Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

It's not what art is but where it comes from that makes little arts magazines like Gardy Loo so important. It's what art uses - all the great and terrible things about life and love that would otherwise be bubbling up and expanding inside of us, with nowhere to go. Art pulls the yell out from our throats and lays it in front of us. It doesn't ignore the bad but boldly grabs it and twists it into something good, something not only manageable but empowering. So much has changed for me over the past four years, but what has never changed is what art can do for a soul. And that, I am sure, will never change.

This is my last issue as Editor of Gardy Loo. I could never say all the things that this experience has taught me, or how sad I am to leave. But I have to thank the staff with all of my heart for dedication and friendship. I was incredibly fortunate to find a group of kids who could not only handle the crazy things I asked of them, but also went above and beyond that every time. And at 2am on Thursday nights, when scanners broke (always) and computers stole our files and refused to give them back, the group never stopped, always moved forward. I have no fears for where the magazine will end up when I'm gone - it's in better hands than it's ever been.

-Mary Peyton Crook

Letter from the Assistant Editor

When I was little, I loved comic books and superheroes. I had dreams of growing up to be Batman, despite my brother's insistence that a girl can't be Batman. So when we decided here at Gardy Loo! to pay homage to all the villains that have graced the pages of countless epic tales and those brave men (and women of course) who saved the city from peril, needless to say I was excited. The excitement was toned down when I realized that this semester marks another big change for us; half our staff is graduating. This comic book is the culmination of all the fabulous times our staff has had over the past three years. Stay tuned though, for our epic adventure is not over.

-Stephani Gambino
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Primary Smiles

Andrea Ryan
Wintry Mix

Andrea Ryan
Haunted

Allyson Kennedy
Keep a count of the nights you can recall.  
I'll keep a notch for each time you stumbled here.  
Eyes veiled behind a wall of glass.  
I wanted to scream questions at you.  
How are you?  
Where are you going?  
How did you get this way?  
But those words, like us,  
lay apathetic still  
refusing to rise to fruition.

Still, I want to know you.  
Even if it takes years,  
I want to collect all your jumbled, drunken words —  
fit them together like a puzzle  
no one else solved.  
But are you even knowable?  
Eyes lost in a shadow of a shadow,  
you wander around this broken town in a shell.  
What images and ideas really cloud your mind?  
I just see the after effects  
(the come down  
the break down  
the existential crisis)  
of a boy too tired to sleep.

How many years can you cross these streets  
under dim lamp light?  
Under dim self ruin?  
Not knowing where you are  
or what you’ve become?  
How many times can you come back and say  
I am going to be okay now  
and just lie there?

Before it all fades from your  
distorted mind,  
remember how this began.  
From a smoking bench worn smooth  
outside our sleepy dorm freshmen year  
to a jumbled apartment room a year later —  
that faded, heavy blanket and Iron & Wine.  
Remember a blue dream of words and sounds  
some lost, some later found.  
Me lying awake.  
The note I left you on the chipped  
bathroom sink.  
My room the next year.  
Remember, although the blinds were down,  
I kept the window unlocked.

Remember the questions  
What do you do in the morning?  
Can you cook anything besides pancakes?  
Is life like a river or a dead end road?  
Have you read Hawthorne? How about Coleridge?  
Will you be downtown? Will you keep in touch?  
What was the last thing you parents said to you?  
Are you confused here?  
Are you still hearing these words?

Remember  
the girl who walked you home.
A Corner in Cobh

I took their picture. I don’t know why, but I wanted them there: captured by the lens in the way that I saw them. Standing together, braving the wind and smoking their cigarettes with their shoulders hunched and their wool caps pulled down acting as the only defense against the rain. I did not want them to see me, for I wanted forever to see them just as they were: three elderly men looking as though they were lifted out of a page of Irish history. They seemed untouched by time, just as they appeared untouched by the violent weather surrounding them. The waves and winds continued to wage a battle against the rocky coast of Cobh; these men merely stood watching like they had lived through a thousand storms and would live to see a thousand more. Not fragile in their age, but sturdy as if each wrinkle etched into their faces was a sign of triumph rather than decay.

In reality they were nothing to me, only three strangers, but to my mind they became a hundred men the moment I passed them. They were fishermen who’d survived years of rough labor on the harbor with only calloused hands to mark their dedication. They were decent men who’d raised good families. They were scoundrels who’d broken the hearts of women. They were poets who’d had their hearts broken. They were soldiers who fought the Irish wars grasping for freedom in the way a dying man gasps for air. They were survivors rescued from the restless sea only by the grace of God. They were dreamers who’d hoped for something more. They were childhood friends who’d never left home. They were a hundred men, a hundred possibilities, and a hundred stories—each one as intriguing and miraculous as the next.

I’d like to tell you that I learned their stories. That today I’ll write down their loves and losses and sorrows and joys into compassionate tale, weaving memories that will immortalize them in the way that they deserve. But I cannot. I learned nothing of the sort and I cannot reveal such tales except in the ambiguity of my own mind where truth and imagination blur to create nothing more than fictitious story. And they deserve more than that. They are more than that. And so it is better, much better, that they be remembered as they were: three men standing together, braving the wind, and smoking their cigarettes on a corner in Cobh.

Emily Langhorne
Forever Young

Lindsey Andrews
The air began to choke around his closet as he sat there, 
alone, 
starving at a small photo, 
pristine compared to his body crumpled at the back of the closet. 
Sit and so still. 
not moving, 
Hardly breathing. 
Numb. 
He is staring at her face. 
He knew he himself stands next to her, 
but can’t stand to see himself smiling. 
I won’t see her smile again. I took care of that for her. 
Everything in his vision has muted to a black and white. 
Everything except the picture he holds. 
Tiny orange and yellow flowers heating the space, 
glowing. 
The heat is so strong it begins to flow 
through his fingers as he touches the photo, 
brushing her stray hair carried by the breeze 
frozen in a part of his life that he had no right to remember anymore. 
Without another thought he rips the picture in half 
piece by tiny piece, 
tearing them away like petals 
laughing in his head 
she loves me…she loves me not… 
repeating this until there in only a sliver of the picture left. 
He hardly wants to touch it now. 
Afraid that the ragged edges will find their way further into the picture, 
Him being the cause of ruining even more of her. 
But he cannot look away. 
She is all that is left of the picture. 
His own form scattered around the closet floor
with bitter winter shimmer
clashes like swordplay
creates and annihilates
its starch uniforms
the air is the tang of blood on
your tongue
when lips bleed and
you lift your fingers
and hold them to your mouth
to set up small soldiers
against loss
and though feathered Darwinian traffic
suggests progression-
beyond soaking in the salt-
there is no golden chalice at this

Altar.

Let me speak to you directly:
We are in a tempest
a storm of monstrous magnitude,
but I have absolutely nothing
to offer you.
everything is nothing

everything is nothing,
    when laughter collides with innocence
and the ones we love seem so far away.

what happens in the absence
becomes another man's joy.

while girls with dark eyes chase death in the wee hours
and boys wrestle with emotions in the waiting room of life.

unknowingly they all drift towards the uncertain,
the undefined,
the unimaginable,
and meanwhile
they are adulterated,

by the wicked winds of time.

Kevin Trobaugh
Despite Your Tendencies and Lack Thereof

“Hi hi hi!” The heart of
the truth & everlasting smile.
It’s over the phone and I can feel it,
in a small window of my mind
I’m overlooking PB, Sedona.
    Chandler, Corona & the like.
I know that smile
that sufficient complacency of normalcy
in my life.
It lifts me back to the place I belong.
Easy flowing, eyes closed head jutted
and smile earnest.

Coffee time,
black roasting lies spilled on the table
laughter or sounds of cackling fills
the local haunt.
Quirky, jerky movements,
the table is destroyed with our abundant
heart-to-hearts --
Something happened, someone hurt
    something bruised, a battle scar to heal.
We play defense for each other,
but not today.
Today we sit thousands of miles apart
defenses down and feelings spilling over.
The coffee is metaphorical and the place is too
but we listen and we hear the important things.
I feel her strong, genuine hand touch mine,
I try to flow comforting words through the
small receiver that doesn’t justify the meaning.
She is asking what to do.
I’m reaching my faithful hand out.

Different flighty circumstance every time,
but always the same.
A long windy rev of an engine can pass this,
Resisting air in our lungs to pass,
build me up buttercup through tensed vocals
We cross our fingers, hope to die,
blood sisters.
We don’t give up and we aren’t going
anywhere.

K.J. Reichel
a bright skied Tuesday afternoon can be ripped
in two by an unforeseen phone
call, an animal wail, or perhaps
just a steady voice smoothing over the unacceptable
words: maybe you should sit down

sit down?
sit down and brace yourself for reality's
un
r
a
v
e
l
i
n
g

sit down and position your body in
a manageable way that can be
contained when they sweep up
the dust that remains after a
breaking
sit down and be content there
a complacent listening ear that will not
rebel under the un
explained
warranted
fair

sit down!
sit while the police investigate his own
space, his closed room
sit while they roll away his drained body
sit while they jot assumptions and overlook
evidence, everything, anything
sit while his roommates rip
up blood and brain smeared
carpet because the I'm sorry, I don't mean
to be a dick landlord doesn't think it is his job

sit down!
sit still at the wake while we praise and sing "Amazing
Grace" which he would have laughed at
laughed! in their faces because

here was a boy who faced life
each day fully
arms and eyes open wide
always standing
never sitting down
It hits me like a wave, engulfing every vien.
I feel like I should go and do, but going just does not do.
I'm alone in my own skin and my eyes don't look familiar.
I can't even say this right, that storm was too strong to recall specifics.
I know I would never give it away, for you and for me.
And today is full of pink and green and every gray is gone.

I know that it can't hurt me now, I know that sky will calm.

Jessie Wilmoth
Spiraling

Lindsey Andrews
Beyond the Veil

Lindsey Andrews
Bridge Beard

Liz Sperry
I.
Shattered crystal minarets lay across
the molten starscape of this beach.
The sun is a red insect eye glaring.
We are a tribe of pale homunculi,
our arms and legs are wire-thin. We are scavengers
here, gathering up the broken crowns
that wash up on the shore. In the cave
that is our home we build idols from them.

II.
I live in solitude here, in this house
built on the ocean floor.
No one visits me but the flickering ghosts
of dream-women. They come to me
out of the water draped in blue gauze and covered
in tiny shards of sea-glass. Their eyes
are always turquoise.
At night I fall into the moonlit mercury
of softly moving waves, though it is cold.
I drift downwards to the base of the ocean,
where I am met with a spinning orb of warm light.

Luke Manning
Seventeen Days

She picks me up.
I feel her rough fingers glide over me.
Her damp breath comes so close.
I echo her melodious words
with my organic voice.

I am smooth to her touch,
she writes while I am in her soft curved torso
she sleeps with her leg resting on my body.
I watch her lips move to the rhythm of her
seemingly frightening dream.
I wish to be able to reach out
to comfort her.
But I must wait until she awakens.

Her hair is caught up in me
It hurts her, so I hurt her.
She picks me up to put me down.
I am placed in the corner of her room
until dust collects.

I know I must wait
seventeen days.
She will take me with her
to Florida. Her fingers will be soft
I will make them bleed
and callus.

Seventeen days.
I will sigh when she sighs
and stare back at her when she looks my way.
Sheepishly, she smiles
at me – her old guitar.

I am only warm when
she picks me up.

Paige Bolton
Reach

Erin Johnson
Four Year Flash

four years feels like a flash
when your mistakes dictate the days.
It’s hard to recall just where you went wrong
After the satisfaction fades.
Losing yourself is such an easy mistake
But repairing the mess is where I tend to break
Such a delicate mess of faith and fate
And can you relate?
This valley, those stars
These skies and these cars
Filled me up, broke me apart.
I’ve been fooled and tricked
Taken in, dismissed.
I’ve been thankful, ashamed
Predictable, unexplained.
I’ve watched the world rearrange.
I wonder at times how I stay sane.
Am I sane?
Counting moments to midnight is no way to live
Giving up youth because your heart is delicate.
Every time I think I’ve found it
whatever it is gives.
I live life in disarray
Trusting too much
In what you say.
And when you command me
I always obey.
This mess
Made it through 4 years
How many more?
This mess
Is giving up in her fears
But is she sure?
This mess.
Wild, unruly, un-understood,
Yes, my failings could be fatal
But my spirit could be gold.
This mess.
This mess is jess.

Jessica Novak
Own

barefoot and beautiful
in the lush green
with the brightest orange of sunrise
sprinkled in the hair

barefoot and beautiful
the drops of dew glisten
with a golden sheen
while the birds sing the sweet serenade to the sun

barefoot and beautiful
flowers cannot compare
with the morning fog caressing the cheek
and a silent wind kissing the nape of the neck

barefoot and beautiful
spinning round and round
with outstretched arms
and upturned face

barefoot and beautiful
dandelions tickle the toes
with their petals
that shimmer a radiant gold

barefoot and beautiful
One is there
With ageless happiness and
Nature encompasses both.

Morgan Rae Ward
Solitude

Good Literature

I need a novel—not sporadic post-it notes left by my bed.

No, hesitant, sentences, filled with commas, that evoke nothing but self doubt.

I want a collection of short stories, a Salinger compilation filled with James Joyce details—not a haiku:

I need all the words not selective ones chosen all are important.

A memoir would be ideal—full of pillow talk that's left for sealed pages—not some one line fortune cookie proverb.

I need substance. Someone I can sit and read for awhile.
A Solid Plastic

"Just use that blue cup," my roommate Nicole instructs me, as I sift through our kitchen cabinets.
"I don't like those plastic cups," I reply.
I'm on a mission to find my mason jar that is swimming somewhere in a sea of plastic. It doesn't really make sense to anyone, why I don't feel comfortable using one of the many cups that sit before me. There is something about them that I can't stand. I'm not sure of my reasoning, but I reach past the rainbow colored plastic for the clear smoothness of glass.

Our cabinets at home were once cluttered with the same colors. I loved drinking from the orange, blue, or purple colored plastic, but now I want something clear and smooth. Not all plastic cups bother me. Solo cups, Nalgene bottles, and things like Gatorade bottles don't drive me crazy; it's those complimentary cups people collect from places like pizza parlors, amusement parks, and sporting events.

I remember that night I held the small orange cup in my little fourth grader palm. I can feel the deteriorating plastic pressed against my mouth. The slivers of plastic cut into my lip as if foreshadowing the cut in my sister's head that would come later that night. Maybe that is the reason I hate plastic cups; they remind me of my sister's blood or my mother's tears.

My mother's second marriage was to a man with two sons. They were married when I was in first grade. Things were good for a few months, but after a year the violence slowly emerged. Usually his sons were the recipients of his outbursts; sometimes my mother experienced his blows.

It was a school night. I had finished my homework and stood in the kitchen, getting a cup of water. I picked my favorite cup from the cabinet; it was orange with my elementary school logo embossed on the front in black, a complimentary cup we got the day I was enrolled at Concord Elementary. That's when I heard them. Another argument over something I didn't understand. I'm not sure anyone understood. Their voices were loud and full of hate. I can't remember what they were yelling but I stood there clutching the cup in my hands. My sister, Maegan, heard the argument and emerged from the basement where our rooms were. She stood beside me as we listened to the argument progress, waiting for our cue to call the police or our grandpa.

This fight was different from the rest. We never saw him hit her; we only heard their heated words. That night there was a new sound. We moved towards the hall where they were arguing and that is when we heard it; a loud crunching sound and then her sobs and sharp gasps for air. They were in the bathroom and we rushed towards the door. He stood in the doorway and we pushed ourselves as far against the wall as possible trying to stay out of his reach. We knew not to interfere but tonight we were braver than usual. Our mother sat crumpled on the floor crying, holding her head. She was against the gray tiled wall in between the aqua green bathtub and the toilet. The tile was broken behind her, our only clue to the loud crunch. Instantly, we were crying together. Maegan's hand clutched my arm protectively. He stalked past us smiling with satisfaction. The fight was over. He ended it when he slammed her body into the wall.

We ran to her side to console her, to feel her protective arms console us.
"We are leaving. I can't take anymore of this." She whispered to us.
"Should we call grandpa? Should we call the police?" Maegan asked in a meek quivering voice.
"No, I will call your Aunt Tica. We will leave tonight after he is asleep. If it wasn't for you girls, mom would have given up already."

She said this more and more these days and I didn't understand till later when I was older what exactly she meant by that.

The night was normal again. We always left after he was asleep, after they had a fight, after my mother decided she couldn't take it anymore. She told us to pack our things and put them at the back door. When it was safe, she would move the car to the back yard and we would run.

Shortly after the fight, he was comfortably sleeping in his La-Z-Boy recliner. My sister and I tiptoed past him, afraid he would wake up at the slightest noise. The boys, my step brothers, were hiding in their rooms. They knew if they
disturbed him his fury would leave bruises on their bodies too. Mom creped out the basement door and moved the car to the backyard. I don't remember what my sister and I did or what we packed in our bags. I do know that we were scared. It had never reached this level before. We knew this was serious.

My mom came back to the house to grab her things and instructed us to stay in the basement, but we couldn't leave her side, we wouldn't leave her side. I still held my orange cup in my hands. I'm not sure why I held it, maybe it was comforting, something solid to hold onto in our unstable lives. We watched as she threw clothes in the bag, more than she usually packed. This wasn't going to be another overnight stay in Richmond. As we slowly walked past him, back towards the basement, he woke up. I still don't know if he had planned it that way. If he was pretending to sleep the entire time we were packing or if we woke him up while walking past. In the end it doesn't matter, it didn't matter then. The fact was he was awake and angrier than when he first fell asleep.

He grabbed my mother and started yelling, digging his fingers into her malleable flesh.
"Run, run, run. Get out of the house," she yelled.
But we couldn't move. We were plastered to the spots where we stood, watching, waiting to see what he would do to her.
She fought against his firm grip. Suddenly, she was free and we were running. I'm not sure where she was while we ran but I could hear her yelling behind us to run for the basement door.

"I'll be there waiting!" she shouted.
My short legs were stretching from step to step as my sister's longer legs seemed to hurtle behind me. We knew he wasn't far behind us. It was his final attempt to stop my mother from leaving. He would catch us and she would have to come back. She wouldn't leave us alone with him. My sister's hand was on my back pushing me through the door; my hand was still clutching the orange cup.

The night was cold and I stood alone just outside the door. My back was to the door but I heard it slam. I heard my sister's scream, I heard his gasp of horror, I heard my rasping breath. Her screams didn't stop. They were shrill. Was she calling my name? Was she calling for my mom? I can't remember. Where was my mom? I stood there staring back at the door where my sister was rocking on the ground screaming. He stood on the inside of the door looking back at me. I didn't know what to do. A wave of questions flooded my mind, should I go back for her; should I go to the car and find my mom? My mom knew something was wrong, she heard the door slam and my sister's screams. She was there. She was calling to my sister. Maegan continued to rock back and forth. She wasn't screaming anymore, just crying and rocking. Mom glared at him, daring him to try something while she scooped my sister off the ground. We ran towards the car. We were safe.

Maegan was still crying and she had begun to clutch at her right ear; she couldn't hear. I saw the small trail of blood that was trickling down her head. Mom hadn't seen it yet. Maegan refused to speak; she just sat whimpering in the front seat, while mom steered the car steadily down the road. I sat in the seat behind her gazing out of the window, looking back towards our house one last time.

That was the night I lost the orange cup. I know it was in my hand when my sister pushed me through the door, but whatever happened to it after that I can't be sure. Maybe I dropped it in the yard; maybe the car crushed it as we drove away. I can imagine it lying there in splintered pieces, polluting the yard just like the scar on my sister's head pollutes her reflection with the memories of that night.

Now my cabinets at home are full of mason jars and green glasses. No plastic lingers on shelves behind wooden doors. We replaced the plastic after that night, after we ran away from our home to escape him, after I lost the orange cup. We erased him with the disposal of our complimentary cups.

When I drink from a complimentary cup the feel of the sharp splintered plastic reminds me of the sharp screams from my sister and my mother's cries. Plastic is no longer something that is solid I can hold onto, I let it slip from my hand sometime that night and I refuse to pick it up again.
The Squeeze

Turner Hilliker

To be continued...
Submissions Process

All submissions are judged through a democratic process by the staff of Gardy Loo and are published based on the number of votes they receive, without exception. Anyone may become a member of the Gardy Loo judging staff simply by attending the judging meetings.

Send submissions to gardynews@yahoo.com, or drop off in the Gardy Loo mailbox in Keerell rm 216. Include a cover page with your name, phone number or email, and a list of the works submitted with clearly labeled titles. If you have specific questions and concerns about submitting artwork or photography, please email us and we'll get in touch with the corresponding editor.

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