

## Bearded Orchid

by Andrea Garrigos

The lady lined up lover after lover as a full-time job and after growing a beard, she'd finally retired. She picked herself up from her daily container as she opened the windows and dusted her room, where she did not find him, only herself scattered in her dead skin cells that lined her wooden bookshelves. Her body, like every *body*, withered away while parts of it flourished, as predictable and inevitable as the seasons will come.

So, she became a deciduous gardener, pruned her pale roots off one by one, clearing a path in her mind to breathe new air; scraggly, green fingers hugging the earth. Billions of dead pieces of her slough away from her body, like water droplets on a waxy leaf dripping down with the tick of the clock. But the clock's arms can't do all her changing for her, and neither should her lovers. Her feet crave a distinct soil. Her gloved hands crave sunrays. She picked up the broom and petaled out to somewhere new. Even an orchid's limbs can't help but seek air, swaying in the cooling breeze until the day mealybugs decide to move in or until the inevitable mist becomes a deluge.

Existence feels like deception knowing one day we will die, a face in the mirror once said, and I am living and dying every day, all at once.

The lady, poor lady, was prone to rot so she let her tears catch a drift. She crawled, rose, and trudged long enough in the dark to grow buds under the right kind of stress. She shooed away misled stingers deceived by a pollination that is built-in. Now, she can be for the sake of being.

The lady's slivers slither around her whispering half-convincing arguments: late bloomers still bloom when they sit still long enough to feel the soil and drink the rain. But the time has come to reorient towards the light.

We know who we are. We are the dying and living regenerating cells. We have eternally been. We are eternally becoming.