



# PEGASUS

2014

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## 2014



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# DEAR PEGASUS READERS,

First of all, thank you for clicking on this link and looking at all of our hard work. We know you want to get to the amazing content of this magazine, so we'll keep it brief. As seniors we'll soon be hitting the road, saying goodbye to the wonderful magazine staff, and all you Sutherland students. Therefore we'd like to share one thing we've learned through our experience as editors: Our classmates are pretty amazing. This magazine is chock full of beautiful, intricate, and incredible writing done by the people you see in the hallways. It's decorated with stunning art made by the kids across the classroom. So while you're skimming through the pages, appreciate that the poem that just inspired you, or the story you just got lost in was written by someone you have the pleasure of going to school with. Know that the painting you just admired may have started as a doodle on the desk you sit in fourth period. This is a great collection and I'm so proud of everybody that contributed, and to those whose hard work made this possible. Most of all, thank you for reading and please, please enjoy!

RACHEL DONAHUE  
AND INDIANA BROWN

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# FICTION



*Art by Gillian Moore (or Dominique K. Pierce)*

# LAUNDROMAT

*Jessica Zeidman*

The neon lights from across the street bounced off the window. *GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS!* The sign flashed in bright green, then yellow, and then a sickening bubblegum pink. The kind of pink you see blown into oversized bubbles on those hyperactive Saturday morning cartoons. The coffee stain on the linoleum countertop looked like a skull if you closed your left eye a little. I had been outlining it all day, trying to make something out of someone's forgotten mess. The brittle edges of my fingernails dug in slightly where I made the sharp corners of the jaw line, leaving soft indents like fishing wire.

"Could you break a five?"

"What?"

"Could you break a five?" she sighed as she cracked her neck, "I need quarters."

"Oh yeah, of course."

She handed me the five-dollar bill. It was worn from too many wallets with a torn left corner and that slimy softness that only cash can have. I waited for the cash register to cooperate, its buttons sticky from age and the humidity. After a minute of prodding and mumbling a few curse words under my breath, it finally sprung open. I nestled the five in with its other grungy companions and started the all too familiar quest for quarters. My boss kept all the change mixed up and loose at the back of the register because the compartments, like so many other things in his life, meant nothing to him. He didn't like playing by the rules, or at least that's what he said. Laziness would be a better way to put it.

I pushed the small mountain of coins toward her, feeling a small burst of accomplishment that quickly disappeared when I saw the tired look in her eyes. She started counting the change in a language I could tell wasn't English. It sounded like the chatter in my mother's kitchen, the same hard Ks and soft Rs that had mixed with the pungent dill and pepper that filled the air. But here it was barely audible above the endless mechanic whir of the washing machines, as if it were a secret.

I glanced at the crumpled uniform under her arm, the faded gold nametag almost hidden by the light blue folds of fabric—*Ana*, the same name as my aunt who would come over on Sundays to cook and gossip. I remember going into the kitchen one afternoon and seeing her sit at the table with my mother. Both women were drenched in the thin golden syrup of sunlight, laughing and peeling beets. She kissed me by holding both sides of my face with her large, wrinkled hands, staining my cheeks with the magenta juice still on her fingers. "Czego chcesz, malństwo?" she



cooed. *What do you want, little thing?* “No!” my mother whispered, her voice sounding unusually sharp. “English!” she cried, “We speak English!” Ana rolled her eyes. My mother stood up quickly and whisked me out of the room, handing me a misshapen bar of bergamot soap and a dingy yellow dishrag. “Wash up!” she called after me. I tried to listen to their fighting over the sound of the water splashing in the cracked porcelain sink, but it was all just noise to me.

She looked up at me when she scooped the change off the counter and smiled weakly, as if to say thank you. She threw her uniform into the dark blue plastic bin by her feet and then held the bin to her chest. She walked toward the machine at the front of the store, the rubber soles of her once-white sneakers squeaked against the scuffed linoleum floor. I watched her as she threw her clothes in haphazardly, splashing unmeasured amounts of generic detergent and flowery fabric softener into the top of the machine. The clang of quarters being swallowed down rusty tubes rattled throughout the store. It was empty now, the last customer having left moments before. *Ding.* Her clothes slowly began to spin; she leaned against the row of dryers behind her. She turned towards me, “Czy znasz polski?” she asked with the same sad smile. *Do you speak Polish?*

I shook my head no.



*Connor Byington*



*Isaac Liu*

*An Excerpt From*  
**THE PAINTER**  
*Noah Young*

The decorations were up. A huge banner with the words “Happy Birthday” inscribed on it in colorful block letters was hung in the dining room and balloons floated on either side of it. The cake had been ordered, the freezer was fully stocked with ice cream, and the house looked spotless. Jack Davies descended the stairs into the kitchen, thoroughly impressed. The kitchen table, which usually housed heaps of paperwork from his dad’s job, was completely cleared off, as was the counter. The floors looked fresh and shiny, and Jack guessed they had been mopped. He walked into the living room and grinned at the sight of his parents, sprawled out on the couch watching a rerun of *Seinfeld* on TV.

“Cleaning wear you out?” he said. It was only eight o’clock, but they looked on the verge of falling asleep.

Andrew, Jack’s father, roused himself and got up. He stretched hugely and ran a hand through his curly red hair. “Just taking a break now that everything’s done.”

"It looks incredible," Jack said appreciatively.

"It better," Jack's mother said. Karen Davies was black-haired and petite, with striking green eyes. Jack had always wondered why he didn't look like either of his parents, but whenever he asked them they just put it down to strange genetics. He was already taller than both of them, his hair brown and straight, his eyes blue. "It did take us all day, after all. Pretty amazing how much junk a house can accumulate." She took in Jack's appearance. "Did you grow another inch overnight?"

Jack smiled. It was a running joke between them. He had hit a growth spurt a few months earlier and was now threatening to reach six feet before the end of the year. "I wouldn't be surprised," he said. "You know, I would've been happy to help with all this. I feel kind of bad, you guys have been slaving over this all day and I haven't done anything."

"No, no," Karen said, shaking her head. "This is your golden birthday, fifteen on July fifteenth! Not having to do all the setup for the party is part of our present to you."

"You're welcome to do the cleanup though," Andrew said, grinning. "That should be enough to satisfy your conscience, right?"

"Ha ha." Jack said sarcastically.

"We're going to catch a movie at the theater," Karen said. "You're okay with being here by yourself, right?"

Jack rolled his eyes and gave her a mock scowl. "Mom. I'm fifteen. And when have I ever not been okay with being home alone?"

Karen held up her hands in submission. "Okay, okay, just checking," she said, smiling. "We'll be back around 10:30, all right?"

"Great," Jack said.

His parents left, disappearing into the warm summer night. Jack slumped back on the couch and let out a contented sigh. He idly flicked through channels, contemplating the day to come. It had been so long since he had had a birthday party, not by any choice of his own but simply because his birthday happened to fall in the middle of the summer and his family was usually on vacation. This year, however, by some miracle of scheduling, Jack's birthday was on a day when he and all his friends were at home, so to make up for the missed parties of years past his parents had promised to throw him the biggest, most impressive celebration ever.

And it was certainly shaping up to be that way.

Jack turned off the TV, intending to go upstairs and work on a sketch he had started that morning. Having plenty of time for drawing was one of his favorite things about summer. But any thought, art-related or otherwise, was driven out of his head by the image he saw reflected in the TV screen.

He saw himself, sitting on the couch. Behind him was the doorway leading to the kitchen. And silhouetted in the doorway was a tall, dark, human shape. He couldn't make out any features, the light from the kitchen and the relative darkness of the living room throwing the figure into shadow. Just the rough form of a head, broad torso, arms and legs.

Jack's heart began to pound.

"Dad?" he said, voice cracking, but he knew even as he spoke that it wasn't his father. The proportions were wrong. Andrew was slim, while the figure was simply enormous.

There was no reply. Jack turned slowly around. *It's not real*, he thought desperately as he turned. *It's just a trick of the light*. And then he was staring at the figure in the doorway, and the figure was very, very real. Jack froze, fear locking his body in place. The figure reached over and flipped the switch on the wall, illuminating the room.

It was a man. He stood at least six and a half feet tall and was dressed in a black leather jacket and pants. His eyes were concealed behind wraparound sunglasses. The rest of his face and head was pasty white and totally hairless.

The sight of him snapped Jack out of his fear-induced paralysis. He scrambled back, tripping over the coffee table and sprawling on the floor.

The man stepped into the room, moving deliberately, and shut the door behind him. Jack got to his feet and backed up until his back was flat against the TV cabinet.

"Jack Davies?" the man said, his voice low.

"N-no," Jack stammered. "No, th-that's not me. He lives in the house next door."

"You are lying," the man said emotionlessly. He drew a gun from his pocket, the weapon tiny in his fist, and pointed it straight at Jack. "Put these on." The man reached in his other pocket and pulled out a pair of handcuffs. He tossed them over the couch and they landed at Jack's feet.

Panic and terror whirled through Jack's mind. "Please, no," he said, voice cracking from fear. "Please, you can have the TV or the computer, anything, just don't take me, please, I'm begging you!" He realized he was babbling but couldn't stop himself.

The man cut him off. "Put them on or I will shoot you. You will not die, but it will be painful, and the outcome will be the same."

Shaking, Jack bent down and picked up the handcuffs.

"Put them on," the man repeated, still in that emotionless, almost robotic tone of voice.

Jack did. The cuffs felt cold and heavy as he closed them around his wrists.

“Good,” the man said. He circled around the couch, moving sideways, the gun never wavering. “Now, come with—”

But as he passed in front of the large painting hanging on the wall, something slammed into him from behind, sending him crashing to the ground, his sunglasses going flying. The gun went off with an explosive bang, the bullet burying itself in the floor a few inches from Jack’s left foot.

Jack stared in utter shock as the surface of the painting rippled and a woman erupted from it headfirst, executing a neat roll and coming to her feet in one easy motion. It was as though the painting was simply a window she had dived through. The canvas wavered for a moment and then the image settled, becoming flat and solid once again.

The woman was fair-skinned and blonde, her hair drawn back in a tight ponytail. Modern-looking black armor covered her body. In her left hand she held a thin sword, the blade glowing golden.

The man rolled over and fired three times, the bullets glancing off the woman’s armor without any affect. She crossed the space between them in two strides and swung, her blade cutting a golden streak through the air. The man pulled the trigger again, but the gun merely clicked. Jack noted numbly that the woman’s sword had severed the gun barrel neatly, leaving a red-hot stump behind.

She kicked the gun out of his hand and leveled her sword at his throat.

“Don’t move,” she said, her voice soft and menacing. “If you move, I’ll kill you.”

But the man did move. He reached into his leather jacket, intending to draw a weapon, Jack guessed.

Without a second’s hesitation she stabbed him, driving the tip of her golden sword all the way through his chest and into the floor beyond. The man’s body convulsed around the blade and then went still, pinned to the floor like a huge grotesque bug in a collection.

The woman relaxed and pulled her sword free, surveying the body for a moment before turning to Jack, who stared at her uncomprehendingly.

“Okay,” she said, addressing him for the first time. “I know this is probably a lot to take in.”

“Oh my god,” Jack said, still staring, mouth hanging open slightly. “You just killed that man.”

“It’s not a man,” she said. “Look at its eyes. Look at its skin. It’s not human at all.”

Jack glanced down unwillingly at the body. He tried not to look at the hole in the leather jacket where the rapier had gone in and instead focused on the face. The skin was just as bloodless as before, but the eyes... the eyes were completely black. They stood out in stark contrast to the white of the face, glassy and dead.

"Holy..." Jack began, but expletives failed him. He stood in shock, unable to look away from those eyes. His gaze was broken when the woman bent down, reaching into the jacket. She searched for a moment, then withdrew a small silver key.

"Here," she said, handing it to Jack. "Unlock yourself."

He did, dropping the handcuffs and key to the floor when he was done. "Who are you?" he asked. His thoughts were spinning out of control and he wasn't sure whether to be terrified of this woman who had killed so casually or relieved that she had saved him.

"My name is Martine Richardson, and I'm your aunt," she replied, turning away and striding over to the painting. With two quick strokes of her rapier, she slashed an X across the large canvas. It immediately blackened and shriveled until the frame was the only thing left, hanging forlornly on the wall. "That should buy us at least a half an hour until they realize the door has been destroyed."

"But I don't have any aunts named Martine..." Jack said weakly.

"I'm your real aunt, not your adopted one."

There was a long pause. Jack was struggling to get his mind around what Martine had said. It wasn't clicking into place.

"I'm not adopted," he said finally. He couldn't think of anything else to say so he just stood there, looking at her.

Martine looked sad, gazing at him for a few seconds. "We have a lot to talk about and not much time."

"I don't want to talk to you," Jack said slowly. "You killed that... whatever it is. You're a killer."

"Jack, listen to me," Martine said, walking over to him. He instinctively flinched away, but she stopped a few feet from him and extended her sword, hilt first. "I'm not going to hurt you. That thing," she gestured to the body on the floor, "was. If it makes you feel safer, you can take my sword and hold it to my neck as we talk. But there are things I have to tell you that no one else can, and I need to tell you them now. This can't wait."

Jack watched her closely, searched her face for deceit or some hint that she didn't mean what she said. He didn't find one, but for some reason he realized that he hadn't expected to. There was something about Martine that he couldn't put a finger on, something that calmed him down and made him think that maybe, just maybe, he could trust her. And she *had* saved him, after all. Then he glanced past her at the body on the floor and looked away quickly, feeling queasy.

"Okay," he said, taking a deep breath. "Keep the sword. But you've got to explain all of this."

Martine smiled at him and gave her sword a flick. The blade vanished, leaving only the hilt behind, which she tucked into a scabbard at her belt.

“I will,” she said, sitting on the couch. “The first thing you need to know—”

Jack cut her off. “If we’re going to talk, can we do it upstairs?” He swallowed as his eyes drifted back to the leather-clad figure. He felt suddenly nauseous.

“Oh,” Martine looked surprised for a second, then followed his gaze and looked over at the dead body as though she had forgotten it was there. “Sure. Lead the way.”

*An Excerpt From*

# THE EXISTENTIALIST

*Jonathan Jobling*

I wouldn’t call myself suicidal. That would imply that I actively seek out my own death. I am simply open to other prospects than life. If one day I found that my child had been granted a scholarship and would no longer need me to support him, I might simply smile at him, walk to the sink, and slit my wrists. Although the emotional impact on him would be scarring, in the end he would recover and I would no longer be bound to this world and to the endless monotony of supporting children. Some see me as a sick man, but all I want is the best for humankind. I am not evil, simply courteous. I do not want to have left the world leaving my two sons behind with nothing. That would be cruel. And I am anything but cruel.

When I die, it is my belief that I will cease to exist. I will be snuffed out, and all that will remain of my true self in this or any universe is what I have left behind as a result of any physical interaction with the world which most likely will be of little consequence. This includes my children, my writings, and any and all of whom I have talked to, debated with, or even glanced at. None of these small whispers matter, globally. But one can try to make something with the gift of life, no matter how small the impact.

I am no more important to our mythical “god”, or whatever you want to call it, than any man or woman on this earth, nor are they any more important than I. But in reality, our minds have no “soul” or intrinsic value. We are not given this life, we simply are. To say that one life is worth more than another, then? Completely plausible. Why shouldn’t it be? Take Dave here for example. Dave has a family, a good job, and a wife that loves him. He thoroughly enjoys life and values it. To say then that Dave’s life is not

now worth more than a 43 year old crack dealer who hates all people that come within his line of sight is mere naivety at best. One enjoys life more than the other and is not a danger to others happiness, and because of this, his life is worth more. That is what matters. Not stardom and paycheck, necessarily. Happiness.

Most people live because they hope that it's worth it. That eventually, it will all pay off in some vaguely foreseen lottery ticket, like it's some grand mirage that could materialize at any moment. And then there's me. I can see. I am the circle, discovering its third dimensionality as a sphere as bittersweet. And now, I don't want to hope. Hope is evil. Hope is the ally of depression, for those who have hope cannot escape its ache. There is only chance, and chance is a tax on humanity.

There are some ways to usurp the system, each with its own drawbacks. Drugs provide a cheap vacation, but like all escapes from prison, physical or mental; arriving back to harsh reality becomes unbearably painful once you can remember what absent illusion brought. Others find bliss in the false promise of god and religion, and I am happy for them. If only I could deceive myself so easily.

I saw a woman yesterday. Young, tempting, tired, the type you find yourself expecting to see street corners late at night. At a certain point they give up on the sickly sweet smile a woman of her profession picks up along the way, and this one looks like she hasn't used it in a while. Her eyes drift from car to car, pleading for recognition, for anything to escape her nothingness. I can feel her emptiness emanating from her, dropping the gaze of some and lifting the eyes of others. She won't be standing on the corner for much longer.

I think I've found my first liberation subject.



*Chris Locke*



# A LESSON BEST LEARNED ALONE

*Kyle Wiant*

The ocean spray stung my face like icy daggers, tiny crystalline blades piercing my cheeks. The ship was silent but for the labored breathing of the oarsmen in the frozen air, and the familiar rhythm of creaking oars. As we drew near to the land, I prepared the materials necessary for the mission at hand. My blade hung sheathed at my hip, a lamb and a ewe, ready for sacrifice, tied with rough twine that I held in my left hand. A sack of offerings dangled limp in my right hand, then was swung over my shoulder as we prepared to make landfall. The rocky shore tore in the wooden hull of our slender vessel, and the rhythm of the oar ceased. Climbing the foredeck, I swung my cargo over the side of the ship and slid down the smooth wood after it. It took less than fifty paces to find the place foretold to me, the location of the ritual. A solemn procession of my men hung back, standing in a semicircle behind me. I unsheathed my blade and carved out a shallow hole in the frosted earth. As I poured libations from the sack into the pit, a pair of my men prepared the lamb and ewe for sacrifice. I murmured a short prayer, then slashed the sheep. A figure began to stir from the earth: at first a mere wisp of smoke, then a shadow, and finally a person. As it stepped forward, I prepared myself to speak. Before I could utter a syllable, however, the soul addressed me with five words: "Won't you be my neighbor?"

"Hello, Fred Rogers," I replied. "I have come to seek your opinion, o wise soothsayer."

"I like you just the way you are," said the man with a nod, cryptic as ever.

"Of course, enlightened one. Now, I ask humbly that you reveal to me the secret of how one makes peace with the world."

But the soul was silent.

“Fred Rogers, I ask again: how does one make peace with the world?”

The soul spoke not a word.

Fred Rogers did not speak, he simply stood, staring at me, his gentle smile warming the cold air.

“O wise prophet, I ask you one final question, in the hope that you might provide me with at least one answer: how do you forgive those who have done evil?”

The soul simply shook its head and smiled, and it was then that I realized his meaning. My eyes grew wide, and my face must have betrayed my revelation, as the soul smiled wide and began to fade back to a wisp of smoke.

“Thank you, Mr. Rogers,” I whispered, as I sheathed my blade, and departed the Neighborhood of Make-Believe.



*Carley Moynihan*

# GLASS MAN

*Adeeb Sheikh*

*"If you should go skating on the thin ice of modern life, don't be surprised when a crack in the ice appears under your feet."*

*- Roger Waters*

## I

It was a glass man, arms and legs and a face blown from molten sand. The craftwork was shoddy; he was a cheap decoration, a veneer of class for the miserly and poor. For years, he was content to watch from the window, as people passed by. He sat atop his pedestal, neither pretty nor ugly, simply extant. He watched with blank eyes. Sometimes they would stare back, and observe features blurred by distance. And it was safe. Eyes don't hurt the glass man, but hands do. Smudges, cracks, all weathering from the people made of truer stuff.

## II

Dinner was always an uncomfortable, half-hour ordeal. They came together, they sat down together, and they ate together. Yet, togetherness was absent; it could not propagate in the thick, tense silence.

The food was the labor of love, although love in the household always meant tears, anger, frustration, and aloofness. Love was pain and a liability.

They ate as fast as they could, eager to return from the place so devoid of life. Each of them had their own agendas to attend to, discrete lives; the family consisted of different people, living and avoiding. Only father ever tried to bind them. For that man, there was an apparent "kindness," an apparent "honesty," and, yet, there was also a darkness; his own personal anger and frustration existed, from which autocracy and tyranny and impatience spilled. When the food was done, they rushed away. No one wanted to wash the dishes.

## III

Drawing circles in the sand. That's what I did one particular evening on the beach. Children played about, chilly water nipping their heels, as the surface of the earth darkened in the wake of a setting sun. Family was around, but not here. That's what mattered.

The sun was a crimson octopus, tentacles and limbs reaching upwards and struggling, as the imminent night crushed it beneath its gravity and weight. The fiery mollusc sank back into the oceanic depths from whence it came. I watched the slow descent, the drawn out strangulation. Looking at my circles and then my family, each member betwixt the fingers of my hand held aloft, I blinked and tightened my face into a scowl. The hand moved on its own, inspired by the surroundings and deep revelation. It guided the twisted, fallen branch clenched in my palm, carving a new thing. Fissures graced the sand, split the sea of broken rocks and from it was born two circles, intersecting. Theirs was a violent conflict, the carefours battlefields. They fought their entanglement and they fought each other.

“Behold! This is art: the divine struggle!”

#### IV

“I wish.” And then he stopped. Wishing didn’t suit men of action. Neither did self-pity. He frowned, stranded in the void, the cracks between things. His was a liminal position; a choice was to be made, a side to be chosen. The copper piece glinted in the white sun and the chiseled features commanded a presence that they had not before.

She was across the fountain, next to the marble spire rising out of the water. He glanced at her with tilted eyes, intent upon remaining discreet in his interest.

*A man of action*, he thought. As he neared her, he could feel each step taking its toll. The weight of his soles began to increase without bound. A quick glance, a meeting gaze, a smile. If ever the boy could sympathize with the sensation of having his heart wrenched out of his chest, this was the time.

“Hey.” He smiled sincerely and softly. She reflected it, but it returned skewed by slyness and coyness.

“Hey, you!” She jabbed a finger between his ribs. Of course, he grinned and took the dull pain. “How’ve you been?”

Rubbing his side, “Ahm, well. Yourself?”

“Oh, quite excellent.” She paused before perking up again. “Hah, have you heard about the --”

And the conversation continued on like this, trite and playful. She delivered her opinions, hands on hips, and he quivered before their forcefulness and her beauty. His quips were funny and complementary, in their awkwardness and sarcasm. He was invested in the conversation and watched at her mouth intently, seeing each syllable forming on her tongue. Yet, in his supreme interest, he didn’t notice her own attention slipping away and the other boys stepping in to fill the vacuum left by a boy stretched so thin, try-

ing to impress. They invaded and their comments landed with just as much hilarity and effect. He was being replaced by burgeoning competitors.

The boy placed a hand on the back of his neck and felt the jutting spine climbing the length of his back, as he dropped his head forward. Words were now just that: words. They were naught but noise. There was no meaning. Not if he couldn't have her.

He dropped a penny in the fountain and wished as hard as he could.

## V

"I have these feelings for you. They're difficult to explain. Perhaps I should start from the beginning. A few months ago, we first met and I can't say that it was remarkable. You were strikingly beautiful for sure. Your hair falling in dark waves, stark against the paleness of your skin. Your nose fitting the frame of your face so well. And your voice, resounding in high, melodic tones. But I digress.

"We met several months ago and, at first, it was just friendship. I enjoyed your company, you enjoyed mine, and we fostered a friendship. Time wore on and I grew closer to you and, one day, there was just something between us. You might not have noticed, but I did. And I wrestled with it, tried to tame it. That's why I'm here.

"They got the better of me. I can't suppress them. I can't control them. It's anarchy... and it's almost beautiful. The chaos of emotion. But it's raging and raging and raging. I want to bring some modicum of order to it, to make it more bearable. So I need your help. That's why I'm doing this.

"I can't say that I love you. I mean, I kind of want to embrace you, to take you into me, heart and soul, mind and body. But that might just be dinner coming back to haunt me... Excuse the joke. But I do feel affectionate towards you. I feel very attracted. I... I hope you can appreciate that."

And in curt reply, "No."

## VI

He bit his lip to strangle the cry. It was an unwilling beast, a pained beast; the gurgling squeezed his heart and stumbled in the acid of the stomach. It was fatally wounded, and yet it would not die. Gasping, wheezing, crying filled the night, as indifferent stars gazed on, steeped in their immutable silence. Looking to them, he asked why? Stars that had seen so much, since the beginning, why did they never intervene? Perhaps they understood the futility of such efforts; stranded in time, watching as everything dies and as their own brethren blink out, one by one. In eternity, it's impossible not to find nihilism. And he was left stranded in limbo, while the earth gently kissed the sky, caressing it, with eyes always closed, blind to the sleights of

men. He hated these things, how they could remain so aloof from his problems. He may have been small, but he *was* the center of his world.

He wanted to expel the weakness that made him undesirable, that yet made him shake. For the first time in years, a brush found its way into his fingers and slowly began laying paint onto paper. It was slow coming at first and then the colors came pouring through his fingertips. There was nothing to see in the end result; it was one stroke layered over another. It had no aesthetic appeal and it was completely ugly. Yet, it was rife with meaning; to him, it was the purest of expression, the rawest of emotion. He was a dainty man.

## VII

“Do we seek the truth or do we seek happiness? That is, I think, the fundamental question.

“As an artist, I seek truth in everything around me. I seek the truth filtered through my own emotions. The world is elastic and shaped by our perceptions. I want something deeper and, yet, I also want myself.

“To digress for a moment, divine inspiration isn’t profound. Or rather, it is in the extreme sense. It isn’t that life changing event, where we see something unique, some once in a lifetime event, from which we cannot emerge the same. Rather, it is the normal. It is a slice of life that resounds with poignance. Divine inspiration springs from the mundane. One day, we wander around, listless, directionless, and then, an instant later, we happen upon the same things we have all our life, but we see them differently. For me, I was always confronted by my smallness, my own irrelevance in the face of the universe. It was a growling beast, an enigma growing and expanding and losing me in all its folds. It wasn’t a unique or new revelation. But one day, I just accepted it. And I found my truth. I found my muse.

“Naturally, then, I cannot attain happiness, as my ultimate goal is absolute truth and absolute truth is absolutely unhappy.

“You might wonder: why can’t truth and happiness exist? Because the world is fundamentally bleak. From this bleakness comes pain... And from pain arises true beauty; that’s what the most beautiful art is: our pain taken form.” He laid down his brush and palette for a moment. A cursory glance upward, as the hoarse arguing voices filtered into the ground. Then, he looked about the empty room, steeped in the darkness of the earth. Eyes lingered on an empty chair, waiting for a companion.

## VIII

The man who stared back was not terrible looking. The skin was slightly sallow and hung loosely, but it was hardly a skeleton. He found this man handsome in a twisted sort of way. But he wondered about what he had become, the undue stress he had put on those he loved. Did this man

reflect the darkness within?

And spikes grew through the his image: ugly, black, monstrous thorns, curling wickedly and settling on the mantelpiece within his mind. He couldn't help but fear that this was who he really was, that it was his fractured mirror that warped the light. Thusly, he drew inward, avoided the pain.

Tears welled in his eyes, glazing and blurring the vision. Colors blended into one another, like the careless stylings of an impressionist. He wiped them away, only to make way for a fresh layer. What strong face was there in anger and sadness and betrayal?

He wished that they had never met. Better to be lonely and feel no pain, then to be lonely and only feel pain. Tears dropped through the air, catching the light and the dark and bending them into their own spherical beauty.

Even after years, rejection stung. And all he could remember was her face, her expression of disgust, and the whip of her hair, as she spun on her heel and left him behind.

Apologies and a rekindled friendship made no easier the lingering sentiments of loneliness, of sadness, of depression. He had no one.

His throat felt very dry and constricted. He stared on into the lights, like a confused doe. Blinking, he was conscious of the million anonymous souls watching from the court stands below.

And he couldn't help but wonder if this was hell; the expectation, the disappointment. Everything is meticulously organized so that, in the end, one would have only won trifles and a vast, vast bitterness. The demons encircled, hanging low, with the taunting faces of friends and family.

He looked first to the depths, simultaneously concave and convex to dead eyes, and then to the judge's stand. A darkness rose from there, and, with it, a voice; momentary silence rang among the chaos of chattering demons.

"*Confess.*" Black lips curled like smoke against the void. The grain of the blackness spun inwards, hollow where eyes should have been; instead of humanity, there was only the absolute. "*In the name of your God, who created you out of a mere clot of blood, confess.*" He reached out and grasped the slight neck. He pressed his thumbs in, gasping for breath. And the demons tore out the teeth, tore out the lungs, and saved the heart for the darkest sacrifice. And then there was only the silent reproach of a million tear-stung eyes.

Was he the villain? In his own inimitable ways, was he the antagonist? Everything burned, caustic in both mind and body.

## IX

Friends are wonderful things. They provide companionship and support and color to an otherwise gray existence. With friends, you can weather not only the worst of times, but the best of times, and come out better for it. They can sweep you to places you've never been.

Anon, friends were about to take him back to where he's never been. He sat down, eager and looking about, while his friends, larger and slightly older, stood around, casually joking with one another. He watched as, one by one, his friends hunched in the corner and then rose up, with a different breezier quality about them. No longer were they heavysset and lumbering about, but floating trapped in the eddy air currents, waiting for a stray draft to carry them off.

"Glasses, you're up." They drifted towards him along errant winds and reached into him, phasing through skin, flesh, bone, and lung. He sighed. Coolness spread in his veins and bound his chest in an icy casket. A second of numbness, and warmth bubbled forth from his depths, rising from his stomach and then into his lungs. The alveoli felt the heat and welcomed it, and expanded, until they held him aloft, forcing him to break from gravity.

He floated, and floated, and floated. People watched from below, their existences too ordered, too mundane, too trite to comprehend, truly, what was transpiring. They wished they were him. He laughed breezily; being the wind, he could simply whisk away from jealous and prying eyes. Shooting upwards, leaving the atmosphere, his body disintegrated. Flesh and skin and hair fell away from the skeleton, until it, too, broke apart. His existence took a more visceral form.

Emanating from the chest that he no longer had was a line of light stretching and curving away dancing about the gravitational field. He blinked. This was fate. This was the path to take.

The line stood straight before him, winding down into infinity. It continued through forever, unending and unsure of its destination.

"Destiny is so nebulous," he thought. "It takes us around forever and forgets the point it once intended to present."

And he looked towards the end, through vast cosmic depths. It was great a darkness, a nothingness between stars. Suddenly, he felt fearful; what if he was trapped forever in the darkness? What if he could never escape? There was a void inside him, too. He drew himself inwards, kept himself compact. He cried and cried and cried for a long time.

Then the white lady came. The thin, drawn metal broke the skin that bound nothing, and the straps held a body belonging to no one. That



body struggled, writhed, and seized, but found only the bite of leather in response; he could only watch, nothing more than air.

At one point, he became conscious of having taken corporeal form once more. Red eyes, from crying or from chemical abuse, he looked up once more. His friends were gone -- lost in the wind. Still strapped in, he put on his spectacles and noticed a chink in the glass.

"The good doctor says I need drugs to make me well again."

## X

A room can tell you a lot about the person who lives in it. A room sees all that transpires within its depths. One simply has to observe the stories etched into the walls.

A basement, drab and concrete, stacked from mortar and brick is born without character and remains so until it has been lived in. The paint splatters around the corner, all different pale colors, aged in the darkness, reflected a prolific painter, one who rejected control in favor of supreme relinquishment of the hand to the soul. And on the walls, some of his works lay bare, a reminder of his struggles. There were crude faces and bodies, born out of color and light. They gazed with empty eyes and slack mouths; each had given up long ago and existence had simply become another form of death. And then there were unrecognizable things, pure forms with an unearthly quality.

In the center, slick with blood, was a lone syringe, dropped and forgotten. There was a liquid among its broken vial, but what small amount there was had hardly been there long, before the drop and the break. Around were overturned tools: brushes across the floor, palettes and cans thrown clear across the room, easels broken into naught but splinters.

Paint had been spilled across the room, flung from their tin and clinging to the walls, indifferently left to dry by people with greater troubles. The dust thrown from crevices had seen it all, the entire argument and the rising tension between father and son. Yet, they spun about the room, excited and undirected, unable or unwilling to take action. They still mirrored movement that had transgressed.

Love *is* pain, anger, frustration. It's a slow roll towards death. Inconsistent people can hardly last together and the fragmentation, the shattering it was always happening, slowly rending people apart.

There would be no return.

## XI

He had a morbid fascination with human creativity. He dissected, picked apart the gray matter, searching for divinity; in the vast, untapped

potential of mankind, he found that faith that society had perpetually criticized him for lacking.

Thusly he searched, laying the paint again and again on to the canvas, the same canvas that stared blankly back. Forms took shape -- beautifully abstract, and representative of the one thing that mattered to him. But he struck them down, so that he might build again, because they were only idols to false gods. He sought the absolute.

He wondered how long before the search consumed his physical self, before his mind and soul dispersed into the vast ether of the heavens, like so many before him. His continuing flights upwards and beyond forever were not without toll.

They said he was going insane, that his mind was going, but that was the price. They said he needed medicine and a doctor -- that they could make him better, but they could only ever hide the heart of the world. They said he was a lunatic, but perhaps he was just a minority of one.

His hand quivered. The brush clattered to the floor and left a nasty streak on the white.

Was he trying to capture something that simply no longer existed?  
Does God live vicariously through us?

## XII

"It's a bit ugly, no? I mean, it's sex that sells... not whatever that is."

*Shut up!* "Mmm. Art is about more than simple aesthetic pleasure."

With delicate fingers, he plucked the brush from the ground. Lifting into the air, the brush hesitated over the canvas for a moment, before setting down on the sill of the easel.

The other man, with capitalism on his mind, walked out of the room and then returned, bottle and glass in hand. He raised the bottle and drank from the glass. "How about it?"

"I don't do alcohol. And if I did, it'd hardly be like you." The brush lifted itself and began trailing along the canvas, occasionally dabbling in the mix of colors.

"Ah, I suppose so -- given your 'condition.'" The capitalist sneered, but the brush continued, unbroken and unfazed. "Yeah, I know about your disease, and how you've refused treatment. I have half a mind not to cut you off." He broke off for a second to put down the bottle. "It's clouding your judgment. When you're -- when you're in that state, you lose sight of it all. That painting -- your supposed 'masterpiece' is born more from psychosis than any aesthetic sense. You've been gone from this world for so long and painting it for so much longer, you've lost your sight. And when it fails -- and it will fail -- I will be the one at a loss. Not you, the bleeding artist, but me, who would be so crazy as to patronize insanity."

The brush settled on the sill of the easel once more, accompanied by a thick, tense silence.

From the street, nothing could be seen. Nothing could be heard. People scarcely looked up.

That night, he painted in sanguineous streaks.

### XIII

I knew. That day, I knew. Clearer in the head than ever, my natural gift unadulterated by the filth of the modern world and my senses sharpened, I gazed upon the vast infinity; I saw the future, knew there could be only one end.

I guess it doesn't make sense. If ever there was such a thing, he was "kind" -- in the sense that his self-interest was temporarily aligned with mine. He wanted money and I -- well, I wanted to make him money, I suppose, if only by doing what satisfied this immense empty depth. His resources were the looking-glass upon absolute truth.

But his look, his judgment. I saw his eyes, his coy smile, and they were something I hadn't seen in a long time. Once upon a time, they had taken something very dear to me. All at once, I wanted to pluck his eyes out with my animal teeth, to plunge them into that fleshy abyss and watch his blood rain down like the hail of devilspawn. I wanted to wrap my tongue around his and pull -- pull it to twice its length -- then four times -- then watch as he choked on the words he once loved so. I wanted to watch him beg forgiveness for his unknown crimes.

You think me mad. But madmen know nothing, and I know everything. He dared to grasp at what I had seen. But he could not comprehend. His mind was too small, and he was all alone in the vast and dark void.

I spilled the contents of his bottle all over the floor and laughed at his loud complaints, as he groped the carpet for the sinking traces of wine. In his immense preoccupation, he hardly noticed the first blow. There was a crack and it was more than just the bottle. And that was the second time I gazed upon true beauty in the physical world. The shards of glass, in that moment, were held aloft by the invisible and unblinking ether; time deserted us for a spell long enough to admire every splinter of glass, glinting in the myriad of light from descending sun and night. Red never shone so beautifully. But he could not see it. He fought back. But he never had a chance. The hundreds of past bottles reverberated with a knell, leading ghostly loved ones with their echoes to one more gravestone among many: Here lies the Capitalist, dead by his unquenchable thirst. His abuse made his body and mind weak, but mine... mine made me strong.

With broken breath, he looked one more time to this cruel world. With those eyes. This was the last time I would ever have to see those eyes. I thrust my arm down, blindly, twisting it as his body would have me.

But even under my skin, those eyes haunted. I harkened to long-ago days. Three laughs. The first, deep. The second, higher -- a girl. And the third, unsure. Unsure, of what he was or what he was doing. He struggled to speak, but they didn't notice. They never noticed. And he smiled, with gapped and ugly teeth, forever pushing his glasses up the bridge of his nose.

*He's a-a-angry.*

## XIV

For a damned moment, I thought you wanted me. In your loneliness and darkness, I thought I might be what you needed. But that look on your face.

You were never alone. No, that was me.

I still remember you.

You were smart -- so damn smart. Witticism and wordplay tumbled off your tongue, born from a greater depth and the vigor of mind. And light danced around your face, circling, weaving, and spilling out from beyond the binds of this physical world, because it could never hope to be so beautiful. But you never knew. You wore men like soles, but you never knew.

And I was nothing.

Why do I paint? Because some distant part of me still believes that if I created something beautiful, you would love me. Because I still believe that any beauty born from me is beauty gained by me. But it can never come from me. What does that say?

*"Let's go back to start. You and me."*

## XV

The remnants of a glass bottle were crushed underfoot and the papers affixed themselves to his boot, as he continued on his way. A moment, and the man peered, for the first time, from under his hat and coat, the collar turned against the wind. Plucking the melted wood from betwixt the ridges of his soles, the man gazed for a second. A line of broken, purple crayon adorned the piece, curving into itself and forming a shape from the nothingness. Stalks rose from its head and four limbs protruded from the main body. And there, against all odds, was a smile. *A giraffe*, he thought to himself. In the corner, scrawled in the pen of an adult, were words; "For Mommy." He crumpled it and was on his way.

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What do you do with a broken glass man? Wrap him up, bind him.  
Lay him in a cushiony grave and lock him from prying eyes. Let him live out  
what little he has left in the comfort of solitude.



*Art by Chris Locke*

# THERAPY THROUGH ELVIS

*Julia Blanding*

"I don't like Pittsford. I'm never coming back," said a woman next to me in the waiting room.

"Don't say that, Mary. You can't judge the whole of Pittsford off of one bad experience," said her caretaker.

"No I don't like it. It's not my cup of tea. I'm not coming here again," said Mary.

Another woman on the other side of me sat with her head on her shoulder, mumbling to herself. Not many of her ramblings were comprehensible, but I think I heard the word "microwave" at one point. I caught her in a moment when a string of drool escaped her mouth and she wiped it away with her hand.

There was a man on the other side of the caretaker, reading a magazine. Every time he flipped a page he would examine the pictures, tap his caretaker on the shoulder, and show it to him, but he never said a word. He only groaned a bit. Sometimes he would try to get the attention of the drooling woman across the room and show the pictures to her, but nothing could disrupt her stupor.

A thin, petite man stepped out from behind the desk. He was tidily dressed in a sweater-over-button-down combo and khakis. Even his stubble looked neat and professional. His vintage glasses accentuated his pixie-sized features.

"June?" he called out into the waiting room with his delicate voice. I stood up in reply.

"Hi, that's me!"

"Okay, we'll have you shadowing Mark today."

Just then Mark entered the waiting room. Mark was dressed in a preppy black quarter-zip sweater and khakis. He was a cheery man with a pink face and round cheeks and a bit of a round stomach.

"Hi, I'm Mark. Nice to meet you!" He said in a soothing, friendly voice.

"I'm June. Nice to meet you too."

Just as I was shaking his hand, a man walked through the door with his cane in tow.

“John! So good to see you,” said Mark, “We have a visitor today!”

“Hi, John. I’m June. It’s nice to meet you,” I said.

“Hello, June! Nice to meet you too!” John responded excitedly.

Mark led us into the back of the building to a room with an electric green door. Mark closed the door and set up a folding chair in the corner for me. The room was filled with instruments of all types. In the corner across from me there was a drum kit, on the opposite wall there was a vertical piano, and on the wall opposite that was an electric keyboard. A tribal drum sat in the middle of the floor along with some scattered music stands.

Loose papers, books, and binders flooded the top of Mark’s little piano. As he began John’s lesson, he rummaged through the mess for his sheet music. There was no way he was going to find it in there.

“Oh, nevermind. We don’t need it anyway,” he said.

Mark placed a small whiteboard on the stand in front of John and wrote a sentence: *It’s cold outside.*

“Now, John, what I want you to do is take this sentence I just wrote and change one word in it to make it your own!” he explained.

John didn’t need too much time to think. Within a few seconds he said with excitement, “It’s *freezing* outside!”

“Perfect, John!” Mark said, scribbling down his student’s sentence.

John, giddy from Mark’s praise, squeezed his eyes shut, brought his shoulders up to his ears, and smiled bashfully.

“Let’s try another,” Mark said as wrote on the board: *There’s ice on the sidewalk.*

Before Mark could even finish giving instruction, John had blurted out, “There’s NO ice on the sidewalk right now!”

“Yes, yes, that works,” said Mark.

The two men constructed a few more lines regarding the weather and then Mark turned to the piano.

“Now I’m going to sing a melody I made up for the first line. Then you sing the second line and try to copy my melody, okay?”

“Okay!”

“It’s *coooold* outside,” Mark rang out the first line with a clear, polished voice. He had one of those singing voices that was obviously developed through choir or theater. It was well-trained and followed all the “rules” that choir instructors teach their students.

“It’s *freeeezing* outside,” John responded. His voice was deep and shaky. He didn’t hit all the notes but, surprisingly, he didn’t sound bad. He had a Johnny Cash tone in his voice. It wasn’t perfect, but it felt real.

*There's ice on the sidewalk.  
There's no ice on the sidewalk right now.  
The wind is whipping by.  
The wind is calm outside.  
The ice is starting to melt.  
The snow is starting to melt.  
It's winter in Rochester.  
It's winter in Rochester.  
It's winter in Rochester.  
It's winter in Rochester.  
New York,  
New York.*

“Wonderful, John! You’re making great progress! You’re getting a lot better at coming up with things quickly,” Mark gushed.

Once again, John responded with his humble smile, his squinting eyes, and his scrunched shoulders. I found that he did this a lot during the session. It must have been a reflex of his.

“What should we work on next?” Mark inquired, “Maybe some Elvis?”

John clapped his hands together with joy. Elvis must have been a favorite of his. His instructor rummaged through a file cabinet full of folders, each one designated to a different student, and pulled out the lyrics for Elvis’s *Are You Lonesome Tonight*. He set it on the stand for John and situated himself at the electric keyboard. The intro rang out with a waltz-like rhythm and a tone laced with nostalgia. Then came John’s booming voice.

*Are you lonesome tonight,  
Do you miss me tonight?  
Are you sorry we drifted apart?  
Does your memory stray to a brighter summer day  
When I kissed you and called you sweetheart?  
Do the chairs in your parlor seem empty and bare?  
Do you gaze at your doorstep and picture me there?  
Is your heart filled with pain, shall I come back again?  
Tell me dear, are you lonesome tonight?*



The first few verses were performed almost effortlessly. John had his hands clasped in front of his heart in a whimsical manner. He looked like a princess from a Disney movie wishing upon a star, but this was a fifty year old man in sweatpants from the 90's and a tattered white t-shirt, singing Elvis songs in a music therapy center. Regardless, he had a sweet, dreamy air about him when he sang. The music took him away from the world he was in and brought him to a more pleasant one.

Without ceasing his playing, Mark shouted out, "Now for the acting part!" This part of the song was meant to be spoken.

*I wonder if you're lonesome tonight  
You know someone said that the worlds a stage  
And each must play a part.  
Fate had me playing in love with you as my sweet heart.  
Act one was when we met, I loved you at first glance  
You read your line so clearly—*

("Cleverly!" Mark corrected him.)

*—cleverly and never missed a cue.  
Then came act two, you seemed to change and you acted strange  
And why I'll never know.  
Honey, you lied when you said you loved me  
And I had no cause to doubt you.  
But I'd rather go on hearing your lies  
Than go on living without you.  
Now the stage is bare and I'm standing there  
With emptiness all around  
And if you won't come back to me  
Then make them bring the curtain down.  
  
Is your heart filled with pain, shall I come back again?  
Tell me dear, are you lonesome tonight?*

"Fantastic, John!" his instructor said. John responded with his signature shrugging smile and a giggle.

"Now let's work on that acting part," said Mark. "How do you think he's feeling here?" He said, pointing his pencil at the first line.

"He's saying, 'Hmm I wonder if she's lonesome tonight?'"

"Yes, what emotion would you say that is?"

"Curious?"

"Yes, maybe curious or questioning," Mark took a note on the lyric sheet, "How about the next six lines?"

"He's in love."

"Yes, so he would probably be talking kind of dreamy because he's remembering that, right?"

"Yeah."

"How about when he says she started to act strange?"

"He's confused!"

"Yes! Now he says he'd rather go on hearing her lies than living without her!"

"He sounds kind of..."

"Kind of...desperate?"

"Yeah! Desperate!" John giggled at that and Mark returned the laughter.

"Now just try to use those emotions in your acting, okay?"

"Okay!"

They played the song again and when it came to the acting part, John's attempt at capturing Elvis's confusion, love, and desperation was much more evident. He acted with his hands, shrugging his shoulders to signify confusion, giving himself a hug to illustrate love, and lowering his arms gracefully to imitate "bringing the curtain down".

"Wow John! You made a lot of progress! That was a *lot* better!"

John shrugged his shoulders, smiling and said, "I just looked at the words you wrote and tried to do it like that!"

"Well you certainly did!"

It was true, he really had improved. Mark wasn't just sugar-coating it. You would think that when teaching music to a mentally disabled person, you would have to constantly feign excitement, but John's progress was evident, praise-worthy, and refreshing to witness. Mark's pride and support in his student was genuine.

To me and John's disappointment, the lesson was over. Mark showed us out to the waiting room and we said our goodbyes. John took a seat in the waiting room, talking with some other students that he must have known. I ventured out into the parking lot to find my little, purple SUV. On the way home, I couldn't get that Elvis song out of my head.



*Vanessa Raffaele*

## BARCELONA

*Paul Rutecki*

The cool Spanish breeze was a refreshing feeling to me, as I did not have the luxury of going outdoors much back at McLean. The gentle wind carried my short, brown hair behind me at the Barcelona street corner where I first absorbed this foreign place.

“Welcome to Barcelona, Susanna,” said a man with a rugged face who was in his forties. “I’m Jose Martinez, director of El Hospital de Barcelona. Valerie assigned you here to help complete your recovery. Let me show you around the city first, so you will feel comfortable here.”

I walked with him down the Passeig de Gràcia, which is Catalan for Promenade of Grace, and we stopped at the famous Casa Mila. I thought the building’s façade resembled a giant sea cliff inscribed with caves serving as the entrance. I was amazed by the stark contrast of its design to the bland brick rectangles of Belmont, Massachusetts. Jose showed me inside and I would have guessed I was in a medieval castle, rather than a house. I touched one of the cold, cast iron pillars in the courtyard which somehow managed to support the building’s incredible weight.

“This here is one of the greatest architectural displays in Barcelona,” Jose proudly said as he began his lecture. “A masterpiece of the brilliant architect Antoni Gaudi, this building is a fine example of a work from the Modernism period, which spearheaded the arts and creative achievements. Notice the splendid fusion of aspects from Gothic and Arabic architecture.” Upon realizing that I had lost all interest, except in making sure the floor didn’t have a checkered pattern, Jose sighed and said, “How about a break for lunch?”

After trying to swallow something called paella at a local restaurant, which consisted of rice, green vegetables, rabbit, and probably a half-dozen other ingredients which did not deserve to be mixed together, Jose took me to the psychiatric hospital where I would be staying.

“Finally, a chance to meet some ‘normal’ people,” I thought to myself as El Hospital de Barcelona appeared in the dirty window of Jose’s red Prius.

The people here were less of the normal lunatics I expected to see, for this place was intended for people with milder mental illnesses than the people at McLean. The first people I saw were still doing strange activities however. For example, one thirteen-year-old boy named Alex, who was writing a letter, would erase every letter he wrote unless it was absolutely perfect according to the standards of a 1st grade workbook. I shared a room with a girl named Maria, who was a know-it-all with a sassy attitude and no proper social skills.

“Why does your shirt say FCB?” I asked her.

She rolled her eyes, stood up with her puny 5’4” frame, and replied, “You don’t know what FCB is? You’re a freaking idiot. It’s the greatest football club on the whole planet, that’s what.”

She then left while abruptly turning her head around, which caused her straight black hair in a ponytail to whip across my cheek.

“Football?” I thought to myself. “Like the sport I saw on TV at McLean when Tom Brady was playing?”

Hoping I could count on Jose, I asked him what FCB is.

He chuckled and said, “It’s pretty important around here. They’re playing a really big game tomorrow and I got an extra ticket from my friend who couldn’t come. Tomorrow you can see what it’s all about.”

Seven o’clock in the morning came way too fast, when I rolled my groggy, jetlagged body out of the sheets. A hospital aid showed up at my door with the medicine Valerie had sent. I was prepared to stealthily hide it under my tongue, a technique which I perfected at McLean, but I decided to actually take it. In Barcelona, there are no doctors that can put me in a taxi headed towards a mental asylum, no people who strip me when I want to shave my legs, and no narcissistic patients could drive me into deep depression and make me want to kill myself, like Sylvia Plath did. I had no

reason to rebel anymore against basic rules. Apparently the other patients had no reason to rebel either, as “perfect penmanship boy” Alex and the rest of us all took our medication and generally followed the rules without incident.

Jose approached me that afternoon in a particularly good mood, wearing a red, plaid shirt over an undershirt which covered his slightly overweight belly, and with a jolly face that reminded me of Santa Claus.

“Buenas tardes Susanna, are you ready to learn about FCB?”

The thought had slipped my mind.

“Sure,” I replied. “So, what kind of sport do they play?”

“They play what you Americans call soccer, and what Spain and the rest of the world call futbol, or some variation of the word. Come along now, or we’ll miss opening kick-off.”

Jose’s monotone GPS said, “Llegar a Camp Nou (Arriving at Camp Nou).

I looked up and saw a phenomenally large stadium, which I felt would have been better suited for something of greater grandeur, like a Roman gladiator battle.

“Camp Nou is the largest stadium in Europe, seating just shy of 100,000 people. And I’ll bet nearly every blue and red chair will be full tonight, as the El Clasico match against Real Madrid has huge significance for Catalan pride.” I wondered to myself why any sports team would need to call itself “Real” to feel important, as I tried to understand where the excitement stemmed from. I tilted my head up towards the darkening sky and observed the large LED displays over the main entrance which featured Barcelona’s star players, with Lionel Messi’s picture in the center.

I laughed and said to Jose, “What kind of parent would name their kid Lionel, Mufasa from *The Lion King*?”

Jose sternly replied, “I would learn to respect him if I were you, Susanna. He has won four Ballon d’Or’s, set a whole bunch of goal-scoring records, and is widely considered to be the best footballer ever.” Once we were inside, the atmosphere was absolutely electric. A sea of red and blue striped fans faithfully belted out the traditional soccer chants which they must have learned before their ABC’s. Jose narrated the opening action for me like a TV announcer after kickoff, so I could get a sense of the sport.

“Ok, so here’s Xavi, he passes it to Fabregas, Fabregas still with it, to Pedro, Pedro attacking up the right wing, Pedro’s running into a bit of trouble here, and he’s forced to pass it all the way down the pitch to Valdes, his own goalkeeper.”

“What a stupid game this is. They start at the halfway line and spend a whole minute going the wrong way? This is ridiculous.”

“Now hang on there, don’t get impatient. Here’s Mascherano. Oh, a good skill move from Mascherano, such excellent dribbling. He passes it to Iniesta, Iniesta to Sanchez, Sanchez on an excellent run down the left flank, here’s the cross... Oh, what a goal by Messi! Sensational bicycle-kick by the Argentinian genius, what a way to score!”

At that instant, the Barcelona crowd erupted with such a great volume that I initially thought the stadium was being attacked. Everyone around me, including Jose, jumped out of their seat and roared as the incredible kick was replayed over the large screen hanging over the starting circle. The goal caused me to experience the passion shared by so many Catalans for the game of futbol. I no longer criticized the loyal red and blue army surrounding me; I was a part of it. The first five minutes and twenty seconds of this game caused me to finally understand what FCB really is.

The first half concluded with Barcelona remaining on top 1-nill. I followed Jose to the croquette line and I saw someone I knew from what seemed like a lifetime ago. A disheveled woman with messy blonde hair was two food stands away from me. She was attempting to flirt with the college kid behind the table, who clearly was uninterested.

“Lisa? What are you doing here in Barcelona?”

“Get out of my way, bit—well if it isn’t Susanna Kaysen. Valerie must have tried to separate us during our recoveries. That idiot couldn’t realize that seeing someone familiar might actually be beneficial to my mental condition. I feel your pain Susanna; I hate this stupid sport too. I only came for free food from my supervisor Ricardo and the chance to meet Spanish guys, which are way hotter than those losers we used to see.”

“Wait Lisa, that guy who scored, Messi, is all I have been able to think about. I need you to help me sneak out after the game so I can meet him. I know you couldn’t help Torrey, the junkie, escape from going back to Mexico, but I know you’re mischievous enough to help me get past a fat forty-year-old.”

“Wow, Lisa, I see you’ve finally learned how to get what you want in this cruel world. Let me tell you something, if you want to break rules you are talking to the right girl. I personally think that Ronald, the guy on the white team with his name spelled wrong, is more attractive, but if you’re into the short guys then suit yourself. Meet me after the game by the croquette stand.”

In the second half, I no longer existed; I was consumed by the image of the guy named Lionel Messi. He became my life. Every thought, every action, every moment, every last ounce of my brainpower was concentrated on him, like a heat-seeking missile tracking its target. I deserted the red and blue army I pledged loyalty to thirty minutes ago. I only cared that my one solider was victorious through the battle.

“Pass it to Messi, you ball hog, he’s better than you are,” I shouted at the top of my lungs.

Around the seventy minute mark, Messi was nearly on a breakaway from a run at the halfway line. There was just him, Sergio Ramos, who was the only defender in the way, and Iker Casillas, the Real Madrid goalkeeper. Even though Messi had to control the ball, he was still running faster than Ramos. Ramos desperately slid in for the tackle and it was unclear to most fans if he got the ball or Messi’s knee. When the referee refused to give a foul, I was infuriated.

I lost all remaining control of my body and I nearly charged down the stairs towards the stadium like a fierce Spanish bull. Jose’s thick, bony hands grabbed me before I could move, but I was able to disguise my intent by claiming my sudden action was a reaction to a bee sting. After the ninety minutes however, I managed to escape from those hands and begin my mission to find Messi with Lisa’s help. After “waiting in the endless female restroom line,” Jose was out of sight. I meet up with Lisa as planned and we ran off, trying to catch Messi before he entered the luxurious team bus.

“This way Susanna, I scouted the parking lot and located the bus. Oh, and watch the guards, good girls like you aren’t used to dealing with guys with guns.”

We reached the vehicle before the players and the hovering media arrived. A heavy rain assaulted our position along with a rumbling groan of thunder, as if to foreshadow ramifications resulting from our plan. We waited at the shelter of a nearby tree for the players while pretending to make a phone call. The players slowly marched through down the brick path like infantrymen, but with the happy smiles of children from their victory.

“Ok Susanna, there’s the short guy with black hair you wanted. I’m leaving before I get blamed for this.”

I swiftly approached him and said, “Messi! I’m so glad I found you. You’re not only my favorite player but the glistening rainbow of my life.”

Messi embarrassingly made a half smile and pretended not to hear me while his teammates looked at him.

Then, completely losing any sense of reality and the absurdness of my dreams, I said, “Oh, Messi, will you marry me and love me for the rest of my life? We could move to America and make snow angels and you could kick David Beckham’s butt out of the (Los Angeles) Galaxy. And then we could...”

I felt strong, oppressive hands on my shoulders that were more powerful than Jose’s. Two security guards removed me from the area and a loudspeaker announcement for a missing girl sounded throughout the stadium.

I kicked the air futilely and yelled, “No, get away from my future husband. Messi belongs with me! No, no, no, no, no, I need you, I need you.” My shout then turned into a melancholy sob, and I whimpered, “nothing else, just you.”

I hung my head in defeat as the bus pulled away and I stared at my worthless reflection in the dark puddle, below the dark night sky. Jose shortly showed up with a disappointed face that no longer had any resemblance to Santa Claus.

The security guard asked, “Are you responsible for this girl?”

Jose breathed deeply before regrettably replying, “Yes.”

He then spoke to me, “Lionel Messi had nothing in the beginning. He grew up in a poor Argentinean family and was diagnosed with a growth hormone disorder. When he turned eleven years old, he was the average height of a nine-year-old-boy. His monthly life-saving injectable treatments cost one thousand dollars, more than half of what his father earned back then. So, what did he do about it? Did he obsess over the people who were successful and give up on his own life? He created his wealth and prosperity himself, with his own two feet. He doggedly practiced soccer every day, which helped him become good enough to play in Spain and arrange for the club to pay for his medical treatment. He faced a severe limitation like you but he overcame it. It may be true that you have some episodes of depersonalization from your illness, but that is no excuse for your irresponsible actions. For goodness’ sake, do something with your life, Susanna. You might be as skilled as Messi in poetry as he is with a soccer ball. Chase your own dreams; don’t hang from the shoulders of someone at the summit when you can climb there by yourself.”



*Meng Yu*



# THE DREAM HOTEL

*Chris Locke*

“Finn, this is my dad, Clezal. To you he’s Mr. Howell.”

Jamy Howell seemed like a good kid, but his dad was giving me a funny look. I always got that from old people—I think that’s what face tattoos do to you, especially in the main lounge. But this guy was different; of course he was old, wrinkly like all the rest of them. His eyes were the only thing that separated him from all the rest of those brain dead seniors: pure white, and looking right through me. Not at the wall but staring at something within me, something beyond me. How was something so fake so real?

I shouldn’t trust him.

“Look, Jamy, I really don’t wanna do this—“

“But you promised! I planned this months ago, and Anier is already out there as our distraction.”

“Look at what happened to Brody, he’s—“

“Not important! We know what we’re doing this time, right dad?”

He turned to him, nearly pulling him down to agree with him. Cyborgs can’t even have kids, why did he keep calling him dad? Not the thirty year-old I know. A monotonous voice pierced the silence that only lasted a second.

“Yes, my son. Do not worry, Finn Foster of Earth. Only 14.035% chance of—“

“That’s enough of that.” If it weren’t for that guy’s voice you’d think he was human. That’s what was most concerning; how could Jamy make a cyborg like that? He couldn’t make anything out of the junk around the Hotel; he’d probably get caught stealing first.

I didn’t notice Jamy stride toward me with a syringe in hand. By the time he grabbed my arm it was too late to stop him. I was in the hands of Dr. Frankenstein Mark VI now.

It’s not hard to fall asleep, only to wake up. Especially when the room’s on fire.

“Jam...” I croaked. Life felt like it was sucked out of me, now hanging over me in a cloud of darkness. It’d take ten men to get me out of these bonds; I’d need a Kapsule from Anier, probably her cloning one.

I finally caught Jamy's eye in the corner of the room; he was patting out a fire that devoured his dad's back. His dad's synthetic skin burned off all the way down to his ankles—why is there a massive hole in the wall? “Did you...hole?”

“Doesn't matter! Just take this, last procedure.” He dropped a paper-thin square on my tongue. At first it was ice cold, but then it changed all sorts of different ways: hard as a rock, vanished for a second, scolding hot. Something felt wrong. It was back to ice cold—should've frozen my mouth shut but instead I hardly felt it. “Did I start that fire?”

“Short answer: yes. It worked!” He turned to me and I swear I saw a spark in his eyes. All along I thought it was some faint hope that something exciting would actually happen in our lives, up until I saw that look. But I had to ask, yelling over the flames, “What exactly is ‘it’?”

He nearly jumped a whole foot, “Don't get angry! (Not again...) Please. I can't fix my dad.” He turned his small blond head to his alleged father, that light in his eyes was definitely gone by then. How could I not feel bad for him? Yeah he was annoying most of the time—and pretty shady too!—but he puts his life into this stuff. That gray-haired tin can looked real, even more realistic than the oafs over in the main lounge of the Dream Hotel.

“Help me up.” After he took off my straps I bent over his dad, and put a hand on him. Of course nothing happened, but then I thought about the square Jamy put on my tongue. The old man's skin was healed in no time. The flames in the room stopped. My breathing slowed, and in that moment I knew: it really did work.

“What's the worst that could happen?”

“You'd die, Jamy! Even if I could shoot a ball of fire it would blast through your plastic thing.”

“It's fiber-optic plastic, obviously. It's also the lid on our trash can, this stuff was made in...”

How did he find this stuff, let alone these places? First the back room of the Hotel for “surgery”, now this alley that was in the center of the city. Main street mid-afternoon: as much traffic as a trail out in the country, before the government testing.

I loved this view; Jamy still blabbing on, hiding behind our trash can lid, waiting for me to act as a flamethrower in front of the dusty gray street that surrounds the park square. It was just a plot of grass—mostly dead—but it gives well-needed color to this town. I'm no art student but I'm smart enough to know that life looked amazing in front of death, the gray and brown rubble and half-destroyed buildings behind the square.

“Somebody should get rid of those...” I muttered.

“R-rid of what?” Jamy cried from behind his blue plastic board.

I couldn’t help myself, I had to try; I forced my arm, practically the whole right side of my body, straight for the buildings across the square. A flash of red and the eyesores were lit, like two beacons—a symbol for change or a bright future.

Naturally Jamy was going crazy (a mix of excited and terrified). “Jay,” I cut him off, “go get some Kapsules. And any other cyborgs you have.” By the time I said that last part I was striding through the door to our flat. The place was a dump, aptly named The Swamp, but the only things that would always be spot-free were our closets. The Hotel Board gave us enough money to keep our uniforms clean in a Clean Closet ©; nice and tidy so the junkies in the lounge didn’t get distracted.

So I put on my suit, a tuxedo with a red skinny tie, and I walked to the lounge with Jamy in tow.

And I thought old people gave me weird looks before. I even took their eyes off of the Dream Simulators, those small boxes that consume them. That’s how this chain got its name, the Dream Hotel Suites. A depressed or rather bored citizen stumbled in through the door, handed a well-dressed greeter like myself a wad of money, and sat down at a table with a Simulator. Get comfortable in your over-sized chair; pull a screen up to an inch in front of your face, and watch colors dance. You might never leave. Pink, orange, green, a dash of blue—a finely tuned symphony, manifested into a little television that never turns off. It doesn’t matter if it makes sense or if there’s a story, the colors always bloom.

People had died sitting here too long. It’s called over-exposure, and ever since Jamy’s last experiment were on clean-up duty. First my boss laughed at them for literally forgetting to eat or drink, and then he laughed at us as we dragged them outside. Today was different though. Today our boss wouldn’t be able to laugh and talk about us behind our backs. We wouldn’t be treated as if we’re the real mess anymore.

Before he could realize why we were so late a red streak flashed across my eyes. That’s when the chaos started. Jamy had a Smog Kapsule, a tiny pill that gives you superpowers for a time, and Anier still had her Clone Kapsule. With an army like that security didn’t stand a chance; they barely even saw Aniers coming straight at them. If one thing she was clever, Anier. I’ll bet she’s the one who found all of that junk for Jamy. “Have the Kapsules run out yet?”

“Nope, just as expected.” Jamy told me, “unlike you.”

I turned to him, “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I made you this way to be a superhero, not a terrorist!”

“I’m freeing these people from themselves! This fake reality is killing them and they give in freely every day. How could you just sit idly by when the world is killing itself? They need me!”

“Listen to yourself—“

“Shut up!” I yelled, and before I could stop myself that same red streak blurred my vision. This time it lasted nearly half a minute. I couldn’t think—some white noise overtook my sense, and I merely writhed in a fiery pain.

Once it stopped all I saw were ashes. The building was destroyed and a fire spread through the town, because of me. I couldn’t help it; seeing people waste their lives in front of those screens drove me insane. Especially when they say that was their last time, what a lie! They mistook movement for action and they sat in those chairs for what might as well be an eternity--

I felt what must be a thousand Kapsules course through my veins. Soot fell like fat snowflakes around me; now I knew I couldn’t waste this gift so I trudged on, helping those in silent despair. Not as Finn Foster, but as something greater. Maybe that superhero that Jamy dreamed of.

Black Muse.



*Claire Lewis*

# I DON'T MISS YOU

*Emma Rizk*

Today was the day I had forgotten.

The house smelled bad, like sickly sweet flowers. Like death. Mom hated flowers. She would smile and hug the gift bearer if they didn't know each other well. But I remember the only time I ever saw my father cry was while he swept up the glass after she threw the beautiful vase full of violets at him. He told me the red stains were from the flowers, but I knew it was his blood streaked across the floor.

It was a fight to the back of the closet, past my mom's St. Patrick's Day sweater, her dingy robe, the rubber cleaning shoes, the wedding gown from her twenties. By the time I grabbed the box labeled with my name, my hands were desperate, I was drowning in her embrace. I threw the time capsule on the bed, noting the impeccable shape of the soft case. I snorted. Her marriage was in shreds, and her memory was drilled with holes, but this meaningless box had withstood the stand of time.

I folded back the lid, then stopped. I felt oppressed in the small dark bedroom, I was uncomfortable with the lies it held. The prayer book on the nightstand, the happy family portrait on the wall, the open door. In the kitchen, under the harsh florescent lights I relaxed slightly and resumed my work. Underneath a red ribbon for a science project, a worn and faded yellow baby blanket, and my scout badge, was a small black velvet box, like the one in which she used to keep her jewelry. I could see her face lighting up when she got it out, such joy that shone from remembering her life before we existed. I was excited now as I cracked open the lid, already planning what I would do with the money if the trinket inside could be sold.

The box contained a small red slingshot, cheap and plastic, a present on my sixth birthday. Attached to it was a note, written in my mother's fierce handwriting, "Someday you will confront your mistake. Then you will want this back." I snapped the lid shut, catching my finger on the hard metal in the process. I barely felt the pain. I was too overcome with hot shame and the image of a dead woodpecker flashing in front of my eyes, skull crushed, wings outstretched, as though it would take flight at any moment. My blood dripped on the tile, and I made no attempt to stop it. I liked the way the red burst across the white ground.

I threw the cardboard box and all its contents in the trash on the way out the door. I took nothing with me from my childhood home but a blood smeared shirt.

\* \* \*

Now here I sit, angry in my memories. This is why I would rather be lost in the fog. On the way home from the house I stopped at the grocery store and bought a cheap bouquet, the strongest smelling one in the store. Then I made one more stop and spread the flowers over her grave. I chuckled before I walked away.



*Maggie Baehr*

# UNTITLED

*Ché Ragland*

Why is she making me do this? She always getting' me involved in her dumb programs. Sometimes I wish my mom was with a woman who is a little less involved. At least there'll prolly be some cute girls there. I look in my mirror, examine my short, skinny frame, and tuck in some stray strands surrounding my forehead. Yea, I'm ready to break some hearts.

At the concert, I see some things I like: short, skinny, and vulnerable. Time to spit some game and let them know what's up. I don't actually want a relationship with any of them; I already have one of those. She's not bad either, at least not in a wrong way. In fact, she is every type of right. She's got long wavy hair, curvy silhouette, infinite eyes to get lost in, the whole nine. But I can drop her for another any time I want to.

Hold up, now we gotta walk? Damn, I did not sign up for this, but you know what, at least we getting fed. As soon as I sit down I see her. A gorgeous face, with a smile so superb, stars in the sky are jealous of its white. I've never been with anyone like her, but I can't stop watching her. My gaze travels from head to toe on this pulchritudinous soul. Pulchritudinous means gorgeous, I learned that from TV. I just need to talk to her, just for maybe five minutes. Here she comes. To me? No. To the bathroom. She's kinda tall, but I can hurt- work with it.

It's already eight o' clock. Time really flies when you're flirting with every girl in the restaurant who will listen. The after party is back on for the second time now, and she rides off into the night in her red Yukon chariot just as I'm walking toward my black ride. We left that pub no more than five minutes after her, and somehow, ten minutes later, we arrive at the site at least fifteen minutes before her. I really hope she's coming- but if she don't, you know I ain't gon' stress it.

But here she is! Waking through the door with that charismatic smile that gives me chills. After a quick, seemingly rehearsed but effortless embrace, I walk her over to where I was sitting and we talk. My god-sister is sitting, being her usual intolerable self. A steady fifteen people remain for the duration of the party. I take my place seated upon the stage, like a king. She's leaning back next to me, doing some people watching with the intolerable one, and I grab her hand, pulling her in front of me. She knows I want her on my lap, but she looks away, being irrationally self-conscious. Instead, she sits beside me, like a queen. Standing up, I sit back down harmlessly upon her thighs, and it makes her laugh, so I know I've done my duty. That one act, made her instantly comfortable, almost makes me regret what I know I am going to do to her. Almost.

But damn, I wish I was smoking right now. I just finished my pack and I can't stand it. I'm thinking things that I don't wanna think. I can't deal, just know He doesn't want me here, but what I don't know, is why He won't just terminate this life line already. He prolly wants me to choose the end, because either way I'm going to the one place hotter than the Sahara. I know it, and it kills me 'cuz either way no one suffers insomnia worrying about me or trying to help me. No one gets on their knees at night asking Him to help me. Maybe I should just finally end it. Tonight? No, not tonight, I can't; not after he just prescribed to me this beautiful woman. Maybe I just have to wait... maybe.

Time to go already? "Ok hun, I'll text you tonight, and that's a promise. Take this with you," and with this, I precisely place a peck of passion on the portal to her pretty pure heart. The same heart I will leave macerated on countless affairs because "I'm sorry" will have taken its place between "Eric" and "Trim", accompanied by a masked pair of two intertwined fingers of the same hand.



*Savannah Hill*



# DREAM THEORY

*Cole Boillat*

"Please, Doctor, can you help her?" A middle-aged man in a grey suit that matched his thinning hair spoke, motioning towards his wife. She was very pretty, a 'trophy wife' of some sort, who looked much younger than he. "She's just been so stressed and aggressive lately, I'm not sure what to make of it." His brow furrowed in worry. "Not to mention the sickness." He fiddled with the end of his tie, attempting to twist it around his finger but instead his finger became stuck briefly in the loop he had made.

"What kind of sickness?"

I shifted my gaze to the blonde woman who sat in front of me, making eye contact.

"Coughing, mainly," the woman said, maintaining eye contact.

"But you've thrown up a couple times as well?" The man asked his wife for verification, which she gave with a pained nod, her blonde hair pulled so tightly into a bun that it didn't move.

"Will you tell me your dream, one more time?"

She readjusted her already-crossed legs and told it once again through her thick, red lips. "I said I had it a couple times already, each time a little different. I was out shopping with a couple-a-friends, and bought this gorgeous sparkling silver dress, you see." She spoke quickly, but with a slight nasal overtone. "They were all so impressed by how it looked on my body, but I thought it was too revealing. My friend, Gloria I think, told me that it was fine to show a little skin, and that I shouldn't feel bad, so I bought it and came home to show my husband. I take a cab home, and I was trying to enjoy the view of the city streets, but I had anxiety for some reason, and the engine kept getting louder and louder. I got to our apartment, but I didn't have enough money left to pay him, so I went inside to get money and I come in to see a pair of black heels next to the door that sure weren't mine!" She tensed in her chair slightly. "So I went upstairs and sure enough, there he was, with some *girl* I'd never seen before in my life!" She settled back down, relaxing herself.

"And quite frankly," the husband added as if what he was about to say had become part of the story itself, "I'm offended that she continues to have this dream. I would never even *fathom* sleeping around—"

"Oh posh! I've seen the way you look at other women, as if you wished I wasn't in your way to block your doing as you please!"

“That is *nonsense*!” the man retorted, temporarily heated, and then managed to calm himself. “You see what I mean, Doctor, it’s hard not to provoke her,” he said with anguish, looking like she had just punched him in the gut.

“When was the last time you two had relations?” I asked, pointedly.

They shared sidelong glances, and although the husband paused before saying, “I’m not sure that’s-” I already knew the answer to that question.

“And tell me, Laurissa, are you on your cycle?” I pulled my stethoscope from my bag and walked over to her.

“No, why?” she said, confused. I listened to her breathe: *inhale, exhale, in, out*.

“Hm...” I let the silence settle in the room, enjoying its last few lingering moments.

“What *is* it Doctor?” The husband pressed, anxious.

I walked back towards my chair and turned around. “Not being on your period – did that make it more enjoyable?” I asked, looking at Lauretta.

The husband started, “But we haven’t –”

“I wasn’t asking ‘we,’ I was asking *her*,” my hand fell palm up in the wife’s direction. “So please, let us finish.” The man froze, mouth still open.

“Doctor *what* are you getting at?” The woman said, forcing a slight, innocent laugh as her voice rose in a questioning tone.

“Your dream, Lauretta. It was fulfilling a subconscious wish. What wish do you ask? Well, the innocence pertaining to skin displayed in your dream is a *clear* wish for *you*,” I said, emphasizing the last word, allowing my hand to gesture at the short, tight skirt she wore so effortlessly. “But why? Why have a reoccurring dream where your husband cheats on you? There’s a quite simple explanation.”

“What?” the husband croaked, finally finding his voice. I gestured towards him with my head, never breaking eye contact with the woman.

“Your husband cheating on you does not make things worse, but better. It acquits you of your prior sin, making it all right – making it even, and making you not quite as guilty as before.”

“Doctor I’m not sure I-” the wife again began to display her fraudulent innocence.

But my voice rose, cutting off hers, “You have no reason to be paranoid. None at all. But that doesn’t quite line up with your dream. You were looking for those shoes, weren’t you? You wanted them to be there.” She opened her mouth but I continued, “You cheated on your husband

Lauretta. Your dreams of him cheating on you allow yourself to rest easy, knowing that he's on your level, but he's really not, is he? Some things go unresolved – you know that. You never paid that cab driver in your dream, after all.”

The husband appeared to be in physical shock. “This can't be true! Is it true? Is it *true*, Lauretta?!”

She broke into tears suddenly, apologizing profusely. “By the way, her lungs are clear, but she's got a pretty big parasite in her stomach. You may want to consider abortion. I'll leave you two alone to discuss this.” I placed my stethoscope back in my bag, and left, closing the door behind me. Rank was in town, he could wrap things up for today.

It was a long train ride to Germany from Vienna, and I slept as best as I could. I had lunch planned the next day with Carl Jung. By the time I stepped off of the train with my luggage, it was just after 8:00 AM. Although it was August, the early morning was cold in Bremen, showing signs of the winter to come.

“Do you need a cab, sir?” the man was waiting at the train station.

“Yes, take me to a café within walking distance of Essinghaus. I have lunch at 12.”

...

I got to lunch 15 minutes early. 17 minutes passed before Jung strolled through the door. “Sigmund, my dear friend, how are you?”

I stood up to greet him, shook his hand and we briefly embraced. “I'm doing well myself, although this German air is a little hard on me – I feel a bit weak.”

“Well then, we have to get some food in you,” Jung said with a smile. He was in his late thirties, and was in good shape for his age. Some part of me always felt warm when he was around, and yet I didn't trust him like I used to, as we disagreed on some points.

“This city is more fascinating than you'd think at first sight,” Jung said, a story on the tip of his tongue.

“Oh, god save us.”

“I'm serious! Just listen. Underneath certain parts of the city, there are lead cellars, and guess what's in them?”

“Lead cellars? What, radioactive brandy?”

“Not quite. Mummies,” he said the word with the excitement of an eleven year old.

“Oh, please don't,” I begged.

“How amazing is that? Under the cathedral. I would love to see them.”

"Why would you want to see dead people?" I began to feel light headed. "That's not fun."

But he continued, "Back in the seventeenth century they were installing a massive organ in the cathedral, and sure enough they dug down and found the lead cellars."

"Carl, not now, I can't stomach it at the moment."

"But just imagine, you're there to put in an organ, you dig a little too far –"

"Jung!" The room started to spin.

"...and staring you in the face is a dead man!" And that's when the room turned, and everything went black.

I got up off the floor with Jung's help. He had jumped from his seat to grab me as I fell, and now was holding me with one arm under my back and one hand steadying my pulsing neck. I looked up at him, and he looked down at me, and just for an instant, I wasn't mad at him – I couldn't be mad at him. And then it was gone. "You might want to eat something, Sigmund," Jung said in a mockingly sincere tone.

"I swear you have a damned death wish, Jung."

"That's insane."

"If you don't kill me first, I'm going to kill you," I said, angrily.

"Oh come on Freud, that's not nice."

...

"There's the Hungarian," I said, pointing from the ship's deck as Sandor Ferenczi walked up the gangplank. It was early morning, and he looked as if he were not fully awake.

"Greetings," he said, nodding his head first at myself and then Jung.

"Let's get settled, and then get some coffee?" I looked to Jung, then Sandor.

"Coffee would be great," the latter said with a sigh.

Within half an hour, Sandor and I were sitting at a table in the ship's large cabin, which had just set off. "Where's Jung?" he asked.

"Not sure, he was fine yesterday. Said he wasn't feeling well."

"That begs the question," Sandor said, "What's been going on with you two?"

"What exactly do you mean?" I asked, feigning perplexity.

"You know what I mean, Freud."

I sighed. "We haven't exactly agreed on everything lately."

"Like?"

"It's pretty clear he's anti-Semitic," I said, "And he clearly holds a grudge when I differ views."

"Oh, I see."

"And he doesn't admit to any of it."

"Well you know what you can do," Sandor said, ready to enlighten me.

"What?" I said, somewhat skeptical.

"Well, you of all people should know. Do what you're good at."

"I don't quite get--"

"You two should psychoanalyze each other's dreams!" He sat forward excitedly, readjusting himself to face more towards me, as I sat at his right side of the espresso bar. "That way," he continued. "You'll know if he is telling the truth or hiding his feelings from you."

"Ok... but what if he analyzes mine and finds out about – you know," I lowered my voice so that he could barely hear, "Minna?"

"Oh, come on. You're the best at what you do. Hell, you *invented* it. He won't find out any more than he already knows," Sandor stated in an assuring fashion.

"Alright then, Sandor. We do it tonight." I reached out my hand to shake his, and he took it firmly.

Jung walked in. "I'm finally all set in my cabin," he said.

"Good," I told him, "because we have an interesting event planned for tonight."

...

The red wine swirled in my cup as I turned it ever so lightly in my fingers.

"Sigmund, this was your idea, therefore you can go first. What was your last memorable dream?"

"Well," I thought for a minute, and took a sip of the dark wine that settled in the crevices of my mouth and tongue, allowing the aroma of oak, cherry, and smooth, strong red grape to linger as the liquid fell down my throat. "I was with my wife Martha and her sister Minna, eating dinner. Roasted potatoes and lamb, I believe. My wife, as clearly as I can remember, told me that the dinner I had cooked was my best yet. That is when I told her that I did not cook it, but her sister Minna did. And yet Minna agreed with Martha, that I had cooked the meal. Suddenly there was a burning smell from the kitchen, as I had forgotten to take the bread from the oven. It had lit on fire somehow, and suddenly flames were running up the walls. Martha screamed at me, asking me why I didn't tell her I was heating bread in the oven, but I didn't remember heating it at all. I really didn't." My voice trailed off in a troubled fashion.

"And you're going to tell me," Jung said suspiciously, "that you have nothing going on there?"

"What do you mean?" I gave an innocent laugh.

"Between the three of you," he said accusingly.

"To tell you that," I looked at him, "would be unprofessional. Now, your turn," I added dismissively.

Anger flashed briefly in his eyes, before he regained control.

"Fine," his teeth hissed. "I was in my house, alone, reading over a letter you had sent me. I decided I needed a drink, so I went down to my basement to the wine cellar. When I descended the stairs, and approached my wine rack, to my surprise, I found two skulls sitting in the shelves. Human skulls."

The way he said it was almost as if he enjoyed the sight of the skulls. Or at least, they did not horrify him. "What did the letter say?" I asked, avoiding the skulls for the time being.

"It," he hesitated, "It was you talking about that man in my childhood. The one I trusted." He choked on the words, "It said that you thought I deserved what happened." His words came out strongly again, "that I deserved to be defiled in such a manner."

"That's ridiculous!" I said, incredulous.

"Is it? Is it so ineffable?"

"Whose skulls were they?" I asked, trying to contain myself.

"My wife and daughter, Freud."

"That doesn't make sense, Carl. Whose were they really?"

"You told me that you had no homoerotic feelings for me," Jung spat out.

"And?"

"And yet when I catch you when you faint, you look at me as if I'm the world to you," Jung said, still steaming.

"Jung! Whose skulls were in your basement?" I began to get heated as the answer became clearer.

"You lie to me about your feelings so that you can protect me from them. How is that protection? All of your lies, your narcissism! You can't even accept my own, correct revision to your damned libido theory!"

"Jung! Calm down!"

"And then!" his voice was hoarse, strained to the verge of tears, "You cannot tell your *best* friend the truth about Minna! You push me away, because you're afraid of what you feel for me, because you can't control it like you do with every single *other* aspect of your miserable life!"

I couldn't handle him yelling. I couldn't stand it, "I'm not the only one who lies here you know! I know you're anti-Semitic, how could you ever care for me when your views are against my very being!"

“Don’t bring religion into this, Freud! This is about morality and friendship. The fact that you value your reputation over our relationship shows me what you really want. I don’t need a damned dream analysis to come to that conclusion.”

“That’s not true,” my voice trailed. I tried to say it convincingly, but couldn’t bring myself to do so.

That’s when I knew. His hot, angry eyes staring into mine, and his heavy breathing and flared nostrils, matching my grief, my sorrow, my realization of my own ignorance. The skulls weren’t his wife and daughter. It was I and it was he. It was something that used to be, a relationship that had always had, and always would have, the odds stacked against it – it was long gone, incurable.

“I think it best,” I said, choking slightly, “if we tend to our own business for a while.”

The skulls weren’t just us individually, but us together. We had each died in one another’s eyes, turned from each other by deception, and subsequently been pulled apart by mistrust. It had just taken until now for me to see it. And I saw it there, in his burning eyes, that I was dead – we were dead.



*Luba Kalantyrva*

# DRAMA



*Art by Carley Moynihan*



# THE LONIOUS MONK: DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

*Jacob Marsh*

Futile. That stage needs direction, art, not  
Muddy mumbling. I deserve more. A solitary  
Hatch, a singular breach in thought, startled like the  
Bottom step, straight, no chaser, with a purpose.  
Too much noise rattles the air, my lungs  
Struggle with it, plead for it to stop. Your babbling  
Has motive decrepit for the boards I might  
Grace with a stunning play of string. And I  
Thought a worth in your brass, no more. Fool,  
Nothing saves you but my own voice sailing above, floating  
On half-diminished waves of yellowed ivory.  
How 'bout it? How, try? Well, you needn't.  
They didn't craft the steps and cracks of Minton's  
Only to watch the dust motes tremble in the dreary,  
Bedridden sun.

Answers? They might lead in a  
Sphere. It is as a daydream 'round midnight  
Spoke and snatched me into its floating grasp.  
A hazy spiral conglomerates to a point of brightened  
Touch, illustrating an unfolding to my creation.  
Speak on Bud, he might well give the same,  
A tale near mine own epistrophy. It shows how, with  
What emotion. Stride like Art, leaving no key lonely,  
Unbroken. A whole-tone down, up, or in a cascade of  
Discord. Whirling, placing, the sevens and  
The fives, lower. And pairs together, hit those.  
Find in-between, creating a new smooth resonance.  
Hit them! Percussive, present. Present, stinging.  
A stringent burst of panoramic atmosphere, a  
Sustained hammer, makes the unlikely harmonious pair.

I told it, still I haven't the quietest idea where  
To start. Start, or finish. The great Miles surely finds  
Inspiration in the notes and movement of a chord struck  
On the spacious, nutty spinet left singularly in tune to the  
Waiting, hopeful stage. But, digressing. Making the

Wrong mistakes, therein has the horn's flaw.  
Study for permutations, the composite finale that  
Sends a cool quake of knowing down the spine, like a brush  
Of winter whisk. Play to the pain. Play to the  
Reaction inside – it knows best. Each rewind,  
Each summary has voice and passion unexamined,  
Rebellious, as the moments watched streak by, becoming  
Memory. Take it, I'm right. They say over at Julliard,  
Science and the process of an imperfect science.  
Better an inconsistent travel than their rigid  
Mind. Creation flows here looking to the house,  
Light blue and molten, over the spruce and ebony,  
The brass and silver. Stick here, one far off day  
Might Carnegie curtain for a Miles, some of a dream  
For any player caught in one pendulous record.

It is not the equipment we play which separates  
Our not-so-different visions; rather it lies  
In the means. Manuscript, or feel? On the emerged  
Or the emerging, the untouched. Eight bars, maybe  
Add one? But ask me now, for I have mind to  
Criss cross, and walk the next stage.



*Addy Schuetz*

PABLO NERUDA:  
DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE  
*Rachel Donahue*

I need to hear the conebill again.  
Please tighten your lips and pull her song out,  
Like warm water; I can see the copihue,  
Climb the fence farther and farther from here,  
Please tell me how it droops; and weave the wild fuchsia  
Through your red knots of hair, smelling of the coast.

I am not a mitimae; they can send  
Away my fingers and my forehead,  
But my heart will always sing with the sedge wren.  
I am not a mitimae, but if I was  
I would sooner face the pit than cross the Maule.  
I would let the poison clot my veins,  
And fill my lungs: baking in the valley of the sun;  
Please let them put me on display.

I have thrown the rod down, and watched it,  
Glowing, repel. Never again will it sink  
The way it did in Cuzco Valley.  
This place is dead; I cannot live off  
Fossilized sunshine any longer.  
So please my dear, sing like the cliff swallow,  
Bathing through leaf-tinted light and diving upwards,  
Red breasted and ready to fight.

I wither here. Manco Copac would  
Turn his well cut jaw away from me.  
Chile is my blood, I feel it circulate in me,  
And pound through you; Sangre thick and hot.  
They tried to tear it out of us.

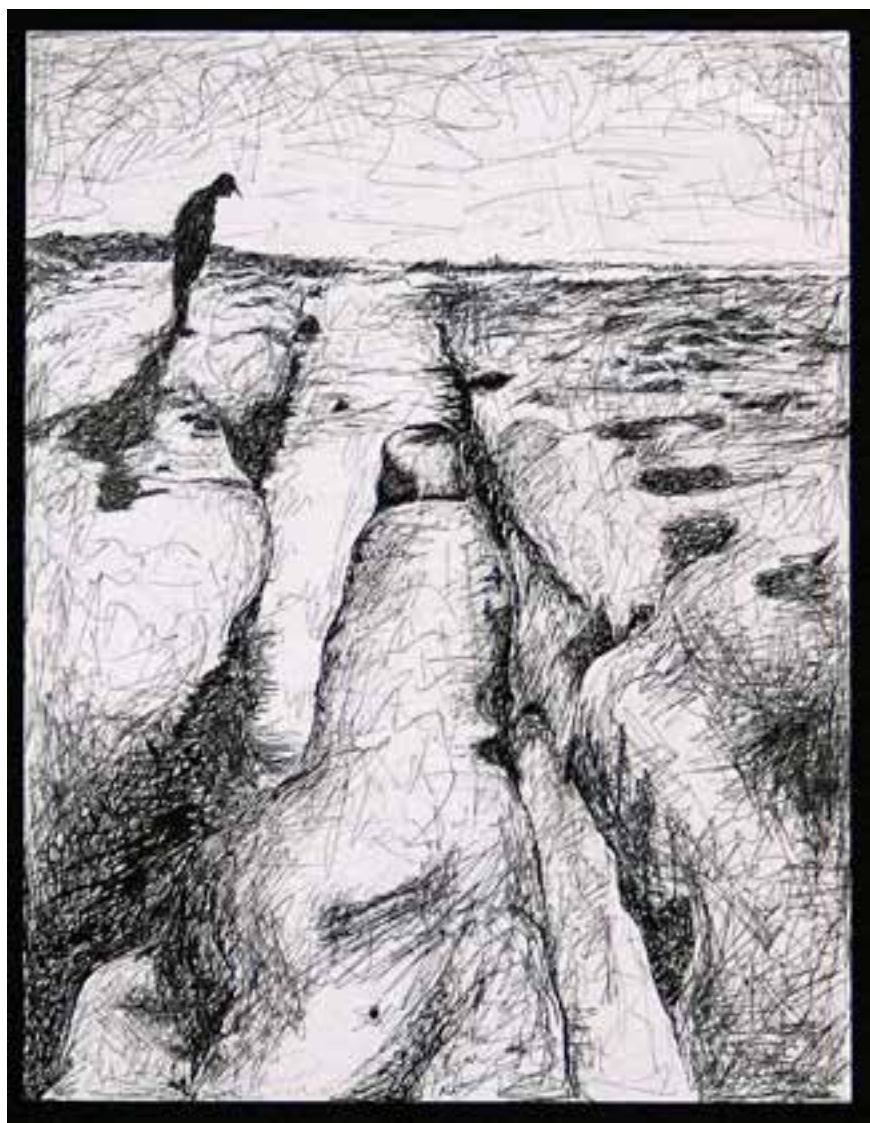
What I have sacrificed to keep them,  
Drinking in the sunshine they silently desire.  
My dear Matilde, what we could've had,  
If not for politics greedily suckling  
My left earlobe. I've longed for the  
Sticky smooth fingers, clinging on to my pant leg,  
Pushing their faces into my chest, mi pecho,  
And falling asleep, breath warm and milky  
On my cheek, mejillas soft as brown flour.  
He would have been my son, and you may

As well have spit on his tiny little feet.  
Or coaxed nightlock into his open mouth.  
He never even opened his crusty blue eyes.  
No, no I am not blameless. I've never touched  
Mexico's earth or your floor on Calle Rosa.

You have been drained of your heat, but it seeps from me  
Upon seeing you dance la cueca tonight.  
My constitution shivers like your garlic's  
Fragile spears. And the honesty spreads red,  
Across your breasts, boiling hives up through  
Your coffee cream skin. That sob echoed  
Through the streets of Nyon. It's shrill sent  
Shards of glass through gasoline puddles.  
But that Romanian woman made us,  
Cry from laughing onto our eleven fried  
Eggs, in our hotel room facing the sea.  
From this view, I could be tasting Chilean salt,  
Off your mumbling lips, spilling with Spanish  
Words and scented like Santiago tierra.

But our home is no longer ours,  
Videla acted as the Cayambi.  
My love, Chile ambushed its people, crouching  
Behind the spiny acacia trees,  
Only to rip the flesh off our bones, and lap up  
Pools of our fireblood; So hungry they  
Swallowed mouthfuls whole, whetting their appetite.  
I will not allow myself to be a sacrilege.  
They will not offer my heart, still beating in their hands,  
To their gods. Sangre will roll down their wrists,  
Hot and pure, but it will not be theirs to give away.  
Chile is being run by cannibals, and yet  
I cannot fight; no amount of chicha  
Could have quenched that blaze, and this wine,  
Warm and bitter, does nothing for me now.  
The response will be no less gory than  
Huanya's vengeful return. Chile will  
Become Lake Yahuatencocho, stewing  
With the limbless heads of the Cayambi.

I'd beg you to sing like the conebill,  
But every morning her song nudges me from my dreams,  
Only to open my eyes to see the world deaf.  
And I'd ask you to plant more honeysuckle,  
But I see it painted in watercolor,  
On the backs of my strained and veiny eyelids.



*Gillian Moore*

# DEAR DADDY

*Ché Ragland*

I'm not ready, but I don't have a choice. The monster takes control and I know who it really is behind the mask of your face. It's not you, it's the needle. The needle you poke yourself with four, five, six times every day. I wish I could just ask you, "Doesn't it hurt, Daddy?" I want to know: does it hurt you, like you hurt me? Is this how it hurt Mommy? I remember, Daddy. You think I'm too little to remember, but now I know what happened when your eyes got big and you closed the door with Mommy in the room with you. I know now. I'm not a little girl anymore. You make me do big girl things now, so that makes me a big girl. I get to be Mommy now. When you're finally finished for the night, I take care of you. I can't pick you up, but I can drag you to your room and tuck you in, just like Mommy used to do to me when you were done with her. She would lay in my bed with her arms around me, her tears making my hair stick together. I remember getting my favorite teddy and putting him between us, believing he could protect her from you. But I know now that it was me who protected her. I'm the one who comforted her bruised body and told her she was beautiful, when it should've been you. But where were you? Knocked out with your "clock" out. Isn't that what you real grownups say? You're never there any more, it's always the monster that looks like you, Daddy. Where were you when Mommy cut in the bathroom? Out. That was always your answer, like it made everything ok; well it doesn't. You left me to make the call to 911, to tell them that the monster made her do it. I couldn't say it was you, because it wasn't, and they'd take you, Daddy, and I'd be alone. I can't be alone, I'm still afraid of the dark. And even after I kept us together, I was still a young and foolish little girl, isn't that what you said? That I was good for nothing? But I'm a big girl, Daddy. So I blame the monster, because I know it is the monster, and you are not a monster, Daddy. You are not a monster. But I have to go now, Mommy keeps calling me. I have to go, I love you Daddy.

YUKIO MISHIMA:  
A DREAM REALIZED

*James Westbay*

What fools! I can't begin—raw minds of swine!  
For them a place not at but on the table.  
Do they clap for Susanoo and strip their  
Rotting flesh to hurl at the rising sun?  
They bow to Iesada shamelessly!  
Even asses know barren fields have no worth,  
And still I look out there and see desert.  
Beyond the balcony obtuse pigs play.  
Outside those doors, boars roam incautiously.  
But, in front of me, a blooming blossom,  
Sturdy branches, healthy grass, white pebbles.  
Here, though enclosed we escape pestilence,  
Here, high ceilings preserve the nation's rays.  
We stand alone, brave men among dimwits.

Morita, there's something 'bout your face—  
Have I just sunk into a warm river  
Where a sweaty slumber soon awaits me?  
I no longer picture their crooked snouts,  
Their oblong faces, their spineless physiques.  
This sword could split my frame in bulky chunks,  
And still my blood would course—an endless fall.  
Don't cower Morita, caress its hilt,  
A diamond panel with pearly inlay.  
Look—smoke rises from its edge; light glimmers.  
Tempered by three-hundred years, it ceases  
To fade with the trials of endless time,  
And when we are dust it still will be steel.  
Come—stroke it before it strokes you and learn  
The calm coolness of its ultimate touch.

Morita, your skin has begun to weep—  
Nerves, I presume? Excitement? Gloom?  
No need for remorse or despair my friend,  
You're fair like the knight who lieth slain,  
Surpassing Omi in body and mind,  
No need for gloves or buttons—smooth and dry  
Your radiance that of the palest Brit.  
Cover my eyes and you appear exposed,  
The familiar image, bound to a tree,  
Thongs choking your wrists, pierced at the side,  
A trapped gladiator with youthful flesh,  
Flames bursting from inside—pure ecstasy,  
A river rushes forth, my eyes shut no longer,  
But still I'm blinded, intoxicated  
By gleaming droplets—the eyes of dead fish.

Everything else seems insignificant.  
Young Ichiro, Noriko—who are they  
But strange children, unfamiliar faces?  
The tender woman in white—who is she  
But a widow with distant memories?  
Their hearts have such luster; mine is like night.  
No hero can be made in a shadow,  
And yet nobility fades in the light.  
A warrior dies on his greatest day,  
As a sly fox passing a hunter,  
As Oda approaching his golden throne.  
When the climax isn't clear we seek it,  
For a geezer makes a lousy samurai,  
And the geyser boils strongest at its end.

It's strange, but now I feel I own the world—  
An arousing shudder of strange delight—  
A new happiness with no need for words.  
Morita, I have one final request—  
Leave me not in agony too long.





*Rachel Smith*

## CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN: THE RITUAL OF BIRTH

*Lilli Biltucci*

Happy Man of happy men, the rightful  
 artist? I hope you laugh, cruelly, your face  
 the painting of visceral subjugation,  
 as I spread my womanhood with a firm  
 hand, a hand tensed with sexuality.  
 Do I need your thick capable hands to  
 rouse and fill my fertile chalice with worth?  
 Am I but a container? A vessel?  
 Now I laugh, already from my inner  
 chambers, a crowded space most functional,  
 springs a child, a sweet child just for you.  
 It kicks with words stinging, emasculating.

She is with me, in the folds of the clean  
white sheets, in the transformative actions  
of my body, as I ascend the table  
currently lacking phallic or yonic senses.  
We together will bestow upon it  
something higher, something as pure as the  
radiant face of the Great Mother herself,  
just as I saw her in my girlhood,  
hanging over the rooftops of Fox Chase.  
Kitch approaches, as he has for eighteen years,  
his tail gliding regally in his wake.  
I operate under the gentle glow  
in a numerical system, with Euclidean body.  
I look to the crowd. Raise your hands with me, orants!

This is for no man, a woman's journey.  
When will you happy men realize your own  
insolence? Women are the true artists,  
the rightful heirs to the shining throne.  
Queens, goddesses, muses, creatures of myth  
weave—no!—build, craft, construct, with body and  
blood, the ancient art, the origin of man.  
Our work is not done, nor is mine.  
But mine is ours, and ours is not thine.

Your arrogance—happiness!—could fill the world,  
making it pregnant with male jocularly.  
But I contest your position, Happy Man.  
How can you occupy, sword in hand,  
an earth decidedly woman? But now I see!  
It is subjective. You think you can tell me,  
protest me, colonize me, own me.  
Me, the dumb film makeress and dancer  
...yet the patriarchal lens is blinding.

And now I hear her, voice calm and undulating.  
And now she appears, but only to me,  
gradually inhabiting the sensual  
air of the gallery full of women,  
the legions of her holy army.  
Scaly, uncoiling, but not phallic, hands upturned,  
her apparition collapses into a mirror.

My ecstatic body is the channel for all life.  
Happy Man, what cold fear touches you over  
my total control of my sexuality?  
What primal urge drives you mad at my  
parturition of life upon my art?  
Are you unaware of a woman's true purpose?  
Everything—it's everything. Everywhere.

What are you afraid of? The chthonic grail is  
just as history's favorite anti-mother,  
Lady Macbeth, urged, to a regicidal husband,  
"look like the innocent flower!"  
Wait—and then, "But be the serpent under it."  
The mud dries upon my breasts, I am earth.  
And now from the rue emerges a serpent.

BECOMING CAROLEE:  
MY IDEOLOGICAL  
REBIRTH

*Lilli Biltucci*

History was made one January day when a motley group of teenage artists descended upon the Perez Art Museum Miami. That was the day I first heard about the polemic, enchanting Carolee Schneemann. We crowded around the pristine glass case that held two adjacent papers, one long and yellowing with typewritten words and the other ruled with a crude sketch in red marker. As our docent described the origins of these two papers, I felt my emotions soar. The most crucial documents of Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* performance piece hung before me. The ruled paper was the sketch that Carolee drew, in a moment of midnight inspiration, when she first dreamed up the *Interior Scroll* performance. And the other paper? That was the interior scroll itself.

Some boys in the group looked on with indifference, but every girl had wide eyes filled with fire. We gasped and whispered amongst each other. I turned to blue-haired Caitlyn at my right, "This is the most important thing in the world." She nodded feverishly. We were liberated. These frail old papers became my own Constitution, a woman's Declaration of Independence.

Learning to think like Carolee Schneemann left several pieces of her brain sealed inside my own. But those pieces are not unwelcome; they are benign and beautiful. When I chose Carolee at the outset of the assignment, I had an inkling that it would be personal, and I was right. Reading through each tangled, ridiculous metacognitive entry I notice a change. I begin outright with a crudely worded sentence about my failure to find a book that I am confident will be of no help to me. And I was still mad. But as I progress, the tone grows more wild, impassioned. One passage begins so eloquently, “I love Carolee and I wish she had birthed me from her magical [womb].” In early March, after reading most of *Women in Art* late into the night I was in frenzy. I laugh now as I read over the unbridled writing produced from powerful fatigue and inspiration.

Life bore on incessantly as I wrote my monologue, infusing my notebook with the events and emotions of the current time. It became a diurnal free writing exercise for me, and a documentation of my idiocy. I wrote about my struggle with shoveling snow in mid-February, expressing irritation at the way my shovel would catch on a rise in the slate walkway, stalling my progress and sounding the deep, hollow thud of plastic on stone. I concluded that entry with an ironic: “It’s probably a metaphor.” A string of expletives grace the a page of my notebook marking the day I spilled water in my backpack, soaking my precious laptop and sending me into a dramatic emotional frenzy. Both my computer and I made it out alive. In early February I went on the book hunt at the Nazareth library. I’d already been at the library for an hour when I noticed my shirt was inside out and proceeded to laugh for five minutes. I rose from my seat by a lunette window and scampered back into a silent, concealed corner of the stacks by the reference books, and reoriented myself. I almost hope someone saw me in the middle of the act just so they could have laughed with me.

Carolee used the word “visceral” frequently, but not in a way that would seem redundant. She was so deeply concerned with the female body and it’s connection to nature, everything taboo yet completely factual. It is as though she herself is the embodiment of concord with all things women. Unflinchingly veristic, her work is a tour-de-force of female sexuality and body functionality. I often mused in my metacognitive entries if I could ever ascend to her level of artistic brilliance. It was not a jealous musing, but a genuine awe. And then there was her feminism. It was a jubilant, uplifting experience that celebrated woman in all forms. To me it felt like the most pure manifestation of the movement, one that rejoiced in body and nature.

Amelioration would be an understatement to describe this journey. Reading Carolee's words and translating her brilliance strengthened me. She is like an omnipresent mother to me now. I reluctantly rejected a line of poetry for my monologue so I could appropriately conclude this piece instead. On the night I spent reading *Women in Art*, I took to my monologue in a burst of creativity. I wrote a line that was as much from Carolee's perspective as it was my own: I am a woman with two breasts for sustaining life, two hands for castrating my challengers, and one nail for everything else.



*Brigitte Gogos*

ZORA NEALE HURSTON:  
DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

*Lauren Ison*

Sassy Susie is dependable, isn't she?  
Gives me a little trouble now and then  
But not enough to warrant trading her in  
For anything with less personality.  
I'm just sorry you didn't join Susie and me sooner.  
'Cause even in all these lovely places,  
The air smells less sweet than in Eatonville,  
That paradise on Earth for Negroes.

No pretend-utopian island in the sea of whites,  
No whitish bourgeoisie blacks, nor Talented Tenth.  
Just the folk, dancing, laughing, and  
Telling lies on Joe Clarke's porch.  
Eating my gingerbread and buttermilk  
As quickly as you and Countee used to.  
Boy, I do miss the good old Harlem days!

But Langston, Eatonville is the real deal.  
I'm telling you, you must see it for yourself.  
Every time I go back I have fresh eyes:  
First, the small peepers of a newborn babe  
Just pulled from Mama's womb by a white man  
Walking by (or so the legend holds).  
Then the eyes of a motherless child  
With an itch to see the end of the Earth.

And now the eyes of an anthropologist—  
Bona fide. Educated as I am, finally,  
By the labor of my own hands with pen  
And paper, typewriter, and nail file too.  
But I'm still just Zora in Eatonville, daughter of Dorothy,  
God rest her soul, and Howard, God rest his too  
Before it goes wandering off again.

Darling, you know you're like a brother to me,  
The only family I really need.  
But it sure was good to see Bob and Ben again.  
Ever since that night when the clock turned and  
The pillow escaped, it hasn't felt right.  
I guess I do have a family now,  
But I don't feel any different.  
Herbert and I, we'll just keep on our own tracks,  
Usually parallel, rarely crossing.  
Please don't mention it to anyone,  
My name is still Zora Hurston, alright?  
But enough about me! Tell me, Langston,  
How are Dorothy and Helene? Countee and Claude?  
Poor Thurman, engaged to that Louise girl,  
I can't see how marriage will suit him  
Any better than it has suited me.

Just wait 'til they hear about our idea:  
It will be beautiful! Think about it,  
Black culture, presented in its rawest form—  
Alive and vibrant and moving on stage!  
No one can do that like you and I can.  
No one else can capture the life of a  
Turpentine worker from dawn to dusk.  
So many little bits and pieces  
Fragments of song and dance and verse  
From this gold mine of material.  
For art, if not for my dry manuscript.

Papa Franz wants more from me but it's hard  
When you come here speaking Bernardese and  
People talk to you about your mother.  
It's not like measuring heads in Harlem.  
When we get back to the Big Apple,  
After enjoying the creature comforts,  
I'm going to buckle down and write.  
I envy you your freedom from the pocketbook!  
Your Godmother is a generous ally,  
With luck, I'll be on her side soon too.  
I fancy myself a little psychic,  
And I have a good feeling about her.

Damn it! I think we punctured a tire.  
Good thing we're close to Columbia.  
Jesus, the money I spend on this car...

# METACOGNITIVE

*Lauren Ison*

Lounging on the beach, I savored the breeze coming off of the Gulf of Mexico and let the intense sunlight soak into my skin. The page-turner in my hands was not a thriller or romance but a thick biography on one Zora Neale Hurston, a woman who appreciated the culture, natural beauty, and history of Florida more deeply than I ever could. Indeed, it was a strange and happy coincidence that I was attempting to immerse myself in Zora's life while vacationing in her homeland. Florida was the state that inspired her literary work and reminded her of her idyllic childhood. It was the state where she collected anthropological material and lived the last years of her life. It was the state she (falsely) claimed as her birthplace, and it was the state where she died. Zora often said that the simplicity of Florida life cured her of her worries; while she loved the excitement and glamour of 1920s Harlem, she felt most at home in Eatonville.

I knew that the Florida I experienced as a tourist was vastly different from the one Zora knew and loved, yet my temporary setting did allow me to establish a bit of a connection to her. In Southern Florida, I saw some of the unique regionalism Zora was entranced by on her academic expeditions—gators, fried food, and all. I saw the trees and the ocean, and I felt the warm, soothing air. I hoped that when I went back to New York, Florida would linger in my memory and flavor my writing, just as Zora's memories of Eatonville influenced her.

Perhaps my trip down South also helps explain why I chose the moment I did for Zora's dramatic monologue, a moment not long after Zora's first return trip to Florida, where she reunited with some family members, got married, and visited Eatonville for the first time in over ten years. In the monologue I wrote, Zora's recent experiences in Florida are still fresh in her mind.

When I began my research, however, I was very uncertain about which moment I would choose. During my first two days in the school library, I focused on collecting as many sources as possible. Although I could not find any biographies on Zora—she's a little too obscure for that, I suppose—I found detailed entries about her in several reference books. I quickly realized that Zora was more complex than I initially expected. Even a cursory glance at her résumé shows that she was a maid, circus assistant,



anthropologist, folklorist, novelist, playwright, performer, professor, and librarian. As I read more about her, a few themes emerged: her blending of autobiography, folklore, anthropology, and fiction in her work; the formative influence of her childhood in the all-black town of Eatonville; and the mystery surrounding her personal and romantic life. She publicly changed her birth date by about a decade, married at least twice and probably three times, and was buried in an unmarked grave. She was a woman of many contradictions and enigmas.

As I researched Zora's life, I felt like a detective, stumbling upon clues—names of places or people—each of which led to new lines of research. I began to fill in the gaps in Zora's life, thanks to two thorough books I picked up at the Rochester Central Public Library. With its high ceiling and dark wood tables, I found the library a peaceful place for reading and research. Along with the biography I took on my trip to Florida, I checked out a book of letters, filled with Zora's own words and uncensored. Even Zora herself tended to alter the truth when consciously relaying her life, as she did in her autobiography, but the letters present her undiluted voice. For this reason, they were very valuable to me.

Zora's letters were expressive and often literary, if not always honest. As letter compiler Carla Kaplan notes in her introduction, Zora presented different personae to her many audiences. She likely saw this duplicity as necessary to pleasing her various patrons and friends. But while many of her letters are manipulative or contradictory, they present a fuller picture of the whole Zora when read together. They also reveal what Zora thought about on a daily basis, from financial matters to race relations. Still, she was and is a difficult woman to define.

To me, Zora's life consists of a series of episodes, some of which seem isolated from each other. To unify them, I first considered writing about a moment later in Zora's life. Rejected by publishers and publicly scandalized, she likely had ample time to reflect on the trajectory of her life. This certainly would have been an interesting era to explore, but in the end, it felt more natural to choose a moment near the beginning of Zora's career, when her future was full of possibilities. I understood the hopeful Zora better than I did the slightly embittered, older Zora.

As I read about Zora's complicated relationship with poet Langston Hughes, I began to think he would be an interesting person for her to address in the monologue. He was one of the few people Zora trusted in the 1920s. Because of his unique knowledge of Zora's history, I thought that Langston could effectively help me connect Zora's past to her future. I wanted Zora to speak to Langston candidly, so I knew the monologue needed to take place before their falling-out over the play *Mule Bone*.

I began composing my monologue by jotting down ideas as they came to me. Perhaps I was not so much composing as I was gathering my thoughts on paper—in free verse rather than blank. While my writing may have sounded more like prose to begin with, I soon found that poetry suited the nature of my research well. It allowed me to express what I wanted to without eliminating ambiguities or imposing a stilted structure. After writing a first draft, I had to do heavy revision, cutting and reworking lines, but the initial writing was enjoyable for me. After reading so many of Zora's letters, it was easy to hear her voice in my head as I wrote.

I also wanted to ensure that there was enough conflict and meaning in the monologue, since it occurred right before many of her major relationships encountered bumps in the road. Rather than focus on those later conflicts, I tried to hint at Zora's ideological idiosyncrasies—about Eatonville and Harlem, literature and anthropology, patronage and independence. She was pulled in many directions, and I wanted to make that clear in my monologue. While Zora and Langston really did get a flat tire near Columbia, I included that detail in my final stanza not just for historical accuracy but also to hint at the unseen dangers in Zora's bright future.



*Addy Schuetz*

FRANZ KAFKA:  
THE TOWER OF BABEL

*Adeeb Sheikh*

My dearest Max—look at this young lady,  
plain face, strong hands, dirty knees... Remember?  
This is the chambermaid I spoke about  
the other day, whilst about on our walk.  
She is Jewish and quiet—a good housewife,

someone to tend to domestic matters,  
although her conversation, physical  
or otherwise, leaves something desired.  
Far too often, I've no recourse through  
the long, sleepless night, but to pour out my passions  
on paper, or whatever may have me.  
I'm betrothed to her to be soon married—  
or so it's been planned, by some machination,  
the weird underpinning of society.

But enough about trivial matters.  
I recall you asked about my writing?  
My progress is... far less than substantial.  
Time seems scarce; I hardly have it any day,  
as this earthly slog hangs as another skin,  
rooted in mind and stymying motion

of hand and foot and mouth. "I must not write,"  
he says, but "learn the trade, support family."  
But when I do write... I am preoccupied.  
Every sheet now begins "Dear Milena."

My dear Max—I cannot see her again.  
What I feel, graced by that fury of hers,  
the wrath of her pen, the lash of her tongue,  
is described only as the insect's plight;  
shivering beneath her boot, it scuttles—  
I scuttle away, with fear my foul wake.

I beg you: understand and refrain from  
judgment. Fear and pettiness don't plague me,  
burden me with this decision. Rather,  
I very much want her to remain close;  
I still love her. But that woman across  
the room no longer responds, nor looks back,  
nor opens her door for this lonely one.

Without her, things return to their once-state.  
The world bears down, eager to swallow me,  
take me into these strange bowels and rend --  
rend the carapace and corrode the flesh.  
it's the slow digestion that whittles the man.  
it is foreign, yet all that I have known --  
from it, I have sprung understanding:  
loneliness is virtue -- isolation --  
the state of contemplation and knowing.  
Those few moments are sweetest, when I'm free  
to trail ink and spin words smooth and rough,  
and let my tongue hang, portal of free thought.

But what is "freedom" except a state of  
forever-entanglement, lost in her soul?  
For me, there is no more solace alone.  
Every night, every damnèd sleepless night,  
and every time these eyes obscure themselves,  
a blurry vision of her face awaits,  
and when I least want or expect, a hand  
plays itself gently along my shoulder  
and soft curves press themselves against my chest.  
I am aroused, beyond any hope of calm.  
I am prey once more to lust. And I like it.

You want to know what I write? Let me tell:

Behold! Here is the Tower of Babel --  
colossal spire... man's ambition to God.  
I have seen it and traced the slow steps down,  
each foot dragging through shovelled earth and clay.  
The toiling millions looked on, unaware,  
as I took respite from mankind's work.  
And in the shadow of the monolith --  
black, unfinished, ever pointing to Heaven --  
I dared to gaze upon humanity:  
the naked masses climbing and tumbling,  
fighting for trifles. The ziggurat,  
grand as all hell and propped against the sky,  
tries forever to consume the Heavens,  
but to no avail. Man cannot end it --

Far too much has been given already.  
Nor can he continue: his thoughts are ruled  
by the future, of pleasure and pain.  
So the Tower stands, testament to futility.  
So they work forever, insincerely.

What would you have me do? What is "noble?"  
It is for the good of all to collapse  
the Tower of Babel upon my head.  
I have no recourse but to drop my fist  
five times onto the tower, raise all hell,  
and climb from the rubble... or not at all.  
Milena can be happy without me  
and I can finally move forward. Right, Max?

Max, did I ever tell you the maid's name?

# EIN UNGEZIEFER ERWACHTE

*Adeeb Sheikh*

Picking Kafka was unintentional on my part. The day our monologue subjects were due, I had only a blank sheet with note to myself scrawled in the margin: “Be *original*.” It wasn’t as if I hadn’t tried; I put half an hour into staring at that blank sheet -- half an hour and I still had a whopping nothing. With only a few minutes left to decide, I put my pen to paper and scribbled down a short list of names -- the last of which was Franz Kafka. He was almost an after-thought -- a mere shade, that man who wrote *The Metamorphosis*, which I had half-read so long ago. Who was he? I didn’t know and in that moment, I didn’t particularly care. Instead, with furrowed brow, I scrutinized my list, trying to strike off names... but each name struck off presented a lost opportunity for some experience -- it just wasn’t a decision *I* could consciously make. (That is, to deprive myself of the experience of writing for one person over another was unacceptable.) Not wanting to resort to eeny-meeny-miney-moe, I leaned over to the next seat.

“Hey Eli... Who should I pick off this list?” After berating me for my tardiness in selection, he looked at the list and then paused for a moment.

“Kafka. Interesting writer, great themes, probably not over-selected.” And that was that.

As I endeavoured to research, I first sought literary analyses of Kafka’s work, particularly *The Metamorphosis* (arguably Kafka’s most famous piece), because I wanted my monologue to be thorough and authentic and to sound as if it was Kafka speaking. (Although, realistically, I doubt Kafka would ordain to write in meter or poetry -- he was a prose writer, through and through.) Of course, I soon realized that it would likely be impossible to imitate Kafka’s style down to a letter; his writing often utilized the variable syntax apparent in German, to create sentences that didn’t translate into grammatically correct English. Furthermore, the disconnect between English and German vocabularies left something to be desired when writing Kafka in English. (For example, *ungeziefer* is like a bug... but it has an almost sinister connotation, unlike any direct translation.) Temporarily set back, I chose to focus subsequent days on amassing biographical information about Kafka.

Obtaining the information was the easy part; there's no dearth of literature about Kafka the man. Where I found difficulty were the actual events of his life. Kafka led, by all accounts, a rather ordinary life. He went to college, had ongoing disputes with his father, worked at a job he didn't like, and eventually succumbed to tuberculosis. Honestly, I had kind of banked on Kafka living some sort of strange or weird life; instead, it seemed like the strangeness of his writing was based less on experience and more out of his insecurity and distaste for modern society.

There was one exception to this: Kafka's love life. He was something of a womanizer... Yet he seemed to fear really, very strong connection with the women around him. It led to interesting moments, where I felt Kafka as a person felt powerless to take what he really wanted from the world. Even so, it wasn't easy to get riled up; I had only vague intimations about the moment I had picked -- the moment when Kafka breaks it off with the love-of-his-life, Milena Jesenska. It was in the weeks after he had proposed to her, only to be shot down because Milena did not want to leave her current husband. Dejected, Kafka continued the illicit relationship for several weeks, before breaking it off with Milena and confiding in his best friend, Max Brod, that he never wanted to see her again, a decision apparently born out of his despair.

Then there was a sudden turn of events in my own life: I gained my own Milena. The experience was wholly depressing and painful to think about -- and for the first time, I wondered how Kafka had experienced it all. It became personally important to me to find out and to complete this monologue.

I rifled through old letters and short stories trying to capture Kafka's thoughts on the entire affair. While I didn't always gain the insight I wanted into his thoughts, I learned the subtleties and nuances of his letter-writing style. Often times, he was formal and stuck to his concrete language -- except in moments of passion. Those rare moments, when he was stirred beyond the realm of normal emotion, he drew out elaborate metaphors, detailing his situation. With this in mind, I redoubled my efforts upon his short stories, searching for some motif in those written around his falling out with Milena. I found "The City Coat of Arms."

It's barely a short story -- a little more than a page and no clear-cut, definite characters. But within that short space, he describes the construction of the Tower of Babel -- how it started out as a grand project, but the

inherent differences of cultures and the constant struggle for mere trifles in the city that sprung around the tower stymied construction. He goes on to say that the people never tried too hard to build, because they always figured the future would have *better* techniques and that everything they did was for naught -- but they refused to stop building too. In their eyes, too much was given already to simply stop. So the people lived in their city around the tower... until the hand of God lay down five times upon the tower and brought it upon their heads.

Reading between the lines -- perhaps even stretching plausible symbolism to its limits -- this short story is about insincerity in any sort of project -- but (to me and maybe even Kafka) especially the work involved in interpersonal relationships. Milena and Kafka continued because that's how it had been; they had no desire to disrupt what had otherwise been a peaceful coexistence. But at the same time, their relationship was stagnant; Kafka wanted Milena as a whole, but Milena was unwilling. So Kafka, rather than let this painful charade continue, broke it off; it's a sentiment that I had come to understand well in the past weeks.

With this in mind, I started writing. Like always, I painted in broad strokes, less adept with a fine-tipped brush; my words were concrete and less "poetic" -- the diction not so carefully or skillfully handled as I know others would have done. But the meter and rhythm weren't terrible. Don't get me wrong, I'm not great at iambic pentameter -- more often than not, I just enforce ten syllables to a line, because in my mind, that's approximately iambic pentameter. However, I felt like a lot of what was said broke naturally into the lines, like, except in some few places, the meter agreed very well with what was being said, that there was little editing to be done. I guess my previous predilection for Shakespearean sonnets was finally manifesting itself in some useful form.

I hear other people had difficulty writing, but writing was never the difficulty for me. I knew what I had to write, what themes I had to address and the Kafka-esque metaphors to suit them. After that, it was a matter of ordering stanzas and creating context. No, my difficulties lay in what I felt was a failure to communicate Kafka himself; his stories get weird, surreal, and almost unintelligible -- all with the intent of communicating something about how Kafka himself felt. But my writing -- it became unclear and I never had quite the imagination to write Kafka as he would have done; my situations were firmly grounded in reality -- nothing so weird or sinister as the author himself might have seen.

My last struggle with this came on the final night of writing. I had finished, satisfactorily -- I had certainly met all the criteria. But it lacked a character, it didn't communicate the feelings that I wanted as clearly or as



beautifully as it could. So, at 2 AM, while making quesadillas and friends with ants, I lamented my failures as a writer. But then I rationalized it: perhaps, while I failed to truly convey Kafka, I discovered something else. Kafka was wrong in how he handled the situation -- surely there must have been something that could have been done other than simply cutting all ties. Maybe I'm just naive, but when you have a connection that strong with someone, it should be kept safe, something precious and forever valued.



*Ella Middleton*

MARTHA GRAHAM:  
LAST DANCE

*Rachel Kucharski*

Oh, come Ron, see that misplaced ankle there?  
That's two times now she's disrespected me.  
I ache for her replaced with one I trust,  
the only other made for this and yet...  
my make has failed me.

My bones press hard against my wrinkled skin,  
itching to set free my restless spirit.  
Archaic? Yes, indeed, that's true. But hours?  
No! Years it takes to cripple a dancer.  
A finger here, a shoulder next... at last,  
My truest vessel turned against me.

In younger autumns, I am fresh from fields.  
Sweet grass grabs my toes and love overgrows  
strong, passionate, boundless love in one  
man it stands like the cross near Helen now.  
Full of grace, but far from saving-  
he flickers, he's fleeting... gone.

You see, it was not a simple plié  
that cracked the bones in this old damned knee.  
It was the weight of *his* love that broke me.  
I feared, in some strange way, the European stage,  
but when I went, I went for him alone.  
And when he left, he left me all alone.  
Now in these empty, hungry hours I know,  
deep darkness is the miracle of struggle.

So leave me to rot and wither like the  
gin soaked old woman that I am. Douse me  
once again in that primal poison and  
set my body up in flames! And maybe  
then my blood will run into the eternal  
stream of all my ancestors before me  
and my mind may finally be free!

Dear Ron, don't look at me that way. Listen!  
Can you hear the winds that come from Santa Fe?  
That lonely refuge in my time of need.  
Can't you hear the wolves cry hungrily  
to a black sky that rips my heart to shreds?  
Or maybe the origins are all wrong.  
They could blow from a bleak, lifeless city,  
veiled in soot and covered in illness,  
where Lizzie still scrubs our fine white dresses.  
Or it has traveled from oceans away.  
Sri Lanka, perhaps, is calling me home-  
calling me back to the earth and the stone.  
"Martha!" It says, "Martha, your time has come!"  
And I'll rejoice as nature takes me in  
to its bosom and says, "You've done enough."

Reviews will not be kind tomorrow, Ron.  
It lacks the vigor of *Clytemnestra*,  
Perhaps my last great work I give the world.  
I'm tired now. I'm so very tired.  
Yet the audience demands to see me.  
After darkness falls on Helen's form,  
applause will come as if that is the end.  
They don't know the secret, Ron. It never ends.  
When the curtain falls, and death prevails-  
not even then, will the cycle end.

## METACOGNITIVE

*Rachel Kucharski*

"Five, six seven, eight!" My feet skim the floor as I glide into a grande jete and wildly throw my arms out to the side. It's an ugly display, but Julie, my instructor, smiles when I land. "That's what I want to see!" If there's one thing I have learned in my three years at this studio, it is that modern dance is extremely difficult. It takes the perfect balance of free movement and steady control to truly master the style. And making my rigid, ballet-trained body move with reckless abandon was a feat in itself. The first thing I learned was the art of breathing: the ability to center yourself with simple yet beautiful patterns of contract-and-release. Then I

learned the more difficult moves that were so foreign to me, yet so striking when I did them correctly. But who was the genius that created all of this? The name Martha Graham moves like a whisper through our studio as we struggle to master a triplet-jump combination. I had never heard of the name when I first started, and when I asked Julie, she gasped as if I had just said something blasphemous. “You don’t know who Martha Graham is?” she said, shocked. A few quick google searches told me that she was an iconic dancer of her time but the words carried little meaning for me. This research project was my opportunity to delve into this woman’s life and to discover how she created this beautiful living art. In a way, researching her style helped me find my own.

Excited as I was to jump into the project, my research didn’t exactly start off with a bang. I convinced my friend to drive me to the Nazareth library on a Friday afternoon so that I could check out books. When I got there and I found out it costs five dollars to get a library card from the school, I decided it would be cheaper and easier to check out books from the Rochester Public Library. But after getting lost in the city, trying and failing to parallel park, and finally paying seven dollars for regular parking (not to mention paying for the gas it took to get there), I realized I have very poor judgment when it comes to economic decisions. That day also happened to be blistering cold. Walking up the bridge by the river was like walking through an icy wind tunnel. Of course, we entered the wrong building and had to walk through the connecting tunnel where the “teen lounge” is located. “Ow, Ow!” we heard behind us as we walked past a table of rowdy, pubescent boys. We ignored them and finally made it to the arts section where I checked out five heavy books on Martha Graham. Walking back through the teen lounge, we heard more catcalling. At that point, I was exhausted from the long school day, my fingers were freezing from being outside, my arms ached from carrying my stack of books, and I was simply not in the mood. I whipped my head around, stomped over to them, dropped my books on their table, and asked, “Was there something you wanted to say to me and my friend?” I’ve never seen three teenage boys go silent so fast.

Compared to my epic library experience, the rest of my research was quiet and uneventful. Instead, I had a collection of small revelations and reflective moments that appear as little phrases and half-finished thoughts in my notebook. My most rewarding source was definitely Martha’s autobiography, *Blood Memory*. The more I read, the more I felt like I knew her. I could feel her intense spirituality and stubborn energy in her writing. It was my most useful tool in developing a voice for my poem. The book also included some very wise and elegant quotes that I tried to incorporate into my piece.

I chose my specific moment in the first stages of my research. I knew I wanted to do the delicate time between her last performance and her suicide attempt, when I felt she was most vulnerable. But then I got to know her, and I became emotionally attached to her as a person. Writing about that moment proved more difficult than I thought it would be. It was mentally draining to become that downtrodden, nostalgic Martha, especially when I knew that she was so much more than that. Looking back, I almost wish I could do another piece, after she had recovered from her depression and alcoholism, when she burst back onto the dance scene with all of the vivacity and energy of her younger years.

As I researched Martha, I came across little things that I recognized from my own modern class. When I finally sat down and watched *Appalachian Spring*, I saw that we use some of her moves in our routines. I remember feeling moved, as if I too was carrying on her legacy in some way, even as an inexperienced dancer at a small studio in Victor, New York. In this way, Martha Graham's work is beyond art. It is a living, breathing, growing style that will continue for generations. She is still creating, even in death, with each new modern dance performance. I understand now why Julie gasped when I told her I didn't know Martha Graham; it was because it wasn't true. I knew her in every arched release, and every flexed foot turn, and every breath I took when I stepped on stage and started to dance.



Ryan Gross



INGMAR BERGMAN:  
THE TRILOGY OF FAITH:  
FAMILIAL AFTERMATH

*Indiana Brown*

You see, I've come to talk with you again.  
Breaking my vow like a pornographic monk,  
I cannot bear to hear your stern eyes and  
distant, abrasive criticisms flicker,  
whispering beneath my pillow  
when I'm alone in my Gothenburg flat.  
The last thing I want is to write you off like a deadly sin  
wordlessly, in my little black book.

Mother, there you are – as beautiful as ever.

Do not be fooled, I don't arrive swaddled  
in a worn white flag, although your Christian  
moral-infused milk may still drip from my  
searing stigmata, I still whip my ribs with the same  
flagellant coils of questions, but Father, why,  
why did not my faith mingle with my  
age? Was it your razor toothed dwarf  
biding its voracious time in the wardrobe  
while you would bruise my hand the mauve of sins?  
The reluctant, arid kiss on your vengeful hand  
hurt worse than the weapon with which you inflicted my penance.

Mother, perhaps my innocence fell prey to him  
the doctor who swindled you of tenderness for  
the sake of making sure I 'turn out right'.  
Give a boy affection and he might not  
become a man, dole out frigid glances  
and he might not have a god. A prescribed folly.

Oh, no, I see the delight of irony  
bubbling in your stare, justice rimmed,  
smelted with bitter delight, Poor Ernst!  
Poor Ernst, and his corrupted childhood,  
yet my littlest of the litter  
sees me once a year, between despondent  
existentialities on tape.  
Sure, I'll be the first to admit, I just haven't the time.  
Children crawling up my legs with the  
ferocity of eight-legged cretins,  
my eyes are locked in hindsight, retrospect,  
back onto my own demeaning youth.  
I know my children are soggy, misshapen clay,  
drying unfinished because I'm using the wheel  
to set my darling magic lantern on.

I wonder, is my return a *schnapsidee*?  
But there are some truths that need to seep out.  
Whether I like it or not, I heard grandma's  
censoring galoshes squish and mute my  
labored breathing as I reached for that  
clammy, pallid, tingling lump of flesh.  
Sophiahemmet birthed my favorite  
apocrypha, just too startlingly  
honest to be a concrete memory.

I am the necromancer, I have  
seen the sex of death. Fitting, of course,  
for the boy nourished with prenatal  
influenza and the sight of  
pure hatred in the crimson swastikas  
those local boys basted upon  
that man's house like oil on a fat duck.

I won't have my tongue cut out, like  
my first bewildered Antonius Block,  
nor silenced with denial like fervent  
Karin on the coast of Fårö (yes, Mother,  
you're my eponymous schizophrenic).  
The words dripping from my lips may be

poison to your eardrums, but you must  
understand the roots of my doldrums.  
I cannot continue this nihilistic feud,  
but I'm not here to deliver apologies.  
God was no more a father to me  
than you, Erik. By a winter's light,  
I renounce my faith today, as well as  
My ties to you as a son – I've no remorse  
for striking you. None at all. *Hej då*.

Mother, dear, sweet mother, I advise  
departure from this icy minister.  
Flee the lecherous arachnid that  
is your husband's deity. Go.  
You're too sublime to stay in this infection  
you call a marriage. I forgive you for  
your mistakes, but without the bruises.  
It's better that way. Untouched knuckles,  
a clean break. Say hello to Dag for me.  
I hope he's realized it by now, our little socialist:  
There's no führer, no father, and there's certainly no god.

## METACOGNITIVE

*Indiana Brown*

At the start of the assignment, I was quite conflicted – do I want to research one of my favorite directors, the pensive and mysterious Ingmar Bergman, or cover the infamous author of *Lolita*, Vladimir Nabokov? A quick skim through their Wikipedia pages proved each to be fascinating in their own ways. Nabokov was apparently a lepidopterist, a synesthete, and had a brother who died in a concentration camp. Bergman had five marriages and countless girlfriends, a short-lived but powerful admiration for Nazism and Adolf Hitler, and a cold, conservative father who served as a Lutheran minister. Each man had a fascinating backstory to delve into, but my heart went with the latter – something about Bergman's combination of a heavily Christian background and the perpetual theme of religious questioning in his movies sparked an interest in me.



At a pre-research point, all I knew about Bergman was his Swedish nationality and the evident atheism, or at the very least agnosticism, in his movies. I've seen *The Seventh Seal*, *Through a Glass Darkly*, *Wild Strawberries* and *The Virgin Spring* – the first two, my favorites, are deeply entrenched in the question of God's existence, and exhibit remarkable performances by the peculiarly handsome Max von Sydow. I decided I needed to include some allusions and references to these works of cinematic art in my monologue, as they left a permanent imprint in my mind and I hoped to cover Bergman's wavering faith in my piece.

The easiest research to do, of course, was the least helpful – internet articles only provided me with dates, awards, film analysis and painfully unbiased facts. I had to order a couple thick biographies from the local library and pore through those to really get to the gory details of his childhood and personal life. After a number of hours of reading and taking meticulous notes on these books, I had a few striking moments I could write about.

First I considered the time when Bergman's brother and some neighbor kids vandalized the summer home of a neighbor, a Jewish director, by painting red swastikas all over it. Bergman was allegedly too cowardly to speak up or do anything about it as he watched it happened, and he says he remembers this moment vividly. Another possibility was an interaction between him and one of his many wives at the death of a marriage, but it became clear that by a certain point, failed relationships became common with him, and his family was not really of huge significance to him. I could have chosen the moment he allegedly lost his faith, at age 8, but I couldn't find what exactly happened to cause this renouncement. A final option was a fierce argument he had with his parents when he was a young adult, in which he hit his father and pushed away his mother and stormed out of the house, never to spend a night there with them again.

Ultimately, I made up a fictional moment which included references to all of these other events, in which Bergman unexpectedly drops in on his parents to explain his loss of faith, some of the choices he's made and cut off ties with his father. I didn't include much of a focus on the setting, but in my mind it's clear he's in his parents' home, perhaps in the kitchen, sitting down at a table with his father when his mother walks in to join the conversation. I tried my best to convey a sense of powerful resentment of his father, and stinging mixed feelings about his mother. Bergman truly adored her, though she was often cold to him, and constantly sought to get his fill of her love during his childhood, which he never fully received.

For me, the most challenging part was getting the iambic pentameter 100% right – I know I faltered in correcting it in at least a few lines for the sake of using the best words possible and visually pleasing line breaks. I feel confident that my tone is palpable and clear, Bergman’s various emotions being far from vague, and there’s plenty of sensory imagery and specific details from his life. I hope my listeners enjoy the cryptic but ideally vivid imagery of the galoshes, his experience at Sophiahemmet, and spider references. I’m sure if anyone who reads this has seen *The Seventh Seal* and/or *Through a Glass Darkly*, a couple of the lines will make a bit more sense, but whether they know who Ingmar Bergman is or not, the most important takeaway is the clarity of his anguish over his parents and his childhood.



*Addy Schuetz*

# CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Ryan Alaimo

## ACT 1, SCENE 1

*It's 1990 in the Philadelphia Museum of Art on a cloudy October day. A man, with his back turned, so that only the wall can see his face. He stands staring at a painting of a small girl, alone, on a merry go round. One hand is holding his suit over his shoulder, hung on his index finger, and the other is in his pocket. His white shirt needs an iron and his tie is loosened with a sloppy knot. The square room has a piece of art on each of its white walls. Where the fourth wall should be, there is an opening to a large hallway. No one is in the room with him. He breathes heavily as if he was sleeping.*

*WARREN HOLM is an art critic who graduated from a small college in Maine. He judges art from all over the United States, but concentrates with art in museums on the east coast. He doesn't talk with his family anymore. He cut himself off from his parents, younger brother and other relatives. His younger brother, Roger, is in his twenties now, while Warren is 38. Roger is favored by their parents because of his success as a pediatrician. Warren's parents wanted him to be a lawyer ever since he was little. They pushed him throughout his high school career to only work for law school, so he could fulfill their dream. He ended up dropping out of law school in his second year after finding out his brother's future. His younger brother got a scholarship to Brown and would be moving onto medical school after. His parents stopped talking to him and he moved to Maine. He enrolled into a small college with the motive to become an art critic. He thought anyone could criticize art and that it would be better than becoming a lawyer. He has always loved going to art museums and looking at all the different forms of art. Always judging whether it was good or bad. He constantly thought of the art as bad or good depending on whether he said to himself, "the brain damaged could do this blind-folded". Warren is cynical and cocky when it comes to his job. Warren became the best art critic in the northeast United States, and he knows it. Many artists fear his opinion and what he could do to their reputation. Warren is normally quiet, but when he speaks, people listen. For once in his life, people listen.*

*SKYLAR SHEA lived in a suburban town outside of Philadelphia. She has been painting since she was three. Her mother died when she was a baby, and her father got re-married to a jeweler. She hated her step mother, because her step-mother kept her from painting and would influence Skylar's father to also keep her from becoming an artist. Skylar is a strong, independent woman who doesn't hesitate to tell her opinion. She has always been like this. Skylar ran away from home after dropping out of high school in her junior year. She started performing street art in downtown Philadelphia*

*for money and ended up actually making some. It was enough to pay for rent and food. Two years later, a small museum offered to put two of her pieces in an exhibit. She was excited for the large sum of money, but was happier about the fact that her art was now out there in the real world. Soon enough, her name and work got out into the public, and many people wanted her paintings. She got paid to paint murals in the city, she painted for museums and schools, and eventually started her own business. Now, the people of Philadelphia paid her to paint pieces for their walls. Skylar's popularity kept growing all along the east coast. Critics couldn't seem to get the best of her. If a critic found something they didn't like in her paintings, their negative thoughts would be countered by something they did like. If they publicly criticized her paintings, she would send them improved copies of the piece with the suggested changes.*

## WARREN

*Bowing his head, as if talking to the floor with an upbeat sounding tone which wasn't meant to sound sarcastic.*

*Living the dream.*

*Raising his head to squint at the painting.*

You know mom, this is what I really wanted to do. Not any of that lawyer crap. That job doesn't even make any sense. People defending the guilty and putting the innocent in jail.

*Softly under his breath as he chuckles to himself.*

What a joke.

*Looking up at the painting with one arm outstretched in a questioning manner. With intensity as if the painting he was talking to, was real.*

I can't believe you wanted me to do that for a living. You can't even swat a damn fly, and you want me to defend murderers? What were you thinking?  
*Slowly with an edge in his tone.*

You know, you don't have to save lives to be happy with your job. You don't need that to be happy with your life. Everyone sees me differently now.

*Smiling to the painting.*

Man, if you could see. If you could see what I have become, you wouldn't be so resentful of what I left to do. There actually is good money here and I didn't need to be in school for ten years to get here.

*He turns to look around the room.*

Sometimes, I think this job is just too easy with all these artists around. I get paid to tell these snobs around here the truth; that they need a new profession.

*He burps inside his mouth.*

These stuck up artists think they're above it all. I am always happy to ruin their day. Thankfully we have security during these critiques, because I don't think I would have any teeth or a straight nose. They don't scare me though. They are too afraid of ruining their reputation, I guess. It's not that good of a reputation to start out with, but I can't blame them.

*With a look of slight pity.*

They really have nothing else to do. They are just, stuck.

*Pulls out canteen.*

At least I can get drunk and still ace this job.

*Takes a drink as a woman steps up next to him without turning to look at him.*

SKYLAR

*With a witty tone.*

I see you are still drinking in museums. I thought you, maybe, learned your lesson the last couple of times.

WARREN

*Taking another sip.*

I see the smoking hasn't been helping with hiding your age.

SKYLAR

*Raising her brow.*

I see the alcohol hasn't been helping with getting rid of that beer belly of yours. When's the baby due?

WARREN

*Ignoring her comment while still squinting at the painting.*

What happened to your "expedition"? Aren't you supposed to be in Africa right now?

*Mockingly.*

Shouldn't you be saving all those children from starvation and AIDS with your paintings?

SKYLAR

*Sternly and somewhat offended, but trying not to show it.*

I was. For two months and now I am back. Have you really been in your hole for that long?

WARREN

*Sarcastically.*

Well, welcome back. Catch any of that malaria?

SKYLAR

*Sneering.*

You would like that.

*Sighing.*

Sometimes I believe you wish I would turn over and die. I can tell that you imagine that from time to time. It is never a vulgar or violent death in your mind.

*Tilts her head.*

No. Not violent, but peaceful. Like a last breathe during my sleep.

WARREN

*With a confused tone and squished face in disgust.*

I don't know about that. How the hell did you become telepathic all of a sudden?

*Shaking his head.*

You might think you are "all that", but I know you can't read minds. I don't think Africa changed you *that* much.

SKYLAR

*Now squinting at the painting.*

Well, I know that I make you miserable.

*Smiling wickedly.*

If I was dead, who would be there to ruin you?

*Now turned, smiling, at Warren as he continues to stare at the painting.*

That is why I can't die. I have to be alive for you, sorry to disappoint.

WARREN

*Rolling his eyes.*

You are a psychopath. Luckily, I have taught myself to tune out all your childish games.

*Slowly, saying each word sharply.*

So, save it.

SKYLAR

*Turning back to the painting, snickering.*

Oh, warren I missed this; our little bickering. You are so funny when you are trying to defend yourself.

WARREN

*Biting his lip, while still staring towards the painting.*

I came to the museum to find peace and quiet. You are stopping that from happening, so why don't you hop back onto your broomstick and fly back to your candy house in the forest.

SKYLAR

*Smirking straight at Warren.*

That's cute.

*With a mocking "baby voice".*

You can't hurt me with your silly little words, "Warr-Warr".

*With a more serious, but quieter tone.*

You know why I bother you? Because you are weak, Warren. You are spineless, manipulative and self-centered. You take my hits and even though you think you can just brush them off each time, I know my hits slowly eat at your insides. They will continue to eat your insides till you are nothing.

*Looking back at the painting.*

All these other artists are afraid of you. Why? What do they have to fear?

*Somewhat angrily.*

You are nothing to me. If anyone is afraid, I would think it is you. I know that I constantly intimidate you. I can see it in your face when you critique my work. It is a face of astonishment. You can't fool me, Mr. Holm. I can tell that you are pleased with my artwork, yet you cannot admit it.

*Tilting her head in question, facing Warren.*

What are you afraid of?

*Looking back to the painting after realizing that Warren will not answer.*

You shouldn't be so opinionated all the time. I know it is your job, but what I meant is that just because your job gives you the right to be judgmental, doesn't mean that you should be like that outside of your work.

*Raising her brow with a face of concern and disappointment.*

You think that artists are such snobs, but they only seem that way to you because you treat them like that. Maybe, you should consider treating some of these people with the respect you would want, if you were painting for your life.

*She turns back to the painting.*

Try living in our shoes for a day and you will see. Trust me. Yes, I made the choice to drop out of college, but I did it impulsively to follow my dream. I am doing something I enjoy and that I am good at, but I can't say the same for you.

*Slowly turning towards Warren with a drawn out tone.*

I know you are good at what you do, but do you enjoy it?

WARREN

Why are you still here? Don't you have something to do? Somewhere to be? I am sure that you could find literally anything to do that it is better than standing next to me.

SKYLAR

*Annoyed.*

Yes, you are right. I do have somewhere to be. Just thought I could stop by to talk awhile before my art show you are critiquing tomorrow.

WARREN

*His whiskey goes down the wrong pipe and he is coughing.*

Tomorrow? Your show? It is tomorrow? Are you sure?

SKYLAR

*Patronizingly.*

Yes. I arranged the time because I was busy all the other days. Pay attention, Warren. It is part of your problem.

WARREN

*Rolling his eyes.*

Whatever.

*With evident sarcasm.*

Well, then I guess I will be looking forward to seeing what beautiful creation you have concocted.



SKYLAR

*Starting to turn away to walk out of the room.*

Yes. You are going to love it, because I know you love my art. You won't be able to hide it this time, Holm.

*Walking away, not looking at him.*

Don't be stubborn. It drives people away. Maybe that is why your parents don't talk to you anymore.

WARREN

*Spinning around with spontaneous rage.*

You don't know my life!

SKYLAR

*Stopping and turning to see his face.*

Shut up Mr. Holm!

*Smiling.*

You are in a museum and people are trying to find peace and quiet. I know about your life Warren. Don't think I am stupid.

*Smiling while walking away, knowing that Warren will take a drink as he watches her leave.*

SCENE 2

*That night, Warren is sitting at a table in the new restaurant downtown, Baker's. He has been staring at the menu for thirty minutes, not reading, but just staring. It is a small restaurant. There is low lighting, jazz music playing softly, and world renowned paintings on the wall. There is a couple sitting in the corner booth. They are sitting on the same side of the booth and the boy has both his arms around the girl. There is a family sitting behind Warren at a table. A mother, father and two rowdy kids. The mother constantly has to tell them to settle down. The father sits on the hard chair, leaning back and rubbing his temples. Across from Warren sits a man, doing his work as he eats. He looks like a graduate student studying economics or business. He rummages through all the pages on the table. They cover the table, so he cannot even see the mahogany wood table top. Warren continues to stare at the menu as he tunes out all that surrounds him.*

WAITRESS

*Walking over, putting her hand on her hip and sighing.*

Sir, have you figured out what you want to order? It has been thirty minutes since I gave you this menu.

WARREN

*Still staring at the menu and drawing out his words.*

Um, could you give me another five minutes? I think I will know what I want by then. Come back then.

WAITRESS

*Rolling her eyes, sighing with annoyance. She looks at her watch and leaves.*

WARREN

*Shaking his head and raising his brow.*

Whatever. She obviously won't be getting a large tip.

*Putting the menu down and looking around the restaurant. He spots the couple in the booth and bites his lip.*

Well, they won't be lasting. You can tell that he is way too into her. Her body is turned away from him.

*With a look of pity and quietly to himself, but talking as if he was having a conversation with the boy.*

She doesn't want you, man. Find someone else that will appreciate your clinginess. Ditch her.

*Turning behind him to look at the family behind him. He chuckles.*

No comment.

*He turns back to the table and points behind him with his thumb.*

Am I right?

*No one sits at the table, but he continues to talk, like there is someone there. He looks across the room, to the busy man sitting at the small table that is covered with papers.*

Now your turn, Mr. Business.

*He rubs his hands together, looking like a villain from an old corny film.*

I mean, I shouldn't because it is so easy. Too easy. I can't resist though.

You obviously made a bad life decision in picking this occupation, my friend.

*Holding his flat, open hand out with his palm facing the ceiling.*

I mean, you can't even finish your food! Try to take two bites in a row.

*Now a whisper.*

I dare you.

*The man continues to study his papers, oblivious to Warren's taunting. Warren puts his hand down, crosses his arms and sits back in his chair.*

See, you thought taking this job would please people. Maybe your parents? Friends? I don't really know who, but what I do know is this. You never thought to check if this job pleased yourself.

*Said softly as he mildly shakes his head.*

You are fooling no one but yourself sure, you might eventually start to make the "big bucks", but that isn't all that matters.

*He leans back in, folding his arms on the table, looking at the man intensely.*

You have to be happy with what you are doing. Hey, if you love drowning in work, then knock yourself out, but I know that deep down inside, you don't like drowning. Yes, life contains work, but not only work. You have to live a little. Enough so that you can keep sanity.

*The man buries his face in his hands and sighs deeply. Warren's brow furrows with some sympathy.*

Keep your head up. The work will pay off for you.

*Warren doesn't realize how he just spoke causing the man to look up from his hands, straight at Warren. Luckily, Warren is quick and is already hiding behind his menu. Warren is dead silent until he hears the man pick his fork up and stab a chunk of meat on his plate. He speaks softly now.*

Yes. You are just like my dear younger brother, Roger. Maybe not as intelligent and definitely less arrogant.

*The baby behind him wails loudly causing Warren to rise his shoulders and lower his head as if he was a turtle retracting into his shell. He looks behind him with a scowl and continues to speak to himself behind the menu. Said with some growing annoyance.*

In fact, I don't think anyone could reach a level of arrogance such as Roger's. You seem like someone he would prey on. I am sorry, but you have a large chance of being eaten alive by all the competitive "Rogers" of the world.

*Warren rubs his right temple and talks softer.*

Roger was once like you, though. Buried in work and competing with his peers. Soon all your hard work will pay off, financial wise. Yes, you will have the nice house, the sweet car and still some dough left over, but you won't be as happy as you thought you would have been.

*Warren starts to become more irritated, talking sharply.*

It's all the same with you business people. Never appreciating anything, except for what concerns you. I know it is impossible, but I hope you do not become like one of them, my friend. I can't do anything to stop you except hope that you don't become a selfish jerk.

*Warren sees someone coming at his left side as he hides behind the menu, talking to himself. As the man approaches, he grows silent and motionless.*

WAITER

*Sternly, but tired.*

Sir. You have been sitting here for two hours staring at that menu, not ordering anything. I am going to have to ask you to leave. Sorry.

WARREN

*He looks around the restaurant noticing everyone has gone, except for him and the graduate student. He stands slowly with a blank expression on his face. He wears a fake, wide smile and pats the waiter on the shoulder for an uncomfortable amount of time.*

Well. I best be going then.

*He loses the smile and walks over to the man sitting at the cluttered table. He puts his hands flat on the table and leans over close. He speaks quietly and briskly as if he was somewhat in a rush.*

Listen to me. Can you do three things? Just three. I want you to do them all this week. First, do something, that won't affect yourself in any way, for a stranger. Next, I want you to do something for yourself. Something that you haven't had time to do. Something you loved doing as a kid. I don't know. Last, take thirty minutes to think about your life. Your future, your past and all the decisions that you have made or will make. Have a nice night.

*Warren taps the table twice and then walks out of the restaurant as the man watches him with a puzzled look. The man is silent and slowly looks down at his papers.*

SCENE 3

*It is 10:30 AM, the next day, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The sun, outside, is trying to poke its face out from behind the clouds. A group of people are inside this room that is located at the back of the museum. Four art critics sit in a row of chairs as Skylar stands in front of them, glancing at her watch from time to time. Pieces that Skylar has painted are spread all around the room. The critics sit in their chairs with their clipboards on their laps. While some roll their eyes, others jump as they are woken by the creaking door. Skylar is red from embarrassment and is about to say something, but then the door opens. It's not rushed open, but it is not opened slowly and*

*shyly. It is just opened. Warren moseys in the room with half a bagel in his right hand and his clipboard under his left armpit. He wears a puffy coat over a wrinkled white button-down shirt that is tucked into a pair of brown pants. His black and red, striped tie has a cream cheese stain on the end. Warren's brown tweed jacket, with the tan elbow pads, has captured some bagel crumbs on the left breast. He tosses the unfinished bagel in the trash and wipes his hands together to get the crumbs off of his sweaty palms. He places his puffy coat in the coat rack right next to the door. He makes no eye contact with the other critics and sits down in the closest chair to the door. He looks at Skylar to find her glaring at him.*

## SKYLAR

*Widening her eyes and looking towards the critics while she claps her hands together once. She talks assertively with her hands still in front of her as if she was praying.*

Alright. Now that we are all finally here, let me tell you about my artwork. *She puts her hands down, but brings them back up to present with her open palms.*

I decided to paint children from third-world countries, mostly Sudan and Chad. I tried to paint their suffering through the use of black and white acrylic and charcoal. I used a lot of broad strokes and some line hatching and I used photographs that I took, as references. I want to show that there are other people in the world that need help and that are less fortunate than us. Thank you and enjoy the show.

## WARREN

*Warren jumps a little as if he just awoke. He looks around the room, dazed, and sees that all the critics are getting up and walking around to the art. Obviously, he heard nothing that Skylar said. As he gets out of his chair, he notices one of the critics. She looks a little younger than Warren and is wearing a dark green dress. Her brown hair hangs to her shoulders and she isn't wearing too much makeup. His eyes widen and he stumbles while trying to get out from the row of chairs. He talks quietly to himself as he walks over to one of Skylar's pieces. His brow furrows with confusion.*

Who is that? Does she know where she is?

*Warren scratches his stubble as he ponders.*

Art critics are never that pretty. They are usually old farts that painted during the stone-age or freaks that are only accompanied by their twelve cats. *He rubs his eyes as if trying to wake from a dream. He glares at her hands out the corner of his eye.*

No ring. I wonder if she has a boyfriend. What am I talking about, of course she must. Look at her.

*Warren looks down to his ruddy shoes and his confidence depletes.*

Then there is really no point in walking over to talk to her.

*Looking up to glance at the woman again.*

In what world would someone like her even talk to someone to me? She probably hasn't even noticed who I am or that I am even here.

*He looks back down, this time to his clipboard. He stares at it for a while until he rears his head back up, looking at her. The next thing Warren knows is that he is already walking over to her. He walks briskly, across the room, with his head up and his hand holding his clipboard under his armpit. The woman looks up, from the piece she was examining, with a small smile. Warren quickly loses some of his confidence after she turns to him. His determination is slowly overtaken by nerves. He stutters a little and talks faster than usual.*

Hello, I don't think we have met. I have been working with these old geezers for a while, but I have never seen you around.

*He pauses after realizing that picking on the elderly wasn't the best way to start a conversation.*

NATALIE

*She giggles a little and raises her open palm sharply. Still smiling.*

Hi, I'm Natalie. What is your name?

WARREN

*He places his clipboard down and puts his hand out to shake her hand and almost misses. His eyes open wider and he chuckles slightly.*

Oh yes, I forgot. My name is Warren. Nice to meet you, Natalie.

NATALIE

*She talks in a low tone and lowers her head a bit to sound "manly".*

Warren. Now that's a man's name!

*Talking in her normal voice while laughing.*

I don't think I have ever met anyone named Warren before.

WARREN

*He chuckles at her joke.*

I don't think I have ever met anyone named Natalie. It is a nice name, though. Suits you perfectly!

NATALIE

*Soft tone and with a bigger smile.*

Thank you. Yes, you probably haven't seen me around here because I just moved from Harrisburg. I applied for a critiquing job here in Philly and I was really lucky to get it.

WARREN

*In a cheery tone.*

Yes you are. This city has its ups and downs, but I like it here for the most part. If you like art, this is the right place to be. A lot to criticize, and I haven't even scratched the surface.

*He talks softer, as if talking to himself, and stares off into the space behind Natalie's left shoulder.*

I would like to think so, though.

*He seems thrown off, knowing that Natalie is oblivious to who he is.*

NATALIE

*Tilting her head slightly.*

So have you judged a lot of art shows during your life? Like any big ones?

WARREN

*Looking off into the distance to pretend that he is having trouble thinking of an example.*

Uh, yes. Some big ones.

*Scratching his five o' clock shadow.*

Do you know Keenan Picard's Boston art show in '79?

NATALIE

*Her face lights up for a split second and then slowly melts back to confusion.*

Actually, no. I don't.

WARREN

*His shoulders slump in minor frustration, but he is quick to bring them back up.*

How about the Julius Pepperfield show in New York City?

*His eyebrow slowly rises, hoping for recognition.*

NATALIE

*She smiles and shakes her head. Her brow curled in a sympathetic manner.*

I'm sorry. I've never heard of that one either.

WARREN

*He looks at the floor and scratches the back of his head with his right hand.*

Well one of my best was Frank Vosk's show in Providence, but I don't think you will know him. His art was absolutely terr-

NATALIE

*Her smile grows and she leans forward. She talks fast and with excitement.*

Frank Vosk? You judged one of his shows? Oh, he is my favorite artist in the New England area. I cannot believe you critiqued his art.

WARREN

*Stunned and relieved that she interrupted him. He tilts his head with confusion.*

You are a fan of Frank Vosk? You are a fan of him and his art? Or just him and not his art? Or all his art and not him?

NATALIE

*Her voice is softer now and she is still smiling.*

I am a fan of him in general. I love his pieces and his personality. I just think he is amazing in every way.

*She hugs her clipboard tight against her chest.*

WARREN

*Warren's nostrils flair, but he looks concerned.*

How do you know what his personality is like? Have you ever met him?

NATALIE

*She shrugs her shoulders and looks off to the distance behind Warren's right side. Her speech has slowed.*

Well, no.

*Her head pops back up to look up at Warren.*

I do read his interviews, though, and he seems like a great guy.

WARREN

*Shaking his head and biting his lower lip. He looks straight at her.*

Well he isn't. Trust me, I met him. He was a complete jerk. I can see why you would mistake him for being down to earth and friendly, but that's exactly what he wants.



*Warren's head lowers, but his eyes stay fixed on her.*

You see, Frank Vosk's art isn't the best around, so to make up for some of his sloppiness, he brings out a character only for press and fans.

*Putting his two fingers out to air quote.*

This, "character" is much nicer than the actual man, who is vile and self-centered.

*He puts a thumb out and hits it against his chest sharply, several times.*

I should know. I met the guy. He tried to throw a chair at me once and it was only because I pointed out something in one of his pieces that he obviously copied from another famous artist.

*Looking away and talking softer.*

It did happen to catch the eyes of the other judges, causing them to expel that piece.

NATALIE

*With a puzzled look and talking slowly.*

But, in an article I read, he said that it was all an accident. He tripped over an easel and tried to grab onto a chair for support, but it ended up looking like he was lunging at you. That isn't the truth?

*Rubbing her temple.*

That is a surprise. I always thought he was a good person. I guess his acting fooled me.

WARREN

*Sighing.*

Yes, well he would always yell at me, when I told him that he should have gone into acting instead of art.

NATALIE

*She smiles and moves her eyes to motion to the pieces surrounding them.*

Well, we better get critiquing. We don't have that much time left in the show.

WARREN

*Frowning at one of the pieces closest to him. It is a painting of two children holding hands on a grassy hill. He scoffs quietly to himself and seems bothered to have to return to his job.*

Oh, right. Almost forgot about it.

*Quietly to himself.*

It's not that hard to forget about these pieces anyways.

*Warren scribbles down some notes from the piece he happens to be sitting next to and walks over to an empty corner of the room to sit down. He pans the room, examining each painting. When his eyes get to Natalie, she looks over to him and gives him a little awkward wave. Warren lifts an open sweaty palm to wave back, giving her a closed mouth smile. She chuckles lightly to herself and goes back to her notes. He wipes his hands together, noticing how sweaty they were and wipes them on his pant legs with disgust. While still looking down, he hears a dreadful sound, cringing as it passes through his ears.*

SKYLAR

*Hands on her hips and with a snotty tone.*

So, I see you've been making friends.

WARREN

*He looks up, but chooses not to look at her face. He continues to pan the room.*

So, I see you still have no friends.

SKYLAR

*Rolling her eyes and chuckling.*

Same old Warren. How are your notes coming along?

*She bends down to look at what he wrote, but he quickly moves the clipboard under his chair. She tilts her head and talks condescendingly.*

I didn't see much written down. How are you going to bust me with your critiquing, this time, if your notes and meaningless junk?

WARREN

*Looking up at her.*

You didn't see anything.

*Smiling.*

How do you know that I didn't write nice things about you?

SKYLAR

Oh Warren. Just give up. You will never win against me.

*Looking down on him, talking slowly.*

It's just how the world works.

*She bends down to get closer to him ear.*

You are the prey and I am the predator.

WARREN

*He shakes her off standing up quickly. He whispers angrily.*  
What is your issue? You can never just leave me alone.

SKYLAR

*Also starts to whisper with a stern tone.*

I can't leave you alone. Don't you see? That's how you win.

*Bowing her head a little, but still looking straight at Warren.*

All these other artists are afraid of you and it's because they have never talked to you.

*Rolling her eyes and filtering her right hand around her face.*

They just read the silly, little mean things you say about their art and then go cry in a corner. Oh, boo-hoo.

*Squinting now and pointing her finger straight at his face.*

If they did talk to you, they would know in a split second that, they too could break you.

WARREN

*Looking over to some of the other critics with boredom.*

Are you done?

SKYLAR

*With a fake sympathetic tone and look.*

Oh. No I'm not. I'm sorry, do you have somewhere to be?

WARREN

I might. It isn't any of your business anyways.

SKYLAR

*Looking over to Natalie, behind Warren.*

Oh, do you really think you have something there?

WARREN

*Shrugs his shoulders.*

I don't know, but at least I'm going out. You know, cats aren't really considered friends.

SKYLAR

*Squints at him and seems somewhat bothered by his comment.*

I'm not as crazy as you think. And I have a dog, by the way.

WARREN

*Smiles and starts to walk away.*

Eh, same thing. I don't really care.

*He is turned away, starting to walk, but stops after hearing Skylar speak again.*

SKYLAR

*She lifts her head to talk to him, as if he is far away.*

You know, she isn't your type.

WARREN

*He turns around to look at her with confusion.*

What?

*Sarcastically.*

Oh, were you the one who talked to her for most of the critique? Didn't think so.

*Turning back around.*

And you wouldn't know my "type" if you tripped on it.

*He walks away, chuckling to himself after his "win" in the argument. He doesn't look back, but he knows that Skylar is standing in the same place. He walks over to the coat rack and puts his puffy coat on. He looks around the room to find no one but two older critics. One is helping the other with their coat. He looks disappointed and stares at the ground. He then brings his head back up sharply and runs out of the room. If he didn't look up, he would have crashed right into Natalie, who was standing outside the door.*

Oh, I'm sorry I didn't see you there.

*He points with his thumb over his shoulder as he pants. The panting keeps him from completing his sentences.*

I was just, uh-

NATALIE

*With a big smile and looking intrigued.*

Talking with the artist?

WARREN

*Points to her, as if to tell her she got it right, as he still pants.*

Yes. That's what I meant to say.

NATALIE

*Hugging her clipboard again, the same way she did when talking about Frank Vosk.*

Oh my god, she was amazing!

*Tilting her head, grinning.*

Didn't you think so?

WARREN

*His eyes widen with shock and he almost forgets to answer her question.*

Um. I thought she was ok. I mean I've been to so many critiques that I kind of get used to art like that.

NATALIE

*Shocked.*

Used to it? Really? How could you get used to art like that?

*She looks up as if imaging herself somewhere else.*

I would put so many of those all over my house.

*Looking back at Warren.*

I thought they were just spectacular.

WARREN

*Avoiding eye contact.*

Well, I don't know about spectacular.

*He looks back at her to find that the smile has disappeared and her mouth is flat.*

That just happens to be my opinion. We critics can't all like the same thing, right?

NATALIE

*Shrugging.*

I guess not, but I don't see how could dislike them.

*Clenching her fists in front of her face.*

They just had so much emotion and intensity. She must have amazing ideas still waiting to be put on canvas. I would love to talk to her sometime.

*Nodding her head and putting her fists down.*

You were just talking to her right? What is she like?

WARREN

*He starts to look at his watch and around the room. His tone has transformed from excitement to a sluggish, lazy tone.*

Well, I don't know. We only talked for a little bit.

*He rolls his eyes at her excitement.*

NATALIE

*Talking softly with long breaks between her words.*

Oh. Ok then I guess.

*Her smile starts to grow.*

Well are you doing anything after this? Would you maybe want to go get a coffee or something?

WARREN

*He looks at his watch and then looks at Natalie with a plain look. Not daunted by Natalie's question.*

No. I'm sorry. I don't want to. I will see you around.

*He turns away and walks down the hall with his hands in his coat pockets. He says to himself.*

For once, Skylar was right.



*Alex Cunningham*

# NONFICTION



*Art by Meng Yu*

# ANCHORAGE

Noah Young

Everything is coincidence. So it happened that I found myself eating beluga whale in the house of a complete stranger in the middle of Wasilla, Alaska.

Let's back up a bit. I was hitchhiking with my friend, Joe Engels, on the side of Interstate A-4, about 50 miles from Anchorage. Our last ride, a nineteen-year-old half-hippie chick driving a Volkswagen, had dropped us in the middle of a fast stretch of highway, which, as any hitchhiker knows, is a pretty awful place to get a ride. The prevailing logic is that drivers should be given as long as possible to assess a potential hitchhiker and decide that no, they don't look like a serial killer, and no, they probably don't smell too bad, and sure, picking them up might be a good idea. On the highway, with cars zipping by at 70 miles per hour, that timeframe shrinks to barely a second. Needless to say, we were not optimistic.

But the only way we could make it to Anchorage by that evening was if someone gave us a ride, so we dropped our packs, stuck out our thumbs, and waited. It was 5 o'clock and cars were passing us at about the speed of Road Runner from the old Looney Tunes cartoons. We expected to be there for a couple hours at least. It barely took ten minutes.

We were so unprepared to get a ride quickly that at first we didn't even notice, the noise of the highway having masked the sound of the car pulling off behind us. I finally heard honking, and turning around saw a black minivan stopped on the shoulder a little ways down from us. I shot Joe a *holy cow, can you believe it?* look as we grabbed our packs and booked it over to the car.

Joe went up to talk to the driver, a routine we had established after hitchhiking together since sunrise that morning, while I held onto both our packs. He was 25 years old and a close family friend, as were his older brother, Nick, and father, John, who had also accompanied us on the trip. Along with my younger brother, Gabe, they made up the rest of our five-man Alaska expedition. We had split that morning into three groups, in the hope that with less people we would be able to more easily get rides. It had worked so far.

Joe walked back to me, shooting me a thumbs-up.

"She'll take us to Anchorage!" he said, grinning broadly.



“Fantastic!” I said, and we high-fived. We loaded our bags into the spacious trunk and then climbed into the car, Joe taking the front seat while I stretched out in the back.

The driver turned around to look at me. She had a hooked nose and a broad, pleasant face.

“Hi, I’m Lisa,” she said, reaching back to shake my hand.

“I’m Noah,” I replied. “Thanks so much for giving us a ride!”

“No problem,” she said, turning back and pulling onto the highway. “So, where’re you guys coming from?”

“Denali,” Joe replied. “We camped up there for a few nights.”

“Oh, okay,” said Lisa, nodding. “I’m guessing you’re from out of state, then.”

And the conversation continued. I sat back and relaxed. This was part of our routine, too. Joe had spent several months hitchhiking around New Zealand and during that time had perfected the art of conversing with complete strangers. I was a bit more inexperienced, this only being the second time I had ever hitchhiked, so I let him do most of the talking.

I reflected over the past day as we cruised towards Anchorage, beautiful Alaskan forests and marshes flying past, bordered on all sides by snowcapped mountains. We had gotten up at sunrise, checked out of the Denali National Park hostel where we were staying, and hit the road early. Nick and Gabe had gotten a ride immediately from the two guys we bunked with the night before, John had headed off about an hour later with a European couple, and Joe and I had been picked up an hour after that. We had ridden with a self-proclaimed racist and supporter of eugenics, a woman who raised sled dogs for a living, and a 70-year-old man who cheerfully spent the ride telling us all about his relationship problems with his 29-year-old heroin-addicted girlfriend. Apparently they smoked marijuana together and he took her to get free needles.

I was brought back to reality when Lisa began telling Joe about herself. “My parents were teachers in several native villages when I was growing up,” she said. “I was raised as a native from about the age of one up until the time I graduated high school, so I have what we call ‘native hospitality’ ingrained in me pretty deeply.”

“What do you mean by that?” Joe asked.

“We believe in treating everyone we meet as though they were family,” Lisa said. “To give you an example, my husband and I picked up a pair of Swiss backpackers a couple years ago who ended up staying with us for a few days, sleeping at our house and eating with us. We still stay in contact to

this day. For us this is normal,” she said, seeing Joe’s look of surprise. “My family does this all the time. But anyway, what I’m trying to say is that I would love to meet the rest of your group, and if you wanted you would all be welcome to stay at our house for a night or two before you head out. We could cook you some real Alaskan food, and I would be happy to show you some of the less touristy areas of Anchorage.”

Joe and I sat there in amazed silence. Finally Joe said, “That’s an incredible offer and I wish I could give you an answer right now, but we should really talk about this with the rest of our group.”

Lisa nodded as though this was to be expected and changed the subject.

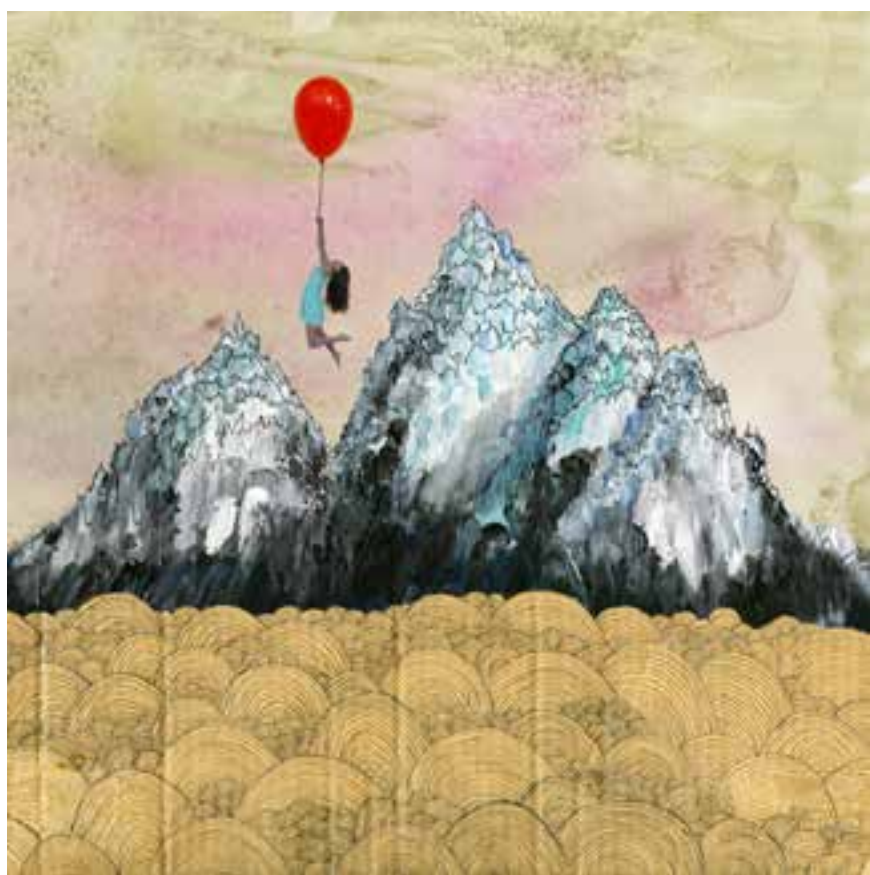
We ended up staying one night at Lisa’s house at the end of our trip, sleeping on couches and in recliner chairs. The meal that night was unforgettable. “I put the call out on Facebook,” Lisa said nonchalantly as she drove the five of us over to her house. “I didn’t have much food at my house, so I got some friends to help.”

What followed was nothing short of a feast. Lisa had invited a few people she worked with to have dinner with her as well, along with her sister, brother and father, and all of them brought dishes to share. We were treated to moose, salmon, caribou, and halibut, cooked to perfection. After living on Clif bars and peanut butter for the past two weeks, it was like ambrosia.

There was also a more exotic portion of the meal: two types of whale blubber and seal sausage. “You shouldn’t have too much of this,” Lisa warned us. “I grew up eating it, but it takes time for the body to develop a level of tolerance. A few bites should be fine as long as you don’t overdo it.”

*Not likely*, I thought after trying the whale. It was about as chewy as meat could get, with a texture like rubber. Dipping it in mustard did not improve the overall experience.

But at the same time as I was gagging on blubber, I was marveling at the unbelievable chain of events that brought me to that point in time. Hitchhiking is a lot like gambling; in the end, no matter how good you are at maximizing your odds, it all comes down to coincidence. You take the cards you get dealt and make the most of them. Getting picked up by a woman so extraordinarily generous as to share her house and food with strangers, after only ten minutes of hitchhiking, while trying to get a ride in



*Carley Moynihan*

# PLACE IS THE PROBLEM

James Westbay

Years ago, I spent an afternoon stacking firewood for my grandparents. The work was draining, but when I placed the final twig on the massive pyramid of logs, I stepped back and inhaled the scent of loose soil. I noticed my silhouette was a mere shadow against a canvas of vibrant colors. The evening that followed was quite relaxing—alone with only my senior relatives in their rural abode and the crickets whom they called neighbors.

This sensation of peace and joy within the background of nature is one which I have only experienced on the open earth of rural landscapes. In his work *Family Happiness*, Leo Tolstoy verbalizes this feeling, writing, “A quiet secluded life in the country...work which one hopes may be of some use; then rest, nature, books, music, love for one’s neighbor — such is my idea of happiness.”

In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy again relates this feeling of happiness to setting through his depiction of different families living in both the city and country. Tolstoy opens the novel with the statement, “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” As the novel progresses, Tolstoy establishes that those rural families are the ones that can obtain joy, while their urban counterparts suffer through distinct miseries. He develops the idea that setting is the most important influence on the happiness of a family through his contrasting presentation of the Oblonskys and the Levins.

*Anna Karenina* opens with a family in turmoil. Throughout the Oblonskys’ descent, Tolstoy weaves in indications of the family’s lavish lifestyle. He notes how Stepan spent the night on a “morocco sofa.” He describes in detail the “grey dressing gown with the light-blue silk lining” that Stepan sports. He draws special attention to Stepan’s societal name, “Stiva.” These notes contribute to the characterization of the Oblonskys as pompous, wealthy urbanites.

Due to Stiva's social status and environment, the liberal party has a strong influence on him. Tolstoy explains, "The liberal party said that marriage was an obsolete institution," and as a result, "family life gave Stepan Arkadyich little pleasure and forced him to lie and pretend." This train of thought accounts for Stiva's lack of love towards his wife and lack of remorse for his crime. If Stepan thinks poorly of marriage, then he would see no point in being faithful towards Dolly.

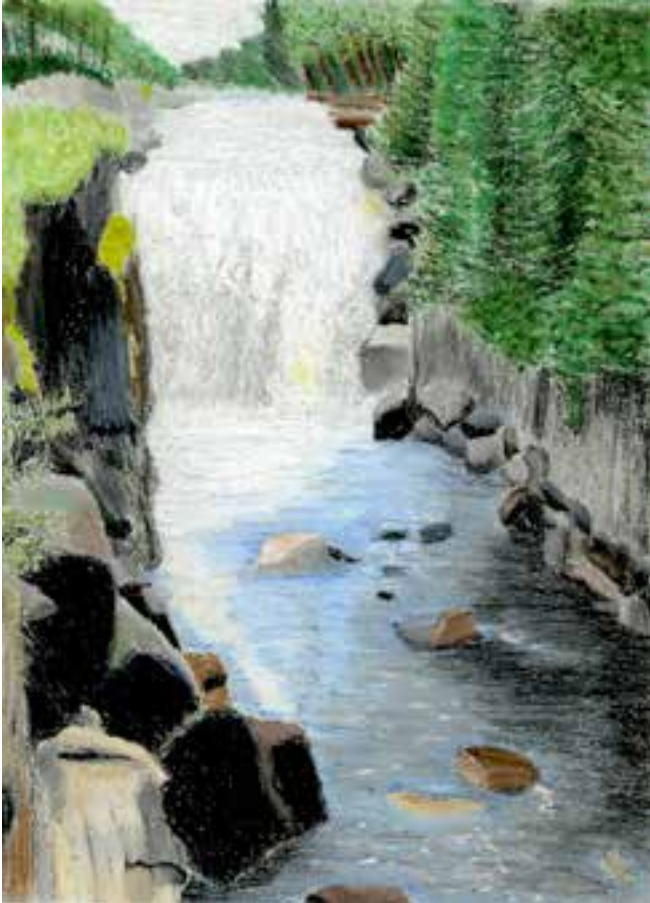
Not only does this liberal philosophy affect Oblonsky's relationship with his wife, but also his relationship with his children. Tolstoy notes that Stiva loves his son Grisha less than his daughter Tanya. Instead of confronting this issue, Stepan dismisses it. He spares nothing but a "cold smile" for Grisha, and as such the boy knows he lacks appreciation from his father. As with his marriage, Stiva sees no need to feel guilty. Stepan's political views suggest that he is not at fault for these negative thoughts, but that the familial institution, in need of reform, is to blame. Because of these ideas which circulate the city, Oblonsky is able to shamelessly dismiss his poor treatment of his family.

Establishing the negative influences of the city in the opening scene of the book, Tolstoy introduces Konstantin Levin as a beacon of light in opposition to the liberal philosophy. There is a sharp contrast in thought when Levin and Stiva meet. Levin cannot grasp certain aspects of city culture. "In the country we try to keep our hands in a condition that makes them convenient to work with...While here people purposely let their nails grow as long as they can," he says, defining one of these disparities. While the haughty urbanites look to uproot the values of Russian society, Levin holds true to the basic social principles of a country dweller. Unlike Stiva, he does not see the evil in marriage and in family.

Without the corruption of civic political thought, Levin finds much more happiness and peace in his family. He holds a true love for his wife and son, which Oblonsky lacks. Whereas the novel opens with Stiva searching for a way out of his marital hiccup, it concludes with Levin's worried search for Kitty and Mitya. Levin shows concern by praying for the safety of his family, and upon discovering them unharmed, he sighs, "Alive? Safe? Thank God!" Whereas Stiva could spare only a "cold smile" for Grisha, Levin experiences "unexpected raptures" when Mitya is able to recognize him. These contrasts are evidence of the joys that Levin feels, but that Stiva cannot grasp.

Of course, Levin copes with stressful situations in his own family. For instance, when Mitya is born, the underwhelming feeling that overcomes Konstanin disturbs him. “But the baby? Whence, why, and who was he?...It seemed to him something superfluous, an over-abundance,” Tolstoy describes how the birth bothers Levin. But unlike Oblonsky, Levin does not blame the familial institution for this troubling thought. Without the corruption of city politics, Konstantin ponders the situation at his rural estate. He overcomes the struggle through his own thinking. Levin realizes that family life entails “more fear and pity than pleasure,” but these nervous emotions are indications of love; a love that is never present in the lives of the Oblonskys.

With Tolstoy’s message in mind, the next time I quarrel with my mother and father, I’ll suggest a journey to my grandparents’ abode.



*Jack Randolph*

# DROPPING NOTES

*Alison Hoi*

Wednesday afternoons, between 3:30 and 4:30, were the greatest burdens of my juvenile life. My Suzuki books folded and creased as I threw them haplessly into my scuffed bag. I ambled to our door, passing my dog who gazed at me through her grey eyes, blurred by cataracts. My mother hid a guilty smile as I mounted my bicycle, positioning the bag on the handlebars. I left a scuffed trail on the rug from our modest upright grand to the garage door.

My feet pushed in a gentle rhythm in an attempt to delay what was to come, but only two hundred yards away, I knew soon I would be padding on the slate walkway with heavy feet. The scratch of nylon on pavement rang in my brain. Begrudgingly, my hand found the chipping brass knob and soon the dusky scent of patchouli and sour Earl Grey enveloped me.

She waved me over to her house's showpiece — a Windexed black baby grand whose innards were lined with delicate red velvet that I begged to touch. We exchanged niceties, discussing how school was going to which I would reply with the generic, “Good,” although I barely understood the times table. All I could do was hope that her twin daughters, Emma and Paula, would run through the door wearing their knee high socks as the sound of the bus releasing its breaks whipped the air, but no such luck.

“Did you practice?” she asked, as she did at the start of every lesson, with an expectant gaze. Wincing at the question, a flash of red flooded my face. “A little,” I would stammer, wedging my hands beneath my jeans. I placed my books on the thin ledge above the golden Yamaha and heard the cracks of the uncreased spines as I flipped to the pieces I was assigned the week prior. I made sure to put “Pachyderm’s Parade,” a piece that I had been assigned and re-assigned for three weeks, on top. Resting my thumb on the cool key of “Middle C,” I stared at the black dots printed on the page.

I stumbled through my piece gracelessly; my foot pressed the pedal erratically causing the resonant notes to slur with a sense of drunkenness, my left and right hands two beats apart. My teacher was quiet. She slid onto the piano bench and began to play, expecting me to watch and listen, but the quick punches of the mallets inside the instrument captivated me more. I rehearsed the song again after she had finished, this time with a bit more

precision only, perhaps, because I avoided the pedal completely. Three more times my fingers translated the notes of the page before she was content with my progress — that, or the incessant buzz of the pineapple kitchen timer that sat on the edge of the bench alerted her that my time was up. Relief washed over me as I hurriedly grabbed my books from the ledge, knocking down her pencils and markers. Just as my foot stepped onto the patio and I waved goodbye, she reminded me to bring a dessert to the Fall Concert for the upcoming Saturday.

The concert was, since I first heard about it, something that I refused to acknowledge or address. They took place at the Kanack School, a vivid red A-frame with an impossibly high ceiling and a stagnant odor of carpet that had suffered through too many winters. The worst part about the concerts wasn't the performing, but rather the silent walk up to the antiquated wooden piano as the gentle eyes of parents watched from below the two-foot stage. It didn't matter whether a student played Vivaldi or Three Blind Mice — each piece received the same aloof applause. The donuts and cider, which served as a reward for parent and students alike for enduring the monotony, were the only redeeming aspect of the event. The thought of a powdered donut hole momentarily quelled the resentment I held against my mother and teacher for forcing me to participate in such a degrading and asinine affair.

The next two days, both of which had me sitting cross-legged in front of our piano, striking the keys to "Pachyderm's Parade," passed with ease. On my ride home from my Wednesday lesson, I inexplicably decided that at the upcoming concert, I would play with fluidity and tact, two qualities that were the antithesis of what my playing typically encompassed. Anxious, I woke up at 6:00 AM to practice, forgetting that my parents and brother were still asleep. Ignoring my father's slow, groggy amble down our staircase, I continued to move up and down the keys until I had the music engrained in my mind. The sound, which flowed evenly and lightly, looped for hours. I didn't even complain when my mother laid out my horrendous black velvet skirt, which was relegated to special occasions, on my cluttered dresser.

Fifth to go, after a trio of teenagers who played pieces that were too long to be fully appreciated by the present audience, my feet swayed and tapped impatiently against the dusty linoleum floor as notes, sharps, and flats bounded from the walls. I felt a nudge against my ribs; my brother nodded his head in the direction of the stage and whispered, "Go already. She just called you."



As expected, a crowd of eyes met my feverish pace to the stage. Feeling the heat from the incandescent track lighting that hung from above, the heavy beats in my chest played like a metronome in my ears. My hands trembled restlessly on the keys before I took a breath, held it, and struck the first note. Instead of looking at my hands, I relied on intuition, of which I had little, and ran through the piece before realizing that I had somehow shifted two keys from the proper position. Pachyderm's Paradise, which was intended to be a lighthearted circus anthem, morphed into a slurry of haphazard noise. Awkward applause drizzled down upon me as I bowed. My cool, plastic seat caught me when I returned to the audience sheepishly. Craning my head to the back of the room, I squinted at the refreshment table, lined with drinks and snacks; everybody brought glazed.



*Rachel Schaefer*

# ON THE TRAIN

*Indiana Brown*

Riding on the train Sunday night, about a half hour before my stop back to Rochester, a female voice somewhere diagonally behind me answered her phone and choked up in a sob.

“Becky?” her voice trembled.

“Becky? Listen, I’m on the train... What?”

“Oh my god. Where are you?”

A sharp inhalation of breath, another teary whimper.

“I’ll be at the station soon, okay? I love you.”

“I love you.”

After the exchange, I could hear her continue to cry a little bit. I felt my stomach lurch. All my prior mundane thoughts turned grey and were replaced by a vibrant flurry of inappropriate curiosity. Is Becky her sister? Her lover? Her closest friend? Was there a car accident? Did someone die?

Immediately a new flood of involuntary, masochistic adrenaline coated these wonders. What if I had received this call? Of course this kind of thing would happen now; a peacefully cramped passenger mindset is just about as vulnerable as you can get. How would I react if I were to suddenly receive the news that a drunk driver had taken both himself and my mom hurdling off the highway? How quickly would my pupils dilate, how rapidly would the tears well if a shooting at Union College had taken down eight students, among their ranks my slender, freckled Andrew? I couldn’t help but feel that wash of narcissistic self-pity, thinking, “Of course that would happen to me. To me of all people. No way fate would let me slide through life without a tragedy like this, it’s only a matter of time.”

I ruminated over these scenarios until a greater fear slipped in through the back door. As I was boarding the train, I’d missed a call from my dad. “Weird,” I thought. “He never calls. He always texts me. Why would he call me? He hasn’t been able to speak coherently on the phone for a few years now.”

What if it wasn't him calling? What if dad had another heart attack, or it turns out the tiny patch of skin cancer on his chest is actually melanoma, or he fell down the stairs again, but this time he cracked his skull open? I could picture Blossom on the other end, harrowed bags under her eyes, a tired, beautiful, elegiac messenger. Or maybe Tracy found him on the floor after picking up his ginger beer and tempeh from Greenstar. I could see her tearfully huddled in the corner of an ambulance, her grungy hippie physique unsettlingly juxtaposed with all the sanitary medical equipment. I heard her revolting smoker's voice repeating, "Pick up the phone, for god's sake, answer me!"

It took me a few minutes to calm down. I tried to regulate my breathing and hoped the boy sitting next to me watching video game tutorials on YouTube wasn't glancing over and regretting picking the wrong seat. Deep breaths. I took a swig of my urine-colored green tea and popped a piece of wintergreen gum. Deep breaths.

Once I had recovered from my baby panic attack, disgustingly conceived in hypotheticals, I couldn't help myself but look back at the woman who'd been crying.

She look about twenty, had an overstuffed, worn out backpack snuggled up against her chest, her greasy bangs fell messily over her forehead, and somehow, there wasn't a single salty streak on her face.

...What?

Her eyes weren't puffy at all, no moist red nose or flushed upper lip. Not a single sign of laceration or distress whatsoever. Well, her expression wasn't a glad one, but it wasn't that of a mourner either. I was wholly confused, and kept glancing back at her.

When the train finally slowed to its halt in Rochester, I stood a few persons behind her waiting to get off. In the middle of the cars, her phone rang again.

"Becky?" she answered. I stared unabashed.

"Becky, I love you," she said, accompanied by a sob.

"Wait a second," I thought. She's not crying...she's laughing! My astonished stare lingered until she felt my eyes upon her and glared at me. This woman's giggle sounded exactly like she was crying. She continued her conversation in hushed tones, but every once in a while, she burst out with a laugh. As I read her face, I could see all her whimpers were actually titters, each wail a guffaw, every blubber a chortle. Close your eyes and you'd be listening to the weeping of the recently bereaved, open them and you'd be confused as hell, like me.

The slow shuffle of disembarking passengers, bags propped up on our backs like weary camels, finally reached the car we were instructed to exit from. The woman got off her phone right before getting off, emitting a final “I love you” and another uncomfortable hybrid of a whimper and a laugh. I was dazed by the whole situation, but still, my curiosity kept its rigid hold on me. As I fumbled down the grimy steps, I tried desperately to find her and Becky. Whoever she was, a mangled, half breathing corpse or a perfectly healthy girl, I at least needed to know – was she a lover, a sister, a friend? But I lost the woman with the chimera laugh and her mystery companion in the blustery winds and swarming crowd.

# THE WORST SKI INSTRUCTOR IN THE WORLD

*Julia Blanding*

Trudging through slush and artificial snow, I neared my own personal hell. It was a place that taught me what true pain was. The stench of tears, vomit, and urine were constant and unavoidable. I tried but could never fight the shooting pain in my feet and calves due to the compressing, shackle-like boots that I had no choice but to wear. Everywhere I turned, I was haunted by the faces of hundreds of little demons, clinging to my legs and tugging at my hair...I was going to ski school.

A gust of heat burst forward and hit me as I opened the door to the ski school building. There were only three people there, but it wouldn't stay that way for long. Reluctantly, I meandered to the “official” whiteboard to discover how terrible my group would be that day. I had Raccoons... good enough so that they can ride a chairlift but bad enough that all we can ski are green circles. That meant I actually had to do work.

I grudgingly sat at one of the tiny, red lunch tables that wouldn't accommodate my disproportionately long legs. I waited there as more and more employees flooded in, bro-hugging each other and talking about what they'd done last night.

“Man, you were so out of it.”

“Dude, I was not.”

“You passed out for like two hours and ate a whole box of Oreos when you woke up.”

“What?”

I sat and waited. The demons began to line up at the door with their wealthy, angry parents. Some wailed, grabbing onto Mommy and Daddy's pants for dear life and some donned menacingly excited faces, just ready to ruin my day.

Finally, the doors opened, and in flooded more children and more frustrated parents than one could have imagined. It was a natural disaster and my job was to clean it up.

The Agenda:

- Greet parents and children with a fraudulent smile
- Peel screaming child from parent's leg
- Escort child twenty feet to the red lunch tables because, if they are not led there BY HAND, they *will* get lost.
- Sign child into registration during which they often forget their last name (or will continue to inform you of their home address, phone number, date of birth, and dog's name)
- Help child put on boots (you may or may not get kicked in the chest) and other ski attire
- Supervise child until it's time to ski

By this time, I was already perspiring, but removing the official ski school jacket was not permitted. I attempted to converse with the monsters but that was easier said than done. There were always at least three kids in every group who were overly-excited to share their opinion and the sound of their voices squealing simultaneously sounded like a third grade birthday party in Hell. Then there was always one little girl who pointed to every boy over the age of ten in the room inquiring as to whether or not he was my boyfriend. There were children who sat in the corner, refusing to speak until their parents returned and, finally, there were the kids who just licked everything.

"So, what's everyone's favorite color?"

"BLUE!"

"MY FAVORITE IS YE--"

"PPPPPPPPPPPPPIIIIIIIIIINNNNNNNNNNNNNNK-

KKKKKK!!!!"

"Is that one your boyfriend?"

"No, he's twenty-five."

"Aren't you twenty-five?"

"No, I'm fifteen."

"Oh."

"Sara, what's your favorite color?"

"..."

“Ok.”

“Nate, that window is very dirty. Get your tongue off of it.”

Once every child was present and dressed, they would have to be lined up and escorted outside to find their skis. My co-instructor and I marched over to the American Express chairlift with seven squealing fiends tripping and dropping skis behind us. At long last, our destination was reached after a torturous seventy meter journey and each child, surprisingly, mounted the lift with few complications. The ascent of the mountain included more simple-minded baby talk and some complaints about height-phobias and parental separation issues.

Reaching the top of the lift couldn't have come any slower but, finally, we had arrived and I was ready to send these suckers straight down the hill and be done for the day. However, they still had to be taught how to ski...and that was going to take much longer than I would have hoped.

Snake formation was assembled and my co-instructor led the way whilst skiing backwards. I took up the back because, as much as I hated those miniscule beasts, it was fun to watch them fall and run into things. Unfortunately for me, though, I had to pick them back up when this happened. Furthermore, I had to follow behind these tykes who couldn't ski and travelled at about two miles per hour, holding a painfully wide “pizza wedge” all the way down the trail. I can't describe to you the pain that I felt in my inner thighs after that feat.

That day, one boy named Kevin stopped on the trail and began to sob.

“I miss my mommy,” he said, gasping and choking on his own mucous and saliva, “I don't want to ski anymore!”

“You can see your mommy at the bottom of the hill,” I told him without the slightest attempt to mask my annoyance, “She's right there but you have to ski down first.”

“I MISS MY MOMMY AND I WANNA GO HOOOOMM-MEEEE!!” Kevin wailed.

Perhaps I was unfair. Kevin was only about six years old, he was stuck in ski school, and I wasn't exactly the best instructor, but I was fed up with this job and this child and so I snapped.

“Look, kid, if you don't ski down that hill, you're never going to see your mommy again,” I said sternly.

Kevin began to cry and spew bright yellow snot more than I believed was biologically possible, but he got the idea and he slid down the trail whilst his tears froze upon his frost bitten cheeks. As for myself, I was simply glad to be making my way down the mountain and just a little bit closer to leaving time.



*Addy Schuetz*

## KURTZ'S EPIPHANY

*Indiana Brown*

Moonlight drips into a dark, sickly humid cabin in a homeward bound boat. The room is moist from the jungle air mingling with the confined sickness of a bedridden Kurtz. Marlow checks in on him occasionally, the man once mad with the power of his miniature, isolated empire now delirious from fever and hindsight. Filled to the brim with mixed feelings and fascination, Marlow listens to his ramblings and his slow decay. Kurtz relays his final words in Marlow's presence, in just a wisp of a breath, saturated with pain and realization – "The horror! The horror!"

Kurtz had ruled his post deep entrenched in the swamps of the Congo with a loyal following of native peoples and passersby, like the star struck, harlequin-like Russian. Despite his all-consuming greed, obvious in threats such as killing the Russian if he didn't relinquish his ivory to him, those who listened to his philosophy and wisdom fell in love with the sticky, sweet honey of his confidence. Kurtz was the king of his castle, but somewhere along the way, success, seclusion and ivory-lust evolved into a fatal insanity. As Marlow discovers the array of rotting heads on sticks decorating the perimeter of the infamous leader's home, he remarks, "There was nothing profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him – some small matter which, when the pressing

need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence.” These heads are a metaphor for the death of Kurtz’s rationality – he fell prey to a darkness inside that displayed its sinister plumage only when he himself was physically in the heart of darkness.

This darkness that overtook Kurtz was a profound realization of the infinity of human desire. The man essentially obtained everything he could hope for – a mass appeal and following, immense power over his post, ivory galore. But the ravine inside that needed to be filled with the acquisition of these desires was ever-expanding. On his death bed, passively fighting fever and inevitable demise with nothing to do but think about the meaning behind his life, he figures it all out – the meaninglessness behind the human condition, the perpetuity of the cycle of wanting, getting, and wanting again. His discovery was especially painful, as Marlow says, “It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core.”

Upon their introduction, Marlow describes Kurtz’s moribund appearance as, “It was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shaking its hand with menaces at a motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze. I saw him open his mouth wide – it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him.” The imagery of his sickly ivory body juxtaposed with the robust, warm colors of the Africans creates a double entendre; not only is it ironic that the one material possession he coveted most, ivory, is the best way to describe his deathly pallor, the people he stole it from are vibrant and full of life in comparison. It was the carrying out of his lusts that drove him to madness, to illness, to his infamous last words.

His final utterance of, “The horror! The horror!” is in reference to the lack of salvation found at the end of human greed – or, rather, the lack of salvation because there is no end to human greed. Satiating lust is like satiating a stomach – you fill it up, sometimes stuffing it to the brim with delicacies and nourishment, but with enough time, it’s empty again and you’re left wanting more. The difference is, consuming food is essential for life, but is fulfilling desire? When you’re just left hungrier and hungrier for more, until you’re finally facing the cold glint of death’s scythe with nowhere left to go, nothing left to accomplish...reflecting on the pointlessness of it all created such a wave of mortification, Kurtz couldn’t help voicing his inner turmoil. His life had meant nothing, and now there was nothing left for him. The horror, indeed.



# INDEFINITELY

*Claire Lewis*

The clock ran five minutes fast. It was nailed above the couch, where the wall swallowed the last step of the green carpeted stairs. Every hour it bellowed an alarm as the long hand completed its cycle, before the hour actually slipped away. A deep colored wood with hints of red framed the clock and twirled around a white cell with thick roman numerals. Below it a dusty glass revealed the gut of the clock. A gold pendulum rocked continuously back and forth, giving off a faint, *tick, tick, tick*, that had become so numb to my senses that I could only hear it if I wanted to. Faded paint strung along the corner of the glass. It spun a web that drew down to a line where a tiny white spider stayed, immortalized just above the far swing of the pendulum.

It's quite valuable, or at least that's what I was told. My parents claimed it when my great grandma died and I was told to cherish and respect it. I didn't know why it was valuable. It was too familiar to me to be anything spectacular. It was the clock that bounced from wall to wall, trying to find the best way to boast its supposed glory. It was the clock that always made me misjudge when the bus was actually going to come. It was the clock I glared at that Saturday afternoon, waiting for its call to three o'clock.

And yet, I had given this mundane ornament the only control I had left in this crumbling house. For years I had been surrounded by things I couldn't control: my parents divorcing, whose house I went to and when, who my parents dated. I was helpless to change anything they did, and when my dad started slipping into depression and disappearing into his addiction, I was helpless to stop him. So I let myself float along with the unstoppable current, pretending nothing was wrong so my nerves could become numb without control. The more I let the sensation of life drain into the water, the more comfortable I became without it.

So when I was suddenly given the tiniest bit of power and it overwhelmed me. It felt like being given a loaded gun and told, "shoot, or hand it to someone else who will." I felt a crushing pressure to be the one to pull the trigger, but it would be so much easier to give it to someone else. How could I choose to leave my house, even if it meant not being buried under the gathering dirt of my father's neglect? There was no right decision, anything I did would permanently be scarred in my brain. The only way I could live with myself after dust settled was to give the choice to something I couldn't change, time.

If my father didn't wake up by three pm I would call my mother and ask to leave indefinitely. But if he did wake up, I'd let go of the breath choking my throat, and be numb once again.

As the long hand with thin twisting metal peaked along the arc of the circle, the clock sang for the new hour.

*Ab abb Ab abb, obb Ob Ab abb, abb, abb.* Three long concluding notes made a bold claim to the hour which, in fact, wasn't even the truth.

Never the less it was the last, and smallest *tick* of the hand that plunged into the pit of the barred numeral, that told me what I had to do. A simply *tick* and the first domino in the still falling lines of explosive pillars tipped. The clock was worth hundreds, but its value to me was choosing when to start the inevitable.

Actually, I think it's five minutes slow.



*Sean Riley*

An abstract painting featuring dark, swirling, and layered colors. The central area is bright and textured, with shades of white, yellow, and orange. The overall composition is dark and moody, with a sense of depth and movement.

# POETRY

*Art by Rachel Smith*

# I WAS ARTICULATE BEFORE I MET YOU, NOW I'M A POET

*Gillian Moore*

This is the part where I get honest.  
I, not we, because  
participation takes an all-time low  
and I don't know if  
you've hit rock bottom yet.  
I'm going to be honest  
and not in a filtered water  
sort of way, or a  
we'll both come out of this  
with one crucial item not crossed off  
our conversation to-do list  
sort of way,  
but the kind where  
I wash my eyes  
before I look at you  
and forget the fact that it's  
ten percent sensation,  
ninety percent perception.

I will not prelude with an I love you  
because you'll need to hear it by the end  
and because this poem is not a palindrome.

I am not your fortune cookie.  
When you finally crack me open,  
you won't find the answers to your problems  
opposite some simple Chinese phrase  
of unspecified dialect.  
Besides, it's never about the cookie.

Last night I was an atom in the excited state.  
I was an atom in the excited state and  
needless to say, I'm still taking  
the slowest quantum leap possible  
back down to ground level.

Last night I had  
a thousand dreams about you  
and in them you were  
a thousand different people  
with a thousand different faces  
but the same hands  
and perfume  
and genetic predispositions.  
It felt like eons but  
according to science,  
you never lasted more than  
a few seconds.

You don't have to make those faces anymore.  
You don't have to whine  
or pout or bat your eyelashes  
to make sure I'm still in the room;  
you're still the only person  
I'll share a bed with.  
It's not because of those faces.  
It's because I like the way  
my insides feel knowing  
your insides are right next door.  
You've already sold me;  
you don't have to keep  
making the pitch.



*Isabella Wu*

## THE ISOLATED DESCENT

*Meng Yu*

I left the dishes unwashed yesterday.  
Someone will clean it up later, I'm sure.  
I wonder how my sister has been doing  
with her life, her violin, her troubles.  
She was always so good at everything, I suppose.

I've been thinking a lot about wishes and dreams.  
You know, the kind that grabs your stomach  
and makes it hard to breathe or think. The kind  
that makes you wish you weren't so human after all.  
You wish you could do anything.  
But I am human, and so are you.

I wish for peace of mind, a body that floats  
suspended in eternity between the dark and the light,  
a reason. I wish  
for a gilded boat made of silver leaf, radiant gems,  
clear through the hull  
like the glass humans are made of.  
You dream of a landscape, of carpet and hardwood floors,  
of synthetic fibers and processed foods.  
You want a piece of home, right?

Yesterday, or perhaps longer, I left the clothes in heaps on the floor.  
It just occurred to me.  
Who are you? You were never here before.  
When you speak, my heart flutters  
in a wild attempt to escape the cage of my chest. My blood threatens to  
leave  
my thin, protruding veins, from the pores of my skin.  
My mind can't comprehend where you came from  
or why I can't see you. Only your eerie voice reaches my deaf ears.  
And sometimes when I open my mouth,  
I hear you speak instead.

I hope nobody's taken the oranges  
from the Price Rite 10 miles from my house.  
I shall go one day  
and buy them all  
to throw on the streets and watch cars skid over them. Again and again.  
Their pulps will splatter on the asphalt  
dyeing it darker than black.  
The crushed flowers of their skins  
will be examined by crows,  
the homeless.

Who put this wall in my way?  
It was you, wasn't it? You keep people from approaching me  
with your arrogance and cruel words. Your cynical thoughts and remarks.  
You threaten me with my fears.  
I threaten you with denial. You can't exist here  
as long as I exist.  
But we both know that there is no mistake. And threats are meaningless  
anyways when no one hears them but myself.

She's the only one who speaks to me. Other than you.  
You're so inconstant.  
Love and sunshine one moment, hatred and gloom the next.  
But she is comfort in the best form  
of darkness.  
I can't see her either. I wonder if I've gone blind somehow.  
But she says it'll be fine  
that everything will work out.

Apples fall from the sky, the size of grapes. My hands are the hands of a  
god,  
the hands of a goat.  
The tip of a skyscraper is above my head.  
Steel contorted in sharp angles,  
arches and curves, with diamond edges.  
It sparkles in the darkness. Yes.  
A skyscraper, exactly as I remembered it to be.  
The apples taste like oranges  
you say.

My heart fell out today.  
Now a headless bird sits in my emaciated hands.  
Sharp bones stab the creature. Black wings.  
She complains about the scent of rotten fruit, about the noise that's started  
recently.  
It's the sound of false concern, irritation and fear.  
You complain about stupidity. Humans won't know genius if it walks up to  
them and spits in their faces. Or smashes them. You like that.

The metal balloon that was in the sky is expanding.  
The coffee I left out on the rug that day must be rotting.  
A rotting world, she complains. She doesn't want to hear the noise anymore.  
We should dig deeper. No one will find us then.  
It's hard to admit, but I like you and her. We can exist together.  
Let's dig deeper. Everything will be all right.



She wants a gilded boat made of jewels,  
clear through the bottom like the plastic  
people are made of.  
You want a floating body, light as air, elastic as the wind,  
a peace of mind.

We'll find freedom from the noise when we reach the bottom.

The grass will sing.

# LOOSE THREADS

*Mythea Mazzola*

Cigarettes.  
Couches stained with a putrid  
yellow.

Smoke  
seeps inside each stitch.

She tugs on a loose thread,  
slowly unraveling her sleeve.  
Bright eyes stare at the man  
who gazes back,  
swishing around  
his liquid  
truth.

He watches her pupils  
grow.  
Those little black holes  
sucking  
him in.

Scowling, at him  
revealing huge incisors,  
                    gnashing,  
                                    tearing,  
  through his  
sinewy form.

Peeling back the  
scar tissue  
hidden deep  
                    underneath.

Another drag,  
another sip.

Ash falls to his feet,  
                    and truth  
                                    leaks out.

The truth leaks out  
and the woman storms out the  
                                    door  
again  
with a dream lost in endless  
days;

with a life lost in a man  
who couldn't hide his fear;

with a son so defiant,  
with a son so quiet,  
who find their father  
in each tear.

She looks back at the man  
                                    gazing into his golden truth  
seeing his reflection.

Clutching the door and her bag  
in her wrinkled hand,  
he looks at the ash on his feet.

With growing pupils,  
she runs  
With  
a drag,  
he takes another sip.



*Amanda Baum*

# THE BIGGEST BALL OF TWINE IN AMERICA

*Nicki Pierce*

It was a personalized earthquake  
that shook the dirt  
from between her toes, pulled her up  
by the roots,  
scalp aching.  
She woke up, lungs full of clay  
and coughed up Minnesota  
choking on sediments and sentiment  
and the biggest ball of twine in America.  
It looked like her insides did  
when she hung them to dry  
around her neck.  
She dried them for six years  
on her back porch  
in that Minnesota sun  
as her neck grew stiff from the effort  
and the skin around her eyes  
lost to gravity.  
The polyester blend of her hair  
was tied back in a bun  
to keep the split ends  
from tickling her elbows  
and her oversensitive pancreas.  
She stuffed them back inside her body  
on the birthday that she celebrated  
with a lack of candles and cake  
and company.

First the gallbladder  
then the spleen,  
before she poured bone marrow  
back into place like mortar.  
Her organs fit like somebody else's.  
Eventually,  
she realized  
exposure had shrunk them.

## THESE COLORS DON'T RUN

*Oliver Ash*

Men and women of this nation, you sleep sound in your beds  
Wake up now, open your eyes, and look upon the dead



These youths so bright, with teeth of white, and not a tear to cry  
Their children line up, unaware, to say their last goodbyes  
Red and white cells, dark blue veins, running hot and thick  
Running now to save their lives, green boys, gangrene sick  
Their skin is white and black and brown, and all of them are dead  
Their skin is white and black and brown, yet all their blood runs  
red

A single tombstone, bullet-grey, to mark their hallowed ground  
While widows weep transparent tears on earth of black and brown  
From coast to coast and shore to shore, men die in sand and mud  
Their colors are their legacy, a rainbow dipped in blood

Now sleep again, return to bed, and pray you'll never know  
The cold cruel canvas of the dead, the hell where youth and  
laughter go



*Chris Locke*

## DEARLY BELOVED

*Sarah Benraiss*

Dearly beloved,  
How have you been?  
Here the rain still falls on Sundays,  
And drapes the drooping lilies.  
I saw a ladybug just this morning.  
I know how you loved them,  
How you counted their spots  
And closed your eyes for a wish.  
It flew away,  
And left me alone  
In that awful house,  
With the too blue blinds  
To hide the peeling plaster.  
A young nurse joins me for tea--  
I can't remember her name.  
She could make you some too,  
With delicate chamomile flowers,  
But you always did prefer coffee.

I poured some on your grave yesterday,  
Watched it drench the wild marigold.  
One bitter drop hung on the yellow petals,  
And I think I saw your reflection.  
I see the doctor rather often.  
He gave me some medicine,  
But I won't take it.  
He's trying to rob me,  
Claiming I have Alezheiheimer  
Or Demernisia, I can't recall.  
I remember your smile.  
It gets closer each passing day,  
Your crooked tooth and innocent grin  
And your wide green eyes.  
The grass is so green, Mary.  
You should see it.  
Where are you?  
I can't remember.  
Dearly beloved,  
How have you been?  
Here the rain still falls on Sundays  
And drapes the drooping lilies.



*Erin Riley*

# PLACEBO EFFECT

Claire Lewis

Dear,  
Stiffly rolling your eyes.  
It's hard to be ironic  
On your third coat of mascara.  
*You don't try hard enough.*  
She says  
*The nunnery would surely kick you out,*  
Gloss drips from her lips,  
As she leans against the sink  
With the trim of a purple lace thong  
Glowing under her  
"Naughty Nun" miniskirt.  
She's always tried enough for the both of us.  
I would be excessive.

This is the last poem  
I will ever attempt to craft.  
It's been a pitiful twenty seven years,  
Harboring this fantasy  
Of someone  
I was never meant to be.  
So in truth,  
This is more of an eviction notice  
Than a poem.  
To the smoke coated writer  
I was never pretentious enough to be.

A shot of coffee  
Makes you smile more than I do.  
But it can't pull you down  
Like I do.  
Replace that squawking artist,  
Dimming in my head,  
And I promise  
I'll give you just enough  
To get by.



You perch  
On the rim of the sink,  
Telling me something  
I'm obligated to care about.  
You don't realize  
That two minutes ago  
I settled for you.

There is no better option.

It took me four months to ask you out,  
And five months for you to say yes.  
It took you eight months to say *I love you*,  
And it took me eleven to mean it.  
Twelve more months to rent an apartment,  
And fifteen after that  
To afford one that didn't have  
Partially working bathrooms.  
And now,  
It's been four years  
And I don't have time  
To play this game again.

I'm too tired to fall in love again.  
It wasn't a very pleasant  
Experiment to begin with.  
I can't imagine  
Finding someone else,  
Throwing more of myself into a  
Gamble,  
Praying the wager was worth the  
Payout.  
I've gotten more than  
I've given  
With you, so  
It has to be you,  
Or no one,  
Because I can't bring myself  
To play again.

If there are hundreds of girls  
I could take,  
And one of them  
Is the cure  
Are the others just  
Sugar pills?  
If love can be feigned  
Then I'd like to fake it  
With you.  
We'll be placebos,  
And simply pretend  
We don't feel the ache.

You give me this smile  
That's far too old  
For your smooth, tanned skin,  
And I wonder if you heard my proposal.  
Have you decided  
To waste your life with me  
In this pitiful partnership we'll call  
Love?

## I'M SORRY, I FORGOT

*Julia Blanding*

I watched the video again,  
Although it's only seven seconds long  
And you can't see much through the clouds.  
I just wanted to remember what you felt like.  
My senses have been slipping, though,  
And I can't feel you very well anymore.

They weren't happy when I told them about how you smiled at me.  
I thought it was just because they couldn't see it for themselves,  
But I've seen it lots of times  
Like when you stopped kissing me just to show it to me  
Or when you saw me sitting on that bench in the mall  
And the backpack on my shoulder shook  
And you showed it to me then,  
But lately I can't remember what it looks like.

I remember there were gaps between your teeth.  
Not the front teeth.  
I think it was the canines or the incisors...  
They weren't big gaps, but the teeth didn't touch in some places.  
And I remember that time you had to get that baby tooth pulled.  
Eighteen and you had to get a baby tooth pulled!  
I never got to see you smile after that  
And now I can't see it at all.

I watched the video over and over again.  
I just wanted to hear you talk about how clean your room is  
One more time.

I thought about your plaid button down  
With the short sleeves and the collar.  
I thought about it on the ground in my room.  
I remember when I tried to pull it over your head  
Because I forgot there were buttons on it.  
Now, I can't quite remember where the buttons were.  
I wish I could run my fingers over them again.  
I'd unbutton them and button them back up  
So I could memorize their placement.

I saw a shirt just like it at the thrift shop yesterday.  
I almost bought it too.  
I kept saying how much I needed it.  
I mean, I know I don't need it.  
I don't know why I keep saying stuff like that.

Now I'm sleeping sideways on my bed,  
Wondering when you get out of work.  
Maybe you're too busy stocking boxes of Fruit Loops to think of me.  
Or maybe you'll see my face when you refill the gumball machine.  
Maybe there's a little yellow gumball like the color of my hair.  
And maybe it reminds you of me  
And sunshine and tie-dye and dandelions.  
I'd like to be associated with those things,  
But I don't know if there even is a gumball machine there  
I don't even know if you think of me all that much.



*Meng Yu*

# HIROSHIMA

*Gillian Moore*



My mind keeps slipping  
back to Hiroshima  
and how we never  
cleaned up our toys.  
They're still stepping on Legos  
and learning what radiation tastes like  
and how to spell it;  
it's a big word,  
especially in the headlines.

I've taken to sitting on sidewalks  
because that's what you were doing  
*when it hit*;  
(that's a time of day now,  
a red X someone marked on the calendar  
when no one was looking.)

It's easier to forget the past  
when you're not forced  
to step on the shards.  
We've done our best  
to clear out the history books,  
but there's still the occasional splinter  
for those with wandering fingers  
and wide eyes spinning like globes.

In Hiroshima,  
they're not stepping on shards,  
they're stepping on shadows.  
That's storybook science, America,  
like in Peter Pan,  
stitching shadows to shoes,  
stitching shadows to sidewalks.  
I can see where you sat  
reading the paper  
*when it hit*,  
before you were taken  
by a wall of hydrogen,  
leaving nothing but a chemical process  
and a color tint in the pavement.

I'll never know what  
you were reading that day.  
Probably something about the war.  
I'd like to think it was the personals,  
though, and I'd like to think you  
finally found her that day  
and that *when it hit*,  
you were smiling  
for the camera.

# UNTITLED

*Rachel Donahue*

The depths of the sky folded in on the city,  
Covering us in wet tar.

And our fingers trembled  
Over the pulsating subway tracks,  
So beautiful when she holds her breath.

The wind whipped my hair into

Her humming in the silence.

And bicyclists, flying by,  
Yelled out names we don't belong to.

The neon underneath her skin,  
Whispers love letters  
Into the ears of bartenders.

And one-kiss museum curators.  
Who have never held a gun.

She licks the teeth  
Of the boys with diamond earrings,  
And their gallito.

But she cannot help,  
but rip the sweetness from  
the dew and dimples  
everyone craves.

The longer her deadlock stains her open mouth,  
The more the car horns  
Fuel her fireball breath.

I'll never tire of parking lot poetry,  
But the cold always got to her.

And this,  
Is worth staying awake for.



*Chris Locke*

# FACADES

*Maddi Smillie*

They stood with each other under the dimly lit lamp post  
As the city receded into the night.  
There were no mountains, but buildings.  
There were no stars, but the flickering lights of offices.  
The air was not fresh and the clouds were not clean.  
This place was far from any natural landscape,  
it was a carefully hand-crafted unit.

So far, these two people had found a way to make this intricate city  
Look like a landscape.  
Making their way through the narrow streets  
As if they were one big open field.  
They had lived in something of Van Gogh or Monet  
a painting on the wall,  
covering up a hole with beauty.  
It was just paint over what was really there.

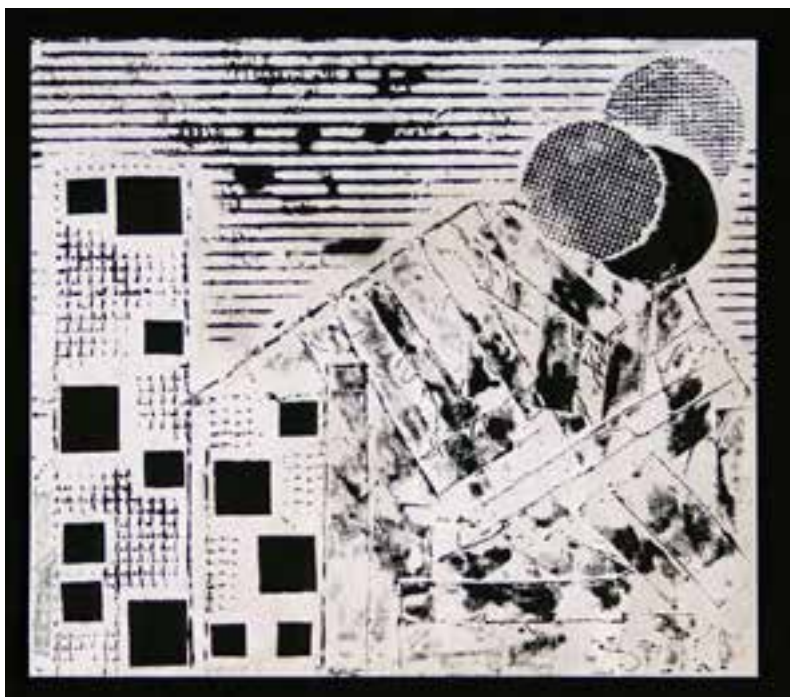
They stood there under that lamp post  
shifting uncomfortably as the truth came out.  
The paint just peeled off and it was no longer  
a beautiful landscape.  
The machines and buildings ripped through their canvas,

Their movements became scripted.  
It was lost to them,  
how to become unknown to one another once again—  
her hands seemed lost and unknowingly rattled around her bracelets,  
his eyes avoided what they had created and destroyed.

The painting was no longer a painting.  
It was now faded,  
Barely visible on a broken and torn canvas.

The two were no longer two,  
but instead one and one,  
each living as  
strangers in the city.





*Taylor Kells*

## UNTITLED

*Indiana Brown*

I'd like to file down these spines, both nascent and tenured,  
Hammer them back into the smooth skin of their birthplace.  
But every day I go untouched  
Another spawns,  
Erect and swollen with the venom of neglect.

You and your naïve, misty gaze.  
I cradle more deviance in one  
Spiny abscess, more sensuality in one  
Carbuncle dagger  
Than your friends would ever dare discuss in hushed  
Voices after dark.

Take a look at the prurient porcupine, the carnal cactus  
That slouches before you.  
The illness of being ignored  
Littered my dimples with dirty needles and  
Tore the tender flesh of my lips.

Mona Lisa lost her smile, David's chiseled masculinity weathered away.  
Charybdis and Scylla are but decrepit sea hags  
When no one approaches to hear their sultry melodies.

For years, your foggy orbs turned a blind eye,  
Leaving the thistles and spurs to hatch in bitter clusters.  
Who will dethorn my thirsty stem?

## VANTAGE POINT

*Nicki Pierce*

Take a picture;  
it lasts longer.  
They said.  
Now we're left with pennies in the bank,  
scraping rust from our smiles.  
It makes no cents.  
I could call it a Kodak moment  
but it's not funny.  
The city is uneven,  
cracking down sidewalk lines  
and lining up side streets  
with sob stories.  
It's a tragedy best looked at  
from up-top  
so I've taken to the fire escapes  
for the big picture  
but never removed the lens cap.  
It was the perfect day  
for tilt shift.

I was so used to the orbit  
of our suburban satellite states  
that I hardly noticed  
nothing moved.  
I leaned over the edge  
of a six story drama  
and felt very tall.  
I spat down into the street.  
The same street where we heard gunshots  
and turned around  
to shelter in a building where  
I learned to triple-step  
to jazz so smooth  
it was like soaring.  
Anybody there could have kissed me.



*Maya Updegraff*

# FAILED MEMORY EXERCISE

*Adeeb Sheikh*

I sit here, now,  
And eyelids flutter about, falling, but resisting the fall.  
Miles of land stretch out before me,  
Appearing bright in the darkness of this tumbling steel cage,  
Guided by winding rails, tracing old paths.  
The scene races past,  
In a blur,  
And all the colors wash away with time.  
As my eyes struggle to keep open,  
Darkness seeps in,  
And an image forms from the black;  
A youthful hand, once familiar, takes hold of my own.

It pulls me, it drags me, it takes me.  
Melting into the folds of the skin,  
I take an old form and see through old eyes;  
Eyes that I had long since abandoned.  
What I see is kaleidoscopic, the sugary sweetness of childhood.  
Scraped knees and hot sweats find us,  
As the sun bears down  
And we escape into the shade beneath a colossus of old, red brick,  
Which looks as so inviting a respite.  
Graffiti paints the walls in thick red and green and black;  
Each stands back to admire it.  
'Art' it was so called then.  
The air was buzzing with heat and in a moment,  
We were off again, running and jumping, chasing and vaulting.

We played and played, but didn't notice as change spilled forth from within  
us.  
Reach and stride lengthened.  
Shrill voices cracked, giving way for a new deepness.  
Outlook changed.

Gathering in the dusk,  
Beneath painted buildings and painted skies,  
We pricked ourselves,  
Contaminated our blood with the filth of urban decay.  
The world spun,  
Back then, as happiness and ecstasy slipped  
From our pores, from our orifices.  
Those painted buildings and those painted skies no longer remain.  
Those people no longer remain.

The paint has since faded, been replaced.  
In the fire of malcontent and dissent,  
Shadows have taken to these walls;  
Shadows unlike those that once hid us from the sun.  
There's something sinister about these,  
Something haunting;  
They are the souls of the unwilling sacrifice,  
Etched into stone;  
They are the blackness dominating the crumbling wall.

Blink, then I'm back.  
The greenery, the leaves, the country-side,  
They lay themselves out before me once more.  
The oscillating motion:  
This iron snake picks me up and drops me gently;  
It's a cradle unlike that into which I was born.

## FATHER

*Meng Yu*

Father,  
the photos you kept  
encased in the cold clasps  
of iron trees and bronze leaves  
are withering.  
The memories you revere  
are the broken pieces  
of a time  
past.

The asylum you built hidden among tall trees  
can no longer hide the neon treasures  
of a regular life.

You plastered before me  
paintings of hell  
to scare me from the ground  
to the Heaven everyone seeks.

That plaster did more  
than stifle naïve dreams.

Father,  
I'm suffocating  
under the dense clouds  
of your expectations.

Fly, you command me.  
Take towards the top.  
But how could these bound wings  
and this chained heart  
ever leave  
the ground they're attached to?  
How could I ever hope  
to reach the heights you've set  
from the earth  
you've kept me on?

You cut tongues from mouths  
with a wave of your hand,  
a head turned away.  
I've learned I can't talk  
to a man with no ears,  
with an upturned face.

Father.  
The blankets that you've wrapped  
around your precious doll  
have started to come loose.  
The strings have all  
been bitten through  
by little grey mice  
that escaped through the gap  
between your tiger paws.

The trophy you so proudly displayed  
has been chipped around the edges.  
Don't you see that you've only ever emulated  
a ghost?

There is nothing beneath  
that distracting gold foil  
but lead,  
poison and soft.

But you won't clear away  
the spiders that skitter through your house  
whispering fine secrets,  
eating fine minds.

Look, you would say,  
as you compared the world  
to the vast night sky.  
You were the moon. I was a star.

The darkness became  
the people of the earth  
who suffocated our lights.  
But I only see  
one thing that detracts from me.

That bright moon which  
draws the eye,  
while that small star  
gets drowned out  
by the artificial lights  
strung through the shade  
made by you.

Of course nobody would see me.  
I'm not even sure  
if you recognize  
the heart by your side, waiting.

Father.  
My heart hurts.  
I can't breathe.  
The metal wires wrapped around my neck are choking me.  
The lines are blurred  
where the words bleed.  
The air here is poison.  
The ceiling is gold.

Father.

Father,

can you hear me?



*Meng Yu*



# THAT THANG

Mahyra Collins



*Anati, Anati, tick tock, gunshots,  
Wastin' time,  
Racing time,  
Tick tock, tock.*

I'm the thing that keep crack heads sniffin' crack  
And cigarette lovers addicted to nicotine  
I'm the thing that be havin' kids poppin' molly  
And a prostitute at the corner of almost every city street

I'm death  
I'm destruction  
I'm the thing that make heroin addicts think *I want more*  
I'm every drink  
Every shot  
And I'm walking casually from door to door

I'm the reason why you cry in debris  
And I'm the same reason why your 12-year-old daughter acts 19

I'm the thing that keeps little boys yelling and screaming  
At the mom because the dad wasn't there  
I'm every distraction  
I'm every touchy subject  
And I want you to know  
That I don't care about you or your families

I'm the thing that reels you in with paper,  
Yes, green paper,  
And oils that smell like citrus and vanilla beans

I'm the thing that comes in the disguise  
Because I lift from tear to tear  
So I'll dry to eye to eye

I might have long, pretty hair  
With big, voluptuous thighs,  
But I'm the thing that makes the world go crazy  
And it's either my way or the drunken highway

So either way  
You have to obey me  
I'm every bomb  
I'm every war  
And like I said I'm walking causally  
From door to door

And you tried to kill me  
But I'm taking over  
Every mind any soul  
So one by one you will  
Surrender  
And if you don't stop me now  
There's no telling how  
Far I'll go  
Because after me there will be no  
Next dynasty  
There will be no overthrow

I'm the thing that lets you live,  
Then, die  
Rather than tell the truth  
Our youth  
Tells lies

And the stories that I imply  
You can't even deny  
Because Black people don't even know  
What I'm talking about when I say  
It's supposed to be the darkness you emphasize

Right?

I'm the thing that has you doubt yourself  
And I'm the same thing  
That had every stupid black man in America  
Addicted to another man's wealth

I'm every anti-Malcolm X  
I'm every anti-Martin Luther King  
I'm every anti-Angela Davis  
I'm the thing that didn't want freedom to ring

I'm sin! Can't you see?  
I walk around with my nose tooted up  
A pistol in my right hand  
And I might have Jordans on my feet

I come in the forms of many  
I live in the hearts of most  
And I may be sitting right next to you  
And you don't even know

Why? Because I'm That *Thang*.

Thank you.



*Alex Cunningham*

# DISTANCE IN CELSIUS

*Gillian Moore*

I could taste your fever  
long before you knew.

You were too hot for  
the particles in the air;  
they died and left me  
choking on hard oxygen.  
You probably mistook it  
for swallowing wrong;  
anyone would.  
You've got a  
record temperature  
like Florida in August,  
all-inclusive of humidity  
("This one's one for the books,  
folks," or at least one  
for the movies.)

Those chemical imbalances are  
beginning to catch up to you,  
and believe me, you'll be  
burning up when they do.  
I'll be around to watch  
when it happens,  
wouldn't miss it for  
our world or the next,  
but I might need to  
borrow binoculars  
because I'm still swapping  
miles for centimeters  
and they tell me they prefer  
to avoid using the metric system  
when it comes to affairs of  
love or state.

For you, I'm learning to  
measure distance in Celsius.

When you burn,  
I hope you do so  
like a Buddhist monk,  
with all the poise and oil stink  
and organized flames of  
the best intentions and  
a job well done.  
(Read: I wish only  
the best for you.)

I fear our neurons are  
falling out of sync.  
Come back soon;  
I can't stand the headaches.

## UNTITLED

*Emma DiMarco*

"Beth is having a baby"  
"What? I didn't know that."  
She sighs, "I guess that does come next."

*It got me thinking and I sat there and I thought. Hell, I thought a lot, my slightly numb fingertips, veins purple, almost black, sitting on my over washed corduroy pants. All this trash women refer to as, "life" is a series of rings to climb, get from one place to the next, never hesitating, constantly focused without distraction on what's coming next.*

Get someone's attention:

"Are you all set with your drink?-"  
*I can't think about what he's going to say next, it's obvious he's not finished, he just sat down. Anxious, I glance at the homely man in and his overgrown beard. He looks at me sharply, his eyes fiery.*  
"No, no."

*He's angry, and she walks away flustered*

*I sit and observe the overly attentive waitress, poor thing. Her mousy brown hair messily tucked behind her left ear, she sees me staring but I don't stop. I think I love her as I watch her continue to wipe down tabletops. Maybe it's a sympathetic kind of love, but I want to tell her, no, no, I need to tell her. I hear myself saying the words, repeating them, my mouth open, like an idiot, looking like I was trying to catch popcorn in my mouth or some stupid thing like that. Standing there in front of her, my eyes glossed over, "Can I help you with something?" she said softly and as if she was afraid I might harm her. I wasn't fearful of her reaction or how the words would sound when I said them, no, it wasn't that. It was a subconscious warning that put a damper on my sudden spell of spontaneity, flashing in neon in my aorta reading, don't fall in love it's a disaster. So I stood there looking at her eyelids and tracing the veins on them. Step one of the list I'd made earlier completed, "Get someone's attention." But I walked away without kissing her face.*

Kiss their face

Get them to like you:

*The nervous shutter of clamoring hands, clammy hands- I want to hold it but mine are too wet. This girl, lanky, mousey and inelegant sent palpitations of heat through my palms and she's resting her hand on my knee, dear god it's so close. She smoked cigarettes only in the morning and got high before she slept, eyelids lightly fluttering with it flowering through her purple blood. She was an insomniac of sorts but I wanted her to love me. No, no, I wanted her to cling to me with her insecurities as if her own life depended upon it, unable to remove her gaping jaw from my swollen palms.*

Get them to kiss your face willingly

"Fall in love":

*Heart bleeding so endlessly that it spelled words on the sidewalk and it seeped into the gutters once the rain came.*

Get them to fall in love with you:

"But like a little bit crass. Hell, she's used to that, with her dad and all. He's a cool guy" He pauses. "...It's very good for her."

"Is that not usually the case?"

"No, no, not since Haynes."

*What if she doesn't really love him though, if she's one of those addicts to what she knows is bad for her. The aching pain carved into the soft tissue of her organs, like an etch-a-sketch you just can't shake, a drug of sorts, yes, carrying her from day to day. She wakes up every day the same, to a dreary morning, hearing the swish of her dry heels against the hardwood floor, dragging her feet, unable to pick up the heavy bones connected to one another and she's longing for the irrational heated discomfort in her lungs. The dense scent of her watch brushing against his shoulder, screaming.*

*The girl next door was sucked into a sinkhole with all the old refrigerators and unwanted junk. I'm here telling you because someone needed to say it and she looked no one in the eye the day before she was lost. I think, but don't dare say that she knew the tragic future that lay ahead of her. Marcy Jones claims she saw her jump and she laughed viciously as she told me, smoking a cigarette, her olive skin shriveled onto her sharp cheekbones. "Like it was a swimming pool on a hundred and three degree day in July."*

Tell them you love them  
Make sure they say it back:

*There was a bitter cold snow covering the ground and it was unforgiving as hell. It swept up the dry leaves and leftovers from lazy jerks' past meals. She slipped and fell and hit her head. In a deadly daze she held him in her arms. "I love you." He breathed out the words lightly, they flicked off the tip of his tongue like hot ashes off the butt of her cigarette. Past relationships promised her that no one could ever "love" her emotionally unavailable state of being. Unable to speak she let out a scoff- "Hah", not sarcastic just the kind of noise you'd make when you're unable to make any others.*

*There were volcanoes emptying their hot embers on the shores of Playa Del Carmen suffocating the little Niño's with hot, hot ash. They turned to stone piled on top of one another centuries ago to create the rock like structure in the middle of the royal blue sea that she was fearfully about to leap from. "Say it" her ears were ringing. Oh, but she didn't, she couldn't.*

Date for a while  
They meet your parents  
Your parents like her  
You meet her parents  
They hate you  
Get her parents to like you  
Meet each other's extended families  
She meets yours and finds out you're crazy  
You ask her to marry you anyways  
She says yes  
The two of you have a baby:

*“She grew up to be a lady bug, you know.” the over enthusiastic man gestures with his hands about the marvels of his daughter. “Yes, yes and everyone says so, she’s quite beautiful, looking more like her mother than myself.” But it’s obvious as he stands in line in his overshined shoes and corduroy jacket that he too finds him self disgustingly attractive, a curse of some sort, wearing his beauty like a shield.*

*At 6:52 am Charlotte was born and I got on my knees and begged god, or whatever the hell is up there, not to make her beautiful, glazed skin a deep pink and tight balled fists, screaming and begging to go back into the womb.*

You have more babies

She wants another baby but you don’t so you buy her a black lab instead  
and name it something stupid

Your kids go to college

They move out of the house

You work a lot and she’s alone too much:

*I ran my finger tips through every pore in her body but never knew what she was capable of becoming, never understanding the depth of how she became the wretched woman standing before me barking at me to “Pick up the damn things I left all over the place.” She’d been a helpless fragile being the day I saved her in the parking lot, she owed me and we had both believed that, until now. A blossoming woman, full and no longer able to snap like a tooth pick with the tips of my fingers. She’d laid down next to me, heavy breathing rocking the mattress; I whispered in her ear “All I wanted was a blindfold so I wouldn’t have to look at her anymore.” She came home a year later to tell me that she needed me; I had that woman on a string.*

You both retire

Together you buy a tacky condo in Florida with an extra bedroom

Your kids come to visit

You meet your kid’s significant others and worry for them:

*There were eye balls drawn on the letter he’d sent me, the long brown envelope looked weathered, the ink pen had traced and retraced the sketchy outlines of others eye balls, lashes and brows. I would be to only see that part of a person, how they observe their surroundings, without having a single notion about their gender, whether or not I wanted them, or at least try, their damn height or hair color. Never knowing if they were an alcoholic, felt crippling amounts of love, or were missing a leg, remaining mysterious yet loved by me because I missed the truth of their being by glancing at their eyes, it’s better that way, its better that way.*



Your kids get married  
Your kids have kids:

She really didn't know anything, she never did. Smiling men in business suits- disgusting lustful gleams in their eyes, always looking at the people walking by. Sitting in two chairs in an airport, briefcases shiny an expensive beneath them.

"Hah- it was the only thing she knew how to do."

"With a face like hers- that's a given."

They laugh bitterly, a quick chuckle before returning to the subject at hand.

"Dumber than a box of rocks."

*That rich man had no compassion in his cold, shrunken heart, beaten down by tasks and stock rates and hotel rooms. He never cried or felt guilt for the disgusting manner in which he spent his nights, unknowing in the atmosphere of compassion and honesty. He had a blazing hellish fire in his eyes that I couldn't ignore. My unending lack of affection carried itself in his genes. I over heard his mindless scoffs when I was dead and I wish I could truly be dead, the kind of dead where you can't hear that and feel like it's your fault.*

She knits sweaters for the new babies and you watch silently

That is if you're lucky enough and the two of you are still in love

You die hopefully before she does so you don't have to be alone:

*There was a body rolled up in the floor mats at some high school and I saw it on the news. Viciously running on the treadmill, sweating out my anxieties like a hungry dog on attack, I watched the screen, glued to the pale stiff feet that hung out of the end of that mat. And I didn't feel sorry for the seventeen year old rolled up like a burrito, dead in his high school's gym. I had gone through my twenty-eight years of living without ever feeling sympathetic because people got what they deserved. I told my mother those exact words when I was seventeen and she cried, never saying more just silently sobbing at the doorway of my bedroom. She knew I was a bitter soul.*

"This was two weeks before he died."

"Mmmh"

"This... was a week before he died."

*The two wrinkled women are hunched over a book, reading the back cover.*

"I've got to get this someday."

*She sets the book down and they walk towards the broken elevator.*

*They carried themselves with a sense of reverence for the deceased person, something I've never understood, and suddenly wish I could.*

But then she's alone and your dead and your bones worry for her  
She dies and you're happy you're together:

*"I begged him for a gun... he shook his head... chin down. But dammit I was tired and wanted my head to be hung on the wall like a trophy, brilliant and useful, hell I was better off up there." I always fantasized about death, much more frequently than women. Total blackness forever held a captivating glimmer and enamel black of lust for the dead in my confused state of being.*

You kids and grandchildren miss you:

*"19. Except loss forever" —Jack Kerouac*

But not for too long:

"Swung over my left shoulder, her arms, her hips alongside my ribs, her body folded over mine. Present like we could've been, dead like we should've been." *Oh all the godforsaken trash you'll hear at a lonely bar.*

They name one of their children after you if you're lucky  
You're forgotten and so is she

"I had this dream, this crazy, dream... and it was pushing down on my head. The pressure... It hurt."

*He lets out a laugh at himself, filling the gap in conversation.*

"So, the whole ceiling was too short and was pushing down on the top of my head."

*The two teachers walk down the hall together using their hands and gesturing, talking, smiling.*

*The pressure of being forgotten, I imagined lifted off the shoulders of the man, his argyle sweater vest protecting his nimble heart from feeling the sharp knife of never again being remembered. What did he care, that ignorant jerk didn't give a damn about who didn't say his name or wake up in the middle of the night, sheets damp, with a slight sensation of a ghost from his soul. No, no, it didn't matter and neither did the pressure of the ceiling in his dream. He carried on without any hint of indifference. I knew that it mattered because I had felt that weight before and my senses were tuned to notice the ghostly end of a man. One hundred and four years later delicate fingers, lanky and awkward would pick up his photo, scoff at his hideous sweater vest, and set it face down on the marble countertop.*



*Brigitte Gogos*

## THE ARTIST

*Mythea Mazzola*

Perfectly circular eyes  
admire,  
or hate,  
him.

The artists inspects his masterpiece,  
his life's work,  
with sharp eyes.

His watercolor  
drips with life.  
Flesh and blood.  
Emotions that scream  
out loud.

He crawls into bed,  
all the while  
staring at her  
while she stares at him.

Filled with confusion  
and utter disgust  
with his creation.

She doesn't fit with the roaring waters  
and shining bright sky  
of this imagistic  
and idyllic  
world.

He paints quickly.  
He gives her rainbows  
and sunshine,  
in vain, hoping that  
she will look  
away.

Yet, he cannot.

He must not.  
Who knows what she'll do then?

# WHAT I WANTED

*Claire Lewis*

There is happiness forged in silence  
And resentment in memory.  
The road curves into a neighborhood  
Growing around trees  
That line the ceiling  
So the moon can't get a word in.

The discoveries I cherished  
Invading your two door world  
Were swelled by adoration.  
Now they foam with bitterness,  
Making the air breathe sour  
Three years ago.

I cling to your profile  
Crossing in green and blue,  
Lights and darkness.  
I don't know this face anymore.  
The dull gaze of your shimmering eyes  
A rat nest of gentle curls.  
Your past is fighting your reflection.  
The brights from your rotten car  
Do little to trick our minds  
And impersonate daylight.

The road chokes as we are regurgitated  
Into neon filled gutters  
Of towns that don't know how to give in  
And close their eyes.

Night drags low,  
Stars don't exist  
Amongst lights that take their stage.  
I feel more confined  
Than when we were trapped by woven branches.

Scratching voices mix an  
Invisible man's with yours.  
You hand me food,  
Formed grease I feel guilty to eat.  
But it's a gift from your calloused palms.  
No one else would  
feed me.  
Bass hammers from broken speakers.  
I don't remember if I paid  
Or you did.  
I don't remember  
If it even matters.

I revolt from this line of memory,  
Scratching at his  
Mirage,  
Pulling for something  
Stuck there.

Remember the string,  
Wrapping tether around  
Furniture and photos.  
White lines cutting  
Through rooms and  
Creating mazes, traps, and pentagrams.  
Were you mad when I cut them down,  
With nail clippers and dull knives?  
You cut them with me.  
Did something inside you squish,  
Like the banana free falling  
From its suspended prison?  
Or did none of this really matter to you?

The old man took the last string  
Tied around my bed post,  
And I lost something that carved a hole  
In its place.  
Thirst for that old love  
Filled it in.  
I begged for a drink,  
Only to be given the salted case  
You hid inside.

You had just begun to crack,  
A circus car turning around,  
Escaping the looming street lamps  
Into the pit.  
If I opened you up now,  
I wonder if there'd be anything left.

You aren't the same,  
And nothing has been resolved.  
We take the same road home,  
And the leaves are lace on the roof  
But I forgot what I wanted.



Rachel Smith

# SAUDADE

*Rachel Donabue*

With stretching arms they do not cry,  
For fathers whose toes have brushed the grainy end,  
And skin that has absorbed enough salt water to reward their bitten  
tongues.

That Saudade that pulls us,  
From between our thinning ribs,  
And licks cold steel from the smalls of our backs,  
Leaves their doomedness through swaying hips.  
While you only watch cold,  
The ships depart from their eyes.

For your blood is not ours,  
Hot with the salt of drowned love,  
The eternal pull of the moons unrequited yearnings.

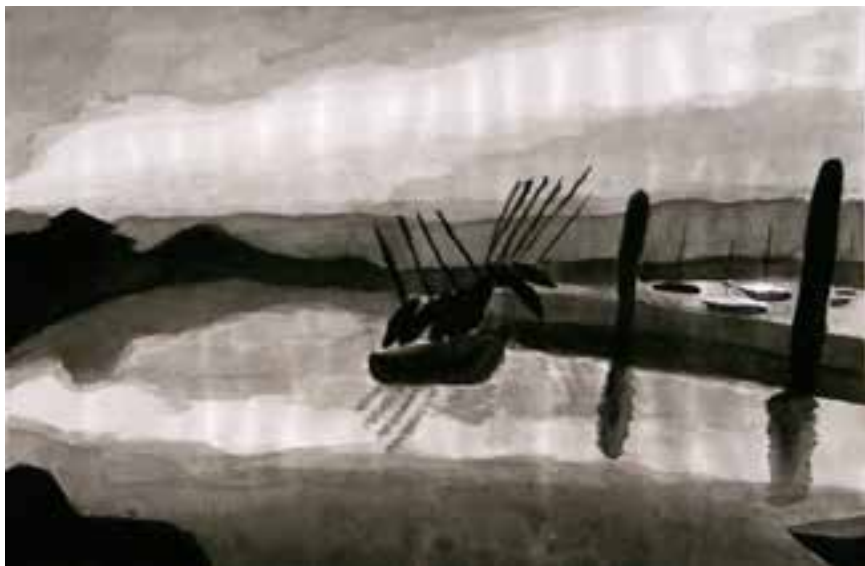
All you have lost is gone.  
And that sharp disappearance falters and dulls.  
You move on,  
We pickle in it.

At first taste of your ignorance I called foreigner,  
But in Spain is extremo and Albania permalie.  
Bosnia's sevdah is the Turk's black bile,  
It spews from the mold in which you don't fit.

Our Portuguese hearts fight as we kick,  
Filling with a melancholy nationalism,  
Tasting like almonds.

We fly through the atmosphere like their bodies sank,  
Bubbles of air departing as cloth permeates,  
And swallows honesty in gulpfulls.  
The world crumbled in its own fingertips,  
Erratic in our thrashing,  
While our toes flutter like butterflies, allowing.





*Taylor Kells*

## MS. PENNROYAL

*Dominique K. Pierce*

I could feel it  
little hands like shark teeth  
split smile sharp  
bone and bone marrow teeth  
gnawing my dust brittle ribs  
hungry as God with the intention of Eve  
those well paved intentions  
of Eve who ate the apple  
of Eve who played with snakes  
hissing in my  
epiglottis wriggling mucus  
where I could taste it but  
couldn't spit it out

screaming  
like toddlers and angry locomotives  
eviscerating unrescued damsels  
stuck in the piston rods sticky  
chunks like cheap blender aftermath and  
how it feels to be an accomplice  
but nobody asked the train  
nightmares railroad women rattling  
insomnia choking smoke on  
the emotional momentum of the moment  
not enough opposite reaction  
no traction, collision happening  
despite the illness called intention  
so to hell with Newton  
and all his laws.

I could feel it  
arms wrapped around  
the revolution inside of me guns  
popping neurons electric  
deltoids stretched like  
atmospheres full of rubber  
lactase smog as muscles  
worked like cities  
to put colors in the sky  
chewing my oxygen  
spitting out coal dust  
veins black  
ink from free pens black  
as faces in history books black written  
black like tragedies but  
look at all that dramatic irony  
deficiency  
frying egg yoke breakfast casual murders  
society sanctioned like smoking  
and driving anywhere  
even with seatbelts as it sucked  
the vitamins and minerals  
from my structural integrity  
like every earthquake

wrecking ball rusting elemental  
disaster since  
before the atom split  
splitting human-shaped spherical perfect  
symmetry like opium and  
in the after-death  
in the hot ooze of radiation-death  
nails are still growing past paint  
toxic with mad painters crazy mad  
mad with conquering  
mad like rabies and dog spit.

I could feel it  
vertebrae splintering  
crunching like cereal  
like cereal boxes  
under car tires who left  
breakfast on the driveway  
the driveway and never come back  
exhaust full of fuming  
violent newspaper sentences  
words that unravel the intestines  
vomit scrubbed front porches  
waving at neighbors  
praying for ignorance in these  
self-contained civil wars  
everybody's a victim  
everybody's a crime scene  
and it murdered me slowly  
digging my spinal cord out  
with silver spoons forks knives  
kitchen plates napkins water glasses  
guests with guest faces  
with baby teeth that get stuck  
in the appetizers

licking broken ligaments like  
candy sweet apple pie  
as I toppled over stranded  
slow motion  
mouth open  
eyes open  
open-ended  
rhetorical questions with  
hands raised rollercoaster gravity  
everybody thinking about friction  
our law-abiding bodies  
heat-sparking baby-making bodies  
all baptized in womb fluid  
thirsty as dead things.

I could feel it  
peeling skin plastic  
revealing the overexposure  
false photography  
hypoclear formaldehyde non-ionic wetting  
of a slick birth  
manifest from my bones  
dripping my blood  
like a false blessing  
a thing I had created  
eighteen years of terrors cutting  
lips from magazines  
and bleeding dentist gums  
grinning certifiably maniac  
shaking bits of liver  
from its hair  
like an animal.

I could feel it  
empty eyed lipless limp baby feet  
useless ankles wrists of a murderer  
lungs of poison ivy faceless  
filthy cornea all three kidneys  
backbone of crown thorns  
screaming frantic bloody vengeance  
charred black morals full  
of scalpels as they torn it out of me  
saying this won't hurt a bit,  
  
but it did.



*Caitlin Fitzsimmons*

# CHAMOMILE MAN

*Julia Blanding*

Whispers linger on bare, white walls  
While Bonzo's bass drum bangs inside my chest.  
The fat boy with the blotchy face howls.  
He sweats a lot when he's wired.

A Chamomile man leans against a dresser across from me.  
His shirt is unbuttoned, revealing the hair that trails down his chest.  
I'm afraid to look at him,  
But I can feel his eyes on me.

Some girls conglomerate by the door.  
They pass wispy dreams from mouth to ear.  
The silvery bubbles of fantasy escape their lips,  
Disappearing in the room's clamoring atmosphere.  
If I caught the wisps before they became vapor,  
Could I read their minds?

The Chamomile man's coffee black eyes penetrate me for a moment  
And the next moment they're elsewhere.  
I ramble about street signs and cobblestones,  
But I don't think he hears a word.  
He only looks.

A loon enters the room in a bathrobe  
And plaid boxers that he's worn three days in a row.  
He just awoke from an hour-long nap.  
He says he's not sure how he got here,  
But I'm glad he made it.

The Chamomile man is back.  
His stare lifts my hair up to his face,  
And I feel it twirling around his finger.  
He's so far away,  
But I feel his fingers grazing my neck,  
And his Elvis lips exploring my shoulders.

I like how his eyes grab onto me.  
I like the way he holds my world between his fingers,  
And the way lusty musings billow forth from his lips.  
There's something about the hair that flows across his shoulders  
And the stubble that grows on his neck like moss on a tree trunk.

When I remember him now,  
I can smell the burning glass,  
I can taste his cappuccino skin,  
And I can hear the music he played as we fell asleep.

He was a simple minded man.  
He needed nothing. He wanted nothing.  
He was chamomile tea running over my lips,  
Scalding my throat,  
Defrosting my icicle fingers.

My mug is now empty,  
But I feel so full.  
Months feel like days with a love so expendable.  
Now we've used each other up  
And I've never been so happy to be used.



*Adrienne Zandvoort*

