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Inverted Negatives

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Inverted Negatives

Author Bio

Ellianie Vega is a senior with a double major in English and WGS and a minor in Japanese. She has worked on The Mercury for four years and is currently Senior Editor. For the past two years, she has belonged to the Academy of American Poets. In her spare time, she enjoys working at WZBT 91.1, writing fiction, and playing the Final Fantasy soundtracks very loudly and poorly on her untuned piano.

Inverted Negatives

ELLIANIE VEGA

When I first developed film, I was surprised
by the softness of it in my hands,
wet with acid that burned the plating from my
bronze bracelets, but never my skin. I
danced in the low red lights behind a
spiraling door that kept the daylight out,
bathed my hands in developer then
burned my negatives onto paper,
pondering its fragility
and wondering how anyone coped
with the inability to know which memories
would turn out and which
never had a chance.

I don't remember the year of that class,
but I kept the negatives that reveal
autumn leaves decaying, bile colored
mushrooms climbing up a willow tree,
evidence of an immature eye
that unapologetically focused on endings,
but perhaps the ability to be unapologetic then
makes it much more mature than I am now.
I want my eyes back.

I've picked up my weighty chrome '80s Nikon
that shoots in antique film.
I'm going looking for memories to burn in my mind,
so before you consider becoming my subject,
know that I initially see things upside down,
misconstrue darkness as light, light as dark,
that I capture my captives in inverted color,
but I will spend time in my dark room at night
watching my life develop, desperate and eager to
get things right, and I promise, eventually,
I will see you as you are.