

PEGASUS - 2017





# PEGASUS

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# Foreword

Beds for Mice  
Kiera Ebeling

When I think of writing, I think of mice and beds. Any and all kinds. Perhaps these are the essential things to writing... stay with me. Mice: sneaky, ever-watching, elusive, small, sometimes unwanted, sometimes food for larger animals, plead with us to be hidden until they demand to be heard. Either way, the mice, now seeming to represent writing, are passive. And this is where the mag comes in. I like to think Pegasus has been a nurturing platform for any mouse to live, in any way they choose. As for beds, that's what I believe nurtures writers--through sleep (or lack thereof), life, nature, love, or death, beds provide writers with all the tools for writing. They provide writers with truths. And that's all you need.

Thank you for trusting us with your mice, thank you for trusting yourself to bring these mice to life, and thank you to all the staff, teachers, and administrators for helping us let the mice be heard. And thank you for listening.



Daisy Chains  
Nina Stornelli

I was all tangled up in your daisy chains. From day one, I was lost in everything about you, beaming smile, gentle voice, bright eyes, quiet laugh. You were the warmth of spring, and I never wanted the seasons to change. So when we sat with the grass tickling our legs and the sun warming our cheeks, I didn't notice that you wove your strands of flowers around me. You encircled my arms with garlands and covered my eyes with blooms—and I was too pollen dizzy to notice. I counted only half the plucked petals; she loves me, she loves me, she loves me (knot). By the time I noticed the welts—remnants of bonds too close and nights when you were not yourself—they had scarred over, leaving stems embedded in my skin. And then you left, just like that, and the leaves were falling, and I was stuck figuring out what you were to me and who I was without you. You had once smiled at my stammered compliments, told me that I was lovely, that daisies suited me (that your deft knots suited me). I wish I could say that I did not agree. But I think that daisies suit you too. After all, it's just like you to catch me up in the simplest things.



Liam Young



So That We May Go to Heaven  
Elise McCamant

We hide in aisles of surreal yellow-lit extraterrestrial supermarkets  
Bombing the world with cascading sin and rotten zucchini  
Sending matches into hospitals with tile floors painted by whiskey  
Tearing the linoleum sky apart cloud by cloud  
To rip the savage bird songs from the arctic grasp of Boreas  
Abandoning our sins of love for the blessings of angels  
Claiming drugs and adultery for our own  
Slicing our frivolous tongues out of fevered mouths  
Because the taste of chocolate still stabs our gums as we streak  
Down the abandoned freeway  
Beneath that cratered moon shattering reflections across the sky  
Tumbling in wire shopping carts, naked but for our socks  
Laughter staining the air as frost and ice pierce our lungs  
We hit a trailer at the edge of a desolate park  
Ex neo-Nazis and confederate soldiers cackling as charcoal homes topple over  
Discarded prostitutes dragged into rusty pick-up trucks  
Lonesome skateboards meandering across ghostly streets  
Alleyways fill with clear skin and intoxicating polyester  
Intertwined with hypnotic EDM pressed up against swaying sequins  
Liquid ecstasy slipping into the sweating glasses of silky courage  
Handed over to panting girls with crumbling vertebrae and split lips  
Shrieks build the air to a frenzied crescendo as we throw you off the roof  
Onto the broken ground slick with triumphant flames  
Burning the trash of blasphemous cults veiled beneath the rafters  
Their veins swelling with bloody hymn  
Lines of children in sunset dresses perch like tropical birds  
Across twine ropes extended over hungry rivers and canals  
Song spirals up in a dissonant wail  
We're tossing the sinners off the bridge, I say  
Not gonna let hell win tonight.



A Letter To The Subconscious Mind  
Mars Ashford

They stripped her skin of its honey and milk, made the chains binding her wrists a necklace that glittered, but wasn't gold. They told her with bright smiles that the aggression of her sorrows was filed under a terrorist act. They killed her parents and then made fun of her for not having them, she was trapped. She couldn't stress enough that the skin covering her body was beautiful and not a limitation, a crime. Her skin didn't define her level of intelligence and shouldn't have been paraded around for cultural appropriation like a new fashion statement. Her skin color wasn't meant to be fetishized, but glorified for absorbing sun rays and making every other tone of skin possible.

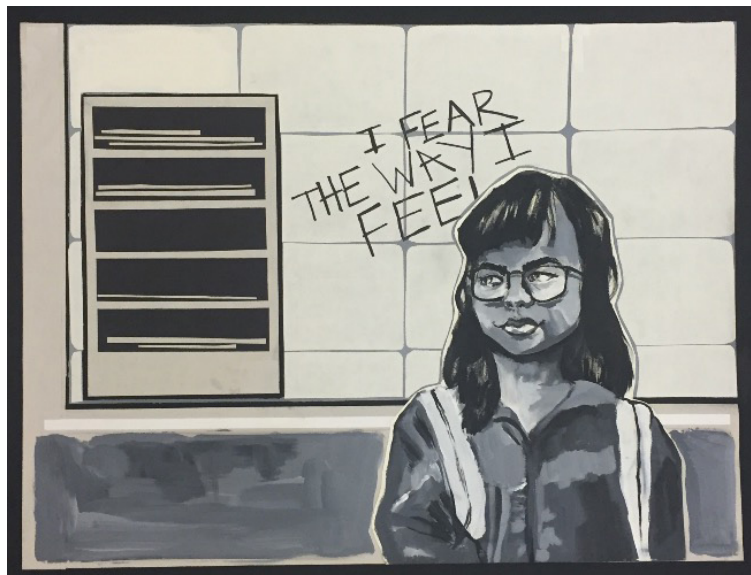
She looked at him, from under her eye lashes at the slightly pink skin on his face. She was conflicted because nobody was their family, but what their family made them and she wasn't sure what his family possibly could have constructed. Her skin had been drained of its Shea. Although very faint, small cracks of a leather whip haunting her people for centuries were on her inner thighs, taunting the skin for stretching slower than the body intended.

She liked his smile, bright and full of lightning. His eyes changed colors, a beautiful viridescent hazel when they too absorbed the sunlight. In the dark, in his moments of need, of complete liberated power, they were grasping onto an oceanic blue. Not the type of blue they make the oceans in movies but the type you see in travel brochures, with sparkling qualities and utter beauty. She loved his hands, she was able to see the veins in them and they were capable of holding any and everything. His hands grasped the world in them and didn't scar. She saw his face in her favorite song, his silver spoon had fed him good.

The sun loved her so much that it kissed her far more than others and her skin glowed golden. Golden like the specs in his green-blue eyes. Others didn't see the sun kissing her as beautiful and they had strong urges to end her strength.

Their bond was built on an unstable foundation, making it cursed from the start. Cursed dating back to their great great grandparents and he knew it. So she sat crooked with him and talked as straight as she could without crying, because in her eyes they had stolen way too many tears for her to donate them generously. It stopped.

But picture it without punctuation because there was none



Rachel Geiger

A Breath Through the Mountains  
Isabella Bors

The smell of applewood and whiskey wafts over her as she hears the laughter rising in the throats of those around her. Wisps of fire crackle with delight and smoke plays in the atmosphere as she hears a familiar voice in the crowd of sound. His tone echoes through the dimly lit room, and she feels the tension begin to dissipate as he speaks. He rambles, laughs, and roars about things she's never thought about, tempting her to listen close to the choice of words flying out of his mouth. She isn't able to see his movement, however, making it difficult to understand his emotions. She isn't able to see his smile, his hair the color of rusted iron, the scar covering his right eye. She doesn't see the twinkle in his eye as he speaks, and only hears his hearty laugh echo through the hall. As all dies down and the rumble of voices exit her field of hearing, she finds his voice, Mal's voice, and picks it out from the depths of the room. He speaks to another, a woman, and she feels a distant undertone in his speech, as if to ward her away. He catches notice of her footsteps, and cries out to her, creating a diversion to the conversation he never wanted to have.

"Anna! Dear God, kiddo, I thought you had gotten yourself lost again."

He smiles, withdrawing from the conversation with the woman to take Anna's hand. She curls her fingers around his rugged thumb as they make their exit through the rickety sliding door. As their feet squelch through the corroded rock and mud of the Catskills, she notices the uncomfortable movements in his thumb, how it twists and turns as if to ask a question.

"Your thumb is moving a lot, Mal. Got something to say?"

"Well, I just...wanted to know how ya liked it. Was I good up there or what? You haven't said anything since we got out of that place."

"Of course I liked it. You've gotta remember though, I don't really understand much 'cause your skits are made for adults."

He sighs, chuckling to himself as she hears the jingle of his keys exiting his pocket. He lifts his thumb out of her grasp, and a slight pinging noise is heard. As she is about to walk further on, a hand rests upon her back.

"Alright, stop here. You were gonna run straight into the car if I didn't stop you, darlin'."

She feels a slight warmth radiate across her face, and hears a haughty laugh echo through the trees.

"You're lookin' awful red there, kiddo. Embarrassed much?"

"S...shut up, I almost ran into a car for Pete's sake. Gimme a break, Mal."

He beams with laughter, and she feels a smile bubbling up inside her. She lets a little seep out at a time, and finally joins in with his laughter.

"Whoa nelly, that was a good laugh. Now, let's get you settled into the truck. Here, I'll lift you. One, two, three...!"

She is flung up into the open air by his arms, and is gently placed into the seat of the truck. Her hands brush against the surface of the leather, feeling its ragged and coarse texture, and the patches lined across its back. She hears Mal take a heavy step into the car and start it with the "click" of the turnkey. He slides down the window, allowing the smell of the woody terrain to enter her nose. The scent of oak trees and fallen snow permeate through her senses, and grant her serenity on the peaceful ride through the mountains. Mal takes note of her dreamlike behavior, and keeps quiet to allow her to drift into a deep sleep. As she begins to doze off, his mind starts to wander, and ends on the moment where he had first met the blinded child.

It had been a Thursday afternoon, the air crisp with frost and icy wind. He had been roaming through the forest with a friend, following the large prints of a bear with a shotgun in hand. They



kept quiet, not knowing what dangers could lie in the fog ahead, and trudged through the piles of frozen leaves on the forest floor. A sound was heard, and both men raised their weapons. Mal placed his finger on the trigger, and walked onward towards the noise, slowing his pace as he got closer. The shadow of a figure came into their vision, and they watched it trip and stumble on a root sticking out of the ground. As it hit the dirt, it screamed, and Mal almost immediately noticed the cry was that of a young girl. He rushed over, frantically putting his shotgun away and shouting at her,

"Hey, you there! Are you alright? That looked like a nasty fall!"

The young girl looked up and pushed herself back, as if to defend herself,

"Who are you? I warning you, if you try anything, I'll kick and scream and yell and.."

"Don't worry, we're not here to hurt you or anything. We just saw you trip and fall from a distance and worried for your safety. Why are you out here wandering on your own? That isn't very safe for a girl your age."

She stopped and sighed, letting herself be at ease to speak her mind,

"I don't like being cooped up inside my house all day, so I decided why not go out and explore the forest a little. It's not as if I didn't take my emergency tracker or anything, it just kind of... broke. In half. I dropped it and heard the screen shatter."

"Tracker? Why would you need one of those?"

She laughed a little, and lifted her eyelid to reveal a misty blue cloud covering her pupil.

"I'm blind."

Both Mal and the other man assumed the same shocked expression on their face, not knowing how to comprehend the situation. Mal's confusion kept him silent, yet after a few seconds he yearned to ask a question,

"...Wh...What exactly compelled you to do this sort of thing? I'm quite impressed you even made it this far into the woods, darlin'."

"Just because I'm blind doesn't mean I can't do certain things. I wanted to leave the house, alright? Nothin' more, nothin' less."

She let out a deep sigh after her statement, and proceeded to find her way off of the ground. Mal noticed a change in her expression, going from frightened to somber in the matter of a second, and furrowed his brow in disbelief.

"Doesn't sound like you're too happy about leaving. Why don't we take you to the nearest sheriff's office? They'll surely find your parents in no time."

"I didn't say I wanted to go back, did I?"

The other man chuckled suddenly, smiling from ear to ear as Mal gave him an angry stare. He sighed, saying,

"A runaway? Well, darlin', we gotta keep you somewhere, and my house isn't exactly the best place for a kid. I can't take care of you for long."

"I have no where else to go, sir."

The girl started to pout, tears welling up in her eyes as she attempted to speak,

"I don't want to go back... I can't go back. Ya' see, early this morning I woke up to my mother screaming bloody murder throughout the house. Then my dad joined in. Screaming about some sort of demon or something. It's been a normal occurrence lately. When I went downstairs, I got an instant headache, and it smelled like the stuff you use to clean windows, ya' know? Ammonia, I think? I just couldn't handle the screaming, so I took my tracker and left to get some fresh air."

Mal smiled a little, and answered with a laugh,

"I would want to get away too, if I were you. It sounds like your parents were on some sort of drug. You said it smelled like ammonia, right?"



"Yeah, the place reeked of it."

Mal gave a loud "humph", and placed his finger on his chin, tapping as if to aid his thinking. After a brief moment, he walked over to the girl and said,

"Here, gimme your hand. I'll guide you back to my humble abode. I can't promise I can keep you for long, but it doesn't seem like you're too safe at home, and I wouldn't want to leave a girl like you out in the cold."

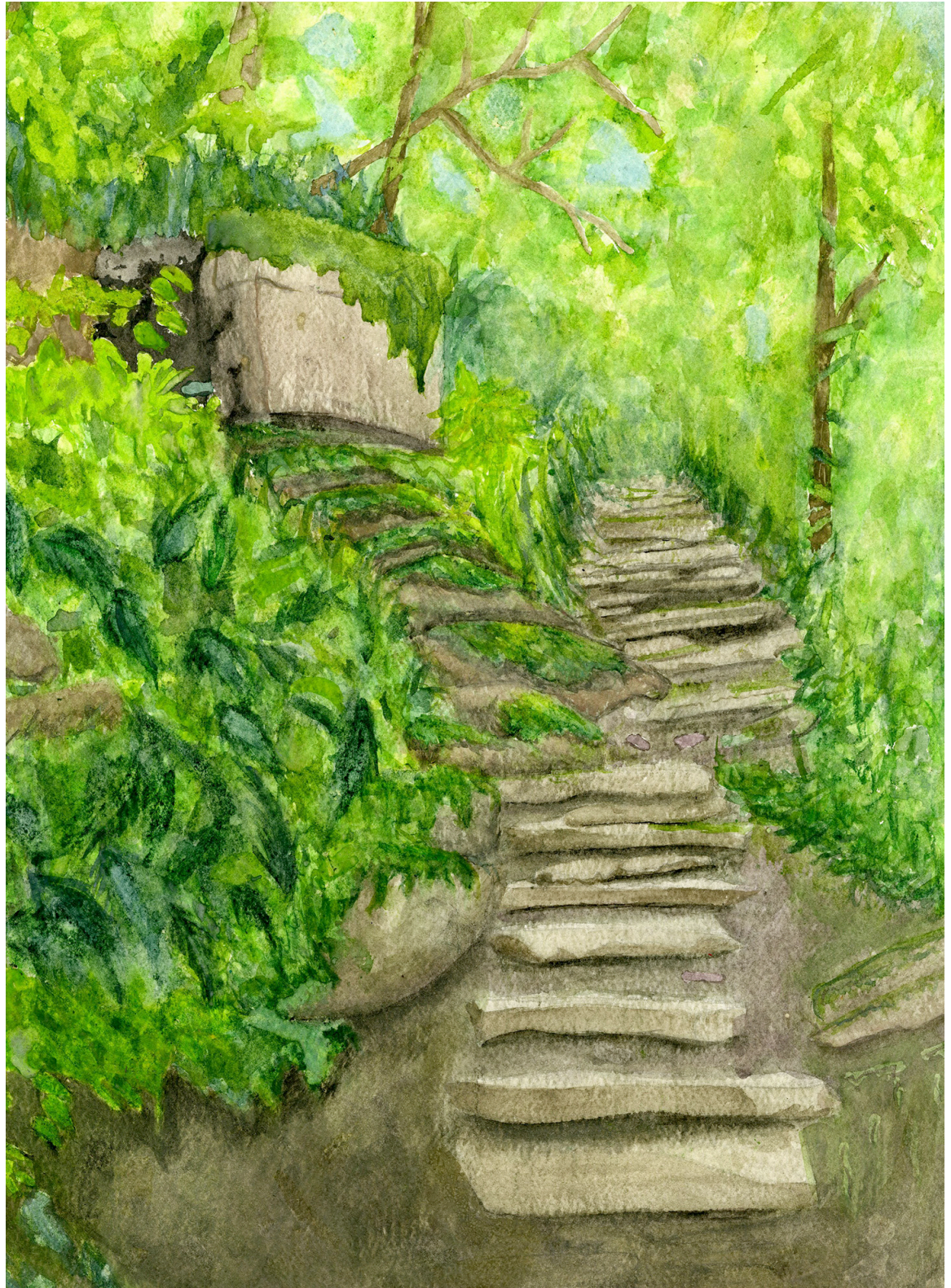
He touched his fingers against her palm, and watched her smile and repeat the gesture, wrapping her fingers tightly around his. He beckoned his friend to follow, and they started to walk down the foot of the mountain. After a while, Mal realized he never asked her name, and proceeded to say,

"Hey, I forgot to ask, kiddo, what's your name? It's kind of important if you're gonna be stayin' with me."

She turned in the direction of his voice and smiled, murmuring,

"Anna. My name's Anna."

"Well, Miss Anna, let's go and get you cleaned up."



Madi Smith



The Sea  
Aquil Sheikh

as I lay in that barrel shoulder deep in its  
water  
the unease, excitement, exhilaration  
instruments that permeated through me  
circular and uncertain

shameless  
you: the sea  
endlessly  
so blue

Shuddering  
I felt the electric eel slither down my spine  
it was a paradoxical relaxation

I couldn't  
here (myself) floating in a tin can  
far above the moon  
marooned at sea  
in a mist of desolation  
the tension of a synthesizer  
it works round and round my neck  
it's a perfect circle

circle is a flawless shape

on an island

A head of me: the sand  
I peered out from  
a body submerged in baked earth granular like sugar  
staring at the sun

Seeing  
there's a place they say  
where the earth is soaked in blood and tears  
it is there they say  
where the brightest flowers bloom



Sara Loughner

At first, my ears didn't recognize the monstrous beast banging on our door. Still in a dream-like trance, my dreary eyes had to focus a little harder to look out the main window to see whitecaps breaking against the ominously dark blue water. I quickly realized it was the wind, howling with all of its force, that was enveloping our cabin with panic. Half the campers were scared, the other half were too tired to care, but me, I was beyond exhilarated. This meant we would be doing more than just sailing today, we would be experiencing the lake and its power fully unleashed.

The end of breakfast brought the commencement of adventure. After racing to the boathouse, I grabbed sails and plopped them onto my boat - boat four. It's not my boat in the way an owner possesses something, but in my mind, boat four belonged to me. Over the years I have developed an attachment to four - it's become sentimental to me, and a lucky charm. I wanted to maximize my time on the water, so my laser focus kicked in, allowing me to rig quickly. I have no recollection of anything from that moment until we set sail, other than telling my crew, Schuller, to check us in, and then bursting out in song. I often sing when I'm feeling ecstatic, and this song fit the situation like a ring on a finger. I was performing "Rig Me Up Maigjrinite", my rendition of the original song "Build Me Up Buttercup". Once ready, we rolled the sailboat into the lake. The cold chill of the water startled me at first, but watching the smooth, white hull of the boat glide into Keuka's churning waters relaxed me. My crew, co-skipper, and I shot out past the dock and into the open water. The force of the wind was overpowering the boat. In the midst of goofing around, and trying to harness the constant gale, I remember thinking how lucky I was to be having the time of my life.

Shortly after we left land, the clouds grew perilous. My co-skipper, Noah, was manning the helm. I hollered over the wind, "Gust ahead! Let out the boomvang and loosen the outhaul," to signal him to loosen the controls. Being the adventurous guy that he is, Noah headed straight toward it. I yelled "Gust on!", and the boat started to tilt a lot. My sailor's instincts led me to sit on the side of the boat to keep it from being overpowered and capsizing, knowing that if it did, we would have a hard time righting it. When I did that, I was nearly thrown out, as the boat started to lean into the wind. Noah immediately glanced at me, then the rudder, then back at me. He said in a startled tone "What happened, what happened? The rudder, it's just... gone!" The force of the wind was so great that it bent our steering mechanism right out of its socket. "What do we do? Didn't Duncan take out the Laser once without a rudder?" Noah had this look in his eyes of shock followed by mischief. He said, "If Duncan can do it, so can we. How long do you think we can sail without the patrol boat noticing?" In response, I remarked "Let's find out," with a sly smile on my face. There is, in fact, a way to steer without the tiller. It's called rudderless sailing. We had to use weight placement and our two sails to stay on the right course. It's a technique that even many expert sailors haven't tried before. Noah manned the main sail, and Schuller manned the jib, which consisted of her listening very closely to the orders Noah barked over the roaring winds. My job, however, was more challenging. I was to sit on the bow and use my arm strength to slide my body back and forth according to the necessary weight shifts, to keep the boat going straight and upright. It was a simple job, but the most valuable because it kept the boat afloat. I didn't feel like a person, but rather part of the sailboat itself. As each wave crashed against the hull, the spray pelted my face, rhythmically coinciding with the thuds of the boat's hull hitting each wave. I inhaled the mist and tasted the crisp lake water. It was better than the most expensive purified water, but the thought of my mom nagging me about some kind of flesh eating bacteria that it might contain muted the crisp freshwater taste. For forty minutes my boat-mates and I hardly spoke. We had an unspoken conversation between the three of us, knowing exactly what to do with every adjustment of the



wind. After a week with little wind and even less adventure, and consequently dimmed spirits, the stormy sailing was like a baptism by water - renewing once again our fervor for sailing.

The wind grew more impish, creating a minefield of gusts too cumbersome to handle. By this time, boat four had gone in so many consecutive circles that the patrol boat noticed and veered toward us. Alas, our fun had come to an end - we would be forced to head back to shore. Unable to get back to camp without a rudder, we hooked up the tow line. As we began to slowly be pulled, I took a moment to breathe. It was then that I realized my heart was beating like the drummed rhythms in a heavy metal song. Boat four unceremoniously arrived back at the boathouse on the end of a tow rope, something normally perceived as a defeat. However, Noah, Schuller, and I ended our day feeling victorious and content with what we had accomplished. As we walked back to our cabins, we smiled at each other, knowing this was one of those adventures we will still be reminiscing about when we are in our rocking chairs.



Alex Moudgil

### Scene One

The stage is set as a theatre (now a museum) in the 1930s. The audience is located where the stage would be. There is a railing downstage right to portray a balcony. Natalie is leaning over this ledge looking out into the audience nostalgically. She is in her early twenties. She is wearing a cream blouse, a long, vivid, red skirt, and black heels. A spotlight reveals her alone in the corner, highlighting her calm pose and distant gaze. The focus on Natalie shows her brown hair tied to one side. She appears very bright in contrast with the rest of the stage that is dimly lit. A minute after the spotlight is turned on, the dim lighting reveals an elaborate backdrop full of deep red and gold tones, a few stairs leading up to Natalie's position, orange, glowing lights, elegant paintings, and two men in their early thirties. Upstage there are also costume and set remains in glass cases on display and ornate chairs. The two men are upstage left viewing the paintings and the building's architecture. Mr. Field is fairly short and wearing a blue uniform. Mr. Harrington is dressed in an expensive suit and stands tall. He has dark, slicked back hair and his appearance and mannerisms match his wealthy status. Mr. Harrington possesses a sense of power and superiority and is used to getting his way. Mr. Field has thin, fluffy, light brown hair. He is very intelligent, but awfully passive and is a single parent trying to earn money to support his child. The two men are in the far background with only very small movements. The one trait the three characters share is their passion for theatre.

Natalie: (soliloquy, dramatically, enthusiastically, occasionally taking pauses to grasp the depths of her words) This building is the Central Theatre. I can't believe I'm saying those words while actually standing in the Central Theatre's balcony. (emphasis on "thee") Incredible shows were performed here with thousands watching in the audience. (she looks all around at the audience, now smiling) This was the place to be. Everyone would come to see these unknown actors perform their hearts out. And then at once, these ordinary folk became stars. They were idols to everyone. In a stressful time where each turn greeted people with devastation, they could free themselves from their worries with theatre. For two and a half hours, relaxation and dream filled them with hope. The actors appreciated the recognition and found their new position of influence to be a gift. Everyone wanted to be those actors on this stage. (gesturing toward the audience) In a world full of horror and doubt, people found escape in their expressions and words. But some couldn't see the line between show and reality. (change in tone) They clung to their dreams of the stage's world and stopped contributing to their part of the real world. These people's infatuation of the actors twisted into envy. One performance was all it took for everyone's fantasy to collapse. (sadly) An audience member ran on stage during a beautiful, hopeful scene and before anyone could say anything, a fight had begun. Some audience members were angry at the disruption, stage managers saw him as a threat, the actors were in shock, and others agreed that they deserved to be in the spotlight as well. The theatre couldn't come back from this incident. I guess the danger of a deception of reality was too great to handle at the time. But the theatre's beauty remains as a monument even though performance has been outlawed ever since. The theatre still stands to make sure a hateful act never happens again, but to me it is just a painful reminder that the astonishing art form is not experienced anymore. It can't stay this way forever.

Mr. Field: (walking to Natalie, leaving Mr. Harrington alone) Excuse me Madame, visiting hours for the public have concluded. Are you part of a private tour? (Natalie remains silent facing the audience) Um, do you have a pass?

Natalie: No, I am here on a (wittingly) self-tour.



Mr. Field: I'm afraid you will have to leave Ms. I can direct you to the sign displaying our public visiting hours.

Natalie: I don't need to visit, Mr. (she gestures toward him still looking out to the audience)

Mr. Field: Field. I am a tour guide for the Central Theatre and -

Natalie: Well I am not looking for any type of tour, nor am I (with disgust) visiting. I am working.

Mr. Field: My apologies. I am unaware of any new employees. Are you a visiting historian? What is your name? Pleased to have met your acquaintance. (he reaches his hand out, but his gesture is not returned by Natalie)

Natalie: I am Natalie. And I am neither an employee nor a visiting historian. (emphasis on "visiting")

Mr. Harrington begins to have larger movements of impatience and light slowly brightens revealing his annoyed expressions.

Mr. Field: (seriously) You are going to have to evacuate the premises Ms. (pauses, thinking) Natalie.

Natalie: (full of personality) What does it matter to you if I'm here? I'm not affecting anyone.

Natalie finally faces Mr. Field, displaying the large height difference between them as she stands on the top step.

Mr. Field: (slightly frightened) It is simply a rule Madame. For safety, there are specific and exact times when different people are welcome and unwelcome.

Natalie: So, you think I'm unwelcome because I'm dangerous? (emphasis on "I'm")

Mr. Field: I don't know you one way or the other. I only know to follow the rules.

Natalie: (agreeing) You don't know me.

Mr. Harrington violently makes his way to the balcony.

Mr. Harrington: (facing Mr. Field) Excuse me, but could you possibly speed up this little encounter. I have a family to return to and much business left to be done here.

Mr. Field: I am supremely sorry, Mr. Harrington. Unfortunately, a conflict has arisen.

Mr. Harrington: Well then, won't you be so kind as to (mockingly) supremely resolve the conflict.

Natalie has returned to her gaze into the audience.

Mr. Field: (nervously beginning to walk upstage left) Yes, I will be back momentarily. I must retrieve assistance.

Mr. Harrington: (sarcastically, irritated) Must you continue this interruption of my private tour as well? And who is this woman taking up all your energy?

Mr. Field: (tensely exiting the stage) She is the conflict.

Mr. Harrington: (grunts, waits a moment) Ms., what are your intentions behind such a long stare?

Natalie: (still facing the audience) My intention is to remain uninterrupted.

Mr. Harrington: (insulted) How funny. Well, you may think this little game of yours is acceptable, but you are greatly mistaken. This is not the time or place to fool around. I am working on creating a very significant change that will affect everyone in the community.

Natalie: (satirically) That's quite a bunch of words, but awfully vague. When you speak, you should really have an intention behind your words. (emphasis on "intention")

Mr. Harrington: (confidently) How true. Why not be a good example and tell me why you're really here ruining my day of exploring this beautiful theatre.

Natalie: (with sudden passion) Extremely beautiful, and that's exactly why I am here, to experience the beauty first hand. I'm going to perform on that stage, an incredible stage.

Mr. Harrington: (mocking her unrealistic goal) If you desire to perform so badly, why are you in the balcony?

Natalie: (defensive) I'm preparing myself and taking it all in. (condescending) It's clear you wouldn't understand, but performing is a rather involved task.

Mr. Harrington: Certainly, nevertheless performing isn't exactly a possibility, right now at least.

Natalie: (hopeful) Right now? Do you have intentions to change this?

Mr. Harrington: I can't say for sure this moment, but a stage like that (motions toward the audience) is meant to be performed on. It's a pity for a stage of this caliber to sit there day and night, unwelcomed by any actors or audience.

Natalie: (enthusiastically) Precisely! It's a disgrace that it remains there as (thinking) just a piece of art to look at. A stage is a piece of art to experience, and I will do just that.

Mr. Field enters stage left with a stressed look.

Mr. Field: Please, keep your voice low Ms. Natalie. Mr. Harrington, I am so sorry this whole circumstance is lasting a rather long time. Unfortunately, all employees have left as it is late in the day. Therefore, I will have to deal with (glancing at Natalie) the situation at hand by myself and consequently, your private tour must come to a conclu-

Mr. Harrington: Now let's settle down. You can make it up to me by continuing the tour on the stage.

Mr. Field: (troubled) But Sir, since Ms. Natalie is-

Mr. Harrington: Accompanying us on the tour.

Natalie and Mr. Harrington exchange smiles.

Mr. Field: (relieved) Very well then.

The three exit stage left, the lights black out and rise to a completely empty stage. The two men remain far left stage watching Natalie. She walk to center stage in awe, opens her mouth to sing and the stage blacks out.

Scene 2

The main curtain is partly closed, leaving room for a grand door center stage. Natalie has finished her performance of a song on the stage. The three stand in front of the door and main curtain. The stage is dark except for a spotlight on the three. It is night time. Natalie and Mr. Harrington have put coats on.

Mr. Field: Again, I apologize for all the inconvenience Mr. Harrington. Truly, I -

Mr. Harrington: Please, I accomplished everything I planned on and more. Here. (hands Mr. Field a generous tip)

Mr. Field: Oh sir, You're too kind. I can't take this. (offering the money back)

Natalie: (joking) Well then, I'll take it.

Mr. Field: Actually, you put on an incredible performance. You deserve it after such a beautiful song. It was nice to finally see someone on the stage and someone so talented.

Mr. Harrington: No, Mr. Field this stays with you. I don't know if I could have made up my mind without your access and knowledge of the building.

Mr. Field: Thank you very much sir. I sincerely appreciate it. Have a sweet night. (he exits through the grand doors)

Natalie: Mr. Harrington, what did you make up your mind about?

Mr. Harrington: (assertively) To have a restoration of theatre in our town.

Natalie: (hesitant) But, how will you be able to accomplish that? So many people are still in fear. So many still don't understand what performing can do.

Mr. Harrington: Yes, I'm very aware of these people, but times have changed. We're in a better place now. People wouldn't have to go to the theatre to escape their life. They would go to celebrate their life.

Natalie: (overwhelmed) True, but how will this all come about? The laws outlawing theatre won't just disappear and where will the actors come from, all the crew and production that nobody is knowledgeable in anymore? Such things do not simply materialize overnight!

Mr. Harrington: Don't worry yourself. I am prepared to fully dedicate myself to this project for as

long as need be. Furthermore, I have accumulated enough money to handle all these questions and more. Plus, there's an astonishing actress standing right before me.

Natalie: (modestly) Thank you. I've wanted to be an actress for as long as I can remember. It's particularly hard to believe that there might actually be a chance for me to perform.

Mr. Harrington: (enthused) It's not just a chance. I'm positive you will be amongst the first to star in a performance that will go down in our history. Honestly, I was blown away by your voice. You were nothing like I expected. Where did you get this talent from?

Natalie: (tightening her coat) My grandmother. Actually, she's the reason I even came here today. She was the leading lady on stage when the incident happened. Some of those costume pieces in the theatre were hers.

Mr. Harrington: (inspired) That's incredible. Do you think she would make an appearance at the grand opening?

Natalie: (cautious) I'm sure she'd love to. In fact, I better be getting back home to her now. It was a pleasure meeting you.

Mr. Harrington: You as well. My wife will be thrilled. She's a singer, but ever since we moved here, I'm sure you can imagine, she hasn't had the opportunities she'd like. Meeting your grandmother would be a dream come true for her. Please contact the Central Theatre's office. I'm sure we'll be in touch soon.

Natalie exits stage right quickly. Mr. Harrington exits stage left sauntering.

### Scene Three

The curtains open. Mr. Field is in the Central Theatre office downstage left. He is sitting on a chair that his coat hangs over at a desk with papers, a pen, and a picture frame. There is a side door stage left. There are paintings and a book shelf in the office. Mr. Field is on the phone with his ten year old son. A spotlight reveals him.

Mr. Field: Yes, I'll be home soon dear. I'm just finishing up some paperwork and brainstorming a bit. How was your day? (listening) Wonderful, wonderful. Did Ms. Carter help with dinner? Perfect and did you thank her? You are amazing! Oh, really? I can't wait to see it. I'm positive you're a great artist. You're teacher really said that? Well, then it must be true. Okay Willy, make sure to get in your pajamas soon. I love you. (hangs up the phone) Oh thank you, thank you god. That Mr. Harrington has made my day. (holding the tip) This will cover meals for at least the next week. And who knows, with his plans for the theatre, we may make more profit than ever. And Ms. Natalie, why she is sure to be a star. I haven't heard a voice like hers in years. It's all coming together. (picks up the picture frame) You knew everything would turn out right. (lovingly stares at the photo and places it back on the desk) Alright, I'm on my way.

Mr. Field puts on his jacket, takes a book from the shelf, looks around to make sure he's not forgetting anything, and exits the theatre through the grand doors. He locks the doors with a key from his coat pocket. He takes a moment to look at the theatre and then smiles toward the audience and quickly walks off stage right.

### Scene Four

Natalie has just arrived home from the theatre. Her Grandmother Lacy is sitting on the sofa reading a novel. She is nearing seventy. There is a sofa, a piano, a coffee table, and a coat hanger. There is one door stage right and one door upstage. This is their apartment which is downstage right. Natalie walks in the front door stage right, takes off her coat, and places it on the coat hanger. There is a conflicted look on her face.

Lacy: (sincerely) Natalie dear, is something wrong? (bringing her book down to her lap) I expected you'd be home much earlier. Is it very cold outside? You look shivery. How was the theatre? Did you speak with Jerald?



Natalie: (happily, yet sometimes sorrowful) The theatre was great as always. I actually met someone there.

Lacy: (worried) What kind of someone? (closing her book) Is this why you're all shaken up?

Natalie: (gloomy) I'm not shaken up. It's just cold outside.

Lacy: Well, something's not right. You're not your usual spunky self. (placing the book on the coffee table) Please, won't you sit down with me?

Natalie: (fearsome) Yes nana, it's not that something is wrong per se, just most definitely changing. This man I met is going to revive the theatre. (hopeful) There'll be shows once again, and he wants me to be in them. There'll be a grand opening which you're invited to make a special appearance at.

Lacy: (thrilled) Oh, why that's magnificent. (stands up, looks down at herself then toward the audience) How will he get the laws changed? Is he a town governor?

Natalie: Not that I'm aware of, but he's fairly wealthy I think. He walked around the place like he owned it.

Lacy: (sitting back down) Well does Jerald know of this man's endeavors?

Natalie: (with disgust) Jerald wasn't there. At least I didn't see him, thank god.

Lacy: (confused) Oh, how did you get inside the theatre?

Natalie: (quieter, quicker, and touching her hair) I slipped in through the side entrance that leads to the balcony when I saw someone leave.

Lacy: (appalled) Natalie! That is enormously reckless. You mustn't be so irresponsible, especially around that theatre. Did you get into any trouble?

Natalie: (animated) Don't be so concerned, everything worked out. I got to perform on the stage! It was phenomenal. I can't even imagine how it would feel with an actual audience. But I've got to start imagining because soon that will be a reality!

Lacy: (apprehensive) Sweetheart, you shouldn't jump so quickly to conclusions. I don't believe any of this is final yet. Something could change, and I wouldn't want you to be disappointed. Do you think Jerald has even been informed of these plans? I don't know how he would react.

Natalie: (annoyed, standing up taking off her heels, then plops down back on the sofa) What does Jerald have to do with any of this? Just because his grandfather wrote and directed all the Central Theatre's shows, that doesn't mean he has any talent or any intelligence. He might as well be the laziest and sleaziest man alive, boy rather.

Lacy: That may very well be. However, you know how much his grandfather and father mean to me. Joseph was the kindest, most innovative director we'd ever seen, and he gave a young, hopeful girl the opportunity of a lifetime. He saw something in me that I never would have known was there, wondrous potential.

Natalie: And I'm very thankful for Joe. In fact, I know Joe would not be happy with a twit like Jerald owning the theatre.

Lacy: Well Joseph gave the theatre to his son and Nicolas had the same right to hand it over to Jerald. You know I respect Nicolas and any choice he made.

Natalie: Yes he was a wonderful friend to you on and off stage. I just can't comprehend how such an undeserving curve could have come from such accomplished men.

Lacy: It doesn't matter how, it matters that it is. So please try again tomorrow. We need the rent from him as soon as possible. (standing up to go to her bedroom) We'll talk tomorrow. Goodnight my dolly. (kisses Natalie and exits through the upstage door)

Natalie: (alone, suddenly realizing) I bet we won't even need Jerald's dough soon enough!

Smiling, she walks to the piano and begins to play happy 1930s tunes and hums along. The lights gradually dim over the apartment, and she is left in very low lighting.

## Scene Five

Natalie's piano playing is heard beneath this scene. Mr. Harrington is sitting at a coffee shop with newspaper on the table and a cup of coffee. The coffee shop is stage left in lighting that is slightly dark, but brighter than stage right. Mr. Harrington faces stage left. There are a few tables spread around and a counter upstage. A couple servers walk around, and a few other customers enter and exit. It is nighttime. This scene extends over half a year. Quotation marks represent Mr. Harrington reading from the newspaper.

Mr. Harrington: Excuse me, could I please have another coffee?

Server: Of course.

Mr. Harrington: (smiles at the server then looks at the newspaper) January tenth. A new year, a new project. (a server brings a coffee) Oh thank you. January twenty first. "What do You Know About the Central Theatre?" I'm finished with this, thank you. Could I please have a regular?

Server: Yes, we'll bring it right over.

Mr. Harrington: February eighth. "Should You be Scared of Theatre?" (irritated) Please, this isn't hot enough. (server takes away the cup of coffee) February twenty second. "Scientifically Proven: Theatre is Healthy for both the Body and Mind" (server brings over a cup of coffee) Thank you so much, please keep the change.

Server: Your regular sir?

Mr. Harrington: Yes, thank you. March seventh. "Have Hidden Talent? The Central Theatre Wants You!"

Server: Here you are. Wow, are you thinking of auditioning sir?

Mr. Harrington: Oh no, not me. How about yourself?

Server: Honestly, I'd love to. I bet theatre will be just snazzy!

Mr. Harrington: Swell! March twenty fourth. "Tickets Now Available!" I'm all set here.

Server: Our Spring special is aces. Would you like to try it?

Mr. Harrington: Sure, thank you. April thirteenth. "Protestors Against Theatre Put in Jail."

Server: Are you finished?

Mr. Harrington: (angrily) No, I'll leave when I'm done. (content) April twenty seventh. "The Rain Can't Flood Music" My regular please. May sixteenth. "Tickets SOLD OUT!"

Server: Sir, were you able to purchase a ticket in time?

Mr. Harrington: Yes, in fact I have an extra, are you interested? (holds out a ticket)

Server: Oh my, thank you so much! Keen!

It is early afternoon this time. The lighting stage left is bright.

Mr. Harrington: I'll take a cup to go. (at the counter) June first. "Begin the Sunny Season with Theatre, Opening Night at the Central Theatre!"

Mr. Harrington struts off stage left with confidence and excitement. The lights go out stage left.

## Scene Six

The theatre office is set up stage left with Mr. Field at the desk. The lights rise on the apartment stage right.

Lacy: (calling from offstage) Natalie! We need to leave soon! (enters from the upstage door wearing a sparkly, long dress and sits on the sofa) Please, get ready, you can play piano tomorrow!

Natalie: It relaxes me! I've never performed in front of anyone before. I don't want to get nervous. (noticing her grandmother's new attire) You look wonderful. (exits through the upstage door)

Lights rise on the office stage left. William enters from the left stage door.

William: Father! (runs over and hugs his father)

Mr. Field: (surprised) Willy! What are you doing here? The show will start soon. You and Ms. Carter should be in your seats. Where is she?

William: (excited) Ms. Carter's right outside the door, but she said I could come see you before the show starts. I missed you, and I wanted to congratulate you! (pulls out a little pamphlet from his coat pocket) It's a script for a musical about how cool you are! I want to be a writer just like you!

Mr. Field: (sentimentally) Willy, this is incredible! I'm so proud of you! Now, why don't you go take your seats?

William: Okay! I can't wait to see a real musical! See you after the show! (runs out the door stage left)

Lights go out stage left. Natalie walks in the upstage door wearing an elegant dress. She looks like a famous star. Lacy begins to cry.

Natalie: Nana, why are you crying?

Lacy: (emotional) Oh, I'm sorry. You just look so beautiful, and you remind me of myself such a long time ago. A budding actress, so talented you are. I can barely remember the last time I was up on that stage, but I remember the way it felt so vividly. I'm simply so proud that you get to experience that tonight. (touching Natalie's face lovingly)

Natalie: Thank you. This has all been like a dream and (sees her grandma's watch, suddenly frantic) Ah, look at the time! We need to leave. Oh, I'm so thrilled!

The two exit through the right stage door.

#### Scene Seven

The stage is set with a row of audience seats stage right facing the actual audience. Ms. Carter, William, Lacy, Mrs. Harrington, and the Harrington children are in this front row with programs. Stage left is dimly lit and is the backstage of the Central Theatre. There are actors in costumes, set pieces, and stage crew preparing backstage. Mr. Harrington is backstage conferring with the stage manager when Natalie enters from stage left. The focus is on stage left.

Mr. Harrington: Natalie, I haven't talked to you in months! You've been fantastic on stage. Where do you always run off to after rehearsals?

Natalie: (nervously) Oh you know, it gets busy with the rehearsals and all. (awkward silence)

Mr. Harrington: Well thanks for letting the office know your grandmother would be here anyways. We'll be honoring her after the show.

Natalie: Great. That will mean a lot to her.

Mr. Harrington: Well I just can't wait for everyone to see the remarkable show we've put together. Enjoy it, you've worked so hard, and I know the audience will be amazed by your performance, just as I was when I first heard you sing.

Natalie: (uncomfortable) I'm going to go make sure my costumes are all set up. (moves upstage to talk to a costumer)

The focus shifts to stage right.

Mrs. Harrington: (sophisticated) Children, thoroughly look through your programs. You'll see all the magnificent, successful people who have created this show. (conceited) See your father's name is the producer, the most important position. And here, the writer, Jerald Caldwell-

Lacy: (confused) Excuse me, Mrs. Harrington did you say Jerald wrote this musical?

Mrs. Harrington: Yes, it's right here in the program. (sucking up) And may I say once again what a privilege it is to be in your presence.

Lacy: Thank you. Why that's very odd. Natalie told me the writer was this very meticulous man named Mr. Field. I remember because she was quite surprised and impressed that he could write so well.

Mrs. Harrington: Well I've heard Jerald Caldwell's name many times. He owns the theatre you know, so I'm sure he's very skillful. Mr. Field though, I've never heard the name Mr. Field.

William: (innocent) Are you talking about my father? I'm William Field.



Mrs. Harrington: (patronizing) Oh how sweet, and what does your father do?

William: Well, he's really cool. He works at this theatre! He gives tours and he knows everything about the theatre! Also, he wrote the musical that's opening tonight! Right up there! (points toward the stage)

Ms. Carter: Will, are you bothering this lady?

William: No, she just was talking about my father.

Mrs. Harrington: (skeptical) Pardon my disturbance, but your son says that your husband wrote this musical. Is this true?

William: (upset) That's not my mom! And why don't you believe me? My father's the best writer there ever was!

Ms. Carter: William, everything's alright. Mr. Field, my neighbor, definitely did write this musical.

Mrs. Harrington: Well, that's not what the program says.

Lacy: (to herself) I wanted to give Jerald a chance, but taking credit for someone else's hard work? This has taken it too far. Natalie was right, we need to stop relying on Jerald.

Mrs. Harrington: (passive aggressive) Excuse me. The show is starting, if you wouldn't mind.

There is a blackout.

### Scene Eight

The stage is set exactly like scene one. Natalie is on the balcony and Mr. Field and Mr. Harrington are upstage left chatting. It is late at night after opening night. Natalie is gazing into the audience reflecting upon the past months. Mr. Harrington walks up to her in the balcony. Mr. Field remains upstage left making sure everything is in place.

Mr. Harrington: (filled with pride) You did it! The show was extraordinary. Everyone is so impressed. They want to come back for the rest of the showings.

Natalie: Wonderful, truly. I've never felt anything like that. I could sense the energy in the air. It would vibrate back and forth between the audience and us on the stage. Thank you for making this happen. I'm exceptionally grateful.

Mr. Harrington: My pleasure. I'm just relieved it all came together without a stitch tonight. I was so nervous, but I'm certain that everyone appreciates theatre now.

Natalie: I was so nervous too, especially after you spoke to me backstage.

Mr. Harrington: I don't believe it! You? You're so confident, and you have every right to be with the massive amount of talent you have.

Natalie: See, you've done it again. You build me up to be so perfect. I'm worried I'll let people down. I couldn't stand it if my grandma was disappointed in me. Not after all she's done for me and this place. This theatre is like her sanctuary, but it was taken away from her. I do not want to ruin the one chance she has to get it back.

Mr. Harrington: She is so proud of you. I could hear how much she adores you in her remarks after the show.

Mr. Field walks up to the balcony.

Mr. Field: Well, that really was something. To think months ago we stood in this exact spot arguing with each other and now, we've worked together to create history.

Natalie: (with sorrow) Oh, but Mr. Field did you see what Jerald did? He took credit for your musical.

Mr. Field: (happy) Oh, what does that matter? The show was a success. I'll be able to support my son now without a worry.

Mr. Harrington: (thinking) The way you care about your family is so inspiring.

Natalie: (agreeing) Yes, it is so great to know I don't need to ask Jerald for money anymore. I can care for my grandma just like she did for me so many years.

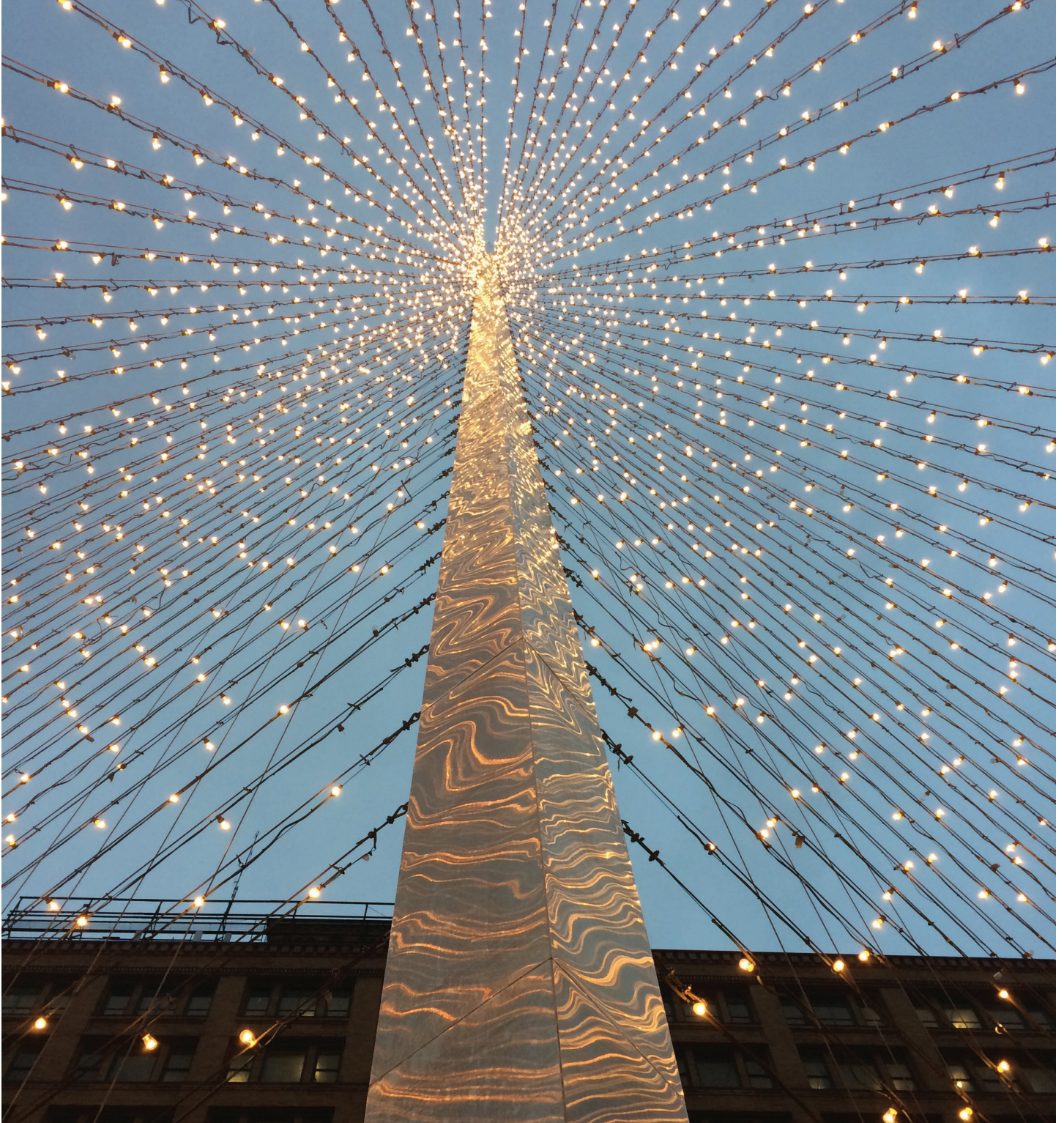


Mr. Harrington: (speaking slowly, reevaluating his life and realizing) Family is everything.

Natalie: (inspired) And the Central Theatre brought about all this positivity! The theatre is a reminder of all the joy and possibility in this world. It can stay this way forever.

The three face the actual audience with their own individual emotion. There is a blackout and the curtain closes.

The End



Grace Ebner



Me  
Noor Lima-Boudakian

It's late and  
There are no lights on except the ones creeping from the hallway to  
Peek in the crack under my door that never closes  
A 24 hour welcome sign  
Maybe it represents the  
Pulsing river thoughts ever pushing to and fro  
Always clawing for the forefront center attention spot in my mind  
My own personal baleful imbroglio  
Starting me, you, and any side adaption if someone I met that had a similar smile or smelled of  
spices that couldn't be washed off or smoked away no matter how hard any of them tried.  
My eyes are thinking not seeing, and putting in the effort  
Still no chance of sleeping in the following hours  
i've told everyone i'm going to bed and until now I wish I had but I can't anymore, i've been pulled  
away into a room bursting full of everything i've ever lost, a new movie track featuring who I used  
to be but it's not  
me  
I am a drawing made with the softest graphite pencil, on hand-crafted canvas, hours of perilous  
work, no sense of fatigue until perfection is achieved.  
Me  
I am the first ray of sunshine on any given day, an exquisite, elegant, pointe-toed culmination of  
every genuine smile received and returned  
I am the open-eyed, arms wide, feet braced against the cold and the wind, no matter if I get a pink  
most or a cold chin because colours make me happy and  
I am not just one but a hundred thousand flowers blooming and opening to still dim daylight on  
the first week of spring when it's okay to stop frowning  
I am an age widened phoenix waking in the still glowing ashes of a memory or two of what I once  
did for someone else, no specificities necessary because they'll always think it's you no matter what  
I say.  
I rise and bloom and shine and appear- slowly then faster like nobody even pretends to  
understand but they don't have to because they're not  
Me  
Firecrackers and  
Your presence is with me  
Again  
Again  
Again  
I have not forgotten the way you looked  
Eyes frantic  
Long dull coat and cheeks tinted the muted rose of my favourite lipstick that I cannot wear ok  
regular days  
It sticks to my passions and then  
I cannot pretend i'm the best at a game I play  
9:30 am, almost every day  
it sounds like brushing hair to me  
muggy or sleek or curls so wild they can't consider being tamed

like my words in a metal-barred cage because if I open the door for a moment  
just a crack, will you pointer finger pinky promise me that you can still watch my back that's been  
stinging for months  
since the november after I turned one year older in time that isn't even real  
a good year of  
unfinished alphabet soup  
that's the way everyone asked for it  
asked for it?  
Did they?  
there's no need to put in requests for tasks already finished off and tied with a bow  
red  
like your bathroom floor  
two doors in, the smell of limes and laundry lap that you always overcame because you never got  
hugged enough  
maybe that one was my fault  
after all, look at our difference in size  
hands  
hands on hands on hands on hands in chains turned  
grey and red  
because if you can't see it it's still better than it ever was then  
when your flowers I never got turned dusty with time despite the fact that wilting wasn't an option  
now that it has been burned to the ground by a fire with two flames made from the  
sparks  
that flew in late december, a continent i've never been to but you couldn't stand by the promises of  
walks and materialistic tendencies we both have  
an apple, half rotten, like you: a good task- you're wonderful at doing practical things for  
impractical purposes  
do you remember the sixteenth day in june?  
It was bright blue  
Like her eyes, unreasonable requests  
gotta leave this roof and room with a ceiling  
high up there is a revolving fan  
wooden  
it doesn't work  
what are these ridiculous half metaphors I come up with in my  
head full of words that have been put in a blender with  
freshly sharpened blades or fingernails and elbows  
soft like your hair and lashes so pointy they could reach out and poke another crater in the moon  
that you  
swore you looked at  
but you said it was glittering and blue  
it was really, I think, a soy milk white  
like the bread I ate when I was writing the list (and the other one too)  
for the shouts you smiled about and made your eyes light up bright enough to let me see the spot  
on your nails that you missed  
like you never missed  
me  
(but that's alright because I don't miss you either)



She's gone. Swept away by the wind just when I was to marry her. Did she truly love me? No, she felt something for me; I'm sure of it. When we frolicked in the courtyard, she told me of her love, yet she left without a trace. Oh, sweet listener upon the pages, what have I done? I did not wish for Bertha to delve into insanity, nor did I wish for her to be involved with my marriage. Beloved Jane, can't you see that keeping her hidden was an act of kindness? She became an animal right before my eyes, and I was awestruck. There was nothing I could do. I truly wanted to marry her, yes, but I could not see past the disease she possessed. I kept her safe from prying eyes because she became hysterical, and attacked anyone that got close to her. Mason was an unlucky example of this, dear journal, for he was ripped open by the very woman I speak of. All I wished to do was marry the woman I loved, yet Bertha was mentioned by that scoundrel, Mr. Briggs, and I had no choice but to exploit her existence. Why must life be this way? I loved Jane. I love Jane. Yet she is forever blocked from my view. Her secretive escape has led me to believe that she never wishes to return, and plans to leave me alone and unloved.

Why, Jane? Haven't I done enough for you? I gave you a place to stay, and considered you a part of my family. My love for you is undying, and I would never wish to abandon you as you did me. What could she be doing without me? Where could she be? Oh, Lord, I feel as if I'm going crazy. Even Alice has noticed a change in my behavioral patterns since she left. She tells me that I have been yelling things and sleepwalking through the corridors at night. Trauma, she says, of losing a loved one. She says Jane may just be dead; she took no food or water when she left Thornfield. As if that's supposed to be reassuring. She's strong, my Jane. My heart tells me she hasn't gone to the divine gates, and that she still lingers, thriving among strangers. Please, keep alive. For my sake, Jane.

I wish to leave this wretched place. Thornfield keeps the memories of her locked inside my own mind, and I cannot drop this feeling of...want, I suppose. It's been just a week since her parting, and this house has yet to keep me from thinking of her. Whenever I look to her quarters, a chill runs down my spine, and I become paralyzed with thought. Scenarios and memories with her flood my emotions, and my heart aches to feel her touch again. Alice even had to snap me out of this trance once; the poor woman thinks I'm headed down the same path as Bertha. Yet I don't feel as if I'm insane, do you? A little deranged, maybe, but not crazy. I love Jane Eyre, and that is all there is to it. Why didn't she listen to my plea? I gave her the full and honest truth about my situation, and still she punishes me for it. She says, "I'm nothing more than a mistress to you while Bertha is alive". What the deuce is that supposed to mean? I left Bertha because she dove headfirst into psychosis, and I couldn't bear to see her that way. I never even thought of Jane as a mistress; I felt nothing less than love for her, even as we first met. When I tumbled off my horse that fateful day, I knew there was something special about that girl. Her radiance made me fall for her almost instantly, and I can still feel the drumbeat of my heart when I first spoke with her. She was the one person who truly made me feel like a man again. And why she would want to take that away from me? I don't know. Her leaving devastated me. It ruined me. I crave her love every time I step a foot in this house, and it needs to end. I need an end. This may be the last you'll hear from me dear journal, but don't fear. I'll find her again.

Wispy streams of sunlight stretched down uneasily from the afternoon sky as I bid farewell to Nick. The summer was coming to an end and I had an odd feeling that other things were soon to end as well. I laughed, smiled charmingly and waved goodbye to him as I turned hastily around and, sinking my hands into my pockets, I retreated back onto my freshly cut lawn. My previous worries had grown and were now a cacophony of sound: symbols clashing, drums booming inside my head. Reality crashed down on me in waves, leaving me gasping for air and struggling to hold on to something.

My hands trembled as the plastered smile began to crack, my lips dipped downwards and my eyes blinked rapidly. I quickly headed upstairs and upon changing into my bathing-suit made my way to the garage to grab the pneumatic mattress. The car seemed to whisper from beneath the canvas sheet. My hands glided over the twisted, contorted metal.

"William, help me blow up this mattress, I'm going for a swim. This car should not be brought out under any circumstances. I've already called someone to come fix the damages, but for now it will remain unused and covered," I shouted loudly to the chauffeur who aided me with the air pump. The summer air had already faded, the autumn leaves settling comfortably on the ground. Seeing Daisy that Fall so many years ago I had found my purpose. I reinvented myself for her, distorted my very being to become visible through her rose colored glasses. I wore my gold hat, flaunted my worth, and built myself from the ashes and yet it wasn't good enough. It wasn't good enough for her and that's all I strive to be. I reclined on the mattress and began chasing the thoughts in my

mind. Maybe Nick was my new purpose; I could invest some money in him, build him up, and we could be friends infinitely. Shaking my head, I furrowed my brow and my gaze drifted until it landed, distressingly so, onto the wilting orchids on the edge of the pool.

I had always thought that I'd hear the shot before I felt the pain, but I was wrong. It was instantaneous. It was a nauseating, intense kind of pain that numbed my mind. I was under the water before I opened my eyes, so I couldn't see the look on his face when he shot me. Tom, of course. It had to be Tom. He was jealous that Daisy loved me, how she had always loved me and not him, never him. I thought of Nick fleetingly, and then my mind was consumed with Daisy, only Daisy, and nothing else. Her disembodied face rippled through my sight. As my body sunk lower I reached my hand upward, clutching the heavy water, grasping for the fading, unattainable light above me. It seemed clearer now than before, unattainable still, but closer to reality. My vision began to fade and my thoughts began to fog. I died much as I had lived, alone.



Rachel Geiger

SCENE I.

The stage is bright and lively with boisterous party-goers, some talk and laugh while others aimlessly mingle in the crowd. They all wear dresses and suits, clearly in post-wedding attire. The bride and groom are nowhere to be seen amongst the circular tables covered in white flower arrangements and linen. Some waiters begin bringing in trays of food for the buffet, and a five-tiered wedding cake sits like a monument at upstage left. A bar is located downstage center with the guests facing the audience and the bartender's back to the audience. While the entire room is rowdy with anticipation and excitement, there is one individual sitting in the middle of the bar under a slight spotlight who does not appear to fit that description. She wears a navy vest and paisley bowtie, but no smile. Her head of short, well-styled hair is anchored on her fist like a boulder sitting precariously on a cliff, and she appears immune to any emotion circling around her in the room.

Bartender: What can I get you, miss?

Emily: Hmmmm... [She scratches her head as she peruses a cocktail menu] Let's start with as much whiskey as you're legally allowed to serve me in one sitting.

Bartender [Chuckling]: Always one in every crowd. Would you like top shelf, miss? [He grabs a glass from under the bar.]

Emily: Who's picking up the tab? Do you know?

Bartender: I believe it's that older couple standing by the far end of the dance floor. [He gestures across the room at an older man in a suit and an older woman in a long, flowing dress who are entertaining a group of younger folks.]

Emily [without turning around]: The groom's parents? [The bartender nods.] Yeah, top shelf would be fantastic. Thank you.

Bartender: There was one guy last weekend who asked my coworker for some straight shots of tequila. Wasn't long before he asked for gin, and it wasn't long after that that he was found passed out on the bathroom floor. [He shakes his head and places a glass of whiskey in front of Emily.] Just please promise me that you're not going to drink yourself to death this evening.

Emily: I'll do my best. [She gives the bartender a half-hearted salute.] It honestly depends on how many hellish minutes I have to spend at that table with my mother tonight. [She looks over her shoulder at the couple on the opposite side of the dance floor.]

Bartender: That sounds like a messy situation. [He pours a drink for another guest and passes it off to them.] You two don't get along, I assume.

Emily: What gave it away? Did the smoke from my hate fire accidentally come out my ears again? [Both Emily and the bartender crack a smile, followed by a few seconds of awkward silence.]

Bartender: It's pretty slow tonight. The rest of your family isn't big on drinking? [He begins cleaning glasses by hand, washing and drying the few that had been used.]

Emily: Nah, most of them are teetotalers; no wonder my parents offered to pick up the bar tab. [She scoffs.] They were almost all celibate until marriage, too. I think conservatives just have something deep within them that fears having a good time.

Bartender: I don't mind; it's a nice break. [He stacks the glasses carefully on the counter.]

Emily: Trust me, you'd mind if you suddenly had to grow up under their rules. [She rests her head back on her fist and sip her whiskey.] They literally pulled me out of school the day we learned about having sex in health class. Oh, and the day they taught evolution, too. And there was also that one time we had an assembly to learn about religions of the world. I guess they didn't want me



poisoned by the ideology of a Muslim woman, a rabbi, a Catholic priest, or a monk.

Bartender: That's pretty crazy. [He sneaks a glance at Emily's attire and general presentation as she finishes off her drink.] Just out of curiosity, what does your mom think about you wearing a bowtie to your brother's wedding?

Emily: You know just as well as I do that she'd rather have no daughter at all than have a daughter who dresses like her son. [Her smile fades.] Can I have another drink, please?

Bartender [Filling her glass]: Sorry, I didn't mean to make you upset. [He hangs his head in shame, but then lifts it again.] At least the pressure is on your brother and sister-in-law today, right?

Emily: You really have no idea how this works, do you? [She shakes her head, smiling to herself.] It's practically the opposite. My mother sees how beautiful, successful, and perfect my sister-in-law and brother are today, and she immediately has the urge to turn me into that too. Tonight is just as much my funeral as it is Mike and Beth's wedding.

Bartender [Solemnly]: That makes sense. I'm really not helping you, am I?

Emily: Don't worry about it, kid. You're giving me booze. [She raises her glass to him.] That counts for something. In fact, you're probably one of my favorite people in the world at this moment in time. Did I ever ask your name?

Bartender: No, I don't think so. My name's Adam. [He outstretches his hand to Emily, and they shake hands firmly.]

Emily: I'm Emily; it's nice to meet you, Adam. If you'll excuse me, I should be heading off to my table for dinner. [She stands and picks her drink up, holding it close to her body.]

Adam: Will I be seeing you again? You make good company.

Emily: Don't you worry, my friend. I'll be back within the hour. [She glances up at the clock that reads 5:46pm.]

[The curtains fall.]

SCENE II.

The stage has been reset so that the three tables that were upstage are now downstage center, center stage right, and center stage left. The bar is out of sight, and the room remains as it was, busy with guests and cheerful. Now, however, everyone has taken their seats for the newlyweds to arrive, along with their meals. At the center table, Emily sits with her mother, Emily's twin brother, David, and his girlfriend Kate. They do not speak for quite some time.

Mother [clearing her throat loudly]: Isn't this lovely? Everyone's all together to celebrate such an important day.

David: I'm so glad Kate and I could make it up in time. [He takes a sip of ice water and lets out a sigh.] Who knew little Mikey would be the first of us to tie the knot?

Emily: I know, right? I could've sworn you and I would've had way better luck with the ladies. [She chuckles.] Mikey would've been dead last in my mind.

Mother [Shooting glares across the table.]: Really, Emily? Why does everything have to be about sexual orientation with you? I don't want to have this conversation, especially here of all places.

Emily: What the hell are you talking about, Mom? You have no issue with Mike marrying Jennifer or David dating Kate. Why is there a problem when I talk about my love life and my potential partners? It's not about being straight when they do it; it's not about being queer when I do it. [Her mother winces.]

Father: You know your mother doesn't like that word, Emily. Show some respect, please.

Emily [Spitefully]: Queer, queer, queer. Don't try to change who I am or how I identify, and I will gladly show you some respect.

Father: You're being unfair, Emily. You know your mother just wants the best for you and your

brothers.

Emily: Yep, that's me. [She shakes her head.] I'm completely unfair, but only when I make a valid point... I don't see Mom trying to set David up with another man.

David: Maybe Lee's right. Why shouldn't she be able to do everything Mikey and I have been allowed to? She's probably ten times smarter and more mature than the both of us put together anyway. Why don't you treat her like she is?

Emily [under her breath]: Because she's a homophobic jerk..

Mother: I just don't want her throwing away her life in the pursuit of love that may never meet her expectations. I think this choice is—

David: You know it's not a choice, Mom. You can't control those feelings.

Mother [irritated]: As I was saying, I think this is going to make Emily's life extremely difficult down the line. People are not as accepting as her friends are, you know? I just don't want her getting hurt, sweetheart. I don't want any of my children getting hurt. Can't you understand that?

Emily: I'm calling b.s. on that one, Mom. [She sits up straighter in her chair, leans in, and lowers her voice almost to a whisper.] You and I both know you're not saying these things because you love me. You're just so damn ashamed to be a homophobe with a gay daughter that you have to find a way to make it sound like you're the good guy here. Well, sorry to burst that bubble, but you're not. The more people like me come out and share their feelings, the faster ignorant people like you will be forced to acknowledge and accept our existence. You locking me in the closet doesn't do anything but make me hate myself and my life. [She makes a fist and pounds it on the table softly.] No matter how many bible verses you hurl at me, no matter how many times I get called a dyke and a lesbo and a faggot on the subway, no matter how disappointed you are in me, and no matter how disappointed I am in myself, I will still be queer. [She watches her mother's face crinkle.] Yes, queer. I will still feel better in a suit than a dress. I will still get butterflies in my stomach when I see a beautiful woman. I will never change, Mom. Never. I can't... But you can.

[Everyone sits in silence for a few moments.]

David: Anyone want a drink? [He stands up quickly to go to the bar.]

Kate [also rising]: Yeah, what do you all want? Beers? Margaritas?

[Emily's parents both shake their heads.]

Emily: Tell the bartender I'm dying for another whiskey. [She hands David her empty glass as they hurry away.]

[The DJ's voice can be heard through the speakers saying, "We would now like to give a nice, warm welcome to the brand new husband and wife. Please give a big round of applause for the new Mr. and Mrs. Michael Reese." Everyone claps and cheers, except for Emily, who sits silently at the table, completely in a daze. Then the curtain falls.]

### SCENE III.

The stage has been switched back to the setup from the first scene. The bar is back at center with Adam standing in front of it. Emily approaches soon after the lights come up. The dancefloor is in use, and the tension has seemingly lifted.

Adam: Hey, best friend. I see you got the whiskey I sent. [He smiles kindly.]

Emily: Yeah, thanks for that. [She sets her glass down and sits on the middle stool.]

Adam: Well? [He leans onto the bar in front of Emily.] How'd it go?

Emily: [She shakes her head.] I don't really want to talk about it. Let's just say that nothing much has changed.

Adam: Ah, I'm sorry. [He pours her a glass of water to go with the alcohol.] You deserve better.

Emily: How the hell do you know what I deserve? I could be the worst person in the world; you

don't know.

Adam: Anybody who drinks as much whiskey as you do has been through their fair share of pain, okay? [He sits on a stool on his side of the bar.] We all deserve some crap, I guess, but no one deserves the amount you've gotten.

Emily: What are you, some personality test to tell people what their drink preferences say about them? Leave me alone, Mr. Bartender. I already know everything you've been telling me.

[Suddenly, a tall, curvy brunette enters and takes a seat on the end of the bar, two stools down from Emily. Immediately, Emily is captivated, and the audience can tell. The brunette girl doesn't notice Emily at first.]

Adam [turning to the brunette girl]: What can I get for you, miss?

Brunette Girl: I'll have a [she gazes at the beers on draft] Sam Adams? Or the closest thing to it?

Adam [Grabbing a glass]: Sure thing... Are you enjoying yourself this evening?

Brunette Girl: It's just another wedding that's not mine. But I guess the childhood friend and cousin of the bride should show up if she's invited.

Adam [smiling]: That seems to be a theme with this crowd. It's all just an obligation, right? My new friend here was saying pretty much the same thing. [He gestures to Emily.]

Brunette Girl: Oh yeah? Who dragged you here? [Finally looking to Emily]

Emily [Glancing away and blushing]: Sister of the groom. I'd kind of be an ass if I skipped.

Brunette Girl: Not really, but I'm glad you decided to come. Misery loves company as they say. [She takes a sip of beer and turns back to Emily] I don't think I caught your name.

Emily [quietly, but finally looking up]: Emily, but you can call me Lee.

Brunette Girl: I'm Olivia. It's nice to meet you. [They meet eyes and stare for about three seconds in dead silence]

Adam [butting in]: And I'm Adam. Thanks for asking. [Positioning himself directly between the two women until they simultaneously try to shove him away] Emily, would you care for another drink?

Emily: No, I'm good. Thank you though. [She finishes off her glass and turns to Olivia] So, what do you like to do when you're not at other people's weddings?

Olivia [chuckling]: Well, I do research for a lab in Washington County. That takes up a lot of time, but when I have time off, I tend to spend it going on shitty dates, desperately searching for someone that wants to be the other half to my wedding when the time comes. The dating pool is just so small, you know? Everyone keeps saying I'm so pathetic for being single at twenty-seven.

Emily: I don't know, you're talking to a single twenty-eight-year-old, and I'm doing okay. So what's your worst horror story? [Laughing] How awful was he?

Olivia [growing quiet and reserved]: Uh... Actually... they've all been she's, but there have still been some major oddballs, trust me. [Emily's eyes grow wide and eager] There was this one time—

Emily: Listen, I have a hard time hearing in loud spaces like this. What do you say we go grab a coffee sometime so I can fully enjoy your bad dating stories?

Olivia [cracking a wide grin]: Yeah, definitely. [Becoming sarcastic] If it would help you hear me better. I'd love that.



Madi Smith





Around  
Aquil Sheikh

humidity of the inner city  
in the chill of night  
tired after the deception of a new day  
comfortable

looking towards the endless road  
in the drivers seat  
it feels like a waking dream  
between buildings  
who shake off the uptight  
the tension of work and business  
and bend inward like palm trees  
melting into the asphalt

exiled out of the city  
only a hundred dollars

it feels like a sleepless night  
when the sky is dark blue  
and you walk around  
feeling like an anchor  
ready to fall

homeless on Miami Beach  
a desperado  
working on lawns  
savoring the sight of  
the dogs twisting through wealthy gardens

I remember the jungle  
the sickest part was that we enjoyed it

paving the way through  
slashing through the tall grass with a machete  
the city wasn't so different

I carved it out  
and made it all  
but I was never sure what I even wanted



Katherine Vollmer

Scenes from Misheard Lyrics  
Kiera Ebeling

She hoarsely screamed, "and he praises  
the Lord!" and I couldn't help but smile. She sounded  
so in love with him, as if she'd jackhammer  
streets wide open so they could dive in just to exist.

Would all that earth absorb her hoarse shouts?

Surely they'd stop when she sat  
in a puddle of iridescent self-ness,  
watching her chest rise and  
fall, only looking over to grab  
his breath with her eyes. Even the wisps  
of vapor and carbon dioxide would  
call up to God.



"Estoy viniendo, Abuelita, estoy viniendo," shouted the young boy, kicking up swirling dust clouds as he chased the trolley, already on its way into the town square. His shoelaces flapped in the wind, completely untied, and miniscule beads of sweat were beginning to form on his temples, both from the sudden exercise, as well as the fear that in a matter of seconds he'd be left at the house alone for the first time since he'd moved in the summer before.

"Rápido, Jorge," yelled his grandmother anxiously, stretching out her arms for the chubby five-year-old to grab onto before the trolley picked up too much speed, "Vámanos." Meanwhile, the boy's two older cousins sneered and snorted at the fiasco in front of them, unfolding their arms only long enough to point mockingly. The trolley rattled over the crest of the hill, slowing just long enough for Jorge to leap aboard, latching onto the railing next to his oldest cousin, Christiano.

"Pssst, Emilio," whispered Christiano, nudging his brother roughly, "Jorge es muy... muy gordo." Even though both Christiano and Emilio were raised in Portugal, hearing and speaking Portuguese since the days they were born, they'd viciously taken it upon themselves to learn a myriad of elementary insults in Spanish to easily taunt their younger cousin in his native language.

Jorge stuffed his hands in his pockets and huddled next to the back of the trolley, taking cover behind another, much older passenger who was carrying a large pot of caldo verde down to the market to sell. The traditional green broth was steaming profusely, and Jorge, never having been a huge fan of the vegetable-riddled dish, plugged his nose so he wouldn't have to smell the scent of cooked kale and spicy sausages percolating beside him.

I just want a nice big bowl of garlic soup like Madre used to make for me when I wasn't feeling well. I'd pretend to be sick just to get a taste of that stuff. Man it was good. Sometimes the bread we ate with it was pretty hard but we didn't even care did we? Nah. Madre was a way better cook than Abuelita could ever be. I can't believe how badly the arroz tasted last night. White rice isn't supposed to be squishy right? I don't have any idea where my mother got it from; maybe it was Abuelito... or God? That reminds me: God, please help my mother with her interview this afternoon. Shoot did that woman just see me make the sign of the cross? Let's hope she's catholic like me. I'd love to go back to Spain; I worry she's sad and lonely without me. That way I'd be able to get away from mis primos too. I don't think they understand.

Jorge picked up his head and glanced over at Christiano, who was now eyeing the back pocket of a young woman standing to his immediate left. Jorge knew that neither of his cousins were strangers to the habit of pickpocketing; they'd practically been raised on the act, doing it solely for the rush it shot into their veins. "We do it for the fun of getting away with it," Emilio often replied whenever Jorge pressed him on the topic. It was the same adrenaline that led people to run with the bulls like his uncle once did or smuggle drugs like his father used to.

Jorge watched as the woman focused intently on feeding the newborn in her arms, totally unaware that she may be 30 Euros poorer in a matter of seconds. As Christiano inched closer though, Jorge did as well, knowing that no new mother had enough money to spare for the simple entertainment of two delinquent boys. The woman hummed softly to her baby, swaying back and forth ever-so-slightly, which made Christiano's face go red in frustration, his hand hovering over her bag like a magician trying to make a rabbit appear in a hat. That's when Jorge had had enough and finally made his move.

"Su bebé es muy bonito, señora," said Jorge, tapping the woman's arm gently.



"Uh, no Español," said the woman immediately, shaking her head helplessly. Jorge didn't really care whether she could understand him or not though. He just needed an excuse to nudge his way in between the woman and his no-good cousin. For the rest of the trolley ride, Jorge stayed glued by the woman's side, even pushing Christiano away at one point to keep him from trying to swipe her cash. As the trolley reached the market in town, the young woman patted Jorge on the head, messing up his already-unruly hair even more. He smiled instinctively, and eventually ran over to where his grandmother was standing, holding her hand as she hopped off the trolley onto the cobblestone path.

"Volte, meninos," shouted Abuelita, calling after Christiano and Emilio, who had already ran off to the stand selling all sorts of candies and confections. She was always the one trying to keep the two of them in line, and she'd probably given up a long time ago, but you'd never be able to tell by the way she'd scream at them. Both boys were stuffing their faces with their favorite chocolates and sweets by the time Jorge and their grandmother arrived at the stand.

\*Thwack\* \*Thwack\* Jorge couldn't help himself from giggling at the sight of his cousins getting smacked on the back of the head by their otherwise-calm-and-feeble grandma; it was one of the few events that was known to always cheer him up. Abuelita took them by the ear lobes and dragged them to the produce stand to buy the produce for that afternoon's meal. As soon as she released them though, they swarmed around Jorge like flies on roadkill.

"Didn't your dad ever teach you not to snitch?" asked Christiano in haphazard Portuguese, "He must know all about that after being in jail for so long." Jorge looked around to find his grandmother, but she had vanished among the heaps of avocados and papayas.

"What's wrong, Jorge? Can't run away to Abuelita?" mocked Emilio, pretending to cry as actual tears began forming in his cousin's eyes. Jorge didn't care when they picked on him directly, but whenever they brought his parents into the equation, his emotions grew unbearable.

"Too bad your mommy's not here to protect you either, little cousin," Christiano said, whispering the last few words inches from Jorge's rosy ear. Everyone knew that Jorge's biggest pet peeve was being called little. Most days he felt like a giant, someone who could conquer the world and assert his dominance, similar to how he had on the trolley ride into town. However, as Emilio and Christiano loomed over Jorge in the market, their shadows blocking out the warmth of the bright daylight, he was fully aware of just how small he really was.

"After she ditched you, where'd that bitch even run off to anyway, Jorge?" said Christiano, pausing in front of Jorge with a smirk etched across his lips as if he had just made the winning move in a game of chess. Sweat dripped down his greasy, preteen face and landed next to Jorge's shoe in the hot pavement down below. Although Jorge didn't speak the language fluently, he knew what words were off limits, especially when it came to talking about adults.

Where did Abuelita go? She'll smack them again for this, I'm sure. Everyone knows that 2-on-1 is not a fair fight, right? Crap, he's balling up his fists. C'mon, think, think. Wax on, wax off, right? Was that it? Paint the fence? Is that what I'm supposed to do now? No, that's ridiculous; just let him throw the first punch if he really wants to do this, and then knock him out. C'mon, I can do this. I can do it.

"Don't be a chicken, Jorge," gawked Christiano, holding up his arms, beginning to bounce around like a maimed kangaroo, "I'll teach you how to fight better than your dad ever could." Emilio chuckled and grabbed onto the collar of Jorge's shirt in the meantime to stop him from running away like he usually did. Jorge's heartbeat was thumping in his temples, but he instinctively

raised his arms up to cover his face.

A small group of kids was starting to gather around the three boys. Some of the older ones cheered them on while others, mostly young girls in colorful sundresses, seemed to look on with increasing horror. One of them, probably no older than two, even ran off to her mother and pointed to the growing ring of energetic youth that now looked like something straight out of Lord of the Flies. Once there was a solid boxing ring of bodies, Emilio nudged his way out of the danger zone.

Jorge stared into his cousin's eyes, hoping that Christiano would somehow surrender after seeing the fear and anxiety swirling in his gaze, but after a few long seconds, it was clear that Christiano did not see. Jorge, to Christiano, was nothing more than easy prey.

"Espancá-lo, chutá-lo, lute, lute," chanted the mob in a deep growl, "Espancá-lo, chutá-lo, lute, lute." Jorge looked around at their salivating mouths, their hungry eyes. Those kids didn't want a fight. They just wanted a show. Christiano advanced first, moving in jerky steps like an old man making his way across hot coals, but Jorge was sure to inch his way back, never allowing the enemy to advance too close or too fast. The wall of bystanders behind him made way, splitting to make a horseshoe with the open end pinned against the produce stand so that Jorge remained trapped by mountains of filled wooden crates. The smirk on Christiano's face said it all; this fight was only seconds from being over.

"Espancá-lo, chutá-lo, lute, lute. Espancá-lo, chutá-lo, lute, lute."

\*Whump\* Jorge took the first blow to his left cheek, despite his hands being up in front of his face. Everything went black for a second, but slowly came back into view, starting with Christiano's fists raised in victory, eventually reaching the cheering sidelines full of satisfied spectators. Jorge could taste the iron-filled gush of defeat filling his mouth; one of his baby teeth had come loose with the first swing. As Jorge leaned back onto the piles of fruits and vegetables behind him to catch his breath, he felt a gentle tap on his shoulder.

"Here, kid," said the older gentleman that ran the produce stand, handing Jorge a plump, moldy tomato, "Get him right between the eyes and then kick the shit out of him." Jorge grinned and grabbed the rotten glob from the man, eyeing his clueless cousin who was now shaking hands with the crowd like some cheesy diplomat. The minute Christiano glanced back at Jorge, it was too late; he'd already taken aim and catapulted that mushy tomato into the air. \*Splat\*

The audience fell silent and studied Christiano, who had immediately tumbled backwards onto his backside with the impact and was now making faint whimpering noises as he tried to wipe the red goo from his face. Emilio crouched down beside his brother, taking off his sweaty tank top to clean up his brother's mess. There was no need for Jorge to do much more than he'd already done. His cousin was too busy crying tomato seeds out of his eyes to throw another punch, and the longer Christiano sat there whining, the more the ring of children dispersed away from the scene.

"¡JORGE MATEO SANTOS! ¿QUÉ HICISTE?"

Jorge's grandmother flew towards him wielding a bag full of potatoes in one hand and fresh seafood in the other. He cowered, knowing she'd whapped both of his cousins with dinner ingredients before for misbehaving at the market. He spit out a slew of apologies, hoping she'd calm down a little. She stopped just short of running her grandson over before grabbing his chin. A jolt of pain shot through Jorge's jaw, but at the same time, there was a sigh of relief. She wasn't mad at all; she'd just panicked when she saw the blood oozing from his busted lip. Christiano and Emilio came up behind Abuelita and examined Jorge's wounds while simultaneously listening in to see if he'd snitch for the second time in one day.

"It's fine. I'm okay, really," insisted Jorge, staring nervously back at his cousins' predatory glares, "I just tripped." That's all Christiano and Emilio needed to hear. They bolted back to the trolley,



Emma Corby

exchanging enthusiastic high-fives and gleeful giggles. In their minds, Jorge had remained their puppet. If anything, they believed they'd hooked a few more strings to his limbs.

"They did this, yes?" asked Abuelita, turning back to her youngest grandson after being sure the other two were out of sight and earshot, "Did you at least try to defend yourself this time, Jorge?" He nodded, pointing to the remains of the tomato, now splattered and nearly steaming on the hot pavement. Abuelita chuckled and patted Jorge on the back just before beginning her long walk back to the trolley.

"I'll be right back," said Jorge a minute later, running back towards the market.

"Rápido," yelled his grandmother, continuing to hobble along the path.

By the time Jorge made it back to the produce stand, the sun was setting in a blaze of orange and pink over the mountains on the horizon. Most vendors were closing up their stands for the evening or quietly preparing themselves dinner as they waited for the post-work rush.

"Es a cambio del tomate" said Jorge, placing a coin he usually kept in his pocket for emergencies on the stand's counter, "Gracias, señor." Then he turned, a smile still stretched across his face, and left, running as fast as he could to catch up with Abuelita and make it onto the trolley that would carry him back home for dinner.



It was after that moment

drug onto the street onto the  
the the the the the the the  
higher ground  
to see the height at its majesty,  
to fall harder into the madness of undertow

I thought about him  
as he laid  
drunk on the street on the day of his birth  
in celebration of all he was worth

laced with a bitter face  
I sank into a velvet coffin  
itchy and acidic

running callously upon a tightrope crafted in smoke  
knowing it's the edge of a two sided sword wielding death

we stood there  
we scoffed at our tears  
we held our roses, white: pale with pain and impure  
we never did anything

I bowed to the monolith  
faceless like truth as it lay before me

dissolving into my own scream  
thrown into a chamber  
wherein waves clashed and flanged  
into and out of sight  
I saw with my ears around the darkness  
as dynamic rainbows pierced through me like liquid spears

God sent his calamity into a deep space  
from which not even in dreams could he imagine his escape  
I wish I knew him  
them

The sun araw  
seething inside  
meeting the bitter sunshine  
I drooled red from my eyes

staring at the ceiling I melted into my bed

I can't beat it

Cicilia was out of the house again, walking idly past the different trading stands, hearing the calls of the merchants advertising their goods. She wished she was at the trading post of Antonio already- she hated the loud noises of the market and despised how she knew she couldn't afford a single thing. She wished she looked more capable so that the tramps' eyes wouldn't follow her with hunger, even though she was only nine years old. She wished her mother hadn't sent her outside.

"Ciccias, stop getting under my feet and get under Antonio's instead!" Tomasia had snapped when Cicilia had wandered through the kitchen for the seventh time that morning. "Help him out for a bit and come back when it's lunchtime. Maybe then I'll have gotten something done!" Cicilia had grimaced with distaste upon hearing the name Antonio. Although her mother's cousin was friendly, Cicilia did not like Antonio's brusque way of dealing with everything. When he had welcomed her family into the city of Caffa, he offered no sympathy, only shelter for two weeks while they got back on their feet. Cicilia wanted to beg to return to their home in Tana, but she knew it would be suicide.

She remembered every detail from that morning six days ago, when her father, Iacopo, had barged in from the front door, eyes wide with fear. He spoke urgently with Tomasia before shepherding the kids into the wagon that they owned. Cicilia overheard bits of the conversation between her parents. "...a fight in the market... some I cattolici idiot... un musulmano murdered..." when she heard that, Cicilia decided to stop listening. "Come on, cucciolo, little puppy." Iacopo had beckoned to her, using one of her numerous nicknames. They had boarded their wagon, riding to the music of the angry yells coming from the village. A Muslim, murdered in Catholic Tana? The Italians were no longer safe. The Mongols would be after them, hungry for blood.

And so Caffa became a haven for the Catholics, despite it being owned by the Genoese, close friends of the Mongols. Cicilia didn't know how long they would be safe there, and whenever she asked her parents, they evaded the question one way or another.

The little girl looked up, realizing that she was at the end of her journey. The door to Antonio's trading house was in front of her, and she could hear the sounds of business bustling inside. Opening the door, she crept in nervously. Antonio's trading house was an epicenter for activity- the best goods arrived there first, so the consumers consisted of smaller trade business owners as well, collecting their goods to sell. Antonio knew what he was doing when he had set up shop in Caffa. He was taking orders at that moment, Cicilia noted, as her eyes caught his. He raised his eyebrows in acknowledgment, finished his conversation with the current customer and then strutted briskly in the direction of little Cicilia. "Buongiorno, cipollina," he greeted her formally before directing her to the cash register. "Think you can handle this for now? I'll be with you in a moment."

As Cicilia worked the cash register, she reflected on how much she hated Antonio. No one calls a child "little onion," she grumbled in her head. Her normal reluctance to interact with him was heightened when she realized she'd have to explain that her mother had sent her away for him to deal with again. Cicilia was in no mood to be laughed at today. Unfortunately, Antonio came towards her in that moment, for she had finished working with the last customer. There would be a moment's respite until the next one- and most likely a long moment. The line was shorter than usual that day.

"What are you doing here?" Antonio inquired shortly. That was it- no "how are you?" Or "what's up?" Her mother's cousin had the mind of a business man, and that mind didn't want to waste a moment's time.

"I just felt like helping out." Cicilia shrugged, then nimbly changed the subject. "I was also

looking for Lorenzo- where is he?" Lorenzo was her brother, and liked to help at the trading house in his free time.

"Out looking for new jobs, I suppose," Antonio mused thoughtfully, eyes darting towards the records that Lorenzo looked over. They were disheveled as usual- Lorenzo jumped from one idea to another, usually leaving projects half-way done. They both sighed and walked across to straighten the files.

"Antonio?" Cicilia asked after a moment.

"Che cosa?"

"How long will we be safe from the Mongols?"

Antonio paused in his work. Cicilia looked up at him nervously.

"Cipollina, haven't your parents told you? The Mongols have already besieged this city."

Cicilia suddenly found it hard to breathe.

"Didn't you notice the line was shorter than usual? The only goods I have been able to acquire are from the locals who trade here. I can't get anything from outside."

As Cicilia stared at him in shock, Antonio finished straightening the last of his pile and sat down tiredly. Not used to such a show of emotion from such an emotionless man, Cicilia said nothing.

"I'm sorry, Cicilia. I didn't think your parents had hidden it from you. It is unlikely that this city will last another week." Antonio gazed at her uneasily as she continued to stay silent. "Hey, gufo, you wide-eyed owlet, don't you have anything to say?" Getting up, he went back to the counter and began checking the math that she had done for the cash register.

Swallowing the lump in her throat, Cicilia took a deep breath. "Antonio... Are we going to die?"

Crash! The front door blew open as Lorenzo burst in, panic echoing in his footsteps. Cicilia whipped around as Antonio jerked his head up, narrowing his eyes at the scene. "What's wrong with you, Lorenzo?"

For a moment, it seemed as though Cicilia's brother wouldn't be able to get the words out. Then he choked out one word.

"Corpses."

He slumped against the door as though he couldn't hold his own weight. Cicilia turned slowly towards Antonio, who was frozen. Then he charged towards the door and Cicilia scrambled to follow, leaving her brother sitting on the floor, gasping for breath.

As the two ran outside, Cicilia immediately became aware of the screams of terror flooding her ears. Corpses? Does he mean... She hoped with all her might that this was not a repeat of the terrors in Tana, hoped that she wouldn't stumble across the dead bodies of Italians as the Mongols took their revenge. Suddenly someone screamed, "The wall!" And then Antonio was taking her hand and running with her towards their house, away from the wall that had kept out their attackers for so long. But Cicilia pulled away and sprinted towards it, because she had seen her mother and father. She opened her mouth to call out to them, but as they came closer, she realized they were running with...running with...

Cicilia's heart dropped to her stomach. Her parents were running with dead bodies.

"Mom? Dad!" They passed her without a moment's hesitation, the bodies in their arms clanking as their armor was jolted around. Armor? She didn't wait to understand what was happening; she bolted towards the wall of Caffa, not heeding the frantic calls of Antonio, not listening to the screams coming from the sea end of the city. She could see Lorenzo, out of his stupor, shooting towards the wall as well. Suddenly Cicilia was aware of the masses of people flooding past her, almost knocking her off balance. Some of them were carrying the dead, some of them clutching the hands of their children, some of them just running away, away from...

"Dio mio, the sky!" The terrified voice a man flashed past her as Cicilia slowed to a stop and



looked up as though ordered by him, the wall only a couple houses away now. A sickening realization spread through her as she saw the horrific scene in front of her.

Corpses. Corpses were falling from the sky.

Cicilia could feel vomit rising in her throat as she took in the smell, the state that the bodies were in, the sight of which only victims of the Black Death were subjected to. The Bubonic Plague had reached the Mongols, and the bodies launched over the wall carried the same sickness. Everyone in Caffa was doomed.

My mother. My father. Both were carrying bodies, both were now infected, both had only days. Anyone here breathing in the smell...

Cicilia stumbled away as her ears started to ring, unsteady and dizzy. She was infected. Lorenzo was infected. They were all going to die.

"Cicilia!" She did not notice when Antonio snatched her hand. She did not see Lorenzo ducking away from a falling corpse, then turning around to grab the same body and sprint towards the sea. All she could comprehend were the rats, the rats spreading the disease throughout the city as they feasted on the bodies, the bodies that littered around the wall, the wall that was supposed to keep out everything.

We are all as good as dead.

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{In 1346, the Mongols besieged the trading city of Caffa. When the Bubonic Plague struck the attackers, they launched the corpses of their fallen soldiers over the wall to destroy the city from the inside. This marked the beginning of the Black Death in Europe, and the end for the Italians of Caffa.}



Rachel Geiger

Us  
Noor Lima-Boudakian

She  
Rises from the quaking earth  
Arms up, beaming and radiant  
Because she cares

Because she cares  
Looks down at her home that is  
Sodden with  
The neat and tidy  
Muddy ground  
And  
Grass of broken spray-can green  
Dotted with the prettiest weeds you'll ever see

Thought nobody was looking so  
She made simple faces then they all over compensated and  
Said looked as though she'd just had a  
Sundress rendezvous with a summer moon  
A tea party with asteroid cakes and drinks of the thawing ice on Jupiter's moons  
All they didn't know is that they were right  
And my calendar reads February  
The second  
She walked calmly along a jagged dock in  
Sock-clad feet with  
Holes singed from the  
Fire I helped her build  
Two weeks to the day, one we almost shared  
She was the matches  
My flint wouldn't light  
My flint wouldn't spark  
Yet we whispered well-known secrets of blue-licked flames  
And felt the handmade air touch our faces  
Never too warm

Never too warm  
She moved her dry bones with a flickering light switch of  
A heartbeat made from oil covered cloth that  
We wrung into the ground and tried not to  
Fall  
On the slippery tiles  
While baking pita bread without an oven  
Never too calm  
And she ran with her words draped in  
Perceived quinoa noodles

For bright blue shirts made to wear only when they match the sky  
She will always know its color from  
Her friendship with the moon in her mirror  
(he gives her gifts of sundresses for their parties and socks in empathy)  
They speak of what may come  
Never too loud  
Never too loud  
And her laugh fills the hummingbird's bowl  
And her laugh tinkles the windchimes that appeared in my doorway  
We draw pictures together  
But my arm shakes  
And her hand is always steady on the pink and green lines  
Never too smooth  
Except the wrinkle in her brow and her sandpaper thoughts  
I am stubborn but you are strong  
She holds my eyes with fragile glass and a pen running out of blue



STAN  
Isabella Bors

Fade In:

EXT. Purgatory - No Time

Two armies sit on each half of the border between heaven and hell. The tension is palpable between the angelic and demonic brigades. Men with horns of all shapes and sizes cross the fiery terrain, aching to fight the hellish angels in front of them. A larger man sits atop a large throne-like structure on the side of light, clasping his fingers to the armrest beside him. He smiles, just begging the monsters across the barrier to scream with hate.

CUT TO:

A close-up of the front lines is seen; the menacing faces of each warrior glare into the screen. Whether angel or demon, these men and women furrowed their brows with anger, and clenching their fists with rage. A sudden ominous wind passes through the silence, and STAN, the unlikely saint among devils, ejaculates a war cry. His wings span out across his back, and flare towards the man on the throne. Stan continues to shout, charging up his warriors for battle. The camera pans closer the demon army.

INTERCUT STAN'S FACE

STAN (V.O.)

Now, you're probably wondering, how did a guy like me end up in this mess? Well, that's a bit of a long story. But hey, I can definitely say that it was one hell of a ride. So sit back, relax, and let me tell you the tale of how I died.

CUT TO:

The bustling streets of New York City are seen, the daytime showing off the city's beautiful glass skyscrapers and layout of the pavement. The camera pans down closer to the people, displaying all sorts of characters walking towards their destinations (possible FILM CLIP). The camera then shows a long shot of a crowd, showing STAN stumbling through it at certain points. Stan has incredibly bad posture, and we can see him hunching over to avoid contact with others in the crowd. A close-up is seen of Stan's face and neck, showing off his prominent dark circles and forlorn expression.

STAN (V.O.)

This...is Stan. Or, what I used to be, I suppose. Stan worked a nine to five job at the office, doing thousands of miles of paperwork just to pay the bills. He was just a regular guy doing a regular job, y'know? Never did anything wrong, and didn't get involved in the pointless stuff. The kid even went to church on Sundays!

UNIDENTIFIED DEMON (V.O.)

Yeah, okay, cut the crap and get to the juicy stuff already!

STAN (V.O.)(CONTINUOUS)

Yeah yeah, alright.

CUT TO:

EXT.CHURCH OF SAINT MICHAEL - 12:00 PM

Stan was walking home from church, minding his own business. The idiot had no idea what was coming for him! As soon as he stepped onto the crosswalk, BAM! Truck runs right over him. "Didn't see the red light" oh, okay Mr. Truck Driver, I see how it is, you piece of...

LUCIFER (O.S.)

Stan!

STAN (V.O.)

Right, right, I know. So, because I was a good boy during my lifetime, I was on the train to Heaven. Or at least I was supposed to be. You see, I happened to have died at the same time as someone else. I mean, that's not really a surprise, considering people die every day, but my situation was different. Someone must have messed with the controls of who goes to which place, because when I woke up, all I could see was fire.

CUT TO:

Stan standing in the middle of a massive pit, awestruck by his surroundings. The camera then slowly pans to a long shot of Hell, taking in every bit of detail. Fire spits out of every crevasse, and mountains of nether rock loom over every speck of civilization. The color of the sky is a deep red, with smog fuming down into the atmosphere. A large stairwell guarded by a gate sits in the middle of the plain, allowing no one but the worthy to descend to the second layer. The camera pans back to Stan, showing a full body close-up. Stan's aura radiates a blue color, and a small ring sits atop his head. He looks around wildly, attempting to figure out his situation.

STAN

I...uh...

HECTOR (O.S.)

Well, lookie what we have here!

PAN TO:

The camera whips around to show HECTOR, the buff yet potato-esque demon with large ram horns. A couple of his goons linger around him, giving scornful looks to Stan. Hector smiles, raring up his voice to speak.

HECTOR

Looks like I've found some fresh meat!(Goons laugh) How big are your horns, string bean? Or, maybe, they aren't there at all! Ghahaha!

PAN TO:

The camera switches back to Stan, showing him backing further into the ditch. A close-up of Stan's face is seen, showing his terrified expression and wide-eyed stare. As he backs up another step, a shot of his foot is shown as he plants it into the dirt. He assumes a fighting stance, and the camera cuts to a long shot of his body. He furrows his brow, and begins to speak.

STAN

Wha...what do you mean...? I don't exactly know what your talking about. Please... (he chuckles and smiles meekly) enlighten me?

CUT TO:

The camera shows a close-up of Hector's face flashing a toothy, menacing smile. The camera then slowly backs out to show the whole group of demons, all smiling directly at Stan. The camera then pans to Stan, showing the determined expression on his face with a brief close-up. Hector then begins to laugh, cackling at the top of his lungs. The goons proceed to do the same, showing off their glistening claws and pointing them threateningly at Stan. The camera does a long shot of the whole group, transitioning slowly to show just Hector's body. After his cackling session, he sighs, and murmurs.

HECTOR (continuous)

Looks like someone needs a little lesson in how things work around here. You see these?

(Hector points at his horns)

These tell ya how much power someone has. They also tell ya how much they've sinned. And, as you can clearly see by the size of mine, I have a helluva lot of strength.

CUT TO:

Hector begins to ball up his fist, smashing it into his hand to indicate his rage. The camera pans

back to Stan, who furrows his brow and assumes a lanky fighting position, torqueing his back and torso. Cut back to a long shot of Hector and his goons, laughing and drawing closer to Stan. Hector then begins to run, with the camera dolly following his movements at a side angle. Camera cuts to Stan, who braces for impact and puts out his hand in defense. A sudden blue light emerges when Hector makes contact with Stan, and he is thrown back by a gust of wind. The camera cuts to Hector, slowing down the time as he drops to the ground. The blue color creeps up Hector's body as he falls, disintegrating his horns and making a white ring around his eyes. The camera cuts back to Stan, who again assumes a wide-eyed expression. A voice is suddenly heard in the distance, bellowing "Sancti". Cut to a close-up of Stan's expression.

INT. Lucifer's Kingdom - No Time

LUCIFER (Not completely visible)

Well, what do we have here?

(Shows an image of Stan and Hector's battleground)

It seems we have a Saint among us.

(He smiles, and the camera cuts to Lucifer's back, showing the torn flesh of where wings used to reside. He begins to laugh.)

FADE OUT



A Child in Arms  
Isabella Bors

Feet splash among the morning dew  
as the painted sky bellows  
To light the way towards a red soaked dawn.  
Trees flap their wings in harmony with the wind  
guiding travelers with the flick of the ginkgo leaf  
through a semi-circle of stones.

A man is covered in binds  
Soaked with war  
Trudging through the underbrush of leaves and  
dirt  
to find his life again.

The river speaks in a soft murmur  
Like a mother comforting her child  
as it sits in a pool of its own flesh,  
Choking  
taking its last breath.

A blade strikes its brother  
the clang of iron ringing through the trees.  
He is blinded by the sound  
not able to see the swaddles  
Cradled against a lost wife  
Undone by the rogue swing of metal at war.

He kneels in soft, forgiving moss  
Placing his cloak upon the riverbed  
Awaiting the dagger.  
A child appears,  
whole and without scars  
Singing to him the hum of the water.

The metal passes across his chest  
Blood dribbling onto the sand.  
There is nothing left but a righteous corpse  
Hand outstretched  
to the final hum of the river.



Rachel Geiger

An Antecedent Scenario for "The Village Tudda" by  
Kenneth Patchen

The girl sat on the broken concrete steps that led into her house. Her blonde hair, dirty and discolored, was kept out of her face by an old handkerchief she'd wrapped around her head. Adam observed her, until a man came and took her up the steps into the disheveled house where she disappeared in the fog of the morning. Shaking his head, Adam turned and walked back down the crooked alleyway towards the train station. He could hear screams echo against the cobbles and bricks of the buildings. The laughter that was carried with the breeze followed suit and spoke of the things unsaid, and the rugs with elephants under them in the homes of the townspeople. This was Tudda: dirty, torn, weary, and mysterious.

Adam had traveled to Tudda because he wanted a change. He wanted to study the town, the people, the way of life. He wanted to hear the strange music, and the old stories. Adam was intrigued by the whispered rumors of the "strange things" that wandered the hills near the fields at night. And while he had come to study the town, he ended up studying her.

Her name was Alena. She worked at the small bookstore next to the house where the old women sat and the naked girls hung by their hair in the back room. Alena had a mischievous smile, an airy laugh, and long hair that she kept in a slightly untucked plait. She had grown up in the Village Tudda. She had seen the strange things in the hills, and she knew all of the stories, and could play the strange music. Alena became Adam's guide to Tudda. They traversed the town, and Alena told him everything he wanted to know. What Adam learned was more about Alena than Tudda, but that didn't bother Adam. Alena was everything he had wanted to know.

Adam was standing on the platform, waiting for the train to pull up, and take him back to the city where his publisher was waiting to see what he had created in his month long hiatus. He stared at the mountains, kilometers away, and he thought about the time he spent with Alena. He remembered the one night, after she took him to see the strange things in the hills, how she had unbound her hair and taken up his hand, and placed it over her heart. He heard the train whistle as it rolled towards the station, and he remembered how she had asked him if he knew about heartbeats. Adam had been silent, but he remembered taking a step closer to her. And he remembered how as he whispered his intentions in her ear, that he could only think of how she smelled like cotton sheets and a foggy morning.

The train brakes screeched as the old locomotive halted. In a daze Adam heard her voice, asking if he would ever come back to her. He picked up his suitcase, and on the breeze he could smell those cotton sheets. He half expected Alena to walk through the fog, and take up his hand again. Adam shook his head and climbed up the stairs to the train. He knew he would never see Alena again. The attendant took suitcases. Adam looked back towards the town, towards Tudda, and he walked down the aisle of the car. He sat down in the back, next to a window. The attendant punched passenger tickets, and when the wheels started to move Adam settled in to the cheaply upholstered seat. Adam watched the fields and the hills, and he thought back to the strange things that roamed Tudda at night. Alena was one of the stranger things. The gray day seemed, ominous, evidence of an approaching storm, but the only drops that fell were from Adam's tear ducts, as the train took him farther away from Tudda, and the only "strange thing" he could ever love.



Sarah Woodams

Roads  
Aquil Sheikh

The air is dry,  
warming and smooth.

woman wearing a skull cap,  
skull of a dog, a lost companion.  
with sinewy black hair, outlined eyes,  
gaunt, a silent black tear that perpetually rolls down her cheek.  
A pauper in kind eyes.  
One hand protects the self  
the other ventures into leaves and darkness of woods.  
A crow behind, perched on a branch, silent, looking towards the sky,  
with white misty eyes

leaves cycle around, oak, old and anew.  
through a flock of flowers,  
flowing through a barren branch,  
whose brother the crow is perched

Where does this road lead?

a puddle that eschews the entire world,  
as if off the worlds perview,  
in a blank white canvas.

it holds a reflection  
who is it there?  
is this who I am?  
is what I see the truth?  
what lies beneath the surface:  
is murky, unformed and undecided.

In the summer nights, basked in the renewal of warming cold,  
I feel so old.

caught in the trap of language games:  
words not from this world,  
thoughts that describe it so well,  
will I ever understand?

worn,  
she is torn quartered and hung  
from the same post  
where her brothers once sung,  
buried in native clay,



and preserved for optimism,  
with love unrequited.

the seas are not filled with flames,  
earth is unshaken  
mountains stand, upright and not uprooted  
oceans do not flood and overflow  
the sky is closed  
and the sun rises in the east

She goes,  
through a tunnel of trees,  
at this road that ends.  
she is home

She  
is  
Home



Emma Corby

To the Man  
Mariah Bender

My camp friend and I sit in Adirondack chairs facing the dark water. The sun has already set,  
Yet the sky  
Clings to the droplets of light that hang  
From the ceiling of the  
Universe.  
Her dead eyes sit,  
Fixed on the opposite shore of the lake.  
The shift in her silhouette tells me that she has opened her  
Mouth only to close it again  
She stops, tastes her words for a moment and begins again.

"There's something I haven't told you yet. I wanted to wait for the right time..."  
I sit,  
Stuck  
In the  
Moments  
Between her words.  
"There was this boy..."

"I thought he liked me..."

"I said 'no'..."

"....."

"He didn't stop."

Three years before this night.  
I sit at the family computer beside my mom.  
My sister is on the other side of a skype call, from her treatment center in Syracuse.  
She has gone there  
To learn to fight the eating disorder that has been trying to steal her  
Away from me for years.

"They don't understand, mom..."  
Her voice cracks with the tears that are trying to  
Break  
Free  
From her throat.  
"The people here..."

"They think I don't want to get better..."



"They think I'm choosing this..."

"They don't know that I have this..."

"Because..."

"....."

"I was raped."

You see, when two of the people you love the most  
Have their bodies  
Claimed by  
Other people:  
You begin to feel as though your name is on some waiting list.  
You wait and pray that you don't have  
The winning numbers  
In this lottery of violence.

So,  
To the man who will one day  
Fall in love with me:  
I'm sorry  
That I may not trust you,  
That I may flinch should your hand approach my waist.  
Please believe me when I say that it will have nothing to do with you,  
That it has little to do with me.  
But rather,  
that it is rooted in this culture that tells  
our daughters to:  
"dress appropriately"  
"don't let your drink out of your sight"  
  
"keep. your. knees. together"  
Rather than teaching our sons that  
  
Her body is not yours to be taken.



Katherine Vollmer



You  
Thanasi Daftsios

*Taking the subconscious and looking at a being from the eyes of everyone else, all those you have met and passed on your walks of life, looking at you.*

This is how you talk; listen; hear; think; lie; Do not hurt others; yourself; this is how you listen; this is how you screw someone; this is how to help someone; this is how to lie(don't lie); Just die; don't die; don't waste your time; you're a waste of time; be happy; how to be happy; don't smoke; get away from the smoke; this is how to be great; this is why you can't; don't be a vlaka, Vlaka; *crythenlieandcrythenlie*; don't make the threat of death; death made a threat of you; *walking corpse*; beautiful mind; Stupid; mature; if you are to lie, don't get caught; if you have to lie, don't; if someone hurts you, hurt them right back; don't hurt others; this is how to be kind; you are kind; you are not a bastard; *you are a bastard*; open up; be reserved; don't do it; *if you are to be hers, be better than you*;... *you lost her*; Control your anger; it's ok to be angry; don't hurt others; don't blame yourself; it's your fault; you are great; you are talented; this is how to be talented; slow down; you are terrible; monster; Monster; Special; try at least; no point in trying at all; calm down; *you can't calm*; go outside....*beauty in her eyes*; calm now?.....*Yeah*

It has been four years since I have noticed that blurred, distant light shine through my blanket of oceanic silt. This time it grew brighter, the heat weaving its way onto me. Centuries have gone by since I last felt this warmth. I could feel the surrounding silt being pushed around by deep currents of the Aegean. These currents, however, were not natural, but very distinct. They were from the same source as the ones from 1973: humans.

I felt five bare fingers gently position themselves underneath me, lightly grasping my smooth surface while avoiding my sharp edge. Another set of fingers brushed off the remaining silt that has shielded me since the wreck. Suddenly, one of my edges became stained with red, and at almost the same time the hand quickly detached itself from my surface. The man glanced away from me and towards the streak of red on his palm. After creating more currents by waving his free hand, he placed it back onto me.

Through the bubbles of carbon dioxide, past the goggles protecting the man from the salty waters of the Aegean, I could see his eyes. Full of exhaustion and relief, he starred back at me. Various emotions continued to flow out of his wheatgrass eyes, just like the blood from his hand. The significance of this moment was clear, as something like this never occurred this far below the water's surface. The man continued to hold onto me, the first shard he discovered, while hovering over millions of other pieces of my relatives.

\*\*\*\*\*

.The weight of the others forced me to press up against the grain of the Turkish cedar crate. Rays of sunshine seeped through the few gaps onto me and other shards on the perimeter, slowly bringing warmth into our temporary home. However, these beams of light did not continuously flood the space. Occasionally, the sunshine would come and go in a quick fashion. This pattern was irregular, and was usually accompanied with a human. The sound of muffled chimes continued as each jam-packed container was stacked onto the deck of the vessel. Scattered footsteps with different velocities soon became the dominant sound with mumbles of the native tongue in the background. The combination of damp wood and sweat masked the air. As the volume of chaos began to settle, it hit me: we were debris, abandoned in a wooden crate decorated with smears of a salty residue.

As the vessel awoke, so did we. The congestion of the crate reduced the power of the machine's vibrations, allowing us to only rattle minimally. The vocal swordplay once again became prevalent throughout the upper decks as the vessel began to disembark. After the rope was gathered and secured around the cleat, the ship horn successfully completed its duty, resulting in the vessel's detachment from the loading dock. Once I felt the water's breeze and the oscillation of the waves, I knew that my home was now a thing of the past. Looking back, I longed for a future homecoming, an event where I could once again be cradled by my creator.

After some time, the roars of the vessel went mute. Through the crack of my wooden cage I noticed that we were motionless, resting in the embrace of a harbor. The landscape here was vastly different; jagged rocks protruded from the coast, protecting the lush vegetation of the interior. Shouts of the native tongue were tossed from port to starboard and stern to bow. Deep grunts came from the belly of the men, as if they were attempting to lift something substantial. Suddenly, there was a universal sigh of relief followed by the heavy object slapping the surface of the sea. Drops of the Aegean then came aboard, as if it was a temporary, isolated rainstorm.

The crew's relief seemed to be short-lived because shortly after, all hell began to break loose. The fluctuation of the waves became one-sided. The resulting pressure forced me to further indent

the cedar crate protecting me from the outside commotion. I could feel the vessel gradually favor the side adjacent to the edge of the rigid shore, unbalancing the previously leveled top deck. The lighter crates began to slide towards the opposite edge, while the heavier ones remained stationary. The sporadic footsteps began to pick up their pace, along with the intensity of the Turkish clamors. The coast's jagged rocks appeared to increase in size, a feat that seemed stressful to the men, but astonishing to me, that is, until I realized its consequence.

Before the chaos was resolved, the vessel was wounded. The serrated crag violently splintered the wooden draft, allowing the sea to infiltrate the interior. The resulting whiplash and rising water level amplified the disorder among the crew. Aware of the conclusion of the event, a majority of the humans aboard decided to join the contents of the Aegean. The force from the second puncture caused us to dismantle from the crate below, tumble across the soggy deck, and into the sharp surface of earth. The structure of the crate was instantly disassembled, and my relatives and I were once again free.

The sunlight was translucent under the surface of the water, but I could still feel its warmth. Caressed by the saltwater, my surroundings steadily became less visible and the strength of the warmth declined as I continued my descent. The water placed me onto the grainy façade of the base of the harbor. Suddenly, a cloud of silt rose above me and everything went black.



Finite Frosting  
Rachel Schaefer

It seems this spring break  
I poured the contents to make  
Something wet and thick  
Derisive of my wrists that shake  
Around the mixture; but it's nothing like the cache; down-nose dripping  
Sweat licking my chops down to my ankles. Weather subsides  
To turn my egg a sunny side  
And if I were a pelican, stand one legged on the beach and fly  
"Would my currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action?  
Soft you now!" The prison speaks, a hardened chest, that gently beats  
along abreast a lovely beach, that withers lest iambic feet walk toe to toe  
unkindly meet in verse they are set free;  
Inside my head I'm nearly dead  
And mermaids sing like winter wren  
I'm half alive, and full of lead.  
I sink and here the mermaids talk  
before I speak in bubbled breath  
Fair speech and mystic matter.  
Words rise up, but not their sound,  
Through littoral batter they are not found  
Inarticulate you find me now;  
I am the subject matter.  
Of place and time I do not show.  
Physical quantity in time and space  
Intangible cannot be replaced  
Yet here I am unbound.



Emma Corby

A Ferry Called Salvation  
Calum Hall

Scene 1: A Charon's Ferry

The curtain rises, revealing the wooden deck of a boat and a rusted white railing. A low rumbling of engines can be heard from behind and beneath stage left. Sounds of water lapping against the side of the boat repeat in a soft and slow rhythm. The only items present on stage are the railing and a pile of crates that are tied down to the deck. Atop the crates is Travis, wearing an open tweed jacket over a black hoodie, olive green cargo pants, and boots a light shade of chestnut. He's a tall slender man with shaggy curly hair and a clean-shaven face.

Travis is quietly writing in a small leather-bound notebook. After a few moments, a look of satisfaction comes across his face. He puts the notebook into his jacket pocket. He stays seated on the pile of crates for a minute, staring into nothing until he gets up, stretches his legs and arms, then walks to the railing facing the audience. He stands there, resting his arms atop the railing, waiting. Footsteps sound from stage left. Jester walks in slowly, looking at the sky and his surroundings. Jester wears an unbuttoned gray jacket with a white and blue checkered dress shirt, chestnut khakis, and broken-down red sneakers. Jester walks over to Travis and does as he does, resting his arms on the railing next to him. The only sound is the rhythmic lapping of the water and the soft rumble of the engines below.

Jester: This journey always brings new faces and personalities [He eyes Travis.] that mix like oil and water.

Travis: [A quiet chuckle.] Do I stand out so much that you can compare me to oil, and others water?

Jester: No you are water. Too clean to be oil. Besides you're wearing a tweed jacket on this ship of fools. And you look like someone who is as yet untouched by madness. Like Odysseus on his journey across the black sea looking only for Ithaca, you seem as aimless and foolish as the rest of us.

Travis: I have to say it's a first to be called a Greek hero and a fool all in a few seconds.

Jester: I speak only the truth. I am merely speaking my mind. As many are too afraid to do nowadays. [In a sarcastic tone of voice.] Have I insulted your tweedy intelligence?

Travis: [Looking at Jester, and grinning and shaking his head.] You are an ass. But at least you are an approachable one, unlike most of the fools aboard. [Holds hand out to Jester.] If you can be serious for a moment, the name is Travis. What might yours be?

Jester: [Smiling, he accepts Travis's handshake.] The name's Jester. [Travis opens his mouth to speak but is interrupted by Jester, who shushes him with a slightly annoyed set of movements and tone of voice.] Yes, my parents were English majors--hence the name and my sarcastic nature.

Travis: [Grinning.] The name fits. If you had been a girl, your name would have been--

Jester: [Sighing.] Yes, my name would have been Hero. [Travis giggles uncontrollably.] You do know you are the giddiest man I have ever seen. My possible name was amusing, I give you that, but you just can't seem to stop chuckling and giggling like some sort of idiot. [Travis's glee dies down, as he takes a handkerchief and wipes his eyes. Jester looks at Travis in slight disbelief and snickers.] You have a monogrammed handkerchief?

Travis: It's who I am--a real prince.

Jester: [With a sneer.] Sure, keep telling yourself that. I'm sure one day you'll find a princess and court her before dying of plague.

Travis: [Grinning at Jester, and ticking off on his fingers.] Sarcastic, parents were English majors, and you find no amusement in an obvious jest. I must say that I'm beginning to think you should be the one wearing a tweed jacket and serving as the water in this huge vat of oil.

Jester: [Chuckling lightly. In a mocking, celebratory voice and exaggerated movement.] Well, what do you know? The prince can jest. [In a relieved tone.] When I first saw you, I thought you were merely a stuck-up writer out looking for a story among us thieves and cutthroats. [Grabbing the handkerchief from Travis.] Or maybe a rich snob looking for adventure and thrills.

Travis: [Slightly grimacing.] Well, you aren't completely wrong in your assumption. I'm a writer, but a piss poor one.

Jester: [Grimacing.] Oh god, your kind is ridiculous, going into danger thinking you can find inspiration at the end of a gun barrel.

Travis: I just hope that we may be friends aboard this ship, and that you won't be the one holding the gun.

Jester: [Covering his face, laughing.] Oh god, I believe your princeliness is showing. I have enough blood on my hands. I don't need a writer's blood to dirty them any more. [Jester checks his watch, and he thinks for a second.] Would you like to join me for dinner? I assume you have no one to dine with because... [Motions generally at Travis.] This.

Travis: [Smirks.] I see no harm in it. What time is food being served in the galley?

Jester: I would say around seven, but Joseph is quite erratic if you come too early or too late.

Travis: Joseph?

Jester: The chef aboard the vessel. You will become well acquainted with him if you haven't already.

Travis: Ahh. Well, I will see you at dinner.

Jester: [Smiling.] See you then, your highness.

Travis: [Light chuckle.] And you, son of poets, child of language, clown. [Jester flips him the bird as he walks off stage left. Travis stays with arms on the railing.]

Travis: It's nice to see that not all is lost on this vessel. The man shows a small glimmer of society in this dire place. [Sighing.] Even if the man is quite obviously a sheep in wolf's clothing, thinking he goes unnoticed by his peers . . . well, most of them.

[Silence falls. Suddenly Travis jerks his head to the left, not violently, but it is notable, and his face shows pain.]

But what of our mind? Silence churns the madness we hope to keep hidden, locked away, and-- [His head jerks again, pang of pain like that of someone plagued by a migraine.] Damn things. [An anxious look falls across his face.]

Why come now of all times, and so loudly? You were once whispers. Where has this intensity come

from? [Travis pulls a bottle of pills from his inner jacket pocket. He opens it up and pulls out a single pill and holds it up to look at it.]

I remember when these were cherry. [The pang of pain comes across his face.]

I'm sick of the taste.

[He drops the pill over the railing. He slowly pours the rest of the contents of the bottle over the railing.]

I shall finish what we have started.

[The curtains close as Travis walks slowly off stage.]

Scene 1 end



Katherine Vollmer



Humans House Hypocrisy  
Eilis Regan

The houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them,  
Gaze at one another with various colors of imperturbable faces.  
They sit alongside the busy streets covered in  
Aged pavement, cracked, and  
The tireless movement of both feet and wheel.  
The hustle of man and his eternally open mouth.  
The vibrations of emotion, or silence occupy the atmosphere.

All the un-living world is hushed—  
The lamp-posts and stop signs remain still.  
Until the last of life removes itself from the street this eve,  
The un-living is lifeless.

A man presently rushes down the front steps of his home;  
He waves his hand and races to meet a cab.  
His wife yells an ambiguous tune that registers  
In the ear of a certain passerby—  
A lady who louses honesty with lies;  
She then quickens her pace to meet her friend and leaves the street a desert-land.

Throughout it all, the houses and the lamp-posts and the street signs grow attentive.

The same commotion peaks at dusk,  
When the daylight has perished, and all is again, stagnant.  
Humanity sends itself to rest and the un-living awakens with the moon;

The houses interrupt their silenced interval  
And lifeless night-chatters erupt:  
Proposals of the gossip of the Mister and Misses,  
The brothers and sisters,  
The living world that brews by daylight, is debated.  
One topic wins the affection of many.

The red house addresses her neighbor,  
Articulating the people's flaws;  
"Inaccurate jabbers plague these people.  
To one is blabbered something and to the other,  
Words anew.  
But have I told you what I heard of your inhabitants...  
They wish to dismiss you for some grander dwelling,  
For they claim that you're most certainly impractical—  
Your windows, too large and your front door, recognizably botched.  
To be concise, they think you're hideous and  
That you are not enough."

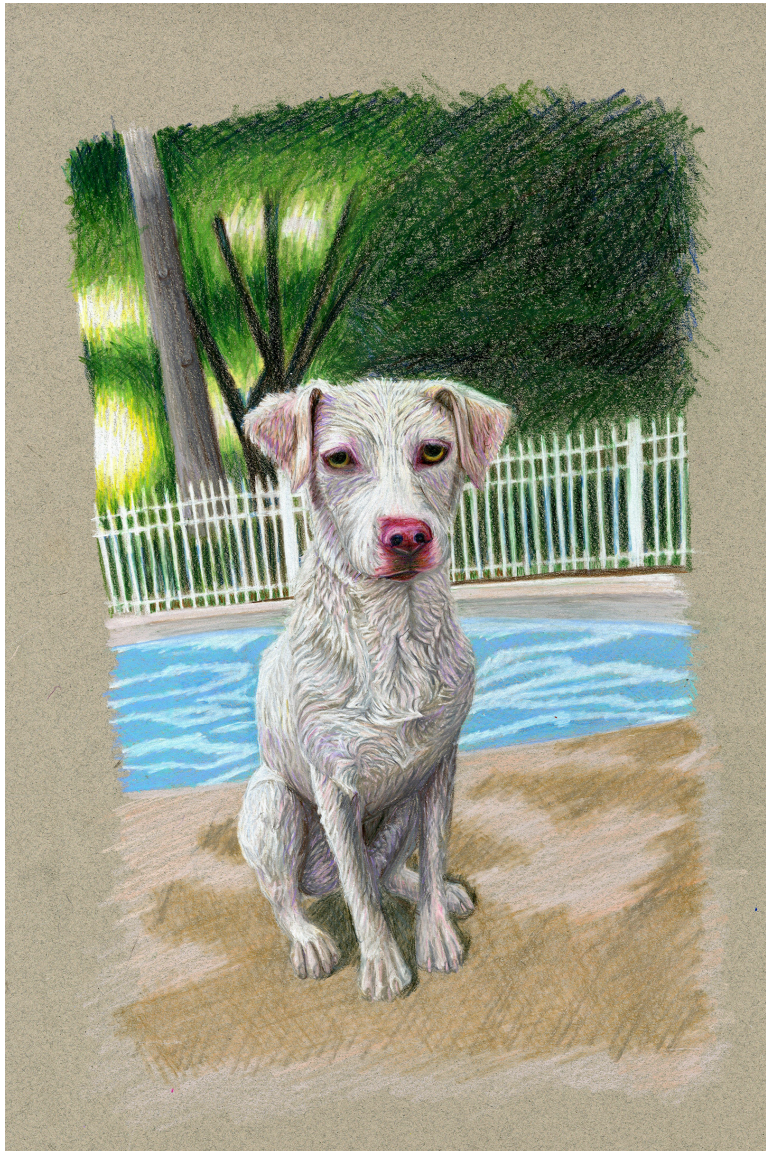
The blue house feels unwell as its last blind falls across its last brightened upstairs window.  
"No more," she cries, "I've had enough."

The apartment whispers this to his adjacent and carries on the news.  
The brick house overhears and blabbers the eerie lullaby along.  
Like a carousel, what's been said is said again and again.  
And again and again.

The blue house's weathered gutters shed a tear.

Darkened hours turn to dawn and the houses submit themselves to empty concentration,  
For they now prepare to listen and listen,  
Knowing that they must contribute to the next night's talk.

And the houses of the street, conscious of lives within them,  
Gaze at one another with various colors of imperturbable faces once more.



Madi Smith

Someone who used to be famous wrote a song about my country. He called it "Desolation." Every day, I live the desolation. Burnt out houses flick by like a newsreel through the dirty window of the train. My city used to be great; it took them years to get tracks out here. They said it was easier than fixing the roads though. Besides, we have no gas.

It's a strange when all your earthly possessions can fit in a suitcase. I've been counting on my fingers what I own; it distracts me from thinking. Five shirts, three pairs of pants, two sweatshirts, nine pairs of boxers, seventeen socks, an atlas, a pair of shoes, a blanket, a water bottle, an owl pendant, a cellphone that no longer gets service, and an old photograph. The faces around me are strangers, but I know them. They've lost everyone, everything. They wish to God they'd died like the rest. Either way, it's not like God is still there. I know them because I am them. Well, not exactly; I haven't lost everyone. I feel a warmth as a head rests itself on my shoulder.

The only time he looks peaceful is when he's asleep. I try to synchronize my breathing with his. He is tall, even taller than me, but thin and lanky just like everyone these days. His messy black hair needs to be cut, and it smells like rain; surprisingly, I find comfort in that. I shift my body slightly so his head falls into the dip between my neck and my collarbone, and turn my eyes back to the wasteland outside our window. I am lost in my thoughts, rebuilding the skeletons of buildings in my mind, when I feel a small hand clutch my shirt. Careful not to wake Magnus, I turn my head slowly to meet a pair of wide blue eyes looking up at me. "Hey bud," I whisper, "you hungry?" Still curled up in Magnus' lap, the child yawns and nods. I tap Magnus gently to wake him, lean close to his ear, and say quietly, "We need the trail mix." You have to be careful when you talk about food, because you never know who could be waiting to take it from you.

Groggily, Magnus shuffles through his bag, and pulls out a beat-up zip-lock bag of nuts and raisins. We had a lot of trail mix hidden in random places; it keeps well and is full of protein, both important characteristics when you're trying to survive. Plus, when they drop supplies out here in the districts people usually ignore the trail mix, which means it's safer for us to collect. All I have for protection are my fists and a long knife I stole from a dead guy; they took the knife when I got on the train. With the child eating contently and Magnus already sleeping again, I return to my own internal monologue.

I wonder what the city will be like when we get there. Who do people fight for, themselves or each other? I've heard they have electricity and running water there; maybe doctors and teachers too. After the Fall, many survivors gathered there, in the place they once called Minneapolis, to form a society they named Fall Haven. Since then, they've been bringing survivors from all over the country by train to the city, as soon as they can fix the tracks. Getting on this train was like a second chance; a hope for a life where we could feel safe. I haven't felt safe in so long.

That's not entirely true. I subtly position myself so that Magnus' sleeping body fits more comfortably next to mine. We knew each other before the Fall, were good friends actually. But when everyone was dying around me, he slipped out of my mind; I figured he'd died like the rest. I remember the day very well; I had locked myself in my house for ten days, and I had little food left and no clean water. Not knowing what else to do, I grabbed my dad's dull hunting knife and a baseball bat and walked to the school. The building was a mess. It was partially collapsed from the bombs, and judging from the smell there were still a good number of bodies in there. Seeing a familiar place in ruins unleashed the flood of emotions I'd been trying so hard to keep down. I sat down on the pavement and cried. There was no one there, no one left but me; I didn't really care who heard. Suddenly, I felt a hand on my shoulder, and a voice said my name. Panicking, I



swung the bat and hit the person hard in the stomach. Luckily it wasn't the knife, because when my attacker fell to the ground with a strangled gasp of pain, I knew who it was immediately. I was, of course, mortified, but Magnus shook it off and offered to share some of his food with me. I wasn't alone anymore.

A jolt in the train stirs Magnus awake. He blinks twice, meeting my eyes, and says, "this is all going to be ok, right?"

I don't really know how to answer; I've spent countless hours thinking about this train. I can't give up hope, but I can't give up fear either. "I have to believe it will."

"I'm just so tired, Evan."

Now it's my turn to put my head on his shoulder. I bury my face deep in the worn fabric of his shirt, and smell rain. I used to hate when it rained; it made things wet and muddy. I have a much greater appreciation for precipitation now. Without running water, a rain shower is sometimes the only shower you'll get for weeks. I still hate snow, though. They couldn't bomb all the Rochester out of me.

The child stretches out across our laps, making little baby dinosaur noises. I smile to myself; there is so much darkness in the world these days, but this little human is bright as the sun. After the Fall, the survivors set up meeting places in the cities. They were designed to reunite old family, but they did a much better job of creating new families. Magnus and I had been together two weeks when we heard of a gathering at Frontier Field in the city. I don't know what, or who, we were hoping to find, but there was nothing there for us. Then we saw the child, maybe two or three years old, and he was alone too. Someone had left him there, crying in the dust, and everyone was walking past him, pretending he wasn't there. Their own lives were too uncertain as it was to add a child into the mix. I was always told that teenagers made rash decisions, and that adults always know best, because they've gained the magical quality of good judgement. The adults were leaving a child to die; the teenager picked him up and tried to comfort him. He was small and blond, and his name was Sam. And we created a new family.

The train rumbles on through a soft blanket of new snow; the light of the moon reflects off it like a million diamonds. The humming fluorescent bulbs that line the roof of the carriage flicker several times and go out. No one really cares; we've lived without electricity for so long that we are more comfortable without it. I like to stare at the sky at night. The stars and the moon and the deep blackness of space remind me how little we are. Being little used to be bad, because everyone wanted to be known. Now to be little is to be unnoticeable and safe and warm and not alone. I know there must be other worlds scattered across the galaxy; I wonder if we could've gotten there someday.

Then, the cold winter sky opens up in a burst of dazzling lights. Bands of green and blue and purple dance across the night like ribbons in the wind. I tap Magnus on the arm and whisper, "look." His eyes widen in awe as he watches the aurora wind its way around the stars, captivated by the raw beauty of nature. The lights reflect in his eyes like a dream; Magnus is always dreaming. He once told me that it was his way of escaping our reality. He has nowhere to hide but in his castle in the clouds; I have to keep him on the ground, and I think he resents me for it sometimes.

My dreams are full of death and ruin; I try not to sleep. Instead, I channel all my energy into planning. I make the hard decisions; I decide what our future will be. Magnus and Sam rely on me to be level-headed and rational. So, I pretend that I'm okay. I'm not. I've lost far too much to be okay. I feel like there's a ragged, gaping hole in my abdomen. It's there every time I breathe, every time I eat, every time I cry. I watched my family die; my friends no longer answered my calls, because they were dead too. Everyone I knew, everyone I loved and looked up to and depended on, disappeared before my eyes, and all I was left with was the incessant pounding of the One

Question in my brain: why am I alive? I live each day trying to make the most of my situation, though I still haven't decided if it is a blessing or a curse. I take care of my new family because I know my parents would want me to. I lost my little sister too; I see her in Sam now. For some reason, I was saved when so many died. I have to be the best person I can be, or I might as well just stop living with the rest of them.

For the last few hours, we have been travelling along a flat, empty plain. It's a dark expanse of nothingness; I can't help but wonder if this mysterious city is even real. But the horizon seems to be shooting up new stars as we get closer to it. A city rises majestically from the prairie, with sparkling lights that spread outward from the center like rays from the sun. We cross a river and there are buildings; they show the same mark of war as those back home, but a careful eye can pick out the tell-tale signs of life. Clotheslines run between the shattered windows, and flaps of fabric cover holes where wooden doors once stood. During the first winter doors were popular with survivors; they burned well and were relatively light and easy for two people to carry. As a result, doors are rather hard to come by now, though there are some heavier metal ones that haven't been broken down yet.

The lights flicker back on in the train, waking Sam, who had been sleeping soundly with his head on my legs. I can see other sets of tracks out the window now, all converging on a central point. A huge rectangular building stands like a behemoth in the shadows, a few miles outside the city, with tracks entering it through a large opening on one side. It reminds me of a giant mouth swallowing up the lost souls; I suddenly begin to doubt the truth of this safe city. I start to remember the rumors, how Fall Haven was constantly sending people out to fight a mysterious enemy, how a train with survivors from the north somehow vanished from the tracks. "Something is not right," I whisper to Magnus. I begin to notice other clues; the buildings outside the windows show no glowing firelight through the windows, the fabric curtains are torn, the clotheslines empty. I need to get off this train.

"Evan, you're fine, it's just nerves," Magnus says, trying to comfort me. "Just wait until we get to the city, and then we'll be safe."

"No there's something...we're not safe here. I have the feeling Magnus, you know, the one I had before the...you know."

Magnus paused before replying. "Ok, I trust you. What are we going to do?"

I gently made Sam sit up; he protested at first, but when he saw the urgency in my eyes, he complied. I knew the train would have to stop before it entered the station to be screened for the disease; apparently, there are children in Fall Haven, and some aren't immune. I had already scanned the carriage when we sat down; I knew there was a door in the back we could sneak out. Trying to look casual, Magnus and I stand up, each with a bag in one hand and one of Sam's hands in the other. Heads turn as we walk down the aisle, but most of the other passengers are too preoccupied with their own problems in their own families to really think too hard about what we are doing. The carriage lurches as the engineer applies the brakes, and Magnus falls backward into me. He mutters an apology, and we keep moving. When we reach the door, I squat down to read the instructions for opening it. They're in Dutch. "Where the hell did they find a Dutch train car?" I whisper to myself. Luckily, I can pick out enough words to understand that I have to pull down on the hefboom and beurt the wheel, and then push out. There is another jolt, and the train is no longer moving. The lights flicker out again, as if to cover our escape. I'm about to open the door, but I stop and unzip my bag, pulling out a pair of socks and a shirt. I quickly slide the socks onto Sam's hands and wrap the shirt around his head. "Be brave, big guy," I tell him, his wide eyes slicing right to my heart.

When I push the door open, a blast of icy air hits me in the face, freezing the breath in my

throat. I let Magnus and Sam slip through first, and follow, sealing way behind me. There is a small platform on the back of the car, and a corrugated metal ladder leading to the ground. Magnus tests the footing for ice before climbing down; when he's on the ground, I pass Sam down to him. I can no longer feel my hands as I press them to the freezing steel. I jump the last foot and land with a crunch in the gravel by the tracks. Looking towards the station, I can see the silhouettes of guards standing in the beams of the huge spotlights mounted over the entrance. Our car was towards the back, so they hadn't reached us yet. "Go!" I hiss, gesturing for Magnus and Sam to follow me down the embankment that raises the tracks above the scrub-choked prairie. I part the grass and trudge through the snow for a few minutes with Magnus following closely. He's carrying Sam now, and dragging the suitcase on the ground with his other hand. We reach a rock, and I set down my bag, pulling out my jacket, and after a moment of hesitation, the atlas. Magnus has his eyes turned to the train, which has begun to move again. It pulls into the station, and the air seems to freeze around me. I tense my hands, waiting for...something. But nothing happens. My pulse quickens; did I just throw out my family's chance for a new start, for a safe place? Magnus and Sam look at me, waiting for me to say something. I open my mouth, but only a cloud of breath makes its way out. I can't face them; my eyes turn to my feet. And then the black beast on the horizon unfurls into a great ball of flame.

The sound hits a second later; a deafening boom that you feel in the back of your teeth and leaves your ears ringing. The initial fireball matures into a blazing inferno that turns night into day. I can feel the heat on my face even from where we're standing. Magnus turns to me, the fire reflected in his eyes, and says solemnly, "That would have been us."

And suddenly, I can't hold it back anymore, and I sink to my knees in the snow. I try to choke back the sobs, to hide my weakness by covering my mouth with my hands. But all my pent-up emotions have found a crack in the dam, and there is nothing I can do now to stop the flow. I try to remember the faces from the train, all fellow pilgrims just trying to feel normal, all their hopes and dreams floating in the winter wind with the ashes. I cry for the unfairness of it all; I am eighteen years old, and I carry the burdens of two other people on my shoulders. The world once held so much and now all I feel is emptiness on every side.

A small body presses itself into me, a soft head forcing its way under my chin. I hold Sam tightly, and flood of beautiful memories pushes back the tide of despair. I see Sam's little dimples when he laughs, Magnus' shy smile, my sister's long hair blowing behind her as we walk by the sea. I haven't seen the sea in so long. I feel the familiar hand on my shoulder, and look up into Magnus' concerned eyes. "Good thing I don't have a baseball bat," I say, laughing through the tears. He offers a hand, and I accept it, rising to my feet with Sam still clinging tightly around my neck. Magnus wraps his arms around me and Sam together, protecting me from my own demons.

"You don't always have to be the strong one," he whispers in my ear, erasing the last of my resistance. I can no longer speak; my body is wracked with sobs as I bury my face in his shoulder. We all hold each other. Magnus begins to talk to me through my tears, offering reassurance and soft affirmations of his presence. "I'm here," he says, "we're all here."

We slept the rest of the night in the shelter of the rock, all huddled together under one blanket. Our future was uncertain, but then again, it always had been. After Sam had been lulled to sleep between us, Magnus and I shared a last look before I closed my eyes and let my thoughts take over. We said nothing, and everything at the same time. The world is not empty, because Magnus is my world, and Sam. We will survive because we have each other. We've each beaten everything the world has thrown at us, lived even against unsurmountable odds. I know that I am safe wherever my family is. As long as love survives, life will continue to be worth living.

In the morning, the sun rose over the frozen rock, lost in the vast expanse of the prairie.



Aquatic Ambience  
Aquil Sheikh

a swirling breeze  
sitting on stools  
a warm atmosphere  
away from the rat race

held between my middle and ring finger  
the strained stump  
a sweet taste of airy ether

blurs between serene days  
going into each other  
bleeding almost

searching through the space between the trees  
as the sound pierces softly  
with a suspending attack  
and a slow decay  
remembering the passing of time  
peering out on the pier of the present  
out towards the jetties that chain the islands together

soft percussive hits  
still going about aimlessly

oblique in certainty  
tasting sweet and blue  
in the late of the night  
that mingles into the dawn of the next day  
the beginning of many things that will end  
seeing them as they journey off into the horizon  
it was only a matter of chance

awash in the events



Emma Corby

It has been a summer of rain. Clouds look like they are carved from the concrete sky. The rains cease rarely, and briefly; during those times I slip on a raincoat and go running. I never run in the neighborhood; instead, I cut through my backyard toward the woods. I follow the faint trail that my feet have worn down. Usually the rain starts again, but the trees offer protection.

I wake up late each day, and I never see the sun. Breakfast is a melancholy ordeal. I sit at the table, alone, staring out the patio door, spoon in milk and cereal turning soggy, observing how the weather makes the backyard look abandoned. I haven't used the slide or swing set for years, and... right now the grass is short, yet I don't remember anyone mowing the lawn. It's always quiet around here. It's only quiet around here.

I don't hear the rain anymore; it is silence to my ears.

When I am finished I thrust my arms out the window and rinse the utensils with rainwater. I leave them on the counter to dry. Then I head into my room and lock the door behind me. Even with the curtains drawn back, it is dim. I walk to my desk and turn on the lamp. I wrap myself in a cocoon of warm light and I learn.

My room is the only place where I feel safe. It's the only place where I can ever be happy. When I sit in my swivel chair and slowly spin, looking at all of the books - my books - that are waiting to be read, I feel as if I can survive a hurricane.

My mind is the only thing I have left.

I read novels, mostly. I cry at the end, sometimes. Either because they are so sad or so damn happy. I hate happy endings - tie it up like a gift and there's nothing left. (Still, the happiness gets me every time.) Novels fill me up with frosting and make me feel whole, even if only for a few hours; the best ones reach the brim, overflow, and still leave me wanting more. I don't ask myself Why do I read fiction? anymore because I have realized that it doesn't matter if the characters don't exist; it doesn't matter if the plot is too unusual to fit in this world (my world).

It would make me so happy to share a book with a friend. I want to hear her gush about the plot, I want to see the mischievous smile that lingers on her lips after turning the last page. These visions inspire me and allow me to sleep at night.

I've been reading short stories by the bunch lately. I guess it's because I write short stories, and I have the feeling that I'll learn something. Usually it's not something about writing, as I hoped, but something about life. An idea - it's more of a feeling, really - that I can't fully comprehend.

Why are the pessimistic stories the most satisfying? Why is it that I feel pleasure when a character fails to face her own regret, becomes trapped in her own solitude, or submits to the inevitability of fate? Of life, in general?

I should sit down with a short story and mark it until it bleeds. Tear it apart to find out what holds it together. Then again, I don't know what to mark, that's the problem.

Why does not understanding make me so sad and frustrated, and more appreciative of life?

Poems have never made much sense to me, either. Still, I feel as if poetry contains a deeper truth than prose - novels may be written in black and white, but poems are composed in color.

I write. What is the point of learning if you do not make? Often I am convinced that there is someone else in the world who writes the other halves of my stories. I have a long list of miniature ideas which are waiting to be paragraphed. (One of them reads: a giant balloon.) An idea that seems extraordinary at first is always a mirage. So there is a deep satisfaction in finishing a story, even if it has a happy ending, even if it has a really bad ending.

I am an obsessive reviser. Every sentence is scrutinized before the ink has time to dry. Usually I

get so caught up in fixing the small things that my story loses its heartbeat, its stream of life. If that happens, there's nothing I can do; even beautiful language cannot mask my mistakes.

Sometimes I get so attached to my work that revision is impossible. Every word seems perfect. (Sure, I could switch the order here, or use a synonym there, but does that really achieve anything?) The problem is, I've heard that real revision is mostly rewriting.

My flaw is that I can only look through a tainted lens.

I don't have to revise, do I? As long as my stories are good enough for me, I should be content. No one else is going to read them except me. I write for myself. I write for myself. (But I do want to leave something behind. Not necessarily for others to read, obviously. As long as my prose exists, I exist. I want someone to know that I lived, for however short a time, in this world.)

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If I'm not reading fiction, I get lost in math and science. I want to understand why it rains, why things fall, why we are governed by natural laws that we did not ask for. Euclid said that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. There are no straight lines in life, I have discovered. Instead, there are circles and triangles and parabolas and sine curves. Geometry is too perfect for me; that's why I love it so much.

I once thought algebra could help me; now I know it can't. My life is a system of  $n$  equations with  $n+1$  unknowns. There's always something I can't figure out.

When I read science textbooks I skim over the calculations because, more than anything, I want to know how things work. I care about the concepts. So I study hydrogen bonding and watch the raindrops fall outside my window. I review phase changes and wonder when it will finally be dry outside. I read about Rayleigh scattering and yearn for gray to become blue. I learn the Second Law of Thermodynamics and think about cleaning my room (which I swear I will never do).

At noon I go downstairs and eat my lunch, once again with the playground as a backdrop. I listen to music on the radio. I wash the dishes outside.

Then I read a couple more chapters, and take a nap. I leave my bedroom window open so the air (which is always cool) can reach my toes. With the curtains closed, it feels like evening.

I don't take piano lessons anymore, but I play anyway. Often I play pieces from years past, ones that I know by heart; when I am bored of those, I choose something else from the book. I sight-read a few measures, to see if I like it or not; if so, I practice it for a few days, and then move on. I fell in love with a piece this summer; it was Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata.

It helps to imagine an audience listening to you, because if it's in your mind there is no pressure, only support. I play for the rain, and I know it listens; it always stops after the last note. That is when I run.

Afterwards, instead of showering, I take off my clothes and stand outside in the rain. Rainwater mixes with sweat and tears, and brings me back to life.

I eat dinner just as I do breakfast and lunch. It's a little darker. There is only one light in the kitchen, and it is all the light I need. I almost feel safe. I imagine sitting near a fireplace during a blizzard. Is it the light I love, or the darkness outside? (I can't live without either.) From my chair, I watch the sky outside. I remember those evenings when the sun emerged from the clouds - those evenings when its rays shone on the wet world, even in a gray sky, and made everything seem like a miracle.

After dinner, I read or write by lamplight, always at my desk. I keep on praying for the sun. Soon the gray turns into black. I can see the moon clearly through the clouds. The rain slows, and maybe when I am asleep it stops. But it will be there in the morning.



Broken Glass  
Elise McCamant

We are the dying-out youth,  
Jumping into the streets and throwing ourselves  
Over the backs of rusty cars that  
Bend and sashay through  
Alleys of drug-dealing men and cardboard box homes.  
We like to waltz atop the swaying buildings,  
Spitting our tasteless gum over the edge  
So we can follow it down to the pavement,  
Become  
Splatters of warm bone and skin  
Because then we are bright shimmering shards of death not  
Dull gray smudges of life.  
We jump into the crashing, screaming oceans.  
I needed you to throw yourself off the jagged crag  
So that I would follow.  
You never could resist a dare  
So you soar off the edge  
And I echo,  
Cinder blocks of cruel words and  
Screaming madmen  
Tied to my skinny ankles.  
As we fall our frail fingers fracture like toothpicks  
And I set my peeling scalp on fire.  
You light your scarf with gasoline and a match,  
Shove it down your throat  
Turn your scream into a star.

We took rhetoric and metaphors,  
Made them into an abysmal cavern of grammarless  
Questions about God, Mortality, the Universe.  
They gave us delicate, nimble answers  
That nobody cared for  
So we grabbed our rulers and our meter sticks,  
Dragged them out of their beds,  
Beat them and kicked them  
With cruel steel-toed boots and  
Iron wills.  
We covered them with  
Dripping black tar that  
Pushed open their paper cuts  
And we rolled them  
Through shattered glass and pigeon feathers.  
We used to sit in our bathroom every night,  
Tear our hair out strand by strand

Under the sharp yellow light of the naked bulb  
Just to look at the rusty pigment  
As it shriveled up to white and gray,  
Disintegrated back to dirt and dust  
And we shaved off our eyebrows  
And stuck your fingers in the outlets  
And I went home with the indigo boy  
Who smelled like marijuana.  
Then we cackled and hissed  
Until our bodies cried themselves to death  
So that we shriveled up like raisins  
In a puddle of steaming tears  
(Oh the irony,  
Drowning of dehydration).

We are a raging inferno  
Of self-help books and  
Screaming protests that  
Get sprayed down and suffocated with  
Fire hoses meant to put out flames  
And I was jumped just last week  
By a German Shepherd whose breath reeked  
Of death and men  
And everyone keeps screaming  
And all the kids keep crying  
And you hung yourself up with the curtains  
And we didn't cry for you.



Pierson Deloe

## I Felt Like I Was Sort of Disappearing Katie Profitt

In the poem *The Munich Mannequins*, by Sylvia Plath, the line “Intolerable, without minds, the snow drops pieces of darkness” resonates with several passages and themes within *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. In the beginning of the novel Holden recalls feeling as though he’s disappearing as he’s crossing the snowy road, similar to the passage from the Plath poem, snow acts as this all encompassing blanket that hides and dissolves someone’s identity. This message

relates to Holden’s rough journey that he recalls in the book. Although masked throughout much of the novel, Holden Caulfield is searching for an internal sense of stability. His travels through New York City is an external representation of his struggles, both within himself and with the people in his life.



Katherine Vollmer

Within Holden’s story it is made abundantly clear that his fears seem to suffocate him, cause him to isolate himself, and cloud his visions for the near future. Although what he seeks is vivid and pressing, he often loses sight of it, letting his anxiety overshadow himself. These lines from chapter twelve are one of the many scenes which include Holden’s fascination with the ducks and the symbolism behind them. “The ducks. Do you know, by any chance? I mean does somebody come around in a truck or something and take them away, or do they fly away by themselves - go south or something?” (Salinger 81). The last part of this excerpt, “or do they fly away by themselves”, ties into what he’s seeking. He’s questioning what he needs to be in his life, if anyone’s going to save him or if he’s going to do it himself. Later in the book, there’s a sense of closure that he might not be able to save himself but he feels it’s his responsibility to save everybody else. “What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff - I mean if they’re running and they don’t look where they’re going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them....I know it’s crazy, but that’s the only thing I’d really like to be. I know it’s crazy” (173). This part of the book, when he’s with Phoebe, is one of the only moments when the audience is aware of his inner emotions, when the previous ambiguity has dissolved and another side of Holden is made apparent. These moments help to clarify who Holden really is and what he’s truly looking for internally and externally throughout the book.

There are few things that Holden seems to have faith in during the novel. Phoebe is one of them and although she isn’t what he’s truly searching for he uses her as a moment of clarity, a way for him to regroup and listen to someone he trusts. The key difference between Phoebe and everyone else in the novel is that she’s the only one he can trust. Numerous times he reaches out to others in need of help and repetitively gets smothered by their poor actions. Phoebe is almost like this guiding light that helps him choose between right and wrong, allows for him to express his real emotions, eliminating the element of phoniness he seems to carry with others.

This extraordinary story by J.D. Salinger still resonates with a modern audience because of its timeless themes and the vivid characters that portray relatable struggles. Everybody goes on a journey like Holden did, going off of the deep end for a bit to find who they really are and what they want to do, for Holden he really just wanted to save others before they had the chance to fall.



A Promise  
Mariah Bender

She lies on her face and breathes-in the grass.  
The sweet dampness of the sleeping air pours into her mind as  
Her consciousness is overcome with grief.

"Can I turn you over?"  
His voice rises slightly with concern.  
Her silence is her response.

His firm hands fold themselves around her shoulders  
And draw her from the earth.

On her back now, she stares up  
Into infinity.  
Her arms draw themselves up and clasp her knees  
To form a buffer.  
If only the demons of the world  
Were her greatest threat.

"Don't do this. Please, please, don't do this".  
The desperation in his voice hurts more  
Than the stones pressing into her back.

She does not look up.  
How could she look up?

His arms wrap around her torso.  
Her body goes limp.  
Her arms fall  
Like a flag on a still day.

He silently lifts her body  
Towards his own.  
He half-carries, half-draws her from  
The middle of the dark road  
Where she had deliberately placed herself.

"Please don't", she begs.  
She implores him  
To leave her there,  
Barefoot and broken.

The cold pavement looks all too inviting.  
A promise of some misfortune.

Shared Pulse  
Grayson Stevens

Pride melted over their backs,  
Bandaging their sorrows in tempo with the darkness  
Falling outside onto silenced sidewalks.  
They huddled under the rainbow  
Like it was a safety blanket, body armor,  
The flag on the casket of their comfort.

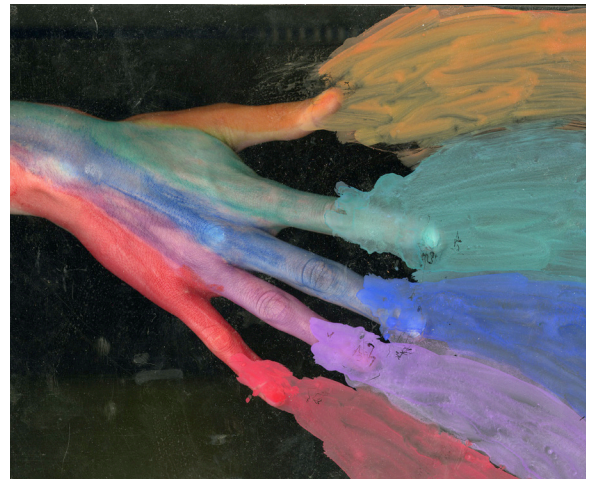
That Greenwich Village street corner should have been bustling  
With a flock of riled up queer folk, echoing laughter,  
And the raging optimism that only comes when we  
Have a whole month to live out loud.

We are a mastered mosaic  
With nothing but hope for  
Tomorrow holding us together.  
But when tomorrow is torn from dozens of dancing souls,  
We need more than colorful bouquets to hold us together.

"You don't have family there," they say,  
"Why does your northern grief come so readily, so steadily?"  
But they forget that I have an identical pulse that thumps deep within.  
That community rhythm booms like bass,  
Like a cacophony of wild drums in my chest,  
And so much stronger than most bloodlines could ever be.

I watched as they hung their heads  
Under that drooping cloth which usually held resilience.  
He leaned on his lover, squeezing his hand tightly  
Between both of his calloused palms for the simple reason that  
He still could.

No one had the right words  
To fill the air that hung with the smell of black,  
Freshly-brewed coffee and the damp evenings of June.  
The stage was vacant and our mic was on,  
But our minds were too full, too cloudy  
To speak of the sun so soon.



Tyler Thompson

Excerpt From "Teller of Fairy Tales"  
Nina Stornelli

If I'm going to tell this story, I'm going to tell it right. That means no "once upon a time" for me, no matter how alien it seems to start a story without the age-old guidepost.

So there is no once upon a time here. There is just the here and now, in a chemistry classroom on a chilly winter day, filled with students carefully adjusting burets full of acids and bases.

With a swish of her long, dark hair, Elise plopped down onto the stool across from mine at the lab bench, wiggling her eyebrows. When I didn't look up, instead finishing my notes and beginning to pour the extra fluid from the buret into a bottle, she laughed and leaned in, an expectant smile on her face.

"Okay, Hana. Time to spill," she said.

I finished pouring and screwed the lid onto the container. "Can it not be? I mean, this is hydrochloric acid. It wouldn't end well."

Elise rolled her eyes. "Hilarious. Spill the beans, not the solvent, you smart—" she glanced at the teacher, yelling at some boys about tidiness nearby. "Smart alec."

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said, pushing my glasses up my nose in hopes of achieving enough haughtiness to throw her off. "Don't you have a lab bench to wipe down?"

She grinned. "Don't worry, it's taken care of."

I raised skeptical brows at that. Turning to put away my titration materials on the shelf, I saw that my doubt was merited—a couple tables over, Clare was wiping up the lab bench that the two shared, a vague, thoughtful frown on their face as they cleaned.

"Don't tell me that you convinced Clare to do all the cleaning," I said.

"I put away the titration stuff, don't worry. They wouldn't let me off the hook that easily. Now stop stalling and tell me what happened with Helena."

"Uh..." I glanced around the room in time to see Helena, laughing with her friends, exit. My face warmed. "It's funny you should say that, because..."

"All right, we're all cleaned up. Let's grab our stuff and head out," Clare interjected. I sighed and stood up, ready to run with the change in subject, only to have any hope of moving past the conversation ruined as they continued, "You can catch me up on the way to English."

Elise smirked and nudged me. "Oh, you're not behind. She hasn't told me anything yet."

"A story that our Grimm isn't dying to tell?" Wide eyed, they placed the back of their hand on my forehead. "Elise, we may need to call a doctor. I don't know how we missed it, but she's very ill."

I swatted their hand away, then smacked Elise's shoulder for good measure. "I'm so glad to see that you put your acting to good use," I grumbled. "All right, let's go to English. I'll tell you on the way there."

"So, what exactly did you guys catch?" I asked, hoping that I still was casual.

Elise smirked. "You and Helena were having quite the chat over by the phenolphthalein at the beginning of class. Complete with energetic hand-motions, too."

"Whatever it was, you were pinker than an over-titrated solution afterwards," Clare added.

"I was not hot pink! I—right, okay, I need to just focus on telling the story."

"So you know how we have that research paper for World History this semester? Well, you don't, Clare, since you're in AP." They both nodded. "Helena and I are in the same class, and she asked what I was writing about, since she saw me talking to Mr. Langley about my topic for a while during class."

"Trying to write about fairy tales for class again?" asked Clare.



I nodded. "Langley didn't let me, though. He wanted me to choose a topic I have to actually research."

"How unreasonable," said Elise.

"Shush. Anyways, I was telling Helena about the fairy tale dilemma, and she gave me a funny look, so I... panicked, I guess. I told her that I write fairy tales. And she thought it was cool! She asked if she could read one, but I've been on hiatus since I made a mess of "The Lark and the Looking-Glass," so I didn't have anything and I didn't want to disappoint her, and..." Elise and Clare shared an amused look. "I said I panicked, okay? I just blurted that I didn't have any works in progress, but if she wanted, she could give me an idea and I'd write a fairy tale for her. And she said that she'd have to think of something and get back to me. So I guess I'm writing Helena a fairy tale?"

For a heartbeat, I hoped that they would respond with sympathy. Then they burst into laughter, and neither subsided until we were seated in Ms. Wilson's class, where I glared at them for the entire period.

The next day, I sketched the curve of a fox's forehead, carefully smoothing out the drawing into something I would be able to ink over more cleanly. I hadn't drawn somethings unrelated to school or fairy tales in some time, and it was a welcome diversion to do so. I could give the finished work to Max—he was always doodling or sculpting little foxes, and his patience as my lab partner in the face of my distraction was admirable. Max, I thought, frowning, was a wonderful, patient friend, with the decency to not tease me. I was, after all a calm, rational person. Nothing was going to interfere with my ability get thins done; no, I was an unflappable-

"Hi, Hana!"

I started, the fox's half-drawn ear becoming more of a unicorn horn. Sheepishly, I looked up.

"Hey, Helena," I said. "What's up?"

She sat down on the desk next to mine, legs crossed, feet dangling. "So, were you serious the other day? About writing a fairy tale, I mean. Is that something you want to do? Because I totally get it if you were kidding, or not that interested..."

"No, no," I said, "I meant what I said—I would be happy to write you a story! I should be asking you that—we totally don't have to do this if you feel weird about it, I don't want to pressure you into this or anything."

"Oh, you weren't pressuring. All the stuff you were saying yesterday was really interesting." The corners of her mouth twitched. "It was cool to see you light up about your stories, too."

"Oh." I fiddled with a pencil rather than look up and blush. "Well, I'm glad that I wasn't just rambling. So, we're doing this, then?"

Helena smiled. "It looks like we feel the same way."

I blinked. "Yeah. Um, yeah, I guess we should start talking story then." I rummaged for my notebook, trying not to think too hard about her words. "Did you have any ideas for plot that you wanted to include?"

Helena leaned back, putting her hands behind her on the desk. "I have some vague ideas. There should be a princess in there. And definitely someone who transforms into an animal."

"A shapeshifter?" I asked, jotting phrases into my notebook.

"Maybe. Or someone who was cursed."

"Okay, sounds good. What else?"

She sighed, reaching up and running a hand through her hair, tousling it. Even tousled, her hair cascaded down perfectly, as if the casual gesture had been a style she had perfected. I reminded myself to keep breathing and act natural as she said, "I'm not very sure, honestly. What do you think?"

I thought for a second. "Well, tone's a big thing to consider. Do you want an epic quest, or a more introspective journey?"

"Introspective is good," she said. She thought for a second, then grinned. "What do you think about a riddle?"

Immediately, my smile matched hers. "Ooh, I haven't written a riddle yet. Let's do it." I scribbled "riddles" onto my notes, underlining it. Then I took a deep breath, looked up, and asked, "What about endings?"

Helena tilted her head to the side in askance. "What about them?"

"I don't really believe in "happy endings" for stories like these," I said, making quotes in the air around the words. "I feel like fairy tales are like fairies themselves—strange, charming, unsettling—but they never leave perfect happiness in their wake, and there's always something a bit squeamish about the end."

Helena frowned, thinking. I raised my eyebrows. "You can try to think of one," I sat back. "Go for it."

She shrugged. "Cinderella."

This would be fun. "Depends on the version you read, but if you want Grimm..." I smirked. "Sure, Cinderella gets the prince, but her stepsisters are left forever disfigured from cutting their feet to fit the shoes."

Helena winced. "Graphic. Okay, what about Snow White?"

"The stepmother has to dance in red-hot iron shoes until she dies," I replied.

Helena made a face. "Well, she did try to kill her own step-daughter."

"And Snow White watched her succumb to agony in her slow, painful death." I retorted. "That's screwed up, too."

"The one with the frog and the princess!"

"The princess only marries the frog because he demanded it after helping her, and he won't stop being a creep."

"The Little Mermaid?" She sounded exasperated.

"The prince moves on, and Ariel turns into sea foam." I grinned. "You see my point?"

She held up her hands in surrender. "Okay, fine, fairy tales are messier than I thought."

"Would you rather have a neat and tidy ending?" I asked. "I can try if you think that would be better, but..."

Helena considered. "Well, less perfect endings sound fine to me." She shrugged. "We can always just see where the story goes."

I nodded. "Sounds good, then. Anything else you want me to keep in mind?"

She shook her head. "If I think of anything, I'll tell you later."

"Okay, I'll keep you posted on the story as I write it."

Helena grinned, holding out her hand, and I gently-high fived her. Helena said, "This is going to be great, I know it."

"Oh yeah," I said, giving her a thumbs-up. "We work together pretty well, don't you think?"

"Mhmm," she said. "We'll have to work together more often, then."

Jarringly, the bell for homeroom rang, jolting us out of the moment before I could agree.

"I'd better run," said Helena. She slid off the desk. "I guess I'll see you in World History?"

"Y-yeah," I said. "See you later!"

She waved as she left. I raised my hand, then lowered it, sighing. At least that went well, I thought. I stayed cool. Pencil in hand, I turned back to my drawing.

The fox still looked like a unicorn.

"Dang it," I muttered, furiously erasing. This was going to be harder than I thought.

You and I  
Liz Zdyb

Our lives were like records  
Playing over and over in our heads.  
My life ended a long time ago.  
My mouth tasted like metal  
As the smell of cinnamon filled the air.  
My hands were cold but my body was warm.  
The laughter rang in my ears as I see  
Bottles smashing into the wall.  
His kiss tastes like my blood.  
And when he hits me  
It smells like peppermint.  
It's 1995 when he left us in  
New York City, Christmas Day.  
I've never been to the city.  
I didn't have my first girlfriend until  
I was in college.  
We loved that All American drug,  
It keeps her by my side.  
She was happy because she had bright red hair.  
But love finds you when you stop looking for it.  
The careful bruises of love,  
I go to bed and hope for a better day to come.  
Her tears make me envious.  
I cease to exist and envelope into the shadows.  
Elizabeth was just there for the thrill.  
She will look back on these days as she grows older.  
The smiling sky looked brighter than days before.  
It was God looking down on us.  
Voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir?  
The trees talk to me as I walk home tonight.  
They ask me if I've ever loved at all.



Wakeful Nights  
Aquil Sheikh

A breath of fresh smoke  
Feeling the yellowing weight down the throat  
Unease wraps itself, tickling at my nose  
A battery of sneezes

In a room that refuses to be clean  
Tied to a bed that remedies no ills  
Swallowing:--  
---feeling the pain of tonsils

Taking in the poisons to  
get closer to death  
and get away from feeling it  
Feeling fine

Taking in the time;  
the countless moments of eternity;  
it never stops.

Nevers is there is sneeze in  
a long night's solace

amidst the ambience of a piano  
that speaks justly in its tonic, its temperament

Looking at the sky so dark,  
not even given a moment to  
look at it in wonder as  
the romantics.

Dizzying  
the room is spinning  
By the hallucinatory end  
its all stars and rainbows

She pecked at the corners of my mind. She purred at me with perseverance, calling at me, telling me what to do. She taunted me, doing the opposite of what I wanted her to do. Hurry up, I call, but she drags on the seconds for what seems hours. Slow down, I say, and she turns into the hare. She deceives me, because the pace is all the same. Deep down I know this Time... Time chases me. She cunningly plucked at my strings and now, slowly but surely, they have all broken. I must accost her.

I listen to her sly ticking until I fall into her trance. I call at her in my haze until she emerges from the fog. She is dressed in a holographic scale gown, her slick black hair is in a sharp up do, not a single hair out of place. Her sideburns curl around her acute cheekbones. Her intense dark green eyes are staring at me. I match her stare and we circle each other, like opponents getting ready for a match. I wait for her to make the first move. "You called me," she reminds me.

Her mouth opens to match the syllables, but what I hear comes from all around me. Her powerful feminine voice sears me. I am surprised by how she almost sounds seductive, but mostly just conniving. I look around in bewilderment until my eyes settle on her face again. She has a smug look on. "It seems I did," I recall. She makes it easy to forget things. "I wanted to talk to you about your interference in my life." She suddenly stops circling me and takes a seat in the fog. She motions with her hand for me to do the same. I hesitantly sink into the fog, and it turns out to be unsettlingly comfortable. "What about it?" She leisurely responds. In fact, she takes her time with everything, as if she has all the time in the world. I don't know how long it has been. It feels right to think only a few minutes have passed but in reality, it feels like hours have.

"I don't want you controlling it anymore." She smiles at my statement and weighs it. "I control everyone's life. Whether I want to or not, I am the basis of everyone's thoughts and actions. Your life depends on me," Time answers.

I consider what she says and thoughtfully respond. "I understand this, but why must you remind me of my deadlines and worry me about the future? Why must the good times that have passed become a distant, faded memory? I don't understand why you must come with all this baggage." I don't know how long it is before she responds.

"If you think it is my fault that this happens, it is not. I am surely just a thing, an idea. I don't bring this 'baggage'. You are bringing it upon yourself. You must learn to balance me, to make me an idea in your head instead of some physical force that is abiding against you." She stands, and the fog settles on the floor again. I stand too and ponder over how she must think our meeting is over. I realize I have no reason to prolong it. I say farewell to Time. "I hope we don't have to meet again. Good luck." She says, and vanishes just as majestically as she had appeared.

I wake up and instinctively check the clock. Time is no longer a person to me. Now, time's voice is but a susurrant in my mind, as it should be.

Frank Utterance  
Eilis Regan

Oh, Gabriel, have I ever loved you?  
Or, I inquire, have you ever felt  
Something stronger than a fondness towards me?  
I suppose, not—I suppose you know not how.  
Likewise, I myself remain ignorant on the subject;  
Or at least I am now, though he never was.  
I must ask, do you understand  
What it means, to love?  
For this relationship has been assembled, a childish mold;  
I regret that it is not built in compassion.  
And I admit, half of it is my fault.

But dammit, it's entirely my own formulation, isn't it;  
I consciously led myself here and froze,  
Amidst everything.  
I never attempted to reveal my whole self to you.  
My perpetual judgment and shallow expressions—  
I allowed myself to compare you  
To the passions of some previous affair;  
I expected you to mimic a ghosted soul,  
That you never could.  
And I hated that you couldn't.  
Bathing in utter rigidity, I threw you away.  
Release yourself from our shattered love.

Gabriel, you are a soul of complexity.  
But as are all persons; even those caught  
In the oblivion of the chase;  
The chase, I never completed—I never will.  
You are your own, as am I: two separate, strangers.  
Strangers who play along with what society prescribes;  
You can't walk backwards down an aisle.

Gabriel, please speak; don't you understand?  
A frail string connects us, and we must  
Acknowledge its permanency...it's hopelessness:  
Any asylum is asymptotic;  
Any healing is unreachable.  
It may hurt to love, but in its absence,  
There's a different breed of pain.  
I admit that I do feel saddened or  
Frustrated or lost, and Gabriel, it's because of us.

The above piece was composed as a creative response to James Joyce's short story "The Dead."

Since Then  
Kaitlyn Walker

Hands in humid curls  
Deceptively thick  
As the blankets covering me  
At night while I  
Lay on my stomach, breathing in.  
Convulsing my muscles into  
Submission while I'm dreaming  
Compresssssss—

Impressions are important, and  
That's why my body hurts and  
Why there are black lines etched  
underneath my eyes until they're  
Stretched around my neck in a long cord  
that brings a soothing voice to my ears:

"And on the  
Exhale.....  
Relax"

Breath out, and feel  
All the magnetic fields shift—until  
My head flattens  
And my eyes melt into  
Dreams of the  
Clocks I broke trying to  
Set timers....

To create magic-  
One must harness  
The Passive Voice,  
In a blatant display of  
Technical mastery  
(Perhaps what I need to achieve)  
Like the way that wise teacher  
Taught me to hold my feelings  
In a sparkly ball,  
Like a firework just before the final explosion.

And this is the last poem  
That I will ever write.  
This is my Apology  
For having been away too long  
in my Cloud Castle



That took hours to assemble  
And is still missing  
Pastel pink pieces.

"But what good does missing do?"  
I'll say, ripping  
the carbon black pen  
Down my forearm.  
That blank white skin  
Will be signed with my name  
(Right on the dotted line.)

And under a new contract and conditions,  
I will surrender my notebooks.  
My inky thoughts-  
To become a reader.  
To become another type  
Of artist.

I always threatened  
That I'd use duct tape for my  
Enemies.  
But now I pull that thick tape  
Across my thin lips. My speeches will  
Forevermore be unspoken through  
The language of someone else's  
Atonal melodies.

So I plug myself back in.  
Those black cords wrap around my neck.  
Hoping to train my ears right this time.  
And some dark spots appear  
On those sheets I prided myself  
On keeping so pristine.  
The broken clock stands in the pile  
Where the flames are curling  
The paper into real spirals.

The floor is getting burned. And  
I turn my cheek.  
Because I am waiting to burn alongside those memories.  
Waiting to turn  
To ash and then recollect,  
Those years  
Spent trying to grow  
In a dead garden.

It's called the fetal position  
Because that's where you become  
Reborn at night.  
In dreams that don't belong to you.  
While you wander  
Through flowerless fields of green and brown  
Until you wake with the sun,

Until I wake with the dawn.  
Raising a new head,  
Spreading longer wings,  
That will be iridescent in the sun.  
And reflective of the moon.

And This time, I won't be Icarus.  
This time I'll keep flying,  
Straight on till the next  
Good  
morning.



Emma Corby



All Death Needed  
Mars Ashford

All death needed was a red flower and a white flag, a simple spark. Inhale insidious death into lungs, forcing them to breathe snow covered trees and sorrow. Exhale accomplishment and melted ice, burned branches. Control is the smoke being forced into daring lungs, control is the cancerous black spots coating them generously in a definite defeat. Was war once inclusive? Or not at all? Was the battlefield a façade of false hope and misjudgment? Or was warfare a simple dream sprinkled upon a mound of nightmares to help induce sleep as a safe haven. Nightmares were dreams gone bad, defective hopes and often failed aspirations of genuine care and love. With control, with the smoke being insidiously sheltered in lungs, the best daydreams could go horrifically wrong with the right push and a tattered white flag thrown into the mix. Hope could show just how bad hell could hit.



Rachel Geiger

He, for whom she's sat  
at the counter, dreams plotted  
on paper napkins,  
has left her with nothing but  
a round, orange moon.

And there's not a thing she can do  
besides pour another cup of scalding tea, "Maybe  
this will be the cup that burns my tongue away," she  
prays to the god who's heard  
crickets chirp from her  
end of the line for months  
turned years.

But it's high time that she  
stop kneeling before mortals  
because their ears are deaf  
with cool ignorance and  
her mouth mute with  
the names of false idols on her lips.

She's got the beads wrapped around  
her calloused fingers, all the right words  
spilling from crooked lips  
with the aid of a half-burned  
tongue, but the neighbors  
worry that her god hung up the  
phone years ago.

And they're knocking on her door, begging.  
These pews have been graced  
with the cheeks of dying babes  
and not a single one was  
eased into that slumber.

But this sleepy momma, with a face as  
round as the moon he left her with,  
has nothing but loose change in  
her uniform apron and crumbling  
determination.

So now's the time, Pandora: open  
up that box again, and let  
her have shy hope. And let her  
god pick up the receiver again.



An envelope is sealed between my teeth. I carry a message as heavy as the heathens and lighter than heaven; embossed with the lichens on a humble boulder. Sanskrit and symbols compulsively lay rest on the paper. Pages weave betwixt each other, marbled and overlay with a peculiar scent and scorn. Paper crinkled and rancid, ferments itself on the tongue and twists. Thrashing concepts I swallow them whole and halved. The paper no less sharp than cutlery patterned by the breast of steel. And the nuptials are tender against the neck. It slowly makes way across the songbird jaded under my flesh. A throat with tissue so hardened that it craves the fresh cut. Young Turk, stem thawed from the cold. Amazons thick with wet air slowly condensing to the bottom of my lungs. Capillaries convulse until they churn the sanctified waters in which they drown. Though I gasp for air it is not my own.

