

STILLPOINT 2013



LITERARY MAGAZINE

Front Cover &
Cover Page Art:

SLY

ALEA HURST
PAINTING, SENIOR

Oil on Fabric
24 x 30, 2012

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STILLPOINT

LITERARY MAGAZINE

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To the Reader,

Searching through a shelf in the Creative Writing office, I came across an old issue of Stillpoint, from nearly ten years ago. It is slimmer in volume and simpler in design than our current form; to say that we've come a long way, though, is to acknowledge how every issue since 1967 has been an individual push forward. Our goal this year has been to lift Stillpoint to its next incarnation, bolder and more closely connected to UGA's undergraduate writers and artists. Throughout the semester, we have strived to make Stillpoint reflect a wider range of student work. The writing, art, and photography here are a way to discover what student artists are working on now, and ultimately, a direct line into the creative future. Our 2013 issue is thus a convergence of diverse styles and ideas, with hundreds of submissions painstakingly narrowed down into one magazine.

As our pool of submissions grows every year, making decisions on what to publish becomes all the more difficult. We discuss pieces extensively, and are continuously looking for new ways to present student work and develop content. In the process, our intrepid staff agonizes over everything from structural devices in poetry to font choices on flyers. Taking a cue from last year, we have once again included a "Found Poem," made primarily of lines from pieces not included in the magazine. We are excited to bring more writers into conversation with one another, and would love to see the tradition continue. With our new website completed, we anticipate even more opportunities for student writers and artists to find an audience.

Whether reading past, present, or future issues of Stillpoint, consider them not only as encapsulations of student voices in a particular cultural moment, but also as foregrounding for whatever comes next. We are proud of the work and creativity that went into this issue, and hope that you enjoy what you read. If it inspires your own work forward, even better.

LIAN PETERS
Senior Editor

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ALL MANN



He walks among the row of herbs toward the flowers, bending forward to examine a spotted leaf. Turning the corner of a garden trestle, he calls to his wife to sweep the garden's corners clear of soil. Otherwise, seeds might take root and cross-pollinate with other species, counter to his structure of research in medicinal

plants. His grasp on the healing properties, so tenuous, might slip with any doubt—any doubt thrown into his records effaces his hand-carved path among leaves and herbs. The threads of science, spun from what he imagines to be the spark of life, might slip through his nerveless fingers and fall from the reach of his



ER OF HERBES

ROOTS AND FRUITS

KATHERINE ARNOLD

diagrammed theories. Practicing medicine—a devotion, like the candles lit daily for the illnesses of the world—has yielded him a manuscript of collected remedies in each specie: *Lilium Perficum*, *Fritillaria Alba*, *Crocus Vernus*.

The bushels of dried herbs come from the Indies and

Americas: the quay is flooded with varieties in his extensive collection. He saw poppies on the quay, and the remedy in liquid exuded from the pressed seeds.

The attempt to stem pain leads his experiments—from the beginning, opium

offered a remedy to his wife's anxiety spells. He poured a small dose, and held her hands when she swallowed the grainy liquid, until the tremors ceased, and then he wrote the date and length of her episode in his medical notebook. Now, he walks forward and absently turns his head to keep her from passing beyond the edge of sight. As he paces the flagstones he scratches another diagram on paper, pausing once to lift his hand and draw calculations in the air before him.

His own doses of opium can't dispel the momentary tremble in his hand, which occurs in short time intervals. He straightens up from the flowers and performs a self-diagnosis: fragility of the nerves due to strain and overwork. Suggested dose: three grams of laudanum. He imagines the poppy seeds as the elixir countering pain, the seeds branching under the dirt and the feet of London.

He wrote the dedication in his book to remind himself of the distance separating research from creation and true authority: these sciences could trip the explorer, and one might come too close to the beginning, like a botanist drawn to the trumpet lilies and intoxicated by the purple intensity of the petals and the bent, slender stems, and a man thus caught and overcome with fragrance would strain his eyes to study the dimly visible formations inside the bell-shaped flower and, in following curiosity, lose his way in the dizzying passages to discovery.



GLASS BOTTLES

LINDSEY ALLEN

Charcoal
Reductive



VULTURES

ANNA SCHOENBAECHLER

BIRD PUTS ON HIS MOTHER'S WEDDING DRESS

WILL WALTON

Bird saw it there, all white and ghostlike, wrapped up in clear plastic, and hanging, stuck between some old fur coats belonging to family members we hadn't known. I could see where moths had set their tiny teeth to work on them and how ages of exposure, as they hung there in the dark, had left them vulnerable to the nesting habits of residential vermin. They were tattered, old things. No one would want them now. The dress stood out even more, wedged between them.

He shot me a look that said, "Is that it?" and I wanted to give him a nod, but I wasn't sure yet—if knowing would do him any good. He reached out and touched the plastic cover, and I realized that he knew, and how could he not have known? I remember Dad shoving the butt of the BB gun under my arm and telling me to shoot at a squirrel scuffling down the trunk of a tree. That was a long time ago. "There are some things a boy is born knowing," he told me. I suppose he was right.

So I said, "Yeah, Bird. That's it. You want me to take it down?"

He nodded.

I pulled it down, hanger and all, from the rack, the plastic covering making tiny crunching noises. I tried not to wrinkle it or let it trail the ground as I handed it to him, placing it in his arms like a newborn baby. He cradled it. Then what he did was unusual. He began to work the plastic covering until it slid off the hanger and the dress was laid bare in his hands. The clear plastic lay in a bunch on the floorboards between us. It looked like the cellophane wrapper from a cigarette box that gets cast off once torn into.

Bird held the dress in his hands now and looked at it. He passed over each crease in the material with his eyes. Each subtle frill, each strand of lace.

“She wore this?” he asked, not looking up.

“Yes,” I said. “She wore that when she married Dad.”

He looked up at me, and again his eyes said something, something more discreet, and suddenly I felt out of touch with him. Too many years separated Bird and me, and it was moments like this that reminded me of the fact. It was moments like these when I still recognized him as a child. As the baby who could whistle before he ever spoke. He had been a mystery then and was a mystery now. Standing there, at six, with his arms held out to me, clutching the dress, he befuddled me.

“What do you want, Bird?” I asked, reaching out and delicately taking the dress into my own hands.

He removed his shirt and dropped it onto the attic floor, next to the dress’s plastic cover. He held up his arms with his fingers squeezed tightly together, making his hands into a point, and leaned into me slightly, as if he wanted me to teach him how to dive.

“Bird,” I said again. “What do you want me to do?”

His pointed fingers pressed into the bundle in my arms, communicating to me what it was he needed me to do. In that moment, I understood.

I released the train of the doily-like fabric from my grip and dropped it down over his arms and head, watching as two hands sprouted from either armhole and finally as his head appeared through the white opening at the top of the dress. His entire body seemed to be swallowed by the mass of the billowy material, and I couldn't help but cringe as I watched the train fall and rest upon the dirty attic floor. It had been kept clean all these years. I watched as he slowly spun in a circle, his head tilted down so that he could see all the undulations in the fabric. “She wore this?” he asked again.



JAIL STAIRS JOHN BUCKLEY

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

FIELD NOTES ON AN EXIT

JESSICA CLARK

I bent grass stalks down to dance this time
as I walked away from you.
They sprang back up after my passing, reveling in
memory.

There is a lingering smell of cigarette smoke in that jacket.
It remembers ashtrays and sleet
Like the grass remembers to dance.

And the feel of rain burying tiny droplets through
scratching wool fibers.

Memory (ghostly it seems)
wraiths rising from timelines buried under our feet,
like smoke from that great fire that took us,
and burned us to life.

COLLOUS

BARRY ERVIN

Cacious

stone, marble

rhodes

and the little beats the tree-buds make pelting
on the screened-in-porch of the fortunate sitters,
kin-folk glitters of bourbon and pop

Crop killers and cops and killers

Great, great things. man things

Toss me in with the wine poured blood, thinning,
no it's just the droplets of fury

Drop it lets bury cans of skulls. jars of bones. boxes full up of wasp's
nest.

With the rest.

Red cheeked, mean minded, 12 year old kid

Called meek and lead headed by 12 year old kids

He makes the rest of us.

He calls on the rest of of us

Screaming

"Come on, yes, the rest of us!"

Mumbling to his trust,

"Call'em, they're on to us ..."

Us

The kid

Colossus

Or

The rest of us.

EATING BALLOONS

JASON LONGORIA

It was two days before my eighth birthday when Mom went to the hospital. She miscarried my sister later that night. She returned home the morning of my birthday. I do not remember the words she said or if she looked at me. I remember the cake was yellow with chocolate frosting. Dad asked me my wish after I blew out the candles.

I didn't know what to say. Smoke curled in silence from the table. The answer to last year's wish still stared out from my mother's unblinking eyes, stabbing at the wall behind me. I fumbled for words to say and instead my throat pulled tight. Then, I cried.

Dad put his hand on my shoulder and when I turned to look there were suddenly a dozen balloons. There was nothing special about them—plain spheres, primary colors, white string. Nonetheless I took the reins from Dad and stepped out into the hallway, staring at red-blue-yellow bubbles with damp eyes.

After the show, I stood outside on the porch of her apartment, staring at the streetlamps. In the light, everything throbbed electric orange, gleaming liquid neon, slick and sparkling. Her right arm was tangled in my jacket, her nails scratching the back of my neck, her mouth pressed against my collarbone. The air and her lips were ice. I flicked my cigarette into the darkness. Then, she introduced teeth. I shivered.

“Is everything all right?” she asked in a breath. The streets below gushed with luster. The edges of the light, along the columns of

trees and doorways, sung with static. “Let’s go inside. You’re freezing.”

I didn’t know what to say. My brain was swimming. I saw the blankness in her eyes and knew any words would pass unheard. Everything still smooth and gleaming beneath orange lamplight, we retreated inside the apartment.

She threw me on the couch and made a feast of me. I do not remember what she was saying. I remember the buttons flying open, my jacket soaring to the wall, her tongue on my neck, her sucking the cold from the skin. She glanced up at me for a moment, pausing slightly to inhale, then resumed, tasting the new pink where her mouth had been.

A girl with stringy hair sat on another sofa, surrounded by faceless others. All of them were laughing. She was fiddling with something, in her hands: a yellow balloon. Her fingers quivered, stretching the rubber neck around the mouth of the tank. They all watched with shining eyes as the balloon sprung full, one sunny bubble.

Then, descending, lips around the neck, swallowing, sucking from the bright-colored rubber, gorging on air. Stringy-hair’s eyes rolled back into her head for a moment and she fell back against the couch. The balloon died as soon as it was born. The spit-streaked rubber plopped wetly on the floor by my jacket.

“Come with me.” The girl on me was staring at me, pupils wide as mine, a thin rope of saliva tethering her lips to my jawbone. “Let’s go to my room—”

I stared at her for a moment, in the light. I could see the balloon-eaters reflected in her eyes. They were all laughing, laughing hysterically, squealing as they inhaled, roaring with every subsequent breath. Everything still glowed orange even though we were beyond the streetlights.

“Do you want to?”

She was quieter now, a little more desperate.

“I’m—”

I knew what I could say: one more word and it would all go away. But beneath her, my throat tightened, and nothing squeaked out.

All I could see, all I could ever see, was the dead sparkle. She was not staring at me, she was staring through me, throwing opaque eyes at the wall behind me.

“Do you want to or not?”

Now even her quavering voice sounded infantile. I could see the world in a whirl around me, the air alive with electricity, the oily lights aglow from beyond the windows. But her eyes were dead eyes. And so all I could see in her was my sister.

The pause made her shudder, an offended blush rising in her cheeks. I fumbled, trying to stitch together a sentence in a language, any language.

“Well?”

A breath rose in me. Without sighing, I replied, “Sure.”

Stringy-hair and her faceless friends whooped at my reply. I do not remember what they said. I remember Stringy-hair handing me one red balloon, pinched at the neck with shaky fingers, closed off without a string.

Without hesitation I pressed my lips to the neck, sucked and swallowed. I sputtered, choked, rolled off the couch, coughing, everyone laughing, laughing. Liquidly, the greasy glow boiled over and filled my vision. Then she pulled me into the darkness and the lights went away.



SUSPEND

Maura Friedman

Digital Photography

THE DOVE

ZACH JONES

Of gentle bird so meek and mild,
That tames the human nature wild,
Sing ye host in heav'n above!
Praise the Spirit, praise the Dove!
Ye beasts below, ye blinded men,
All ye rebels dead in sin,
Come to the Fount, the blessèd Well
Behold the One who conquer'd Hell.
With infant eyes and heart unveil'd,
With weary soul so long assail'd,
Find new life and joy abounding!
Hear the holy song resounding!
In Him now rest, in him abide
Your healing's in His piercèd side



CLICK TO RE-INSTALL LIBRARY

ANNA SCHEONBAECHLER

Protruding from paper

and glue;

And he declares, with humble care,

“I had miles to go before I slept

But now I lay

here sleeping

For Heaven’s sake, keep me awake

To stop the world from weeping.”

Another ghost

comes swirling ‘round,

Through the deathly air subdued,

“I am Nobody. Who are you?

Nobody you may be,

But assist me

to live on in minds

Beyond eternity.

I would not stop for death,

So he kindly stopped for me.

Has a deeper death halted my words

For all eternity?”

Poe sprang up as Dickinson returned

To her gloomy tome,

And

he glowered down with sadness deep

As he began to bemoan,

“I was not weaker or wearier,

And

no midnight was drearier,

Than the dreariness of to-night.

Watch the rain gently

padding down—

The world is crying for my slight.

Alone I have been from my

earliest hour—

I did not think as others thought—

I did not see as others saw—

And

alone I am once more,

In the stagnant air, burdened with uncare,

In these metal

prisons, I am caught.”

Poe was not the last to come

Upon my flustered

eyes,

Here Lewis Carroll came streaming out,

A mathematician in a mad

hatter’s guise,

“‘I read what I see’ is not the same

As ‘I see what I read’—

But if

only that were true:

Alice is rather lonely now,

And more

than her eyes are blue.

But, look on the bright side—

If imaginary numbers

really exist,

Perhaps there are imaginary students here, too.”

As Carroll swiftly disintegrated,

Shakespeare

cut in, with wounded chagrin,

“I never meant to scare anyone,

Not with my witches

and copious puns.

What will be my ultimate fate?

Will there someday come a

date

When my lines from Romeo and Juliet

Are re-done to new attitudes fit:

‘And

when it shall yellow,

Take it and cut it into little stars

And the light

from the fire shall be so bright

That all will be in love with the flames

And pay no worship

to my garish verses.’

It is possible: yes, indeed it—

They are just as likely to

burn it as read it.”

I watched wide-eyed as he slowly faded away

Drifting and dispersing like the lonely cloud

Over which

Wordsworth’s daffodils held spellbound sway.

My attention was whisked the forty-eighth time that

day

To another ghostly

condensation upon the binding

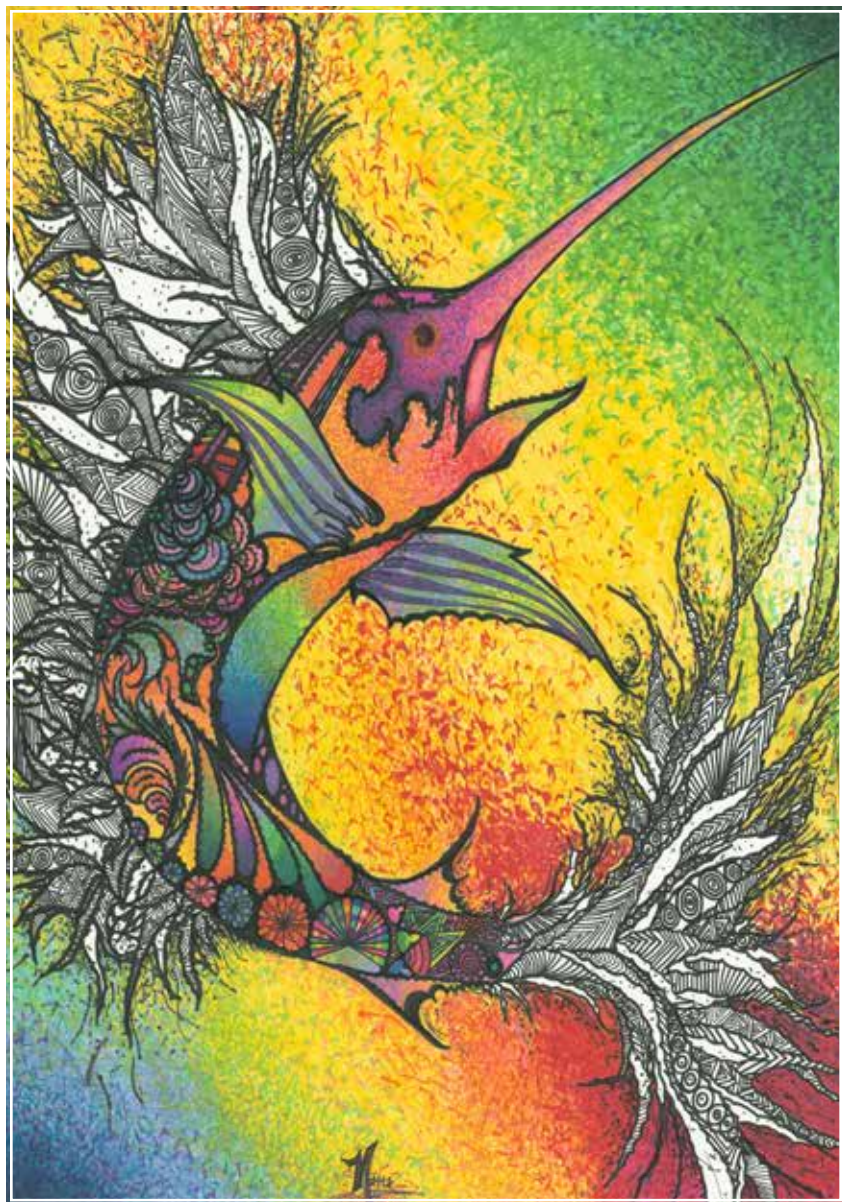
And I was much pleased with the finding:

“I am glad to see you

conclude with me,”

Said a bearded Bernard Shaw with a glancing grin,

Enable us to be alive again,
Robust and lively, just the
same
As if we had pulsating vitality in our hearts:
Alive in mind, in thought and time,
Passed not to
oblivion overwhelmingly dark
Passed not to nothingness so silent and deep
Stop and listen, now,
won't you keep—”
But then I ran into the sliding door
And stumbled out, and heard
no more.



MARLIN JUMP

DAVID NAHABEDIAN

VIRGIL

WILL WALTON

The wing grew from his right shoulder—
Shot out so suddenly, he was knocked over
Before he felt the burning,
Before he looked to see what had torn.

His skin was ripped, but when he saw the burning,
he saw there was no bleeding.

There was the scent he recognized, though
—he could not place from where.

Virgil would know. “Virgil!” he cried, “Are you there?”
But like Christ on the cross, saying,
“My God, My God—,” he was alone.

SIMULTANEOUS ASSIMILATION

JEANETTE KAZMIERCZAK

When the Great Architects¹ started building the Whole of Known Creation, the Department of Environmental Development and Maintenance (DEDM) was lead by Krishna, who micromanaged *everything*. The pristine state of the sky only made it even more that someone over in the Ministry of Astronomy and Astrology (MAA) had really dropped the ball because the stars had escaped their heavenly orbits and were nowhere to be found.² Seafarers were getting lost and sailing off the edge of the world. Fortune tellers were losing clients. It was a problem. So, Plato from MAA begged a favor from the Native American Council for Spiritual Affairs (NACSA), and they sent over The Coyote.³

That was when Life and Summer
Ran around Creation without any shoes on.
They had encouraged everyone with flowers and kisses
Since the Beginning.
Life looked like Grace Kelly in a white dress
And Summer was a sunburned girl in a green smock.⁴

1 Krishna, God, Buddha, Zeus, Jesus, Allah, Jupiter, &c. It was a collaborative effort.

2 Back then, before God and Allah had managed to pin them permanently to the velvet canvas of the sky, stars had wings like hummingbirds. They just hovered in place – when it suited them. But that also made them awfully hard to catch.

3 The Coyote wasn't “the trickster” then and he was wolf-handsome. But you could see being the good guy didn't fit right anymore. Like how a wire hanger stretches the shoulders of your favorite sweater, making it awkward to wear

4 Summer always looks slightly damp, like she just recently went swimming and hasn't had time to dry yet. She lives in a tree-house with a rope ladder and adorns her hair with Technicolor flowers. In the begging, when it was just her, she would fall asleep counting fireflies.

The Coyote, wearing his favorite purple top hat, brought along the Magnificent Narrative Typewriter (MNT), who was taking the minutes of the Creation of All Known Things. Despite his various failings, The Coyote was not stupid. He went as far north as he could, which at that time was West Virginia, and climbed the tallest sycamore tree in All of Known Creation. The stars – silly, fickle creatures that they were – had clumped together in the northern part of the sky to laugh at the moon and her obese, pock-marked face. The MNT sat anxiously at the base of the tree and berated The Coyote, as he swayed in the highest branches, for his recklessness. And because he was also busy typing the Minutes, for a short time, the story of the world looked something like this:

And then on the third day of the third month, the Great Architects, Lords of all Scaffolding, Kings of the Celestial Toolbox, Princes of Copper Plumbing, ASFDSJ;LKADSF;LKAJ!!11!!11!!! WOULD YOU BE CAREFUL THERE YOU IDIOT?!?!?! IF YOU FALL I'LL KILL YOU BEFORE THE GROUND DOES! COYOTES DON'T CLIMB TREES, TOP HATS BE DAMNED!!!!!! then did say, "Let there be constructed a great barrier in the Heavens, that the sun may not burn us nor the air we breathe escape us. Let it also be built large enough that our dearest creation-child, the airplane, Lord of the Sky, King of International Airspace, may never want for room within the great barrier around the world, but may roam ASDFLK! DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO BE CAREFUL?!?! DON'T MAKE ME COME AFTER YOU!@! YOU TELL THOSE STUPID FLAMING BALLS OF HYDROGEN TO GET THEIR SHIT IN ORDER OR I'M COMING UP THERE INSTEAD . . . &c.

But The Coyote laughed his handsome laugh and smiled a smile full of wicked teeth and charmed the stars back into place one by one. From its place on the ground, the MNT could not see that The Coyote tricked Orion and Ursa Major into being friends, or that he stretched the truth to reconcile the Pleiades. The MNT was only impressed by his skill and charisma. And then, when The Coyote was starting back down the tree, and the MNT was clicking its keys in contentment, The Coyote fell and died.⁵

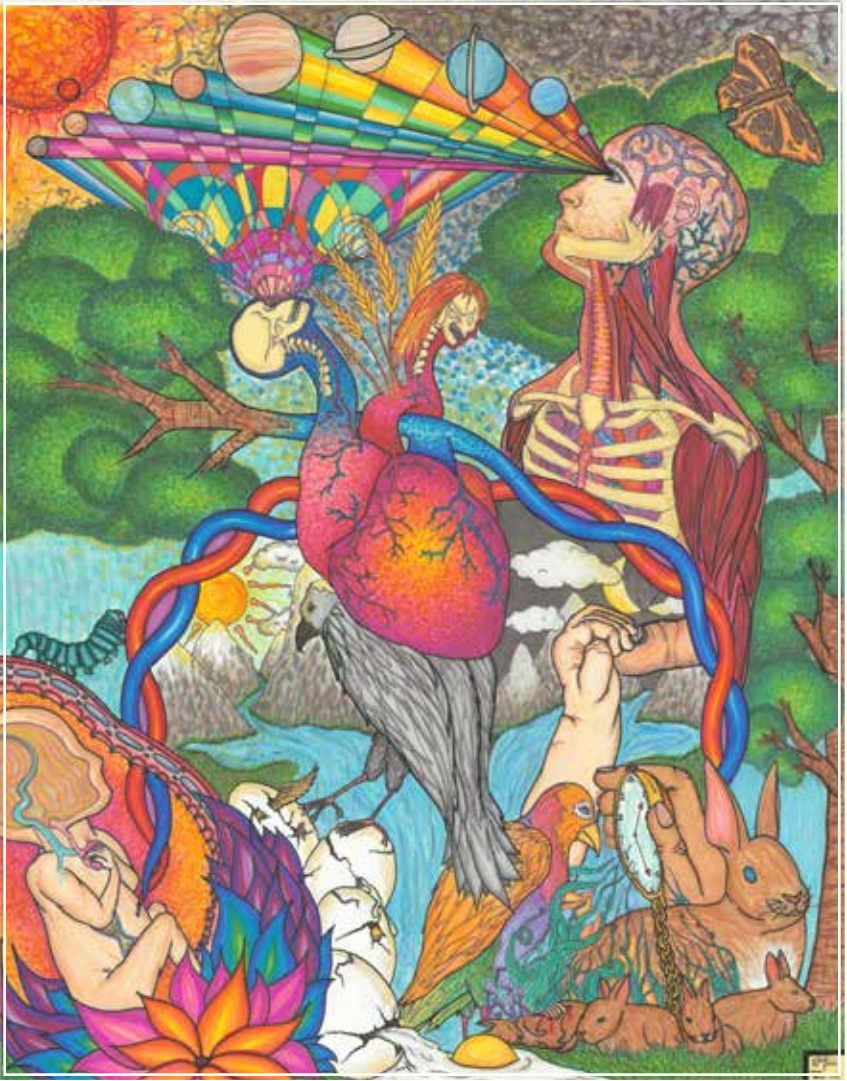
That was when Death and Winter
Came in through the front door of Creation
From where they had been smoking cigarettes in what was left
Of Nothingness.
Death looked like Cary Grant in a tuxedo
And Winter was an albino kid in a black pea coat.⁶

The tricky, slippery Coyote bled his rich red blood over all the Earth under the tallest Sycamore in All of Known Creation. And the MNT, who only ever loved him for what it thought he was, ruined the color of his blood with its inky black tears because the Department of Office Supplies had yet to invent colored ink. They were too busy entertaining us with spinning desk chairs.⁷

5 Coyotes don't climb trees, top hats be damned.

6 Yes. Winter is an albino kid in a black pea coat. It's not that surprising if you think about it. He thinks ice cream time is *all* the time. He hibernates in the warm weather, coaxed into a refrigerator by Spring's cool hands, only waking fitfully during Summer's thunderstorm power outages. Summer presses her face jealously against the window as Fall lulls him back to sleep with the dry-leaves whisper of her voice.

7 As an addendum to Note 6: Do you know? Refrigerators used to run. Well, they scuttled. They scuttled around on hands like Thing from the Adams Family. But one day – after The Coyote died and the MNT stopped taking the Minutes and Death and Winter came in from Nothingness – cowboys corralled the refrigerators between a rock and a hard place and took their hands from them. Now they sit and hum docilely in our kitchens. But they keep a little Winter in their hearts, and they put it in your jam and your cheese and your leftovers. And when you eat, the refrigerators are putting Winter in you.



FROM THE HEART

DAVID NAHABEDIAN

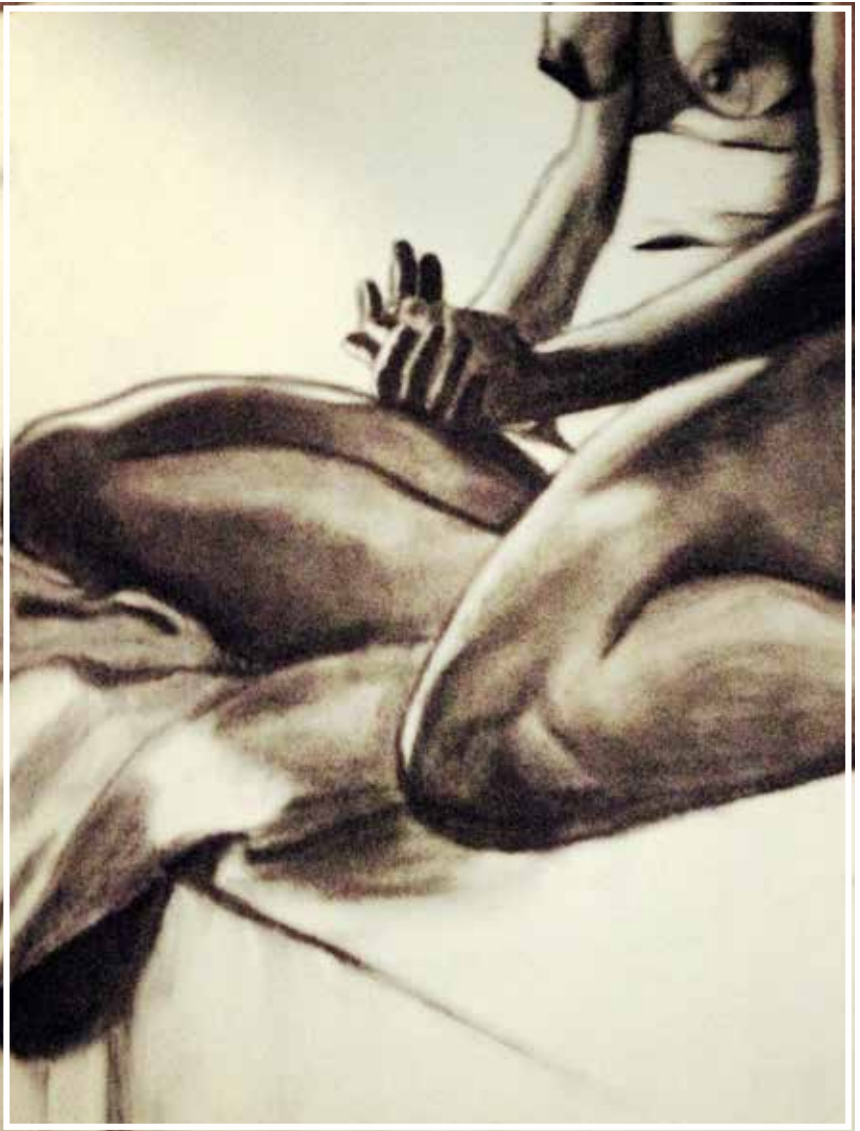
SOLO AND FERMATA

SAMUEL DICKINSON

harsh house lights dim, a
hush spread thin as a whisper
caught on your tongue embraces
eyes, hearts, calls them closer

to the passionate vibration between
mind and string from my
girl across the world, it seems a
symphony of indelible impact,
vocalization
to sympathetic heart-drum as
I close my eyes

once more dreaming
for two hands in the dark



FEMALE NUDE

LINDSEY ALLEN

Charcoal, and Graphite Stick

RED MUG

Clayton Reindl

I'm sitting outside on the back porch in the cold thinking
about how crazy it is to spend hours talking to yourself,
because

that's really what poetry is, isn't it? talking to yourself, when
my nose starts to bleed.

For some reason, that makes me think of something my therapist
said a long time ago about shame—

how it is passed from generation
to generation and about the driving power that
particular heredity can lend to
addiction.

I'm stopping up my nose
with yellowed, weathered paper-towels Jeremy, Ed or I
had left

on the table, and I look at the claret stain on the
back of my index finger and notice how remarkably
close in color it is

to the mug steaming beside my laptop.
I hold my hand beside the mug and compare the two in the light of
the streetlamp

wondering how such a similarity could be coincidental. But it
has to be,

doesn't it? I can't imagine a situation in which a
ceramics design team
meeting is commandeered by a single
savagely vocal marketing rep who insists
"The only way this thing will sell is if it's the color
of blood in the stasis after it dries

but just before it crusts,
dammit!”

A situation in which God models blood after the color of a
mug is equally silly.

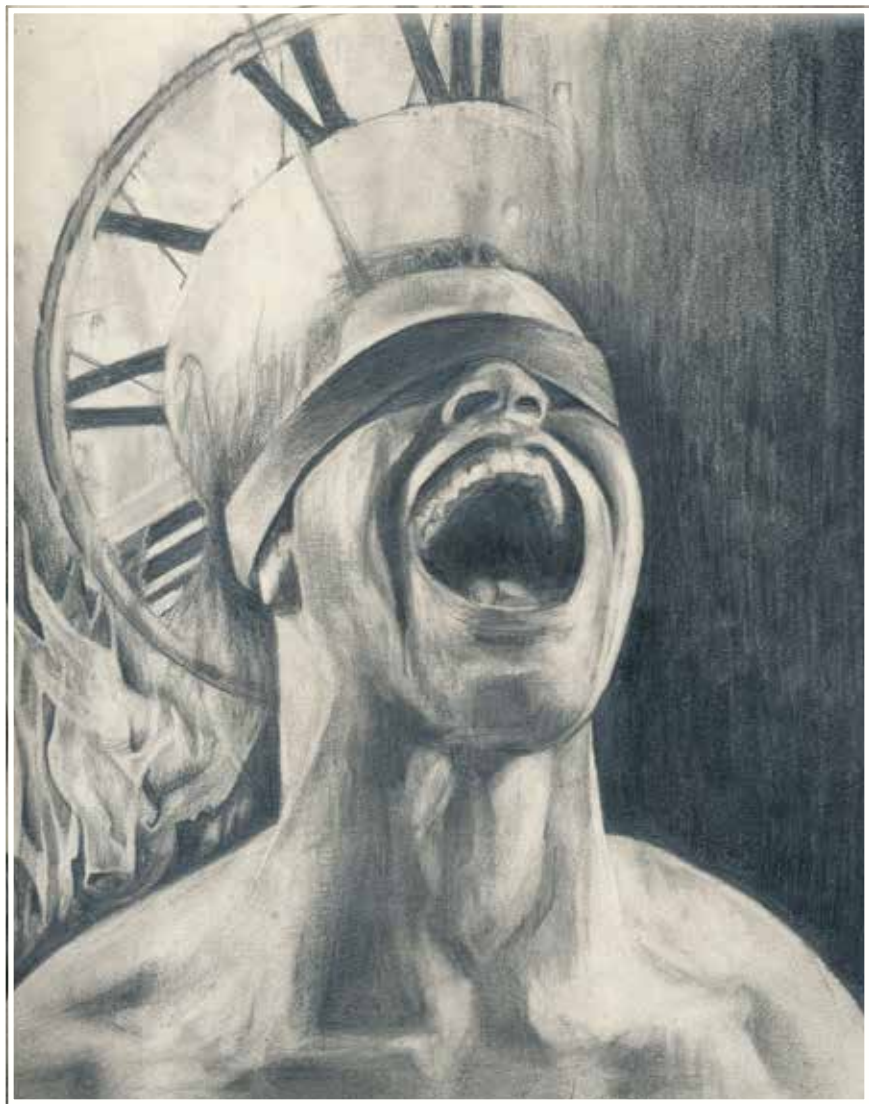
Tonight, it is filled with a hot chamomile, but if that freshman girl
hadn't flaked on me again

it would be whiskey just like every other night this week
except Thursday, and I think of my grandfather, who was an
alcoholic

and my grandmother, who once won forty thousand dollars at
a slot machine

somewhere in Mississippi, and I look at their blood
that is my blood that is staining the back of my finger
that is the same color as a coffee cup and I wonder why the
hell

I'm sitting out here in the cold
talking to myself tonight.



THE ELEVENTH HOUR

LAUREN FOSTER

POST-SHOCK UNIVERSITY

WILL WALTON

I cracked an egg on the sidewalk, the ground still warm enough from the Shock that it cooked it right in front of me. I scooped it from the pavement in pieces, chunks of gravel seasoning its edges, and ate it, pretending the tiny crunches were fresh-ground pepper. “Fresh ground,” I mused. It was funny, because everything around was fresh ground now, every surface still hot, shining and new, even gooey, in some places. The Shock had split the city in half with its heat, burned the feet of millions, and sent up boiling pulp from underneath. The soil became liquid. Trees sagged in their beds and toppled as their roots incinerated. The first floor of Student Housing melted away, and now each dormitory looked like a miniature, angular Leaning Tower of Pisa. Glass broke; desk contents poured from windows and were subsequently absorbed by the churning ground. Pencil sharpeners, picture frames, alarm clocks, microwaves, pizza boxes, miniature refrigerators, and clipped coupons—all went into the mix, along with parked cars (some of which survived, except for their tires), cast-off booze bottles, the basement of the parking deck, innocent pedestrians who knew no better, and squirrels. It is true, I saw a squirrel burn up right in front of me, a spark catching hold to its tiny feet and sending a flame up its body to the end of its tail, where it gave a pop, and the squirrel was no more. Yes, the ground below became a live mix of blood, bone, and everything human, everything animal, much of what we gathered, much of what

we built, much of what we took for granted, all melted down and spinning in the mix. I closed my eyes and held tight to my mattress, thinking, if it did slide and I toppled with it out of my window, I might be able to sail across the molten ground to somewhere secure. But the ground hardened, again, and I waited for a day and a half to venture out. There was steam rising from the new asphalt, a glorious pink sun over the tower of the Learning Center, and I could see, off in the distance, a hammock that sagged, while remaining in tact, between two twisted and charred trees. I would walk to it, I decided, but, first, to look for food.

The glass wall of the dining hall had shattered. Jagged shards protruded from its bottom edge. I cut my ankle on one as I stepped through—my only injury, I realized. I made my way, in the dark, past upturned chairs and tables, to the kitchen, a place I had never been. Knives, ladles, and pots hung from the walls. In the corner, there was a big sink and, to the side of it, an industrial dishwasher. It smelled rotten. I stumbled over a jumble of fallen pans, a shelf that had overturned, and bumped into a refrigerator door. It opened into a wide space, chilly and damp, with shelves along the walls and carts pushed into the center, every surface stacked with foods, almost all of which would go bad, I was certain. With no electricity, there wasn't much of a chance. I started to wonder if the Shock had absorbed it all. I found a carton of eggs and extracted two, then felt my way back in the dark.

THE ANIMAL

EMILY KOPP

The animal slithered over the sill,
A flue framed for its breath to break.
A drip of darkness in the light,
Shadow twice as tall as its outlined flesh.

His claws cut with savage imprecision.
He mottled and daubed the crape paper walls.
Like Antony, he damned them with a dot.
A ribbed print in paint, special as a flurry's flake.

The bellwether's clang flooded the hallway.
A heavenly shower of pots and pans fell dull,
And crashed onto the linoleum floor.
Two by two. Four by four. As Fury smothered Fate.

The air whistled shrill-- looping and liltling.
A call: Attention! Attention! Attention!
"An animal," Teacher said, eyes plastic.
Stalking in the hush-- guts all black, brain curled in knots.
His jowls sweat for envy, his cavities ached.

Bred of soil ashen with the Pequot,
Snow the chipper sowed with her winnowed flaxen hair,
The animal took their milk-toothed skulls, and clipped
With each clip, a green lima bean stalk at the fuse.

He stole them unripe, put out their wonder.
All that mattered was they would never fall in love either.



SEATED

Michelle Norris

Photography

THE GARDEN

DEVIN COX

She brought me to the gardens,
Soft emerald city.
Her botany expertise
Lends itself to an interesting date.
Facts concerning cycles and light
And soil and time
Seed a sentiment,
Breaking up the stiff notions
I had thought benign.

Last week at the museum,
Hurrying through the corridors,
We spoke of animals long ago
Driven to extinction
By a lack of smaller animals
And plants to consume.
Her childhood fantasy
Of becoming a Sharptooth
Played out next to a skeleton.
I made her promise not to eat me,
And she roared with laughter.
I thought her bared teeth beautiful.

For a moment she loses me
To the thickness of the garden.

Here reside our ancient cousins

Who were kind enough
To remain green and still,
A mother fixing carbon
In the morning and at night.
I clutch her photosynthetic apron,
A frond as broad as my arms.
Its tiny hairs caress my cheek,
Find their way into my open pores.

My girlfriend gives a glance and groan
To defoliate my skin, to reclaim
My affection and my facing her.
Simple words that I can't understand
Float down through the porous floor.
I look upwards to the light
Shimmering, filtered by the living canopy.
Each cell in that leaf sang into my ear.
So close was it pressed that I heard
And felt their beauty.

At the same time I loved her too,
Her sleek hair and sharp facts,
But here is a being, a living creature,
That will never hurt you.

MUDBABY

JASON LONGORIA

Inspired by “Spirit of Grand Central Station—The Man Who Helped the Handicapped” at the Georgia Museum of Art

The subsumed colors snake through Earth,
 & writhe to form a face. Enough
time’s elapsed. Wet cold gypsum laves the
 larval façade, fleshes image into
imago. Primary rainbows wreath around
 Earth-child, infuse subterranean shade
with eons of folk wisdom, in pooled pigment.

Enough time’s elapsed. Nine months &
 nine thousand years spent without
light, where the child drowns in amniotic
 dark: unknown, unseen, unformed.
Now the timer’s up. You plunge your hands
 into the mud & wrest from nothing
this color, this breath, this spectral infant.

Now he’s here. O & you know not how
 to change him, nor how to mold him
so he fits within these sacred echelons, these

lightless castes. Truly the existence of
rainbow mud children is thoroughly discouraged.

It's all selenite, & all see traces in the
sunlight, & all steel themselves to steal it.

Earth-child cannot be, not in this way: not
buoyed by these unexpected colors &
this unbecoming bone structure & the incivility
of his open jaws & the size of
his ears as compared to the width & breadth of
—his ruddy eyes, his puddling nose,
his bubbling lips & halfway smile, his whole
world—all that, & more: his face.

We see the colors,
& we pause.

Enough time's elapsed,
though, & so

We abort dumb mudbaby back to the dark.



FRIENDLY MORTICIAN RYAN

ANNA SCHOENBAECHLER

UNIVERSE'S GREATEST DAD

MATT BURNS

Every time Dad came home from a business trip, he'd bring us a T-shirt or a stuffed bear inscribed with, "The Garden State," or "The City of Brotherly Love," or something dumb like, "oHIo, Didn't See You There." No matter how goofy there were we knew they really said Dad was thinking about us. Even if it was late when he came home, he'd stay up tossing around a baseball from his Southeast Snack Foods Distributors Conference telling us which stale knock-off Keebler was peddling this time. One night we decided to give a gift back to Dad. We pulled each other up onto the kitchen counter and leaned on our tip-toes onto the mug shelf and picked out a big white one from way in the back. We lowered onto the floor slowly, rolling our weight across the balls of our feet so we wouldn't rattle the cabinets, and slid open the junk drawer slowly to reveal its treasure stash of pencils and pens. Digging way down deep, we found our Pebeo Porcelaine paint marker from that strange weekend mom was a potter, and wrote World's Greatest Dad across the mug. We stepped back to look it over, but something wasn't quite right. With a thick black stroke we crossed out "World's" and wrote underneath it "Universe's." We both nodded and put the mug in the oven to bake on the paint. While we waited, we turned the TV on mute and let an

old Leave It to Beaver play while we imagined handing Dad the mug full of coffee in the morning.

After breakfast we offered to do the dishes. Dad handed us his plate and fork, but held his mug close to his chest. “This is huge for me, boys,” he said. “Bigger than you know.” We smiled and scrubbed the plates and Dad went into his room. Muffled voices came from his door and we turned off the faucet. Dad was excited, but Mom was stern.

“You can’t... that doesn’t even... What would they...”

“No,” Dad said. “They’re not screwing around here. This isn’t some cliché world’s greatest dad thing... this is a big opportunity for us... My friend Kevin Fogg does all sorts of stuff like this. Has his own Zaxby’s.”

Dad came out, smiled, and patted our shoulders. “You guys have really done something great.” He tucked his mug under his arm, got in his car, and drove away.

After four days without a call we started to worry. But then our doorbell rang and the UPS man handed us a package from Dad. Inside was the first official Universe’s Greatest Dad action figure. It had all the symptoms of dad – his salt-and-pepper hair brushed to one side, his round shoulders and blue jeans – but the face wasn’t quite right, like he’d stood too close to the microwave and had started to melt. The figure held a tiny white plastic mug. Attached to it was a note – “Boys, thanks to you we’re making it big.”

Two weeks later Dad was on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, showing off the first two Universe's Greatest Dad novels and the soundtrack CD that accompanied them. "Universe's greatest dad, isn't that somethin'?" Dave said. "If only we all could've had one of those growing up." Dad laughed, but then he stopped and rubbed his chin.

The next night Dad's commercial played right after the opening credits of *American Idol*. "Franchise opportunities are available now. Does your market need a Universe's Greatest Dad? With your investment and royalty payments on all future profits, you can be an official Universe's Greatest Dad for your community, neighborhood, or household. Call now." The phone number flashed, but it was one we hadn't seen before.

A knock on the door from a guy who looked like the action figure of Dad. "Howdy there, just wanted to introduce myself. I'm Dale Connor, the neighborhood's new Universe's Greatest Dad."

"No you're not," we said.

"Sure am, chiefs," he said and pulled out his UGD license showing his picture next to Dad's logo. "Officially trained by the one and only – I groove to Jimmy Buffett, read the box scores over my bowl of Special K every morning, and have a real short fuse when it comes to waiting for tables at restaurants. And I know our favorite player of all time is Babe Ruth. You can count on the service to be high-quality and uniform."

We threw a stuffed bear at him, but he dropped it. “Wait, guys, hold on—“ he said as we shut the door on him.

It wasn't until we read the trades the next day when we found out how bad it had really gotten.

As part of the rollout of the Universe's Greatest Dad IP, dad had inked some big new licensing deals and promotional partnerships.

- New David Burns licensees include: American Home & Textiles (juvenile, infant and toddler bedding and bath products, hooded towels, bath towels, beach mats, hooded ponchos, and terry and canvas tote bags, as well as table placemats, tablecloths, napkins, welcome mats, curtains, valances, tie backs, pet beds and kid's quilted slumber mats); Hybrid Apparel (t-shirts, tanks, fleeces, and thermals for juniors, men, toddlers, and infants, and novelty tops for girls); In Canada J corp (youth, toddler, and infant tees, swimwear, underwear, and sleepwear); A&A Global (plush toys, foam balls for crane arcade games); Andrews Blaine (plastic and magnetic bookmarks and book lights); The Young Scientists Club (science experiments and lab kits, science-related products, and science club subscriptions for K2-5); Color-A-Cookie (mini-bites boxed Animal Crackers, cookie decorating kits, gingerbread (dog) houses, decorated cookies).

- In promotional partnership: here in the US Buffets, owner/operator of HomeTown Buffet, Old Country Buffet, Country Buffet, Ryan's and Fire Mountain restaurants, signs on to underwrite the Universe's Greatest Dad TV series on Fox, as well as offer UGD printable activities, placemats, stickers, bookmarks, and book reading logs for families at its restaurants nationwide; Internationally, Wendy's/Arby's International will offer three different collectable David Burns Make-A-Scene kits, featuring a background and six repositionable stickers with their Kids Meal Premium.

Two years passed. All of our friends' dads had become UGDs. We'd go over to their houses for dinner and it was always the same, spaghetti and conversations about the Braves' pitchers. Each morning at the bus stop, ten UGDs stood by their kids, like a row of identical stick figures. No one stood behind us.

We tried calling Dad and sending him letters, but every time we got caught up with one of his secretaries. "David is busy today," was the script, and then they'd choose something off their long list: snorkeling with investors; foreign press interviews; 3D-body scans for the motion-capture biopic.

Mom tried to date, but every man close to her age was a UGD, and the last thing she wanted was someone who looked like that. Even

men who weren't fathers became UGDs. It was a quick way to clean up a stoner or slacker's image. He'd become instantly presentable and have a pocket full of hobbies and interests; and Dad would get 4% of any money he made.

Based on the magazine covers, Dad couldn't spend his money fast enough — an Irish castle; a private Caribbean island; penthouse in Dubai. Jet skis and strippers in neon bikinis and fat, fat gold chains. Critics started accusing him of diluting his brand image. “What kind of Great Dad snorts cocaine with Hong Kong businessmen? Has the so-called Universe's Greatest Dad sold out?”

Women no longer were drawn to the UGDs. The look became tacky and even vile to some. One by one, franchises closed up shop and reverted back to who they really were. The press moved on.

At 2:41 am Dad knocked on our door. He was wet and scruffy, with hair to his shoulders. He didn't look us in the eye, he just went into his room and shut the door. We slammed our fists into it, yelling, “Where you been, pop?” but Mom told us to keep quiet and go upstairs.

The next morning, Dad was shaved and trimmed, eating his Special K at the kitchen counter. He said good morning and told us he'd had to sell his mansions to pay off debts he owed to the Yakuza. We

nodded, but weren't satisfied. Stories of shaking up the Japanese mafia may have impressed us in elementary school, but we'd grown up in the past few years. We needed hard answers. "Where's your mug?" we said.

Dad dropped his spoon and stared out the window. "Check my briefcase."

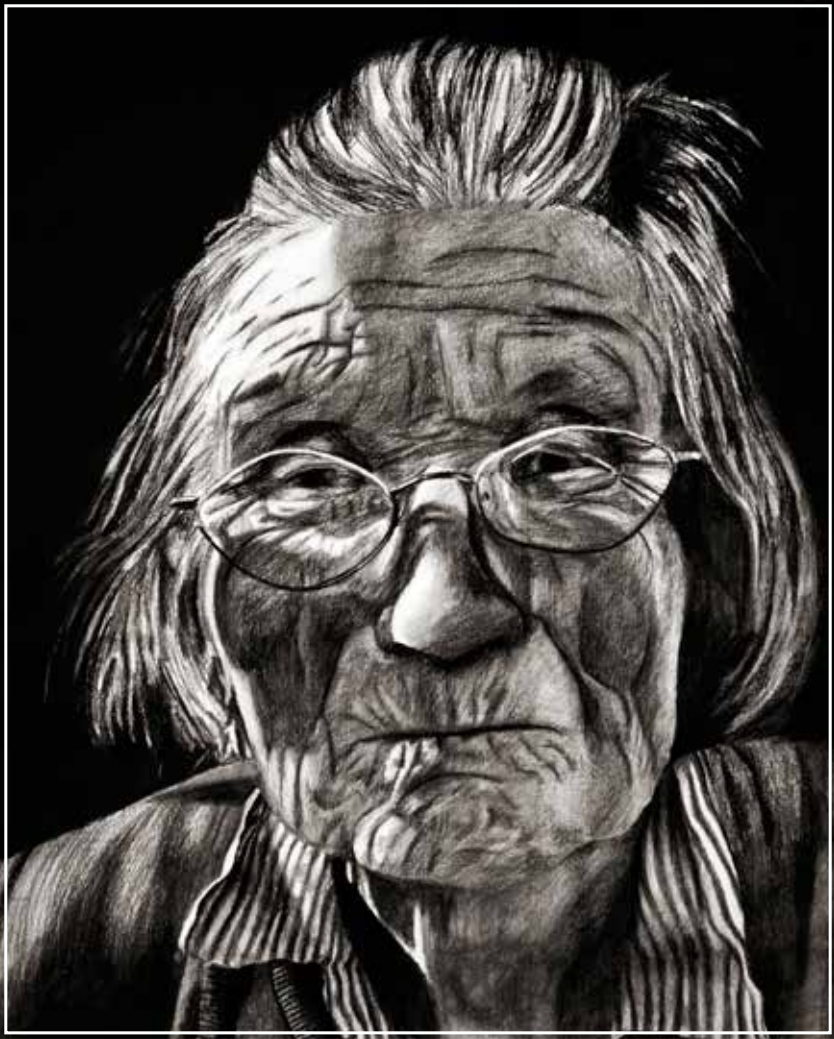
We opened the case and found the mug, still in pristine condition. "I used it every day," he said. "Take a look inside." We reached in and pulled out a dull gray sphere with a row of busted teeth. "Human skull," he said. "Babe Ruth's. I fell in with some grave robbers up in Hawthorne. I never stopped thinking about you two."

That afternoon Dad told us stories from his world travels while we tossed around Babe Ruth's skull like nothing had ever changed.

REDNECK SOLILOQUY

WILLIAM ROBINSON

Either I am or I ain't, I reckon
Fig're I should suck it up and live with my rotten luck
Or give 'em hell to stop it?
And by endin' it, endin' m'self, - to croak, - to kick the bucket
Finished; leave behind the pain
And loads o' worryin' I do 'round here
That there's a mighty powerful notion
To die, - to sleep. Now hold on there,
If I'm dozin' I might could dream
Now there's gettin' the short end o' the stick
'Cause when I'm well and gone,
What dreams will I be stuck with in that boundless sleep?
Now that'll make you think
Hell, who would put up with years of daggum drought,
Always having to kill the animals you raised, the constant calls from
the high-falutin' Man at the bank,
When one match too close to the fertilizer could blow it all away?
But then what's on the other side?
What's up in that big blue yonder where everyone goes but no one
comes back?
Bottom line is I know what to 'spect 'round here;
Only God Almighty knows what's waiting for me
I reckon that there's the thought that makes us all chicken out
Well that's that
Death sounded good for a spell
But I ain't riskin' it



JETHA ANDIE ASHE

WITH AN ONION-SKINNED FIST

MATT BURNS

I rule these streets with an onion-skinned fist. Since I took charge crime has plunged six feet under and the whole suburb knows the rev of my dirt bike zipping through the streets as a siren signal that they are safe for another night. No one cares that I am an eighty-six year-old woman or that I patrol the streets on my dirt bike in the nude. My ovaries pump enough testosterone into my blood to keep me out of the MLB. I am on patrol tonight, blasting down roads and over medians, keeping an eye on this town while the night air skims my sagging form, purifying each wrinkly crevasse. I hit sixty-five miles an hour and my breasts fling around my torso on opposite sides, enveloping me in mammalian parentheses. But I refuse to be a footnote. I throttle it to eighty and my breasts stretch further, slapping together behind me like a seal applauding an independent film. My breasts are Medusa's tongue flapping in open-convertible wind, the wiggly phallus of a teenage luggage handler greeting *le petit mort* in the force of a jet engine. Each breast is its own pirate flag, fluttering wildly to declare the independence of their sagging form; to pledge their allegiance to the cult of stretch and dangle. I hit ninety and my breasts are twin fire hoses, gushing forth—

There is an explosion of glass. With a lightning-crack smash I'm slammed upside-down into a concrete wall. I look for the perpetrator. There must have been a crime. No one is here but me and two young girls slicing roast beef in Arby's shirts. This is an Arby's restaurant. I kick some of the glass shards away and pick up my bike. The taller girl suggests that I shouldn't think of so many metaphors for my breasts while driving my dirt bike. She says it distracts me. As I pull a piece of glass from my bony foot I tell her that if she cares so much she should blog about it and that without me this town would be overrun with two-bit whores and cocaine cowboys. She suggests that the only crimes this city has seen in the past two years have been me slamming my dirt bike into restaurants during my midnight rides. I tell her to get a job as I toss my chapped leg over the seat and mount my loyal steed. The night is still young and this town needs its vigilante. I fire the engine into gear and launch towards the darkness as my breasts fly over my shoulder like a continental soldier, vibrating behind me as two wires broadcasting the voice of Mother Earth herself.

LULLABY

CLAYTON REINDL

Streetlights and oak trees, crosswalks and clock-towers
have the slow heartbeats and sleepy resonance of storms in the
summer.

On the concrete, a leaf skirts past my toes; propelled by the wind
and my aching thoughts towards the dark.

The stolen light of the moon chokes and sputters, coughs and dies
on the viscous syrup of an insomniac's dreams;

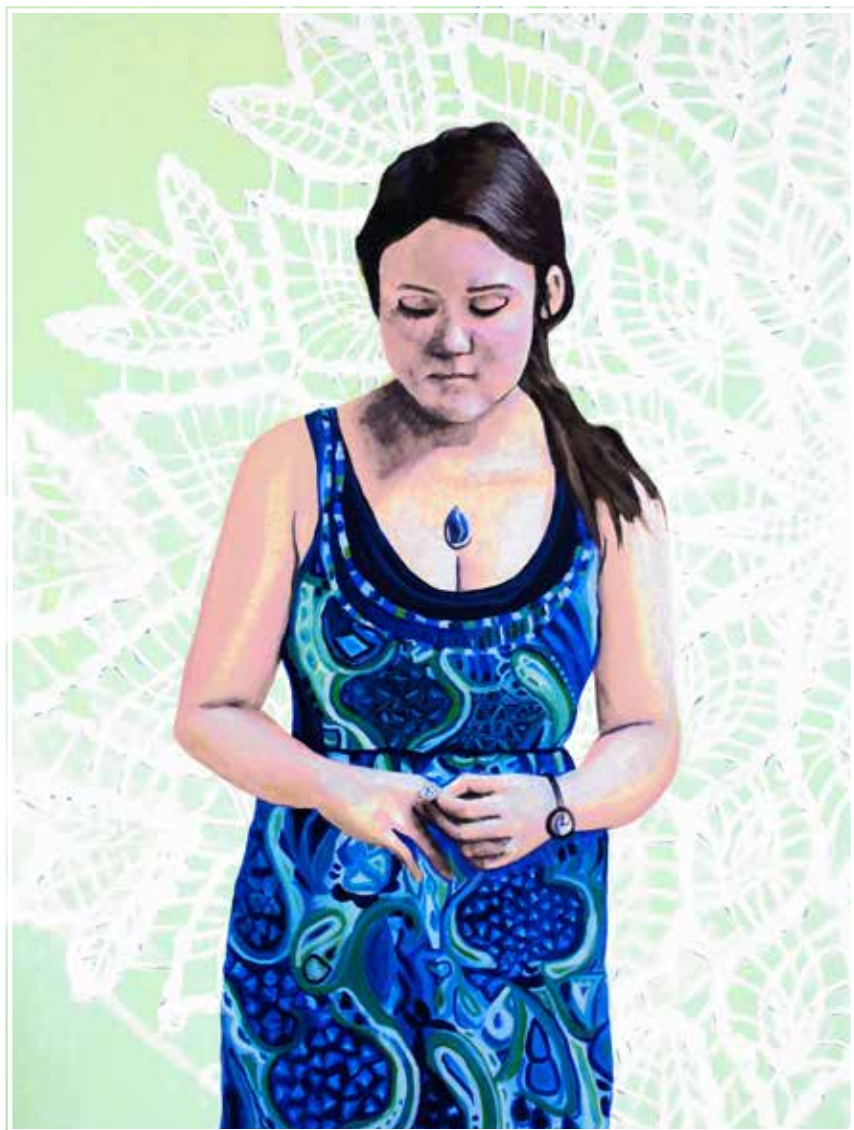
dissipates miles before it can cut deep shadows into the face of this
city.

When the change in my pocket rolls over and between my fingers,

it stains them with the kind of biting smell, like metallic blood,
that clears sinuses. Welcoming signs on the doors of diners

no longer hum neon; chains on bicycles are silent
unless I spin the wheels.

This city sleeps better than I do.



CHLOE
ANDIE ASHE

MIND TRICK

WILL WALTON

To think the things I thought of,
 when I was a kid:
“Devil, have my soul,” then
To catch myself: “No, no,” thinking
All the while I were insane.
To be aware of, yet not understand,
 how little control there is,
 truly, to be possessed.
To be so small, through it all—
 “It is yours”—and to be damned,
Without even the wager of a sacrifice;
Just a slip of the mind, and it is
 Finished.
I may not have it back now.

HEDGES

ALEX REUBERT

Ben Hedges, age 23, wakes up and immediately takes a shower. Under the uncomfortably hot water he scrubs every nook and hairy cranny of his body, dispelling the grease and dead skin that accumulates during sleep. He gets out, dries off, throws the towel in the washer and starts the cycle. Then he goes to the mirror with a glob of gel in his palm, rubs it all into his damp hair, and parts his bangs to the far left side of his forehead, where they'll stay for the rest of the day—where they'd stay for the next three days if, God forbid, the pipes froze, or he gets kidnapped, or hit by a car and can't shower for a while. After the forty to fifty minutes it takes him to get meticulously dressed, he unlocks the dead-bolted front door and stands there for a moment, letting out the tiniest whisper of flatulence, the only one he'll allow himself for the rest of the day and night, whether in public or private.

He gets in the car, cranks it up, & wonders what he'll do to pass the time. It's a Saturday and both of his friends are busy working. Ben can't go in to work on Saturdays. He's tried, but the building is locked until everyone comes back on Monday. Without his friends,

all he can do is mosey down the road in the general direction of his favorite coffee shop, and this is exactly what he does.

All of the sudden, as Ben is driving carefully through the neighborhood, keeping his eyes peeled for pedestrians to wave to, his cell phone starts ringing in his pocket. Excitement bubbles within him, like his whole body is carbonated. He pulls over to the side of the road and clicks on his emergency flashers to encourage other drivers to pull around him, if any other drivers should come. He pulls the phone out of his pocket and sees an unknown number lighting up the screen. Breath held, hands trembling, he flips open the phone and brings it to his ear.

“Hello?” He asks, his voice as timid as his previous flatulence.

“Hello,” the voice says, the voice of a woman. But what on earth would a woman want with him? “I’m calling on behalf of Charter Communications . . .”

Ben flips the phone shut, and instantly regrets being so rude to the Charter woman. But what else could he have done? A Charter person is not the kind of person he wants to talk to. And the fact that it was a woman felt like salt in an open wound. More than that, Charter would not stop calling him. Weekday, weekend, morning or night they would call, usually every other day. Ben had answered the first time. After all, it seemed like the polite thing to do. Someone calls and wants to talk to you and you talk to them. It was a woman on the line—actually, she had a very similar voice to the one he’d just hung up on—but instead of asking Ben personal questions and getting to know him better, she just kept asking about whether or not he wanted high-definition cable, and a land line, and whether or not

he wanted to bundle it all together into a single, low-low monthly price along with his internet service. What really irked him about the whole thing is that she thanked him for being one of Charter's most loyal customers, when she knew damn well that he had only started using them as his internet service provider a mere two months ago. He had been so offended that he saved Charter's number in his phone so that whenever they called, "This is Charter" would flash across the screen and Ben would not answer. But now they are getting tricky, using a different number to try and catch Ben off guard, trick him into taking the call and feeling obligated to stay on the line so as not to hurt the woman's feelings. She probably got pretty jaded, calling four times a week only to get Ben's voicemail, so she figured she'd try using her cell phone to mask her identity. He chuckles to himself. Pretty sneaky, Charter. He saves the new number as "This is also Charter."

"If only they knew," Ben says, then clicks off his flashers and drives on.

At the coffee shop, Ben orders a small green tea with essence of flowers and lemony citrus, for here, so they give it to him in a blue teacup. He takes a small table in the corner. After a while, a man approaches and asks to borrow the empty chair tucked into the other side of the table, but other than that, no one speaks to Ben. He sits there, sips his tea, and it's just like back when he was a kid, sitting beside the front window, watching his friends outside playing tag and kickball. It's not that he was a sickly child or anything, he just thought it felt right to wait for them to come to his door and ask him to come out and play. He would have hated it if he went out there of

his own accord and joined them, when they secretly didn't want him there at all. So he would always wait for them to come ask. A lot of times they did, but sometimes Ben sat there by the window for hours until dinner was ready.

He leaves the coffee shop a couple of hours later and starts driving home. He stops at a red light and, looking across the intersection at a gas station on the corner, he sees a young woman with satin-red hair standing beside a gas pump. Her back is turned, but God is she beautiful. If the light changes in time, Ben could pull into the gas station, get out of the car right then and there, no pretext, and say something to her. He would be ready for that surprised, wary look on her face. He isn't a very attractive person and he knows it, but none of that would matter because she would soon be smiling, once he said something like, "Hi, my name's Ben and I just wanted to meet you." And then she would want to meet him too. But the light does not change in time. The young woman drives away, and as Ben passes the gas station, he knows he would have never gone through with it in the first place.

Eventually, night falls and Ben starts getting that restless feeling, the kind that comes after it gets dark and you haven't spoken to anyone that cares about you in two or three days and all you see out the window is your own reflection. He boots up Netflix and selects *Sleepless in Seattle*, sits down, and sets his phone beside him on the arm of the couch. During the opening credits, he picks up the phone and turns the volume up to its highest setting. He knows it's silly, but what if he gets up to go to the bathroom, forgets to bring his phone, and someone tries to call? He wouldn't hear it over the splash

of urine, unless the phone is on extra loud. In any case, it makes him feel better. The movie starts and as Tom Hanks is mourning the death of his wife and feels the need for a change, a big change, a move to Seattle, Ben feels it too—though he’s never had something that precious to lose.

Ben eats a bag of popcorn, some cereal, and a microwave pizza.

In the movie, Tom Hanks’s son Jonah runs away from home, intending for his dad to follow, and flies to meet Meg Ryan on Valentine’s Day at the top of the Empire State Building. Tom Hanks catches the next flight to New York City. He finds Jonah on the roof and holds him in his arms, tears in both their eyes. There are tears in Ben’s eyes as well. It always surprises him with movies, or even sitcoms, how simple it is to cry with them. He is trying to hold on to that feeling when his cell phone rings.

“This is also Charter.”

Ben reads the name and something inside him snaps. It’s unforgivable, to shatter such a wonderful moment, to intrude on his life in such a way. This time, Charter has gone too far. Ben picks up the phone and flicks it open, a smile spreading across his face. He is feeling disgruntled, un-polite—snarky.

“Hello?” he says.

“Hello . . . Ben Hedges?” the woman asks, the same woman that called that morning and had been calling, harassing him, for the past two months.

“Oh, wait a moment . . . yes . . . yes, that’s me,” Ben says, chuckling to himself.

“I’m calling today,”

“Don’t you mean tonight?”

“Oh, yes, excuse me. I’m calling tonight on behalf of Charter Communications. Do you have a few minutes for us to go over your current plan?”

“I have all night,” Ben says, stretching out the “all” for an unnecessary number of seconds. “All night, if you know what I mean.”

“Great. First of all, I want to thank you for being one of our most loyal customers.”

“No need to thank me. It’s been my pleasure. I should be thanking you guys for having such incredible internet.”

“Well, I noticed that you only have our high speed internet for the low price of \$29.99, is that correct?”

“Wait,” he says, “before this goes any further, there’s something I want to ask you . . . is there any way I can get premium cable and bundle it with the price I pay for my internet?”

“Yes there is. Do you have a land line in your house hold? We actually have a promotion going on, if you’re interested. I can set you up with our triple play package, and offer you 1 free year of DVR service.”

“Wow.”

“That’s our usual 125 channels, including 60 exclusive high-definition channels, our award winning high speed internet, and then you’d also have a land line in the household—all for the low price of \$94.97. “

“Now, what is a DVR?” he asks slyly.

“It’s a device for recording television shows, football games, things like that. You can store up to 780 hours of recording. just in case there’s a movie you want to watch or see, you can always record it.”

“Yeah, wow. Getting that free for a year, sounds like I’d get pretty used to that.”

“It’s actually really useful, you know, since I work pretty much the whole day, I can set it up to record the shows that I want to come home and watch, like, my favorite show’s *The Walking Dead*, and I’ll always have my DVR recording it so I don’t have to worry about, you know, missing an episode and having to mess around with Netflix or anything.”

“Well that sounds neat. What was the price of that whole triple play package again?”

“Only \$94.97.”

“Ah, you know what?” he says, feigning disappointment. “I don’t really see any possible advantage in owning a home phone, and I actually love my Netflix account. I love using it, so I don’t think I’ll be needing any upgrades tonight.”

“But it seems like a waste not to get our premium cable,” she says quickly. “you have such a big T.V.”

Ben looks over to the front window and sees a young woman peeking up from the sill, a cell phone to her ear, and satin-red hair. They stare at one another. The living room is silent, but for the hushed sound of flatulence against couch cushion.



MISS H.S.

ALEA HURST

OIL ON CANVAS

24X30, 2012

I BREAK

KELSEY LAMONICA

and so does my window.

You waved goodbye to him carefully,
like he was the last poem in your book

you taped up and sewed together. Smiles
like smirks have too much to them and not enough

left over for me to hear.

*

the music was loud inside and none of
us wanted to watch

through the thunder. You forgot your umbrella
and your steps, and you wanted to

borrow mine. I let you, of course I let you.

Left over right and under over inside

of the blue ballroom with candles melted
down to their dishes.

*

she sat by the pool while they danced;
green water overlapping light

drowning out. Words mean nothing
when they're not said

out loud to you.

*

Twelve days passed, maybe minutes
maybe miles weren't enough to see

the way the light fell in just the right spot.

The way the time fell into the old, broken clock.

They kept clapping again, three times
for the night sky.

*

And the waves crash over
and on.



SHE
KATIE KING

DUSTIN MOULD

MATT BURNS

In sixth grade Dustin Mould was universally reviled. It was impossible to know if we hated Dustin because of the way he acted, or if he acted the way he did because we hated him. At Webb Bridge Middle School, we didn't wonder about the chicken and the egg; we wondered which came first, us calling Dustin Candle-Wick-Dick or Dustin spoon-flinging half-melted gummy worms into Becca Ramsey's hair. Stories about him were never matter of opinion. At age eleven, there were a few cold, hard facts we could trust – the brake on a Razor scooter will burn the hell out of your heel if you ride it barefoot, Rodney Mullen is the greatest skateboarder who ever lived, and Dustin Mould routinely has intercourse with his mother's pewter candle snuffer. The sun rose, Dustin did a Find + Replace to swap all of the "horses" for "ballsacks" on Christina Ritchie's Computer Literacy paper, we talked openly about Dustin making out with the janitor, the sun set.

One of his signature moves was scraping the black soles of his Reebok high-tops across the tile floor when he entered the cafeteria. Every day, without fail, he announced his entrance with a jarring,

high-pitched squeak. He had his whole superstitious ritual worked out like he was an MLB pitcher – he'd clear some space for himself, hop up and down three times, jog ten steps and then slam on the brakes as his shoes burned their rubber track marks into the white linoleum. We'd all boo, or throw wrappers, or call him a moron who was going to work as Sports Authority his whole life. Mr. Willie, the janitor, would shake his head and start unwrapping the floor waxer power cord. Dustin just laughed, pumped his fists, and slammed his hands to outline his crotch. It was the world's worst WWE entrance, but he did it every day, no matter how many times we encouraged him to choke on his dog's penis.

By February we'd had enough. Dustin screeched across the floor, this one particularly ripe, hitting sour notes that could peel the fuzz off Ms. Reineke's lip. Scott Stonehower stood up and beamed a half-eaten apple into Dustin's chest, connecting with a dull thud that sent Dustin's frail body tumbling backwards. Dustin scrambled to his feet and ripped another screech, then another, eeking out more and more in stilted juts as he backed-up, like Michael Jackson moonwalking in tar. "Stop it," Scott yelled, throwing a banana at Dustin. "Your balls aren't going to drop until you're fifty." Dustin kept squeaking, now flicking his tongue between a V he made with his fingers. Scott threw a handful of orange rinds and said, "When you get a boner it goes up inside you and pokes out your butt." Dustin tore out even longer squeals and smoke puffed out from his shoes. "Quit it," said Scott, hurling two pineapples. "You don't have any friends and you never will." The squeaking stopped. Dustin

was backed into a wall; the dark line tracing his path from jukebox through the rotunda had come to an abrupt halt.

Scott pulled a Jamaican starfruit from his left cargo-pant-pocket and there was a tap on the window behind Dustin. We all crowded at the edge of the cafeteria to see Dustin push the window open. Two smooth, gray fins flopped inside. We looked to each other as whispers of “What the hell,” “No way,” and, “Take off that stupid hat, I can’t see” surrounded us. We all knew what it was; we’d seen a starboard flipper just like that a million times on the cover of the Life Science textbook. A long bottlenose poked inside the window, and then a loud squeal straight from this dolphin’s mouth hushed everyone. Dustin ripped his shoe against the floor one more time, scraping and torquing with all the force in his skinny right leg, and the dolphin nodded agreement. It locked eyes with Scott and pumped his shiny shoulder at him, flapping a flipper like a punch. Scott leapt back and dropped his starfruit as the Dolphin laughed and stuck up its lip. Dustin climbed through the window, mounted the dolphin’s back, and turned away from us. But before Dustin and his dolphin took off, he turned back and raised his right middle finger proudly above his head. He raised his left hand and made a circle; he then inserted the right middle finger into the left circle over and over again, making eye contact with every last one of us. He clicked his smoldering heels against the dolphin’s sides and they were off, cruising down Walnut Creek to a destination we’d never know.

Willie unwrapped the floor waxer cord. We all looked to each other, not sure what to do, where to look. Courtney Fielding broke the silence. “Bryan ties his sweatshirt around his waist to hide his period stains!” Some of us pointed at Bryan, but some didn’t get it. Bryan yelled, “Kyle Hines’ uncircumcised dick looks like a pair of ladies’ tights!” A section of us moved away from Bryan and motioned droopy elephant trunks with our arms. “But,” said Kyle, “but Lewis Roberts gets a poker chip every time he makes his bed and when he gets five his mom lets him masturbate!” A third of us branched away from Kyle to fill in the details of the Roberts household. Our voices grew to fill the cafeteria again, but for the first time there were thick gaps between the three sections of us, too wide to hand a Fruit-Roll-Up across.

Those gaps remained for the following years. The only time we ever crossed them was to ask a former friend, “Whatever happened to that Dustin Mould kid?”



WANDERED

MAURA FRIEDMAN



BERLIN 2012

MAURA FRIEDMAN

BREAKING INTO TAPTWIST ABBEY

PAUL KASAY

Last Monday Lilt found a way to climb to the top of the bell tower. Have you ever met someone like that? Crazy kids man, that's a way to put it. But it's not the best way. The punk rock subway riders, howl at the moon kinda hoodlums, well, that's one thing. Lilt was like that, in a way. But she never cut her hair weird, never smoked, or lit a bomb, nothing like that, whatever. She just always seems to have that look on her face, like she was calculating the various distances between overhangs, from column to column, to windowsill to window latch. Banister, grout, flower box, loose brick, tile overhang, weathervane. You saw it cross the curved corner of her eye. That's Lilt, picturing herself running over rooftops, silhouetted by the moon or something like that. So one night a few days ago she swept into the kitchen stained with the patina from the copper drain pipes that led up the side of the abbey, and totally triumphant, and we all sat up on the roof of portico that hung right above the face of the clock just as it was striking eleven, covering our ears and laughing as the bottles of wine went rattling off across the stone.

“Can't you imagine it? Back a thousand years ago, lines of fire all circled up around the city walls, everyone on the battlements, the king standing right here, looking out on the lights and rows of men lurking between the shadows, and suddenly there is a tense little

silence and a big whooshing sound. And it gets louder, and louder and all the fire is in the air and twinkling up and up and getting smaller and smaller then another little silence. And the king watches as those lights start getting bigger again, coming down. And the he stands here, master of his lands, protector of his people, and hands on the balcony just thinking: “Motherfucker.”

“Like Caesar said! Bleeding on the marble of the senate hall, eyes clouding over, the vision of his empire and glory obscuring in a haze, he takes Brutus, leans him down to his ear and says “Imma haunt the shit out of you.”

“You think there are any ghosts up here?”

“Here? Na, nothing’s ever lived up here.”

It was always things like that, the things that make you think that to live a normal live would be a tragic and devastating defeat.

You see, we wanted to be blazingly, luminescently drunk, crammed in the back seat of a cab rushing through Tokyo neon. We wanted to be in London, walking in a steel cold rain, planning some non-violent but still thoroughly deviant act, the kind that happens right as Westminster is striking midnight and the sound echoes over the water. Shit like that.

And we always seemed to think like that, that was how it went for a while, reenacting dreams that just made you just want to make up more obscure and incredible visions. We always wanted to be on a clock tower, looking out over a city at night, bulbs on strings, running between poles, tracing lines along the architecture

until morning. There's the day sure enough, a jumbled leafstorm, the strewn floor of a marketplace, every bit of the world we live in. But at night, you can see where the lights are.

With Lilt that feeling could hit you on the fucking subway, elbow to elbow with half of London. So past a point everyone would stop talking and look out for a bit, everything a getting little brighter and tilting a bit to the left.

“Hey Lilt! My toes are tingling. Which probably means I would make an excellent sled, if you guys want to surf me off this roof.”

One day, Lilt and I were walking down through this little market along the river. She looked through some scarves and banjos, little silver things stacked on old kitchen tables, though we didn't buy anything. She mostly sewed a lot of her own stuff. Had a garden. Cooked, played guitar, a lot of the things that could make you feel beat down and basic about your own abilities, if she wasn't so honest. She'd say that she started doing a lot of it by accident and then was too dumb to stop. The stuff she actually did like, well, she'd say she practiced that a lot. Though I'm still not too sure what it was she practiced, and what were those things that just came to her like beads of water collecting on cold glass.

Sometimes we would do nothing. Nothing to write about, days ran along sometimes with small victories “I bought an espresso machine!” “I rolled this wheel of cheese all the way home!” We ate a lot. We watched movies. We read and walked.

One night we all helped her drag an old tree into a field, falling apart, wet, smelling like the swamp, just the heartwood sticking out, and we made a fire by the teepee that her uncle had taught her to build and fried eggs and bacon and popped popcorn in the grease. We traced out names in gunpowder in the dust and lit it off and it looked like something invisible was writing it all out in fire.

For most people transitions seem hard. I mean, it's school, it's summer, suddenly it's somewhere else, maybe graduation. You don't know whether the trick is that you have to forget something or remember something just well enough to pass into another little frame. For some people it comes as a shock I guess. Some just wake up, move to New York, start writing songs and short stories. Some never move anywhere. I remember wondering about what we would decide when we finally did, wondered where we'd wake up in five years, with whom, and how happy.

But that's nothing. We wondered if we would eventually step out of ourselves, if by ten years from then we'd look back at who we were and wonder how we felt. It's pretty terrifying I guess.

"Lilt, what are you doing next year?" She would usually tell us what she wouldn't do, no freelance journalism, no internship at an embassy, no selling insurance.

"Why don't we open a donut shop?"

"I'm going to be a potter in Oregon."

"Amateur criminal"

"Professional bird watcher."

“We should buy land.”

One night around Christmas, we were all in the graveyard on the side of the abbey by the river right as it was starting to snow, eating steaming hot cornbread that Lilt had brought in a big tin cooler.

“Do you think people will forget?” We had just been sitting there looking up and across the river where the white stood out swirling against the black water curving along the embankment.

“What do you mean, Lilt?”

“I mean, do you think this will end up meaning anything to us when we’re older?”

...I know it’s not one of those questions you really answer.”

We were sitting on one of the tombs and I looked over at her, the steam from the bread in her hand rising up past her face.

“A lot of us are just going to get confused, think that acting like townies and pirates and never taking responsibility for their own damn actions will make them spritely and young and springy until rapture.”

She took another bite and looked over at me, the curves of her eyebrows disappearing up into her hat.

“But, you can’t tell me we won’t remember stealing those ponies,” we all said. “Or that time we all almost drowned at the botanical gardens. We’ll remember climbing the clock tower.”

She jumped down, looked up, laughed as she caught a big clump of snow that had fallen off a branch of the cedar tree.

“Guess we’ll just have to be smarter than we’ve ever been. Nothing more or less at stake than our own immortal souls and the dastardly dark future that might contain us telling our grandchildren nostalgic stories of our real lives until they actually hate us.

That’s another half of the danger I guess. You can’t be a kid forever. Not doing the same things you did when you were a kid. Anyone can fake it. That’s why some people can’t be parents, they never got better at being young. So they turn into old fuck ups. You know the people that put fireworks on their kid’s bicycle because it will be, like, totally awesome, and who haven’t married someone sane enough to, say, momentarily question that decision.

Somewhere out in the hush a clock was striking one, and Lilt was humming something as we walked out of the gates back to town. Sometimes I think what bothered Lilt the most was worrying that wasn’t worried enough. She never could work herself up into that kind of frenzy. You see, at night you can see where the lights are, and when it snows everything thing’s quiet and starts to glow.

“Hey, Lilt, What are we going to do next year?”



OBLIGATIONS

KATIE KING

82 STILLPOINT

DERBY DAY

ABBY SPASSER

people had begun to watch me
and my face
never really forgave me for
that
a dog was savoring the
green core
of an apple
and I shuddered at the image

teeth scraping at the skin and seeds
of the fruit—

you dug deep to the dregs
of obligation
and suddenly
I am saddled up and decorated
like a racehorse
or a bride
fingerprints, hash marks, bruises
stick to me like flies
and I must stay this sturdy

only a kick could knock
me down

my eyes have turned lax
my straps have grown loose
(they were tired of budging
like I was tired of you)

but I am wrong to be so sturdy
and I must stay that way
so I can only
stand here
like
the little girl
who pulls
stained strings
from between
nervous legs
and realizes
that before she can
retire
she must bleed herself
clean

THE DAILY GRIND (A WRECK NOT AN ACCIDENT)

JASON LONGORIA

Everyday, we
 get up
 brush our teeth
 comb our hair
 put on clothes,
and then summarily
 fall into place
 in the clip
 of giant metal guns,
of which we then voluntarily
 allow ourselves
 to be the bullets.

We hop inside the clips
 strap ourselves in
 straighten the mirrors
and then make the synchronized jump
 into the trajectory
and, thereby,
 cement ourselves
inevitably
 upon the asphalt.

Our chariots
 are not chariots,

so much as they
are metal monsters
ribbed with steel
fanged with glass.

We
load ourselves into monsters' gullets
fall into place within the clip
we have always known.

I once slid inside
the wet metal throat;
my feet
entrenched in leather entrails
my eyes
veiled behind glass fangs
my body
encircled by those steel ribs.

And I
destroyed, like a monster
destroys.

My monster clamped jaws
around another monster, and
destroyed that monster;
crunched steel ribs
shattered glass fangs.

Such carnage, predatory triumph:
lions prancing

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

MEREDITH THORNHILL

The scent carried with the wind.

“Blackberry,” she said.

Blink of the eye, ‘round turned.

Mother did not look back.

Cliff, cold and black

Slipped from under.

A laughter sounded

Like thunder,

And upon her porcelain skin a lick.

“Blackberry, dear, look before you leap.”



PROXIMITY MEETS

ELIZABETH VOGAN

AIRLESS

KATIE KING

Nora is thirteen when she learns to drown.

It's her first June in Arizona, her first June without a beach in her backyard, and no matter what gets said over the dinner table, it's nothing like home. The temperature might've read the same, but the heat makes her bones feel wrong; it's so dry and so cracked, and all Nora can think of is the night she accidentally fell asleep in front of Daddy's space heater and woke up with her skin an empty red and her throat so shriveled she could hardly breathe — only in Scottsdale it's like that all the time. Nothing she's done in three months has made it better. The heater is tethered to her, following her to the drugstore and the park and the movie theater, and she hasn't figured out how to sever the damn cord. It's so different from her heat that she wants to cry, but she can't, so her eyes burn instead. Right then, on the Sunday afternoon of Jacob's sixteenth birthday party, Nora would've felt more at home in snow. But she doesn't have snow — or rain, or the lake, or her ocean. All she has to look out on is the old-new backyard with its sharp, prickly brown mat of something their landlord called a lawn, two rusted red folding chairs, and an inflatable kiddie pool that

Momma picked up at the Walmart.

For the beginning days of summer, she tries looking at the inside things. Nora looks at books, and the inside of the fridge, and the paint on the wall. The *Law and Order* marathon on TNT runs for days. She starts a habit of holding her breath during the commercial breaks, and her initial attempt gets her up to fifty-seven seconds before her vision starts to blur. When she gets to a certain point, even the pressure of her pink fingernails cutting into her palms can't snuff the burning in her lungs.

TNT keeps her attention longest. By the end of the week Nora is up to sixty-eight

seconds. She's confident seventy seconds is doable today, but she forgets it's Saturday, and Momma doesn't work weekends. Only three hours into the morning the TV gets turned off and Nora goes to her room, having been ordered to change out of her pajamas.

"What am I supposed to do?" she yells as she shimmies into a pair of blue jean shorts. The fabric is still damp from the wash. Wet and clinging, the material makes her thighs feel huge, but she wants them to still be her favorite pair, so she tells herself to ignore it.

"I don't know, Nora," Momma's voice carries through the door from her usual spot in the kitchen. "But you need to do something besides sit in front of the idiot box all day. Go outside and play or something."

So Nora goes outside.

The few neighborhood kids she knows well enough to name are either out of town. The only other person she can think of is Jacob, and just the thought makes her cheeks redden and feet move. Before the sun starts leeching the sweat from her skin, she's on the road to Henry

Burns Park. Calling it a park is a bit of a stretch, though, because it's too small for that. The ground is flat enough to play soccer or frisbee, but really most people just use it as a place for their dogs to shit so they don't have to clean up their own lawns. There's also a tennis court; it's the park's one redeeming feature in Nora's eyes. That's where Jacob spends most of his time, teaching the neighborhood kids how to hold a racket and backhand a ball for ten dollars a session. He'd taught Nora for five.

The special rate was because their Moms worked together, he'd whispered that day, reaching around her back to adjust her grip on the racket, his mouth brushing against her dry black hair, so close to Nora's ear that she could feel the words form on her skin. Even after he'd stepped away, the residual nerves kept her muscles taut for the rest of the lesson. She'd wanted and not wanted another lesson since.

Jacob is where she expects him to be, leaning against the Park's run down net, two rackets at his feet. He takes slow, deliberate sips out of a clear plastic water bottle. Nora fingers the strap on her purse, almost positive she has five dollars on her.

"Hi—" she squeaks out.

No. That's wrong. She starts again. "Hello, Jacob."

He looks up and over at her, but the movement is jerky. His eyes settle on her face, then travel down her body. Recognition is slow to come, but it gets there. "Nora, right?"

She nods. He was beautiful. Tall and golden-haired with long-lashed brown eyes and a quick, white smile. "I — um, I," Nora begins, then stops, her face as hot as the sun. Looking down, she fishes the money out of her purse, the weight of his eyes heavy on her bent neck. She

fumbles, then finds it.

She offers him the cash with only a slight tremor in her hand.

“I’m gone two minutes and look what you’ve found. I thought you paid sluts, not the other way around.”

Off to Nora’s left a much older guy approaches on unsteady feet. He says, “I’m gone two minutes and look what you’ve found. I thought you paid sluts, not the other way around.”

He emerges from behind a bush with a clear water bottle in one hand and brown paper bag in the other, his navy polo only half tucked into his khaki shorts. His eyes are glinting.

When the sound-image finally hits her, hot and sickly on her skin, she doesn’t expect it to hurt like it does. At first it’s like a pinch, and the shock of it is what bites deepest, but when Nora hears Jacob give a startled laugh, there’s a sudden sharp, wrenching twist and she gasps. Her wide eyes fill with moisture, and she takes a stuttering step back. She realizes her hand is still outstretched. Nora has never felt so stupid in her life.

“Actually, dipshit,” Jacob begins, and Nora’s head jerks over to his. He’s gesticulating so widely with his hands that liquid from his water bottle sloshes on to Nora’s sneakers. He doesn’t notice. Nora isn’t there. “Whores get paid. A slut is a woman who gives it away for free. What’d they teach you in college?”

“A whore is a bitch is a slut. Gertrude Stein.”

Jacob’s lumbering friend finally reaches them and pauses unsteady by Nora’s shoulder. She wants to shiver and run and disappear at the same time, but her body’s tensed so tight, just like when Jacob whispered in her ear but so very unlike it at the same time that she doesn’t know why she could ever think the two feelings similar.

The heavy palm reaching out, clutching, resting on her bare shoulder with lazy confidence is what breaks the thread holding her back. She looks up into golden hair and brown eyes and white, white teeth, and she starts to run. Nora thinks she hears an amused, excusatory, “oh, but that one was just a baby, Jacob,” but she doesn’t stop to be sure.

When she’s home in the bathroom with the door shut and the shower on, she starts flinging off her shirt and bra, starts kicking off her shoes. The shorts don’t come off as easily. They stick to her ugly fat thighs and she scratches herself trying to pull them down her legs. Without thinking, she throws them in the trash.

Nora sits under the water for twenty minutes before telling herself she’s being an idiot. So she gets out and gets dressed. She eats supper and watches TV. She goes to bed. Momma doesn’t say much of anything. She works twelve-hour days during the week, so she’s tired a lot. Most of her weekend time is spent at the kitchen table reading and resting and looking over bills. Nora finds her like that the next morning-afternoon when she stumbles out of bed at twelve o’clock.

Momma looks up from the paper and grins wide and white. “Bout time I saw your shining face, lazy girl.”

Nora grunts out an unintelligible response and rummages in the fridge, trying her best not to frown. A tupperware container full of watermelon doesn’t look wholly unappetizing, so she pulls it out and begins to pick at the wet spongy pieces with her fingers.

“Mhmm,” Momma answers, looking back down at the pile of bills. “Just don’t forget the Mitchell’s have that pool party this afternoon.”

“Huh?”

“The pool party,” she repeats slowly. “Jacob’s sixteenth birthday. Cheryl invited us over two weeks ago.”

Panic crawls up and out her throat before she can control it. “I don’t want to go,” she blurts. “I — I don’t have anything to wear.”

“You do, and we’re going.”

Nora glares over her watermelon. “No, I’m not.”

Twenty minutes later, Nora is outside in her too tight pink and white one piece bathing suit, filling up the inflatable Walmart pool with water from the hose, so mad at her mother she could spit. The time it takes to fill up with water is just long enough for the anger at her mother to articulate itself into a desire to punish her for being so selfish. To make her feel terrible.

The pool is right underneath Momma’s kitchen window; it’s perfect for what she wants. She’s expecting Momma to look outside any second, but the longer she waits the more frustrated she gets, so she climbs in anyway and goes ahead with it. Inside, there’s just enough room for her to stretch out to her toes. She puts her head down and lets her arms float beside her, trying to look as gone and empty as possible. Water slips into her mouth. It tastes like rubber. Nora closes her eyes, holds her breath, and starts to count, just knowing how very sorry Momma will feel when this is done. How she’ll look out the window and maybe gasp before flying out the kitchen door and shaking her awake, crying as she says how very sorry she is for the pool party, and Arizona, and Daddy leaving them. The image gets her to thirty-six seconds.

She continues to count. Forty-three. Speckled, pinprick reds brand the fleshy insides of her eyelids. Forty-four. She’s getting more

and more lightheaded, more and more frustrated.

Momma isn't looking. She would be able to tell if she were looking, she knows. She thinks. Nora's chest burns, and she bites her lip. The frustration feels like it will break from her, break her.

Fifty-seven, fifty-eight.

Her arms won't stay floating at her side anymore. They push down until her fishbone fingers clutch at the slick plastic and curl up and inwards — until Nora feels the dry, dry dirt and grass underneath her fingers, separated only by the slick blue sheet. Her pretty pink nails almost cut through the cheap plastic.

Sixty-nine, seventy.

Nora screams.

It's a short, violent exhalation. Her mouth opens wide. Her eyes squeeze tight. The sound escapes from the back of her throat, bursts from her in a current of air pockets that pushes past her lips and claws up across her cheeks. She hardly hears it, wants to hear it, but she feels it ripping in her chest. She wishes the violence to her lungs would last longer so that she can leave more at the bottom of the plastic, but the water bites. She doesn't have the air. With a wrench, Nora turns over. Her hair is soaked and her body feels so heavy and graceless that really it's more like a flop. Vision blurred and mind dizzy, her first new breath is too deep, too fast. She chokes a little. She wheezes some. Her eyes flit to the kitchen window, and there's her mother, still at her table, papers everywhere, her head down.



TORBELLINO

ELIZABETH VOGAN

DISTANCE

MAURA FRIEDMAN

Our Southern skies
have opened:
sheets suspended from
the edges of roofs,
A droning hush to
sync your breath.
I've stayed huddled
this December
(quilts, knits, foreign skin)
But there's an intimate exposure
where our minds entwine and
mine's meandered often
grazing fading lines.
This December
we'll break and coalesce in
pieced attempts at parting,
but our whole has holes
and you're so far away.
Send your words
to rush my veins
the way rain overwhelms gutters.
We say life vests are for cowards
but still cling to one another.
This December,
If two trains leave
our respective rooms
in a moment,
Both traveling at
their respective speeds,
Could we make
a home in the wreckage?
Could our bodies
lie still at night?
Love is taking solace
in the same constellations.



MIDNIGHT SNOW

KATIE KING

BURNT

ALEX REUBERT

Blues make you
squeeze
whatever's on hand.

So if you are up
to your arms
in dishwater,

nostalgia,
a sunken window
will cut the skin.

Squeeze a thing
that speaks

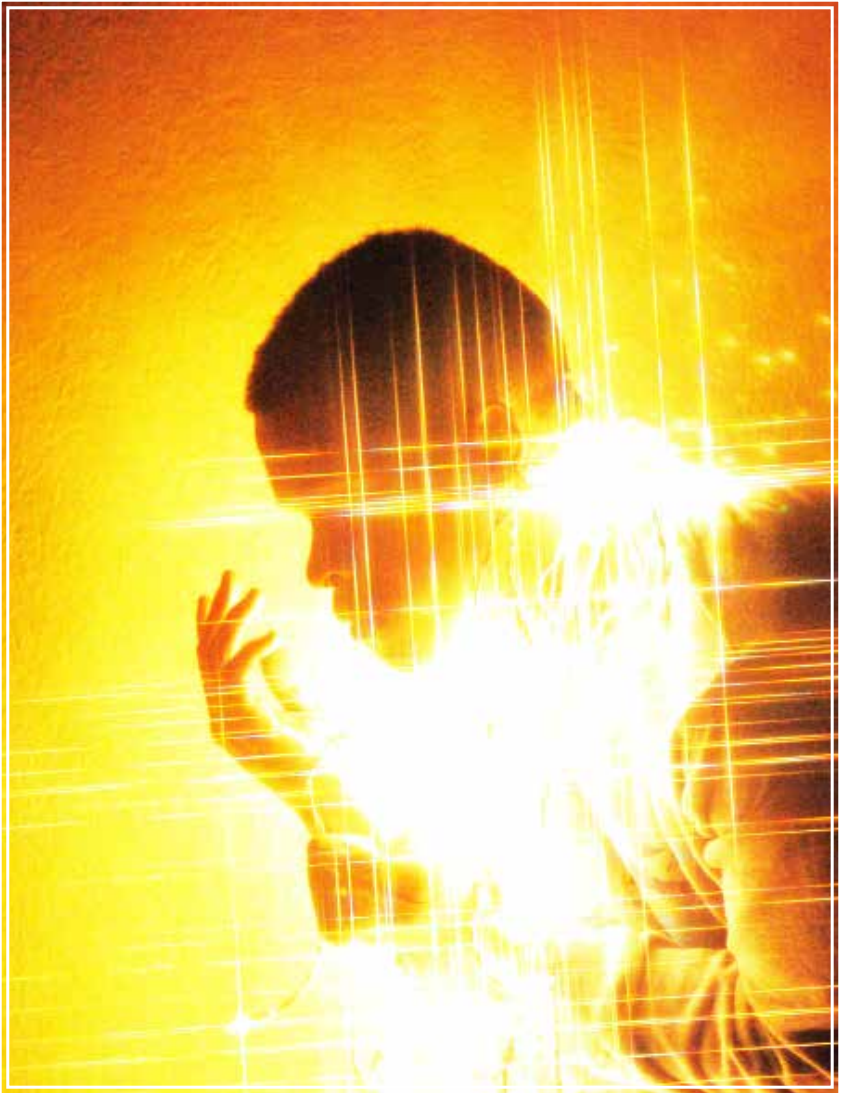
as you stand with
mouth as open and silent
as ears—

that's the gardenia
on a desk in which
a letter is burning,

that's Holiday at her frailest

when she held
herself
as if she had no body

but a bunch of valves and pipes
beneath her dress—



IMMOLATION

SHANDTON WILLIAMS

Digital Photography

THE MIRROR

ZACH JONES

It is so very hard to hold a mirror
You cannot shrug and drop it like

the world

Covered in linen, waiting, biding,
standing in the corner of the attic room
It ages faster, truer than the self

Yet it never
dies

Try to shatter,
throw, or stab,
or

break

it

“The moral life is beautiful, art
for art’s sake”

Not beauty, but the self, in the one mind
and the one consciousness Look deeply
then, behold

the
darkest
void

A festering white-washed
tomb

“You fool, you must first clean
inside the cup A dead and rotten tree
cannot produce good fruit”

A smile cracked and broken and the
not-so-very-tiny wrinkled brow
The trees for forest, flesh for heart

Was once called
depravity

A word that gave the mirror such
a weight

A word that damned the will damned
the soul

The image is but adim and dusty
shadow, only just in part
What is revealed, not found-
the solution

The voice of Providence

HE WHO SPOKE and made the
lightto shine Lifts the veil and makes
the blind to see

Not the wild natural world where serenity
and cruelty beg us worship both
Nor the ever-changing wishes ofcity dwellers

“Come all ye
burdened”

For the mirror only shows a fatalbroken
imageWeighed down by its heavy, honest,
picture
all buckle

Gentle Pilgrim, lifted dampened
wearyeyes upon the ugly nails and bloody
beamsWith a thundering crash themirror
fell

A new identity bestowed

Looking in his reflection, the ransomed
childstrangely sees
Yet not his former,
fractured visage but

THE KING'S

EVERYBODY LOVES RAYMOND



MODERN FAMILY

MICHELLE NORRIS

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL

Laura Silverman

Mother was asleep on the couch downstairs, hand clutching the remote control, head resting on the flat throw pillow. The button of her jeans was popped open, revealing a stretch of pale round stomach.

Abigail walked towards the sagging corduroy couch, socked feet silent against the wooden floor, and bent her ear to Mother's parted lips. She checked for steady breath against her cheek before turning around and climbing the stairs to the second floor of the house.

The door to the master bedroom was closed. Abigail gripped the knob with a moist palm and turned it bit by bit until the fasten clicked. The door swung open and knocked with a gentle thud against the back wall. Abigail paused and listened.

Silence.

She took careful steps towards Mother's vanity. The table was tall and wooden with peeling white paint, and Abigail had to stand on her tiptoes to reach the top of it, arms stretching taut over her head. Her fingers swept the surface, nudging aside half-empty perfume bottles and tubes of uncapped lipstick, until they landed on the handle of the brush.

She took the brush from the table and smiled. It was engraved with spiraled rivets and strung with soft, sabeline hairs. She slipped it into the pocket of her dress and looked twice before leaving the room.

and darting down the hallway.

Her door was cracked open. Inside, Lucas was sitting on her bed, plucking at the stray threads of her daisy yellow quilt.

“Get out,” Abigail said.

“Why?”

“Because it’s my room, and I said so.” Abigail walked forward and pointed a finger at her younger brother. The brush lay heavy in her pocket, dragging down the left side of her dress. “Get out. Get out. Get out!”

“No.”

“I’ll tell mom.”

Lucas stopped playing with the frayed edge of the quilt. He looked up at his sister with heavy blue eyes. “No you won’t.”

“Oh, yes I will.”

“She’s sleeping. You won’t wake her up.”

“Want to bet?”

Abigail stared Lucas down with the firm, set gaze she had learned from her father until he slid from the bed and landed lightly on the threadbare rug.

“You never want to play with me, Abby.”

“Later. We’ll play later.”

As soon as Lucas left the room, Abigail closed the door behind him, her fingers fumbling to turn the smooth lock. She listened, body tensed, as Lucas trudged down the stairs and into the backyard.

Only when the house was quiet did she pull the brush from

her pocket. Late afternoon sun glinted off of its silver surface.

Abigail sat down on the rug and regarded her reflection in the floor-length mirror. Her white dress was stained with a dark spot from where she had spilt grape juice earlier that morning. Mother had made her strip off the dress right there in the cold kitchen so that she could rub it with hot water and bleach. But the stain wouldn't come off. It was,

“Permanent. That’s just great, Abigail. Nine years old and still making a mess. Your father works hard so I can buy you these nice things, and then you just ruin them. Well, you aren’t getting a new dress. Oh, no you’re not. You can wear this one to school, stain and all. I don’t care. I really just don’t care.”

Abigail licked her finger and rubbed at the spot, but it still wouldn't come off. She crawled forward, far enough so that she could only see her face in the mirror, brown eyes and small dark lips.

She picked up the brush and pressed the fine hairs against her plump cheek. She leaned into the bristles and inhaled the hairspray scent.

Her hair was tied back with a fat orange scrunchie. She pulled it off and let her dark curls tumble down over her narrow shoulders.

The handle of the brush was slick in her still damp palm, and it almost slipped from her hand as she pressed the bristles to her scalp. When she first pulled the brush through her hair, the needles snagged in her matted curls. She had to yank it through the knots again and again until all of the tangles were gone and her hair was puffed and straight.

Abigail smiled, closemouthed, at her reflection. She leaned forward and breathed hot air against the mirror, fogging the glass surface. With her pointer finger, she drew two eyes, a wide mouth and long, straight hair. She smiled at the face, and the face smiled back.

Then a car pulled into the driveway. The sound of the running engine penetrated the silent house.

Abigail hastily rubbed the mirror with the back of her sleeve and scrambled to her feet. She grabbed the silver-handled brush. A web of brown and blonde hairs lay between the bristles. Voices from downstairs echoed hollow and loud into her bedroom,

“Where are the children?”

“I fell asleep. They’re probably playing outside.”

“I don’t suppose you started dinner either.”

“There’s a casserole in the freezer, if-”

“You’re pathetic.”

“Al-”

When the silence was cracked, splintered apart, it often stayed that way for hours.

Abigail dug her little fingers into the base of the brush and yanked out the strands of hair. She stuffed the hairs into the pocket of her dress, pulled open her door, and raced back to the master bedroom.

“What do you think I do all day? Just sit around on my ass and wait-”

“Don’t raise your voice.”

“I’ll raise my voice if I damn well like!”

The brush clattered loudly against the vanity as Abigail dropped it from her hand. She almost crashed into Lucas as she rushed back out of the room. His arms hung limply by his sides as he stared at her.

“What are you doing?” He asked.

“Nothing.” Abigail grabbed her brother’s hand and pulled him down the hallway. “Come with me.”

She guided him into his room and pushed him onto the rug patterned with fire trucks and police cars.

“Stay here,” she said. She pulled a Dr. Seuss book from a shelf of toys in the corner of the room and returned to the rug.

“What are we doing?” Lucas asked.

“Reading a story.”

Feet were now pounding up the staircase.

“Why?”

“You said you wanted to play. Now listen to the story.” Abigail opened the book at random, cleared her throat, and started reading, “When our mother went down to the town for the day, she said, somebody has to clean this all away. Somebody-”

Mother was standing in the doorway. Her fair skin was flushed, and her blonde hair was flattened from her nap. The button on her jeans was still undone, exposing the rim of her white cotton underpants. Abigail closed the book and clasped her fingers over the thick binding.

“What are you two doing?”

Lucas looked at his mother and then at Abigail, as if unsure whether or not he was doing something wrong.

“We’re just reading,” Abigail responded. She lifted the book for proof. “See?”

“Fine. Finish up and wash for dinner.”

And then she was gone.

Abigail let out a tight breath. She dropped the book to the rug and stood up.

“Where are you going, Abby?” Lucas asked.

“To my room.”

“I thought we were reading a story.”

“We weren’t really reading-”

And then the footsteps were hammering back down the hallway. Abigail spun around to find Mother once more standing at the door. Her light eyes were hot and unfocused. “Why was my bedroom door open?”

Abigail had forgotten to close it in her hurry to return the brush. She jammed her hands into her pockets. She could feel the tangle of hairs against her fingers, and her heartbeat started thudding in her eardrums. “I don’t know,” she said, forcing herself to meet Mother’s eyes.

“Are you lying to me, Abigail?”

“No.” The loose hairs tickled her palm, so she made a fist around them and squeezed hard. “Why would I lie?”

Mother lowered her voice. “When I find out what you did, you’re going to be in big trouble little girl. Do you understand me?”

“I- I didn’t do anything wrong.”

“You’re a liar. A bad liar.”

She turned from the door and slammed it shut behind her.

Abigail’s knuckles were white when she took her hands from her pockets. Lucas was thumbing through the pages of the book.

“What did you do?” He asked.

“Nothing,” Abigail snapped. “I didn’t do anything.” She stepped forward and snatched the book from her brother’s hands.

“Ouch!”

His finger was bleeding, sliced open by the side of the page. He lifted it to his mouth and sucked.

Abigail chewed her lip. “I’m sorry,” she said. “I’m sorry Lucas.”

She grabbed a tissue from his nightstand. “Give me your hand.” She wrapped the tissue around his finger and squeezed gently. “Here,” she said. “Hold it just like that, and the bleeding will stop. I’ll finish reading you the story, and by then the bleeding will stop, and then we’ll wash up and eat dinner, okay?”

“Okay.”



Her father ate dinner alone in the living room with the television turned to the seven o’clock news. The rest of them ate dinner in the kitchen over the Formica table, swallowing down thick slices of casserole, barely heated, flavorless from weeks spent in the freezer.

Lucas had trouble cutting his casserole, so his mother leaned over to help. Her eyes narrowed in on the thin cut across his finger, but she said nothing.

The silence in the kitchen was disturbed only by television in the other room,

“ceasefire talks were held in Egypt today over”

Abigail stuffed dry chunks of the casserole into her mouth.

She wanted to finish and retreat to the bathroom so she could flush the strands of hair down the drain.

“Slow down, Abigail,” Mother warned. Her own casserole sat untouched. She was drinking wine from a green plastic cup.

“Sorry,” Abigail said. Now she concentrated on chewing each chalky piece.

Lucas was fidgeting next to her, short legs swinging over the edge of his chair, fingers poking at the crumbs on his plate.

A chair groaned in the living room. The television snapped silent. Light footsteps sounded across the living room, a door opened and closed, and the stereo flicked on,

“you who are on the road, must have a code that you can live by, and so become yourself, because the past is just a good bye”

“Son of a bitch always playing that goddamn music all night,” Mother cursed under her breath. “Are you two done eating?”

Before they had a chance to respond, Mother snatched their plates from the table. Abigail’s fork clattered to the ground.

“Pick that up,” Mother said. Abigail rushed to her knees, grabbed the fork, and still kneeling, handed it to Mother. “Get off that dirty floor. Go upstairs. Both of you. Get ready for bed.”

The noise from the stereo trickled out of the kitchen and up the stairs.

“My finger still hurts,” Lucas said as they climbed.

“Run it under cold water,” Abigail responded. “It’ll be fine.”

“Why didn’t daddy eat with us?”

“Daddy’s in a bad mood. You know he doesn’t eat with us when he’s in a bad mood.”

Abigail closed the bathroom door and walked over to the toilet. She grabbed the hairs from her pocket and held them up under the fluorescent light. Brown and blonde. Coarse and smooth. Lucas was pale and blonde, just like Mother, but Abigail had a dark complexion and even darker hair.

She dropped the strands into the toilet. The water slowly detangled the clump. Abigail watched as the thin hairs pulled apart. She flushed, and the strands swirled and swirled until they finally disappeared down the drain.

There was a knock on the door.

“Abigail, what are you doing in there?” Mother asked.

“Just brushing my teeth.”

She turned on the faucet. Her toothbrush was pink with white ridges, and her toothpaste was blue with bright sparkles. It tasted like peppermint.



When Abigail returned to her bedroom, the first thing she saw was the silver-handled brush sitting on her bed. She froze, hand still on the doorknob.

“Close the door,” Mother said. She was standing in shadows in the corner of the room. Her arms were crossed over her heavy chest. “Close the door,” she repeated.

It was always worse if she doesn’t listen the first time.

Abigail stepped into the room and closed the door behind her, clicking the latch in place carefully so that the door shut silently.

“What’s wrong?” Abigail asked.

“Don’t play dumb with me.” Mother grabbed the brush from the bed. “I can still feel your greasy little fingers all over the handle. How many times do I have to tell you to keep your hands off of my things?”

“I didn’t-”

“The brush is cleaned out, and I didn’t do it.”

“Maybe dad-”

The laugh was short and sharp. “Maybe dad, what? I told you not to play dumb, and I meant it. Come here.”

It was always worse if she doesn’t listen the first time.

Abigail met Mother in front of the bed. Her hands were slick with cold sweat, so she rubbed them down the sides of her dress.

“Bend over,” Mother said.

Abigail bent over the bed. She gripped the comforter and closed her eyes.

“This will be the last time you touch my brush,” Mother said.

The silver handle was hard and heavy.



She slept on her stomach that night, and her dreams were pierced with the voices from downstairs,

“I don’t care about your hairbrush, Sandra. Don’t hit my daughter again.”

“Yeah, what are you going to do about it, Al? I don’t see you teaching her how to mind her own damn business.”

“She’s my daughter, and you won’t lay another hand on her.”

“Like you’re going to stop me you fucking asshole.”

And at some point in the middle of the night, the voices stopped, but the stereo flicked back on, and the music crept through the house, the same song looping over and over again,

“teach your parents well, their children’s hell will slowly go by”

Abigail rolled over onto her side and stared out her open window. Dawn light was trickling into her room, bathing the walls in grey shadows. The music was echoing through the house, and she imagined her father with closed eyes sitting in his cracked leather chair, and she imagined Mother passed out on the bed, snoring loudly, both hands clutching the silver-handled brush, and she imagined Lucas twisting in his sleep on the other side of her wall, and she imagined the music getting louder and louder until it seeped through the cracks in the house and out onto the streets and into the neighboring homes, and she imagined that maybe if it got loud enough, someone would hear it.

And maybe then it would be silent.



DOWNTOWN

JOHN BUCKLEY

THE FOUND POEM

A Found Poem is composed of words and phrases “found” in different sources and then combined and restructured as a poem. Stillpoint’s found poem is made up of memorable lines pulled from pieces in this year’s submissions that, with some exception, did not make the final cut for publication.

CONTRIBUTER	POEM
Kelsey Lamonica	intercession
Zach Jones	No
Matt Burns	Pastoral
Samuel Dickinson	Bottom Drops Out on Indignation
Andie Ashe	Self concious
David Nahabedian	In the Back of Mind
Elizabeth Vogan	A Shimmer From Bliss
Paul Kasay	On a Bus to Bath
Davis Buchanan	Said the Poet to the Prophet
Sam Hine	Bedroom
Noah Adler	Messier Object Hope 89
Jacob Kennedy	Jaune
Jessica Clark	Field Notes on an Exit
K. Hope Calhoun	Dear Eric
Julia Stacy	Consoled
Rebecca Arnall	The agony of your abscence
Lisa Dinh	Thinking of You, Untitled 10

THE FOUND POEM

Why am I not a brick?
I am a tea whore.
Took this job sarcastically
(ghostly it seems)
Wraiths rising from timelines buried under our feet,
Like smoke from that great fire that took us,
And burned us to life
Excuse me, Emperor, your kingdom's melting
It is dripping water now...
The perfect faeries.
Without perfection.
Listening to Katy Perry's "Thinking of You" and drowning.

Dust, dust, four corners of dust,
A bedroom's un-metallic rust.
Mystic elephants sleep here
Lost like a star behind a candle flame.

The agony of your absence overwhelms me.
It's cologne in the air of a French whorehouse
All I hear is you and your trumpet
Wake up and smell the thorns.
He does not play the trumpet.
In breaking bones, we deposit growths.
Legs, move.
Mouth, make.
Lungs breathe melted snow every so often,
Crystal air caught in twin glasses.

Damn that was deep.

BIOGRAPHIES

The Stillpoint Staff

LOREAL AJAMAJEBI

My name is Loreal and I'm the web editor of Stillpoint Literary Magazine. I'm a nerdy computer science major with a love for all things art.

CHRISTOPHER DAY

Despite chronic illiteracy and debilitating apathy, staff member Christopher Day has somehow managed to weasel his way into the university and work towards degrees in both English and Women's Studies. Christopher is the Submissions Editor for Stillpoint.

IVA DIMITROVA

Iva Dimitrova is a staff member whose goal in life is to have even half the wit of a British sitcom.

DYLAN HUFFORD

Dylan Hufford has often been misquoted as saying *The Great Gatsby* was a horrible book, when in fact he merely said it was mediocre. He has also been criticized for his stance against the oppression of the passive voice in literature, but he refuses to give up on what he believes to be right.

ADRIANA GREGORY

Adrianna Gregory is a graduating senior majoring in Comparative Literature and Russian.

DAFNA KAUFMAN

Dafna Kaufman is a film fanatic, music maven, and literature lover.

JEANETTE KAZMIERCZAK

Jeanette Kazmierczak can't answer your questions right now (being held captive by angry natives in the wilderlands of the Andes) please leave your name, message and contact info on the bottom of page eleven and return this book to the shelf. She'll get back to you after she escapes and saves the day, priceless artifact or dude-in-distress.

JASON LONGORIA

Jason Longoria is graduating from the University of Georgia this semester with a degree in Psychology and English.

LIAN PETERS

Lian Peters is a graduating senior majoring in English and Biology. She enjoys reading and occasionally plays bass, and she hopes that her future titles include, among others, "Jaded Local Celebrity."

EMILY RETHMAN

When I'm not spending my time camping or hiking, I can usually be found immersed in a book no one has heard of or writing a piece of fiction no one will ever read. My two years at UGA have taught me that zombies are real and for one week out of the semester, changing your major is as easy as changing your clothes and that anything is possible with a cup of coffee. Stillpoint has been my gateway into the minds of those around me and I'll be forever thankful for the opportunity to be apart of this wonderful magazine.

ALEX REUBERT

Alex Reubert is in his fourth and final year at the University of Georgia. After graduating, he hopes to get a job.

LAURA SILVERMAN

Laura Silverman is not a member of the Stillpoint staff.

ABBY SPASSER

Abby Spasser is a rising sophomore majoring in English and minoring in Theatre. She maintains to this day that her best piece of writing was a six-word memoir she wrote in ninth grade: “Likes happy endings, but still procrastinates.”

MEKISHA TELFER

Mekisha Telfer is a Junior studying English with a concentration in Creative Writing and French. In her freetime she likes to read books, watch movies and push boundaries by turning everything in as late as possible. She hopes to one day write something people will read. Maybe a blog.

SHANDTON WILLIAMS

Shandton Williams is a rising Senior majoring in English Creative Writing with a Minor in Film Studies. In addition to being the Design and Layout Editor for Stillpoint he is an amateur photographer with aspirations to direct a Biopic about Napoleon Bonaparte. When he's not loafing about with his Pen and Spyglass, he enjoys long walks in the wilderness and a good Danish.

ABOUT STILLPOINT

Since 1967, Stillpoint Undergraduate Literary Magazine has served as a forum for undergraduate writers and visual artists at the University of Georgia. The pieces featured in the 2013 issue of Stillpoint were selected from a pool of blind submissions. Names were omitted during selection and staff members did not judge their own work. This issue was arranged by the Design Editor with the help of the Stillpoint staff and others using Adobe InDesign 5.0 on a Windows PC. The type is set in the Adobe Garamond Pro and Bebas Neue typeface.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

Stillpoint would like to thank the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, the English Department, the Creative Writing Program, and the UGA Central Duplicating Service. Additional thanks is due to the Franklin College Fee Allocation Committee.

We'd like to extend a special thank you to Jordana Rich, Dr. Andrew Zawacki, Dr. Doug Anderson, Laurie Norris, and Candee Bradbury for their help throughout the year.

Finally, thank you to everyone who submitted work, attended an event, or read this magazine.

STILLPOINT STAFF

STILLPOINT

2013

