



THE MERCURY

THE STUDENT ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE OF GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

Year 2018

Article 41

4-25-2018

Still-Life (Portrait of a Lover)

Bethany Frankel

Gettysburg College, franbe02@gettysburg.edu

Class of 2020

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury>

 Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), and the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Frankel, Bethany (2018) "Still-Life (Portrait of a Lover)," *The Mercury*: Year 2018, Article 41.

Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2018/iss1/41>

This open access poetry is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

Still-Life (Portrait of a Lover)

Author Bio

Bethany Frankel is a sophomore English major with a Writing Concentration with a double minor in Educational and Peace & Justice Studies. When not writing her novel and drinking copious amounts of coffee, she can be found working on her music or petting dogs. She was born and raised in Delaware, which is, in fact, a state.

Still-Life (Portrait of a Lover)

i. hands

yours take mine,
take my whole life too
because i fall in love with you
every time you pull me closer
and my skin brushes yours,

heat from your body
like rope winding me,
desire binding the strings
of my heart

to your fingers.
play me like a marionette.
knit me into the fabric
of your heart,
rip out the embroidery of
your last relationship:
a girl that looks just like me,
someone you now consider a psychopath,
a stranger.

i become new when you touch me,
made again from the electricity
sparking from your fingertips;
i am a hotwired car,
i fall into the leather of your
convertible mustang when your
hands and want restrain me.

keep me tethered to earth;
with all of the confusion floating
in the genetic dark of my brain,
this is the only way i feel real.
hands in mine as we dance,
endless movement and time

erases everyone else from the room
until the universe consists
of your palm on my palm.
my heart in your hand,
blood buried beneath nails;
you look at me wondering

why i gave you this damaged thing
to carry.

pull me closer and tie
the knots of me to your wrists.
nervous sweat slicking your fingers
when you first told me
you loved me.
a strong grip when my tears fall
and melt into your skin,
my salt mixing into your bloodstream;

i cannot tell you from me,
i cannot distinguish what hand is mine;
my grip becomes tighter
because even when sense
slips through my fingers,
i cannot let you get away.

ii. neck

press your hands on me,
press them up against my neck
and wrap your long fingers
around my throat

watch as i gasp for air,
the purple bruises left behind
a request to feel something
to feel real
and what it's like to comprehend
the feeling of drowning
without water.

am i still alive?
does it count as living
if you press your palms
to detect a heartbeat and i
pronounce myself dead on arrival
from the pills i've been taking
to make myself feel whole again,
to feel like my old self again.
depression makes every word i speak
feel like a pretender in your eyes.
my senses burned out
by one too many matches swallowed
and the brandy bottle that lit
my sentences on fire.

place your hands on me.
give me cpr,
teach me how to turn my shaking breath
into something more convincing:

teach me how to pump
my lungs again to
make the heart beat fast
against my neck
in the palm of your hand.

i rest my head
next to yours,
our pulses touching and fighting
but the only war
is to make it to another morning.

iii. legs

we run through meadows of gold,
dandelion puffs and wheatgrass
licking the skin at our ankles.
i want to dance with you
beneath the endless
east coast july sky;

your legs stretch on for miles
a stride to match a smile
to match your skin
as radiant as the sun:
you are summer,
you are the birds soaring overhead

and you never know that i am winter,
i am the cold
that creeps into your jacket
even after it's zipped up all the way.
i try to pretend like one smile can thaw me.

keep pace with me
even though it's a hindrance;
your laughter moves faster than your muscles
even though your legs could
cross an ocean,
but mine could only pass a stream
and crumble beneath my foundation.

i remember the sea:
indigo swirling waves
knocked out my knees
and made you stand your ground.
i remember the patio:
dulled neon lights barely
glowing glinting off your teeth
as you rest your hand
on my thigh and it is

so unlike the previous residents
that rented my body as their home,
their summertime cottage
with the heating bill
they always left unpaid.
oh how they ran
away from my heart;
maybe they were waiting
for you to stay.

you have walked beside me
at every step of the way,
every milestone and path
every hike around my heart
around my love.
starting to build a home
in the deep dark wood
along my dirt road
that leads back to where i belong.

you run ahead,
still laughing and smiling
still an aspect of summer
in a changing climate;

still part of the race,
you never lose that golden glow.
i watch your form retreat on the horizon,
a figure running into the sunset.
you are unaware
that i have stopped running.