

TIDEPOOLS 2013



TIDEPOOLS
A JOURNAL OF IDEAS



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T I D E P O P L S

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IN APPRECIATION

Tidepools would not see daylight without the tireless efforts of a handful of students, staff, and faculty. The editors would like to express their sincere gratitude to those who contributed to this edition.

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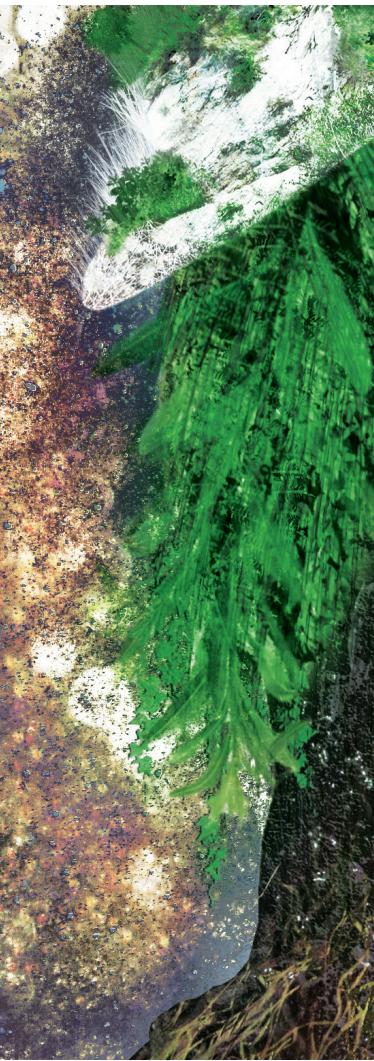
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+LIFE

On Monday

Carina Simantob

S

ometimes I would convince myself, for only the briefest of moments, that I understood what he was going through. Maybe that was in and of itself my own personality disorder. I would defend him to make myself feel like a better person in front of my friends, when deep down I would never truly understand why he couldn't just "Man up," either.

It's funny to me now that I look back on it. People are so eager to sign your cast when you break your leg, bring you flowers or cards when you call in sick, pity and praise you in your fight against cancer. However, there will never be a Hallmark card out there for your crippling panic attacks, or a walk for your depression. There will be no bracelets of support, no words of encouragement, no flowers at your bedside, only judgment and false comforts.

At first I would honestly pity him when he would sink down to the floor, face drained of color. I didn't understand why it was happening, but I understood it was hurting him and that was enough for the time being. I would tell him it would pass, rub his back, and then we would sit on the couch with a warm cup of tea in our matching Bubba Gump mugs. It was a time before I grew impatient with him, when everything was new, words of praise and support flowed easily. I thought that I liked the idea of being a holy saint who came to his rescue. I didn't realize that the more I praised, the more I was actually belittling his disease, thinking that I alone could cure him. It never occurred to me that a few words here and there were by no means a real form of treatment, or that a hospital could do anything better than I could.

It wouldn't take much to trigger an attack, but once they started you never knew when they would stop again. He would begin shaking violently, curled up into the tightest ball, choking for air. His symptoms would become so disabling that the panic would spread to me; the frustration it caused pushed me to resent his very existence. Holding him

on the couch no longer worked, his tea would grow cold before he could regain the ability to function as a human being for long enough to drink it. In anger I would tell him,

"Just stop thinking about it, it's all in your head."

"Yeah, I'm sorry," he would smile weakly, and be apologetic from the very core of his being.

"It's okay, just try harder, resist it." Only now do I realize how selfish these words were. It's okay, try harder not to be blind. It's okay, try harder, resist having AIDS; Such simple words, yet such a hurtful meaning.

I wanted to understand. I really and honestly thought I could get myself to understand what it was like. But in the end, all I did was lie to him and myself. I thought I was his refuge, his sanctuary, but the more I tried to 'fix him' the more I was denying the actual problem. The disease wrapped around him on a daily basis, suffocating him, rotting his brain. Our plans would suddenly be turned upside down because his own body was attacking him, devouring him bit by bit.

On Sunday we went together to the park; we were normal again. His long fingers wrapped around mine, cradling them like a fragile bird. I was not the bird in our relationship though; I have long since realized this. He was the one longing for a place of safety, leaving his body for brief moments, taking flight. When he flew he could see his true sanctuary; a place free of guilt, a place where a hand was offered to him to pull him free of his suffering until he had to return once again. Each step in his human body was heavier than the last, and dragged him down deeper and deeper into the depths; the very place he wished he could escape. We sat down on the bench, where he held his head almost as if in fear that it might leave his body, that it might escape without him. I believe he finally realized that he could no longer return from his brief flights. He knew that if he returned he would never find his way out again. I was completely oblivious to his discovery at the time, thinking I had finally cured him.

So on Monday he flew, and didn't look back.

In the morning it had rained and the whole world smelled damp and foreboding. Or maybe it hadn't rained...maybe it was entirely sunny and I only remember it being rainy because nothing bad ever happens on a sunny day. Either way I remember we had been a normal couple, if only for one brief moment. I went to his office only to discover his new freedom. My walk to the kitchen was a long but empty one.

I was too short to reach the top shelf where the twin mugs lay. I pushed the mug off the edge with my fingertips, foolishly hoping to catch it before it crashed to the cold tile floor. Hoping I could save it before it finally shattered into a million pieces at my feet, cutting my ankles. I bent over to pick up the pieces, impossible for even a professional to put back together again. They sliced my fingers at odd angles until I eventually gave up, and finally understood what he had felt.



Jason C. Finn
"Mother Nature"
(Photoshop)

The Miles Traveled

Joanne D'Amato

His words travel across the land
divided not only by rails of steel
but laws of man, coating the earth
blue and gray, drenched in a final
alliance of deepened-crimson.

His words travel across the land
a message of emancipation, though
tears cloud faces, as the gears
of my mighty coal engine moan,
and my wheels groan to a slow stop.

His words travel across the land
with conviction to abolish slavery,
while a dark-garland, black as raven
wings, drapes the train. My iron grill
waves flags of stars and stripes on this,

His last day of travel across the land.
Smoke of dismal gray streams from
my stack like a mourner's veil swept
into the robin-blue of a spring sky.
A pageant of grief guides my way
as I bring Lincoln home.

Do Not Go Gentle

Natasha Schimka

They always rage before the light dies. Oh, do they rage.

With shattered voices they protest, they rebel, they challenge, they kick, they shriek. With cracked pride they weep, they beg, they beseech, they crave one last time, but the answer is always the same. They thrash like cornered animals, teeth bared and hackles raised. That good night gently beckons them and they snap at it, dart away into the corner, cower in abject despair.

She showed no sign of noticing him—no sign of anything, really, when he sidled out. For a moment, he wondered if he'd arrived too late. He gathered the shadows about him and crept a step closer. Usually, this was when they became active. This was when the freeze started to set in, that fathomless freeze bypassing flesh to seep straight into the bones. Already, he could feel the room's temperature dropping degree by degree, yet there was still no response from her. Perhaps she truly had already expired. Had he read the times wrong? He pulled out his schedule and gave it a quick scan. 4:40:37 P.M., PST, 23 November 2009. Five minutes from now. Would she sleep until then? Would she expire without speaking? Perplexed, he seated himself in the uncomfortable chair next to the window.

As he sat down, the sun outside faded to a hazy gray, as if covered by a film, and the chair squeaked. Her eyes flickered, then opened. Her lips formed a silent word—Sasha, he read, and recalled the description of Alexander Vasek from his notes. She managed a croak before coughing overtook her. She sat up, gulped down the water at her bedside, and watched him. Her breaths were low-pitched wheezes which racked her entire body. Fingers tapping restlessly against the schedule in his lap, he waited for her to speak again.

She said, "Seen Sasha?"

"I have not," he said. Two hours from now, Alexander Vasek would be fatally injured in a car crash on his way to visit her in the hospital. Best not tell her that. "The room was empty when I arrived."

"I know," he said.

Wryly, she smiled. It was lopsided, her lips slightly curled to show a glimpse of teeth. "So? What're you here for? Joke from the Doc?"

"I'm here for you."

Her smile faded.

They always know what he means. Oh, do they know. This was the part he hated most. The histrionic reacting and raging.

Casually, she looked down and took note of the black tendrils slithering around the bottom of her bed. They twitched at her gaze. She shivered, hugging the blanket to herself as she hacked violently, and, suddenly, fixed her gaze on the monotone comforter. A hand raised to hover beneath her right eye.

"That too?" She pointed to the murky window, where sunlight streaked in in shades of ash. Dust particles hung suspended, as if the world had transformed into a black-and-white photo.

"Yes."

The hand dropped, then gestured he come closer. When he did not, she croaked, "C'mon now." He stood up slowly, his schedule book melting into the shadows, and walked closer. He stopped a few feet shy of her. She held out a hand expectantly and, with a jerky, cautious movement, he gave her his. With both her sallow, trembling hands, she held it firmly. "Like an ice cube," she said in a teasing way meant to draw a reaction from him.

He drew back his hand quickly. "You're...not afraid?"

Her arms retreated under the blanket, still hugged tight to her chest. "Of what?"

"You're going to die."

He studied her closely, watching with a sharp eye for any hidden horror beneath that passive expression, but she only shrugged. The blanket fell. She bunched it back up, rolling her shoulders underneath it to prevent it from falling. "Aren't you cold?" she asked. It took effort to keep her teeth from chattering, he could tell.

"That's not relev—"

"Aren't you cold?"

"...I'm used to it."

"Comes with the job?"

"Yes, actually."

She frowned. "Crappy job."

"I'm used to it."

"Good benefits?"

"Excuse me?"

"You get f-free pineapple upside-down cake in heaven f-for the job no one wants?"

"No. And I did personally ask to have this—" He broke off, blinking. He waved a hand and the shadows flooded into his hand, where they solidified into a book. After a quick scan and quick glance at his watch, he looked up.

"Lemme guess: I've got t-ten seconds left."

The book disintegrated and dripped to the ground like dry rain. "Two minutes," he said, frowning. "You seem awfully cheerful for that fact."

"Why wouldn't I be?"

Why—

After she turned her head aside to cough violently, she cracked a grin. "You sure are easily confused. Any siblings?"

"An older brother. But that was a long time ago."

"What was he like?"

What was he like? Images scattered into the corners of his mind: untameable hair, obnoxious laugh, hunched over to squint at the actors gathered in the Old Globe—O, that this too solid flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a—"Don't ask about me," he said, more harshly than intended. "This is your time."

"My t-time?"

"These are your last moments, Kalena Vasek. Scream and plead while you can. After this, there's no more."

She stared at him. He faltered under her close scrutiny and looked away; her grin returned, much to his chagrin. "You're way too nice f-for this. How'd they rope you into it?"

Fifty-six seconds, murmured the clock ticking at the back of his mind. He rushed, "Wouldn't you rather—talk about yourself? Share fears? Ask to deliver last regrets? Really, anything at all—"

"Answer me."

"—I'm just here to serve—excuse me?"

"If you want to help, answer me."

Discomfort roiled in his stomach. "There's not much time left," he said. His darkness had already sucked the light from the room, and though his vision adjusted easily, she screwed up her eyes and unconsciously leaned toward him to compensate. The thermostat dully gleamed zero.

"Then stop b-beating around the b-bush."

"I..." He what? It had been so long. "Why talk about myself when you're the one who won't last much longer?"

"I've spent my entire life talking," she said. "For now, I'd just like to listen."

Thirty seconds, it murmured. "Would that—help you?" he stammered. "Expire?"

Amused, she said, "Yes, that would help me 'expire.' Though, one quick question." She eyed the shadows coagulating into a scythe in his left hand. "That won't...hurt, right?"

"That's...that's all you're worried about? You have your brother, and your husband, and your child, and your friends, and your—"

"Is that weird? To not b-be afraid?"

Timidly, he let the corners of his lips turn upward. It felt unnatural. Unrehearsed. "You're the first."

She smiled back with what he knew were blue lips and yellow teeth. "B-Been t-told I'm weird." She threw the comforter off and, pulling a box out from who knows where, lit a cigarette. With the first inhale she erupted into coughs. She wiped blood onto the sheets and said, "Don't t-tell Sasha or my husband."

Twelve seconds. "The cold numbs any pain," he explained hastily.

"The last—my predecessor didn't use this. Hurt then. He didn't say anything. I died alone. Confused. Afraid. Didn't know what was going on. Had no one. I just—I just wanted to—"

4:40:37. He dragged the scythe down her chest and cut loose her soul. Her cigarette fell from limp hands; the scythe dropped into the darkness and liquefied. He held the orb—her soul—in a feeble grip as all the shadows retreated back to him. Light flooded the room; the radiant sun's last fanfare before sinking beneath the horizon. But he felt nothing.

What color would her soul be, if he could see in more than mere blacks and grays and whites? Would it be warm, if he could feel more

than a mere endless chill? It was so small. The grandiose ones, the benevolent ones who spent their lives accomplishing great things, had large, pulsating souls, but hers was tiny. Insignificant.

"I just wanted to reassure people," he whispered to no one. "Make their passing easier. But I didn't realize—how ungrateful they would be. How unrewarding this would be."

He felt silly.

Sighing, Death picked up the cigarette, set the orb carefully into his bulging bottle, and moved onto the next one.



Megan Snedeker
"Love"
(Painting on wood)

Not In-Case-Of-Emergency Close

Denise Stephenson

No one expected her to die. It was a simple kitchen accident. No big deal.

Rebecca's small dinner party had gone off without a hitch. She had the red wine open and breathing and the white on ice when the guests arrived. Everyone enjoyed the wine, munchies and conversation while they awaited dinner. It was a simple meal of curried veggies with lime marinated tri-tip and fresh bakery bread. As Rebecca served, one of the guests inquired about her band-aid.

"Oh, just nicked my finger while chopping the onion."

"Should we look for blood?" asked one.

"Is that why you chose a curry?" laughed another.

"Oh, just eat. And the person who finds the bloody digit wins a prize." Everyone chuckled, though one guest was careful as he chewed through the heavily sauced vegetables.

The next evening, Rebecca noticed a thin red line leading toward her wrist from beneath the band-aid. She worried she'd wrapped the finger too tight or left the band-aid on too long. She removed it and found the wound surrounded by a white ring with grey pus oozing out. Oh dear. She looked in her medicine chest but couldn't find any antibacterial ointment. She realized the local pharmacy had already closed so she poured a bit of alcohol on the wound. Yowza, that stung. Then she put on a clean band-aid intending to dress the wound better the next day.

In the middle of the night she awoke to a burning sensation in her left hand. She turned on the light. The red line had lengthened. Pus oozed out of the bandage. The clock read 1 a.m. Not the best time to need medical attention, but what could she do? She wrapped a couple of paper towels gently around her hand in the hope of not getting pus on anything. Then she dressed and knocked on her neighbor's door.

Reg saw her through the peep hole. He cracked the door open. "What's up, Beck?" Then he saw her hand. "Whoa, girl, did you hurt yourself?"

"Remember, I cut myself prepping dinner?"

"Yesterday."

"It's infected. I need to go to emergency."

"For a finger? Can't it wait till morning?"

"It's hot and nasty. I'm scared."

Reg opened the door. "Hot and nasty? I like nasty," he growled and headed to grab his car keys before Rebecca could wonder if Reg was coming on to her. "You're lucky I'm sober," he called from the bedroom.

Rebecca walked with Reg into Emergency. She told them she'd cut her finger. The staff moved slowly until they discovered the red line emanating from the wound and learned that she'd cut herself in a kitchen accident. She insisted it was onions and not the steak that she was chopping when the knife had sliced across her left index finger. The nurse looked skeptical, but she didn't argue.

When she was alone in the curtained space, Rebecca suddenly got nervous. She started tapping her foot. She found that she was cold, even though she was wearing a winter parka. Her finger still felt hot, like the burning when you'd stayed outside too long playing in the snow. She put her hood up and wrapped her arms tightly around herself. The nurse's questions got her wondering. She replayed her party preparations in her head.

She could have been cutting the tomato when she did it, but it was definitely tomato or onion, not steak. She didn't think about germs in her mouth even though she'd immediately sucked on the cut. She didn't

consider that she hadn't washed the vegetables before cutting them. She didn't think about the fact that after prepping everything, she left the same band-aid on when she cooked the steak, served the meal, showered, slept. Since it hadn't been deep and didn't need stitches, she had truly ignored the cut after covering it.

By the time the doctor arrived, Rebecca was shivering. She asked for a blanket, but instead, the doctor asked a nurse to bring ice to try to lower Rebecca's temperature, which had spiked to 104 degrees. The doctor feared sepsis. She sent for a white blood count.

"What's wrong with me?"

"I can't be sure yet, but it appears you may have blood poisoning."

"From a simple cut?"

"From bacteria most likely. Were you working with meat?"

"That's what the nurse asked. I used a fork on some steak, but I was slicing an onion or maybe a tomato when I cut myself."

"Kitchen hygiene is more important than most people realize. Keeping meats and vegetables separate when preparing them, cleaning counters, washing hands."

"I've been cooking since I was 8. Nothing like this has ever happened."

"Could be your immune system has been compromised by a cold or flu. Could be a virulent form of bacteria on the food. Could just be luck. But we'll get you taken care of."

Reg couldn't believe it when the doctor came and told him Rebecca was dead. Now he felt like such a heel. He'd been tired of watching all the crazy, injured people come and go from the ER and had just been thinking how he should go home and let Beck call him when she was ready. But he

hadn't figured out how to get that message to her. What a schmuck! Here he was worried about a little sleep and she had been dying.

"How could she be dead? She just had an infected cut, an eensie little nick on her finger?"

"It wasn't just infected. She had blood poisoning."

"Blood poisoning? How did that happen?"

"At this point, we can't be sure. Are you family?"

"No, I'm a neighbor with a car."

"Do you know her next of kin?"

"I know her friends, I don't know her family. I'm holding her purse. Do I check in it? Do I give it to you?"

"If you'd like, we can take her personal belongings and look for an emergency contact."

Reg wasn't sure if he should take her purse home or give it to the attendant who was with the doctor. Beck's keys were in the purse, so if he kept it, he could get into her apartment. And do what? He'd always liked Rebecca and she'd helped him out a couple of times, but they weren't that close, not in-case-of-emergency close. He handed the purse to the short woman in the blue scrubs with frolicking dolphins. Shouldn't she be wearing something less cheerful?

Reg picked up his iPad that he'd been playing games on. He walked to the door and stopped. He looked back into the bustling room. It seemed wrong to just walk out, but what else was he gonna do? A sharp morning light made him squint before he ducked into the dark parking structure and took the elevator up to the 7th floor. As he wound his way round and round the cement structure he wondered what he would do with his day. Probably go back to bed and maybe pull the covers up over his head.

Is This Freedom?

Cody Hewitt

W

e typically remember the days that either bring us depression or joy. The day I remember is not one of those days. It was neither a sad day nor was it a happy one. It was just a day. It started normally with an unwelcome greeting from my alarm, which took me away from my vacation on the beach with Scarlett Johansson and reminded me

of the classes I had to get ready for. Class was the same, or at least I think it was, I can't really remember. Class was followed with a conversation with friends on the way to the parking lot. Whether it was significant or not, again, I can't remember. I took the same way home as I always do. Take El Camino, turn right on Encinitas Boulevard, same BMW dealership on the right and burnt down McDonald's to the left. Once home I was excitedly greeted by my dog, probably because I always give her a treat when I get home. Since I didn't feel like starting on homework, I decided to take her for a walk.

We went on the usual trail that I take her on. When we got to the trail there was a lizard sitting on a wall as if set up to watch the people come and go. A group of trees granted us entrance but loomed over us wishing we were someone new. Although I was surrounded by living things I could only talk to myself. "So this is life?," I thought. A continuing rinse and repeat cycle that occasionally goes off course in order to make up our memory so we don't think of the real life Groundhog Day that we live in. I continued to wonder if the freedom we have is truly freedom. We spend our youth getting trained enough until we can get a job and spend the rest of our lives living to work and working to live. We complain about this mundane existence but we accept it and do nothing about it. I looked down at my dog, who in turn looked at me with what I thought

was a smile, and I wondered why taking a walk gave her so much joy even though she has gone down this path so many times. I asked her, "How are you not bored looking at the same dirt road and looking over the same cliff and sniffing the same trees?" No reply. I saw her leash and wondered if she resented me for denying her freedom just like we have been denied. Through curiosity I unhooked the leash to see what would happen. As expected, she took off once her bindings were removed. Just when I was about to start chasing after her a funny thing happened, she turned around and waited for me. She urged me to catch up so she could continue. I laughed to myself. Maybe that was the freedom we have. The ability to go as fast or as slow as we wanted as long as we were going the way that was assigned to us.

We got to the end of the road and back to my car. We were reunited with a friendly face. The lizard still sat in the same place. Both my dog and I stared at it although our reasons were different. She was licking her lips trying to figure out how to catch the reptile. I stood wondering what this lizard did all day. Did it just sit? A path was there for it to take but it chose to just sit there. Maybe it had the freedom that we only dream of. Maybe it lived the life we wanted of having a path but choosing not to go down it. Maybe it was just trying to sell me car insurance. All I do know is that a part of me envied it.

The Citrus Grove

Clifton King

There is a small hill behind our house
where we planted citrus trees.

Our first crop was meager:
grapefruit the size of lemons,
navel oranges masquerading as tangerines.
But, the blood oranges, when sliced open,
were like setting suns scattered atop
the kitchen counter. Soon the grove
was more than we could manage:
the pruning, spraying, picking.

So, we solicited help with the trees.
A man named Raul showed up:
tall, muscled, dark from days in the sun.
He said he knew citrus, understood
their blossoms, sympathized
with those curling leaves, would settle
for nothing less than the best bounty.
On his battered Ford truck he carried

ladders for the harvest; in the cab,
an old suitcase held everything else
he owned. That first season he appeared
each morning just before the sun.
My wife took him coffee.
A kind gesture I thought. But then,
coffee became breakfast. I noticed
Raul was now clean shaven every day.
My wife had a renewed interest in citrus.
"Just something to keep me busy," she said.

Now, when my neighbors inquire of her
whereabouts I tell them, "...a world cruise
with her sister." Later I will explain,
"She met a man in Madrid."
There is a hill behind our house where we
planted citrus trees. This year, in a small plot
of freshly turned earth, there are two new
trees.

The Dragon

Lauren Atherton

It was the morning of her 40th birthday that she became painfully aware of the hangover she brought upon herself. As her head split open, or at least threatened to, she took in what can only be described as evidence of a night either well or ill spent. The motel room was already adorned with tattered drapes and furniture, but she and her newly discovered partner had littered it with beer cans and cigarette butts. There was a trail of clothes from the bathroom to the bed and a stamp on her hand from the bar they had begun at. It became clear that she needed to free her arm from the man's painfully heavy body so that she could relieve both her stomach and her bladder. She also became sure that when God said "Let there be light!", he did not mean this.

The man startled awake when she pulled herself from under him and proceeded to give her the details of what the alcohol had blurred from her memory. He left with an "I had fun last night. Call me sometime." As if that was ever going to happen. She took a cold shower and some aspirin, and stared at herself in the mirror for what seemed like hours. It was then, and only then, that she began to ponder how her life had brought her here.

In 1988, she graduated from high school as an honor student with a full ride to the University of Colorado. Leaving the small town of Atchison was the most liberating experience her short life had given her. She was free to learn about ideas and meet people that were different from those she'd known all her life. She would be able to discover who she was as an artist, or musician, or whatever she decided would be her calling. She was embarking on a world that, until that point, had just been a dream.

When she stepped onto the campus for the first time she felt a weight lift off her shoulders and decided then and there that she would take every opportunity to make the most of her college years. She played rugby, joined a sorority, had perfect attendance, and was a member of the classics club. She organized parties, played in the school band, worked for Greenpeace, and acted in a few of the school plays. On top of all this, she graduated Magna Cum Laude as a double major in both English and Biochemistry. One could argue that she was the model student. There

wasn't any sign of trouble, at least not that she could remember. She, of course, had not met him yet.

In 1992, she was accepted to the University of Michigan's law school. While she didn't know this at the time, it would be a decision she would regret in retrospect. Conor Flannagan was the product of Irish immigration. He was a first generation American who grew up poor so that his parents could send him to college. He learned from a very young age to do what was necessary to get ahead, and it was with this mentality that he was accepted to law school. She should have known from that damn lizard to stay away from him.

Conor's lizard was a Komodo Dragon named Elliot, which if she knew anything, she knew to stay away from. He had built a cage for it in his backyard so that people could admire it without fear of being attacked. Komodo Dragon bites are highly toxic and they, as a species, are relatively aggressive. They are also extremely illegal to possess because they are endangered. While this should have been her first clue as to the character of the man, it was actually rather endearing at the time.

She had never been a believer of love at first sight, but when she saw Conor her heart stopped. For an Irishman, he was abnormally tall, especially in comparison to the men he was playing pool with. As he leaned over the table with perfect position on the 8 ball, he glanced up for a moment and they caught each other's eyes. He seemed in that moment to be looking into her soul. In reality, a piece of his dark hair had fallen into his powder blue eyes, but she was going to ignore that. All she knew, was that life as she knew it was over.

Over the next three years, she and Conor did what every couple in a long term relationship does: they dated, moved in together and announced an engagement. They both graduated from law school at the top of their class with very prestigious job offers. They moved to Boston, with their surrogate child Elliot, where he began practicing for a private firm and she for a pharmaceutical company. They had what their friends would call "the perfect relationship." It wasn't until well into their marriage that she saw any indication that there would be trouble in paradise.

With Conor's background, he quickly became one of the top defense attorneys in Boston. He was able to handle both the monotonous and high profile cases with ease. He was, in the words of one of his senior partners, "one of the most promising young lawyers to ever work for Weston, Masters, and Crick." It became clear that if he stayed on he would be able to make partner by the time he was 40, which would have made him the youngest partner in the history of the firm. While she was a good lawyer herself, she was ready to be a full time mother and it seemed that his salary would allow her to do so.

By the year 2000, she had become pregnant with their first child, Tierney. She was beautiful with the same dark hair and blue eyes Conor possessed. Being a mother was like nothing she had ever experienced. It made her simultaneously the most happy and nervous person she knew. In 2002, she had their second child, Collin, and with him it seemed that their family was complete. They truly did have the perfect life.

Over the next few years, Conor would get into the habit of working long hours and sleeping at the office. He would come home when he felt like it, if he came home at all, and change into a new suit only to leave again for work. When he was home, he seemed preoccupied as if he felt like he shouldn't be there or that he had other things to do. This didn't bother her because she remembered what it was like to be a practicing lawyer, and with the kids it almost seemed easier for him to be gone. It meant that she didn't have to take care of him too. He became more moody and irrational. She remembered once that he became so angry, he punched a hole in the wall of their newly remodeled bathroom next to her head. However, all of this she could handle.

Everything came to a head in the summer of 2009. Tierney and Collin were away at summer camp and she had the house to herself for the first time in what seemed like forever. On the third night of their absence, Conor came home drunk with a list of problems he decided to take out on her. As they argued, she thought about how much had changed between who they were and who they had become both personally and as a couple. She thought about the saying her mother had taught her; that people never really change. She had always shrugged and ignored her, but on some

level she had known the truth in what she was saying. She could now apply it to the man she once loved so much. It wasn't until the brick came crashing through the window that she realized how much she wished she had only come to this conclusion earlier.

"Mary-Ellen!" she remembers him screaming as he ducked for cover. "Get down NOW!" It took her a moment to realize what was going on, but once she came to, she hit the ground like an anvil. She heard glass shattering as the bullets punctured her perfectly manicured walls and the subsequent pictures that hung on them. Furniture fluff was flying around her head and one bullet whizzed by her ear narrowly missing her shoulder. While she knew consciously it was just a matter of minutes, it felt like the shooting would never stop. When the shooting finally subsided she and Conor looked at each other for a long time before she was able to speak. "What. The Hell. Was that?" she asked in spurts.

Apparently Conor's mood swings and drastic attitude change over the past few years was the product of a fairly serious cocaine problem. She had known plenty of lawyers throughout her career that used cocaine to handle the work load, but she had never believed that Conor could be one that would fall subject to it. She had believed, naively of course, that not only was he above substance abuse, but that he could handle anything that was thrown at him. Now, as she stared at the ruin that was her living room, it occurred to her that the signs had been there all along. She had chosen to ignore them.

Over the next hour she and Conor talked for the first time in years. In 1995, the year he began at the firm, there was a series of busts made against the Irish Mob in Boston. The Mob had been using the lawyers from Weston, Masters and Crick for years and immediately connected with Conor because of his ethnicity and his tenacity in the courtroom. After representing them for 5 years, the bosses began to take notice of him and offered him a position. Since Tierney was already on the way, he decided to take their offer so that he could make some extra money and she could stay home with the baby. He started small, but eventually was aiding the Mob with drug trafficking, embezzlement and general cover up stories. He became their "Go-to Guy." He had recently decided that



The Personification of Death

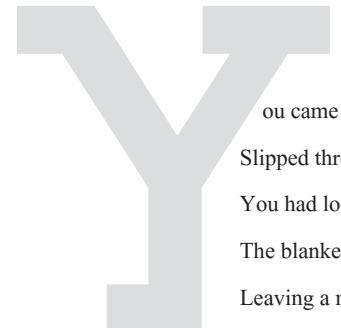
Zsasha Flores

he was done, but the Mob apparently had other plans for him. They said they would let him out permanently if he murdered a known affiliate that had turned into what he called a dime dropper. He had refused and apparently was receiving the first round of punishment. The severity of the punishment was because, as a parting gift to himself, he had taken a pound of cocaine. As she sat there and listened to the man she had given her life to, she was flabbergasted. How did she not see this coming? Had she been asleep for the past 15 years? It was then that she walked over and picked up the brick that had announced the beginning of the explosion. The last thing she remembered after picking it up was opening the note attached and seeing the picture of her children.

The next week was a blur from one police station to another. She felt helpless, but there was nothing that could be done. She finally received peace of mind the following Saturday when she received a phone call. Her kids had been found, but she needed to come down to the hospital to identify them. As she stood at the glass window of the morgue and looked at her beautiful 9 year old daughter, who looked so much like the man responsible for her death, she couldn't help but scream. If only she had noticed how much her husband was in trouble. She kicked and pounded on the wall asking God for his help. She worked herself into a frenzy and the hospital staff was forced to sedate her.

When she woke up she had clarity and a fire that she hadn't had in years. When she reached the front door of the house that was supposed to be her home, she paused for a moment to understand her battle plan. As she gathered her thoughts she thought about all the last few years she wasted with her husband. He caused the greatest misery any person can cause a mother and took her children from her. When she opened the door she found Conor sitting on the machine gun shredded couch that she hadn't the will to clean or replace. He was sitting with a bottle of scotch in one hand and a cigar in the other. "You know," he said. "This is the first time I've really felt connected to you. I'm sorry it happened this way." With that she raised her pistol and shot him between the eyes.

Before she left her old life for her new one, she sat down outside with Elliot. While she had admired the giant lizard as a young woman, she sat there now wondering how she didn't notice his imperfections earlier. He was always so cold and distant with scars from fights with his food. It seemed suddenly that the Elliot knew what she was thinking and what she had just done. He lunged her, hitting the reinforced metal cage that had been his home for so many years. She just smiled at him. Her last act as Mary-Ellen Flannagan was to call the zoo before taking off into the sunset.



You came to me that night
Slipped through the door and tucked yourself in
You had locked the door
The blankets were pulled tight
Leaving a mark around my neck, choking me
My heat was stifling next to your chill
The dichotomy of the darkness of night and the light of day
The odds were in your favor
The room resembled the shiny jet of your eyes
A darkness undisturbed
Were we in my room?
The walls were no indicator
Were they even there?
I couldn't tell
Still, we were in my bed
Your flesh uncomfortably on my flesh
I felt your icy hand on the small of my back, gently sliding up

Your graze so soft I almost mistook it for a chill up my spine
You pulled at my underwear
That's all you wanted wasn't it?
You bit my lip at my discomfort
The taste of blood mingled with your breath
You stole the breath from my lungs
Then I experienced a chill like none I had experienced before
You killed me that night
You killed me and my romanticized notions of death
I always had expected death to be comforting
Take me in its arms, be the antidote to life
But no, you were far from that
You weren't a lover but my ruination
Sometimes, I wish you really had killed me



Fog

Samira Rashan

"Jade? Do you know why you're here?"

You bite back a sigh and stare up at your new counselor in annoyance. He's ancient; probably around his seventies. You study his attire and already you find yourself placing judgment upon him.

He's sporting a beige suit with striped, dark brown tie and there is even a fucking pocket watch, the end of the chain clipped onto the middle button of his vest, while the watch is placed snugly into his breast pocket. You scoff inwardly when you realize he has half-moon glasses sitting at the edge of his nose. The whole attire just screams pretension, and that's not even putting into account the pitiful look he's casting upon you.

"I lost my patience with Dr. Kernal and ended up punching him in the face. He quit and now I'm stuck with you." You answer with as much nonchalance as you can muster, but you can still feel the dull ache in your knuckles from the punch. It wasn't your proudest moment.

"You see, I want to start fresh with you. Get to know you better, Jade. So when I ask if you know why you're here, I mean if you know why you're here at this hospital?" He smiles.

"I'm sure it states that fact somewhere in my file you got there."

He raises his eyebrows at you, "I would rather hear that piece of information from you, Jade."

You're about to bite back how it's not just a 'piece of information,' it's your fucking life. It's what got you here in the first place.

"My mother was murdered." You mutter. Your eyes are downcast, watching as you rub the toes of your feet against the soft carpet. "She bled to death in my arms and then I went crazy."

You hear him sigh dejectedly and shuffle paper around.

You don't get much sleep since you arrived at the psychiatric ward, which is pretty shitty considering it's their job to fend after you, make sure you get a good night's rest and shit.

You're just disappointed no one has given you any sleep medication. But mostly, the sleep deprivation stems from the fact that the blonde girl won't leave you alone in your room.

"Would you just leave?" You yell, exasperated. You turn your pillow and fluff it, then shove your head against it, facing opposite from the looming presence.

"You know I can't."

You don't answer her and she falls quiet. In actuality, you're kind of glad she's sticking around, because something about her company eases your mind. You only voiced your irritation cause the blonde is always there—in the corner of your eyes, on your bed, in the stall next to you, always, always there and it's freaking you out.

Clearly no one else can see her, she's part of your imagination. The thought terrifies you, considering you're a 19 year-old adult. You're not supposed to have an imaginary friend.

But you do. And she's blonde.

"Who are you?" You swallow against the lump forming in your throat and finally talk to her.

You can just feel her bright smile from across the room. "I'm me, silly." You somehow fall asleep for the first time in days to those words.

Your dad is arriving three weeks later to come visit you. Even though you hate to admit it, you miss him. You miss him and all your friends. The patients you are surrounded by drive you insane, which can be ironic considering half of them are indeed insane. You feel bad because it sometimes really scares you when they come too close or try to speak to you.

You're gripping onto that last ounce of sanity you have as you try your hardest to convince yourself you're different. You're different than everybody here.

But you hear your mom's patronizing voice from when you were little and innocent, taunting you. Just because you're different doesn't mean you're better than anyone.

When your dad arrives the first thing you notice is the amount of weight he lost. He looks almost pathetic and weak. His face is unshaven and his eyes are drooping. You want to ask him if he's an alcoholic now

or a chain smoker now that his wife and daughter have disappeared from the house. Although, you bite your tongue back; you'd rather not live in ignorant bliss.

"How have you been doing, honey?" He asks you after a hug.

You gesture for him to sit on the sofa behind him before taking a seat yourself. "I've been good, daddy. I might even be getting better."

"Oh?" His brows raise and his smile widens, but it doesn't reach his eyes. His eyes are clouded over with a dull shade. You smile brightly.

"Did the doctors say so?"

"No, not really." You shrug. The doctors and therapists rarely speak to you about your progress. "But I feel better. It won't be long before I come back home."

He breaks eye contact with you and purses his lips. You continue speaking, "How are you coping? How's work? How's the family?"

"They're fine. Everyone's fine." As an afterthought, he adds, "They miss you."

You hear him say something else but you're momentarily distracted by the blonde, whose finger lightly passed the line of books on the shelves behind your dad's back. You swallow when her piercing blue eyes lock onto yours. She's out of the room before you know it.

"Jade?"

You blink and jump when you realize you tuned your dad out. You shake your head, "I'm sorry, what?"

But he only stares at you dejectedly. You wonder what you did wrong.

After a moment, "Do you remember that time we went camping with your mother? In the summer between your middle school and high school?"

You stare blankly at him for a while. Then, there's suddenly a pang in your chest. It's getting increasingly harder to breathe. You bring your hand over your chest to relieve the pressure there. You gasp and choke

to regain your strength back, but it's futile. His words trigger something deep within your subconscious. Images of your mother, a lake, fishing poles and bright smiles.

The doctors are by your side in a flash before you collapse to the ground.

A few days have passed since your dad's failed attempt at a visit. You doubt he'll be back anytime soon considering the time between his visits have increased gradually.

You're slumped underneath a tree, watching as women of all ages stroll around the courtyard of the hospital. The blonde girl is dancing before your stretched out legs, completely in her own little world. She's actually quite fantastic at it and you find yourself smiling along.

It reminds you of a time when you were little and in dance class. You made quite a few friends, surprisingly, despite your snarky personality. Apparently, dance girls have just the same amount of attitude to let you join their group.

When the blonde falls to her bottom next to you, she throws her head on your shoulder and suddenly cuddles by your side. You stiffen, despite yourself. A rush of unrecognizable emotions surge through you. To ease the tension you're feeling, you meekly mumble out, "Tired?"

"I'm comfortable here with you." She replies.

"Okay."

"I was in dance class from elementary school to middle school." You blur in a middle of a session.

Your therapist looks up expectantly and grins, "Were you?"

"Yeah. I loved it. The dancing was fun. The music. Even the people. The people were nice."

His hand comes up underneath his chin in a thoughtful manner. His eyes look past you, scanning the wallpaper, pondering. "Do you find these people to be influential to you today?"

You can't help but be amused by the questions these counselors ask



sometimes, only because you've watched many films that have therapists in them and Hollywood couldn't have gotten it more right.

"Well, duh. I always wanted to be a dancer growing up. Me and a few friends always dreamed of touring with Beyoncé or someone."

"Are you still in contact with these friends?"

You visibly freeze at that question. Your jaws clench. Before your counselor can repeat the question, you mutter out, "No."

"I miss your singing." The blonde girl says one Thursday morning. The two of you are laying sideways on your queen bed, staring at one another.

Overtime, the blonde's face has been getting clearer. You can now count every single freckle and read every emotion on her face. You were never good at reading people's emotions, but it's easy with her.

"I don't sing."

"Yes, you do. You're very good at it."

You take her word and don't question it. You feel your eyes wandering to her lips.

Your fifth session with the new dude doesn't go as well as before. You're on the edge of your seat, watching time tick by incredibly slowly. You wish it would hurry up so you can go somewhere private and continue talking to the blonde.

"You seem agitated. Is something bothering you, Jade?"

"I just want to get out of here. This is a waste of my time."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because I fucking do!" You snap and meet his eyes for the first time that session. Though, for some reason, you feel yourself relax at the look of understanding in his eyes. Something about his wise appearance and expression of understanding puts you at ease.

"I've been seeing a girl." You quietly state, "I don't think she's real. But she's everywhere. And— and she's blonde." You don't know if you did the right thing by telling him, but then again, there's nothing to lose. He's a therapist, so it's his job to keep your shit straight. He makes no movement on his part, not even the slightest change in expression. It's as though he's heard this a million times from every

patient of his.

"What does she say?" he asks.

"Nothing. We just...we just talk... about nothing." You feel incredibly exposed. It's the most you've revealed about yourself in months.

"How does she make you feel?"

Your thumbs twiddle in your lap. "Happy. At home."

You don't know who initiated it, but one minute the two of you were standing extremely close in the middle of your room, the next, you're kissing.

You break away with a gasp, because everything is wrong. There are sirens going off in the back of your head. You want to cry, scream, laugh, and bolt out the door. You know it's no use anyway, she'll follow you. She always does.

Instead, you say, "I've kissed you before."

Her eyes stare straight at you, staring into your soul and somewhere deeper than that. "A million times."

The rare nights you do fall asleep, you dream of a huge crowd. Of people dancing and smiling, people of all different colors and genders. It's like something out of John Lennon's songs and you can't stop it from appearing every time you close your eyes.

You only wake up when the sound of gunshots throws the entire crowd into chaos.

"I know you from somewhere, I don't know where, where have I seen you— why can't I remember?!" You're pacing the floor, from one end of the bedroom to the other end. Your mind is racing— images of dancing children, tents and fishing, crowds and beer, flash through your mind, but you can't figure out why. Your heart aches, but pawing at your breast to make it go away isn't helping.

"Why don't you remember me, Jade?"

You want to throw pillows at her, lamps and books, anything, but your heart is telling you no.

"I don't know. I don't know." It's not until you feel something salty at the corner of your mouth that you realize you're sobbing and crying

really loudly and embarrassingly.

"I'm here for you, okay?"

"No, you're not!"

You stop in the middle of the room in a split second, finding her figure on your bed. Her legs are crossed, arms folded in the middle of her lap. She's staring at you sadly and it just doesn't fit. She shouldn't be sad.

"You're not here for me," you whisper.

"I see her everywhere, she's dancing, smiling, she—" You whip your head back at your counselor and stalk before him with such intensity it causes him to lean back. "She kissed me."

"Did you want her to kiss you?"

You want to scream no, that it's not normal— but gay, that it's even weirder. You're able to touch a ghost or whatever the fuck she is.

Except, the words that come out of your mouth are the complete opposite. "Yes. I love her." Your hand flies to your mouth, "I don't—I don't know why I said that."

The mood in the room darkens immediately. The therapist grabs the notebook from his lap and places it on the table adjacent to him. "Jade, I'm going to ask you to do something, but you have to promise me not to panic."

"What?" You exhale. You're tired and exhausted. You need answers.

"Lift up the corner of your shirt a little."

Protest is at the tip of your tongue, but your hand already made the movement. Your head falls to the sight of exposed, tan skin.

There's a wound, almost the size of a quarter, dark and twisted. You choke out a sound. "What— what is that?"

"It's a bullet wound."

"I don't...I've never seen it...I..." How could you not have noticed this before? It's your fucking body. You shower every day, you look at yourself in the mirror every day...How?

He's explaining something about PTSD, and just like how you tuned out your dad, you're blocking his voice. Or more accurately, the blonde girl's appearance in the room takes all your attention.

She's just standing there, desolate. You can tell by her expression she's waiting. For what, you don't know.

"Hailey," you mutter. Suddenly, as though a ten ton weight crashed onto your head, you're falling to the ground, sobbing uncontrollably, as everything comes back.

Dance class. May 2002. You meet her for the first time in the



Jennine Burton
"I Am Eroded"
(Photography)

corner of the room, scared to death because you're supposed to introduce yourself in front of everyone. She came skipping next to you and introduced herself. She had blonde hair that immediately mesmerized you. She said her name was Hailey and that you'll be the best of friends forever and to not worry because the class was super friendly.

"I—I had a girlfriend— she— she—" You're gripping onto your hair, pulling it, with tears streaming down your face in floods. Guttural noises are ripping past your throat as you fall apart.

Road trip to Lake Tahoe. June 2007. Your family decided to spend time together on a road trip, but you refused to go without Hailey, your best friend and something more. This was the last summer you spent with your mother as well. She left the family after a divorce. But Hailey...Hailey was always there. In the tents, the two of you stole kisses here and there, mindful of the parents. You remember falling asleep to the sight of blonde hair in the sleeping bag next to yours. Your counselor dashes to the door, calling out the nurses, shouting, "It's happening, again!"

Pride fair. June 2011. Rainbow flags and beer. Hand in hand you took your girlfriend to the side, towards the parking lot. The two of you were smiling and giggling. It was the best day of your life.

"Do you remember her name?" The counselor is next to you and the next thing you know, holding onto your shoulders, trying to talk you through your hysteria.

"Hailey." You gasp out.

There was too much alcohol running through your system, but you made a mental note to thank your buddy Taylor for the beer he provided you and Hailey.

"What happened to her?"

"She was shot. We both were." You gasp and clutch your heart. The memories were flooding in, crashing against your skull. You find that you are detained, two nurses on either side of you, constraining you as you try and fail to hit yourself.

Hailey's car was still a bit too far, although the two of you were taking all the time in the world. For the first time in forever, the both of you felt in touch with society, accepted and acknowledged. Pride week was your week. No one could take that from you.

"What happened to your mother, Jade?" The therapist is now crouched before you, trying to calm you down with these questions. In the midst of your panic, you felt a strong urge to punch him.

"My mom- it wasn't my mom. She's ran away- oh, god. She ran away years ago, but Hailey, oh god...She's dead!" You're gasping and you want to vomit, because you can't do this. You can't. Not without her. You literally cannot continue on without her. She was your everything, but they killed her.

Two men were approaching from the other side of the parking lot. You didn't register their presence until they made a whistle sound. Your head turned to their direction. Your heart dropped. The four of you were isolated from the main event. No one was around for blocks.

When they stood before you, blocking the car, you knew something was wrong. From the way Hailey stiffened next to you, she was well aware of the fact, too.

You're wrestling against the nurses, pushing them away from you. You need to get out of the room, away from everything.

Hailey is nowhere in sight. You gasp and collapse to the ground. She's always there. For the past few months, her ghost was always something you could rely on.

"Where are you? Where are you?"

Your mind was momentarily caught off-guard by a comment one of the gunmen muttered, but it was too late. The sound of gunfire shot through your ears and before you knew it, Hailey had fallen to the ground with a shriek. Before you can scream, cry, kill, a bullet pierces your side, causing you to fall onto the ground in agony. You remember falling onto blonde hair, eyes zoning in and out, your vision filled with blonde locks.

"Jade? Listen to me, we're going to sedate you so you don't hurt yourself or any of the staff members, do you understand?"

The words those gunmen spat at you are last thing you remember before you black out.

"Fuckin' dyke."

Five days later...

"Jade? Do you know why you're here?"

Saxophone

K.D. King



The house smiled into the golden sun of the soft spring afternoon, contented with its occupants. Still, it savored the delicious anticipation of holding everyone in its arms later that day. The kitchen was the happiest room. Nanna napped in the corner, wrapped in waves of warm vanilla and covered with cats teaching gravity new lessons. At the window, Sheila studied the picture clouds morphing across the cobalt sky, amused by the hummingbirds playing tag in the preening palm fronds and chittering with bad tempered abandon.

The phone rang and Sheila grinned at the caller id, thinking how sweet it was when an almost grown man child called his mother. He'd needed to come home; he'd sung that through his emails and whispered it into the crevices of his silences for weeks. She'd felt his yearning reach toward desperation, but now he was almost here. Mother love answered the phone before Sheila's hand even made it to the receiver. Then time stepped slightly out of joint.

Later, Sheila looked back again and again, trying to access that last moment of peace. She saw the dust motes suspended in a ray of sunshine and felt the excitement pulsing in her chest and behind her eyes. She willed her past self to leave the phone alone. Preserve the world as a safe place for another hour, maybe two. It never worked. Every time, she answered the phone. Every time, her smile froze to her face, and Nanna woke with a start at the strangled sounds fighting out from behind Sheila's teeth. Every time, Sheila shattered and broke into jagged shards on the cold stone floor.

Egg

Marlee Galland

You were on your way home when you died.

It was a car accident. It wasn't anything particularly remarkable, but fatal nonetheless. You left behind a wife and two children. It was a painless death. The EMTs tried their best to save you, but their efforts were futile. Your body was so utterly shattered you were better off, trust me.

And that's when you met me.

"What... what happened?" You asked. "Where am I?"

"You died," I said, matter-of-factly. No point in mincing words.

"There was a... a truck and it was skidding..."

"Yup," I said.

"I... I died?"

"Yup. But don't feel bad about it. Everyone dies," I said.

You looked around. There was nothingness. Just you and me. "What is this place?" You asked. "Is this the afterlife?"

"More or less," I said.

"Are you god?" You asked.

"Yup," I replied. "I'm God."

"My kids... my wife," you said.

"What about them?"

"Will they be all right?"

"That's what I like to see," I said. "You just died and your main concern is for your family. That's good stuff right there."

You looked at me with fascination. To you, I didn't look like God. I just looked like some man. Or possibly a woman. Some vague authority figure, maybe. More of a grammar school teacher than the almighty.

"Don't worry," I said. "They'll be fine. Your kids will remember you as perfect in every way. They didn't have time to grow contempt for you. Your wife will cry on the outside, but will be secretly relieved. To

be fair, your marriage was falling apart. If it's any consolation, she'll feel very guilty for feeling relieved."

"Oh," you said. "So what happens now? Do I go to heaven or hell or something?"

"Neither," I said. "You'll be reincarnated."

"Ah," you said. "So the Hindus were right,"

"All religions are right in their own way," I said. "Walk with me."

You followed along as we strode through the void. "Where are we going?"

"Nowhere in particular," I said. "It's just nice to walk while we talk."

"So what's the point, then?" You asked. "When I get reborn, I'll just be a blank slate, right? A baby. So all my experiences and everything I did in this life won't matter."

"Not so!" I said. "You have within you all the knowledge and experiences of all your past lives. You just don't remember them right now."

I stopped walking and took you by the shoulders. "Your soul is more magnificent, beautiful, and gigantic than you can possibly imagine. A human mind can only contain a tiny fraction of what you are. It's like sticking your finger in a glass of water to see if it's hot or cold. You put a tiny part of yourself into the vessel, and when you bring it back out, you've gained all the experiences it had."

"You've been in a human for the last 48 years, so you haven't stretched out yet and felt the rest of your immense consciousness. If we hung out here for long enough, you'd start remembering everything. But there's no point to doing that between each life."

"How many times have I been reincarnated, then?"

"Oh lots. Lots and lots. And into lots of different lives." I said. "This time around, you'll be a Chinese peasant girl in 540 AD."

"Wait, what?" You stammered. "You're sending me back in time?"

"Well, I guess technically. Time, as you know it, only exists in your universe. Things are different where I come from."

"Where you come from?" You said.

"Oh sure," I explained. "I come from somewhere. Somewhere else. And there are others like me. I know you'll want to know what it's like there, but honestly you wouldn't understand."

"Oh," you said, a little let down. "But wait. If I get reincarnated to other places in time, I could have interacted with myself at some point."

"Sure. Happens all the time. And with both lives only aware of their own lifespan you don't even know it's happening."

"So what's the point of it all?"

"Seriously?" I asked. "Seriously? You're asking me for the meaning of life? Isn't that a little stereotypical?"

"Well it's a reasonable question," you persisted.

I looked you in the eye. "The meaning of life, the reason I made this whole universe, is for you to mature."

"You mean mankind? You want us to mature?"

"No, just you. I made this whole universe for you. With each new life you grow and mature and become a larger and greater intellect."

"Just me? What about everyone else?"

"There is no one else," I said. "In this universe, there's just you and me."

You stared blankly at me. "But all the people on earth..."

"All you. Different incarnations of you."

"Wait. I'm everyone!?"

"Now you're getting it," I said, with a congratulatory slap on the back.

"I'm every human being who ever lived?"

"Or who will ever live, yes."

"I'm Abraham Lincoln?"

"And you're John Wilkes Booth, too," I added.

"I'm Hitler?" You said, appalled.

"And you're the millions he killed."

"I'm Jesus?"

"And you're everyone who followed him."

You fell silent.

"Every time you victimized someone," I said, "you were victimizing yourself. Every act of kindness you've done, you've done to yourself. Every happy and sad moment ever experienced by any human was, or will be, experienced by you."

You thought for a long time.

"Why?" You asked me. "Why do all this?"

"Because someday, you will become like me. Because that's what you are. You're one of my kind. You're my child."

"Whoa," you said, incredulous. "You mean I'm a god?"

"No. Not yet. You're a fetus. You're still growing. Once you've lived every human life throughout all time, you will have grown enough to be born."

"So the whole universe," you said, "it's just..."

"An egg." I answered. "Now it's time for you to move on to your next life."

And I sent you on your way.



Forever Changes

Camilla Aguirre Aguilar



lurry camera focusing. Pixels.

I can already see it. A screenplay that reeks of trivial existential human crises. Diagnostic Manuals. Compounded Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Symptoms with legs.

Still choke on the irreversibility of time. It flickers. Number these days, jumping off of the bridges of calendar lines. Aye, dreams of that apartment linger behind these eyelids. Crazy. Don't know if I accept life, sometimes. Words, letters.

We were alphabetic. Amha, Brian, Camilla.

Amha, with his nebulous Afro. Damn mess with a mind in love with each other. My Street Creature. I still blossom in his tree trunk arms. Brian. A lanky, beautiful human being with green cat eyes and a mysterious, almost feminine smile that made something inside you feel comfortable about smiling too. Enter girl in leather jacket with turquoise ringed fingers, disgruntled, fish lipped, tosca most of the time, and always smoking a cigarette. Me: Camilla.

We all came from houses that left us cramped. Freedom. August. We felt like demigods with our new sheets, dishes, forks, thousands of spatulas, and knives that didn't match. Ultimately took us three months to realize that the shrubs in front of our stairs were actually a failed attempt at blooming two letters to form an acronym. Bellevue Apartments.

We couldn't believe we had stairs. Called it the nest.

The kitchen was a quaint closet of linoleum. It overlooked an anxiety-inducing parking lot, cars squeezed next to each other like crooked teeth. Through the kitchen window, we locked eyes with the occasional sunset punctuated by telephone poles and wires. The alphabet often sat on its counters, cross-faded and curled over each other from laughing. Snagged us a whiteboard on which we hastily wrote random dramatic questions or thoughts. Smoked spirits, blasted Siouxsie and the

Banshees, eavesdropped on ancient stars, and listened to couples make love and bark at each other to petty Linda Vista sirens.

Flashbacks of Brian. When he macked an eighth of mushrooms and became a gangly, chuckling psilocybin silhouette. I introduced Maggot Brain and Funkadelic into his psyche. I gave Brother word that music walked on water and let him wade into that bottomless, beautiful place. Eclipsed, he wandered down graffitied streets. Strolled into the dark like the credits of some witty, independent film. Like gravity never existed. Ridiculous twanging clangs buzzed from his ear buds. Back In Our Minds. Funkadelic. Atmospheric, cerebral shadow people. A dream. Trinary star system, orbiting. Klutzy, poetry stumbling out of our mouths. Cackling and smiling.

Happy because we were happy.

Our planet. The alphabet kicked it like a baby in the third trimester. We were so back in our minds then.

The laughter of the eighteen-minute novella that was moving our battered, charming, ninety-dollar Salvation Army couch up two flights of cramped, stucco stairs.

Those two long, pink feet hanging off that mass of used fabric always greeted me. A halo of dark blonde hair shoved into a massive Emergency Medical Technician textbook. He'd regularly take our blood pressure and press his stethoscope to our heartstrings. Brother.

Amha and Brian would get their Anime fix, Technicolor lights flickering in the dark. I, of course, had already fallen asleep to the lullaby of Japanese syllables.

Once, we came home and Brian was sprawled out on the bathroom tile. "I, I missed you guys." His beautiful, soft, drunk words looped out like cursive. Voice shifted from ache to confusion, embarrassed eyebrows lifted.

"We all gone through this Brother, don't even be worried. Brian, I have high school stories. Yes, stories as in plural."

Tree trunk arms carried him to his bed, tucked him in.

I brought amateur holistic remedies: tap water and carbohydrates.

Brian's eyes, lost. Voice a geocentric orbit, radio waves rippling out into the cosmos. As I was leaving his arm grasped mine, heavy breathing. His words tumbled out in the moonlight.

"Can you hold me?" Silence.

Four lungs breathing in lunar light particles slashed with vertical blind shadows. My brown eyes burned. Sat down and protectively brushed my fingers through his hair and felt his heaviness seep into me, deep. Brother sighed.

A happy, little boy smile bloomed on his face.

I held his drunk, wandering words and felt a sadness creep.

Time gap.

I waded out of a Temazepam dream and bumped into Brother in the dark. Long, elegant fingertips tenderly pressed the front door behind him.

His voice was a maze.

See, when Brother spoke, he waded into you. And you felt like you were part of something. Trivial, but sensational. Somewhere, deep and secret inside of you.

It was a three in the morning on a school night kind of love.

See, the idea was that we were going to be there for each other.

I inhaled the thoughts he exhaled, chain-smoking cigarettes. Our dialogue was natural, liberated of awkward silences. We sat on ragged Salvation Army cushions for three hours until I watched his sleepy shadow disappear into his room.

Grainy Polaroid memory cells bump against each other.

One hundred and sixty-eight hours later.

It was Monday. The linear equation of time and unknown variables loomed over that apartment. Dawn shifted on our walls.

See, waking up next to Amha is poetry. Beautiful when he sleeps,

body stretched out like a dark, cosmic stanza. We met wanting free cigarettes. Still inseparable.

I'm avoiding.

I tip toed down the stairs. "Is that a bowl of Kix? That's what's up, Brother." Giggles. Jade irises glanced back from his thick textbook. Brother flashed me the cereal in his mouth.

I squinted dramatically at him and slithered into the bathroom to paint my face.

Moments tattooed inside me.

If time gave us a receipt, we would exchange it for twenty-four hours and a conversation. Cramped into fetal question marks, curled and reminiscing with New Slang on loop. Brother always came home late. What if we lingered over those Monday hours with more respect? We didn't. Instead. Slept in the following morning.

Tuesday. Black November.

I am curious as to how neural scans of this brain would appear when the blood flows there, to that apartment. Wrinkled tissue numbs and vandalizes my experience into sputters of blurred memory. Red Herring. I am avoiding, again.

Fingers rubbed myopic eyelids. I blinked, hard.

Amha's face behind a sliding glass door.

Locked eyes with dark brown, frazzled planets that gagged on unspoken syllables.

Felt the womb pang.

"Brian jumped off the Coronado Bridge."

Shotgun at point blank. Buckshot words ripped through the curled upper lip that I had just kissed. Mind twitched. Flickers of his smile. Nausea. Focus. Stumbled into his room. Prom pictures littered his bed. Scarred arms gripped Ethiopian tree trunks. Collapsed in silence. Melted into the sky. Brother free falling.



The Show

Nothing. Sometimes, everything.

Aye, Brother. Dead.

The desperation of fists pounding on our apartment door and Brian's Papa crumpling into my arms. The deafening sound of an activated sympathetic nervous system and its pulse throbbed in my ears against his sharp sobs. Ache purged violent, raspy tears that soaked my black shirt, pickled my brain cells. Aged eyes were hardened, raw, and elsewhere. Frantic. He staggered into Brother's room and searched for a note, a Post-it, anything. Resurrected nothing. He wobbled down the stairs and left as soon as he came. Panic. Time. Ache.

That was when I looked at our refrigerator.

A message on the whiteboard. Lanky, awkwardly beautiful handwriting. "A friend in need is a friend indeed, but a friend that bleeds is better."

Smoked a cigarette on the patio. Felt the fingers of time backspin our orbit. We erased the whiteboard with our sleeves.

For weeks we fantasized that he was somewhere in Russia. Smoked joints and murmured to each other that he was stardust, and not the ache of an empty apartment room. Breathing became useless, but necessary. Moving stuffed cardboard boxes became a regular imperative.

Home became blurry, a fingerprint on a telescope. Home. House.

And where is home? For that matter, what is home?

When Brian parked his car at three in the morning, his wrists bleeding with budget cuts, ache, humanity, and depression, he felt homeless.

A house is a bridge you can freefall off, a structure indifferent to your human suffering. Houses have walls that can be gentrified or vandalized. An asylum. A yuppie villa. Home is a feeling. An internal place that you can't pedal your childhood bike to. One must resuscitate home constantly and find it within oneself throughout life.

Time wades on, without him. My ribcage swells with nauseating

phantoms. It will be three hundred and sixty-five days in one hundred and twenty minutes.

I am a fragment in many ways. Flowery language.

Poetic, existential woman weeping across double-spaced pages.

Some experiences are bitter pills you swallow dry even if you don't got the sickness. Blunt human suffering often is the exchange we make for getting tangled up in love. Still dream about that apartment.

Sometimes it takes the absence of something, for one to realize it even was something. Right? Losing the feeling of home, only to realize that it was your touchstone. So, I let the little beauties of life make me giddy.

My dinky Volvo, older than me, squeaky windows rolled down, cigarette lit and Arthur Lee and Love's Forever Changes album scratching through speakers, making weekday traffic look poetic. Seas of break lights, glowing red blood cells trickling down the veins of freeways.

The smell of a sweater, the way the sky feels five minutes after it rains. Familia. Snapshot seconds of laughter. Cracking up, legs dangling off the kitchen counter. A good conversation. Connection. Brushing against someone.

And what in the hell is happiness?

Blue lines and red margins?

Listen, happiness is one of those paradoxes.

Feeling infinite, even if it is only for a second.

Its only constant is change. It's a glimpse, a second. A moment. A month. A relationship. The mania of writing. A mixtape. Passion. Love. I'm rambling, again.

Poetic weeping woman. Aye, Camilla.

Crazy. Banshee!

And what is suffering?

Not speaking.

Alexander Stauffer

Jitters in the air and in stomachs,
faces glistening in the bright glow of green room mirrors.
Stockings, shoes and wardrobe strewn about,
make up being hastily applied.

Frantic searching for lost items never to be found,
slightly off replacements substituted for perfection.

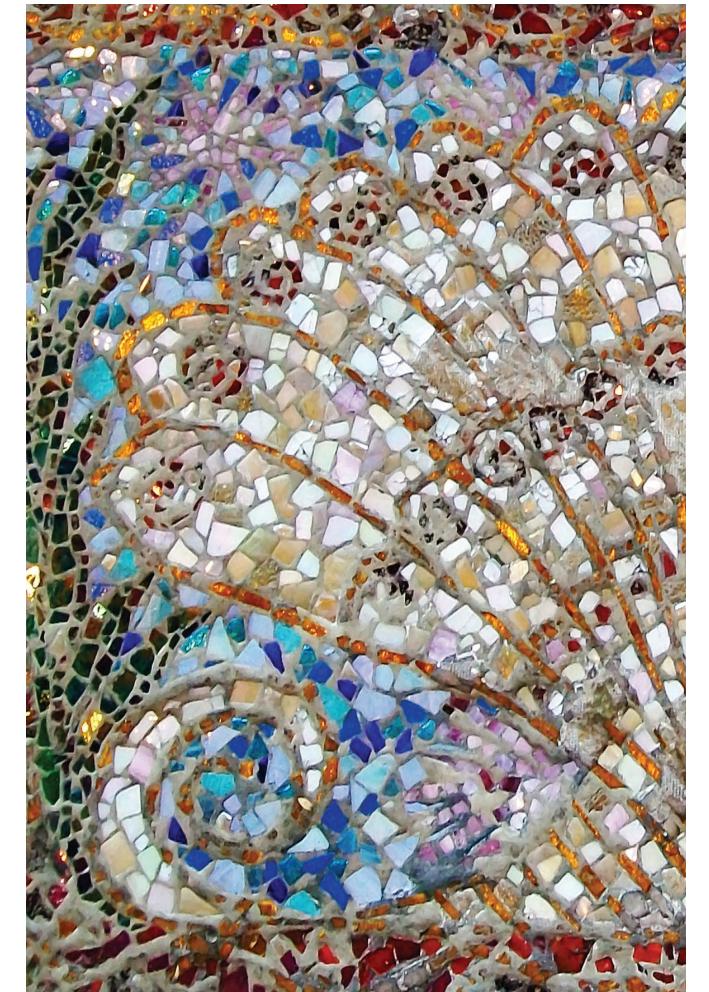
Props sit on tables waiting to have a purpose.
Lines stored in memory banks waiting to be expressed.
Directors and choreographers standing outside in the light drizzle,
lighting cigarettes with a passed box of matches.

All waiting for the dim of the lights.

Ages pass while places are taken.
Nervous and eager looks dart back and forth.
Mutters and whispers spring from every crevice.
Words of comfort and remembrance are given,
none of which help.

The music chimes and startles,
a song heard a thousand times before.
The adrenaline surges and the heart pumps through the ears.

The curtain parts and it's time.
And the lights, the blinding lights!
Wait!
What was I supposed to do?



Becky Kessab
"Seascape Mosaic"
(Photography/Mosaic)



Ribcage Prison

Justin Morris

Perhaps the heartbeat
is a knock against a door,
a petition and a question
a protest against the silence
As it leaps against its walls
In a vain dream of escape
It refuses to acknowledge
the unlikelihood of a response
desperate, it beats faster
it knocks and begs and pleads
to be let out of its ribcage prison
to be free from the scorching cold
What is the point of all this silence?
Is something gained by this lonely endeavor?
But from out of the encircling emptiness
There comes no answer at all



Shayda Moshirvaziri
“Roses”
(Digital Art)

The Matinee

Melody Fleetwood

Elegant shoes click across the Plaza
A body plunges from the garage roof -
Smashes on the cruel concrete below.

The perfumed women won't pause in midstride
As they flock to the theater to attend
A matinee of Madame Butterfly.

Heads averted, the panicked women slip past
“Don’t look, my dears.” Hurry to the safety
Within the courteous velvet walls.

Police cordon off the awful sight
While a shaggy cluster of sullen men
Watch, intent, squatting near the theater doors.

Later,
Women blink in the light and flutter out
Of the warm cocoon, music whispering in their ears.
They part like water around the hardened rock of
Homeless men.

The late sun gleams pure and gold across the square.
The broken body has been carried away-
The gloomy parking garage awaits.

“Careful, my dear, it’s so dark in here”
As they ascend to their shining cars,
Watching for the unexpected intruder.

And then, the drama ends, the resilient
Circle down the anguished curls of the exit ramps
To speed to the safety of their innocent homes.



Christina Preiss
“Sea Dragon”
(Photography)



Vigil

Joanne D'Amato

As shadows inch nearer
warmth wanes dark draws
its curtain on the day leaving
winter to weave a blanket
of frost where dew glistened

But I race ahead as always
pushing loneliness aside
in my attempt to ignore
not having you here to hold off
the dreaded chill of empty sheets
these consequences of war

Fraught with news of death
tears for those left behind
abandoned and I thank God
it wasn't you restless I pace
back and forth worry crushing
this carpet of worn uncertainty

A path traced again and again
until I exhaust fear allow myself
to step beyond dismay
into the pale cold
focus on the skies above
my breath wavering white

In these minuscule moments
just before shards of gray soften
to pink and violet enters the expanse
when heaven meets dawn I wait
for something to come of all of this





MEMORIES

Gable

Candace Laidlaw

don't remember much about my early years or my brothers and sisters. I recall being one in a squirming pile of fur and paws with wiggling tails and my ears were often tugged on. Back then, life was mostly about sleep and play. The most important thing was tracking down milk from our mother's enlarged teats. She always seemed to want to get away from us, not caring if we ate or starved, but I didn't starve.

I grew up into an 80 pound Labrador Retriever named Gable. I'm white and nine but people call me yellow and claim I'm old. Humans are funny in how they see dogs. Anyhow, I've forgotten most about being a puppy but I've got more to tell.

Most of my memories are of Jessie, my favorite person. But there are blanks too and maybe it's because of my seizures. Like I'm not sure how we came to live in a trailer in the middle of the desert.

We weren't always in Hesperia. Once Jessie and I lived by the sea and splashed in the water. A few times, I slurped some ocean water and it tasted funny. After that, I tried to keep my mouth shut when I rode in front of Jessie on his surfboard. We'd rush wet and free down the crashing white waves. He'd laugh when I barked as I raced across sand, or tried to bite small waves lapping the shoreline or chased after gulls.

Jessie and I did a lot of fun things together because we were buddies. He'd take me hunting. My most important jobs were flushing the birds, then finding them and bringing them after Jessie shot them.

One of the best things we did was ride in his truck. I loved it. I'd hang my head out the window and sneeze. My ears flapped around as the breeze ruffled my fur. We'd go fast. We traveled a lot because he was a speedy junkie too. He raced motorcycles. His bike traveled in the bed of our truck. We slept in the trailer he pulled behind.

Jessie and I were together for a long time before we found Sebastian. Only a puppy, he was abandoned at a rest stop. We took him with us when we pulled out. At night Seb slept curled between my front and back paws. Eventually, Seb grew too big to fit, then he slept next to me. Seb was my

pal. I taught him all the important stuff like where Jessie kept the treats, to chase a ball, to catch a Frisbee and to avoid skunks. I watched over Seb as he grew into a 40-pound beagle-basset.

Soon after Seb was full-size, Jessie picked up a human named Amy. Shortly after she came, Jessie parked our trailer beneath a cottonwood tree. He didn't race his bike any more. Instead, he put on special clothes and left.

Seb and I stayed with Amy. She's pretty, with hair like mine, but most importantly she'd cooked tasty stuff and shared leftovers. Months past before Jessie returned smelling of the sea.

Amy would greet him at the door then ask. "Where ya' been soldier?"

I'd jump up-and-down, and lick him while Seb tugged on his pant legs. He'd pet us and call us good boys. When Jessie returned, Amy cooked steak and Seb and I would each get a bone. With Jessie home, we'd play fetch, go for walks and I'd snuggle on the bed. Then he'd put on his special clothes and leave again.

I'm not sure how long this cycle went on but it was long enough that my knees started hurting and I'd lost a few teeth. One day men came. They wore clothes like Jessie put on when he went away. One man had on a white collar. Those men made Amy cry. I growled at them and snapped when she cried out Jessie's name. Amy hit me. She locked me and Seb in the bedroom. She wept for a long while after they left. First chance, Seb and I gave her licks and nuzzled her hand. It didn't help.

After those men came, things changed. Amy doesn't cry often, seldom laughs or takes us for walks. She doesn't stay home much anymore. We've all lost weight. Most days Seb and I are tied up under the desert sun. A boy down the street throws rocks at us. We bark and try to make him go away. Sometimes our ropes knock over the water dishes and that's really bad. It's worse when she forgets to give us water.

But enough about the past, right now I must get Amy's attention. I'm staring at her to try to remind her to fill our water dishes. She's ignoring me. Amy finishes her cereal and puts her spoon and bowl in the sink. Soon she'll dish up our food. My stomach rumbles. The thought of breakfast makes me drool. My tail thumps. "Hurry up," I'm trying to tell her but I know she

doesn't understand. When you can't talk, you try signals. Amy never seems to understand me like Jessie did.

"Oh no!" I want to tell her. "You are turning the wrong way." I jump in front of her trying to herd her with a gesture as I try to say, "Our bowls are over there."

She brushes past.

"What is she doing?" Sebastian barks joining the confused procession at her side.

At the door, she picks up our leashes.

"A walk! Oh joy, oh joy" I bark happily but of course she doesn't understand.

"Sit!" Amy snaps.

My tail knocks against the floor as I do my best to place my bottom on the floor. It's so hard not to dance around it's been so long. I leap up and lick her face.

She pushes me down. "Sit. Stay."

My legs slip out from under me. I yelp. I wish I could explain that my knee pains me. I scramble back up and into an awkward sit. She frowns.

With the leash snapped in place, I'm doing my happy dance in my head as we rush out the door. To my surprise she leads us towards his truck. Oh wow, it's been forever since we got to go for a ride.

Amy lifts Sebastian into the truck then pats the seat waiting for me to jump up. I crouch, spring and fall back onto my tail. I scuttle back onto my paws. She grabs my front legs and sets them on the truck's floor then pushes as I clamber up. Once inside, Seb moves over so I can climb onto the seat. Amy starts the engine but she forgot to roll down my window so I stare at where we are going.

Lots of other cars up ahead. When we slow down, I see another dog and bark. Blocks later, I woof at a string of bikes. What a fun ride! Once out of town there's less to see. I relax because I know this

isn't the way to the vet. I hate going to the vet and being poked and prodded. Worst is the thermometer under my tail. Jessie told me I couldn't bite the vet and I honor him by not doing that but I sure want to. My tail starts to wag thinking of Jessie.

Finally, Amy parks in front of a big building. I can hear dogs barking inside it. The noise grows louder now that we are through the doors. It's a new place because I'm sure I'd recognize these horrible scents—soapy smells, mixed with urine of all kinds, sweat and fear. It's kind of like smells at the vet's office but different too.

Immediately, I don't like this big place. Scared, I lean against Amy's legs. Seb feels the misery too and sags against me. I hear Amy talking to the woman who's behind the counter. She takes a clipboard, writes then hands it back.

Soon a stranger appears. He smells like other dogs. I panic when he puts a loop over Seb and my heads. Amy releases our collars. She takes our leashes, scratches my ear, pats Seb's head then turns and walks towards the entrance. I try to follow but the cinch tightens around my neck.

"Come back!" I bark at her but Amy walks away. Despite my nine years of wisdom and all the times I tried to teach her dog speak, I'm helpless.

The wood door slams shut behind her. Seb whines.

The man tugs us down a corridor. I'm barking as my claws scrape against the floor but I can't make him stop. He jerks us into a metal cage.

The door clangs shut. Inside our pen, I smell terror mixed with urine and feces. Seb leans against me. He's shivering.

"Don't worry," the man says, "I'm sure someone will adopt at least one of you before the two weeks are up."



Fair-Feathered Friends

Brynn Aufhammer

ears were streaming down my face as I sat on the edge of the dock watching the lights dance across the water. I felt the warmth of my dad's arm around my shoulders as he tried to console me, but I saw a glimpse of a tear in his eye too. Even though it was sad to let go of something that I loved so much and that my dad grew so fond of, it was the starting point to a great relationship with my father.

We didn't always get along so well. Elementary school came and went, he was my dad and my hero; I looked forward to him coming home at the end of his long day at the office. Sometimes I got tickled to death as soon as he walked in the door, but I loved it. I would squeal and wriggle on the floor as his hands tickled my little girl toes, I laughed so hard I cried. Things started to change in middle school and our relationship became rough. He was always worried I spent too much time on the computer chatting with my friends from school. I hated it and he knew it. In high school it got worse. I started dating boys from school and he did not approve. That didn't stop me though, and I became a rebellious teenager always looking for an opportunity to sneak around him. Our relationship continued to regress until one day my suggestion of some new-feathered friends would change our relationship forever.

"You want ducks?!" He exclaimed with skepticism.

After hearing about my sister's friend who hung out with his pet duck all the time, I was instantly hooked on the idea of a new pet. Hamsters, bunnies, dogs, birds and even little mice had come and gone throughout my lifetime. I was truly an animal lover yearning for something new and normally unheard of. My dad was completely cynical about the whole idea and immediately said no, but my persistence and sad eyes eventually won him over. Even though we weren't quite getting along, he couldn't say no to such determination of his maturing daughter. He made me promise that I would be the sole caretaker of my new friends and that if

he had to step in to feed, clean or care for them in any way, they would be gone, out for good. Our backyard had a big grassy plane, and past the bushes and the trellis were steps leading down a hill to a small dirt lot that would be the perfect place to house my ducks.

So the next day my best friend Tara and I piled into the backseat of my dad's Jeep and we all travelled an hour away to a feed store where I heard they sold ducklings. We walked into the old looking barn to hay covered wood planked floors and a musty smell to the air. I approached the counter and asked the man if they sold ducklings, and to my surprise, they did! I asked for two of them. I waited at the counter for a few minutes and was so excited to meet my new friends. The man reappeared with a small paper bag in his hand. He turned it slightly to show me the two pairs of eyes peering up at me but then took it right back, stapled it shut and handed it to me. I was horrified that he would just throw them in a bag and staple it. I figured it was because ducklings are sometimes used as snake food. I was happy to be doing my part to save two of them from their intended death. As soon as we got back into the car, I couldn't wait to meet the creatures, so I opened the paper bag and carefully moved them to the box I had prepared for them. They looked so scared and helpless. I named them Abby and Costello. I had purchased an incubator lamp to keep them warm and universal poultry mash, mixed with water, to make a formula for ducklings to eat. I had arranged for them to stay in my bathtub, lined with newspaper and a box turned on its side with blankets for them to snuggle up with and stay warm under the light.

For the next few weeks I watched my ducklings grow incredibly fast. They grew past their funny, awkward stage where their legs were too big for their body and they ran in awkward strides. They would follow me around the house and go wherever I went. Eventually when they were big enough, they moved to the backyard where my dad and I had built a pen with a children's swimming pool for them to swim in. During the day they were allowed to roam around the yard and pick through the green grass for bugs. My dad took great pleasure in observing them graze while

he did his yard work. Despite the thrill of being a first time duck owner, I learned some lessons the hard way.

One morning I woke up to my dad sitting on my bed gently bringing me out of my slumber. He looked at me with sad eyes and proceeded to tell me that Costello was gone. He had found feathers strewn all over the pen and Abby hiding in the corner. A night predator must have gotten to him in the dark of night. My dad held me and consoled me while I held my darling Abby, and she stayed with me in my room for the following week while she recovered from the shock. Meanwhile, we built a full enclosure for her to be safely locked up in at night so she was protected. My dad and I both became very fond of the girl. I took her with me to the park where she had free roam to graze in the grass. I took her to the pool with me during the winter while no one was there so we could swim together. We became very attached and I upheld my promise to my dad to always care for her.

Towards the end of my high school career I became busier and busier with homework, friends and boyfriends, that I didn't have as much time to spend with my beautiful duck. I came to a decision to introduce Abby to a new friend, which meant raising another duckling in my bathtub. I named him Diego and he was just as cute of a duckling as the first two. When he was old enough, he joined Abby in the backyard. But Diego's stay in our lives didn't last long. When Abby started nesting by sitting on a batch of eggs, Diego flew away. I watched him go, up and over the treetops, I could hear his distinct quack throughout my neighbors' yards. Despite my frantic effort of running around knocking on stranger's doors, Diego was gone forever. Sobbing uncontrollably at the loss of my new friend, my dad was the first person I called.

For the following weeks I checked on Abby every day as she faithfully kept her eggs warm. I was unsure whether they would actually hatch or not. One night I took the flashlight out of the kitchen drawer and made my way through the dark, down the hill to visit Abby. During

our visit I reached under her and picked up one of her eggs, I could feel it vibrating in my hand! It was invigorating to feel new life within my fingers. My dad was away on a business trip, but again he was the first person I called. I told him about how excited I was that the eggs were hatching. Sure enough, the next morning, we had eighteen little ducklings all huddled under the wings of their dedicated mother.

As the ducklings grew, my dad and I watched them with awe at the beauty of nature and how my domesticated Abby knew exactly what to do as a mother. But all good things come to an end. As I graduated high school, the decision was clear that I would not be able to care for the ducks anymore. One night my dad and I piled everyone up into the car in boxes and drove them to the lake, where ducks had free roam and the elderly fed them on a daily basis. I knew this would be the perfect place for our feathered friends to live the rest of their days. And as we sat there on the dock watching them swim away into the night, we reminisced about the happy times and the sad times. During our touching talk at the lake, my dad admitted to me that at first he thought I was being totally nonsensical for wanting ducks, but that now he had realized that he loved the entire experience and how it brought us so much closer together. Our relationship had become so much stronger throughout this experience. We were no longer fair-weathered friends.



Catharsis

Becky Broome

"There it goes."

Megan looked at Craig. "What?"

"They are starting to launch the Dragster. We have to go get in line. Now."

"But we've been in this line for twenty minutes already."

Craig gave her the look and an exasperated sigh.

"Fine. Let's go."

Craig, Elliott and Megan headed back through the entrance for the Millennium Force against the current of incoming thrill-seekers. This was their second day at Cedar Point. The first day the Top Thrill Dragster was closed down for maintenance. A fact that was not lost on Megan.

"So...we are confident they wouldn't open up the ride unless it was completely safe, right?"

Elliott giggled maniacally. "Sure, Megs."

They had planned this trip for the last six weeks and two days. The drive from Knoxville, TN to Sandusky, OH was a long nine hours and forty-seven minutes, during which they had put over four hundred eighty miles on her twin sister's car. Sarah wouldn't have minded. She was stationed in Al Asad for the foreseeable future.

I wonder what she is doing right now.

By the time they found the end of the line for the Top Thrill Dragster, the sign read that the current wait was going to be three hours or more.

"Guys, I don't mean to be a wet blanket. I mean, I do, but... do we really want to wait three hours for a thirty second ride?"

Craig and Elliott looked up at the towering rollercoaster and in unison replied. "Yes. Yes, we do."

Shit. I have to do this.

"So according to the website, when this rollercoaster is running at full capacity, they can process seven hundred twenty four people an hour.

That means this line is roughly two thousand, one hundred eighty three people long."

"Thanks for the insight, Elliott." Megan rolled her eyes.

Is she safe? Is she scared?

This steel behemoth was the reason they had traveled to the otherwise sleepy town of Sandusky. To ride on the tallest, fastest rollercoaster in the world. For Craig and Elliott, it was the vacation dreams were made of. For Megan, it was an experience that might allow her to forget that six thousand, two hundred four miles away, her sister was sleeping in a tin can with an M-16 under her pillow.

She doesn't have the luxury of overcoming her fear of heights in this particular manner. Her fears are surely different. Her fears are my fears, too.

Every minute and a half another train launched. Each time, Megan counted the time from launch to the train's return to the docking station. Thirty seconds flat. She could close her eyes and start singing Mary Had A Little Lamb and by the time the "fleece was white as snow" everything would be over. She turned to the guys and told them of her plan.

"No. You have to keep your eyes open. You have to see what the world looks like at one hundred twenty miles per hour." Craig reasoned. "Otherwise, why did we come?"

To feel guilty. I get to have fun and my DNA is holed up in some base where she has to have a plan to kill everyone she meets.

"Fine. But I'm going to bitch about it the whole time." Elliott smirked. "We already knew that, Megs."

Megan counted the time in twenty minute intervals. Each whoosh of a passing train was a reminder of what she had agreed to do. Heights were not her thing. Years before she and Craig had gone to visit Sarah in Seattle while she was stationed at Fort Lewis. They had photographs of Megan at the top of the Space Needle hugging the exterior and crying. Height was scary. Falling was scarier. And it seemed to her you couldn't have one without the other.

Except when you fall to the kitchen floor because your favorite person on this earth has just called you on the telephone to tell you she's being deployed.

"One more hour to go!" Craig was wearing his shit-eating grin. The guys started babbling about the wonder that was the Top Thrill Dragster.

"They had to use a 480 foot crane to build the damn thing."

"I read that it has two thousand eight hundred feet of track."

"It reaches 120 miles per hour in less than four seconds. That is some engineering genius right there."

"They use some sort of hydraulic launch system. That's where they get the speed."

"If it doesn't clear the top, a mechanic has to climb up to there and push it. Can you imagine?"

"That sounds horrific," Megan interjected.

Never paint a kitchen red again. It's too dark. Bad news comes in red kitchens.

As they progressed through the line, they watched the docking and unloading station. Scared faces. Nervous laughter from the men and women packed in like some sort of livestock. Some people were backing out at the last second. Others were wearing their bravest faces as if they were proving something to those around them. Occasionally there was the odd "been there, done that" kind of guy, wearing a T-shirt from another park as if to say to the world, this is nothing. Primarily though, the crowd was piss-your-pants anxious and scared.



Jessica Ziebarth
"Rhythm"
(Photography)



Rollercoaster scared. Not IED scared.

They approached the docking station. The trains coming back were greeted with cheers from the crowd. Every time. Their return was met with much rejoice and jubilation. Megan could almost feel the ticker tape falling on the crowd. Friends and loved ones waiting at the end of the track. "How was it?" "Did you pee your pants?" "I can't believe you did this. You must be insane." Each train unloaded tear stained faces, gnat embedded t-shirts and electrocuted hairdos. Some got off and kissed the ground. Others ran to get back in the obscene line to do it again.

Will she get a parade?

The thousands turned to hundreds. The hundreds dwindled to dozens. All of a sudden the world was blurry. There was no one else to stand in front of Megan anymore. Craig squeezed her hand. His eyes told her this was okay.

"You know, thousands of engineers went to college for years to make sure this ride would bring you back safely. They wouldn't let anyone ride if it was unsafe."

"Sweet Jesus, Craig! Did you know they don't have seat belts?"

"Who needs seat belts when you have physics and gravity on your side?"

Shit just got real.

A handler approached. It was time. Craig helped her into the car.

He smiled and held her hand.

"Keep your eyes open. Squeeze my hand. And scream as loud as you can."

The train started its slow push to the launch site. Screams from the crowd turned to distant echoes. The sun was starting to set and the sky had turned a dusty pink. The countdown started. Then, speed.

Megan felt the push of air on her face and she closed her eyes.

Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb...

"OPEN YOUR EYES!"

Megan opened her eyes at the top and for a single moment she could see everything. The sun setting. Lake Erie lapping into the harbor. Elliot in the car in front of them with his hands in the air. Thousands of spectators yelling from so far away. She saw Sarah's homecoming. Late nights of catching up and laughing until it hurt. Sarah and the dogs playing at the park. Driving through Starbucks as she headed to class. And then down. Earth running up just as fast as she had left it.

Oh shit. Oh shit. His fleece was white as snow!

Just like that it was over. The train entered the docking station. Megan's face was wet from tears. Her voice raw and broken. The three of them got off the train and she fell to the ground.

I'm safe. And she'll be home in two hundred forty seven more days.

Spring Day

Melody Fleetwood

Inside, a woman sits by the window meaning to write a story.

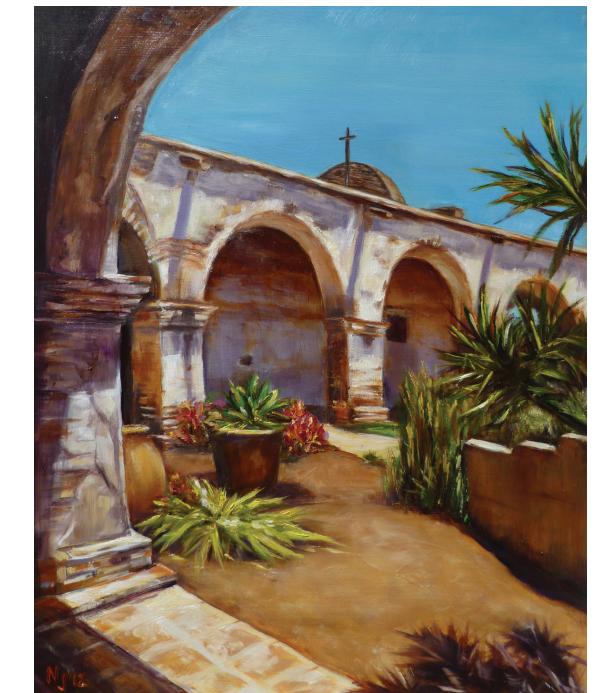
She watches her dog, wrapped in the scent of rosemary, clicking across the bricks.

Smooth grey stones surround the idle faucet.

A blue plastic watering can lies on its side, heating in the sun.

She wonders if the two green tomatoes have ripened yet. She leaves her chair and walks out into the light, the dog pads along beside her.

Inside, the papers drift to the floor.



Nancy Jarmuz
"Midday at San Juan Capistrano"
(Painting)



Countdown

Natasha Schimka

One, two, three, four, five.

Five whistles and the roaring behemoth slams past, leaving behind a toxic trail of smoke and tears. She stands there, grinning triumphantly, as her hair whips around like a tornado. Feet planted past the cracked yellow line—STAY BACK, it commands—she towers there until the clackety-clack of the tracks fades to birdsong. Hands on hips, she whirls around and watches as he, hands over his ears and a safe distance away from the tracks, hesitantly opens his eyes again. You'll never beat me, her expression boasts. He smiles sheepishly, hands shifting in his pockets, and mentally counts how many candies he owes her for completing their daily dare. One, two, three, four—

—Four seconds and he pulls away. His eyes slide open to see her face red as a tomato. He steals her breath, one more time, then draws back. Her exhales are like secrets; puffs of white suspended in the crisp air. Slowly, slowly, she leans into the lingering hand upon her cheek and gives him a bright smile, bright as the sun. A train screeches nearby and the wind crackles the leaves but it is her, just her, only her here in this cold morning. Racing, racing, his mind races with thoughts and images and ideas and emotions but only three words shine through the chaos, just one, two, three—

—Three months and the move is complete. The clutter of boxes is finally gone. He sinks into the chair, a sigh falling from his lips, and glances at the solemn fireplace. The flickering flame glints upon the picture frames dotting the walls. Outside the window is a picture of city life, of honking cars and bustling people. His ears strain for that familiar intonation of the train, but he only hears the city.

The chair groans as he rises and hobbles into his room. Absently, he draws out the shabby pouch from underneath the queen-sized bed and lets the coins tumble onto the blanket like drops of clinking rain. He recalls the excitement which bubbled inside him every time his father returned

from overseas with coinage in tow; he recalls the last time his father never returned. He recalls everything, everything he ever had, everything that is not here.

The city is not his home, but his heart is here. Everyday, his heart returns from work an hour after him, and today, she returns to find him here, pouring over his collection. Her arms encompass him as she teases him about his old man's hobby. She laughs at his grumpy reply and takes him out for the evening; and though he complains, she knows better. This is why they are here. This is why he is here. He gives her one kiss then two—

—Two words, and they are lies. Shakily, she breathes.

In.

Out.

In.

Out.

She is not what she used to be—all wrinkled smiles, crinkled eyes, and jerky hands. She rests trapped under the sheets in the hospital bed, and the fire is gone from her. He holds her hand and she repeats the lie: I'm fine. He knows she is not fine. He knows it cannot end here. He knows it may end here. He knows she still has yet to travel the world. He knows, he knows, he knows—she just can't—don't leave me, say his weary hands. Don't leave me, say his weary eyes. Don't leave me alone—

—One.

Only one person arrives at the train station that morning. He stands behind the yellow line and watches the sun rise.

With sluggish, heavy footsteps, he clammers down and walks along the train tracks. Pebbles crunch beneath his feet and for a moment, he

can see her there, see her as she used to be, balancing precariously on the tracks and giggling at his anxiety. He watches as his memory hops off the tracks to dart into the trees, then he follows. She disappears behind an ancient oak. He halts as the memories of this place flood him: first meeting, first kiss, wedding. The beginning, the middle, and...

Beneath the tree he settles; the bark is solid and comforting against the back of his head. Sunlight filters down around him in golden rays. The air buzzes with birdsong beating in time with the flutters of their wings, with the flutters of his quieting heartbeat.

With a smile, he closes his eyes.



Summer Pankopf
“Oceanside Pier”
(Photography)



Compromise

Kerry McDonald

Once upon a time,
I would heed your cries
of battle, and victory
as your claws scramble
against the floor,
and foes vanquish
at your dainty paws.

Once upon a time,
you prowled the lawn
quite voraciously;
and on the morrow,
dawn would bring you to my side
your tail a banner of success,
the spoils of war in your jaws.

Gagging, I would receive
a trembling mouse,
or a furious moth,

or perhaps
a delicate lizard's tail,
thrashing with alarm. Nowadays,
however,
your haunting grounds
are made of wood
and carpet—
not even the fun, shaggy kind.

Patiently you bore our move
so equally patient, I ignore
your late night tumbles
and midnight yowls
as you seek my praise.

With bleary regard, I eye your
prize:
the limp fur
plastered against your own,

and plastic innards jingling
a merry tune...

It makes my grimace
a genuine smile
for I cannot help but marvel
that seventeen years
have trickled by
and you still wish gifts upon me
at all.
When all is said
and violently done,
you curl at my side,
content with a night well spent.

I curl as well,
grateful, for I much prefer
a lack of sleep
to a lack of appetite.

Nancy Jarmuz
"Reclining Majesty"
(Painting)



Bolsa Street

Camilla Aguirre Aguilar

I can almost see you.
Curls slicked back
with Butchwax, an attempt at hiding
a lousy haircut.
Peddling cellophane flowers
in Santana barrios.

And I remember your home, chipping.
A crappy paintjob in Eggshell No. 42.
Hinted with pumpkin colored rust stains.

And as a little boy
you played in the garden.
Digging forts, cross-legged
on the earth, littered
with Papa's cigarette butts.

And I remember the snap
of your screen door.
Papa, and the two toned shoes you shined,
stumbling, under the muggy Santana moon.

And I can hear you,
Singing the Jackson Five
at the top of your little lungs
to hush Mama's battering.
Trembling, beneath soiled
Superman covers.

Pretty red high heels stabbing
into pretty pink skin.
Cheekbones snapping into pieces
where love should have been.

Gums bleeding as she smiled.
Pretty face melting in a fire.
Eggshells cutting feet.

Niles

Joan Gerstein

Overwhelmed by throngs I seek a side street
in ancient Jerusalem on the outskirts
of the Arab section. The cobbled path
is mostly empty except for patient
merchants poised on chairs aside shops.
A young, affable man greets, then escorts
me up narrow steep winding stone steps
to a rooftop to see the panoramic Old City.

His name is Niles. I know he will want to sell
me something. His friendship's worth the price.

He is Bedouin. "A kosher Arab," he kids, not
wanting to scare away this Jewish customer.
The tiny store has been in his family
for seventy-five years. The tribe's traipsing
days are over. Niles shows me a worn photo
album of his family. Many now live in the USA.

Seated across from me, Niles holds a rababeh,
a one-stringed olive wood instrument
with rectangular sound box, painted to look
like flowering trees. With a horse-hair bow,
Niles plays and sings in Arabic, When the wind blows
we are happy. I hear joyful music of a gently
moving stream. Then the bow produces melancholy
sounds. Tomorrow we are moving, we have no water.

He serves tea, orders a light lunch. I will have
to buy something, but his merchandise is so
precious. Silk rugs hand embroidered in tiny
chain stitches of horse hair— too delicate
to walk upon. Embroidered tunics ladened
with buttons, shells, other items to be placed
on a baby so he doesn't crawl away from the tent.

Hand-sewn splendorous wedding veils are followed
by antique jewelry. My first day in Jerusalem and I
have wandered into a treasure trove of ancient
artifacts. Each magnificent piece of history is too
expensive, but when I choose favorite earrings,
we haggle as others have done for 3000 years
in this same spot, and I leave satisfied
with a desert melody tinkling from my ears.



Freedom and Bulls

Eric Abresch

There was once a boy who many would say idolized the wrong type of people. He saw the homeless and thought of them as free. He looked at them and saw that they did whatever they wanted to, slept whenever they wanted, never had to go to school and were rude to whomever they thought deserved criticism. They were free birds while he was trapped in his mother's cage. One day as he was walking downtown holding his mother's hand, they walked by rows of homeless people in sleeping bags; some quietly sitting to themselves and others yelling at pedestrians walking by. Once they returned home, he conveyed his admiration for these people to his mother.

His mother turned to him with a look of dismay and began a rant about the homeless to scare him, telling him the harsh truth. She explained how wrong he was, how the homeless are the least free of everybody. "They don't have anything except what's given to them out of charity, so they yell at people because they are unhappy. They sleep on the streets because they have no other place to sleep. They don't get to eat the good food that you get to eat. Many of them are just plain crazy. They do unexpected things. Don't ever trust them."

Later on, when he was able to walk home from school by himself, he saw a lizard which he began to chase. Eventually, it led him to a homeless man that was by far the scariest man he had ever seen. The man had blood coming out of his nose and mouth, his two front teeth missing and clothes completely torn. The man stopped him and mumbled, "boy, where am I?"

Fear and confusion leaped from the boy as he repeated the statement back to the man, "Boy, where are you?" Laughter spat out of the homeless man. As the boy looked closer at the man, he realized that he looked different than all the other homeless men he had ever seen downtown. None of the homeless he had ever seen looked so young or

had a mohawk. He had patches with big A's all over his clothes and an over-sized camping backpack, unlike the shopping carts that the homeless normally had.

Curiosity took over the boy, so he started asking all kinds of questions, "What do you mean 'where are you'? Why are you so bloody? Who are you and how old are you? Are you even homeless or are you just pretending?"

"Slow down boy!! My head hurts. But give me some time and I'll explain how the bull got me."

"The bull?," he started to imagine a cartoon bull beating a mohawk man. "You're crazy."

"I may be crazy but the bull did get me. That's how I lost my two front teeth." He paused and took a sip of a small, curved, metal container. "The bull beat me up because I was riding a freight train."

The rest of his story continued and amazingly made even less sense. Ideas of a mohawk man escaped from a mental hospital seemed like the only logical explanation. But the mohawk man assured the boy that he was "a modern day nomad, traveling the world for the sake of adventure and freedom."

Those two words then captivated the boy into asking all new sorts of questions, "How did you get on a freight train?"

"Well I hopped it of course. It's really easy when you know how to. But the bull doesn't like people hopping freight-trains, so he beat me up."

"Why?"

"Remember how I said bulls work on the trains?"

The mohawk man may never have made sense to the boy, but that didn't matter. He drove the boy's imagination; ideas of freedom galloped, thoughts of running away from his home for the sake of adventure and freedom engulfed him. He then quickly returned home, packed his bags and ran away from home.

He only spent one night away until a policeman found him. The policeman questioned him, trying to figure out where he came from and where his home was. But all the kid thought about was the mohawk man and he replied with "The bull got me, too!"

Roberta Van Hise
"Painting of a German Cow"
(Painting)



If the Wind

Stephanie Kelly

If the wind ever flew inside my head and observed the world through my eyes it would experience being born in a place where it is so hot that everything feels damp, all the time. The food is spicy and the streets are always crowded and the people smile at you and pinch your cheeks because you don't look like them and they are curious. The wind did not stay in this place long but blew away to a very cold place where it's hard to breathe at first because the air is so thin at the roof of the world.

The food is still spicy and you eat the same thing every day. The people in this place are brown and beautiful and very strong. The wind learned how to talk and play like them and the wind loved this place so close to the sky.

Soon though, it was time to move on and so the wind blew south to a very hot place and saw many things. The wind saw things it had never seen before: dying people on the road, children begging, mounds of garbage in which people lived. And the wind learned that the world was not all beautiful but sad and full of suffering. There were still some beautiful things but the wind had to look for them or else they would be missed because the sad things were much easier to see. The wind learned about Karma, the Caste system and many things about people in this place.

The wind then moved on and flew north but this time it was very far away, across oceans to a new place. This place was cold and filled with fog and it always seemed to be raining and the sunshine hid. The people in this new place were like the weather, cold and hiding. Here in this cold and foggy place the wind experienced new things like hot water coming out of the faucet, fast cars and stairs that moved. The people in this place were not on the streets begging or living in piles of garbage but they were not happy and the wind wondered why.

Once again the wind flew across the ocean to a new place where the wind stayed for a longer period of time and the wind grew and was

told things about this place, about capitalism, Republicans, Democrats, six lane highways, and drive-throughs. The wind stayed in this place for some time but soon grew restless and blew back across the ocean to the place near the roof of the world with the beautiful brown people and here the wind was taught about many more things like revolutions, bribery, borders, coups and communism. Here the wind learned that the world was a complex place and right and wrong were sometimes hard to define.

When it was time to move on the wind once again blew away to a very different place, a place in the heart of the world where the people were black and the earth was red and the land was green and full of life. Here the wind learned about death, disease and new ways of thinking about death. The wind also learned the terms human rights abuse, ethnic cleansing, child soldiers, and saw what those words meant. Here in this place the wind saw desperation of a new kind and hatred, greed, and terrible violence and the wind learned about breaking rules, telling lies, and committing crimes because of desperation. In this same place the wind also saw great love, sacrifice, selflessness and giving, even when there was nothing left to give. The wind also saw courage, hope, abundant joy and compassion and the wind learned that despite all the evil, hatred, and terrible things in the world, that there are just as many good, beautiful and wonderful things in the world.

The wind continued to blow to new places and learn new things and experience change and life which came along with sadness, disappointment, and suffering. But life also came along with joy, exhilaration, wonder, happiness, excitement and love. The wind learned that there were two ways to look at the world; one which saw hope and the other which saw only despair and the wind chose to view the world through hope, because hope keeps on going when despair stops and the wind always wanted to keep on going.



Train Wreck

Natasha Schimka

lose weight, of all things. Wish I had that fast of a metabolism...Oh! That totally reminds me! Guess what?"

"What?"

"I ran into this suuper hot guy when I was on my way here. Like, literally, ran into him. It was so embarrassing! But then he picked up my hat—fell off when I fell, oh my god, it was horrible—and handed it back to me. We talked for a bit, then voila! Date night. This Saturday. Seven P.M.."

"Oh my god, Celeste! I'm so happy for you."

"I know, right? About time I got myself someone after You Know Who."

"You dated Voldemort?"

"Dated who?"

"Sorry. Joke. He's this, uh, character, from—"

"Yeah, anyway. We definitely need to go shopping sometime this week. I mean—Sarah. This guy was hot. Like, ermahgod, five million degrees on the hotostat. You know? He's a keeper. Oh. And you have got to tell me what you do to keep your complexion so perfect. I swear I always get these annoying zits right before I go on a date."

"I don't really do anything. Just wash when I take a shower. And I steam my face once a week, but that's about it."

"Ugh. Jealous. I wish I was as gorgeous as you."

"Haha. Sorry."

"Have you gotten a guy yet?"

"N—Not yet, no. But there's, um, this guy, from—from the coffee shop. We've been talking and he's totally interested me."

"Really? Huh. Well, bring' im along! I so want to meet him. You hardly ever get guys so when you do, we gotta celebrate!"



"Yeah. Right."

"...Wow. It's been ages since we've been able to get together, huh? Life's just been so hectic recently."

"I know, right? I've been doing extra time at the office so I can get promoted. Almost there, I think."

"Good luck with that."

"Thanks. I've also started volunteering at the library. Just shelf reading. I go there so much I figured I might as well give back."

"Oooor you felt like getting a tax break. I hear ya. C'mon, Sarah, we both know you wouldn't go help out there for no reason."

"Y—Yeah! I mean, that would just be dumb, right? Ha."

"Especially with that troll there. I mean, seriously, they should really just fire her. She's such a bitch. I drive all the way to freakin' Eagleton whenever I feel like a good read."

"Seriously? I mean, yeah, she's pretty rude, but it's not hard to avoid her."

"I can't stand her and she can't stand me. So yeah, not hard to avoid her, 'specially 'cause she avoids me."

"Haha. I work in the back of the library so I don't really see her, thankfully."

"Speaking of books. Have you read that new one? By what's-her-face. Um. It's about these two girls who were like peas in a pod in their youth but now they're older and completely different and life's so complicated they just can't understand each other anymore, but they still stay friends because they're idiots or something. The title's escaping me."

"Um. Is it...Train Wreck?"

"Yeah, that's it!"

"I've heard of it. Haven't read it though. Is it good?"

"It's okay. It's not the best he's written, but it's a good read. I

don't know if you'd like it, though. Too realistic. Not enough goblins or whatever."

"Oh. I usually read anything, really. Not just fantasy. Maybe I'll pick it up if it's not checked out."

"You'll have to tell me how you like it."

"Yeah. I will. I'm reading For the Beauty of the Earth right now."

"Snoozefest."

"Ha. The writing's kinda droll, yeah, but not bad."

"Ugh. Where's our food? There's hardly anyone here."

"I dunno. By the way—where'd you get your hat? It's totes adorbs."

"Thaaanks! It was just something Patricia brought back from her Greece trip. I frickin' love Patricia. She's the best."

"Oh. I don't think she brought me anything."

"Did you tell her you wanted something?"

"Well, I did ask her to get something, but not anything in particular."

"People forget. Don't worry about it. I'm sure she had this huge-ass list of people she had to bring stuff back for."

"Yeah, but she didn't forget you..."

"Look, it's just a hat. Don't be such a bitch about it."

"What the hell, Celeste?"

"Sorry, but your little passive-aggressive comments are seriously getting annoying."

"Passive-aggr—what are you talking about?"

"Don't even try. You're always making these annoying oh-pity-me comments. Like, 'why didn't anyone invite me to the concert' and 'why doesn't anyone love me?' Seriously. Stop it. It's annoying."

"I do not do that!"

"You don't? You've already done it multiple times. And while we're on the subject—look, just because I'm better with men doesn't mean you have to get so jealous all the time."

"I don—"

"You do! You always get so annoyed when I'm enjoying myself. Do you have to be so freaking insecure all the time? Can't you just let me be happy for once?"

"Celeste—"

"Don't even start. I don't want to hear your pathetic excuses. That's another one of your problems. The pathetic excuses. You're late but it's never your problem. Oh, no, it couldn't be that poor liddle Sarah has actually done something wrong?"

"Well, you're no fucking saint either, Celeste. I always, always have to sit through your just-as-annoying comments. Okay. I'm prettier than you. I know it, you know it, so stop bringing it up! What does it freaking matter, anyway, when you're the one who always gets the guys? Why does it matter that I'm apparently gorgeous when I can never find anyone? Will you just stop rubbing it in my face all the time?"

"...Hey, Sarah, people are starting to look. Just calm down—"

"There you go again, just shoving me to the side because you're bothered. You always do this. You just ignore me and treat me like I'm trash and then never let me stand up for myself. Well, I'm standing up now and you're not going to control me anymore."

"Sarah, you're seriously overreacting—"

"Overreacting? Overreacting? You're the one who fucking snapped at me when I got sad because I was left out—again. And yeah, okay, maybe they just don't like me as much and that's fine, that's just my problem, but you—you just rub it in my face. Like everything else. And I'm the one who doesn't like you being happy? You're the one who doesn't like me being happy!"

"Sarah, you know that's not true—"

"It is. You're the most selfish person I've ever met. Everything always has to be about you. Do you even listen when I talk to you? Do you even know anything about me? I know so much about you and I—I care for you so much—even when you're being really stupid and getting plastered and gambling all your money away I just—you never even give me presents anymore. Just cards, when I spend hours picking out things for you, sometimes just when I feel like it, not even for a reason. You don't even want to hang out. I always have to talk to you first."

"And that means I don't care about you? I always tell you how great you are and how I'd like to be like you but you—you don't say anything back. I buy chocolate for you when you're depressed and I come pick you up when your car breaks down and I always defend you when you let people take advantage of you because you're a pushover and—"

"You sure don't defend me from yourself."

"What? What's there to defend?"

"You just—...Celeste, what happened to when we were like sisters?"

"...Things change."

"You're right. People change."

After Sarah leaves, Celeste stares at the table. Her food arrives, along with Sarah's. She pays the bill, sets her hat on the table, and goes on her way.



A San Francisco Bus Ride

Clifton King

Across the aisle from us
a big man, shirt open,
his bare belly like a ripe melon
in his lap; his hair wild, tangled
from San Francisco wind & neglect;
traces of his last meal in his beard;
a constant cascade of obscenities
from sun blistered lips.

He reaches out,
taps a Chinese woman on the arm,
shouts something
about the Pope & the President.
The woman refuses eye contact.
Boarding passengers
go to the back of the bus & stand,
those two empty seats next to him
crowded with demons.

I See You

Shelby Soares

I see you in all of the perfect things.
In the fragile wings of a honeybee,
In the grass to which the morning dew desperately clings,
In the dark abyss of night over the sea.
In our little girl's soft smile as she coos and sings.
I see these precious things, and they lessen my despair;
For though you are gone, I see you everywhere.

The Dragonfly

Melody Fleetwood

Through open doors and rooms, up stairs,
The dragonfly sought cool
A creature glowing green and blue
With filmy wings that tremble.
But dimly saw its perfect mate
Fly far off their silvered pond.

Lighting at last on silvered surface,
It paused to rest on this strange sea.
An ideal mate. Two so similar.
Love surely must be destined.
Resigned, the dragonfly reflected.
Its ideal match was an illusion

Slender legs softly touched the mirror—
shining plane, water-like but solid.
Then,
Our dragonfly fluttered upward,
Calling for its twin to follow,
As will sometimes happen in the lives
Of dragonflies and men.



Christina Preiss
"At the Koi Pond
(Photography)



Laws I Live By

Sandy Carpenter

I haven't cried for awhile, tears went out like an ebb tide to rarely flow, or flood. Hardly a sob at nineteen when Mama died; I never wept for my first engagement, or the last estrangement as I shut that door in his face and walked away, glad to go.

I think all this is why I didn't dream of girls; always assumed my daughter wouldn't be stoic like me, and when she'd cry it could bring back every indelible departure of my own life so in some word or gesture I'd betray my feelings that I prefer buried deep.

Sons are easy, you pick them up, you hug them, you say, "Everything is going to be all right," and they believe you because you are Mom who makes tumbles better with just a kiss. And if you sniffle a little with boys, they like it. The unskilled labor of love learned early.

I was the first-born and the last, the plum of my parent's eyes; gratuitous meanness bewilders me yet the neighbor kid slaps my arm daily; I'd bawl like a baby walking to school. I'm shocked when Daddy says, "Smack him back, and he'll learn. So will you." I do, so torment's brief.

There are fool rules on this earth, we live by them in frustrated states of gratitude or grief.

The Reason for the Grass Leaf's Beauty

David Kim

Because it shakes before the wind
The grass leaf shakes before the wind
Because it knows the sweet scent of the wind

Before the presence of the wind
The grass leaf knows nothing but to bow
Yet it only loves the sweet scent of the wind
It never gets carried away by the wind

The grass leaf is beautiful
Because it shakes before the flow of the wind
Because it bows before the weight of the wind
Because it loves the charming scent of the wind
But it never gets taken away by the wind.

88 Keys

Erin Whittinghill

Moving harmony into the house was controversial from the start. Her golden silence, for languid days buried in lengthy tomes, interrupted by intrusions like the echoes of chords through their hollow home. His insistence on a reminiscence that swallowed the room, upset their rhythm, set their blues. Each day

a key change, each minute a new measure, a new tone in their burgeoning tune, composed without rests.

When the nest is empty, you fill it with distractions of practice and pages of notes, adding verses,

not to late-night lilting lullabies, but to a new acapella mood. He pushed forward, she pushed back, in endless attempts to capture the corner with the best light. A quarter century later, the cacophony quieted,

their sonata cycle complete. Their mutual refinement, the shiny black bone of contention, placed

on consignment. The day the movers carried it away, with a sly smile, under her breath she proclaimed, I won.



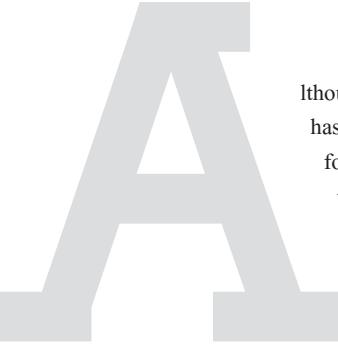
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LIFE



Cursive Letters Into Knives

Victoria Hanson



lthough I have never met her, Kathleen Hanna has saved my life. I know she is responsible for resurrecting countless other nameless teenage girls from a self-imposed depression. She is my hero, and heroes deserve if not fame, recognition. Unfortunately, far fewer people have heard of Hanna than of other more prominent, though less contextually substantial, female musicians.

Even in the realm of feminist icons she has seemed to gain more notoriety than reverence. Her controversial tactics and marginalized beliefs have let more traditional, tamer Second Wavers (Gloria Steinem, bell hooks) supersede Hanna's fan base. Even the nickname of Third Wave feminism, riot grrrl, identifies itself as a more aggressive and demanding movement. The bands in which Hanna collaborated support this in their names as well: Bikini Kill has obvious violent imagery and Le Tigre represents a fierce, carnivorous animal. Jessica Rosenberg and Gitana Garofalo speak of the passivity of girlhood and the vulnerability this causes in relation to grrrlhood "At a time in their lives when girls are taught to be silent, Riot Grrrl demands that they scream." (Rosenberg, Garofalo)

Instead of responding patronizingly to patriarchy like so many former feminists were prone to ("Oh, they just don't know better.") riot grrls retorted confidently with, "Maybe I wouldn't have to be a feminist if you weren't such an asshole!" (Marcus 9). This embodies the only attitude Hanna could embrace after working in shelters for battered women (Marcus 33-41). Hanna's music spoke to girls who were unsatisfied with the mainstream media's saturated depiction of womanhood. Her song lyrics tackled topics which were normally only spoken in whispers instead with a punk rock rawr. She bopped about the stage screaming about abortion, queer theory, race, abuse, and sexuality. She saw her rock venues as a conduit for girls to "...take the mike between

songs and talk about their experiences of sexual abuse and their stories of abortion." (Siegle). When we compare this scene of safe expression and confession to the male-dominated 90s norm of punk rock shows, we see quite a juxtaposition. Of course punk shows are known for being gritty and rowdy, but often this created an exclusive atmosphere which barred many women from experiencing live shows due to fear. These girls who identified with the D.I.Y. sentiments of punk philosophy could not engage in the full conversation because, as portrayed in the 1984 film Suburbia, it could be a risky place for girls. Suburbia featured the real punk rock band TSOL giving a staged concert where a female audience member's dress was torn off by a bunch of macho guys, leaving her fully nude. Then the tech guys for the band swung the spotlight onto her as she screamed in terror. This was the kind of boys club Kathleen Hanna was first exposed to when she entered the Olympia/Seattle punk scene. This is why Hanna's inclusiveness is so pivotal. She allowed music aficionados to talk about this kind of treatment. It didn't matter if they were a woman, lesbian, gay, or anyone else who did not fall into the hetero-normative roles most punk ironically cemented, they were safe at a riot grrl show.

The burgeoning grunge scene on the other hand was much more egalitarian than punk. The grunge genre was heralded by the musical messiah of gen X, Nirvana. Prior to the emergence of riot grrl it was often assumed that the role of women in music should be confined to groupies or bubble-gum pop stars. "You learn that the only way to get rock-star power as a girl is to be a groupie and bare your breasts and get chosen for the night," Dylan Siegler said in her article about Kathleen Hanna. Although they were punk pioneers themselves, Hanna and her friend Tobi Vail provided inspiration for the up and coming Nirvana. The story has become a legend akin to a feminist Paul Bunyan: it was Hanna who inspired Nirvana's zietgeisty "Smells Like Teen Spirit." Upon further examination we realize her role in its inception was not at all like a groupie, but was instead an accidental peer suggestion. Tobi

was dating Dave Grohl at the time, and one evening the two of them were hanging out with Kurt Cobain and Hanna as they tagged. They were "spray painting pro-choice slogans on the abortion alternatives center in town," then later that evening, "Kathleen graffitied 'Kurt smells like teen spirit'" (Marcus 43), a reference to the popular deodorant. Who knows how this evolved into the bizarre lyrics that became the anthem for nihilistic youth we know today? What is important is the non-sexualized role Hanna played in the story. Other women such as Pamela des Barres, glorified their intimate relationships with rockstars and created an identity from it, but Hanna was an artistic equal.

Music wasn't Hanna's only mode of expression. She and her contemporaries also produced zines, which were independently published magazines that tackled an eclectic array of subjects. This D.I.Y. attitude reflected Hanna's desire that the revolution be accessible to all. Anyone could submit articles to these zines regardless of educational background, class, socioeconomic status, race, or gender. Consequentially this resulted in many typos and grammar mishaps, but the idea was that they were getting the message out there. Zines offered an alternative to the magazines available at the check out counter, which gave only a limited perspective. Collaboration and finding others fed up with the oppression they experienced was part of a zine's scope. Sometimes this evolved from readership, other times it was the creation of the platform itself. Either way it was about forming interpersonal relationships. According to Kristen Schilt, "zine making offered girls a way of forming connections with other girls who shared their experiences. The formation of these connections allowed girls to see their own personal experiences with rape and assault as part of a larger political problem." Bikini Kill had its own self-titled zine. Its pages outlined the manifesto of riot grrl as dictated by its pioneers Hanna and Vail. They stated "Riot Grrrl is: BECAUSE we know that life is much more than physical survival and are patently aware that the punk rock 'you can do anything' idea is crucial to the coining angry grrrl rock revolution which seeks to save the psychic and cultural lives of girls and women everywhere, according to their own terms, not ours." (qtd. in Schilt).

Although Hanna's tactics were unquestionably refreshing they undoubtedly alienated potential allies. Her harsh lyrics, which include references to incest and multiple disses of former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, prompted many to turn her music off. In Le Tigre's "My My Metrocard" Hanna sings "Oh fuck/Giuliani/He's such/A fucking jerk/Shut down/All the stripbars/Workfare Does not work." As part of the punk scene she wielded an ammunition of curses, shock value tactics, and she dared to offend. In "Suck My Left One" Hanna sings of a mother who tells her daughter to respect her father, even though he is sexually abusing her. Both the language and the context were problematic for Hanna in reaching a wider audience. Most of her material was not suited for broadcasting on the radio or MTV. Kathleen herself admitted to her past indiscretions on her website saying, "During high school I was pretty much obsessed with three things: 1) going to shows (punk and reggae); 2) smoking weed; and 3) drinking alcohol." (Hanna) These things taken alone would cause most mothers great anxiety. Second Wavers also found fault in Hanna's tactics, they argued making music and zines wasn't doing anything to produce a viable change in the world. Indeed, riot grrl "...focuses more on the individual and the emotional than on marches, legislation, and public policy," Rosenberg and Garofalo asserted.

Hanna's aforementioned lifestyle begs the question of if she is perhaps unsuited for such an influential position over young girls. Along with this we are also implicitly presented with the conundrum of sex positive feminism versus the dangers of exploitation. Hanna stripped to support herself and she did not find anything inherently wrong with it (Marcus 37-39). Gender studies and feminist theory have recently encountered a cataclysmic rift between two opposing attitudes towards sex work. Some abolitionists or prohibitionists see sex work as a threat to the safety of women and symbolic of males' oppression of women. Others who consider themselves sex positive, vie for protection, regulation, and decriminalization of jobs ranging from stripping to prostitution. The rhetoric of these two stances is obviously being manipulated to morph the associations people make with these values, as is the case with the abortion debate. This black or white dichotomy frustrated Hanna, and



when she went to meetings held by either side of the sex work debate she was met with resistance from their leaders (Marcus 37-39). Regardless of her alienation, her experiences in strip clubs influenced her beliefs and consequentially her music. In the song Jigsaw Youth by Bikini Kill Hanna sings, "I can sell my body if I wanna/God knows you already sold your mind." This sentiment alienated many who held an opposite perspective or were more ambivalent towards the issue.

How did Kathleen Hanna save my life? When I was in high school, which is the intended audience of riot grrl, I got really into modern poetry. I felt that it spoke to my experiences as a girl coming of age. Unfortunately, it only perpetuated a notion I had about great art

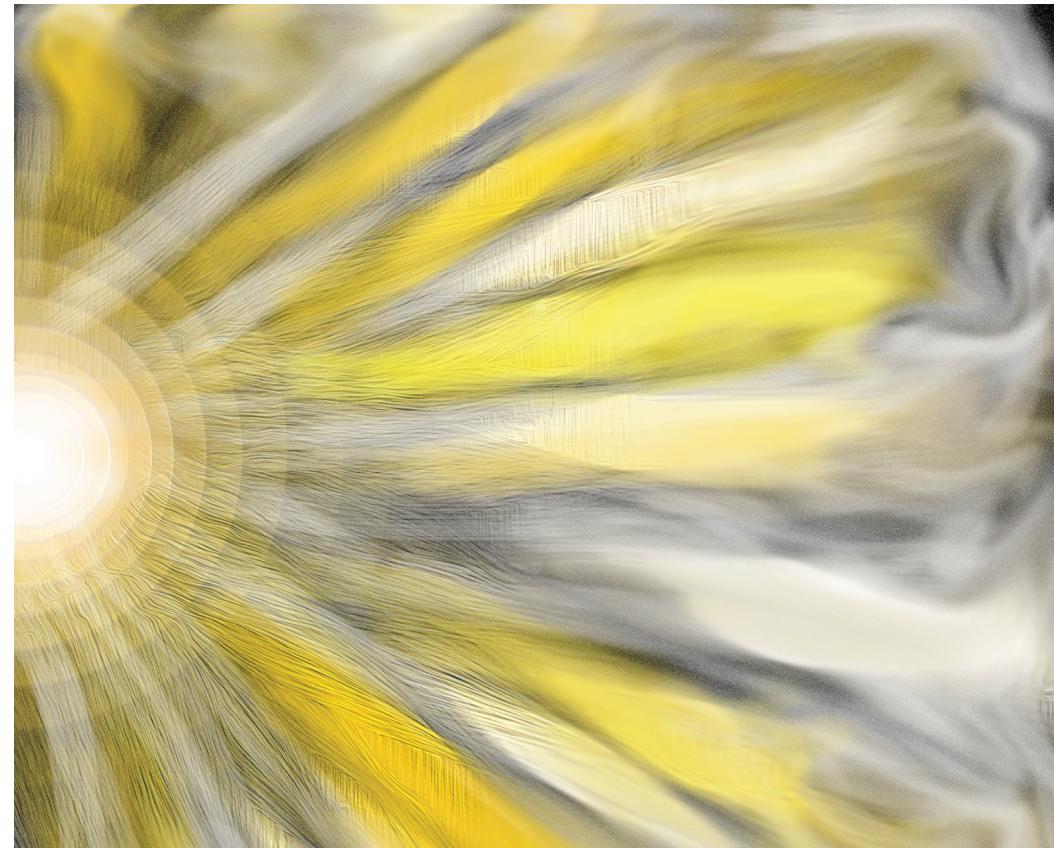
and melancholia being inextricably linked. For a hormonally histrionic adolescent these can be dangerous ideas. I idealized Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Elizabeth Wurtzel, and Shakespeare's Ophelia. Then one day I stumbled upon some Bikini Kill and Le Tigre songs. That night I wrote in my journal next to a Sylvia Plath quote which I had previously transcribed, the lyrics to Bikini Kill's "Bloody Ice Cream":

The Sylvia Plath story is told to girls who write

They want us to think that to be a girl poet means you have to die.

Who is it that told me all girls who write must suicide?

I've another good one for you, we are turning cursive letters into Knives.



Robert Percell
"Radiance"
(Digital Art)



The Street Person

Catherine Baker

It's not bad sleeping in the woods; no one to bother you.

I lie there listening to the birds chirp away as I try to squeeze in a couple more minutes of sleep, which I know I shouldn't do. You have to beat the crowds to the dumpsters behind restaurants. It took me a while to determine which routes were the quickest, and which places wrapped their food in plastic so it would still be safe to eat. Those are always the craziest. Every so often a new guy would stumble upon the treasure trove of half burnt bread behind the French café. It takes time for the animalistic behaviors of survival to wear off. It's always better to avoid the new ones than to fight over the bread; it's not worth losing your life or risking your health any more than you already have to. Today was such a day.

It's easier to avoid people when you smell the way I do.

It's not very often a warm shower comes my way, or any at all. You can see it in the faces of those that pass you by. It is very rare that people make eye contact with me, and when they do they quickly drop the dollar in my upside down cap and scurry along. Most days are uneventful and boring; on others I'm not so lucky. Sometimes the voices get too loud and I have to buy a bottle and drink until they quiet down. Occasionally they are really loud, and alcohol isn't enough. I know the money I make on days like today may have to last me for a while.

It's almost winter; the shelters must be opening soon.

At least this time of year I know that it will be easier to find food. Hot food. The shelters are both my favorite and least favorite season of the year. They're a reminder of what I'm missing the other nine months of the year, but at least there are showers, and hot meals waiting, and privacy. After so many years it doesn't get any easier going to the bathroom outside. I would gladly use a real toilet with real walls, and a door. But local businesses won't let me in, not with the way I appear to them. All they see are the clothes and the dirt, not the person underneath them.

It's difficult to keep up with doctors' orders.

The other night my backpack was stolen while I slept. All my meds were in there. I stopped by the free clinic to get a refill on my prescription, but the nurse tells me that I have to wait two weeks before I can get more. What's the point? Once I get my refill I'll have a few days peace with them, before they are stolen again. It's hard to hold on to things. Night's coming and it will be back to the woods I go. I'll need to scope out the flattest sleeping area with the most coverage. It takes time to set up, and days are getting shorter.

It's easier to believe the lie.

Maybe tomorrow will be different.

Then again, maybe not.



Roomies

Brad Statzer

ooking back on it now, things weren't that bad...sure, I had to follow a few rules and do a few chores, that part hasn't changed. Even now there is still the occasional disagreement of whose turn it is to take out the trash or load the dishwasher. I've had fights with my siblings as kids that were more sophisticated than the petty brawls that stem from someone "accidentally" eating the last of your ice cream.

I guess my parents actually meant it when they said "...life's not fair." Probably because they are lactose intolerant and don't eat ice cream. But I do, and you can imagine my disappointment when I came home to find a teaspoon of my Chunky Monkey ice cream left in the carton and placed back in the freezer. As if I wouldn't notice someone had been filching. However, I'm not going to cry over spilled milk, or filched ice cream as it were. Well, the parents were right to some degree, life is not fair when you live with crummy roommates.

I'll admit that I'm not perfect; I'm actually starting to think that maybe I'm the one with the problem and everyone else is a saint. I'll let you be the judge...I was nineteen when I first moved out on my own. I felt on top of the world at that moment. For once I didn't have to adhere to the parental "my roof, my rules" routine. My new roommate, Reeve, seemed to be a pretty laid back guy. Then after the initial honeymoon stage wore off, so did the top of the world feeling. Reeve always left his change in a jar on the kitchen counter. I never really noticed it except when I had to move it to get to the electrical outlet. One afternoon while I was being scolded for not hanging the dishtowel neatly on the oven handle, Reeve accused me of stealing from his change jar. He told me,

"I know this because I put a paper clip on the lid, and I found it sitting on the counter this morning." So I asked him,

"Is it possible you knocked it off when you put your briefcase up there?"

"No, and I've noticed that some change has been missing!" Who does this guy think he is? *Rain Man*? I don't even know how much money I have in my wallet let alone my piggy bank. I tried to explain that I wasn't pilfering his coins, but how could I dispute the hard evidence against me? Needless to say, I did not live there too much longer and when I did move out I left him my piggy bank so there were no hard feelings.

I thought things might be better if I moved in with a long-time friend of mine.

Shane was one of those friends who you don't see very often, but those few times we did get together I would remember why I didn't hang out with him too frequently. It was his carelessness and absent-mindedness that bugged me; anything anyone said was in one ear and out the other. He would constantly forget that rent is always due on the first of the month...not the fifteenth. No big deal though, if it hadn't been a monthly occurrence. He was also a perpetual drinker and that's fine with me as long as it doesn't interfere with my life. However, one night he woke me up knocking on my window in the middle of the night. I unlocked the front door and he stumbled in. His face had a few lacerations. So I had to ask,

"Shane, where is your car and why don't you have keys?" He had the overwhelming stench of whisky and cigarettes on his breath when he slurred,

"I need you to call a tow truck. I crashed my car down by the Jack-In-The-Box." I, being a very logical person when I'm half asleep, told him to go to bed and deal with it in the morning. It wasn't long before I was woken by a knock at the front door. Of course it was the cops looking for Shane. I suppose you can't leave an abandoned vehicle in the road after you have plowed into a streetlight and expect no one to notice. How many times do you have to tell someone that drunk driving is a bad idea before they listen? At least once more I suppose. A few weeks later I walked outside on my way to work and lo and behold, Shane had sideswiped my car while parking in the driveway. My side mirror was on the ground in pieces. That was my boiling point with Shane, but I'm no fool, I waited

for him to fix my car before I asked him nicely to move out. I should've known he was going to stiff me with his rent and leave his room in no shape that would get me my deposit back...but what can you do?

One might think I would have learned a valuable lesson about moving in with friends. I figured Bryan and I were good enough friends that living together would not create any rifts between us. The fact that his old roommates, some of our good friends, asked him to leave should have been a red flag. It started off all laughs and good times, as it always does, then slowly began to spiral downward. It really began when he got a new girlfriend and a week later moved her into the house. It didn't go over well with our other roommate Delilah either. He always denied she was actually living there but it's hard to dispute that when I was waiting on her so I could use the shower every morning. He had this sense of superiority where he felt entitled to use everyone else's things, even if he had to jimmy the lock on their door to get them; laptops, food, booze and clothes you name it. Ironically he would be the one to flip out if heaven forbid somebody were to eat his pop tart. If that wasn't enough, when we finally managed to get him to move out, after only a few months, he took some of my stuff with him. Another few months later he called me to help him move out of his most recent residence because his new roommates were "crazy."

It was nice having a female roommate for a change. A little mixed company was nice to offset the testosterone driven household. Delilah was very tidy, beautiful and compassionate, most importantly tidy. She had one of those smiles that lights up the room and a laugh so cute that when you hear it, you can't help but to laugh yourself. I guess it's a gamble anytime you get involved with someone you live with. I'm sure it works out fine for some, but others probably end up the way we did. I guess we weren't on the same page in terms of where we drew the line between roommates and "special roommates," as she called us. If it were me, I wouldn't have been so bold as to bring someone else into my bedroom while she was in the next room. I'm not going to say that my ego wasn't a little bruised after that incident, but I wasn't going to let it create any tension, for fear of saying something mean or stupid. She has a personality that makes it too difficult to hold a grudge anyway. It was my fault for letting myself

get too invested. It's one of those lesson-learned sort of moments that help you from making the same mistake again. Things worked out in the end, not in the way that I would have liked, but not a bitter ending like my previous roommates.

Up until this point I thought it was impossible for me to live with anyone; stranger, friends, lady-friends, but a co-worker of mine, Nicole, needed a place to live and I had a room to fill. Everything was on the up and up, she loved to cook and loved to eat. After some time passed everything was still smooth sailing, for a little while. My only concern was that at work she was quite catty and loved to gossip, so I was cautious to never vent about anyone from work to ensure it wouldn't get back to them. She on the other hand did not have the same integrity; she actually told people at work that she thinks I'm a closet homosexual. There's not much to say when someone starts a rumor like that; if you get angry then you're either homophobic or it's true. I chose to let it go and chalked it up to Nicole doing what she likes to do best.

Nicole has a brother, Gregg, who needed a place to live and we happened to have an extra room. Gregg works as a police officer and likes to flex his authority, especially when trying to train my dog as if he is The Dog Whisperer. I have gotten a different perspective of law enforcement since living with Gregg. By no means am I suggesting that this is characteristic of all officers. But once you see a law official stumble in the door after driving home drunk on several occasions your perception may become sullied. Gregg and Nicole have this unbreakable bond, which is refreshing to see in a brother and sister. They're both so proud and supportive of each other's accomplishments. When I look at them I wish I could look past the hypocrisy, because they are actually nice people at face value. I can't though. They don't know what I really think about them and I carry on like we're all one big happy family. I guess that makes me a hypocrite too.

So this is where I stand now. I know that there are two sides to every story, and for every finger you point there are three more pointing back at you, or the thousand other clichés that may apply here. However, the most positive thing I have taken from these experiences is learning the kind of person I want to be and the type of qualities that I would like to perpetuate.



Caution

Andrew Freedman

Look here. I never agreed with that diagnosis in the first place. It's not like I spend my afternoons expecting to be attacked by timber wolves or for a piano to fall on my head. I'm just prudent, no more careful than anyone else. You put on your seat belt when you drive, don't you? Probably use the shoulder harness too. It's only natural. Somebody tastes your food before you eat it, don't they? And if I don't miss my guess, you look like the kind of guy who cooks in a Nomex flame-retardant suit with the two-ply fiberglass visor, same as I do.

There's a family outing to the seashore this Sunday, and I like to make sure everyone survives. That requires a few simple precautions. The sun is vengeful, we all know that, so some sort of beach umbrella is essential. Most everyone uses them. Privacy, shade. A deflective shield against elemental forces bent on reducing us to cinders. Well, this handy enclosure from Ray's Bivouac Supply is just the ticket. With a capacity for 85 people, it only takes up half a cargo trailer. No, it is NOT a circus tent! A circus tent has three support masts and wind resistant rigging.

As you know, it can be tricky getting from the parking lot to the campsite without some unexpected mishap. Broken glass, can lids, trip wire, Punji sticks, land mines. They're all lurking just below the surface. No sweat. My military surplus pan head metal detector takes the guess work out of finding a suitable place to put the ol' ice chest and towel, and it's got a color coded defusing unit with one retractable robotic arm. I also bring along a portable surgical unit that sets up in a jiffy just in case.

I can swim like a seal, but let's face facts; the ocean is hazardous—any six-year old can tell you that. Great white sharks, for instance. They're just about everywhere these days. Why, one was recently sighted off the coast of Bainbridge Island just north of Seattle, and Bub, that's practically next door in nautical miles. Now, if I was really para....,

uh, what those psychiatrists said I was, I'd be dragging one of those reinforced steel photography cages with the electrified shell into the surf with me, wouldn't I? Hmm? No need. This pontoon mounted harpoon gun should work just fine, thank you very much. And, if the other bathers don't like the shark repellent at first, they'll thank me later. In any case, depth charges, as I found out last summer, are unwieldy, and they kill too many innocent fish.

Let's talk about riptides. Am I being overly vigilant? Possibly, but hey, if some refluxing current thinks it's going to drag yours truly all the way back to Micronesia, get a load of this personal anchor, only one hundred and twelve pounds, and it attaches right to my belt loop. I've got the deluxe whitewater leash too.

Supposedly in all of geologic time a tsunami has never hit this section of coast line. Ha. You find me one marine seismologist who was alive before 1850 to substantiate that claim, and I'll leave this inflatable observation tower in the garage. No? Well then, while everyone is brushing sand particles off their buffalo wings, I'll be gazing over the horizon with this refractive telescope. When that wall of water washes over Catalina Island at 80 miles an hour, I'll be calibrating exactly how many minutes the family and I will have to reach my trusty Corolla using this solar powered graphing calculator with built in GPS.

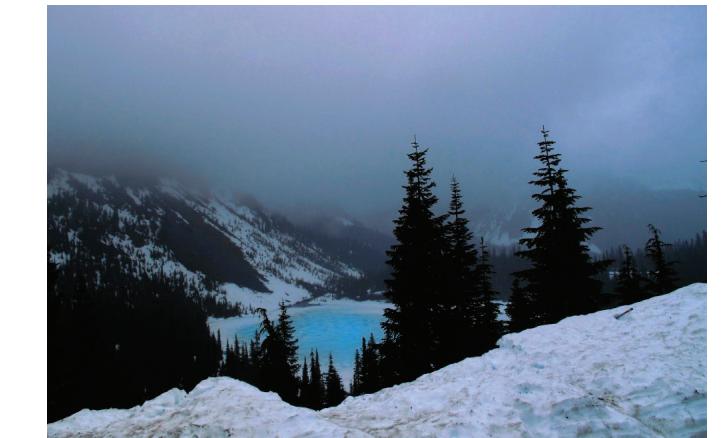
You say I'm being overly concerned about nothing. An alarmist. Well, if on Sunday morning I hear that there's even a hint of a red level terrorism warning anywhere in this hemisphere, you'll find Mr. Ready for Anything in my driveway eating a jelly donut, while I bolt the docking brackets of this surface-to-air missile onto the hood of my car. Better safe than sorry I always say.

Thoughts Behind His Cigarette

Joseph Ryan

Girls turning into women	Fears no longer there
Boys turning into men	Bridges burned
Puppies turning into dogs	Sits a man with a smile
Lovers becoming evil	Not evil or enchanting
Friends becoming strangers	It lights up his face
Life has changed itself	Not revenge or guilt
Whether for good or for bad	Just a simple smile
No one has touched a thing	He watches his life
We sit, and we watch	While the world is asleep
As creation takes control	Thoughts behind his cigarette
Sitting on this porch	
Which used to be a playground	
Crying and laughter throughout the neighborhood	
Now at peace	
Silence	

Megan Snedeker
"Mt Rainier's Blue Lake"
(Photography)



Stand Like Mae West

Robin Galen Kilrain

S

he told me I should start standing like Mae West, illustrating with a hand on her hip and elbow jutting out. The image of me channeling the sexual icon brought a smile to my previously drawn face. Her following comment, that the pose would be necessary due to developing the “worst sunburn of my life,” ushered the tension right back. In addition, fatigue would follow after a three-week “honeymoon period.” Oh, and my left-side set of ribs would, hereafter, be quite easily prone to cracking. I started to feel overwhelmed. If any of these details, or the myriad others, however, should slip my mind, I could rest assured that she and the techs would have a constant eye on me, making them readily available to answer questions throughout the seven-week journey. So, any pointers not retained from this initial consultation with my radiation oncologist could be recovered later—as I trusted my health also could be after this final stage of treatment for breast cancer.

The following Thursday, Johnny Depp—via the cover of a 9-month-old People magazine whose headline exclaimed the astounding idea that he was experiencing bumps in his love life—welcomed me to the changing room that would be my home for ten minutes every weekday. (He continued to stare out at me as part of this new morning routine well past the time I shocked myself by becoming entirely sick of his boyish handsomeness.)

By Friday, a piece of Scotch tape with my name on it adorned the cubby where my medical gown would reside, a sign I belonged there, at least temporarily. This was oddly comforting. As was the presence of my three invisible roommates. They came and went during other ten-minute intervals, their existence indicated by only black ink announcing their names, repositioned bottles of aloe lotion, and their own somewhat rumbled smocks. There was actually little time to observe anything,

though, as technician K. or E. was at the door, to escort me to the main event, promptly the moment I pushed it open.

They always greeted me as a friend. Or, perhaps, more like a coworker. Which, I suppose, is what we were, of sorts. “How are you today? How was your weekend? I love the color of your cap!” Small talk that became somewhat more intimate as it became more informed. Over nearly two months we learned bits and pieces of each other’s lives outside of the treatment room, and the music selection du jour became a less frequent subject choice for me (luckily, the ’50’s tunes also segued over the weeks into those from other eras). Disappearing from my radar as well were the other niceties presumably meant to comfort patients and take the edge off the rather ominous aura created by the dauntingly massive machine that doled out the doses of precisely targeted radiation. I no longer noticed the soothingly green nature mural occupying one wall, or the totally absurd plastic sculpture of duck butts hanging from the ceiling, their feet paddling away beneath an opaque blue surface, precisely positioned for the amusement of supine patients.

What I did continue to note was M.’s cheerful “Good morning! I’ll see if the girls are ready for you” called from the reception desk at precisely 9:45 each visit. (I never came early, as their schedule was always right on track, and though the atmosphere could not have been more welcoming, I really didn’t want to spend extra time there.)

Dr. L.’s fabulous accent—was it German?—complemented well her fun, bold jewelry and clothing choices, which I was privy to once a week. Her presence exuded confidence and strength, with an easy laugh to go with it. I enjoyed seeing her, and hearing the encouraging news she always seemed to deliver.

By the time I received my farewell hugs and “graduation” certificate announcing my “courageous” completion of the full course of radiation, I realized, with a great relief, that my honeymoon period had extended for the entire length of my treatment. I had utilized my Mae West stance

but once during the seven weeks, and then just to make myself grin at the semi-private joke. The predicted acute sunburn and the issue of fatigue had both remained elusive. During this treatment, I had, basically, been granted a free pass by the Universe (for which I’ll be forever grateful).

Cancer ends up teaching everyone something different; unfortunately, we don’t get to choose what those things will be. With the aid of resounding support, I managed to experience a learning period that was more interesting than traumatic. Among the gems I came away with was the fact that tattoos, no matter how small, hurt. I was forced to receive three tiny dots for alignment purposes; these were my first tattoos—and also the last I care to get. In addition, I found out that the chunk of metal carved with a bumpy oval to match my specific radiation needs during the latter weeks of treatment would not make a good paperweight. I asked, thinking it could be a cool souvenir. However, K. and E. responded that since they weren’t even allowed to touch it without protection, it wouldn’t make the best remembrance (I took the piece of Scotch tape with my name on it instead). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I realized that Johnny Depp isn’t really that cute after all.

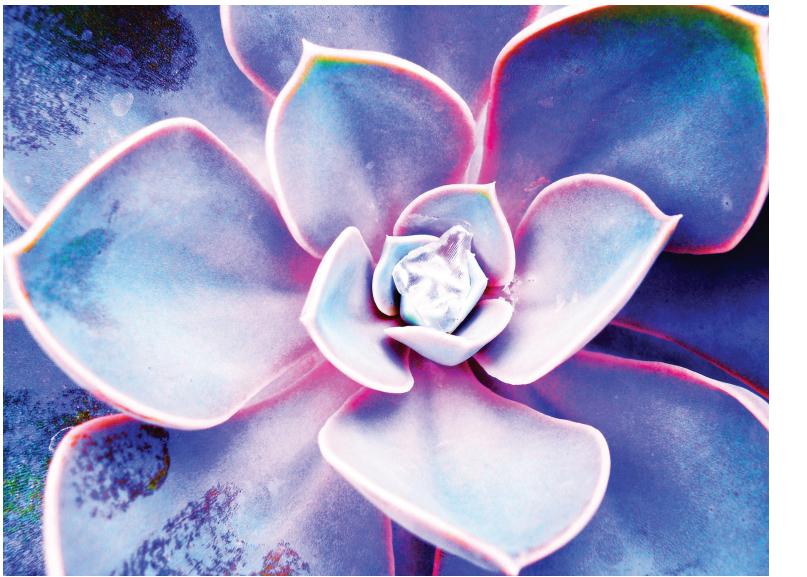
Jessica Studabaker
“Seer of Everything”
Photography



Colors

Monet's Lily Pond

Clifton King



Jennine Burton
“Hello You”
(Photography)

She claims that in a past life
she was a blossom in Monet’s lily pond.
There, she basked in his pensive gaze
pleasured by silent brush strokes
as he redefined nature’s images.

Today, clouds float among these lily pads
and pink petals motionless in a mirrored sky.
“It must have been like this
on his last day,” I say.
“Quiet,” she says, “these flowers don’t know.
See how they wait for him
— open, bright as a child’s face.”

Curry Mitchell

I forgot to take off my 3-D glasses before eating my toast...

Mom’s fridge and bowled plant are versions
in red and blue.

The sink stacks colors layered from deep purple to what I think
is black, and
one magenta magnet pinches one magenta corner—photo to fridge door—
making a sliding memory stick
on the blue side.
On the red side,
my sister’s shorts flame orange—
she dances past the slit-opened oven for warmth
and a chip—
and ants march a blazing file towards poisoned sugar
along a laser-light-show counter

near the chips and the bowled plant.
There is green somewhere inside those limp stems and pillow-leafs
that spill out of that bowl,

but I can’t see it.



Coming of a New Day

Andrew Ingersoll

As the sun rose overhead, a few rays of light slipped through the dense overhanging canopies that shaded the jungle floor. A world of its own, the Amazon was like a bustling city, its skyscraping trees overlooking nearly all walks of life. In the middle of it all was a small native boy no older than thirteen. His body was scarred and painted with blood. He raised his hand to the sky; in it was a large beautifully colored lizard. "I am the lizard king!" he screamed in his native tongue as he explored deeper into the mysteriousness of the jungle that he called his playground.

The natives relied heavily on the jungle and its abundant resources; they saw the Amazon as a gift that must be regarded with the utmost respect. They understood the dangers that it held, but they also knew how to utilize its power to support the lives of all the tribe's people. For these reasons the jungle was rightfully deemed sacred by all who understood its power.

As the native boy climbed over a large moss covered tree root, he was able to hear an unfamiliar sound coming from the distance. The boy crept through the thick entanglement of vegetation as he followed the sound to its source. Slashing vines and branches out of his way with the machete he carried at his waist, his curiosity grew with every step. The loud buzzing sounds grew louder the closer he got. Suddenly he came upon a halt in the thick forestation. He stood with his mouth opened wide and his jaw dropped in awe. What was in front of him seemed alien even to his wildest imaginations. He quickly turned back towards the path he had just slashed away and ran as fast as he could back to the village to report what he'd seen. Hurdling over tree roots, ducking under branches and bolting through the remains of large spider webs, the only thing on the boys mind was trying to comprehend what it was that stood in front of him.

Space Apart

Bill Carter

My affection for you is compared
to the affection the Moth shows towards the Moon.

No matter how hard the Moth tries to reach for the moon's
attention,
he will never reach it.

The destiny of the Moth is then realized:
The Moth can only glimpse from afar,
never being able to touch or hold
the one he yearns for.



Megan Snedeker
"Italian Indian Bridge"
Photography

Watch the Lights

Ben Johnson

Watch the lights, I tell myself
The beginning is always the same
I turn up the music
So the only other things I can here
Are my own thoughts
It's strange how busy the mind is when still
Stranger still is how calm the mind is
When the world is passing by

Watch the lights, I tell myself
They'll bring me where I need to go
I've known these roads for a lifetime
But these aren't the ones that interest me
I make the circuit all the same
Letting my thoughts of the day uncoil
And fade into the asphalt behind me

Keep watching the lights, I tell myself
It's always the same
I'm swept into the current
I don't know where I'm going, I only know
That I need to be there
The road pulses with life and every vein
Leads to a new destination, a new experience
I let myself become as lost as my thoughts
Until the only lights to be seen

Are the ones in the sky



Becky Kessab
“Country Landscape”
Photography



Domesticated Dinosaur

Joan Gerstein

I clipped his wings, so Rasta, my cockatiel,
wiggle up rungs of a steep wooden ladder
that extends from carpet to an ebony
metal cage. In a world of you peck my back,
I'll peck yours, he lost lengthy flight but gained
privileges: a well-stocked seed dish,
warm shelter, door usually open.

Like high-heeled housewives of the fifties,
Rasta's been sweet-talked into acquiescence
with millet seeds, mirrors, multiple treats.
He cuddles beneath my chin, bows his crown
of plumes for a scratch, perches on shoulders
like a silky feathered epaulet.

Yet under that gray, white, yellow panache
reside vestiges of his ancestors.
There in a thick lizard tongue, hooked beak,
in beady black eyes and hollow bones,
in scaly claws with three toes fore, one back
are Rasta's Jurassic origins.

So This Is Love

Myriah Dickey

On my walk down the bright hall So this is love.
I cherish these last few moments Impossible to have dreamt
Belly full of your life All these moments with you
Chaos surrounds me In your eyes is the cure
I focus on you For every tear ever shed
“hello, happy birthday” they say Your first smile
Once one, now two I am the last winter’s snow
We meet In the dawn of spring ahead
You smell of the sweetest lily Softest kisses on the cheek
With skin the color of desert sands Embraces chest to chest
Hands that make my soul smile So this is what I’ve waited for
So this is what I’ve read about So this is love.



Convenience Sake

Patti Lee-Wahl

Chagrin
into togetherness
like a popsicle
we cohabitatem, mate,
satiate and break.

We loved us
and our sticky fingers
until I melted.

Summer Pankopf
“Tahitian Wave”
(Digital Art)



Oh, What a Teacher Can Do!

Laura Arnsbarger

Oh, What a Teacher Can Do!

My strongest association with fall is back to school. And in the fall of fourth grade, my life changed forever.

Our teacher was Mrs. Snyder. To my nine-year-old eyes she was old looking, older than my mother, more like a grandmother, slightly stout, with short, graying blond hair and ordinary clothes. Nothing special about her, I thought. How lucky I am that I was so wrong.

Mrs. Snyder quickly took control of all 50 of us—that's 50 nine-year-old kids in her classroom. How did she do it? The same way any savvy teacher would:

She bribed us.

If we were good—and I mean very good—15 minutes before lunchtime Mrs. Snyder would stop teaching and read to us. Read to us? No teacher had done that before. Not much of a reader, I didn't know what to expect. She started with the first in the Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and soon I was caught up in the story about a girl who shared my first name.

If we were super good, and we were—all 50 of us—Mrs. Snyder would read to us again, for 15 minutes before the end of the school day. For 30 minutes a day I lived in the Little House in the Big Woods, followed by Little House on the Prairie. Then Mrs. Snyder began the third book, On the Banks of Plum Creek.

And then, the school year ended.

Oh, no! No more Laura and Mary and Pa? No Mrs. Snyder to read to me? I was really sad. So Mom took me to the library, helped me get a card and now I could follow Laura's story myself. And so I did follow Laura's story, and the stories of thousands of people all captured between the covers of books. Reading became one of my greatest pleasures—and necessities.

That's how my life changed forever starting in that fall of fourth grade.

Mrs. Snyder didn't teach me to read.

She taught me to love it.

Plea for Sanity

Sam Mariscal

When the elephant is in the room
When 87 more are killed every day
When small children—the only pure ones in existence
Are taken from the world
When all moral barriers have been torn down
When it seems everyone is a potential victim
When we grieve, yet do not act
When we put ourselves before those who have fallen
When the likes of Oswald, Huberty, Hennard, Klebold, Harris, Loughner, Holmes,
And now Lanza, compose the “well-regulated militia” meant to secure our state
When the most essential branch of government
Teems with blind patriotism
When it clings to an antiquated, anachronous, incongruous idea
When it prevents a state from fulfilling its most essential duty,
When it cannot ensure the security of its people
When we ignore the different geographical circumstances
That show us what can be achieved
What left can we aspire to?
Happy is he who can trace effects to their causes—Virgil
The secret of getting things done is to act—Dante
When will we wake up?

Full Circle

Roberta Van Hise

“No trumpets sound when the important decisions of our life are made. Destiny is made known silently.”
~Agnes DeMille

A small house, a shack really,
resting on an island shore
provides protection from
sun and rain;
we make do. Turquoise waters
surrender up a daily bounty of fish,
mangos and bananas drip from trees.
And then, tourists come –
a sea of strangers. Hotels and restaurants
burst forth, numerous as spring rabbits.
Our parents find work and speak of
“educating the children.” Many
years of study lead to a college
degree, a prized job in an immense
city of cement sidewalks, subways,
buses, buildings that scrape
the sky. A frantic, but fruitful life;
marriage and children come next.
Financial success provides
a comfortable home in the suburbs
a car to impress, world travel,
scholarly children
to follow the pattern set. Life is waning
now, work is done, passions of youth
subside. Memories draw me back,
I yearn for that time in the little
shack, resting on the shore beside turquoise
water, fishing, picking mangos and bananas;
my reward for a life well lived.



Ceilings Become Floors

Alan Lopez

When ceilings become floors
They do not crash down,
As one would be subject to expect.
Don't be so glum.
Limits are set by ourselves.
That ground that you stand on
You can always push back up from it.
The ceiling you stare up at,
Is it a star speckled endless sky?
Or the glitter in the popcorn your grandparents thought so fashionable?
Are you that bird that leaves an imprint of itself on paned glass?
Or did you aim true for the open air,
Not fooled by magician's tricks.
We all have our rooms we are confined to.
Our lives sprout upward as living towers
Each landing, a room seen as a moment of our lives
There are no elevators, there are no stairs
Yet you must continue
Will your once floor rise?
Crashing through what you thought was your ceiling
Propelling your own personal scraper skyward
There is no top floor, no roof, no penthouse
But every so often there is a window,
And my god what a view.

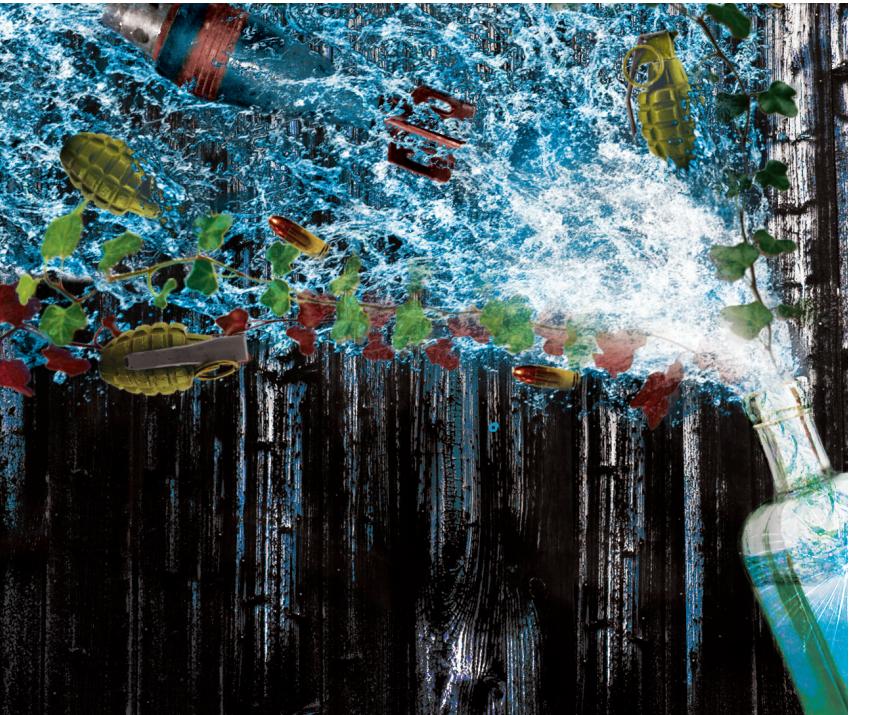
If Asked to Change the World

Jhenna Diaz

I'd start with a sponge
to the lead feet of L.A.
who slam fists to steering wheel
blindfolded and pissed,
redirect wasted fingertips
from spray paint can
to paint brush,
and take the switchblades
from their lonely minds
desperate to be a crow
in the crowded murder.

I'd rewrite the world
from outside the
leather wallets,
become a corporate robin hood,
break down the big
and spread the coins
to mom and pop.

I'd shake this generation
of chameleon youth,
put out their cigarettes,
show them the perks
of walking their own step,
and re-teach them
how to use their minds.
Instead I'll dream in ink
and wish that my pen
would change it all
in well written phrases
because "words are the voice
of the heart" (Confucious)
and mine screams.



Jason C. Finn
"Potency"
(Digital Art)



The Body He's Been Given

Catherine Roberts

Placing one foot in front of the other was all he could think about. "I can do this" he repeated over and over again in his head trying to make himself believe the words. There was no path he was following, instead he was creating his own, covering his face from the branches of the trees, as he trekked through the thick forest. Each step was as painful as the last, his shoulders aching from the heavy pack strapped on his back, his hands freezing from the 23 degree weather, but the physical pain had the least of his attention. The voices inside his mind telling him to quit, telling him he's worthless, those were the struggles he wanted to crush.

Fourteen hours ago, he had laced up his hiking boots which were caked in dried mud from previous excursions, threw the 50lb pack over his shoulders, and stepped out of his old, beat-up Chevy truck, and into the darkness of the trees standing shoulder to shoulder in front of him. It was just 24 hours of hiking through the unknown forest with a sandbag stuffed into his backpack. A hard but simple task on the outside, that created a long internal struggle for him to beat. No one could or would ever understand why he did this; hell, even he couldn't figure out what would drive him to this sort of self-torture. Maybe it was the need for him to push his body to its physical limit. Maybe it was the need to breathe in the crisp, fresh air away from the harsh city fumes. Maybe it was a combination of these reasons; but one thing he did know, was that when he heard the first whisper of those cruel voices, he knew that was what he'd been waiting for.

Ten more hours to go and the conditions were taking their toll on his body. He paused by a tall tree, and placing his hand on its trunk, leaned against it. He looked at where he'd laid his hand, and noticed thick scars etched into the tree's coarse bark. He took his other hand and placed it over his chest, feeling his own scar, tracing it down from his heart to his bellybutton. It had been 27 years since the surgery but he would never forget it. He would never forget the accident, the shards of broken glass flying in every direction, and he

would certainly never forget the choices he'd made leading to the chaos that night.

The hoot of an owl brought his attention back to the present. He looked up to see a beautiful white owl staring back down upon him from a branch above. He watched it spread its wide wings and take off into the clear night sky, flying higher until it became a bright speck amongst the stars. He went to remove his hand from the tree but realized both his hands were now laying on his chest, feeling his heartbeat. He took a long and deep breath, pushed the backpack higher onto his shoulders, and continued walking. One foot in front of the other. The pain was there but barely noticeable. The voices, they were there too, but distant, like they were being swept further away from his thoughts. He knew they'd return again, but until then it was just him, his feet, and the body he'd been given, and he'd be damned if he just stood there, letting his body take up space. No, he had to keep moving.

There's a Beach Out There

Jhenna Diaz

Whitney rummages through her briefcase in a desperate panic to find a piece of paper. The paper's purpose is irrelevant. All that needs to be known is that this piece of paper is much too important to Whitney. More important even than the hairpins that keep her earthy brown hair wound in a tight knot at the back of her head, giving her a terrible headache. It's 9pm, but she can't leave until the paper is found. Around nine thirty Whitney brings her head out from her desk drawer, to see that there's a man sitting across from her, brushing what looks like sand off of his feet. Whitney freezes although the man looks as unthreatening as the Hawaiian shirt he's wearing. He looks to be in his early sixties, most of those years being spent in the sun, based on his golden tinted skin. One ankle is resting on the top of his leg and he stretches his arms up then entwines them at the fingertips behind his head of wispy grey hair.

"It can't be that important," he says breaking a silence that has been unbroken for hours except by the rustling of papers.

Whitney says nothing, still trying to make sense of the man's presence, and getting lost in the sea breeze smell that he brought into the room with him that successfully forced her to forget her previous task.

"I mean seriously, how long have you been at it? A good four hours now? What's going to happen if you don't find it, and is it really going to be worse than a life behind this desk? Although I will admit that the desk is very nice, things that weren't made in a factory are much more interesting."

"I'll get fired," Whitney finally says quietly. Feeling like a small child offering a feeble excuse.

"I'm sorry, but I fail to see the down side to that." he smiles.

As much as she searches she can't seem to find a down side to that either.

"I mean, I know its your business and everything," he says as he uncrosses his legs and starts to stand "but there's a beach and a sun out there everyday that doesn't get the chance to shine on you, and honestly, I think it's a cruel self punishment that you stay behind these walls. Surely you don't deserve such torture."

As she thinks about it and envisions said beach, the piece of paper seems more and more like the meaningless piece of paper that it is.

The man shrugs. "I just thought you looked like you needed a little reminder" he tips an imaginary hat and then disappears through the door and out into the heavy darkness.

After a few moments of making sense of what just happened, Whitney pulls the pins out of her hair and grabs a piece of scratch paper from the recycle bin. On it she writes, "Sorry, not coming back." With that and a semi-formulated plan involving a beach house in La Jolla and a sun dress, she grabs her car keys and is gone.



The Year 2020

Russell Zen

Elephants and asses are still our two leading political parties,
Women still have to act stupid because society says so,
Men's egos are like inflated balloons that are truly unstable in nature,
Lizards get no attention, but their cousins are still GEICO's trademark after all this time,
Americans still pay for overpriced coffee at Starbucks (it's 5 dollars now for coffee)—
Starbucks! You can still find one every 10 miles whichever direction you go,
Salmonella contamination still causes salad recalls from your local grocery store about once a year,
But who cares? No one eats them anyway.
But God forbid if our Oreo supply gets affected, there'd be a homeland security issue; Call the feds.
Americans still pop a pill a day, we just have newer names now for the same pill as before.
And you need these pills, because TV said so, and the FDA approved it.
If there's a problem, file a lawsuit, that's the proper way to go about it.
In the year 2020, unmanned drones fly over your neighborhoods all across the country,
So you better not be doing anything naughty, you've lost your privacy.
Complain all you like, but you can't file a lawsuit here,
Because the government will drone your lawsuit away.
Just know the drones are out there for the sake of peace, so it's ok...
Americans still spend money they don't have in 2020, just they spend more now.
Or do it online.
Banks may have been evil back in 2010, they're still evil in 2020, just less of them now,
You're either rich or you're poor now,
What does middle class even mean now?
So much is the same,
What really changed in 2020?
Anything good?



Nancy Jarmuz
"My Little Panda"
(Painting)



Happy and Miserable

Euichol Shin

Newborns are the happiest
For they don't suffer from any responsibilities

Newborns are miserable
For they can't communicate their thoughts

Children are the happiest
For they have innocence
Children are miserable
For they are not mature enough

Adults are the happiest
For they can exercise their free-will
Adults are miserable
For they have to take on responsibilities

Elders are the happiest
For they have the wisdom to go on
Elders are miserable
For they have to count the days

I'm the happiest
For I know there's no such thing as absolute happiness
I'm miserable
For I know that's how life goes on for everyone.

All Roads Lead to Rome

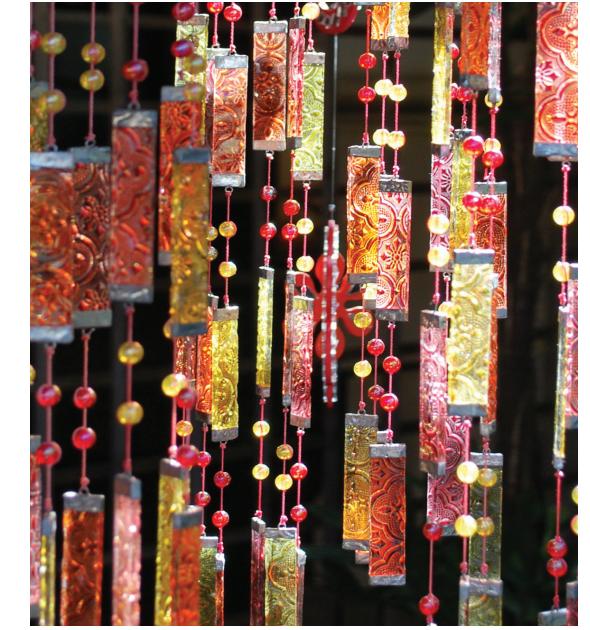
Christina Perez

The days were no longer yesterday
than they are today.
Life will not pass you by,
take the time to live your life your own way

You haven't missed a beat.
A different road would not have been better.
Your smile could not be any bigger .
Your destiny is closer than ever.

The music didn't play louder,
on the days you were not here.
Listen to the song playing this moment,
follow the rhythm it will help you heal.

Don't wish you would have done some things differently.
Celebrate that you are home.
You can do anything today
All roads lead to Rome.



Becky Kessab
“Bejeweled Wind Chimes”
(Photography)



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NEXT YEAR'S ENTRIES

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL ENTRIES:

- 1) Do not put your name on your entries. Fill out a cover sheet for each entry. Cover sheets are available on the *Tidepools* page at:
<http://www.miracosta.edu/instruction/english/tidepools.html>
- 2) All entries and cover sheets should be sent electronically to: tidepools@miracosta.edu
- 3) Include your name and the title of the work in the subject line.

QUESTIONS:

If you have questions about submissions, please contact:
Dana Ledet at (760) 795-6871 or **Jane Mushinsky** at (760) 575-2121 ext 7792.

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ENTRY DEADLINE FOR ALL SUBMISSIONS:

FRIDAY
DECEMBER 6
2013

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