

**Rosa  
Angelica  
Garcia**

**For Hype Literary Magazine**

## Pinto Soup

“Stop talking so much at the table!”

Dad had made pinto bean soup with spices. The color so lightly brown but captured my eye with its green. My mom had cereal and milk. She didn't want something heavy for acidic pain later. After my dad shouted. My mom looked at my brother and I who held back laughs. She couldn't hold back. Out goes the milk from her mouth. Laughter for the next couple of minutes. Our stomach in pain. My mom's face red from embarrassment and lack of oxygen. Dad with his serious face keeps eating pinto soup.

## Morts Jaune

It was a Tuesday morning in April of 2009. I had a useless flip phone. I remember staring at my tan walls. Vibrations interrupted my routine of not wanting to get out of bed, contemplating if school was worth it, and whether breakfast was THE important meal of the day. A number I didn't recognize popped up on my tiny screen.

“Hello? Yes, this is she. I see.” I felt okay. I knew I wasn't.

It took 52 seconds to find out my best friend was dead.

It took 66 minutes to react.

It took a year to accept it, or at least attempt to.

It took three years to talk about it.

I didn't know how long it would take for things to be normal even though nothing was— or would be again.

I met Cecil when I was in second grade. I don't remember much about our first encounter. I know that Angela had something to do with it. Angela was one of the first people I became close friends with in middle school, and she happened to live on the same block as me. We both loved ladybugs and snow. She was a pale blonde girl with blue eyes. I was the short brown curly-haired girl with brown eyes. Complete opposites. My self-esteem was nonexistent.

There was this tall girl. She had white skin, green eyes, and long wavy hair. She looked like a porcelain doll. Cliché I know, but she was way too pretty. Her hair looked auburn. She walked up to me and said, “Hi. My name is Cecil Auburn Abett. I'm in fifth grade. What's your name?” Cecil Auburn Abett with auburn hair. Her image was my dream. I wanted to look like that. I told her my name and she called it pretty. I never thought my name was pretty. It wasn't an original name considering my name was commonly used in Latin American countries. She smiled and grabbed the blue and white tie-dye ball from the floor and threw it at Angela. Angela giggled and threw at me. The snow never sparkled as much as it did that day.

Now, I color this antistress coloring book. I keep avoiding the color yellow. I still hate the color. It's so bright and happy. I avoid it because it reminds me of her. But I avoid it so I can miss it and go back to it. I keep thinking I could have stopped her from accidentally overdosing. Maybe if I knew she was taking different kinds of pills or something. I can't remember her face. I can't remember the shape of her eyes, the curve of her mouth. Did she have freckles? Was her voice deep, soft, loud, or rough? I know she spoke like the stereotypical girly girl in those teen movies. What was the apartment like? I know rooms connected but how, where? Where were they connected? I don't remember the last day I saw her. I don't remember the street she lived on. I don't remember what New York City looked like in 2009. I don't remember her mom. I don't remember her ex-boyfriend. I don't remember how we celebrated birthdays. I don't remember if she was skinny or chubby or curvy or whatever. I remember colors. The color of the rooms, her hair, her eyes, and her favorite color. I

remember scents. I remember the daisies. And then I remember the black couch. Green and white tiled floor. White sheer curtains. No sunlight. It was night. It was dark. Cecil had just turned eighteen a few months before. She was an adult, but just barely. She just found out she was pregnant. Her boyfriend left her. He was a jerk. He was abusive. He was selfish. He didn't want anything but the accomplishment of fucking a virgin. She did lose her virginity to him. They had sex probably four times, and the fourth was the one to knock her up. "Don't yell at me. Please," she begged repeatedly.

"Cecil, you are fucking stupid. You dated an asshole knowing he was an asshole. He got you pregnant which was a big mistake. You are only eighteen. You should be the responsible one. A child is a blessing, but that dick doesn't deserve you nor your child. He fucking walked out on you the moment he found out. So, stop being an idiot."

"He left because of me. It's my fault. I need to find a way to get him back." She was crying. She was crying so heavily that snot was coming out of her nose.

"Don't. Are you serious right now? You're fucking pathetic if you think you should chase after him."

I called her a bitch that night. She cried profusely. I never apologized and I don't think I ever would have because she never went back to him. Months after her discovery of her pregnancy, Cecil asked me to be the godmother of her twins even though she didn't know they were twins until about four months in. She also asked me to name them. I was to announce the names in the living room of Cecil's apartment. The green tiles were glossy. The light from the window hit my face and I felt my eyes light up like caramel brown in the aura. Cecil's mom sat directly in front of me. Cecil was right next to her holding her two-month bump. It was round and sweet. She was glowing, the way people say a pregnant woman will. The black couch outlined her slim figure, making her belly just that much more apparent.

I took a deep breath.

"You ready?" They nod.

"Aimee if it's a girl. Eric if it's a boy," I said. Cecil's mom smiled with elegance. I guess she read my mind. Cecil looked at her with confusion. She shrugged at me but said she liked the names. She never found out why I picked those names. Aimee because it means love in French. Eric because she loved *The Little Mermaid*. Love for the love she would have for these children. Eric because she finally found her prince.

Dead yellow. *Morts Jaune*. The worst but most beautiful color. It was the color of my feelings for the first two years after her death. I saw yellow everywhere. I hated it. It was dead.

She was dead. Stupid yellow. I wonder why she never talked about being French. *Morts Jaune* sounds pretty. I read *The Year of Magical Thinking* while sitting on a yellow patterned, two-seated couch on a carpet that has browns and hints of teal. I turn the pages back and reread the lines that made me dwell on my anxiety: "Grief is different. Grief has no distance. Grief comes in waves, paroxysms, sudden apprehensions that weaken the knees and blind the eyes and obliterate the dailiness of life." Damn. Joan Didion kind of hurt me. When does someone stop grieving? When does it actually end? My chest feels tight. Tight like when I attempted to wear a dress six years after I bought it, my ribs being squeezed in the fabric. My breaths are short. Short like the distance between the carpet with hints of brown and teal and the piss-yellow couch. My tears sting as they fall. You're grieving. It's like I can hear her say that to me. Tell me, Cecil, what I am doing? But she is dead. She's been dead for six years.

Cotton candy. Pink and blue. Soft and sweet. I saw these colors in my head but that was the scent of her skin and her home. This scent is one I loved.

The dark wooden door was slightly open. I walked in and stared at her. She didn't notice me, but I notice her pouting. From the direction Cecil was facing, I can tell her mom was in the kitchen.

"I want sugar cookies!" Cecil frowned.

"No 'Hello'? No hug? No 'Welcome back'?" Cecil ignored me. This was my first day back in the city. I tried to come to the city every other day to visit her since she didn't live in New Jersey. I went to school and she didn't. She was so busy with doctor's appointments and shopping for baby clothes that she banned me from her apartment for a while. It had been a week or two since I had spoken to or seen my best friend. The cotton

candy aroma in the room was home to me.

“No, Cecil Auburn!” I can hear her mom shout from the kitchen. I laughed. Cecil whined for about half an hour. She didn’t acknowledge me until after then, she hugged me tightly. Her five-month pregnant belly poked my chest more than it had before. She looked at me with her eyebrows knitting together and tears sparkling in her eyes. Pregnancy cravings are a bitch to deal with but more annoying to deal with when you’re not pregnant. She had a shitload of sugar cookies that month. I never understood pregnancy. I was only fourteen when Cecil got pregnant. I leave for the kitchen. It was like the light at the end of a tunnel, bright yellow and white. I called the long, narrow hallway the “art tunnel.” Cecil always asked for my help in the decoration of her apartment. The cotton candy scent was gone and a buttery, sugary, heavy scent tickled my nose.

“Mum, you gave in.”

“I can’t have her crying all night over stupid cookies. This is the third night!” Cecil’s mom was never the kind of mother to neglect her daughter. She was always there for Cecil.

“O-M-G is that sugar cookies?!”

Cecil smelled the sugar cookies. She wobbled her way into the kitchen. Cecil’s face lit up. Her smile was flawless. The daisies on the white table reflected off of her. The white walls and yellow curtains with daisy hooks keeping them together made her glow.

From what I can remember she looked perfect.

Cecil was alive.

But now, she isn’t.

She is dead yellow.

## The Shuffling

Tuesday came sooner than I wanted. My head didn't wrap around the fact I'd be writing something traumatic so quickly after it happened. The air was moist and smelled of vanilla and lavender. It was artificial smells mixed with mugginess. I can hear shuffling in the hallway, all familiar but not the shuffling I wanted. Tiny steps approach my door.

"Meow." My cat sticks her paw under the door and pulls, trying to get in.

"Meow", even louder.

No. I refuse to open the door. My brain can't handle the noise yet and the comfort of a cat isn't what I wanted. It was a reminder that I needed comfort. Depending on a cat would make me feel useless. I grabbed the mint chocolate on my bedside table and threw it into my mouth. The wrapper crinkled in between my fingers. I opened it and wrinkled it several times. Oh no, I'm getting anxious. I'm getting emotional. I stare at the pictures on the wall. The faces blurred into one image. Turning grey. I want the shuffling of the faces on my wall to be the sound I hear outside my door.

It's Autumn, and autopilot seemed to have kicked in after the third week of September. Even writing seems robotic. I reached the end of what I feel to be a dream. A hallucination maybe? Yet, all I know is I'm alive. My heart beats and skips every now and then, and my temperature decides to sway from hot to cold.

The clock hits 2:43 AM. I should probably sleep. A shadow creeps over me as I sleep. I felt the heaviness of its eyes. I imagine them to be white, pure. The shadow sat on the edge of my sofa. I felt my ankles ache. The weakness that weighed over my body was profound, the shadow laid itself on my right side. I felt anxiety and irrational fear. I thought of the different ways I could die and what I'd leave behind. I didn't want someone to go through my things and figure out what to keep and throw away. I didn't want someone to read everything I've written. If I die, I'm taking everything with me. Oh, stop it.

As my body starts to shake, I think of the faces on my wall. All of them are the same face at different times. The age of a person is never truly seen until there are images being compared to each other. The faces were kind, colorful, and genuinely beautiful. The features were similar in all yet different. I felt relief. My spine had stopped hurting from the shaking. I miss laughing. I felt the shadow flip over and move to the left side of me. The heaviness was still there. The white eyes still staring at me. I hear the shuffling in the hallway. The shuffling I wanted. I thought by morning the shadow would be gone.

It never turned into morning.