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Color

colour | color, n.1

Pronunciation: Brit. /'kʌlə/ , U.S. /'kɛlə/

Forms: ME-15 colur, ME colure, coulur, ME-16 coloure, ME- colour, ME- color.

Etymology: Early Middle English colur, later colour, color, Old French color, culur, colur...

I. As a property or quality.

1. The quality or attribute in virtue of which objects present different appearances to the eye, when considered with regard only to the kind of light reflected from their surfaces.

The particular colour of a body depends upon the molecular constitution of its surface, as determining the character and number of the light-vibrations which it reflects. Subjectively, colour may be viewed as the particular sensation produced by the stimulation of the optic nerve by particular light-vibrations. This sensation can also be induced by other means, such as pressure of the eye-ball, or an electric current.

Mission Statement

The Manuscript Society of Wilkes University has been publishing its creative written and visual art magazine, Manuscript, continuously since 1947. Currently, the student-led editorial staff publishes two issues a year, and copies are complimentary.

In preparation for a career in editing, publishing, or creative writing, any Wilkes student is welcome to submit to or work on the editorial board of the Manuscript Society and critique a variety of creative pieces, including visual art, from the Wilkes faculty, staff, students, and alumni. This process includes creative workshops, copyediting, and layout. Recently, the Society produced a hardback edition of the Fall 2008 edition, a woodblock cover design in the Spring 2009, and a confidential folder design in Fall 2010.

Wilkes Students may elect to enroll in ENG 190 – Projects in Writing: Manuscript for one (1) credit of coursework. Meetings are held during club hours each semester. Numerous on-campus poetry readings are open to the Wilkes community and greater public.

The end product of each semester is a published, award-winning magazine which showcases the talent and creative minds of Wilkes University.

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Miranda Baur

Faith in Ernst's "Oedipus Rex"

I am the lion and I am the lamb.
I am the bull and I am the bird.
I've got a bullet hole in my wing,
and a rope tied around my horns;
nevertheless, I am the Ultimate.
My mother laughed the day it happened,
or maybe she cried —
they sound the same to me.
The day I crawled
between the cracks of the Walnut.
The day I left the white-walled world.
I snuck in sideways
and found the darkness delicious.
The walls were as soft as Grandmother's face.
My body curled around itself
and began to overlap—
so much so that my eyelids dripped down my chin.
Then my arms melted around my knees
and my spine was conceived through my skin—
Bone is just as Beautiful as Bald.
Let me be the one to tell you
that there wasn't any light
and there wasn't any sound.
My life didn't flash before my eyes.
Angels did not drag me by the feet.
Just my own hollow breath bounced inside of the Walnut—
And eventually, it faded.
I am the lion and I am the lamb.
I am the bull and I am the bird.
I am deceased. And I am very much alive.

Anne Janecek



Miranda Baur

Open Eyes

Veins like rivers and canyons carved into the Earth

Pumping and thumping to known and unknown places.

Up, down, left, right—around my finger and within my head;

Inspired by Beauty!

Have you seen it in the man on the sidewalk with slumping shoulders and gleaming eyes?

Have you seen it in the broken glass at his feet that capture pieces of the racing clouds?

Have you seen it far away in a hazy meadow's golden waves,

Or on fingertips of a blackberry bush kissed by summer rain?

I've seen it and I've loved it!

I've held it in my dreams!

I've gazed at many passersby;

Everyone's a stranger and a phantom-friend.

Between each person, the wind will blow

And between each person there lies a strand of doubt

Like a fishing line; we reel and tug through each other's eyes.

We are inseparable beings bound by expression!

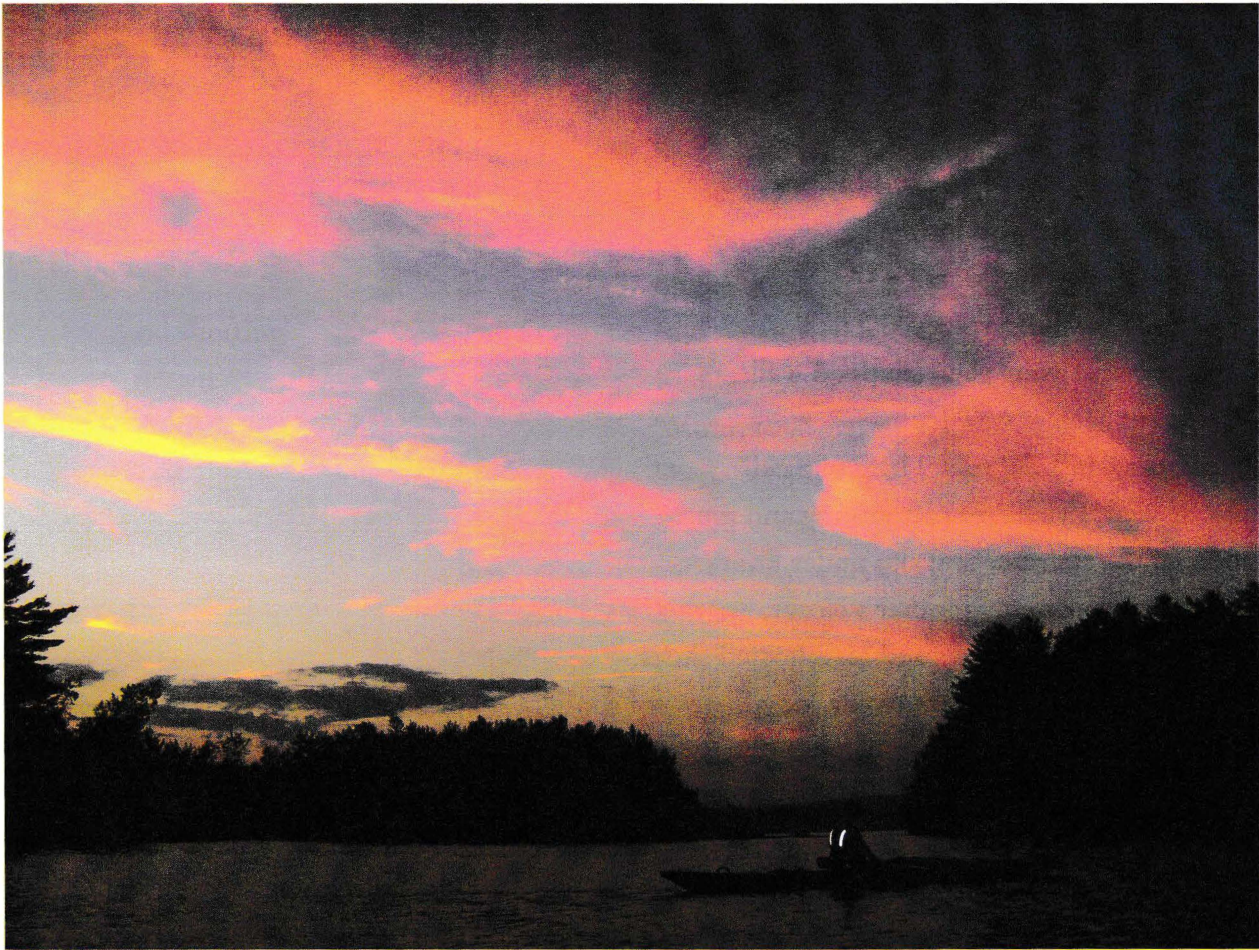
Sometimes the sweetest words aren't words...

Sometimes the kindest actions are motionless...

Sometimes the best way to spend an hour is in seconds.

Time is just a rhythm, pacing in a cage,

And all the world's a candle, burning on the stage.



"Fog Blanket Off Cadillac Mountain"

Miranda Baur

Old House

I know every inch of you, Old House.
I've washed your windows
and scrubbed your floors.
I've heard shouting voices
pound against your paint-chipped walls
like palms against war drums—
like fists against the metal bars of a cell.
Just as well, I've heard soft singing and music
slide up the staircase and slip under doors.
I found shelter in my mother's closet,
full of perfumed blouses and high-heeled shoes.
The dust always danced between long fingers of sunlight
and the floor held onto dirt like fond memories.

And in my mind, Old House,
you are still regal. You are still warm;
But your door is tempting
and the closet is drab.
I am not a part of you—
I am not nailed to your walls,
nor hinged to your doorways.
Therefore, release me!
Let me go!
Let me walk away from your safe walls and locked doors—
From your weary banisters and stale photographs.
I'll come back.
And when I do,
I'll love you more.

Miranda Baur

Grown-up Conversation

I.
 No words.
 Just eyes
 opening and shutting.
 They are drawn
 to
 artificial light
 gleaming
 off of
 Liberated
 canned beets
 on my dinner plate.

II.
 I clear my throat.
 My mother chews
 on her steak.
 Red meat. Red beets.
 Red face.
 “Mom, I—”
 She takes a sip of water.
 Warm water
 and freshly squeezed
 lemon.
 (It’s a “de-tox” thing...)
 “Mom, I—”
 She reaches for a napkin.
 “Mom, I need you
 to look at me.”

Todd Oravic



“Recollection”

Miranda Baur

III.

She heard me.
 Knife and fork
 hit the table.
 Eyes
 make
 contact.
 Red meat. Red beets.
 Red face.
 "What's going on?"
 She asks.
 She knows the answer:
 we're eating dinner.
 It's six-thirty in the evening
 Eastern-Standard time.
 She had work.
 I had school.
 We enjoy being busy—
 we're clearly related.
 "Honey, you can tell me anything."
 She stole that line
 from a television show.
 We upgraded to Dish TV
 last Thursday.
 Words
 escape:
 "I need to go."

IV.

"Go where?"
 "Far away, Mom."
 "How far, Honey?"
 "Far enough,"
 I reply.
 I've always
 had a thing for

Ambiguity.

My mom has always
 had a thing for
 Digging.
 "Why,"

she asks.
 What a horrible
 question.

V.

Dinner's getting cold.
 Cold beets. Cold meat.
 Face
 still red.
 I can't answer
 her question.
 I just need
 Freedom.

VI.

"Honey, why do you want to leave?"
 (They all
 call me
 Honey.)
 I can't blame the snow,
 or the people,
 or the smell,
 because I don't mind them.
 I can only
 blame
 myself.

VII.

"Mom, I need to
 Grow

Miranda Baur

Up.”

“You can grow up here,”

she compromises,

“you have for eighteen years.”

“But mom—”

“That’s silly.”

“I don’t think you—”

“Honey, your dinner’s getting cold.”

Mouth opens.

Words stop.

Eyes down.

Fork up.

I hold my nose

and swallow.

*Ashley Bringmann***In That STATE of Mind**

State of mind

No one understands

The difference

The torment

How the head expands

Moves fast

Talks quick

Different kind of wit

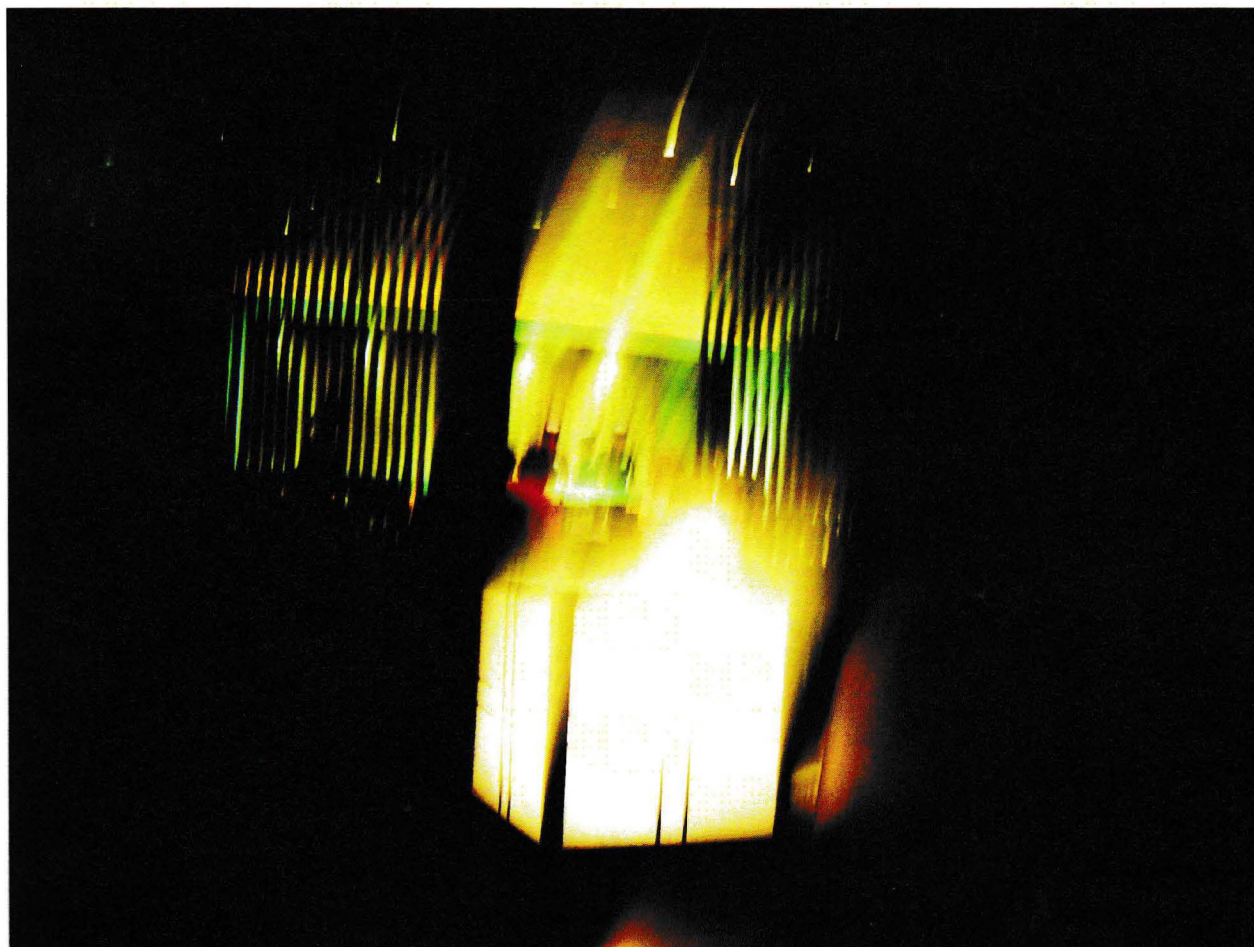
Lots of lights

Big city times

Flicker out slowly

In that

State of mind

Todd Oravic

“The Session”

Ashley Bringmann

There's No Place Like Home

Corpse waiting
Empty broken net
Five feet deep

No fluid
Tank full of
Goldfishes

She showers in
Cold blood
Cracks in the frame

There are dirty dishes
No food, no water
Nothing

Places like stone
Hollow core
Not a home

Todd Oravic



“Where”

Joseph Chrismer

Sonnet #6

I messed things up,
Mostly at the start,
I was still a fuck up,
I was afraid to give up my heart.

Throughout the years,
I never forgot your ways,
The light finally appears,
Which opened my eyes to new doorways.

I have been falling for a long time,
And I finally am taking a leap
To knowing that this could be a lifetime
Of feelings with meaning so deep.

I have always been afraid of what this could be.
Now all I want to do is hold you dearly.

Sean LaFleur



“Set in Stone”

David Cook

I

The Turning of Cards

I see men who would pray I see women who would birth I see Children who would return
 readily seek the mystic and children whose viscera would and watch us all pay the boatman
 worship her house of cards drive them to abandon water with our fear and our perdition
 and pay for the hope of rain, for now-remembered deserts and our shame for hope of spring
 Or the truth about its end. Forever weeping along the river. Begin to talk of life and April's joy.

II

Letter upon the Water

Where have you gone.
 The flowers have died and bloomed,
 And the river has finished its song
 Too soon for younger hearts and years,
 But not for you.

Do you remember her chorus,
 Or the melody of the water-birds,
 And the faint mimicry of children
 Answering birdsong with a whistle
 And laugh.

They were like muses, the children,
 Inspiring older hearts to young men's dreams.
 Now they have departed, and old age sits
 Along this bank waiting
 And nothing more.

There is nothing more
 For me now, except to turn
 And face the sun and watch
 As I become lost in the water
 And the sand, and slowly turn
 To dirt and ash.

III

A Child Speaks

Will the earth turn back to sand, mother,
 Turn back to water and sand
 Without us? Mother, turn
 And face the sun. Mother,
 Turn your back to water and sand,
 And watch the earth turn back.

Free from us, mother, we'll be free
 From the water and sand.

What will happen to the city, mother,
 When we are dirt and ash?
 Will the bridges fall, mother,
 When we are dirt and ash?

I have read many old books, mother,
 Which talk of cities buried in sand,
 And their people, too, buried,
 Turned to dirt and ash,
 When they turned and faced the sun,
 Turned and faced the sun, mother,
 And turned their back to the water and sand.

David Cook

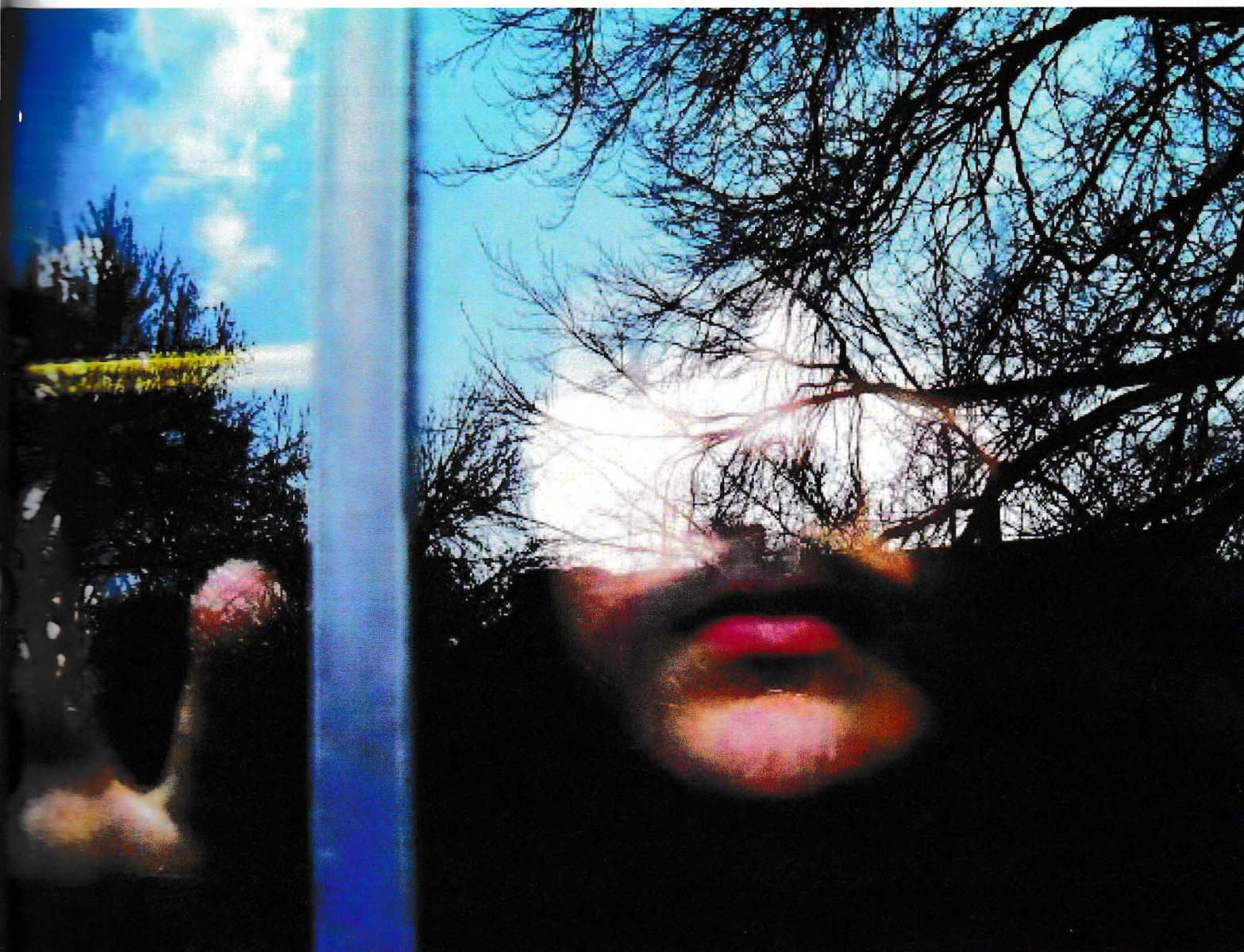
Do you remember their names, mother

The names written in ash,
Or the names of cities, mother,
Unreal cities lost in sand?

London, mother, too will turn,
Turn back to water and sand.

And the Thames will sing sweetly

To the water and the sand,
To the dirt and the ash,
And the Thames will forget
All names written in ash.

Sheri Jones

Anastasia Dudzinski

Aftermath

I don't know how long I stood there. Long enough for the cold wall to turn warm, I suppose. I moved to the floor, throwing my legs out in front of me. Lit a cigarette. Let it burn to my skin without taking a drag. Your question settled between my fingers.

"Where does sleep go when you wake up?"

"It sleeps," I said. You sighed. "It hides." Still, not enough. "We hide it." You looked up at me. Now I had something.

"Go on."

My voice now a whisper, "It is violently slaughtered and reborn every night."

The cigarette only sharpened the smell of sweat.

"I had a dream this morning that I was the house mother for three marines and I was irrevocably in love with another woman." You shook your head and mumbled something about greed.

The air moved over my skin, half startling me out of my thoughts, my hands lighting another cigarette. This one I smoked. It stung, made my teeth flash cold and my tongue shrivel.

My foot twitched, dragging me out of the wish-I-was-drunk stupor. The crack across the ceiling leaked water. A drop touched my mouth with the acid taste of rust. But there was still you, the bite of metal on your lips, dried out wildflowers, and that morning breath you always have. A drop hit my forehead, dribbling down the creases in my face into my scowl. Rust again.

"Burn the poet."

"Haven't we always?"

I sighed.

Lit a cigarette.

Let it burn to my fingers.

*Anastasia Dudzinski*In my dreams

I wait for the explosion,
For shrapnel to tear through my flesh,
For my blood to spatter against the wall and
Leak across the floor –
Sheen of salt filtering through the keen of a crow.
Whims of a muse turned demon,
Preying upon the mind unguarded,
Whispering to me:
“Meet me, kid, meet me here.”
And I always respond the same
When I meet the muse,
I always respond the same.
Slam the drawer.
Lock it. Swallow the key.

Miranda Baur

“The Incident”



Anastasia Dudzinski

Locust

There's sand in my pocket. My chest is heaving in stinging cold air. Snow is softly falling, enveloping me in a white mink muffler. The tiny grains of glass burn against my fingertips. I lost a glove. Standing still makes me realize the cold against my wet clothes. I shiver from the inside, the caviar air breathing out all warmth. A polite suggestion of a prayer floats through the empty space before me: a swirl of black and white, of grey. I take a step. My boots are gone. The lace flakes press against my soles, each an individual pinprick of rice wine pressure. The points beneath my feet are searing hot, the sun is pure and holy bright inside my eyes. A last step. The waves roll to meet my toes, obediently cooling my snow-scalded feet. Fugu venom brushes against my soul to tingle and tease with the brush of death. My hand, still iced cold, digs into my pocket. The tiny grains of glass burn against my fingertips. Prised water falls away from me, releasing smooth droplets. My chest is heaving in burning hot air. There's snow in my pocket.

Miranda Baur

"I Hide In Raindrops"



Jaclyn Englehardt

SC Blues

Regulars

at one with their bar stools

sinking into the stinking leatherette

Empty men with empty eyes

Emptying their glasses

Their wallets

For empty girls with empty smiles

And bruised thighs

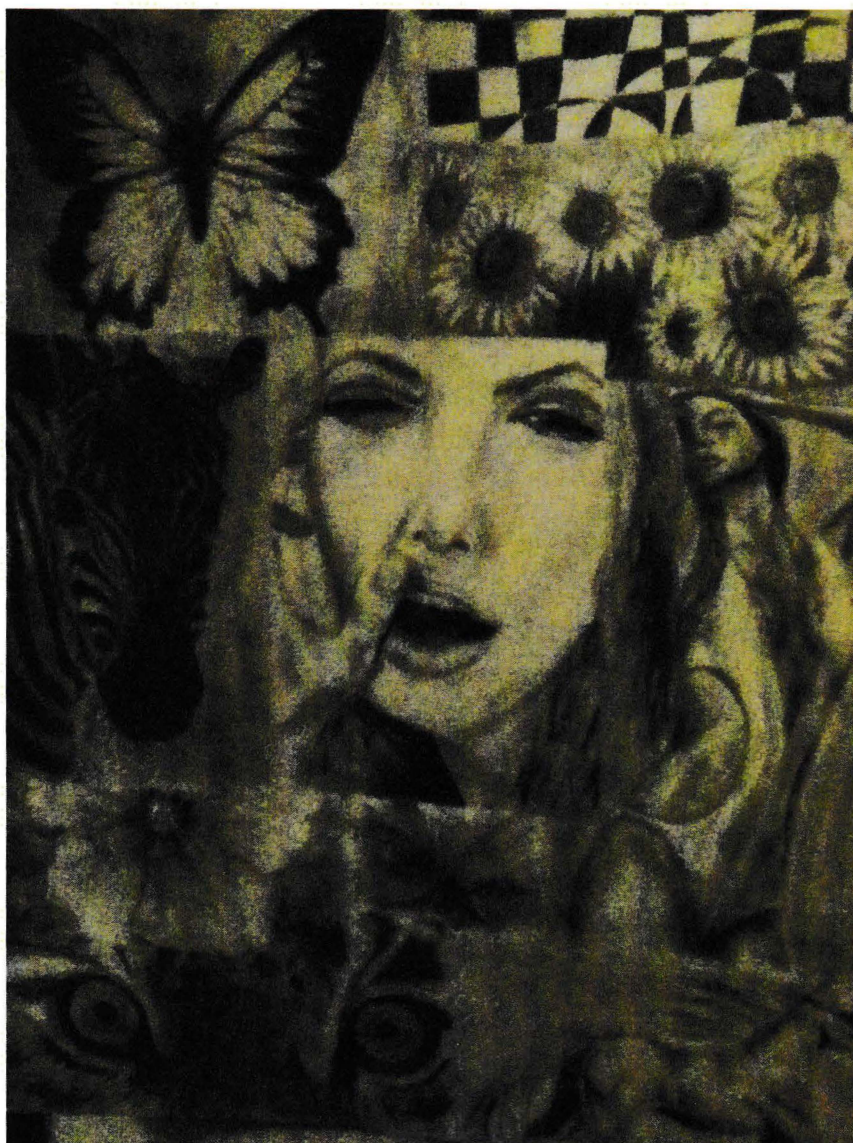
Hoping to leave a little fuller than they came

Click clack

High heels on hardwood floors

Kick off the half-hearted hustle

Looking for meaning in dirty money



Sara Wolman

“In My Head”

Holly Evans

Creation As We Know It

I came home to a bag filled with my belongings and you groping a stranger. It was 6 P.M. when I was told to grab my shit and get out. What was happening? What could have turned our home into a bitter cage in which two rats fight for survival? I stood there not knowing if I could take one step. I looked into his eyes and confused them for black marbles.

A strong voice grappled me from my disorientation; "What the fuck are you staring at? Get out!" This tone was one that I was familiar to. I knew it like I know the creases in your face or splits in your hair. Your voice lured me to your side for an eternity. Vibrations escaping from your throat made me obey and kneel open mouthed on the floor. Now I feel iced teeth grasp to my neck, sending frigid neglect down my chest, puncturing my stomach.

You grabbed my wrist, pulling me close. I could see the woman behind you. She looks at me scared and awkward. Her stare makes me feel pathetic. She feels sorry for me, an emotion that I don't need from anyone. I want this, I want all of it. He is the monster and I am the parasite. I feed from his flesh, and he thrives off my dependence. She is blind to the nature of the beast.

"I want you gone," he said shaking. Sweat dripped down his brow and onto his cheek. I stuck out my tongue and licked it off. It was salty and slithered like a snake down my throat. This must be what the devil's water tastes like. The shaking stopped, he looked into my eyes and I mirrored him. It was obvious what we both saw... Hell.

Serpent Sidewalk

Slither from the concrete

Wrap around the pole.

The bright light beats down

Watch every second.

"Come girl, take this piece from my tongue."

The dose tastes less bitter in a sweet mouth.

Capsules rattle behind her teeth

The snake slides down.

"Goodnight girl, apologize to the light for me."

Slither away but leave your slimy seduction.

Sonja Heisey



“Shattered”

Kristen Cook



“Monarch At Rest”

Holly Evans

Vrohi Revisited

A water-filled street.

Peasants trudge, model awkward frowns.

They fear eyes

Watch the sky.

Where is this place kept?

And who keeps this place?

Mechanical or Satanical?

They feel d^ro_ps fall from their lashes

Onto their cheeks.

This liquid burns and fills their flesh with heat.

A girl with emeralds for eyes whispers from a lamp post,

“He is in the rain.”

Her neck made of porcelain cracks.

Red velvet flows.

Emeralds turn to rubies.

Vagabonds walk over her

Stealing her sight.

Her body melts into the asphalt.

The street widens.

Marcia K. Farrell

Thai

I went to Thailand
and could feel spicy-scents of food
pricking the skin of my arms,
making them dance like strands of silk
leaping from a caterpillar
across my view of the bay in Bangkok
playing hide-and-seek with images
of golden temples and statues of gods
dipped in jewels.

Bangkok, known better as Krung Thep by the Thais,
surrounded by the Chao Phraya,
looks like the toy of the Royal Palace
with its legs sitting in the bath of canals
called klongs
while playing with its boats.

I stood in front of Buddha—
the immovable, voluptuous stone giant
towering many feet above me—
and wondered how even the Enlightened One
could practice Right Concentration—
the threshold of Nibbana—
making cravings extinct,
when policemen wear gas masks to direct traffic
so they would not be choked by merciless
clouds of pollution
slinking through chaotic streets.

The intoxicating nightlife
of dance clubs featured in Western movies
blends with the orthodox Doctrine of Misery
and Salvation
of Theravada Buddhism
dominating the country,
filled with rice fields and
monasteries,
that cherishes this capital city they call

the City of Angels,
the city refusing to remain idle
enough for a label.

But that was only in my head
as I flipped through pages of Sashai's photo album
while she pointed out places my cousin Melanie
knew
only as an embryo,
growing inside Sashai's uterus.
The kitchen hummed with egg rolls
simmering in the pan.
Why did you leave? I want to ask,
but don't
because I know her answer—
love
for a foolish American soldier—my second cousin—
who married her in Hawaii
and divorced her after three children
once she learned his culture too well.
Why did you stay? I could ask,
but then I saw her oval-faced 10-year-old girl
with swaying black hair, running to hug Sashai's
smiling second husband,
and I know her answer for that question, too.

Sonja Heisey



"Distant Cities"

Jeffrey Ford

Silver Hairpin Master

Being a farmer was never meant to be an easy life. Time is spent on caring for the livestock and minding the produce, if any grow. The rural province of Shandong has seen better days, however. Last month, flooding wiped out a fraction of the fields limiting supplies of grain. I chose this life as a form of exile. Perhaps, it was an inherent desire to get back to my ancestor's true roots. Friends would tell me: "You're a fool, Chan! You inherited all this wealth from your father, yet you go and live off the soil!" The best one I heard was: "All men have their elements, water or fire. Yours is pig shit."

In actuality, this is a most favorable life because it's the only honest work there is. Still, the country landscape and wind blowing through the trees can become maddening with the protests of swine and goats, not to mention having a roof over your head that leaks. That's why there's a benefit to building your house by a road. Once in a while, I'll venture into town for supplies or recreation. I always put on my most presentable suit and my only valuable possession, a silver hairpin, to hold back my balding head.

The people in town are prone to furious banter about the foreigners who are coming in and buying up land left and right. Personally, they have their varying degrees. There is a foreign family who used their plot to erect a temple to worship their own gods. I remember getting a good look at it during its construction. Housed inside the highest point was a brass bell the size of a water pail. Despite its size, it produces a ring that could be heard well into the next town.

The outsiders observe a belief that emphasizes heavenly orders. Adorning the main altar are various drawings depicting the kingdom of gods populated by gaunt men with domed heads and tired expressions looking down on the mortals with pity. Just like our ancestors. Accompanying them are women with golden hair and red mouths open like newly budded flowers to flaunt their innards or take in the sunshine. Then there were the devils. Much detail was given to their leathery hides and serpentine features. These were akin to the vermin found nestling on a swine's haunch.

In the center of town, a band of worshippers gathered singing prayers and preaching sermons with locals and merchants joining in. The foreigners wore dark colors making them look like ravens while everyone else wore their usual garb like any day. Many who walked by couldn't help but stop to watch this one man shouting calamities. I couldn't help but be amused by his face. His whole head looked like a large ball of cotton with two seed pods for eyes. Evidence of a mouth was clarified by the quivering slit in his beard. All emotion was left to his eyebrows.

"The Lord is kind and merciful. He who lives according to the golden rule will be rewarded tenfold," Cotton said with brow furrowed in delight.

"Yet I cannot comprehend when one man must raise a hand in violence to another, and for

Jeffrey Ford

what, a dispute over manhood, a slur against the honor of warlords and tyrants? No, these are not the teachings that drive the golden rule. Our way involves love for our fellow brothers and sisters of man. All men are brothers in the eyes of God.”

Suddenly, a voice shouted from the crowd like a wounded pup. “Golden rats! How insulting you squat over our elders’ graves and tell us lies. My husband and son died to keep you out. My baby you slaughtered!” The shouting came from a middle aged woman with a red and runny face with a posture made arched by her heavy breasts.

The conglomeration of merchants and foreigners looked at each other with worrisome expressions. The Cottonhead’s brow was furrowed. He turned to one of the locals standing with the singers and asked: “What is she saying...I can’t understand her. Please translate for me!”

“Your day will come, I have plenty more to sacrifice for our country,” the woman cried as she was led away by the hand of her twelve year old. “My whole womb is blessed with *qigong!*”

Where was I during this display? Just sitting at a restaurant, taking in a drink and contending with a bowl of soup; didn’t expect the drama, though. That was for free.

Little by little, the white afternoon sun gave way to the cherry of twilight. Soon the forest-enclosed townscape behind would be lit by lanterns and street lamps. Every time I walk down the dirt road leading home I expect wolves to emerge from the brush. A sturdy branch might stagger them but only for a brief time. No need to worry any longer. Home isn’t too far away.

Upon reaching the cottage, I found it to be eerily still. No squealing of livestock or she-goat braying for their evening meal. Something was amiss. Inside my house, a fire from the coal pit was flickering. Did I forget to put it out? I almost wish I did. Sitting inside near the ember pit was a young man with a bald head wearing a billowy robe. He appeared to emerge from the shadows as he stood to greet me. Wrapped around his wrist was a fine, dangling chain. Save for that, and the silvery stubble on his head, the man represented a courteous storm cloud.

“Are you Chan Kang? My name is Zei. I’ve been sent by order of the magistrate’s office. Apparently, you have refused to pay the annual Opera Tax.”

I took a few more steps inward and replied: “Yes, true I’ve been behind in payment, but it’s been so damn hard raising anything except worms. Tell your boss to come down here and have a look for himself!”

Zei merely made a smirk and said: “He’s not the type to get his hands dirty. See, I am here to collect, but it’s not money. You see, the annual opera is an important fixture of the annual festival. Everyone in the province is required to do their part. Now you know how to hide your wealth, but it doesn’t fool the magistrate. He knew your father, your family, Chan. The real dilemma with trying to get an opera off the ground is...”

While he was busy speaking his piece, I was pondering my circumstance. With every small

Jeffrey Ford

step I made, he would return twice fold. Just out back I left the hoe near the trough in the pen. Drowning out Zei's shortening speech was the bucket containing the diluted roof water placed only an arm's stretch from the fire pit.

"...but it should be known that the life of an assassin is no different than an actor. Do you know what they call me in Jinan? Do you?" he said.

Just then I broke with the plan in my head to answer: "No, please tell." All the while my heart was saying: "**Stop chattering and strike now!**"

"They call me 'Flying Fox.'" To which I replied coolly: "My, my! You *do* love your opera."

Finally, in a stifled beat my heart yelled: "**GO!**"

Immediately, I snatched the bucket and doused the flame. At that cue, "Flying Fox" released his arm and shot an iron-hot lightning bolt from his sleeve. I fell to my knee narrowly dodging the projectile and letting it get caught on a support beam. Moving towards one another, I managed to strike the Fox in his belly and make for the back window leading to the pen.

Without hesitation, I staggered to the pig's pen only to be greeted by an unwholesome sight. Littered in the mud were the butchered carcasses of all my pigs and goats. Their heads echoed the impact of the death blows. Limbs and intestine formed like festering islands. I had no other option but to hold back the shock and move towards the hoe which was submerged in the mud. Behind me closing fast was the Fox with his chain circling his body in a flail motion. He stepped back and launched the device once more. Within two seconds, I felt the chain snake around my waist and right arm. The plover-shaped blades of the flying ax found a resting spot below my rib cage. Realizing I was fighting to remain stable, Flying Fox whipped a loop of chain over my neck to force me to the mud. Dragging my body towards him he probably thought: "Best take him dirty than alive."

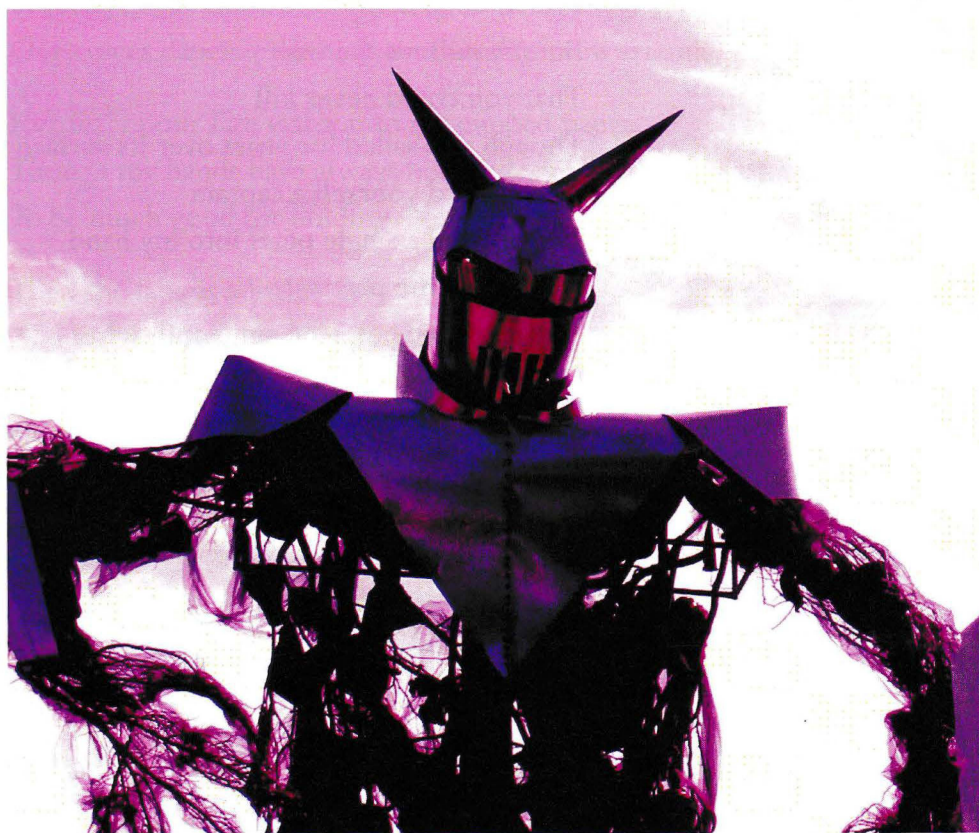
Little by little doom was certain. The plow of the hoe was beginning to look like a pebble. I could feel the tines of the chain-ax gradually tearing my midsection open. No! It wasn't over yet. The hairpin with its beveled and sharp point would do, but I couldn't release it in this state. I looked into the dead eyes of a sow's head and realized the animals who were a source of living in life would aid me in death. Using my free arm I grabbed bile, bones, and guts and threw them at my opponent. Zei spit and almost gagged on what was most likely a spleen. Lucky for him, he would no longer have to swallow such vile things. Now within striking distance, I pushed the pin into his gizzard like a knife through melon. Though it was quick, I could feel the veins and cartilage giving away.

With renewed composure, I returned to my feet and grasped the chain with sharpened fob ready to turn it on its master. Flying Fox's motions were limited now. Blood would be filling his mouth and lungs momentarily. His final speech consisted of a guttural buzzing. As the temple bell began to chime, Flying Fox Zei crumbled to the ground like a tall oak. In the glimpse of the

Jeffrey Ford

dying sun, he was rendered nigh invisible by his robe except for his slivery bald head and the glint of the hairpin.

Sonja Heisey



“Iron Man”

*Jessica George***Life's Lament Removed**

I often sit and wait at night
 For answers from above
 The how, and where and why of things
 The nature of God's love
 I ponder all that's past and gone
 Opportunities all lost
 I question how they may return
 What could be the cost
 Then from the depths of my lonely heart
 A warmth begins to spread
 The light of all my future plans
 Just dreams inside my head
 God has blessed my life since birth
 Our Father who knows best
 He asks that I may not dwell
 His will I would not test
 Optimism must be gained
 Hope is all I need
 To work through all of my life's sorrow
 Live the life I wish to lead
 All my dreams can come true
 If to the future they pertain
 My determination never dies
 If my joy so bright remain
 I found true love is the key
 When seeking a good life
 A sharing in God's law must be
 For together fighting strife

*Bethany Guarilia***Undine's Curse**

I breathe salt
 It's what we sea-folk do
 Braiding seaweed into our long hair
 Until your fingers catch us like nets
 And tear off these fragile-webbed fins
 The land is my exile
 Dirt and nettles trip my newfound feet
 Jellyfish never stung like you,
 Poison deep in my cold veins
 But my pulse is the tide
 That you could never kill
 Though you sailed for years over its surface
 And fancied yourself a captain
 You pressed a single pearl into my hand
 And called me pretty,
 A little music box who sings and sighs
 Go ahead and close your eyes, honey
 I'll take the breath from your still-warm lips

Bethany Guarilia

Small Hands

My finger traces the shape of vines

That curl over the tablecloth:

Meaningless figures, a distraction

Darting insects captivate me – her eyes

(Earth and the slow crawl of rivers),

As far as the rock-strewn coast of Maine

Trivial things that I notice

Because the air stifles like a warm wool blanket,

Our voices dancing the back-and-forth of new friends

Her fears pour like water into my cupped palms,

Though my hands have always been too small

To be much good for holding

Then she laughs a little

And sun-yellow dust falls onto the table

As she tears petals from a daisy with thin-boned hands

Justin Jones



"Jumanji"

Bethany Guarilia

The Absence of Fear

Terrors lived in the silence of night. Naomi Tanaka-Bradley knew she was not strong, and therefore she feared the dreams that would come with sleep. A slight woman in her early forties, Naomi was well-liked by her co-workers for her quiet humor and good-natured dependability. But though others might have enjoyed the luxury of sleep, she feared the loss of self that oblivion created. However, Naomi feared the dreams more than anything else. Waking with the sick feeling of sweat beneath her night clothes, she would walk with shaking legs to the door of her son's bedroom. The knowledge of another person just a room away reassured her that she was not alone. Though Ryan was no longer a little child needing her to make him lunches and kiss his forehead when he came home with scraped knees, he looked up to her as someone who always had the right answer. They had no one else but each other, in a house that was far too large for two.

Other things hid themselves away in the night besides dreams. Naomi awoke suddenly. The heaviness of sleep burdened her eyelids. She opened them and glanced at the clock. The green digital numbers revealed 2:17 AM. She turned onto her back and brushed her hair away from her face. In a little under four hours, Ryan would get up for school. She smiled to herself and remembered walking him to school on the first day of kindergarten.

The room suddenly felt cold. Her stomach twisted, every nerve flaring with awareness. Someone was in her room. She heard no sound, no footsteps or breathing, but she knew. Just as surely as she had known something was wrong when she walked into a silent house one afternoon a year ago. Ryan could not have been awake already. She fought to keep her breathing slow and steady, afraid to speak even as her mind criticized her for being ridiculous.

Slowly, Naomi opened her eyes and waited a few seconds before they adjusted to the darkness of her room. And she saw it, in the corner of her bedroom: the black outline of a tall figure, moonlight reflecting off two pin-pricks in its eyes. Silent and still, watching her.

Fear kept her frozen to the bed, unable to scream. The figure made no move to approach her. Her thoughts raced through a million questions and possibilities: What if she —? How did he (for a person that tall must be a man) get into the house? Would he hurt Ryan?

"Please." She said, her voice small and cracking like old paper. Her pulse was like bullets in her ears. "Don't hurt us." She clenched the bed sheets in her trembling hands.

The two spots of moonlight blackened, and when Naomi blinked, she could see only an empty corner. She had heard no footprints or rustle of clothing, but she knew the figure had gone.

The old bed creaked as she slipped out of it, and she walked lightly on bare feet, checking on Ryan (he snored loudly, unaware) before searching through the house for the

Bethany Guarilia

disappeared figure. A light appeared in every window of the house except for her sleeping son's as she looked in every place where someone might hide. She returned to the second floor stairs an hour later, exhausted and troubled, when she heard "Mom?" – her son's voice, hoarse with sleep – and footsteps in the upstairs hall. "What's going on?"

She berated herself for waking him. "It's nothing, Ryan. I just thought I heard something." Naomi looked up at him from the bottom of the staircase, noting his disheveled hair. But another part of her was aware of his height, and how it was not as tall as the figure in her bedroom. She drove back the guilt she'd felt for doubting him, but it only left more questions.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

Naomi tried to smile, though she couldn't quite hide her shaking breath.

"I'm fine." She replied. "I think it must have been a dream."

Ryan looked at her for a second, mouth in a frown, then shrugged and ambled back to his room. Naomi went to her own bed though she would have no more sleep that night.

Naomi's coworkers noticed her distraction the next day. Despite the chilly spring weather, she felt uncomfortably stifled in the office. All the coffee she'd needed to stay awake left her feeling jittery and restless. Her unease persisted, ever since she had looked into the mirror that morning and thought she saw twin peaks of light in the dim bathroom. She arrived home in the afternoon and called her sister, Elena. They hadn't talked in at least a month, but the sound of her younger sister's voice steadied her.

"I had a dream last night," Naomi said after a few minutes of casual conversation. "More like a nightmare, really. A dark, shadowy figure in my bedroom." She gripped her cell phone tightly so her hand wouldn't shake. "Just standing there; watching me."

"Yeah, that's a little creepy," Elena agreed. "But it probably doesn't mean anything, just your mind being weird. You never slept easily, even when we were kids."

Naomi raised her hand to her mouth, then thought better of it, and touched her hair instead. "But sometimes dreams tell us about our fears, right?" she said, her voice low. "I know I tend to let my imagination get the best of me." She laughed quietly, and Elena chuckled along with her, before a serious mood descended on the conversation.

"It's been a year, sis," Elena said. "Maybe you should talk to someone. Besides me, I mean. You won't even talk to Dad about it. And Ryan –"

"We're *fine*. Let's not bring that up now, okay?" Naomi realized she didn't mean to be so harsh, but they both said their awkward good-byes as the call grew tense between them. Her teeth worried away at the corner of her thumbnail.

Later that night, Naomi stayed downstairs, curled up on the sofa with a book while Ryan went up to his room. She knew that she wouldn't sleep easily, so she hoped her dog-eared copy of *Jane Eyre* might keep her company. After realizing she reread the same paragraph, she got up

Bethany Guarilia

to get a glass of water.

Something rattled in the basement. She turned quickly and looked at the closed door to the basement. Her search the night before had included the basement, but she had spent as little time down there as possible. Maybe her search hadn't been thorough enough.

She set down her empty glass on the kitchen table and opened the basement door. The stairs disappeared into darkness, and the only sound was that of her breath. She clicked the switch for the light, and she felt some relief as the completely normal stairs came into view.

Naomi listened and heard nothing. She closed the door behind her and slowly went down the stairs, every creaking step horribly loud in her ears. The ceiling rafters came into view, strung with cobwebs. The hulking shapes of the washing machine and dryer stood like sentinels. Again, she opened every door and cabinet in the spacious basement, cursing when she almost stubbed her toe on one of Ryan's weights. He didn't come down here so much anymore, either.

She turned, and the book fell from her grasp to the floor, pages twisting into origami shapes, as she saw a belt tied like a noose hung over one of the rafters. She backed into the wall, staring at the spot where before there had been nothing.

"No," she whispered. "Not this."

This time when a figure appeared in the dark corner, she knew what she would see. She looked into the eyes of her dead husband. Her fear slipped away as anger replaced it.

The rings around his neck were ugly, but his face showed no expression. She could see the outline of the room through his body.

"You," she said. "you're not real." She took a step closer, fists closed tightly. If she'd had longer fingernails, they would have bitten into her palm. He did nothing but stare, and that only increased her anger. "You *left* us! I wanted to help you, but your stupid pride meant you wouldn't talk about it!" The electrical charge of adrenaline coursed through her, shaking every limb. "You left your body here for me to find! I still thank God Ryan didn't see it!" She shook her head harshly. "We still can't talk about it! You broke our family and *we still can't talk about it!*"

Suddenly she became aware of the tears blinding her vision. Maybe they had been there the entire time. "I've been so afraid," she said, too tired to feel angry anymore. "Afraid for Ryan, afraid for how I can possibly keep us going. Afraid for me."

Naomi's tightly clenched hands opened, slowly. She felt her breathing grow slow and deepen as something long held up in the hidden places inside of her released itself. The dark had always scared her. Maybe it was time to change that.

When she looked up, the image of her husband was gone. And she realized that he had never been there at all.

Erin Guydish

A Pain

You're the toothache in my shoulder,
 the spinal tap, done too high and too deep,
 Because you're always pulsing under my skin
 like a tumor weighing down my shoulders,
 deep enough to ache but never

 Down
 in my muscle fibers enough
 for medication or massage to relieve.

I see you,
 paralyzed,
 like you're wearing a c-spine collar,
 out

 of the corner
 of my eye
 watching me
 tie my shoe

 and trying to glimpse you puts
 a crick in my neck
 like the winter wind when it hits
 unscarfed bare skin.

That pain's sudden and sharp
 So at least it's quick
 like an injection of Novocain
 although it happens
 without cause or effect
 when I'm washing dishes
 and then you're there
 in the kitchen too
 and I caress your scruff,
 and realize it's just a dirty dishrag

Sonja Heisey



“Red Carpet”

Erin Guydish

Blue Balls

Dear Prof Blue Balls,

Dear Officer Ten Minutes-I'll be in your hall,
Dear Mr. Pretentious, making a booty call,

Sir, if I may loosely address,

How do you ponder that I couldn't care less,
and that I apparently am such a mess

As to need your ejaculation

to validate my situation
without further contemplation

to servicing you, free of charge and commitment?

I'm quite unsure why you believe what pleases you pleases me

And I may be blind, but I still can't see
why you feel deserving of this reward without a fee.
Because, you see, this is a declaration and not a plea.

Dear Dr. Fuck me now, Love me later,

Dear Sir, Hey Girl don't be a hater,
Dear Monsieur to me women should cater,

You're not a Gift from God,

in fact, I wouldn't go for a roll in the hay, or rather, the sod,
And I'm quite unapologetic that I can't service your rod.

If I were Flora or Fauna, your balls would be eternally blue,

Because then you might learn something new,
Like how to find productive things to do.

However,

Until my supernatural abilities come through,
I'll just be content with belittling you.

Erin Guydish

An Answer to Republican Concerns

I had the right to say no,

When I was a giddy high school junior
at that full freshman frat bash.

And later I found,

you spiked my sprite,

held my stumbling, tumbling body

Up the carpeted, slanted stairs

among slipping, sliding photos,

tucked me under a downy comforter,

And told me, "You'll be alright in the morning."

The Morning found me

With a split skull, missing panties,

Aching vagina, empty memories, and

a terrified phone call to my older sister,

who drove two hours in a blizzard

to get me, tell me "It's not your fault,

It was a mistake, and He took your ability

To say no."

I had the right to say No,

But you said "I'll give you a ring,"

Told me "You'll be gorgeous in white."

When that didn't succeed,

you said "All your friends are doing it,"

and "I'm going to tell everyone I scored anyway,

and you know how that gets around."

So with wide eyes, awkward positions, and painful thrusts,

I let you force your «*manhood*» into me

until you filled me with shame.

Six weeks later my best friend walked me

through protestors

with cardboard signs

who slapped us with slurs and chants.

All the while she told them she was

"too young to be a mom" and

"wouldn't you rather have one less

family to support with your taxes"

as if we were there for her not me.

The Nurse told me, "When you left,

you found out how to say No."

I had the right to say No

To the dark acts in the closet. I

could have screamed

it out in public when you

held my hand to cross the

street, or tattled when you dropped

Erin Guydish

me off at school saying

“She’s late.”

I could have said No to

the eye-raping you did when

the family was busy

conversing at dinner,

No

to the caressing when I got out

of the shower to you

and No towels,

and

No

to the silence

you forced into me.

After....Forever....Mom took me

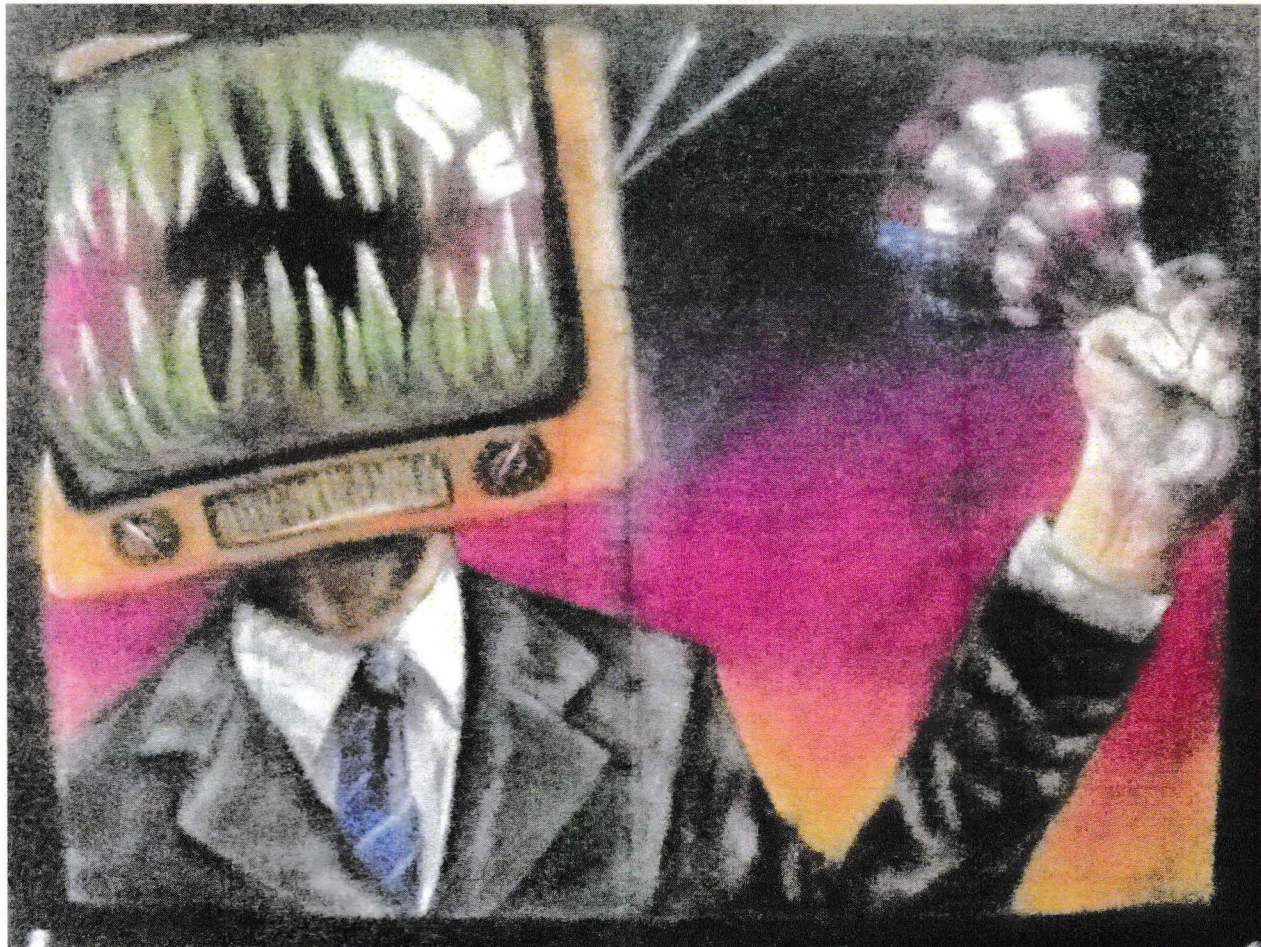
to remove the cancer you put

Inside.

Yes, My Friends, I had the right to say No...

But Tell me, Could You?

Sara Wolman



“Hungry”

Erin Guydish

Win First

You chafe me

like a tampon rammed up inside,

like when you're too dry and you tense up and it gets up there wrong. Then you either have to take it out or deal with the rubbing.

The stabbing and sawing between your legs, but smiling on your face like the world is AMAZINGLY AWESOME and gives you mini-orgasms every time someone praises you well

OR

You rip it out

so it tears your inside and put a new one in feeling the cooling plastic which is soon replaced by packing cotton that cushions the fall of unused lifeblood because the disapproving looks of relatives, coworkers, and friends isn't enough to remind you.

No, you need your ability to reproduce, to slowly seep through packed rayon fibers crammed into your most SENSITIVE, SECRET SPACES to tell you. "You're missing out," as if being a Mother is still the only valuable avenue a woman can embark upon.

BESIDES

the chaffing and the seeping, there's the performance.

I must "doll myself up" to go out and be evaluated like a piece of technological equipment.

What programs are already installed? How much memory do I hold? How much artificial intelligence do I possess? How fast do I go? Can I get on my knees? Oh, and the question of utmost importance: Do I SPIT or SWALLOW?

So

There's the chaffing and the seeping and the constant appraisal and you have the nerve to tell me to just play the game?

...Show me how to Win First

Johnathan Haydock

The Glass

Whether half full or half empty, who says it can't
Cause a big problem when spilled at a power plant



Sabrina Hannon

Sonja Heisey

A Christmas Carol

The spotlights were giving me sunburn.

It was far too hot for a parlor in nineteenth-century England. A dozen players sat clustered in a circle on donated furniture. I was center, surrounded by my anxious, make-believe friends and family. Before me stood my estranged uncle Dan and he was begging my forgiveness. My ancient velvet stage dress weighed on my shoulders. I stared at my tacky Salvation Army stage shoes, the director's words echoing in my head.

"That was too happy. I don't know what to say to you. Do you know what the word pensive means?"

I blushed in angry embarrassment. Of course I knew what pensive meant. I'd read Harry Potter; I was in ninth grade honors English, for goodness' sake. I'd just never acted like this before.

I was the only freshmen given a speaking part in the Fall Play, and I was married to Scrooge's nephew Joe, one of the most adorable and sought after boys in the senior class. I had two left feet to match my two dance scenes, one with Joe and one with Dan (who also happened to be a senior). I was way out of my league.

I sighed, trying to quiet the stampeding buffalo in my chest. Slowly, I raised my head to look Dan in the face and forgive him for being a nasty old man.

His eyes were crossed.

I completely lost all composure. All tension and embarrassment exploded in a fit of giggles. Someone shouted my lines as Ryan banged a fierce polka on the out-of-tune stage piano. Dan laughed and led the dance, only stepping on my toes once or twice.

At least it was only dress rehearsal.

Sonja Heisey

Sunshine

The radio softly buzzes:
Its ten thirty five am
High of eighty-five
A blissful Saturday morning—

She's outside again,
Flowered bonnet bleached
By years of shading those blue eyes.
Sweat drops merge and form rivers
Tracing years of smiles.
Chalky dirt dusts hands strong from
 wiping tears and noses
 comforting first falls and broken hearts
She pats soil back into place
Around a fresh, grinning daisy.

Finished, she lays back
Fresh grass bends underneath
Her tough and tiny frame.
Sun beams warm crinkled arms while
Ants tickle ancient toes.
Satisfied, she shades her eyes
Watching clouds clump
And dance and sway
Telling a story,
Water watching water.

Maybe the clouds see her
Find something special
In an old lady's garden.



Milana Grigoriev
"Sunny"

Virginia Hults

Aftermath

He keeps his eyes shut. He does not want to think of the road beneath his knees, or the dusty boots surrounding him. Instead, he pulls images to the surface of grass, green and bright after summer rain. Of snow, brilliant white covering all in sight with a shimmering blanket after a storm. He thinks of the hiking path covered with reds and oranges, yellows and lingering tints of green. He keeps the memories vibrant behind closed lids, refusing to admit the images of sandy landscape and haze that he has grown accustomed to.

Voices around him threaten to dissipate the memories he has gathered, and he struggles to keep them at the forefront of his thoughts. He almost allows the burn of his muscles, arms wrenched and fastened tight, to loosen his grasp on the deadly calm that has settled about him. He has been here long enough to recognize words passed between those above him, but he shuts them out as best he can. The task of holding back despair is becoming more difficult.

The barrel of his weapon is harsh pressed flush against his own skull, and he resorts to drastic measures, pulling memories he has buried deep. Diana's face, smiling and sun-burnt from the vacation at the shore. He always told her to put extra sunscreen on—her skin was fairer than his and easily burnt—but she was forgetful while they dove in and out of the ocean's waves. Owen's tiny hands trying to bait his fishing hook, making him nervous as they slipped over the sharp point and threatened to pierce delicate flesh.

He feels emotion beginning to prick at the corners of his eyes, but his lips curve slightly at the edges as their faces swim before him. He feels afraid, though not for his own sake. The gun is loud when the trigger is finally pulled. He flinches at the sound, confused. He lets the memories fade and opens his eyes, no longer feeling the gravel bite into his knees. The day is bright after the darkness his lids provided and he squints until his vision adjusts. There is a body at his feet. He stares, uncertain of what he is seeing. He sees his own face turned towards him, smile still curving the lips. The wound is hidden from him, though he can see the blood—his blood—seeping slowly. The earth sucks the liquid greedily, absorbing whatever it can in the intense heat.

The men around him are moving, leaving his body in the road. They fade as they move away, blending with the burnt horizon. He clenches his eyes shut once more, willing pleasant memories to come forward and take him from his position beside his own dead form.

When he opens his eyes it is too dark, and he waits as his eyes adjust. The chest of drawers comes forward first, its shape as familiar as the vanity that takes form next. He sits up and breathes deeply, willing the remainder of the dream to slip away. Diana stirs beside him, leaning up on elbows and raking a hand through disheveled hair. Her voice is groggy from sleep.

"Everything alright?"

He scrubs his face with one hand, yawning. "Yeah, everything's fine."

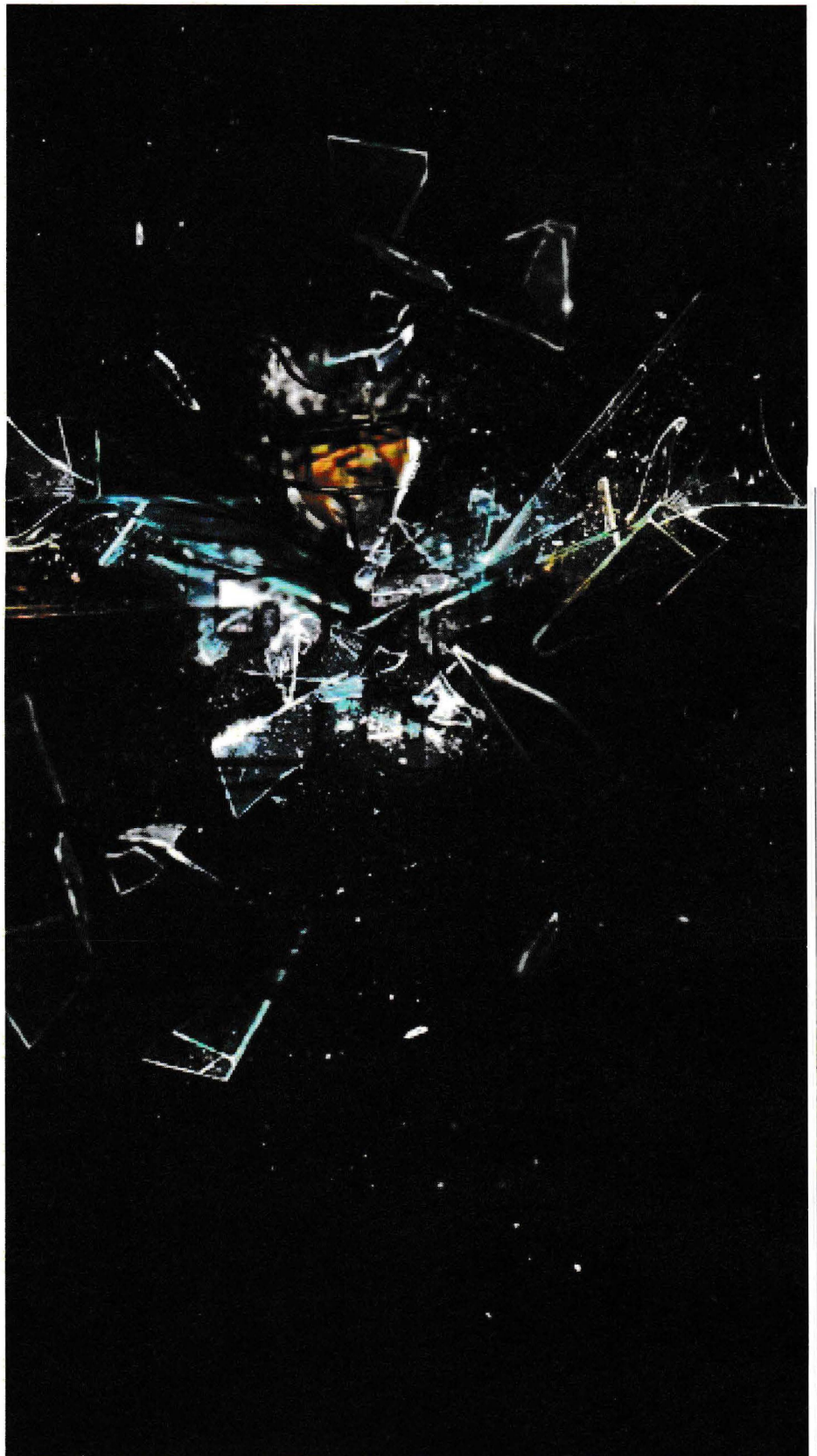
Virginia Hults

“More dreams.” It isn’t a question. She sits up as well, passing him the glass of water from the bedside table.

“They’re just dreams,” he says, finishing the glass and rising to refill it.

He feels her eyes at his back as he heads for the kitchen. The house is quiet, and he finishes another glass of water before filling it once more and returning upstairs. He pauses at Owen’s bedroom door, glancing inside. The Spiderman night-light glows a gentle red from beside the bed, and he can make out his son’s form curled under the action hero quilt. He closes the door quietly and returns to his own room, where Diana has already lay back down. She rubs his arm as he joins her and he is grateful she does not mention the dream. He has dreamt the scenario before, many times, with many variations since he returned nearly a year earlier.

He sighs as he settles once more into the sheets, thinking maybe tomorrow night will be the night he does not dream of war.



Rob Noone

“Shatter”

Justin W. Jones

Passing Notes

Yo—

I have to work-out today.

It sucks. I'm so tired.

Fishing tomorrow at some lake
with Carol's brother and Gary.

Just put some fish sticks in
the freezer for dinner. Eat up.

I'll be at practice 'till 5. Don't
wait up. Gone to the store with
the kids—your father called. He
said he needs to speak with you
about Damian.

I met your new
girlfriend. I hope you don't like
her THAT MUCH—

I told her that
you don't shower! HAHA!

We need to talk about your grades, Sonny.

I've run away from home

Forever!

Don't try to find me—

I'll be home later.

C—YA

Word Processing

To be a part of the typing generation—
is to be a friend to nature.

We type, we copy, cut & paste.

The literary communities before us
constantly put pen to paper.

They wrote, they scribbled, scratched & tossed.

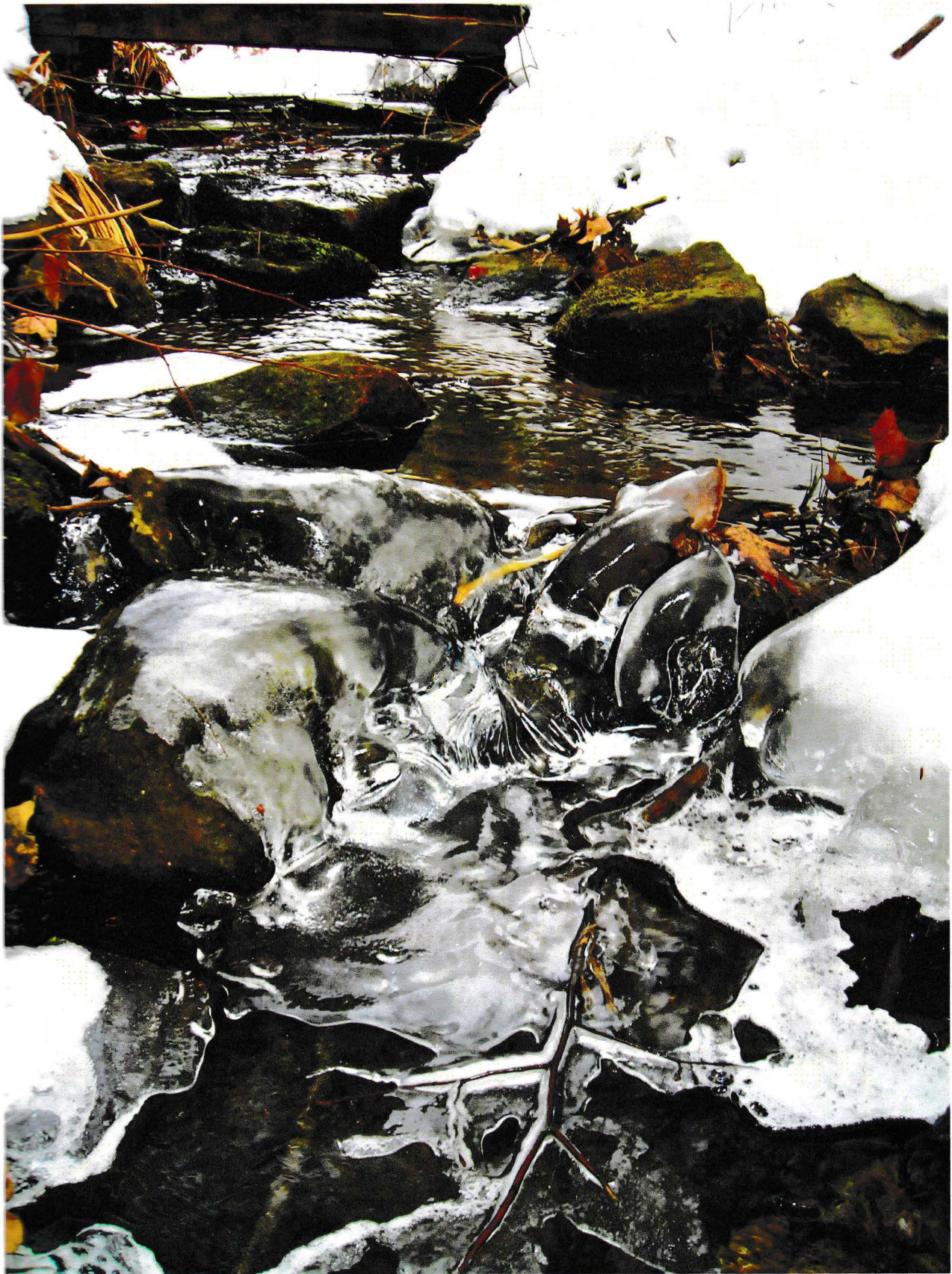
We conserve—
and they learned not to waste

Justin W. Jones



“Lionsgate”

Kristen Cook



“Leafy Stream”

Jami Kali

Candles and a Radio

She made the water hot. Said she liked it hot. Said I should too since hot water rinses away everything you might not want on or under your skin. Her tub was huge, an old clawfoot. Unbleached mildew hugged the cast iron. One at a time, my feet submerged themselves. The water burnt and colored me pink. A loofa hung from the faucet and she promised to use it. She brought me oatmeal soap. Told me oatmeal encouraged exfoliation. She brought candles and a radio.

Sabrina Hannon



Jami Kali

The Itch

The strong scent of tall grass on the tree lawn hides inside the musty odor that hovers near the porch. The siding is only yellowed on their half of the double block and my fingers leave a thin line of white as they run down the chalky, aluminum surface. The windows, covered in newspapers taped from the inside, are smudged and smeared with white gunk. My eyes scan the headlines.

101 Teenagers Killed in South Korean Gas Explosion.

Finland Wins Ice Hockey World Championship.

Blame Jenny: Man Kills Best Friend after Same-Sex Crush Revealed on Jenny Jones Show

Some things should be kept secret.

The screen door cries as it opens and I knock. I knock again and wait. In two days, the rash will surface. Scaly little rings. Tiny patches of dry skin that grow and grow. I'll dig until there's blood beneath my fingernails. The itch will drive me mad. And this will remind me of her.

The door opens a crack, revealing a fresh, pink sliver of face. Then the crack widens and my eyes meet with a round, plump blondie. Her skin is plastered in foundation, eyes caked with mascara, and I know right away that I've found the right house.

The porch odor mixes with the sour musk that crawls out the door and I take a deep breath, swallowing the bitter perfume. The woman stares at me, tilts her chin to the side. "Are you lost, dear?"

"No."

Chubby laughs. "Scared then?" Another hand pulls the door open wider and a smaller face peeks out, much prettier than the fat one. Pudgy straightens her head and hides her smile. "Here for fun?" Then she shrills, half-hyena, and the human in her falls into a fit of coughing.

My foot, second-guessing our trip, slides backward along the rotted porch. "I know where I am."

"Susie." She turns to the juvenile peeking out beside her. "We've got fresh meat tonight." Susie covers her smile with a tiny paw and steps away from the door. The fleshy girl takes my hand in hers.

The wind blows into the kitchen, conspiring with the fat girl. It pushes while she pulls me inside and locks the door. "You can call me Kate. That's Susie." She points to the girl who now leans against a sink full of dishes. She can't be older than twelve. "We've got me, Susie and Maxxi here."

"Okay."

Jami Kali

"And your name?"

"Kala."

Kate squeezes and doesn't let go. "Hi, Kala. That's a pretty name. How'd you hear of us?"

My mouth shapes some silent words before I shrug. "A friend."

She looks behind her, towards another room. "Maxx-i, we have a *vis-i-tor*." She turns back to me and winks, extra skin enveloping her eye. "Gotta love Maxxi." She taps her foot, swollen inside a tight brown shoe, and begins to hum out of tune. Next to her foot, a large black bug scurries by and disappears into a dark cranny near the sink. Kate repositions her hand inside of mine, intimately weaving our fingers together. "Maxxi. We got company. Ya hear me in there, Tits?"

Maxxi's strawberry hair bobs as she strides into the kitchen. Her legs, long and white, hide behind cutoff sweatpants. She scans me from my head down and rolls her heavy green eyes. Her tuliped mouth twists into a deeper frown.

"Have your pick," Kate says. She lets go of my hand, leaving my palm moist and hot.

Susie has gone back to washing dishes and Kate continues to tap her foot on the greasy linoleum floor. My head nods towards Maxxi.

Kate licks the perimeter of her pink lips. "Perfect. Let's get right to it then. Have fun, girls." She leans forward and pretends to whisper. "Maxxi'll take care of ya."

Maxxi lets a sigh leave her nostrils and waves for me to follow her under the archway out of the kitchen. "Come on. Don't mind the mess."

We weave through the living room around piles of toys and garbage. A pair of toy handcuffs lie next to a collapsed tower of wooden blocks, each painted with a different letter of the alphabet. Pink panties lay draped atop a heap of barbies and kens. Two redheaded toddlers, a boy and a girl, sit on the couch in front of the television set. On the screen, a prime time black family eats dinner and shares personal thoughts about college.

"Ya don't wanna end up waiting tables forever," the father says.

The mother, wearing an apron, places a hand on her hip. "Hey, watch it."

The audience roars with laughter.

Maxxi walks fast past the children and leads me to another room. The bed is unmade and next to it, a dresser spews balled-up rainbows of clothing onto the floor. Maxxi follows my eyes. "Not easy cleanin' up after two kids."

"I bet."

"Got any of your own?"

"Kids? No. No kids. Not yet." I hold my hands together and fiddle with my thumbs.

"Don't." She sits down on the bed and slips off her sneakers. "Life's over once ya do. Like to go out? Forget it. Time to yourself? Gone." She pushes a hair dryer off the bed and onto the

Jami Kali

floor. "You like the lights on or off?"

"On is fine."

She smiles for a moment, then frowns again. "Good choice." She peels her t-shirt up over her head, red strands of hair falling down onto her face. She looks up as she squirms out of her sweats. "Well?"

I sit down next to her as she slithers out of her panties, placing them in my sweaty palm. She puts her arms behind her back, unhooking her pink bra. Then she stops and looks at me. Her forehead crinkles and her plucked brows move closer together. "Have we met?"

"No. No, we haven't. I mean, I don't think so."

"Your face. It's—" She shakes her head.

"I don't think so," I say.

She places the bra on my lap. "Ya gonna undress or—?"

My shirt slips over my head and she reaches around my back for the hook of my bra. With one hand, she slides each strap off my shoulders. With the other hand, she presses her nails softly into the flesh of each shoulder blade. I take off my pants and hide my thighs beneath my palms.

She crawls into bed and I scoot in beside her. We lie facing each other as her nails glide along my flesh. This close, I can see each freckle scattered across her upturned nose and beneath each eye. Her body is too soft to be sheltered by a roof that might cave in on her at any moment. In the living room, the television set releases a continuous chatter of muffled voices that drown out the occasional child's cough. Maxxi leans forward to push the covers away and I notice the first blotch on her back. It's red and scabbed over.

"What are you here for?"

"I don't know."

She moves in closer and climbs on top of me. She tries to smile, but it dies before reaching her lips. She kisses my forehead, my nose, my mouth, my chin. No one has kissed me like this before, so liquid, so guiltless. She nudges her nose against mine and lightly lines my lips with her tongue. My fingers tickle her tender arms and my hands move onto her back. I ignore the bumpy surface of her scaly flesh and slide my grip down to her hips instead.

"I've never been with a woman before," I say.

"Then let's get acquainted."

Jami Kali

When I Die

"Money is happiness. Make the big bucks first, then do what you want." Her beer, poured in a crystal wine glass, spills over the side as she slams her fist on the tabletop.

An almost empty pitcher of margaritas sits in the kitchen. The uneaten fried chicken legs and shrimp have been covered and put away. The New Year's Eve party was a success, despite Nan's tumble down the last three stairs leading from the bathroom to the living room. No eyebrows were raised; she always falls at family get-togethers because she always has too much to drink. Uncle Harry, the only other remaining guest, is on the couch watching TV.

"I don't care much for money," I say.

Nan's bony hand squeezes mine tighter. "You've got to care about money in this world. Do what you gotta do. Look at me."

"I know. You work hard."

"Take it from me. I'm seventy-six. How do you think I do it?"

"I have no idea."

Harry turns his head away from the tube. "You're full of shit, mom."

Nan dismisses him with a drunken wave of the hand. "Because I have to, that's how." She turns and faces the windowsill. Christmas dolls, the interactive ones with batteries in the bottom, adorn the wooden ledge. She presses the red button on the snowman and he starts to sing something familiar and muffled. "These are antiques." She sings along a few words but coughs before she can finish. She picks up her glass and takes a drink. "They're yours." The snowman swings a string of blue lights in the air, hitting them against the glass cottage to his left. "I work hard and this is what I have to show for it. This house. These things." She waves her arm above her head, gesturing towards her Christmas relics. "This is all yours when I die." The snowman's song finishes. "Did you hear me?"

"I heard you."

She takes another long drink from her glass and pours the rest of the can in.

"Let's not talk about things like that," I say, well aware that many others hanging in my family tree have been promised the antiques, the jewelry, the house.

"Hey, I'm not afraid to die. I'm ready. I've been here for a long time." She squeezes my hand again with cold fingers. With her other hand, she pushes my hair behind my shoulders.

"Do something with this hair. It's too long."

"Okay."

"I mean it," she says. "You've got to be respectable. You've got to look professional. They want professionals in this world."

"It's not so long."

Jami Kali

"Look at me." She takes hold of my chin with her free hand and moves my face towards her. "Do you wanna be like your old Nan? Waiting tables till they put you in the ground?"

My head turns back to avoid her stare.

Harry slams the remote control against his palm. "Leave her alone, Ma. How do ya get this damn thing to work, anyway?"

She finishes off her beer. "I'm giving all my old clothes to the Salvation Army. Let the poor people have them."

My hand lets go of hers to cover my mouth, concealing a yawn. "That's a good thing to do."

"Damn right, it is. Some of them people walk around without jobs, on relief, on welfare. Not me. And I don't mind givin' back, neither."

Harry smiles at me and rolls his eyes. "Ah, blow it out your ass, Mom."

Nan laughs and nudges my arm. "Go let the dogs out."

My back, stiff from sitting so long, cracks as I stretch up from my chair.

"And grab me another beer."

The dogs don't follow my voice as I take a warm beer from the case beside the fridge. The small one leans along the radiator while the big one sits in the middle of the floor, scratching at the bloody spot on his back, the spot he's been scratching and licking all night. "They don't wanna go out," I say.

"You sons a bitches get out there. Out." Her fist shakes the table again. They dash into the kitchen, the bigger one jumping at the back door until it's opened. "Out, out, out." The cool air blows against my face as they rush out into the yard. "I talked to Alma," she says from the next room. "Did I tell ya?"

The fridge swings open in front of me. "No. How is she?" Five orange jello shots remain on the tray, the least popular flavor of the night. Three of them jiggle down my throat before I return to the living room.

"She's good. She's bad. Who knows."

My thumb slides beneath the tab and pushes up to crack open her beer. The wind outside plays with the loose siding, slamming it against the house, makes Harry jump. Pictures tremble on the walls, framing strangers who have since grown out their crew cut, put on thirty pounds, got a couple microderms, lost ten pounds, got married, and started wearing glasses. The fake tree, in the corner near her telephone, shakes dust from its plastic leaves into the air around us.

Harry, from the couch, cranes his neck to see out the window. "Windy night."

"You know Alma," Nan says. "Never has her shit together. Never knows what's goin' on."

"I don't know her so well." My fingers find a small piece of paper on the table. It's a note, in her large loopy handwriting, listing everything she needs from the store. Coffee is

Jami Kali

spelled with two o's. Juice is missing its i.

"Asked me where I think Big Hack is now. Is he up in Heaven? At peace? Like I know." She picks up her cigarette and takes a puff. The inch-long ash falls onto the tabletop. "I said, Alma, you're the one who goes ta church every Sunday. You should know." She rolls her droopy eyes up towards the ceiling blocks and smiles. "Heaven. I don't even know if I'll get up there. But I'll tell ya what." She leans closer to me. "Wherever we are when we're dead, we ain't gonna know each other. We ain't even gonna look the same. I know that for sure."

Harry stands up. "Oh, whatta you know, Ma?"

"Harry, you can kiss my ass on Public Square. I'll give ya an hour to draw a crowd."

Harry laughs, grabs the newspaper off the table, and heads upstairs.

"Don't use too much paper. You goddamn kids and that toilet. It overflowed twice this week. You kids will be the death of me." She cackles and takes another drag of her cigarette. She sets it back in the Las Vegas ashtray that Aunt Col brought back from the family's vacation. In the center of the dining table sits the candy dish that she brought home from Jamaica the year before. Nan puts her hand on mine. "Boy, I'll tell ya. I'm ready to go, don't get me wrong. But a few more years, that's all I ask for. A few more years with you kids."

"You have plenty of time."

"Where do I think Big Hack is? What a thing to ask." The dogs scratch at the back door. The pipes gurgle, sizzling with water, heating her ancient bones. She holds on to my hand. Her old skin is smooth like silk and the hair on her arms is barely there. "He's been dead for twenty-one years," she says. A tear trickles from her eye to the corner of her nose. "And I've been working for sixty just to keep this house myself." She licks her gums. Another tear rolls off her cheek and onto her lap.

I put my arms around her and she cries harder, like thunder, as the wind beats at the house.

The dogs bark and scrape at the door. She drinks down what's left in her glass. "Let those bastards in."

In the kitchen, I suck down the two remaining jello shots and walk over to the sink. Next to the glass where her teeth soak is a picture of Nan and Big Hack leaning against their '67 Pontiac Lemans. They look like movie stars.

The door opens and the wind blows my hair back as the dogs burst in the room. Standing in the open doorway, the fresh air clears my nostrils of the stale cigarette smoke that had been lingering there.

"You're a pain in my ass," Nan says, creaking up the steps to the bathroom. "I told you not to use too much paper."

But their voices are muffled beneath the screaming wind. Lightning flickers somewhere

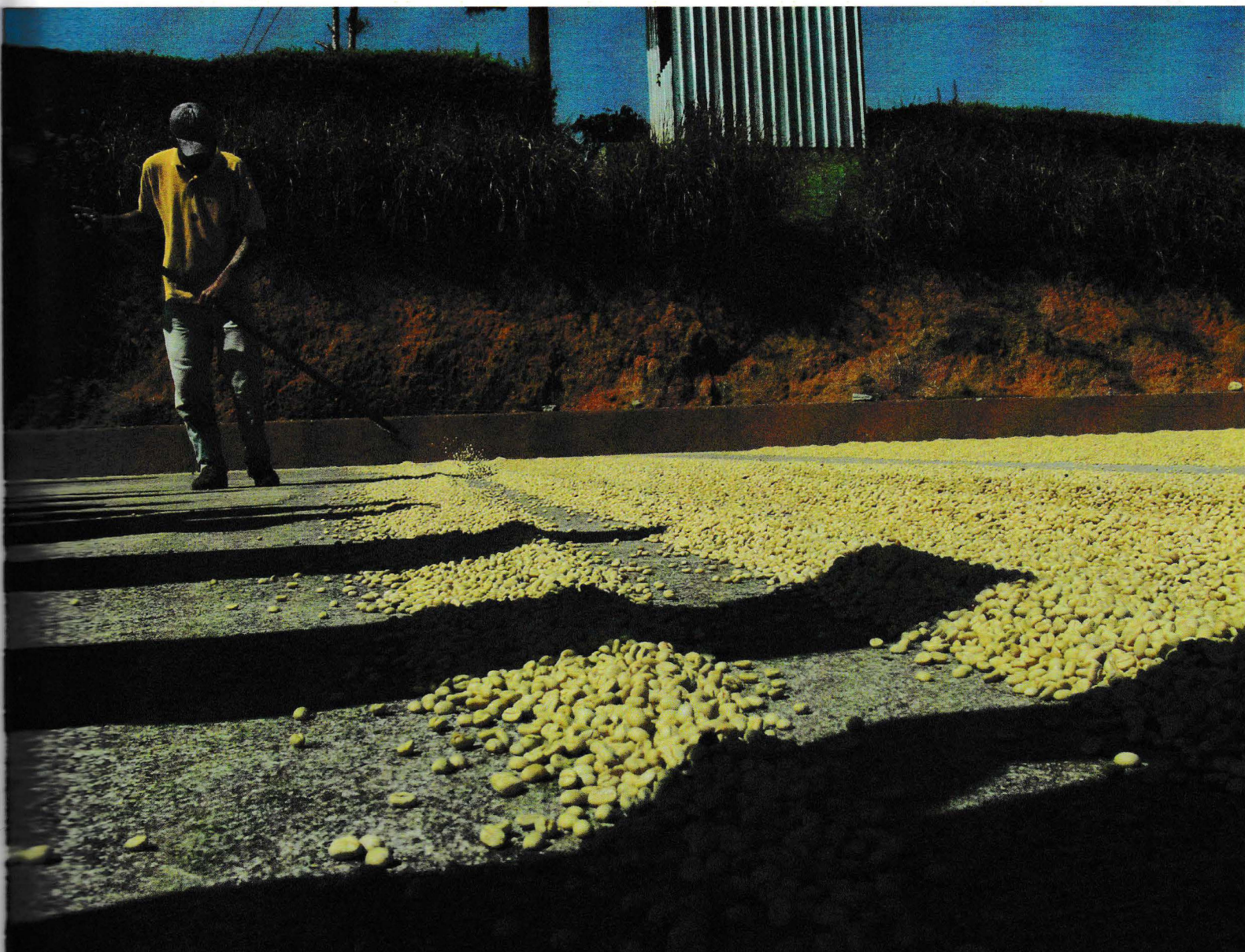
Jami Kali

in the sky hundreds of feet away as a sub-sonic rumble moves through the air. A loud thump shakes me, makes me turn away from the violent wind and run into the living room.

At the bottom of the stairs, Nan lays contorted, neck twisted to the side.

“I got it,” Harry says from the bathroom. “It stopped overflowing. Got it out with my hands.”

Sean Lafleur



Jami Kali

His Surrender

Beside God's closet, loose threads
pile
on
his carpet.

His dishes mount each other
His teeth soak in a nearby glass.

He walks to clear his mind and the city
tempts his depression. What is God thinking
when he hangs his head
or when he gets that burning look
in his eyes?

He's naked because clothes are heavy.
They make groups for people like him to talk
but God has long given up seeking comfort
outside of home.

Ask him about it.
He might whisper that
he loves or hates everything in the world
but most likely, he will look away and lie.

God writes on himself with permanent marker
to retain revelations that come and go
then looks in the mirror and asks
Too much?

Him and his cozy surrender, his quiet leave from our living rooms
to hide away in his own.

Get up and do something, God. Something else.

God blinks his eyes

Jami Kali

and goes back to reading. He doesn't turn off the lights
when we knock. He reclines in his chair and lowers his hearing.

Anne Janecek



“Life Contour”

Jami Kali

In the Mountains, Near the River

In dreams I meet a young man
who paints white feathers
and sells them in the mountains
near the river.

We discuss the Koran
(a book I've never read)
and I ruffle his feathers.
Not a salesman, but a talker
while names are not exchanged.

I pull an elephant from his pile
standing upright
in a loincloth
holding a spear
and covered in hair

engraved on a silver ring.

He cuts me a deal
and I make my way back home

Todd Oravic

The Skyline's Persona

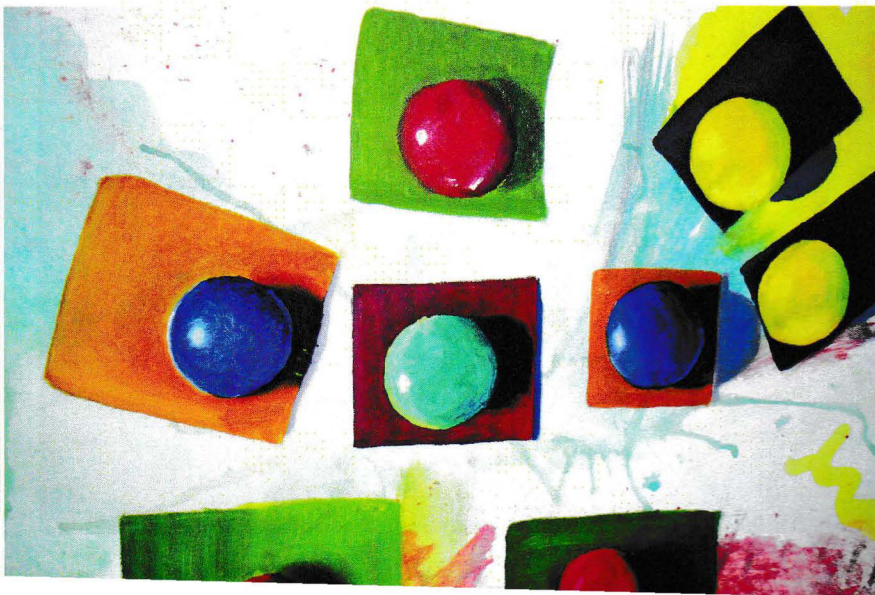
Hers was a spectrum, colorful
Newly born thoughts on love
A boy beams
A tall father, he, but down the way some length
Inauthentic grin

A battered gate, years of wear
And water damage

Cultivate still! The ground here breathes!
But irregular, as warped windows
Alive but slow, fault lines
Age our mother

Synapse crackles and love moves again
In slow climb
Fluctuating angles, silver skyscrapers sway
In high wind
The glare
The skyline's persona

Here is a world of atoms
Clenched together
And maybe manufactured
As love will always try



Sonja Heisey

"M&M Man"

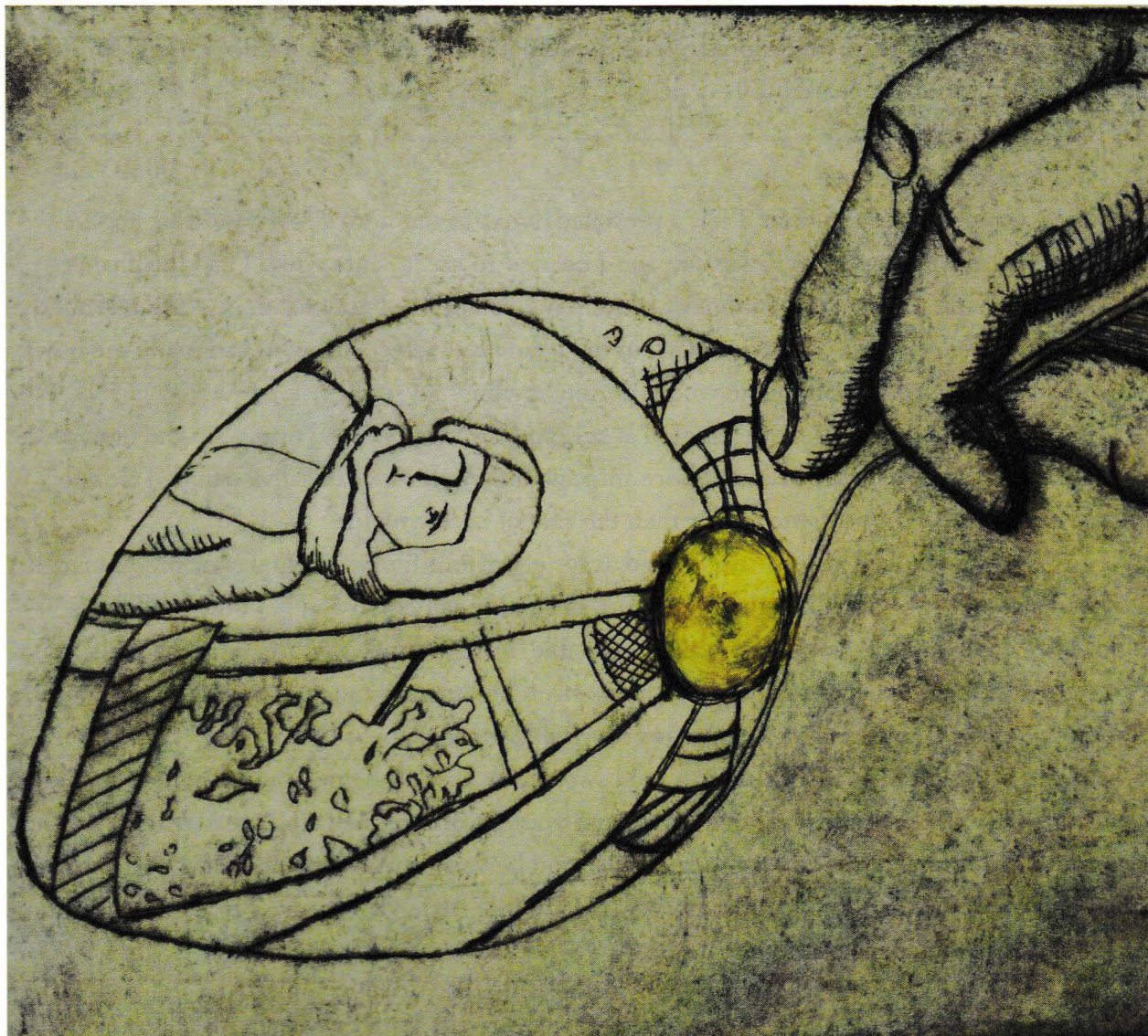
Todd Oravic

I've Placed My Thumbs

I've placed my thumbs
 on the walls of rifts
 between the great land masses.
 Discarded sums—
 monetary gifts—
 slept under overpasses.
 The moon said "Hi,"
 but you went inside.
 "Oh nonsense, maybe later!"

And whereas I
 put some time aside.
 Learned each and every crater.
 The town submerged
 in the crater lake
 the deluge isolated.

Anne Janecek



"Spoon"

Erin Robinson

Wolf-Santa

It was Christmas Eve. Soon, Santa would drop through the chimney into the fireplace we didn't have and empty a sack full of toys, half of which would be for me, none of which I would care about. When I awoke, the dancing teddy bears I had attempted to eradicate with blue and purple crayons were illumined by the flames that had begun to creep up the walls. The only possessions I cared about, my books, were smoldering in the white plastic crate that was melting to the floor at the right of my bed. Smoke smothered my face, and the scorched scent of my childhood burned the insides of my nostrils. I rose from the bed, coughing violently, and dropped to the floor.

I knew what to do in a fire—they taught us at school—and crawled through the open door into the hallway, heading toward the kitchen. The ashy carpet burned my kneecaps as I dragged them sleepily across the floor, but for once, I didn't care. I called for my parents and brother. I wanted my cat.

No response.

I peered into the living room to see if I could make it out the front door. The room was an inferno, but there appeared to be a path.

No one answered.

I needed to get out.

As I approached the door, I felt a presence. Next to the fiery Christmas tree stood a man in a red suit. It was Santa. I was six, and I needed to meet Santa while I had the chance. He could take me through the chimney and help me escape. As I got closer, he turned around. He wasn't the same obese geriatric "saint" in the gaudy red velvet suit who had made me howl when I was two. No—this time, he would do the howling.

Wolf-Santa bared his teeth, snarled at me, and his fangs glowed orange in the light of the flames. His eyes were beady, red, and bore through me. A glimmer of saliva dangled from his snout, which boasted of a lighter color than the rest of his tawny fur.

"Wh-wh-who are you?" I stammered as his eight-foot figure loomed over me. A growl. I turned around. I would get to the front door as quickly as I could and get out, but flames blocked my exit route. The kitchen was inaccessible. I was trapped, and the upright Wolf-Santa came closer. He extended a paw, and his talons stretched toward me. I assumed the fetal position in the corner, cowering in wait for my inevitable death.

My body jolted as I woke up in a cold sweat. I sat up and turned on the light as quickly as I could. The black smoke was gone. My house was not on fire. The clock read 5:00 a.m. The real Santa had probably already come and gone, and he was probably not a wolf. I'd had the same nightmare the previous year and had woken up the same way. I wasn't in the fetal position or crouched in the corner, but I was alone.

Erin Robinson

"You Can't Hit It"

The bat cracked the ball
 like the shovel split my skull
 when I was seven.
 It whistles, and you watch,
 wish you could slam one
 that would make me make
 a noise that loud.
 My feet beat the sand
 while my heart pounds,
 each valve thumping shut
 to keep it working, keep it tough.
 You chase me,
 wish you could get me down,
 get me dirty.
 I don't look back—
 sliding in,
 touching home.
 I know how to keep you away
 and close
 at the same time.

I don't strike out.

Courtney Sperger

Sss-lap, Tap

"In medias res it seems to start
 The message here, a novel art;
 A story loved by any sap
 Of dance as felt by those who tap.

One and two, swing three and four
 Swing one and two more measures go
 Sss-lap, ball-change, fff-lap three more.
 A kick-step, side-step, buffalo.

Applause begins, the curtains close.
 The shoes fall off the cramping toes.
 A tutti breath is held backstage.
 The program's turned its final page."

Chad Stanley

Inventing 1974

Named after its inventor, "shrapnel" consists of fragments packed within an explosive device, rendered airborne on detonation.

Those alive invent time,
And plot distance,
Living lives along lies
Of ballistics.

In July, 1974,
I am freshly invented and small,
Six years old,
Touring White Tower.

I circle around circle-round cannonballs,
Mortars that tickle and tick,
And tickingly, tickingly,
Encircle me.

Then, with a flash, I am ballistic,
Flying high beyond today's fragments.
West-born abroad, forced west-borne
Home to West Hartford.

I must have slept on the plane,
Smothered, smoke-muffled,
Parent-packed, and safe;
Nowhere yet near fearful of flight.

I am not a survivor,
And remain merely a tourist.
Flying, we tour moving shrapnel:
Living is always ballistic.

As reported by the BBC, on July 17, 1974,
"a bomb ripped through the Mortar Room in the White Tower at 1430 BST.
The small basement exhibition room was packed with tourists from the UK and abroad
who took the force of the blast." Those at a distance heard "a muffled boom."

Chad Stanley

Jingles and "Ground Zero"

Drawing myself out of dissertation dreams
I spiral down stairs as the phone rings.

"Are you seeing this?" she asks, and with "No,"
I am not watching but guilty.

Tuning into the crash,
I see impact, and am guilty.

When people say "falling man," later,
I am guilty for not having seen him.

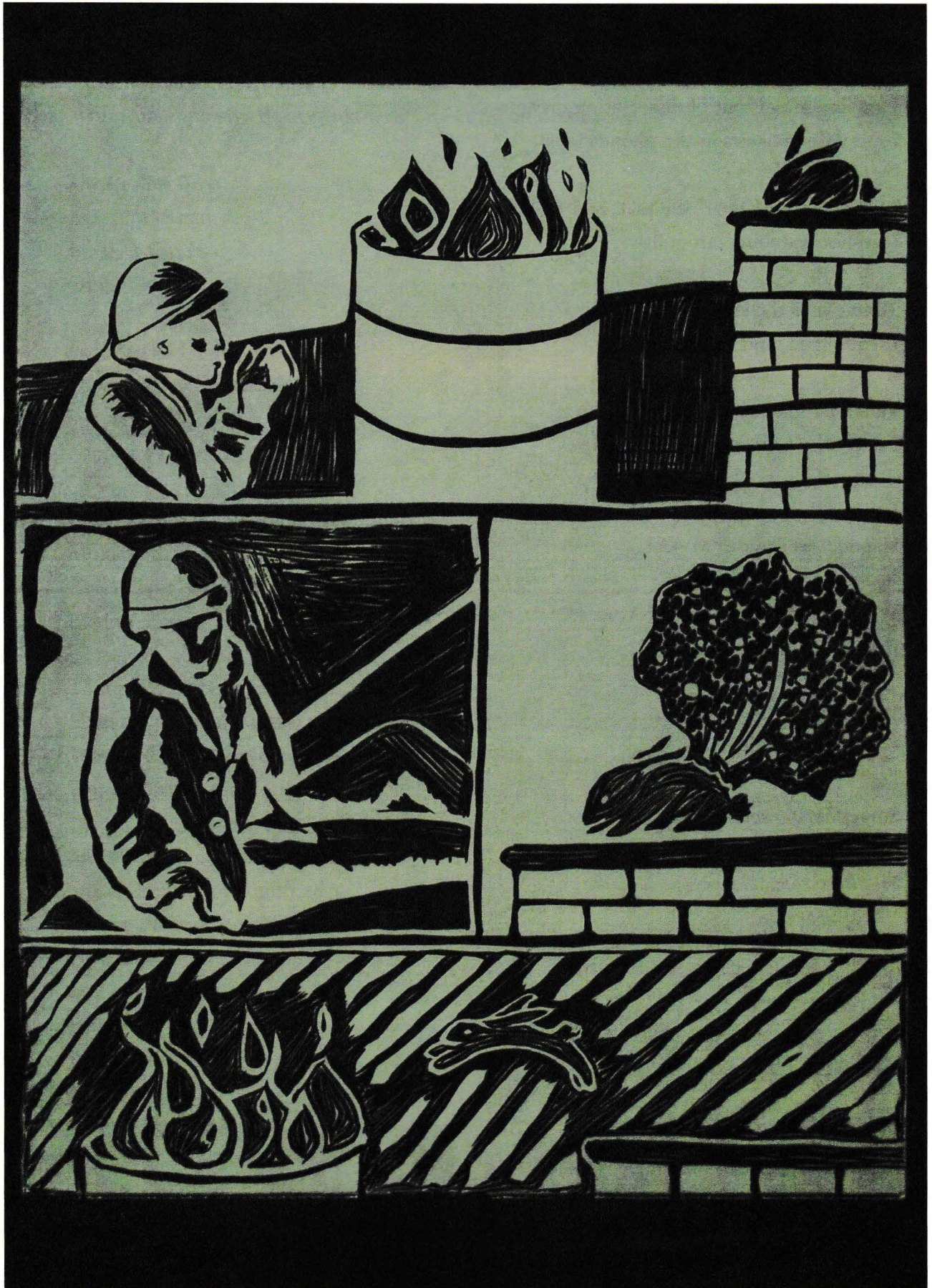
Later still, I am guilty for scissors,
Handed over under M-4A1.

We filled in the spaces with voices,
Jingles and "ground zero."

With melody, in rhetoric,
We buried and listened.

Surrendering scissors,
I cut worlds into ribbons.

Anne Janecek



Kenneth Stucker

WILKES BARRE

Autumn, a strange woman,
spread her bed with scarlet,
bangled her body with gold,
invited us to embrace for a season,
wrap ourselves in her vermillion
and remember
and fear

Winter came like the far-off invader,
the man who spoke in a harsh tongue
we had forgotten.
The whinny of wind whipping through branches
The flash of spurs
The rush of rain, robbing, robbing, robbing.

Trees stripped of their adornment,
Autumn lay naked in the storm drain
ruby and amber fingers curled into
beggar's cupped hand
waiting for the good Samaritan

River(bed) Street, once cracked and chapped,
black gummed and carious tree-toothed--
flooded again.

The wise men and the weathermen
considered the sky from rooftops
or railroads
newspapers like soothsayer's scrolls
crumbled to line jackets

ECCE HOMO!
Behold the city!
Brick and bleached bone,
windows boarded up and

painted black
burnt out breweries
rubble
Bars and churches barred up
from the days when barons
swept spirits out of Wilkes-Barre

Barbed wire brought back
from the Balkans, from the
War of Wars, reaches out from fences
like stinging anemones
from silent ocean reefs
every house a bunker for the battle
of brother against brother

Streets of condemned buildings
streets of condemned men
In every business lot—
stacked pallets and stray cats
(I see you, Mrs. Calico
I see you're in hurry. Hurry home, Mrs. Calico
give Ol' Tabby Tom my regards
give the kittens milk and mange)
In every storefront
Old men with folded hands and faces
lean—leaning in, looking outward and looking
down and out

Beinvenido a la panaderia de Senora Sanchez
A little brown abuela works in the dark,
bristling and caviomorphic
waits for the sun
fills the street with the scent of bread
Piece of paper reads
"Help wanted"
but there is no help

Kenneth Stucker

Crakhaus is a soggy street with soggy houses
 Broken panes and porches make for
 gat-toothed smiles or wheezing gasps
 Sit with me on this salted-slug sofa
 The land's Lord-It-Over-Everybody will come someday
 and whitewash these sepulchers
 hang "For Sale" signs on slouched sills

On Union street rusted metal awnings
 stretch over windows like orange eyelashes
 trying to blink out the sooty city air
 tenement houses with glass doors
 and caged lights shine like the open mouths
 of caves or coal mines
 This city could burn forever
 underground.
 City in a black bituminous vale.
 Votive Candle beneath a basket.
 Neither the worm nor the fire die.

The spray-painted playgrounds are barren
 Miniature benches for miniature bums.
 Aluminum spring ponies pinned mid-prance in a circle
 stationary and smiling, cotton candy-colored conspiracy
 You and I sit on a see-saw, speechless
 staring knowingly at each other
 creaking up and down on our toes
 skin and bone beneath the blanched sun.
 You bare your teeth.

Across the street
 Tuber-skinned old timers
 root to a rust-red bench
 in front of an old box factory
 perfunctory Pomeranian yapping
 at a pit-bull.

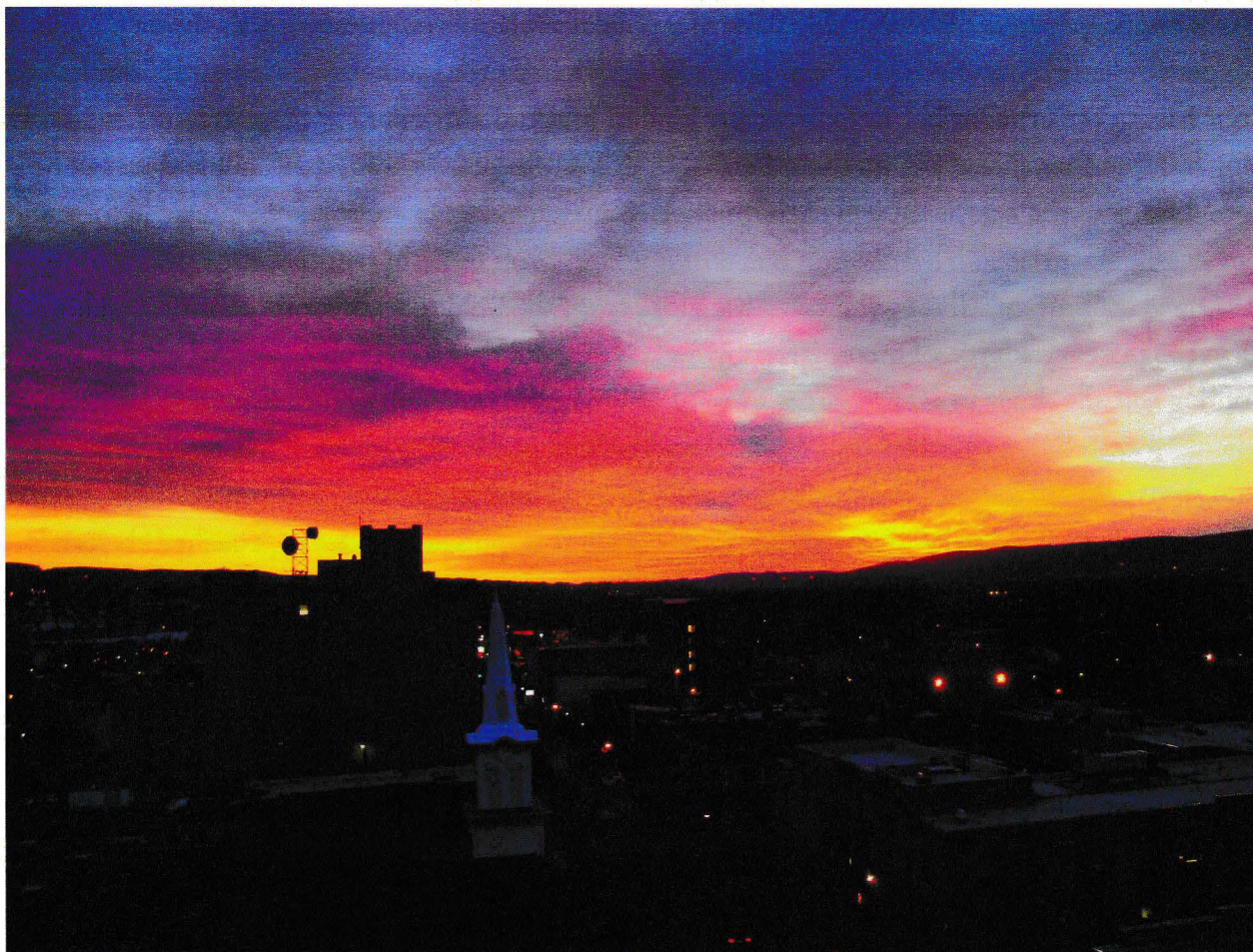
Kenneth Stucker

(Wilkes-Barre is a city of people walking pit-bulls.)
They smell like love for each other
and fear of blacks
and the mildew from the leftover city,
the rotting houses that marinated in the Susquehanna
when Agnes and the Kingly River kissed

In front of the Catholic school
God sits slum-swaddled like the stranger among you
Hand extended
(The nail that stands up or reaches out
shall be hammered down or in)
Passersby put spare change and smokes in the pierced palm
The plaque reads "WHATSOEVER YOU DO"
A many-headed warning

(Let the reader understand.)

Kristen Cook



"Barre Sky"

Joseph Waichulis

New Parents

My heart was racing, pounding with such a velocity that, at any moment, I felt as though my chest would explode. I've been in this situation countless times, each time feeling as though it was my first. This time was different, though. This time I wasn't stealing money, or electronics, or expensive jewelry. Now, I was dealing with a life, a tiny bundle of innocence that, with one swipe of my hand, will be forever changed. My palms were sweating, my insides trembled, and if I didn't know any better, I would say there was a possibility of me throwing up.

I checked over my uniform, making sure it looked professional enough to fly under the radar of onlooking eyes. I hadn't seen one security guard roving the halls of the hospital. Not one person asked me to show some credentials of any kind. Nobody seems to be looking my way even though seconds ago I walked out of the pediatric unit of the hospital, carrying with me a souvenir that would be dearly missed upon the discovery of its absence. The young boy, at least I think it's a boy, was fast asleep in his crib when I picked him up and slipped him into the small bag that that hung over my shoulder.

I always knew I was good at what I did, but this task validated my professionalism far more than any other heist I had pulled off in the past. I've tackled every type of venue one could think of: department stores, grocery stores, private parties, pawn shops, even people's homes while they were asleep in their beds. Not once have I seen the inside of a jail cell; nor have ever experienced a ride in the back of a police car. I've brought home TVs, DVD players, expensive jewelry, and stacks of cash, none of which had ever seemed to impress my mother, nor has it ever brought her to express any kind of gratitude for running these errands and keeping food on the table. Jack, on the other hand, drives the getaway car. That's all he does, all he's good for, and she acts as though each time we return, his efforts are solely responsible for our success.

This time, we'll see who takes the glory from the field. Barely seventeen years old, and I'm the primary source of income for my forty-year-old, drunken mother and whatever piece of dog shit she drags in off the street to call her boyfriend. Currently, that would be Jack.

I exited through the hospital doors and walked at a brisk pace back to the car. Unless I am spotted, I never run. Running makes an individual look suspicious, and suspicious is about the last thing I want to be right now. A wave of relief swept over me as I approached the car. It seemed as though this would be an in-and-out operation with literally zero complication or obstacles to overcome. That feeling quickly went away, though, the second I saw Jack asleep in the back seat, drunk on whatever three-dollar bottle of whiskey he brought along for the ride.

"Jack, wake the hell up!" I said audibly as I pounded on the window.

"You locked the fucking doors, asshole. Wake up!"

I wasn't quite sure of what had irritated me more, the fact that Jack locked all of the

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doors to the getaway car before cracking open the booze, or the notion that he passed out in the fifteen minutes I had spent in the hospital. Either way, if I didn't want to get caught, I was going to have to quickly devise some kind of plan.

I searched the grounds of the parking lot, looking for anything big enough and hard enough to smash through one of the windows. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I spotted a small pile of bricks stacked neatly at the edge of the parking lot. I walked over and nonchalantly picked one of them up, the entire time holding my stolen prize in a small brown bag, praying that he wouldn't start crying. I looked around the parking lot to make sure nobody was in sight, and then hurled the brick through the passenger side window. I reached my arm in and unlocked the back door. As I pulled the door open, Jack began to wake from his alcohol-induced coma.

"The broken window?" he slurred. Streams of drool oozed down his chin, and soon after his brilliant observation regarding the window, he slipped back into the unconscious world.

"You really are some kind of freaking animal," I said, pulling the newborn out of my bag and tossing him onto Jack's lap.

"I guess I'm driving now, too, ain't I?" I yanked the keys from his hand and stood up, scanning the area one more time to make sure no one was coming. I then climbed into the driver's seat through the passenger's side door, buckling my seatbelt before starting the engine.

"This place must have the worst security I've ever seen," I said with a laugh as our car pulled out. Jack was already fast asleep, though, still mumbling something about the broken window.

I turned on the radio, and drifted off into my own little world as we drove down the highway. I thought about what would happen if we were caught this time, and how my mother would survive without me. I glanced down at my watch and noticed we'd been driving for nearly two hours and both Jack and the baby were still fast asleep. I felt good about myself, proud of my impressive accomplishments at such an early age. I knew that my mother would finally have to give credit where credit's due, and it was definitely due in my direction.

I've spent the last two years of my life supporting my mom and her scum-bag boy-friends, and all I've ever gotten in return were a collection of harsh criticisms and some asshole's hand up my shirt when no one was looking. Now, things will be different. Now, I'll be bringing back the gift of life, a child to consume her time and hopefully get her to lay off the booze.

As we approached the New York state line, it dawned on me that both of my passengers were remaining remarkably quiet; and although the sound of a crying baby was not my idea of easy listening, I found it rather peculiar that the child hadn't yet found anything to complain about. I was already familiar with the advanced sleeping skills that Jack had possessed. He had

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time and again demonstrated this talent through his habitual tendency to sleep through any and all employment opportunities that came his way. I wasn't familiar with the sleeping habits of a newborn, though, and I grew worried that something might be wrong.

I was scared to look back, but forced myself nonetheless. As I glanced in the rearview mirror, I saw Jack sprawled across the backseat of the car. The armpits of his not-so-white tee-shirt were tinted a dark shade of yellow and the back of his jeans were pulled down, exposing just enough skin to trigger my gag reflex. The baby was nowhere to be found.

"What the fuck!" I screamed as I pulled the car to the side of the road.

"Where's the baby?" I yelled, pushing and punching Jack's body in a futile attempt to wake him up. That's when I noticed it, the tiny fingers poking out from beneath Jack's robust midsection. I quickly reached down and pulled the child out from under him.

I placed his little body across my lap and listened for a heartbeat, but heard nothing. I checked for any signs of breathing, but there were none. I leaned back against the seat and wondered how my mother would react to the news. I looked down at the ridiculous candy striper suit that I was wearing and instantly grew hateful; hateful toward Jack for making all of my hard work completely irrelevant. I guess I was also hateful toward the baby for not giving me some kind of warning that he was being smothered.

"So close," I said as I rubbed my cold hands across my forehead.

Soon, I began to hear the muffled sounds of slurred profanity coming from the back of the car; and for a moment, I thought Jack was beginning to wake up. I remained as quiet and as still as possible, watching his body shift around the cushions of the backseat. Before long, his body had curled up into a fetal position and the gentle sounds of snoring filled the car once more.

"Whew! That was close," I whispered to myself. I had to get out of there before he awoke if I wanted to clear myself of the whole messy situation, and get rid of Jack at the same time. I quickly gathered up my belongings and proceeded to wipe down the inside of the car, anywhere I might have touched. I pulled the hand sanitizer out from my purse and thoroughly scrubbed down the tiny, lifeless body that was almost my brother. I placed him on the backseat next to Jack, and managed to position Jack's arm so that it was draped over the child's body.

I checked the seats, the floor, and the glove compartment for anything that could link me or my mother to the car, and then ever-so-carefully opened my door and let myself out. I walked to the back of the car to make sure that I hadn't left anything in the trunk. I then wiped off the car keys and tossed them onto the front seat.

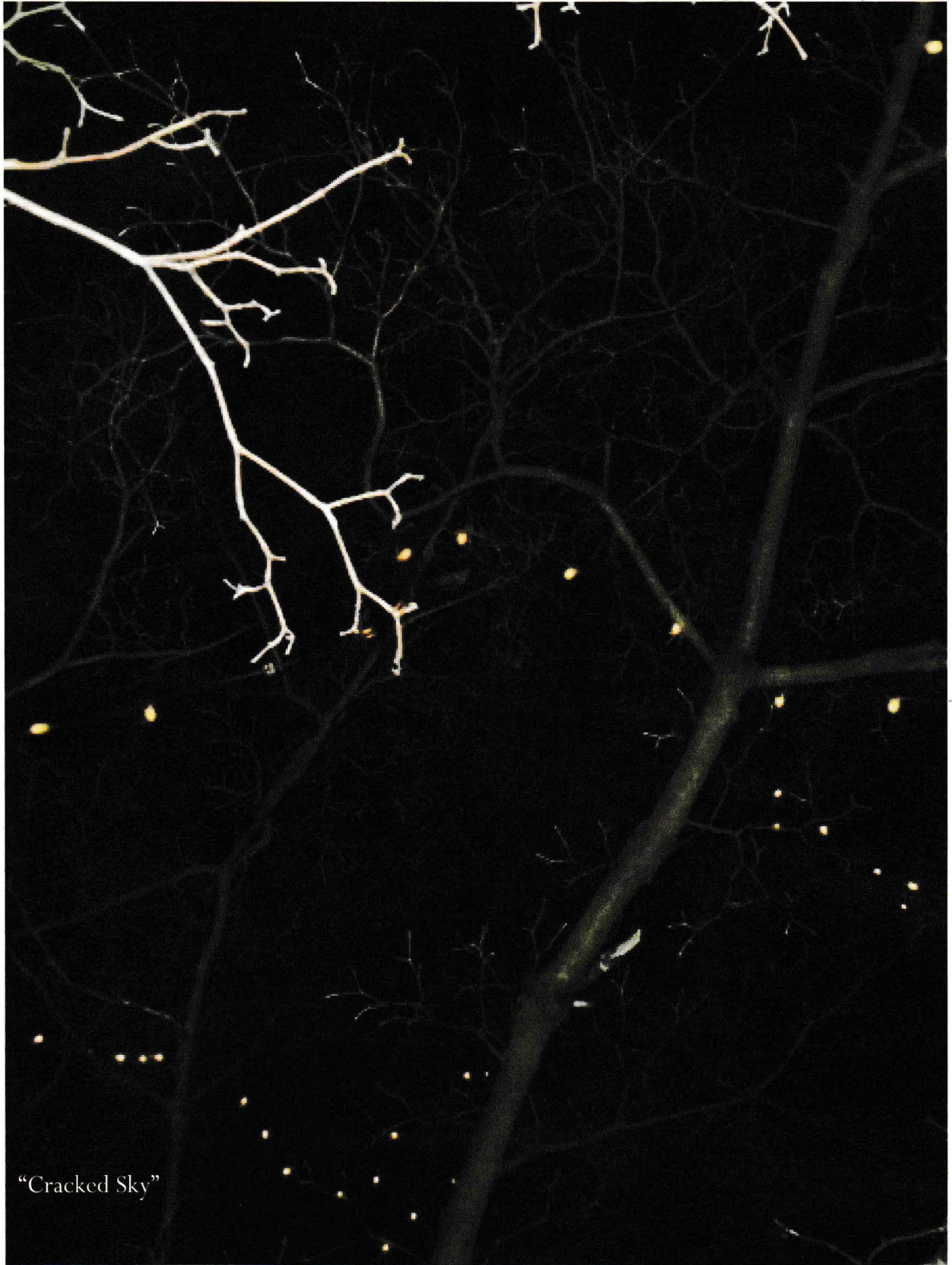
The sun was now beginning to set, and I had one hell of a long walk ahead of me. I didn't mind, though. The thought of Jack not coming back was enough reward for me; no more late night trips to my bedroom or violent outlashes at my mother. As the sky grew dark, I imagined

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the police shoving Jack into the back of a cruiser while he continued to incoherently ramble on about a broken window, and I laughed harder than I had laughed in a long time.

“Goodbye Jack.”

Justin W. Jones



“Cracked Sky”

Mariah Welch

A Flashback Home

After the snow storm, twelve inches of white,
I pull on my mother's leather boots,
Double-knot them tightly around my ankles,
And step out into the Arctic, alien backyard.
The wind hits my face, penetrates through
Permeable skin on my cheeks, seeps
Beneath the cracks in my eyelids,
And before blinking, I stare with frosted eyes.
I hear the chirp of a forgotten bird,
One of those fledglings born before the storm,
Crying for a worm, a warm woman's hand,
A vomited breakfast, brunch.
My feet crunch, bury themselves in footsteps
As I mark my trail with a left foot, a right foot.
A piece of trash (Newspaper clippings maybe.
A napkin maybe.) dances its way
Across the lawn.
I start to mimic, follow (maybe a tissue),
Towards our broken, red, and rusting swing set
And remember a time of taking turns
Or watching the bounce of your curls.
I touch a gloved hand to peeling decal.
A wool-coated finger slides delicately,
Mouse-like, through the rusting swing's holding chain.
Before I pump, begin to take off,
I spot two ears, the permeable and
Whiskered cheeks, the dark and frosted eyes
That stare from under the slide, all hard
And all belonging to your dead and frozen dog.

Mariah Welch

The Women You Love

Colorado streets, damp and dark with the
freshly showered curls of a Jewish woman
that you loved for seven months, pink-lipped,
heavy-lidded eyes, and lazy, liquid-legged.

Lighting the black screen, she reveals the cat,
the slinking, Siamese savant
whose stomach slips with ease over cement
and whose tail twitches in the twilight.

Grocery bags suffocate gutter grates,
gasping condensation calls, the hot breath,
the morning mist that seeps through steel teeth
and sticks like fleas to the feline's fur.

Her in her tie-died Talmud t-shirt—
Sidewalk-sitting, sidesplitting, seam ripping
at the remains of a rotting alphabet
with her mortar, her makeshift pestle.

...

In the middle of the night
A dirty dream wakes me up, drifts
and dances clumsily around my living room,
lands a linoleum split in the kitchen.

I follow, foolishly giggling 'round corners,
tripping over terrapin-toed feet with
blood-blistered bottoms, duct-taped soles
and I am a klutz, a carnival of heavy steps.

Erotic handshakes glow, halogen hellos
to a girl dressed mostly in black
with a face like a field mouse, timid when sober

and spitting at a crowd.

As the room heats, dogs barking out a musk,
dogs with pink gums and sweet smiles,
she removes her shirt to show
a six-nippled stomach and pallid privates.

...

You pick her up, pinky grasping at palm's pulp,
and gently set her on your lap, asking,
"My sweet, what has woken thee?"

Then, staring into her rippling fishbowl eyes,
you begin to cry.

Mariah Welch

Thinking of Something to Say

Nathan has a foot fetish that he isn't afraid to talk about with women. Once, on the internet, Nathan was going through random articles on Wikipedia. After falling upon pages explaining methods of postage and mail carrying systems in Australia, Nathan landed on an article detailing what a "balloon fetish" actually was. In an e-mail to a woman, Nathan wrote:

"And they call them fucking 'looners'. It's all really sick when you think about it but whatever. People can go around their bedrooms popping balloons full of KY on each other but what would happen if I asked you to step on some grapes with those pretty feet of yours? Let me tell you all about how catastrophic it'd be. The world would end. Outright apocalyptic shit."

"Hey Nate,

It's not okay for you to contact me anymore. Please stop," was the woman's response.

Nathan lives in his mother's house. Outside, a hedge lines the perimeter of both the front and back yards and in the morning, Nathan's grandmother pulls bed linens from a swinging clothesline. Squirrels chirp and chatter as they scurry across a delicately shingled roof and Nathan's mother pours a watery cup of coffee.

Nathan shares the basement with a border collie named Sadie and he honestly hasn't been able to sleep very well lately. Nathan often spends his days fantasizing over nearly perfect nights and wishing he could sleep like he was able to years ago. He yearns for dreamless, thoughtless sleeps where even his subconscious is able to shut down, shut its mouth. Nathan wants a pissless sleep, a sleep his bladder doesn't rudely interrupt. Nathan wants a dark, quiet sleep.

Around 2 A.M. a rain begins to fall, turns into ice as it hits the blacktop, and a man stumbles onto the large, looming steps of a Protestant church across the street from Nathan's house. The man opens his deeply lined hands and stretches his fingers to the purple and navy blue night. The cold rain rouges his cheeks and bites at his fingertips, licks at his bearded neck.

"I can usually take whatever it is you feel like throwing at me, Lord. Maybe I've had enough for now. I'm an asshole. I'm a self-loathing asshole and the truth is that I don't even want to be alive anymore. Call me a coward. Please call me a coward," he says in a drunken soliloquy, stuttered psyche spraying from gin-dampened lips.

He yells, "I don't even want to be alive anymore," as his fist raps at the church's heavy oak door.

Sadie barks, startled awake by the thud, the diminishing sound of knuckles meeting wood, the slurred begging of a man. Nathan rustles uncomfortably in his soiled bed clothes. The smell of Domino's pizza crusts lingers in the basement's thick and musky air. Nathan can see his breath steam as it lets out. Across the room, Sadie's cries are animated, leaking like silver ghosts

Mariah Welch

through her needlelike canines.

Peeling back a layer of sweat-stained blankets, Nathan calls out to Sadie with a room-warming cry. "Please just don't. Just don't do that, Sadie," but Sadie's yelps erupt more erratically. Howls slip quietly down her jawbones and end in puddles on the floor.

"Come on. Really?" Nathan asks with a twitch.

Nathan pulls himself up from the couch and heavily sets his feet on an unfinished basement floor. His socks hang droopily from toes and bunch at his ankles. Not bothering to straighten himself out, Nathan digs a hand through his oiled hair and stands with a desire to dominate, to control. Pizza boxes litter the floor, fragments of half-eaten slices and dried bits of cheese scattered about, roaches in cardboard homes. Glasses sit in mildewed stacks, films of green holding them together. The television is flashing and Martin Scorsese has Robert De Niro trying to save a teenage prostitute's life.

Nathan picks up an aged newspaper, last week's *Diamond City*, and scans over a no-name band's shitty review. The paper feels like a cat's tongue as he rolls it between his hands, twisting like an Indian brush burn.

Sadie begins to whimper at the paper's ominous rustle. She puts her yellowed teeth away and recoils. Her haunches pull back and her belly grazes at the debris on the basement floor. In the background, De Niro is a night-light of dirty cab rides, a gleaming shaved head.

A window, held open with a small wooden plank, lets in a chilling breeze and with the gust, Nathan catches a whiff of his mother's morning cup of coffee. He pauses with a half-illuminated face, shadow puppets stumbling clumsily across his still-tired eyelids, nose, lips, chin.

"I'm not gonna hit you with this. Don't whine. Don't whimper," Nathan says, pulling a dusty fleece blanket over the black metal bars of Sadie's cage. "I can teach you who is boss but neither of us would like that." The tightly rolled newspaper drops to the floor with a stale thump.

Nathan hears his mother walking through the kitchen with dainty feet. He hears the microwave humming as it heats a boxed and plastic-wrapped breakfast. The cupboard doors squeak as his mother searches their depths for a decent mug, one without a chip or a crack. The cupboard doors slam and outside, the birds begin to sing their songs. It's early, too early to be awake but Nathan checks his e-mail to see if he has gotten any responses to freshly posted foot fetish classifieds. De Niro's gun fires with a mechanical drum roll and Nathan smiles at:

"Hey Nate,

Thought you might like (teenage girls desperate for a man's attention sending you pictures of their freshly painted toenails, teenage girls with daddy issues willing to send you their smelliest socks, ripped stockings) some pics of me."

Also, "This little piggy went to market. This little piggy stayed home," in video form.

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Also, "It's people like you...no. It's *scum* like you that are turning our town into a cess-pool. Your (which should be 'you're') sickening. You discust (which should be 'disgust') me," from danny07642@yahoo.com.

Nathan swivels in his desk chair and grabs the remote from a nearby coffee table just in time to catch a glimpse of De Niro's head resting on the cushions of a prostitute's dingy sofa. A heavy thumb pushes and compresses the bright red power button and the sun leaks into the frosted basement windows, coats the room in an eerie blue film.

"Nathan," his name comes barreling down the steps.

"Yeah, Ma. What's up?"

"Come upstairs...now."

Nathan pulls thermal pants over his bleach-stained underwear and clears the cache on his computer. He runs up the steps.

"There's a man on the front porch," Nathan's mother squawks over the tweeting birds with concern as she peels at the plastic of her nuked breakfast dish. She pulls open a drawer and digs around in search of a fork. "Go check it out for me," she says, stabbing at a soggy piece of meat and fiddling with the sink's faucet.

The lawn is crisp, grass white with the morning's frost, and a man lies idly on the red brick steps. Nathan bends down and places a firm hand on the man's shoulder. He doesn't move.

"I can't tell if he's dead or just sleeping," Nathan says.

"Oh, Nate. Don't you dare tell me that."

"No, Ma. I'm serious. I seriously can't tell."

"You better not be scaring your mother."

"I'm not joking," Nathan says with his jaw clenched. "I'm serious."

Nathan nudges the man, nearly pushing him from the front steps and knocking an orange hunting cap from his hanging head. Opening the front door, Nathan's mother steps onto the front porch carrying a pot filled with cold, clear water.

"Let's dump it on his head," she says.

"That's ridiculous."

"Nathan, I do *not* want this drunkard on our front steps," and she tilts the pot.

Water splashes onto the man's thick-haired head and seeps into the crevices of his heavy winter jacket. Nathan stands back, hands in his mouth as he bites at fingernail stubs, and the man sputters awake with a wild mouth yelling, "What the hell?" His arms flail, reaching up, down, patting at the pockets of his coat.

"Man, get off of our porch," Nathan demands.

"Where the hell am I?" the man asks.

Mariah Welch

“You’re in Ashley, Pennsylvania...a hell hole,” says Nathan.

Nathan doesn’t recognize the man as he grabs his shoulders and helps him to stand. “Get outta here before we call the cops,” he threatens. Nathan’s mother shakes her head and covers her face with her palm.

The man staggers on the way to his car and Nathan’s mother looks up to yell, “You make sure you thank God. You should be happy to be alive!” Sadie begins to bark from the basement.

The man stops. “Lady...I’d rather be dead. Put some flowers on my grave. I won’t see them anyway.”

Nathan glances towards his mother, her morning cup of coffee settling in her bladder, and watches the color drain from her skin, from her green eyes. As he is thinking of something to say, Nathan remembers a De Niro line, a quotation that has been stuck in his head all morning. Quietly, he turns to his mother, his shocked and pale-faced mother, and says, “Someday a real rain will come and wash all this *scum* off the streets.”

Jeffrey Ford



“Tuck it and Roll it off the Highway to Tomorrow”

Mariah Welch

He gave me a tape of Joy Division

At, or in, actually, inside of a coffee shop, I'm sitting right behind a woman, or a girl, that I met a couple of times at parties. We both have some things in common like an affinity for animal rights and maybe she cares about calories as much as I do but probably not.

A couple of minutes ago I was standing in a line. I don't think I stand straight enough and I'm more than aware of my poor posture. She walks in and it was just freezing cold outside so I take my glasses off and fix my hair a little bit. I've seen her here before and it's been awkward talking and right now it's awkward because I don't have my glasses on because they've fogged up and I'm trying to clean them with the corner of my scarf but the fringes keep getting in the way. I'm not as blind as I say I am and when I see her we smile at each other like we're friends but really I just met her two or three times at some parties and know that she likes to eat cantaloupe and strawberries and I think blueberries.

Anyway, I buy my coffee, medium and dark, and I smile at the barista because he knows by now that I don't need room for cream or sugar and sometimes he charges me thirty cents less than my coffee should actually cost. Also, sometimes he gives me free refills.

I grab a table that's already taken by an Asian girl and she tells me that she will be leaving soon and some guy is sitting alone at a table looking at his phone but I try not to talk to anyone at all. Even if part of me thinks he has nice lips.

A good song comes on and the lyrics are about love, which is something that I have been experiencing quite a bit of lately and it makes me smile. The iPod keeps playing a pretty decent shuffle and my phone is dead so I actually listen to it. My coffee binge has started to give me the coffee jitters and sometimes I shake my legs and feel the rubber soles of my boots rub against a neat, wooden chair.

I need to know what time it is and this girl is sitting right in front of me and I know her name is Marissa. I know her boyfriend's name, I know her boyfriend's brother's name, what she dressed up as for Halloween, and I know that she is more confident and social than I will ever be because she is wearing a white t-shirt with a neck that is wide enough to drop off of her right shoulder. A pink bra strap screams wildly there. Still, I don't ask the time and I get up to use the restroom but my bladder isn't even full and I actually just want to pull my pants up without worrying about anyone staring at me. In the bathroom I lift my shirt and take a look at my ribs to see if they are showing any more prominently than they did yesterday but I know they probably aren't because after I got home I ate three pieces of bread instead of only two and I didn't even bother or worry about purging after that. I frown at myself in the mirror and button my pants swearing that tonight I will only eat green vegetables and not even that many of them because I honestly don't deserve to eat when I look like this.

I can feel half of a grapefruit breaking down in my stomach from this morning and I still

Mariah Welch

don't know what time it is so I just sit back and hope that no one tries to start small talk because I am honestly not in the best mood today.

I finish the last sip of my coffee, cold and bitter, and secretly listen to my neighbor-table dwellers speak about their knowledge of poetry and:

"People only like Joy Division because they have to like Joy Division. They know they're a band everyone is supposed to like."

"So, I need to like Joy Division? I only like one of their albums."

"Well, they only have two...and they're both incredible."

"I think I like *Closer*."

"*Closer* is amazing."

I smile because I love Joy Division and I want to say something about how I just changed my laptop background to an image of Ian Curtis but I don't and I think that this man, actually boy or guy or even dude, doesn't really like Joy Division as much as he says he does because he forgot to mention their two song EP that has the song "Atmosphere" on it (which is probably underrated when it comes to Joy Division songs) and he probably knows all of the lyrics to the song "Disorder" and he probably thinks that New Order sucks.

I remember thinking that a guy working at my grocery store's deli counter was attractive and when we finally started talking in real life, his Facebook status was about New Order but someone said something like:

"New Order is the poor man's Joy Division," and the deli guy responded with something like:

"Joy Division is the depressed man's New Order."

I think that might be true but in my kitchen I am just as happy dancing around with pots and pans to "Perfect Kiss" by New Order as I am to any Joy Division song, so I guess I can't really prove that. Even to myself.

And the deli guy I thought was attractive cut off his long, sloppy, almost-dreaded hair on the day before we actually hung out in real life and when I went to open the door to let him inside, I think the spark was gone. I barely even knew him but I told him about my grandmother and my hometown and later, on my bed, he put his arm around my waist and tried to kiss me but it didn't feel right having his hand there and his mouth tasted like meat and cigarettes and it was certainly not a "Perfect Kiss". When I see him now at the deli, I wave and smile and sometimes nod and I usually wonder if he thought my breath tasted like vegetables and coffee. I guess I'll never ask or know.

Someone once told me, when I went to Bible camp, that if you commit suicide, you go to hell and that Catholics go to hell because they aren't Christians and that to become a Christian you need to get saved and that to get saved you need to accept the Holy Spirit into your

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soul or body and I tried to explain to my camp counselor that Catholicism is Christianity and that I had drank the Lord's blood in the form of wine and eaten host which was pretty much the same idea, but she still tried to convert me. I was eleven and I wasn't even old enough to consider myself a Catholic but I had read the Bible and the next day, I got in trouble for wearing shorts that were too short (because God doesn't like when we show our skin to him).

At the coffee shop I wonder if Ian Curtis believed in any sort of God or if he had accepted the Holy Spirit or had sparked a serious conversation with the flames of a burning bush in a non-metaphorical kind of way. And I hope that Heaven is fake and that I'm right about being an atheist because I can't even begin to imagine Ian Curtis burning in the hot fires of hell because if he couldn't take living on earth how could he possibly stand the anxiety and fear he must be dealing with down there? I wonder how hell is affecting his lyrics and his voice and his opinions and I try to imagine hell's version of Joy Division and then I think that if New Order went to hell they would probably just sound identical to Joy Division (that is: "Joy Division is hell's New Order").

"Do you know what time it is?" I finally bring myself to ask her and she tells me that it's 12:35 and I know that I should probably eat something when I feel nothing but dark black coffee splashing around in my stomach but I won't because this girl is thinner and prettier than I am and I was supposed to meet someone here at 12:30. She hasn't shown up yet and my phone is dead so I haven't been able to contact her and she might not even be okay (or alive) so I just sit in the corner and hope that no one bothers me or starts any small talk.

A woman sips coffee in a red coat and I can actually call her a woman because she is older than forty and I suppose age is what constitutes womanhood in my eyes and I don't consider myself to be a woman. I notice the woman glancing at me and pretend that she didn't glance at me but she catches me glancing at her and I watch her scribble something down on a crumpled piece of receipt paper and all of a sudden the happy folk music stops playing, the lights shut off, the scream of the milk steamer silences and no one knows what to do or how to react because none of us even want to talk to or confront each other at all.

The wind blows outside and the thunder claps and there is a strike of lightning so bright that I close my eyes and remember that I don't even own a pair of sunglasses but I probably don't really need to spend money on something like that when I have conveniently been born with a fine set of eyelids and when I open them, Ian Curtis' ghost is illuminated in the middle of the room, glowing like an angel with his giant golden microphone and no one even recognizes him at first because his face is full and his eyes are well-rested and he is smiling and he says:

"Odd question, but does anyone here know how to play guitar?" and I raise my hand because I want to impress Ian Curtis' ghost.

"Come here, then," Ian Curtis' ghost says and I join him in the middle of the room where

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he has a guitar waiting for me that I pick up and strap to my back and play a few chords on.

The woman in the red jacket looks up at me from her table and hands me the crumpled receipt I had spied her scribbling on and I read what she had been scribbling and it is the numbers and lines of a short guitar riff.

"I want you to play that," Ian Curtis' ghost says with a head that nods at the receipt paper and we start to play and he starts to sing and I notice that this entire time I haven't noticed Ian Curtis' pearly white set of wings and the fact that we are playing a New Order song that is so upbeat that everyone in the coffee shop has gotten up to dance. Colored lights flash and people begin to sweat and smile and laugh and pull up their loudly colored bra straps and I think:

"New Order is Heaven's Joy Division," and I giggle when my neighbor-table-dweller-Joy Division fans shout out, "play 'Disorder'!" and even though Ian Curtis doesn't have hollow eyes or sloppy hair or a belly full of drugs, we play "Disorder" because Ian Curtis' ghost is kind and good and crowd pleasing.

Everyone sings along knowing that Joy Division is one of those bands that they are supposed to like and before the lights come back on, the guitar fades and everything fades but for a second, Ian Curtis' ghost and I can hear the whole world singing:

"I've got the spirit

Lose the feeling

Let it out somehow," and Marissa repeats that it is 12:35 but nothing makes sense enough to believe in anything for certain.

Stephanie Wilkie

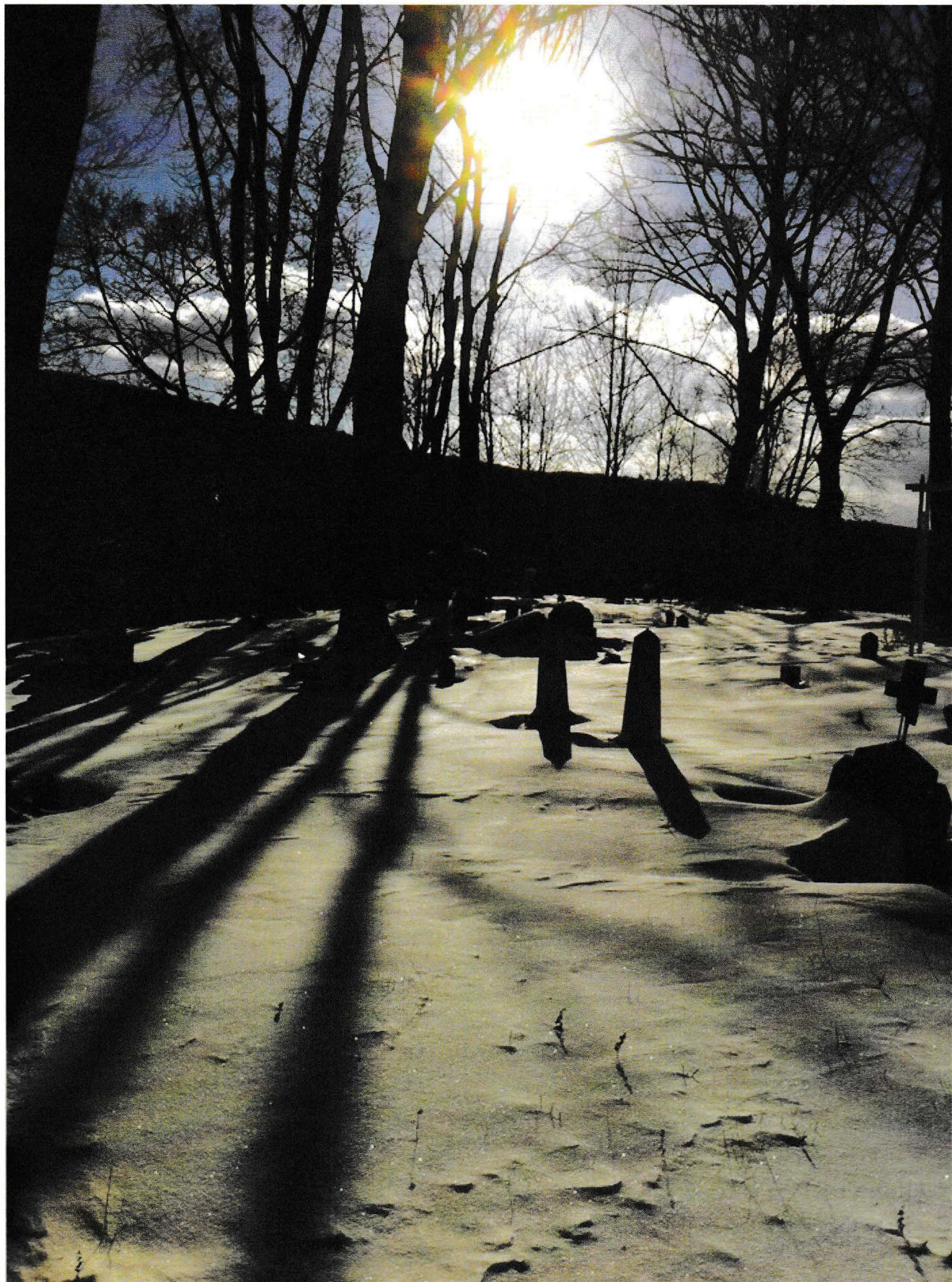
Damnation

Simplicity, simplicity
Life often lacks simplicity
Always caught up in
What's going down
Never a break from
Anything, but breathing, breathing
Deep breaths act as an escape
That only lasts a short while
Before the suffering returns

What is it good for?

Advocates of long, strenuous battles for some kind of solution
Following suit for an answer from self-destruction
But nothing comes from the midst of confusion.
One after another, a finger is pointed
To each and every man who is accused for someone else's crime.
The struggle for normalcy has long since passed
The answer now is to adjust to the adversities of society.
Giving and taking and the war is just beginning to heat.
Prisons are over-capacitated, war zones are over-stocked and rifles are over-loaded.
In truth, we are all guilty
For either ignoring the cries for help or smacking down the hand of justice.
Revolution is at a halt, and we are all to blame.
When every man is setting his perspective to zero,
It's hard to move on.

Bethany Guarilia



“Cast a Long Shadow”

Ashley Zerfoss

Strawberry

The following is a conversation

Between a **BOY** and a *GIRL*

And tells how they fell in love:

Hey! Hey! It's me!

Hey! I didn't recognize you at first.

It's okay!

How have you been?

I haven't seen you since—

—Math class.

It was fun last semester,

But I'm glad my math classes are finished.

Really?

What major are you?

English. Why?

So...you, like, read books...

For fun?

Yes.

You're a Communications Major?

Yes. Why?

So you, like,

listen to the radio and watch T.V.

To learn, right?

Huh, I guess I do.

You're smart...

And you smell like strawberries.

Thank you... I suppose.

My lip-gloss smells like strawberries.

Oh...

Does it taste like strawberries, too?

Well, not exactly like them

But you could say it

Tastes like strawberries.

I don't believe you.

--Here they **BOY** kissed the *GIRL* and her strawberry lips--

Wow...it DOES taste like strawberries!

Was that some scheme to get me

To like you?

No! Why?

No reason,

But it worked.

Sara Pisarchick

1856

shrill whistle

little protection

danger

new idows



Sara Pisarchick



Sara Pisarchick



Sara Pisarchick



Author Biographies

(to submit for next semester: send you poetry, prose, and art to magazine@wilkes.edu)

Staff

Miranda Baur tends to have a hard time following directions.

Ashley Bringmann says 2-4-6-8 (fill in the blank).

Holly Evans likes to say NO!

Jeffrey Ford was first discovered in the wilds of Australia by a National Geographic expedition. After years of being raised by wild Wallabies, the young bush-critter was cleaned up and introduced into the world of television production. One day, he consumed a whole plate of fried Oreos and suffered a sugar shock. He then hijacked a hovercraft and fled into the night.

Bethany Guarilia is a junior who will one day impart her knowledge of Biology to the brilliant minds of the future. In other words, she can't wait to become a high school teacher. She loves music, sushi, cats, and literature, and hopes to be a published author someday.

Justin W. Jones accomplished his three-year goal of getting another short story into Manuscript. Now he just runs this thing.

On May 21st, **Sonja Heisey** will begin her career as a part-time restaurant secret shopper, travel blog corespondent, and snail extraordinaire.

Peter Polyak is a Sagittarius and enjoys frequent long walks on the beach and spooning. He also enjoys playing guitar, reading about psychology and neuroscience and being a good person.

Faculty Advisors

Along with advising the Manuscript Society, **Mischelle Anthony** is Associate Professor of English at Wilkes specializing in poetry and eighteenth-century women writers of gothic and sentimental prose. Mischelle is founder and coordinator of Luzerne County's Poetry In Transit program that places local writing and visual art on public buses.

Sean Kelly chose not to brag about himself.

Writers & Artists

Joseph Chrismer is a student at Wilkes University.

David Cook is a junior majoring in English and Communication Studies at Wilkes University but finds such categorization to mean little in the “grand scheme of things” as he so often says. Cook, instead, prefers to be known through a singular, personal identity which stretches beyond all hierarchical naming systems which destabilizes even the most elaborate codified power structures. Additionally, Cook has been known to write things which make no sense, taking pleasure in knowing somebody had to go through the effort of reading it.

Kirstin Cook is a communication studies major at Wilkes, class of 2013. She is from Windham, Maine. She is very involved on campus, taking on many positions such as News Editor of the school paper, The Beacon, host on the television show Wilkes World, host and coordinator of the radio talk show Angles, logistics coordinator of the Tom Bigler Journalism Conference, telecommunications assistant at for the Wilkes’ admissions department, actress in the student-produced film “Gray” and athlete on the women’s varsity cross-country team.

Anastasia Dudzinski, a New Jersey native, has been writing since she was twelve. Beyond writing poems and stories, Anastasia knits, photographs, tends plants, and keeps tropical fish. On a rainy day you can find her snoozing in bed or walking around outside. She will always be a die hard fan of Shel Silverstein (who is enjoyable reading with a bag of candy and a blanket).

Jaclyn Englehardt is only here because Justin W. Jones made her, so blame him.

Marcia K. Farrell, self-proclaimed yarn sorceress, Rushdie devotee, and Baking Empress of pudding cookies, occasionally writes creatively in her free time. That is, whenever the Maggie decides that she is allowed to do anything other than pay attention to such a pugnacious pug (which is not often!).

Jessica George is a sophomore Spanish major and Education minor. She does not write a lot but when she does it is to express a strong emotion she is feeling at the time whether extreme joy, frustration, or sadness. To Jess, language is like song without the music and she thoroughly enjoys using it as a release.

Milana Grigoriev is a Freshman studying Spanish Education. She had a strong passion for photography and would love to pursue a future in photography. As of now, she takes pictures of animals, people, objects, & nature. She would love to travel in the future to enhance her per

spective of art and ultimately improve her skills.

Erin Guydish is currently pursuing her MA in literature and criticism at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She hopes to survive the apocalypse of the information age and continue to examine the arbitrariness of reality and the systems, which create and maintain them. She also strives to promote the position of confessional poetry to touch spaces where most authors and readers often refuse to go. Perhaps she would like to be an active member in today's apocalypse by deconstructing artificial intelligence and emphasizing emotional outreach.

Sabrina Hannon is a Wilkes Alumni who is currently working on her Masters in Women's Studies at Southern Connecticut State University. She plans on using her photography to distract people while she takes over the world.

Johnathan Haydock is an easy-going person. He loves to work on and with computers especially when it comes to 3D work. He likes witty comments and joking around with friends. Johnathan has a very concrete view of things and uses his view to make jokes.

Virginia Hults, a.k.a. Ginny, is a Wilkes Alumni living in New York who is dedicated to the task of acquiring as many books as possible to fill her future library, despite the limited space currently available. She maintains that any flat surface can be used as a bookshelf and is deaf to the protests her printed companions incur. Also, her freelance editorial services are available to any and all authors in need, in case anyone would like to help her get the aforementioned library.

Anne Janecek is a herbivore living in north east Pennsylvania. She sleeps in a zebra tent and had toast and a banana for breakfast today. She might graduate this may with a degree in integrative media with a cognitive minor in art. Please do not point out the stains in clothes.

Sheri Jones is influenced by nature, love, and the simplicity in everyday surroundings. She believes every little thing, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, has some greater purpose. You just have to see it through the proper perspective.

When **Jami Kali** pushed through the shop door, a bald psychic with a long, red beard and a speech impediment greeted her. For a twenty-dollar fee, he took her hand and explained that her boyfriend was gay. He slammed his fist on the table and shouted about soul mates, claiming that two people with identical cosmic DNA can have a ton of fun, sure, but they ultimately aid in one another's destruction. A week later, she came home early and caught her boyfriend in \

bed with that same psychic, arguing over whose fault it was that they couldn't afford a cruise to the Bahamas in their previous life. So, to be brief, Jami doesn't trust anyone and spends a lot of her free time writing.

Sean LaFleur is a senior who will be graduating with degrees in Criminology, Psychology, and Spanish. He took the photos while on a trip with Alternative Spring Break in Costa Rica. He is stronger than Justin W. Jones and Matt Kovalcik, despite his lack of beardage and slightly smaller stature. Koval and Jones are weak souls who will be greatly missed by Sean post-graduation.

Rob Noone is a 2009 graduate of Wilkes University, winner of the 2008 Promax BDA North American Student Design Award, and is currently employed as a advertising graphic designer at the Scranton Times.

Todd Jeffrey Oravic is one of the sophomore English majors at Wilkes University, located in the city of Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County (18706), Pennsylvania, in the Eastern Standard Time Zone of the United States of America, located on the North American continent, resting upon the North American tectonic plate, between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans on the Earth, located -- along with seven other planets and one extra extraterrestrial object that used to be a planet but is not anymore -- in the solar system of an insignificant yellow dwarf star (the Sun) situated at the edge of the Milky Way galaxy, a member of a group of seventeen galaxies known as "The Local Group," somewhere in the realm of this vast, expansive Universe. He can also write good.

Sara Pisarchick earned a BFA in Communication Design from Kutztown University, worked at Sposto Productions as a designer for clients such as Suzuki, Verizon and Wilson Leather. She then moved on to become an in-house Multimedia designer at Paul Frederick Menstyle. She earned her MFA in graphic design from Boston University while teaching as an adjunct instructor and managing the web and design department of a science and theology publication. Upon her move back to Pennsylvania she took the position of Art Director at Motor Trend Auto Shows. Entering the field of higher education full-time, she taught at the Art Institute of York, PA before working at Wilkes University. Currently she does instructional design consulting for the build of online courses and just wrapped up the co-authorship of an advertising and design textbook through MAVCC that will be published this spring.

Erin Robinson is a secret.

Courtney Sperger is a Senior Biology Major who spends her spare time delving into the arts.

Dr. Chad Stanley teaches English literature, hopefully with greater effectiveness than he creates it. He wishes to thank students from his Fall 2010 Modern British Poetry class, as teaching this course inspired many, many hours of creative writing.

Kenneth Stucker disappeared.

Joseph Waichulis failed to send in his bio as promised, but enjoys spending time doodling unicorns with Justin W. Jones.

Mariah Welch knew about that band you like way before you did and yes, their first album was way better.

Stephanie Wilkie is an underpaid, overworked and underfed young woman just looking for a daily dose of sunshine to clear up the grey skies.

Sara Wolman is a senior Political Science major with a minor in International Studies. She has always enjoyed doing artwork of any kind, especially drawing and painting. Sara graduates in May of this year and has just accepted a position in AmeriCorps with the Mount Adams Center in the Pacific Northwest, where she will be engaging in environmental work and education.

Ashley Zerfoss is an English Major with a Minor in Secondary Education and a member of the class of 2013. In addition to writing her fabulous poetry, Ashley is also a staff member of the Inkwell Quarterly, the Beacon Crossword writer, and the Manager of the Wilkes University Chorus (in other words, she never sleeps). Her future aspirations include teaching English to the bright young minds of the future, finishing the novel she started in middle school, and changing the world one smile at a time.



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