



THE GRAIL

VOL. XIV

February 14, 2019

ISSUE I

INSIDE

REQUIRED LOVE

HONEY

Marvin C. reminisces about reunited love and tenderness covered in honey.

PAGE 1

HISTORICAL LOVE

THIS MUST BE THE PLACE

Lauren M. reminds us that love can flourish at Reed by uncovering two heart-warming Reddie love stories.

PAGE 3

PUPPY LOVE

I WISH TO WRITE THIS FOR MY DOG

Aislin L. S. waxes poetic about the loving wisdom of their otherwise exceedingly dumb dog.

PAGE 9

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FROM THE EDITORS

To our readers,

Welcome back to spring semester everyone – we made it! *The Grail* is coming back in full force this semester, now giving you your biweekly dose of arts and writing! We have heart eye emojis for this week's issue, which features the work of new and old contributors alike on the topic of love and romance. So whether you're into roses and boxes of chocolate, or think Valentine's Day is a capitalist conspiracy, we promise that we'll have something for you. *The Grail* gets sexy as two lovers reunite in Marvin C's sweet story (1), and editor Lauren takes us on a tour of campus locales brimming with romance (3). Owen H. shares adoration for public transportation,

and Max N. expresses loneliness in waiting for loved ones (4). Genna G. details dangerous love in an action-packed love short story (5), and Flora G. draws a new snakeless medusa (7). Imani G. rebuts an iconic ee cummings love poem (8), and Aislin L. S. reflects on the best breed of love – obviously the canine kind (9). Sophie H. shares some lovely photos in a heart-shaped bath (10).

Love,

Dan, Sophie, and Lauren

p.s. If you're interested in writing with us, our meetings are Tuesdays at 8pm in the Student Publications Office (GCC-047). Or send questions and submissions directly to our brand new email address thegrail@reed.edu!

CONTENTS

Honey, 1-2

This Must Be The Place, 3

Ode to the E Train, 4

[Untitled], 4

Love, 5-7

I Will Not Carry Your Heart, 8

[I wish to write this for my dog], 9

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Front cover drawing by Flora Gladwin

Honey

by MARVIN CAUGANT

My bird,

The very thought of the last weekend makes me shiver from bliss. Let me live that moment again.

You came to meet me directly on the platform. I didn't have to wait long. You knew perfectly well that my enthusiasm would have been slightly tainted by the smell of the rain on the woollen coat of the rushing crowd, combined with the smell of the pub next to the station, heady and dizzying. You wanted to catch the purity of my happiness. I ran into your arms as soon as I saw you, leaving my Barbie-pink suitcase behind. Your warmth quickly got to me, and I closed my eyes as I buried my face into your neck.

The memory, so far already, of the smell of your perfume merging with your very essence, amplifies my shivers.

Habit Rouge, by Guerlain – an oblong bottle that fills my erotic dreams.

I breathed in and looked up – you looked deeply into my eyes. Your cashmere-gloved hand reached for the cold, sticky skin of my hand, and you put your honey flavoured lips onto my flesh. We remained there for a moment, exploring each other's well missed buccal territories. We didn't care – about the suitcase that could have been stolen, about the inappropriate comments that could have been uttered.

Was that love? Or carelessness? As a matter of fact, one goes with the other.

I cannot remember now what broke that

first moment. I licked my honeyed lips. I smiled at you before kissing you one more time, more lightly, more fleetingly. You told me you loved me and that you were “over the moon” to see me again. You went to fetch Barbie back without letting go of my hand, and you led me out of this Dantean place. The movement of my eyes was quickly shifting: I admired your face, slightly wet from the drizzle of Brest¹, but also your feet, elegantly gloved by your cherished Dr. Martens' shoes. Almost automatically, we headed for our shelter, which had just been opened, overlooking the castle and the Recouvrance neighbourhood. You kissed me one more time before going to get our order.

Vanilla and cinnamon rooibos for you, Thé des Tempêtes for me.

You asked me to tell you all about my life in Paris, how my research went, how it was like living with my flatmates. I could easily read in your eyes the affection that you felt for them. You told me you had a surprise for me. I was not especially surprised, as you could infer from the smile on my face, for I am now used to your displays of affection. You took a patent cardboard box out of your tote bag and gave it to me. I opened it clumsily.

In this precious box was a honey-pie.

We walked back to your place despite the pouring rain. One of your hands held one of mine, the other your crimson umbrella. We walked up Jean Jaurès Street, walked across the Place de Strasbourg just for pure fun before slowly going down again, heading for your kingdom.

¹ A coastal city in Brittany, France

As we got closer to your apartment your hand, stuck deep in my back until then, started going sensuously down my bum to finally find shelter in the love of the back pocket of my Levi's jeans.

When we arrived in front of your place, you kissed me, got your honey-coloured key out, pushed the front door open, and kissed me a second time before letting me in. Our slow pace then turned into excitement.

One flight of stairs.
 One kiss.
 Two flights of stairs.
 One hand under my jumper.
 One last flight.
 Mystery.
 Your nook.

The walls of your living room were covered with quotations. Dickens, Zadie Smith, George Eliot, Levi-Strauss, Patricia Highsmith. You relieved me of my several layers of clothing in this cage made of words. You showed me into your room. The shutters were open. I relieved you of your rain-soaked coat in this cage made of photographs—photographs of us, of our student life, of our nights spent in the Kennedy Parc, of our moments of happiness. You, naked. Me, naked. You led me to your desk. You went to the other end of the room. You turned on your record player and played *The XX—Heart Skipped a Beat*. Then you turned to me, watched me wrap my arms around my torso. You came closer and freed me from that aura of insecurity. You pushed me delicately onto the desk, and I was happy to be lying on your poem drafts for cushions.

You kissed me again, one more time. This

time more sensuously. You laid your body upon mine.

Your perfume was the most perfect fore-play you could have given me. I let you do it, and closed my eyes.

Then I opened them again and gazed at the honey-coloured ceiling.

After that, we spent some indefinite time on the desk. You tickled me, I brushed your chest with my hand. Only once you got up to change the record. It was almost 1pm when we went back to the living room. I was cosily wrapped in your favorite sweatshirt.

You know, the honey-coloured one.

You came out of the kitchen with two crystal glasses— the ones I gave you on your twenty-third birthday— and a bottle of Sauternes. You opened it in a pop. "The one sound that can wake me up at night", as my grandfather used to say. We drank to our reunion and to the present. You picked up the book you were reading at the moment from the little oak table, which was covered with several mauve rings. You were reading Ginsberg. Again. As always. That book had been read and reread, its pages had been dog eared so many times. You opened it at random and read me a poem.

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down the side street under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full-moon.

To be continued.

First written in French, translated by the writer's best friend, Camille Le Gall.

This Must Be The Place

By LAUREN MONDROSKI

Stories of Love from Places to Sit on Campus

Valentine's Day is often about gestures, gifts, and words exchanged that situate romance in the spotlight. Love, though, is obviously much more than that. It's more experiential, imbued into aromas, the songs we hear, and significantly, the places we exist in together. I often think about the love stories held in the places on Reed's campus over its hundred year history. I wonder how many people had their awkward yet exhilarating first kiss, or stayed up late talking and falling in love with someone, or met (by chance) the person they wanted to spend the rest of their life with, in the very same places I walk by every day? With that, I bring you two stories that prove that love has the ability to make even places like Reed sacred, and that it really can be as simple as sitting, side-by-side, enjoying one another's company.

Cerf Amphitheatre

If you walk towards the Cerf Amphitheatre from the back of Commons, you'll be greeted by one of the nicest views of the Canyon. It was fall when I first discovered that on the right side of the amphitheatre, there's a small clearing that's just a bit more secluded, where you can look directly at the blue bridge through the autumn leaves. In this spot, I found a simple log bench that had an engraving:

While we were students, we spent many an afternoon in this canyon, and fell in love. On graduation day in May 1945, we were married in the Reed College Amphitheatre.

The engraving on the bench was dedicated to Eileen P. Kuhns and E. Douglas Kuhns. When I started thinking about things to write for Valentine's Day, I was reminded of this bench and decided to look into their stories. Eileen Pease was a sociology major, and Edward Kuhns studied political science. The two of them were editors of *The Quest*, and both lived in Portland prior to attending Reed. A more significant and impactful similarity, however, was that they each lost their parents at young ages. Independent and with a drive to succeed, in each other they found "a kindred soul." I wasn't able to find any archival photos or mentions of the wedding, but I did find their names in the chapel's wedding records book. Between 1921 and 1959, almost ninety couples wed in the chapel, mostly Reed seniors or recent alumni, but also students who still had a few years left until graduation. When I go to this bench, sometimes, I imagine the Kuhns' wedding, looking out into the Canyon in late spring. Out of all the details that come to mind, imagining the amount of elation between the two of them is the most evocative—two people intoxicated by the thrill of finishing four long years of Reed, but also by the excitement of the rest of their lives just about to begin, together.

Thesis Tower

Because of the seismic renovations, the library is a little out of sorts right now. Walking through the stacks can end in frustration for librarians and students alike. Unnoticed, among all the shifting around, are a few pieces of furniture that have special meaning—the end tables and comfy lounge chairs in the reading spot between the North and South Reference rooms. These custom chairs were a part of the 1992 renovation of the thesis tower, made possible because of a donation by Dorothy Atkinson, 28'. This renovation appeared to be a typical remodeling effort, aimed at making the thesis tower a cozy, well-lit, and accessible place to browse titles and work among the achievements of past Reed students. Atkinson was known for speaking her mind on the project, however, which could have something to do with the fact that the renovation was in honor of her late husband, Neal Atkinson 30', to whom she had been married since 1934. Neal Atkinson and Dorothy Shapiro individually made their marks on campus, and together they shared a passion for tennis, campus involvement, and even the same major, economics. Crucial to this story of the thesis tower renovation, though, is lore about how the couple would often work side-by-side, holding hands as they did readings and thesis work. This is likely why, in former librarian Victoria Hanawalt's thesis tower dedication speech, she remarked that Dorothy insisted on very specific types of end tables and chairs, the reason being that "she wanted students to have a place on which to leave love notes." Details like these acknowledge that the library has always had significance beyond studying, and that it is a place where powerful love emerges in soft and subtle ways, like whispers of conversation among the stacks of books. When our own renovations in the next few years are completed, the furniture that serves as a reminder of this tale of love will finally return to the tower. But until then, take a moment to find them in their temporary home, maybe have a seat, and write a few love letters of your own.

Ode to the E Train

By OWEN HART

Closed eyes, head on
 shoulder, hand in hand
 reminding. Know these
 swaying lights inside
 this shaking tunnel form the
 glowing vein
 within a darker hall. Shifting
 sideways,
 lifting, liting, loving—an old
 ship, slipping
 forward-port-and-starboard,
 shapes the shared
 still solitary midnight of its
 wake.
 O silent syncopation, trace
 your rhythm
 on the stranded crests of
 softness waiting yet.

[Untitled]

By MAX NOBEL

New ways of being
 Lonely are invented every
 Day and you walk until
 You raise yourself up with
 Forearms and elbows feeling
 The sinking now into
 The complete stillness
 patiently
 Waiting for your shape

Love

By GENNA CHILDERS

Kalila jerked her kitchen knife out of the body before her, a gush of blood chasing the blade. It soaked her hands, warm on her clammy skin. The man struggled to breathe through the blood bubbling in his lungs for a moment longer, clawing at her torn jacket, before his heart gave out. He slumped against her, the dead weight forcing her to stagger backwards. She slammed into the kitchen counter, cursing breathlessly at the pain before shoving the man's body off of her with all of her remaining strength. He hit the tile floor with a sickening thud, the glaze of blood on the ground soaking into his hair.

Kalila forced herself to suck in a breath as the adrenaline deserted her, leaving her shaking and exhausted. The knife slipped out of her trembling fingers and clattered to the floor, coming to rest at the dead man's feet. She propped a hand on the counter behind her in an attempt to hold herself up as she scanned her apartment.

There had been six men in total, she realized, as she counted the bodies scattered around her kitchen and living room. The realization almost made her proud. Slate was an arrogant bastard; if he had sent six of his best to kill her, it meant even he had a high opinion of her skills.

Not a high enough opinion to get the job done, she thought to herself, a bit smugly.

And then the pain hit.

It was so sudden and so overwhelming that her knees buckled beneath her, her elbow slamming into the kitchen counter as she struggled to keep herself upright. Her pathetic attempt failed, and she hit the ground hard, the tile bruising both of her knees. She curled in on herself, gasping desperately. Another wave of agonizing pain swept through her body, drawing an anguished moan from her lips. She squeezed her eyes shut, trying to find her bearings somewhere in the sea of pain.

After a moment the torment subsided, enough for her to search for the source. With shaking hands she peeled her jacket off her body, letting it drop into the blood on the kitchen floor. The right side of her abdomen was throbbing, so she forced her shirt up, hissing at the pain of motion.

There, embedded deeply in the skin and muscle beneath her ribcage, was a long, thin blade. Her heart dropped into her stomach, her chest aching with the knowledge of that blade. It was a specialized hollow weapon, carried only by Slate's Black Wraiths. Designed

to hold one of the deadliest poisons known to man. Even a prick meant a painful, certain death.

She could see the black of poison spreading through the veins across her ribs and abdomen, making its way towards her heart and brain. She had maybe an hour before she slipped beyond the reaches of life. Less than that before the muscle spasms and intense pain would make her wish for death.

She could feel panic edging at her senses, threatening to overwhelm her. She struggled against it, trying to ground herself against the thought racing through her mind over and over again: *I don't want to die*.

How desperately she didn't want to die.

She could feel her chest tightening, feel her cheeks heating, feel her body beginning to shake. She was slipping beyond the reaches of rationality, of calm, into the realm of desperation, of fear.

Suddenly there was a banging at the door, a gruff call of "Package for Kelly Waters," and then receding footsteps as the delivery man retreated back down the hall. The noise jerked Kalila out of her spiral into panic, grounding her in the blood-soaked silence of her apartment. She drew a ragged breath, the blade shifting slightly in her side and sending a wave of pain through her body.

She waited briefly for the pain to subside before she began shuffling through the blood on her kitchen floor, one hand pressed against her side and the other feeling along the counter above her for her phone. She was beginning to think she'd never find it when her fingers closed around the familiar shape and she breathed a sigh of pained relief.

She dragged her phone off the counter, slumping back against the wall. The poison spread further through her veins with every move she made, and she could feel it like fire inside her. She knew she wasn't extending her life any through these actions, but it didn't matter. She had to hear the voice she loved once more before she died. That was more important than a few minutes of anguished existence.

She unlocked her phone with trembling fingers, keeping her right forearm pressed against her side in an attempt to keep the blade from moving and causing her any additional pain. She could hear nothing but her shattered breaths and the stumbling beat of her own heart, the silence of her apartment almost suffocating.

She scrolled through her contacts as quickly as she could, pulling up her girlfriend's name and number in between waves of agony. Alouette's smiling face stared back at her from her contact picture, and the wave of affection that swept through Kalila made her struggling heart ache.

Before she could hesitate, before she could stop herself from carrying out this awful idea, she pressed call.

Kalila held the phone to her ear with her left hand, composing herself while it rang. Alouette picked up on the fourth ring, her breathless voice filling Kalila's ear. Her heart skipped a beat.

"My love, hello!" Alouette said, her tone bright. "Why did you call?"

Kalila couldn't help her slight smile, the expression breaking through despite the overwhelming pain of the poison winding its way towards her heart. "Hello to you too," she said, her voice a bit rough. "Do I need a reason?"

Alouette gave a little laugh. "Of course not. It's just a little late." There was still a hint of breathlessness to her words.

"Are you ok?" Kalila asked, a stab of worry piercing her heart. She didn't think Slate knew about Alouette, but she couldn't be sure. "You sound a little out of breath."

"Oh I'm fine! I just got back from the grocery, and you know how the stairs to my apartment always take me out."

Kalila managed a chuckle, the sound dying a bit on the end as the pain choked it out of her lungs. "Those damn stairs," she murmured.

Alouette laughed. "What about you? How are you?"

Kalila was almost certain her heart would burst for how much it ached. She struggled against her closing throat. She didn't want Alouette to know anything was wrong, to worry about her at all. She wanted these last moments of her life to be peaceful, filled with nothing but the one she so desperately loved.

God, how fucking badly she didn't want to die.

"I'm good," she managed, leaning her head back against the wall and gritting her teeth as another wave of pain wracked her body. She took a breath. "I just wanted to hear your voice. My favorite sound in the world."

She could almost hear Alouette's smile in her response. "You know if you want I could head over to you. We could curl up on your couch, watch a movie."

Kalila smiled, tears filling her eyes. "That sounds nice." She tried not to think about the shards of glass littered across her couch, the blood staining its cushions.

"But it's too late. I'm sure you had a full day at work. You need some rest."

"No," Alouette countered. "All I need is you."

Kalila felt a tear escape her right eye and slide down her cheek, warm and wet against the dried blood and sweat on her skin. She forced herself to take another breath. "And you'll always have me," she said, even though the words hurt more than the poison in her veins.

Alouette let out a soft, satisfied hum. Kalila could barely suppress a sob at that simple, beautiful sound. She knew it was the last time she would ever hear it.

"I should probably let you put those groceries away," Kalila said, her voice breaking slightly. "It is getting late, after all." She wasn't sure why she said the words. She had no clue what time it was. She knew only that there was moonlight filtering into her apartment through the windows in her living room, illuminating the mess of dried blood and dead bodies. She knew only that she didn't have long before the poison reached her heart, before she slipped into an agony that would only end in death. She knew only that despite all of that, she desperately didn't want to say goodbye.

Alouette gave a soft laugh. "The ice cream *is* melting all over my counter."

"An issue of dire importance," Kalila murmured. Another wave of pain tilted the world on its axis. She shoved down the groan clawing its way up her throat with all of the strength she could muster, moving the phone away so it couldn't catch even the slightest hint of her pain.

"Obviously," Alouette replied. "Ice cream is a million times more important in my life than you are."

Kalila forced a chuckle. She couldn't bring herself to say anything.

Alouette was silent for a moment as they simply sat, basking in each other's presence. Alouette on a stool in her dining room, regarding her melting ice cream with amusement and slight worry. Kalila on the blood-stained floor in her kitchen, her heart slowly tearing in two, poison spreading through her veins.

"I'll see you tomorrow for lunch, right?" Alouette asked. Kalila could hear a shuffle of movement as her girlfriend stood and began to put her groceries away.

Kalila had forgotten about their scheduled lunch. They were supposed to meet at Alouette's new favorite restaurant, some little sandwich place near Central Park.

She could feel the tremors begin in her legs, clues that the poison had reached her heart.

“Of course,” Kalila responded, her voice barely a whisper. “I can’t wait.”

“Good.” Alouette’s voice was full of love and joy, music to Kalila’s ears. “I love you, Kalila.”

“I love you too, Alouette,” Kalila said. “More than anything in this universe and any other.” The tremors were traveling up her legs, the pain nearly unbearable. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

She hung up just as the tremors reached her upper body. Her arms began to shake uncontrollably, and her phone clattered to the bloody floor beside the kitchen knife and the dead man. The pain was worse than anything she had ever experienced, and she gritted her teeth against the screams that were rising up her throat. She would die with whatever

dignity she could muster.

Seconds later, her dignity was nothing in the face of the pain that filled every corner of her shaking body. There was no hope of relief. She screamed, over and over again, as loudly as she could. There was no one to hear her.

There was peace, briefly, right before the end.

As her heart slowed in her chest.

As her vision dimmed.

As her body ceased its violent shaking.

As the poison choked the life out of her.

Her last thought was of Alouette.



Drawing by FLORA GLADWIN

I Will Not Carry Your Heart

A Refutation of E.E. Cummings' "I Carry Your Heart with Me"

By IMANI E. GARROTT

The first two lines of this E.E. Cummings poem are so often quoted that they've sadly been reduced to cliché. I can honestly say that I enjoy and admire Cummings' poetry. For that reason, I have read and (over)analyzed this poem so many times that I've rendered myself incapable of reading it simply a sweet message conveying the purest love.

"i carry your heart with me(i carry it in
my heart)i am never without it(anywhere
i go you go,my dear,and whatever is done
by only me is your doing,my darling)
i fear

I do not carry your heart with me. Nor does it reside in mine. I have made a room for you in my heart. The room is warm and hygge (a wonderful concept I once heard Rick Steves explain on NPR). But your heart does not reside in it. No, I refuse to insult you by implying that your heart is so simple and small as to fit inside that of another. Try as I might to create a facsimile of your heart in that room I've made for it, that facsimile will not (and should not) be your heart. Your heart belongs to you. If I carried it in mine, it would not belong to you anymore. And you cannot give something that no longer belongs to you to another. What a Catch-22.

no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want
no world(for beautiful you are my world,my true)
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

You are not my world, and I can only hope that I am not yours. To be one's world. You were an astronaut, deployed to find a new planet. Trapped in my gravitational field, you found yourself in a strange place that bore my name. Everywhere you look, you see me and only me. You've lost yourself in this world that is me. Hungry, cold, and without your own way (it's lost like you), you begin to feast on whatever resources I have to offer. I am your world, and like the human that you are, you expect your world to nourish you. To sustain you. Eat me, drink me, drain me. There is no more for me to give.

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;which grows
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

The egocentric romantic in me wants to believe in the idea that whatever exists between us (yes, between us specifically) keeps the stars where they belong and contributes to the pulsing life force that streams through all things. Maybe it does in its own small way. In the (likely) event that it does not: I'm content to feel here on earth. And if my soul somehow drifts lazily toward divine realms reserved for only the truest of lovers, I'll let it.

i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)"

I don't.

[I wish to write this for my dog]

By AISLIN LIGHTER STEILL

for Milo

I wish to write this for my dog.

I wish to write it into the sniffing language he understands,
to chase it into the proper sequence of circles and stairhops,
to tell him how he sounds on approach
to our next battered front door.

I wish to offer an overloud greeting in more than tone, than in pitching,
gather desperately in my arms the gleaming copper gaze
flooding the room's corners,
wail back my praise with twin vigor that I hear him as my heel does a splinter—
the yelp of a nerve struck, and for a moment made known.

Paw placed in my hand like the bird he pursues,
stouthearted,
in the new yard, gestured vocabulary
hanging from my palm in its still tangle, the feathered unfathomable.

I wish to murmur promises, but I have learned this one lesson
of his beaming curriculum.

I want to yowl this raucous joy for the both of us
And cry together that Yes! We are together!



Honeymoon By SOPHIE HALPIN



roses are red
violets are blue
submit ur contributions
to thegrail@reed.edu

to:

from: