Welcome slips in from the intercom above, as if its tinny reverb had always been embedded in the back of your mind. You look up: that's right, you're in the airport! The theme of this Blue Mirror is Terminal: of layovers, of alternating periods of wait and go, of both the obvious arrival and the implicit departure. We hope that as you read through this edition, you see in it the slow but timely cycle of restlessness and hopeless introspection that's in our wake, and still in the cards. It can be difficult to keep up any other line of thought as we find ourselves once again thrust into the motions of school without any of the familiar recourse or companionship, left to pick up the pieces from clinically delivered intercoms and signs. The pieces in this issue are uncertain or adrift, many remaining in memory and in the interior of the mind. They tell us that it's worth it to embrace this feeling, before we go looking for the answers we seek.

The thing about airport terminals is that desires and motives lie beneath the surface. The calm of sleek metal pillars and tile floors is peppered with the chatter of strangers, and the frantic inner monologue of their dreams, reservations, expectations. Yours, too – it bubbles up.

The thing about bubbles, of course, is that they're evanescent – they pop, whether with a bang or in silence. We take on distractions instead, and our minds drift away in response. Time slows and hastens at will in an indefinitely languid acceleration. Hesitance – did I make the right choice? Hoping – will she run to me at the gates, just before we take off? Excitement – the boarding has begun. Warm thanks to those of you who took a leap of faith to submit your work, and thank you for reading. We wish you a safe and rewarding flight, and we hope to see you again soon.

— BAE (Benet, Alice, and Emily)
today, friday / holy day / prayer of congregation / but now / i seek forgiveness on my
own /
learn to count blessings in silence / against neon light / did the Prophets worship / in
the glow of a gas station? / i / detached body / staring back at flickering apartment
wall /
knowing my parts / supplicate across ocean / still i look for them / this land's promise

today, friday / lottery day / cheap television screen / the white faces with opaque
smiles / rolling glass spheres into fates / worthless ticket / wonder / whose lives have
lifed / while i / groveling / sink further into dark / midnight kitchen shifts / slashed
tires / face bleeding from fearful shaving / first they sang / numbers / later they sing /
that i / terror

/salam
(Hello)

/static / knowing that / i / reassurance not truth /
mother / creases of worry / wringing knots into hijabs /
father / clinging hope / pacing through streets /
for now i / crush thoughts into restaurant napkins /
hoping / sandpaper teeth / grind / my shameful kisses at kicking feet /
into nonexistence / i / made of missing organs / i / good boy / i / better liar /
i / say everything is /

/alhamdulillah
(great because of God)

later / thumbing over glass prayer beads /
in another hemisphere / the motion would curve /
my tongue into Arabic / but now / wishes / for lucky ticket / for milky skin of steel /
for home

but hollowed city / turns away / pitiless / nothing holy /
in her mouth / so now / i sow / pieces of metal from screens / pearly grins / their talk /
spit on my shoes / into / my hands / my chest / i / whole again / i / will pray in my new
body /
until it swallows me whole
UNTITLED
emily yang

for the air vent on the ground floor of the louvre. may you taste all the world on your breath.

o grate,
lover of air and fire,
did you ask for this too?
the great flock door to door,
eyes pulled as if by string to the glass
and you are an afterthought,
the ground beneath their feet.
dusty gold and made of earth,

rain drips slow down your sides in the summer afternoons;
staccato drops to the tenuto
of feet lost in thought
moving from point a to b.
linger, you think, wait for me
a little longer.
dust from all corners of the earth
find their way to the gaps
between your golden teeth.
linger, you say to the music of passing feet. wait for me
a little longer, won’t you?
GLASS EMPTY
gabe hart

LIMINAL SPACES, BUT NOT QUITE
campbell depken

i write my best poetry
in those in-between places:
a half empty church on a sunday night,
a scalding shower in the late afternoon,
the quiet of my own bed after an exhausting day.
It is never any god nor the cascading water,
and it is never the weariness;
it’s the hollowness—
those places where all you are left to do
is burrow inside your head
and pray to whatever divine you believe in
that you won’t find it empty
THOUGHTS ON SUNLIGHT
emily lin

There is something pure about the sunlight that comes in my west-facing window as it shines past my plants to land on my bed. The allure of dropping what is at hand, closing my laptop and notebooks and textbooks, to curl up in the sunlight like a cat, draws me every day. It is a pull I do not often ignore, despite what amounts of homework I may find myself having to do afterward. Especially now, in the tenth month of the year, sunlight is fleeting, and its presence must be enjoyed. Whether the light is in my dorm room (its walls empty, the gaping lack of a second person in that room ever-obvious but only to me, the memories of a previous year, in a previous time, embedded into its walls), or my room at home (walls I desperately want to paint, boxes and trinkets that never find themselves organized, noises that are simultaneously quieter and more piercing than noises at school), I am inevitably drawn to the light, and its promise of warmth, comfort, and rest.
You used to touch my hair when you were anxious. 
Your fingers smelled like my 12th birthday cake, 
three dollops of buttercream frosting, not too sweet, 
with a dark chocolate undertone and a hint of cinnamon.
I couldn’t have known the flour was stale, 
or the eggs spoiled and angry.
Your smile was caramel enough.

I don’t remember when your frosted words turned bitter. 
Maybe it was after you heard the tires of 
my new bike squeak by your house, 
and I tasted, for the first time, red velvet jealousy.
You beat me into hard rusk, 
until I too wished we could go back to the good old days.

Guilt wrecks me more than your words. 
I should have invited you to my brother’s wedding, should have 
shared my popcorn with you instead of the boy I met at college.
Maybe then you wouldn’t be rotten memories, 
and I wouldn’t be your prey.

You reek of crippled candy wrappers, squashed laughter, 
spoiled strawberries picked by my own hand. 
Regret poisons me, but doesn’t even look your way. 
I hope your feet hurt while you trample me.
RED FRUIT
huda haque

my great-grandfather would call the
pomegranate
the heavenly fruit in arabic
a voice i have never heard
folded into sky, its inflections at the tips of
constellations
each time the fruit opens with a crystallizing
crack, after difficulty
burgundy veins peppered with crackling
albedo that
i must flick tirelessly away
routine of eden makes dough of my hands
stained fingers beyond recognition
grasp at the jewels
nestled in the white flesh like a skull
cradling the concentrated cosmo of man
finally i make them greet my mouth
one

by
one

vermillion kisses opulence for
a moment
makes me master of all mother of none
then gone

an apple has no epithet it
laughs at preparation
is your hair dangling
messy from the gray workweek
loves your teeth all the same
crooked ones
a child might paint a bedroom door
in their shape
it is swipes of wrist
under water

in a moment
i can sink into its flesh
gnawing away loudly
is this not human nature?
to eat life curved and whole
down to its humble spine
to be buried in the plains
where it once grew

later, in dreams
someone whispers that my name
means
guidance pressed into nerves
but some days i want my name
to read me back into shadows of
nothing
but some days i want my name
to make exploding pearls out of my
tears
now i beg you to
cut me open just to know
what kind of sweetness my arteries
carry
and you refuse
knowing i will die
knowing that was the point
SELF-PORTRAIT AS WORLD’S WORST BADMINTON PARTNER

isabel hardwig

after Chen Chen

Unsure of body and limb. Bad of eyesight. Constantly overbalances when diving, and picks the exact wrong dandelions. Howls points in crude tennis scoring, incorrectly. Forgot to wear shoes. Forgot to wear shoes and now sports an instep rash with fallen petals. Ate oatmeal for breakfast, again. Left the book out in the rain last night and dreamed a number of inconsequential endings. Continues to make jokes hinging on the word “shuttlecock.” Extremely aware of all the jokes about shuttlecocks that have already been made, but still craving an ugly, unkind attention, a fleshy undersided attention, wary of time and its fossilization of perfectly good backyards. Did not eat the peaches in time. Did not clean up the peaches when they rotted, and now the gray-green puddles have remade the kitchen in their image, smell of forgotten wood and avarice. Forgets to cook with oil. Doesn’t know more than three or four state capitals. Hasn’t kissed anyone in four months, and has deleted enough texts to make up a small poetry chapbook. Keeps bleating these meaningless junctions of numbers, this unvictory, as if by some miracle of preservation this April can be quantified and pinned to the regrowth of grass, forty-love, forty-five-love, love-all, love carried in the mouth like a visiting dignitary, love assuming the role of depletion, popped. Also, can’t play badminton worth a damn.

I LIKE THEIR SHOES | ghita basurto

m
MY BRAIN IS PLAYING BOSS MUSIC BUT WHAT FOR?

campbell depken

a synonym of ambition
is anxiety.
how else are you supposed to achieve so much
if your brain does not fill you
with the true terror of failure?
how are you supposed to accomplish anything
if everytime you even have to acknowledge
the slightest possibility
of imperfection
you don’t want to curl up into a ball
and empty both your heart and your eyes?
how will you reach any of your goals
without your heart pounding
and your hands shaking
and your body trying so desperately
to save itself from this perceived
unperceived danger?
how would you be anything
without your anxiety?
i am beginning
to appreciate the rain
as much as i love the sun,
and i believe you must love the
rain
or else why would
showers be the way they are:
not a single stream, but
a million droplets dripping,
tapping against tile floor,
drenching through your clothes as
you run through the rain—
or rather dance—
because no one is watching/
because no one is crazy enough to
get caught in the storm.
but you are beyond crazy;
you are wild
and gentle:
a soft patter
raining down on the rooftop
as you fall asleep on the red couch
with a cup of tea on the coffee
table,
warm and dry
and damp:

morning droplets
coating bright green grass
and dewy leaves underneath a
moon
that hangs heavy in the sky
like the clouds
that you tilt your head up towards
as the rain weighs them down
and they fall
not as a single stream, but
in a million droplets
that carry with them the thought
that
yes,
i am beginning to love the rain
as much as i do the sun.
BABY BLUE
diya bhatt

It’s been three years since we found the little house on the corner of Wellesley and Hawthorne, my new paradise, and hers. Every morning of our twenties was spent scraping mold off the ceiling until we had a bucket’s worth of the stuff. We couldn’t get over how funny she looked covered in it. I painted the walls baby blue, a bad choice, probably, but she left before she could tell me not to. Now the sunlight makes them look gray. I’m fighting tears when I look at them for the last time. I had dreams for those walls, but after her I realized I forgot what it felt like to know someone else did too. Mom tells me I was too rough, the house needed a woman’s touch. She doesn’t know how long I wanted the same thing.

The house is still sleeping when I leave. Its silence interrupts the rock and roll belching out from the car stereo, so I get out of there as fast as I can. I try not to miss the garden, but I find myself doodling the roses she planted, and then forgot about, back in May. I couldn’t bring myself to take care of them.

It’s been a year since I gave up on the little house, two years since she did. The dreams, the fantasies, really, of breathing portraits and real faces in the kitchen disappeared with her. I guess I left my blue-gray paradise before I could watch it fade away.
NIGHTMARES
suhani ramchandra

clenched fists
pursed lips
sweat trickling down my forehead
buckled knees
arms squeezed
the world falls down to my shoulders
my breath stops
my heart drops
i wake up to the bright sunset
WINGS
meara kane

Butterflies have soft, delicate wings. When they fly, they glide gracefully at the mercy of the wind, and tenderly land on each blade of grass as lightly as a feather. On a sunny day you may see light gently beaming through their translucent wings, because they are too thin to withstand the piercing light. People like to say that this fragility makes them beautiful, but it always makes me sad to think that they could be torn to pieces at any moment. An inconveniently placed branch, a swipe from a cat’s paw, or even just a strong gust of wind could tear the wings of a butterfly and end their gentle flight together.

Grasshoppers have short, snappy wings. They leap, then deploy their wings to help burst through the air. Each movement propels them further and further along their path until they land strongly and securely, crashing into each blade of grass with a force great enough to bend them towards the ground. When the grasshopper is frightened it can always find a way to propel itself forward. Perhaps it can land on a higher perch or fall deep within the foliage where nothing can reach it. People like to be frightened by grasshoppers when they see them jump around so suddenly, but it always makes me happy to think that they are strong enough to withstand any threat. They are sturdy little creatures with a brilliant passion for survival, and I do not have to fear losing them to the wind.

Geese have strong, graceful wings. They use them to fly hundreds of miles to distant lands over the horizon every year. Any creature with such a spirit for adventure must be wonderfully powerful. A goose can protect itself through both flight and flight. Its wings allow it to fly far beyond the grasping claws of any impending danger, but a goose’s temperament often lends itself to bouts of violence. A goose will tear your skin apart with its solid, dull beak and talons.

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Some people like to enjoy geese on relaxing days spent at the park, and may feed them breadcrumbs or simply watch them glide across the surface of a lake. Some people regard geese as nothing more than a nuisance, and may chase them away while making rude remarks behind their backs. I have never had a particularly strong opinion on geese, but I know how I feel about their beaks and talons. It always makes me scared to think that they could tear me apart so easily. If that happened, I would become just like the butterfly in the wind, and I already know that feeling far too well.
COMETS AND STARS
ben rashley

NATURE POEM DISGUISED AS GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH
isabel hardwig

the Sheetz feeds
to the point of sickness on four lanes’
yellow paint, motorcycle yelling
haikus in
its sleep. here, we have coffee & a muffin &
two bags of sharesize m&ms,
sacrificial lambs laid up in the bathrooms,
mice in the freezers for pythons
and those of us who dream in
little pieces. i buy eggs. feathers.
every night is stiller than the
night before. frozen with focus, or
with fear.
recall the egret in the pond last night. her
legs bent into parallel winters.
how she claimed the water
until it was not even water unless it had her in it.
the skim milk
moon named something stupid,
like gibbous or worm, epitaphed
in the surface and, later, the blank bullet of her eye.
i convince the cashier that my name is gizzard shad.
the girl
behind me calls herself bluegill. the dimes i hold
want to go back into the magma, want to exchange
their faces for sediments and bone.
don’t scare away the birds, someone says, and then
she holds my hand.
NEVER NOT, NEVER NOT BLACK

jacob jarrett

I’m never not black, that’s to say,
I am always a negro
Inseparable from my color, that’s to say,
my skin is always negro
When the cops pull me over, no matter how bright,
I’m still a n****r
If I suck up to the cops, no matter how polite,
I’m still a n****r
Yes, when I’m applying to college,
I’ll select the box that says black
Yes, when I’m applying to a job, they’ll see
my skin is still black
Yes, when I listen to rap, you might think
my skin is darker
And when I listen to rap, you might perceive
me as a not-never-not-black marker
But I am black ALL the time, and not just when it aids me
I am black ALL the time, and certainly not with the intent to
harm you
I am black ALL the time, whether it kills me or not
I am black ALL the time. I’m NEVER-NOT-BLACK.
RIPPLES
sara telekar

i skip a stone
it goes not too far
and it splashes in the middle of the pond

my sister skips a stone
her stone goes farther
it dares to reach the border of the water

it’s a clear winner
she turns to gloat and i smile amusingly
while our father claps her on the back

and when we turn to go home
my sister continues celebrating
and from my public yet not seen spot
i raise a toast to her

because it was i that taught her how to skip rocks
it was i that showed her the motion
the technique
the precision

and it was i that showed her the right way
her own way
and then she learned how to skip rocks
better than before
with a finesse that i had never seen before

and i will not mind that her rock went farther than mine
because one day, she will teach her own family how to skip
and she will tell them the secret
that i told her

the secret to skipping stones
is in the ripples
CARDBOARD LIVES
emily yang

i’m not cut out for this
bulls**t. fold yourself
On behalf of the staff of Blue Mirror, thank you for flying with us. We hope you enjoyed your flight, and we wish you safe travels on your next adventure.