I’d be a sheepdog that lets you free,
Staring on raw hide, wondering
Whose ignorance lured the gate latch.

Afterward I’d drift along in waves
And ripples that feel more like rippy sand
Than revitalizing water.
Dry bubbles flower beside me, popping.
Tainting my tongue with grit and taunting.

When they whisper their absurd advice:
“The only person you can blame is your silent self.”
To return becomes a fantasy only imagined.
As a ghost who already knows your name,
Who spins you around and kisses you,
Whose teeth gently click against yours.

I asked you so many times to tell me,
Tell me how to talk before I’m drowned
By a lonesome plague, neglected by the healthy.
“Eat everything in sight,” you said.
“Don’t even count the calories.”
But I can’t stand it when my food touches,
So I think I’ll take one quiet bite
at a time.
STRANGERS
Megan Witt
I thought of you today, with fond memories but a lump in my throat.
For you see, you are a skilled sailor and I am the sea. Calm and gentle
but even with unpredictable crashing waves, you still managed to see through
the destruction into the horizon.
I slowed my waves and helped you
on your course. You spoke of me
as though I was majestic and dangerous,
like the contradiction made me seem
so lonely. And for that, I never broke
your sails or drowned you, even when
my waves seemed unbeatable to manage.
It is unfortunate, though, that even

the most skillful sailor can get lost.
I am the sea, ever-changing with
a passion to save every sailor on my
waters. You are a master of your trade
and trusted me with consistency
and commitment I could never offer you.
You reached the shore line one chilly
evening with torn sails and cursed
me for the beautiful destruction I was
and turned your back to me. You will
realize that I will always be with you—
the whistle in your ear, the salt in your
tears, the slight breeze through your hair.

I went days without you, and it hit
me like a summer storm. Your silence
shook me, and my waters grew rough
and unsteady. But like all good storms,
it passed, and all that was left was the
darkness and calm of the moon. So now
I am the sea, a blue and vast everlasting
memory to you. And you, a lost sailor
with no destination that I watch from
afar. No longer a sailor, no longer
a sea, for we are just strangers now, lost
without you and lost without me.

LOVE POEM
Cody Oliver
You are a buck with no tilter,
keeping me at bay with velvet ropes
and crumpled paper.

I’ve got veins full of potential
and withdrawal slips to prove it.

If I could
I’d slip them between the pages
of your paperback memory
and hold my place,
and in return
I’d leave room for you
in my autobiography:
annoying,
punctuating,
and crossing out every error.

I’ve spent hours on end
perfecting my penmanship
and sent you many letters,
handwritten and heartfelt,
only to receive them myself
marked
"return to sender,
and paired with a note
that read:

"you’re sweet,
my dear,
but I’m not myself.
I am a sheep chasing wolves
and I only read fiction.”
FIREFLY
Kelsie Mertz

The willows lean toward the west
While her skin tingles from the wind.
Her eyes swollen and red,
Can still make out the edge of the bridge.
The cicadas harmonize with her footsteps
But the melody is absent to her ears.
The light illuminating the lake is lost behind the hills
And nothing is left but stillness.
Her cool, calloused fingers caress the metal barrel
Which carries a flood of panic up her spine.
The lake is alive again by little yellow lights
Finding their way through the dark.
On and off, on and off.
With her palms faced up,
A fiery plant itself in the center of her grip.
And the light continues to spark on and off.
On and off.

Bryan Fellenbaum | Calgary, Mixed Media, 6.5 x 8.25 inches

Johannah Lassen | Flowers, Digital Photography, Unspecified
I didn’t say anything. I knew what was coming—the same thing that had happened so many times before—the same thing that always happens once they find out.

He looked me in the eye, but only for a second before turning his head towards the door. Maybe he hoped someone would walk in and take over so he wouldn’t have to get his hands dirty. Maybe he wanted to get up and walk out and deal with it later. Whatever the reason, I wished he would get on with it already.

“Earlier today, one of the waitresses was complaining about you. She was saying you were a—rude person.”

Yes, the list—the dreaded list—so horrible in its implications people have a hard time saying it—the words so thick and heavy they catch in your throat.

“I didn’t want to believe her, but I had to look into it, and by God, there you were. I just couldn’t believe my eyes.”

He swallowed. “Christ Nick, you’ve been working here for what, six months? You should have disclosed this on your application.”

I leaned forward in my chair. My palms began to sweat. I could feel it all bubbling to the surface—the shame, the anger, the regret. I wanted to cry but I wouldn’t let myself. “If I did that, you never would have hired me. And if you bothered to do a background check, you would have found it.” I wanted the words to sound strong and defiant. I wanted to make it seem like I didn’t care—that it didn’t bother me—that I was a tough guy. But that little quiver in my voice betrayed me. The words wavered up and down as they came out. I must have sounded pathetic.

He turned his head towards me, but his eyes stayed fixed on the door. “I can’t believe it. I just can’t believe it.”

His voice quivered to a loud whisper. “You know there are children in here right now.”

Oh, those poor children. How I hated that excuse. God, give me any reason to hate myself—give me any reason to feel ashamed, to feel like a monster, but don’t give me that shit.

What about the children? What a crock of shit. Those are the words of conniving politicians, the words that newscasters use to make people scared and keep paranoid mothers listening to their insipid bullshit. What about the children? My blood began to simmer and then boil over.

“She was seventeen for chrissake, and it was consensual. It’s not like I went around raping five-year-olds.”

He made a face like he’d bitten into something nasty. “But doesn’t matter, Nick. I can’t have you working here anymore. You’ll get your last paycheck in the mail.”

I said nothing more. I got off the chair and walked out of the office without so much as glancing at him. As I left the building, I thought good riddance.

On the way home, I stopped at a bar and picked up three six-packs of beer.

I lived in a trailer park on the outskirts of town—not one of the nice ones. Some trailer parks are decent places to live. Some of the trailers they have three days’ worth as well as houses.

Not mine. Mine was a ratted, dogy little white and sky-blue piece of shit that looked like it would collapse if the wind blew the wrong way.
A RATHER LARGE SPACE

A. R. Moses

"You're quite courageous to be out here on your own."
Her first words to him, she was in awe.
"Usually one would seek for something familiar, or even help. But you...you fascinate me."

Colonel Burlington avoided the grains of sand out from between his teeth and spit them out through his thick mustache, the squeaking screech of his enamel zipping his brain. He sat beside a boulder, right foot under his left knee, stitching a bullet wound on his thigh. Salt flats, ancient woods and stone lay strewn around him. With every prick of the needle his hands shook more and more.
Her voice came from within the helmet atop his head. Or so he thought. She spoke so gently at first, as if she was putting an infant down to sleep, nearly hushed.
"Did you hear me?", she whispered. "You're too far out here."

Burlington continued his operation with no sign of acknowledgement towards her. He winced at the dirt trickling and mixing in the fresh blood of the open tear.
"Funny, funny man", she teased.

He纲 up the helmet off his head and tossed it over the boulder out of sight.
"I wonder...", her voice still just as audible. The colonel's eyes widened as he froze in place, the point of the needle sticking up out of his stretched skin. He raised a hand to the side of his head caked in white clay.
"I wonder if you know yet. I missed your arrival. Preoccupied, rather large space."

He noticed her voice sounded bolder for a moment, almost cocky.
It unsettled him, a visible grace note etched into his face. He bit the thread of the last stitch to finish the job and stood up.
"Head down to the ravine, won't you? I admire a man who follows his own convictions, but I'm trying to make this easier for you. Go along now, I'm not going anywhere."

The tone seemed to be more in the realm of confidence, he realized. Still, the tremble of her speech vibrated the center of his mind, as if his skull were a ceramic bowl and a spoon kept seizing inside of it.
He crept around the curve of the boulder to grab his helmet. His boots dashed in a mud caking from below the cracked surface. Over towards what appeared to be north, judging by the sun's position in the cloudless sky, he could make out the break in the horizon where the ravine waited. He headed towards it.
"Watch your step, Burlington..."
The closer he got to the edge, he began to hear various guttural groups echoing further down. A few paces to his left lie a skinless body. Its eyes followed him as he walked past. It sputtered and gagged something incomprehensible.

"I'm creating something here, something for all of us. Come and be a part of it..."
His spine wiggled in place, shaken by her voice. She was becoming unfamiliar. He felt a small drip on his jacket collar so he rubbed his hand on the back of his neck. Sliding his fingers upwards past his hairline, he noticed he actually had no hairline, just a bloody, pulpy concave mess. He ran his fingers over a couple cracked vertebrae and stuck his middle finger into another bullet-sized hole at the base of his skull. His helmet tipped forward to rest on his biceps. A string of drool ran down his chin as he pressed into his exposed brain.
"Please?" Another woman's voice called out from the ravine.

Burlington limped over as quickly as he could. His stomach turned at the sight before him. Bobbling, moaning, and gargling, the ravine was filled with endless mounds of pulsing bodies. They squirmed as they rolled and slid on each other, like the sand still stuck in his teeth. The woman called out again. And again. Until she was quieter, and quieter. Burlington stood shivering.

In the distance, a howling drone shook the already quivering landscape. He suddenly felt a sharp stabbing pain in his wounded thigh and clenched down on both his leg and his bite. As he glanced down at it, his veins began to pour out and spill onto the ground. They grew thicker and whipped around him, tying his body to strewn pieces of dead wood and stones.

The inwards of a skinless torso beside him slithered over to him. They wrapped one end of themselves around the width of his shoulders, and the other end gripped onto the edge of the ravine. Gradually, it began to pull him in...The drone screamed louder.

Danielle Patterson | Pegasus. Oil, 36 x 48 inches

"You're sweating," the woman's voice in his head said. "That's no sun up there, darling. My darling man. That's no sky either."
Burlington looked up at the faded orange sky, and the orb of light hovering in the center.
"Nothing's out there. All we have is here. Forever. Built with your sacrifices. Bone and muscle and nerve. Strong nerve, strong hearts. To be what you were, Colonel, for all of you to be what you were. What else would Hell be made of?"
Rearing in the distance, along with the drone, he was able to see the two sides of the ravine shifting closer towards one another. They smashed into each other at a furious speed, causing quakes and other tremors. Mountains formed with the sounds of cracking bones and meat splitting apart. Blood poured out from every crevice. As the mountain range charged towards him, he tried frantically to break free, but

he sunk beneath the surface before he could even let out a scream, leaving only a crimson stain. The only remnants of his existence.
The sheep roam lush pasture among streams, vibrant and free.

The herd commune with wonder through a screen 6 inches by 3.
CAFFEINE
Kassidy Rineer

I have never drawn
To the shade of brown before
Yet I gaze into your eyes wanting more
I can't help falling irrationally in love
With the creamy, smooth, rich color of
Mocha coffee found in your eyes
And I hesitate in turning away
Unsure if I can function completely
Without the caffeine in your stare

TRANSFER
Rose Hogan

What moves you?
Is it the sight of a glimmer
or the lightest touch?
Is it contrasting color
or a sweeping blood rush?
Maybe it's something that I do not know.
A foreign experience
that makes you delicious.

Do you think of it often?
Do you remember its name
or the way it smells?
Do you remember the texture
or the secrets it tells?
Maybe it's like sweeping wet paint
across thick empty paper
slowly, with all your focus.

I don't know what it is and
I don't know how it moves you
But I'm sure of it.
"CHAMPAGNE."
Tabitha Rea

If someone would have told me what I know,
Destructive words that I will now ignore;
Listen, listen to us, they go.

They believe I can’t set his heart aglow,
He always intrigues me to my very core;
If someone would have told me what I know.

A villain, just a man without a soul,
Then I still would be crying out for more;
Listen, listen to us, they go.

He begged for me to come to his chateau
In New Orleans and show up at his door;
If someone would have told me what I know.

Everyone of them thinks I should tell him too,
When he gives me champagne on the dance floor,
Listen, listen to us they go.

He whispers plans of taking me to Rome,
With hopes of going places I’ve never been before,
If someone would have told me what I know.
Listen, listen to us, please go.

A HAUNTED HOUSE
IS NOT A HOME
Delaney Seltzer

There is a girl inside of me, a girl
the color of inkies. She hangs from
my light fixtures, over the family.
She breathes in their passive aggressive
mumbles and exhales sarcastic
undertones. They do not notice her.
She calls for them in the night
but all they hear is the creaking
of my floorboards. She reaches
out for them but all they feel
is the breeze seeping through
the cracked windows and brushing
its fingertips against their cheeks.
She sticks glassy fingers into
my sockets because maybe the shock
will jumpstart her heart again; resurrect
her soul so she can be one of them.
She lays in my brain, tears sinking
through the floor begging to be
noticed. The family plants pots to catch
them. Grief is the echo that resonates
after every unfulfilled wish lands hard
against the tin.
Samantha Dillman | I Will Follow You Into the Dark, Acrylic & Paint Marker on Board, 14 x 36 Inches

Miranda Hughes | Jilted, Archival Ink Jet Print, 12 x 18 Inches
PLANTED
Natalie Risser

A boy in a long lavender coat stood along the shore of Lake Michigan with his father, eating one sunflower seed then tossing the next into the unsavering water. His lavender coat reflected a lavender personality and if you asked the father to describe his least favorite thing about the son, he would ramble about his stupid lavender sexuality.

Even in winter, his father would carry on about marigold girls and how they could make any type of boy happy. But as the boy observed, the sand never shifted with seeds that land on top of the water. Even in summer, the father would say "Look, these carnation girls are so funny." But as any lavender boy knew, a bird would catch the seed before it would sink to the bottom. Since it was the father's turn to have the seeds, the boy passed the bag and walked towards the parking lot, where a long line of porta-potties stood. After the father put several seeds into his mouth, he threw the next. But before thinking of chewing, and with a jab of his arm going forward, the seeds throbbed to the back of his throat. The boy could hear his father gagging and coughing, for he wasn't too far away. But as he felt his lavender bowels acting up, he decided to take his time and finish. After a few more minutes in the bathroom, the boy walked back to the shore where his father lay collapsed, turning a shade of purple. If you asked the father then what his favorite thing about the son was, he would ramble about nothing.
ROOTS INTERTWINED WILL NOT DIMINISH
Samantha Holmes

After replenishing the ladies’ glasses with house sangria at table eleven, she made her way to the break-room. The pitcher was still in hand, perspiration washing over her fingers. Her ponytail swayed with the flash of the apples floating on top, both the same golden hue. She was not pleased, for the gentlewomen’s presence at branch cut our conversation short. “Like I was saying,” she continued. She was relieved thinking about the near release from the bitters, only to be left worrying about the upcoming season. Branching off to meet her new roommate that August did not excite her. I understood, I could relate, I thought. I grew used to our volleying stories and grins at work, all the while unaware she was planning to spike. Her back pocket buzzed. Table eleven’s salads were waiting.
She returned with a handful of leaves, gesturing for me to pass the pepper grinder and said, “If we don’t get along, I’ll be stuck with her. And I hate girls...all the drama.” She whipped her head at me when I didn’t answer, “Not you, you’re not like most girls.” I tasted the water her roots drank from. At an early blossom, her close buddies were only boys. She opened up to me only to expose a rough, cracked-grey exterior.
Golden fruit started to fall. The bitter pool under her feet made the orchard diminish and die. She liked the notion of not being like other girls. She wasn’t. Her roots spread poison.

I SEE YOU NOW AND THEN
Elizabeth Leavens

I see you in my hands,
I can see your reflection In the folds
at my knuckles And sometimes in my
nail beds.

I don’t see you in my lips,
But my eyes match in color,
Where they differ in shape.

I feel you when I grimace.
At mom’s embarrassing mom-ness.
A smile, hidden smirk
Was your favorite way to smile.

There’s a lot I would give:
To trip on your shoes,
Wake to your frustration,
Patch up your wounds

Or say goodbye.

I miss you, Always.
HEY HONEY, HOW’S THE WRITING?
Elizabeth Leavens

"Hey honey, how’s the writing?"

Well, Mom, I see you still don’t
Have a single clue about the nature of
Anxiety.

Even though you had two kids
Who battled mental illness
Everyday from 2004 through 2013
And 2011 through present.
But anxiety is not something
I can put on my resume,
When we lived close to an airport and
9/11 and weapons of mass destruction
And that’s an airplane, how low is it?
And terrorists hurling toward us
And terrorists with nuclear warfare
And dissolving into dust
And death
And death
And death
And death
And what the fuck comes after?
What the fuck IS God?
Infinity seemed pretty improbable
Even though I was ten.
It took me three or four years

To stop worrying about that one at night.
Thought that it was a battle before, well...
I couldn’t hide those death questions
As well as I had for the last eight years.
Too upset to think
Too blank to write
So I can drown anxiety with
Video games
Distractions
Pretty pictures

Distractions
Insomnia.
Too anxious about not writing to draft
And all in all it just means I’m going to fail.
Just like Dad said.
5am and I still haven’t slept because you asked,
“How’s the writing going?”
Well, Mom.
It’s not.

To Kathleen Barrett | Unattainable, Mixed Media Drawing on Toned Paper, 24 x 18 inches
Brittany Kurtincez | Pressure Point. Oil on Stretched Canvas. 36 x 38 inches

Kylie Streeter | Ghost. Oil on Wood. 24 x 30 inches

RAH RAH RAH - 3/29/14
Brittany Woo

There are flies in my head
They are all in corns
My eyes strain into mushed, ripe fruit
My ears pinch into folded dough
Today could not have been any better
Another One Gone
Christopher Kril

A lonely soul with a mind outside of his head
Drank his liquor like water before he went to bed
Stacks of paper lined up on the floor
Another lady sneaking out the back door
He was broken in two the day darkness came
From that day on nothing would be the same
The wind blew in a different direction
A poor man lost with good intentions
The people spat in his face

"Get him out of this place"
Smoked up, rolled up like a sick dog
An old man humming an old song
Laughter and madness all intertwined
If only you could press a button and rewind
Go back to the past, to the days of old
When the sun was yellow and money stood for gold
The story of the man that stepped on the moon
Creation of another silly cartoon
We live on a stage of revolving regret
We treat them like kings, though they are our pets
The disgrace and the epic loss
Sentenced with a quarter and a toss
You're lost and weak and don't know where to go
Your song has already been sung long ago
Pathetic, a letter of lies
The numbers were picked, but you won no prize
Call the police; they'll help with your crime
Why write a poem if it doesn't rhyme?
The answer does not exist
Although you might insist that you are weak
There are no chances to repeat
My love, my wisdom, and my heart
It is hard to start when you know it's dead
Harder to begin when you caused the loss
of your only friend
I FEEL
Megan Luckenbaugh

I feel everything
And I feel nothing
So deeply and all at once
Rushing over me the tides of sorrow
Drowning the victims and blinding the sun