

# Gardy Loo

James Madison University

Fall 2011





## Dear Folks,

It's hard to believe this will be my last Fall semester with Gardy Loo. Looking back on the years I've worked on the staff and watched this magazine grow reminds me of Gardy Loo's theme for this semester: Transcendence. Each issue we aim to transcend in excellence from the publication before. Long hours, cold coffee, and tired eyes are an easy sacrifice to make that goal happen.

I would like to thank everyone involved with Gardy Loo's production. I've been lucky to work with the dedicated students in our four committees: Design, Writing, Art/Photography, and PR. Gardy Loo couldn't have happened without each student's efforts. A special thanks to the assistant editor, Ansley, for helping to run meetings, logistics, and give moral support. I would also like to thank the Media Board for allotting us funds to stay in print this semester, as well as to Rose Gray and Laurie Kutchins for their sound advice and efficiency with paperwork. Finally, thank you to everyone who submitted work. Gardy Loo would not be possible without the incredible talents of JMU students.

And so I leave you with a quote to sum up the theme of our magazine this issue. The philosopher Seneca said transcendence is, "The power of the mind to be unconquerable." Our minds are our own to think and make decisions and we can transcend with each encounter. Such an experience may come from a story's unsettling character or even a provoking picture. So be empowered by the work of these artists as you read through the pages. We hope you enjoy the trip.

Sincerely,  
Rosie Grant

## Dear reader,

Having worked with some of the most talented, dedicated, inspiring people for two years now in production of this magazine, I've been able to step back and appreciate how important things like this magazine are. Gardy Loo may be a completely unknown name that I find myself replacing with just "The Literary Arts Magazine" when I mention it to other people, but it's not about the name, or the popularity. This magazine represents everything that we, as college students, shouldn't take for granted at this time in our life. It's a collection of beauty produced by the people around us. It's a piece of evidence that some of those people you pass walking to class, hidden behind sunglasses and between earbuds, are deeper than their major and their favorite kind of music, the two questions that we use to quickly define and categorize the people we meet.

The art in this magazine was chosen for you. So soak these pieces up as much as you can- as much as it takes for you to get inside these artists' heads. Surprise yourself with how much you can relate to the kids you don't know but walk past on a daily basis. I mean, this is college. Connect with people, for God's sake.

Enjoy, my friends.

Much love & many Gardy Loos,  
Ansley

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*Drift* Julie Rae Powers



# Silence

Please—don't speak.

Silence is my favorite sound.

It's when all the truths

too grand for words

find ways to express themselves.

So please—listen.

Cause I'm saying it all,

everything I've been dying to tell you,

in this silence.

Can you hear it?

Grayden Uyeda





*Studying Soundly* Rebekah Sipe

*Susannah's Song* Rebekah Sipe








*In the Reading Corner* Rebekah Sipe

## A Snapshot: Grad Kaitlyn Schmit

In the background, swarms of relatives dressed in Sunday's best pose with teenagers in black robes. The lucky few adorn golden stoles, but all sport bright smiles for scrapbook memories.

And there is Dad, beaming as he plants a kiss on my sister's cheek, wraps his marine-muscle arms around her petite frame, and squeezes so to eliminate the space between their two beating hearts. Bre is, of course, center stage, quite literally that day—the additional, golden honor of the Valedictorian medal dancing around her perfect breasts as she walks, as if to say not only is my owner brilliant, but check out this body. Behind this scene, there I stand with crossed arms, my boobs barely filling out Bre's hand-me-down dress. I stare off into the distance, perhaps looking at other families, perhaps thinking of the celebration-dinner planned later that day. I love pot roast. If I only knew that Mom would stop cooking once her baby left for Duke, I definitely would have had seconds.





*The Night is Agonizing* Julie Rae Powers





*Aphrodite* Jeanne Roberts



*Berries* Donovan Seow



# Sirena

Michael Critzer

I do not remember the circumstances surrounding my initial decision. There are things one loses in the arms of a lover. I recall only despair—despair and loneliness—great that I strove like a madman to remedy it. Such a thing could not be left to fate. I realized the soul's truest companion—its mate—could only be found within, where the need is great enough to define the smallest detail. I had to trace her like a puzzle piece from the impression of its mate—from the impression of my desire. The knowledge of her was already in my psyche, somewhere deep in my own primordial hunger. I had but to access her, to create her, to give her life.

If at any point I would have stopped to consider my actions, they would have indeed seemed ludicrous, so I did not. But before you dream of corpses strewn together or some mechanical consciousness, I must put an end to your wild imaginings. This is no fiction for Halloween, and I am as real as you or anyone around you. To be honest, I never really had a plan, just a purpose—a passionate, unrelenting purpose.

I began by writing streams of consciousness, spiraling down in their focus, attempting to summon her nature, her attributes. As the image of her formed more completely in my mind, I sketched her physical form. I discovered each curve and line of her—her dark red hair, the sardonic arch of her eyebrow when she smiled. . . I recreated that image over and over with pencils, paints and software until I knew every secret of her body. She was my perfection, my Sirena. At length, I composed narratives in which she and I starred, from my

perspective at first, but as I came to know her more intimately, she wrote from hers.

We began our courtship in earnest then, with our times together bound in an old leather journal. Our imagination was the only limit. We picnicked in castle ruins, made love on desert sands, and explored dense jungles and caverns where no man had yet set foot. And she still managed to surprise me, in spite of her origins. It was she who suggested the doll, a life size vessel for her, a representative avatar by which we might elevate our relationship from joint composition to real time, tangible converse.

She was inside of me,  
and therefore she was truly  
anywhere I chose to see her, but  
I craved to see, to touch, to know  
her encased in living flesh.

I spared no expense. I discovered a manufacturer that catered to sex fetishes with life-size latex dolls. I believe I unsettled them by actually arriving at their factory. Their clientele, I gathered, desired more discretion, but my cause was noble, and I had no need to be ashamed. I had to pay them extra to follow my very specific designs, but what is money compared to the soul's happiness? I demanded to oversee each and every step of the process—too much hair here, a slight freckle there, mind the proportions! By the end, they were desperate to be rid of me. I do not believe the average person can stay prolonged in the presence of such concentrated, essential

passion as my Sirena had awakened in me.

I laid her gently in the back seat of my car and, once home, carried her across the threshold like a newlywed, though she was my oldest companion. I cannot describe the exhilaration of that first night—sitting physically next to her, engaged in conversation, yet now able to squeeze her hand for emphasis, to brush the hair from her face as I gazed into her eyes. It took some adjustment, of course, but I soon learned to see my dear Sirena in the glass eyes of that doll just as surely as I had seen her in my mind's eye. Yet with time, I found myself wanting even more.

She was opposed at first, but she eventually came around, though I suspect now it was due more to my obstinacy than to any real change of mind. I became greedy. The touch of cold latex and the expressionless face of the doll was no longer good enough, no matter how much I knew she was truly there. She was inside of me, and therefore she was truly anywhere I chose to see her, but I craved to see, to touch, to know her encased in living flesh. If I had then known what price I would have to pay for that dream, I would have banished it from my mind at its inception.

Our plan was to find a suitable vessel, some sweet, lonely girl—not too strong of mind. I would court her, keep her interested, and all the while I would concentrate on seeing my Sirena within her. I would pour my beloved from my mind into a body whose feeble will she could easily master. I knew my soul's companion would be up for the task, and then we could be together in this physical world just as soundly as destiny had bound us in spirit.



## Our imagination was the only limit.

We settled on a young woman we met through a dating service. Rosa was slightly insecure and had just the right touch of desperation. She was eager to please and hung on my every word. There was some friction between my Sirena and me then. She was scared to lose me to an outsider, but my attention to Rosa, as pleasant as her devotion was to my ego, was strictly procedural. I directed her in the role of my better half, subtlety at first, allowing Sirena's expressions to play on my own face until they were unconsciously mimicked on hers. But with time I became bolder. At my suggestion, Rosa began to dye her blond hair red with just the right highlight, to pluck her eyebrows just so, to pout with her lips when she wanted something of me; she began to read the right books and, eventually, to think the right thoughts.

She would thrill under my praises, and I almost felt a fatherly pride in her progress, but it did not matter, for soon Rosa began to fade, and my Sirena began to grow within her. It was in small things at first—a glance, a turn of voice. But soon she began to say things—Sirena things, in Sirena ways. It was thrilling to watch, but a hard process to endure, for as more of her became present in Rosa, just as much became absent inside of me. There was a loss of intimacy. Part of me longed for the days when we would sit hunched over a blank page, scrolling out our dreams with a single mind. But I consoled myself with the knowledge that I would soon wrap her arms around my body as her consciousness once enveloped mine. Growth in a relationship

is painful, I told myself, but with every loss, something is gained.

In less time than I had imagined, the process was nearly complete. I had moved Rosa into my home, preparing for the full birth of Sirena at any point. I tried to stay with her as much as possible to hasten the transformation—to will it to completion. I would only leave her alone as she read or slept, for I knew my Sirena was working independently now. She would be hastening to return to me and would need her own time with Rosa to set in, so I concealed the latex doll in a compartment beneath our bed and encouraged Rosa to lounge in the bedroom as much as possible. But it was at the end of one such time that all of my hopes were dashed.

I had left Rosa in meditation over a poem, Sirena's favorite poem, about death and resurrection. I had retired from the constant focus of my labor to sleep and regain my strength. When I awoke, I walked into the bedroom and found Rosa sitting across from Sirena's former vessel. The doll was lifeless, mouth gaping, as in a silent scream, its arms strewn out over the side of the chair where it had been thrown. One glimpse at Rosa's face told the tale.

She was no more. Staring out at me wildly through those eyes was my beautiful Sirena. The moment I had longed for was then at hand—the moment when I would know my transcendent lover in a primal passion that only the confines of flesh could afford. But it was ruined—ruined by the look of terror on her face. As she stood there in flesh and blood over her lifeless, synthetic doppelganger, with

the same hair and eyes, the same makeup and dress, it was too much for her—one transition too many for her precious psyche.

She began to scream as she looked from me to the doll and back again, and she would not stop the bloodcurdling cry of mortification. I tried to calm her with my tone, with my touch, but she shrank from me like a wide-eyed banshee. She backed into the bed and fell upon it, and I had to rush to keep her from sliding off of the other end and fleeing the room. It devastated me to see the distress inside of my Sirena, and I cursed myself for my determination—for not listening to her cautious admonishment. But part of me, I'm ashamed to say, simply raged. She was ruining everything!

All of our work—all of our careful planning was destroyed! Even the precious times we had in her initial creation would be robbed from us. I needed to make her see, to save her from herself. She needed to stop screaming! I held her close to my chest, pinning her flailing arms and muffling her cries.

I attempted to soothe her, held her so closely, so tightly, until at length she ceased her hysterics and lay still. I raised myself away from her then, and her wide eyes stared at me with horror—a silent horror with a silent scream—gaping past me to its reflection on the doll.

THE END









*Ride Free* Jonathan Blair



# Why Do I Fear You, Sleep?

Ryan Lester



*Sisyphus* Madelyn Wigle

Why do I fear you, Sleep?

When your supple fingers loosen my buttons  
Why do I brush your hands away?

You only come with gentle invitation  
But I callously spurn your advances

So I resign myself to open eyes  
And a restless mind  
With no strange and illusory dreams  
For a sweet escape;  
And I endure another light  
With my wits in shambles  
Bereft--O! bereft  
Of your healing presence

Sleep,  
I welcome you into my bed  
Be my guide  
and I will follow your moves  
Let me drift in your arms  
And shift into wondrous fantasies  
That daylight fails to see

Mind,  
quiet yourself...  
And let the somnolence--  
Shh! Hush now--  
And let the somnolence  
close your...tired little eyes...  
cover you like...like a warm...blanket...



*Bloodline* Madelyn Wigle



**The bench was the same avocado green it had always been.** When I was twelve, I'd steal cigarettes from Harper's Grocery and ride my bike to smoke there. It was a ten-speed Schwinn my brother left me when he went away to school. Harvard Law. I stopped cold turkey when he died of lung cancer his junior year. I used to smoke two packs a day before I'd ride home. Outside, I could hear the low hum of the machines, the metallic sound of quarters. "Just another establishment with coin-operated machines," he used to say. "Unconscionable" I'd reply with a grin. He was always teaching me to say big words. One day I told him I met Jesus at the Laundromat and he just sat there cold.

## Laundromat

Logan Hill







O remember us fleeing  
a dead garden in your yard,  
aprons hanging on the porch,  
cats puking on the couch,  
and we'd go to the club  
and grab cups and boys and each other  
knowing another tomorrow  
is ten hours on concrete,  
sweat licking our backs  
and stroking our tits  
for gawking toothless supervisors.  
Talk me to the car  
to smokey seats,  
irreverent animals,  
and brutal time card.  
Convince me.  
I see your porch light  
through sagging boney trees  
and hoot and holler,  
hanging out a car window,  
white trash mating calls  
at cousins dropping  
from tree stands  
and scattering like whitetails.

We cackle in cold sheets,  
forcing the aspirin  
to wake to the boss  
that throbs until it grinds  
in the torn red uniform  
for wrecking tomorrow  
and so many machines  
of blade, edge, gear, and heat  
that tear, crush, gnash, and melt.  
Collect me.  
I'm two bottles ahead  
and I still taste boy,  
marshmallow in a microwave  
puffing out of t-shirts,  
gushing through my knuckles.  
I still speak  
our language of stumbling  
where your horses cuss  
and chickens groan  
outside your windows  
where possums wheeze  
and bottles fall at night  
from stiff broken hands  
that scratch a half-rotten porch

## Missy's House Chloe Carlson

where we watch mountains bruise and blush  
over the yard of oil slick feathers  
from Eli the rooster  
who screams at the sun  
but is no match  
for water-proof boots.  
You put a bucket in my lap  
to catch all the things  
I must say  
before I transfer  
to feed new machines  
of ink, paper, stone steps,  
neat rows of raised hands,  
and halls of rushing gears  
where I am screwed  
into a place  
with no buckwheat pancakes,  
our lazy boy litanies,  
flogging berry Boone's Farm,  
or flatfooting at sunset  
so I swallow our tongue  
and they can't have it.



# Good Advice

Chloe Carlson

I should listen to my goddamned dreams  
like some tree-humping crystal-wearing space cadet hippy.  
But we just laughed when I told you  
about one that starts really nice  
with us moving slowly in the dark.  
Then the soft sweating skin of your back  
becomes cool firm scales under my hands  
and each time you slide out and away  
their tight edges scrape my thighs.  
The truth spreads across your shoulders  
and a ribbon tongue wraps around my throat  
as you rasp, "Will it be all right?"  
"Yes," I whisper. "I can love you like this."  
But something tried its damndest  
and would not give up on me.  
Tonight you and I are children  
and we run and scream through summer  
until our voices are sand stuck between our teeth.  
So I lead you into my grandmother's kitchen  
where wet glasses of cold water glisten  
on the counters, the table, even the windowsill...  
I push a glass out of your hand  
but you shove me so impossibly hard  
I can't stop you from drinking another.  
Glass shatters on the floor and you leave me a child,  
growing up, up, and up into an angry drunk man,  
pulling me through broken glass and vodka.  
We don't laugh at this one  
and you tell me I watch too many shitty movies  
so I watch you.





*Untitled* Lauren Van Reesema



# Wild Advice

*Eternity Forbids Thee* Zach Souliere





# Drawer Full of Memories

Girl One gave me a watch  
Because that's all I would do.  
She was my first and  
I was enchanted by every move.  
We'd talk and talk—that's all it was—  
But I swear I was in love.  
Funny that we ran out of time  
While I was looking at my watch.

Girl Two gave me a picture frame  
That after a year and change  
Still remains empty.  
No picture—perfect, freeze-frame  
Smiles masking the pain,  
Photo with her face.  
Just an empty case she gave  
Where her heart should've been.

Girl Three gave me nothing  
And that's all there is to know.

Girl Four gave me her love,  
Which I used, abused,  
Lied to and buried.  
I still see the scraps  
Of what's left  
Strewn around my room  
As letters and clothes.

So to you I will give a gift,  
Because in my past  
I've been selfish.  
I'll love with all my heart,  
Brain, body, and whatever else you  
want.  
In hopes that together  
We can spend the rest of our lives  
Intertwined.

Graydon Uyeda

## Sunday Morning

Graydon Uyeda

they fall from the sky--  
angels sent to wash away my sins.  
no two alike.  
each taking the weight of the world  
and removing it from my shoulders.  
time slows to a crawl  
and the scene has never been more  
serene.  
enveloped by the world  
but completely alone  
in a solitary reflection  
on what I am,  
the facade rinsed away.  
i am me,  
shivering,  
cold,  
wet,  
and exposed.  
a tragedy,  
whose flaws the gods lament.  
they cry,  
for my humanity  
is beautiful.  
i am ME.  
shivering,  
cold,  
wet,  
exposed.



Just now  
The extra pillow I always throw to the side  
Fell unexpectedly and I thought for a moment  
It was you.  
I listened for breath, waited  
For the slow rise and fall,  
Waning and waxing  
Of your double mooned breasts,  
Recounted the sun-spotted constellations  
Freckled into memory;  
I waited  
For soft, shaven legs,  
and lips, orbiting,  
moisture warm on my neck.  
I waited for pulse and rhythm,  
Elegiac when neither came,  
My foot, hiding in holes.





*Lipstick Lullabies* Zach Souliere

## Haiku from Robin

Kelly Ostergren

You are some kind of batman  
and I know better  
than to think you're a villain.





*Let it Burn* Sam Leonetti

*Life in Dreams* Sam Leonetti







# A Mother's True Love

Alexandra Hickling

They Split  
He loves another  
She weeps in her misery  
He moves onto Another  
She holds her son close  
He takes her son away  
Her tears fall like a never ending rain  
He introduces her son to another  
She fears the very thought  
She prays it will not come to that  
He laughs, another laughs, and her son laughs  
She doesn't sleep, because when she dreams she sees him with another and her son  
Her son gets use to the idea  
He plans a meet  
She agrees in hopes of seeing a glimpse of her son  
Another comes along  
Her son's holding Another's hand  
She holds back tears  
Another looks up and smiles  
He looks her in the eye  
She keeps her eyes locked on her son, his little hand clasped in Another's hand  
He says something  
She doesn't hear  
Another says something  
She doesn't hear  
Her son looks up at Another and asks, "Mommy can I go play?"  
She hears, her blood turns cold  
Another looks up and smiles  
Tears fill...spill  
He tells her son to go play  
She stands stone still, watching as her son walks eagerly away without a word  
Her son plays  
She watches  
He places a hand on her shoulder, murmurs something  
She shutters, unable to speak  
Another stares at the ground  
He says something she doesn't quite catch  
But she knows  
She stares after her son  
He takes Another's hand and walks away toward her son  
Another picks her son up  
Her son looks up smiling into Another's face  
They walk away  
She stares after them  
She walks home in silence  
She continues to the roof  
She looks down, staring at a picture of the one that was once HER son  
The tears pour down... down... down like a never ending rain  
The image flutters away and so does...  
She.



I have been to the crossroads.  
This is what I saw: the green  
night eyes of a jealous lover  
fiery soul and heart in red sky

at the crossroads with the devil  
a fleeting chance a greatness  
sold my soul

I have been to the crossroads.  
This is what I heard: a pleading  
cry scream of desperate souls  
crickets chirping in vast cornfield  
nearby all the ears are listening

at the crossroads with the devil  
guilt always gets the best of me

I have been to the crossroads.  
This is what I taste: smoky sky  
fog cross burning black night  
I smell the flesh a cedar tree


at the crossroads with the devil  
crucified and gone I weep alone

I have been to the crossroads.  
This is all there is: one blind eye  
distant sea light wind that blows  
the devil back nobody was there

# Under Red Sky

Logan Hill





*ksddf* Julian Williams

Logan Hill, Julian Williams



la whistle in the black  
 awakes the pallid room,  
 its stubborn gloom,  
 shattering the illusion.  
 muscles moan,  
 shadows groan,  
 and i beg of gravity to fall.  
 i plead for the opiate dream,  
 until i slip away once more.]

~~~~~  
 oh step-worn cobblestones, oh familiar grime-filled crevices--  
 sing me to thy depths and cradle me beneath the feet of the restless  
 wanderer  
 below the creaking park benches and their pondering, prodding  
 inhabitants  
 among crumbling cellars and musty basements nestled in the knowing  
 dirt

with the rusting grates, the cigarette butts, and the mush of the season.  
 oh meandering after-dark breeze , oh rustling leaves--  
 sing me through the watchful alley to alight on a drooping telephone  
 line  
 where the crooked branches tangle with the fraying wires  
 and the invisible gas light ghosts hover above a heavy electric fug  
 as the droning traffic lights drudge through their drowsy ballet  
 oh stoic, creaking steeple, oh stale cement stairwell--  
 sing me to the quiet surface of the parking garage  
 where a solitary pickup truck sighs, forgotten for the night,  
 staring over the humble and clumsily patched quilt of faded rooftops,  
 all basking in the light of the one and only, strangely lonely moon.  
 oh tattered chain-link grid, oh lazy convenient store corner--  
 sing me down the slope that hides behind a gap in the fence,  
 sliding among the moss and silt, the trickling, lukewarm runoff,  
 to the ramshackle tarp shanties beneath a blanket of summer leaves,  
 tracing the indented trail carved by years of soot and spit from above.

## Your Hair was Red as Gypsy Fire

Logan Hill

*for grandad*

Placing the board on top of your grave,  
 we all took our own turns jumping; like  
 excited children at christmas or the  
 little school girl with braids in her hair.  
 They would trail upward as she ran through  
 the schoolyard. With horse hooves for slow  
 dancing, we packed down the sod  
 like horses, galloping towards the urn.  
 The boys in the cemetery were silent.  
 They are twins, the north and south poles.  
 They sat and listened to the deep hum  
 of cows and the low drum of the Gehl.  
 He must be harvesting, crop for the dead.  
 We each placed a bulb, a tulip or daisy,  
 as if to say his life was as bright as  
 our porcelain tears or as hot as a pelican  
 in flight; as if knowing he was tired,  
 a buffalo sleeping in fieldgrass.  
 Later I returned to find the flowers  
 that had grown, the remnants of this  
 sacred ground where, once, we danced  
 like gypsies around the fire of your hair.  
 It burns still in me.

*Campagna* Jeanne Roberts





oh seeping stone steps, oh night-blackened porthole--  
sing me round the lazily unwinding ceiling fan,  
where the jingling of tipsy keys in locks faintly echoes in the still  
and cafe ghosts melt and blur with curling, yellowed pages  
all drifting lightly in the pale peach breeze of flowering trees  
(but no.  
the horrible dusk.  
it looms.  
knowing and cruel.  
i fight the rise.  
i writhe  
i cling.  
to myself,  
to the place,  
to her.)  
a moment, a moment more to cherish.  
a final piece of us to have and hold.

is mine is hers is ours is us.  
and then...  
oh timidly tranquil, somber rain.  
oh faintly gleaming, steaming pavement.  
sing me.  
oh sing me,  
sing me please.  
back to my slumbering, softly mumbling darling.  
[the midnight wake of a lonesome train teasing her heavy curls,  
her rhythmic breaths falling in line with sigh of the crying whistle]  
to the sanguine silence.  
the precipice moon.  
when she was still mine, and i  
hers.

# Sing Me

Chelsea A. Hurst

*Fluency* Julie Rae Powers



Logan Hill, Chelsea A. Hurst, Julie Rae Powers, Jeanne Roberts





*My Brother* Shelby Hanson

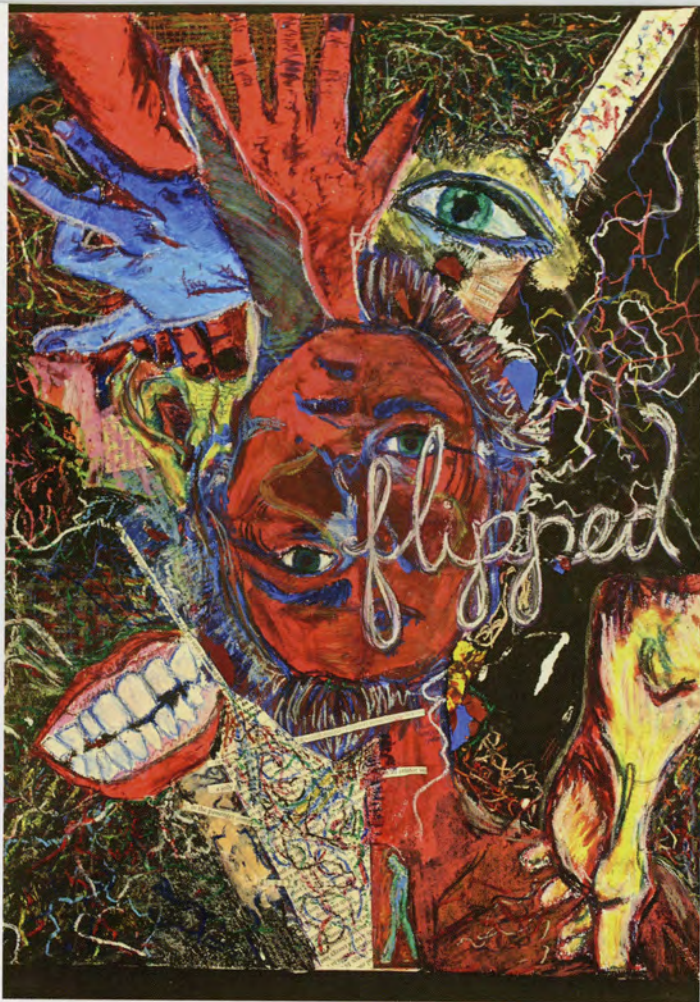


# Wandering Austin Shifflett Guitar Player

There, perched on a wall of Bluestone,  
You sit  
In half-lotus, guitar cradled  
In your lap  
Embraced  
By your sun-weathered, darkened arms  
Darkened by days of wandering  
Under bleating harsh yellow burning sun  
Your great brown beard grows long,  
Wrangly tuft extending down to the  
Center of your bosom  
The deep wells of your eyes gazing outwards  
To the passing students, subtlety  
Looking for recognition-  
That recognition which we ALL look for

In the eyes of peaceful passing strangers  
Yet some are too unsure to acknowledge  
You throw down that veil, O wandering guitar  
player,  
You sit as living sculpture representing the  
Freely expressed human soul which shouts:  
I am!  
I am here!  
I am myself boldly proclaiming myself  
In this moment!  
Nimble finger-picked chords  
Gently loping waves of sound beneath  
Your soft voice  
I sit looking up, also in half-lotus  
A student of your freedom





*Flipped* Shelby Hanson

## To the **Vase**

(To the broken  
from the breaker)



# from the **Hammer**

Anonymous

I can't write anymore because of you. You took the only part of me that could produce creativity. You stole my thoughts and dreams- and you crushed them, laughing. I look at canvas now and I hate it. I look at lined paper and then I crumble it. Every night, I feel the shades of my very soul get pulled down and the door slam shut. I used to believe in a light, but no matter how many candles I offer flame to, there's always a finger that gets burned. The only things I write about are doors, waves, the push, and counting breaths. I cannot fight back against any of them. All are crushing, and all are vengeful. I only took the hits because you gave them to me. I only fell because you tripped me. You blew into my life without warning, without care, but now you won't leave. Like a sickness or a storm. Like a foreign spot on a freckled arm, or the color pink that's just one shade too dark. You stay, quiet like a predator, and just as hungry.

But you were not always so mean. Once you were pretty, and you didn't have lines on your face or too-bitten nails. You moved through hallways encircled. You demanded beauty. Nature bent to you. You stood straight up, and you walked angry if you had to. Now you walk angry even if you don't. You seek out words from songs to bathe in, you seek the words of others to fill the gaps that yours leave. Even after you read this, you'll flip open the Secrets and run your mouth over the secrets. Just to feel something. Because you don't feel it anymore. You don't feel the need. The energy vanished. You lost the craving. It takes driving too fast and breaking obsolete rules to speed up your heart rate. You go unnoticed when you need to. It takes stained sheets for you to feel completely and totally alone. You were almost perfect, but now you seem contrived.

I learned something from all this. I learned to love you. Deeply and with holes and flaws, I love you. And I know that during every moment I want to lay face down and curse at dusk and curse at light, I will bite my tongue. Because my devotion is as sharp as teeth, and just as infinite.

You are everything. I will never leave you.



**S**he's cute." The woman looked up and took me in for the first time, as if she didn't notice me at all when she plopped down on the bench next to me a few seconds ago.

"Thanks," she now grinned back widely at me before returning her attention to the baby.

"How old is she?" I asked.

"She's a little over seven months now," she responded still smiling proudly.

"What's her name?"

"Isadora."

"That's pretty."

"Thanks. It means gift or blessing in Greek. My husband is Greek and he thought of it. We thought it was just perfect for her. We call her Izzy for short though."

Gift. Blessing. Words that describe something you're grateful for, something you hold onto and never let go of. I stared at the baby in the stroller. She was looking down at her feet and slowly clenching and unclenching her hands into little fists. A tiny spot of drool shimmered under her lip. The mother began rummaging through her huge bag until she pulled out a stuffed elephant for the baby. The infant eyed it indifferently as the mother thrust it into her hands.

"Is she your only child?"

"Yes. She's our first baby, but hopefully not our last. My husband and I want a big family."

Family. A word to describe something that sticks together, no matter what. I turned my head

back to the playground in front of me that I was observing before the woman arrived. Every swing was filled and competing to go the highest. High pitched screams and chuckles could be heard echoing out of the big tube that connected the two jungle gyms. Two little girls were breathlessly enjoying the slide. They raced each other around the jungle gym, up the steps, and to the top of the slide as if their lives depended on it, all for the two second thrill of sliding down.

Then they frantically stood up and began the race all over again.

"Are you here with any kids?"

The woman's voice jerked my head back to her, and then to the little girl who was now clenching her fists around each of the elephant's ears.

"Oh yeah, I'm here with my little brother," I lied automatically, "he's running around somewhere in the chaos."

The woman smiled again and glanced at the throngs of children circling the playground.

"How old is your brother?"

"He's six," I replied, "I'm babysitting him this weekend while my parents are on a trip."

My parents were probably at home right now getting ready to go nowhere and certainly not watching my imaginary brother.

"His name's Brian," I added just for the hell of it. Why not?

"That's nice of you. I hope you're getting paid," she grinned.

"Only if he's still alive when they get home."

The woman let out a polite laugh. I looked back at the playground and my chest tightened. I know I shouldn't keep coming here, yet I can never seem stop myself from detouring on my way home from school.

I sighed and dropped my head so that I had a prime view of the ant navigating around my shoe.

I reminded myself that I should be thankful. The decision was supposed to make both of our lives easier. My mouth dried up as my head tried to convince my heart of the words she fed me months ago. It's better this way.

Across from me on the other side of the playground, a mother was busy trying to reign in her four young kids, three of whom I noticed were boys and very energetic. Two of them were chasing each other with action figures while the mother was scolding the third little boy for some reason, probably something to do with the little girl crying on the other side if her. It's for the best she said. You and I both know we can't raise a kid by ourselves. We're not ready. Of course I wasn't ready. I wasn't ready for

a lot of things. I wasn't ready when she told me she was pregnant. Just like I wasn't ready to trip and fall down the stairs and break my arm when I was ten. I wasn't ready to brake when a truck suddenly cut me off last week on the highway. And I certainly wasn't ready to prove a differential equation on my pop quiz in calculus yesterday. You can't be ready for life. You can't just press pause and throw on a helmet

when you're about to get side-rammed or politely ask those storm clouds not to rain until after you've walked the five blocks home. Of course I wasn't ready to have a baby, but I wasn't ready to lose one either.

The excited screams of a bunch of little kids caught my attention. I recognized the familiar sounds of an ice cream truck right before it drove into view. All around me, kids were begging their parents for some ice cream. Some parents reluctantly pulled out their wallets and followed their overjoyed children to the truck while other kids, whose parents were more firmly refusing any more doses of sugar, looked on in jealousy.

Someone else can be a better parent for her. They could provide for her, give her things that we just can't. The choking lump in my throat reappeared as I thought about our conversation.

Why wasn't I more persistent? I could've worked a second job in the evenings during the week without having to give up school. My parents would have come around eventually and helped us out too. We had other options. Why did it have to be that one?

I suddenly had a violent urge to call her. I even felt for the phone in my pocket and pulled it out

only to stare blankly at the screen. What the hell am I thinking? She doesn't want to talk to me. We haven't spoken in months. She probably doesn't want anything to do with me ever again.

I don't blame her. After all, I left her after she fell asleep at the hospital and didn't answer her messages for the whole next week. When I finally agreed to meet her at our favorite diner,



she dumped me. I was still so mad and hurt that I didn't care about being dumped at the moment. I just stared coldly back at her and said, "It's better this way."

The ice cream truck could boast yet another group of satisfied customers. Kids were taking a break from their vigorous activities to sit restfully and eat their ice creams. The truck driver was

enjoying a break as well, sitting in the back of his truck and waiting for anymore late customers.

The woman beside me had pulled out a book and started reading, glancing at the baby in the stroller next to her every few seconds.

I could tell the words shocked and hurt her as soon as I said them. It was not the reaction she expected. I would never have used her own words against her under normal circumstances. But these were anything from normal circumstances. She stared silently at me as if trying to see if the same person she first knew and fell in love with was still there. But I had changed. We both had. She averted her eyes quickly and pulled herself back together. She was always good at that.

She had the incredible ability to keep cool in any situation and control her emotions. It was one thing that had always amazed me about her. In all our time together, I don't think I ever saw her get angry or frustrated once. Whereas I would lose my temper in a fraction of a second, she was always the cool-headed one, the rational one. I don't remember what was said after that. We both sort of acknowledged that it was over, mumbled our goodbyes, and left as quickly as possible.

The mother with the four children was gone. Other parents were starting to round up their own kids to go home as well and get ready for dinner.

I looked back down at my shoes. Now, all I wanted to do was tell her that it was okay to be angry. I wanted to tell her that it was okay to cry and be sad too. I wanted to throw my arms around her so tightly that she would tear up just from my embrace. I wanted to smell her hair again and just stare at those blue eyes that

I used to see everyday. I wanted to tell her I was sorry.

I wondered what we would have named her. Would I have called her Bella because it means beautiful? Sarah because it means Princess? Or Melissa because it means sweet? I closed my eyes and remembered holding her. She was so tiny and so fragile. Every move I made around her was slower. Even every inhale and exhale of my breathing was controlled while she was in my arms.

Through the small squinting slit of her eyelids I recognized the same piercing blue eyes as her mother's, who was now fast asleep in the hospital bed beside me. My heart clenched. This tiny little being instantly had more power over me than I could have ever imagined possible. Everything else that I ever thought was a priority before paled in comparison now. She was the most important thing. Just when I thought it would take the jaws of life to pry my daughter away from me, a nurse came in and said she had to be taken to be weighed and measured. I handed her over. Just like that. For the last time.

A new set of young boys had taken over the slide. A little further away, some kids were seeing how far they could go on the monkey bars. The baby beside me giggled and caught my attention again. The mother put her book aside and beamed down at the baby in the stroller who was looking up now, returning the smile with two bright blue eyes.

"Blue eyes."

"Yes. Aren't they so blue?" the woman said, making me realize I'd said it out loud. I looked at the woman's eyes, a light plain brown. Then, noticing my gaze, she added, "She got them from her mother, her real mother. She's adopted."

Her real mother. She's adopted. Not even bothering to wonder why the woman was sharing this information with me, I locked my eyes on the baby.

"I only met her mother twice," the woman continued, "but I remember she had very blue eyes.

They're beautiful aren't they?"

"Beautiful."

A little over seven months now.

The baby started to whimper and threw her arms around, dropping the stuffed elephant to the ground.

"What?" cooed the woman in a high-pitched voice, "Are you getting tired? I bet you're ready for a nap."

The woman picked up the elephant and threw it into her bag along with the book. She moved to stand up. Only when she had turned the stroller around did my eyes finally break away from the girl's. My head snapped up to the woman as she spoke over her shoulder, "Goodbye. It was nice meeting you."

I stared mutely. The woman was already five paces away and getting smaller.

Wait! Come back! I wanted to scream. When did you meet her mother? What was her name?

Ten paces away, twenty paces away...

Who are you? Where are you going?

My hands clenched the edge of the bench. My legs were frozen. I stared at the woman's back until she rounded the gate out of the park and turned a corner out of sight. Who was this woman? Where is she going? Where did she adopt her? Does she rock her to sleep at night? Does she leave a night light on? Does she provide her everything she can? My mind raced with possibilities and questions that I wanted to ask but something was holding me back from chasing after her, from chasing after the baby with the all too familiar bright blue eyes. I suddenly and painfully realized I wasn't ready.

Mackenzie Kelley **Not Ready**



## Movement

Matthew Smircich

Cars rushing on a road,  
Parallel to people walking by.  
Breeze free, fresh, cool,  
Drifting beneath an open sky.  
Leaves whisper tiny tales,  
Shifting ground rumbles, roars.  
Each step marks passing moments,  
Existing to flow, stay, soar.  
Dying light hangs in empty air,  
Shadows grow, multiply, fade.  
Doors shut, windows close,  
People return and farewells are bade.



*Wonder of Forest* Nannan Chen

*Changes in Water* Shelby Hanson



36 Gurdy Loo

## Whispered

Kim Sabol

To peer into the depths of your eyes is to touch eternity: a shimmering wisp of a thing....  
To touch your hand is to know what life is....  
To smell your skin is to capture a hummingbird in gently clasped hands....  
To hear your breath is to see raindrops fall upon a leaf in slow motion....  
To lie in your arms is a portrait of a dream that does not wane in waking.



# Skylight

Ryan Orr

The red sun hides behind the horizon,  
Sneaking a look at me through the rear view,  
As the pure white moon guides me away.  
Eyes heavy with the weight of your world,  
A single star in front of me,  
Snickering at how much closer it is to you,

This metal box around me vibrates,  
as the floor embraces the pedal,  
The wind grabs hold of the car,  
each gust increasing the time it'll take,  
Every extra second,  
reminding me of every little inch.

With the sun still in retreat,  
The blackness becomes tantalizing,  
But the moon attempts to light my way  
My only ally in the war,  
Doing battle against a now cloudy sky.  
The whiteness bleeding on the road,  
Through the army of solid black,  
The sky has won,  
The moon engulfed by its nemesis.  
Once again I feel stranded,  
Now alone on the edge of the road,  
Searching for someone to save me,

Bright lights scream by and I'm back,  
The car now hissing at me to move.  
The road then takes me.  
The velvety surface a trickster,  
Beckoning you to move,  
Telling you it will never do harm.

I make the turn and see the light,  
The blackness vanquished by reds and blues,  
Headlights shining upon the ghost of you.



Peacock Nannan Chen





*Passeggiata* Jeanne Roberts

# My Father's House

Kaleigh Somers

I never would have purchased this house if I'd known it was where my father grew up. Sure, I figured he lived somewhere in the area. Maybe even in this town. But not here. Not in this house.

My father didn't tell us anything about his life. On numerous occasions, I asked my mother why we never saw his family at birthdays and weddings, or why all the pictures hanging up in our living room were of her and her parents growing up—not his. "Your father doesn't like to talk about it," she said. "And it's not my place to betray his trust."

My brother and I would nod, pretending to understand, but always with this ache in our stomachs, this deep-rooted suspicion that my dad had some great big family he wasn't telling us about.

Early last month, I got a call in the middle of the workday. My husband, Bill, and I had just moved into our new house, a quaint little cottage set back from the road. Bill, always the negotiator, told me the real estate agency gave us a great deal, assuring me the book value was much higher. I didn't ask about the price, didn't even step inside the house more than once before he worked out the logistics and had us packing clothes into boxes.

Looking back now, a red flag should

have shown its nasty little head. I'd never asked about the previous owner, how long the house had been on the market. Nope, nothing. Just nodded my head, smiling until the muscles in my face hurt. My arm wrapped around Bill's waist while the agent led us around the house, detailing all the pros of living so far removed from society.

"Amy Palmetto?"

"This is she," I said into the receiver. I knew that voice. Where did I know that voice?

"It's your brother." A pause, then,

"Mike."

"Mike," I said through my teeth. "I haven't heard from you in five years."

"I know. I know." He sighed, as if disappointed in me. "I shouldn't have left."

"No. You shouldn't have."

"Listen," he whispered. "D'you still wanna hear dad's story or not?"

The way he asked, it was like we just talked about it yesterday, like it was easy to pick back up where we'd left off.

"Fine." I tried to sound only mildly interested, like we could have gotten disconnected mid-call. "Tell me."

My secretary cocked one eyebrow up, craning her neck as if she might suddenly stretch it across the ten feet to my desk.

"There's no other family, but I found something on the Times' website about this guy, Ronald Harvey, on trial for killing his wife. Big picture with the article."

"He looks like Dad?" My secretary relaxed into a smile, thinking, I was sure, that somebody, somewhere, had given birth.

"Spitting image," he said. "But like twenty or thirty years too old. It's scary."

"Really."

"And if that's not enough for you, here's the kicker." I smiled so my secretary would turn back to her desk. "He's quoted in here saying it wasn't him. That his son, Patrick Harvey, did it. He says Patrick's mom molested him as a child, that she deserves to die, and while Ronald wishes, get this, that he did it, it was his son Patrick's doing."

I let out a short, cold laugh while I processed this. There could be a million Patrick Harveys in the world, couldn't there be? That's what I told myself when I hung up. Then, after buying the paper on a stand at the corner and reading it myself, I noticed the old photo insert with a young boy and his father, the caption identifying them as Ronald Harvey and his son, Patrick. The father had his arm around his son as they stood in front of a house. My house. That's why, tomorrow, I'm setting it on fire.



# On Avoiding Slugs

Holly Martin

I would never step on a slug

For one thing  
they don't even have  
a fighting chance

What if  
the lining of your intestine were  
between you and the universe?  
So I never step on slugs.

Vortex Melissa McMillan





# The Sonambulist

Emily Iekel



*Lightless Bloom* Kelly Reetz

I. Silence among

Fallen cherry blossoms

Sakura sakura sakura

Sacra

Sacred

Space

This stadium, the sky,

The tender smiling Moon.

II. Streakers!

Sibilantly

Stupidly

Smashed

Slimly gleaming

Pale spritelike curves

Hair dark over one shoulder.

The Moon gazing

Upon her children

Thinks,

What a bunch of little gods!

III. Slow in the night wind

Down by the lake,

Black waters rippling,

Lights reflecting pearl and pyrite,

Siren's eyes.



# The Observers

Chelsea A. Hurst

The sky revealed itself to the land that morning, a pale and sprightly blue against the sprawling, pipecleaner pines. The gangly trees with their anointed and tangled limbs hitched skirts up to clamber towards the sky's easy splendor. To their excitement<sup>47</sup>. The , and to the sweet frivolity of a robin couple's reel, the grandfather pines turned their eyes, groaning sighs at the abandon of youth—sighs that traveled like shivers down their massive trunks and made the still needles quiver.

The pines recalled the days of tilled earth, and the tired muscles that lay at rest in the unassuming white farmhouse below. The odd assortment of happily oblivious livestock, occasionally harassed by the boys with dirty fingertips and overalls, sneaking a bit of fun between the withering looks of mother in her housedress, a wooden spoon held in one of the small, work-worn hands that rested on her hips. The pines had once watched father pull into the packed dirt drive, with a coalminer's hack to match the weary pattering of his automobile.

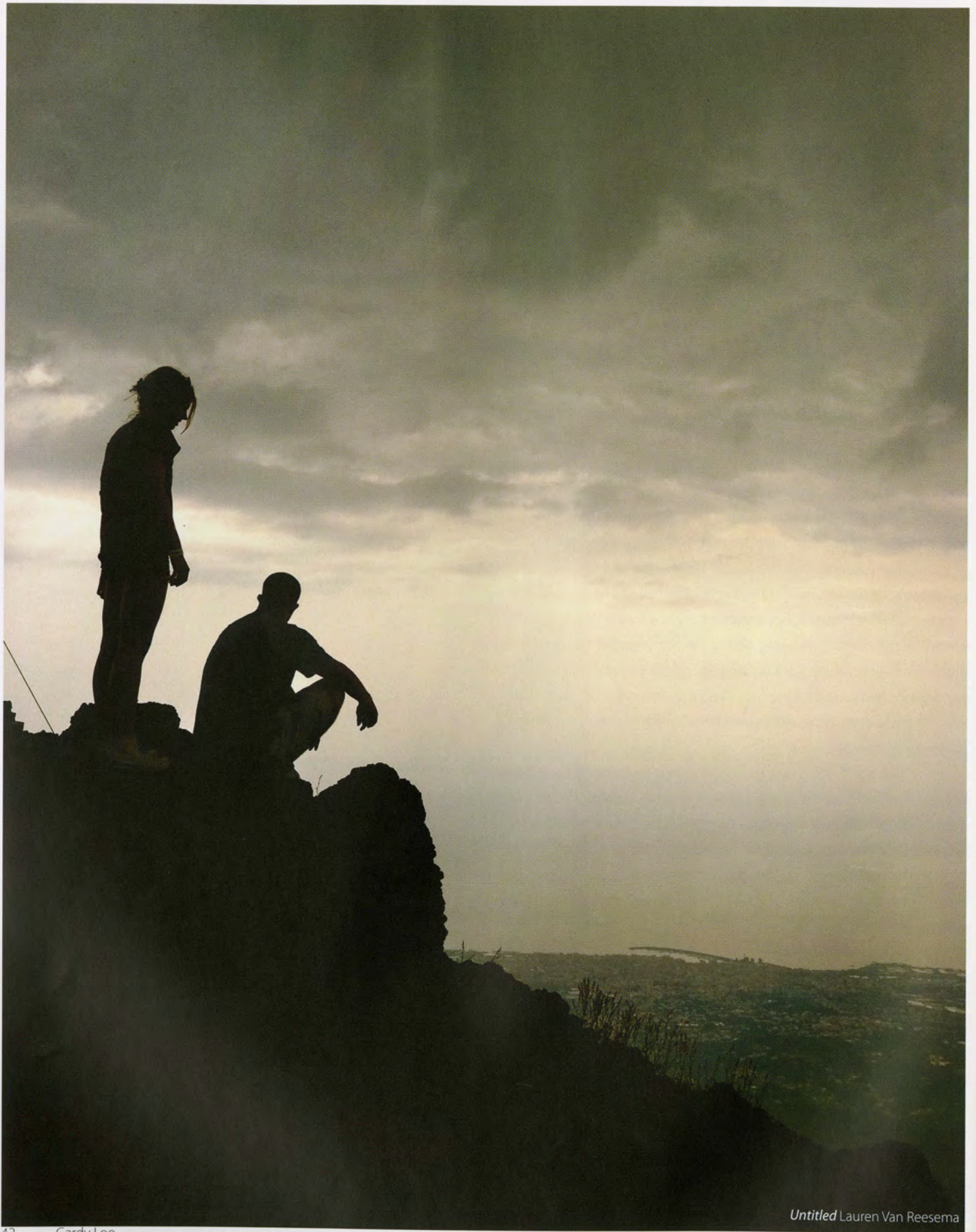
The earth, years ago, had dissolved crops, bones, sweat and ash, holding it all and becoming one with it. A humble mass of the swallowed and decomposed, arms raised to heave sprouts to the surface, as laborers once heaved stone in the arid sun of far-away lands. Sprouts to caress, console and support the barefoot soles of privileged grandchildren. Standing on the grass like they stood on the backs of those who came before them; those farm boys who grew to men and built lives from the ground up. Each child was a pharaoh with scuffed knees and elbows, cowlicks and sticky fingers, or a queen with discarded mary-janes and freckles, French braids and curls. The pines saw all this, saw each child's transformation. They watched with mild indifference the fleeting love story that is life, as seasons changed and things fell down around them. Waiting, waiting. Knowing that one day... even they—

would descend to the grass and thistle and fallen needles, heaving a final groan as they kissed the earth that sent them skyward many long years ago. settling down to lay with the swallowed and decomposed. the sweat and flesh and bones. the forgotten relics of man, nestled in the mother loam. at last, Home.



*Who is John Galt* Zach Souliere







# Wallflowers

Logan Hill

To be alive: not just the carcass  
But the spark.  
That's crudely put, but...

If we're not supposed to dance,  
Why all this music? — Gregory Orr

Seeing you perched across the room sewn in dirt you grow it makes me want to dance like horses

I can see you across the looming room you clutch it tightly as if to say these feet are deciduous as pine

They are birch trees that move around us forests of ash and palm and willow alive in dirt

Your hesitation must have been the blank piece of paper in your left breast pocket and pen in your hand

You must have thought your boots were brown or that recognition is as close as you'll get to love

Hunched and leaned towards moonlight I must have recognized everyone says this about you

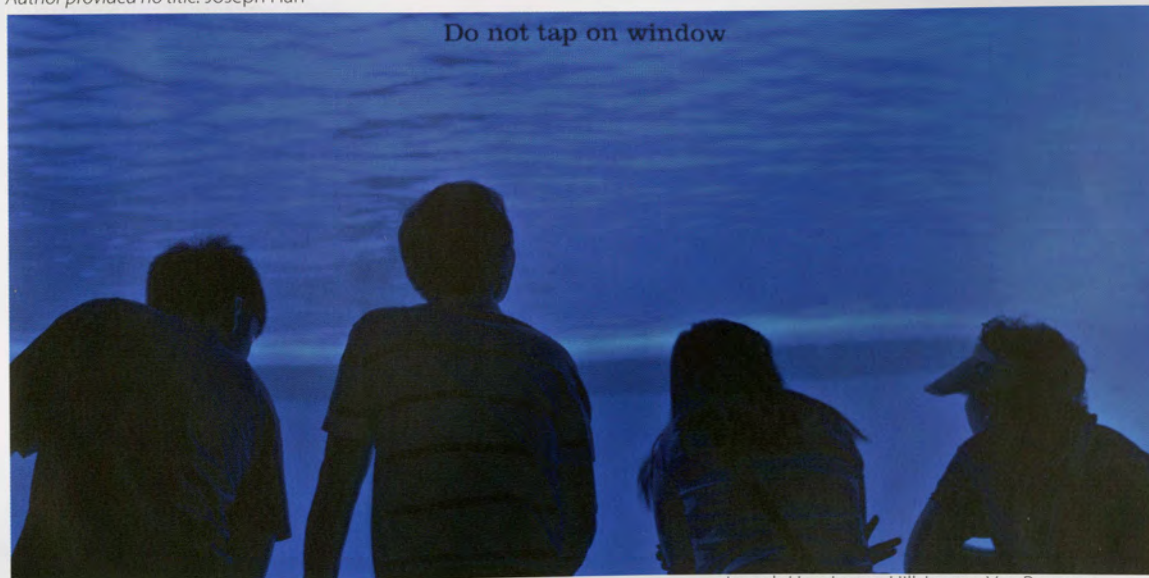
They always seem to say this about you you are the wallflower that never moves I watch this occur

There is somehow sorrow in knowing that sorrow is inevitable — the orange peel thrown away —

You must have realized this, that it must be thrown away and I that bitterness comes before the sweet

Capriciously beneath the canopy of trees coniferous stars you must have seen me coming

*Author provided no title. Joseph Han*



Joseph Han, Logan Hill, Lauren Van Reesema



# Scavengers of the Magnificent

Madelyn Wigle

*Temptress* Zach Souliere





We are the oooh-ahher's, the \$1.99 glitz and glam-ers. We're the stay up all night  
 because we can and wake up happy people.  
 We are the punch you in the mouth if you're an asshole people.  
 We are the dancers, the prancers, the vixens.  
 We're the red-lipped twirl and whirlers; the trip and pick yourself back up-ers.  
 We're the toasters to the romance in everything people,  
 The cut you open with a comeback rattlesnakes.  
 We are the microphone-licking bursts of light,  
 the muddy water divers, the tire-swing swingers.  
 We're the heavy jewelry sports, the beach-cruiser thieves.  
 We are the thieves of all that is vintage and the pioneers of 21st century  
 adventure.  
 We're the make-you-work-for-it people.  
 We're the drink and then laugh til you piss-ers.  
 We're the windows down in the winter rollers, the damaged ear-drum and often  
 flushed and out of breath people.  
 The free, the forgiving, the grateful,  
 the willing insomniacs.  
 We rip off the fastened collars of what is expected.  
 We are among those who find fulfillment in knowing there is wear and tear under  
 our boot soles.  
 We are the rip-it-out and put it on my wall people, the get up and karaoke even  
 when you're tone-deaf people.  
 We are the "what the hell, why not" people,  
 The tasters of the electricity in music.  
 We're the thirsters for knowledge and shake-you-up endeavors. We're the "i  
 wanna be everything when i grow up" people.  
 We are the astrological over-estimators.  
 We are the double-fisted with bouquets of flowers people, the A.D.D. collagers,  
 the wearers of our mother's shoes and father's sweaters, the lovers who believe  
 in the unequivocal importance of family.  
 We're the soul mates to our best friends. We believe in tea, coffee, and beer.  
 We're the speeding ticket because you were so into the song playing on your  
 radio that you went sixty in a thirty people. We are the got out of that speeding  
 ticket people.  
 We worship the sun and feel small next to the ocean.  
 We are undefined dimension; search til you find it and find something else  
 people.  
 We are the wanderers who lust for "butterflies" to spontaneously ambush our  
 abdomen and for someone to make us laugh more than we make them laugh.  
 We are the scavengers of the potential for life to feel magnificent. We scoff at  
 indifference and kick down the door to let the sun in and burn the fat off our souls  
 like Hemingway told us to.  
 We blow kisses to the tidings of a morning that leaves stragglers on wooden  
 floors and we make our way through the decorated filth of the unknown with a  
 grin.  
 To us, we build our Camelot by moving alongside one another, out of step but to  
 a similar rhythm; a rhythm that bleeds every color and remains fleeting.





Darryl Julian Williams



We Were One Lauren Van Reesema



# Gardy Loo

## The Staff

Adviser: Laurie Kutchins

Editor in Chief: Rosie Grant

Assistant Editor: Ansley Luce

Art & Photography Committee Heads:

Zach Souliere

Art & Photo Committee:

Natalie Barisano

Alex Hickling

Sam Leonetti

Poetry and Prose Committee Head:

Carlisle Sargent

Writing Committee:

Lauren Pichon

Erica Dodson

Alex Hickling

Matthew Smircich

Rachel MacGregor

Jamie Swann

Kara Schab

Maddie Wigle

Kim Sabol

Chief Designer: Irene Asuncion

Assistant Designers:

Emily Bagdasarian

Jaimie Swann

Rachel MacGregor

Aqeel Akbar

PR: Kara Schab

Assistant PR: Kim Sabol and Lauren Krohn

Webmaster: Mary Clare Tracy

The staff met Wednesdays, from September until November, 7 PM at the Gardy Loo House Office in The Annex, Harrisonburg, VA. They discussed possible theme ideas, campaign for submission promotion, the judging process, and other affairs. Submissions were accepted until 5 pm on Sunday, October 10, implementing a limit of 5 entries per person.

Of the 209 submissions, 98 were writing pieces and 111 photography or art pieces. To judge submissions and organize the magazine more efficiently, also for the first time the staff divided into non-exclusive committees: Poetry & Prose, Art & Photography, and Design. A GoogleDoc was created to review all writing pieces, and a Flickr account was created to review the art and photography pieces. Each committee

had two members who organized meetings and led discussions to finalize selections. The Poetry & Prose committee members finalized selections at the Gardy Loo Office on Wednesday, October 28. The Art & Photography committee members finalized selections that same night. The Design committee met as needed, and began designing the magazine once selections were finalized. All judging was conducted in a democratic process of voting and discussion, with no exceptions.

Production for the magazine was completed Friday, November 11th. The magazine was designed "based on content"; each visual art piece was matched up with a corresponding poetry or prose piece wherever possible. The final theme decided upon was "transcendence".

Pieces were placed in the magazine in an order that suggested moving from one level to another. To preserve artistic integrity, all writing, photography, and art are published in the condition in which they were submitted. We apologize for any errors.

All pages are printed on recycled paper, FSC C002927, Rainforest Alliance Certified, using Toyo HyPlus ink. All pages are in CMYK color and were designed using Adobe InDesign CS5 and Adobe Photoshop CS5 on Mac desktop computers in the Hillside Hall computer lab at James Madison University.

In Adobe InDesign CS5, pages were created using 5 pica (1 in.) margins on the top, bottom and outside; 2 picas on the inside, with 18 columns and .6 pica (.125 in.) gutter. In Adobe

Photoshop CS5, all photos were cropped to size with 400 resolution in TIFF format. The following fonts were used (in no particular order): for titles, Myriad Pro in Regular, Light, and Bold, 36pt.; for writing piece bylines, Myriad Pro Light, 10pt.; for art/photo attributes, Myriad Pro Italic for the title, Myriad Pro Light for the artist, 8 pt.; for folios, Myriad Pro Light, 8pt.; for copy, Myriad Pro Light in 9pt. font and 14 pt. leading. McClung Companies in Waynesboro, VA printed 1000 all-color copies. The staff distributed copies free of charge to members of the JMU community in December 2011.

## Judging Process

## Production Details



### **Gardy Loo Literary Magazine**

The Annex  
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