

## THE ELEPHANT AND I

By Kristiana Mitracek

I can feel the secrets swimming  
up my neck and through my cheek's  
capillaries

the same way I imagine  
microscopic threats in thousands  
on any handle or cup  
Dust

if I think about it long enough  
in my carpet piling up  
on my covers hanging just  
by threads 'til in exhaustion  
they let go and I inhale them  
in my sleep  
these things

These things if I thought them  
could prevent me all too often  
from cleaning, breathing if I let them  
cause I'm out numbered  
and blind  
and busy

I am speaking constantly  
but its not really explaining  
and its not useful when  
its not entertaining  
at least not to them  
I am talking  
cause my mouth  
hasn't quite figured out  
how to say two things at once

there has been an elephant  
in the room so long  
I draped him with a woven cloth  
and he seems to belong

and no one asks, anymore  
if anything is wrong  
no longer look at him half-nervous  
they look past him like he's gone

and when he first arrived  
in his huge,  
black wet eyes  
was a silent anger daring  
you to recognize him  
but you tip toed without touching  
his thick dusty skin  
and stretch-climbed over the couches arm  
avoiding him

and all the people and possessions  
that he smashed just with his size  
when i hauled them down the stairs, I swore  
I saw him start to cry  
and the people who were afraid  
now they just don't come inside

he's too big to hold  
and I'm too small to try  
so I taught him to stand still  
ignoring screams and stomps  
and rewarding him humming  
circus-y songs  
And my favorite thing he does  
is sway along  
dragging his trunk tracing  
bashful and withdrawn

and now he's been there longer  
than anyone that promised  
with their arms or their ears  
or their smell or wallets

and when I laid in the living room  
staring at the ceiling  
I realized no one  
is waiting or willing

to pet him or feed him or ask him why  
cause at some point he'll either  
leave or die  
but I don't think so

and its just a hair harder than they're willing to try  
but I think I understand and I cant say that I  
would want to feel like I could've  
made it better and didn't  
either.

and as the secrets in single file squeeze their way to fill my lips  
my head drops to my hands  
cause I'm just so sick of it  
and no one is around cause there wasn't any room  
the elephants on his side  
dreaming of the zoo  
and I lay on the couch  
and breathe it out loud:  
I'm sorry I could never  
Explain myself

And I'm looking at this massive thing  
asleep on my floor  
and half asleep I'm looking  
at the light switch by the door

And he lifts one giant leg,  
as if he's trying to stand  
stretches out his trunk,  
and presses it to my hand  
and out his hairy nostrils,  
he sighs his own goodnight

I press closed, stinging eyes  
as his trunk turns out the light

Illustration by Jacob Gibbs

