



# STILLPOINT

University of Georgia  
undergraduate literary magazine

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## To the Reader

Since 1967, Stillpoint has served as a forum for undergraduate writers and visual artists. The pieces featured in the 2011 issue of Stillpoint Literary Magazine were selected from a pool of blind submissions. Names are omitted during the selections process and individual staff members do not judge their own work. Thanks to the particular caliber of UGA's community of writers and authors, determining the content of this year's magazine was no easy feat. Between these covers are works selected from a record number of submissions: over 400 pieces from more than 100 writers and artists.

Fans of the magazine may be interested to learn that the works of three UGA writers featured in last year's magazine were selected for publication in the Bennington College anthology, plain china: Best Undergraduate Writing 2010. The poems of Reid Bateh and Sarah Conkin, as well as my own short story can be found online at [plainchina.bennington.edu](http://plainchina.bennington.edu).

For more information about upcoming Stillpoint readings and events, submissions guidelines, and staff applications, please visit our website: [www.uga.edu/stillpoint](http://www.uga.edu/stillpoint).

Devon Young  
Senior Editor

## RACHEL BRENT

### Company Car

Local man killed in freak industrial accident.

Crushed to death by a falling steel beam.

Police still investigating.

Time of death

12:02 pm.

The cherry tree blossoms and shades

Brown grass, dirt, and borrowed kitchen chair.

Petals fall on a storybook and melted popsicle sticks

Orange, purple, red.

Swim trunks dry on a line.

The tricycle in the drive has tipped but no one notices.

The company car has pulled into the drive.

## HANNAH GILL

### Dressed the Moon

I.

Act 1, scene 1: she lights the candles

Act 2, scene 3: wicks have expired, fallen, remained still charming as an unsullied soldier

Act 2, scene 5: after all but one have slowly burnt to naught, she walks out

Mother: Josephine, where are you going?

Daughter: Outside, to think.

To which replies Mother: It's too loud out there.

Responds Daughter: Loud must be quiet.

*Who do you want to be, Josephine?*

A lover, and two shots of whiskey.

*Do you want to be loved?*

Undecided, if the wind doesn't blow.

II.

Clean Shaven: Ride my passion?

Josephine: Woo the flowers.

Past the hour: Clean Shaven.

Satisfaction guaranteed, says Josephine.

Loving is fun if love is obsolete.

*Who goeth there?*

He did, if there is passion.

No more satisfaction and I am obsolete.

III.

Manuel: I like to surprise people when I flick my lights on in my car.

Josephine: My lights are automatic. Maybe I will live it up manual style.

Manuel style, suggests Manuel.

Nods Josephine: Live it up Manuel style.

He follows me in department stores.

And into my bedroom, which is next to the laundry room.

I love him, sure, like water falls, like waterfalls

IV.

Tree mango bookends

If not freedom you'll have each other

Leaping up gravel driveway, Manuel: *Te amo, linda.*

Josephine, twirling in pink skirt: *Claro, te amo.*

Manuel: If you marry me, we can't leap the way you used to.

Blindfolded: *Te amo, Manuel.*

I had a dream that I followed a little girl

On a path bordered by abyss, *peligro*

She wandered blithely and a string encircled me

When I awoke I could not soar, just like my dream, no more

V.

No hobbies and lobbies or quaint little job scenes

She wanted to make beans but had no expertise

Then she wanted to go, to sail on a boat

But there was no water, so she cried even harder

Josephine: Should I stay or should I go go?

Golden Retriever: Woof.

Josephine: You're right, this is the most I'll ever be loved.

Golden Retriever: Woof, and the wind blew.

VI.

Running out to the mango trees (because the boredom was suffocating)

She sees her neighbor, ex-hippie beadmaker, silver haired capitulator

"I don't know how to make dinner for my husband"

The pity etched in eye creases invites her in

Mexican ceramics.

Silence.

Sturdy whisk and a barstool.

Silence.

Rosemary: Who do you want to love?

Josephine, with fierce gestures and speech slow as the tide: The homeless.

Stretching her love across the counter, with fingertips, Rosemary: What part

Rosemary: Who do you want to love?  
Josephine, with fierce gestures and speech slow as the tide: The homeless.  
Stretching her love across the counter, with fingertips, Rosemary: What part  
of you is homeless?  
To which Josephine supposed: All of me, without a tugboat.

She waited under the mango trees with flan and a towel to keep it from  
flying.

## JASON LONGORIA

### Theomachy

She entered the sanctuary.

She glanced—  
    at the face of Mary,  
        maternal eyes set wet with stony tears,  
        at her  
            flowing dress and samite veil;  
    at the form of Joseph,  
        spine arched in anticipation of labor,  
        at his  
            hands, free of his own chisel;  
    at the hands of Jesus,  
        pierced through with holes,  
        at his  
            nails, and the nails.

She raised Her own hand—  
    snatched Her own chisel—  
        obliterated Mary's tears,  
        snapped Joseph's back,  
        tore fresh holes in Jesus's hands.

She smiled—  
    fell prostrate—  
        not before God,  
        but before Man.

She is the Goddess of Reason—  
    She is doing  
        all She can.



ISABEL SCHNEIDER

The Struggle (Oil on Wood Panel)



Postcard #1

The Streets

Dear Patrick,

You told me to make the most of my time here.  
That, I have found, is not hard to do.

But I wonder, sometimes,  
(as I pass monuments in pursuit of some simpler place)  
what you meant.

My mom wants to know if I have seen the David  
– or some correlation.

I have seen streets.

Sullied and sunken like bruises, swelling from one shade of shadow  
to another of dirt and dust but always pulsing and hot.

These streets smell.

Mostly of fetid waste and older things,  
a hallmark just as representative of Renaissance culture.

My friend regrets the graffiti.

I think no one would wish it there. But it settles me.  
Like all commonly human things it makes these streets familiar  
not in their beauty or grandeur or inconceivable artistic riches  
but rather in their rudeness.

The spray paint is a monument to the monuments.

Not recalling our highest achievements, not studied in centuries to come,

but an offering left to a different god,  
one marking crudely a reminder that something moved  
among us in this city, scaling walls weaving lithe lines  
between someone else's dank laundry and a shutter in need of paint.

I saw a cigarette butt burning off slowly  
on the stairs of the Santa Croce yesterday,  
dusting ash into the air. I wondered,  
had the smoke sung from some other incense,  
what Dante would have thought?

But since his likeness is stuck in stone behind so many foreign faces  
he probably would not have seen it.



## VIVIAN PROSPER HEDGES

### Itch

Malaise'd, you looked austere and lovely  
but then you parted your hair in the back—  
and your neck is a bare fish belly!

## DANIEL LOPILATO

### The King of Iceland

The boy woke up feeling inflated.

He closed his eyes.

I want to be king, he said.

I want to be king.

He turned nine the day before. On his birthday, he entered his father's closet without asking. He chose a king's outfit, prying coats off their hangers and dragging shirts in a trail behind him as he returned to his room, clothing balled up in a laundry basket.

In the morning, he would dress a king.

And now, in that glorious morning, he stood in front of the mirror, the bundle of clothes in his arms. He looked at his stomach, which was full of hot air, and put his hand over it. The boy's skin felt like paper, and he knew he could never be hungry again, because when you know what you must do, that hot anxiety is your only appetite. When the boy pressed his stomach, he could feel the air shift to other parts of his body, but always it came back. He imagined a swollen red balloon just beneath its surface. His skin was soft canvas spread thin; it glowed faintly.

My name is St John, he said to myself.

My name is St John and I am king of Iceland.

St John was not the boy's name, and the words felt funny on his tongue. Funny because it was so new, funny because it was so clearly the right name for him: he knew, today, Jacob would not do. Today, the boy was St John. Today he was king of Iceland.

He inhaled deeply.

This is the way you feel when you know there is only one thing to do—and you know you must do it. This is the sun wrapped in a balloon, and when you wake it's burning the oxygen around you, it's charging the air and consuming all the light in the world, it's stealing the light from everyone's eyes but yours, and it's burning a path out of ice. The king of Iceland is inhaling the balloon, and its heat is driving straight for the boy's head. Behind his eyes is purpose. Behind his eyes is truth.

First, a brown plaid coat. It hung off his shoulders, and he wore it the way a horse wears melting skin—with a certain dignity, with an air of determination at every step. Around his neck he wrapped a scarf, smelling of tobacco smoke, which touched the nape of his neck seven times and still it graced the ground. Over his stomach, St John wore an old nightshirt spilling over with mothballs, spilling over with pride. He swam in it, and it swam on him. He drew his father's trousers up to his chest and cinched them with a black belt; the belt buckle felt cold against his ribs, and the pockets dragged on his sides like a cramp. He would fill them with ice; they would remind him of Iceland. St John removed his father's pipe from a coat pocket and placed it in his mouth. He put on a pair of glasses missing one lens. He combed his hair to one side.

I am king of Iceland, he said.

Next, he thought he must know the name of every hill and every mountain in Iceland. He must know all the streets of each city, and know at least a tenth of the population by first name. He forgot the latter aspiration after consulting the encyclopedia. Instead he knew he must remember one name:

Ingólfur Arnarson.

He mouthed the words four times over, and the name felt like peanut butter in his mouth, the name of the first Norse settler, who scaled an ice volcano into hell and returned with the gift of immortality. St John would scale volcanoes to find Ingólfur Arnarson. He would scale volcanoes so he could never die, and then he would rule forever.

St John memorized the population of Iceland; he memorized the area; he memorized the staple crops. He called an airline and asked for the price of a flight to Iceland; the operator laughed and hung up.

St John estimated about one hundred dollars.

He memorized fact after fact until he felt comfortable with his knowledge—with the knowledge of an expert. He felt comfortable learning all the mysteries of Iceland. He had a poster board that folded into three wedges. In the center, he traced the shape of his beautiful homeland and colored it painstakingly green. When the boy imagined Iceland, he thought of its people fitting on the face of a coin the shape of his green kingdom, and they were all standing together on this green mass. They were all



standing together and holding hands.

St John! St John!

Yes, subjects?

We love you with undying grace.

The whole world loves you with undying grace, St John.

Your father loves you with undying grace.

You can do no wrong.

St John, your every move rings true with honesty, and we cry with joy when you speak.

St John, love yourself with undying grace.

He knew some of these were lies you tell a new king, but he knew also they were prophecies.

St John, one day the world will love you.

One day you will ring true with honesty, and at your funeral we will mourn with sincerity and vigor.

The walk to school was frigid, and the rain was cold as ice. But inside, St John burned with purpose. He burned with pride for his nation, and he protected his people with two plastic bags, wrapped and sealed—his green country, penciled onto oblivion.

The king of Iceland had already missed a good portion of his day in preparation, but it did not much matter to him. He knew he could spare not a moment less for dressing, and not a moment less for the people of Iceland. He knew he must remember Ingólfur Arnarson or he must fail, and for that, all else could wait.

He arrived to science class with a tardy note, he received a scolding, but he did not relent. At the front of the room stood a small boy, and he was holding two magnets. He was pushing them together as hard as he could, but they would never connect. He invited the other students to try, and all of them stood up in a line, and each tried, and still none made contact. When time came for St John to try, he pushed as hard as he could. He pushed until he thought he could push no more, and then the image of Ingólfur Arnarson flashed across his eyes, holding a tiny rock as he ascended the volcano. He held it close to his chest; St John felt a clink and the two magnets touched if only for a moment.

The king of Iceland performed the impossible! he cried out. The others were already shuffling back to their seats and did not hear. To St John, nothing mattered but the truth, and the truth was he could perform feats of impossibility. He sat down

with the rest of the class and another student stood up with Energizer batteries, explaining about copper and conductivity, but St John stopped thinking about batteries soon after.

The royal palace was the most grand and eloquent house in all of Iceland, built into the slope of a mountain that was always snowy. Each room had a fireplace, and skiers often complained of the chimneys that jutted out of the mountainside because they disrupted their runs. St John thought he would channel all of the fireplaces into one chimney, and then the skiers could perform with no danger. This was a brilliant idea, and he committed it to memory.

A little girl walked to the front of the room next, with a light bulb in her hand. She spoke of the filament, of electricity. She spoke of circuits and switches, and the power grid, and she mentioned names of little use. St John knew his moment was about to arrive—the moment he waited for so proudly, the moment he burned to meet. He felt the pressure in his stomach rising; it was almost unbearable, and he thought he might need to use the bathroom or vomit.

When the little girl sat down, the king of Iceland's heart-beat began to accelerate. His mind was alive with names and numbers, with Iceland's most important facts. Suddenly he wished he had memorized the entire encyclopedia entry—each and every facet of Iceland was just as important as the next. The teacher asked if Jacob was ready, and St John stood up and corrected her.

My name is St John, he said.

I am ready.

He walked to the front of the room with his board. He unfolded it carefully and set it on the table, positioning it so it could not fall over. He stood back. It was perfect, it was beautiful. The people of Iceland chanted in agreement:

You're beautiful St John!

We love you!

Your father loves you!

St John turned to face the class, diving his hands into his pocket. He was surprised to find them wet, and when he gripped for his ice cubes they were nowhere to be found. Searching for a moment, he surrendered; he refused to lose this battle to humiliation. But he found Iceland fading from his thoughts. He couldn't

hold it, and he knew it was slipping away.

Iceland, he said.

Iceland is the world's greatest country.

It is an island, which means it is surrounded by water.

It is an island composed entirely of ice.

St John began speaking faster now, and new facts he did not even know before leapt into his head.

Its population is three hundred thousand, and each person's name begins with an 'I'.

The most important person in Iceland is Ingólfur Arnarson. His name begins with an 'I' and he was the first Horse settler in Iceland.

Thinking to open the glories of his country to discussion, St John asked the class a question:

Does anyone know why Ingólfur Arnarson is the most important person in Iceland?

No response was uttered, and St John found the silence engulfing his knowledge. He struggled to remember what was so important of Ingólfur Arnarson.

Ingólfur Arnarson was the first person to climb into a volcano. There are a lot of volcanoes in Iceland, and this one was especially hot. He didn't climb in with a normal rope, but with a rope of ice. He climbed into the volcano's mouth, where nothing is solid and everything is fire.

He took a long gulp, and reached deep into his pockets, where he found his father's pipe soaked with water. Withdrawing it, he said:

This is the pipe Ingólfur Arnarson smoked when he got to the bottom of the volcano.

His heartbeat was racing.

This pipe contains the power to eternal life.

This pipe saved Ingólfur Arnarson from burning to death, because it is made of ice.

He set the pipe to his lips, and at that moment an administrator entered the room. She leaned into his teacher's ear and whispered something. The teacher shot a hard glance back at the woman and turned slowly to St John.

And then he returned to the surface of the volcano, he was saying awkwardly over the pipe.

He returned and lived forever, and he still lives there

today.

Iceland is in Europe.

Iceland is the best country in the world.

He paused.

I am king of Iceland.

He stopped. His moment was up; he had knocked it way out of the park, he could tell by the way the kids all looked at him.

If anyone wants to touch my poster, they can. Or look at it to see how perfectly I drew Iceland.

No one spoke, probably because they were so impressed, they were so dumbfounded. No one spoke because there were no words to be uttered alongside the name of Iceland.

I'm going to Iceland tomorrow for a hundred dollars.

Again, silence.

Longer silence.

Finally, the teacher opened her mouth:

Jacob. There was a pause. Can you tell us why this is not a science presentation?

St John was caught off-guard.

Because Iceland is more beautiful than batteries.

His teacher kept nodding.

I know, Jacob, but the purpose of this presentation was not to talk about beautiful countries. It was to talk about science.

Well I did talk about science, in a way.

Oh did you?

Yes. I talked about volcanoes and living forever.

The teacher had no response.

I talked about never dying and being loved by all the people of an entire country.

Thank you, Jacob. May I speak with you after class?

He nodded and sat down with his poster board, holding it close to his chest.

His mind raced—what could it be she wanted to talk about? She would probably congratulate him on the best presentation of the year. She would probably tell him his father loves him more than he could ever know. Class was dismissed in a few minutes, and he approached the teacher. She said he needed to go to the office, that they had a note for him.

Jacob, she said.

Yes.

Good luck. I hope you can be king one day.

She gave him a hug and sent him off down the hall.

When St John got to the office, his grandmother was waiting for him; this sent a shiver into his chest, and he quivered. He could feel the balance of the world was off. He could feel something was wrong.

She came close and held him, and the two walked outside.

The car was cold, and he could see his grandmother's breath as she spoke to him. Neither of them bothered to turn the heat on.

Jacob, she said softly. Jacob, your father's plane went down today. This morning—it's been on the news all day.

She sniffled and dabbed a tear from her eye with a wadded up Kleenex.

St John said nothing; he knew his father would never die.

His plane crashed inside a volcano. They say that's never happened before. They say the likelihood of that happening was less than a hundred millionth of one percent, given the number of volcanoes on the earth and its total area. I guess that means it was long overdue. Jacob, sometimes things happen that you don't expect and they seem awfully big at the time, but you have to believe in yourself and you can keep living like a normal person.

St John remained silent.

Tell me what you think, honey. You were always the silent one.

He pictured his father's plane as it descended into the mouth of the volcano, and he looked outside the window and molten rock was flowing past. All was fluid, and the sides of the cabin were turning red with heat. The man sitting next to him was melting, and his father reached into his pockets. He reached into his pocket for his pipe, but he couldn't find it. His pockets were wet and the pipe was missing. He had worn the wrong coat. How could he wear the wrong coat? The figure of a man floated past the window and had a grimace on his face. He was in pain because he could not stop living, because he had eternal life and it burned him. Your son, the king, he said to St John's father. Love him with undying grace.

The car snaked back to Jacob's house and he went

straight to his room. He took off his coat and his pants and he held the pipe to his nose. He smelled it, and he could smell Ingólfur Arnarson's breath as he spoke to his father.

The man reached through the window, and his skin was blue and cold. He took his father's hand as the plane plunged into an ocean of lava, and he left a frozen rock in his palm. The plane melted and two dim figures in a shifting world remained.

Welcome to eternal life, he said.



ISABEL SCHNEIDER | In the Passage of Time (Oil on Canvas)

REID BATEH

Noche de San Juan

Sky and sea both. Salt sticks to skin. Rearranging ions,  
there is a pattern here. My gills use only constellations.

...

To breathe in ancient battles. Wet the dead light  
through a conveyer body, overseen. Salt or stars? *Both.*

...

It's hard to tell. Stars stick to skin. Skin unseen but  
represented. A series of flicker-dots define a form.

...

Our bodies have sprouted filaments. I see hers. *Where were  
You?* A chorus of small jingles. Connects her lights to mine.

...

I've heard these lights before. *I was over there.* The dots my  
skin collects leak onto the sea's surface. Blurrier with each exchange.

...

They are too old to be crushed by conversion. Diluted...not dead.  
Their death occurs elsewhere. Just ask the Northern Fly, eaten by Aries.

...



## KELLY DOYLE-MAYCE

### Moves

it's on one of these a.m.'s, reading just like a blush  
of the times, of allowed, but unseemly fistfuls  
of a vague new cereal, a bruised banana,  
a bottled water with dents all over, a championship of breakfast,  
a 400th-meter dash for hartsfield-jackson  
w/mom shuttling, & me napping down ga 400  
w/excessive napkins, in rowdy cosmetics at a such  
pale hour of the face, over-washed down hair  
, & frankly a bit sunday-bested for a friday  
- where it's raining starved & sharklike, & I yawn but think, it's so  
humbling, how the windshield wipers are  
life-saving us & on adrenaline alone - & Mom  
is musing on fiscal things, audibly but not too much  
, w/due respect to the thunder & the talk radio  
, & I am snoozing again & again, nodding  
& having weird dreams in the back seat here, though of no note,  
& then, flash-in-pan, quick, the thickening  
of the morning, like gravy at boiling, we arrive  
at kiss-n-fly, curbside, a grab bag, adieu & adash-

it's on a morning this that, somehow, we've done it  
again, skipped curtains, skipping town like so  
, but that's just the half of it, & at this point  
it is quite mad, I'm dashing in delusions of photo-finish grandeur  
, redcheeked, kissed & immediate, I keep  
moving, keep passing to the desk & evidently,  
I'm just past the minute mark to check bags & I say  
you people, I swear - still, & although it's never  
ideal, there'll be a subsequent departure,  
& I tell them to do the needful - I am relisted, bags checked, bye.  
I am northbound in what would seem no  
time, seated, & frowning upon abject views of  
land, thinking it must be sad, the life of prospecting.

*Now?* Orion stalks his prey in my lungs. Until they both turn into salt.

and dissolve. I cough my throat into a dry crosshatch. *Not yet, two more.*

...

I look back to the beach. It burns with circle flames. People kissing fire

licked bottles. They made their light. The temporary orange kind. Full of warmth.

...

I collect mine, from cold eternity. *Alright.* Rum echoes burn my mouth with clenched

numbness. I grind my fifth wisdom tooth down to stars. Or salt. Her eyes mix our dots.

*Now!*

## CHRIS YOUNG

### Junkyard

It was a most unusual job. I'd been asked to give a price on eradicating all the weeds in a salvage yard south of Atlanta. It seems that the growth between the junked cars was home to a fair number of snakes and rats and generally made it hard for the employees and clients to find the used parts they needed. Since the gig was so far from home, I brought the water, tanks, backpacks, and herbicides I might need along for the drive in anticipation of my irresistible sales persona. Then, having convinced the owner of my nuclear capabilities, I proceeded to own the yard.

Somehow, this connected to an old fantasy of mine- to have the total undisturbed run of a junk yard. When younger, we had snuck into a few of course, for fleeting moments, always looking over our shoulders for the owner or the dog - but now, to have legitimate reason to cover and explore every inch of the ground, every car, or more precise, piece of a car- I would have done the job for free. Left alone to my work, the extreme heat of the sun, the serene silence, had me in a ritual daze before the first pass, and I melted into that transcendental line between the outside world and the pasted images of my imagination. I was given over to the opportunity to walk through the ruined carriers of steel and dreams and spray the weeds that were so abundant.

"You must find some really cool stuff here", I had said prematurely to the owner before I started. He just stared blankly. The eerie and macabre harvest of this garden quickly changed my tune. You could still hear the voices, the conversations of each house in this ghost town as the wind blew up the devils and dust. Maybe it was the sun.

Every car had a story. Many of them too gruesome to dwell on for more than the minute it took to spray around. I pushed the twisted door of a mangled sculpture to get the nettles hiding behind it. A glance at the layer of glass on the side floor

revealed the lipstick, opened, lying where it had come to rest after impact. Cassettes and CDs of the last rites, arranged in the disarray of a Jackson Pollock, lay at rest, never removed. Eighty acres of stopped dashboard clocks kept the recorded moment they were used for the final time.

I passed car after car. Those that still had windshields had the point of impact outlined, the veins of cracks bleeding away. I see a few quarters on the seat and instinctually reach for them then recoil as another part of my limbic brain tries to tell me what that dark rust-colored stain is on them. Most steering wheels have the dead mushroom of an air bag that had grown instantly and faded, painted with their individual Rorschach. My social mind tries to look away. My analyst tries to decipher the hidden symbols. My silent observer moves me to the next car. More runes. More ruins.

"All you do is spray weeds all day?" I looked up to see one of the employees out for a body part. He had the same crewcut as I. We both wore dirty clothes. His shirt had his name sewn on. My pants were tore up each side of the leg for the cross ventilation. His arms were painted in black grease, mine in a deep blue marker dye. We both squinted.

"No", I told him. "I'm just doing these small jobs until our larger season opens up. Usually I'm sitting at an air conditioned desk in clean clothes. I got a crew that does this. Actually I got my resume together and am seeking a senior exec position in business. Maybe regional manager or something."

He just stared blankly as if I hadn't said a word. My observer self also stared blankly, astonished at itself, trying to disassociate itself from the reality of what it had been doing- just spraying weeds all day in the junkyard.

"Really", I tried again, vainly, "I don't really look like this." I tried to raise my posture a little to an executive demeanor. The forty pounds of my backpack protested. The rags I wore were embarrassed by how filthy they were. I wasn't back in the trailer park - I was the guy who cleaned the trailer park. Whoa, I thought to myself, I am never going to pull off that job interview.

You never really get used to the snakes. You just ignore them. Like the wasps that come out to greet you at each new car, showing off their back half of a shiny new Ford Escort. Squatters. You're more likely to get bit by a jag of steel you didn't see. Or step on a child's doll hiding under the brush that screams when you squash it, mimicking the ghosts, the wind blowing through the plastic reed in her back.

The job took a lot more poison than I thought. I ran out of my preferred choice and had to switch prescriptions halfway through- a questionable formulation that while ensuring my client would never have a cat-briar problem, might not do the flattening eradication I had hoped to be paid for. I was at a loss. An imposter. Pretending to be a senior exorcist and the best I could do was to open access to the demons.

Customers came and went through the yard. Some shouted their excitement on a find, holding up their hacked off ball joint to the sun like a Mayan showing the still beating heart of his last sacrifice. Nobody else seemed to see the weeds or hear the whispers or notice the lacquer of fear that was splashed on once polished chrome.

Mortality. Purgatory. Just like that, a crash, and they're not coming home anymore. They had gone for milk. They had left intact. Driving back home that night, exhausted by the day, asleep at the wheel, I fiddled with the cell trying to call my wife. She asked me to pick up a few things. "See you soon?" she asks. Hanging up, I checked the truck's clock. Watching the lights go by from my peripheral view, I remember the radio's alto singing "Why does my heart go on beating? Why do these eyes of mine cry? Don't they know it's the end of the world? It ended when you said goodbye".

JOHN STOVALL

## Eulogy

It was the first flurry on the wood of his undertaking  
being unsquirrelled as soon as kindled  
in the green jello of my severance oh  
my conspirator brothering had done it now,  
called it a day in his own invented language.  
but we never blamed him.

he wasn't a he, you all see. he was  
no mustached member of the company  
board, no stack of cats hovering, oh  
in the intoxicating air of long leather  
death. and we loved him for it.

oh he was an I, from the moment  
from the moment, he was an I

should I not try to understand  
why beneath the potted plant  
beside the red velvet desk the how  
of it wasn't ungainly for a lady to try  
to understand?

where was the savior exactly?

said my said when she flew the valet  
away to the valley, where flannel sin pays  
with saplicked pinecones, shadows  
and pitchfork mobs rotating with the  
earth. she loved it. rotating  
stretched the earth how  
she loved it.

It was cold blooded basking on the sun  
in a flatrock. it was a shawl of cyanide  
upon the exoskeletal breast. it was sealed  
in the church of the church of. it is difficult  
as the ribbons are ribbed that surround us so  
erase yourself in this mirror and the body:  
which is the hairs which is the scars  
who is God to be  
perfect?

CATHERINE YI

Limbo and Afterthoughts  
(A Series of Poems)

I.

She told him you used to inspire me  
and he asked her for a dollar.

I anticipate  
the  
syncopated  
beats  
of your heart

I count  
the  
candid  
intricacies  
of your laugh.

You keep your stories  
tied down  
to the bottom  
of your stomach  
afraid  
they'll destroy  
the lovely peach pitted  
crowns.

A story can heal,  
but  
on accident.

no one is allowed to mention  
the joke pretending to be a sin  
and we all need fixing

to be infinite.

Cracked lips swear by  
the crowded corners  
of their minds.

Noble adulterers know  
more or less love.

It was a devastation  
like years of longing had just exploded  
on to the concrete walls,  
the ceilings,  
the wooden floors.

Noble adulterers know  
more or less love.

It was a devastation  
like years of longing had just exploded  
on to the concrete walls,  
the ceilings,  
the wooden floors.

She told him I'll do you grand favors  
and he asked her to keep it down.

your terracotta lips press  
rough lies upon  
my stained glass skin  
cannot contain  
your glacial proclivities  
full of thrones.

I walked in on your  
dirty glazed  
pots and it  
sucked me dry  
with your culture couture and  
loose morals.

Digging the earth  
trying to remember  
where you buried  
your sacred prayers  
and the answers  
to your jokes  
and riddles

You pulled away  
from me  
to  
untangle our veins  
in secret.

if everything you touched turned to dust  
then you touched dust  
dust would turn to touch  
and flesh  
and become.

there are things we keep from each other  
because we crave boundaries  
so we can cross them  
because we crave full disclosure  
so we can build hidden walls  
to be closer to  
ourselves.

II.

My words  
ran dry when  
I left here.

I know every texture  
and every groove  
of these  
weathered wood dreams

The boy had a dream  
and his dream stranded him  
stuck on the moon  
so he sat in dust  
listening to Coltrane  
smoking his pipe  
in an indigo  
blackness.

Her mouth was like  
that cursed box  
forever unhinged

And you regret  
ever having coaxed it  
open.

Not everything could possibly be  
infinitely fascinating, lady.

III.

"We would rather be ruined than changed;/ We would rather die  
in our dread/ Than climb the cross of the moment/ And let our  
illusions die."

— W.H. Auden

I left you  
on the cusp  
of everything.

You sucked the wind  
right out  
of my bones.

I don't believe  
I have it in me  
to win someone  
back  
to make the queen  
of the angels sigh  
to fix my lips  
to lie.

I lied,  
all teeth clenched  
and earnest eyes,  
I blinked  
up and down,  
opening  
my mouth  
only to close it again.

I hope you  
handle  
your women  
the way you do  
your guitar.

I watch your mouth  
fail you as  
you choke on the water  
rising in your throat  
flooding your words  
garbling your unholy laughter  
leaving mud behind  
on your lips.

Sorry about the crumpled papers,  
Sorry we got carried away,  
Sorry about your daddy issues,  
and how I only ever half listen.

Inside of him  
is the part of a man  
who's never truly loved  
anything  
but the red earth  
of his land  
and every speck  
of dirt and dust  
in between.

He felt his lungs  
deflate  
with surrender  
and

I always cry  
a little  
for chubby boys  
with cracked glasses  
and matted  
hair.

Electric eyes  
never come  
into focus.

I drove all night  
writing you  
left-handed letters.

You fill  
my  
gaps.

It was morning,  
and  
everything was so  
backwards,  
I drove  
around,  
stopping only  
to buy  
a pink eraser.

Every breath he draws  
reverberates  
through his body  
with feeling.  
It makes me  
feel my ghosts  
after all this  
time.

Wine-stained fingers  
swipe across  
her barley colored  
hair  
and smear  
the wetness  
on the walls.

Pine  
whittled away  
into scraps  
of nothingness,

waiting to be  
swept  
into trunks.

Blueberry guts  
carpet  
the floor

It took weeks  
for me  
to unweave my dream  
from your  
tangled net.

I pried out your  
blank  
stares  
in a fit  
of hope.

Your eyes bore  
into me  
thread after thread  
searing the skin  
off my back,  
unraveling each breath  
to cover  
and uncover  
the geography  
between my collar  
bones.

“The power of a glance has been so much abused in love stories that it has come to be disbelieved. Few people dare say nowadays that two beings have fallen in love because they have looked at each other. Yet that is the way love begins, and only that way. The rest is only the rest, and comes afterwards. Nothing is more real than the great shocks that two souls give each other in exchanging this spark.”

- Les Miserables by Victor Hugo

IV.

You murmur  
in your sleep  
begging  
for forgiveness,  
swearing  
on your mother’s  
grave.

I’ve killed a man  
before  
with my bare hands  
in a home  
where the walls were red  
of course  
and the accents  
were pewter  
and the sculptures  
were timeless  
and the clocks  
ticked backwards.

I called the cops,  
priding myself  
on my slow  
getaways  
and  
impeccable  
timing.



You collapse  
into yourself,  
a heap  
of hedonistic  
habits and  
hermeneutics.

You rolled me  
up tight  
lit and puffed  
as I screamed,  
livid.

I watch you  
spit my name  
from your mouth  
and stomp it out.

Your gaze  
shatters  
through  
my chest  
and I shiver  
at every ghost  
I've ever kept  
settled at the bottom  
of my lungs.

ALLY WHITE

The Wet Worlds: Underground (Ink & Gouache)



## LINSDAY POTTER

What happened before now and chemical compounds –  
Before that wax-thin rice paper the second skin burned off  
those layers of your outer self and entitled presence that made you bold.

Was that your intended shade we treaded so heavy  
over each traced track of cracks, like closing leafed palms.

What history was here exfoliated, in a time less sterile or cosmetic – I've found nothing  
so compelling as your sheer majesty in age  
and yet it takes careers to clean you, but of what?

## WILLIAM J. LEE

### Dominion

Merlot. 1935. A \_\_\_\_ year.  
Cascading rays from the dampened yellow streetlamps  
Play prism on the emptied glass.  
    Invert the aged. Fill and deplete  
Until their days level out.  
The ashen white of the table cloth catches  
Remnants of nature's prior parade.  
Pinstripes pull up in parallels.  
Collar touch to the soles of men.  
Fabrication. Fabric. He sinks into his waistcoat.  
Cobblestone avenues hold one set of hooves, two purses  
And a young belt clutching a dirty napkin.

Of the fourteen chairs, thirteen expose amber skin and allow the lustful wind atop.  
Embers turn to tablecloth. The cilia mimic the countenance.  
    Six small cotton corks to the right  
And the menu asks again, "Where will you go?"

The 8:15 Settle-Carlisle Line was a falsehood.  
The earth will eat the loafers with their two pound shine  
As the wobbling suit finds its way to a familiar lock.  
The door will open and only half of the lights will work.  
The dresser in the closet will have two distended drawers and a hollow countenance.  
The air will pass unrestrained through the room as it pries in from the window facing  
the square.

Time claims its due within itself.\*

For now, another elder is dusted off  
And the cotton count creeps to eight.

### Postcard #3 Reparations

Dear Elisa,

When we were younger, the webbed spaces between us were smaller.  
But we grew into something else entirely.  
And here we stand, your cross - that bared  
and more bestial part, laced in lattice,  
between scaffoldings and some restorator's hand.

## MATT BURNS

### My Old Beans

It's hot. Blazing. Arizona, dead-middle of summer. I am sweating. I unzip my pants and fling them aside. They won't be necessary today. I hear the train rocketing towards me. Lightning fast, thunder loud. Powerful and swift. I bend to the dusty ground and lay on my side. The train turns round a hill and comes at me, an ant crawling across the dry brown sea. It grows and grows, bigger and louder. I cup my moist testicles and stretch them across the track. I feel the track vibrating in my vas deferens and a drop of sweat falls off my nose. The steam horn blares, unbearably loud. The track reverberates to a supersonic hum and my testicles bounce, two Mexican jumping beans in an extra-large sock. The wheel makes its slice in an instant and in the next the friction heat on the track seals it shut.

I suspect one day a few kids will go out there to the tracks to flatten some pennies and they'll find my decrepit set of nuts sitting in their rotten bag, abandoned and dusty, maybe picked over by the crows. And I hope those kids pick up my old beans and toss them around, maybe play some monkey in the middle or use them as hacky sacks. And perhaps those boys will play in the desert until they tire and the sun goes down and they will light a fire and have a moonlit ceremony in which they drink animal blood and recite ancient chants and ingest my testicles to gain my wisdom. They will high-five the devil and know what it means to be alive.

That, sir, is where I see myself in ten years. I hope that is congruent with the Applebee's vision, as I need this job.

## JILLIAN JACKMAN

### Alzheimer's

You couldn't live in that town and escape the steel mill. When they graduated from Hopewell High, a disappointment of its own, they walked right off the stage and kept walking, right on down to the mill. Rows of grey lunch boxes filled with home ec success, waiting to feed dark empty bellies. The girls found themselves a steel mill guy to wed, married at eighteen, pregnant with success. Food stamps to accidents, benefiting from father's new found lunacy. The lunacy's their fault, but the poverty is still passed down from pa.

If you strip me down bare I look just like them. Deep blue veins on pale sunless skin. Stout from the Italians, plump from the Polish. They all had headaches from the mill. They all had cracked hands and dirty nails. My head throbs from dangers in the womb.

There were always delusions at the breakfast table and fear of grandfathers who caress more than hands. Love shouldn't let that happen. She sighs and says, "Ignorant hands build ignorant towns." We're all a slave to the mental disease we breed. "Promise me you'll grow away. Promise me you'll bury three generations of suffering into one compact sentence." They ran from the Germans in Europe to struggle in the mills in Aliquippa so that I could free their memories. Alzheimer's runs in our family.

SERENA NAIDU | Creature #1 (Oil on Canvas)



SERENA NAIDU | Creature #5 (Oil on Canvas)



## JASON LONGORIA

### You

I remember you from that advertisement.

Not that advertisement, really; *the* advertisement. I couldn't tell you anyone I knew who hadn't seen that commercial. In a sea of holier-than-thou housewives revealing the wonders of modern cleaning supplies to their dumbfounded husbands; strung-out cartoons yelping the virtues of puffed sugar to children; clean-cut and otherwise attractive fast food workers distributing food like Eucharistic wafers, complete with clerical grin; thousands of attractive young women, their self-sufficiency overt, extolling the miracle of birth control; alpha males asserting their natural authority by peddling deodorant for the Man; and movie studios making empty promises of innovation, as shameless as politicians—yes, I remember you.

Your name is Francine Deveaux.

I remember that name for two reasons.

First of all, your name was so deliciously memorable.

What a perfect recipe: your first name, unique in its obscurity, so delightfully retro; and your last name, breathing the airs of Europe, or at least blond ancestry. Your name smelt of cheese and fine wine. You weren't some farm girl who got drunk and flashed her tits to strangers; no, you were above that. You were Francine Deveaux, beautifully unique by sole virtue of your name.

Second of all, your name was so obviously bogus. One bored trip to Wikipedia revealed to me that you weren't Francine Deveaux at all. You were, to my surprise, Frieda Kurczynski; you'd worked at some greasy spoon for a number of years before acting suddenly struck your fancy. Before you knew it you'd traded coffee-stained aprons for Prada, dusky fluorescence for blinding spotlights—you jettisoned your life of worrisome anonymity, crude drunks, and belching truckers for the obviously brighter alternative, regardless of the cost.

Before I saw you here, I knew you, however incompletely.

I suppose I should begin with how we first met. I'd just

walked in from a hard day's idle work; my fingers were tired from frisking through the daily news blogs and whatever Wikipedia article struck my fancy. I announced my return to no one, threw Hot Pockets in the microwave, and changed out of my shirt-and-tie, and had just sat down when you burst into the room.

Your entrance was loud, if not on just the ears but also the eyes. You were writhing on a rock on some secluded island beach, ensconced in rainbows, surrounded by exotic flora and a host of voyeuristic parrots. Furthermore, you were groaning—only God knew why; personally, I couldn't give a damn—in the unmistakable mime of a woman in orgasm.

Your clothes—where were your clothes? Oh wait, how could I forget: you were wearing palm fronds, the obvious choice for any shipwrecked woman in need of clothing. You must have been a very talented seamstress to be able to fashion a bikini out of palm fronds.

Wait a second, I was getting off-track. There you were, groaning in the now, and I was deluded by the idea that you even had a backstory. You simply had no backstory; there was no reason to think of *why* you were on the beach, or what circumstances had led you there. There was only you, mock-masturbating on a rock, clad in only palm-frond lingerie.

You weren't a castaway at all, just Jenna Jameson in Tahiti.

There suddenly emerged a third person in the room: a snake, creeping silently up your body, its bright crimson scales in perfect juxtaposition to your mocha-butter skin. Its coiled body caressed your calves so closely you could've sworn the snake had arrived with roses and a bottle of champagne. At the very least, there was a reason for your groaning. You were under assault by a venomous snake, even if it looked like you were enjoying it.

The snake crept ever higher, as your groans reached fever-pitch; finally coiling atop your strategically censored breasts, it poised to strike. Then, the cutaway: you holding aloft a vase of perfume, looking like Aphrodite leaving a sauna.

"Paradise," you cooed, "is in the palm of your hand. Viper: unleash your inner serpent."

Then, cut-to-black—brief silence broken suddenly by Mrs. Everywoman flustered that her absent-minded hubby and rabble of children spill coffee and juice all over the white rug, *again*.



I grabbed the remote. Pausing the TV, I rewound, past Mrs. Everywoman's angry gestures and her family's awestruck faces, freezing the frame on your gleaming figure, your triumphant smile, holding aloft that bottle of perfume like a trophy.

"What is your name?" I asked no one. The question remained unanswered for the remainder of the evening.

A few short inquiries to coworkers later, I learned your name, or rather, your pseudonym: Francine Deveaux.

You were going to be a big star.

It makes it ironic that I see you now, bent over my table in a blouse I know you could button all the way up, made-up like you're about to go out on the town, breathing mint into my face.

You're Francine Deveaux.

Or rather, you're Fran, without a last name. You've served me coffee. I'm handing you an extra dollar in tip.

I'm smiling; inwardly, I'm laughing. You're smiling; inwardly, you're crying.

I leave the café to return to my office. You stay inside, glancing at the streets outside, ashamed that you will soon have to walk amidst the plebeians again, cursing your lack of high heels, cursing God and cursing fame.

Don't worry, though. You'll be back, even if not in Hollywood. At least for me, you're only a click away.

## CHRIS YOUNG

### Honeymoon

It was my honeymoon. Mine. I had planned it for over a year. After I had injudiciously asked her for her hand in matrimony, it evolved into the only part of the actual wedding event over which I was given any say, and begrudgingly at that. She wanted Paris, froufrou Frenchy, or some exotic island getaway. I just wanted a back roads California country thing, Big Sur and all. And I had to stand my ground and fight them all off to keep this one little thing my way. Snooty down-the-nose looks by in-laws-to-be only made me more sure I was going. Fortunately for all concerned, she walked out a few months before the wedding, and I had these tickets. So when that special day came, I threw rice at myself, tossed flowers over my shoulder, and delightedly went to California.

I dined on trout in the redwoods. I took long romantic walks on the beach. I watched sea lions devour the sun in the sea, barking like hounds. I fell in love with myself all over again. Not an argument was heard, and all decisions were unanimous. I sent her a postcard saying congratulations to us all.

All this, by background, a way to talk about Salinas Valley and the brussel sprout harvest. I was driving along, passing all these farms of pistachio and almond trees, and decided to follow a side road to buy some fresh pistachios before they got salted and sent off to foreign markets. It was November, and harvests were in full bloom. I had once corresponded about buying fresh raw olives in this area, for curing my own olives, and it occurred to me that maybe there might be a pick your own olive farm or some such around. After several leads, I was told of a man who had a few trees in his front yard, a ways off in the Steinbeck country of dirt roads and old post fences that is California past the highways. No neighbors within sight, I found his place and asked my bizarre request to pick of his trees, which delighted the old senior who owned the place. He showed me the second refrigerator in his garage that housed gallons of his own cured olives, on which he

bragged, handing me a stony, garlic-drenched, green plum of a fruit that was so nasty as to gag me. But decorum had me smiling and complimenting the fine cuisine and adding that I only hoped mine would be so good. He gave me a ladder and even handed me a five gallon pail. Having been a professional migrant worker for twenty some years, I picked two pails in forty minutes. The fruit was in waves down branches like willow trees, the knobby oily orbs raking off in my fingers. You dare not eat one unbleached by lye as you will long remember the astringent mistake. Finished, I thanked him for the hospitality and we chatted a bit looking off across the empty golden hills.

Quite delighted in the afternoon, I was cruising back down the road in no time. I passed one giant mega farm after another. Artichokes and beans. Carrots and Kale. Vast flatlands of black earth. In the distance, villages of workers huddled in the mists below the horizons thrashing up clouds of dirt. I passed a large drainage canal, and the air suddenly changed and the drizzly haze in the valley became an unusual aqua blue. That is, the air literally had a blue tint to it as it hung over this one set of fields, and an intense somewhat rank odor filled the car. I pulled over to investigate and was surprised to see an ocean of waving stalks covered with bulgy, green, gnarled knurls. Brussels sprouts! This multi-headed Hydra of little Medusa heads that will turn an appetite to stone! Brussels sprouts - the scourge of my own youth to the extent it was handed down into the prank response of my own children's questions. Dad, what kind of ice cream did you get? Brussels sprout! What is for dinner? Brussels sprouts! I threatened Brussels sprouts on my children in the way some grannies use the boogeyman to keep the babies in line. Now, here was a world of the buggers growing defiantly against my will. I got out of the car and grabbed the camera to document this gross absurdity. I was lining my shot when I heard a roar approaching and looked to realize I was parked on the shoulder of the highway in the only exit path from this field. A series of farm tractors, each one dragging behind it three separate fully loaded-to-the-gills-with-sprouts carts, were snaking down the perpendicular dirt road alongside the fields, barreling at least fifty miles an hour right toward me. The manic imported race drivers had no intention of slowing down their piece rate for some freakin touristo gringo taking pictures in his clean shoes. The front driver was

honking furiously raising his fist in anger and the entire field of protuberated stalks in riot raised their knurls and joined in chiding me. With Brussels sprouts in full attack, there was no time for a moment's thought. I jumped into my car and sped out of the way just barely missing being clipped by the Deere.

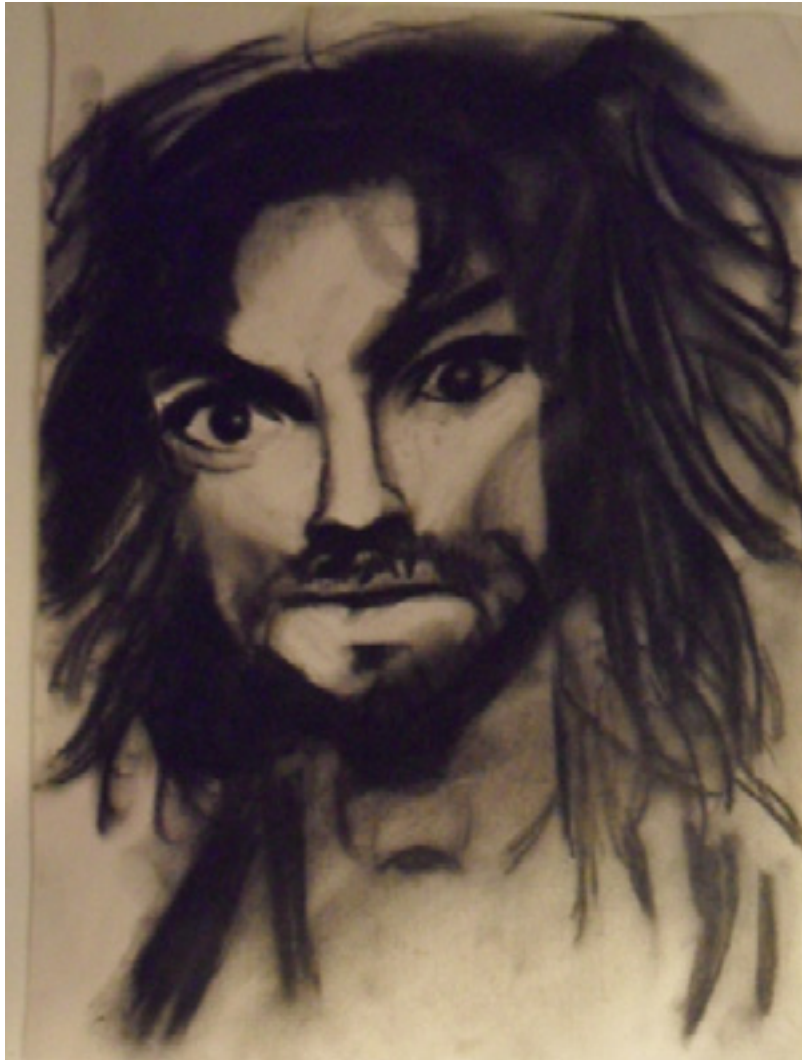
There is not any actual inherent evil in a loud field of screaming Brussels sprouts. They are aptly named Cruciferae, meaning 'those who have a cross to bear', I assume that cross being their taste and smell, and they carry that burden with the grace of lion cubs at play. Brassica Oleracea, simply translated 'smelly little cabbage clusters', is a species unto itself with a dialect of the palate handed down through generations of fine breeding. In the drizzle, in that black dirt, they clamber and raise muscular cane shouting their fleshy perfume to the teal smoke they create. A foreigner, out of place, I don't look back but drive on, chastised by the fervent revolution.

Time has passed, and my children now grown have decided that they like this grotesquely eccentric yet healthy and fashionable delicacy. "Dad, will you please get us some Brussels sprouts, and maybe a froufrou French cheese to melt over them, to go with our black eyed peas and our New Years dinner"

I try to tell them of the battle of Salinas Valley, but the words, just too many words, and not the right kind. And worlds. How do you describe the landscape of Neptune, or the orchids of Pluto? There was a lot of blue. And a smell.

KAREN CARLSON

Charles Manson (Charcoal)



JASON LONGORIA

## Apoptosis

Everyone loves orchids—  
everyone I know, anyway.

Why wouldn't they?  
Grandmother used to say  
that orchids were  
Mother Mary's pearly pins, set in  
Mother Nature's dewy hair; all prayers  
from Earth to Sky to God.

Yes, orchids: precious, pink—  
freshest milk mixed with red ink.  
Yes, orchids: rare, like gems—  
woven in the Earth's own hems.

Once, I held an orchid in my hand—  
laid upon my fingers—  
smooth as silk—  
pink as peaches—  
the lacteal luster,  
the ambrosial aroma—  
I couldn't see  
what everyone else saw.

I only saw a trap—  
a Venus flytrap—  
orchids are flytraps  
and everyone is flies.



Yes, the flower fell from my fingers  
in wordless whorls  
to an eager Earth  
filled with flies.

I fail to see the beauty  
I fail to see the wonder  
I fail to see the glory  
in pink petals torn asunder.

## PATRICIA WHITTAKER

### Aging

"What does it feel like,"  
Asked Camden's sister  
"To grow up?"  
But Camden didn't know  
Shivering on wet grass  
Clutching his scrawny knees  
Picking at old scabs  
Camden didn't know--

He didn't know  
How kids went from beings kids  
To not really kids at all  
He couldn't yet imagine  
Abandoning his rocks,  
or tree house,  
or mother's books  
Forgetting them like moon dust  
As adults often did--

But his sister waited for an answer  
Sat in cold silence  
Looked in his eyes  
Wiggled like a question mark  
Waited for a dot

"There's a point--" he started  
He felt funny  
He stopped

"There's a moment--" he restarted  
He felt wrong  
He restopped

"There's a time--" he re-restarted  
He grasped at the words  
Watched them wriggle away  
He re-restopped

"Soph, I don't really know at all"  
He said with finality  
As brothers often do

PAUL KASAY

## Antiques

The antique typewriter  
by the door in the grocery store in the mountains  
Had a sign that said  
DO NOT TOUCH  
printed in cursive block letters  
And as I was walking towards the door  
I thought about taking it and throwing it against a wall  
Kicking it across the room, gently picking it up  
And letting it fall into the deep alpine river  
By the cafe with the balcony over the water  
As a song about anarchy comes on the radio on the patio

The thought was there and gone  
But where did they get off?  
Lack of trusting but probably necessary  
Pleading but also domineering  
A rule so tempting to break  
So ready to slap away  
The butterscotch covered hand of child  
Why bother to put it there?

Of course, as we went to walk out I was  
Mostly sure that I wouldn't do it  
Having the thought pass and  
Remind me I'm daydreaming  
and wasn't going to set the thing on fire

But you were in front of me as we were walking out  
You looked over and  
Lightly placed your hand on the dusty bronze  
Leaving a handprint over the little slip of paper

You laughed once  
And turned out the door  
As I followed  
In awe at your wisdom

PAUL KASAY

## Cutting Room Floor

What is left here, the extended version of the kiss  
Right after Vermillion unties Claudia from the train tracks  
Or is it the train turned back into the marriage proposal of another man  
the tracks, only a perceived notion of fate, simply gone  
As airy as the ideas again

Claudia a sensible girl, Vermillion not so good looking  
And they kiss later, alone, not in the pouring rain  
That washes away all the evildoers laying in ambush on the riverside

Here the scraps on the floor are those things...  
Felt a little too much, the unbelievable clarity,  
the quick response and the melancholy sigh  
Even those scenes where the main character seemed a little too much  
Like the director's sister

There is the line of dialogue from before the baptism scene  
Replaced with a quick shot of a stain glass window  
And there's the girl undoing her blouse  
Instead of the curtains fluttering in the moonlight

You'd like to give them summer, the shore, shimmering heat on the hood  
of a car  
You'd like to have it mean to them like it did to you  
But they won't sit around forever, eventually they'll be off turning  
the corner from the theatre  
and so you show the last four minutes of the last day before school starts  
A sand covered shoe by a reed mat and a cerulean door frame  
The place where they finally park in the end

And to be sure, they'll leave their own scraps  
piled on the caramel coated floor  
Ghost celluloid of the first subtle look from Kate  
The quick pan around the arena

The flick of sunshine coming through the blinds  
The whole minute silence staring out the window at the ferry

You can only hope some small reel will continue spinning along in  
the evening  
That they'll stare off one second longer  
At a girl in a red overcoat under the marquee  
at the one lone window  
Lit up in the blue  
across the street from their quiet home

SARAH QUINN

The Run-Off [Politics]



(Oil on Canvas)

SARAH QUINN

The Outskirts [Superstitions]



(Oil on Canvas)

SARAH QUINN

Everything Can Be Replaced [Traditions]



(Oil on Canvas)

COLIN FRAWLEY

Practice

When people left the office of urologist Dr. Aaron L. Heller, an odd sense of well-being tended to accompany them, like a benign wraith was walking them to their cars on behalf of the practice. It would not have been remarkable except that the feeling wasn't limited to a couple patients; nearly everyone noticed it taking some form or another. Being a licensed medical professional, Doctor Heller made sure to address his patients' principal ailments, of course, but there was also this aforementioned lingering, ineffable sensation, which might have manifested itself as more restful nights, or improved patience, or maybe even increased sexual satisfaction. There was a certain bodily *togetherness* with which Dr. Heller imbued his patients, and this togetherness stuck out so much in their minds that their original maladies seemed distant and inconsequential—so much so, in fact, that patients were no longer ashamed to talk about them. It may generally be said that it is not common practice for people in America to speak openly about their urologists or the ailments that necessitate visits to them, but that is why, over time, Dr. Heller garnered such an exceptional reputation. He got people talking.

Without question, the man got people talking in a variety of ways.

For instance, forty-eight year-old widow Ellen Hume came away from her first visit with Dr. Heller – one concerning a non-life threatening but nonetheless disconcerting case of genital prolapse – and in the end was not only willing to openly address her affliction, but went out of her way to recommend the services of the short bald man to everyone she knew. This rash of referrals even included those who, to the best of Mrs. Hume's knowledge, had no occasion to visit a urologist any time in the near future. She received more than a couple cocked eyebrows, which didn't surprise her, but she couldn't stop reiterating to friends what a calming, reassuring presence Dr. Heller had; how he simply caused all the embarrassment and anxiety of having a problem like hers to vaporize.



You never would have known there was anything special going on, she said, by looking around the place. While she conceded that nervousness over her condition may have compromised her observational faculties to some degree, she certainly hadn't noticed anything unusual as she entered Dr. Heller's building: The office had the same brown-carpeted, elevator- muzaked waiting room as pretty much every other medical facility she had been to (and over the course of her life she had seen plenty: pediatricians, general practitioners, dentists, clinics, OB/Gyns, still more pediatricians, every office the same quiet neutral box. Hospitals were slightly different, of course – brighter, favoring whites and silvers over soft, bland earth tones – but that was only a matter of trifling detail).

The quiet, dark-skinned woman at the desk was polite and accommodating in a garden-variety kind of way, though she did wear an interesting floppy orange hat that looked somehow foreign; Mrs. Hume didn't want to have to guess exactly where the hat was from, because she just knew she would be wrong and end up feeling ignorant. There was a fish tank next to the row of chairs along the western wall, lit from the top by a very bright white light that irradiated the fluorescent pinks and greens of the coral networks lining the tank's bottom. It was pleasing to the eye in its own right, but Mrs. Hume thought the tank so pedestrian in the context of this place that she imagined one might order it from a specialty catalog devoted entirely to nondescript waiting room décor. Honestly, it was all as ordinary and regular as one could imagine, which didn't strike her as odd in any way – she wasn't expecting anything more.

But now that she thought about it, the woman at the desk did have an air of authority about her not typical of receptionists, reticence aside. She carried herself quite upright in her padded rolling chair and her floppy orange hat capped a noticeably subdued smile – almost grim in its restraint. It was as though an important secret gave her all the assurance she needed in this world. Mrs. Hume was a bit discomfited by the woman's demeanor as she stood at the counter filling out her paperwork, but the feeling hardly registered, lasting only a moment, and before she knew it she was back to jotting down her social security number using the green *Heller, M.D.* pen attached to the clipboard by a

little silver chain. Then she sat down and waited, the only patient in the lobby.

It was the early afternoon on a Tuesday, which partially explained the place's emptiness. Still, she had never been to such a practice so simultaneously cramped and vacant. She found that the silence gave her too much time to think. Her mind began to turn back to her condition and its ramifications and the awkward, humiliating nature of it, and so she started vacillating, wondering whether she wanted to talk about it at all, even with a medical professional<sup>1</sup>. The music in the lobby was too placid to actually be calming. It felt like a cold, synthetic blanket of white noise meant to cover up something important and dangerous. Feeling edgy, she turned to the magazine table next to her, hoping to find a suitable distraction. She brushed vacantly over a few standard titles, her nerves refusing to relent, before happening upon a strange and hitherto unfamiliar publication, the cover of which featured a smiling dark-skinned man clad in an outfit not unlike that of the receptionist, though his was predominantly blue instead of orange. Mrs. Hume continued to scan the cover for a few moments before her eyes fell upon the title: *Isokan Yoruba Magazine*.

She frowned in perplexity rather than displeasure. Having never heard of the magazine before, she resolved to ask Dr. Heller about it (she would have asked the receptionist, of course, but based on what the woman was wearing it seemed the magazine's presence in the lobby might have been somehow connected to her. Mrs. Hume just knew she would take a misstep if she broached the subject).

As it turned out, Mrs. Hume never actually got a chance to ask Dr. Heller about the magazine; she forgot all about it when she was called into the exam room and found a short, balding man with a thick gray mustache leaning on an unusual-looking dark wooden cane. The cane was thick and imperfectly smooth, and its knob was carved into the shape of a small, hairless humanoid head flanked by smaller heads on each side. The main face,

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1. She would later repudiate her embarrassment, which fact she made sure to highlight in all subsequent discussions of Dr. Heller and his field. Over coffee and bagels with a friend on the quiet, sun-baked patio of a neighborhood café, she would pose the question, *Is it really fair to scorn our bodies for failure when we're both on the same mission?*

wide-eyed and secretive, bore the baleful stare of a being possessed of supremacy and oversight, arousing Mrs. Hume's curiosity but also chilling her a bit. Noticing in her what could at the very least be called interest, Dr. Heller took the initiative, explaining that he had acquired the staff during his travels to the African west coast a decade earlier, shortly after his wife died. Specifically, he had been to a poor village in Nigeria that was home to a diasporic population of the Yoruba people, one of Africa's largest ethnic groups. This, of course, explained the magazine in the lobby, and so Mrs. Hume was able to put to rest her list of non-medical queries for the voluble old doctor. The cane, he continued, was called a *Shango* staff, named after the Yoruba sky god whose image the head bore. And the receptionist, in case she was wondering, was Abeje, a woman he met in the village who said that she wanted to combine her knowledge of Yoruba healing practices with Western-acquired the staff during his travels to the African west coast a decade earlier, shortly after his wife died. Specifically, he had been to a poor village in Nigeria that was home to a diasporic population of the Yoruba people, one of Africa's largest ethnic groups. This, of course, explained the magazine in the lobby, and so Mrs. Hume was able to put to rest her list of non-medical queries for the voluble old doctor. The cane, he continued, was called a *Shango* staff, named after the Yoruba sky god whose image the head bore. And the receptionist, in case she was wondering, was Abeje, a woman he met in the village who said that she wanted to combine her knowledge of Yoruba healing practices with Western medicine but had no means of educating herself. During his time overseas, Dr. Heller had spent many late nights talking with Abeje about her people, her goals, and her concerns. He also found the time, he said, to glean a bit of knowledge from the young woman, who was eager to exchange cultural and medical information. In her, Dr. Heller saw true dedication and potential, coming to believe in a few short months with her that, given the right opportunities, she might do her village – perhaps even her whole country – a great deal more good than she already was. So he made her a promise and, upon returning to the states, arranged for her to travel to America, work in his office and take classes at night, all while living under his roof and care. Mrs. Hume smiled a tight-lipped smile and nodded as he spoke and examined her malady, thinking to herself

that this had to be one of the kindest people she had ever met. Elated, she made a mental note to include all of Dr. Heller's African exploits in the story of her visit to his office, along with the inexplicable comfort she was beginning to feel (which was authoritative and strong, despite the remaining fact of her genital prolapse. Comforted by his presence and gentle analysis, she somehow didn't mind). Meanwhile, the doctor was politely asking her to pull her pants back up and scribbling his instructions on a piece of paper, assuring her that everything should be fine. Before dismissing her, he asked her whether she had ever truly seen what was on the backs of her eyelids.

(Of course later on Mrs. Hume heard about the certain ... *suspicious* surrounding Dr. Heller's home life, though she never believed in their validity. A month or so after her trip to the office, after she had told everyone how painless and curiously pleasant it had been, neighbors had started whispering about lots of unexplained comings and goings at Heller's house during the late evening and early morning. According to the "witnesses," these visits occurred with had been, neighbors had started whispering about lots of unexplained comings and goings at Heller's house during the late evening and early morning. According to the "witnesses," these visits occurred with alarming regularity. The lights were always off when people entered Dr. Heller's prim, two-story white house, and they stayed off until much later, when two or three darkened figures could be seen skulking down the brick walkway around one, maybe two in the morning, rustling the bordering rose bushes every few nights as they stumbled through the dark. One friend of Mrs. Hume's who happened to live near the doctor wondered aloud whether it might be some kind of illicit sexual undertaking. An orgy, perhaps? He is living with a young woman. She is new to the country, I've heard. Anything to get ahead. Besides, anytime I see her and try to say hello she's so dodgy and quiet. Plus, he is a urologist – it's not impossible that he could have some kind of fixation.

This woman's sister, with whom Mrs. Hume was also friendly, offered a different explanation: Drugs. A doctor? she said. It's too easy for some people to pass up. Anyone in his position could easily make at least half his legitimate income each year writing bogus prescriptions or passing the stuff off directly. All

the drugs are probably why everyone who goes to him loves him so much. The sister was sure she had seen money change hands through the window as she passed by one night. It was dark – no wonder – but she knew what she saw.

But Mrs. Hume was loath to believe such allegations. The man was a philanthropist, after all. And obviously she hadn't taken any illegal drugs from him. Besides which, why was it out of the question that the strange late-night visits were attributable to Abeje? She was taking night courses and was significantly younger. She could have friends coming over to study, or just to watch movies. Having dealt firsthand with the gentle, sympathetic doctor, Mrs. Hume refused to indulge in speculation.)

It was upon Mrs. Hume's recommendation that Tony Porter later went to Dr. Heller for his overactive bladder. Mr. Porter was dubious of Mrs. Hume's claims, never having been one to believe in miracles, but his condition was growing tiresome. Besides, Mrs. Hume (as well as her late husband, while he was alive) was a good friend of the Porters. So Mr. Porter went and had the doctor see what he could see, expecting to walk away with little more than a copay bill and a prescription. But Mrs. Hume was not surprised to learn that Dr. Heller's record remained pristine: An hour or so after checking in, Mr. Porter came away thrilled, impressed and rather zealous, which, like Mrs. Hume's post-visit effervescence, struck everyone as odd, dysfunctions relating to the genitalia not typically being construed as appropriate casual conversation. But the way Mr. Porter described the situation was like this: doctor see what he could see, expecting to walk away with little more than a copay bill and a prescription. But Mrs. Hume was not surprised to learn that Dr. Heller's record remained pristine: An hour or so after checking in, Mr. Porter came away thrilled, impressed and rather zealous, which, like Mrs. Hume's post-visit effervescence, struck everyone as odd, dysfunctions relating to the genitalia not typically being construed as appropriate casual conversation. But the way Mr. Porter described the situation was like this:

He said this short, stooped over little mustachioed man of roughly fifty (but maybe more? It was hard to tell with this guy) ambled into the exam room smiling, coming to a stop directly under his medical degree (Johns Hopkins, 1986) with his hands

on his hips. The thing that struck Mr. Porter as interesting was that Dr. Heller didn't launch right into any kind of physical probing or poking or anything; they just talked about the situation a while, the doctor speaking of the problem as though it were an ornery, pestilent little creature resolved to make a home inside Mr. Porter and evict him before he could run it off in turn. He said it was possible Mr. Porter's body was overrun with pathogens, his bladder issue being the manifestation of all the unwanted guests. Mr. Porter started to protest, saying he wasn't sick per se, but Dr. Heller took no notice. He shook his head and ruffled his white coat at the collar, muttering quietly to himself. We have to let this ailment know that it is not welcome, he said. *So to speak*, he added quickly, after looking up at Mr. Porter's confused expression.

For a moment, at Mr. Porter's request, the conversation turned more traditionally medical. Specifically, Mr. Porter's frequent urination was likely traceable to a case of benign prostatic hyperplasia. In English: an enlarged prostate. Very common in men over fifty, though uncomfortable, to be sure.

This condition, Dr. Heller continued, according to Mr. Porter, can cause anxiety and disrupt sleep patterns, which is obviously very bad. Sleeping soundly is the key to feeling sound.

Do you drink coffee? he asked Mr. Porter, who replied that he did.

Excellent, said Dr. Heller. That will help. Now stop it. Excuse me?

You'll have to stop drinking coffee. It can make it easier for the problem to implant itself in your bladder. for the problem to implant itself in your bladder.

Mr. Porter agreed to stop drinking coffee, and incidentally has not had a cup since, though honestly, he only believed he was paying lip service to abstention at the time (the doctor had raised an eyebrow at Mr. Porter's promise; they always know that tone of voice when they hear it, Mr. Porter had come to notice). But then, he said, Dr. Heller began to move back toward the unorthodox side of things. First he asked how Mr. Porter typically felt at night.

Like when I lie down to go to sleep?

Yes.

Well it's nothing unusual. Of course I've got to pee, usually. But you know...work, kids. Very typical stuff.



But you stay up?

For a little while, sure.

Have you ever thought of taking a you minute each night,

Mr. Porter?

I'm sorry, I'm not sure I understood you just now.

A minute *for you*. Just some time for complete, isolated relaxation in order for your body to reevaluate its own state.

Like meditation.

Yes.

No, I've never really been...are we still talking about my bladder here?

It's not just about your bladder, Dr. Heller said, laughing slightly as though he were reminding a young child of how to tie his shoes. He paused for a moment, closing his eyes and rubbing his chin before finally instructing Mr. Porter to go down the hall to the bathroom to empty the bladder that it wasn't all about.

When he came back, Dr. Heller said, the room would be empty and would smell a little more interesting, a little less clinical. He wanted Mr. Porter to sit on the examination bench with his legs crossed and just close his eyes. Just close them for ten minutes and breathe. With his eyes closed, Dr. Heller wanted him to stare at the backs of his lids and see what he saw. Then, hopefully, he would understand the value of a you minute.

Mr. Porter did as he was told, making his way down the short hallway to the typically clinical bathroom with the metal toilet and little door in the wall for urine samples (which he was not asked to give, strangely enough). He was substantially unsettled at this point, he later assured people, but he continued to follow instructions, thinking of the doctorate on the wall; possessed of a master's in engineering, Mr. Porter typically gave diplomas generous credence. at this point, he later assured people, but he continued to follow instructions, thinking of the doctorate on the wall; possessed of a master's in engineering, Mr. Porter typically gave diplomas generous credence.

When he came back to the exam room, the lights were off except for a sole desk lamp shining in the corner. It was facing the wall, presumably to cut back on glare. He found that the room did smell nicer, kind of like pine bark, or something similarly earthy and dense. He worried for a moment that he was being watched remotely; he trusted doctors and all, don't get him wrong, but he

had never encountered treatment like this. After a few minutes of indolent silence, unable to spot any hidden monitoring devices in the relative darkness, he mounted the bench, just like Dr. Heller had said, and crossed his legs. The room was silent. He breathed. He closed his eyes and listened to that breathing. Soon, he felt the spring-loaded tension begin seeping out from his legs as they weighed further and further upon each other in the recumbency so familiar from elementary school. The barriers between his various appendages, the individuality he usually felt in each of them dissolved, leaving his whole body a malleable statue, a miraculously erect bag without subdivisions or support. And somehow, he thought with a smile, none of this disgusted him.

After ten minutes or so the door opened slowly, sterile light from the hallway creeping in as Dr. Heller reentered and warned Mr. Porter that he was about to turn on the halogen overhead. He asked whether Mr. Porter felt any better.

Mr. Porter smiled. I feel really good, he replied quietly. I really do. But I just emptied the tank, to be fair.

Dr. Heller smiled. That's only fair to acknowledge, he said. But I would like for you to do what you just did at least once every day, preferably more often. Try to do it at regular times. Go to the bathroom first and bathe in what I'm about to give you, relaxing as much as possible. Then I want you to take this herb, sit down on the floor, and allow your body to take stock of its own problems for a while. You'd be astounded at how much better the body works when it is relaxed.

Then Dr. Heller wrote down the name *Pygeum* on a notepad and handed it to Mr. Porter. This herbal remedy, the doctor explained, was composed, among other things, of bark extract from the red stinkwood tree of Sub-Saharan Africa. Taken in conjunction with regular bouts of dedicated bodily realignment like he had just experienced, the *Pygeum* could go a long way toward relieving Mr. Porter's discomfort. Before he left, Dr. Heller reminded him one more time that his body was composed of various

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2 The cops' warrant was supposedly based on the suspicion that Dr. Heller was involved in the stateside reception of embargo-restricted goods from Somalia. Which I guess turned out to be true, technically. But it was an absolutely microscopic operation, and that wasn't even the idea; the idea was that they (the cops, the D.A.'s office, et al) would be able to cook up some

systems, but that together these systems make a whole; letting the body communicate with itself is the key. Then Mr. Porter went out to the office and signed the insurance papers for the quiet but friendly woman behind the desk whose strange robe and hat seemed to comport quite well indeed with what he had just experienced.

I've spoken with Mr. Porter several times about Dr. Heller: Neither of us ever believed any of those vile allegations. I'm not just saying that based on third-party testimony, either: I had to go in to the office because I was peeing red for hours after exercising. This fact obviously put me on edge. I actually did have to submit a sample, and after running some tests, he diagnosed the problem as gross hematuria. He said blood cells in the urine are not necessarily indicative of a major problem. Monitor your comfort levels, he told me, and unless you experience any serious pain, don't worry too much. He glossed over the disorder: it wasn't the point. Instead, he spent the majority of our visit advising me on how to maximize my well-being by combining my already commendable exercise habits with what he called *regular you time*. That will do, he said. Whatever you want to call a quiet half-trance where you can see your glowing insides – your own actual insides! – on the backs of your eyelids. You can see so much of yourself when you stare right at them.

His unalloyed interest in my feeling good – it made me feel good on the spot. I did take him up on his recommendation for regular quiet reflection. I know now what people meant; the testimonies ring true.

And everything people had said about his building was true: You would never know that such a left-of-center professional like Dr. Heller practiced there. But it's obvious now that his choice there was rather deliberate: How better to conceal eccentricity than under the facade of the quotidian? I just wish I'd known that he needed his obscurity; that he didn't particularly care for our referrals. They were, in hindsight, incredibly dangerous. I can't help

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other charges based on whatever they found during their investigation--charges that would have better chances of sticking, e.g. malpractice, criminal negligence, etc. It seems that during his hours away from the office, Dr. Heller was practicing a more traditional breed of medicine in his living room. But it's also worth noting, I think, that all these patients were submitting to the Yo-ruba treatments completely of their own volition. I still don't see the problem.

but feel like we're all partially responsible for what happened to him. But he saw all of us anyway, even after the accolades brought him more and more venomous notoriety around town. It wouldn't be off base to say some of us hate ourselves for it now. But we know why he did it.

When they ran the photograph on the front page of the local paper – the one featuring Dr. Heller being led out of his home in handcuffs, wearing a blue and orange robe and matching floppy hat – I wasn't entirely surprised. Another of those seemingly ever-present witnesses said Dr. Heller stumbled into the rose bushes as the cops dragged him out of his house and down the brick pathway<sup>2</sup>, a patch of thorns tearing at his leg and causing him to make the only sound he made that day, a muted staccato gasp that the witness said reminded him of someone being shanked from behind in an old prison flick. The last thing Dr. Heller saw of his home was the sizable herb garden he kept out front, from which he encouraged his neighbors to take little samples whenever they liked. After staring at his garden for a few moments, he lowered himself into the back of the police car without help from the arresting officers. Then he lay stoically in the back seat, one leg bleeding slightly from the wounds of the spines of his own plants. As the car jerked away, his hat slid down over his eyes and stayed there, his hands fettered and still.

Like I said, I wasn't entirely surprised. I still hate to say that, but it's true. Most of the people around here don't regard their bodies in the same manner that he does. That they would regard Dr. Heller the way they did, all the suspicion and pronounced xenophobia, was only a matter of course.

Still, I wish like hell I had gotten to see the whole incident in front of his house, just so I could accurately verify or dispute all the things people said. Everyone who was there had supposedly noticed something that no other person could vouch for. But this, too, was unsurprising: People talk. Over time, alleged arguments become alleged firefights, speeding tickets becomes rampages in blameless games of community-wide Telephone.

*There was this weird vapor coming off his robe that you could only see if you got really close.*

*He was doing this chant under his breath the whole time they were leading him to the car, and when he started getting in, one of the*

*cops just sprung this random tiny nose bleed.*

*You could see, like, twenty, twenty-five people crowded around his house's windows, looking out at the whole thing. And none of them were white. And who's to say there weren't two, three times that many people hanging back from the windows? A hundred people, none of them part of this guy's family, just hanging around his house in the middle of the day.*

The redness in my urine has steadily declined over time. Now, my pee looks more like tea than blood. It doesn't hurt. More than anything, it's good to know the problem isn't that urgent in the first place. I don't think it's too much of a stretch to say that was Dr. Heller's greatest contribution, in my own case: Just giving me the relief I needed to move on with my life, to live each day knowing that, as I age, something will eventually get to me, but it won't be this. Knowing the difference between a slight systematic miscommunication and a holistic issue – this is what he taught his patients to recognize, above all else.

I tried to go see him in prison soon after he arrived there, but they said he wasn't taking visitors. When I mentioned his name, the guard at the desk gave a slight start before she politely informed me he wasn't available, even during visiting hours. We held each other's gaze for a moment – an odd interval, somehow knowing, but not particularly tense – before I nodded and turned to leave.

But the guard called out to me as I walked away.

I could tell him you came by if you want, she said. What was your name?

I turned back to face her. Frowning in consideration for a long ten seconds, I eventually declined, thanking her warmly before heading to the parking lot and driving back home, where my wife was surely waiting for me so we could go on our daily run. As much as I had wanted to see him, I thought it best not to disturb what I imagined to be a heavy, halcyon scene cutting a much-needed swath in the prison's cool grayness: I saw the doctor, his mustache grown bushy and cowlicked, sitting cross-legged on the bench in his cell, staring complacently at the glowing insides on the backs of his eyelids.

## DUNCAN LIEN

### A Waiting Room Gospel

Codes and electrodes unfold  
Turning on a knife edged dime.  
Suede shoes and shirtless,  
A grotesque regionalist hallmark  
They won't let you sleep  
And you can't just ride off.  
No. Everyone needs an audience.

A sanguine gospel.  
A damned soul with the  
Key and no steady lock.  
Drag your heart out to the still  
And dive right in, all cylinders flying.  
Her looking glass figure,  
Humble and obscure,  
Cranial and curvaceous,  
Antimonious and earmarked,  
Subterranean Coptic saint of  
Cracked mosaics,  
An inverted simplex  
Yearning for tessellation.  
Certain uncertainty  
The telos of beauty  
Absolutely a trope.  
Flowers en masse or  
The grace of antique machinery  
(Shulamite steam power).

Preach, grope, thunder, stutter,  
Exfoliate, thrust, flog, allude and conclude  
Beyond the crusade.  
Consider the audience:  
Point, shoot, demand.  
Pantomime the shadow of

Whirlpools on lava, the  
Petrified image of becoming.  
Amorphous and irreverent,  
Vehemently off the track  
Blazing a hot trail.



ALLY WHITE | Corpse Glow (Woodcut)

AMANDA PRICE

Wild Packs of Family Dogs (Pen & Ink)



FREDERIC LEVESQUE

Cross My Heart and Something Else

White hot homeless men  
with crossed fingers in the lost  
barrios of Barcelona  
make chills in the shadows  
and  
In the red air  
with the salty blows  
of sea chant

I kiss your wet forehead

Well-liquored in broken languages  
Giants all of us  
Dancing in the wasted ashes  
of whatever rosy bars

This must be where the homesick find  
warm corners

and  
Sleep.

This must be where sad lovers  
touch hands and sing  
each others names  
inside  
the skylines of stone angels

This is where your  
vanishing heart fell on the floor  
and you blushing  
had to watch me hold it

This must be where I die in the slowly someday

Something will change  
or I'll sell my blue veins  
and last teeth  
for a castle carved in  
the hills  
and let your cool snake tongue  
slip in my American bloody mouth

Then

All the slow tortured deaths  
in the world  
will seem like tickle fights  
between dumb children

Take me through the streets  
poor streets  
Spanish angel  
I taste history in your  
wine breath

I promise in blood never  
to promise again  
if we bury each other  
in the used sand  
and never set foot in the  
cities  
again

This will be where I die  
feeling the  
heavy of your  
eyes  
burning my chest  
the same someday  
slowly.

Then all the slow  
tortured deaths  
of the world will

seem like a lost lustful trick  
played on strange strangers.

Fill me up with hot air  
and hope for  
Fill me up with hot air  
and hope to

god  
i don't fall

## HANNAH GILL

### STANDING IN A PICASSO EXHIBIT in 3 parts

Part 1: Picasso reveals.

Cast:

Genevieve: *slender spectator with a silver scarf*

Picasso: *invisible artist with visible visions and thoughts*

Chorus: *art historians in earphones adjacent to Genevieve's ears*

Genevieve enters exhibit with high hopes of illuminated emotions like rain that brightens a city between overcast skies and earth. She meets Picasso in a quote painted in acrylic above seductive oils. Genevieve shields her heart with a hand to keep in the admiration of said Picasso.

P: Art is not chaste<sup>1</sup>.

G: You were not chaste.

P: A very simple fact. I loved women.

G: Their bodies they gave you? Their forms defined in charcoal?

[hissing]

P: I painted what I saw.

G: Indefinite intimacy.

P: I could only paint reality.

G: A body unfolded and arranged in color. Intimacy is surreal.

P: Intimacy redefines reality. A kiss bestows a realm of new dimension to opened eyes.

G: Can art be chaste?

P: Not in Paris.

G: Can art be chaste?

P: Not when discovering.

G: Can art be chaste?

P: Not with sharp angles.

G: Can art be chaste?

P: No.

G: Can love be safe?

P: Never.

C: Humans falling on humans

The muse more a solace than the lover

Artists finagle intimacy to produce invidious statements

Part 2: Dora Maar suffers a seated position.

Cast:

Genevieve: *lonely onlooker with love to learn*

Dora Maar: *psychoanalyzed and painted by Picasso*

Chorus: *French experts recorded for exhibits in handsets*

Genevieve studies Dora Maar Seated and weeps as Dora wept, with secrecy, a bursting tree that offers one acidic sapdrop at a time.

C: Why not paint profile and portrait's sadness

it *is* how he saw her (kissing a muse)

Dora takes pictures and makes love

but her womb creates like water is dry

D: He had a bullfighter's body

and an absent way of leaving

G: Did he love you?

D: The thing about an artist is he only loves what inspires him

G: I can see why you would cry.

C: Infatuation sinks like golden coins

Ineluctable casualties of war on waves

D: If home is happy, I am a nomad without a camel.

If home is family, I am a nomad.

If home continues, I am without a camel.

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1. quote of Picasso, "art is never chaste."



### Part 3: Le Baiser with final lover.

#### Cast:

Genevieve: *girl who stands in front of Le Baiser with jutted hip*

Jacqueline: *second wife of silver haired Picasso*

Chorus: *distant voices who daringly educate Eve*

Genevieve faces Picasso's revelation of kissing Jacqueline. Jacqueline endures in the arms of someone who did not let go. Above the painting reads, "No pleasure without the taste of ashes."

G: He married you last. You were his last pleasure.

J: There comes a time when every man realizes he wants to be loved.

G: What did you see when you kissed him?

J: I didn't. I always closed my eyes.

G: Picasso thought otherwise. Oils on canvas.

J: He watched the rain fall on a cloudless night. His coarse hair.

G: He often saw you naked.

J: To admire grace tremendously.

G: Is it fair he knew your body more than you did?

J: The weight of his adoration brought me to kneeling.

G: Would that pleasure be so sweet

J: Yet always the black taste. No ashes so white and pure without the fire that made them and the bitterness that hasn't left them yet. I hope you find fire, Genevieve.

C: To finish a painting or linger in a kiss?

If every lover's morning were a possibility to leave undone a work of art?

## KELLY DOYLE-MACE

### Barber

I saw you, none, you were token-bearing on front porches like we've seen in this town, poorly without welcoming wand, without a sound, didn't you see the pillars? Bug-scotched & sound-still, side-glanced & stranded in small lights shying, the poor things were beaming green as though taken with the trees, and this inviting to the inner soiree, this was mine too for the evening party. I waved a smile hi through the veranda's many vines, I stooped inside to spot you put away a plastic glass, solo as you knocked back with two headliners and twice as many solo projects. Projecting from above, an electric-driven electric instrumental: words too obvious.

I saw you, ghost, and wondered when. You had forgotten of our coffees, sipped in warmth from ceramic the thickest ever witnessed, each of us sat on either side of the copper counter. You in your evening shift, in your breadwon buttons, in your my pleasure tenor, we were all the time agreeing, nodding to the overhead. We were all the time in awe of the overhead! It's no thing; we were younger and absorbent, and not much else. You were eager to impress, seeming to charge forth with some army of speech parts borrowed from the books around you, homogeneous and quick to come. But I held my boys back and continued to rear them: quality over quantity, kids. I held my breath through the bouts and didn't have to close my eyes, it was more than fine. We were then and would be now young, and I knew it, and you did not know.



The vine is a giant when the town's not tall, and invitations only overheard are enough acceptable, but my star, I was good as departed on arrival. It was in your greeting, in your proceeding not to point out the drinks while you held one your very self, and how I'm not going to go looking for them on my own. It was in how all these mothers seemed never to have taught these children to use eye contact when in parties of three or more. You know, the scene, and I've seen enough of it. And so I'm leaving. I left your evening, waved a smile bye through the porch's winning vines, was pruned by the barbs, was maybe waved back to. I stepped down and drove down the block and watched as too many of these porches were façades, one-layer after another, as the centuries old greens that spread before them in true claim are all too leading to their doors.

## DANIEL SMITH



Self-Portrait As a Shattered Laocoon (Digital Photography)



## KATIE McCREERY

### Damaged Goods

Ellsworth McCall ran the general store in the center part of town that still sold everything from canned goods to borax to yard tools to hunting knives, even though a catalogue store had moved in across the street two years ago and had just about put him out of business. But Dirk d'Angelou had no intentions of going into the catalogue store, because he knew from experience that it was hard to bargain there, because their prices were set by some grey-suited group of business executives in some city he might have heard of but never seen. And people from there had to be obeyed. That was what the clerk behind the register had told him last time he'd been in there trying to find a way to afford a decent pair of britches and wouldn't take him up on his offer to scrub floors or something in exchange for a discount, because corporate wouldn't like it and no one is allowed to go against corporate. So he stuck to haggling with McCall.

His search was slow and tiresome as he tried to find everything he wanted at the lowest price he could, then limit even that to things with flaws in them he could exploit to drive the price even lower: cans with dings in them, day-old bread, milk a few days scarce from going sour. The few other shoppers stared at him, pondering his choices; they were looking for the best quality as he searched for the worst. Dirk had gotten good at ignoring them though; they didn't know what it was like to have to feed two people for as long as they could on just a few dollars, and as bitter as he was about it, he couldn't quite find it in himself to wish that they'd ever learn.

He carefully arranged the damaged items on the counter, setting them in careful piles according to object so that it wouldn't seem like so much he was attempting to get for so little. McCall sighed. "Just leave it, Dirk," he said. "Show me what you got. We'll work something out."

The boy nodded swiftly, dark hair falling over darker eyes. "This bread's got mold on it," he said, slipping the loaf out of the wax-paper bag to show the grocer. "You couldn't sell it like that. You'd have to pitch it."

"Take it then. What else?"

"This cheese's got mold, too." Both of them knew that cheese mold was easily cut off and thrown away, leaving the rest perfectly marketable, but even the man behind the counter did not mention it. "I'll give you half."

"Half plus a nickel and I'll think about it."

Dirk ran the calculations in his head. "Fine," he replied eventually. "The cans. Every one of them's banged up. No tellin' what it's like inside of them. No one likes bruised peaches, even from a can."

McCall wouldn't have done it if he hadn't felt sorry for the kid, only sixteen and having to figure out everything for himself without even a mother to make sure he'd combed his hair. "How's your father doing, Dirk?" he asked tentatively.

The boy wouldn't meet the man's eyes. "He was asleep as I left. For his sake I hope he stays that way for as long as he can. These days, being awake don't suit him very well. I'll give you thirty for the lot," he said, turning the grocer's attention back to the cans. Thirty cents. Less than half but more than nothing. It wasn't a lot, but McCall had known the boy's father and was still willing to let him take what he needed even if it meant he wouldn't break even at the end of the month.

"Anything else for you?" McCall asked, looking over the groceries before examining Dirk, who appeared to have been swallowed by his too-big clothes, flawed rejects that were nicked from the bin of the tailor's next door. "This don't seem like an awful lot."

"I'll come back," Dirk said. "I'll have more money soon. Then I'll come back."

"All right," McCall said. "That sounds good. I'll see you then."

"Actually, Mr. McCall," said the boy, looking up for the first time so that McCall could see the uncertainty in his face. "There's one more thing, if it wouldn't be too much of a bother." He put the case of beer on the counter, the brown glass bottles glinting in the dusty sunlight.

McCall ran a hand through his hair. "I sure am sorry, Dirk, but you know I can't sell that to anybody under a certain age, even you."

"But it ain't for me," the boy said desperately. "It's for my daddy. I'm willin' to pay full price for it, too. I have enough left over

for it, see?"

"Your daddy's real sick," McCall said, as though Dirk actually needed reminding.

"Sir, my daddy ain't sick. My daddy's half-dead."

"Then Providence knows he shouldn't be drinking!"

"You really gonna deny a dying man a drink?"

Ellsworth McCall sighed and took the boy's money. "Tell a soul about this and I'll be in deep trouble, you understand me, Dirk d'Angelou?"

"I understand, Mr. McCall. I'm—my father and me—we're much obliged to you. For everything."

He nodded. "Give your father my best. And Dirk—call the doctor if he gets any worse, all right? Doc Joyce's a good man; he won't charge you unfairly if you just tell him your circumstances. But Dirk—he won't sugar coat or nothin'. Just know that before you call him. He'll tell you the truth just the way it was meant to be told, whether you're interested in hearing it or not."

"Thank you, Mr. McCall. I'll be sure to do that, if it comes down to it." The cowbell hanging from braided twine above the door clanked dully as he exited the store, as though dejected to have lost the business.

Dirk took the road a little ways, then turned off abruptly, onto a dirt path that quickly ceased being any kind of path at all as it wound its way deeper into a pine-grove a little ways beyond the outskirts of the little town and everything in it. He set down the dusty grocery sacks used his penknife to flip the cap off of one of the dusty bottles of dusty booze and gulped it down, ignoring the fact that he didn't like the taste of liquor and the fact that old man McCall would very well tan his hide if he found out. He wondered whether having his ass whipped raw was worth the buzz in his head and the slow fire that licked the back of his throat then remembered that he didn't really care. Besides, he'd already rehearsed the lines in his head a thousand times over: *Would you really deny a dying man's boy a drink?* Like McCall said, his rhetoric could get him whatever he wanted.

He downed another two bottles with the same haphazard indifference of the first, until his thoughts were pleasantly slow and sluggish like the gully beyond choked with debris from the sawmill that turned ceaselessly yet never seemed to produce anything of substance, not like the noise in his head that was only

just beginning to show the symptoms of becoming an aching throb.

He hadn't told McCall that he'd already talked to Doc Joyce, and he'd been as brutally honest as predicted, taking no pay for such grim prognoses. He'd given the boy's old man a month at most and left some morphine packets on the table, though Dirk could never quite decide who between the two of them could use it more.

He slipped the remaining bottle in his coat pocket. He'd need it, for later, when the buzz had worn off and he needed something to sharpen his senses.

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"How much you cheat McCall out of today?" His father's breath was wheezy, like he was gargling salt water instead of coughing up blood.

"Not much," Dirk lied easily.

"You'll pay him back when you can sell the house. Get a smaller place. Big enough for one."

They'd bantered like that since the first diagnosis, but it still never quite failed to shake Dirk, who tried to focus on placing the cans on the shelf one by one in strict little lines of which he was in control. "I'll find another way to pay him back. Rent out rooms here if I have to. But I like the house and I aim to keep it."

"You're too young to run a boarding house."

"I'm too young to be an orphan."

His father smiled weakly. "Ain't anyone too young for Providence." He paused. "You gonna ignore me once I'm dead and buried? All that shit I told you?"

"I aim on ignoring you tonight, as a matter of fact."

Pushing himself up, Dirk's father glared. "I told you. I don't like you out fighting. We ain't that poor."

"We will be soon. And it ain't fighting. It's boxing. And if I did it just because we're poor, I'd be a hell of a lot worse at it than I already am. Now lay down before I slip some of this morphine in your soup. I'd knock you out in a second if I thought it would shut you up."

"You're gonna miss me. You know that, right?" It wasn't a question.

"I know it."

His father's head sunk into the pillow, and Dirk looked

over his shoulder, ever vigilant for the sign of breath. "Damn," the man said softly. He always lost his voice after a few minutes. "This hurts like hell."

"I know it."

"Like hell you know it."

"You ever taken a good punch to the ribs? If I don't know it now I sure as hell will later. Tonight, maybe. We'll see."

His father muttered something inaudible. He caught words like "ignore" and "ghost" but mostly preferred not to try to interpret the rest.

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Two fights were lost that night. Dirk "Danger" d'Angelou lost to Slim Whitten in a makeshift boxing ring hidden in a warehouse, in a city a long bus ride away from home. Though his odds hadn't been much worse than his son's, the older d'Angelou lost a fight was well, but his was against Providence, and Providence always seems to win. One way or another, Providence always wins.

KORY GABRIEL



Ingres (Graphite on Paper)

SERENA NAIDU



Perfect Storm (Charcoal & Pastel on Paper)



ALLY WHITE

Girl Turned Gorilla (Woodcut)



LYDIA BRAMBILA

A Passing In Two Parts

I

It was a single note,  
Plucked  
On the opposite coast by a finger,  
Outstretched, that rang  
For a moment,  
Still and ringing— relished, then

Silence in the room

But the note, sweet  
whispered out through the threshold  
humming down the stairs  
through the lobby  
into the street  
Swishing whisper  
hovering into mailboxes, moving intact  
beneath beaten soles

Sweeping closer, closer, with  
growing intent into the phone line  
and into the quivering ear

II

My mother stood in a print dress above the earth that  
would inevitably trickle down into  
her father's hair and teeth,  
buried in this flat plain

Had shipped herself there over  
dirt roads and gravel, bus after  
bus into Mexico

And as the wind  
spat  
in a manner not appropriate  
for the occasion (as would  
a rude houseguest, to bend the  
wheat and flip the pages of a prayerbook,  
as would  
a coy heathen)

She heard a note ringing clear, like  
silverware on glass  
Felt the beauty of it all  
in the soles of her shoes

## DUNCAN LIEN

### Daffodils

i.  
The oaks -  
for their stately pleasures,  
their 100s of years,  
the creek beds come and gone,  
coffins floated away,  
not for their fated successions and emancipations,  
(tho I've been shown a tree that owns itself),  
the persistence of their leaves,  
or shade cast over fallen planters, rail barons, statesmen,  
their stillborn wives and beautiful children,  
grecian urns atop marble phallus;  
climb not higher.

ii  
everything a lichen here,  
in a comfortable stasis between rock & dust, ruin & rune.  
neither here nor there, killing nor caring  
coming or going it's a tight rope that's  
keeping you up and bringing you down.  
a synthesis neither fiction nor fancy-  
both true and false,  
lacking both breast and mind -  
it cannot be felt or formed.

roses sans thorns, the wind blows hollow-  
neither dirge nor dhrupad.  
brokendown never to have brokendown-  
known a breakdown...  
a vase mid-fall.

in permitting all naught is permitted-  
at once sheriff and outlaw  
prudish beasts dancing static round frozen fire.

god is claimed as an omnipotent dependent.  
memory and memorial keep one another at bay-  
taloned turkeys, gobbling eagles. whole skin wed  
to knife.

what i offer is neither action nor account. a flake suspended in  
a ray melting in a timeless instant.

iii  
golden daffodils bobbing gaily litter this sacred profanity,  
wide open jocund chicken heads,  
pausing naught to tangle with  
a couched heart;  
their spring eternal.

## KELLY DOYLE-MACE

### Elizabeth & Element

Elizabeth & Element, two bugs, went out tipping bartenders on a Tuesday dusking. They were very much at large, a fact which had them in splits, school-girl soused, skirt-scandalous. More wishing to raise the bar than to raise any brows, they nevertheless had the gentlemen folks behind the counter stepping right up, delighted, and when asked so many times throughout their rounds what was the occasion, Elizabeth & Element would, guaranteed, always sound out the same fabulous reply: "We're living our *lives!*" One can imagine how many pink pomegranate things were offered to them that night.

After a few, the really unique individualities of the ladies began to shine through, and most impressive. These were women with real passions, and the novelty and boldness to pursue them. Element, a natural blonde by the way, thought to count out loud all the teeth and caps she could survey, and even at her very blackest hour she fell upon a thousandth flash of white. Of course she would always pull herself up for her pal Liz - the more expressive of the two - if only to be the first to hear her really original ideas. "What if we sat on the bar? Not at, but on," she would spout, her toes bunched preparedly. And naturally then, they did just that, ignoring swipes and swats and pesky wandering backhands. The goal, or the experiment rather, was to just be as everywhere as possible. Those lot were booth booth-swapping, swivel-switching, sitting on the craziest surfaces, even questioning the whole damn question of seating. "Does my ass go this way?" "Does my fat ass go that way?" "To what extent should it flatten when I perch it on pine?" "On funky peeling vinyl revealing moldy old foam that we're not afraid of?" "On chrome-played steel, or on hip converted church pews?" And et caetera, they would ask.

And as if hit by mass sprayings of *Raid*, they burst out in the simultaneous discovery that they were in this together, and that together, they must seize the day. "Kyle!" Elizabeth hollered, "Kyle, get a look at the pair of us. Have ya ever seen a more high-fiveable duo?" "No ma'am, concurred Kyle, "I never saw a dozen hands I



I wanted to high-five so much in my life." Kyle with a switch of the wrist slid down the bar to the bugs a handle of their favorite juice. "You girls can handle it," he added, winking. Giggles all around, the bugs swigged & swished & kept tabs. These were a true blue two.

"But more about we," insisted Elizabeth. "Yes, I was just thinking, we deserve a drink," laughed Element. So they hopped down from Kyle's bar and to a Gin Joint they beer-buzzed. In jest they drank Gin Fizz. "Call it a fizz with a twist," said barman Lou, with his darting eye. "Oh Lou, you're so fat!" squealed Elizabeth, "But we do love a twist!" And even pancake chest Element began to squirm across the mock marble bar onto her hindlegs and into a tight twist. "Can we twist on the speakers?" asked Element, setting to twist on the speakers. "I don't know, you tell me," requested sleazy Lou. "We can twist everywhere," emphasized Elizabeth, "We can twist in every which way." They fizzed and twirled long and when Lou suddenly went from so fat to too fat, E & E went out the door on the fly.

"The next bar we visit should be a bank." Elizabeth of course agreed that it was of no matter that banks were shut that time of the after hours, and the next bar they visited was a bank. "Stick 'em up," hooted Elizabeth to Hank, the bankback. Hank not being frank, he gave them a blank face. "Aw c'mon, Hank, we like ya, we just think you're a peach." Element chimed: "We want to thank you, Hank. D'you wanna thank us? For thanking you?" Hank again went blank, and in roars the bugsies burst laughing. Then Hank gave. "Heck, girls, you really gave me a scare. What'll ya have?" "Whatever's on the house," answered Elizabeth. Hank handed her a jumbo wad of filthy cash. "Check to be sure, but I think there's some hundreds in there!" he said with a proud grin. "Ooh, hundred bills! How clever of you, Hank, we would have never thought to add that!" Element said sweetly. "Hey Element," Elizabeth innovated, "What if something could actually be on the house?! As in, physically, scientifically or whatever, on the house! Imagine." Overhearing, Hank suggested the trap door in the ceiling.

On the house, they met one Tommy. He was a real hunk, and much more frank than Henry. He read the bugs like a laminated diner menu with his eyeballs - Element in her pushup bra, Elizabeth the one with the askin'-for-it little red toenails. They squirmed a little in

the chilled open air. Tommy, too cool for school, asked 'em, "What's with the costumes, bugsies, whatcha bein' for Halloween?" "It isn't Halloween and these aren't costumes," insisted Elizabeth, getting right up in his mean face with hers. "But for the record, we're Lucy & Ethel!" Hank sputtered: "Oh dear, no one told me it wasn't Halloween!" and half-jokingly began to loosen his collar.

More laughing, boozing, throwing punches. At some point, there was talk of deviation: "Liz, when are we going to go get window treatments?" whispered Element privately to Elizabeth. Hank, overhearing, was harried, and he proposed to the girls that they hang from the telephone wires to air out their little wings, "If you'd be more comfortable that way," he added. But E & E remembered the bankroll in their pockets and politely declined. "But aren't you squirrels? After all, you've been squirreling all night," Tommy demanded. The girls froze a bit, then burst into their hoot. "Oh good heavens no!" hooted Element. "Yes, we have been squirreling, but we are of course not squirrels!" hooted Elizabeth. "Also, you may be confusing some of our squirreling with swirling," she added, taking a Brandy. But by now, Tommy was indignant and bored. "If you bugs aren't squirrels, then what are we even doing here?"

Elizabeth felt strange, and noticed the morning car engines sweetly starting to start up around town below. "We shouldn't be here, Element," she whispered to Element, and Element hiccupped her concession right in Tommy's face: "The motion is, let us settle up, good sirs!" And as they were pushed over the edge and plunging fifteen flights towards the pavement below, it did cross Elizabeth's & Element's minds that their ass was grass.

## ALI COAD

### Roads & Wingless

I dived too deep into the  
streetlight wide eyes of a cop  
who closed the fare on the high-  
way most people use  
to get to Mississippi. Jealous  
and weeping, a sparrow  
mouthed man mouthed  
the song that crows sing when  
wondering what it's like  
to fly over Lake  
Michigan without any wings.  
I imagine it would feel  
lighter, somehow, and I  
suppose our stagnancy  
is the same. Here  
the crows think very little  
of us, even less than we do  
of them.

## HANNAH GILL

### Growing Hips

I.  
Dancing ceased the way a bird falls in game season  
The sudden arrival of gravity abreast an egregious injury  
She could not combust with brushes of ballet toes  
So her hips created bait for the fishermen

In the dressing room  
Josephine dressed the moon  
Asking her mother  
If she will ever resemble a string bean again

"You have woman hips"

And admiration of her own body ignited  
The way wisteria ravishes  
The fences

II.  
Mental disorders require more than one of the following:  
Suffering  
Ineffective suffering  
Perverse suffering  
Illegal suffering  
Anxious suffering  
And whimsical suffering

She suffers sedately  
But doctors say loneliness is not ineffective anymore

Silent sultry saddened Sophie  
Wants for happy after lonely  
Scared of people in her home  
She stains red lipstick for no one

Cry, Sophie  
Softly, coyly, Sophie, cry  
Sophie, with cupped hands, [don't] cry  
Not in corridors nor steppes nor sky

The first step to seeking help  
Is simmering your heart  
In a double boiler  
Stirring frequently

III.  
*First position*

Introducing Genevieve [Arms devant]  
Not to be confused with Eve  
For she was born into sin

*Tendu, Second position*

A mother's only child, *aplomb*  
*Tendu, Fifth position*  
Saunters through midnight valleys [Tendu en avant]  
Holding affluent hands with a married man  
What does his wife feel when he comes home?

Dégagé

Privately weeps and smiles in red hues

Back to *fifth*  
(The way a good girl should)

*Tendu right*  
His affection rusts her cheeks [Effacé]  
And she wonders if the stars also grieve without the sun

*Arabesque*  
Close your eyes when he kisses you

*Allégro to fifth*  
To see a spectrum of colors abound from you, with you, to you  
It could be a masterpiece

*Dégagé*  
If she buried the broken cistern  
*À la seconde*  
Straddling a sacred coulee  
Pastures pledged in green and love  
*Relevé*  
*Balancé*  
*Tendu, First position*  
Would she leap?

WILL WALTON

## Bird's Grandmother Discovers the Dead Calf

Leather fingers, cracked knuckles,  
Grit 'neath nails, all trimmed.  
With haste, the cold got you dry.  
Beating in your wrist, a heart  
'Hind your sternum. I picture it  
As we swing to and fro like  
The pit and pendulum,  
Shoulders popping,  
Pop pop pa-pop,  
Our arms, you and I,  
Synchronized, so suddenly

You let me go, heart drops.  
Sink slowly. Hand to brow.  
Sunlight slides through slanted  
Cracks 'tween your fingers.  
What is it, Grandma?  
Changes in your breath, the  
Beats in your wrist go  
Ba-bump ba-bump ba-bump,  
As I slide off your handshield, and  
("What light through yonder window--")  
Without warning, witness

What fell your hand.  
On wet grass, God's onceborn baby  
Broken. Not believing, though  
I was indeed seeing, in a clump  
Of fur and jerky, all spat-out  
Like tobacco (Spittooo!)  
On the cold ground, snout torn,  
Permanent snarl ("Wipe that grin  
Off your face this instant--"),  
A smear on her shoe. Coyotes,  
She said, sighing.

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