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Section Intro: Recognition

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recognition

Layout by Ashley Clemens. Art by Julianna Markus.

Who are the people who have shaped the person you are today? As much as 2020 and 2021 have been about grappling with resistance and resilience, these past two years have also given us the opportunity to reckon with our past, to reflect upon, remember, and give recognition to the people we have known, the philosophies and quirks that they have shared with us, and the stories they have left behind.

Recognition begins with perception, the ability to look outside oneself and notice something: something that doesn't quite fit with your worldview, something that may make you uncomfortable. Recognition can evoke complicated feelings: gratitude, regret, anxiety, or a stubborn motley of all these emotions. Each of the stories in this section deal in some capacity with the act of recognizing, and the unusual emotions entangled with it. What comes next is the internalization of what you perceive, a uniquely difficult step, whether it be processing grief at the loss of a loved one, really listening to a peer when they speak to you, or recognizing your own biases.

In "Mou Léipeis," Shelby Rodger tells a coming of age story in that centered on her relationship with her Greek grandmother—her yiayia, whose death and memory have caused a rupture to her worldview. Through moments of grief and fragments of faulty memories, Rodger remembers her yiayia, and also remembers herself growing up through the eyes of her grandma.

In "The Pulchritudinous Cardinal," Alison Pelkonen struggles with a lack of recognition of the severity of COVID-19 and the

devastating impact it has wreaked in her family. By illustrating the character of her grandfather, Pelkonen shows readers a glimpse of what has been lost during the pandemic and the dire consequences of non-compliance with COVID-19 protocols. The sense of grief within this piece is profound, but we can also find a sense of self-recognition and peace as the author learns to accept the pain they have had to endure. "Pulchritudinous" means beautiful, after all.

In "The Best Player in Town," Collin Helwig reflects upon a childhood friendship that innocently navigates the tension caused by rash judgement from others and the preconceived notions that we attach to strangers. Recounting a chilly night of pickup basketball, Helwig gives recognition to a friend from a very different familial background and pays tribute to the bond that they shared.

In "Zen," Alexandra Manzano writes in jest about her father, a middle-aged man whose mid-life crisis comes as a sudden calling to Zen Buddhism. Manzano describes the different traditions of this particular incarnation of Zen consisting of hot yoga, yard décor, and floating on his pillow.

All of these contributions highlight personal recognitions, big and small. They show us stories of personal evolution and just how much you can accomplish when left to your own devices. They also show us how the act of writing these stories can in and of themselves be a powerful act of recognition. Writing can be a way to process and understand, or at least try to understand, this crazy world around us.

—Bonnie Yu and Drew Harper