

THE TIDE, AND THE DOG, AND GOD, AND YOU
BY OWEN KARLSEN (HE/THEY)

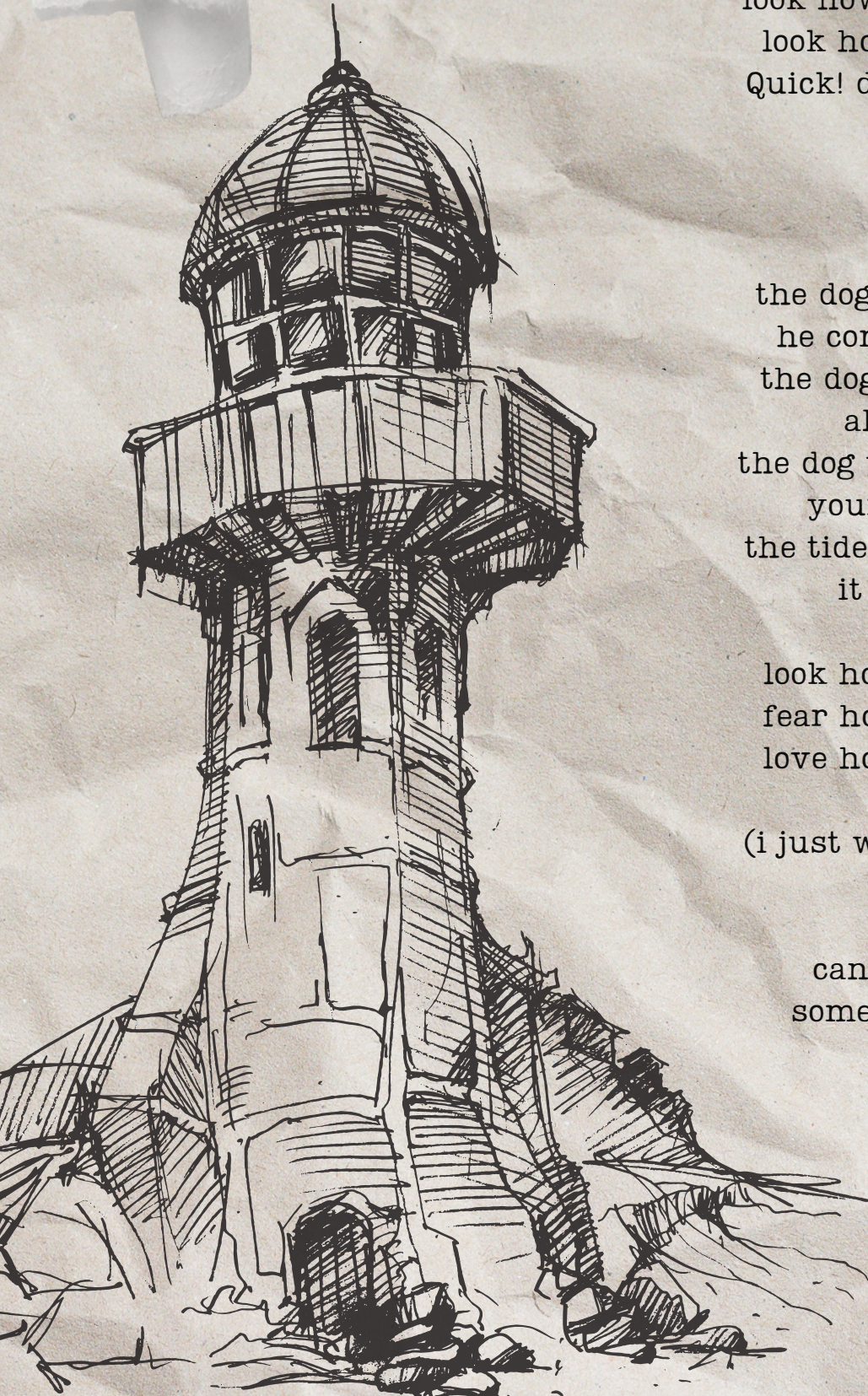
look how far the tide comes in
look how white the water is
Quick! did the ocean paint the
rocks?
did God?
did You?

the dog knows his name and
he comes when you call it
the dog just met you and he
already loves you
the dog you just met loves you
your family loves you
the tide loves you, that's why
it rushes in so far

look how far the water goes
fear how far the water goes
love how far the water goes

(i just want somebody to walk
with)

can the tide bring me
somebody to walk with?
can God?
can You?



AUTHOR BIO

Owen is a 3rd year student at sf state. he loves staying up too late at night, sleeping in too late in the morning, watching sad movies, watching funny movies, and watching funny sad movies. he is a capricorn, but he doesn't really know what that means. owen writes to try to make sense of his many, many feelings. he is most prolific when he is sad, but does his best writing when he is happy. one time, owen went on a walk by a lake and he thought maybe it changed his life. he also thought that writing this bio in the third person would be funny, but now he's worried it comes off as pretentious.

One Step Away from Whorehood

By Hannah Epstein (she/her)

Trigger Warning- sexual content

There is a thin line, a balancing act, between being a woman and being a whore. I don't believe I ever made it to womanhood; I am caught in the crossfires, choosing between a life of purity and one of genuineness.

A girl who holds on too tightly to the skirts of her mother, who follows her around as though her mother is a priest and she the follower, often finds that growing up has an overwhelming feeling of impurity to it. A guilt will collapse over her when she has her first period, when she is kissed on the cheek by a man who wants to see her naked, when she is given a cup of vodka. So, if she takes the liberty of growing up, with the world seeing her as a woman, her sense of innocence will be fragile, and she will hear it cracking apart with every step she takes towards independence. She will know that the original sin of man is not that of Eve, but of herself, of what grows between her legs. And she may find that perhaps she is not a woman at all: no, she is nothing but an unnamed creature, one with a beginning yet no end. After all, what defines a woman? Is it innocence, purity, all which is stripped by age?

And, when the virtue she owns is finally torn off, most of the time by an animal that is disguised as a man, she will know that her time as a woman has ended, that her skin is no longer hers but owned by those who pass her by and whisper obscenities into her ear. That, perhaps, the only way to regain the faith she had as a child, when

she grasped onto her mother's clothing, is to tear off her skin completely and begin to sew new, untouched, flesh together, to glue on nails that have yet to be painted, to pin in eyelashes that will better cover her eyes. And so, why refer to anyone as she? As her? As beautiful, as ugly? Is that not only a way to force someone into submission, to make them appear pure when in fact they are only human, all holding the same ugly beliefs and violent desires?

It only took me one night to see this truth: one evening, where my humanity made me filthy. Where my choices made me burn with shame, even though they themselves held no wrong. Ever since that night I have tried, without success or reason, to scrub myself clean of a man's touch and the confused pleasure it gave me. Because I believe that had I been disgusted by his kisses and his touches, I would feel no shame. Because had I been disgusted, I would have been woman, not human.

I am eighteen. I am entering a bar, one that will soon be both the graveyard and church of my life. I am wearing a black skirt, a sheer shirt, a bra with white lace. I have smeared red onto my lips, I have placed glitter on my eyes, I have straightened my hair. The only thing pure thing I wore that night was a pair of old penny loafers.

A man who is too sad or broken or stupid to understand his actions, begins to shower me in compliments. At first, they are welcomed: what is my

life if not for the affirmations of men? Who am I if not seen in their image? But soon, the compliments make way into touches, gentle at first, a brushing of the shoulder, a holding of the hands. I leave that night, excited, pleased, fulfilled. I leave that bar feeling as though I still hold true to who I am, to an idea of myself that has yet to be disproved. I am not like those other girls, I know myself, I am confident. I don't need a man to give me compliments, though how nice it is when they do.

It is funny because you think you know what you are when you are a woman. Or as what we present as woman. If you take away what we, "woman," are supposed to be, do you get something all that different from man? All men are assholes, all women have yet to have the freedom to be assholes

So, I, then a woman, go back to the bar later that week. The man is still there: we rush towards each other, exclaiming how crazy it is to run into one another again. We are excited, we sit down, pick up our conversation from where we left it last.

"Who is your favorite author?" He asks me this as he orders me a vodka soda.

"Martha Gellhorn"

"The one who was married to Ernst Hemingway, right?"

"Yes."

"She wrote?"

"She wrote. Did he?"

We both laugh, though I see no difference between his question and mine. After our second drink, I don't think he ever asked me what I liked to drink or ever allowed me to order, his words begin

to slur: I'm so happy to see you again. I blush here, yet I feel as though I am deceiving him: he thinks I am older than I am, I feel like a liar and fraud. I say I must go; he asks that I stay. I say that I am eighteen, still in high school, that I'm sorry I lied. There is no silence, no hesitation, when he says:

"I thought you were older, but I don't mind." He kisses me, not softly like in the movies, but like how a man is supposed to kiss: rough and unpleasantly.

Had I been woman, had I done what the girl is supposed to do, I would have walked away, maybe said "get off me" and giggled. I would have not allowed him to touch me but validated him still by pretending as though I enjoyed it. Or, better yet, I would have never even put myself in that position to begin with. But here is where I learned I am no woman at all: I kissed him back. I blamed the drinks afterward, but it was not the drinks, I had been careful to not drink too much. I told myself that I won't ever go to a bar again, I'll forget that I ever allowed myself to be impure.

Soon, as though even then I wanted to hide from myself what I was doing, I took him to the bathroom. I believed that if people did not see us, then it never happened at all. This falls into my old belief system, in which the world's perspective of me is reflective of who I truly am. I allowed him to touch my breasts, to touch in between my legs, to kiss my neck. Then, without letting it go too far, I left, he walked me out. Nothing beyond those kisses and touches happened; but it was not that I just allowed them to happen, it was that I encouraged them.

I did not sleep that whole night. I thought I was disturbed and perverted: allowing a man, so much older than me, to kiss me? Who am I truly, who have I been forcing myself to be all these years?

A woman is not a person but a symbol in the eyes of a man. He, I'm sure, went home with no regrets,

thinking that perhaps one day I would be willing to go farther with him and prove just how much of a whore I am. This was evident by the series of texts I received from him the following day, to which I never responded.

I told friends what happened, and they told their friends, and soon a game of telephone sung through my school: did you hear she fucked some guy in the bathroom of a bar? No that's not true, I swear. Then why does everyone say that's what happened? I don't know, they're liars. Yeah, right.

My final thoughts are this: since I was young, clenching onto the skirts of my mother, I have been trying to bend myself into a living thing reflective of this idea of woman. A woman, or at least the way the world describes her, is the antithesis of a man. Tender, calm, pure, innocent. A woman is not allowed to feel pleasure in the way of a man, and if she does then she is no woman at all, but a whore, a slut, a bitch. An object to be abused unapologetically.

So, what is the moral analysis of that night? Was I just some stupid naïve girl, or did I play some role in what occurred? I could walk away and rid myself of any responsibility, try to be a woman once more. But then I would be ashamed, and have something to hide, and be forever clinging onto to an idea that is impossible to achieve. It is for that reason that I am abandoning the idea of woman, finding myself somewhere in the larger spectrum of humanity, and settling in to accept the idea that I am not the pure clean person I once was. I have come to this: that night, I hurt no one. My actions may have not been womanly, but womanly does not equal purity, and purity does not equal morality.

Author Bio

Hannah Epstein is currently an undergraduate at Bryn Mawr College studying International Relations and Creative Writing, however she was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She has recently been published in Ignatian Literary Magazine for her short story "Madeleine."



WAITING

BY (LIV) WISELY
(THEY/THEM)

IM WAITING TO BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU
IM WAITING TO BE RIPE
IM BREWING TO BE
YOUR CUP OF TEA
YOUR STEEP, YOUR STRAIN,
YOUR TYPE.
I'M WAITING TO BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU
MY EYES ARE ON THE CLOCK
FOR THE DAY I'M SECURE IN YOUR SILENCE
INSTEAD OF AFRAID OF OUR TALK.

IM WAITING TO BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU
IM WAITING UNTIL IM DONE
I'M WAITING TILL IVE NO SCARS OR WOUNDS
TO BLEED ON ANYONE.
IM WAITING TO BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU
IM WAITING FOR PAIN TO END
IM WAITING TO LESSEN THE WEIGHT OF LOVE
BY SPREADING IT AMONG FRIENDS.

IM WAITING TO BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR YOU
I HOPE, BEFORE IM FORGOT.
WAITING FOR THE DAY YOU SEE
ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE TO ME.
ALL THE THINGS I HOPED YOU'D BE.
THE DAY WE SEE THAT WHAT WE ARE,
DEEP DOWN, IS MUCH MORE GOOD BY FAR
(- A REVELATION SO BIZARRE)
THAN ALL THE THINGS WE ARE NOT.



Author Bio: I'm Liv Wisely. I call myself generally a writer and cartoonist, because poet and artist seem too lofty. I'm a creature of the Bay Area, and a child of the professional theater community, which seeded my love of storytelling. I write to amuse my childhood self, to fight capitalism by doing something that gains me no money whatsoever, and most of all, I write because of the existential fear that I will die without ever getting what was in my head out into the world. I think everyone should write. We all live a singular existence, each of us, and it deserves to be immortalized, no matter how small.

middle of maybe

by maya coles
(she/her)

when i leave the house, my mom always says to be safe, like someone will be hiding in the backseat of my car waiting to beat me down. she says to be safe like lightning will strike me on a clear summer day, like a stagnant tree will fall and crush me, like the road will collapse beneath me as i walk.

this mother's day, maybe i'll gift my mom with a hanger and a gun. i'll give her one last chance to take me out before i pack my bags to move, before she cups her hands to cry and i cover my mouth to stifle screaming. i'll give her one last chance to make me forever a child, permanently, not just in the remnants of her mind, not just within the fabric of a ripped and tattered baby blanket. i'll give her one last look as i emerge into the new world, just like i had emerged from her in my entirety. the seventeenth candle on a seventeenth birthday cake; she burns her hand lighting it. i don't notice until months later.

she grasps the steering wheel like it's the hands of my father on the day i was born. she motions to me like i have something to owe her, and i do, and i will, until i die — and even long after then. her grey hairs reflect the strains of my grandmother, and her mother, and our lineage of women burdened with gentle hands cursed with callouses.

like those jigsaw puzzles me and her used to do, i spend day in and day out trying to piece myself back together, delicately, irritatedly, and disgustingly focused. down the line, i would give up on it and start a new one; i would craft a new personality based upon extortion and indecisiveness and my inability to stay on top of anything, founded by the fact that me and my mother will never be able to make enough time for each other. i wish to resemble her as much as i want to resent her.

my teen years turn dark with the pollution of the stars, i pick my scabs and lick my wounds and scratch at my stretch marks. they are maps, marked by gross growth. my mother pays her dues at the toll booth and starts off down an exhausting road of temporary permanence. the gold at the end of the rainbow bridge is me, my fair skin and my frailness, my unforgiving nature and the love i can only harbor if i try very hard. i begin to wonder if i was worth the strife; if i was worth her scream, her payment, the death of her innocence. her longevity. her pastime.

AUTHOR BIO

My name is Maya Coles, and I am going to be attending the University of La Verne in the fall as an English major. Hence my field of study. In school, the only subject I really connected to was English, along with my extracurriculars that involved art and writing. I love to make my own stories and draw from my own experiences. I love the endless creativity associated with any form of art, and I enjoy analyzing the reasoning behind authors writing the way they do. I write about insecurities, as well as overcoming them. I write when I'm happy the same way I write when I'm sad — forcefully and wholeheartedly. Attempting to make every single one of my pieces beautiful and tasteful. I hope they are able to resonate with others and find little homes in their hearts.