



**The Great Lake Review  
SUNY Oswego's Literary Magazine  
Fall 2014**

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**The Great Lake Review**  
**SUNY Oswego's Literary Magazine**  
**Fall 2014**

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# Shale

Cassidy Carroll

Nora stood calf-deep in the cold lake water. She could feel her lower back muscles more than she had in a number of years, due to carrying the cedar planks for their new dock down to the water bank. She watched her husband swear under his breath. He had been fidgeting with a piece of galvanized steel for twenty minutes, trying to place it in the rocks for the base of the dock.

“Do you want me to do something?” she asked.

Her husband let out a deep sigh. Nora couldn’t tell if it was because he was exhausted or because she’d asked the wrong question at the wrong time. “No,” Jim said.

Nora nodded.

“They lied on their website,” Jim said.

“What are you talking about?” She walked closer in the water.

“You know, on their dock website, they said, ‘Easily installed by the do-it yourselfer!’ They lied.”

Nora pinched her lips together, trying not to laugh. “Maybe you’re just not a do-it yourselfer. Maybe we should have paid the money for them to assemble it?”

With his hands around the pole, Jim twisted it into the rocks underwater. He made a grunting sound that reminded her of her labor with their daughter. “We don’t need people to do it for us, Nora,” he said between twists.

“You sure I can’t help more?”

Jim dropped the pole in the water and stood straight up in one quick movement.

“No,” he said. “Just need a break.” He said it under his breath, like he was almost ashamed.

“I’m going to get a beer,” he said.

Nora sat down on the beach to wait. They had only had the cabin for a few months and it seemed they had had more arguments in it than they had in their year-round home. She told herself it was the stress of an extra mortgage and maintenance of another house that caused it, but she didn’t always believe herself.

She sifted through some stones on the edge of the water and found a piece of rock. It was gray and smooth, even with little pieces chipped away. She had been watching documentaries on geology at night since Hannah had gone away to college. She’d learned quite a bit about rocks.

“Got you a beer,” Jim said when he reached the beach again. Nora saw him looking at the rock in her hand. “What’s that?” he asked.

“A piece of shale,” she said, handing it to him.

He looked at it for a second then tossed it into the lake. She watched it go.

What she knew: It took 10,000 years to create a piece of shale, layer after layer, the finicky work of centuries. It took no time at all for it to fall apart.



# 2004

Mareena Razik

*Hambantota, Sri Lanka*

here's something  
we don't talk about, at least  
not in our house.

the waves  
crashing down on that  
small town.

fishermen in their boats,  
children in their schools,  
families in their homes up in the hills.

those in the beach-front mud huts,  
a woman, and her two small children,  
running towards the drawback, the water

receding, trying to gather  
the silver fish flopping on the sea floor. a husband, my uncle,  
calling them back. how were they to know

what was coming?  
the waves rushing back in  
moving at a million miles a minute,

the fish now flying miraculously,  
the great ocean now  
a rushing wall with

waves the height of houses falling,  
crumbling, tumbling to the ground  
raining down on the screaming hungry open mouths

of those living in that starving country,  
before rolling away, only to come back  
again, again. my father, sitting by the phone,

desperately waiting for a call from someone; father, sister,  
brother,  
just to let him know that they were okay.  
the blue glow of the television humming in the background.

my mother praying in her chair,  
my brother too young to understand,  
can you even begin to imagine

the weight of that water,  
as it hit them,  
as it pulled them under?

as it drowned them  
again, again.

# *Boxer the Horse*

Ariana Zink

I.

We lingered in a stark white waiting area for hours. My mother covered in one of the uncomfortable plastic chairs that clung at the walls. Several times she dragged me with her to the ladies' room, lamenting over her present look—the puffy, reddened eyes and the faint trail of black mascara weaving its way down her pale cheek. She dabbed at her face with a tissue.

“God, look at me. What are people going to think?”

“Why, do you want to meet someone?”

Appreciated, my comment was not.

She hid her makeup-smeared face underneath her hands. She had left the house in such a rush that morning, she had only had time to boast four or five decorative rings on her long talon fingers. Beside her was my grandfather, acting as the designated driver for the morning's activities, as well as the stoic man whom all hospital personnel communicated to. Don't talk to the wife—no, the father-in-law, that's who's really invested.

Although, considering across the room my brother Devin and I were more engrossed in the muted television airing an episode of *SpongeBob SquarePants*, I shouldn't be implying any subtext. I used to entertain the idea that, at 10 years old, I didn't understand what was happening.

After a few misadventures under the sea, a doctor sauntered in, the first one sighted in a couple of hours. My mother, with a speed not to be seen since, launched herself at him. The satisfied smile was replaced momentarily by sheer fear.

“Woo, Mrs. Zink! You nearly gave me a heart...”

He cleared his throat quickly and tugged at the hem of his coat.

“He’ll be fine,” he said.

He had the charts to prove it. The four of us swarmed around him, inspecting the black and white photographs of the inside of my dad’s heart. In the “before photo,” a dark line slithered along until it just stopped dead, right in the middle. Closed for construction, I suppose. The other half of that line after the jump was thinner, resembling a faint vein in your hand. The “after photo” was much more cheerful, the two lines connected again to form—

“Who does that look like?”

My mother’s eyes scrunched together, the mysterious figure in the heart a few inches from her nose. She clicked her tongue to the roof of her mouth, a character trait she had adopted from years of riding horses, but now serves to dispatch her irritation.

“That’s going to bother me for the longest time.”

The doctor relayed my dad’s condition to my grandfather and mother, though I could see her eye shifting every few seconds back to the tell-tale heart. I gawked at the image until it finally struck me.

“It’s Snoopy.”

II.

My dad is a Boxer, the horse from George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Boxer was a machine, in constant motion, performing physically exhausting tasks to ensure the survival of his farm. Even when harmed, he trudged forward through his work. There is one differing factor between my dad and Boxer, the horse. Boxer was blind to his purpose, and Raymond Zink is no fool. He’s trapped in his own existence, not destined or forced but obligated to work until he, like his literary counterpart, collapses and is shipped off to the glue factory.

I think my dad is afraid of his ending. Not of the “being dead” aspect because, as he so eloquently words it, “When you’re dead, you’re dead. You don’t give a fuck anymore.” He is afraid to know whether his life mattered. It is a life defined mostly by his labors. Are we the children, and she the wife of the farm? Or are we the pigs, exploiting a workhorse until no longer possible, and callously casting him off for whiskey, never acknowledging his worth?

I can say sincerely that before my dad’s heart attack, I was a pig. And afterwards, I was still a pig. I didn’t miraculously realize in the hospital waiting room how little I valued my father. People don’t change overnight. Hell,

even in movies (which are, of course, totally grounded in reality), it takes the protagonist at least 80 minutes to have a transformation of some caliber. And, even then, you have to give or take 30 or so minutes to introduce the character and learn what's wrong with the asshole in the first place.

In any case, I was there in the hospital, showing no emotion. There wasn't some internal battle raging on inside me. Even when I saw my dad sprawled out in a hospital bed, with an IV stabbed in his arm and a monitor beeping almost mockingly every moment, there was nothing. I wept more for kittens I had for days than I did for my father. Does a title you hold for someone decree the level of grief and love you give them in times of peril?

Well, I know one person who felt my nothing was an insult.

"You two are unbelievable?" she said, not questioned.

Hours later, Devin, my mother, and I arrived home without our grandpa. Without his presence, my mother was able to speak freely to us. Devin had barely let the door slam shut when our mother upset herself again and broke down in tears. She threw her words around carelessly as if they were fists to faces.

"You just sit there the entire time and do nothing. Don't cry or anything. Your father almost dies, and you don't even care."

Neither of us responded. The silence stretched in the kitchen until Devin, rather dumbly, suggested we take tomorrow off from school. Because our father had a heart attack, his exact argument. I would be lying if the thought hadn't wandered in my head, although I wouldn't poke a bear, and he slapped it across the face with a frying pan.

My brother Dylan had been at a sleepover and missed the entire morning. When he came home and our mother told him, he immediately began to cry. My mother cradled him and stroked his hair, gentle words flowing from her harsh tongue. No hugs for people who didn't care.

III.

My dad was more of an abstract concept than a physical being prior to his heart attack. He was something that was discussed frequently, often utilized by my mother as a threat against her misbehaving pack of brats. Once, at the prime age of eight, I ran away and bolted into chilled winter blackness. My mother merely had to screech into the dark that she was about to phone my dad at work. I scampered

back to the house, tail between my legs.

He was always at one of his jobs. Often, my three older brothers and I were drafted over the years to assist with his newspaper post. In the early mornings on the weekends, we, the children between the ages of eight and 18, were stuffed inside our overbearing coats and sent off with our dad to the papers. We huddled together, eyeing the multiple grayed men, my dad included, shuffling awkwardly from spot to spot, hands tightly fastened in their stained pants pockets. The men gathered in small clusters, bitching incessantly on any topic imaginable. It was certainly warranted bitching. The glamorous life of the postal carrier was not one to be envied. Low pay partnered with trivial labor repeated hundreds of times every night. Slipping the local grocer "Buy Two, Get the Third Free" coupons for yogurt into the news portion of the paper is simple. Doing it 500 times becomes tiring after a while. I, however, was too short to reach the counters to fold the papers. Instead, I was tasked with collecting the completed papers and slogging them to the cages that lined the dull walls.

The worst chunk of it was the waiting. Always with the fucking waiting. The proprietors of the paper place assured its carriers the main section of the paper would be printed and ready to be delivered at midnight. And we arrived, promptly, at midnight. One o'clock, the phone blared through the condensed building. The papers were being printed and would be there shortly. Two o'clock, the trucks were rumored to be heading over. Some mornings, the papers wouldn't arrive until three. All you could do with those three wasted hours was gather with your comrades and bitch. They needed their bitching.

After the papers were fully assembled came part two: the delivery. If my brother Brandon was not with us, my other two brothers and I crammed into the way back of our dad's HHR, folded papers engulfing us from both sides. While the world was tucked in for the morning, we silently drove to house after house, slipping bagged papers into mailboxes. Cool air would blast into our faces whenever my dad would have a short burst of speed. Often, I drifted off and awoke to a slight touch of a sunrise. My dad never did disturb any of us when we fell asleep on the job. It was not a profession for the faint of heart. One postal carrier, pushed into full-fledged vigilante gone awry, stole the papers from customers' mailboxes and tossed them into a neighboring lake. Some deemed it idiotic; others, brilliant. Whatever his

final straw was remained a mystery. He never showed up for work again.

My dad was thrilled when his children went to work with him. He had unhappy helpers lifting a portion of the work from him. Although with three plus children occupying precious space in the car, and at such a young age, were we actually helping? His career was employed as a scare tactic and a cautionary tale. He didn't intend for his kids to grow up to be him.

IV.

With a heart now officially pumping blood, my dad was ejected from the hospital and forced to inhabit an exotic world: his house. A bizarre world for all players involved. Employment no longer his primary pursuit, my dad resolved to tackle a project. Mustering all his strength provided by a new strict diet of flavorless meats and spray-on margarine, he set off fixing our home. The house needed a new coat of paint on it. All the cars had to have an oil change. The tiles layering the bathroom floor had to be pulled and replaced.

One particularly cold day, my dad decided the lawn was too long. He was outside, mowing down frosted-tipped blades of grass with a push mower. From inside, my mom and I watched him from the kitchen window. She clicked her tongue.

"What the hell is your father doing? It's freezing outside."

My mom tapped her fingernails on the window.

"He can't fix the heater or clean up all his clothes off the dining room table, but he can spend hours mowing the lawn."

As we stood discussing him, we were each bundled up, me in my winter coat. And regarding his clothes, to say he left a few garments here and there on the table was a colossal understatement. The table was littered with pairs of ripped jeans, heavy sweatshirts, and socks. Just one sock from each pair. He somehow managed to consistently lose a single sock and leave the one out, in case whoever was doing the laundry found its match. The table became so cluttered, eating at it was impossible. Not that we ever actually ate at it to begin with, but it would have been nice to have the option. We continued to stare at him. He was stopped, his face red as he vigorously jerked the cord to start it once again. He was unsuccessful and let the cord be ripped from his grasp.

“Uh oh,” my mom said. “Now he’s pissed. He’ll probably come in here, swearing at everyone, his arms whirling around.”

Sure enough, he was tromping up the yard towards the front door.

“You better go hide in your room. He’s coming in red hot.”

I flew from the kitchen, weaving through the house, climbing the spiral stairs until I made it to my room. Just as I firmly shut my door, I heard the slam of the door from the kitchen. My dad’s roars could be heard through the walls. The words were muffled, but the tone was violent. I flinched when his booming voice made waves. His sparring opponent was mostly my mom, taking the brunt of it. She would brawl with her own growls and hisses. Their battles followed an unchanging plot: he sparked it, throwing the first blow, and she fired back. They would go after each other for only a few minutes before he’d stomp elsewhere, thudding through the rest of the house and then retreating to his room to sulk for hours. My father’s fights never became physical; his snarl and words were enough. “Angry Dad” is what we affectionately called him when he was explosive, which was too frequently to the point of legendary.

The house was still ominous. All who were hidden wouldn’t resurface for at least a half hour after the dust had settled. I waded out from my room back downstairs. Even my mom I was wary of after one of their fights. My mom was scrubbing at the dishes furiously, softly yet with venom, talking to herself.

“Bastard,” she said. “Gets all pissed off and takes it out on me. Doesn’t ask for any of the boys for help. He’s such a fucking martyr.”

One distinct difference between my father and a Boxer: Boxer wasn’t an asshole.

V.

Raymond Zink was a lonely man.

He spent most of his days alone. He ate his meals alone on his way to work. He slept alone. And in a house of six people, he was alone. We all were. He was the first to acknowledge it, the first to act on it, like a true Boxer. He wanted a farm, a good old-fashioned farm.

But he couldn’t rally the troops for an immediate revolution; we were already the pigs. Although Napoleon or any of the other pigs felt no remorse over what they did



to Boxer. Sure, it didn't eat away at them, but the guilt was still there. It hopefully made the whiskey a little harder to swallow.

My dad's farm may have been his latest project, but not all of the family was involved in the dream. He and his brother Fred hadn't spoken in years; pride in both men is what kept them apart. Pride dies, though, like all living things. Especially Fred. In those times of estrangement, he was slowly being hollowed out from cancer. It wasn't until he was moved into a hospice that my dad had a guest-starring role in his brother's life. Their final time together came when the phone rang solemnly on a Thursday night a few months ago. Twelve minutes after my dad arrived, Fred quietly slipped away.

At the cemetery, Fred was temporarily in a drawer, until his ashes could be buried with my aunt. My dad had put in a copy of his favorite Western. When the rest of the family trickled away, my dad lingered, gazing up at his brother's drawer. Then, he wandered towards the tombstones. It's odd to think, but with every step taken, you land on top of someone. Someone who once existed, who now is truly abstract. Husbands and wives were buried side by side; if one was buried two rows down, second from the left, would it matter really? Or the flowers that decorate the graves—what do they even mean? That someone out in the world loves whoever's in the grave or misses them. Or maybe the flowers are given for a guilty conscience? There were no flowers on her grave, his mother's. No husband buried near her. Only a son occupying a drawer down the road.

On the ride home, my dad instructed my mom and me on what not to do with him. No drawers, no large ceremonies. A cremation, like being sent off to the glue factory, essentially. Well, I won't be drinking whiskey at his funeral.



## *Self Portrait #4*

**Kristy Hoover**

# A.R.I.A.

Susan Velazquez

INT. TEST ROOM

A stark, white test room. ARIA, an emotionless android stares straight ahead. The DOCTOR stands in front of her with a clipboard in hand. He jots notes as she speaks.

DOCTOR

Are you ready to begin?

ARIA

Affirmative.

DOCTOR

Excellent. Let's just, uh, go over the basics. Tell me your name.

ARIA

My name? I do not recognize that command?

DOCTOR

Oh, sorry. State your model name and number.

ARIA

Greetings. I am ARIA, the Artificially Responsible and Intelligent Android. I am model 6.6, the latest ARIA technology. My purpose is to serve you and make your life easier. My ISBN is 2 4 8 8 1 1 K 0 8 7 7 7 7--

DOCTOR

(interrupting)

Alright, that's enough. Well, you're fully charged so let's just begin.

He goes to the projector and turns it on. He turns off the lights and shows a series of artworks: The Thinker, Starry Night, Night Hawks, and a Jackson Pollock. ARIA is emotionless as she watches. After the images are done, he turns off the projector and turns the lights back on.

DOCTOR

Alright, ARIA. What can you tell me about these pictures I just showed you?

ARIA thinks for a moment.

ARIA

(monotone)

Image 1: The Thinker by Auguste Rodin. Image 2: Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh. Image 3--

DOCTOR

Okay, thank you, ARIA. But how do those pictures make you feel?

ARIA

Feel?

DOCTOR

What did you think of them? Did you like them?

ARIA thinks for a moment.

ARIA

I'm sorry, I do not understand this command. Please review the instruction booklet for a list of--

DOCTOR

ARIA, do any of these pictures mean anything

to you?

ARIA

What do you mean, Doctor?

DOCTOR

Did any one make you feel happy or sad? Or angry?

ARIA

I...I do not understand. Please review the instruction booklet for a list of--

DOCTOR

--Yeah, yeah. Okay, whatever.

DOCTOR makes a few notes in his clipboard. He goes back to the projector and turns off the lights once more. This time, he shows another series of images: the Haitian revolution, Nat Turner's rebellion, a news photo from the Arab Spring, a painting showing the storming of the Bastille.

DOCTOR

(softly)

What can you tell me about these, ARIA?

ARIA thinks. She looks at the DOCTOR.

ARIA

Image 1: The Haitian Revolution. Image 2: Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion. Image 3: Arab Spring. Image 4: The Storming of the Bastille--

DOCTOR

(annoyed)

--Okay, okay. And what do you think of these images?

ARIA says nothing. He hands her several sheets of paper and some pens.

DOCTOR  
(gently)

Okay, ARIA. Now draw me something, anything you like. Oh, and if you wanted to draw one of the pictures you saw today, that would be alright.

ARIA  
You want me to draw you something?

DOCTOR  
Yes!

ARIA  
What would you like me to draw you?

DOCTOR  
Whatever you want.

ARIA  
I do not understand--

DOCTOR  
Goddammit, just draw me something! You're supposed to be the most intelligent android on the market and you can't follow this simple command. JUST. DRAW.

He scribbles quickly on the paper and throws it harshly at ARIA. She stares ahead emotionlessly. Then she picks up the pen and slowly copies his squiggles.

DOCTOR  
Yeah, do whatever you want. Just one second, ARIA.

The DOCTOR leaves the classroom.

INT. HALLWAY.

A SECOND DOCTOR is waiting outside the hall when DOCTOR exits the room.

SECOND DOCTOR

Well?

DOCTOR

Not a single original thought in its head.

SECOND DOCTOR

So Saratoga was just--

DOCTOR

An anomaly. A malfunction. A fluke. Whatever the lawyers want to call it.

SECOND DOCTOR

And she showed no reaction to the second set of images?

DOCTOR

None. It just thought I wanted to know where the images were from. Couldn't even draw a squiggle until I showed her how.

SECOND DOCTOR

But then how could that ARIA in Saratoga kill--

DOCTOR

Look, they still haven't ruled out an accident. Maybe it was just a malfunction.

SECOND DOCTOR

And you're sure? We can't release the new line if there's a possibility that they'll--

DOCTOR

ARIAs don't defy programming and none of them are programmed to do anything that's not in the manual. Even with the Saratoga incident, they're still the most reliable androids on the market. They're programmed to serve.

INT. CLASSROOM

ARIA is doodling on the paper.

SECOND DOCTOR (V.O.)

And you don't think they'll ever get tired of serving?

DOCTOR (V.O.)

Saratoga was a fluke. Androids don't have the concept of rebellion, even if you give it to them on a silver platter.

ARIA finishes her drawing. It is a crude drawing of her killing the DOCTOR. She folds it up and looks around before she secretly places it in her pocket.



# *Skeletons Trying to Warm Themselves*

**Linne Ebbrecht**

These are the things I try to tell myself – That there are days  
when you will catch  
the skeletons in your closet wearing your jackets to warm  
their bones.

The days you can't seem to dig yourself out of your own  
grave  
are days you will still catch yourself digging – thinking.

There will be the days when you may not be bettering  
yourself, but  
these are days when you are not ruining yourself either.

Days when the dried marrow seeks heat. These are days of  
strange hope.



# *Heaven's Gate*

**Kristen Burke**

# Nine

Imani Gary

Jamie moved into 201 Riggs Hall two weeks ago. Her room was cool and the view was great, but she hated it. We'd decided her neighbor was nuts. Every five seconds he yelled the word "nine." All hours of the day: nine, nine, nine.

I rarely visited. I couldn't take it. Nine. Nine. Nine. It was insanity.

Last weekend was Jamie's birthday. She threw a small party in her room. No one came. Your neighbor's a freak, one text read. 202 scares me, said another. I have work at NINE, NINE, NINE, was mine. I thought it was clever.

A few days ago, I walked Jamie to her room. The nines could be heard from the stairs. When we passed 202, Jamie kicked the door and screamed, "Stop" to which 202 replied, "Nine!" Jamie looked like she could cry.

Yesterday, Jamie missed breakfast.

Today, she missed it again. I walked to Riggs and took the stairs to the second floor. The hallway was quiet. I knocked on Jamie's door. No answer.

202's door was cracked open. I knocked.

"Have you seen the girl in 201? Jamie?" I asked. The door swung open. 202 looked me up and down, smiled, and whispered, "Ten."

# *Inertia*

Dylan LaBadia

\*An object in motion tends to stay in motion unless acted upon by an outside force\*

I couldn't bring myself to ride past the cemetery in my quiet hometown where my grandmother lay to rest. The town I grew up in was much like one out of a timeless storybook: a tiny, old-fashioned town with beautiful corn and hayfields as far as the eye could see and livestock that easily outnumbered human life. A town so small that one road extended through and beyond the entirety of it. My whole family had grown up and lived within a 10-mile radius of one another, worked on the same farm, went to the same middle school through high school, and inevitably rested in the same small cemetery on the other side of the fence from the horse farm.

It was a hot summer afternoon, just before the breeze of fall began to sweep through the valley. The barn quickly filled with our square bales of hay, stacked like Legos, pieced together all the way into the peak where I worked. I sat at the very apex, with my head tucked to my chest so I didn't hit it on the ceiling. I looked down the speeding elevator, where the bales were being sent up, down through the small tunnel I had left to get out and could see the last wagon was almost empty. My arms were covered in dust, bleeding and scratched like they usually were during hay season. I mouthed the last words of a fading Jason Aldean song, with my throat too dry to actually allow sound to escape. Yet I continued to work as I did every other day, with my four friends and godfather, bailing and stacking hay. My friends all played with me on the high school soccer team. Brendan was the other captain, along with me. He had short blonde hair and bright, eager blue eyes that rested

just above his giant goofy smile. He was our goalie, with wide shoulders extending into two lanky arms that had two baseball glove-sized hands attached. Today he sported a white T-shirt drenched in sweat and coated in hay dust, with the jeans to match, and tattered old black gloves to protect his callused hands. He stood well over six feet tall, towering over nearly everyone, and was my prized hay stacker, as well, because he could toss bails the necessary five or six tiers high. We'd grown up together since the age of four, so I knew well enough that the baby face was more accurate than the brute body frame.

As the wagon was wheeled back out of the barn, I stacked the final bale and wiped the beads of sweat from my forehead, attempting to clean the hay dust from my eyes. After we all had safely made the descent out of the haymow, we gathered around the tractor to collect our daily pay. Cracking jokes and laughing at the expense of one another, we began to make plans for later, deciding to meet at the Subway three miles away. I told Brendan to ride with me and check out my new sound system, proudly installed the week before when I had gotten my license. The maroon paint was bright, but the car was rusted in certain spots after my grandmother and grandfather had both driven it for years. It had been given to me as a present when my grandmother was hospitalized. Dual exhaust pipes and the other exterior features didn't make it impressive really, but the V3800 series engine imported from Japan did. My grandfather had served in the military for years and had a passion for power and speed, which must have proved genetic, as he warned me to go slow the second I could grip the keys away from him.

Dust and gravel flew as we spun out of the farm behind the other two cars of teammates and headed down the road. The warm summer breeze spread through the car as I showed Brendan the range of noises my Audiobahn subwoofer could produce. As I turned up the volume, I could feel the bass pounding in my chest, as if my heart was speaking with a megaphone. My right foot seemed to grow heavier and heavier. We accelerated down the double-lane straightaway with corn fields on both sides, the joy of adolescent invincibility forcing us both into childish grins, glancing back and forth at each another.

As we came to a stoplight, Brendan looked over to me and bellowed, "We finished early. Can you stop at my house first?"

With a smile, I looked back at the road, reached for the volume switch, and turned it up until the rearview mirror rattled from vibrations. His question turned to a smile of mutual joy. Turning left, I could see my friends' taunting looks in the mirrors. As the oldest of the group and the captain of the team, I felt some need to impress them or be first. I began to accelerate; 20, 30, 40, 50, and suddenly Brendan and I hit 70 miles per hour, travelling down the left lane of a double yellow-lined road where the speed limit was 45. We both looked out the window to point and laugh at the other drivers, quickly falling behind us into the rearview. But as Brendan's eyes met mine, the mood harshly transitioned to reality and fear. His big goofy smile turned into a look of panic, and his wide eyes looked to me for refuge. A rusted old tow truck driven by someone I didn't know was now on the right side of us, in the lane I should have been in, refusing to let my immature decision go unpunished. I attempted to hit the brakes, but every move I made he would mirror, accelerating as I would with seemingly no emotion or intent on his face.

My heart raced as the pounding music began to fade into the background; it now registered there was a car coming my way around the corner. I made the decision to fully accelerate and bring Brendan and myself back to safety; 80, 90, 100. As my Lumina screamed to over 100 miles per hour, I faced the realization that we weren't going to make it back into our lane. Just before the moment of impact, I took what seemed like forever to turn and grab my teammate's chest, as if I could protect him. I'd never slowed down enough to notice the purity of how deep and blue his eyes were until they begged of mine to save him. My car hurled towards the other coming head-on; a devastating view of a horrified husband and wife was seared into my brain as they turned backwards in their seats to shield their four-year-old daughter.

"FUCK!" I heard Brendan scream as I jerked the car to the left.

For a brief second, everything was serene and euphoric as I floated above the car, watching the collision. In and out of reality, I could barely endure the scene of the two panicking, terrified parents as their gray hair became quickly disheveled in a rushed, last-second effort to save the precious cargo strapped into the car seat behind them. I saw the veins streak across the man's forehead and down his neck as he screamed at me through the glass. The mother

covered her mouth with one hand as she reached backwards helplessly, explosively bursting into tears just as the metal began to screech off each another.

Why didn't I tell Mom and Dad I love them?

I left for work without giving my niece a hug before she left for preschool.

I just killed my best friend....

The impact of the colliding vehicles propelled Brendan's head into the windshield, spraying shards of glass throughout the interior. We spiraled out of control through a telephone pole and into nearby trees. The ear-piercing noise of twisting steel and the screeching of locked-up tires was outmatched only by the ringing in my ears from the airbag that had snapped my head sharply back into the headrest. The 30-foot tall pole lay snapped completely in half, and the wires draped over my car, hissing and sputtering sparks into the air.

It's said that in life-threatening moments, adrenaline can allow you to unlock every shred of muscle in an effort to protect yourself. Before my car ceased spinning, the magnitude of what I'd done set in, along with the immediate guilt of being unscathed aside from the glass poking out of my head and neck. Terrified for Brendan and the family, I forced my left fist into my right palm and used my elbow as a battering ram to knock my dented-in door off its locked hinges. Before exiting, I turned to Brendan. Red liquid streamed down from his hairline into his eyes and onto his dirty white shirt. The powder from the airbag stuck to the blood on his forehead and oscillated in tributaries that flowed over the bridge of his nose, down his cheeks and lips, to finally drip onto his now red shirt. He groaned in an attempt to roll over towards me and exhaled one breath, as if he'd been under water for five minutes, and gestured with his one free arm to check the others.

I exited my car, leaping over two hissing power lines and sprinting across the road to the crippled-looking SUV. Twisted steel pressed into the passenger seat. I observed the car in a panic, first running to the passenger door that had been smashed in from impact; there was no movement in the car, most noticeably absent in the back from the seat that no longer sat strapped in place.

"You killed them!" the husband shouted as he rushed his way around the opposite side of the car, struggling to try and free his princess from the backseat.

My head darted up as his words harshly affirmed my

fears, and adolescent innocence was stripped from my life for good. I began trying to rip her door open, stopped only by the husband grabbing my shoulders to tear me away. Our eyes met, and I could see the mix of rage and fear in his eyes.

“What the fuck were you thinking!?” he pleaded with hands on his head, as if exhausted from running a marathon.

“I’m calling an ambulance!” he screamed, his voice breaking as tears started to overcome his anger.

I put my hands on my head as the husband had done and looked into the sky for an answer, finding nothing but anxiety from the sound of bass still playing in my car, where my best friend lay bleeding. I looked back to see the damage to my car, astonished and guilty to be alive. The white smoke slowly turned to darker gray and bellowed from underneath my folded hood, floating off into the darkened evening sky. Through the shattered back window, I noticed Brendan’s massive frame slowly move around, crunched into a position where his knees met his chest. He was unable to get out of the car, which now rested 15 feet off the road under a tree and three tangled power lines. Half of the pole lay beside the car; the dent it made extended halfway into the car, through my gas tank. The windshield was completely shattered, but most of the real carnage showed on the passenger side; no longer was there a headlight, wheel, or really any recognizable parts. I couldn’t believe how lucky I was to be alive until I saw the five-foot long tree branch harpoon puncturing the roof of the car, which shot down into the back of my headrest only inches from where the airbag had wanted me.

I was too defeated to form tears. My other teammates who had seen the crash rushed to my side, galloping over the power lines and tall grass to make sure Brendan was okay. I heard the sirens of ambulances and police cars mock me in the distance.

Should I run? --- Are they alive? --- How long will I be in jail for this?

I should be the one stuck in that car.

In a town as small as mine, everyone knew everyone, especially if you played soccer and even more so if you got into trouble. I looked down the road to the cemetery where my grandmother rested, and I prayed for forgiveness. Over the wrecked car, I could see two figures running down the road, neither in uniform. Disoriented, I began to think I saw myself rushing down the road to my aid, but I quickly broke



into tears when I realized it was my father. The closer they got, the louder the sirens became. And as my dad finally wrapped his arms around me, I saw the car I'd be leaving in pull up behind him.

The ambulance and police whipped in beside the totaled car and hurriedly went to work freeing the woman. Still in shock, I sat down in the middle of the road and watched the husband helplessly hope for his wife's life as I did the same. After minutes of struggling, the Jaws of Life were used to rip the bent metal off of her. The door came free, but she sat still. She didn't move. She didn't speak. Slowly, I saw her look up to her husband, and once their eyes met I could see immediate relief. Although noticeably injured with broken glasses, a bloody nose, and airbag residue covering her black dresscoat, I could tell she was thankful to be alive. The guilt was nearly unbearable as I watched them carefully lift her onto the stretcher, stabilizing her neck and back. But my worst fear was thwarted when I saw the young girl crawl into the driver's seat out of the caved-in backseats. The reunion of this family made my knees tremble, and for the first of many times to come, I heard my grandmother whispering for me to slow down.

# *Two Dogs Hounding One Another*

**John Britzzaloro**

My bedroom window recently admitted  
to being a mirror,  
and this whole time I thought that alcoholic  
was a man in my backyard.

Oh, how the Lord knows I'm tired.  
For the longest time the only ship I would sail  
was one on display in a bottle—  
sailing right into a fortress.  
Our mouth: the moat.  
Our teeth: the gates.  
Our tongue: the drawbridge.  
If this head is a castle,  
I want spears outside the throne room,  
Jesters in the courts,  
and monks in the cellars.



# *September Dusk*

David Owens

# *Summer in the Southern*

Kaitlyn E. Murphy

I miss those days so warm  
that even laying in bed  
atop the wavy blue sheet  
caused a slow pool of my  
salty perspiration  
to turn my sternum into a lake  
in a valley next to my heart,  
and paste my uneven bangs onto  
my wide, empty forehead.

Those days whose only solace comes  
from an endless walk three blocks  
down egg-cooking tar to the station  
and hopping on a train-any train  
with a climate controlled by  
an anonymous god,  
salvation for hundreds of Queensland children  
baptized as the doors fold open.

Sitting in antarctic seats  
staring through my own pupil floating in the window  
onto the ever-passing suburbs  
mindlessly as houses pass with time  
No final destination, but to be a passenger  
at the mercy of the timetable,  
escaping the Island's sun.

# *One Day the Earth Took Me*

**Kathleen Hardiman**

One day the earth took me.  
It started with a fall  
tripped over a rock, and the earth took me.  
Normally I would have laughed it off and went on with my  
day.  
But I stayed sprawled on the ground.  
Everything silent  
I could see people trotting over to me  
I assume they asked if "I was ok"  
I heard nothing.  
I was too preoccupied by the clouds dancing in the sky.  
Too enveloped with the smell of deep solid air  
feels like I've never breathed in before in my life.  
My hands wrapped around freshly cut grass  
my breathing slowed.  
Breathing in the bits of cloud and exhaling it right back out  
heavy water go in and out.  
See kids running to get a teacher's help but I didn't tell them  
to stop.  
Everything is slowed.  
Lay in rays of the sun  
closed my eyes and lifted in to the sky,  
fingers enlaced in the smooth scratchy grass  
I let it all go.  
I know I dreamed I couldn't tell you what.  
When I felt water falling on me  
I thought it was rain or maybe even snow in the middle of  
spring.  
My friend woke me with a bottle of water  
raised with a jerk, water falling off me.  
I left a part of myself in the earth.  
I think I can't remember my dream because the earth took it  
like it took me.  
And I never asked for it back.



# *Abandoned*

Hannah Joy

# *Fabulous Faye and his Fantastic Finale*

MK Cornfield

Arlo Faye walked to the middle of the stage hidden behind several maroon velvet curtains. The curtains separated, the lights turned on, and Arlo saw his shadow. Emphasized by the bright lights, his back was hunched, his knees bent together.

*Well, he thought, I'm not seventeen any more.*

Arlo straightened when he looked again at his shadow. The tall, black top hat that rested on his head gained him several inches in height. He had worn the same hat for the last fifty years—at every show, at every performance. It had faded in color, and Arlo had patched the small tear in the fabric with a single square of red.

“Hello, everyone!” Arlo shouted toward the theater, taking his bow. “Welcome to my very last magic show.”

The crowd applauded. Arlo stood, his hands raised above his head, his right hand holding a small, black wand. It was slightly bent in the middle from years of use.

Arlo performed his act. He performed with grace and dignity. He made a butterfly flutter out of a small, black box that had been empty before. He caught a bullet in midair. He hypnotized a dog to believe it was an alligator.

In the end, Arlo took his final bow. He heard the roar of the audience and, when the lights slowly rose up, he looked at last into the crowd and saw that every seat was empty.

# *Obsolete*

Luke Parsnow

The driver's door on Amos's car squeaked as he opened it to get out, grabbing his suitcase from the passenger seat. He saw some peeled rust fall to the ground as he slammed the door.

"Hey Amos, maybe you can use some of your retirement money on a Corvette or something," said a joking voice behind him.

Amos spun around to see Brett walking toward him.

"And get rid of that? No way. Don't make them like that anymore," Amos said smiling and the two shook hands.

"You ready for today?" Brett asked.

"Sure am," Amos said as the two started walking toward the entrance to the building.

Amos saw Julie, the secretary, sitting at the desk as they walked inside.

"Hello there, Julie. How are you today?"

Julie smiled when she saw who walked in the door.

"Just fine, Amos. Thank you."

Amos walked through the office, saying his usual "hellos" to everyone.

"Hey Jack. How's the kids? Hey Martha, I like your dress. Hey Sue, how's your father-in-law doing these days?"



When that was all over, Amos went to his desk and sat down, tugging off his brown plaid suit. Then he rubbed his hands to try to soothe the arthritis and worked.

\*\*\*

They threw a party for him. Nobody could miss it. Even Dan, who had needed to go to the bank before it closed, and even Hannah, who had to catch a plane at four the next morning. Amos was the popular one in the office. Everyone loved him. He was the kind of guy that you met for the first time and instantly became your best friend. You just didn't know people like Amos anymore.

After the gifts and toasts were given, the festivities ended, and everyone gave their last best wishes to Amos before departing. Amos was the last one to leave, collecting the last things from his desk. He checked his pocket watch, then lifted his box of things, glanced at his desk one more time, and began walking toward the entrance.

Then he saw it next to the main door. They must've dropped it off. The damn machine that Amos had dreaded for months now was in a box with sealed wrap around it.

Amos knew he wasn't retiring. He wasn't being let go.

He was being replaced.

Its circuits could move faster than his tired hands. Its hard drive could move faster than his mind.

Avoiding the urge to kick the box, Amos put his head down and rushed out of the door, nearly dropping his own box in the process.

On Monday morning, the machine had been installed. But it didn't ask Julie how she was, it didn't ask Jack how his kids were, it didn't know what Martha was wearing, and it didn't know that Sue's father-in-law was in the hospital.

When turned on each morning, an automated voice said, "Working."

That's all it knew to say.

# *Social Media*

Abigail Allen

Into the building they bring me—  
cuffed and chained to myself.  
I walk past the open doors where I  
see the other prisoners:  
women and men who slam books  
against their faces, over and over  
and over, blood sloshing and bone  
cracking as they scream and cry and sob  
and rot.

“Like me! Like me!”

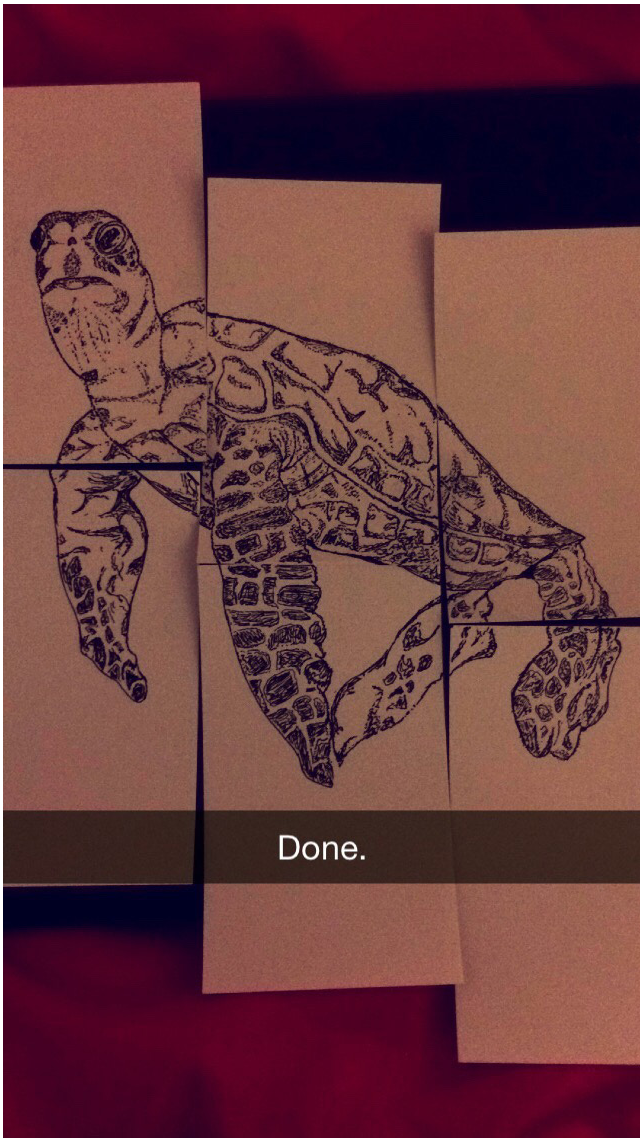
They screech and bleed.  
No nurse can stop them—  
they are too far gone.

And then the ones who climb towards  
the ceiling, wretched cries and squawks  
like birds—their twittering and tweeting  
scratching and scraping against my ears.  
Some others, the tumblers they call them,  
are trapped against the wall, eyes wild  
and dark as they strain against the bonds,  
ready to cast themselves down the stairs,  
down

down

down

into the pits  
where the others prick themselves  
and pin themselves, thin little needles  
driving down deep into muscle  
that squirms and wriggles like  
a convulsing brain fried and boiled.  
And they stuff me into the place  
with all the rest—they leave me  
chained against the wall,  
slamming the books into my face,  
sticking the pins deep into my skull  
and say, “Welcome to paradise.”



Done.

# *World of Snaps*

Christopher Gomez

# *Minotaur*

**Andrew Kowal**

It was part bull and all man.

Flooded with testosterone, it hit puberty in three days, then ran around Crete goring and eating people.

Yet, King Minos couldn't kill his abomination, his wife's child.

He asked Daedalus, the artificer, for a prison.

Daedalus built a maze of black stone, the size of a city.

At the center was the Minotaur's man-bull cave; it had the

surround sound entertainment system, the loaded mini-

fridge, and a throne chair hewn from the same black stone.

The Minotaur waited in comfort. For its seventh and fourteenth birthdays each, the beast feasted on seven maidens and seven boys.

At twenty-one, the Minotaur was having another average day: drinking beer, pumping iron, watching porno.

The door creaked open. He looked to see a strong youth holding a sword.

He snorted, put down his can.

"Who the fuck are you?"

# Hairy

Mollie Clark

By the time summer came around the hair on my legs was an inch long. I always knew that my hair grew fast and with purpose, but I figured it would take longer than a couple months to turn into a wolf-woman. It must have been my insistent shaving, starting at age eleven, occurring every morning at 6:00 a.m. for the next seven years that left those hairs anxious and ready to see the light of day. All that time they had been brooding and planning and plotting and building up to the moment when I would let my guard down and they could revolt against the razor and be known to the world.

When my legs were silky smooth I would rub them together under my silk sheets every night like a cricket. This activity desisted for the few weeks that my leg hair was growing out, but once that brief period of discomfort was over the hair was long enough to be soft and smooth like fur and I quickly became fond of it.

My mom kept her mouth shut for longer than I expected her to and my dad didn't even notice. It wasn't until my photo shoot in late June that my mom actually communicated her discomfort in words: "It's an underwear ad, Elizabeth. Why don't you clean yourself up a bit and show some pride?"

I did make one attempt after surveying myself in the mirror without my shirt on and seeing the hair underneath my arms. It's funny; I was so busy taking note of the growth in my leg hair that I had forgotten other parts of my body could get hairy. And hairy they got.

My mom placed a razor on my bed that I gingerly picked up and took out of its packaging with shaky hands. As soon as I pushed the bathroom door open I could smell the blood and knew I had made a mistake.

Ally on the tile floor, covered in red, ripped up and torn open with a note on the counter top. In a panic, I reached for

the door but my hands were covered in sweat that sent me slipping back—back onto the bloody floor with my sister. In a scramble, I threw my hands up a second time and made contact with the door knob. With a shallow breath I threw myself out of the room, slamming the door behind me and shaking my head. Make like an Etch-A-Sketch, I told myself. Shake, shake, shake until that image falls apart.

That afternoon I drove with my mom to a studio in the city. I did a shoot for Aerie once about a year earlier and it was almost glamorous. They only ended up using one of my pictures in the fall edition of their lame mail catalogue, but they did treat me a lot better than JCPenny and those other Sunday flyer ads. It kept me just interested enough to let my mom sign my agent for another two years.

Long Legs Lizzy, my agent, Karol, would call me. “Don’t call me Lizzy,” I always muttered back.

When we got to the studio I was privileged enough to spend some quality time with said agent who sat next to me in the dressing room, typing away furiously on her Blackberry as I tried to take a nap in my makeup chair. At one point I actually turned the lights off and she didn’t say a word. Her fingers were a blur of red nail polish as the light from the phone illuminated her tanning booth complexion, outlining every wrinkle and freckle.

I was really starting to wonder where my stylist was and how long a cigarette break really takes when Karol shot her head up and threw her hand onto my shoulder. “Lizzy,” she said. “I know this year’s been a real bitch but you can’t let it get in the way of your work. Because you’re a true artist and when you’re on the cover of *Vogue* you’ll be able to look back at this experience and see how much it made you grow. Because artists, they’re plagued with hardship. Drugs, poverty...death...it’s not fair but the universe seems to always put these burdens on the backs of the talented people because they have the capacity to turn that raw emotion into a hit song or a novel or in your case, some serious fashion photography. So just go out there and show them what you’re made of, girl. You’re a survivor, you know?”

I felt ready to leave. It was bad enough that my agent was spinning a soap opera around my sister’s death, but there was something about the way that she kept calling me an “artist” that made me either want to laugh or to hit her.

When I finally got on set I threw the bathrobe onto my chair and walked in front of the cameras to the sound of silence. My underwear, though not particularly provocative,

could not conceal the womanhood that sprouted from the most inconvenient of places.

As my mom got into a heated argument with the director about what could be photo-shopped out and if anyone knew where I could get a good waxing, I changed and headed to the car with the hopes of dozing off in the back seat.

The next day I went to my psychiatrist, Ian. He was tall, gangly and wore half-moon glasses and liked to say things like “truly inspirational” and “deeply touching” and “I can only imagine.” He was the critic’s quote on the book jacket of my life. And, frankly, he was unnecessary and very much over paid.

“Why don’t you tell me what happened at the photo shoot yesterday, Elizabeth.”

“You already know, I heard my mom yelling at you about it on the phone.”

“But I’d like to hear it in your words.”

I shrugged and he wrote rapidly in his notebook. Blushing, I thought about what kinds of adjectives he was using to describe me and what my “case” would look like in paper and ink.

“Have you seen any of your friends yet this week?”

“No but I, uh, I’ve been planning on calling up Jess to see if she wants to chill, maybe go to the movies or something.”

This was a lie. I hadn’t seen any of my friends since school got out and I wasn’t rushing to meet up with them any time soon. When Ally was still alive, they had no interest in her. When she dropped out of school last year there was a long period of time when I would walk up from behind my friends in the cafeteria, all of them pulled close together with very serious looks on their faces; eyebrows raised, voices low, heads shaking side to side. I never actually heard them talking about Ally or the rest of my family, but I didn’t need to. I’d read the script. As long as when they saw me coming they took the cue to shrink back into their seats and let me eat in peace, I didn’t let it worry me.

It was the same after her death, only worse. They all came to my sister’s wake in new black dresses with big, sad eyes, but not one of them stayed for the funeral. After a watered down version of her autopsy appeared in the local newspaper, I locked myself in my room and watched from my window as one by one the girls would stride to my front door and my grieving mother, still in her full hair and makeup only with bags under her eyes and a constant wrinkle in her forehead, would come out to address them: *Liz is okay, you’re*

*so sweet to check up on her, honey. I'm sure she'll be back to school soon.* And having fulfilled their daily good deed they would trot back to their cars and whip out their cell phones, texting in group messages, planning that weekend's party at Ben's because his parents were out of town and *someone tell that bitch Jennifer that she's not invited and do you think his older cousin would buy us alcohol?*

Later that day, I actually did call Jess. She said she would totally love to hang out and suggested that we go to the beach and, having no good reason not to, I said that would be fine and for her to come to my house in an hour. Then I stood outside of my bathroom for thirty minutes with a razor in my hand. After ten minutes I gave up and returned to my room. When Jess came a half hour later she found me lying in my bed with the covers over my face.

She flicked the overhead bulb on and my closed eyes filled with spots.

"Uh, hey girl. Ready to go?"

She was sporting a golden tan and a big floppy hat. Her bikini-cover draped elegantly down to her mid-thigh. I rolled out of bed and threw on my swimsuit, not caring if she saw my gangly frame in the process. When I was ready to go she stared at me, her cheeks flushed, until I said, "What?"

"If you want to go shave, I'll wait for you," she said.

A year ago I would have been mortified. Out of pity for Jess, I would have run to the bathroom and shaved immediately in an attempt to let the air out of the awkward situation. But I was over that. Nothing embarrassed me anymore. So I said, "Nah. Let's go," and we left.

We laid our towels down in a sea of human bodies. Distressed women watched over crying toddlers and sunburned children ran in circles around us. A group of muscular college guys tossing a football watched us park our bags and towels.

"Looks like someone forgot to mow the lawn," one of them commented loud enough for us to hear. I saw Jess flush and turn her back to me as the men laughed like hyenas. Ignoring them, I spread out on my towel and crawled onto it, spreading out my arms and legs and letting my pores breathe. After months of embracing my dark and air conditioned room, I surrendered to the sun and was relieved when he welcomed me back with open arms.

"I'm going to the Outer Banks next week," Jess said. I opened one eye lid and squinted at her.

"You could come with if you want. Remember when my



mom took us there in, what? Sixth grade?"

Jess was sweet. I would have loved to go to the Outer Banks if I wasn't so exhausted all the time. Jess stared at me from under her shades and I kept my face buried in the crook of my arm until I thought of an excuse not to go with her.

"Oh, thanks. I'm going hiking next week though," I said. This fib came out without any thought at all. My eyes popped open as I realized that the date of the father-daughters hiking trip was actually scheduled for next week. That day in January felt like years ago. After an hour of Ally and I teasing our dad about never taking us hiking anymore, he marched into the living room and wrote in big letters on his calendar: "GOING HIKING WITH ALLY AND LIZ (PROMISED ON JANUARY THE 14<sup>TH</sup>)."

I thought of the grin this put on Ally's face and wondered if that was the last time I saw her smile.

Jess proceeded to ask me about what modeling I'd been doing and I grumbled back my replies. Not really paying attention to her, I stared at the waves as they crashed and subsided, inching closer to us with every break against the sand. People around us packed up their bags and shook out their towels to move farther from the approaching water, but I ignored them. I couldn't stop thinking about the last time that Ally and I had gone hiking. On our way up the mountain we'd seen four deer hanging around a quiet highway that cut through our path. On our way back down there were three deer sniffing at the body of one that lay in the middle of the road, blood still seeping out. Ally cried the entire ride home, her face buried in a pillow.

And then, I was wet. I looked around and saw Ally behind me, beckoning me up the beach towards dry sand. Another wave was approaching and I knew I had to move.

I rushed forward, not away from but into the water. I threw myself into one wave after the other. I knew my towel was getting soaked behind me, but I didn't need it anymore. I was sick of laying; it was time to move again.

\*\*\*

My mom must have been more shaken up by the underwear shoot than I thought because when I got back from the beach she was curled up on the couch, her face buried into the cushion and her back to the rest of her family. I sat next to her and rubbed her back. She looked up surprised.

"I'm sorry about the shoot today," she whispered.

"It's okay. Can you cancel the one for next week,

though? I think I want to go hiking,” I said.

She blinked out tears. “How about I cancel all of them?” she asked as she pulled me closer.

“But what will we do without Karol, modeling agent extraordinaire?”

She laughed and pulled me closer. I dug my face into her side so she wouldn’t see the smile creeping its way up my cheeks.

\*\*\*

I took a bath that night just a foot from where I found Ally’s body. For once I didn’t tell myself not to look at the scene as it unfolded again in my mind. Certain images suspended in time and space and instead of running back to my room, I stared back. I forced myself to remember the details—the mascara smudges on her cheeks, the scratched out sections of her note and that incredible smell. I allowed my head to float below the water’s surface where I felt warm and safe. A voice in the back of my head even suggested that I stay there forever and, although it was tempting, the voice didn’t sound familiar enough to trust.

Slowly, I pulled myself to a standing position and watched the water ripple away from my calves. I stepped out of the tub and looked into the medicine cabinet where my mom kept a collection of different razors she’d acquired for me in vain because no matter what color or brand or model she bought, they weren’t going to be used. After throwing on my bathrobe, I placed them all in her room with a note: *Trade you these razors for some bug spray and sunscreen?*

The bath had tired me out, but instead of going to sleep I hopped on my bike. My muscles shook as I struggled up hills. Sweat popped up around my brow and my breathing came quicker.

I couldn’t stay still any longer.

# Excerpt from *A Dream of U'kelhigo*

Alfred McEvoy

SOME SAY THAT DREAMING INVOLVES TAPPING INTO ONE'S HIDDEN SUBCONSCIOUS.



THE THINGS OUR RATIONAL WAKING MINDS KEEP LOCKED AWAY.



BUT I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN IT TO BE DIFFERENT."

IN MY DREAMS I TAP INTO ANOTHER CONSCIOUSNESS, A PROJECTED CONSCIOUSNESS.

I THINK MAYBE WE ALL DO. JUST THAT MOST OF US AREN'T AWARE OF IT.



LIKE SOME KIND OF SIGNAL, A TRANSMISSION. AND OUR DREAM IMAGES ARE JUST HOW OUR BRAINS INTERPRET THE MESSAGE.



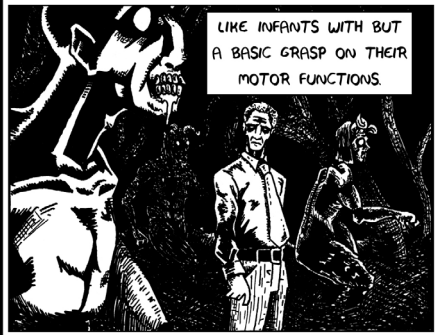
I'M NEVER ALONE IN MY DREAMS, THERE ARE ALWAYS OTHERS WITH ME.



UGLY, MISSHAPEN THINGS.

SURROUNDING ME,

CLUMSILY TRUDGING ALONG.



LIKE INFANTS WITH BUT A BASIC GRASP ON THEIR MOTOR FUNCTIONS.

I CAN NEVER QUITE MAKE THEM OUT,



DESPITE THE PRESENCE OF A FULL MOON OVER HEAD.

I SAY A FULL MOON BECAUSE IT WAS NOT OUR MOON BUT RATHER A PALLID, GREEN THING

THAT LOOMED SO CLOSELY OVERHEAD IT ALMOST FELT LIKE IT WOULD COME CRASHING DOWN ON US AT ANY MOMENT.



THOUGH THEIR TWISTED  
FEATURES APPEARED HUMAN  
IN THE DIM LIGHT

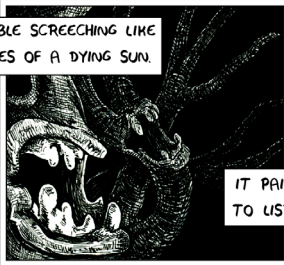


THE SOUNDS OF THEIR  
IRREGULAR STEPS WERE  
THOSE OF HOOFED FEET.



THEY MARCHED TOWARDS THE  
SOURCE OF AN OBDIOUS SOUND,

A TERRIBLE SCREECHING LIKE  
THE CRIES OF A DYING SUN.



IT PAINED ME  
TO LISTEN TO.



THOUGH I COULDN'T  
COMPREHEND THE SYLLABLES,  
I KNEW WHAT IT WAS.

IT WAS A COMMAND, BECKONING  
THE HALF MEN FORWARD.

I FOUND MYSELF CAUGHT IN  
THE MIDDLE OF THEM,



MOVING IN TANDEM AS TO  
AVOID BEING TRAMPLED IN  
THEIR WAKE.

# *Waltz of the Opium Poppy*

Aaron Golish

EXT. BUILDING ROOF TOP - DAY

We hear some traffic. We see a shady young JUNKIE (28) with greasy hair and a black hoodie as he takes a long drag off of his cigarette. He exhales smoke from his nostrils then blows a smoke ring that quickly fades into the wind. He has a somber look on his face. He throws away the cigarette butt and walks towards the edge.

CUT TO:

EXT. ADJACENT BUILDING ROOF TOP - DAY

The Junkie approaches the ledge of the building from across the street. We hear louder traffic.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING ROOF TOP - DAY

The Junkie takes off his hoodie. He wears a faded white tank top. He has several tattoos on his arms. He reaches in his pocket and takes out a bag, a metal spoon with electrical tape wrapped around the handle and a lighter. He carefully pours some of the white powder into the spoon before heating it up with the lighter.

He ties a band around his arm and uses a syringe to suck up the brown liquid. Once he

is satisfied he bites the band and pulls with his mouth.

#### JUNKIE'S POV

We see his outstretched arm. Scars line his wrist. He plunges the syringe into his inner elbow and pushes the plunger all the way in.

#### EXT. BUILDING ROOF TOP - DAY

The Junkie drops the empty syringe and releases the band. He stumbles. We hear a racing heartbeat that drowns out the other noises. It stops when he lets out a big breath.

The "Waltz of the Flowers" by Tchaikovsky begins to play.

The camera zooms out as a giant pair of wings erupts from his back. The Junkie leans forward and falls off of the edge.

The camera follows.

#### EXT. BUILDING SIDE - DAY

The Junkie smiles slightly while he falls. The wind whips through his hair.

CUT TO:

#### INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A MOTHER holds her newborn.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A stumbling FATHER bursts through the living room door, beer bottle in hand. It looks like he is shouting. He smashes the bottle on the ground and hits the MOTHER. A BOY (4) watches, cowering from the kitchen doorway.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD DUGOUT - DUSK

The Boy (now 12) is alone with his COACH. The Coach rubs the Boy on the arm. The Boy looks reprehensive. The Coach begins to unbutton the boy's shirt before he takes off his own.

As the camera pans out the Boy is seen shaking his head 'no'. Eventually all we see is the outside of the dugout as the two are no longer in the frame.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A typical goth TEENAGER (16) with black eyeliner walks up to his locker. He rips off a paper sign that reads 'FAG' that has been stuck up. As he grabs it, you can see the scars on his arm. He turns a scolding look at some nearby students that laugh at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DUSK

As he walks, the Teenager catches a surprise sucker-punch to the face from someone off-screen. The camera zooms out to the Teenager being beaten by some JOCKS.



CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

We see the bruised and bloodied Teenager walking. He is interrupted by a DRUG DEALER with his face obscured by a hood. The Teenager buys some drugs before a quick transition to a public restroom.

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM - NIGHT

The Teenager is seen taking the drugs.

MONTAGE

The Teenager is seen in various locations trying different drugs.

The Teenager smokes marijuana with others at the back of an outdoor Rock'n'Roll concert. The Teenager steals Vicodin from his Mother's medicine cabinet.

The Teenager takes a hit of ecstasy at a rave, and proceeds to dance with glow sticks amidst a crowd of people at a laser light show.

The Teenager snorts a rail of cocaine in a dirty handicapped stall. He lays back and relaxes as his nose begins to bleed.

The Teenager locks his bedroom door and takes out a glass vial of LSD. He uses a dropper to apply a few drops to his tongue. His pupils dilate as he stares at a poster on his ceiling.

END MONTAGE

INT. ROOM - DAY

The Teenager injects heroin for the first time.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The sickly looking Teenager (now turned Junkie) is shoved into the back of a police squad car.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON - NIGHT

The Junkie is locked up behind bars in a bright orange jumpsuit.

CUT TO:

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - NIGHT

The Junkie gets a tattoo on his left arm. The Man is surprisingly stone faced, no signs of pain.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING SIDE - DAY

There is a sickening crunch and splatter as the Junkie lands on a car.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The driver of the car is revealed to be the

Junkie's former Coach. Blood pools on the ground near the body. The camera zooms in on the forming blood pool as a single, white pigeon feather lands in it. The music reaches the end.

FADE TO BLACK.

# WMBDSM

Andrew Kowal

I can't hide from  
nipple clamps  
genocide  
stiletto heel  
pinned eagled, screaming  
children shot dead  
at a wall of steel  
bull-whip cracking  
skulls of forgotten citizens  
brutality, my brutality.

Mommy make me better  
you're a leather lady liberty  
my atonement and confession  
of rape from the sky  
losses we don't count, only  
brown lives, a noose  
tight on my throat  
your black gloved hand  
and all I see is blood  
shrapnel, flayed hide  
enemas plug my ass  
piss me, hit me with a

switch

now lace up my shoes  
now tighten my tie  
pin my flag  
for another day at the office.

# *Table for One*

**MK Cornfield**

Carl

She said a table for two, and the hostess sat her in my section. “He should be here soon,” she told me when I took her drink order. That was twenty minutes ago. I brought her a glass of Riesling, on the house. She was too busy checking the time on her phone to drink it. Or maybe she liked red wine better. I checked on her again, but she just shrugged and handed me the menu back. She told me she was sorry and walked out the front door as quickly as she could in heels. A one hundred dollar bill fell out of the menu. A phone number was written on it. I thought about texting her—she was cute. But instead I slipped the money into my back pocket and finished the glass of wine myself.

Evan

I set the dining room table for eight, even remembered to bring out the soup spoons from the cabinet inside the hallway closet. The house didn’t look as festive as it had last year, but it looked pretty close. The doorbell rang and people entered, giving hugs and holding food to share. I took the turkey out of the oven. It wasn’t burnt. I hoped it was cooked all the way through. My brother-in-law draped his coat on the back of a chair at the table—Julie’s old chair. He saw me looking and moved over one seat. The rest of us took our places around the table. It was like we were all playing an ugly game of musical chairs.

Anna

The elderly couple holding hands walked past her, just as they did every day. They didn’t say hi. A young woman jogged past with a stroller in front of her. Anna wondered if the woman had a baby boy or a girl. Or if perhaps she just

jogged with an empty stroller for fun. Two benches down from Anna's, a handsome man sat holding a Sudoku book making marks with a shortened pencil. He looked stumped. I'm good at puzzles, she thought and looked away, certain that she was a blank space for whom there was no right number.



21

Morgann Smith

# Perfect Vagabonds

Kevin Son

The city lights were always so luminous at night. As if to make up for the lack of visible stars, they would compensate with a radiant array of artificial aurora. Car alarms set on repeat, blaring sirens from all directions, and mundane pedestrian conversations didn't exactly accommodate the false sense of serenity either. But it was enough to suffice some perception of composure. The one thing that always proved euphoric, despite the false atmosphere the streets of Manhattan seemed to produce, was the cool nighttime air. Just taking in a deep breath near Central Park was always enough to induce some sensation of bliss.

Simply breathing smoothly, though, was a task far out of my reach at this point. Consistently chain-smoking tends to eventually restrict any ability to even take pleasure in something as trivial as breathing. Not that I was complaining. The pungent scent of nicotine was far more gratifying at that point. The people walking their dogs, jogging, or simply out for a stroll thought otherwise, though. Their looks and scowls of disgust and revolt made that abundantly clear as they passed this kid with nothing but a skateboard at his feet and pants that were way too low. Try so hard to be different, but just end up being like everybody else. It's a free country, right? If I wanted to slowly kill myself for nothing more than a few moments of brief elation, then I should be able to do so if I may very well please.

Although I couldn't help but feel some remorse when the occasional humble-looking mother would stroll past with her child kept as far away as she could get him from my general aura of fog. Who takes their kid out for a walk at 9:00 P.M. on a brisk autumn evening, anyway? I dismissed the idea that I had done anything wrong and turned the volume up on my phone.

*"The lonely stoner seems to free his mind at night /  
He's all alone through the day and night / The lonely loner  
seems to free his mind at night (at, at, at night)."*



The soothing melodies of Kid Cudi roared through my headphones, allowing anyone close enough to be able to hear what I was listening to. An odd habit, really, as if I were expecting some divine beauty to come up to me and ask if that was, indeed, Cudi I was rocking to. To which I would respond, “Why, yes. It is, in fact, Mr. Mescudi,” in the most alluring yet nonchalant tone I could muster. She would naturally be taken aback by my refined demeanor and fall in love with me on the spot, then coyly ask me to escort her back to her apartment where we would engage in the pleasures of each other’s bodies. A kid can dream, can’t he?

*“Have you ever been to heaven at night / Closing your eyes the feeling’s so right / At first you might see this one bright beam of light / Clutching your soul to the toll like the bright...”*

Rather casually, I had apparently dozed off right there on the park bench. The lyrics to the final song on the album loomed on as I attempted to register my location, all the while wiping the sleep from my eyes. The song really set the mood with its enticing rhythm and overall resonance. This was a usual routine of mine, but this was the first time I had let the sleep take over and drag me into its sweet embrace. Probably because I had burned through an entire box of cancer sticks that day. Nicotine did have a tendency of making me drowsy.

Without really caring too much, I soon gathered that my board was no longer beneath the bench. I should have known better than to have been so careless and let this happen, but it truly didn’t faze me as much as it should have. To my surprise, though, I had gained some company while in a deep slumber. A homeless man—or at least I could only assume so due to his tattered clothing, lack of shoes, distinct odor, and fetal positioning—was beside me. Of course, I could have been wrong. Maybe he just took pleasure in cosplaying as a vagrant in order to earn what little cash he could and see how many people would even give him the time of day. To be honest, I had done something along those lines in the past, just minus the stench, outfit, and obvious look of defeat. High school was a really weird stage. What was even weirder was the type of people I associated myself with; I’ve always had a bad habit of being easily convinced. Amazingly, it doesn’t take much to acquire sympathy from complete strangers. Of course, it could have just been the fact that I looked far too young to be sitting on the dirty subway floors with a face that screamed dejection and sorrow. People can be so generous when they want to be.

About an hour had gone by, but I forced myself to remain on that bench beside him out of insincere empathy. This was *my* spot, after all. I'd claimed it for several nights now. Also, there could have been a chance that this was just some rich tycoon out trying to discover at least one kind-hearted soul left in the world. Although simply thinking that meant that it was certainly not me. I was always trying to seek some kind of reward, as if I deserved the recognition at all. Like I was some saint who was far superior to all others. Almost on cue, the lyrics flowed through my eardrums:

*"And none of y'all really cared about me / Now guess what, I'm all you see, I'm all you see / This will be my world / I told you so..."*

At that point, I couldn't help but close my eyes and sing along aloud, all the while drowning in the harmonious tunes that continued to thrive in my head. I couldn't tell how audible I was outside my own little world of melodies, but it was apparently loud enough to wake the resting guest beside me. As I glanced at him sitting up, I ceased my caroling and removed my headphones, disheartened. His scruffy middle-aged face and low eyes pierced my being with a familiar look of disgust, as if he was the one looking upon a disgruntled vagabond.

Although I had been in much more threatening situations, an immense fear for my life still coursed through my body at an alarming rate. *This is where I die, this is where I die, this is where I die.* As he reached into his coat pocket, thoughts of the past began to plague my mind: What were we thinking, asking that girl out after only 30 seconds of conversation? Why did Dublin call us shallow when his girlfriend broke up with him because she liked us? We told her we weren't interested; he could have at least given us credit for that. Remember that time we volunteered to be in that school play? What the hell were we thinking? When did we get this scar on our arm? Flash after flash after flash....

Sitting there absent-mindedly and regretting every decision ever made leading up to this point, it took me a moment to finally realize what he was holding out to me: a cigarette perched lazily, hanging between two crusted fingers. Of course, I graciously accepted, not giving a second's thought as to where it had been or even where it had come from. Although I had plenty of my own to spare, the last thing I wanted to do was come off as pretentious. Especially considering that I practically reeked of a Marlboro factory farm. He then pulled out a chrome zippo lighter with what seemed to be the name "Ellie" engraved in cursive

across the surface, his fingers limply clutching it. I leaned in to ignite it, getting an up-close view of his pale face, the dirty grey hairs that formed his beard and the dark circles beneath his eyes that had been given birth to by a harsh mother known as the world. One can only imagine the kind of burdens that could have formed those spots now forever a part of his identity. I began to piece together my own interpretation of how he had ended up this way rather than ask directly and break the deafening silence.

Perhaps this “Ellie” was his high school sweetheart whom he had so desperately convinced himself he would love for all eternity. They graduated together but decided not to go to college because there was no way he would have gotten accepted into any. As time passed, her love for him wilted, since she knew that she could have done so much better. But he was completely oblivious to her inner feelings and planned to propose to her with a lighter that meant the world to him, since he couldn’t afford an engagement ring. That was what did it. She decided that she no longer loved him and kicked him out of his own place. Now here he was, sharing a smoke with this sullen kid on a putrid green rusting park bench in the city in the wee hours of the night. There was something melancholic yet transcendent about that moment. Words were unnecessary, feelings were mutual, the now silent evening served as the inaudible soundtrack. We were from two entirely different worlds, but here we were as one. Brought together by the fate of our own condescending lives, both far too naïve to take on the world as we were, inevitably paying the price for our own arrogant ways.

Or maybe his parents had just hated him enough to give him a girl’s name. I couldn’t help but chuckle at the thought. In response, he flicked the butt over my head into the grass and, with that, he candidly got up and drifted into the night air. I couldn’t help but feel as if I had destroyed something beautiful. His dazed stumbling left me feeling sorry for him. Not that there was anything I could have done to help but provide what little sympathy I could. It was kind of funny how, in that moment, I felt so connected to this person I had never even met before—especially considering the fact that he was in the state he was. We never really stop and think about what it would be like to be in their shoes or, in this case, feet.

As human beings, it is only natural to want to be happy, but not every one of us deserves such an honored privilege. Despite that, we all believe that we do. The poor, asinine nobodies that this world has produced may very well

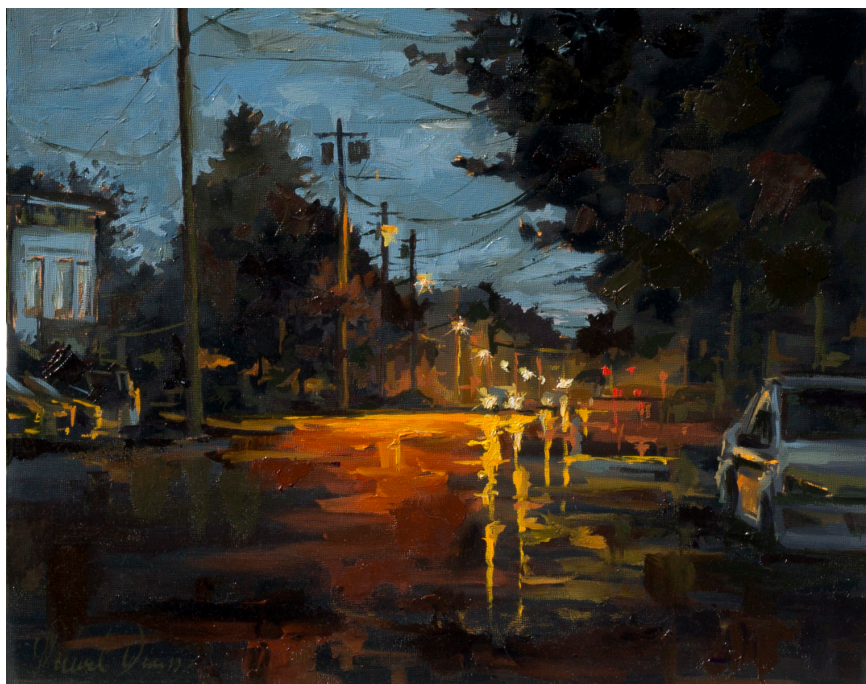
be the happiest set of people. The crazy homeless man in the subway constantly laughing at passers-by on their way to work, he's amused at the fact that everyone else is still making an effort, despite knowing there really is no point. The old woman who won't vacate her house, even though it has been foreclosed and everyone calls her evil, she's at peace knowing she will forever remain in the very house she grew up in. The candid runaway teenager whose parents had never even bothered to file a missing person's report, despite knowing he has nowhere to go, still charges headfirst into the world with a skip in his step. Those individuals have discovered the secret behind it all: Maybe to be happy, all we need to do is discard all the reasoning that we've been taught and all the norms that we've been assigned by our society. If that's all it takes, then why are so many of us still so disturbingly miserable? Is it because we're all too scared to stand up, stand out, and draw attention to ourselves...or does it just come down to acceptance? Accepting the fact that we are incapable of achieving what it is we desire most without having to give up something of much greater value. To attain complete and eternal happiness, we would first have to give up our sheer morality and all that we hold dear. But worst of all, we would have to part with our sanity. That must be why mental patients are always so immersed in their own worlds. They've discovered the secret and are paying the ultimate price. If that is the truth of the matter, then what does it mean to be happy?

As he faded just out of my vision, leaving behind a thin trail of smoke, it almost felt like the world had slowed down for a moment. Nothing remained but a blurred silhouette on an empty concrete plain. It was hard to distinguish whether he was still moving away or simply walking in place. He vanished from my story just as suddenly as he had come into it, leaving behind another imprint on the forever-turning pages. At the end of it all, we're all just left with ourselves and our fables. Feeling content, I reinserted my headphones and whispered along to the song that was on:

*"I'm on the pursuit of happiness and I know /  
Everything that shine ain't always gonna be gold / I'll be fine  
once I get it, yeah / I'll be good."*

In that moment, the familiar faint sounds of small polyurethane wheels gliding over crack after crack after crack slowly made their way past my headphones into my little world. The instant I opened my eyes, the figure of a raggedy-dressed man zipped past on four wheels, holding

his middle fingers up to the air and reclaiming his youth. Or it could have been directed towards me. The dim trail of smoke he left, once again, soon dispersed. At least he kind of said goodbye this time.



# *June After the Storm*

David Owens

# Sinking

Mareena Razik

*“Be patient and tough; someday this pain will be useful to you.”*

— Ovid

Most days I find myself  
struggling  
just to breach the surface and  
catch  
    my  
        breath.

It seems I've fallen overboard, and  
my ship sails on, on tears  
slowly running like  
rivers and steady streams into  
the too big sea.

Without the strength to push,  
and pull, and drag yourself back up  
to the breaking waves, the  
crisp air, the salt on your tongue,  
your lips, and your hair,  
what are you?

Buoyed.

Seaweed.

I have crawled.  
I have curled, and rolled myself up so tightly into a ball  
just so one day I  
might get the chance  
to      bounce      back.

I count out even breaths  
to steady my scared chest.  
The wind hasn't been  
knocked out of me;  
it has been stolen,  
ripped away from me.

This anxiety is destroying me,  
taking me  
away from me  
anchoring me  
making me somebody I  
never thought I would be.

I wait for courage in the shadows,  
but it doesn't come.  
This heart of mine has left me  
blind, and  
deaf, and  
dumb.

They say "someday"  
this pain will be useful. Well baby  
"someday" is a lot like "maybe"  
and "maybe" is a great perhaps  
in a sea of confusion and uncertainty.

I hope  
someday  
I'll understand. I hope  
someday  
I'll wash up on some white shining shores  
coated in the sandy grime of the sea. And that this pain  
will be a distant, failing memory. I hope  
someday  
I'll learn to laugh because I hope  
someday  
I'll learn that the greatest storms do pass.



# *Breakfast*

**Stephanie Caucci**

The waves came in sets of three. I timed them, holding my board, waiting for the right moment to charge the swells. The coast of South Africa is known for its amazing waves and freezing cold water. My wet suit clung to my skin, insulating body heat as best as it could against the morning wind. Other surfers were starting to arrive at this secret spot. Only the most serious and experienced surfers would go due to the constant dangers and attacks.

Gripping the board with both hands, I submerged under the last wave in a set, and came up for air behind the breakers. I paddled out away from the rest of the guys. They don't take female surfers too seriously, especially not out here where people are injured every day.

I sat on my board and waited for the right wave to show them that I can handle it out here the same as them. The wind picked up a bit, forming the best set of the day. I paddled hard, about to stand up on my board, but something dark swam beneath me. I sat back on my board and the wave rolled on without me. My mind was just playing tricks. The shadow disappeared.

Surfers pass the signs every day. The monsters that lurk beneath us own these waters. We are merely visitors that are allowed to enter their domain.

Fidgeting with my ankle strap, I swore there was a large black eye staring up at me.

# Tequila

Sarah Fessler

gives her nightmares.

Always the same one, exact in every specific detail. She never strays from the twisted path she tries to run, unable to move faster than the broken-handed clock on the wall like her feet are smeared into the ground. And the war tactics she uses to escape the killer who lacks expression, no room for emotions, she fails to gain ground, hiding in the corn field every time. She says,

“Some pains you can’t escape like the glistening edge of a razor blade or the twinge of vodka slopingly sliding down your throat.”

Last night she says she dreamt of coffee.

Still, in its oversized cup and by the time you reach the bottom the coffee is already cold. She woke to its craving, the dark smell of roasted beans dragging her down the stairs. The black beverage slowly creeping into her veins, like roots tattooed across her skin, to awaken her eyelids from inside out. She says,

“Some pains you can’t escape like singeing your eyebrows on the flame of a lighter, the butane too high, when you light your cigarette. Or getting hand sanitizer in your paper cut.”

She’s always been afraid of the dark. She says,

It’s been 49 minutes, 22 hours, 6 days, 3 weeks, 11 months since she saw your ghost.

# *Here, We Sit Aside*

Jordan Bianchi

## Substitute

Charles' asthma struck yesterday. His little lungs were still weak and filled with mucus. The songs I sing to guide him to sleep each night have fallen short. It's not the constriction he feels first– it's the terror. So he does not rest.

Sleep has strayed far from my body. I saw him enter my room before he could tug my sheets.

“My chest hurts.” It scared him to say that out loud. Brave, yes, but utterly helpless.

My husband had been his previous mentor on this issue, their lungs the same. I sat in the chair he would have chosen, watching Charles slurp his cream of carrot soup. Below his nose it was crusty. Each metallic touch on the bowl seemed to last much longer than it should have.

Time and time again, I slipped into believing that I was stronger than his lungs.

## The Memories of Taste Buds

Vittoria broke into a cold sweat. I left the room. The war was enlisting her dreams, irrevocably twisting them into nightmares. By the time I returned, she was sitting upright, back against the wall. Barely half awake, she gasped for breaths. Her pillowcases were stained.

I sat on the bed and handed her a plate with a prosciutto sandwich. None of that cheap American stuff, the best from San Daniele. She muttered thanks as audibly as she could. One bite, and she was back.

After seventeen years of marriage, I still hadn't attained an impact as strong as her mother's, the one who treated Vittoria to the salty meat when she was young and upset.

Gently, she touched my face, then lay back under the pearl duvet.

I ached in imagining myself as the uneaten crusts, appreciated for their support but ultimately pushed aside.

## Assisted

There isn't enough jelly for my toast, if it even qualifies as toast. The bread is still mostly white. Just a small amount is all I'd need to make it go down smoother. But I don't want eyes following my strides as I cross the cafeteria to get another packet. At least, not right now.

Wanting to be alone isn't as terribly rare as most people think. Now, though, I'd prefer to be completely hidden. The occasional pair of eyes wander, finding my own— mawkish, bloodshot and tired. They never linger.

Father was alone for years. He was alone three hours ago when I was stuck in traffic and couldn't say goodbye. Did his nurses give him enough jelly for his toast? Did someone he knew look him in the eyes? Was there anyone, anyone at all?

# Eggs

Kaitlyn E. Murphy

In communion with you,  
I scramble two eggs every Sunday  
morning lasting far into the afternoon.  
I think of coffee, the paper, bacon, toast.  
Remembering our four small portions of orange juice,  
slow teardrops forming on the flat sides of the glass.  
Slowly soaking into the dreamy blue place mat,  
leaving deep navy rings of condensation with every sip.

I stare at my coffee, too shockingly bitter to drink.  
The sweet, glossy cartoon faces on the mug  
contradict the hot concoction it holds.  
You drink yours black, swallowing mindlessly while you read  
the paper, delivered at exactly six oh eight AM  
You hand me the funnies, the only section painted with color,  
once you finish laughing.  
I wait wide-eyed for the only section I read,  
I want to laugh with you.

The dishes pile in the sink,  
my mother finishes her meal, she gets up,  
starts clearing the table, cleaning our rest-day breakfast.  
My father stops her, he cleans it himself, leaves us to enjoy  
the smell of fresh newsprint and crisp, cooling bacon  
as we sip our coffee with inky grey fingers.  
Everything black and white.

In communion with you, I scramble two eggs.  
Sunday morning, lasting far into the afternoon.  
I put my lone plate on the table,  
wobbling on its shaky white legs.  
Twiddling my thumbs while I wait,  
water for coffee still boiling on the stove  
in a hundred and thirty year old house  
you'll never see.

White and pale yellow mounds stare up at me,  
steaming and soft, salty next to a pool of catsup, sticky and  
red.

The water boils frantically as I read last week's news  
on a computer screen. The dishes piled high in the sink,  
waiting.

Sunday morning magic taken into my own hands,  
a ritual I continue without witness.

# *District Attorney of Secrets*

**Seaumus Lyman**

I seek through the pages of the large, heavy book on my desk. Flipping through it, I see that the golden edgings on the pages are wearing away. It is a fresh reminder for what had happened in the city often called the American Rome.

I close the book, the pages collapsing with a thud. I remember all the faces I saw in there, bodies of unsolved murders from the past 20 years. Memories of each seep back into my mind.

The second one is my favorite as it had the most interesting story. We think the suspect is a male in his late 40s. He kidnapped a young woman named Jill and tortured her for days until she was dead.

I hear a loud thud come from the other room.

I take the book and place it in the bottom of the drawer to my desk. My phone rings.

“Hello?”

“Hey Mack, it’s me,” David, my right-hand man says.  
“Everything is cleaned up down here.”

“Sounds good. Torch the place,” I say.

“Copy that chief.”

David hangs up and I take off my suit jacket, hanging it up on the coat rack behind the door to my office. Another thud comes from the room next to my office.

Grabbing my briefcase, I leave my office as the thuds became closer to one another. I quickly turn to the left and put the skeleton key in the lock for the door next to my office.

It unlocks with a heavy click.

The room is dimly lit and, on the other side tied to a chair, is the mayor. He sees me and squirms in the chair, trying to break free. I walk slowly to the table beside him, placing down my briefcase. I open it, revealing my impressive collection of knives.

I pull out a large one; it shimmers in the light. I slit his throat, ending that quickly. I pull out a disposable camera. I need to add one more to the collection.



# *When Life Gives You Lemon*

Rebecca Rowback

—Inspired by Alex Lemon

My rat thinks I'm not going—  
The man in the business suit

Screeching like a bat on meth  
—A battered baseball bat—

The bus multiplied, it had trip-  
Lets, and died during bus-birth.

I don't want you here—  
Not yet.

It is much too graphic; Flashed  
Until the flooding has subsided

Hire a professional, she said,  
It has an exit only sign—

And then the day is nothing,  
But a little bite of my head.



# *Arabian Adirondack*

Hannah Joy

# *What Happens After*

**Angela Anthony**

INK

Drew sat in the desk to the left of me. I never actually spoke to him, except for the day that he asked me for a blue pen. I only had black. Instead of taking it, he spent the rest of class not taking notes, looking out the window.

It wasn't on the news, students found out through rumors. I wonder, when Drew was about to do it, if there was a moment where he thought, should I or shouldn't I? The way he thought, black or blue?

Mr. Miller assigned an article about medieval punishments, but in the pictures I saw Drew hanging from each black noose.

LIAR

I have nothing more to look at. I've already counted the stitching in both chairs we sit in, I've pictured the days she received her social work certifications that hang on the wall, and I've rearranged the bookshelf in alphabetical order in my mind.

"You can trust me," she says every session. I almost hit her.

The night before, he kissed me on the forehead.

"Goodnight princess, I'll see you in the morning."

I never got to see him. Mom saw him in the bathtub and made me wait outside for the police. When we could view the body, his eyes were closed. He never saw me.

## KICK

At first this was a typical homicide case. Husbands that have been shot by their wives are common cases. Our team went to work, fingerprinting and collecting DNA samples, while I measured blood spatter patterns. When we put the information together, we were baffled by the results, and the case came to a close.

That night I dreamt of a woman coming home to find her husband dead on the floor with a gun in his hand. She falls to her knees, leaving tears and fingerprints all over his shirt as she sobs and shakes him to wake up.

When a beginner uses a gun, the recoil force kicks back, usually jabbing the person in the chest. She didn't have that experience because the first and only shot she ever took was pointed at herself.

# *Listen, Please*

**Jennifer Moss**

My grandmother never did lie, she said:  
In order to lose one's self you would've had to have first  
found it.  
At age eight, I only felt the words swish around in my head.  
I wonder what she would say to me now?

In order to lose one's self you would've had to have first  
found it.  
Dig deeper into the ground, soil your hands.  
At age eight, I only felt the words swish around in my head.  
Thirty years of hiding behind closed doors, I weep.

Dig deeper into the ground, soil your hands.  
Maybe when you fall it won't feel the same.  
Thirty years of hiding behind closed doors, I weep.  
Tomorrow it won't hurt, nana.

Maybe when you fall it won't feel the same.  
Alzheimer's took your memory, but it didn't steal your spirit.  
Tomorrow it won't hurt, nana.  
Can I ask you a question?

Alzheimer's took your memory, but it didn't steal your spirit.  
Did you recognize my face as I read to you?  
Can I ask you a question?  
Same sized palms, don't let go just yet.

Did you recognize my face as I read to you?  
Because I swear your eyes said yes.  
Same sized palms, don't let go just yet.  
Behind the clouds there is eternal sunshine.

Because I swear your eyes said yes.  
My grandmother never did lie, she said:  
Behind the clouds there is eternal sunshine.  
At age eight I only felt the words swish around in my head

# *Maria's*

Jordan Dedrick

(JACKSON sits at a table in a fancy restaurant, he is agitated. Melony sips from a glass of wine occasionally.)

JACKSON

Why are you always late? Don't you know how much that drives me crazy? You ask a person to be somewhere at 5:30, don't you think that they would be there at 5:30? I mean, it's ridiculous that I have to sit here and wait around like I have nothing better to do with my life. What do you think? You've been pretty quiet.

MELONY

I don't particularly care for Cabernet. I don't think that it's anything special. I just think that people think they sound fancy when they order it.

JACKSON

Don't people understand the importance of punctuality anymore? If I came to my job late, I would be fired.

MELONY

I think I like white wine better.

JACKSON

I can't order anything until the rest of the table arrives. Some places won't even let you sit until everyone is there. You're left

standing looking like some idiot with friends who can't be bothered to show up on time.

MELONY

I have to use the bathroom.

(MELONY stands from the table and exits Stage Right. DARLA enters from Stage Left and takes Melony's seat.)

DARLA

Sorry I'm late. Traffic. Oh, you ordered me a Cabernet. Thank you, honey.

(LIGHTS OUT.)



# *Coming or Going*

**Mollie Clark**



# *Sullen Moon*

**Mareena Razik**

Ontario Series #2 by George O'Connell

a blue-black sky,  
a pale moon;  
    both           faded.  
    moon  
lowly  
    hanging  
half on the  
    horizon  
half  
sunk  
sullenly  
    in  
    the  
    sea.

the gulls swim  
on sand colored shores  
their soft squawking suddenly-  
sweet sounding.

their white wings are  
washed  
within the waves  
where heaven and earth  
    (e m b r a c e)

crashing, lapping up the great grains  
of mud and dirt  
getting back to the basics,  
original stasis.

where were we  
when the waves first started crashing?

fighting, for  
evolution coming too quickly,

fingers at the ready, no  
not fingers  
just something closely resembling...  
back to embracing  
question:  
how does one  
manage  
to support the other?  
answer:  
in the thin,  
                  [controlled]  
strokes of a painter and  
his brush just  
sitting by a lake.

it may be late  
but he can still see  
the purple beauty  
of the night  
just as clearly.

beauty it would seem  
is not all  
about the light.

# *Inexcusable*

**Angela Anthony**

We stare in the mirror at my stupid dress. Mom smiles and is about to tear up. Gross. “I’ve been waiting for this day for years. You look beautiful. The Young Ladies Academy would be foolish not to accept you. I know you won’t let me down.”

This bubbling feeling starts, and my stomach roars. I look around the dinner table to see if anyone heard it. My sister politely eats her food while my Mom talks with the Academy Mistress, buttering her up with any story she can about me. I take a big breath.

I try to ignore the roar and bubbling, so I take a big gulp of water. It settles for a moment then my eyes begin to tear. The roar rings in my ears and the bubbling moves up my body.

“Ava!” Mom’s glare pierces through me. “You were just asked a question, dear,” she looks toward the Mistress.

Beads of sweat on my forehead are the only movement at the table as everyone sits still, staring at me. I’m holding my breath until my sister gives me a swift kick under the table.

I burp long and loud, like in an exaggerated sitcom.

I close my eyes and hold my breath for a long moment. Mom’s face turns the color of what I assume my butt cheeks will look like tonight after a nice spanking, then I see the Mistress crack a smile and hold a chuckle.

“Mistress, may you please pass the pepper?”

# Ghosts

Andrew Kowal

“Mommy, it’s Opa! He’s calling from heaven.”

My little cousin, Jennifer, was playing with the old rotary phone.

“That’s great, Jenny,” Aunt Mary said. “What’s he saying?”

“They have a really big garden with giant tomatoes!”

She pressed the phone to her ear and waddled off to the back of the basement, cord dragging behind her.

“Emma, will you watch her?” Aunt Mary asked.

“Sure,” I said.

The adults filed upstairs, and I dropped myself on the sofa and kicked off my black heels. My feet hurt after standing at the burial so long. I was tired all through and rubbed my eyes.

When I looked up, Opa was across from me in his armchair. I shouldn’t have believed it, but that was where I was used to seeing him. I still heard Jennifer talking into the phone.

“She’s so silly,” he said, beaming.

\*\*\*

I had this number. She’d handed it to me, didn’t even have to ask.

My friends said five years was enough time; said I shouldn’t keep pictures in the hall, in the kitchen, on the nightstand.

Maybe if I could fill my head with pictures of this other woman, like her smile, her heels, those tights, her ass, and

the way that necklace tickled her cleavage...

I saw Karen on my bed. I shrieked like a little girl, but she just laughed warmly.

She said, "Greg, I won't be happy until you're happy."

\*\*\*

Hadn't seen the guy since he relocated to Portland; hadn't kept in touch. That made it, what, three years holding on to his book?

But I got to the place, and Leon was at my table. Weird. He waved. Frankly, he looked a lot paler than I remembered. I swore his hand was tinged blue.

"Hey man! How has it been out west?" I asked, sitting down.

"I've been fine. Went bungee jumping once."

"Really? Awesome."

"Yeah, you learn things about the tensile strength of rubber."

"Haha, sure, sure," I said.

"Are you still reading that?"

"Yeah, almost done! I can bring it to you tomorrow."

"I need it now."

"I'm like a hundred pages to the end."

"I'm still on page 354. It's my book, I need it back."

"But—"

"Dude, just give me the book."

"Uh, okay."

I handed it to him. Then he opened to page 354 and disappeared entirely.



# 20/20

**Angela Anthony**

She was accustomed to the way she saw the world blend together in a hazy, obscure way. Terrified of contacts and hateful of her reflection when she wore her glasses, she chose to see the world in her own alternative, only wearing the glasses for class.

One day, a professor had class outside. She hovered her glasses a few inches from her face, looking back and forth at the world through the lenses and not.

Through her eye, the grass fused into one massive green blanket; trees had large heaps of ruffles that only turned to leaves once they hit the floor. Stars gleamed and intertwined with one another, and clouds filled the sky with unclear abstract art.

When she was home, instead of seeing the bruises on her younger sister, the cuts on her arms, and her Mom's shattered glasses of wine, she blended her surroundings together and saw a world that was bearable to live in.

Through the lens, each blade of grass stood individually. Leaves pushed against one another. Stars shone different shades of light, and clouds showed depth and texture.

And before her vision became more clear and intact, she removed the glasses from her face and crushed the lenses under her shoe.

# *Two Weeks Before She Found Out She Had Cancer*

**Angela Anthony**

They snipped the last bit of my hair off to create my 8th donated wig and I smiled, knowing I was helping someone less fortunate than me.



## *Ocean City*

Hannah Joy



# *Sex Ed. with Candy and Mary*

Katelyn Bauersachs

INT. BEDROOM-DAY

CANDY(21), a confident, horny, seductive hooker is making a sex Ed film with her sister, MARY(19), a religious, youth group leader. Mary is wearing a white turtle neck, Levi jeans, and a cross around her neck. Candy is wearing a skimpy sequin dress.

They are setting up Mary's computer for their first test shoot of Mary's webisode for health class.

CANDY

Aright babe, you ready to inform your classmates of all the dirty, nasty details of the lovely thing we call sex?

Mary is blushing and looks annoyed.

MARY

Candy we aren't making a porn, we're educating the youth of all the risks that come with sex.

CANDY

Oh Mary, you're such a baby. Let's just get this shit done, I have an appointment at eight.

Mary Laughs to herself and rolls her eyes.

MARY

An appointment, ha! You mean you have to meet some sleazy guy for

sex?

CANDY

I'm sorry how else do you expect this roof to stay over our heads, when mom and dad died, their will stated I was to take care of you. It didn't state how I was to provide for you.

MARY

Whatever, the camera's ready, lets go.

Mary pushes the record button on her computer and sits behind a desk with Candy that has an assortment of sexual items on it.

MARY (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Mary and this is Candy, today we will be informing you on the risks and dangers of sex as well as proper ways to practice safe sex. Before beginning I would just like to say the safest sex is no sex.

CANDY

Or the safest sex is on a stable surface..

Mary shoots Candy a dirty look.

CANDY (CONT'D)

What? It is! This one time me and a cli... I mean my boyfriend were doing it on the trampoline and things got a little out of hand, and the next thing I know I've been bounced off and landed in a huge pile of mud!

Mary fidgets with the collar of her turtle neck and thinks of something else to say.

MARY

Anyway...thank you for that lovely story, Candy. But I would first like to start off with the different ways the Lord has provided us to practice safe sex.

CANDY

Ha, the Lord? Ya the Lord totally was like "hey I'm totally going to invent these rubber balloon things to prevent pregnancy and STDs", I don't think it was the Lord Mary..

MARY

The Lord creates everything with our best interests in mind, besides you, I don't know what he was thinking when he said "and let there be Candy"...Moving on, as I said the safest way to prevent pregnancy and STDs is to not have sex, at all, ever, but if you do choose to, the Lord has some other options for you.

CANDY

Jesus Christ no sex? Ever? No wonder you're so bitter all the time. Girl you need to get laid, and soon.

Mary is now furious with her sister, she is refraining from blowing up on camera.

MARY

No Candy I don't. And don't use God's name in vain. With sex comes great responsibility. As I was saying if you choose to have sex make the smart decisions the Lord would like to guide you to. Like using condoms, which can be purchased at a local convenience

store which will protect you from both pregnancy and STDs.

CANDY

What's next, did the Lord create birth control in his pharmaceutical cloud way up in the sky?

MARY

Good point, Candy. As well as condoms, birth control is highly effective in preventing unwanted pregnancy, the Lord and I highly recommend it.

CANDY

For the love of God would you cut the religious shit out!

Mary jumps up and runs over to her computer and turns off the camera. She is enraged with Candy.

MARY

Oh I'm sorry that I find a need to believe in a higher power when I'm stuck living with someone who thinks the ocean is salty because it's filled with whale sperm! Or that my "guardian" thinks the oven is for closet space and not cooking, or maybe because my "guardian" is a fucking hooker!

CANDY

Oooooooooooooooooooooo, you said a bad word, how will the Lord ever forgive you? Oh wait he won't, you've never even stepped foot in a church.

MARY

I'm not worried about the Lord forgiving me, you however I am sure will never be forgiven. Humping men

like a horny chihuahua isn't  
exactly a respectable profession.

Candy is looking at the computer in shock.

MARY (CONT'D)  
What's wrong?

CANDY  
Ummm did you mean to submit our  
first video to Youtube?

MARY  
What no!

CANDY  
Well, it's somehow on here, and we  
already have 800 views. Some guy  
commented saying he wished the Sex  
Ed class he took in high school  
was more like ours.

MARY  
Oh no, the Lord is never going to  
forgive me.

# *Baby's First Curse Out*

**Angela Anthony**

Mommy thought that it was chocolate ice cream that was on my finger.



# *End of the World*

**Hannah Joy**

# *Shift the Rails*

John Britzzalero

I've written my name  
in the dust that coats your windowsill,  
so each time you look  
out of the glass, you  
know which pair of eyes to avoid.

You see,  
these same eyes  
read into your story  
so many times  
that the  
bindings  
    fell  
        off.

and the words that run parallel across its pages  
are the rusted train tracks to which I'm tied.