

Cherish Regret



What choices make a good life? This is the central theme of the *Gauntlet's* creative writing supplement. It's not an easy question. Does the intention behind the choice matter? What of inauthentic choices? Is a good life determined by yourself? Your family? Your friends? The creative pieces included here attempt to answer these questions, but the answers are just as ambiguous as the question itself. It can only be answered for yourself. What choices make a good life?

We think the answer is that the choices you make for yourself allow you to reach your goals.

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Between the Lines

New clothes, new hair, new shoes
No news
Just muse
Refuse the shadow's blues.
Step outside the crystal guide
And hide the fortune deep inside

Bombard the senses
Tickled trance
Sensual bliss and hollow's mist
Aesthetic twists invoking bliss
Consumption's potent kiss.

Re-vamp, re-style, become, beguile
Weigh down deep beneath the piles
Of make-up, wake-up
Lonely child
Your desperate faultline quakes.

Polished prime fill in the cracks
Shattered dreams smoothed into facts
Boxes filled, filling spaces
Traces of your essence lost
Waxed away like upper lip,
As barren as Brazilian

Flips fantasy into vignettes
Full-length feature stars someone else.
Freedom found on shelves in aisles
Compiled for comfort, stacked in stiles

Tasting, fleeting, never eating
Wholeness bleeding, passions seething.
Wanting, aching, never taking
Courage making, strength unshaken
No more waiting, options bating
The time is now for youth is fading
And beauty isn't bought
Nor are dreams fraught
With prescriptions, plastic slots
And formulaic plots.

Strip the clothes from off your back
Embrace the flaws and all we lack
See the beauty in just that
The light does not refract.
Tear down walls, the prison aisles
Smash open gates, trash turnstiles
Open eyes consume the skies

And minds shall learn to fly.

— Tamara Cottle, third-year
anthropology

Snapshots of Seventeen

i.
unwound smoke twists; like
prayer beads, spills unto
dandelion skeletons

ii.
chiaroscuro
dark and light dance like gypsies
lust like hurricane

iii.
quiet Friday
afternoons spent
chasing Dharma in coffee cups

iv.
your breath is smoke
our lungs are white with
nausea of winter blues

v.
i am Narcissus
fingerprints on mirrors
clawing at imperfection

vi.
charcoal eyes and cigarette butts
the city thaws
spring crawling forth

vii.
winter eludes
the murky landscape
spring trapped in muddy ice

viii.
acid smell of paint
staining my favourite blouse
i am a masterpiece

ix.
lotus blossoms weeping

dewy misery
lament your sleeping tongue

x.
sugar-free gum drop
safe safe safe
numbers stay satisfied

xi.
spaceship thighs
galaxy of insecurity
wish to be stardust

xii.
soft pillows of tissue
encasing pelvic temple
desire to crumple like dust

xiii.
afterbirth of confidence
Cleopatra's odalisque
naked and burning

xiv.
paper cranes
wings like broken limbs
float from your lips

xv.
forcing yourself
to love muddy handprints
— caged selflessness

xvi.
dog-eared notebook
stained with
earl grey

xvii.
shadows fall over
your face like snow in April
nails dug into palms
you dream with icicle
tongues

xviii.
i read your back
like braille
you are a storybook

xix.
my mother goes in for surgery
chest torn open
like the red sea
splitting

xx.
like
prayer beads spilling
spinning
in crucified silence

xxi.
to stay awake
for days
welded to typewriter keys

xxii.
chapped lips
— sand paper intimacy

xxiii.
some days
it is like living
with no lungs
like breathing
through pores

xxiv.
and i fell in love on a train
from london
to brighton
and I forgot
to ask his name

xxv.
sometimes you get caught in my throat
your name
your aphorisms
caught in the mucus
lining my airways

xxvi.
somehow, one day
it all stopped
and i could befriend myself again

— Erin E. A. Vance, first-year English

Enlighten Up?

My religion is earthy —

I do not trust those who rebuke the flesh, the physical

who punish us for trusting

the limited means we have been granted to experience reality.

A peaceful, quiet rest

The sound of rain adorning a leaf's flesh

Moths grasping innocently toward the light

The twitch of a puppy's nose while dreaming.

I do not need enlightenment —

The feeling of my love's flesh against my lips,

his kiss

I yearn to hear the laughter of my loved ones

see their gracious smiles.

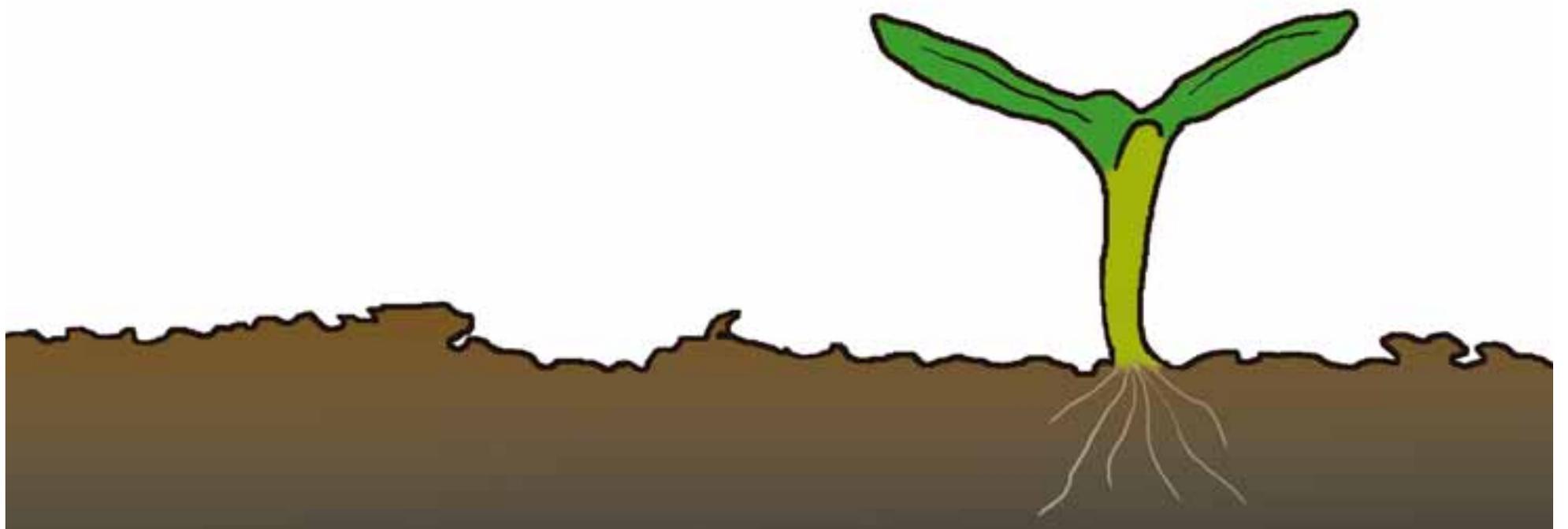
I hunger to feel the strength in my body

and the sharpness in my wit.

I do not trust those who deny the flesh —

Life is the rough palm of a helping hand.

— Melanie Hudson, third-year anthropology



Excerpt from “Future Fathers”

Vincent stares at his phone, the pool cue clutched like a spear. He storms over to the screen door, weaving slightly, and flings it open.

“Don’t let the mosquitoes in,” I squeal. He leaves without closing the door behind him. We turn back to the fire. Chris shrugs. We wait quietly for him to come back. Eventually, Chris crosses over to close the door. He pauses for a moment, looking at something beyond my line of sight. He says,

“That is not a good idea.”

I hear the roar of a truck engine.

Chris walks over and wiggles the diminished bottle of Jack Daniels, ship-wrecked in the foyer. “Inauspicious,” he says. We run out the cabin. Night-blindness strikes hard. The trees are blotting out a starry horizon; I can only see two spheroids of mud illuminated by Vincent’s industrial-strength floodlights. I walk beside Chris to the window. Vinny has rolled it down and is glaring at us out of the corner of his eye. We are on the driver’s side. I notice Chris is careful not to stand directly in front of the truck.

The sweet and sour stench of gas bubbles up into my sinuses. “So, what happened?” I ask.

“It’s useless. It’s shit.”

“You’re too drunk to drive,” Chris says to him.

“I drive better drunk than I do sober.”

“And I am Queen Isabella of Spain,” Queen Isabella is Chris’s favourite Spanish princess.

“We actually can’t let you drive out of here.”

“Go fuck yourself.”

I rub my temples and say, “Okay, Chris will fuck himself for you. But first get out of the car.”

Vincent stares back at his instrument panel and pushes buttons.

“Be careful not to engage the warp drives,” I say to him.

Chris leans past me into the window. They breathe hot air at each other, a rancid battleground of ethers and digestive acid. “Don’t be an idiot. God’s sake, turn off your car. That reek of gas is going to make me pass out again. It’s bad enough that you drive a truck.”

A hiss from inside the shadowy booth. “What the hell do you mean, it’s bad enough that I drive a truck?”

A responsible adult would separate them.

Chris starts ranting, “For starters, you don’t even need a truck this big. You don’t haul anything around except for the imagined weight of your own balls. You are a high school student who has racked up a twelve-thousand dollar debt because you think trucks appreciate in value, which they don’t. They are designed to fall apart, so you buy more,” he enunciates.

“Not the best time for a discussion,” I say. “Rabid bears,

cursed by the Goddess of the Hunt, roam these woods, and we should probably get back inside—”

“No, this is a good time. He just drives this big shitty truck around to look like Brando while it burns hundreds of litres of gas every month that goes into your lungs. And now he wants to drive it drunk on top of that. Vinny, what you have to realize is—”

“Brando drives a street car,” I point out reasonably.

“What? What do I have to realize, Chris?”

“I am getting to that. What you have to realize is that one day gas is going to be expensive. And then this ‘Harvest Gold’ bulk of refined steel and flattened carbon you purchased to make yourself feel bigger will be fit for the incinerator.”

Vince had his truck painted Harvest Gold, which he suspects adds anywhere from ten to twelve horsepower. I listen hard for crickets and hear the sound of Vincent spitting at our feet. “Alright,” he says, “but what are you going to do about that right now, you goddamn lib pussy?” He reaches for his command console and the automatic windows start rolling up. For two uncomfortable seconds we watch a curtained sheen of starlit glass separate us from Vince. Like Darth Vader’s meditation egg sealing back up. Like the waves of an Indo-Asian tsunami. He slouches back in his seat and tucks the brim of his hat lower. Chris springs into action. He thrusts his hand through the window and tries to spring the door lock. Vincent jumps back to the console, and locks the door. I groan. Chris jumps and flails around trying to stab his hand downward and pop the door latch but the window is still creeping up and he risks having his arm pinned.

I say, “Watch out . . .”

But it is too late and Chris’s arm is stuck in the window now, as I can tell by his attempts to pull away from the car. Vincent puts the truck in first and starts driving forward, yelling at Chris to disengage. Chris yells back that he can’t and tries to wave his arm for emphasis but ends up clawing Vincent in the face. The truck speeds up. I start jogging beside them — Chris also jogging awkwardly like a human sidecar. Just as the truck is about to vacate the cobblestone-paved driveway the window rolls down far enough for Chris to lurch away from the door. He sprints into pursuit and manages to grab hold of the ledge on Vincent’s flatbed. I watch him and realize he must still be very drunk.

Chris doesn’t try to climb into the trunk: he clamps both hands firmly onto each side (still running) and attempts to halt its movement by braking his heels against the ground, his hips tilting forward the way a snowboarder’s would in order to stop. Vincent slows down, waving us away in the rear-view mirror, and for the ensuing split-second before Chris eats dirt I see the muscles in his forearms swell heroically and picture his amazement at the discovery of superhuman strength. But he falls like a novice skier, skinny jeans and red sneakers toppling sideways into the muck and his foe peels off, veering haphazardly towards a metaphorical sunset. My eyes have adjusted well enough to the darkness to see Chris’s face from where I stand. I hope he cannot see mine; I am trying not to laugh at him. Gloom swallows the tail lights. Soon, they will disappear. But then we hear a tremendous bang and the tail lights stop fading. They float behind a smog of gas and mist.

— Tobias Ma, fourth-year English

