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Qualia

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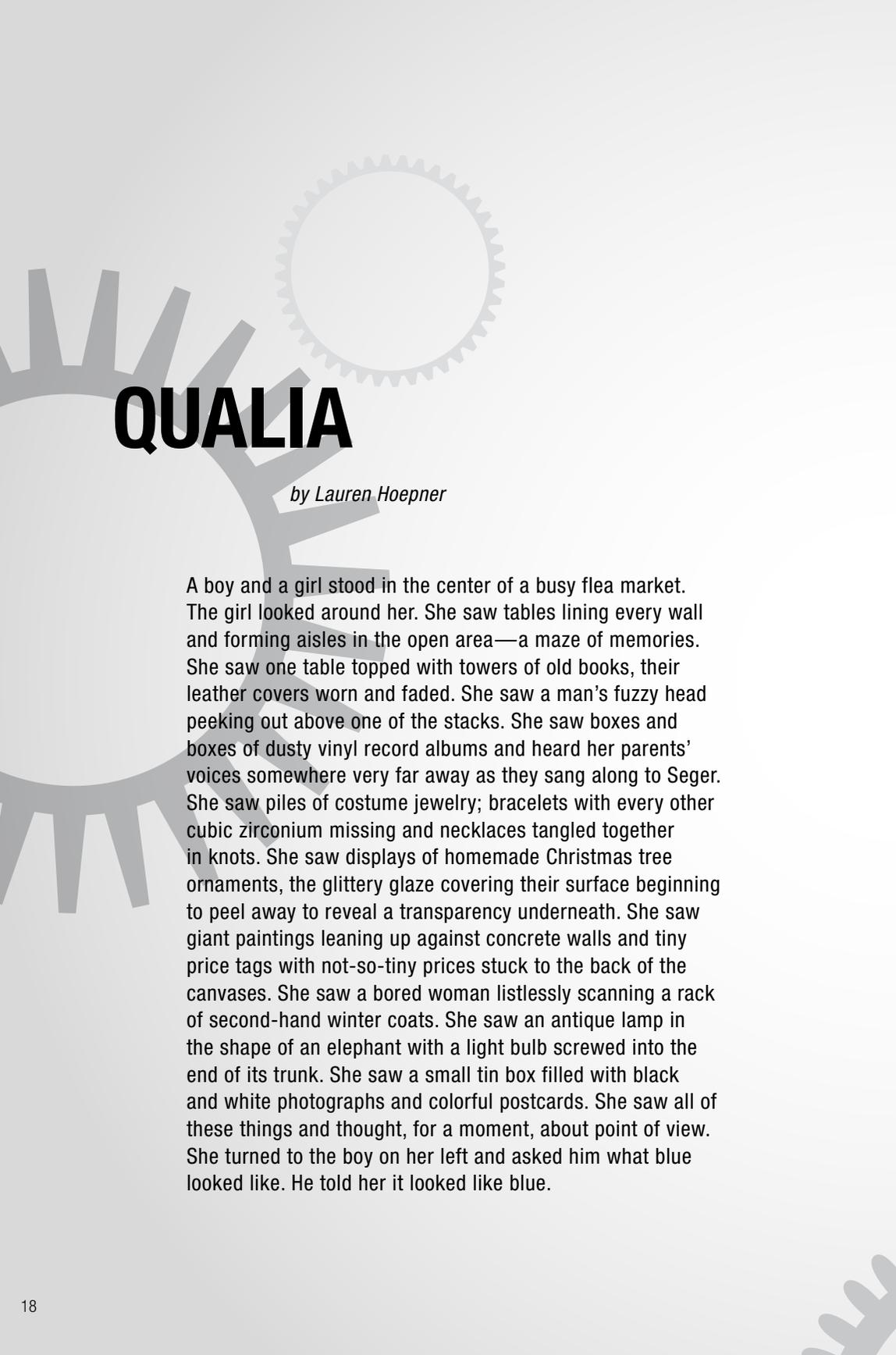


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The background features a large, faint, stylized gear on the left side and a sun-like shape with rays on the right side. The gear has several teeth, and the sun has a circular face with radiating lines. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

QUALIA

by Lauren Hoepner

A boy and a girl stood in the center of a busy flea market. The girl looked around her. She saw tables lining every wall and forming aisles in the open area—a maze of memories. She saw one table topped with towers of old books, their leather covers worn and faded. She saw a man’s fuzzy head peeking out above one of the stacks. She saw boxes and boxes of dusty vinyl record albums and heard her parents’ voices somewhere very far away as they sang along to Seger. She saw piles of costume jewelry; bracelets with every other cubic zirconium missing and necklaces tangled together in knots. She saw displays of homemade Christmas tree ornaments, the glittery glaze covering their surface beginning to peel away to reveal a transparency underneath. She saw giant paintings leaning up against concrete walls and tiny price tags with not-so-tiny prices stuck to the back of the canvases. She saw a bored woman listlessly scanning a rack of second-hand winter coats. She saw an antique lamp in the shape of an elephant with a light bulb screwed into the end of its trunk. She saw a small tin box filled with black and white photographs and colorful postcards. She saw all of these things and thought, for a moment, about point of view. She turned to the boy on her left and asked him what blue looked like. He told her it looked like blue.