

WARREN PIECES

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 BODIES



2	Manar Khalid <i>Venus</i> <i>Chloris</i>
4	Amy Leblanc <i>Unfolding</i> <i>brier</i>
6/22	Lucie von Schilling <i>cervix is latin for</i> <i>Black Ink</i> <i>The grape lives</i>
8	Gina Hay <i>Hazel</i>
12/19/25/27	John Ledingham <i>A Sea Voyage</i>
15	Reid Urchison <i>Bypass</i>
16	Allyx Williams <i>Back</i>
17	Kiley Verbowski <i>Wisdom Teeth</i>
18	April Winter <i>Perverse Cow 3</i>
20/24	Sophie Crocker <i>petrichor: makeshift seabed</i> <i>everything's a hummingbird</i>
26	Erin Vance <i>Nuptial Flight</i>





Chloris Manar Khalid

Amy LeBlanc
Unfolding

The car horn in her stomach
blares across the bridge.
Swallowed cherry pits
root to her sides
with kites and rubble.
When cyanide dissolves,
thorns push out of her feet—
leaving craters openly empty.
She smells carrion and hair,
flaming in the kitchen sink—
the webbing between
her toes can cut candles,
as she ripens in a chrysalis
and the bridge begins to bend.

Amy LeBlanc
brier

a panic bird warbles
in an opera house gutter.
I bought you a bed
that was too wet to anchor
and begged you to sleep-
I bargained, offering you
spindles and figs.
my hands overflow-
I am grasping, weary
with cloves and raveled twigs.
instead, you lie
in debris and sweepings
too cumbersome to grip.
my headboard unspools
into a sweetbrier
and I sleep among the spines.

Lucie von Schilling
cervix is latin for

neck. she is thirteen, standing in front of a
 mirror, undressing slowly. practising.
 she is older, now.
 wine

crawling up a throat. vertigo
 in the murk of sleep.
 choking

on laughter and lady-fingers. a bar
 of citrus soap, lathered, and turning
 over and over in a hand.

she is bedroom eyes.
 stoner eyes, butterfly tea
 belly. she is teeth

sinking into mango, torn open
 pomegranate. she is each individual calyx
 on a sprig of spring lavender. she is
 lavender

crushed between fingers.
 seasoned cast iron. still,
 she is undressing slowly.
 painfully now.

a long haul of tobacco after smoking
 a hybrid. oxygen rush. a mouth full of
 red

meat. she is imagining herself
 as a thin neck.

why? they answer: because
 she is a woman.
 she is

Lucie von Schilling

Black Ink

Her cool, blue rolls and
peaks under clenched fingers.

Kept in celestial tow, kelp tangling.
They're pulled deeper on the undercurrent.

Swells of salt smash together,
moans surface and resurface.

Sheets of rain hover before each
squall picks them up, like waves,

and throws them against the rocks.
Inside, in bed, bodies' hurricane.

~~~~~

The cedar bough whispers  
in brushes to the red tin roof,  
Do storms make  
you horny?  
The roof answers,  
Yes, in gentle cries.

Beyond this, the beach  
sleeps, except for the tide.  
The relentless awake.

Gina Hay  
*Hazel*

*One*

"Stop touching that," Ava murmured. Hazel touched it again. She put her hand up on the window, pulled it down, created a thick smudged print on the otherwise clean glass.

"Could you please-" Again. Another smudge. Quicker this time, thin and angry next to the thick, patient handprints running down the surface, racked up like soldiers in a line. Fogging up the image of outside, trees, domes of dark green, lazily stirring in the wind.

At eighty-three, Hazel's face was wrinkled, but she tightened her already thin mouth into a horizon. The red lipstick on the inside of her lips was bleeding onto her teeth, and her skinny eyebrows were furrowed into a harsh V. Her eyelids were half-shut in contempt. She wanted to make herself ugly, mean. She wanted to look like a red-faced child in the midst of a tantrum. A nuclear meltdown.

"You make it hard. For us to call you, I mean," explained Ava, plain-faced and charming, exasperated. She was so well put-together. Clean bits and pieces all tied up in ironed clothing, business-casual. Dennis, her quiet boyfriend, sitting at her side, holding her hand. It was Friday. Ava had washed her hair, stood in front of the mirror with an o-mouth, heating red strands into curls. Hazel had woken up in the afternoon, headed to the bank to exchange a ten-dollar bill for a bag of nickels. Two

hundred, in rolls, stowed in a laundry bag by a bank clerk with pursed purple lips, small eyes half-closed in suspicion. She'd walked home, listened to the wind washing away the leaves only to pull them back in, whistling. Hazel's hair now hung, thin and oil-infested, limp waves along the sides of her small face, reaching her shoulders. She made her lips thinner, pushed them together until, below the lipstick, they turned white.

"Jane wants to take you in. Make sure you're safe." Ava explained. Dennis nodded. They were in a restaurant on Hazel's block. Neither Ava nor Jane trusted their mother to meet them in places with hordes of people, because they'd all be able to see the woman acting out. Small places wouldn't do either, it would all be less discreet, harder to cover up and hide away. The place had to be close. Hazel had to use a cane to carry around her eighty-three-year-old body, which her daughters suspected would collapse once a walk reached the twenty-minute mark. After twenty minutes, her mind would indubitably also fold over upon itself; she kept herself busy with devoted pursuits; long sessions of low-voiced preaching at the dinner table relating to pus and insects, leather shoes caked with wet mud slugging through restaurant carpets.

"You can do whatever you fucking want. Until the day you drag me through the streets by my ankles, into Jane's suburban shit-den, I'm staying in my house," announced Hazel. She sat there quietly, waiting for Ava to say something. Waiting for Dennis to agree. When neither of them did, she reached below her chair, pulled out the laundry bag, started breaking up rolls of nickels. Ava sat, peering through unaffected eyes, as though she were

watching a child wear itself out; the child unaware that this would result in a sound sleep from afternoon to morning. Outside, the wind fell quiet, and nature turned blank.

## *Two*

Once they got to Hazel's home, thin layers of wrappers and plastic bags strewn over every floor, she went to the bathroom. She didn't announce anything, she just went. Ava had become a weatherwoman of sorts, able to predict every act Hazel had planned for herself.

"Give her a minute, then go get her," she told Dennis. He was sat down on the couch, watching her collect trash off the floor. She'd brought a trash bag in her purse.

Dennis walked up the stairs, and was met by a yellow light flooding through the bathroom door-frame. Outside, a willow swayed, all disturbed and impermanent. He walked up to meet the light, and tensed up once he saw Hazel. She was undressed, down to her bra and underwear, making faces at the mirror's reflection. She studied herself, turned her mouth and eyes gradually more angry, until all that was left was a pool of contempt. Non-verbally growling, biting into itself; eyes as thin slits that malice slipped through. Lips open a quarter inch, a snarl, more growls, somehow made yet inaudible. Dennis was in no sense surprised. This would happen, she would strip down, she would get angry, Ava would fix it as Dennis perched on the sidelines. Back when he was in his thirties, Ava in her twenties, he'd been

shiny and interesting. Now, he sometimes had to touch his skin to confirm that things had turned out like this; fatty, dry, red and raw. He was bland. And he couldn't fix things like Ava could. In the bathroom, Hazel's face went slack. The white lace, hung from a pale silhouette, suddenly paired with an earnest dread. She looked out the window, where everything seemed to have come to a standstill. A silence crept through, into herself. It often did, when the skies turned to blank paper slates, and house plants retreated into their ceramic containers; when the neighbors mowed the lawn, and she stood at the window, peering through the blinds, paralyzed. When the wind picked up, she breathed in again, eyes shut. Then opened them back up and dressed herself. Dennis had lost track. His gaze was now fixed on the outside, rooted in the permanence of change. At some point, everything would fall silent again, only to pick back up, and keep growing.

John Ledingham  
*A Sea Voyage*

*Dear M—,*

I write to you now from open waters, with the pungent air and empty skies.

I write to you knowing this letter will never reach you. So much the better. I want to tell you a story from inside its unfolding, I want to tell it as it happens. I know it is bad form to write an address without a message in mind but bear with me, all things tend toward a natural end.

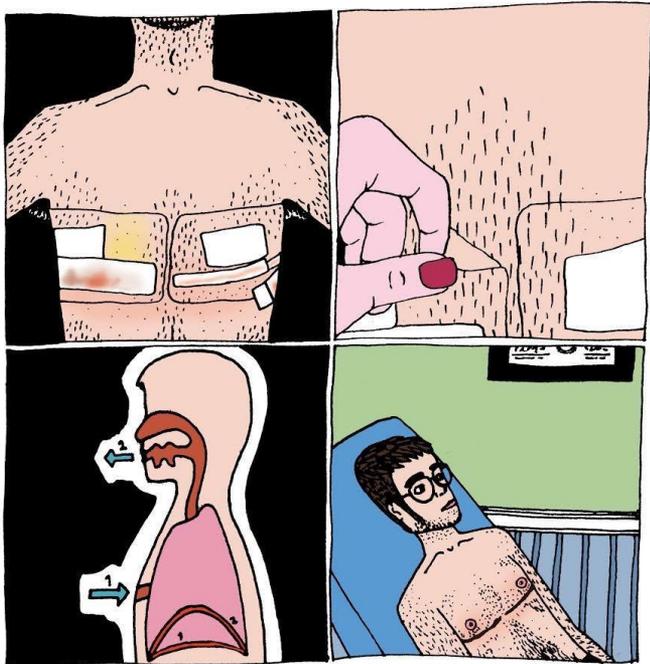
Let me orient you: I sit, more or less comfortably, by a port-side window on the ship's top passenger deck with three spaces between me and the lady in the aisleseat. It is dim and grey out the window, I have not seen land in days. I'm not sure of our destination, but it is not a fare I could have afforded. I wonder if the war hasn't diverted our course. I have nothing to do now but sit patiently and write to you, and hope the plainclothes do not pick me out of the crowd. I sit with my toolcase clutched tight, you always called me untrusting, but it always finds a purpose — I use it now as a deskspace, you owe it this very correspondence. I'm sure you'll be glad to hear me confirm a suspicion you've long had about my toolcase. It is true that my line of work - though steady - has not afforded me the stability your offices have found, and that taking my tools along wherever I go is simply part of plying the trade — but this case in particular has always meant something more for tucked inside a cavity on the underside of a false bottom are the tools which I use to practice alchemy, and if the plainclothes got a hold of it things would become much worse very quickly. Perhaps you've known all along, and are chuckling now

at the naivete with which I kept this secret, there were signs, I suppose, there were my diatribes late into the night about that pedant Isaac Newton, *but could you have guessed at my expertise?* No, I'm not one of those unioners, nor am I in the private employ of any court. I work in the shadows of the shadows. I am a self-taught, self-employed *lateral alchemist*, and my great area of practice is the transformation of copper into zinc. *Copper and zinc?* you ask, *not the Philosopher's Stone?* I assure you my unromantic work is no matter of skepticism or modesty. On the contrary I'm the absolute best in my field, small though it may be, and while the scientific among us continue to sacrifice themselves at that utopian altar I take the road of ill-profit and inconsequence toward *mastery*. I have been told there is no future in zinc. I have read detailed reports from institutions I respect which say foreign markets are moving towards tin-copper alloys, that once the war ends there will be no looking back, and that the time of my need is long dead. They can't comprehend my disinterest. They can't see what I've found in the mastery of process. They are peddlers, nothing more, and so I pay them no mind. But this was not the story I meant to tell you. I meant to tell you of my unpaid voyage, and my pursuit by the plainclothes.

Let me orient you: From where I sit now, I can see two doorways down the aisle from which the plainclothes periodically emerge with masks of determination as they amble around bumping into each other and slipping on banana peels, strutting up and down the walls in packs of three, exchanging hand signals like they are right on the verge of an arrest before disappearing once more below deck. They are born losers, and the nature of their assignment is unfair. There are simply too many passengers on too many decks for them to ever find me, there are too few agents and too few leads. But it's not the plainclothes I fear finding me now, it's the Ticket-Taker.

The Ticket-Taker who, impartial, unknowing, will be my exposure and the agent of my arrest. The devoted Ticket-Taker who winds his way up from the bowels of the ship, seat after seat, row after row, deck after deck, dragging his feet ever onward. I can trace his progress beneath my feet, feel his coming and going by a boiling in my blood, honorable Ticket-Taker, a perfect instrument of Law, the one who will hand me with a pleasant smile and a true absence of hatred to my executioners. But it is a fate I have chosen myself. I have made the choice to hide in plain sight. I have taken that gamble. Many an innocent is found up on deck, not single one is found stowed away with the rats. So like any good cosigner of the social contract I have made a performance of my innocence, called just enough attention to myself, asked permission from those who hold no authority.

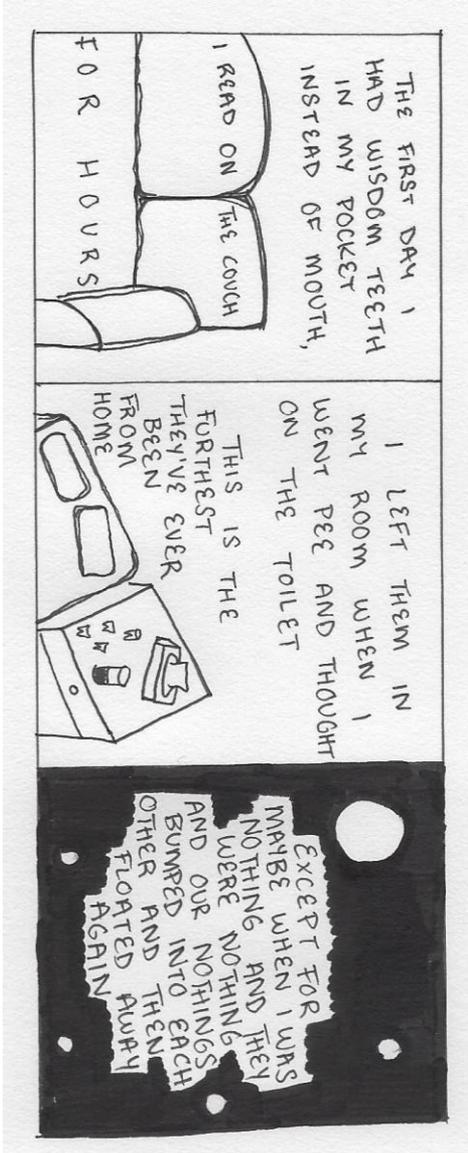
I have only misplaced my ticket.



After having my skin trapped under waterproof bandages, for 2 weeks, having them removed made it feel like I could breathe right through my skin without any need for my mouth or nose at all.



*Allyx Williams Back*



Kiley Verbowski Wisdom Teeth



April Winter *Perverse Cow 3*

John Ledingham  
*A Sea Voyage*

Dear M—,

How are you doing? If I thought I would hear back from you I would also ask if you are in good health, and whether you were able to walk again. I apologize that my story has become fragmented. I hope you have read these letters in the right order. There *is* an order to things after all.

I have had to live by the virtues of nonbeing and patience in my disguise and it has begun to override a lot of my thinking. I have lost track of my story as I have lost track of the days. Meanwhile I have not left my seat once since we pushed off shore. How long can a man sit? I have not gotten up to eat or sleep, - a man without a ticket has no cot to retire to - not even to use the toilet. I have always been good at holding my bladder — doctors I've known have expressed great admiration for its size and elasticity — but for this super-human faculty I feel only the more caged by all about me which is merely-human. *Which is to say*, no matter how long my bladder holds, it is the bladder of a man who must eat and drink. Now, we have all read in scientific journals that one can last a month without food or water but not in this heat, not in air this stifling, I can feel my life being lost in perspiration. No, it will not take a month. The sea and sky are still and indistinguishable.

Sophie Crocker

*petrictor: makeshift seabed*

the locals pilgrim out to the desert to see where the tourists have drowned:  
tents pitched in riverbeds that, dry the previous evening, have become rivers  
again. a spring storm crept in at night: cherry blossom-pale rainwater swoops  
familiar geometries in the sand.

now the dunes are redder than life, and  
the cacti quench with flowers, and the locals  
stand as if wearing black. they watch the  
anemone-dance  
of the submerged tents, while the bodies inside  
bloat symbiotically.



Lucie von Schilling  
*The grape lives*

in sweatpants and a tight  
 crop top. It feels tasty  
 peeled, but thinks this appeal  
 doesn't translate when

clothed. Eaters, why doesn't  
 the grape love  
 the way the crop top  
 accentuates its roundness?

You do. Have you ever  
 put the grape in  
 your mouth, filled  
 your cheeks with air,

and shook, bounced  
 it around? The grape  
 calls this game  
*getting fucked up.*

It loves *getting fucked up.*  
 Yesterday, the grape  
 did a whole load of  
 purple crop tops.

Have you ever seen  
 something like that?  
 An entire load of purple.  
 The grape flaunts

its figure despite its fatness.  
It knows it is seedless,  
dependable, even addictive,  
and that everyone rubs its

skin before they pop it. Eaters,  
how many grapes will crunch  
between teeth before you feel  
whole again? It repeats,

*I am a body, but  
I am not just a body.*

Sophie Crocker  
*everything's a hummingbird*

it's strange,  
 crying someone else to sleep: i drink her grief and  
 return it to her, her head on my lap. after an hour  
 her nightmares heat my pelvis through her skull –  
 are any bones built for grieving? marrow, maybe. salt,  
 maybe. asleep, she finally cries – cries the way unconscious drunks  
 vomit to asphyxiation. i turn her face to the side  
 so her runoff soaks my leggings. she's superheated,  
 body hyperaware it's alive. survivor's guilt scalds.

(towards summer's end all the bumblebees turn bold and painfully  
 yellow before hibernation, as the butterflies wilt and the  
 wasps die.)

even corpses  
 move internally. atoms vibrate slower when cold but  
 they still vibrate. matter trembles at molecular level –  
 ice, glass, plums, baleen, harp strings, cinnamon, cicadas,  
 and heart strings, living or no. everything's a hummingbird:  
 atoms on fire, atoms alight, atoms a wing-beat away from  
 disappearance – disintegration – song. from under her eyelids,  
 nectar trickles hotly onto my thighs. she barely stirs but remains  
 kinetic. then she half-opens her eyes; dragonfly-teal irises  
 trapped in red webs.

John Ledingham  
*A Sea Voyage*

*Dear M—,*

I wonder if you shouldn't have seen a doctor sooner. I hope your mother is doing well and that she has had many hot meals. The days are no longer bracketed by night. There are no stars or sun anymore. Only one great wall of light, far off erected somewhere along the horizon. Sometimes I think I can see the men who operate it, who scale its hidden scaffolding, trailing cord, changing bulbs, throwing levers, whose pin-point heads poke through the anticircle absences of light. It's absurd of course, they would be far too small for sight, but I see them. The plainclothes still search for me. The bounty on my head grows with every passing minute. My heartbeat has slowed excessively. If I am to make it out of here alive I may join the circus. The plainclothes own the empty space now.

*Dear M—,*

I am convinced we are no longer moving at all. I thought I would be dead by now. I thought I would have seen the Ticket-Taker at least. I feel as if the whole ship is passing into death alongside me. Perhaps the crew has lost spirit, perhaps the passengers. Call it off! Call it off, Ticket-Taker!

Erin Vance  
*Nuptial Flight*

The world is a garden translated by fire.  
 A female says yes by closing her wings,  
 and the blueberries push fierce their lush spice.

The Cabbage White is a minimalist.  
 She says no by fluttering her wings.

Butterflies have a fate; their displacement green  
 and sympathetic.

Somewhere in Europe  
 the flowers want a good listener,  
 the chanting of the blueberries not quite the song  
 of pretty swallows.

The Holly Blue holds grudges.

The sky is a map pinpointed with ducks,  
 who nip at the butterflies, only out for a lay.

Since the glands of virgins have little smell,  
 they suckle fresh blueberries to draw others in.

Let the male collect the alkaloids,  
 while the female holds tight her wings to her back  
 like shoulder blades.

The female has enough work to do, now.

John Ledingham  
*A Sea Voyage*

*Dear M—,*

I have come to understand the privilege of my position. I am a man condemned to death in good health and good spirits, experiencing no loss of freedom and relieved of any hope of escape by the double bind circumstance has placed upon me. Do you understand M—? It is a privilege no human could ever ask for but having been granted it I have no choice but to see its blessings and take advantage of them. What is left? This body and these words. Now I write with an ending in mind. Now as I write I record my death along the infinite gradations of circumstance passing into it, and perhaps, by some spontaneous perfection of form will *conclude* its record from the other side. It is a pilgrimage made daily, and *still* unrecorded. Is this not one of the greatest oversights of the whole human project? We all become so solipsistic in death! But I am inside it now, and, with a disciplined hand and empty mind will let it pass through me, and with this pen I will turn inside-out the eternal and resolve the puzzle's final piece in objectivity. It will be my greatest transformation — it may well *be* the philosopher's stone! All stories make for good form that are carried out long enough. Let me tell you what I see and resolve experience into words. It is the word that matters, the document. Historians pore over a general's action, but nobody cares what he felt. His feelings were false, and now nonexistent, as if never existent. His actions too, but the word of the deed remains. Now, is my ego so great to attach Truth to transient emotion? It is the passage that is real, that must be recorded, that may be conquered. If I can set down the movements in words plain as these I have nothing to fear whatsoever. Plain words, easily read and digested. There is nothing to fear in a word.

I had always left it up to somebody else to die for me, someone much wiser or much weaker, someone somehow better equipped to face it – but here I am now inside-myself ready to see this much talked about final act. I as I am now will pass into and reach out of the concluding act and give shape to its formal actualities. It might be a pretty good time! I should wish that everyone is faced with such an opportunity to die sat upright observing it.

The near dead are said to be clairvoyant. Is that said, or was that itself an instance of clairvoyance? Some things in life you are sure of. In my final moment I am sure I will be cursed by the face of the pedant Isaac Newton. How ugly it will seem but how small it really is.

Behind a hundred walls of stone you die of your own body just as quickly. I have seen it first hand in the markets, the dead and dying piled up in the gutter, it's a laugh to think what good the walls did them! As far as I can tell there's not a single place you could go where you would be any safer from your body. A month at most, that's no time at all, a month at most hanging over the heads of all that is human and still we fear one another! Fear life or give up fear altogether!

I can scarcely remember a time before this ship, this record. Anything beyond this experiment is dim and unreal. The whole thing is a laugh now. I really am just these words.

I have stopped paying attention to the passage of time, after a while you just cast it aside. I used to sleep, but in this collapsed moment I inhabit both worlds simultaneously between which I can no longer discriminate. Therefore, I now must maintain two copies of this document simultaneously. 1:1 reproductions to ensure this

project will not be lost in the substance of a dream. It's tedious I admit, but I've become quite skilled at this strange brand of ambidexterity, and the upkeep is imperative to keeping an anchor in hard reality. It is the steering of two parallel vessels towards one shared destination. The alternative I cannot entertain, that kind of skepticism is dangerous thinking.

**Cover image**  
***Noise* by Allyx Williams**

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