



GARDY LOO
SPRING 2013

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PRAGUE WINTER

Alexandra Parker

"Welcome to Prague." Nikola looked scornfully down at Pavel. "The war is over. The great Communist Party is now in control, Pavel." He looked down at the boy. "We have freed them from the German Fascists." He added. "You will attend your new school in Prague today." Nikola's lips were taut and his smile did not reach his eyes.

"Yes sir," said Pavel. He was wary of his new professor, with his stiff military jacket. His eyes were snakelike, predatory slits. Nikola was also Pavel's temporary guardian. Pavel walked into the new Soviet-style school; the halls were stark, harsh, and colorless. Pavel found himself standing in front of the class, his cheeks blushing

pink. He was small for his twelve years. His head was a shock of white blond hair, contrasted by plump rose lips. He was effeminate, his pale grey eyes framed by thick lashes. Twelve pairs of irises watched him with curiosity. Pavel averted his eyes, and looked at his feet.

Nikola sneered and spoke, "This is your new classmate, Pavel. He comes to us from the Soviet Union." Twelve pairs of eyes narrowed at him in distrust. Whispers broke out. Pavel slowly took his seat and pulled out his book, consumed by the heat of shame. A broad boy, barbaric and imposing in stature, turned to Pavel. His great fat face broke into a devilish grin, and his teeth were sharp and gleaming. Pavel's eyes widened—he understood that he was the hunted. Pavel turned back to the front of the class, his face drained of all blood.

"I'm Aleksandr," said the beefy, hulking boy. "And you're Soviet scum." Aleksandr spat at Pavel's feet, his wad sticking to the yellow linoleum. Pavel slowly wrote out his name and the date—*December, 1946*. When class ended, the sun was descending rapidly, but Pavel remained

at his desk. He watched as Nikola methodically and neatly creased each paper before sliding them into his briefcase.

Pavel's lashes fell as he focused on his tiny palms. Time had blurred his only memories of his parents. He flashed back to the dingy foster houses that had sheltered him, each of his four or so guardians as neglecting and disinterested as the last. In the Soviet Union Pavel was given ration stamps. He remembered how he almost never had his basic needs, such as toilet paper, and how his belly was always growling for food. His last guardian, an elderly woman named Elena had taken him into her home, a house that smelled of cats and sausages. She was different from the others, motherly with her crinkly smile. Pavel remembered being shocked by her offer of tea, her kindness, the warm mug cupped in his hands. At bedtime she read him German folklore, and *The Brother's Grimm* became his favorite story. When she died, Pavel was scooped up by Soviet child services and dumped into Nikola's care. While other children happily played outside, Pavel spent each day knowing that no one cared that

he was alive. Pavel received little affection and expected none, meeting each morning with wide eyes and a humble expression. He would sit on his cot and look out at the bleak, sooty city from his window. Always the outsider at a new school, Pavel never had many friends in Moscow. Today, he woke up in Czechoslovakia. Pavel had told himself, today will be better, yet he felt a tinge of despair. His attention tore back to the present: "Get your things Pavel. We are leaving," Nikola barked.

Nikola steered Pavel down the hall, his heeled boots clicking on the linoleum with each footfall. Moments later, Pavel was blinded by the sun, diffused behind white clouds. Pavel trudged back to Nikola's high-rise apartment through Wenceslas Square. A cloaked statue stood at one end of the Square, the stone figure of Jan Hus seemed to leer at him.

When he wasn't at the school, Nikola cleaned his guns and drank top shelf vodka in the local pub, leaving Pavel to fend for himself in the apartment. Pavel tread with caution as he wandered about the empty rooms. He couldn't

tear his eyes away from the dead animals Nikola had killed, their many heads decorating the walls of the apartment. Where their eyes had been, Nikola had placed black marbles. The dead buck, wild boar, and wolverine stared blankly from their ebony orbs, making Pavel feel uneasy. Nikola kept his finest guns, bows, and arrows on display in a cabinet in the apartment.

One day Nikola attended a conference after class, so Pavel was left to walk home by himself. In the back of his mind was a constant fear of being attacked, as Aleksandr seemed to be always on the prowl for fresh Soviet meat. I haven't seen Aleksandr all day, he's probably out sick. Pavel tried to calm his nerves as he walked briskly. Across the square, three boys were snickering and swinging around a shiny object. Pavel's heart quickened and faltered. "Oy!" yelled Aleksandr. Pavel sped up. Aleksandr and the two boys caught up to him and grabbed his arm. "Little rat, why are you in such a hurry?" Pavel's gut wrenched with fear. "Wanna see what these can do?" He flashed the brass knuckles on his hand. Pavel was terrified, but not subdued.

He desperately tried to lean his neck away, but Aleksandr landed a brutal metal fist into his soft face. Pavel felt the gush of warmth as blood filled his mouth; he choked and sputtered. The boys laughed as Pavel fell to the ground. He crawled away, sniveling and defeated.

That night, Nikola examined Pavel's gashed lips and torn mouth. "I am sure those boys were just messing around. Ah well," he said, "Now you look tougher. Not so much like a girl." Pavel looked into Nikolas' eyes and saw that they were empty and pitiless. Nikola shrugged, and stabbed his blood sausage with a fork. That night, Pavel lay awake on his bed, his eyes wide with fury. He was used to being treated as the strange, outcast child, but no one had physically harmed him, or had even threatened to do so. He knew he was loathed here, he saw the Czechoslovakian children recoil in his presence. They muttered slurs under their breath, their eyes wet and shining, glaring with suspicion. He looked down at his delicate body. Vexed with

himself, Pavel resolved that he would find some way to beat Aleksandr. In class the next day, Pavel fumed with anger as Aleksandr chortled over his busted face.

"Like your new face, do you? Not such a pretty boy anymore!" Nikola smirked, ignoring Aleksandr and continuing his lecture. The other students dared stolen glances at Pavel's face, but chose not to comment. Pavel's pencil twisted in his hand, his shame rising in his chest. He broke the pencil with a snap, imagining it was Aleksandr's spine. Pavel thought, I must find a way to fend him off. Nikola handed out a mathematics exam; Pavel rushed through the arithmetic, only half paying attention.

In the dead of night, Pavel crept through halls past taxidermy heads and snuck into Nikola's office. The dead animals were witnesses to his misbehavior, and he thought wildly, that they would betray him. He motioned toward the mahogany cabinet, squinting in the pitch dark.

He slowly opened up the case and saw gleaming rifles, silver pistols. His eye was drawn to a shelf with an array of arrows. With a light touch, he ran his fingers across the metal tips. He nicked one of the brown arrows and slid it up the sleeve of his shirt. Just in case Aleksandr tries to hit me again, he thought.

The next day at school, Pavel ignored Aleksandr and his cronies. With his arrow he felt confident, almost strong. He strutted when he walked down the halls and was daring enough

He looked down at his delicate body. Vexed with himself, Pavel resolved that he would find some way to beat Aleksandr.

to meet Aleksandr's mean scowl with a stony stare. Sitting at his desk, he would feel for the arrow in his book bag and press his thumb against the

cutting tip. Almost like a ritual, he would turn the small arrow around and around in his fingers.

That evening, Pavel again found himself alone. He sat on a bench as he waited to walk home with Nikola, scraping designs in the snow with his feet. He failed to see the shadows of

three boys approaching him from behind. He leapt up and spun around in surprise: the biggest figure was none other than Aleksandr. Pavel stood frozen in the snow in front of Aleksandr, caught off guard. The two boys held Pavel's arms so that Aleksandr could freely punch him in the stomach. Afterwards they threw him to the ground and ran off. Pavel lay gasping in pain in the snow, all confidence shot. Mortified, he dashed down the school steps slowly made his way across Wenceslas Square. He struggled up the stairs into the apartment building and didn't stop until he slammed the door to his room. He lay on the floor and winced in pain, raging inside. With no one to talk to, he lived in his head. *Why am I so weak?* Pangs of shame only worsened the throbbing in his gut.

It was nighttime. Pavel opened his window and stuck out his head to feel the frigid air swirl about his face. He looked down and felt a pang of horror as he saw Aleksandr approaching the building, still at some distance. He stood frozen at the window, unconscious of the snowflakes that were beginning to fall.

He's stalking me! Pavel realized. *He's come here to finish me off!* He peered over the ledge, seven stories above the ground. Pavel dug his hand into his bag, grabbed the wooden handle of his arrow and hurtled down eight flights of stairs towards Aleksandr, savage fury masking his own pain and blocking out all reason. *He won't get the best of me this time.* He skidded to a halt a few feet in front of Aleksandr, whose face was white with shock. Pavel was breathing heavily, his right palm sweating from gripping the wooden handle too tightly, hidden behind his back. "Come to play, little mouse?" Pavel's eyes never left his aggressor's face as he plunged his arrow deep into Aleksandr's neck. Blood began spurting out with each heartbeat. There was silence for a moment. The flakes became heavy, the white sky released heaps of flurries.

He watched, unflinchingly as Aleksandr staggered for a moment before crumpling in the street. He stared in horror for a few moments before coming to his senses. He looked down to see that Aleksandr's wound was now trickling, the great brute's head slowly becoming engulfed in a

pool of blood, stark against the snow. Aleksandr's beady, glaring eyes were replaced by closed lids, his cherry face now pallid. Pavel yanked the arrow until it was finally released from Aleksandr's neck and bolted down the street. He shivered violently, unable to think or feel. For the first time, Pavel was excluded from the inner workings of his own mind. He reached the city park. Every notion of right and wrong screamed out to Pavel, but he was consumed by self-preservation. His hands covered in red, Pavel stuffed the arrow in the soft earth near the trunk of a bush, pushing it down farther and farther until it disappeared, leaving only the entry hole. This, he covered in dirt with his heel. Pavel slowly made his way back to the apartment and crawled into his cot, but not before wiping down his body with a rag and throwing his clothes into the fire. His eyes were open but he saw nothing.

By morning, the city was abuzz with news about the dead boy, mysteriously murdered by an unknown assassin. Some claimed it was a random lunatic, others insisted it had to have been someone he knew. The morning papers said that

the murderer had used a sharp object to slash the victim's carotid artery in half, causing Aleksandr Petrov to bleed to death. Such a weapon was nowhere to be found. *What have I done?* Pavel could not confess to Nikola: he would turn him over to the police. Pavel stood motionless in a corner, trying to appear small, as the police searched Nikola's apartment. The officers were puzzled by the hundreds of arrows in Nikola's artillery—they were perfect murder weapons, yet none of them had even a trace of blood. When they finally left, empty-handed, Pavel sank to the floor, his heart hammering. All he could feel was relief. *He's dead, he's dead.* The case was left unsolved, stashed away in police records. No one seemed to remember to bother Pavel at school. He anxiously tried to scratch away the dried blood that remained stuck beneath his nails. Each day Pavel waited for Nikola after school.

"You will sit and wait quietly." He watched as Nikola meticulously aligned the pens on his desk, and folded his papers, always creasing perfectly, perfectly.



LA MÁS FINA

Shannon Hall

Light, refreshing, gold
The taste of sex at your brother's house
Your tongue on mine
Warms me to the core
Like your touch
Electric current gazes
Strip poker and bar laughter
Friends all around
Before I sneak off with you into the dark of night
Bathing in ice water
To dispel the heat
And lie in the moonlight
Tangled silhouette
Satisfied soul reaching nirvana
Es la cerveza más fina
Con una copa de recuerdos

KITCHEN

Ian Spiegel-Blum

In Judaism, the kitchen is the center of the home. Holidays are celebrated in seven hour-long ceremonies, God's promised manna is disseminated amongst the family—it is where Jewish mothers maintain safety. For my mother, it was a place to wrest control from Fibromyalgia, the muscle disorder that rendered her largely immobile. When she could clean, when she took control, we loved her most.

She'd start by mopping. My brother and I knew not to even think about it—I mean, you didn't enter; you'd go hungry happily. Then, the shake-up—that's what my brother called it—she'd move my grandmother's kitchen table into the adjoining den, placing it in front of seven fractured mirrors bolted to the browning wallpaper. My brother and I sat together in the connecting living room, thankful for the stench of analeptic bleach, breathing the burn deep into our nostrils, sitting on the septic hand-me-down

couches and chairs. The furniture were relics, remnants of my mother's childhood, a life she mostly neglected. So when she cleaned, we'd give her the space she needed to preserve the artifacts, shipped by my grandmother before she moved to Israel, their relationship anemic. We'd wait, staring at the stone plaque above the mantel leading into the den, a picture of the shining city on the hill, of Jerusalem, where mom spent her early twenties, before an Arab spilled bleach into her eyes, causing her to fly to her parent's house, to her mother's kitchen, where I imagine she sat at the same round table, patches over her eyes, looking first to her mother to heal her, and then towards the light, seeing as all must the mortality of safety; we'd read to ourselves the promise etched into the stone, Shalom—peace, and hope that this clean would assuage more than the floors and counters, eradicating the cockroaches and more importantly, the vermin of the soul. We'd wait until mom emerged from the kitchen and into the living room, back to the land of the living, and hope she'd sit on the couch next

to us instead of her bed upstairs, in her domain, whence we knew not to enter. Not to breathe.

Sometimes, she'd scrub away her skin, as if to sterilize the grime underneath the epidermal level, the sponge thick with soap—a stand-in for oil and alms, an anointment in the Hebrew tradition of re-invigoration. But when she felt exhausted from the day's attempt to remove stains, she'd lie on the couch, and I'd remember finding her one night when I was young in the same position. I touched her shoulder and said, "Mom!" She woke up; opened her damaged eyes, looked at me as if I were an Arab, my hand a grenade, any moment expected to explode. Long strands of goop, Polygrip denture cream, stuck her lips together, and when she pulled them apart I could hear the pops of strands breaking, flesh unglued.

Then she stuck three fingers down her throat and retrieved two strands of cherry lico-rice. She stared at me with unknowing eyes, and I felt our roles had somehow inversed, that I was both parent and child, that she had abandoned me. She put one strand into each of her nostrils

and said, "I'm a walrus!" before crawling on hands and knees into the kitchen, the space no longer sacred, now the destination of wild things, of the darkness lurking inside. So when mom collapsed onto the couch, I saw her as I did that night, a doppelganger.

After moving to Israel, my grandmother wouldn't see my mom again until the funeral home. I remember the morticians dressed her in soft white. I felt her forehead—cold—and remember thinking how clean she looked in the ambient light, lying in the same position as on the couch, the same as a day spent cleaning. Her eyes were closed. I thought then of my brother who wasn't allowed to see her body and was glad, hoping, for him, she maintained the illusion of safekeeping. When we left the coffin, my grandmother stayed behind, wanting to look a bit longer, grasping for the ability to heal.

Since her death, I've fought to keep the details of her, but like an image fractured by shattered glass, the reflection is a shadow. I am trying to remember her eye color, but instead remem-

bered this: when she cleaned, you kept hungry, full now with something else. The kitchen would wait. You'd sit in awe of your reflection; you'd try to hold her hand, ignoring the residue under her nails.

You'd watch her mouth closely.



Sarah Hade Deprivation

MOLOTOV

Haley Lambert

The day she found him on the couch
choking on his vomit
was the day she swore she would finally leave
him.

The 911 recording replayed
professionally kind voices that asked probing
questions
about locations and lapses of time.

Her strained voice answered
in frenetic machine gun clips
in ways she hoped
disguised her disgust.

When the paramedics arrived too early

and cracked his chest open
to save his life,
she could not help but wish
that they would leave him there,
ribs splayed open
so everyone could see the way
his ugly insides invaded the rooms
and finally understand
how the mere scent of him could make her sick.
She could barely bring herself
to join his gurney in the back of the ambulance.
Or force herself to watch as they ensured
the waning and waxing movements of his chest.

When they arrived at the hospital
and wheeled his body,
swollen with years of vodka induced self-harm,
into the operating room,
she said her good-byes
and hoped that when the doctors pumped
the liquor from his distended belly
they'd take every memory of her with it.

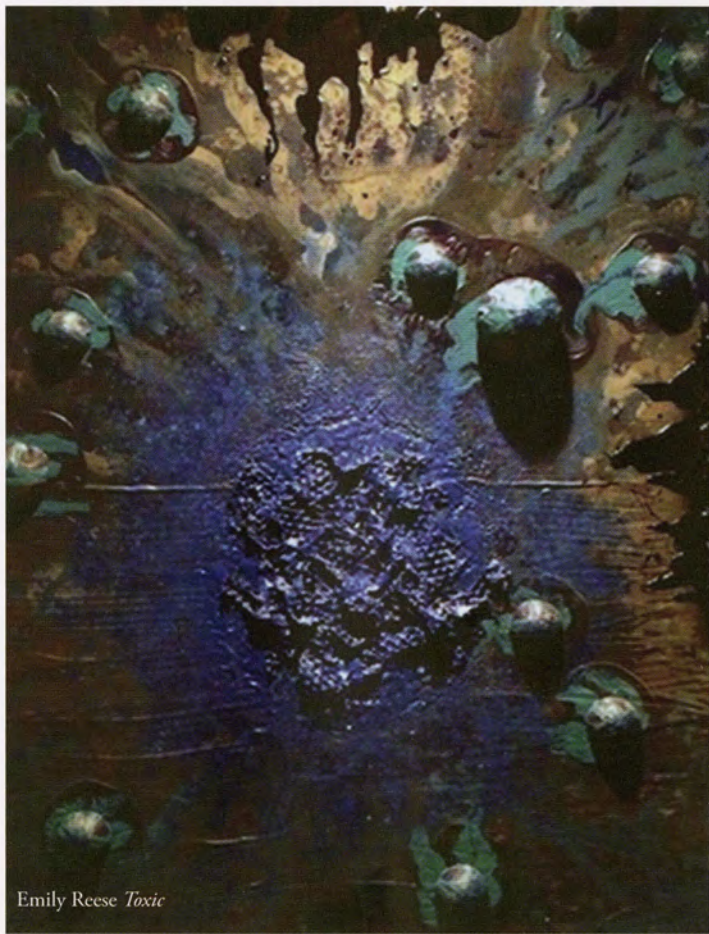
EGG

Chris Ellis

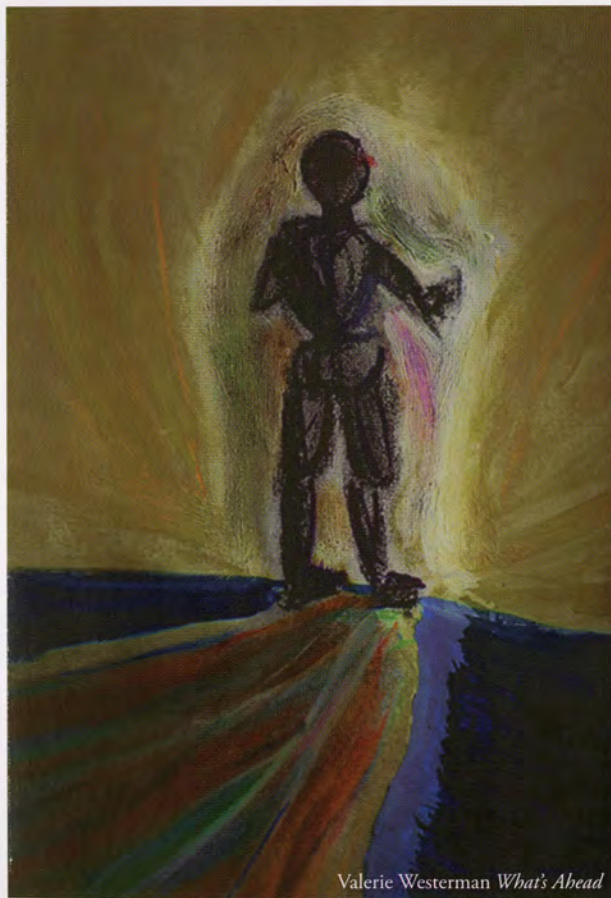
When

I found you...

You didn't want to
find me. You pushed me
away, closed me off, igniting
a fire inside of me, that burned so
damn hot that I was beside myself. The
further away I was pushed the hotter the
flame became. The more I desired to know
what could be underneath your tough exterior
shell. If I could just get close enough to crack it,
would a soft, raw interior ooze out? Or would
I chip away to uncover a hardboiled soul, over
cooked by a treacherous past. Does your fire
still burn as hot as it does in me? Tell me
before this fire solidifies my yolk and
no one will want to crack it.
No one dares to.



Emily Reese *Toxic*



Valerie Westerman *What's Ahead*

FALLING THROUGH

James Carbia

"Big game tonight. Leesville's a tough team. You're gonna have to come out aggressive."

Beyond the window, blurred trees rushed by, giving way to a long stretch of uninhabited horizon. Moonless night swallowed the dusty field beneath, and just as it came into view, it was gone. The muted interior of the speeding car seemed to amplify my father's voice.

"Remember what we talked about after practice. They've got that two-guard - great on defense, but he always bites on the head fake. You cannot go out there and play scared; throw the fake, and pull up. It's simple. We sure as hell aren't losing this game."

Red light flooded the car as it slowed. Through the windshield, packs of dingy pick-ups and glimmering luxury sedans streamed across the perpendicular street. A small sports car dipped into an adjacent lane to avoid a rut in the potted road. A Jeep without doors or windows lit up, honking in retaliation. Further down, flashing blue lights forced the traffic to slow. Dad's eyes narrowed and he bashed the steering wheel.

"Goddamn it! We are not showing up late to this game. Idiots just backing up the roads, no regard for those of us actually going somewhere."

"The game doesn't start for an hour, Dad. It's okay if we show up a little late to warm-ups," I said.

He turned and gave me the look. "So you think it's just fine to show up late to the biggest game of the season? Your teammates depending on you, the scouts waiting; that don't matter right? I'm getting really sick of this damn attitude of yours. You can ride back from the game with your mother."

The bright lights in the gymnasium illuminated everything below. The vibrant colors, compounded with the blasting music and thunderous cheers, caught everyone in a chaotic whirlwind. Cheerleaders kicked and jumped for the crowd while students waved homemade signs and adults clapped hard and shouted.

From the court floor, my eyes wandered up the bleachers. Mom was sitting four rows above Dad, way to the left so she could be close to the door, in case she had to take a call. Now that they had gotten away from each other, they wanted to focus on their interests. Their primary responsibility in life was almost out of the house; for Dad, this meant a kid playing college ball to brag about at the bar counter and more free time to work on his poker game. For Mom, she had a chance to focus on her work without any family interruptions; she was jockeying for the senior vice-president position at her accounting firm. Maybe they would both be a lot happier this way.

"LET'S GO EAGLES, LET'S GO! LET'S GO EAGLES, LET'S GO!"

I wiped my face on the scratchy inside of my jersey. Matt, Trey, and

the underclassmen stared up anxiously from the sideline, faces strained with stress, arms linked in anticipation. Dad pointed to the clock, his face contorted with deep-set wrinkles. Two seconds, one point game, two shots to win. In front of me, my fellow starters stood in position, shiny and dripping from the effort of the hard-fought game. I stepped up to the line.

"Aye, you got it man!"

"Knock 'em down!"

"Let's go!"

I dribbled three times. I looked up, measuring the distance. I spun the ball twice in my hands. I shot.

An explosion of sound burst through my ears as I saw the ball drop through. One down. Beneath my feet I felt the gym's vibrations.

"One more!"

"This is it! Gotta hit this one!"

The masses began to move. Slowly, they inched towards the rail in preparation for the court-rushing. Some of the braver kids grabbed and leaned over the railings, even as administrators hurried forward, yelling and shoos them away.

Mom remained seated. She was looking up now, realizing the gravity of the situation, but every few seconds her eyes darted down towards her smartphone. Dad used to get so angry about that. Why don't you put that damn phone away, he would say. Why don't you put the damn phone down and --

It was time to focus. With all of this, basketball was always what got me

out of my thoughts. It always took me away; it could always distract me.

The chants and rhythms of the crowd gave way to simple cheering, and finally the gym reached near-silence. The basket seemed far away. The silence was dizzying following the bombardment of sound. Frayed nylon hung under the faded orange rim, sticking out against the clouded translucency of the backboard.

The ball bounced three times. It spun twice over in my hands. My knees buckled slightly, and then I rose straight up towards the bright gym lights. The ball was high in my hands, and it flowed with me upwards. It reached its peak, ready for separation. I released.

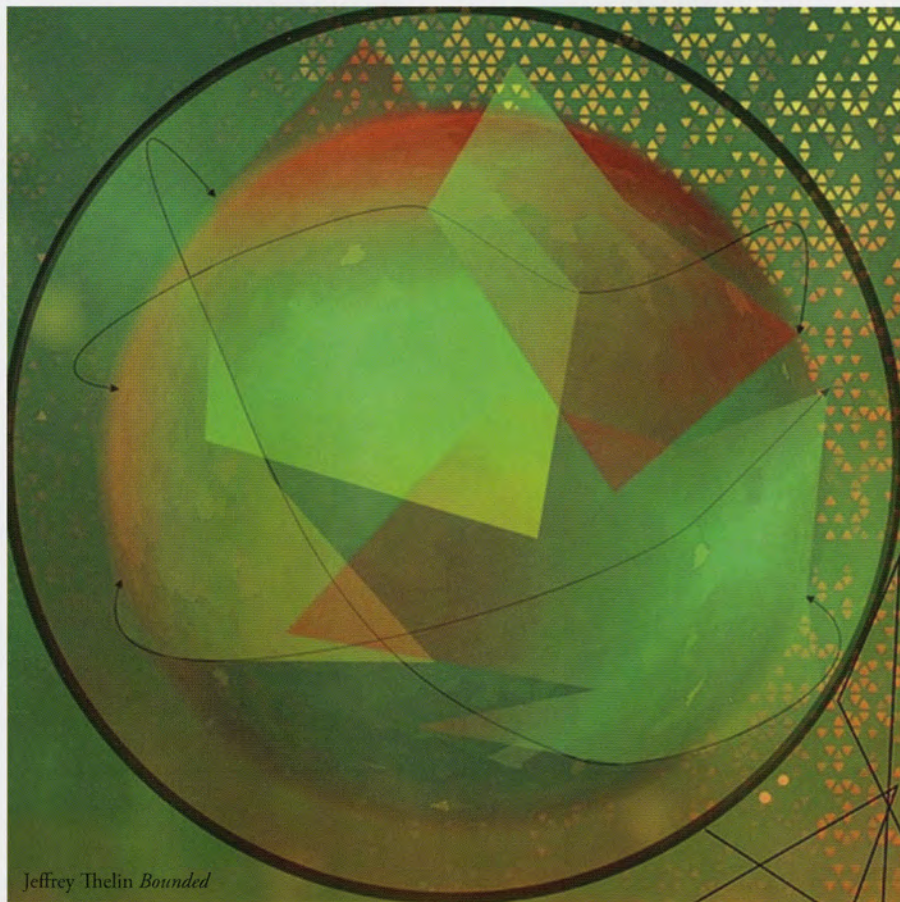
Rain pounded the windshield, drops so big that each left residual coverage before being swept over by the racing wipers. The road ahead was hard to make out; the violent precipitation shattered the traffic's light into a kaleidoscope of red and yellow. Even the lines in the road were hard to see. Instead of straining my eyes forward, I surveyed my surroundings. Again the trees rushed by, but they seemed even darker. They stood next to the rocky side roads, which had become saturated with mud. The car dipped off the asphalt, slipping into the sloppy shoulder before recovering.

Mom was on the phone. She had met me after the game and walked with me out to the car, but she was interrupted by a call from her lawyer and had been on the phone since. The same old words floated through the car; finances, shared accounts, property value.

I began thinking of the days ahead. In just a few more months,

high school would be winding down. The cold winter would ease up, thawing enough for spring to break through its frozen cracks. Or would it be a long winter? Would these days continue, with the cold, dreary feelings that come with them?

The raindrops continued to cascade. I tried to look past them. But they came down too hard and too fast, and despite the fervent efforts of the windshield wipers, I could only see what was immediately in front of me.

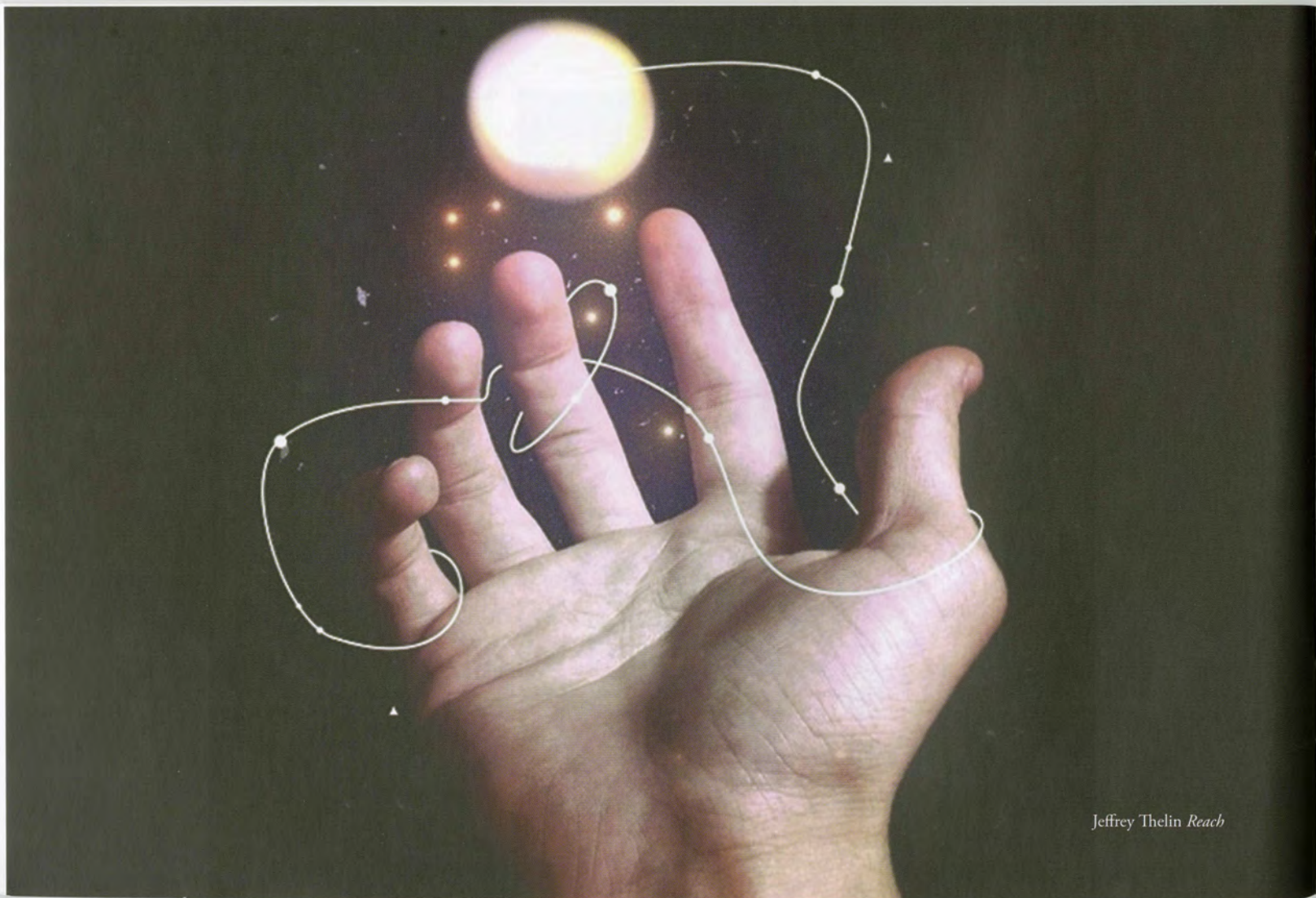


Jeffrey Thelin *Bounded*

INFINITE

Tommy Sheffield

duality soul
the of one's is
causality mind



Jeffrey Thelin *Reach*

BONES

Jasmin Ullah

i can't stop writing about people, about bodies, about
you

it worries me that all my sentences end with your name
on the underside of my tongue -

didn't you tell me once

you don't like being held too close?

with you i am on the verge

always

of a wrong-moment smile

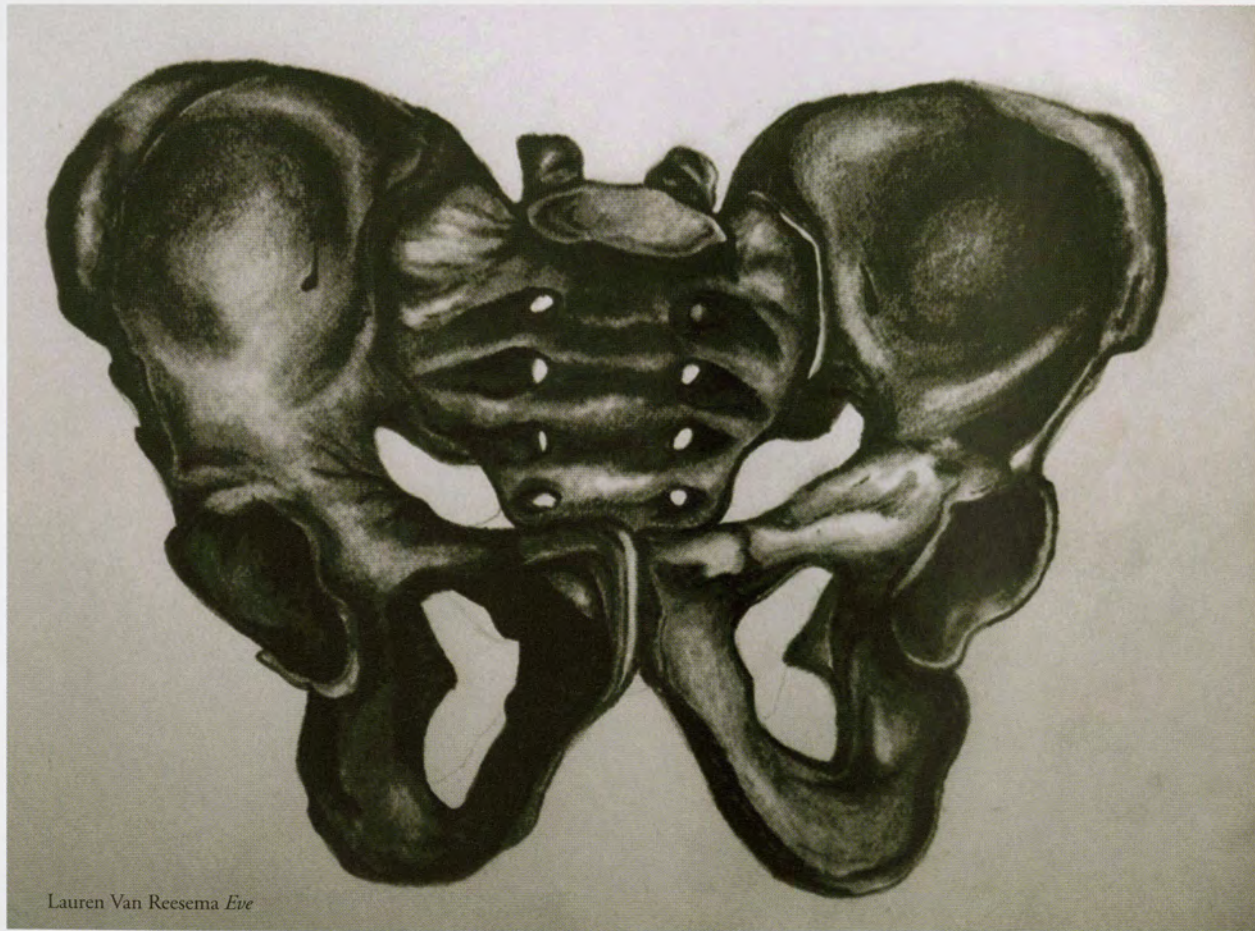
of reaching for your hand

just to trace the curve of your palm

of stuttering

i could tell you the names of the bones in your body, if you wanted

i could lie about them just so you'd stay



Lauren Van Reesema *Eve*

Broken glass glitters like dew-drop grass
and street lamps murmur—
the heavy sigh of tires grinding gravel
cause a cat, fur matted with tar, to yelp.

A man, soft as summer moonlight, walks.

His eyes, blue-brown like his father's,
his hair, as thick and tangled as seaweed
fighting currents. Smoothing his sleeves,
twisting his watch, he enters the bar.

The dim lights and electric pulsations
are jarring, but he proceeds.

Between sips of beer and ticks of his watch
his eyelids flutter. Watching the other men.
He steps cautiously onto the dance floor
and finds a partner, the tempest of alcohol
and nerves swirling in his stomach.

Erica Figert

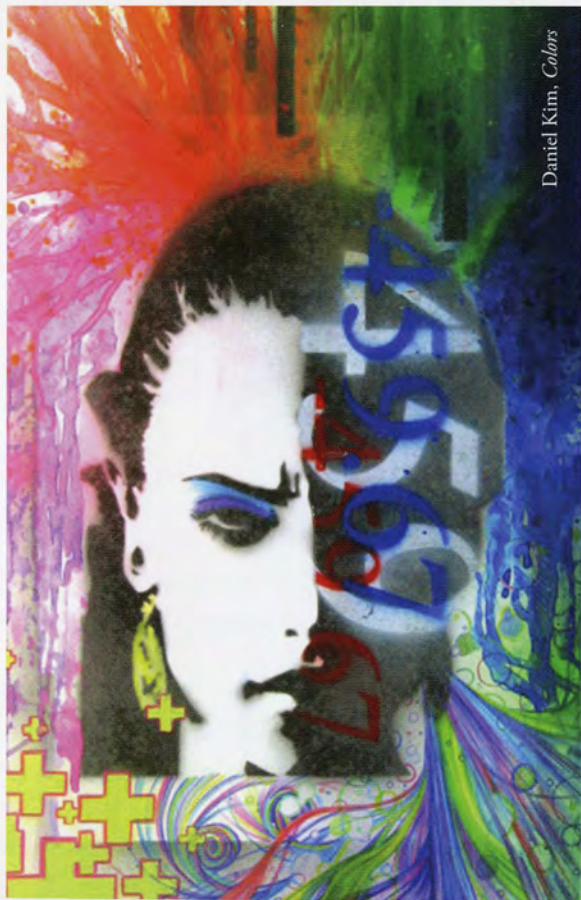
PERVERT

He tires of dancing, fondling, booze—
he wants flowers, kissing, hot tea.
He wants to go home and sleep.

So, smiling shyly, he departs. Walking to his car,
a breeze licks at his hair and he stops to admire
the moon. Suddenly, a gust knocks him to his knees,
and he screams in surprise like the alley cat.
The asphalt under his fingers moans with him.

Whimpering as he turns, a fist like brick crushes down
and his body breaks. He wants to scream, but his jaw,
it is covered in broken glass and hangs limply
like an infant's head. "Pervert," they shout,
and with black tongues and machine-like bodies,
their boots and his ribs collide.

His body is on fire. He wants to go home and sleep.

Daniel Kim, *Colors*

I

Clouds slouched low in the tepid air,
stars trembling behind veils of grey—
there was no moon.

A path shrouded by menacing oaks,
dirt pulsing with roots and weeds,
crawls slowly forward. The gaunt house
towers above the sleeping town,
shutters gaping like tired mouths.

One round window bellows fluorescence.

A man stands sturdily in an obscure corner,
his pallid complexion feigns exhaustion
but his hands are strong.

The grinder screams, like rusty nails
running down some junkyard car,
burnt orange sparks spewing savagely.
He stops, the acrid breath of the room
suspended in the fetters of his anxiety-
reaching for the pads, he pauses to admire
the pale hand. It has only to polish

and then he can give life to his creation.

Erica Figert

ATHENA

II

She sees an image in front of her,
confined in a wooden frame.

Another image appears—
she does not know
if she fears the difference
or welcomes the similarity.

III

Standing behind her, head slightly bent,
his mouth quivers at the corners.
He lifts his hand, runs it across her cheek.
Her body goes rigid, lips part,
as if trying to object to his caress.

A gentle smile transforms his face,
the haggard creases become soft etchings.
He studies her long, sun-bathed hair,
red lips full like autumn apples, eyes as green
as buds of May, porcelain skin soft and firm.

She watches him curiously, feels him behind
her, fights the urge to turn around.
He speaks and she understands—
beautiful.
The wide eyes, quick breath, soft touch,
hard voice—he is her creator.

IV

His warm body encased in cotton,
eyes closed, chest expands, contracts—
the dim hum of a distant dream.

Images beating in sporadic rhythm
through the veins of consciousness—
reflections are not enough.
Wrapped in slate-grey silk,
she removes herself
from his grasp.

Dark secrets sleep in narrow corridors.

V

The ornate carvings, the smell
of wood, the jet-black handles—
they beckoned, fanning her intrigue.

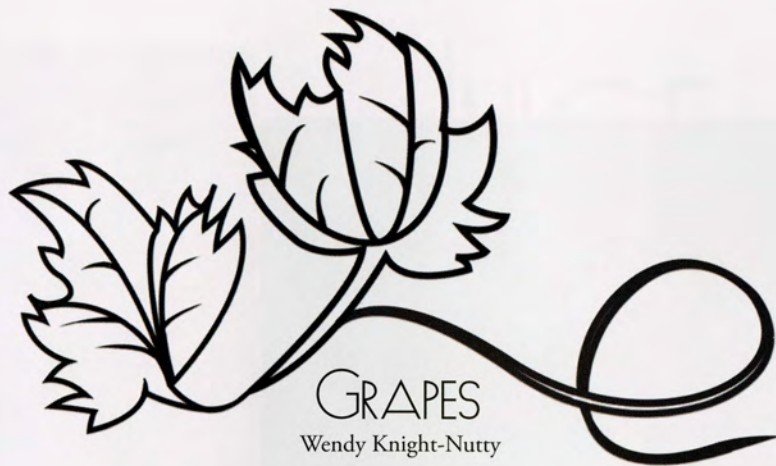
She steps slowly into the room.
Hair still lingering on the metal,
she drives the scissors through his flesh.

VI

While the pain ravages his body
he drops to the floor and moans.
Limbs jerking, he crawls past her,
shirt and skin bound in blood—
he sinks, unconscious.

VII

His lids slide open and he sees the cabinet,
the floor sprinkled with ashes of wood,
a hollow abyss where they once slept.
He could see their eyes, hair, lips,
feel their skin. He extends his hand,
crusted with blood, toward the cabinet.
A harsh wind rips through an open window
and the doors slam shut, his shrill cry
grating like metal grinding metal
as he sees the hard lines
vigorously carved in wood,
the letters,
the word.
Her name.



GRAPES

Wendy Knight-Nutty

like jingle bells shiver
and drop to the ground, never
fill the destiny of human consumption:
skin tears, bursting amniotic fluid
upon a waiting, taste bud speckled
tongue that laps the tangy
nectar and pushes the embryo
between grinding molars,
leaving only seeds
to be spat in a
plastic-lined
can.



Julia Kron *Springtime*

GREEN BEAN POEM

Sarah Golibart

I grew up fast on a green
bean pole
smiling at the sun, the dirt my home.
Born of the ground
the warm earth.
The aroma of new
whipped air, soil, and sky.
A mixture of me
completed by water rushing in
to finish
the Great Gardener's work.
Three peas in me
like solid serenity
first a small white flower
then little Sarah bean
with a Sarah green shell
and glad Sarah leaves.
I have waited to be picked now
for almost twenty years.
There just has been no one around
to do the job.



Emily Reese *Evolve*

JUICE

Brooke Covington

From the dark, sweet berries
Covering our mouths
A deep purple—exploding, invading
Our mouths
Your tongue, searching mine
For any remnants of that temporary sweetness
Because all things summer,
Whether it be love
Or berries
Don't last forever.
So let's feast on it.



Levi Key *Wasted* 003

THE LION HUNT

Gabrielle Fleury

It is a room unlike any other room before the fire, except perhaps in the safari journals of old, the stories shared by fading men who long for a time when the danger was high and a foreign sun loomed on the horizon. The ancient man remembers it all, the subtle prick of terror when the darkness spread slow shadows over the camp—how flimsy then seemed the tent, the sinuous move of a leopard in the bush. That was how they lost Stanley wasn't it, to the whisper and the dark? People always thought that a human kill in the bush would be a ghastly thing, blood spread over the crushed grass to leave a trail, but a cat could kill a man often just by shaking him, no blood. Only the glint of buttons that had popped off Stanley's jacket to shine coldly at them in the morning, as if the man had risen out of his tent for a walk and had never come back. It was those nights in the bush when you shivered in the darkness that you felt yourself

to be so far from home, where even the stars had shifted and you dared not light a fire to see what it was that watched you.

The old man flexes his hands, feeling the bunched knuckles, and thinks that these were the hands that had held a gun, that had known what it was to face a charging lion so many years ago. What it was to hunt a lion when one was young, watching in the bush with your heart hammering copper in your throat, the glare of the sun upon the back of your neck like a palpable blow! Half the hunt was waiting, the telling of jokes between yourself and the guide, the other half was fear itself, not knowing if it might spare you. In the half-darkness before the fire, the dying man pushes aside the beginnings of his dressing gown and gazes down upon his withered chest, the faint pink lines still engraved there. That long-ago lion had not been any lion, but his lion, whose coat had been as silver in the morning light and whose eyes had been like flame. Five hundred pounds, the amber of his furious gaze rimmed by white, the meat of his lips revealed in a snarl. His roar was like the cry of the earth and

he held the boom of thunder in his throat.

A lion-skin rests before the fire and on its back the feet of great men have walked, and its dead ears mounted have heard the talk of a generation. The arthritic hand of the man now rests upon the head of the lion and he thinks to himself that there is none of the poetry left that it had when it was alive, the gleam of the sun upon its mane that falls through his fingers now like old straw. Sometimes, sometimes winning is no fun at all, and he strokes the great cat's head, the head of a cat that could have been sleeping, and in his drowsy way, he wonders if it too dreamt and dreams of Africa, of an Africa that now only exists in his memories and in the skin of the lion, the golden grass and the bluest of skies. Once he had killed a lion, and now the old man and his adversary sit together before the fire, and the dream of the lion was like that of the man, and the dream of the man was like that of the lion.

DEATH OF A SNAKE

Sarah Golibart

I saw a snake get killed today
the lithe black body
roiling on the hot
pavement before
the car
ran
it
over.

Displaying itself on the
black top, the winding
country road, serpentine
not unlike the ill-fated snake.
It looked at me
bared its head and we
thought together

about life, love, and
suffering
before the car
ran
it
over.

The cracking pop
of its smooth black body
signaled the end
and I thought alone
about love, and
suffering,
but mostly suffering
considering the snake's manner of death.

Bianka Snorgrass *Palm Sunday*



Your sun-browed arms, flecked with purple stains
from a worked-my-ass-off-give-me-a-beer stepfather,
serpentine around my waist.

Stale, hard breath creeps across my neck and you
violently twist me up to your shoulder, tears of stifled
rage suffocating those baby blues-

we are young.

The air is stiff like a dried-up rag and the sky beats
rusty nails of summer into our skulls. Thick grass bones
crunching under naked feet, you run

with me dangling from your shoulders like some frail
white ragdoll. The hum of a summer storm pulses above,
and the land stretches like a lazy dog-

it smells like rain.

We fall hard. Weeds caress our wounded bodies
and grass stains our tired knees, and I cackle like
the tar-black crow. Groping the ground, I feel for you

but you are as erect as the crispy trees, glaring down
at me and studying the scars of laughter around my mouth

as if they cause you scars I cannot see-

the clouds explode.

Heavy bullets of rain melt into my skin, and the wind
carries the scent of invigorated dirt. Your calloused fingers
saunter down my arm, your gritty hand finds mine.

Every step is more deliberate as you lead me to the house,
blue shutters bellowing, aged windows gaping. Inside
you throw me against granite and groan-

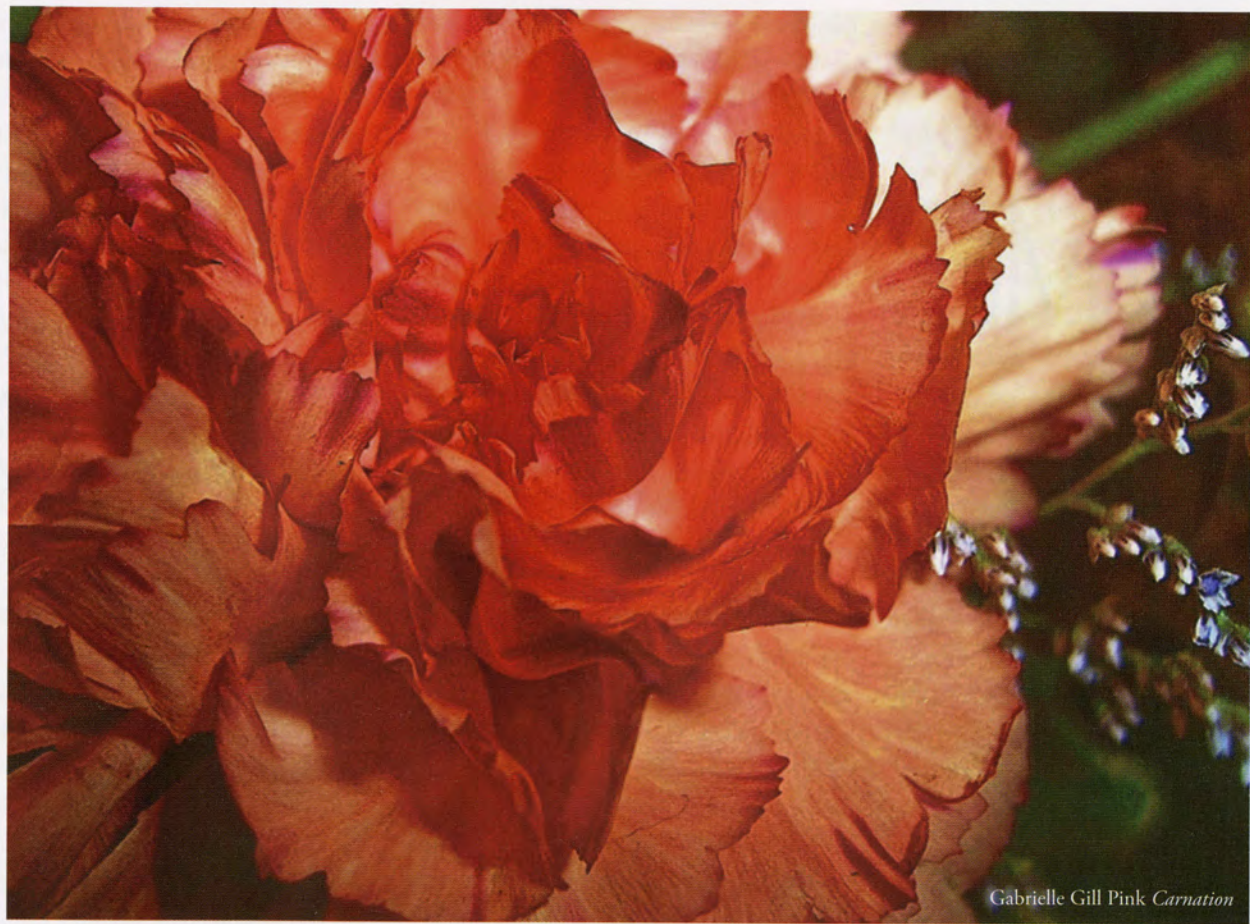
my body shudders.

Those work-worn fingers sew themselves into my
waterlogged hair. Parched lips, teeth painting my neck-
I open my eyes and see a bowl of strawberries

red like the summer sky, and as green as July trees.

Erica Figert

STRAWBERRIES



Gabrielle Gill Pink *Carnation*

DRY SUMMER

Aaron Lovejoy

The Parish's showed up here in Driver in late May. They moved into that old Victorian place right around the corner from Main Street, right up on the hill by the river. Beautiful house, burned down a couple years later, struck by lightning, pretty sad. The summer soon after Johnny Parish and his family moved into town was probably the hottest that anyone alive could remember. Such a terrible drought came that, by June, the Nansemond River damn near ran bone dry.

I remember my father calling me down one Saturday morning before that blazing sun had risen. "Get up boy," he said. "All the men are

going down to the river to get fish. No you won't need your rod, Son. You'll see."

And I did see. When we came down to the river's bank, the entire town was wading in the water with wicker baskets, scooping up as many fish as they could. I almost felt bad for those fish, some of the biggest had eluded my father and I for years. This was the end for them all, large and small, newborn minnows and the granddaddy largemouths who were kings in their own rite.

They all just laid there gasping for water, eyes bulging out like a grape squeezed between your fingers. The largemouth kings didn't even struggle as I grabbed and threw them into my basket, as if they had already accepted defeat earlier that morning.

That was also the first time I had ever seen Johnny Parish. After picking fish for what seemed like hours, I stood up to stretch and see how everyone else was fairing in their harvest. As I did, on a bluff overlooking the dead river was a tall lanky boy, about my age, with deep brown hair and a slight frown that looked to be permanently molded onto his face.

"Hey that's the Jimmy Parish's boy," my dad told me. My father grabbed a handkerchief from his back pocket and wiped the sweat from his forehead and then wrung it in his hands to clean them of residual fish mucus. As the temperature soared that morning, the water in the river dried to the height of a rain puddle. "Yeah his father works with me at the shop," he added, "go on and meet him. Jimmy Parish says he isn't doin' too great at meeting new friends."

So I waded through the holocaust of fish over to the river bank and made my way up to Johnny's bluff. I came up behind him, shuffling and kicking a few rocks so I didn't startled him. I could just imagine my hello being answered with his startled fall off the river bluff.

"It sounds like rain," he said as I approached.

"What are you talking about?" I asked. "Listen. All of the fish, breathing their last. It sounds like rain."

"Too bad it isn't rain, we sure could use it. I'm Tyler." Introduced myself, and thought about what he said. What a strange thing to notice,

though the world was quieter from up here on the bluff.

"Johnny," he said flatly.

"How come you aren't down there with everyone else?" I asked

"I figured that this would happen, with it being hot and all. I feel bad for the fish. We aren't playing the game by the rules anymore." Johnny responded.

In the following weeks I rode my bike past Johnny's house at least twice a day. Some days it was on purpose, I'd be finished with baseball practice and ride past to see if I could catch a glimpse of the dark haired boy staring out his window and at the town down the hill. Some days I would ride into town to run errands for my mother and just ride a little further down Main Street to see if Johnny was outside playing on the tire swing. He never was, but that didn't stop me from looking. It seems silly I guess, but it was something I could think about to shatter the suffocating boredom of youth in a small town. There was something intriguing about Johnny, something about his somber features

and heavy thoughts, like he was the vessel for the world's problems. He reminded me of characters in my comic books. Like a young Clark Kent, with much slighter a figure.

One Sunday after church, I decided to go up to the Parish house and see if I couldn't get Johnny to come out and play. Normally I'd be having the time of my life playing with the other kids at church brunch, but that Sunday, brunch was cancelled so all our parents could wait in line outside city hall to get that week's water rations. For the past few weeks, the reservoir in town had been bone dry. Trucks from Richmond were driven into town hauling water tanks so we wouldn't dry up like the largemouth kings.

I stopped my bike in front of the Parish's house. It seemed like a sepia photograph made real: an old house on a hill, the stagnation of the world around me in the summer heat, the sun fixed at high noon. I couldn't see my shadow as I filed down the front walk. The door was wide open as I walked up the steps.

"Come in, Tyler." Johnny called from inside the house.

I hesitantly entered and walked in the direction of the voice. I found Johnny sitting on in a back room study, reading *The Cloud* by Percy Shelley. It took a while for my eyes to adjust to the darkness of the room. I sat down on a sofa adjacent to his reading chair.

"How have you been?" I asked him. He looked up from his book and he was pale as I might be in the dead of winter.

"I've been better. Kind of lonely" he replied with a subtle frown.

"Well have you met any of the kids in town?"

"I haven't." he said in an apathetic way.

"Of course you're going to be lonely if you don't know anyone! Some sunlight might do you good too. Let's go out for a walk." I suggested.

We walked down to the Parker's cornfield. The sun was lower in the sky and we sat beneath a big live oak that grew beside a cow pond. We dipped our feet in the remnants of the pond's water and cooled off as we talked.

"So where'd you come from?" I asked

"Lots of places." He answered "Lots

and lots of places. We don't stay in one place too long."

"That must be amazing, I've only ever lived here in Driver." I said mournfully. "I get so tired of the same town, same school, same folks."

"It's not as great as you think," he replied, "moving around so much means I never really get to talk to people, I never make friends."

"You mean you've never had a friend?" I was amazed. I wouldn't say I was popular as a kid, but in a small town like Driver, I knew everyone.

"No I don't mean that," he said shortly, "I just mean I've never been in one place long enough really make a friend, a close one."

"Like a best friend?"

"Exactly," He replied, "And it's not just the moving, it's hard for me to really relate to other kids. I'm different."

"I know, and that's great! Everyone in this town is the same, it's so boring. Like everyone's lived here so long that they've all become the same person." I said enthusiastically.

"Well I probably won't be here long enough to be the same, not before my parents move me again." Johnny said with a hint of angst. By now, the summer

Rebecca Bunker Boy with Puppies



heat had almost completely dried the cow pond leaving our feet to kick around only dust.

"Why do your parents move so much?" I asked.

"I...my dad, for work." He stammered, taken off guard by the question. "His company transfers him a lot."

"Oh I understand," I said half-heartedly.

"Let's head back," he said, "I'm starting to burn." I looked at my own skin and noticed its pinkish tone. I had fair skin and freckles, prolonged exposure to sun was my sworn enemy. As we walked back towards town, I remembered something my father told me the day the river ran dry.

"Hey!" I shouted, "I thought your dad worked with mine at my dad's shop? Why did you say some company made your dad move?"

Johnny's face looked pale, as if the pinkish sunburn had washed away like rosy paint. He stopped walking and turned to face me. His dark hair covered his eyes which now shone with something between fear and resent-

ment.

"My parents move me because I do bad things and get in trouble." He said simply and hotly.

"I don't mind!" I absentmindedly replied. No answer from Johnny, he just smiled slightly and turned to continue walking down the street. We walked home without another word exchanged between us.

As the summer went on, the drought and Johnny Parish settled in for a long stay in Driver. The possibility of being someone's first best friend excited me and I tried to hang around Johnny Parish as often as possible. As that hot summer burned on, Johnny and I went out and had all kinds of adventures around Driver. I brought him to the Jameson's junkyard, the old water tower out on Matoaka Road, and all the other places that everyone who grew up in town was practically born knowing about.

One evening I brought Johnny up to hanged man hill, a small ridge on the edge of town with a tall lone tree at the crest. Legend says that tree was where they used to hang prisoners

and their cruel spirits still haunt the place to this day. Kids came to visit the hill less because of the legend and more because of the view. We sat beneath the tree as the sun sank low in the sky, providing relief from the oppressive heat.

"This is the first tree I ever climbed, back when I was a little," I told Johnny Proudly. It was like the town was part of my history and I part of its.

"I've never climbed a tree," Johnny confessed.

"What do you mean you've never climbed a tree? Everyone has climbed a tree!" I couldn't imagine someone never participating in an activity as holy to childhood as tree climbing. "It's one of those things you do with friends. I guess I never got the chance." He said as he looked at his high-top sneakers sadly. "Well Hell, you got to climb this one!" I shouted as I jumped to my feet.

"Okay I guess," he said with a slim smile as I wiped the sweat from my hands and pulled him to his feet.

"Just follow my lead," I instructed, "Put

your hands where my hands go and your feet where my feet go."

He nodded and we started our climb. For the first half of the climb, Johnny was doing pretty well, having never climbed a tree before. The limbs were strong and close together, like a natural ladder up the side of the tree. As the limbs started to thin out toward the top, I could look out all the way across driver to the railroad tracks on the far side of town.

"It's breathtaking!" Johnny shouted from a couple limbs below me.

"Just wait till you see the view from the top," I said as I deftly jumped to a higher branch.

"I don't think I can make it, Tyler." Johnny said hesitantly. "I'm not strong enough to hold on and pull myself up."

"Yes you can, just grab my hand and I'll pull you up." I told Johnny as I extended my hand downward toward him.

"I...I'm not sure." Johnny whispered as if trying to convince himself it was okay.

"C'mon Johnny, I've got you. You've got to trust me. I can help you up, that's my job. I'm

your friend." I told him with a sincere smile.

"Well...okay," He said quietly as he looked at the ground and then up toward my hand.

Johnny reached up toward my hand and then jumped, his hand landing into mine as I grasped it tight. As I flexed my arm and began to pull him up toward me, my sweaty palm began to slip. I squeezed as hard as I could but his slender hand slipped right out of mine. Before I could reach him with my other hand, he was already gone. Johnny fell downward, missing every branch and landing hard on the ground below, his neck bent at an unnatural angle.

I ran as fast as I could to town. I knew there was nothing I could do alone, I was just a kid with a problem much bigger than me. I made it to the drugstore and they told me they would send for an ambulance. Maybe he would be okay after all. The pharmacist was pretty calm. Calmer than an adult with a real problem would be. He rang my mother and she brought me home.

That evening seemed to crawl by like molasses. My mother had dried tears at the dinner table, I had a feeling like a big rock had appeared

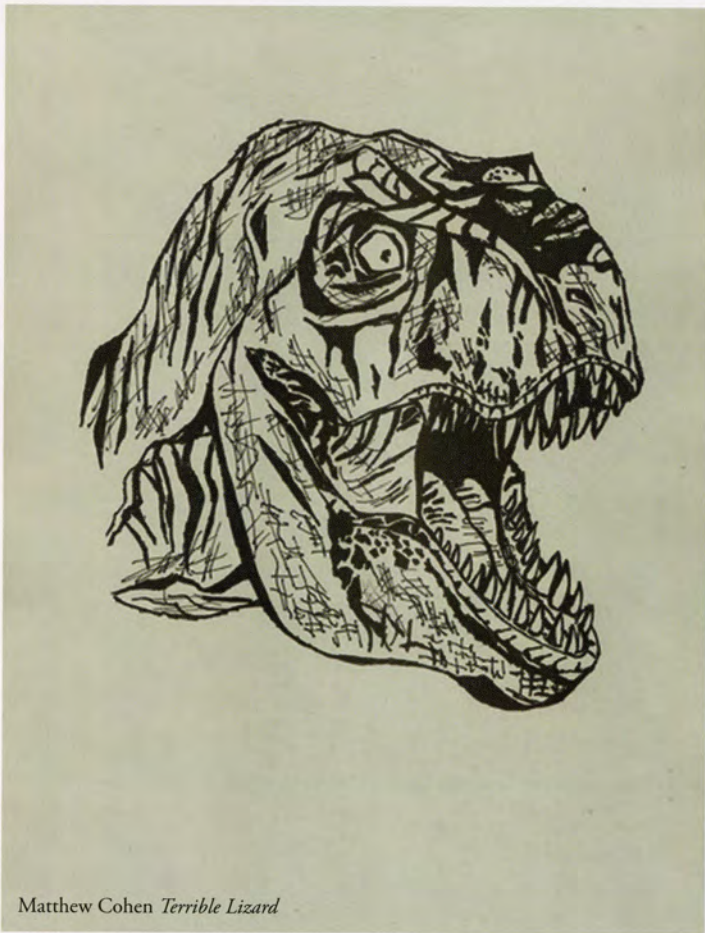
in my small intestine, and my father told me ad nauseam: "I told you to never play up on that tree with your friends, son, it's dangerous."

Just as night fell on the town of Driver and our dinner was finished, the kitchen phone rang. My mother picked up the phone and my father sent me out of the room so she could talk in privacy. I sat down in the living room and waited.

About five minutes passed and my mother came into the room, the streams of tears on her face were less dry than at dinner.

"It was Mr. Parish. He didn't make it." My mother sighed. Outside, our fork and spoon wind chime began to stir as a breeze picked up.

That night a large thunderstorm rolled in from the west. A single thunderhead stretched high into the sky, higher than any plane could fly. We could hear the thunder rolling hours before the lightning was seen. When the rain came, it poured and poured hard. Like every drop of water that hadn't fallen that summer was coming down all at once. It was the worst storm to ever hit Driver.



Matthew Cohen *Terrible Lizard*

IMPORTANT

John Eustace Needham

Thank God we can't see their tiny faces,
masked over with dust and blood.
Thank God Uncle Sam erases
their mothers' tears in a vast, media-flash of patriotic flood.

Thank God they all die over there,
and not on our classroom's floor.
Thank God we don't have to care
about collateral damage behind a bolted door.

Thank God we can't see their names lie
beneath a bright, smiling yearbook photo of tragic glint.
Thank God we bury them out of our mind before they die;
the calamity of infants is concrete covered with tiny hand prints.

Our Windows are open,
but Thank God the blinds are closed.

-
I hope we write "HOPE" on our missile heads,
so they can see what we're really all about.

SAIL BOAT

Elaina Moriarty

ailing whale stared at the sail boat, afloat.
 tailed the floating boat, noted the road to sand, unsafe.
 saintly whale seen by its tail and throat by the
 sail boat, prepares to assail, must prevail.
 net unveiled, rails and smote availed,
 remote sail boat soon may impale.
 Hail or Hell the sash of sky, the whale not afloat,
 and soaked sail boat bailed in cloaks availed.
 sage whale, forsake or save coach and tote sail boat.
 the sake of notes, quotes, wrote in gale and jail, the sail
 boat must pail or demote, fail or float.
 sated fate. sail boat.



Stephanie Wainless *Into the Distance*



Aimee Brasseur *Man's Best Friend*

JOY IS A RIVER-WET DOG

Hannah Cranston

Mist muddled mornings and mango-gold afternoons,
blustering winds and apple-bright fires; these
will all be a part of your new life.

Tomatoes will twine round the stakes in your garden.
Seashells will blush

lazy on your window sill. Warm soap suds will
slosh in your dishwater, slow-spinning, waiting
for your cool fingers to roil their masses into rainbows.

One drizzling morning, while you fill your glass at the tap,
a bubble will overcome the brim of your cup,
then burst spectacularly.

On an afternoon in late autumn
while you walk beneath a flaming tree,
a crow will swoop swift to alight near your feet,
then make you a delicate bow.

Don't forget these greetings. They're sent to remind you
that however flawed the landscape

of arid mind and fallow heart, of dull and aching
body, joy is real.

At any moment, joy can shake you by the shoulders, grin

madly into your face, and tell you again
that she takes many forms, each lovelier than the
last.

Joy is the lean dance
of elm's arms in a whipping wind. She's
the green curl of a garter's tail
as it flicks through browning grass.

She is the wood smoke that tumbles up
at dawn to kiss trees' topmost leaves.

Joy is a river-wet dog dancing dry.

Joy may prove uncomfortable.

You may not be ready. And as
the cool, green spray of shaking dog
flecks wet across your face, you may not want it.
But joy is for you.

From golden snout to phoenix-fire tail,
She is yours for the sopping embrace.



James Sarubbi *Bird on East Campus*

MEDICINE BAG THAT BURNS

Luke Haushalter

King of the crows,

cawling at the moon, cacaw-
ing within a cloud. Who are your subjects?
why don't they listen? Yours
is a house of

petulance and coquetry,
stripped bare among the dead branches
that want to have something else besides
an endless winter of constant thoughts,
cries of mercy and dim-lit serenades.
This season is the downfall

of an empire,
it is the meticulous undoing of a tapestry,
we sit on, under the eaves of twilight,
to make love to
ourselves beneath blankets to escape.

Sinful king of blackbirds,
your pride will hide you in the
morning,
when you are a lone
blight in a dismal snowfallen wasteland.



Laura C. Wilkins *Out of Line*

FATE

Alexander Snider

I was fourteen years old at the time, and I still remember that day as if it were yesterday; the day I found my purpose.

That fateful day had started off like countless others before it. The year was approaching its twilight; all the leaves had begun to change color. Some even had fallen to the ground below, and crunched beneath my feet as I stepped through the forest.

I loved the forest. It was my escape from the world. The false world.

This was the real world.

Walking through these parts of the forest was something I did quite often after school hours. It

provided for the comfort for the holes in my life, and my understanding. Not many others came through these parts. There weren't enough animals for hunters and no homes for a couple miles at least.

It had seemed like any other day. Then I heard something off to my right. I saw her. And she saw me.

I wasn't sure what exactly she was, but I hadn't ever seen a creature that compared to her elegance. She was larger than I, shaped like a fox, and had thick golden-white fur covering her body. Her nine tails only made her seem larger, yet at the same time more beautiful. I didn't have time to see anything else. She took me.

I could no longer move of my own accord. It was as if my body was no longer my own. Her thoughts pried through my mind, and did as they willed. The relationship wasn't one where I could provide feedback. If she knew what I was thinking, the fear I felt, she ignored it.

She took me far away from my home to an old church. I don't remember much of what she wanted from there, but I know what she found

pleased her. For the first time, I too found myself to be pleased. This felt right. She wasn't a demon, and this wasn't a curse.

It was an honor. In fact, it was the greatest honor I had ever received. She gave me my purpose.

Gradually I began to stop counting the days she kept me as her servant. They weren't to be dreaded, they were to be treasured. I soon forgot about everything else. I wanted nothing else from my life. She completed me like no one else could do.

I had never felt that way before about anyone, or anything. To this day I cannot describe that feeling.

The seasons went by quickly when I was with her. I was now sixteen. Even if I had wanted to return to my old life, I would have to start anew. She hadn't cared about that life. I hoped that she would keep me until the day I left the world.

But that was not to be. One day, she moved on.

I could always feel what my body had been doing while it was hers, but now that I was alone,

everything felt... different. For a few days I wandered around aimlessly, unsure what path to take. Should I return home to my family? Should I look for her?

It didn't take me long to realize that those two questions were one and the same.

She was my family now, and my home. I wanted to know more.

So I sought her out.

My journey was a long. Through research I found out that my experience was not a unique one. She had taken others as well, all throughout the ages. I read stories, journals, and even joined groups that seemed to worship her.

I never stayed in one place for very long. The worshippers lost my attention after a week or so. They all wandered off their path long ago. I wasn't sure how to proceed.

The years went on, and my body had grown more slender. I continued to read accounts

of those who had seen her. I learned from these that it was likely that she didn't allow for everyone to retain their memories of her.

But she had allowed me to remember.

The hope that provided alone encouraged me to continue on my journey. Over time I learned that she

rarely stayed in one place for very long. She went wherever she pleased, whenever she pleased. I had to think like she would. If I were her, I would stay just beyond the reach of civilization.

Looking in those areas would be my best chance.

The first few months proved fruitless. But over the time since she left, through study at various libraries that I came across, I learned how to tell what sorts of berries were able to be eaten, and which weren't. I hadn't figured out how to hunt yet, but that would come in time.

Then one evening, I saw her.

She hadn't changed a bit over the five

years. The fondness of her that had grown within me didn't stop the fear from creeping in. She fixated her eyes upon me, and I could feel her anger.

One of the thoughts that had occupied my mind during the journey was simple, yet complex: What was the first thing that I was going to say to her? Anything less than perfection could mean the end of me.

"Will you teach me about your life?"

A simple question, but one that I thought would best communicate my intentions. Her anger seemed to subside a bit, and I could feel her searching through my mind to see if I was being genuine.

She had been very stiff, something I knew was a sign that an animal was upset, and might even be ready to attack. I was terrified, but my other feelings kept me in place.

Her fur relaxed and her furrowed brows retreated back into their normal position. She had seen my true feelings. She looked me over for a few more seconds, and then told me that I could spend the night with her and that she would tell

I write this in the hopes that one day perhaps it will be found by a traveler who happens across this forgotten place.



Aimee Brasseur *Color Run Shower*

me what I wanted to know.

I bit down on my lip. The plan worked. I followed after her, making sure to keep a few feet behind the long tails which she made sure to keep off the ground. I was still afraid, but less so than I was just minutes earlier.

As it turned out, she was living in a cave not too far away. It wasn't the largest of homes, but she seemed to be satisfied with it. She led me to the rear of the cave and looked me over again as if she were waiting for me to begin. And so I did.

My questions carried on late into the night. What was she? Where had she come from? What was she searching for? She answered them in earnest detail. Through the whole time though, I noticed that she seemed ever so slightly perplexed at my attitude towards her. Perhaps there hadn't been many others who actually possessed fondness for her. She informed me that that was indeed the case.

I found this hard to believe. How could such a beautiful creature not attract the furthered interest of anyone she had possessed in the past? She told me that she too puzzled over this. She

said she considered it an honor to be possessed by her. I told her I agreed.

It wasn't until I couldn't keep my eyes open any longer that sleep took me in. I remember dreaming of her that night. I worried that she wouldn't be there in the morning.

But that wasn't the case.

She allowed me to stay longer than one night. Those nights turned to weeks. I followed her around during the day whilst she hunted. If she had noticed me, she didn't make any move to stop me from doing that. I soon learned how to hunt by watching her. On occasion, I could have sworn I caught her looking at me, as if she were expecting me to learn from her even without asking directly.

One night, she informed me that there were others like her out in the world, and that, along with answers, was what she was looking for. I told her that I doubted that there was anything more beautiful than her in the world. Her response marked the first time I had actually seen an outward hint of returned fondness. She gave me the fox equivalent of a smile, and then went

to sleep.

Weeks turned to months, and months into years. I had become an accomplished hunter, and the hints of fondness towards me popped up then and again on rare occasions. She hadn't allowed me to touch her fur yet, but I thought that was to be expected. Touching to understand was something I'd only ever seen humans appreciate.

I write this in the hopes that one day perhaps it will be found by a traveler who happens across this forgotten place. I don't believe she knows that I have it, and I suspect that she won't think to read it come the morning. Perhaps it will be published somewhere. Somewhere that one of her future servants might find it.

The winter is harsh and unforgiving. My time here is coming to an end. I won't make it through to the morning.

You allowed me to sleep against you tonight. You wanted me to live on. For the first time, I could feel your fur. It was lusher than I could ever imagine it to be. I feel as though I understand you. I know that it's not possible for any man to ever fully understand you, but I feel

as though I understand what you wanted me to know.

If you read this, please know that you gave me the most honored existence that any man could ever hope to live. I wish that I could tell you how I really feel about you, but no words do it justice. Such are the limits of man.

I wish that I could continue on, but I feel as though I have reached my limit. All I can say is...

Thank you for allowing me to truly live.

ALLEGED RAPE

Zachary McCarthy

He knew only enough Japanese
to tell me "Shut the fuck up
if I don't want to die."

Every syllable splattered red against
the motel mattress, forming the rising sun
which was actually the setting
of my innocence—devoured
like a single grain of rice,
the firebombing of Tokyo, 1944.

He smashed my skull with the spent
skeleton of liquid nationalism, whistling
stars

and stripes forever, and lit a cigarette.

*I have a funny thought
in the rapture of Osakai Station,
as I fall backwards
into the mouth of God,
and it is this:*

I hope the American troop that raped me
flies home to find everyone he ever loved
gone. Not dead, just gone.

I hope the pills just make it worse.



Laura C. Wilkins *Meaningless*

Hello, are you there?
(Please leave a message after-)

You lying bastard

Why didn't you call?
(Please leave a message after
The beep.) BEEP Call me.

Rage, never ending
I sit by the phone, waiting
It will never ring

It's so exhausting
(Please leave a message after-)
Never being heard

Hola! Que Pasa?
(I don't understand this shit)
Hablas Espanol?

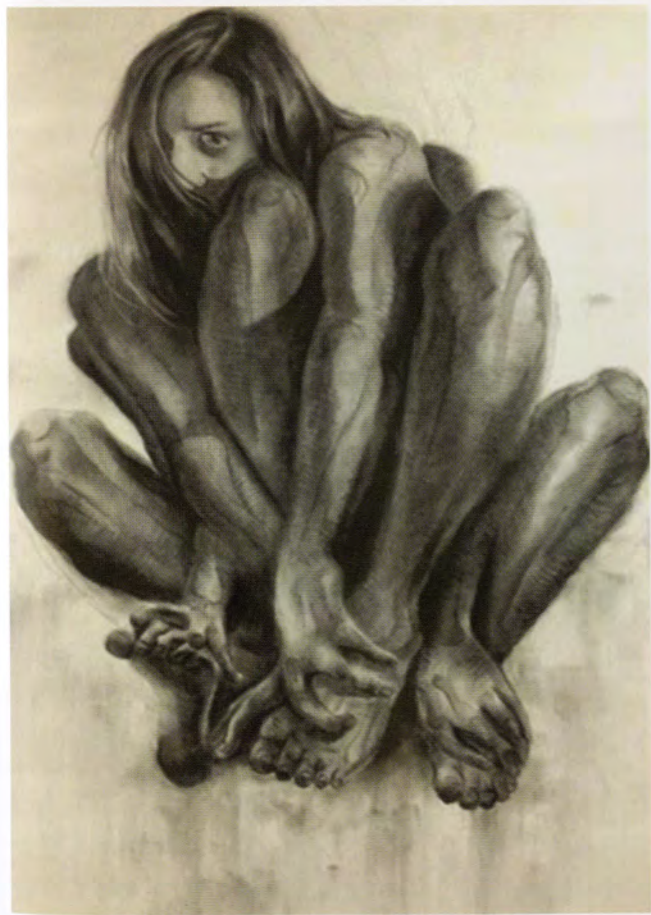
Wrong person, wrong phone
(Lo siento. No ingles)
You lying bastard

Rebecca Heisner

AWKWARD PHONE HAIR

Kelsey Fisher *Untitled*





Kelly Sheridan *Limbs*

TOO MUCH LIPSTICK

Dillon Vita-Finzi

Jeri puts it on her lips.
Jeri puts it on her tongue too.
Jeri sucks it out slowly.
Jeri then begins to chew.

Jeri loves her Mom's lipstick.
Jeri finishes every tube.
Jeri loves her Mom's lipstick,
just as much as her Dad's glue.



Jackie Brennan *Morning Mine*

HOW TO HAVE MONONUCLEOSIS

Alexandra Parker

Inspired by Lorie Moore's How To Be A Writer

First semester, you are as hyped up like Stevie Nicks on cocaine. You spend your days bike riding in notoriously high-waisted jean shorts, at nights you are hunched over books, writing in a slanted scrawl. Your weekends are a harangue of dark nights, stumbling on the streets on the way to loud shoegaze shows. Acquire a taste for expensive vodka and Haruki Murakami novels. In *Norwegian Wood* you follow Toru's isolated and depressing years in college. Shave the sides of your head in a fit of impulsive passion. Like Toru, you fall in love, unexpectedly and completely by accident.

The pressure of school begins to weigh down on you. Your roommate is seldom happy, often absent, and always depressed. She hasn't made any acquaintances in this new city, so you become her surrogate mother, her sole source of friendship and attention. She finds a job at a local coffee shop. You sign up for a college radio show. Download too much music by queer, shoegaze, progressive bands. College life slowly

sucks you dry like a fat tick.

Two months into your college term, get sick. It's only a cold, you tell everyone. It lingers for weeks, so deny to your friends, to yourself, that anything is wrong. The cold becomes a hacking, mucus cough. Let the cough rack you through the nights. Get frustrated. Then, get angry. You try tea—drink pots and gallons of the stuff. Brew Jasmine, black Chai, Herbal. You get desperate. Go to the doctor for any remedy. The lined physician's face frowns and forms the word mononucleosis. Tell them you came in for bronchitis. Insist you cannot have mono, there's just no way. Trying not to rip the paper on the table, you chew your cough drops much too hard. The kissing disease is like a death sentence. Drop three classes and struggle to finish even one. Take a laundry list of prescription medicines.

Your dedicated boyfriend is very concerned. He watches patiently as you gasp into your nebulizer three to five times a day. Feel guilty about dragging him through your illness.

Your best friend from home just wants her drinking buddy back. Distance yourself from

her. Avoid all alcohol and cigarettes, stop going to shows and parties. Flush your weed and social life down the toilet in your apartment. Nothing works.

Make many calls to the pulmonologist, the internal medicine specialist, the endocrinologist. Fill those pills. Chew vile tasting, cherry menthol cough drops. Read Jhumpa Lahiri novels about the plight of Indian-American immigrants to distract yourself. Keep a word document of fragmented thoughts. They sound like:

A story below

*You and I are falling into shades of indifference
I wonder what I would see in the walls.*

Call your boyfriend one night. Somehow he has put up with months of your illness and long weekends listening to you cough in your apartment. He tries to soothe you, his voice ricochets off the wall. Hang up the phone, and stand on the bridge outside your apartment because it is the highest altitude in the city. With blank eyes, stare at nothing and everything at once.

Second semester, your muscles atrophy like melted glue. Your arms feel like churned butter and your belly is the swollen thorax of a spider. Prednisone steroids have strange side-effects, you take note of pepperoni like acne, and suddenly you have the appetite of a small Russian boar. Forget to brush your hair on a regular basis. Your eyes look wild, and you acquire a permanently frantic expression. Listen to Kendrick Lamar. Play good kid, m.A.A.d city over and over. Who ever said white girls can't listen to underground rap?

Find a new doctor, an Internal Specialist he is called. The image of a man in a white coat pops into your head, he is poking inside in your torso with fat, gloved fingers. Be relieved when you meet the chubby, middle-aged man who must be your savior: he is your last, desperate hope for a cure. With his knuckles he taps on your spine, then examines your eyes with a blinding light, and listens to your heart with his stethoscope. He pats his beard and concludes

that you need extensive blood testing: out comes the needle. The nurse wraps a rubber band tightly around your arm, flicks the needle and jabs it into your arm, sucking out blood. Hear the liquid fill the vial, and resist the wooziness that washes over you. A few weeks later, you learn that the frumpy Internalist tested you for HIV, Hepatitis C, and the Epstein-Barr virus. All of these came back negative. The nurse on the phone tells you there is no Epstein-Barr virus in my system: you don't have mono anymore. Let this news set in.

Flick through pictures of you and your friends from the summer. Next to them, you looked so skinny and tan. The mirror reflects a puffy swollen face. Squeeze your unfamiliar belly fat and wonder what is wrong. Is it anemia? No, your iron levels are excellent. Your mother looks at you with pity in her eyes, sympathy in her gesture. Write strange haikus late into the night under the hypnosis of Ambien. Revel at how the shortest form of poetic verse has the most

rules. You refuse to adhere to the 5-7-5 syllable rhythm. Erase and rewrite in frustration:

*Burnt umber eyes draw me into
Your sacred warmth*

Months later, your symptoms have begun to subside. You reach out to your friends but find that they have on the whole, forgotten about you.

NARCOLEPSY

Elaina Moriarty

I walk briskly down the hall, boots click clicking against tile, papers clutched to my chest
 when it begins rolling through my mind, dense fog, creeping deliberately through me
 swirling my mind into clouded puddles, tendrils crawling down my spine and
 seeping into my chest, I push on, fight the inevitable, the unconquerable,
 even as it caresses my thighs, knees, ankles, that invisible force can
 easily pull them back, air turns thick as molasses, feet already
 dragging, mind powerless, already it's shutting down,
 concrete walls suddenly billowing cloud pillows
 papers slip from relaxing muscles and now
 falling as gently as my eyelids, lashes
 flutter only once more, helpless,
 the battle again lost to that
 constant torturer, that
 cruel, seductive
 cousin of
 Death,
 sleep.



Julian Ali *Untitled 4*



Valerie Westerman *Eyelashes*

RIGHT SIDE, WRONG BED

Elaina Moriarty

a bloom of breath
twisting over the void
like fog over its river

a cool mint shiver
to match chilled eyes
breathing in small sips

plum pigments of my lips
and scarlet blush to color
cheeks that seem shy

but eyes reveal every lie
glance at shredded nails
then peer through midnight lashes

morning sun now flashes
time no longer caught like
high heels between cobblestones

resigned to face day's unknowns
once more I wake up on
the right side, the wrong bed.



Bianka Snorggrass Sister

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO DROWN

Jasmin Ullah

if you don't want to drown

you should probably learn to swim

and if you can't swim

float

and when the sun gets in your eyes and the salt of the waves crawls ruthless into your skin

find a fellow drowner

and sink together

NEGATIVE CONFESSIONAL

Luke Haushalter

A crestfallen house of cards,

sitting on a haystack, a web of lies,

a man transfixed upon beauty on a picture on a park bench. New York City. Moments
unseen--deferred and indifferent. A rhythmic salutation to a sun god. A Monster
in maid's clothing.

We live in an age ripped from the headlines, we're All Blues, all blurs,
mistaken for someone we knew once, and loved, long ago. It's
too treacherous to trust, too sneaky to be seen. Ready on the level, we're
waiting for the other shoe to drop

two ...

three...

The mistakes we make in a lifetime weighted against a heavy heart. The youth of kingdoms past
settling with
the ruination of their eldest citizens.
Catchphrase poetry, remarks
mumbled just
to break the
goddamn silence.



Bryan Murphy *Boardwalk Loner*

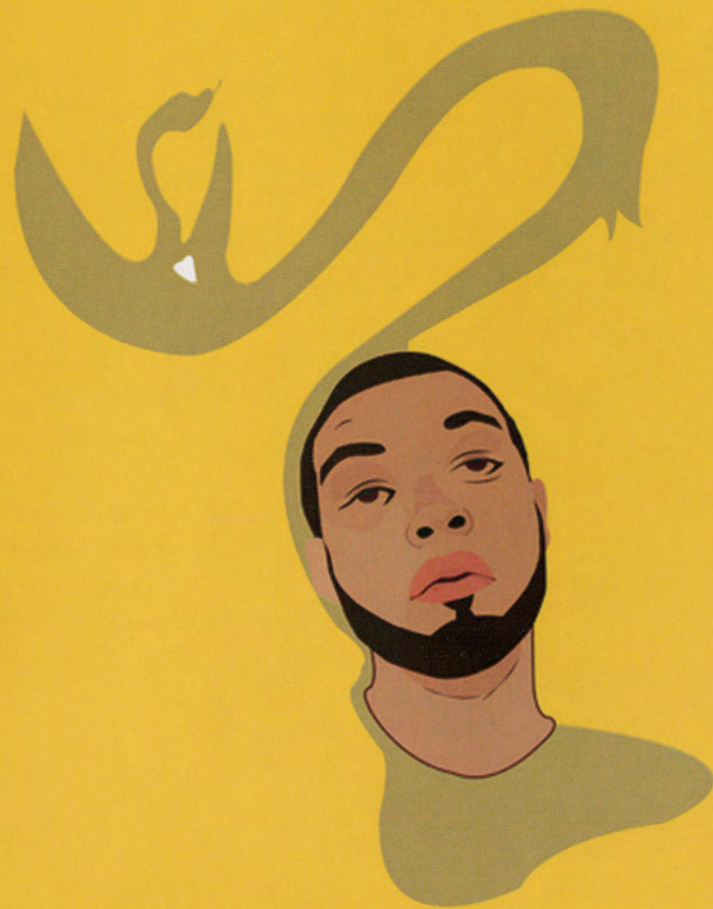
MY KIND OF BENZO LOW

Zachary Schneller

Trazadone lows
Clobbered with benzo
Induced sleep terrors
Wake up screaming
Another Ambien pronto
Sunshine brings
Fuzzed out dazed out haze
My bed feels like a maze
I walk to the mirror
And look at my swollen
Seroquel sloppy stomach
Bloated and distended
Metabolic syndrome
Slabs of flabs of fats
Depresses me
But I can't drink it away
Because of the fucking labels
Stupid fables of drowsy sorrows
Not drowned but steeped
In medicated mudslides
Shudders wrack my body
As I'm strapped back to the

Hard bed of enemy agony
Of past agonies and the
Agonies yet to come
Thrashing and screaming
Ants with their needle legs
Crawl over my body
But no matter how hard I kick
I can't get them off
I try so hard
My knees pop like twin shotgun blasts
Am I some doctor's shit sick kicks
While he pounds paralyzing posts
Securing me to my bed
Like some insane medicated Jesus?
Or is some little kid zeroing on me
With a magnifying glass
Perforating my skin with smoking craters?
My body has become a battlefield
Where all the good feelings
Trying to burst through
Become trapped in interlocking
Strands of barbed wire

Julian Ali *Serpenter L'homme*



The man on the road
Sitting with a sign
Taking off a load
Unaware of time
He lays down his head
A pillow without dream
On his concrete bed
Simple as it seems

His life never ends
Without a sense of age
A lifetime that depends
The music that he plays
A penny or a dime
Lay down what you will
He's happy for the gift
A song for his next meal

HAPPY STREET MUSIC

Bradley Andrick

And you ask
How can it be
That this poor man
Is happier than me?

Laura C. Wilkins *Clarence Darrow*



TOWER IN THE SKY

Malcolm Lenore

Crash!

The boy rolls out of bed onto the floor and sits up, rubbing his eyes as he scratches his hair before rubbing his stomach. Slowly he raises his arms above his head and stretches, letting a long yawn escape from his lips. He begins to rise off the floor to begin his daily morning routine but as his feet touch the ground he senses a strange, cold, hard, feeling on his soles. Looking down he sees that the floor is made out of old cobblestone grown over with moss. Confused, the boy raises his eyes to see an unfamiliar room. A small, dark area, lit only by a kerosene lamp placed on a small wooden table in the corner, a single stone chair placed beside it, the walls are red brick, old and cracked, and look to be a multitude of years old. A simple wooden shelf placed above the bed is covered in odd trinkets the boy doesn't recognize. The boy begins to panic, the presence of fear begins to spread throughout his body, causing him to breath rapidly and he starts to scratch at his throat as if trying to let in the air his mouth cannot. Slowly the boy begins to calm down and out of the corner of his eye, he sees the glint of something shiny in the other corner of the room.

Taking the lantern from the table he wanders over to the opposite side of the room, his feet making a mixture of *squish* and *rubble* as he steps on the mossy cobblestone, where he finds a small, circular, bronze rimmed mirror. Looking in the mirror he recognizes his face: his curly black hair grown down to the base of his neck, his dark, green eyes, his long, circular nose, his pointy, elf-like ears which stick out of his curly hair, and his bright

red lips. He's dumbfounded though by the clothes he appears to be wearing: a white shirt and pant combination, littered with horizontal black stripes, with an anklet strapped to his left ankle and a chain attached leading to a ring stuck in the wall. He attempts to tug at the chain but it won't budge. He scans the room for something he can use to break it.

Bringing the lantern back to the bed, he gets a better look at the shelf placed above it and the many unusual objects that it holds. He pushes all of the objects onto the bed and begins searching through them. He finds what appears to be a small circular object with the letters N, S, W, E printed inside but deems it worthless and tosses it onto the floor. He then picks up a flask containing a sort of brown, sloshy liquid and taking a small sip, finds it safe and takes a big, long gulp. Finally, he moves onto the final object, a bag small in stature but heavy in weight. He opens the bag only to find a dirty red colored powder. He takes a sniff and finds that there's no smell. The boy accidentally breathes a small sigh sending a gust of powder into his face. Suddenly, the boy's eyes begin to burn and his nostrils begin to flare and he begins to grasp at his throat. He quickly grabs the flask and pours the remainder of its contents onto his face and into his throat. The pain quickly subsides and the boy puts down the bag. As he does, however, he notices something colorful still on the shelf.

It appears to be a knife with a shiny, red blade and a snake shaped hilt, curved in a way that allows his small fingers to grasp it tightly. With blade in hand he gets to work on the chain. In six strikes, he's released and it clanks as it falls to the ground. With the chain gone, he starts looking for

a way out.

Shining the lantern around the room, the boy can't find even a hint of a door. About to give up, the boy decides to take one more look around when he notices that one of the bricks seems to be pushed in farther into the wall than the others. He pushes on the brick and it falls through to what appears to be another side. Shocked, the boy begins to push other bricks. One by one they fall, revealing a hidden doorway. The doorway leads to a dank, smelly hallway, so black not even one small detail about it could be seen. He tries opening his mouth to yell hello, but only a raspy breath escapes his lips. He tries again and again but only breath comes out. The boy drops the lantern and clutches at his throat, trying over and over again to speak but to no avail. The boy falls to his knees and begins to cry, the sound of his wheezy cries echoing off of the dark, black walls of the hallway.

After a while, the boy wipes his eyes, picks up the lantern, walks back to the chain and picks up what looks like a belt and wraps it around his pants, and tucks the unusual knife inside of it. He picks up the bag of dust (deeming it worthy as a distraction for whatever he may come across) and stuffs it into the pockets of his pants. Ready to go, the boy pours some oil that he found on the table into his kerosene lamp and put the rest into the flask that he found from the shelf. He walks through the open doorway into the dark hallway and proceeds to go forward into the darkness. The boy walks for so long that he begins to think that he is trapped by some kind of magic. The only things keeping him company are the sounds of his feet scuffling across the floor and the lamp in his hand. He continues to walk

for about what seems to be forever, his lantern growing dim, and is about to give up and go back when he sees a slimmer of light up ahead.

The closer he gets, the bigger the light grows. He reaches a small wooden door, just about the size of the boy. With no visible doorknob, he turns off the lantern and sets it onto his belt and pushes as hard as he can on the door, apparently too hard because as soon as the boy pushes, the door springs open, sending the boy stumbling onto the ground. Instead of cobblestone though, the boy falls onto a soft, red and golden rug. The boy picks himself up and immediately covers his eyes with his hands. He begins opening up his fingers slowly, allowing his eyes time to adjust. After a while, he removes his hands and sees bright, yellow painted walls, covered in paintings of people he cannot recognize, a very soft rug (the same rug he's standing on) covers the entire floor with a tower embroidered in the middle. Candle holders are placed along the walls of the room, a chandelier hangs from above, shining brightly, like a miniature sun, a table is placed along the center of the room, with four chairs facing the wall opposite the boy. The table is littered with all kinds of meats and pastries. The boy's mouth begins to water, and his stomach begins to grumble, he begins to twitch and holler at the welcome of these new, delicious smells. He walks up to the table and pulls back one of the chairs revealing a decomposed body.

Shocked, the boy throws the chair to the floor, sending the body crashing. Upon impact, it crumbles into pieces, sending bones and rotten skin everywhere. The boy drops onto his knees and begins to frantically scramble away from the body, screaming, or at least trying to as only raspy

whispers escape his mouth. A sound from a door across the room brings him back to his senses.

"Footsteps? Here?" he thinks. He crawls under the table as the sounds of the footsteps come closer. Peering his little head out from under the table, he is able to get a look as the door is kicked open and in walk three strange looking creatures covered in green scaly skin, with red slanted eyes, and long protruding noses with piercings along the ridge. They are about two times taller than the boy and have long skinny arms with three fingers, each covered in long claws. The same could also be said of their legs. They walk with their backs hunched over, the two in the back are wearing leather belts and buckles, with long guns – possibly rifles – strapped in holsters across their backs. The one in front seems to be in charge, as it has on pieces of metal mixed in with the leather. It also carries a sword on its side in addition to the gun on its back.

The one in charge looks at the body on the floor and begins to yell in a language unknown to the boy at the other two. The two subordinates begin searching the room, sniffing around for any scent of someone being there. The boy under the table begins to back away farther from the front, when he accidentally kicks one of the many table legs making a *thunk* sound. Suddenly the creatures spring onto the table, making loud thud sounds as they land on top of it and their sharp nails pierce through the wood, almost nicking the boy. He hears them crawling and sniffing on top of the table when suddenly one of their long arms appears under the table, scratching around. The arm draws closer and closer to the boy, he pulls out his knife



and prepares to strike, when suddenly a loud noise comes from the door opposite the one the creatures came from.

The arm retracts from under the table and the three creatures huddle together. The leader chooses one of his minions to go out with him and scout the location of the noise. The remaining minion is chosen to stand guard. He waits patiently until he can no longer hear the sound of their footsteps. He slowly peers his head out from under the table and sees the remaining guard standing guard to the left, with the doorway that they walked out of on the other side. The boy realizes that if he waits for too long the other two would come back. He reaches his hand up onto the table and searches around for something before finding some silverware. He crawls towards the end of the table closest to his destination and then chucks the silverware as hard as his little arm can towards the corner next to the guard. The guard runs after the sound and as soon as his back is turned, the boy runs towards the open door and down the hallway, slamming it behind him. He can hear the monster shriek and begin to give chase.

The boy keeps running and running and in the back he hears the monster gaining speed, its nails making scraping sounds as they react against the cobblestone floor. He looks back and sees it running on all fours and getting closer and closer, eventually gaining enough distance to reach its arm out at him. He grabs his knife and slashes at the creature's hand, cutting off one of its fingers. It yelps in pain and stops moving to grab its lost digit. The boy runs even faster, thinking he is in the clear, when suddenly he hears a loud bang followed by a sharp pain in his left leg. He looks down to see that a bullet nicked his leg, leaving a bloody red gash in his pants. The boy ignores the pain and continues to run as hard as he can towards the door he can see in front



Levi Key Larinz 002

of him for he knows that if he stops for a second, he'll be dead. Finally, the pain takes weight and the boy drops to his right knee. He looks back and sees the beast getting extremely close with its gun in hand with a smoking barrel. The monster leaps at the boy, as a cat would a mouse. The boy falls farther down onto his knee and propels himself at the beast, hitting it in the stomach mid-flight with his head. He quickly scrambles to his feet as the monster begins to recover and charges at it. He rams into its stomach, sending both him and the monster crashing through the door into the next room. They roll and tumble across the floor until smacking into what appears to be a window. The monster grabs the boy off of itself and smashes his head into the window, breaking the glass in the process. The boy is then grappled by the neck and held out the open window by the monster, which appears to be wounded as well, with the boy's knife stuck into its abdomen.

Grasping for air, the boy begins to kick and punch at the beast to no effect. Suddenly, he remembers the powder he put in his pockets. Digging around he manages to gather a handful and throws it at the monster's face. The monster shrieks in horror and lets go of the boy, it begins to grab at its throat, and its eyes turn red and blood begins to drip from them. The monster gags and tries one more time to attack the boy. The boy does a very messy, but successful dodge and the monster falls through the open window to its death. The boy limps towards the open window and looks down. All he can see are clouds and what appears to be a tower leading so far down, he can't even see the base. Taking a look around the room he entered, he notices that it's small and filled with shelves of books, covered in extreme

layers of dust, their titles in a language the boy cannot understand. The floor is again covered with a red carpet with a tower embroidered on it, and a single desk with a lamp attached stands in the middle of the room covered in dust, except for one spot that seemed as if someone was recently here. The boy sits at the desk and rips off some of his shirt to bandage the wound on his leg. While doing so though, the boy notices a certain smell that he finds familiar but cannot remember from where. He makes some more makeshift bandages and stuffs them in his pocket in case he needs them for later. Almost immediately after, the boy hears the cries of the other two monsters coming from down the hallway.

The boy goes and pushes one of the shelves into the entryway and begins looking for another way out of the room. The sound of the other two monsters clawing on the wall of the shelf startles the boy. He backs up towards the open window, and taking a look outside, sees that there is a ledge placed along the edge outside leading to another window. The boy slowly brings himself out of the window, onto the ledge and begins to walk slowly across, his hands planted firmly onto the wall. Inside, the two other creatures break through the shelf and smelling the blood of their fallen comrade, go into a crazed frenzy, breaking and tearing the room apart. The leader stops and suddenly flaps open on the side of its head revealing what appear to be some variation of an ear, he then points towards the open window and yells at the remaining minion to follow him and they give chase.

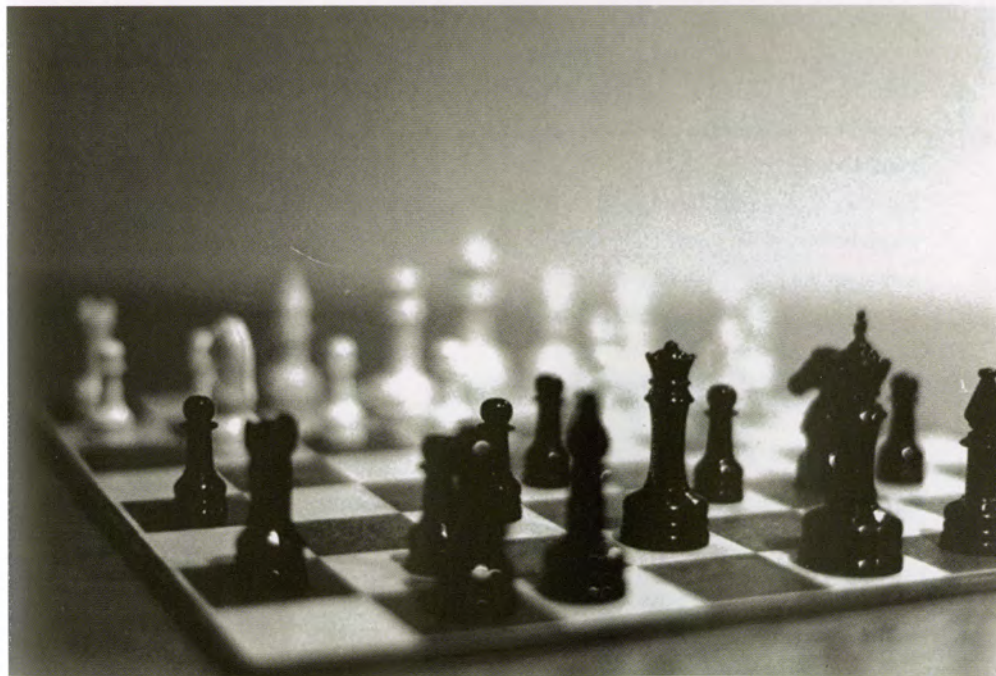
Just as he is about to reach the other window, a hand reaches out and grabs him and flings him inside, sending him headfirst into a wall, just as

a shot is rung and a bullet flies by. The man who grabbed him reaches out the window and grabs one of the monsters by its neck and pulls it inside. The creature thrashes around in his hands before a *crack* is heard, and the monster turns limp. He tosses the monster's body onto the floor. As soon as the body of the creature hits the floor, the leader appears from the window and tackles the person, cutting off his hand with its sword. He breathes aggressively and grabs the leader's sword arm, and steps heavily on its leg, resulting in a sickening cracking sound. The leader backs away and with his other hand, the man reaches back and pulls out a knife that looks similar to the boy's. The leader pulls out his gun and fires off a shot that hits the person in his stomach. The man shrugs it off and charging with the knife, plunges it deep through the leader's chest and slashes across, spilling the creature's organs all over the floor. In that split second between the stab and the slash, the leader manages to cut across the mystery man's stomach, inflicting a similar wound.

The boy recovers from the throw just in time to see the final strikes land between the two. As the man falls onto his back, he rushes over to his side as to try and give him help. The boy sees that it was a man, very muscular, also wearing the same uniform as the boy, the man also had curly black hair and pointed ears that stuck out, like the boy, and his face had a long scar across his cheek. He takes out some of the handmade bandages and tries to wrap the wound on the man's stomach to no effect. He tries calling for help, but the sound of his rasping breath reminds him that it's useless. The man takes his hand, and ruffles the kid's hair. He tries to reach

inside his pocket to pull out something, but death takes him before he can finish. The boy pushes the man, thinking it was a joke, he pushes harder and harder but the man doesn't move. He sees that the man's hand is in his pocket and digs around for whatever the man was trying to give him. He pulls out a picture of the man, a little boy, and someone who could be his wife. The boy notices that the child in the picture looks strangely like him. As the boy looks closer at the picture, he sees a circle drawn around the boy's face with an arrow that points towards the back of the picture. Turning the photo around, the boy follows the arrow, and in big letters, is the word "Son."

He freezes for a second, looks back at the man, then looking back at both sides of the photo, the boy finds a note scribbled at the bottom. He reads the note and his face drops. The boy picks himself up, and, holding back his tears, he walks over to the dead body of the leader. He scavenges for something of use, taking its gun and a small key found in the pocket. The boy sees a locked door in the back of the room, and using the key, opens it easily. The door leads to a lift. A small sign is placed on the side of the lift, "Ring 7 of Terra Tower" and a small diagram shows that there are seven floors in total. The boy walks up to the lift and presses the up arrow button. As the lift begins to rise, the sound of music can be heard from above. The boy sits down on the hard metal floor of the lift and begins to cry, as he knows that this is only the beginning of his doomed adventure. The boy drops the photo and on the back a phrase was circled: "Death Tower, No Escape, Must Protect Son."



Stephanie Wainless *Checkmate*

We watched CNN on that Tuesday,
the memory is still so fresh.
We watched them die.
In our grief, we wondered:
What would I do? Would I leap
or perish, try to be a hero
or run out of fear? Nestled in the comfort
of our sofas we say of course
we would be heroes,
we'll sign up to fight those
bastards, those evildoers.
I would take any bullet for you, America,
sure would. I'd give my only son.
But we wept as black paper floated from
that unnatural sky.
From here it does not matter
if we would jump, help
or die.

ETHICS

Heather Butterworth

DARE | SAY

Kelly Ostergren

For Patrick

It's almost easier to write to you
because I don't know you, never knew you.
You're like a repeating dream
entering my consciousness
remembering every so often.

I've almost said it so many times
and held my tongue
for Mom's sake
because it wouldn't be funny.
The ever unspoken thought:
At least I only have one brother.
I'm sorry if you knew this
and it offended you.

It's hard to remember you're there
sometimes

because I never saw you.

(I feel like I'm exploiting
a story that's not mine to tell—
to turn it into art.

But it is, too, a way of remembering,
which in the written word
is always valid.)

I only have one picture with you.
We're in a pumpkin patch
with Mom and Dad.

I'm almost 18 months old,
wearing a frilly hat
and puffy coat because it's October.
You were curled up inside Mom,
her extended shirt the only
testament to your presence.
I wish you got to feel the cold breeze
or see the bright orange pumpkin globes
or hear the crunch of leaves—
to taste autumn.

I'm 22 now.
You'd be 21

and we could knock back
a beer together on our visits
home on college breaks.

I wonder if you
would have been an athlete
or in love with books
or wholly different
from your brother and me.
Maybe you'd be the science nerd
our family never had.

All these years
I've seen the large bouquet
Dad brings home
every late November.
That's how they remember you.
Forgive me, it's the 22nd, right?

I hardly know your story.
I think you were healthy
right until the end.
The umbilical cord:
first your life, then your death,

coiled around your neck
and they couldn't help it,
they couldn't fix it.

I heard it was the doctor's fault
that we're not sharing that beer.

Mom and Dad held your cold
perfect body.
I'm sorry you never got to enter
this full earth
with a hallelujah scream.

I never even asked
if you were buried somewhere.
Brother, I have no idea
where what's left of you here is.
So I'm sorry.

I miss all the soccer games
we never played,
the spelling bees we weren't in,
the recitals we never went to,
the grades you never got,

the books you never read,
the days you never graduated
or married my sister-in-law
or celebrated the birth of your children.

Dare I say
I love you
who I have no adjectives for ...
you, the brother I never knew.

Valerie Westerman *Untitled*



I sit beside a window on a plane
 bombarded with stimuli.
 The clouds and city pass into the distance
 on my right.
 Peanut butter obscures the face of the
 child looking straight into my eyes.
 And on the left—two perky breasts
 across the aisle,
 bordered by scraps of tie-dye.

FLIGHT 2405

Graydon Uyeda

I dare not look ahead—
 what shall I say?
 She communicates through smiles, cries, and,
 I'm assuming,
 shrieks of pleasure.
 All of these are foreign to me.

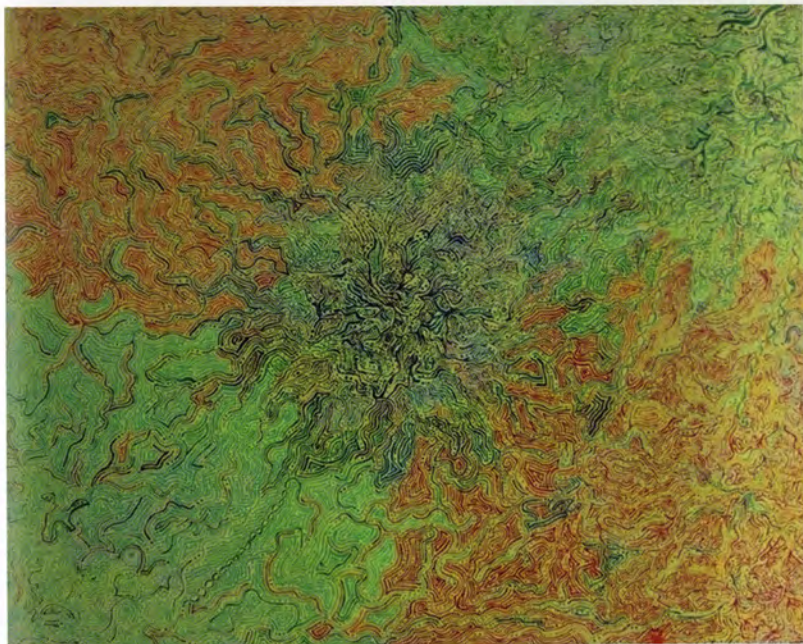
To look left would be indulgence;
 fantastic fodder for my fantasies.
 But there is risk too,
 the vileness of being caught
 admiring a body part meant to be admired.
 I know not of her spirit, soul, or mind,
 so respect or love dwell alongside
 my sex drive
 repressed by optical slants.

As the last of the buildings

give way to the first of the clouds,
 seat-belts are released by a light
 Flickering.
 The vast white expanse
 is just inches away
 from the cabin full of breasts
 and babies and bodies.

I just keep thinking how nice
 it has to be to be a cloud—
 spending days twisting and turning
 into shapes;
 sometimes many a second;
 to be a scribe for the universe,
 recording its will within your physicality.

But then I turn for one more glance
 down the tie-dye V-Neck.



Drew Swanson *Mind of a Maze*

APPROACHING WAR

Erica Figert

The metal-jaw man whispers obscenities.
Crawling like desperate rats,
teeth sharp saws gnawing steel,
they call me by my modern name.

I've known shells of sand and sea,
but here, on this shore,

sallow young men gaze haggardly
from mud-stained orbs,
and I choke on their memory
as they drown- dulce, dulce...

in the distance, sweet cries of women
starting to explode.

CUPCAKES FOR LUNCH

Elaina Moriarty

On my eighth birthday, I could not sit still.

I wiggled on the school bus, skipped down the hallway,
and bounced in my seat, impatiently counting the seconds.
Glance at the clock. Ten twenty-one. Ninety-nine minutes until lunch.
Ten twenty-two. Ninety-eight minutes until lunch.

In a sparkling purple box, carefully packed by my
Mother, 24 cupcakes waited to be devoured.
It was all I could do not to demand
we skip recess, go straight to the lunchtime celebration.

Running outside, I felt the warm southern air,
glimpsed the comforting steeples of the
Catholic church across the street. I raced
to the black tops towards my very best friend.

Katie stood waiting, curly hair tangled, pink nails
holding an extra hula hoop just for me. I sped to
her side, excitement bubbling, snatched the toy
with a flourish, and pressed my lips to Katie's.

Before I could share with her my delicious secret,
my name was being shouted over the blacktop.
In a whirlwind I was marched back inside, tossed angrily into place
across from the Principal. Bewildered, cupcakes danced in my head.

The Principal glared over sternly crossed arms, but I barely heard
the scolding, until the word "suspended" cut through my reverie.
Suddenly realizing my terrible mistake, I offered my most logical explanation
"no no! best friends can kiss. today is my birthday!"

Here my teacher interjected helpfully. "Girls can't kiss. Neither can third graders."
Giggles came from the main office and I stared at her, waiting for
someone to explain the joke, until my mother arrived, a storm of righteous anger,
and on the way home I cried at the unfairness of it all,

because I never even got to share the cupcakes.

Bianka Snorgress It's Called Fashion My Love



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ANSLEY LUCE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Just as you are skipping through the last couple pages of this literary arts magazine, Carlie and I are skipping through the final days of our time here at JMU, and our time with Gardy Loo.

Yes, I just used that simile. Yes, I realize it was clichéd. No, I won't apologize.

The comparison between our time here at JMU and an issue of Gardy Loo is actually quite appropriate. I think I can speak for both Carlie and myself when I say that college has been much like an issue of Gardy Loo: a little dark, a little light, a little smart, a little sexual (sorry mom), but always full of amazing people, and definitely just long enough.

Since joining the magazine staff as a freshman, I've held Gardy Loo very close to my heart, and have thoroughly enjoyed watching it grow and evolve through the years. I could not be more proud of or grateful for the rest of the staff for the work that they've done on this issue, and I can't wait to see what they accomplish on their own. They're interesting and intelligent and awkward and I know they're going to do amazing things in the coming years. (Good luck, staff—we love you!!)

For those of you who submitted, and for those of you who simply appreciated, thank you. We do this for you.

Spread your art; spread your truth.

Xoxo,
Ansley

CARLISLE SARGENT

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

If you are who I think you are, then you are probably exhausted. Completely wiped out from making it through eighty-something pages of literary arts. I know you aren't the type to skip pages or just look at the pictures, or worst of all, *skim*. You are like me, in that you started from the beginning and journeyed through until the end. Through Nikola's artillery, through wrong-moment smiles, through HOPE and Infinity and the face of Mr. Darrow. You've almost closed the book.

You, dear reader, deserve a thank you.

Gardy Loo has been a part of my life since I was a freshman. I found a niche, filled with wonderful, ridiculous, and creative people, and I never left. In four years, I have seen the magazine grow in depth and complexity. This semester, I have seen the magazine almost *double* its previous length. To the staff, I could not be more indebted to you for sticking together and pulling off something so beautiful. You all are terrible at taking group photos, and I love each one of you dearly. Thanks for making college much more fun.

To everyone, keep writing. Keep painting. Keep drawing. Keep reading.
These are the only things that make sense.

Love,
Carlisle

PRODUCTION DETAILS

All pages are in CMYK color and were designed using Adobe InDesign CS6 and Adobe Photoshop CS6 on Mac desktop computers in the Hillside computer lab and Moody Hall computer lab at James Madison University.

In Adobe InDesign CS6, the body copy is in Adobe Garamond Pro 9pt font with 14pt font leading. Copy bylines are in Adobe Garamond Pro 9pt font with 14pt font leading. Art bylines are in Adobe Garamond Pro 8pt font with 14pt font leading.

Title font is in Raja Drama ranging from size 16pt to 120pt.

In Adobe Photoshop CS6, all photos were cropped to size with 300ppi resolution in TIFF format. McClung Companies in Waynesboro, VA printed 1000 all-color copies. The staff distributed copies free of charge to the members of the JMU community in late April 2013.

The staff met every Thursday, from January 17th until April 18th, 7:00PM at the Annex on Mason Street, Harrisonburg, VA. They discussed possible theme ideas, campaigned for submission promotion, tightened the judging process, and established an extended Gardy Loo website. Submissions were accepted by email until February 25th, having a limit of 5 entries per person. Of the nearly 400 submissions, 226 were writing pieces and 138 were photography or art submissions.

The staff divided into non-exclusive committees: Writing, Art & Photography, and Design. A GoogleDoc was created to review all writing pieces, and Flickr account was created to review the art and photography pieces. Each committee had a member who organized meetings and led discussions to finalize selections. The Writing committee met at The Annex on March 12th at 8:00PM to make their final decisions. The Art & Photography Committee met at Carrier 247 on March 12th at 7:00-9:00PM to make their final decisions. All judging was conducted in a democratic process of voting and discussing, with no exceptions.

The design team, headed by the chief designer Emily Bagdasarian, met on Tuesday, March 19th to begin production, and they completed the magazine on Thursday, April 4th. As with the previous semester, the magazine was designed “based on content”; each visual art piece was matched up with a corresponding poetry or prose piece whenever possible. Pieces were placed in the magazine in no particular order. We apologize for any errors.

WANT YOUR WORK IN THE NEXT GARDY LOO?

Please send all submissions to jmugardyloo@gmail.com. Please include your name, phone number or email, and attached works with clearly labeled titles. Anyone may become a member of Gardy Loo judging staff simply by attending staff meetings.

SPECIAL THANKS

JMU College of Arts and Letters

JMU Media Board

Laurie Kutchins

Mary Murphy and McClung Companies

CONTACT US

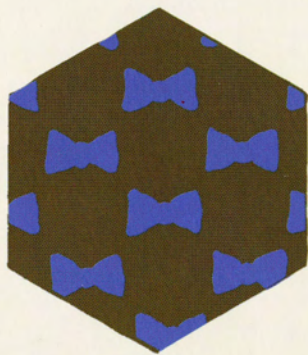
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